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The Headband from Vodoča: Reflections of a Narrative from the Alexander Romance

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The necropolis at the Church Complex of Vodoča, the Church of St. Leonthius at the village of Vodoča, lies 4 km west of the city of Strumica. It was in use from the Middle Ages until the middle of the 20th century.¹

After the conservation and final documentation of the movable archaeological material,² the finds revealed a unique piece of headdress - a headband (frontale, prečhelech, etc.)³ which is the focus of our interest in this text.

The headband was discovered in grave 463 where an adult female was buried; to our regret, there is insufficient anthropological and osteological data for this skeleton.

The grave was intact and contained two finds: a headband and a ring.⁴ In the region of the head, above the forehead, eight circular plates from a headband were discovered (their original arrangement is unknown) and, on the left hand, a ring (finger unknown).

¹ Archaeological excavations at the necropolis in Vodoča were begun by V. Lahtov in 1961/62. P. Miljković Pepek carried out his exploration in 1973/74. The largest section, however, was explored by the archaeologist Jovan Ananiev (1947-2003); he worked on this site without interruption between 1979 and 2003. It was his wish that I carry out the further exploration and research of this necropolis with 1081 graves. The final field work was finished in 2004 by the archaeologist Vane Sekulov.

² Conservation and final documentation of the material that is the subject matter of this article was carried out by the following archaeologists/conservationists who were also in charge of documentation: Biljana Bozaroska, Branko Pavlovski and Davča Spasova.

³ On the pictorial sources for women's headdresses as adornment for the head and the forehead, and on mediaeval terms from written records (especially in archives from Dubrovnik), see E. Манева, *Крстиеви - Средновековна некропола*, Скопје 2000, 44-51, сл. 26-28, н. 85, 98, 102, 105, 108, 109.

⁴ Grave 463 was discovered on 23 September 2004 in Quadrant C 16. The existing documentation indicates that the pit was dug into the ground, without fixed construction, at the depth of 2.17 m to the surface level of the terrain, "in the east wall of a stable". It lies along the axis West-East and is trapezoid in shape, with rounded corners and the dimensions 1.75 m x 0.60 (west) and 0.35 (east).

The ring is made of bronze, with the application of the techniques of casting and carving. Its analysis revealed that it is a later derivative, i.e., a rural variety of the luxurious aristocratic rings imported from Italy in the 15th century. Abandoning the complex Evangelical texts, the minute decoration on the head and the loop, the precious metals (gold and niello) and the painstaking techniques, the local craftsmen managed to imitate only the ornamental elements on these rings. Thus, for example, on the ring from Vodoča we see the letter R in the centre of the decorated surface on the head or, as it is known in some archaic Macedonian dialects, on the “little shield.”⁵ Fig. 1.



Fig. 1. Ring from grave 463 - detail

The abstracted “inscription” on the lateral fields in the shape of zigzag lines (lines at an angle) is, in fact, an unsophisticated substitution for the text which in these precious engagement or memorial rings read *Annello da peto* (A ring from the heart). A complete heraldic depiction with a helmet, the wolf as a motif above it and a trapezoid shield with a carved letter “p” were shown in the centre of the head of the imported specimens.

Following certain analogous elements in later specimens,⁶ such as those related to the morphology, decoration or rendition which were inspired by the impressive earlier rings that were emblematically emotional or functional in their nature, it was concluded that the ring from grave 463 in Vodoča was manufactured, i.e., used towards the end of the 15th century and in the 16th century.

Despite the wide chronological frame proposed by the experts in their analysis of the ring discovered in grave 463 in Vodoča, the cultural and social origin of the headband and its date of manufacture have already been established with a high degree of certainty, which makes possible its further detailed study. This is especially important due to the fact that it has no known analogies.

⁵ The text with an elaborate description of the jewellery from grave 463 and a detailed analysis of the ring is in print: E. Maneva, Накитот од гробот 463 од Водоча, *Годишен зборник на Филозофски факултет*, 59, Скопје 2006.

⁶ Б. Радојковић, *Накиј код Срба*, Београд 1969, 199, сл. 113; В. Писарова, Средновековни пръстени от фонда на окръжния исторически музей в Кюстендил, *Известия на Националния исторически музей*, Том VII, София 1988, 163, обр. 23, VII, 1; Д. Милошевић, *Накиј од XII до XV века из збирке Народног музеја*, Београд 1990, 138, 139, 143, кат. бр. 209, 220, 222; Б. Иванић, *Накиј из збирке Народног музеја од 15. до почетка 19. века*, Београд 1995, 35, кат. бр. 83.

Although the headband is brittle and fragile, it can be concluded that it was composed of eight circular plates of equal dimensions: $D = 20$ mm, cross-section = 0.5 mm. Fig. 4.



Fig. 2. Applique bearing cruciform pattern



Fig. 3. Applique depicting griffin

All the plates are made of thin copper sheet and decorated with the impression of mould patterns with hammering. This, as well as their shape and, to some extent, the technique applied, alludes to the evident influence of coins as an inspiration in the decoration of jewellery, weapons and other items.⁷ Here, the numismatic depictions are used as ready-made iconographic patterns for the expression of a certain message, a narrative or status; they were also used for prophylactic purposes, i.e., to protect the wearer from evil.⁸

In Antique and mediaeval jewellery, the coins were less used, either as such or as models suitable to be copied. In the Macedonian folklore jewellery and that of the neighbouring regions that are of a later date, the coins became the most impressive decorative element. Their presence, as in the earlier period, designated not only prestige and social status, but was also perceived as an aesthetic, apotropaic and magic category.⁹

In terms of its manufacture, material and the attempt at narration evident in the decoration, the headband from Vodoča is very similar to the other finds from the ne-

⁷ The headband on the helmet with clasps from Heraclea Lynkestis which dates from the late 5th and the early 6th centuries is decorated with a frieze of circular depictions made after numismatic patterns. They expressed the status, the dignity and the ideas of the wearer; at the same time, the motifs and the inscriptions protected him as a warrior and a common human being from evil. Е. Манева, Нумизматички предлошки во декорацијата на шлемот со спојки од Хераклеја, *Монетништвото и монетноковничкото во Македонија*, МАНУ, Скопје 2001, 85-91.

⁸ Н. Maguire, Magic and Money in the Early Middle Ages, *Speculum* 1992, 1037-1054.

⁹ Е. Манева, *Средновековен накит од Македонија*, Скопје 1992, 62, 64.



Fig. 4. Appearance of the applique from the hair-band (drawing D. Spasova)

cropolis;¹⁰ therefore, the possibility that all these artefacts originate from the same local workshop should not be excluded; it was probably active during the late 15th and 16th centuries, while its craftsmen must have been inspired by numismatic patterns.¹¹

On each of the better preserved plates, two perforations can be seen close to the outer edge and aligned along an imaginary horizontal line. Therefore, it can be concluded that the elements from the headband must have been sown onto a textile (or leather?) surface. Fig. 4-6.

The plates are grouped in two basic types on the basis of the motifs depicted. In four of them, which are completely identical, a cross is shown in the middle, dividing the circle into four segments, each with a small circle. Both the cross and the small circles emulate interlaced filigree, i.e., are inspired by some more expensive or earlier pattern.¹² Fig. 2, 4-6.

¹⁰ Е. Манева, Водочка варијанта на кружни наушници од крајот на XV век, *Годишен зборник на Филозофски факултет*, 58, Скопје 2005, 277-296.

¹¹ In Byzantine minting, as well as in many mints that worked under Byzantine influence, we encounter elements from emblematics, heraldry and sfragistics. The cross in numerous varieties was among the most popular motifs. All these factors influenced the design of the jewellery. M. H. Hendy, *Catalogue of the Byzantine Coins in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection and the Whittemore Collection*, Vol. 4, *Alexius I to Michael VIII (1081-1261)*, Washington DC, 1999, Part II, Pl.II, XXV, XXXVII, XLVI, etc. Ph. Grierson, *Dumbarton Oaks Catalogues, Byzantine Coins in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection and the Whittemore Collection*, Vol. 5 *Michael VIII to Constantine XI (1258-1453)*, Part II, Washington, 1999, Pl. 10, 35, 38, 40, 45, 50, 72, etc. В. Иванишевић, *Новчарство средњовековне Србије*, Београд 2001, Т. I-VIII; T. Crafter, A Die Study of the Cross-and-Crosslets Type of the Ipswich Mint, c. 1161/2-1180, *The Numismatic Chronicle*, vol. 162, London 2002, Pl. 43-47 etc.

¹² М. В. Седова, *Ярелирные изделия Древнего Новгорода (X-XV вв.)* Москва 1981, рис. 12.

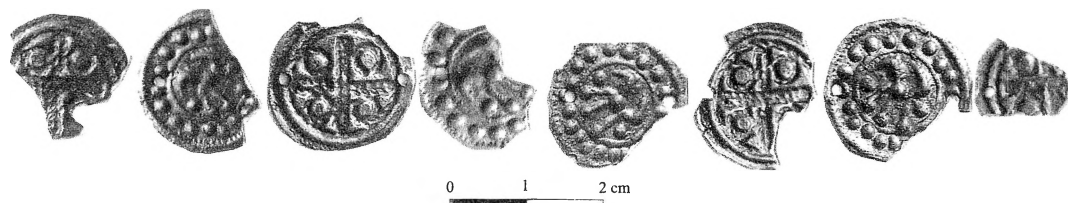


Fig. 5. Appearance and possible sequence of the appliques in the hair-band (photo-documentation)

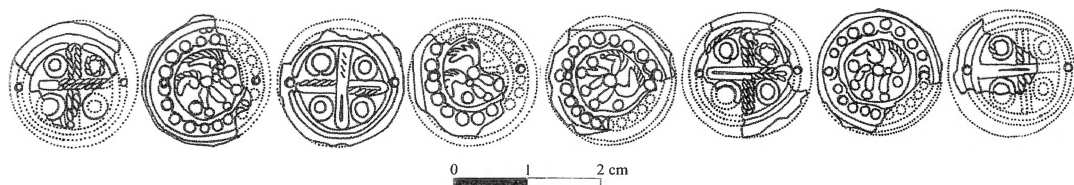


Fig. 6. Attempt for reconstruction of the hair band from grave 463 (drawing D. Spasova)

The decoration on the other four plates (Fig. 3, 4-6) consists of a circle surrounded at the periphery with a band, formed with two concentric circles, each filled with 20 nodular beads. The central circular surface depicts a stylised but effectively shaped zoomorphic figure, a fantastic winged, four-legged creature - the gryphon.¹³ These four plates were also impressed on the same pattern, but are perforated and sown onto the surface in two different ways. On two of them, the gryphons are still and standing. In the other two plates, they stand on their hind legs: in fact, they are shown in a posture which indicates that they are about to take off. Fig. 4-6.

It was this specific posture of the gryphons that originated the first suggestions concerning the explication of the message encoded in the decoration on the headband and its link with the story known as Alexander the Great Taken Up to the Sky.¹⁴

The romance about Alexander the Great, his life, adventures and conquest of the world and the secrets that border on the impossible, was written between the 2nd and

¹³ The depiction of the gryphon is highly schematised. The body, the head and the four claws are shown as nodular protrusions and therefore it is not clear whether it had a lion's or an eagle's head. The wings are the most elaborately made part of the figure: they are arched and spread, with emphasised feathers, and it seems that the creature has lion's claws.

¹⁴ G. Millet, *L'ascension d'Alexandre*, Syria 1923, T. IV; A. В. Банк, Моливдовул с изображением полета Александра Македонского на небо, *Труды Отдела Востока Эрмитажа*, Ленинград 1940, Т. III, p. 186; A. Grabar, *Le succès des arts, orientaux à la cour byzantine sous les Macédoniens*, *Münchener Jahrbuch der bildenden Kunst*, Folge 3, Bd. 2, München 1951, 47, ill. 10; Г. К. Варнер, *Скульптура Владимиро-суздальской Руси. Г. Юрьев Польской*, Москва 1964, 117; В. П. Даркевич, *Свейское искусство Византии*, Москва 1975, 154-159, рис. 223-235; Т. И. Макарова, *Перегородочайные эмали Древней Руси*, Москва 1975, 44-53; Б. А. Рыбаков, *Язычество древней Руси*, Москва 1987, 562-656; Т. Тотев, *Пресловенската съкровище*, Шумен 1994, 18-35; Л. Дончева-Петкова, *Митологични изображения от българското средновековие*, София 1996, 13-50 etc.

3rd centuries BC by Pseudo-Callisthenes. The episode with Alexander the Great's taking up to the sky was added in the 5th century. It was undoubtedly the most popular profane piece of literature in the Middle Ages, re-written many times and published in many variants (redactions). In the Latin version written by the Neapolitan arch-priest Leo of Naples in the 10th century, the birds which, in earlier editions, took Alexander up to the sky, are replaced by gryphons.¹⁵

In Byzantine art, numerous depictions of this narrative characteristic of the court and profane literary cycles appear; their meaning was not only apotropaic, but also emblematic of the apotheosis of the imperial power.¹⁶

This theme is also present on profane buildings, churches, stone plastic elements, in woodcarvings,¹⁷ molivdovoulla, miniatures, textile, metal and ceramic ware and other artefacts from Christian material culture;¹⁸ however, it is encountered in Islamic material culture as well.¹⁹

The next focus of our attention are diadems decorated with this motif. In this context, a case in point is the diadem of a female ruler from Preslav found in the court treasury probably buried in 971. Although it comes from a much earlier period, it is our basis for the elucidation of this theme.²⁰

The central plate on this diadem shows young Alexander in a two-wheel chariot drawn by two eagle-headed gryphons looking away from each other. Lured by the pieces of meat skewered on the spears in his hands, the gryphons stand erect on their hind legs, ready to take off. The other plates show symmetric standing pairs of lion-headed gryphons, creatures known as *senmurvs* (half-dog, half-bird) and two other eagle-headed gryphons.²¹

On the central plate of the diadem of a princess from Sakhnovka, the young Alexander is also shown taken up by gryphons, but in his hands he holds sceptres decorated with vegetative motifs (lilies, seeds, etc.) The other plates on the diadem are also decorated with vegetative motifs.²²

¹⁵ А. В. Банк, 1940, *op. cit.*, 186; В. П. Даркевич, 1975, *op. cit.*, 154 etc.

¹⁶ А. Грабар, *Светското искусство въ Русия преди монголското нашествие и „Песната за похода на Игор“ - Избрани съчинения*, Т. II, София 1983, 278.

¹⁷ Among other depictions on the wooden door of the Church of St. Nicholas the Hospitaller in Ohrid, there is also an eagle-headed gryphon shown in combination with an astral symbol with an apotropaic function. Л. Дончева-Петкова, *Митологични...* *op. cit.*, 34-35, обр. 31.

¹⁸ Cf. n. 14.

¹⁹ Alexander the Great taken up to the sky is depicted on a copper cup with Arabic inscription that belonged to the Seldjuk Emir Sikman Ibn Daud (1114 -1144). В. П. Даркевич, 1975, p. 157, илл. 228.

²⁰ The diadem from Preslav has been the subject of a number of studies. Т. Тотев links many motifs from the treasury and the diadem with the 9th and 10th centuries and even earlier, but believes that it was made in Preslav not later than in the first half of the 10th century. Тотев, *op. cit.* 35. Л. Дончева-Петкова dates the diadem to the first half of the 10th century; it was buried with the entire court treasury, in 971. Л. Дончева-Петкова, *Митологически...*, *op. cit.* 25.

²¹ Т. Тотев, *Преславскою...*, *op. cit.* 22, обр. 8.

²² Makarova claims that the diadem from Sakhnovka dates from the 12th century and that it was buried between 1143 and 1180. Rybakov dates it to 1165 and links it with Princess Agnesa. He attributes the diadem from Kiev with the figure of Christ on the central plate to her granddaughter (beginning of the 13th century). Т. И. Макарова, *Перегородчайы...* *op. cit.*, 46, 48, Т. 12; Б. А. Рыбаков, *Руси*, *op. cit.*, 639-640.

Comparing the diadems from Preslav and Sakhnovka with the identically designed diadem from Kiev which, however, shows Christ, i.e., the Deesis on the three central plates and the winged archangels Michael and Gabriel and the holy apostles Peter and Paul on the other plates, B. A. Rybakov puts forward the thesis about the transformation of the ancient iconographic depiction of various solar deities which eventually ends with the Christian version of Christ's Ascension. He also believes that the figure of Alexander the Great on the diadem from Sakhnovka should be identified with the Slavonic deity Dažbog or the Sun itself in its zenith;²³ in his opinion, when a two-wheel chariot is also shown, the wheels symbolise the daily movement of the Sun across the sky, i.e., the sunset and the sunrise.²⁴

In this context, Rybakov lucidly compares Alexander the Great - the son of Ammon (or Apollo), Dažbog - the son of the supreme deity of the Slavs and Jesus Christ - the son of God.

For Rybakov, the fact that the movable feast of Ascension Day, which is celebrated on the fortieth day after Christ's resurrection, is always close to the summer solstice and is celebrated without exception on Thursday, the day dedicated to the solar deities and thunder-bearers, is yet another argument in support of his assumptions.²⁵

In the light of this hypothesis, it could be claimed that the depiction on the headband from Vodoča is a unique metaphor of St. Elijah's fiery chariot. On the other hand, it is well known that this prophet from the Old Testament is a Christian transcription of Perun, the most venerated deity among the Slavs in these parts.

The custom of bringing irises to the church on Ascension Day (in Macedonian, *perunika*, one of the attributes of Perun, the supreme deity of the Slavs)²⁶ for the protection of the home and the people from thunder,²⁷ still survives in Macedonia.

According to folk belief, the world consist of three parts, the Upper, the Middle and the Nether lands (the sky, the earth and the underworld). The thunder-bearer rends the sky with his lightning, releasing the life-giving water. Except for the gods, only heroes could freely pass from one world to another. In folk tradition, Alexander the Great does it in search of "live" or life-giving water.²⁸ Heroes also travelled to other worlds for healing medicines, in order to free someone or to lift spells and dispel magic.²⁹

Did the headband from Vodoča have a central plate besides the existing ones, with the portrait or sign of the person that is being taken up to the sky, was it perhaps lost

²³ Б. А. РЫБАКОВ, *Руси*, op. cit., 639-641.

²⁴ Б. А. РЫБАКОВ, *Руси*, op. cit., 563-566; Е. Манева, *Крсїеви*, op. cit., 46, Т. I, XXII, 1, 2; Idem., *Средновековен...* op. cit., 37, Т. 31, 31/91.

²⁵ Б. А. РЫБАКОВ, *Руси*, op. cit., 641, 647-652.

²⁶ The iris or *Iris germanica* (in Macedonian, *perunika*,) is often identified with the lily (*Lilium candidum*). Stylised as the tree of life, the ideogram of vegetative forces, the symbol of the Holy Mother of God, etc., the lily is one of the most frequent motifs in mediaeval heraldry and ornaments, as well as in the decoration of head jewellery. Е. Манева, *Крсїеви*, op. cit., 45, n. 86-90, Т. I.

²⁷ Т. Вражиновски, *Народна митологија на Македонијте*, Скопје-Прилеп 1988, 126, 222.

²⁸ В. Антиќ, Романот за Александар Велики и фолклорот, *Од средновековнаџа книжевностї*, Скопје 1976, 157-161; Т. Вражиновски, *Македонски народни преданија*, Скопје 1986, 26-33 etc.

²⁹ Т. Вражиновски, *Речник на народнаџа митологија на Македонијте*, Прилеп-Скопје 2000, 131.

at a later time, destroyed or replaced with an new element that was later added to the design³⁰ or was it perhaps made of material subject to decay?

There are, nevertheless, eight plates,³¹ and all the answers to these questions remain uncertain.

The ascension/taking up to the sky that was so popular and appropriate in the decoration of the jewellery for the head and the forehead, was evidently subject to conceptual transformations; it can be assumed that by the 15th and late 16th centuries, this narrative acquired a form which was rudimentary, but still familiar to the wearer.³²

However, even if we reject the argumentation concerning the reflections of the ascension/taking up to the sky in the decoration of the headband from Vodoča, we cannot ignore the fact that the basic inspiration that came from certain influences from the folklore is still linked with the Alexander Romance.

According to the Alexander Romance, the miraculous conception of Alexander the Great by the Egyptian healer and sorcerer Nectanebos was performed in such a way that "...he himself entered her [Olympias] in the shape of the god Ammon, and this is what he looked like: he had an eagle's head and on it, a bunch of basil, he had the eyes of a serpent and the legs of a lion, and winged shoulders, golden and black, this is what Ammon looked like..."³³

The symbolism of gryphons is very complex. They combine the power of two masters: the celestial power of the eagle and the earthly one of the lion.

As early as in the 6th and 5th centuries BC they were the state and imperial emblem in Persia. In Scythians, they were the mythical guardians of the gold hoards, and in Slavs, they were the mighty guardians and protectors of crops.³⁴

In Hellenic mythology, they are associated with Apollo, the god of the Sun, in Roman, with Nemesis, the daughter of Nyx, in Egypt, they are the personification of the god Ammon, in Hellenism they are associated with his son Alexander the Great, and in Byzantium, they were the patrons of the warriors and the military aristocracy.³⁵ It has been claimed that in Byzantium, gryphons designated the title of kaesar.³⁶ In Christian doctrine, they designate the double nature of Christ as the Son of God and a human.³⁷

³⁰ In the central part of the headband from grave 4 in Krstovi near Demir Kapija, a special element was discovered - an attachment hook for the scarf in the upper part with three inserted decorative blue stones. Е. Манева, *Крстјеви*, op. cit., 45, 46, Т. II, Т. XXII, 1, 2.

³¹ The wreath from the rich treasury at Markovi Kuli in Varoš near Prilep is dated to the 14th century. It consists of eight rectangular plates with inserted decorative stones in the centre. М. Ђоровић-Љубинковић, Налаз из Маркове Вароши код Прилепа, *Музеју 2*, Београд 1949, 103-113; The jewellery probably belonged to the family of Dimitrija Volkašin or King Marko.

³² The schematised version of *Alexander Taken Up to the Sky* is depicted on the medallion in Pala d'Oro in the Church of San Marco in Venice, where a miniature ruler's portrait inside a circle is shown between two gryphons. А. Grabar, *Le succès des arts...* op. cit., 47, ill. 10.

³³ *Александрида*, Редакција Димитијар Пандев, Охрид 2001, 17.

³⁴ Л. Дончева-Петкова, *Митолоџични...* op. cit., 13-47; Рыбаков, *Руси*, op. cit., 624-633.

³⁵ On the symbolism of the gryphon see: Д. Срејовић, А. Цермановић-Кузмановић, *Речник ђрчке и римске митолоџије*, Београд 1979, 99; J. Chevalier, A. Cheerbrant, *Rječnik simbola*, Zagreb 1987, 177; Л. Дончева, *Митолоџични...*, op. cit., 13-47 etc.

³⁶ Н. П. Кондаков, *Очерки и заметки по истории средневекового искусства и культуры*, Прага 1929, 29, 106.

³⁷ L. Réau, *Iconographie de l'art chrétienne*, Paris, I 1955, 88.

It is clear that creatures which had the power to guard deities and their altars, the rulers and their thrones and hoards, the warriors and their offspring and which, crossing the borders between worlds in their flight to eternal life also had an important status, and an apotropaic and fertility role as a magic power which protects and which they transfer onto the wearer of these emblems.³⁸

The plates with crosses on the headband from Vodoča (Fig. 2, 4-6) have, without doubt, complex symbolic meaning.

They can be linked with the richly decorated chariot which took up the hero to the sky and with St. Elijah's fiery chariot, i.e., that of Perun, the thunder-bearer.

The wheels are ideograms with heliolatric, solar, lunar or astral meaning.

Except the cross, the crossing lines on the plates can also designate wheel spikes, the sides of the world, sun rays, lightning, phases of the Moon, cosmic elements, etc. The latter possibility is alluded to in the Alexander Romance, when Alexander the Great asks the Creator: "How did You knit the human body of four forces and planted in them a consecrated soul and fastened it, as some driving force, on four equally balanced wheels so that, while the four forces are in equilibrium, the body created by You is whole and moves steadily forward, but when one of the four components grows or is reduced, then the body disintegrates, and the soul departs from man's exhausted body? But if with Your providence and healing skills the balance of the four wheels is restored, the body and the soul are healed..."³⁹

The belief in the power of head jewellery is clearly demonstrated in the Alexander Romance in the episode in which Alexander the Great is given "...the wreath of Solomon with three stones which had twelve healing properties and he also received the wreath of Queen Sybilla with numerous magic powers..."⁴⁰

* * *

Who was the lady from grave 463 in Vodoča?

The dating of the ring and the headband indicates that she lived, i.e., was buried in the period between the late 15th and 16th centuries.

The Ottoman inventory books from this period confirm that during this period Vodoča was populated by Christians.⁴¹ The funeral rite and the orientation and posture of her body testify to this fact.

³⁸ The collective find of plates from several different headbands from Požarevac in Serbia revealed a number of interesting specimens. The plates with a stylised lily in the upper part and an eagle-headed gryphon in the lower part are dated to the late 14th century. In the specimens from the late 14th and the early 15th centuries, the lily is stylised as the tree of life flanked with two birds. The plate with stylised lilies and rosettes originate from Peć in Kosovo and are dated to mid-15th century. Б. Радојковић, *Српско златарство*, Београд 1981, кат. бр. 26, 27, 28, р. 22, 23; Д. Милић, М. Томић, *Остава средњовековног накита у Народном музеју у Пожаревцу, Силаринар XXI*, Београд 1972, 163-168, Т. I, II; see Cf. n. 26.

³⁹ *Александрида*, Охрид 2001, 130.

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, 41, 42.

⁴¹ Inventory books for the district of Strumica from the 16th century also mention the village of Vodica, i.e., Vodoča. They give the list of all the names of male heads of families (84), bachelors (15), widows (14) and *baštine* (16), together with all the taxes. *Турски документи за историјата на македонскиот народ. Ойширни пописни дефтери од XVI век за Кусиндилскиот санџак*, Том V, кн. III, Скопје 1982, 80, 81.

It seems that she belonged to higher social circles, perhaps a family of *baštinari* which possessed inherited property entered in inventory books as *baštine* and which had a specific privileged status in the Ottoman empire.⁴²

She was buried with objects that suited her faith, status and the customs characteristic of that time.

It could be claimed that the mentality, aesthetic norms, behaviour and numerous other parameters from everyday life were, among other things, shaped exactly by the Alexander Romance and, as such, had already been implemented as part of folk culture and style.

The deceased female from grave 463 in Vodoča, adorned with a headband and a ring manufactured after the patterns of earlier luxurious aristocratic specimens is a unique reflection of a narrative from the Alexander Romance, more specifically, the part on wedding jewellery: “Then, Alexander rose from his throne, took Roxana by the hand... seated her next to him on the throne, took off the wreath from his head and placed it on her head and took off the ring from his finger and put it on hers...”⁴³

⁴² The Slavonic term *башиџина* (*baština*) is used in Ottoman inventory books for the provisionally inherited state land owned by a Christian family, which corresponded with the farms owned by Muslim families. In the 16th century, the number of *baštini* in Vodoča was sixteen. *Турски документи...*, op. cit., 80, 81, 648, 657. А. Стојановски, *Македонија во Турскиот средновековие*, Скопје 1989, 241, 249.

⁴³ *Александрида*, Охрид 2001, 78.