



# ATTILA'S EUROPE?

STRUCTURAL TRANSFORMATION AND  
STRATEGIES OF SUCCESS IN THE EUROPEAN  
HUN PERIOD



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## STRUCTURAL TRANSFORMATION AND STRATEGIES OF SUCCESS IN THE EUROPEAN HUN PERIOD

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Edited by Zsófia Rácz and Gergely Szenthe



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# CONSEQUENCES OF HUNNIC RAIDS AND THE NEWLY-ESTABLISHED BORDER: AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL PANORAMA OF THE CENTRAL BALKANS (CA. 450–500)

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**ABSTRACT:** According to Priscus, in 447 the Roman Empire and the Huns agreed to move their border away from the Danube, to a distance of five days' journey from this river to the vicinity of Naissus. Yet, already in the next year Attila himself suggested that the border should be shifted back to the Danube. The death of this legendary Hunnic leader in 453 was soon followed by the collapse of their empire, but at least the northern parts of the Central Balkans remained out of Roman reach. Unlike those of earlier or later dates, Germanic finds from the second half of the 5<sup>th</sup> century belonged to the ruling people and not to foederati. Together with them, this paper will bring together the Roman finds from the second half of the 5<sup>th</sup> century, mostly numismatic, to investigate their spatial distribution. These finds provide a glimpse into the Eastern Gothic strategy in these parts and an overview of the Roman strongholds upon which the 6<sup>th</sup>-century reconquista could have rested.

**KEYWORDS:** Hunnic incursions, Gothic rule, Roman persistence, Central Balkans, ca. 450–500 AD

## MIGRATION-PERIOD EVIDENCE

From the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> and throughout the 5<sup>th</sup> century, Northern Illyricum underwent radical political, economic and social changes. The processes sparked by the movements of the Goths culminated with Hunnic incursions of 441 and 443.<sup>1</sup> The crisis, marked by the decrease in monetary circulation from the late 4<sup>th</sup> century onwards, became even more evident in the second half of the 5<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>2</sup> The fall of the Middle Danube limes is attested to not only by the written sources of the period<sup>3</sup> and the hoards of gold and bronze coins;<sup>4</sup> archaeology reveals that in the declining cities along the former frontier new, Migration-period cemeteries emerged,<sup>5</sup> while wealthy Balkan hinterlands – or at least their northern parts – saw the vanishing of large agricultural estates, villas and villages and the termination of mining activities.<sup>6</sup>

On the other hand, it is not only that the Central Balkan archaeological record does not include princely graves<sup>7</sup> and iconic Hunnic finds such as the metallic cauldrons<sup>8</sup> or gilded saddle plates;<sup>9</sup> not a single piece of our evidence may be ascribed to them without serious reservations.<sup>10</sup> From this period we can rather recognise traces of their Germanic allies' presence. The elaborate published grave 2/2006 from the Singidunum IV cemetery, dating from the time of Attila's Balkan operations, should be mentioned here. Producing a variety of weapons, most of them broken, it has been dated to the later stages of the D2 phase (420/430–450) and attributed to an elite warrior who might have come to Singidunum from the Tisza region.<sup>11</sup> A grave from Markovac in the Velika Morava valley, between Margum and Horreum Margi, contained a golden torque and a silver belt buckle.<sup>12</sup> A very similar torque comes from the famous Untersiebenbrunn 'male' grave, after which the D2 phase (380/400–440/450) was named,<sup>13</sup> and such buckles with elongated, narrow plates are known from a Hunnic grave in Beljaus, Crimea.<sup>14</sup> A general problem in establishing more narrowly dated horizons – those preceding and post-dating Hunnic raids – is that the chronology of grave goods often embraces both the Hunnic and post-Hunnic periods (D2/D3 phase = 430/440–460/470). For example, out of a total of 149 Migration-period graves at the Viminacium I and II cemeteries, only two burials have been dated to D1 and D2 phases, and some 35 to the mid-5<sup>th</sup> century (D2/D3 phase).<sup>15</sup> From the period slightly pre-dating the collapse, I would like to briefly comment on several finds from Timacum Minus. Graves 27, 97 and 123, all containing arrowheads and two of them characteristic 5<sup>th</sup>-century bronze belt buckles, have been erroneously dated to an earlier period.<sup>16</sup> The buckle from grave 123 in itself can be dated to the middle or the second half of the 5<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>17</sup> and that from grave 27, similar to the buckle from grave 2/2006 at Singidunum IV but much simpler, to the D2 phase,<sup>18</sup> or perhaps to the first half or the middle of the 5<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>19</sup>

According to Priscus, in 447 the Empire and the Huns agreed to move their border away from the Danube, i.e. its section stretching from Pannonia to Novae, to a distance of five days' journey from this river to the vicinity of Naissus, where a market-place was to be established. Dacia Ripensis and parts of three other Balkan provinces ended up in Hunnic hands, but this was not to last for long. While the Roman diplomats tried to mitigate the peace terms, already in the next year Attila himself suggested

- 1 IVANIŠEVIĆ–BUGARSKI 2018, 91.
- 2 IVANIŠEVIĆ–STAMENKOVIĆ 2011, 757; IVANIŠEVIĆ 2015, 654–656, Figs 2–3.
- 3 PRISCUS, frag. 2.280,11–14, 280,20–281,6, 8.302,14–21.
- 4 RADIĆ–IVANIŠEVIĆ 2006, 56; cf. VASIĆ 2008, 119–120.
- 5 IVANIŠEVIĆ–BUGARSKI 2018.
- 6 IVANIŠEVIĆ 2015, 659.
- 7 Cf. ISTVANOVITS–KULCSAR 2006.
- 8 Cf. MASEK 2017.
- 9 E.g. ISTVÁNOVITS–KULCSÁR 2014.
- 10 Cf. IVANIŠEVIĆ–KAZANSKI 2014, 137.
- 11 IVANIŠEVIĆ–KAZANSKI 2009.
- 12 POPOVIĆ 2001, 234, Fig. 25; IVANIŠEVIĆ–KAZANSKI 2014, 137, Fig. 4; IVANIŠEVIĆ 2015, 661, Fig. 7.
- 13 KAZANSKI 1999, 293–294, Fig. 7/6.
- 14 AJBABIN 2011, 66, Abb. 27/3, 4.
- 15 IVANIŠEVIĆ et al. 2006, 119–121; IVANIŠEVIĆ–BUGARSKI 2018, 104.
- 16 PETKOVIĆ–RUŽIĆ 2005, 29, 41, 43, 88–90, 100, 144, Pl. IV/G. 27, X/G. 97, XI/G. 123.
- 17 Cf. SCHULZE–DÖRRLAMM 2009b, Kat. Nr. 594.
- 18 BEZUGLOV 2001, 279, Fig. 2/9.
- 19 AHMEDOV 2010, 106, Ris. 9/9.





Fig. 1 Singidunum II, Graves 14 (left) and 15 (right). Documentation of the Institute of Archaeology, Belgrade

that the border should be shifted back to the Danube.<sup>20</sup> After Emperor Theodosius died, his successor Marcian evaded the terms of the treaty, but Attila was already on his way to the West.<sup>21</sup>

The death of this legendary Hunnic leader in 453 was soon followed by the collapse of their empire, a major outcome of the 454 battle of Nedao.<sup>22</sup> Many peoples, mostly of Germanic stock, freed themselves from the Hunnic yoke. While this resulted in the withdrawal of part of the Huns and some of their Germanic allies to the Black Sea steppes,<sup>23</sup> and, eventually, in the public display of the head of Attila's last son in Constantinople in 469, at least the northern parts of the Central Balkans remained out of Roman reach. Within a broader framework, 'With the Huns no longer in the picture, the Goths again became the main external factor affecting the Roman Balkans'.<sup>24</sup>

Unlike those of earlier<sup>25</sup> or later dates,<sup>26</sup> Germanic finds from the second half of the 5<sup>th</sup> century – notably from Singidunum and Margum – belonged to the ruling people and not to *foederati*.<sup>27</sup> This is apparently indicated by intramural burial. In contrast to other Migration-period cemeteries in Singidunum, formed outside the then-settled area, Singidunum II was intramural. The latest in date, this necropolis of lower-class people comes from the second half of the 5<sup>th</sup> century (Fig. 1).<sup>28</sup> The burials from the vicinity of Singidunum, from Rospri Ćuprija and Ostružnica,<sup>29</sup> may be dated to the D3 and E phases (450–470/480 and 470/480–510, respectively). The former is particularly interesting, as it produced a bone buckle with a cloisonné-decorated gilded bronze pin (Fig. 2) and a spatha;<sup>30</sup> it has therefore been attributed to the Apahida–Blučina–Tournai horizon (= D3).<sup>31</sup> The graves recorded in the course of the early excavations at Margum<sup>32</sup> must have been *intra muros*. Even though they cannot be narrowly dated, they were thus supposedly laid during the period of Germanic rule over the city and the region, between c. 441 and 510.<sup>33</sup> In contrast to this, the three Timacum Minus graves were found at the extramural necropolis, apparently not clustered together;<sup>34</sup>

20 PRISCUS, frag. 7.286,31–287,7, 14.327,30. Cf. THOMPSON 1948, 97–98.

21 KIM 2016, 95.

22 JORD. GET., I, 261.

23 KAZANSKI 2011.

24 HEATHER 2007, 179, n. 49.

25 IVANIŠEVIĆ 2015, 657–659.

26 BUGARSKI–IVANIŠEVIĆ 2018.

27 IVANIŠEVIĆ–KAZANSKI 2014, 140–142.

28 BJELAJAC–IVANIŠEVIĆ 1993, 136–138, Figs 9–10; IVANIŠEVIĆ–BUGARSKI 2018, 108–109.

29 TATIĆ–ĐURIĆ 1958.

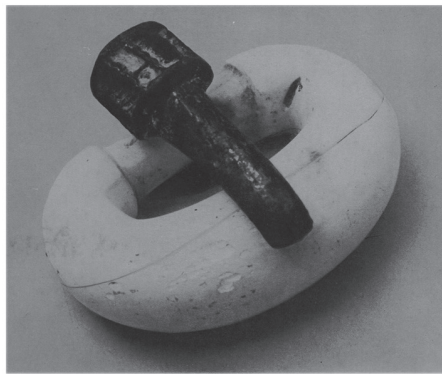
30 BJELAJAC–IVANIŠEVIĆ 1993, 136, n. 64, Fig. 11/1.

31 IVANIŠEVIĆ–KAZANSKI 2014, 142.

32 MANO–ZISI et al. 1950, 144–153, 155–156, 159–163, Fig. 5, Fig. 16, Fig. 29/11–12; cf. BUGARSKI–IVANIŠEVIĆ 2013, 468–469.

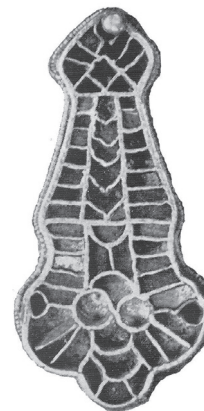
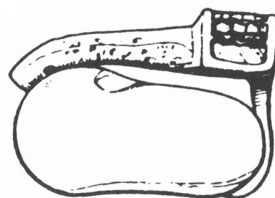
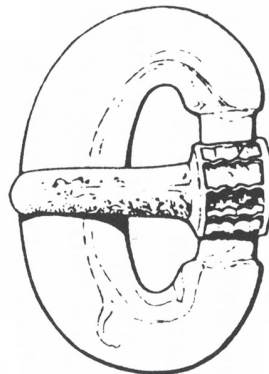
33 IVANIŠEVIĆ–BUGARSKI 2018, 109.

34 Cf. PETKOVIĆ–RUŽIĆ 2005, Pl. 6.



**Fig. 2** *Rospi Ćuprija* (after BJELAJAC–IVANIŠEVIĆ 1993, Fig. 11/1, drawing, and BIRTAŠEVIĆ 1963–1964, sl. 7)

1 cm



1 cm

**Fig. 3** *Nova Lederata* (after DIMITRIJEVIĆ et al. 1962, T. IV/2)

therefore, they might well have belonged to *foederati* whose garrison would not defend the fort against the Hunnic attack.

The finds from the smaller fortifications along the former Danube frontier, such as Sapaja and Rtkovo-Glamija I, are from the same period. A (spatha-sheath?) golden cloisonné fitting from the Sapaja bridgehead – the river isle’s Late Roman *quadriburgium* Nova Lederata<sup>35</sup> – has been dated to the early years of Theoderic’s reign, before he left for Italy (472–488).<sup>36</sup> As noted long ago by Volker Bierbrauer, its garnet layout, set in different angular cells (Fig. 3), has general similarities with the famous Eastern Gothic find of cloisonné eagle brooches and a helmet-shaped mount from Domagnano,<sup>37</sup> while its quatrefoil central decoration can be seen as influencing the more complex motif of the same shape, but composed of mushroom-like cells.<sup>38</sup> Particularly well-designed quatrefoil mounts, dated to the second half of the 5<sup>th</sup> century, come from the Central Caucasus.<sup>39</sup> Another find, a silver (knife/seax-sheath?) fitting with a swastika-shaped inlay setting, apparently Eastern Gothic and dating from the second half of the 5<sup>th</sup> century, came from the Rtkovo-Glamija I fortlet (Fig. 4).<sup>40</sup> This decoration – a swastika developing in an X formed by stepped lines, i.e. in a zig-zag ‘lightning’ motif – had influenced later faux cloisonné patterns (the Bopfingen, Xanten, and Bifrons finds).<sup>41</sup>

A few finds of this kind have been unearthed in the Central Balkan hinterlands as well. Dated to the second half of the 5<sup>th</sup> century, i.e. to the Tournai horizon, the finds from Hammeum (Fig. 5), southwest of Naissus, include a fragmented spatha point with a golden U-shaped chape, a 67.1 cm long seax – among the longest in this period<sup>42</sup> – and a golden kidney-shaped fitting decorated with a cloisonné-like amethyst and talc (?) pattern,<sup>43</sup> the latter presumably being a backing paste.<sup>44</sup> An especially interesting parallel comes from the Anglo-Saxon cemetery at Buckland, Kent, described as a ‘boucle de ceinture composite de type franc remontée en fibule’.<sup>45</sup> Such cloisonné

35 DIMITRIJEVIĆ 1984; JOVANOVIĆ 1996; BUGARSKI–IVANIŠEVIĆ 2012, 485, Ris. 3–4; IVANIŠEVIĆ–BUGARSKI 2015, 60–62.

36 VINSKI 1964, 157–158, Sl. 1–1a; cf. BUGARSKI–IVANIŠEVIĆ 2012, 493–494.

37 BIERBRAUER 1973, 502–503, 507–508, 521, Abb. 4, Taf. 35/1a, Taf. 36/1, Taf. 38/1a.

38 Cf. ADAMS 2016.

39 ADAMS 2011a, 15, Pl. 8.

40 GABRIČEVIĆ 1986, 72, Fig. 21; MILINKOVIĆ 1998, 289–290; ŠPEHAR 2012, 46, Fig. 17.

41 ADAMS 2011b, 25–26, n. 9, 10, Fig. 11/1–3.

42 Cf. KISS 2014.

43 MILINKOVIĆ 2006, 251–252, Abb. 6. The finds were collected some 25 years ago from a depth of 1.5 m when a canal for the water-supply system was dug in Ratka Pavlovića Street in Prokuplje. They are kept in the National Museum of Toplica in Prokuplje, bearing inv. nos 185–187. I am indebted for the photographs and further information to my colleague Julka Kuzmanović-Cvetković of the National Museum of Toplica.

44 Cf. HORVÁTH 2013, Fig. 2.

45 HAITH 2006, 81, Fig. 3.

buckle plates have indeed been found in Normandy,<sup>46</sup> similar finds came from Byzantium as well,<sup>47</sup> and reniform horse-harness fittings are known from post-Hunnic contexts in the North Pontic region.<sup>48</sup>

A golden buckle from Kruševac, likewise decorated in cloisonné, is of similar date (Fig. 6). Its decoration, including quatrefoil garnets (none of them preserved), resemble that of the Apahida find, and the cloisonné-decorated object from Buckland bears the same central motif.<sup>49</sup> Probably an Eastern Gothic grave good and dated to c. 450–470/480, or the Apahida–Blučina–Tournai horizon, the Kruševac buckle has been connected with Thiudimer's move to Macedonia which took place in 473.<sup>50</sup> Although some of the previously proposed dates seem historically too specific, our finds most certainly bear a post-Hunnic 5<sup>th</sup>-century date. Just like the Sapaja find, the buckle from Kruševac has been seen as a product of the Danube region's goldsmiths.<sup>51</sup>



Fig. 4 Rtkovo-Glamija I (after GABRIČEVIĆ 1986, Fig. 21)



Fig. 5 Hammeum. Documentation of the National Museum of Toplica in Prokuplje

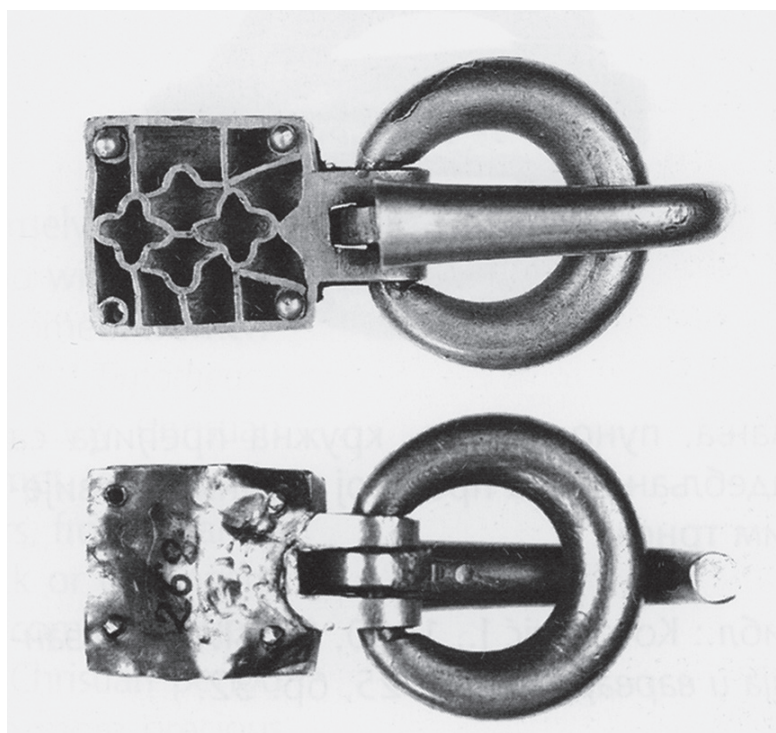


Fig. 6 Kruševac (after POPOVIĆ 2001, 155)

46 LORREN 2001, 196–197, Pl. XVII/2.

47 SCHULZE-DÖRRLAMM 2009a, Type C3, 89–93, Abb. 33.

48 HRAPUNOV–KAZANSKI 2015, 177, 180, Ris. 5/8–26.

49 HAITH 2006, Fig. 3.

50 VINSKI 1964, 173–175, Sl. 2/12; MILINKOVIĆ 1998, 446–447; POPOVIĆ 2001, 155, 243, 274.

51 VINSKI 1964, 175.

## LATE ROMAN EVIDENCE

It has already been noted that in the (Serbian) scholarly tradition the Hunnic invasion was seen as ‘catastrophic for urban life to the extent that towns and forts remained deserted until the beginning of the 6<sup>th</sup> century’.<sup>52</sup> I believe that this was mostly due to dramatic historical accounts, like the description left by Priscus of desolate Naissus in ruins, with the bones of the killed scattered about the river bank and only a few sick people left within,<sup>53</sup> or the more general remarks about the scale of the disaster of the 6<sup>th</sup>-century chroniclers, Marcellinus Comes and Procopius.<sup>54</sup> Up until very recently the horizon of the second half of the 5<sup>th</sup> century was entirely missing from the archaeological records and publications, ‘despite the fact that continuity is attested by coin finds on numerous sites’ and in the collections of the National Museum in Belgrade.<sup>55</sup> In what follows, this paper will bring together the Roman finds from the second half of the 5<sup>th</sup> century, mostly numismatic, to investigate if their spatial spread fits the data from the written accounts.



Fig. 7 Gradište at Dupci (photographs by Dušan Rašković)

Fig. 8 Grnčar, Kulište-Caričin Grad (photographs by Aca Đorđević)

Although Naissus was one of the cities badly damaged in 441, the written sources inform us that it was to remain within the Empire. While we do not know of any Migration-period burials there, the existing cemeteries in the city were continuously used by the Romans at least until the beginning of the seventh century.<sup>56</sup> The 4<sup>th</sup>- to 5<sup>th</sup>-century graves at the Jagodin Mala necropolis produced characteristic Late Roman jewellery, belt buckles and glass *balsamaria*,<sup>57</sup> and within this cemetery there were five Christian churches, including a 5<sup>th</sup>-century three-nave with a crypt.<sup>58</sup> A spatha from nearby Draževac cannot be exclusively dated to this period; it might as well come from the 6<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>59</sup>

A large Late Roman fortification, Gradište at Dupci, situated on the Kopaonik Mountain slopes west of Niš and south of the West Morava, is known owing to surveys and metal detectorist finds, and not through archaeological excavations. One of these finds is a solidus minted for Emperor Zeno (Fig. 7). Believed to reflect the renewal of Roman authority,<sup>60</sup> this find<sup>61</sup> may in fact be indicative of the continuity of their control there. Out of the total of 42 coins from the site, as many as 37 can be labelled Early Byzantine, most of them struck for Anastasius I; however, among the remaining five Late Roman coins there is also an earlier 5<sup>th</sup>-century find, a *tremissis* of Theodosius II.<sup>62</sup>

52 IVANIŠEVIĆ 2015, 659.

53 PRISCUS, frag. 8.291,9–15.

54 MARC. COM., 447.2; PROCOP. DE AEDIF. 4.4. Cf. THOMPSON 1948, 94; KIM 2016, 93–95.

55 IVANIŠEVIĆ 2015, 659–660, n. 37–42.

56 IVANIŠEVIĆ–BUGARSKI 2018, 105–106.

57 JEREMIĆ 2014.

58 JEREMIĆ–FILIPOVIĆ 2016.

59 MILINKOVIĆ 1998, 448, T. 142/2. In another place MILINKOVIĆ 2011, 131 nonetheless tends to connect this find with the movements of the Goths under Thiudimer and Theoderic.

60 RAŠKOVIĆ 2011, 175.

61 RIC 910: 476–491.

62 RAŠKOVIĆ 2019, 57. I hereby warmly thank the author for supplying me with additional information and the obverse and reverse photographs of the solidus.

Southeast of Niš is Babušnica, and next to it the village of Grnčar. From the Kulište–Caričin Grad site there, a Late Roman fortification in this mountainous region, comes an as yet unpublished *solidus*<sup>63</sup> struck in Constantinople between the years 450 and 457 for Emperor Marcian (Fig. 8).<sup>64</sup> From the same locality is another interesting find, a long-published inscribed brick reading “c(e)met[er]ium” – a Christian funeral inscription not earlier than the 4<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>65</sup>

Some 80 km to the southwest is another Late Roman hillfort, Rujkovac, which served to protect nearby roads and mines. Among many coins from the site, spanning the third and the 6<sup>th</sup> centuries, those minted in the middle and second half of the 5<sup>th</sup> century stand out: the *minimi* of Theodosius II, Marcian, Leo I, Zeno, and Basiliscus, including an imitation related to Marcian’s coinage, and two *tremisses* struck for Theodosius II and Zeno, respectively. Numerous cut-down coins and lead flans have been found as well, indicating that the practice of cutting down coins continued into the second half of the 5<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>66</sup>

One of the most important Late Roman centres in the hinterlands of present-day Serbia is Romuliana. The site of the former Tetrarchic palace was believed to be different from many other localities of this region in showing some sort of continuity of life throughout the 5<sup>th</sup> century, i.e. in revealing ‘a local, rather isolated and self-sufficient community’.<sup>67</sup> This is corroborated by a largely neglected hoard from the same site, consisting of 41 *minimi*, eight cut-down coins and a lead flan, predominantly issues of Leo I, Zeno and Anastasius I, the emperors of the second half of the 5<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>68</sup> Further confirmation came when a grave was excavated just outside the massive northern rampart (Fig. 9). This simple grave of a male aged between 35 and 45 years, apparently of a higher social status, contained three gold coins: a *solidus* of Marcian (450–457) and *tremisses* struck for Theodosius II (439) and Aelia Pulcheria (450–453).<sup>69</sup> Unlike other Marcian’s *solidi* from these parts – albeit few<sup>70</sup> – this is the only one minted in Thessalonika.<sup>71</sup> In Romuliana there are no finds from the Migration period which could be reliably dated within the second half of the 5<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>72</sup>

From the nearby village of Vražogrnac (Porodin?) comes a *solidus* of Emperor Leo I, dated to c. 468–473;<sup>73</sup> further to the northeast, from Aquae on the Danube limes came 12 *minimi* minted for Marcian, Leo I, Zeno, and Anastasius I, and a *tremissis* of Zeno.<sup>74</sup> It could well be that a *solidus* of Zeno (476–491), catalogued as originating from the “Negotin–Danube river bank”,<sup>75</sup> is in fact from the same town. From Aquae also come several poorly illustrated Migration-period finds,<sup>76</sup> but none of them can be dated with any certainty to the second half of the 5<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>77</sup>

Without any doubt, Ulpiana was one of the most important cities in this under-urbanised region; in a nearby mining shaft in Janjevo a *solidus* minted for Leo I (457–474) has been found.<sup>78</sup>

In concluding this survey it is important to note that some finds, preliminary dated to the second half of the 5<sup>th</sup> century, are apparently of a later date. In the course of the

63 It was found by chance by a local farmer and shown to Aca Đorđević, a visiting archaeologist of the National Museum in Belgrade, who took the photographs and shared them with me. In the meantime, the coin was sold to a private collector. I would like to express my gratitude to Aca Đorđević for his help and information, and for allowing me to publish this important find. On his surveys in this area cf. ĐORĐEVIĆ 2017.

64 RIC 510: 450–457.

65 PETROVIĆ 1975, 34–36.

66 IVANIŠEVIĆ–ŠTAMENKOVIĆ 2011, 758, 762, Figs 1–2.

67 PETKOVIĆ 2008, 363.

68 JANKOVIĆ 1984; IVANIŠEVIĆ–ŠTAMENKOVIĆ 2011, 762.

69 POP-LAZIĆ 2016, 240–242, Figs 10–12, n. 37–39.

70 RADIĆ–IVANIŠEVIĆ 2006, cat. nos 54–58.

71 Cf. POP-LAZIĆ 2016, Fig. 12a, n. 37.

72 Cf. MILINKOVIĆ 1998, 301–303; 2011; PETKOVIĆ 2011; POP-LAZIĆ 2016.

73 RADIĆ–IVANIŠEVIĆ 2006, 84, cat. no. 61.

74 JANKOVIĆ 1981, 67; cf. IVANIŠEVIĆ 2015, 659.

75 RADIĆ–IVANIŠEVIĆ 2006, 86, cat. no. 82.

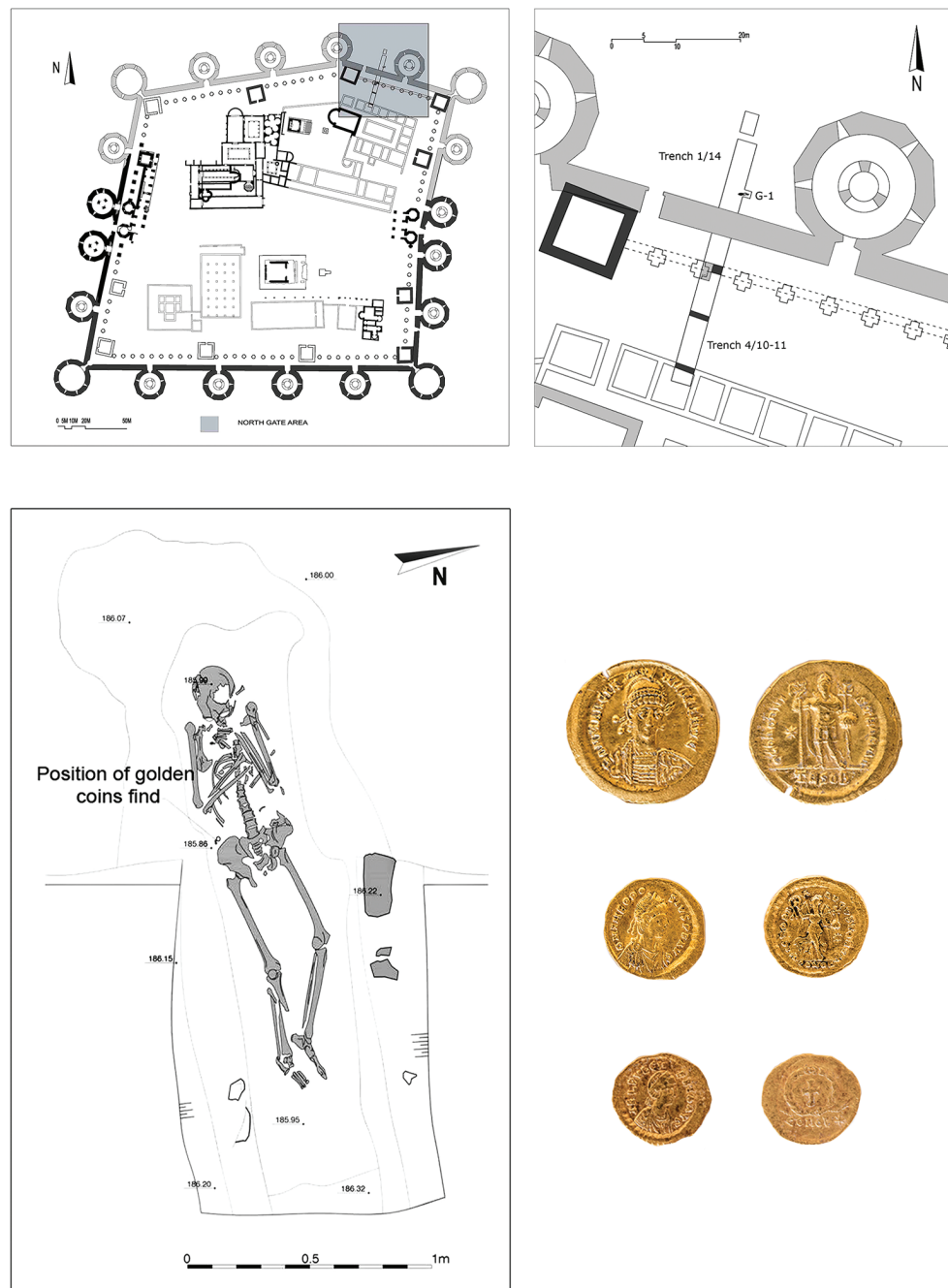
76 JANKOVIĆ 1981, 174, 176, T. XVI/13, 16, 17, T. XVII/7.

77 MILINKOVIĆ 1998, 298–299.

78 ČERŠKOV 1969, 34, n. 75; IVANIŠEVIĆ–ŠPEHAR 2006, 152.

recent rescue excavations at the Begov Most site in Staničenje near Pirot, below the Gradište fortification, more than 130 graves from a damaged necropolis have been recorded. All the graves were oriented northwest-southeast and most of them were simply dug; some had modest stone constructions or brick gable covers. While three coins of Theodosius I and Arcadius have been found next to the graves, only four burials produced inventories on the basis of which the cemetery has been dated to the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> and the 5<sup>th</sup> century. Among them are two oval buckles<sup>79</sup> resembling the A5 and A6 types by Mechthild Schulze-Dörrlamm, datable to the end of the 5<sup>th</sup> and the first half of the 6<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>80</sup>

Fig. 9 Romuliana (after Pop-Lazić 2016, Figs 10–12)



79 PETKOVIĆ et al. 2017a; PETKOVIĆ et al. 2017b, Sl. 7/1, 5.

80 SCHULZE-DÖRRLAMM 2009a, 12–15.

## CONCLUSION

The border established in 447 between the Huns and the Empire was short-lived at best, but in any case it reflected the political, military, and economic realities of the time. The Empire was already weak before the Hunnic incursions. Its Danube limes – however sophisticated – was apparently impossible to defend,<sup>81</sup> whereas the southern possessions were closer to the core of the Empire and as such better able to persist. The former Roman lands between the old and new frontiers were meant to become an unpopulated and uncultivated buffer zone, which would prevent deserters, slaves and prisoners of the Huns to flee and join the imperial forces.<sup>82</sup>

The Hunnic threat did not last for long, but this line was still to mark the boundary between two different areas. Yet, even to the north of this ‘frontier’, monetary circulation apparently began to recover soon after the dissolution of Attila’s state, as attested to by the finds of *minimi* of Marcian and Zeno from Drobeta and Romula,<sup>83</sup> and perhaps by that from Burgenae in Syrmia, minted for Marcian, as well.<sup>84</sup> Although between 456 and 473 Pannonia came under the political control of the Eastern Goths through *foederati* agreements,<sup>85</sup> the recent analyses of the cemeteries, burial customs and grave goods speak for the continuity and even prevalence of the Roman population in the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> centuries in the region’s metropolis, Sirmium,<sup>86</sup> and similar were the cases of Pannonia Prima and Valeria.<sup>87</sup> The Romans likewise persisted in the cities along the Danube limes – whose place-names survived as well<sup>88</sup> – to welcome the 6<sup>th</sup>-century restoration of Byzantine rule in Northern Illyricum.<sup>89</sup>

Therefore, the finds from the northern parts of the Central Balkans (although not very numerous) indicate both Germanic presence and Roman endurance in the second half of the 5<sup>th</sup> century, while the southern parts lack evidence for the former. As evident from the distribution map (Fig. 10), the Migration-period finds are concentrated in former Roman cities and forts along the Danube, and along the western banks of the Velika Morava and South Morava rivers. Contrariwise, Naissus best presents the continuity of urban life in these parts – albeit with short interruptions – but the possessions northeast of it appear to have stayed within the Empire as well. While the finds from Dupci, Rujkovac and Grnčar fit into the general picture, those from Aquae, Vražogrnac and Romuliana indicate that the Timok valley was still controlled by the Romans. In the narrow riparian area of the Carpathian section of the *limes*, framed by steep mountains beyond both riverbanks, there were no other cities between Viminacium and Aquae, but only smaller forts. Unlike Viminacium and many fortlets, including Sapaja and Rtkovo-Glamija I, Aquae survived the Hunnic destruction and life continued there, although in an attenuated fashion.<sup>90</sup>

In the decades which followed the collapse of the Hunnic Empire, the Romans had no means of re-establishing the Danube border.<sup>91</sup> For example, the destruction of Singidunum in 441 was followed by a Sarmatian occupation of this city, and from 471 on by that of the Eastern Goths.<sup>92</sup> In 473 the Amal-led Goths arrived in the Balkans, taking over

81 BUGARSKI–IVANIŠEVIĆ 2012, 492, 499.

82 PRISCUS, frag. 7.286,31–287,7. Cf. DE VINGO 2011, 372.

83 OBERLÄNDER-TÄRNOVEANU 2002, 3.

84 MIRNIK 1996, 193, cat. no. 235.

85 DE VINGO 2010, 275.

86 IVANIŠEVIĆ–BUGARSKI 2018, 94–95.

87 DE VINGO 2015, 570.

88 ZEČEVIĆ 2002, 50.

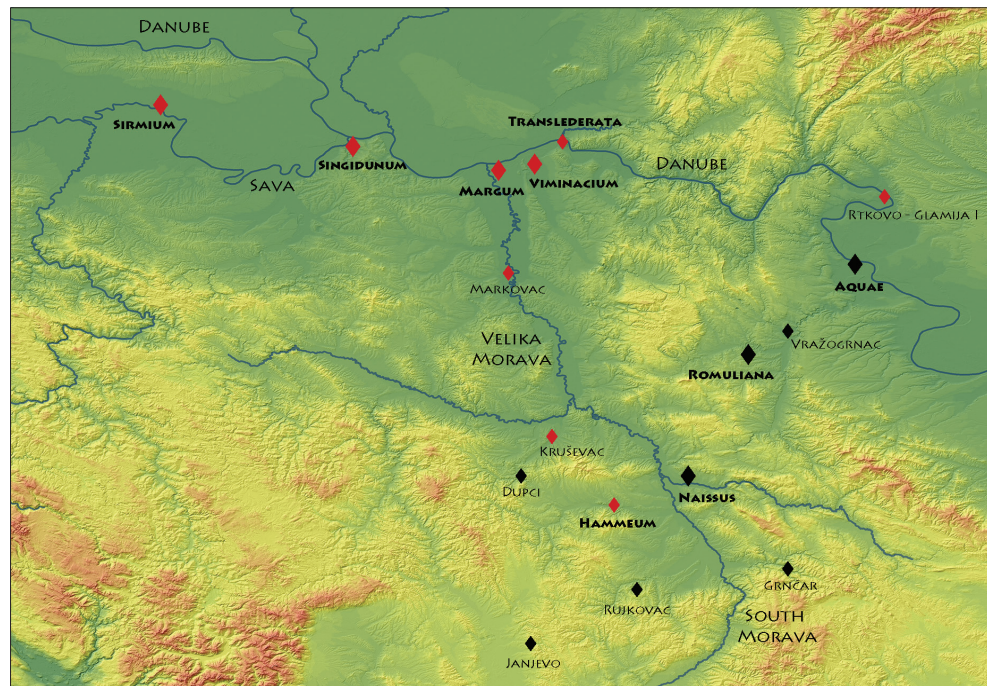
89 IVANIŠEVIĆ–BUGARSKI 2018, 110.

90 JANKOVIĆ 1981, 184–185.

91 KIM 2016, 105.

92 JORD. GET., LV, 282.

Naissus and Ulpiana on their advance towards Thessalonika. Soon after that they moved to Novae, and until the year 478 they were not openly hostile to the Balkan provinces. However, this year saw the sack of Stobi and Heralceia Lyncestis.<sup>93</sup> The Balkans were left out from the imperial care. After uniting under his sway the two groups of Eastern Goths, Theoderic turned to Thrace in 486, and in 488 his Goths finally left for Italy<sup>94</sup> – although, according to the Lower Danube archaeological record, not all of them.<sup>95</sup>



*Fig. 10 Archaeological Panorama of the Central Balkans (c. 450–500), Migration-period (red) and Late Roman finds (black)*

Our evidence suggests that the Eastern Goths, rather than taking over all the cities and forts, controlled major Central Balkan communication routes – most of the Danube course and the Velika Morava and South Morava valleys. As noted by Alexander Stanev, ‘...settled in compact groups, [...] they occupied extensive territories such as Moesia Secunda and Dacia Ripensis...’<sup>96</sup> Perhaps this was the case in these parts too, where their southernmost finds are those from Hammeum. The question has been posed if they came from a single or several graves, or perhaps from a hoard?<sup>97</sup> It does not seem at all likely that two long blades could be deposited in a single grave pit. If there were two prominent warriors’ graves at Ratka Pavlovića Street site in Prokuplje, one would have to count at least with a small elite cemetery there: according to the classification by Michel Kazanski, the finds of swords and cloisonné fittings constitute the fourth group of inventories of the Hunnic and post-Hunnic military leaders’ graves.<sup>98</sup> Moreover, it has recently been stated that ‘the cloisonné style [...] became the highest fashion among the emerging barbarian aristocracy across Europe from the end of the 5<sup>th</sup> century...’<sup>99</sup>

Thus, Hammeum might have been turned into a Gothic outpost near Naissus, and Rujkovac and Grnčar, the somewhat hidden Roman hill-forts south of it, apparently remained in Roman hands. Similarly, near Kruševac, the finding place of the cloisonné-decorated buckle, is the Dupci fort on the Kopaonik slopes where the 5<sup>th</sup>-century

93 JORD. GET., LV, 285–286.

94 HEATHER 2007, 182–185.

95 STANEV 2014, 76–77.

96 STANEV 2014, 76, Figs 5–6.

97 MILINKOVIĆ 2006, 252.

98 KAZANSKI 1999, 293.

99 HILGNER 2018, 300.



coins have been found, including that minted for Zeno. The same was true of Ulpiana and its region, where even the mining activities continued after the Hunnic raids.<sup>100</sup> It is not known whether the Eastern Gothic stay left any archaeological traces there:<sup>101</sup> most likely it did not, as we are informed that in the course of the same campaign Thiodimer had left Naissus leaving only a few men behind.<sup>102</sup> Although one written source claimed that the Goths had burnt Ulpiana,<sup>103</sup> archaeological publications do not mention fire damage.<sup>104</sup>

The finds are few and therefore do not allow for establishing sufficiently reliable models. Yet, sketching two different areas in the Central Balkans and largely matching historical data, their distribution map not only reveals the complexity of the period in question, but also provides a glimpse into the Eastern Gothic strategy in these parts and an overview of the Roman strongholds upon which the 6<sup>th</sup>-century reconquista could have rested.

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100 IVANIŠEVIĆ–ŠPEHAR 2006, 152.

101 MILINKOVIĆ 2003, 143.

102 JORD. GET., LV, 286.

103 HEATHER 2007, 184, n. 61.

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