MAGDOLNA SZILÁGYI

On the Road: The History and Archaeology of Communication Networks in East-Central Europe

BUDAPEST 2014

The publication of this volume was generously supported by
the National Cultural Fund of Hungary and
the Central European University, Department of Medieval Studies

Front Cover

Road leading to the castle of Barcarozsnyó (Râşnov, C. Braşov, Romania)
cut into mountain bedrock (photograph by Oana Toda, 2011;
published in TODA 2012: 159, Fig. 7)

Back Cover

The remains of the church of Sásdikál covered with trees and the adjacent road
dated to the Middle Ages (photograph by Magdolna Szilágyi, 2013)

Volume editor
József Laszlovszky

ISBN 978-963-9911-57-4

HU-ISSN 1216-6847

© The Author and Archaeolingua Foundation
All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system,
or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, digitised, photocopying,
recording or otherwise without the prior permission of the publisher.

2014

ARCHAEOLINGUA ALAPÍTVÁNY
H-1014 Budapest, Úri u. 49.

Copy editing by Karen Stark
Desktop editing and layout by Rita Kovács

Printed by AduPrint Kft.

Contents

Preface 7

Acknowledgements 9

1. Introduction 11
   1.1 Previous research on medieval roads 13
   1.2 Sources 18
      1.2.1 Written sources 18
      1.2.2 Maps 24
      1.2.3 Archaeological sources and methods 32

2. From Roman to medieval roads 53
   2.1 The road system of Roman Pannonia 53
   2.2 The medieval names of Roman roads 55
      2.2.1 The material of Roman roads 56
      2.2.2 The rampart of roads 62
      2.2.3 Roman stone monuments along the roads 64
   2.3 The use of the Roman street system 66
      2.3.1 Savaria – Steinamanger – Szombathely 66
      2.3.2 Scarbantia – Ödenburg – Sopron 71
   2.4 The survival of Roman roads outside towns 76

3. Terminology and characterization of medieval roads 85
   3.1 The hierarchy of roads 89
   3.2 Legal aspects 91
      3.2.1 Ownership and right of use 96
         3.2.1.1 Public roads 97
         3.2.1.2 Common roads 98
         3.2.1.3 Private roads 100
      3.2.3 Royal authority 101
      3.2.4 Legal or illegal character 103
   3.3 Functional aspect 107
      3.3.1 Pilgrims' routes 107
      3.3.2 Military roads 117
      3.3.3 Trade routes 122
         3.3.3.1 Salt roads 123
         3.3.3.2 Wine roads 130
         3.3.3.3 Market roads 135
      3.3.4 Ecclesiastical roads 141
         3.3.4.1 Church roads 142
         3.3.4.2 Corpse roads 145

3.3.5 Agricultural routes 147
3.3.5.1 Drove roads 149
3.3.5.2 Mill roads 152
3.3.5.3 Hay roads 154
3.3.6 Industrial roads 155
3.3.6.1 Stone routes 156
3.3.6.2 Timber routes 157
3.4 Modes of travel and transportation 160
3.4.1 Footpaths 161
3.4.2 Bridle-ways 163
3.4.3 Cart roads 164
3.4.4 Sled roads 168
3.5 Topographical relationship between roads 168
3.5.1 Crossroads and bifurcations 169
3.5.2 Short-cuts 171
3.5.3 Relative position 172
3.6 Physical properties 172
3.6.1 Material and surface 173
3.6.1.1 Earth 173
3.6.1.2 Clay 173
3.6.1.3 Stone 175
3.6.2 Relief 176
3.6.2.1 Elevated roads 176
3.6.2.2 Hollow ways 177
3.7 Vegetation 183
3.7.1 Plants covering the road 183
3.7.2 Plants around the road 184
3.8 Age of the road 185
3.9 River-crossing places 186
3.9.1 Bridges 186
3.9.2 Ferry ports 193
3.9.3 Fords 195
4. Conclusions and outlook 197
List of abbreviations 203
1. Signs and terms 203
2. Archival collections 203
3. Sources and literature 204
Bibliography 211

Preface

The book in the reader's hands deals with communication networks in the Middle Ages. Medieval roads of different size, hierarchy, and function formed an intricate system that developed in a mutual relationship with contemporary villages and towns. These different types of roads represented the backbone of the settlement system being the channels of trade and travel. Their knowledge is therefore indispensable for studying archaeological topography, economic history, military history, and human geography, as well as many other subjects.

The purpose of this book is to familiarize its readers with the characteristics and variability of medieval roads, as well as to introduce them to the sources and methods of historical road investigations. The present book refers to many routes from East-Central Europe. However, a detailed reconstruction of the entire road network of region would have exceeded the size of Archaeolingua's Series Minor volumes. This book is based on the author's PhD dissertation titled *Árpád Period Communication Networks: Road Systems in Western Transdanubia*, defended at the Medieval Studies Department of the Central European University in Budapest, in December 2012. The chronological and geographical frames of the original text have been broadened, and the research questions have been slightly re-formulated. The chapters have been re-written, some new chapters were introduced, while others were completely omitted. The book is still using the results of a very detailed analysis of written sources on medieval Western Transdanubia, but several eleventh- to fifteenth-century examples have been incorporated from the territory of East-Central Europe in order to give a broader and more general overview on the variability of medieval roads. The book also provides an outlook on the roads of former Roman provinces, particularly of Pannonia, and their continuity into the Middle Ages.

Until recently, the history and topography of medieval roads and pathways have raised little attention in East-Central Europe. One of the main reasons for this lies with the difficulties of their identification and dating. Written sources enable us to define the routes of communication roughly, and only rarely do they make possible the identification of minor roads. In the landscape where the roads and tracks are closely investigable, on the other hand, it is dating that represents a major challenge. Maps, making the third main group of sources, are available only from the eighteenth century onwards, and can therefore be used only retrospectively for the reconstruction of medieval topography. Although each type of source above has its own limitations, their combined use has great

benefits for the identification of medieval roads as they finely complete each other by highlighting different aspects of medieval routeways.

The great variety of place-names mentioned in this book required careful and consistent treatment. When mentioning the *coloniae* and *municipia* of Roman Pannonia I normally use the Roman names of towns and provide their modern names in parentheses. When discussing the geography of the medieval Hungarian Kingdom I generally use the medieval Hungarian names of towns, settlements and that of the contemporary counties they belonged to. In addition, I provide the modern place-names and countries if they do not belong to Hungary today. Finally, in the case of archaeological sites I usually provide the modern names of locations.

The present book may be either read from cover to cover or consulted for certain types of medieval roads discussed in separate chapters. The readers I have in mind for this book are students and researchers whose field of interest involves historical roads or landscape in general, whether they are archaeologists, historians, or geographers. Furthermore, it will hopefully also raise the curiosity of those who are engaged in local history research or anyone that simply wants to know more about the past.