

**Doctoral (PhD) thesis**

Dislocation of the Roman military units in the  
territory of the present-day Slovakia in the context  
of brick stamps

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## **The aim of the dissertation, delimitation of the topic**

The last comprehensive study on the subject was submitted over 50 years ago, in 1972, when Jozef Bujna presented his thesis titled “*Rímske tehly z nálezov na Slovensku a na Morave*” (“Roman Bricks from Finds in Slovakia and Moravia”). In this work, he collected stamped bricks from the territories of present-day Slovakia and Moravia, amounting to approximately 1,200 pieces. Of these, around 800 can be attributed to what is now Slovakia. Unfortunately, the results of Josef Bujna's thesis were never published.

Over the past few decades, thanks to archaeological excavations and published findings, the number of known stamped bricks has increased significantly. Nevertheless, no systematic collection and evaluation of Roman stamped bricks in the territory of present-day Slovakia has taken place. This lack of research provided the rationale for selecting this topic for my dissertation, which focuses on the collection and assessment of Roman stamped bricks.

## **Outline of the research methods**

During the course of my research, I was able to collect 1,861 stamped bricks from 54 archaeological sites. These sites are distributed as follows: 49 in present-day Slovakia, 3 in present-day Hungary, and 1 in present-day Austria. Additionally, I included bricks with unknown provenance currently held in Slovak museum collections. One such example is the collection of stamped bricks housed in the Danube Museum. The museum's predecessor was founded in 1886, and its initial collection area focused on the surroundings of Komárom. A considerable number of Roman objects and stamped bricks from Brigetio and nearby Roman sites entered the museum's holdings. However, as these finds were neither processed nor published, their exact provenance cannot be determined today. This situation is exacerbated by the loss of the old inventory books during the turbulent first half of the 20th century.

The 49 sites located in present-day Slovakia are spread across 20 municipalities. The collection includes bricks from Roman, barbarian, Migration Period, and medieval secondary contexts.

In 1947, following the signing of the Paris Peace Treaties that ended World War II, three villages – Horvátjárfalu (now Jarovce), Oroszvár (now Rusovce) and Dunacsúny (now Čunovo) – were annexed to then-Czechoslovakia. Although research in Oroszvár had already begun in

the 19th century, systematic excavation only commenced in the 1960s. By that time, much of the Roman auxiliary fort, the surrounding vicus on three sides, and parts of the Roman cemeteries had already been built over by the modern village. A medieval motte-and-bailey castle was constructed over the northwest part of the fort, forming a mound that helped preserve the Roman walls below. However, its surrounding moat partially destroyed the Roman stone water drainage systems near the auxiliary fort. Further disturbances occurred during renovations of the Oroszvár manor house in the post-medieval period. According to local landowner János Modrovich's 1840s notes, Roman funerary gravestone were unearthed at the site known as the "Bergl" and were embedded into the walls of a greenhouse in the manor's park. It is possible that other Roman remains were also used in the manor's reconstruction. As a result, nearly all stamped bricks uncovered during the 1960s systematic excavations at the Bergl site were found in secondary contexts.

Even in antiquity, the Romans reused roofing tiles and other building materials. In Oroszvár, examples of such reuse include a Roman tile-lined drain near a partially uncovered hypocaust house at Irkutsk Square and several late Roman tile graves. Six Roman cemeteries are known in the Rusovce area, with stamped bricks found in tile graves at cemeteries I, II, and VI.

In the locality known as Téglasszín in Oroszvár, remains of a Roman villa estate and its cemetery have been excavated. In one of the buildings, bricks bearing the stamp of the private manufacturer *Atiliae Firma* were found. While tile graves were uncovered in the nearby cemetery, no stamped bricks from these graves are currently known.

Throughout the early medieval and modern periods, Roman materials were frequently reused in Oroszvár. At Latén Street, numerous Roman bricks, including one stamped specimen, were recovered from the fill of a Migration Period feature.

In this region, which is poor in natural stone resources, the locals often quarried Roman ruins for building materials. A prime example is the Church of Saint Vitus located in the manor park, which was built using Roman stone monuments and bricks.

Similarly to Oroszvár, Dunacsún lies on the right bank of the Danube and was therefore also part of the Roman province of Pannonia. During highway construction, partial remains of a Roman villa estate comprising six buildings were discovered in the area. Among the finds were Roman stamped bricks.

On the left bank of the Danube, the site of Izsa-Leányvár (now Iža-Leányvár) marks the forward post of Brigetio. Numerous stamped bricks have been recovered from this site. However, most of the earlier bricks, mainly from excavations led by János Tóth Kurucz and now held in the Danube Museum, cannot be specifically identified. Only part of the stamped bricks from systematic excavations ongoing since 1978 have been published. Many of these bricks were found in secondary contexts and the stamps are often poorly preserved.

In the Barbaricum (non-Roman) territory, several buildings employing Roman construction techniques have been excavated, such as those found in Dévény (now Devín), Nagykér (now Velký Kýr), Cífer-Pusztapát (now Cífer-Pác), Stomfa (now Stupava) and Pozsonyhidegkút (now Dúbravka). All these sites except for Pozsonyhidegkút yielded a significant number of stamped bricks.

In the historical center of Pozsony Óváros (now Bratislava Old Town), at least nine sites gave us Roman stamped bricks. Roman foundation walls were reportedly discovered during the construction of the Primacial Palace and the Motesiczky Palace. According to Titus Kolník and Tatiana Štefanovičová, this area may have housed a multifunctional Roman building used for interactions and trade between Romans and local Germanic tribes. Stamped bricks were found during the construction of the Primacial Palace. Other Old Town sites yielded bricks exclusively from secondary contexts, such as in Saint Martin's Cathedral, a 9th–10th century oven, a 14th–15th century refuse pit, and a grave on Kornhuber Street.

Sites such as Keszegfalva (now Kameničná), Mászt (now Mást, part of Stupava), Nagyharsás (now Velký Harčáš, part of Komárno), Zohor (now Zohor) and Zselíz (now Želiezovce) have yielded only a few stamped bricks to date. In some cases (e.g., Keszegfalva and Zselíz), it is questionable whether the bricks were actually found at the listed locations or transported from the right bank of the Danube.

Sites like Dunamocs (now Moča), Hetény (now Chotín), Nagysáró (now Šarovce), Nagysurány (now Šurany), Dévénytető (now Devínska Kobyla) and Pozsonypüspöki (now Podunajské Biskupice) have yielded only isolated finds.

Three sites from modern-day Hungary are included in the catalogue: a Roman watchtower at Koppánymonostor, material from Brigetio (now Komárom), and finds from the Óbuda

Hajógyár. Most of these are known only from descriptions, with a few held in Slovak museum collections.

From modern-day Austria, bricks from Carnuntum (now Bad Deutsch-Altenburg, Petronell) were included, now housed in Slovak museums' collections.

Roman bricks without known provenance are primarily held in the Danube Museum. Due to the loss of earlier inventory records, their original find spots cannot be determined.

The full title of my dissertation is *Dislocation of the Roman military units in the territory of the present-day Slovakia in the context of brick stamps*. However, in many cases, the stamped bricks do not allow us to determine the specific deployment of units. Many stamps originate from units stationed in Vindobona (now Vienna), Carnuntum (now Bad Deutsch-Altenburg, Petronell) and Brigetio (now Komárom), such as legio I Adiutrix, legio X Gemina, legio XIV Gemina, and legio XV Apollinaris.

Some sites yielded stamps from units specialized in brick production, such as cohorts I Aelia Sagittariorum and cohorts VII Breucorum.

In addition, a smaller number of bricks from other auxiliary units were discovered.

The dataset includes a relatively large number of late Roman stamps beginning with OF ARN (OF ARN BONO MAG, OF ARN VRSICINI MG, OF ARN MAXENTIVS Magister) or ending in titles like *tribunus* (Lupicinus, Terentianus) or *duc* (legio II Italica / Tempsonius Ursicinus duc).

The collection also includes complete or fragmentary place-name stamps (for example Quadriburgium).

Alongside unit-stamped bricks, bricks from private manufacturers were also found. From present-day Slovakia, around 120 stamped bricks from 13 private producers (for example Atilia Firma, Cent Karus, C VAL CONST KAR, C. Iulius Iul[---], GFPF, CIF or GIF, CVS, FEARORI ANIS, FIG SAB, FL SEX, IVLI OF, OF PLSF, P R FE FI P, Sep(timius) Vital[---]) are currently known.

A few bricks in the collection bear cursive inscriptions, scratched into the drying surface before firing. These include alphabetic marks and notes on the producer or quantity.

Clear evidence for the physical dislocation and stationing of specific military units can currently be confirmed only in the case of two auxiliary units documented at Oroszvár (ancient *Gerulata*): *cohors V Callaecorum Lucensium* and *ala I Cannanefatium civium Romanorum*.

The first brick stamp of *cohors V Callaecorum Lucensium* was discovered in 1972. Based on this find, Vladimír Varsík proposed that this unit may have founded the earliest phase of the military camp at Gerulata. The unit was later stationed at *Crumerum* (now Nyergesújfalu), from where an additional stamped brick was published by Barnabás Lőrincz. In 2012, a rescue excavation on Irkutzk Street in Oroszvár yielded six further stamped bricks of the same unit, which significantly strengthens the plausibility of Varsík's hypothesis. Another brick from *Crumerum* was identified in the collection of the Hungarian National Museum thanks to the work of its archaeologists. The bricks from Oroszvár and Nyergesújfalu were produced with two different dies, indicating either different production periods or multiple workshops.

The fragmented brick bearing the stamp of *ala I Cannanefatium civium Romanorum* represents the first material evidence of this unit in the region, as previously it had been known only from votive inscriptions, funerary epitaphs, and military diplomas. The brick in question was demonstrably produced locally. Its deformation during the firing process suggests a lack of experience on the part of the brickmaker, possibly indicating temporary or improvised production conditions.

## **Results**

My study can be divided into several major chapters. In the first chapter I explained the reason of the choice topic. In the second chapter, I introduced the research history of the subject to the reader. Here I have collected the most significant publications related to the topic from the previous, roughly one and a half centuries.

In the third chapter I dealt with the Roman brick production. The chapter is divided into several smaller subchapters. For example, one subchapter focuses on brick manufacturing, while another is dedicated to the Roman brick kiln furnaces discovered within the Pannonia province.

In the fourth chapter, I discussed the distribution of Roman stamped bricks according to their findspots. That chapter is divided into 25 subchapters, covering the twenty sites within present-day Slovakia, the three sites in Hungary, the one site in Austria and the unknown site where Roman stamped bricks have been found.

In the fifth chapter, I examined the typology of the Roman stamped bricks presented in my dissertation. The sixth chapter contains a brief summary of the dissertation.

The appendices include an alphabetical list of finds from each site. First, there are 49 Slovakian sites located across 20 villages. Following this are the finds from the three Hungarian and one Austrian sites. Lastly, the catalogue includes finds from an unknown site, which are currently part of the museum collection in Slovakia. Since the institutions hosting these collections are spread throughout several modern countries and due to the lack of old inventory records, the exact findspots are unknown.

Additionally, the appendices contain four maps showing the locations of the sites listed in the catalogue.

The drawings of the Roman brick stamps discussed in the dissertation are also included as a part of the appendices.



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### List of publications related to the dissertation

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1. **Mathédesz, L.:** Oroszvári római bélyeges téglák.  
In: Felirattani újdonságok 2014-ben. Szerk.: Kovács Péter, Fehér Bence, Történelmi Ismeretterjesztő Társulat Egyesülete, Budapest, 88-101, 2014. ISBN: 9789638972767

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