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On the cover: a marble statue of Hygieia; ca. AD 180-190; photo by Rareş Bondoc; see the paper of Ota et al. in this issue.

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The Achaemenid Persians in Elmalı Plain (Southwest Türkiye): New Evidence and Perspectives from Hacımusalar Excavations

Archaeologia Bulgarica
XXX, 3 (2026), 1-16

Okan SEZER / Fatih ÇONGUR / Bülent ARIKAN

Abstract: The Elmalı Plain (the Plain) is a subregion of Western Anatolia that has not been adequately studied, leaving many archaeological questions unanswered, including those related to the Achaemenid Persian studies. Due to the limited archaeological efforts, only one tumulus with Achaemenid Persian traits and some find points dating to the Middle and Late Iron Age have been identified by M. J. Mellink discussed the presence and extent of Achaemenid Persians in the Plain. Nevertheless, 'new' evidence from Hacımusalar allows us to make some further suggestions. This pottery form, known as the Achaemenid bowl, which imitates metalware, is an indicator of the drinking culture that was specific to ancient Persia. Achaemenid (clay) bowls yielded from the former (1994-2019) and current (2022 onwards) excavation campaigns of Hacımusalar display variations in features, such as lip flare angles and carination shapes. The assessment of the past landscape of the Plain, coupled with the traditional settlement patterns of Achaemenid Persians and their material remains, such as clay bowls, enables us to argue the Plain's significance for Achaemenid Persians in a more detailed framework than previously possible. We suggest that the Plain functioned as an administrative and agricultural region ruled by an Achaemenid Persian and/or a Persianized local elite situated at Hacımusalar until the second quarter of the 4th century BC. Afterwards, as the cultural and political entity of littoral Lycia – likely led by Perikle – expanded into the Plain, the power, cultural influence, and land use shifted from the Achaemenid Persians to the Lycians. Consequently, the Plain was turned into a highland hinterland of the littoral Lycia.

Key words: Achaemenid Persians, Elmalı plain, Hacımusalar, Achaemenid bowls, ancient political ecology.

Introduction

The Elmalı Plain (the Plain, **fig. 1**, approximately 1100 m above sea level, covering 75 km^2), the second largest karstic plain (i.e., polje) in Türkiye, is an intermontane flatland surrounded by the western flank of the Taurus Mountains. The roughly triangular Plain (**fig. 2**) has many large aquifers, and numerous lakes on the Plain were active until they were drained in the 1960s. The mountains surrounding this fertile and lush plain still support cedar, oak, and pine tree forests. The Plain is accessible from the north, southeast, and southwest and acts as a hub between the natural harbors west of the Antalya Gulf and the inland (Aegean and central) regions of Anatolia. These natural passages and the rich biodiversity of the plain have attracted people throughout prehistoric and historical periods. Although travelers in the 18th and 19th centuries visited the Plain and recorded the archaeological remains, the earliest comprehensive and scientific archaeological research was conducted by Machteld J. Mellink between the 1960s and the 1980s. Mellink discovered and excavated the late Neolithic site at Bağbaşı, the Early Bronze Age site of Semayük, and the cemetery at Karataş (Eslick 1992, 2009; Warner 1994), followed by her campaigns at the Iron Age tumuli of Kızılbel and Karaburun (Mellink 1967; 1972; 1976a).



Fig. 3. Aerial view of the Hacımusalar Mound from the northeast (Hacımusalar Excavation Archive)

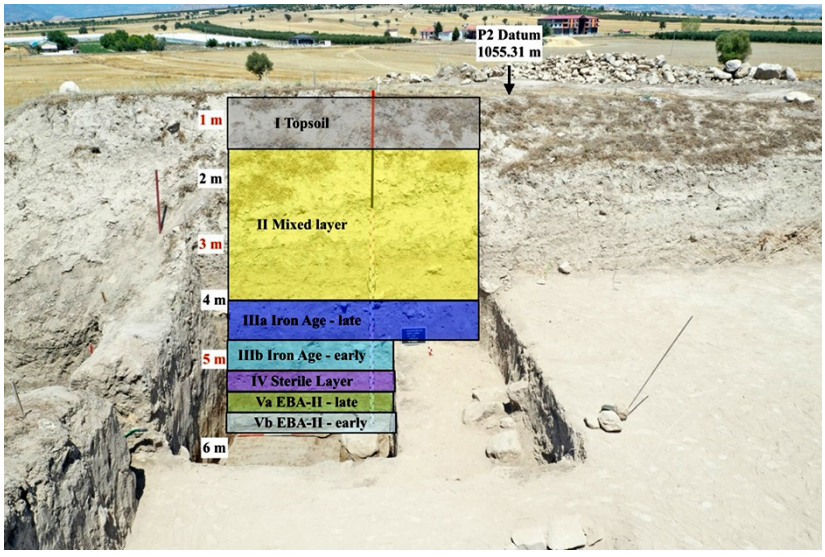


Fig. 4. The cross-section of the North Trenches at Hacımusalar Höyük (Hacımusalar Excavation Archive)

The Northern Slope of Hacımusalar (**fig. 4**), with the thickest cultural deposits, reveals the complex stratigraphy of the mound, which was further complicated by the construction of an Iron Age fortification wall preserved to a height of 3 m. It shows the top 6-meter deposit at the end of the 2025 campaign, where the first 4 m showed mixed archaeological deposits with co-occurrence of Bronze, Iron, Classical, and post-Classical material remains. This mixed deposit also yielded Achaemenid (clay) bowls. Beneath 4-5 meters from the surface, we reached undisturbed Iron Age layers followed by a thin sterile layer, which subsequently gave way to the Early Bronze Age II phases.

Achaemenid (clay) bowls from the North Slope trenches have been classified into three main categories based on the time interval in which they were positioned, rather than their form and other features. This approach is favored because we intend to measure the vertical temporal boundaries of the archaeological culture likely attributed to the Achaemenid Persians in the region.

In the following pages, examples are presented with their form and other technical features. After introducing the Achaemenid Persian settlement patterns in Western Anatolia, the expansion and/or exis-

The Late Iron Age Grave from Tirimioara, Mureş County, Romania

Archaeologia Bulgarica
XXX, 3 (2026), 17-26

Sándor BERECKI

Abstract: The study presents a Late Iron Age burial found with a metal detector in Tirimioara, Transylvania, which was afterwards excavated archaeologically. The grave inventory consisted of a belt plate, an arrowhead and a crown-shaped neck ring. The crown-shaped neck ring is the southernmost example of its type, previously unknown in this region, whose closest parallels occur east of the Carpathians, in the area of the Poienești-Lukaševka communities associated with the Bastarnae, while its core region is situated in the north-eastern part of central Europe. Together with a few previously discovered contemporary finds, the complex sheds light on the social and political transformations of the eastern periphery of the Carpathian Basin in the 2nd century BC.

Key words: Late Iron Age, grave, crown-shaped neck ring, Poienești-Lukaševka communities, Bastarnae.

I. Circumstances of discovery

In July 2024, Á. Cs. Balázs reported to the Mureș County Museum the identification of a Late Iron Age grave using metal detectors on the outskirts of the village of Tirimioara. The metal detectorists provided the museum with fragments of a bronze and an iron object, human bones, and several fragments of a black pot. As a result, the archaeological feature was unearthed in August 2024.

Tirimioara (Hungarian Kisteremi, commune Crăciunești/Karácsonyfalva, Mureș County) is located 10 km south of the municipality of Târgu Mureș, in the hilly area on the eastern edge of the Niraj Valley, a tributary of the Mureș River, south of county road 151D (Acăţari – Ungheni). The area where the cremation grave was discovered is located south of the village of Tirimioara, in the Nagyerdő forest, north of Benehegy hill, east of the Bene stream (**fig. 1**).

According to the metal detectorists, they carried out a surface metal search over a large area around the finds, but did not detect any further signals. This effectively rules out the presence of surface metal fragments, but does not exclude the possibility of further finds without metallic evidence. The finds were discovered at a depth of approximately 0.20 m in an area of about 2-3 m^2 on a forest road that is no longer in use. Among the objects, metal detectors recovered an iron belt plate and four pieces of a crown-shaped neck ring, along with a few pottery fragments and human bones, while the arrowhead and other pieces of the vessel were left at the site. The spatial location of the finds can be reconstructed based on the report and drawing of the finders (**fig. 2**).

The grave was probably disturbed during the use of the forest road, which may have scattered the grave goods and human bones and destroyed the upper half of the vessel and perhaps the lid, whose pieces could not be identified afterwards. However, the fragmentation of the necklace cannot be attributed to modern disturbance, as the different preservation, oxidation, and patina of the pieces suggest that the crown-shaped neck ring was placed in the grave in a fragmentary state.

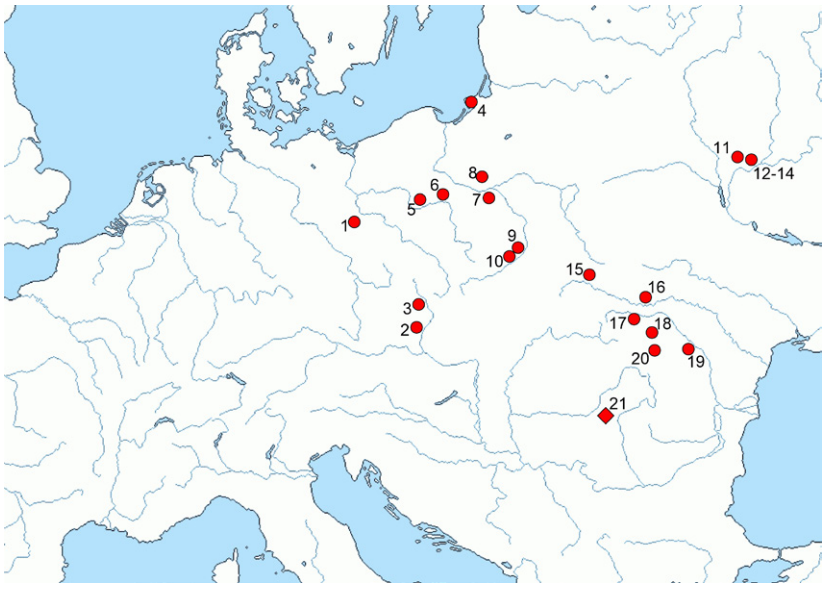


Fig. 8. Crown-shaped neck rings of Kostrzewski III, Babeş E and *Rauchfuß* 5 (Dwikozy and Błonie) type (after Rustoiu et al. 2026, fig. 8, list 1): **1** Klinge, DE; **2** Bobravská vrchovina, CZ; **3** Křenov, CZ; **4** Lochstädt, RU; **5** Staw, PL; **6** Synogaç, PL; **7** Izdebno Kościelne, PL; **8** Kluczewo, PL; **9** Dwikozy, PL; **10** Błonie, PL; **11** Hreblya, UA (2 pcs); **12** Lisky-Makhon'kovo, UA (2 pcs); **13** Lisky-Kazjonnoe, UA; **14** Lisky-Valok, UA; **15** Vil'khovets', UA; **16** Zalishchyky (Zales'e), UA; **17** Stanivtsi, UA; **18** Vârful Câmpului, RO; **19** Miroslava, RO; **20** Ţibucani, RO; **21** Tirimioara, RO (S. Berecki)

goods nor analogies with contemporary cemeteries excavated east of the Carpathians and their burial customs provide any help. The use of pots and jars as urns has been observed mainly in women's graves, and belt plates also occur more frequently as grave goods in women's burials, while weapons are characteristic of men, although no arrowheads have been found in graves so far (Babeş 1985, 188; Babeş 1993, 39, 42).

Based on the crown-shaped neck ring, the grave can be dated to the LT D1 period. The nature of the burial indicates that the object did not arrive in the intra-Carpathian region through intermediaries (trade, looting, etc.), but was buried in the grave together with its owner, in accordance with the rite characteristic of the Poienești-Lukaševka community.

V. Discussion and conclusions

European mobility in the 3rd-2nd centuries BC had a significant impact on the Carpathian Basin region. At the end of the LT C1 period, the Transylvanian "Celtic horizon" came to an end, and the use of earlier settlements and cemeteries was discontinued. A new type of culture, the "Padea-Panaghiurski Kolonii group", appeared in the region (Rustoiu 2015, 27-28), which advanced from the lower Danube area to Transylvania, led by an equestrian warrior aristocracy, whose panoply consisted of sword, spear, shield and curved dagger (Berecki 2021, 82), with a heterogeneous culture which combined mainly Thracian and Celtic cultural elements (Szabó 2005, 51).

Almost simultaneously, from the end of the 3rd century BC (Iarmulschi 2016), communities from Central-North Europe, from the territory of the Jastorf culture area between the Elbe and Oder, together with others from the Danish islands, arrived in several waves and, enriched with elements from the territories they passed through, settled east of the Carpathians, creating the "Poienești-Lukaševka culture", which, based on ancient sources, is associated with the Bastarnae. The route of this early Germanic migration towards southeast is also reflected in the distribution map of crown-shaped neck rings (**fig. 8**) (Babeş / Untaru 1969, 290; Babeş 1993, 108; Munteanu / Iarmulschi 2018, 230, *contra* Maciałowicz 2016, 87). Approximately 205 settle-

A Cult Statue of Hygieia Discovered at *Apulum* I – *Colonia Aurelia Apulensis*, Roman Dacia

Archaeologia Bulgarica
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Radu OTA / Sidonia P. OLEA / Darius GROZA

Abstract: The infrastructure works carried out in Alba Iulia in 2023 revealed numerous Roman stone monuments. The subject of this article is a cult statue of Hygieia with the acolyte Hypnos, discovered on Regimentul V Vânători street # 72 from the Partoș district, belonging to the modern municipality of Alba Iulia. Below this district is the best-developed Roman city in the province of Dacia, known as Apulum I – *colonia Aurelia Apulensis*. It was recovered from a modern layer (19th century), below the foundation level of the contemporary road that was to be rehabilitated. It was executed according to an iconographic scheme originating in Asia Minor, the manner of rendering the drapery of the *himation* being encountered in statues of several divinities such as Themis, Fortuna-Tyche, and Nemesis. The goddess of medicine and health is displayed alongside Hypnos, brother of Thanatos, who was placed near the goddess's left leg. She is dressed in a long-sleeved tunic with cufflinks/buttons, over which is wrapped a *himation* rendered in intricate folds that cover most of her body. In her right hand, she held the snake, and in her left hand a patera from which she fed the reptile. The organic rendering of the drapery and bodily forms, together with the more limited use of the drill, lead us to date the sculptural work to the late Antonine period, around AD 180-190. No petrographic analysis has been done, but the look of the marble (white colour, fine-grained) and the comparison with other sculptural works on which such investigations have been conducted, urge us to think about the Central Phrygia, where the Aphyon quarry was in use. It is a sculptural work of certain artistic value, most likely made by a Greek sculptor from the Hellenized area of Asia Minor. Unfortunately, the head, forearms, attributes (the snake and *patera*), and most of the acolyte Hypnos are no longer preserved. The iconographic analysis is complemented by considerations regarding the restoration of the monument, starting from the collection, and the taking of the first measures of primary preservation. During the restoration process, the deposits were removed, and volumetric reintegration were carried out using compatible materials and chromatically matched additions, wherever necessary.

Key words: *colonia Aurelia Apulensis*, Hygieia and Hypnos, cult statue.

Introduction

Colonia Aurelia Apulensis (Apulum I) is the most developed city in Roman Dacia, a true economic capital of the province (**fig. 1**). It was first investigated archaeologically by A. Cserni, the first director of the Museum in Alba Iulia, in the years 1911-1912; he unveiled a large building with 13 rooms, which housed a pottery workshop and one for bone and horn processing (Cserni 1912, 282, fig. II; Egri 2018, 116, fig. 3; Anghel 2023, 236). City and *forum* limits were identified by excavations between 1988-1994, carried out by I. Piso, A. Diaconescu, I. Bogdan Cătăniciu, V. Moga, R. Ciobanu and M. Drîmbărean, who concluded that the settlement had a rectangular shape of 1500 x 500 m and an extent of 75 ha (Diaconescu / Piso 1993, 67-70; Ardevan 1998, 45-49; Moga et al. 2000, 141-202; Bogdan-Cătăniciu 2000, 109-139). The impressive development of this city is marked even in the crisis moments of the middle of the 3rd century AD by adding the epithet *Chrysopolis* to the official title of the urban settlement, aspect proved by an inscription dated in the years AD 252-253, dedicated to



Fig. 3. The marble statue of Hygieia (R. Ota and D. Groza; 3D scanning by C. Șuteu)

Fig. 4. The marble statue of Hygieia (R. Ota and D. Groza; 3D scanning by C. Șuteu)

parting an intense note of sensuality. The shadowy effect of the crease of both vestments (*chiton* and *himation*) produced with the drill, especially in the lower part of the legs, shows us once again the statue's note of elegance. Precisely these features illustrate a chronological classification of the sculptural work, in the late era of the Antonine dynasty, in the period 180-190 AD, without entering the Severan dynasty (AD 193-235), when the organicity of bodily forms disappears, and the drill is used excessively.

The statue was placed in a niche, just like the one discovered by A. Cserni at the headquarters of the governors of Roman Dacia in *Apulum* in 1899 (Cserni 1899; Almăjanu / Ota 2016).

The presence of the Acolyte Hypnos, seated near the left leg, of which a small part of the right wing is still preserved, is a concept of the art of Asia Minor, developed around *Ephesus* and *Miletus* (Diaconescu 2005B, 152; Varga 2016, 23), where the hospital temples had statues of Hygieia alongside Hypnos, God of sleep and convalescence, who helped the goddess in healing the sick or sleeping the dying (Varga 2016, 23). This association with Hypnos then spread to the islands of Crete and Cos, eventually reaching Dacia (Varga 2016, 29). It is known that in the eastern area of the Mediterranean, the concept by which the attributes of a deity are taken over by another deity has

Terracotta Divine and Mythological Depictions: Terracotta Artifacts from a Private Collection (*Amisos*)

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Davut YİĞİTPAŞA / Ahmet Cuneydi HAS

Abstract: This article examines terracotta figurines with divine and mythological themes from a private collection, which occupy an important place in the coroplastic art of antiquity. The artifacts discussed in this study were analyzed from stylistic and iconographic perspectives and compared with similar examples from Anatolia and neighboring regions.

Among the terracottas, depictions such as Tyche, Eros, and Satyros were highly popular in the plastic arts of the Hellenistic and Roman periods. These figures functioned not only as cult objects but also appeared as mask types and as handles of terracotta braziers used in daily life.

These collection pieces have been interpreted through their typological details and evaluated in terms of ancient religious and socio-cultural iconography, as well as from a sculptural perspective. While the works are explained through their typological characteristics, the religious and socio-cultural iconography of antiquity has also been comprehensively assessed within the framework of sculptural art.

Key words: *Amisos*, terracottas, coroplastic art.

Introduction

The earliest foundations of the city of *Amisos*, established by Milesian colonists, were first laid in the mid-sixth century BC at the site known as the Çakalca-Karadoğan Mound (*Amisos*) (Şirin / Kolağasıoğlu 2016, 37-38. Alkaç et al. 2024, 5). Based on the ancient literary sources and the available archaeological evidence, some scholars suggest that the city was founded in 564 BC (Atasoy 1997, 36; Tsetskhladze 2010, 80). After its conquest by the Persians in 546 BC, the city experienced both territorial expansion and significant demographic change. As the city developed, Athenian colonists settled in 437 BC at Toraman Tepe and its surrounding area, situated approximately 9 km east of the Çakalca-Karadoğan Mound – the site where the earliest foundations of *Amisos* had been established. During this period, the Athenians renamed the city *Peiraieos* and established a new settlement. Over time, the settlements at both locations came to be incorporated into the city's territory (Şirin 2024, 84). The coroplastic repertoire of *Amisos* also includes Tanagra-type figurines and statuettes depicting scenes from everyday life rather than gods or goddesses (Şirin 2025, 39, 61, Res. 20, Çiz. 6). This attribute can also be observed on terracotta bust-type statuettes of goddesses, including Aphrodite, dated to the first and second centuries AD (Talloen 2019, fig. 8-10, 11-14; Şirin 2021, 290).

The figurines from *Amisos* (Çakalca-Karadoğan Mound) fall into two principal types: standing female figures and female figures seated on thrones. Among the seated group, the draped female statuettes depicted wearing a tall cylindrical *polos* are of particular significance because of their iconographic meaning. The *polos* worn by these figurines is a divine headdress that features prominently in the iconography of Hepat, Cybele, and Kubaba, deities whose origins have been associated with the Mother Goddess cult tradition (Ekiz 2003, 2004; 2005;

periods. Terracotta portable braziers depicting these figures constitute an important category of archaeological material. Typically used in ritual or domestic contexts, these braziers consist of a cylindrical body, a deep upper fire basin, and handles positioned along the rim (Şahin 1999, Res. 1, 61; Şahin 2003, 109-113). In antiquity, these braziers, which formed part of culinary culture, were also used as decorative hearths for heating purposes (Leonard 1973, 19; Şahin 2005, 240). Mold-made protomes of satyrs and silenoi, applied along the rims of these braziers, were often depicted alongside animal figures such as bulls and goats.

In these objects associated with the Dionysiac cult, both the wise and aged Silenos and the more youthful satyr are observed to be depicted on the protruding handle sections of terracotta braziers. In the specimen under study, the satyr enclosed within a framed panel is shown with thick hair parted in the middle and combed backward on both sides (**fig. 11**). His raised eyebrows, bulging eyes, and flattened nose are combined with a thick moustache, beneath which the beard descends in parallel strands. In the other example, Silenos is depicted with prominent signs of old age: a bald head, a broad forehead, large eyes with emphasized pupils, long pointed ears, a flattened nose, prominent cheekbones, and a moustache and beard rendered in parallel downward strands (**fig. 12**). Silenos, also known as the master of the satyrs, presents an exaggerated facial expression that gives him a grotesque appearance reminiscent of grotesque imagery.



Fig. 11. Brazier handle with Satyr (photo by D. Yiğitpaşa)



Fig. 12. Brazier handle with Silenos (photo by D. Yiğitpaşa)

Portable braziers of this type were widely distributed across different regions of Anatolia during the Hellenistic period (Leonard 1973, 19). In Anatolia, brazier handles of this type have been recovered from cities such as *Theangela*, *Halicarnassus*, *Knidos*, *Myndos*, *Ephesos*, *Miletos*, *Patara*, *Stratonikeia*, and *Troas* (Şahin 1999, Res. 9, 23, 26, 27, 28; Şahin 2011, fig. 2, 74, fig. 75, fig. 77). In particular, the Bodrum Museum of Underwater Archaeology houses important examples in this context, including brazier handles from various regions of Anatolia decorated with satyr, Silenos, goat, bull, and vegetal motifs (Leonard 1973, ILL 2-3; Şahin 1999, Res. 9 IV. 1, Res. 28 V.15, Res. 26 V/13, Res. 27 V/14, Res. 23 V/10).

Satyr figures enclosed within angular borders, characterized by thick curls parted at the centre of the forehead and combed sideways or upward, broad forehead lines, furrowed brows, and fleshy eyelids, find close parallels in the artifacts under examination. Hellenistic brazier handles from *Stratonikeia*, *Myndos*, and Troy likewise display comparable features (Şahin 2011, fig. 1; Kaplan 2009, Lev. 23, Kat. # 78, 81). In these examples, alongside the characteristic features of satyr or Silenos heads, floral rosettes placed at the corners of the panels, finely combed strand-like hair, and moustaches integrated with grooved beards are also attested. The protruding beard sections may have served a functional role as part of the handle structure (Şahin 2011, 92).

Outside Anatolia, these brazier handles have also been found in cities such as Athens, Kalymnos, Rhodes, Delos, Sicily, Egypt, and Naukratis (Burr 1933, 189; Christian 1961, fig. 7, fig. 8, fig. 29; Şahin 2011, fig. 67, 81, 84, 95, 99, 103, 109). In the Hellenistic period, a figurative brazier handle from Naukratis, featuring a Papposilenos head enclosed within an angular frame, shares stylistic characteristics with the figurative brazier handles discussed above (Thomas 2015, fig. 4). In this type of brazier handle, the depictions applied to the edges may

Lime kilns from Izvor Mahala (NW Bulgaria): Mineralogical and Archaeological Study of Lime Production Technology

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Nikoleta TZANKOVA / Philip MIHAYLOV

Abstract: In this study, we present the results of an archaeological survey and mineralogical investigation of lime production facilities discovered in the "Stamenovoto" locality, Izvor Mahala village, Vidin region. An integrated approach combining field observations with XRD and XRF analyses was applied to examine kiln materials and lime samples, providing insights into firing conditions and production technology. The identified mineral assemblage includes calcite, quartz and its high-temperature polymorphs tridymite and cristobalite, aragonite, and silicate phases. The results indicate that calcination generally occurred at approximately 850-950°C, while localized overheating reached temperatures above 1000-1100°C. The observed vitrification resulted from the partial melting of silicate impurities and their interaction with calcium compounds. The identified mineral phases further suggest highly heterogeneous firing conditions, characterized by alternating oxidizing and CO_2-rich microenvironments within the kiln. Comparison with published data from Bulgaria and the Balkans reveals the closest parallels with the medieval lime-production facilities from Pliska and Plovdiv, dated to the 10^{th}-11^{th} centuries.

Key words: lime kilns, archaeomineralogy, XRD and XRF analyses, calcination technology.

Introduction

The production of quicklime is a technological process with widespread and significant applications in construction, agriculture, and various artisanal practices, spanning from antiquity to the present. Nevertheless, identifying lime kilns archaeologically is challenging due to their limited structural remains, relatively late adoption, and frequent overlap with other heat-related structures. As a result, documenting and studying these sites is crucial for reconstructing local production methods and understanding the economic exploitation of natural resources within a region. Despite this significance, lime production remains insufficiently studied in Bulgarian archaeology, with existing data being fragmented and mostly linked to isolated sites.

The present study focuses on a group of lime kilns, registered during archaeological research in the territory of the village of Izvor Mahala, Kula municipality, Vidin region. In the immediate vicinity of kilns, an Early Bronze Age (EBA) site with an area of about 0.2 ha was discovered (**fig. 1**). The archaeological site provides an opportunity for analysis of both the lime production facilities themselves, the raw material base, and local traditions in lime production. The aim of this article is, through mineralogical and chemical examination of the materials from the kilns and the resulting product, to determine the firing conditions and the technological features of the production, thus expanding knowledge about local practices in lime production.

Archaeological setting

The archaeological site was registered in 2012 in the Automated Information System "Archaeological Map of Bulgaria", under # 10001173

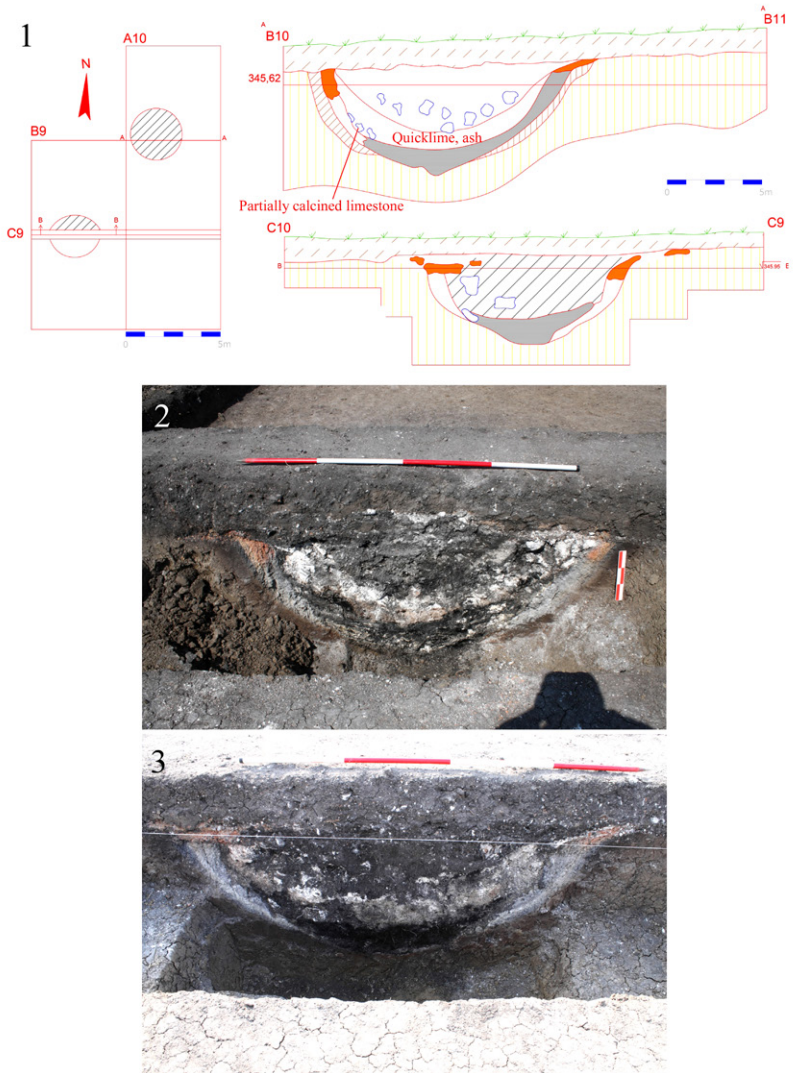


Fig. 4. Lime kilns A2 and A3: **1** Plan and profiles (author A. Bakamska); **2-3** Profiles of the kilns (Ph. Mihaylov)

relatively late period, most likely between the 18th and the first half of the 20th century.

Materials and methods

Samples from three strongly fired pit features, lime kilns, shown in **figs. 3–5,** were investigated. Brick lining material from the inner wall of the lime kiln, the lime product obtained from limestone calcination, a vitrified zone from the kiln wall material, and the raw material used in the process were examined under a stereomicroscope and by X-ray diffraction (XRD). Additionally, the final product was analyzed by X-ray fluorescence (XRF) method.

The phase composition was determined by powder X-ray diffraction at the University of Mining and Geology "St. Ivan Rilski", using a Bruker D2 Phaser diffractometer equipped with a Cu tube and PSD detector. Measurements were carried out using Cu Kα radiation with a Ni filter, over a scan range of 5-70° 2θ, at 30 kV and 10 mA. The record patterns were interpreted using EVA software and a COD database (Crystallography Open Database).

The chemical composition of the lime product obtained from limestone calcination was determined by X-ray fluorescence analysis using a Supermini200 (Rigaku, Japan) spectrometer at the Institute

A Byzantine Silver Plaque with *Cloisonné* Enamel Depicting Christ Pantokrator from the Trapezitsa Fortress, Veliko Tarnovo (Bulgaria)

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Abstract: The study presents a gilded silver plate with the image of Christ Pantocrator made in the combination of *cloisonné* and *champlevé* enamel technique discovered at Church # 22 in the Trapezitsa fortress, the second citadel of Tarnovo, the capital city of the Second Bulgarian Tsardom (1185-1396). It was found together with other artefacts of the Christian art and divine ritual laid as relics for consecration in the altar. The manufacturing technique, the iconography and the image style allow to relate the Trapezitsa plate to the Byzantine *cloisonné* enamels from 12th c. AD and attribute it to a Constantinople workshop. The shape and the dimensions of the plate suggest that it decorated the cover of a book, icon, reliquary or pectoral medallion. In a later period, the plate with Christ Pantocrator was reused as decoration of another artefact.

Key words: enamel, Trapezitsa Fortress, relics, Second Bulgarian Tsardom.

Introduction

The subject of this study is a rare monument of Byzantine art discovered during recent archaeological excavations in the capital of the Second Bulgarian Tsardom, Tarnovo. The object is a gilt silver plaque depicting Christ Pantokrator, executed in *cloisonné* and *champlevé* enamel (**fig. 7**). It was recovered from the sanctuary of Church # 22, excavated between 2017 and 2019 within the Trapezitsa Fortress, the second fortified nucleus of the medieval capital. The artefact represents an outstanding example of Byzantine *cloisonné* enamel, a category of objects that is exceptionally rare among the archaeological material from the period of the Second Bulgarian Tsardom (1185-1396). Equally significant are the observations concerning its archaeological context. Of particular interest is its secondary use as a relic deposited for the consecration of a newly constructed church. Originally forming part of a Christian liturgical object – such as the fitting of a book or an icon, a reliquary, or another ecclesiastical object – the silver plaque depicting Christ Pantokrator was reworked for subsequent use. More than a century after its manufacture, it was deposited together with other monuments of Christian art and liturgy in Church # 22, erected in the southwestern sector of the Trapezitsa Fortress during the 1330s. The author's analysis focuses both on the specific archaeological context in which the artefact was discovered and on the object itself as a work of Byzantine art.

Archaeological context of the find

The enamel plaque depicting Christ Pantokrator originated from the Trapezitsa Fortress, one of the two fortified nuclei that formed the urban core of Tarnovgrad, the capital of the Second Bulgarian Tsardom (**fig. 1**). The massive fortification walls, erected during the early decades of the 13th c. AD, enclosed an area of approximately 70 decares, which by the 14th c. AD had become fully occupied by residential

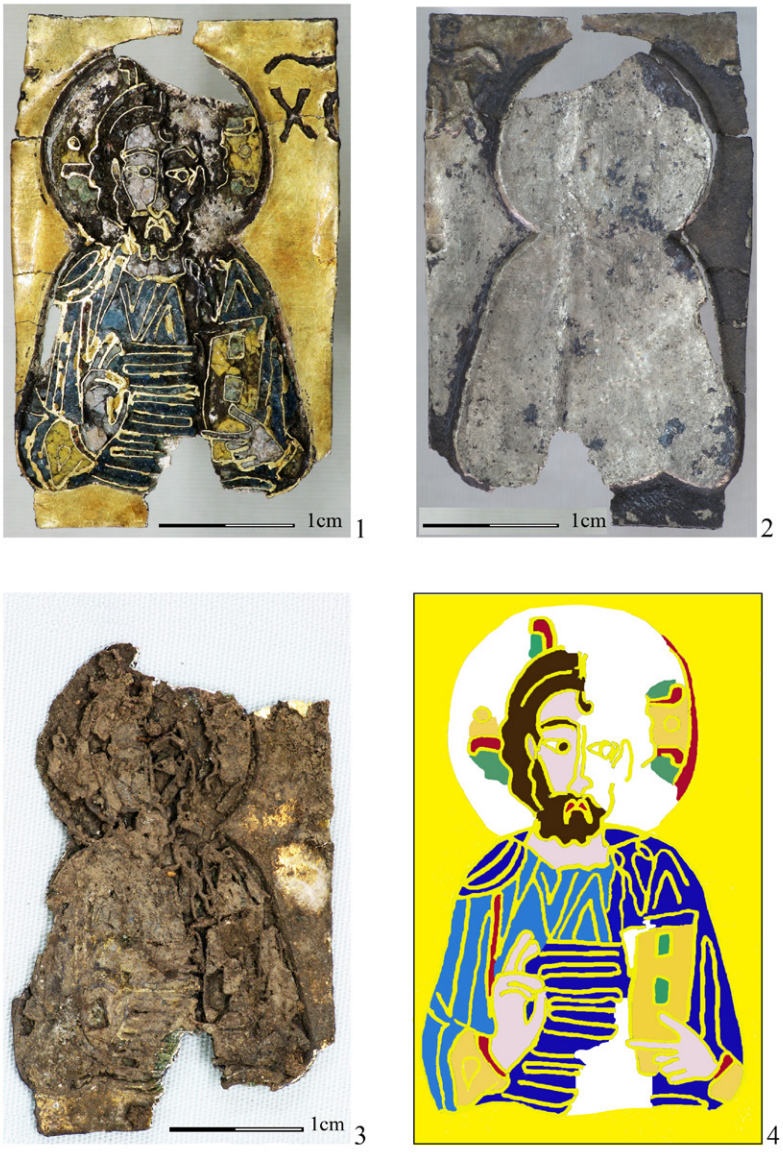


Fig. 7. Silver plaque with an enamel depiction of Christ Pantokrator from Church # 22 in the Trapezitsa Fortress: **1** obverse after conservation and restoration (I. Chokoev); **2** reverse after conservation and restoration (I. Chokoev); **3** obverse before conservation and restoration (I. Chokoev); **4** diagram of the colours of the enamels on the plaque (I. Chokoev)

the sanctuary has also been recorded in Church # 3 in the fortress near Sevlievo. During the excavations carried out in 1980, parts of processional crosses and fittings from a Gospel book were discovered in a masonry-built chamber within the bench along the southern side of the apse (Ботева / Тотев 2019, 92; Тотев / Ботева 2018, 614, fig. 3).

It is important to note that the monuments of Christian liturgy and art deposited during the construction of the church were placed in two locations within Church # 22: around the altar table and beneath the now-vanished structure – a chest/cupboard or a bench – along its southern wall. Thus, in addition to their common function as relics associated with the consecration of the church, they were also linked by the significance attributed to these two areas of the sanctuary. It is therefore reasonable to assume that, for the builders and users of the church, the now-lost structure along the southern wall was invested with a significance approaching that of the altar table, the liturgical center of the church.

The character of the objects deposited for the consecration of churches is noteworthy. These include both objects intended to contain

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