

# FOLIA ARCHAEOLOGICA BALKANICA

## IV

*In honorem professoris  
Viri clarissimi ac doctissimi  
Viktor Lilčić Adams*

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Burton James Stone



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## COMPLEX OF THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES OF STARO BONČE

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**Abstract:** *The archaeological site Staro Bonče extends to the north-eastern part of the Pelagonia valley, more precisely in the western foothills of Selečka Mountain between the villages of Bonče and Podmol near Prilep. Natural biogeographic benefits have enabled continuous development of living in all time periods, from prehistory to the present. Three sites were registered in the Archaeological map of the Republic of Macedonia, under the village Bonče, and four sites were registered under the village of Podmol. With intense research within the project Systematic Archaeological Research of Staro Bonče in the period from 2006 to 2017, thirteen new archaeological sites were discovered and researched. The character of the described sites determines the chronological framework of the existence of the wider area.*

*The large number of necropolises and several buildings so far discovered, among which the monumental tomb of Macedonian type of the site Pavla Čuka, unique in these places, is distinguished, represent significant findings that make the hypothesis of professor Viktor Lilčić PhD for the localization of the antique city of Pelagonia, the capital of the Pelagonians in the early antiquity, and later the capital of the fourth Macedonian merida in the area of Staro Bonče, very probable.*

**Key words:** Staro Bonče, Pelagonia, Early Antiquity

The archaeological complex of sites of Staro Bonče extends to the north-eastern part of the Pelagonia valley, more precisely in the western foothills of Selečka Mountain between the villages of Bonče and Podmol near Prilep. Natural biogeographic benefits have enabled continuous development of living in all time periods, from prehistory to the present. Pelagonia has as well always been a crossroad of important road communications.

Three archaeological sites have been recorded in the Archaeological map of the Republic of Macedonia, under the village of Bonče,<sup>1</sup> and four sites were registe-

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<sup>1</sup> Б. Бабиќ – Б. Китаноски, 1996, 282.

red under the village of Podmol (Figure 1).<sup>2</sup> With intense research within the project Systematic Archaeological Research of Staro Bonče in the period from 2006 to 2017, thirteen new archaeological sites were discovered and researched. With this research, it becomes clear that it is necessary to revise the Archaeological map, that is, to enter the newly recorded sites, as well as to specify the character of those already registered in it.



Fig. 1 - Archaeological complex Staro Bonče, view from the top Visoka (Kjave)

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid, 307.

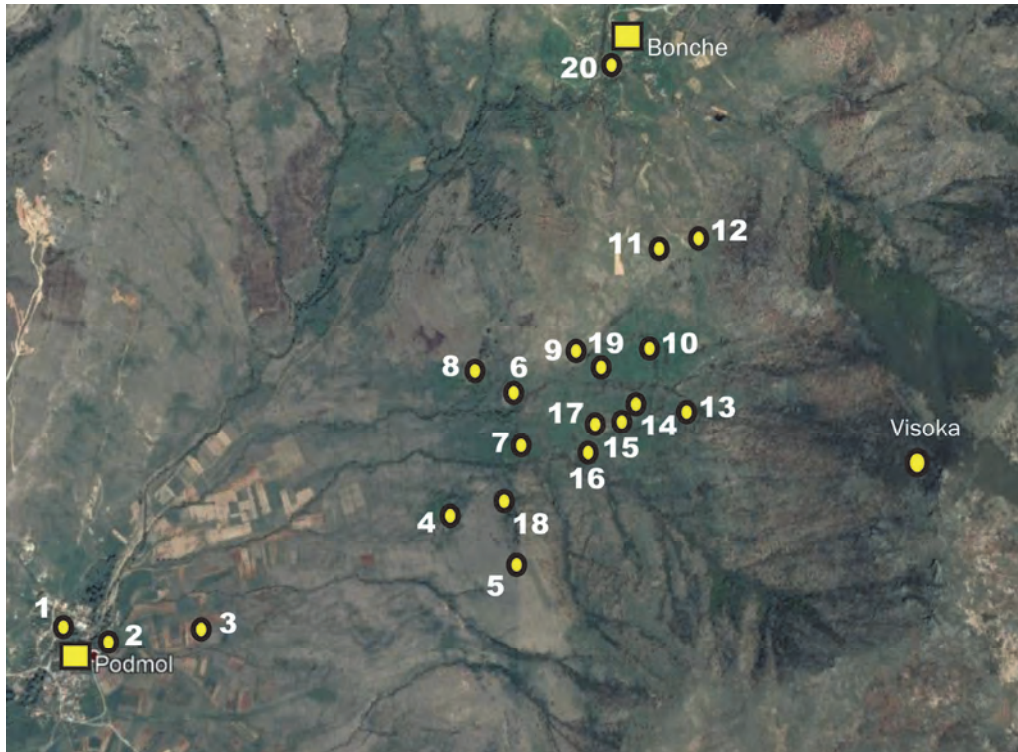


Fig. 2 - Sites

1. Gorno Maalo; 2. Učilište – Gorna Crkva; 3. Kutlišće; 4. Pavla Čuka; 5. Kolkot;
6. Golema Spanica; 7. Mala Spanica; 8. Vigna; 9. Gramagje pod Golema Spanica;
10. Dolen Grad; 11. Kamenolom; 12. Plato nad Kamenolom (Gorna Preslapta);
13. Gramagje - Dzidot; 14. Gramada pod tri kamna - a Roman necropolis;
15. Gramada pod tri kamna - an early antique necropolis; 16. Gramagje na Petočna Voda;
17. Kladenec pod Gramada pod tri kamna; 18. Dupnatica; 19. Plaza; 20. Crkvište

The history of the research of the area that covers the complex of Staro Bonče can be traced from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when during the First World War in Pelagonia and the neighbouring Mariovo region, the French and German military forces operated. Although there are no written data, certain excavations of the monumental tomb at the site Pavla Čuka are remembered in the collective memory of the locals.

Later, between the two World Wars in 1936, N. Vulić, performs research on this representative building, whereby he also revealed the vaulted corridor – dromos.<sup>3</sup>

In 1985, in a modest research campaign of the Institute and Museum - Prilep then, the archaeologist B. Kitanoski performed excavations at the nearby site Kolkot.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> N. Vulić, 1937, 611-612.

<sup>4</sup> B. Kitanoski 1984, 128.



Staro Bonče as an archaeological site is mentioned in several bibliographic units.<sup>5</sup>

With the research carried out at the archaeological site of the top Visoka (which dominates the lower area - the complex Staro Bonče) in 2005, under the leadership of V. Lilčić from the Institute of Art, History and Archaeology at UKIM – Skopje, there is a knowledge of the connection of the two sites within a larger urban whole, consisting of an upper part - acropolis with a geostrategic character, perhaps with a residential building or a sanctuary and a lower settlement with necropolises.

Certainly, a significant additional incentive for starting serious and comprehensive research on the wider area is the accidental detection of parts of three shields belonging to soldiers of the personal guard of the Macedonian King Demetrius I at the location of Dolen Grad.

Summarizing the above-mentioned findings, complemented by an analysis of the random movable archaeological findings stored at the NI Institute and Museum – Prilep,<sup>6</sup> in 2006, the scientific and research project "Systematic archaeological researches at the complex of sites Visoka - Staro Bonče" started, which was organized by the Faculty of Philosophy in Skopje, in cooperation with the NI Institute and Museum - Prilep.<sup>7</sup> Within these research, the site Visoka and the lower area, i.e. the sites within the complex Staro Bonče, are being researched in parallel. In the period from 2006 to 2017, in order to obtain data on the character and chronological belonging, excavations were carried out at the following sites: Pavla Čuka, Dolen Grad, Gramagje - Dzidot, Gramada pod tri kamna, Golema Spanica, Mala Spanica, Gramagje pod Golema Spanica, Gramagje na Petočna Voda and Plato nad Kamenolomot (Gorna Preslapta). On other sites that have not been archaeologically excavated, photo documentation and geo-positioning of a map was carried out. Based on the research findings, a more specific representation of the chronological affiliation and the character of the sites, their mutual ratio and the framework of the settlement existence, as well as the burial of this area in the past, were obtained.

### **1. Site Gorno Maalo, village of Podmol**

Geographical coordinates: 41°12'00.07 " N; 21°34'00.05 " E; 677 m above sea level

Archaeological findings have been excavated at several locations in the village of Podmol, according to which we can confirm the existence of an ancient settlement. The highest concentration is observed in the northern half of the village,

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<sup>5</sup> I. Mikulčić 1966; K. Кеписки, 1971, 43.

<sup>6</sup> It is mainly a numismatic material, accidentally found by the locals.

<sup>7</sup> Head of the project in 2006 is prof. PhD Viktor Lilčić.

where a large number of fragmented garden ceramics, pithoses, coins and other archaeological objects were found during excavations on foundations for residential and other buildings. The character of these findings points to the existence of a settlement in a longer period during the second and first centuries BC, through the Roman imperial period, until the late antiquity. In separate houses, i.e. yards, there are marble findings from architectural plastics, which probably belonged to that settlement or may have been brought from some locations from the wider area. Also in the village church St. Dimitrija several stone elements are kept, including the marble ara with a Greek inscription in nine rows.<sup>8</sup>

## 2. Site Učiliste – Gorna Crkva, village of Podmol

Geographical coordinates: 41°12'00.21 " N; 21°34'00.29 " E; 678 m above sea level

The second location with a large concentration of archaeological material in the village of Podmol, is within the primary school yard and the space to the east from the school. This area is known among the locals as Gorna Crkva (Upper Church). In addition to the surface visible remains of building stone and a multitude of fragmented cover and vessel ceramics, several more important findings were discovered. A large number of coins from the Hellenistic, Roman and Late Antique period are distinguished, Ephes type ceramic lamp, a late variant from the second half of the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC, bronze finds of a figurine of the god Mercury, plumage of a figurine of a warrior and a ring (Figure 3), as well as a marble window meno and part of a column, indicating the possible existence of an early Christian religious building, according to which the location is known as Upper Church.



Fig. 3 - Findings of bronze, Roman period

## 3. Site Kutlište, village Podmol

Geographical coordinates: 41°12'05.75 " N; 21°34'18.80 " E; 688 m above sea level

The archaeological site Kutlište consists of several plateaus at about 600 m east of Podmol village (Figure 4). I. Mikulčić defines it as a settlement of the Hellenistic - Roman period, dating backed by the accidentally discovered findings of the terracotta representation of a woman, the republican denar of Julius Caesar and the

<sup>8</sup> Б. Бабиќ – Б. Китаноски, 1996, 307.



Fig. 4 – Site Kutlište



Fig. 5 - Bracelet, archaic period

antoninian of Gaius Valens Hostilianus.<sup>9</sup> Most probably, the settlement was of broken type, which actively existed in the mentioned period, also extending to the two previously described sites.

In this site a bronze bracelet was found, also accidentally, which according to analogous examples could date from the 7<sup>th</sup> century BC. (Figure 5) This so far unique finding tells us about the possible use of the place in the Iron Age, so that the chronological framework of settlement existence could be moved earlier, at the outset of this era.

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<sup>9</sup> I. Mikulčić, 1966.

#### 4. Site Pavla Čuka, village Podmol

Geographical coordinates: 41°12'24.32 " N; 21°35'18.30 " E; 761 m above sea level

The archaeological site of Pavla Čuka is located at the very border of the areas of the two villages Podmol and Bonče, about 1.8 km northeast of Podmol. From there, in the continuation of this direction, the area called Staro Bonče begins. The site was a huge tumulus, under which a monumental tomb was built in the early antiquity. During the time, the tumulus stretched and lost its original form. Its maximum area size is about 100 meters in diameter.

The tomb in the archaeological science became known in the distant 1936, when excavations were performed for the first time by N. Vulić. At that time the vaulted walkway - dromos and the grave chamber were researched for the first time. We find this from the particularly scarce information from the preliminary report of the researcher.<sup>10</sup> Later, I. Mikulčić published a partial plan of the tomb, drawing analogies and giving a brief overview of the manner of construction and the date.<sup>11</sup> The description of the tomb was again published in the monograph Prilep and the Prilep Region in 1971<sup>12</sup>, after which this exceptionally significant monument remained forgotten until the initial excavations that began in 2007.<sup>13</sup>

The uniqueness of the tomb on the site Pavla Čuka initiated the start of a campaign for its complete research and documentation from 2007, within the framework of a project of the Faculty of Philosophy. The excavation started on the only visible part, the outer entrance part of the vaulted dromos constructed of right-angled monumental stone blocks. The chamber was not visible due to the huge accumulated earthen embankment with erosion (Figure 6).

At the start of the excavation itself, several stone blocks identical by the processing and form as the blocks of the vaulted dromos, were found. The subsequent research revealed that these blocks were in fact part of a monumental wall, which, in the shape of a ring, surrounded the tomb. After this fascinating discovery, the protogenos unique architectural conception, after which the archaeological research of the building became systematically conducted, saw the light (Figure 7).

After the excavations the diameter of the perimetral wall of 32 m was recorded, which wholly surrounded the central elements of the tomb, the vaulted walk-

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<sup>10</sup> N. Vulić 1937, 611-612.

<sup>11</sup> I. Mikulčić 1966, 62-63,73, T. XXIV, Figure 33a.

<sup>12</sup> К. Кепески, 1971, 42.

<sup>13</sup> The archaeological research is led by A. Jakimovski. The research included the archaeologists Duško Temelkoski - deputy head and Aleksandar Mitkoski from the NI Institute and Museum - Prilep, Katarina Kasapinova, archaeologist - documentation specialist and the archeologists Igor Aleksovski, Sasa Lilčić and Dejan Kebakoski, at that time students at the Institute of History of Art and Archaeology.

way - the dromos, the anteroom and the chamber. The lowest row of stone blocks of the wall was dug into the natural rock. Its western part, composed of two rows of stone blocks, and at a height of 0.80 m has been preserved. To this direction, the total measured length of 18 meters from the beginning of the dromos was preserved, after which the wall stops. Most likely the blocks of its continuation were taken away by the local population in the past.



Fig. 6 - Entrance to the tomb before the start of the research



Fig. 7 - Tomb of the site Pavla Ćuka (view from the top)

The other, the eastern part of the perimetral wall has been preserved and consists of three rows of blocks, with the horizontal positioning of the blocks of the first and third row recorded, while the second row was constructed with their vertical placement (Figure 8). This eastern part of the wall was discovered in a length of 37.5 m, measured from the entrance to the dromos, but it, as the western part, was violently interrupted. In continuation, in certain places, the wall is followed as an impression in the rock itself. Part of the degraded stone blocks (11 dislocated blocks were numbered) were used as a fence - adjacent to the neighbouring agricultural plot at only a few meters north of the tomb, in order to protect the plot from erosion. The remaining blocks of the wall which were missing were most likely broken and transported in the two villages Podmol and Bonče, where they were used as construction material for the construction of houses and other buildings. The process of breaking the blocks and their decomposition is documented in the course of the research itself.

It was recorded that the blocks from the eastern part of the wall from their internal side were unprocessed, indicating that only the outer part of the perimetral wall was visible, while from the inside it was embedded with soil, beginning the formation of the calotest cap on the tumulus.



Fig. 8 - The eastern part of the perimetral wall

A few meters east of the entrance to the tumulus, a number of monolithic stone blocks have been registered (Figure 9). Superficially seen, at the time of the discovery, they were disassembled without any particular order, and beside the circular perimetral wall from its outer side. However, on the eastern side of the laid

blocks there is a wall. From this wall *in situ* there are only two rows of stone blocks. Precisely this uniquely preserved wall implies that it was a building with an elongated right-angled form, that is, that it is probably Heroon (Figure 10).



Fig. 9 - Front part of the tomb (view from the top)



Fig. 10 - Remains of Heroon

A part of the access corridor to the interior of the tomb was also discovered. It was carved in a rock and in the form of a mildly lowered ramp and it descended to the entrance of the tumulus, that is, to the beginning of the vaulted walkway – dromos.

The dromos was constructed of monumental rectangular stone blocks, with lengths ranging from 2 to 3 m and up to about 0.60 m in width and height (Figure 11). It was well preserved, with only a few blocks missing. The length of the dromos is 11 m, while the height of its southern end (its beginning) is 3 m, and at the north end it is 3.20 m high before the entrance to the vestibule. The access, that is, the entrance from the open corridor to the vaulted dromos, was closed (blocked) with stone blocks, identical in shape and construction with those of the outer circular wall and the dromos itself. In fact, from that place the closed part of the tomb starts. The chamber and vestibule of the tomb were constructed of smaller standardized travertine blocks (Figure 12). This type of stone is rare in the wider area; there-



Fig. 11 - Dromos



Fig. 12 - The interior of the tomb





Fig. 13 – Chamber of the tomb

walls of the chamber is 2 meters. Unfortunately, no movable finds were detected on the inside of the grave. No architectural decorative elements were discovered, although such a monumental building had to possess them. Namely, in most of the analogous cases of this type of tomb the presence of decorative plastics was registered.

The vestibule and the chamber were built after the rock had been previously cut, so that the space with dimensions of 8 m from east to west and 7 m from north to south was obtained. The vestibule is with inner dimensions of 1.5 x 3.5 m, while the chamber is 4 m long and has a width of 3.5 m.<sup>14</sup>

During our research, 10 graves were discovered among the dismembered remains of the building (Heroon). Six burials are of the type of cysts of roughly made stone slabs, and four are free diggings in the rock terrain. The tombs are without exceptions with small dimensions, which points to the fact that burials of children are concerned. It is assumed that these burials were ritual, as part of some superstition.

<sup>14</sup> A. Jakimovski, 2011, 38-39; A. Jakimovski, 2012, 165-180; V. Lilcijk Adams, A. Jakimovski, 2015, 34-41; A. Jakimovski, 2017, 131-136.

fore it is assumed that at that time it was considered as more valuable building material. The blocks were precisely cut, with dimensions of 0.50 m in height and with a length between 0.60 and 0.90 m. The chamber and the vestibule were separated by a two-winged door, from which the marble threshold with noticeable openings for joining elements was discovered. Almost the same marble block- threshold is found at the entrance of the vaulted dromos to the vestibule, which probably means that there was another door to that place. At the bottom of the chamber, attached travertine blocks to the walls of the chamber were found, placed in the form of the Cyrillic letter Г (Fig. 13). According to their positioning, they probably served as places where the grave gifts were laid. The highest preserved height of the walls of the

Due to the negative influence of the chemical properties of the soil, the osteological material in them is very rare. Their dating is based on the coin of Julian 2 Apostate (361 - 363, Fig. 14, 2).<sup>15</sup> The setting of Tomb 3 at the place of one block, taken out of the circular wall of the tomb, points to the conclusion that in the antiquity, that is, before the 4<sup>th</sup> century, the tomb was already partially degraded and probably robbed. From the second half of the 4<sup>th</sup> century, the monumental building was transformed into a cult place where ritual funerals were performed, as confirmed by the child burials described above.

Considering that the representative grave at the Pavla Ćuka site was opened and robbed in the distant past, no movable find were discovered in its interior. It is therefore difficult to define precise chronological determination. Findings discovered in the outer free space (Hadrian's denar, Krispina's dupond, terracotta and clay cube - Figure 14, 1) and the iron spear discovered in the access corridor at the entrance to the tomb do not possess appropriate deterministic and chronological significance.



Fig. 14 - Krispina and Julian II coins

In the absence of relevant movable finds, we will rely, above all, on the establishing of analogous comparisons with similar graves in relation to the architectural concepts and style of construction. Around 70 tombs of the "Macedonian type" were discovered in the region of Asia Minor and on the Balkans, to which the tomb of

<sup>15</sup> J. W. E. Sutherland 1981, 423, No. 228.

Pavla Čuka belongs.<sup>16</sup> The majority of them are located in lower Macedonia, a territory inhabited by ancient Macedonians. Approximately ten tombs were discovered outside of this territory, six in southern Greece, two in Asia Minor and one in Albania. Indeed, however, these were the places where the presence of the antique Macedonian population was registered. The geographical distribution of this type of tombs in a wider area, and where with security the existence of the Macedonians was confirmed, justifies their definition as "Macedonian type" of tombs.

On the territory of the Republic of Macedonia, two tombs of this type have been discovered. One of them is in the antique town of Lihnid,<sup>17</sup> and the other is the tomb of the site Pavla Čuka, as a segment of the complex of the sites of Staro Bonče, which probably composed the antique town of Pelagonia.<sup>18</sup> The tomb is located in an area inhabited by the autochthonous population of the Pelagonians and is the final northern recorded tomb of the "Macedonian type".

During the early antiquity ancient Macedonians were buried in graves of the type of cysts. Somewhere around the end of the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC commences the burial in graves with larger dimensions. This phenomenon relates to gradual class splitting, whereby the ruling government class buried its deceased in monumental buildings. The tomb of Katerini with a double chamber and flat roof dated around the middle of the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC, represents the earliest known example of a representative tomb among the Macedonians. With a later dating is the so-called grave of Persephone, which has particularly large dimensions and a flat roof, as well.

Already from the second half of the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC they begin to build the so-called "Macedonian type" of tombs, which as the eternal home of the aristocracy were especially decorated.<sup>19</sup> The facades of these tombs were formed in the Ionian and Doric styles, and the inner walls were richly frescoed with plant motifs, scenes of battle and hunting, car races etc.<sup>20</sup> Probably, in the last quarter of the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC, the vaulted tombs appear.<sup>21</sup> The end of the construction of this type of tombs is around the middle of the second century BC, and this was obviously related to the weakening of the Macedonian aristocracy and falling of Macedonia under Roman rule.

However, the appearance of the vault as an architectural element, its origin and dating, provokes polemics and disagreements in the scientific circles. Accor-

<sup>16</sup> B. D'Angelo 2010, 57-68.

<sup>17</sup> В. Битракова, 1985, 136; В. Битракова-Грозданова – П. Кузман, 1998, 3-16. ; P. Kuzman 2009, <http://www.mav.mk/article.php?lang=en&article=18>.

<sup>18</sup> В. Лилчиќ – Д. Кебаќоски, 2006, 22; V. Lilchikj Adams, A. Jakimovski, 2015, 34-41; A. Jakimovski, 2011, 38-39; A. Jakimovski, 2012, 165-180; A. Jakimovski, 2017, 131-136.

<sup>19</sup> S. G. Miller 1982, 153.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, 153-171.

<sup>21</sup> S. G. Miller 1993, 1-4.

ding to certain researchers, the vault in the "Macedonian type" of graves has in fact its own development in Macedonia.<sup>22</sup> However, according to other researchers, the Macedonian military architects, who followed King Alexander III in his conquests, recorded the vault as an architectural solution in the countries of the east. According to this theory, the vaulted tombs in these spaces were probably built after the death of Alexander III, after his military architects return and convey the skill of building the vault.<sup>23</sup> This chronological connection is used by the greater number of researchers to determine the most famous tomb of this type, i.e. Philip's Tomb in Aigai<sup>24</sup>, as the tomb in which Philip III Arrhidaeus was buried. In support of this hypothesis is also the analysis of S. Rotroff for the ceramic findings in the tomb, which are dated in accordance with similar movable material recorded in a closed context in Athens, at the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC.<sup>25</sup> However, even after three and a half decades since the discovery of this royal tomb, there are ongoing scientific discussions about its dating and origin.<sup>26</sup>

The analogies of the tomb of Pavla Čuka are found in several famous tombs. Among them, the closest are the relations to the tombs of Amphipolis<sup>27</sup> and the tomb of Pidna.<sup>28</sup> The discovered heroon, however, makes it closer to the so-called Philip's Tomb. In general, the comparison with these and other tombs of the "Macedonian type" imposes a date on our tomb in the last quarter of the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC, or the early years from the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC. This date is supported by the fact that in this time period the greatest growth and power of the state (Principality) of the antique Pelagonians was confirmed, as confirmed by the detection of material movable finds. In the period before and after, we note a certain economic and political stagnation of this ethnicity.

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<sup>22</sup> N. G. L. Hammond 1978, 331-350; E.A. Fredricksmeier, 1981, 330-334; M. Andronicos, 1987, 1-16.

<sup>23</sup> R. A. Tomlinson 1977, 473-479; T.D. Boyd, 1978, 83-100.

<sup>24</sup> M. Andronicos, 1976, 123-130; M. Andronicos, 1977, 40-72; M. Andronicos, 1980, 168-178; M. Andronicos 1987, 1-16.

<sup>25</sup> S. I. Rotroff 1997; W. J. D. Gill 2008, 335-358; There are more examples of dates given by the material found.

<sup>26</sup> K. Chilidis 2008, 75-103; Only the part from p. 75-86, with the stated literature about the problem of the origin of the vaulted tombs, while I contest the rest of the text with political connotation.

<sup>27</sup> D. I. Lazaridis 1997, 65-74; From the four tombs of Macedonian type discovered in Amphipolis, the so-called Macedonian Tomb 1 has an identical arrangement of the blocks of the concealed dromos, but with twice smaller dimensions from the tomb in Pavla Čuka; The last, fifth discovered tomb in Amphipolis is with monumental dimensions and common is that it has an outer perimetrial wall, the only one similar to the Pavla Čuka tomb with dimensions larger by three times with a diameter of 100 m of the circular wall.

<sup>28</sup> G. Miller S. 1993, 1-4; The tomb is dated in the last third of the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC. This tomb known as the 'Heuzey's Tomb' has identically built dromos with the same dimensions, and the difference is that this tomb has two vestibules and one chambers.

According to the issue of the identification of the deceased who was buried in the tomb of Pavla Čuka, it can only be assumed that it was a Pelagonian basileus unknown to us. Bearing in mind its dating on the turn of the 4<sup>th</sup> century in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC, it probably belonged to one of the direct heirs of the two Pelagonian basileis, whose names were carved in the three inscriptions found in Athens, and dated in 365/4, 363/2<sup>29</sup> in 350<sup>30</sup> BC. In particular, on the second of these inscriptions, the name of the basileus Menelaus of Pelagonia is legible, to whom the city of Athens gives the honour of his communion. In any case, the name of the ruler that was buried in the tomb of Pavla Čuka still remains to be mystery.

### 5. Site Kolkot, village Podmol

Geographical coordinates: 41°12'16.84 " N; 21°35'34.07 " E; 850 m above sea level



Fig. 15 - Site Kolkot

On the naturally dominant elevation in the immediate vicinity of about 350 meters south-east of the Pavla Čuka tomb, the archaeological site Kolkot is located.<sup>31</sup> Archaeological researches were carried out at this site only in 1985, when a circular

<sup>29</sup> F. Papazoglu 1957, 199-200; I. Mikulčić 1966, 72; В. Лилчич – Д. Кебакоски, 2006, 22.

<sup>30</sup> I. Mikulčić, 1966, 73.

<sup>31</sup> V. Lilchikj Adams – A. Jakimovski, 2015, 32.

wall was discovered with dimensions of about 30 meters in diameter and 1.20 meters preserved height (figures 16 and 17), built of fine crushed rock with mud as a connecting agent. At the centre of the circle in the natural rock, four right-angled chambers were found, for which the researcher assumed that they were graves, and other interventions in the natural rock were disclosed, for which no explanation was given.<sup>32</sup> Preliminary and extremely poor information from this research is given in the Archaeological Review.<sup>33</sup>

The presented material is defined as belonging to the late antiquity, from the only saved / published photograph it can be noted that it is very similar to the material found at the Pavla Čuka tomb.<sup>34</sup> Bearing in mind that around the tomb we have burials from the late antiquity period and, in fact, the whole material (coin and fragmented pottery) around it belongs to the late antiquity, it is probable that two buildings of the same period, from the early antiquity are concerned, which were used again, that is, they were respected much later in the later antiquity. This conclusion is also supported by the fact that there is almost an identical diameter of the circular walls of the tomb and Kolkot, as well as the dromos that is perceived on the surface, connecting the two building. According to the proximity of Pavla Čuka and the surroundings with a large number of early antiquity necropolises, as well as the elements that the building of the archaeological site Kolkot possesses, and in the absence of excavation, material and technical documentation, we can only assume that it is a cult bu-



Fig. 16 - Wall construction



Fig. 17 - Wall construction

<sup>32</sup> Archaeological excavations were carried out by the Institute and Museum Prilep, under the leadership of B. Kitanovski; B. Kitanovski B., 1984, 128.

<sup>33</sup> B. Kitanovski, 1984, 128.

<sup>34</sup> The prepared field documentation has never been deposited in the Institute and Museum Prilep, and also the movable archaeological material was lost.

ilding connected with the procession of burials or maybe a local variant of the cult to agriculture, or something similar to Tesmophorion (Tesmophoria) - a circular shrine - temple, in the honour of Demetra and Persephone, especially respected in the early antiquity.<sup>35</sup>

## 6. Site Golema Spanica, village Bonče

Geographical coordinates: 41°12'44.95 " N; 21°35'30.42 " E; 779 m above sea level

The site Golema Spanica in the Archaeological map of the Republic of Macedonia is registered under the name Spanica and is defined as a site with solitary finds from the Hellenistic and late antiquity period.<sup>36</sup> During the research, about 2 km southwest of the village of Bonče, we found two sites which are known as Mala and Golema Spanica among the locals. These are two hills separated from one another about 150 meters, which from the strong erosion were washed down to the rock itself during the time, with visible remains of graves embedded in the rock itself.



Fig. 17 - Golema Spanica site (view from Mala Spanica)

<sup>35</sup> A. Jakimovski, 2017, 131-136.; These dilemmas we hope to be clarified after carrying out revision archaeological researches at the site Kolkot, as well as in the places where the soil from archaeological excavations has been deposited.

<sup>36</sup> Б. Бабиќ – Б. Китаноски, 1996, 282.

Golema Spanica is a necropolis on the very top of the dominant rock (Figure 17). Within the framework of the project, a total of 14 graves have been cleaned and documented, which in the past were most probably opened during illegal excavations (Figure 18 - plan). The burials were carried out in rectangular chambers dug in the rock, and they spread to the eastern end. The dimensions depended on the size of the deceased, and have a depth of about 50 - 70 cm. On the outside around the right-angled chambers, with a recess up to 15 cm frames were created on which the missing stone roofing plates were supported (Figures 19 and 20). Most likely they were taken away by the local population and used as a construction material. The tombs were grouped in two or three, so we assume that it is a matter of family burials.

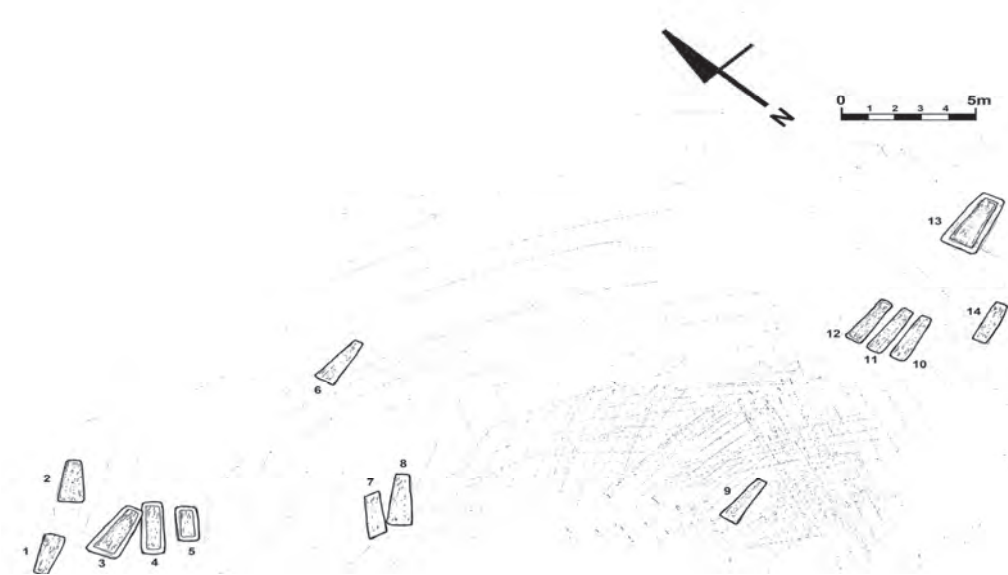


Fig. 18 - Golema Spanica site - a plan for a necropolis

In view of the fact that only cleaning and documentation of the previously open grave constructions was performed, no finds were detected that would serve for dating and determining the necropolis. All graves have an approximate orientation east - west. According to the fact that they become narrower towards the east, it can be concluded that the heads of the deceased were placed at the west end of the chambers. This fact implies the assumption that it is probably a matter of Christian funerals, and it can be supported by the existence of the early Christian site Vignata (Stara Crkva), located in the immediate vicinity of Golema Spanica. In this space, beside a silver drachma of Alexander III (Figure 21), two medieval coins, a bronze one



of John II Komnenos (1118-1143) and a silver matapan of Jacopo Contarini (1275-1280).<sup>37</sup>



Fig. 19 - The graves of the site Golema Spanica



Fig. 20 - The graves of the site Golema Spanica



Fig. 21 - The Drachma of Alexander III

### 7. Site Mala Spanica, village Bonče

Geographical coordinates: 41°12'32.90 " N; 21°35'32.35 " E; 769 m above sea level

At the site of Mala Spanica, which is in the immediate vicinity of Golema Spanica, there is a grave dug in a rock, with dimensions of 1.80 x 0.50 (0.70) m. (Figure 22). The measured depth is of about 60 cm, while the covering plate is missing. The grave in shape is identical to the described graves of Golema Spanica and is probably al-

<sup>37</sup> Б. Бабиќ – Б. Китаноски, 1996, 282;

so 'widely' excavated in the past. Apart from a number of improperly shaped ones, other noticeable interventions in the rock are not visible.



Fig. 22 - The tomb of the site of Mala Spanica

### 8. Site Vignata – Stara Crkva, village Bonče

Geographical coordinates: 41°12'46.72 " N; 21°35'22.41 " E; 765 m above sea level

During the research of the wider area within the project, in 2007, the site well-known among the locals as Vignata or Stara Crkva was also visited. This archaeological site is located at about 300 meters west of Golema Spanica. The remains of construction stone, as well as several characteristic marble elements that refer to the existence of the early Christian basilica at this location, are recorded. Among the marble findings there are bodies of pillars, part of a parapet plate, probably, window meno (Figure 23).<sup>38</sup>



Fig. 23 - Pillar

### 9. Site Gramagje under Golema Spanica, village Bonče

Geographical coordinates: 41°12'50.69 " N; 21°35'43.70 " E; 807 m above sea level



Fig. 24 – Site Gramagje under Golema Spanica

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<sup>38</sup> Д. Кебакоски, 2008, 50 - 58.

In 2012, small-scale excavations were carried out on the location called Gramagje, a tumba with an elongated form. It is located near the site of Golema Spanica, and right next to the local road communication (to the right of it) that connects the villages Podmol and Bonče (Figure 24). On the surface, a large number of rock groupings are recorded, and as more specific, more sizable plated stones are evident, which are buried vertically in the ground. In some of them, the upper edges visible over the surface are clenched in such a way that they have a slightly sharp appearance. The southern part of the tumba was researched, with the opening of two grave constructions (Figure 25). And in the two graves researched, their fillings with smaller stones after the execution of the funerals were confirmed.



Fig. 25 - Tombs 1 and 2

Tomb 1, with orientation northwest- southeast is angled shape and has dimensions of 2.40 x 1.30 m. The one downward and the other cross-side were formed with massive plate stones, vertically placed, while the other two were formed with amorphous stones with medium size. The base is the rock, and the measured depth is 0.60 m. The osteological remains of the buried deceased are not detected, and only fragments of ceramic vessels are recorded from the movable finds.

Tomb 2 has dimensions 2.90 x 2.00 m and a depth of 0.95 m. With its orientation, northwest-southeast, it occupies a position setting under a right angle in relation to Tomb 1. The sides of the grave structure were formed with vertically placed massive plates, whereby by smaller amorphous stones its angles were finished. At the base, the rock was carved in the shape of a rectangular pit with dimensions of 2.00 to 0.97 m and a depth of 0.20 m. In this grave, as well, no skeleton remains are recorded, and fragmentary finds of several ceramic vessels and two fibulas of Asia Minor type are found among the grave additions (Figure 26, 1, 2). Another fibula of this type was discovered in the free space (Figure 26, 3).

According to the characteristics of the discovered finds, the site Gramagje is a necropolis that is chronologically located in a timeframe from the 4<sup>th</sup> to the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC. Burial was probably by cremation of the deceased. Identical grave constructions were recorded in several other locations on the wider area within the complex of archaeological sites Staro Bonče, described below. This means intensive residential living in the specified time interval.



Fig. 26 - Findings from the necropolis Gramagje under Golema Spanica

## 10. Site Dolen Grad, village Bonče

Geographical coordinates: 41°12'50.97 " N; 21°36'00.50 " E; 834 m above sea level

With the start of the research of the archaeological site of Visoka in 2005, by professor PhD Viktor Lilčić, which is actually the Acropolis of Dolen Grad, the interest in the exceptionally rich archaeological area of Staro Bonče became real again. This interest was additionally increased with the accidental finding of the remains of the three ancient Macedonian shields. In particular, at a location in Dolen Grad (about 1.2 km south of the village of Bonče), a resident from that village found fragmented bronze frames of the shields, whereafter the parts were divided among several residents of that village and the village Podmol<sup>39</sup>. After the intervention of the NI Institute and Museum - Prilep and the Faculty of Philosophy of Skopje, these unique findings were collected in the institutions. The following year 2006, under the leadership of professor PhD Dragi Mitrevski and archaeologist Goce Kocovski, protective probe hole archaeological research was carried out on the site. With Probe 1 with dimensions of 2 x 2 m the space of the findings was researched, in order to determine that the shields together with other findings (ceramic vessels and weights and iron gears) were deposited in a large vessel pithos, placed in a pit with oval form (Figure 27).



Fig. 27 - Location of the findings

<sup>39</sup> Д. Темелкоски, П. Жуел, 2007.

The shields are a unique discovery in the Republic of Macedonia.<sup>40</sup> With a chemical analysis of the structure of fragments of the bronze frames, carried out by P. Piccardo of the University of Genoa, Italy<sup>41</sup>, the existence of three shields was unquestionably confirmed. This analysis also shows that the wooden foundations of the shields were overlaid with leather, on which the bronze frames were placed.



Fig. 28 –  
Graphic reconstruction of the shields

The shields have a central twelve-ray sun, and around it on the stripe frame is an inscription with a Greek alphabet ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΔΗΜΗΤΡΙΟΥ (Figure 28).<sup>42</sup> This inscription is perimetrically surrounded by seven smaller suns which have eight rays. An evident element, which additionally confirms the existence of three shields, is the number of the preserved letters of the fragmented bronze frames (Figure 29 and Figure 30).<sup>43</sup>

In the chronology of antique Macedonian rulers, two kings are called Demetrius. On the territory of the Republic of Macedonia, including on the wider area with-

in the complex of Staro Bonče, coins only of the king Demetrius I (306-286 BC) were discovered.<sup>44</sup> The analysis of the findings of ceramic vessels found in the pit, performed by professor PhD V. Bitrakova Grozdanova, showed their date on the passage from the 4<sup>th</sup> in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC.<sup>45</sup> According to this information on the shields of Staro Bonče, probably the name of King Demetrius I was inscripted.<sup>46</sup> There remains an open question about why, in one pit, three representative guard shields would be placed? This question also reflects the unfamiliarity about the nature of the pit. Is it a cult pit or a cenotaph? Apart from these two unanswered questions, the finding of the three shields in Staro Bonče represents a special archaeological find.

<sup>40</sup> The conservation and reconstruction of the shields was carried out at the NI Institute and Museum Ohrid by the conservationists Biljana and Klime Balevi; One shield is exhibited at the National Archaeological Museum Skopje, and two in the NI Institute and Museum Prilep.

<sup>41</sup> P. Piccardo, D. Temelkoski, 2011, 201-211.

<sup>42</sup> V. Lilchikj Adams – A. Jakimovski, 2015, 32-33.

<sup>43</sup> P. Juhel - D. Temelkoski, 2007, 165-180.

<sup>44</sup> В. Лилчиќ - Н. Шелдеров, 1994, 169.

<sup>45</sup> V. Bitrakova-Grozdanova, 2007, 870, Tab. 2, 5-9.

<sup>46</sup> P. Juhel - D. Temelkoski, 2011, 177-191.

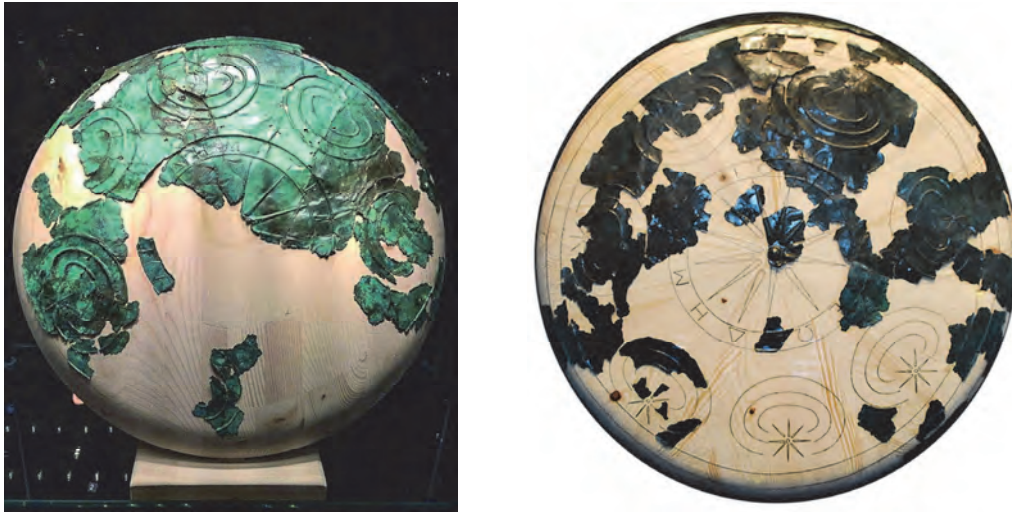


Fig. 29 - Reconstruction of the shield (in the Archaeological Museum Skopje)



Fig. 30 - Reconstruction of the shield - detail

In addition to the research of the site where the remains of these significant finds were discovered, another probe was placed in the immediate vicinity. With this Probe 2 (dimensions of 4 x 3 m), the foundation parties of two walls were discovered, built in a dry wall technique. Unfortunately, the limited resources, as



well as the disagreements with the owner of the plot, prevented the larger volume of research of the construction to which these walls belonged, resulting in more concrete knowledge. However, the detected modest fragmentary remains of ceramic vessels, showed time overlapping with the construction of the representative finds from the pit described above.

### **11. Site Kamenolom, village Bonče**

Geographical coordinates: 41°13'07.58 " N; 21°36'00.74 " E; 863 m above sea level

At the location of Kamenol at about 700 m south of the village of Bonče, a large concentration of stone is observed on the surface. Research is not carried out, but it is assumed that this area was also used in the past for residential living or as a necropolis. From this site is the finding of the top of iron spear.

### **12. Site Plato above Kamenolom (Gorna Preslapta), village Bonče**

Geographical coordinates: 41°13'09.53 " N; 21°36'07.34 " E; 884 m above sea level



Fig. 31 - Site Plato above Kamenolom (Gorna Preslapta)

On an elevated area in the immediate vicinity of the site Kamenolom a larger plateau with slight side falls was formed (Figure 31). The recognition indicates that the space was used for funerals. A large number of stone groups were visible on the surface, similar to those of the site Gramagje bellow Gorna Spanica. On the site the-

re were also visible traces of wild digging. This elevation which is about 1 km south of the village of Bonče, among the locals is known as M.V. Gorna Preslapta. In 2013, three tombs were opened, from which Tomb 1 and Tomb 2 in terms of their time period may be included within the framework from the 5<sup>th</sup> to the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC, while the third dates somewhat later, in the Roman period.



Fig. 32 - Tomb 1

Tomb 1, which is positioned on the most dominant point of the elevation, is oriented north-south. Around it, on the surface there is an enclosed wreath of very massive stones, bordering it (Figure 32). This wreath is in the shape of a trapezoid, with longitudinal sides with a length of about 5.00 m, the north side with a length of 3.60 m and the south side of 4.20 m. The vestibule between this wreath and the grave structure was filled with a crevice of smaller rocks, and also the burial structure after the completion of the funeral was filled with stones. The grave construction itself was formed with the digging of a right-angled pit in the rock plazika with dimensions of 4.10 x 2.00 m, where after in the upper part with partially-processed stones bordering walls were elevated. From the findings, fragments of several ceramic vessels were recorded, of which typical is one plate from the type ihtija and one of the type ehinus, coated with black varnish and one gilded bronze buckle with an irregular ball-like form, processed in the form of rosette. From the skeleton of the deceased, there were rare osteological remains, and on the grounds of the grave - the rock plazika, traces of grime were recorded. The existence of a fence wreath

around the grave construction speaks of the probable funeral of a person with a higher social position.

Tomb 2 of the necropolis is at 60 m southeast of Tomb 1 with approximately right-angled form and the same orientation north-south. On the very surface the layer of stones with medium and very large dimensions is recorded (Figure 33). The grave structure was formed with fenced walls from a massive plate of stone, and is with dimensions of 3.00 x 2.10 m (Figure 34). At a mean depth of about 0.60 m the rock - the foundation of the grave was found. Amorphous fragments of ceramic vessels were recorded, one of which was with black varnished surface, and the fragmentarily preserved glass vessel lekythos - ariballos, found of import - eastern Mediterranean type is separated as a more typical find (Figure 35). A poorly preserved fragment of needle of iron fibula was also recorded.



Fig. 33 - Tomb 2, unopened

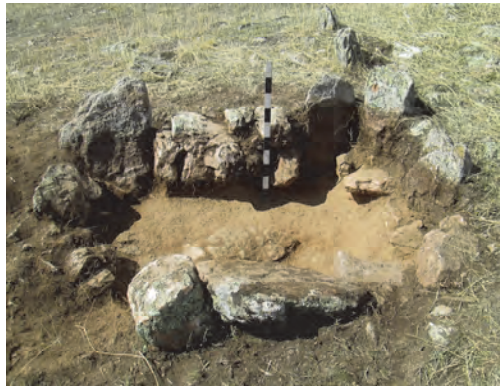


Fig. 34 - Tomb 2, open



Fig. 35 - Finding in the Tomb 2, glass vessel lekythos - ariballos

Tomb 3 is positioned at about 50 m east of Tomb 1 and is of the type of cyst (Figure 36). It has north-south orientation and is open with illegal excavations. The form is trapezoidal, with dimensions 2.30 x 0.90/0.70 m and a depth of 0.50 m. The covering plates are missing, while the foundation is the rock itself. In the soil taken out of its interior, no movable finds were discovered, but according to the manner of formation and according to other graves with finds, discovered at Staro Bonče, most probably it is a tomb originating from the Roman period.



Fig. 36 - Tomb 3

### 13. Site Gramagje – Džidot/the wall, village Bonče

Geographical coordinates: 41°12'41.24 " N; 21°36'10.30 " E; 869 m above sea level

The site Gramagje/Džidot is located at the foot of the mountain, under the top Visoka. The site before its accidental disclosure with recognition in 2009 was not known in archaeological science. At first several nicely shaped stone blocks were recorded, decomposed from wall construction and used as borderline between farm plots, in order to keep the soil from erosion. With the installation of the control

probe (trench), Wall 1 was discovered stretching in the east-west direction. With the research that continued the following year - 2010, despite this wall which was discovered in the length of 15 meters, a small part of Wall 2 was discovered with the direction of north-south and in the length of 3 meters. The width of the walls is 0.70 meters (Figure 37).



Fig. 37 - Remains of wall architecture

The bottom line of Wall 1 is of nicely shaped, rectangular stone blocks with dimensions of about 1 m in length and 0.70 m in width, while in the second row it is constructed with identical stone blocks, and finished in height with small unprocessed rocks, bound with a mud. According to the method of constructing of the wall and its length, we assume that there was a public building at this location. During the research, right up to the wall from its southern side, bronze coins of Philip II and Alexander III (Figure 38) were found, as well as the upper part of the Peloponnesian type bronze needle. These finds, as well as the manner of processing of the

stone blocks from which the wall was built, refer to the date of construction in the middle of the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC and the beginning of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC<sup>47</sup>, i.e. during the same period when the construction of the site Visoka and the tomb of Pavla Čuka was performed.



Fig. 38 - Coins of Philip II and Alexander III

**14. Site Gramada Pod Tri Kamna (under three stones) - Roman necropolis, village Bonče**

Geographical coordinates: 41°12'39.27 " N; 21°35'56.83 " E; 822 m above sea level

**15. Site Gramada Pod Tri Kamna - early antique necropolis, village Bonče**

Geographical coordinates: 41°12'39.16 " N; 21°35'53.28 " E; 814 m above sea level

The most extensive archaeological excavations were carried out at the location of Gramada Pod Tri Kamna (under three stones), a larger natural elevation with an elongated form, at about 1.5 km south of Bonče (Figure 39). The site was registered in 2009 with the recording of visible dense concentration of groups of stones on the

<sup>47</sup> V. Lilchikj Adams - A. Jakimovski, 2015, 30-31.

surface, distributed in certain forms. In many places, the site has shallower and deeper diggings, as a result of illegal activities in the past.



Fig. 39 - Site Gramada Pod Tri Kamna

With systematic probe surveys, realized in several campaigns, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2016 and 2017, the use of the area for burials for a longer period of time was determined, beginning from the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC until the Roman period. A total of 22 tombs dating from the early Antiquity and several Roman time tombs were recorded.

The subsequent Roman tombs, which were unfortunately previously opened with illegal excavations, represent deeper rectangular grave pits dug in soft land plazika and covered with massive stone slabs (Figures 40 and 41). In view of the detected condition, they do not have skeleton remains or any other additions. The only not tomb-related Roman time find is one bronze coin, utterly destroyed and not readable, but according to the shape it corresponds to the Roman imperial period.

Regarding the older burials on the necropolis Gramada Pod Tri Kamna (under three stones), we mainly encounter grave constructions identically formed as the previously mentioned early-antiquity necropolises within the complex. These are shallower or relatively deeper grave pits - chambers, carved in the rock, mainly

with irregular or regular right-angled form, and rarely with a square or oval basis (Figures 42).



Fig. 40 - Roman Tomb 1



Fig. 41 - Roman Tomb 2



Fig. 42 - Part of the early antique necropolis

On the surface they were mostly bordered with vertically embedded longitudinal plates or with roughly processed blocks. The filling with smaller amorphous stones between the enclosures of the bordering stones and the angles of the constructions was noted. The dimensions and orientation of the graves are different. Joint



chambers within one fence structure are present, as well as grave constructions that have a common side, referring to family burials (Figure 43). Only the tombs marked as 11 and 12 are separated according to the shape of the grave chamber, an oval-pitched pit in the rock, on the surface bordered by partially carved stones (Figure 44). For all the tombs it is common that, after the execution of the funerals, they were filled with smaller stones, probably as part of a certain final ritual procession (Figure 45).



Fig. 43 - Tombs 8 and 9,  
an example of family burial



Fig. 44 - Tomb 12



Fig. 45 - Probe 4

In none of the graves skeletal remains were recorded, and the occurrence of grime is mostly observed. According to the registered rich archaeological inventory dating from the 6<sup>th</sup> to the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC, it can be concluded that the cremation of the deceased was the only one, dominant way of burial in the relevant period of time, confirmed at another archaeological sites.

Among the finds dominate ceramic vessels, fragmented, but also some completely preserved. The vessels with characteristic forms for the passage from the 6<sup>th</sup> in the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC (archaic period) are of rougher manufacturing, while the laterally dated in the 4<sup>th</sup> and 3<sup>th</sup> century BC are somewhat finer. Rarely, there is an occurrence of brown non-greasy varnish on the top surface of the early finds, or black on the top of the later ones. Some of the vessels with larger dimensions and evident remains of ash and grime probably had the function of urns, in which the cremated remains of the deceased were placed, in Tomb 2, a mug with one handle (Figure 46), and a crater in Tomb 3 (Figure 47).



Fig. 46 - Urn in Tomb 2



Fig. 47 - Urn in Tomb 3

The more significant finds of ceramic vessels of the archaic graves (numbered 1 to 5) are two scale-like vessels and one miniature mug/cup, while the jewellery found is of Minor Asia type of bronze and iron fibulas, a pair of silver boat-like earrings in (Figure 48) and a bronze bracelet. In Tomb 3, an iron top of a spear and an iron knife were discovered.



Fig. 48 - Finding in a Tomb

type on the territory of the Republic of Macedonia (Figure 49), also a bronze ring with a very noticeable decoration of its crown (representation of an adult person with a hat kausia that most probably holds a child in the arms), a bronze bracelet, a silver fibula of Minor Asia type (Figure 50), top of a spear and an iron knife (Figure 51).<sup>48</sup> In Tomb 11, tops of two iron spears were found, while in Tomb 12 the remains of a larger wide open bronze vessel with two symmetrically placed iron racks (probably representing an urn in which the remains from the cremated deceased and grave additions were deposited), tops of two iron spears and also an iron knife.



Fig. 49 - Fiala of Tomb 10

The richest in terms of the finds and also exceptionally valuable are the three so-called graves of warriors, Tomb 10, Tomb 11 and Tomb 12. Apart from the fragments of ceramic vessels with characteristic forms for the early antique period, to which these graves chronologically belong, in each of them significant contributions have been discovered, which make them distinctive. In Tomb 10, the most representative findings were recorded: a bronze ritual vessel - fiala with vegetable ornamentation, rare find of this

In the research of the necropolis at the site Gramada under three stones, several other tops of iron spears and two iron arrows with a square cross-section were discovered in the area between the grave sections.

Considering the scope of its research, this necropolis offered a diverse and highly valuable movable archaeological material, according to which its existence has been determined in the long period, from the late-archaic time, through the early antiquity, to the Roman imperial period. This wealth of representative grave additions points to the burial of inhabitants belonging to the affluent social layer, of a still unknown settlement for us.

<sup>48</sup> V. Lilchikj Adams – A. Jakimovski, 2015, 30-31.



Fig. 50 - Findings in Tomb 10



Fig. 51 - Findings in Tomb 10

## 16. Site Gramagje na Petočna Voda, village Bonče

Geographical coordinates: 41°12'34.44 " N; 21°35'48.03 " E; 797 m above sea level



Fig. 52 - Site Gramagje na Petočna Voda

Close to the site Gramagje Pod Tri Kamna, about 100 m towards the southwest, on two natural parallel longitudinal elevations stretching from the east to the west, identical groups of rocks are noticeable on the surface, as on the sites described above belonging to the early antiquity necropolises (Figure 52). The north elevation is about 45 m long, while the largest measured width is about 20 m. The southern elevation is about 75 m long, with the east end ending up to a width of 7 m, while the width is about 23 m in the western end. In many places there were wild excavations visible. The research in 2013 included two tombs.

Tomb 1, which is located in the middle part of the north elevation is oriented east - west (Figure 53). Here we also find an embankment of smaller stones over the grave construction, formed with bordering walls from massive plate stones. In the spaces between them, as well as in the angles, smaller stones were inserted. The burial pit itself is with a right-angled shape and dimensions of 3.80 x 3.30 m. At a depth of about 0.50 m the base is registered, which is a hard-filled soil with a pale yellow colour. In one part, in the middle of the base, placement of stone plates is re-

corded. In the found movable findings of fragmented parts of ceramic vessels the fragment of shallow cone-shaped bowl, coated with black varnish, was singled out.



Fig. 53 - Tomb 1



Fig. 54 - Tomb 2, unopened



Fig. 55 - Tomb 2, open

Tomb 2 is located at the western end of the southern elevation of the necropolis of Petočna Voda. It has smaller dimensions and orientation north - south. Filling with smaller stones after the completion of the funeral ceremony and bordering with large elongated plate stones is visible again (Figure 54). At a depth of about 0.40 m the base is registered, which is a hard-filled soil with a pale yellow colour. In one place in the southern part, there were signs of severe burning. The grave pit is of trapezoidal form with a length of 2.80 m and on the north and south sides of 1.20

m and 1.70 m respectively. (Figure 55) A very modest, movable material of fragments of ceramic vessels with no characteristic features is recorded.

These researches confirmed the existence of another location where the inhabitants of the city under Visoka performed funerals in the time interval from the 5<sup>th</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC.

### 17. Kladenec na Petočna Voda

Geographical coordinates: 41°12'38.82 " N; 21°35'43.65 " E; 791 m above sea level

In the immediate vicinity of Gramada Pod Tri Kamna to the west, there is a lower elevation, which due to the agricultural activities in the past became fairly stretched. On this area with illegal excavations, several graves of the cyst type were opened, formed and covered with nicely processed stone slabs. At the foot, we registered a wall, with the western site thereof being cleared to document it. The wall was built in a classical manner from semi-finished monolithic stone blocks. According to these finds, this location was used in the Roman period, thus confirming the continuity of the existence of the settlement, which was spread out in a wider area known as Staro Bonče.

### 18. Site Dupnatica, village Bonče

Geographical coordinates: 41°12'30.23 " N; 21°35'39.95 " E; 787 m above sea level



Fig. 56 - Site Dupnatica, Probe 1 from the northwest

A somewhat different conception of the formation of a necropolis space in the early ancient period was recorded in the site Dupnatica, located at about 600 m north-east of the site Pavla Čuka. It represents a dominant elevation, which to the northwest turns into a mild slope. On the surface of the wider area stone groups are visible.

In 2015, research of one specific area was carried out (Figure 56). The multitude of the large and medium dimension rocks was initially raised, which with the further excavations turned to be a part of the embankment formed after the funeral was completed. As a new phenomenon, the existence of a central grave whole with very large dimensions was recorded here (Figure 57). Marked as Tomb 4 (according to the order of discovery in relation to other grave constructions) it was formed with 12 large plain stone blocks, some of them with lengths exceeding 1 m, vertically embedded in the soil *zdravica*. It has dimensions of 5.10 x 3.10 m and orientation east - west. In two segments, in the eastern and western parts, a level of stone occurs. The foundation of the grave is a hard soil *zdravica*.



Fig. 57 - Tomb 4

With regard to the movable finds, it is dominated by the fragments of dozens of ceramic vessels, whereby as forms the presence of two echinous plates is defined, then kylix, vessels with a profiled wreath stretching to the outside, a vessel called kantharos with a black-varnished surface and another black-varnished vessel. The most important find is one brooch of gold made in the filigree technique, with the



upper side formed in the form of rosette, while by granulation silvery grains are applied to the back side, one positioned centrally and the remaining ones radially (Figure 60.1). Another more significant find was discovered, a silver needle with a cone head.



Fig. 58 - Tomb 2



Fig. 59 - Tombs 6 and 7

The seven other discovered tombs distributed around the described central hole were formed with smaller or larger partially carved stone blocks and stones with an amorphous form, and have different orientations, dimensions, and irregular right-angled forms (Figure 58 and Figure 59). The grave pits were dug in a hard yellowish soil. In the research of several of the graves at the level of their bases, the remains of grimes were recorded, which implies to the cremation of the deceased. This assumption is supported by the fact that no skeleton remains were found in none of the tombs.

In addition to the multitude of fragments of ceramic vessels, more significant movable finds are the silver fibula of Minor Asia type in Tomb 1 and the terrible representation of Cybele (Figures 60, 2 and 3) and the two iron rings with oval crowns found in Tomb 8. In this tomb several fragments of a bigger ceramic vessel, most likely an urn, with carbonized osteological residues were collected. Another find of bronze fibula of Minor Asia type is singled out, found at the beginning of the research when raising the rock layer (Figure 60, 4).

The movable finds, as well as the way of forming the grave constructions, chronologically include the necropolis of Dupnatica in the period from the 5<sup>th</sup> to the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC. The research of this necropolis offered an awareness of the existence of a concept in shaping the necropolis space by grouping several tombs around the central entity, which we marked as Tomb 4. Most probably a family burial is concerned. However, the large volume of the central entity implies a consideration in the

direction of a possible redefinition of its function, or whether it may have represented a place where the ritual funeral processes took place.



Fig. 60 - Findings in tombs

### 19. Site Plaza, village Bonče

Geographical coordinates: 41°12'47.53 " N; 21°35'47.77 " E; 800 m above sea level

At about 300 m west of the place where the remains of the shields with the name of the King Demetrius I have been found, at a wide open level space of a connection of two valleys stretching from the bottom of the mountain from east to west the site Plaza is found. At this location, on the surface groups of stones are also visible.

Archaeological excavations were not carried out, but according to the sites described above, it is highly probable that they were part of grave constructions. The two worthy finds, the silver strater of Amyntas III and the bronze coin of Philip II recorded in the numismatic collection of the NI Institute and Museum Prilep as occasional finds (Figures 61, 1, 2), refer to the chronological frame of 5<sup>th</sup> to the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC of existence of the site of Plaza. The valley that closes this site on the

south side is inserted as a site called Dlabok Dol, with the silver drachma of Alexander III recorded (Figure 61, 3).



Fig. 61 - Coins of the Macedonian kings

## 20. Crkvište

Geographical coordinates: 41°13'39.73 " N; 21°35'39.77 " E; 770 m above sea level

On the west entrance into the village of Bonče, the site Crkvište was registered. The name itself points to the existence of an older Christian facility on this site, but the foundations of marble move the chronological framework of existence much later to the antique period. In the courtyard of the village church of St. Jovan theologian we find marble pillars, decorative architectural elements, ara with an inscription in ancient Greek and round tiles, as well with inscriptions in ancient Greek.<sup>49</sup>

According to the recorded sites in the period from 2007 to 2017, it is possible to make a preliminary picture for the archaeological complex Staro Bonče, which, definitely, has huge potential. It should be noted that these 11 archaeological campaigns were with limited resources in the duration of 15 to 30 working days, and we hope that the next researches will complete the picture, so that we would get better knowledge to define the riddle hidden for centuries on this area, i.e. the most probable name of the city for now assumed capital of the fourth Macedonian merida –

<sup>49</sup> Б. Бабиќ – Б. Китаноски, 1996, 282.

Pelagonia. According to the recorded sites, the research of some of them, the analysis of the found movable and immovable archaeological material, we can locate an early ancient city that existed from the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC until the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century in the area of Staro Bonče, bordered by a large number of necropolises that we researched. Later on, one hiatus arises in the area of Staro Bonče, or we have rare finds in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC up to the 1<sup>st</sup> century. In contrast to that, on the area of the current village Podmol, according to the knowledge obtained so far, we know about the presence of a settlement that existed from the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC to the end of the antiquity. No major research was carried out in the village of Podmol until now, but according to accidental finds and several probes, we can locate the settlement in the northern part of Podmol with certainty.

The character of the described sites determines the chronological framework of the existence on the wider area, beginning sometime at the end of the Iron Age in the 7<sup>th</sup> century BC followed by a strong intensification of life, mainly presented through the necropolises where burials in the late archaic period and in the early antiquity were performed. This is the period when in this north-eastern part of the valley Pelagonia the powerful Principality of the Pelagonians was developing.

The great number of necropolises discovered so far, we described above and several buildings, among which the monumental tomb of Macedonian type on the site Pavla Čuka is singled out, unique in these areas, represent remarkable findings that make the hypothesis of professor PhD Viktor Lilčić for the localization of the antique city of Pelagonia, the capital of the Pelagonians in the early antiquity, and later the capital of the fourth Macedonian merida in the area of Staro Bonče very probable.

Антонио ЈАКИМОВСКИ  
Душко ТЕМЕЛКОСКИ

## КОМПЛЕКС АРХЕОЛОШКИ ЛОКАЛИТЕТИ СТАРО БОНЧЕ

### *Резиме*

Археолошкиот комплекс Старо Бонче се простира на североисточниот дел од Пелагониската котлината, поточно во западното подножје на Селечка планина, помеѓу прилепските села Бонче и Подмол. Природните биогеографски погодности овозможиле континуиран развој на живеење во сите временски периоди, од праисторијата, па сè до денес. Пелагонија отсекогаш била и крстосница на значајни патни комуникации.

Во Археолошката карта на Република Македонија, под село Бонче се евидентирани три локалитети, а под село Подмол се регистрирани четири локалитети. Со интензивни рекогносцирања во рамки на проектот систематски археолошки истражувања на Старо Бонче, во периодот од 2006 до 2017 година се откриени и истражувани уште тринаесет нови археолошки локалитети. Со овие истражувања, станува јасно дека е неопходно ревидирање на Археолошката карта, односно внесување на новоевидентираните локалитети, како и допрецизирање на карактерот на оние кои се веќе заведени во неа.

Според досега евидентираните локалитети, во периодот од 2007 до 2017 година, можно е да се направи прелиминарна слика за археолошкиот комплекс Старо Бонче, кој секако поседува огромен потенцијал. Треба да се напомене дека 11-те археолошки кампањи беа со ограничени средства, со времетраење од 15 до 30 работни денови, па, оттука, со наредни истражувања се надеваме дека ќе се дополнува сликата, со што би се добиле уште поконкретни сознанија за решавање на загатката сокриена со векови на овој простор, односно најверојатното име на градот (засега претпоставена) престолнина на четвртата македонска мерида – Пелагонија. Според евидентираните локалитети, истражувањето на дел од нив, како и анализата на пронајдениот движен и недвижен археолошки материјал, можеме да лоцираме раноантички град кој егзистирал од 5 век пред н.е, до крајот на 4 век, на просторот на Старо Бонче, ограничен со големиот број некрополи кои ги истражувавме. Подоцна настанува еден хијатус, на просторот на Старо Бонче, односно имаме ретки наоди во 3 век пред н.е до 1 век. За разлика од тоа, на просторот на денешното село Подмол, досегашните сознанија ни говорат за постоење на населба која егзистира од 2 век пред н.е, па сè до крајот

на антиката. Засега не се вршени поголеми истражувања во село Подмол, но според случајните наоди и неколку сонди, со сигурност можеме да ја лоцираме населбата во северниот дел на Подмол.

Карактерот на опишаните локалитети ја утврдува хронолошката рамка на егзистирање на поширокиот простор, започнувајќи некаде од крајот на железното време, 7 век пред н.е, по што следува силно интензивирање на животот, главно презентираан преку некрополите на кои што се вршело погребување во доцноархајскиот период и во раната антика. Ова е периодот кога во овој североисточен дел од котлината Пелагонија, се развива моќно кнежевство на Пелагонците.

Големиот број на досега откриени некрополи, опишани погоре, и неколкуте објекти, меѓу кои секако се издвојува монументалната гробница од македонски тип на локалитетот Павла чука, единствена на овие простори, претставуваат забележителни сознанија кои ја прават мошне веројатна хипотезата на проф. д-р Виктор Лилчиќ Адамс за убицирање на античкиот град Пелагонија, главниот град на Пелагонците во раната антика, а подоцна престолнина на четвртата македонска мерида, на просторот на Старо Бонче.

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