

SUMMARY

TOPOGRAPHICAL STUDIES ABOUT MURSA

It is well known that Mursa, the important Roman castrum («Colonia Aelia Mursa») near the Pannonian »limes« was situated on the right bank of the river Drava where now the »Lower town« of Osijek is located. The roman strata there sometimes appear only half a meter deep, but more often much deeper. The history of Mursa and her archaeological finds had been repeatedly worked on and published in branch periodicals at home by Brunšmid, Celestin, Hoffiller, Klemenc and others, although in recent days no topographical studies of Mursa have been made.

In this treatise attention is drawn to some writers who visited Osijek (Essek) in the 18th century and who wrote about Mursa's ruins which then still could be seen above the ground. The Italian count Marsigli after having visited many countries along the Danube gives an account of what he has seen there in his famous and voluminous work »Danubius Pannonico-Mysicus« (Amstelodami, 1726) and shows in tome II, schedule 21, fig. XI, a sketch of the Turkish fortress at Osijek (number 1) where at A A the ruins of Mursa are marked and at B the Roman road leading to the north. Although the Roman road is marked too near eastward of the fortress, we shall see that the Roman ruins are marked rightly on the east close to the fortress. Marsigli in his description (pag. 49) clearly says that the ruined Roman city walls were seen above the ground and that on the left bank of the river Drava a long dam existed (the Roman road) leading to the north.

The German writer Fr. W. v. Taube in his work »Historische und geographische Beschreibung des Königreiches Slavonien und des Herzogthumes Syrmien (Leipzig, 1777 and 1778, book III, pag. 4—12) describing Osijek speaks of a long hill between the Austrian fortress and the »Lower town« which was covered with the ruins of Mursa. So Marsigli was not quite wrong when he marked the ruins closely to the east side of the fortress.

Salagius, an ecclesiastical historian described also in his work »De statu ecclesiae Pannonicae libri VII« (Quinqueecclesiarum, 1778) in the third book (pag. 112/113) the enormous ruins of Mursa between the »Lower town« and the fortress as well as the numerous finds and stoneinscriptions which he himself had seen and read.

Katančić, the well known Slavonian writer, Franciscan friar and professor of numismatics and archaeology at the university of Budapest, is most important as regards these topographical studies. As a young clergyman during his stay at Osijek between 1773 and 1777 he was an eye-witness of the pulling down of Mursa's foundation and of the digging up of stones and bricks from the Roman road beyond the river the intention being to erect with the obtained material a new road from Osijek across the morasses to Hungary. This happened during the reign of the Austrian empress Maria Theresia. As to the plundered Roman road the traces of it were in recent days rediscovered as a slight and straight northward going elevation with no building material in evidence. At a low water level one of those years Katančić could also see the remnants of the Roman bridge in the river and clearly indicated where it was he had seen them. At that time a Roman milestone was found too on the spot where the old Roman road crossed the newly built one. Katančić was so deeply impressed by everything he saw at that time that he zealously began to study the whole system of Roman roads in Pannonia in order to be able to prove the milestone was found on its original spot and that its distance from Aquincum was really 160 M. P. (as the inscription on it clearly imparted). As a result of his extensive studies he published at Osijek in 1782 his book »Dissertatio de columna milliaria romana ad Eszekum reperta« which deals not only with Roman roads but also with the history of Mursa and with all significant archaeological finds of his days and thus gives a good illustration of Mursa's torso in the 18th century. He saw, studied and described in this book the square-formed strong city wall (according to him each side of it was 424 Rom. steps long); he further mentioned a beautiful mosaic-floor of a house or a temple, the ruins of a »tepidarium«, a square fireplace; he also gave the size of the foundation of a huge building (90×50 Rom. steps), then of a square building (45×45 Rom. steps)

and of a third the size of which he does not indicate but gives its distance from the square building to the west. Even outside the southern city wall he saw and described the ruins of a round-shaped temple and of a small square-shaped building. He clearly pointed out how distant all these edifices were from the city wall. Katančić added to his book a sketch (number 2) and explained it as follows: a) the place where the milestone was found, b) the traces of the city wall, c) the ruins of the bridge, d) the place where the milestone was removed in his days, e) the new-built road, f) the traces of the famous Turkish bridge and g) the road leading to Darda. At the northeast corner of the wall Katančić marked the parish church which still exists in the »Lower town«. In his work he also deals with the epigraphic material and especially stresses the importance of a stone excavated in 1784, 330 Rom. steps westward of the wall, the inscription of which tells us that the »decurio« Caius Aemilius Homullinus erected on his own expenses 50 shops with double porticos. Katančić assumes that the inscription dates from the time of the emperor Hadrianus who honoured Mursa with the title of »colonia« and that it was found in its original place. Hence we must conclude that the civil part of Mursa developed outside of the wall, westward close to the Austrian fortress. The barbarians beyond the »limes« were on the opposite side.

The ecclesiastical historian Josephus Koller in his »Prolegomena in historiam episcopatus Quinqueecclesiarum (Posonii, 1804), gives a further sketch of Osijek and Mursa and their roads (number 3). He explains it as follows; the traces of the Roman road from the village Bellya A to the river Drava B, Mursa C, the piers of the Roman bridge D, the milestone E, the new road FF, the famous Turkish bridge GG. Koller's plan of Osijek and Mursa is more elaborate and gives far more detail than the one from Katančić. Both plans are alike as they have no wall on the north side. They also indicate the wall with a double line (presumably meaning a double wall); but they do not exactly correspond in the shape of Mursa's wall nor do they have the same exact direction of the road leading to the north. In spite of it Koller's plan is a valuable complement to the plan of Katančić.

In the 20th century colonel Karlo de Matassich and Radoslav Franjetić, a hydroengineer, took up topographical studies about Mursa. Matassich well knowing the essential results of Katančić searched for traces of the long ago pulled down wall and discovered traces near the supposed south-west wall corner and saw characteristic deepenings along the supposed southern side; he also noticed near the supposed south-east wall corner significant traces on the ground and thus was able to define the wall from here on to the north. In this way he was sure about the south and east wall line. In the north he determined there was no wall at all, the river being a defensive line. Matassich gave an account of his experiences in the local newspaper »Die Drau« entitled »Mursa« (15, IV, 1911, pag. 9 and 10).

Franjetić, an archaeological enthusiast, who lived for many years in Osijek and knew the terrain well came into possession of an old map of the Austrian fortress of Osijek (Essegg) dated 1786 (number 4 and 4a). In it he noticed double-hatched lines just at the round southwest corner, then along the southern line of the wall and on the north along the river. After having studied Katančić and Koller he believed that the north-east wall corner was near the parish church (although the church was actually outside the wall) and thus was able to give us a reconstruction of the whole city-wall (number 5 and 5a). The distance between the hatched lines made it possible for him to anticipate the existence of two parallel 3 m thick walls with 18 m in between them; the hatched lines on the north convinced him also in spite of Katančić and Koller of the existence of a corresponding northern wall along the river. Calculating the distances and carefully considering all vital points he was finally able to make a drawing of the castrum with the following measurements: 760 m W—E, 680 m N—S, 516.800 square meters. With the aid of Katančić's measurements of the buildings and their distances from the wall, Franjetić could define their situation inside and outside of the wall.

He also noticed in the map some hatched lines south-east from the Austrian fortress which clearly showed that here too were some extracted walls. The stone inscription which conveys that Homullinus erected 50 shops was found somewhere near these supposed extracted walls and we can rightly believe it was found »in

situ«. This fact made it possible for him to conclude that here, outside the city wall, westward to the fortress, the civil and commercial parts of Mursa were developed. The depression in the old map near the south-west corner, Franjetić believes, was the place of an amphitheatre and marked it in his reconstruction. The Greek historian Zosimos is the only one who mentions the amphitheatre at Mursa in front of the city gate, when describing the famous battle at Mursa in 351 (*Historia nova*, ed. Mendelsohn, Lipsiae, 1887, II, 50, pag. 107). Franjetić is of the opinion, that it was built of timber, that it covered an area of 14.000 square meters and could accomodate about 4.000 people. He thinks that the cemetery will have to be found along the »via decumana«.

Thus it was possible with the help of old and new searchers to get a fairly good idea of the situation, size and shape of the military and civil part of Mursa, of some of her buildings, amphitheatre, bridge and roads. The modern Osijek is growing fast over old Mursa and we really think it high time to save all possible topographical notes when new finds appear in order to restore the picture more completely.

II

In the second part of this treatise a list is given of all topographical records connected with Mursa taken from branch literature, periodicals, local newspapers and the inventory of archaeological objects in the Museum at Osijek. With the help of these records a map (number 6 and 6a) is construed showing where the main finds were made which could help to clear up the urbanistic picture of Mursa. The signs represent finds which throw some light on Mursa as a town such as: graves, grave monuments, sarcophagi, stone inscriptions, altars, sculptures, walls, milestones and a ship. The blue signs and sloping lines indicate the finds or the ground with frequent finds from Katančić's days on to the year 1946 and the red ones from then on to 1956.