

From Roman Gorsium to late-antique Herculia: a summary of recent work at TÁC (NE Pannonia)

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Introduction

New excavations have established the name and clarified the rôle of this previously little-known Roman town in northeast Pannonia (fig.1). The military surveyors of emperor Joseph II recorded the site in the vicinity of the modern village of TÁC as early as 1783,¹ and on the basis of surface finds the site was known to Hungarian archaeologists as early as the first half of the 19th c.² The carved and decorated stones found chiefly around Székesfehérvár³ (10 km from TÁC) and Sárpentele⁴ led Mommsen and others to conclude that the centre of the imperial cult lay thereabouts,⁵ but subsequent investigation did not indicate that those two towns had been important Roman settlements (even though some suggested that one of those two towns was the ancient Gorsium mentioned in the Antonine Itinerary).⁶ Consequently A. Alföldi assumed that the ancient materials used to build Székesfehérvár had been brought from Aquincum.⁷

Systematic excavation at TÁC began in 1934,⁸ when a large building with three apses (subsequently interpreted as a palace) and a 4th-c. cemetery were found less than 300 m apart.⁹ The goal of the current excavations, which began in 1958, is to uncover the entire urban settlement (fig.2), which, from aerial photography and field surveys, seems to have extended about 100 ha. After the 1991 season about 6% of the settlement has been excavated, including the small centre, part of the southern district, some cemeteries, and a section of the harbour. We now know more about the site than about most other towns in Pannonia. The main part of the settlement lies on the E bank of the river SÁRVIZ (converted into a canal in the 19th c.). Part of the settlement extends to its W bank. Recent work has established the direction of the main arteries to and from the town. Two roads approached from the S, one on the E and the other on the W side of the river. On the NE was the road to Aquincum. The fourth road connected the town with the legionary camp of Brigetio on the Danube. The two main routes mentioned in the Antonine Itinerary, one running from Sopianae (PÉCS) to Aquincum, the other from Sopianae to Brigetio,¹⁰ crossed near TÁC. As a result, we can confidently identify the Roman settlement at TÁC as ancient Gorsium.

1 The following additional abbreviations are used:

AAntHung = *Acta Antiqua Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae*

AHung = *Archaeologia Hungarica*

"Forschungen 19XX" = reports on the current excavations at Gorsium, regularly appearing in *Alba Regia*

IKMK = *Az István Király Múzeum Közleményei*

RIU = *Die römischen Inschriften Ungarns*

SzSz = *Székesfehérvári Szemle*

On the 1783 survey of the site, see Gy. Fülöp, "Gorsium térképes ábrázolása 1783-ból," *ArchErt* 110 (1983) 82-88.

2 F. Rómer, "Magyar régészeti krónika," *Archaeologiai Közlemények* 6 (1866) 103, nr.810.

3 *CIL* III 3345, 3347, 3348 = 10334, 19336, 10338.

4 *CIL* III 3342, 3343.

5 *CIL* III 432.

6 *Itin. Ant.* 264, 4; 265, 1; J. Fitz, "Zur Frage der ins Komitat Fejér verschleppten Steindenkmäler aus der Römerzeit," *IKMK* A/7 (1958) 13-14.

7 A. Alföldi, "Epigraphica III," *ArchErt* 3/1 (1940) 195-235.

8 T. Horváth & A. Marosi, "Jelentés az 1934. évi őszi tácfövenypusztai ásátásról," *SzSz* 5 (1935) 35-38.

9 A. Marosi, "A tácfövenypusztai ásátás," *SzSz* 4 (1934) 53-71.

10 A. Radnóti, "Sopianaeből kiinduló római utak" in *Pécs szab. kir. város 'Majorossy Imre Múzeumának Értesítője'* (Pécs, 1939/40) 37.