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Early Christianity in Aquae Iasae (Varaždinske Toplice) and Iovia (Ludbreg) in Pannonia Savia

1. Introduction

Northern Croatia encompasses the most of the southern portion of the Roman province Pannonia, that is, the whole of Pannonia Savia and roughly two thirds of Pannonia Secunda. This area borders with Noricum (present-day Slovenia) on the west, with two Pannonias: Prima and Valeria (present-day Hungary) on the north and with Dalmatia (present-day central Croatia and Bosnia & Herzegovina) on the south. (Fig. 1)

Both the early Christian material finds and the state of relevant scholarship in the bordering countries are much more advanced in comparison with northern Croatia. Consequently, an abundance of early Christian architecture and small finds are characteristic of the late Roman horizon in Slovenia, Hungary, Bosnia, central and southern Croatia and northern Serbia. Northern Croatia, on the contrary, offers quite a different picture. According to my investigation and insight, only 18 securely or potentially early Christian sites have been recorded so far, of which only 8 are undeniably early Christian in terms of material record. (Fig. 2) First come three bishoprics: Siscia/Sisak (11), Mursa/Osijek (8) and Cibalae/Vinkovci (17). Iovia/Ludbreg is not included among them, because the identity of the place is still disputed and no secure early Christian finds have been recovered there (this issue will be addressed later in the text). A further 5 sites are undoubtedly Christian: Aquae Iasae/Varaždinske Toplice (15), the most important of all in terms of archaeological evidence, i. e., the only to have yielded early Christian architecture; Ozalj (9), probably a hilltop fortified settlement with a church and therefore akin to a large group of sites in the Alpine and sub-Alpine region of neighbouring Slovenia; Štrbinci, most probably Roman Certissia (14), with an abundance of early Christian grave finds; Veliki Bataji (16) near Daruvar (Aquae Balissae) and Zagreb (18). The remaining 10 sites have yielded small finds with only probable or even merely possible early Christian significance. Altogether, of the indisputable material evidence of early Christianity in northern Croatia only one church has come to light - an adapted building at Aquae Iasae, in addition to some 12 grave monuments and around 30 small objects. On the other side, nearly

the same amount of various sorts of material belongs to the category of uncertain finds, whose exact determination would depend on the context, which in the majority of cases is missing. Such a ratio clearly points out to an urgent need for archaeological investigation into the early Christian horizon in northern Croatia.¹ Significantly, the majority of small finds stem from Sisak, a Roman town sadly neglected in terms of systematic archaeological research. Had the contrary been the case, this town would have inevitably yielded a whole wealth of small artefacts in addition to Christian architecture.

In short, the picture of the early Christianity of northern Croatia figures as dull and unexpectedly poor in material record, while this area emerges as a sort of an early Christian archaeological desert surrounded with the provinces much richer in finds. The question inevitably arises of why this should be so. In other words, is it a true picture or just an accident of archaeology? If true, such a state of matters requires an explanation.

The assumption of south Pannonia (its easternmost section with Sirmium excluded) lacking in early Christian finds should first be verified against the background of historical record. Most significant and instructive in this respect is comparison with the northern part of the province, i. e., the area of present-day Hungary. Dr. Gáspár's book on early Christianity in Hungary, completed several years ago and eagerly waited for, is long overdue. Consequently, I am not acquainted enough with the state of early Christian scholarship in Hungary, especially in the light of the fact that a few architectural complexes, initially determined as early Christian, have subsequently been discarded as such.² Despite such drawbacks, resulting in limitations of knowledge and hesitations in interpretation, it is more or less true that the early Christian horizon in northern Pannonia is far richer in finds than its southern section. But, is such a state of matters justified by the logic of historical considerations? Not likely.

First of all, the province of Pannonia is a natural, geographic, geopolitical, historical and cultural whole with similar conditions for development throughout history, antiquity included. During all of the Roman period the territory between the Sava and Drava had

been an essential part of Pannonia: with the exception of its westernmost Hungarian section along the so-called amber route, southern Pannonia was exposed to the processes of Romanization and subsequent urbanization earlier than its northern portion, meeting thus the prime condition for the spread of Christianity.³ It should also be borne in mind that the southern section of the province was in later periods less afflicted by barbarian incursions, offering thus more favourable living conditions.⁴ Although the majority of written documents on the southern-Pannonian clergy, martyrs and church communities relates to Sirmium, still a considerable number of them bears also on the Croatian part of Pannonia. On the other hand, documents concerning the Hungarian portion of Pannonia are quite insignificant.⁵ Although the silence about north-Pannonian Christian communities and martyrs should be ascribed to an accident of ancient history and archaeology, the prevalence of the documentary evidence for the Croatian section of Pannonia still remains surprisingly significant; surprisingly as measured against a background of paucity of archaeological record. Paradoxically, the whole of Hungary (and not only its earlier Romanized western stretch) abounds in early Christian archaeological monuments and finds, while in northern Croatia they are tenuous and markedly disproportionate in relation to the written source material. On the other hand, however meagre the material, it is quite variegated and curious in many ways, while some of the finds are unique or even spectacular; they obviously could not have sprung from an early Christian "archaeological desert".⁶

To sum up: all the enumerated features of early Christianity in northern Croatia tend to defy the assumption of the virtual archaeological poverty of the early Christian horizon in the Croatian portion of southern Pannonia. The only plausible explanation therefore lies in the state of inadequate research in northern Croatia, particularly as concerns the late antique and early Christian periods.

2. Aquae Iasae (Varaždinske Toplice)

My choice of considering Aquae Iasae and Iovia in conjunction has been provoked by several reasons. First, both of them have yielded architecture (although that in Ludbreg is only putative), which is a rarity in northern Croatia. Second, both these sites are still problematic as concerns evaluation of early Christian finds. And last, during late antiquity Aquae Iasae and Iovia appear to have become interrelated in terms of civil and ecclesiastical administration. Both settlements are situated on the river Bednja, a left tributary of the Drava, at a distance of some 14 km from each other. (Fig. 3)

First to be addressed is Aquae Iasae, a town unattested in historical sources as having had any municipal

status. It was predominantly a therapeutic and religious settlement, developed around and focused upon thermal baths, with also an outstanding role as a traffic and trade centre.⁷ It has produced a considerable number of dedicatory and votive inscriptions to various gods and divinities dating from the 1st-4th centuries. Unfortunately, the cemeteries of the town have neither been explored nor even located, nor has any inscribed funerary stone come to light to furnish additional data on the prosopography of the place. Consequently, all of the recovered epigraphic evidence belongs to the itinerant visitors who came to Aquae Iasae in search of health and pleasure, and who, irrespectively of their number and share in the whole of the population, were undoubtedly the most outstanding class of inhabitants. According to the epigraphic evidence the share of Orientals among the visitors of Aquae Iasae was neglectable, while no Jews are attested either. The majority of the visitors, belonging mostly to various strata of the military and civil administration, originated in the western provinces.⁸ At first glance such an ethnic composition does not appear particularly favourable for the spread of Christianity, at least not if viewed in the light of an axiom of early Christian archaeology, that namely Orientals and Jews were those who most readily introduced Christian ideas throughout the Empire and acted as nuclei of Christian communities in larger settlements. What circumstances, then, could have induced and supported the appearance of Christianity at Aquae Iasae? They should probably be looked for in the cosmopolitan air of the spa and the nature of its architecture, adaptable through both its shape and usage for remodelling into a church.⁹ Also not to be underestimated in this respect is the vicinity of Poetovio, which might even have been connected with Aquae Iasae administratively, at least till the beginning of the 4th century. The Christian bishopric organized there in the second half of the 3rd century at the latest could not have failed to exert some influence on the spread of Christianity in the neighbouring thermal baths, particularly in the light of many inscriptions left in Aquae Iasae by individuals from Poetovio or the Poetovian community in earlier centuries.¹⁰

If a cosmopolitan area was an introductive background to Iasean Christianity in broad terms, the cult of the Unconquered Sun can tentatively be comprehended as its immediate predecessor there, possibly backed by an imperial (Constantinian) favour. This, of course, is only a vague hypothesis which needs to be more amply substantiated; so far it rests on only one monument, a marble votive inscription to Sol (Fig. 4). A plausible reading or interpretation of this inscription has not yet been achieved.¹¹ There is one curious detail about its design: secondarily incised sun-rays springing obliquely from the letter "o". As the inscription should probably be dated to the second half of the 3rd or even the beginning of the 4th century, this intervention might

tentatively be ascribed to the period of Constantine the Great, who otherwise devoted special attention to Aquae Iasae. The secondary sun-rays should hardly be understood as a mere decoration; they probably convey a meaning which can hypothetically be interpreted in terms of a "Christianization" of the monument. Since the renovation of Aquae Iasae after the destruction in a devastating fire took place on the command and under the patronage of Constantine the Great, it is not unlikely that his religious affiliations significantly coloured the atmosphere of the baths. And his religious attitudes, well known and much discussed among scholars, were above all marked by a blend of devotion to Sol and Christ at the same time.¹²

It is therefore likely that the first manifestations of Christian religion in Aquae Iasae showed in Constantine's time and were possibly influenced by his very religious attitude. I will seek to substantiate this hypothesis later in the text on the grounds of the Iasean architecture. In the meantime, I would first like to bring to mind the story of Christianity at Aquae Iasae as proposed by its long-term and deserving researchers Branka Vikić-Belančić and Marcel Gorenc and unanimously accepted among scholars. According to the mentioned authors, the most spacious, N-S oriented rectangular room of the baths, considered to be a *basilica thermarum*, was in Constantine's restructuring of the whole complex given an interior apse raised for 20 cm above the remaining surface. This, the opinion goes, did not alter the social and representative function the basilica had had from the start.¹³ According to Vikić and Gorenc the thermal basilica was accorded the function of a Christian church only in the second half of the 4th century, when a narthex-like ancillary room was attached to its southern facade and the building interior repainted. (Fig. 5) Two frescoes have survived of this redecoration, which are accordingly considered to be contemporary. One of them, featuring a nimbate head of an elderly man with fairly short hair, beard and moustaches, had fallen from the ceiling of the main room and was found on the floor in the fill of the collapsed material. (Fig. 6) Faint traces of another painting displaying a motif of a saltire cross in the form of two obliquely crossed red lines on a background of pale yellow with greenish nuances are still visible on the interior surface of the northern narthex wall. (Fig. 7)¹⁴

However, a closer scrutiny of both the architecture and paintings seem to be calling for a reinterpretation of the "Christianization" of the Iasean thermal basilica. This, as a matter of fact, should not have happened later than the time of Constantine the Great, that is, at the beginning of the 4th c. I put forward this hypothesis in the previously mentioned article, but apart from the editor and reviewer, who were supportive, I have no information on its reception by other scholars.¹⁵ On what grounds, then, could the proposal be substantiated for a Constantian remodelling of the thermal basilica of

Aquae Iasae into a Christian building?

The function of the thermal basilica in general is multiple and comprises social gathering, cultural leisure and sports recreation.¹⁶ Such must have been the role of the basilical hall of the thermal baths at Aquae Iasae before their remodelling. However, with a raised apse added, the building must have experienced a shift in its basic character and usage from social gathering and recreation into something different and more dignified, such as religious cult. In essence, the raised apse should be envisaged as a tribunal for a dignitary to preside over whatever social occurrence is taking place in the building. With the acquirement of such a tribunal the Iasean basilica could not have been turned into a judicial or civil building, as the settlement lacked civic status. It can therefore be presumed that the raised apse provided this building with the capacity to hold Christian service, either exclusively or alternately with some other function. It should be noted that such a reconstruction of the role of the remodelled basilica is not at all incongruous with Emperor Constantine's well known ambiguous religious attitudes. Interestingly, the excavators claimed that concurrently with the adaptation to a church in the 2nd half of the 4th c. the basilical hole became so to say turned in on itself and more overtly cut away from the rest of the baths.¹⁷ This should imply a separation also from the complex of the three small thermal rooms immediately north of the basilica (1-3), interpreted otherwise as two changing rooms (apodyteria) and a mid-space. Nevertheless, the plan they brought forward shows otherwise. (Fig. 8) It was exactly with Constantine's restructuring of the baths that these three rooms were fairly openly separated from those placed more northerly, with which they communicated only through the opening in the mid-space (2), while at the same time the two more important rooms (1 and 3) became attached to the basilica by means of doors. In other words, the only way out from the northern rooms through a mid-space does not affect the impression of the predominant orientation of this block toward the basilical hall. The concurrent walling up of the door in the northern facade of the basilica did not at all result in its complete closing from the northern block, as communication was maintained with rooms 1 and 3. It is important to notice that nothing in the nature of the building's isolation was effected after Constantine's reconstruction: when the narthex was added to the southern facade in the 2nd half of the 4th century, the northern rooms remained unchanged both architecturally and in terms of communication. No explanation was offered by Vikić and Gorenc for the function of these spaces in the Christian period. Yet, in broad terms they must have served as ancillary rooms to meet various requirements of Christian liturgy taking place in the main hall. Contrary to the northern block, which most probably formed a unified assemblage with the basilical hall from its very remodelling, the claim for the nar-

thex as having been added only in the 2nd half of the 4th century is very convincing. Only, this should be understood not as the first, but rather the second Christian phase of the basilical hall at Aquae Iasae. If such a line of reasoning is justified, what we have in Varaždinske Toplice is one of the earliest instances of early Christian architecture in the whole of Pannonia.

A further support of the claim for a Constantian church at Aquae Iasae should be looked for in its two residual frescoes. Notwithstanding an inadequacy of dating on the grounds of art-historical criteria, these two frescoes still reveal traits of chronological stages. The one in the narthex (Fig. 7) is very clumsily executed. It exhibits features of the so-called red and green style of the 3rd century, which regained popularity again in the Pannonian painting of the 2nd half of the 4th century. It thus fits into the proposed scheme of the "Christianization" of the basilica in the 4th century.¹⁸ Contrarily, the saintly head from the main hall is far more skilfully rendered, showing an air of a classical, or rather, classicizing style (Fig. 6). It can therefore be tentatively ascribed to one of the trends in Constantinian painting, distinguished by a return to the classical values of beauty in portraits.¹⁹ Significantly, Prof. Fabrizio Bisconti of the *Pontificio Istituto di Archeologia Cristiana* in Rome, a well-known expert on early Christian painting, when shown a published reproduction of the fresco, was inclined to date it to the Justinianic period. In so doing he was not aware of the general archaeological context of the site, namely of the fact that Aquae Iasae was destroyed at the end of the 4th century, never to recover again.²⁰ Such an error with chronology is nevertheless significant in the light of a classicizing stream inherent to Justinianic painting.²¹ It can therefore be assumed that the renowned scholar recognized an air of classicizing beauty in the features of the fresco from Aquae Iasae, the same quality which led me to date it to the Constantinian period. It should be borne in mind that different level of accuracy in paintings of a certain whole is not inconceivable, as various painters could have been in charge of its accomplishment simultaneously. However, the two frescoes from Aquae Iasae belong to different worlds of conception and execution, and are hardly imaginable as pertaining to an architectural unit decorated at one time.

A curious opinion that the saintly head depicted on the fresco was John the Evangelist had been proposed by the late Edith B. Thomas in a personal communication to Branka Vikić, who later put it on paper.²² When introduced with this issue, but unaware that the prophet, and not the apostle, was in question, Professor Bisconti observed that the position of the head, as slightly bent down, could really point to John the Baptist in the act of baptism. In any case, with the remainder of the fresco material fragmented and unpublished, it would be most insecure and unrewarding to conjecture about the nature of the painted scenes from the Iasean basilica.

I have already touched shortly on the issue of a possible administrative connection between Aquae Iasae and nearby Poetovio, situated at a distance of about 50 kilometres as the crow flies. There are several pros and cons for both an affirmative and a negative answer, but this is not the place to engage in detail with this question. If the alledged administrative appurtenance of Aquae Iasae to Poetovio had been a reality in the earlier Roman period, the circumstances certainly changed in late antiquity. After Diocletian's administrative restructuring of the Empire Aquae Iasae was registered as a Pannonian settlement, as is proved by the inscription commemorating Constantine's restructuring of the baths damaged in fire (CIL III 4121).²³ Since by that time Poetovio had already been shifted to the province of Noricum, the preservation of the administrative connection between the two settlements is not very likely.²⁴ On the other hand, if the civitas and bishopric Iovia was really located on the place of present-day Ludbreg, some 14 km northeast of Varaždinske Toplice as the crow flies, Aquae Iasae must have belonged to it in terms of ecclesiastical administration. It is even possible to hypothesize that civitas Iovia was established as bishopric exactly in consequence of Poetovio's shift from the province of Pannonia, given that Siscia as the nearest see in Pannonia was probably too far to cover ecclesiastically the whole of the province of Pannonia Savia. These are only hypothetical suggestions, but such that lead to another questionable issue of the Roman and early Christian archaeology of Croatia, namely that of Iovia.

3. Iovia (Ludbreg)²⁵

In 1999 an international conference with the title "Norico-Pannonian autonomous towns" took place at Brdo near Kranj in Slovenia. Initially, I had thought that Iovia was included on account of its status as a civitas, as recorded in the Jerusalem itinerary (*Itinerarium Hierosolymitanum* or *Burdigalense*) in the 1st half of the 4th c.²⁶ However, in the course of the conference it transpired that the assumed status as a bishopric qualified this town for a topic of the conference.

The issue of the bishopric of Iovia has provoked much scholarly dispute, but to no final result.²⁷ Several points should be emphasized at the start of any such discussion. First of all, the written and epigraphic sources are not such as to justify beyond doubt the existence of this bishopric. Egger's arguments for a bishopric at Iovia were convincing enough to have won the majority of scholars on his side.²⁸ Nevertheless, the hypothesis that the see of Iovia actually existed and that the bishop Amantius, known from the epitaph of a sarcophagus from the 4th or 5th century found at Beligna near Aquileia, was in fact connected to it, still remain to be finally proven. Second, of the three Pannonian Iovias mentioned in Roman itineraries, two were on the

Poetovio-Mursa, and one on the Sopianae-Brigetio road. Only one of them, Iovia/Botivo, 37-39 Roman miles south-east of Poetovio, was in the Jerusalem itinerary and by implication in the Ravennate Cosmography recorded as a *civitas*.²⁹ This, however, is a slightly simplified picture dependent on the itineraries, and one that needs to be commented upon, so I will return to this question later. Leaving it aside for the moment, it appears necessary at this point to bring to mind the fact that the ecclesiastical administrative organization followed in broad outline that of the previous civil division, generally resulting in the establishment of bishoprics in *coloniae* and *municipia*, or, for that matter, *civitates*.³⁰ According to this axiom of Roman administration, only a settlement with a civic rank was likely to become a bishopric. If, therefore, the see of Iovia is a historical fact, it should be identified with *civitas Iovia* of the Itinerarium Hierosolymitanum. Although its position on the place of present-day Ludbreg on the Bednja, a tributary of the Drava river in northwestern Croatia, has not yet been confirmed epigraphically, the archaeological record from Ludbreg strongly supports such an identification.³¹ If now we take these hypotheses as true, it transpires that the two components of Iovia's late Roman status: *civitas* and bishopric, were mutually related, or rather, contingent. It would normally be expected that a *civitas* comes first to prepare the way for a bishopric. However, given that Iovia had not been mentioned as a *civitas* before the beginning of the 4th century, it is also possible that this settlement's promotion to a civic rank was the result of a need for a new bishopric in the territory of Pannonia Savia, since Poetovio had, through Diocletian's administrative reforms, been assigned to Noricum. This, however, is also only a hypothesis, as for a possibility of Iovia's mention as a *civitas* before the 4th century we have to depend on the Antonine Itinerary, which displays status of places only sporadically and also inconsistently.³² In other words, the fact that Iovia was not marked as a *civitas* in the Antonine Itinerary does not necessarily mean that it did not have a civic rank at the beginning of the 3rd century. Whatever the case, the situation of Iovia/Botivo on the route of the itinerary which, following the course of the Drava river, carried pilgrims from the western parts of the Roman empire to the holy places in the Holy Land, is also possibly indicative of the history of Christianity there.

It has been mentioned already that scholars do not agree on the issue of Iovia, primarily as concerns its topographic identification. Hungarian archaeologists, beginning with Harmatta in 1970, are of a more or less unanimous opinion that the see of Iovia is to be found on the Roman and early Christian site of Alsóheténypuszta. A large fortified settlement which yielded an abundance of early Christian architecture and small finds was discovered there, which indeed could have been a *civitas* in the late Roman sense.³³

I will make a short digression at this point to explain what my initial intentions were when submitting a paper for this conference. Naming it "Early Christianity in Aquae Iasae and Iovia" I had in mind first to present the early Christian remains at Varaždinske Toplice in a new light, and second, to bring arguments for the see of Iovia at Ludbreg. I must admit now that while searching for the proofs of the latter, I, if a little unwillingly, found myself supportive of the opposite, that is, of the location of the questionable bishopric at Alsóheténypuszta rather than Ludbreg. My initial inclination towards Ludbreg as the site of the see of Iovia was the result of leaning too heavily on Egger's statement that, while the Iovia southeast of Poetovio was a *civitas*, the other two Pannonian Iovias were *einfache Strassenstationen und als solche für einen Bischofsitz nicht geeignet*.³⁴ While extremely perceptive and convincing in putting forward a hypothesis for a north-Italian bishop meddling in the ecclesiastical matters of a region belonging to another archbishopric, that of Sirmium, Egger appears to have been somewhat superficial and a little incautious with the itinerary data. He did not pay attention to the fact that the Iovia of the Sopianae-Brigetio road, which is tentatively located on the site of Alsóheténypuszta, is recorded in the section of the Antonine itinerary with settlement status omitted altogether, which is not the case throughout this document. For instance, the Iovia of the Poetovio-Mursa road is encompassed within the section which specifies each place's civic rank, but leaves Iovia without any meaning possibly, though not necessarily, that it was not yet a *civitas* at that time.³⁵ Therefore, even if the Iovia situated in Pannonia Valeria was a settlement with civic status, this would not have necessarily been recorded in the Antonine Itinerary. Another tentative argument to contest the civic rank of the northern-Pannonian Iovia would be its omission from the Ravennate Cosmography, which otherwise enumerates the *civitates* of the Empire. However, neither this argument holds: the Cosmography mentions only selected places, as is specifically stated throughout the text, and no settlement on the road Sopianae-Brigetio is recorded there. Equally, historical circumstances relative to the creation of the Ravenna Cosmography explicitly show that many other existing settlements do not appear in this otherwise highly relevant document for the political geography of the ancient world.³⁶

The majority of scholars have accepted Egger's hypothesis that the missionary activity of the bishop Amantius was directed towards the mixed barbarian tribes headed by two leaders: Alatheus and Saphrac. Although the literary sources are not explicit on the precise location of their settlement within the province of Pannonia, it is generally agreed that it should have been in Pannonia Savia or Secunda.³⁷ However, there is no definite proof that Amantius' barbarians have been exactly those of Alatheus and Saphrac, while it is a

known fact that people of Germanic stock were settled all over Pannonia, Valeria included. In short, the documentary evidence does not contest an equation of Iovia with Alsóheténypuszta, while the archaeological evidence supports it strongly, and the only detail lacking to prove it finally is an epigraphic document. Only on account of this, and for the sake of scholarly impartiality, should we still hold this issue as unresolved and wait for a definite proof in favour of any of the candidates for the see of Iovia.

If, in the face of the above data, we still consider the possibility of an equation of Ludbreg with the see of Iovia, the weakest point of this theory lies in the almost complete lack of early Christian material from Ludbreg. Small finds with even remote associations to Christian symbolism have until recently been lacking altogether. However, when preparing this paper I learned that in the course of private building works last year in Ludbreg two tiles came to light, both ornamented by means of shallow grooves. Before having seen these artefacts I had been told that one of them bore a motif of a fish, while on another a diagonal cross was depicted. The first one with the alleged fish (Fig. 9) actually shows a fish-like motif, differing, however, from the average early Christian fish-graffittos in that its head is rounded instead of being pointed and its tail is not completed. If indeed rare, such stylizations of the fish in early Christian art are still not unparalleled.³⁸ Nevertheless, the motif in question should most probably be interpreted as a sign for a letter with a variety of possible meanings. It should consequently be classified among similar signs, often grooved by means of fingers onto the surface of Roman bricks and tiles, whose meaning or purpose remains obscure.³⁹ First of all, a sign usually described in the literature as an omega-like design, may actually denote the letter "o" of the late Roman epigraphy.⁴⁰ It also figures (though not in an oval, but an angular form) in the runic script with the same vocal value and the meaning of "inherited property". Similar signs occur frequently on bottoms of late antique and medieval pottery and tiles in the Danube area and are accorded apotropaic-religious significance.⁴¹ It may also be worth mentioning in this context that the omega-like sign resembles closely the hieroglyph SA, meaning "protection".⁴² The omega-like pictogram appear also to represent a measure for liquids (*sextarius*) and is accordingly frequently found on Roman amphorae. Because of the sign's occasional appearance on amphorae within Christian contexts, Leclercq suggested it contained a crypto-Christian meaning⁴³. If such a hypothesis may not sound convincing regarding amphorae, it cannot be rejected in some other situations. For instance, a marker for the capacity of liquid would not make sense on a tile, such as the one from Ludbreg. If now we bring to mind an appearance of the sign in question in the context of an early Christian grave, its cryptic symbolism becomes more plausible.

44 Another tile (Fig. 10) bears an ornament of a diagonal cross all over its upper surface. Lines of various shapes designed on bricks and tiles are at times interpreted as a technical device to help the surface stick to a mortar bedding. Yet, if a tile with a cross-like motif on its upper surface is found on the floor of the crypt of an early Christian church, as is the case at Gata in Dalmatia (Fig. 11), Christian symbolism should be envisaged. In short, the depictions on both tiles from Ludbreg should be comprehended as symbolic rather than being just a technical device or fortuitous scribble, but a more accurate interpretation of their symbolism depends on the archaeological context. Unfortunately, such data is missing, but it appears that the two tiles were most probably found within the area of the southern cemetery of Iovia, stretched along the road to Aquae Iasae. Significantly, several late Roman sarcophagi stem from this place⁴⁵, indicating a probably early Christian surroundings and giving more liability to a possible Christian interpretation of the two newly found tiles. Understandably, the whole story remains highly hypothetical for the moment.

The Christian architecture in Ludbreg is slightly more revealing, but its authenticity is yet to be verified. It has namely been hypothesized that the 2nd century baths were in the 2nd half of the 4th century remodelled and converted into a Christian church. (Fig. 12) The excavation of this architecture has never been completed; however, two strata were identified. First comes the thermal baths comprising a large east-west oriented hall and three oriented apsed pools. Only one metre long stump of the parapet of the third (northernmost) pool was discovered, which did not yield enough data for a plan of the initial phase of the three-apsed baths to be reconstructed. In the later restructuring the northern apse was demolished to make way for a narrow tiled chamber on the northern flank, producing thus a building in the form of a double-apsed hall with an elongated lateral room on the northern side. The excavators Vikić and Gorenc interpreted this restructuring as an adaptation to the needs of Christian liturgy.⁴⁶ The reconstructed building does not reveal what one would name a typical early Christian ground plan, yet it does fit into the basic scheme of a certain type of early Christian architecture. What I have in mind is not exactly the double-apsed church, which is indeed rare in early Christian contexts. The supposed Christian building in Ludbreg should better be compared to a type of early Christian architecture consisting of the main building and an apsed ancillary room, or even better to the so-called double or twin-church, widespread in early Christian building and symptomatic particularly of episcopal centres.⁴⁷ The double-apsed building recovered at Ludbreg, particularly in the light of the supposed bishopric, should therefore be comprehended as a "condensed" variation of the twin-church. Anyhow, the whole story, although it cannot yet be completely

discarded, desperately needs more convincing substantiation.

There is, however, another spot within the archaeological topography of Ludbreg, possibly indicative of a Christian site. The present-day parish church of the Holy Trinity in the far north-western corner of the town overlay a medieval predecessor, which had itself been erected directly above the late Roman fortifications (Fig. 13). The church is oriented, and in its immediate vicinity an abundance of late Roman and early medieval small finds, as well as remains of walls, were found during the excavations in 1968-1979. Since it was not possible to excavate beneath the floor of the modern church, only a more or less plausible hypothesis remains that this should be the place to look for an episcopal complex, if such had ever existed there.

Given all the pros and cons for the existence of an early Christian see at Ludbreg and Alsóheténypuszta respectively, a question arises of whether there is any argument at all in favour of Ludbreg, that is, the Iovia of Pannonia Savia. On closer scrutiny, not many. Yet, it is useful to call to mind that *Aquae Iasae* was another early Christian site which failed to produce any small finds of religious significance. This comes close to an archaeological enigma, as those sections of the settlement that have been excavated were researched thoroughly in the course of the long-term planned excavations in 1953-1982. Ludbreg was also archaeologically researched over a ten-year period (1968-1979), but only rescue excavations employing limited and sparse soundings were conducted there, leaving much of the area

untouched. Therefore the majority of the archaeological record remained below ground, and, moreover, hardly accessible to scholarly excavation on account of the living urban organism on the surface. In other words, unexpected, or rather, expected, finds might be awaiting there. It would be interesting to quote in this context Dr. Mirja Jarak of the Faculty of Philosophy in Zagreb who, seeking to defend the theory of an episcopal see at present-day Ludbreg, in only two sentences condensed the pressing problems of the early Christian archaeology of northern Croatia. It goes: *If it is known that Hungarian early Christian, and in general late Roman finds are very numerous and rich, while they are scarce in Croatia, the extensive finds from Heténypuszta do not represent an argument for the location of a bishopric in this town. Other Croatian sites, such as Sisak, Osijek and Vinkovci, also have very scarce early Christian finds (in the sense of a lack of early Christian architecture), but nonetheless no one considers that Siscia, Mursa and Cibalae should be relocated elsewhere because of this.*⁴⁸ These true and witty remarks are eloquent not only of the specific issue of the see of Iovia but also of the circumstances of northern Croatian early Christian archaeology as a whole.

It comes out clearly from the above-mentioned data that without further archaeological research neither the question of the diocese Iovia nor any other similar problematic issue of the early Christian horizon in northern Croatia is likely to be successfully thrown into light.

Note:

- ¹ Migotti 1997.
- ² Tóth 1994, 247.
- ³ Mócsy 1974, 117; Barkóczi 1980, 86, 90-92; Fitz 1980, 164; Lengyel – Radan 1980, 25; Póczy 1980, 239; Fülep 1984, 285; Šašel 1992; Poulter 1996, 118, 122.
- ⁴ Mócsy - Szentlélek 1971, 32; Mócsy 1974, 307-308
- ⁵ Fitz 1980, 169; Tóth 1994, 244-245; Jarak 1996, 265.
- ⁶ Catalogue; Migotti 1997.
- ⁷ Gorenc – Vikić 1979.
- ⁸ Hoffiller – Saria 1938, 205-211; Rendić-Miočević 1992, 74.
- ⁹ Krautheimer 1963, 8, passim; Yegül 1992, 317-322; Salway 1993, 514; Migotti 1999, 64-65.
- ¹⁰ Rendić-Miočević 1992, 68; Bratož 1996, 304-305.
- ¹¹ Migotti 1999, 54-58.
- ¹² Pohlsander 1996, 21-44.
- ¹³ Vikić-Belančić – Gorenc 1961, 210-212.
- ¹⁴ Vikić-Belančić 1978, 590-591; Migotti 1997, 33-35.
- ¹⁵ Migotti 1999.
- ¹⁶ Vikić-Belančić – Gorenc 1961, 210-212; Yegül 1992, 488.
- ¹⁷ Gorenc – Vikić 1979, 37.
- ¹⁸ Migotti 1997, 79-80.
- ¹⁹ Dorigo 1966, 125-125, passim; Migotti 1999, 76-77.
- ²⁰ Gorenc – Vikić 1979, 45.
- ²¹ Bilaniuk 1998, 381, passim.
- ²² Vikić-Belančić 1978, 590.
- ²³ Migotti 1997, 54.
- ²⁴ Mócsy 1962, 750.
- ²⁵ After discarding Fitz's hypothesis of Iovia/Ludbreg in Pannonia Valeria and placing it rightly in Pannonia Savia (Tóth 1982, 70), unexpectedly Endre Tóth changed his mind and started repeatedly to note down this settlement as a place in Pannonia Prima (1989, 390-91; 1994, 252). As far as I know he never bothered to argue this attitude.

- It is true that there are no explicit proofs in the literary sources for the border between northern (Prima and Valeria) and southern (Savia and Secunda) Pannonia. Both the geographical logic and some indirect clues from the written sources put it on the river Drava, which leaves open the question of the administrative position of the settlements situated along the river banks. Accordingly, some authors place the border either exactly along the course of the river or somewhat south of it. However, E. Tóth drew this line south enough for Iovia-Ludbreg to remain in Pannonia Prima. As, on the other hand, the majority of authors place Iovia in Pannonia Savia, so did I (cf. *Not. Dign. Occid.*, p. 143; 714; Vulić 1921; Graf 1936, 41; Mócsy 1962, 588; Barkóczy 1980, 109; Šašel 1992a, 697, Abb. 1; Šašel 1992b, 750, 753, Abb. 1, 2) This at the same time accounts for the title of the present contribution.
- 26 Soproni 1980, 213.
- 27 Jarak 1994, 175-176; Migotti 1997, 23, 98 and literature quoted there.
- 28 Egger 1963, 57-67; Jarak 1994, 175; Tóth 1994, 249-252.
- 29 Itin. Hieros., 561.10; Raven. Cosmograph., IV 19, 14.
- 30 Krautheimer 1963; Salway 1993, 517; Tóth 1994, 245; Liebeschuetz 1996, 8.
- 31 Migotti 1997, 23-24.
- 32 Itin. Ant., 130.2, 264.8.; Kubitschek 1916, 2335
- 33 Fülepi 1984, 282-283; Tóth 1988; Tóth 1989, 390-391; Tóth 1994, 249-252.
- 34 Egger 1963, 66, n. 28.
- 35 See note 32.
- 36 Rav. Cosmograph., IV. 19-20.; Funaioli 1914.
- 37 Várady 1969, 519-522, passim; Šašel 1992 b.
- 38 Cf. some strap ends from Siscia (Migotti 1997, 66, V.b.8.) and Roman Britain (Mawer 1995, 63, D2.Br.1.
- 39 Matijašić 1986, 205. n. 14.
- 40 Testini 1958, 488, Fig. 225, passim.
- 41 Fiedler 1992, 164-170, Abb. 37/XVI.
- 42 Barb 1953, 199, Pl. 29a.
- 43 Leclercq 1924, 1688-1689.
- 44 Kákosy 1975, 113, Fig. 12.
- 45 Vikić-Belančić – Gorenc 1984, 92.
- 46 Vikić-Belančić 1978, 591-593; Vikić-Belančić 1984, 133-134, sl. 8.
- 47 Chevalier 1996, I, 65-70, Pl. VIII/2, IX/2, XIX/2, XXIV/2, XXV/2, XXVII/2, XXVIII, XLI/1, XLIX/5, LII/3, LV/2, LVIII/1-4, LX/1, LXI, LXII/1, LXVI/3, LXIX/2; Duval 1999, 11-12.
- 48 Jarak 1994, 175-176. BARB 1953

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Korai kereszténység Aquae Iasaeban (Varaždinske Toplice) és Ioviaban (Ludbreg) Pannonia Savia tartományban

Aquae Iasae (Varaždinske Toplice ÉNy-Horvátországban) elsősorban gyógyászati és egyházi település volt a Kr.u. 1. századtól a 4. század végéig. Fejlődését a termálkutaknak köszönhetette, de emellett kiemelkedő volt közlekedési és kereskedelmi szerepe is. Korábban azt feltételezték, hogy a legnagyobb fürdőépület, az u.n. *basilica thermarum* – egy É-D tájolású, belső apsisal rendelkező épületet – csak a 4. század 2. felében vált keresztény templommá. Jelen dolgozat módosítja ezt a keletkezést, e szerint az épületet már Nagy Constantinus idején átalakították. Az új keletkezést építészeti jellegzetességek, és két korai keresztény freskó indokolják. Ez alapján Aquae Iasae bazilikája a pannoniai keresztény építkezés egyik legkorábbi példája.

Iovia (Ludbreg, ÉNy-Horvátországban) azonosítását az írott forrásokból ismert keresztény püspökséggel érvek igazolják, és ellenérvek cáfolják. Az írott források Ioviaban jeleznek egy egyházi központot, de a régészeti anyag, főleg az ókeresztény időszak tekintetében meglehetősen szegény. Ezért számolni kell azzal a lehetőséggel, hogy a Iovia-i püspökség az alsóheténypusztai lelőhellyel azonos (Pannonia Valeria tartomány területén), ahonnan számos korai keresztény emlék ismert. A Iovia-i egyházi központ azonosítása akkor válik egyértelművé, ha az említett két Iovia valamilyen feliratos emlék bizonyítja ezt.

(fordította: Haász Gabriella)

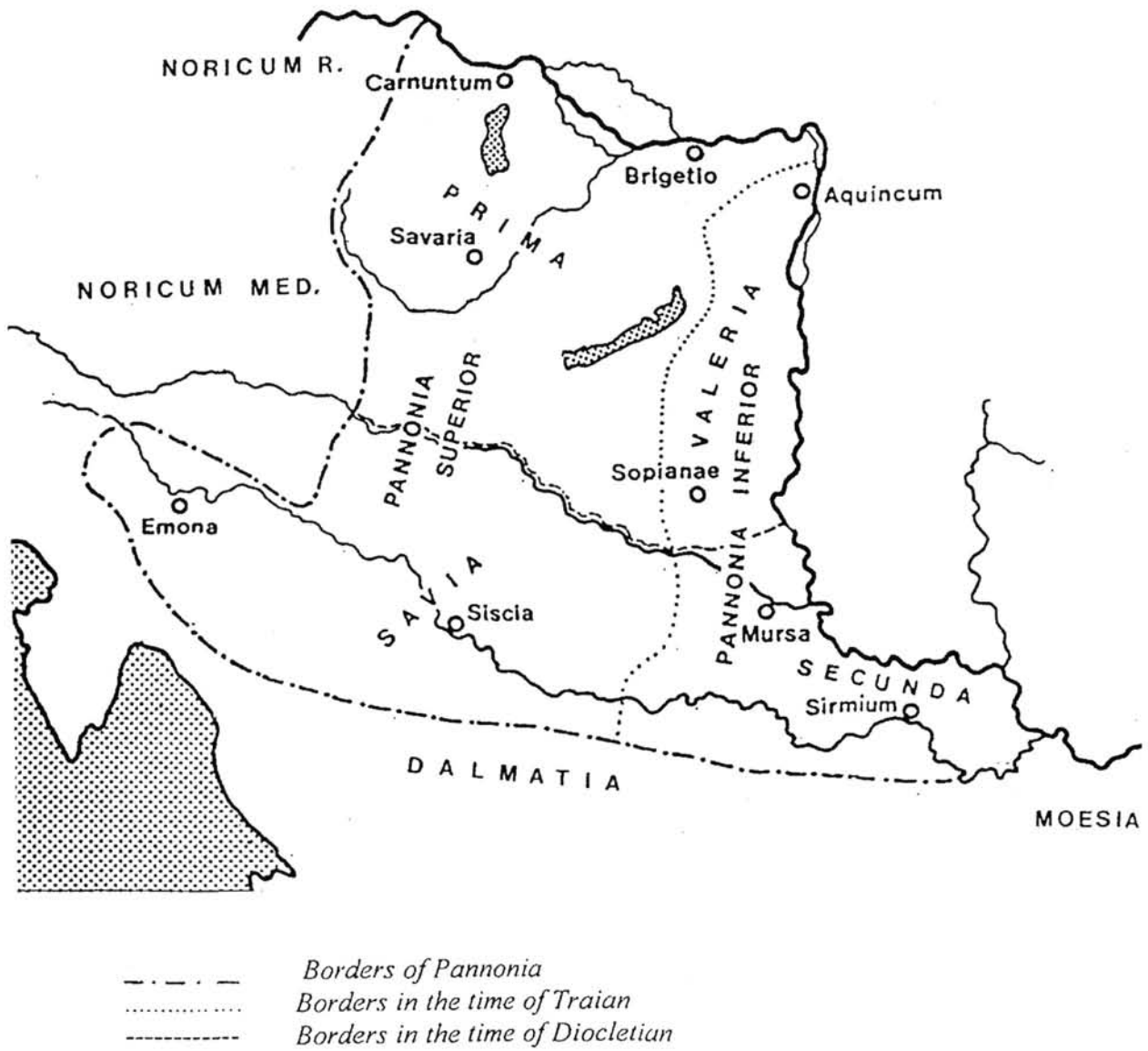


Fig. 1. Pannonia in the late Roman period (after Migotti 1997).
 1. kép: Pannonia a késő római korban.



Map 2: Distribution and list of sites

1. Cerić; 2. Čečavac (Rudina); 3. Daruvar; 4. Donja Glavnica (Kuzelin); 5. Kamanje (Vrlovka); 6. Ludbreg; 7. Novačka (Gradina); 8. Osijek; 9. Ozalj; 10. Samobor; 11. Sisak; 12. Sotin; 13. Sveti Martin na Muri; 14. Štrbinci; 15. Varaždinske Toplice; 16. Veliki Bastaji; 17. Vinkovci; 18. Zagreb.

Fig. 2. Early Christian sites in Northern Croatia (after Migotti 1997).

2.kép: Észak-Horvátország ókeresztény lelőhelyei.



Fig. 3. Geographic map of a section of northern Croatia with Ludbreg and Varaždinske Toplice.

3. kép: Észak-horvátországi térképrészlet Ludbreggel és Varaždinske Toplicével.



Fig. 4. A votive marble inscription to Sol from Aquae Iasae (Varaždinske Toplice) (photo: N. Kobasić).

4.kép: Márványkőre vésett votív felirat Sol tiszteletére Aquae Iasaeból (Varaždinske Toplice).

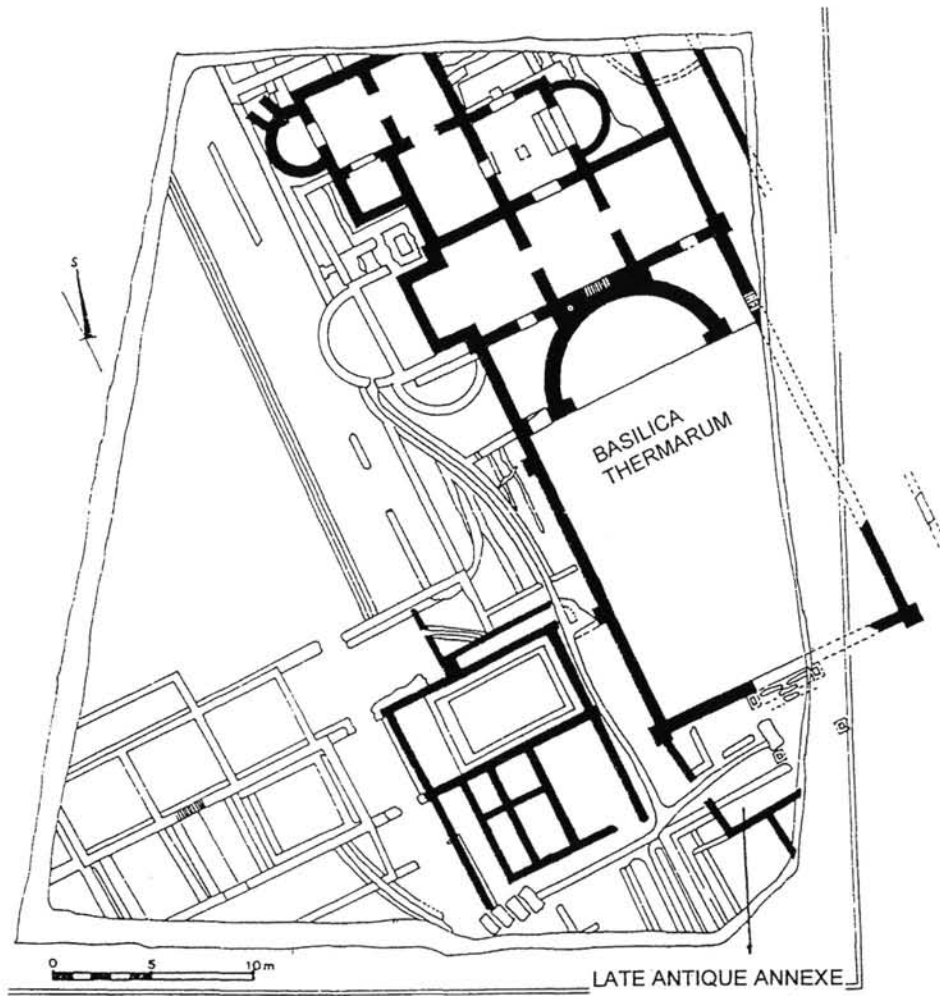


Fig. 5. Plan of the basilica at Aquae Iasae (after Migotti 1997).

5. kép: Az Aquae Iasae-i bazilika alaprajza.

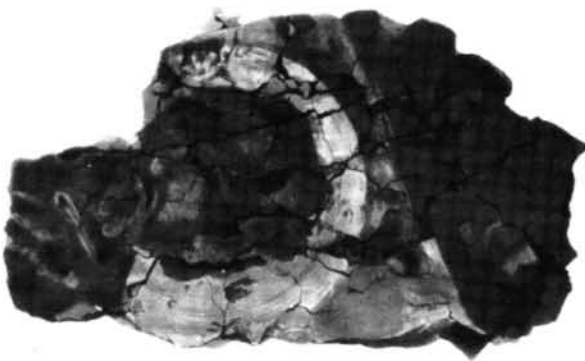


Fig. 6. A watercolor reproduction (painted by Slavko Šohaj) of the fresco from the main hall of the basilica at Aquae Iasae (photo: N. Kobasić).

6.kép: Slavko Šohaj által készített festmény reprodukció az Aquae Iasae-i bazilika csarnokában talált freskóról.

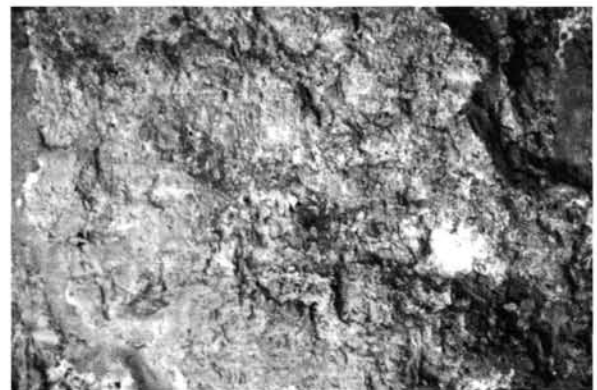


Fig. 7. The fresco on the narthex-wall of the basilica at Aquae Iasae (photo: A. Rendić-Miočević).

7.kép: Az Aquae Iasae-i bazilikában a narthex falán talált freskó.

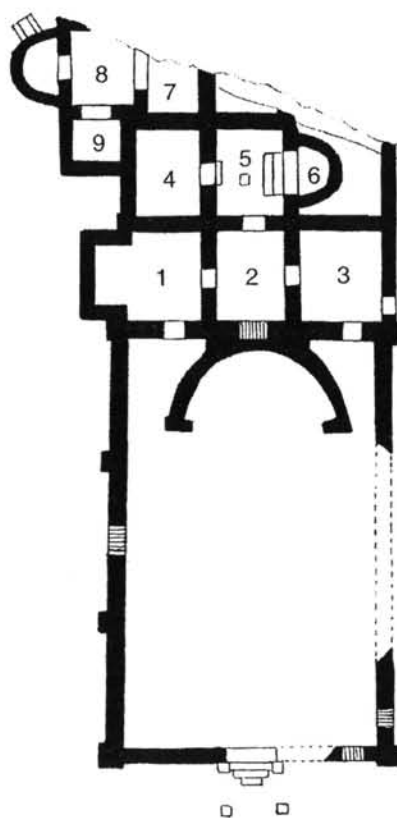


Fig. 8. Basilica with the set of northern rooms at Aquae Iasae (after Vikić-Belančić – Gorenc 1961).
8. kép: Az Aquae Iasae-i bazilika északi helyiségeinek elhelyezkedése.



Fig. 9. A tile from Ludbreg with a fish- or an omega-like motif (photo: Z. Gregl).
9. kép: Tégla Ludbregből hal vagy omegaszerű motívummal.

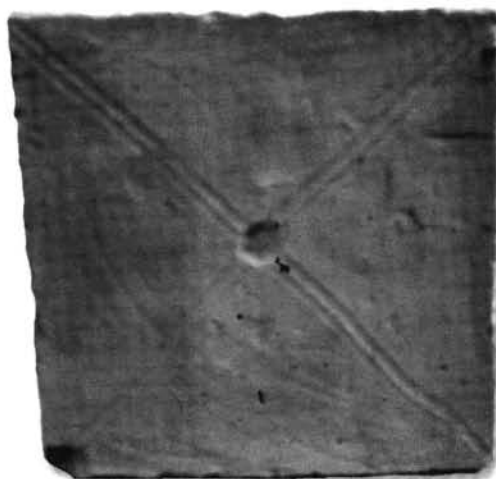


Fig. 10. A tile from Ludbreg with a diagonal-cross motif (photo: Z. Gregl).
10. kép: Tégla Ludbregből átlós kereszt motívummal.

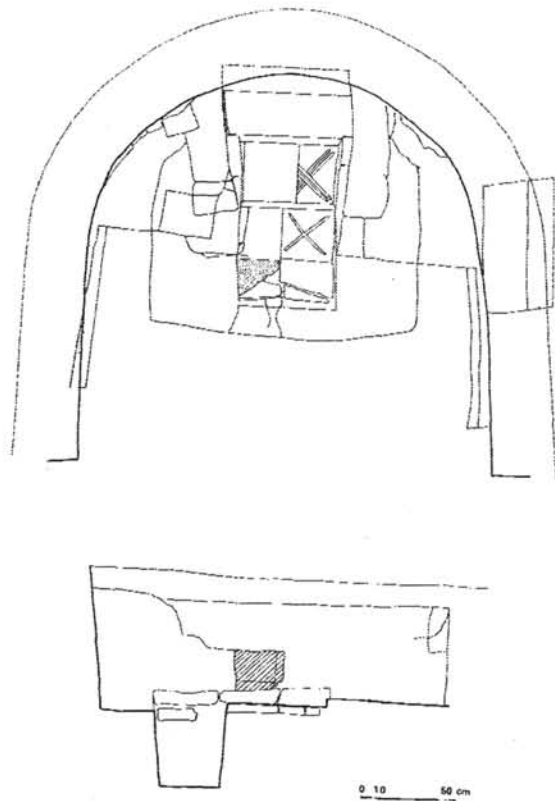


Fig. 11. Plan of the crypt of the early Christian church at Gata in Dalmatia (after J. Jeličić Radonić)
11. kép: A Gata-i (Dalmácia) ókeresztény templom kriptájának alaprajza.

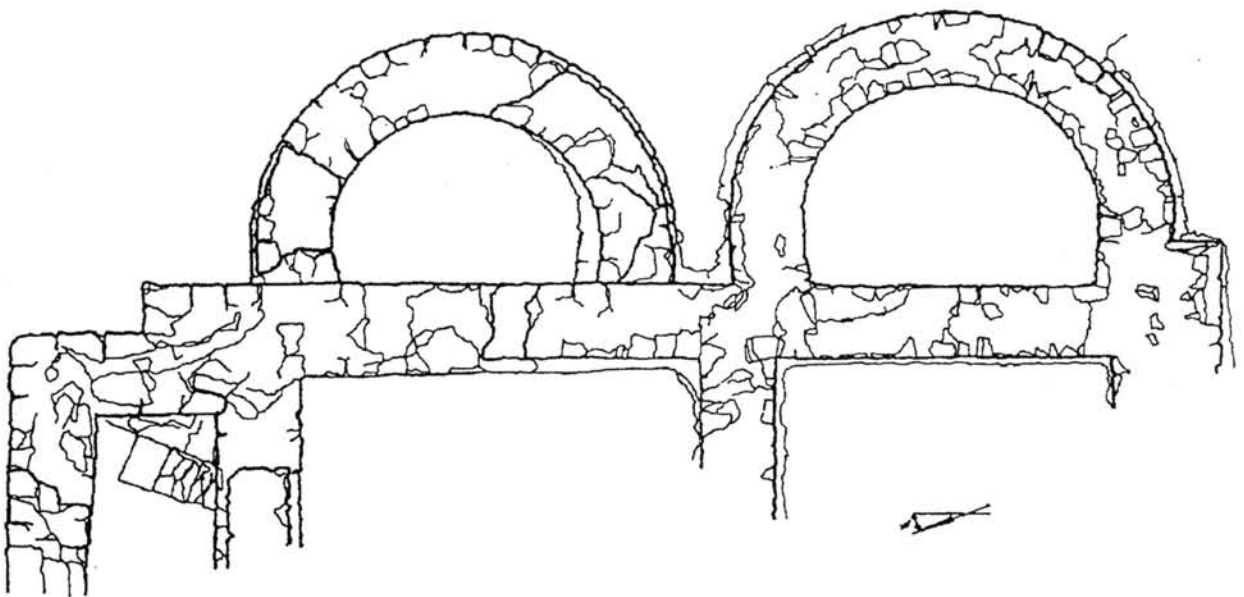


Fig. 12. Plan of the baths in Iovia after their adaptation (after Vikić – Gorenc 1984).
12. kép: A Iovia-i fürdő alaprajza az átépítés után.



Fig. 13. Plan of Iovia (after Vikić – Gorenc 1984).
13. kép: Iovia alaprajza.