

## Roman fortification *Timacum Minus*

The oldest military fortification in the Timok Region, *Timacum Minus*, was built in the Beli Timok valley near the village of Ravna, not far from Knjaževac. Its base is rectangular, dimensions 144 x 112 m and total area about 2 ha. Archaeological research of this site revealed many centuries of settling, starting in prehistory to the Middle Ages. The *Timacum Minus* settlement reaches its peak in the ancient period and it represents a significant mining and metallurgical center.

*Timacum Minus* is located in the place where the roads to the Danube region the Morava region and the Adriatic Sea crossed. It is located in the fertile valley of the Beli Timok, close to the edges of Balkan Mountain. Built in such location, it had favorable conditions for development throughout the entire ancient period. Numerous ore deposits (gold, silver, copper, lead and iron) on Stara Planina Mountain determined the economy of town *Timacum Minus*. Epigraphic inscriptions confirm that it represented an important administrative center for the wider region. It was devastated several times in barbaric invasions from the middle of III to the middle of V century.



From the preserved descriptions and plans it can be concluded that the dominant position was occupied by the fortification with high, well preserved ramparts and towers. In the immediate vicinity a civil settlement developed with residential buildings, villas, temples and *thermae*. Valuable data on the residents of this settlement are provided by numerous finds from the nearby necropolis Slog. A part of these finds is today exhibited in the Homeland Museum in Knjaževac.

The fortification served as a camp for a Roman auxiliary unit – a cohort. It was able to accommodate from 500 to 1,000 soldiers, infantry and chivalry. It was added up on several occasions and the phases of those works can be seen on its walls. The first earthen fortification with wooden towers on the corners and a palisade, surrounded by a defensive trench (*fossa*) was built probably at the end of I century and it served to accommodate the cohort of Thracians from Syria (*cohors I Thracum Syriaca*). The first fortification built of solid materials, stone and river pebbles bonded by mortar was raised at the end of II century AD and served for the accommodation of the cohort of Dardani (*cohors II Aurelia Dardanorum*). It is characterized by corner towers built on the interior side of the rampart. The next, Phase III of the construction is related to the foundation base and the construction of defensive square towers built on the outside part of the rampart after the Gothic intrusions into the territory of Upper Moesia. It dates from III century. In this phase the ramparts were built of grey sandstone blocks with the use of

‘spolias’, architectural marble elements from older objects and gravestones. Based on the archaeological finds it is considered that the fortification in this phase was defended by 16 to 20 towers. The last renewal of the fortification occurred at the end of IV century when the new fortification with an enforced rampart and protruded towers was made in *opus mixtum* technique with the use of stone and bricks. The existing gates were closed by the newly built towers, whereas by the existing rampart a new one, 2 meters wide was made.

In the interior of the fortification several objects have been explored. An object has been explored in the central part, and it is supposed that it served as a granary (*horreum*). Next to it there was the headquarters building (*principia*) for the accommodation of military administration, a temple with military insignia and the treasury. These objects were made by combining rows of bricks and stone bonded by mortar. In the northeastern corner of the fortification a circular archaeo – metallurgical object was discovered (*cisterna*) with a circular pool in the middle, 6 meters in diameter. Based on preliminary archaeo – metallurgical analyses of the samples it can be assumed that the object served for the flotation of ores and separation of silver and gold. Traces of metallurgical activity, casting and forging iron were also detected in the other parts of the fortification.



To the north east of the fortification there are Thermae I – a Roman bath built in II century, and restored in IV century. It rests on the system of pillars between which hot air from the furnace (*prefurnium*) circulated and evenly heated all rooms. The entrance was on the eastern side and it served as a changing room (*apodyterium*). Next to it there is a mildly heated room (*tepidarium*) and two more intensely heated rooms (*caldarium*) connected with the furnace (*hypocaustum*), and also a cold bath (*frigidarium*) with a smaller pool. To the south west of the fortification there is an object with a

floor heating system – hypocaust, which has not yet been fully explored.

Numerous examples of roman artifacts (altars, imperial honorary inscriptions, grave steles, etc.), antique bronze and marble sculptures, reliefs and other everyday use items of high artistic and craft value were found during these systematized scientific and research works on the site, but also during field works in the village. A part of the rich archaeological collection made by precious finds from the *Timacum Minus* site is exhibited as permanent exhibition in the Homeland Museum in Knjaževac, Karađorđeva 15 Street and within a smaller archaeological exhibition in the Archaeo-Ethno Park in Ravna.

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