

The river island monastery: long-distance connections and micro-regional isolation in the case of Bizere Abbey?

Abstract:

The Bizere abbey appeared and functioned, along with several other monastic foundations, in direct connection to the watercourse of the Mureş River. The location of this archaeological site was, most likely, an island during its active days and favored the development of a particular archaeological landscape. Various types of data (archival, cartographic, archaeological, geological, and geophysical) allowed valuable assertions to be made about the relationship the abbey shared with the river in terms of both local and long-distance communication possibilities. These also made it possible to retrace the watercourse configuration prior to the Habsburg river regulations and to comment on the negative impact the river eventually had on the site, due to its accelerated hydromorphology. Moreover, Bizere abbey is, so far, the only medieval site of the region where archaeological research has retrieved data pertaining to the topic of inland navigation and water transport. Remains of boats and at least one possible mooring location, along with other features, are proof of the practical solutions the Benedictines employed in order to make good use of, and even profit from, a location that, at times, could have become quite unfriendly.

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