

Gáspár, Dorottya

Donatio Iustiniani

The aim of this paper is to set up and examine a hypothesis about the early Christian basilica at Fenépuszta.¹ According to this hypothesis, the basilica was modified very late in the 6th or early in the 7th centuries by Benedictine monks. Mirja Jarak disputed a supposition connected with the *donatio* in a contribution published recently.² She systematically considers the source, the *Epitome chronicorum Cassinensium*, but particularly the part containing the *donatio Iustiniani*, which is generally thought to be forgery. This document lists the towns that were given by the Emperor Iustinianus I to the monastery of Monte Cassino and the Benedictine monks. These towns include some possessions in the province Pannonia as well.

Mirja Jarak asked the question whether the order of the towns contains any logical sequence or not. She pointed out that the composer of the *donatio* had written the names of the towns in the same order and with the same orthography as we read them in the *Itinerarium Antonini*. The sites and provinces listed did not belong to the Benedictine monks, but they undeniably belonged to the territories annexed by the Iustinianus I. The main point of Jarak's statement is as follows: „The archaeological finds as well as the *Epitome chronicorum Cassinensium* refer to the connection between Pannonia and the Eastern Roman Empire in the 6th century. ... Although Justinian's donation to St. Benedict is unacceptable, a connection between locations from the *Epitome chronicorum Cassinensium* and Justinian appears to be true. ... For the problem of the presence the Eastern Roman Empire in Pannonia, the secure sources are missing, but it may be presumed that the former Eastern Gothic territory belonged to Justinian's sphere of interest.”³

I shall now attempt to clarify some elements of this issue by way of reference to evidences and interpretations. My discussion is going to pursue the following heads:

1. Benedict and the historical background
2. Benedict and Emperor Iustinianus I.
3. Benedict and St. Gregory the Great
4. *Donatio Iustiniani*
5. Archaeological and liturgical evidences and ideas
6. Conclusion

1. Benedict and the historical background

Benedict was born at Nursia. He studied rhetoric and law in Rome. „There, at a very early stage, it would appear, he was tempted both by women and by spiritual pride. 'He withdrew the foot he had placed on the doorstep of the world' (St Gregory), i.e. he fled from Rome and its dangerous charms.”⁴ At that time, he was less than twenty. He went to the village of Enfida, then Subiaco, where he lived in a grotto. Three years later, he became the leader of the monks at Vicavoro. Nevertheless, because of his harshness, his followers wanted to poison him. Benedict's life, however, was saved by a miracle. He returned to the grotto. Then, another group of monks tried to poison him, again. But a crow took away the poisoned bread. Finally, he arrived at Monte Cassino after these events. He built a monastery where once a temple of Apollo stood.⁵ This happened around 529. He died on March 21, 547, or so. According to general opinion, Benedict founded at least three cloisters, namely Subiaco, Monte Cassino and Terracina.⁶ Of course, there were other monks both before and after Benedict.⁷

The period that began with the fall of the Western Roman Empire in 476 was not exactly a quiet one. Rome itself lost its former glamour. After killing Odoacer, Theoderic (473-527) became the ruler in Italy, and had his residence in Ravenna from 493. He intended to reign pretending to Roman culture and intellectual life and religious tolerance. Finally, however, Theoderic chose bloodshed, because of the anti-Arian edict of Emperor Iustinus I. (518-527). Even pope Iohannes I (523-526) fell victim to the savagery of Theoderic. Ostrogoths living on the Italian peninsula, ravaged and put the country to ruins. Iustinianus began to reconquer the country in 535.⁸ However, under the leadership of Totila (541-552) the Ostrogoths withstood Iustinianus' army. In addition, there was a conflict between pope Vigilius (537-555) and emperor Iustinianus I (527-565).

2. Benedict and the Emperor Iustinianus I.

Some, seemingly coincidental, events are very interesting. Iustinianus I. closed the ancient schools in

Athens in 529, at the very moment Benedict settled down with his followers Monte Cassino.⁹ There is no apparent link between these events; they nevertheless indicate the odd way in which the Emperor and Benedict or at least his monks were into touch at the time,¹⁰ but there were other occurrences that coincided, most notably the barbarian attacks during and after Benedict's own lifetime (480-547). The barbarians devastated monasteries, for instance, Monte Cassino in 577 or in 581,¹¹ and Subiaco in 601. Monks fled to Rome, where they settled on mons Caelius. It should be noted here, that the Ostrogoths also destroyed the early Christian church at Valcum. Iustinianus wished to restore the unity of the Roman Empire by reconquering the land and bringing the barbarian tribes under regulation. Simultaneously, he required people's return to the catholic faith.¹² As a theologian, he also regulated the life of the clergy and the monks, even giving them privileges. This point matched the *donatio* in his religious and foreign policy. As M. Jarak pointed out, the former Gothic possessions had been annexed into the Iustinianus' territories, which contained the destroyed monasteries and the church of Valcum in Pannonia¹³.

3. Benedict and pontifex Gregorius Magnus (pope St. Gregory the Great 590-604)

One may wonder Benedict had been an unknown human being until the Gregory the Great, who himself was a monk. He reported the miracles in his *Dialogi*.¹⁴ Gregory was the first to write about the forgotten Benedict, although Benedict had given the monks the Rule, which was later to be so influential and famous. Décarreaux adumbrates his propositions in connection with this silence until Gregory the Great.¹⁵ From the destroyed monasteries, the monks ran to the Urbs, where they lived secluded from the world, nevertheless, their lives changed compared to their former timetable in their own monasteries. On the other hand, a new stage of the war began in Rome; the Langobard king, Agilulf (590-616), invaded Rome. Gregory the Great as a former *praefectus urbi* could organize the resistance and the safeguard; however, he did his best to save the monks and their religious ideals. That was why he founded monastery on the mons Caelius, where he lived as a pope as well. It was also here that he wrote the *Dialogi*. At this time, Benedict had been dead for 47 years. Therefore, reality and imagination could very well have blended in memory: „Seit etwa zwanzig Jahren vertreten benediktinische Historiker jedoch einen anderen Standpunkt. Von der Mitte des VI. Jahrhunderts ab gibt es lange Zeit kaum Dokumente über die Mönche von Monte Cassino. Auch Gregor, der Benedikt doch so sehr preist, erwähnt die benediktinischen Mönche nicht.“¹⁶ There is no reason to be surprised that we have not had any data from the period of the *donatio*. Consequently, we have not had any evidences proving or

disproving the authenticity of the *donatio*. But we very well know that the Benedictine monks started out to their mission.

4. Donatio Iustiniani

The part in question is as follows:

„Augustus (sc. Iustinianus) namque effectus propter amorem, quem in Patrem Benedictum habebat, concessit eidem Patri, et eius Casinensi Coenobio in perpetuum possidenda, quae super annectimus; sed et insuper dedit ... In Pannonia Cibalim, Antianim, Himasam, **Balcum**, Scarabantiam, Vindemonam, Arlapem, Yaciacum, Nimaniam, Artebindo. ...¹⁷

Translation: Augustus (id.e. Iustinianus) is moved by his love to father Benedict, has permitted the same father and his Cassian monastery to hold possessions mentioned above for everlasting ones; in addition he has donated ... in Pannonia ... Balcum.

First, let us suppose that the *donatio* is authentic. Iustinianus really donated towns and territories to the Benedict and the Cassian monastery. If the donation were true, it should have happened between 535 (the beginning of the reconquest) and 547 (death of Benedict). Had the donation happened after the death of Benedict, then the text of *donatio* would have been inserted later, as need arose. In spite of the text being a later interpolation, the donation could have actually happened. In this case, we may ask why we do not know anything about the Benedictine possessions at the listed places. We may answer that we do not know because we have no evidence at all for this Benedictine possession; hence, we can state neither that this possession never existed nor that it ever existed.

Second, let us suppose that the *donatio* is forgery. In this case, we may ask why the interpolation was actually done and who did it. Cui prodest? I wish to draw only a tentative implication, not a final solution. Iustinianus sought the unity of the Roman Empire led by New Rome. In order to do so, he had to reconquer the land and establish a unified, i.e. catholic faith and Church. On the territories annexed by Iustinianus, besides the local population, German tribes lived, who were Arians. They did not want to be converted. The Benedictine monks were sent in order to convert them. The monks were sent west, to the once Western Roman Empire, and they indeed went. They needed accommodation. Where? On the other hand, we have proofs of donations, not by the Emperor or Emperors, but by unknown benefactors, who granted land to build cloisters in the neighbourhoods of Monte Cassino and other towns.¹⁸ Is it impossible that donations like these should have occurred outside Italy? No, it is not. I think it is very much a possibility. Cui prodest? Emperors? People? Monks? Or all the three?

5. Archaeological and liturgical evidences and ideas

The early Christian church of Valcum has three apses and three naves, (fig. 1).¹⁹ The pavement of the middle apse is on a higher level than that of other two apses. The middle nave and apse with flanking branches were built first. The other two apses would be joined later, when the Ostrogoths reconstructed the "Binnenfestigung" after the destruction.²⁰ Every church provides space for liturgy; consequently, every church has to match the liturgy. The *Ordo Romanus* required only single apse and a modest outline. The Benedictine monks insisted on the *Ordo Romanus*, and their churches were more modest, because the liturgy lacked elaborate ritual; better to say, their liturgical elaboration depended on occasion. At first sight, this fact seems to contradict the presence of the Benedictine monks. Let us dwell on this point a little longer!

Ostrogoths were the ones who reconstructed the church; and they professed the Arian creed. The Arians celebrated *messae Gallicanae*. The form of this liturgy was influenced by the more elaborate Syrian ritual.²¹ The Antiochian, Maronite, Byzantine and Armenian ritual were modelled on the Syrian one.²² All these rituals emphasised the solemnity of ceremony with motions and processions. A modest church building with a single apse would not match these rituals. Only a larger building with aisles and apses could provide space for them. The Ostrogoths built only this larger type of the church, and this is the only type of church found at excavations sites where once German tribes lived.²³ Furthermore, we know that local features in other towns modified the *Ordo Romanus*. Ambrosius explained that the *Ordo Romanus* had to be followed but would other customs might also be kept besides the *Ordo Romanus*.²⁴ The Roman liturgy, allowing for local modifications, spread very quickly.²⁵ Let us return to our central issue, the Benedictine monks. To

assume their arriving at Valcum, they settled there, taught there, and celebrated liturgy there. The situation urges us to ask questions. Where did they dwell? Where did they have the possessions? What was the possession? Who gave them the possession? What was the celebrated liturgy like? Did the Ostrogoths take part in this liturgy? Who took part in the liturgy? Did the monks insist on the *Ordo Romanus* or did they celebrate it with local features? Did they celebrate the *missae Romanae* altered by *modo Gallicano*? How long did they remain here? These questions lead us to further hypotheses, if we attempt to reply them. They dwelt in the building called *horreum* during the day. This became the possession of the monks. Perhaps, wealthy inhabitants give it to them. It is very likely that Ostrogoths took part in the liturgy. In addition it is very likely that the monks celebrated the Roman liturgy with local features. The Roman and the Gallic liturgies were assimilated to one another. We must not forget the liturgical reforms implemented by Gregory the Great. These monks agreed with Ambrosius, who followed *Ordo Romanus*, and maintained other customs besides it. The Benedictine monks have remained in Pannonia, better to say in a country that had once been Pannonia. They wandered to other areas. However, we cannot know many other towns they wandered to until they settled in their present place.

6. Conclusion

Whether the *Donatio Iustiniani* is authentic or not, it might indicate some ecclesiastical events. The Ostrogoths had built a church, and this was modified - according to my supposition - by Benedictine monks, who arrived at this area during the papacy of Gregorius Magnus. Consequently the plan of this church, as we see today, can be dated to the turn of the 6th and 7th centuries.

Note:

¹ The vast literature on the basilica is discussed in detail in my forthcoming book: Christianity in Pannonia during the first five centuries. BAR. No. 22. I. a-b.

² JARAK 1998 779-786.

³ JARAK 1998 784-785.

⁴ DÉCARREAU 1964 218.

⁵ According to DÉCARREAU a temple of Jupiter - 1964 219.

⁶ DÉCARREAU 1980 160.

⁷ DÉCARREAU lists them, 1967 215 note 1: Martin of Tour died 397, Jerome 419, Honoratius of Lérins 429, Augustine 430, Pulinus of Nola 431, Cassenius 435, Hilarius of Arles 449, Patrick 461, Caesarius of Arles 543, Martin of Braga 580, Radegunda 587, Columba of Iona 597, Leander of Seville 601, Isidore of Seville 636.

⁸ NOETHLICH 1999 Sp. 683, C, I, c.

⁹ LATOURETTE 1937 66.

¹⁰ CHAPMAN 1929 57-87. For example, his examination

- regards the resemblance between the Rule and the Novels of Iustinianus.
- 11 DÉCARREAU 1980 160.
- 12 NOETHLICH 1999 686-688
- 13 MÜLLER 1988 270. The Ostrogoths burnt and also reconstructed the church.
- 14 Translation by Tamás RADOS and Flóris SZABÓ in the series "Lelkiségi füzetek 4." Pannonhalma, 1993. The basis of the translation is: Umberto MORICCA: Gregorii Magni Dialogi, libri IV, Rome 1922.
- 15 DÉCARREAU 1980 160-165.
- 16 DÉCARREAU 1980 165.
- 17 MURATORI A L: Rerum Italicarum scriptores. Tom II. Mediolani 1723. Epitome chronicorum Casinensium p. 353. A, E.
- 18 CHAPMAN 1929 149-150.
- 19 E. TÓTH: Das Christentum in Pannonien bis zum 7. Jahrhundert nach den archäologischen Zeugnissen. In: Das Christentum in bayrischen Raum von den Anfängen bis ins 11. Jahrhundert. hrsg. von BOSCHOF E. / WOLF H. Wien 1994 241-272, Abb. 6; LÓVEI P: Építészet a Kárpát-medencében a honfoglalás előtt. In: Magyarország építészetének története. Ed. SISA J./WIEBENSON D. Budapest 1998 13-20. fig. 1.6.
- 20 See note 13.
- 21 BOTTE I/1963 35.
- 22 BOTTE I/1963 18.
- 23 I wish to express my gratitude to Professor Guzik for sharing with me his knowledge about the architectures of the 5th. and 7th. centuries.
- 24 BOTTE I/1963 28.
- 25 Think of today's practise!

Literature:

- BOTTE B 1963
Riten und liturgische Familien. In: Handbuch der Liturgiewissenschaft I. Freiburg, Basel, Wien 16-35.
- CHAPMAN D J 1929
Saint Benedict and the Sixth Century. London
- DÉCARREAU J 1964
Monks and Civilization. The Story of Early Christian Monasticism and Its Influence on Western Culture. New York
- DÉCARREAU J 1980
Geschichte des benediktinischen Mönchtums. In: Benedictus. Eine Kulturgeschichte des Abendlandes. Genf 145-378.
- JARAK M 1998
„Pannonian Benedictine Possession in the 6th Century. In: Acta XIII Congressus Internationalis Archaeologiae Christianae. Roma- Split II. 779-786.
- LATOURETTE K
The First Five Centuries. (A History of the Expansion of Christianity. Vol. I.) New York- London
- MÜLLER R 1988
Die spätrömische Festung Valcum am Plattensee. In: Germanen, Hunnen und Awaren. Schätze der Völkerwanderungszeit. Frankfurt am Main 270- 273.
- NOETHLICH K L 1999
Iustinianus (Kaiser) RAC Lief. 149- 150. 668- 763.

Donatio Iustiniani

A Keszthely-Fenekpusztán előkerült ókeresztény templom Pannoniában az egyik legvitatottabb objektum. Bár a donatio Iustiniani nem problémamentes mint forrás, most mégis erre hivatkozva egy hipotézist állítottam fel.

A régészeti feltárás bizonyította a templom átépítését. Továbbá azt is tudjuk, hogy e területen jelen voltak az ariánus germán törzsek. Minthogy az ariánusok a gazdagabb, keleti liturgiát gyakorolták, feltételeztem,

hogy a donatióban szereplő Valcum, amelyet Justinianus a bencéseknek ajándékozott, valóság, és a bencések épp az ariánus germánok megtérítésére érkeztek ide. A templomot a gazdagabb liturgiának megfelelően a germánok alakítják át, ezt nem mérsékelik a római liturgiát végző bencések, de jelen vannak és maradnak is. Feltételezem, hogy lakhelyük a „horreum”-nak nevezett épület lehetett.

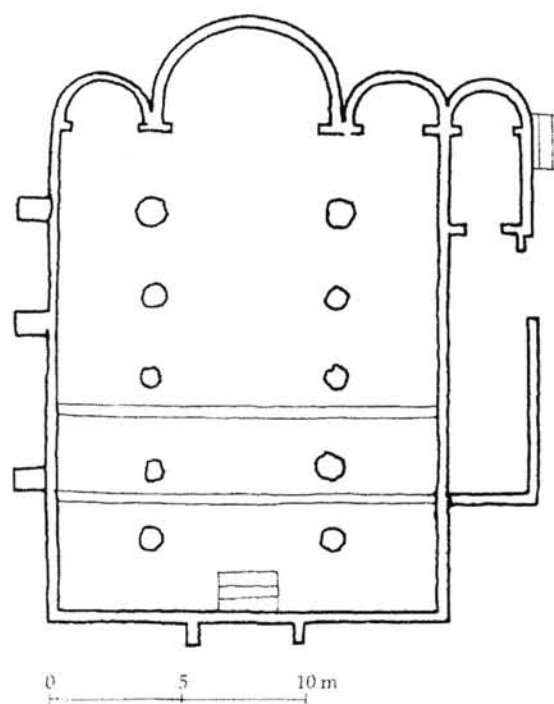


Abb. 1: Ground-plan from the final period of the basilica of Keszthely-Fenekpuszta.
1. kép: Keszthely-Fenekpuszta, a bazilika alaprajza az utolsó építési periódusban.

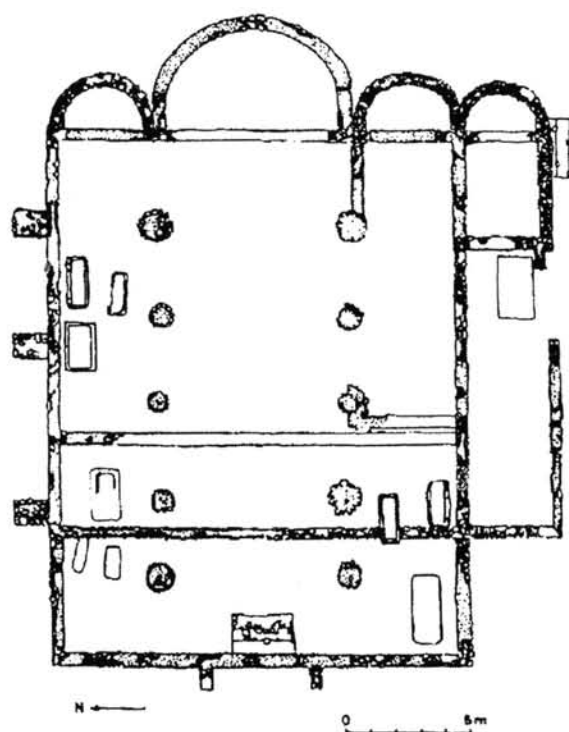


Abb.2: Situation of the graves from the late 6th -early 7th centuries in the basilica of Keszthely-Fenekpuszta.
2. kép: Keszthely-Fenekpuszta, a 6. század végi - 7. század eleji sírok helyzete a bazilikában.

