

SOPIANAE.
A STUDY OF CULTURAL INFLUENCES
IN FOURTH CENTURY SOUTHERN PANNONIA

1. *Introduction*

Sopianae was an important Roman town in the province of Pannonia. By the fourth century AD it gained a status of the provincial capital, when Pannonia was divided into four provinces. The fourth century was the time when Pannonia was probably the most important as the home province of Constantine the Great and many 'Pannonian Emperors'. To be more specific, the Balkans, - where, I will argue, Sopianae belonged - seems to be a united region within the empire with its own traditions, influenced as much by the west as the east. However geographically it did not belong there, Sopianae was the northernmost town within the Balkans' cultural circle.

2. *Historical and Geographical Analysis*

The settlements on the site of Sopianae were conquered by the Romans in the first century AD.¹ A Roman city was founded in the second century from the separated settlements, but its golden age was the fourth century. After the administrative reform by Diocletian at the very end of the third century, Pannonia was divided into four provinces. Because of the constant Barbarian attacks along the Danube *limes*, the civil administrations of the new provinces were established in the *hinterland*, while the military governors (*duces*) kept their residence in the previous capitals, along the Danube (Carnuntum and Aquincum). Sopianae became the headquarters of the civilian governor (*praeses*) of the north-eastern Valeria province.² This change in the status of the town was followed by investments from the state. The first fifty years of the fourth century were a period of rapid growth funded by imperial expense. Many buildings were reconstructed and a new street grid was laid down. The palace of the governor and the huge structure of a bath complex were built.³

¹ G. Kárpáti, *Contra damnationem memoriae (Az emlékezet kitörlése ellen)*, in Bertók et alii, *A pécsi világörökség*, Pécs, Sopianae Örökség, 2003, p. 35-40.

² J.C. Rolfe (ed.), *Ammianus Marcellinus: Res Gestae*, London, Heinemann, 1939; F. Fülep, *A Pécsi ókeresztény mauzóleum ásatása (Excavations of the Late Roman - Old Christian Mausoleum in Pécs)*, in *A Janus Pannonius Múzeum Évkönyve*, 32, 1977 (henceforward: Fülep, *A Pécsi ókeresztény*), p. 31-44.

³ N. Lenski, *Failure of the Empire. Valens and the Roman State in the Fourth Century AD*, Berkeley, CA, University of California, 2002, p. 42; F. Fülep, *Sopianae: The History of Pécs during the Roman Era, and the Problem of the Continuity of the Late Roman Population*, Budapest, Akadémiai Kiadó, 1984 (henceforward: Fülep, *Sopianae*), p. 34-35.

Within these new circumstances, the Christian church became the main player in the local society, funded by the emperors and wealthy individuals.

2.1. *Contemporary Society*

The classes of the local society included native Celts, Italian settlers, Dalmatians, immigrants from the Danube provinces, and families from other parts of Pannonia. This mixed local society was the result of the good commercial connections and trade routes, which had run through the city. Sopianae had well-established commercial connections and advanced economic links with Italy, Gaul, Germany, Rhaetia, the Balkans, Constantinople and even with the Barbaricum on the other side of the Danube.⁴

Landowners, retired soldiers and their families, traders, craftsmen and bureaucrats were all present.⁵ The upper *strata* – rich tradesmen, landowners, high-ranking bureaucrats and soldiers – built bigger and richer houses.⁶ Among the local aristocrats, there were the members of the municipal council. However, to be a member of a municipal council in Late Antiquity was not an easy matter, as one had to supplement the tax income if it had not reached the expected level, which it usually did not. For that reason, the financial power was in the hands of the landowners, who escaped from municipal obligations.⁷ This landowner-aristocracy had a considerable influence on civic life.

2.2. *Geographical Situation*

The main military road between Constantinople (founded in AD 324) and Trier, imperial capitals of the East and the West, ran through Sopianae in the fourth century.⁸ From Italy, an important trade route between Milan, Aquileia, Poetovio (Ptuj, Slovenia) and Mursa offered a good connection to Sopianae and linked the city with another western imperial capital, Milan. Aquileia was the main starting point for immigration from Italy. The *limes* road along the Danube was also within a day's walking distance and linked the town to the Danube, another important route between east and west.⁹ In addition, of course, the city had good connections with other important Pannonian cities such as Carnuntum, Savaria, Siscia and Aquincum. On the other hand, the Balkan provinces (Dalmatia and Moesia) were very close to Sopianae. Through these provinces oriental travellers arrived in the city via

⁴ Fülep, *Sopianae*, p. 258.

⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 276.

⁶ F. Fülep, *Pécs rómaikori emlékei (The Roman Monuments of Pécs)*, Budapest, Képzőművészeti Alap, 1964, p. 11.

⁷ C. Mango (ed.), *The Oxford History of Byzantium*, Oxford, University Press, 2002 (henceforward: Mango, *The Oxford History of Byzantium*), p. 72.

⁸ Fülep, *Sopianae*, p. 12-13.

⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 13.

land and via water (from the Adriatic coast). The crossing point at the river Drave, at Mursa, was only one day's walking distance away from Sopianae, hence the city was on the route of every eastern traveller who wanted to cross the Drave towards the west.

The geographical position of the city made it an important transit station between east and west, especially in the fourth century AD (Figure 1). This statement is supported by the *Itinerarium Antonini*¹⁰, which is talking about Sopianae as an important crossroads. The military road was used by merchants as well as soldiers. Merchants came from the east and the west to the city. The proximity of the Amber Road, which ran from Italy, through Savaria to the Baltic coast providing a trading highway from the fourth century BC onwards, had also had effect on Sopianae.



Fig. 1. Map of the middle regions of the Roman Empire in the fourth century AD. After A. Marcellinus, *The Later Roman Empire*, W. Hamilton (transl.), Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1986, p. 502-503.

2.3. Other Late Roman Funerary Sites

Late Roman funerary sites are commonly found all over the territory of the former Roman Empire. Just to mention some: the most famous are the catacombs of Rome¹¹, where the funerary art of the third and fourth century AD was born, and more than 150,000 graves were found. Also in Rome are the *Isola Sacra* cemetery and the *Torre de' Sciavi*. The former is famous for its wall

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 12.

¹¹ J. Stevenson, *The Catacombs. Rediscovered Monuments of Early Christianity*, London, Thames and Hudson, 1978 (henceforward: Stevenson, *The Catacombs*).

paintings. In Italy, Lugnano¹² needs to be mentioned, as well. Poundbury in the UK contains funerary buildings (*mausolea*), Boscombe Down¹³ (Wilts.) also in the UK contains several hundred Late Roman graves, but no buildings were found, although the excavation of the area is still ongoing. Other sites in the UK are: Lankhills¹⁴ (Berks.), Brongham¹⁵ in Cumbria, the cemeteries of Roman London: Watling Street¹⁶, the eastern cemetery¹⁷ and the western cemetery¹⁸, Bletsoe¹⁹ (Bedfords.), Dunstable²⁰ (Bedfords.), Cambridge²¹, Leicester²², Gloucester²³, Irchester²⁴ (Northampton), Stanton²⁵ (Oxon), Dorchester-on-Thames²⁶ (Oxon), Topsham²⁷ (Devon), Curbridge²⁸ (Oxon), Colchester²⁹ and

¹² D. Soren, N. Soren (eds.), *A Roman Villa and a Late Roman Infant Cemetery: Excavation at Poggio Gramigneno, Lugnano in Teronica*, Roma, L'Emma di Bretschneider, 1999.

¹³ This information was gained directly from Wessex Archaeology Ltd, a company which has worked on the site for nearly a decade. For more information see the following Wessex Archaeology report: Wessex Archaeology, *Boscombe Down*, 1997.

¹⁴ G. Clarke, *The Roman Cemetery at Lankhills*, Oxford, Clarendon, 1979 (henceforward: Clarke, *The Roman Cemetery*).

¹⁵ H. Cool, *The Roman Cemetery at Brongham, Cumbria: Excavation 1966-67*, 2004.

¹⁶ A. Mackinder, *A Romano-British Cemetery on Watling Street: Excavations at 165 Great Dover Street, Southwark, London*, London, MOLAS, 2000.

¹⁷ B. Bruno, *The Eastern Cemetery of Roman London: Excavation 1983-1990*, London, MOLAS, 2000.

¹⁸ S. Watson, *An Excavation in the Western Cemetery of Roman London: Atlantic House, City of London*, London, MOLAS, 2003.

¹⁹ M. Dawson, *A Late Roman Cemetery at Bletsoe, Bedfordshire*, Bedford, Bedfordshire County Council Planning Department and the Bedfordshire Archaeological Council, 1994.

²⁰ R. Gardner, *Archaeological Investigations at 24 Friary Fields, Dunstable, Bedfordshire*, in *Bedfordshire Archaeology*, 25, 2004, p. 159-189.

²¹ M. Alexander, N. Dodwell, C. Evans, *A Roman Cemetery in Jesus Lane, Cambridge*, in *Proceedings of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society*, 93, 2004, p. 67-94.

²² R. Gardner, *A Roman Cemetery in Clarence Street, Leicester*, in *The Leicestershire Archaeological & Historical Society Transactions*, 79, 2005, p. 27-89; L. Cooper, *A Roman Cemetery in Newarke Street, Leicester*, in *The Leicestershire Archaeological Historical Society Transactions*, 70, 1996, p. 1-90.

²³ H. Hurst et alii, *Excavations at Gloucester; Third Interim Report: Kingsholm 1966-75*, in *The Antiquaries Journal*, 55, 1975, p. 267-294.

²⁴ D.H. Kennet, *The Irchester Bowls*, in *Journal of Northampton Museum Art Gallery*, 4, 1968, p. 5-39.

²⁵ N. McGavin, *A Roman Cemetery and Trackway at Stanton Harcourt*, in *Oxoniensia*, 45, 1980, p. 112-123.

²⁶ R.A. Chambers, *The Late and Sub-Roman Cemetery at Queenford Farm, Dorchester-on-Thames, Oxon*, in *Oxoniensia*, 52, 1987, 35-69.

²⁷ A. Sage, J. Allan, *The Early Roman Military Defences, Late Roman Cemetery and Later Features at The Topsham School, Topsham*, in *Devon Archaeological Society Proceedings*, 62, 2004, p. 1-39.

²⁸ R.A. Chambers, *A Romano-British Settlement at Curbridge*, in *Oxoniensia*, 41, 1976, p. 38-55.

²⁹ N. Crummy, P. Crummy, C. Crosson, *Excavations of Roman and Later Colchester, 1971-88*, in *Colchester Archaeological Reports*, 9, 1993.

Cirencester.³⁰ Other sites in Europe includes: Rusovce³¹ (Czech Republic), Ziegefeld³² (Austria) and a Late Roman cemetery in Malta. Pannonian cemeteries in Hungary are among the best recorded ones³³, the most important sites are Pécs (Sopianae), Budapest (Aquincum)³⁴, Dunaújváros (Intecisa)³⁵, Bogád³⁶, Kisárpás³⁷, Magyarszerdahely³⁸ and Zengővárkony.³⁹

3. Archaeological Evidence (Structures)

The Early Christian Cemetery of Sopianae/Pécs lies close to the possible western gate of the Roman town-wall near a road that leads to the north.⁴⁰ The use of the site of the Early Christian Cemetery as a burial ground began in the third century AD. Pagan graves (R/36-R/38) were found.⁴¹ From another part of the cemetery, third century cremation burials have recently come to the light. From the first decades of the fourth century, east-west oriented inhumations appeared amongst the burials. In the second half of the fourth century, rich *mausolea* were built with underground burial chambers (*hypogea*). This is later than similar developments in the Roman catacombs.⁴²

3.1. Funerary Buildings

More than thirty funerary buildings are known from the Early Christian Cemetery of Sopianae (Figure 2) from the fourth century, many of them being decorated with wall paintings. On the one hand, the subjects and the artistic style of the wall paintings show a close relationship with the paintings in the Roman catacombs. On the other hand, the Sopianae burial

³⁰ A. McWhirr, L. Viner, C. Wells, *Romano-British Cemeteries at Cirencester*, Cirencester, Cirencester Excavation Committee, 1982.

³¹ L. Kraskovská, *The Roman Cemetery at Gerulata Rusovce, Czechoslovakia*, Oxford, in *British Archaeological Reports Supplementary Series*, 10, 1976.

³² Ä. Kloiber, *Die Gräberfeld von Lauriacum, Das Ziegefeld*, Linz, 1957.

³³ V. Lányi, *Die spätantiken Gräberfelder von Pannonien*, in *Acta Archeologica Hungarica*, 24, 1972, 53-213; see also Clarke, *The Roman Cemetery*, p. 382-386.

³⁴ J. Topál, *Roman Cemeteries at Aquincum, Pannonia*, Budapest, Aquincum Nostrum, 1993.

³⁵ E.B. Vágó, *Későrómai sírok Intecisában és Bölcskén*, Budapest, Akadémiai Könyvkiadó, 1961.

³⁶ A. Sz. Burger, *A bogádi későrómai temető*, Pécs, Janus Pannonius Múzeum, 1964.

³⁷ E. Bíró, *Kisárpási későrómai temető: előzetes beszámoló*, Budapest, Akadémiai Könyvkiadó, 1959.

³⁸ L. Horváth, *A magyarszerdahelyi kelta és római temető*, Zalaegerszeg, 1979.

³⁹ J. Dombay, *Későrómai temetők Baranyában*, in *A Janus Pannonius Múzeum Évkönyve*, 1957, p. 181-330 (Zengővárkony: p. 187-216); see also Clarke, *The Roman Cemetery*, p. 383-386.

⁴⁰ Fülep, *Sopianae*, p. 15-16.

⁴¹ *Ibidem*, p. 60.

⁴² L.V. Rutgers, *Subterranean Rome*, Leuven, Peeters, 2000 (henceforward: Rutgers, *Subterranean Rome*), p. 68.

chambers belong to the Macedon *hypogeum* type⁴³, which occurs in a region, centred in the Balkans. Sopianae seems to be the northernmost settlement of this circle, as no painted burial chambers were found north of the city in Pannonia.⁴⁴

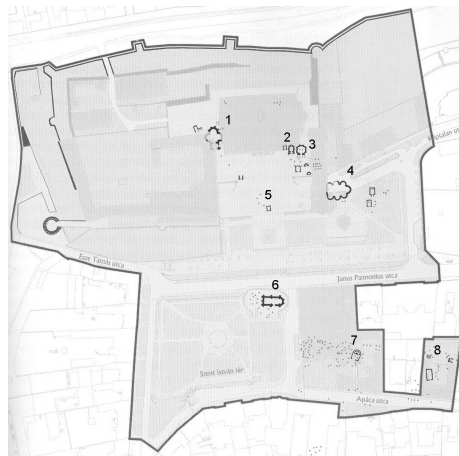


Fig. 2. The Early Christian Cemetery of Sopianae. After Hudák, Nagy, *A Fine and Private Place*, p. 11. Key: 1. Cella Trichora; 2. St Peter and Paul Burial Chamber; 3. Burial Chamber V; 4. Cella Septichora; 5. Burial Chamber of the Jar; 6. Early Christian Mausoleum; 7. Burial Chamber XIII; 8. Double tomb.

3.1.1. *The St Peter and Paul Burial Chamber*

The wall paintings of the St Peter and Paul Burial Chamber in Sopianae are the peak of Early Christian art in Pannonia.⁴⁵ The main painting, depicting *St Peter and Paul* on the northern wall of the burial chamber (Figure 3) is related to catacomb paintings in Rome.⁴⁶ However, the closest parallel is the representation of St Peter and Paul in the burial chamber of Niš (Serbia) (Figure 4). Depicting the two apostles has a strong connection with the orthodox iconography of Rome directed against Aryanism. The depiction of Christ and the two main apostles was the symbol of Rome in the second part of the fourth century⁴⁷, and with that the symbol of orthodoxy, directed against Aryanism. The acanthus tendrils on the southern and northern wall (Figure 5)

⁴³ K. Nagyné Hudák, *Bibliai témák és szentábrázolások a sirmiumi metropolia ókeresztény művészetében*, Master Dissertation, Budapest, Department of Archaeology, Eötvös Lóránd University, 2003 (henceforward: Nagyné Hudák, *Bibliai témák*), p. 65-66.

⁴⁴ E. Tóth, *Pannonia Christiana. A kereszténység kezdetei a Kárpát-medencében*, in *Életünk*, 8, 1991, p. 740-747.

⁴⁵ Nagyné Hudák, *Bibliai témák*, p. 38.

⁴⁶ Fülep, *Sopianae*, p. 39.

⁴⁷ Nagyné Hudák, *Bibliai témák*, p. 47.

of the burial chamber are similar to the acanthus tendril motifs of the Theodorus mosaic in the double basilica at Aquileia⁴⁸, but before that time the motif occurred in Rome, as well, in the Case Romane (Figure 6) and in the St John and Paul catacomb. On the barrel-vault four male portraits can be seen in medallions around a *Chi-Rho* symbol (Figure 7). Plants, flowers and birds represent Paradise around the portraits. There are stylistic parallels with the medallions in the Ciriaca catacomb in Rome⁴⁹ and with the medallions on the Theodorus mosaic in Aquileia (Figure 8). The *fin de siècle* portraiture applied, and the characteristics overall are typical of the late fourth century.⁵⁰ The composition of the whole burial chamber, especially the Paradise scene on the barrel-vault with flowers, plants, doves and peacocks were spread from Aquileia. However, they can be found in the Balkans (Figure 9) as well (under the influence of Aquileia).⁵¹



Fig. 3. Northern wall of the St. Peter and Paul Burial Chamber. After Hudák, Nagy, *A Fine and Private Place*, Picture 18.



Figure 4. The main painting from the western wall of the Niš burial chamber. Available at http://www.nis.co.yu/manastiri_i_crkve_grad_a_nisa/engleski/f17.html [25/09 / 2006].

⁴⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 50.

⁴⁹ Z. Kádár, *Pannonia ókeresztény emlékeinek ikonográfiája*, Budapest, Stephaneum, 1939 (henceforward: Kádár, *Pannonia*), p. 14-15.

⁵⁰ K. Hudák, L. Nagy, *A Fine and Private Place. Discovering the Early Christian Cemetery of Sopianæ/Pécs, Pécs, Sopianae Örökség*, 2005 (henceforward: Hudák, Nagy, *A Fine and Private Place*), p. 46-47.

⁵¹ Fülep, *Sopianae*, p. 39; Hudák, Nagy, *A Fine and Private Place*, p. 44.



Fig. 5. Acanthus tendrils on the southern wall of the St. Peter and Paul Burial Chamber. After Hudák, Nagy, *A Fine and Private Place*, Picture 16.



Fig. 6. Acanthus motifs in the Case Romane, Rome. Available at http://www.case_romane.it/slide/im_oran.html [26/02/2007].



Fig. 7. The barrel vault of the St. Peter and Paul Burial Chamber. After Hudák, Nagy, *A Fine and Private Place*, Picture 26.



Fig. 8. The Theodorus mosaic from Aquileia. Available at http://www.aquileia.net/clip_image002.jpg [15/11/2006]



Fig. 9. The Early Christian crypt in Niš, Serbia, detail from the barrel-vault.
Available at http://www.nis.co.yu/manastiri_i_crkve_grada_nisa/slike/Grobsvod.jpg [26/02/2007]

3.1.2. *The Early Christian Mausoleum*

The Early Christian Mausoleum (Figure 10) can be dated to the 370s or 380s.⁵² Its building has a parallel in the *mausoleum* in Marusinac (Figure 11), near Salona.⁵³ This *mausoleum* has similar size, dimensions and internal organisation as the *mausoleum* in Sopianae.⁵⁴ The paintings on the northern wall of the Early Christian Mausoleum depict the *Fall of Adam and Eve* and *Daniel in the Lions' Den*. The inspiration for the paintings of the *mausoleum* is the catacomb art in Rome, where the theme of the *Fall* was very popular. It is possible that wandering Italian painters worked in Sopianae from Italian sample books. Two epigraphs of such painters have been found in Savaria in northern Pannonia, as evidence for the presence of wandering artists in the province.⁵⁵ In Aquae Iasae (Varaždinske Toplice, Croatia) in southern Pannonia a fragment of a wall painting depicting a saint found in the middle of the main basilica is also likely to be the work of an Italian travelling artist from Rome or Aquileia.⁵⁶ It is unclear who is depicted in the *Figure in the white gown* (Figure 12) on the eastern wall or in another name: the *Figure sitting on the throne*. According to Fülep⁵⁷ the painting depicts a martyr, because of the presence of palm leaves. Nagyné Hudák⁵⁸ adds that the painting possibly depicts the deceased who was first buried in the burial chamber. It is not unknown to build thrones to the dead, and these played a role in one of the

⁵² Cs. Pozsárkó, *A sopianaei ókeresztény "Mauzóleum" szimbólumai*, in *Ókor*, 4, 2005, p. 65-70.

⁵³ Dyggve, 1951, cited in Hudák, Nagy, *A Fine and Private Place*, p. 17.

⁵⁴ Fülep, *A pécsi ókeresztény mauzóleum*, p. 254.

⁵⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 255.

⁵⁶ B. Migotti, *Evidence for Christianity in Roman Southern Pannonia (Northern Croatia). A Catalogue of Finds and Sites, British Archaeological Reports International Series, 684, 1997* (henceforward: Migotti, *Evidence for Christianity*), p. 33.

⁵⁷ F. Fülep, *Sopianae későrómai és ókeresztény múltja*, in I. Éri (ed.), *Pécs: ókeresztény mauzóleum és a "korsós" sírkamra*, Budapest, TKM Egyesület, 2001, p. 1-9.

⁵⁸ Nagyné Hudák, *Bibliai témák*.

funerary rituals.⁵⁹ The *Daniel* painting on the northern wall depicts the popular Early Christian topic: Daniel in the lions' den. Daniel is the archetype of the persecuted Christians who at last escaped from eternal death.⁶⁰ This subject can be found many times in the catacombs of Rome (for example in the Lucina catacomb). However, the depiction of Daniel in the Sopianae fresco shows similarities with the figure of the Good Shepherd in the Good Shepherd Grave in Thessalonica.⁶¹ In Sopianae Daniel wears a tunic instead of the usual Persian dress, which is a typical western characteristic.⁶² There are numerous parallel examples to the paintings of the *mausoleum*. The plant decoration on the northeast wall is similar to the graves numbers 4 and 8 in Serdica (Sophia, Bulgaria). The figure in the white gown has its parallel in the Noah figures in the catacombs and in Salonica, in the Good Shepherd grave. The plant decoration around the throne (?) can also be found in Niš (figure 4). The red ribbons, which are hung from the *Chi-Rho* symbol on the northeast wall, and the position of Eve's head and the style of her hair show similarities with the Eustorgius grave in Salonica. The hair of the lions on the painting of Daniel has its parallel in Arles.



Fig. 10. The Early Christian Mausoleum, the part that can be seen on the surface. After Bertók et alii, *A pécsi világörökség*, colour plate between p. 40 and 41.



Fig. 11. The mausoleum in Marusinac, near Salona. Available at http://www.solin.hr/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=47&Itemid=124 [25/09/2006].

⁵⁹ Stevenson, *The Catacombs*, p. 96.

⁶⁰ Z. Kádár, *Ókeresztény és kora bizánci művészet*, Budapest, Gondolat, 1959, p. 4.

⁶¹ Nagyné Hudák, *Bibliai témák*, p. 36.

⁶² Kádár, *Pannonia*, p. 27-29.



Fig. 12. Enthroned figure in the Early Christian Mausoleum of Sopianae.
After Hudák, Nagy, *A Fine and Private Place*, p. 22.

3.1.3. *The Burial Chamber of the Jar*

The Burial Chamber of the 'Jar' or Burial Chamber II (Figure 13) is a rectangular building; there is a burial chamber under the *mausoleum*. The main importance of the building lies in the wall paintings of the burial chamber. It contains decorative elements rather than single wall paintings, apart from the *Glass and the Jug* in a niche of the northern wall. There are two sections of paintings on the walls. The lower part is decorated in rectangles painted to look like marble. As a part of this lower band, there is a rectangular imitation marble slab under the niche. Arrowhead-shaped yellow flowers with green leaves symbolize the Garden of Paradise.⁶³ On the upper part of the northern wall, there is a representation of two vine tendrils with grape leaves and greyish-purple grapes. The vine tendril on the northern wall and the geometric decoration are closely connected with the Niš burial chamber (figure 14). Marble incrustation imitation with rich floral and vine tendril decoration can be found in Grave 7 in the church of Santa Sofia in Serdica.⁶⁴ The Salonica burial chamber also has some panels with grid patterns and with the imitation marble incrustation similar to the Sopianae paintings.⁶⁵ The trellis-motif decoration all around the lower section of the paintings is similar to the decoration found in Serdica, Grave no. 7.⁶⁶ To summarize, the Burial Chamber with the Jar has similar influences to the previously mentioned two funerary buildings in Sopianae, but between the three, it was the least sophisticated and was decorated in simpler way.

⁶³ Hudák, Nagy, *Fine and Private Place*, p. 30.

⁶⁴ Fülep, *Sopianae*, p. 45.

⁶⁵ *Ibidem*.

⁶⁶ *Ibidem*.



Fig. 13. Northern wall of the Burial Chamber with the Jar. After Hudák, Nagy, *A Fine and Private Place*, Picture 10.

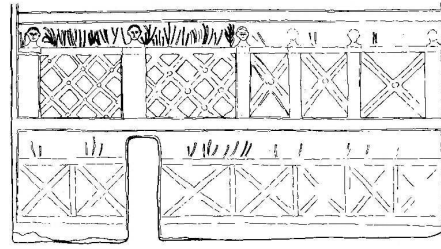


Fig. 14. The Early Christian Crypt at Niš, Serbia. Details from the northern wall. Available at http://www.nis.co.yu/manastiri_i_crkve_grad_a_nisa/slike/ps8.jpg [26/02/2007].

3.1.4. Other Funerary Buildings and Tombs

The *Cella Septichora* (Figure 15) is a unique building. No building with the same ground plan has been unearthed in the Roman Empire. Ferenc Fülep⁶⁷ suggests that it was a funerary basilica where the Eucharist was celebrated. On the other hand, one of the leading archaeologists of the new 2005/2006 excavations thinks that it was not a basilica in an architectural sense, because no altar has been found.⁶⁸ The closest parallel for the Sopianae building is the St. Gereon in Cologne.⁶⁹

Many different types of graves were found in the Early Christian cemetery. Most of them had some kind of roof, and many of them were walled. All graves were subterranean, and the simplest ones were earthen. For built graves, the main building material was brick and they were usually plastered. The types of graves found in Sopianae were not unique in Pannonia. For example, a grave vault similar to a type, found in Sopianae, was found in nearby Certissa (Štrbinici, Croatia). The structure of the graves in Manastirnice, next to Salona (Solin, Croatia) is similar to the Sopianae graves.⁷⁰ A rare feature is the children's cemetery west of Burial Chamber XIII. The cemetery contained sixty-five children's skeletons altogether, including newborn babies, infants and teenagers. This cemetery is similar to the children's cemetery in Ziegelfeld (Austria) (Graves 72-77) from the fifth century AD.⁷¹ The finest example among

⁶⁷ *Ibidem*.

⁶⁸ Cs. Pozsárkó pers. comm.

⁶⁹ F. Gerkon, cited in Fülep, *Sopianae*, p. 58.

⁷⁰ Migotti, *Evidence for Christianity*, p. 37-38.

⁷¹ Fülep, *Sopianae*, p. 176.

the Sopianaean graves is a double tomb constructed of stone and brick. The inner walls of the tomb were plastered and decorated with *Chi-Rho* monograms and red and yellow flowers. This kind of decoration may often be seen in the painted funerary chambers of the Balkans and the catacombs of Rome.

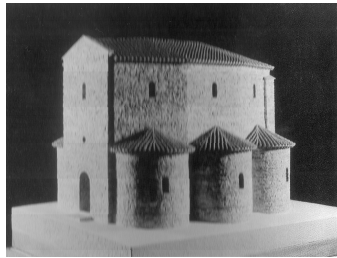


Fig. 15. The reconstruction of the *Cella Trichora* in Sopiana.
After Bertók et alii, *A pécsi világörökség*,
colour plate between p. 26 and 27.

4. Archaeological Evidence (Finds)

One of the most systematically excavated areas of the Early Christian Cemetery is the cluster around Burial Chamber XIII, excavated between 1968 and 1972 by Ferenc Fülep. From the 110 graves excavated here, 110 glass vessels came to light, including jars, vases, beakers and perfume bottles. Other finds were rings, earrings, bracelets and fourth-century coins, showing striking similarity with the Roman catacombs.⁷² However, a more detailed investigation reveals other influences among the finds (mostly grave goods), as well.

4.1. Glass Objects

The best-known inscription from fourth century Sopianaean has been found on a *pie zeses* type of glass beaker dated to the end of the fourth century AD or first half of the fifth century, which is now in the Hungarian National Museum.⁷³ Although the inscription is in Greek, this text spread throughout the whole Empire.⁷⁴ In fact, this vessel arrived in Sopianaean from Cologne.⁷⁵ Another *instrumenta* inscription can be found on a glass cameo (Figure 16)

⁷² Hudák, Nagy, *A Fine and Private Place*, p. 15-16; Fülep, *Sopianaean*.

⁷³ P. Kovács (ed.), *Corpus Inscriptionum Graecarum Pannonicarum*, Debrecen, University of Debrecen, 2001 (henceforward: Kovács, *Corpus*), p. 35.

⁷⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 64-65.

⁷⁵ Fülep, *Sopianaean*.

dated to the third or fourth century AD⁷⁶, with a Greek inscription around a female head portrait. The portrait depicts an eastern type hairstyle. This cameo is likely to be from the Greek east, and perhaps offers some evidence for the oriental connections of third to fourth century Sopianaes.



Fig. 16. Glass cameo from the Early Christian cemetery of Sopianaes with a Greek inscription around a female head. Janus Pannonius Museum, Pécs, Inv. Nr. 612. Photograph by the author, with the kind permission of the Janus Pannonius Museum.

A special find from the children's cemetery is another glass cameo (Figure 17), depicting the Good Shepherd, from the grave G/17. The origin of this kind of representation is a frequently occurring motif in Early Christian art of Pagan origin on Rome, the ram bearer (*kriophoros*). It is interesting that the toga of the Good Shepherd on the Sopianaes cameo is curled up on both sides, which was never depicted in western provinces, but was popular on the eastern type representations. Among glass finds, it is worth mentioning a glass bowl from Cologne, oriental beakers and conical beakers from the Red Sea, and a glass amphora, which is thought to be Syrian import.⁷⁷ Overall, regarding the glass finds from the fourth century, Fülep⁷⁸ states that the amount of glass imported from the western (mostly Gaul and Rhineland) and the eastern provinces was the same.

⁷⁶ Kovács, *Corpus*, p. 35.

⁷⁷ Fülep, *Sopianaes*, p. 197-198.

⁷⁸ *Ibidem*.



Fig. 17. Glass cameo from Grave G/17.
After Gáspár, *Christianity in Roman Pannonia: An evaluation of Early Christian Finds and sites from Hungary*, in *British Archaeological Reports International Series*, 1010, 2003, Fig. 246.

4.2. Metal Objects

As for metal objects, bronze vessels were found which were made in the Rhineland, a bronze lamp made in Italy, and brooches from Illyricum.⁷⁹ Bronze bracelets were found, which are similar to bracelets found in Rhaetia, and a belt set from grave R/212 which can be linked with a military belt found at Augst (Switzerland).⁸⁰ Bronze headdresses were found in children's graves. The fashion of bronze headdresses spread from the Rhineland⁸¹ to the east. A typical Christian find is a suspension from a lamp, found in the Burial Chamber V in 2000. It contains the Greek letters alpha and omega in a *Chi-Rho* symbol (this is the official symbol of the Early Christian Cemetery of Sopiana).

In addition, from the fourth century, a wooden casket with bronze plates has been found. The plates depict mythological scenes and the personification of four cities (Siscia, Constantinople, Rome and Sirmium). It could be a product of Sirmium or Siscia, but it is also possible that it was produced in Trier.⁸² However, the site of the finding is questionable.

5. Conclusions

Having briefly reviewed the evidence above, we should have a picture about the mixed influences on Roman Sopiana. It is easy to recognise the strong influence of Rome, Italy and other western provinces. However, in the level of finds the oriental influence is considerable. We should not forget that oriental goods were probably more valuable, because they were harder to get,

⁷⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 202.

⁸⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 204.

⁸¹ *Ibidem*.

⁸² *Ibidem*, p. 216-218.

hence this could be the reason why we are likely to find them among grave goods.

There remains the question of how these influences spread? There are several possible explanations: for example, as it was already mentioned, travelling artists could play an important role in spreading a fashion or an artistic style. Furthermore, culture, especially the high culture of Rome, was an important issue in the century concerned. Aristocrats around the governor would care about keeping up with the new cultural movements in Rome (see for example the reform of pope Damasus, which can be followed in the catacomb art).⁸³ Funerary art was especially important, because that was the only memory of a person's life after his/her death. High-ranking people were especially sensitive to that.

We should not forget, however, that influences did not travel, but people did, and in the fourth century AD the movement of people was considerable. Socially, in the first and second centuries AD, the most characteristic immigrant group coming into the area was the Italian⁸⁴, but it was gradually replaced by other people from the western provinces. However, oriental immigration began as early as the second century AD and became stronger throughout the period.⁸⁵ By the fourth century, the oriental influence was considerable in the area. People from all over the Empire ended up in Sopianae, and no doubt they brought their funerary art. However, what has biased the results of the archaeological record is the status of those who were buried. Most of the remains are from high-status burials (funerary buildings), hence our data came from a high-status context, and this does not mean that the lower classes were subject to the same kind of influences. There are grave goods from lower status graves, but the grave goods from all over the Empire only mean that Sopianae had good commercial connections with the rest of the Empire. This is usually true for every Roman town at that time.

There is also a problem with regard to the division of the influences into eastern and western. The definition of eastern culture, hence the definition of eastern influence in the fourth century, is not exactly determined as, until AD 395, there was only one, united empire. Even the linguistic differences were not very considerable, because at least within the upper classes, many Latin writers chose to write in Greek, and vice versa. The language of the administration in the East was Latin until the sixth century AD.⁸⁶ Furthermore, even if we can demonstrate an influence of eastern origin, it could have arrived

⁸³ For more information on that see: Rutgers, *Subterranean Rome*.

⁸⁴ F. Fülep, A. Sz. Burger, *Pécs római kori kőemlékei (Die Römerzeitlichen Steindenkmäler von Pécs)*, Pécs, Pécs Megyei Város Tanácsa, 1974.

⁸⁵ A.R. Morton, *The Historical Development of the Roman Religion from 9 AD to 285*, PhD thesis, Lampeter, Department of Philosophy, University of Wales, 1996, p. 58.

⁸⁶ Mango, *The Oxford History of Byzantium*, p. 5.

from the west to Sopianae, hence it proves western influence, not eastern, from the town's point of view. We have enough evidence for the strong western influence in Sopianae in the fourth century in terms of the influence of the Roman catacombs, Aquileian Christianity, and trade from Gaul and the Danube provinces to support this argument on the level of archaeology. The discussion of the archaeological remains reveals strong influence from the Roman catacombs, but also North Italian samples were applied. Rich finds from Gaul and the Danube provinces confirm connections with these areas.

Furthermore, it seems that the Balkans was a relatively united region, at least on a cultural level, and Sopianae was the northernmost city of this region. After Italy and Rome lost their leading position within the Empire in the fourth century, the provinces became more important, and the importance of the area around the Balkans, with Sirmium in the centre, was considerably emphasised. In the person of Constans (AD 337-350), this central part of the empire had an independent ruler, who reigned in the Balkans, Italy and Africa.⁸⁷ The effect of the Greek-speaking eastern and Balkan culture was strong in fourth-century Sopianae, as it can be traced through art historical evidence.⁸⁸ On the other hand, the influence of Constantinople that gradually oppressed everything in the area was only partial in the fourth century.⁸⁹

This study has brought to the light some details regarding the division of Pannonia into northern and southern. It is easy to establish a strong link between Sopianae and the so-called southern Pannonia. In my opinion, the term 'southern Pannonia' could apply not only to the region south from the Drave, but spread over the river, at least to the sub-Mediterranean city of Sopianae, as we can see many similarities with traditionally southern Pannonian towns. The division according to modern countries (southern Pannonia = northern Croatia and Serbia; northern Pannonia = Hungary and western Austria) is not correct in the terms of the fourth century picture. Even the fourth-century administrative border, which was the river Drave, did not constitute a cultural or social division, as the river (which was partly navigable in antiquity and has an important crossing point at Mursa, close to Sopianae) was rather a link than a divider between the areas to its north and south.

Of course, I have not used all the available evidence, but typical examples from every group of archaeological evidence has been drawn on in this study. Consequently, it can be claimed that the results from that database

⁸⁷ P. Sarris, *The Eastern Roman Empire from Constantine to Heraclius (306-641)*, in Mango, *The Oxford History of Byzantium*, p. 19-59.

⁸⁸ Nagyné Hudák, *Bibliai témák*, p. 65-66.

⁸⁹ O. Gábor, *A Ciszterci Rend Pécsi Nagy Lajos Gimnáziuma udvarán talált temetőrészlet*, in E. Antal, K. Dr. Csekőné Kádas and Gy. Kalász (eds.), *A Ciszterci Rend Pécsi Nagy Lajos Gimnáziumának Jubileumi Évkönyve*, Pécs, A Ciszterci Rend Pécsi Nagy Lajos Gimnáziuma, 2003, p. 59-72.

are representative of the full scope of evidence from the site. What is now necessary, however, is a complete study about funerary practices of the Balkans. The results of that future research can establish the presence of a culturally flourishing region between east and west in the Balkans and the surrounding region. As this region lay partly in the Western and partly in the Eastern Empire, the results should be striking and could reveal a mixed culture. Further research could also help us to build a more realistic picture of the Late Roman Empire, when East and West were not sharply divided, and smaller regions were sometimes more important than the great division of the Empire and its people into eastern and western.

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SOPIANAE. UN STUDIU DESPRE INFLUENȚELE CULTURALE ÎN SUDUL
PANONIEI ÎN SECOLUL AL IV-LEA
Rezumat

Acest studiu analizează fenomenele de influență culturală din orașul roman Sopianae (azi Pécs, Ungaria) prin investigarea monumentelor de arhitectură și funerare păstrate și a altor elemente de cultură materială descoperite în cursul cercetărilor arheologice. Autorul pune în evidență fluctuarea influențelor apuseană și răsăriteană prin intermediul analizei obiectelor de artă funerară și a aportului de populație venite din apusul sau răsăritul Imperiului Roman.