

VIVERE MILITARE EST

FROM POPULUS TO EMPERORS - LIVING ON THE FRONTIER
VOLUME I

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EVIDENCE OF EARLY CHRISTIANITY ON THE DANUBE LIMES, FROM SINGIDUNUM TO AQUAE*

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ABSTRACT

This paper studies historical sources combined with archaeological data on traces of early Christianity in the middle section of the Roman Danubian Limes. Thanks to the results of archaeological researches and accidental findings, a picture was obtained, although still insufficiently clear, on the development of Christianity in this area in the period from the 4th up until the end of the 6th century. Historical sources note the existence of an organized Christian community at the Limes in the end of the 3rd and the beginning of the 4th century. The oldest archaeological traces come from the mid-4th century and they are mostly linked to the findings of painted tombs or stone and lead sarcophagi with distinct Christian symbolism. In large urban centres, Singidunum and Viminacium, parts of buildings which can be possibly defined as churches were discovered, from the 4th-5th century. Most of the ecclesiastic buildings discovered along the Limes belong to the period of the 6th century. They were built within military encampments and they bear witness of the high degree of Christianization not only of military crews but also the civilian population which lived in those fortifications and their immediate vicinity.

KEY WORDS: EARLY CHRISTIANITY, ECCLESIASTICAL OVERVIEW, FOURTH-SIXTH CENTURIES, LIMES, CHURCHES, TOMBS, WALL PAINTING, SARCOPHAGI.

* This paper results from the projects: *Romanisation, urbanisation and transformation of urban centres of civil, military and residential character in Roman provinces in the territory of Serbia* (no. 177007) and *IRS – Viminacium, Roman city and military legion camp – research of material and non-material of inhabitants by using the modern technologies of remote detection, geophysics, GIS, digitalization and 3D visualization* (no. 47018), funded by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia.

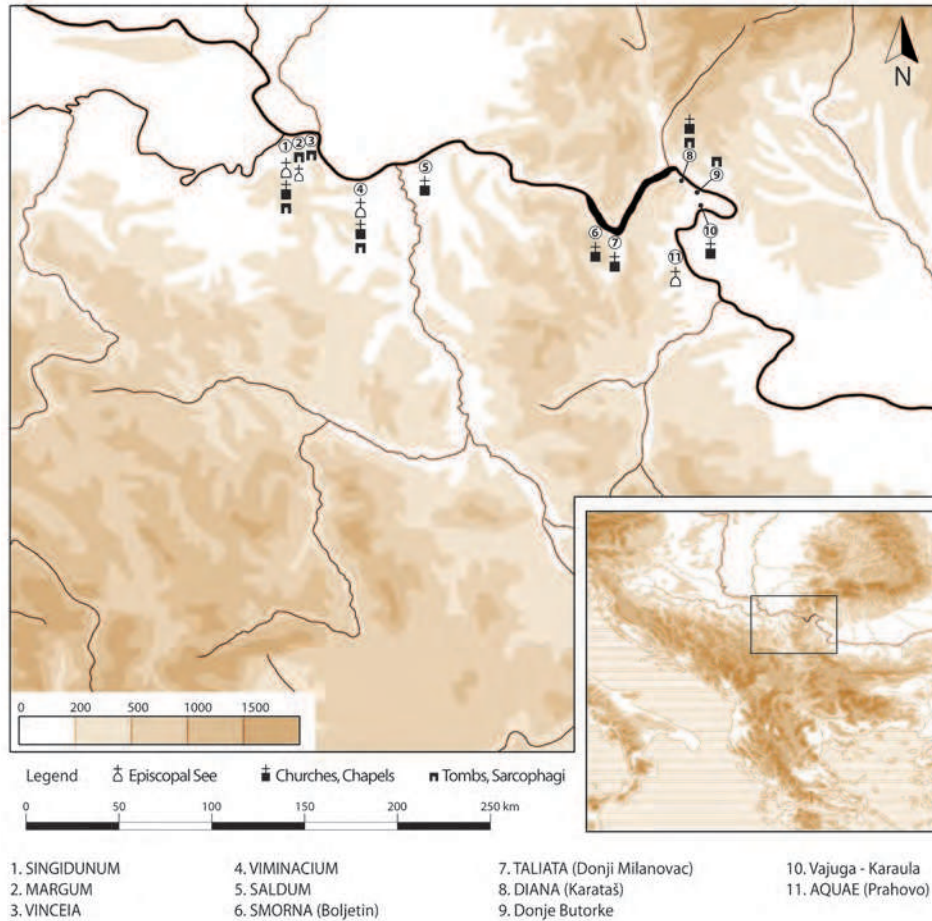
The Late Antiquity period was filled with turbulent political and social events and turmoil which brought deep political, economic and social changes to the Roman Empire, leading to the gradual transformation of the late antique society. The possibility of free confession of faith, proclaimed by the Edict of Toleration by Emperor Galerius, in 311 AD (The Edict of Serdica), as well as freedom of confession of the Christian faith by Emperor Constantine I in 313 AD (The Edict of Milan), brought prosperity and development to Christianity, both in the organisation of the community itself, and also in the areas of construction and artistic development. Urban centres, smaller settlements and fortifications got their first basilicas. Necropolises with churches serving the cult of the dead were formed outside the city ramparts (*extra muros*).

Systematic research of the sites along the Middle Danube Limes, such as Beograd–*Singidunum*, Dubravica–*Margum*, Kostolac–*Viminacium*, Čezava–*Novae*, Donji Milanovac–*Taliata*, Karataš–*Diana* and Prahovo–*Aquae*, which represented important church, urban and military centres, enables an insight into the processes of Christianisation through findings of the remains of church architecture, sepulchral monuments, as well as the different objects used in the Christian cult or personal piety (Map 1). The first scientific papers and research of the early Christian monuments along the Limes originate from the 1870s. The Austrian researcher Felix Kanitz, during his stay in Kostolac, described the late antique tombs in detail, some of which had frescoes.² In the 1880s, in the newly edited archaeological journal “*Starinar*,” Mihailo Valtrović was among the first to publish the studies of the individual early Christian finds, and the results of the research of the early Christian grave units in the area of *Viminacium*.³ Further investigations were continued by Miloje Vasić, who published, at the beginning of the 20th century, the important grave units and still valid typology of burial forms from this metropolis.⁴ The greatest impetus in discovering the monuments from the early Christian epoch was at the time of extensive archaeological works in the course of the construction of HPP Đerdap I during the 1960s and 1970s. By the research of

2 Kanitz 1904, 180–181.

3 Valtrović 1886, 70–71; *Idem* 1891a, 109–130, *Idem* 1891b, 130–142. M. Valtrović recorded the existence of a rich fresco-painted tomb in *Viminacium*, which was destroyed by the locals. Valtrović 1884, 6, 14, 124.

4 M. M. Vasić gave the first known typology of late antique graves and tombs in *Viminacium*. Vasić 1907, 96–98.



Map 1. Early Christian sites on the Middle Danubian Limes

the forts' interiors and their immediate surroundings, the remains of foundations of several basilicas, chapels and tombs were also examined, and archaeological material from the early Christian period was also found, though it was scarce.⁵ Afterwards, a series of individual papers, studies, and catalogues of findings were published that complete our knowledge of religious life and artisan production inspired by the Christianity of the Late Antiquity period.

⁵ The papers were published in the journals *Arheološki pregled* 1964–1970, and *Starinar* 33–34 (1982–1983), 1984.

THE HISTORICAL AND ECCLESIASTICAL OVERVIEW OF THE MIDDLE DANUBE LIMES

The northern border of the Roman Empire on the Danube was already established in the 1st century AD. Since the time of Trajan, from the 2nd century AD, until the epoch of Aurelian in the 270s, the area of the middle Danube basin represented only the border between the provinces in the inland.⁶ After leaving Dacia, the right Danube bank again became the mainstay of defence from barbarian attacks. Due to the political and strategic importance of the Danube Limes, the territorial division of the area that was included in the Diocese of Dacia, i.e., the Prefecture of Illyricum (*Praefectura praetorio per Illyricum*), was frequently changed. On the north of the former Upper Moesia (*Moesia Superior*), along the Danube, the province of *Moesia Prima* was formed, encompassing the middle part of today's Serbia, with its easternmost point in *Taliata*, today's Donji Milenovac. The province of *Dacia Ripensis* spread from the Poreč river confluence toward the east.⁷ Although separated by the administrative boundary, these two provinces were connected by the fortification system.

The area of the Middle Danube, according to historical sources and archaeological material, came into contact with the new religion relatively late compared to the southern part of the Balkans, in which Christianity was present since the time of the Apostles.⁸ The process of Christianisation was much slower in the mountainous hinterland and deeper in the inlands of the provinces, due to the greater isolation of the inhabitants, who were away from the main communication routes. The first information about the presence of the Christians in the Danube area originates from the time of Marcus Aurelius (161–180) and his war against the Quadi tribe. The war was fought by a legion that was brought from the East (*XII Fulminata*) in which there was a significant number of Christians, as Tertullian

⁶ Mirković 1981, 90–91.

⁷ Veters 1950, 6.

⁸ The New Testament scriptures contain the Epistles of the Apostle Paul directed to the Christian communities in the cities at the south of the Balkan peninsula: one for Philippians in Macedonia, two for the Christians in Thessaloniki, two in Corinth in Achaia and one to Apostle Titus on the Crete island. Lebreton, Zeiller 1946, 176–188.
Dela ap. 16, 9–12; 17, 1–14; 19, 21–22; 20, 1–2.

and Eusebius of Caesarea wrote.⁹ However, the first reliable traces of Christians in the Middle Danube area come from the time of Diocletian (284–305), who systematically persecuted members of the Roman army stationed along the Danube who confronted pagan customs that were close to the Emperor.¹⁰ The majority of the Christian martyrs mentioned in the sources or in tradition are connected to larger urban agglomerations in these provinces.

One of the largest cities in the province of Upper Moesia was *Singidunum*, a fortification in the frontier region, with the seat of the *IV Flavia* legion.¹¹ Due to its remarkable strategic importance, on the confluence of the river Sava into the Danube, the city was often in the possession of the various tribes and tribal alliances that were located in these areas.¹² The oldest information about the presence of Christians in *Singidunum* is related to the tribulation in the time of Diocletian's persecutions. One of the first Christian martyrs, Donatus, has been reported in the sources as *diaconicus sanctae ecclesiae Singidoniensis*.¹³ The fact that *Singidunum*, as an important military base in the borderland of *Moesia Prima*, had a deacon who died for the faith as early as the beginning of the 4th century, indicates the existence of an organised Christian community before the release of the Edict of Milan, in 313. The death of a group of Christians in *Sirmium* who were from *Singidunum* and among which there was the priest Montanus and his wife Maxima is also known from sources.¹⁴ Several years later, two more martyrs appear, whose death is also connected with *Singidunum*: the martyrs Ermil (*Hermylus*) and Stratonik (*Stratonicus*), who were executed after 313 AD.¹⁵ According to the later, insufficiently reliable Metaphrast's *Menologium*, their bodies were thrown into the Danube and were believed to have been buried 18 miles downstream of *Singidunum*, possibly in the area of today's village of Brestovik, where the fortified settlement *Aureus*

9 Zeiller 1967, 42–46, with cited literature.

10 Zeiller 1967, 53–108.

11 Mirković 1968, 37–49; Eadem 1976, 23–32.

12 Barišić 1955b, 2, note 5b.

13 Zeiller 1967, 75–76, 78.

14 Zeiller 1967, 78. Montanus and Maxima appear in the martyrologies under different dates, March 26 and May 11. Cf. Zeiller 1967, 105.

15 Zeiller 1967, 105–107; Popović 1991, 73–80.

*Mons*¹⁶ was located. It is possible, however, that the bodies of the martyrs emerged eight miles from *Singidunim* in *Castrum Octavum*, in today's Višnjica.¹⁷

The first known bishop of *Singidunum*, Ursacius (*Ursatius a Singiduno, Ursacius*), was mentioned in the sources for the first time, as a participant of the Council of Tyre in 335 AD, where he appears as an opponent of bishop Athanasius of Alexandria, one of the leading representatives of the Nicene doctrine.¹⁸ On the Council of Serdica in 343, Ursacius was the leading one on the list of heretics (*nomina haereticorum*).¹⁹ During his long service, until approximately 370, the Episcopacy of *Singidunum* had an important role in the church policy of the Empire and in the spread of Arianism, which was present in the whole Danubian area and Illyricum, as well as in Italy, Gaul and in the East. During the time of Ursacius, one local Synod of Arian representatives was held in *Singidunum*,²⁰ and the bishop himself together with bishop Valens of *Mursa* had a great impact on Emperor Constantius II in terms of religion.²¹ The Episcopal See in *Singidunum* after him was also another apostle of Arianism, bishop Secundianus. As an Arian he would be convicted by the council of the western bishops in Aquileia, in 381 AD.²² Written evidence of subsequent bishops of *Singidunum* has not been found to date. The Episcopacy certainly existed in the 6th century, and *Justinian's Novel CXXXI* testifies to this.²³ In the second half of the 6th century, in relation to the Avar attacks and the siege of the city by the Khagan Bayan, historical sources mention a bishop of *Singidunum* who, together with the military commander Sethos, strived to defend not only *Singidunum*, but *Sirmium* as well, in 579 AD.²⁴

The city of *Margum* on the right bank of the Velika Morava (*Margus*), in the vicinity of its confluence with the Danube, had an important role in economic and religious life in the Limes area. The existence of a bishop in the town is men-

16 Mirković 1976, 27; Eadem, 1979, 21.

17 Mirković 1976, 27, note 13.

18 Zeiller 1967, 149–150; 216; Lippold 1961, 1055.

19 Mirković 1976, 27.

20 Bratož 2011, 228, note 112.

21 Barceló 2004, 149.

22 Zeiller 1967, 150.

23 Zeiller 1967, 151.

24 Menandri excerpta, p. 471.34–473.4; Barišić 1955a, 92–93; Mirković 1976, 27.

tioned by the historian Priscus. The Hun's conquest of *Margum*, *Viminacium* and some other cities in the Danubian area, according to his description, was directly connected with the bishop of this city and his unseemly deeds.²⁵ The bishop of *Margum*, whose name is unknown, according to Priscus' testimony, went to the Hun territory and robbed the king's treasury. Being afraid of retaliation, he surrendered to the enemy and promised the capitulation of the city in return.²⁶

Among the most important cities of the *Moesia Prima* province was *Viminacium*, the capitol and Episcopal See.²⁷ The political significance of the city itself, as well as the presence of a large number of soldiers from various parts of the Empire, influenced the spread of different Eastern religious doctrines, together with the official religion of the Empire, among which Mithraism was dominant.²⁸ Written data about the existence of an organised Christian community in the city originates from the 4th century. The city was an important meeting place at the end of July – beginning of August in 337 AD between Athanasius of Alexandria, on his return from exile in Trier, and Emperor Constantius II, who led military operations against the Sarmatians at that time.²⁹

The bishops of *Viminacium* of the 4th and 5th century are known from historical sources. The bishop Amantius, signee of the acts of the Synod of Serdica in 343, who was probably represented by one of his priests, presbyterus Maximus,³⁰ was, together with the majority of the bishops from Illyricum, against the main Arian representatives in the Balkans, the bishops Valens of *Mursa* and Ursacius of *Singidunum*. Bishop Cyriacus, mentioned in 356 in *Atanasius Epistola contra Arianos*, was possibly on the Episcopal seat of the Moesian capitol, *Viminacium*, even though in the source this is not precisely stated.³¹ An unnamed bishop of *Viminacium* from the first half of the 5th century was mentioned in one letter to Pope Celestine I (424).³² From the period after the Hun invasion in the middle of

25 Prisc. Frg. 6, 1, p. 276.32–277.5; Barišić 1955a, 9; Mirković 1986, 209.

26 Zeiller 1967, 151; Mirković 1986, 209.

27 Popović 1967, 29–53; Mirković 1968, 56–73; *Eadem* 1986, 24–27.

28 Zotović 1973, 31–33; Zeiller 1967, 17–26.

29 Burgess 2008, 38, 42.

30 Zeiller 1967, 148.

31 Zeiller 1967, 148–149

32 Zeiller 1967, 598.

the 5th century, there is no data about church organisation in *Viminacium* until the 6th century when, in Justinian's Novel XI from 535, we find that the city fell under the jurisdiction of the Archbishopric of *Justiniana Prima*. At this time, as Procopius informs us, the renewed Episcopate was elevated to the status of Metropolitanate.³³

Among the important cities which were also Episcopal centres in the province of Coastal Dacia was the city of *Aquae* near today's Prahovo. Historical sources report that the bishop of this city, Vitalis, was one of the participants of the Synod of Serdica, in 343.³⁴ Only in the 6th century did the activity of the bishop of *Aquae* become known. Justinian I singled out the Episcopate *Aquae* as a distinct church unit, independent of the episcopate of *Meridium* to which it was subordinated until then, including in its episcopate the city of *Aquae*, and its surrounding fortifications (*castella*), churches (*ecclesiae*) and agricultural lands (*territoria*).³⁵ This measure derived from the intent of suppression of the Bonosus heresy, still present in certain regions in the 6th century.³⁶ In Justinian's Novel XI, dated 535 AD, the bishop worked on the suppression of the Photinus heresy, which, at the end of 6th century, was confessed to by Bonosus, the bishop of *Naissus*. Justinian strived to finally suppress this heresy in the Balkan area and in this endeavour he assigned a special role to the bishop of *Aquae*.

Since the beginning of the Roman conquests, in the regions of *Moesia Prima* and the *Dacia Ripensis* provinces, large cities and settlements were formed and lots of fortresses were built along the Danube Limes, with numerous troops stationed in them. Even though the majority of settlements and fortifications were destroyed during the Hun invasion in the middle of the 5th century, a considerable number were restored by Justinian's fortification activity in the Balkans, which Procopius described in detail in his famous work *De aedificiis*.³⁷ During decades-long archaeological research on the Danube Limes, traces of the churches, sepulchral monuments and objects which were parts of church furniture, and also objects of a profane nature with some Christian attribute have been found. These

33 Popović 1967, 37, note 69.

34 Hilarius, *Coll. Antiar. Par. A*, 4, 1, 27, 6; CSEL 65, 66, 20; Athanasius, *Apologia* 48, 2 (124, Nr. 11); Zeiller 1967, 154; Bratož 2011, 244.

35 Mirković 1995, 207.

36 Iustinianus, *Nov. XI*, 5, 29–33; Zeiller 1967, 350.

37 *De aedif.* IV, 4 p. 122.15–129.4; translation according to: Barišić 1955a, 58–70.

material remains indicate that Christianity among civilians, as well as among the soldiers of the Roman Empire, was considerably present in the period from the 4th until the end of the 6th and beginning of the 7th century.

CHURCHES AND CHAPELS ON THE LIMES

The archaeological remains of church architecture from the period of Early Christianity on the Middle Danube Limes are very modest, which is a consequence of insufficient knowledge regarding the settlement horizons in larger and smaller cities or fortified military settlements. This is especially significant for the territories of two provincial metropolises – *Singidunum* and *Viminacium*, in which relatively modest traces of the presence of Christian communities during Late Antiquity have been found.

There is almost no data about churches in *Singidunum*. In the places where remains of church architecture would have been expected there are thick layers of modern, Ottoman and medieval cities. During research of the interior of the legionary fort *Singidunum* in the area of Kalemegdan, foundations of a structure that could be potentially identified as an early Christianity basilica have been found (Fig. 1, a).³⁸

In *Viminacium*, the established areas of civil settlement and legionary fort have been researched to a lesser extent in the places where considerable remains of church architecture of the 4th and the first half of the 5th century could be expected (Fig. 2). In the new research of the area around the amphitheatre which occupied the north-east corner of the fortified city, in the near vicinity of the eastern facade of this complex, the foundation remains of a structure were found (Fig. 3–4). In the absence of reliably confirmed remains of Christian sacral buildings, some researchers of the *Viminacium* necropolises have presumed that luxury family mausoleums were used as places where Christian cults for the deceased were performed.³⁹ It is possible that they were used for the smaller family of collegium members' gatherings during commemorations or for memorial services for the members buried in these tombs, but not for wider use. The building of churches

38 The authors express special thanks to Dr Stefan Pop-Lazić for this information.

39 Zotović 1986, 60–63; *Eadem* 1994, 60–63.



Fig. 3. *Viminacium* (Kostolac), Early Christian church?, aerial view (M. Korać in: *Fasti Romanae* 2017)

on a city's necropolises was a common Christian practice during the 4th, 5th and 6th centuries, seen on numerous sites, among which the basilicas that have been researched in the area of eastern Late Antiquity – the Early Christian necropolis of *Naissus* in today's city quarter of Jagodin Mala stand out.⁴⁰ The structure that has been explored at the Više Burdelja site could have had the role of a burial basilica in the area of the *Viminacium* southern necropolises (Fig. 2, 2).⁴¹ It is a three–

⁴⁰ Jeremić 2013, 129–130; Jeremić 2014, 18–22.

⁴¹ Jeremić 1977a, 55–57; Milošević 2006, 105–106.

Fig. 4. *Viminacium* (Kostolac), Early Christian church?, view from the amphitheatre (M. Korać in: *Fasti Romanae* 2017)



naved structure, 24.6 x 17.2 m, oriented northeast–southwest, with an entrance on the west side. The interior of the building is dissected with two rows of four 1 x 0.7 m pillars. The corners are reinforced with pilasters, as well as the interior of the eastern wall, with two pilasters set in the direction of the central pillars. The walls of the building and pillars were built mostly of reused bricks, stone blocks and gravestone fragments. The coins below the roof covering define the time of intensive use of the building to the period from Constans (337–350) to Gratian (367–383).⁴² Research has shown that the structure was built over the remains of a necropolis from the second half of the 3rd century, and that burial practice inside the building continued during the 4th century, when the tombs were built, and that some of them were fresco–painted.⁴³ The eastern part of the building remains unexplored, so there is no data regarding its final shape, nor any data on archaeological findings from its interior. The question of whether the building served as a cemetery basilica or if it was a large family tomb that could have been used as a cemetery chapel, remains open.⁴⁴

42 Milošević 2006, 106.

43 Jeremić 1977b, 59.

44 Milošević 2006, 106.

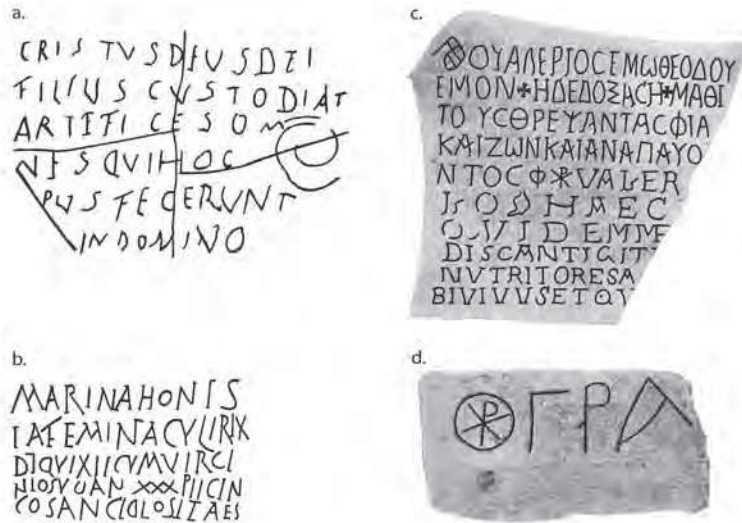


Fig. 5. Viminacium, Early Christian inscriptions

One epigraphic monument might testify to the construction of the city basilica on an unknown location in *Viminacium* (Fig. 5, a). It is the finding of the inscription on one large brick that reads: *Cristus (!) deus dei / filius custodiat / artifices (!) om/nes qui hoc^s [o]pus fecerunt / in domino*.⁴⁵ *Artifices* were workers who sought blessing for their work for the Lord (*in domino*). Unfortunately the brick was found at the beginning of the 20th century without recorded conditions of the find, therefore we cannot estimate the location on which the structure had been built and from where this brick originated. *Christus deus dei filius* is the formula that is characteristic for Orthodox Christianity,⁴⁶ which was actually practiced in *Viminacium*, judging by the priests that sat on the Episcopal throne of this city during the 4th century.

The Christianisation of the Danube Limes was definitely very intense, however the archaeological findings do not show much evidence of it. Downstream along the Danube, the evidence of church architecture has been registered on several sites, thanks to protective archaeological excavations during the construction of HPP Đerdap I, and chronologically they would correspond to Justinian's military, administrative and ecclesiastic consolidation of the border. These are foundation remains of four church buildings *intra muros* in three fortifications, in Čezava–

45 Mirković 1986, no. 216.

46 Gargano 2106, 18.

Novae, Donji Milanovac–*Taliata*, Boljetin–*Smorna* and Vajuga⁴⁷ (Map 1). Also, some towers of Late Antique and Early Byzantine fortifications in Saldum, Donje Butorke and Karataš–*Diana*, with their shape, resemble chapels more than observation points, so they will be mentioned here.

On the site of *Castrum Novae* in Čezava, the fortification for the accommodation of cohorts with a few structures in the interior, and a part of the dock have been examined (Fig. 6). A civil settlement and the associated necropolises remained unexplored. The remains of early Christian church buildings belong to the latest (7.) construction phase of the fortification dated to the 6th century (Fig. 7). These are the foundation remains of two basilicas constructed one above the other, the earlier of which was completely investigated (Fig 8 a, b).⁴⁸ The older church (basilica 1) was partly discovered below the foundation remains of the later building in the northwest corner of the fortification. It was built from stone, brick and mortar. In the published reports there is no data on its appearance or dimensions, except that by its dimensions it slightly deviates from the later church. The apse of the older church is larger than the apse of the later one, and on the outside it was reinforced with at least three or four counterforts.⁴⁹ The northern wall of the building was dislocated to the north about 2 m in relation to the northern wall of the younger church. Based on the shape of the structure, researchers have determined it to the time of Justinian I, until 543/544 AD.⁵⁰

Above the older church, a new, somewhat smaller church was built. It was built above the remains of an older basilica and does not occupy the dominant position within the defended space. It is located at a distance of about 7 m from the western rampart and about 65 m west of the fort's main northwest–southeast communication. The basilica's orientation slightly deviates from the rampart route, which is approximately positioned with its corners towards the cardinal points, and the Basilica itself is positioned on an east–west axis with a deviation of 20° of its east end towards the north. The building is preserved in the foundation zone and, to a lesser degree, in the aboveground part. It was made of crushed stone, mortar and

47 There is no data about shape, size and construction elements of the church in Vajuga. Cf. Popović Lj. 1984, 109.

48 Vasić 1984, 102, fig. 9; *Idem* 1995, 49.

49 Vasić 1984, 102, T. VI, 1, 3.

50 Vasić 1984, 102.



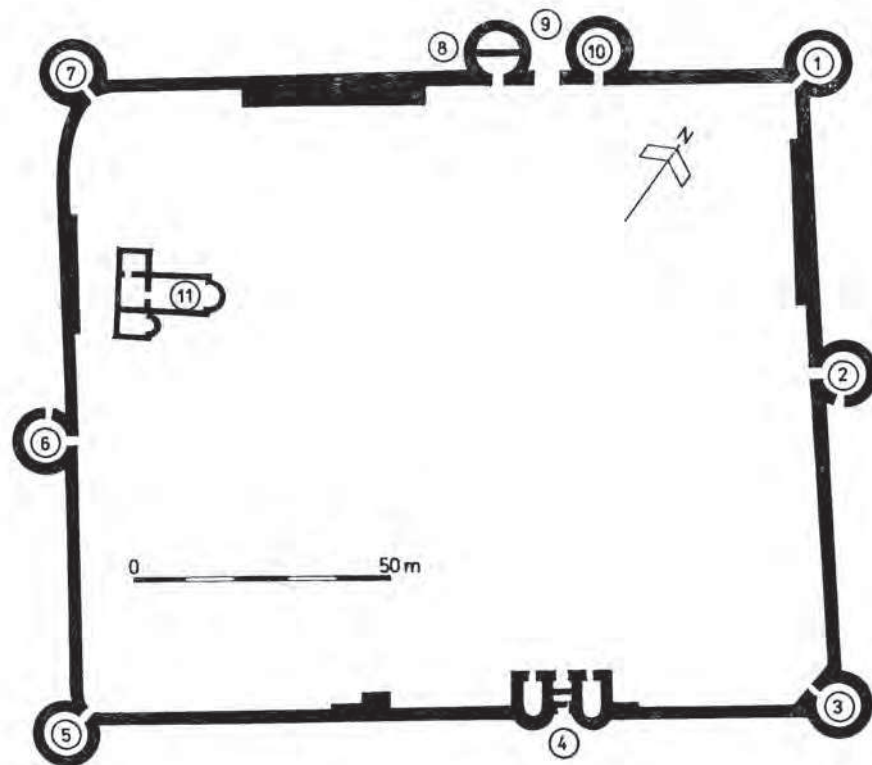
Fig. 6. *Novae* (Čezava), aerial view (documentation of the Institute of Archaeology, Belgrade – the IAB)

brick. It consists of a naos, a semicircular apse, a narthex and two annexes from the north and south sides of the narthex.⁵¹ The southern annex ends in the east with a semicircular apse. A marble mortar was found in it, which probably served a cult purpose.⁵² The total exterior length of the building is 22 m, and the area in the west with the annexes – 17.5 m. The basilica's nave has internal dimensions of

51 Vasić 1984, T. VI, 1.

52 Vasić 1995, 49.

Fig. 7. *Novae* (Čezava) in the 6th century AD (after: Vasić 1984, 103, fig. 9)



about 10.5 x 6.25 m, with an apse depth of about 2 m. In the interior of the apse there was a built-up semicircular bench. The building had a partially preserved mortar floor. Researchers determined the construction of the church to the time of Justinian I, after 543/544, based on the shape of the floor plan, while coins of the emperor Maurice, from 593/594, indicate the date of its destruction.⁵³

A church with a similar plan and period of construction, also *intra muros* of the fortification for accommodation of the cohort, leaning on a western rampart, was found in Donji Milanovac–*Taliata* (Fig. 9).⁵⁴ Its west end rests against a tower, whose lower level is adapted to a baptistery (Fig. 10).⁵⁵ The building is oriented approximately east–west, with a deviation that is conditioned by the direction of the western ramparts (Fig. 11). It consists of a naos, with internal dimensions of 9.5 x

⁵³ Vasić 1984, 102.

⁵⁴ Popović 1984, fig. 4, 5, 6.

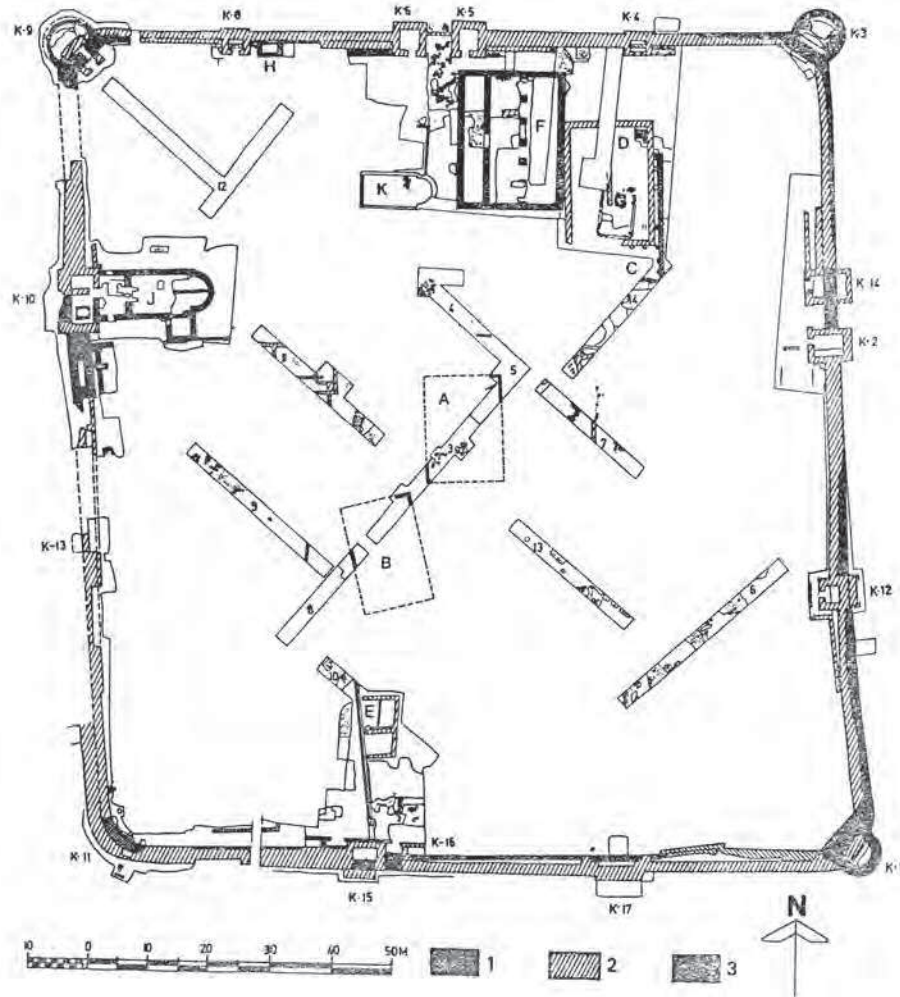
⁵⁵ Popović 1984, 273; Ilić 2006, 226–227.



Fig. 8. *Novae* (Čezava): a. basilica No. 2, view from the NW; b. detail of the basilica No. 1 (documentation of the IAB)



Fig. 9. *Taliata* (Donji Milanovac), site plan (after: Popović 1984, 266, fig. 1)



5.9 m, with an apse on the east, 3.4 m deep. In the west there is a rectangular narthex, 5.8 x 4.3 m. The baptistery in the tower, measuring 8.2 x 3.5 m, is attached to the narthex (Fig. 12).⁵⁶ On the south side, at the eastern end, a 3.3 x 3 m annex was subsequently built, with an entrance from the western side, with a width of 0.75 m. The entrances to the church are 1.2 m wide, on the southern and northern part of the narthex, where there were entrances to the naos and baptistery, through passages 1.65 and 1.25 m wide.

⁵⁶ Popović 1984, T. VII, 3.

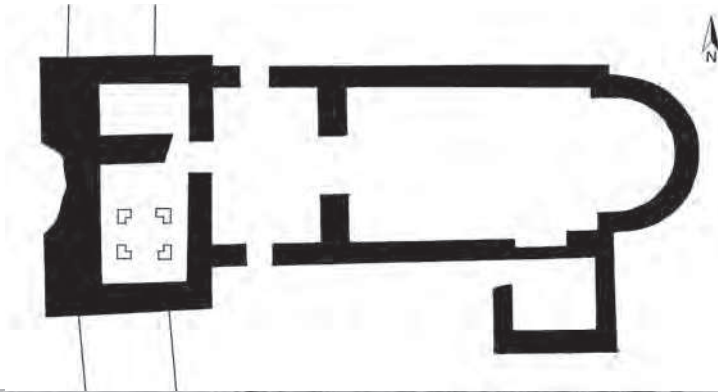


Fig. 10. *Taliata* (Donji Milanovac), Early Christian basilica, ground plan (after: Ilić 2006, fig. 2)



Fig. 11. *Taliata* (Donji Milanovac), Early Christian basilica, NW view (after: Popović 1984, T. VII, 3)

Fig. 12. *Taliata* (Donji Milanovac), the baptistery in the tower (after: Popović 1984, T. VIII, 3)



The church in *Taliata* was built using the *opus mixtum* technique, with brick walls. Researchers discovered two phases of reconstruction, based on differences in the floors and the finishing of the church walls. The older church floor, 30 cm below the younger one, had a mortar base on which Roman bricks of various formats were placed, as well as hexagonal ceramic tiles. For the younger naos floor, large format bricks were used, while standard Early Byzantine bricks were used in other parts of the building.⁵⁷ Extensive use of the space has been documented by the

secondary repair of the floor with stone pieces, or fragmented bricks. The baptistery was positioned on the ground floor in the southern part of the tower.⁵⁸ It had brick paving with a substructure. The piscina has an oval shape and was built from brick and mortar and plastered, with stairs on the east and west side. There were pillars on its corners, and they were most probably bearers of a wooden canopy construction. Two layers of piscine mortar coating have been registered during research.

According to the archaeological findings, it has been concluded that the basilica was built during the time of Justinian's renovation of the *Taliata* fort.⁵⁹ Over time, the fort degraded and low quality reconstructions were performed on some of the buildings inside the fortification, as evidenced in the church, or destroyed, like the large *horreum* whose space was used as a workshop for metal processing.⁶⁰ This fortified settlement in *Taliata*, which was more rural than a real military base, was destroyed during Avaric attacks in 595/6 AD.⁶¹

⁵⁷ Popović 1984, 276, fig. 6.

⁵⁸ On the upper floors the tower might still have defensive and observatory function. Cf. Popović 1984, 280.

⁵⁹ Popović 1984, 280.

⁶⁰ Popović 1984, 280.

⁶¹ Popović 1984, 280. In the Middle Ages, on the area of basilica, the medieval necropolis structured in rows was formed in 11th and 12th century, with a smaller single-nave church in the vicinity of the northern gate of the early Byzantine fortification.

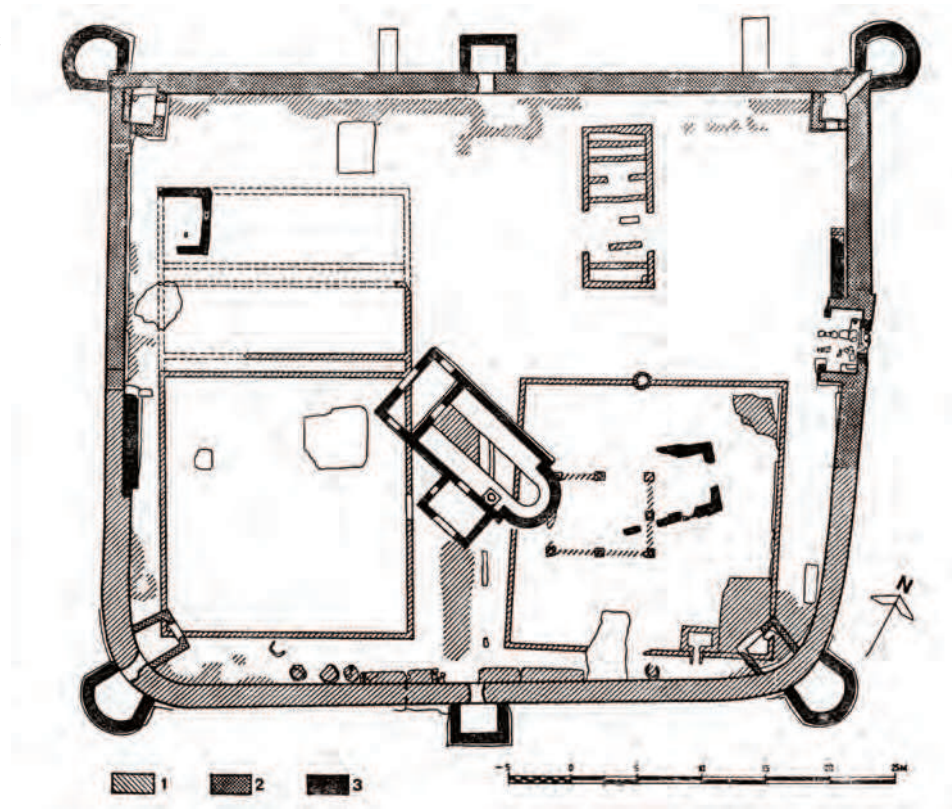


Fig. 13. *Smorna* (Boljetin), aerial view (documentation of the IAB)

Archaeological research in Boljetin, which was identified as the Roman *Smyrna* or *Smorna*, examined the Roman and Early Byzantine fortification, together with a nearby early Roman necropolis (Fig. 13).⁶² Within the Early Byzantine renovation of the fortification in the 6th century (3rd construction period), a parish church was built with inner dimensions of 15 x 5.5 m (Fig. 14, 15). It has an east-west orientation with a 13° deflection in its eastern part toward the south and with its orientation considerably deviating from the fortification's orientation. It is a structure with a naos and a semicircular apse, with a 2 m diameter at its east end

⁶² Zotović 1984, 211–229.

Fig. 14. *Smorna* (Boljetin),
site plan (after: Zotović
1984, fig. 2)



and a rectangular narthex on the west (Fig. 16). On the inner side of the apse there is a masonry bench, 0.90 m wide made of cut stone panels, for priests' seats. In the naos, next to the southern wall, 0.60 m from the eastern end of the wall, there was a cross-shaped baptistery with dimensions of 1.2 x 1 m, built from bricks joined with mortar, and plastered with two layers of mortar (Fig. 17 a, b).⁶³ The first mortar layer was hydrostatic, and the second one was white lime. The floor in the basilica consisted of a sand substruction, a pebble layer and a layer of white lime mortar on which bricks were laid. The narthex on the west side was subsequently built, as was the southern annex. It has doors on the southern and northern wall, each 1.2 m wide and on the west side, 2 m wide. The narthex and naos were connected by doors that were 1.4 m wide. In a later phase, the southern and western doors were walled up. The main entrance to the church was then on the north

⁶³ Ilić 2006, 226.



side, which is the closest to the main communication of the fort, with an east–west direction. The church in Boljetin was built from cut rubble, crushed stone and brick, which was preserved only in one row or as imprints in the mortar.⁶⁴ In a later phase, levelling was performed with a low quality lime.⁶⁵ Partitions of the passages were most probably made at this time. The structure was in a renewed and levelled condition and used for cult purposes during the 13th and 14th century, when a rural necropolis was formed around it.⁶⁶

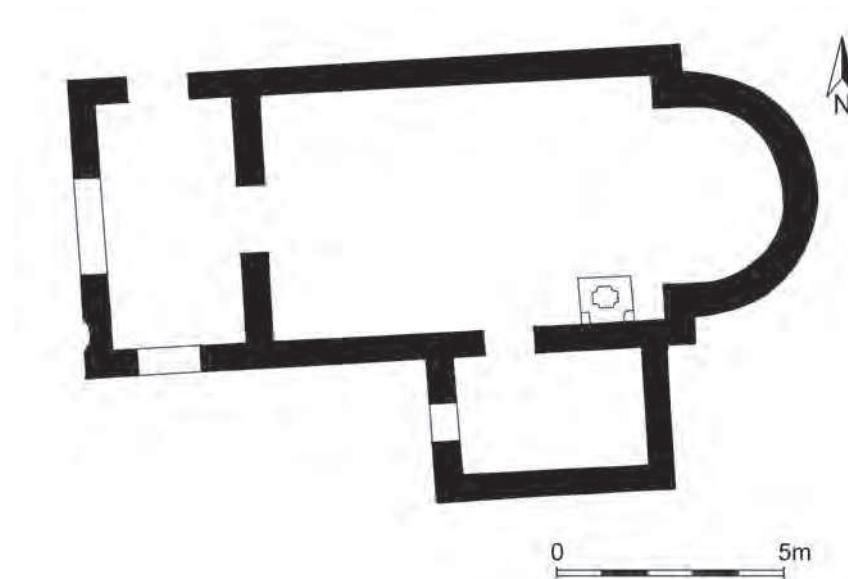
Fig. 15. *Smorna* (Boljentin), Early Christian basilica, view from the East (documentation of the IAB)

64 Zotović 1984, 223.

65 It is possible that the upper, aboveground parts were made of wood, and they collapsed over time. In the second phase, traces of wooden constructions were not recorded. Cf. Zotović 1984, 224.

66 Radičević 2008, 203.

Fig. 16. *Smorna* (Boljentin),
Early Christian basilica,
ground plan (after: Ilić
2006, fig. 1)



Within the Limes fortifications, examples of tower construction have been recorded which, by their shape, orientation and emphasised apse, remind one of Early Christian chapels, and therefore they are mentioned in this paper. They are dated from the 4th to the mid/latter part of the 6th century. In Saldum, the Early Byzantine *castellum*, which was used for the accommodation of auxiliary troops, together with its earlier phases and remains of the previous architecture has been explored (Fig. 18).⁶⁷ Remains of the settlements outside the fortification and necropolis were not covered by protective archaeological research, conducted from 1966–1970. In the interior of the Early Byzantine fortification, architecture made of lightweight materials was registered. The rampart with four towers was built during Justinian's renovation of the Limes.⁶⁸ Three towers have circular plans, while the fourth was built in the form of a chapel, with a rectangular plan and inner dimensions of 5.75 x 4.20 m, with its longer sides parallel to the Danube (Fig. 19).⁶⁹ It ends in the east with a semicircular apse 2.20 m deep (Fig. 20). At the western end, the entrance is 1.30 m wide, with a rectangular anteport (1.30 x 2.25 m). The interior of the room is floored with mortar, with a substructure

⁶⁷ Petrović 1984, 128–134; Jeremić 2009.

⁶⁸ Jeremić 2009, 47.

⁶⁹ Jeremić 2009, 40–42.



Fig. 17. *Smorna* (Boljentin), Early Christian basilica:
a. naos with the baptistery;
b. detail of the baptistery
(documentation of the IAB)



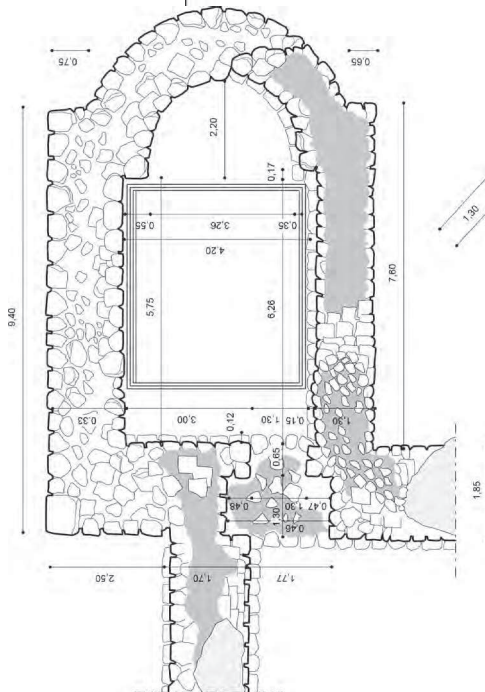
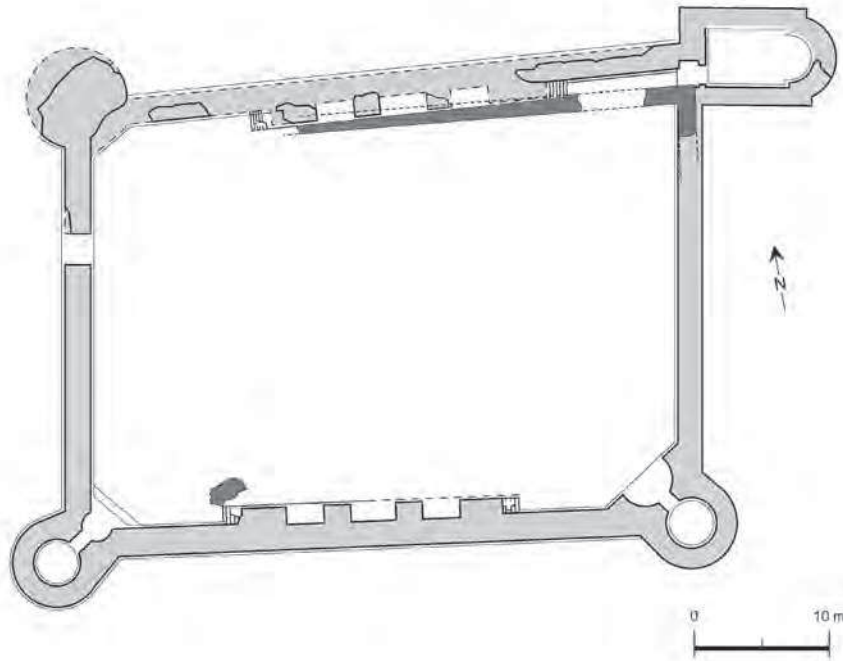
made of pebbles. Due to exposure to the Danube currents, the tower in the form of a chapel was quite damaged at the time of excavation, and the archaeological layers, especially the latest horizon, were destroyed by erosion, so the data on findings was missing. Consequently, a more precise attribution of this space into cult or other purposes is lacking.

A tower of a similar shape was recorded at the fortification in Donje Butorke, near Kladovo. At the time of Justinian I, a fortification with circular towers on the corners was built (Fig. 21). In the middle of the south-eastern rampart, at the location of the walkway extension, a structure was built – a tower of a rectangular plan with an apse with its shoulders on the eastern end (Fig. 22). The orientation of the tower deviates slightly from the orientation of the ramparts and is turned more towards the east. The tower is 5.5 x 3.2 m in size, with a trapezoidal anteport in-

Fig. 18. Saldum, ground plan of the castellum (after: Jeremić 2009, fig. 19)

Fig. 19. Saldum, NE tower, ground plan (after: Jeremić 2009, fig. 28, a)

Fig. 20. Saldum, NE tower, photo (after: Jeremić 2009, fig. 27, b)



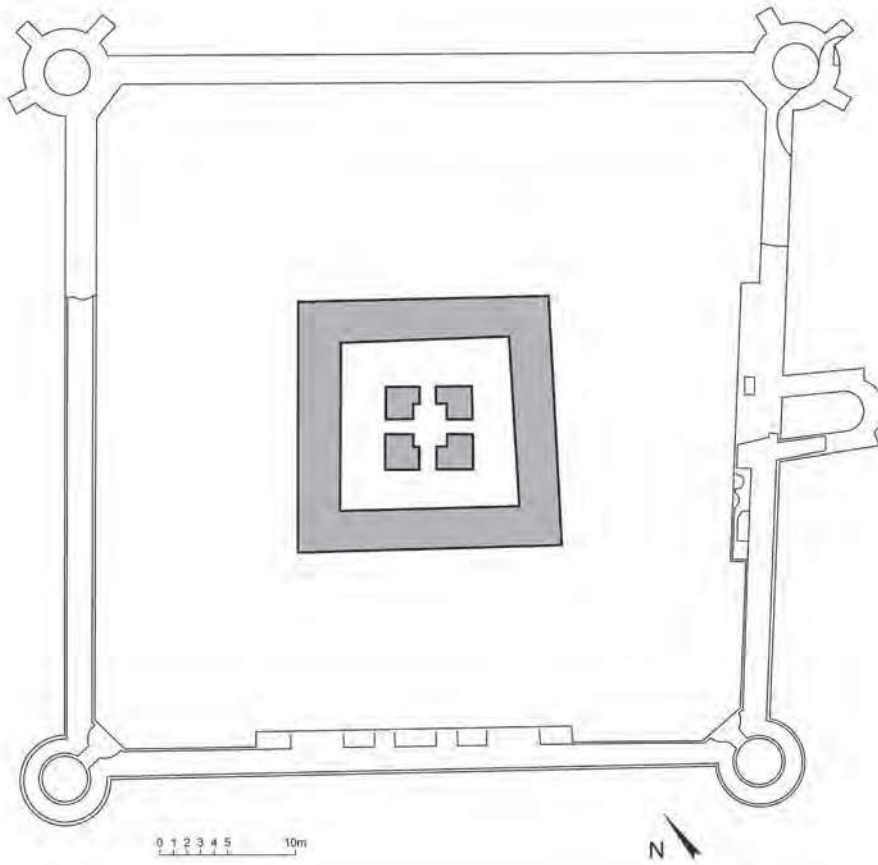


Fig. 21. Donje Butorke, ground plan of the fortification (after: Jeremić 2007, fig. 3, 4)

Fig. 22. Donje Butorke, Eastern tower with an apse (after: Cermanović-Kuzmanović 1979, T. III, 3)



corporated into the lower floor of the walkway.⁷⁰ The entrance to the tower and the tower itself were arched. It is possible that there was also a floor, which could have had an observation function, as in the case of the tower in *Taliata*. In its final form, the tower in Donje Butorke is in the shape of a chapel, most likely realised in the second phase of construction, in the middle or in the second half of the 6th century.⁷¹

The remains of a fort for the accommodation of cohorts in Karataš, with its associated settlement and necropolis, have been identified as the Roman settlement of *Diana* (Fig. 23).⁷² The site is about 300 m downstream of HPP Đerdap I and is situated on the bank of the Danube. Research has determined the main stages of the construction of the fortification that was first made of earth, and afterwards of stone fortification, to periods from the 1st to the end of the 6th century. Apart from the ramparts and buildings in the interior, parts of the necropolis were examined, and a tomb (crypt) was accidentally discovered on the bank of the Danube (*cf. infra*). The fort plan from the 4th century has also attracted the attention of researchers (Fig. 24). A rampart from the 4th century was built on the line of a *vallum* from the oldest phase. On the centre of the western rampart, a projected tower with an antefort was placed, flanked by two side niches. The peculiarity of these niches is their shape, they are semicircular from the outside, as are the towers of the eastern and southern rampart, while in the interior both have apses with shoulders, thus making the shape of the chapel, which in a military tactical sense had less of a clear view than circular towers, which allowed visibility from all sides (Fig. 25).⁷³

BURIAL OF CHRISTIANS ON THE LIMES

In the necropolises along the Limes not many burials with distinctive Christian features have been recorded, mostly due to areas being inaccessible for exploration and due to the small volume of conducted archaeological works. Although Christians were the dominant political and economic group in the Late Antiquity

70 Cermanović–Kuzmanović 1979, 129; Kondić 1984, 146.

71 Jeremić 2009, 47.

72 Kondić 1987, 43–44.

73 Rankov 1980, 53–60; Rankov 1984, 7–10; Rankov 1987, 5–7; Kondić 1996, 81–83.

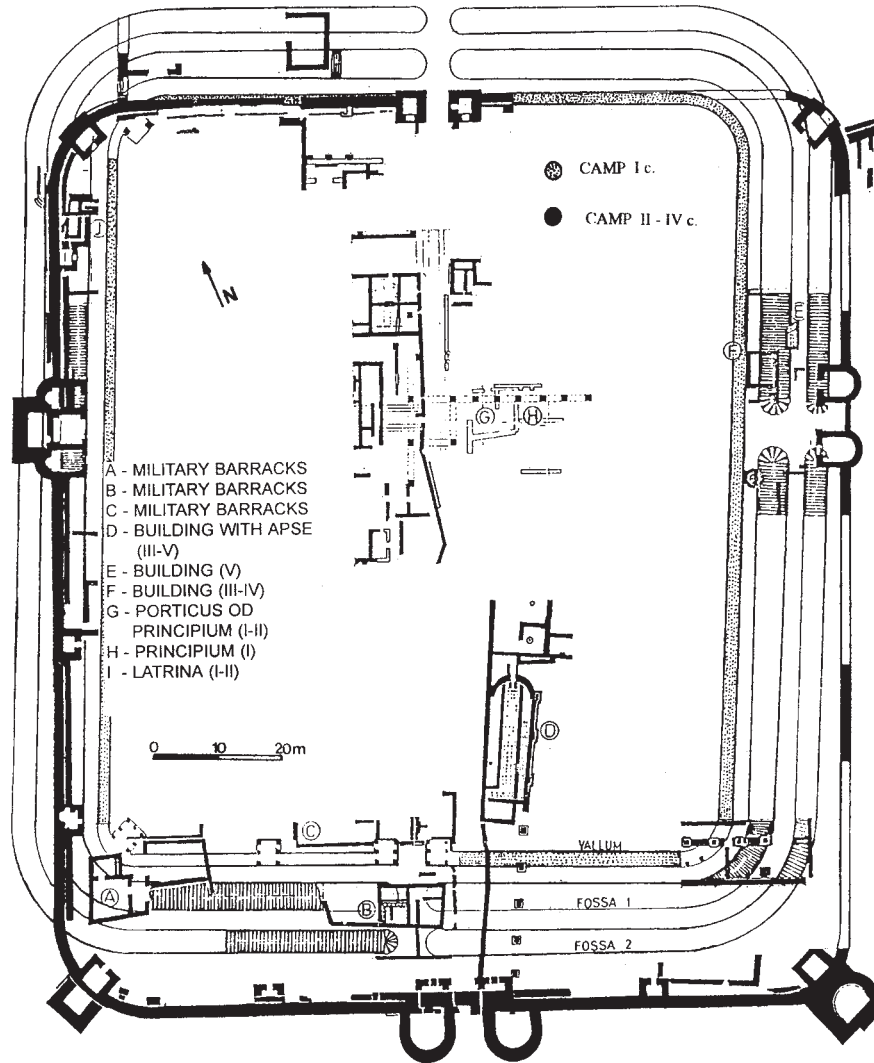


Fig. 23. *Diana* (Karataš), aerial view (documentation of the IAB)

period, Christian elements in a funeral cult can mostly be seen through artistically painted tombs, relief decoration of stone or lead sarcophagi and, most rarely, through architectural units devoted to the martyr cult.⁷⁴ Early Christians were

⁷⁴ On the other hand, we have little data on Christian burials because of the inequality of the research. In *Singidunum*, at the site of the Late Antique necropolises, modern city quarters are spread, so data was obtained mostly during protective works in a smaller, limited range. *Margum* is insufficiently explored, it is situated on free areas that are partly devastated by the river's current, while the most extensive research efforts are performed in *Viminacium* in areas endangered by the con-

Fig. 24. *Diana* (Karataš), site plan (after: Kondić 1996, 82, fig. 1)



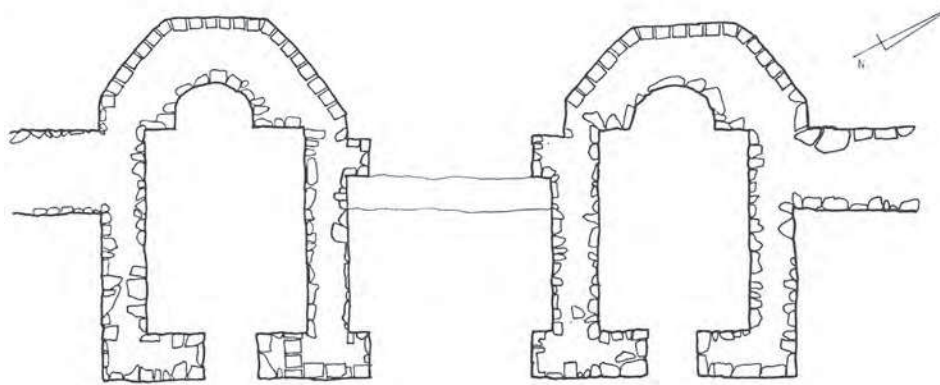
buried together in necropolises with late pagans, without a clear separation of grave areas, and this is confirmed at the *Viminacium* necropolises.⁷⁵ Researchers

struction of PP Kostolac. However, here it is difficult to distinguish the early Christian burials due to the small number of personal piety objects or undoubtedly Christian symbols in the tombs or grave architecture. The necropolises were formed on the wider territory of *Singidunum* in Višnjica and Brestovik, and downstream in Tekija, *Diana* and Vajuga.

⁷⁵ Zotović 1986, 53; *Eadem* 2000, 15.



Fig. 25. *Diana* (Karataš), Western gate: a. groundplan (after: Rankov 1987, fig. 1, 2, 6, 8)



have explained this by the lack of clear boundaries between pagan and Christian views of the afterlife during the 4th century,⁷⁶ although it could also be due to the continuance of traditional rituals and methods of burial, which were deeply rooted in the population, and were difficult and gradual to change.⁷⁷ Tertullian had

76 Zotović 2000, 15–16.

77 Jeremić 2014, 52–53.

Fig. 25. *Diana* (Karataš),
Western gate: b. northern
tower; c. southern tower
(after: Rankov 1987, fig. 1,
2, 6, 8)

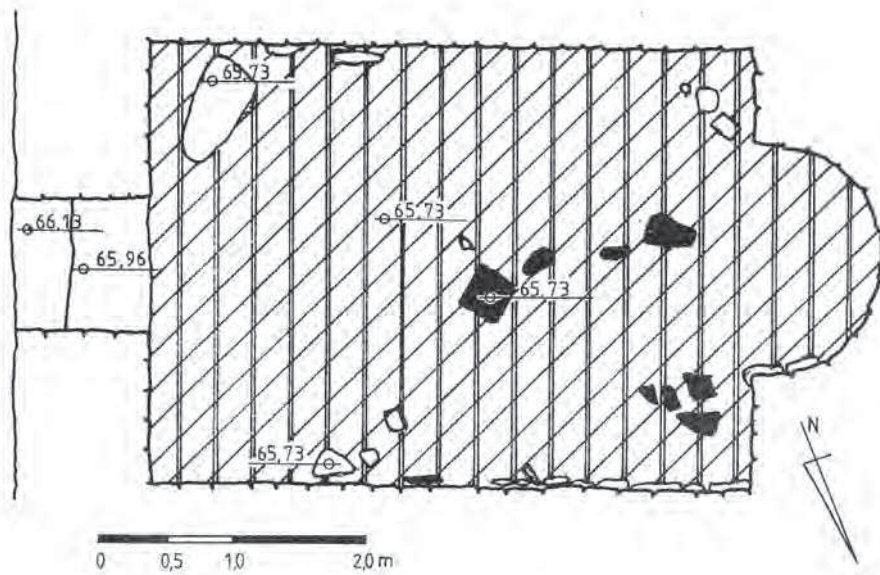




Fig. 26. *Singidunum* (Belgrade), the Jonah sarcophagus (documentation of the IAB)

already noticed that *Christians* are made, *not born*, and that new Christians grew up as Romans, who maintained the cultural, social and political views they grew up with.⁷⁸ It is also difficult to identify burials as Christian in the cases of grave findings which were without grave goods and inventory. This can be interpreted both as the burial of poor class members, but also as a respect for the strict Christian practice of rejecting luxury.

In *Singidunum*, Christian burials have been confirmed in research of the south-east urban necropolis (Fig. 1, b). Reliable confirmations of burials of the Christian population were available there, such as the remains of the deceased being laid down in a stone sarcophagus with the biblical scene of the Jonah tribulation, and lead sarcophagi decorated with Christian symbols. All quoted findings are generally defined to the 4th century. In 1885, in the centre of Belgrade on the corner of Kapetan Mišina and Jovanova Street, during earth works, a sarcophagus measuring 2.18 x 0.98 x 0.74 m, made of limestone with a lid in the form of a four pitched roof was discovered (Fig. 26).⁷⁹ The sarcophagus was decorated with Noric-Pannonian scrolls, and was reused for new burials, most probably in the mid or the second half of the 4th century, when new customers required the addition of the presentation of popular Christian scenes on it.⁸⁰ On the front side of the sarcophagus, a relief figure

78 Drake 2016, 2.

79 Valtrović 1886, 70; Idem 1891, 142.

80 Pilipović, Milanović 2016, 220.

scene was presented, quite unskillfully executed (Fig. 27). The narration takes place through a series of various episodes, with scenes from the Old Testament, about the suffering and repentance of the prophet Jonah, with the action taking place from the right-hand side of the observer to the left. The story begins with the display of a ship with full sails, with a mast in the form of a cross and the naked figure of Jonah, who leaps into a restless sea full of sea monsters. The exit from temptation is represented by his appearance from the jaws of a sea monster, with his arms spread to the Good Shepherd, the Saviour of the soul. Behind the rescued Jonah is a tree with fruits and birds in the branches, symbols of life in paradise. Presentations with Jonah were popular in the Constantinian and *post-Constantinian time*, and the cult of martyrs and faith in salvation played an important role in the religious life of *Singidunum*.⁸¹ This is also supported by a reduced relief depiction of a fish and gourd on the bottom of the lead vessel, which can be brought into a connection with this biblical personality.⁸² Jonah symbolises a person who is full of doubt and wandering, but who, through temptation and redemption, finds the path to salvation. Like a sheep, he returns to the flock of the Good Shepherd, the one who cares for Christian souls.⁸³

Burials in the lead sarcophagi are considered luxurious among the *Singidunum* Christian population. Out of seven registered sarcophagi,⁸⁴ from the area of the southeast necropolis of the 3rd and 4th century, only with one specimen is it possible to assume that it was a Christian burial, of a child in a sarcophagus with a length of 1.07 m (Fig. 28).⁸⁵ The lid of the sarcophagus was decorated with three crossed lines, among which are crosses in relief whose arms end in arrowheads. The sarcophagus was dated to the first decades of the 4th century⁸⁶ and it has closer analogies in two sarcophagi from *Viminacium*, discovered at the beginning of the 20th century⁸⁷ during rescue excavations of the southern necropolis.⁸⁸

81 Pilipović, Milanović 2016, 222–224.

82 About this topic M. Vujović prepares the paper.

83 About the Good Shepherd in the paper of O. Ilić and G. Jeremić, in this Collection.

84 Pop–Lazić 2002, 83; Crnobrnja 2003, 314, sl. 1.

85 Crnobrnja 2003, 314; Milovanović 2017, 270, cat. 377a.

86 Crnobrnja 2003, 315.

87 Vulić 1909, 133. It is possible that it is the same specimen that Milovanović published as an accidental find. Cf. Milovanović 2017, 270, cat. 377.

88 Golubović 2002, 631, fig. 8, 9.



Fig. 27. *Singidunum* (Belgrade), the Jonah sarcophagus, detail (documentation of the IAB)

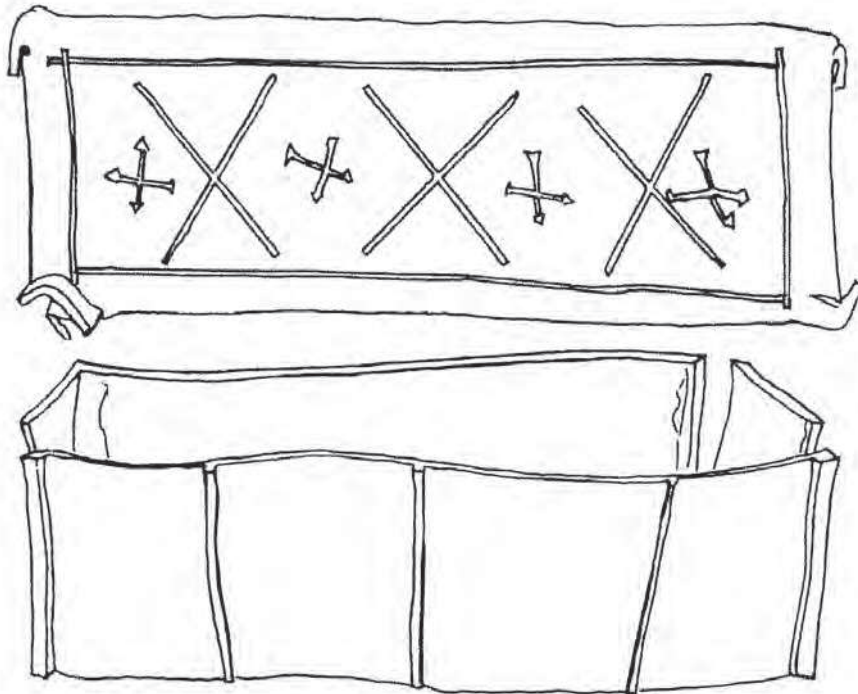


Fig. 28. *Singidunum* (Belgrade), Early Christian lead sarcophagus (after: Crnobrajka 2003, fig. 2)

Very little is known about the *Margum* population and their funeral customs at the Early Christian time. The epigraphic evidence does not provide information about the Christian epoch,⁸⁹ while the methods of burial are known on the basis of a small amount of protective research. In the course of excavation in the area of the south-eastern city necropolis formed along the road to *Viminacium*, a small

⁸⁹ Mirković 1986, 213–217.

number of graves from the Late Antiquity period were found. A semicircular vaulted tomb, which was well built, without a dromos, and with fresco decoration, is distinguished among the others (Fig. 29).⁹⁰ All sides of the tomb had fields divided, by a red-coloured cross, into four parts. The lower zones were additionally divided into panels of imitation marble.⁹¹ The tomb was most probably painted during the 4th century, not necessarily at the beginning of the century. Among the analogues there are well dated fresco-painted buildings with an imitation marble overlay from a villa with peristyle in *Mediana*, from the middle of the 4th century,⁹² and a presentation on a plinth in the semi-circled vaulted tomb in *Naissus*, from the ninth decade of the 4th century (a tomb with Christ's monogram).⁹³

The research of the *Viminacium* necropolises that has taken place since the end of the 19th century and intensively since the 1970s, has yielded data regarding about 14,000 individual or collective burials from the Antiquity and Late Antiquity periods. The necropolises of the late antique *Viminacium* developed south from the legionary fort and fortified city at the sites of Pećine and Više Burdelja (Fig. 2). Originating from this area are the largest number of Christian monuments, mausoleums, painted tombs, lead sarcophagi, epigraphic monuments and movable finds that come with Christian symbols.

Christian tombstone inscriptions from *Viminacium* are very rare (Fig. 5, b–d). Two marble tombstones, which today are missing, were found at the beginning of the 20th century. Their conditions of finding are unknown. They are 2 and 4 cm thick, and they were most probably used as a tomb cover in some mausoleum or cemetery basilica.⁹⁴ For a funerary inscription in one grave from the necropolis in Pećine, a square brick with dimensions of 41 x 41 x 5 cm was used.⁹⁵

On these three inscriptions the names of two deceased females and one male were mentioned. *Marina, honesta femina* lived 30 years with her husband *Publi-*

90 Jovanović, Cunjak 1994, 118–119, fig. 13.

91 Researchers dated the tomb to the end of 3rd and the beginning of 4th century, based on the assumption that the presentation of a cross is not clearly presented and therefore originated during the period of persecution of Christianity in the time of the Tetrarchy. Cf. Jovanović, Cunjak 1994, 119.

92 Archaeological research showed that the decoration of the villa with peristyle (frescoes, mosaics, sculptures) was performed simultaneously, in about the mid 4th century. Cf. Jeremić 2006, 140.

93 Jeremić 2014, 46–49.

94 Mirković 1986, no. 217, no. 219, with older literature.

95 Mirković 1986, no. 218

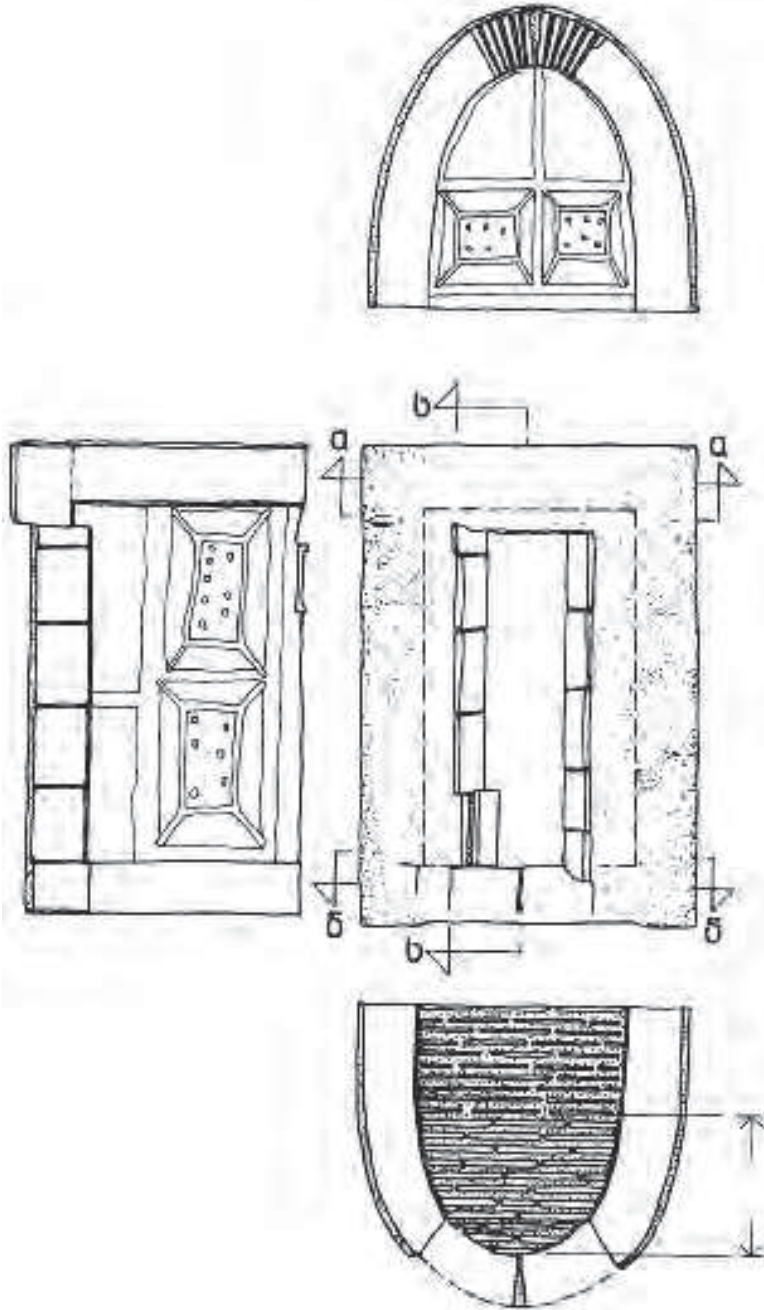


Fig. 29. *Margum* (Dubravica), painted tomb (after: Jovanović, Cunjak 1994, fig. 13)

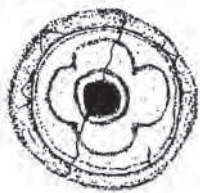
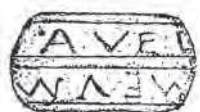


Fig. 30. *Viminacium* (Stari Kostolac), clay spindle whorle with an inscription, a. photo; b. drawing (documentation of the IAB)

us *Licinius Constanciolus* (*P. Licinius Cosanciolus*),⁹⁶ the other deceased woman, whose name has not been completely deciphered – SIIHA, was a widow (*bidua*), who lived for 45 years or, according to another interpretation, outlived her husband by 14 years (the inscription in this part is insufficiently clear). The third inscription refers to the funeral of a *Valerius*, to whom the foster parents (*nutritores*), who loved this boy very much, built a monument.⁹⁷

To the Christian circle of funereal practice objects belongs a find that was laid next to a deceased woman buried in a tomb at the Pećine necropolis. The object is in the shape of a biconical spindle whorl made of baked clay with a central vertical perforation, decorated with four petals (Fig. 30, a–b). The inscription, in Latin in two rows facing each other, reads: *Ave domina / Lumen meum*, and this is common among inscriptions of the Christian world.⁹⁸

A small number of grave units reliably defined as burials of Christian believers have been found in *Viminacium*. These are finds of one masonry tomb with a fresco painting, three lead sarcophagi and three children's graves, oriented in a north–south direction, with findings of a Christian content.⁹⁹ In a tomb with a west–east orientation, built from bricks and mortar, with a trapezoidal shape and, at the moment of discovery, a destroyed cover, and with a fresco painted interior, three men aged about 40 were buried, together with a woman of about 20.¹⁰⁰ Based on the coin finds, the tomb is dated to the third or fourth decade of the 4th century.¹⁰¹ This is, for the time being, the only one of the 28 discovered fresco-painted graves and tombs that can be classified as Christian, because of the representation of a Christogram on the western wall (Fig. 31) and complex figural scenes on other walls, which could have deeper allegorical and religious meanings.¹⁰² On the eastern wall, the source of life is symbolically presented in the form of a kantharos (*aqua vitae*), surrounded with trees of life (*arbores vitae*)

96 Mirković 1986, no. 217.

97 Mirković 1986, no. 219.

98 Mirković 1986, no. 224; Documentation of the Institute of Archaeology, Belgrade, Project *Viminacium*, field inv. no. 2637, grave no. G-732/1981.

99 Zotović 1994, 60–66.

100 Necropolis of Pećine, grave G-5517. Zotović 1994, 64.

101 Spasić-Đurić 2015, 115.

102 Korać 1995, 172–173; Idem 2007, 33–43;



Fig. 31. *Viminacium*, Early Christian tomb, western wall (after: Korać 2007)

and two antithetically positioned peacocks that together symbolise the eternal life in paradise (*pax aeterna in paradisum*), but also participation in the Eucharist.¹⁰³ On the north side there is a scene (*venatio*) in which a rider on a horse in gallop is moving to the right, closely followed by a lion with open jaws jumping toward him. The rider is here presented as a victim who, despite the weapons in his hand, does not enter into battle with the beast. However, on the south wall of the tomb, the venator faces danger face to face, accompanied by a hunting dog, confronting a leopard directed towards him. In the world of good fighting evil, he decides to oppose the forces of evil, for which he will receive eternal bliss as a reward.

Christians from the wealthier city classes of *Viminacium* buried their dead during the 4th century in lead sarcophagi.¹⁰⁴ Research has recorded five sarcophagi

103 Korać 2007, 44–47; Spasić–Đurić 2015, 116.

104 During explorations of the necropolises in the last 30 years, over 20 lead sarcophagi have been

that have Christian symbols on the lids or sides, as well as two ossuaries, which could be treated as Christian receptacles. The sarcophagi were laid out in luxurious family tombs, individual masonry structures or directly placed in the ground. It is assumed that they were made in one of the local workshops, under the influence of Syrian masters or their motifs, possibly as the orders of Oriental customers.¹⁰⁵ Lead ore in the Late Antiquity period was very accessible in this market, thanks to the vicinity and activity of the mines in *Moesia Prima* and the surrounding areas (*res metallica*), among which the centres of exploitation on the mountains of Deli Jovan, Avala and Kosmaj near *Singidunum*, and also on Rudnik are particularly significant. Most often, in lead sarcophagi, children or younger women were buried in luxury clothing, often decorated with gold embroidery, which would oppose the recommendations of the fathers of the church for nurturing Christian modesty.

Burial in a lead sarcophagus was registered at the necropolis of Antique *Vinceia*, today's Smederevo, at the site of Ćirilovac. On this site F. Kanitz registered the remains of a Roman fort and settlement.¹⁰⁶ In earthworks in the vicinity of the site, part of the necropolis was found in which a lead sarcophagus with a figural scene and inscription was registered (Fig. 32).¹⁰⁷ The relief presentation on the lid, made by casting, contains a depiction of the Christogram made of a series of triangles in whose centre was a deltoid with an equal-armed cross. In the upper part, on each corner, is a human head with an unskilfully and oversized wreath depicted, as well as another one in the lower part of the cross at the point of the intersection of the arms. Depictions of three characters have been interpreted as Dionysius masks, here presented in symbiosis with the Christian belief in resurrection after death.¹⁰⁸ The engraved inscription reveals the name of a deceased woman: *Aur+eli(ae) Salleliae f(iliae) c(arissimae)*.¹⁰⁹

One of the most significant grave units discovered in the Middle Danube area is the finding of a crypt in Karataš–*Diana* (Fig. 33). The building is located north

found, out of which almost third was decorated with different motifs. Cf. Golubović 2001, 139; Milovanović 2017, 269–278.

105 Golubović 2002, 629–630.

106 Kanitz 1904, 153–154.

107 Cunjak, Marković–Nikolić 1997, 37.

108 Cunjak, Marković–Nikolić 1997, 39.

109 Cunjak, Marković–Nikolić 1997, 41.

of the gate of the *porta principalis sinistra* fort, on the axis of the main road of the camp, on the Danube slope towards the port, taking a position that is visible both from the fort and the Danube banks. It is a crypt with an aboveground structure, with a rectangular plan and dimensions of 8.2 x 6.7 m (Fig. 34), and with a dromos on the eastern side.¹¹⁰ The underground part of the structure is divided into two rooms with five vaulted *arcosolia*, in which the funerals were carried out (Fig. 35). The structure was built from stone and mortar, with bedding courses made of bricks that were also used for vaulted constructions and pillars (Fig. 36), while the floor was paved with bricks. In debris of the western room, a marble *transenna* relief was found with a crossed bands motif made in relief (Fig. 37, a, b). A close parallel for it is found in the Christian architecture of the 4th – 6th century, in marble *transennae* from *Naissus* and *Sirmium*, on the base of the Obelisk of Theodosius in Constantinople, as well as on a painted railing of paradise on a tomb in *Naissus*.¹¹¹ According to the method of construction, the crypt has similarities with mausoleums explored in the area of the eastern necropolis in *Naissus*, in Jagodin Mala, as well as with a crypt within the

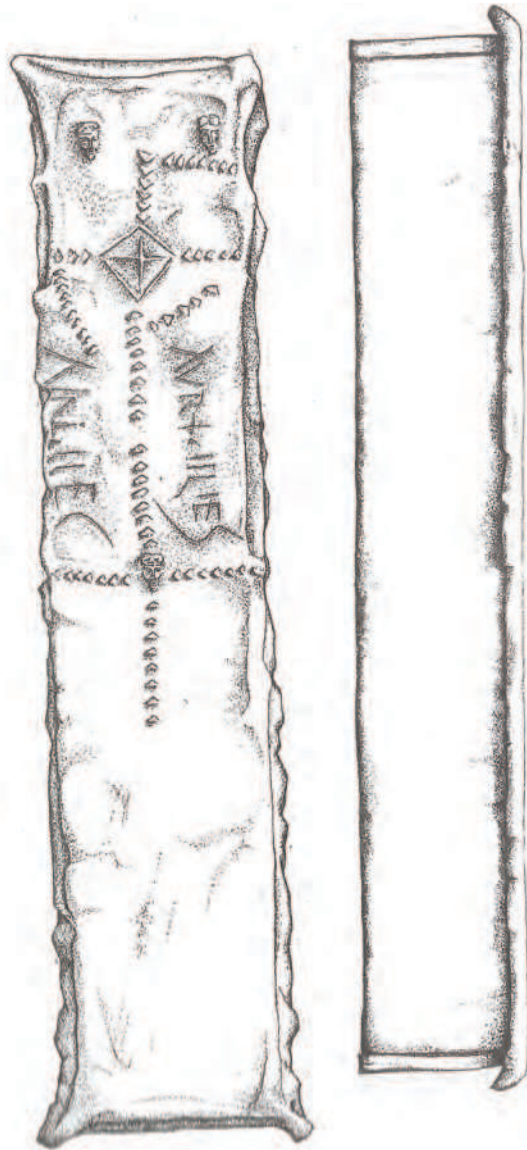
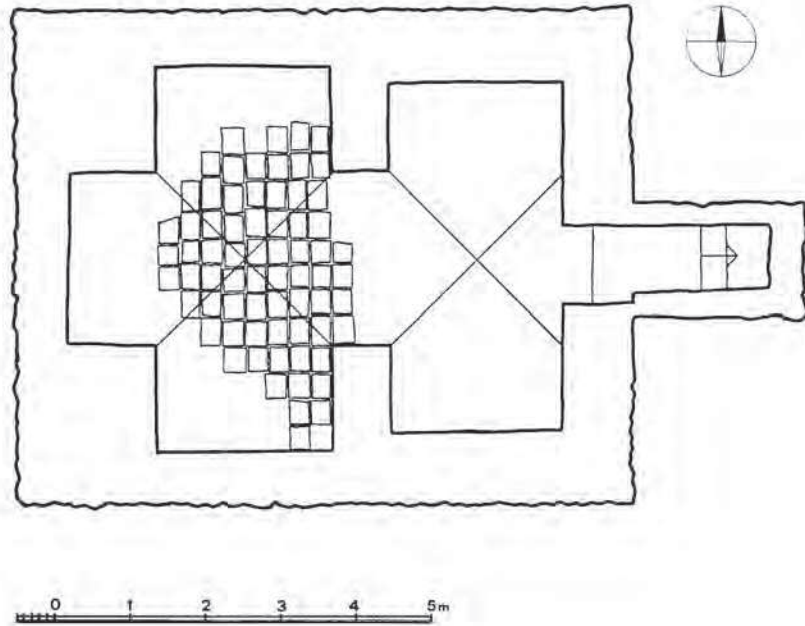


Fig. 32. *Vinceia* (Smederevo), lead sarcophagus (after: Cunjak, Marković-Nikolić 1997, T. I)

¹¹⁰ Milošević 2013, 238.

¹¹¹ Nikolajević 1978, 684–686.

Fig. 34. *Diana* (Karataš), the crypt, ground plan (after: Nikolajević 1978, fig. 7)



complex with a cemetery basilica at the same site.¹¹² In the building, dislocated remains of several deceased were found, one of which had a cross-shaped fibula, indicating a military funeral, possibly of a person based in this fortification. The crypt was dated to the second half of the 4th century.¹¹³

The deep changes that affected the Middle Danube areas, which included numerous administrative, military, social and economic reforms, contributed to the creation of a specific social climate in which the Late Antiquity society was developing. The beginning of the Late Antiquity was marked by numerous stratifications, which were particularly noticeable in terms of the confession of different religions. Christianity, as an up and coming religion with a very diverse organisa-

¹¹² Jeremić 2014, 19–22, 34–35.

¹¹³ Milošević 2013, 239. The author, on the basis of analogies in the form and method of construction with the crypt from Naissus, considers that it is a martyrium, even though there is neither, in hagiography, the name of the martyr who died or was buried in Diana, nor any epigraphic evidence. Cf. Milošević 2013, loc. cit.

tion that functioned well in the coastal towns, gradually established itself in the Danube area, with resistance particularly shown by the military emperors of the Tetrarchy period. Great brutality in the suppression of the freedom of Christian followers was shown by the emperors Diocletian and Galerius, especially in the cities along the Danube, where the largest number of members of the army and the priesthood perished for the faith of Christ.

In the first half of the 4th century, Episcopates were organised in the larger cities of the Danube area (*Singidunum*, *Margum*, *Viminacium* and *Aquae*), however, the remains of basilicas in which bishops had their seats and ministered, have not been reliably localised to date. It is only from the later periods that we know of the existence of the foundation remains of smaller parish churches that rose during Justinian's restoration of the Limes in less urbanised environments. These buildings probably served liturgical purposes not only for the fortifications' troops, but also for civilian communities in those places.

In a survey of necropolises and individual graves and tombs, only a small number can be identified as indisputably Christian deceased resting places. Those were burials in stone (with presentations of Jonah) and lead sarcopha-



Fig. 33. *Diana* (Karataš), the crypt, view from the east (documentation of the IAB)



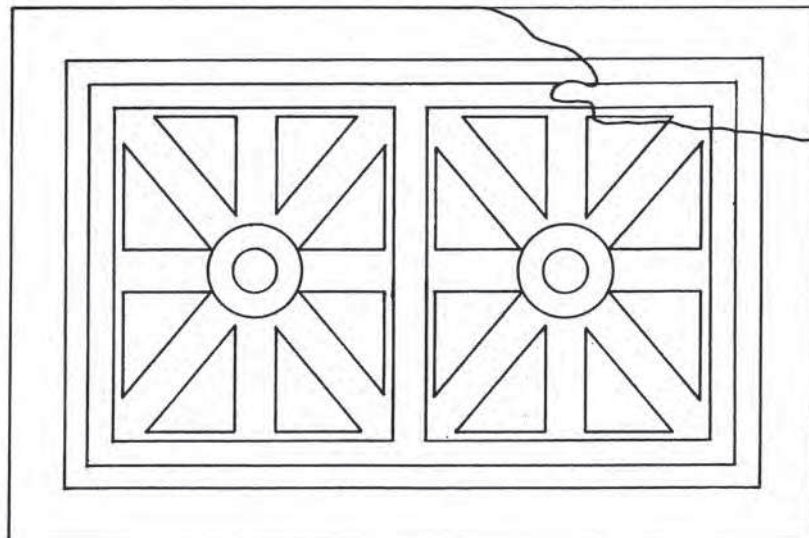
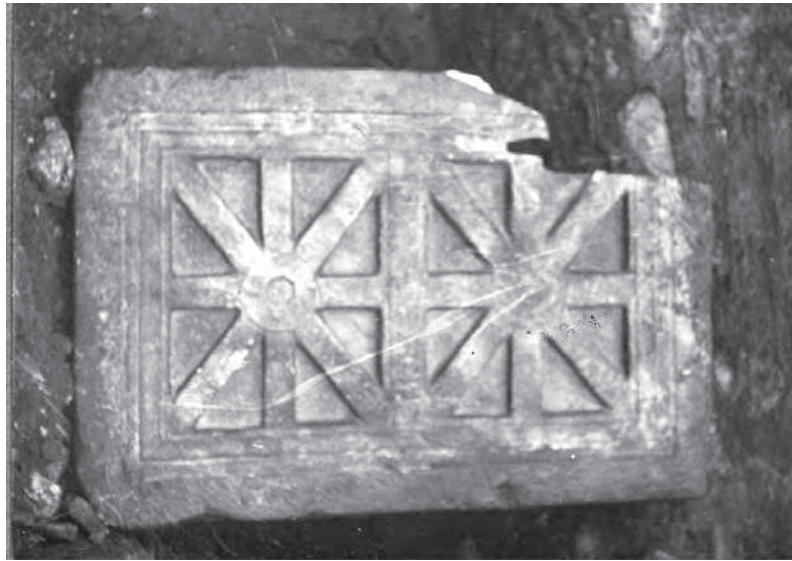
Fig. 35. *Diana* (Karataš), the crypt, detail of an arcosolium (documentation of the IAB)



Fig. 36. *Diana* (Karataš), the crypt, detail of a pillar (documentation of the IAB)

gi (with crosses and Christian inscriptions), graves with Christian inscriptions, or masonry graves and tombs with depictions of Christian content and symbolism. Although meagre and heterogeneous, the finds from this section of the Limes speak of the methods of the spread and acceptance of Christianity, which played an important role in the functioning and preservation of society in areas exposed to constant attacks on the edges of the Roman world.

Fig. 37. *Diana* (Karataš),
the crypt, a
marble transenna:
a. photo,
b. drawing
(documentation
of the IAB)



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