

# Belt types, identity and social status in late antiquity: the belt set in *Emona's* grave 18

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Over the past decade, a number of rescue excavations along Slovenska street in Ljubljana have contributed to knowledge of the funerary landscape of *Colonia Iulia Emona's* N cemetery (fig. 1), one of its three burial grounds.<sup>1</sup> Slovenska street roughly follows the line of the Roman *cardo maximus*, heading north towards *Celeia*. In front of the city gates, the ancient road was lined by grave monuments on both sides, a practice which continued throughout the life of the colony for almost 400 years.<sup>2</sup> Since the first discovery of a burial in 1635, over 3,000 burials have been unearthed in *Emona's* N cemetery.<sup>3</sup>

The grave under discussion here lies in the central part of the N cemetery, c.60 m west of the Roman road.<sup>4</sup> Excavations (50 m<sup>2</sup>) were prompted in 2011 by the construction of underground waste-containers. They revealed a further 20 inhumation graves, including some with associated grave goods and coins dating to after A.D. 285, with most dating to the second half of the 4th c.<sup>5</sup> Among them, grave 18 stands out for the quantity and significance of its grave goods (fig. 2). The grave pit (1.90 x 0.50 m, 0.25 m deep) was sub-rectangular, with vertical sides and a flat base. Pebbles were arranged to form an irregularly-shaped 'wreath' around the lower part of the skeleton. The poorly-preserved skeletal remains, oriented SSW–NNE, had been cut by a modern water pipe, leaving only the skull and fractured leg bones at either end.

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- 1 L. Plesničar Gec, *Urbanizem Emone* (Ljubljana 1999) 92-96; A. Gaspari, *Emona. Prazgodovinska in rimska. Vodnik skozi arheološko preteklost predhodnice Ljubljane* (Ljubljana 2014) 205-10.
  - 2 Late Augustan graves are the earliest Roman graves in the N cemetery: I. Bekljanov Zidanšek, "Grob 1007 s Kongresnega trga v Ljubljani," in I. Lazar and B. Županek (edd.), *Emona med Avoilejo in Panonijo* (Koper 2012) 13-26; Gaspari (supra n.1) 124-26; A. Gaspari et al., "Augustan military graves from the area of Kongresni trg in Ljubljana," in J. Istenič, B. Laharnar and J. Horvat (edd.), *Evidence of the Roman army in Slovenia* (Katalogi in monografije 41; Ljubljana 2015) 125-69. The latest graves are dated to the late 4th-early 5th c.: L. Plesničar Gec and I. Sivec, "Emona at the beginning of Great Migration period," in D. Dimitrijević, J. Kovačević and Z. Vinski (edd.), *Problemi seobe naroda u Karpatskoj kotlini* (Novi Sad 1978) 60.
  - 3 The excavations conducted prior to 1968 are published in two separate monographs, one featuring archaeological research between 1635 and 1960 (S. Petru, *Emonske nekropole [odkrite med letoma 1635-1960]* [Katalogi in monografije 7; Ljubljana 1972]), the other that from 1961 to 1968 (L. Plesničar Gec, *Severno emonsko grobišče* [Katalogi in monografije 8; Ljubljana 1972]). Subsequent excavations of this cemetery have not yet been fully published. A good overview is given by B. Županek, "Landscapes of the deceased: the structure and dynamics of the northern Emona necropolis," in M. Janežič, B. Nadbath and T. Mulh (edd.), *Proceedings of the 1st International Archaeological Conference: new discoveries between the Alps and the Black Sea. Results from the Roman sites between 2005 and 2015. In memoriam Iva Mikl Curk* (forthcoming 2018).
  - 4 The closest known burials are on Puharjeva street, where construction work in 1952 revealed three cremation burials, two of them containing a Tiberian coin, and two inhumation graves: F. Leben, "Najdba antičnih grobov v Ljubljani," *Arh. vest.* 3 (1952) 310-14; J. Šašel, "Puharjeva 3," *Var. spom.* 8 (1962) 293; Petru (supra n.3) 116-17.
  - 5 Š. Tomažinčič, *Poročilo o arheoloških izkopavanjih na območju izgradnje podzemnih zbiralnic na Štefanovi 4 v Ljubljani* (unpublished, arhiv ZVKDS, OE Ljubljana 2011); ead., "Ljubljana," *Var. spom. Poročila* 48 (2013) 116-18; ead., *Končno strokovno poročilo o arheoloških izkopavanjih na območju izgradnje podzemnih zbiralnic na Štefanovi 4 v Ljubljani* (unpublished, arhiv ZVKDS, OE Ljubljana 2014).