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BOOK REVIEW



A thousand one hundred and seven units, cemeteries and isolated graves, based on published data, are presented in this volume. In total 11,421 graves are analysed. The only completely excavated cemetery in Pannonia is that of Beška-Brest, while simple graves were reported from several sites.

The structure of the book is clear and well constructed. The list of sites is published on <https://tinyurl.com/MartonCatalogue>. The evaluative part is complete and made more expressive with its 322 diagrams and maps. The reference list on pages 283–338 is imposing, proving the author's profoundness. There is a catalogue of the burials in an alphabetic order, with their separated numberings. Besides the complete reference list of the graves here their dating is also given. Annex I is actually an appendix; it contains the list of 369 sarcophag-burials of eminent importance because of their inscriptions. Various interpretations of their readings is analysed with philological criticism. Here in a table and maps 82–87 illustrate the available data; among others the number of burials on the individual sites, their distribution by rites and the chronological sequence of the burials.

The subject of the book is the chronological and topographic frames determined in the introduction. The rich burials of Emona are naturally omitted from the analysis of Pannonia, since this town had belonged to the region X of Italy from the end of 1st century. It is actually debated if Emona ever belonged to Pannonia, or not. We think, based on Pliny's and Ptolemy's data that it was part of this province in the first century, but even so it could be difficult to separate the graves of individual cemeteries used in the period when the town had belonged to Pannonia from those ones that can already be related to the region X of Italy. V. Lányi analysed 4th-century cemeteries; she published her results in the 1972's volume of *Acta Archaeologica Hungarica*. Similar analyses were missing from the previous centuries, so A. Márton's work is a very important synthesis, filling this gap from the chronological aspect, he reviews the material of graves from the Augustan period to the Age of the Tetrarchy.

The description of the difficulties concerning the compilation of the corpus is followed by the chronology and history of research. It is followed by the analysis of inhumation and cremation burials and then the discussion of grave cult. To separate the primary and secondary grave-goods and their interpretation by groups is a logical step at the description of the grave furniture. The author was capable to control the huge material and the aspects of his analyses composed many details. The questions are logical but he not always tries to answer them. Owing to his profound knowledge of archaeological literature, he suggests several solutions to a series of problems and correctly lists arguments in favour or against the individual hypothesis. The author sums up the observations on inhumation burials in more than 40 pages. He found that the most common orientation of the graves was E–W and its SE–NW version and that the preference of orientation changed in the Early Imperial Period. The fact that the number of the recorded graves is low and their dating is not always exact renders the analysis of the first century burials rather difficult. Actually the 1st-century chronology is restricted to the second half of the first century. The SE–NW orientation is common until the end of the Marcomannic Wars (AD 166–180), later it became sporadic. E–W and W–E orientation was common in the 3rd century. His statements are illustrated by a

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dozen of column charts according to centuries. The documentations of sites are often incomplete, so the orientation of only about half of the uncovered graves of the Early Imperial Period is known. He raises the question if the orientations can be linked with preferences by age or gender. Naturally this question can not be answered in lack of the anthropological analysis. Orientation is varied even within the same cemetery. In this regard there are no regional differences. E–W orientation is perhaps slightly more common in the territory of the *civitas Eraviscorum*, in the north-eastern part of the province, but this may be due to the state of research. The great variety of orientation may be a specific feature in Pannonia in the Early Imperial Period. Several versions are differentiated among the inhumation burials, pit graves among them ones with interior steps, shaft graves with lateral niches, brick or tile graves, stone cists graves underground walled grave chambers, over ground walled graves chambers and sarcophagi. The burials that can not be grouped into any of above categories are summed up under the title ‘miscellanea’.

Most of the burials are single pit graves of which he observed 6 shapes. In a few cases, the filling of the grave suggested a wooden coffin (e.g. grave no. 148 of the Solymár cemetery). As these are only a few graves with inner wooden structures we do not know in what state the corpses were preserved in them. It is not possible that wood deteriorating insects (*serpula lacrimans*) contributed in the decomposition of the bones and *vica versa*, it is not possible that poorly preserved remains indicate wooden coffins. The author rightly observed regarding the covering of pit graves with *tegulae* or stones that the purpose could be either binding the dead to the grave or protecting or marking the grave. He thinks that the pyres built in pits with interior steps were the antecedents of graves with interior steps. These are only a few graves with lateral niches; their number slightly grew in the later Roman period. Brick graves flourished in the 4th and early 5th centuries although they already appeared in the late 2nd century and became widespread in the middle of 3rd century. They clustered in the principal cemeteries in Britain in the towns strongly connected with the army (this burial type is fairly rare in a rural environment). Most of the stone cist graves have been robbed, so it is difficult to date them. They generally occur in the western province in the 4th–5th centuries. The chronology of the stone cist graves is similar in Pannonia. Perhaps the only early occurrence is recorded from Arrabona. According to the grave furniture the underground walled grave chambers probably belonged to the wealthier layers. This burial type is recorded from the municipal cemeteries of Poetovio, Savaria and Aquincum. Overground grave chambers are very rare and sometimes it is not even certain that they were really grave chambers standing on ground level. The dead were placed in elongated pits of pyres built over trenches in Aquincum and Gerulata. There may have been no link at all between the earlier cremation and the later inhumation grave. It is also possible that the area was possessed by the same family and this is why the later graves were placed in the same parcel. An earlier idea suggested that the grave with pits were cleansed with ritual burning, but it can not be proved.

A long chapter is dedicated to sarcophagus burials. The reason may be that as opposed to other burial types, the sarcophagi bear inscription, so in case of primary burials – they offer an insight in the either affiliation or social status of the buried person. From Pannonia 371 sarcophagi are recorded. The earliest sarcophag-burial can be found in the western part of the province. Flavian glass vessels and Italian terra sigillata were found in the sarcophagus of the Deák Square cemetery in Scarbantia. I do not agree with author’s opinion that late Samian from the Po valley were exported until Hadrian’s reign or even until Antoninus Pius’ time. This is true regarding their production in Italy, but erroneous from the respect of the Pannonian importation. We can already find South Gaulish pottery in Trajanic forts and they are not to be expected to appear in the inner Pannonian region later than the second decade of the 2nd century. The number of sarcophagi is uncommonly high in Pannonia in the Antonine–Severan period especially in Aquincum and Brigetio. At the same time only a dozen sarcophagi are recorded from Carnuntum, which developed in parallel to the other towns and was raised to the rank of *colonia* at the same time. Relatively many items were found in Poetovio, Intercisa and Sirmium. The economic situation favoured the common acceptance of this more expensive burial rite. Sarcophag-burials became a tool to demonstrate the social status and so stone carving workshops produced them in series. Although this group of monuments is well represented in Brigetio as well I do not think that a kind of rivalry existed between the population of Aquincum and Brigetio, as suggested by the author. The number of sarcophagi illustrates that the economic centre of the province was in the towns and settlements along the eastern Pannonia limes at that time. This boom can be explained among other with the arrival of eastern elements in Intercisa. The importance of Savaria and Scarbantia, the towns along the Amber Route significantly lessened as compared to the 1st and 2nd centuries, well illustrated by the decrease of the number of inscriptions and the supply of imported ware. Evidently the numbers of wealthier social layers were buried in the sarcophagi. Based to the analysis of the inscriptions A. Márton groups here the soldiers (mainly officers and their family), the veterans and members of the *ordo decurionum*. The inscriptions often hint to oriental elements, they generally mention persons from Syria, Thracia, Bithynia and individuals coming from the Greek speaking territories of the Balkans and especially from the western provinces in much lower. The ratio of eastern elements is especially significant in the Severan period or slightly later. Yet the burials can not evidently be related to an ethnicity or the representations of certain religious trends. Thus the author supposes that the sarcophag-burials can be related to a series of components. Sarcophagi were used in different ways, even in the same town. They could be placed on the ground or deepened into the earth. Some of the sarcophagi dug into the earth are decorated with reliefs. It was earlier suggested (T. Nagy) that the early items stood on the ground and they were buried in the Late Roman Period. But the finds did not support this suggestion. It is also true that most of the

sarcophagi were robbed and sometimes secondarily used, so the grave furniture is known in only one case out of ten. Glass vessels were the most common grave goods together with coins, cosmetic good and article of wear. Jewellery was generally made from precious metals. This finds also reflect the better financial situation of the buried. Certain data observed in the sarcophagi imply stretchers but the only evidence is known from the Halbtorn cemetery. Wooden coffins are relatively frequent and they show a balanced chronological distribution. In 2007 A. Márton had already published a paper on lead coffins, not older than the late 3rd century. An item from Poetovio is dated by Gallienus' coin. They appeared in the 1st century and became common in Hispania, Gallia and Britain. In Pannonia they generally occur in municipal cemeteries.

There is a chapter dealing with the position of the buried individuals. In 126 cases the bodies were certainly laid on the back but the number of individuals buried in this position must have been much higher, only the reports do not mention it since this was the common way of burials. Individuals lain on the belly could be observed at four generally distant sites from Gerulata to Sárbogárd. A series of theories explain this feature (suicide, criminals, etc.), but as we can learn from D. Castella's 1999 publication, none of them have been proved. In certain cases it seems that it was the consequence of a punishment for the break of a social norm. The bodies were found in a flexed position lying on the side in Aquincum. Formerly it was considered to have been a definitely late Roman phenomenon (K. Póczy, J. Topál), but this position has no dating value in itself. The ethnicity of the persons buried in this way can not be determined so A. Márton refutes that this custom would have been appeared on some Illyrian-Pannonian impact. The provincial burials of this rite are clearly chronologically distant from the similar Later Iron Age ones and at the same time, they appear in cemeteries of settlements with mixed populations. No connections could be demonstrated between the position of the skull and the positioning of the corpse either in Pannonia or elsewhere. The position of the arms could also be varied even within the same cemetery. The only thing that could be observed is that the number of the versions decreased by the 4th century and became uniform at the end of the 4th century. The summary of the rites practised during and after the burials is also very interesting. Traces of burning could sometimes be observed on the skeletons like in grave 122 of Solymár, in a burial in Gomolava and on the skeleton in the sarcophagus of Répceszentgyörgy. Although the authors of the publications suggested that the individuals died in conflagrations, A. Márton proposes either a cleaning rite or a partial cremation. Stones were placed on the body in the coffin in grave 64 of Solymár which could bind the dead to place, or the stones had originally belonged to the grave construction, or like at grave 25 of Bela Cerkov, they built the foundation of a grave marker mound. In certain burials the skulls or the bones were lifted from the grave after the burial. The custom was common especially in the Late Iron Age but it also surveyed in the Roman period in Northern Italy, Britain or

Moesia superior. In a Late Iron Age environment the skulls could be placed in a sanctuary. Owing to the fact that the other is well versed in literature, the author can offer several explications to every phenomenon, while he is cautious enough not to consist on any single idea.

Inhumation burials of the Early Imperial period are treated in a separate chapter. Formerly a chronological difference was supposed between the two rites, cremation was used in the Early Imperial period and inhumation burials were common in the Late Roman Period. Certain specialists determined the time of shift in the beginning or the middle of the 3rd century. The rite itself was thought enough to date, so skeletons without grave goods were automatically dated from the late 3rd or the 4th century, while cremation burials without grave furniture were automatically dated from the Early Imperial period. The early inhumation burials were supposed to be exceptions which needed special explanation. Accordingly they could belong to less Romanised members of the autochthonous population or persons who could not pay the costs of cremation. Another explanation was that slaves, criminals or suicides had been buried that way. A. Márton cites many publications to disprove these suggestions. Regarding the site of the less Romanised elements he lists many examples that inhumation burials can also be found all over Northern Italy in the 1st–2nd centuries from Aquileia to Sarsina or Portorecanati. This rite was continuously present in cemeteries of the region of Locarno or on the territory of Emona. Although cremation dominated the Early Imperial period, there are inhumation burials in Gallia Narbonensis just like in Germania or Raetia. So the burial rite considered to be later was not uncommon even in the burials of the immigrant Italic people. On the other hand cremation burial dominated in Pannonia in the La Tène D period so it seems unlikely that the Early Imperial period inhumation burials were evidence of the continuity of a Late Iron Age tradition. The number of Early Imperial period graves is the highest in the Eraviscan territory and it is only here that a cemetery contains only inhumation burials. Nevertheless these burials can not exclusively be linked with the Eraviscans as neither the brooches nor inscriptions reveal the ethnicity of the buried individuals. Several specialists tried to determine the data when inhumation burials replaced cremation ones (A. Jovanović: Severan Age, J. Topál: second half of the 3rd century) but inhumation burial was not the only rite even in 4th century. The author lists 4th-century cremation burials from 26 sites with noting that their number can be higher by some burials without grave goods. The number of inhumation burials evidently increased in the 3rd century which is explained by the fact that cremation was more expensive or by the influence of eastern cults or later by influence of Christianity or the immigration of barbarian elements. It is difficult to estimate their direct impact when no epigraphic evidence support them.

An important result of his work is that the suggested change of rite in the 3rd century is only a mere fiction both in Pannonia and in the majority of the western provinces. The 4th-century cremation burials at the same time can not be

linked to immigrants. He examines the large cemeteries used from the middle of the 3rd century, when coins date the burials and found that no data can be determined in the entire province from where the number of inhumation burials exceeds the ratio of cremation burials. It is naturally partly due to the fact that the middle of the 3rd century and the period proceeding the era of the Tetrarchy is especially poorly documented. The date of the “change” could be different in various communities and it was not complete even by the early 4th century. In regard of cremation burials he discusses the orientation of the pyres and the graves, the cremation sites (*ustrina*), the pyres built on the ground and in trenches, the construction of the pyres, the positioning of the body on the pyres and the interventions on the pyre sites and the charred remains. He could use representative samples from tree sites: the cemeteries Gerulata I–II and Matrica. In the Late Roman Period E–W orientation was dominant in other provinces as well when a certain regulation system determined the orientation of the graves; while in the early period the main roads, the structures of the cemeteries and personal trends could modify the orientation of the graves. Due to this high variety the orientation can not suggest ethnicity, so it does not support the hypothesis of barbarian settlements. A number of cremation sites are supposed but they have not been published. The most probable of them is the structure uncovered in the cemetery of Novo Mesto-Beletov vrt. The pyres built on the ground were generally protected from erosion by *tumuli* built over them (in 65 cases). The earliest ones are the cremation site of Tiberian–Claudian time of Katzelsdorf, where the latest ones can be dated from the early 3rd century. In rural cemeteries overground cremation sites can generally be observed. In the cemeteries of forts the bodies were probably buried in common cremation sites. Pits of pyres are often mentioned from Aquincum and Intercisa. As this type is also recorded in Pannonia, the author supposes that immigrants from the Balkans brought this pyre type with them. It often can not be decided from the publications if the pyres were built in or over the trench. This type does not have Late Iron Age antecedents so they must have arrived in the province after the Roman Conquest. The origin of cremation rites linked with trenches can be found in Italy and the army recruited in Italy and merchants could help in their diffusion. He is cautious with the results of the analysis of pyre remains. Probably oak was used for cremation (Oberkohlstätten), which frequently occurs in Pannonia (*glandifera Pannonia*), but wooden grave caskets could influence the analysis. Funeral beds (*lectis funebris*) also attest Italian impact although only a single one is recorded from Emona. No documentation has ever been made of the exact position of the charred bones. More than one individual could be collected from a frequently used cremation site (*nunc tumulus cineres ossaque lecta tegit* – CIL III 6475). Interventions on the cremation site could be documented at grave no. 106 of Bécsi Road in Aquincum where the charred remains were collected after cremation. They were put into an urn and placed on the bottom of the trench of the pyre and then the trench was filled up with the remains of pyres.

Sometimes tile roofs were constructed over the cremation sites as in Ostia and Sarsina. Sometimes the gathered remains were placed in the urn in an anatomical order (Gerulata cemetery II). The traces of grave cult could be observed in one of the cemeteries of Aquincum: in the form of pipes carrying liquid offering (*profusion*). In the case of cremations in a secondary position, the remains were generally placed in a pottery vessel. They are found in large numbers in municipal cemeteries in the period between the second half of 1st century and the Marcomannic Wars. This burial method is also recorded from the La Tène period. Thus beside the traditions of the autochthonous population the dead cults of the northern Italian immigrants and elements arriving from beyond the borders of the empire also added to the evolution of this burial rite. Generally a large storage jar served as an urn. No connection could be detected between the gender and the age of the dead and the urn type in Pannonia. It was observed in the Solymár cemetery that the pottery vessels were intentionally bored through. A. Márton could neither prove nor refute the theory of a soul hole. Burials with monumental grave constructions are generally unknown. Amphora burials are recorded in Emona and a few sites. The author suggests a later dating to the appearance of house urns which P. Petru discussed in details and linked with the Latobici and dates their production from the end of the third quarter of the 3rd century. A layer of better financial possibilities must have used these house urns. Another custom of placing the remains in glass vessels was imported from Italy. Merchants from Aquileia could contribute to its distribution. Most of the glass urns were found in rural cemeteries (except Savaria and Scarbantia). They were generally placed in *ossuaria*, although they also appeared in grave chambers. The urn itself was surrounded with stones or slabs. Sometimes it was put into a large vessel or wooden chest.

Four lead urns are recorded from Pannonia. Probably a number of the autochthonous Azalus elite were buried in the Környe item. Very rarely the ashes are placed in a bronze vessel; in such cases a time lap of 70–90 years can be expected between the production of the bronze vessel and its use for burial. At certain urn graves charred remains were also found outside the urn. As the remains in and outside the urn were not composed during the analysis we can only suppose that they used to belong to the same person. A significant epigraphic material can be connected to the *ossuaria*. They generally mention active soldiers or their families. A. Márton clarifies this group of remains according to their shapes which according to him also indicates chronological differences. Due to the low number of dated items, he is cautious concerning their chronology. Certain *ossuaria* can contain the remains of more than one person. It can be true in the case of items with relief decorations as well as e.g. in the Kleinwarasdorf grave, where the grave goods contained weapons together with casket mounts, these latter ones generally belonged to female graves. If they had ornaments they were similar to those of the sarcophagi. Most of the *ossuaria* are placed in pits, sometimes in grave garden or grave construction. The common grave goods are jugs and lamps and amber objects, gold hair pins

and earrings also occurred; the latter ones perhaps can be linked with the Italian layer. The earliest *ossuaria* can be related to Italian immigrants; veterans or merchants. This burial type arrived in Pannonia through Aquileia and Emona. The soldiers recruited in Northern Italy could largely add to the distribution of ossuary burials. The latest burials of this type were used in the early 4th century in the region of Lake Fertő (Neusiedler See).

After cremation the remains could be placed in wooden chest or organic container as well, although they can only rarely be observed (Novo Mesto-Beletov vrt). The so-called bone heap burial is the most frequent may be secondary cremations without urns. It is supposed to be the survival of an Iron Age tradition as similar burials are recorded on the territory of the Latobici. Simple pit graves and so-called burial wells (he cites analogues from Sirmium) are differentiated among grave types linked with cremation burials. Based on analogues from Gallia the wells with rich finds did not serve funeral purpose; water was hauled from them or

they were used for other cultic activities. The origin of the cult of the so-called 'funeral wells' similar to the Sirmium ones points towards Gallia Lugdunensis.

Brick graves appeared in towns alongside the Amber Route as early as the middle of 1st century. This grave type arrived in Pannonia with immigrants. Large wooden chambers could be the burial places of the higher social layers (in Andautonia such a grave contained a glass service of 9 items). The majority of the stone cist graves can be found on the territory of the Latobici in the 1st and 2nd century. The composition of cremation graves could be solved in various ways. The graves were covered with the stone mounds in the period between the late 1st and mid-3rd century. Sometimes large stone slabs were used for this purpose. A special West Pannonian feature is that secondary cremations and the pyre sites were covered with roof-like constructions built by tiles. The custom came from Italy (Portirecanati). We can find in Pannonia, where Italian immigrants can be recorded.