30 YEARS

ARCHAEOLOGIA BULGARICA

XXX 2026 1

Archaeologia Bulgarica **XXX 2026 #1**

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On the cover: : a 10th century silver horse-harness ornament from an Oghuz elite burial; see the paper of Cs. Balogh, fig. 17 in this issue.

ISSN 1310-9537 **Printed in Bulgaria**

Geoarchaeological Investigations of the Paleoenvironment in the Area of the Kush Tepe Archaeological Site

Archaeologia Bulgarica
XXX, 1 (2026), 1-12

Rossitza KENDEROVA / Borislav BORISLAVOV /
Yordanka DONKOVA / Marlena YANEVA

Abstract: The present study focuses on the archaeological site of Kush Tepe, located in the southeast part of Bulgaria in the lower course of the Kalamitsa River, before its confluence with the Maritsa River. Four occupation periods were identified based on archaeological material: the Early Bronze Age (EBA), the Early Iron Age (EIA), the Hellenistic period, and the Middle Ages. Twenty-four EBA pits and three concentric ditches were recorded in the central and eastern parts of the site. Thirty pits from the EIA were found near the hill, while only one pit belongs to the Hellenistic period. Thirty medieval pits, often cutting into earlier features, were also documented in the eastern sector. Geomorphological observations and sediment sampling were conducted across the site. Fifteen sediment samples were subjected to granulometric analysis, supplemented by geomagnetic and electrical resistivity mapping. These data allowed for the reconstruction of the paleogeographic setting of the site during the EBA and EIA, within the Subboreal climatic-stratigraphic epoch.

Key words: Kush Tepe, Southeast Bulgaria, Early Bronze Age (EBA), Early Iron Age (EIA), paleogeographic situation, Subboreal.

Introduction

This study examines the territory of the archaeological site of Kush Tepe, situated to the east of the village of Kapitan Andreevo on the right bank of the Kalamitsa River, before its confluence with the Maritza River (**fig. 1).** The rescue archaeological excavations were conducted under a contract with the National Archaeological Institute with Museum at BAS (NAIM-BAS), with Borislav Borislavov as an excavation manager. A total of eighty-six structures and three ditches were studied at the site, dating back to several periods, including the Early Bronze Age (EBA), the Early Iron Age (EIA), the Hellenistic Period and the Medieval Period.

Our preliminary studies revealed that pits and remains of Iron Age houses (Early or Late Iron Age) were discovered during similar archaeological studies in the southern parts of the village of Kapitan Andreevo, besides a Slavic settlement and structures from the Early Medieval Period (Попов et al. 2007, 194-198; Sarafov / Cherkezova 2018, 25-28).

The present study aims to reconstruct the paleogeographic setting of Kush Tepe during its EBA and EIA occupations, within the Subboreal climatic-stratigraphic epoch**,** on the basis of geomorphological and sedimentological studies.

Morpho-hydrographic Characteristics

The main geodetic benchmarks (3 items) are situated in the northern part of the site. They are: eastern (110.808 m), middle (108.203 m) and western (107.843 m). This places the site within the lowland hypsometric region of the Upper Thracian morphostructural zone (Канев,

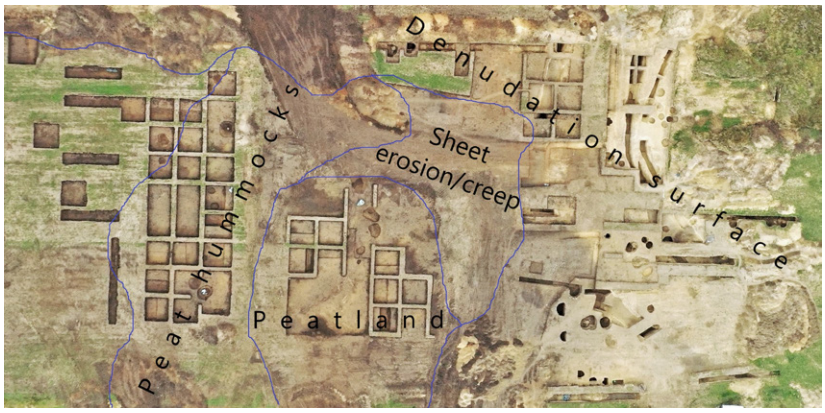

Fig. 10. Paleogeographic interpretation at the archaeologic site based on geomorphological, geological and geophysical studies (Rossitza Kenderova, Marlena Yaneva)

the modern topographic surface was formed on neoeluvium (weathering crust on the deposits of the Ahmatovo Formarion), which was slightly advanced by surface erosion and creep. The soil-forming processes transformed the upper two layers. This demonstrates that the terrain was (and still is) favourable for construction and agricultural use. The eastern and northern parts are appropriate for building construction and infrastructure. Based on the area, we assume that a settlement is more likely to be located further north than east.

The rest of the studied territory can be divided into two parts: a peatland and its periphery, the so-called peat hummocks (**fig. 10**). The data allow us to claim that the studied territory was a peatland after 2500 BC. In climatic terms, the preceding period was the Early Bronze Cryophase (about 2900-2500 BC), which characterised the beginning of the Subboreal era. The cryophase is a period of climate cooling, expressed in a decrease in average annual temperatures by up to 2°C (compared to the present ones). This reduced evaporation and increased the rate of frost weathering in the higher areas, while in the middle parts, it increased the rate of certain slope processes (creep). It is assumed that this may be one of the reasons for the migration of people in Europe from north to south (Балтаков / Кендерова 2003). We suppose that the formation of the peatland, but only its western part, began during the cryophase. The distribution and boundaries of the peatland and the peat hummocs were confirmed by electrical resistivity tomography.

At the beginning of the Subboreal, small tributaries of the Kalamitsa River and probably the Maritsa River flowed through the territory, which is evident in the characteristics of the deposits in sample point 659. This is also confirmed by breaks in the horizontals on the three-verst map and the one on scale M 1:1 000 000, which are visible to the right of the Kalamitsa River without any surface streams currently noticeable there.

The final formation and/or expansion of the peatland occurred during the Bronze Age Thermophase. The deposits that constitute it have facilitated the digging of the pits. It can be hypothesised that its evolution was rhythmic, i.e. the water may have fluctuated in it, and this could have continued at least until the Early Iron Age cryophase (starting around 1000-1100 BC).

The Bronze Thermophase characterises the Middle Subboreal period (ca. 2500-1000/1200 BP). During this period the conditions shifted from cold to warmer, resembling today's climate. This suggests

A Late Iron Age Linchpin from Găieşti, Mureş County, Romania

Archaeologia Bulgarica
XXX, 1 (2026), 13-18

Sándor BERECKI

Abstract: The study presents a Late Iron Age linchpin found with a metal detector in Găieşti. From technological and typological point of view, the object belongs to the group of bimetallic linchpins with decorated head, which were widespread in large areas of Europe, and which are mainly associated with the military aristocracy, as well as with visual representations of their religious beliefs. However, according to its artistic characteristics, the object from Găieşti can be considered a representative artefact of the eastern European La Tène culture.

Key words: Late Iron Age, chariot, linchpin, bimetal, La Tène art.

In April 2024, S. A. Zahan and D. A. Moldovan found a bimetallic linchpin as a stray find while metal detecting on the outskirts of Găieşti village (Hungarian Göcs, com. Acăţari/Ákosfalva, Mureş/Maros County), north-east of the 493 m high Bérc-tető peak, between the European road E 60 (DN 13) and the Găieşti Stream crossing the village, on a steep sloping area between the road and the forest, with streams running through it. The village is situated on the lower course of the Niraj River, in its southern hilly area, in the northern valley of the hills separating the Niraj and Târnava Mică rivers. The same persons also collected other ancient and modern objects from this area (**fig. 1**). According to them, the Late Iron Age linchpin was found as a single stray find, no further contemporaneous objects were identified together with it.

The symmetrically segmented three-part head of the Găieşti bimetallic linchpin is made of cast copper-alloy (**fig. 2**). The central element of the ornament – resembling the La Tène anklets with large hollow knobs – is narrow, thicker and taller than the lateral elements, whose exterior is spherically terminated, with a straight, tapered edge. Each of the three curved elements is framed by a narrow vertical ridge at each of its edges, and the three parts are separated by two wide concave depressions. The mounting surface is flat. The bronze ornament was cast on the iron plate of the linchpin, fixed by diffusion, since no rivets could be observed.

The hooked body of the shank and the upper flat fixing plate are forged iron. The upper part of the fixing plate is triple scalloped and both lateral parts are curved, following the line of the bronze element throughout its entire surface. The lower part of the mounting plate continues in the shank, narrowing funnel-like, with a functional wheel locking knuckle on the left between the two elements. The linchpin's shank is rectangular in section, the 60 mm long upper half is vertically straight, while the lower part is slightly curved to the left. The tip of the shank is round, oval in section, separated from the rectangular part of the pin by a 3 mm wide, partially preserved bronze ring, a preserved fragment of a larger, probably spherical ornament covering the tip. Total length of the linchpin: 145 mm; width of the head: 74 mm; length of the head: 46 mm; thickness of the head: 25 mm; thickness of the shank: 14 mm; weight: 230 g.

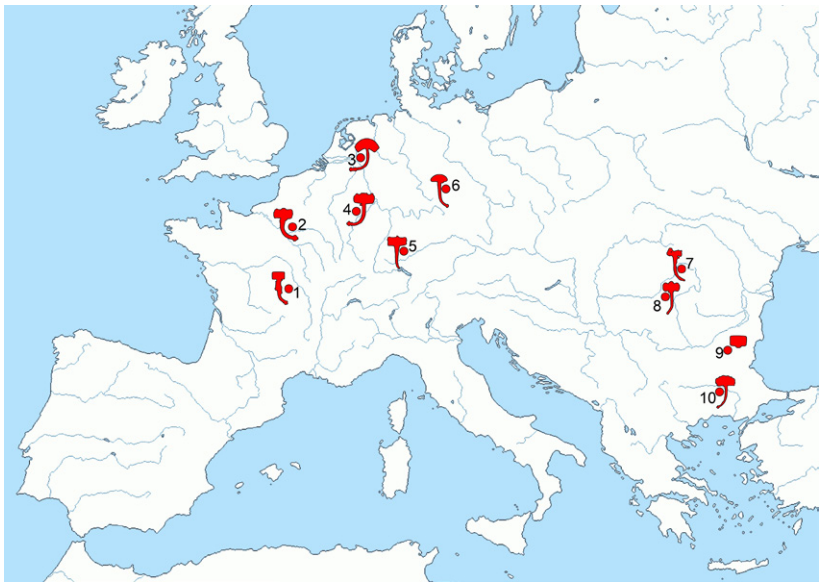

Fig. 4. Linchpins with ornamented head and curved shank: **1** Orval; **2** Roissy-en-France; **3** Hordain; **4** Niederweis; **5** Urach; **6** Großdraxdorf; **7** Gălăoaia; **8** Găiești; **9** Troitsa-Bobata; **10** Mezek (S. Berecki)

In the Carpathian Basin, linchpins were mostly found as grave goods in warrior burials, sometimes on their own, as *pars pro toto*, and other times accompanied by other parts of the chariot (Berecki 2018, table 1). In this region, only the finds in Mukachevo-Galliš-Lovačka are known as settlement finds (Mihalik 1901; Lehóczky 1912; Kobal 1996; Berecki 2018). Their appearance in settlements can presumably be linked to their production, to hoarding in domestic environment, or to other types of rituals within the settlement.

Iron linchpins with ornamented bronze head and straight shank are widespread throughout central and western Europe. The most common are the linchpins featuring male heads, such as those found in Stradonice-Hradiste in the Czech Republic (Schönfelder 2002, Abb. 112/6), Unterradlberg in Austria (Megaw et al. 1989), or the Donnersberg *oppidum* (Schönfelder 2002, Abb. 112/3), the Manching *oppidum* (Sievers 2013, Abb. 57/7, 59) and the water find in Urach (Schönfelder 2002, Abb. 112/7), in Germany. Two rarer examples with bird head decorations were found in the Manching *oppidum* in Germany (Schönfelder 2002, Abb. 112/1-2).

There are two types of linchpins ending in a straight shank, with the head ornamented in the Vegetal or Plastic Style: spherical, like the one found in the *oppidum* at Basel/Gasfabrik, Switzerland (Schönfelder 2002, Abb. 112/5), or in the settlement in Berching/Pollanten, Germany (Schönfelder 2002, Abb. 112/4), or symmetrically curved, like the one found in the *oppidum* at Stradonice-Hradiste, the Czech Republic (Schönfelder 2002, Abb. 112/10), the water find in Rhein bei Mainz, Germany (Schönfelder 2002, Abb. 112/9), in the grave with a four-wheeled wagon in Verna, France (Schönfelder 2002, Abb. 112/8). The symmetrically curved linchpins show a close connection to the crescent-headed linchpins, like the ones found in the settlement in Kemmelberg, Belgium (Van Doorselaer et al. 1987, fig. 106), the two fragments from Colne Fen and the chance find in Kings Langley, in the UK (Spratling 1972, 56-58, fig. 38/106-108).

The shanks of the finds from Găiești and Gălăoaia are curved. In the case of the type defined by M. Schönfelder as iron linchpins with decorated bronze head the shanks are usually straight (Schönfelder

The Goddess Wringing Her Hair. About a Venus Distaff Finial from *Halmyris*[1]

George NUȚU / Florian MIHAIL

Archaeologia Bulgarica
XXX, 1 (2026), 19-28

In memory of Dan Elefterescu (1949-2025)

Abstract: A beautifully crafted bone statuette of Venus *Anadyomene* was discovered at *Halmyris* – a Roman fort and city in the Danube Delta. The statuette, dated to the 3rd-early 4th c. AD, features the goddess wringing her hair, a classical motif inspired by a 4th-century BC painting. This rare find showcases artistic finesse and provides insight into the cultural and artistic exchange in the Roman provinces. The statuette likely adorned a finger distaff – an object associated with women's textile work and potentially carrying apotropaic or votive significance.

Key words: bone, distaff, Venus *Anadyomene*, *Halmyris*, *Moesia Inferior/ Scythia*.

Introduction

In 2014, a beautiful carved female statuette made from the metatarsus of a large mammal was discovered during a rescue excavation prompted by the construction of a 'Tourist Information Center' in the extramural area of *Halmyris* (**fig. 1**), west of the fortification. This early Roman fort and the Late Roman and Early Byzantine city are among the best-known ancient settlements in the Danube Delta, due to intensive excavations that have been ongoing since 1981. Although the range of archaeological materials discovered at this site is large, inscriptions and pottery stand out. Artefacts made from bone and antler have a low share among the finds and thus have only recently begun to be published.

The figurine was discovered in Trench II, squares #3-4, at ▼2.20 m (Stanc et al. 2023); History and Archaeology Museum, "Gavrilă Simion" Eco-Museum Research Institute Tulcea, inv. #51.671.

Description of the Find

The statuette is partially preserved: the proximal extremity and one hand are missing (**fig. 2**). The lower part, starting from the navel, is broken. The representation is very realistic, with all the anatomical elements being marked. The hair, parted in the middle, is piled up in a high bun on top of the head and falls in two thick curls down the sides of the shoulders. The right arm is completely preserved. Only the hand of the left arm is still preserved. Both hands were wringing the two braids that fell on the character's shoulder. The hair is rendered through oblique and vertical incisions, and the bun is outlined through oblique lines and small vertical notches in the upper part. The locks are well-defined. All of them consist of oblique lines organized along three long and straight lines. Their intersections create V-shaped forms (**fig. 1/b**). The facial features are delicate, with small limitations due to the material in which the piece was made. The delicate sketching of the eyes and eyebrows, and the somewhat less successful sketching of the nose and mouth are noteworthy (**fig. 1/a**). The body is excellently finished, only the lower part is seriously damaged. The same

[1] Acknowledgments: The authors are grateful to Prof. Henry MacAdam (New Jersey) for English review and to Prof. Elisabeth Trinkl (University of Graz) for a part of the bibliography cited in this paper.

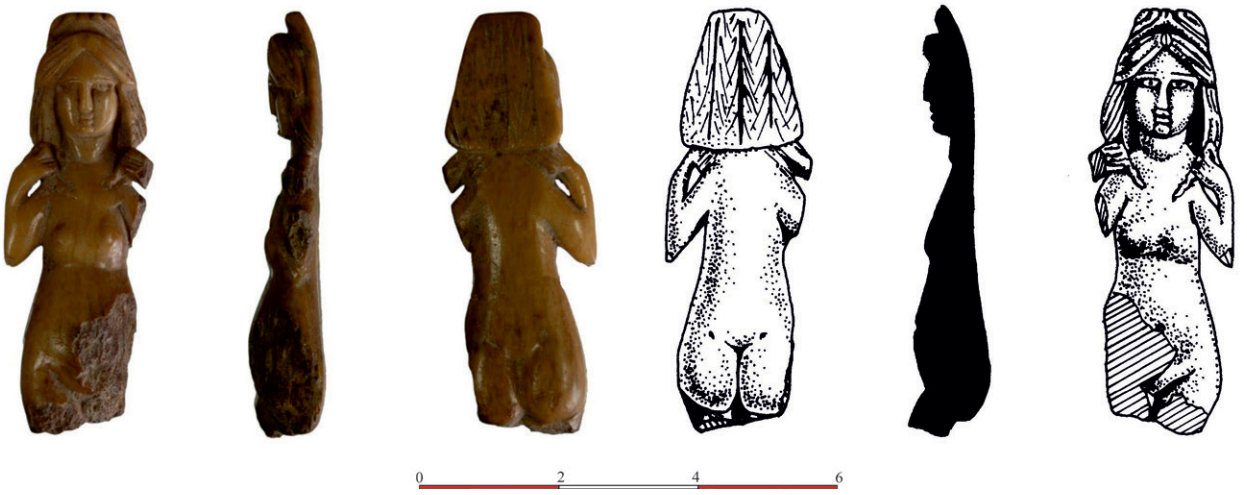

Fig. 2. The distaff finial (photo G. Dincu; drawing C. Geanbai)

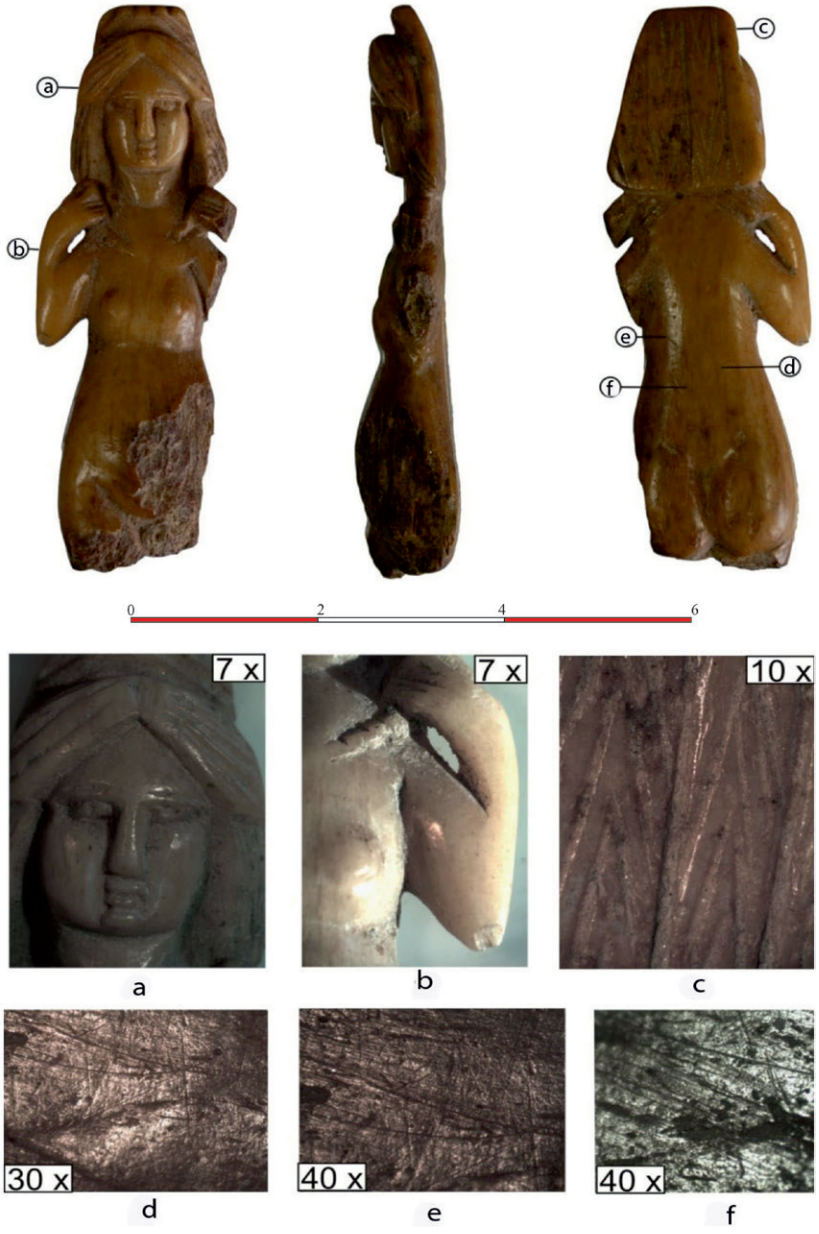

Fig. 3. The distaff finial (F. Mihail)

The Early Oghuz in Eastern Europe in the Light of Archaeological Records

Csilla BALOGH

Archaeologia Bulgarica
XXX, 1 (2026), 29-63

Abstract: The Oghuz tribes were present on the Eastern European steppe for a relatively short period, from the late 9th to the mid-11th centuries. This circumstance helps explain the limited number of archaeological finds attributable to them. The earliest scholarly investigations into the early Oghuz – primarily undertaken within the framework of Soviet archaeology – began only in the 1950s and 1960s. These initial studies focused predominantly on richly furnished kurgan burials uncovered along the northern shores of the Caspian Sea, which have been attributed to the military-administrative elite. In the following decades, further Oghuz-related graves were excavated in the region between the Prut and Dniester Rivers, as well as within the territory of Dobruja. The present study offers a synthesis based on systematic archaeological analyses of all Oghuz burials identified to date in Eastern Europe, with the aim of outlining the characteristic features of their funerary practices and material culture. It also highlights the most significant graves discovered along the Caspian littoral and examines evidence from the Carpathian Basin that may be associated with Oghuz presence. Until now, scholars have tended to assess the material remains of the Oghuz and Pechenegs jointly, owing to the substantial similarities between them. The present study, however, seeks to identify and interpret the distinctions between their respective funerary customs, as well as certain archaeological markers that may be regarded as specifically characteristic of the Oghuz.

Key words: Oghuz, Eastern Europe, archaeology, burial customs, material culture.

Introduction

The Oghuz[1] were a people who founded the Seljuk and Ottoman Empires and incorporated numerous Turkic groups within their confederation. From the 820s onward, their historical settlement area can be situated in the western parts of the Kazakh steppe, east of the Pechenegs, and around the Syr Darya River and the Aral Sea. In this region, they established a powerful tribal union known as the Oghuz Yabghu State[2]. This area was in continuous contact with the Islamic world, for much of Central Asia (Turkistan) – particularly the region of Māwarāʾ al-Nahr – had come under the authority or influence of the Islamic Caliphate since 751, when the Arabs (the Abbasids) defeated the Chinese at the Battle of Talas.

After the collapse of the Karluks around 893, the Oghuz also seized the territories of the Pechenegs. However, because the Khazar Khaganate maintained a strong frontier defense along the Volga River, the Oghuz were unable to expand westward during the first half of the 10th century. In this period, Islam spread increasingly – especially among the settled Oghuz populations. In 985, a group of Oghuz under the leadership of Selçuk broke away from the tribal confederation and migrated southward. After their conversion to Islam, they took part in the ongoing regional conflicts, first in the service of the Samanids and later of the Karakhanids. Ultimately, after capturing Baghdad in 1055, they founded an independent empire.

The other segment of the Oghuz tribal organization, having preserved their traditional beliefs, began to appear gradually west of the

[1] For the name Oghuz, see Ercilasun 2015; for a recent etymological discussion of the term Oghuz, see Aydemir 2021, 230. For a general study on the history of the Oghuz, see Erkoç 2021, 720-723.

[2] For the emergence of the Oghuz on the stage of history, see Taşağıl 2015; for the history of the Oghuz Yabghu State, see Agacanov 1998.

Fig. 8. Grave 500 at Szeged-Kiskundorozsma-Hosszúhát: A 10th-century Conquest-period Hungarian burial and the iron-rod reinforced quiver recovered from it (after Türk / Lőrinczy 2015)

One of the richest male burials attributable to the Oghuz was discovered on the banks of the Volga, near Novonikol'skoe, approximately 60 km southeast of Volgograd (**figs. 15-17**). Within the framework of fieldwork conducted by V. P. Shilov, excavations were carried out between 1952 and 1954 in two kurgan groups (Komantseva 1977). Burial 13, located 8 meters from the centre of Kurgan 7, belonged to a high-ranking Oghuz warrior. In the rectangular, west–east-oriented grave, the skeleton of a man buried in a wooden coffin was uncovered (**fig. 15/1**).

The horse skull and the limb bones lay in anatomical order on the coffin. The grave also contained a bit (**fig. 17/27**), as well as stirrups and saddle remains (Komantseva 1977, fig. 6a-b). The frame of the saddle was made of oak and covered with felt and red leather. The decorations of the horse harness were made of silver, including examples with rattles and heart-shaped ornaments (**fig. 17/1-26**).

The deceased was dressed in a silk caftan (Komantseva 1977, fig. 4a-c) and leather boots. The leather belt at his waist was adorned with forty-five gold-plated silver inlays (**fig. 16/1-9**). At the level of the right hip lay a composite bow made of hornbeam wood and reinforced with plates of deer antler (**fig. 16/18**). In addition, a quiver made of willow and birch, together with the arrowheads it contained, was placed at the

A New View of the Construction of the Şeyh Süleyman Mescidi and the Original Perimeter of the Christ Pantokrator Monastic Complex in Constantinople

Archaeologia Bulgarica
XXX, 1 (2026), 65-80

Alexander STANKOV

Abstract: The recent renovation and comprehensive research of the notable Şeyh Süleyman Mescidi have revealed numerous architectural details previously unknown. Despite efforts by the Turkish-Italian team, several questions concerning the history and construction of the building remain unresolved. Through this publication, we aim to provide a new perspective and chronological assessment of one particular aspect, specifically the construction of the building's second level.

Key words: Constantinople, Şeyh Süleyman Mescidi, Pantoκrator, Venetians, renovation, pointed arches.

Introduction

Constantinople, presently known as Istanbul, remains one of the most significant yet incompletely explored cities in history. Despite its exceedingly rich cultural heritage as the capital of the Eastern Roman Empire, many facets of its past remain obscure. Archaeological excavations (Bayülgen 2024) and historical sources disclose only portions of its complex history, leaving unresolved questions for scholarly investigation. The discovery of new artifacts, documents, and technological advancements offers an opportunity to reassess existing knowledge. The application of innovative methods such as digital archaeology and advanced data analysis facilitates new discoveries and the development of contemporary interpretations that shed new light on Constantinople. This is exemplified by the Pantokrator Monastery, constructed between 1118 and 1136.

Discussion

The Pantokrator Monastery, located on the fourth hill of Constantinople, exemplifies the peak of architectural, social, and religious achievements during the Comnenian Renaissance (Ousterhout 2001). Founded by Emperor John II Comnenus (1118-1143) and his wife Empress Irene (1104-1134) (Ousterhout 2019, 225), the complex includes three churches – Christ Pantoκrator, Virgin Eleusa, and St. Michael – as well as a tomb for the Comnenian dynasty, a hospital (*xenon*), a nursing home (*gerokomion*), a library (Janin 1969, 521), a bathhouse (Van Millingen 1912, 239), and various service, residential, and administrative buildings, along with cisterns and other structures (Gülersoy 1976).

The history of the Pantokrator Monastery can generally be divided into three distinct periods: its foundation and period of prosperity (1118-1204), the Latin period during which the monastery was served by Latin clergy (1204-1261), and its subsequent activity during the rule of the Palaeologus dynasty (1261-1453). During the initial period, the monastery's operations were generously funded through imperial

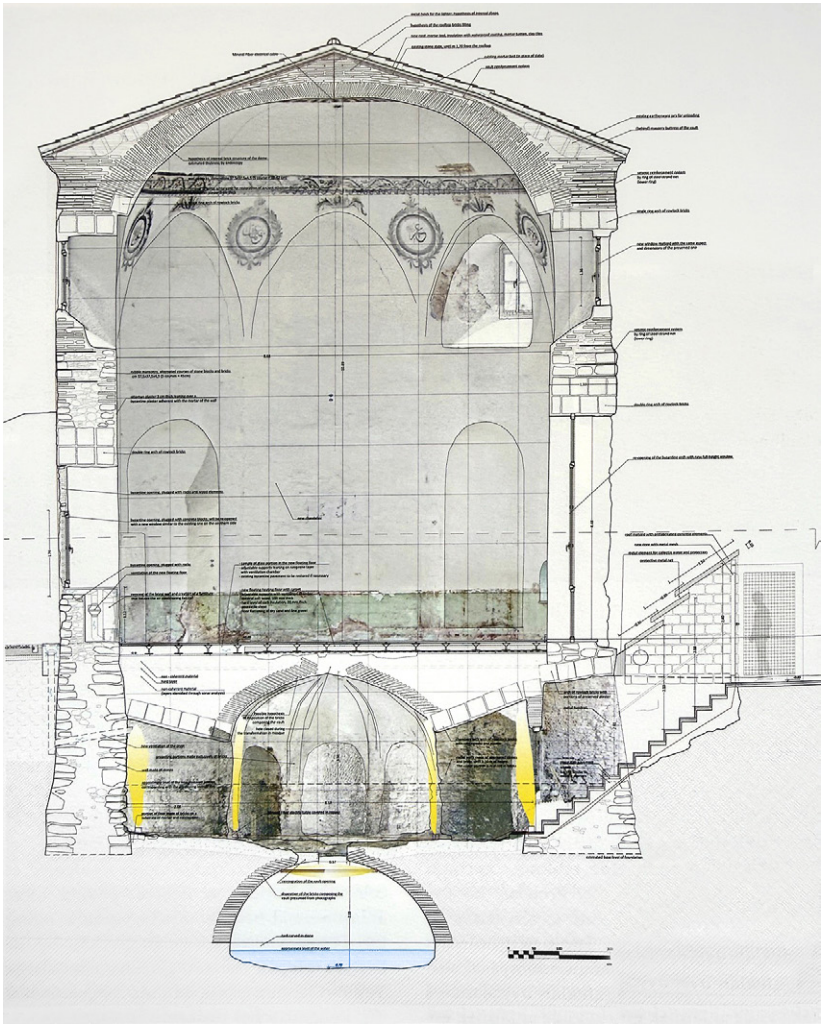

Fig. 4. General plan of the building (after Berlucci /Aydemir 2017, 82, fig. 26)

Fig. 5. The entrance of the crypt (Sercan Özkurnazlı 2024)

water level from time to time. It has been determined that the reservoir was excavated into the solid bedrock (Ilhan 2017, 52).

The research indicated that the crypt was likely initially constructed as a single-room structure, with niches subsequently added at a later stage, as these were not structurally integrated with the walls of the original chamber (Gabrielli 2017, 103-113). The original entrance to the building currently known as Şeyh Süleyman Mescidi was altered during the Ottoman period owing to its change in function to a mosque. The investigation uncovered the original Byzantine floor, characterized by an octagonal shape and providing access to water; however, the connection with the crypt was not established during the study (Berlucci 2017, 80). Additionally, marble sills were found *in situ*.

The structure of the initial level of the edifice (reaching up to +5.58 meters) features an internal octagonal plan, while the external form is square. The external square plan is constructed from alternating five rows of bricks and two rows of stone masonry. The bricks measure 37.5 centimeters in length and 4.5 centimeters in thickness, with appropriately maintained spacing. The joints are of comparable dimensions, approximately 4 to 5 centimeters thick. The arches of this first level are constructed entirely of bricks, utilizing mortar with a finer grain structure. Based on conducted studies, it is proposed that this section of the building dates to the 5th century, during the reign of Emperor

On the Mosque and the Mihrab: A Contribution to the Study of Ottoman Architecture

Archaeologia Bulgarica
XXX, 1 (2026), 81-96

Lyubomir MIKOV

Abstract: It is emphasized that there is no mosque without a mihrab and there cannot be one, because it is the heart of every mosque. This means that the mihrab is the most important compositional element in the architectural solution of every mosque, which is due to its establishment as a key facility in every mosque interior. In order to understand the purpose and essence of this fundamental facility in mosque architecture, a brief historical overview is made in relation to its prototype, its location and layout. It is noted that the *Qibla* determined by the Prophet Muhammad is obligatory and has no alternative. This means that the mihrab can always and everywhere in the Islamic world be only one. However, in the history of mosque architecture, there are two cases known that make an exception in this regard. One is related to the "Mosque of the Two Qiblas" ("Masjid al-Qiblatain") in Medina, and the other case is the "Mosque of the Three Mihrabs" of Hayderin Efendi in Istanbul. These mosques are examined in a cultural-historical perspective.

Key words: mosque, mihrab, Qibla, hadith.

There is no mosque without a mihrab, and there cannot be one, because it is the heart of every mosque. This means that the mihrab is the most important compositional element in the architectural solution of every mosque, which is due to its establishment as a key facility in every mosque interior. In order to understand the purpose and essence of this fundamental facility in mosque architecture, an explanation is necessary regarding its prototype, its location and layout.

The Mihrab: A Brief Historical Background

The prototype of the mihrab in early Islam was a spear – the word 'mihrab' itself has a common root with the Arabic word *harba*, meaning 'spear' (Стародуб 2010, 47). According to several *hadiths* in the collection of authentic narrations by al-Bukhari (810-870), Muhammad prayed facing a spear, which he stuck in front of him. His companions, who lined up behind him, also faced the spear. The Prophet prayed in front of the spear even while traveling (ал-Бухари 2004, hadith # 67 [76], 240 [376], 296 [494], 297 [495]). This way of praying while traveling was adopted by his companions, and the act of prayer became more widespread.

Instead of the word 'spear', in some hadiths the descriptive expression 'a stick with a sharp end' is used. However, in hadith # 296 (494) of al-Bukhari, the word 'spear' is used. This hadith states: "*It was narrated on the authority of Ibn Umar*[1]*, may Allah be pleased with them both, that when the Messenger of Allah went out (to pray) on a day of Eid, he would order a short spear to be driven (into the ground) in front of him, then he would pray facing the spear, and the people would pray behind him [Muhammad]. He used to do the same when he was on a journey. And later this custom was adopted by other rulers*" (ал-Бухари 2004, 135-136).

[1] Abdullah ibn Umar al-Qurashi (614-693), a famous companion of the Prophet Muhammad.

Fig. 2. Musalla in the market in the Lozenets district of Sofia (late 15th or early 16th century; photo L. Mikov)

is reserved only for the official (imam or *hodja*) who leads the prayer ritual of the Muslims lined up in front of him. It is also common for this person to have an assistant who repeats his words to the Muslims praying in front of the portal niches.

The function of the mihrab is not yet fully understood. Opinions on this issue are very diverse, some of which are even controversial. G. Fehervari, for example, believes that the essential form of the mihrab is connected to the ancient Eastern Semitic, Jewish and Christian traditions and to the esoteric concepts of this structure as a door symbolizing the transition to the afterlife (Fehervari 1993, 7-8). J. Dickie, however, writes that the niche-shaped mihrab was conceived as "an acoustic device, a voice resonator, reflecting and amplifying the sound wave" (Dickie 1978, 33). This conclusion applies primarily to the mihrab niche in Arab mosques, which is larger and much deeper than the mihrab niche in Ottoman mosques. One of the latest opinions on the function of the mihrab is that of Sh. M. Shukurov, who believes that it is a "reduced image of the Temple" (Шукуров 2002, 67).

The decoration of some Ottoman mihrabs includes picturesque depictions of the Kaaba (for example, in the "Turgut Reis Mosque" in Balchik, 19th century, **fig. 3**), as well as a fountain symbolizing the Zamzam (Zemzem) well (for example, in the "Mirza Said Pasha Mosque" in Ruse, 1875-1876, **fig. 4**). These images are an indication

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ISSN 1310-9537 **Printed in Bulgaria**