

# Strategie e Programmazione della Conservazione e Trasmissibilità del Patrimonio Culturale

*A cura di*

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ISBN

978-88-909158-8-8

Edizioni Scientifiche Fidei Signa

EDITORE	EDITOR
Fidei Signa edizioni scientifiche	Fidei Signa Scientific Editions
Via Chiana 97	Via Chiana 97
00198 Roma	00198 Roma
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Williams Troiano	Williams Troiano
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Chiara Rizzi	Chiara Rizzi
PROGETTO GRAFICO	GRAPHIC DESIGN
Francesco Mastantuoni	Francesco Mastantuoni
COPERTINA	COVER BOOK
Williams Troiano	Williams Troiano
TIPOGRAFIA	TIPOGRAPHY
Futura Grafica 70	Futura Grafica 70
ISBN	ISBN
978-88-909158-8-8	978-88-909158-8-8
TIRATURA	PRINTING
999 copie	999 copies

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# THE LATE ANTIQUE NECROPOLIS IN JAGODIN MALA, NIŠ (NAISSUS), SERBIA – EIGHTY YEARS OF RESEARCH\*

## LA NECROPOLI TARDOANTICA A JAGODIN MALA, NIŠ (NAISSUS), SERBIA – OTTANT'ANNI DI RICERCA

di Gordana Jeremić

*Institute of Archaeology, Belgrade*

*Nel 2013 la città di Niš celebra due anniversari importanti – 1700 anni dalla proclamazione dell'Editto di Milano e 80 anni di ricerche della più grande necropoli tardo antica nel territorio della città (necropoli di Jagodin Mala). Niš – Antica Naissus era il luogo di nascita dell'imperatore Costantino I, che, come notano le fonti, riccamente decorò sua città natale. Lo splendore della città tardo antica è poco nota a causa di modesti scavi archeologici, che sono oggi quasi completamente fermi. Tuttavia, ancora oggi edifici parzialmente recuperati ci raccontano la ricchezza e l'importanza della città, che fiorì soprattutto nella metà IV e la prima del V secolo. Un pò più ricchi di dati sul periodo tardo antico sono stati ottenuti dalla ricerca archeologica della necropoli che era situata lungo la via militaris per Ratiaria, nella zona del moderno quartiere della città di Jagodin Mala. La necropoli è stata studiata, con ampie interruzioni, per 80 anni. Circa 300 tombe di tombe liberamente sepolte, più di 60 tombe e cinque edifici ecclesiali sono stati scoperti, così come ricco materiale archeologico portatile. Di tutte le tombe esaminate, solo cinque di loro sono state conservate e disponibili al pubblico, e tra questi particolare attenzione viene attratta da due con resti di affreschi dipinti (la tomba con una rappresentazione di san Pietro e san Paolo e la tomba con cristogramma) gravemente minacciate di estinzione in condizioni reali di esposizione e conservazione. Tra le chiese, solo la basilica a tre navate con cripta è stata scavata ed è restaurata e disponibile al pubblico oggi. Obiettivo di questo articolo è quello di richiamare l'attenzione sull'importanza delle tombe e della basilica con cripta a Jagodin Mala e al problema dello stato della loro conservazione e presentazione, che richiede un intervento urgente sia da istituti di ricerca e dalle sovrintendenze della protezione del patrimonio in modo che potessero durare nel tempo che sono davanti a noi e per anniversari futuri.*

*Keywords:* Jagodin Mala, Niš - Naissus, Dacia Mediterranea, necropolis, late antiquity, IV-VI century, heritage monuments.

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(\*) This paper is a result of the research on the project of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development, Republic of Serbia: *Romanization, Urbanization and Transformation of Urban Centres of Civil, Military and Residential Character in Roman Provinces on the Territory of Serbia* (No. 177007).

The modern town of Niš (Republic of Serbia) got its name after antique *Naissus* (Ναῖσος, Ναῖσός, *Naessus, urbs Naisitana, Navissus, Navissum, Ναῖσούπολις*)<sup>2</sup>. The Antique town arose on the left bank of Nišava, most likely during the I century AD. At this time, the territory was inhabited by population on whose ethnic structure little is known; scarce onomastic and archaeological data suggest the presence of members of Illyrian, Thracian, Dacian and Celtic origin<sup>3</sup>. Thanks to a very favourable geographical and strategic position, on the junction of roads for *Viminacium, Ratiaria, Serdica, Constantinopolis, Thessaloniki* and *Lissus*, as well as rich natural resources (fertile Nišava valley, low hilly area, and a mountain massive in the rear, the vicinity of mines and rock quarries), *Naissus* had all the necessary conditions to develop in-



Fig. 2 - Late Antique provinces in the central Balkans with the location of *Naissus* Niš, Serbia (STAMENKOVIĆ 2013, map 2).

On the opposite page, Fig. 1 - Tomb with calotte, Benetton Serbia, researched in 2012, view from the east (photo Zoran Radosavljević-Kiki, Institute for Cultural Heritage Preservation Niš).

to an important economic centre of the southern areas of Upper Moesia (*Moesia Superior*).

The Early Roman settlement was located on the right bank of Nišava and almost nothing is known on its first fortification. The town received the status of *municipium* probably in the first half or mid-II century (during the reign of Hadrian [117-138] or Antoninus Pius [138-161])<sup>4</sup>. At the end of III and at the beginning of IV century the town flourished in the newly founded province *Dacia Mediterranea* (fig. 2). Emperors Constantine I and Constantius III were born in this town, and emperors during IV century spent more or less time in one of the palaces, as noted in historical sources in the period between years 316 and 394 (Licinius, Constantine I, Constantine II, Constans, Constantius II, Iulian Apostate, Valens, Valentinian I and Theodosius I)<sup>5</sup>. The presence of imperial workshops (*officina*) for production of objects from precious metals<sup>6</sup> and manufacture of weapons for the Roman army were also confirmed<sup>7</sup>. During the Early Christianity, *Naissus* was also an important religious centre. From historical sources the names of six bishops are known: Cyriacus (before 343), Gaudentius (343), Bonosus (before 391), Martianus (409-414), Gaianus (516) and Proiectus (553)<sup>8</sup>. It is also known that during the Easter of the year 344 liturgy was held by Athanas of Alexandria<sup>9</sup>.

Apart from the ascents it had, *Naissus* and its neighbouring region also survived significant devastations in the Late Antique period. First strokes hit the town in the years 378-380 by Western Goths. In the year 441 Huns besieged and destroyed *Naissus*<sup>10</sup>, and it was never again restored in its previous glory. Thanks to the building activity of Justinian I in the VI century the town had another short ascent, which was interrupted by avaro-slav intrusion in the 580s, when town lost its physiognomy and one part of the population left as refugees for *Thessaloniki*<sup>11</sup>.

The archaeological excavations of the fortified part of the town were very modest. Partial research were done on *intra muros* parts of city forum with basilica and street, one building with *octagon* (possibly a palace) and one Early Byzantine building, and public *thermae* and a small complex of *tabernae* were discovered in the *extra muros* area. Two necropolises were encompassed by this research, to the east and north from fortifica-

<sup>2</sup> PETROVIĆ 1979, p. 37.

<sup>3</sup> MIRKOVIĆ 1977, pp. 837-840; PETROVIĆ 1979, p. 37; PERIĆ 2001, pp. 11-18.

<sup>4</sup> PETROVIĆ 1976, p. 49.

<sup>5</sup> PETROVIĆ 1976, pp. 35-41; VASIĆ 2008, pp. 9-23.

<sup>6</sup> POPOVIĆ 1997, pp. 134-138.

<sup>7</sup> *Not. dig.* or. X, 37.

<sup>8</sup> BRATOŽ 2011, p. 245.

<sup>9</sup> PETROVIĆ 1979, pp. 42-43 and note 31.

<sup>10</sup> PETROVIĆ 1976, pp. 41-42; *Idem* 1979, pp. 40-41.

<sup>11</sup> PETROVIĆ 1976, pp. 44-45; *Idem* 1979, p. 42.



tion, on the sites Gradsko Polje and Jagodin Mala. The necropolis on Gradsko Polje (along the road for Viminacium) was used for burying during III-IV century, while the inhumation on the nearby necropolis on Jagodin Mala (along the road for Ratiaria) was carried out during a longer period, IV-VI century.

The necropolis in the modern city quarter of Jagodin Mala (city municipality Pantelej), after which it is got its name now known in the scientific literature, emerged on the *loess plateau* on the right bank of Nišava, to the east from the fortification (fig. 3). It is being excavated, with large interruptions, for over 80 years. The first data on the existence of Late Antique necropolis are from the end of XIX century, when the tomb with barrel vault and fresco-painted cross of the *crux gemata* type was discovered, during military exercise in a ditch east from the fortress. This tomb also represents first published find from this area<sup>12</sup>. The fate of this tomb is unknown.

The first archaeological finds of larger scale were carried out in the 1930s when there was great interest for antiquity in the Niš and the awareness for preservation and importance of cultural heritage. During this time,

there was the enthusiastic foundation of the Museum Society first and the Museum of Niš<sup>13</sup> a bit later, which took over the role of the organizer of the archaeological research of necropolis, its documenting, conservation and display of artefacts.

First “small probe“ was in the year 1932, and the excavations in Jagodin Mala became large excavations in the year 1933. During a two-year campaign, the biggest part of the necropolis area was excavated by sondages. Five church buildings were registered and partially discovered, seventeen tombs with barrel vaults, large number of graves of freely buried individuals, and relatively rich portable material (jewellery, pottery and glass vessels, money)<sup>14</sup>. Among the most important finds is the discovery of one tomb with barrel vault in the south-western part of the necropolis, in the immediate vicinity of the basilica with a crypt. The tomb was fresco-painted in its interior on the western wall; there we could see in two zones the representations of the heaven, with vegetable motifs, arched entrance and a lozenge (lower zone), as well as six arches with drawings of planets, stars and crosses in the upper zone<sup>15</sup>. After the finds of money of Justinian I, minted in the

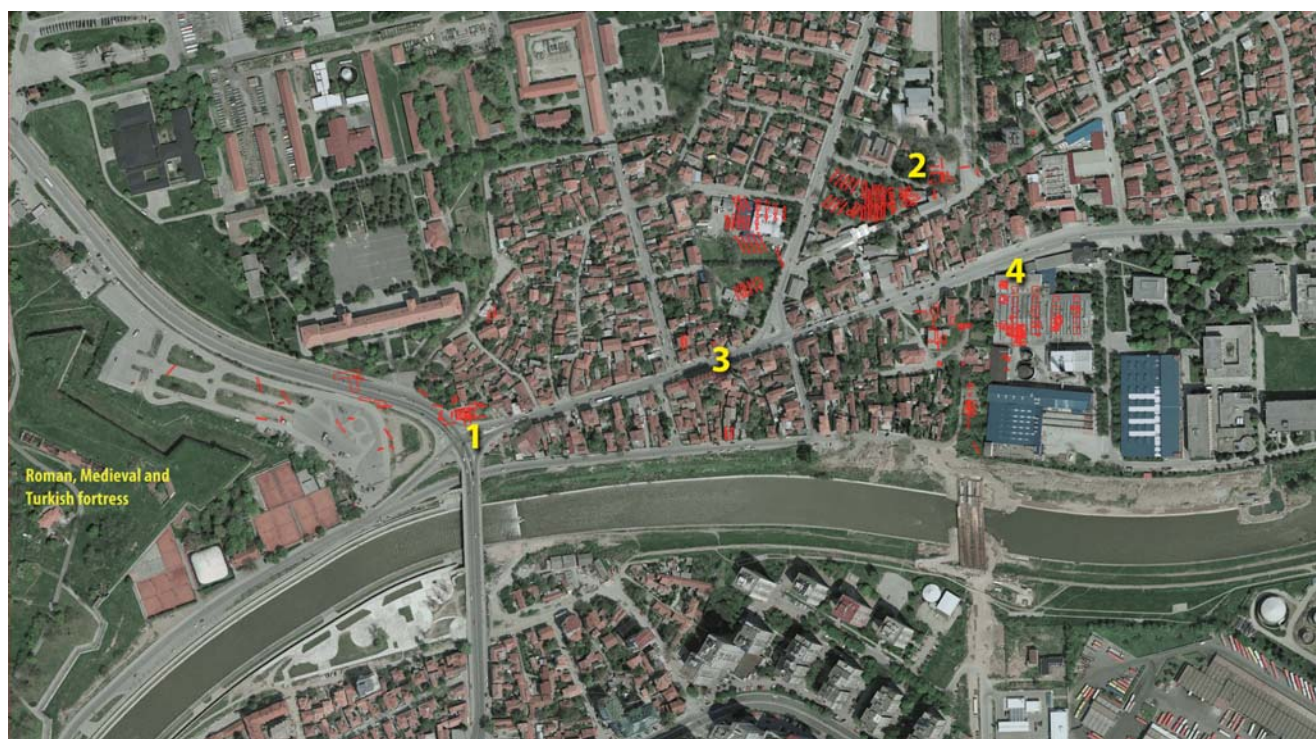


Fig. 3 - Situational plan of the necropolis Jagodin Mala, Niš: red lines – excavated areas; 1. the basilica with a crypt; 2. the tomb with a representation of St. Peter and St. Paul; 3. the tomb with a christogram; 4. the tomb with calotte in the factory “Benetton Serbia” (A. Vukojević, documentation of the Institute of Archaeology, Belgrade).

12 VALTROVIĆ 1888, pp. 118-120; KANITZ 1909, pp. 165-166.

13 JEREMIĆ 2013, in press.

14 ORŠIĆ SLAVETIĆ 1934, pp. 303-310.

15 STOJČEVA 1998, pp. 7-9.

period between 532-537, the time of the burial or, perhaps, of the erecting and painting of the tomb, may be determined as the first half of the VI century<sup>16</sup>. Oršić Slavetić offered somewhat earlier a date in his interpretation, placing the money into the time of reign of Anastasius I (491-518)<sup>17</sup>.

The tomb was destroyed some twenty years after the discovery by the construction of the modern high-way. The necropolis in Jagodin Mala represents a well organized cemetery, with regular rows of graves and tombs, whose number is the largest in the vicinity of grave basilicas, which were erected at a small distance one from another. Five such buildings were registered so far by the archaeological research. The most important one is the basilica with a crypt (fig. 3, n° 1). The crypt is also the first building registered and investigated within this complex, in the years 1932 and 1933<sup>18</sup>. The building had a rectangular ground plan, dim. 7,44 x 3,13 x 3,38 m, oriented in the same sense as the basili-

ca. The entrance was on the eastern side, where the narrow corridor and seven steps created the connection with the basilica. On the western wall of the crypt there were three niches, the middle one larger than the two on the sides. The southern and northern wall contained two deep *arcosolia* each, with niches on the party walls. In the middle part of the main chamber a stone pedestal was placed, interpreted as the place for keeping the relics of some unknown martyr. In the rubble of this building part of architectural decoration were found – a Ionic capital with Christian symbols and the body of a marble column, as well as money of emperors Constantine I and Constantius II, from the first half and mid-IV century<sup>19</sup>. Within the crypt a large number of dislocated human bones were discovered<sup>20</sup>. The building is not fully excavated; some above ground parts of a larger building were not researched. Five years after the discovery, the crypt was already neglected<sup>21</sup>. It was only in 1947 that a roof and a fence were



Fig. 4 - Tomb discovered in 1953, interior, present-state of fresco-paintings on the western wall (photo Zoran Radosavljević-Kiki, Institute for Cultural Heritage Preservation Niš).

<sup>16</sup> CRNOGLAVAC 2005, p. 92, cat. 95.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. ORŠIĆ SLAVETIĆ 1934, p. 304.

<sup>18</sup> ORŠIĆ SLAVETIĆ 1934, fig. 5.

<sup>19</sup> MILOŠEVIĆ 2004, p. 12.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> BRATANIĆ 1937, p. 182.

built above it and around it to protect it. However, as the building is at the crossroads of city boulevards with frequent traffic and in the vicinity of a flea market, it is often used for disposing of the garbage. The building and the basilica have a table with basic information about them, but, unfortunately, they are not in the official tourist offer of the museum in charge. After the conservation, finished over 45 years ago, no interventions were carried out on this building, and it was only in this year that it was planned to change the protective roof. The crypt was declared a heritage monument of exceptional importance. In the register of the Institute for Cultural Heritage Preservation of the Republic of Serbia, Belgrade, it is described as "Byzantine tomb near the Jagodin Mala bridge, Niš, the municipality of Niš", record number 1012.

On the eastern side, the crypt was connected by a corridor with the basilica, which was also not fully investigated, because of private properties and modern buildings on the eastern and northern sides of the building. The basilica was researched during 1952-1953, 1962 and 1967<sup>22</sup>, when it was conserved and became available for the public. This is a building with three naves and with semi-circular apse on the eastern end, destroyed by modern construction, and narthex on the western end<sup>23</sup>. The outer dimensions are 23,2 x 17 m, and the inner ones are 21,6 x 15,5 m. The building was preserved up to the plinth; the preserved height of walls was up to 1 m. The wall faces, outer and inner

ones, had pilasters on arches. The walls were built of stone and pebbles, connected with plaster, with layers of bricks inserted, which was also used for columns, pilasters, arches and upper surfaces of tombs within the basilica. The central nave was separated from the others by small built columns. The floor of the naos was on a lower level in comparison with floors of narthex and exonarthex, and had pavement made of stone slabs and mosaic carpet (*opus tessellatum*) of unknown appearance, since a large quantity of mosaic stone and marble pieces was discovered in the building rubble. The inner walls were fresco-painted, but only small number of fragments with red, yellow, ochre, blue, green and white colour bands was recovered<sup>24</sup>. Several fragments of pseudo-capitals from red baked clay were also discovered in the building rubble<sup>25</sup>, as well as two fragmented sepulchral monuments, from secondary used marble slabs<sup>26</sup>. These two inscriptions are extremely rare epigraphic testimonies from the territory of Late Antique Naissus in general. For the first time, there are names of Christians buried in the necropolis, i. e. within the basilica mentioned on them (*Petrus, Antoninus, Thoma, Gentio or Gentius, Ma[...]sa, famula dei*). After having analysed their palaeographic characteristics, the inscriptions are dated into V-VI century.

In the interior of the basilica were also noted burials of deceased in in-built or tombs made out of stone slabs, in two led sarcophagi, as well as in one chamber with three *arcosolia*<sup>27</sup>. In the narthex of the basilica, during



Fig. 5 - Copy of fresco on the western wall from a tomb discovered in 1953 (JEREMIĆ 2013, fig. 63).

<sup>22</sup> MANO-ZISI, JOVANOVIĆ 1952, pp. 365-367; ZOTOVIĆ, PETROVIĆ 1968; ZOTOVIĆ, PETROVIĆ, PETROVIĆ 1967, pp. 115-116.

<sup>23</sup> SPREMO-PETROVIĆ 1971, pp. 28-29, T. X.; MILOŠEVIĆ 2004, pp. 124-125.

<sup>24</sup> JAGODIN MALA 2013, cat. 176-177.

<sup>25</sup> JAGODIN MALA 2013, cat. 175.

<sup>26</sup> PETROVIĆ 1979, pp. 91-92, cat. 50-51; JAGODIN MALA 2013, cat. 178-179.

<sup>27</sup> MANO-ZISI, JOVANOVIĆ 1952, p. 367.

the excavations in the year 1962, one child led sarcophagus was discovered, buried into the Neolithic layers<sup>28</sup>. The sarcophagus had, on its cover and all the lateral surfaces, applied motifs of three-partite imperial busts, and on the cover a cross motif, with two persons on the cross ends. Imperial busts, according to their stylistic traits, correspond to the iconography of representations of heirs of the emperors Valentinian I – Gratian II, Valentinian II and Theodosius I, therefore, the sarcophagus were probably manufactured between years 379 and 408<sup>29</sup>. The graves inside the basilica and around it belong to two Late Antique phases: older one, which precedes the basilica building (buried in the crypt and within arcosolia of the chamber in the southern part of the basilica) and later one, from the period when the basilica was erected (built tombs and the tombs with construction in the basilica's interior). Older horizon of burials belong to the period of IV and the first half of the V century, while the later graves originate from the period of V-VI century, when this cult building was erected.

The first expert systematic excavations of the necropolis were organized in the year 1956, under the directorship of M. Grbić, with cooperation with Lj. Zotović and N. Petrović, and they lasted for only two weeks<sup>30</sup>. The excavations continued in years 1957 and 1958, again in a limited extent, as well as in the 1960-1962 and 1967. The excavation campaigns lasted, in average, for about a month, and they were carried out on free areas, mainly in the middle and north-eastern part of the necropolis, with dense disposition of trenches; other areas were excavated only sporadically. Due to the limited range of excavations, as well as probable urgency to examine the largest area possible, the methodology that was used was to dig 1 m wide ditches, later enlarged if the tomb constructions were discovered. The former cultural organization, called *Samoupravna interesna zajednica kulture*, financed the research, on the level of the city of Niš and the Republic of Serbia. This research encompassed approximately 230 grave units. Out of this number of graves and tombs, three were selected for conservation and preservation (the largest



Fig. 6 - The tomb with a christogram, Ratka Pavlovića Street 55, researched in 2006, view from the east (photo Zoran Radosavljević-Kiki, Institute for Cultural Heritage Preservation Niš).

<sup>28</sup> JAGODIN MALA 2013, cat. 108.

<sup>29</sup> NIKOLAJEVIĆ 1989, p. 2447, note 10; BUSCHHAUSEN, BUSCHHAUSEN 1991, pp. 45-59, Taf. 3-4; versus Constantine's sons, cf. PETKOVIĆ 2010, p. 282, cat. 1433.

<sup>30</sup> JEREMIĆ 2013, in press.

tomb with barrel vault, oriented north-south; the tomb with one calotte and one well preserved tomb with barrel vault).

The most important discovery on the necropolis in Jagodin Mala was the accidental find of the tomb with barrel vault in the year 1953 in the yard of the English centre (Kosovke devojke Street no. 6) (fig. 3, no 2). The tomb was examined in the same year<sup>31</sup>, and afterwards conserved and a protective building was erected above it<sup>32</sup>. This was a rectangular burial chamber, inner dimensions 2,63 x 2,33 x 1,78 m, built from bricks and plaster, with an entrance on the eastern side and one square niche on the west. In its interior the tomb had three partition walls, which enclosed the burial places. The tomb was already plundered before its discovery. However, what makes it stand out from other monuments from this necropolis is her extraordinary fresco-painting. On the eastern and western walls are representations of Christ monogram, enclosed with figures dressed in white *togae* with *palia*. These persons were identified as St. Peter and St. Paul (presented on the eastern wall) and unknown persons on the western wall (saints, mortars, less likely the deceased buried in the tomb)<sup>33</sup>. On lateral sides of the tomb, on the vault and outer sides of burial tubs is the presentation of the Eden with rich vegetation, grapes and birds eating them. The tomb was put under protection as the heritage monument of exceptional importance; however, be-



Fig. 7 - Christogram on the vault, the tomb in Ratka Pavlovića Street 55, researched in 2006 (photo Zoran Radosavljević-Kiki, Institute for Cultural Heritage Preservation Niš).

cause of inadequate methods of preservation, the frescoes in it disappeared completely with time (fig. 4). The only document on them are black-white photographs, as well as copies of frescoes (oil on canvas in colour), done in size 1:1, today at display at the National museum of Niš (fig. 5). The copies of representations in the vault zone and outer sides of burial tubs do not exist, only black-white photographs and drawings made on pause. Another heritage monument, discovered by chance, is about to meet the same fate as this tomb with figural frescoes.

During private construction works in the 2006 in the Ratka Pavlovića Street 55, a dredge damaged the western part of one tomb with barrel vault (fig. 3, n° 3). The works were stopped until the tomb was researched (fig. 6), and afterwards it was incorporated into the architecture of a new residential building, in whose cellar it is today. The tomb had square base plan, inner dimensions 2,3 x 2,3 x 2,05 m, built in the same manner as other tombs on the necropolis. What makes it stand out are carefully executed wall paintings. On the western zone, in the plinth level, there were two panels representing initiation of marble lines and pebbles of different size; along the side walls there were large bands with grapevine leaves, and on the vault a Christ monogram was made, in golden-brownish colour, placed within the medallion of 1,15 m diameter, on blue background, within a rich wreath of laurel (fig. 7)<sup>34</sup>. Within this tomb the skeletal remains of three individuals were discovered, and in grave inventory two glass bottles, bronze money, probably minting of Theodosius I from the year 393, as well as remains of silk clothes with golden embroidery of one of the female deceased<sup>35</sup>. Fresco painting from the tomb is heavily devastated by the action of materials from near-by sewer, however, this situation is still unsolved and the frescoes are in danger to disappear permanently.

Recently, thanks to large construction works, large-scale archaeological excavations were carried out in the area of the necropolis in Jagodin Mala. Firstly in the year 2010 a surface of 234 m<sup>2</sup> along the construction of the Boulevard of Vojvoda Mišić was researched, with previous geo-electrical scanning of the soil, and it was determined that previous construction and infrastructure building works damaged numerous grave constructions. One tomb with barrel vault with over ten deceased buried in it was especially damaged, its entrance and steps were destroyed, and the vault was pierced in two places because of the placing of sewer and waterline pipes (fig. 8). Five inbuilt sepulchres and

<sup>31</sup> MIRKOVIĆ 1956, pp. 53-54.

<sup>32</sup> NENADOVIĆ, PANIĆ-SUREP 1956, pp. 142-146; PETROVIĆ 1959, pp. 167-172.

<sup>33</sup> MIRKOVIĆ 1956, p. 58; NIKOLAJEVIĆ 1980, p. 311; PILLINGER 2011, p. 30.

<sup>34</sup> ČERŠKOV, ALEKSIĆ 2008, pp. 102-104, fig. 4.

<sup>35</sup> JAGODIN MALA 2013, cat. 124, 137, 190, fig. 30, 31.

two tombs were researched by protective-systematic excavations, all of them damaged or plundered, as well as approximately thirty graves of freely buried deceased<sup>36</sup>. This research was financed by the Direction for development of the city of Niš.

The area of the western part of the factory complex “Benetton Serbia” (former factory “Nitex”) belongs to the same part of the necropolis, and the archaeological research were carried out in 2012 (fig. 9). The investigations were located in the area for the future factory 1A and fire-preventing road, and sixteen trenches were opened. The findings were exceptional. A total number of 75 grave units with over 120 burials were discovered. It was in this research that it was established that in-built tombs, tombs with barrel vaults and graves with brick and imbrices constructions were erected in regular rows, without overlapping. To these units also belong the finds of two tombs with calotte, one with entrance, with barrel-vaulted arch on the southern side, and the other with built access steps on the east (fig. 3, no 4; fig. 1). Both these tombs were plundered and devastated in Antiquity and in recent times, as well as most of the other tombs. Biggest part of burial inventory comes from freely buried deceased, whose grave marks were probably lost in the antiquity, so rich and diverse jewellery can be found in these units, from precious metals (gold and silver), bronze, glass, amber<sup>37</sup>. Portable finds, as well as the remains of grave architecture, belong mostly to the second half of the IV until the first half of the V century (fig. 10). Because of the extraordinary concentration of graves at one place and



Fig. 8 - Tomb I, Boulevard Vojvode Mišića, researched in 2010, view from the south (photo Zoran Radosavljević-Kiki, Institute for Cultural Heritage Preservation Niš).

their relatively good preservation, an initiative was started, supported by the city of Niš and the investors from “Benetton“, to encompass the large part of the necropolis in one unique exhibition area in the cellar part of the new factory building, to make it accessible to the public.

The necropolis in Jagodin Mala belongs to the period of early Christianity and it is known in the world scientific literature mainly because of the find of the tomb with figural representations of St Peter and St Paul and the basilica with a crypt (for which it is assumed to represent a *martyrium* for some, so far unknown, Christian martyr for the faith). This is an opportunity to remind that since the start of research 80 years have passed and very little has been done for the presentation, preservation and popularization. Firstly, the small scale of research, justified from one side because the modern town covered numerous parts of the necropolis, it was not possible to investigate it and perceive it fully. Secondly, the engagement of the institutions in charge for research, conservation and managing with heritage was used in full capacities, and absence of long-term program of activities to present this heritage monument to the world, led to its stagnation and in some cases devastation. In the last three years, the situation started to change slowly, mainly thanks to the restoration of research activities, as well as the transparency of research results, mainly through the organization of exhibitions of excavation photographs and through the presentation of the results at scientific conferences in Serbia and abroad. It is a fortunate circumstance that in the year 2013 in the birth town of Constantine, Naissus – Niš, the celebration of 1700 years since the Milan edict was proclaimed is held, and the archaeological material and the remains of architecture from Jagodin Mala regain their importance in larger scale, through large exhibition on the Jagodin Mala necropolis, organized by the National museum in Niš. The exhibition is even more important because this is the site from the time of Constantine and his successors, and some of the persons buried here were contemporaries and witnesses of this epoch, in the period when the burials were carried out according to Christian rituals, but with pagan traditions still strong. The burials of deceased in single or luxury family tombs demonstrate that Late Antique Naissus was at this time the town of prosperity and good life. It is our duty to respect this heritage and through good conservation praxis, rational managing, permanent advertising and work on publication of research results bring it closer to our contemporaries and to leave it in the best possible state for future researchers and other interested parties.

<sup>36</sup> ČERŠKOV, JEREMIĆ 2011, pp. 53-54.

<sup>37</sup> JAGODIN MALA 2013, fig. 18, 22.

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Fig. 9 - Benetton Serbia, researched in 2012, panorama, view from the south (photo Zoran Radosavljević-Kiki, Institute for Cultural Heritage Preservation Niš)

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Fig. 10 - Jewellery from grave 66, Benetton Serbia, researched in 2012 (photo Zoran Radosavljević-Kiki, Institute for Cultural Heritage Preservation Niš).