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**SISCIA IN LATE ANTIQUITY AND THE EARLY MIDDLE AGES:
FATE OF A POST-ROMAN TOWN IN SOUTHERN PANNONIA**

ABSTRACT

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On the example of Siscia this article reconstructs the fate of a Roman town in southern Pannonia following the waning and disappearance of Roman government, in a drastically changed political, economic, and population situation that characterized this area at the time of the transition from Antiquity into the Middle Ages. Historical circumstances and basic patterns of urban degradation of Roman Siscia and its transformation into the Early Medieval Sisak are determined with special consideration of archaeological topography and settlement continuity. The question of possible settlement shift of the Early Medieval settlement in regard to the Roman town is also considered.

Key words: Late Antiquity; Migration Period; Early Middle Ages; Carpathian Basin; Siscia; Avars; Germans; Huns, Slavs; urban degradation; settlement continuity

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STATE OF THE RESEARCH

In general, the study of Late Antiquity settlements has lately experienced a boost¹. There are numerous new studies, both monographs and papers, spawned in the last twenty years or so and concerning the developments that Roman-age towns went through in Late Antiquity and aspects of their transformation into Early Medieval settlements. An excellent survey of what happened to Roman towns in Late Antiquity is offered by J. H. W. G. Liebeschuetz (2001), with a pessimistic perspective that is certainly applicable to the situation in the region between the Danube and the Adriatic. Most recently, H. W. Dey (2015) adopted a less gloomy view, at least for the areas of the former Roman Empire, where new rulers of successor kingdoms had been more interested in the preservation of the Greco-Roman urban tradition. There is a number of monographic studies concerning specific regions or single cities, for instance: H. G. Saradi's of the 6th-century Byzantium (2006), A. Leone's of North Africa (2007), or

¹ The present paper is a supplemented and slightly expanded version of Gračanin, Bilogrivić 2014.

M. Kulikowski's of Late Roman Spain (2010), and P. Arthur's of Naples (2002), D. M. Deliyannis's of Ravenna (2010), or D. Boin's of Ostia (2013), as well as compilations of individual studies, such as those edited by N. Christie and S. Loseby (1996), C. Lepelley (1996), G. P. Brogiolo and B. Ward-Perkins (1999), W. V. Harris (1999), G. P. Brogiolo, N. Gauthier and N. Christie (2000), Th. S. Burns and J. W. Eadie (2001), J. Rich (2001), J.-U. Krause and Ch. Witschel (2006), J. Henning (2007), and A. G. Poulter (2007). Papers by J. W. Eadie (1982), B. Bavant (1984), N. Christie (1996), A. G. Poulter (2001), S. Ciglenečki (2003), and O. Heinrich-Tamáska (2015) are especially instructive for the purpose of this study.

Basic difficulties concerning the reconstruction of Late Antique urban history in the region between the Sava, Drava and Danube that the researcher faces may be succinctly expressed as paucity of written sources and lack of archaeological research or insufficiently processed archaeological material (Gračanin, Rapan Papeša 2011, 7–8). With the exception of Sremska Mitrovica, Roman Sirmium, no major systematic archaeological research has been conducted². In the case of Siscia these limitations are even more striking, having in mind its importance in the late Roman Empire. Still, owing to the fact that Siscia was a prominent provincial centre, information from written sources testifying a relatively stable life of the town even in the 6th century are relatively more numerous, which is a rare case for southern Pannonia. Written sources also form a basis for the hypothesis about the town's functioning during the Early Middle Ages, in the 9th century. This mosaic of data is complemented by archaeological finds, although the fact that these are mostly accidental finds renders a considerable problem. They have often been dredged from the river Kupa, frequently even without concrete data on the circumstances of their discovery, thus preventing precise determination of the sites (Fig. 1).

Croatian scholars have written much about Roman Siscia and the Early Medieval Sisak, but focusing mainly on either the former or the latter period and not trying to understand more deeply the complex processes of the transformation of the Late Antique town, or at least to give a basic outline of this process. This makes the present level of knowledge insufficient for a more thorough insight. Some of the rare contributions aiming to comprehensively present the vicissitudes of Siscia in the transitional period from Antiquity into the Middle Ages are the works of Z. Burkowsky (1999) and M. Buzov (2004). However, they have mostly been reduced to taxative listing of the archaeological material. Archaeological viewpoint prevails also in the works of A. Horvat (1954), Z. Vinski (1970) and T. Lolić (2003). Historical interpretation, on the other hand, is predominant in the contributions by M. Hoti (1992) and N. Budak (1994a; 1994b)³. Since the cited works primarily focused on the classical Roman period of Siscia (Hoti 1992; Lolić 2003) or the Early Medieval, the so-called

² For Sirmium see Jeremić 2006; Heinrich-Tamáska 2015.

³ The second paper of N. Budak is a somewhat modified version of his first contribution, with all the theses and conclusions remaining unchanged.

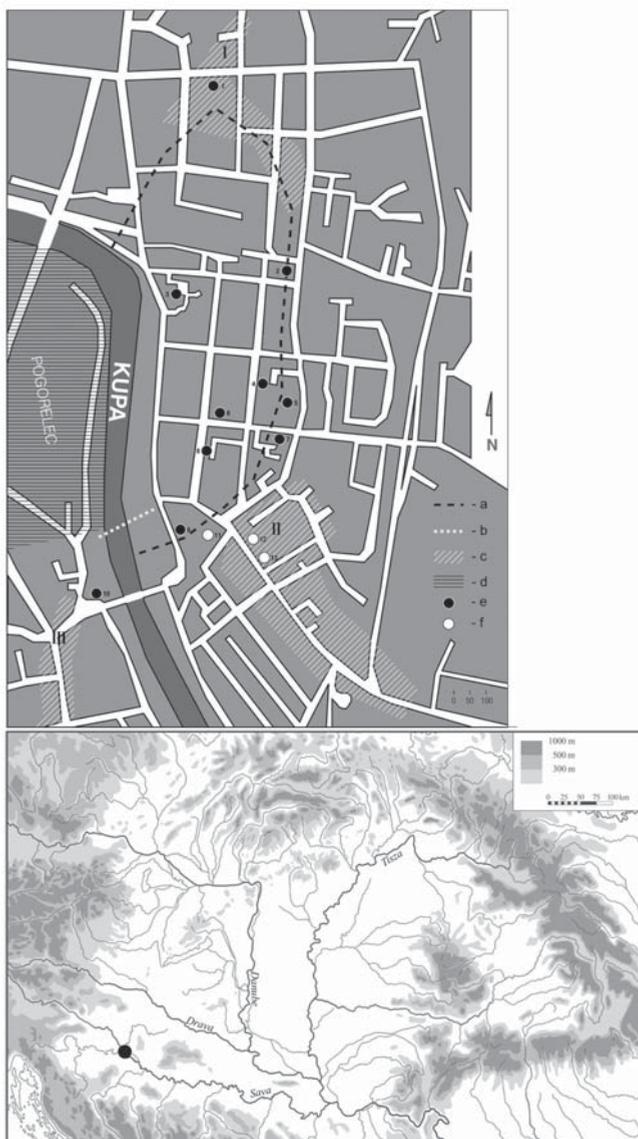


Fig. 1. Post-Roman Siscia and the location of Siscia; drawn by B. Labaš and G. Bilogrivić*, computer design P. Jarosz.

a — position of the Roman age town wall; b — position of the Roman bridge; c — Roman necropolis; d — presumed position of Pre-Roman Segestica; e — sites with finds from the second half of the 4th and the first half of the 5th century; f — sites with finds from the period between the 6th and 10th century; I–III — Roman numerals mark the approximate positions of Late Antique necropolises. 1 — St. Quirinus; 2 — State archives; 3 — Rimska Street 25; 4 — Ante Starčević Street 40; 5 — Playground of the “June 22nd” elementary school; 6 — Ivan Kukuljević Sakcinski Street; 7 — Euroherc; 8 — Site MT-10, Stjepan and Antun Radić Street; 9 — Ban J. Jelačić Square; 10 — Grain storehouse, retention pool; 11 — Holy Cross; 12 — Hrvatski branitelji Square; 13 — King Tomislav Street.

* The excellent map in Migotti 2015: Fig. 13, drawn by Z. Wiewegh and readjusted by B. Migotti, has also been consulted.

Old-Croat Sisak (Horvat 1954; Vinski 1970; Budak 1994a), it is precisely the crucial period of the 5th–7th centuries which has eluded greater scholarly attention. This period is usually characterized as either the final suffix in studies chronologically reaching to Late Antiquity, or a cursory prelude in studies of the Early Medieval times. Justification for such a state to a certain extent can be found in the truly fragmentary information contained in the written sources and sporadic traces of archaeological material.

However, in spite of the objective obstacles, it is possible to determine key elements of the gradual extinction of Siscia's urban structures and roughly delineate the course of transformation of the Late Antique town into the Early Medieval settlement through a careful analysis of all extant sources, both historical as well as archaeological ones. With regard to the approach, considering the already highlighted limitations, it is best to try to interpret the written evidence against the background of the material evidence when the latter are more telling, even though the scarcity and interpretative uncertainty of both types of sources for southern Pannonia impose many constraints that have to be taken into account. Thus, the historical processes are necessarily viewed as contingent. Be that as it may, the starting point is the undeniable fact that Siscia, just like other late Roman urban entities in the Pannonian area, was subject to thorough reshaping of urban paradigms and a far-reaching loss of urban characteristics. Nonetheless, although it had for long ceased to exist as a town, it kept the topical settlement continuity.

FOURTH CENTURY

In the 4th century Siscia was undoubtedly one of the most developed Pannonian towns, as well as one of the most prominent towns of the Roman Empire. This is testified by the figural relief on a bronze-plated wooden chest showing the personifications of five towns and cities along with their names: Rome in the centre, Carthage and Constantinople to the left, and Nicomedia and Siscia to the right (Hoti 1992, 51; Lolić 2003, 135). Although it is presumed that the chest was made in 351, during Magnentius' usurpation, and could thus be marking his effort to ingratiate himself with the provincial elite in southwestern Pannonia before the forthcoming decisive conflict with the legitimate emperor Constantius II (337–361), the conveyed image was not an unbacked manoeuvre⁴.

Since the time of the Tetrarchy Siscia experienced a new boom by becoming the administrative centre of the province of Pannonia Savia, with the provincial treasury and imperial mint, which had been in function since the time of emperor Gallienus (260–268; cf. Hoti 1992, 147–149; Lolić 2003, 134)⁵. It is

⁴ In the counteroffensive undertaken against Constantius II, Magnentius charged, won and pillaged Siscia in August 351, which would mean that this attempt of rapprochement did not succeed; for details see Gračanin 2003, 12–13 (a typing error occurred in that text, stating August 350 as the date of Magnentius' conquest of Siscia, where it should be August 351).

⁵ On the mint of Siscia see Buzov 2009.

conventionally thought that during the Tetrarchy Siscia, just like other important Pannonian urban centres, had greatly changed its urban physiognomy with numerous new buildings, which is understandable concerning the newly arisen needs (Póczy 1980, 245, 268; Hoti 1992, 149; Lolić 2003, 143). Accordingly, the town walls would have been renovated and expanded, new public buildings erected and even a residential quarter built. During the reign of Constantine I (306-337), after Christianity had become a licit religion, a basilica dedicated to saint and martyr Quirinus would have been built (Hoti 1992, 149; Póczy 1980, 268)⁶. The urban tissue of Siscia was defined in the late 2nd and the early 3rd centuries when town walls encompassing the area of around 47 hectares of presumably elliptical shape were built, and the shape did not change afterwards (Nenadić 1988, 75–76; Lolić 2003, 138–140; Lolić, Wiewegh 2012, 199–200; Burkowsky 1999, 36)⁷.

Archaeological excavations have identified only a little of the presumed building boom during the times of the Tetrarchy and afterwards, especially under Constantine I. A building in the southern part of Siscia (Stjepan and Antun Radić Street, formerly the Street of marshal Tito) with several rooms and traces of paved floors, floor mosaics and painted wall plaster (certainly a patrician urban villa built in the place of an earlier building) is dated to the first half of the 4th century by a coin of Constantine I (Faber 1974, 135-138; Nenadić 1988, 78; Koščević, Makjanić 1995, 6; Lolić 2006, 233). In the same street (site MT-10) remains of architectural structures dated to the period between the late 4th and the early 5th centuries have also been found. Along them there were coins ranging from the time of Valens to the time of Theodosius I, as well as contemporary to them Late Antiquity lamps and other pottery remains. These are assumed to be remains of an important public building (Burkowsky 2000, 8). Finds from the site at Rimaska Street No. 25 suggest a possible construction of an extension and modification of the thermal complex from the late 2nd and the early 3rd centuries (Škrkulja 2008, 286–288). A spacious five-aisled building of approximately 800 m² in the southwestern edge of Siscia (present-day ban Josip Jelačić Square) seems to have originally been a grain storage facility (*horreum*). Later on it was converted into an internal courtyard with roofed porches and an atrium, while plastered brick benches were added along the southwestern and north-eastern walls (Lolić 2003, 142–143; 2006, 233)⁸. The original edifice is dated to the beginning of the 4th century, while the modifications are considered to be from the second half and the late 4th century (Migotti 2003, 109). According to a recent carefully presented opinion, the conversion of the building in the later decades of the 4th century would have also encompassed its sacralisation by a Christian component,

⁶ See also Migotti 2011, 54–56, for an assumption of a hagio-toponymical continuity of the area around the church of St Quirinus.

⁷ Up to now remains of smaller sections of the walls have been identified in the north, north-west, south and southeast edges of Siscia. The walls were accompanied by a moat. A. G. Poulter (2001, 106) thinks that the extent of Siscia was expanded in the 4th century, but gives no arguments in support of the claim.

⁸ See also Migotti 2003, 107, where it is assumed that the feature occupied a space of 23 × (approximately) 40 m (= 920 m²).

i.e. a possible arrangement of a chapel within existing sanctuary areas, while at the same time retaining the basic economic function (Migotti 2003)⁹. Results of the most recent systematical archaeological excavations, undertaken in the area around the church of St. Quirinus are also providing data on building activity in this period. Archaeological excavations and geophysical surveys uncovered, among other things, remains of a northern wall, running from the church front in the southwest direction. The wall was preliminary dated to the 4th century (Mušič, Miloglav 2012)¹⁰.

Of course, the available archaeological research does not by far reflect the full extent of construction works Siscia was subject to during the 4th century, among other reasons also because the town had suffered damage in the attack of the counter-emperor Magnentius in August 351. This undoubtedly resulted in the need for repair and renovation of buildings and structures, among them surely also the town walls¹¹. The claim that Magnentius' usurpation was decisive for Siscia and that after it a rapid decline of the town began, especially obvious during the reign of Valentinian I (364–375) and his brother and co-emperor Valens (364–378) (Hoti 1992, 151) is somewhat too far-fetched¹². In any case, as the provincial centre and imperial mint, the town could count on continuous interest of central imperial authorities to take care of its upkeep. Such support became even more important for the functioning of towns as time moved on.

Siscia also survived more or less unscathed the crisis of the late 370s and the beginning of the 380s. The crisis befell vast areas of Pannonia after the insurgence of Thracian foederati (Gračanin 2011, 55–57). Although, neither historical sources, nor the available archaeological sources record the suffering of Siscia, the threat seems to have been strong enough so that it may have incited the individuals to deposit coins in the ground, which is also likely testified by the find of a hoard in Sisak consisting of coins of emperors: Gratian (375–383), Valentinian II (375–392), and Theodosius I (378–395; cf. Gračanin 2011, 234, 351). Today, the opinion that Pannonian foederati, i.e. a group of Greuthungian

⁹ See also Migotti 1997, 22–23, where the author presents the opinion that the most probable location of an early Christian site is close to the present church of the Assumption of the Holy Cross, because the sarcophagi of Severilla and Felicissima most probably have been found there, as well as a water tank; cf. Migotti 2011, 56–57; 2015, 67.

¹⁰ A layer of collapsed building was also determined alongside the wall but at this time it is impossible to determine the date of the collapse. Insight into the data collected at the site, as well as the cited article (published in the meantime), was provided to us by the research leader — I. Miloglav from the Department of Archaeology, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences of the University of Zagreb. We would like to extend our thanks for this.

¹¹ It is well known that after the victory over Magnentius at Mursa in September 351, Constantius II spent months on, among other things, taking care of repairing the damage inflicted to southern Pannonia before continuing the war operations (Gračanin 2003, 24).

¹² The author refers to the dark image of the state of Pannonian towns painted by Ammianus Marcellinus, 30.5.2, 6, 14, although he speaks of northern Pannonia and the towns of the Danube frontier. It seems that the towns in the interior of Pannonia managed to preserve a certain level of prosperity in the 4th century, for which cf. Poulter 2001, 112–113. K. Póczy (1980, 250) also claims that the deterioration of urban life in Pannonia proceeded slower in the region between the Sava and Drava.

Goths, Alans and Huns¹³, was settled in Pannonia Savia, thus also in Siscia and its surroundings, can be discarded. So may be the opinion that Savia itself was targeted by new barbarian incursions in the 380s.¹⁴ On the other hand, the town became the stage of an armed conflict between the usurper Magnus Maximus and emperor Theodosius I. After Siscia was occupied by the counter-emperor's forces, a fierce battle took place there probably in July 388, in which Theodosius prevailed, mostly thanks to the engagement of Hunnic and Alanic horsemen (Gračanin 2011, 60)¹⁵. Six iron arrowheads dredged from the river Kupa, usually considered to be of Hunnic or Germanic provenance and dated roughly to the 5th century, might give some testimony of the battle (Simoni 1989, 118, 125, Nos. 65–70). It is impossible to determine precisely to what extent these battles inflicted damage to the town, but it can be supposed that it was not exposed to major destruction¹⁶. Available sources in no way suggest that Siscia was devastated as it had been during the attack of Magnentius. Still, the ever weaker potential of central authorities to influence the situation in the Danube area must have had a negative influence on the general state of Siscia as well. However, in the late 4th and the early 5th century the town undoubtedly continued to function as a provincial centre, which confirms that the urban structures kept certain vitality.

The next crisis befell Pannonia in 395, with the situation restored, at least temporarily, by General Stilicho four years later. A written source explicitly states that due to his actions the Pannonians in the Sava and Danube areas once again opened the gates of their towns and began to clear forests, plant grapes and pay taxes¹⁷. It is difficult to judge whether the comment would pertain to Siscia as well, since southwestern Pannonia was mostly spared of barbaric incursions.

¹³ P. Heather (2005, 509, Footnote No. 39), characterizes the hypothesis about the existence of the so-called tripartite group of peoples composed of Goths, Alans and Huns and led by Alatheus and Saphrax as „scholarly fantasy” and „nonsense”. N. Lenski (2002, 332, Footnote No. 73), also says that the evidence does not support this hypothesis. However, they seem to disregard much of the extant evidence which can be interpreted in its support; cf. Gračanin 2006, 30–49 (there the terms Ostrogothic/Visigothic are admittedly used anachronistically for the period in question). Especially telling seems to be a testimony of an inscription from a now lost sarcophagus of Bishop Amantius of Iovia, where *bini populi*, of which one is called *plebs aliena* under *gemini duces*, are mentioned; cf. Lotter 2003, 74, with Footnote 262. On balance, it seems clear that there were groups of Goths, Alans and Huns settled in Pannonia, which, at least for a while, may have functioned as a united agglomeration and viewed from the Roman perspective as an alien nation under two leaders.

¹⁴ The opinion on the settlement of the so-called Pannonian foederati in Pannonia Savia is voiced by M. Hoti (1992, 152–153), after A. Mócsy (1974, 343). For a new interpretation see Gračanin 2011, 57–58. New incursions of barbarian groups across the Danube affected northern Pannonia.

¹⁵ The imperial panegyric Latinius Pacatus Drepanius in his *Panegyric of Theodosius* names Siscia and the river Sava as witnesses of an „illustrious conflict” (34.1: “Testis es, Siscia, testis pulcherrimi, Save, conflictus”), very lively describing the death of the usurper's defeated soldiers in front of Siscia itself (34.3: “Iam qui ad muros differenda morte properaverant, aut fossas cadaveribus aequabant aut obviis sudibus induebantur aut portas quas eruptione patefecerant morte claudebant”).

¹⁶ N. Šipuš (1985a, 8) assumes bigger damage to Siscia.

¹⁷ *De consulatu Stilichonis*, 2.191–207 (from the year 399): “[...] Hinc obsidione solutus / Pannonius poterque Savi, quid clausa tot annis / oppida laxatis ausus iam pandere portis / (...) agnoscitque casas et collibus oscula notis / figit (...) exsectis inculta dabant quas saecula, silvis / restituit terras et opacum vitibus Histrum / conserit et patrium vectigal solvere gaudet, / immunis qui clade fuit”.

However, the increased care from imperial authorities and stabilised situation had to have a positive effect on Siscia, as well. Sources preserved information on the mission of senator Flavius Lupus, whom Stilicho had sent to Pannonia Secunda as a tax expert to estimate the debts of local landowners and to see that a part of the money be spent on renovation of provincial town walls (Gračanin 2011, 234–235). It would not be overhasty to presume that a similar mission visited Pannonia Savia as well, where Siscia, considering its importance, would have profitted the most from ordered tax levies (Gračanin 2011, 62, Footnote 84).

The relative momentum of Siscia in the 380s and 390s can also be inferred from coin finds¹⁸. Eight bronze coins (one of which minted in the mint of Siscia) and a golden one of Valentinian II dating from 378–392 were found in Sisak (Alföldi 1924, 33–35; Šipuš 1985a, 8). Then, there are 15 bronze coins of Theodosius I from 387–395 and two bronze coins of his wife Aelia Flaccilla from 383–387, both minted in Siscia (Alföldi 1924, 33–34; Šipuš 1985a, 8; Dukat 2004, 115, No. 113; Burkowsky 2004, 115, No. 114). The short-term rule of counter-emperor Magnus Maximus in Siscia is testified by one of his bronze coins and that of his son Flavius Victor, both from 387–388 and emitted from the mint of Aquileia (Alföldi 1924, 34). In this period the mint of Siscia was still operational. Seventy bronze coins of Arcadius, dating from between 383 and 387, are preserved mostly from sites in Pannonia Secunda (the majority from Bononia / Novi Banovci). Among them there are 11 pieces from Sisak (Fig. 2: 2–12; one dredged from the river Kupa; cf. Mirnik 1996, 171–178, Nos. 36–105). Siscian bronze coins have also been found in Viminacium / Stari Kostolac (49 pieces), Pincus / Veliko Gradište (10 pieces) and Horreum Margi / Čuprija (5 pieces) in the province of Moesia Prima, giving a total of 64 bronze coins (Vasić 1988, 178, 180)¹⁹. Even in distant Capernaum in Palestine coins of the Siscian mint were found. Among others there were three bronze coins of Valentinian II and three of Theodosius I, dating from between 375 and 388 (Arslan 1997, 259–260, 299)²⁰. In Sisak itself (in one case the find is from the river Kupa) further 25 bronze coins of Arcadius were found, which had been minted in other mints and dated to 383–395 (Mirnik 1996, p. 169, Nos. 14, 16, p. 170, No. 26, p. 171, No. 34, p. 180, No. 116, p. 181, No. 126, p. 185, Nos. 159, 162, p. 186, No. 175, p. 187, Nos. 178–179, p. 200, No. 296, p. 202, Nos. 314, 320; Šipuš 1985a, 8). Another bronze coin of Arcadius found in Sisak comes from the mint of Cyzicus and dates from 395–401 (Mirnik 1996, p. 204, No. 332). According to the most recent, although incomplete, catalogue of numismatic finds from Sisak further coins may be added to the list: 16 bronze coins of Valentinian I, 25 bronze coins of Valens and 6 of

¹⁸ For coins as a source of information on economic activities see Reece 2003.

¹⁹ However, Pannonia Secunda and Moesia Prima were supplied mostly by Siscian coins minted between 378 and 383 (Vasić 1988, 183).

²⁰ One Siscian bronze coin dated to 375–395 was found in Gerasa / Jerash on the eastern side of the river Jordan and one more in Ein Nashut on the Golan Heights, while two bronze coins from between 375 and 388 were found in Syrian Antioch; Arslan 1997, 275, 280, 295; see also Tepert 2011, 79–80, 81.

Gratian, 8 bronze coins of Valentinian II, and 7 bronze coins of Theodosius I, including a maiorina of high quality mint from the mint of Siscia (Fig. 2:1). It must be emphasized that a great part of the mentioned coins have been minted in the Siscian mint itself (Burkowsky 2008). The circulation and minting of coins surely indicates economic liveliness of the town in the late 4th century.

FIFTH CENTURY

In 401, a new danger arose in this region that could have directly stricken the Siscian area. In late autumn the Visigothic king Alaric I passed with his troops through southern Pannonia, possibly by the main road in the Sava valley, which led via Siscia (Gračanin 2011, 62). Since Siscia was one of the garrison and supply points, it would not be improbable that Alaric had chosen this path of incursion into Italy, possibly even occupying the town. Also in his second raid into Italy, in 408, Alaric possibly took the same main road, which led more directly to Emona, since the written sources state that he set up the first camp there (Gračanin 2011, 65)²¹.

It is precisely the period after Alaric's second invasion which is given special importance in the historiography, with the assertion that it was the time when the Western Roman imperial government once again took control over western Pannonia, including Siscia. This then would have enabled the restoration of Siscia's mint, which allegedly had stopped functioning already after the battle between Magnus Maximus and Theodosius I at Siscia, and once again was in operation between 408 and 423, which is established by the existence of mints marked SM (Šipuš 1985a, 8)²². Today, it can no longer be assumed that there was a prolonged suspension of production in the mint of Siscia, as testified by emissions from

²¹ From Siscia he would surely have taken the vicinal road via Buševac through Turopolje and Samoborsko Polje, possibly to Bregana, since Siscia was more directly connected with Nevidunum by that route (Gračanin 2011, 44).

²² Also by N. Šipuš (1985b, 79), where it is stated, though, that the mint of Siscia ceased operating in 387. Here the author refers to R. A. G. Carson, P. V. Hill, J. P. C. Kent (1989, 75). This opinion stems all the way from A. Alföldi (1924, 13), who considered the personnel of Siscia's mint to have been removed from Siscia so that Magnus Maximus could not get hold of them, and after his fall they would have found themselves in Aquileia. A. Alföldi based his conclusion on the fact that Magnus Maximus did not mint his coins in Siscia (which he would have taken in mid-387) and on the presumption that the small bronze coins with SALVS REIPUBLICAE on the reverse, minted in Aquileia after Maximus' defeat, in their workmanship fully indicate the work of Siscian minters. The interruption in production was accepted also by A. Mócsy (1962, 578), with the slight difference that he considered Siscia to have fallen into the usurper's hands in 387 or in the early 388, with the suspension of minting ensuing then. This is accepted also by J. Šašel (1974, 720). According to B. Zmajčić (1961, 21), the mint of Siscia was permanently closed by Theodosius I in 387 because of a (undefined) barbarian danger in Pannonia, which is taken over from Pearce 1951, 140 (see also Nenadić 1988, 93). K. Biró-Sey (1980, 345) also asserted that minting in Siscia was suspended in 387 and probably because of a barbarian threat, but only shortly, since the mint was once again operating until 392, and then again from 408 until 423. This is taken over by M. Hoti (1992, 153), who had, however stated earlier in the text (p. 147) that the mint was active

the early 390s (Kent 1994, 35). However, it is questionable whether the bronze coins of Honorius and Theodosius II bearing the SM mark originate from the mint of Siscia or not, so according to some opinions the mint was closed in 395 (Vasić 1988, 183). *Notitia dignitatum omnium tam civilium quam militarium utriusque imperii*, which most likely originate from the early 390s and was then amended for the western half of the Empire under Honorius (395–423), and most probably also under Valentinian III (425–55), mentions a governor of the royal mint in Siscia (*procurator monetae Siscianae*). Also, in the same written source there are mentioned: a head of the provincial treasury (*praepositus thesaurorum Siscianorum, Saviae*), a commander of a section of the Danube fleet (*praefectus classis Aegetsium sive secundae Pannonicae, [...] nunc Siscia*), and a tribune of the third Alpine cohort (*tribunus cohortis tertiae Alpinorum, Sisciae*), while an administrator of the emperor's private property in Pannonia Savia (*procurator rei privatae per Saviam*) also probably had his seat in Siscia, although this is not explicitly stated (*Notitia dignitatum*, 11.24, 39, 12.21, 32.56–57)²³. To what extent these entries reflect the reality of the situation in all aspects of life is, however, another question.

Still, with due caution this evidence seems to allow for the assumption that the imperial civil and military administration to a certain extent continued to function in Siscia even in the first decades of the 5th century. The fact that military units were stationed in Siscia in the 420s also can be derived indirectly from the information that the Western Illyrian general Generidus, named to the commanding duty in 409, contributed to the restoration of situation in Pannonia, Noricus and Raetia. This is interpreted as a reorganisation of the defence in Western Illyricum (Gračanin 2011, p. 66, No. 117). Perhaps he may be credited with transferring the command of the section of the Danube fleet of Pannonia Secunda to the centre of Pannonia Savia, since *Notitia dignitatum omnium tam civilium quam militarium utriusque imperii* emphasize that it is “now” (*nunc*) in Siscia (Kovács 2004, 120). Elements of late Roman military belt sets, whose dating extends into this period as well, can also testify to the presence of the army in Siscia in the early 5th century²⁴.

Finds of coins from the first half of the 5th century, numerous in comparison with other south Pannonian towns of the same time horizon, can also be an indicator that late Roman Siscia was a very lively urban centre²⁵. It should be noted that quite a few of those finds originate from the very centre of Roman

until the early 5th century. Drawing from N. Šipuš (1985b, 80, 83–84), M. Buzov (2009, 638) also concludes that the mint of Siscia was operational during the reign of Honorius.

²³ For the dating of *Notitia dignitatum* see Kulikowski 2000, 358–361. The third Alpine cohort was based on an earlier auxiliary unit from the Principate period; cf. Kovács 2004, 117.

²⁴ These are: six heart-shaped belt tongues, a small chip-carved buckle with a lozenge-shaped base, a chip-carved pentagonal fitting and two chip-carved tongue-shaped tongues. All are dated to the 4th century as well (Radman-Livaja 2004, 98).

²⁵ Regardless of that, there is a dramatic decline in the scale of coin circulation between 402 and 423 with the respect to the preceding period of 383–402. In terms of percentage, the decline amounts to 1875.43%; cf. Nađ 2012, 392.

Siscia, between the Stjepan and Antun Radić Street and the Street of Ante Starčević (former Street of Vladimir Majdar; cf. Šipuš 1985a, 8)²⁶. The finds in question are: 4 bronze coins of Arcadius from 400–408 (one of which was minted in the name of his wife Aelia Eudoxia) as well as one gold coin of the same emperor; one bronze coin of Honorius from 403–408, a further 8 from the time between 408/410 and 423, and a gold one from 404 (found in the river Kupa); 2 bronze coins of Theodosius II (one from 408–423, the other from 425–450) and a gold one; 6 bronze coins of Valentinian III from the period between 425 and 455 (Alföldi 1924, 34–35; Šipuš 1985a, 8; 1985b, p. 78, Nos. 3, 5; Mirnik 1996, p. 188, No. 190, p. 189, No. 197, p. 198, No. 283; Dukát 2004, p. 115, No. 115)²⁷. Important in this respect is the site located at the playground of the elementary school “June 22nd”, where a large quantity of Roman coins from the entire period of Classical Antiquity was found. Several coins from the second half of the 4th and the first decades of the 5th century need to be emphasized here: 3 bronze coins of Valentinian I (Fig. 3: 1–3) and one of Valentinian II (Fig. 3: 4), 6 bronze coins of Valens (Fig. 3: 5–10) and one of Gratian (Fig. 3: 11), 2 bronze coins of Arcadius (Fig. 3: 12–13) and one of Honorius (Fig. 3: 14), and a half-siliqua of the Western Roman emperor Joannes (423–425) (Fig. 3: 15). Remains of architecture from the 4th and 5th centuries, most probably residential, were found at the same site (Burkowsky 2008, 12, 17; Baćani 2006, 55–57).

In the year 433, the Western Roman imperial government surrendered most of the Pannonian provinces over to the Huns, but with imposed restrictions, whereas Pannonia Savia was probably the only one completely left out of this arrangement (Gračanin 2011, 69–71)²⁸. It became common in historiography to date the (supposed) formation of a new province, Valeria Media, approximately to this time. It would serve as part of the Western Roman defence system in the outskirts of the Alps. The assumption is based on the fact that the province is mentioned in *Cosmography* of Anonymus of Ravenna, who is believed to have written it in the first half of the 9th century, but depicting the state of the first decades of the 6th century. This would mean that he was using data from the sources belonging to the 6th century (Gračanin 2011, 235–236)²⁹. Anonymus of Ravenna’s list of places is somewhat confusing, with toponyms sometimes distorted to the point of being unrecognizable in regard to their Roman form. Among other things, this surely is a consequence of manuscript errors. Anonymus of Ravenna counts places that belong to Pannonia Secunda, Pannonia Valeria, Pannonia Savia and Noricum Mediterraneum as parts of this Valeria Media, which, as he writes, ends with a very large river called Sava. The sites of *Sicce*, *Fines*,

²⁶ Among these there are the already mentioned coins of emperors: Valentinian II, Theodosius I, Arcadius and Honorius from the 480s and 490s.

²⁷ A less precise dating is available for 7 bronze coins of Arcadius as well as one bronze coin and a half-siliqua of Honorius; cf. Burkowsky 2008, 11, 15–16.

²⁸ The opinion of M. Hoti (1992, 153), that Pannonia Savia was open to the settlement of the Huns and that they became the lords of Siscia, cannot be established in the written sources.

²⁹ For the dating of the work of Anonymus of Ravenna see St a b 1976, 31; 1998, 104.

Romula, Nomiduni, Cruppi, Acerbo and *Atamine*, for which the toponyms *Siscia, Ad Fines, Romula, Neviodunum, Crucium, Acervo* and *(A)emona* can be discerned are important for the western part of the region between the Sava, Drava and Danube (Ravennatus Anonymus, *Cosmographia*, 4.20). Leaving aside the question whether Valeria Media ever actually existed as an organized province³⁰, it may be presumed that in the 430s Siscia took over the role of an outpost towards the area under the Hunnic power. This surely influenced the extensive deterioration of the town, since the troublesome proximity of the Huns had logically dictated the retreat of the representatives of civil and military administration from the town. Finally, the province Siscia was the centre of seems to have been turned into (administratively and politically) bare interspace. Especially when in 437 the Pannonian provinces were formally ceded to the Eastern Empire, which was chiefly interested in the eastern part of the region between the Sava, Drava and Danube with Sirmium as the central defensive point, which in 441 fell under the Huns along with the rest of Pannonia Secunda (Gračanin 2011, 71–72). Thus, the military units located in Siscia had probably been withdrawn by 437. With respect to the altered political situation the provincial administration was probably disbanded, i.e. its maintenance officially became the responsibility of East Roman government and there are no indicators in the written sources that they ever took care of that. The imperial mint, if it had reopened in the early 5th century at all, certainly was not in operation for some time at this point.

Decreased intensity of life in the town is reflected also in extremely rare numismatic material belonging to the second half of the 5th century. There is only one bronze coin of emperor Marcian (450–457) and a gold coin of emperor Anthemius (467–462; cf. Šipuš 1985a, 8; Dukat 2004, p. 116, No. 116). Still, these finds indicate that Siscia remained connected to the Empire, no matter how thin the umbilical cord might have been. Other archaeological remains such as jewellery and decorative belt implements found in the river Kupa, or even more often lacking precise locations of the finds also testify to the presence of Roman population in Siscia in the 5th century³¹. These ties with the Empire were not entirely broken even by the time of the arrival of the Ostrogoths, who seem to have only temporarily affected the area of Siscia in the first period of their presence in the former Roman Pannonia (455–473). Namely, an incomplete silver plate brooch found in the territory of Siscia and dated to the second half of the

³⁰ R. Bratož (2007, 268) rightfully urges to be careful, emphasizing that the written sources of the second half of the 5th and of the 6th centuries mention mostly the old names of southern Pannonian provinces.

³¹ K. Simoni (1989, p. 108, No. 3 [silver wire necklace], p. 109, Nos. 9–11 [hair pins], p. 109–112, Nos. 14–18, 20–24 [brooches], p. 114–116, Nos. 35–44, 47–53 [buckles], p. 117–118, Nos. 60–63 [bracelets]). Certain objects possibly originate from the 4th (*ibidem*, Nos. 10–11, 14) or the 6th century (*ibidem*, Nos. 18, 35–38, 43, 48–52), or may belong to the arrived Germanic population (*ibidem*, Nos. 60–63). A silver hair pin with cicada-shaped head (No. 9) could be a part of Ostrogothic cultural goods; see also Vinski 1957, 136, No. 1, 156; Gračanin 2011, 322.

5th or the early 6th century is thought to have been an Ostrogothic possession,³² although the circumstances of the discovery are unknown. A bronze decorative fitting and cast brooch, both cicada-shaped and believed to be of Ostrogothic (or Hunnic) provenance, could also belong to the second half of the 5th century (Simoni 1989, p. 109, Nos. 12–13, p. 110, No. 19)³³. It is more probable, though, that all three finds come from the second period of Ostrogothic presence, in the late 5th and the first half of the 6th century. Either way, Ostrogothic contacts with Pannonia Savia in the first half of the 5th century cannot be excluded, since from written sources it is evident that they were quite active in Pannonia.

When the Western Roman emperor Maiorian (457–461), who also enjoyed partial recognition of the Eastern Roman court, in the year 458 recruited troops in the Danube area among Pannonians and different barbarian peoples for an intended campaign against the Vandals, he might have also included the people of Siscia in the recruitment (Gračanin 2011, 82, 222, 246; Gračanin, Škrkulja 2014, 174). The already mentioned gold coin of emperor Anthemius, who was elevated to the Western Roman throne by the will and support of the Eastern Roman emperor Leo I (457–474), also indicates stronger contacts with Italy than with the Eastern Empire.

In the late 470s most likely the Suebi also settled in the surroundings of Siscia. The conclusion about their stronger presence in southern parts of the former Pannonia Savia is based on narrative sources. Archaeological finds may possibly also corroborate that assumption. A bronze bow brooch of West Germanic provenance and dated to the 5th/6th century was found in Siscia. However, it could have belonged to the Suebic Alamanni, who seem to have been settled in the same area by the Ostrogoths in the early 6th century. The find of a silver bow brooch dredged from the river Kupa and dated to the first half of the 6th century is also believed to likely indicate the Alamannic presence (Gračanin 2011, 99, 223–225, 246–247)³⁴.

³² In the recently opened new medieval permanent exhibition of the Archaeological Museum in Zagreb, authored by Ž. Demo, this brooch is determined as the *Villafontana* type, dated to the beginning of the 5th century and attributed to the federates. The exhibition catalogue is in preparation. We most cordially thank Ž. Demo and A. Dugonjić from the Archaeological Museum in Zagreb for kindly providing us with the information regarding the exhibits.

³³ See also Vinski 1957, p. 138, No. 2, p. 156–157; Gračanin 2011, 83, where the cast silver cicada-shaped brooch is not mentioned. It should be noted that another cicada-shaped cast fibula is described by K. Simoni (1989, p. 109, No. 12) as silver, while Z. Vinski (1957, 138, No. 3) determines it as being lead, thus also noted in Gračanin 2011, 322.

³⁴ For the description of these finds see Simoni 1989, p. 112, No. 25, p. 113, No. 28. In the case of the silver bow brooch there is an expressed possibility that it is of Thuringian provenance, which would certainly associate it rather with the Alamanni, having in mind the geographic proximity of Thuringia and Alamannia. It must also be noted that in the recently opened new medieval permanent exhibition of the Archaeological Museum in Zagreb, authored by Ž. Demo, this brooch is determined as the *Krefeld* type and dated to the end of the 5th — beginning of the 6th century, whereas the bronze bow brooch of West Germanic provenance is dated to the second half of the 5th century and attributed to the Ostrogoths.

SIXTH CENTURY

The establishment of firm Ostrogothic rule in the second period of their presence in this region, which occurred between 497 and 504, marked a new moment in the history of post-Roman Siscia (Gračanin 2011, 93; Gračanin, Škrkulja 2014, 181–182). Administratively, the old Roman province of Pannonia Savia was annexed by Dalmatia under the Ostrogothic *comes* with the seat in Salona (Gračanin 2011, 96–97; Gračanin, Škrkulja 2014, 183; Gračanin 2015, 21; 2016, 223). However, Ostrogothic government gave a new impulse to the Savian province as well, which undoubtedly also implied the functional restoration of its most important urban centre — Siscia³⁵.

This awoken dynamics of urban life in Siscia is illustrated by information from narrative sources, less from archaeological ones, although it is impossible to be more precise about its extent. First and foremost evidence is provided by the collection of *Variae*, authored by a high official of Ostrogothic kings, Magnus Aurelius Cassiodorus Senator, with several letters directly relating to Savia, i.e. Siscia³⁶. In one of them, the Ostrogothic king Theoderic the Great informs the *defensores* and the *curiales* that he had placed Fridibadus at the head of their places (*locis vestris*) so that he could, by legal strictness, curb cattle rustlers, prevent murders and punish thefts, thus securing them, the pecaeful provincials (*quietos vos*), from criminal misdeeds (*ab sceleratis ausibus*; cf. Cassiodorus, *Variae*, 4.49). Fridibadus was sent to the province in 511 and according to some scholars he would have held the function of *comes civitatis Sisciae*, that is, a military governor of Siscia, i.e. Savia, or a *comes Gothorum* on a special assignment (Gračanin 2015, 40; 2016, 242–243). In any case, Fridibadus must have had wide authority for bringing order into the province and it is clear that he possessed both civil and military power.

Around 523/526 a legal expert was sent to Savia — the illustrious man (*vir illustris*) Severinus, a member of Italo-Roman aristocracy. His mission commenced after the king had found out about often complaints of the provincials about Savian landowners. These had transferred their fiscal obligations to the less fortunate (*in tenuem fortunam*) and by dishonourable activities (*scelerato commercio*) increased their own profits (*suis compendiis*) as if public service (*functio publica*) was a personal commodity (*commoditas privata*). Wanting to make this right, the king ordered Severin to investigate all landowners with mindful justice (*considerata iustitia*) and determine the equality of levy (*aequalitatem tributi*) with such method (*hac ratione*) so that the public tax is imposed according to the category of properties and individuals. Those that had imposed taxes without the king's permission and had by their own will transferred levies to others shall be punished by legal severity (*legum severitas*) in order to recompense all the damage to those to whom they had illegally (*incompetenter*) caused losses (Cassiodorus, *Variae*,

³⁵ M. Hoti (1992, 153) states that life in Siscia „somewhat normalised” under the Ostrogoths.

³⁶ For a more thorough study of the letters pertaining to Savia, Pannonia Sirmiensis and Dalmatia, see now Gračanin 2015; 2016.

5.14). At the same time, Severinus received the task of pacifying the Savian landowners themselves, dissatisfied with tax burden (Cassiodorus, *Variae*, 5.15).

It can be presumed that it was precisely Siscia that was the central point from which both Fridibadus and Severinus performed the duties given to them. At that time civic administration was restored in the town, with the *curiales* and a *defensor civitatis*, just like before. The mention of the long-haired (*capillati*), denoting the groups with a right to freely carry arms, presupposes that the Gothic *comes* (*comes Gothorum*) also had his seat there (Cassiodorus, *Variae*, 4.49)³⁷. The re-establishment of provincial and town administration must have been followed, along with a certain economic boom and military presence, by the restoration of urban infrastructure, thus surely giving a new glow to the main town edifices. The repair and maintenance of buildings (town walls in the first place) was also one of the primary duties of curial officials.

Of course, due caution is necessary in order not to overexaggerate the extent of Siscia's urban tissue renovation during the Ostrogothic period. Although Siscian urban life did undoubtedly gain new strength, archaeological research has not yet given it greater corroboration. Finds of Ostrogothic coins, more numerous in comparison with coins from the second half of the 5th century, are an exception. Besides its great value in propaganda, money also indicates increased financial and economic flow. These finds include one silver half-siliqua and 3 silver quarter-siliquae of king Theoderic the Great (474–526), one golden tremissis in the name of Anastasius I (491–518; Fig. 4: 1–5) and 5 bronze decanummi in the name of Justin I (518–527; Fig. 4: 6–9), alongside one more golden tremissis of Anastasius dredged from the river Kupa (Mirnik, Šemrov 1998, p. 203, No. 804, p. 204, Nos. 810, 814, 815, p. 205, Nos. 817, 823, 825, 826, p. 206, No. 829)³⁸. The said golden tremissis minted in the name of Anastasius I was coined in the mint of Siscia, which was once again been put into operation during Ostrogothic rule³⁹. Its revival was surely a consequence of stabilised situation and Theoderic's efforts towards the awakening of the economy, reflected especially in the encouragement of mining production. Siscia had been a metallurgical centre in the earlier periods of Roman Empire as well, with iron ore mines of present-day Banovina and northwestern Bosnia towards the city (Škegro 1999, 100–101, 105, 129, 137; Gračanin 2015, 48–49; 2016, 253–254). At this time the old mines were probably again put into operation because the Ostrogothic king cared especially about reopening the pits, so that Siscia also could directly benefit from that⁴⁰. The

³⁷ See also Gračanin 2011, 247. For the *capillati*, see Gračanin 2015, 31–33; 2016, 234–235. A *comes Gothorum* is mentioned in direct relation to Savia in Cassiodorus, *Variae*, 5.15.8; cf. Gračanin 2015, 28; 2016, 231.

³⁸ For the tremissis of Anastasius see Alföldi 1924, 35; Mirnik, Šemrov 1998, p. 143, No. 2.

³⁹ Further 4 tremisses originate from the mint of Siscia, the sites of discovery being Kupirovo (Srbia, Croatia), Bosanska Krajina (Bosnia and Herzegovina), Prapretno-Gradec (Sentjur pri Celju, Slovenia) and Dubravica-Grahovo (Skradin, Croatia); cf. Demo 1994, 133–136, 205. Arnold 2016, 76 supposes the existence of an official mint-master at Siscia.

⁴⁰ The king ordered *comes* Simeonius to explore the iron ore mines in Dalmatia and put them in function, cf. Cassiodorus, *Variae*, 3.25.

emphasized importance of Siscia in this period is indirectly testified by the early Byzantine historian Procopius of Caesarea who mentions Siscians (Σισκίοι) as the inhabitants of inland regions east of Liburnia, Histria and Venetia, which would mean that he practically identified the town's inhabitants with the Roman population of the entire province (Procopius, *Bellum Gothicum*, 1.15.25–26).

The Ostrogothic presence in Siscia in the late 5th and in the first decades of the 6th century is testified also by archaeological finds e.g. jewellery, pieces of equipment and other objects⁴¹. The finds clearly indicating the presence of the Roman population during the 6th century are numerous enough as well. Together with those mentioned earlier (dated partly to the 5th century but perhaps belonging to Germanic population)⁴², we can list two cast bronze brooches in the shape of birds of prey and a cast bronze buckle of the so-called Mediterranean form (Simoni 1989, p. 114, Nos. 33–34, p. 17, No. 54). However, an even stronger indicator of a substantial presence of the local population is the recovery of church organisation. The names of two Siscian bishops, John and Constantine, are known from the acts of two church councils held in Salona in 530 and 533, in which they took part. One could possibly presume that John had become bishop thanks to planned Ostrogothic endeavours aimed at strengthening the components of urban life in Siscia as much as possible, which had certainly been a big step forward in comparison with the previous period, since there are no known Siscian bishops from the 5th century (which does not mean that there were none; cf. Gračanin 2011, 262). The power of the Siscian church might be reflected also in the remains of an Early Christian basilica with a separate baptistery discovered beneath and beside the present-day church of Our Lady of the Mountain (*Majka Božja Gorska*) in Lobar in Hrvatsko Zagorje, taken it was built at the behest of the Siscian bishop. It was situated within a hill-fort and because of its suitable elevated position it is possible that in perilous times, especially after the breakdown of Ostrogothic power, it served as a shelter for a high church prelate, possibly even the Siscian bishop himself (Gračanin 2011, 262; Filipec 2010, 52)⁴³. Since Ostrogothic military forces were also

⁴¹ See by Simoni 1989, p. 112, No. 26 (cast bow brooch), No. 27 (silver bow brooch with gilt traces), p. 118–119, No. 71 (bronze staff with bird-shaped ornament), p. 119, No. 72 (silver spoon). The cast bow brooch (Simoni 1989, p. 112, No. 26) was previously thought to be made of bronze (Vinski 1957, 156, where it is noted that the brooch is analogous to a pair of bronze brooches from Bački Monoštor), although K. Simoni does not specify the material. In Gračanin 2011, 322 it is thus also cited as a bronze bow brooch. However, in the recently opened new medieval permanent exhibition of the Archaeological Museum in Zagreb, authored by Ž. Demo, the brooch is determined as being silver, belonging to the *Prša-Levice* type and dated to the second half of the 5th century. In all likelihood, the finds considered to possibly indicate a passing Ostrogothic stay (or contacts between the Ostrogoths and local population) in Siscia in the first period of their presence in Pannonia could also belong here (see Footnote No. 29).

⁴² See by Simoni 1989, p. 110, No. 18 (horse-shaped bronze brooch), p. 114, No. 35 (silver buckle), p. 114, Nos. 36–38 (three bronze buckles), p. 115, No. 43 (bronze buckle), p. 116, Nos. 48–49, 51–52 (four bronze buckles), p. 116, No. 50 (iron buckle), p. 117–118, Nos. 60–63 (four bronze bracelets).

⁴³ The site was inhabited continuously from the 3rd up to the late 4th century, possibly even during the 5th; see Filipec 2008, 65.

stationed at Siscia, even though their number surely ceased to be so substantial after the conquest of Pannonia Sirmiensis (Gračanin 2015, 32–33; 2016, 235), one can barely doubt that Arian church must also have been active. It may be presumed that one of the existing town churches was placed at the disposal of Arian worshippers. It was thought in Croatian scholarship that the find of a silver spoon with an incised cross and dated to the first half of the 6th century directly indicated Arian service since it would have served in the Eucharist, but such an opinion is mostly abandoned today (see Migotti 2011, 61–62, 63–64)⁴⁴. In any case, such a luxurious object can be taken as another indicator of the renovation of life of the town community, i.e. that there were individuals during the Ostrogothic period who could have afforded such a luxurious object themselves. In the context of Siscian 6th century Christian topography one should perhaps also view the building, the remains of which have been discovered at Ljudevit Posavski Square, with an east-west orientated apse, and which is considered to have been a Christian sacral feature (basilica; Migotti 1997, 22; Nenadić 1988, 78; Burkowsky 1999, 61; Buzov 1999, 259)⁴⁵.

The final breakdown of Ostrogothic rule in southern Pannonia and Dalmatia by 537 summoned the Lombards as the new power in western parts of the region between the Sava, Drava and Danube. Emperor Justinian I (527–565) made a federate treaty with king Audoin (546–560) only a decade later, by which numerous forts in southern Pannonia were ceded to the Lombards, primarily those in Pannonia Savia and Noricum Mediterraneum (Gračanin 2011, 102–103, 106–107). The finds of two coins of Justinian (one gold tremissis minted in Constantinople between 527 and 565 and a decanummus minted in Rome between 542 and 547) might possibly be interpreted in the context of an at least transient renewal of tighter relations of Siscia with the Empire (Gračanin 2011, 108; for the coins see Alföldi 1924, 35; Mirnik, Šemrov 1998, p. 149, No. 79, p. 166, No. 329). The town kept its importance in the Lombard period also, since the Lombards seem to have settled within it. Archaeological material of (as usually believed) Lombard provenance discovered in the Siscian area, although without precisely known locations of finds, consists of a massive silver-gilt bow brooch, a bronze pommel of a sword, a decorative bronze-gilt horse gear fitting and a globular greyish-brown clay pot (Fig. 5:a; cf. Vinski 1970, 46; Simoni 1989, p. 113, No. 29–31, p. 118, No. 64; Filipec 2001, 95). Since they are probably finds from destroyed graves, one may be inclined to presume a Lombard military unit stationed in Siscia.⁴⁶ Lombard coins (imitations of a solidus and a tremissis of

⁴⁴ M. Buzov (2004, 464) is still somewhat prone to that opinion. However, the communion by hand was customary in Late Antiquity. On the spoon see K. Simoni (1988, 79–82 [especially pp. 81–82 in regard to its possible use]). Cf. Hauser 1992 for a detailed study on Late Antique and Early Byzantine silver spoons.

⁴⁵ The exact locations of Siscian early Christian basilicas cannot be undoubtedly determined; cf. Lolić 2003, 144; Wiewegh 2004, 26.

⁴⁶ Of the mentioned finds, the massive silver-gilt bow brooch is brought in connection with the Herulians who are thought to have found a safe haven around Siscia after the collapse of their kingdom in around 508 (Demo 2014, 37–38), whereas, in the recently opened new medieval permanent

Justinian I) have to be added to the list (Fig. 4:10, 11; cf. Mirnik, Šemrov 1998, p. 208, No. 856, p. 209, No. 857). The mint of origin of these coins is unknown, but since the Siscian mint was once again operational under the Ostrogoths, it is not improbable that the Lombards used it as well.

It is hard to determine for sure how important Siscia was to the Lombards as a strategic or an economic centre. Following one opinion, based on the extant archaeological material, workshops producing high quality chip-carved objects for the Lombards were active in Siscia (Tomičić 2000, 278). Current level of knowledge does not allow for this assumption to be either corroborated or refuted. It has also been thought that the centre of the Lombard polity was shifted from the area north of the Drava into the region between the Sava, Drava and Danube (Várady 1984, p. 106, No. 232), in which case Siscia could have played a relatively prominent role in Lombard plans to deal with their enemies, the Gepids. There has even been a presumption that the expression *urbs Pannoniae*, mentioned in a section of the *Historia Langobardorum codicis Gothani* that speaks of the Lombard quest for a suitable residence and their arrival to Pannonia, refers to Siscia⁴⁷. Still, both claims are too far-reaching and either impossible to corroborate, or not founded on solid and reliable source of information. Finally, the Lombards' settlement primarily affected northern Pannonia (which they also held longer), while presently established sites with finds of the so-called Lombard material culture in the region between the Sava, Drava and Danube are far too rare to allow any founded assertion in favour of this region (Gračanin 2011, 110–112).

The Lombard arrival did not drastically change political circumstances for the Siscians, since the newcomers had, just like the Ostrogoths before them, officially been imperial allies. In that way they gained authority over local Roman inhabitants. However, while the Ostrogoths cared much more for Roman administration and the Roman way of life, the Lombards did not develop such direct contacts with *romanitas* and had not been previously exposed to Roman culture, but were the late beneficiaries of the disintegration of the Roman state system. Their awareness of the need to maintain urban life was thus necessarily on a lower level. Still, one should not think that the Lombards were incapable or unwilling to use the advantages offered by urban settlements, since they had no problem with that once they came to Italy. They simply did not possess the mechanisms to support their development, especially in the settings of advanced urban degradation, such as the ongoing one in Pannonia. This undoubtedly had a negative effect on the functioning of Siscia. Finally, it is also questionable to

exhibition of the Archaeological Museum in Zagreb, authored by Ž. Demo, the decorative bronze-gilt horse gear fitting is determined as of West Germanic provenance and dated to around 500 A.D.

⁴⁷ Bóna 1990, 4. The pertinent section reads: “Deinde meliore ubertatis patriae requirentes, ad Traciam provinciam transierunt, in Pannoniae urbis patriam suam hereditatem affligerunt, unde cum Abaris reluctantes seu bella plurima ardentissimo animo ipsam Pannoniam expugnaverunt”; cf. *Historia Langobardorum codicis Gothani* 2; also in Pavao Đakon, *Povijest Langobarda*. This representation is quite at odds with what is known about the Lombard arrival to Pannonia and their relations with the Avars and thus cannot be taken into account as a relevant basis for historiographical reconstruction.

what extent the Ostrogothic period renewal was thorough and invigorating. In addition, the one decade of nominal Eastern Roman rule surely did not reflect positively on circumstances in Siscia, since it once again became a town at the northwestern edge of the Empire's sphere of interest. It may also be that the outbreak of the Justinianic plague in the 540s affected the south Pannonian area and added to the town's gloomy prospects.

It may be assumed that under the Lombards the curial system in Siscia collapsed and that civic administration was taken over by the bishop, a process already occurring in the late Roman Empire (Liebeschuetz 2001, 151–155). This does not mean that the Siscian elite lost its power over the town's affairs, but simply that there was no need any longer for a more organised form of civic government. The presumed level of economic activity from the previous period was certainly also not sustained, since economic flows were no longer being strengthened by the interested in them central government. Siscia might have also been interesting to the Lombards because the Arian church had most probably been active there under the Ostrogoths, even though it must have ceased to function after the Ostrogoths' withdrawal. In any case, there are no indications of the new rulers having contributed to the preservation of urban paradigms of post-Roman Siscia. There was probably a part of Siscian inhabitants also among the Pannonians taken by the Lombards to Italy in the spring of 568, searching like many others for a better and safer existence (Gračanin 2011, 116–117, 247). The ensuing formal restoration of Eastern Roman imperial government meant little in such circumstances, since no concrete power stood behind it. Life in Siscia continued, indicated by an isolated find dated to the second half of the 6th century. It is a silver cross-shaped brooch with circular ornaments and remains of fabric along the pin, coming from a destroyed grave. The exact location of the find is known: it is believed to have been found at the site of the Late Antiquity cemetery, the so-called eastern necropolis of Siscia at the Hrvatski branitelji Square (formerly the Square of Josip Broz; Simoni 1989, p. 113, No. 32; also Sekelj Ivančan 2001, 200–201; Demo 2014, 48–49, No. 13)⁴⁸. Its provenance is somewhat controversial, since it has been determined as Early Byzantine, but also as Lombard⁴⁹. In any case, even if it was a Lombard product that had somehow come from Italy, it is less probable to have been a property of a Lombard, since it is dated after 568⁵⁰. It's more important, though, that it indicates the use of the Late Antiquity cemetery by the southeast edge of Siscia,

⁴⁸ The eastern necropolis of Siscia is dated to the 4th century and the graves are exclusively skeletal, cf. Buzov 1999, 259–262.

⁴⁹ Early Byzantine: Vinski 1967, 22; 1968, 107, 144; Simoni 1989, p. 113, No. 32; Demo 2014, 48; Lombard: Werner 1962, 98, 101; Tomičić 2000, 278. The latter is taken over also in Gračanin 2011, p. 110, Nos. 223, 323, with a remark that it might have belonged to a Lombard returnee, or wasn't in Lombard possession at all.

⁵⁰ If the assumption of Siscian workshops producing objects for Lombards is correct, this brooch could have also been made there and might represent a reflection of the taste adopted from the Lombards by the remaining Roman population (provided that the object can be determined as being of a specifically Lombard provenance in the first place).

outside of the town perimeter, which could testify to its integrity even in this late period. The only thoroughly excavated Siscian Late Antiquity necropolis (the south-eastern one) had functioned as a primarily cremation burial place until the late 4th century, judging by the find of a coin of Theodosius I from 378–383 (Wiewegh 2003, 76).

SEVENTH TO NINTH CENTURIES

By the end of the 6th century the Avars, aided by Slavs, seem to have taken firm control of the region between the Sava, Drava and Danube (for details see Gračanin 2011, 119–125, 129–132). The Slavic advance that ended the last remains of imperial influence in this region took place in the last two decades of the 6th century. It undoubtedly followed the Drava and Sava valleys along the main Roman roads, heading west towards the former province of Noricum Mediterraneum up to the borders of Italy and south into Dalmatia, all the way to the coast. It seems that the Slavic incursions were directly connected with Avar strategic and tactical requirements, so it might be possible to distinguish two main stages. The first would have begun after the Avars took Sirmium in 582 and would have been directed towards central and western parts of the region between the Sava, Drava and Danube, because it is usually believed that bishopric towns in the former region of Noricum Mediterraneum (Celeia, Emona and probably Poetovio) had fallen into the hands of the attackers by 587. The complex above present-day Lobor must have been destroyed at the same time. On its ramparts, in the excavation of the Early Christian church and especially on the floor of the Early Christian baptistery building, remains of a fire were determined and the ¹⁴C analysis of the discovered ashes gave an approximate date of 410–580 AD (Filipec 2010, 52). Siscia was also probably occupied in the same period. It could have served as a strongpoint for further Slavic incursions in the second stage of their advance, which then turned southwards. This probably began in the late 590s, because in 597 the Avar khagan himself led a campaign into Dalmatia, and at the very turn of the 6th century the Slavs are known to have already threatened Salona (Gračanin 2011, 131).

It was once thought that the mention of Bishop *Vindemius Cessensis* at the council of Grado in 579 referred to the Siscian bishop, but this opinion has been abandoned and his seat is today mostly considered to have been at the Brijuni islands (Suić 1987, 213–215)⁵¹. Thus, the last known Siscian bishop was Constantine, who might have also been alive in the second half of the 6th century, although the available source information does not allow to determine the time of his death. One can be

⁵¹ See also Begović, Schrunck 2011, 657–671, where the seat of the bishop is located at the church of St Mary. B. Marušić (1990, 403–430) thought that the see was in Betika near Barbariga in Istria. The least probable option is that it was on the island of Pag, which is still advocated by B. Ilakovac (1998, 81). Equally unlikely is the thesis about Cenedo in Venetia, proposed by L. Margetić (1983, 126–130); see also Bratož 1990, 541–542, No. 161.

more certain in the assumption that afterwards the see of Siscia was left vacant, and the absence of a bishop would have also negatively affected the remnants of civic administration. Although a more developed church organisation in Siscia ceased to exist⁵², Christian cult did not disappear. It was kept alive by the core of the Roman population which continued to live in the Siscian area in the 7th century. It may be presumed that a large enough number of them remained and so passed on the Roman name of the town (*Siscia* → *Sisak*) and possibly also the nearby hydronyms (*Savus* → *Sava*, *Colapis* → *Kupa*) to the Slavic newcomers. Their presence is thought to be indicated by archaeological finds of Early Byzantine provenance: a fitting of a buckle of the so-called Corinthian form, a bronze buckle with U-shaped fitting, a bronze fitting from a U-shaped buckle and a bronze U-shaped tongue with four red glass inlays (Simoni 1989, p. 115, Nos. 55–58). In all likelihood the former Roman Siscia became an Avar-Slavic settlement already in the late 6th century so the entire Roman population was in time completely slaviced (Filipec 2001, 96)⁵³. The transformation is evidenced by archaeological material, though still very rare: one decorative fitting displaying a lying griffin and another in the shape of a boar's head along with examples of tongues and fittings, dredged from the river Kupa and dated to the 8th century, as well as several axes dated to the late 8th and early 9th century (Filipec 2001, 90–91; 2003, 117–125, 128; Vinski 1978, 184; also Burkovsky 1999, 88, 90). Some other finds can be added to these, such as three-edged arrowheads from the 7th–8th century, and tongues and fittings from the 8th century (cf. Vinski 1970, 46; Burkovsky 1999, 88; Sekelj Ivančan 2001, p. 200, No. 18)⁵⁴. The vitality of the settlement area once occupied by Siscia is indicated also by coins of Byzantine emperor Phocas (602–610): two bronze half-folles (20-nummi), one from 603–610 and minted in Constantinople and the other from 606–607 and minted in Carthage (Fig. 4:12, 13; Mirnik, Šemrov 1998, p. 191, No. 670, p. 194, No. 699). A gold solidus, which is supposed to belong to the age of Phocas is also sometimes cited (Mirnik 1990, 167; Goldstein 1995, 123; 2000, 219). These coins in all likelihood came here through the Avars and chiefly illustrate their strategic and settlement needs, but could also indicate certain economic activity which did not completely die out in the early 7th century. A find of two pressing

⁵² It is very questionable whether the mention of a Siscian bishop (*episcopus Siscianus*) in Archdeacon Thomas, *History of the Bishops of Salona and Split*, 13.2, can be taken as a confirmation that church organisation in Siscia survived, considering the legendary narrative context in which it is presented, i.e. in connection with the alleged restoration of bishoprics owing to the missionary actions of the Salonitan archbishop John of Ravenna. This assumption is carried out in Budak 1994, 80, 107; also in Budak 1993, 228; Bratož 1996, 214, no. 40; 1998a, 597, no. 27. However, for now there is no concrete evidence of the survival of church organisation in Siscia, which does not mean that there were no priests, illiterate clergymen only rudimentary familiar with Christian rites and cited in the records of a council held in 796 on the banks of the Danube; cf. Bratož 1993, 177; 1994, 56; 1998b, 175–177; 1999, 99–100.

⁵³ The same author (Filipec 2003, 128) emphasizes uncertainty regarding the question whether Siscia/Sisak was under Avar overlordship, but because of its suitable strategic position this is quite probable.

⁵⁴ By oversight these finds were not noted in Gračanin 2011, 322–324, nor in an earlier contribution, Gračanin 2008, 35.

matrices for horse gear decoration dated to the late 6th and early 7th century and ascribed to (itinerant) goldsmiths could fit into this presumption (Vinski 1958, 16, 27; 1970, 46; Filipec 2001, 95).

The small number of finds from the earlier Avaro-Slavic period, i.e. finds that could be connected with the earliest phase of Slavic settlement in the 7th century is not only characteristic of Sisak, but of the region between the Sava, Drava and Danube in general. Until very recently these were extremely rare, commonly single finds, and often from unknown or insecure contexts⁵⁵. Probably the best known is the rich find from Čadavica near Slatina, consisting of several pieces of silver jewellery and belt implements usually attributed to the so-called Martinovka culture (Demo 2014, 52–59). This is a chance find from 1929 and there was a re-examination of the site some thirty years later which determined the remains of only one simple (grave) pit with a few fragments of pottery. The report by the alleged original witnesses about a sword with a gold-plated hilt being also found in 1929 cannot be considered trustworthy. Thus it cannot be clearly stated whether it was originally a single grave, a part of a cemetery or even possibly a hoard. The find is now usually dated to the third quarter of the 7th century on the basis of distant analogies with the hoards from Zemianský Vrbovok in Slovakia and Zalesie in the Ukraine (Curta 2010, 311; Demo 2014, 58), although some scholars still prefer an early 7th century date (Jarak 2006, 190–191; Bugarski 2012, 250)⁵⁶. Another find of the same horizon is a small silver “Slavic” brooch from Stenjevec in Zagreb, also a chance find from the early 20th century, and dated to the early 7th century (Vinski 1954, 78)⁵⁷.

However, numerous excavations carried out during the last 10 years or so on several sites, mostly in Podravina (Croatian part of the Drava valley), have greatly enriched our knowledge of the period. These have been rescue excavations, uncovering smaller or larger parts of 7th–8th century settlements. Probably the earliest such settlement has been discovered in Nedelišće — Stara ves, near Čakovec (Bekić 2006, 211–217, 223–252). It consists mostly of sunken huts and pits of various functions. The huts were of an elongated oval shape, presumably with a tent-like roof construction. The finds from these features are simple, mostly fragments of coarse and undecorated ceramic pots, sometimes also spindle whorls, fragments of bone objects, etc. According to the excavator, the pottery can typologically be attributed to the so-called «Prague-type pottery» (Bekić 2012). Such early dating is confirmed by ¹⁴C dates of the early 7th century and the first half thereof (Bekić 2013).

Somewhat similar features (sunken huts, storage pits, middens) have also been found at two sites that are in close proximity to each other, Šemovec —

⁵⁵ For a list of such sites with the relevant earlier literature see Sekelj Ivančan 1995; Gračanin 2008, 32–37; 2011, 285–360.

⁵⁶ Most recently Jarak (2016, 13) has opted for the first half of the 7th century.

⁵⁷ In the recently opened new medieval permanent exhibition of the Archaeological Museum in Zagreb, authored by Ž. Demo, the Stenjevec brooch is determined as belonging to the Novi Banovci-Kelleren type I/J and dated to the last third of the 6th and the first third of the 7th centuries.

Šarnjak and Jakopovec — Blizna, both near Varaždin. The pottery from Šarnjak is generally of a better quality than that from Nedelišće, mostly produced on a slowly rotating wheel, with larger pots and more regular decoration. The ¹⁴C dates for the site are of the late 7th and the first half of the 8th century (Bekić 2008, 107–11; 2013, 242–245). The pottery from Blizna on the other hand is coarser, mostly not wheel-turned and often undecorated. According to the finds as well as the ¹⁴C dates, this settlement was founded in the first half of the 8th and continued existing into the 9th century (Bekić 2006, 125–179; 2008, 107–109; 2013, 245–248). Quite instructive is also the case of Brezje, by the river Plitvica near Varaždin, with at least six documented settlement sites of various Early Medieval dates. It seems that the site was settled already in the 7th century (Brezje 4 and 5) and continued until the 12th century, occasionally shifting from one micro-location to another (Bekić 2009; 2013, 248).

The most extensive and most thoroughly published excavations have been carried out at Torčec, near Koprivnica (Sekelj Ivančan 2010). Similar to Brezje, Torčec also exhibited several micro-locations of Early Medieval settlements. The largest part of the finds can be dated to the period from the late 8th century onwards. However, at the site of Prečno Pole I a sunken hut and another feature have been excavated, yielding ¹⁴C dates of the late 6th and early 7th centuries. The hut was of an irregular square layout, presumably with a tent-like roof structure (no post holes have been discovered). The finds were mostly fragments of coarse and undecorated pottery, but also animal bones, fragments of burnt daub, a spindle whorl, a fragmented bone comb and a fire steel. Two further sunken huts belong to the second phase of the settlement (Torčec II), from the first half or the middle of the 7th to the middle or the second half of the 8th centuries. Their layout is generally similar and the finds are also simple, but the pottery of this phase is mostly wheel-turned and decorated (usually with multiple wavy and straight lines). A single grave of an older man found within the settlement also belongs to this phase (Sekelj Ivančan 2010, 26–49, 76–89, 105–124, 152–169).

A smaller excavation further east, at the site of Virovitica — Đota, uncovered three Early Medieval features. One of them was a sunken hut of a rectangular layout with curved edges, inside of which traces of burnt planks were found along with fragments of coarse pottery decorated with incised wavy lines. There were also remains of an oven construction. According to the ¹⁴C dates, the feature functioned in the late 7th and the first half of the 8th centuries (Sekelj Ivančan, Tkalčec 2008, 113–114).

Also two cremation cemeteries, one from Vinkovci — Duga ulica 99, with 10 graves (Sekelj Ivančan, Tkačec 2006), and the other from Belišće — Zagajci, with 32 graves (Filipec 2009a) are of the same period. The recently discovered settlement site at Buzin, just south of Zagreb is also contemporary, with pit features, some of which might have been dwellings. One of them exhibited some remains of iron slag, possibly indicating some kind of metalworking production. Most of the dates point to the period between the middle of the 7th and the late 9th century, but there are indications of a possible earlier beginning of the



Fig. 2. Siscia. Selected Late Antiquity coins (1 — Photo by B. Suntešić, courtesy of Gradski muzej Sisak; 2–12 — Photo by I. Krajcar, courtesy of Arheološki muzej u Zagrebu).

1 — maiorina of emperor Theodosius I; 2–12: bronze coins of emperor Arcadius (Photos not to scale).

settlement (Radman Livaja, Galić, Perinić 2011; Sečkar 2011). Most recently another early medieval site has been discovered in rescue excavations during the reconstruction and extension of the Zagreb Airport “Pleso” in the vicinity of Velika Gorica south of Zagreb. Seven shallow sunken features are taken as indicating dwellings belonging to an early Slavic settlement. An oven, pottery fragments and a small fragment of a thin bone two-rowed comb have also been found. The ^{14}C analysis of an oven sample has yielded a date of 690–750 A.D.



Fig. 3. Siscia. Selected Late Antiquity coins; Photo by B. Suntešić (courtesy of Gradski muzej Sisak).

1–15 — bronze coins from the site of the „June 22nd” elementary school playground.

(Bunčić 2017)⁵⁸. Next to the Buzin site, the Pleso site is so far the closest one to Sisak. Somewhat isolated is the find of a pottery urn with cremated remains of a male individual from the Our Lady of Mountain (*Majka Božja Gorska*) site in Lobar in Hrvatsko Zagorje. The urn was discovered south of the existing church at the spot where the remnants of a Carolingian-era wooden church had been

⁵⁸ The “Pleso” site finds are displayed in the recently opened new medieval permanent exhibition of the Archaeological Museum in Zagreb, authored by Ž. Demo.



Fig. 4. Siscia. Selected Early Byzantine coins; Photo by I. Krajcar (courtesy of Arheološki muzej u Zagrebu; Photos not to scale).

1-5 — coins of Theoderic the Great minted in the name of emperor Anastasius I; 6-9 — coins of Theoderic the Great minted in the name of emperor Justinus I; 10-11 — coins of anonymous Lombard kings minted in the name of emperor Justinian I; 12-13 — coins of emperor Phocas.

previously unearthed. The urn also contained remains of cattle, sheep or goat, deer and pig. The find has been seen as a clear indication of a cremation grave, which belonged to a well-off member of the local Slavic community, and has been dated to the late 8th or the early 9th centuries (Flipec 2009b).

The expanding number of excavations in recent years has thus uncovered several settlements which can be connected with the early Slavic settlement of present-day northern and eastern Croatia and further excavations will surely produce more such finds. What has been said about the early medieval settlement situation in northern and eastern Croatia, as well as general settlement features, is comparable to that



Fig. 5. Siscia. Pottery from the Early Middle Age Period; Photo by I. Krajcar (courtesy of Arheološki muzej u Zagrebu).
 a — ceramic pot from the river Kupa, 7th c.; b-c — ceramic pots from Treća street, 9th/10th–11th c.

of eastern Slovenia (Guštin 2002; 2008). This is of course only the beginning of this kind of research and one should always bear in mind the problem of ethnic determination of material finds. Still, the finds so far show that larger area of former Pannonia Savia was populated in this period, and by a new population.

Already after the disappearance of Ostrogothic government, Siscia itself certainly began losing its urban characteristics, with the town's degradation climaxing under Avar rule. If the Slavs had to take the town by arms, which seems likely judging by the fate of the Lobar fort, it certainly suffered destruction that had a negative reflection on local living conditions. For now, it is impossible to determine the extent to which life continued, i.e. which parts of the former Roman town were completely abandoned and which had to a certain extent kept

their settlement functionality. Moreover, according to one opinion, the Avar-Slavic settlement was located on the opposite side of (post-)Roman Siscia, south of the river Kupa, in the southern, hilly part of Pogorelec, where the former Segestica is considered to have existed earlier (Budak 1994a, 172; 1994b, 101)⁵⁹. In the same southern part of Pogorelec, present-day Novi Sisak, a Roman period necropolis was located (Buzov 1999, 262). However, for now there are no Early Medieval finds from the Pogorelec area. On the contrary, the existing finds with known locations suggest settlement continuity at the site of Roman Siscia. Two ceramic pots (one from the 9th/10th, the other from the 11th century) were discovered in Treća Street (Fig. 5:b, c), 11th century ceramic remains by the church of the Holy Cross, while examples of the so-called Bijelo Brdo jewellery from the late 10th and the 11th centuries were found in the Street of king Tomislav, close to the eastern Late Roman necropolis (Sekelj Ivančan 2001, 201–202).

This would point to a conclusion that the Early Medieval settlement was approximately in the central and southern part of former Siscia, if the ceramic finds can be taken as indicative of the settlement area. Its inhabitants were obviously buried next to the Late Antiquity cemetery. It can also be imagined that the settlement was protected by a moat, earthen rampart and a wooden palisade, i.e. that it had functioned as a typical Early Slavic fortified settlement. That would justify the fact that Frankish sources note this settlement as a *civitas*, which indicates its relative size and fortification⁶⁰. On the other hand, it may be that the fort of Siscia was located at the site of Segestica, thus making possible additional supervision of the surrounding area (Gračanin 2011, 256). After the region between the Sava, Drava and Danube came under Frankish rule, the Sisak settlement experienced a boom, apparently becoming the centre of the dukedom of Lower Pannonia⁶¹.

⁵⁹ The author leaves an open possibility of a settlement on both sides of the river Kupa. For the location of pre-Roman Segestica see Nenadić 1988, 72–73; Burkowsky 1999, 19; I. Radman Livača (2007, 160–170) points out the fact of the duration of the toponym Segestica during the period of Roman Siscia.

⁶⁰ Siscia/Sisak is mentioned as a *civitas* in *Annales regni Francorum*, a. 822 and *Annales Fuldenses*, a. 823.

⁶¹ Frankish influence is clearly indicated by finds of the Carolingian Era: a small, probably Frankish, battle axe (*francisca*) with the edge extended on both sides, and remains of strap elements of unpreserved spurs of Carolingian characteristics, dated to the late 8th and the early 9th century (Gračanin 2011, 324). However, regarding the *francisca* one must ask the question when and under which circumstances it came to this area, since it is a weapon which was more or less out of use from the late 6th century and so the later finds are explained as traditional remains or grave goods of older individuals (Hübener 1995, 475). In archaeological literature the finds of a *francisca* in northern Croatia are sometimes explained through the Germanic presence in the region between the Sava, Drava and Danube in the 6th century (Sokol 1986, 56; Sekelj Ivančan 1995, 147, no. 289; Rapan Papeša 2012, 427–428), but it is equally possible that the weapon came here as a part of war booty, since the Avars had fought the Franks in the second half of the 6th century (Pohl 2002, 45–46).

CONCLUSION

Even though the historical reconstruction offered here is sketchy and picture of post-Roman Siscia and Early Medieval Sisak an impressionistic one, some conclusions may be drawn. Roman-period Siscia at the end of the Roman Classical period went through the same transformation which numerous urban centres throughout the European parts of the Roman Empire were subject to. The far-reaching weakening of the Roman state system in the end caused the unstoppable decay of Roman towns, which were no longer able to sustain former prosperity in the greatly changed circumstances. The ever greater weakness of the once propulsive curial councils reflected very unfavourably on living conditions in urban environments. Exceptions were those urban entities that could count on greater interest of imperial authorities, among which Siscia, a prominent provincial centre on the crossroads of important roads and in the vicinity of mining facilities, can surely be included. Thus it is founded to presume that in the 4th century Siscia was one of the most developed Pannonian towns, even though archaeological research still hasn't provided a basis for a thorough reconstruction of its urban paradigms in the said period. Although mostly spared by the big crisis that befell vast parts of Pannonia in the late 4th and early 5th century, Siscia did not preserve the full vitality of its urban tissue after the region between the Sava, Drava and Danube had come under Hunnic influence. The proximity of the Huns had a direct effect on the retreat of the representatives of civil and military administration from the town. In the 530s the town additionally found itself in a gap since the Pannonian provinces were ceded to the Eastern Roman Empire, which did not care much for the western part of the region between the Sava, Drava and Danube.

It can be assumed that the second half of the 5th century was the time when the urban degradation of Siscia experienced its first climax. A sort of recovery came only with the Ostrogothic rule at the turn of the century. Narrative sources testify to the restoration of town administration and church organisation, while relatively numerous finds of Ostrogothic coins indicate the strengthening of economic and financial flows as well. The renewal was short-lived, since already under Lombard rule the urban decay of Siscia, already happening during earlier periods anyway, continued. It was surely finished by the end of the 6th century, with the final blow dealt by the Slavic advance and the establishment of Avar domination. This began the transformation process of post-Roman Siscia into the Early Medieval settlement. Its area kept the topical settlement continuity, clearly indicated by archaeological finds. The Early Medieval settlement seems to have been located in the central and southern parts of former Siscia and in all likelihood resembled a typical Early Slavic fortified settlement. This does not rule out the possibility of the existence of a fort erected in its proximity, on the other bank of the river Kupa, in the southern part of Pogorelec, although archaeology has not corroborated such a claim yet. Finally, the advent of Frankish rule enabled a new boom of the settlement. Its political and administrative role as a probable centre of the dukedom of Lower Pannonia was surely a consequence of an exceptional geostrategic location as well as sufficient

size and fortification, because of which it was labelled a *civitas* by Frankish sources. This was at the same time a sort of restoration of the status which Siscia had in the Late Roman period, though not of its former urban development.

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Abbreviations

AA	Auctores Antiquissimi
AF	Archäologische Forschungen
Aves	Arheološki vestnik.
BAR Int. S.	British Archaeological Reports International Series
BySl	Byzantinoslavica
CCSL	Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina
CEFR	Collection de l'École française de Rome
CIAC	Congressus internationalis archaeologiae christianae
Dph	Denkschriften der philosophisch-historischen Klasse
GGMS	Godišnjak Gradskog muzeja Sisak
JbRGZM	Jahrbuch des Römisch-Germanischen Zentralmuseums Mainz
JRAr S	Journal of Roman Archaeology Supplementary Series
MGH	Monumenta Germaniae Historica
RE	Real-Encyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft
RGA	Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde
SRLI	Scriptores rerum Langobardicarum et Italicarum saec. VI–IX
SS	Scriptorum
SSRG	Scriptores rerum Germanicarum
VAMZ	Vjesnik Arheološkog muzeja u Zagrebu (III. ser.)

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