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**CHRONICLE OF THE FIRST PLANNED EXCAVATION
IN HUNGARY:
ISTVÁN SCHÖNVISNER AND *DE RUDERIBUS***

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Abstract: The excavation carried out by István Schönvisner, under what is today Florian Square (Budapest, Distr. III.), next to the *Villa Torcularia*, during which he revealed the *sudatorium* of Aquincum's bigger bath, the *Thermae Maiores* began on 10th February 1778. Thanks to this excavation and the rapid publication of the results, the professor of antiquity and numismatics of Buda University became the founder of provincial archaeological research in Pannonia. In the same year he published the results of the exploration in *De Ruderibus Laconici Caldariique Romani...*, which – like Schönvisner's other works – is revolutionary. He systematically processed the inscribed and figurative fragments which were discovered during the excavation and gave a complete overview of the era's cultural history. In this paper, I would like to demonstrate the historical and cultural historical importance of this work, present its structure, the topics discussed, and the results by which István Schönvisner laid down the foundations of scientific classical archaeology in Hungary.

Keywords: antiquarianism, classical archaeology, provincial archaeology, *Thermae Maiores*, Schönvisner, 18th century, Aquincum, Pannonia

István Schönvisner was born in Sívár in 1738. He joined to the Jesuit Order in Vienna in 1756, and completed the novitiate in Trencin.¹ He studied philosophy in Vienna (1761–62) and theology at the University of Trnava. After filling various teaching positions across the country (Zsolna, Sopron, Vienna) he was transferred to Trnava in 1773² and then moved to Buda in 1777, after being appointed as second *custos* of the University Library in April. After the relocation of the University, he became the supervisor of the University's antiquity collection. The background of that was the royal ordinations of Maria Theresa about the reformed and relocated University. In her *Ratio Educationis* in 1777 the Empress decided to create new departments serving the teaching of history:³ including the department of numismatics and antiquity. Since these were among the *libera et*

¹ Petruch 1942, 171.

² In this concern, see the letter of János Galgóczy, the vicarius generalis of the Diocese of Esztergom (4. December 1773.) in the National Archives of Hungary, C 67, Htt. departamentum litterario-politicum, Acta commissionis studiorum 29, F. 124., No 230.

³ *Ratio Educationis* 1777, 310.

extraordinaria studia, they were taught just two hours a week, so the professorships of these departments were linked to positions in the University Library: the second custodian, István Schönvisner became the professor of numismatics and antiquity. Among the library-related sections of the *Ratio Educationis* in addition to staff issues, special emphasis was placed on the further expansion of the coins collection and the gathering and preservation of the material relics „occurring all over Pannonia”⁴ – and the supervisor of that collection became the professor of antiquity, too.

During the second half of the 18th century, the University’s Faculty of Humanities was the best in Hungary as regards academic achievement and was also best suited to solve national scientific tasks. The greatest authorities on historiography taught here: the names of György Pray, István Katona, Károly Koppi and István Schönvisner ensured that the University became the centre of scientific life in Hungary. According to the records, there were numerous cases of people turning to the professors for an expert opinion, but no one’s name comes up as often as Schönvisner’s: in 1778 he was asked to evaluate the Roman coin findings in Vörösberény, and in 1779 the Roman milestone found in Csév.⁵ In addition to the excavation in Óbuda discussed in this paper, his greatest scientific achievement as an archaeologist was the writing of the first Hungarian city monograph, the *Antiquitatum et Historiae Sabariensis...*,⁶ published in 1791. This was commissioned by János Szily, the first bishop of the Diocese of Szombathely, with whom Schönvisner had an extensive correspondence – initially in the matter of the library of the seminary.⁷ After Maria Theresa founded the diocese in 1777, Szily immediately started to build a system of cultural institutions, and when more and more Roman artifacts were found during the construction work, he asked Schönvisner to write the history of the city based on them.

⁴ Appendix (§ CC.) De Universitatis Bibliotheca, Numophylacio, ceterorumque antiquitatis monumentorum Musaeo. ‘(...) *Adest praterea Numophylacium admodum copiosum, Latinis, Graecis, ac Hungaricis monetis belle instructum; neque deinceps deerunt vel sumtus, vel industriae ac thesaurum novorum in posterum fuerit excusum, isthuc sine mora transmittetur. Denique et illud sedulo in posterum curabitur, ut monumenta antiquitatis per Pannoniam passim occurrentia sensim colligantur, atque in Palatio Universitatis asserventus, usui et emolumento futura non domesticis modo disciplinarum auditoribus, de etiam exteris visendi studio huc aliquando delatis.*’

⁵ The records can be found in the documents of the University Library and the collection of antiquity and numismatics belonging to it in the National Archives of Hungary, C 67, Htt. departamentum litterario-politicum, Acta commissionis studiorum 156., F. 16.

⁶ Schönvisner 1791.

⁷ Their correspondence can be found in the Library of the Diocese of Szombathely.

Schönvisner had only been in Buda for a few months when, in January 1778, the owner of the site near the Villa Torcularia⁸ found some ancient ruins while digging a lime pit, and he – as the antiquarian professor of the University – was asked to inspect the walls. He found that these were the remains of a Roman building (*partes vetusti Romani aedificii*). As I have already mentioned, the excavation was not only of archaeological importance, but also represented a significant stage in Hungarian cultural history. For the first time in Hungary, after the completion of the excavation, Schönvisner arranged for the professional protection and preservation of the ruins, thus taking here the first step towards Hungarian monument protection. ‘*In aditu eorum rudерum extructa est domuscula impensis Universitatis, cujus clavis apud custodem Bibliothecae servatur.*’ – he wrote in the catalogue of the University Library’s collection of numismatics and antiquity,⁹ after inventorying the artifacts from the excavation that came to the museum (these will be discussed later). A protective building was raised above the excavated ruins, and the key of which was entrusted to the library’s (second) custodian, who was also the professor of antiquity at the university.

The excavation started immediately on 11th February 1778,¹⁰ after he learned about the ruins, and the results were presented in his work *De Ruderibus Laconici Caldarii que Romani et Nonnullis Aliis Monumentis in solo Budensi partim hoc primum anno MDCCLXXVIII. repertis partim nondum vulgatis*, which deservedly occupies a prominent place among antiquarian works with a similar theme.

Since massive interest in classical antiquity arose in the late Renaissance period (its first Italian representatives were Francesco Petrarca, Poggio Bracciolini, Leon Battista Alberti and Flavio Biondo),¹¹ humanist antiquarian works began to appear one after the other. This began with Petrarca, who used both his philological and archaeological skills in his works. We can observe that he considered not only written memories as sources (although he preferred them), but also archaeological finds, especially inscriptions and coins.¹² Perhaps an even more important antiquarian was Flavio Biondo (Blondus 1392–1463), who was one of

⁸ ‘...iuxta villam, quae a torcularibus nomen habet...’ Schönvisner 1778, 2. According to Bálint Kuzsinszky, it was the old ‘dézsmaház’ in Óbuda, which was dismantled for the building of a tobacco factory in 1889. Today’s Flórián square. Cf. Kuzsinszky 1897, 133.

⁹ Schönvisner 1780a.

¹⁰ ‘III. Non. Febr. hoc videlicet anno (...)’: Schönvisner 1778, 2.

¹¹ Miller 2012, 244–260.

¹² Miller 2012, 257.

the first to copy inscriptions.¹³ During the 16th century, such research also appeared outside Italy:¹⁴ an important milestone was the *Romanae Antiquitates*¹⁵ published by Rosinus in 1583 or the *Thesaurus Antiquitatum Romanarum*¹⁶ in twelve volumes, published by Graevius between 1694 and 1699. Minor antiquarian works were published about Roman baths too: for example, the *Dissertatio de balneo Romano in Agro Lupodunensi reperto*¹⁷ written by Johann Kasimir von Häffelin about the bath from Lopodunum¹⁸ (today Ladenburg, Germany), which was excavated only twenty years before the *Thermae Maiores*.

The *Thermae Maiores*,¹⁹ which was identified and partially excavated by Schönvisner, was the largest public bath in Aquincum, the headquarters of the governor, and at the same time, the capital of Pannonia Inferior province. Aquincum consisted of two major parts: the civil town²⁰ laid out in the northern part of the modern town, surrounded by a wall dating back to the 2nd century AD, and the military camp,²¹ about 2.5 kilometers south of the civil town in today's Óbuda. At the end of the 1st century AD, a camp was built for the *legio II Adiutrix*, a legion of approximately 6000 people. This was a 460 x 520 meter walled area containing the command building, the barracks, several hospitals, warehouses, dormitories, office buildings and the large bath. This building, erected in the second century, opened from the two main streets of the camp (*via praetoria* and *via principalis sinistra*) and is the largest of the twenty-four public baths discovered so far in Budapest, with an area of 120 x 140 meter. The water was provided on the one hand by the fourteen springs of the Roman Bath ('Római fürdő'), which were led through the city's north-south *aquaeductus*, and on the other hand by the east-west aqueduct that collected the water of mountain streams and brought it to the camp.²² The ruins of the aqueducts are still visible in Óbuda today. The bath was built in the 2nd century AD, and as the archaeological finds testify that, after having carried out many renovations and extensions over the

¹³ He published his *De Roma Instaurata...* a topographic account of ancient Rome, describing all the monuments and buildings in three volumes between 1446 and 1449, then in 1459 the *De Roma Triumphante...*, a discussion of pagan Rome, an encyclopedic survey of Roman public, private, military and religious matters.

¹⁴ Learn more about the topic of European antiquarianism in Miller 2012, 244-260. and Papy 2004, 97-131.

¹⁵ Rosinus 1583.

¹⁶ Graevius 1694-1699.

¹⁷ Haeffelin 1773.

¹⁸ Cf. e.g. Sommer 1998, 81-201; 806-809.

¹⁹ About the *Thermae Maiores*, the history of the military camp and the excavation of the bath, see Kaba 1996.

²⁰ Cf. e.g. Zsidi 1990.

²¹ Cf. e.g. Póczy 1986.

²² Kaba 1996, 112.

centuries, it was probably still used even after the collapse of the Roman Empire.²³ Schönvisner's excavation in 1778 brought the first remains to the surface, and now the whole site has been explored.

In his work, Schönvisner describes the building found here, as well as other archaeological findings discovered on the site and nearby. The volume contains 234 numbered pages, plus a table of contents and an index. *De Ruderibus* consists of two major parts, the first having five and the second eleven chapters. The first part, which bears the title *De Ruderibus Laconici Caldariique Romani*, is specifically a description of the excavated ruins. Two of the chapters are about the *Thermae Maiores* and describe about the parts explored by Schönvisner.

During the excavation Schönvisner uncovered a 15x8 meter room – the *sudation* (the sweating chamber) of the bath – and provided a lot of evidence to show that it could be part of a public bath.²⁴ This hypothesis was proved in 1849, when a *palimpsest* inscription was found during the building of a canal (it can be found in CIL III. nr. 3525).²⁵ The stone that carried the inscription was an altarstone from a sanctuary; after the original text was scraped off, an inscription was carved on it about the renovation of the bath,²⁶ saying that the large bath of *legio II Adiutrix Claudiana* reopened in 268 AD after a reconstruction.²⁷ Schönvisner also requested the opinion of other highly respected professionals (*virī periti*) about the identification of the ruins,²⁸ and his assumptions about the monument were confirmed by György Pray, the famous historian, director of the University

²³ Kaba 1996, 133.

²⁴ *'Itaque haec, et quae praterea praec. cap. sparsim commemoravimus, sufficere nobis videtur, ut rudera haec proscarum balnearum, ac speciatim laconici, concameratae sudationis, caldariiue Romani reliquas esse opinemur.'* Schönvisner 1778, 36.

²⁵ Mommsen 1873.

²⁶ See CIL III 3525 = CIL III 10492 = ILS 2457 = AE 1944, 85 = AE 1956, 7 = AE 1993, 1310 = TitAq I 12 = TitAq I 160: *Thermas maiores / leg(ionis) II Adi(utricis) Claudianae / [m]agno tempore in/[te]rmissas et destitutas / [re]tractatis porticibus / [a]ditibusque [pri]us refeci[t] / exhiberi inde [inc]episse / militib(us) [iuss]it [pri]die Kal(endas) Iuli(as) / praes[id]e [pr(ovinciae) e]gregio]] v(iro) Clemen(tio) Silvi(no) / et cura Aur(eli) Frontini praef(ecti) leg(ionis) eiusdem Pater/no II et Mariniano co(n)s(ulibus);* Today it's in the Museum of Aquincum, inv. AM 81.7.40.

²⁷ About the interpretation and the historical background of the inscription, see: Alföldi 1943; and recently Kovács, Szabó 2009, 17-18. with the earlier literature.

²⁸ *'Quamquam non mea unius est haec opinio, plures acri iudicio praediti, rerumque anti-
quarum periti viri hoc monumentum non sine voluptate spectarunt, factaque diligenti partium om-
nium investigatione, in eandem concessere sententiam.'* Schönvisner 1778, 36.

Library, Ádám Patachich, the archbishop of Kalocsa, and the Italian Jakab Mariosa, the *praefectus* of Patachich's library.²⁹

This 15 x 8 meter room was found after digging to a depth of eight feet.³⁰ In the first chapter of his work, Schönvisner separately discusses each of the revealed parts (§1. *De Pavimentis*; §2. *De Intercolumnio*; §3. *De Praefurnio*; §4. *De Vaporariis*; §5. *De Parietibus*), giving an exemplary, accurate, professional, detailed description. He makes use of ancient authors – particularly *De architectura...* by Vitruvius for their identification – but he often illustrates his words with scenes from ancient times (such as Cicero's letters or Juvenal's Satires), as well as the works of early modern authors (for example the descriptions of Mátyás Bél, Marsigli or Brown). He was also familiar with other works on the same topic: he defines the building in a whole chapter (*De nexu partium, forma, usu prisco hujus monumenti*),³¹ and compares the ruins found in Óbuda with the description of the bath ruins in Pisa³² (*Monumenti hujus cum Laconico, seu Sudatione Pisana collatio*).³³ Each chapter would deserve a separate explanation, but, due to lack of space a single example will be given: the description of the mosaic cubes making up the floor of the *caldarium (pavimentum)*. The mosaic consisted of finger-sized painted marble pieces, and several different types of marble were used to achieve the desired look. He gives precise description of its physical characteristics.³⁴ Since the image may have been damaged even during antiquity and the cultivator of the area further destroyed it with his pickaxe (*a rudi colono illico pessime tractata, frustratim ferreo ligone discerpta*), he could only detect its colors. The pieces from the floor were placed in the University's antiquity collection until – as he wrote – they had the opportunity and funds to examine them again.³⁵ So far, I have not been able to find out any more about them, but in the museum's aforesaid *Inventarium*, which Schönvisner began to write in

²⁹ He quotes the letter of Jakab Mariosa to György Pray dated 15th February 1778. (Schönvisner 1778, 37-39.), in which the librarian of the Diocese of Kalocsa confirms Schönvisner's view about the ruins and encourages the archaeologist to begin the excavation and elaborate the theme.

³⁰ '*Partes eius, quae refossa octo circiter pedum altitudine humo, patuere, sunt: pavimenta duo, intercolumnium, praefurnium, vaporaria, parietes.*' Schönvisner 1778, 2.

³¹ Schönvisner 1778, 34-39.

³² Robortellus 1548.

³³ Schönvisner 1778, 39-50.

³⁴ '*Constat enim exiguis marmoreis tesseriis, ad unguem excisis, et in varios colores tinctis; sive potius hae crustae nativi esse coloris, sed ex variis marmorum speciebus desumptae videntur. Altitudo quadratulorum unum non excedit digitum, latitudo vero basium politarum adeo exigua, vix ut digiti mensuram adaequet. Porro particulae omnes tenacissima quadam tectorii specie coagmentantur.*' Schönvisner 1778, 3.

³⁵ '*...quas ad inceptam Antiquitatum Romanarum in hac Regia Universitate collectionem reposuimus, donec, uti spes est, potestas et sumptus ad refodiendam cum ceteris monumentis reliquam pavimenti tam nobilis partem suppetiverint.*' Schönvisner 1778, 4.

1780 – and in which he gives particular emphasis the items from the *Thermae Maiores* – they are certainly not included.³⁶

In the first part of the book, however, he describes the parts he revealed, and gives a detailed description of the Roman baths, again demonstrating his extensive knowledge: for example, we can learn about the difference between *laconicum* and *caldarium* (*balneum*), or what kind of rooms there were in the bath buildings and how they were used. His architectural and technical descriptions are complemented with interesting data from cultural history: he mentions the slaves of the *apodyterium* who guarded the guests' clothes,³⁷ or he describes the customs of the bathers in the subsection *De Thermarum fine ac institutis*.³⁸ Finally in the fifth chapter (*Rationes, ob quas Monumentum nostrum non privati, sed publici cujusdam balnei Romani pars fuisse videtur*) he summarizes his reasons for identifying the ruins as a public bath.

In the second part, which bears the title *De nonnullis aliis monumentis et inscriptionibus*, he describes the other inscribed and figurative artifacts found during the excavation and in its neighbourhood, sometimes illustrating the descriptions with his own drawings. He placed many of the items in the University's antiquity collection, as can be seen in the museum's catalog.³⁹ He discovered two coins in the bath (*De Numo Philippi Rom. Imp. hic reperto*),⁴⁰ one of which (made of copper) was so badly damaged that he couldn't identify either the inscription, or the depiction. The other coin (which is depicted in an engraving on the opening page of the second book) was a silver denar issued by Philip the Arab and Philip II: the description of this is so accurate and professional, that it can still serve as the basis of a precise definition of the coin.⁴¹ He gives data on fineness (*Secunda moduli*), then the circumscription of the *recto* (completing the inscription) and its image, and finally describes the *verso* of the coin in the same way. The coin leads Schönvisner to an important conclusion: the bath must already have existed during the reign of the two Philippi (between 244 and 249

³⁶ Schönvisner 1780a.

³⁷ Schönvisner 1778, 65.

³⁸ Schönvisner 1778, 90-97.

³⁹ 'Ex balneo Romano anno 1778. mense Febr. in oppido Budae veteris detecto huc translati sunt tabuli duo testacei, tegulae duae cum inscriptione *Legionis II. Adiutricis Piae fidelis*. Item gemma nigra annularis cum effigie Mercurii. Reliqua suo loco manserunt, exceptis numis quibusdam Romanis ibi repertis, qui infra recensebuntur.' Schönvisner 1780a, 2.

⁴⁰ Schönvisner 1778, 101-107.

⁴¹ 'Pars adversa, ut vides, caput corona radiata cinctum refert, ad pectus cum paludamento. Epigraphe: IMPERATOR IULIUS PHILIPPUS AUGUSTUS. Aversa typum habet aequitatis, seu Mulierem stolatam, quae dextra extensa bilancem, sinistra cornucopiae tenet. Epigraphe: AEQUITAS AUGG. id est Augustorum duorum: Senioris nempe et Junioris Philippi.' Schönvisner 1778, 101-107.

AD).⁴² The following chapters are about the stamped bricks found during the excavation and their imprints (*De Laterculis eorumque inscriptione*), and the inscribed ceramic fragments, the *tegulas*, which probably covered the bottom of the drain.

While describing each of the artifacts, he maintains his usual accuracy. Schönvisner's descriptions never stand alone, because he puts them in context, not only with literary and material examples, but also in the form of longer commentaries. For example, there is a long discussion about the Roman units (*pes, palmus, ounces, digitus*) in the chapter *Praevia de palmis veterum Doctrina*, and he similarly devotes a whole chapter to the historical context of the *legio II Adiutrix* in Pannonia,⁴³ based on the inscriptions and his other sources, giving a panoramic view of the Roman legions as well (*De tempore, quo Legio II Adiutrix ad hanc Danubii ripam stativa habuerit*). He clearly had very wide knowledge on the subject, and he sought to pass on to his readers. Surprisingly, no records remain about his professorship, but he issued two books about the cultural historical themes explained here – *Antiquitates Romanae*⁴⁴ and *Antiquitates Graecae*⁴⁵ – which have been used for decades in secondary education.

The last topic discussed in *De Ruderibus* is the description of the inscriptions found in the vicinity of the excavation, in the *Villa Torcularia* (*Inscriptiones Romanae, quae in villa, ruderibus supra descriptis vicina, adservantur*). Schönvisner found eight inscriptions there – either built into the wall or lying on the ground. Although the descriptions in his city monograph (the *Antiquitates*, published in 1791)⁴⁶ reveal much greater experience in epigraphy, the influence of his Western European models can already be observed in *De Ruderibus*, despite certain errors in transcribing and interpreting them.⁴⁷ In every case he transcribes the inscription, strictly following its structure and the disposition of the lines. Afterwards, he makes suggestions for the missing letters and then presents the text carrier (its material, the decorative elements on it), and finally tries to date the inscription. In each case, he gives an exact description of where the inscription came from. In addition to the inscribed fragments, several figurative carved fragments were also found in the *Villa Torcularia* and in the vicinity of Aquincum. Two of them are fully expounded, both in drawing and in writing

⁴² Schönvisner 1778, 102-103. Cf. Kienast 1996, 198-200.

⁴³ Cf. Lőrincz 2000.

⁴⁴ Schönvisner 1818a.

⁴⁵ Schönvisner 1818b.

⁴⁶ Schönvisner 1791, 45-59.

⁴⁷ For example the inscription nr.*215 in the CIL III. is classified as forgery based on Schönvisner's work: 'Ex epistula Antonii Mancini scripta 10. Aug. 1780. Schönvisnerus ant. Sab. p. 58, qui intellexit falsam esse'. Mommsen 1873, 22.

(*Explicatio duorum saxorum, qui Tabula III. exhibentur*), such as the composition featuring a Nymph, with suggestive of water in the background, and half-naked partly submersed figures.

In this chapter⁴⁸ Schönvisner describes in detail that he found two stones '*magnitudine et elegantia longe praestant*' at the monastery of the Trinitarians in Óbuda, which were later purchased and delivered to the museum of the University Library.⁴⁹ Both of them – which might have once belonged together based on their size and theme – were presented foremost by Schönvisner: the inscripted stone recorded the construction of a fountain (*...silanum pecunia sua fecit*),⁵⁰ its pair is the aforementioned nymph-representation.⁵¹ Only one of them has remained: the stone with the inscription is kept in the Hungarian National Museum's Lapidarium (MNM RD 194), the other, depicting a nymph is unfortunately lost. This is why the description and in particular the cutting about the stone are extremely valuable, because based on this, we can get a clear picture about what it was like. '*Capita desunt*' – Schönvisner says, meaning that the head of the figures are missing. They were certainly broken down in the Turkish era, when depicting of man was banned. The remaining stones were probably built in in an unknown place. It appears on the copper plate of Schönvisner, that apart from removing the heads, the top of the stone was cut off as well to suit for the secondary use.⁵²

The chapters describing the other artifacts end with a presentation of fifteen inscriptions, providing the proof that Schönvisner has a major place among the greatest antiquarian scholars. In *De Ruderibus* he disproved an inaccuracy existing since the 13th century: he clearly identified the area of the bath as the ancient Aquincum, and at the same time contradicted the misinterpretation that the Roman settlement there was that known as Sicambria (*De nomine Municipii, in quo legionis II Adjutricis tam diuturna stativa erant*).⁵³ The name of Sicambria⁵⁴ was first mentioned in Simon Kézai's *Gesta*, where it was identified with Óbuda, and as the royal headquarters of Attila the Hun, probably after Godfrey of Viterbo. Later the *Chronicon Pictum* also mentioned the area under this name, but in the

⁴⁸ Schönvisner 1778, 167-173.

⁴⁹ Cf. Schönvisner 1780a, 2.: 8. '*Lapis, qui memoriae prodit a Cajo Iulio Severo ob honorem accepti magistratus in collegio fabrorum, Silanum propriis sentibus factum consulibus Muciano et Fabino. Inventus in agro Budae Veteris seu Aquinci. Item alter cum anaglyphis absque inscriptione.*'

⁵⁰ Cf. CIL III 3580, and recently Kovács, Szabó 2009, 12.

⁵¹ About the Nymph see Ritoókné Szalay 2002, 74-77.

⁵² Ritoókné Szalay 2002, 76.

⁵³ Schönvisner 1778, 206-216.

⁵⁴ About the origin and the survival of the 'Sicambria' tradition, see Szabó, Kanyó, Spekner 2015.

15th century the interest in Sicambria – as Óbuda’s central role – started to decline. The theory was revived during the humanism period, because of an inscription mentioned by Bonfini in his *Decades*, which was allegedly found during the construction of a church, and recorded the founding of Sicambria.⁵⁵ An important difference compared to the previous sources was that Bonfini originated the name of the city from the name of a German legion: ‘*nam civitas ista ex auxiliatrice Sicambria legione Germaniae nomen olim assumpsit*’.⁵⁶ Schönvisner was the first to claim that this inscription was a fake made by a humanist,⁵⁷ arguing against its antique origin, reciting his argument point for point. Later, in the 19th century, this was confirmed by Mommsen, who was also classified the inscription among the *falsae* in CIL III.⁵⁸ Specialist literature now fixes the time when the forgery was made as the second half of the 15th century. The faking of the inscription is attributed to Bonfini from Jenő Salamon’s researches, and it’s been rooted in the specialist literature in this wise.⁵⁹ However since the text appears almost exactly in the same form in the *Inscriptiones Sacrosanctae...* of Apianus,⁶⁰ and it’s almost excluded, that the authors of that would have known the *Decades* of Bonfini, so we have to assume a common source as the creator of the inscription, who is already unknown to us.⁶¹

But for three centuries before Schönvisner the view that the ruins existing in Óbuda were the monuments of ancient Sicambria held its ground. In the early modern ages, some scholars had cautious doubts that the mythical Sicambria founded by the fleeing Troyans was really here. For example, Mátyás Bél in the chapter describing the history of Óbuda in his *Notitia*, says that Sicambria was established on the ruins of Aquincum, after its destruction.⁶² The last two chapters of *De Ruderibus* are probably the most important and well-deducted arguments the whole work: without any doubt Schönvisner disproves the chronicles and historiographers of the early modern era, enumerating his arguments in

⁵⁵ ‘*In hac veteri Buda lapis effusus est, Matthiae regis tempore, dum fundamenta iacerentur aedium Beatricis reginae, cum tali inscriptione: LEGIO SICAMBRORUM HIC PRAESIDIO COLLOCATA CIVITATEM AEDIFICAVERUNT, QVAM EX SVO NOMINE SICAMBRIAM VOCAVERUNT.*’ Bonfini 1581, 24.

⁵⁶ Bonfini 1581, 24.

⁵⁷ ‘*Sed cum forte eadem aetate non deessent emunctae naris viri, qui novam hanc opinionem, ut fabulosam exploderent, quod ex illis Bonfinii verbis liquet: ineptos et somniculosos annalium scriptores non sectamur. Mirum! Effoditur lapis eo prorsus tempore, qui optatum Sicambriae nomen aptiore ad persuadendum documento Budaevi veteri adferat.*’ Schönvisner, *De Ruderibus* 210.

⁵⁸ Mommsen 1873, 19. *183.

⁵⁹ In that subject see Kulcsár 1968, 257-258.

⁶⁰ Apianus 1534, 492.

⁶¹ Kulcsár 1968, 258.

⁶² ‘*Qui post deletum Aquincum, Sicambriam, heic loci positam credunt; dicunt ii quidem aliquid; sed nequeunt tamen, tantae conversionis aetatem, designare.*’ Bel 1737, 165.

points, showing why the ancient Aquincum is the only correct identification, and finally ending up the fallacy held for centuries.

Schönvisner received various honours for the exploration of the bath and the rapid processing of the results: Maria Theresa ordered that twenty-four gold coins should be paid to Schönvisner from the foundation of the University Press as a reward for his work.⁶³ He published his next work—*In Romanorum iter per Pannoniae Ripam...*⁶⁴—, a historical–geographical description of the artifacts, found along the road marked by Roman milestones from Taurunum (Zimony) to Lauriacum (Enns) in 1780. In 1786 he was appointed as first *custos* in the Library, and in 1794 he became its *praefectus*, a position he held until his death in 1818. In 1794 he resigned from the professorship of antiquity and numismatics (his last archeologically themed work was the *Antiquitates* in 1791), and from that time he devoted his life to numismatics: for example, he published the catalog of Ferenc Széchényi's numismatic collection.⁶⁵

The oeuvre of the archaeologist and historiographer István Schönvisner was the culminating point of 18th century antiquarianism in Hungary, the founder of scientific archaeology. He laid the foundations of provincial research in Pannonia, and gained considerable merit in the teaching of antiquity and numismatics. As the German scholar Rosinus noted in the letter of dedication of his *Romanae Antiquitates*:⁶⁶ 'The rediscovery of antiquity required four methods: the recovery and editing of literary sources, the description of archaeological remains, the probing of ancient history, and the systematic reconstruction of single aspects of the classical civilization.' Schönvisner's *De Ruderibus* satisfied all of these criteria: his examinations extended to the smallest details and he processed his results systematically. In addition, the work was written from a very modern point of view and its findings are still relevant today.

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⁶³ National Archives of Hungary, C 67, Htt. departamentum litterario-politicum, Acta commissionis studiorum, 156. Universitas Budensis, F16. 930.

⁶⁴ Schönvisner 1780b.

⁶⁵ Schönvisner 1807.

⁶⁶ Cited by Papy 2004, 100.

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