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BOOK REVIEW



Tatjana Lolić: Urbanisation of Roman Siscia: Interpretation of historical and modern maps, drawings and plans

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Lolić, T. (2022). *Urbanisation of Roman Siscia. Interpretation of Historical and Modern Maps, Drawings and Plans*. Archaeopress Roman archaeology, 89. Archaeopress, Oxford. 200 p, 263 figs, 2 maps. ISBN 978-1-78969-623-3.

Siscia was the first city in Pannonia to be occupied by the Romans, in as early as 35 BC. Although Segestike, occupied by Octavian, was not topographically identical to the later colonia, it was of great military and commercial importance. Until the time of Claudius it was a fortress of *Legio IX Hispana*, from Flavian time it was a city with a rank of colonia, and after the administrative reform of Diocletian it became the capital of the province of Savia.

It is understandable that the road network, the structure of the colonia and the development of its urbanisation have become the focus of research. This was by no means an easy task, since the present Sisak (Sziszek), which developed from the end of the 18th century onwards, was built on the site of the former Roman town. Siscia thus remains only as an archaeological layer beneath the modern settlement. The present-day town, which follows its Roman predecessor in structure, thus allows only limited archaeological research; only 10% of the ancient settlement has been excavated. Stratigraphic observations could only be made in a few places.

The publication presents the results of research carried out in 16 blocks, with a logical interpretation of the observed colonial phenomena. The data from the excavations is accompanied by old documentation of observations made during the 1931–1935 surveys and they are strongly taken into account and built upon in this publication. The geographical and hydrographic observations and drawings of L.F. Marsigli *Danubius Pannonico-mysicus*, as well as the data of the 13th century Mappa mundi map, are also of great importance. 300 drawings supplements the information resulting of excavations carried out from the Second World War to the 1980s. Archaeological research over the last 40 years has also brought many questions closer to being answered. In addition to the above, the work takes stock of the information on Siscia provided by the ancient authors Polybius, Velleius Paterculus, Strabo, Pliny and Dio Cassius. However, there is no such compilation of inscribed monuments, which may also provide data on the urbanisation of the city (e.g. the presumed location of places of worship, shrines). The map of Pannonia at the beginning of the work, depicting the location of Siscia, is likely to provoke controversy. It indicates Emona as part of Pannonia, which, according to M. Šašel-Kos, was never part of this Danubian province. In my opinion, it can be assumed that Emona was part of Pannonia in the first century, but from the Flavian period on it may have been part of the Italian Regio X.

Encyclopaedic summaries of Siscia were first written by J. Šašel (1974) and A. Faber (1974), and then by D. Vuković in 1994. All the earlier works were based only minimally on the finds recovered during excavations, with the exception of R. Makjanić's publication on terra sigillata, R. Koščević's on fibulae and her study of thin-walled pottery types published in 2003 in "The autonomous towns in Noricum and Pannonia". In general, the pottery finds were published by I. Miletić Čakširan in her dissertation in 2019.

After an introduction on the history of research, the cartographic sources are analysed (pp. 18–37), mainly the topographic data of Marsigli. In this section, she also discusses information on the wider area of the city, its defenses, gates, street network, bridges, canals and other buildings, and discusses in detail the so-called Tiberius Trench, that was located

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between the Sava and Kulpa rivers. The function of the latter is not conclusively understood yet, but it is assumed that it may have been a channel connecting the rivers.

The main chapter of the publication deals with the interpretation of the archaeological features (pp. 38–183). Within each site-block, the position of the city wall, the gates, the moat belonging to the fortification and some internal buildings (e.g. the large horreum built next to the southern city wall) are discussed. The road network was built up as early as in the first century. The city itself was built *ex novo*, after the Pannonian Segestike had been built on the other side of the river. Settlement on the right bank of the Kolapis (Kupa) is verified from as early as the sixth century BC on. The location of the fortress of *Legio IX Hispana* remains unknown, although a significant amount of military equipment was recovered during the dredging of the Kupa River. The publication of it is to the merit of I. Radman-Livaja. The wooden pillars belonging to the harbour can be considered a rare find, which were proven to belong to a first-century structure. The first city wall had a wooden structural support as well, its traces were observed in several areas. The military was likely involved in the early construction works. The earliest phase of the city is the period from Augustus to Claudius, the buildings of which have been observed mainly through the excavations at the railway station. The earliest layer found at a depth of 4–5 m contained finds from the decades between the first century BC and 30 AD. The archaeological features of the earliest settlement have cut through the stratigraphic layer of the La Tène period. Timber structures, including the remains of a bridge, were observed in various places during excavations; their dating was aided by ACO and Sarius pottery. The early structures also fit into a regular street system. Although the town was partly built on prehistoric substratum, this did not influence later construction. The first stone (or stone-based) buildings were erected in the age of Claudius. Major construction works took place after 71 AD, when Siscia was granted the status of colonia.

The city walls were built of brick, with stone reinforcement in places, as evidenced by excavations carried out in 1997.

The results of the more recent excavations were well comparable with Marsigli's drawings; as of a gradually narrowing upper structure and ascending wall built on a wide foundation running 4–4.5 m deep. Some of the bricks bear the SISC stamp, meaning that the building materials were sourced from local municipal workshops. The city wall was probably built in the Severan period, when the colonia was given the rank *Septimia Augusta*. In places the walls were reinforced by stone construction embedded in mortar.

In addition to archaeological excavations, geophysical measurements were also carried out to determine their location. The fortifications were further reinforced in the fourth century AD. External and internal towers were part of the defensive structure along the walls. Among the city gates, the northern gate was the subject of new research in 2004–2007, although Marsigli had already depicted this gate in one of his drawings.

The town's forum was probably identified during excavations by the railway station. An altar dedicated to Jupiter and Juno was found in this area in as early as 1900. The two deities appear together only on this inscription, although 15 Jupiter inscriptions are recorded from Siscia. This fact, in addition to the fact that the intersection of the *cardo* and the *decumanus* is precisely at this location, supports the localisation of the forum at this site. An important feature of the city centre is the *macellum* overlooking the *cardo maximus*, or a building erected for commercial or administrative purposes. In the city centre there is a large public bath, the *caldarium* of which has been excavated. The baths may also have contained mosaic rooms, as evidenced by the tesserae found. A. Faber puts this building to the first and second centuries. Excavations in 2006 revealed that the baths had multiple construction periods. A major reconstruction may have taken place at the turn of the second and third centuries. The *thermae* occupied more than 3 *insulae*.

One of the most important buildings in the south-eastern quarter of the city was a large horreum built of carved stones, reinforced with brickwork (*opus mixtum*). The outer walls were reinforced with buttresses. Four rows of supporting pillars were unearthed in the horreum. The building had been probably built in the fourth century; its orientation differed from that of the street system in the greater part of the town, but it is clear that the same orientation was followed by earlier buildings in this part of the town in the first–second centuries. Earlier tombs (*cippus*) were built into the horreum.

In addition to the public buildings, some of the town's residential buildings have also been excavated. In A.I.S. Radića Street, near the centre, a part of a patrician house was unearthed. This relatively luxurious building with apses, mosaics and wall paintings is a second-century domus, which was somewhat altered in the third century and parts of it were no longer in use. According to T. Leleković, the walls found south of the building may also belong to this domus. This part was built over a Flavian workshop. Although the building was not without luxurious elements, it could not have been part of the residential complex, which would have required a larger area. A significant building was excavated in 2007 in I. Kukuljevića Sakcinskog Street, where a building of the first and second centuries was also built over in a later period. The early building has been dated to the Flavian period on the basis of the millefiori glass and thin-walled pottery, although I believe it may be earlier. In this block, the four-room building overlooking the street, in use from the second to the fourth century, had probably been a shop.

An early timber building of residential character may date from the Claudian period in the second half of the first century; the date is supported by terra sigillata finds, early thin-walled pottery and Dressel 6B amphorae. This building may have been in use at a time when the military was still stationed in Siscia. A glass furnace was excavated above it. The town may have been an important industrial centre; among other things, there are finds referring to pottery production (see dissertation by I. Miletić-Čakširan 2019). Three



pottery kilns have been found in A.I.S. Radića Street, and we also know of a mould used for the production of lamps. Previously, L. Nagy had located a second century terra sigillata workshop in Siscia, but it turned out that the location of the manufactory was Margum and Viminacium. Metalworking may have been important in the life of the colonia, but no information is available on the location of the workshops. The town may have been an important centre for iron processing, as attested by iron bars found here. Siscia may have been one of the centres of wool production in Pannonia, as indicated by the large number of lead seals found here.

An important facility, a monument of the city's water supply system was found in Block 15, on the other side of

the Kupa. The brick foundations of the pillars of the aqueduct were discovered here. Siscia must have had at least two water supply systems.

T. Lolić's book can be considered a fundamental work for the study of Pannonian cities. The author presents the urban structure of Siscia, its layout and the buildings investigating so far, based on the completeness of the data. We can only praise the research that has been carried out in the difficult conditions of urban excavation, since the modern city was built on the site of the Roman colonia. The work presents important stages of the urban development of Siscia well documented, with a series of colour photographs.

