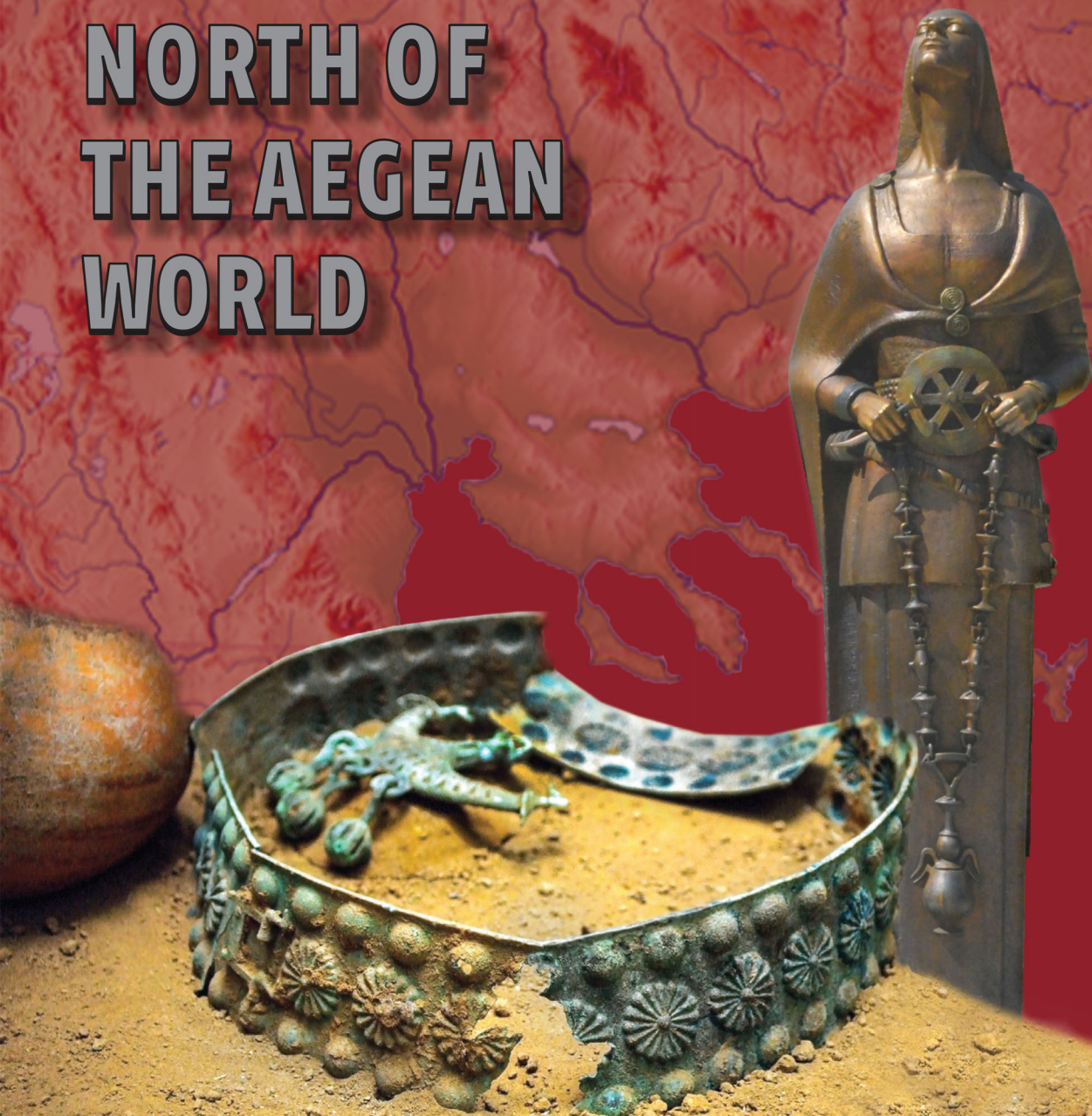


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PREFACE

This book could have the same title as the capital work of S. Casson “Macedonia, Thrace and Illyria”, written in 1925, because it has ambitions to answer almost the same questions. However, after 100 years of archeological research, Balkan archeology has provided so many new finds and scientific knowledge that we had to limit our interest only to the territory immediately to north of the Aegean basin, and only to the Bronze and Iron Ages, until the classical period. In such a way, this book can be seen as an upgrade to Casson's work but also as a separate, comprehensive picture of the cultural values of the region just north of the Aegean coast, in the interior of the Balkans, between the Adriatic and Black Sea, and in the north to the line determined by the Shar Planina and Stara Planina massif.

The picture of the Balkans in the Bronze Age is formed by three cultural zones, going from south to north. The southern Balkan zone covers the Aegean basin with the islands and mainland Greece, as the first literate territory in Europe where the Minoan and later Mycenaean civilizations developed. To the north of it stands out the “illiterate” so-called Central Balkan zone, in the territory from the North Aegean coast inland to the Shar Planina-Stara Planina massif. Local cultures based on the common Eneolithic heritage are developing there, which only at the end of the Bronze Age will establish closer contacts with the Aegean, more precisely the Mycenaean world. To the north of it, in the Danube and the Carpathian region, extends the northern Balkan zone, which connects the Balkans with the prehistoric cultures of Central Europe.

This picture is certainly only a rough sketch of the cultural division of the Balkans in the Bronze and Iron Age, in which our interest is only the territory just north of the Aegean zone and south of the Danube and Carpathian zones, which we named as the Central Balkan zone. At the current level of research, it is culturally least compact, geographically most developed and least documented, and thus, scientifically the most provocative.

Due to the previous division of this territory between 4 modern countries, it is not uncommon for this region to be treated as a heterogeneous area, for which there are no serious ambitions among researchers to fully understand its common cultural values. On the other hand, if the modern borders are removed, it will be shown that area largely nurtured the same values and

undoubtedly in the early Bronze Age was the only cultural core, from which different communities would develop later. In the Iron Age, these communities could be considered as fully formed peoples with their own recognizable cultures and historically witnessed territories.

The features of the material and spiritual culture of the communities north of the Aegean world, according to the archeological finds, in many segments are close to each other, but also in almost the same relationship with the Aegean and towards the cultures to the north, in the Carpathian - Danube basin. This raises the question of whether this region should be viewed as the northern periphery of the so-called Aegean world, as a southern periphery of the Carpathian-Danube world or as a separate ethno-cultural structure. To answer this question, it is necessary to summarize all the data arising from the archaeological research in the last 100 years, from the present-day territories of Southern Albania, Republic of Macedonia, Northern Greece and Southern Bulgaria.

By providing a complete picture of the cultural development of this region during the Bronze and Iron Ages, we hope will make a significant contribution to Balkan archeology and above all will open new opportunities for further, uninterrupted study, without being locally closed. This should be the main goal of this book, which is the result of three decades of research and documentation of all archaeological data arising from field research on the sites of the Bronze and Iron Ages throughout the so-called Central Balkan zone.

Many of my colleagues from different institutions have made great efforts for that, providing me with a direct insight into the results and finds of their field research. In this regard, I must express my special gratitude to the archaeologists working on these matters in the Archaeological Museum in Tirana, the Archaeological Museum and the Aristotle University in Thessaloniki, the Archaeological Institute and Museum in Sofia and other local museums in the region (Korcha, Kozani, Serez, Blagoevgrad, Plovdiv etc). In addition, it is a great convenience that in most of these last 35 years of research I have personally participated, either as a direct manager, as a professional consultant or simply as a guest in the expert teams, especially at the sites in the Republic of Macedonia. All this enabled me to begin with the realization of this project, in the hope that I will succeed in providing a sufficiently documented, complete picture of the cultural development in the aforementioned territory within the specified period.

The Author
Skopje, August 2021

CHAPTER 1

THE EARLY AND MIDDLE BRONZE AGE NORTH OF THE AEGEAN WORLD

Keeping mostly within the borders of today's modern states, the archaeology of the Bronze Age on the territory from the Adriatic to the Black Sea coast, has developed various cultural and chronological systems. This, of course makes it difficult to fully see the general development and connectivity of individual regions. Engaged in determination, mainly of local phenomena from the Early and Middle Bronze Ages, and attracted by the historical and cultural attractiveness of the finds from the Aegean or Carpathian – Danube basin, the views of archaeologists most often moved north-south and vice versa. Thus, the relations along the west-east line are largely neglected. However, if we stick to the basic cultural manifestations, especially in the Early Bronze Age, one can easily detect more common moments representing a unique cultural basis for the entire territory north of the Aegean world.

CHRONOLOGY AND COMMUNICATIONS

The overall cultural development of the Bronze Age communities took place within the three basic chronological phases of the Bronze Age, the Early, Middle and Late Bronze Age. Within these phases, in some regions, more detailed chronologies have been developed, based mainly on the more researched neighboring territories, more precisely on the chronology of the Bronze Age in the Aegean or Carpathian-Danube basin. For example, thanks to contacts with western Anatolia and Troas, the Thracian region was chronologically superior to other regions. There, the Early Bronze Age is clearly divided into three phases (Phase I - Ezero, Phase II - Mihalich and Phase III - Kiri-lovo), starting from the last centuries of the fourth to the beginning of the second millennium before Christ. In the western regions the Late Eneolithic development had a prolonged development, so that in the valleys of Struma and Vardar, the early Bronze Age is associated mainly with the northern Balkan

cultures such as Coțofeni-Kostolac or Bubanj Hum (I-III), fulfilling almost the entire 3 millennium BC. There is a similar development in the Albanian area, where the early Bronze Age is known through the two phases of the local so-called Maliq culture (Maliq III A and B). However, despite such a fragmented chronology, in different local systems the basic developmental stages of the Early, Middle and Late Bronze Ages can be taken as the only framework on the entire territory. Thus, the Early Bronze Age can generally be placed in the range of 3000 -2000 BC, the Middle Bronze Age in the period of 2000 – 1500 BC and the Late Bronze Age around 1500-1200 BC.

All the communities from the Early and Middle Bronze Age in the given territory achieved a unique level of social and economic organization, as well as a unique cult-religious system. At that time, some regions could have absorbed certain influences from outside, from the neighboring cultural environments, but still the basic manifestations in the material and spiritual culture were unique for the entire Central Balkan territory. This refers especially to the Early Bronze Age, when the entire territory north of the Aegean world was culturally oriented mainly to the north and had almost no contacts with the existing, at that time, Cycladic and Minoan cultures in the Aegean basin.

Outside influences took place along the old communications, established since the Eneolithic as communication lines mainly from the north, from Danube to the south, to the Aegean Sea (Fig. 1). They also represent the first Bronze Age communications, which will play a key role in the further cultural development of some regions in our territory. For example, the easternmost communication line passed from the Lower Danube, through the Upper Thrace area, mainly along the valley of Maritsa towards the Aegean basin, through which influences have also entered in the opposite direction.

The valley of Vardar, even more, the valley of Struma, had the same role of spreading the northern and central Balkan elements to the south. On the opposite side, the eastern Adriatic coast played the role of a communication line along which the Western Balkan elements spread out, not only towards southern Albania but also towards mainland Greece.

During the Early Bronze Age, these old Trans-Balkan lines, along which the Eneolithic communities moved, not only they were not forgotten but they gained an even greater role and significance. Among them, the easternmost line stands out, extending from the Lower Danube region, through the Upper Thracian Plain to the East Aegean coast and the West Anatolian area with Troas.¹ Unlike the others, along this line, during the early Bronze Age, trade will take place not only with the north, but also it will be used for the first goods to come from the south, from the eastern Aegean to the Thraci-

¹ Vasileva Z – Minkov P. 2018, 98

an area. The best illustration of this are the finds of some luxury items made of gold, silver and electron such as those from Dabane, Ovcharci, Izvorovo or the so-called Trojan cups from Mihalich and Asara-Constantia in the Upper Thrace plain.²The end of the usual use of this communication appears to be at the beginning of the Late Bronze Age when its southern arm will be put in the service of the Mycenaean expansion to the ore centers in the Eastern Rhodopes.

The other lines, more precisely the valleys of Struma and Vardar in the early Bronze Age had mainly inter-Balkan character, connecting the Balkan communities internally, but without any elements of the Aegean basin.

The Struma Valley, which was crucial for spreading of the Eneolithic values from the Danube to the south, first of all in Eastern Macedonia through the certain points such as Slatino and Topolnica and Carevi Kuli - Strumica in the early Bronze Age used to spread Carpathian-Danube elements to the south.³Thus, during the last phase of the Early Bronze Age there, among other items, exclusive finds appear such as those from Petrich or Rupite (Fig. 2).⁴This old communication will gain importance again during the Late Bronze Age, but then for the elements and influences coming from the south, from the Mycenaean world to the north, mainly to the great natural border at the Kresna Gorge.

The Vardar Valley had also the same role. Following the Morava Valley, this line connected the Danube with the Aegean Basin. The line was used for the cultural movements to continue within the only so-called Danube-Balkan complex of the Early Bronze Age.⁵Only at the end of the Bronze Age this line will be exposed as one of the main communications for the penetration of Mycenaean elements to the north, in the interior of the Balkans.

The third or westernmost line, although with a certain chronological lag, carries the same phenomena and cultural movements: first from the Danube to the Dalmatian and Montenegrin coasts (steppe tumuli in Dalmatia with luxury items like in Tivat) and to the south in Central and Southern Albania (in the time of Maliq III-A). This route, towards the end of the Middle and Late Bronze Age, will be used for the penetration of the first products from the Aegean world, as well as for the spread of the first Mycenaean elements to the north, mostly in the ore-bearing areas of the Korcha-Cologne region.

² Aleksandrov S. 2018, 86-96

³ Georgieva P. 2007, 335-337; Chryssanthaki – C. K. – Todorova H. and others, 2007, 43-62; Chokadziev S. 2007, 223; Mitrevski D. 2001, 102; Rujak Z. 2021, 21-125

⁴ Aleksandrov S. – Hristov M. 2018, 332-334

⁵ Garasanin M. 1983

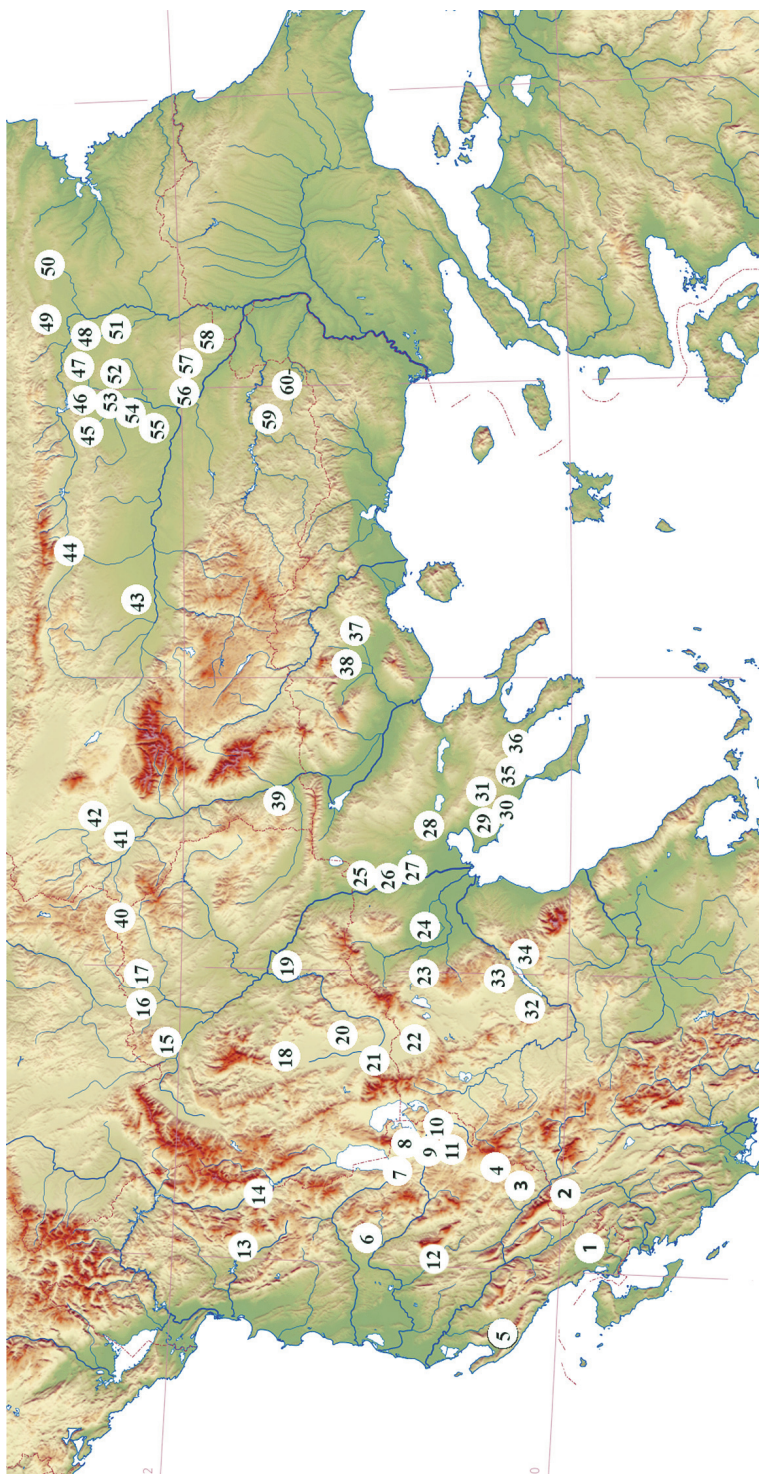


Fig. 1 Disposition of the most important sites from the Early and Middle Bronze Age north of the Aegean world : 1 Konsipol, 2 Benjo, 3 Piskove, 4 Lauras, 5 Dukat, 6 Pazok, 7 Podgorie, 8 Gorovec, 9 Maliq, 10 Tren, 11 Barch, 12 Katundas, 13 Nazir, 14 Topoijan, 15 Kale-Skopje, 16 Pelince, 17 Lopate, 18 Varos-Prilep, 19 Demir Kaplja, 20 Radobor, 21 Kravari, 22 Armenohori, 23 Mandalo, 24 Arhontiko, 25 Vardino, 26 Vardarofitsa, 27 Kastanas, 28 Saratse, 29 Mesimeriani, 30 Kritsana, 31 Gona, 32 Aiane, 33 Nereida, 34 Servia, 35 Hagias Mamas, 36 Molivopirgo, 37 Dikili Tash, 38 Sitagroi, 39 Petrich, 40 Kokino, 41 Sapareva Banja, 42 Pernik, 43 Junacite, 44 Dabane, 45 Karanovo, 46 Nova Zagora, 47 Ezero, 48 Chokoba, 49 Kamen, 50 Vratca, 51 Drama, 52 Bikovo, 53 Djadovo, 54 Ovcharci, 55 Trojanovo, 56 Galabovo, 57 Izvorovo 58 Mihalich, 59 Tatul, 60 Ada Tepe

In this way, it is obvious that the first Bronze Age trade, namely the exchange of products of local communities with the outside world take place along the above mentioned communication routes. The mentioned exclusive finds from the Early Bronze Age, either as grave, votive or settlement items, arrived from outside, in any case represent specially procured goods or items in order to be exchanged, testify for the special opportunities and needs of the local population, along those communications. Communities outside those communication lines did not have the same opportunities, so that they continued their local development, without any significant outside influence (Fig. 1).

In any case, it can be concluded that the local communities from the territory north of the Aegean world, through the Early and Middle Bronze Age were culturally oriented to the north and organically connected to the northern parts of the Balkans and the Danube region. Only the region of south-eastern Bulgaria had established certain contacts with the south, where since the Early Bronze Age there are elements, in addition to those from the north and from the eastern Aegean, and first of all, from the western Anatolian cultural circle. Thus, this region was the only link that connected the Aegean world with the Carpathian-Central European and Northern Black Sea world, which cannot be said about the other more continental areas.



Fig. 2 Luxury items of the Early Bronze Age from Petrich and Rupite

At the start of the Middle Bronze Age, the first pottery on wheel, so called Minoan pottery, will appear as Anatolian-Aegean manifestation, but it manifested itself as an extremely limited phenomenon, only along the North

Aegean coast including Chalcidice, without any impact in the interior of the Balkans. Somewhat later, on the other side, along the Albanian coast, objects will appear that will illustrate the first contacts with the Aegean world of the Bronze Age, more precisely with the Cretan or Middle Minoan culture (Fig. 3). However, these finds (mainly imported weapons and pottery) date back to the early Mycenaean period and represent the first contacts with the south, which paved the way for future penetrations of Mycenaean culture in the region.⁶



Fig. 3 Grave finds from Pazok as the earliest Aegean imports

TERRITORIAL AND CULTURAL CHARACTERISTICS

In the overall Early Bronze Age development of the entire Central Balkan territory, there are no recorded strong enough local marks, in order to be able to single out certain clearly demarcated cultural groups. In the archaeological finds are detected only local variants of the basic forms, which are unique and develop synchronously on the entire territory, north of the Aegean world. However, on the basis of these varieties and especially according to the geomorphological characteristics of the terrain, the entire territory can be roughly divided into three basic, mainly geographical zones.

The first – western or conditionally speaking Albanian zone is connected mainly to the Adriatic catchment area or to the territory of Northern Epirus and Albania, south of the Mati River, extending east to the areas around the large lakes.

⁶ Prendi F. 1982,217, Fig. 40

The second – central or conditionally speaking Macedonian zone includes the areas to the east of the large lakes, through Pelagonia and the valley of Vardar to the valley of Struma. That zone belongs entirely to the Aegean catchment area.

The third – eastern or conditionally speaking Thracian zone covers the Rhodope region together with the Upper and Lower Thracian plain to the west coast of the Black and Marmara Seas. This zone is marked by the areas of the Black Sea and Eastern Aegean catchment area, mainly the territories around the Maritsa and Tunja rivers with their tributaries.

Due to the numerous common manifestations, the boundaries of the mentioned zones cannot be precisely determined, therefore, certain transitional areas must be considered, where they touch and overlap. Such is for example the region around the large lakes (Ohrid, Prespa, Kostur) between the first and second zone, as well as the Western Rhodope region with the valley of Mesta and Struma, between the second and third zone.

Despite this division into zones horizontally, the basis of a unique character of the Early Bronze Age culture on the entire territory is indisputable, as a product of the previous joint Balkan-Danube Eneolithic heritage. This unity is manifested in all spheres of material and spiritual culture, such as in the settlements and settlement life, in the burial and necropolises, in the cult places and beliefs and in the movable finds, primarily in the ceramics.

SETTLEMENTS AND SETTLEMENT LIFE

In the Western Zone, several settlements from the Early and Middle Bronze Age are known and researched. They are mainly concentrated in the Korcha valley (Maliq, Tren, Sovjan, Podgorje, Gorovec), then Luaras in the Cologne region to Benje and Consipol in the south, Durres on the Adriatic coast or Bilis and Nezir in the north (Fig. 1).⁷ Among them, the largest and most important is the settlement in Maliq on the lake with the same name, today dried up, which gives the chronology of the entire wider region. Thus, the early Bronze Age development in the largest part of Albania is known through the phases Malik III-a and b, while the Middle Bronze Age through Malik III-c.⁸

It is about different types of settlements, which were used in the same time, often positioned in the same region. Thus, in the Korcha region, which has clear predispositions for agriculture, there are settlements mainly in the open or in the plain, such as Maliq, Sovjan, Podgorje, Gorovec. There are data

⁷ Prendi F. Bunguri A. 2008, Fig 1, 230,267

⁸ Prendi 1982, 209-220

for the settlement in Sovjan that in the early Bronze Age it was of tell or mound settlements type, which later during the Late Bronze Age, with the increase of the waters in Lake Maliq was reorganized as a palafitte settlement.⁹ This was probably the situation with the neighboring Early Bronze Age settlements in Gorovec and Maliq. The Early Bronze Age settlement in the cave Tren also existed in the same region. Such cave settlements have been discovered in the neighboring regions, such as those in Benje, Katundas, Konispol, Nezir and others.¹⁰

In addition to these types of settlements, in the higher livestock areas of Albania, settlements of dominant elevations were also in use, most often on river terraces such as the settlements in Muzhice, Bilis, Tropojan, and others.¹¹

The picture of settlement life during the Early and Middle Bronze Ages in Albania is made up of different types of settlements, among which it is difficult to find common elements. They were undoubtedly determined by the geomorphological, climatic and socio-economic conditions. It is noticeable that all were in some way naturally protected, without the erection of certain stone and other fortification systems.

Residential architecture implies structures built in the usual Balkan prehistoric style, with wooden piles and a wooden skeletal structure covered by mud and clay. Mostly, only parts of the houses are discovered, but it is indisputable that there were also apsidal type houses, such as the one in Sovjan.¹² The floor of the houses was made of compacted earth with smoothed clay, and inside the usual inventory for daily activities was revealed, including a loom, an internal fireplace and granular food storage areas. It should be noted that outside the houses, in direct communication with them there are documented systems – a complex of fireplaces or ovens, such as those in Maliq.¹³ Such structures from the Albanian Early Bronze Age manifest the same housing principles as in the neighboring regions to the east, where, for example, apsidal structures, such as the one in Sovjan, are found widely, from Skopsko Kale, through Kastanas, Karanovo, Junacite to Sitagri.¹⁴

These most general characteristics of the settlement life from the western or Albanian zone can be easily transferred to other regions in the East.

⁹ Prendi F. 2018; Prendi F. Bunguri A. 2008, 186-187

¹⁰ Prendi F. Bunguri A. 2008, 190

¹¹ Prendi F. Bunguri A. 2008, 188

¹² Lera P. – Touzchais G. 2004; Prendi F. – Bunguri A. 2008, 191

¹³ Prendi F. 2008, Fig. 2 2018; Prendi F. 2018,

¹⁴ Mitrevski D. 2019, Fig 35 and 36 ; Aslanis J. 1985, Abb. 14; Hiller S. – Nikolov V. 2001, Abb. 7,13; Merpart N. J and others 2007, Fig 64,35, Pl. 7,9,10,16; Renfrews C – Gimbutas M. – Elster E. 1986

The central or Macedonian zone shows similar values of the settlement life, which in the same way shows conditionality first of all from the geo-climatic, morphological and economic predispositions of the terrain (Fig. 1).

In the plain parts, such as the Pelagonian plain, during the Early and Middle Bronze Age, the agricultural settlements of *toumba-tell* type have been developed. The most famous such settlements are those within the so-called group Armenohori or Pelagonia group (Radobor, Karamani, Visok Rid, Armenohori, to Mandalo and Arhontiko).¹⁵

The marks are the same for the tell settlements from the Early and Middle Bronze Age along Lower Vardar and around Thessaloniki (Vardarofca, Kastanas, Saratce, Gona, Mesimeriani and others).¹⁶ They were also under influences from the north, so they show a closer connection with the valleys of Vardar and Struma. Only in Chalcidice and along the east coast (Kritsana, Hagias Mamas, Molivopirgo, Agia Paraskevi and others), certain peculiarities in the material culture occur, arising from the influences coming from the western-Anatolian world to the east and the Cyclades to the south.¹⁷



Fig. 4 Panoramic view on the Early Bronze Age settlement and sanctuary in Pelince

In addition to the tell settlements, in the higher livestock areas such as along the middle Haliacmon river or in the vicinity of Kozani and Grevena,

¹⁵ Garasanin 1983; Andreu S. – Fotiadis M. – Kotsakis K. 1996 571; Papaeftimiu A. – Pilali A. 1997 81; Митревски Д. 2013,125

¹⁶ Aslanis J. 1985; Heurtley W. A. 1939

¹⁷ Heurtley W. A. 1939, 178, Kat. N. 162 250

there are settlements on natural hills (Servia, Nereida, Aiane, etc.) as well as those along Upper Struma (Pernik, Radomir, Sapareva Banja, Dyakovo), along Middle Struma (Kovachevo, Hotovo, Drenkovo) or along the Middle Vardar and Upper Vardar valley (Demir Kapija, Skopsko Kale, Pelince).¹⁸ They were all built on natural, dominant hills, with unique values in the basic principles of settlement life.

As an illustration of that type of settlements, we select the northernmost or the Skopje-Kumanovo group of settlements, where several settlements are known from the Early and Middle Bronze Age, all of them of the so-called Gradishte type (hilltop settlements) (Kale-Skopje, Lopate, Pelince and Kokino) (Fig. 4).

The pottery, like all other finds from Early Bronze Age, has the closest parallels to the north with the Moravian group, Bubanj Hum II and III, but also with the southern settlements along Lower Vardar (Kastanas Vardarof-tsa), with those from Pelagonia (Radobor, Karamani, Armenohori) or more to the south with Mandalo, Arhontiko, as well as with the settlements in Albania from the phase Maliq IIIa-b (Fig. 5, 15, 17). Thus, for example, the pottery from the Early Bronze Age in the so-called Skopje-Kumanovo group differs from the neighboring Pelagonia or the so-called Armenochori group only that the vessels are very often dark and unequally baked, contrary to the bright (ocred-baked) vessels, which are dominant in the Pelagonia group.



Fig. 5 Some examples of Early Bronze Age pottery from Kale- Skopje (Kale II)

¹⁸ Heurtley W. A. 1939, 190; Aslanis J. 1985, 204-281; Alexandrov S. 1995, 253, Fig. 1; Митревски Д. 2013, 109

The most significant data come from the settlement of Kale – Skopje, which is a multi-layer settlement, whereby Kale II being associated with the Early and Kale III with the Middle Bronze Age.¹⁹ Among the phenomena from the Early Bronze Age Kale (Kale II), the long apsidal construction is noteworthy, which is known for its shape and inventory from Maliq III–b, through Kastanas (Layer 23) to the Early Bronze Age settlements in Thrace such as Karanovo, Junacite, or Sitagri (Fig. 6).

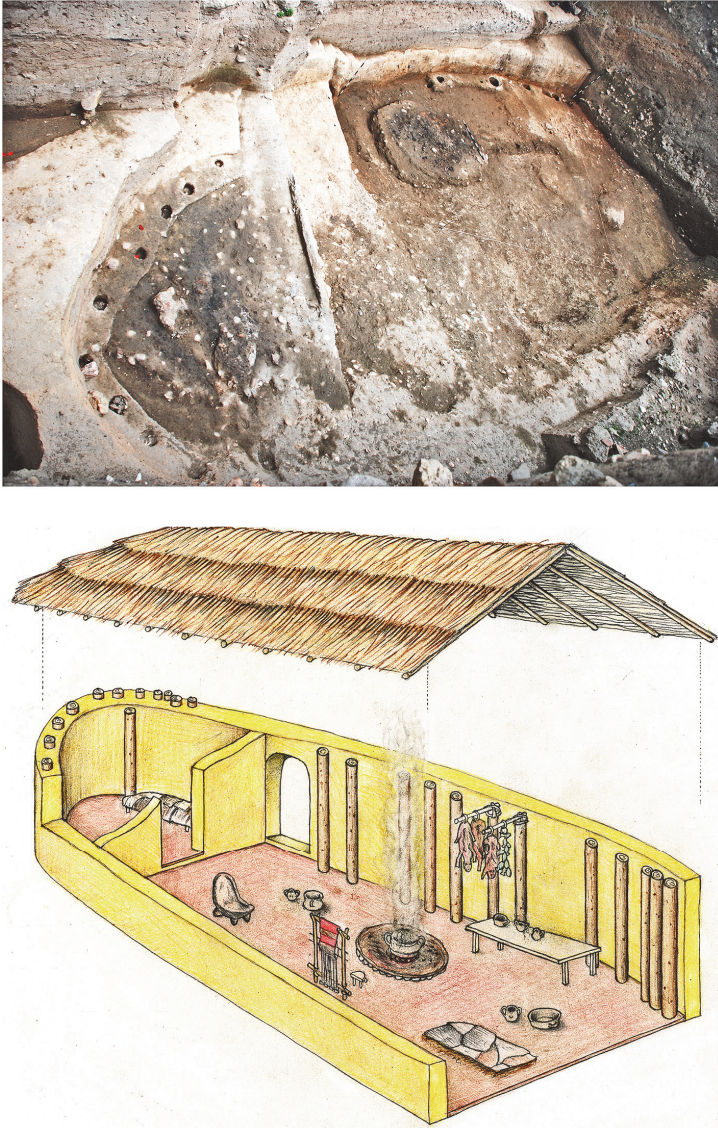


Fig. 6 An apsidal house of Early Bronze Age from Kale - Skopje (Kale II) with reconstruction

¹⁹ Mitrevski D. 2016, 21



Fig. 7 Complex of outside kilns of Early Bronze Age from Kale - Skopje (Kale II)

Next to that house on Kale, a complex of external fireplaces and ovens was discovered, as in Maliq or in some settlements in the east in the Upper Thracian Plain (Karanovo) (Fig. 7).²⁰ Unfortunately, in other settlements only parts of such external systems of fireplaces or ovens are often found, and it is believed that they have been used for baking ceramics, but even more likely for preparing food, bread and of course embers for the interior of houses.

During the Middle Bronze Age, the pottery from Kale retained the same forms, with some decorative novelties, just like the situations in Maliq III-c, Radobor, Arhontiko, Kastanas to the Junacite and Raskopanica in the east. Then fortification systems began to be built more intensively around the settlements, which in the previous Early Bronze Age were really rare. As a special phenomenon from that time on Kale-Skopje stands out the earthen wall with a ditch that protected the Middle Bronze Age, Kale III settlement, as well as in many other settlements throughout the territory north of the Aegean world (Fig. 8).

²⁰ Prendi F. 2008,73, Fig. 2; Hiller S. – Nikolov V. 1997; Nikolov V. 2018, Fig. 2

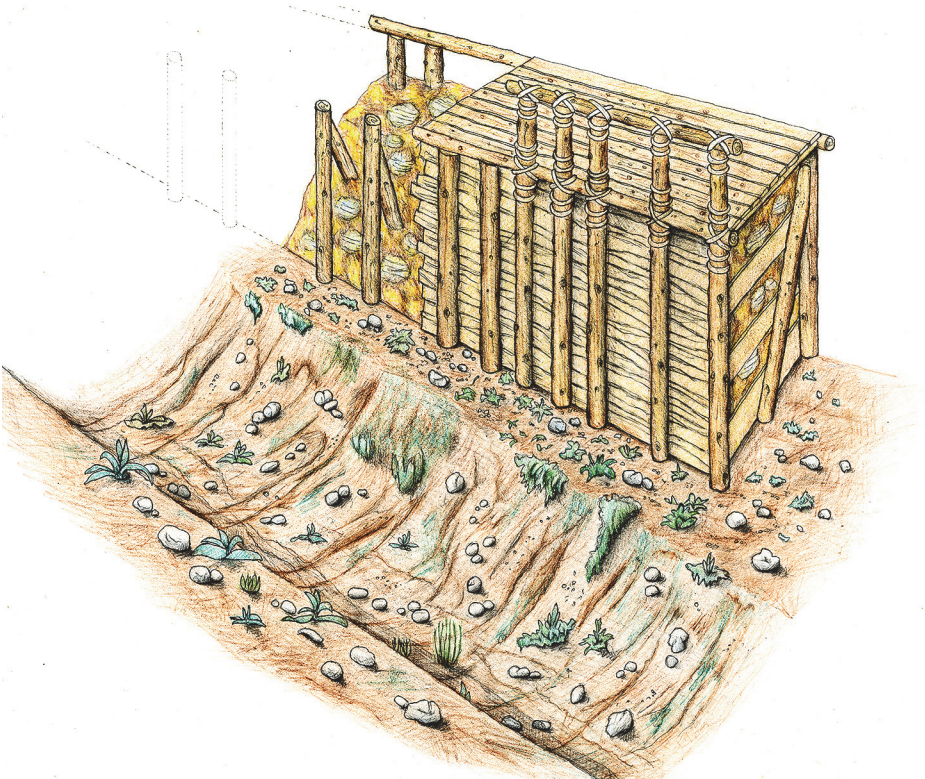


Fig. 8 A part of the earthen rampart of Middle Bronze Age from Kale-Skopje (Kale III)

The same features are revealed in the settlements along the Vardar valley, as well as along Struma. Due to its geography and natural resources, the settlements along the Upper and Middle Struma stand out there, manifesting closeness but also openness to influences from the north. Thus, they were in close cultural connection with the settlements existing at the same time in the interior of the Balkans, to the Danube and the Carpathian basin, more precisely with the settlements from the circle of Coțofeni-Kostolac II or Bujanj Hum I-d culture, to Bujanj Hum III. On the other hand, certain forms of material culture in those settlements are synchronized with the southern settlements, along Lower Struma (from Krioneri to Sitagri and Dikili Tash) or with the Lower Vardar settlements (Kilindir, Vardaroftsa, Kastanas).²¹

The Eastern or Thracian zone during the early Bronze Age shows the most intense and dynamic development of settlement life. It is certainly a result of the geography itself, climate and natural resources, as well as of established contacts, both with the more northern Danube-North-Black Sea areas and with the southern Anatolian East-Aegean world. Such influences from outside enabled faster development by intensifying metallurgy and the trade exchange, so that the cultural differentiation of that region in relation to the others will start at the end of the Early Bronze Age and with the beginning of the Middle Bronze Age. However, there also, the same way of life and principles of settlement life are documented during the early Bronze Age. In the plains, the old still Neolithic tells or tumba settlements are used, while in the higher parts, there are settlements on natural hills or hilltop settlements. Thus, even in the Early Bronze Age, certain micro-regions can be sorted after the local peculiarities in the settlement life. For example, the tell settlements in the Thracian Plain up to the Black Sea coast, show special peculiarities, close to such settlements in Aegean Thrace but not to the settlements existing at the same time in the Western Rhodope region with the valleys of Struma and Nesta.

The Upper Thrace Plain with the valleys of Maritsa and Tunja had the greatest conveniences for faster economic and cultural development in that part of the Balkans. The settlements from the oldest phase – Ezero (Ezero, Karanovo, Junacite, Galabovo, to Sitagri and Dikili Tash to the south) still use the same locations of the older, Eneolithic settlements and the same, the old economic base.²² The benefits of the New Bronze Age, at that phase, are only announced by influences from outside, either from the north or from the south-east (Troy 1). Thus, on the foundations of the already disintegrated Eneolithic

²¹ Alexandrov S. 1995, 255

²² Aleksandrov S. 2018, 87, Map. 1; Nikolov V. 2018; Aleksandrov S. 2018-a; Bojadziev J. – Bojadziev K. 2018; Leshtakov K. 2018; Renfrews C – Gimbutas M. – Elster E. 1986; Treuil. R. 1992

society in Thrace, in the first phase (Ezero phase) the first products began to appear from outside, ceramic imports from the south or individual, limited forms of luxury jewelry and the first metallurgy of bronze (Ezero, Sedlari, Junacite, Dikili Tash, Sitagri).²³

In the next, second phase (Mihalich phase) and especially in the third phase (Kirilovo phase) the situation changes in the direction of closer connection of the Thracian area (Upper Thracian Plain) with the Anatolian-Aegean cultural circle.²⁴ At that time, certain changes in the settlement life appeared, with the gradual fortification of the settlements with more serious defense systems, and external so-called mountain sanctuaries. In the material culture the connection with the Western Anatolian world is becoming closer. From there, numerous new forms in ceramics are spread and accepted (from Troy I and II), but also new types of residential buildings (Fig. 9).

Such are considered to be the long rectangular structures, often apsidal-shaped, with standard internal inventory (ovens, fireplaces, pythos - barn, grain drying areas) (Karanovo, Junacite, Sitagri, Dikili Tash).²⁵ All those elements in the third phase will begin to spread to the west, along the northern Aegean coast to Thessaly and mainland Greece (Thassos, Torone, Hagias Mamas, Kastanas, etc.).²⁶ The culmination of the spread of western Anatolian elements will take place at the end of the Early and the beginning of the Middle Bronze Age, when the so-called Minian pottery will appear along the same route.²⁷

As a conclusion about the settlement life on the territory north of the Aegean world in the early Bronze Age, the following common denominator can be drawn. In the plain regions with agricultural conveniences, the tell settlements are dominating, which maintain the old, still Neolithic economic traditions. Around them, new stockbreeding settlements (hilltop) are established in some mountain surroundings or regions with mountainous background. Thus, special settlement systems are gradually formed, on the one hand by the agricultural and on the other by the stockbreeding communities. According to that, it can be considered that the general, the Early Bronze Age settlement system was developed within compact micro regions, plain – agricultural and mountain – stockbreeding regions. Material culture is unique, in

²³ Vasileva Z. – Minkov P. 2018, 98-103

²⁴ Pavuk P. 2018, 269

²⁵ Hiller S. – Nikolov V. 2001, Abb. 7,13; Merpart N. J and others 2007, Fig 64,35, Pl. 7, 9, 10, 16; Renfrews C – Gimbutas M. – Elster E. 1986

²⁶ Aslanis 1985, Abb14; Horejs B. 2007

²⁷ Heurtley W. A. 1939, 208-211, Fig. 78,79; Horejs B. 2005; Horejs B. 2007

that the more communicative regions, such as the Upper Thracian Plain, achieve faster economic development than the others, and there, at the end of the Early Bronze Age, cultural differentiation began.



Fig. 9 Anatolian elements of Troy I and II in the Southeast Bulgaria:
1, 2 Mihalich, 3. Asara-Konstancia, 4 Ezero

NECROPOLISES AND BURIALS

Burials in the territory north of the Aegean world, same as the settlements, occur in different types, namely in different burial forms and rituals. Thus, through the burial we can follow all the communities from the Early and Middle Bronze Age as they go through the same cultural processes.

In the Albanian, as well as in other zones, in the Early Bronze Age, the old custom of burial in a contracted (hocker) position is still present within the settlements. But besides them, new, primarily tumular necropolises

outside the settlements appear. The old cult concept of burial with contracted inhumations within the settlement is known from Maliq, in the layers of phase Malik III-a.²⁸ On the other hand, a new tumular way of burial appears, which has no previous development but appears for the first time at the end of the Early Bronze Age. From then on, the tumuli burials began their development through the next phase of the Middle Bronze Age, but also through other newer prehistoric periods. Such are the tumuli in Pazok, Tropoje, Piskova, Ceruje, Dukat, Barch, which are similar to the tumuli existing at the same time in the northern parts of Albania, but still have their own special features.²⁹ They are made of stone and earth, formed on a circular base, with a clear central grave that stands out by its special construction from the other secondary tombs around it. It was surrounded by a circular wall made of stones, which often opened to one side, forming a short access – as a dromos up to the central burial with a contracted inhumation, carried out by digging in a deep pit (Fig. 10).

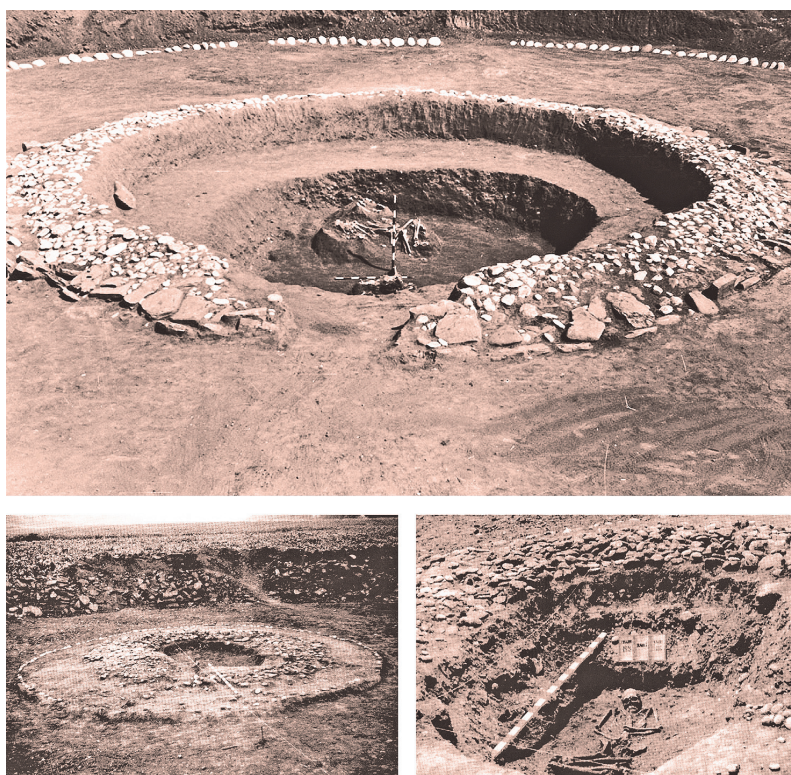


Fig. 10 The tumulus of Pazok with the Early Bronze Age central grave

²⁸ Prendi F. – Bunguri A. 2008, 194

²⁹ Prendi F. – Bunguri A. 2008, 194,196-208; Bodinaku N. 1982; Andrea Z. 1976 , Mirdita Z. 1979; Prendi F. 1995

The presence of red color is often on the floor of the pit and on the skeleton itself, for which the best is the example from Piskova. The grave pit of the central burial could have been covered with a wooden structure, as in the tumulus in Pazok, and not rarely, animals were sacrificed next to it. The grave goods in those burials find their parallels mostly in the Early Bronze Age finds in the north, through Western Serbia (Belotich – Bela Crkva to the Danubian region and Pannonia).³⁰

With such characteristics, the oldest tumuli in Albania are largely an expression of the cult concept of the so-called kurgan peoples from the steppe areas. It is believed that these tumuli most vividly illustrate the last penetration of the steppe communities to the south, towards the end of the early Bronze Age, when they apparently reached even Albania.

The picture of burial forms and rites is similar in the opposite eastern or Thracian part of the Balkans, although those there have a significant chronological advantage. There, also, in addition to the old custom of burial within the settlements (Ezero, Karanovo, Junacite, Dyadovo) new burials appear, under tumuli with kurgan features (Merichleri-Haskovo, Mednikarovo, Kamen-Sliven, Drazhevo-Yambol, Venec-Karnobat, Trojanovo and others) (Fig. 11).³¹

In this sense, burials in the Early Bronze Age in the Thracian region can be reduced to two basic principles manifested through burials in settlements and outside settlements, either in flat necropolises or more often under tumuli. Searching for the essential differences in the burial rituals, both ways of burial have their own characteristic features. Burials within the settlements (Ezero, Junacite, Karanovo, Kaznlak, Stara Zagora,) are dominated by children - babies, but adult burials were also practiced, mainly under the thresholds of the houses or in the yards.³² The deceased persons were laid in a contracted or flexed position in ceramic vessels (most often in children) or in pits. Such a custom connects these burials with the old still Neolithic tradition, which was maintained in agricultural societies until the Early Bronze Age or until the final change of that principle, with the establishment of the new, Indo-European way of burial.

The second type of burial outside the settlements is an expression of the new concept, which appears for the first time with the first Bronze Age manifestations at the start of the early or the so-called “Ezero” phase. They are characterized by clear features of the so-called “Pit Grave Culture” since the transition from the IV to the III millennium.³³ Whether they are organized in

³⁰ Andrea Zh. 1975, ; Prendi F. 1982, 214

³¹ Александров С. 2015, 33-45; Aleksandrov S. 2018,90

³² Лештаков Л. 1992,7-26, Nikolova L. 1995. 271; Aleksandrov S. 2018-a, 302; Merpart N. J and others 2007, 155-164, Nikolov V. 2018,308

³³ Панајотов И. 1989

flat necropolises (Bereketa mound – Stara Zagora) or under mounds-tumuli, it is about burials in a hocker position, in spacious pits, closed with wooden beams, where the deceased were covered, painted with ocher – red color. The dead were accompanied by various, often luxurious grave gifts as well as animal sacrifices.



Fig. 11 Some Early Bronze Age tumuli from Southeast Bulgaria: 1 Merichlari, 2 Kamen-Sliven

The spread of flat necropolises leads to the north and the Danube region where they are more common (from Devnia and Topoli in the vicinity of Varna to Batin in the vicinity of Ruse), while mound or tumular necropolises are dominant in the Upper Thracian Plain (Kamen, Merichleri, Drazovo, Trojanovo and others).³⁴

³⁴ Aleksandrov S. 2018, 90; Александров С. 2015, 33

These types of necropolises, especially tumuli, appear as a foreign tradition, with already followed, created ritual and funeral customs. The oldest tumuli are found in the eastern parts of the Lower Danube region (Koslogen-Belica), in the late V and early IV millennium, while they enter in mass use from 3100 to 2500 BC in the so-called pit grave culture. From there, they spread towards west, to Banat and Hungary, and towards south, to eastern Thrace, illustrating large migratory movements. The once established method of tumulus burial, in the early phase of the Early Bronze Age, will develop in the area of Thrace through all the younger periods of prehistory, all the way to Roman time.

Concerning the burial in the Early and Middle Bronze Age in the so-called Macedonian zone there are not enough data to better understand it. At the present stage of research, tumular burials with step elements as in the neighboring zones to the east or west are not known. Two necropolises with tumuli in Chalcidice (Kriaritsi and Skioni) have been documented, but their appearance and features are the result of other cultural mechanisms.³⁵ Chalcidice peninsula itself, as well as the northern Aegean islands, represent a special cultural whole, a transitional zone where Anatolian and Cycladic, as well as Balkan elements of the Early Bronze Age are found, so that all those elements can be met there together.

Other burials in the Macedonian zone are still graves within the settlements, such as those in Archontiko or parts of organized necropolises outside the settlements, such as those in Servia, Vasilika-Agia Paraskevi, Hagias Mamas.³⁶ In any case, it is about a contracted inhumation, either in pythoi or in cists of stone slabs. Although a small number of burials are known so far, inhumation in a contracted position can be considered a basic ritual, and the appearance of organized necropolises outside the settlements is a novelty established around the end of the third millennium and the beginning of the second millennium BC.

Only one site is known on the territory of the Republic of Macedonia, where graves from the Early Iron Age were discovered. It is a necropolis in Varos in the vicinity of Prilep, where a dozen graves were discovered, as part of a larger organized necropolis.³⁷ All burials are contracted inhumations in cist graves enclosed and covered with stone slabs. The grave goods are reduced to only a few vessel shapes, characteristic for the early Bronze Age in the wider area north of the Aegean world (Fig. 12).

³⁵ Asouchidou et al. 1998; Tsigarida – Montazi, 2009

³⁶ Pappa M. – Nanoglou S. 2016, 280-284; Akamakis 2009, 193; Pappa 2010, 382-440

³⁷ Китановски Б. 1978, 33-58



Fig. 12 Pottery finds from the Early Bronze Age necropolis in Varos – Prilep

The burial in the so-called Macedonian zone suggests that the process of Indo-Europeanization in that part of the Balkans took place significantly slower, more precisely that the old still Neolithic tradition was still alive throughout the whole third millennium BC and particularly strong in the plain, agricultural regions. The final stabilization of Indo-European cultural values took place at the end of the III millennium. Then, the first outside, organized necropolises were established with inhumated burials in a contracted position in in cist graves or in large ceramic vessels, as an expression of the final phase of Indo-Europeanization of that part of the Balkans.

The unified burial with contracted inhumation in the Macedonian zone can be traced to the north, to the valley of South Morava, and there, in the vicinity of Vranje, was discovered an Early Bronze Age necropolis with cremations in urns, which is already an expression of another, northern Balkan-Danube concept of burial.³⁸ However, in that necropolis, there are finds that belong to the repertoire, both the Moravian Bubanj Hum III and the Pelagonia or Armenohori group. Thus, it seems that the Vranje or South Morava region with the valley of Pchinja is a transitional zone to the more northern so-called Carpathian-Danubian cultural zone.

³⁸ Bulatovic A. – Bizjak D. – Vitezovic S. 2016, 71-89

CULT PLACES

A special phenomenon in the early stages of the Bronze Age is the appearance of cult places and sanctuaries, connected, more precisely conditioned by areas with strong mystical and spiritual power. They are usually located in a mountainous environment or on the very tops of dominant rocky hills, in each case in areas with a special geomorphological feature of the terrain and strong mystical and spiritual forces. In the early Bronze Age these phenomena may not have been as pronounced and common as in the Late Bronze Age, but the need for them was undoubtedly established since that period.

The basic concept of practicing religious needs in such sanctuaries meant the use of a certain sacred area, access to it, with altar structures (made of stone or clay), depots (usually shallow pits) for placing votive offerings or the remnants of ritual activities and other structures often cut in a rock. All these phenomena were spread everywhere the terrain allowed it, but also initiated it. In that sense, the most common are the most famous sanctuaries in the wider Rhodope region, but also those in the Kumanovo-Kratovo or Prilep region, where the volcanic morphology of the terrain is strongly pronounced.

In the so-called Eastern or Thracian zone in the early phase of the Bronze Age, until about 2500 BC such external sanctuaries had not yet been established, which suggests still the practicing of Eneolithic beliefs and the gradual formation of a new religious concept. This is the picture also in other regions north of the Aegean world.

The establishment of external sanctuaries, in the Thracian area, more precisely in the cult structures such as those in the village of Biser, in the village of Bikovo in the vicinity of Sliven or on Tatul occurred at the end of the early Bronze Age, more precisely during the third phase of the Early Bronze Age (Kirilovo phase).³⁹ The small number of sanctuaries during the older phases of the Early Bronze Age indicates that new spiritual values and cult practices associated with this type of sanctuary were gradually established during most of the third millennium. However, in the third phase, the appearance of sacred places on natural rocks or natural heights becomes more frequent, with all new elements of enclosed cult space (with ditches and stone) with cult pits, fireplaces and altar surfaces (Cherna Gora 1, Drama, Konevo), by which the new Bronze Age cult concept and new ritual activities were finally completed. Thus, all conditions were created for the development of numerous so-called rock and mountain sanctuaries in the future centuries, such as those of Semara, Levka, Radinchevo and other sanctuaries from the Middle

³⁹ Фол В. 2007; Гоцев А. 2002,51.

and especially from the Late Bronze and Early Iron Age, when they culminated in the territory of Southeastern Bulgaria and in the Rhodope region.⁴⁰

In the Macedonian zone, the best examples of cult spaces from the Early Bronze Age are the sanctuaries in the vicinity of Kumanovo, in Pelince and Kokino, which we will focus on, given their research and the number of archaeological data that originate from them.

The sanctuary in Pelince was positioned along the ridge of a dominant crest that led to the settlement space of the Gradishte-Pelince site (Fig. 4 & 13).⁴¹ Unlike the settlement where limited excavations have been carried out and where layers of Early Bronze Age, Early Iron Age and early antiquity have been discovered, the sanctuary has been fully explored. It is chronologically determined in the second half of the III millennium BC.

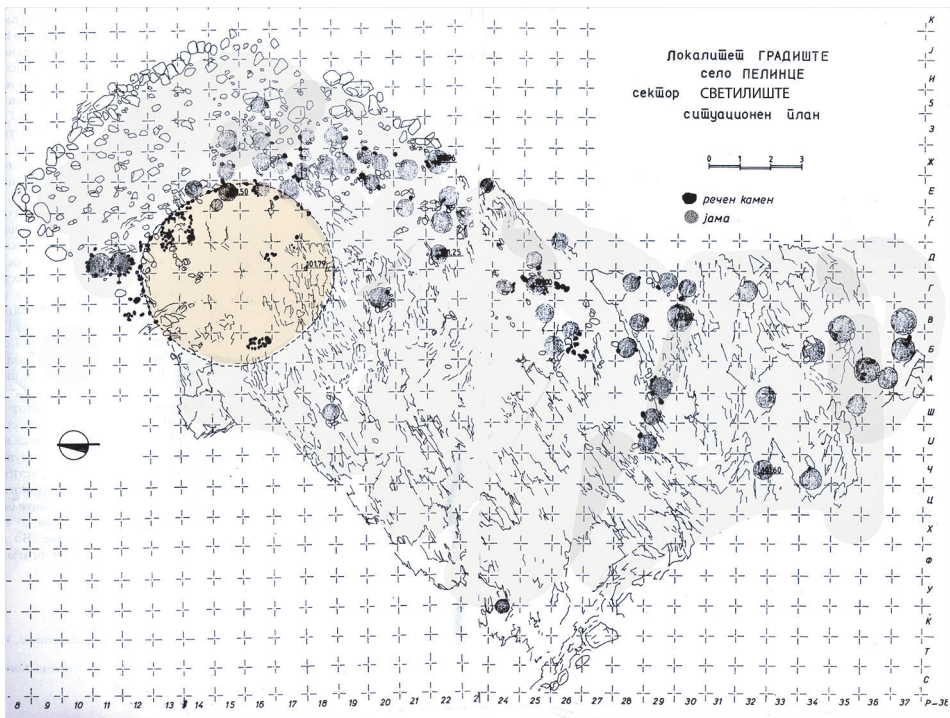


Fig. 13 Plan of the Early Bronze Age sanctuary in Pelince

The entire available space of Pelince is a naturally limited sacred area, dominated by a circular structure in the center, similar to the antique esharas. On a circular base of 6 meters in diameter, on a substructure of small river

⁴⁰ Фол. В. 2003, 215-228; Радунчева А. 2002, 59-80; Фол. В. 2007

⁴¹ Трајковска Л, 1999, Булатовиќ А. – Станковски Ј. 2012; Митревски Д. 2013, 59, Сл. 46

stones an altar surface was formed with a clay coating, strongly burnt, which served as a recipient. According to the analysis of the slag residues, a special feldspar ore was burned on that surface provided from the immediate surroundings, releasing special visual effects during the burning. We do not know what other activities were performed on the circular altar surface, but it is certain that those activities carried the essence of these ritual actions. Smaller pits with minor finds were arranged around the altar, mostly ceramic vessels, but also weights, parts of clay sculptures, animal bones, etc. (Fig. 13 and 14). The vessels may have contained votive food (according to their form and preservation), but there is no doubt, like the other finds, represented remains used in the ritualized actions.



Fig. 14 Some ritual pits around the central altar in the sanctuary in Pelince

In any case, the ceramics from Pelince show a unique quality and fabrication, which indicates its local production (Fig. 15). The represented forms find parallels in all neighboring regions, both in the repertoire of the Morava group Bubanj Hum III and in the Thracian Early Bronze Age (Mihalic phase), as well as in the contemporary pottery of Lower Vardar Valley (Kastanas, Vardaroftsa, etc.) or in the Armenochori group (pottery EBA-III Mandalo, the older Bronze Age pottery from Radobor and the older pottery from Archontiko) to the pottery from Maliq III-b.⁴²

The same pottery with some typological variants to certain forms was discovered in the nearby Kokino, located 20 km away from Pelince.⁴³

⁴² Д. Митревски 2013, 60, Сл. 57

⁴³ Станковски Ј. 2007; Митревски Д. 2013, 58



Fig. 15 A part of the ceramic finds from the sanctuary in Pelince

The sanctuary of Kokino is located on the top of a high volcanic hill that dominates the entire surrounding area (Fig. 16). The highest part is a rock mass with a natural saddle, a flat surface on which stone seats-thrones are carved, access paths in the rock, smaller surrounding platforms and markers in the rock.



Fig. 16 Panoramic view of the Bronze Age sanctuary and observatory in Kokino

All of them are considered to be elements of a prehistoric astronomical observatory. But, in direct communication with that space, other phenomena were discovered on the first, northern terrace.⁴⁴ The whole terrace was protected by a stone wall that enclosed the terrace from outside, the north side. Structures and movable finds with an undoubtedly cult character have been discovered in that area, a large flattened stone surface, probably a sacred platform and numerous cult pits, different in shape and dimensions.

Most often, the depressions and cracks in the natural rocks have been used, enclosed by smaller stones, filled with pottery, stone tools, clay figurines, bones of domestic animals and other offerings, closed by earth filling and smaller stones (Fig. 17). Thus, there are clearly two distinct parts in Kokino, the astronomical observatory and the Bronze Age sanctuary, and most of the archaeological material is related to the sanctuary.

Kokino astronomical observatory and the sanctuary have been closely related, as indicated by a special finding discovered in the sanctuary space. It is about a ceramic vessel with an engraved decoration, actually a presentation of the movement of the Sun, its track on the horizon between the mountain peaks (Fig. 18).

⁴⁴ Stankovski J. 2002



Fig. 17 A part of the Early Bronze Age finds from Kokino

The appearance of the so-called rock-cut sanctuaries and an astronomical observatory in the same place is not a rear case, and occurs in a much wider area at that time. The situation of Kokino, due to its formal and chronological characteristics, is closest to the Harman Kaya sanctuary and observatory, in the vicinity of Momchilgrad in the Rhodope Mountains (Fig. 19).⁴⁵



Fig. 18 A part of the vessel with engraved astronomical motive from Kokino

⁴⁵ Фол. В. 2007, 206-210

According to the discovered movable finds, it is indisputable that Kokino sanctuary was in use from the end of the early Bronze Age to the late Bronze Age. Their stratigraphic position on the field is not quite certain, but among the numerous finds, especially in the ceramics, according to their typological characteristics, the vessel shapes typical for the end of the early Bronze Age are clearly noticeable (Fig. 17). The same forms are met in the wider territory, from South Morava to the Aegean Sea and from Albania to the Black Sea at the end of the early and the beginning of the Middle Bronze Ages.

The sanctuaries in Pelince and Kokino are only the most explored sanctuaries, where most of the archeological finds originate from. Most of the sanctuaries, due to their nature of the sites, with no special architectural structures built, without permanent use, in other words, without clearly stratified finds, offer far less data. Thus, similar mystical spaces in the service of the religious needs of the Bronze Age population are also found in the Prilep rocky terrain and the Vinica mountainous space.⁴⁶



Fig. 19 Panoramic view of the sanctuary in Harman Kaja-Rodope (according to V. Fol)

The remains of an early Bronze Age sanctuary on Kokolov Rid nearby Vinica are interesting, with elements and finds that have parallels in Pelince but also in the east in the sanctuaries that appear at the same time on the Thracian territory. The sanctuary was organized on a dominant mountain ridge, by depositing votive gifts around the tallest circular structure on the terrain (Fig. 20). Movable finds, although quite indicative, are unfortunately most often discovered in the secondary position (Fig. 21).

⁴⁶ Stankovski J. – Temelkovski A. 2017, 47



Fig. 20 Panoramic view of the sanctuary in Kokolov Rid near Vinica

The establishment of this sanctuary determined the cult character of that area, which later in the beginning of the Iron Age have been used for burials under tumuli.⁴⁷

Locations of such cult sites have apparently been specially selected to meet the needs of communication with the gods. The elements of the natural environment have been used regularly, whether for cult structures in dominant mountainous positions, high rocky areas with items deposited in a rock, or in cave structures. All these sanctuaries appear to have similar characteristics and testify to unique spiritual needs and mechanisms of their practicing on the entire area north of the Aegean world during the Early and Middle Bronze Ages.

THE POTTERY AND OTHER SMALL FINDS

The strongest expression of the material culture of the Early and Middle Bronze Age is the pottery. With the exception of some luxury, gold or silver items, mainly jewelry that appears as an import from outside and only in special situations, the pottery is a true indicator of the character and features of the material culture of the early Bronze Age. Its physiognomy through the

⁴⁷ The results of the research of the sanctuary Kokolov Rid – Vinica by J. Ivanova, head of the research, to whom I thank for the information.

early stages of the Bronze Age best reflects the process of forming a new cultural concept.

The early Bronze Age pottery basically shows unique values of the entire Central Balkan zone, so it is a common base from which the whole ceramography will develop through the next phases of the Bronze and Iron Ages. It was formed locally through the early stages of the Bronze Age, on the foundations of the common Balkan-Eneolithic ceramic heritage.



Fig. 21 A part of the Early Bronze Age finds from Kokolov Rid near Vinica

More serious influences from outside are found in the Eastern Thracian space only, where in the later phases of the Early Bronze Age some new elements appear, mainly from Troy II or along the northern Aegean coastline, where at the beginning of the Middle Bronze Age the so-called Minian pottery appears. In any case, during the third millennium BC the new pottery production will be completely stabilized.

Basically, the Early Bronze Age pottery throughout the entire territory north of the Aegean world is characterized by significant simplification of forms and strongly reduced decorations, compared to the previous Eneolithic ceramics. Rough, mainly storage and firepots dominate, while luxury table pottery is quite limited. Their decoration is reduced to simple techniques,

mainly with engraving, plastic accessories, fingerprints and mechanical smoothing, without the sophisticated painting techniques.

Almost all vessel shapes begin their development in the Early Bronze Age and develop through the later stages of the Bronze Age, basically in the same way and according to the same principles, in all regions. In this sense, the same basic ceramic forms are found from the Adriatic to the Black Sea. (Fig. 22). Some forms will disappear during the Late Bronze Age, but most of them will achieve great typological development, with numerous local variants and special art features, characteristic for certain groups, surviving until the end of the Iron Age.

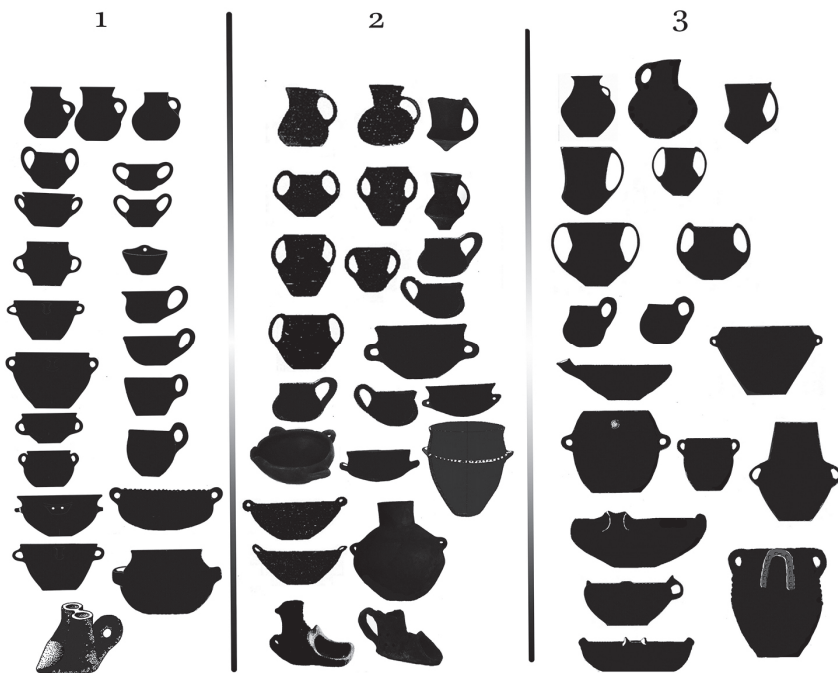


Fig. 22 Comparative table on the basic pottery shapes from the Early Bronze Age:
1 Albanian zone, 2 Macedonian zone, 3 Bulgarian zone

The strongest pottery production is found in regions with pronounced agricultural predispositions and a strong Neolithic tradition, such as the Thracian Plain, Thessaloniki, Korcha or Pelagonia. The new pottery in those regions achieved a most dynamic development towards the end of the early Bronze Age. The best example is the situation in Pelagonia, on the Tumba-Radobor site. An exceptional phenomenon of mass ceramic production was discovered there, probably to meet the needs of all surrounding settlements.⁴⁸

⁴⁸ Митревски 2013, Митревски Д. Сл. 44 и 45,61

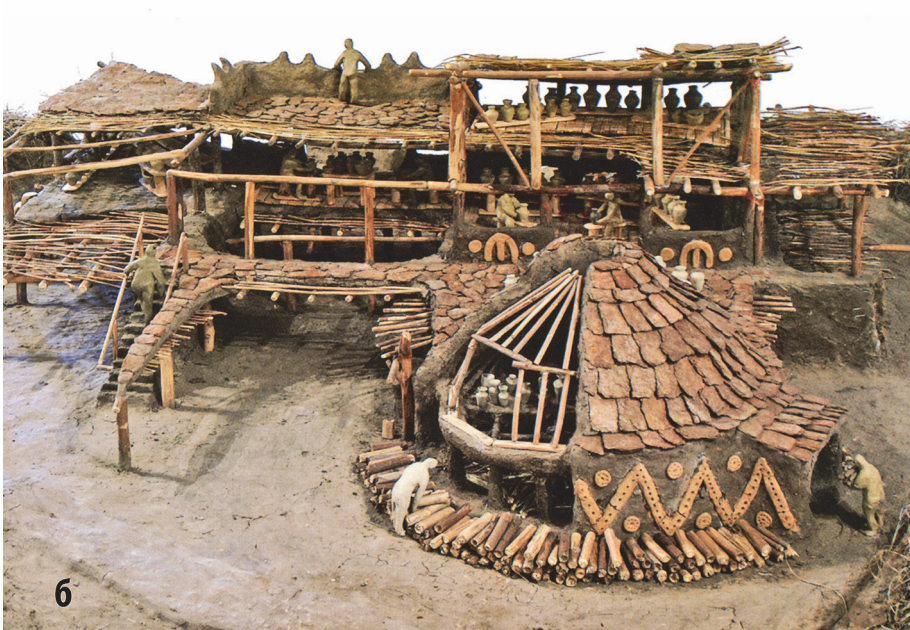


Fig. 23 Reconstruction of the pottery kiln from Toumba – Radobor (according to M. Vasileva)

The settlement in the village of Radobor near Bitola is a common tell-mound that was in use from the Neolithic to the Middle Bronze Age. Towards the end of the Early and the beginning of the Middle Bronze Age, it achieved its highest cultural and economic growth, as one of the most powerful settlements within the Pelagonia or the so-called Armenochori group. Large kilns

for firing a large number of ceramic pots have been discovered in the settlement dating from that time (Fig. 23).⁴⁹

In one of them, several hundred vessels were discovered in the original position, as lined up for the last time in the kiln. Their fabrication is unique, mainly red baked vessels, with surface smoothing without any special decoration. The repertoire of the represented forms implies numerous variants of a dozen basic forms, which is a production that significantly exceeds the needs of the settlement itself (Fig. 24).



Fig. 24 Some ceramic finds from Tumba – Radobor near Bitola

According to the number of variants, quality and quantity, the pottery from Tumba – Radobor exposes this settlement as a real ceramic center, which at the beginning of the Middle Bronze Age produced almost all pottery forms that appeared in the wider area of the so-called Armenochori group (Visok Rid-Bukri, Tumba-Kravari, Tumba-Karamani, Tumba-Armenochori to Mandalo and Archontiko).

As bearing manifestations in the ceramics of that time, the same forms are found in the neighboring so-called Maliq or Korcha group of settlements (Maliq III-b and c, Sovjan and others), in the Skopje–Kumanovo group (Kale–Skopje, Pelince, Kokino, Lopate), and in the Lower Vardar (Kilindir, Chaushica, Kastanas) and Thessaloniki (from Saratse to Hagias Mamas).⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Garasanin M. 1982, 172; Garasanin 1993; Heurtley W. A. 1939; 192-198; Митревски Д. 2013, 56;

⁵⁰ Prendi F. 1982, Fig. 38, Fig. 39, 212-215; Heurtley W. A. 1939, 166-192; Aslanis J. 1985, 204

At the same time, the Thracian space goes through the same processes and mechanisms of formation of Bronze Age ceramography, and there, the influence from outside played a significant role. This especially refers to the valley of Maritsa and the Upper Thracian plain in the third phase of the Early Bronze Age (Cyrilovo phase), when the contacts with the western Anatolian and Aegean space, with Troy II and III, were already intensified. As a result of the inclusion of that territory in the main trade routes of that time connecting the Western Anatolia and the Eastern Aegean world with Central Europe, appeared the first imported vessels produced on wheel and their local copies. It is especially noticeable at certain points considered as the first trade colonies on this route, such as Mihalic, Galabovo, Asara Constantia.⁵¹ These processes impose higher criteria in the local pottery production, which, in the East Thracian space begins to stand out with special local features. Without those contacts, the other more conservative areas, in the west towards Struma, Vardar and Albania, were still relying on the old local traditions and contacts established with the north, with the local middle Danube and central Balkan cultures (Late Vucedol, Kostolac, Bubanj Hum II and III and the alike).⁵²

In any case, it can be concluded that the ceramography in the early Bronze Age was gradually established throughout the north of the Aegean world. Towards the middle of the third millennium, the old Eneolithic criteria were completely abandoned everywhere, and finally the new Bronze Age production was developed, with reduced forms, mainly in monochrome style and design. It shows similar features throughout the territory and substantially differs from the Danube-Carpathian pottery production and, even more, from the pottery existing at that time in the Aegean basin. It is most illustratively shown in the comparative table of the development of the basic pottery forms through the Early and Middle Bronze Age throughout the territory north of the Aegean world (Fig. 22).

In addition to pottery, and the other small objects that are discovered, first of all, as inventory in the houses since the Early and Middle Bronze Age in the same way express the unique way of life, the same level of cultural development, as well as the common character and features of the material culture. Usually, in the houses are discovered ceramic spindle vertebrae, loom weights, and various tools, usually made of local stone or bone. Production of figurines has been reduced to a minimum, so that only a few, extremely stylized anthropomorphic figurines are known so far (Maliq, Radobor, Mandalo, Pelince, Kokino) (Fig. 25).

⁵¹ Aleksandrov S. 2018, 93

⁵² Aleksandrov S. 1995; Aleksandrov S. 1998, 223-233; Митревски Д. 2013, 59-61 Prendi F. 1982, 214

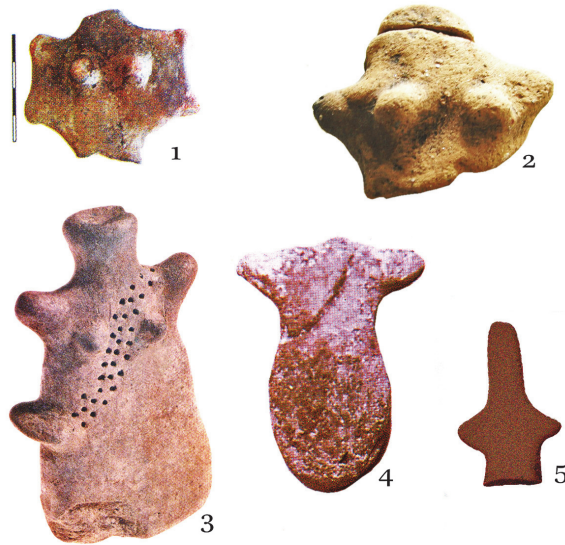


Fig. 25 Terracotta figurines from: 1 Pelince, 2 Kokino, 3 Radobor, 4 Mandalo, 5 Maliq

Metallurgy, on the other hand, has developed with different dynamics. In the western regions it is known that only rare bronze objects have been discovered in just a few settlements.

Interesting data for the first Bronze Age metallurgy originate from the settlement Tumba-Kravari in the vicinity of Bitola. There, layers from the Neolithic to the Early Bronze Age have been discovered, whereby a copper ax, a casting mold of that shape and a stone ax originate from the Early Bronze Age (Fig. 26).⁵³



Fig. 26 Copper axes, a stone ax and a stone mold from Toumba- Kravari near Bitola

⁵³ Симоска Д. – Санев. В. 1976, 48, сл,229-23, Митревски Д. . 2013, Сл. 43,57

Analog copper axes (3) are known also from the early Bronze Age in Albania, as well as an axe from Mandalo or some small objects and remains of the metallurgical activity in Kilindir nearby Kilkis.⁵⁴ They all clearly suggest that during the Early Bronze Age there was local metallurgy in those regions, but still as copper production.

On the contrary, in the Thracian East, in the early phases of the Early Bronze Age, far more bronze objects are found, most commonly tools and weapons, which can be found in the settlements together with molds for casting them, such as those from Ezero or Carnobat or clear remains from metallurgical activity in Sitagri and Dikili Tash.⁵⁵ Besides them, the objects made of precious metals are even more frequent, but mainly as imports in the early tumular burials such as Venec, Drazhevo, Kamen, Trojanovo (Fig. 27).⁵⁶

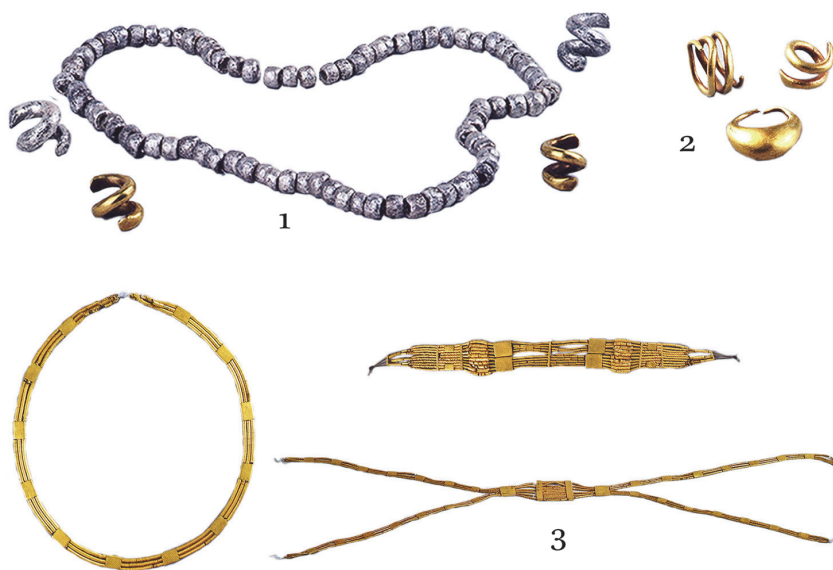


Fig. 27 Luxurious jewelry from: 1 Trojanovo, 2 Venec, 3 Dabane

They are the ones that testify to the functionality and the role that the old north-south communications had for the origin and development of metallurgy in the Upper Thracian Plain and in South-Eastern Thrace in general. Thanks to that, already in the third phase of the Early Bronze Age, the local metallurgy is intensified with the use of tin bronze, so that during the Middle

⁵⁴Prendi F. 1995, 244,Tafel 1, Heurtley W. A. 1939, Casson S. 1926, Pl. VIII- 3; Papaeftimi A. – Pilali A. 1997, Fig. 60

⁵⁵Branigen K. 1974, 36,p 18-19; Aleksandrov S. 2018 – a, Fig. 2; Treuil. R. 1992,116

⁵⁶ Aleksandrov S. 2018-e, 32; Iliev I. – Bakardzhiev S. 2018, 325; Georgieva R. and others 2018, 329; Dimitrova D. 2018,317

Bronze Age the Thracian area experiences a real flourishing of bronze production and goldsmith's trade (Ovcharci, Izvorovo, Dbane, and others) (Fig. 28)⁵⁷ Such progress is certainly due not only to the contacts with the Lower Danube and Carpathian region but also to the already established influences from the south, from the Anatolian-Aegean world. The picture is actually the same as with the development of ceramography at that time. In that sense, going more and more to the west, metal production and luxury jewelry are less common, so that the most western such finds are the finds from Petrich and Rupite, in the valley of Lower Struma (Fig. 2). From there, two depots with gold, silver, electron and bronze items are known, the appearance of which, according to the represented forms, is undoubtedly a result of trade movements and direct contacts, both with the north and with the south along the old communication in the Struma valley.⁵⁸



Fig. 28 Some bronze and golden items from: 1,2 Dabane, 3,4 Ovcharci 5,6,7,8 Izvorevo

The picture of development of the Early Bronze Age material culture is, in fact, a picture of the final establishment of the cultural concept of the new Bronze Age which basically has the Indo-European values. The further development of these values without any significant changes and innovations leads us through the Middle Bronze Age. Therefore, the distinction between Early and Middle Bronze Age material culture is difficult to be seen everywhere. It should be noted that due to its resources and external contacts, the Thracian space has achieved the fastest cultural and social development, so that even since the Middle Bronze Age there it can be considered the emer-

⁵⁷ Hristov M. 2018, 335-340; Aleksandrov S. 2018-e, 368; Brislavov B. 2018, 371

⁵⁸ Aleksandrov S. – Hristov M. 2018, 332

gence of a certain tribal elite. Graves of such an elite (Izvorovo, Kamen, Ovcharci, etc.) do not occur in the more western regions, which had a far weaker economic base. However, some forms of small jewelry such as gold and silver earrings of the so-called Levkas type and others similar to them testify about the unique taste and needs of the entire territory from the Danube to the Aegean Sea and from the Adriatic to the Black Sea.

In the next phase of the Late Bronze Age, new, more serious contacts and cultural influences from outside, especially from the south and the Mycenaean world, will be established, which will significantly enrich and modify the local culture. By this, the more serious ethno-cultural differentiation of the communities north of the Aegean world will start.

ON THE PROCESS OF INDO-EUROPEANIZATION AND CULTURAL DIFFERENTIATION

The image of the Early and Middle Bronze Age north of the Aegean world, as much as it represents an image of a heterogeneous society, it still says that the communities of this territory, although with different dynamics, went through the same cultural and social processes. They were fundamentally different from the processes that shaped Cycladic culture and Minoan civilization in the Aegean basin. The impulses for such a character of the Early and Middle Bronze Age culture, mostly came from the north, related to the process of Indo-Europeanization in the Balkans. They were based on the already established Eneolithic relations within the joint Danube-Balkan Eneolithic complex, of course adapted to the new climatic, social and cultural conditions.

Formation of the Bronze Age cultural concept predominated in the Thracian territory, where the structure of the settlement system shows elements of social transformation since the fourth millennium. It started in the old multi-layer settlements (Ezero, Karanovo, Junacite, Dyadovo and others) with the implementation of new cultural elements, first in the material and then in the spiritual culture.⁵⁹ Towards the middle of the Early Bronze Age, the settlements in the Thracian space, stimulated by the new needs for protection, began to be established and new settlements to appear on natural dominant heights, as well as cave settlements.

The same types of settlements from the Early and Middle Bronze Age are present in other regions depending on the geo-morphology and economic potentials of the environment. Thus, in the plain and agricultural areas, tell or

⁵⁹ Aleksandrov S. 2018, 87

mound settlements are present (in Korcha area, in Pelagonia, along Lower Vardar or in the Thessaloniki area). In the higher, stockbreeding regions, the settlements are located on hills, such as: Topojan, Mazhica, Ajani, Kale-Skopje, Pelince, Pernik, Radomir, Djakovo, Mihalic, Sitagri, Dikili Tash, etc. In the regions with predispositions to use of natural shelters there are cave settlements such as those in Albania: Tren, Benje, Katundas, Konsopol, Nezir or in the Rhodopes: Jagodina, Trigrad, Koshnica and others.

Agricultural environment where the so-called Indo-European influences was significantly weaker, such as in Pelagonia or Lower Vardar and Struma Valleys and Thessaloniki area, although in new conditions, they continued the old still Neolithic and Eneolithic way of life, gradually and very slowly accepting the criteria of the new time. Extremely limited contacts and influences from outside, left there space for extended life of the old values, which will be nurtured deep into the Bronze Age.

Therefore, it can be concluded that the theories for the penetration of the population engaged in stock-breeding, coming from the northeast are not only not outdated, but find full confirmation in the settlement structure, organization and character of the settlement life during the Early Bronze Age all over the territory north of the Aegean world. Perhaps these theories are somewhat exaggerated if it is insisted on strong invasion, on dissolution of the Eneolithic population, or complete change in the population. But, of course, this was not the case, because in all segments of life the same phenomena are detected that initiate a long process of mixing of the autochthonous, agricultural and the new, stock-breeders-nomadic population. This process resulted in the final formation of the new Bronze Age ethno-cultural substratum.

The new ethnic elements expressed through the cultural novelties that appear in the earliest phases of the Early Bronze Age undoubtedly are coming from the north-east, the eastern Danube and the northern Black Sea, first in the regions of the Thracian plains and mining areas in Southeast Bulgaria and later in the west, integrating with the old Eneolithic population.

Such a process is most evident in the sphere of burial. In the early Bronze Age, there is a variety of burial forms and rituals, but this variety is a common denominator for the entire territory north of the Aegean world. However, with the stabilization of the Bronze Age (Indo-European) burial concept, the only ritual of contracted inhumation is established on the entire territory, both in the tumular and flat necropolises. In the regions exposed to the penetration of communities with the pit culture, the way of mound burial is stabilized, mostly in the Thracian and Albanian zone (Pazok, Piskove, Vodhin, Bajkaj, Mericleri, Drazovo, etc.).⁶⁰

⁶⁰ Prendi F. Bunguri A, 2008, 196-208; Iliev S. 2018, 318; Iliev I. – Bakardzhuev S. 2018, 325

The process of spreading the elements of the so-called “pit culture” through introduction of the new way of burial in a contracted (hocker) position, painting in red and covering the pit with wooden beams took place gradually, from the East Danube to the west and south. Such burials are usually associated with the steppe population and their migrations, and occur in flat or more often in mound-tumular necropolises. Such duality was probably not due so much to ethnicity as to socio-economic differences. In that sense, the mound or tumulus burials in the Balkans are considered the strongest expression of the new, patriarchally organized steppe population engaged in stock-breeding. If so, then the process of their spread to the south in the territory north of the Aegean world can be easily traced.

The spread to the south, not only of the mound burials but also of other elements arising from the so-called pit culture, in any case, took place unevenly and with unequal intensity along two branches, east and west. The eastern branch led directly from the region of the northern Black Sea and the East Danube to the Upper Thracian Plain, where they first appear and domesticate.⁶¹ These are rightly considered a foreign tradition and a confirmation of the migration of the steppe population. There, their penetration was the earliest and most intense. They appear in large number in the early phase of the Early Bronze Age, from 3100-2500 BC (Kamen-Sliven, Merichleri-Haskovo, Trojanovo-Radnevo, Drazhevo-Yambol, Venec-Karnobat and others).⁶²

On the opposite side, on the west side, the same phenomena spread south after first penetrating the Pannonian and Central Danube areas. From there, they continued to the Adriatic, and along the eastern Adriatic coast, until the end of the Early Bronze Age or in the Middle Helladic period, they spread to the southern parts of Albania and to Central Greece.⁶³

Along the Vardar valley, Lower Struma valley, in Pelagonia or in the Haliacmon region, up to the sea, there are no known mound-tumulus burials with steppe characteristics. In that zone, during the Early Bronze Age, burial was practiced with contracted inhumation in pits and mostly ceramic vessels, as an expression of the still active old prehistoric customs.

It is interesting that, in continuation, north along the Morava valley to the Danube, the picture is similar. The old customs of burial in vessels were still practiced there, with the cremation being the dominant ritual there. On this basis, the entire territory from the Danube to the Aegean Sea, along the Morava-Vardar valley can be divided into two parts. Cremation was practiced

⁶¹ Панајотов И. 1989

⁶² Aleksandrov S. 2018,90; Iliev S. 2018, 318; Iliev I. – Bakardzhuev S. 2018, 325 ; Georgieva R. and others 2018, 329; Dimitrova D. 2018,316

⁶³ Hammond N. G. L. 1976; Prendi F. – Bunguri A. 2008,196

in the northern, Moravan parts, which gravitate towards the Danube, while in the southern, Vardar parts, open to the Aegean, inhumation was common. The basic funeral rituals thus established will be practiced throughout all subsequent prehistoric periods.

Following the phenomena in the sphere of burial during the Early Bronze Age, it is most vividly shown that the process of Indo-Europeanization did not take place evenly and, even more, at the same time. It covered the entire early Bronze Age, with the Thracian zone chronologically and economically and socially superior to the other two zones. On the other hand, communities along the Vardar Valley and the Macedonian plains were the most resistant to the acceptance of Indo-European benefits.

This image, which arises from settlements and burials, is supported by other cultural phenomena from the early Bronze Age north of the Aegean world, such as the formation and stabilization of new religious beliefs and practices related to the so-called mountain and rock/peak sanctuaries and of course the establishment of the new Bronze Age material culture.

By the end of the third and first centuries of the second millennium, Indo-European values had already stabilized throughout the entire territory from the Adriatic to the Black Sea. Thus, the Middle Bronze Age communities, with a similar genesis, created a similar, common cultural basis for all the novelties and cultural changes that would occur somewhat later, with the spread of Mycenaean culture to the north during the Late Bronze Age. Then, for the first time, the influences from the Aegean south will be strong enough to play a significant role in the further local development of some communities. These influences will, in fact, disrupt the previous, largely unique Bronze Age development and will begin the process of more serious ethno-cultural differentiation among the communities of the entire area north of the Aegean-Mycenaean world.

CHAPTER 2

THE LATE BRONZE AGE NORTH OF THE MYCENAEAN WORLD

The highest achievement of the Balkan Bronze Age was certainly the emergence of the brilliant Mycenaean civilization in Continental Greece. Numerous local cultures in the interior of the Balkans remained in its deep shadow. However, some Balkan regions established certain contacts and relationships with the Mycenaean world, and succeeded to ensure faster economic and cultural development and thus, stand out from the rest. In this sense, the picture of the Balkans in the Late Bronze Age is formed by three clearly separated cultural zones, looking from south to north. In the extreme south, there is a so-called core of the Mycenaean world or areas such as the Peloponnese, Attica, and Boeotia, where the Mycenaean social, economic, cultural, and religious systems were established and fully developed. These values were later extended to the north of Thessaly as a zone on the Mycenaean periphery, which basically determined the territory of the so-called Mycenaean world.¹

To the north of that territory extends the second zone or areas from the Albanian coast of the Adriatic Sea, to the west coast of the Black Sea in the east. That territory was basically outside of any Mycenaean integration, relying on the local cultural tradition, closely connected to the more northern areas of the central and northern Balkans. However, in some micro-regions, the direct influences of Mycenaean culture are spreading, which will play a significant role in the cultural development of the local communities there (Fig. 29).

The third zone covers the northern areas of the Central Balkans to the Danube and the regions north of Stara Planina to the Carpathian range. This zone is organically and traditionally connected with the Carpathian-Danube basin and contains only indirect elements of the Mycenaean culture.

¹ Kilian K. 1988, Fig. 1; Feuer B. 1983

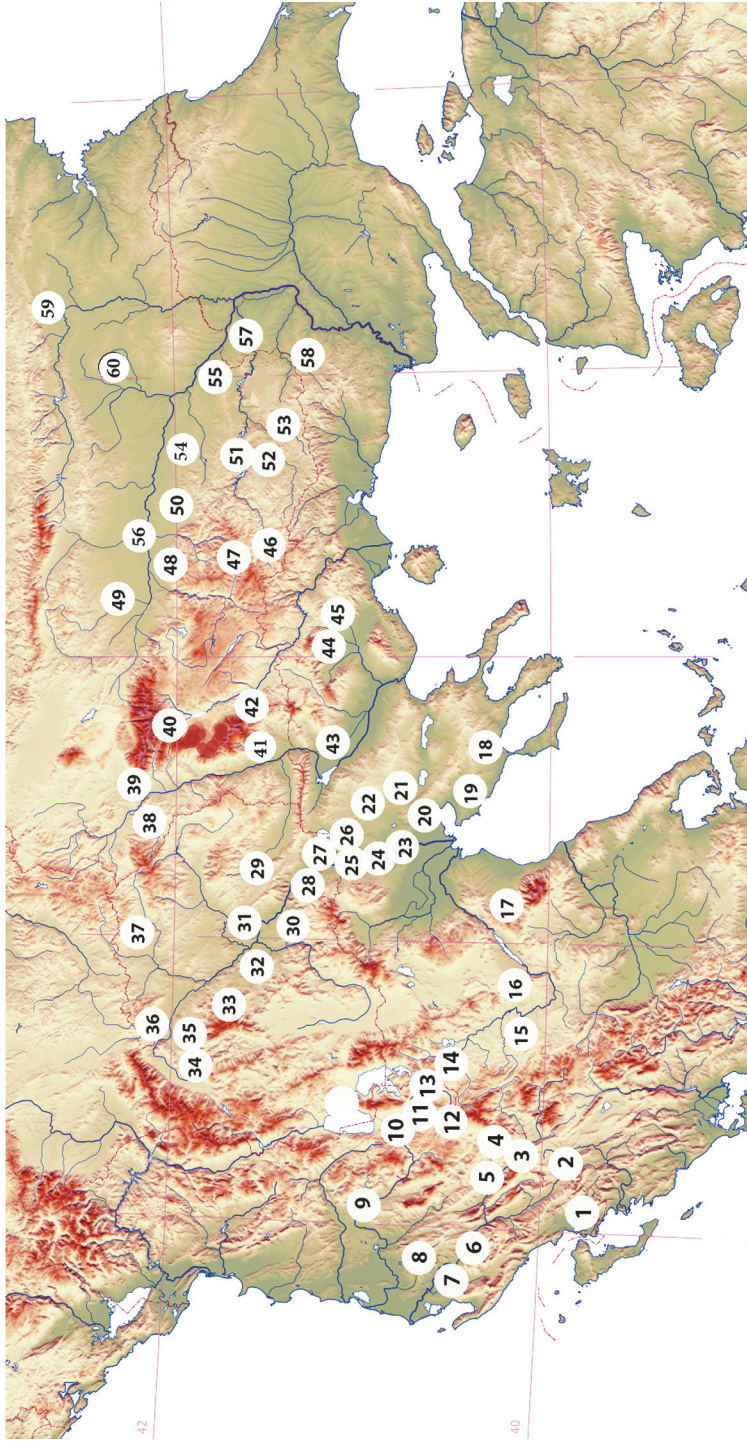


Fig. 29 Disposition of the most important sites from the Late Bronze Age north of the Aegean world: 1 Bajakaj, 2 Vodhin , 3 Piskove, 4 Prodan, 5 Benje, 6 Dukat, 7 Viora, 8 Vajze, 9 Pazok, 10 Maliq, 11 Sovjan, 12 Barch, 13 Tren, 14 Bubushi, 15 Grevena, 16 Aiani, 17 Ag. Dimitrios, 18 Ag. Mamas, 19 Kritsana, 20 Toumba-Tessaloniki, 21 Saratse, 22 Assiros, 23 Kastanas, 24 Vardarofitsa, 25 Chauchitsa, 26 Kilindir, 27 Mrdaja, 28 Vardarski Rid, 29 Gabrevci, 30 Mali Dol, 31 Ulanci, 32 Vodovrati, 33 Manastir-Chaska, 34 Brvenica, 35 D.Sonje, 36 Kale-Skopje, 37 Kokino, 38 Krsto Pokrovnik, 39 Kamenska Chuka, 40 Bresto, 41 Sandanski, 42 Koprivlen, 43 Feia Petra, 44 Exoki, 45 Potami, 46 Seclari, 47 Adata, 48 Perushnica, 49 Junacite, 50 Dragoina, 51 Harman Kaja, 52 Tatul, 53 Ada Tepe, 54 Gorski Izvor, 55 Biser, 56 Plovdiv, 57 Kush Kaja, 58 Dolno Lukovo, 59 Sliven, 60 Jambol

Our interest is certainly aimed to the second zone, where during the Late Bronze Age the nurturing of local values from the previous phases of the Bronze Age continued, but also the first direct contact with the Aegean world of the Bronze Age was established. It is considered that the first Aegean elements in the north appear since the Cretan thalassocracy, as evidenced by some finds in Albania and along the Black Sea coast.² However, the real direct contacts with the south come with the penetration of Mycenaean goods to the north. This was marked by the appearance of the first Mycenaean imports of early types of Mycenaean weapons, especially swords, such as the swords from Pazok, Mati, Vodhin in the west or such finds from Drama-Yambol, Smolyan or Razgrad in the east.³ It was just with the earliest Mycenaean import that the way was opened for all the social, economic and cultural innovations that would follow, thus announcing the new development phase of the Late Bronze Age.

The beginnings of the Late Bronze Age all over the territory north of the Mycenaean world can be positioned shortly after the appearance of the first Mycenaean products or somewhere around the middle of the second millennium BC. These objects paved the way for cultural influences from the Aegean Late Bronze Age, but only in certain micro-regions, those of special Mycenaean interest. Such were the valleys of the main rivers, which from the sea coast led to certain regions in the interior, which possessed exceptional natural resources. Then, the Mycenaean society or the first Mycenaean merchants and adventurers were mainly interested in ore and wood. In that way, the new communication lines were penetrated, along which the trade movements will take place, and which at the same time will enable the increase of the mining and metallurgical activity in those regions. To all this we must add the emerging climatic conditions, which have also caused certain cultural and economic changes, so that we can complete the basic factors in turning a new page of the Late Bronze Age development of communities just north of the Aegean world.

In this context, very clear is the distinction between the regions through which cultural elements from the Mycenaean south and the more conservative regions have circulated, and where the Mycenaean influences did not reach at all. Thus, during the Late Bronze Age, certain regions began to stand out with their special local features, which actually began the process of establishing their cultural identity.

In any case, throughout the territory north of the Aegean or Mycenaean world, during the Late Bronze Age, a significant increase in the number

² Samsaris D. C. 1989, 167, Prendi 1982, 216, Fig. 40;

³ Prendi 1982, 224, Fig. 41; Jung R. 2018, 242–248, Map 1, 2

and variety of sites compared to the previous Middle Bronze Age was documented. There are different types of settlements, different forms of burial and differences in practicing the cult needs, as a result, primarily of different geo-climatic, economic and cultural conveniences. However, the general picture of the Late Bronze Age is basically formed by two cultural segments. The foundation is in the local Early and Middle Bronze Age culture and the development of traditional values, on which, in certain regions, the contacts and influences from the Aegean world of the Late Bronze Age, more precisely, certain elements of the Mycenaean culture were upgraded.

THE LOCAL CULTURE OF THE LATE BRONZE AGE

If we put aside the Mycenaean influences then we will get the pure character of the local late Bronze Age culture. It will be clearly seen that it was still firmly relied on the traditional values, which to a large extent shows similar manifestations throughout the north of the Aegean world. A series of common moments reflect the unique values of that culture, such as: common forms and principles of settlement life, the only model of practicing the local funeral customs, the only religious needs by developing and practicing specific cult places and sanctuaries and, of course, common basic forms of the material culture.

LATE BRONZE AGE SETTLEMENTS AND NECROPOLISES

In the settlement life of the entire territory during the Late Bronze Age there is a significant increase in the number and types of settlements, so that there are: palafitte settlements, mound-tell settlements, settlements on tops, open type or fortified settlements, mining settlements, caves, or so-called guard settlements. The different positions and types of settlements were conditioned by a number of factors, primarily by different geo-climatic conditions, different conveniences for development of certain economy, as well as different opportunities for establishing contacts and influences from outside. They all have initiated the need for new principles in settlement life and new settlement organizations.

The new climatic conditions in the centuries of the Late Bronze Age imply achievement of a temperature maximum, after the permanent global warming.⁴ This inevitably caused an increase in water areas and a decrease in

⁴ Todorova H. 2007, 5

areas suitable for agriculture. Thus, in certain regions, mainly in the lake areas, at the expense of the previous agricultural settlements, new types of settlements were necessary, more precisely, organization of palafitte settlements with the fishery as dominant economy. The best examples of this are the situations in the Korcha valley with the Lake Maliq, but also in the Ohrid, Prespa and Dojran regions. The most famous settlements on Lake Maliq in the Korcha area are the settlements of Maliq and Sovjan, which existed just in the late Bronze Age as strong palafitte settlements, although previously they have represented farming mounds-tell settlements (Fig. 30).⁵



Fig. 30 Reconstruction of the pile dwelling settlement of Maliq (according F. Prendi)

The situation was similar in the neighboring Ohrid-Prespa region as well as in Dojran region. In the Ohrid region, for the first time since the late Neolithic - Early Eneolithic when similar geo-climatic conditions were documented, palafitte settlements appeared in the Late Bronze Age. Geological examinations show that the waters of Lake Ohrid in that period covered the entire Ohrid and Struga field, so that the lake area was the only to offer living conditions (Fig. 31).

There, on the positions closest to the mountain background or along the entire eastern shoreline of the Lake Ohrid, pile settlements were founded, such as the settlements in Vrbnik in the vicinity of Struga, Penelopa in Ohrid, Michov Grad in the vicinity of Gradiste, Bay of the Bombs and Bay of the Cap-

⁵ Prendi F. 2018; Prendi F. and others, 1994; Prendi F. – Touchais G. 1996

ricorn in the vicinity of Pestani and so on.⁶ They all show the same cultural features, developing locally, mainly within the Late Bronze Age, until the very beginning of the Iron Age. Certain archeological interventions were carried out in most of those settlements and rich archeological material was discovered (Fig. 32). However, the most researched and most famous is the settlement in Bay of Bones or the so-called Michov Grad, where we have the most beautiful picture of the landmarks of those settlements and the strong local character of the cultural inventory in them (Fig. 33).⁷

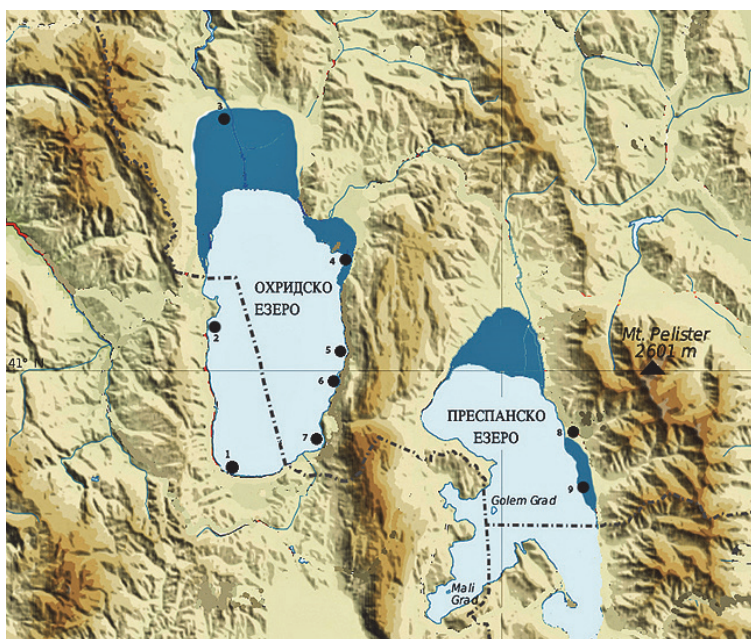


Fig. 31 Map of disposition of pile dwelling settlements in the Ohrid region: 1 Podgorec, 2 Bukeze, 3 Vraništa, 4 Penelopa, 5 Bay of bombs, 6 Bay of bones (Michov grad), 7 Bay of Capricorn, 8 Asamati 9 D. Dupeni

No archeological excavations have been carried out on the neighboring Lake Prespa, so that, based on a small number of accidental finds, one can only assume the existence of similar palafitte settlements, especially in the vicinity of the village of Nakolec and D. Dupeni, at the eastern end of the lake.

At the same time, on the southern shore of Dojran Lake in the locality of Mrdaja, in the vicinity of Star Dojran, an economically strong pile settlement was discovered.⁸ Archeological excavations there have revealed the re-

⁶ Кузман П. 2013

⁷ Kuzman P. 2009; Кузман 2013; Kuzman P. – Dimitrova E. 2010, 20; Митревски Д. 2013, 70

⁸ Ружак З. – Сламков Е. 2021

mains of a several times rebuilt palafitte settlement during the Late Bronze Age (Fig. 34). Archaeological material lists this settlement among the most important points of the local Vardar or the so-called Ulanci group of the Late Bronze Age (Fig. 35).⁹ However, some cultural elements position this settlement, between the famous Lower Vardar settlements from the Late Bronze Age (from Vardarski Rid, Kilindir, Chaushica, Vardaroftsa to Kastanas) and the localities existing along Lower Struma (from Kamenska Chuka, Krsto Pokrovnik, Feia Petra to Toumba-Asiros).



Fig. 32 LBA ceramic finds from the pile dwelling settlement in the Ohrid region

⁹ Mitrevski D. 2003; Митревски Д. 2013, 65



Fig. 33 Panoramic view to the reconstructed settlement in Bay of bones – Pesti

Climatic conditions during the Late Bronze Age also caused serious changes in the plain areas with a strong agricultural tradition, such as in Pelagonia. There, the old mounds or tell settlements, after intensive way of life, usually continuously from the Neolithic to the Middle Bronze Age, during the Late Bronze Age are largely abandoned. Most likely due to climate change, the fertile agricultural area was covered with water or strongly exposed to frequent floods, and the life in the plain came to a standstill. In that sense, in the Pelagonia plain, there is no settlement from the Late Bronze Age known so far. The last, youngest layers in the stratigraphy of numerous prehistoric mounds document life in the Middle Bronze Age. Abandonment of these settlements is a clear confirmation of the serious climate change, and thus socio-economic changes that occurred with the beginning of the Late Bronze Age. One can only assume that the population of those settlements moved to new higher, safer and more appropriate areas for the development of an economy that was no longer so much dependent on agriculture and the fertility of the soil.

Similar processes took place also in the east in the Upper Thracian Plain. After the continuous and intensive development of the settlements from the early and start of the Middle Bronze Age, new social, economic and climatic conditions obviously appeared, which during the late Bronze Age caused changes in the organization of settlement life and changes in the topography of the settlements themselves. Most of the old tell-settlements in the plain were abandoned, and new settlements are located on high, mountainous positions, especially in the Rhodope region, developing new economic activities, cattle-breeding and above all mining. Mostly, these are usually small,

single-layer settlements, with dwellings built of wooden skeletal construction and a clay plot, with one or at most two rooms, with a fireplace or oven inside. Although few in number (Vishegrad, Plazishte, Stomanci, Pchelarevo, Dragojna) they are concentrated mainly in the eastern Rhodope region, where the exploitation of natural resources, especially gold, is intensified.¹⁰ The best example of this is the situation discovered in Ada Tepe-Krumovgrad, where a real gold mining center is documented (Fig. 36).¹¹

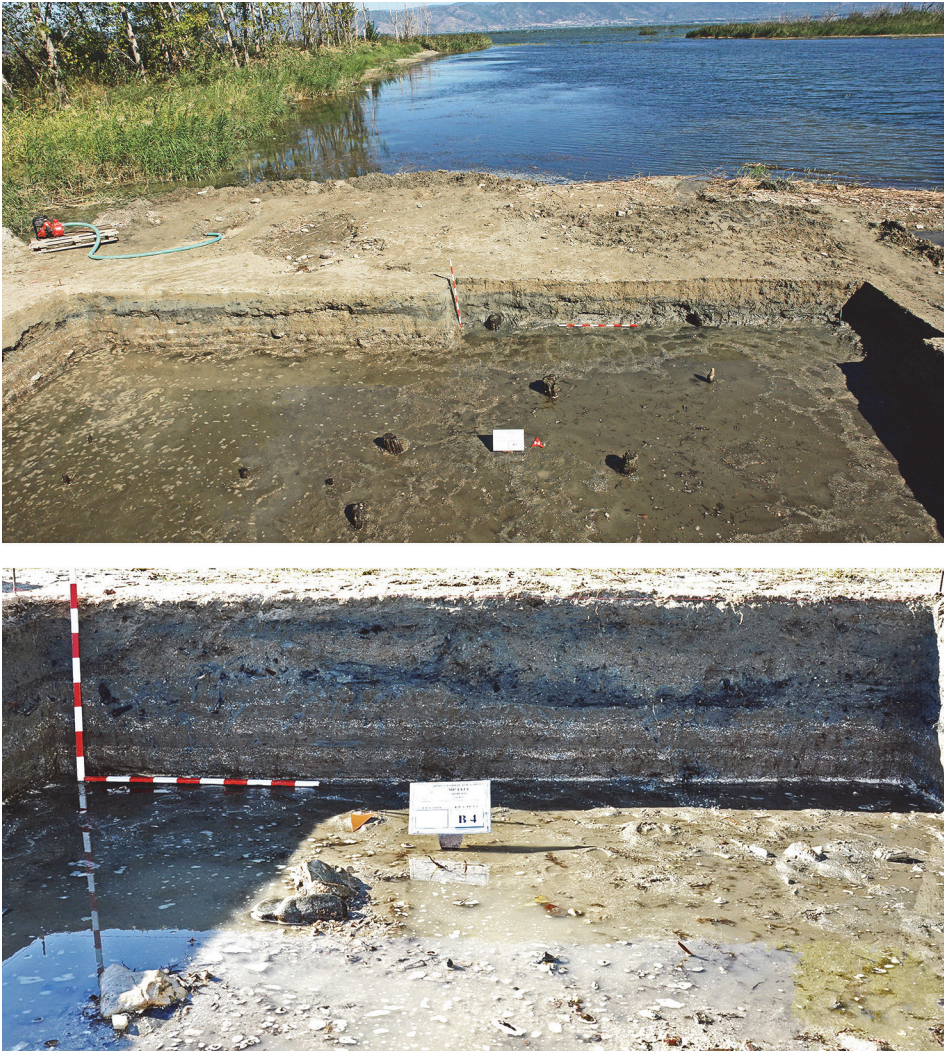


Fig. 34 Field situations of the pile dwelling settlement in Mrdaja-Dojran (according to Z. Rujak)

¹⁰ Nekhrizov G. – Tsvetkova J. 2018, 182; Bozinova E. Jung R. – Mommsen H. 2010, 45

¹¹ Popov H. 2018, 402; Popov. H. – Jockenhovel A. 2018, 193



Fig. 35 Some ceramic finds from Mrdaja- Dojran

The activities related to obtaining gold were probably initiated from outside, which is indicated by the individual finds of Mycenaean import, precisely in that region, mainly from LHIII-A (Perushnica, Gorski Izvor, Devin, Drama, Dragoina).¹² However, mining in that region opened up new opportunities and a new page in the development of local communities and enabled a real rise in the metallurgy during the Late Bronze Age.

The Late Bronze Age is also characterized by increased movement along the main communications and the opening of new communications, mainly along the river valleys. This brings with it the growing danger of military

¹² H. Popov – A. Jokenhovel, 2011, 265–281; Jung R. 2018, 241; Bozhinova E. – Andonova A. 2018, 398

conflict, which has highlighted the need for fortified and well-protected settlements in higher and more easily defensible positions. Such fortified settlements, with dry-stone walls built on high, dominant positions, are the most common type of settlements, whether they are located in communicative regions, in cattle-breeding or mining areas, in the entire area north of the Aegean world.



Fig. 36 Archaeological researches in the mining settlement of Ada Tepe (according to H. Popov)

In Albania, a number of such small fortified settlements in cattle-breeding or mining areas have been registered, which have been active as long as the resources were easy for exploitation. Thus, after the contacts with the Mycenaean world were established, the rise in mining, more precisely the exploitation of copper, especially in the Korcha-Cognie region enabled the achievement of a high level of metallurgical activity.

In the Korcha region, the cave settlement in Tren, at the southern end of Lake Prespa, should be noted, while in the valley of Haliacmon, the settlement of a dominant natural elevation in the vicinity of Aiane-Kozani stands out in its importance (Fig. 37).¹³

¹³ Korkuti M. 1971; Karamitrou–Mentessidi G. 2008, 27



Fig. 37 Panoramic view of the top-hill settlement of Aiane (according to K.Mentesidu)

In the valley of the river Vardar, besides the old Bronze Age tumba-tell settlements in the southern Vardar area, there are a number of new fortified settlements of dominant heights, among which the most important are those of: Vardarski Rid and Kofilak in the vicinity of Gevgelija, Stolot in Ulan-ci, Chair - Tremnik in the vicinity of Negotino, Monastery-Chaska in the vicinity of Veles and the Skopje Fortress in Skopje.¹⁴

Along the valleys of Struma and Mesta, the number of settlements from the Late Bronze Age has also increased in relation to the previous period, with new types, mainly at high, exposed and strategic positions, which form a new, complex settlement system.¹⁵ A special place in it is taken by the specific so-called guard settlements or checkpoints - towers of key strategic positions intended to defend and control the movements on the main communication along the Struma valley but also on the natural crossings towards the Vardar valley (Kamenska Chuka, Pokrovnik, Buchino, Moshtinec, Padezh, Leshko, Drenkovo, etc.).¹⁶ This type of settlements is concentrated and distributed in Blagoevgrad region, just before the entrance of Struma in the Kresna gorge (Fig. 38). This suggests that it was a type of limes, which controlled and protected the crossings from the south to the interior and vice versa. It is confirmed by the elements of Mycenaean influences. They end exactly in that line, while in the north, towards Kustendil, they do not appear in any form.

¹⁴ Митревски Д. 2013, 65

¹⁵ Grabska-Kulova – M. – Kulov I. 2007, 279, Fig 9.

¹⁶ Stefanovich M. – Kulov I. 2007, 389; Stefanovich M. – Bankoff H. A. 1998



Fig. 38 Panoramic view of the guarding settlement in Kamenska Chuka - Blagoevgrad (according to M. Stefanovich)

To the east along the valley of Mesta, the most famous are the settlements of Koprivlen and Bresto, which attach to the sites in the Western Rhodopes and those along Upper Marica, where the earliest Mycenaean imports were discovered in that area (Lilovo-Devin, Perushtica, Gorski Izvor, Dolno Levski, Dragojna).¹⁷ Obviously, the arrangement and type of settlements was conditioned by the surrounding resources and the need for their secure positions, and yet suitable for the development of trade relations and exchange of goods. In spite of the settlements in high and strategic positions, the old multi-layered prehistoric mounds-tells that could respond to the newly created conditions continued to exist through the Late Bronze Age, of course with the necessary changes, such as the erection of various external protective, fortification systems. Such are the tell-settlements along Lower Vardar and Thessaloniki region (Kilindir, Chaushica, Vardaroftsa, Vardino, Kastanas, Assyros, Tumba-Thessaloniki, Saratse, Ofrinio, Olynthos, etc.).¹⁸ Exactly the layers of those settlements from the Late Bronze Age point to the most intense and most dynamic life.

The most eloquent situations about the character and values of the Late Bronze Age are offered by the settlements in the valley of Vardar, and this is the reason that we will focus on them in more details.

¹⁷ Nekhrizov G. – Tzvetkova J. 2018, 186–191; Бошкова А. 2002, Бозинова Е. – Андонова А. 2018, 398; Athanasov B. and other 2018, 420; Jung R. 2018, 242

¹⁸ Casson S. 1926; Heurtley W. A. 1939; Hansel B. 1979; Adreu S. – Fotiadis M. – Kotsakis K. 1996, 581; Soukantos I. – D. Malamidou 2019, Fig. 4

THE VARDAR VALLEY IN THE LATE BRONZE AGE

Along the valley of Vardar, several sites have been explored, which show unique features of the Late Bronze Age culture. The settlements have a unique organization of settlement life, unique values of residential architecture as well as movable finds, while necropolises have a unique burial ritual and strongly canonized burial forms and customs. Basically, all the sites show a peaceful and stable development, until around the beginning of the 12th century BC. At that time, everyone was culturally oriented and opened to the south, with established contacts and influences from the late Mycenaean world, but still developed without interruption their local values within the so-called Vardar or Ulanci group of the Late Bronze Age (Fig. 39).¹⁹



Fig. 39 Disposition of the sites in so-called Vardar or Ulanci group of the Late Bronze Age:

- 1 Kastanas, 2 Vardaroftsa, 3 Vardino, 4 Chauchitsa, 5 Kilindir, 6 Mrdaja, 7 Kofilak,
- 8 Vardarski Rid, 9 Demir Kapija, 10 Chair - Tremnik, 11 Mali Dol – Tremnik, 12 Vodovrati,
- 13 Ulanci, 14 Stolot, 15 Stobi, 16 Manastir- Chaska, 17 Bezania- Krivi Dol, 18 Beli- Kochani,
- 19 Kale - Vinica, 20 Strnovac- Vojnik, 21 Dragoevo, 22 Dolno Sonje, 23 Govrlevo,
- 24 Varos-Prilep 25 Kale - Skopje, 26 Brvenica, 27 Skupi

The most complete picture of the peaceful and stable development through the centuries of the Late Bronze Age is found in Tumba-Kastanas, but

¹⁹ Mitrevski D. 2003; Митревски Д. 2013, 65

only up to layer 14-b, because already in the subsequent layers 13-11 new phenomena and turbulent times are documented, filled with destruction and penetration of cultural elements from outside.²⁰

The neighboring Lower Vardar settlements, Vardaroftsa, Vardino, Chaushitsa and Kilindir, went through the same processes. They all had strong layers dating from the Late Bronze Age, documenting peaceful local development until around the beginning of the 12th century, when almost at the same time they were all violently demolished and set on fire.²¹ In their stratigraphy, the Bronze Age dwelling ends with a burnt layer, in which the last Bronze Age finds are found. In that layer, for example, in Kilindir, among other things, unburied skeletons and individual finds of bronze weapons have been discovered in several places, characteristic of the end of the Bronze Age.²² That settlement was no longer rebuilt, while the reoccupation of the other settlements (Chauschitsa, Vardino Vardaroftsa) took place only after the turbulent times had passed by the establishment of a completely new, Iron Age culture.

These events that marked the end of the Bronze Age living in the Vardar valley are even better documented in the northern settlements, where the picture is complemented by the numerous necropolises of that time.

The aforementioned palafitte settlement Mrdaia on the Lake Doiran is just one example of a late Bronze Age settlement, which, although small and of a special type, still had the same fate as the others. Its stratigraphy indicates economically very strong and stable life during the Late Bronze Age, which ends with a layer of total demolition by fire, after which the settlement was no longer rebuilt.²³ In the last, burnt layer, among other things, a bronze axe-kelts of the Northern Balkan type was discovered, which as a new, foreign form in the Vardar valley can be considered as part of the weapons of the destroyers (Fig. 34, 72).²⁴

The other Late Bronze Age settlements along the Vardar valley were positioned on dominant heights, but not in a safe enough position to be protected. For example, the settlement of Vardarski Rid was located on the eastern slopes of a low hill, facing the riverbed of the river Vardar. It was a relatively small settlement from which remains were discovered of two rectangular houses built with unbaked bricks founded in shallow channels dug in stone base, as well as a part of the stone wall, which enclosed the settlement from

²⁰ Hansel B. 1985; Andreu S. – Fotiadis M. – Kotsakis K. 1996, 580

²¹ Casson S. 1926, 121–132, Fig. 37, 39, 40; Heurtley W. A. 1939, 214–221

²² Casson S. 1926, 132

²³ Пујак З. – Сламков Е. 2021, цр. 1, сл. 2

²⁴ Пујак З. – Сламков Е. 2021, Т. 15–4

the east side, open side towards the riverbed of the river Vardar.²⁵ In fact, it is an initial settlement from which the early historical city of Gortynia will develop later through the Iron Age.²⁶ On the opposite, west side of the hill is the corresponding necropolis. Burials in it were common for the whole Vardar (so-called Ulanci) group of necropolises from the Late Bronze Age, with contracted inhumation in cist grave structures and grave goods analogous to the finds in the settlement.



Fig. 40 Position of the refuge settlement on Kofilak, view from the Vardarski Rid settlement

Life in the settlement, as well as the use of the necropolis, were interrupted around the 12th century BC, only to be rebuilt later during the Iron Age and continue to develop with much stronger intensity until the arrival of the Romans. However, during the use of the Late Bronze Age settlement on Vardarski Rid, a few hundred meters away, on the adjacent higher, naturally far more protected and far safer hill, known as Kofilak or Bogorodicki Rid, remains of single-layer use were discovered (Fig.40).²⁷ One of the few buildings with remains and inventory like those from the settlement on Vardarski rid, from the end of the Bronze Age, has been explored. The very position, character and marks of the cultural inventory discovered at that position points to the possibility that it is about an escape from the late Bronze Age settlement on Vardarski Rid, which was used in situations of danger.

²⁵ Videski Z. 2005, 96

²⁶ Mitrevski D. 2005, 15

²⁷ Videski Z. 2005, 96

Going north along the valley of Vardar, the next explored settlement from the Late Bronze Age is that of the locality Chair in the village of Tremnik nearby Negotino (Fig. 41).²⁸



Fig. 41 Position of the settlement on Chair – Tremnik near Negotino

At a medium high point facing the riverbed of the river Vardar, in the lowest layers remains of a Bronze Age settlement were discovered, on which there are stratified layers of a larger pre-Roman settlement, which is presumed to be the ancient city of Antigonea. Bronze Age layers have been explored in an extremely limited area, so that no significant structures other than small, mainly ceramic finds have been discovered. However, a few hundred meters south of the settlement, in the locality of Mali Dol, the necropolis from that settlement has been explored, which is known as one of the most important necropolises for documenting the end of the Bronze Age and the beginning of the transition period in the Vardar valley.²⁹

The necropolis Mali Dol - Tremnik is a typical representative of the Vardar group necropolises from the Late Bronze Age, with identical manifestations to the other necropolises within the so-called Vardar or Ulanci group (Fig. 42, 43).³⁰ However, the peculiarity of Mali Dol necropolis is that there are two horizons of burial, with two different cultural inventories that clearly stand out there. Over the old local, late Bronze Age necropolis, with usual

²⁸ Research is underway, I express my gratitude for the information to prof. M. Jovanov, head of research.

²⁹ Папазовска А, 2018; Papazovska A. 2019

³⁰ Mitrevski D. 2003; Митревски Д. 2013

contracted inhumations in cist-graves made of stone slabs, burials with cremation in urns were discovered in several places (Fig. 43-b). They stand out as a new phenomenon, associated with a new burial ritual but also new forms of material culture. Several such burials discovered are dug directly over the grave slabs of the previous cist-graves with inhumation, which most directly indicates that it is about a later phenomenon and burials that have used for a short time the old necropolis from the Late Bronze Age.



Fig. 42 Some of the Late Bronze Age grave goods from the necropolis of Mali Dol – Tremnik

The character of the new burials with cremation in urns, together with the grave goods related to them, as well as their relationship with the older burials clearly shows that it is an impact of new cultural values, and of course a new population, which undoubtedly remained in Tremnik for some time. This picture is supported by all other finds dating from that time in the valley of Vardar, which we will especially put the focus on below.

About 20 km north of Tremnik, in the vicinity of Gradsko are the necropolis and the settlement from the Late Bronze Age located in the village of Ulanci. The necropolis is the most famous, eponymous site for the Vardar group, where 125 graves have been investigated. Their organization, burial forms, customs and grave goods are an excellent illustration of a well-organized community with a stable and peaceful life during the 14th and 13th century

BC (Fig. 44).³¹ All this is clearly visible first in the organization of the necropolis, more precisely the planned use of the sepulchral space. In other words, the necropolis has a clearly expressed horizontal stratigraphy or continuous development, from the oldest burials closest to the settlement, towards the youngest burials to the periphery of the available space. The burial ritual, the grave forms and customs were completely developed and unique, and the grave goods were standard local forms, without any significant presence of weapons in the graves (Fig. 45). The oldest burials can be dated in the 14th century and the last in the 12th century BC.



Fig. 43 Some cist graves from the Late Bronze Age and cremation urns from the Transition period in Mali Dol necropolis (according to A. Papazovska)

³¹ Mitrevski D. 1998, 449; Videski Z. 2006, Fig. 1; Митревски Д. 2013, сл. 50

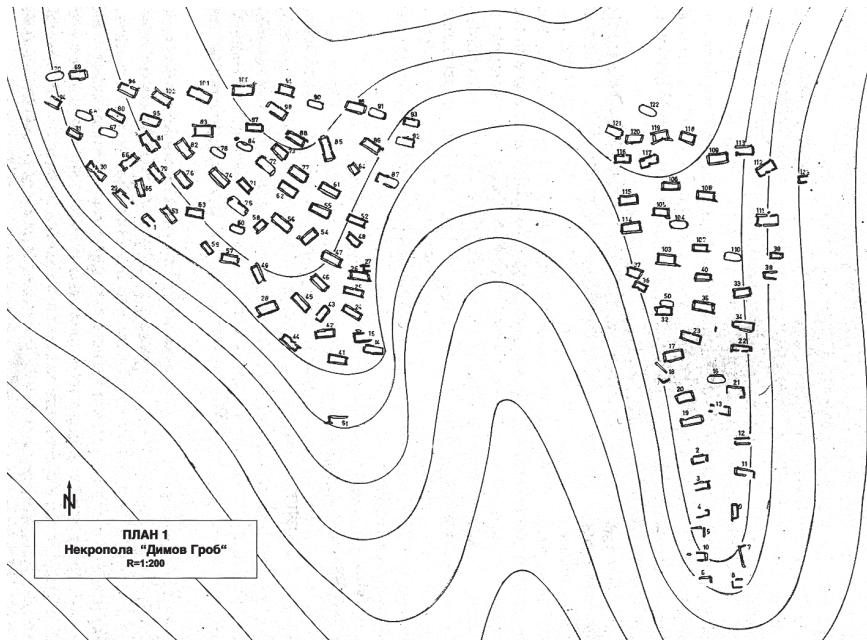


Fig. 44 Plan of the Late Bronze Age necropolis in Ulanci (according to Z. Videski)

Its settlement is located 200 meters to the south, on a small but dominant hill, more precisely on the hill called Stolot (Fig. 46).³² The settlement occupied the flat plateau (85x25 meters) and a low terrace. Around the edge of the plateau, the settlement was protected by a dry wall of crushed large stones, and no more than a dozen houses could be placed there. The settlement existed during the Late Bronze Age when 3 cultural layers (construction phases) were created, not counting the last layer from early Roman times, when the same space, due to its strategic position, was used as a military station, a guard post to control the Roman road from Stobi to Astybos and Pautalia and, of course, for the protection of the city of Stobi, which was located on the opposite, west bank of the river Vardar.

In the three layers from the Late Bronze Age in the settlement Stolot-Ulanci, finds were discovered which are identical to the grave goods in the neighboring necropolis. Although not a single building has been fully investigated, it is obvious that the residential architecture in all three settlement layers was made of unbaked bricks. The last layer stands out as a burning layer on the entire surface of the settlement, which was obviously formed by violent demolition and fire of the last residence, after which the settlement was no longer rebuilt. At the same time also the use of the necropolis was uninterrupted.

³² Mitrevski D. 1998, Fig. 6, 7, Mitrevski D. 1997, Fig. 9, p. 44–45



Fig. 45 Some of the local monochrome pottery from Ulanci necropolis

Therefore, it can be concluded that a peaceful Late Bronze Age development was documented in Ulanci (14th-13th century BC), until the violent demolition of the settlement of "Stolot" and its setting into fire, sometime during the 12th century. Thus, after more than a hundred years, the life in Ulanci was abruptly, violently and irreversibly interrupted, and the destroyers left no significant remnants of their culture.

Despite the situation in Ulanci, indisputable remains of the destroyers and in general, material testimonies about the events that caused the end of the Bronze Age development in the Vardar Valley, were discovered at the Manastir-Caska site in the vicinity of Veles, about 30 km north of Ulanci.³³



Fig. 46 The positions of the necropolis and the settlement in Ulanci

³³ Јовчевска Т. 2008, Due to the discovered skeletons, the settlement of Manastir-Caska was initially wrongly defined as a necropolis.



Fig. 47 Some of the ceramic finds from the Late Bronze Age settlement in Manastir-Chaska, near Veles

The Monastery-Caska site is a small but obviously economically strong Late Bronze Age settlement in a dominant position with a flat plateau, protected by a wall of crushed stones. A powerful layer dating from the last living was discovered on the entire surface inside, filled with remains of strong

destruction in fire, after which the settlement was no longer rebuilt.³⁴ Residential buildings were built of mud bricks, and only parts of them have been discovered, as well as all the internal inventory at the time of the fire, such as: hearths, remains of vertical looms, stone hand mills, storage vessels and all other manifestations of the settlement life. Among the other movable finds, pottery, various bronze and flint blades, stone sharpeners, bone, stone and bronze tools (chisels, needles, spikes) and the like stand out (Fig. 47). All these finds have parallels in the material of the other late Bronze Age sites along the Vardar Valley, so that the use of the settlement can be placed within the 13th to 12th century, while the burnt layer of the last living belongs to the 12th century BC.



Fig. 48 The bronze axes-celts from Manastir – Chaska

Along with the mentioned finds in the burnt layer, certain objects of northern origin were discovered, such as bronze axes-celts, as well as spearheads and arrowheads. These are foreign forms in the local Late Bronze Age culture, which have their origin in the regions of the Northern Balkans and the Danube, and according to their character and typology can be easily associated with the destroyers of the settlement (Fig. 48). And not only that, perhaps the strongest illustration of the invaders from the north and the very act of destruction and burning down of the settlement of Manastir-Chaska are the remains of several burnt human and animal skeletons in that layer (Fig. 49).

A total of 12 human skeletons have been documented, found in different positions and in varying degrees of preservation and slightly burnt. Their position in the burnt layer, the lack of a grave construction, as well as the lack

³⁴ Јовчевска Т. 2008, 19–22, Т. II, Т. III

of other necessary elements from the burial treatment unequivocally indicate that it is about unburied victims of the destruction of the settlement. A similar situation with unburied victims from the same time is known from the mentioned settlement in Kilindir in the vicinity of the Lake Dojran.³⁵

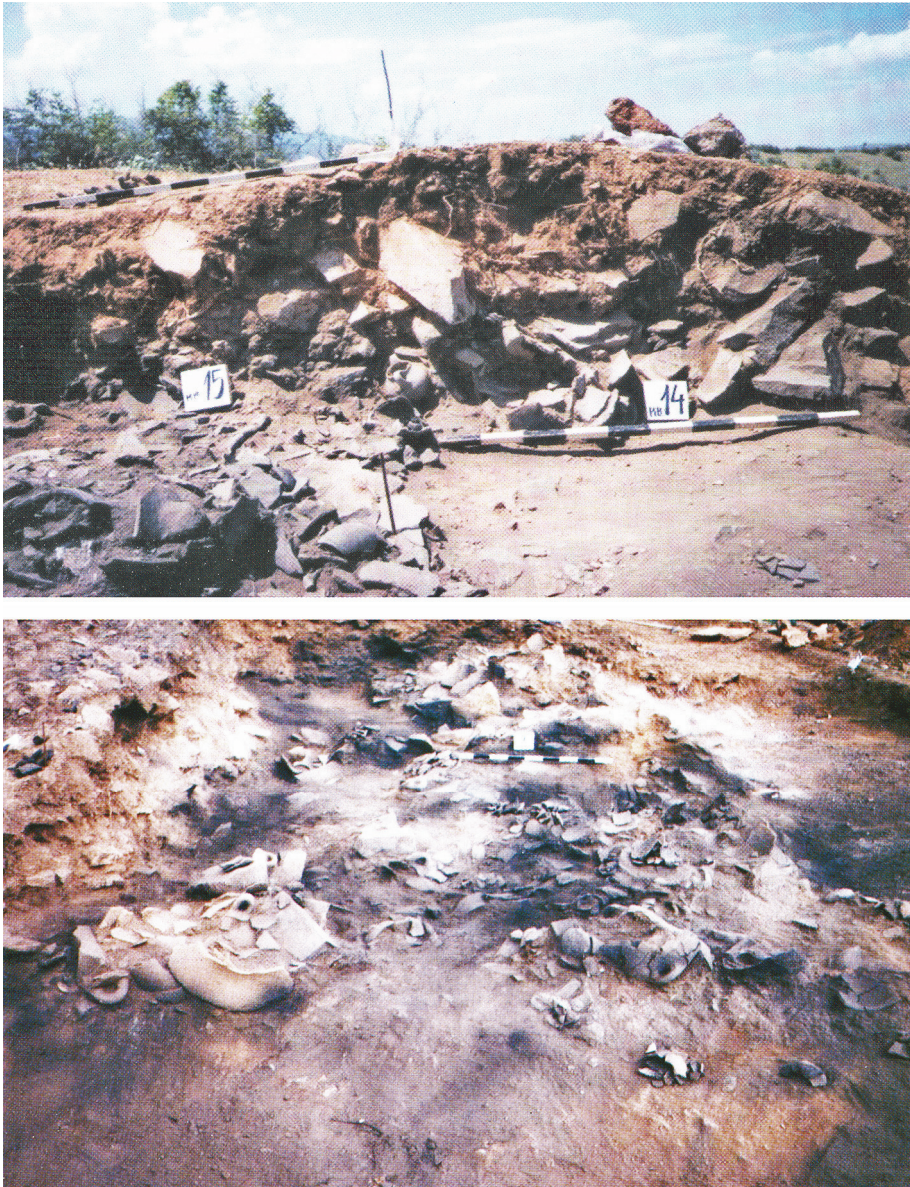


Fig. 49 Remains of some burned houses in the last layer in Manastir - Chaska (according to T. Jovchevska)

³⁵ Casson S. 1926, 132



Fig. 50 Parts of two apsidal houses from the Late Bronze Age settlement in Kale-Skopje

In any case, in the settlement Manastir-Chaska we have the most vivid picture not only of the demolition of the settlement but also of the reasons and processes that caused the end of the Vardar or Ulanči group of the Late Bronze Age and that led to cessation of Bronze Age development.

The picture of the Late Bronze Age in the Vardar region is completed with the situation in its upper part, in Skopje region. The settlement of Skopsko Kale stands out there as the northernmost point of that cultural circle. It is the fourth settlement (Kale IV) in the general stratigraphy of Kale-Skopje.³⁶ Unlike the previous, the third settlement from the Middle Bronze Age was spatially significantly larger, with larger houses and richer inventory. It is about an economically strong settlement, from which 4 houses have been explored until now, built with wooden skeleton structure and unbaked bricks. Their length ranges from 5 to 8 meters and width from 4 to 6 meters, often with one side apsidally resolved (Fig. 50). The interior space means a room in which as a regular inventory there is a hearth or oven, as well as storage vessels - pithoi, dug into the floor made of smooth clay. Among the movable finds, there are ceramic forms common to all sites from the Late Bronze Age in the Vardar-Ulanči group, among which a submycenaean amphora stands out as a curiosity (Fig. 51).

The settlement was rebuilt three times until the 12th century BC, when it finally disappeared and was no longer rebuilt, and the mentioned amphora marks its last existence.³⁷

In the stratigraphy of Kale – Skopje, the Late Bronze Age life is marked as a period of peaceful local development, culturally oriented to the south and connected with the other sites of that time along the Vardar valley.

³⁶ Mitrevski D. 2016, 15

³⁷ Mitrevski D. 2016, 65; Mitrevski D. 2019, 76–78, Fig. 44

Both in the southern parts of the Vardar valley, as well as in the Skopje region and whole Upper Vardar area, during the Late Bronze Age, burial with crouched inhumation has been practiced. Such necropolises have so far been discovered in Brvenica in the vicinity of Tetovo and in the area under the ancient theater of Roman Scupi.³⁸ All other manifestations in those necropolises are analogous to the other Vardar necropolises. Moreover, several burials with cremation in urns were discovered in Scupi, in the same relation with the older inhumations as in the case of Mali Dol - Tremnik.³⁹ They document the same penetration of new settlers from the north into the Skopje region, where they have stayed for some time. The strongest level of confirmation about that we have in the famous necropolis with graves - urns, on Hippodrome site, in the plain of Skopje (Fig 76).⁴⁰ A new, smaller necropolis was formed there, from which a total of 11 graves with cremation in urns were discovered, and also there are other phenomena that directly connect this necropolis with the regions in the north, with Eastern Kosovo and with the Morava valley to Danubian district, mostly with the local Donja Brnjica group.

Such necropolises with urns along the Vardar valley are a good illustration of the migratory movements, which will cause the end of the Late Bronze Age, and mark it with the demolition of Vardar settlements and penetration of a number of new cultural elements from the north.

There is another locality from the Late Bronze Age in Skopje region that should be pointed out, primarily due to its character and cultural content. That is the locality Vranjak near the village of Varvara.⁴¹ On the right bank of Markova Reka, known for its gold-bearing deposits, only one building was discovered on a dominant elevation with an exceptional strategic position, protected by a wall of crushed stones. About thirty storage vessels were found in it, with no other settlement finds. It is obviously about a position and building that served to provide and store food, which is another illustration for the beginning of turbulent times sometime around the beginning of the 12th century BC. The situation of Vranjak-Varvara has many similarities with the sites of the type of strategic-guard stations such as those in the vicinity of Blagoevgrad on Struma (Kamenska Chuka, Krsto Pokrovnik).⁴²

Several conclusions, important for the whole cultural development of the entire territory north of the Aegean world, arise from the nowadays researches of the Late Bronze Age in the Vardar valley.

³⁸ Abazi Lj. – Tolevski I. 2018, 107–113; Mitrevski D. 2019, 79; Jovanova L. 2015

³⁹ Jovanova L. Папазовска А. 2018, 10, Сл. 7

⁴⁰ Mitrevski D. 1994

⁴¹ Видески З. 2005, 68, Т. II–IV

⁴² Stefanovich M. – Bankoff H. A. 1998; Stefanovich M. – Kulov I. 2007



Fig. 51 Some of the ceramic finds with the submycenaean amfora from the Late Bronze Age settlement in Kale-Skopje

In the first place, the beginning of the Late Bronze Age happened a little later, only after the penetration of the first Mycenaean elements in the northern parts of Vardar Valley, where we have the finds of the Mycenaean sword from Tetovo and the marble cap for another such sword from Markova Sushica.⁴³ Probably only then the Vardar road was affirmed as the main communication line from the Aegean to the interior of the Balkans, which was the key moment for the spread of Mycenaean influences, and thus for the formation of the local so-called Vardar or Ulançi group of the Late Bronze Age. Only then (around the beginning of the 14th century BC) the more northern communities do turn culturally to the south and indirectly connect with the Mycenaean world.

The second moment indicates a peaceful and stable local cultural development during the 14th and 13th century BC, with unique features along the entire Vardar region, which show high-built criteria, based, to a good extent, on the influences from the south.

⁴³ Nasteva I. – Videski Z. 1996; Mitrevski D. 1998, 450–451, Fig. 1 and 3

The following conclusion refers to the end of the Vardar or Ulançi culture of the Late Bronze Age that happened, with no doubt, at the end of the 12th century BC. It was caused by long-lasting incursions of various communities from the north through the central Balkans to the south, or to the already destroyed Mycenaean centers. The bearers of these incursions buried their dead with cremation. Such an appearance in an environment in where inhumation in a contracted position was practiced undoubtedly documents a new population. They have arrived from the more northern areas, most likely from the Morava and Kosovo region, from where they were suppressed by other more northern communities and for some time stationed at various points along the Vardar valley, from where they probably made military incursions towards south and returned again. These long-lasting events, left significant consequences for the further cultural development of the entire region north of the Aegean world, and it seems so according to the genesis of the new proto-geometric culture in Greece. In any case, they opened the new phase of the transition period from the Bronze Age to the Iron Age. In the text below, we will put special focus on the issues related to these complex processes that have taken place in the centuries of the transition period.

LATE BRONZE AGE SANCTUARIES

An important segment in the local culture of the Late Bronze Age north of the Aegean world are the so-called mountain sanctuaries, rock-cut or sanctuaries on peaks, as well as cave shrines. They have been known since the Early Bronze Age, so that their use in the Late Bronze Age is only an expression of maintenance of the old spiritual needs and the tradition of cult places. In that sense, the basic constituent parts of the sanctuaries still imply the existence of sacred space ways at the central and the highest surrounding position, as well as various ritual activities, always connected with specially shaped spaces with burning-ovens that were used as altars. Their common denominator is the character of the votive gifts, among which there are only local types of ceramics, objects made of clay, stone, bone and as an exclusivity, metal or objects related to the metallurgical activity. They all had special places for depositing gifts, either in pits or in the depressions and cracks in the rock itself.

However, the layout of the Late Bronze Age sanctuaries was not uniform throughout whole territory north of the Aegean world. This was conditioned by various factors, mostly from the tradition itself but also from the geo-morphological conveniences of the space. The positions of the new sanctuaries were specially selected in places nearest for communicating with the

gods, in other words, in areas of mystical and strong spiritual power. In that sense, the mysticism of the Rhodope landscapes in the east was most exposed, and also the unusual volcanic creations on the Kumanovo-Kratovo terrain in the west.

In the Rhodopes, numerous sanctuaries are known with different contents and manifestations of practicing cult activities, but with unique cultural contents, characteristic of the local culture of the Late Bronze Age.⁴⁴ This period is considered to be the beginning of the functioning of almost all mountain sanctuaries or sanctuaries on the peaks, which are the most widespread cult places in the eastern Rhodopes.⁴⁵ Such are the sanctuaries of Ada Tepe, Aul Kaya, Harman Kaya, Stomanci, Dragoina and others, while those of Perperikon and Tatul are exposed as real cult centers.

An important moment in the function of most sanctuaries in the eastern Rhodopes was the rise of metallurgy as an activity of the gods, due to which the sanctuaries in the Rhodope region gained special importance and role in social life. This was especially pronounced after the Mycenaean influences, which intensified the metallurgical activity during the Late Bronze Age. Thus, with the rise of metallurgy, the local population in the Rhodopes came closer to the strength and power of the gods they communicated with on the high mountains or the so-called rock-cut sanctuaries.

Similar is the situation in the western Rhodopes where the sanctuary of Babjak stands out in the valley of Mesta or the sanctuary of Skalata-Leunovo nearby Petrich in the valley of Struma.⁴⁶ According to the concentration of the sanctuaries, no matter of the type, it is visible that going from the eastern Rhodopes to the west, their number decreases significantly, so that in the Macedonian area they are much rarer. Here, stands out the continued use and it seems, the intensive use of the old Early Bronze Age sanctuary of Kokino nearby Kumanovo, as well as the newly discovered sanctuary at the Manastir site in Gabrevci nearby Radovish.

The rocks at the top of Kokino (Tatichev kamen) were still in use as an astronomical observatory and the cult space still used in the old way, since the early Bronze Age (Fig. 16). According to the movable archeological material, it can be concluded that in the late Bronze Age the intensity of use of the sanctuary has been the highest. Archaeological finds are mainly votive gifts, carefully left, more precisely stored in the shallow pits in the depressions and crevices of the rocky base or in circular structures formed and filled with sto-

⁴⁴ Бајраков Д. 2016, 50–72

⁴⁵ Nehrizov G. 2005, 155

⁴⁶ Тонкова М. – Гоцев А. 2008, 95; Domaradski M. 1986, 89–104, Mihailov. F. 2018, 97

nes and earth.⁴⁷ In fact, by their nature and conditions of discovery, they were probably remnants of ritual acts performed on a specially designated altar area. In this particular case it was a spacious flat surface in the natural rock, around which were placed the ritual structures with votive gifts. Among them are various forms of ceramic vessels, animal bones, terracotta figurines, stone tools, etc., all characteristic manifestations of the local culture of the Late Bronze Age (Fig. 52). In addition to these, however, there are some finds of stone molds for casting bronze objects. Although in the immediate vicinity there are no indicators for a higher level of metallurgical activity, casting molds in Kokino confirm the exclusivity of metallurgy as an activity of a divine character.⁴⁸



Fig. 52 The finds from the Late Bronze Age sanctuary in Kokino

The sanctuary in Gabrevci is another type of sanctuary, located in a limited space on a flat mountain hill.⁴⁹ The sacred surface was protected by an

⁴⁷ Stankovski J. 2002; Булатовиќ А. – Станковски Ј. 2012 Kuzmanovska O. – Stankovski J. 2018

⁴⁸ Bulatovic A. – Stankovski J, 2012, Foto 24, 5; Ѓорѓиевски Д, 2017, Сл. 91–96

⁴⁹ The results of the research in Gabrevci have not been published. I thank for the information provided to T. Nacev, head of the research. Most of the findings are exhibited in the Museum in Stip.

outer stone wall, and inside all the phenomena were organized in a circle in a diameter of about 25 meters. Ritual actions involve burning and leaving-storing of groups of ceramic vessels in shallow pits. In several positions, strong remains of burning were found with finds mainly of animal bones, and ceramic vessels grouped around them. Among other things, over 200 ceramic vessels have been discovered, which is the largest collection of Late Bronze Age pottery so far, in which almost all forms of the local ceramics of that time are included (Fig. 53). According to them, the use of the sanctuary can be positioned in the period from the 14th to the 12th century BC.



Fig. 53 Some of the ceramic finds from the Late Bronze Age sanctuary in Gabrovci near Radovich

The phenomena discovered at the sanctuary in Gabrevci are basically similar to all other known sanctuaries from the Late Bronze Age. However, the maintenance of the local tradition is strongly expressed there, so that the closest parallels in the character, the formal marks and the way of performing the ritual activities take us back to the early Bronze Age and we find them mostly at the sanctuary in Pelince.

Late Bronze Age shrines, by their nature as guardians of spiritual and traditional values, are the purest expression of the local cultures in the north of the Aegean world. Unlike settlements, necropolises, mining centers, etc., they were the most resistant to cultural influences, which at that time came mostly from the south, from the Mycenaean world, and which inevitably influenced the creation of a new cultural context of the Late Bronze Age.

THE SPREAD OF THE MYCENAEAN CULTURE TO THE NORTH OF THE MYCENAEAN WORLD

There are certain assumptions about the contacts of some Balkan communities with the Minoan civilization, mainly as a maritime trade exchange. Given the Cretan thalassocracy, this could easily have happened in the early Bronze Age, but we do not yet have direct material evidence for that.⁵⁰ Therefore, as first direct relations between the communities from the interior of the Balkans with the Aegean world, we consider those established by the Mycenaean merchants and adventurers. No doubt they were initiated by the Mycenaean interest in the availability of natural resources (copper, gold, wood, etc.) that were scarce in the Mycenaean world. We have the most beautiful literary review of this process in Apollonius of Rhodes, more precisely in the legend of the Golden Fleece, where it is said that on the way back from Colchis across the Black Sea, the Argonauts turned west on the Danube, certainly to the gold and copper-rich Carpathian-Lower Danube region. Archeology clearly confirms this region as a major source of metals and a major Mycenaean interest in trade and crafts exchange.

In any case, the Mycenaeans were forced to discover such regions, especially in the neighboring regions, and to penetrate appropriate communications there. Thus, the local population established the first direct contacts with the Mycenaean culture, which began to spread not only its interests but also its knowledge and culture in those regions. In that way, new development opportunities were opened for the local communities, which will prove to be crucial in creating the Late Bronze Age culture in those regions.

⁵⁰ Bonev A. 1988, 65

In relation to the Mycenaean culture, the territory north of the Aegean world, is usually treated as a zone of the so-called limited diffusion, but some regions in it still stand out with the so-called expansive diffusion of the Mycenaean elements.⁵¹ These regions were of special Mycenaean interest, while the other areas outside them continued to develop their traditional values from the Early and Middle Bronze Ages (Fig. 54).

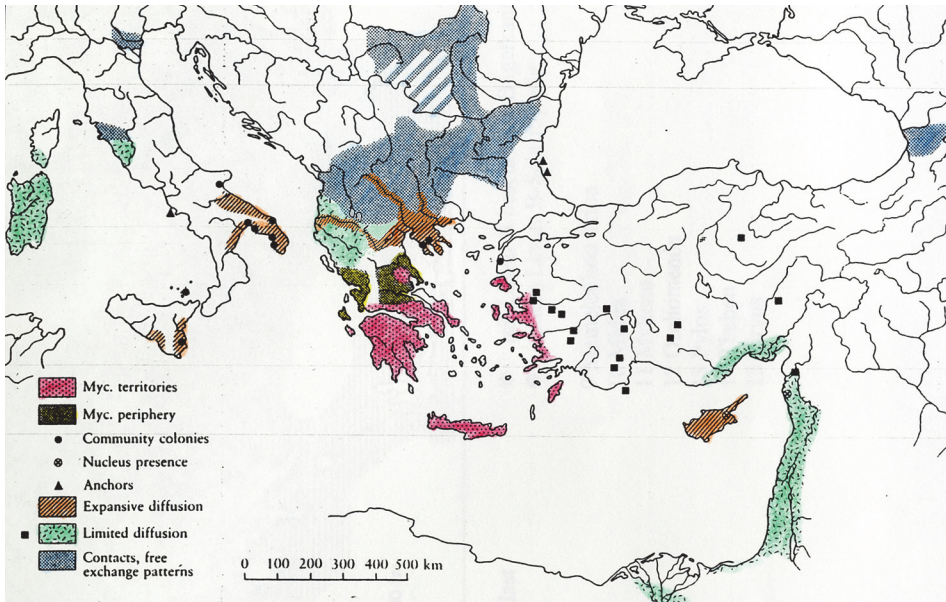


Fig. 54 Map of the spreading of the Mycenaean culture (according to K. Kilian, supplemented by D. Mitrevski)

The regions documented as the most exposed to the spread of the Mycenaean culture are mainly the river valleys, those that led from the surrounding coast to the interior, to the regions, as a rule, rich in mineral resources. With the spread of certain Mycenaean elements in so far deep prehistoric environments, the local communities were given the opportunity to create special cultural values, different from those in other environments which were outside the Mycenaean influence.

In the widespread area from the Adriatic to the Black Sea, such regions clearly stand out along the valleys of the rivers Shkumba-Devol in Albania, Haliacmon in Greece, the valley of Vardar, as well as the valleys of Lower Struma, Nesta and Marica, to the east. Archeology highlights those regions as the most important for the spread of Mycenaean influences in the interior of the Balkans. The valleys of these rivers have been shown to be the easiest access for

⁵¹ Kilian K. 1986, 446; Kilian K. 1988, Fig. 1

Mycenaean traders, from the sea coast to inland areas rich in natural resources, especially copper, gold and wood. They were used to establish the first roads for direct communication of the local Balkan communities with the Aegean world of the Bronze Age. The archeological situation in those regions shows the same mechanisms of acceptance and adaptation of the Mycenaean elements to the local taste and needs, which often produced the same or similar cultural manifestations.

Going from west to east, we first point out the valley of the river Devoll, which, following the river Shkumba, led to the rich in resources, primarily copper, in Korcha-Kolonia region in Southeast Albania.

MYCENAEAN INFLUENCES ALONG THE DEVOLL VALLEY

The earliest Mycenaean interest in the resources in the interior of the Balkans was realized through the North - Epirus or Albanian coast. It was the closest and most accessible region outside the Mycenaean world, which had certain relations with the Aegean region since the Middle Helladic period

Numerous finds show that in the early Mycenaean times the first Mycenaean traders entered the interior regions from the shores of the Ionian and Adriatic Sea along the Albanian river valleys, discovering the most appropriate accesses to the regions with rich mineral resources. This was the first phase of Mycenaean contacts, and best illustration for that are the finds of weapons, mainly bronze swords, daggers, spears and knives, of Aegean origin from the LH I period or from the end of the 17th and 16th centuries BC (Fig. 55).

Most of such finds have been discovered in the local Middle Bronze Age necropolises mostly in the southern half of Albania, such as those of: Vajze, Vodhin, Pazok, Midhe.⁵² Their repertoire indicates representative items of a personal nature, which, as a rule, are revealed as goods in graves of local persons, which in turn have obviously had a significant place in the local communities. These finds are distributed in the regions close to the sea coast, and the samples discovered in the interior are being associated with valleys of the main rivers such as Mati, and above all Shkumba and Devoll.⁵³ We consider that the finds from the necropolis in Pazok, in the valley of the river Devoll, include the most continental and most indicative example of the early Mycenaean penetration in the interior of the region. There, the first Mycenaean imports were discovered as grave goods in grave number 7 of tumulus 1, such as a bronze sword of the Aegean type and a ceramic cup with a Vafio

⁵² Prendi F. 182, 216, Fig. 40; Prendi F. 1986, 15, Fig. 3, 4

⁵³ Bejko L. 2002

shape of the so-called Kefti type, typical for the early Mycenaean culture (Fig. 3).⁵⁴ Of particular importance is the ceramic cup, which is currently the earliest ceramic import in the interior of the Balkans, which probably in those early times paved the way for Mycenaean penetration to the ore areas in the Korcha and Kolonië region, to the east. Apparently, these incursions took place along the valleys of the rivers Shkumba and Devoll, to the Korcha valley, but also along the valley of the river Osum to the Kolonië region, rich in copper.

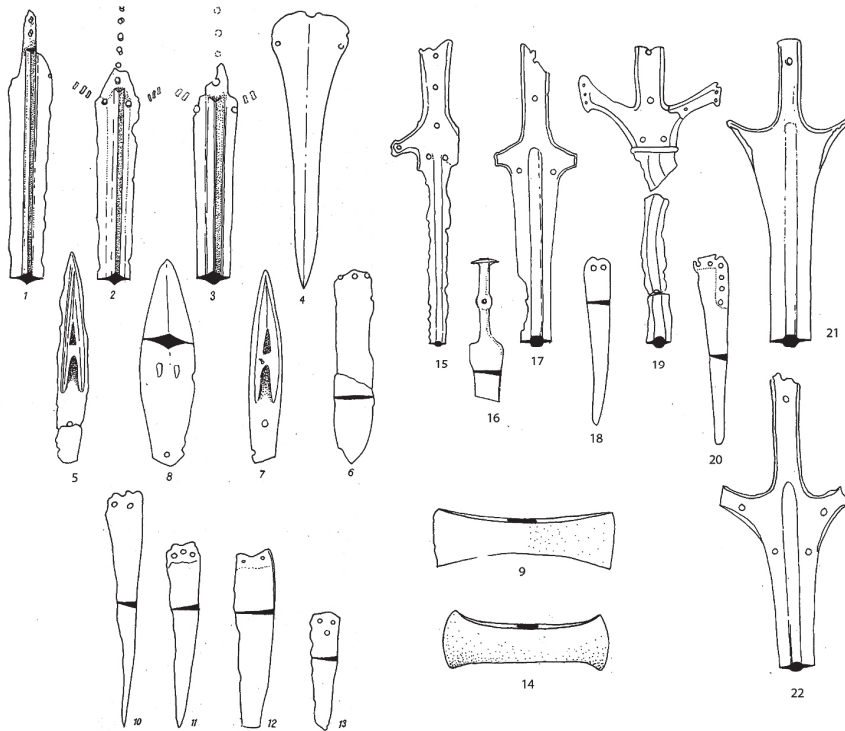


Fig. 55 Early Mycenaean weapons in Albania (according to F. Prendi)

In the centuries to come, from the XV-XIII century, the contacts of the local communities from Southern Albania with the Mycenaean world have continued, but still at the level of trade exchange. Several finds are known to have been discovered at various sites, either as Mycenaean imports or as products manufactured locally but under strong Aegean influence. However, these items are only metal finds, mainly bronze weapons (swords, axes, daggers and spears), which are isolated occurrences in the local culture of the Late Bronze Age.⁵⁵ Such items, whether they were the result of trade, military tro-

⁵⁴ Prendi F. 182, 216, Fig. 40-14; Prendi F. 2002 Fig. 2-2, 9

⁵⁵ Prendi F. 1982, Fig. 43

phies, or products made specifically for local tribal leaders, have left no deeper cultural implications in those areas, with the exception of the Korcha region, where Mycenaean influences will come to a particular expression.

Along the valley of the river Devoll and especially in the Korcha valley, the contacts with the Mycenaean world were the strongest, so that they played a serious role in modifying the local culture and determining the further cultural development of the region. Thanks to them, special cultural values will be formed there, in many ways different from those in other regions. These will be recognizable as the Devoll or Korcha cultural group, which will develop, from the Late Bronze Age throughout the centuries of the whole Iron Age.⁵⁶

A few moments determine the character and features of this group. Geo-morphological and climatic peculiarities distinguish the Korcha region into a single, complete whole, which, however, through the river Devol had easy access to the Adriatic coast, from where the first Mycenaean influences came. According to the mentioned Mycenaean imports from Pazok, it is obvious that the spread of elements of the Mycenaean culture in this region started in the early Mycenaean time, which will be the most noticeable in the early phase of formation of the group or in XIV and XIII centuries BC. At that time, the process of wider acceptance of these elements and adaptation to the local taste and needs began, as well as their further local production began. Thus, creation of the final form of the physiognomy of the group appeared in fact as a result of a happy compilation of elements based on the local Bronze Age tradition and acceptance of certain Mycenaean elements after the long-term contacts with the Aegean culture of the Late Bronze Age.

However, despite the strong Aegean influences, it must be emphasized that the Devoll culture was basically a deeply local culture, as it was completely based on the values of the local Bronze Age. These values are manifested through the unique archeological phenomena of the wider Albanian but also of the entire neighboring internal Balkan area, and originating from the single so-called Danube-Balkan complex of the Early Bronze Age. On such bases and cultural tradition in the Devoll-Korcha region, only certain Aegean elements were added, either in the production of weapons, jewelry or ceramics, which created new, but still locally limited manifestations with internal-local development.

The strongest mark of the Devoll culture is given by the matt-painted pottery, which will achieve a long local and regional development, until the end of the Iron Age. There are various assumptions about the origin, chrono-

⁵⁶ Andrea Z. 1976, Korkuti M. –Petrusko K. M. 1993

logical and cultural values as well as the development and holders of this pottery.⁵⁷ However, the characteristics of such pottery in the Korcha region, as well as the comparative analysis with the related pottery from other regions with similar relations with the Mycenaean world, confirm it as a local reaction to the late Mycenaean pottery.⁵⁸

Matt-painted pottery first appeared in the Devoll Valley in the 15th and 14th centuries BC or at the same time as elements of the Aegean culture of the Late Bronze Age began to be accepted there. That very moment indicates that the impetus for its emergence came from outside, from the same inspiration that was crucial for formation of the Devoll group, and that could only be the Mycenaean influences. Thus, following the example of the Mycenaean pottery, only certain technological innovations were introduced in the production of the usual local pottery. These innovations are reflected in the use of refined light-baked clay and decoration in a far more sophisticated way, with quality matt-painted decoration before baking. The represented forms of vessels firmly adhered to the local Bronze Age tradition, but certain locally modified - copies of Mycenaean forms, as well as some samples of real Mycenaean import will appear in it, just to confirm the direct contacts with the Mycenaean world, more precisely the inspiration from those contacts (Fig. 56).

The strongest evidence for the character of this pottery as a local reaction to Mycenaean pottery is the fact that the same phenomenon is registered in other neighboring regions that have been similarly exposed to Mycenaean influences, primarily: the valley of Haliacmon, Thessaloniki area and the valley of Vardar.⁵⁹ These regions went through similar conditions and the same cultural processes as the Korcha-Devoll region, so that similar manifestations appear there, primarily in the creation of a similar local matt-painted pottery. Due to the common Bronze Age base, the same forms can be found, produced in all these regions, although there was no possibility for some of their closer mutual contacts. It is interesting that also on Italian soil, in the regions that were under strong Mycenaean influence, similar pottery appears, more precisely the same local response appear as a result of the contacts with the Mycenaean world.⁶⁰

All this suggests that the late Bronze Age matt-painted pottery emerged as a local response to the Mycenaean pottery, certainly only in the regions that were most strongly exposed to Mycenaean influences. There is no such

⁵⁷ Bodinaku N. 1990, Prendi 1982 ; Hochstetter 1982

⁵⁸ Bodinaku N. 1990 ; Hochsteter A. 1982 ; Krapf 2014, 585; Видески З. 2006; Horajz B. 2007. 277

⁵⁹ Hochstetter A. 1982; Karamitrou-Mentessidi G. 2008; Hochstetter A. 1984; Horajz B. 2007, 277; Mitrevski D. 2008, Fig. 4; Mitrevski D. 2003

⁶⁰ Vagnetti L. – Jones R. E. 1988, 335–346

pottery outside those regions or in areas not affected by Mycenaean influences. The values of the local Bronze Age ceramography, which has typical internal Balkan characteristics, continue to be nurtured and developed there. In that sense, for example, in the Ohrid-Prespa region, in Pelagonia, as well as in other more conservative Upper Macedonian areas or in the regions outside the Vardar valley with its tributaries, matt-painted pottery from the Late Bronze Age is not known.

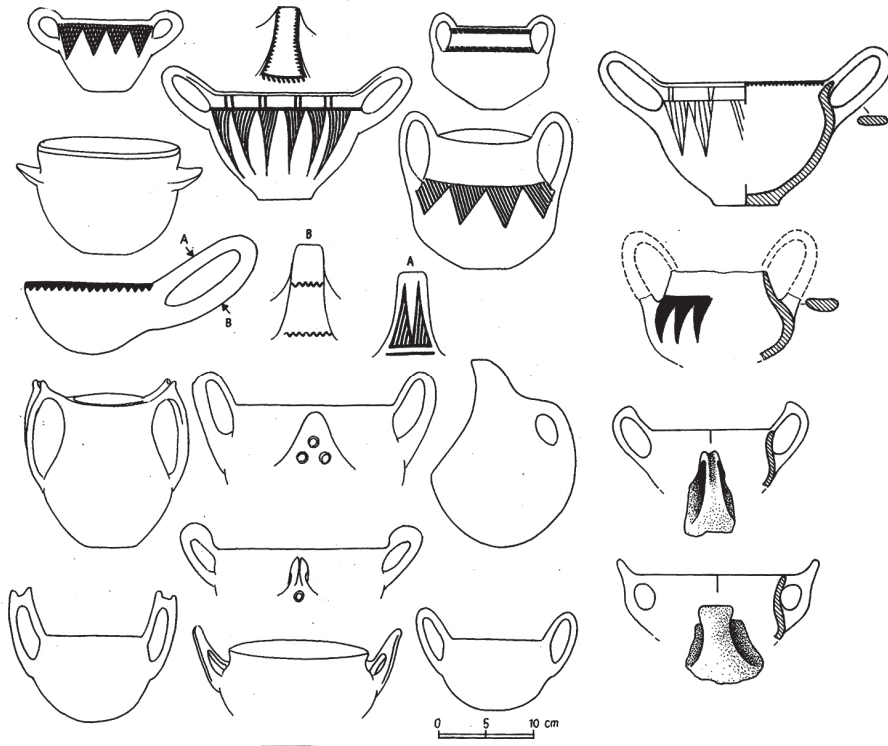


Fig. 56 Some characteristic pottery shapes and decorations of the Late Bronze Age in Albania (phase Maliq III-d) (according to F. Prendi)

Despite the Mycenaean influences in the genesis of matt-painted pottery, it should still be considered an autochthonous phenomenon with autochthonous development, which in the centuries of the transition period to come and the Iron Age will not take place evenly and in the same way in all mentioned regions. Thus, the production of matt-painted pottery during the transition period in the valleys of Vardar and Struma was completely stopped, while in the Korcha region and in the valley of Haliacmon it will continue its local development throughout the Iron Age. Therefore, in the entire, conditionally speaking Upper Macedonian or lake area, the matt-painted pottery will

not only spread but will also develop in the light motif of the local Iron Age culture, so that some authors will name it as Western Macedonian, geometric pottery.

The most important sites from which we draw all the data for the Devoll-Korcha area in the Late Bronze Age are the necropolises in Pazok and Barch and the settlements in Maliq, Sovjan and Tren.⁶¹

The necropolises of Pazok and Barch speak of a clear preservation of the Bronze Age tradition of tumulus burial. It is directly related to the oldest burials in that area since the early Bronze Age, as well as to the continuous development of local ceramic forms. On the other hand, all manifestations of Mycenaean influence on local culture occur in the same necropolises, such as Mycenaean imports, local copies of Mycenaean forms, and matt-painted pottery as a local reaction to the Mycenaean pottery (Figs. 3, 10).

The settlements, for their part, although different types (Sovjan and Maliq as palafitte and Tren as a cave settlement) reflect the same stratigraphic development of all the mentioned phenomena, especially on the local matt-painted pottery throughout the Late Bronze Age.⁶²

As for the Devoll group, it is interesting to note that the Mycenaean influences penetrated to the east along the river Devoll, to the Korcha valley south of the large lakes. On the opposite side, in the neighboring Ohrid-Prespa region, Mycenaean elements have not yet been discovered. Although these are regions with the same Bronze Age tradition, no forms of Mycenaean influences occur. Apparently the communication along the Devoll valley in that period reached only the Korcha area, so that the areas in the east were left out of any Mycenaean influences. Only during the Iron Age, the road towards Ohrid area and Pelagonia will be penetrated and the so-called Kandavian communication fully traced, on which the famous Via Egnatia will be built in Roman times.

MYCENAEAN INFLUENCES IN THE HALIACMON VALLEY

The Haliacmon Valley is the region closest to Mycenaean Thessaly, so that the strongest influences and most Mycenaean products are discovered in this region, especially in the valley of middle Haliacmon. It is the first region north of Olympus, where several real Mycenaean points are known. At more than 1000 meters above sea level, on the northern slopes of Olympus, necropolises have been discovered documenting the northernmost, direct Mycenaean

⁶¹ Andrea Z. 1976; Korkuti M. 1971; Prendi F. 1982; Prendi and others 1994; Prendi F. 2018

⁶² Prendi F. 2018; Prendi F. – Touchais G. 1996; Korkuti M. 1971

presence. The most significant is the necropolis on the site of Spathes with graves similar to the Mycenaean shaft structures, covered with heavy stone slabs, glued with red earth.⁶³ In its vicinity, another such necropolis was discovered along the same mountain pass which was used to enter Macedonia from Thessaly. Burials in these necropolises contained typical Mycenaean burial gifts (Mycenaean vessels, weapons, jewelry, etc.), that points to direct Mycenaean presence, probably a Mycenaean settlement in its vicinity, or Mycenaean guard posts that have controlled the main passage from north to the Mycenaean world.

Such a Mycenaean presence has provided a direct connection, mostly with the Middle Haliacmon valley, with the region of present-day Kozani to Grevena, where the first Mycenaean imports were discovered, such as the find of clay head of a Mycenaean figurine discovered at Ano Komi nearby Kozani, the Mycenaean sword from Grevena or part of a pithos with symbols of a 'linear B' inscription discovered in Megali Rahi nearby Kozani (Fig. 57).⁶⁴



Fig. 57 Early Mycenaean imports from the Kozani area, terracotta head and a Linear B inscription

The last site is actually the largest hill top settlement, in fact the early historical center of the region or ancient Aiane (Fig. 37). The acropolis part of that site was used also in the Early and especially during the Late Bronze Age, when one of the lower terraces was used as a necropolis, known as Livadia.⁶⁵ There, in grave pits and cists grave made up of stone slabs with contracted inhumation, appear goods with Mycenaean character (pottery, weapons, jewelry, etc.).

Numerous Mycenaean products or local finds produced under strong Mycenaean influence have been discovered in a number of other sites in the

⁶³ Pantermalie – Poulakie E. 1991; Andreu S. – Fotiadis M. – Kotsakis K. 1996, 573

⁶⁴ Papaeftimiū A. – Pilali A. 1997, Fig. 79, Karamitrou–Mentessidi G. 2008, Fig. 7 and 122

⁶⁵ Karamitrou–Mentessidi G. 2008, 72

surrounding of Kozani. The most beautiful picture about it is given by the pottery itself, where Mycenaean vessels and locally produced matt-painted pottery meet together (Fig. 58).⁶⁶ Mycenaean pottery includes imported vessels, most likely from Thessaly, while local matt-painted pottery is a separate category of pottery from the Bronze Age heritage, but produced by implementing elements of Mycenaean ceramography.

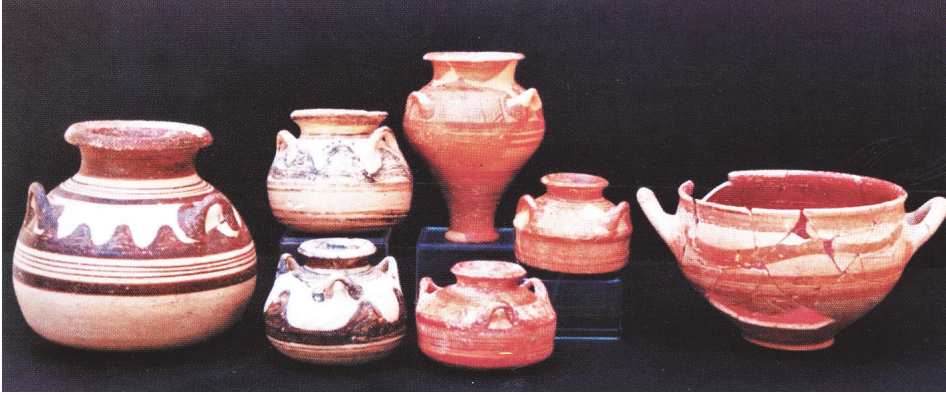


Fig. 58 Mycenaean imported pottery in the Kozani region

The character of the Mycenaean imports (mainly pottery and weapons) as well as the connection of Haliacmon with the passage ways to Mycenaean Thessaly indicate primarily the commercial character of the relations of the local population with the Mycenaean world. They resulted in more Mycenaean goods in the graves of the local population from the 14th and 13th centuries BC, as well as increased production of local matt-painted pottery.

The genesis and character of the local matt-painted pottery, we believe it was the same as in the neighboring regions, which were also under strong Mycenaean influence, namely that it is a local reaction to the Mycenaean pottery. Here, the pottery had the settlement of Aiane as its production center, located in the Middle Haliacmon region. The represented vessel shapes in this region are an expression of the local Bronze Age ceramography, which have almost the same features as the matt-painted pottery in the Devollian group, Vardar valley or Thessaloniki region.

Therefore, it can be concluded that the local matt-painted pottery, in all these regions, went through similar cultural processes, generating similar features, which gives the basic feature of the late Bronze Age culture in all regions that were under Mycenaean influence (Fig. 59).

⁶⁶ Karamitrou–Mentessidi G. 2008, 75, Fig. 117

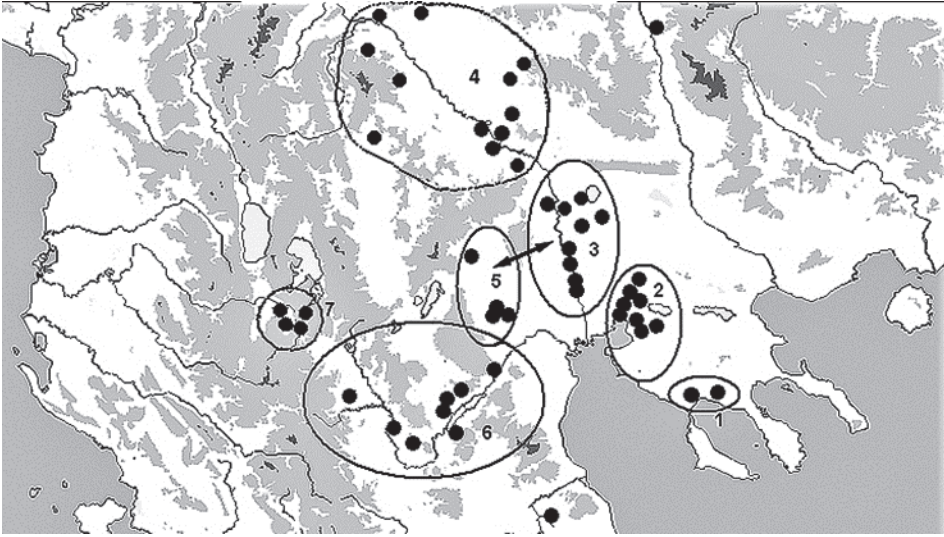


Fig. 59 Map of distribution of the local matt painted pottery from the Late Bronze Age in the separated regions (according to B. Horaiz, supplemented by D. Mitrevski):

1. Chalcidice region, 2 Thessaloniki area, 3, 5 Lower Vardar region,
- 4 Middle and Upper Vardar region, 6 Halliakmon region, 7 Korcha region

The highest concentration of local matt-painted pottery, along with Mycenaean pottery, is the group of 80 vessels offered in one place and covered with earth, discovered within the necropolis in Livadia - Aiane.⁶⁷ In their vicinity a burning space-hearth was also discovered, suggesting a situation similar to the phenomena in the already mentioned sanctuaries of the Late Bronze Age in the north. Apparently, in the area of the necropolis in Livadia, certain cult activities took place which are similar to those in the mentioned sanctuary in Gabrevci nearby Radovich..

Along the valley of Haliacmon and in the Devoll (Korcha) region, matt-painted pottery will continue to develop through the subsequent centuries of the Iron Age, when it will spread to the entire so-called Upper Macedonian area.

MYCENAEAN INFLUENCES IN THE THESSALONIKI AND CHALCIDICE REGIONS

The spread of Mycenaean culture elements in Thessaloniki and Chalcidice regions was the strongest and most constant compared to the other regions in the interior, due to the most pronounced trade character of the rela-

⁶⁷ Andreu S. – Fotiadis M. – Kotsakis K. 1996, 567; Karamitrou–Mentessidi G. 2008, 72,

tions with Mycenaean civilization along the northern Aegean coast. This implies the strongest implementation of those elements in the local culture, not only through imported objects, their copies or the local matt-painted pottery, but also through the architecture and economic and social organization.

Under the influence of the Aegean-Mediterranean culture of the Bronze Age, the architecture of this region is dominated by buildings built, not in the Balkan prehistoric mode, but by the use of bricks. At certain points (Tumba-Thessaloniki, Assiros, Kastanas) there are also elements of a central economy, more precisely centralization of the economic power, in larger complex buildings.⁶⁸ Such buildings, include storage rooms, craftsman and other premises, in a whole which has a special place and role in the settlement. Among them, the so-called apsis building of Tumba-Thessaloniki stands out, where 5 different rooms are connected in one complex building on an area of 160 square meters, as expression of a special social organization of the settlement (Fig. 60).⁶⁹

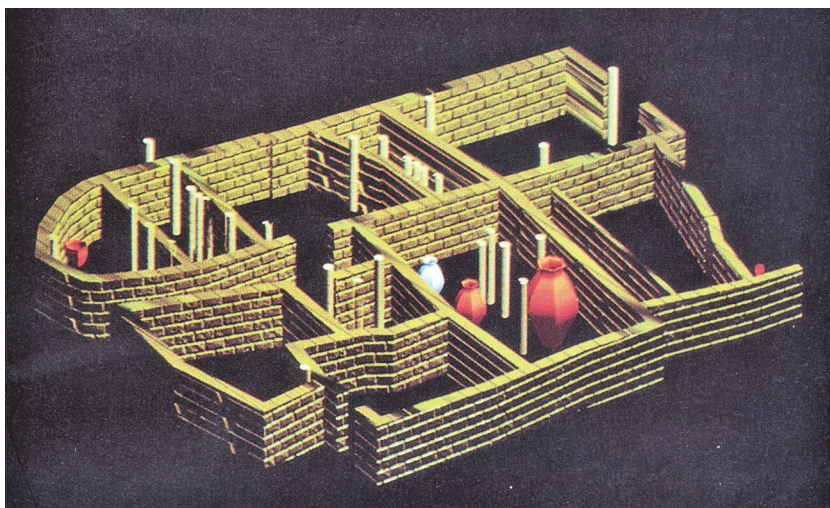


Fig. 60 The central building in Toumba-Thessaloniki (according to S. Andreu)

Thus, this settlement is exposed as the main center of the economy of the wider area, which reminds of the situation in the Mycenaean centers. Such a character is often given to the famous building of Assiros with rooms for storage of large quantities of cereals, from the same time (13th century).⁷⁰ Even the so-called apsidal building of Kastanas is observed in such a way, al-

⁶⁸ Andreu S. 2001, 160

⁶⁹ Andreu S. – Fotiadis M. – Kotsakis K. 1996, 582; Papaefthimiu A. – Pilali A. 1997, 87, Fig. 76

⁷⁰ Warlde K. A – Warlde D. 2007, 559, Plate 4; Papaefthimiu A. – Pilali A. 1997, 86

though it is about an architectural conception and construction common to the late Bronze Age in the whole Vardar valley.

In any case, direct influences from the Aegean Bronze Age are evident according to the architecture and organization of individual settlements on the North Aegean coast, and the presence of Mycenaean vessels and their copies, as well as the intensive production of local matt-painted pottery and it only confirms the significant influence of the South in creating the local culture of the Late Bronze Age in the region of Thessaloniki with the Chalcidice.

Mycenaean imports in that region were not limited only to weapons for exchange or gifts as in the continental regions, which had no direct contact with the Mycenaean culture, but to pottery as packaging for products arriving from the South. Local copies were made according to their model, and the local matt-painted pottery there developed most of the shapes and decorations. All this indicates direct and constant contact with the Mycenaean world. Local matt-painted pottery there dates back to the Late Middle Bronze Age (Torone) and in the beginning of the Late Bronze Age (Agias Mamas) as a result of early contacts with the southern parts of Greece.⁷¹

Although the influences from the South were absorbed in different ways, in each region separately, without changing the character of the local culture, still some settlements in Thessaloniki can be assigned the character of trade stations for exchange of goods both from the North and from the South. In that sense, in the Toumba-Thessaloniki, Therme, Saratce (Perivolaki), Gona, Mesimeriani, Olynth (Hagias Mamas) and the like, elements are found from both the Balkan and the Aegean Late Bronze Age, which gives a special mark to those settlements, but also to the whole culture of the Late Bronze Age in that region. The Mycenaean presence at these stations was of such a character and scope that it was sufficient for those settlements to be in the service of further spreading the Mycenaean elements to the North.

The spread of Mycenaean influences from the coast to the North did not take place evenly in all regions: it depended on the geography of the terrain itself, primarily on the communicativeness and resources of individual regions. Thus, the direct contacts with the communities north of the watersheds of Mesta and Struma are detected up to the Rhodope massif, mainly through the finds from the settlements in the vicinity of Drama such as Stathmos Agista and Dikili Tash. Only certain elements from there, mainly imported ceramics, incidentally penetrated into the interior, along the valley of Mesta, and along the valley of Struma, the Mycenaean elements are present only in its lower course, to the Kresna gorge. In spite of that, almost all forms of Mycenaean influences are found along the whole valley of Vardar.

⁷¹ Horajs B. 2007, 277

MYCENAEAN INFLUENCES ALONG THE VARDAR VALLEY

Vardar valley, as an already developed and easiest communication from the Danube to the Aegean, for the first time during the Late Bronze Age was exposed to cultural penetrations in the opposite direction, from south to north. After the penetration of the Mycenaean culture in the northern Aegean coast and Thessaloniki region, it began to be spread to the north along the Vardar valley. The earliest Mycenaean products are imported weapons in the most distant, but ore-bearing regions in Upper Vardar valley, such as the famous Mycenaean rapier from Tetovo and the marble pommel for a similar sword from Markova Sushica near Skopje.⁷² According to the finds from Markova Sushica, these were objects in graves of local individuals, buried in graves with local rituals and local late Bronze Age pottery. If we add to that the finds of Mycenaean weapons in Iglarevo, neighboring Kosovo, then it is quite clear that the earliest Mycenaean penetration along the Vardar was directed to the ore areas in the north, and marked by the appearance of Mycenaean weapons in the local areas, no matter how conservative they were and outside of the major communications. In favor of that, there is a finding of a double ax of Aegean type discovered in the ore-bearing region Debrca of Demir Hisar area, in the vicinity of the village Pesochani (Fig. 61-1).⁷³

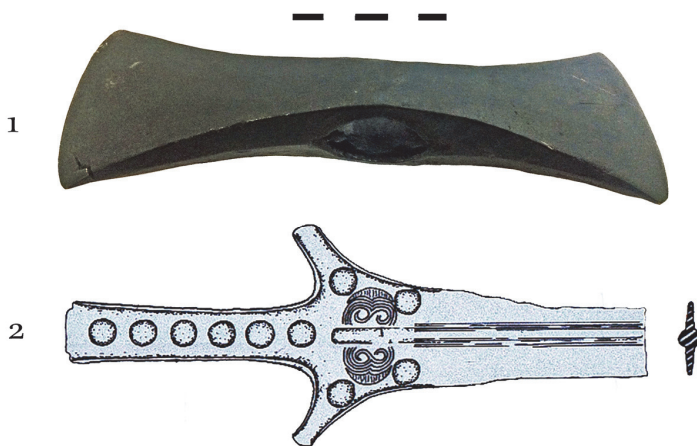


Fig. 61 The first Mycenaean imports from: 1. Pesochani – Debarca, 2. Tetovo

After such an initial penetration of Mycenaean elements, already in the 14th century BC, the way was opened for permanent, mainly trade com-

⁷² Mitrevski D. 1998, Fig. 1. Fig. 2

⁷³ The double bronze ax is a surface find from Gradište–Pesochani discovered by prof. V. Lilčić, to whom I thank for the information provided.

munications of the local Vardar population with the Mycenaean world. The influences from the Aegean south were layered over the local Bronze Age cultural base, thus creating a special and sufficiently recognizable cultural milieu. In that way, the Late Bronze Age development started in Vardar region, which during the 14th and 13th centuries intensified within the so-called Vardar or Ulanci group of the late Bronze Age.⁷⁴ Numerous new settlements and necropolises appear, which had their use mainly in the period from the 14th to the 12th centuries BC, and it is within that period that the old, multi-layered settlements in the Lower Vardar have had their full rise (Fig. 39).⁷⁵

The participation of the Mycenaean influences in the creation of the Vardar or Ulanci group was marked by the acceptance of a series of elements from the South in almost all spheres, in the settlement life, the material culture, and even in the burial. These influences were certainly stronger in the Lower than in the Upper Vardar valley, but in any case they are present from Kastanas in the South to Kale-Skopje in the North.

Mediterranean-Aegean elements of construction appear in the architecture by using bricks instead of the previous Balkan prehistoric architecture. Such structures, on a rectangular base, often with an apsidal front side, are best known from the settlement of Kastanas, but are also present in the north (Kofilak and Vardarski Rid near Gevgelija, Stolot-Ulanci to Kale-Skopje).⁷⁶

In the material culture, Mycenaean elements are most evident, no matter whether these are settlement finds or grave goods. Among them, the pottery is dominant, and it occurs in all three groups, which are the result from the contacts with the Mycenaean world and these are: a) Mycenaean import b) local copies of Mycenaean forms and c) local matt-painted pottery.

Mycenaean vessels were imported mostly from Mycenaean Thessaly. They are far more common in the southern Vardar, mostly in Kastanas, but they are also found in the north, as in Demir Kapija, Ulanci or the youngest such finding, the submycenaen amphora from Kale-Skopje.⁷⁷ On account of this, vessels with Mycenaean shape are much more represented, but handmade, from homemade clay and by local craftsmen (Fig. 62). Such vessels, mostly in the form of alabasterons and amphoriskoi, have been discovered along the entire Vardar valley. They are mostly found as grave gifts, in necropolises, such as Koshur-Dolno Sonje near Skopje, Vodovrati-Gradsko, Ulanci-Gradsko, Demir Kapija and others.⁷⁸

⁷⁴ Mitrevski D. 2003; Mitrevski D. 2013.

⁷⁵ See Chapter 2: Vardar valley in the Late Bronze Age

⁷⁶ Videski Z. 2005, 91; Mitrevski 2006

⁷⁷ Podzuweit C. 1979, Podzuweit C. 1986; Mitrevski D. 1998; Mitrevski D. 1999

⁷⁸ Mitrevski D. 1998, Fig. 4



Fig. 62 Mycenaean imported vessels and copies of the Mycenaean forms through the Vardar valley: 1 Vodovrati, 2,3,11,12 Ulanci, 4 Mali Dol, 5,8 D. Sonje, 6,9 Demir Kapija, 10 Bezanija-Krivi Dol

Undoubtedly, the largest number of vessels made under Aegean influence are the finds of the so-called local matt-painted pottery. Same as in other regions under strong Mycenaean influence, in the Vardar region such vessels represent a local response to the Mycenaean pottery.

As a benefit from the direct contacts, primarily with the northern Aegean area, along the Vardar valley in the early phase of the Late Bronze Age (Layer 18 in Kastanas) pottery started to be produced, although by hand, but made of purified clay, lightly baked and decorated with matt-painted decoration, usually arranged around the shoulder of the vessel, by painting according to a Mycenaean pattern, on the rim, neck, handles and the lower area around the bottom. Thus, the most popular forms of the local Late Bronze Age ceramography were used, such as kantharoi, amphora-like vessels, jugs with cut away neck and so on (Fig. 63).

Compared to other regions where the local matt painted pottery is found, it seems that it was the most widespread along the valley of Vardar. It

is found not only in the valley of Vardar but also along direct tributaries of Vardar or along the valleys of Bregalnica, Crna Reka, Topolka, Pchinja (Fig. 64). It also shows the strongest local features, such painting on the inner side of the rim with a series of oblique lines (Kastanas, Chaushica, Kilindir, Ulanci, Vodovrati, Tremnik, etc.).⁷⁹ In that way it gives the main mark of the whole Late Bronze Age culture in the region of the Vardar basin.



Fig. 63 Local matt painted pottery through the Vardar valley:
1,2 Ulanci 3 Vodovrati, 4 Mali Dol, 5 Govrlevo

The pendants in the form of double axes that have been under evident influence of the Aegean Bronze Age stand out among the other phenomena in the material culture of the Late Bronze Age along the Vardar valley. These, as cult objects, appear in individual burials, which stand out by their content as graves of women with a special place and role in the community (Fig. 65).⁸⁰ The most famous are two such burials (graves 54 and 82) from the necropolis in Ulanci, where about 15 double axes formed ritual belts (Fig. 66).

The forms of bronze single-edged knives come from the same Aegean inspiration, and which are discovered in the valley of Vardar, as the only

⁷⁹ Hochstetter A. 1994, Pl. 46. 4, Pl. 261. 13; Heurtley W. A. 1939 Kat. N421, N433; Mitrevski D. 1997, Fog. 12. 4–7; Видески З. 2006; Papazovska A. 2018, Kat. br. 36

⁸⁰ Papazovska A. 2017

forms of weapons, although perhaps they should be treated more as tools than weapons (Fig. 66). Real weapons (swords, spears, arrows, etc.) have not yet been discovered in the Late Bronze Age necropolises along the Vardar valley, which together with the organization of necropolises and the unique burial customs are the strongest indicator of peaceful development during the 14th and 13th centuries BC. The same is confirmed by the phenomena in the layers of the Late Bronze Age in the Lower Vardar settlements such as: Kilindir, Vardino, Chaushitsa, Vardaroftsa and Kastanas.⁸¹



Fig. 64 Local matt painted pottery along the Vardar tributaries: 1,2,3,4 Manastir - Chashka, 5,6 Dragoevo, 7 Strnovac-Kumanovo, 8 Varos-Prilep, 9 Bezanija-Krivi Dol

The peaceful Late Bronze Age development was probably secured by the existence of organized military force. How unacceptable it sounds for that early time and territory, such an assumption, however, is still supported by Homer's testimony about the participation of organized military units that, with their military leaders, arrived from the Vardar valley in defense of Troy.

⁸¹ Kasson S. 1926:127–133 Hansel B. 1979; Hansel B. 1989

On the one hand it indicates the Paeonian communities of the Vardar valley as part of the general Aegean world of the Late Bronze Age, but at the same time of a well-organized society with its own military organization. The archaeological illustration of that is shown in an exceptional find from the necropolis in Ulanci. There, a tomb stone stele with an engraved male represented in full military equipment was discovered as a secondary used stone slab in one of the grave structures of the 12th century (Fig. 67).⁸²



Fig. 65 The graves with ritual belts shaped by the miniature double axes from Ulanci

All the elements on the stele indicate attributes of military power, more precisely status of the deceased as a military leader, that automatically confirms the existence of a particular military organization.

In any case, the peaceful development of the Vardar communities lasted until the beginning of the migrations and the turbulent times, which affected this region in the 12th century and continued almost in the entire 11th century BC. These destructive events definitely interrupted the Bronze Age culture and the further development of the Vardar group, as well as the previously nurtured contacts with the Aegean world.

⁸² Mitrevski D. 1989, Fig. 5, 453; Mitrevski D. 1997, Fig. 7



Fig. 66 The ritual belt of miniature double axes and different types of cutting tools from the Ulanci necropolis



Fig. 67 The stone stela from Ulanci

MYCENAEAN INFLUENCES IN THE VALLEYS OF STRUMA AND MESTA

The Mycenaean elements along the Struma valley entered only along its lower stream, mainly as Mycenaean imports. The best illustration of that are the grave goods in the necropolis of Feia Petra in Serres, but also some finds, such as the miniature bronze axes–labryses from the necropolis in Sandanski.⁸³ There is a similar situation also in the valley of Mesta where Mycenaean imports, primarily ceramics, occur in Koprivlen and Bresto near Razlog.⁸⁴ From the same region are the famous stone slabs – “stelae” from Razlog, which due to the ornamentation close to the Mycenaean art, some authors rightly believe that they should be associated with the Aegean civilization of the Late Bronze Age, more precisely that they were locally made but with no doubt under the influence of Mycenaean culture (Fig. 68).⁸⁵



Fig. 68 The stone stela from Razlog

All these finds mark the roads of limited penetration of Mycenaean elements in the interior of that part of the Balkans, and along the Struma valley those influences reached only the mentioned guard posts in Blagoevgrad region such as Kamenska Chuka, Krs-to Pokrovnik and others.⁸⁶ As limes, they separated the internal Balkan area from the valley of Lower Struma, which in turn was open to influences from the northern Aegean area.

Elements of Mycenaean culture penetrated the Mesta valley in a similar way. Their layout clearly marks the road to the mining points in the western Rhodopes and to the Upper Thracian Plain.

Contrary to the situation along the valley of Vardar where the Mycenaean influences are an important segment in the physiognomy of the local so-called Vardar or Ulanci culture of the Late Bronze Age, in the valleys of Struma and Mesta they had a different character. The repertoire of Mycenaean

⁸³ Valla M. 2007, 368; Alekandrov S. – Petkov V. – Ivanov G. 2007, Tab. 2

⁸⁴ Aleksandrov S. 2018–d; Athanassov B. and others 2018

⁸⁵ Танев Т. 1965, 3–11; Милчев А. 1971, 71; Тончева Г. 1984, 92

⁸⁶ Grabska–Kulova M. – I. Kulov, 2007, 291, Fig. 9

finds and the context of their discovery in those regions point to relations with the Mycenaean world, which were not permanent and did not play a significant role in the formation of the local culture of the Late Bronze Age. That is why, for example, no more serious local response to Mycenaean pottery was created there, in the form of local copies of Mycenaean pottery or local matt-painted pottery. The only such finds are known from Blagoevgrad, where only a few shards of matt-painted vessels were discovered on Kamenska Chuka.⁸⁷ Thus, it can be concluded that the spread of Mycenaean elements along Struma and Mesta was mainly in the service of the Mycenaean interest in discovering and exploiting the mining-metallurgical potentials of the region. This was even more pronounced in the other Thracian regions with stronger mining-metallurgical potentials, where the Mycenaean influences had a different character and left greater consequences.

After the discovery of the great mining potentials in the Carpathian region and Transylvania by the Minoan-Mycenaean traders, an intensive exchange was established, not only for copper raw materials and products but also for the exchange of metallurgical, theoretical and goldsmith experience. Those contacts took place, mainly through the easiest communication by water, through the Lower Danube and the Western Black Sea. This directly linked the Carpathian resources to eastern Mediterranean knowledge, resulting, on the one hand, in discovery of semi-finished products – ingots and anchors along the west Black Sea coast, and on the other hand in numerous types of weapons and cult objects of Aegean-type in the Lower Danube, and, especially with exclusive Vuchitrn-type objects.⁸⁸

However, the primary Mycenaean interest in copper ore and gold, logically were the regions with such resources, which are closer to the Aegean world. Among them stands out the East Rhodope region, which was easily accessible after the already established old communication along the valley of Maritsa. Thus, that region found itself in a new cultural position, compared to the previous Middle Bronze Age, and also to the other neighboring regions.

MYCENAEAN INFLUENCES ALONG THE MARITSA VALLEY

The trade tradition along the Maritsa valley with the Upper Thracian Plain has already been strongly expressed before the penetration of the Mycenaean miners and metallurgists. Even during the Early and especially in the

⁸⁷ Stefanovich M. – Bankoff H. A. 1998

⁸⁸ Bonev A. 1988, 65–77; Popesku D. A – Oanta Margitu R. 2018, 113–121; Horajz B. – Jung R. 2018, 233–239

Middle Bronze Age, the region achieved a high level of trade, but also metallurgical, goldsmith and cultural needs in general. In fact, as early as the end of the Early Bronze Age, functional trade routes were established there, connecting the Aegean-Anatolian civilizations with the gold-rich regions of northern Transylvania and the Carpathian region. Even then, wheel made pottery, so called Trojan cups from Troy II, cult objects, specific tools, as well as novelties in residential architecture reached the North through that region. On the other hand, strong trade relations were established with the Lower Danube and the Carpathian region. On this route, from Central Europe to the north all through to Syria in the south, the region of the Upper Thracian Plain played a key role, so that at the end of the Early Bronze Age trade colonies were formed there, such as Mihalich, Asara Konstancia and Galabovo, but also complex sites such as the locality Debane.⁸⁹

With the discovery of the great mining potentials of the eastern Rhodope region by the militarily structured Mycenaeans and by putting of the communication in the Maritsa valley in service of the Mycenaean goals, the previous economic, trade and cultural development in the entire region was interrupted. Simply, the beginning of the exploitation of the ore, especially the gold-bearing deposits, led to a new economic, but also a new social situation with disintegration of the previous settlement system and establishment of a new settlement topography. In fact, according to the position and type of new settlements (small settlements in high, strategic and easily defensible positions), the character and role of metallurgy and the place of weapons in the material culture, it can be concluded that war and military conflicts played a significant role in the life of local communities of the Late Bronze Age.

In the beginning, the penetration of the Mycenaean culture elements along the valley of Maritsa in the Eastern Rhodopes and the Upper Thracian plain happened as an exchange and mainly gift from the South in order to gain the favor of the local heads for smooth exploitation of the rich mineral resources in the Eastern Rhodopes. Thus, in fact, the Mycenaean ideas, but also the Mycenaean metallurgical experience began to spread, contributing also to the local production to develop.

Among the archeological finds from the early phase of the Late Bronze Age there is an unusually great variety and quantity of bronze weapons (swords, axes, spears, arrows, knives), which confirm their local production. However, it is obvious that this production was under strong influences from outside, from the North (from the Carpathian-Danube regions) and from the South (from the Aegean-Eastern Mediterranean regions).⁹⁰ Mycenaean influen-

⁸⁹ Aleksandrov S. 2018, 87–95; Hristov M. 2018, 335

⁹⁰ Черних Е. Н. 1978 232, Панајотов И. 1977, 19–34

ces have a dominant place, and these are manifested in all forms of weapons. Thus, the Mycenaean swords-rapiers appear in Perushtica, Dolno Levski, Drama, Gorski Izvor, Ada Tepa and others, and the Aegean double axes of the so-called Bipens and Labris, in Semchinovo-Pazardzhik and others (Fig. 69).⁹¹ Also, the earliest appearances of spearheads (Perushtica, Dolno Levski, Krichim and others) or single-edged knives are elements of the Eastern Mediterranean and Aegean world of the Bronze Age, which were not known in Thrace until then.⁹²

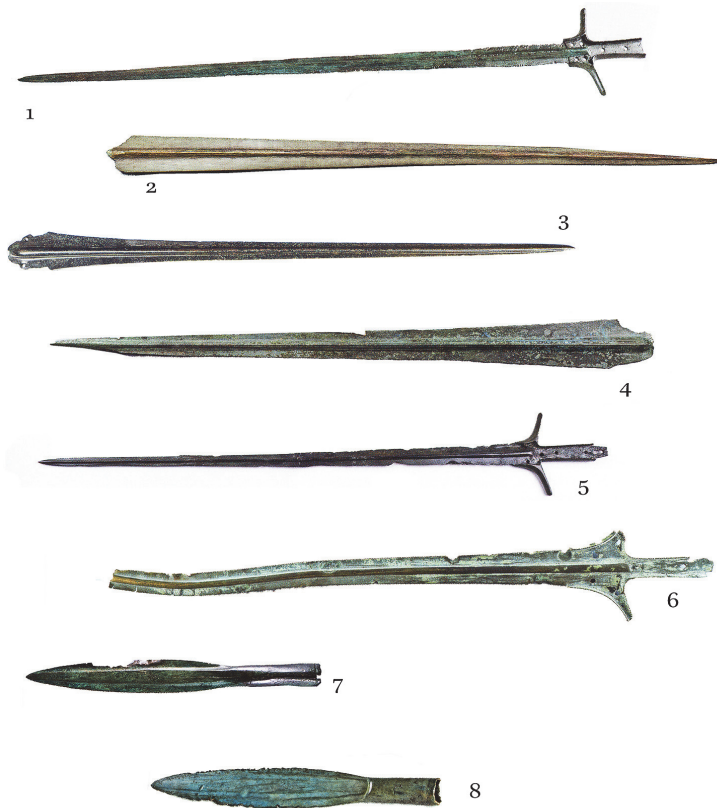


Fig. 69 Early Aegean types of weapons from Eastern Rodope and Maritsa region:
1,8 Levski, 2 Lilovo, 4 Drama, 5,7 Perushtica, 6 Gorski Izvor

The presence of the so-called Aegean types of weapons in Upper Thrace and East Rhodope, according to their typology and context of discovery, during the XIV and XIII centuries can no longer be treated as diplomatic exchange. They were mostly of local production, for which, in addition to the

⁹¹ Jung R. 2018 241–251

⁹² O. Hockmann 2007

chemical composition, the greatest confirmation are the finds of individual stone molds for their casting (Nova Zagora).⁹³ Such weapons were current goods, but above all, it should be understood as an expression of the military needs and character of that time. Obviously the need for such weapons comes from the intensification of the mining in the Rhodope region and transport activities along the Maritsa Valley. Such conditions inevitably led to militarization and hierarchization of the local society, and the Mycenaean weapons is only an illustration of those processes, as well as the character of the Mycenaean presence in these areas.

The most complete picture for the character of the Mycenaean presence in the Eastern Rhodopes, is offered by the locality Ada Tepe near Krumovgrad, which became known as the main source of gold in the Late Bronze Age in that part of the Balkans.⁹⁴ There, a special purpose mining settlement was built and its organization planned, as well as a mine for exploitation of the gold ore. Its main intensity of use was realized within the period from the XV to XIII centuries BC. For the needs of the local mining population, a sanctuary was organized on the highest peak, and during the XIII century, a defensive wall built around the central part of the settlement. Some objects from Ada Tepe were of Mycenaean origin (wheel made pottery) Mycenaean sword cap, bronze spear and an ax), and they illustrate in the best way the Mycenaean participation and role in the exploitation of the gold mines.

Among the archeological finds from this whole region, the Mycenaean pottery appears only incidentally, with only a few fragments of imported vessels discovered in Dragoina, while local copies of Mycenaean vessels or local matt-painted pottery are not known.⁹⁵ This, in fact, confirms the military-mining character of the relations with the Mycenaean world, so that it is only a matter of occasional, and not of regular and permanent trade relations, as in the other previously mentioned regions, exposed to direct and permanent Mycenaean influences.⁹⁶

The real trade relations took place along the west coast of the Black Sea, mainly in the southeast. In addition to the finds of raw metals - ingots and anchors from merchant ships carrying cargo to the metallurgical centers, primarily in the Eastern Mediterranean and Asia Minor, there (e.g. at the site of Vratica 1 near Burgas) real various imported goods were discovered.⁹⁷ Thus, among the pottery, there are imported vessels mainly associated with Troy VI,

⁹³ Катинчаров P. 1972, 245

⁹⁴ Попов H. – Jockenhovel A. 2018 – 193–205; Попов H. 2018, 402–415

⁹⁵ Bozhinova E. – Jung R. – Mommsen H. 2010, 44–95, Abb. 4, Taf. 14; Jung R. 2018, 247; Nekhrizov G. – Tzvetkova J. 2018, 187, Fig. 2

⁹⁶ Килиан К. 1986, 445; Kilian K. 1988, 115

⁹⁷ Hristova T. 2011, 104; Pavuk P. 2018, 273

as well as their local hand-made copies. Such phenomena speak of direct trade relations, but mainly with Northwestern Anatolia and Troas.

From all this it can be concluded that despite the collapse of the Middle Bronze Age settlement system in the Upper Thracian plain, thanks to the mineral resources in the Eastern Rhodopes, the Late Bronze Age and Mycenaean influences brought a new rise in mining and metallurgy. However, in addition to Mycenaean influences, old trade relations with the western Anatolian world, as well as their close socio-economic ties, continued to be nurtured. Thus, the old communication line along the Maritsa valley that connected the Western-Anatolian area with the Danube and Central Europe was still used, and will be fully expressed in the late 13th and 12th centuries, with the start of the turbulent times and general Balkan movements from the north to south and southeast.

Cultural influences from the south are very clearly reflected in the archaeological finds discovered in the northern regions of the Aegean world in the Late Bronze Age. They include not only forms of common practice but also the emergence of local preferences and regional responses to those values. Such a common practice is the appearance of similar forms of Mycenaean weapons in the regions of special Mycenaean interest and even more similar local matt-painted pottery, in all regions that have established closer and longer lasting trade relations with the Mycenaean world.

The local communities outside those regions continued their Bronze Age development without any outside influence, especially not from the Mycenaean culture. The old local values were nurtured in their material culture, so that sometimes it is extremely difficult to separate the Middle Bronze Age from the Late Bronze Age culture. In any case, the communities that have made some contact with Mycenaean culture provided faster economic and cultural development, but all this lasted until the collapse of Mycenaean civilization and the beginning of the migrations and military incursions from north to south, during the transition period.

TROY AND THE BALKAN COMMUNITIES

During the Bronze Age, the relations of the Thracian communities in the Black Sea area, the Marmara Sea and the East-Aegean region with Troas and Asia Minor are indisputable. However, in Balkan archeology, the connection of certain internal Balkan communities with Troas is a much bigger scientific challenge.

Starting from numerous records of ancient authors, the question of the connection of the Balkan Moesi, Dardanians, Paeonians and Bryges with the Asia Minor Mysi, Dardanoi, Maeonians and Phrygians is still open. There is still no general opinion in the science on the nature of the relations, so that there are various perceptions, arising mainly from different interpretations of the historical sources.

All modern researchers logically start from Homer's oldest records, and there several times the Moesi, Dardanians, and the Paeonians are mentioned as allies in the defense of Troy. However, there is a standard dilemma as to whether Homer conveyed the geographical situation of the Bronze Age or reflected the geography of his Iron Age. Due to that, it is difficult to recognize the historical facts in his poetry, and that is the hypotheses for both the Balkan and the Asia Minor origin of these peoples and their migrations in one direction or another are (not) equally documented.

As the Moesi people go beyond the territorial framework of this paper, our interest is directed towards the Dardanians and the Paeonians. In this occasion we will try to summarize the archaeological data for them, given the numerous new finds discovered in recent decades. In this sense, the real question is to what extent we can recognize the Paeonian and Dardanian communities of the Late Bronze Age in these new finds, and to what extent they confirm or deny the historical records.

The Dardanians with Homer are marked as communities living in the immediate vicinity of Troy while the Paeonians are described as a military contingent arriving from outside, farthest from west, from the Vardar valley.

Later authors only complicate this situation by taking from each other the information about the events of the legendary times, by shaping them in their poetic, essayistic or even political view. In any case, it is not easy to extract the historical truth only on the basis of the records of ancient authors, especially if we know that archeology, due to poor research of the Bronze and Iron Ages for a long time did not play a significant role in resolving these issues. Today the situation has changed significantly so that, thanks to archeology, there are numerous new discoveries offering a range of new data on these issues.

In the last three decades, archeology has discovered that during the Late Bronze Age, just north of the Mycenaean world, along the Vardar valley with its tributaries, the local so-called Ulanci culture has been developed, with features that significantly differentiated it from other cultures in the interior of the Balkans (Figs. 39, 45, 62-67).⁹⁸

⁹⁸ Митревски Д. 2003, 46–52 Митревски Д. 2013, 183–188

The Vardar or so-called Ulançi culture of the Late Bronze Age was formed on the bases of the local Bronze Age tradition, but its most significant mark, by which it stands out from the other neighboring groups of that time, is its openness to the influences from the south, from the late Mycenaean culture. Exactly these relations speak very illustratively about the involvement of those communities in the events of the Aegean, and not the internal Balkan world of the Late Bronze Age. The close relations of the Vardar communities with the Aegean world were certainly a precondition for their participation in such a general Aegean event as the Trojan War.

The Vardar group achieved its full development during the 14th and 13th centuries BC, while during the 12th century it was forcibly interrupted. However, its continuous cultural development and re-growth is indisputable, especially through the centuries of the Iron Age, until the time of Herodotus, when the “father of the history” re-emphasized the Vardar valley as a Paeonian territory. Therefore, from the writings of Homer to Herodotus, we can consider the Vardar Valley as an indisputable and unchanged Paeonian territory. The only dilemma remains whether the Homeric Paeonians or the late Bronze Age communities of the Vardar valley were at a sufficient level of social, economic and military organization to participate with their contingents in the defense of Troy.

Archaeological excavations reveal exactly that, exposing the Vardar group of the Late Bronze Age as the most developed group in the interior of the Balkans. It was the only group that has had direct contact with the Aegean world, and their necropolises, with their organization and burial customs, reflect a stable, strongly canonized and organized society. Their settlements, with their structure and economic power, did not lag far behind the settlements existing at the same time in the Aegean basin. In this sense, the three settlements (Vardino, Vardaroftsa and Kastanas) stand out, located next to each other in the lower reaches of Vardar or according to Homer, “Vardar with a wide course”.⁹⁹ In their continuous use, throughout the whole Bronze and Iron Ages, the layers of the Late Bronze Age stand out with the greatest economic and cultural strength. Among them, the one in Vardaroftsa stands out as the largest. It was positioned in the middle, protected from the north by the neighboring settlement in Vardino and from the south by Kastanas, and according to that it is considered that it was Homer's Amydon from where the military contingent left for Troy under the leadership of Pyrraechmes.

A proof that the Paeonians of the Late Bronze Age have been developed to a sufficient level as to have certain military organization, is the mentioned stone slab stelae from the necropolis in Ulançi, which illustrates exactly

⁹⁹ Casson S. 1926, 46; Heurtley 1939; Hansel B. 1982; Hansel B. 1989

that (Fig. 67). It depicts a male figure in clothing and military equipment of Aegean type. The leather belts with a military ax and a long dagger attached on, as well as the wide belt, are attributes of a high-ranking warrior, while torques around the neck undoubtedly point to highest military dignity with character of a military leader.

All these archeological data confirm Homer's records of the Paeonians who took part in the defense of Troy. But, there is a dilemma, did they return to their homes after the fall of Troy or did they stay in Asia Minor, or perhaps they have additionally brought their compatriots as settlers to Asia Minor. This dilemma is imposed by several records of the ancient authors, but also a number of archaeological finds.

After many years of war for Troy, and given the new situations in both the Balkans and Asia Minor, the possibility opens up for certain settling of Paeonians in Asia Minor. Archeology clearly indicates that the Central Balkans and especially the Vardar Valley as a central communication area, at that time were affected by long-lasting riots and destructive processes. The local Vardar or Ulanci group is experiencing almost complete dissolution, so that even the largest and most protected settlements, such as those along Lower Vardar, suffered in permanent, multiple fires caused by outside invaders, which usually came from the North. Thus, after the valley of Vardar, which before that, during the 14th and 13th century was the most densely populated area, in the centuries to come, from the 12th - 10th century BC the intensity of life was dramatically reduced.

On the other hand, on the western Anatolian coast, south of Troy, around present-day Izmir, ancient authors recorded a new people who called themselves Maeonians.¹⁰⁰ They are known to have taken part in the Trojan War, as one of the defenders of Troy. Their territory was known as the land of Lydia, but the Lydians are not mentioned by Homer, most likely because they founded their kingdom after the fall of Troy. Thus, the Maeonians are in fact considered proto-Lydians, and it is recorded by Herodotus. According to him, the Lydians were originally known as Maeonians, and only later began to be called Lydians, but certainly before the arrival of the Greeks and the establishment of a Greek-Heraclidean dynasty in the same territory.¹⁰¹

Whether the similarity of the names is enough to equate the Asia Minor Maeonians with the Balkan Paeonians can still not be said with certainty. However, an archeological find discovered in Sardis strongly suggests such a possibility. In the seventies, about 30 cult pits - depots with various artifacts were discovered there. Each pit contained 4 different ceramic vessels and an

¹⁰⁰ Brice T. 2006, 142

¹⁰¹ Кацаров. Г. 1921, 21–23; Brice T. 2006, 142

iron knife, with each vessel containing the skeletal remains of a dog.¹⁰² In modern scholarship, it is considered that they were all remnants of ritual offerings to the Lydian god Kandaules, to whom the dogs meant a lot. On the other hand, such discoveries with dog victims and careful burials of dogs are common in the historical Paeonian territory (Bylazora, Kale - Skopje, Gradiste-Brazda and others). Not only that, the ancient authors, several times have mentioned the name of Kandaules as one of the most important Paeonian deities - God of medicine, personification of the sun or Paeonian Helios.¹⁰³

After the intensification of the Greek colonization of the coast of Asia Minor and the Lydian territory, the Asia Minor Maeonians are no longer mentioned, which could indicate their return to their previous homeland in the Balkans. Archeology with its many discoveries confirms this hypothesis, which could have happened in the late 8th and early 7th century BC. Then, along the valley of Vardar, especially in Lower Vardar, a large number of new inhabitants began to concentrate and formed the known so-called Lower Vardar or Gevgelija group of the Iron Age.¹⁰⁴ It has been historically confirmed that the bearers of that group are the southern Paeonian communities, and features of their culture are found along with the surviving elements of the older so-called Vardar culture of the Late Bronze Age and certain elements of Eastern Aegean-Western Anatolian origin. For example, the local matt-painted and linearly painted pottery, which is the main feature of the Lower Vardar group of the Iron Age and the only pottery worked on a wheel in the interior of the Balkans, has many elements related to, at the same time existing, pottery in the East Aegean and Asia Minor (Fig. 80).¹⁰⁵ Also, in the Iron Age settlement Gloska Chuka, between Valandovo and Gevgelija, among other things, a typical Anatolian fibula from the 7th century BC was discovered.¹⁰⁶

From what has been said so far, it can be concluded that Homer was right, at least when the Paeonians are in question, and the archeology not only confirms it but also significantly complements it.

In the case of the Balkan Dardanians, their relations with Troas are significantly different and even deeper. According to Homer and the writings of some other ancient authors, their origin is from Troas, from the Dardanos family, the ancestor of the Trojan royal house. On the contrary, in science it is often thought that it is about an old Balkan people, who moved to Asia Minor with the great ethnic movements, and Homer only included them in his poetic

¹⁰² Greenwalt C. H. 1976; Kurth A. 1995, 571

¹⁰³ Кацаров Г. 1921, 23; Kuhrt A. 1995, 571

¹⁰⁴ Vasic R. 1987, 701–711; Mitrevski D. 1997, 87

¹⁰⁵ Митревски Д. 2012, 105–111

¹⁰⁶ Митревски Д. 2009, Сл. 18–3, 141

creation for the Trojan War. Other researchers believe that the Balkan Dardanians and the Asia Minor Dardanians are two different peoples without inter-relationship.¹⁰⁷

With all these assumptions in mind, archeology is uncovering more and more evidence of the Dardanians as an Asia Minor people who, after the fall of Troy, crossed the Balkans and settled just north of the Paeonians. Several facts in that direction are undeniable.

During the Bronze Age in Asia Minor there was a kingdom called Dardania, which is mentioned in several Egyptian texts.¹⁰⁸ Thus, one of their military contingents participated as Hittite allies against Ramses II in the famous battle of Kadesh.



Fig. 70 The grave goods of the Aegean origin in the Iglarevo necropolis

In the defense of Troy, Dardanians from around the Ida mountain were under the leadership of the famous Aeneas, the second branch of the Trojan royal lineage or cousin of the sons of Priamus. Poseidon prophesies to him that he will survive the fall of Troy in order to continue the Dardanian-Trojan genus. In this sense, the legend is noted, according to which Aeneas with his Dardanians, refugees from Troy, founded a new kingdom somewhere in the west. But where in the west? Is it the journey of Aeneas from Troy to Rome, described in the Aeneid, or should Diodorus be believed saying that the Dardanians settled in the Balkans, on the other side of Thrace. In any case, after the fall of Troy, the Dardanians are no longer mentioned in Asia Minor. At the same time, in the Balkans, on the territory along South Morava and Eastern

¹⁰⁷ Papazoglu F. 1969, 101

¹⁰⁸ Brice T. 2006, 135–138

Kosovo, archeology reveals the formation of a new culture, which differs significantly from the neighboring Balkan cultures. It is named after the group Brnjica after the first discovered site in the vicinity of Pristina.¹⁰⁹ Its continuous development can be traced from the end of the 13th century BC all through the entire Iron Age to the historical times, when its bearers will be witnessed by ancient authors such as the Dardanians.¹¹⁰ The basic features of that culture suggest to a good extent that it was established by a population that came from outside, somewhere from the broad Aegean region.

The numerous necropolises discovered on the territory of Donja Brnjica or just Brnjica group show that it is about an already built and highly canonized way of burial. Cremation of the deceased has been practiced and placing of their remains in specific vessels - specific urns and specific grave structures. Thus, these were closer to Asia Minor than to the Central Balkan burial customs. Among other things, bronze weapons (swords, daggers) of the Aegean type were discovered in the oldest burials (Fig. 70).¹¹¹ These are the only such finds in that part of the Balkans and testify to the direct military contacts that this population had with the Mycenaean world. In that sense, a rare find of a typical Mycenaean helmet made of wild boar teeth was discovered as a grave offering, in a 12th century grave in the necropolis of that type in the Hippodrome near Skopje.¹¹² It could have only arrived there as a military trophy taken from a high-ranking Mycenaean warrior.

The other grave goods in the necropolises of the so-called Dolnja Brnjica group also stand out for the character and repertoire of the finds in other necropolises in the surrounding cultural groups. Unlike them, the communities from Brnjica group were not bearers of the so-called Hallstatt culture. This points to the conclusion that it is not about the Balkan mentality and taste, but about the Mediterranean population, which did not accept the usual so-called Hallstatt elements, characteristic for the whole internal Balkans.

With the help of archaeology, we can largely determine the routes where the Dardanians from the Asia Minor passed to Europe and penetrated so deep into the interior of the Balkans. Whether they did so with a previous plan to settle next to their Trojan allies, the Paeonians, or they simply set out to the west in search for a suitable land for their new kingdom, reaching only the area of South Morava and Kosovo, will remain a matter of supposition. In any case, they could only do so by land, contrary to what is said in Aeneid, only to be understood as a poetic vision, a counterpart to the Odyssey.

¹⁰⁹ Srejovic D. 1959, 83–136

¹¹⁰ Luci 2007, 348–356

¹¹¹ Luci K. 1997, 92–99; Luci K. 2007, 356; Luci K. 2013, cat. no. 166

¹¹² Mitrevski D. 1994; Mitrevski 1998, 445

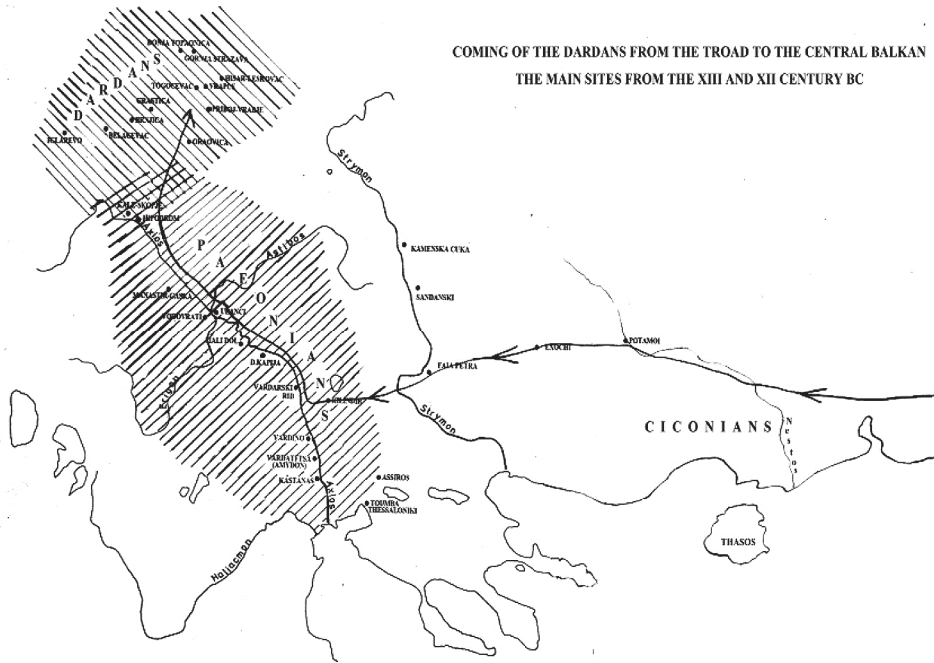


Fig. 71 The map of possible moving of Dardanians from Troy to Kosovo

Land communications at that time were established only by the routes along which Mycenaean influences and interests had previously spread in the interior of the Balkans. Regions outside these routes nurtured deeply conservative and local cultures without any contact with the Aegean world of the Late Bronze Age. Thus, the only possible route that had to be taken was the same road by which the Vardar Paeonians and the Thracian Ciconians arrived close to Troy (Fig. 71). According to the disposition of the archeological sites, their character and finds discovered so far, this line passed from the Thracian Chersonese, along the valley of Maritsa, to the Rhodopes or over today's Drama to Serres and Lower Struma, to continue below Dojran Lake to Lower Vardar and Paeonian Amydon. It was not possible from there to continue to the west, due to impassable geographical obstacles. The only way was to go north, along the Vardar valley, but only to South Morava and Eastern Kosovo. Other communication lines at that time it seems have not been penetrated yet, so that their final destination remained the territory that in historical times will be known as the land of Dardanians.

CHAPTER 3

THE DARK CENTURIES OF TRANSITION FROM THE BRONZE TO THE IRON AGE

The term "Dark Centuries" or "Dark Age" is commonly used for the Middle Ages. But the first such a period is known in the Hellenic history as a period of serious decline of the civilization and cultural values, in the time after the collapse of the Mycenaean centers. Thus, the term "Dark Age" in the Aegean reflects the centuries immediately after 1200 BC. The same can be said about the situation in some regions north of the Aegean world.¹

In the period of the 12th and 11th centuries BC, along the main communications leading from the interior of the Balkans to the Aegean, there were long-lasting migration processes filled with destructive events, which interrupted the continuous Bronze Age development and created turbulent and uncertain times for a long period.

Such general Balkan movements of the communities from north to south were certainly part of the so-called large Aegean migrations, whereby some authors are right associating them with the so-called a second or smaller wave of Aegean migrations, considering that the first was associated mainly with the 13th century and took place by sea, all the way to Egypt in the south. There are certain characteristic forms of bronze weapons and jewelry from the Central European and Eastern Alpine region that point to this first wave. Although insufficiently documented, some authors associate this wave with the demolition of the Mycenaean centers, as well as to the invasion of the so-called northern or maritime peoples of Egypt in the time of Merneptah and Ramses II. However, it is more important for us that these events did not leave more significant consequences in the north of the Aegean world. On the contrary, at that time, in that territory, the local cultures of the Late Bronze Age are in full flowering, showing still peaceful development, with external influences from and contacts either with the north and the Danube area (more

¹ Snodgrass A. M. 1971; Whitley J. 2003; Dickinson O. 2007

emphasized on the Thracian territory) or from the south and the Aegean world (more emphasized on the Paeonian-Macedonian territory).

On the contrary, far more serious consequences were caused by the events of the second wave, which have taken place almost throughout the entire 12th to 11th century BC. In different regions, they left different consequences and had a different share in the further cultural development, especially in the genesis of the new Iron Age culture.

The communities involved in this so-called a second new wave moved along the continental communications, from the wider region of the northern Balkans and the Danube area to the Aegean basin and already collapsed Mycenaean or Asia Minor centers. They buried their dead with cremation, as opposed to the dominant local ritual of crouched inhumation as a Bronze Age tradition among the communities south of the Shar Planina - Stara Planina line. They carried with them characteristic, conditionally speaking Central European, more precisely Northern Balkan forms of weapons (swords, spears, axes-celts, sickles, etc.) which until then were not known in the local cultural circles. Also, for the first time, certain northern techniques appear in the production and decoration of pottery. All these finds confirm the chain movement of the communities from the north, where some of them suppressed the others in complex and long-lasting processes, which implied retention for some time at certain points.

However, the consequences of these events were not felt equally in all regions, although everywhere they played a significant role in the further local cultural development. To the west, on Albanian territory, the penetrations took place through the Western Balkans, along the eastern Adriatic coast to the Southern Albania and Epirus. Although there are also some depots found with bronze objects as in Toronica or the new types of so-called Central European weapons, mainly swords and spears, the local cultural development was not interrupted.² There, these types of finds only mark the beginning of the turbulent times and trace the way of the penetrations to the South. For example, in the valley of Devoll, life was not interrupted, but still there are elements that point to the penetration of a new population from the North, who were buried by burning in urns.³

These events, with all the destructiveness, were expressed the most along the Vardar valley, which together with the Morava valley is the main communication line from the Danube to the Aegean. In relation to other communication regions, the situation along the Vardar valley was the most dramatic, so that in the centuries of the transition period and especially in the

² Prendi F. 1984, 19–43; Prendi F. 1982–a, Abb. 12

³ Andrea Z. 1975; Andre Z. 1976

first centuries of the Iron Age there we have almost complete depopulation. Life and cultural situation will stabilize only in the centuries to come.

Almost all Late Bronze Age settlements and necropolises along the Vardar valley were violently destroyed in the period 12th-11th century BC and were not rebuilt. Only individual, naturally, better protected settlements, such as Kastanas (at that time river island in the river Vardar) survived, but suffered seriously, so that we have there the most complete picture of that time and those events.⁴

After the peaceful and stable development throughout the centuries of the Late Bronze Age, sometime in the late 13th and especially throughout the 12th and 11th century BC, the settlement of Toumba-Kastanas, experienced dramatic changes, manifested by a series of new archeological phenomena, which appear for the first time, as foreign elements that have arrived from the north along the Morava-Vardar valley. Among other things at Kastanas at that time, there are changes documented, in the topography and in the organization of the settlement. The settlement was set on fire four times and was constantly renovated, but with changes, both internally and in the conception of the structures. The old architecture with bricks was replaced by Balkan prehistoric architecture and structures built of wooden skeletal structure covered with mud. In the material culture there are new central and northern Balkan forms, primarily fluted vessels, as well as novelties in the economy of the settlement itself, with the application of new types of plants and breeding of new types of cattle.⁵ However, despite the dramatic nature of the events that the settlement of Toumba-Kastanas underwent during the centuries of the so-called transition period, due to its position and exceptional adaptability, it managed to overcome all crises, survive and continue its development in the centuries of the Iron Age to come.

From the previous insight in the Late Bronze Age sites in the Vardar valley, it can be concluded that they all went through unique cultural processes and events that led to the end of their Bronze Age development. The archeological manifestations are unique, and they well document those events, their bearers and the fate of the local population.⁶

Sometime during the 12th century BC, all the settlements along the Vardar valley completed their Bronze Age development with strongly burned layers. Archaeological finds in those layers testify of a rapid, forcibly demolished and completely burned off settlements, and in some of them unburied

⁴ Hansel B. 1989

⁵ Kroll J. H. 1983

⁶ See the previous chapter.

bodies are found, such as in Manastir-Chaska, or in Tumba-Kulindir).⁷ Some new types of bronze weapons have been discovered as remains of the military actions, such as axes-celts, spearheads and arrowheads (Fig. 72).⁸ Exactly such weapons with their indisputable northern origin point to the destroyers and their penetration, from the Northern Balkans and Danube-Carpathian regions, along the Morava-Vardar valley, towards the Aegean.

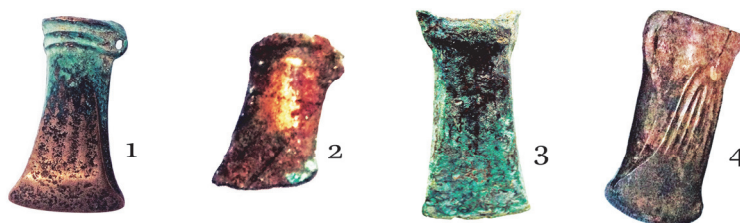


Fig. 72 Bronze axes - celts of northern origin from:
1 Skopje, 2,4 Bezania-Krivi Dol, 3 Mrdaja - Dojran

At the same time, the last burials have been documented in the old necropolises of the local Late Bronze Age culture (Brvenica, Skupi, Dolno Sonje, Ulanci, Vodovrati, Tremnik, Vardarski Rid and others).⁹ The burials in them were found with the usual and unique ritual of contracted inhumation in cist-graves. But, in some of them (Skupi, Mali Dol-Tremnik), within the necropolis itself, and often directly on the older local burials, new burials have been discovered, with new burial rituals, with cremation in urns (Fig. 43-b). Such a burial ritual was common for the northern Balkan areas and especially for the Carpathian-Danube cultures of the Late Bronze Age, so that along the Vardar valley they are clearly recognized as graves of new settlers from the North, more precisely the invaders who have burned off the local settlements and permanently interrupted the local Bronze Age development.

On their way to the south, they have stayed at certain points for some time, and formed somewhere new, their own necropolises, such as the necropolis in the Hipodrom near Skopje.¹⁰ In any case, everywhere, it is about a few burials. The largest necropolis of that type, the one in Klucka - Hipodrom, a total of 11 urn graves were excavated, and according to the site situation, up to 15-20 deceased could have been buried (Fig. 76).

The features of this necropolis are typical for the communities of the South Morava region and the group of so-called Donja Brnjica, while in the

⁷ Jovcevska T. 2008, 22, Tab, II, III; Casson S. 1926, 132

⁸ Jovcevska T. 2008, T. 25.

⁹ See in the part of the Late Bronze Age in the Vardar valley.

¹⁰ Mitrevski D. 1994

material culture elements are being discovered from the northern regions (for example, fluted pottery, as well as from the Aegean area (for example, a helmet made of canine teeth of wild boar). All this suggests that in some places the newcomers from the north stayed for some time, but nowhere permanently.

Particularly indicative concerning the events of the transition period along the Vardar valley are the new vessel shapes and decorations, which were identified by Hartley earlier, in the burned layers of the settlements in Vardino and Vardaroftsa, as so-called Lousich or Danubian pottery, due to its, basically, Central European origin.¹¹ Its penetration to the South in the late 13th and during the 12th century BC is easily mapped along the Morava-Vardar route. Until that time, such fluted pottery was not known in the local Bronze Age cultures of the Central Balkans, such as in Parachina or Donja Brnjica groups. It appears around 1200 and only in the Morava Valley, first in Mediana and then in Hisar – Leskovac, as well as in the burned off layers of the 12th and 11th century in the settlements of the South Morava region such as Konchulj, Priboj near Vranje and others.¹² Its further route to south can be followed only along Vardar valley, where it appears as one of the strongest indicators of the penetration of the invaders coming from north.

All these phenomena of the transitional period along the Vardar valley speak of long-lasting turbulent times caused by the penetration of different communities from the north, which not only caused the end of the peaceful Bronze Age development but also interrupted the cultural connections with the south, until that time. Thus, the whole region gradually became more culturally oriented towards the north and central Balkan area.

The situation was similar in the valley of Struma and Mesta, where the continuous development of the Bronze Age settlements was also interrupted. At that time, the specially fortified and strategic points were finally destroyed, such as: Kamenska Chuka, Krsto Pokrovnik and others near Blagoevgrad.¹³ The previous contacts that Lower Struma and Mesta had established with the Mycenaean world were permanently interrupted, and the high mountain positions are more and more actualized as new settlement positions. On the contrary, numerous new mountain and so-called rock cut sanctuaries are appearing, and their use will intensify even more in the next phase of the Early Iron Age.¹⁴

The new ritual of burial with cremation in urns, as a basic feature of the new settlers from the north is registered along all communication lines in

¹¹ Heurtley W. A. 1939, 129

¹² Garasanin M. 1982, 181; Stoic M. 1996 ; Стоик М. 2001, 19; Булатович А. 2010

¹³ Stefanovich M. 1998; Stefanovich M. – Kulov I. 2007

¹⁴ Nehrizov G. 2005; Байраков Д. 2006; Zdravkova–Dimitrova J. 2008, 493–507

the north-south direction. In the valleys of Struma and Mesta such necropolises were not as evident as in the valley of Vardar. The new way of burial occurs only in Nevestino near Kustendil, as well as more towards south in the valley of Mesta near Potami and Exochi.¹⁵ In any case, in these parts, as in the Vardar valley, the centuries of the so-called transition period (12-10 cent.) are marked by a decrease in the intensity of life, with a significantly reduced number of settlements and necropolises compared to the previous Late Bronze Age.¹⁶

Outside these main communication lines, the situation was not so dramatic. The Late Bronze Age settlements there existed through the centuries of the transition period and the Iron Age, although they accepted a number of influences from outside. Perhaps the most illustrative example of this is the situation of the settlement Tumba-Assiros.¹⁷

Located away from the main roads, between Lower Vardar and Lower Struma, this settlement has not suffered any more serious consequences upon its continuous development from the Late Bronze Age to the Iron Age. This only confirms the key role that the valleys of these two rivers, especially the Vardar valley, played in the turbulent events of the transition period.¹⁸

The situation in the Upper Thracian Plain and the Eastern Rhodopes in terms of the migrations from north to south was somewhat different. There, the Maritsa Valley has already been in use for centuries and active line connecting the eastern Aegean and Asia Minor with the Carpathian-Danube region. As a transit zone, penetrations from these sides were nothing new and unusual. Thus, settlement life and changes during the transition period, compared to the previous Late Bronze Age, do not differ significantly. It is only in material culture that new phenomena are discovered indicating the penetration of new cultural values, mainly from north to south. The strong rise of metallurgy in the region during the Late Bronze Age, during the 12th and 11th centuries, has already been slowed down, and instead of the previous forms of Aegean inspiration, more products appear, primarily weapons of northern or Carpathian-Danube origin.

The key to understanding the processes and events of the transition period throughout Thrace is the Late Bronze Age situation north of Stara Planina and along the Danube river. This region is considered to be the source of many phenomena that will occur in the next phase in the south.

¹⁵ Gergova D. 1995, 31–48; Grammenos D. 1979

¹⁶ Grabska–Kulava M. – Kulov I. 2007, Fig. 9

¹⁷ Wardle K. 1980; Warlde K. A – Warlde D. 2007; Andreu S. – Fotiadis M. – Kotsakis K. 1996, 579–581

¹⁸ Warlde K. A – Warlde D. 2007, 455, Tab. I

During the Late Bronze Age, the Danube region reached the peak of its cultural and economic development, thanks primarily to the mutual and direct contacts with the copper and gold-rich Carpathians and Transylvania regions. Metallurgy and trade relations, as the strongest basis for rapid economic and cultural development are experiencing their highest rise. Vuchitn-type finds illustrate this in the best way.¹⁹

During this Late Bronze Age, on this territory (nowadays N-W Bulgaria, N-E Serbia and S-W Romania), dominated the cultural group named Dubovac-Žuto Brdo or Kerna-Girila Mare or Orsoa-Balej, collectively known under the common name “culture of incrustated pottery”.²⁰ It develops during the Late Bronze Age and achieves unusually high cultural values. Towards the end of the Bronze Age, it experienced its demographic boom, and by that its greatest economic and military power, and then declined suddenly.²¹

At that same time (13/12century BC) along the Lower Danube numerous depots appear with a large amount of metal objects, primarily bronze weapons and tools as well as stone molds for their casting (Vrbica, Ovcha Mogila, Loznica, Dulovo, Pobit Kamak and others).²² The most famous among them are the two depots in the village of Vrbica (Vrbica 1 and 2) near Pleven, as well as the depot in Ovcha Mogila-Sveshtov.

A total of over 120 bronze objects were discovered in the depots of Vrbica, mostly sickles and celts of local production, but also an ax from the early Bronze Age and a part of a Central European sword. All were kept in ceramic pots at two nearby locations. In the Ovcha Mogila-Svishtov depot, mainly celts are found, but also a Mycenaean rapier (out of use, twisted and damaged) as well as two spears, a razor and a copper ingot.²³ The fact that in such depots are discovered different types, mainly massive bronze objects, often broken, out of use, as well as objects older than the time when they were stored, indicates that these are buried values that are kept ready, most likely for remolding. To the same circle of finds we may have to add the well-known collective find including 3 copper ingots, an ax-celt and a two-edged Aegean axe from Semerdzievo-Ruse.²⁴ Although the typology of the axes indicates a little bit older time, the content itself indicates a character of collected values in order to be melted and casted into new forms.

¹⁹ Bonev A. 1988, 29–39; Stefanova M. 2018, 226, Fig. 3

²⁰ А. Бонев 1988, 39–53

²¹ Черних Е. Н. 1978, 176–185, Филипов Т. 1974, 12–23, Филипов Т. 1976, Бонев А, 1988, 53

²² Hristova T. 2018, 162–169, Map. 1

²³ Илчева 2000, 457, Kraus 2005, 199–210

²⁴ Bucholz 1983, 79; Hristova T.–Toneva S. 2018 – a, 433

For the same purpose, more precisely for their use in the future were the stone molds in the large depot from Pobit Kamak-Razgrad.²⁵ Such buried values in the best way illustrate the beginning of turbulent times and migrations to south, where later similar depots appear (Zeljo Vojvoda - Sliven, Sokol - Stara Zagora, Mogilca - Smoljan and others (Fig. 73)²⁶

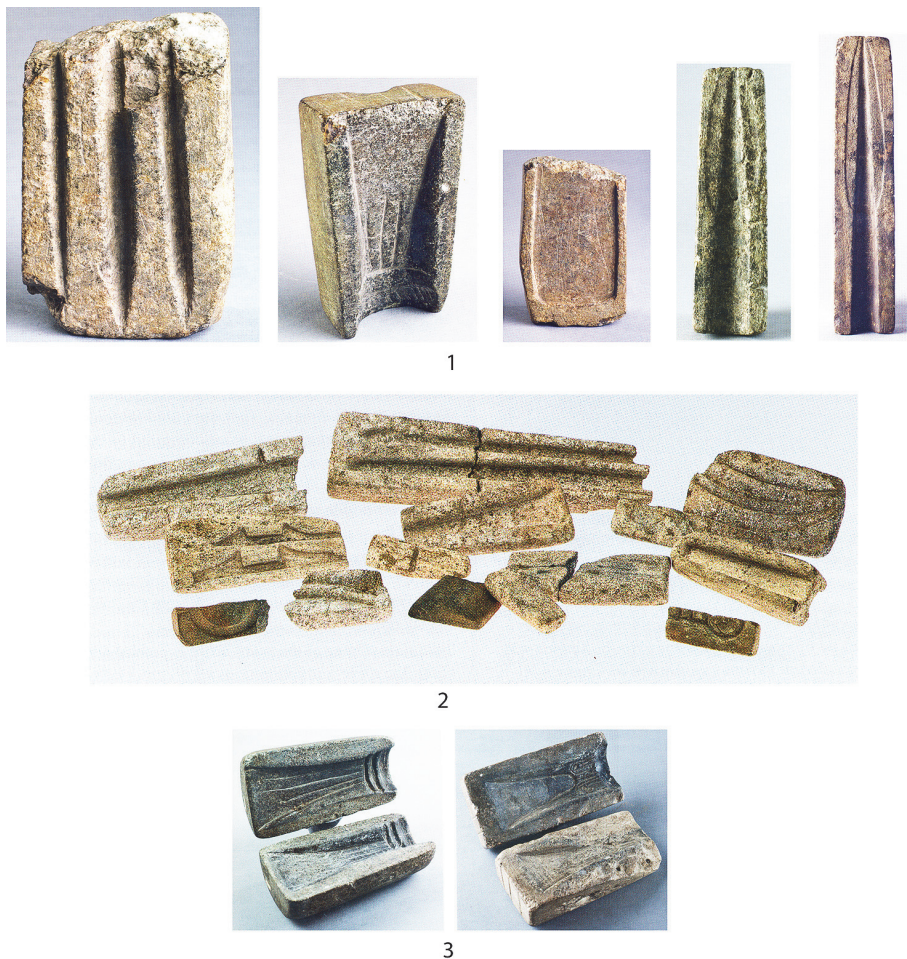


Fig. 73 The depots of stone molds of the Transitional period from:
1 Sokol, 2 Mogilica, 3 Zeljo Vojvoda

In addition to the bronze objects, the migration movements from north to south are marked by the depots with ceramic vessels of the type such as those of Plovdiv, Esenice, Zimniche, and Cherkovina.²⁷ Although there are

²⁵ Хансел 1976, Лестаков Л. 2018–b, 383

²⁶ Черних 1978, 195, Дамјанов 2007; Jochenhovel A., 2018, 172–179,

²⁷ Бонев А. 1988, 54–59

different assumptions about the character of these depots, the most acceptable is that it is about stored food in large pits as essential values in turbulent times. The fact that for this purpose sufficiently hidden and safe places were used such as old wells (Plovdiv, Esenice) or hidden in some walls (Cherkovina), as well as the fact that 44 pots from the depot in Plovdiv were carefully arranged in 6 rows separated by layers of clay speaks of the intention to reuse them someday.²⁸ On the other hand, the forms of deep, conditionally said, closed vessels, without presence of open plates or containers, as well as the still preserved grain residues in some of them (Esenice), only confirm the storage character of these depots.²⁹

Some vessels of these depots have clear characteristics of the pottery from the Danube circle of the Late Bronze Age, which emphasizes the line of penetration of cultural elements from the Danube to the south.³⁰ Perhaps the most illustrative example, which connects the sites from the last phase of the Danube culture of incrustated pottery with the depots of Plovdiv-Zimniche - Cherkovina type is the necropolis with cremations near the village of Gradshnica-Vrachansko.³¹

In any case, sometime during the 12th century BC, the communities-bearers of the so-called culture of incrustated ceramics started to migrate together with the neighboring tribes to south, more precisely to relocate, along the main Balkan communications, which led from the middle and Lower Danube to the Aegean basin and western Asia Minor. These movements included different ethnic groups, and through complex and long-lasting processes of their intermingling, connection and creation of a new cultural and ethnic image, which will stabilize even in the next centuries of the Iron Age.

In order to realize such migrations full with military conflicts and conquests, it was necessary first to prepare the ground, the invaders to be well acquainted with the roads, with the structure of the population and the opportunities and wealth of the countries they had to pass through. Therefore, it must be assumed that they have already established certain contacts with those countries. In that sense, in the area south of the Stara Planina-Shar Planina line, during the Late Bronze Age or at its very end, a series of novelties in local ceramics appear for the first time, previously known from the Carpathian-Danube area. Thus, the most pronounced phenomenon is the incised decoration with inserts in the eastern parts, especially in the Rhodopes part, where it is widely accepted and adapted to local tastes and needs.

²⁸ Детеv П. 1964, Хансел 1976, 77

²⁹ Николов – Жекова 1982

³⁰ Бонев А. 1988, 58–59

³¹ Николов Б. , 1978, 19–27

Among such ceramics, the low-neck globular cantharoi and engraved incrustation on the body stand out. It is considered that the inspiration came from the Late Bronze Age ceramography in the Danube area, especially from the territory of the so-called culture of incrustated pottery, and from there they began to spread mostly in the valleys of Struma and Mesta, towards Vardar region, where they gained special popularity. According to their prevalence and chronology, all this took place during the Late Bronze Age, when in some regions, these forms developed local marks. In that sense, the most striking are the globular cantharoi with framed incrustation in the settlements along the Vardar valley. These appear very often. in Lower Vardar (Kastanas, Chau-shica, Dojran, Kilindir, Demir Kapija), while the northernmost and youngest specimen so far is the find of the necropolis with urns in Hipodrom nearby Skopje (Fig. 74).



Fig. 74 Some globular cantharoi with framed incrustation of the Late Bronze Age from:
1 Hipodrom- Skopje, 2 & 3 Demir Kapija

An even more indicative finding for the penetration of northern elements to the south is the appearance of specific vessels - Pyranoi, which at the same time are cooking vessels and hearths. Their origin is also sought in the north, and they appear in our territories for the first time in the Late Bronze Age. Since then, that form has been continuously developing throughout the Iron Age, with special popularity in the Macedonian areas. Its popularity is associated with changes in diet and food preparation, influenced by the north, which occurred in the late Bronze Age and especially in the transition period (Fig. 75).³² In that period, we mainly follow the spread of these vessels in the settlements of the communicative regions, in the whole area from the Adriatic to the Black Sea and in the south to the North Aegean coast (Prodan, Maliq, Sovjan Kale-Skopje, Manastir-Caska, Vardarski Rid, Vardaroftsa, Vardino, Kastanas, Koprivlen, Vratice, Stathmos Angista, Olynthus and others).³³

³² Gimatzidis S. 2017

³³ Horajs B. 2005, 79; Horajs B. 2007, 148, Pl. 133 ; Krapf T. 2014, 586, Fig. 1, 2; Prendi F. 2018; Alliu S. 1984, 60; Hristova B. 2011, Fig. 18, 19



Fig. 75 The characteristic cooking vessels – puranoi from the Late Bronze Age settlements in: 1, 2 Kale- Skopje, 3, 4, 5 Manastir – Chaska

The two mentioned ceramic forms are witnesses of the northern, Carpathian - Danube influences, which most often occur together in the same archaeological context. Thus, they can be taken as indicators of the character of the established contacts of the local communities with the Carpathian-Danube region since the end of the Late Bronze Age. On the other hand, the previous use of these two forms, in particular the Pyranoi in the Carpathian-Danube areas and their gradual expansion to south, suggest that the beginning of disintegration of the Danube society, as well as the beginning of their migration to south occurred since the end of the Late Bronze Age. The contacts, established at that time, with the central Balkan communities actually paved the way for the final and often destructive penetrations from north to south and southeast, which took place during the 12th and 11th centuries BC.

In the very process of migrations and military movements towards Aegean and northwestern Asia Minor, due to the very nature of the material, one should not expect much ceramic products that invaders would carry with them. Therefore, the main indicators of their presence are their weapons and most often their burial ritual with cremation, and if their ceramic or cult

forms of clay appear, it points to their longer stay at certain points or to their final destination, where they have usually produced them locally. Such examples are the mentioned grooved pottery in the Vardar valley, as well as a series of ceramic finds in Troy VII B2, which are considered to be of Thracian origin, whereby the most indicative is the so-called buckle pottery. Perhaps even more indicative for the final destination of the communities from the north is the so-called barbaric or handmade, smooth ceramics, which appear in the LHIIIC period in the mainland Greece and Peloponnese, as evidence of the occupation of certain Mycenaean points after their destruction in LHIII- B2 period, by newcomers from the north.³⁴ In that direction, certainly the most indicative are the typical Danube clay idols, discovered in Attica.³⁵

The directions and lines along which the penetrations took place connect the widespread Central European, more precisely the Carpathian-Danube area as a source with the final destinations in the Aegean basin and north-western Asia Minor. However, the time-consuming processes and the involvement of different cultural groups imply permanent repression and interference with each other, especially in the communities of the Central Balkan area. Thus, special cultural units are gradually distinguished and physiognomized, which will come to full expression after stabilization of the situation during the Iron Age. In any case, based on the archeological remains, we can conclude that these movements and military incursions took place in several branches along the main communications, across mainland Greece and through the Upper Thracian Plain and along Maritsa to Asia Minor and Troas. Therefore, the Central European and Western Balkan elements dominate along Albania, the Central Danube and Central Balkan elements along the Vardar and Struma valleys, while the Lower Danube elements were dominant in the eastern Thracian areas.

A common denominator for all incursions was the introduction of a new urn cremation ritual. In the whole area north of the Aegean world, where until then the old Bronze Age tradition of burial with inhumation in a contracted position was nurtured, somewhere under tumuli somewhere in flat necropolises, suddenly a new ritual with cremation in urns appears.

In the Albanian zone, the occurrence of burials with cremation in urns is only in individual cases, within the local, traditional customs of burial under tumuli, as in the case of the necropolis in Barch - Korcha. Together, sometimes with imported Mycenaean pottery from the LHIIIC period, typical objects appear, mainly weapons of Central European-Northern Balkan origin.

³⁴ Bankoff-Mayer-Stefanovich 1975; French E. 1989, 40–51 Stefanovich M. 1973 Snodgrass A. M. 1971, 322

³⁵ Garasanin M. 1953

All this indicates that these movements or the so-called Pan-Balkan migrations that happened in Albania after 1200 BC were limited and did not interrupt local cultural development or traditional relations with the Aegean.³⁶ The local practice of burial with inhumation in tumuli was not interrupted, nor the further development of the characteristic matt-painted (Devoll-type pottery).³⁷ However, these events paved the way for intensified influences and permanent contacts with the Western Balkans, and from there the elements of the so-called Hallstatt culture, which will be widely accepted, adapted and locally produced as the main marks of the Iron Age culture will spread in the centuries to come.

Such was not the situation in the Vardar valley, where the movements were far more intense and long-lasting. The bearers of the cremation in urns, for some time there interrupted the local cultural development, as well as the traditional relations with the Aegean world (Fig. 76).

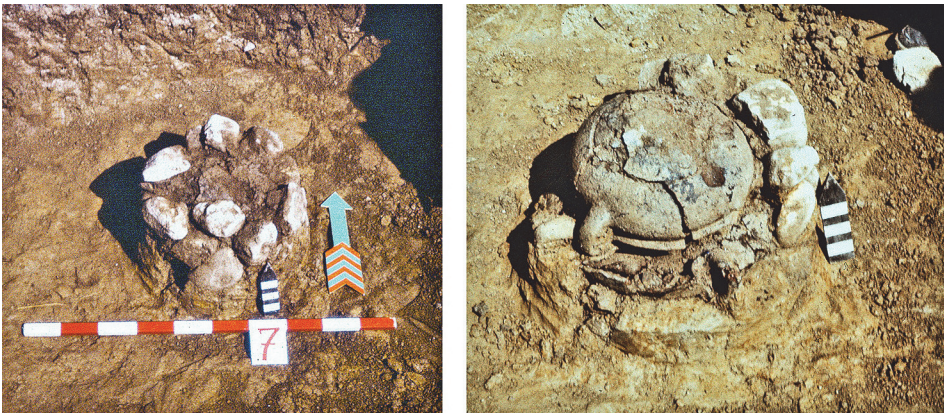


Fig. 76 A cremation urn from the necropolis in Hipodrom near Skopje

At the expense of that, permanent relations were established with the more northern, central Balkan areas, up to the Danube in the north, from where in the following centuries a series of elements will spread that will participate in the genesis of the new Iron Age culture.³⁸ However, burial by cremation in urns in the Vardar valley had only an episodic role, so that after the end of the turbulent times, the old way of burying continued with the practice of inhumation in grave cists, but now, not with contracted but with extended inhumation.³⁹

³⁶ Prendi F. 1982, 226

³⁷ Andrea Z. 1976; Bodinaku N. 1990 ; Prendi F. 1985 , 81, Fig. 1, 2, 3

³⁸ Mitrevski D. 1984-a

³⁹ Mitrevski D. 1997, 26; Митревски Д. 2013, 74-75

The situation was similar in the valleys of Struma and NESTA, where a number of elements from the Danubian cultures are revealed, especially from the so-called culture of incrustated pottery, and on such a basis, it is believed that communities from the northwestern regions of Bulgaria participated in the emergence of the urn cremation ritual.⁴⁰ Although the cremation in urns, as in the necropolis in Nevestino near Kustendil, stands out as a new ritual and way of burial, it is undeniable that it manages to be incorporated in the traditional way of burial under tumuli like in Potami and Exochi, which is even more evident in the east, in eastern Rhodope region, in the Upper Thracian Plain and especially along the Maritsa valley.⁴¹

The appearance of urns in the Maritsa valley, as an impact on the traditional tumuli, exposes even more strongly the connection with the Danubian communities of the Late Bronze Age. The best example of this are the finds from the tumulus in the village of Glavan, where with the cremation burial, among other things, terracottas of the water birds are discovered of the type of so-called "Apollo's chariots", typical for the incrustated pottery culture.⁴² The acceptance of cremation in these areas was more pronounced, so that birituality became a common Thracian practice during the Iron Age to come.

Finally, we must ask ourselves whether the described processes of migratory movements during the transition period can be associated with the well-known ancient written sources. According to the previous archaeological finds, there is possibility of connecting the movements along the valleys of Vardar and Struma with the data and the legend of the so-called return of the Heraclids to Greece, and the movements through the Thracian plains and the valley of Maritsa with the migration of the Moesi to Asia Minor. For the time being, these assumptions are enough only to be taken into account in the further researches, and future archeological finds from the area north of the Aegean world will confirm or reject it.

⁴⁰ Gergova D. 1989, 233

⁴¹ Gramenos D. 1979 ; Gramenos D. 1982

⁴² Катинчаров Р. – Димитров М. 1978, 44; Гергова Д. 1989, 234

CHAPTER 4

THE IRON AGE NORTH OF THE AEGEAN WORLD

The formation of the Iron Age culture throughout the area north of the Aegean world could begin after the end of the turbulent events of the transition period. Only then conditions were created for undisturbed local development, which would lead to the final formation of the first political communities in that area. Thus, the basic questions with regard to the Iron Age refer to its beginning, the genesis of local cultural groups and their development until the first political unification.

THE BEGINNING AND GENESIS OF THE IRON AGE NORTH OF THE AEGEAN WORLD

The beginning of the Iron Age can be determined by several parameters. If we judge by the beginnings of those phenomena that have been continuously developed through the centuries of the Iron Age, they are always found somewhere in the late 11th century BC. For example, the numerous necropolises, primarily in the so-called Macedonian zone, where discontinuation of the Bronze Age culture was the most dramatic, and the emergence of new cultural values most evident, have their oldest burials in the late 11th or early 10th century BC (Vergina, Pateli, Visoi-Beranci, Saraj-Brod, Orlovi Chuki and others). The first use of iron in the manufacture of weapons also indicates to the same date.

The adoption of the new metal technology certainly took place gradually, as a result of the mutual contacts during the transition period, mostly of the connection of the Balkan migrations with Anatolia. In fact, at that time, a crisis in bronze production was documented in the entire Balkan-Aegean area, more precisely in the acquisition of bronze, which opened the way for the emergence of a new, far more expensive, but more efficient metal, especially

for the manufacture of weapons and tools.¹ Probably, the knowledge of iron was first spread by some metallurgists from the East during the 11th century. Through their activity in regions rich in iron ore resources, conditions for local production were created, which is witnessed everywhere in the early phase of the Iron Age (X-IX century BC).²

On the other hand, as a benchmark for the beginning of the Iron Age, the changes in urbanization and cultural content can be taken, namely the emergence and adoption of the new "Balkan" architecture of the multi-layered settlements (Kastanas, Vardino, Vardaroftsa, Assiros and alike). These moments also point to the 11th century BC, whereby, the performed C-14 and dendrochronological analyses play a crucial role in fixing the exact date of the start of the Iron Age. Thus, for example, the most important are the C-14 analyses of the finds in the well-stratified layers of Kastanas, as well as the dendrochronology done on samples of the wooden pillars of the first Iron Age architecture in Assiros. All these analyses point to the date after 1070 BC as beginning of the Iron Age.³ However, the synchronization of the phenomena in the cultural layers in Assiros (phases 4 and 3) with Kastanas (layer 12), due to still numerous Bronze Age elements in them, indicates that the Iron Age culture had not yet been sufficiently defined. Thus, we have many more elements for the beginning of the real Iron Age in the next phases 2 and 1 of Assiros and in the layers 11 and 10 in Kastanas. In any case, the beginning of the Iron Age can be freely positioned in the course of the second half of the 11th century BC.

Regarding formation of the Iron Age culture, it is indisputable that different cultural elements, from different sides have taken part in it. According to that, three segments are basic, which were the main constituent elements in its genesis. The first segment are the local Bronze Age traditions, as a fundamental value on which the other two segments are added, which, in fact, represent different cultural values, that have come from different sides, in different times. In this sense, the second segment consists of the surviving elements of Mycenaean culture, which were accepted in certain regions during the Late Bronze Age, and some of them continued to be nurtured in the subsequent centuries of the Iron Age. The third segment is represented by the cultural elements that came from the North, within the general Balkan movements in the transition period, either as Central European, Pannonian-Danube or Lower Danube elements. These have been the strongest segment in the formation of the new Iron Age culture.

¹ Snodgrass A. 1989, 29

² Stojanov T. – Borislavov B. 2018, 288

³ Wardle K. A. – Wardle D. 2007, 489–497

The Bronze Age tradition as a common cultural basis, however, has not been everywhere equally loaded with the other elements from outside. In more conservative areas, the Bronze Age heritage is certainly more expressed, especially in burials, cult activities, and the preservation of old forms in pottery. In spite of that, regions that had some communication with the Mycenaean world will continue to nurture certain elements of the Aegean Bronze Age. The elements from the North, Central European and Danube origin, which were accepted in different regions with different intensity, depending on the geography of the region, played a particularly important role.

Central European types of weapons, mainly swords and spears, will be locally made of iron, and some new forms and decorations in pottery will be adopted in the local ceramography, developed locally during all the centuries of the Iron Age. Also, at the beginning of the Iron Age a series of new so-called Hallstatt or Balkan-wide forms of bronze jewelry (fibulae, bracelets, torques, phaleras, etc.) will be widely accepted and locally produced. Their popularity will increase especially in the metallurgically strong regions, as a Balkan-wide fashion of the Iron Age.

The penetration of Hallstatt jewelry in the western regions took place mostly along the Eastern Adriatic, and the Devoll valley, in which the so-called Candavian Road had a special role in entering the interior. The same processes have happened through the Central Balkans along the Morava-Vardar valley and to the east through the valleys of Iskar and Struma. Thus, various types of arched and spectacled fibulae, bracelets, torques, phaleras and alike, appeared in those regions for the first time, with the beginning of the Iron Age.

The most striking among them are the fibulae that will gradually displace the long textile needles practiced until then, and develop into a real light motif of the Iron Age. Their use, either as arched fibulae or spectacle fibulae in this part of the Balkans began in the early phase of the Iron Age (10-9 century BC), accepting first the large arched fibulae from the so-called Liburnian or Dalmatian type, in the end of 11th and the beginning of 10th century BC.⁴ This type of fibulae, as the earliest form in the Iron Age, first appears on the territory of Albania (Dukat, Barch, Patos, Perlat), and then in the Macedonian areas, in the oldest tombs of the known Iron Age necropolises of Vergina in the south, through Pateli, in Bitola. (Rapesht), Prilep region (Popadin Dol, Trojaci, Prilepec) all the way to Demir Kapija near Vardar and Lakavica near Stip (Fig. 77).⁵

⁴ Drechsler R. 1976, 150; Bouzek J. 1997, Fig. 116, Fig 117

⁵ Albanien – Schitze, 1988, Kat. N. 59; Andrea Z. 1975; Radt W. 1974 Tab. II; Митревски Д. 1997, Кат., 279–319

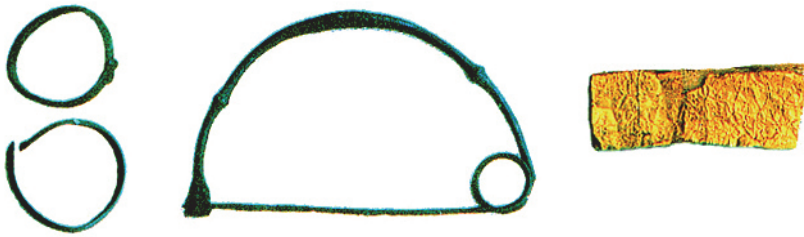


Fig. 77 The grave goods of a grave from Budur Ciflik – Demir Kapija

In the vicinity of Skopje, in the necropolis in Przali in the village of Varvara, two fibulae were discovered of the Dalmatian-Middle Bosnian type known as Golimljevo type, closest to the fibula from Perlat in the Mati valley.⁶ However, these fibulae could not reach the Vardar valley through Albania, but only from the North along the Morava valley, from where the mentioned fibulae from Demir Kapija and Lakavica near Stip have also penetrated. In fact, the spread of this type of fibulae shows the path of spreading also of the other forms of the Hallstatt jewelry.

After their acceptance, all these forms jewelry during the Iron Age will be locally developed and affirmed as Balkan bronze jewelry, popular throughout the whole territory north of the Aegean world. However, as we move east to the Thracian area, the Hallstatt elements are weaker. Elements from other cultural backgrounds penetrated the territory in the easternmost parts of present-day Bulgaria.⁷ In addition to the indisputable influences from the Carpathian-Danube region, elements from western Anatolia and N-E Aegean were also accepted there. Significant role in this played the communities from the Danube-Thrace regions, but also those Thracian communities that migrated to Asia Minor.

In any case, the Iron Age culture in the north of the Aegean world is a specific compilation of cultural elements that participated with different intensity in the genesis of individual cultural groups. Depending on the elements that have dominated, regional groups were formed, which during the Iron Age will achieve further complete and uninterrupted local development. Exactly such a development will enable the nurturing and exposure of their cultural values, by which they will be easily recognizable and will be able to connect with the writings of ancient authors.

⁶ Mitrevski D. 2019, Fig. 48; Islami S. 2013, Fig. 26, 1

⁷ Gergova D. 1980, 112

IRON AGE CULTURAL GROUPS

In the archeological literature, several local cultural groups are known, distinguished on the basis of the unique features of the material culture, but above all according to the burial and religious values, as the strongest distinctive feature of the wider ethno-cultural communities. Also, one of the strongest mark of individual groups is the local ceramic production, which is most sensitive to regional differences.

All these elements taken into account form a map of the distribution of a dozen Iron Age cultural groups on the territory north of the Aegean world, related one to another (Fig. 78).

On the territory of today's Albania, 3 local groups can be distinguished. In the north, around the Mati River all the way to the Lake Skadar, the Northern Albanian Group is formed, which is actually part of the so-called Glasinac complex, and because of that the term "Glasinac-Mati culture"⁸ is often used.

The Southern Albanian group developed south of the Shkumbina River, along the Adriatic coast, in the valleys of Vyosa and Osim with the Kolonje region with the sites such as Lieshan, Dukat, Patos, Piskove, Bajkaj, Rehova, Kakavi, Piskove, Lauras, and others.⁹ Although this group was extremely traditional and originated from a common Bronze Age heritage, it nevertheless shows a close connection with the south, with the wider area of Epirus. Burial continues with the nurturing of the old and unique, tumulus burials, and pottery preserve old Bronze Age forms, while jewelry, weapons and tools are dominated by forms accepted from the wider Central European area and Western Balkans.

The Devoll group, in the southeast, in the Korcha region, continued to be developed through the Iron Age, certainly with significant innovations in material culture. Although it is firmly rooted in the Bronze Age tradition, the presence of all segments that participated in the genesis of the Iron Age culture is obvious.

Old matt-painted pottery, characteristic of the Late Bronze Age, continued its development with small variations during the Iron Age, opening a new phase in its development, spreading eastward in the Upper Macedonian areas.

⁸ Islami S. 2013

⁹ Korkuti M–Petrusko K. M. 1993, 720, Bodinaku N. 2001, 97–100; Aliu S. 1981; Korkuti M. 1981; Aliu S. 1986; Bodinaku N. 1994, Budina Dh. 1971

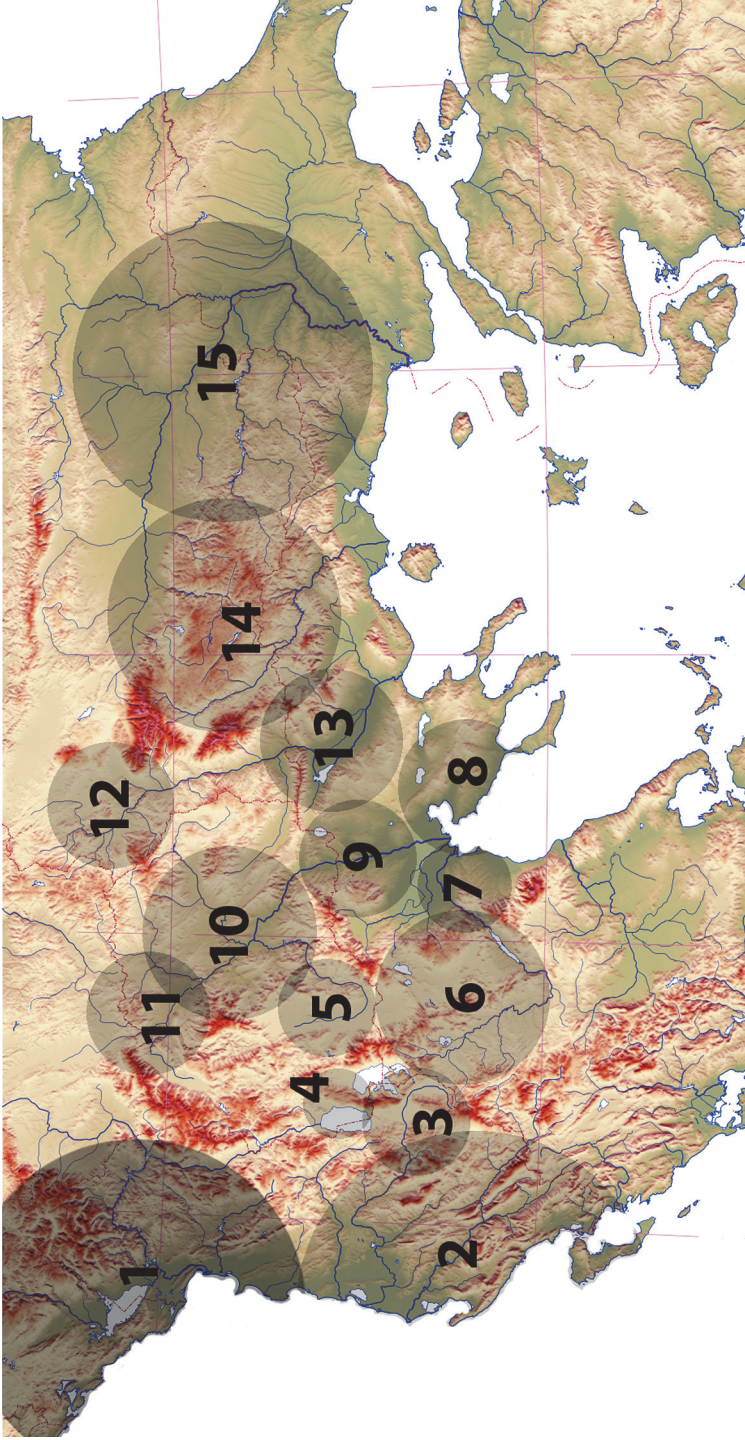


Fig 78 The disposition of the regional cultural groups of the Iron Age: 1 North Albanian group, 2 South Albanian group, 3 Devollian-Korcha group, 4 Ohrid group, 5 Pelagonia group, 6 Upper Macedonian group, 7 Lower Macedonian group, 8 Thesaloniki-Halkidiki group, 9 Lower Vardar – Gevgelija group, 10 Middle Vardar and Bregalnitsa group, 11 Upper Vardar group, 12 Upper Struma group, 13 Lower Struma group, 14 Western Rodope group, 15 Eastern Rodope group

As a distinct metallurgical region with a strong tradition of bronze production, the Korcha region with the Devoll valley has played a key role in the adoption and production of new Hallstatt forms of jewelry, as well as their spread to neighboring areas in the east. From there, at the same time, certain forms of jewelry and cult bronzes were accepted. So, although it derives directly from the Late Bronze Age, the Korcha Iron Age sites (Kuci Zi, Kamenica, Maliq IV, Sovjan, Tren, Drenove and others), at the expense of the current openness to the west along the Devol Valley will turn to east and more closely connect with Ohrid and Kostur (Kastoria) Iron Age sites.¹⁰ Among other things, they are united by the specific geo-morphology of the terrain, around large lakes, at an altitude of 600-900 meters.

Many of the achievements of the Devoll Group from the beginning of the Iron Age began to spread eastward to the neighboring areas, more precisely to the wider lake area. It was this time that the eastern branches of the so-called Kandavian road or the route of the future Via Egnatia were formed, which connected the Devoll valley with the Ohrid-Prespa region, Pelagonia and the Ostrovo Lake area. On the other hand, the old Devoll communication was extended to the neighboring Kostur (Kastoria) region and the valley of Upper Haliakmon. That is moment will prove to be crucial for the development of the Iron Age culture in these areas, as well as for the closer economic and cultural interconnection of those communities and their opening to other regions along the west-east line. Thus, for example, the rich mining and metallurgical potentials of the Ohrid-Demir Hisar region have been realized, so that it, from an extremely conservative region, will achieve rapid economic growth in the Iron Age and grow into a central region, crucial for further trade and economic relations in this part of the Balkans.

With the prolongation of the so-called Kandavian road to the east in these parts, for the first time, with the beginning of the Iron Age, a characteristic matte-painted pottery appears, until then known only in the Devoll group. This pottery, produced in the Iron Age way, unites the entire so-called Upper Macedonian area. In Ohrid region and Pelagonia plain it is associated with the formation of the first Iron Age settlements and necropolises (from the Ohrid Fortress, Zovic, Saraj - Brod, Zhivojno, to Pateli and others) (Fig. 79).¹¹

¹⁰ Andrea Z. 1985; Andrea Z. 1976; Amore M. G. –Bejko L 2001, 270, ; Bejko L. 2005; Andrea Z. 1993, 109–123; Prendi F. – Andrea Z. – Lera. P. 1988:2, 248; Lera P. 1990, 250, Korkuti M. 1971; Prendi F. 1974, 103–139

¹¹ Mitrevski D. 2021, 90, Sl. 6; Pl. XXIII, Мачкич П. – Симоска Д. – Трбухович В. 1961; Микулчиќ И. 1966; Mitrevski D. 1997, Fig. 29, Kat. N. 29, 70; Heurtley W. A. 1939, Pl. 23

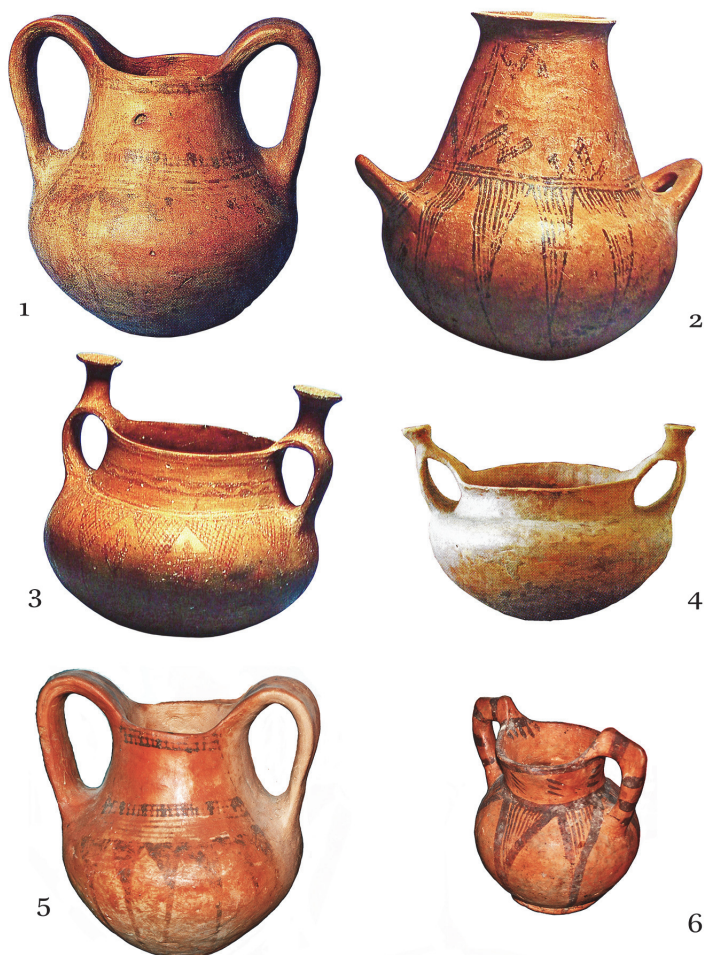


Fig 79 Matte painted pottery of the Iron Age from the so called Pelagonia group

On the other hand, by connecting the Korcha region with the Kostur (Kastoria) region and the Haliacmon valley, this pottery is exhibited as the strongest mark of the local Iron Age culture. Therefore, the term Bubushti-Tren ceramics, or western Macedonian geometric ceramics, is used in scholarship, although given its prevalence mainly in the territory of the Upper Macedonian communities, perhaps the most correct term would be Upper Macedonian matte-painted pottery.¹²

In the settlement life of the whole area in the Iron Age, there are different types of settlements (gradishte-top hill type, palafitte, cave), all with unique features of material culture.

¹² Heurtly W. A. 1939, 227–229; Kat. N. 459–465; Korkuti M. 1971, 46, T. VIII–IX

In the area of burials, in the transition period, in the large Korcha tumuli, certain cremation (Barch) occur as an indicator of penetrations from the north and interference of the communities in the general Balkan movements.¹³ It will continue to be practiced in the Iron Age but with extremely limited intensity, so that the old traditional inhumation ritual will not be abandoned and will significantly dominate (Kuchi Zi, Kamenica and others).¹⁴

The Upper Macedonian group covers the sites in the area from Haliacmon in the south, to Pelagonia in the north and from Lake Prespa to the Emathia plain in the east. The Devoll Valley played an important role in its cultural physiognomy, not only in influencing the development of local pottery, but also in the spread of Western Balkan (Hallstatt) jewelry, and probably in the spread of the tumulus burial way.

As in other regions of the so-called Macedonian zone, the division between the livestock and agricultural communities is visible in the burial method. The cist inhumation was the only burial ritual everywhere. However, in the higher, more conservative and primarily livestock areas such burials are organized under tumuli, while in the agricultural communities, in the plains, in flat necropolises. The most vivid example of this is the situation in Pelagonia. At a distance of only a few kilometers, there are burials with the same cultural inventory, with those in the higher, livestock parts (mostly in Mariovo) organized under tumuli (Mojno, Orle, Rapeshe, Chanishte, Krusevica, etc.), while they are in the plain parts were buried in flat necropolises (Brod, Grade-shica, Zivojno, Bukri, etc.)¹⁵

The situation was similar in the southern parts of the upper Macedonian area, where in the valley of Haliacmon around Kozani (Aiani, Raki Komanoi) there are flat necropolises with cist graves, while in higher areas (for example Pateli on the Ostrovo Lake) tumuli were practiced.¹⁶

The material culture of the Iron Age in the Upper Macedonian group is characterized by unique manifestations on the whole territory, with nurturing and unique artistic and spiritual values. In this sense, the same matt-painted pottery, Hallstatt jewelry and common forms from the wide family of the so-called Macedonian bronzes appear. All of them were locally made, with visible local marks in their performance.

The Lower Macedonian Group is the southernmost region, covering the plain from Olympus in the south to the wetlands of Ematia to the north and west of the Thermae Bay to the mountainous terrain of Mount Bermion.

¹³ Andrea Z. 1975; Andrea Z. 1976

¹⁴ Andrea Z. 1985; Bejko L. 2005

¹⁵ Mitrevski D. 1997, 102–110

¹⁶ Karamitrou–Mentesidi G. 2008, 23; Farmakovski V. V. 1899; Farmakovski V. V. 1901

It is best known for the necropolises in Vergina and Dion, where most of the Iron Age finds are located. According to them, it is easy to conclude that the character of the material culture as well as the burial customs in the Iron Age were deeply Balkan, organically related to the northern regions, but due to their geography, influences from the neighboring regions to the south were constant, mostly from Thessaly and Euboea. These influences are most visible in ceramics since the protogeometric times. The development of the group is well illustrated by the continuous use of the necropolis in Vergina, which can be traced without any significant change throughout the whole Iron Age or from the end of the 11th century until the 6th century BC.¹⁷

Along the Vardar valley, primarily based on differences in the local ceramic production, two local groups stand out, one north and the other south of the Demir Kapija gorge.

The North Vardar group unites the Middle Vardar, Upper Vardar and Bregalnica groups, because it is widespread in all these micro-regions, more precisely in the Vardar valley with its tributaries (Pchinja, Bregalnica, Topolka, Crna Reka).¹⁸ Unique cultural values have been discovered in that entire territory, although tumulus burials have been practiced there as well, in the more conservative livestock areas, while flat necropolises have been practiced in more communicative and mainly agricultural areas. However, the basic ritual of burial with inhumation was unique and common also to other neighboring groups. Cult-religious needs and artistic ideas were also common, and most strongly manifested through the only cult bronzes. Compared to the South Vardar group, the influences from the north, from Morava region are more pronounced in the northern group, which is reflected in the greater popularity of certain forms of Central Balkan jewelry, and especially in the production of local ceramics (Fig. 80).

The South Vardar or Lower Vardar group is also known as the Gevgelija group due its center and the largest concentration of sites in the Gevgelija-Valandovo region.¹⁹ It is interesting that its formation and separation took place at the end of VIII or the beginning of VII century BC.

By stabilization of the living conditions along the Vardar valley, the great ore potentials are activated in that region and the bronze metallurgy is intensified. Thus, at the beginning of the VII century BC, the population of the surrounding area was concentrated in the Valandovo Gevgelija region, and numerous new settlements and necropolises appeared.²⁰ We have the most

¹⁷ Andronikos M. 1969, Vergina; Radt W. 1974

¹⁸ Vasic R. 1987, 690, Mitrevski 1997, 121; Митревски Д. 2013, 225

¹⁹ Vasic R. 1987, 701

²⁰ Mitrevski D. 1997, 118–131

vivid example in the mining settlement near present-day village of Dedeli, with its necropolises.²¹ The settlement is located in a mountain environment with rich copper resources in the surrounding area. There are several necropolises located around it, all with cist graves dating from the middle of the 7th to the middle of the 6th century BC. The situation was the same with numerous other sites in the Valandovo-Gevgelija region, soon every few kilometers archeological sites are discovered, especially necropolises whose use is reduced mainly to the 7th and 6th century BC.



Fig. 80 Examples of Iron Age pottery from the so-called Middle Vardar- Bregalnica group

Thanks to the achieved high level of metallurgical activity as well as the communicativeness of the region, the Lower Vardar Group in that period achieved extremely fast economic and cultural growth. As a result of such development at the end of the VI century, the Iron Age settlements along the Vardar valley began their proto-urban development, and already in the 5th century they will be historically witnessed by Thucydides as important city centers in the area of Amfaxis (Idomene, Gortinia, Europ, Atalante).

The Lower Vardar Group of the Iron Age developed high values of its material and spiritual culture, so that in addition to the usual forms of so-called Hallstatt jewelry, there are numerous other types of bronze objects (pendants, amulets, cult objects, etc.), from the family of the so-called Macedonian

²¹ Mitrevski D. 1991

bronzes.²² However, the main feature of the group is given by the characteristic ochre-baked and linearly painted pottery, locally made on wheel (Figs. 81, 82).²³

The openness to the south and the Greek colonies on the northern Aegean coast made it possible to accept certain archaic influences in the local ceramic production.²⁴ Thus, by merging traditional forms and archaic technological achievements, a special local ceramic production was created, and it is the only and the first Iron Age pottery, made on a potter's wheel, which appears in the north of the Aegean world.



Fig. 81 Examples of Iron Age pottery from the so-called Lower Vardar group

The Thessaloniki group, we conditionally named because it covers the Iron Age sites located in the Gulf of Thermae itself and along the northern shore of the Aegean Sea including the Chalcidice peninsula. These sites, especially continental ones, such as those in Nea Filadelfeia or Tumba Assiros, were closely associated with the Lower Vardar or the Struma Valley, but only in the Early Iron Age. Later, with the establishment of numerous Hellenic colonies on the Aegean coast, they oriented themselves to the south and were directly under their cultural influence. Some of these settlements are also organized as Hellenic Emporions or trading stations (Anchialos, Nea Filadelfia, Saratce, Kalamaria and others).²⁵ Thus, in the Iron Age settlements there are

²² Bouzek J. 1984; Mitrevski 2021–a, 104, Fi. 11

²³ Башиќ P. 1987, 701, T. LXXII–LVXXIII; Mitrevski D. 2012, 105–112

²⁴ Mitrevski D. 2012, 109, Fig. 105, 106

²⁵ Tiverios M. A. 2009, 407; Despotidu B. M. 2008, 41–44; Heurtley W. A. 1939, 236–238

more and more finds of imported, geometric and archaic goods, which makes the Thessaloniki region, together with Halkitiki and many newly established Hellenic colonies, the first region to actively enter the Hellenic cultural sphere, and thus gradually abandons the values of the Balkan Iron Age.

All the mentioned cultural groups of the Iron Age in the so-called Macedonian zone can be considered close and related to each other, with almost unique material culture, but due to its exposure to various influences from outside, show strong local characteristics, especially in ceramics.

In the Thracian territory, south of the Stara Planina, the Iron Age culture was extremely heterogeneous, with various manifestations of different origins, although always rooted in the local Late Bronze Age.

In the sphere of burials, various funeral rituals and burial forms are found throughout the entire territory, with developed and diverse burial customs. Cremation and inhumation can be practiced simultaneously in the same necropolis, either under tumuli or in flat necropolises.²⁶ Also, there are different types of cult places (mountain, rock-cut, pit and other types of sanctuaries), different types of settlements (top-hill, mining, caves, river terraces, etc.), various megalithic monuments (dolmens, menhirs, rock cut, etc.). It is in this heterogeneity and compilation character that the culture of the Iron Age is recognized the Thracian tribes during the Iron Age. However, they all unite the unique values of the Thracian culture.

Based on the manifestations in ceramic production, the so-called undecorated pottery stands out at the end of the transition period. After that, through the Iron Age, the so-called Psenicevo ceramics, with characteristic printed decoration developed.²⁷ Due to the uniform marks of this pottery on the entire territory of the Rhodope region and the Upper Thrace Plain including the valley of Marica, the term "Pshenichevo culture" is often used.

Somewhat later or in the so-called second phase of the Early Iron Age, some regions, however, are developing certain local features. The area of the Western Rhodopes stands out from the general picture for (non) representation of certain forms and decorations in ceramics, such as the so-called Cepina group, while the Struma valley is affirmed as a transition zone between the Rhodope region to east and the Vardar valley to west.²⁸

The differences in the Iron Age culture in the Thracian area were created by intensification of the contacts, on the one hand of the Eastern Rhodope region and the valley of Maritsa with Anatolia, the Northern Aegean region

²⁶ Гергова Д, 1989

²⁷ Nikov K. 2016; Nekhrizov G. – Tzvetkova J. 2018, 40–42; Bozinova E. 2012

²⁸ Bozinova E. 2008

and the Lower Danube and on the other hand of the Western Rhodope region and the Struma valley with the Macedonian territories.

Along Struma valley, similar to Vardar valley in the VII and VI centuries, new settlements are concentrated around the ore fields with rich deposits, mainly iron ore. This especially refers to Upper Struma (Krakra-Pernik, Tatomir-Mestica, Bardiv Rid-Breznik and others).²⁹ According to the pottery of several researched sites (Pernik, Kocherinovo, Galabnik, etc.), and first of all, according to the finds from the necropolis Katrishte near Kustendil, this region is culturally positioned between Vardar valley and the wide Rhodope area.³⁰ In any case, both in the Late Bronze Age and in the Iron Age, Struma valley was a real contact zone, where elements from Pshenichevo and Cepina groups in the east were mixed with elements from the Vardar cultural groups of the Iron Age. It is interesting that, both Lower Vardar and Lower Struma were open for influences from the South, while north of the Kresna gorge, the Iron Age sites along Middle and Upper Struma were close to the region of Middle and Upper Vardar with the valley of Bregalnica.

All mentioned groups in the north of the Aegean will develop in a pre-historic or rather protohistoric context until formation of the first urban settlements and their integration and organization in the first political communities. On that course, the relations with the Aegean world that will be established in some regions, at the end of the VIII and especially in the VII and VI century BC, with intensification of the activities of the Hellenic colonies along the Adriatic, Aegean and Black Sea coasts were of special importance. Thus, more communicative regions will develop much faster and at the end of the VI century will overcome the Iron Age development, while the more conservative ones will continue for some time to nurture the values of the local Iron Age culture.

SETTLEMENTS AND NECROPOLISES

Iron Age settlements throughout the entire territory in the North of the Aegean world adhere to local tradition and micro-regional resources, so there are the same types of settlements found as those formed during the Bronze Age. However, in the multi-layered settlements with continuous use from the Bronze Age, the economic and cultural decline during the transition period, as well as the consequences of the turbulent times during the early phase of the Iron Age (10th-8th century BC) are evident. On the other hand,

²⁹ Mihailov F. 2019, 189–198

³⁰ Georgieva R. – Nehrizov G. – Aljakova P. 1998, 31–48; Georgieva R. 1990, 173

newly established settlements are built only after the stabilization of conditions, always in natural protected positions and in areas with particularly remarkable potentials for development of certain economies. In any case, the settlements from the Iron Age were conditioned primarily by the geomorphological and economic potentials of the region, so that in different regions there are different types of settlements, such as: agricultural, livestock, mining, fishing-palafitte or cave settlements.

The most traditional and most resistant to the novelties of the previous turbulent times were the agricultural settlements. These are mostly multi-layered with a strong continuous development since the Bronze Age, certainly in a new Iron Age context. They appear on the old prehistoric tells-mounds in the fertile plains, such as those in the Lower Povardarie and Thessaloniki area (Chaushica, Vardino, Vardaroftsa, Kastanas, Saratse, Kalamaria, Assiros and others), but also as settlements on naturally dominant, flat hills and river terraces, surrounded by fertile agricultural area and other natural resources in the environment, such as: Megali Rahi-Aiane, Archontiko, Anchialos, Vardarski Rid, Isar-Marvinci, Gradishte-Knezhje, Koprivlen, Pshenichevo, Ovcharevo and others).

The first type of agricultural settlements, tells-mounds settlements were limited to a single, predetermined settlement area. Thus, the population was directed to maintain the old prehistoric organization of the area and nurturing the old basically prehistoric activities, with limited opportunities for nominal growth and spatial planning, which means without any major opportunities for the development of crafts, trade and other activities. With the rise of these needs, especially after the establishment of numerous Hellenic colonies on the sea coast, these settlements are gradually losing their significance.

The second type of settlements, unlike the first, were built on dominant heights, with surrounding terraces on which they could expand in an environment suitable for the development of crafts and trade. During the Iron Age, these will gradually strengthen and affirm as production centers. For example, in the Iron Age settlement of Isar - Marvinci, pottery kilns were discovered for the local ochre ceramics with matt-painted and linearly painted decoration. Each kiln accommodated 20-30 vessels so that the needs of all the surrounding settlements could be covered (Fig. 82).³¹

The situation was similar in Anchilao, where during the 8th-7th century the settlement has been exposed as an emporion of Euboea for the exploitation of gold from the Galico River, but also as one of the main production centers.³² Several settlements from that time are known in the Thracian area

³¹ Mitrevski D. 2012, 105-112

³² Tiverios M. A. 2009, 407

as production centers. Thus, for example, in Ovcharevo, 25 clay seals for the production of printed ceramics, and in the settlement Branica, molds for casting various metal objects were discovered.³³

During the 5th century, settlements of this type will grow into the first urban settlements, true early ancient cities, and some into political centers (Aiane, Petres, Idomeni, Gortinia, Sindos, Bilazora and others).³⁴ The Iron Age life in these settlements was usually concentrated on the highest plateau, while the lower terraces were gradually occupied. Necropolises were regularly disposed around the settlement in the lowest terrain parts.



Fig. 82 A kiln for the characteristic Lower Vardar pottery from Marvinci near Valandovo

³³ Балабанијан 1985, 72–73, Алацов–Балабанјан 1984, 187, .

³⁴ Karamitrou – Menteseidi D. 1989, 13–22; Velleni V. A. 1998, 37; Mitrevski D. 2005, 15–90; Tiverios M. 2009, 407; Chrisostomou A. – Chrisostomou P. 2009. 489; Mitrevski D. 2016

The situation was similar with open settlements on river terraces, such as the settlement in Koprivlen or Pshenichevo.³⁵ In the Thracian area, the Iron Age settlements are often found as complex sites, with elements not only of settlements but also of sanctuaries. In the Rhodopes such are the settlements of Ada Tepe, Kush Kaja, Semercheto and others, while after Marica and Nesta settlements appear together with the so-called pit complexes such as in Simeonov Grad or Koprivlen.³⁶

The most common and widespread settlements in the Iron Age were livestock settlements, located on higher and more difficult terrains with a mountain background. They were founded in newly created condition of Iron Age, in still incompletely stabilized circumstances, after the turbulent times, away from the main communications. As a rule, they are small settlements, additionally protected by dry-walled rampart, which occupied an area of up to 1-2 hectares. As special livestock points, their use was limited in time, so they are usually single-layer settlements, often used only seasonally. Therefore, they did not develop larger organized necropolises. On the contrary, only individual tumuli are associated with them, which can be found in different positions near the settlements, as an expression of the “scatter” type of living and maintaining a tribal system of organization. Such settlements are found throughout the entire territory, in all pastoral areas, from the North-Epirus areas in Albania (such as the small hilltop sites around Lauras, to the extreme eastern slopes of the Rhodope schain (such as Chuka-Sarakachani).³⁷ Their use throughout the Iron Age illustrates largely isolated way of life, without significant contacts and external influences.

Other types of settlements such as mining, cave and lake-pile dwelling settlements were not uncommon during the Iron Age. They were conditioned and determined by the geomorphology of the field and the possibilities for development of appropriate economy in a certain period. Such were the mining settlements of Ada Tepe in the eastern Rhodopes, in Dedeli-Valandovo on the southwestern slopes of Belasica or the several settlements along Upper Struma in the vicinity of Pernik and Kyustendil.³⁸ In these areas, in a certain period, a larger population was concentrated and mining settlements were organized, which lasted as long as the mineral resources were available and could be easily exploited. For example, in the mountainous environment of Dedeli a settlement was located for the first time in the middle of the VII century BC. Due to the difficult accessibility to the site, no archeological excava-

³⁵ Бошкова А. 2002, 83

³⁶ Bozopova E. 2008; Влчева Д. 2002, 102

³⁷ Aliu S. 2004, 14–17; Efstratiou N. 1993, 135–178

³⁸ Bozinova E. 2008, Mitrevski D. 1991; Mihailov F. 2019, 169

tions have been carried out there, but several foundations of rectangular houses have been registered, and the last burials in the nearby necropolises indicate that life and mining activities have lasted until the first quarter of the 6th century BC.³⁹

Cave settlements, either as more permanent dwellings or as temporary hiding places, such as several points in the Middle Rhodope region.⁴⁰ They have used the naturally protected areas in the periods that required special protection, such as the whole period of transition, but also the early phase of the Iron Age, when the living conditions were not yet stabilized. In some cases, such as near the cave in Tren at the southern end of Prespa Lake, the morphology in the field and economic conditions allowed a long-term presence and uninterrupted nurturing of the local culture. Thus, a rich stratigraphy was created covering the period of use of the settlement, from the late Bronze Age and through the transition period until the Iron Age.⁴¹ A similar situation with even longer-term use, through different prehistoric periods, all through to the end of the Iron Age was discovered in the cave in Konispol in the southern part of Albania.⁴²

During the periods of high water levels in lakes in the territory north of the Aegean world, pile-dwelling or palafitte settlements were built. This was especially pronounced in the region of the so-called Great Lakes (Ohrid, Prespa, Maliq and Kostur), where the tradition of life in pile-dwelling settlements has been maintained since Neolithic times.⁴³ During the early phases of the Iron Age the water levels, after the Late Bronze Age when it reached its maximum, in the lakes, covering all the surrounding agricultural areas, were still high. Thus, almost all Palafitte settlements in the Late Bronze Age continued to be used in the Early Iron Age as Maliq and Sovjan on the Lake Maliq or several settlements on the eastern shore of Lake Ohrid (Vrbnik near Struga, Penelope-Ohrid, Plocha-Michov Grad, Bay of the Bombs, Bay of Bones and others) (Figs. 33 and 83).⁴⁴

Most of these settlements during the entire Iron Age (8-6 centuries) were no longer in use, with the exception of the settlement Vrbnik near Struga, which is the only palafitte settlement that continued its life through the younger stages of the Iron Age. According to its size and repertoire of findings,

³⁹ Митревски Д, 1991

⁴⁰ Дамјанов Д, 2017, 120–125

⁴¹ Korkuti M. 1971, 46

⁴² Korkuti M. – Shabani H. 1989

⁴³ Chrysostomu P. – Jagoulis T, – Mader A, 2015, 24–32; Кузман П. 2013, 297–430

⁴⁴ Prendi F. – Andrea Z. – Lera. P. 1988; Prendi F. , 2018; Prendi F. – Touchais G. 1996; Lera P. 1990; Кузман П. , 2013, 297;

it is obvious that after the stabilization of climatic and economic conditions, the palafitte population in Struga was concentrated in Vrbnik, as a single and central settlement. On the other hand, the population of the Ohrid palafitte settlements probably concentrated in the central fortified settlement on Ohrid Kale.⁴⁵



Fig. 83 Iron Age pottery from Ohrid: 1 Pottery from the beginning of the Iron Age, finds from the Bay of the bones - Pestani, 2 Pottery from the Full Iron Age, finds from Plaosnik - Ohrid

⁴⁵ Митревски Д. 2021

No matter how special in character and the economy they practiced, the mining, cave and lake settlements of the Iron Age did not show any differences in the material and spiritual culture compared to the other settlements of that time, nurturing the same regional cultural values.

In the scope of burials, the Iron Age is a period when burial practices from the previous centuries throughout the Bronze Age have experienced impact of customs from outside during the transition period, somewhere more, somewhere less, after which a stable burial ideology and practice was finally completed. In the entire territory north of the Aegean world, the old funeral rituals, burial forms and customs were not abandoned, on the contrary, they were completed and developed within the new social, economic and cultural conditions of the Iron Age.

The basic Bronze Age burial ritual with contracted inhumation during the Iron Age continued to be practiced, but as inhumation in an extended position. On the other hand, bringing cremation into practice during the transition period, as a ritual in the communities of the Danube and Central Europe that penetrated to the south, had different share in different local communities. In this sense, for example, in the eastern Thracian communities, which were more directly and longer exposed to the influences and penetrations from the Carpathian-Danube area, gradually have changed their attitude towards the deceased, which meant fundamental changes in the burial beliefs and practices. There, the new ideological conception related to the burning of the deceased were incorporated much more widely and deeply. In spite of that, in western communities, burning during the Iron Age only incidentally occurs in a few cases (Lauras, Kuch i Zi - Korcha, Paleo Genicokastro - Kilkis, Katrishte-Kjustendil and others).⁴⁶

In the absence of a solid basis in the local burial tradition, cremation in the Albanian and Macedonian zones was quickly abandoned, while in the east it was accepted for simultaneous use with inhumation. In this way, burial practices were finally formed on the basic idea of the afterlife, built during the Bronze Age. Thus, the communities in the Albanian zone practiced the tumulus way of burial, mainly with inhumation, the communities in the Macedonian zone used extended inhumation in tumular or flat necropolises, while on the Bulgarian territory the birituality was widely practiced, both in flat and tumular necropolises.

The simultaneous use of flat and tumulus necropolises during the Iron Age was only a way of organizing burials, conditioned by the social organization of individual communities. Thus, in the more conservative, livestock

⁴⁶ Aliu S. 2004; Andrea Z. 1976; Savaropoulou T. 1988; Savaropulu T. 1991; Georgieva R. – Nehri-zov G. – Aljakova P. 1998, 1998, 31–51

communities that firmly adhered to tribal relations, burials of tribal-related deceased were practiced under a common tumular embankment. Communities in communicative and economically more developed regions, where tribal relations have long since been overcome, the same burials were organized in flat necropolises. Such relations were most pronounced in the Iron Age communities in the so-called Macedonian zone, where without a previous tradition for the first time, with the beginning of the Iron Age, in the more conservative, livestock communities, the tumular way of burial was accepted. It was developed throughout the Iron Age, in accordance with their social development. In spite of that, communities in the open and communicative regions continued the Bronze Age practice of organizing graves in flat necropolises, with the same grave structures and burial customs.

Finalizing the burial ideology and practice, Iron Age burials are definitely exposed as a major distinctive feature of the communities north of the Aegean world. Thus, in the western or Albanian zone, where the Bronze Age tradition of burials, mainly with inhumation under tumuli, remained unchanged, and the communities recorded in the historical sources as southern Illyrian tribes are recognized. The communities in the so-called Macedonian zone where extended inhumations were exclusively practiced, organized in flat necropolises or under tumuli with specific features and development through the Iron Age, can be associated with the Paeonian and Macedonian tribes. In the eastern communities where birituality was widespread, it is not difficult to identify the Thracian tribes.

Although there are obvious differences in funeral rituals and burial forms, similar burial customs are found in all Iron Age communities, which means basically similar beliefs, related to the cult of the deceased, the belief in the afterlife, the heroization of the deceased and so on.

At the very act of burial everywhere, from the Adriatic to the Black Sea, almost the same funeral activities were practiced, which include: animal sacrifice (in s-w Thrace even human sacrifices), funeral feast with eating the sacrificed animals, leaving food, ritual breaking vessels, laying the deceased with the personal belongings and the like. All this unites a powerful system with similar ideas and conceptions about life and death, based on the belief in the afterlife. Such an attitude towards death has its roots in the common Bronze Age heritage.

The most stable and strongly associated with the Bronze Age tradition were the communities in the western or Albanian zone. The use of tumuli has been a dominant practice there since the Bronze Age, with only certain variations in the shape and size of the tumuli distinguishing the southern group of tumuli from those north of the Mati River. However, differences in the ma-

terial culture are visible, after which the northern group of tumuli is organically associated with the so-called Glasinac culture.⁴⁷ In contrast, the necropolises in the southern parts of Albania, were close to the Epirus culture of the Iron Age, while in the southeast, in the Korcha region or in the so-called Devoll group forms are discovered which are characteristic for the Iron Age culture in the Macedonian zone.⁴⁸

The tumular burial method as a general Indo-European benefit from the beginning of the Bronze Age was accepted in Albania, as an expression of the tribal connection of the deceased, emphasizing the role and significance of the oldest tomb, which was always positioned in the center of the tumulus (Pazok, Barch, Vodhin, Bodrishte, and others) (Fig. 10).⁴⁹ Conservatism in nurturing such funeral practices has kept tumuli in Albania as the only burial form during the Iron Age. Thus, the Korcha region or the so-called Devol group stands out for its characteristic large tumuli with over a hundred burials (Barch, Kuchi Zi, Kamenica), in which individual cremations⁵⁰ can be found as a benefit from the transition period. The uniqueness of these tumuli can be explained by the wonderful living conditions offered by the Korcha region in that period, when the highest concentration of population was achieved, organized into larger tribal groups, which means larger tumuli.

Among the population from the neighboring, Macedonian zone, during the Iron Age, the Bronze Age practice of skeletal burial remained, only no longer in a contracted but in an extended position.

In the open and communicative areas, such as the Vardar valley, the Thessaloniki or Pelagonija plains, flat necropolises develop with extended inhumations in cist-graves, often surrounded by stone slabs. The most obvious examples of this are the necropolises in the so-called Lower Vardar or Gevgelija group (Chaushica, Bohemica, Milci, Suva Reka, Marvinci, Dedeli and others), which continue the local tradition of the Vardar or Ulanci group of the Late Bronze Age. Developing through the Iron Age, necropolises reached their strongest intensity as large organized necropolises during the 7th and 6th centuries BC.

On the other hand, with the very beginning of the Iron Age or around the end of the 11th century, tumular necropolises appeared, and only in the more conservative, mainly livestock areas. Their appearance, without previous tradition, but with special formal features and specific development through the centuries of the Iron Age, speak of a cultural phenomenon of exceptional

⁴⁷ Islami S. 2013

⁴⁸ Prendi F. 1998, 643; Prendi F. 1974; Andrea Z. 1993

⁴⁹ Andrea Z. 1976–a, Prendi F. 1991, 508–510

⁵⁰ Andrea Z. 1985, Bejko L. 2005

chronological and socio-economic and historical significance. With such characteristics, conditionally speaking, the Macedonian tumuli differ from the tumuli that appear at the same time in the west of Albania, and even more than the tumuli in the east in the Thracian zone.

After all turbulent events and cultural interference in the transition period, tumuli in Macedonia appear to be an absolute novelty, but still they should not be seen as the penetration of a new population from outside. First of all, their import can not be traced and associated with a clearly defined territory, and they appear in an initial form that will develop over the centuries of the Iron Age. Moreover, the material culture associated with them is identical to that which occurs in flat necropolises. Not infrequently, only a few kilometers away, there are tumular and flat necropolises, from the same time and with the same cultural inventory. Tumuli are associated with the higher livestock parts, while the flat necropolises are associated with the more communicative plain part of the region. The best illustration of this is the situation in Pelagonija, where the tumuli are located in the livestock, highland part of Mariovo (Orle, Mojno, Chanishte, Krusevica, Manastir and others) while the flat necropolises from the same time in the plain part along the Crna river (Saraj-Brod, Bukri, Gradeshnica and others).⁵¹ The same relations between the flat and tumular necropolises are also documented along the valley of Bregalnica, in Stip, Ovche Pole and Skopje areas, while in the most communicative and economically most developed Lower Vardar region, the tumulus burial way was not practiced at all. All this speaks of a new positioning and a new social and economic organization of the population in the more conservative, mostly livestock areas.

In any case, tumuli in Macedonia are not an ethnic but a socio-economic category, developing through the Iron Age through two basic phases, first as genus-clan tumuli (10-8 century BC), and then as a family type of tumuli (8-6th century BC). Such development best reflects not only the cultural but, above all, the social and economic development of the individual Iron Age communities.⁵²

The older, the so-called "genus" or "clan" type tumuli is associated with the establishment of new settlements whose basic economy was livestock. They were formed by several genera, which had their strongest expression in the clan tumuli, positioned near the settlements, usually distributed along the surrounding ridges.

With the introduction of the tumulus practice, the clan tumuli began to form around the oldest initial burial, meaning around the founder, the fat-

⁵¹ Mikulcic I. 1966, 26; Mitkovski A. 2010; Mitrevski D. 1997 (catalog of necropolises)

⁵² Митревски Д. 2013, 222

her of the clan. The separation of the oldest as a central tomb, with a separate circular structure and covered with a special embankment of earth and stones speaks of its special significance and role, up to the level of divinization. Formation of the tumulus took place gradually with each new burial of followers, positioned radially around the central tomb, with their heads turned towards it, until the last member of that genus. As long as the memory of the founder and the father of the genus lasted, so did the group relations, as well as the formation and celebration of the tumulus as a collective genus tomb. Given the length of that process, the last burials could have been performed only 2 centuries or more after the central burial, so that after a while they were buried in order in the already formed tumulus, just to emphasize their belonging to the genus. The best example of this is the famous tumulus from the necropolis in Visoi-Beranci nearby Bitola, where out of a total of 3 genera-clan tumuli, arranged in a line, only one was fully explored (Fig. 84).⁵³

Other examples only confirm such a picture of the features and development of so-called Genus or Clan tumuli (Fig. 85). From the large necropolis in Vergina, through Pateli and the Mاريوvo tumuli in Pelagonija to the tumular necropolises along Bregalnica (Orlovi Chuki-Stip, Kunovo Chuki-Kochani, Krshla-Vinica and others), this type of tumuli marks the initial phase of the use of Iron Age necropolises, but will continue to develop throughout the entire Iron Age, through the younger type of so-called Family tumuli. In that sense, clan tumuli with the central tomb of the founder of the genus were in use from the end of the 11th to the 8th century BC, at the latest. Already during the 7th and 6th century, newer, family tumuli were practiced.

The family type of tumuli was undoubtedly developed from the previous genus-clan type with the disintegration of the genera into smaller units or families. The best examples are the necropolises in Radanje-Shtip, Sopot-Veles and Gorno Pole-Star Karaorman, where the last necropolis is a school example of the relationship between the genus type and family type of tumuli. In Gorno Pole near the village Star Karaorman in the vicinity of Stip on a spacious gentle slope are registered over 300 tumuli of the newer family type with cultural inventory from the 7th and 6th century BC.⁵⁴ However, next to them, but in a higher and dominant position, along the crest of the first ridge were arranged in a line 10 larger tumuli of the older genus-clan type, known as Orlovi Chuki (Fig. 86).⁵⁵ Apparently, they started using the whole necropolis in the 10th century BC, thus separating the 10 initial genera.

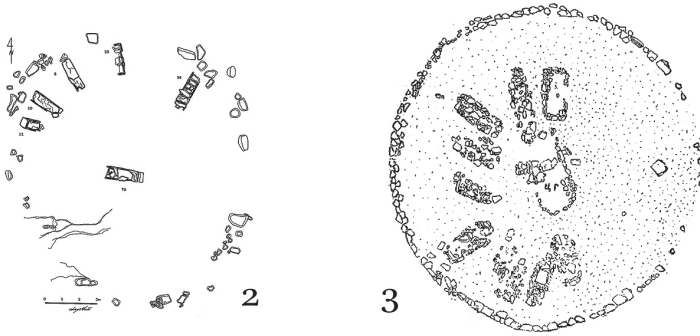
⁵³ Mikulcic I. 1966, 34; Mitrevski D. 1997, 97. Fig. 26

⁵⁴ Mikulcic I. 1959, Mitrevski D. 1997, Kat. br. 60

⁵⁵ Mikulcic I. 1960; Pasic-Vincic R. 1972; Nacev T. – Jovanov M. 1996

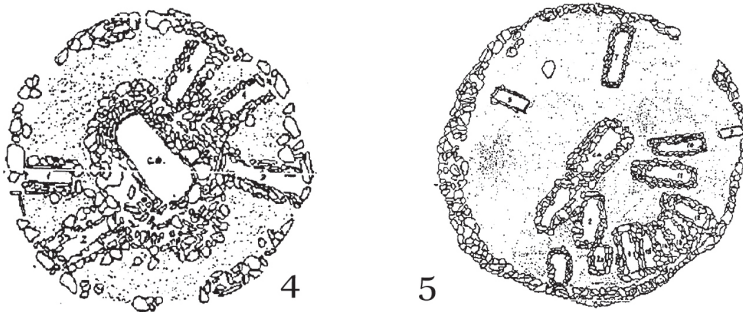


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Fig. 84 Model of an Iron Age clan tumulus in Visoi Beranci near Bitola

Fig. 85 Genus or clan type of tumuli: 2 Krusevica-Mariovo, 3, 4, 5 Orlovi Chuki - Star Karaorman

During the VIII, and mostly through the VII and VI centuries BC, there will be 300 smaller, familial tumuli at the foot of the ridge, developed from them. The architecture, grave forms and customs of the family tumuli have remained basically the same as those of the genus-clan tumuli, but with smaller dimensions, a smaller number of burials (2-8) and of course without a central

grave. Only the round sepulchral space was filled successively by laying the dead persons from one family, next to each other (Fig. 87). In some cases, when a family has gone out prematurely, the tumulus remained incompletely filled as in tumulus number 11 in Sopot.



Fig. 86 Panoramic view of the tumular necropolis in Orlovi Chuki - Star Karaorman, near Stip

With the emergence of social differentiation and the separation of richer and more powerful individuals, sometime at the end of the 6th century BC the old genus system was already abandoned and thereby the use of the Iron Age tumuli, too. However, the created tumulus tradition found its reflection in the monumental so-called Macedonian royal tombs.

In the Thracian area, the variety of burial rituals and forms with the beginning of the Iron Age increased significantly compared to the previous, Bronze Age. Both cremation and inhumation were practiced simultaneously, and the tomb forms were various, from ordinary urns, pits or cists surrounded by stones or stone slabs, stone platforms, tumuli covering cremations and inhumations, to various types of so-called megalithic tombs. Such variations in burial can be explained, among other things, by the openness of the region and the permanent contacts and influences, either from the north of the Danube or from the south, from the Aegean-Anatolian area. The best confirmation of this are the situations in some necropolises along the valley of Maritsa and the Eastern Rhodopes.

The occurrence of cremation in the Marica valley is related to the end of the transition period and the beginning of the Iron Age, and it is best known through the Gabarevo buckle urn or the so-called Gava type urns from Manole, mostly through the finds from Glavan where in one of the cremations, terracotta figures of waterfowls were discovered, typical for the cultural

tradition of the Carpathian-Danube region.⁵⁶ In contrast, in the area of the Eastern Rhodope in the Iron Age the so-called chamber-tomb in the rock were practiced and developed, which are undoubtedly an expression of the Aegean tradition of the Bronze Age.⁵⁷

In any case, with the beginning of the Iron Age, birituality with all their variety of funeral forms and customs became typical for the entire Thracian area. After the 8th century BC, certain funeral activities began to be preferred with their further local development. Thus, the practice of tumulus burials were the most common, as typical for all Thracian tribes.

A special phenomenon in the field of burial among the Iron Age communities from the region of present-day southeastern Bulgaria is the appearance of dolmens. In many elements they are a counterpart to the so-called genus-claan tumuli from the same time in the Macedonian zone, as an expression of the same funeral ideology, but with different elements implemented in their formation and development. We'll speak about it in more details in the next chapter dedicated to certain cultural phenomena of the Iron Age in the north of the Aegean world.

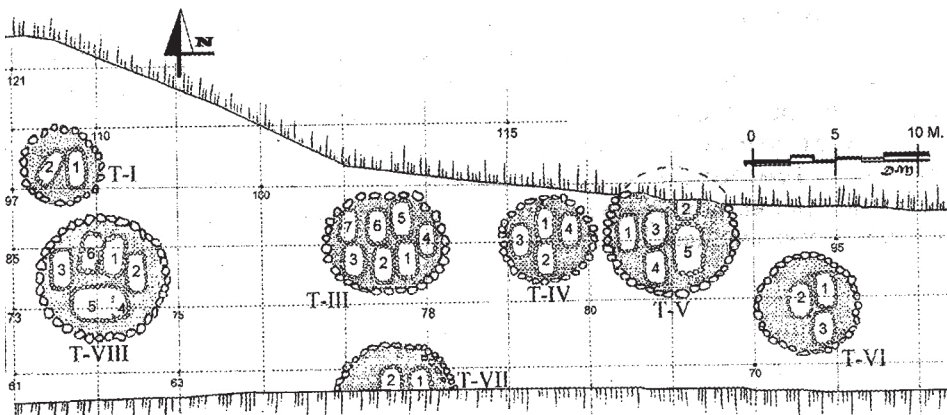


Fig. 87 Plan of a part of the necropolis with so-called family tumuli in Sopot near Veles

CULTURAL PHENOMENA OF THE IRON AGE

During the Iron Age, certain phenomena occur that stand out in many elements from the other common manifestations of the Iron Age. They appear at a certain time in a certain territory and have a special chronological,

⁵⁶ Mikulcic I. 1960; Pasic-Vincic R. 1972; Nacev T. – Jovanov M. 1996

⁵⁷ Nehrizov G. 2015

cultural, artistic and religious weight. Such are: dolmens in southeastern Bulgaria, the Paeonian cult bronzes in the Macedonian zone and so called Mycenaean reminiscences throughout the entire territory from Adriatic to the Black Sea.

DOLMENS

With their monumentality, mystery and chronology, dolmens are a phenomenon of Thracian culture of the Iron Age, which have always attracted the attention of researchers.⁵⁸ These are burial, megalithic structures that appeared at the beginning of the Iron Age in a limited territory, in SE Bulgaria, NE Greece and European Turkey. All are distributed in the mountainous parts of this territory, mostly on the northern slopes of Sakar Mountain, in the region of Strandzha, to the easternmost slopes of the Rhodopes. They are positioned individually or in groups, usually in dominant positions, in a line, along the crests of individual ridges, with wide control over the surrounding lower slopes.⁵⁹ Dolmens were erected above ground, from large stone slabs that form a stone chamber or chambers covering a space that can reach a length of 2-3 meters and a width of up to 2.5 meters and a height of up to 2 meters. A special feature of the dolmens is the entrance, which was open, more precisely, cut in the central part of the front stone slab. Such an entrance could be oval, rectangular or arcade. An access corridor or dromos was often constructed next to the entrance to the chamber (Fig.88).

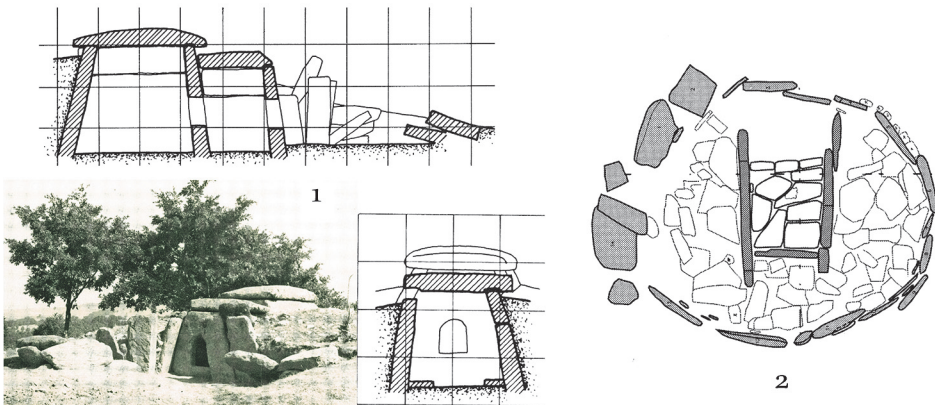


Fig. 88 Some examples of dolmens: 1 Bela Treva- Hliabovo (according to P. Delev),
2 Turski Grobista – Zelezino (according to G. Nehrizov)

⁵⁸ Megalitite v Trakia, 1976; Megalitite v Trakia, 2, 1980

⁵⁹ Gocev A. 1998, 247

Different types of dolmens are registered depending on the construction of the chamber (with one or two compartments) and of the entrance, according to the possession of dromos or without it. In any case, such a structure was covered with a single, tumular embankment of earth and stones, which could have been fenced at the base, more precisely protected from erosion by a circular wall of stones.⁶⁰

According to the discovered archeological material, the period from XI-VIII century BC is the period of raising the dolmens, although in some cases there are clear indications that they could be reused in the centuries to come. Although rare finds that can be safely associated with specific burials in the dolmens, yet they revealed typical Pshenichevo and Troy VIIB₂ pottery, as well as metal finds, mainly fibulae characteristic for the period from XI to VIII century BC.⁶¹

Dolmen development reflects the evolutionary processes of the Thracian tribes during the Iron Age, and some construction techniques can be taken as prototypes for the later ancient masonry tombs of the Thracian rulers and aristocracy.

Many moments about the sudden appearance of dolmens, their development and cultural values are still a scientific mystery. However, a comparative analysis of the dolmens with the so-called genus-clan tumuli in the Macedonian zone could help in their better understanding, because they are close and synchronous in many elements.

Both grave forms appear with the establishment of the new socio-economic and cultural values of the Iron Age, without previous local tradition. Thus, they are exposed as the strongest mark of a new value system that will be developed in the coming centuries. At that time, new settlements were created in dominant and naturally protected positions, organized by several genera. Dolmens and genus-clan tumuli in their vicinity are kind of monuments to these genera, more precisely to the great role and importance of the founders of the genera. In this direction, both dolmens and the genera-clan tumuli are covered with a mound embankment, as a visual manifestation for memories of the genus and especially of the founder-father of the genus.

Both the genus-clan tumuli and the dolmens were positioned in dominant positions, often arranged in a line along the crest of individual ridges, from where they controlled the surrounding common space of the genus and the community. If the community developed for a long time, it could form a larger necropolis at the foot, but certainly without divinization of the foun-

⁶⁰ Nehrizov G. 2015

⁶¹ Megalitite v Trakia 1976, 72, Megalitite v Trakia 1980, 197

ders of the genera, who remained in dominant positions, in the dolmen or genus-clan tumuli, as guards who would guard the community forever.

The general social and economic development of communities, both in southern Thrace and in the territory of Macedonia, in the Iron Age, can be traced through the development of dolmens and the genus-clan tumuli. With the disintegration of the genus system and the loss of the role of the founder of the genus, both the dolmens and the genus tumuli were abandoned sometime during the VIII century BC. However, the echo of their essence to mark the greatness and importance of the leader, reached the ancient times and the idea, much later, the Thracian and Macedonian rulers to celebrate their royal power in a similar way. In that sense, a number of elements from the old dolmen or genus-clan tumuli can be found in the monumental ancient masonry tombs of the Thracian (Odrysian) and Macedonian rulers. The basic idea of ensuring immortality of the ruler's greatness was common and realized, as with their older predecessors, mostly through the size of the mound-tumuli embankment and the masonry tomb in it. The Macedonian royal tombs were built as underground structures, in accordance with the tradition of the old genus-clan tumuli, while Thracian tombs were built as above-ground structures, following the dolmen tradition.

PAEONIAN CULT BRONZES

The intensive production of bronze jewelry and small bronze plastics is one of the main features of the Iron Age culture in the communities north of the Aegean world.

Among the regions that stood out for their extremely fast and high growth of bronze production was the valley of Vardar, especially the copper-rich Lower Vardar region. The largest and most diverse types of bronze objects were discovered there, mostly from VII and VI centuries BC. Their local production is characterized by a high percentage of copper (about 97%) and a small proportion of other elements such as arsenic, iron, aluminum and others. At that time, the popularity of those bronzes as jewelry, decorative and utilitarian objects was widespread in all surrounding areas, so that in scholarship they are recognizable under the common name "Macedonian bronzes".⁶²

Within such a wide family of Macedonian bronzes, a group of the so-called Paeonian cult bronzes⁶³ stands out for its high aesthetic, cultural and

⁶² Bouzek J. 1973; Bouzek J. 1974; Videski Z. – Temov S. 2003

⁶³ Mitrevski D. 1988

chronological values, as well as the context of their discovery. These are different types of small bronze objects in the form of birds, miniature cups, stylized birds, round plates, ball objects, horn-shaped objects, various forms of composite pendants, often with bird accessories, etc. (Fig. 89)

Their distribution is more than 90% along the valley of Vardar with its tributaries, more precisely in the historically witnessed territory of the Paeonian tribes, in the Paeonian time, so they are the strongest expression of the Paeonian culture of the Iron Age.⁶⁴ Only a few specimens have been found outside this territory, mostly as grave goods or gifts in some Greek temples and sanctuaries.⁶⁵

The first feature of the Paeonian cult bronzes is that they are closely related to each other and are discovered in the same context, in special women's graves, which in many elements stand out from other ordinary burials. In a situation when all women's funerals were equipped in a standard way, they, in addition to the usual women's jewelry, also contain various forms of cult bronzes. They are therefore defined as priestly burials.⁶⁶

So far, a dozen such burials in several different necropolises have been well documented. In them, such bronzes were discovered in an original and very eloquent position, which testifies to their indisputable cult character, more precisely that they were associated with specific ritual actions performed and religious beliefs. In this sense, Paeonian cult bronzes can be divided into two categories, namely: a) cult symbols b) cult implements.⁶⁷

Cult symbols are all bronzes in the form of some appliques or pendants that were worn attached to clothes or hung on body parts (Fig. 90). They regularly have mounting brackets attached to the top. They can be pendants themselves, such as bird figurines or their modifications, but they also appear as complex pendants on which smaller pendants are hung. In any case, they affirmed the cult and illustrated the beliefs of the population, but also the very meaning and role of the deceased as a priest in that cult.

An even stronger cult expression is the so-called cult implements. These are objects that served in the practice of the ritual actions of the priestesses (Fig. 91). At the funeral they were specially treated and usually laid separately, next to or on a priestess body. We have the most eloquent illustration of this in tomb 15 from Marvinci, known as "the tomb of the Paeonian priestess of Marvinci" (Fig. 92).⁶⁸

⁶⁴ Mitrevski D. 1988; Bouzek J. 2006

⁶⁵ Vasic R. 2003, Fig 3–4; Andrea Zh. 1976; Bouzek J. 1974; Kilian Dirlmeir I. 1979; Kilian K. 1975; Kiliaan Dirlmeir I. 2002, Taf. 63–64

⁶⁶ Mitrevski D. 2007; Mitrevski D. 1999; Papazovska A. – Husenovski B. 2019

⁶⁷ Mitrevski D. 2007, 574

⁶⁸ Mitrevski D. 1999, T–I, TIII–3



Fig. 89 Different forms of so-called Paeonian Cult Bronzes



Fig. 90 Paeonian Cult Bronzes as symbols of the cult

Different types of bronze circular plates, cups with lids, as well as the so-called miniature vessels and horn-shaped objects for now can certainly be attributed to the category of "cult implements".

Large circular plates have so far been discovered in several specimens, best known through the specimen from Marvinci and the finds from Chaushica.⁶⁹ They occur in different variants and dimensions, whereby, the northern samples, such as the finds from Orizari-Kocani or Radanje-Shtip, being significantly smaller than the Lower Vardar circular plates.⁷⁰ They were decorated with open work penetrations and radial engravings, so that they are considered to symbolize the sun itself. The question is whether such plates were worn on a stick, as the ancient authors wrote about the Paeonian worship of the sun, or were simply part of a ritual belt, as suggested by the find from Marvinci.

Bronze cups (Pyxisis pendants) are the most striking among the Paeonian cult bronzes. They come in different types, sizes and in different variants, depending on the local possibilities and taste, but they were always made according to the same concept, in two parts, with a cup-container and a lid which close the contents of the cup.⁷¹ Chemical analysis of the interior of such a cup determined the presence of morphine, namely that opium tar was stored in it.⁷² Bird protomes or stylized birds were made on the cup itself or on

⁶⁹ Mitrevski D. 1999, TIII-3; Casson S. 1968, Fig. 59 – 62, p. 155

⁷⁰ Kilian K. 1975; Bouzek J. 1974; Mitrevski D. 1990

⁷¹ Bouzek J. 1973; Kilian K. 1975, Taf. 34–44 Vasic R. 1974, 230–232

⁷² The analyzes were made by Pere Toshev at the Institute of Chemistry within the Faculty of Natural Sciences and Mathematics.

the lid. Their bodies were usually decorated with engraved bundles of parallel lines and embossed concentric circles, which refer to the symbols of the sun, light, and freedom.

Miniature bronze vessels occur in two versions, as jugs or as bowl-dish, usually with a horizontally extended handle.⁷³ Thus, they copy the local ceramic production only in bronze miniatures. They were discovered in a different context, but never in a sufficiently eloquent situation, so it is assumed that they could have been worn as pendants. However, their very form suggests that they may have also served in some of the priestly activities.



Fig. 91 Paeonian Cult Bronzes as cult implements

The situation is similar with several objects in the form of horns (possibly horns in consecration). It can only be assumed what these horns served for, how and in which processes of the priestly activities have been used. However, the lower part was hollow in the form of a cylindrical tube, which indicates that a wooden holder, similar to the cast iron spear top of that time, was implanted in it.

According to the iconography of the Paeonian cult bronzes, but also according to the data of the ancient authors on the beliefs of the Paeonians, it is indisputable that these are objects in the service of the cult of the sun.⁷⁴

⁷³ Bouzek J. 1974; Kilian K, 1975

⁷⁴ Vasileva M. 1994, 21–27, Mitrevski D. 1999, 85

Their strong production is a result of the rise of metallurgy at that time, which allowed the emergence of numerous shapes with local specifics in performance, as well as with different chemical composition of bronze.

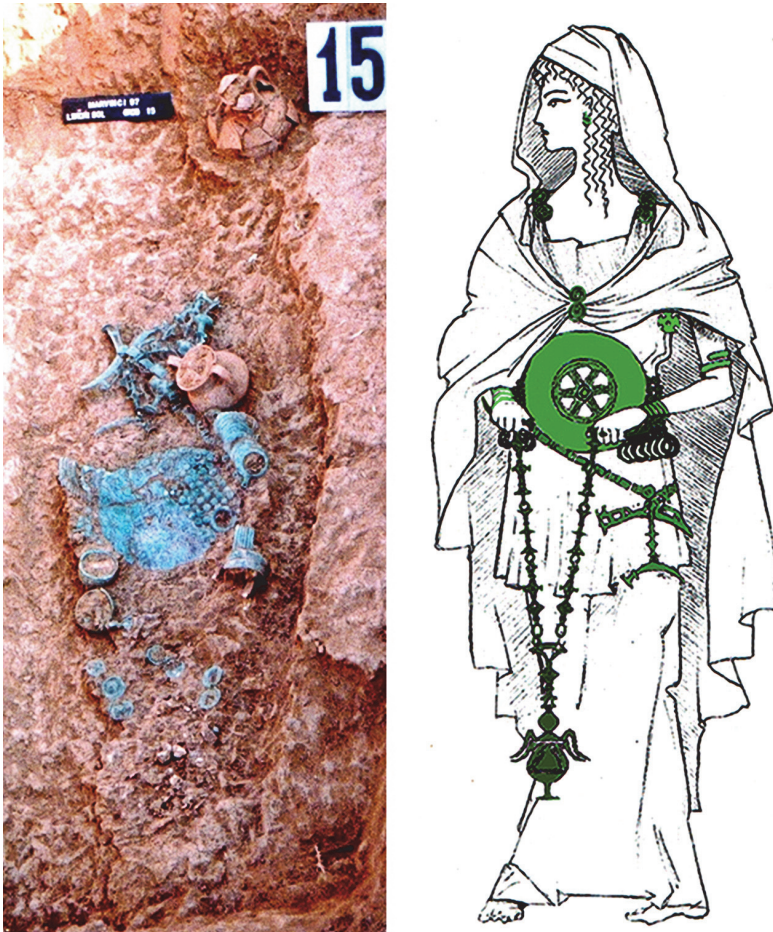


Fig. 92 The grave 15 from Marvinci necropolis, known as the grave of a Paeonian priestess

The central area for the production of Paeonian bronzes was probably the territory of the Lower Vardar region, where the so-called southern group of Paeonian cult bronzes stands out (Fig. 93). In addition to it, two other regional groups are evident, the northern and the western. The northern group of Paeonian cult bronzes includes such objects such as those discovered in the Skopje region, along the Middle Vardar and along the valley of Bregalnica (Fig. 94). In contrast, the western group includes the bronzes from Pelagonia and Ohrid region (Fig. 95). All these groups are characterized by the special popularity of individual forms, which have developed their own variants, with noticeable local features.



Fig. 93 South Paeonian group of cult bronzes

The chronological value of the Paeonian cult bronzes should be especially emphasized, which entirely belong to the cultural context of the VII century BC. The comparative analysis of several thousand objects in about 1000 excavated tombs dating from the VII and VI century BC allows us to clearly distinguish two chronological groups, one related mainly to the VII century, the other to the VI century BC. The Paeonian cult bronzes appear only in the context and together with the finds of the older group, the one from the VII century BC. These are not be found either in the eighth nor in the sixth century, so that they are exposed as chronologically very sensitive objects, a real light motif of the time.

In terms of their metallurgical, aesthetic and cultural values, the Paeonian cult bronzes exceed the level and values of the bronze production in the neighboring communities. Some similar objects appear there, but mainly as pendants in function of ordinary jewelry, while such cult bronzes are not

known. The reason for this was probably the direct conditionality of the Paeonian cult bronzes from the specific Paeonian beliefs and ritual actions, which in case of accumulated metallurgical knowledge and rich copper resources have also produced a special aesthetics.



Fig. 94 North Paeonian group of cult bronzes

MYCENAEAN REMINISCENCES

Some phenomena in the Iron Age culture in the territory north of the Aegean world undoubtedly originate from the tradition of the Aegean Bronze Age and appear in the same Mycenaean form, but significantly later, in the local Iron Age conditions. Such phenomena are considered as Mycenaean reminiscences, but despite numerous analyses and various interpretations, these are not yet fully defined. So, the reasons for their occurrence and the mechanisms of their maintenance and development in non-Mycenaean territory are

not yet determined in a satisfactorily manner. They are still a scientific provocation for the scholars who are interested in Iron Age north of the Aegean world.



Fig. 95 Western Paeonian group of cult bronzes

From the findings so far it can be concluded that after the collapse of the Mycenaean civilization, some of its elements continued to be nurtured, not in the Aegean basin but outside, north of the Mycenaean world, in communities which have been in contact with Mycenaean culture and not affected by the destructions crucial for the Mycenaean centers and Mycenaean culture. In conditions of the new Iron Age, these phenomena could not be fully exposed but only latently present. But when historical circumstances were created similar as the Mycenaean, more precisely when the necessary degree of social, economic and cultural development was achieved, these appeared in their full expression as in the Mycenaean Greece.

The most archeological situations are supportive to such assumptions, but all these has first to document the strong enough relations of the lo-

cal Late Bronze Age communities with the Mycenaean world or even Mycenaean settlements. Only in this way, such Mycenaean values could be transferred to the north, and accepted and domesticated there by the local population, to the extent that they could be maintained throughout the whole Iron Age.

In that sense, we have already highlighted the cultural relations of some local communities from the Late Bronze Age with the Mycenaean world, as strong enough to leave deep consequences in the further local development.⁷⁵ On the other hand, written historical sources have also noted contacts that could have produced such phenomena. For example, the participation of the Thracian Cicones and the Paeonians as allies in the Trojan War suggests that they not only had contacts with the Mycenaean world but were a factor in the most significant events and processes of that time in the Aegean basin. Also noteworthy is the fact that a group of Cretans led by Boton have immigrated to the Macedonian region of Bottiaea.

This allows us to believe that the Mycenaean reminiscences are in fact cultural phenomena that have once been already accepted by some communities from the Late Bronze Age north of the Mycenaean world. But, without the necessary conditions for their full manifestation and development through the centuries of the Iron Age, they were only maintained until the creation of an appropriate social and economic structure, similar to the Mycenaean.

Among the first forms that have been adopted in the north was the labrys, or double headed axe, one of the most sacred symbols of imperial and priestly authority in Crete and Mycenae. It gained special popularity in the Macedonian area where since the late Bronze Age it was domesticated as a cult object, related to female, priestly burials like those in the necropolis in Ulanci near Gradsko, Bezhanija near Stip or in Sandanski in Struma valley (Fig 65).⁷⁶ Such objects continued to be used in the early phase of the Iron Age, still as cult objects in special female burials, often as triple labryses (Vergina, Nea Philadelphia, Visoi-Beranci, Vojnik-Kumanovo, Tremnik-Negotino and others) (Fig. 96).⁷⁷

Unlike other objects, labryses were in continuous use and typological development until around the 8th century BC. Therefore, they cannot be considered reminiscences, but they very clearly depict the path and mechanisms of the penetration and maintenance of the Mycenaean ideas north of the Mycenaean world.

⁷⁵ See in the corresponding chapter on Mycenaean culture.

⁷⁶ Mitrevski D. 2003; Митревски 2013, 183–188, Сл. 65 for Ulanci and Bezhanija, Aleksandrov S. et al. 2007, 357; Papazovska A. 2017, 122–124, Fig. 7.

⁷⁷ Andronikos M. 1959, 248; Kilian–Dirlmeir I. 1979; Papazovska A. 2017, 125; Mitrevski D. 1997, Кат. br. 66; Misailidou–Despotidou B. 2008.

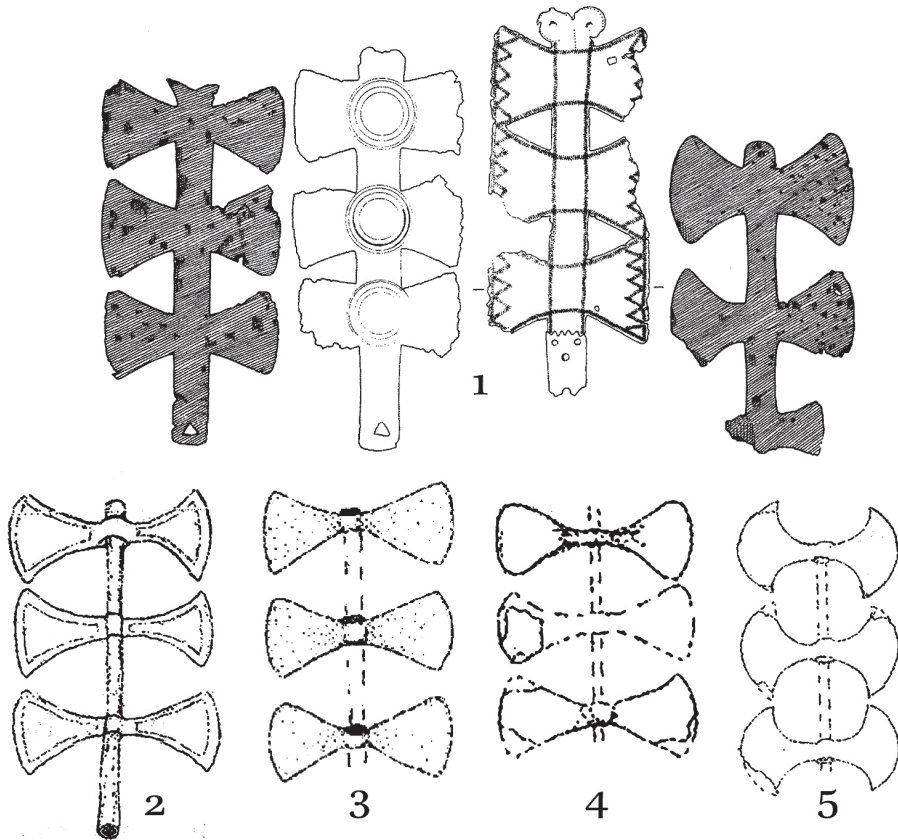


Fig. 96 Triple axes as cult objects from the Early Iron Age: 1 Vergina, 2 Vojnik-Kumanovo, 3 Tremnik-Negotino, 4 Saraj- Brod, 5 Visoi - Beranci

The strongest manifestation of what is called Mycenaean reminiscences are the golden burial masks (Trebenishte, Gorna Porta, Beranci, Archontiko, Sindos, West Chalcidice) (Fig. 97).⁷⁸

Their connection with early Mycenae is indisputable, although there is a time distance of 1000 years among such objects in the Mycenaean shaft tombs. The connection with Mycenae is emphasized also by other accompanying objects, which appear together with the golden masks, such as the numerous gold applications, especially the plastrons and the mouth covering sheets, on which two upright lions are represented, the heraldic symbol of the younger Mycenaean dynasty of the Atreidae (Fig. 98).

Obviously, the inspiration from the Mycenaean civilization and the heroic times of the Late Bronze Age was preserved and nurtured by the Macedonian and Thracian tribes throughout the Iron Age, but the question is in

⁷⁸ Kuzman P. – Ardzanliev P. 2018

what way. In the unfavorable conditions of the Early Iron Age it could not have been manifested in an appropriate way. However, some finds of gold or silver leaves for the mouth are known, such as those from Budur Chiflik-Demir Kapija from the XI-X century or those from the necropolis in Chaushica near Kilkis from the VIII-VII century BC (Fig. 77).⁷⁹ They testify that the idea was still alive throughout the Iron Age.



Fig. 97 Disposition of the golden burial masks (according to P. Kuzman)

At the end of the VI century, a certain centralization was achieved, when the tribal aristocracy stood out with sufficient accumulation of values, military and political power, and specific trade relations were established and fully developed. In such circumstances the old inspirations appeared in their full splendor, as in the early Mycenae.

The custom of covering parts of the body with precious metals, primarily gold, although basically an Egyptian custom that reached Mycenae through Crete, from where, with the spread of the Mycenaean culture, it was accepted in the north. There, according to local beliefs about immortality and the afterlife, it has been maintained, although in rudimentary form, until late Archaic and Classical times. Then, it comes to full expression, with special popularity among the Macedonian and Thracian tribal aristocracy, manifested through the famous grave gifts from Trebenishta or Aiane, through Archonti-

⁷⁹ Mitrevski D. 1997, Kat. N. 22, Kilijan K. 1975; Casson S. 1926; Fig. 53

co and Sindos to Duvanli in the east, as an expression, basically as a single funeral ideology.⁸⁰ A similar line of connection can be drawn between the Mycenaean and Thracian-Macedonian burial forms.

Leading form in the Mycenaean necropolises were the so-called chamber tomb or tombs recessed in the rocky terrain. Such tomb structures are found later, in southern Thrace, together with the Dolmens, but limited mainly to the eastern Rhodopes, more precisely in the area that was most exposed to Mycenaean influences, such as the territory of the Homeric Cicones. They have basically the same features as the Mycenaean chamber tomb, but were in use from the 12th / 11th century throughout the Iron Age until the early antiquity (Fig. 99).⁸¹



Fig. 98 Golden leafs and overbreasts with lion scene: 1,2,3 Trebenista, 4 Aiane

These appeared on the Macedonian territory much later, in the centuries of the Macedonian Empire, as common grave forms, strikingly similar to the Mycenaean chamber tomb (Marvinci, Prilep, Bitola and others).⁸² Probably the Thracian and Macedonian rock cut or chamber tombs were influenced by the Mycenaean idea which they practiced in their own way.

⁸⁰ Popovic V. 1966; Kuzman P. – Ardjanlijev P. 2018, 59–63, Fig. 1; Кузман П. 2013, 436–441, Fig. 38–42; Karamitrou–Mentessidi G. 2008, Fig. 14

⁸¹ Delev P. 1984, 27; Megaliths in Thrace 1976, 82–99

⁸² Stankovski J. – Temelkovski A. 2017, 49–58

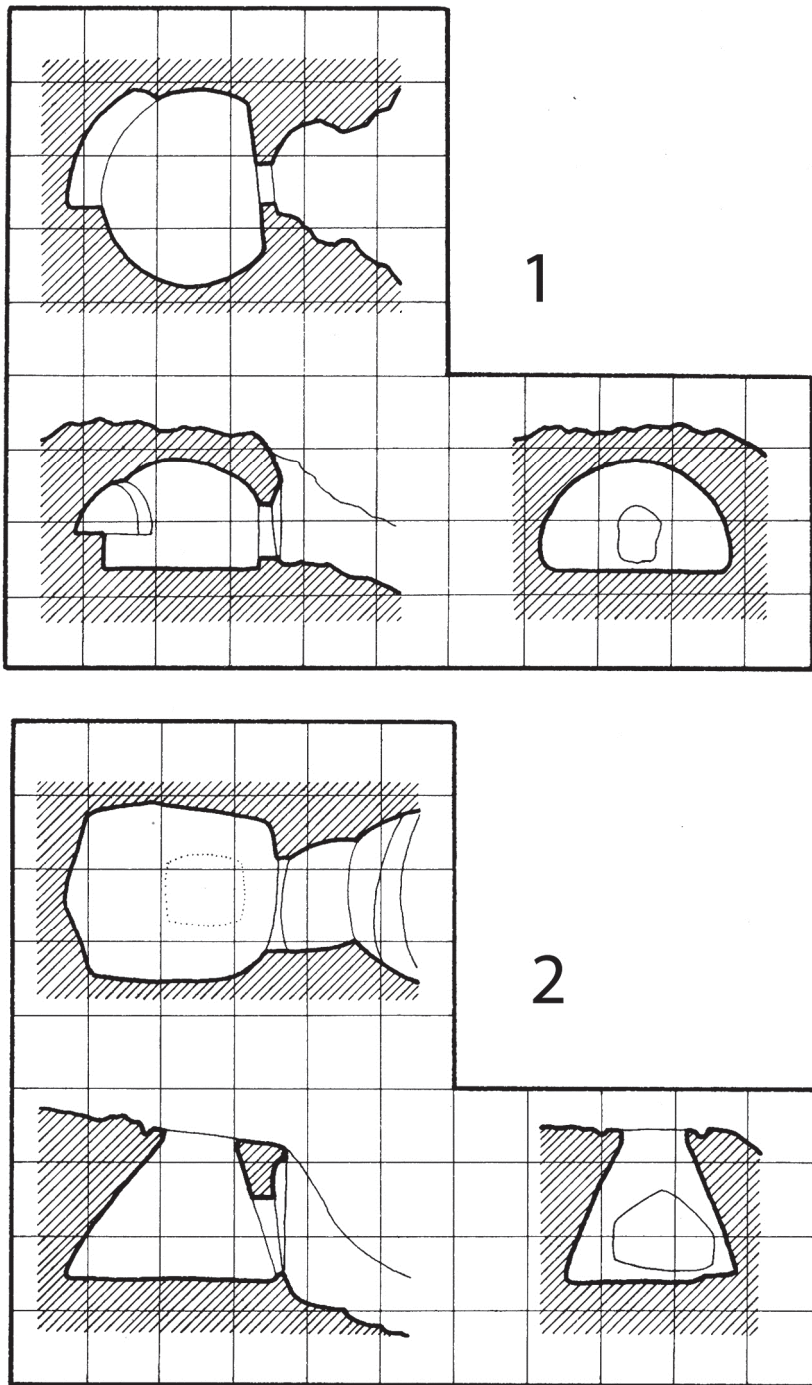


Fig. 99 Some examples of the so-called Chamber Graves in Rodope region:
1 Kodza Tepe – Ovchevo, 2 Vodenicharsko

Similar processes took place in the planning and organization of the first ancient centers in Macedonia and Thrace, which are much closer to the Mycenaean than to the classical principles. Thus, the early ancient cities, with a fortified acropolis and outer defensive wall, have the acropolis, similar to the Mycenaean centers, as a specially protected area - an inner citadel for the palace and the ruling family. The best examples for this are the cities of Bylazora as the capital of the Paeonian rulers and the Thracian capital of Seuthopolis, where typical hearths or altars are found such as those in Pylos, Mycenae, Tiryns (Fig. 100).⁸³



Fig. 100 The cult hearth from Bylazora

All the mentioned phenomena from the Iron Age and early antiquity can be considered as a continuation of the Mycenaean tradition in terms of Iron Age local cultures north of the Aegean world. It is essentially a manifestation of nurturing similar cultural values and similar needs, although in different historical backgrounds, but with a common tradition since the Bronze Age.

⁸³ Митревски Д. 2016; Mitrevski D. 2019; Димитров П. Д. 1984, 171 ; Чичикова М. 1975, 181–190

CONCLUSION

The communities north of the Aegean world through the Bronze and Iron Ages have passed all the stages of development until their final formation as the first people, attested in the historical sources. If we follow the continuity in their cultural development, it will take us back, to the early Bronze Age or to the 3rd millennium BC.

At the time when the so-called Cycladic culture appears and the Minoan civilization develops in the Aegean basin, the new Indo-European communities are stabilized in the north, in the interior of the Balkans. Throughout this entire period of Early Bronze Age development, they have gone through the same cultural processes and developed common cultural values throughout the entire territory, from the Albanian Adriatic coast to the Black Sea coast in the east. They have culturally been oriented to the north and organically connected with the Northern Balkans and the Lower Danube region, and basically have a unique cultural development without significant influences from outside. Only in some regions there are objects found from outside, exclusively made as luxury items, mostly gold, silver or electrum jewelry, coming either from the north of the Danube-Carpathian region or from the southeast, from the east Aegean and western Anatolia regions. These items appear as grave or votive gifts and it only confirms the existence of trade in goods, and only in the regions where old communication lines have already been routed, and through which the process of Indo-Europeanization in the Balkans took place. The other regions, especially the Macedonian areas, were not exposed to some significant influences from outside. In any case, during the third and first half of the second millennium, similar archeological manifestations appear on the entire territory north of the Aegean world, documenting a unique character and level of social life, unique types of settlements, forms of burial and burial customs, cult places and beliefs, artistic conceptions and most of all a unique material culture. That is why science speaks of a unique area, often called the Balkan-Danube cultural complex of the Early Bronze Age. All manifestations in these areas are fundamentally different from those in the Aegean basin, and depended primarily on the regional cha-

racteristics of the terrain, local resources and the character of the local economy.

At this early phase of establishment of the Indo-European cultural values, it is evident that basically the same phenomena are found on the entire territory in the interior of the Balkans. For example, in the plain-agricultural regions there are settlements of the old still Neolithic type of the so-called tell or tumba, no matter whether it is the Pelagonia Plain, Thessaloniki basin or the Thracian Plain. In spite of that, in the livestock or mining areas, the same small fortified settlements in more dominant positions have been documented, whether it is about the so-called gradishte settlements in Albania, in the northern parts of the Republic of Macedonia, along Struma or in the Rhodope region.

The same thing happened in the sphere of burial, where exactly the great variety of burial forms is a common denominator for the entire territory north of the Aegean world in the Early Bronze Age. Thus, cremation and inhumation could be practiced simultaneously in the same region, in flat necropolises or under tumuli. Even the old Neolithic burial custom was still practiced in some settlements. A special phenomenon is the tumular structures with a central-pit grave and burial in the so-called hocker position as a typical Indo-European custom. Such examples have been discovered in several localities from Albania to Thrace and the Black Sea coast. In Macedonia, with its plains and strong Neolithic heritage, the process of Indo-Europeanization was slower, and with it the acceptance of new Indo-European burial forms and customs, too.

A special mark of the Early and Middle Bronze Age is given by the open-air sanctuaries, in high positions with various structures, mostly hollowed out in rock, as the most famous are known those in the northern parts of Pelagonia, in the Kumanovo-Kratovo area or in the Rhodopes and Southeastern Bulgaria. All their characteristics point to unique religious needs and a unique way to practice them.

However, the strongest expression of cultural unity in the early Bronze Age was the production of pottery. At that time, new ceramography with new vessel shapes appeared on the entire territory in the interior of the Balkans, which would later develop locally through the next phases of the Bronze Age and Iron Age. Thus, the Early Bronze Age pottery is considered to be the source of all later pottery in the area north of the Aegean world, which best summarizes the unique values of the common cultural basis of the Early and Middle Bronze Ages.

In the next phase of the Bronze Age, the communities will begin their local development by creating and affirming their own cultural features,

which will be especially pronounced during the Iron Age, when it will lead to a clear separation of the Illyrian tribes in the west, Paeonian-Macedonian in the middle and Thracian communities in the east. Contacts with the Aegean world, which will be established and nurtured in the Late Bronze Age or during the second half of the second millennium BC, will also play an important role on that path. However, these contacts were mainly of a commercial nature, initiated by the Mycenaean needs for natural resources, so that they were limited to certain micro-regions of special Mycenaean interest.

All the communities of the Late Bronze Age were in the deep shadow of Mycenaean civilization in the south, in mainland Greece. They were never part of the Mycenaean system and culture; on the contrary, they were outside of any Mycenaean integration. Only certain micro-regions have made certain contacts with the Mycenaean world and thus managed to ensure faster economic and cultural development, and stand out from other local groups. Such were the valleys of some rivers that led from the seashores to the areas rich in natural resources (copper, gold, silver, wood, etc.), which were lacking in the Mycenaean world. The first lines of communication were created through these routes and later play a key role in the further cultural and historical development.

To the west, such was the copper-rich Korcha-Kolonja region in southeastern Albania, with a route penetrated along the valley of the rivers Shkumba and Devoll. There, the local so-called Devoll or Korcha cultural group was formed. The situation is similar with the valley of Haliacmon river, with the strongest Mycenaean influences discovered in the middle and lower reaches of the river. Such a situation was mostly expressed in the valley of Vardar, where the Lower Vardar Valley, a region rich in copper ore was of special Mycenaean interest, as well as the gold deposits in Markova River in the Skopje region. A special cultural group was formed there, the so-called Vardar or Ulanci group of the Late Bronze Age. Mycenaean influences in the east penetrated the valley of Lower Struma but also in Mesta and Maritsa, and from there they have reached the gold and copper rich Rhodope areas, especially in the eastern Rhodopes.

By spreading the influences of the developed Mycenaean civilization in the, at that time, deep prehistoric environments in the north, the local communities there were given the opportunity to create special cultural values, which were different from those in the surrounding areas, which remained outside the Mycenaean influence. The communities that were not reached by Mycenaean influences continued to nurture the values of the local Bronze Age.

Already at the end of the XIII century, the entire Eastern Mediterranean was affected by turbulent events, military campaigns, and north-south migrations that will last for the next two centuries. Initially, continental areas such as Macedonia were not significantly affected by these events, which took place mainly on sea routes. However, at the end of the XII and in the XI century, incursions of the Danube and Central Balkan communities towards the Aegean took place exactly through Macedonia, mainly along the Morava-Varadar line, but also along Struma and Marica rivers. Although their final destination was the Aegean region with already destroyed Mycenaean centers, these long-lasting migrations left significant consequences, especially in the areas along the main communications. The previous continuous development of the Bronze Age was interrupted by the permanent threat and burning of all settlements on the way to the south.

The long duration of these processes led to the stationing for a certain period of the new settlers from the north at certain points, and in some places even to a certain coexistence with the domestic Bronze Age population. Among the archeological remains of that time, the culture of the invaders is clearly distinguished from the local culture of the local population. Thus, in the ruins of the destroyed settlements, items are found, mostly bronze weapons from the northern Balkan provenance. On the other hand, in the new, renovated settlements, a new type of Balkan architecture appears with new forms and decorations of ceramics characteristic for the Danube and Central Balkan areas. However, the most obvious difference is in the burial, where, at the expense of the traditional way of burial, mainly with contracted inhumation, new necropolises appear with cremation of the dead in urns. The bearers of such a custom were the new settlers from the north, mainly from the Danube area, where such a way of burial was a common ritual during the Late Bronze Age. The disposition of such necropolises clearly reveals the routes of the penetrating Danube and Northern Balkan communities to the Aegean and Western Anatolia.

As a consequence of these events in the next phase of Early Iron Age development, a serious decline in life intensity has been documented, so that some regions, especially those along the main communications, were almost completely depopulated. It is believed that the population retreated to more conservative and naturally more protected areas, where they remained until complete stabilization of the circumstances, around the VIII century BC. However, even in that phase of stagnation and conservatism, the process of physiognomy of the new Iron Age culture took place.

The culture of the Iron Age emerged on the basis of the old Bronze Age and supplemented with a number of new Balkan elements, which were

accepted in the course of the processes mentioned in the previous centuries of the transitional period. Thus, the whole territory north of the Aegean world was culturally oriented to the north and was part of the inner Balkan world of the Iron Age. The communities formed since the Early Iron Age continued their further local development as separate units.

During the Full Iron Age (VIII-VI centuries) these units have already been completely established and ethnically and culturally recognizable, so it is considered that the Iron Age has been the period of the final formation of the Paleo-Balkanic peoples. With their further continuous development, we come to the historical times and first ancient authors, and they reveal to us their names and territory in which they form their first political communities of the hereditary monarchical type.

The further course of historical development is well known from the writings of the ancient authors, primarily Herodotus and Thucydides. Archeology, on the other hand, clearly documents the process of gradual acceptance of the values of classical Hellenic culture, which already at the end of the V and during the IV century BC largely led to cultural unification of the entire territory.

In any case, the cultural basis of all communities north of the Aegean world has been deeply Balkan, and their development was the result of a millennium of building, on a common Bronze Age basis, through local Iron Age development until the unification in the first political communities. So, it is no accident that these peoples shared similar cultural, economic, and political values during pre-Roman antiquity and had the same relations toward the Hellenic world to south of them.

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