

## References

- Abbe, M. B., and T. Şare Ağtürk. 2019. "The new corpus of painted imperial Roman marble reliefs from Nicomedia: A preliminary report on polychromy." *Technè. La science au service de l'histoire de l'art et de la préservation des biens culturels* 48: 100–9. <https://doi.org/10.4000/techne.2567>.
- Kampen, N. 2009. *Family Fictions in Roman Art*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- L'Orange, H. P. 1938. "Ein tetrarchisches Ehrendenkmal auf dem Forum Romanum." *Römische Mitteilungen* 53: 1–34.
- Marlowe, E. 2016. "Multivalence of memory: The tetrarchs, the Senate and the Vicennalia monument in the Roman Forum." In *Cultural Memories in the Roman Empire*, ed. K. Galinsky and K. Lapatin, 240–62. Los Angeles: Getty.
- Şare Ağtürk, T. 2015. "Painted reliefs from Nicomedia: Life of a Roman capital city in colour." *Antiquity* 89, no. 346. <https://www.antiquity.ac.uk/projgall/sare346>.
- Şare Ağtürk, T. 2018. "A new tetrarchic relief from Nicomedia: Embracing emperors." *AJA* 122, no. 3: 411–26. <https://doi.org/10.3764/aja.122.3.0411>.
- Şare Ağtürk, T. 2020. "Myth and eponymy on the tetrarchic frieze from Nicomedia." *JRA* 33: 417–31. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1047759420001099>.
- Zeyrek, T. H., and İ. Özbay. 2006. "Statuen und Reliefs aus Nikomedeia." *IstMitt* 56: 273–314.

*Journal of Roman Archaeology* 35 (2022), 999–1004  
doi:10.1017/S1047759422000496

# The landscape archaeology of special places: the Roman imperial palace Romuliana

Tatjana Cvjetičanin

National Museum of Serbia/Faculty of Philosophy University of Belgrade  
<t.cvjeticanin@narodnimuzej.rs>

VON BÜLOW, G., and S. PETKOVIĆ, eds. 2020. *Gamzigrad - Studien I. Ergebnisse der Deutsche-Serbischen Forschungen im Umfeld des Palastes Romuliana*. Römisch-Germanische Forschungen Band 75. Wiesbaden: Reichert Verlag. Pp. viii, 406. ISBN 978-3-95490-477-8.

The longstanding public and professional interest in the striking remains of Gamzigrad, nowadays one of the most renowned archaeological sites in Serbia from the Roman period, is marked by several turning points that defined both academic and public discourse. Seen first, in the 19th c., as the romanticized ruins of an ancient town and then, after systematic archaeological investigations that began in 1953, as a Roman military camp, a fortified villa, or an administrative center and the seat of the governor of the mines in the surrounding area, Gamzigrad represented an impressive record, but one among many, of the Roman past in this region. The first milestone in its recent history was the appointment of Dragoslav Srejšović as the director of excavations from 1970 to 1996. His conviction that Gamzigrad was an imperial palace<sup>1</sup> was confirmed in 1984, with the discovery of part of a sandstone archivolt bearing the inscription *Felix Romuliana*.<sup>2</sup> Then in 1993, a porphyry

---

<sup>1</sup> Srejšović 1983, 24–66.

<sup>2</sup> Srejšović 1985, 51–67.

head was found, a portrait with imperial insignia that was part of a monumental sculpture of the emperor Gaius Valerius Galerius Maximianus. Gamzigrad was acknowledged as his residence, and all the structures within it were associated with the emperor and his mother, Romula. Proclaiming Gamzigrad as a testament to Galerius's ideology<sup>3</sup> and a representation of the imperial propaganda of the Tetrarchy was the second defining moment in research and interpretation.

Thus, Gamzigrad was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2007 as Gamzigrad-Romuliana, Palace of Galerius,

the Late Roman fortified palace compound and memorial complex ... commissioned by Emperor Caius Valerius Galerius Maximianus, in the late 3rd and early 4th centuries. It was known as Felix Romuliana, named after the emperor's mother. The site consists of fortifications, the palace in the north-western part of the complex, basilicas, temples, hot baths, memorial complex, and a tetrapylon. The group of buildings is also unique in its intertwining of ceremonial and memorial functions."<sup>4</sup>

The site was firmly detached from its surroundings and from nearby remains that had already been archaeologically verified.<sup>5</sup>

Fortunately, then came the third milestone: the collaboration between the Römisch-Germanische Kommission (RGK) of the German Archaeological Institute and the Archaeological Institute Belgrade (AIB), which lasted from 2004 until 2012. After years of archaeological investigations focused only on the palace structures, the quality and richness of finds, and comparisons with other similar monuments, in an attempt to fully reconstruct the splendor of the palace and verify its owner, comprehensive multidisciplinary research was now conducted with completely new goals and objectives. The main research question was whether the palace was an isolated complex or incorporated into an already existing cultural landscape. The project included the study of interactions between the natural environment and (human) modifications to the landscape, and of how and when the environment was used; that is, settlement patterns from prehistory to the Middle Ages and settlement chronology. Non-destructive methods and limited excavations outside the palace area were used. The other field of research was architecture, taking the form of virtual reconstructions and with the final goal of facilitating and enhancing conservation works and the site's revitalization. The book *Gamzigrad - Studien I* is the first comprehensive outcome.

Unfortunately, the results of the architectural research on the palace's structures are not included in the publication due to the untimely loss of Prof. Ulrike Wulf-Rheidt (1963–2018). A brief overview of her activities as part of the Gamzigrad project, written by Christoph Rummel (5–8), shows that her participation was essential and inspirational. The book is dedicated to her memory.

Gerda von Bülow, leader of the German team, contributes an overview and chronology of the project activities, and a list of the many institutions and experts from different disciplines who were involved, in her contribution "Das Deutsch-Serbische Gemeinschafts-Projekt zur geophysikalischen und archäologischen Erkundung der

---

<sup>3</sup> Srejić 1993.

<sup>4</sup> <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1253/>

<sup>5</sup> Popović 2010.

Umgebung des Palastes *Felix Romuliana*. Chronik der Geländearbeiten von 2004–2012” (9–16). A multidisciplinary approach and “in tandem” investigations combining archaeology and geosciences, along with traditional archaeological prospection and small-scale excavations, resulted in the discovery of a significant number of new structures from the time before Galerius built the palace (14, fig. 1). It also led to new ideas about landscape use and settlement patterns. The results are very important, changing to a degree the (professional) perception of Gamzigrad.

The two chapters that follow present the new results obtained by GIS and geophysical analysis. The first is by János Tóth and Brigitta Schütt, “GIS based topographical analysis in the surroundings of *Felix Romuliana*, Serbia” (17–26), and the second is by Tim Schüller and Mark Opelt, “*Felix Romuliana*-Gamzigrad. Geophysikalische Erkundung des Innenbereichs zu archäologischen Zwecken” (27–42). Topographic and morphometric analysis shows that the natural surroundings were highly suitable for a large-scale construction project such as a fortified palace and that the site is unique in its setting. Indications of landscape instability were discovered; a natural catastrophe had created an erosion gully, probably shortly before the erection of Galerius’s palace. Geomagnetic research west and north of the palace identified more than 50 previously unknown stone structures, some of them destroyed by the gully. Geophysics also identified new structures within the palace, with superimposed building remains to the depth of around 4 m.

The results of geomagnetic prospection formed the basis for small-scale but valuable archaeological excavations, mainly in the area north of the palace. The features of the newly discovered precinct (fig. 1b, 85), indicating the importance of this site after Aurelianus’s abandonment of Dacia, are presented in Gerda von Bülow’s chapter, “Die Ergebnisse Archäologischer Sondagegrabungen auf geomagnetisch prospektierten Flächen nördlich und südlich des Palastes *Felix Romuliana*” (83–102), and the contribution to it by Miloje Vasić, “Coins from Gamzigrad 2008 – *extra muros*” (103–16). Striking new structures, such as a group of 16 columns in a circle with central foundation (93–94) (a monument with representative official or cult character from the second half of the 3rd c.), a huge building with pilasters, a 106 m-long possible horreum, and a tabernae-like building, all enclosed by a wall, suggest to von Bülow that the fortification that preceded the palace and the enclosed area north of it, with its inner buildings, were erected as early as the reign of Aurelianus. Analyses based on topography and excavations indicate that the enclosed area survived for only a short time and was destroyed by a natural catastrophe around the end of the 3rd c., before Emperor Galerius commenced his works. After the destroyed buildings were abandoned, new edifices were erected and some of the old structures were partially rebuilt and reoccupied (see von Bülow, “Die Villa *extra muros* nördlich von *Felix Romuliana*. Ergebnisse der Grabungen 2010–2012” [245–82] and Miloje Vasić, “Coins from the Villa *extra muros* – 2010/2011” [283–86]). Precise analyses of pottery assemblages by Sven Conrad in “*Felix Romuliana*. Die Gefäßkeramik aus den Grabungen *extra muros* 2006–2008” (117–70) supplement valuable data. Apart from indicating that the site was in use until the 6th c. (table 1, 134), the detailed repertoire of locally made gray kitchenware is an essential addition to our not-so-vast knowledge about Late Roman pottery production and distribution here. Moreover, it contributes to the question of the site’s function: the very low number of amphorae indicates the site (fortification?) was not integrated into the central distribution system.

Questions of the palace's reuse – that is, its life after the peak importance of the site as Galerius's palace – are presented in a block of chapters dedicated to the new excavations of the palace's west gate and its surroundings, which opened up the possibility of revisiting previous results. These chapters are Sofija Petković's "The results of archaeological research in the south tower of the west gate of later fortification of *Felix Romuliana* (Tower 19)" (171–204); Miloje Vasić's "Coins from Tower 19 in *Felix Romuliana*" (205–13); Sven Conrad and Ana Premk's, "The pottery from Tower 19" (213–44); and Dragana Vulović, Nataša Miladinović-Radmilović, and Stefan Pop-Lazić's "Fifth century burial in front of the northern gate of *Felix Romuliana* – anthropological analysis" (287–304). The area was heavily used from the second half of the 4th to the beginning of the 7th c., firstly for metal workshops, as indicated by the evidence of smelting furnaces, and later for burials, as remains of isolated graves and cemeteries show.

The reinterpretation of important finds also has a place in the book. The well-known porphyry head of Galerius – presented to the public for the first time at the exhibition *Roman Imperial Towns and Palaces in Serbia*, organized by Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts in 1993 – is a starting point for Marianne Bergmann's further analyses in "Die Porphyrsulpturen aus dem Palast von Gamzigrad" (305–52). This new study shows that fragments of porphyry sculptures belong to two oversized statues of emperor(s) crowned with winged Victory figures (39, fig. 41). A new point of view on Galerius's refurbishment of the previous palace is offered by Gordana Jeremić in the chapter "Mosaics from Gamzigrad, with a special overview of the *Sectilia Pavimenta*" (353–72), which connects stylistic characteristics with those of Galerius's palace in Thessaloniki.

The excavations yielded some extraordinary new finds that are valuable (and puzzling) when it comes to an understanding of site dynamics. One of these is presented by Gerda von Bülow in the chapter "Eine Neu Entdeckte Marmorsulptur aus der Villa *extra muros* nördlich von *Felix Romuliana* – Teilstück einer mythologischen Jagdszene" (373–94). A part of a marble sculpture of a boar and a dog, with a partially preserved horse's hoof, is attributed to a life-size statue of the Thracian horseman, or Hero (392, fig. 26). This possible presentation of a symbolic hunt or an emperor's virtues generally dated to the period from the 2nd to the 4th c. Found in the villa *extra muros*, probably in secondary use, it is evidence that the story of one of the most representative and elaborate Roman monuments in Serbia is still unfolding.

The landscape studies conducted for the project have shown precisely the same. For many years, the palace was disengaged from its setting, with an emphasis on the Felix Romuliana as a unique site "where the ceremonial and the memorial program intertwines and forms an inseparable ideological whole with the fortified palace,"<sup>6</sup> with underlying notions about the importance and centrality of the Gamzigrad site for the development of the region. These new studies bring challenging results. The combination of traditional archaeological prospection and, where necessary, geophysics resulted in identification of a total of 91 sites in the valley of the Crni Timok River, of which 24 are new. Settlement patterns from prehistory, and the duration and attributes of prehistoric forms in the landscape, are the topics of the contribution by Aleksandar Kapuran, "The prehistory of north-eastern Serbia using the example of *Felix Romuliana* and its surroundings" (59–82). The chapter by

---

<sup>6</sup> "About Gamzigrad Romuliana," in *World Heritage Serbia 2017*.

## The Roman imperial palace Romuliana

Jana Škundrić-Rummel, “Landscape history research in the surroundings of the archaeological site *Felix Romuliana*” (43–58), represents the results of particularly important analyses of the interrelation of the Gamzigrad site and its surroundings, focusing on the Roman period.

The cycles observed in landscape use, which show peaks in settlements and land utilization in the Neolithic, the Early Iron Age and, finally, Late Roman times (47, table 1–2) clearly answer the main research question: was the palace an isolated complex or incorporated into the already existing cultural landscape? Škundrić-Rummel observes that the high-level settlement activity that occurred before the Roman period went into decline in the early Empire: sites from the 1st–2nd c. are scarce, connected mainly with river courses and roads, and the area seems semi-deserted. Škundrić-Rummel briefly plays with the idea that up to 30 Early Iron Age sites may have continued into the Late Iron Age and possibly the subsequent period, based on a fairly weak parallel with the Krševica site in south Serbia<sup>7</sup> and more in line with the idea of “urbanization” expected from the Romans. She resumes, however, with firm data, starting with the only mid-3rd-c. site located in the enclosed area north of the palace, military site, or villa site, placing Galerius’s palace in isolated settings from the early 4th c. (50). It appears that the palace, regardless of the emperor’s status and wealth, was not important to the region in economic terms and did not influence settlement growth, as there is no supporting network. If anything, it contributed to depopulation (55). The post-palatial period, from the end of 4th to the beginning of the 7th c., shows an increase in landscape use, with 42 locations of different character. Romuliana seems to have been a possible center and “for the first time the main site (was) actively supported by its immediate landscape” (50–51). The evolution was probably triggered by ore processing. Finally, after a new cycle of decline in the 8th and 9th c. and rise in the 10th and 11th, Romuliana and its surroundings fell into decay after the 11th c.

The new results of landscape archaeology research demonstrate that the idea of the importance and centrality of the Gamzigrad site to the development of the region is misleading. While the importance of the Emperor Galerius himself is not in question,<sup>8</sup> Felix Romuliana as an “artificially created phenomenon” did not trigger a network of supporting sites, and “even if [a] system was planned, there was not enough time for a hinterland to develop and gravitate towards the palace” (56).

Together with newly discovered structures that preceded the palace and fresh data about the palace’s reuse, multiple layers of archaeological data coming from this very important project and presented in *Gamzigrad - Studien I* both resolve some essential questions and pose others. The character of the enclosed northern area, which goes back to the

---

<sup>7</sup> Vranić 2022.

<sup>8</sup> Regrettably, Felix Romuliana was used to promote the importance of the Serbian territory: “the establishment of the Tetrarchy, the rule of four emperors, i.e., of the *most important period* in the history of the Classical world, during which *emperors born in the territory of present-day Serbia* revived, within a few decades, the power of the weakened Roman Empire, enhanced the importance of their *native region* and made it the *centre of the civilized world...*” (my emphasis). The exhibition “commemorate[d] the period in which the territory of *Serbia* had a key role in the history [of] *European civilization*” (Srejšović 1993, Introduction). Cf. Kuzmanović and Mihajlović 2015.

very beginning of the site's interpretation as a military camp, fortified villa, or administrative center of the mines in the surrounding area, the connection of this area to the palace, settlement patterns, and landscape use in Roman times in the province, and the relation to the fortified border are all stimulating opportunities for future research. This book edited by Gerda von Bülow and Sofija Petković offers significant and stimulating new data and perspectives that we hope will set the tone for further research projects in the Balkan region.

## References

- Kuzmanović, Z., and V. D. Mihajlović. 2015. "Roman emperors and identity construction in modern Serbia." *Identities* 22, no. 4: 416–32.
- Popović, I., ed. 2010. *Felix Romuliana – Gamzigrad*. Beograd: Arheološki institut.
- Srejović, D. 1983. "Carski dvorac." In *Gamzigrad. Kasnoantički carski dvorac*, ed. Srejović, Đ. Janković, A. Lalović, and V. Jović, 24–95. Beograd: Srpska akademija nauka i umetnosti.
- Srejović, D. 1985. "Felix Romuliana. Galerijeva palata u Gamzigradu." *Starinar* 36: 51–67.
- Srejović, D., ed. 1993. *Roman Imperial Towns and Palaces in Serbia*. Belgrade: Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts.
- Vranić, I. 2022. *Helenizacija u novom ključu. Potrošnja grčke firnisovane keramike, "umrežavanje" i kulturne promene na Krševici, V-III vek pre nove ere*. Beograd: Arheološki institut i Narodni muzej Srbije.
- World Heritage Serbia*. 2017. Belgrade: Republic institute for the protection of the monuments of culture. [https://www.heritage.gov.rs/cirilica/Download/Svetska\\_bastina\\_Srbija\\_World\\_heritage\\_Serbia\\_book.pdf](https://www.heritage.gov.rs/cirilica/Download/Svetska_bastina_Srbija_World_heritage_Serbia_book.pdf).

*Journal of Roman Archaeology* 35 (2022), 1004–1011  
doi:10.1017/S1047759422000502

# Bir Messaouda at Carthage: a 6th-c. basilica tells a story of urban renewal and sectarian reconciliation

Susan T. Stevens

Randolph College <[sstevens@randolphcollege.edu](mailto:sstevens@randolphcollege.edu)>

MILES, R., and S. GREENSLADE. 2020. *The Bir Messaouda Basilica. Pilgrimage and the Transformation of an Urban Landscape in Sixth-Century AD Carthage*. Pp. 397 + 32 color plates. Oxford and Philadelphia: Oxbow. ISBN 978-1-78570-680-6.

This much-anticipated publication of the 1997–2004 excavations at the Bir Messaouda basilica at Carthage tells an admirably clear, succinct, and accessible story; it is a model for making the most of a stratigraphically challenging site. Aside from archaeologists, the report is likely to pique the interest of other readers, especially historians, for its framing of fragmentary and arcane archaeological evidence within larger local and regional concerns of urban topography and land use, as well as ecclesiastical politics and history. From the introductory first chapter, Richard Miles makes this his primary goal.