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Slavery in the Roman Central Balkans*

Abstract: The paper reviews previous studies of slavery in the Central Balkan provinces concluding that the issue was marginal and has received very limited research attention. It also attempts to outline possible future directions for investigating archaeological evidence suggestive of an enslaved population. First, it explores funerary contexts that indicate the interments of slaves in a few urban necropolises, aiming to stimulate further discussion of similar cases. Similarly, the paper revises several architectural examples that may have been associated with slaves, mostly from imperial estates and residences, but also from one fortified metallurgical complex. Although the views expressed here are hypothetical and tentative, the purpose of the paper is to emphasize the importance of keeping the topic open and trying to improve our analytical and methodological tools for dealing with it.

Keywords: Roman Empire, Central Balkans, slavery, funerary archaeology, villae rusticae, imperial estates.

In my previous paper, I dealt with some basic aspects of the research on slavery in the Central Balkan Late Iron Age period (Mihajlović 2022). Here I continue the critical overview and focus on (basically) the same area but in the Roman period, i.e. the 1st–5th centuries CE. It is important to note that the term Central Balkans is more vaguely used in historical and archaeological studies of the Roman era than in such research of protohistoric times. The area became part of the Roman Empire during the reigns of Augustus and Tiberius, and subsequently witnessed a series of administrative transformations, often with no clear indications of the exact provincial demarcation lines. Of course, Roman provincial divisions do not correspond to modern national state borders, which

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Figure 1 – The Roman Central Balkans as it is usually defined in archaeology and historiography with sites mentioned in the text marked.

is the reason for the often volatile delimitation of the Roman Central Balkans and the inclusion or exclusion of certain areas based on various criteria (e.g. Roman period provincial or regional divisions, modern state frontiers, modern language closeness or barriers, availability of material for individual research, etc.). In general, and most commonly, the Roman Central Balkans (Figure 1) is thought to encompass the province of Moesia Superior (as constituted in 86),

the southeastern part of Pannonia Inferior (created under Trajan), and the eastern part of Dalmatia (defined as a separate province in the second half of the 1st c.). ‘Domestic’ Roman historiography and archaeology were predominantly concerned with areas of the Central Balkans that were within former Yugoslavia, often overlooking parts of Roman provinces that were within other contemporary states (i.e. northwestern Bulgaria, which was within Moesia Superior, and northern Albania, which was part of Dalmatia).

In any case, the area was relatively intensively studied over the years, particularly in the period 1960–1990, and many academic accounts of various topics and materials were published, primarily in Yugoslav languages. In this research process, priority was given to historical sources, meaning that interpretation of epigraphic and literary evidence served as an overarching framework for understanding the Roman period, while archaeological evidence was mostly incorporated into historically preconceived scenarios. As I do not intend to delve into detail into the development of the academic approach to the Roman era, it is suffice to note that Roman studies in Serbia/Yugoslavia were completely colored by the Romanization paradigm. As a result, interpretations within any subfield or thematic area relied entirely on the idea of the Roman Empire conquering the natives, spreading its socio-political system, economy, and culture, and thus transforming the Balkan provinces from a ‘tribal’ protohistoric and ‘lower level’ socio-cultural form of existence into the higher and civilized way of Roman life (see Mihajlović 2023).

When it comes to the issue of slavery, this theoretical approach fully shaped academic attitudes, directions, and manner of research. Along with the notion that pre-Roman ‘tribes’ were insufficiently developed to be considered ‘societies with slaves’, it was generally assumed that slavery arrived thanks to the Empire and spread simultaneously with the establishment of provincial society and overall Romanization. In other words, because the process of integration into the Empire was thought of as a replication of the ‘full package’ of Roman social, economic, and cultural templates, slavery was considered its integral part, appearing in full-fledged form with the arrival of Romans. Consequently, both in Roman historiography and archaeology, slavery was treated as a self-evident phenomenon that had not received sufficient attention as an area of study in its own right.

Historiography and Roman slavery in the Central Balkans

The thematic course of Roman historiography in Serbia was set by Nikola Vulić (1872–1945), a pioneer in the field, who conducted thorough research of ancient literary sources in an effort to establish a basic chronological and historic framework for Roman provinces in the Central Balkans. Vulić was primarily

interested in political and administrative history, and thus his interpretations dealt with basic questions of conquer, the establishment of the military system, the road network, and civic settlements. Although he continued to discover a large number of epigraphic evidence throughout his career, he concentrated on essential publishing and reading of texts within catalogs, never attempting to make an overall reconstruction of the social history of the Roman Central Balkans. As he was the only classical historian in Serbia during the first half of the 20th century, this situation remained unchanged until the 1950s, when the first collections of evidence from the Balkan provinces were published, primarily by Hungarian classical historians Andreas Mócsy (1929–1987) and Géza Alföldy (1935–2011).

The subject of enslaved and freed people in the provinces of Dalmatia and Pannonia also sparked the interest of these scholars (Mócsy 1956; Alföldy 1961), most likely under the influence of Soviet historiography (see Mócsy 1956, fn. 1; Alföldy 1961, fns. 3 and 34). In any case, with very little evidence for Pannonia Inferior and more abundant material for Pannonia Superior, Mócsy reached several very general conclusions: in the first place, that the economy based on slave labor was meager; that it developed only from the 2nd and especially in the 3rd centuries; and that it was predominantly linked to foreign merchant families who used slaves and freedmen as agents for their trade enterprises, or else to veterans and soldiers (1956, 233–240). He also theorized that this was the outcome of the small estates economy that existed in Pannonia Inferior, where local farmers did not hold slave workforce, as well as the lack of important trade routes and low urbanization that was mostly military in nature (Mócsy 1956, 243–246). Some years later he published a book on society and Romanization in Moesia Superior where he reviewed social structure, through the study of epigraphic material (Mócsy 1970). In the section dedicated to slaves and freed people, he listed the inscriptions by individual settlements, with notes on particularities for each of them. Summing up the situation implied by the inscriptions, despite being aware that epigraphic visibility of these classes is unreliable, he concluded that enslaved and freed people were predominantly found in the largest urban settlements, that they were associated with trade and crafts, and that their small number implies an undeveloped economy of the sort in Moesian settlements. Mócsy also assumed that there were no large agricultural estates that extensively used the slave workforce (1970, 183–189).

In the meanwhile, there has been a change in the local context as a new generation of classical historians assumed academic positions and initiated wider research. Thus, Fanula Papazoglu (1917–2001), Miroslava Mirković (1933–2020), Petar Petrović (1938–1997), Slobodan Dušanić (1939–2012), and Borka Dragojević-Josifovska (1910–2004) produced the first domestic syntheses of literary and epigraphic data. Their work solidified previously vague and

scarce knowledge of the Roman period in the Central Balkans (e.g. Papazoglu 1957; Mirković 1968; Čerškov 1969; Petrović 1976), allowing researchers to move beyond basic historical questions of timeline and crucial ('breakpoint') events. Nonetheless, the main course set by Vulić has not changed, and Roman historians remain strongly devoted to political, military, and administrative narratives with regard to the Central Balkan provinces. True, the social structure of particular settlements or areas within the provinces was considered, but these considerations were predominantly concerned with ethnocultural affiliation and status, i.e. whether the inhabitants of the province were of foreign or native tribal origin, what happened to the conquered ethnic groups, what was the pace of the spread of Roman citizenship, and how quickly and deeply the process of Romanization caught the provinces. As a case in point, one can cite the book by Miroslava Mirković (1968), a study of Roman settlements along the Danube in Moesia that is still relevant today. In this comprehensive volume, she analyzed all the available evidence and offered a reconstruction of the province's history, from the period of conquest, the establishment and development of individual settlements and military posts, to the road network and population structure. Within the part about the population, which covers soldiers, veterans, natives, and immigrants, the last section deals with slaves and freedpeople (Mirković 1968, 134–136). Mirković presents a general view, possibly following Mócsy, that slavery penetrated slowly in Moesia. This allegedly happened because the slave-owning relations were already in decline when the Romanization process advanced more strongly into the province, but also because free peasants were overwhelmingly present in the Danubian area, while craft production was undeveloped (Mirković 1968, 134). Along with this speculative view, she rightly points out that there are only a few inscriptions mentioning slaves in Moesia and that their contents are quite scant, making it difficult to understand the share that slavery had within economic relations at the Danubian frontier. Setting the framework in this way, she then reviews a few pieces of epigraphic evidence related to slaves, pointing out that this social group was usually mentioned in the inscriptions of their owners. Mirković (1968, 135) also briefly considered freedpeople, noting that they are represented in epigraphic data more often and that they were of much better social and economic standing than slaves. In conclusion, she reiterated the insufficient nature of the source material to make any conclusive comments and regarded as probable that slaves were used in agriculture, mostly in the estates of veterans (Mirković 1968, 136), an opinion she already expressed in the section dealing with the Moesian Danube's military population (Mirković 1968, 123–124).

Similar observations of a very condensed and general nature can be found in a book on the Roman period in Kosovo and Metohija (Čerškov 1969). Again, the study of literary, epigraphic, and archeological evidence yielded an overview focused on conquest, Roman settlement, road network, economy, and so-

cial structure. Čerškov also hypothesized highly tense relationships between natives and conquerors, inhabitants of towns and rural areas, and Romanized and non-Romanized communities (1969, 49–61). Within this framework, he shortly explored the issue of slaves, pointing out that only a few inscriptions mention them, and assuming that in the eastern Roman provinces, slave-owning was a much less developed phenomenon than in the metropolis of Rome (Čerškov 1969, 61). Consequently, he concluded that slaves mentioned in the inscriptions found in Kosovo and Metohija were of house or imperial origin and that evidence of slaves and slave labor in agriculture, crafts, and mining was at the time lacking. Although one of Čerškov's main general references was the book about the Danubian-Balkan area in the Roman period written by Soviet author Oleg V. Kudryavtsev, and despite his basic use of Marxist principles of 'relations of production', 'productive forces', and 'class struggles', he did not pursue the issue of slavery further. On the one hand, this was due to scarce and limited source material; but on the other, it was probably because he was primarily interested in ethnic interactions of natives and Romans, as well as the allegedly sharply opposed urban and rural populations in the Roman provinces.

Slavery is addressed in the studies of mining in Illyricum, conducted over several decades by Slobodan Dušanić. In a series of articles where he dealt with administrative, juridical, and territorial issues of ore exploitation, and carefully considered the manner of its organization, Dušanić also mentioned the labor force employed by imperial authorities in an attempt to maximize the extraction of precious metals. Besides the native miners and felons convicted to work at quarries, Dušanić considered the possibility of slave labor as well. However, because of the lack of written sources, he only briefly and marginally mentioned the issue without delving more deeply into the implications it entails (Dušanić 2003, 262). He paid slightly more attention to issues of imperial slaves and freedmen (*familia Caesaris*) who served as procurators and staff in the mining districts and estates (Dušanić 1977; 1996; 2003, 262; 2004), but again more as an illustration of Roman emperors' direct and firm administrative control and monopolization of mineral extraction than as a focused interest in these particular social categories.

Similar limited interest and discussion of slavery can be found in the fundamental and to this day indispensable serial publication of Moesia Superior inscriptions that systematically cataloged, resolved, and interpreted epigraphic materials from towns and regions of the province (*Inscriptions de la Mésie Supérieure* I, II, III/2, IV and VI). The information in each volume extracted and analyzed from the inscriptions is synthesized to offer a general historical picture, administrative and topographical particularities, and a review of population structure as presented in epigraphy. This last aspect of the province's settlements and areas, however, is only an overview of the social positions and

roles mentioned in the texts (most notably by provincial and municipal magistrates and persons of various military ranks), as well as a discussion on possible ethnic and geographic origins according to the onomastics of the recorded names. Slaves and freedpeople are mentioned in these sections, but only by listing their appearances in texts and through comments on their possible origin as well as relationships with other persons recorded within the same inscriptions (Dušanić 1976, 109; Petrović 1979, 35; 1995, 48; Dragojević-Josifovska 1982, 35; Mirković 1986, 59). In other words, there were no attempts to problematize and examine these echelons more thoroughly and beyond the basic notion that they were a social reality in the Roman era, and that freedpeople were generally in a better position than slaves and were usually associated with the class of officers and veterans or imperial authority.

To some extent, an exception to this trend can be found in the work of Naser Ferri, who published an article on *seviri Augustales* and *Augustales* of freed origin known in the epigraphic evidence of Upper Moesia (1990). Combining general studies of the problem with 18 inscriptions mostly found in the most relevant urban settlements of the province, he addressed the question of former slaves becoming *Augustales* and concluded that the situation in Moesia Superior generally conformed to the trends observed elsewhere in the Empire (Ferri 1990, 599–602). The same author also published a book in Albanian (with an English summary) titled *The social-economical status of released slaves in the Roman province Moesia Superior* (Ferri 1996). Although the review of the work suggests it is an analysis of freedpeople's social position based on the catalog of epigraphic material from the province (Boshtrakaj-Camaj 2006), the book is unavailable to me in any form. The work stayed out of academic radar within ex-Yugoslavian scholarship, even for authors who faced no language barrier (e.g. Mirdita 2015 does not cite the book at all). Nevertheless, this can be regarded as a rare attempt to shed some light, in a focused manner, on the role that people of the chattel background had within the provincial society. Similarly, a focused approach is found in the article of Mirjana Sanader, which discusses the duties of *vilicus*, reviewing examples from Illyricum against the backdrop of literary sources and general academic works on the matter. As in previous cases, her method included a listing of inscriptions referring to the different capacities of *vilici*, from private estate managers to positions within the system of customs and toll stations, mining exploitation, and administrative services (Sanader 1996). Thus, her review resulted in the incorporation of local examples into the already acquired general knowledge on *vilici*. The same methodology of cataloguing inscriptions that mention slaves and freedpeople with accompanying brief commentary and general information was employed by Zef Mirdita (1936–2016). The collected epigraphic material is presented as part of a reconstructed social structure of Dardania in Roman and early Byzantine times,

and it cites examples of enslaved and freed persons in different social contexts recorded in funerary and votive monuments from various types of sites (Mirdita 2015: 251–275). This review also concludes that the evidence from Dardania matched the general situation throughout the Empire, particularly in Danubian provinces, i.e. that the phenomenon of slavery did not differ compared to other areas of the Roman world.

All of the cited work can inarguably be regarded as valuable contributions that have directed academic attention to the problem and brought to light highly instructive evidence of local provenance that aids in a more thorough comprehension of Roman period slavery. Nevertheless, it is important to point out that research conducted so far cannot be evaluated as a work of systematic and comprehensive manner. First, the approach used was mostly general in that it did not specify the research questions beyond incorporating the local material into the overall picture of Roman slavery, nor did it contextualize particular cases in their own local environment. In other words, slavery in the Central Balkan provinces never gained the status of an autonomous research field or was subjected to comprehensive specialized study. Of course, this was the direct consequence of the dearth of evidence, both in quantity and quality of content, and surely if epigraphic material was ample, the academic results would have been much more extensive. However, the limited study of slavery in the Central Balkans is also the result of the theoretical and methodological direction of local Roman historiography. Namely, belonging to the European tradition of Roman studies, the dominant academic perspective in Serbia/Yugoslavia relied on literary and juridical sources that were created from the standpoint of Roman imperial elites and were suited exactly to their needs (see Mihajlović 2023, 121–176). As a result, the phenomenon of slavery was regarded as a matter of course of imperial social structure that arrived with the Roman conquest and spread through the Romanization of provincial society. It is thus treated as a historical fact, something that was indeed present but was of secondary importance compared to issues traditionally held in the highest regard within the academic mindset of 19th–20th centuries: political, military, and administrative history, important figures and events, army, ethnicity, and Romanization. It is my belief that this theoretical and interpretative framework contributed to reduced interest in slavery and hindered more extensive research on unprivileged social categories in general.¹ Additionally, as Marxian theory had little influence in classical historiography, and only a few academics tried to employ it in a generalized and selective

¹ The illustration can be found in a study of *colonnate* in late antiquity conducted by M. Mirković (1997). Although she focused on an underprivileged and oppressed class of population, her main concern was the legal and organizational issues of *coloni*, their status and the issue of freedom.

manner (Mihajlović 2023, 147–167), the official Marxist ideological discourse in Serbia/Yugoslavia in the period 1945–1990 made no difference in this respect (in contrast to Soviet context: Baryshnikov 2020). In conclusion, historiographical studies of Roman slavery in the Central Balkans have a conspicuously confined scope and a narrow thematic line, and it can thus be asserted that they have a marginal position within the research interest of local academia.

Archaeological research and slavery in the Roman Central Balkans

Professional archaeological work on Roman sites in the Central Balkans began in the late 19th century, but the majority were small-scale research campaigns with relatively modest results. It was only after the Second World War that archaeological investigations became systematic and were markedly intensified (Mihajlović 2023, 93–195). These efforts aimed to excavate the most important Roman-period remains such as large settlements, villas, imperial estates, and palaces. However, because the areas of Roman urban centers had been continuously inhabited and modern towns and cities covered their remnants, the possibilities for extensive research were considerably diminished. Military posts of various types, on the other hand, gained the most conspicuous attention, for several reasons. First, these kinds of sites were abundantly present and remained visible in the landscape, and second, they were established as a scholarly sub-field with a long history and wide European academic interest (Mihajlović V. V. 2018). Importantly, a large number of Roman army sites were explored during the extensive rescue projects conducted in the Iron Gates region prior to the construction of two power plants and a dam across the Danube watercourse (Cvjetičanin 2020). Various types of burial grounds also attracted more extensive research: from parts of large urban necropolises to clusters consisting of several graves in rural environments. While these were rarely systematic excavations, with the majority coming from rescue projects and small-scale investigations, the database of funerary evidence in the Central Balkans can be considered substantial and diverse. It is worth noting that the later Roman period (3rd–5th c.) accounts for the lion's share of structural remains, the most abundant material, and the greatest diversity of sites in the Central Balkans, while earlier evidence is relatively less familiar or nonexistent. This is most likely the result of settlement continuities, especially at military posts and urban centers where newer construction phases demolished older ones. Nonetheless, it could also be the consequence of socio-economic and demographic processes, i.e. the region's relative prosperity in the 3rd and 4th centuries (cf. Mócsy 1974; Donev 2020a; 2020b).

In any case, the intensification of archaeological research resulted in various publications containing basic data, chronology, and the general characteristics of particular sites, micro-regions, and wider areas. These mostly focused on the presentation of the architecture, construction phases, and the technical and technological specificities of objects and other structures. Similarly, considerable work has been done in the systematization, typological and chronological attributions of various sorts of archaeological material (Mihajlović 2023, 463–475). Although the quality of these efforts and individual results vary, it is certain that the knowledge of the Roman-period Central Balkans has improved and advanced greatly since the mid-20th century.

On the other hand, the interpretative direction of Roman archaeology in Serbia and former Yugoslavia remained quite traditional, relying heavily on an approach developed at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries. The central features of this framework are descriptions of the material, a dominant focus on exceptional, valuable, artistic, monumental, and well-preserved objects, and, most importantly, a tendency to incorporate archaeological evidence into established historiographical interpretations of ancient literary evidence. It also includes generalized ‘bird’s-eye’ views, orientation towards ‘major topics’ such as conquests, urbanization, imperial munificence, the army, and relations between ‘Romans and natives’. Thus, the ruling paradigm within Serbian (and ex-Yugoslavian) Roman archaeology was Romanization, with ethnocultural dynamics in the provinces figuring as the fundamental research problem. More precisely, this outlook holds as an axiom that objects directly reflect cultural ‘essence’ and ethnic affiliation, and hence that the greater or lesser presence of ‘Roman’ material culture (or influences it left on the locally produced artifacts) automatically signifies the level of transformation into the Romans. In other words, archeological interpretations of the Roman period were predominantly focused on evaluating ethnic and cultural transformations that happened under the influences of advanced Romano-Mediterranean culture brought by the Empire (Mihajlović 2023, 176–201). In such a theoretical-methodological constellation, even spheres like agriculture, mining, craft production, settlement pattern, religion, and social structure are often thought of as strongly related to the allegedly sharp and clear-cut Roman/non-Roman division. As a result, other aspects of provincial society were largely relegated to the margins of research interest and had a supplementary value compared to ethnic attribution of material culture. Consequently, topics that were outside of the mainstream tendencies and standpoints received much less scrutiny, were treated in a cursory manner, or were entirely neglected. Moreover, because Marxist thought had no bearing on Roman archaeology in ex-Yugoslavia, interest in slavery could not and did not emerge from this direction either.

The research of funerary evidence is a fitting example, not least because burial grounds are the most extensively excavated and published Roman sites in the Central Balkans. Since the 1960s, variously scaled investigations of urban necropolises (e.g. Scupi, Viminacium, Singidunum, Sirmium, Naissus), small towns cemeteries (e.g. Municipium DD, Demessus, Timacum Minus), burial grounds in mining districts, agricultural estates, and rural environments have been conducted. Regardless of the type of site, as well as the standard typological, morphological, and chronological classifications of burials and their assemblages, funerary features, inventories, and practices were unanimously comprehended as direct reflections of ethno-cultural differences and Romanization. Since this was the fundamental research concern, burial characteristics have been habitually reviewed as indices of ethnic and cultural provenances such as 'native', 'Illyrian', 'Dacian', 'Thracian', 'Roman', 'mixed', 'Oriental', etc. According to this viewpoint, these ethnocultural 'imprints' occurred within the provincial funerary sphere either as a consequence of cultural influences or migrations; in any case, they were directly linked to the process of Romanization and simultaneous 'acculturation' of autochthonous 'ethnocultural elements' (the paradigm is best summarized in Srejšović 1965; Jovanović 1984; 2000; for the critique and different approach: Cvjetićanin 2016; 2018).

On the other hand, it is telling that none of the published studies on Roman necropolises in the Central Balkans attempted to systematically examine the social structure of the buried populations. Excluding several recent works that can be characterized as exceptions (Danković 2020; Vojvoda, Golubović and Mikić 2021), no attempts have been made to put funerary data into the perspective of social stratification, status, gender, age, professional, or some other roles. Furthermore, in methodological terms, the interpretations are based exclusively on a descriptive approach, frequently combined with subjective impressions and judgments. Thus, there is an evident absence of the use of analytical tools such as analysis of the frequency of features, contexts, and finds; statistical processing of evidence; recognition of different patterns within funerary assemblages; and spatial and contextual inquiries of graves and their inventories. Such a theoretical and methodological trajectory cannot be explained solely as the result of ambiguous, inconclusive, and deficient evidence (e.g. cremated remains, scarce grave goods, fragmentary state of research, etc.), since most of the authors freely speculate and are quick to determine ethnic and cultural influences of funerary features. Rather, this is a preference drawn from the general theoretical mindset of culture-historical archaeology and the Romanization paradigm, and it actively hinders any discussion of questions outside of its essentialist scope. In such an interpretative framework and research approach, there is very little room for themes such as slavery. This is not to say that burials of the enslaved

receive absolutely no consideration, but it is undeniable that such instances are exceedingly sporadic and treat the issue in a notably reductive manner.

To the best of my knowledge, the earliest tentative mention of slaves in a funerary context comes from authors who published the results of excavations at the Doclea necropolis (near Podgorica). In short, they asserted that the appearance of inhumation graves dating from the early imperial period should not be interpreted as a result of foreign immigration, particularly from the Roman 'Orient', or as the influence of Christianity. Instead, "in these solitary and normally poor graves one should rather see the burials of slaves and members of the poorest class, or possibly of Italic immigrants who held to their family traditions" (Cermanović-Kuzmanović, Velimirović-Žižić and Srejić 1975, 30, 314, translation mine). A. Jovanović offered a completely opposing viewpoint in his monograph on Roman necropolises in Yugoslavia. Starting with the assumption that inhumation graves in major urban centers were not an autochthonous form of treatment of the deceased (which was cremation), he argued that this kind of interment probably belonged to immigrants from the Roman East, the so-called 'Orientals'. Among them, he presumed the presence of soldiers, merchants, artisans, but also slaves with whom the oldest (from the 1st c.) and the poorest inhumation burials should be associated (Jovanović 1984, 47, 99, 145, 158). Jovanović returned to the issue more than 20 years later but maintained his position that inhumations with no grave goods or with humble inventories belonged either to the poor population of the provincial urban centers or, more probably, to the incomers from the Roman East who were slaves (2006, 25, 26, 32, 38–39). However, this hypothesis received no further elaboration or attempts to demonstrate it with actual evidence. Additionally, although Jovanović's views on the ethnocultural nature of burials in the Roman Central Balkans were mostly accepted by other scholars, his postulates about slave-burials were never utilized in an attempt to identify the graves of enslaved. Again, this shows that the understanding of funerary aspects revolves exclusively around the idea of a normative culture that was rigidly linked to ethnic affiliations and defined all aspects of life, while issues such as the burials of slaves (or, for that matter, other unprivileged categories) remain insignificant.

One case, however, stands apart, at least to a certain extent. In her study of the Gomilice necropolis, Mirjana Glumac takes a different vantage point. First, she considers the generally accepted stance that the slave workforce was widely used both in mining districts and agricultural estates and combines it with the fact that Gomilice was the burial ground within the Tricornenses imperial mining districts, in the vicinity of the administrative center of Demessus (Glumac 2014, 144–146). She also makes the interesting point that among the buried at Gomilice there were members of the 'local aristocracy', but also slaves

who were their servants (Glumac 2014, 149). Finally, Glumac offers helpful insight: “In the western half of the necropolis, within the burials encircled with stone-built perimeters, the members of local aristocracy were interred, probably of several families. In their proximity, outside the perimeters, there are mainly graves with modest grave goods or without inventory, which might belong to slaves, members of domestic servants” (Glumac 2014, 175, 180, translation mine). Unfortunately, she does not elaborate on the possible implications of the hypothesis further, nor does she specify this general principle by pinpointing the cases that correspond to the postulated model. Nevertheless, this is a unique departure from the ethno-deterministic perspective and the introduction of social stratification as an interpretative criterion for funerary contexts. As such, it deserves praise, not least because it suggests that slaves should be studied as an integral part of provincial society and that they could have been present in the burial grounds in the Roman Central Balkans.

Apart from funerary studies, research on agricultural villas, some of which have been partially excavated in the last half a century, also demonstrates that there is marginal interest in slavery. Although it is common knowledge (based on literary sources) that *villae rusticae* heavily relied on slave labor, this aspect is seldom noticed and even less frequently acknowledged by local scholarship. Recent publications that supplement the results of decades of research in the area of Srem/Syrmia surprisingly do not consider this issue at all, albeit they discuss a wide range of topics, from architecture to economic activities and particular clusters of finds (Brukner and Dautova Ruševljan 2015; Dautova Ruševljan 2016). Similar is the case with reviews that look into villas in other areas of the Roman Central Balkans or the region as a whole. Their authors usually follow the historiographical views of Mirković (1968) and do mention the usage of a slave workforce, especially pointing to this possibility for the large agricultural villa estates. They even commonly cite Roman authors’ accounts on villas’ life and organization of space in general, and quarters and duties of slaves in particular, but curiously make no attempts to connect any archaeological contexts, structures, or finds to the presence or activities of enslaved dwellers of villas (Ilić 2012; Marić 2014; Ropkić Đorđević 2016; Busuladžić 2011 for Bosnia and Herzegovina). This is of course not surprising given the very modest scope of archaeological research of rural sites in the area, as well as the lack of published and reliable data in the cases of excavated ones. Additionally, there are generally great difficulties in archaeological recognition of evidence that can be decisively linked with slavery and slaves (see Thompson 2003). Notwithstanding these objective obstacles, a good part of our uncharted knowledge is still directly generated by the theoretical setting of Roman archaeology in the countries of ex-Yugoslavia: strongly bided by traditional research agendas, the field is reluctant to open ‘unconventional’ sets of questions and to make an effort in tackling them.

The only exception that I am aware of concerns the large 4th-century villa complex in Anine near Lajkovac (in what then was the eastern part of Dalmatia) where excavators found iron fetters (Arsić, Pecikoza and Pavlović 2020, 25). While the exact context and find spot have not been specified, it is clear that it came either from the villa (which included residential and economic parts organized around the central courtyard) or from the nearby baths that were later repurposed into the workshop and warehouse (Arsić, Pecikoza and Pavlović 2020, 5–17, 57–58). It is also relevant that this estate encompassed two large granaries (19 x 50 m), which indicates market-oriented agricultural production (Arsić, Pecikoza and Pavlović 2020, 17–18, 44, 58; Fig. 2, 1), and thus the probable employment of socially subordinated workforce, including slaves. Citing Busuladžić (2014, 127–128, 199–200), the authors state that while several similar finds of iron fetters, some from the villa sites, have been reported in Bosnia and Herzegovina as well, in Serbia these objects are either unknown or unrecognized as such due to their similarity to animal irons (Arsić, Pecikoza and Pavlović 2020, 26). I would add that such a situation is also a direct consequence of dormant interest in the issue, and an attitude that considers only well-preserved and obvious examples (like the one in Anine) and thus overlooks fragmentary or inconclusive evidence. In any case, the Anine find and its publication can be regarded as a ‘wake up call’ to keep the archaeology of slavery in mind and examine the material from villa contexts much more carefully.

Another similar and isolated case, this time from the mining context, is also informative. Following historiographic studies of Roman metal exploitation in the provinces of Central Balkans, there have been attempts to investigate the issue from an archaeological perspective as well. While more limited in conclusions than research of written and epigraphic evidence, archaeological inquiries did produce important observations. One of them concerns intense Late Roman metal extraction and processing exemplified by activities in and around the fort of Krakul Jordan in the auriferous Pek valley (Tomović 2001). This partially excavated 4th-century hill enclosure contains convincing and informative evidence for gold-ore processing, as well as for accompanying activities such as the production of ceramic vessels and the forging of iron tools used in mining (see the end of the text). Additionally, from the valley near the fort (the village of Železnik) comes a fragment of iron leg fetters that is briefly described as a find from a smithy, with no further published details (Tomović 2001, 171, fig. 29; Fig. 2, 2).² Tomović viewed the object as evidence of the presence of slaves or convicts, who made up the largest part

² This most likely refers to the Late Roman unfortified metallurgical object with traces of furnaces and slag discovered in Železnik, shortly mentioned by Kondić (1995, 192), but otherwise unpublished.

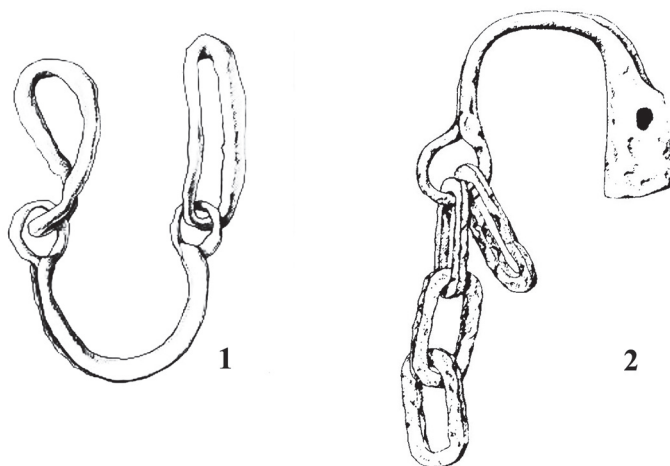


Figure 2 – Iron fetters from 1: Anine Late Roman villa (source: Arsić, Pecikoza and Pavlović 2020, figure 53), 2: Krakul Jordan Late Roman fortified metallurgical complex (source: Tomović 2001, Fig. 29).

of the considerable workforce needed for mining. This accords with personal information provided by V. Kondić to S. Dušanić (1980, 52, fn. 357) about the frequent discovery of shackles in the areas of Pek and Timok where ore exploitation was organized within the supposed imperial districts. Unfortunately, none of these artifacts were published and many details remain unknown, serving as a repeated reminder of the marginal attention that the topic received within Serbian and Yugoslavian archaeology.

To conclude this part of the paper, I will simply reiterate that much of our ignorance about slavery in the Roman Central Balkans stems from the omnipresent lack of particular interest in the matter. Roman slavery is accepted as a historical fact and understood as a part of the socio-economic package brought to the provinces through the process of Romanization. Because the concerns of local archaeologies dwelled in the realms of ethnicity, culture, and acculturation, social structure and its enslaved portion were never acknowledged as a field worthy of an aimed and specified research. Albeit the scarcity of direct evidence was and remains an objective obstacle, there were no attempts to reach the issue even indirectly and give it proper consideration. In a nutshell, this was the consequence of theoretical framework and interpretational and research preferences, i.e. favoring some at the expense and subsequent neglect of other questions.

Possible directions for future research

There have been significant developments in the last several decades that can be beneficial for the research of slavery in the Central Balkans. These changes are threefold and come from the spheres of theoretical advancements within Roman studies (in the context of slavery see Webster 2005, 2008), the greater scope and quality of studies of slavery in the Roman period (e.g. Thompson 2003; Joshel and Hackworth Petersen 2014), and the progress of hard science methods that are successfully employed in archeology. I will not review or comment on these in general but rather try to briefly direct attention to their implications for the study of the issue in the Central Balkan framework.

Funerary evidence in search of the enslaved

I begin with funerary archaeology and what could be the possible research directions in future attempts to identify and study the burials of slaves. The obvious vantage point is the assumption that marginal status during a lifetime can be reflected in the funerary sphere. Examples that come to mind for the Roman period are burials of the *infames*, or socially disrespected and morally ‘polluted’ categories such as criminals, prostitutes, and gladiators who were denied the right to a proper burial, and/or were segregated and confined to spaces away from regular burial grounds used by the society’s majority (see Hope 2007, 162–165). Closer to the stratum of slaves (who were not automatically *infames*, although were stigmatized even when freed) is the poor population which could have been excluded from cemeteries reserved for more affluent urban dwellers as clearly demonstrated by the burial ground of Esquiline Hill in Rome and similar cases (Carroll 2006, 69–77). Along this criterion, it is also justifiable to include individual and group burials that were separated, isolated, and removed from the areas with normative burials, or were segregated and positioned along the edges of necropolises. One telling example is a mass grave found at the periphery of the south-east necropolis of Scupi, where around 200 adult male individuals, some with hands tied behind their backs, others with tied legs, were carelessly thrown into a shallow trench with no objects beside them, most likely after collective execution by decapitation (Jovanova 2017). While it is still impossible to determine the character of this group since anthropological analyses considering certain options are still ongoing (and currently point to soldier population – Veljanovska 2017; Stankov 2017), it shows that marginal and outcast positions in life correspond to body treatments and burial practices after death. Building on this thought, another example of funerary marginalization can be assumed for the mass inhumation of nine to 13 adult individuals who were buried without order in several levels, in different positions and orientations, with-

in the north-eastern necropolis of Mursa (Göricke-Lukić 2000, 119, 173). The interesting thing about this group is their peripheral location: apparently, they were on the outskirts of the necropolis, while their burial superposed three earlier inhumation graves that destroyed the foundation of a perimeter wall of an even earlier rectangular family mausoleum (Göricke-Lukić 2000, 97, 173). Furthermore, there was only one simple bronze ring among the buried individuals, additionally signifying the deprived social position. Collective burials or burial spaces that were continuously used for successive interments are similarly indicative in this respect, and good examples can be found in the Više Grobalja necropolis of Viminacium. The unit signified as grave G-491 contained seven individuals, all adult males, without any grave goods, some superimposed, and some placed next to each other (Korać and Golubović 2009, 398). It is indicative that three more skulls were found next to two of them, which shows that later interments devastated older ones, without care to preserve the remains of the earlier deceased. Similar situations of multiple burials of adults, within a small space and overlapping one another, but with no grave goods, were found in G-401 (three males, one female), G-402 (dislocated bones of an undetermined number of many individuals), G-403 (four males), G-431 (four males), and G-448 (four males) (Korać and Golubović 2009, 340–342, 359, 368). Unfortunately, the plan of this part of the necropolis, as well as the sketches of the mentioned burials are not published, so it cannot be determined if they were separated from normative tombs, although it is clear that G-401–403 were proximate to each other. Nevertheless, if one were to look for cases suitable for further and closer review as possible slave burials under the criteria stated above, these would be the best candidates to start (and for additional reasons, read further in the text).

There is another premise to consider when attempting to identify possible slave internments. As evidenced in many different epigraphic and archeological cases across the Empire, enslaved and freed people were continually socially bonded to individuals and families that owned them, and in many cases their burial places were found inside or near the family/kin and household burial plots (e.g. Edmondson 2011; Mouritsen 2013). The logic of centric burial space organization was employed in many cases in the Central Balkans necropolises, albeit not as a universal rule. Nevertheless, when applied, it consisted of the central burial (or two) and later interments that were positioned differently, but with a clear spatial reference to the ‘main’ grave. Hence, in considering the burials of marginal members of the inner kin/household hierarchy, including slaves or freed persons, it makes sense to first consider these peripheral entombments (as also pointed out by Glumac 2014, 175, 180). To this, I would add another criterion that may support the starting methodological principle of peripherality. In the Central Balkan provinces, primarily in Moesia Superior and eastern parts of Dalmatia and Pannonia Inferior, the cremation of the deceased and deposition of remains of bones and ashes was the predominant burial practice up to the 3rd

century, when inhumation started to prevail. As mentioned earlier, there were already tentative and general presumptions that inhumation burials from this period (1st–2nd c.) could be associated with the lowest social strata and slaves (Cermanović-Kuzmanović, Velimirović-Žižić and Srejšević 1975, 30, 314; Jovanović 1984, 47, 99, 145, 158; 2006, 25, 26, 32, 38–39). Although I concur with this basic notion, instead of relating the appearance of inhumation to slave immigrants from the Roman East, I rather see it as a phenomenon associated with the system of social positioning that spread with the advancement of imperial structure and roughly matched the constitution of *municipia/coloniae*. In other words, the introduction of inhumation burials in the region can be seen as one of the habits related to status rather than ethnic identities, and practiced by diverse societal categories (from elites to lower echelons of the free population), at first only in the urban environments and in relation to conditionally termed ‘Roman citizenship ideology’ (Mihajlović 2011). However, while its Empire-wide transmission among the elites and free urban population was perhaps due to cultural trends and emulation (Morris 1992, 32–40, 52–68), the inhumation of slaves could have been practiced for other reasons entirely.

In the Central Balkan provinces, incineration of the deceased and burial of their remains inside the relatively elaborate form of graves with burnt walls (of the Mala Kopašnica-Sase type) was a normative funerary custom (Jovanović 1984; 2000; Korać and Golubović 2009, 541–546). For present purposes, it is important to note that the practice required significant investments: 1) in effort and time – since it included preparing (maybe even exposing), transporting, and incinerating a body, collecting cooled remains from the pyre, digging the pit and firing its walls, laying down the remains and grave goods, filling the grave, and forming the surface level with a burial marker; 2) in material resources – such as wood for the pyre, but also means to obtain cemetery plot, equip the burial place, and organize each sequence of the funerary process; and 3) in space, i.e. its adequate affordability – because the Mala Kopašnica-Sase type of graves necessitated a relatively wide surface area that was afterwards mostly respected (since in most cases it was undisturbed by later burials). In contrast to these qualifications, inhumation burials of individuals inside the simple narrow pits with no burnt inner walls or ground-level constructions could be much more easily prepared, and the body of the deceased could be laid down directly after transportation to the necropolis. Additionally, if the body was inhumed without a container, in a simple sack, textile shroud, or wooden coffin, this could also serve as an indicator of the deceased’s status. In this sense, it may be argued that inhumated deceased of adult age from the 1st–2nd centuries³ situated along

³ Only adult inhumated deceased should be considered since the inhumation of children up to the age of 15 years was a norm.

the borders of groups of burials with a centric spatial arrangement are good candidates for possible slave internments. Admittedly, because this model is vague and inconclusive, it is important to utilize it carefully and to complement it with additional clusters of supportive evidence that could synergically make the case stronger. One of them could be the absence of inventory or very humble and “ordinary” assemblages within the peripheral and simple inhumation graves. Supposing that individuals who died in enslaved status or were in a dependent position even after liberation had very limited means and usually no access to materialities other than frequent, everyday, and modest objects, one could expect such circumstances to be mirrored in the funerary sphere. Another feature that could be helpful is the lack of any kind of ground-level surface structures, but also the partial disruption and devastation of inhumation graves. Because urban cemeteries most often had relatively limited space for burying, were in continual use, and were loaded with a larger number of interments due to the high level of mortality (usual for ancient societies), it can be expected that burials of socially marginalized categories would have been treated with much less care than those of their masters, patrons, and other upscale contemporaries. Hypothetically, if this were the case, the surfaces of their graves would have been less visibly marked and respected, causing more frequent damage to the pits underneath. Finally, unusual positions of the deceased (e.g. lateral crouched/‘fetal’, half-seated, face and stomach down posts)⁴ or burial practices and rites that considerably diverge from the common ones could be suggestive, not only of different treatment during life but possibly of exotic geographical and cultural origin (which is sometimes to be expected given the long-distance slave supply system). To conclude, in attempting to identify slave burials in the Roman Central Balkans it might be helpful to look into early imperial inhumations of adult individuals in urban necropolises, which had peripheral features in spatial terms, were placed in humble containers (or did not have one at all), and were buried inside simple pits, with very modest or no grave goods at all, whose burial places have no indication of conspicuous surface markers, and (possibly) were disturbed by latter tombs.⁵ Cases conforming to this model indeed exist, and in Figure 3 I have singled out several examples from the Viminacium necropolis of Više Grobalja for the sake of brief illustration, although there are many more fitting instances.

⁴ Such instances are known in the Viminacium’s Više Grobalja necropolis: G-49, G-327, G-347, G-426, G-475 (Zotović and Jordović 1990, 58, T. VII; Korać and Golubović 2009, 296, 306, 357, 385), but also from Mursa’s SE cemetery: grave no. 92 with three individuals in a fetal position (Göricke-Lukić 2000, 150–151, 97, 174).

⁵ Of course, all of this is also valid for the cases of collective burials, positioned as segregated cluster of graves, or at the outer parts of necropolis.

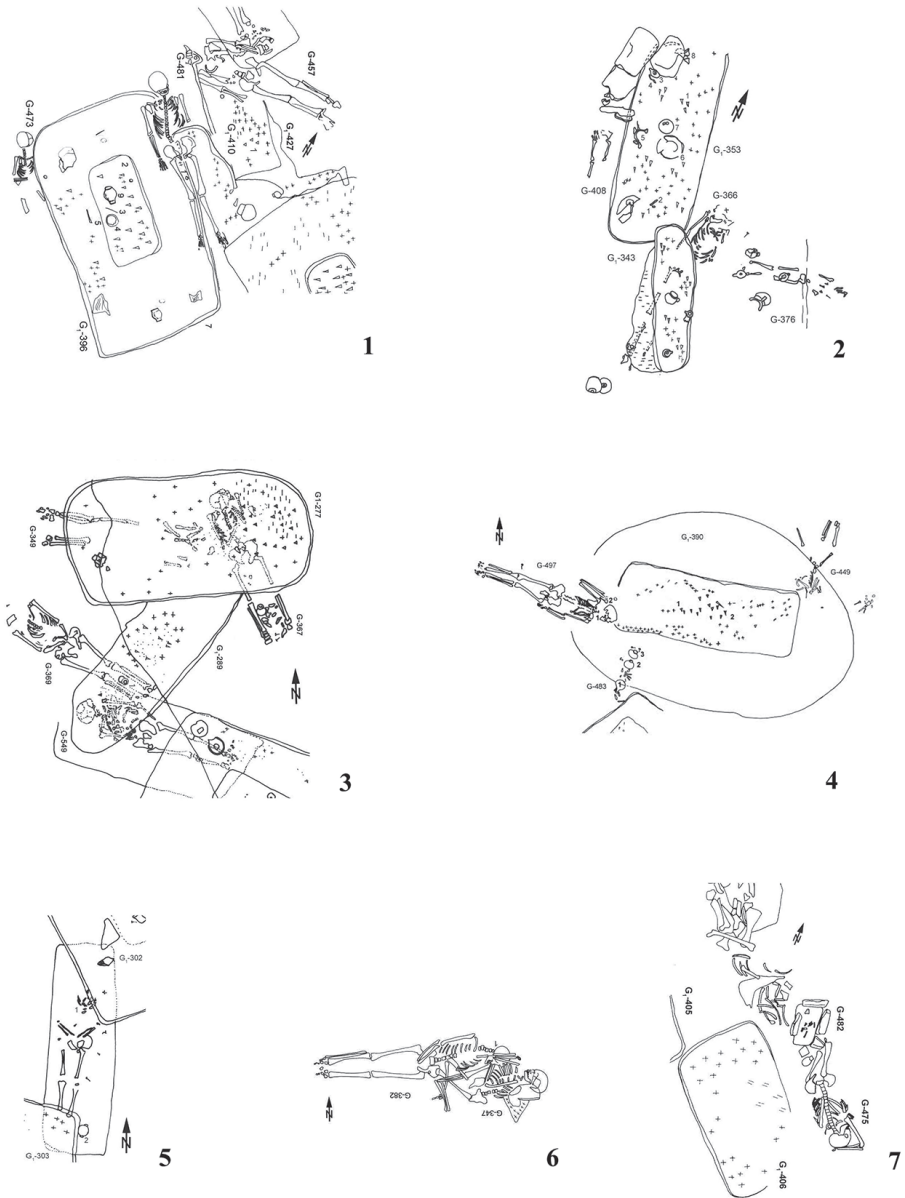


Figure 3 – Examples of inhumation burials of adults in marginal positions, with unconventional body posture, or devastation of sepulcher space in the Više Grobalja necropolis of Viminacium, 1: G-481, G-457, 2: G-366, 3: G-367, G-369, G-549, 4: G-497, 5: G-525, 6: G-347, 7: G-475 (source: Korać and Golubović 2009).

Nevertheless, as helpful as these criteria may be, they are admittedly inconclusive and can work only as an initial evaluation of evidence. Any of the mentioned features, or even all of them combined in particular cases, cannot guarantee the identification of slave or freed people burials, which is why our conclusions must be reached with maximum epistemological care. Another issue is that slavery in the Roman period encompassed a very broad, diverse, and nuanced range of cases that varied depending on the confluence of multiple factors. There were very different slave destinies and agencies, some of them quite successful (e.g. those appearing in epigraphic records, imperial, and other freedpersons of considerable resources and social capacities), which means that at least a portion of them would translate their status to the funerary sphere in the same/similar ways as the free provincial population. The sobering reminder of this comes from the NW necropolis of Scupi, where, in a very rare and fortunate case an epigraphic tombstone stands in its original place, above the undisturbed grave. The tombstone commemorates Smaragdus, whose monument was erected by three members of the society of worshipers of the temple of Hercules ('cultorens templi Herculis'). Smaragdus is named only by his *cognomen*, while others in the inscription bear two names, indicating that he was most probably of slave background, while the dedicants were presumably freedmen (Jovanova 2015, 119–121). However, the grave with Smaragdus' burnt remains conforms to the norm: it was inside the pit, covered with tiles, and contained a set of objects that is common and widespread both in necropolises of Scupi and in the Central Balkans in general: two ceramic jugs, ceramic lamp, two bronze coins (Jovanova 2015, 109–116). This reminds us that slaves and freedpeople were integral parts of various communities within the Empire, and although underprivileged and marginalized, they were deeply and inextricably entangled with other societal groups. Therefore, at least some of them were associated with materialities (and funeral elements) that were in common usage and indiscernible by any of the standards we would expect, meaning that evidence of slavery could be found everywhere and in any archaeological context, but would be unrecognizable at face value.

For this reason, it may be highly instructive to cross-reference purely archaeological datasets pertaining to spatial and contextual aspects with bioarchaeology of specific deceased's corporeal histories. The information obtained through physical anthropology analyses of age, general health, basic nutritional status, injuries, and markers of occupational stress could be very useful in discerning if an individual had biological trajectories that correspond to our knowledge about underprivileged groups in the Roman period. There is at least one study for the Central Balkan region that demonstrates this clearly, revealing the full potential of a multi-referential approach to ancient slavery. In the vicinity of ancient Remesiana (Bela Palanka), at the site of Gladno Polje, a Late Roman burial ground

was recently discovered (Ružić 2017). The cemetery was probably used by the population that lived and worked at the economic villa estate, as suggested by the adjacent and contemporary courtyard-type object. The excavated area of the burial ground features 51 simple pit graves containing the remains of 63 inhumated deceased, most of them of juvenile age. Of this number, 28 adult individuals were analyzed for musculoskeletal markers of stress, revealing that in nine cases (five females and four males) there is compelling evidence to suggest very intense physical activities throughout their lifetime (Stefanović and Jovanović 2013; Jovanović 2013). Additionally, some individuals who had died young had markers caused by hard work, which implies that they had started working early on in their lives. Similarly, even the skeletal remains of children had pronounced muscle attachment traces on their bones in some cases, and intense work did not end with old age, as males older than 50 years had clear physical stress markers in two cases (Stefanović and Jovanović 2013, 836; Jovanović 2013). The authors of the study draw an interesting comparison to seven persons buried in a nearby brick-built vaulted tomb, who died in old age and, contrary to Gladno Polje individuals, showed no skeletal indications of hard labor. As Stefanović and Jovanović point out, such differences demonstrate significantly divergent conditions and quality of life, and although it cannot be claimed that Gladno Polje was a cemetery solely for villa workers, a third of the deceased undoubtedly did very demanding physical activities, some of them throughout their whole lifetime (2013, 836–837). Applying the criteria proposed above, I would add a few more relevant details: these nine cases differ from the rest by the absence of personal belongings (such as jewelry and clothes accessories) and the notable scarcity of grave inventories (amounting to a ceramic jug in three cases and a bronze coin in three cases – Ružić 2017). While it is true that all adult burials in Gladno Polje had modest contents, it is perhaps telling that the most “overworked” people had the most humble materialities accompanying them in death. Another peculiarity is the presence of multiple burials within the same pit: in two instances, persons who were laboring intensely shared a grave with other deceased (grave 29 contained the remains of five individuals, while grave 32 had the remains of two). Finally, one bronze hair-ring was found as the only artifact in grave 4, which is an extremely rare and unconventional object in the Central Balkan Late Roman burials, implying possible immigrant background. However, despite all of these data, it is impossible to say whether the nine deceased people from Gladno Polje were indeed slaves, especially because the Late Roman economic estates there were also occupied by *coloni*, whose subject status placed them at the bottom of the social specter, together with small farmers, poor rural population, and simple laborers who were not in the *colonate* position. All of these social cohorts would also qualify for burials similar to the Gladno Polje examples, making possible interpretations again conditional.

Further possibilities for resolving the underdetermination of archaeological evidence we are facing could be the employment of chemical methods to human osteological material. Analyses of stable isotopes' values (of carbon, nitrogen, and oxygen) can provide invaluable supplementary data on the type and quality of diet, while strontium ratios offer a starting basis for considering the geographical movement of individuals. Both of these can be very helpful, at least in the cases of extreme deprivation and systemic exclusion of slaves from normative lifestyles, and for the assertion of possible market acquisitions via long-distance trade networks. Another set of relevant evidence can be obtained from ancient DNA research, which may prove particularly beneficial in identifying slave burials within family burial plots: it could be assumed that peripheral and modestly interred deceased (such as the examples in Figure 3) were not biologically related to individuals found in central graves, at least not on the same basis as legal relatives and family members. For all of these possible research directions, the prerequisite is to have skeletal samples of adequate quality and quantity, which are best obtained from highly preserved skeletal remains. Indeed, the previously discussed Central Balkan cases all include exactly this type of human material, but there is one insurmountable obstacle. The fact that the normative funerary practice from the 1st to the mid-3rd centuries included incineration reduces the mentioned potentials to an impossible point: the datasets that could be extracted from inhumation graves would be inevitably partial and lack the crucial comparative referential frame, as it is rarely possible to obtain the same type of information from incinerated burials. Consequently, more conclusive insights would mostly be out of reach, whereas the reachable answers would be inevitably limited. In such circumstances, it is possible to obtain reliable results from Late Roman contexts (3rd–5th centuries) when inhumation became the dominant funerary practice. In many cases, particularly in urban necropolises, there are clear examples of the centric spatial funerary logic where central sepulchers are placed within *memoriae*, mausoleums, and built tombs, the graves of (presumably) their close relatives are situated next or in immediate proximity to them, while the interments of direct or indirect family members of secondary importance are dispersed outwards. Of many such cases, I will mention only the example I am most familiar with: at the Late Roman (4th–5th c.) eastern necropolis of Remesiana, a rectangular stone foundation of *memoria* was excavated in 2018 and 2019. Within this area, there are two graves, each containing the remains of one adult and one juvenile, most likely the closest members of a family group. The upscale status of those buried in the structure can be safely assumed due to the fact that the main tomb was deeply cut into the bedrock, very solidly built of bricks, and sealed with mortar, while the objects that accompanied the deceased consisted of a silver brooch, a silver coin, and glass vessels. Outside the *memoria*, 14 more graves in simple pits were discovered, some of

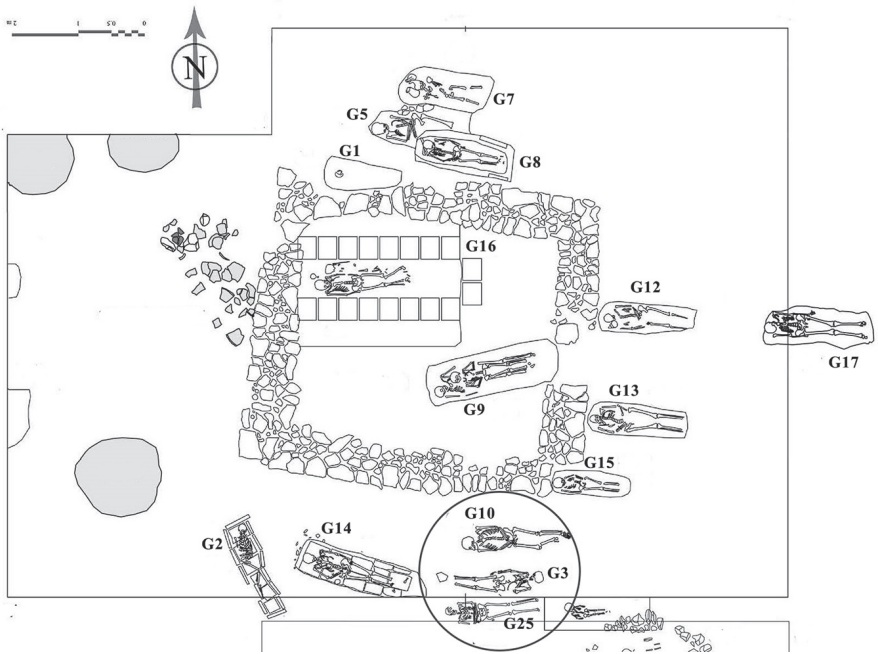


Figure 4 – Plan of the *memoria* and surrounding graves at the eastern necropolis of Remesiana: three peripheral graves (encircled) of the deceased with possibly lower status within the presumed kin group (source: Janković, Mihajlović and Bandović 2021).

them gravitating towards the *memoria* and tending to be next to the entrance or the outer sides of walls (Janković, Mihajlović and Bandović 2021; Figure 4). Among these, a cluster of three graves located south of the object (nos. 3, 10, and 25) are characterized by the complete lack of grave inventories, or (in one case) very humble ones, shallower pits, and a somewhat greater distance from the *memoria*. Furthermore, grave no. 3 shows features of the so-called deviant funeral, with the deceased inhumed face down and obvious traces of unconventional burial rites. In comparison, interments closer to the *memoria* were dug into the bedrock, and each contained at least one grave good (although none as rich as the central tomb). For these reasons, it would be extremely informative to closely compare and correlate all possible bioarcheological details of people buried inside the funerary structure, immediately next to it, and at its periphery, especially individual dietary and health status, as well as mutual DNA relations. In other words, the centric spatial and burial logic, the deceased's 'circles of importance', and their skeletal remains offer an excellent case study to test the hypothesis presented earlier in this paper. The point is that we need to collate and study in detail as many similar examples as possible from different types

of sites so that we can have a reliable basis to discuss whether some of these people may be considered members of the enslaved part of the Central Balkan provincial population.

Architectural evidence in search for the enslaved

In the last several decades, with increased archaeological attention to Roman slavery, there has been significant progress in considering some architectural evidence and contextual features as valuable indicators of the accommodation of the enslaved. This is especially the case for large villa estate sites, which are traditionally seen as environments where a considerable slave workforce was regularly employed. The analyses of villas' layouts, the existence of specific separate objects within the estates, and even investigations of spatial affordability in terms of paths of movement, communication, and exclusion from certain areas, all proved to be effective tools in approaching the question of archaeology of Roman slavery (Thompson 2003, 78–130; Webster 2005, 170–178; Joshel and Hackworth Petersen 2014, 162–229; Fentress, Goodson and Maiuro 2009). By comparing literary information about the dwelling of the enslaved with archaeological data in villas, these studies formed the general premise that small loggings for collective habitation, usually lined up in a row (either within long and narrow buildings or located in the secluded parts of residential houses), with poorly executed architectural interior and very humble household items most likely represent slave quarters (*cellae*) or, in some cases, restrain chambers (*ergastula*). Although most of the studied cases concern well-preserved and fairly recorded sites in Italy, and there are comparably fewer such instances in the provinces, several examples from the Central Balkans are worth reconsidering in this light.

At the site of Late Roman Mediana (Brzi Brod), the suburbium of Naissus (Niš), a huge villa complex has been investigated for decades. The research focus, with good reasons, was on the large palatial house organized around the peristyle courtyard with many rooms at the wings, a spacious reception hall at the center, two *stibadia* on each of the hall's sides, and a private bath connected to the residential area by a corridor. The object showed luxurious features such as mosaics, frescoes, porphyry and marble statues, lavish bronze railing, and a heating system. The villa also had a monumental entrance and was enclosed by a perimeter fence, which altogether indicates its role as a residential component (*pars urbana*) of a much larger structure. Indeed, both in the eastern and western areas adjacent to the villa more objects have been excavated or geo-physically detected, confirming the concept of symmetrical layout and spatial organization of a vast economic and residential estate (Vasić et al. 2016).

On the western side, a long and narrow object has partially been investigated, as well as a large rectangular structure that occupied an approximately central position within the area enclosed by the wings of the formerly mentioned building. The rectangular object (92 x 27 m) demonstrates the indubitable characteristics of a storing facility – *horreum*. The long and narrow object had an L or II shaped layout, but only the northern and eastern of its wings were unearthed, the existence of the western being assumed but not confirmed. The wings were 232 m (northern) and 137 m (eastern) long, and 11.5 m wide, had porches (turned towards the *horreum*), and contained rooms of basically two types: large ones with open space (without partition walls) and smaller ones of bipartite arrangement. The smaller chambers were divided so that a centrally positioned entrance (c. 1.5 m wide) led from the porch into a smaller room (c. 3 x 10 m), and from there two entrances (located towards lateral walls) led further into a bigger room (7 x 10 m). Some of the rooms in the eastern wing had well-preserved floors, and on some of them work surfaces of various sizes were recorded: sometimes they were formed of horizontally laid tiles, in other instances they were structures of plaster, occasionally with channels (that supposedly served for ventilation). Two of the rooms had furnaces, while some were equipped with rectangular pedestals made of hydrostatic plaster or tiles and with drainage channels. As the preliminary report states, much of the archaeological material was found in the rooms and included ceramic vessels, tools for various crafts (smithy, carpentry, sewing), glass and metal objects, and even a small hoard of blacksmith tools recovered from one of the furnaces. Based on all of the features, it was concluded that these barracks served as workshops (*fabricae*) for the extensive, diversified, and specialized manufacture of goods within the elaborated system of production and storage (Petrović 1996, 298–300). Furthermore, a geophysical survey east from the residential villa revealed a similar structure: elongated and narrow buildings forming the II layout, with a large object in the middle of the area enclosed by its wings, but also traces of baths behind the barracks' NW section (Figure 5). While this side of the estate was only partially excavated, and only in the area of supposedly communal baths, it was reasonably concluded that the west and east sectors with barracks and *horrea* were economic parts of the villa estate (i.e. *pars rustica* and *pars fructuaria*). The complex, due to its enormous size (approximately 80 ha with all surrounding structures), luxurious features, economic capacities, and the period of usage throughout the 4th century, is interpreted as an imperial domain and was recently characterized as the villa of Constantine the Great, mostly used by his successors upon their stays in Naissus (Vasić et al. 2016). Whereas the supposed function of the villa as Constantine's residence is debatable, the conclusion about the complex's purpose as an imperial estate is convincing, not least because such a colossal economic structure of a private sort is virtually unknown in the Central Balkan provinces.

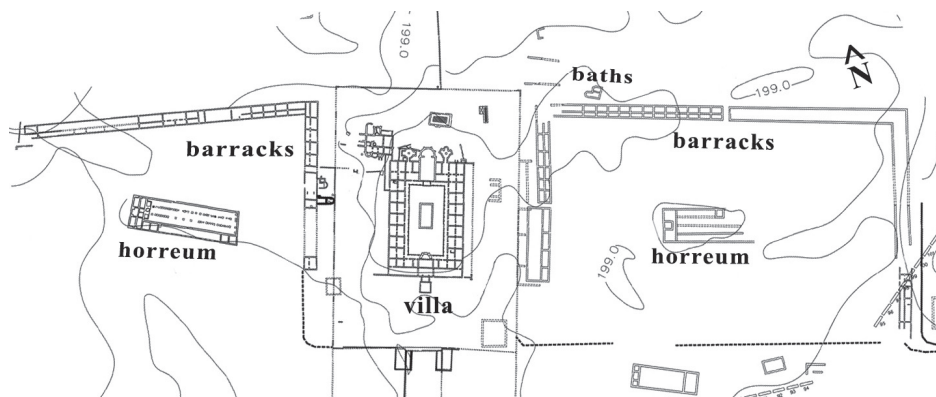
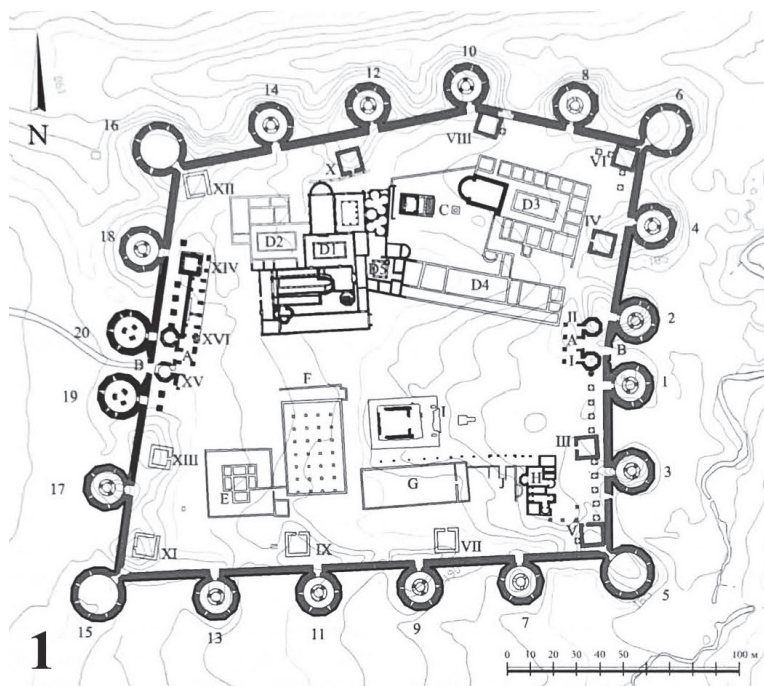


Figure 5 – The 4th-century imperial estate of Mediana near Naissus: a ground plan of the main structures with barracks and storehouses areas west and east of the residential villa (source: Vasić et al. 2016).

For the purpose of this paper, of particular interest are, of course, the barracks. Taking into account their two-compartment plan and the size of the rooms, as well as the imperial context (i.e. Emperor's armed entourage), the most recent interpretation suggests that these were military barracks – *contubernia* (Vasić et al. 2016, 6–7, 11–12, 41). On the other hand, the mentioned results of excavations in the western block clearly point to their workshop function (Petrović 1996), and the proximity to storehouses further implies the economic role(s) of the barracks. Furthermore, we should appreciate the workforce needed to supply and manage such large *horrea*, as well as the minor probability that the army would be directly involved in the production and processing of agricultural goods and concomitant villa activities. In other words, given its economic purposes, the imperial domain of Mediana must have had an adequate service that was in all probability accommodated to optimize workforce organization and control (see Thompson 2003, 140–143 for a work camp in imperial quarries at Chemtou in Tunisia). Hence, it is worthwhile to consider the possibility that the barracks had multifunctional rather than exclusively military purposes and that some of their portions were associated with laborers of, perhaps, imperial slave backgrounds. Additionally, although it is a fact that the discussed spatial outline is typical within Roman army strongholds, it is also true that facilities for slave accommodation closely followed the military architectural model in their arrangement and organization (Thompson 2003, 92, 99, 100–101; Fentress, Goodson and Maiuro 2009). Therefore, because the information on the excavated portions of barracks in the western area is only published in summary, and we currently lack detailed information about finds, specific contexts, and internal features of the chambers, it is important to keep an open mind for different testing options. In other words, the barracks at Mediana could have been

an environment closely associated with daily activities and accommodation of (imperial) slaves and are worthy of scrutiny in this light.

The following example is also from the imperial context, this time from Galerius' (293–311) fortified residence of Felix Romuliana (Gamzigrad). Designed according to the rule principles and ideological framework of the Tetrarchy (retirement after 20 years of reign, understanding of emperors as *domini* of divine ancestry), the composite palatial site was built between 305 and 311 CE. Although Galerius did not live to see the palace completed and withdraw to it but was instead buried in its vicinity (at the hill of Magura), up to his death in 311 Romuliana was built as a composite residential compound, similar to Diocletian's palace in Salona (Srejšović et al. 1983; Popović ed. 2011). The relevant spatial structure for this paper is the so-called Palace 2 or D3 in the NE corner of the fortification, east of Palace 1/D1 (the main residential building). Palace D3 is a structure with a central courtyard and a large apsidal hall around which other rooms are situated. An interesting element of this structure is the series of rooms in the northern part, all of approximately the same size (c. 6 x 6 m) and closely resembling the layouts of the known slave quarters. The actual purpose of these rooms, as well as of Palace D3 as a whole, is unknown, since only the large hall was systematically excavated, with the rest of the building known only by test trenches, while other archaeological details (contexts and finds) remain unpublished so far. It is evident that the hall's apse was cut through and that stairs leading to the temenos of a small temple (built in the area between Palaces D1 and D3) were constructed, which suggests that the original purpose of the building was changed or adapted in relation to the temple. Moreover, it is clear that Palace D3 was situated next to but not directly linked to the large, elongated object D4 ('Building with corridor'), the role of which has not been determined yet due to very limited excavations (Srejšović et al. 1983, 45–46; Čanak-Medić and Stojković-Pavelka 2011, 96–98; Popović 2019, 84–91, 139–142). It is perhaps indicative that structure D3 has quite an isolated and peripheral disposition: it is distant from the main communication within the fortification; its entrance is in the NE corner, close to the inner side of the eastern wall and in a 'dead angle'; the southern string of rooms has a highly restrictive entrance through only one protruding passage room; while the northern rooms are connected with the small temple's precinct via the passage next to the central hall. The most peculiar thing, however, is the fact that the northern row of rooms has direct access through a small corridor to the backside northern space, behind Palace D1 and building D3, and quite close to the postern, which served as the only way in and out through the northern fortification wall. If it is assumed that slaves used the northern string of rooms, this would mean that they could have moved around the palace and fortification away from the main communication and remained out of sight while performing their tasks (for more on this, compare Joshel and



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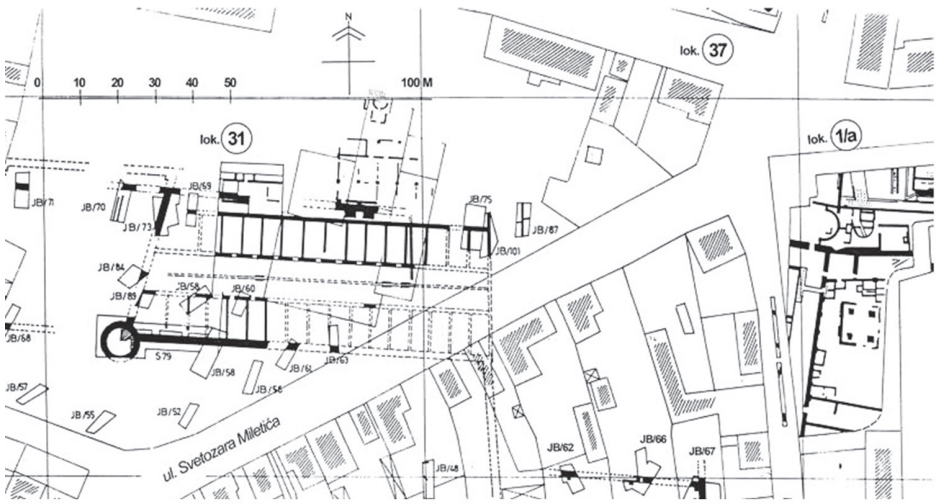
Figure 6 – Felix Romuliana, fortified imperial residence: 1 – general plan, 2 – Building/Palace D3 plan with a series of small rooms in the northern part (source: Čanak-Medić and Stojković-Pavelka 2011).

Hackworth Petersen 2014, 169–191). Still, without extensive contextual analyses of finds and interiors of D3 building rooms, one can only hypothesize all of this. In doing so, however, it is good to keep in mind that imperial residences and estates (which Romuliana could have become once Galerius died) required a large number of staff of various profiles, some of whom were surely imperial slaves or freedpeople. In this light, it is more than valid to expect that a considerable number of enslaved and manumitted people were involved in Romuliana, in capacities ranging from administrative duties to everyday servant activities and household management. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that the villicus or procurator of the estate, together with his subordinates, resided somewhere in proximity to the central buildings, ready to take on whatever activities they were obliged to do.

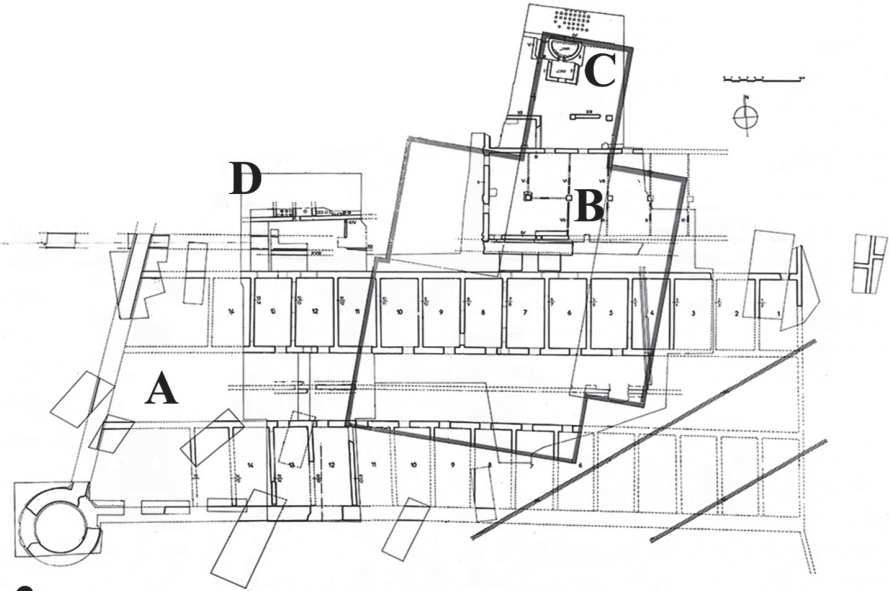
Another case worth revising in the light of possible slave presence is linked to the imperial context. Some 100 meters west of the residential area of the imperial palace in Sirmium (Site 1a) two interesting buildings were discovered (Site 31), presumably comprising one of its integral parts. They are situated in the corner of the southern part of the city's fortification, with one section serving as the back wall of the southern building, and the other as the west lateral wall of both the north and south buildings (Figure 7). The structure is designed so that two similar elongated objects (c. 80 x 10 m) face each other and share a courtyard (c. 80 x 10 m). Although no archaeological evidence has been found for the entrance, it could have been placed only on the eastern side, leading to the courtyard, and one passage could have been formed at the lateral wall of Room 1. This solution produced an enclosed environment with reduced communication possibilities via one direct and one roundabout access point. Both buildings consisted of an almost identical series of (probably) 16 rooms, each measuring c. 9.5 x 5 m, with c. 1.5 m wide entrances on their shorter sides (which were not centrally positioned but placed 0.6 m from the right corners of rooms). It is uncertain what kind of windows these rooms had since the preserved heights of the walls do not allow for any such conclusions. The rooms' floors were made of meager plaster and most likely had some sort of wood covering, and the walls were probably plastered as well. The buildings were of the ground-level type, with no upper floors and possibly only attics. The courtyard had a pebble paving and one drainage channel that ran along its central axis. The buildings were constructed and used in the 4th century, and after a flood (indicated by a layer of river sediment), they were reused at the end of the 4th and beginning of the 5th centuries (Bosković et al. 1974; Duval and Popović 1977; Milošević 2001, 41–42; Jeremić 2016, 263–264).

The interpretation of the buildings' purpose stemmed from their characteristic plan. Initially, it was presumed that they were military barracks, but afterward, the possibility of workshops was raised, chiefly because of the

find of a large quantity of bone needles, some of which were semi-finished (Bosković et al. 1974, 638–639). However, based on similarities in the spatial arrangement of storehouses and granaries found in Ostia, the final conclusion was that these buildings had the same function and that, along with a storehouse (excavated immediately to the north – Figure 6, 2: building B), they comprised the imperial palace's storage complex (Duval and Popović 1977, 58–61). Along with the architectural argument, the authors stated that the rooms were too large to be typical soldier cubicles within *contubernia*, that other than bone needles there were no other traces of handicraft activities, and that in one room a very large number of amphorae shards were found. The layout similarities between Sirmium and Ostia are compelling, but again the trouble is that such arrangements serve to optimize space and intended function, which is why they cause ambiguities in deciding their nature solely according to the architectural features. In this case, the main obstacle is that the detailed report and analysis of excavated architecture were not supplemented by the publication of inventories and contexts, neither as a summary nor for particular spatial units. The mentioned thousands of amphorae shards found in northern Room 13 are dated to the phase of the object's reuse (the end of 4th and beginning of 5th c.), while no similar inventory is reported in any other excavated unit, nor did the excavators mention, for example, traces of cereals that were presumably stored there. There are also other concerns, such as why were these buildings enclosed, detached, and turned away from the warehouse (Building B) to their north; why the granary contained a pit with discarded finished or half-finished bone needles; and was the courtyard drain ditch really for atmospheric waters only, or did it have a sewerage role as well. In other words, the current interpretation is inconclusive, and the evidence allows us to think in terms of workforce accommodation associated with the imperial residence, assigned duties in the adjacent warehouse (Building B), and other maintenance tasks (including the registered manufacture of bone objects). The replicated rooms could have served as dormitories for at least 10 persons per chamber, while both interiors and the courtyard could have been used as work surfaces. The restricted access points provided control of the residents' movements, and the nearby baths (which shared the space of the warehouse Building B) could have been used for hygiene purposes. Considering the importance of the imperial palace in Sirmium during the 4th century, having a large household staff should not come as a surprise, nor should the slave profile of some of its members. For these reasons, I would advise keeping our options open and carefully considering the mentioned assumption, at least until detailed analyses of material from layers allow for a more decisive interpretation.



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Figure 7 – 1: the general plan of the residential part of the imperial palace (Site 1a) and an area with barracks, warehouse, and baths (Site 31);
 2: layout of the barracks, presumed granaries (Building A), warehouse (Building B), and objects with hypocaust and preafurnium (Buildings C and D)
 (sources: Jeremić 2016; Duval and Popović 1977).

The last case I will discuss here concerns the already mentioned 4th-century site of Krakul Jordan located on a hill surrounded by the Pek and Brodička rivers in the area of Metalla Pincensia. This fortified area is interpreted as a metallurgical complex built to exploit auriferous water and soil in and around the river of Pek. Despite its ramparts and towers, it is thought that the fort does not resemble typical military strongholds and that excavations carried out in its southern part reveal clear evidence of industrial activities. In the first place, the series of eight relatively small rooms (c. 20–50 m²), with their backsides directly attached to the rampart and floors sunken into the bedrock, are interpreted as workshops (Figure 8). This is exemplified by finds in Rooms 2 and 8: the former contains remains of a furnace and iron finds such as tools and ingots, suggesting its function as a smithy; whereas the latter accommodates traces of vaulted pottery kiln as well as numerous shards (some of which were still attached to the kiln's fragments of clay walls), implying it was a ceramic workshop. Since Room 2 yields such tools as pickaxes, shovels, and mattocks, while in and next to Room 8 exclusively large vessels (amphorae, pithoi, and pots) were registered, it is presumed that both units produced objects necessary for (golden) ore processing. Furthermore, within Tower 3 traces of two furnaces from different chronological phases were uncovered, although it is unclear whether these were associated with craft or served for food preparation (since only fragments of pottery were documented). There are some indications of glass production as well, but these are inconclusive. In contrast to this string of cubicles stand the rooms investigated in the western section: instead of floors made of pebble substructure and thin plaster, these have tiles-paved surfaces, lack finds related to manufacture, and contain finds of better quality such as fragments of *terra sigillata* and red painted pottery, gems, mirrors, and decorated ceramic lamps. Because of these characteristics, it was assumed that these were administrative quarters. Bringing together all of these features, the excavator presumed that Krakul Jordan was a metallurgical center with numerous workshops that supplied the large workforce with items required for efficient ore exploitation and gold extraction, but also with materials needed to build their accommodation structures (Tomović 2001).

What immediately springs to mind here is the common usage of slave or convict labor in mining activities (Thompson 2003, 156–181), as well as the mentioned iron fetters recovered from the remains of a (supposed) smithy that was located in the nearby village of Železnik. Considering the ample evidence of hard labor activities at Krakul Jordan, and the confirmed utilization of restraining methods in its immediate vicinity, the involvement of the enslaved population in and around the site seems quite a convincing option. Whether they were accommodated in the barrack-like cells such as Rooms 3–7 or lodged in some other uninvestigated location within the fort remains uncertain, but it is clear that places like Krakul Jordan are among the most sensible and promising contexts to search for their presence.

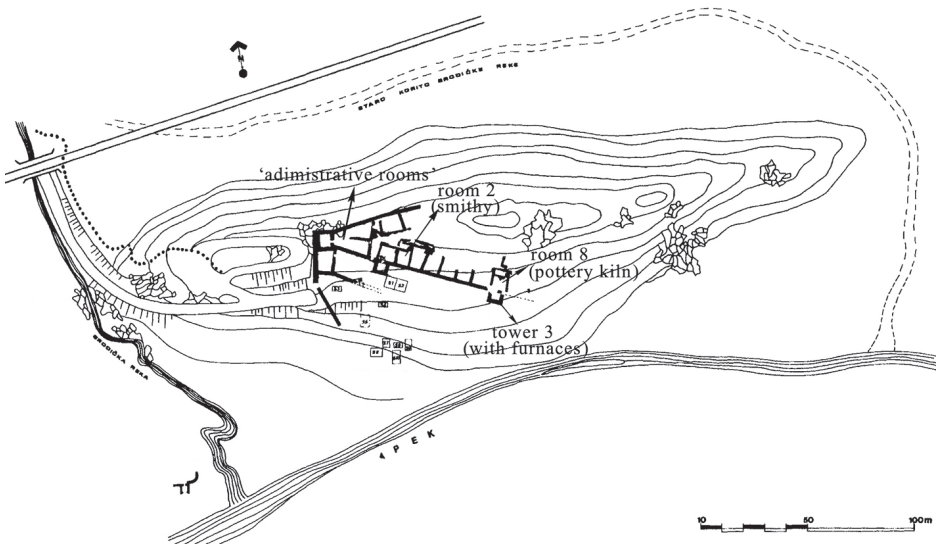


Figure 8 – Ground plan of the metallurgical and workshop center of Krakul Jordan (rooms mentioned in the text are marked with arrows; source: Tomović 2001).

Concluding notes

To briefly conclude the paper I shall reiterate the basic points set forth above. The issue of slavery in the Central Balkan provinces of the Roman Empire has not been addressed in local historiography and archaeology in a systematic way and as a focused research agenda. This is caused not only by the lack of obvious and direct epigraphic and material evidence but also by the theoretical and methodological direction that only marginally considered the issues of social structure and diverse population categories in Roman provinces. As a result, slavery was touched upon only in passing and was always looked upon as one of the consequences of Romanization and a Roman period social fact that requires no particular and further academic analysis. However, moving away from the traditional perspective of the Roman Empire as an interaction between Roman/Romanized and natives, where ethnic and cultural relations are held as the *spiritus movens* of provincial society, it is necessary to employ a more elaborated and nuanced approach. This could include the recognition of a complex social structure, differentiated based on various principles, with many groups and actors whose positions and agency depended on mutual intersections of various factors. In this sense, it is necessary to appreciate the Central Balkan provinces as relational networks imbued with power, where, along with the privileged (e.g. army, emperors, administration, officials, the rich) who were at the center of traditional academic scrutiny, there were also under- and disprivileged cat-

egories. Consequently, the issue of slavery and its roles, as well as its echoes among our source material, arises as one of the pressing questions, not least because Roman social structure existed and functioned inseparably from the exploitation of enslaved people, as this type of relationship was pertinent throughout all of its levels and spheres. It is then crucial to always keep this notion in mind and pursue the search for its traces whenever possible, regardless of all the difficulties caused by the underdetermination of our evidence.

Following this basic principle, I have tried to outline the main promising paths for future detailed research. All of them encompass the theoretical presumption of systemic and more or less subtle practices of exclusion and othering, combined with methods of careful and detailed spatial and contextual analyses, as well as the usage of bioarchaeological data of individual corporeal histories. Reviewing funerary evidence, it is worth considering the cases that differ from the normative burials, that are peripherally located, handled in specific ways (e.g. with less care, collectively, by other body treatment, etc.), that lack the usual repertoire of grave goods or show some other peculiarities. However, these features are not sufficient per se but must be correlated mutually and with individual biological evidence detectable by physical anthropology and chemical analyses of osteological material (such as age, general health status and paleopathology, traces of injuries, indices of hard physical activities, type of diet, geographical background, aDNA relations with other deceased). Although at this stage it is possible only to hypothesize and select the most indicative cases, the mere fact that we can do so begs for further and thorough studies. Nevertheless, it is important to be cautious since the enslaved in the Roman world occupied a diverse range of positions, from those living and dying in the worst imaginable conditions (e.g. in mines) to those who 'broke their chains' and managed to achieve influential economic and social standings. Because of this, and because slaves were entangled with other social groups, and shared space, time, and materialities with them, it is crucial to remember that some, perhaps even a good part of them, could have received burials not distinguishable from those of non-slave categories.

Another type of evidence that offers a good starting position for reconsidering the presence of the enslaved population is specific architecture, which together with associated finds and archaeological situations can indicate spaces of slave work and accommodation. In the Central Balkan areas, four sites contain buildings that to some extent correspond to the better-known and more reliably interpreted examples of slave quarters. Although this identification is tentative and more conclusive views are currently out of reach because the materials from these buildings have not been published, it is indicative that in three cases (Mediana, Felix Romuliana, and Sirmium) they are directly related to imperial sites, while one is a specialized complex for mining activities (Kraku lu Jordan). Taking into account the indispensable role of enslaved and freed staff in

imperial estates (i.e. their running, maintenance, and administration), as well as in ore exploitation, all of these examples call for more thorough further studies in this direction. Furthermore, they comply with the well-known pattern that environments linked to the powerful and rich, whose privileged positions were supported by numerous underprivileged and subjected people, are best suited for the initial search for evidence of slavery.

Finally, it is critical to emphasize that the goal of this paper is not to provide definite proofs and archaeological examples of slavery in the Roman Central Balkans, nor is such a thing possible at the present state of research and evidence processing. Instead, the purpose of this work is to demonstrate that there are reasonable arguments and compellingly open space for such attempts to begin. In other words, there are both theoretical and evidential grounds for taking slavery in the provinces into consideration, especially in further studies at all levels, from extensive research projects and excavations to revisions of old and interpretations of newly acquired evidence. Therefore, when studying the Roman period Central Balkans, it is necessary to keep the question of slavery always in mind, both because it is essential for understanding its dynamics and because it is the topic most under-researched and marginalized within local academia.

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Ropstvo u rimsko doba na centralnom Balkanu

U radu se razmatra dosadašnje istoriografsko i arheološko istraživanje pitanja ropstva u rimskim provincijama na centralnom Balkanu. Kritičkim osvrtom na objavljene radove ukazuje se da tema ropstva nije bila u žiži istraživačkog interesovanja i da je spominjana usputno, u veoma kratkim crtama, kao fenomen koji je u rimskom periodu podrazumljiv i za koji je pretpostavljeno da se proširio posredstvom procesa romanizacije. Zalažući se za promenu ovakvog stanja i otvaranje pitanja ropstva kao relevantnog polja studija, rad upućuje na moguće pravce daljeg istraživačkog delovanja. Najpre se obraća pažnja na funerarne kontekste i kriterijume koji bi mogli ukazivati na sahrane pojedinaca robovskog statusa. Analizom odabranih primera sa gradskih nekropola rimskog centralnog Balkana (pre svega Viminacijuma i Remezijane) sugerise se neophodnost detaljnog istraživanja više različitih aspekata mogućih robovskih sahrana, od prostornog pozicioniranja, grobne forme i priloga, do fizičko-antropoloških i hemijskih analiza humanog osteološkog materijala. U radu se takođe preispituju osobine pojedinih arhitektonskih celina pronađenih prvenstveno u kontekstima carskih imanja i rezidencija (na Medijani, Romulijani i u Sirmijumu), ali i unutar utvrđenog metalurškog kompleksa (Kraku lu Jordan). Uzimajući u obzir površinu, prostornu organizaciju i širi kontekst, sugerise se da su ove građevine mogle biti neposredno vezane za rad i boravak robova. Mada su pretpostavke koje se ovde nude hipotetičkog i uslovnog karaktera, potrebno je naglasiti da

one služe kao polazište kako bi se otvorio prostor za dalje proučavanje ropstva u centralnobalkanskim provincijama.

Ključne reči: Rimsko carstvo, centralni Balkan, ropstvo, arheologija pogreba, vile rustike, carski posedi.

Esclavage à l'époque romaine aux Balkans centraux

L'article examine les études historiographiques et archéologiques précédentes de la question de l'esclavage dans les provinces romaines des Balkans centraux. Une analyse critique des articles publiés indique que le sujet d'esclavage n'était pas au centre d'intérêt de recherche et qu'il était évoqué au passage, très brièvement, comme un phénomène sous-entendu à l'époque romaine et supposé s'être répandu par le processus de romanisation. En arguant qu'il est nécessaire de changer cet état de choses et de soulever la question de l'esclavage en tant que domaine de recherche pertinent, l'article indique des pistes possibles de recherches ultérieures. En premier lieu une attention particulière est portée aux contextes funéraires et aux critères qui pourraient indiquer les enterrements des individus ayant le statut d'esclave. L'analyse d'exemples sélectionnés des nécropoles urbaines des Balkans centraux romains (principalement Viminacium et Remesiana) suggère la nécessité d'une recherche détaillée de plusieurs aspects d'enterrements possibles d'esclaves, à partir du positionnement spatial, par la forme de la tombe et le mobilier funéraire, jusqu'aux analyses physico-anthropologiques et chimiques du matériel ostéologique humain. L'article examine également les caractéristiques de certains ensembles architecturaux découverts principalement dans le contexte de domaines et de résidences impériaux (Mediana, Romuliana et Sirmium), mais aussi au sein d'un complexe métallurgique fortifié (Kraku Lu Jordan). Compte tenu de la superficie, de l'organisation spatiale et du contexte plus large, on propose que ces bâtiments pourraient avoir été directement liés au travail et à la résidence des esclaves. Bien que les hypothèses proposées ici soient hypothétiques et conditionnelles, il convient de souligner qu'elles servent de point de départ pour une étude plus approfondie d'esclavage dans les provinces des Balkans centraux.

Mots clés: Empire romain, Balkans centraux, esclavage, archéologie funéraire, domaines impériaux

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