

Medvedjek near Veliki Gaber

IRN 10177

Medvedjek – archaeological site

Motorway section

KO 14 Bič–Trebnje

Geographical coordinates

x 493501 y 86999 z 338

Primary topographical map sheet TTN5

Višnja Gora 48

Cadastral register

c.c. Veliki Gaber, cadastral plot nos. 419/2, 420/2 & 490/4

Site type

Cemetery

Period

Roman

Method and date of discovery

Watching brief

Fieldwork method and date

Excavation 2002

Excavation director

Primož Predan

Excavated area

973 m²

Site archive kept by

ZVKDS, Novo Mesto Regional Office

A Roman cemetery was discovered at the northern edge of the existing motorway directly before the point where the Medvedjek hill near Veliki Gaber levels out at Gmajna. The area is part of a larger site known under the name of Medvedjek, which was excavated on the southern side of the existing motorway in the period between 1980 and 1981. The central part of the site was destroyed during the construction of the Ljubljana–Zagreb road between 1958 and 1960.

Sixty-two cremation burials were recorded during the rescue excavation. They display a wide range of grave construction, but date to a relatively short period of time. The finds indicate that the graves date to the period between the middle of the 1st and the end of the 2nd century AD. It is important for the excavation of the northern part of the mortuary site that three Roman cremation graves were additionally cut into a large prehistoric barrow on the southern side of the present road (excavated between 1980 and 1981). A small Noric-Pannonian type Roman barrow with a dome-shaped tomb in the centre was also excavated at that time, but, regrettably, had already been robbed. All the newly discovered stone-built tombs were also plundered. However, the data are important, because they indicate that robbing took place in the period when the tombs were still visi-



ble in the landscape. The fact is also interesting that robbers hardly ever touched the oil-lamps, obolos and personal artefacts (fibulae, bracelets) and the cremation remains. This would indicate that the tombs were robbed in the Roman period.

The prevailing grave construction type consists of rough limestone quarry stone lined rectangular graves covered with one or two stone slabs. 26 such graves were excavated, amounting to 42 per cent of all the graves discovered there.

Stone cists or graves lined with stone slabs were far less frequent. Three or even four such graves were discovered, amounting to 6.5 per cent of all the graves. Two stone-built tombs with extant rectangular or even oval plans (1–2 m in size) were very similar to them. Their entrances were made in one side through a corridor or *dromos*. This type amounts only to 3 per cent of all the discovered graves. The domed tomb or the large circular quarry stone grave (ca. 4 m in diameter) was probably the most prominent structure in the area. A similar type of grave construction had already been discovered in the 1980 and 1981 excavations. A large stone base with an opening for the insertion of grave stela was found in the mortuary site, suggesting that other markers existed, but are not preserved. Perhaps the markers of simple grave pits were made of less durable materials (e.g. timber), which would account for the fact that the graves have remained untouched.

A very common burial type was that of a grave in a larger oval or less frequently rectangular pit (60–120 cm in size) into which the cremated remains and grave goods were placed. Burials in pits are considered the simplest method of burials in the region of Upper Pannonia during the Early Imperial period. This was the case with 22.5 per cent of the graves, excavated on the site. A more modest method of burial can be added to them, i.e. burials in smaller, irregular pits (oval or oblong in shape) with scarce grave goods. This type comprises 16 per cent of the graves discovered here. Urn burials (typical for this part of the Dolenjska region in terms of size and manufacture) are not distinguished from the usual amphora burials. These account for 8.5 per cent of the burials.



Roman oil lamp with tragic theatre mask

PRIMOŽ PREDAN

References

- BAVEC, UROŠ, "Medvedjek – arheološko najdišče, lokacija Gmajna", Showcase of the Month (17. April–7 May 2003), *Informativni list*, No. 5, Novo Mesto 2003.
- BREŠČAK, DANILO, "Medvedjek pri Velikem Gabru", *Arheološka najdišča Dolenjske*, *Arheo*, special issue, Novo Mesto 1990.