

KAMIL RABIEGA¹

Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw
ORCID 0000-0002-0428-4237

ANA KONESTRA²

Institute of Archaeology in Zagreb
ORCID 0000-0002-7726-6515

ŽELJKO KRNČEVIĆ³

Šibenik City Museum
ORCID 0000-0001-5358-5944

TONI BRAJKOVIĆ⁴

Šibenik City Museum
ORCID 0000-0002-2303-6933

**MULTIDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH INTO THE TOPOGRAPHY
AND LANDSCAPE OF ROMAN RIDER (DANILO, ŠIBENIK,
CROATIA) – FIRST RESULTS OF THE EXCAVATIONS NEAR
ST. DANIEL’S CHURCH AND NEW DATA ON THE MEDIEVAL
CEMETERY AT ŠEMATORIJ SITE**

Interdyscyplinarne badania topografii i krajobrazu Rzymskiego Rider (Danilo, Šibenik, Chorwacja) – pierwsze wyniki wykopalisk w pobliżu kościoła św. Daniela i nowe dane na temat średniowiecznego cmentarzyska na stanowisku Šematorij

Abstract: The village of Danilo, located in the southern part of Šibenik-Knin County, is known for several archaeological sites where research is conducted since 1951. Among these, at the location

¹ Kamil Rabiega, PhD, assistant professor at the Institute of Archaeology, Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw. His research interests include settlement and trade in late antiquity and early Middle Ages, historical architecture and modern methods of documentation and presentation of archaeological sites. E-mail: k.rabiega@uksw.edu.pl.

² Ana Konestra, PhD, research associate at the Institute of Archaeology in Zagreb, Croatia. Her main research interests are Roman and late antique archaeology of the eastern Adriatic and pottery studies. E-mail: ana.konestra@gmail.com.

³ Željko Krnčević, MSc, Former director of the Šibenik City Museum and curator of Medieval archaeology collection. His research interests are Medieval archaeology, time of arrival of Croats, time of Principality and Kingdom of Croatia. E-mail: zkrncevic@gmail.com.

⁴ Toni Brajković, Director of the Šibenik City Museum and curator of Roman archaeology collection. His research interests are Roman epigraphy, Roman numismatics, mythology, eastern Adriatic trade connections in the Roman period. E-mail: toni.brajkovic@gmail.com.

Šematorij/Stari Šematorij the remains of a large Roman building (villa?) and *thermae* dating back to the 1st or early 2nd century were discovered. The ancient roots of the village are evidenced by inscriptions mentioning the Roman city of Rider (*Municipium Riditarum*), founded in the second half of the 1st century. Near the 18th-century church of St. Daniel, archaeologists have been finding numerous architectural elements and decorations from a monumental Roman building for years, but the precise location of it were unknown until recently. The conducted geophysical research, analysis of LiDAR data and archaeological excavations suggest that the area currently occupied by the church and the extensive cemetery might conceals the remains of the ancient center of the Roman town of Rider. During archaeological excavations in 2023, 12 graves were discovered.

Keywords: Danilo, Municipium Riditarum, Šematorij, cemetery, jewellery

Abstrakt: Wieś Danilo, położona w południowej części żupanii szybenicko-knińskiej, znana jest z kilku stanowisk archeologicznych, na których badania prowadzone są od 1951 roku. Wśród nich, w lokalizacji Šematorij/Stari Šematorij odkryto pozostałości dużej rzymskiej budowli (willi?) i term datowanych na I lub początek II wieku. O starożytnych korzeniach wioski świadczą inskrypcje wspominające rzymskie miasto Rider (*Municipium Riditarum*), założone w drugiej połowie I wieku. W pobliżu XVIII-wiecznego kościoła św. Daniela archeolodzy od lat znajdują liczne elementy architektoniczne i dekoracje z monumentalnej rzymskiej budowli, jednak jej dokładna lokalizacja do niedawna była nieznana. Przeprowadzone badania geofizyczne, analiza danych LiDAR i wykopaliska archeologiczne wskazują, że obszar zajmowany obecnie przez kościół i rozległy cmentarz może kryć pozostałości starożytnego centrum rzymskiego miasta Rider. Podczas wykopalisk archeologicznych w 2023 roku odkryto 12 grobów.

Słowa kluczowe: Danilo, Municipium Riditarum, Šematorij, cmentarz, biżuteria

Introduction

The settlement of Danilo (Gornje) is located in the eastern part of Danilsko Polje, in the Šibenik-Rogoznica coastal microregion, in the hinterland of Šibenik, to which it administratively belongs today.⁵ The field itself narrows in this place and is limited by limestone ridges: Podi in the north, on which is located the site of Danilo Gradina, and slightly lower southern elevations Crno brdo, Provo and Kosa, between which stretches the canyon of the Dabar stream. Tectonic-wise, the ridges form anticlines, between which there is a syncline, i.e., a field covered with younger sediments. The reefs are composed of Upper Cretaceous limestones, in some places dolomites and dolomitic limestones are clearly visible, while only in some places do Cenomanian and Turonian limestones break through. From the Upper Cretaceous sediments in the top zones of the ridge, transgressive freshwater brackish Kozin limestones and foraminiferal limestones follow.⁶ In the valley itself, there is the youngest series of geological deposits, forming a complex of limestones and marls with glauconites and flysch marls of the middle Eocene, covering mainly Quaternary alluvial

⁵ D. Magaš, A. Blaće, *Geomorfološka obilježja Danilskog polja kod Šibenika kao osnova historijsko-geografskog razvitka*, "Geoadria", 2010, vol. 15(1), pp. 6-7.

⁶ Ibidem, p. 9.

deposits.⁷ In the field itself, there are several ponds and wells, while the aforementioned stream is mostly dry today.⁸

As a result of cooperation between Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw, the Institute of Archaeology in Zagreb and the Šibenik City Museum, the project “Multidisciplinary research into the topography and landscape of Roman *Rider*” was initiated in 2019 to develop integrated multidisciplinary research in the area of Danilo and Gradina, with the aim of defining landscape features, determining the area of ancient architecture and the relationship of the hilltop settlement with the later Roman municipium and the changes that occurred in the settlement until the Middle Ages.⁹ In 2019, 2021 and 2022, geophysical measurements were carried out in a number of locations in the immediate vicinity of the Šematorij/Stari Šematorij site. In 2020, the wider area of Danilo was surveyed using LiDAR and orthophotomaps were produced. The LiDAR data was analyzed using various methods, resulting in the creation of a digital terrain model. Parallel to field research, systematic digitalization of available documentation is being carried out (ARHINDOKS – Institute of Archaeology, Archive of the Šibenik Municipal Museum)¹⁰, alongside the processing of movable finds from previous research.

In 2023, the fourth archaeological campaign was carried out. This included fieldwork across a wider area of the site, geophysical measurements using a ground-penetrating radar at the Veruše site at Danilo, and test excavations at the Šematorij site, i.e., in the cemetery in the immediate vicinity of the Church of St. Daniel.¹¹ The aim of the 2023 campaign was to continue the geophysical measurements that had been initiated and to verify the results of earlier measurements in the cemetery. In the vicinity of the 18th-century church, numerous architectural elements and relief decorations from a previously unidentified monumental Roman building were discovered on several instances.

History of research

The sites in the Danilo area have been known in archaeological literature since the mid-20th century. Thanks to the cooperation between the later Institute of Archaeology and the Šibenik City Museum, archaeological efforts intensified, especially at the Šematorij/Stari Šematorij site. Shortly thereafter, research began at the nearby Gradina site and at

⁷ Ibidem, p. 10.

⁸ Ibidem, p. 7, 12.

⁹ A. Konestra, F. Welc, T. Brajković, G. Lipovac Vrkljan, P. Androić Gračanin, *Multidisciplinarna istraživanja topografije i krajolika antičkoga Ridera (Danilo, Šibenik) – Pilot kampanja 2019. godine*, “Annales Instituti Archeologici”, 2020, vol. 16, pp. 295–297.

¹⁰ cf. M. Buzov, *La documentazione archeologica degli scavi a Danilo conservata presso l'Istituto di archeologia di Zagabria – le ricerche di Dujе Rendić-Miočević, già membro dell'Accademia croata di scienze, lettere, arti*, in: *Illyrica Antiqua II. In honorem Dujе Rendić Miočević (Proceedings of the international conference, Šibenik 12th–15th September 2013)*, ed. D. Demicheli, Zagreb 2017, pp. 135–155.

¹¹ The research was directed by A. Konestra (Institute of Archaeology in Zagreb), T. Brajković (Šibenik City Museum) and F. Welc (Institute of Archaeology, Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw), with the participation of Ž. Krnčević (Šibenik City Museum), K. Rabiega (Institute of Archaeology, Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw), A. Orłowska (Provincial Heritage Monuments Protection Office in Warsaw) and students and doctoral students from Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw.

several other sites within the valley.¹² Initial excavations yielded significant finds, including hundreds of Roman inscriptions, several of which mention *Municipium Riditarum*, a city founded in the early Roman period, likely located in the Danilo area, within the territory of the local Iron Age community of the Riditi. The considerable corpus of epigraphic material was undoubtedly the most important outcome of the research and elevated Danilo's status not only in the context of local Roman archaeology but also in a broader scholarly discourse. Inscriptions from Danilo, featuring local Dalmatae names, thus entered the epigraphic record thanks to the compilation of the *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* in the late 19th century, through the works of D. Rendić-Miočević, and by more recent studies.¹³

Archaeological research conducted over several decades at several sites in Danilsko Polje, but foremost at the Stari Šematorij site has uncovered the remains of several Roman structures and many grave contexts from different periods. However, although the broad phases of development of the site are relatively well defined, at least at the Šematorij / Stari Šematorij site, which clearly separates several phases of use and transformation of this space, the nature of several of these complexes and the overall layout of the settlement are not fully defined.¹⁴ The graves dug into the ruined Roman structures can be roughly dated to late antiquity (32 graves) and the entire medieval period (371 grave).¹⁵ It is also important to note that, at least according to currently available data, graves were exclusively found above the Roman thermal complex and within the bounds of the modern cemetery, while the adjacent building (so-called villa) does not appear to have not been reused as a burial site. The graves excavated at Stari Šematorij have not yet been published in full.

Further medieval cemeteries – though with significantly fewer graves – have been uncovered at the sites Luguše and Eraci.¹⁶ Excavations, previously initiated in other parts of Danilsko Polje and in the wider area surrounding Šematorij (e.g., Veruše, Katuni)¹⁷ have been continued by the Šibenik City Museum (I. Pedišić, Z. Krnčević, T. Brajković). Smaller

¹² T. Brajković, Ž. Krnčević, E. Podrug, *Historijat arheoloških istraživanja u Danilu*, in: *Illyrica Antiqua II. In honorem Duje Rendić Miočević (Proceedings of the international conference, Šibenik 12th-15th September 2013)*, ed. D. Demicheli, Zagreb 2017, pp. 121-133. In this contribution we will not be dealing with the Neolithic heritage of Danilo, which became eponym of a middle Neolithic culture identified on the eastern Adriatic.

¹³ E.g., D. Rendić Miočević, *Iliri i antički svijet*, Split 1989, pp. 843-890; A. Domić Kunić, I. Radman-Livaja, *Urna uz Danila u kontekstu društvene alite municipija Ridera*, "Arheološki radovi i rasprave", 2009, vol. 16, pp. 67-106.

¹⁴ Different interpretations can be found in: M. Zeman, *Roman architectural complex at Stari Šematorij in Danilo (Rider) – the issue of function*, in: *Illyrica Antiqua II. In honorem Duje Rendić Miočević (Proceedings of the international conference, Šibenik 12th-15th September 2013)*, ed. D. Demicheli, Zagreb 2017, pp. 426-427, 439; A. Faber, *Urbane značajke u lokaciji i rasteru arhitekture antičkog Ridera (Danilo kod Šibenika)*, in: *Illyrica Antiqua II. In honorem Duje Rendić Miočević (Proceedings of the international conference, Šibenik 12th-15th September 2013)*, ed. D. Demicheli, Zagreb 2017, pp. 49-68. A. Domić Kunić, I. Radman-Livaja, *Urna uz Danila u kontekstu društvene alite municipija Ridera*, "Arheološki radovi i rasprave", 2009, vol. 16, pp. 67-106.

¹⁵ D. Jelovina, *Starohrvatske nekropole*, Split 1976, pp. 42-43. Ž. Krnčević, *Novi srednjovjekovni nalazi iz Šematorija na Danilu*, "Vjesnik za arheologiju i historiju dalmatinsku", 1994, vol. 86, pp. 275-286; I. Pedišić, *Sanacijsko-konzervatorski zahvati i najnoviji rezultati zaštitnih arheoloških istraživanja u Danilu*, "Opuscula archaeologica", 1999, vol. 23-24, pp. 521-527; T. Brajković, Ž. Krnčević, E. Podrug, *Arheološki vodič po Danilu*, Šibenik 2013; T. Brajković, *Lokalitet: Danilo (Redni broj: 258)*, "Hrvatski arheološki godišnjak", 2014, vol. 10, pp. 510-512; S. Krznar, Ž. Krnčević, K. Turkalj, *Luguše i Eraci – dva ranosrednjovjekovna groblja na rubu Danilskog polja*, "Annales Instituti Archeologici", 2024, vol. 20, pp. 194-217.

¹⁶ S. Krznar, Ž. Krnčević, K. Turkalj, op. cit.

¹⁷ D. Rendić Miočević, *Epigraphica Riditina anecdota. Uz jedan davni nalaz kasnoantičkih grobova u Danilu Gornjem (Veruše-Katuni)*, "Arheološki radovi i rasprave", 1988, vol. 11, pp. 63-81.

architectural units have been identified, primarily characterized by production and utility installations (pools, presses), while some of them contained late antique and medieval graves. Portions of the architecture examined in the area of Stari Šematorij were restored in parallel and are now presented on-site.

The Church of St. Daniel is located in the northern part of the Danilo settlement burial ground. The currently functioning cemetery extends east of the Stari Šematorij archaeological site. The current church dates back to the 18th century and has undergone several renovations. It is possible that it stands on the site of an earlier church. In the 1980s, the church underwent a major renovation, during which the nave and facade were rebuilt, the roof was replaced, and a new reinforced concrete floor was laid. At that time, excavations were carried out inside the church, but no detailed archaeological data has been preserved, apart from a floor plan and a series of fieldwork photographs.

Based on the available photographic documentation and the horizontal plan, it can be established that at least one stone-built grave was uncovered during the works, along with the remains of earlier architecture and sizable stone blocks (Fig. 1). Several items were also found in the church walls (possibly during the same period of excavations), including a fragment of a Roman stele.

It is known that in the 20th century, research was carried out in parts of the new cemetery, although at a considerable distance from the site of the prospection in 2023. In 1981, excavations also took place in the central part of the old cemetery area (in front of the Bedrica family tomb/mausoleum). During the construction of the tomb northeast of the Church of St. Daniel in 1989, no archaeological research was conducted, however, on that occasion, a large stone block with relief decoration – most likely the cornice of a monumental building – was discovered. Again, during the constructions of modern tombs, several walls and a few graves were uncovered and examined during rescue excavations in 2022.¹⁸

Results of the non-invasive survey

In 2022, geophysical measurements were conducted in the Šematorij area of Danilo using ground-penetrating radar (GPR) and magnetic methods. During the research, the GPR survey was carried out and measurements were taken along profiles spaced at intervals of 0.5 or 0.25 m. All survey polygons were documented using a GNSS RTK device and aerial orthophotomaps. As a result, waveforms or reflection profiles were obtained, which served as the basis for further archaeological interpretation. The processed results were also rendered as 3D models of detected anomalies. One notable find was the outline of an ancient structure featuring massive walls and a rectangular layout (approx. 20 × 10 m), with foundations located beneath and adjacent to the Church of St. Daniel.

Results of trench excavations in 2023

In order to verify the results of geophysical measurements, an archaeological trial excavation was carried out in 2023 in the vicinity of the church. The trench was marked out in the north-south direction along the south-western corner of the church façade, measuring 7 m in length and 2 m in width (Fig. 2). As a result of the excavations, 144 stratigraphic

¹⁸ The excavations were led by T. Brajković (Šibenik town Museum), and results are still being processed.

units were identified, 12 graves with stone architecture (Fig. 3–4) were uncovered, and 40 small finds were inventoried.

In the northern part of the trench, after the removal of the topsoil and humus, large stone slabs were uncovered. The slabs formed the cover of an Early Modern tomb (G1), which was left unexcavated. In the southern part of the trench, a large, elongated stone block (SJ 3), was soon discovered. It had been secondarily placed on a masonry wall (SJ 18), south of which another tomb (G2) was identified. The tomb extended only partially within the trench and was examined as far as its depth allowed. It is a masonry tomb constructed from square-cut stone blocks bonded with mortar and it has a trapezoidal shape. Moreover, square insets for beams were observed in the tomb walls. It contained several disturbed and *in situ* burials. The deceased were laid on their backs, oriented north-south, with heads to the north; the position of the arms could not be determined. Several finds were recovered from the tomb (pilgrimage medals, clasps, rosaries, beads, a silver button, earring, a cross, and a glass fragment), allowing it to be dated to the 17th or 18th century. Among these particularly notable is the cross-pendant, which can be dated to around the 18th century. It is a Latin cross with profiled edges and a vertical eyelet for suspension. The obverse depicts the crucified Christ, with an illegible inscription – presumably INRI – at the top of the patibulum, and a round projection resembling a skull or Golgotha at the bottom. The reverse is illegible, but based on parallels, it likely features a depiction of the Immaculate Virgin, standing on a crescent moon with her hands folded on her chest, accompanied by the inscription *Virgo Immaculata Vitam Praesta Puram* (Fig. 6.A)¹⁹.

Elsewhere in the trench, several soil layers and a complex stratigraphy of older burials were recorded. The grave G3 was identified south of G1, and grave G4 next to it to its east (Fig. 5.A–B). Both were masonry graves (stones bound with mortar), covered with stone slabs containing mostly dislocated bones. Also, both graves were cut in the northern part by the southern wall of G1, resulting in only partial preservation. In addition, grave G3 overlapped grave G5. In the infill of G3 fragments of tiles (imbrex?) and pottery were found. Moreover, two mosaic tesserae were discovered in G4.

Adjacent to the northern wall of SJ 18, a displaced stone block (SJ 12) was identified – likely the cover of a grave beneath which the wall SJ 28 was located. Between SJ 18 and SJ 28, displaced bones were found, identified as G10. The tomb was built with regular stone blocks laid in a dry-stone technique (or with a very small amount of poor lime mortar). It had a more regular, rectangular shape and was possibly covered with a large, worked slab (SJ 12). Displaced bones were recovered from the tomb, likely re-deposited. A glass fragment and several pottery and ceramic building materials sherds were also found within the grave. Next to G10, a small layer of ancient *tegulae* (likely the remnants of a once extensive collapse layer) SJ 61 was discovered, located on SJ 83. During the excavations, grave G11 was defined in the W profile, but it could not be fully explored. It consisted mostly of disarticulated bones and fragments of pottery.

¹⁹ A. Piteša, Katalog nalaza iz vremena seobe Naroda, srednjeg i novog vijeka u Arheološkome muzeju u Splitu, Split 2009, p. 228; A. Azinović Bebek, Novovjekovni nalazi u grobovima 17. i 18. stoljeća oko crkve sv. Nikole biskupa u Žumberku, "Vjesnik Arheološkog muzeja u Zagrebu", 2009, vol. 42, no. 1, p. 476; A. Azinović Bebek, Križevi u novovjekovnim grobovima župne crkve Sv. Marije Magdalene u Čazmi, "Prilozi Instituta za arheologiju u Zagrebu", 2009, vol. 26, p. 277, 281; D. Knez, Od zore do mraka. Križi iz zbirke Narodnega muzeja Slovenije, Ljubljana 2010, pp. 115–116.

G5, located beneath G3 and partially beneath G4, was constructed with dry-stone walls and covered with stone slabs. It functioned as an ossuary with many, mostly long bones, placed on the stone cover of G7. The grave was rectangular in shape. Within G5, a silver earring – more precisely, a temple ring with three, equally sized, round beads decorated with filigree – was discovered. It corresponds to type D according to N. Jakšić and No. 30 in V. Sokol's typology and can be dated to the (mid-)13th–14th century (Fig. 6.B).²⁰ A fragment of glass was also found in the grave infill.

To the south of G5, grave G6 was identified, also constructed using the dry-stone technique. The southern wall of the grave was formed by vertically arranged stone slabs or slates, while the northern wall was probably actually the southern wall of G7, composed of smaller stone blocks arranged in dry-stone technique. The grave was covered with two large stone slabs, with smaller stones filling the space between them. No footboard or headboard was visible. The bottom of the grave was formed by a large stone block (SJ 83). The shape of the grave was oval or possibly irregularly rectangular. A disturbed burial and a possible *in situ* skeleton of a child were explored. The bodies were laid on their backs, oriented east-west, with heads to the west, the position of the arms could not be determined – although hands may have been crossed on the pelvis. The grave contained 11 fragments of pottery (including 2 bottoms).

Beneath the last burial in G5, the stone slabs covering G7 were identified, forming the floor of G5. The walls of G7 were built using the dry-stone technique and covered with larger stone slabs or slates without any infill between them. The north and south walls were constructed from small, regular stone blocks, possibly reused. The footboard and headboard consisted of single, large blocks, with the headboard located inside the W profile. The grave was approximately rectangular in shape. The *in situ* bodies were laid on their backs, oriented east-west, with the heads to the west and hands crossed on the pelvis. A silver hoop earring with straight open ends was found, clearly associated with the burial. The infill contained fragments of metal, ancient glass, pottery (including one rim), one mosaic tessera and six fragments of pottery. The earring is of a simple type in use for several centuries, however the variety with straight ends can probably be dated from the mid-10th to the 12th century.²¹

In the central part of the trench, beneath G7, grave G8 was identified. It was built in a similar way, but with the use of *spolia*. The grave covering was preserved only in the lower (eastern) part and was made of stone slabs or slates. The walls are also constructed from vertically arranged stone slabs and larger stone blocks. The western wall of the tomb consisted of several larger stone blocks. The tomb was approximately rectangular in shape. A fragment of pottery was found in the infill of G8.

Several bones located beneath the footboard of G7 were identified and labeled as G9 (Fig. 5.C). These were disturbed bones, including a fractured skull, found in a small oval pit. A pottery fragment was also recovered there.

²⁰ Ž. Krnčević, op. cit., p. 283-284; V. Sokol, *Medieval Jewelry and Burial Assemblages in Croatia. A Study of Graves and Grave Goods, ca. 800 to ca. 1450*, Leiden 2016, pp. 222-223, 224; N. Jakšić, *Naušnice s tri jagode u Muzeju hrvatskih arheoloških spomenika u Splitu*, "Prilozi povijesti umjetnosti u Dalmaciji", 1983, vol. 23(1), pp. 68-69.

²¹ M. Petrinc, *Groblja od 8. do 11. stoljeća na području ranosrednjovjekovne hrvatske države*, Split 2009, pp. 119-120, 588, Tab. 308; V. Sokol, op. cit. p. 193; several examples in D. Jelovina, op. cit.

Below grave G6, a large stone block (SJ 83), was found, most likely *in situ*, interpreted as a monumental threshold. The slab is formed by three stone blocks and extends below the western profile of the trench. It measures approximately 95 cm in width, 50 cm in thickness and 2.20 meters in visible length as documented in the 2023 excavations. The threshold is characterized by distinct edge profiling and a square groove in the south-eastern corner.

At the level of the threshold, in its immediate vicinity on the south side, a compact layer of pinkish plaster was recorded. Considering that many mosaic tesserae were found above it, it can be assumed that this is a preparatory layer for the floor. Below grave G8, grave G12 was recorded. It was covered with slightly larger and more irregularly shaped stone slates, which were covered with yellowish clay at the seams. The walls are built of more regular, smaller stone blocks. The shape of the grave was irregular, narrowing towards the east and widest in the central part. Both the footboard and the headboard consisted of single, possibly worked, large stone blocks. G12 was dug into layers below the level of the threshold, possibly damaging it (Fig. 7). Probably due to the available space next to the ancient threshold, the grave assumed a trapezoidal shape. A partially *in situ* skeleton was found, oriented east-west with the head to the west; the position of the arms could not be determined. A fragment of glass was found in the infill.

Discussion

The graves discovered during the 2023 excavations are characterized by severe disturbances and secondary deposition of bones from older burials in the form of ossuaries. This is due to the long tradition of burial at the cemetery of the Church of St. Daniel, a tradition that continues to this day. As a result, most graves were damaged, and the overlapping of their structures often makes it difficult to define their shape or even to distinguish them precisely. Such intensive burial activity undoubtedly indicates the significant importance of this burial place for local communities, at least from late antiquity, through the Middle Ages and early Modern period. Today's cemetery at the Church of St. Daniel is probably just a portion of a larger burial ground that originally extended over the Roman thermal complex excavated at the Stari Šematorij site (Fig. 8). The architecture of the graves and the grave goods reveal consistent typology and chronology. Moreover, the current 18th-century Church of St. Daniel at Danilo was likely built over a smaller, earlier building.²² Based on the fieldwork and the data collected thus far, it can be concluded that the remains of a monumental ancient building lie beneath it.

The graves excavated at Danilo-sv. Danijel in 2023 with *in situ* preserved skeletons indicate that the deceased were laid on their backs, mostly oriented east-west, with their heads to the west. In one case (G2) the skeletons were oriented north-south, with their heads to the north.

Extensive research on cemeteries within the territory of medieval Croatia has yielded several studies on burial practices, grave architecture, and grave goods. Within these, various typologies of graves have been proposed. Some scholars, foremost D. Jelovina²³ and

²² T. Brajković, Ž. Krnčević, E. Podrug, *Arheološki vodič po Danilu...*, op. cit., p. 117.

²³ D. Jelovina, op. cit., p. 148.

J. Belošević²⁴ consider these traditions as continuations of late antique practices. However, considering broader burial customs, both pre-Christian (so-called “pagan”) and Christian phases have been identified. M. Petrinc notes that within early medieval cemeteries (8th–11th century) characterized by Christian burial practices, graves built with drystone walls or graves lined with vertically arranged stone slabs predominate.²⁵ Within these main types D. Jelovina further distinguished several sub-types, categorizing them by shape.²⁶ Similarly, V. Sokol distinguished four distinct groups of medieval funerary architecture based on material culture phases.²⁷

Based on the analysis of the grave architecture, grave goods and stratigraphy of the layers, the graves can be divided into three main phases: I. early Middle Ages (G6), II. late Middle

Ages (G5, G7, G8, G11?, G12) and III. early Modern Age (G1, G2, G3, G4, G9, G10). In phase I, the grave was enclosed with a dry-stone construction, with walls formed of vertically arranged stone slabs or slates. It was covered by two large stone slabs, with the space between them was filled with smaller stones. The shape was oval or possibly irregularly rectangular. This type of grave corresponds to Jelovina 3a/Sokol C² types.²⁸ Phase II is characterized by a structure built with dry-stone walls. The graves are covered with larger stone slabs or slates, either without infill or with yellow clay between them. The north and south walls are built with regular smaller or larger stone blocks. The footboard and headboard consist of one large block each. The graves were rectangular or trapezoidal in shape. These graves correspond to the typology of Jelovina 4b, 5/Sokol D-E.²⁹ Phase III includes masonry graves built of regularly shaped blocks connected with mortar, rectangular or trapezoidal in shape (in the case of some graves, the exact shape cannot be determined due to significant damage). These graves built with the use of mortar belong to type 6 by D. Jelovina.³⁰ Oval and rectangular graves constructed with both dry-stone walls or stone slabs (and covered with slabs) were also recorded during the excavations carried out in 1981 in the cemetery at St. Daniel.³¹

The grave typologies defined at Danilo-St. Daniel occur, as mentioned, more broadly in Dalmatia, but perhaps the best analogies should be found within the Danilo – Donje Polje microregion. Notably, two more early medieval cemeteries have been identified on the northern slopes of Danilo field: Danilo-Luguše and Danilo-Eraci. The cemetery in Luguše, accidentally discovered in 1951, is located about 1,5 km northwest of the Danilo-Šematorij. A total of four graves were discovered there, oriented north-south and constructed of dry-stone walls, with regular stones and irregular stone slabs serving as covers. The grave finds included three bronze rings and two earrings with single beads, dated to the 9th–10th centuries.³²

²⁴ J. Belošević, *Materijalna kultura Hrvata od VII. do IX. Stoljeća*, Zagreb 1980, pp. 133-134.

²⁵ M. Petrinc, *Grobља od 8. do 11. stoljeća na području ranosrednjovjekovne hrvatske države*, Split 2009, p. 111; M. Petrinc, *Gräberfelder aus dem 8. bis 11. Jahrhundert im Gebiet des frühmittelalterlichen kroatischen Staates*, Split 2009, p. 126.

²⁶ D. Jelovina, op. cit., p. 72-72.

²⁷ V. Sokol, *Medieval Jewelry and Burial Assemblages in Croatia...*, op. cit., p. 114-116.

²⁸ D. Jelovina, op. cit., pp. 72-72. V. Sokol, *Medieval Jewelry and Burial Assemblages in Croatia...*, op. cit., p. 114-116.

²⁹ Ibidem.

³⁰ D. Jelovina, op. cit., p. 71.

³¹ Ž. Krnčević, op. cit., p. 280.

³² S. Krznar, Ž. Krnčević, K. Turkalj, op. cit., pp. 196, 201, 204-205.

The Danilo-Eraci site is located north-east of Šematorij. This site was excavated in 1971, and 32 early medieval graves were discovered there. All of them featured stone architecture consisting of a single row of irregularly cut stones, together with vertically arranged, irregular, unworked slabs. Most of the graves are rectangular in shape, though oval graves were also found. Based on the shape of the burial chamber, the graves were classified as types 3c (oval) and 4c (rectangular) according to D. Jelovina.³³ Considering the relatively small size, short period of use, and different forms of graves, it is concluded that these forms were used concurrently.³⁴ The vast majority of graves are oriented west-east, with a shift to the north. Only four graves are oriented north-south. Finds included simple hoops, earrings with single beads, and rings. The dating of the cemetery to the 10th century is confirmed by 14C analysis carried out on a human skull sample found in 2022.³⁵

The cemeteries in Danilo-Luguše and Danilo-Eraci belong to a group of early medieval cemeteries that were founded and functioned without a church building. The cemetery at Eraci was probably used by a small community for several decades, most likely in the first half of the 10th century. In addition to providing some analogies to the graves discussed here, these sites certainly served contemporary communities inhabiting the area of Danilo. After the cessation of burials at the sites of Luguše and Eraci, all the communities living in Danilsko Polje buried their dead at the site of Danilo-Šematorij, around a church building³⁶. The graves so far discovered in Danilo-sv. Danijel exhibit similar grave architecture, but based on the sparse grave goods, it seems that most of them have a later chronology, confirming the longer continuity of this cemetery.

Other sites located at a short distance from Danilo provide relevant analogies to the burials at St. Daniel's. These include the Donje Polje-sv. Lovre site and the Vrpolje-Kosa site. At sv. Lovre 136 graves were discovered around the church, dated – based on finds – to the period from the 9th to the 15th century.³⁷ Several early modern period graves were also recorded, along with two ceramic urns dated to the end of the 7th–early 8th century. The discovered graves were oriented mainly east-west, though northeast-southwest, north-south orientations also occurred, often determined by natural depressions in the bedrock. The shape of the graves was mostly oval, though rectangular examples were also found. They were constructed with stone and irregular stone slabs, without binder. As in the case of Danilo-sv. Danijel, late medieval ossuaries were also discovered. A particularly important analogy to the site of Danilo-sv. Danijel is the find from grave 22 – a silver earring with three beads, dated to the 12th–15th century³⁸.

At Vrpolje-Kosa, excavations conducted between 1965 and 1970, uncovered 123 graves dated to the 9th–10th centuries.³⁹ These graves were mainly oriented east-west, typically

³³ D. Jelovina, op. cit., p. 71.

³⁴ S. Krznar, Ž. Krnčević, K. Turkalj, op. cit., p. 211.

³⁵ Ibidem, pp. 196, 200, 208.

³⁶ Ibidem, p. 212.

³⁷ Ž. Krnčević, *Srednjovjekovna arheološka nalazišta na šibenskom području*, in: *Područje Šibenske Županije od pretpovijesti do srednjega vijeka*, ed. B. Čečuk, Zagreb 1998, pp. 208-211.

³⁸ Ibidem, p. 210.

³⁹ Ibidem, p. 211-212.

containing a single individual, rarely more. In the cemetery, in some graves the use of clay as a binder was observed – similarly to findings at Danilo-sv. Danijel.⁴⁰

Conclusions

Research, especially excavations, conducted in 2023 near the church of St. Daniel in Danilo yielded extremely significant results regarding burial stratigraphy, as well as the presence of an earlier, Roman phase associated with a monumental structure featuring a stone threshold. Several phases can be clearly distinguished in the graves, as reflected in different architectural solutions and orientation of the graves. These phases can be securely dated to the early and late Middle Ages and the early Modern period. This chronological sequence is corroborated by the extension of the cemetery, which was investigated further west at the Stari Šematorij site and in the area of the modern cemetery, as already shown in research conducted in 1981.⁴¹ Most of the graves contained multiple burials, sometimes *in situ*, and sometimes earlier burials were disturbed and displaced. Therefore, it is premature to estimate the minimum number of individuals before anthropological analysis is completed. The grave architecture, shape, and the rare finds associated with the burials all have parallels within this microregion, and beyond, but perhaps the best analogy is that of the cemetery at sv. Lovre in Donje Polje. In fact, in both cases long continuity of burial and the presence of a church building have been ascertained.

The earlier, Roman stratigraphy within the excavated trench has been largely disturbed by later burials, and only a few structures have been found *in situ*. Apart from ancient *tegulae*, a completely displaced fragment of a probable Rhodian amphora and several glass fragments, no finds were recovered that would allow for a more precise dating of the structures. However, the discovery of a monumental threshold and other larger blocks that were reused for the construction of tombs, as well as a number of other *spolia* found during these excavations, and also earlier in the area around the church of St. Daniel, strongly suggest that a monumental Roman structure was located here. Its more precise definition, as well as the potential discovery of earlier graves, can be expected with the continuation of excavations in this trench.

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⁴⁰ Ibidem.

⁴¹ Ž. Krnčević, op. cit.

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Fig. 1. Interior of the church during the renovation in 1983. Photo: Nj. Lapov, Conservation Department in Šibenik, inv. no. 2867



Fig. 2. Danilo-sv. Danijel 2023. Trench No. 1 in the cemetery at the church of St. Daniel at Danilo. Photo: K. Rabiega

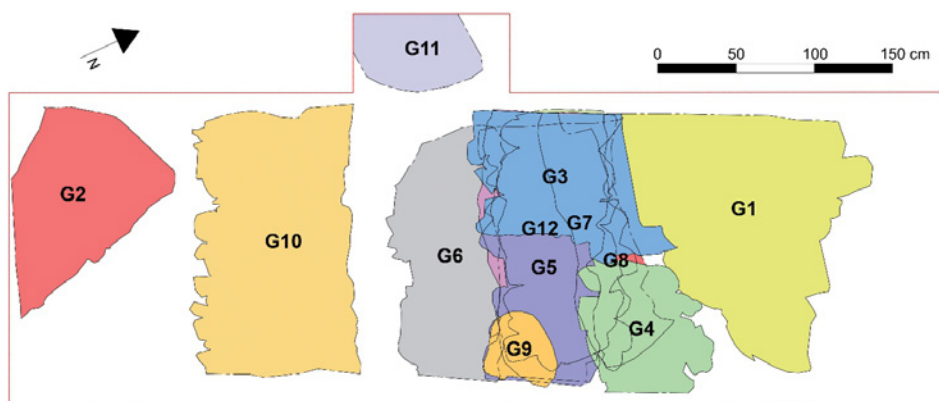


Fig. 3. Danilo-sv. Danijel 2023. Trench No. 1. Plan of discovered graves. Drawing: K. Rabiega

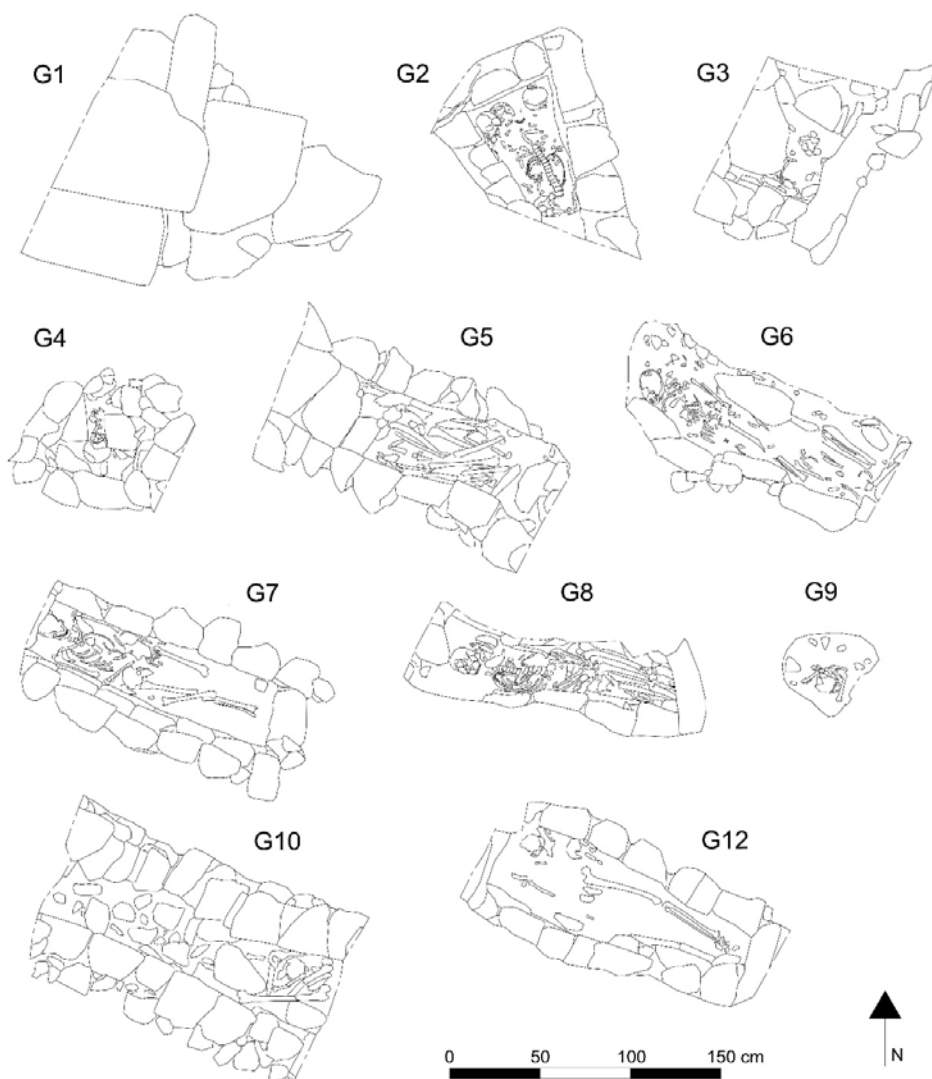


Fig. 4. Danilo-sv. Danijel 2023. Trench No. 1. Graves G1-10, G12. Drawing: K. Rabięga

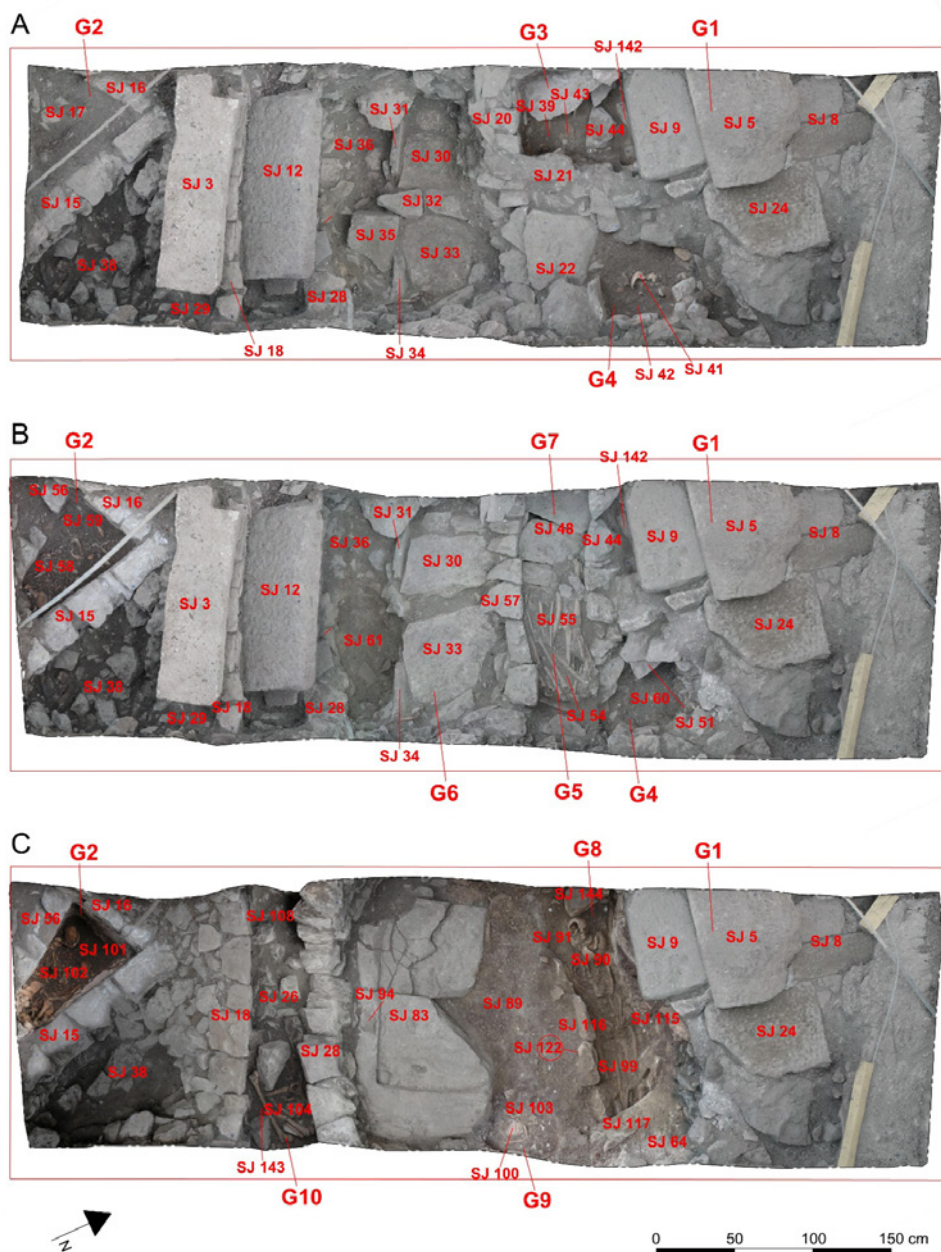


Fig. 5. Danilo-sv. Danijel 2023. Trench No. 1. A – Plan with graves G1, G2, G3 and G4; B – Plan with graves G1, G2, G4, G5, G6 and G7; C – Plan with graves G1, G2, G8, G9 and G10. Photo and drawing: K. Rabiega



Fig. 6. Danilo-sv. Danijel 2023. Trench No. 1. Selection of small finds from graves: A – Cross-pendant (G2, SJ 87); B – Silver earring with three, equally sized, round beads decorated with filigree (G5, SJ 54). Photo: K. Rabięga



Fig. 7. Danilo-sv. Danijel 2023. Trench No. 1. Stone threshold (SJ 83) and a medieval grave (G12) dug next to it. Photo: K. Rabięga

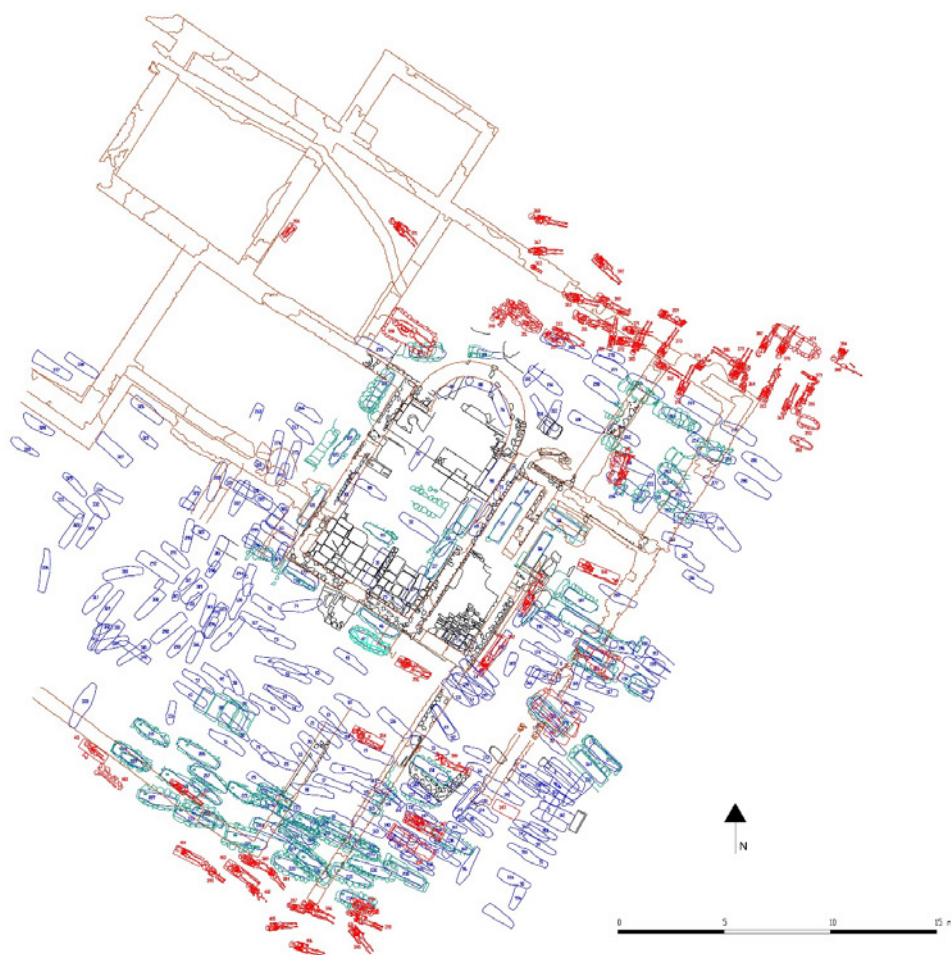


Fig. 8. Plan of Roman architecture and graves at Danilo-Šematorij/Stari Šematorij 1951–1970 (based on plans inv. no. IARH-DANILO-29, 1961; IARH-DANILO-27, 1964; IARH-DANILO-57, 1965; IARH-DANILO-31, 1966; IARH-DANILO-32, 1966; IARH-DANILO-23, 1967; IARH-DANILO-28, 1968; IARH-DANILO-1, 1970). Digitalisation: K. Turkalj, K. Rabiega

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