



Snežana Golubović, Miomir Korać

## The Recent Discovery of a Temple Complex at *Viminacium*

The ancient Roman city and military encampment of *Viminacium* covers an area of 220 hectares in the inner city, extending to over 450 hectares in the wider city region. It is located today under cultivated arable land and artifacts and fragments of objects from Roman times are scattered in the furrows of agricultural fields.

An exploration of the cemeteries<sup>1</sup> and the city of *Viminacium*<sup>2</sup>, was undertaken at the time of the construction of a thermoelectric power plant and the opening of a strip mine at the village of Stari Kostolac in the 1970's (95 km south-east of Belgrade). Since 2002, a newly founded interdisciplinary team has conducted new investigations using the most recent non-invasive methods in archaeology. The most up-to-date remote sensing methods such as aerial photography, electrical resistivity and geo-radar are being applied. The aerial photos and geomagnetic surveys of the site have given us a reliable picture of the camp with its defensive walls, gates, towers and an administrative building lying beneath the fertile farmlands. All of these techniques have helped the archaeologists to conduct more efficient excavations considering the rapidly encroaching coal strip mine.

In the year 2002, a structure at the outlying site of Kamenje was partially explored. At that time, the object was not directly endangered so excavations were interrupted to begin again in January of 2007 (fig. 1). The investigations were then again renewed and lasted until March of 2008, ending with the moving



Fig. 1 - The features at the edge of strip mine.

<sup>1</sup> Зотовић, Љ., Јордовић, Ч. 1990.

<sup>2</sup> Поповић В. 1968, 29–49; see also Мirković 1968, 56–67; 1986.



Fig. 2 - The situation with all buildings explored since 2002 till 2007.



Fig. 3 - Buildings No. 2 and 5 built of red stone and mortar.

of the newly discovered features to a new location. As they were in the direct path of the expanding strip mine, their relocation was unavoidable if their complete destruction was to be prevented.

Following the results obtained by the geophysical survey, the site was divided into a grid of squares and excavated. The complex, located some 800 m to the east of the military camp, consisted of eight structures amounting to about 500 m<sup>2</sup> (fig. 2). Debris such as fragments of bricks, chunks of green schist and red stone were scattered all over the surface and, upon excavation, comprised the bulk of the matrix of layers overlying the structure. Numerous pottery fragments and bronze coins were also found – valuable for chronology which places the features in the middle of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Century, with only Buildings No. 1 and No. 8 dating to the 4<sup>th</sup>.

Most of these objects were found at the base. We are therefore unable to reconstruct completely the sequence of construction. In the feature partly explored in 2002, the walls were built of pieces of red stone with mortar. In the southwest corner an older piece of architectural decoration made of limestone was found reused in construction.

Building No. 1, located closest to Building No. 8, was built from red stone, green schist, and fragments of brick without the use of any connecting material. Through style of construction and coin finds it



Fig. 4 - The most parts of Building 3 built of red stone, green schist, bricks, and mortar were destroyed.



Fig. 5 - The largest structure, No. 4 built of green schist and mortar.

was dated to the 4<sup>th</sup> Century. Structure 1 was the only building with walls, which measured 0.7 m in height. The remains of the other structures evidenced only platforms.

Buildings No. 2 and No. 5 (fig. 3) were preserved to a height 1.5–1.7 m. They were built of red stone and mortar. At very remains and beside No. 2 ten cubes of limestone were found belonging to the superstructure of the building, which was not preserved.

Most parts of Building No. 3 were destroyed (fig. 4). The feature was preserved in base height to 1.7 m and was built of red stone, green schist, bricks, and mortar.

The largest structure, No. 4, was not explored completely (fig. 5). It was built of green schist and mortar while the investigated length was 11.8 m.

Building No. 6 was made of red stone, green schist and mortar. It was preserved to a base height of 1.25 m, but was mostly destroyed. Only the northern part remained.

Building No. 7 was built of green schist and mortar. It was preserved only to a height of 0.6 m with extensions to the south and west, which were initially considered buildings themselves, but later recognized as pavements.

Building No. 8 (fig. 6) was situated to the north of the rest of the group and

represents, most likely, a rural house from the IV century as demonstrated by the coin finds. Pieces of red stone and green schist, along with bricks and mortar were used for construction. In the matrix overlying the feature were found pieces of limestone and marble architectural decoration, brick and pottery fragments, iron nails, numerous bronze objects, etc. The house, together with placements for columns (porch), reached a size of 22.3 x 20.6 m, and consisted of eight rooms. The walls were preserved in height from 0.6 to 1.00 m and were built of red stone, green schist, and bricks without mortar.

The first phase of Building No. 8 consisted of rooms II–V. The foundations of their walls are placed deeper than those of the other rooms. Rooms I and VI–VIII were attached to the walls of the core of the building (rooms II–V) and the construction method employed was rather different – using a dry-laid stone and brick technique. The foundations of the inner walls were placed lower than the outer ones. The function of the last structure (Building No. 8) was easy to recognize. The nature of those previously discussed, however, was almost impossible to define. Unfortunately, the site has been plundered for centuries and nothing is left in terms of finds which could help us in assessing the use of those buildings. Only a few similarities in the architecture and the disposition of construction lead us to search for

analogies in so-called ‘temple complexes’ as defined, for example, at Kempten (*Cambodunum*)<sup>3</sup> or Altbachtal<sup>4</sup> (Cüppers, 1990, 588–591) both in Germany.



Fig. 6 - Building No 8 consisted of eight rooms.

**Dr Snežana Golubović**  
Archaeological Institute Belgrade,  
Knez Mihailova 35/IV, 11000 Belgrade,  
Serbia  
E-mail: zanasg@eunet.rs

**Dr Miomir Korać**  
Archaeological Institute Belgrade,  
Knez Mihailova 35/IV, 11000 Belgrade,  
Serbia  
E-mail: misko@mi.sanu.ac.rs

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<sup>3</sup> WEBER 2000, 72–78.

<sup>4</sup> CÜPPERS 1990, 588–591.