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MURSA IN THE SPOTLIGHT OF NEW SOURCES AND NEW LITERATURE

It is time to draw a new sketch of the history of Murša in the light of new results in researchwork.

The field of Murša has not yet been systematically excavated and there is not much to be hoped for, as the Roman layers of Murša had been long ago disturbed and overthrown when in the 18th and 19th centuries the modern town of Osijek had been planned and the remaining Roman ruins levelled with the ground. Of course with the present building activities, on frequent occasions, foundation walls of Roman houses and numerous other finds are still found and thus our knowledge is continually being increased. Among the new finds are inscriptions on stones, sarcophagi, gravestones, stone and bronze objects, ceramics, terra sigillata, glass, trinkets, gems, coins, bricks and tiles, sometimes with seals of producers, and so on. 4, 7-13

The epigraphic finds have been republished in contemporary literature; the sarcophagi, considered as a special group, created the idea that Murša was one of the four possible production centres for sarcophagi for Noricum and Pannonia;⁶ the examination of the Mursan sigillata suggests that it may have been imported from South Gaul and Germany (Lezoux, Rheinzabern) and of home-made Pannonian sigillata. All these facts are in concordance with the general survey of import of these wares into the South-Eastern Pannonia.¹⁴ The examination of the bronze material has pointed to the import from Italy, Gaul and the Orient as it was the case elsewhere in Pannonia.¹⁵ The results of topographic research have also been taken into account in the presentation of the Pannonian Limes in Yugoslavia¹⁶

Topographic research could point to the extent of the colony Murša, to the site of the bridge and road leading north, and to traces of more roads in its surroundings. Mócsy's and Barkóczi's results on their respective onomastic studies have been used here and helped to come to better explanations on the structure of the population of Murša, on the leading social layer, on traces of military units that were in the course of time garrisoned here and in the neighbourhood.^{3, 17, 51}

As there are no military inscriptions that would directly indicate the existence of a legionary (temporary or permanent) camp in Murša, it was possible to as-

sume with the help of comparisons and analogies that at the time of Domitian's Sarmatian, and Trajan's Dacian wars, a fairly strong military garrison must have existed here.

The well known fact should be repeated that while the occupation of South-Western Pannonia had been going on, the garrisons of Emona, Siscia and Poetovio played an essential part in it and yet there do not exist any inscriptions of leg IX Hisp. from Siscia;²² secondly, in Poetovio large buildings were erected at the very spot of the camp and of the canabae as soon as the camp was liquidated and the colony founded.²⁵ Therefore, although there are no direct proofs of the existence of a camp in Mursa and although archaeological evidence does not yet show where it stood, examples like Siscia and Poetovio encourage us to assume a military camp existed and that later the colony was built upon it. Also, according to Mócsy's opinion, the Romans already in Augustus' and Tiberius' time crossed the river Drava and had in this part of Pannonia permanent garrisons and, in pre-Claudian and Claudian time at least an auxiliary camp must have existed in Mursa.³⁰ It is hard to imagine the military occupation did not advance along the Drava Valley parallel with the penetration along the river Sava and that Mursa played no important role at it at all, especially at the time of Domitian's Suebo-Sarmatian war when there were 5 legions in Pannonia, and again at the time of Trajan's Dacian wars when only one legion was stationed at Aquincum in Pannonia Inferior. J. Klemenc relies upon the witness of the tomb inscription of Verecundus, a soldier of leg X Gem. and of the century of Paetus. This inscription had been dated between 102 and 107 and suggests that then a significant crew of the respective legion was stationed in Mursa. J. Klemenc decided that in general it should be assumed that on frequent occasions troops commissioned to defend the bridge on the Drava were stationed at Mursa.^{31, 32}

As regards the development of military forts, civil settlements and colonies and their mutual connection, G. Webster assures how in Roman Britain urban centres mostly originated out of military reasons: many of them occupied sites near forts and camps where troops had to be provided for mostly from these civil settlements. Thus in the course of time three legionary camps in Britain became colonies: Camulodunum, Lindum and Glevum. The defensive establishments of the Romano-British colony Glevum were erected just on the site of the earlier legionary camp. Viroconium is well known as the camp of leg XIV, but archaeological investigation resulted in the conclusion that the legionary camp lies deeply interred under the central surface of the town for which reason it will for ever remain impossible to solve this problem satisfactorily.⁸⁹

Taking into consideration such analogies, in the case of Mursa, we may assume a camp must have existed here in the early imperial period, while the mighty defensive walls around the colony, probably erected on the site of the earlier camp, belong to the later imperial time when all of Pannonia was exposed to attacks by barbarians.⁴¹

Mócsy's results in onomastic investigation allow us to determine, first, the legal position of a person, second, the way and time of acquiring civic rights and third, the origin of a person: whether aborigine or alien. With the help of these results some important general views over the first two centuries in Pannonian history could be obtained. Under the rule of Tiberius the romanization of the province started with veteran settlements at Emona, Savaria, Scarabantia and on the Balaton Lake. The process of romanization of Western Pannonia became intensified under the rule of the Flavii and a further step had been done in the Sava Valley with the foundation of the colonies Siscia and Sirmium. Only in Trajan's time the romanization of Eastern Pannonia started with granting of civic rights on a larger scale, while Hadrian hastened this process founding quite a number of municipia in the inner part of the province. Mursa alone was made a colony with veteran reductions and a centre of Roman culture for this part of the province.

While Mócsy maintained that, in the period up to Marcus Aurelius, the leading positions in urban settlements and in the army were mostly occupied by Northern Italics, Celts from the South of Gaul and Dalmatians, — Barkóczy,⁵¹ on the other hand, established that after the Marcomann wars, under the Severi, civic rights had been largely granted. The population along the Limes became extremely thinned but soon increased from other parts of Pannonia, by barbarians across the Danube and from different parts of the Empire, especially from the Orient. Thus a new mixed population started around the camps and on the territory of the one-time »civitates«. All these alterations are reflected in the new gentilicia

and cognomina after the Marcomann wars. While Marcus Aurelius largely grants civic rights in the whole of the province, Septimius Severus grants them particularly to local inhabitants on the Limes. Caracalla's decree finally assured civic rights to all freeborn people.⁵⁶

Analysing the inscriptions from Mursa and supported by these standpoints, it could easily be shown who were the duumviri and the decuriones in this colony. The decurio Titus Flavius Martinus for example was probably from the West whose ancestors came to Western Panonia and here obtained civic rights under the rule of Vespasianus.⁶⁴ The decurio Caius Aemilius Homullinus, who in Hadrian's time built 50 workshops with double arcades, presumably belongs to those Northern Italics who, either himself or his ancestors, came from Aquileia by way of Savaria and the Balaton Lake.⁶⁵ The decurio Titus Hortensius Frequens was perhaps from the South of Gaul.⁶⁶ Marcus Aurelius Apollinaris, the decurio of the municipium Mursella, west of Mursa, judging by his name, must have been a Greek and was living in Caracalla's time.⁶⁷ In the neighbouring place Cibalae (the present-day Vinkovci) the decurio Marcus Ulpius Fronto Aemilianus was a native of Illyricum who obtained rights under Trajan's reign, which is obvious by both his names.⁶⁸

Among the *augustales* we find a certain C. Iulius Maternus(?), presumably a Westerner by origin, and P. Aelius Callimorphus, a Greek perhaps from Northern Italy.^{70, 71}

Valerius Martialis must have belonged to some building branch of business to whom his colleagues, the »lapidari« erected a gravestone. The cognomen Martialis occurs in the North of Italy and in the West.⁷⁵ Antonius Barbilus, a merchant, probably from the Orient devoted a small altar to the unconquerable god Mithras.⁷⁶

Among the freedmen whose names are known to us, we also find a mixture of different nations. Iulia Primilla the *liberta* of Gaius, and C. Iulius Successus, her *collibertus*, must have originated from the North of Italy, respectively from Noricum. Their patronus must have been an offspring of a civilian with Iulian civic rights.⁷⁷ Flavius Philippus, a freedman of Titus Flavius Martinus was a Greek⁶⁴ and so was Asclepiades whose name we find incised on an altar dedicated to Iupiter by the decurio T. Hortensius Frequens.⁶⁶ The freed people Urbana and her son Gaetulus had as patronus a Celt by name Aterix. Urbana was probably a Pannonian native, while her son judging by his name was an offspring of an African father.⁷⁸ One imperial freedman is known only by his name Fortunatus, but because of the heavily damaged inscription we cannot guess whose emperor's slave he had been.⁷⁹ The name Fortunatus is characteristic for Oriental and African slaves after Marcus Aurelius.

Mursa was the seat of an imperial procurator. Quintus Corvinus Aemilianus is known to have been a *proc. Augg.* (perhaps during the reign of Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus) and he was by origin from the West.⁸¹ Marcus Ulpius Ianuarius is known as a *cornicularius proc. Aug.*, and one could easily guess that he was of Celtic origin although romanised.⁸² Lucius Marcius Avitus, a *b(eneficiarius) proc(uratoris)* was perhaps from Noricum,⁸³ and Caius Iulius Iulianus, also a *b. cos.* was probably a descendant from Northern Italics.⁸⁴

Only some of the examples from the late first, second and early third centuries are chosen here to show that in urban institutions, in craft and trade and in the administration of the province, descendants prevailed of earlier romanised Italics and Westerners, of Greeks and of Orientals. Only occasionally we find among them romanised aborigines.

Then, inscriptions from Mursa in which *legati Aug. pr. pr.* are mentioned, have been discussed. Caius Geminus Capellianus, *leg. Aug. pr. pr.* dedicated some gift to the Mursenses (CIL III 3282). The serving of this legate occurred in the middle of the second century when again a clash with the Jazyges, south of Alisca, burst out. It is assumed the gift was done in connection with some military action, in which the Mursenses distinguished themselves.⁸⁷ In a fragmentary inscription, the name of Castinus the very capable legate at the time of Septimius Severus and Caracalla, is mentioned, by which one could be led to suppose that some military task near Mursa might be connected with it.⁹²⁻⁹⁴

On an altar of outstanding proportions, dedicated to the river gods Danuvius and Dravus, traces of erased names of an emperor and of one legate can be discerned (CIL III 10263) which makes it more than probable that the *ara* was erected by a legate *pro salute* of Elagabal. It is not yet possible to decide which legate

it was but a suggestion may offer itself that in this inscription some war movements may be guessed.^{95, 96}

Inscriptions from Mursa mention four times the leg. II Adi., once the leg. I Adi., once the leg. X Gem. and once the leg. XIV Gem.⁹⁹⁻¹⁰⁹ In the area around Mursa up to Daruvar and Ilok six more inscriptions are so far evident with names of legions, i. e. of the leg. II Ital.,¹¹¹ of the leg. X Gem.,¹¹² leg. VII Gem.,¹¹³ of leg. IV Flavia¹¹⁴ and of leg. I Ital.¹¹⁵ Exceptionally interesting is the inscription with names of several legions and the *cursus honorum* of Herennius Valens.¹¹⁶

Some significant localities near Mursa are known by inscriptions, as for instance Mursella (at present Petrijevci, CIL III 10243) where, as is supposed, leg. XXI Rapax and then leg. XIV Gem. and leg. XXX Ulpia were garrisoned.¹²² Teutoburgium (at present Dalj) is the well known seat of ala II Arav. and of ala I c. R. which distinguished themselves in Domitian's wars.¹²³

All these inscriptions help us somehow to imagine the permanent restlessness and frequent movements of troops in the first three centuries A. D.

Further investigation of inscriptions and sources, new and old, yielded some new knowledge about building activities at Mursa in Hadrian's and his successor's time when large public edifices, temples, shops, perhaps *thermae* had been constructed. Also at the time of the Severi, building activities had been continued with restoration of temples, roads, bridges, statues and so on.¹²⁴⁻¹³⁶ We know of only one early Christian sanctuary, i. e. of the Chapel of the Saint Martyrs when Mursa was the See of the widely known troublemaker, the Arian bishop Valens, in the beginning of the 4th century.¹³⁷ That Mursa also had a stadion, this we find in the sources.¹³⁸

As regards religion and cults it is evident that Jupiter was the most worshipped of all deities. His name is found in numerous inscriptions and his statues from Roman *lararia* have been found or excavated.^{139, 143-147} The cult of Hercules, the god of soldiers, is witnessed by epigraphic and plastic monuments in stone and bronze.¹⁴⁸⁻¹⁵⁹ Silvanus,¹⁶⁰⁻¹⁶⁸ Liber,¹⁶⁹⁻¹⁷⁵ Terra Mater, Vertumnus were worshipped by small farmers, peasants and gardeners who were concerned with the fertility of their land.

If we judge by oriental cults rooted here, Mursa has certainly been a significant centre of merchants, craftsmen, dealers and soldiers, all worshippers of Osiris, Isis, Serapis, Sabazius, Mithras and Kybele. Here also existed a synagogue.¹⁸⁶⁻²⁰⁵

If we take into account all numerous statues preserved from Roman *lararia*, or temples, we come to the conclusion that here too, as elsewhere in romanised centres Apollo, Mercurius, Venus, Amor, Higeia were in high esteem.²⁰⁶⁻²¹² Astonishingly rare are the fragments of early Christianity that have so far been found or excavated which does not necessarily mean that Christians were so extremely few in Mursa.