

The following finds from this period belong to a damaged Germanic, also military, grave. By the grave goods, i.e. the shield boss and the Elbe type cup and other objects, the grave is dated to the turn of the 5th and 6th centuries.

Further in the text the author attempts to ascribe some historical validity to these finds. Because of the position of Svete Gore, above the Sotla valley, with the crossing of communication routes below it, the author believes, because of the character of the finds, that there was a military post somewhere in the immediate vicinity, perhaps near Bistrica ob Sotli. Bearing in mind Rome's military policies and her defence system, the author does not exclude the possibility that this military post was one of the border defence posts built along the Sotla. Because of innumerable barbarian attacks, a refuge or sanctuary grew up on the summit during the 5th century, judging by the ruined wall on the north-eastern slope of the hill. The presence of the above-mentioned grave, which belongs to the period of Gothic domination in this area, has caused the author to think that this outpost still existed at the beginning of the 6th century, as a part of "civitas Noricum" or "Pannonia Urbs". The material found further raises the question of the ethnic structure of the settlement. Thus the author visualises, as continuing elements, an indigenous population, with military "immigrants" who were undoubtedly in authority.

Finally the author touches once again on the already much discussed relief from the façade of the St. George chapel. In spite of all analogies postulated to date, the 3-dimensional form finds its most genuine analogies in the figures on the golden bracteates which originate from the same cultural circle as the content of the Germanic grave. From these points the author concludes that the stylistic and iconographical evidence does not point the way so much to the actual creator of this relief but more reliably gives an indication of the taste and perhaps even more the spiritual inclinations of the customer for whom it was made.

EARLY CHRISTIAN CHURCH ON KUČAR NEAR PODZEMELJ*

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Podzemelj is an important archaeological site which became well-known through its many prehistoric finds.¹ Yet, in nearby Otok during the last century Roman graves were found, showing that this area was certainly inhabited during the Roman era as well.²

The prehistoric settlement stood on the southern summit of Kučar which rises steeply above Podzemelj from the plain of the river Kolpa. On the northern, somewhat lower summit stand the still easily visible remains of mortar walls, such that at least three building complexes can be distinguished over the extensive plateau.

The ruins of Kučar were known comparatively early, already mentioned in short notes by A. Müllner and J. Pečnik,³ they were also known by J. Szombathy, who even made several exploratory excavations at this site in 1891.⁴ The smaller building on the northern summit of Kučar was also excavated

* The report was published in Slovene in *Arheološki pregled* 17 (1975), 121—123.



1 Kučar pri Podzemlju; view of the church from the south-west. — *Kučar pri Podzemlju; pogled na cerkev z jugozahoda*

in the summer of 1968, but even after this excavation the purpose of this building had not been completely explained.⁵

Thus the first significant results were not achieved until the rescue excavation organised in July and August 1975 by the Ljubljana Regional Institute for the Preservation of Historical Monuments and the Bela Krajina Museum at Metlika. This excavation was made necessary by the presence near the northern summit of Kučar of a large stone quarry which had begun seriously to jeopardise the archaeological remains. Research was therefore concentrated on the most threatened building, the ruins lying nearest to the edge of the quarry.

The rescue excavations revealed that on the northern summit of Kučar we had stumbled on the extremely well preserved foundations of a late Roman church which had also had a narthex and small annexe. The building (21.5 m long, 8 m wide) had been built from broken stones of varying thickness, cemented with mortar, so that the walls were an average of 70 cm thick. In some places the walls were preserved up to more than a metre high.

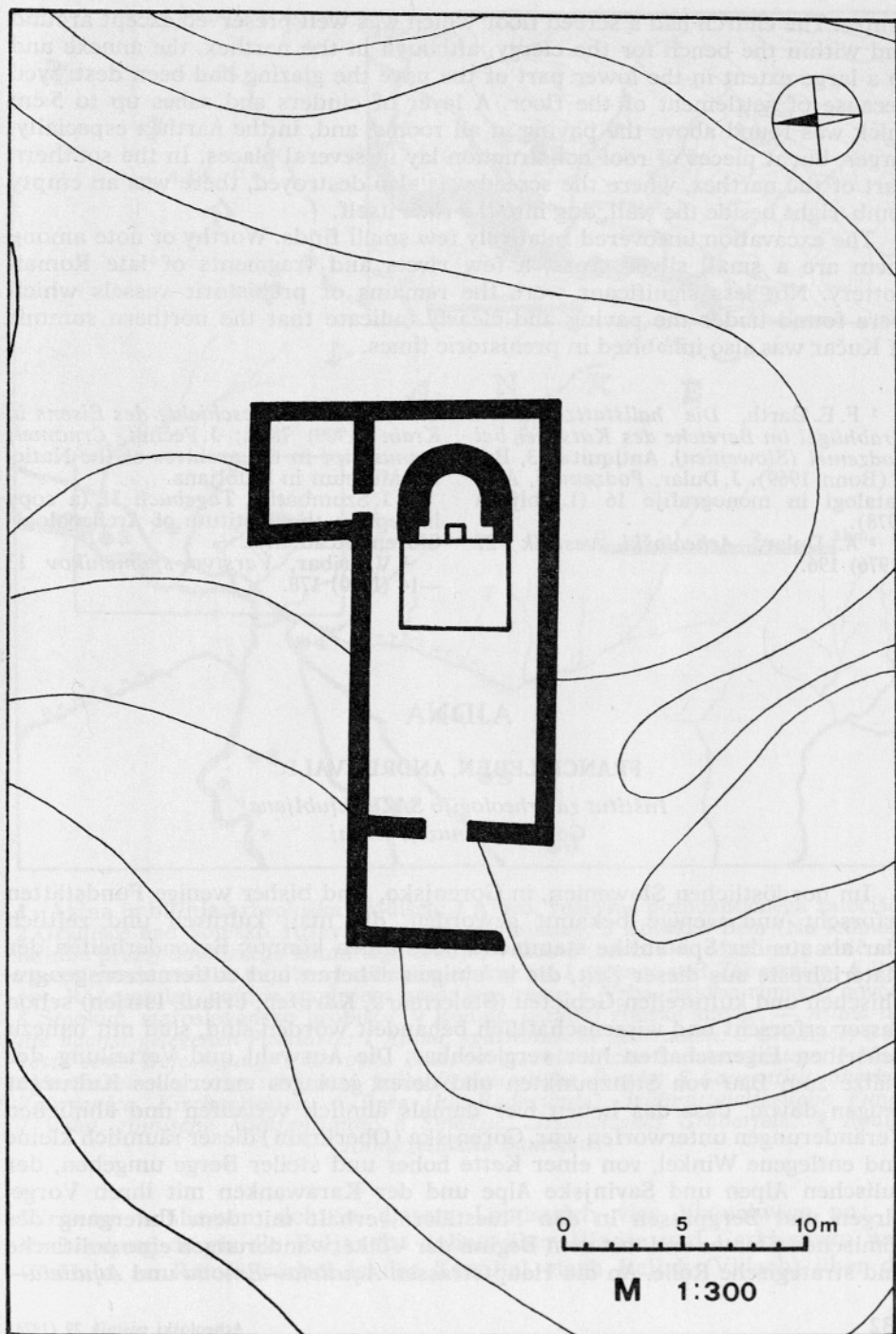


2 Kučar pri Podzemlju; eastern half of the church with semicircular bench. —
Kučar pri Podzemlju; vzhodna polovica cerkve s polkrožno klopjo

The nave of the church, aligned in an east-west direction, was effectively divided into two parts by a somewhat raised square podium. Behind the podium stood a semi-circular bench, 4.6 m wide and made of small stones. Although the wall was not very high at this point (many stones were missing especially at the right-hand end), the shape of the bench was still clear. There was a 70 cm wide gap at the centre of the bench. As the wall at the foundations was continuous, and as both edges of the gap were straight, we can assume that a large stone block (seat) was formerly fixed at the centre of the bench and was most probably removed at some time in the past.

In the area between the arms of the bench was a 35 cm deep walled space for a reliquary. Judging by the groove round the edge of the cavity, it was once covered by a stone slab, no longer preserved today. On the northern side of the presbyterium was a 6 m long, 4.5 m wide annexe, which was connected to the main body of the church through a passage behind the left arm of the semicircular bench.

The narthex on the western side of the building was 4 m wide. It was divided from the nave by a wall containing a 1.6 m wide entrance at the



3 Kučar pri Podzemlju; plan of church. — *Kučar pri Podzemlju; tloris cerkve*

centre. The church had a screed floor which was well preserved except around and within the bench for the clergy, although in the narthex, the annexe and to a large extent in the lower part of the nave the glazing had been destroyed because of settlement of the floor. A layer of cinders and ashes up to 5 cm thick was found above the paving in all rooms, and, in the narthex especially, larger, burnt pieces of roof construction lay in several places. In the southern part of the narthex, where the screed was also destroyed, there was an empty tomb, right beside the wall, dug into the rock itself.

The excavation uncovered relatively few small finds. Worthy of note among them are a small silver cross, a few rivets and fragments of late Roman pottery. Not less significant were the remains of prehistoric vessels which were found under the paving and clearly indicate that the northern summit of Kučar was also inhabited in prehistoric times.

¹ F. E. Barth, *Die hallstattzeitlichen Grabhügel im Bereiche des Kutscher bei Podzemel (Slowenien)*, *Antiquitas* 3, Bd. 5 (Bonn 1969). J. Dular, *Podzemelj*, *Arh. katalogi in monografije* 16 (Ljubljana 1978).

² A. Dular, *Arheološki vestnik* 27 (1976) 196.

³ A. Müllner, *Geschichte des Eisens in Krain* (1909) 78 ff.; J. Pečnik, *Črnomelj manuscript* in the archives of the National Museum in Ljubljana.

⁴ J. Szombathy, *Tagebuch* 31 (a copy is kept in the Institute of Archaeology, Slovene Academy).

⁵ V. Sribar, *Varstvo spomenikov* 13—14 (1970) 178.

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Im nordöstlichen Slowenien, in Gorenjsko, sind bisher wenige Fundstätten erforscht und wenige bekannt geworden, die man kulturell und zeitlich klar als aus der Spätantike stammend bestimmen könnte. Besonderheiten der Materialreste aus dieser Zeit, die in einigen näheren und entfernteren geographischen und kulturellen Gebieten (Steiermark, Kärnten, Friaul, Istrien) schon besser erforscht und wissenschaftlich behandelt worden sind, sind mit nahezu denselben Eigenschaften hier vergleichbar. Die Auswahl und Verteilung der Plätze zum Bau von Stützpunkten und deren geringes materielles Kulturgut zeugen davon, dass das Leben hier damals ähnlich verlaufen und ähnlichen Veränderungen unterworfen war. Gorenjska (Oberkrain) dieser räumlich kleine und entlegene Winkel, von einer Kette hoher und steiler Berge umgeben, der Julischen Alpen und Savinjske Alpe und der Karawanken mit ihren Vorgebirgen und Bergpässen in den Flusstälern, erhält mit dem Untergang des römischen Staates und mit dem Beginn der Völkerwanderungen eine politische und strategische Rolle. An die Hauptstrassen *Aquileia—Emona* und *Aquileia—*