

# LIMES XX

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VOLUME II



# LIMES XXIII

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Congress of Roman Frontier Studies,  
2<sup>nd</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> September 2018

Viminacium – Belgrade, Serbia

VOLUME II



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*These proceedings are dedicated to the memory of  
C. Sebastian Sommer,  
dear friend and colleague,  
man who dedicated his entire life to the Roman limes.*

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**Proceedings of the 24<sup>th</sup> International**  
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# Limes in Serbia - the early days

## ABSTRACT

The arrival of Romans to the territory of what is now Serbia was a complex process. In certain aspects, local population along the Danube was already acquainted to the Roman material culture. Still, many aspects were completely new to them. In an occupied country and with new inhabitants, local people had to find a way to survive and adapt themselves to the new situation. Those who chose to stay, gradually made contacts with the Romans, initially presumably through trade and supplying. However, those who decided to leave, crossed the Danube and fled to barbaricum. Their role in what was yet to come was also of great importance both for the barbaricum and for the Roman Empire.

**KEY WORDS: ROMANIZATION, ROMAN LIMES, NEW ERA, DANUBE, SCORDISCI, SERBIA**

During the last decades of the Old Era, in many parts of Europe, social and economic changes took place, caused by the always growing power of Rome. Even before actual occupation, presence of Roman traders and trade were attested. The expensive Samian ware or bronze ware was exchanged against raw materials or slaves. However, regular trade was established only after the Roman army reached these regions.

### Settlements and forts

At the territory of modern Serbia, both unfortified and fortified pre-Roman settlements were erected close to the land or fluvial roads and communications. As an example, unfortified Scordiscian settlements in Srem can be named. Many of them were discovered and

excavated during construction of the motorway from Belgrade to Zagreb (Fig. 1). Many of them were well-preserved and indicated a highly developed Late Iron Age farming (Brukner 1995, 188, plan 2).

On the other hand, fortified pre-Roman settlements (Todorović 1974, 50), for example those along the right Danube bank, showed poor state of preservation. This is mainly because they were destroyed by fluvial erosion. Many of them also suffered from destruction during some of the later periods – Roman, Byzantine or even later.

An illustrative example of continuity from pre-Roman to Roman times can be seen at the right Danube bank in eastern Srem. In pre-Roman times, there was a row of Scordiscian fortifications, the *oppida*, placed upon

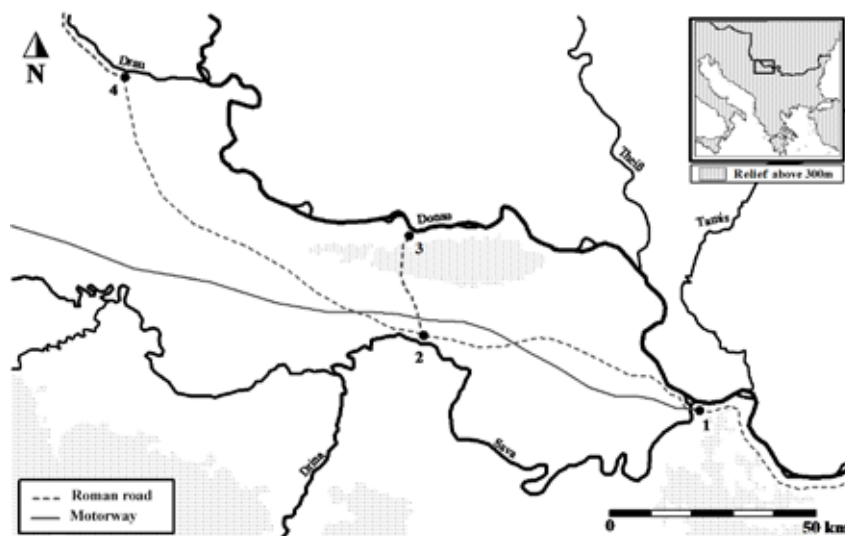


Fig. 1 - Direction of the Roman road compared to the modern motorway from Belgrade to Zagreb (after Brukner 1995, 188, plan 2)

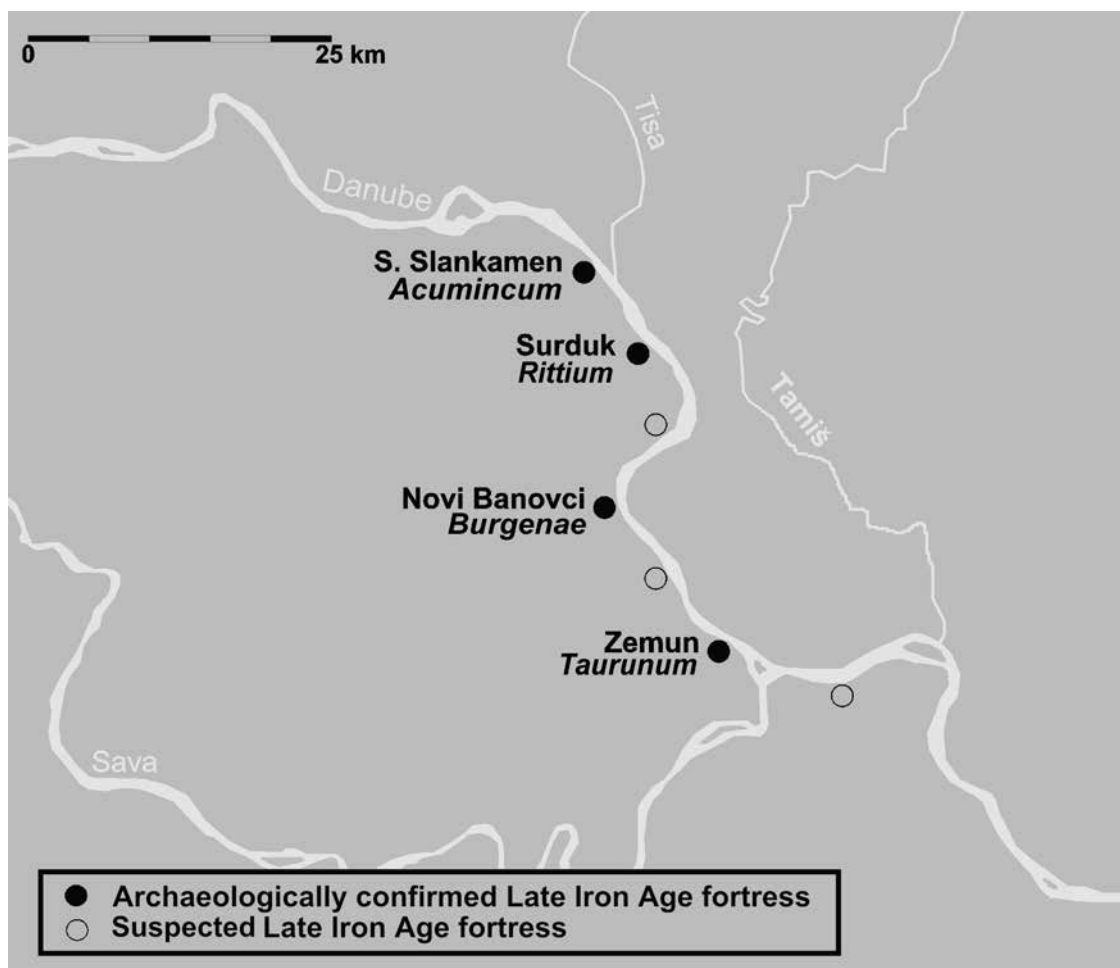


Fig. 2 - Scordiscian forts along the Danube, later turned into Roman castra (after Tapavički-Ilić 2007, Fig. 1)

the right Danube bank. All of them were at an approximately same distance from one another, measuring about 7 km and visible to one another. In Roman times, on all of those places, Roman *castra* were established,

their names now known, from *Acumincum* (Slankamen) in the north to *Taurunum* (Zemun) in the south (Тапавички, Илић 2006а; Tapavički Ilić 2007). (Fig. 2) Due to its strategic position at the mouth of the river

Tisa into the Danube, *Acumincum* represented an important stronghold and the center of the *civitas Scordiscorum* through the entire Roman period.

If we move to the south, the two well-known pre-Roman sites include *Singidunum* (Belgrade) and *Viminacium* (Stari Kostolac). Both during pre-Roman and Roman times, they possessed extraordinary strategic positions. On both sites, significant traces of Scordiscian culture were discovered (Todorović 1972; Jovanović 2018). In Roman times, they turned into important military strongholds and legionary forts. Due to presence of the Roman army, these two settlements soon developed into large cities and represented spots of highly advanced Romanization.

### Burials

Changes that took place in burying rites relate more to grave-goods and less to actual graves. A good example includes graves of the so-called “Stenjevac” type, common for the period between the turn of the Eras to the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD in Pannonia Inferior (Jovanović 1984, 50). (Fig. 3) Those are cremations performed on a common stake, with remains later transferred to the grave pits and buried together with grave-goods. Grave-goods of pre-Roman times include pre-Roman types of pottery, jewelry (brooches or arm-rings) and weapons. The same type of graves from Roman times also includes pottery, only this time mostly Roman tableware. (Fig. 4) Further on, there are vessels made of metal or glass, oil-lamps and coins. Weapons were no longer parts of such grave-good sets. (Jovanović 1984, 49-51). (Figs. 5 and 6)

A specific and very new type of burials was brought to these regions by Roman soldiers from Gaul – burials in the shape of wells or shaft graves. They were never widely spread here and they were dated into a limited time span, actually only the beginning of the Roman presence. They were discovered on sites later to become great urban centers, like *Singidunum* (Belgrade), *Viminacium* (Kostolac) and *Sirmium* (Sremska Mitrovica) (Valtrović 1885a; Valtrović 1885b; Golubović 2008; Milošević 1985).

Finally, the highlight of Romanization in the realm of the dead includes the tombstone inscription from the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> and the beginning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD discovered in Slankamen (*Acumincum*). It is well-

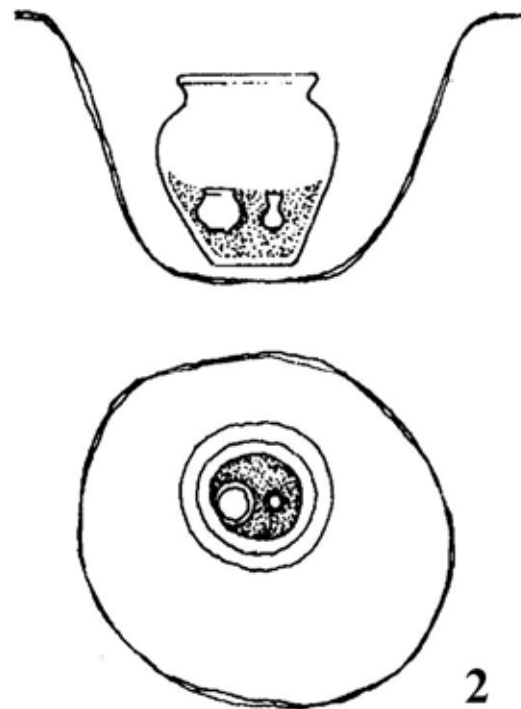


Fig. 3 - Example of the “Stenjevac” type grave (after Jovanović 1984, 50, Fig. 11)

known that prehistoric pre-Roman ethnicities in the Balkans were illiterate. But here, on this inscription, a man named *Titus Flavius Proculus* is mentioned, who was a *princeps praefectus Scordiscorum* (Papazoglu 1969, 265). It clearly shows that Scordisci were up to a certain level integrated into the Roman administration and were enjoying some kind of limited autonomy.

### Pottery

After the Roman occupation, only wheel-thrown pottery underwent changes. Most of the table ware types were replaced with Samian or Campana ware. However, until the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD, only the newly immigrated Italic population was the user of Samian or similar high-quality ware. Local inhabitants did not use it. Only after the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD did local pottery workshops get romanized. This is confirmed with finds of various molds for the production of Samian or Terra Nigra vessels, but also with finds of various jugs or amphorae. (Tapavički, Ilić 2009). (Fig. 7)

Simple, not wheel-thrown pottery was not imported and this refers to kitchen ware. Pots, sieves, lids or storage vessels did not change at all. The only type of kitchen ware that was imported is a *mortarium*. It stands exclusively in connection with Roman cuisine



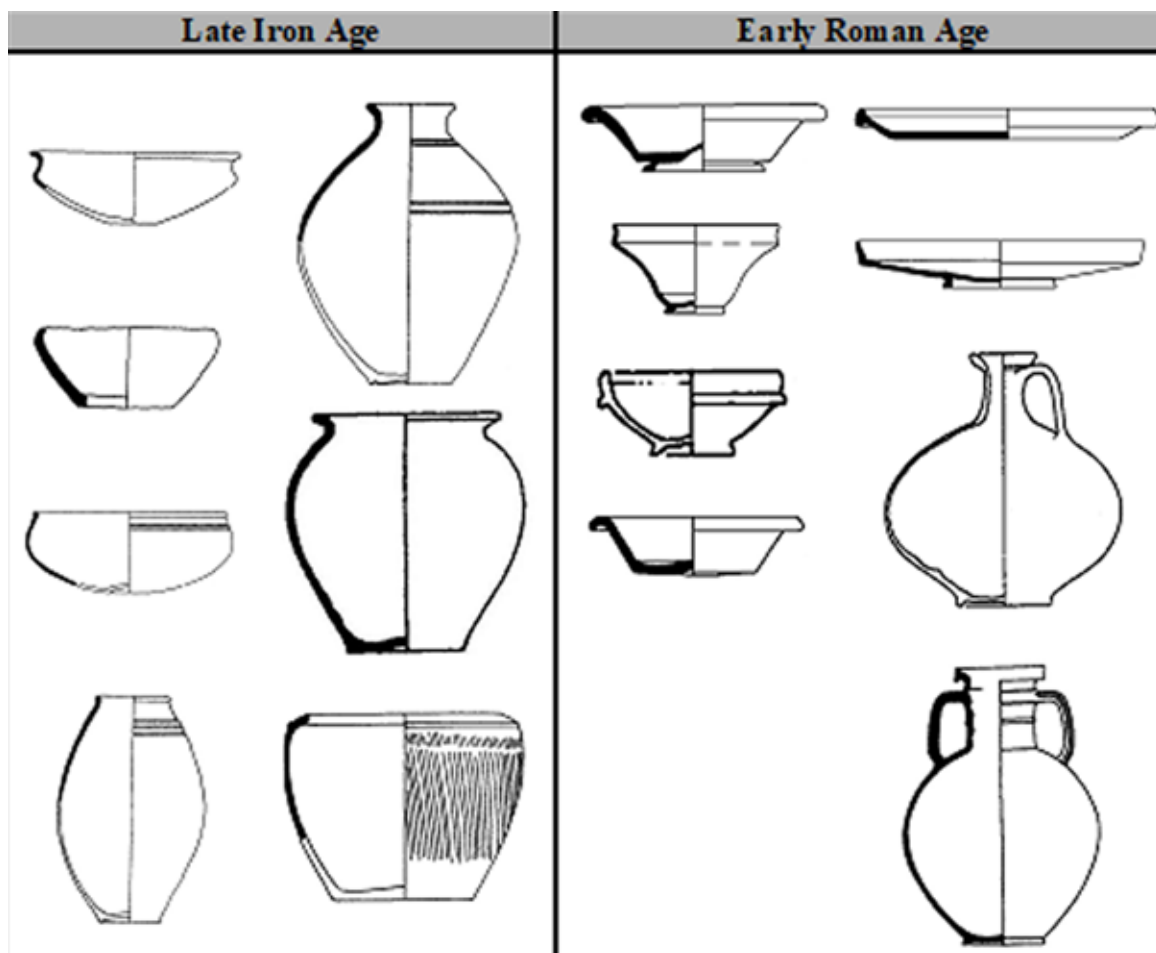


Fig. 4 - Comparison of vessel types deposited as grave-goods in pre-Roman and Roman times

LATE IRON AGE	EARLY ROMAN AGE
SWORDS	SWORDS
SPEARS	SPEARS
SHIELDS	SHIELDS
	PICK - AXES
	AXES
	TONGS
	WHET STONES
	MEDICAL INSTRUMENTS

Fig. 5 - Comparison of grave-goods in pre-Roman and Roman times (male graves)

and their way of preparing food and was not known in pre-Roman times. Presence of *mortaria* among finds

indicates changes in local diet (Tapavički, Ilić 2008). Before the arrival of the Romans to the territory of

LATE IRON AGE	EARLY ROMAN AGE
BROOCHES	BROOCHES
SCISSORS	SCISSORS
GLASS BEADS	
METAL PENDANTS	
	TERRACOTTA FIGURINES
	CASKETS
	OIL - LAMPS
	MIRRORS

Fig. 6 - Comparison of grave-goods in pre-Roman and Roman times (female graves)

DEVELOPMENT OF POTTERY FROM PRE-ROMAN TO ROMAN TIMES													
Bowls		Sieves		Lids		Beakers		Jugs		Pots		Containers	
Pre-Roman time	Roman time	Pre-Roman time	Roman time	Pre-Roman time	Roman time	Pre-Roman time	Roman time	Pre-Roman time	Roman time	Pre-Roman time	Roman time	Pre-Roman time	Roman time

Fig. 7 - Comparison of pottery types in pre-Roman and Roman times

modern Serbia, Dacian cups were used as lamps. Their main fuels were various lipids. In Roman times, the earliest import of oil-lamps occurred. It reflects developed trade, not only of oil-lamps, but also of olive oil, that was used as fuel. According to mold finds, the

earliest workshops for oil-lamp production were established in Pannonia during the second half of the 1<sup>st</sup> century.

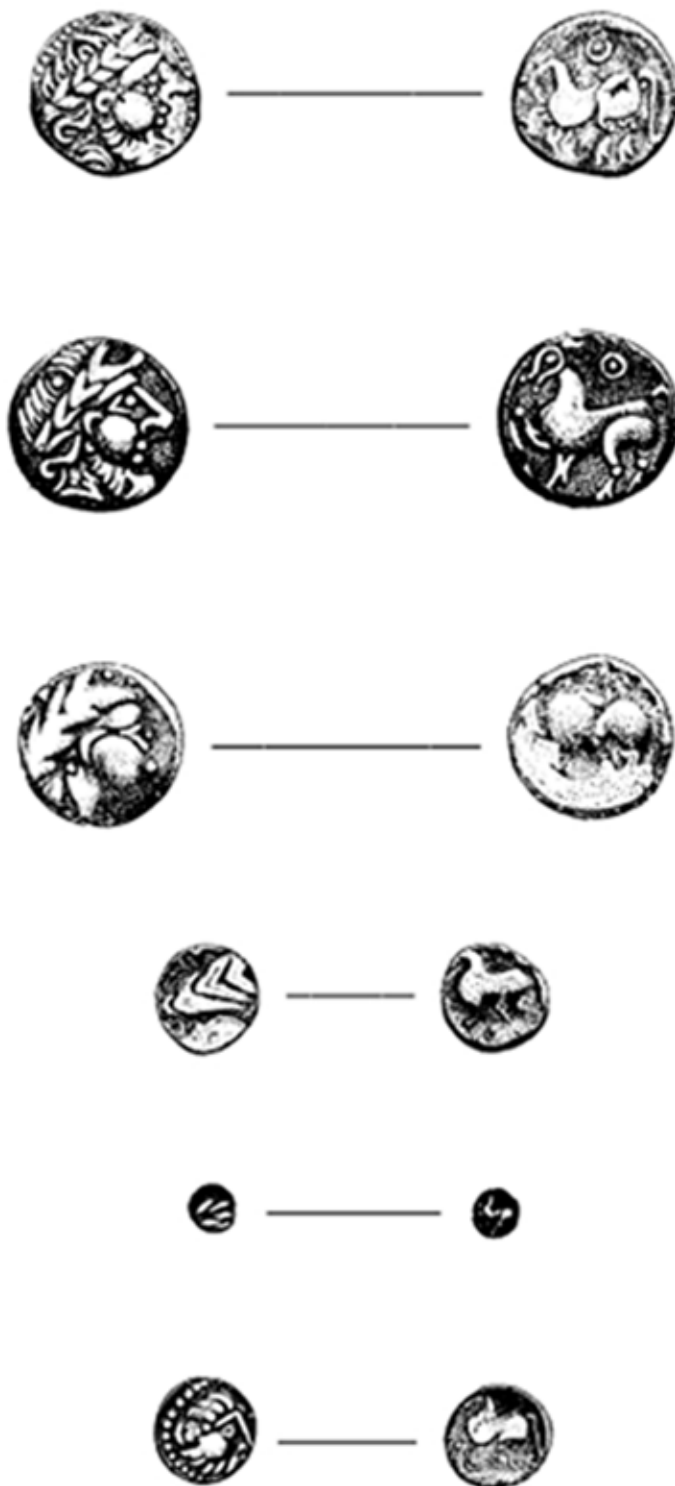


Fig. 8 - Changes in images and weight of Scordiscian coins of the "Srem" type  
(after Popović 1987, 46, Fig. 1; 48, Fig. 2; 51, Fig. 3; 52, Fig. 4; 53, Fig. 5 and 59, Fig. 6)

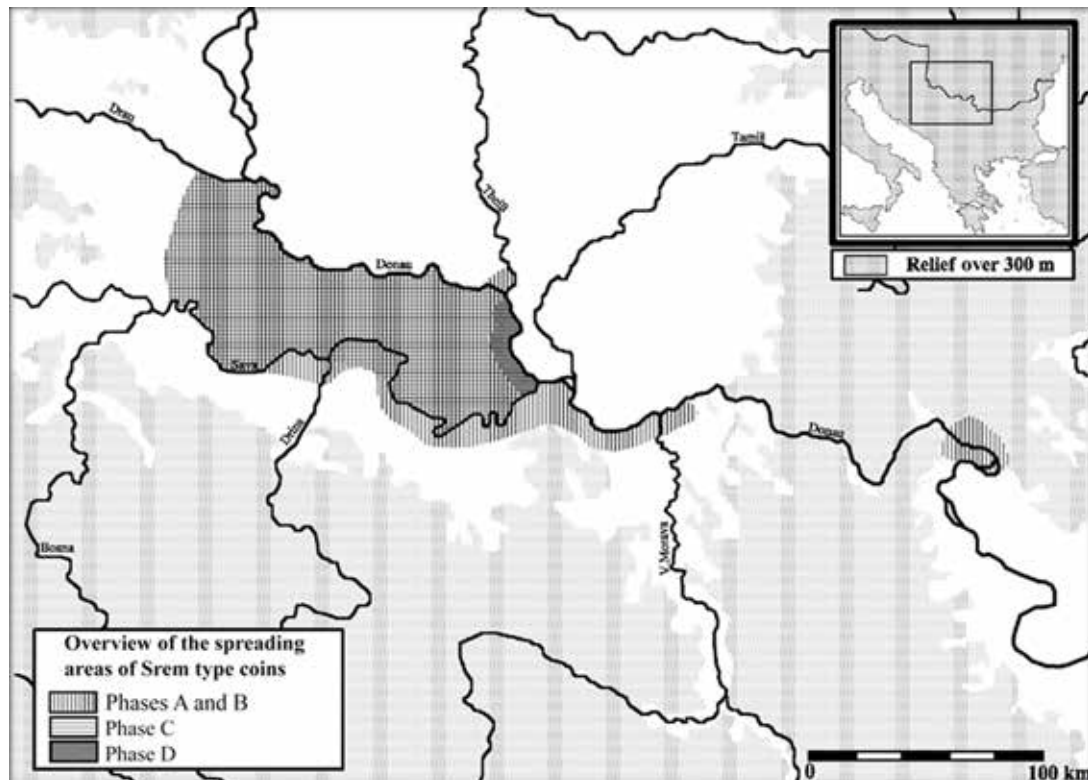


Fig. 9 - Narrowing down of the spreading territory of the Scordiscian “Srem” type coins

### Coinage

At the territory of modern Serbia, the tribe of Celtic Scordisci was the first one to mint coins. Their earliest minting was in silver, but only after bronze coins were introduced, one is allowed to speak about monetary economy. As an example, the “Srem” type of coins shall be named, minted from the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC to the turn of the Eras. It was first minted in silver, but later on in bronze. With the always decreasing metal quality, weight reduction and decrease of artistic expression took place. The fourth indicator of decline was narrowing down their spreading territory, as shown on map. (Fig. 8 and 9) Coin circulation was thus limited only to a narrow strap along the Danube River in eastern Srem. With such a process going on, it was easier for the Romans to suppress the local currency and to introduce a common monetary system throughout the Empire. This change took place at the turn of the Eras, much supported with the always growing needs of the Roman army stationed in this part of the Empire (Tapavički, Ilić 2006b).

### Conclusion

It may seem that this overview of changes is too short and too modest. Possibly it is. The idea was to illu-

strate only those changes that took place soon after the Roman occupation, basically during the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD. On the other hand, the idea was to illustrate only those changes that have been confirmed archaeologically. Surely, also many other aspects of life have changed, but archaeological evidence is missing or it hasn't been discovered yet. For example, there must have been changes in costume, both male and female. New animal species must have been introduced. The same refers to agriculture - new kinds of crops, fruits and vegetables must have gradually been introduced. Marshy soil around the rivers must have been dried out and new surfaces gained for ploughing. At the same time and in the same manner, new surfaces were gained for building a road network, leading to an easier movement of people and goods. So, better trading conditions were established.

Among the intangible changes, there must have been a gradual change in religious aspects. Local deities were either forgotten, but most likely assimilated with the Roman gods, giving them a so-called *interpretatio Romana*. Along with this, there must have been a change in onomastic, both regarding people's names and names of geographic terms, like settlements, rivers, mountains etc. Some can be recognized bearing eg. Celtic prefix or suffix (like *Singi-dunum*).

Romanization was a long lasting process, with its highs and lows. It was a process that took place more or less spontaneously. On one hand, the Romans tried to gain sympathies of local aristocracy and people in general. On the other hand, there was always a tendency by local populations for an easier and better way of living, like they imagined the life of Romans would have been. The more local populations were influenced by the Romans, the easier it was to control them. Many of such influences still remain to be discovered.

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## Zusammenfassung

In diesem Text versuchte man, jede Änderung in den Leben der Einheimischen darzustellen, die nach der römischen Okkupation stattfand. Die Leitungsidee war, nur diejenigen Änderungen darzustellen, die im Laufe des 1. Jh. n. Chr. stattfanden, aber auch nur diejenigen zu besprechen, die archäologisch nachweisbar sind. Sie schließen Änderungen in Siedlungs- und Straßenbau, in den Bestattungssitten, in der Herstellung unterschiedlicher Gegenstände wie Tongefäße, Lampen,

Schmuck oder Münzen mit ein. Bestimmt haben sich auch weitere Lebensaspekte geändert, wozu archäologische Nachweise nicht existieren oder noch nicht entdeckt wurden (wie Tracht, Landwirtschaft oder Viehzucht). Darunter kommen auch Änderungen in unterschiedlichen Religionsaspekten. Einheimische Götter wurden wahrscheinlich mit den römischen assimiliert und durch eine *interpretatio Romana* verehrt. Aufgrund einer lateinischen Inschrift konnte man ebenso Änderungen in der Verwaltungsstruktur nachvollziehen.

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