



# TYCHE

## Beiträge zur Alten Geschichte Papyrologie und Epigraphik

Band 9, 1994

Herausgegeben von

Gerhard Dobesch, Hermann Harrauer  
Peter Siewert und Ekkehard Weber

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DE GRUYTER



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H O L Z H A U S E N

**Herausgegeben von:**

Gerhard Dobesch, Hermann Harrauer, Peter Siewert und Ekkehard Weber

**In Zusammenarbeit mit:**

Reinhold Bichler, Herbert Graßl, Sigrid Jalkotzy und Ingomar Weiler

**Redaktion:**

Johannes Diethart, Wolfgang Hameter, Bernhard Palme  
Georg Rehrenböck, Hans Taeuber

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Marjeta ŠAŠEL KOS

## The Embassy of Romulus to Attila One of the last citations of Poetovio in classical literature

Poetovio, an important Norican settlement on the ancient amber trading route, belonged to the province of Pannonia in the period of its greatest prosperity, and was known from the period of Trajan onwards as *colonia Ulpia*.<sup>1</sup> As is shown by the *Itinerarium Hierosolymitanum* (561, 4) and the *Tabula Peutingeriana* (IV, 20), in the 4th century — undoubtedly after the changes in provincial administration introduced by Diocletian — the city was again attached to Noricum, more exactly: to the province of *Noricum Mediterraneum*, as is confirmed by later sources. Its exceptional position at a crossing of the Drava and also at a crossroads of the most important Norican-Pannonian routes, meant that even in the modified conditions of the late Roman period Poetovio played an important role not merely in military terms — a city established at such a position must have had a permanent military garrison — but also as the see of a bishop,<sup>2</sup> a lively industrial-craft centre, and, as can be concluded from various literary notes, mainly from data in *Expositio totius mundi et gentium* (see below) and from Ammianus Marcellinus (XIV 11, 20; cf. also XV 1, 2), the temporary residence of the highest military and civil representatives of the Roman government. Ammianus mentions that the Caesar Gallus arrived at the Norican city of Poetovio (*venit Poetovionem oppidum Noricorum*), where he was arrested on the orders of Constantinus in a palace outside the city walls (*palatium ... extra muros*).

On the basis of two sources, Ammianus and the Byzantine historian Priscus (see below), it appears that the terms „Norican town“ or „a city of Noricum“ gradually became some kind of synonym for Poetovio and its *ager* from the 4th century onwards. This becomes even more comprehensible if it is considered that the *ager* of Poetovio more or less corresponded to that part of Noricum which had previously been included in Pannonia.<sup>3</sup> It is much less believable that a town which had been a part of Noricum throughout its entire development, such as Celeia or Virunum,<sup>4</sup> would be referred to in this manner, as the towns in this province were

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<sup>1</sup> B. Saria, RE XXI 1 (1951) 1167 ff (s. v. *Poetovio*). I would like to thank Professor R. Bratož for having kindly read my text, and Barbara Smith-Demo for having translated it into English.

<sup>2</sup> R. Bratož, *Kratek oris zgodovine krščanstva na Slovenskem v pozni antiki*, Zgod. čas. 35 (1981) 206–208, 212ff; cf. Id., Zgod. čas. 40 (1986) 382.

<sup>3</sup> In modern literature the meaning of the term *civitas Noricum*, or πόλις Νορικόν, is still controversial, see n. 6 below, and G. Alföldy *Noricum*, London, Boston 1974, 199.

<sup>4</sup> Different opinions are cited by B. Grafenauer, *Ustoličevanje koroških vojvod in država karantanskih Slovencev* [Die Kärntner Herzogseinsetzung und der Staat der Karantanerslawen], Ljubljana 1952, 418–420, who maintained that the term most probably denotes the city of Poetovio; see also Id., *Zgodovina slovenskega naroda* 1, Ljubljana 1964<sup>2</sup>, 220. J. Šašel, *Antiqui Barbari. Zur Besiedelungsgeschichte Ostnoricums und Pannoniens im 5. und 6. Jahrhundert nach den Schriftquellen. Von der Spätantike zum frühen Mittelalter*, Sigmaringen 1979, 137 (Vorträge und Forschungen 25), suggested Celeia, or, more probably, Poetovio. See also L. Margetić, Neka pitanja boravka Langobarda u Sloveniji (Note su alcune questioni del soggiorno dei Langobardi nell' odierna Slovenia), *Arh. vest.* 43, 1992, 149–150



clearly all Norican. Poetovio undoubtedly also had close contacts with the province of Pannonia later, and thus it is occasionally mentioned in the sources as a part of Pannonia, although such notes should most probably not be interpreted in the administrative sense, but rather geographically. In principle, it would not at all be unusual were Poetovio to be called a Norican town, or a city of Noricum, if it was in fact a Norican settlement in Pannonia. This would theoretically also be true of Carnuntum, but the city of Poetovio and its vicinity undoubtedly had the most exposed position among all Norican regions, and exactly because of this, it played the most significant role in a geographical sense. The town was located along the most heavily travelled routes leading from the Balkans through the Illyrian-Italic Gates into Italy, since in the Roman Imperial period the route along the Drava was more important than the route to the east through Emona and Siscia along the Sava (*Itin. Ant.* 129–130; *Itin. Hieros.* 560–563).<sup>5</sup> It was the constant target of Germanic and other barbarian tribes — in the first half of the 5th century particularly the Huns — who partially intended to settle on Roman provincial territory and partially through the regions of Sirmium (Pannonia) and Poetovio (Noricum) penetrated towards Italy through Emona. It is understandable that Rome urgently desired to protect Poetovio against the barbarians, as it is equally comprehensible that it was fought over by legitimate rulers and usurpers.

In a document from the mid 4th century, *Expositio totius mundi et gentium* (57, ed. J. Rougé, *Sources chrétiennes* 124, 1966, p. 196; cf. also *GGM* II 513 ff.), this region was described with the following words: *Deinde Pannonia regio, terra dives in omnibus, fructibus quoque et iumentis et negotiis, ex parte et mancipiis. Et semper habitatio imperatorum est. Habet autem et civitates maximas, Sirmium quoque et Noricum, unde et vestis norica exire dicitur. Haec Pannonia regio.* (The region of Pannonia follows, a land rich in everything, also in produce, beasts of burden and trade, and to some extent, slaves. It has always been the residence of emperors. There are also very large towns, Sirmium and Noricum, from whence also the Norican dress is said to have come. Such is the region of Pannonia.) *Civitas Noricum* is compared in this text with the city of Sirmium, and the expression — at least in this context and in this source — cannot, in my opinion, be interpreted otherwise than as the city of Noricum. Analogously, and regardless of its various interpretations the expression πόλις Νορικόν as noted in Procopius (*De bello Goth.* III 33, 10: Λαγγοβάρδας δὲ βασιλεὺς Ἰουστινιανὸς ἐδωρήσατο Νορικῶν τε πόλει καὶ τοῖς ἐπὶ Παννονίας ὀχυρώμασί τε καὶ ἄλλοις χωρίοις πολλοῖς καὶ χρήμασι μεγάλοις ἄγαν), cannot be explained otherwise than as a city. The otherwise interesting interpretation of R. Egger, who maintained that the expression *civitas Noricum*, or πόλις Νορικόν, denoted Celeia and Poetovio and their administrative regions,<sup>6</sup> does not seem convincing to me. The opinion of S. Ciglencéki, who partially based the results of his archaeological research on the historical conclusions of Egger, seems even less plausible. He recently identified the term πόλις Νορικόν with a series of late Roman fortified elevated settlements between Celje and Brežice, in the mountainous area between the rivers Savinja and Sava, extending to Haloze in the north and to the river Dravinja.<sup>7</sup> The

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and 169, who cited the opinions of B. Saria, I. Bóna, J. Werner and others. The meaning of πόλις Νορικόν should be reconsidered.

<sup>5</sup> A. Mócsy, *RE Suppl.* IX (1962) 661; J. Šašel, *Rimske ceste v Sloveniji*, Arheološka najdišča Slovenije, Ljubljana 1975, 97f.

<sup>6</sup> R. Egger, *Civitas Noricum*, *Wiener Studien* 47 (1929) 146ff. = *Römische Antike und frühes Christentum* I (1962) 116–122. He rightly noted (p. 119 n. 10) that J. Haury's emendation of Νορικόν, in place of Νορικόν, is unfounded.

<sup>7</sup> S. Ciglencéki, *Polis Norikon, Poznoantične višinske utrdbe med Celjem in Brežicami*, Podsreda 1992. M. Büdinger, *Oesterreichische Geschichte* I, Leipzig 1858, 58, n. 2 (undecided), and L. Haupt-



anonymous author of the *Expositio* always used the word *civitas*, even in other contexts, to refer to an urban settlement, and Procopius too, undoubtedly made use of the word πόλις in its usual meaning of a city, since in the same chapter, just a few sentences earlier, he mentioned that the Gepids held the city of Sirmium under their authority (III 33, 8: Γήπαιδες δὲ πόλιν τε Σίρμιον καὶ Δακίας ἐκ τοῦ ἐπὶ πλείστον ἀπάσας καταλαβόντες ἔσχον ...). Egger, who used the edition of the *Expositio* then available to him, and could not know of the later interpretation of the text by Rougé, cited an incorrect example in his intention to prove that this word could also mean province in the usage of the anonymous author.<sup>8</sup> The only debatable element might be where the writer, by birth from the Syrian-Palaestian region,<sup>9</sup> refers to Tuscany as a town (56: <Post> hanc habes vicinam Tusciam. ... Et haec quidem Romae et Tusciae. Italiae vero et aliae civitates sunt splendidae, quae sic vocantur Aquileia et Mediolanum.). This would require special analysis, but it is evident that the author considered it a town. I would merely add that on the *Tabula Peutingeriana* (V, 1), an Etruscan town of Tuscania is documented in the 7th Italic region (cf. Pliny, *N. H.* III 52), and Stephanus of Byzantium cited, in addition to the country of Tyrrenia, a town of the same name (*s. v.*)

The city of Noricum, located in Pannonia according to the source, and compared to Sirmium, can only be Poetovio.<sup>10</sup> This was a city which was Norican and which throughout a good part of its Roman history belonged to Pannonia, to which the *ager* of Poetovio, as is logical to assume, could have been re-attached after Diocletian's reforms, if such was required by the military-defensive position of the Roman government in this endangered section of the Empire. The idea that the term *Norican city* refers to Poetovio is simultaneously confirmed by an interesting piece of information from Diocletian's edict *de pretiis* supporting the note in the *Exposito totius mundi et gentium* that the city of Noricum was known for the manufacture of clothing. The edict listed products, complete with prices, and, among several other Norican textile products, there was specific mention of a Poetovian cloak or coat (19, 67 [*fibulatorium Petovionicum \* quinque milibus*], reconstructed on the basis of the Greek text: φιβλατώριον Πετουβιωνικόν \*, ε),<sup>11</sup> which was evidently so-well known a type of clothing in the empire that it was specifically noted among the limited number of products mentioned in the edict.

mann, *Krain*, in: *Erläuterungen zum historischen Atlas der österreichischen Alpenländer* I 4, 336–337 and n. 8, had previously suggested Poetovio. The latter maintained that the expression πόλις Νωρικόν can definitely not denote the province of Noricum. See also F. Kos, *Gradivo* I (1902) 36 n. 4, and R. Bratož, in the review of H. Krahwinkler, *Friaul im Frühmittelalter*, *Zgod. čas.* 47 (1993) 145 and n. 4.

<sup>8</sup> Egger (n. 6) 116–117. Unconvincingly also H. Wolff, *Die Kontinuität städtischen Lebens in den nördlichen Grenzprovinzen des römischen Reiches und das Ende der Antike*, in: *Die Stadt in Oberitalien und in den nordwestlichen Provinzen des Römischen Reiches*, Mainz 1991, 313–314 and n. 93 (Kölner Forschungen 4). The meaning of *civitas Valeria* should be reconsidered – it seems that this may refer to Sopianae, cf. *Amm. Marc.* XXVIII 1, 5: *apud Sopianas Valeriae oppidum*, but see also F. Lotter, *Antonius von Lérins und der Untergang Ufernorikums*, *Hist. Ztschr.* 212 (1971) 299–303, who would explain it as Lauriacum.

<sup>9</sup> J. Rougé, ed. *Expositio totius mundi et gentium*, in: *Sources chrétiennes* 124 (1966) 29–38.

<sup>10</sup> Poetovio is also listed among the Pannonian cities in the register of participants at the synod in Serdica in A. D. 343, where one *Aprianus de Petabione Pannoniae similiter* is mentioned (*PL* 56, 852 A). No note is made of any participant from Noricum, although among the provinces which had supported the Catholic party, Noricum, too, is mentioned (*PG* 25, 312 A). It is not to be excluded that Athanasius referred to Aprianus of Poetovio. I am indebted to Professor R. Bratož for this interesting observation.

<sup>11</sup> S. Lauffer, *Diokletians Preisedikt*, Berlin 1971, 158–159 (Texte und Kommentare 5.); Marta Giacchero, *Edictum Diocletiani et Collegarum de pretiis rerum venalium*, I *Edictum*. Genova 1974, 178–179.

Poetovio apparently retained a reputation as an active provincial city in the Late Roman Empire.

Coin finds, in addition to other isolated archaeological finds, are the main proof that the life continued in the city in the 5th and 6th centuries. This is particularly apparent for the 5th century, when monetary circulation declined strongly in neighbouring Rhaetia, in contrast to Noricum.<sup>12</sup> In comparison to nearby sites, relatively large quantities of coins were found at Ptuj from the 5th and 6th centuries. These undoubtedly confirm an at least partial existence and functioning of administrative units in the city, and incontestably prove that Poetovio was in fact the centre of its region in this periods, although in a reduced form. It is clear that life in the city could have been temporarily disturbed or even partially interrupted due to major barbarian invasions.<sup>13</sup> The importance of fortified and elevated *refugia* in the vicinity would certainly have been increased in such phases.

Poetovio was mentioned fairly rarely in Late Roman literary and other sources (in addition to those mentioned above see also: *Cod. Theod.* XII 1, 78; Zos. II 46). The further existence of the city far into the 6th century is proven, despite the scarce archaeological finds, by the mention of Poetovio in the work of the Anonymous Geographer of Ravenna (216, 6, ed. M. Pinder, G. Parthey), where the name of the town is noted as Petaviona, listed among the towns of Pannonia, between Remista and Vincensima. The last author before the Anonymous Geographer — chronologically speaking — to cite the name of Poetovio was the Byzantine rhetor and historian of the 5th century, Priscus, from the town of Panium in Thrace. The Greek writers, who continued the tradition of classical and Hellenistic historiography, were an incomparably more comprehensive source for the history of the 5th century than the short chronicles written in Latin, although they naturally wrote from the standpoint of the eastern Roman empire and attributed much more emphasis to events in this eastern half. Occasionally these two worlds met and Priscus described one such episode, when reporting on the eastern Roman embassy to Attila, in which he himself participated. Among other events, he also described the encounter with a mission from the western Empire led by the *comes* Romulus. This episode is particularly significant because of the mention of Poetovio and also that of the *comes* Romulus, who allegedly had originated from Poetovio (see below). The episode is undoubtedly among the most vivid and personally experienced narratives in classical literature<sup>14</sup>.

Later writers, such as Euagrius and the anonymous authors of the *Suda* lexicon, as well as the *Excerpta de Legationibus*, termed Priscus a rhetor and sophist: it cannot be denied that in the style of classicist writing he gave a great emphasis to the external form of his work and the

<sup>12</sup> X. Lorient, *Trouvailles isolées de monnaies d'or romaines dans la province de Rétie (I<sup>er</sup>-V<sup>er</sup> siècles)*, in: *Studia numismatica Labacensia A. Jeločnik oblata*, Situla 26 (1988) 70, and n. 52.

<sup>13</sup> P. Kos, *The Monetary Circulation in the Southeastern Alpine Region (ca. 300 B. C. – A. D. 1000)* Situla 24 (1986) 218–224, especially 220 and 223. In the 5<sup>th</sup> century, the following coins were discovered in Ptuj and its immediate surroundings: 3 coins of Theodosius II (*FMRSI* II 428, 2; III 196/1, 878 and 200, 445), 2 of Honorius (*FMRSI* II 434/25, 1206 and unpubl.), 1 of Galla Placidia (*FMRSI* II 434/25, 1207), 2 of Valentinianus III (*ibid.* 434/7, 341 and 20, 111), 1 unidentified coin (*FMRSI* III 200, 500), and also a coin of Leo I (*ibid.* 200, 449). In the 6<sup>th</sup> century, when there were altogether very few coins in circulation, a coin of Anastasius is known from Ptuj (*FMRSI* II 434/25, 1208), as well as a coin of Justinian I (*FMRSI* III 196/1, 916). I am indebted to Dr. P. Kos for this information on the monetary circulation.

<sup>14</sup> See also N. J. Austin, *Autobiography and History: Some Later Roman Historians and their Veracity*, in: *History and Historians in Late Antiquity* (ed. B. Croke, A. M. Emmett), Pergamon Press 1983, 57. For the German translation of this episode see: H. Wolfram, *Das Reich und die Germanen. Zwischen Antike und Mittelalter*, Berlin 1990, 192–198 (Siedler Deutsche Geschichte).

rhetorical effects in it. His *History*, in which he wrote about the period between 434 (the beginning of the reign of Attila) and 474 (the death of the emperor Leo), is unfortunately preserved only in fragments — according to new editions of Bornmann and Blockley, a total of 68. It is particularly unfortunate that his *History* is not entirely preserved, as it would undoubtedly have been the most elegantly written and most reliable historical work for the period of the 5th century. Its title is unknown, and in the *Excerpta de Legationibus*, where many fragments of Priscus are preserved, it is simply called the *History*, or the *Gothic History* (the latter title is certainly incorrect in terms of the preserved contents). In the *Suda* it is written that, in addition to declamations and letters, he also wrote a *History of Byzantium and of the Period of Attila* in eight volumes.<sup>15</sup> It is strange that Photius in his *Library* (9th century) does not mention the work of Priscus. It was utilized, in addition to various other historians from Procopius to Malalas, mainly by Jordanes for his *History of the Goths (Getica)* — he may have known Priscus' text indirectly, from Cassiodorus' *History* — and later by Johannes of Antioch (at the beginning of the 7th century). Both authors are important for the reconstruction of Priscus' text.

Priscus was most probably a state official in the eastern half of the Empire, although nothing detailed is known of his career. It is conjectured that he had first been an assistant (*assessor*) to the *comes* Maximinus, and that during the reign of Marcianus he had been assigned as an *assessor* to the *magister militum* Euphemius.<sup>16</sup> In 449, he was invited by Maximinus to accompany him on a delegation to the court of Attila (among the others participating was the interpreter Bigilas). According to W. Ensslin's reconstruction of the careers of Maximinus and Priscus, this Maximinus would be identical with the Maximinus who was *comes et magister scriniorum* in 435, and subsequently may have become *comes consistoriarum*.<sup>17</sup> Priscus perhaps worked in one of the administrative offices or *scrinia*, unless — as suggested by B. Baldwin — he should rather be regarded as a barrister, since this is one of the meanings of the word *rhetor* in Byzantine Greek. In any case, there is barely any evidence in the extant sources to postulate and/or reconstruct Priscus' official career.<sup>18</sup> Despite the arguments set forth in Ensslin's article, J. R. Martindale, in the *Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire (PLRE II, 1980)*, considers it necessary to distinguish between the military officer Maximinus and the civil administrator Maximinus, the patron of Priscus.

As regards the sources of Priscus, there is no indication that he would have utilized the works of earlier historians in his text. It seems that he merely used archival sources and the evidence of eyewitnesses; he himself participated, whether actively or passively, in the series of events that he described, since he often travelled and was also able to gather data from competent, and/or prominent, individuals.<sup>19</sup> The imperfections of his history are largely those that can be attributed to late Roman classicist writing in general: due to an over-emphasis on

<sup>15</sup> About Priscus see *Prisci Panitae Fragmenta*. A cura di Fritz Bornmann. Firenze 1979, xiff. An earlier basic work about Priscus is that of J. Kuranc, *De Prisco Panita rerum scriptore quaestiones selectae*, Lublin 1958. The latest is R. C. Blockley, *The Fragmentary Classicising Historians of the Later Roman Empire. Eunapius, Olympiodorus, Priscus and Malchus*. I and II (ARCA, Classical and Medieval Texts, Papers and Monographs 6 and 10) 1981, 1983. See also B. Baldwin, *Priscus of Panium*, Byzantion 50 (1980) 18–61.

<sup>16</sup> Bornmann (n. 15) xii.

<sup>17</sup> W. Ensslin, *Maximinus und sein Begleiter, der Historiker Priskos*, Byzant.-neugr. Jahrbücher 5 (1926/27) 1–9.

<sup>18</sup> Baldwin (n. 15) 21.

<sup>19</sup> This aspect of the late classical historians Ammianus, Olympiodorus and Priscus is analyzed by Austin (n. 14) 54–65.

elegant expression and rhetorical flourishes in the text, there was no space for chronological and geographical-topographical determinations, and for various technical and other details, all of which were unnecessary ballast as far as the authors of that period were concerned. For instance, although Priscus described the reception by Attila in detail, the encampment itself where this took place cannot be located with certainty on the basis of his narrative.<sup>20</sup> However, given Priscus' mention of Hunnic royal graves (fig. 6, Blockley; 2, Müller-Dindorf, see below), there is almost no doubt that the residence of Attila, or rather one of his main residences, should be sought somewhere on the far side of the Danube in the broad hinterland of the town of Margum (the present-day Orašje, near the juncture of the Morava and the Danube). A. Alföldi has hypothesized that the Hunnic rulers had a residence in the vicinity of the Danube opposite Margum from as early as Uldin onwards.<sup>21</sup>

A second failing of Priscus, which likewise is not characteristic merely of him but also of other Byzantine writers, is the fact that he constructed his narrative around individual important figures of his age. One of the crucial personalities in the *History* of Priscus is Attila, and the author was particularly interested in the diplomatic contacts at the highest level between the Roman emperors and the barbarian kingdoms. From the description of the visit to the court of Attila in 449 (fig. 12 according to Blockley, 8 in the editions of Müller, *FHG* IV, and Dindorf, *HGM* I [*Exc. de Leg. Rom.* 3]; translation from the Blockley edition), I have chosen the section of the text containing information that I wish to illuminate anew in the commentary:

*When he had completed a journey of seven days, on the orders of our Scythian guides we halted at a village, since Attila was to take the same road and we had to follow behind him. There we met some western Romans who were also on an embassy to Attila. Amongst them were Romulus, who had the rank of count, Promotus, the governor of Noricum, and the general Romanus. With them were Constantius, whom Aetius had sent to Attila as his secretary, and Tatulus, the father of Orestes who was with Edeco. They were not members of the embassy but were travelling with the envoys out of personal friendship, Constantius because of his earlier acquaintance with them in Italy, Tatulus out of kinship, since his son Orestes had married a daughter of Romulus. ... They were making this embassy from Patavio, a city in Noricum, in order to pacify Attila, who wanted Silvanus, the manager of the bank dealing in bullion at Rome, to be handed over to him on the ground that he had received some golden bowls from Constantius. This Constantius came from the Gauls of the West and he too, like the later Constantius, had been sent by Aetius to Attila and Bleda as secretary. At the time when Sirmium, a city of Pannonia, was being besieged by the Scythians, Constantius was given the bowls by the bishop of the city for the purpose of ransoming him if the city were captured and he survived, or, if he were killed, of buying the freedom of those citizens who were being led off as prisoners. However, after the capture of the city, Constantius ignored the rights of the Scythians and, coming to Rome on business, handed over the bowls to Silvanus and received from him gold on condition that either within a stated period of time he repay the gold with interest and recover the sureties or Silvanus do with them as he wishes. But Attila and Bleda came to suspect Constantius of treachery and crucified him, and, after a time, Attila, being informed of the matter of the bowls, wished Silvanus to be handed over to him as a thief of his own possessions. Therefore, envoys had been sent by Aetius and the Emperor of the western Romans to say that, as Constantius' creditor, Silvanus had received the bowls as sureties and not as stolen property and that he had sold them for silver to priests and not to common citizens: for it was not right that men should use for their own purposes vessels*

<sup>20</sup> See, for example, R. Browning, *Where was Attila's camp?* *JHS* 73 (1953) 143–145.

<sup>21</sup> A. Alföldi, *Der Untergang der Römerherrschaft in Pannonien*. 2, Berlin, Leipzig 1926, 69.

dedicated to God. Accordingly, if, after this reasonable explanation and out of respect for divinity, Attila would not drop his demand for the bowls, they would send gold for them but would not surrender Silvanus, since they would not hand over a man who had done no wrong. This was the reason for their embassy, and they were attending him so that the barbarian might give his reply and dismiss them.

Since we were on the same journey, we waited for Attila to go ahead and followed with our whole party. Having crossed some rivers, we came to a very large village in which Attila's palace was said to be more spectacular than those elsewhere. It was constructed of timbers and smoothly planed boards and was surrounded by a wooden wall which was built with an eye not to security but to elegance. ...

Commentary:

If we wish to comment briefly on the mission of Maximinus and Priscus, we must first place it in the framework of the historical events of the period. According to the most recent critical edition of the text of Priscus (R. C. Blockley), the embassy may — as previously — be dated to 449. In this period, the eastern half of the Empire was ruled by Theodosius II (408–450), and the west, in Ravenna, by the son of Galla Placidia and Constantius, Valentinian III (425–455), who gained the throne as a minor and whose mother ruled in his name for ten years as regent.<sup>22</sup> The government of the western part of the Empire was in fact, from 433, in the hands of the supreme commander of the military forces, the *magister utriusque militiae*, the patrician (from 435) Flavius Aetius (*Aetius* 7, *PLRE* II, 1980),<sup>23</sup> who for three years (405–408) had been a hostage to Alaric, and several years later had also been a hostage at the Hunnic court. His later military successes and career owed a great deal to his Hunnic allies, with whose help he fought against his political opponents, and in Gallia against the Visigoths and the Franks.<sup>24</sup>

As a reward for their support, in the year 433–434, when he became *magister utriusque militiae*, he ceded them the region of Pannonia along the Sava, as is mentioned by Priscus in fragment 11, 1 (*Exc. de Leg. Gent.* 5 = frg. 7 in the editions of Müller-Dindorf; the date is extrapolated from the context); *The Scythian* [= Hun] *Edeco*, who had performed very well in the war, arrived again as [Attila's] ambassador [to Constantinople] together with Orestes. The latter was a Roman by birth and was from that section of the Pannonian land along the river Sava, which had been subject, after the agreement of the general of the western Romans, Aetius, to the barbarians [i. e. Attila]. This *Edeco* came to the court and delivered the letters of Attila, in which the latter accused the Romans in reference to fugitives.

Exactly what section of Pannonia the Huns had received remains unclear. A. Alföldi, who concentrated his studies particularly on the problems of the Late Roman Pannonia, considered that the western Roman court had ceded Valeria to the Huns as early as the year 406.<sup>25</sup> In

<sup>22</sup> See O. Seeck, *Geschichte des Untergangs der antiken Welt*. Bd. 6, Stuttgart 1920, 279–316; Anhang, 459–470; E. Stein, *Geschichte des spätrömischen Reiches*. I, Wien 1928, 472ff.; J. B. Bury, *History of the Later Roman Empire*. I, New York 1958 (repr. from 1928), 265 ff.; A. H. M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire* I, Oxford 1973<sup>2</sup>, 173; A. Demandt, *Die Spätantike. Römische Geschichte von Diocletian bis Justinian, 284–565 n. Chr.*, München 1989, 150 ff. (Hb. d. ATW).

<sup>23</sup> G. Zecchini, *Aezio. L'ultima difesa dell'Occidente romano*, Roma 1983; for the embassy led by Romulus see pp. 262–265.

<sup>24</sup> See also C. D. Gordon, *The Age of Attila*, Ann Arbor 1960; E. A. Thompson, *A History of Attila and the Huns*, Oxford 1948, 102–120, especially 111–113; also interesting for the history of Attila and the Huns: F. Altheim, *Attila und die Hunnen*, Baden-Baden 1951, and O. J. Maenchen-Helfen, *The World of the Huns*, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London 1973. On the problems referred to here, see especially Alföldi (n. 21) 1–2, 1924–26.

<sup>25</sup> Alföldi (n. 21) 86–87.

terms of the agreement of 433–434, mentioned by Priscus, Alföldi assumed that this otherwise reliable writer had mistaken the Drava for the Sava. Alföldi wrongly concluded that the province mentioned in Priscus must have been Savia, although Priscus merely referred to the Pannonian land along the Sava. If the Huns had actually received Savia, then from a strategic viewpoint this would certainly have implied the previous fall of Pannonia Prima, of which there is no indication in the sources.<sup>26</sup> It is certainly incorrect methodologically to dispute the credibility of a reliable literary source if definite archaeological, or other, evidence to support the contrary opinion is lacking. Thus there is no doubt that in the phrase „the Pannonian land along the Sava“ Priscus meant to refer to Pannonia Secunda, which was the closest Pannonian region to the Hunnic territory on the left bank of the Danube. The data from Priscus were also interpreted in this manner by Várady.<sup>27</sup> In addition to Valeria, a large section of Pannonia along the Sava, apparently a fairly large part of the province of Pannonia Secunda, had come under the dominion of the Huns fifteen years prior to the embassy of Maximinus and Priscus. The Huns settled the provincial territory as *foederati*, and Attila was given the title of *magister militum*.<sup>28</sup> It is clear that the Huns did not receive all of Pannonia Secunda on this occasion, the larger towns (certainly Bassianae and Sirmium) remaining under eastern Roman authority until, some eight years later, they were conquered by Attila.

It is apparent from the report of Priscus, as well as from other sources, that the question of prisoners of war and military fugitives was of great importance to Attila, as both of the above were a source of income. He demanded large ransoms for prisoners, as was well illustrated by the affair of the gold vessels of the bishop of Sirmium. There were also Hunnic fugitives who found themselves on or joined the Roman side, which was a problem of mainly strategic significance for Attila, and he thus regularly sent missions to Theodosius requesting the return of these fugitives, and each time the ambassadors were given generous presents. Priscus explicitly stated that this was one of the manners in which Attila enabled his loyal collaborators to increase their wealth (frg. 10, Blockley edition; 6, Müller-Dindorf). These included, as seen in the translated fragment, one of his closest confidants, Edeco, and his secretary from the western Empire, Orestes (*Orestes 2; PLRE*, vol. 2),<sup>29</sup> the father of the last western Roman emperor, Romulus Augustulus – this in the sense that he was the last to be proclaimed emperor in the West, as it is otherwise known that coins were minted in the name of Julius Nepos as late as 480.<sup>30</sup> The request by Attila for the return of fugitives was also simultaneously intended to prevent them being recruited by Theodosius' military commanders. The Roman army was forbidden to recruit soldiers throughout the entire territory controlled by the Huns.<sup>31</sup>

The Huns attacked other cities in Illyricum from the bases they had appropriated, and certainly also from the conquered Pannonian strongholds. In 441 they besieged, conquered and plundered several cities in the eastern section of Illyricum, including Ratiaria, Naissus,

<sup>26</sup> Alföldi (n. 21) 89–91. A. Mócsy, *Pannonia*, RE Suppl. IX (1962) 582, also referred to Pannonia Prima in this context.

<sup>27</sup> L. Várady, *Das letzte Jahrhundert Pannoniens. 376–476*, Budapest 1969, 303–314. See also Šašel (n. 4) 128.

<sup>28</sup> For these controversial problems see Várady (n. 27) 303 ff.

<sup>29</sup> See most recently about Orestes I. Bóna, *Das Hunnenreich*, Stuttgart 1991, 110–117: however, not all the facts stated by the author seem to be correct.

<sup>30</sup> J. P. C. Kent, *Julius Nepos and the Fall of the Western Empire*, in: *Corolla memoriae Erich Swo-boda dedicata*, Graz, Köln 1966, 146–150; Ž. Demo, *The Mint in Salona: Nepos and Ovida*, in: *Studia numismatica Labacensia A. Jeločnik oblat*, Situla 26 (1988) 247–270.

<sup>31</sup> Bury (n. 22) 273.



Singidunum and Viminacium, while the city of Margum was delivered to the Huns by the bishop, and was looted without siege. This episode of Attila's conquests in Illyricum is also preserved in the extant fragments of Priscus (frg. 6, Blockley; 2, Müller-Dindorf; the translation by Blockley):

*When the Scythians at the time of the market overcame the Romans by a trick and killed many of them, the Romans sent to the Scythians, blaming them for the capture of the fort and their contempt for the treaty. They replied that they had done these things not to initiate the trouble but as a riposte, for they claimed that the bishop of Margus had crossed over to their land and, searching out their royal tombs, had stolen the valuables stored there. Furthermore, they said that if they [sc. the Romans] did not hand him over and also hand over the fugitives as had been agreed (and there were very many amongst the Romans), they would prosecute the war. When the Romans replied that this claim was untrue, the barbarians, confident in the truth of their own allegations, rejected arbitration of the disputed matters and turned to war. They crossed the Danube and ravaged very many cities and forts along the river, amongst which they took Viminacium, a city of Moesia in Illyria. While these things were happening, some were arguing that the bishop of Margus should be handed over, so that the whole Roman people should not be endangered by the war for the sake of one man. He, suspecting that he would be surrendered slipped away from those in the city, crossed over to the enemy and promised that he would betray the city to them if the Scythian kings made him any reasonable offer. They said that if he fulfilled his promise, they would treat him well in every way, and hands were shaken and oaths given for what had been promised. He re-crossed to Roman territory with a large force of barbarians, which he concealed right by the river bank, and, rousing it during the night, he handed the city over to the enemy. When Margus had been laid waste in this way, the position of the barbarians was greatly improved.*

Sirmium and Bassianae undoubtedly also fell in this wave of Hunnic conquest, probably even before other towns if the Huns had conquered them from their Pannonian strongholds, although numerous modern historians date the fall of Sirmium to 447 or 448.<sup>32</sup> A. Alföldi noted that these two years cannot be taken into consideration at all since Attila's secretary, Constantius, who had pawned the gold vessels of the bishop of Sirmium after the fall of the city, was executed — for other reasons, most probably because he had supported the interests of the western Roman Empire<sup>33</sup> — at the order of both Hunnic kings, Attila and Bleda, thus prior to 455, the year when Attila rid himself of his brother.<sup>34</sup> The stories of the bishops of Sirmium and Margum are interesting and are similar in certain details, as they eloquently indicate that wealth was concentrated in the hands of the church and the bishops, and further lead to the impression that a bishop was also an important factor in local government in the secular-civil sense, given that other urban officials are barely documented.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>32</sup> For the date see M. Mirković, *Sirmium — its History from the 1 Century A. D. to 582 A. D.*, in: *Sirmium I*. Beograd 1971, 48 and n. 286.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. for this Constantius: R. C. Blockley, *Constantius the Gaul, Secretary to Attila and Bleda*, *Echos du Monde Classique / Classical Views* 31 (1987) 355–357.

<sup>34</sup> Alföldi (n. 21) 2, 96. This date has surprisingly not always been accepted even in the latest literature, such as, for example, H. von Petrikovits, *Die römischen Provinzen an Rhein und an der oberen und mittleren Donau im 5. Jahrhundert n. Chr. Ein Vergleich*, *Sitzungsber. d. Heidelberger Akad. d. Wiss., Phil.-hist. Kl.* 3 (1983) 8–9. Correctly N. Duval, V. Popović, *Urbanisme et topographie chrétienne dans les provinces septentrionales de l'Illyricum*, in: *Actes du X<sup>e</sup> Congr. intern. d'archéol. Chrét., Studi di antichità cristiana* 37 – *Ellenika* 26, Città di Vaticano, Thessalonike 1984, 542–544.

<sup>35</sup> A. Poulter, *The Use and Abuse or Urbanism in the Danubian Provinces during the Later Roman Empire*, in: *The City in Late Antiquity* (ed. J. Rich), London, New York 1992, 99–135, *passim*.



Individuals from the western half of the Empire, mentioned by Priscus in his description of the embassy to Attila, are mainly known only from his text, as is the case with the *comes* Romulus (*Romulus* 1, *PLRE*, vol. 2), the father-in-law of Orestes and the grandfather of Romulus Augustulus, who had been given the name of his grandfather. According to the current opinion, Romulus' daughter, the mother of Romulus Augustulus, would have been from Poetovio.<sup>36</sup> The authenticity of this information is based entirely on the text of Priscus (see the translation above), in the section which, according to De Boor<sup>37</sup> and later editions, should be translated as: *His son Orestes had married a daughter of Romulus. \*\*\* They were making this embassy from Patavio, a city in Noricum ...* (ὁ γὰρ αὐτοῦ παῖς Ὀρέστης Ῥωμύλου θυγατέρα ἐγεγαμήκει. \*\*\* ἀπὸ Παταβίωνος τῆς ἐν Νωρικῷ πόλεως ἐπρεσβεύοντο ...). There is a lacuna in the text, which the authors of editions prior to De Boor placed after the words: *Patavio, a city in Noricum*. According to their reading, the words and punctuation were placed in such a manner that the sentence in translation would read: *His son Orestes had married a daughter of Romulus, from Patavio, a city in Noricum. \*\*\** De Boor decided to move the lacuna back, after the words *the daughter of Romulus*. He must have had well-founded philological reasons for his decision, although he did not specify them. R. C. Blockley, who followed De Boor's modification of the text, also did not give reasons for his placement of the lacuna in his edition, but in a letter he listed three linguistic criteria for his decision: 1) The clause Ῥωμύλου θυγατέρα ἐγεγαμήκει ἀπὸ Παταβίωνος would be extremely unusual and awkward; 2) Priscus did not use ἀπὸ for the origin of individuals he mentioned, but ραητερ ἐκ. (cf. p. 262, l. 379; p. 276, l. 579; 288, l. 7; 342, l. 4), which had already been brought to my attention by A. Šašel — Blockley's second reason thus confirms her conjecture; and 3) Priscus elsewhere often mentioned cities as stations on the route of an embassy (eg. p. 248, l. 62 and also in frg. 9, 2).<sup>38</sup> However, because of the comma after the word ἐγεγαμήκει, even in these editions the mention of Poetovio would not necessarily have referred to the daughter of Romulus.<sup>39</sup> Várady, however, in contrast to De Boor's decision, preferred a reading according to the earlier editions,<sup>40</sup> although — as argued above — such a formulation is philologically barely acceptable.

Regardless of the manuscript transmission of the text, the formulation *Romulus' daughter from Poetovio* would still be unusual, as it would be expected that Priscus, having first mentioned Romulus in the embassy shortly before this, would have noted where he was from if he wished to specify the origin of Romulus' family, and would not cite where his daughter was from, since it can be assumed that father and daughter were from the same city, and in this case one would expect the origins of the father to be noted. Such a conjunction of phrases as had been chosen by the authors of editions prior to De Boor would obviously lead to the suggestion that perhaps the home of the daughter was specifically noted because it was not the

<sup>36</sup> As, for example, B. Saria, *RE* XXI 1 (1951) 1176, s. v. *Poetovio*; Várady (n. 27) 319ff.; J. Šašel, *Aquileia, Ravenna e Poetovio*, *Ant. altoadr.* 13 (1978) 143–145; H. Wolfram, *Die Geburt Mitteleuropas. Geschichte Österreichs vor seiner Entstehung 378–907*, Wien 1987, 37, and recently Bóna (n. 29) 111 and 117.

<sup>37</sup> *Excerpta de Legationibus (Excerpta historica Iussu Imp. Constantini Porphyrogeniti Confecta, vol. 1)*. Ed. C. de Boor. Berlin 1903, p. 132.

<sup>38</sup> In his letter of May 6, 1992, for which I would like to thank him again.

<sup>39</sup> This detail has been kindly brought to my attention by Professor Blockley in his letter. In his edition (n. 15) II, p. 384 n. 47, he remarked: „The punctuation of the text, including the placing of the lacuna, is that of de Boor. The older editors place a comma after ἐγεγαμήκει and the lacuna after πόλεως. No explanations are offered for either reading.“

<sup>40</sup> Várady (n. 27) 319ff.

same as that of the father – which would be most unusual. There is no doubt that the new reading also makes more sense in terms of content. Despite the different opinion of Várady, I think that the citation of Poetovio in this context, as placed by De Boor and subsequent editors, fits well into the concept of the narrative. The city is mentioned as an intermediate station of the western Roman embassy to Attila, undoubtedly sent by Aetius from Ravenna. As is apparent from Priscus' text, the *comes* Romulus (perhaps *comes Illyrici*) and the new secretary Constantius, at least, most probably left from there. In Poetovio they may have been joined by the governor of the province of Noricum (*praeses Norici*) Promotus (*Promotus* 1, *PLRE*, vol. 2), who may have otherwise occasionally stayed officially in Poetovio, and perhaps the military commander Romanus (*Romanus* 2, *PLRE*, vol. 2). This would be even more likely if he were also the commander of troops stationed at Poetovio, which is unfortunately unknown.<sup>41</sup> As has been noted by H. Castritius, the members of the embassy obviously represented the highest civil and military authority of the Norican-Pannonian provincial territory bordering on the Hunnic kingdom. Thus the military rank of Romanus, which is not precisely specified by Priscus, may have been that of a *dux*,<sup>42</sup> perhaps of Pannonia Prima and Noricum Ripense. Orestes' father, Tatulus, may have also lived in Poetovio, if he had moved there after the Hunnic occupation of Pannonia Secunda, his original home. No further data are available about these three individuals. However, it is interesting that the name *Tatulus* is epigraphically documented only once, precisely in the region along the river Sava, at Vranje near Sevnica in the territory between Celeia and Neviodunum.<sup>43</sup>

Reading the report by Priscus about this embassy, a historian might be puzzled as to why Attila, seven or eight years after the fall of Sirmium, would suddenly wish to clear up the affair with the golden vessels of the bishop of Sirmium. The embassy from Aetius was evidently merely an answer to one sent previously to Ravenna by Attila. The key to a full explanation probably lies in the affair of Attila and Honoria. It is known from sources that only a few months after this mission, in 450, the intrigue of the sister of Valentinian III, Iusta Grata Honoria, came to light. She had been in contact with Attila behind the backs of the family through the services of her eunuch Hyacinthus, and had sent Attila money and her ring, asking him to intercede with the Ravennate court and have her released from house arrest. The event had much broader consequences than it might have had otherwise, as Honoria was not merely a princess at the court, but also bore, as did her mother Galla Placida, the title of Augusta. She was proclaimed Augusta even before her brother's marriage in 437, as is shown by inscriptions (eg. *ILS* 817 and 818), and her co-regency is also indicated by coinage minted in her name.<sup>44</sup> In the *Suda* it is explicitly stated that she wielded partial imperial authority (ἦτις καὶ αὐτὴ τῶν βασιλικῶν εἴχετο σκήπτρον). She had become involved in a scandal with the manager of her estates and fortune, Eugenius, who certainly expected to usurp imperial

<sup>41</sup> Várady (n. 27), 321.

<sup>42</sup> H. Castritius, *Die Grenzverteidigung in Rätien und Norikum im 5. Jh. n. Chr. Ein Beitrag zum Ende der Antike*, in: H. Wolfram, A. Schwarz (ed.), *Die Bayern und ihre Nachbarn I*, Österr. Akad. Wiss., phil.-hist. Kl., Denkschr. 179 (1985) 25. Blockley (n. 15) II, p. 384 n. 46, has proposed two possibilities: Romanus may have either been *dux*, or *comes rei militaris*.

<sup>43</sup> J. Šašel, *Napisi. Inschriften*, in: P. Petru, T. Ulbert (ed.) *Vranje pri Sevnici. Vranje bei Sevnica* 1975, 136 no. 4 (Katalogi in Monografije 12) (= *AIJ* 34, and E. Weber, *Die römischen Inschriften der Steiermark*, Graz 1969, no. 356). The name in the form *Tatulo* is otherwise attested only twice in Pannonia, see A. Mócsy et al., *Nomenclator*, Diss. Pann. 3/1 (1983) s. v.

<sup>44</sup> J. P. C. Kent, *Solidi of Valentinian III: a Preliminary Classification and Chronology*, in: *Die Münze: Bild — Botschaft — Bedeutung. Festschrift für Maria R.-Alföldi*. Frankfurt am Main, Bern, New York, Paris 1991, 271ff., especially 277.

power at least partially. This is mentioned by Priscus (the text is preserved in Johannes of Antioch, frg. 199, 3) and other sources (see *Honorina, Iusta Grata, PLRE*, vol. 2). When the affair was exposed Eugenius was executed, and Honorina, who only through the intercession of Galla Placidia did not meet the same fate, was forcibly betrothed to the dependable Flavius Bassus Herculanus, a consul in 452. The entire tale of Honorina was chronologically placed and commented on by J. Bury in an article that is still of fundamental importance despite having been written early in this century.<sup>45</sup> In the sources, above all in Priscus, who described the episode with Honorina in a later fragment (frg. 17 = Johannes of Antioch, frg. 199, 2), there is actually no causal connection made between the embassy of Romulus and Honorina's alliance with Attila, which apparently was not then known to the public. However, it cannot be excluded that the affair with Honorina itself might have been the true reason for Romulus' mission. Any eventual marriage with Honorina would have placed Attila literally side by side with Valentinian III, as he could then legitimately demand some kind of co-regency, or at least authority over part of the western Roman Empire. This was certainly an affair at the highest level which by all means needed to be prevented. This becomes even more apparent in the further text of Priscus (*ibid.*), where it is stated that Theodosius, in great fear of Attila, urgently advised Valentinian III to hand Honorina over immediately to the Hunnic king.

A direct connection between the embassy of Romulus and the affair with Honorina has already been suggested by L. Várady,<sup>46</sup> and was supported with further arguments by J. Šašel.<sup>47</sup> In terms of the chronological data documented in the sources, there are none that would contradict this hypothesis. I would like to illuminate it from several points hitherto insufficiently taken into consideration. Orestes was the secretary and confidant of Attila in the years in question; it would be difficult to imagine that an episode such as the negotiations of Hyacinthus on behalf of Honorina with Attila could have remained a secret from him. On the other hand, it is unlikely that in terms of a political intrigue so important and, for the western Roman Empire, so fateful, such as the connection between Attila and Honorina, he would not have attempted to report on these events to the western Roman court via his father and his father-in-law, the *comes* Romulus. Valentinian III without a doubt wished the affair to remain secret, as it could only harm him, while it would probably gain Attila new allies. It is also understandable that in the west they did not wish for the affair to become known at the eastern Roman court, hence it is not at all unusual that Priscus would have learned nothing of this from the western Roman embassy. They had probably anticipated the position of Theodosius, as it was known that he was attempting by any means to dissuade Attila's Huns from attacking his part of the Empire. Perhaps Romulus, when he spoke to Priscus of the incredibly good fortune of Attila (frg. 12, Blockley = 8, Müller-Dindorf), was alluding specifically to Honorina. The western Roman embassy was composed exclusively of Orestes' relatives, friends and acquaintances, and their task was probably to consult with him about how to deal with the situation. As shown by subsequent events (most of all the invasion of Gallia by Attila), their mission was not successful.

I have touched on three problems. In my opinion the sources, especially *Expositio totius mundi et gentium*, certainly do not support suggestion that the expression *civitas Noricum* (evidently analogous to Procopius' πόλις Νορικόν) signified a region of fortified hillforts between Poetovio and Celeia, as was suggested by R. Egger and accepted by a number of scholars, S. Ciglenečki among the latest.<sup>48</sup> The use of the expressions *civitas* and πόλις would

<sup>45</sup> J. B. Bury, *Iusta Grata Honorina*, JRS 9 (1919) 1–13.

<sup>46</sup> Várady (n. 27) 315 ff.

<sup>47</sup> Šašel (n. 36).

<sup>48</sup> Egger (n. 6); Ciglenečki (n. 7).

seem to exclude anything other than a city with its territory. On the basis of the sources, it seems more likely to me that the expression „Norican town“, or „a city of Noricum“ refers to the city of Poetovio itself, and certainly its *ager* as well, as the latter was closely connected to the city in terms of administration. I further consider that it will be necessary to correct (in modern literature, particularly Austrian, Hungarian and Slovenian) the commonly cited assertion that the daughter of Romulus and the mother of the last western Roman emperor was from Poetovio. This is based on the early editions of the text of Priscus, but a new reading has shown that the citation of Poetovio most probably refers to the western Roman embassy to Attila. And finally: with this hypothetical but nonetheless credible reconstruction of events, I have attempted to substantiate the opinions of Várady and Šašel that one of the tasks of Romulus' mission was to convince Attila, with the help of Orestes, that Valentinian III would never accept his connection with Honoria.

Inštitut za arheologijo  
ZRC SAZU  
Gosposka 13  
Ljubljana

Marjeta Šašel Kos