

## THE WORLD OF LATE ANTIQUE SOPIANAE: ARTISTIC CONNECTIONS AND SCHOLARLY PROBLEMS

An important Roman town in the province of Pannonia, Sopianae became the capital of Valeria province in the AD fourth century when the province was divided into four new administrative units. In its heyday, the town of Sopianae was influenced as much by the west as the east, or the Balkans. This paper focuses on the artistic connections and their impacts, which can be traced in the late antique cemetery in Sopianae with the help of some examples. Some issues that seem important to describe the situation of the town within the Late Roman Empire will be discussed; for example, even though Sopianae did not lie within the Balkans as it is defined today, the town nevertheless had very strong connections with that region. The closest parallels for the paintings found in the burials chambers under the Early Christian mausolea of Sopianae are those found in Niš. However, the network of connections was not straightforward. Some influences have oriental features although they actually came from territories lying to the west of the town. Influences, which reached Sopianae from the Balkans were usually of western origin.

### *The Situation of the Town in Late Antiquity*

Due to the constant Barbarian attacks along the Danube limes, the civil administrations of the newly organised, smaller provinces were established in the hinterland of Pannonia, while the military governors (*duces*) maintained their residences in the former capitals along the Danube (Carnuntum and Aquincum). Sopianae became the headquarters of the civilian governor (*praeses*) of the province of Valeria, located in the north-eastern territories of Pannonia.<sup>1</sup> This change in the status of the town was followed by investments from the state. The first fifty years of the AD fourth century represented a period of rapid growth funded by imperial sources. Many buildings were reconstructed and a new street grid was laid down. The palace of the governor and the huge

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<sup>1</sup> Amm. Marc.: *Res Gestae*, 28:1; Ferenc Fülep, A pécsi ókeresztény mauzóleum ásatása (Excavations of the Late Roman – Old Christian Mausoleum in Pécs), *JPMÉ* 32 (1977), hereafter Fülep, A pécsi ókeresztény, pp. 31-44.

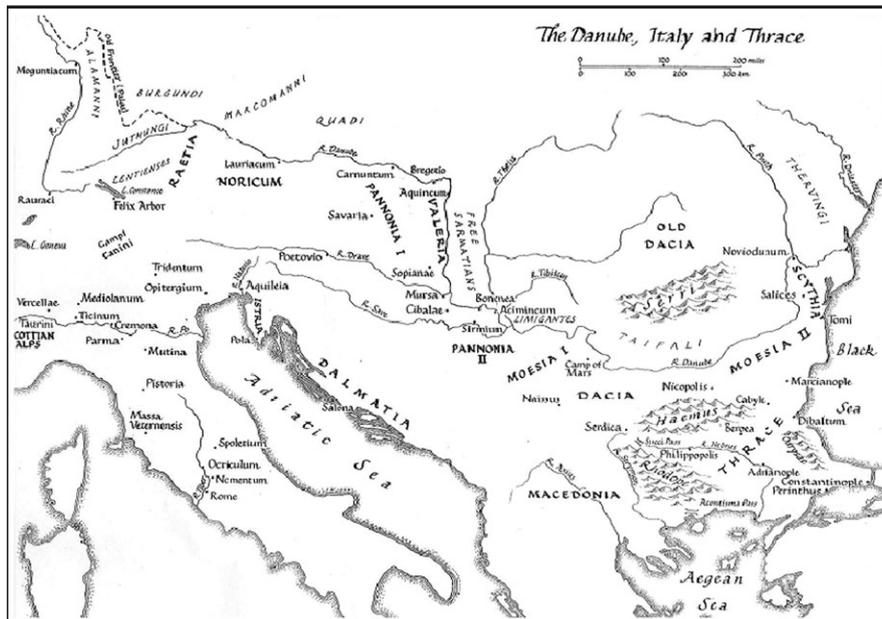


Fig. 1. Map of the middle regions of the Roman Empire in the AD fourth century. After Ammianus Marcellinus, *The Later Roman Empire*, translated by W. Hamilton (Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1986), pp. 502-503.

Сл. 1 Мапа средњих области римског царства у IV веку. По Аманијану Марцелину, *The Later Roman Empire*, превоо W. Hamilton (Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1986), pp. 502-503.

structure of a bath complex were built.<sup>2</sup> Within these new circumstances, the Christian Church became the main player in the local society, funded by the emperors and wealthy individuals, although Christians were probably still in minority among the citizens. Local society included native Celts, Italian settlers, Dalmatians, immigrants from the Danube provinces, and families from other parts of Pannonia. This mixed local society was the result of the good commercial connections and trade routes which had run through the city. Sopianae had well-established commercial connections and complex economic links with Italy, Gaul, Germany, Rhaetia, the Balkans, Constantinople and even with the Barbaricum on the other side of the Danube *limes*. The population of the town comprised landowners, retired soldiers and their families, traders, craftsmen and bureaucrats.<sup>3</sup> Among the local aristocrats, there were the members of the town's council, as well. Although to be a member of a town's council in Late Antiquity was not an easy matter, as one had to supplement the tax income if

<sup>2</sup> Noel Lenski, *Failure of the Empire. Valens and the Roman State in the Fourth Century A.D.* (Berkeley, University of California, 2002), p. 42; Ferenc Fülep, *Sopianae: The History of Pécs during the Roman Era, and the Problem of the Continuity of the Late Roman Population* (Budapest, Akadémiai, 1984), hereafter Fülep, *Sopianae*, pp. 34-35.

<sup>3</sup> Fülep, *Sopianae*, pp. 258. and 276.

it did not reach the expected levels, which usually it did not. For that reason, financial power was in the hands of the landowners, who could avoid municipal obligations.<sup>4</sup> This landowner-aristocracy had a considerable influence on the town.

The main military road between Constantinople and Trier ran through Sopianaе in the AD fourth century. From Italy, an important trade route between Milan, Aquileia, Poetovio (Ptuj, Slovenia) and Mursa offered good connections to Sopianaе and linked the city with another late antique western imperial capital: Milan. However, Aquileia was the main starting point for immigration from Italy to Sopianaе, something clearly shown by the evident influences coming from the North-Italian metropolis on Sopianaе. The *limes* road along the Danube was also within a day's walking distance and linked the town to the Danube, another important route between east and west.<sup>5</sup> In addition, of course, the town had good connections with other important Pannonian towns such as Carnuntum, Savaria, Siscia and Aquincum. On the other hand, the Balkan provinces were very close to Sopianaе. Through these provinces travellers from the east came to the town via land and via water (from the Adriatic coast). The crossing point at the River Drave at Mursa was only two days' walking distance from Sopianaе; hence the Valerian town was on the route of every eastern traveller who wanted to cross the Drave towards the west. (fig. 1)

Very few details are available about the Roman town itself in Sopianaе/Pécs. The main database, for this research is the late antique cemetery, north of the town. The focus here will be on funerary remains. Late Roman funerary sites are commonly found everywhere in the territory of the former Roman Empire. The late antique cemetery of Sopianaе/Pécs lies close to where scholars suspect the western gate of the Roman town-wall, which was located near a road that leads to the north. The use of the site as a burial ground had begun in the AD third century. In it there are pagan and Christian graves together with more than thirty funerary buildings.<sup>6</sup> In the first decades of the AD fourth century, east-west oriented inhumations appeared amongst the burials. In the second half of the AD fourth century, rich mausolea were built with underground burial chambers (*hypogeia*), among other buildings like the unique *cella septichora*. They are later than similar developments in the catacombs of Rome.<sup>7</sup> The most representative buildings will be discussed in this paper such as the 'Early Christian Mausoleum',<sup>8</sup> the St Peter and Paul Burial Chamber and the 'Burial Chamber of the Jar'.

<sup>4</sup> Cyrill Mango (ed.), *The Oxford History of Byzantium* (Oxford, University Press, 2002), hereafter Mango, *The Oxford History*, p. 72.

<sup>5</sup> Fülep, *Sopianaе*, pp. 12-13.

<sup>6</sup> Fülep, 'Sopianaе', pp. 15-16 and 60; Olivér Gábor, A pécsi későantik temető épületeinek számozása, *Sopianaе Krónika* (2007), pp. 11-14.

<sup>7</sup> Leonard Rutgers, *Subterranean Rome. Search of the Roots of Christianity in the Catacombs of the Eternal City* (Leuven, Peeters, 2000), hereafter Rutgers, *Subterranean Rome*, p. 68.

<sup>8</sup> The name of the building is unfortunate, as nearly all funerary buildings from the cemetery are mausolea, and there are several, which are clearly Christian. It should be mentioned that the funerary buildings are often called burial chambers, even those which do not

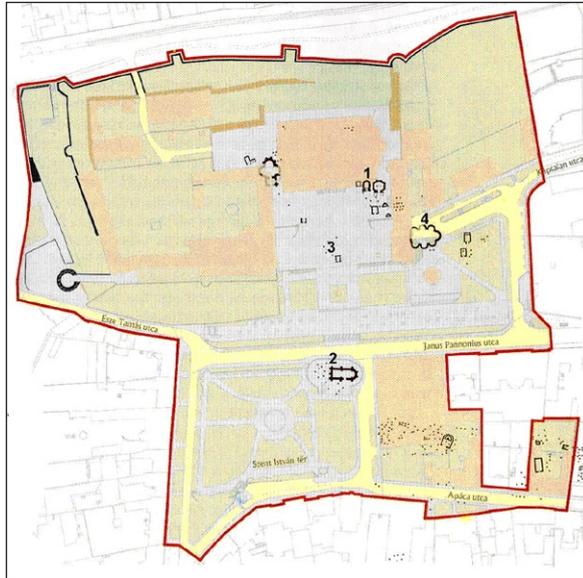


Fig. 2. The Early Christian Cemetery of Sopianae. After K. Hudák and L. Nagy, *A Fine and Private Place. Discovering the Early Christian Cemetery of Sopianae/Pécs (Pécs, Sopianae Örökség Kht., 2005)*

Сл. 2. Ранохришћанско гробље Сопиане. По К. Худаку и Л. Нађу, *A Fine and Private Place. Discovering the Early Christian Cemetery of Sopianae/Pécs (Pécs, Sopianae Örökség Kht., 2005)*

More than thirty funerary buildings are known from the Early Christian Cemetery of Sopianae from the AD fourth century, many of them decorated with wall paintings. The subjects and the artistic style of the wall paintings display a close relationship with the paintings in the Roman catacombs. On the other hand, the Sopianae burial chambers belong to the Macedonian *hypogaeum* type, which occurs in a region, centred in the Balkan provinces. Sopianae seems to be the northernmost settlement of this cultural tradition, as no painted burial chambers have been found in Pannonia north of the city.<sup>9</sup> (fig. 2)

The wall paintings of the St Peter and Paul Burial Chamber in Sopianae represent the pinnacle of Early Christian art in Pannonia.<sup>10</sup> The main painting on the northern wall of the burial chamber, depicting St Peter and Paul, is related to catacomb paintings in Rome.<sup>11</sup> However, the closest parallel is the representation of St Peter and Paul in the burial chamber from Niš. The depiction of Christ and the two main apostles was the symbol of Rome in the second part of the AD fourth century and the symbol of catholic church, probably opposing the Arians. The acanthus tendrils on the southern and northern wall of the burial chamber are similar to the acanthus tendril motifs of the Theodorus mosaic in the double basilica at Aquileia, but before that, the motif occurred in Rome as well in the *Case Romane* and in the St John and Paul catacomb. Four male portraits can be

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have an underground part, which is clearly wrong. In most cases, it would be better to call them mausoleum, or the exact type should be named, like *cella septichora* or *cella trichora*.

<sup>9</sup> Endre Tóth, *Pannonia Christiana. A kereszténység kezdetei a Kárpát-medencében, Életünk* 8 (1991), pp.740-747.

<sup>10</sup> Krisztina Nagyné Hudák, *Bibliai témák és szentábrázolások a Sirmiumi metropolia ókeresztény művészetében*, unpublished MA thesis (Department of Archaeology, Eötvös Lóránd University, Budapest, 2003), hereafter Nagyné Hudák, 'Bibliai témák', p. 38.

<sup>11</sup> Fülep, *Sopianae*, p. 39.



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

Сл. 3. Северни зид гробнице Св. Петра и Пола. По Худаку-Нађу, 'A Fine and Private Place', Слика 18.

seen on the barrel-vault in medallions around a Chi-Rho symbol. Plants, flowers and birds around the portraits represent Paradise. There are stylistic parallels with the medallions in the *Ciriaca* catacomb in Rome<sup>12</sup> and with the medallions on the Theodorus mosaic in Aquileia. The *fin de siècle* portraiture applied, and its characteristics overall are typical of the late AD fourth century.<sup>13</sup> The composition of decoration in the whole burial chamber, especially the Paradise scene on the barrel-vault with its flowers, plants, doves and peacocks were probably inspired by similar work from Aquileia. However, these motifs can be found in the Balkans as well (again under the influence of Aquileia).<sup>14</sup> In this single building an Italian influence can be observed which probably reached the town from the Balkans. (figs. 3, 4)

Another important building is the so-called 'Early Christian Mausoleum', which can be dated to middle of the AD fourth century. Its building type has a parallel in the mausoleum in Marusinac, near Salona.<sup>15</sup> The mausoleum in Salona has a similar size, similar dimensions and a similar internal organisation as the mausoleum in Sopiana. The paintings on the northern wall of the 'Early Christian Mausoleum' of Sopiana depicts the Fall of Adam and Eve

<sup>12</sup> Zoltán Kádár, *Pannonia ókeresztény emlékeinek ikonográfiája* (Budapest, Stephaneum, 1939), hereafter Kádár, *Pannonia*, pp. 14-15.

<sup>13</sup> Hudák-Nagy, *A Fine and Private Place*, pp. 46-47.

<sup>14</sup> Fülep, *Sopiana*, p. 39; Hudák – Nagy, *A Fine and Private Place*, p. 44.

<sup>15</sup> Ejnar Dyggve, *History of Salonitan Christianity* (Oslo, Aschehoug, 1951) cited in Hudák – Nagy, *A Fine and Private*, p. 17.



Fig. 4. The main painting from the western wall of the Niš burial chamber. After Miša Rakocija and Jelena Rakocija, *Monasteries and Churches of Niš*, CD-ROM edition (Niš, Studentski Kulturni Centar, n.d.)

Сл. 4. Слика са западног зида нишке гробнице. Миша Ракоција и Јелена Ракоција, *Манастири и цркве града Ниша*.

and Daniel in the Lions' Den. The inspiration for the paintings of the mausoleum was clearly the catacomb art in Rome, where the theme of the Fall was very popular. It is possible that wandering Italian painters worked in Sopianae from Italian sample books. Two epigraphs of such painters have been found in Savaria (Szombathely, Hungary) in northern Pannonia. Thus, evidence exists for the presence of wandering artists in the province.<sup>16</sup> In Aquae Iasae (Varaždinske Toplice, Croatia) in southern Pannonia, a fragment of a wall painting depicting a saint found in the middle of the main basilica is also likely to be the work of an Italian travelling artist from Rome or Aquileia.<sup>17</sup> The Daniel painting on the northern wall depicts the popular Early Christian topic: Daniel in the lions' den. Daniel is the archetype of the persecuted Christians who in the end escaped from eternal death.<sup>18</sup> This subject can be found many times in the catacombs of Rome (for example in the *Lucina* catacomb). However, the depiction of Daniel in the

<sup>16</sup> Fülep, *A pécsi ókeresztény*, p. 254-255.

<sup>17</sup> Branka Migotti, *Evidence for Christianity in Roman Southern Pannonia (Northern Croatia). A catalogue of finds and sites* (Oxford, BAR Int. Ser. 684, 1997), hereafter Migotti, *Evidence for Christianity*, p. 33.

<sup>18</sup> Zoltán Kádár, *Ókeresztény és kora bizánci művészet* (Budapest, Gondolat, 1959), p. 4.

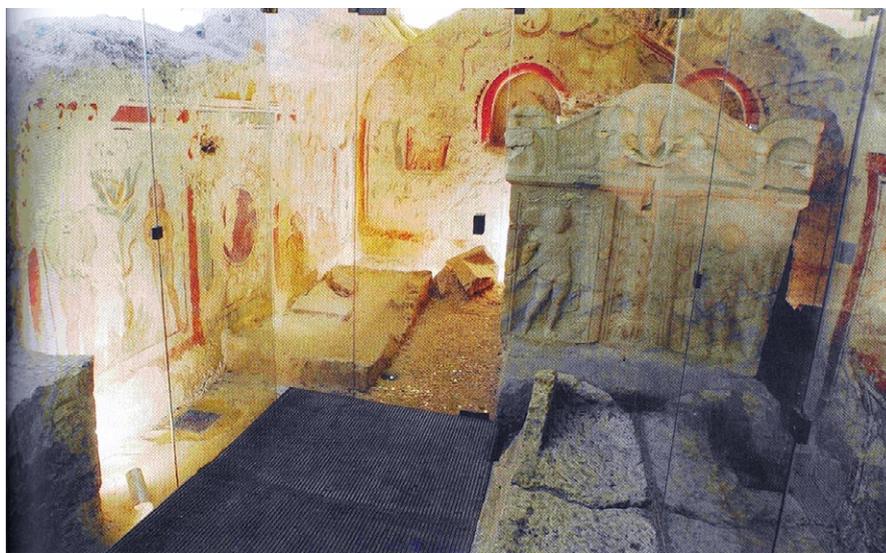


Fig. 5. An insight to the crypt of the Early Christian Mausoleum. After Hudák-Nagy, *A Fine and Private Place*, Picture 4.

Сл. 5. Увид у крипту ранохришћанског маузолеја. По Худаку-Нађу, 'A Fine and Private Place', Слика 4.

Sopianae fresco displays similarities with the figure of the Good Shepherd in the Good Shepherd Grave in Thessalonica.<sup>19</sup> In Sopianae, Daniel wears a tunic instead of the usual Persian dress, which is a typical western characteristic.<sup>20</sup> There are numerous parallel examples to the paintings in the mausoleum. The plant decoration on the northeast wall is similar to that found in graves Nr 4 and 8 in Serdica (Sophia, Bulgaria). The figure in the white gown has parallels in the Noah figures in the catacombs and in Salonica, in the Good Shepherd grave. The plant decoration around this painting can also be found in Niš. The red ribbons, which are hung from the Chi-Rho symbol on the northeast wall and the position of Eve's head and the style of her hair reflect similarities with the paintings in the Eustorgius grave in Salonica. The hair of the lions on the painting of Daniel is similar to the hair on the lions from Arles. (fig. 5)

Our third building is the 'Burial Chamber of the Jar' or Burial Chamber Nr 2. It is a rectangular building and there is a burial chamber under the mausoleum. The main importance of the building lies within the wall paintings in the burial chamber. The painting contains decorative elements rather than single wall paintings, apart from the image of the Glass and the Jug in a niche in the northern wall. There are two sections of paintings on the walls. The lower part is decorated in rectangles, painted to look like marble. As a part of this lower band, there is a rectangular imitation marble slab under the niche. Arrowhead-

<sup>19</sup> Nagyné Hudák, *Bibliai témák*, p. 36.

<sup>20</sup> Kádár, *Pannonia*, pp. 27-29.



Fig. 6. Northern wall of the Burial Chamber with the Jar. After Hudák-Nagy, 'A Fine and Private Place', Picture 10.

Сл. 6. Северни зид гробнице са Крчагом. По Худаку-Нађу, 'A Fine and Private Place', Слика 10.

shaped yellow flowers with green leaves symbolize the Garden of Paradise.<sup>21</sup> On the upper part of the northern wall, there is a representation of two vine tendrils with grape leaves and greyish-purple grapes. The vine tendril on the northern wall and the geometric decoration are closely connected with the Niš burial chamber. Marble incrustation imitation with rich floral and vine tendril decoration can be found in Grave Nr 7 in the church of Santa Sofia in Serdica. The Salonica burial chamber also has some panels with grid patterns and with the imitation marble incrustation that is similar to the Sopianae paintings.<sup>22</sup> The trellis-motif decoration all around the lower section of the paintings is similar to the decoration found in Serdica, Grave Nr 7. To summarize, the 'Burial Chamber with the Jar' displays similar influences to the two previously mentioned funerary buildings from Sopianae although of the three, it was the least sophisticated and was decorated more simply. (figs. 6,7)

Our last building is the Cella Septichora, which is a very unique building. No similar building with the same ground plan has been unearthed elsewhere in the Roman Empire. Ferenc Fülep<sup>23</sup> suggested that it had been a funerary basilica where the Eucharist had been celebrated. On the other hand, the results of the new excavations in 2005/2006 suggest that it was never been used, but was left

<sup>21</sup> Hudák – Nagy, *A Fine and Private Place*, p. 30.

<sup>22</sup> Fülep, *Sopianae*, p. 45.

<sup>23</sup> Fülep, *Sopianae*.

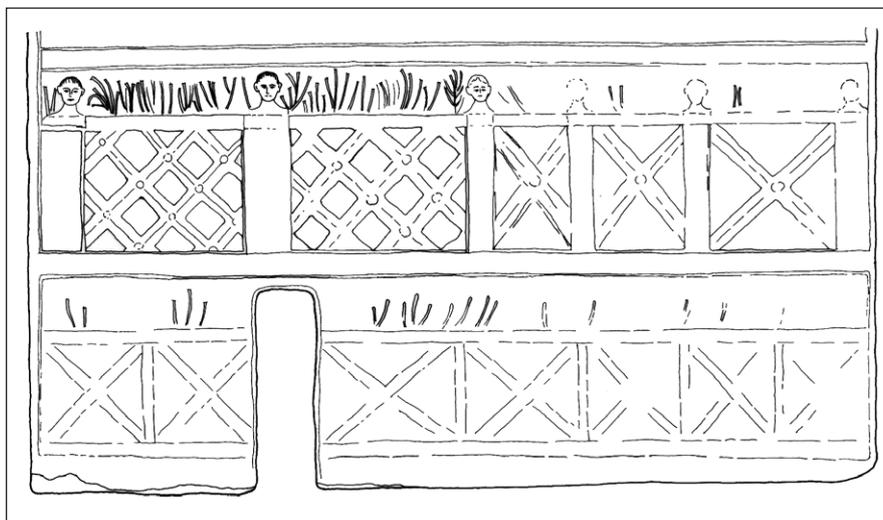


Fig. 7. The Early Christian Crypt at Niš, details from the northern wall. After Miša Rakocija, *Манастири и цркве града Ниша (Monasteries and Churches of Niš)*, Niš, 1998, fig. 8.

Сл. 7. Ранохришћанска гробница у Нишу, детаљи са северног зида. По Миши Ракоцији, *Манастири и цркве града Ниша (Monasteries and Churches of Niš)*, Ниш 1998, Сл. 8.

unfinished.<sup>24</sup> It was possibly intended to be a community place for large congregations or common burial place for rich citizens. The closest parallel to the Sopianae building is the mausoleum under the St Gereon in Cologne.<sup>25</sup>

As far as simple graves are concerned, many different types of graves can be found in the late antique cemetery of Sopianae. Most had some kind of roof, and many of them had walls. All graves were subterranean, and the simplest ones were earthen. For constructed graves, the main building material was brick. These graves were usually plastered. The types of graves found in Sopianae were not unique in Pannonia. For example, a grave vault similar to a type found in Sopianae was found in nearby Certissa (Štrbinici, Croatia). The structure of the graves in Manastirine, next to Salona (Solin, Croatia) is also similar to the Sopianae graves.<sup>26</sup> A rare feature is the children's cemetery west of Burial Chamber Nr 13. The cemetery contained sixty-five children's skeletons altogether, including newborn babies, infants and teenagers. This cemetery is similar to the children's cemetery in Ziegelfeld (Austria) (Graves 72-77) dated to the AD fifth century.<sup>27</sup> The finest example among the Sopianae graves is a double tomb constructed of stone and brick. The inner walls of the tomb were

<sup>24</sup> Zsolt Visy, *Cella septichora. Előzetes beszámoló a Szent István téren, az ókeresztény temető területén folytatott régészeti kutatásokról*, *Pécsi Szemle* 9/2 (2006), pp. 3-13.

<sup>25</sup> Friedrich Gerke, cited in Fülep, *Sopianae*, p. 58.

<sup>26</sup> Migotti, *Evidence for Christianity*, pp. 37-38.

<sup>27</sup> Fülep, *Sopianae*, p. 176.

plastered and decorated with Chi-Rho monograms and red and yellow flowers. This kind of decoration may often be seen in the painted funerary chambers of the Balkan provinces and the catacombs of Rome.

### *The Nature of Influence*

The evidence presented here shows the mixed influences that arrived in Roman Sopianae. It is easy to recognise the strong influence of Rome, Italy and other western provinces. However, the eastern influence is also considerable. How did these artistic influences come to Sopianae? There were several possible routes. For example, as has already been mentioned, travelling artists may have played an important role in promoting a certain artistic style. The élite culture of Rome would also have been an important model. Aristocrats around the governor would be eager to keep up with new cultural movements in Rome (see for example the reform of Pope Damasus, which can be followed in catacomb art).<sup>28</sup> Funerary art was especially important because that was the only memory of a person's life that remained after his/her death. High-ranking people were especially sensitive to questions of remembrance. It should not be forgotten, however, that influences did not travel. People did, and in the AD fourth century people moved around extensively. By the fourth century, the oriental influence was considerable in the area. People from everywhere in the Empire ended up in Sopianae, and no doubt they brought their funerary art with them. However, what has biased the results of the archaeological record is the status of those who were buried. Most of the remains are from high-status burials (funerary buildings), hence our data came from a high-status context. This does not mean that the lower classes were also subject to the same kind of influences.

One should not forget that the real reason behind erecting a monument I discussed (except the mysterious *cella septichora*), was the commemoration of the social self of the deceased. The type of commemoration was influenced as much by the social, religious, regional identities of the families, erected the monuments, as the artistic impacts of the artist, who undertook the task of the decoration. The real question should be asked in a longer work is why a certain family choose a special type of representation, and why they picked up a special kind of decoration from the available options. It would be also useful to investigate the shift in the late antique society, where the deceased citizens of the towns played an important role in the towns' local society, as earlier, but new *patroni* emerged, the martyrs. While in the case of Naissus we have clear details, that the funerary monuments of the late antique cemeteries clustered around martyr burials, in Sopianae we do not have such a data, yet.

It is also problematic to divide the artistic and other influences into 'eastern' and 'western'. Even the linguistic differences were not very great because at least within the upper classes, many Latin writers chose to write in Greek, and vice versa. The language of the administration in the East was Latin until the AD sixth century.<sup>29</sup> Furthermore, even if it would be possible to demonstrate

<sup>28</sup> For more information on that see: Rutgers, *Subterranean Rome*.

<sup>29</sup> Mango, *The Oxford History*, p. 5.

influences of eastern origin, these impulses could have arrived from the west to Sopianae. Hence even apparently eastern style artistic influences demonstrate western influence, not eastern, from the town's point of view. There is enough evidence for a strong western influence in Sopianae in the AD fourth century through the influence of the Roman catacombs, Aquileian Christianity, and trade from Gaul and the Danube provinces to support this argument archaeologically. Study of the archaeological remains reveals the strong influence of wall paintings from the Roman catacombs although North Italian examples were also applied. Rich finds from Gaul and the Danube provinces confirm additional connections with these areas.

The Balkan provinces, which formed a relatively united region, at least on a cultural level, also played its role in the town's life. After Italy and Rome lost their leading position within the Empire in the AD fourth century, the provinces became more important, and the importance of the Balkans, with Sirmium at its centre, has been emphasised by scholars. In the person of the Emperor Constans (AD 337-350), this central part of the Empire had an independent ruler, who reigned in the Balkans, Italy and Africa.<sup>30</sup> The effect of the Greek-speaking eastern and Balkan culture was strong in fourth-century Sopianae, as can be traced through art historical evidence.<sup>31</sup> Naissus – called 'Martyropolis' in the AD fourth century – was clearly an important centre of the martyr cult.<sup>32</sup> It is obvious the Naissus influenced Sopianae in one or other way.

What is now necessary, however, is a complete study of funerary practices of the Balkans. The results of that future research may potentially establish the presence of a culturally flourishing region between east and west in the Balkans and surrounding regions. As this region lay partly in the Western and partly in the Eastern Empires, the results should be striking and may reveal a variety of mixed cultural influences.

Жолт Мађар

#### СВЕТ КАСНО АНТИЧКЕ SOPIANAЕ: УМЕТНИЧКЕ ВЕЗЕ И НАУЧНИ ПРОБЛЕМИ

Један важан римски град у провинцији Панонија, Сопиане (сада модеран Печуј у Мађарској), постао је престоница провинције Валерија у IV веку нове ере, када је провинција била подељена на четири нове административне јединице. Овај рад фокусира се на уметничке везе и њихове утицаје, чији се трагови, уз помоћ неколико примера, могу пронаћи на касно античком гробљу касно античке Сопиане. Фокус је

<sup>30</sup> Peter Sarris, *The Eastern Roman Empire from Constantine to Heraclius (306-641)*, in Mango, *The Oxford History*, pp. 19-59.

<sup>31</sup> Nagyné Hudák, *Bibliai témák*, pp. 65-66.

<sup>32</sup> Miša Rakocija, *Нова сазнања о ранохришћанској прошлости Ниша (New Insight into the Early Christian Past of Niš)*, in Miša Rakocija (ed), *Niš & Byzantium. Sixth Symposium, Niš, 3-5 June 2007. The Collection of Scientific Works VI.* (Niš, The City of Niš – University of Niš, 2008), pp. 45-58, at. p. 58.

на погребним остацима. Употреба ове локације као као земљишта за сахрањивање почела је у III веку нове ере. У првим деценијама IV века на погребима се почиње са сахрањивањем у правцу исток-запад. У другој половини IV века, грађени су богати маузолеји са подземним погребним просторијама (*hypogeia*), између осталих, грађевина попут јединствене *Cella Septichora*. Оне настају касније него сличне грађевине у римским катакомбама. У овом раду разматрају се најрепрезентативније грађевине попут „Ранохришћанског Маузолеја“, гробница Св. Петра и Пола, и „Гробница са крчагом“. Предмети и уметнички стил фресака показују блиску повезаност са фрескама у римским катакомбама. Са друге стране, гробнице Сопиане припадају македонском *hypogeum* типу, који се јавља у региону смештеном у центру балканских провинција. Изгледа да је Сопиане најсеверније насеље ове културне традиције, са обзиром да осликане гробнице нису пронађене у Панонији, северно од града.

Доказ који је овде презентирани, приказује мешане утицаје који су пристигли у касно античку Сопиане. Лако се препознаје јак утицај Рима, Италије и осталих западних провинција. Међутим, постоји и знатан оријентални утицај. Како су ови уметнички утицаји стигли у Сопиане? Постајало је неколико могућих путева. На пример, могуће је да су путујући уметници одиграли значајну улогу у промовисању одређеног уметничког стила. Елитна култура Рима би такође могла да представља један значајан модел. Аристократе којима је гувернер био окружен желеле су да буду у току са новим културним кретањима у Риму. Погребна уметност била је од изузетног значаја јер је представљала једино сећање на живот преминуле особе после њене смрти. Особе високог ранга биле су посебно осетљиве по питању успомена и сећања. Али, не треба заборавити да утицаји нису путовали а да људи јесу, и да су се у IV веку људи екстензивно кретали наоколо. До IV века, постојао је знатан оријентални утицај у овој области. Људи из читаве империје пристизали су у Сопиане и, несумњиво, са собом доносили своју погребну уметност. Међутим, оно што је створило предрасуде када се ради о археолошком материјалу јесте статус оних који су сахрањивани. Већина остатака потиче од високо-статусних сахрана (погребне зграде), тако да се наши подаци односе на високо-статусни контекст. Ово не значи да су ниже класе такође подлезале истој врсти утицаја. Треба имати на уму да је прави разлог за подизање споменика, које сам овде разматрао, била комеморација друштвеног дела личности преминулог. На врсту комеморације утицао је, колико друштвени, религиозни, национални идентитет породица које су подизале споменик, толико и уметнички утицај уметника чији је задаток био украшавање. Балканске провинције, које изгледа да су биле релативно уједињена област, макар на културном нивоу, такође су играле своју улогу у градском животу. Након што су у IV веку Италија и Рим изубили своју водећу позицију у царству, провинције су постале важније, а Балкану, са Сирмијумом као центром, научници су придавали већи значај. Ефекат грчко-говорне источне и балканске културе био је јак у Сопиане у IV веку, што се може пропрагити кроз уметничке историјске доказе.