

ARCHAEOLOGIA BULGARICA



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On the cover: a golden ring found in a 3rd century sarcophagus at *Viminacium*; see the paper of Danković / Mikić in this issue; photo by Goran Stojić.

New Data on the Earliest Metallurgy of Gold: Gold Artifacts from Tell Yunatsite, Southern Bulgaria

ARCHAEOLOGIA BULGARICA
XXIX, 1 (2025), 1-23

Kamen BOYADZHIEV / Yavor BOYADZHIEV /
Stoyan GEORGIEV

Abstract: The article presents five gold artifacts from the Chalcolithic (fifth millennium BC) layer at tell Yunatsite, southern Bulgaria. The analyses focus on the technology of manufacture, chronology and provenance of the gold. The stratigraphic position, pottery assemblage and ^{14}C dates attest that the earliest one precedes the famous Varna I “golden” cemetery and is among the few earliest known gold artifacts in the world. The study of the main chemical composition and trace elements (using LA-ICPMS) of the objects and placer gold from the nearby Topolnitsa and Luda Yana rivers suggest the use of local sources, probably placer gold, and the functioning of a local goldsmith center in the western part of the Upper Thracian Plain, possibly even in or around tell Yunatsite.

Key words: gold metallurgy, Chalcolithic, gold provenance.

INTRODUCTION

The fifth millennium BC (Chalcolithic, according to the Bulgarian periodization) in the Balkans is marked by a significant technological innovation: the appearance and development of the earliest metallurgy in Europe, based on copper. Its origins have been a subject of long-lasting discussions, but recent research provides more data on independent local invention based on rich copper sources in present-day Serbia and Bulgaria and advanced pyrotechnology attested in pottery production (for a detailed overview see Radivojević / Roberts 2021). The development of copper metallurgy was related not only to advances in technology but also to social transformations, control over ore sources, trade networks, etc.

But it was not just copper. A few centuries after the appearance of metallurgy in the Balkans, cast gold artifacts appeared here for the first time in human history. Since it was found in 1972, the famous Varna “golden” cemetery has attracted the interest of researchers. Constantly increasing analyses of the gold artifacts from the cemetery and new finds from other fifth millennium BC sites in the region extend our knowledge concerning the technological mastery and social organization of Chalcolithic society (Hansen 2013; Leusch et al. 2015; Radivojević / Roberts 2021; Todorova / Vaisov 2001). Recent finds from the tell-site at Yunatsite provide new information on the earliest exploitation sources and metallurgy of gold.

THE SITE

Tell Yunatsite is situated in southern Bulgaria, in the western part of the Upper Thracian Plain. The diameter of the tell is 110 x 100 m and its height is 12 m above the modern-day surface (**figs. 1, 2**). The tell developed on a low terrace on the ancient bank of the Topolnitsa River near to its confluence with the Maritsa River. The site was located at an excellently situated strategic point and communication center. The Upper Thracian Plain is connected by suitable routes to the west to the

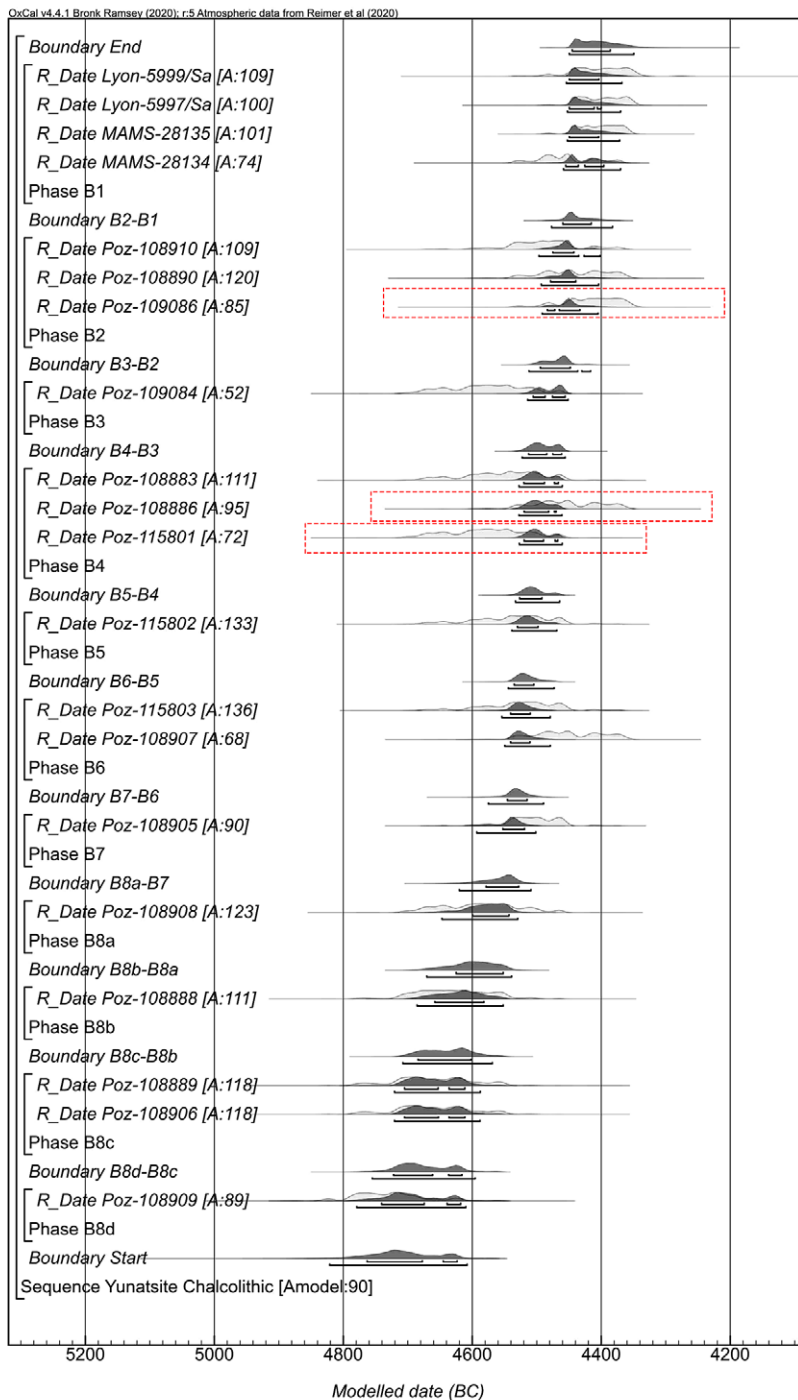


Fig. 10. Series of ^{14}C dates from the Chalcolithic levels at tell Yunatsite (after Boyadzhiev et al. 2021, 15, fig. 12). Levels BII-B and BIV are marked in red (authors: L. Brandtstätter, Y. Boyadzhiev)

both Karanovo VI culture to the east and Krivodol culture to the west (Todorova / Matsanova 2000, 341; Petrova 2004, 427).

Absolute chronology. A local anomaly in the concentration of ^{14}C in the atmosphere that affects the dates from the Middle and Late Chalcolithic in Bulgaria has been attested (Boyadzhiev 1995, 168-171; 2015, 384-90; 2016). The Early Chalcolithic dates fit well with the calibration curve, but 'drop back' towards the end of the period, from 5700-5600 BP to 5990-5890 BP. As a result, the date series for the Early and Late Chalcolithic largely overlap. The anomaly is well visible in the tell-sites, but is attested in the cemeteries with the earliest gold artefacts, as well. The ^{14}C dates from the end of the Early Chalcolithic

L'art rupestre d'Alta, Norvège. Le paysage comme architecture symbolique

ARCHAEOLOGIA BULGARICA
XXIX, 1 (2025), 25-47

David DELNOÏ

Résumé : Cet article constitue le premier jalon d'une étude consacrée à l'art rupestre d'Alta, Norvège. Nous nous consacrons ici à l'étude du paysage et à sa symbolique. Notre objectif est d'analyser le panorama comme espace de sens. Les caractéristiques géographiques seront envisagées comme des formes, à l'instar des images gravées. Dans cet article, nous décrirons les différents paysages au sein desquels prennent place les gravures d'Alta. Ceci nous permettra de mettre en évidence le choix d'un panorama type, où se rassemblent des géotopes particuliers. Par le biais de l'ethnographie et de la symbolique, nous montrerons les valeurs d'ordre spirituel attachées à ces différents éléments. Les comparaisons seront principalement réalisées avec des populations issues d'Eurasie. Enfin, nous aborderons le paysage sous l'angle des théories Jungiennes. Nous nous aventurons dans cette voie pour deux motifs principaux. Tout d'abord, nous considérons la constitution du corps social comme un dérivé de celle de la personne. Ensuite, dans les productions culturelles de ce corps social, nous posons l'expression de réalités dérivées de celles présentes à la Conscience. En d'autre terme la mécanique propre à l'individu se répète, sous une forme à peine voilée, au travers de la mécanique sociale. Ce dernier passage nous permettra de confirmer l'atmosphère du lieu comme hautement mythologique. Au terme de ce premier article, nous aurons démontré l'espace des gravures comme un lieu choisi, et dont le volume symbolique est confirmé par l'adéquation entre paysage et construction psychique.

Mots-clés : Alta, Norvège ; Archéologie du paysage ; Symbolique ; Contexte de l'art rupestre ; Ontologie.

INTRODUCTION

Nous envisageons ici le contexte géographique des gravures d'Alta. Ces dernières occupent des lieux précis dont l'étude et l'analyse permettent de mettre en évidence les similitudes et différences. Les éléments du paysage seront envisagés selon trois axes. Le premier est d'ordre purement pragmatique, et se focalise sur le champ de vision offert par tel emplacement. Le deuxième angle porte sur la valeur des éléments du paysage, considérés comme symboles, parmi les populations traditionnelles. Enfin, nous abordons ces mêmes éléments selon une perspective davantage psychologique, afin de mettre en évidence les universaux structurels de la psyché humaine. Notre objectif est ici de mettre en lumière le cadre au sein duquel prend place l'art rupestre d'Alta, en préambule à une analyse plus particulière des motifs gravés.

Notre approche s'inscrit dans une perspective structuraliste, fondée sur trois piliers principaux. Le premier se compose des faits archéologiques, dont nous pouvons tirer une série d'informations pragmatiques, telles la typologie, les datations, etc. Le deuxième pilier est constitué par l'ethnographie et la mythologie. Ceux-ci nous offrent une approche vivante de la production culturelle et nous permettent d'envisager des mécaniques sociales ou encore des universaux. Enfin, le troisième pilier rassemble les approches de la phénoménologie et de la psychologie. Celles-ci ouvrent le champ de recherche sur la constitution ontologique de l'individu. Ces trois sources constituent une base solide pour envisager l'art rupestre et en proposer une approche holistique. Combinées, ces perspectives nous permettent de mettre en

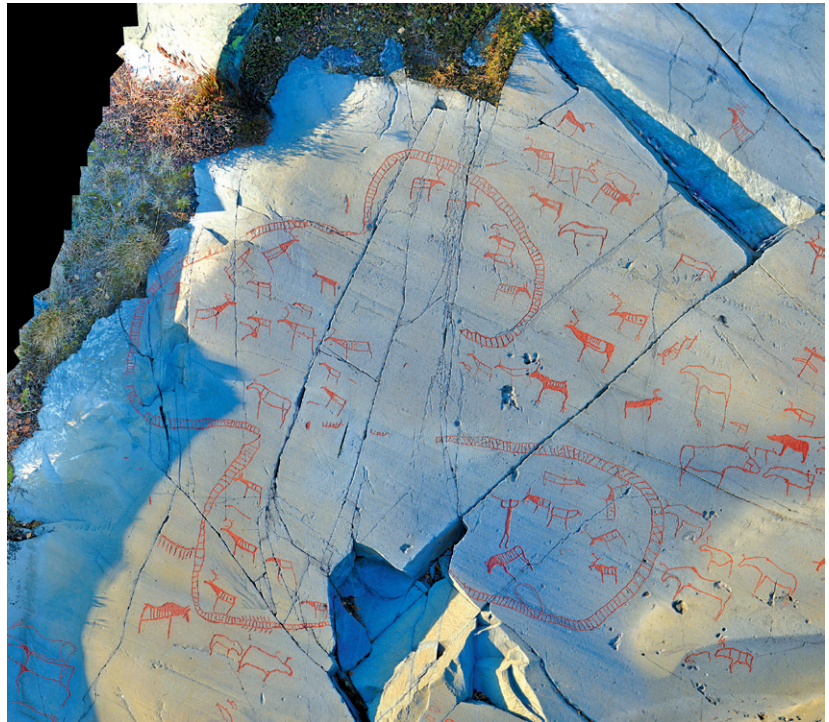


Fig. 1. Détail du panneau 1 à Bergbukten, Alta (d'après Tansem 2015)

tions germaniques se diffusent également (Broadbent 2010, 29-42). Le début du premier millénaire cal. B.C. apparaît comme une période de grands changements. L'art rupestre d'Alta livre alors ces dernières représentations avant de tirer sa révérence (**fig. 1**) (Broadbent 2010, 29-42).

PANORAMA

Laissés en jachère, les abords de l'Altafjorden furent semés de motifs, dont l'évidence graphique fait refluer ces champs endormis. Gravures et peintures constituent les deux modes rupestres connus de cette région¹. Au fond du fjord bifide, une dizaine de localités voient se déployer ces représentations. Quatre secteurs, par l'importance numérique des figures, apparaissent comme des sites majeurs. Sur base des données mises à disposition par l'Alta museum, nous avons pu recenser 4 932 éléments, dont 3 781 déterminés et 1 151 indéterminés. Ces quatre secteurs rassemblent 2 756 motifs déterminés soit environ 73% de ceux relevés et près de 56% du total des gravures. Ces données sont développées dans un article ultérieur. Dans la suite du texte, sauf exception, nous donnerons les pourcentages en regard des motifs déterminés. Nous écartons de ces analyses sommaires les éléments indéterminés faute de pouvoir en tirer des conclusions, au-delà de leur simple comptage. Depuis l'occident, les secteurs sont Ytre Kåfjord, Bergbukten, Ole Pedersen et Amtmannsnes. Un cinquième pourrait être ajouté à cette liste, i.e. la Storsteinen. Toutefois, ses caractéristiques la placent à part des secteurs mentionnés dans le texte. Contrairement à ceux-ci, la Storsteinen est une table de pierre en décrochage marqué par rapport à la pente naturelle et dont la face supérieure est couverte de gravures. Si son positionnement dans le paysage est semblable aux autres secteurs, nous avons choisi d'en traiter dans un chapitre ultérieur. De prime abord, tous ces sites partagent un environnement commun et se logent au plus près du fjord. Ils ap-

¹ D'après les données disponibles à l'Alta Museum et nos visites sur place.

Paleogeographic Study of the Area of an Early Bronze Age Settlement near the Village of Bogdan, Karlovo Municipality

ARCHAEOLOGIA BULGARICA
XXIX, 1 (2025), 49-57

Martin HRISTOV / Rositsa KENDEROVA /
Kamelia MARINOVA

Abstract: The objective of the study is an Early Bronze Age settlement (2800-2200 BC), located in the Karlovo Valley on the territory of the village of Bogdan. The archaeological research verified by terrain geomorphological descriptions, samplings, and sedimentological laboratory analyses, allowed to reconstruct the palaeogeographical environment during the habitation period of the site and to compare it with the contemporary one. Archaeological research showed that the site was inhabited during the Late Neolithic period, however, the Early Bronze Age registered the most active terrain exploitation. Geomorphological and geological data revealed that ancient people chose the place because of its stable terrain and proximity to the river. Since then, there have been evident changes in the environment, the most significant one is the southward displacement of the Stryama River riverbed.

Key words: paleogeography, geoarchaeology, settlement, Early Bronze Age, the village of Bogdan (Karlovo Municipality).

INTRODUCTION

The archaeological site represents a settlement from the Early Bronze Age (2800-2200 BC). It is located in the narrow northwestern part of the Karlovo Valley, to the south of the village of Pevtsite, situated on the territory of the village of Bogdan and its municipality. Its altitude (416.41 m of the general benchmark) places it in the middle part of the hilly belt of the country (География на България 1997, 49-51).

The main objective of the present study is to analyze the natural environment during the habitation period of the ancient settlement according to archaeological and geomorphological research data.

The site is situated on a small (about 650 m wide) intervalley hill, formed between two Stara Planina streams (unnamed on maps in M 1:25 000 and 1:50 000), which are situated to the west and east of the site and flow into the Stryama River (**fig. 1**). Both streams gather their water from the mountain parts of Stara Planina from about 1500-1600 m altitude. The settlement is situated at a height that is elevated above the surrounding surface 7 m to the north and 10 m to the south.

The archaeological excavation of the site (**fig. 2**), which started in 2018, revealed a cultural layer about 1 m thick. It is suggested that it was thicker, but its top part was partially scattered during agricultural cultivation (such as leveling and over deep plowing).

To the present moment, it can be claimed with certainty that the habitation of the area began during the late Neolithic period – the last centuries of V mill. BC, probably in a one-layer settlement. After that, life continued in the second and third stages of the Early Bronze Age, although there are indications it was inhabited in the last centuries of the 3rd c. BC or the very beginning of 2nd c. BC.

The archaeological research shows that the site was used for agricultural purposes. It is documented by the presence of various hearths,

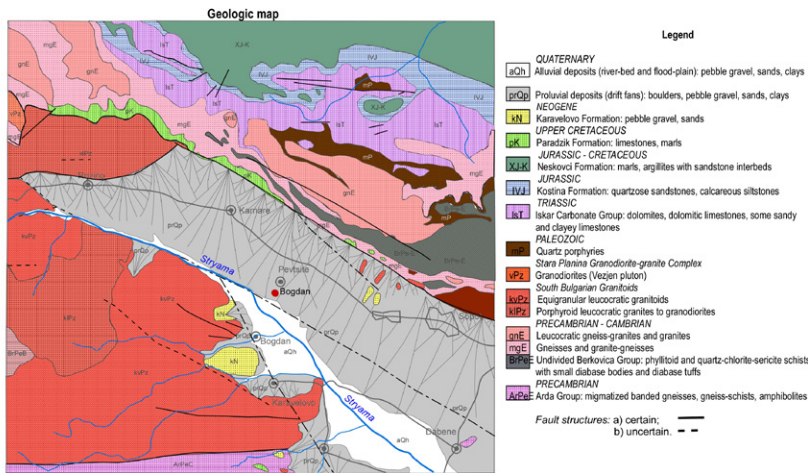


Fig. 5. A geological map of the area in M 1:100000 (map sheet Karlovo according to Русева et al. (1991) and Troyan according to Четвишев et al. (1993) with the amendment (K. Marinova)

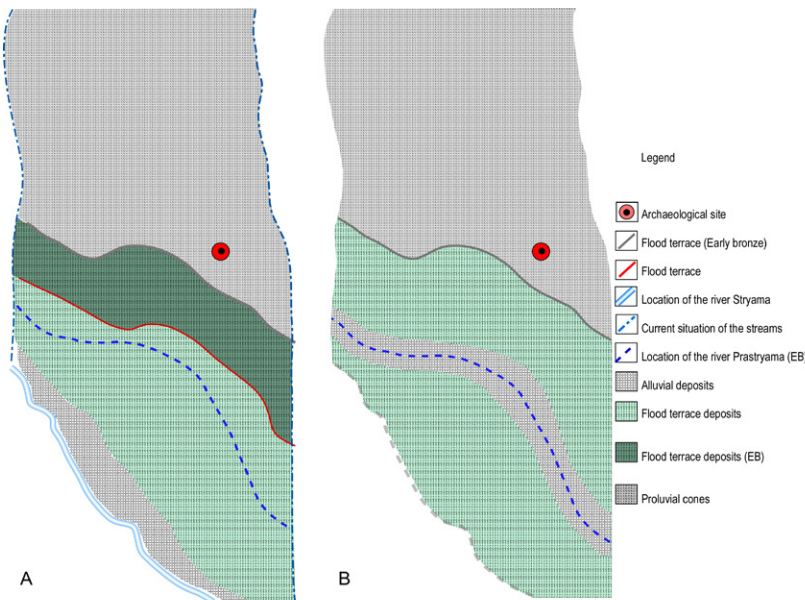


Fig. 6. A scheme of the contemporary (A) and paleogeographic (B) conditions in the site area (R. Kenderova, K. Marinova)

plain terrace) of the Stryama River. Various igneous, metamorphic, and sedimentary rocks also could be found in the archaeological site area (fig. 5).

In geomorphological terms, the site is in the Karlovo morpho structure (Канев 1989, 134). Its alluvial fans overlap and form an apron, which builds the northern and central part of the valley surface. A small section of its southern part is formed by the alluvial deposits of the Stryama River and its streams. The location of the apron (and the taluses) is regulated by the Zadbalkanski Fault, which is clearly expressed by the foot of Stara Planina (fig. 5). The location of both streams is regulated by precipitation and climate changes during the Holocene period.

The archaeological site is located in the periphery area of the foothill apron. The contemporary riverbed of the Stryama River is about 550 m to the west and 850 m to the south of the site, as the river makes a curve to the south. The relative height between the site and the riverbed of the Stryama River is between 8 (in the western part) and 10 m in the central part. It can be seen in the intervalley hill rising like a step, at the place of the settlement. The contemporary anthropogenic

Double Pins in Ancient Thrace

ARCHAEOLOGIA BULGARICA
XXIX, 1 (2025), 59-78

Miglena STAMBEROVA

Abstract: Double pins were one of the most widespread metal objects in the central and western Balkans in the second half of the 1st millennium BC. However, these objects were not fashionable among the Thracian population. In recent years, the number of the double pins found in the territory of ancient Thrace has increased, but they have not yet received sufficient scholarly attention. The present article focuses on the intriguing discussion surrounding the rare occurrence of double pins in the Thracian lands. The aim of the research is to investigate their characteristics, chronology, context of discovery, and possible uses. Between the last centuries of the Early Iron Age and the 1st c. BC, three chronological periods of diffusion of these objects have been identified specifically for the territory of ancient Thrace. Despite certain advantages in construction, double pins never gained popularity among the Thracian population due to the predominance of fibulae, and the possible overlapping of their functions.

Key words: Double pins, ancient Thrace, central and western Balkans, double pins with an M-shaped head, pins of Trebenishte type, pins of Glasinac type, fibulae, bronze, iron, silver.

INTRODUCTION

During the rescue excavations of the Hellenistic Thracian city of *Seuthopolis*, a seemingly unremarkable discovery has gone largely unnoticed in archaeological literature (Огненова-Маринова 1984, 170-171, обр. 1/1; cf. here cat. # 7). The bronze object, a simple length of wire bent three times into the shape of the letter “M,” stands out neither for its material nor for its craftsmanship. Despite its simplicity and lack of decoration, this artefact offers an intriguing insight into a specific category of objects commonly referred to as “double pins”. These objects have been extensively explored in the existing literature, with notable contributions from scholars such as P. Jacobsthal (Jacobsthal 1956), G. L. Carancini (Carancini 1975), I. Kilian-Dirlmeier (Kilian-Dirlmeier 1984), H. Parzinger (Parzinger 1993). R. Vasić (Vasić 1982; 2003) has conducted the most detailed studies on double pins, supplemented by new specimens discovered over the years (Blečić Kavur / Miličević-Capek 2011).

The distribution of double pins was geographically vast, spanning from Anatolia across the central and western Balkans to the Apennine Peninsula, and from North Africa to Scythia. Chronologically, these pins had a long period of production, dating from the 8th to the 2nd c. BC¹ (Vasić 1982, 220; 2003, 109). As a result, they attained the status of “eternal” fashion items (Blečić Kavur / Miličević-Capek 2011, 36), largely independent of cultural and chronological specificity. Whether originating in Anatolia or emerging as a local fashion influenced by the East, by the mid-1st millennium BC and specifically from the second half of the 6th to first half of the 5th c. BC, double pins had become one of the most popular objects in the western and central Balkans, including areas such as western Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the southern Adriatic region, northern Greece and the modern region of North Macedonia. These pins were crafted from bronze and iron, as well as from precious metals such as gold and silver. Notably, double

¹ The *terminus ante quem* of these items can be extended to at least until the 1st c. BC (see below).



Fig. 1. Double pins from Thrace: **1** Nevestino, bronze (M. Stamberova); **2** Vlashko Selo (present-day Tsarevets), bronze (M. Stamberova); **3** Bagachina locality, Staliyska Mahala, bronze (S. Todorova); **4** Podem, bronze (M. Stamberova); **5** Koprivlen, bronze (M. Stamberova); **6** Vasil Levski, bronze (M. Stamberova); **7** Seuthopolis, bronze (M. Stamberova); **8** Dren – Delyan, iron and silver (I. Panayotov); **9** Vetrilnika locality, Staro Selo, iron (G. Nikolova-Arabadzhieva); **10** Vetrilnika locality, Staro Selo, bronze (G. Nikolova-Arabadzhieva); **11** Lyaski (present-day Novo Leski), bronze (M. Stamberova); **12** Vetrilnika locality, Staro Selo, iron (G. Nikolova-Arabadzhieva); **13** Trapezitsa Hill, bronze (D. Rabovyanov); **14** Vetrilnika locality, Staro Selo, silver (G. Nikolova-Arabadzhieva)

(Un)usually Lavish Sarcophagus from *Viminacium*

ARCHAEOLOGIA BULGARICA
XXIX, 1 (2025), 79-94

Ilija DANKOVIĆ / Ilija MIKIĆ

Abstract: Recent excavations at *Viminacium* resulted in the discovery of an intact sarcophagus. It housed the remains of two individuals, a male and a female, probably members of the family that owned the nearby *villa rustica*. Gold and silver objects, as well as jet hairpins belonging to the female deceased, brought forward the possibility that she died before getting married, or at least before bearing children to whom she could bequeath the jewellery. In various cultures, burials of such individuals differ from the norm, and as such, they should be easily recognised in the archaeological record. “Exceptionally lavish” graves from the Roman period were identified in recent scholarly articles as the resting places of young women and girls denied of marriage or childbirth. A more scrutinous study of grave assemblage from *Viminacium*, accompanied by a DNA analysis, showed that lavishness cannot be the sole factor for attributing a burial to this group, and that the full contextual approach is needed.

Key words: *Viminacium*, exceptionally lavish burials, DNA.

Ancient *Viminacium* was located on the frontier of the Roman Empire, on the Danube River, in what is now Serbia. It was founded during the second half of the 1st c. AD as a legionary camp of the *legio VII Claudia*, which remained stationed here until the end of Classical Antiquity. A civil settlement emerged next to the camp and, over several centuries, it grew to become the largest city and the administrative centre of the province of *Moesia Superior* (Спасић-Ђурић 2015, 22-26; Korać 2019, 22-31).

Excavations of *Viminacium* have mostly been of a salvage nature, concentrated on the surroundings of the legionary fort and the city, endangered by substantial coal mining activities in the area. Such is the case with the territory located to the north and northeast of the *castrum*, which has been the subject of extensive archaeological excavations since 2012. During this period, numerous features have been unearthed: remains of a road, drainage canals, clay and sandpits, parts of necropoles, water wells, and several rural villas (Danković / Petaković 2014; Redžić et al. 2014; Milovanović et al. 2017; Milovanović et al. 2018; Milovanović et al. 2019; Korać 2019, 220-226).

Of particular interest to this paper is a group of three villas (*villae rusticae*) located ca 500 m north of the *castrum*, alongside the road leading from the fort's northern gate (*porta praetoria*), and turning to the east (**fig. 1**) (Korać 2019, 221-222; Миловановић et al. 2020, 78). These edifices probably served as country houses to upper-class citizens of *Viminacium*, but were also centres of estates specializing in agriculture, herding, and horse breeding (Marković / Danković 2020). Areas between the villas served as burial grounds, both for the families of the owners and the people employed on these estates (Миловановић et al. 2020, 78).

Approximately 8 m east of the central building in this group, a burial in a stone sarcophagus was discovered. The fact that it was undisturbed by the pillaging that devastated necropoles of *Viminacium* made it stand out in the corpus of sarcophagi from this site¹.

¹ Of nearly 100 specimens known from *Viminacium*, only 4 more were not plundered (Спасић-Ђурић 2003, 61).



Fig. 5. Grave assemblage (photo: Goran Stojić)

stitutes for the pottery vessels that were a prominent part of funerary provisions³, and this could have been the case in the sarcophagus, especially considering that one of the vessels clearly was not attributed to Individual B.

Another fairly common part of grave assemblages in *Viminacium* are coins, found in approximately one quarter of the researched graves (Vojvoda et al. 2021, 51)⁴. Four specimens were deposited in the sarcophagus, all made from copper alloys (fig. 5/d-g). Two of them, located next to the left femoral bone of Individual A, could be securely attributed to a local *Viminacium* mint, and dated to the reigns of *Philippus I* (minted between 244 and 248 AD) and *Trebonianus Gallus* (minted between 250 and 252 AD). The remaining two, similarly placed next to the left femur of Individual B, are ineligible, but their diameters and weights suggest a chronological frame of the mid-3rd century. One of them was minted in the Bithynian town of *Nicaea*,

³ Depositions of three clay vessels in a burial, most notably three jugs, are very well attested in the necropolises of *Viminacium* (Raičković 2012, 165-166; Golubović et al. 2020; Vojvoda et al. 2021, 49).

⁴ We must bear in mind that many of the discovered graves were looted in the past, so this percentage could only be higher.

REVIEWS

ARCHAEOLOGIA BULGARICA
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Люба ТРАЙКОВА. Късноантичната фортификация на Трансмариска на Долен Дунав (по археологически данни), София / Lyuba TRAYKOVA. Late antique fortification of *Transmarisca* on the Lower Danube (according to archaeological data), *Archaeologia Bulgarica*, Supplement 7 / Sofia: NOUS Publishers, 2024. Pp. 195 (incl. 33 figs., 43 tabs., Summary in English), hardback. Open access PDF. ISSN 2683-0477, ISBN 978-619-92330-9-2 (print), 978-619-7782-00-4 (pdf)

This publication is the recapitulation of archaeological investigations in *Transmarisca* conducted in 1969-1970 and later in 1989-1991, 1995-1998, 2001-2004, 2008-2011, 2013-2015, and 2018-2019. The author presents the results of surveys made by several scholars during these years (R. Zmeev, L. Vagalinski, and E. Petkov), as well as her own investigations in 2018-2019. L. Traykova also includes the discussion of the results of excavations carried out between 2020 and 2022 by V. Vărbanov and G. Mitev. Thus far, the excavations have been focused on the *Transmarisca*'s fortifications, which are the main element of the presented architectural remains. The archaeological materials are fragments of ceramic vessels and twenty-three other small finds.

The book is divided into six chapters. Chapter 1: Introduction (Увод), Chapter 2 (История на проучванията), Chapter 3: Fortifications of *Transmarisca* (Фортификацията на Трансмариска), Chapter 4: Ceramic vessels from seven seasons of archaeological investigations (Керамика от археологическите проучвания през 1989-1991, 1995, 1996, 2018-2019 г.), Chapter 5: Small finds from archaeological investigations carried out by the Author (Дребни находки от археологическите проучвания през 2018-2019 г.), and Chapter 6: Conclusions (Заклучение). The apparatus includes Bibliography (Библиография), Appendices (Приложения), Catalogue of ceramic vessels (Каталог на керамика), Catalogue of small finds (Каталог на находките), Figures, tables and illustrations (Фигури, Табла и илюстрации).

Chapter 1 consists of the subchapters, in which the Author discusses the location of *Transmarisca* (Местоположение), the subject of the study (Предмет на изследването), an overview of its objectives and scope (Цели на изследването), as well as the methods employed (Методи). The introduction concludes with traditional acknowledgments to other scholars.

The presentation of physical geography is somewhat limited. The landscape, terrain features, and the role of the Danube, are fundamental in shaping the settlement patterns and should be given more details and comprehensive analysis. Implications of geological phenomena and topography on settlement layout and defensive features could be also more extensively illustrated. More developed presentation, including e.g., proximity and accessibility to the river, accessibility to the resources (stone, clay), as well as to the road network, would add valuable insights to the study which is specifically focused on the fortifications. It would be also highly interesting to learn about possible Roman presence on the other side of the Danube (or the reasons of their absence). As the sources inform, on the other side of the river, opposite to *Transmarisca*, was the fort of Dafne (Amm. Marc. 27.5.2-3; Proc., De aedif. IV, 7, 7; Lenski 2002, 127-128; cf. Madgearu 2000, 133; Bondoc

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