

RECENSIONES

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Magdolna Szilágyi: On the Road: The History and Archaeology of Medieval Communication Networks in East-Central Europe. Archaeolingua Series Minor 35. Archaeolingua, Budapest 2014. 254 p., 89 ill. ISBN 978-963-9911-57-4

The detection of communication networks from different periods still contributes to the current line of research in archaeology and historical geography. Mapping of past road networks is of particularly great importance. Although numerous ideas, assumptions, and scientific studies have come to light by now, there are still a great number of unanswered questions concerning prehistoric, Roman, and medieval road systems. Despite the fact that the road studying has been a popular and fashionable topic for a century now, there are relatively few comprehensive works involving field research. Similarly, only a few studies have been dedicated so far to differences between various road types, their modes of use, and legal status.

The author of the volume reviewed here made an experiment to combine pieces of information yielded by traditional source analysis with topographical survey of geographical names known from medieval charters and early modern maps. She compares these data with survey of field features, completed by her own topographical investigations at some places. The published study is an extended form of the author's PhD dissertation (*Árpád Period Communication Networks: Road System in Western Transdanubia*) providing an overview on the region. Its core comprises the analysis of rich source material from the Hungarian region of Western Transdanubia.

One century ago, in the second decade of the 20th century, József Holub pointed out that the reconstruction of the road system of Hungarian Kingdom would be possible only after the complete identification of its toll collection places. Somewhat later, Lajos Glaser made an attempt to reconstruct Roman road system based on road names being preserved in medieval charters. These two approaches are worth highlighting here because they well illustrate the characteristics of road investigations that have several pitfalls. This not only stands for the investigation of medieval road system, but also for outlining the Roman road system of Pannonia. Lacking a more perfect starting point, researchers tried to connect known and outstanding archaeological sites by the aid of documentary evidence and to identify

place names to those which are known from certain ancient texts. Only little attempt has been made to mapping roads by means of systematic field surveys, although its significance had already been emphasised by Flóris Rómer in 1866. On the other hand, sources used for the reconstruction of various routes, including amongst others Roman routes, were often written more than one thousand years after their construction. Owing to a lack of any continuity of memory their applicability is highly questionable. Among others, this is why the researches of Endre Tóth was highly valuable. He demonstrated that from road names mentioned by Glaser the term *öttevény*, in fact, indicates roads of Roman origins.

In her present work Magdolna Szilágyi thoroughly discusses the characteristics, construction techniques, and survival of Roman roads. Following the first chapter (pp. 11–52) dealing with research history and sources (where in addition to the analysis of written documents and cartographic representations and names found on them, an emphasis is laid on archaeological evidence and data obtained from the archaeological application of remote sensing methods) this is the subject of the second chapter (pp. 53–84). The primary aim of the author is not to represent the evidence that are available on the Roman road system, but to represent those characteristics that are relevant for demonstrating the survival of Roman roads. It must be mentioned here that the author used even most recent reconstructions, too. She draws parallels between Roman roads and medieval evidence. She compares, for example, the route and construction technique (embankment) of the so-called Amber Route with the road mentioned by medieval charters (p. 63). Furthermore, she deals with the denominations of salt roads (*sóút*, *sóhordóút*) (p. 78), a question, she returns to in a later chapter (pp. 123–130). She observes an important form of the survival of Roman roads correctly: namely their function as property boundaries. Although there are several examples for Roman roads used in the Middle Ages (such as the one excavated by Orsolya Láng at Bécsi Road 134), the topographical investigations of E. Tóth have demonstrated that ancient Roman roads were not necessarily in use in medieval times (though still visible) when their route did not fit into the settlement structure.

The third chapter (pp. 85–196) forms the backbone, the main part, of the book. This informs us about medieval road terminology and the features of roads. The author consistently goes through the

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hierarchy (long-distance and local roads), as well as legal aspects and ownership of roads (the question of public and private roads, and roads under royal control) before giving a more detailed description of road types resulting from different functions of roads (pp. 107–160). She distinguishes pilgrimage routes (3.3.1), military roads (3.3.2), and roads of commercial (3.3.3), ecclesiastical (3.3.4), agricultural (3.3.5) and industrial (3.3.6.) usage. This part represents – if I may say so – the most valuable part of the work. These sub-chapters give a detailed account of specific terms used in medieval charters, and in several instances even the photographs of their road sections identified in the field, or their cartographic representations. In this logical system the author methodically gathers various synonymous terms, names of roads that undoubtedly belong to the same category, as in cases of the above-mentioned *só-út* (salt road), *sóhordó-út* (road for salt transportation), *sóút*, *sósút*, or *borút* (wine road), *borhordóút* (road for wine transportation), or *malomút*, *malomuta*, *malomlóút* (mill road). The examples of *barátút* (monks' road) mentioned in connection with hollow ways (MRT 4/19–20; MRT 4/54–55; MRT 4/ 100–101) should have also been referred to in sub-chapters dealing with ecclesiastical roads, although the Archaeological Topography of Hungary (MRT) does not specifically discuss them in archaeological periods.

Pilgrimage routes description (3.3.1) mentioned at first place stands somewhat out from the classification based on functions. It fits more into chapters discussing either written sources or the hierarchy of roads. This group belongs somewhere else based on the author's logic and methods throughout the sub-chapters. M. Szilágyi deploys several synonyms for names of each road sub-type known either by charters or maps, thus creating a very good basis for the topographic reconstruction of Hungarian road system. In contrast, the presentation of international pilgrimage routes – known mainly from the names of road stations – belongs more to the discussion of the role of medieval road network in international context. Similarly, on logical basis chapters 3.4 and 3.6 focusing on means of communication and physical properties of roads respectively, would have been included earlier by the reviewer. However, all these do not diminish the value of the author's exemplary collection.

The subsequent sub-chapters of chapter 3 discuss linguistic records of vegetation found by roads (3.7), as well as the rich collection of documentary evidence about river-crossing places (bridges, fords, and ports). These latter are of particularly great importance as locating river-crossings has a significant role in modern research methods of road studies (supported also by Geographical Information Systems).

Using them for modelling topographic environment and the variations of possible road remains, these points provide absolute – and more accurate parameterization – possibilities for the results for Least Cost Path (LCP) analyses that are more and more widespread today.

Sub-chapter 3.8 lists road names known from written documents gathered from relative chronological aspect. These are, for example, *via antiqua*, *via vetus*, or *via nova* mentioned by sources. In case of *via antiqua* occurrences L. Glaser warns us that these denominations appear also at places that were never subjugated by the Romans. Thus this chapter perhaps highlights best how “short” historical memory was in some cases. In connection with Roman roads in Britain Hugh Davies gave an example of a road considered to be of Roman origins by 19th century collective memory, which – according to archaeological excavations – proved to be a forgotten metalled road made only 150 years before. Similarly, Zsolt Mráv's and Ádám Szabó's field surveys demonstrated that the so-called “Roman road” running on the Érd Plateau was in fact constructed in the early 20th century. Therefore, it is important to handle old documentary evidence with some criticism, and subject them to archaeological control wherever it is possible.

The 256-page volume contains 89 figures. One-third of the figures are maps of different scale, comprising 18th and 19th century military and cadastral surveys, maps compiled by other authors (indicated and referenced by the author in an exemplary manner), as well as maps designed by the author herself. The Roman and medieval roads, and sometimes their continuous use over centuries are illustrated by numerous (in some cases unpublished) excavation photographs and drawings. Putting illustrations in the text facilitates the orientation of the reader to a great extent. The figures are closely interconnected with the content of the text.

In conclusion, Magdolna Szilágyi published an extremely forward-looking comprehensive study, which will count as a fundamental piece of scholarly literature on Hungarian road investigations. The author summarises the one-century state of traditional research into medieval road sequences in an attractive, extensively illustrated volume supplied with an extremely thorough terminological toolbox and topographical survey.

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Editio externa

Tim Wittenberg: Kult bei der Arena. Nemesis-Heiligtümer im Kontext römischer Amphitheater. BAR International Series 2615. Oxford 2014. 122. p. ISBN 978 1 4073 1246 0

After a long, more than two decades of laconic publications on the cult of Nemesis, the book of Tim Wittenberg is the first important contribution in this topic. After Hornum's landmarking work from 1993¹ which marked the research, emphasizing the relationship between Nemesis and the games, the recent studies now are focus-

ing more on the religious, iconographic and mythological aspects of the divinity. The book of T. Wittenberg is the result of his M.A. studies from the prestigious HGGG (*Heidelberger Graduiertenschule für Geistes- und Sozialwissenschaften*) and the first major synthesis on the cult of Nemesis since Hornum's book. This is a prestigious fact indeed, however can be also a disadvantage, although the main aim of the book is not to fulfill the gap between Hornum and the present historiography, but to present the already known sources through a contextual analysis – as the author affirms in the introduction of the book.

¹ HORNUM 1993.

In the first chapter (*Amphitheater und munera: Sinnbilder römischer Kultur*, pp. 4–10.) the author presents the historiography on the perception of amphitheatres and their socio-political meaning from the Republican times till the Principate. After presenting very shortly the architectural and politico-social evolution of this type of building, as a *par excellence* urban and monumental sign of Roman presence, he discusses the religious meaning of the amphitheatre – in two short pages. However, the author never states clearly, if his book is following the methodology of religious studies (*Religionswissenschaft*) or more an archaeological current, the title and the topic suggest, that an interdisciplinary approach would be useful. Analyzing a cult in a contextual situation would need a longer and much more detailed introduction on the religious aspect of the amphitheatre. Recent studies, focusing on sacred land – and soundscape, the relation between spatiality, time, movement, ritual and emotions as religious agents influenced also our knowledge about public spaces and buildings.² Amphitheatre, as space for magical practices is also an important aspect, mentioned only shortly in some part of the book.

The next chapter deals with the definition and iconography of Nemesis (*Nemesis – Definition und Ikonographie*, pp. 11–21.). The author presents again very shortly but in a concise way the chronological and historical evolution of Nemesis from the Greek philosophical notion up to the complex, polyvalent Roman manifestation of the cult. In some pages, he discusses the iconographic evolution of Nemesis in Rhamnos, Smyrna and Egypt, too. Although this chapter is very useful as a short introduction on iconography and corrects some of Hornum's statements, the author should update his bibliography and references – few of the cited works being published in the last decade.³ He presents in a particular subchapter the iconography of Nemesis in the context of the amphitheatre too with a special focus on the context and even spatial aspects of the statues.

The major part of Wittenberg's work is the chapter which deals with the detailed presentation of the Nemesis sanctuaries of the amphitheatre. The 220, as the number of the attested amphitheatres of the Roman Empire, appears many times in his book and also in the international literature, however a comprehensive list of them still missing. As the case study of the conurbation of Apulum shows, there must be further urban centres with possible amphitheatres and also with Nemesis sanctuaries.⁴ In this case, however, the situation is more clear: Wittenberg presents only those obvious cases, where there a Nemesis sanctuary was archaeologically attested near an amphitheatre. Identifying a Nemesis *sacellum* is not an easy task, as his study proved. The author enrolls a rigorous criteria system, on which he identified a sanctuary, based mostly on the *in situ* inscriptions and votive statues. He clarifies also the architectural and functional differences between sanctuaries constructed in the vicinity or inside of the amphitheatre. To give a detailed analysis of the main types of Nemesis *sacellae*, Wittenberg presents some notable case studies for each group. For the *sacella* erected inside of the amphitheatre, he presents the case study of Virunum, for the shrine built in the corridor (*carceres*) he chooses as a relevant analogy the case of Italica and for the Nemesis sanctuary

outside of an amphitheatre, he presents the case study of Carnuntum. The author presents shortly the historical and topographic milieu of the settlement, after which he presents the architectural specificities and the votive finds of the buildings. As he already marked in the introduction, his main aim was to present and interpret the votive finds (mostly the inscriptions and statuary monuments) in a wider, architectural/archaeological context. For this reason, his case studies are focusing on the detailed presentation of this contextual analysis, however in rare cases presents the cult of Nemesis in a wider, urban or micro-regional context too. The author enrolls also few examples (Aquincum, Iol Caesarea, Gortyna, Isca Silurum, Salona, Segusium, Venafrum) where the *sacella* was not attested.

A particular case study on the *planta pedis* representations in the amphitheatres of Italica and Tarraco (pp. 35–37.) shows the important, cultic role of these buildings in local context, and also in a more complex functional, ritualized association. Wittenberg interprets the *planta pedis* slabs and the association of Nemesis–Caelestis as an African syncretistic tradition, originated from Egypt, later becoming popular in Isiac cults, too.⁵ This example however shows the complexity of the religious milieu in an amphitheatre and its multifunctional aspect, played in the personal and communal religiosity of the worshiper(s). The amphitheatre, as a cultic place was not only a monumentalized element of Romanness, but played an important role in shaping the city, as a place of memory,⁶ the city, as sacred landscape, soundscape⁷ and was an important agent in institutionalized sacralization and ritualization. Beyond this, however the presence of magical practices and personalized inscriptions, as the *planta pedis* slabs shows the important role of the *Nemeseion* in the embodied manifestation of religion.

The second part of the book consist of the ten page long bibliography, which shows his familiarity in the topic and the catalogue of the Nemesis sanctuaries attested in the context of amphitheatres (pp. 75–96.). The 22 buildings here are just shortly listed, mentioning the place, dimension of the amphitheatre, type of the *sacellum*, its dimensions, chronology and the finds with bibliography. The last part of his book presents 53 illustrations – mostly plans and panoramic views – of the presented places in the catalogue.

Tim Wittenberg's work is definitely an important contribution. Not only because reopened a quite neglected aspect of Roman archaeology and religious studies, but for the first time in the study of the cult of Nemesis, he analyzes the finds and the amphitheatres in their wider, architectural and archaeological context, clarifying numerous specific aspects on the evolution of this building type and their local variations. The cult of Nemesis in this work appears first time, as a polyvalent religious manifestation, far beyond as protector of Roman Empire, Romanization, *pompa* and *ludi*. Further studies will need to analyze the role of the divinity, and the amphitheatre as religious space in a more wider, interdisciplinary context of “lived” ancient religion.

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² ZALESKI 2013, 590–602, DODGE 2013, 281–298.

³ The recent research project (Forschungsprojekt) of Daniela Bonnano from the University of Münster is also focusing on the conceptual analysis of the notion of Nemesis.

⁴ SZABÓ 2014, 533–544.

⁵ A more detailed and radical reinterpretation of the footprints see: GASPARI 2015.

⁶ MA 2009, 248–256.

⁷ CLÉMENT 2008, 431–457.

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