

# The terracotta lamp in the shape of a gladiator's helmet from the Viminacium amphitheatre

## Keramična oljenka v obliki gladiatorske čelade iz viminacijskega amfiteatra

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### Izvleček

Članek obravnava keramično oljenko, ki posnema obliko gladiatorske čelade in je bila odkrita v viminacijskem amfiteatru. Najdena je bila v bližini manjših konstrukcij, ki verjetno predstavljajo gladiatorski kulturni prostor. Oljenka izvira iz prve četrtine 2. stoletja našega štetja, kar časovno sovпада z razvojem mesta in začetkom delovanja amfiteatra. Vrhunska izdelava z natančno oblikovanimi podrobnostmi dokazuje, da gre za uvožen izdelek. Rekonstruirana nepopolno ohranjena svetilka iz Viminacija glede na analogije predstavlja pomanjšani posnetek značilnih čelad gladiatorjev murmillo. Po okrasu svetilke in njeni obliki lahko sklepamo o načinu izdelave, predvsem lokacija najdbe, domnevno povezana s kulturnimi prostori v amfiteatru, pa nakazuje ožjo namembnost svetilke.

**Ključne besede:** rimska doba, Zgornja Mezija (Srbija), Viminacium (Viminacij) pri Kostolcu, amfiteatri, keramične oljenke, gladiatorske čelade

### Abstract

The article discusses a terracotta lamp in the shape of a gladiator's helmet that was discovered inside the Viminacium amphitheatre. It was found near architectural structures probably devoted to a gladiatorial cult practice. The lamp is dated to the first quarter of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD, and it coincides with the period of the development of the city and the early use of the amphitheatre. The lamp's superb workmanship with precisely executed details suggests the lamp was an imported item. As the lamp was fragmented, we attempted to reconstruct it based on similar specimens. We believe that it represents a miniaturized helmet of a *murmillo* gladiator. We also tried to determine the manufacturing process and purpose of the lamp on the basis of its attributes and the context of discovery.

**Keywords:** Roman period, Upper Moesia (Serbia), Viminacium near Kostolac, amphitheatre, terracotta lamp, gladiator's helmet

## INTRODUCTION

Recent archaeological excavations of the Viminacium amphitheatre yielded a unique find, of a type as yet unknown in modern Serbia. It is a fragmented terracotta lamp in the shape of a gladiator helmet. Comparing it to similar specimens from throughout the Roman Empire, we tried to

determine its manufacturing process and origin, as well as the purpose of the lamp at this site.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>The article is an amended version of the paper *A terracotta lamp in the shape of a gladiator's helmet from the Viminacium amphitheatre*, which was given at the 4th International Congress of the International Lychnological Association (ILA) in May 2012 in Ptuj (Slovenia).

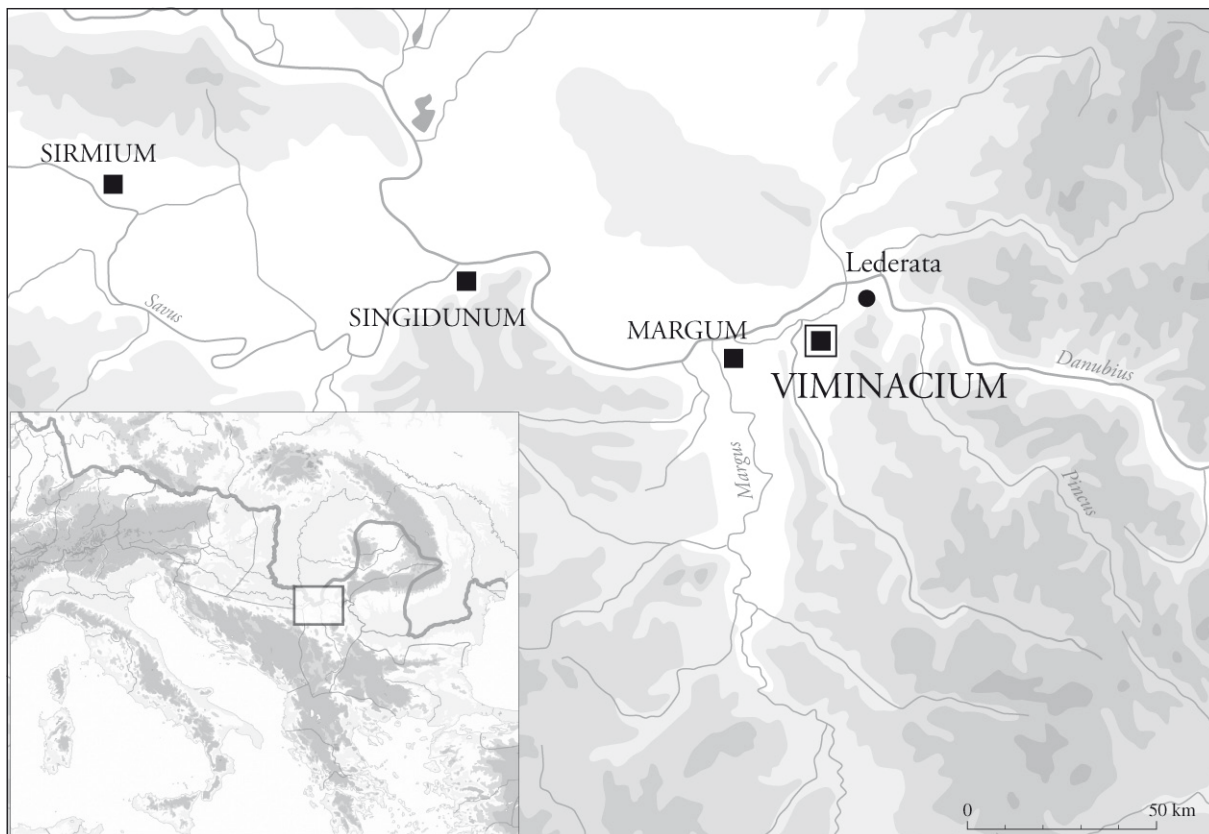


Fig. 1: Location of Viminacium.  
Sl. 1: Lega Viminacija.

### VIMINACIUM, ITS AMPHITHEATRE, AND THE CONTEXT OF THE FIND

Viminacium is located near Kostolac in eastern Serbia, on the right bank of the Mlava River, close to its confluence with the Danube River (Fig. 1). In the Roman period it belonged to the provinces of *Moesia*, *Moesia Superior*, and later *Moesia Prima*. Initially it was a fortress, where the legion *VII Claudia* was stationed from the second half of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD. Next to the fortress, a town arose and became the capital of the province (Mirković 1968; Popović 1968).

An amphitheatre was located in the northeastern corner of the ancient town and approximately 50 m from the northwestern corner of the legionary fortress (Fig. 2a). The first small-scale excavations of the amphitheatre were conducted at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Valtrović 1884, 11–12, 100–103). Systematic archaeological investigation started at the end of 2007 and is still in progress. In addition to the discovery of the main parts of the amphitheatre, town walls were also identified

(Nikolić, Bogdanović 2012). The archaeological excavations revealed an earlier wooden structure, which was later replaced by the stone and wooden construction of the amphitheatre. Based on the archaeological stratigraphy and the finds, including pottery and glass vessels, terracotta lamps, coins and other bronze finds, it is suggested that the wooden amphitheatre of Viminacium was built next to the legionary fortress during the reign of Emperor Trajan. It is assumed that this building was used for a very short period and that it was replaced by a stone and wooden structure, probably during Hadrian's reign. The stone and timber amphitheatre went through at least two building phases, followed by the construction of town walls along the amphitheatre exterior in the last quarter of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD. The amphitheatre functioned until the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> or early 4<sup>th</sup> century AD. In the Late Roman period, it was abandoned and the area was used as cemetery (Nikolić, Bogdanović 2012; Nikolić, Bogdanović in print).

A fragmented lamp in the shape of a gladiator's helmet was discovered in 2010 in the area of the

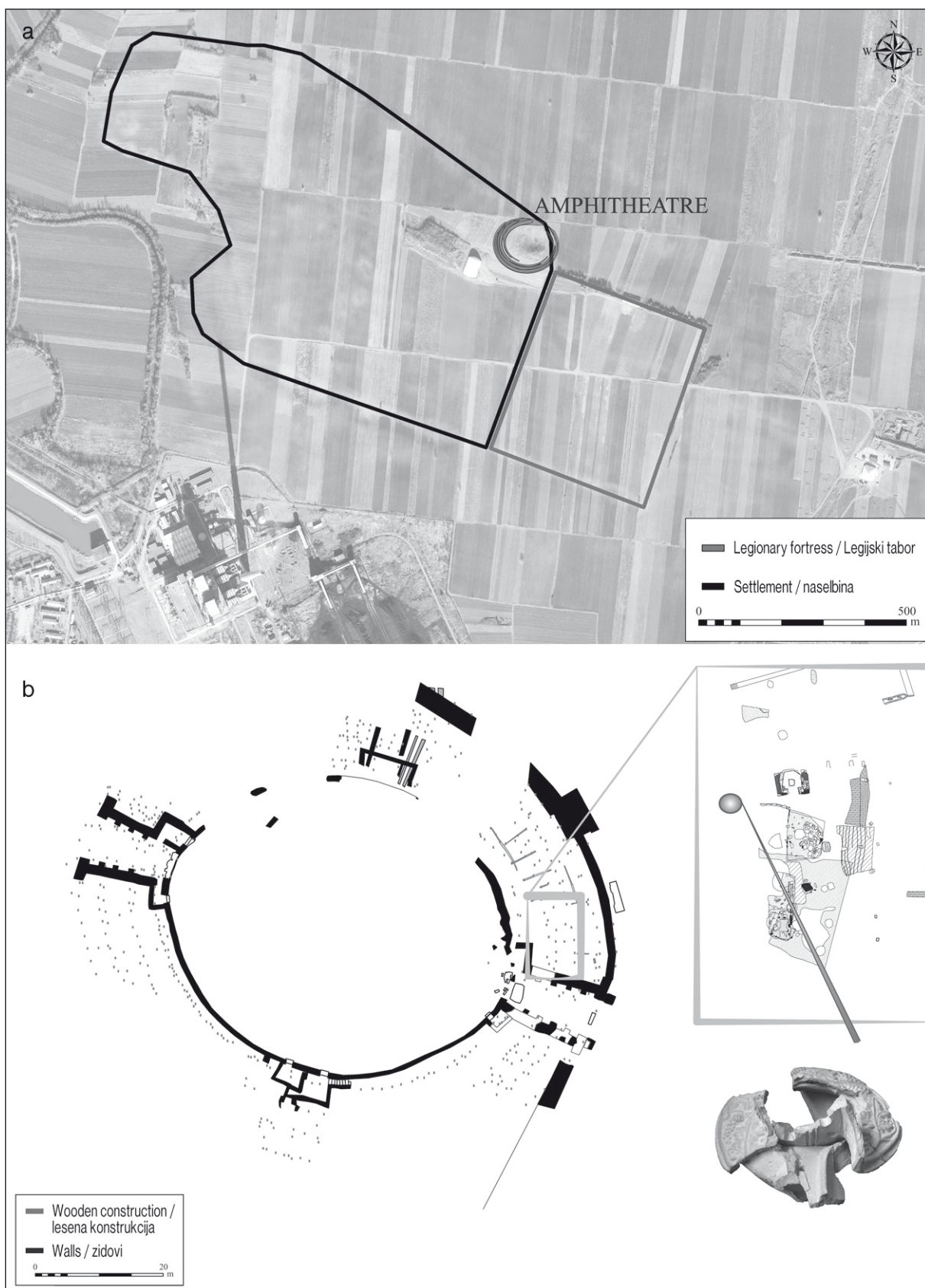


Fig. 2: Location of the Viminacium amphitheatre (a). The site of discovery of the lamp in the shape of a gladiator's helmet (b).  
 Sl. 2: Amfiteater v Viminaciji (a). Najdišče oljenke v obliki gladiatorske čelade v amfiteatru (b).

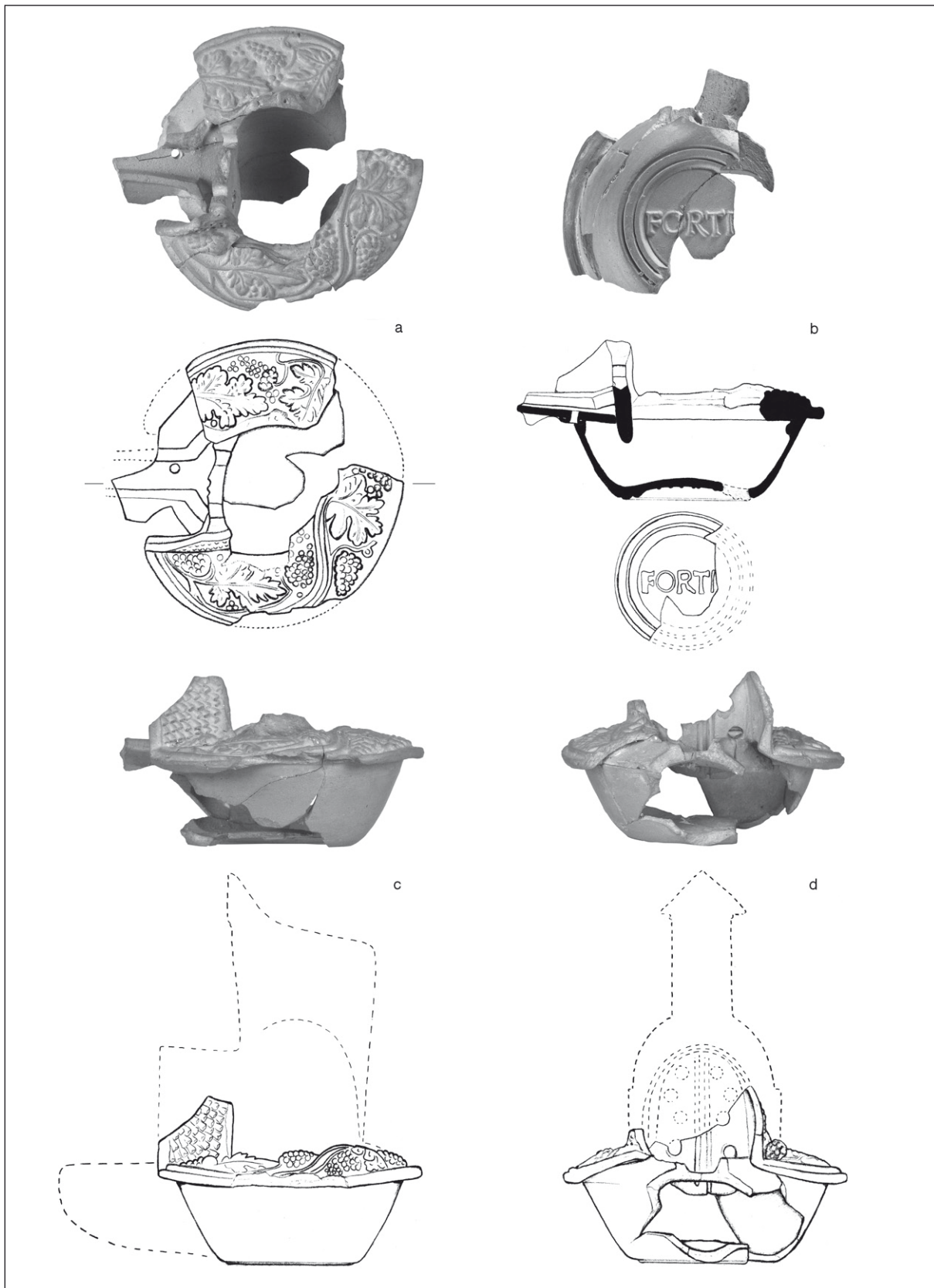


Fig. 3: The lamp from Viminacium. Scale 1:2.

Sl. 3: Oljenka iz Viminacija. M. = 1:2.

(photo / foto: V. Ilić, Narodni muzej Beograd; drawing / risba: D. Rogić, Arheološki institut, Beograd)

*cavea* to the north of the eastern amphitheatre entrance (Fig. 2b).<sup>2</sup> It was found close to three small fresco decorated structures surrounded by a wooden-earthen construction, and was probably related to them. All these features were disturbed during later construction. The surviving dimensions of the wooden-earthen structure are 6.50 × 4.00 m. One small rectangular structure has partly survived and it measures 1.30 × 0.90 m, while another two have been totally destroyed, so their shape, construction, and dimensions could only be suggested by the layout of building material and the surviving structure. The latter was made of limestone, green schist, and bricks in the lower part, up to 0.90 m in height, while in the upper, mainly damaged part, it was made of wattle and daub. The southern wall had a small door, 0.45 m wide. Wall paintings with floral decorations were detected in the mentioned structure, as well as within the ruins of the other two. According to the archaeological finds, among which lamps of different types predominated, these features and its detected stratum would belong to the first wooden amphitheatre, suggesting that the gladiator helmet lamp would correspond to the same construction phase. The shape and dimensions of these structures, both with surrounding construction, point to a cult place for gladiators, which could be expected in an amphitheatre (Golvin 1988, 337–340; Hornum 1993, 56–62; Pastor 2011).

### DESCRIPTION OF THE LAMP

The surviving part of the lamp measures 99 mm in length, 90.5 mm in width, and 54 mm in height (Fig. 3). The diameter of the disc measures 92.5 mm. It was made of red baked purified clay,<sup>3</sup> and its surface was smoothed without coating.

The lower part has a long open nozzle-channel with sharp edges. Part of the nozzle with the wick-hole has not survived. The air-hole was set next to the nozzle-channel edge. On the partly preserved base, measuring 51.5 mm in diameter, the workshop stamp FORTI(S) was set within three high-relief concentric circles. The stamp was well imprinted with raised letters 7.2 mm high.

The surviving upper part of the lamp includes fragments of the reservoir, disc, and rim in the shape of a gladiator's helmet. The preserved parts of the helmet's dome and the vertical brim at the front are covered with impressions that resemble scales. The 26 mm wide lamp shoulder, moulded as the helmet's neck-guard, bears a rich relief decoration depicting grapevines. A part of the visor can be distinguished behind the nozzle (Fig. 3). It has two incised vertical lines in the middle and three holes (with diameters varying from 5 to 6 mm) drilled along the lines representing eyeholes. On the right side of the lamp, at the inner side of the rim, one small hollow was identified as the remnant of one of the feather holders commonly present on gladiator helmets.

### ANALOGIES FOR THE VIMINACIUM LAMP AND ITS RECONSTRUCTION

Considering the main features of the lamp from Viminacium (Fig. 3) it can be ranked among the figural lamps representing gladiator helmets. Its lower part was shaped in a mould bearing characteristics of *Firmalampen* (Istenič 1999, 149) and its nozzle resembles Type X A according to Loeschcke's typology (1919) and Type XVII according to Iványi (1935).

Lamps in the shape of gladiator helmets in general are very rare finds. Only 28 specimens are known,<sup>4</sup> and one mould from the territory of the Roman Empire (Fig. 4). According to their form, size, and decoration K. Goethert (1991, 159–164) distinguished two types, Type A (Fig. 5: 1–3) and Type B (Fig. 5: 4). The first type (Type A) represents helmets of *thraex*, *murmillo*, or *hoplomachus* and was further divided into three subtypes. The first Subtype Aa (Fig. 5: 1) includes large richly decorated lamps with floral decoration on the rim or neck-guard and figural decoration on the crest. The bowl of the helmet and its wide front vertical brim surrounding the visor were both covered with impressions. The front of the visor has numerous holes. On the bottom of these lamps the stamp FORTIS appears. The second Subtype Ab (Fig. 5: 2) is similar to the first, but Subtype Ab is

<sup>2</sup> The lamp is kept at the Viminacium Archaeological Park (Inv. No. C- 2865).

<sup>3</sup> The colour corresponds to 2.5YR 5/8 of the Munsell Soil Colour Charts (Munsell 1975).

<sup>4</sup> This number excludes fake lamps from London and Berlin (Greifenhagen 1975, 112–114; Goethert 1991, 161), a lamp in the Schloessinger collection (Rosenthal, Sivan 1978, 49, Nr. 197; Goethert 1991, 161), and a lamp from New York (Richter 1924, 295) that also seems to be a copy.

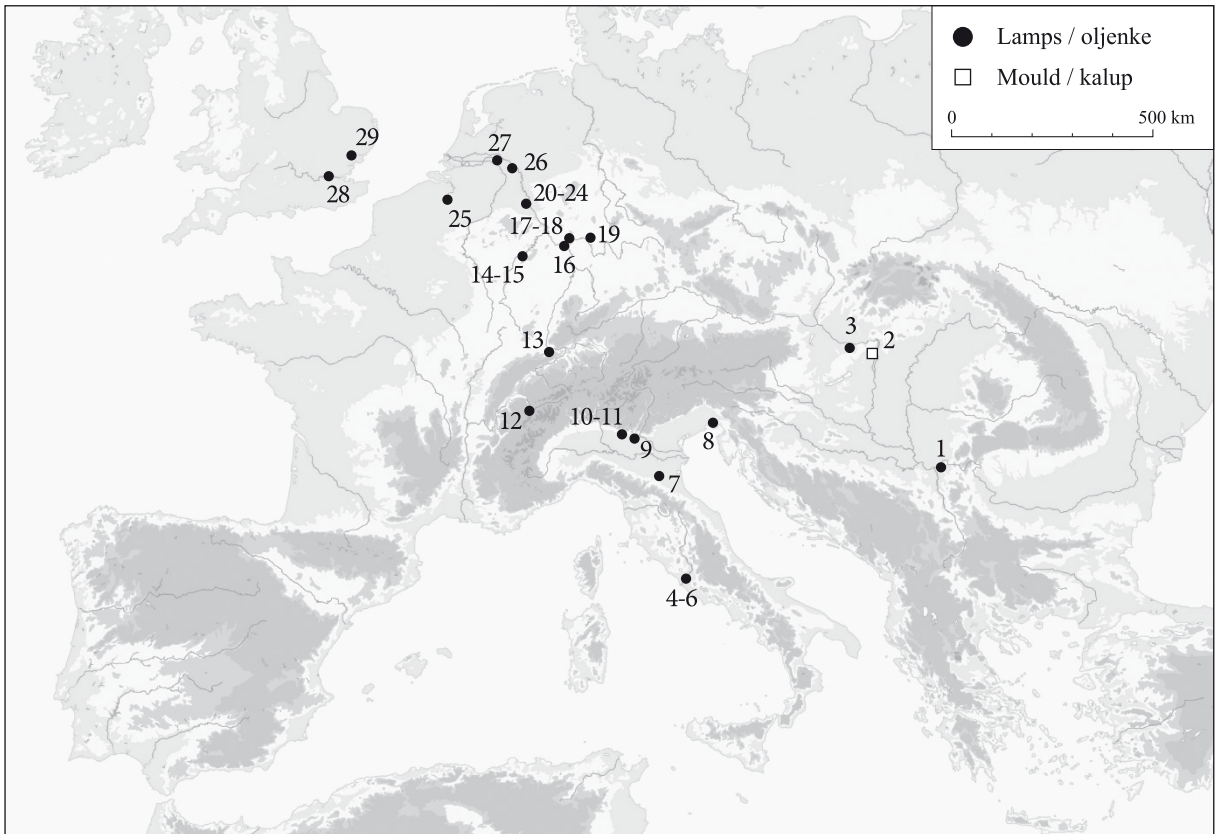


Fig. 4: Distribution of lamps and moulds in the shape of gladiator helmets (**Type/Subtype** of the lamp).

Sl. 4: Najdišča oljenk in kalupov oljenk v obliki gladiatorske čelade (**tip/podtip** oljenke).

1. Viminacium, **Aa** (unpublished / neobjavljeno)
2. Budapest (Aquincum), **Aa** – mould / kalup (Nagy 1937, 187–189; kep 4, 5)
3. Komárom/Szőny (Brigetio), **Ab** (Bónis 1980, 367; Pl. 57)
4. Rome (Roma), **Aa** (Mercando 1962, 35, n. 9; Tav. 12: 1,2)
5. Rome (Roma), **Aa** (De Lucia Brolli 2000, 163; n. 114)
6. Rome (Roma), **B** (Grant 1971, Fig. 8)
7. Bologna (Bononia), **Ab** (Gualandi Genito 1977, 180 N. 503; Tav. 66)
8. Aquileia (Aquileia), **Ab** (Buchi 1975, 86, N. 601; Tav. 29)
9. Sirmione, **Aa** (unpublished / neobjavljeno)
10. Brescia (Brixia), **Ac** (Bezzi Martini 1987, 90, N. 18; Tav. 33)
11. Brescia (Brixia), **B** (Bezzi Martini 1987, 90, N. 19; Tav. 34)
12. Martigny (Octodurum), **B** (Chrzanovski 2006, 73, Cat. 98)
13. Augst (Augusta Raurica), **Ac** (Chrzanovski 2006, 73, Cat. 97)
14. Trier (Augusta Treverorum), **Aa** (Goethert 1991, 159, Nr. 29; Abb. 24)
15. Trier (Augusta Treverorum), **Ac** (Menzel 1954, 77, Nr. 514; Abb. 65)
16. Mainz (Mogontiacum), **Ab** (Ronke 2012, 305; Abb. 4)
17. Wiesbaden (Castellum Mattiacorum), **Aa** (Pinsker 2000, Abb. 1–8)
18. Wiesbaden (Castellum Mattiacorum), **B** (Pinsker 2000, Abb. 1; 9–11)
19. Rückingen, **Ab** (Birkner 1952, 361, Abb. 2)
20. Cologne (Colonia Agrippinensis), **Aa** (Niessen 1911, Nr. 2147; Taf. 84)
21. Cologne (Colonia Agrippinensis), **Ac** (Niessen 1911, Nr. 2147a; Taf. 84)
22. Cologne (Colonia Agrippinensis), **Ac** (Walters 1914, 64, No. 442; Pl. 13)
23. Cologne (Colonia Agrippinensis), **B** (Niessen 1911, Nr. 2142; Taf. 84)
24. Cologne (Colonia Agrippinensis), **B** (La Baume 1964, 271; Abb. 256)
25. Brussels, **B** (Skinkel-Taupin 1980, 7b)
26. Xanten (Colonia Ulpia Traiana), **B** (Houben, Fiedler 1839, 52, Taf. 29: 1)
27. Nijmegen (Noviomagus Batavorum), **Ab** (Evelein 1928, 59, Pl. 15: 7)
28. London (Londinium), **Ab** (Walters 1914, 64, No. 441, Pl. 13)
29. Colchester (Camulodunum), **Ac** (May 1930, 183, No. 38; Pl. 73)

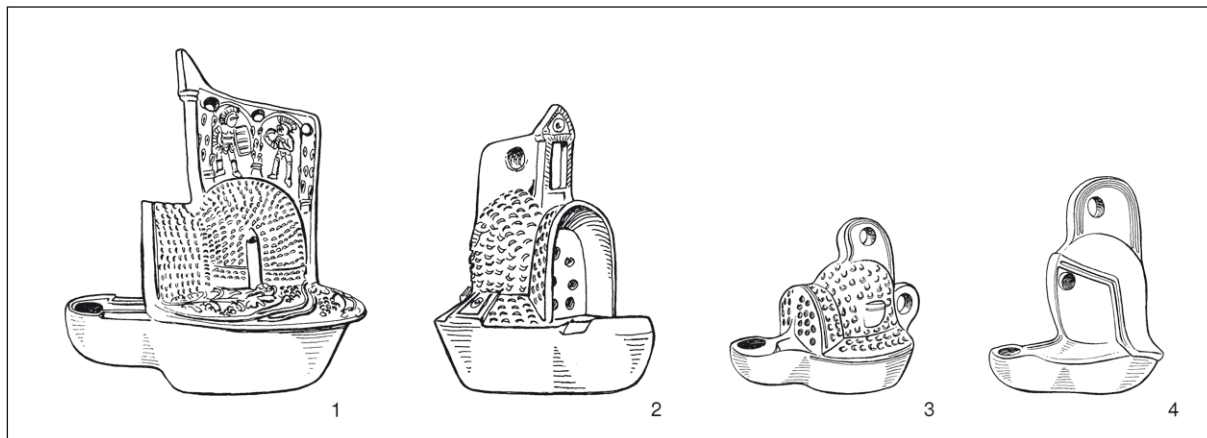


Fig. 5: Types of lamps in the shape of gladiator helmets: 1 – Subtype Aa (richly decorated lamps); 2 – Subtype Ab (undecorated lamps shaped like Subtype Aa); 3 – Subtype Ac (simplified lamps of Subtypes Aa and Ab); 4 – Type B (rounded helmet lamps). Scale 1:3.

Sl. 5: Tipološka razvrstitev oljenk v obliki gladiatorske čelade: 1 – podtip Aa (bogato okrašena oljenka); 2 – podtip Ab (neokrašena oljenka, oblikovana kot podtip Aa); 3 – podtip Ac (poenostavljena oljenka podtipov Aa in Ab); 4 – tip B (oljenka v obliki zaobljene čelade). M. = 1:3.

(after / po Goethert 1997, Abb. 80)

slightly smaller and it is not decorated with floral or figural motifs, only with impressions. On the bottom the stamps FORTIS, C. DESSI, and NERI appear, sometime with additional inscriptions. In comparison with Subtypes Aa and Ab, the third Subtype Ac (Fig. 5: 3) comprises smaller and more simplified lamps with a wide neck-guard and broad visor edge and also a closed visor frontal area. Their surface is perfectly smooth or covered with impressions. The second type (Type B) represents a *secutor* helmet (Fig. 5: 4) with a rounded bowl and closed spherical visor bearing two small eye holes. These rounded helmet lamps are smaller and their surface was usually left plain.

According to Goethert's typology, the Viminacium lamp corresponds to Subtype Aa together with specimens from Rome – *Horti Lamiani* (Mercando 1962, 35, n. 9; Tav. 12: 1,2) (Fig. 6), Rome – unknown site (De Lucia Brolli 2000, 163, n. 114) (Fig. 7), Wiesbaden – Mainz-Kastel, grave (Pinsker 2000, Abb. 1–8; Ronke 2012, 304–307, Abb. 1–2) (Fig. 8), Cologne – St. Severin, cemetery area (Niessen 1911, Nr. 2147, Taf. 84) (Fig. 9), and also fragments of the upper parts of lamps from Sirmione – villa of *Catullus*<sup>5</sup> and Trier – Altbachtal sanctuary, theatre (Goethert 1991, 159, Nr. 29, Abb. 24). A mould for this lamp subtype was discovered in the Aquincum pottery workshop situated within

the military town (Nagy 1937, 187–189, kep 4–5; Szentlélek 1959, 167–170, I. kep 6) (Fig. 10).

Detailed examinations of the fragmented lamp from Viminacium, and comparison with similar specimens allow the reconstruction of its primary



Fig. 6: The lamp from Rome – *Horti Lamiani*.  
Sl. 6: Oljenka iz Rima – *Horti Lamiani*.  
(after / po Greifenhagen 1975, Abb. 2)

<sup>5</sup> A fragment of the lamp is shown on a poster in the museum in the *Catullus* villa (unpublished).



*Fig. 7:* The lamp from Rome – unknown site.  
*Sl. 7:* Oljenka z neznanega najdišča v Rimu.  
(National Etruscan Museum in Rome)



*Fig. 8:* The lamp from Wiesbaden – Mainz-Kastel.  
*Sl. 8:* Oljenka z najdišča Wiesbaden – Mainz-Kastel.  
(after / po Pinsker 2000, Abb. 8: left / levo)



*Fig. 9:* The lamp from Cologne – St. Severin.  
*Sl. 9:* Oljenka z najdišča Köln – St. Severin.  
(after / po Junkelmann 2005, 45)



*Fig. 10:* The mould from Aquincum.  
*Sl. 10:* Kalup iz Akvinka.  
(Aquincum Museum, Collection of Photos)

dimensions and shape and also the manner in which it was made. It is estimated to have originally measured 127 mm in length, 92.5 mm in width and 135 mm in height (*Fig. 11*).<sup>6</sup> According to the

<sup>6</sup> The lengths of the similar specimens from Rome (Mercando 1962, 35; De Lucia Brolli 2000, 163, n. 114) and Wiesbaden (Pinsker 2000, 2) vary from 118 to 127 mm.

Aquincum mould (*Fig. 10*) and the observations of A. Greifenhagen (1975, 111) about similar specimens, the upper part of the lamp was made from a two-part mould, and the crest was moulded together with the bowl. The helmet visor with pierced

They were approximately 90 mm wide, while their heights vary from 129 to 135 mm.





Fig. 11: 3D model of the Viminacium lamp. Not in scale.

Sl. 11: Trirazsežnostni model oljenke iz Viminacija. Ni v merilu.

(made by / izdelava: Ž. Jovanović, Center for New Technologies Viminacium, and I. Bogdanović)

cylinders was made separately and added to the bowl. The upper part was subsequently worked by hand during the final stage of production, while the clay was still soft.

The upper part of the lamp was probably shaped into a *murmillo* helmet with the bowl and wide front

vertical brim that protected the visor, covered by impressions imitating fish scales. This kind of gladiator was often related to the sea fish of the same name, and just like the fish caught by fishermen, it was usually opposed to *retiarius* in the arena (Junkelmann 2008, 110–111; Nossov 2009, 58–60).

The wide shoulder of the Viminacium lamp, similar to other specimens of Subtype Aa (Figs. 6–9), is modeled like a neck-guard and richly decorated with grapevines. The iconography is commonly related to the cult of Dionysus/Bacchus (Crnobrnja 2006, 56), often considered as a god of vegetation, while Dionysus is also interpreted as a god of the underworld (Cermanović, Srejić 1996, 109–110). As the lord of the dead, he might also be considered related to gladiators and their hope to survive or reach immortality.

The visor of the Viminacium lamp – closed and divided into two halves, imitating the two halves of a real helmet visor, with the numerous holes that represent eye- and breathing-holes – has the same layout of perforations as the specimen discovered at *Horti Lamiani* in Rome (Mercando 1962, Tav. 12: 1), as well as an identical decoration, size, and workshop stamp, and probably also the crest (Fig. 6).

There are known two variants of the crest, indicating *murmillio* or *thraex* helmets.<sup>7</sup> The *murmillio* helmet has a more decorative and architecturally designed crest, such as appears on lamps from *Horti Lamiani* (Fig. 6) and an unknown site in Rome (Fig. 7), Wiesbaden (Fig. 8), Sirmione, and Trier (Goethert 1991, Abb. 24), which vary only in details. The second variant of the *thraex* helmet is displayed on the mould from Aquincum (Fig. 10). It depicts a tall curved crest decorated with a stylized griffin's head. A similar crest was probably set on top of the lamp from Cologne (Fig. 9).

Even if the top of the helmet of the Viminacium lamp is missing, it can be assumed that originally the bowl had a crest similar to those from Rome, which represents the facade of a temple on its narrow front side. Beside the frontal decoration, on each lateral side two gladiators, *murmillio* and *traex*, are depicted. Above the gladiators at the top of the crest, three suspension holes were pierced. The facade of the temple is depicted together with pairs of gladiators, which may be related to the cult of the goddess Nemesis. The griffin depicted on the second variant of the crest of *thraex* helmets is also considered to be an incarnation of Nemesis as the goddess of retribution (Hornum 1993, 24–32; Nossov 2009, 68). Small temples consecrated to this goddess, the patroness of gladiators, have been noted in many amphitheatres (Golvin 1988, 337–340; Hornum 1993, 56–62; Futrell 2001, 110–119; Pastor 2011).

<sup>7</sup> About the types of gladiators and their equipment see: Junkelmann 2008; Mattesini 2009; Nossov 2009.



Fig. 12: Gladiator's helmet from Berlin.  
Sl. 12: Gladiatorska čelada iz Berlina.  
(after / po Junkelmann 2008, Abb. 90)

Based on lamps of the same subtype (Aa), it can also be assumed for Viminacium lamp that a large filling hole was set next to the crest on the top of the bowl. Furthermore, on both sides of the bowl thin hollow cylinders were probably added (Figs. 6–9). They represent holders for colourful feathers that sometimes adorned the gladiator helmets (Junkelmann 2008, 53–73, 229–248; Nossov 2009, 84–90). They also could have had some functional purpose on lamps, such as for the placement of incense (Pinsker 2000, 3).

The shape of the upper part of the Viminacium and other lamps of Goethert's Subtype Aa is related to the gladiator helmets Subtypes of Pompeii and Berlin (Greifenhagen 1975, 110; Junkelmann 2008, 63–65, 234–243, with relevant literature).<sup>8</sup> The richly decorated helmets discovered in the gladiator's barracks in Pompeii, and the specimen from an unknown site kept in Berlin (Junkelmann 2008, 64–65, Abb. 90) (Fig. 12), are classified as ceremonial gladiator helmets. The decoration on the lamp from Viminacium is reminiscent of helmets from Pompeii, while the shape of the helmet and the impressions on the bowl of the Viminacium lamp show similarities with the *murmillio* helmet from Berlin. Grid visors from museums in London, Budapest, and Carnuntum (Junkelmann 2008, 64, 243, Abb. 403–405) also belong to the same Berlin subtype of gladiator helmets.

<sup>8</sup> About gladiator helmets, also see: Negin 2006; Mattesini 2009; Nossov 2009, 84–90.

## THE PROVENANCE AND DATING OF THE VIMINACIUM LAMP

Although it is still not certain where the workshops of helmet lamps were located, it is assumed that high quality gladiator helmet lamps (Goethert's Subtype Aa) were manufactured in northern Italy (Nagy 1937, 188; Szentléleky 1959, 168; Goethert 1991, 159, 162; Goethert 1997, 136). Large scale northern Italian production of lamps with the FORTIS stamp on their base is testified near Modena (Loeschcke 1919, 280–282; Szentléleky 1969, 92–93; Harris 1980, 131; Schneider, Daszkiewicz 2011), and the suggestion that the Aquincum mould originated in northern Italy (Nagy 1937, 188; Szentléleky 1959, 168; Zsidi 2003, 203), might indicate that this type of lamp was imported from that region. However, the existence of the Aquincum mould points to local production as well. In addition, it is assumed that helmet lamps were imitated and produced in a simplified form (Types Ac and B) in local workshops within the Rhine region (Goethert 1991, 162; Goethert 1997, 136; Ronke 2012, 305). W. V. Harris (1980) also questioned the lamp distribution from a single centre and suggests that lamps were locally produced.

The Viminacium lamp differs from locally made pottery objects in the precisely executed details, the fine imprint of ornamental detail, the workshop stamp, and the fact that the lamp was not coated. Although it lacks the chemical and mineralogical analyses that are commonly used for determination of *Firmalampen* origin (Istenič 1999, 89, 149; Schneider, Daszkiewicz 2011), its attributes and the proposed provenance of analogous specimens (Nagy 1937, 188; Szentléleky 1959, 168; Goethert 1991, 159, 162; Goethert 1997, 136) indicate that the lamp from Viminacium could be imported from northern Italy.

The Viminacium lamp was discovered within a layer related to the first wooden amphitheatre that dates back to the beginning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD (Nikolić, Bogdanović in print). Similar lamps of Subtype Aa in Italy are dated to the late 1<sup>st</sup> and first half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD (Nagy 1937, 188, with relevant literature), and the lamps of this subtype imported in the Rhein area are dated to the first half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD (Goethert 1991, 164; Goethert 1997, 136; Ronke 2012, 307). The mould for this type of lamp discovered in Aquincum belongs to the one of the earliest workshops in the military town and it is dated to 90–120 AD (Nagy 1937, 188; Zsidi 2003, 201, 203).

*Firmalampen* of Loeschcke's type X A with the FORTIS stamp appeared in Viminacium during the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD and existed until the second half of the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD, and they were most common during the 2<sup>nd</sup> century (Korać 1995, 220–222, 240–242, 263–266), while figural lamps at Viminacium are dated to the period between the Emperors Nerva and Gordian III (Korać 1995, 212).

According to the context of the find and the dating of similar specimens, the lamp from the Viminacium amphitheatre can be dated to the first quarter of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD. The dating of the Viminacium lamp corresponds to the suggestion of G. Ville (1965, 150–152) that the gladiator helmets of the Berlin subtype, which were commonly seen as models for lamp manufacturing, appeared during the early 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD, and remained in vogue up to the last days of gladiators. M. Junkelmann (2008, 64–65) questioned earlier dating of the these helmets and considered that the Berlin subtype certainly existed in the second quarter of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD, while K. Nossov (2009, 84) suggested that it appeared in the middle of the same century. Bearing this in mind, as well as the dating of similar helmet lamps of Subtype Aa, the previous dating of Berlin subtype should be examined.

## CONCLUSION

The gladiatorial games (*munera gladiatoria*) had an important role in the life of the Romans. The importance of these spectacles is reflected in numerous depictions of gladiators and their equipment on various objects made of different materials (Augenti 2001; Junkelmann 2008; Nossov 2009). The finds of terracotta lamps with representations of gladiators are known from many sites throughout the Roman Empire (Barbera 2003; Bémont 2005; Rnjak 1979; Junkelmann 2008; Vujović 2011), but specimens in the form of gladiatorial helmets are rare, as are examples with the full figure of a gladiator, as is known from the Archaeological Museum in Split (Dyggve 1933: 96–97, Figs. 50 et 51; Rnjak 1979, 252, kat. br. 511).

From the distribution of gladiator helmet lamps (Fig. 4), is evident that the Viminacium lamp represents the easternmost find. It belongs to the richly decorated Goethert's Subtype Aa and represents a miniaturized *murmillo* helmet similar to the Berlin subtype of gladiatorial helmets.

Gladiator helmet lamps have been found in different contexts, mostly at cemeteries (Goethert

1991; Pinsker 2000; Ronke 2012). The terracotta lamp from Viminacium is particularly interesting because it is the first one ever discovered within an amphitheatre.

The function of lamps in the shape of gladiator helmets is still not clear (Pinsker 2000, 9–12). The context of the Viminacium lamp suggests that it might be a votive offering dedicated in shrines. The significance of light and lamps is very important in rituals, especially in rituals related to the glory of the dead or in this case to the gladiators. Nemesis was the patroness of gladiators and chapels that have been identified as *nemesea* appear in various locations in amphitheatres. Epigraphic and iconographic evidence for the cult of Nemesis in Viminacium (Mirković 1986, 77–78, no. 35–37; Gavrilović 2011; Vujović 2011) points to special worship in this city.

Although it has been suggested that this kind of lamp could be comparable to today's fan articles and souvenirs (Ronke 2012, 307), in the case of the Viminacium lamp its site of discovery indicates that it was a cult object. This is well in accordance with the symbolic decorations on the lamp, which are related to Nemesis and Dionysus, and by the fact that lamps were dedicated in temples and sacred contexts, as a lamp of the same subtype (Aa) was found in a mystery theatre in the Altbachtal sanctuary in Trier where initiates participated in scenic and cult games (Goethert 1991, 159, Nr. 29, Abb. 24; Sear 2006, 207–208), and also the lamp from Rückingen (Subtype Ab), discovered along with other finds within a feature related to a *mithraeum* (Birkner 1952, 361, Abb. 2). As B. Pinsker (2000, 9) noted, a great number of the

known gladiator helmet lamps had never been used, and there is no evidence that Viminacium lamp had ever been lit, so it can be suggested that it may have been intended as a votive offering to be dedicated and ignited in shrines.

### Acknowledgments

We would like to thank to Jutta Ronke (Regierungspräsidium Stuttgart, Landesamt für Denkmalpflege) for sharing her knowledge and for giving us important advice about lamps in the shape of gladiator helmets. We are also grateful to Orsolya Láng (BHM Aquincum Museum), who kindly welcomed us to her museum and showed us the mould for lamps in the shape of a gladiator's helmet and its imprint, which was of great help in better understanding the manufacture of the lamp. We owe a particular debt of gratitude to the graphic designer Željko Jovanović (Center for New Technologies Viminacium, Beograd) for his contribution of a 3D reconstruction of the Viminacium lamp.

The article has resulted from projects funded by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia: *Viminacium, Roman city and military camp – research of the material and non material culture of inhabitants by using the modern technologies of remote detection, geophysics, GIS, digitalization and 3D visualization* (No. III 47018) and *Romanization, urbanization and transformation of civil, military and residential urban centres in Roman provinces in the territory of Serbia* (No. III 177007).

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## Keramična oljenka v obliki gladiatorske čelade iz viminacijskega amfiteatra

### Povzetek

Figuralno okrašene oljenke, ki posnemajo obliko gladiatorske čelade, so redke najdbe na najdiščih na območju rimskega imperija. Članek obravnava takšno keramično oljenko, odkrito med nedavnimi arheološkimi izkopavanji v Viminaciju v Gornji Meziji (sl. 1).

Ožje najdišče izjemne najdbe je v notranjosti amfiteatra, v bližini ostankov arhitekture, treh manjših konstrukcij, ki verjetno predstavljajo kulturno mesto za gladiatorje (sl. 2). Glede na najdiščni kontekst in datacije primerljivih najdb sodi svetilka iz Viminacija v prvo četrtino 2. stoletja našega štetja, kar sovпада z razvojnimi obdobjem mesta in z začetkom delovanja tamkajšnjega amfiteatra.

Ohranjeni del oljenke je dolg 99 mm, širok 90,5 mm, višina je 54 mm (sl. 3). Izdelana je iz dobro prečiščene rdeče žgane gline. Notranjost je odlično izdelana, površina je glajena in brez premaza. Spodnji del oljenke je bil oblikovan v kalupu, tipičnem za izdelavo pečatnih oljenk (*Firmalampen*, tip Loeschke X A in tip Iványi XVII), s pečatom delavnice FORTI(S) na dnu. Zgornji del oljenke ni v celoti ohranjen, obsega le dele diska in oboda. Ti fragmenti dokazujejo, da je zgornji del posnemal gladiatorsko čelado, ki pa ji manjka vrh z grebenom.

Oljenke v obliki gladiatorske čelade so bile odkrite v raznih kontekstih, tudi v zaprtih arheoloških celotah. Keramična svetilka iz Viminacija pa je zaradi svojega najdišča izjemna, saj je prva, ki je bila odkrita v amfiteatru.

Proučevanje oljenk v obliki gladiatorske čelade je pokazalo, da je svetilka iz Viminacija najvzhod-

nejša tovrstna najdba (sl. 4). Po tipologiji sodi v bogato okrašen Goethertov podtip Aa (sl. 5: 1; 6–9). Značilnosti oljenk tega tipa sta rastlinski okras na obodu ali ščitniku za vrat in figuralni okras na grebenu na vrhu. Kupolo čelade in širok poudarjen rob okrog vizirja prekriva okras iz finih brazd.

Nepopolno ohranjena svetilka iz Viminacija je bila rekonstruirana z natančnim pregledom fragmentov in s pomočjo analogij (sl. 11) – oblikovno najbližja je oljenki iz Rima (najdišče *Horti Lamiani*, sl. 6), o kateri lahko ob primerjavi s podobnimi primerki sklepamo, da prikazuje pomanjšano čelado gladiatorjev murmillio (prim. berlinski podtip gladiatorskih čelad, sl. 12).

Glede na ohranjeni kalup iz Akvinka (sl. 10) lahko domnevamo, da sta tako spodnji kot tudi zgornji del viminacijske oljenke izdelana v kalupu.

Oljenka iz Viminacija je torej nedvomno uvožen izdelek in dokaz za zgodnji čas uvoza oljenk iz severne Italije. Skromno število oljenk z gladiatorsko čelado, ki jih poznamo z območja celotnega cesarstva, kaže, da si je tovrstne izdelke lahko privoščil le majhen del prebivalstva in da sta bila njihova proizvodnja in uvoz verjetno zapletena in draga.

Ožja namembnost izjemne viminacijske oljenke ni popolnoma pojasnjena, nedvomno pa jo nakazuje že samo mesto najdbe. Mogoče so sicer različne razlage – tovrstne svetilke bi med drugim lahko opravljale vlogo današnjih izdelkov/suvenirjev za občudovalce ipd. –, vendar bližina glavnega vhoda, svetišča in arene pomeni, da je bil prostor z najdeno svetilko zelo intenzivno uporabljan, tudi med

verskimi rituali. Oljenke so prižigali v svetiščih, med verskimi obredi. Na religiozni pomen svetilke in možnosti njene uporabe najverjetneje opozarja tudi simbolna dekoracija na predmetu, ki nakazuje povezave z Nemezo in Dionizom. Nesporno dejstvo je, da veliko svetilk v obliki gladiatorskih čelad ni bilo ožganih in na oljenki iz Viminacija prav tako ni nikakršnih dokazov o gorenju. Lahko pa bi predstavljala votivno darilo, namenjeno posvetitvi ter prižiganju in gorenju v svetišču.

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