

Abstract Submission

Classical Association of the Middle West & South – Southern Section.

Saint Severin on the Danube: An Examination of the Application of Text and Archaeology in One Roman Province

The discipline of Classical Archaeology counts among its resources a tool not always available to the archaeologist: text. Many scholars studying the material remains of past societies do not have any substantial writing – such as history, literature, or poetry – composed by the people they study. The study of both artifacts and writing has formed the basis of Classical Studies for centuries, providing two avenues of insight into the lives and minds of the ancient Greeks and Romans.

The ancient Roman province of Noricum (modern day Austria) possesses one particular text that has proved to be a popular resource for the students of that region. At the beginning of the sixth century, the Roman monk Eugippius wrote a biography of Saint Severin, the “Apostle of Noricum,” who could be seen as an Austrian counterpart to Ireland’s Saint Patrick. Along with providing an account of Severin’s travels and activities in Noricum during the second half of the fifth century, this fine example of hagiography also includes information about the decline of the Roman Empire and the last years of Roman occupation along this stretch of the Danube.

While the combined study of both text and archaeology has been a longstanding staple of Classical scholarship, the relationship between the two types of evidence in terms of their compatibility often is questioned. Cautious investigators wonder about the respective impressions that each type of resource provides, especially if the two ever contradict each other. This paper proposes to briefly examine the information provided by *The Life of Saint Severin* for the last years of the Roman settlements along the Norican Danube as it compares to the picture of that area created from information provided by decades of archaeological research.