

VIVERE MILITARE EST

FROM POPULUS TO EMPERORS - LIVING ON THE FRONTIER
VOLUME I

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EARLY CHRISTIAN FINDS ON THE MIDDLE DANUBE LIMES*

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ABSTRACT

The paper deals with the Early Christian objects in the Middle Danube Limes from Singidunum to Aquae. According to their function, shape or decorative content, it is possible to divide them into items that used in liturgical practice (silver chalices, bowls, spoons used during the Eucharist, flagon, procession crosses, lamps) and various objects, which shape, inscription or ornamental elements indicate Christian character, but which were intended for secular purposes (jewelry, steelyard, crest application with Chi-Rho monogram, fibulae etc.).

In addition to the local products, a certain number of objects consist of imported material produced in some major production centers, most often in the East, from where they were distributed to the other parts of the Roman Empire. A significant number of imported items indicate Egyptian origin, with their separate production centers, and from where they had been brought as an import to the Balkan region by trade routes. Some of the products were manufactured in western centers of manufacture. All registered Early Christian items, in their own way shed light on a turbulent period in this region from the 4th to the beginning of the 7th century.

KEYWORDS: EARLY CHRISTIAN OBJECTS, LOCAL AND IMPORTED PRODUCTS, MIDDLE DANUBE LIMES, 4TH TO THE BEGINNING OF 7TH CENTURY.

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

Religious objects had a special significance in the period of early Christianity, showing not only a commitment to religious institutions, but also the economic development of the ecclesiastic community to which they belonged. Discovered church hoards contain, along with the objects that were used in liturgical rituals, numerous gifts including votive objects of great value obtained from donors, or as an income from properties that were bequeathed to the church. The contributions of believers, members of the church community, together with income from church properties was one of the main sources of the church's wealth and it was used for, among other things, the construction and decoration of sacral structures. On a large number of silver vessels (chalices, bowls, glasses, spoons, etc.) that were intended for liturgical rituals, most often found engraved is the Christogram. As opposed to late antique silverware of the early 4th century, at the end of 4th and during the 5th century, and particularly during the early Byzantine period, Christian symbolism was an integral part of decorative content, whether in the ornamentation or the content of the inscriptions that were relatively common in this period.

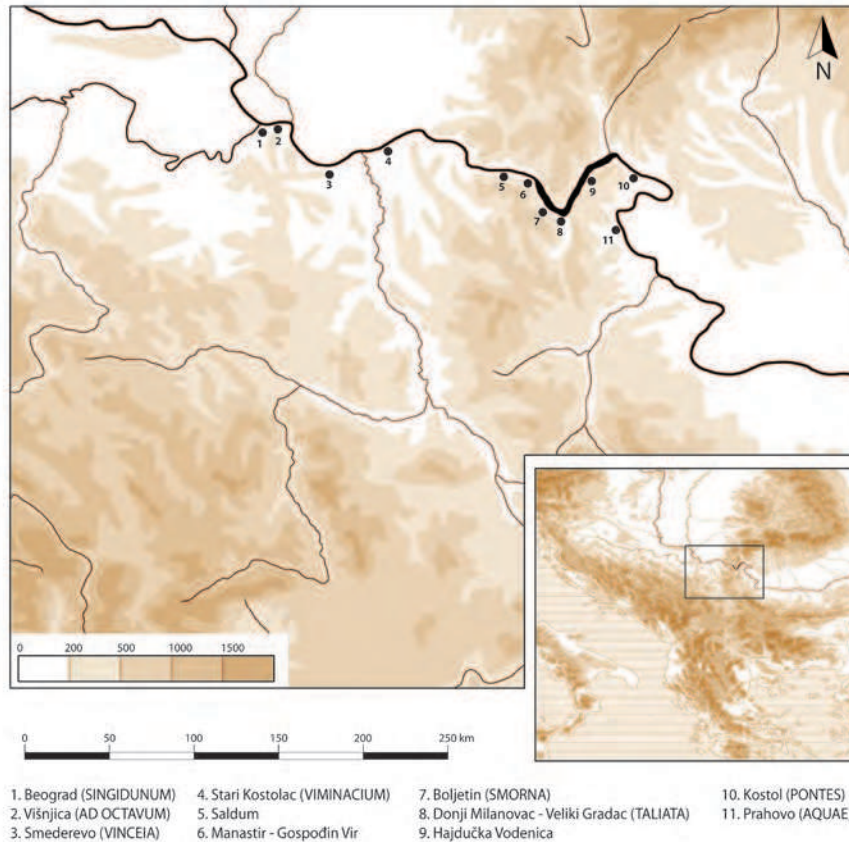
When it comes to the area of the Danube Limes in the territory of today's Serbia, we can distinguish a rich collection of different early Christian objects of liturgical practice or various objects whose shape and decoration indicate their Christian character, but which were intended for secular purposes. All of them confirmed that the presence of Christians was deeply ingrained into the Roman army (Map 1).

From *Viminacium*, the capital of *Moesia Prima* and the Episcopal See in the 4th century,² we can distinguish a rich collection of silverware. Five silver chalices on a high conical foot with a cover (two of them preserved) were made by casting technique with engraving (Fig. 1).³ There are numerous chalices with a similar shape that are attributed to the Early Byzantine period on the basis of control stamps or the style of craftsmanship. The profile of the silver chalice's foot found at the Riha site, near Aleppo in Syria, now in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection in Washington,⁴ is similar to the foot of the *Viminacium* chalices. Based on the five identified stamps in the inner side of the foot, the chalice is attributed to one of

2 About the significance of the Episcopacy in *Viminacium* see the paper "Evidence of Early Christianity on the Danube Limes, from Singidunum to Aquae" in this Collection.

3 Popović 1994, kat. 277–281.

4 Ross 1962, cat. 9, Pl. X.



Map 1. The sites on the Middle Danube Limes with early Christian findings

the Constantinople workshops during the reign of Justinian I.⁵ In the north of Syria and the eastern part of Asia Minor, abundant hoards of silverware, gifts of some wealthier members of the church community, have been found. To date, approximately fifty silver vessels as individual findings that belonged to the church of St. Sergius in Kaper Koraon, in the vicinity of Hama, have been found.⁶ It is believed that the silver chalice with a strainer, now preserved in the Museum of St.

⁵ Cruikshank Dodd 1961, cat. 8.

⁶ The hoard of church items made of silver found in the region of Hama, in Northern Syria contains chalices, strainers, ladles and spoons. Somewhat more rarely appear silver foils that served for covering church furniture, fans and lamps. The official stamps on them enable a very precise dating to the Early Byzantine period. Cf. Mundell Mango 1986, 68–73, fig. 1, 2.

Fig. 1. *Viminacium*.
Collection of silver
chalices (photo N. Borić)



Anne in Jerusalem, was also from Hama.⁷ The official stamps on the chalices indicate that they were manufactured in Constantinople, and that they most probably came into the possession of the wealthier members of the local Syrian community through trading, who then donated them to the church. Many of these objects can be precisely chronologically defined to the middle of the 6th century due to the control stamps or the inscriptions with the names of the donors.⁸

In comparison with the objects originating from the East, our specimens look very modest, both in their production technique and their decorative themes. On the basis of analogies we can conclude that *Viminacium* vessels in the form of a chalice, by their style, show particular features, which could be said to be a combination of existing forms of eastern origin with a local tradition, which leads to the conclusion that the vessels might have been manufactured in the local workshops of *Viminacium*.

The small silver vessel in the shape of a hemispherical bowl with a wide, flat rim with a string of beads welded around it comes from *Viminacium* (Fig. 2).⁹

⁷ *Cradle of Christianity* 2000, 88.

⁸ Kent 1961, 35–45.

⁹ Kondić 1994, kat. 276.



Fig. 2. *Viminacium*. Silver bowl with Christ monogram (photo N. Borić)

Subsequently engraved Christ monogram on two places on the lower side of the rim, point to the Christian attribution of this bowl, at least in a certain later phase of its use. This type of bowl is known as *Schüssel mit Kugelrandverzierung* and has been discovered in known hoards of that period from Britain to the countries of the Eastern Mediterranean. An identical specimen originates from Kerch in Crimea (*Panticapaeum*), dated to the late 4th or the beginning of the 5th century.¹⁰ Another bowl of the same type represents part of a silverware hoard in the vicinity of Latakiya in Syria which is kept today in the Cleveland Museum of Art, in Ohio.¹¹ A finding similar to the previously mentioned ones originates from Palmira, now housed in the State Museum in Berlin.¹² The control stamp on this vessel enables a precise dating to the last quarter of the 4th century.¹³ Based on these analogies we could also date the bowl production to the same period of time.

The rich collection of *Viminacium* dishware contains a few more types of silver bowls whose Christian attribution is absolutely certain. Among them are two shallow bowls with a horizontally profiled narrow rim that stands out (Figs. 3

10 *Spätantike und frühbyzantinische Silbergefäße* 1978, Abb. 42.

11 Mundell Mango 1998, fig. 12.

12 Cruikshank Dodd 1961, cat. 81a.

13 Cruikshank Dodd 1961, cat. 81b.

Figs. 3. a-b *Viminacium*.
Silver bowls with two
stamps with a Latin cross
(documentation of the
National Museum in
Belgrade)



a–b).¹⁴ On the outer side of the base, on two opposite ends, a rectangular stamp with a Latin cross is imprinted, with the letters B and Z around it, for which J. Kondić gave an interesting interpretation that the bowl is a votive offering brought for the soul of the deceased.¹⁵

It could be concluded that the silver vessels from *Viminacium* are characterised by the simplicity of the shape and the reduced ornamentation, most often consisting of several concentric circles. Vessels are mostly made of lower quality silver, and are similar in their form and dimensions.

The function of spoons has not been fully defined in scientific literature. Some authors regard them as objects of the Christian cult, while others classify them as profane objects, as a part of luxurious tableware.¹⁶ Spoons with a Christian attribution are typically decorated with the Christ monogram on the inner side of the bowl or, on a transition piece that connects the handle to the spoon bowl, some appropriate text or a symbolic meaning is depicted (fish, lamb).

Three almost identical specimens of silver spoons treasured in the National Museum in Belgrade make up part of the previously mentioned collection from *Viminacium* (Fig. 4). On their rounded transition to the handle an inscription in the form of a monogram is engraved. According to M. Tatić-Đurić this inscription can be read as *Enneus*, providing the closest parallel to the inscription with the name that is on one Christian sarcophagus from the Lateran Museum, with a depiction of Adam and Eve – *Ennius Asterius*.¹⁷ According to its form, this ligature with a monogram is similar to those that were registered on stamps from Anastasius I to Maurice, i.e. in the period from 491 to 602.¹⁸

Taking into account the similarity of our dishes and spoons to those originating from the famous hoard of the church objects in Canoscio, in Italy,¹⁹ in

14 The collection of Christian objects from *Viminacium* that consists of two bowls and four spoons represents an accidental find that came into the National Museum in Belgrade as purchased (two bowls and three spoons); the fourth spoon of the same type is part of the collection of the National Museum in Požarevac. The authors would like to express special thanks to the director of the National Museum Bojana Borić-Brešković on the provided photos of the objects.

15 Kondić 1994, 66.

16 Korać 1995, 189–190.

17 Tatić-Đurić 1967, 244; Diehl 1961, 4027.

18 Cruikshank Dodd 1961, 104, pl. 250.

19 Milojčić 1970, 122, Abb. 9/1, 11.

Fig. 4. *Viminacium*. Silver spoons (photo N. Borić)



which church dishes with Christian characters have also been found together with spoons with emphasised Christian symbols (Christogram, fish, lamb), the conclusion could be drawn that the finding from *Viminacium* also contains a selection of church items intended for the Eucharist.

We can classify the spoons from *Viminacium* into the Desana type, according to the hoard found at the Desana site in Italy.²⁰ The characteristic of this type of spoons is that in the transition piece that connects the spoon bowl to the handle there is a small disc, while the handle is elongated and pointed at the top. On the disc, various Christian symbols or inscriptions were engraved, as is the case with our specimens.

The spoons, as objects of a religious character intended for the Eucharistic, have numerous closer or further analogies on the whole area of Europe and the Mediterranean. They are generally chronologically determined into the period from the 5th to the 7th century.²¹

²⁰ This famous Ostrogoth hoard contains, among other finds, 18 silver spoons, of which 12 belong to the Desana type. It is dated to the period of approximately 500 AD until the first half of the 6th century. Cf. Simoni 1988, 79–86.

²¹ Miložić 1970, 111–133.

When considering the person whose name could be presented on spoon inscriptions from *Viminacium*, we cannot agree with the interpretation of some authors, according to which the inscription is the personal name of the craftsman,²² since the spoons were usually marked by the name of the owner or donor, in the same way as tableware or arms were decorated with Christian symbols in the Middle Ages.²³

At the *Pontes* site – Trajan's bridge, near Kostol, on the Iron Gate part of the Danube limes, a hoard of medieval iron tools was found in the layer between a house from the second half of the 9th century and a house from the 11th century.²⁴ The most typical item from this hoard was undoubtedly a flagon with a biblical inscription, today housed in the National Museum in Belgrade. The flagon is made of cast bronze, and decorated using engraving and punching techniques. The handle is connected to the rim by open panther jaws and to the belly of the vessel by a thin shield, above which is a sculpted head of a ram. Behind the head of the panther, which connects the handle and the flagon opening, there is a representation of a bird, made in relief (Figs. 5 a–c). The surface of the vessel is decorated with friezes of incised and punched ornaments. On the neck of the vessel the inscription ΦΟΝΗ ΚΥΡΕΙΟΥ ΕΠΙΕΙΤΟΝΥΔΑΤΟΝ (*The voice of the Lord is upon the waters*) is incised, which is a part of the third verse of the 29th Psalm of King David.

There are many opinions about the time of making of this undoubtedly liturgical vessel. When the flagon was published for the first time, the researcher of medieval layers in *Pontes* dated the flagon to the period between the 6th and the 8th century.²⁵ However, in a later article dedicated to the analysis of the *Pontes* hoard, and especially of the flagon, the same author, guided by the context of the inscription engraved on its neck, defined the flagon as a church liturgical vessel, produced in the 8th–9th century.²⁶ Somewhat later, the vessel was defined as a Byzantine product,²⁷ or as an order from the Christian East for the needs of

22 Kondić 1994, 66.

23 Milojčić 1970, 122.

24 The campaign was conducted in 1983. G. Marjanović-Vujović was head of the excavations of the medieval layers on the Kostol–*Pontes* site.

25 Marjanović–Vujović 1983, 117, kat. 98.

26 Marjanović–Vujović 1987, 136, 138.

27 Bugarski, Ivanišević 2013, 143–144.

Fig. 5. a Kostol–Pontes.
Bronze flagon, view and
details (after: Popović 2015,
112, fig. 1 a-c)





Figs. 5. b-c Kostol-Pontes. Bronze flagon, view and details (after: Popović 2015, 112, fig. 1 a-c)



the Slavonic population, and dated into the 11th century.²⁸ The last in the series of arguments regarding the chronological determination of this vessel was recently published. According to the interpretation of the author, who was guided by an analogue finding from Vrap in northern Albania, the vessel was dated to the end of the 6th and the beginning of the 7th century.²⁹

The art of casting bronze objects was inherited from ancient times and continued in the Late Antique and Early Byzantine period and in the, by then to a great extent Christianised, Roman Empire. As with the antique examples, Christian lamps were ship-shaped (*navicella*), with one or two openings for a wick and a small handle (*acrostolium*) on it. In the 4th century, the handle on bronze lamps was often decorated by a Christ monogram.

One extraordinary finding is the ten flame ship-shaped bronze lamp originating from the surroundings of Smederevo–*Vinceia*, from the Mezul site (Fig. 6). Part of the bow is extended by the representation of a fantastic animal, sculpturally made, holding a man in its jaws, reminding us of the story of Jonah, who symbolically represents “Christ’s Passion and Resurrection. In the same way that Jonah spent three days and nights in the whale’s belly, Christ spent three days and three nights in the depths of the earth” (Matt 12:40). This was the favourite theme of Early Christian mosaics and sarcophagi of the 4th century, and it is found on the previously mentioned sarcophagus from Belgrade. Marine fauna on the ship’s sides symbolises the sea, where dolphins occupy a central position, as one of the important Early Christian symbols. The cover (deck), foremast and, most probably, human figures positioned on the deck are missing today. The votive inscription is placed on the bow and stern and, according to V. Popović can be interpreted and read in two ways:

DEI – IN DOMU – TERMOGENES – VOTUM FECIT, which indicates more of a pagan character of the lamp, or

IN DOMU – DEI – TERMOGENES – VOTUM FECIT, revealing a more Jewish or Christian meaning.³⁰

There are not many analogies for this type of lamp. The lamp probably originates from the time of the Empire and points to a connection with Rome, since in Rome,

28 Zečević 2013, 232–233.

29 Popović 2015, 121–130.

30 Popović 1970, 324.



Fig. 6. Smederevo–*Vinceia*, Mezul site. Bronze lamp in the form of ship (photo N. Borić)

in the ruins of the Valerian palace, a similar lamp was found that today is housed in the Archaeological Museum in Florence.³¹ The text on this lamp is written on a plate at the top of the foremast. This specimen was hung by wire quoits and, unlike our example, there are only two openings for flames on each side.

When it comes to the dating of this unique lamp in our area, the opinions of the authors do not coincide.³² V. Popović, on the basis of the dual formulation of the inscription, and according to its paleographic characteristics, considers that this specimen should be dated to the 3rd century.³³ We can say with certainty that the lamp has a votive character, as clearly indicated by the inscription, in which the donor is marked with his proper name. It is difficult to explain this unique finding and determine to whom it belonged, whether to some Christian community, or individual, but most probably to a member of the Christian faith, thus representing a specimen of the early presence of Christianity in the area of *Moesia Prima*. According to the mentioned lamp from the museum in Florence, we can also determine our specimen in the time period of the second half of the 3rd or at the beginning of 4th century.

31 Brenk 2003, fig. 187.

32 According to L. Pavlović, the lamp might have been produced in the time of Hadrian (117–138), the emperor who was a fan of the Greeks, Greek culture and cults. Cf. Pavlović 1967, 128.

33 Popović 1970, 329.

Fig. 7. *Singidunum*. Bronze lamp with a cross-like handle (documentation of the Belgrade City Museum)



A bronze lamp from *Singidunum* represents a well preserved example of a lamp with an elongated beak, a cover in the form of shell and a cross-like handle (Fig. 7).³⁴ The stand on which such lamps were usually placed was not preserved.³⁵ This type of lamp has numerous analogies in the whole Mediterranean area. From the immediate vicinity, a similar type of lamp originates from Stobi and is dated to the 5th century³⁶ and from the Luciu site in Romania.³⁷ This type of lamp is part of the collections of numerous museums and private collections throughout the world. From the private collection of Christian Schmidt in Munich comes the sample that is the same as the finding from Belgrade.³⁸

It originates from the area of the Eastern Mediterranean and is dated to the 6th century. Similar findings are housed in the Louvre, in Paris, in Egyptian collection.³⁹ Even though they come from the most diverse areas of the Late Antique Empire,

34 There is no precise data about the finding place of the lamp, except that it was found in the area of Belgrade. It is housed in the Collection of the Migration period and Middle Ages of the Belgrade City Museum. The authors would like to express special thanks to the director of the Belgrade City Museum to Tatjana Korićanac and to the curator Nika Strugar on the provided documentation for the objects.

35 Janković 1997, 334, kat. 578.

36 *Od arheološkoto bogatstvo* 1980, kat. 555.

37 Teodor 2001, 119, fig. 5/2.

38 *Rom und Byzanz*, 87–88, cat. 80.

39 Bénazeth 1992, 122–123, E11924, E14283.

there is no doubt that the quality and uniformity of the craftsmanship of these lamps indicate the existence of separate production centres where they were produced and, afterwards, distributed from. As for most of the other shapes made of bronze, we may also say for these lamps that they are most likely products of Coptic workshops that were centres of production of bronze objects during the 5th and 6th century.⁴⁰

The Cross as a dominant Christian symbol does not appear before the end of the 4th century, except on rare monuments.⁴¹ Starting from the 5th century, under the influence of the councils of Ephesus (431) and Chalcedon (451),⁴² the cross becomes part of the dogma and official religion, retaining this attribute until today. The motif of the cross is noticeable on numerous monuments of various purposes: carved or painted on the stone relief of public and private buildings, as a decorative motif on mosaics, painted on the walls of early Christian tombs, on objects made of wood and ivory, on objects of a religious character dedicated to liturgical activities or on objects that make up part of church equipment, on oil lamps, or stamped on objects that were in profane use. It is especially widespread on jewellery, primarily on Byzantine products of precious metal in the 5th and 6th century.

In Christianity the cross took different forms during its development.⁴³ The most typical are variants of the cross with equal arms, or a cross with a longer vertical arm. Starting from the Middle Ages it would be known as a Greek or Latin cross and this terminology has been preserved until today. According to the form of the crosses, it is possible to conclude the method of their use, or their function. The crosses of larger formats used during the practicing of certain liturgical services, where they were carried in the church itself and around it, can be designated as processional, according to this function.

Two pendants of a processional cross made of lead come from *Viminacium* (Fig. 8–9). Both crosses were hung on the lower edge of the horizontal arm, as indicated by the holes on the upper vertical arm. According to G. Marjanović-Vujović, such and similar crosses were donated to a church by believers as a pledge of their prayers with which they addressed it, or as a sign of gratitude.⁴⁴

Fig. 8. *Viminacium*. Lead pendant of a processional cross (redrawn after: Marjanović-Vujović 1977)

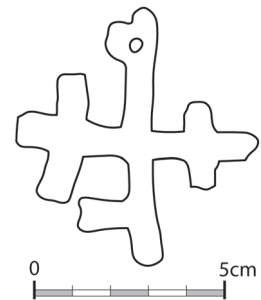


Fig. 9. *Viminacium*. Lead pendant of a processional cross (redrawn after: Marjanović-Vujović 1977)



40 Nesbitt 1988, no. 26–31; Badawy 1978; Gabra 1996.

41 *D'un monde à l'autre* 2001, 230; Dalton 1901, cat. 292, Pl. VI/a.

42 Kartašov 1995, 295–417.

43 On different forms of the cross as a Christian symbol, cf. Mirković 1965, 172–173.

44 Marjanović-Vujović 1977, 11.

A bronze stamp from the collection of the Belgrade City Museum probably comes from the territory of *Singidunum* (Fig. 10).⁴⁵ The stamp is in the form of an equal arm cross with a cast inscription in negative in Greek “ANTΩΝΙΑΣ ΚΑΣΤΑΣ” that can be interpreted as “return to Antonius”, as M. Janković stated.⁴⁶ Bread has had a symbolic meaning since ancient times, and the rite of its marking existed before the appearance of Christianity.⁴⁷ The stamps that were used for the marking of Christian bread during the Eucharistic had a clear Christian attribute, which is shown on a specimen from the Belgrade City Museum.

Weighing equipment like steelyards and counterweights are relatively rare findings on archaeological sites. A part of a steelyard, a beam with a measuring scale and a punched inscription and a smaller counterweight are housed in the Belgrade City Museum (Figs. 11 a–c).⁴⁸ The other part of this group finding, with a counterweight shaped like the bust of a Byzantine Empress⁴⁹ and a chain system with hooks for hanging loads, is housed in the National Museum in Belgrade (Fig. 12). Recently, in his discussion about this steelyard, M. Vujović, to a large extent, shed light on the set of circumstances which, more than eighty years ago, led to the separation of the parts of the Belgrade steelyard.⁵⁰

On both sides of the shorter part of the beam of the steelyard, there is a punched inscription in Greek (Fig. 13). The text of both inscriptions begins and ends with a cross:

ΠΑΠΑΚΕΣΟΙΚΟΝΟΜΟΥ

On the other side, part of the text, also between two crosses, may be read as:⁵¹
ΚΥΡΣΦΙΑ(ΙΚΟ)C

45 There is no precise data about the finding place of the lamp, except that it was found in the area of Belgrade. It is housed in the Collection of the Migration period and Middle Ages of the Belgrade City Museum.

46 Janković 1997, 307, kat. 543.

47 *Cradle of Christianity*, 97.

48 The steelyard is a part of the Collection of the Migration period and Middle Ages of the Belgrade City Museum.

49 Tatić–Đurić 1962, T.I, II a, III v–g. The counterweight shaped like the bust of a Byzantine Empress is a part of the Collection of the National Museum in Belgrade.

50 Vujović 2014, 161–183.

51 Vujović 2014, 166–168.



Fig. 10. *Singidunum*. Bronze stamp in the form of cross (documentation of the Belgrade City Museum)

According to the interpretation of M. Vujović, the steelyard beam from the Belgrade City Museum can be more precisely aligned with the Constantinople type.⁵² In the area of the Danube Limes, parts of a steelyard that was most probably intended for the measuring of medicines or precious metals, gold, or silver are originated from the fortification in Saldum.⁵³ Steelyards similar to the one from Belgrade have been found in Gamzigrad,⁵⁴ Caričin Grad,⁵⁵ in the Early Byzantine fortifications in Ras⁵⁶ and in Gradina on Jelica Mountain near Čačak.⁵⁷ The steelyard from Debrešte in Macedonia belongs to this type, also with a punched inscription between two Latin crosses.⁵⁸ Such inscriptions are quite common on bronze steelyards of the 5th and 6th centuries. We find them also in the Dumbarton

52 Vujović 2014, 169, with cited literature.

53 Jeremić 2009, 189–190, fig. 89, cat. 626–628.

54 Lalović 1983, 165, kat. 348.

55 Bavant *et al.* 1990, 245, Pl. XLIV/299–301.

56 Popović 1999, 116, kat. 160, sl. 67.

57 Milinković 2010, sl. 39–41, T. XIV/5, 60–61.

58 *Antička bronza* 1969, kat. 338.

Figs. 11. a-c *Singidunum*.
Details on the shorter lever
arm of the Early Byzantine
steelyard (documentation of
the Belgrade City Museum)





Fig. 12. *Singidunum*. Counterweight in a form of Byzantine Empress (documentation of the National Museum in Belgrade)

1. $\text{Ϡ}\text{I}\text{T}\text{A}\text{T}\text{A}\text{K}\text{E}\text{C}\text{O}\text{I}\text{K}\text{O}\text{N}\text{O}\text{M}\text{Ϡ}\text{I}$

2. $\text{Ϡ}\text{K}\text{Y}\text{P}\text{S}\text{O}\text{I}\text{A}\text{:}\text{I}\text{.}\text{O}\text{C}\text{Ϡ}$



Fig. 13. *Singidunum*. Inscription on the shorter lever arm of the Early Byzantine steelyard (After: Vujović 2014, 182, T. III).

Oaks collections, and they mostly originate from the East. A completely preserved steelyard form in the Dumbarton Oaks collection was found in Constantinople and dated to the 5th century.⁵⁹ Another steelyard from the same collection has been dated to the 5th–6th century and is marked with the name *Edesius* in the genitive singular case (+HΔECIOY+).⁶⁰ Yet another steelyard, also made in Constantinople, comes from the private Munich collection of Christian Schmidt.⁶¹ As is the case with our finds, next to the cross there is a punched inscription in Greek: MAXIOY. It is most likely the name of the owner and it is written in the genitive singular case, which can be translated that it belongs to *Maxius*. This is quite a rare name that, in the 4th century, mostly belonged to the higher officials of the Empire or to priests. The steelyards of the Constantinople type are generally dated in the period from the 5th–7th century and, according to the highest concentration of findings and inscriptions in Greek, the place of their production is the Eastern Mediterranean.

The role of the early Christian church and its officials in the economic life of the Early Byzantine state was crucial, especially in the hinterlands, away from the main administrative centres and from fiscal control. In certain critical circumstances, the Church appears not only as a spiritual stronghold, but also as the main exponent of the state in economic organisation and, furthermore, as a direct participant in the financing of the military and of military logistics. The steelyard with a counterweight shaped like a Byzantine Empress (Ariadne) from Belgrade could, therefore, represent evidence of these measures of the Byzantine state, which were undertaken in the context of the recovery or renewal of fiscal organisation and military supply in the hinterlands of the Danube area, from the time of Anastasius I (491–518), and quite certainly during the rule of Justin I (518–527), and later during the time of Justinian's great renovation of the Limes.

Beside the counterweight shaped like the bust of a Byzantine Empress, which was made using the hollow casting technique, with its cavity partly filled with lead, another part of the steelyard from Belgrade is a fully cast spherical counterweight, which is the weight verified by the exagia kept in the city church (Fig. 11 a). Apart from the exagia the official etalon for the weight of gold coins, there were exagia that

59 Ross 1962, 61, cat. 71, T. XLIV, XL.

60 Ross 1962, 63, T. XLII/73.

61 *Byzanz das Licht*, Kat. III, 25.

were used as a control measure for the weight of the counterweights used in trade.⁶² By keeping them in churches their accuracy was guaranteed.⁶³ The main purpose of the exagia was related to gold coins (*exagia solidi*) and the control of their weight, but they were also used in goldsmithing. Therefore, scales and exagia are also found in the graves of travelling goldsmiths in Kunszentmárton, Jutas (Hungary).⁶⁴ The characteristic Christian symbols were sometimes present on these exagia, as is the case with a specimen from Prahovo–*Aquae*, with an acronym around the cross on the obverse *E (clesiae) Mun(di) +*. On its reverse is a cross with a monogram with the following letters *A, N, I V, S*. Below the monogram is the Greek letter *Γ*, which can be interpreted as the number 3 and could be a tremissis or one nomisma.⁶⁵

A gold glass vessel base with a portrait of a married couple with a child, made in the *fondi d'oro* technique, originates from the territory of Prahovo–*Aquae*.⁶⁶ The preserved part of the rounded base contains, on gold foil in the middle, an engraved representation of a man, woman and a child (Fig. 14).⁶⁷ The portraits are shown *en face*, with the Latin inscription *VIVAS IN DEO* above them. A thin silver foil band frames the depicted figures.

This type of decoration was common in the period of the early Empire. However, the flourishing of this technique that consists of casting in a mould and the insertion of foil shaped in the form of medallions is connected to the period of the 3rd and 4th centuries.⁶⁸ In most cases these are fragments of flat or rounded plates or spherical chalices. In the beginning, these gold leaves were decorated with scenes from ancient mythology, so that with the development of Christianity, particularly in the 4th century, scenes with Christian content prevailed. Together

62 Kostić 1993, 69.

63 The steelyard from the early Byzantine fortification of Ras–Podgrađe was found on the floor of the 6th century basilica. Cf. Popović 1999, 116, kat. 160, sl. 67.

64 Kovačević 1977, 167–168, sl.103, 104.

65 The counterweight is preserved only in drawing. According to Đ. Janković, its weight could have been 4.56 g, cf. Janković 1981, 166.

66 The gold glass base came to the National Museum in Belgrade through a purchase in 1977 (inv. no. 1511/IV). According to uncertain data given by the owner, the cross-shaped fibula (inv. no. 1519/IV), which will be discussed later, was found together with this base. The authors would like to express special thanks to the director of the National Museum Bojana Borić-Brešković on the provided photograph of the object.

67 Rankov 1983, 85–89; Ružić 1994, kat.1194, T. XLIV/1.

68 Cermanović–Kuzmanović 1976, 175–190.

Fig. 14. Prahovo–*Aquae*.
Glass base made in the
fondi d'oro technique
(documentation of the
National Museum in
Belgrade)



with the acclamation in Latin *VIVAS IN DEO*, during the 3rd and 4th century many specimens made in Italy have the expression *PIE ZESSES* or only *ZESSES*, first in Greek, and later in Latin. Along with the inscription, we find the Christogram, which may be followed by the so called apocalyptic letters α and ω .⁶⁹

Representations of married couples, as in the case of the specimen from Prahovo, were common in the decoration of gold bases of glassware, and the acclamation *VIVAS IN DEO* is also common as an integral part of the whole. The majority of specimens with family presentations originate from Italy, while they are rare in provincial production, except in Pannonia.⁷⁰ A similar scene on our specimen to that from Prahovo indicates the distinctiveness of this motif in the Danubian provinces in general.

⁶⁹ Migotti 2003, 15.

⁷⁰ In the province of Pannonia, there are as many as four out of five found specimens with presentations of married couples in provincial production: two originate from Štrbinci near Đakovo in Croatia, and two are from Hungary. Cf. Migotti 2003, 15.

Despite the eastern origin of this technique, gilded glasses are characteristic to the western part of the Empire. Most specimens come from Roman catacombs, while a significantly smaller number has been found in other provinces of the Empire.⁷¹ It is a common opinion that the largest and perhaps the only production place for such objects was Rome.⁷² On the other hand, it is assumed that in Trier, the second large provincial centre for glass making, smaller medallions and gold glass bases were produced.⁷³ However there are also opposing opinions, according to which glass bases made in the *fondi d'oro* technique have eastern, Egyptian or Syrian origin.⁷⁴ Nevertheless, most authors who have been engaged with this issue attribute the oriental elements of style, as well as the inscriptions in Greek on some specimens, to the eastern origin of the craftsmen that were employed in western workshops, rather than to the origin of the products themselves.⁷⁵ The opinion of some authors regarding the local production of the specimen from Prahovo–*Aquae*, is completely alone and seems insufficiently grounded.⁷⁶

As was already mentioned, such depictions of married couples were very common in the decorating of gold glass bases. The acclamation *VIVAS IN DEO* also commonly appears as a part of this whole. Based on numerous analogies,⁷⁷ as well as the stylistic features of the characters, this object can be also dated to the 4th century. Finally the question remains about the purpose and use of such gilded glass base made in the *fondi d'oro* technique. Archaeological context is certainly necessary in order to identify the purpose and use of these objects. For the time being it can be concluded that most of them were parts of grave related goods. In addition, there is the fact that only the bases of the vessels have been found and never complete vessels or their shards, so the shape of the vessels is still little known. All these facts directed B. Migotti to the conclusion that glass vessels with gilded bases were

71 Until now, about 500 pieces of gold glass bases made in the *fondi d'oro* technique with engraved depictions have been found in the territory of the entire Empire. Except for Rome and Italy, gilded glass bases, though small in number, were evidenced in: Austria, Germany, France, Spain, Hungary, Bulgaria, Serbia, Croatia, and Slovenia. Cf. Migotti 2003, 14.

72 Migotti 2003, 16.

73 Cambi 1976, 141.

74 Cermanović–Kuzmanović 1976, 180.

75 Migotti 2003, 14.

76 Rankov 1983, 88.

77 Migotti 2003, sl. 3, 5, 6, 10, 12, 15, 16.

ritually broken to be placed in the grave, or to serve as grave markers.⁷⁸ Assumptions about their plausible original function can only be made based on the shape of the vessels, as well as according to the engraved depictions on the gold foil.

From the surroundings of Smederevo–*Vinceia* originates a bronze statue of the Good Shepherd with a lamb on his shoulders.⁷⁹ The Shepherd is presented as youthful, with an almost boyish face and curly hair, while the details of his clothes and the lamb's fleece are roughly presented (Fig. 15). The coarse and unskilfully made statuette indicates provincial work. The lower parts of the shepherds legs are missing.

The image of the Good Shepherd (*Pastor Bonus*) is often used in the artistic creation of the Late Antiquity, both as a young man or an old man with beard. This is a topic from a pagan world that loved to show pastoral scenes with philanthropic meanings. The Old Testament is full of presentations with the Good Shepherd, where metaphors with his image describe the role of the priest to the believers: David (Psalm 22), Isaiah (40, 11). In the New Testament, Jesus is a Good Shepherd to his people (John 10, 1–18), returning the lost sheep to its flock (Matthew 18, 12–14; Luke, 15, 4–7). The model of the Good Shepherd has a simple meaning that emphasises the relationship between saviours and those that need to be saved and, perhaps, this explains his frequent representation in the iconography of Late Antiquity when, from a persecuted and illegal religion (*illicitae*), Christianity became the universal world religion.

A gold necklace with two medallions and a cross, together with a gold ring represent part of a grave find from the Bela Stena necropolis in the village of Višnjica–*Ad Octavum*.⁸⁰ The double medallions are made using the filigree technique and there is granulation with a decorative motif in the form of oppositely placed reduced palmettes (Fig. 16). The pendant on the necklace is in the shape of the Latin cross. For this necklace we may say that apart from its aesthetic value it also has a deeper symbolic significance. M. Tatić–Đurić designated this necklace as στρεπτὸν, i.e. jewellery that is worn directly around the neck, which is indicated by the small dimension of the necklace.⁸¹

78 Migotti 2003, 16.

79 Valtrović 1891, 109, sl. 1–2; *Antička bronza* 1969, kat. 300.

80 Tatić–Đurić 1964, 185–192.

81 Tatić–Đurić 1964, 193.



Fig. 15. Smederevo–*Vinceia*.
The Good Shepherd (photo
N. Borić)

The mass usage of Christian symbols in the artistic creation of the Late Antiquity commenced only in the first half of the 4th century, after the issuing of the Edict of Milan, in 313 AD. The cross as a dominant Christian form is present on many monuments starting from Late Antiquity. According to some authors, its use in goldsmiths is present approximately from the 5th century when it started to be used not only for cult purposes, but also as an element of jewellery and other products of artistic craft.⁸²

Very close analogies, not only with the medallions, but also with the cross, are provided by a find from Mersin, in the vicinity of Tarsus, which A. Grabar dates to the end of the 5th and start of the 6th century.⁸³ In support of dating the necklace to this period are the historical circumstances. The necropolis of Višnjica belonged to the fortification which is assumed to have been *Octavum/Octabon*, one of many that Justinian I renovated or built in the period of his great building activity in the Balkans during the 6th century.⁸⁴ Most probably, the necropolis next to the fortress of the Justinian era also belonged to that period.

Cross shaped forms of pendants in the Danube Limes area are not very common. A bronze pendant in the shape of an irregular cross decorated with ornaments in the form of concentric circles at the ends of the arms and in the middle of the cross originates from Ram-*Lederata* (Fig. 17).⁸⁵ A pendant from *Viminacium* from the Više Grobalja site also has a cross-shaped form (Fig. 18).⁸⁶ The cross is plate-shaped with horizontal arms, made of thicker bronze sheet. On the front there is a circular setting, probably for enamel or glass. The cross was part of a necklace with 112 multicoloured beads. This cross-shaped pendant originates from a child's grave and is dated to the 6th century.⁸⁷

The common feature of all cross-shaped forms of pendants is the fact that they were made of bronze, as were most similar ones from closer environments, such as

82 Vinski 1968, 104–105.

83 Grabar 1951, 27–49.

84 *De aedif.* IV, 4 p. 122.15–129.4; translation according to: Barišić 1955, 67.

85 Vinski 1968, 110–111, T. VII/30.

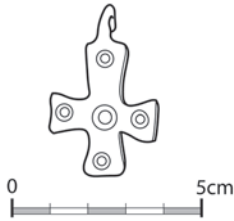
86 The pendant is a part of the grave inventory (grave no. 134, Više Grobalja site). It makes up a part of the Antique collection of the National Museum in Požarevac. The authors would like to express special thanks to Dragana Spasić, the curator of the National Museum in Požarevac on provided photograph of the object. Cf. Zotović 1994, 183–190; *Eadem* 1994a, kat. 15.

87 Zotović 1994a, 66–67.



Fig. 16. Višnjica–*Ad Octavum*. Gold necklace with two medallions and a cross (photo N. Borić)

Fig. 17. Ram–*Lederata*.
Pendant in a form of cross
(redrawn after:
Vinski 1968, T. VII/30)



specimens from Gamzigrad,⁸⁸ or Gradište/Balajnac near Niš,⁸⁹ except for a pair of gold pendants that come from the Hisar fortification (Suva Reka) in Kosovo.⁹⁰ They are usually of smaller dimensions, simple and do not display particularly skilful craftsmanship. Decoration most often consists of small concentric circles, which is the ornamental characteristic for Late Antiquity and the Early Byzantine period.

Two silver rings originated from *Viminacium*, from the Pećine site, have a Christian attribute in the form of a Christ monogram, engraved in the plate like head, which date them to the second half of the 4th century (Fig. 19).⁹¹

A pottery lamp from Antique *Singidunum* contains clear Christian elements in its decorative content.⁹² The lamp has an oval shape with an elongated beak (Fig. 20). Two figures, male and female, both in an orant position, are presented on the disc. Besides this depiction, crosses on the disc, beak and a third one on the leg of the lamp indicate the Christian character of the lamp. All three crosses are made of relief dots. According to the clay composition, the lesser quality of baking and the relatively unskilfully made composition of this depiction, M. Birtašević is of the opinion that it is a product of a local workshop, dating quite broadly to the period from the 6th to the 9th century.⁹³ It should be said that figures presented in an orant pose represent characteristic iconography since the time of painting in catacombs, and disappeared during further development, becoming even rarer in the 6th century.⁹⁴

The other finds originating from the Danube Limes are mostly represented by lamps of an oval form with a cross in combination with floral and geometric ornament as a dominant motif. One such specimen comes from the fortification in Saldum.⁹⁵ The lamp has an oval form with a representation of a cross on a disc, while the wider shoulders are decorated with geometric motifs (Fig. 21). The handle is in

88 Janković 1983, kat. 183–185.

89 Jeremić 1995, fig. 27.

90 Shukriu 1989, 77–85, fig. 7, T.II/3.

91 The rings were the grave inventory (child grave no. 213, Pećine site), but today only one is preserved and makes up a part of the Antique collection of the National Museum in Požarevac. Cf. Zotović 1994a, 65, sl. 5.

92 The lamp was found in 1937 in the foundation of the building of the Patriarchate in Belgrade and is housed in the Collection of the Migration period and Middle Ages of the Belgrade City Museum.

93 Birtašević 1955, 46.

94 Gerke 1973, 29.

95 Jeremić 2009, 138, cat. 403.



Fig. 18. *Viminacium*, Više Grobalja site. Pendant in a form of cross (documentation of the National Museum in Požarevac)

Fig. 19. *Viminacium*, Pećine site. Silver ring (documentation of the National Museum in Požarevac)

the form of a stylised palmette, which is an influence of the Late Antiquity tradition. This shape of a handle is often found in Early Byzantine layers and also on a fragmented lamp from Caričin Grad,⁹⁶ and from Bumbesti–Jiu in Romania.⁹⁷ The lamp from Saldum was found on the floor level of a fortification from the Justinian epoch.

The lamp from Prahovo–*Aquae* also has an oval form with a cross-shaped handle.⁹⁸ The shoulder is decorated with lines, while a stylised star shaped floral ornament is on the disc (Fig. 22). According to the opinion of researchers, the lamp is a local product, made under the influence of Syrian–Palestinian workshops and is dated to the 5th century.⁹⁹

Pottery vessels for profane use, with some Christian attributes, are represented in several finds in the area of the Danube Limes. The majority of findings are vessels for the storage and transport of food. These kinds of items usually had a long life, so it was common to put marks of ownership on them that could, at the same time, be features of belonging to the Christian faith. Such features could also appear on master's stamps, or those of the workshops which produced such dishes. There are also specimens containing certain Christian acclamations.

Amphorae and pithoi represent two basic types of vessels that served for the storage and transport of foodstuffs. Amphorae were most commonly used for the stor-

96 Bjelajac 1990, 190, pl. XXII/4, XXVI/2.

97 Teodor 2001, fig. 6/8.

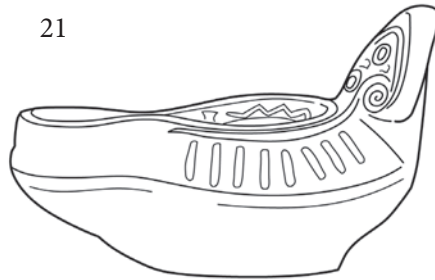
98 The authors would like to express special thanks to Gordan Janjić, the curator of the Krajina Museum in Negotin for provided the photograph.

99 Janković 1981, 163, T. IX/2.

Fig. 20. *Singidunum*. Pottery lamp with two figures and crosses (documentation of the Belgrade City Museum)

Fig. 21. *Saldum*. Pottery lamp with a cross and a handle in a form of palmette (redrawn after: Jeremić 2009, 138, cat. 403)

Fig. 22. *Prahovo-Aquae*. Pottery lamp with a handle in a form of cross (documentation of the Krajina Museum in Negotin)



age and transport of liquids, while pithoi were mostly used for the storage of grains, and other types of solid food. Their larger presence on certain sites speaks precisely about the economy of the region and, thus, about the primary production activities.

The finds of amphorae that, in their decorative element, contain some Christian symbols are recorded mostly in the Danubian area. Among them there are several findings of amphorae of the so called spindle–shape that have a representation of a cross painted in red: Saldum (Fig. 23, 1), Boljetin–*Smorna* (Figs. 23, 2, 3) and Donji Milanovac–*Taliata* (Fig. 23, 4). They are widely represented on the Danube Limes and they most commonly contained wine. The earliest versions of this type occur in the 4th century, mostly in the area of the western Mediterranean, and then recorded in other parts of the Mediterranean in the 5th and particularly in the 6th century.¹⁰⁰ The bottom of the jug from the fortification in Saldum, with its engraved Christogram, is another confirmation of early Christianisation in the Danube Limes¹⁰¹.

The larger vessel with handles from *Singidunum* is decorated with deeply stamped ornaments in the form of an alternating pattern of grapes and fish (Fig. 24). According to the conditions of the find it is dated to the second half of the 3rd and beginning of the 4th century.¹⁰² It cannot be claimed with any certainty that this is a vessel with a Christian attribute, since the presentation of the fish does not necessarily indicate that the owner of this vessel belonged to a Christian community.

The findings of fragments of Late Antique helmets with a Christian attribution, clearly speaks about the Christianisation that was present among the Roman troops on the Danube Limes. These are remains of application decorated with Christogram that were applied on Late Antique composite helmets (Ridge helmets, Intercisa type IV).¹⁰³ In *Viminacium*, at the Čair site, in the area of the fortified city (*colonia*) and legionary fort (*castrum*), a part of a decorative application with a Christogram in relief was accidentally found in 1991 (Fig. 25). The helmet itself, to whom this application would belong, was not registered, as was the case with another find from the Limes, from Manastir, in the Iron Gates area. On this site remains of a small watchtower (*burgus speculatorius*) made of stone and mortar have been confirmed, as well as the remains of small wooden architec-

100 Bjelajac 1990, 87.

101 Jeremić 2009, 117, cat. 337.

102 Nikolić–Đorđević 2000, 184.

103 Vujović 2012, 33–38.

Fig. 23/1. Saldum.
Amphora with a cross
painted in red
(redrawn after: Jeremić
2009, 110, cat. 319)

Figs. 23/2, 3. Boljetin–
Smorna. Amphorae
with crosses painted
in red (redrawn after:
Bjelajac 1996, T. XXXI, 167,
168)

Fig. 23/4. DonjiMilanovac–
Taliata. Amphora with cross
painted in red (redrawn
after: Bjelajac 1996, T.
XXXI, 174)

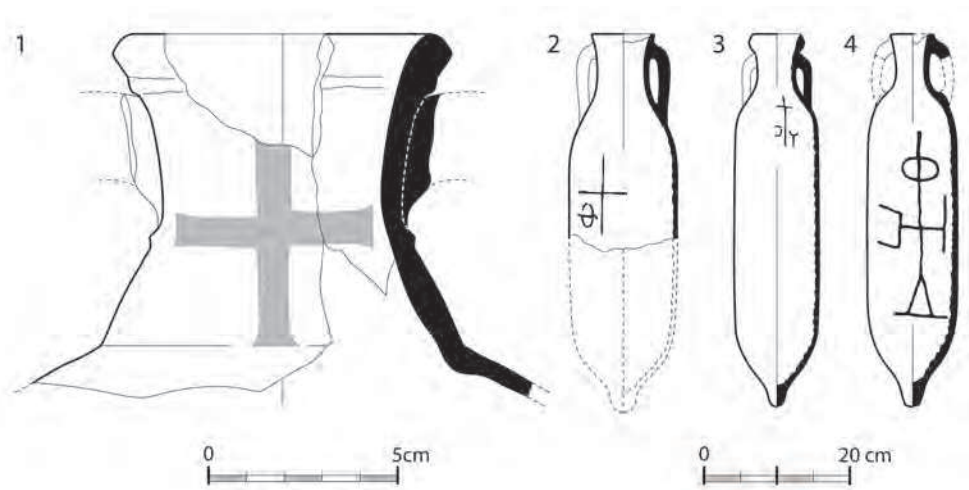
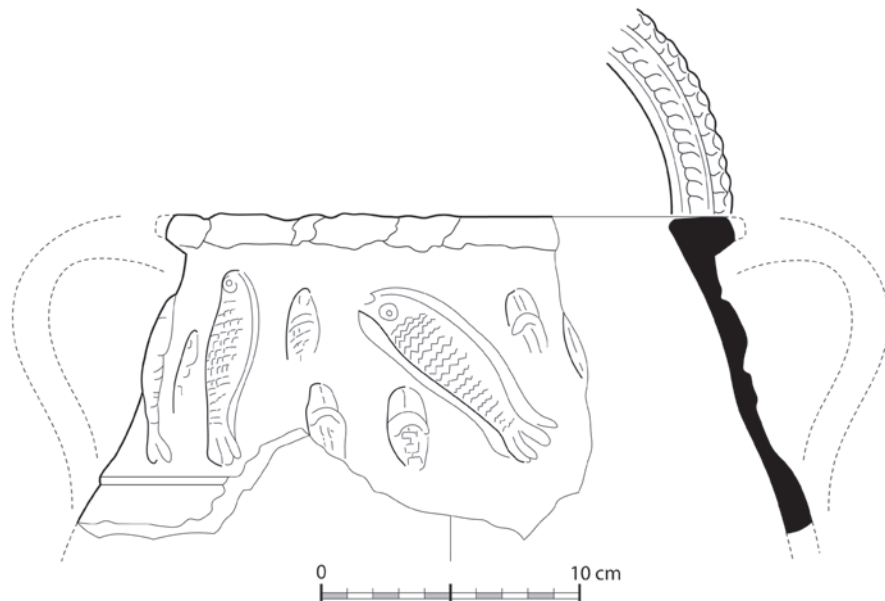


Fig. 24. *Singidunum*. Larger
vessel decorated with
stamped ornaments of
grapes and fish
(redrawn after: Nikolić–
Đorđević 2000, 183, kat. 2)



tural structures,¹⁰⁴ with an associated Late Antique necropolis, partly devastated by medieval burials. A *burgus* with an associated settlement is dated to the time of *praepositus Hermogenes* (whose brick with a stamp has been found in the tower floor and whose time of service at the Limes is dated from the ninth decade of the 3rd century to the time of Constantine I) and to the time of the Constantine ep-
104 Minić 1984, 153.

och, (based on the finding of coins minted in 319 AD) and later.¹⁰⁵ From research of the Late Antique necropolis it has been determined that, most probably, the persons who made up the troop of the *burgus* were buried there and, judging by chronologically sensitive findings of fibulae and buckles that indicate some military funerals, their burials took place in the late 4th century.¹⁰⁶

In one grave, in the location of the left shoulder of the deceased, a fragment of an object made of copper, plated with gold, with a relief depiction of a Christogram was found. The object is determined to be a pendant and dated to the 4th century.¹⁰⁷ It is part of a crest application that came to this grave in some unusual way (Fig. 26). It is possible that it represented a part of the filling of the grave pit, which means that it didn't belong to the deceased,¹⁰⁸ or, in the event that it was the personal equipment of the deceased, the object was obtained and secondarily used due to its decorative or maybe for its prophylactic functions. Examples of the decoration of Late Antiquity helmets with this symbol are registered at sites from Britain to the Danubian border countries, and a good parallel is the fragment of a helmet's decoration from Kaiseraugst–*Castrum Rauracense* that came from the fort interior.¹⁰⁹ Researchers have assumed that findings from *Viminacium* and Manastir could be dated to the late 4th century, possibly to the time of Valens and the Valentinian renewal of the Danube Limes (364–378/380), or later, to the time of Theodosius I (379–395) and immediately after his death, up to the Hun invasion in 441/443.¹¹⁰ The soldiers who would wear this type of Late Antique helmet were most probably representatives of the infantry. Findings of fragments of decorative crests with Christograms in the area of the legionary fort of *Viminacium* and the small watchtower in the inhospitable section of the Limes in Manastir in the Iron Gates, indicate that in various military points at the end of the 4th century, Christianised representatives of the Roman army stayed and actively participated in the defence of the territory and in daily activities.



Fig. 25. *Viminacium*, Čair site. Application with Christ monogram (redrawn after: Vujović 2012, 31-32, fig. 21, 2)

105 Vujović 2012, 35.

106 A cross-shaped fibula and a bronze buckle are dated to the period of 364–380 and later, up to the beginning of the 5th century. Cf. Vujović 2012, 33.

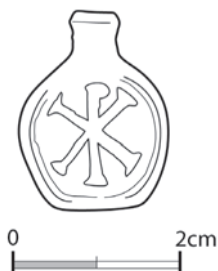
107 Minić 1984, 154, fig. 1.

108 Vujović 2012, 35.

109 Faccani 2012, 109, note 31.

110 Vujović 2012, 36.

Fig. 26. Manastir.
Application with Christ
monogram (redrawn after:
Minić 1984, 154, sl. 1)



In the area of the Danube Limes, a small number of fibulae which, by their shape or decorative content, can be defined as Early Christian have been recorded to date. The bronze cross-shaped fibula with gilt from Prahovo–*Aquae* is most probably part of a grave inventory together with the previously discussed gold glass base made in the *fondi d'oro* technique.¹¹¹ The fibula belongs to luxurious and well crafted specimens, with à jour decoration (Fig. 27). In her monograph about fibulae, S. Petković states that such fibulae were a mark of the military or an official honour given by the Emperor on the occasion of state holidays or anniversaries.¹¹² The rectangular foot is, in the central part, decorated with rich ornamentation in the form of a fish bone, performed by engraving, notching and the niello technique. The same ornament is found on a high positioned bow at the end of which is the *Chi-Rho* monogram, given in a circular medallion with a square frame, emphasised by niello. The needle is missing. On this fibula there is one of the oldest depictions of Christ's monogram on an object with an official character.¹¹³

Cross-shaped fibulae have been found in all parts of the Empire, and judging by the numerous finds, they were well represented along the Danube Limes, particularly in Pannonia.¹¹⁴ There are numerous presentations of these fibulae in a series of miniature art monuments made of ivory, glass and metal and also in painted presentations on frescoes, mosaics and gold foils. This specimen of a cross-shaped fibula, as well as a very similar one that comes from the tower of Niš–*Naissus*,¹¹⁵ indicates its official character by its high quality craftsmanship. Their production should be connected to public workshops in larger urban centres. The presence of the Christ monogram indicates that the fibulae could not have been made before 313 AD, i.e., before the issuing of the Edict of Milan.

One more fibula originates from the Danube Limes area with an obvious

111 The fibula makes up a part of the Late Antique collection from the National Museum in Belgrade. In the older literature, Dušanovac is stated as the finding place of this fibula, Cf. Jevremović 1988, 165–169. With a later detailed review of National Museum documentation it was established that the fibula came into the National Museum in Belgrade through a purchase, together with the previously mentioned glass base (inv. no. 1519/IV); Cf. Popović 2001, kat. 89, fig. 15.

112 Petković 2010, 261.

113 Jovanović 1978, 58.

114 Since the findings are without any clearly defined Christian attribution, we are of the opinion that it is sufficient only to mention some of the sites for a clearer insight into the distribution of these types of fibulae: Sisak, Osijek, Sremska Mitrovica, Novi Banovci, Dalj, Drnovo, Ljubljana, Ptuj.

115 Jovanović 1975, 235–245; Jovanović 1978, 65, kat. 53, sl. 128.



Fig. 27. Prahovo–*Aquae*.
The bronze cross-shaped
fibula (photo N. Borić)

Christian attribution. It is a bronze fibula with a backward bent foot, from the fortification in Hajdučka Vodenica in the horizon of the 6th century.¹¹⁶ The top of the foot ends with a cross like motif made in relief. A similar specimen to this fibula comes from Pernik in Bulgaria with a bow ending in the shape of a cross.¹¹⁷ There are closer analogies in other Balkan provinces of the Empire, such as a bronze fibula from the fortification at the Sokolica site, in the village Ostra, in the vicinity of Čačak, with pseudo-corded ornaments, which is dated to the 6th century according to the finding of a bronze follis of Anastasius I, minted in Constantinople between 512 and 517 AD.¹¹⁸

116 Jovanović 1984, 325, T. III/9.

117 Lyubenova 1981, 170, obr. 112/2, 3, 10.

118 Milinković 1986, 52.

CONCLUSION

The archaeological findings originating from the Danube Limes area that stretches from *Singidunum* to *Aquae* which, by their function, form or decorative content, can be defined as Early Christian, in their own way shed light on a turbulent historical period in this area from the 4th to the beginning of the 7th century. It was a time of political turmoil, conflicts between the Roman and Byzantine armies, and invading barbarians on the northern borders of the empire. The growing uncertainty, which was primarily the result of frequent barbaric invasions, as well as the conditions caused by the economic crisis that was distressing the empire during the whole of the 3rd century, brought general uncertainty and provided favourable conditions for the spread of messianic ideas among the pagan population, especially those ideas coming from the East.

Our present knowledge of the spiritual life of the inhabitants of cities and fortifications in the Middle Danube Limes in the Late Antiquity period shows that, besides the dominance of the official religion of Rome, the importance of Christianity was increasing, as evidenced by the preserved material remains and written sources as well. The number and variety of objects of a religious character devoted to liturgical practice, as well as objects of a profane nature with clear Christian features that are represented both in larger urban structures and in fortifications on the Danube Limes, indicate the existence of a well organised Christian church and an already developed form of Christian life in these areas in the period from the 4th to the beginning of the 7th century.

When considering the character of the finds themselves, their modest workmanship is noticeable, and they were most often produced in local workshops (*Viminacium*, *Naissus*). In addition to these local products, a certain number of finds consist of imported material produced in one of the major production centres, most often in the East, from where it was distributed to the other parts of the empire. A significant number of imported finds indicate Egyptian origin, with their separate production centres, and from where they had been brought as an import to the Balkan region by trade routes.

The mass settlement of Slavic tribes that started at the beginning of the 7th century led to deep ethnic and social changes that had already begun, and which now contributed to the definitive destruction of the overall urban structure, and thus

of the church organisation. The interruption of the continuity of life was testified in all thus far registered fortifications on the Danube, as the first line of defence from the tribes emerging from the north and northeast. In the conquered areas, a new form of life, bearing all the features of typical rural culture, completely strange to Late Antiquity urban and the already, to a great extent, Christianised civilization, was formed and marked the centuries to come.

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