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VUJADIN IVANIŠEVIĆ – IVAN BUGARSKI

TRANSFORMATION OF BURIAL SPACE IN THE CITIES OF NORTHERN ILLYRICUM DURING LATE ANTIQUITY

Zusammenfassung: Das nördliche Illyricum mit seinem langen Donaulimes und Grenzstädten war von den Einfällen und Ansiedlungen der Westgoten und Ostrogothen sowie den Wanderungen der Alanen und Hunnen stark betroffen. Diese Einflüsse gipfelten in den hunnischen Einfällen der Jahre 441 und 443. Die Standorte der spätrömischen Nekropolen in den ehemaligen Wohngebieten weisen auf das Schrumpfen großer Stadtkerne im 4. Jahrhundert hin, was auch durch den Rückgang der städtischen Bevölkerung in den großen Städten entlang der nördlichen Grenze des Imperiums veranschaulicht wird. Nach den Beweisen von *Sirmium*, *Singidunum*, *Margum*, *Viminacium* und *Naissus* im Inneren des Balkans war die Besiedlung der Barbaren nicht überall von gleicher Dauer und Intensität. Besonders in *Singidunum* und *Viminacium*, teilweise auch in *Sirmium* kann man die materielle Nachlassenschaft der donauländischen germanischen Stämme (Goten, Gepiden, Sueben usw.) aus dem 5. – besonders der zweiten Hälfte – und 6. Jahrhundert studieren. Die Gräber aus dem 6. Jahrhundert enthielten Analogien aus westlichem und nordgermanischem Milieu. Obwohl wir über die frühbyzantinische Bautätigkeit in und um *Viminacium* oder *Singidunum* nicht viel wissen und andere archäologische Spuren nicht aussagekräftig sind, weisen die Bestattungssitten und Funde von römischer Provenienz darauf hin, dass man die Einwohner, die die Neuankömmlinge in den Städten angetroffen haben, nicht außer Acht lassen darf. Die grundlegende und gleichzeitig am schwierigsten zu beantwortende Frage ist, inwieweit ihre Ansiedlung die ethnische Zusammensetzung der Städte im nördlichen Illyricum verändert haben kann. Die Untersuchung der Lage der Friedhöfe, der Bestattungssitten und der materiellen Kultur bietet einen grundlegenden Einblick in die turbulenten Veränderungen im Leben der einst großen städtischen Zentren, die bald aufgegeben und dem Zerfall überlassen werden sollten.

Keywords: cities, cemeteries, transformation, local population, foreigners, Late Antiquity, Northern Illyricum

The cities and settlements in Northern Illyricum underwent significant changes from the end of the fourth and during the fifth century. The incursions of the Visigoths and Ostrogoths and their settlement in the northern Balkans and the Pannonian Plain, followed by the migrations of the Alani and the Huns, led to radical political, economic and social transformation in the decades to follow. These parts of the Empire got reshaped by the attacks and settlement of different barbarian¹ groups, which culminated in 441 and 443 with Hunnic incursions under Attila. With its long Danube *limes* and frontier cities, Northern Illyricum was particularly affected by the war. The fortresses of the legions *IV Flavia* and *VII Claudia* in *Singidunum*, *Viminacium* and *Cuppae* lost their importance, as did the smaller military camps on both banks of the Danube mentioned in the *Notitia Dignitatum*.²

¹ The term “barbarian(s)” is here used to label non-Roman newcomers of different origins, notably Germanic, and their material culture. For wider theoretical and terminological considerations, including the use of historical ethnonyms, see, e.g. *Fehr 2010; Brather 2004; Curta 2007; López Quiroga – Kazanski – Ivanišević 2017b; Vida 2017*.

² *Bugarški – Ivanišević 2012* 491–493.

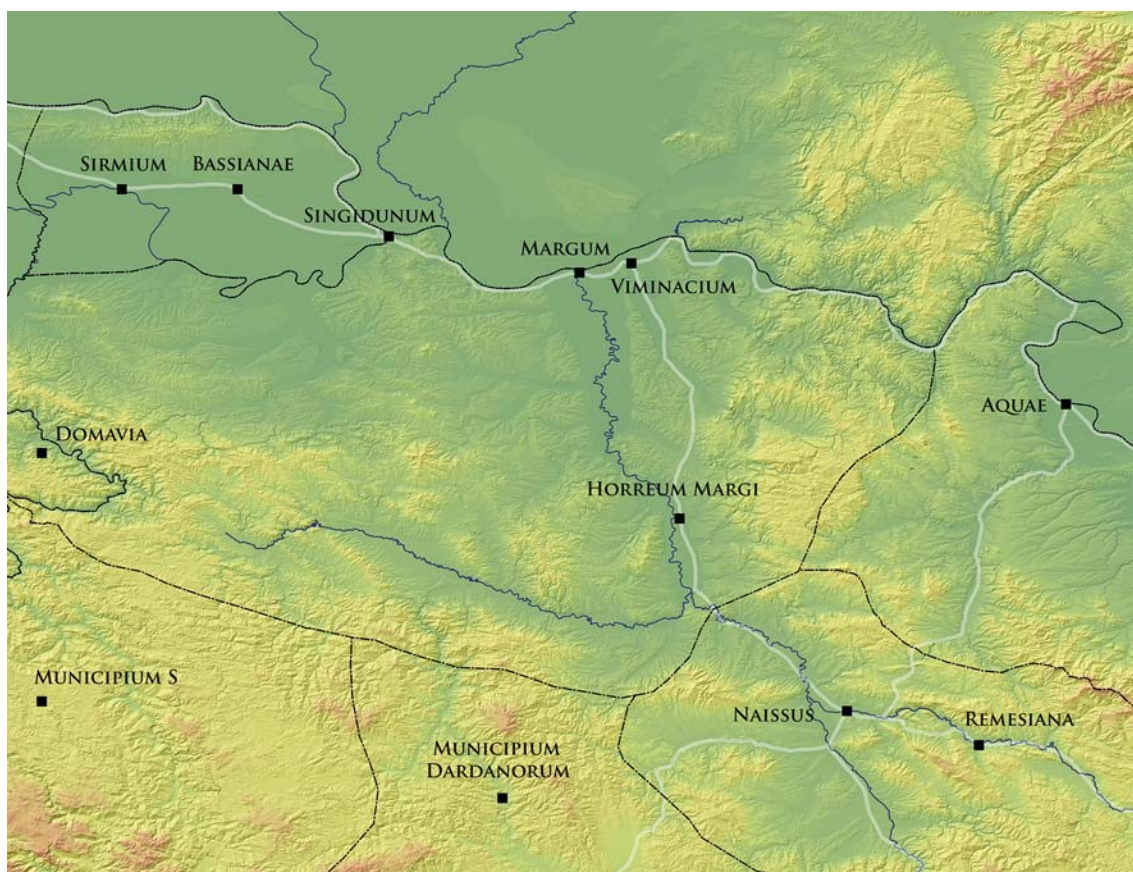


fig. 1. Northern Illyricum, Cities

Wealthy hinterlands that used to supply the Roman army on the frontier suffered most from these turmoils, with the vanishing of large agricultural estates, villas and villages. At this time, all activities were terminated in the once prosperous imperial mining domains in the area of the Kosmaj Mountain, as well as in neighbouring provinces, Dardania in particular. Imperial workshops in the cities were to follow this trend.³ It is not easy to judge the scale of these changes, principally because of the scarcity of written sources and the small overall number of epigraphic monuments. Another problem is the low level of research on cities, both on the *limes* and in the hinterlands. Data on topography and urban planning are very scant and generalised, with the exception of *Sirmium* and *Viminacium* which have been excavated for many decades now, resulting in a better understanding of the extent and urban complexes of these two cities.⁴ In addition, we know little of the above-mentioned estates and villas in the valleys of the major rivers – the Danube, Sava, and Morava – that were also the main arteries of communication (fig. 1).⁵ Unlike the cities, fifth- and sixth-century cemeteries are better explored. Their location in former habitation areas points to the shrinking of large fourth-century urban cores and to a decline in urban population. The Late Roman necropolises which have been explored in major cities along the Empire's northern border, such as *Sirmium*, *Singidunum*, *Margum* and *Viminacium*, and in *Naissus* in the interior of the Balkans, are illustrative of this process. Judging by this evidence, the settlement of the barbarians was not of the same duration and intensity in all places. The basic question, and at the same time the most difficult to answer, is to what extent this settlement

³ *Ivanišević 2016 89.*

⁴ *Popović 1971 119–148; Popović 1968 29–53.*

⁵ *Ivanišević 2015 659.*

could change the ethnic composition of the cities in Northern Illyricum during the fifth and sixth centuries. The small overall number of the finds of barbarian material culture in its interior cannot in itself serve as evidence of a drastic decline in the local population, which apparently took shelter in numerous refugia above the valleys and in the interior of the Balkan mountain ranges.⁶

Sirmium

Sirmium, a prosperous city which hosted fourth-century emperors and their entourage, where church councils took place and which was home to many martyrs, started to lose its importance by the beginning of the fifth century. The last Roman emperor to stay in the city was Valentinian II, while Theodosius I was the last ruler to pass through *Sirmium*, heading for the eastern part of the empire in 394.⁷

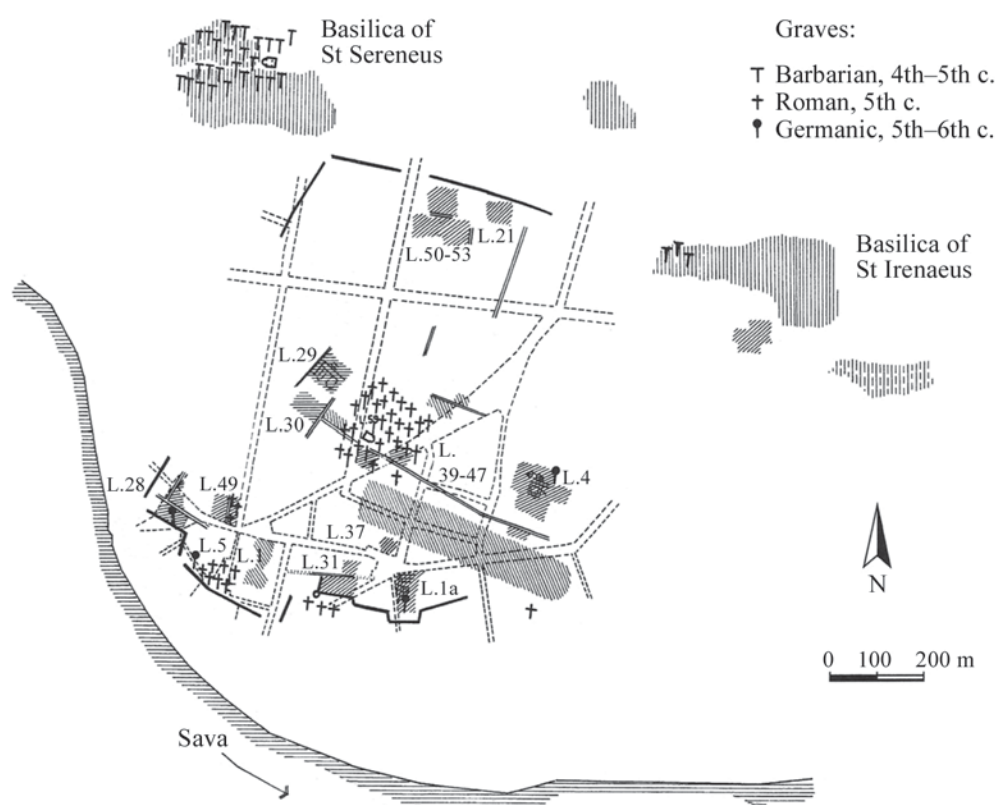


fig. 2. *Sirmium*, Late Roman cemeteries according to Vladislav Popović (*Popović 1982* Abb. 3)

The cemeteries developed to the west of the city, along the road to *Siscia*, and especially to its east, along the road to *Bassianae* and *Singidunum*. There were also some minor necropolises to the north of *Sirmium*. Within the large cemeteries, there were *martyria* such as St Serenus Basilica in the northern part of the city's western necropolis and St Irenaeus Church in the middle part of the eastern cemetery. Early Christian cemeteries developed around these churches, although – due to barbarian incursions – not for long (*fig. 2*). Unlike the results of their anthropological

⁶ *Ivanišević 2015* 658–659.

⁷ *Mirković 1971* 37–42.

analyses,⁸ these cemeteries as yet remain unpublished.⁹ As in other Pannonian cities, in *Sirmium*'s extramural cemeteries there were Germanic graves as well, dated in the older literature from the end of the fourth and to the first half of the fifth century.¹⁰ The graves around the *martyria* in the two extramural *Sirmium* cemeteries yielded bead necklaces, iron buckles, knives and arrowheads.¹¹ Especially important is the find of a tombstone of one Otgarius ([R]otgarius), a Christian Goth.¹²

As noted by Ammianus Marcellinus, already in 375 the citizens of *Sirmium* decided to invest their money in rampart repair instead of building a theatre. It was said that the fortification had been in bad condition as a consequence of the long-lasting peace,¹³ but this was to change. In spite of many efforts in defence of the border, including the 407–412 edict by Theodosius II addressed to the praetorian prefect of Illyricum, in which he insisted that all the citizens had to take part in the erection of fortifications,¹⁴ the cities were to suffer from barbarian incursions. From the beginning of the fifth century, prominent citizens started to leave Pannonian cities, as evidenced by an inscription from *Salona*. Unearthed in 1878, it mentions a *clarissima femina* from *Sirmium* who died in *Salona* in 425 at the age of 30.¹⁵ *Sirmium* lost its administrative status at the time of Attila, when the seat of the prefecture was moved to *Thessalonica*, as noted in Justinian's *Novellae* 11.¹⁶ After 468, at the time of Emperor Leo I and Patriarch Gennadius, the relics of the Great Martyr St Anastasia were transferred to Constantinople.¹⁷

Due to these circumstances and to the decline in population, in the course of the fifth and sixth centuries the city's core moved to the southern parts of the fourth-century polis, towards the Sava riverside. Among other archaeological data, this is best illustrated by fifth-century burials in numerous locations *intra muros*, and particularly south of the Forum and along the southern rampart.¹⁸ While the latest monument from the extramural cemeteries could be dated to the later fifth century,¹⁹ from the end of the fifth and during the sixth century a cemetery developed in the location of the former "Imperial Palace". From what we know so far, the only building constructed in the first third of the fifth century in the central part of the city was the Basilica of St Demetrius, around which a necropolis emerged (*fig. 3*).²⁰ It is important to note that some of the 25 brick-built graves (the very small ones) and two small sarcophagi found at the graveyard around this church contained bones of adults and have therefore been interpreted as reburials of individuals exhumed from the extramural cemeteries before the arrival of the Huns.²¹ It is likely that seven intramural, brick-built graves from Locality 5, likewise Late Roman, date from the same period.²²

All this, together with the barbarian presence in the cities on the Danube in the second half of the fifth century, point to the decreasing significance of *Sirmium*. And yet, the analyses of the cemeteries, the burial rites and the grave goods in particular speak for the continuity and prevalence of the Roman population there in the fifth and sixth centuries. Especially indicative of this are the brick-built graves, sometimes covered with slabs, and small stone sarcophagi, which

⁸ *Miladinović-Radmilović 2011*.

⁹ *Milošević 2001* 159–176.

¹⁰ *Popović 1982* 550.

¹¹ *Milošević 2001* 176.

¹² CIL III 6449; *Kovács 2008* 499.

¹³ *Ammianus Marcellinus* XXIX.6.10.

¹⁴ *Codex Theodosianus* 11.17.4: 605.

¹⁵ CIL III 9515; *Wilkes 1972*.

¹⁶ *Novellae* 11: 94.

¹⁷ *Vedriš 2007* 191–216; *Popović 2016* 182–183.

¹⁸ *Popović 1982* 545–557.

¹⁹ *Milošević 2001* 176.

²⁰ *Popović 2012* 115–118.

²¹ *Popović 1982* 550; *Popović 2012* 131; cf. *Miladinović-Radmilović 2011* 291–310.

²² *Milošević 2001* 177; *Miladinović-Radmilović 2011* 240–241.

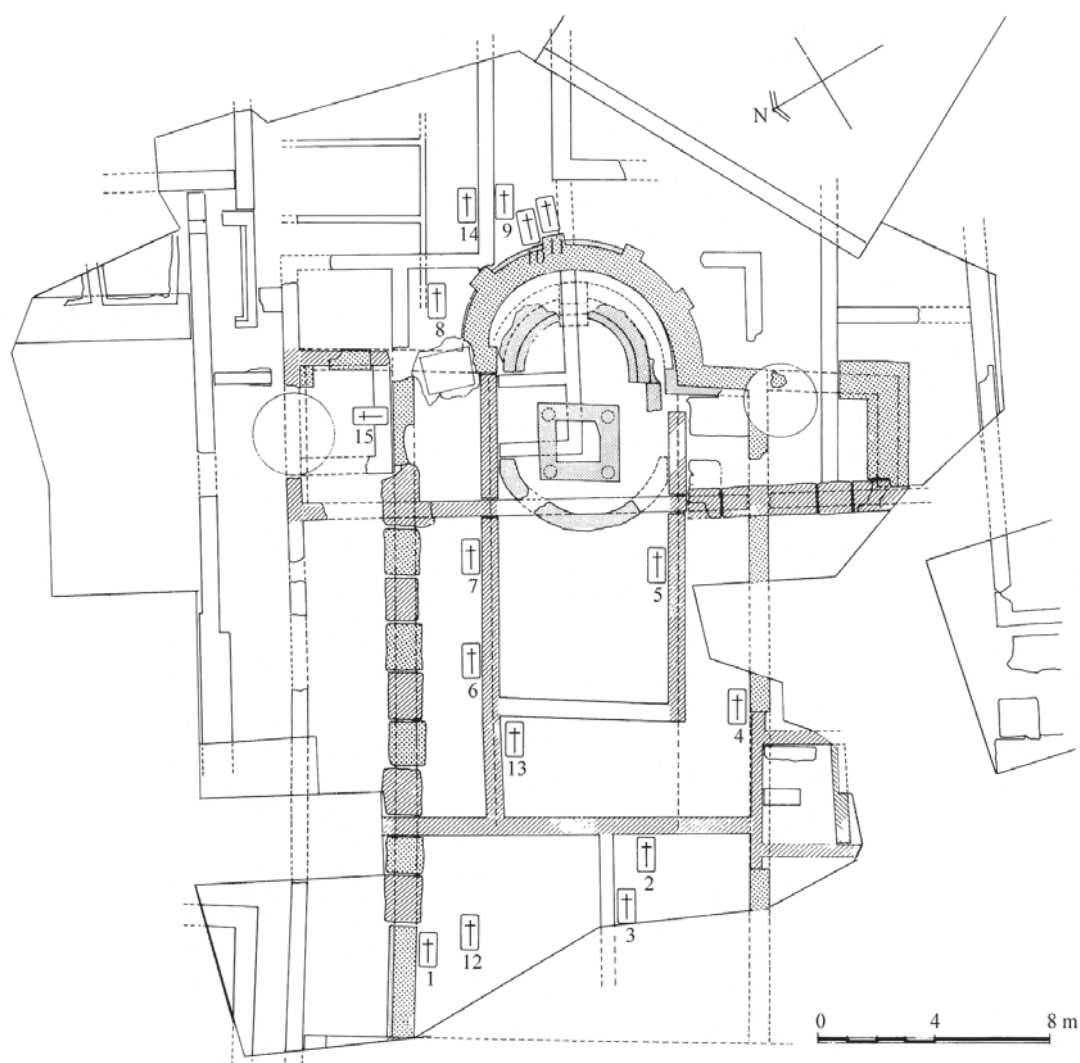


fig. 3. *Sirmium*, Basilica of St Demetrius, Late Roman graves (Popović 2012 fig. 2)

contain the usual repertoire of material culture of the Late Roman population of Pannonia and of the Illyrian provinces; in many cases, they belonged to impoverished local residents.

An exception is a damaged grave from Puškinova Street. As in the case of Locality 5, in the area of the former villa a Late Roman cemetery was apparently established in Locality 3;²³ however, one grave yielded a pair of Reggio-Emilia-type brooches alongside two amber beads and one made of gold (fig. 4).²⁴ These brooches, originating from the Danubian Germanic milieu, can probably be dated to the D3 period (ca. 450–480), or the time of Odoacer.²⁵ Another Eastern Germanic grave, containing a silver-gilt belt buckle with lozengiform plate, dated to the second half of the fifth century, has been unearthed at the long-lasting extramural Zidine cemetery.²⁶

Some of the 26 graves in the area of the former “Imperial Palace” were simply dug in. They have been dated to the middle of the sixth century and attributed to the Gepids, as some of the

²³ Miladinović-Radmilović 2011 239.

²⁴ Dimitrijević – Kovačević – Vinski 1962 93–94, fig. 5. 3; Ercegović-Pavlović 1982 25–27, Pl. 5. 1–4.

²⁵ Menke 1968 245–246; cf. Bierbrauer 1975 108–109, 113; Ivanišević – Kazanski 2002 112–113.

²⁶ Ercegović-Pavlović 1982 19–27; Gavritukhin – Kazanski 2010 116–120.

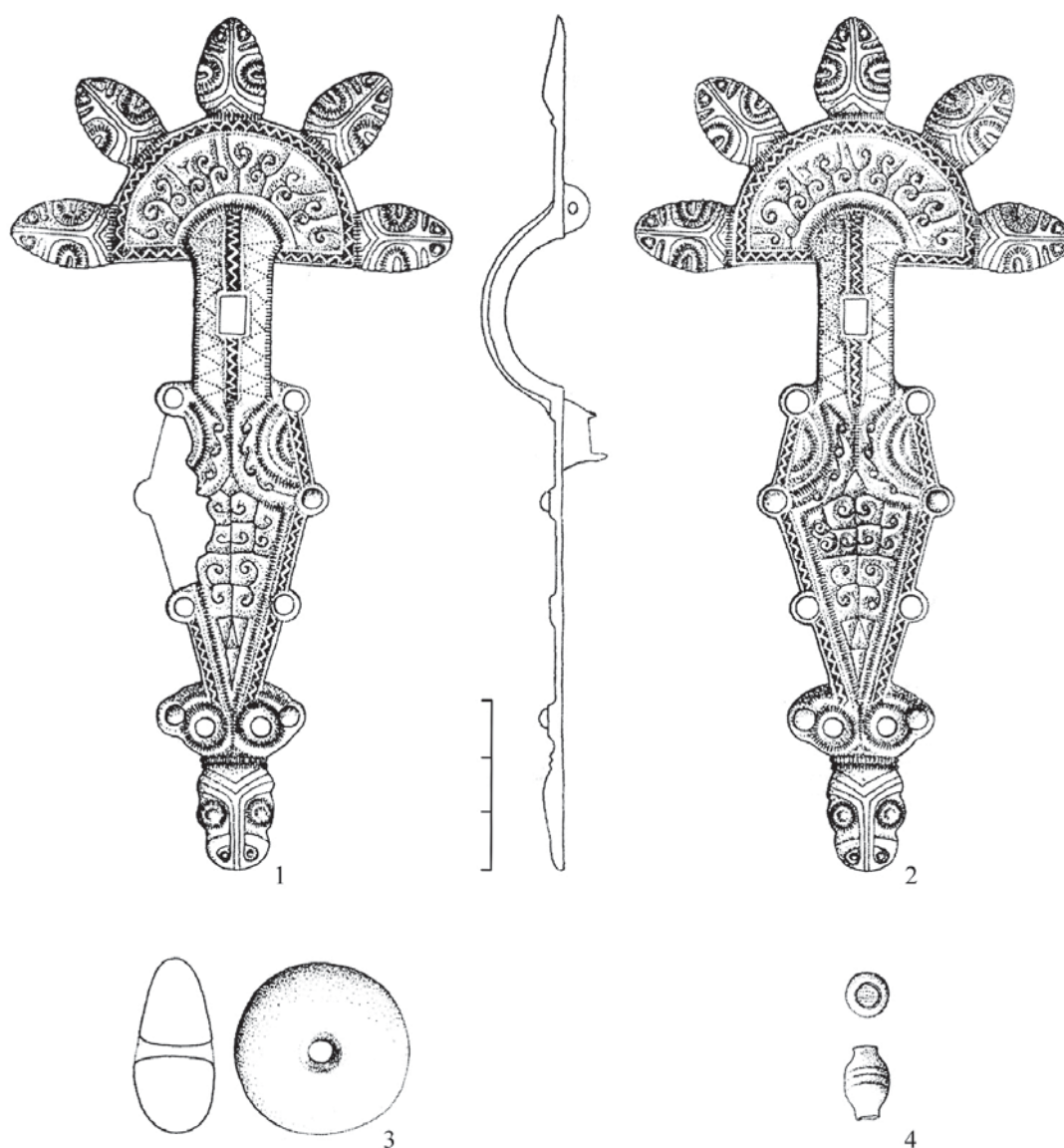


fig. 4. *Sirmium*, Puškinova Steet, Grave 1, Grave goods (Ercegović-Pavlović 1982 Pl. 5. 1–4)

deceased had artificially deformed skulls.²⁷ Judging from the bronze buckles, the graves can be dated broadly within that century.²⁸

Singidunum

Located on the very Danube frontier, *Singidunum* suffered numerous barbarian incursions as well. The city was destroyed in 441, which, according to Jordanes, first led to a Sarmatian occupation, and from 471, to that by the Ostrogoths.²⁹ The city's urban layout is known only roughly: a legionary fortress was located above the confluence of the Sava and the Danube, while the settlement extended along the ridge to the south-east. While very little is known of the city's inner

²⁷ Pejović – Lučić 2011; Miladinović-Radmilović 2011 391–421.

²⁸ Cf. Ivanišević – Kazanski 2002 124.

²⁹ Jordanes, *Getica* LV.282.

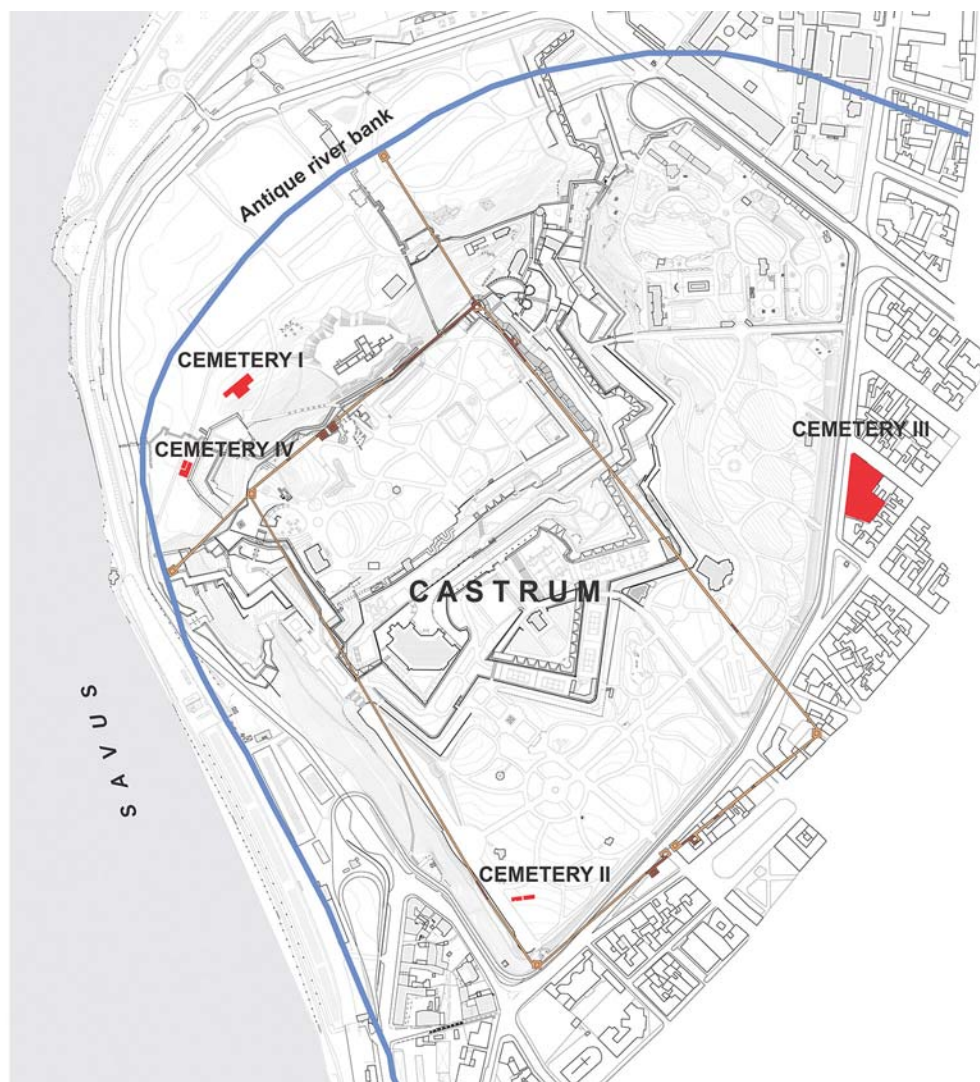


fig. 5. *Singidunum*, Plan of the castrum and location of Great Migration cemeteries I–IV

structure; the areas of the Roman cemeteries are better researched.³⁰ The largest one developed south-east of the city, along the road to *Viminacium*,³¹ and small necropolises were located on the slopes to the north and the south of *Singidunum*, in the direction of the Sava and the Danube. Similarly as in *Sirmium*, these *Singidunum* necropolises illustrate the shrinking of the urban area.

The changes of the fifth century can best be studied in these cemeteries, both in the area of the former fort of the *IV Flavia* legion and within the settlement. The oldest two date from the middle or the second half of the fifth century (*Singidunum* I and IV) (fig. 5). They are located at the foot of the camp, near the Roman port. A total of 16 differently oriented graves were excavated at the *Singidunum* I cemetery. It is likely that members of several families were buried in this necropolis. Only grave 16 produced somewhat more luxurious objects – a bronze brooch and a silver crescent-shaped pendant – while grave 9 contained a pair of iron brooches. In other graves there were no typologically distinct objects, or no finds at all.³²

³⁰ Popović 1997.

³¹ Pop-Lazić 2002.

³² Bjelajac – Ivanišević 1993 134–136, figs 7–8.



fig. 6. *Singidunum*, Cemetery IV, Grave 2, Buckle

The *Singidunum* IV cemetery is located some 100 meters away from the first one. Only three graves have been recorded, at least two of them containing weapons. Grave 1/2006 could not be excavated and grave 3/2005 was plundered; the only find recovered from it was a Dobrodzień-type umbo, dated to the D1 phase, or between 360/370 and 400/410. On the other hand, grave 2/2006 produced a variety of weapons – most of them broken and deposited to the left of the deceased – and other artefacts, by which it could easily be dated between 420/430 and 450, or to the D2 phase. A silver-gilt belt buckle from this grave has parallels in Hungary, where there are similar groups of graves or small elite cemeteries; thus this warrior might have come to *Singidunum* from the Tisza region (fig. 6). Unlike *Singidunum* IV, the first necropolis was the burial ground of lower-class families.³³

Both cemeteries with simple dug graves were established away from the central part of the fortress and the settlement, but were soon followed by burials within the camp, in the area of its south-western rampart (*Singidunum* II). Twelve adults and three infants were buried west-east, without any grave constructions, and a horse was inhumed there as well. Only three graves produced grave goods: from grave 14 came a bronze bracelet, a silver ring, and a buckle made out of bone and bronze, while grave 15 contained a pair of silver brooches, another bronze bracelet, three bead necklaces and a coin minted under Constantius II. Judging from the finds, this cemetery can be dated to the second half of the fifth century; just like *Singidunum* I, it was not elite.³⁴

Particularly interesting for our analysis is the *Singidunum* III cemetery, formed above the northern edge of the former urban core and on the fringes of the Roman necropolis. This damaged cemetery of 105 graves was probably the main graveyard in *Singidunum* during the Migration Period (fig. 7). It can be dated from the end of the fourth to the end of the sixth or the beginning of the seventh century. Many graves overlapped each other, indicating the intensive use of this burial ground. Most of the older graves were oriented east to west and laid in the south-eastern part of the cemetery, while the majority of the graves had an opposite orientation, towards the west. The third group comprises graves oriented to the south; these are located in the north-western part of the cemetery, but some of them in the southern part as well. Unlike the other three cemeteries, *Singidunum* III was characterised by brick and stone built graves in the Roman fashion (38% in

³³ Ivanišević – Kazanski 2009 117–135.

³⁴ Bjelajac – Ivanišević 1993 136–138, figs 9–10.



fig. 7. *Singidunum*, Cemetery III, Plan

total), while the majority (52%) were simply dug in the ground. Such graves are distributed in the southern part of the necropolis – the oldest horizon – and in the central part. In addition to this, there were six other types of graves. Some of them were paved and covered with bricks and/or tiles; there were brick coffins as well, some graves were roofed, and a single one was constructed with stone blocks, imitating a sarcophagus.³⁵

The majority of the graves had been looted; therefore it was not an easy task to determine the social or ethnic composition of the cemetery, or even its internal chronology. However, four graves yielded bead necklaces typical of the fourth and the beginning of the fifth century, a fourth-century buckle and a Keller 3–4-type brooch. The next group of 12 graves belongs to the D2/D3 period, the Smolín horizon: these burials produced a Smolín-type brooch and a bird-shaped one, a metallic mirror, and a Vérand- or Liebenau-type umbo. Comparable finds are known from Germanic contexts in the wider Danube area and cannot be attributed to any particular population group.

The third group of graves can be dated to the last third of the fifth and the beginning of the sixth century, or to the D3/E period. These graves contained typical Eastern Germanic finds such as Reggio-Emilia-type brooches and a silver Italo-Ostrogothic buckle, but also some Mediterranean ones, like a disc fibula. Judging by these finds, the buried were members of a heterogeneous barbarian group, mostly of Germanic descent, which settled in *Singidunum* around the year 500.

³⁵ Ivanišević – Kazanski 2002 103–107, figs 2–4.



fig. 8. *Singidunum*, Cemetery IV, Stray find of the Pécis-type buckle

Some graves can be dated only to a broader period, from the fifth to the early sixth century, and two graves to the sixth century. Finally, one grave containing Roman finds can be dated to the late sixth or the beginning of the seventh century, and a stray find of a Pécis-type small buckle can be assigned to this horizon as well (*fig. 8*).³⁶

The *Singidunum* III necropolis was first used by Germanic *foederati* in Roman service, and by the Germans who ruled the city afterwards. According to the written sources, by the end of the fifth and the beginning of the sixth century, the city and its vicinity had been settled by Ostrogoths, Gepids and Heruli. The grave finds of different origins point to this kind of mixture, irrespective of whether the buried were mercenaries or members of the ruling class.³⁷ That the Heruli were buried in this necropolis is also suggested by pottery,³⁸ and their presence in *Singidunum* and the Danube region was recently underscored again.³⁹

Margum

The least studied city in this survey is *Margum*. One of the oldest Roman cities in these parts, which developed next to the legionary camp, *Margum* regained its importance during the crisis of the Roman Empire. At that time, a system of at least two fortifications on both banks of the Danube – *Margum* and *contra Margum* – was established, controlling a natural crossing point over the river into the Empire's Balkan possessions.⁴⁰ For this reason, *Margum* is frequently mentioned in the written sources.⁴¹ The remains of the city lie at the confluence of the Danube and the Velika Morava, and they suffered greatly from two millennia of flooding and riverbed displacements. Moreover, what was left of *Margum* is currently hidden by a dense forest. Only the recent LiDAR

³⁶ *Ivanišević – Kazanski 2002 124.*

³⁷ *Ivanišević – Kazanski 2002 125–127.*

³⁸ *Tejral 2005 135, Abb. 8. A–C.*

³⁹ *Ivanišević – Kazanski 2010; Ivanišević – Kazanski 2014 146–152; Bugarski – Ivanišević 2013 474–476.*

⁴⁰ *Bugarski – Ivanišević 2012 486; Bugarski – Ivanišević 2013 473–474.*

⁴¹ *Priscus, frg. 2.280: 11–14, 280: 20–281, 6; Jordanes, Getica LVIII.300; Theoph. Sim. VII.10.*

and geomagnetic surveys, and extensive excavations, provided a more substantial glimpse into the poorly preserved urban area.⁴²

Perhaps the most thoroughly studied building at *Margum* was the *thermae* (one of at least three such edifices), excavated back in the nineteen-forties. It was abandoned in the course of the fourth century, and in the overlying layer objects from the fourth and fifth centuries have been found, including crossbow and cicada brooches;⁴³ burnished gray pottery was recovered from the same layer and from some pits. Some graves were excavated next to the *thermae*.⁴⁴

About 100 m to the east of this building, also near the old Morava riverbed, another *thermae* was excavated. It has been concluded that it ended in fire, linked to the Hunnic raid.⁴⁵ In its area a cemetery was explored on two occasions. First, a total of 58 graves were excavated, and in 2011 ten more graves were recorded.⁴⁶ In addition to prehistoric cremation burials, second- and third-century Roman graves were also encountered.⁴⁷ A further five graves were dated to the end of the fourth and the beginning of the fifth century. These were brick-built graves, oriented west to east, with very modest inventories or lacking grave goods. Some of the neighbouring graves may have been of the same date,⁴⁸ and the above-mentioned graves unearthed during the first excavations generally belong to this horizon. The finds from these graves, such as a bronze earring with polyeder-like ending and a pair of simple cast bronze armrings⁴⁹ cannot be attributed to Germanic populations without reservations.⁵⁰

On the other hand, four simple dug graves excavated in the 1989–1990 campaigns have been attributed to the Gepids who settled this strategic point before the year 568, probably as Byzantine *foederati*; the fact that their graves lay among the Byzantine ones was taken as a supporting argument. The series of brick-built graves without inventories may have belonged to the sixth-century burial horizon,⁵¹ as well as a few other burials oriented in the same way as the four ascribed to the Gepids. Apart from the graves, a handful of fragments of characteristic stamped pots also testify to the presence of a sixth-century Germanic population in *Margum*.⁵²

The inventories of these Germanic graves include an iron spearhead and a wheel-made pot decorated with rhombic stamps (grave 15), a burnished ceramic bottle (grave 16), and a spatha with a grip ending in a pommel cast in bronze, unusually pointed towards the head of the deceased (grave 17) (fig. 9).⁵³

These objects can be dated to the first two thirds of the sixth century and have parallels in both Gepid and Lombard milieus. Yet, after a thorough survey of the listed finds, the present authors concluded that the buried at the *Margum* cemetery may well have been Heruli.⁵⁴ This could also be the case with those buried *contra Margi*, at *Constantia (Constantiola)*, present-day Kovin. Usually believed to have been Gepidic,⁵⁵ the five Germanic graves could in fact be assigned to the Heruli.⁵⁶

⁴² Ivanišević – Bugarski 2012; Rummel – Peters – Schafferer 2012.

⁴³ Dimitrijević – Kovačević – Vinski 1962 119, fig. 2.

⁴⁴ Mano-Zisi – Marić – Garašanin 1950 144–153, 155–156, 159–163, fig. 5, fig. 16, fig. 29. 11–12.

⁴⁵ Cunjak 1996.

⁴⁶ Documentation of the Institute of Archaeology, Belgrade. Unpublished.

⁴⁷ Jovanović – Cunjak 1994 107–119.

⁴⁸ Jovanović – Cunjak 1994 119–120.

⁴⁹ Dimitrijević – Kovačević – Vinski 1962 119, fig. 1.

⁵⁰ Bugarski – Ivanišević 2013 468, fig. 2.

⁵¹ Jovanović – Cunjak 1994 120–122.

⁵² Bugarski – Ivanišević 2013 469.

⁵³ Cunjak 1992.

⁵⁴ Bugarski – Ivanišević 2013 469–470, 474–476.

⁵⁵ Cf. Ivanišević – Kazanski 2014 145.

⁵⁶ Bugarski – Ivanišević 2013 474.

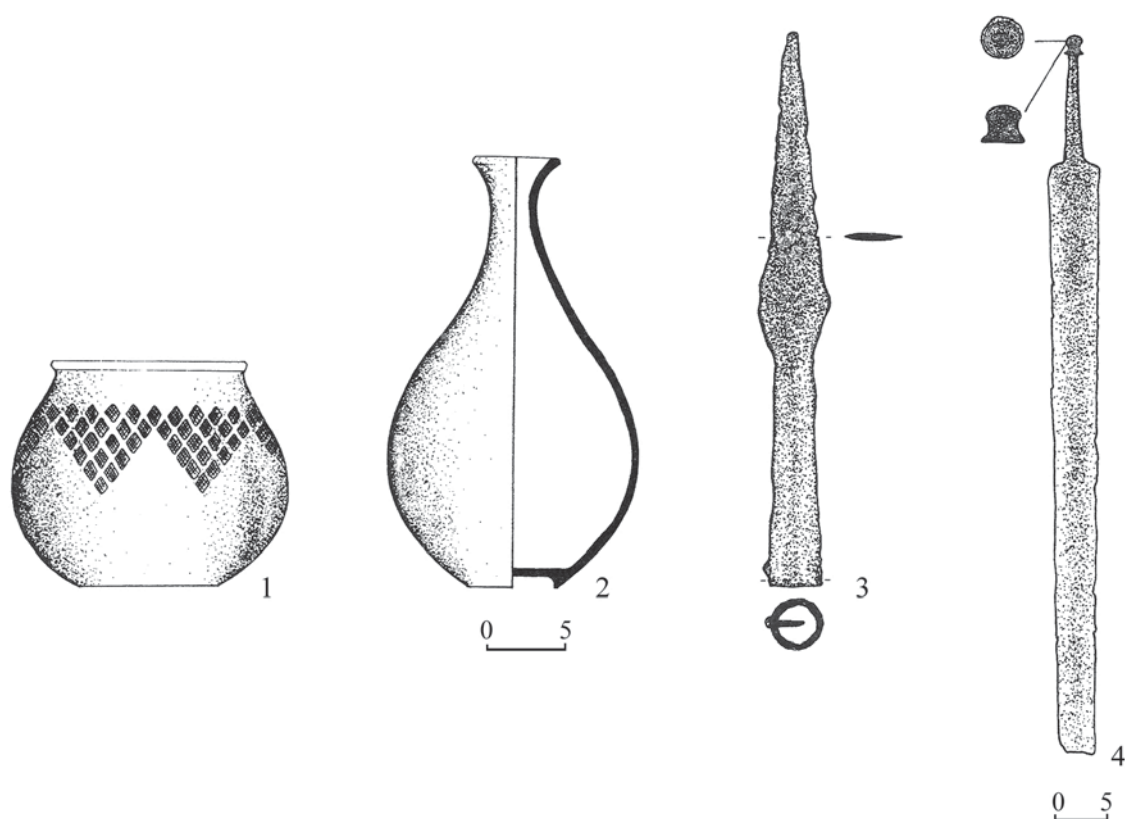


fig. 9. Margum, Cemetery: Grave goods (Bugarski – Ivanišević 2013 fig. 3)

Viminacium

Thanks to the decades-long excavations and the ongoing large-scale geophysical surveys, the topography of *Viminacium*, the capital of Upper Moesia, is rather well known, with well-defined ground plans of the city, military camp, and nearby settlements and villas.⁵⁷ South of the main urban areas, cemeteries were explored at the localities Više Grobalja and Pećine. With more than 14,000 graves, these two sites provide exceptionally good case studies for the research of burial rites in this area between the second century BC and the beginning of the seventh century AD, and particularly between the first and the fourth centuries AD. While the latter remains unpublished, some 1,080 graves from Više Grobalja, both cremated and inhumed, were briefly presented in two publications,⁵⁸ and a Migration period cemetery from the same site was published as a monograph.⁵⁹ Part of the city cemeteries developed east of *Viminacium*, by the surrounding settlements and villas (fig. 10).

In the city itself, there were several necropolises from the Late Antiquity, likewise testifying to the diminution of its urban core. One of the intramural cemeteries, recently recorded and as yet unpublished, was said to have been established in the fourth century in the city's amphitheatre. *Viminacium* too suffered from Hunnic raids, never to fully recover. It has commonly been believed that Early Byzantine *Viminakion* can be identified with the nearby site of Todića Crkva, but the ongoing excavations failed to produce any evidence of a sixth-century occupation there. Thus,

⁵⁷ Spasić-Đurić 2002 13–40; Korać – Pavlović – Mrđić 2006 21–26.

⁵⁸ Zotović – Jordović 1990; Korać – Golubović 2009.

⁵⁹ Ivanišević – Kazanski – Mastykova 2006.

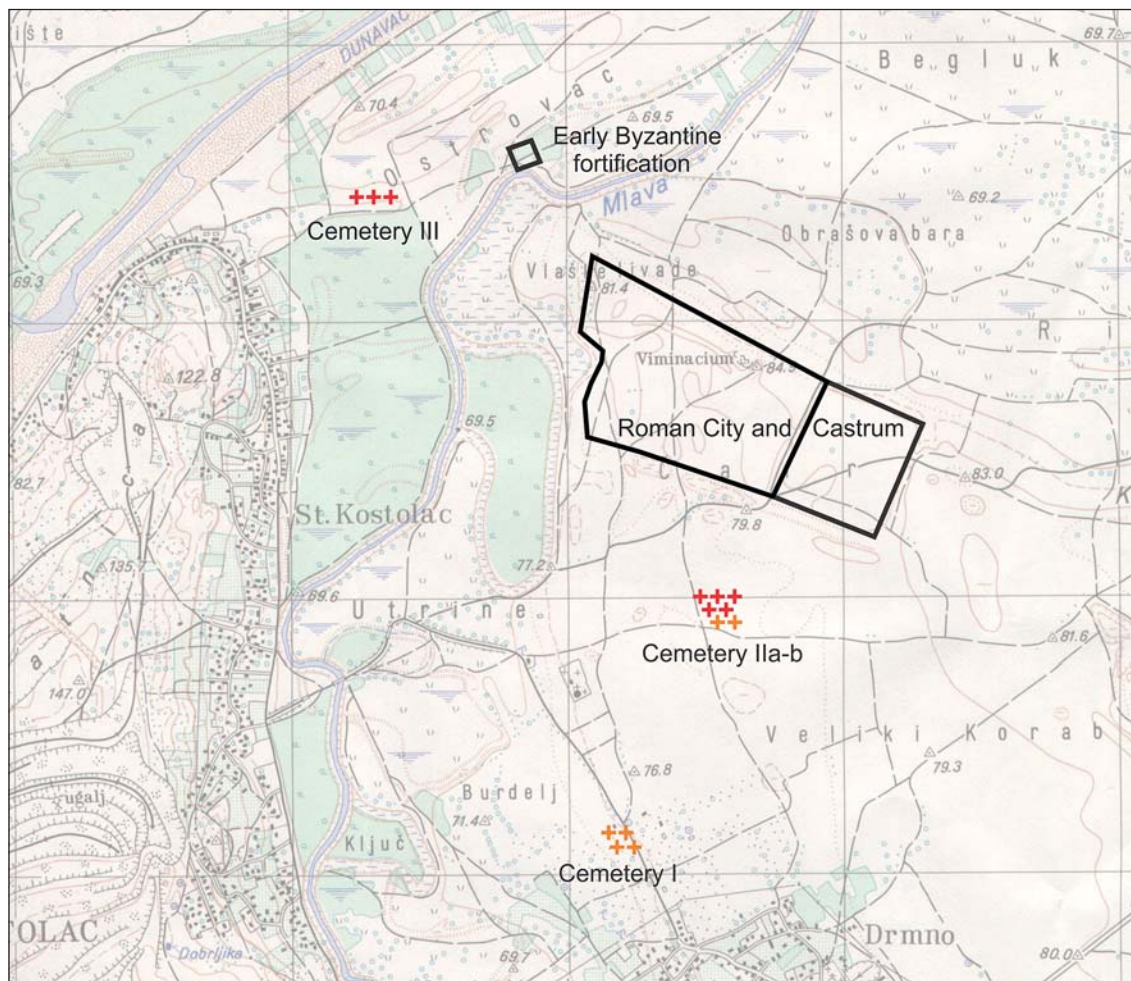


fig. 10. *Viminacium*, Location of Great Migration cemeteries I-III

it is argued now that the sixth-century city was located at the site of Svetinja,⁶⁰ in the immediate vicinity of *Viminacium*, where an Early Byzantine fortification was excavated.⁶¹

Unlike in *Sirmium* and *Singidunum*, the fifth- and sixth-century cemeteries were located outside the city, in the area of the Roman cemetery (Više Grobalja – *Viminacium* Ila and IIb), in the wasteland south-east of a minor third-century necropolis and a small later building (Burdelj – *Viminacium* I), and above the ruins of a Roman building (Lanci – *Viminacium* III). In contrast to the intramural burials in the amphitheatre, the extramural cemeteries are attributed to Germanic peoples. There were 43 such graves at *Viminacium* I, 106 at *Viminacium* II, and a total of 22 graves came from the *Viminacium* III cemetery.

Again unlike in *Sirmium* and *Singidunum*, the majority of the graves at *Viminacium* I and II were simply dug into the ground. Brick-built graves were few: only two such graves were found at Više Grobalja, while at Burdelj they concentrated in the northern part of the cemetery. Only a single brick-built grave was recorded at Lanci.⁶² Grave goods can be ascribed to a Germanic population, and among them there were also Roman products, in particular brooches with bent stem.⁶³ Warriors' graves yielding swords, spearheads, arrowheads and shields are another

⁶⁰ Ivanišević 2016 91–92.

⁶¹ Popović 1988; Milošević 1988.

⁶² Ivanišević – Kazanski – Mastykova 2006 7–12.

⁶³ Ivanišević – Kazanski – Mastykova 2006 type 1.15, fig. 9. 10–26.



fig. 11. *Viminacium*, Cemetery II, Grave 118

characteristic feature of the *Viminacium* cemeteries; a large bronze bowl from grave 118 at *Viminacium* II is an exceptional find (fig. 11).⁶⁴ No such burials have been found in *Sirmium*, and in *Singidunum* they occur very seldom.

In terms of chronology, only two graves from *Viminacium* II (graves 134 and 1607) have been dated to Phase A (D1 and D2 in general chronology), that is, to the end of the fourth and the first half of the fifth century, and some 35 graves in all from *Viminacium* I and II have been assigned to the mid fifth century, or Phase B (D2/D3). The graves from the final stage, Phase C, were the most numerous. They could be sub-grouped into Phase C1, starting from the beginning of the sixth century, Phase C2 from its second third (MD5), and Phase C3, dated to the last third of the sixth century and the first half of the seventh, at the latest.⁶⁵

A considerable number of Western and Northern Germanic finds came from burial phase C. Most of these graves, including the *Viminacium* IIB cemetery, are from the C2 Phase, that is, from the reign of Justinian I, showing that Germanic mercenaries, notably Heruli, played an important role in the defence of the *limes*.⁶⁶ The *Viminacium* III cemetery is of a later date, from the last decades of the sixth and the beginning of the seventh century, providing evidence that the barbarians were also employed to defend the border during the reign of Emperor Maurice and, probably, Phocas (fig. 12).

⁶⁴ Ivanišević – Kazanski – Mastykova 2006 36–43, 47, figs 21–24, 48.

⁶⁵ Ivanišević – Kazanski – Mastykova 2006 119–122.

⁶⁶ Sarantis 2010.

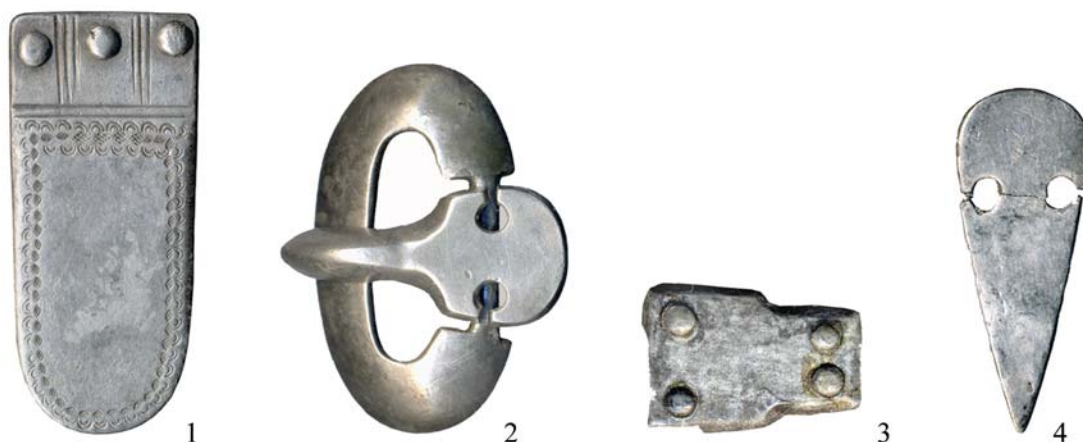


fig. 12. *Viminacium*, Cemetery III, Grave 23

Naissus

One of the most important centres in the interior of Northern Illyricum, *Naissus* was a strategic crossroads between *Serdica*, *Thessalonica* and *Constantinople*, as well as the Danube region and the Adriatic coast. For the most part, the city developed on the right bank of the *Nišava* river, within the limits of a still-standing Ottoman fortress. Very little is known of the layout of the city. Parts of the ramparts have been documented, and parts of a few buildings too, but not enough to discuss the urban planning and the city's development.⁶⁷ After its golden age under *Constantine the Great* and his successors, *Naissus* was badly damaged in 441. Yet, we know from the written sources that the city was to stay within the Empire. According to *Priscus*, in 447 the Empire and the Huns agreed to move their border away from the Danube, at a distance of five days' journey from this river to the vicinity of *Naissus*, where a new market place was to be established instead of the old one, which used to be in *Margum*.⁶⁸

Two Late Roman necropolises, one at the *Gradsko Polje* site, were eventually merged into a single cemetery – *Jagodin Mala* – situated east of the city, along the road via nearby *Mediana* to *Serdica* (fig. 13). Having been excavated since the late nineteenth century, the cemetery is one of the best researched in this region. Of the more than 300 burials, simple dug graves belonged to lower social strata. There were 65 vaulted tombs too, some of them painted with frescoes. The cemetery has been dated between the fourth and the sixth century, or the beginning of the seventh. The fourth- to fifth-century graves display the usual repertoire of Late Roman gold, silver and bronze jewellery, belt buckles and glass *balsamaria*.⁶⁹ The site clearly demonstrates a continuity of burial location throughout Late Antiquity; moreover, some finds from the cemetery may be dated to the first decades of the seventh century, if not even later.⁷⁰

Within the necropolis there were five Christian churches. One of them was a fifth-century three-nave; it had a crypt with *arcosolia* and niches. In the interior of the church and the crypt as many as 55 graves have been uncovered, including brick-built graves, those constructed with stone slabs, and even a small lead sarcophagus decorated with the cross and five relief groups composed of three imperial busts each, possibly from the very end of the fourth century.⁷¹ The

⁶⁷ Petrović 1976.

⁶⁸ *Priscus*, frg. 7.286: 31–287: 7.

⁶⁹ Jeremić 2014.

⁷⁰ Bugarski 2012 234–235.

⁷¹ *Buschhausen – Buschhausen 1989–1990*.

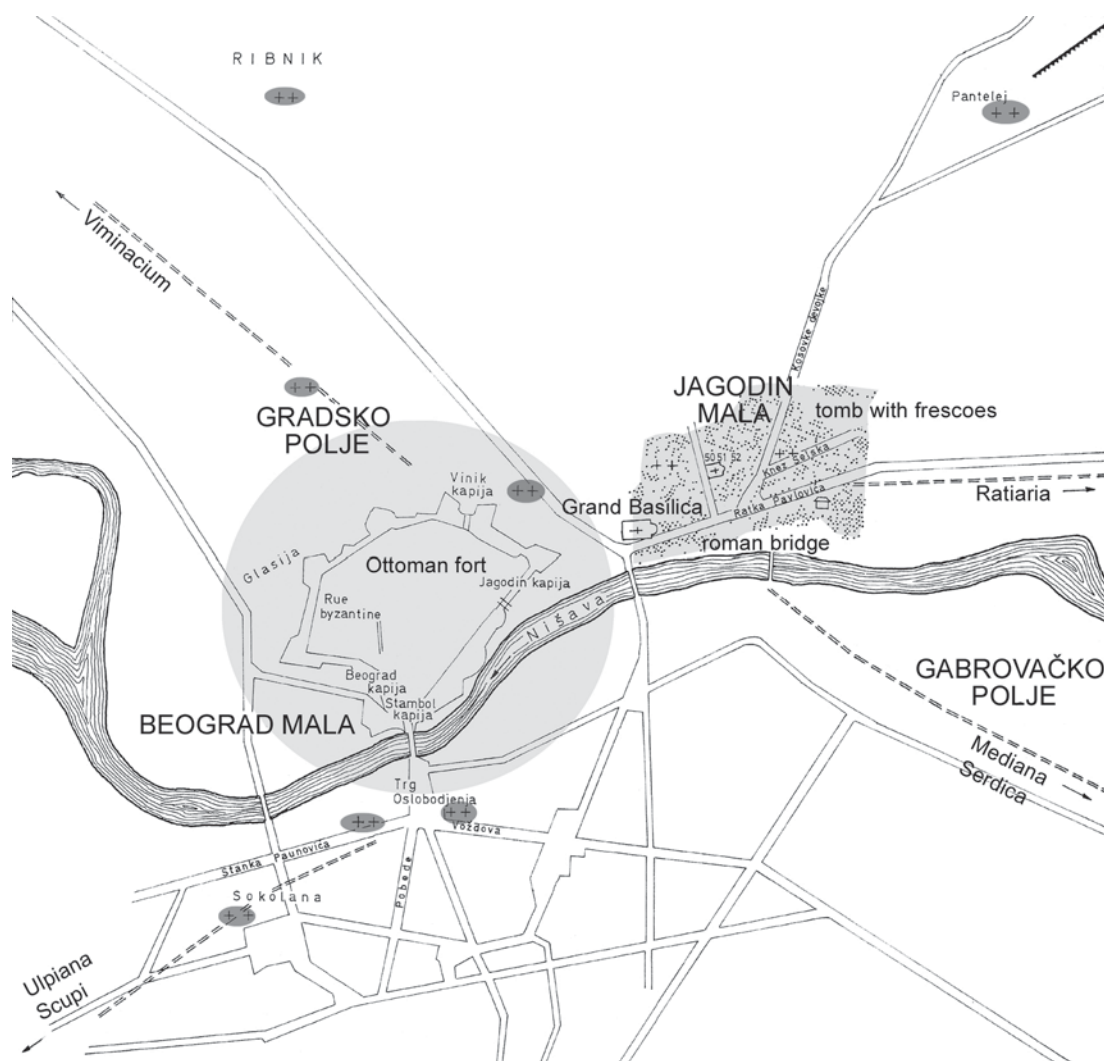


fig. 13. *Naissus*, Location of cemetery at Jagodin Mala (Petrović 1976)

crypt was believed to have been built over an older memorial,⁷² but this cannot be proved. Small cemeteries and single graves have been recorded on the left bank of the river, too.⁷³ Thus, *Naissus* presents telling evidence of urban Christian burial practices of the time (fig. 14).⁷⁴

In the vicinity of the city there were large public villas, the largest being *Mediana*. This estate complex included at least two villas, a *castellum aquae*, a pair of large *horrea*, and extensive rows of barracks.⁷⁵ At the nearby Čele Kula railway station site a small fourth-century cemetery has been excavated, probably belonging to this complex.⁷⁶

While at Jagodin Mala and in the other smaller cemeteries around *Naissus* no graves have been found which could be linked to barbarian settlement, these came from *Mediana*. Some small finds from this site, particularly a brooch with good analogies in the Chernyakhov–Sântana de Mureș culture,⁷⁷ belong to the D1 Phase.⁷⁸ Moreover, after this important economic centre had

⁷² Milošević 2004.

⁷³ Ajdić 1974 33–45.

⁷⁴ Jeremić – Filipović 2016 1745–1751.

⁷⁵ Petrović 1994; Milošević – Peters – Wendling 2011.

⁷⁶ Jacanović 1980.

⁷⁷ Jovanović 1989 91, fig. 4.

⁷⁸ Ivanišević 1999 97–98, fig. 1. 2.



fig. 14. *Naissus*, Jagodin Mala cemetery, Late Roman grave

lost its original function, four graves were dug into the debris of the Late Roman buildings, near a modest single-nave church containing a simple mosaic with a Christogram. Next to it there was another small church. These important finds have not yet been properly published; grave 34 was mentioned for its inventory – a double bone comb and a crescent-shaped bronze pendant. The cemetery (?), as well as the churches, may be connected to a short stay of a Germanic, notably Gothic population at *Mediana*. According to Miloje Vasić, this horizon lasted between the years 378 and 441, when, judging from coin evidence, *Mediana* too saw its end.⁷⁹ Some of the brick-built graves excavated south and east of the Villa with Peristyle are from a later date, perhaps from the (late) sixth century.⁸⁰

Conclusions

This brief survey of the fifth- to sixth-century cemeteries in Northern Illyricum points to both a reduction of urban areas and a spatial differentiation of burials in and around the cities. To summarise, *Mediana* is the location of the oldest Migration Period cemetery in this area. Its establishment speaks of losing the importance that this large *villa publica* with numerous warehouses once had in supplying the troops and the *limes*. The necropolis was formed on an already ruined and abandoned estate, next to the small churches built by the same *foederati* settlers. Entirely different from the urban ecclesiastical architecture of *Naissus* and coming from a barbarian context, with respect to the historical framework the churches and graves from *Mediana* may be safely attributed to the Arian Goths.

We do not know of any similar burials from nearby *Naissus*; it would appear that Christian practices were entirely different there – uniform, urban and richly funded. In *Naissus*, which

⁷⁹ Vasić 2004 290–292.

⁸⁰ Maksimović 2002.



fig. 15. *Naissus*, Tombstone of Peter (Photo Miro Radmilović)

became a border city in the middle of the fifth century, the existing cemeteries were continuously used by the Romanised local population until at least the beginning of the seventh century. Particularly striking is a tombstone discovered in the cemetery area, dated to the mid-sixth century. The epitaph of a certain Peter, son of the vicar Thomas, among Christian names mentions that of his brother Gentio as well, which is of south Illyrian origin.⁸¹ The inscription is also a testimony to the important social role the Romanised residents played in *Naissus* (fig. 15).

It is likely that towards the end of the fourth century and during the first third of the fifth there were some Gothic graves in the extramural Roman cemeteries of *Sirmium*. Intramural burial was first practiced by the local residents, and only later by Germanic newcomers: by the end of the fifth century, their graves started to appear in these cemeteries too, although not in the main one, around the Basilica of St Demetrius. Only in the sixth century do Germanic graves appear *intra muros* in a more significant proportion, at the site of the former “Imperial Palace”.

In the middle of the fifth century and/or in its second half, two Migration Period cemeteries were formed in *Singidunum*, outside the then-settled area (*Singidunum* I and IV). Another foreigners’ necropolis was established in the second half of the same century, which was intramural, namely the *Singidunum* II cemetery. The *Singidunum* III cemetery was founded in or at the end of the

⁸¹ *Vulić* 1934 47 n° 38; PLRE 1320 – Thomas 22.



fig. 16. *Singidunum*, Cemetery III, Grave 78

fourth century; the oldest group of graves contains Late Roman material, also present in Migration Period contexts. On the other hand, the next group of graves, dated to the middle third of the fifth century (Phase D2/D3), comprises Germanic burials, as does the third group, dated to the last third of the fifth and the beginning of the sixth century (Phase D3/E).

There were also Roman graves in the same cemetery, although in this case the grave type (simple dug graves or those built with brick) cannot be taken as a criterion for whether or not a grave was Roman. Some brick-built graves (e.g. graves 1 and 2) yielded typical Germanic finds, whereas grave 78, containing a Keller 3–4-type brooch, was simply dug into the ground (fig. 16).⁸² Of all the analysed necropolises, this one best demonstrates the ethnic diversity of the period. Most of the grave goods are typical of the Germanic peoples successively settling along the Danube *limes*.⁸³ At the same time, a considerable number of grave goods belong to the Roman tradition.

Furthermore, even if we knew very little of *Margum*'s topography and the fortification circuit – only the line of the eastern rampart can be partially established on the basis of the LiDAR data and field survey⁸⁴ – as the graves from the second and third centuries had been documented in the city cemetery, it could easily be deduced that it was extramural. In contrast to this, judging by their location, the graves recorded during the early excavations by the then-uncovered *thermae* must have been *intra muros*. Even though they cannot be narrowly dated, one can suppose that these graves were dug during the period of Germanic rule over the city and the region, between *ca.* 441 and 510.⁸⁵ Contrariwise, the four extramural graves may have belonged to the Byzantine *foederati*. They must have been dug after the city and the wider region had been reclaimed by the Empire, which would also support their attribution to the Heruli.

Most of these briefly described cemeteries belonged to the foreigners; only the main necropolis in *Margum* and perhaps *Singidunum* III were initially Roman. Although the *Viminacium* cemeteries

⁸² Ivanišević – Kazanski 2002 127, 136, Pl. I. VI. 78.1.

⁸³ Cf. Špehar 2012.

⁸⁴ Ivanišević – Bugarski 2012 250, fig. 8.

⁸⁵ Cf. Bugarski – Ivanišević 2012 492–494.

were formed in the area of the earlier Roman burial ground, they were separate Migration Period graveyards. Brick-built graves in these necropolises were not numerous and they contained no finds; they were probably Roman. We may conclude that, unlike in other cases, in the *Viminacium* area the persisting Romans used Germanic cemeteries.

Given its location, it is likely that the Lanci cemetery, or *Viminacium* III, was in fact used by the *foederati* garrison stationed at Svetinja;⁸⁶ the Germanic presence there has also been dated approximately to the last third of the sixth century (*fig. 12*).⁸⁷ The same could be true of the other two necropolises, but it is also possible that there was another, as yet undiscovered, *foederati* settlement in the area of the former metropolis. Richly furnished graves in all three cemeteries testify to a significant social differentiation among the barbarians and mirror their status during the times of Emperors Justinian I, Maurice and, probably, Phocas.⁸⁸ An enormous share of *amphorae* sherds in pottery contexts at Svetinja illustrates another lucrative role these mercenaries played: the distribution of goods,⁸⁹ and the finds of lamellar armours also speak of their importance to the Empire.⁹⁰

Stepping out of the comfort of our case studies to the risk of drawing more general conclusions, we shall first repeat that the numerous fifth-to-sixth century cemeteries in *Singidunum* and *Viminacium* are illustrative of ethnic and social differentiation in burials. The process of formation of new cemeteries has much to do with population movements, either within the cities themselves or in connection with the settlement of newcomers. In the first period, i.e. the first half of the fifth century, small groups of graves occurred along the *limes*, from *Sirmium* and *Viminacium* to *Aquae*, and in the hinterlands, at *Mediana*. They can be dated to the D2 and, especially, D2/D3 horizons.

From the middle of the fifth century, new cemeteries were formed in the urban quarters of *Sirmium* and *Singidunum*. This period in the history of Illyricum is illustrated with numerous objects of material culture, either single finds or those originating from the cemeteries, testifying to the settlement of Germanic peoples in the Empire. Their necropolises were established within the cities and in their surroundings. In the case of the *Singidunum* area, such small cemeteries, or even solitary graves, are known from Ostružnica,⁹¹ Rospi Čuprija and Karaburma.⁹²

Most of the graves from this period constitute homogeneous groups with common characteristics: the deceased were laid on their backs and oriented towards the north or west, and were buried with objects of personal adornment found in either functional layout or deposited next to the dead, perhaps as grave gifts. Being similar to burials from the second third of the fifth century in the Middle Danube region, these graves did not contain weapons, tools or vessels; a similar group of simple graves is also known from *Sirmium*.

Luxurious finds from the somewhat more recent graves of the same horizon speak for a social differentiation among the barbarians and the emergence of elite groups. Judging by the finds from the graves and their position within them, the bulk of the population buried in the largest of *Singidunum*'s cemeteries from this time (*Singidunum* III) was Eastern Germanic. This attribution is corroborated by the fashion of wearing the brooches on the chest and shoulders, as documented in female graves. The Germanic brick-built graves are also highly illustrative of the acculturation processes.

The restoration of Byzantine rule in Northern Illyricum, in the provinces of Moesia Prima and Pannonia Secunda, was followed by reconstruction of the fortifications in cities and on the *limes*.

⁸⁶ *Ivanišević – Kazanski – Mastykova 2006* 133.

⁸⁷ *Popović 1988* 26–31.

⁸⁸ *Ivanišević – Kazanski – Mastykova 2006* 129–136; *Ivanišević 2016* 92.

⁸⁹ *Ivanišević 2016* 92.

⁹⁰ *Bugarški 2006* 174–175; cf. *Glad 2010* 184.

⁹¹ *Tatić-Đurić 1958*; *Bjelajac – Ivanišević 1993* 138, *fig. 11*.

⁹² *Bjelajac – Ivanišević 1993* 133, *fig. 6*.



fig. 17. *Viminacium*, Cemetery II, Grave 133

At the same time, the Empire encouraged the settlement of barbarians such as the Heruli in the *Singidunum* area, to whom we may ascribe, with due caution, the large cemetery Kormadin by Jakovo in the Syrmia region.⁹³ As evidenced in the *Margum* and *Viminacium* cemeteries, in the course of the first half of the sixth century the Empire engaged new groups of *foederati* to help defend the Danube border, especially the strategically important places.

Oriented to the west or north-west and containing ceramic vessels, weapons and tools, these graves differ from those of the previous horizon. Moreover, the finds of brooches with bent stem and belt buckles from the *Viminacium* and *Singidunum* cemeteries clearly indicate Byzantine fashion influences. Particularly characteristic are the finds attributed to Western and Northern Germanic populations: brooches with rectangular head and extended bows (fig. 17), the *Weibschwert*-type umbo with silver rivets, decorated scabbards and, to some extent, pottery.⁹⁴ Numerous weapon-graves at the Više Grobalja cemetery (*Viminacium* II) clearly reflect the presence of mercenaries on the Danube *limes* at the time of Justinian I. They were also engaged later on, as evidenced in the *Viminacium* III necropolis and their settlement at Svetinja (*Viminakion?*).⁹⁵ The presence of barbarian troops in the hinterlands was sporadic. The unique grave from *Ulpiana – Justiniana Secunda* is very telling,⁹⁶ as is Procopius' passage on subduing a riot in this city in 552.⁹⁷

Especially in *Singidunum* and *Viminacium*, and to some extent in *Sirmium* too, one can study material culture of the Danube region Germanic peoples (Goths, Gepids, Suebes, etc.) from the fifth – particularly its second half – and sixth centuries. The sixth-century graves contained finds with parallels from Western and Northern Germanic milieus. Although we do not know much about Early Byzantine building activity in and around *Viminacium* or *Singidunum*, and other archaeological traces are not conclusive, burial rites and finds of Roman provenance, especially brooches and belt buckles, warn us not to overlook the local residents whom the newcomers encountered in the cities.

In spite of great efforts, the cities were to disappear, and the population mainly moved to Dalmatia, as once again evidenced in *Salona* by the gravestone of a certain Domnica, *quae a Sirmio Salonas adducta est*,⁹⁸ and the epitaph of the nun Iohanna, who also came there from *Sirmium*, dated to 551 or 612.⁹⁹ This was also the fate of the population from other parts of

⁹³ Dimitrijević 1960; cf. Bugarski – Ivanišević 2012 494–495.

⁹⁴ Ivanišević – Kazanski – Mastykova 2006 type 1.3, 14.1, 14.7.2.

⁹⁵ Popović 1988 21–23, 26, 34–35.

⁹⁶ Milinković 2003; Milinković 2006.

⁹⁷ Kovačević 1963–1964.

⁹⁸ CIL III 9576; Kovács 2008 501.

⁹⁹ CIL III 9551; Bašić 2008 84–88.

Northern Illyricum. In the *Miracles of St Demetrius II* it was claimed that Thessalonika was to house refugees from the Danube region, *Pannonia*, *Dacia* and *Dardania*, as well as from other provinces and cities.¹⁰⁰ That part of this population was re-settled in the Barbaricum is testified by the cemetery in Vajska.¹⁰¹ The deceased buried there¹⁰² may even have originated from *Sirmium*.

The issue of relationships between the various barbarian groups, notably of Germanic stock, and the remaining Romans in the fifth and sixth centuries, up to the early seventh-century collapse of Byzantine rule in Northern Illyricum, is very complex. The study of the cemeteries' layout, burial rites and especially material culture provides only a basic insight into the turbulent changes in the lives of once large urban centres which were soon to be abandoned and left to disintegrate.

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