

ALEKSANDAR BULATOVIĆ, Institute of Archaeology, Belgrade
BARRY MOLLOY, University College Dublin, Dublin
VOJISLAV FILIPOVIĆ, Institute of Archaeology, Belgrade

THE BALKAN-AEGEAN MIGRATIONS REVISITED: CHANGES IN MATERIAL CULTURE AND SETTLEMENT PATTERNS IN THE LATE BRONZE AGE CENTRAL BALKANS IN LIGHT OF NEW DATA¹

e-mail: abulatovic3@gmail.com

Abstract. – Alleged “Aegean migrations” have long been seen as underlying major transformations in lifeways and identity in the Balkans in the 12th–11th centuries BC. Revisiting the material culture and settlement changes in the north-south “routeway” of the Velika Morava–Južna Morava–Vardar/Axios river valleys, this paper evaluates developments within local communities. It is argued that mobility played an important role in social change, including an element of inward migration from the north. We argue that rather than an Aegean end point, these river valleys themselves were the destination of migrants. The prosperity this stimulated within those communities led to increased networks of personal mobility that incorporated elements from communities from the wider Carpathians and the north of Greece over the course of two centuries.

Key words. – Late Bronze Age, Velika Morava–Vardar/Axios corridor, Aegean, absolute chronology, channel-decorated pottery of Belegiš II–Gava type, small scale movements, migration

Cultural connections between groups occupying the Balkan Peninsula and Greece intensified at the end of the Bronze Age, particularly around 1200 to 1000 BC. This was a time of substantial, crisis-driven social change in societies in the Mycenaean polities to the south and the Carpathian Basin to the north. In this paper we explore changes that took place in the societies in the river corridor of the Morava–Vardar/Axios, which links these two regions. We argue that the communities living there were transformed by new patterns of mobility and migration and that, in turn, these communities became dominant mediators of cultural change. Rather than being a passive conduit linking major centres of influence to the north and south, in the wake of the collapse of political systems at those centres, communities in these valleys became influential on an increased scale. This is characterised by a greater connectivity and cultural coalescence during the transitional period between the Bronze and Iron Age.

These new connections are visible primarily through ceramics and mortuary practices, and they have sometimes been explained as the product of large-scale population migrations associated with the Mycenaean collapse.² As a field, archaeology is increasingly comfortable with revisiting questions of the social impacts of human mobility, though this requires adequate theorisation.³ As our understanding of migration and mobility has developed in recent years, the challenge is increasingly to explain the material

¹ We wish to dedicate this article to our late colleague and friend Alexandru Szentmiklosi, whose expertise on prehistoric ceramics continues to underpin advances in our knowledge of Bronze Age societies.

² Miložić 1948/49; Desborough 1964; Garašanin 1973; Stefanovich 1973; Catling & Catling 1981; Mitrevski 2003 and others.

³ Heyd 2017; Kiriati and Knappett 2017; Kristiansen et al. 2017.

patterns arising through shifts in the nature of the movement of people and less to question the movement itself.⁴

Looking to the river corridors connecting Europe and The Aegean, material culture clearly demonstrates that there was intensified interaction after 1200 BC and that mobility of ideas included the movement of people at some level.⁵ Scholarly opinions on the extent of mobility vary from denial that it happened to Aegean migration models, which claimed mass migrations from Central Europe via the Balkans caused the fall of the Mycenaean Palatial system, and there are many shades in between these extremes.⁶ One of the inspirations behind the Aegean migration model was the obvious changes in material culture and settlement patterns in the Central Balkans, particularly in the Južna Morava Valley at the same time as the collapse of Mycenaean polities in the 12th century BC. This also took account of the Morava and Vardar/Axios valleys as the primary overland conduit linking the Aegean world and continental Europe, first identified by Gordon Childe.⁷

The Morava flows south to north, where it joins the Danube and a short overland journey to the south brings one to the north-south flowing Vardar/Axios river. While the importance of this corridor remains relevant for understanding cultural change, the mass migration model lacks material support and explanatory power. However, as will be argued below, material evidence for mobility and connectivity still requires an explanation, particularly because of similarities between pottery shapes and decoration from the Central Balkans and the lower Vardar/Axios valley.⁸ The character of changes have been interpreted differently, but all authors agree on one thing – the connections between these regions increase in scale and visibility in the period of 1200–1000 BC. For this reason, this paper focuses on the chronology and the character of interconnections within these river valleys.

We will address potential consequences of changes in mobility patterns, including migration, for life-ways of populations during the phase termed the “Transitional period” in relative chronology, which bridges the Bronze to Iron Ages.⁹ Building on the current state of the art, this paper introduces new data, including absolute dates, which provide insights into the developmental sequences of settlements and pottery. It is demonstrated that beginning in the 12th century BC, the steady increase in influence of ceramic styles, but also metalwork forms, from the Pannonian Plain re-

veals a fundamental shift in the expression of cultural identity in the Morava Valley. We also tentatively propose that a contextual analysis of the relative abundance of the intrusive Belegiš II–Gava style¹⁰ identifies a differential reception to this material culture in upland and lowland sites.

Ultimately, given the close relationship between pottery shapes and domestic practices, particularly concerning mundane rather than prestige forms, this is indicative of inward migration. The processes underlying these developments contribute to an increase in networking and prosperity across the wider region. Overall, we argue for migration into the Morava preceding an expansion of interaction networks through which both people and ideas spread south over a multi-decadal scale into the Vardar/Axios valley and down to the northern shores of the Aegean.

Material culture and settlement patterns of the Late Bronze Age

The basin of the Južna Morava, as well as the area west of it, was inhabited in the late Bronze Age by people who made and used a characteristic pottery style termed the Brnjica group.¹¹ The pottery considered characteristic for this group is well-defined, and so we can be confident in the attribution of the finds to this group. Accepting that use of a pottery style was a choice and does not equate to intrinsic identity, that very choice demands that we recognise this use as

⁴ Anthony 1997; Burmeister 2000; Hackenbeck 2008; Dziegielewski, Gawlik, Przybyła 2010; B. P. C. Molloy 2016a; Francesco Iacono 2019.

⁵ Bulatović 2011; B. P. C. Molloy 2016b; Ruppenstein 2020.

⁶ See in: Milojević 1948/49; Chadwick 1958, 11; Desborough 1964; Vermuele 1974; Catling & Catling 1981; Drews 1988, 207; Bulatović 2011; B. P. C. Molloy 2018 and cited literature.

⁷ Childe 1939: 85.

⁸ Milojević 1948/49; Garašanin 1973; Stefanovich 1973; Bouzek 1985; Stojić 1997; Mitrevski 2003; Bulatović 2011; Bulatović 2019; Ruppenstein 2020.

⁹ According to R. Vasić the Transitional period covers the time span of Reinecke's Ha A and Ha B phases (1997, 149–151).

¹⁰ This paper does not analyse the Southern Pannonia region, so any discussion about fluted pottery attribution (being part of the Gava complex or Belegiš II group) goes beyond the remit of this paper. We use the term channel-decorated pottery and/or Belegiš II–Gava style. This term has an extended usage in the archaeological literature and would equate with Belegiš IIb or III in rarely used schema (Medović 2001; Tasić, Tasić 2003; Bulatović 2009; Bulatović, Filipović 2017 etc.).

¹¹ Srejović 1960; Lazić 1996; Stojić 2001; Bulatović, Stankovski 2012, 351–382 and cited bibliography.

participation in a cultural norm.¹² In areas to the south, pottery is sometimes attributed to this group in sites in the lower course of the Južna Morava, where elements of the Brnjica tradition are seen incorporated into the stylistic conventions of another distinct ceramic stylistic tradition, the Paraćin group. This group also has a distinct developmental history stylistically speaking, and the incorporation of Brnjica elements is not universal. Recognising that styles represent cultural choices, this suggests both familiarity with these pottery traditions from the north and a degree of permeability of the communities using Paraćin pottery.

Pottery and absolute chronology

At this point, we would like to introduce some of the typical pottery and metalwork styles which will help us to define both chronological and social interrelations within the Central Balkans and between the people there and their neighbours. This is necessarily descriptive and detailed and is supported by illustrations throughout. The typical pottery inventory for the Brnjica group includes S profiled bowls (Pl. I/5, Pl. III/1, 2, Pl. IV/4, Pl. V/2–4, Pl. VI/11–13), semi-globular or conical cups with one handle that extends above the rim (Pl. II/3, Pl. III/3, 4, Pl. IV/7), globular or pear-shaped beakers with two handles that extend above the rim (Pl. II/5, Pl. IV/6), pear-shaped or ovoid amphorae with everted and thickened rims with a ring-shaped inner edge (the so-called Brnjica rim) (Pl. I/2, 6, 11, Pl. II/8, 9, Pl. III/5, 6, Pl. IV/9, 10, Pl. V/6, Pl. VI/14–16), handles with a knee-shape profile and a fan-shaped top (the so-called *slatina* type) (Pl. I/8, Pl. VI/20, Pl. VII/19, Pl. IX/9, 10) and a few other shapes occasionally encountered. These are discussed in more detailed literature.¹³

The site of Svinjarička Čuka is so far the oldest known site of the Brnjica group with an absolute date from the Late Bronze Age.¹⁴ We will also consider the site of Hisar, which is an enclosed site on a low hill overlooking the river plain. This site has been systematically excavated and provides the latest absolute dates for this group (Tab. 1/7).¹⁵ At Hisar, changes can be recognised in the typical pottery styles recovered, with some forms being quite atypical for the Brnjica group. It is apparent that the duration of the Brnjica group extends from the beginning of the 15th century BC at the earliest to the beginning of the 13th century (probability 95.4%), or potentially the middle of the 15th century and the middle of the 13th century (probability 68.2%) (Tab. 1)¹⁶.

Alongside pottery considered characteristic of the Brnjica group, there is also pottery of different styles recorded alongside Brnjica sherds at sites in all regions of this group. These present features of other, older, pottery traditions from this same region. Such finds are also found in neighbouring areas, such as sites where Paraćin group pottery dominates. These older forms are primarily characterised by their ornaments in the form of incised spirals or rectilinear motifs, rows of triangular or oblique punctate dots, often filled with white incrustation. They may also have incised lines that form geometric motifs, inscribed or hatched triangles or deltoids, and incised strips filled with double rows of punctate dots. These ornaments, both in technique and motifs, are very close to pottery from the Oltenia lowlands and the region between the Balkan Mountains and the Danube in the Middle and Late Bronze Ages. They have been recorded in several of the pottery groups in the area, and there may be an element of these being defined differently by different authors, variously called Balta Sarata, Verbicioara, Govora, Cherkovna, Zimnichea–Plovdiv, Tei IV.¹⁷

The shapes of these vessels that appear sporadically in contexts alongside pottery of the Brnjica group are most commonly a globular beaker with two high-set handles, often decorated with motifs of an incised spiral (Fig. 3).¹⁸ This type of beaker also appears in the area of the neighbouring Paraćin group.¹⁹ In that area, it was even more commonly found than in the area of the Brnjica group, so it could be said that it was a favourite “non-local” element in the LBA ceramic groups of the Central Balkans. In a previous study that deals with these beakers, it was stated that they were a popular pottery form across a vast area

¹² Roberts, Van der Linden 2011.

¹³ Stojić 2001; Bulatović, Stankovski 2012.

¹⁴ The excavations have lasted from 2018 until today, and are conducted by the Institute for Oriental and European Archaeology, AAS, Vienna and the Institute of Archaeology, Belgrade, within the project “NEOTECH project P32096 (FWF)” (Horejs et al. 2019 and cited literature).

¹⁵ Filipović et al. 2020, Suppl. Dataset.

¹⁶ If we take the oldest date of the appearance of Belegiš II pottery at Hisar as the date of the end of the Brnjica group’s existence, although the characteristic Brnjica material still exists but together with BII-G pottery, at least on Hisar.

¹⁷ Guma 1997; Crăciunescu 2004; Hansel 1976; Schuster 2003.

¹⁸ Bulatović, Stankovski 2012, T. V/7, VI/15; Jevtić 1990, T. IV/1, V/2.

¹⁹ Stojić 1997.

from Wallachia in the north, to the Aegean in the south and from the Velika Morava and Južna Morava valleys in the west to today's eastern Bulgaria – an area of almost 150,000 km².²⁰

However, they are most numerous on the north-western coast of the Aegean Sea and in the Wallachian lowlands. One of the identified variants is numerous in the Velika Morava Valley, and so it is clear that this region was participating in networks linking Aegean and south Pannonian Plain communities – that is, they were active agents in this process and not passive elements in a communication corridor.

Another connection between these distant areas can be identified in the tradition of using encrustation as a means of decorating vessels. Encrustation had been a dominant mode of pottery decoration in Oltenia and south-eastern Pannonia since the LBA,²¹ and from there it may have spread into the Central Balkans (including Svinjaricka Čuka, Pl. I/3, 10, 11),²² as well as on the northern Aegean coast.²³

Another type of decoration that occasionally appears on Brnjica pottery but cannot be considered characteristic of this group is channel decoration. These are usually executed in oblique orientations.

No	Site	Context	Lab. Code	BP	cal BC	Published
1	Svinjarička čuka	LBA cultural layer	MAMS 34886	3140±25	1444–1331 (68.2%) 1494–1309 (95.4%)	Horejs et al. 2018
2	Medijana	feature 2-dwelling structure	MAMS 27601	3046±26	1380–1271 (68.2%) 1400–1220 (95.4%)	Bulatović et al. forthcoming
3	Medijana	“in front of the LBA construction”	BC 6	?	1280±90 (1370–1190)	Coles, Harding 1979
4	Svinjište	dwelling structure, wooden hilt	BETA 433117	3030±30	1370–1225 (68.2%) 1390–1210 (95.4%)	Bulatović et al. forthcoming
5	Svinjište	dwelling structure, wooden hilt	MAMS 27600	3015±25	1369–1215 (68.2%) 1384–1113 (95.4%)	Bulatović et al. forthcoming
6	Končulj, Gradište	Trench 1, horizon 2	OxA-38792	3008±24	1304–1190 82.6% 1378–1131 95.4%	This study
7	Hisar, Leskovac	feature 7, sector 1/2006	Poz-105052	2965±35	1255–1137 (68%) 1280–1053 (95.4%)	Filipović et al. 2020
8	Pelince	ritual place, zone IV, quadrate II22	MAMS 31470	2939±21	1207–1115 (68.2%) 1214–1057 (95.4%)	Bulatović et al. 2018
9	Hisar, Leskovac	feature 7, sector 1/2006	Poz-98085	2920±35	1192–1062 (68%) 1218–1011 (95.4%)	Filipović et al. 2020
10	Hisar, Leskovac	feature 15/2002	OxA-38793	2917±24	1135–1026 (66.5%) 1208–1026 (95.4%)	This study
11	Ranutovac, Meanište	feature 45	OxA-38722	2902±22	1131–1011 (85.6%) 1193–1011 (95.4%)	This study
12	Hisar, Leskovac	feature 25/2002	OxA-38719	2883±22	1127–995 (94.8%) 1187–981 (95.4%)	This study
13	Ranutovac, Meanište	feature 3c	OxA-38723	2846±23	1059–924 (88.7%) OxCal 4.4.2 1086–925 (95.4%)	This study
14	Ranutovac, Meanište	feature 26	OxA-38724	2824±22	1021–911 (90.3%) 1047–911 (95.4%) OxCal 4.4.2	This study
15	Ranutovac, Meanište	feature 3b	OxA-38725	2614±22	818–783 (95.4%) 809–795 (68%)	This study

Tab. 1. Absolute dates for LBA and Transitional period in the Južna Morava Basin

Табела 1. Абсолютни датуми позној бронзаној доба и прелазној периода у долини Јужне Мораве

They are commonly wide and deep motifs or they may be executed in vertical short and shallow channels, mainly on the bellies of both bowls and beakers (Pl. IV/2, 3, 8, Pl. V/4). From a chronological perspective, it is important that this channel decoration has not yet been found on sites dated to the early phase of the Brnjica group (Br C–C/D), such as Svinjarička Čuka, Medijana and Svinjište.²⁴ The earliest appearance of channel decoration in the area of the Brnjica group is recorded in Končulj (Pl. IV/2, 3), in a context dated to the 13th century calBC (Tab. 1). At Končulj, the channelled ornaments are reminiscent of those on the pottery of Middle Bronze Age groups in southern Pannonia and Late Bronze Age groups in western Serbia. That said, the vessel shapes on which this occurs in the Južna Morava basin have few if any similarities with the vessels of the LBA in western Serbia.²⁵ The semi-globular channel-decorated deep bowl from Končulj (Pl. IV/2) has its closest analogies in the Balta Sarata IV group in southern Transylvania, which also dates to the 13th century BC.²⁶ A bowl very similar to the S-profiled bowl with two handles and short channel decoration elements on the belly from Končulj (Pl. IV/3) was discovered in a LBA grave in Dobrača, Šumadija.²⁷ These vessels, mostly bowls with bellies decorated with wide, oblique channel decoration, closely reminiscent of the bowls with twisted bellies characteristic of the Brnjica group, are very common in the Wietenberg group in Transylvania.²⁸ Channel decoration as a decorative device was present in this group from the end of the Early Bronze Age (phase A).²⁹

Channel decoration executed in a similar manner to that found on Brnjica vessels was recorded on vessels from the late phase C of the Wietenberg group, which corresponds to the end of the period Br C in Central European chronology.³⁰ Other analogies with the pottery of the Wietenberg group can be observed in this group, including handles with plastic extensions at the apex, spiral ornaments, incised or hatched triangles, and double rows of opposite triangular punctates.³¹ Other features known from the Wietenberg group include series of punctates (prick-marks), as seen on sherds from the sites of Svinjarička Čuka (Pl. I/1–4, 9–12) and Mediana (Pl. II/4, 5, 10, 11, 14), and other sites where Brnjica group pottery is dominant in assemblages.³²

Oblique channel decoration is also a common motif on pottery at LBA sites in the south-eastern part of the Carpathian Basin, and dates from the end of 16th to the early 13th century calBC.³³

Regarding the absolute chronology of this atypical pottery of the Brnjica group with oblique channel decoration, it is documented on vessels dated to the 15th Century BC. This appears to correspond to the very beginning of the group, based on stratified finds from Svinjarička Čuka (Pl. I/1–4, 9–12) and Mediana. At this latter site, along with ceramics characteristic of the Brnjica group and some with similarities to the Paraćin group, globular beakers decorated with spirals were also found (Pl. II/5, 11).³⁴ A house excavated at Mediana is dated between the beginning of the 15th and the last quarter of the 13th century BC (probability 95.4%), and potentially between the first quarter of the 14th and the second quarter of the 13th century BC (probability 68.2%). These dates largely coincide with an older ¹⁴C date from Mediana from several decades ago (Tab. 1/2, 3). Similar finds occur in a later context at Končulj, which is dated to the 13th–12th century BC (Tab. 1/6), as well as many sites with Paraćin and Brnjica group ceramics in Pomoravlje. These contexts are not dated, but finds from contexts from dated sites

²⁰ Bulatović 2011, Map. 1.

²¹ Bulatović 2011, 122, notes 11–16.

²² Jevtić 1990, 98; Stojić 1997; Bulatović, Stankovski 2012, T. IV/33, 40, 41.

²³ Hochstetter 1984, Taf. 13/5, 18/1, 27/8, 35/1; Wardle, Wardle 2007, Pl. 14; Andreou, Psaraki 2007, Fig. 6. Pl. 4.

²⁴ We are expecting soon a new absolute date from one semi pithouse from the Hisar settlement. The bottom of the object was on virgin soil and definitely represented the earliest settlement horizon on the site, i.e. LBA. In this object, S profiled bowls with wide oblique flutes on the belly were found.

²⁵ Medović, Hansel 1989; Hansel, Medović 1991, Taf. 25/3; Guma 1997, Pl. XLVII/2, XLIX/4, L/1, 2, LIIa etc; Stojić 1998, sl. 1, 6, 9, 13, 15, 20, 26, etc; Filipović 2008, sl. 47, 52; Ljuština 2012, Pr. 61/4, Pr. 66/4, Pr. 104/5, 7, Pr. 105/3, 6, 8; Radojčić 2013, inv. nos. 28, 30, 48.

²⁶ Guma 1997, 68, Pl. LXXII/2–4.

²⁷ Stojić 1998, sl. 20.

²⁸ Boroffka 1994, Taf. 6/3, Taf. 8/7, Taf. 28/1, 2, 4, 5, Taf. 77, Taf. 138/6, Taf. 126/7, Taf. 124/4, etc.

²⁹ Fantaneanu et al. 2013, 177, Fig. 5/1, 6, 10, 11, Fig. 6/2, 3, 5, 6, 8, 9 etc.

³⁰ Boroffka 1994, 288, Tab. 14.

³¹ Boroffka 1994, Taf. 1/7, 12/2, 26/4, 35/1, 7, 38/16, 22, 23, 60/8, 62/3, 85/9, 92/4–8 etc. Some of these ornaments are older and belong to the earlier phases of the Wietenberg group (249–250).

³² Bulatović, Stankovski 2012, T. IV/33, 40, 41, T. XV, T. XXIV/1.

³³ Sava 2020, fig. 27.

³⁴ Bulatović 2008.

indicate they should be dated to approximately the same period – Br C / D–Ha A1.³⁵

Metalwork

We will shift our focus now to metalwork finds which complement the picture evident from the analysis of pottery. Styles of metalwork link societies in a large area encompassing the Velika Morava and Južna Morava valleys and the Vardar/Axios valley, southern Transylvania, southeast Pannonia and the area between the Carpathians and the Balkan Mountains. In the core study area of this paper, there are notably few hoards of bronze objects and bronze finds in general are relatively rare. We will focus only on those objects which have good contextual records.

For a socketed axe from Svinjište (Pl. III/9), close comparanda come from the Mali Izvor near Zaječar and the Sečanj III hoard in Vojvodina,³⁶ the Ovcha Mogila hoard in northern Bulgaria,³⁷ along with items from other hoards from northern and NW Bulgaria. These axes are characterised by their lack of a side loop.³⁸ The main problem with contextualising the socketed axe from Svinjište is the conflict between ¹⁴C dates and the relative typological chronology. It was recovered in a stratified context which is absolutely dated to the 14th to 13th centuries calBC. However, similar pieces from the region would normally be dated to the 12th to 11th centuries BC. For example, the axes of the Ovcha Mogila hoard are good representatives of the type Vrbitisa A, var. E after Dergachev.³⁹ The chronology of these in Central-Northern Bulgaria (the main region where this type of axe is found) should not be placed earlier than Ha A2, i.e. 1100 BC at the earliest. Also, the vast majority of Vrbitisa socketed axes do not have side loops, which is, *grosso modo*, the norm form of Western and Central Europe socketed axes. Several pieces similar to the Svinjište axe have been found in Bosnia⁴⁰ and Italy,⁴¹ where they are also attributed to the Hallstatt A period. Recently, Gavranović and Kapuran have refined the typology of Central Balkan socketed axes.⁴² They attribute the Svinjište axe to their Variant A, which they date to the Ha A2–Ha B1 period. It seems that this variant emerged in the Central Balkan region with elements from the east and west as a “hybrid” form, which, logically speaking, must be younger than the styles it incorporates

A bronze chisel was also recovered from this site (Pl. III/10).⁴³ Channelled chisels similar to the Svinjište specimen are distributed in the lower Danube area

and Black Sea region, where they would be dated ca. 1400–1300 BC,⁴⁴ as would similar forms from the North Caucasus.⁴⁵ However, remains of the casting channels represented as “horns” at the rim are characteristics of later (Ha A–Ha B3) socketed axes, also from the lower Danube area and Black Sea region.⁴⁶

A sickle from Končulj has parallels in the Klenje hoard near Golubac, at the entrance to the Đerdap gorge, which R. Vasić dates to Br D, i.e. the 13th century BC.⁴⁷ However, all other finds from the Klenje hoard should be dated slightly later to Ha A at the earliest.⁴⁸ Specimens similar to the sickle from Končulj were found in Ha A1 hoards from Dipsa and Suseni in Romania. Comparanda also come from Central Europe, but those pieces are dated to Br C1, such as the piece from the Waldshut hoard.⁴⁹ While a specimen from the Gemer hoard (Slovakia) is dated to Br D / Ha A1, a similar sickle was dated as late as Ha C from the Ostrovice Primasowskie hoard from Poland.⁵⁰ This type of sickle was rare in southern Pannonia, and may be connected with Central Europe. The relatively wide chronological span, as well as rarity of this sickle type, further complicate clear dating. Alongside this stylistic dating, the stratigraphic location of the find from Končulj suggests a Br D–Ha A1 date.⁵¹ Given the simplicity of the form and this wide possible date range, the piece from Končulj may probably be dated to the 13th to 12th centuries BC. Finds of this type of sickle this far south would at least accord with, though not prove, an argument for inward migration from the north. A needle with an eyelet was recovered from a Late Bronze Age structure at Velika Humska Čuka. In the same ar-

³⁵ Stojić 1997, 61.

³⁶ Gavranović, Kapuran 2014.

³⁷ Krauß 2005.

³⁸ Černych 1978, 185 and further.

³⁹ Дергачев 2011, 154.

⁴⁰ Žeravica 1993, Taf. 37/495.

⁴¹ Carancini 1984, Tav. 124/3782–83.

⁴² Gavranović, Kapuran 2014, 35.

⁴³ Булатовић 2007, 259, T. LXXX/18.

⁴⁴ Дергачев 2011, 216–222.

⁴⁵ Dergachev, Bockarev 2006, 537, Pl. 111/7.

⁴⁶ Дергачев 2011, 246.

⁴⁷ Vasić 1994, 12–14, Abb. 1, Taf. 1/16.

⁴⁸ Јацановић 1986.

⁴⁹ Primas 1986, taf. 5/78.

⁵⁰ Gedl 1995, taf. 10/154; Furmánek, Novotná 2006, taf. 3/45.

⁵¹ Bulatović, Filipović 2017.

chaeological feature, pottery with Verbicioara elements was discovered together with Brnjica pottery.⁵²

In addition to these elements originating from the north, metalwork influences from the south and east can be found in the area where Brnjica pottery was used. Particularly in the southern parts of the Južna Morava Valley, influences from the material culture of the communities of the Vardar/Axios valley are attested. Most notably, these include matt painted pottery and local variants of Mycenaean Type Ci swords, which, along with other various finds, have been discussed in detail recently.⁵³ In the area of the Brnjica pottery group, there are four of these variants of Mycenaean swords – two from Iglarevo,⁵⁴ one from Tetovo⁵⁵ and one from Guvnište near Aleksinac.⁵⁶ To these we should add a marble pommel common to this type of sword, which was found at Gorešnica near Skopje.⁵⁷ If we draw an imaginary diagonal line from the southern Adriatic shores to the Lower Danube region we can find several similar pieces, which are probably dated between the 15th and 13th centuries BC on the basis of similarities with Mycenaean forms.⁵⁸

Finds of bronze daggers and knives also share similarities with Mycenaean types dated to the LH IIIA to B ceramic horizon in southern Greece.⁵⁹ Finds from Grave 7 at Klučka near Skopje are also relevant here, particularly due to the prevalence of Brnjica ceramics in the cemetery.⁶⁰ These are sections of cut and perforated boar tusks which are said by Mitrevski to be similar in size and design to those used for boar tusk helmets in Greece.⁶¹ Bronze double-axes are also found in the same area as Brnjica pottery, particularly those of the Kravari and Kilindir type.⁶² Axes of this form from the wider area of the Južna Morava Valley pieces are known from the vicinity of Niš as well as⁶³ Staničenje⁶⁴ and Babušnica.⁶⁵ A casting mould from the area of Babušnica is the only known example of Kilindir-type axes in the Central Balkan area.⁶⁶ These axe types are distributed widely, if in low numbers, with pieces coming from near the Adriatic and Black Sea coasts (respectively “Dalmatia” and Royak) and the southern Pannonian Plain (“Hungary”).

Other tools/weapons of relevance which have comparanda in Greece are sheet bronze arrows. These are usually found in Brnjica urns in cremation cemeteries. A casting mould for these arrowheads was found in the area of the Brnjica group.⁶⁷ There are also dress ornaments from the same chronological horizon as these metal tools and weapons. These are pins with a conical head and ball on the neck, pins with a conical

head and elongated perforated neck, and the so-called spectacle-shaped and Iglarevo-type pins.⁶⁸ In a broad sense, these pins are not found north of the distribution of Brnjica group pottery, and some similar examples are known in the Vardar/Axios valley.⁶⁹

Alongside these typological considerations, recent work on tin isotopes is relevant because this provides insights into exchange networks of communities in the Morava Valley.⁷⁰ Mason and Powell have studied three objects from our immediate study area.⁷¹ Focusing on ¹²⁴Sn and ¹²⁰Sn, there is a common signature for objects analysed which suggests that a common source of tin was used for each. These do not overlap with currently known sources of tin mined in prehistoric Europe.⁷² The research of Powell and colleagues shows that the origin of tin with this same isotopic pattern was used to make bronze objects of Late Bronze Age date in Banat, Wallachia, the area between the Balkan Mountains and the Danube, and southeast Serbia. While its ultimate source remains unclear, it is probable that the same source was accessed and exchanged throughout the wider region to the east, west and north of the Morava Valley.⁷³ Their study does

⁵² Stăciunescu 2004; Булатовић, Станковски 2012, 131–134; Булатовић, Милановић 2014, 170.

⁵³ Bulatović 2011, 132 with cited references.

⁵⁴ Harding 1995, 21, Taf. 4/24–25.

⁵⁵ Harding 1995, 21, Taf. 4/23.

⁵⁶ Филиповић et al. 2015.

⁵⁷ Колиштркова et al. 1995: 39–40, Т. I/2.

⁵⁸ Jung 2018, 240 and further, Molloy 2016, 2018, Harding 1995, Kilian-Dirlmeier 1993

⁵⁹ Паровић-Пешикан 1995: 14, сл. 5/5.

⁶⁰ Mitrevski 1994: 120–121, fig. 11.

⁶¹ Mödlinger 2013.

⁶² Филиповић 2015, 350 and further; Kleitsas, Jung and Mehofer 2018

⁶³ Гарашанин М. 1959: 30, сл. 2.

⁶⁴ Antonović 2014: cat. 323.

⁶⁵ Antonović 2014: cat. 325.

⁶⁶ Паровић-Пешикан 1995: 6, сл. 2/8.

⁶⁷ Филиповић 2016, 263–264.

⁶⁸ Vasić 2003, 26–27, 65–69.

⁶⁹ Vasić 2003, 26–27, 65–69.

⁷⁰ Mason et al. 2020

⁷¹ We wish to thank A. H. Mason and W. Powell for the insight into the unpublished results of analyses for the area of south-eastern Serbia.

⁷² Mason et al. 2016; Mason et al. 2020.

⁷³ Powell et al. 2018, 147.

not rule out the Erzgebirge deposit in Central Europe, which was mined in prehistory⁷⁴, as a possible source, and they found no data to support the existence of a speculated tin source on the tributaries of the Mures River or the Bujanovac area of south-eastern Serbia.⁷⁵ While tin supply links the communities of the Morava to their neighbours, the full extent of the exchange network this reveals remains to be seen.

A final comment can be made with respect to areas to the west of the Južna Morava Valley. Pottery of the Brnjica group has very little in common with ceramic styles used at this same time in western Serbia.⁷⁶ This indicates a dearth of cultural transmission between these two areas. These differences are also seen in mortuary traditions. In western Serbia, tumuli with inhumations, cremations or a combination of both can be found at this time. Interestingly, the Sn isotopic signatures of metal finds from western Serbia indicate that a different source of tin was used there, potentially from the southern slopes of Cer Mountain.⁷⁷ This difference may further emphasise the reported low levels of interaction or cultural exchange between groups on the western margin of the valley and those within it. Taking account of the pottery and metalwork together, the evidence indicates that there were clear links already in place connecting societies in the Central Balkans with those in the northern Aegean and the southern Carpathian Basin during the 15th to 13th centuries BC.⁷⁸

Settlement patterns

In the Late Bronze Age (16/15th–13th century BC) in the area of the Brnjica group, especially along the edges of the Južna Morava Valley and its tributaries, there is an increase in the number of hilltop settlements that have been documented (Fig. 1). This constitutes a significantly higher proportion of hilltop settlements relative to plain settlements than in the Middle Bronze Age (approximately 19th–16/15th century BC).⁷⁹ In the Middle Bronze Age, the percentage of hilltop settlements in relation to plain settlements was below 10%. By the Late Bronze Age, the percentage of hilltop sites had increased to close to 50%.⁸⁰ It is interesting that hilltop settlements were built mostly on the edge of the Južna Morava Valley, beginning at the mouth of the Končulj gorge (Fig. 1/38) not far from the spring of the Binačka Morava and their distribution extended as far north as the site of Gologlava (Fig. 1/1). From this latter site, it was possible to control the area of the confluence of the Južna Morava and West Morava

Rivers. Hilltop settlements were also located in positions where the valley narrows, in gorges and at entrances to gorges (Fig. 1/34, 28, 17, 18, etc.). Hilltop settlements were also well-placed to control communications along larger tributaries of the Južna Morava, such as the Krševička River (Fig. 1/42), the entrance to the Banjštica gorge and the gorge itself (Fig. 1/35, 36). A small number of hilltop settlements were built outside the main communication corridor of the Južna Morava and its tributaries (Fig. 1/40, 46–48).

The largest of the hilltop settlements in this region is the site of Hisar in Leskovac. This has an extremely favourable strategic position and was built on a hill at the end of an elongated tongue above the river Veternica, which flows deep into the Leskovac plain (Fig. 1/23). The Late Bronze Age settlement on this site was located at the very top of this dominant elevation and was surrounded by a rampart. The younger phase, dated to Ha A / transitional period, was mostly located on the eastern slope of the site, outside the area that was surrounded by ramparts in the previous period. A section excavated on the southern edge of the plateau revealed important stratified remains. This includes a semi-sunken pithouse with ceramic material characteristic of the Brnjica group. This had been excavated into the natural subsoil. Sealing this feature, and after its abandonment, a substantial layer of debris from a burnt and collapsed fortification palisade was documented. Cut into this burnt layer was a pit with Belegiš II–Gava ceramics.⁸¹ The absolute date of the pithouse is not yet known, but results are expected soon.⁸²

Fortified enclosures are also documented at other sites along the fringes of the river valley. The remains of stone ramparts have been documented at Gradište in

⁷⁴ Nessel et al. 2019.

⁷⁵ Durman 1997, Fig. 2; Powell et al. 2018, 10.

⁷⁶ Lately, the term Brezjak group has been used for it, which seems to be the most adequate of all the proposed terms (Filipović 2013; Bulatović et al. 2017; Bulatović et al. 2018).

⁷⁷ Mason et al. 2020

⁷⁸ Bulatović 2011.

⁷⁹ Bulatović 2020.

⁸⁰ Булатовић, Станковски 2012, 205–211; Bulatović, Filipović 2017, 149–154, also including the sites that were registered in the meantime.

⁸¹ Bulatović, Filipović 2017, Fig. 3.

⁸² The date will be published as part of a broader project Death and Burial between the Aegean and the Balkans, led by Stefanos Gimatzidis from the Austrian Archaeological Institute, Vienna.



Fig. 1. Sites of the Brnjica group in the Južna Morava Basin

1. Stalać, Gologlava Site; 2. Maskare, Bedem; 3. Čitluk, Konopljara; 4. Globoder, Ivlje; 5. Rutevac, Bara; 6. Rutevac, Školska gradina; 7. Mali Šiljegovac, Crkvena porta; 8. Kruševac, Lazarev grad; 9. Zdravinje, Grabujevac; 10. Boljevac, Čukar; 11. Vrtište, Velika česma (Urvina – Breg); 12. Novo Selo Bubanj; 13. Hum, Velika humska čuka; 14. Donja Vrežina Čardak; 15. Niš, Medijana; 16. Lipovica, Jeričište; 17. Živkovo, Šljivče; 18. Zlokućane, Gradac; 19. Podrimci, Široka ornica; 20. Bobište, Izvoriste – Sastanci; 21. Bobište, Puište; 22. Donja Slatina, Dački Rid – Gumnište; 23. Leskovac, Hisar; 24. Guberevac, Kumanluk; 25. Guberevac, Vranja noga; 26. Vlasotinca, Vodovod – Luka; 27. Mala Grabovnica, Progon – Čuka; 28. Gdelica, Kale; 29. Zbežište, Skobaljić grad; 30. Štulac, Svinjarička čuka; 31. Rujkovac, Okučnica Baneta Krstića; 32. Tulare, Imanje Stević Radisava; 33. Kržince, Piljakovac; 34. Priboj, Gradište; 35. Vranjska Banja, Crkvište; 36. Prvonek, Gradište; 37. Dubnica, Gradište; 38. Končulj, Gradište; 39. Lučane, Resulja; 40. Surdul, Selište; 41. Ljiljanec, Selište; 42. Krševica, Kale; 43. Klinovac, Tri kruške; 44. Prosečnik, Vražji kamen; 45. Biljača, Krivosoje – Dipin Dol; 46. Svinjište, Stublina; 47. Svinjište, Reka; 48. Svinjište, Gradina; 49. Ranutovac, Meanište.

Abbreviations:

PE – Pelince, sites of Dve Mogili and Gradište; KK – Mlado Nagoričano, Kostoperska Karpa; KO – Kokino, Tatičev Kamen; MA – Makreš, Gradište; RU – Rugince, Velja Strana; ST – Stracin, Gradište; VR – Vražjegrnci, Blidiž.

Сл. 1. Локалитетни брњичке групе у долини Јужне Мораве

1. Сталаћ, Гологлава; 2. Маскаре, Бедем; 3. Читлук, Коноплјара; 4. Глободер, Ивље; 5. Рујевац, Бара; 6. Рујевац, Школска градина; 7. Мали Шиљеговац, Црквена порта; 8. Крушевац, Лазарев град; 9. Здравинје, Грабујевац; 10. Бољевац, Чукар; 11. Вртиште, Велика чесма (Урвина – Брег); 12. Ново Село Бубањ; 13. Хум, Велика хумска чука; 14. Доња Врежина Чардак; 15. Ниш, Медјана; 16. Липовица, Јеричиште; 17. Живково, Шљивче; 18. Злокућане, Градац; 19. Подримци, Широка орница; 20. Бобиштије, Извориштије – Састјанци; 21. Бобиштије, Пујиштије; 22. Доња Слатина, Дачки Рид – Гумништије; 23. Лесковац, Хисар; 24. Губеревац, Куманлук; 25. Губеревац, Вранја нога; 26. Власоштиње, Водовод – Лука; 27. Мала Грабовница, Прогон – Чука; 28. Грделица, Кале; 29. Збежиштије, Скобаљић град; 30. Штулац, Свињаричка чука; 31. Рујковац, Окућница Банета Крстића; 32. Туларе, Имање Стевић Радисава; 33. Кржинце, Пилјаковац; 34. Прибој, Градиштије; 35. Вранска Бања, Црквиштије; 36. Првонек, Градиштије; 37. Дубница, Градиштије; 38. Кончуљ, Градиштије; 39. Лучане, Ресуља; 40. Сурдуљ, Селиштије; 41. Љиљанец, Селиштије; 42. Кршевица, Кале; 43. Клиновац, Три крушке; 44. Просечник, Вразји камен; 45. Биљача, Кривосоје – Ђипин Дол; 46. Свињштије, Сидублина; 47. Свињштије, Река; 48. Свињштије, Градина; 49. Ранујовац, Меаништије.

Скраћенице:

PE – Пелинце, локалитетни Две Могили и Градиштије; KK – Млаго Нагорицано, Коспоперска Карпа; KO – Кокино, Татићев Камен; MA – Макреш, Градиштије; RU – Рујинце, Велја Страна; ST – Стјацин, Градиштије; VR – Вразјегрнци, Блдиж.

Priboj at the entrance to the Priboj Gorge.⁸³ At the site of Gradište in Končulj, the remains of a fortification were recorded that consisted of a ditch with post-holes defining an interior palisade as well as quantities of stone that must have served as part of the defensive structure.⁸⁴ A ditch around the multi-layered hilltop settlement in Zlokućani near Leskovac was also detected and this was dated to the Late Bronze Age on the basis of finds of Brnjica pottery.⁸⁵ There are clear horizons of burning inside the settlement area at all of these sites with fortifications as well as burning of the fortifications themselves.⁸⁶

Analysis of the distribution and interrelationship between these fortified settlements gives the impression that they formed a well-planned defence system along the Južna Morava corridor. They appear to have been permanently settled and were not only places for temporary refuge to be used in the event of an attack on a community living in the lower flatlands. The mutually supporting structure of settlement distribution is most clearly seen in the intervisibility between sites – from any given site at least one other site can be seen. For example, Hisar, Zlokućane and Živkovo are all intervisible. In turn, this also meant that this string of settlements had visibility over most of the river valleys themselves. According to the material culture, especially pottery, communities at all sites consumed pottery of the Brnjica group almost exclusively.⁸⁷ The construction of these sites is approximately contemporary, so the idea of a possible “defensive system of fortifications” in the Južna Morava Valley appears appropriate. To clarify this probable pattern further, more absolute dates from settlements are required.

With the increase in the number of hilltop settlements in the Late Bronze Age, the number of lowland (plain) settlements did not fall. On the contrary, they continued to be built in positions suitable for cultivating land on the terraces of the Južna Morava and these were often built with no hilltop settlements nearby (for example the sites of Rutevac, Vrtište, Bujanj, Lipovica, Podrimci and Bobište). It is interesting that the lowland settlements of Svinjarička Čuka and Medijana have yielded the oldest dates so far for the LBA in the Južna Morava basin, (15th–14th/13th century /Br C–C/D). Settlements without recorded protection (fortified settlements nearby or fortified themselves), such as Medijana and Svinjarička Čuka, appear to be older than the first fortified settlements. This suggests that fortified settlements were built in the final phase of the Late Bronze Age, in the period Br D–Ha A1. It is not possible

on the basis of relative ceramic chronology alone to determine this divide, due to the long duration of use and stability of forms in Brnjica type pottery. Nonetheless, the chronological data for the LBA settlement pattern in the Južna Morava Valley so far renders this scenario plausible and testable through further absolute dating of contexts from different types of settlement.

The end of Late Bronze Age and Transitional period (Br D/Ha A1–Ha B)

At the end of the Bronze Age, probably at the end of the 13th century, and certainly by the second half of the 12th century (Tab. 1/7), changes took place in many aspects of life in the Central Balkans, which are most clearly visible in the Južna Morava Valley.

Pottery and absolute chronology

From the 12th century (possibly as early as the late 13th century), a new style of pottery appeared at settlements alongside pottery of the Brnjica group. This new style of pottery derived from the tradition of channel-decorated pottery of the Pannonian Plain, commonly called Belegiš II (or part of the Gava complex in Hungarian literature). The development of this style after ca. 1200 BC is called Belegiš II–Gava, to account for minor, but chronologically relevant, developments in identifying features. Belegiš II–Gava is typified by channel decoration, and it is used on bi-conical urns, bowls with inverted rims, small juglets, carinated cups and other shapes. While an intimate and direct relationship is clear, the pottery is not a direct facsimile of the shape-ware-decoration schema of vessels in the Pannonian Plain. The deposition of this Belegiš II–Gava alongside Brnjica pottery has been observed at Hisar from at least the second half of the 12th century BC, but its use probably began somewhat earlier (feature 7, Tab. 1/7, 9).

It is probable that the vast majority of Belegiš II–Gava was locally made, on account of minor idiosyncrasies. This might suggest they are not the product of migrant potters, but rather local products designed to

⁸³ Vukmanović, Popović 1982.

⁸⁴ Bulatović, Stankovski 2012, 223; Bulatović, Filipović 2017, 153, fig. 4.

⁸⁵ Stalio 1972

⁸⁶ Vukmanović, Popović 1982; Bulatović 1999/2000; Bulatović, Filipović 2017.

⁸⁷ Srejić 1960; Bulatović 2000; Stojić 2001.

meet a stylistic expectation of consumers.⁸⁸ There are very few cases of hybridisation/entanglement with earlier traditions and so while they are local expressions of a style, they present a schism with previous conventions.⁸⁹ Arguably, that was due to new aesthetic trends but as pottery shape, more than decoration, defines function, vessels are intrinsically involved in the construction of identity through routine engagement and performance.⁹⁰ The new style therefore marks a cultural change manifested through routine actions as part of lifeways as well as signalling difference through appearance. Importing pottery styles from another region when new settlements are being established in new locations could be explained at a purely local level as rejection of old social systems in favour of new ones. However, it appears more likely that migration played a key role. Ruppenstein's "general and rough" principles for archaeological recognition of migration in this same context are salient as they require 1) introduction of a set of cultural novelties, 2) their rapid and widespread appearance, and 3) a clear area of origin where there was older use of the object types (Ruppenstein 2020: 107). In this case, it is clear that cultural conventions from the Pannonian Plain that had been used since ca. 1400 BC were adopted in the Južna Morava area at a time of substantial change in both areas around 1200 BC. As archaeology becomes more comfortable with exploring tangible markers for migration⁹¹, the argument that people moved at increased rates within existing networks at times of social stress is a compelling model in this case for the introduction of Belegiš II–Gava styles. The earliest date for Belegiš II–Gava pottery in the Južna Morava area comes from a sealed context at Hisar. Two grains of millet were selected for absolute dating from a larger quantity of 320 grains from the same pit (feature 7, Tab. 1). These were deposited between the end of the 13th and middle of the 11th century BC with a probability of 95.4%, or the period of the first two thirds of the 12th century BC, with a probability of 68.2% (Tab. 1).

The new, most dominant form of the vessel in the Južna Morava area during this period is a hemispherical or conical bowl, with an inverted faceted or fluted rim (Pl. VI/5, 8, Pl. VII/1–10, Pl. VIII/1, Pl. IX/1–3, Pl. X/1–5). Deeper vessels with a cylindrical neck and rounded belly with horizontal or oblique channel decorations and vertical plastic thickenings (Pl. VI/3, Pl. VII/12, 15, Pl. X/11) are also common. Characteristic amphorae with a long conical neck with an everted

rim with fluted decoration often on the neck, belly and rim and with two protrusions or four sets of two parallel tongue-shaped protrusions on the belly are also documented, with one protrusion pointing downwards and the other upwards (Pl. VIII/5, 7).⁹² This type of amphora is characteristic of the Belegiš II–Gava and Gava groups and is widespread in southern Pannonia⁹³ and throughout the Pomoravlje (Južna Morava and Velika Morava basins) region.⁹⁴ The earliest examples of the mature form of these amphorae are absolutely dated to the late 15th to 14th centuries BC.⁹⁵

In this period, channels are the most common decorative device. The execution of these channels is narrower than those from the previous period. Also, while oblique examples occur, horizontal channels are also very common, and more rarely, vertical channels are used. As well as the bellies of bowls and amphorae, the rim of bowls (Pl. VII/1, 6, 7, Pl. X/1–5), as well as rims and necks of amphorae (Pl. VIII/7) may also bear channel decoration. In this period, the handles are also often decorated with narrow channels (Pl. VI/2, Pl. X/7, 9), and examples are also found of the so-called *slatina* type handle, which was present in this area in the previous period.⁹⁶

Somewhat later, from the period of Ha B1, perhaps even slightly earlier (according to the absolute dates we currently have) (Tab. 1/14), other ornaments such as embossed concentric circles appear alongside the channels (Pl. IX/8).⁹⁷ In the last phase of the so-called transitional period (Ha B), certainly from the end of the 9th century BC (Tab. 1/15), and probably a little earlier, rows of imprinted rectangular prints made with hand rollers, or oval stitched ornaments also appear (Pl. X/1, 11).⁹⁸ This would become the basic feature of pottery in the Early Iron Age in this area.

⁸⁸ Knappett and Kiriati 2017; Knappett 2010; Aslaksen 2012.

⁸⁹ Fahlander 2007; Hodder 2012; Stockhammer 2012.

⁹⁰ Pitts and Versluys 2021; DeMarrais et al. 2004; C. Knappett 2010; Malafouris 2008.

⁹¹ Kristiansen et al. 2017.

⁹² Bulatović, Filipović 2017, Fig. 5.

⁹³ Forenbaher 1994; Vranić 2002.

⁹⁴ Bulatović, Filipović 2017.

⁹⁵ Sava 2020, Molloy et al. 2020

⁹⁶ Bulatović, Jović 2009, T. XXVIII/105, T. XXXIII/16; T. XC/37.

⁹⁷ Compare: Bulatović 2009, 66, Pl. III/23, 24

⁹⁸ Compare: Bulatović 2009, 66, Pl. I/4, Pl. II/11, 18, Pl. III/19, 28 i dr.

Metalwork

By the end of the 13th and the beginning of the 12th century BC, a large number of bronze finds were periodically being deposited in the Morava–Vardar corridor. Some of the metalwork types originated from western regions of the Balkans and the Pannonian Plain as well as from Central Europe. A few Reutlingen-type swords that had been developed by communities in the Po Valley and Pannonian Plain are known along the Morava–Vardar/Axios communication corridor.⁹⁹ The sword was developed by Br D at the latest, and it appeared in the Central Balkans before the end of the 13th century BC, which is clear from bronze hoards in the Pannonian Plain.¹⁰⁰ When we look at the wider area of the interior of the Central Balkans, specimens were found at Tekija near Paraćin,¹⁰¹ Golemo Selo¹⁰² and Pudarnica¹⁰³ near Vranje, an inhumation grave from Donja Brnjica,¹⁰⁴ Lakavica,¹⁰⁵ Delčevo¹⁰⁶ and Mirovo (variant Konjuša).¹⁰⁷ This latter example is dated to Ha A2 and is exclusively connected with the area of the north part of western Serbia and Mačva.¹⁰⁸ Analysis of tin isotopes δ^{124} showed that the swords from Golemo Selo near Vranje and another from Maovo in the southwest Pannonian Plain have similar values (0.21 and 0.28) to each other and the sickle, pin and axe discussed above.¹⁰⁹

Parallel to the appearance of Reutlingen swords, the so-called flame shaped spearhead was also introduced in Ha A1. This had no predecessors in the MBA Central Balkans, and its distribution is similar to the swords.¹¹⁰ Examples come from an urn from the cemetery in Gornja Stražava,¹¹¹ from the settlement of Velika Humska Čuka¹¹² and Malič at Lake Ohrid.¹¹³ A piece with a faceted socket comes from Kokino in North Macedonia.¹¹⁴ This faceted decoration on the socket is commonly found on Avila's Type G / Snodgrass' Type B spearheads distributed in Albania and Epirus (with an outlier in Achaea).¹¹⁵ Notably, a spearhead from Polymistrias in Greek Macedonia has this faceted socket but a blade typical of the Pannonian tradition, while one from Agrilia in Thessaly is of typically Pannonian form, indicating mobility through the Morava–Vardar routeway.¹¹⁶ So far there have been no finds of spears with flame-shaped blades with this socket type found south of the specimen from Malič.

In the area where bronze swords of the Central European type and spears with flame-shaped blades appear, bronze axes of the so-called Montenegrin-Albanian type do not appear. Their distribution is more

clearly related to the area of Montenegro and southwestern Serbia.¹¹⁷ Also, arrows made of bronze sheet, common in the previous period on the Morava–Vardar axis, are unknown from the period Ha A1/A2. Some rare examples of this date were found in the Central Balkans far from these major river valleys.¹¹⁸

Some types of bronze jewellery, such as pins with a blunt head or with a biconical head with horizontal grooves, appear in the Velika Morava area, but their distribution does not extend as far as the Central European weapons towards the south of the Central Balkans.¹¹⁹ We may include the pin from the Mali Dol cemetery in Macedonia¹²⁰ in the group of pins with a biconical head and horizontal grooves, in which case that specimen is the southernmost find of this type dated between Br D to Ha A2. On the other hand, the largest number of pins of this form is documented in Posavina and in the Danube region. The only significant concentration outside this zone is found in the Velika Morava Valley. A biconical head pin with the neck ornamented with dense zigzag lines from Hisar (Brnjica II a–b)¹²¹ can be closely dated to the Ha A1 period and demonstrates further connections with the Middle Danube region, where the nearest analogies are found (Salaš Noćajski and Kozluk).¹²² The pin was found in a layer together with bowls with inverted

⁹⁹ Harding 1995.

¹⁰⁰ Филиповић 2015, 335–338.

¹⁰¹ Васић 1992, 288, сл. 3.

¹⁰² Јовановић 1966, 247–248, сл. 1; Булатовић 2007, 87, кат. 1, Т. VIII/1.

¹⁰³ Булатовић 2007, 163–164, кат. 1, Т. XLI/1.

¹⁰⁴ Sreјović 1960, 94–95, сл. 8.

¹⁰⁵ Harding 1995, 40, cat.no. 99

¹⁰⁶ Митревски 1997, 56, сл. 15/1.

¹⁰⁷ Филиповић, Милојевић 2015, 49, кат. 4.

¹⁰⁸ Harding 1995, 41.

¹⁰⁹ Mason et al. 2020.

¹¹⁰ Филиповић 2015, 327–328.

¹¹¹ Крстић 1992, 234, Т. IX/4.

¹¹² Ђурић и Гарашанин 1983, 39, кат. 189.

¹¹³ Prendi 2008, 387, Abb. 12/15.

¹¹⁴ Станкоски 2009, 3, Т. I.

¹¹⁵ Snodgrass 1964; Avila 1983; B. P. C. Molloy 2016b.

¹¹⁶ Molloy 2016.

¹¹⁷ Филиповић 2015, 354–356.

¹¹⁸ Филиповић 2016.

¹¹⁹ Vasić 2003, 61, 70 and further.

¹²⁰ Папазовска 2019: 148, Т. XXIII/1в.

¹²¹ Stojić 2009, cat. 18.

fluted rims (characteristic of Belegiš II–Gava group) and potsherds ornamented with horizontal channel decoration together with a series of punctate-decorated triangles.

A pin with an unornamented mace-head was found at Hisar,¹²³ and after R. Vasić this type of pin can be dated to Ha A1/A2.¹²⁴ The distribution of mace-head pins includes the Middle Danube region and several pieces were recovered from the Velika Morava Valley.¹²⁵ The Hisar pins are the most southern examples of the type. The violin bow fibula from Niška Banja is the only known example from the Central Balkans.¹²⁶ This type of fibula is said by Vasić to have originated in northern Italy during the 13th century BC, from where it later spread to the Western Balkans and Pannonia. The relationship of personal ornaments from this area and examples found in Northern Greece and Albania has recently been discussed by Ruppenstein.¹²⁷

Settlement patterns

The analysis of the distribution of Belegiš II–Gava pottery in the Južna Morava area reveals that it is present mainly in settlements in the lowland part of the valley and on the river terraces (Fig. 2). On some sites, Belegiš II–Gava ceramics occur alongside sherds from Brnjica group vessels (including so-called “Brnjica rims), and occasionally so-called “slatina” handles (Lipovica, Ranutovac, etc.).¹²⁸ These “slatina” handles are commonly decorated with narrow channels (see examples from Bobište, Bratmilovac and Lipovica).¹²⁹ This feature reflects an element of hybridization or entanglement of stylistic features drawn from the local Brnjica and the introduced Belegiš II styles. This mixing of conventions is restricted to handles, however.

Hilltop settlements with Belegiš II–Gava related sherds are extremely rare, and even if such pottery is present (mainly bowls with an inverted rim), it forms only a small proportion of the overall pottery assemblage. This could be an indicator of the character of relations between the population that inhabited hilltop settlements and those that lived at lower elevations. Alternatively, it may point to special functions of these elevated sites in which visually more ornate vessels of Belegiš II–Gava style were not utilised.

Nonetheless, occasional finds of Belegiš II–Gava related pottery in hilltop sites indicate that this style was consistently present throughout this area. We can still identify a very small number of Belegiš II–Gava

related sherds at hillforts otherwise dominated by Brnjica pottery, which indicates that those dwelling in the forts had a reserved receptivity toward the new style. It is quite plausible that the Belegiš II–Gava pottery was introduced by migrants into the Južna Morava Valley who mixed well with some elements of society who had been there before them, while others were less receptive. We have argued above that networks were well established between the societies in the Pannonian Plain and Morava Valley area in the Late Bronze Age, and so inward migration may be seen as an expansion of pre-existing networks or a change in their character. Therefore, if we accept the argument of inward migration, we must ask to what extent or for what duration such migrants and their material culture were considered “foreign” or different? There is no doubt their arrival would have been transformative, but we must seek to better understand the extent to which it was disruptive or caused social disjuncture. It is possible that the bias in find context of pottery styles reveals a process of negotiating their inclusion over time into the communities already established there.

It is therefore important to define the rate and spatial extent of the adoption or integration of Belegiš II–Gava pottery. The presence of this pottery in hilltop sites, even as a small proportion of assemblages, allows us to determine that certain hilltop settlements were first settled in the 12th century BC at the earliest, when we correlate this pottery with absolute dates (Tab. 1/1–9). The hilltop settlements at Skobaljić grad in the Vučjanka canyon (Fig. 1/29), Končulj in the lower course of the Južna (Binačka) Morava, and Prvonek, in the canyon of the Banjska river¹³⁰ (Fig. 1/38, 35, 36), allow us to consider this chronology. At each of these sites a small number of sherds which have a form of Belegiš II–Gava decoration were found.¹³¹

¹²² Vasić 2003, 80–81, cat. 530–531. That type of pins was the most numerous in Central Europe (Bohemia, southern Germany, Slovakia and Hungary).

¹²³ Stojić 2009, cat. 3.

¹²⁴ Vasić 2003, 87–88.

¹²⁵ Vasić 2003, 87–88.

¹²⁶ Vasić 1999, 13, cat. 6.

¹²⁷ Ruppenstein 2020: 112–113.

¹²⁸ Bulatović, Jović 2009, T. XCI/42. This study: Pl. 7/19, Pl. 9/9, 10.

¹²⁹ See note no. 83.

¹³⁰ Bulatović, Jović 2009, 319; Bulatović 2007, T.LII/49, 51.

¹³¹ Bulatović 2007, T. LII/49, 51.

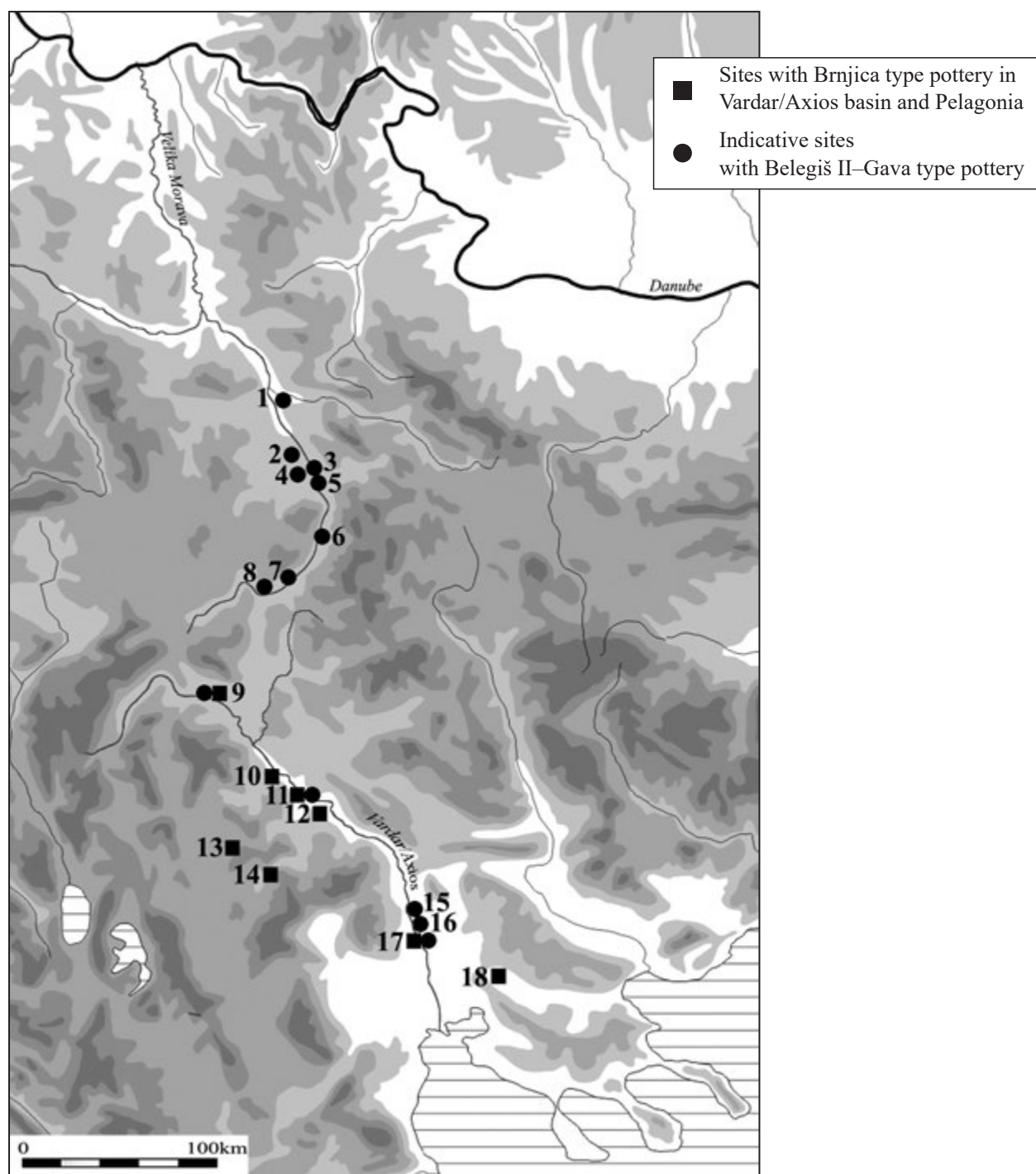


Fig. 2. Sites with Brnjica group type pottery in the Vardar/Axios Basin and Pelagonia and significant sites with Belegiš II–Gava type pottery

1. Novo Selo, site of Bubanj; 2. Lipovica, Jeričište; 3. Bobište, Sastanci and Izvorište; 4. Leskovac, Hisar; 5. Bratmilovce, Donje Polje; 6. Kržince, Piljakovac; 7. Ranutovac, Meanište; 8. Turija, Česma; 9. Skopje, Klučka (Hipodrom–Mažari); 10. Čaška, Manastir; 11. Veles, Stobi; 12. Tremnik, Mali Dol; 13. Prilep, Varoš; 14. Veprčani, Slamite; 15. Vardina; 16. Vardarophitsa; 17. Kastanas; 18. Asiros.

Сл. 2. Локалитети са керамиком брњичке групе у долини Вардара и Пелагонији, и значајни локалитети са керамиком типична Белеши II–Гава

1. Ново Село, Бубањ; 2. Липовица, Јеричиште; 3. Бобиште, Састанци и Извориште; 4. Лесковац, Хисар; 5. Брајмиловце, Доње Поље; 6. Кржинце, Пилјаковац; 7. Ранутовац, Меаниште; 8. Турија, Чесма; 9. Скопје, Клучка (Хиподром–Маџари); 10. Чашка, Манастир; 11. Велес, Стоби; 12. Треник, Мали Дол; 13. Прилеп, Варош; 14. Вејрчани, Сламите; 15. Вардина; 16. Вардарофца; 17. Касијанас; 18. Асирос.

The hilltop settlements that have securely dated strata are located away from the main communication routes of the Južna Morava, Moravica and Vardar rivers. They lie on the other side of the Preševo saddle (Fig. 1/48). We must ask if these hillforts were also inhabited in the Late Bronze Age, or if they were created as a form of refuge for people resistant to the changing social and political situation stimulated by inward migration into the Južna Morava Valley and environs. With this in mind, Konculj hillfort, which is absolutely dated to the LBA, was clearly set back from the main communication routes, but nonetheless lies at a strategically important position on the route linking the Južna Morava Valley to Kosovo and Metohija. In order to evaluate if there is a cultural and chronological pattern in the changed distribution of settlements in various topographic locations moving into the 12th century BC, further dates from well-stratified excavations are required.

The site of Dve Mogili in Pelince, Pčinja Valley, dated to the 12th century BC, is also relevant to this discussion (Fig. 1/PE). At that site, pottery corresponding to the Brnjica group was found exclusively (Pl. V).¹³² The site is approximately contemporary to Hisar (specifically feature 7), where we know that Belegiš II–Gava type pottery was being consumed at a time when it was not being used at Dve Mogili (Pl. VI). It remains possible of course that Belegiš II–Gava type pottery was used in this region at this stage but has not been identified as of yet at this site, which served a ritual as well as settlement function from the early to late Bronze Age. Indeed, the site may have had a special function more generally, and votives were commonly deposited in the form of pottery and other objects. We speculate that “foreign” material could have been seen to disrupt the sanctity of this long-lived place. We can also observe that the site is located outside of the Morava–Vardar route, so perhaps this pottery was simply not present at that time due to its location (Fig. 2).

The assemblage from the settlement on Hisar, unlike other hilltop settlements located outside of the Južna Morava Valley, indicates the simultaneous use of these two different pottery styles. While some crossovers are noted, as observed above for handles, the two traditions continued to be produced alongside each other for an uncertain period of time. Looking to the lowland settlement in Ranutovac (11th–10th century BC) about 40 km south of Hisar, we can observe a significant change, but we remain cognisant of its dif-

ferent topographic position. At Ranutovac, the ceramic assemblage is completely dominated by Belegiš II–Gava type pottery. Sherds corresponding to the previous Brnjica group are only rarely found at this stage, though this does reveal the survival of the tradition in this vicinity (Pl. VII/19, Pl. IX/9, 10). According to absolute dates, this continuity of use of Brnjica pottery consumption at this site continued until the end of the Ha A2 period, or the beginning of Ha B1, i.e. between the second half of the 11th century and the end of the 10th century BC (Tab. 1/14).

According to our current data, we can identify two possible scenarios, accepting there are grey areas in between. The first is that there was emulation and local production of Belegiš II pottery (in the form of Belegiš II–Gava) on the basis of fashion alone; that is, the idea was spread through minimal personal mobility and was primarily a diffusion of an idea. The local production and interpretation of Belegiš II conventions may support that. However, given the duration and continued local manufacture, as well as disruptions in the Pannonian Plain at this same time (discussed below), we prefer a model that involves directional mobility or migration. People who had long used Belegiš II pottery moved into the Morava Valley and inhabited unfortified lowland sites. This settlement was on the fertile and broad valley lowlands, which facilitated ease of communication and extensive arable, as well as pastoral, farming. These flat expanses of the valley broadly reflect the landscape of the Pannonian Plain. In light of this, the rarity of the characteristic Belegiš II–Gava pottery in the hills outside this route may be relevant. One exception is the hilltop settlement on Hisar, which has an extremely favourable position on a broad-surfaced, dominantly located hill in the middle of the Leskovac plain. The transitional period settlement on Hisar was mostly located on the gentle eastern slopes. This had no fortifications, unlike the LBA settlement defined by a ditch and rampart on the plateau of the hill. Unfortunately, we lack absolute dates from the LBA settlement on the highest plateau and so the chronological relationship between these two areas of settlement is unknown, and it remains possible some occupation within the rampart continued after the LBA.

¹³² Compare: Bulatović, Stankovski 2012, T. LVIII and cited bibliography.

Economy

There is little data about plant and animal management strategies in the Central Balkans during the Late Bronze and Early Iron Age. Paleobotanical analyses have been completed on samples from two sites thus far – Hisar and Ranutovac, so these results only allow preliminary insights into subsistence strategies and landscape management in the region. Together with the changes in material culture and settlement patterns, one important development can be detected in the archaeobotanical record. This was the marked increase in the cultivation of millet alongside other plant species. It was found at Hisar in feature 7 (12th century calBC), as well as in Ranutovac in feature 3c (late 9th–early 8th century BC).¹³³ Millet can be cultivated as a springtime crop, which increases temporal diversification in agricultural risk management in a community by providing fresh crops in different seasons, perhaps a reason for its popularity at this time.¹³⁴

According to recently published paleobotanical analysis partnered with absolute dates, it has been confirmed that a major increase in the use of millet occurred in Europe in the middle of the 2nd millennium.¹³⁵ This large-scale cultivation pattern began in Ukraine in the 16th century BC (*Vinogradnaya Sad*), spreading into the south Carpathian Basin by the 15th century BC and Central Europe by the 13th–12th century BC.¹³⁶ A large quantity of millet was recorded together with Belegiš II–Gava pottery at Hisar in feature 7, suggesting it may have been introduced to this region alongside this pottery.

Valamoti identifies an increased use of millet in Greece from the second half of the 2nd millennium BC.¹³⁷ Significant quantities of millet were recovered from the bottom of a pithos in Assiros in northern Greece. The feature is dated to the 14th to early 13th century calBC.¹³⁸ At this same time, or perhaps slightly earlier, millet has been recorded at other sites in northern Greece (Archondiko, Kastanas, Toumba Thessaloniki).¹³⁹ The dates for millet use in the Pannonian Plain and in Greece thus both predate the earliest known examples in the Morava Valley at Hisar (13th century BC). The dearth of archaeobotanical studies in the Morava Valley limits our understanding of developments there in millet farming. This presents the possibility that it was introduced from either the north or the south, though as Filipović et al. chart its spreading from Ukraine westwards, it is plausible that its use spread from the Carpathian Basin to Greece via the Morava Valley. This model of LBA use in the

latter area may be supported by the material culture evidence for intensive interconnections with the Carpathian Basin and Oltenia. Interconnections with the south, in turn, are seen for this same period at Assiros, Kastanas and other sites in northern Greece, where spherical cups decorated with spirals were recorded. This was a popular form of vessel across a vast territory from southern Transylvania to the Aegean coast.¹⁴⁰

Discussion of the 13th to 11th century

Južna Morava Valley

The analysis of portable finds, settlement patterns and absolute chronology of the Late Bronze Age and the pottery groups from the Bronze to Iron Age transitional period in the Južna Morava Valley reveals that this was a well-connected area and a communication route during the Late Bronze Age. This is recognised through the exchange of ideas, experiences and knowledge of people from south-eastern Pannonia and southern Transylvania through to groups in the northern Aegean world.¹⁴¹

People using pottery of the Brnjica group inhabited the Južna Morava Valley, occupying lowland settlements primarily during the first phase of the LBA. By the end of this period, numerous hilltop settlements with fortifications in defensible positions were established. These latter are distributed along the very edge of the north-south running river valley, set in strategic positions from where it was possible to control the routeway. At that time the material culture reveals that this valley was at once an important natural communication route and a node in the social networks connecting the northern Aegean and Carpathian ambits. Given the fortified nature of hilltop settlements at the end of LBA, based on absolute dates so far from

¹³³ Unpublished. We wish to thank D. Filipović for this data.

¹³⁴ Filipović et al. 2020.; Marston 2011

¹³⁵ Filipović et al. 2020.

¹³⁶ Filipović et al. 2020: 5, Figure 4.

¹³⁷ Valamoti 2013.

¹³⁸ Filipović et al. 2020.

¹³⁹ Valamoti 2013.

¹⁴⁰ Bulatović 2011, Map. 1.

¹⁴¹ Булатовић 2011. Similar conclusions had come before from J. Bouzek (1985), and recently N. Palincas (2018). Some authors (Kristiansen, Larsson 2005, 18–19, ref. 8, 62, 158 and further), however, criticised J. Bouzek's approach to this problem, without denying interconnections between the Mediterranean and Europe.

Končulj and Hisar, it is plausible they formed an interlinked defensive feature linking the various communities of this area. Several of these fortified settlements were burned down, but the precise chronology of this remains unknown. In the upper Južna Morava valley, we can tell that hilltop settlements in Končulj had been settled by the 13th century BC. This might suggest that violent destruction of the fortifications in these settlements occurred after that period – that is, post 1200 BC. This may suggest that inward migration was not set within an entirely peaceful context, so that it may have been implicated in local conflicts as settlement and material culture forms were shifting. Aside from hilltop settlements, the few absolute dates available indicate that in the first half of the 12th century BC (Tab. 1/7, 9), the completely different Belegiš II–Gava pottery was introduced into an area previously dominated by Brnjica group traditions.

This new pottery undoubtedly derives from, or even belongs to, the Belegiš II–Gava cultural group, which was characteristic of the Pannonian Plain since at least 1400 BC.¹⁴² During the 12th century BC, this became the dominant ceramic style used throughout the whole of the Morava Valley,¹⁴³ and a short time later, throughout the Vardar valley. Pottery with this characteristic channel-decoration, particularly the bowls with inverted rims, has been found in quantities in cemeteries and on settlements dated to the 12th to 11th centuries BC all the way to the level of the northern coast of the Aegean. That said, deeper vessels from the Vardar area with a cylindrical neck with an ornament on the belly in the form of oblique or horizontal grooves “divided” by a vertical plastic device, (Pl. VI/3, Pl. VII/12, Pl. X/11) may find their best parallels in the transitional period from the Velika Morava Valley,¹⁴⁴ rather than the Pannonian Plain. That is, a distinctive local variation of the Belegiš II–Gava tradition can be recognised in the Vardar Valley and it is predominantly this variation that is documented in areas to the south. It seems that this is an original “Morava” element that evolved from Belegiš II–Gava pottery.

On the basis of the above detailed discussions, the question is raised as to whether the appearance of Belegiš II–Gava pottery and the introduction of new types of bronze objects can be related to changes that took place within the Morava Valley itself. Specifically, we refer here to the building of hilltop settlements with fortifications on the one hand and the instances, and possible horizon, of burning we observe at these. Judging by the situation recorded at Hisar, where

sealed contexts with pottery of the Belegiš II–Gava type were recorded in association with occasional finds of Brnjica group sherds, we can say that the two different styles coexisted at this site for a period. It will be important to identify if this pattern can be recognised at other hilltop settlements from this period in future fieldwork. In particular, a more systematic comparison of sites within and just beyond the Južna Morava Valley will be revealing. This is because there are strong suggestions in the current datasets that Belegiš II–Gava pottery was less common outside of the main communication corridor and that local Brnjica pottery continued in use into the 12th century BC. The distribution of both Brnjica group and Belegiš II–Gava group pottery from this period (12th–11th century BC) suggests a bias in settlement choices, with the latter being dominant in settlements on the plains and terraces of Južna Morava river, while the former dominates assemblages outside the Južna Morava Valley. This raises the question as to whether we find a bifurcation of society in this area resulting, in part, from inward migration and the manner in which the people, as well as craft traditions, of such groups articulated with established communities.

We emphasise here that we consider bearers of pottery styles as a technical device to enable a comparative study of communities. In this sense, while it may be used to differentiate the people using certain pottery and living in certain settlements, we do not imply ethnic groups or even deeply held cultural or social distinctions. We speak here of choices in how identity was expressed using pottery styles and shapes. For that reason, it is necessary to consider different possibilities for the introduction of Belegiš II–Gava type into the Morava region. Was this a result of population interaction alone, i.e. cultural transmission (short-term movements of low intensity such as trade, marriage, exchange of information and knowledge, etc.)? Or can we imply from this data more intensive population movements involving larger numbers of people and with a greater permanency; i.e., resettlement? Pottery of the Belegiš II–Gava type is associated with the Carpathian Basin and is present south of the Carpathian arc in Oltenia as early as the end of the 13th

¹⁴² Медовић 2001, 220.

¹⁴³ Стојић 2005.

¹⁴⁴ Стојић 2005, T. XXXV/9–14, T. XXXVI/14, T. LI/2, T. LX/18, T. LXI/1, сл. 17.

century BC, and certainly by the first half of the 12th century BC.¹⁴⁵ Recent research in Banat shows that the general style began notably earlier on the Pannonian Plain within the Carpathian arc.¹⁴⁶ The earliest examples which may be called Belegiš II style date as

early as 1400 BC, though it is during the 14th century that the style matured and came into wider circulation. This style is largely (but not exclusively) defined by characteristic urns, bowls with inverted rims, carinated/s-profile cups and small-footed juglets.¹⁴⁷ The

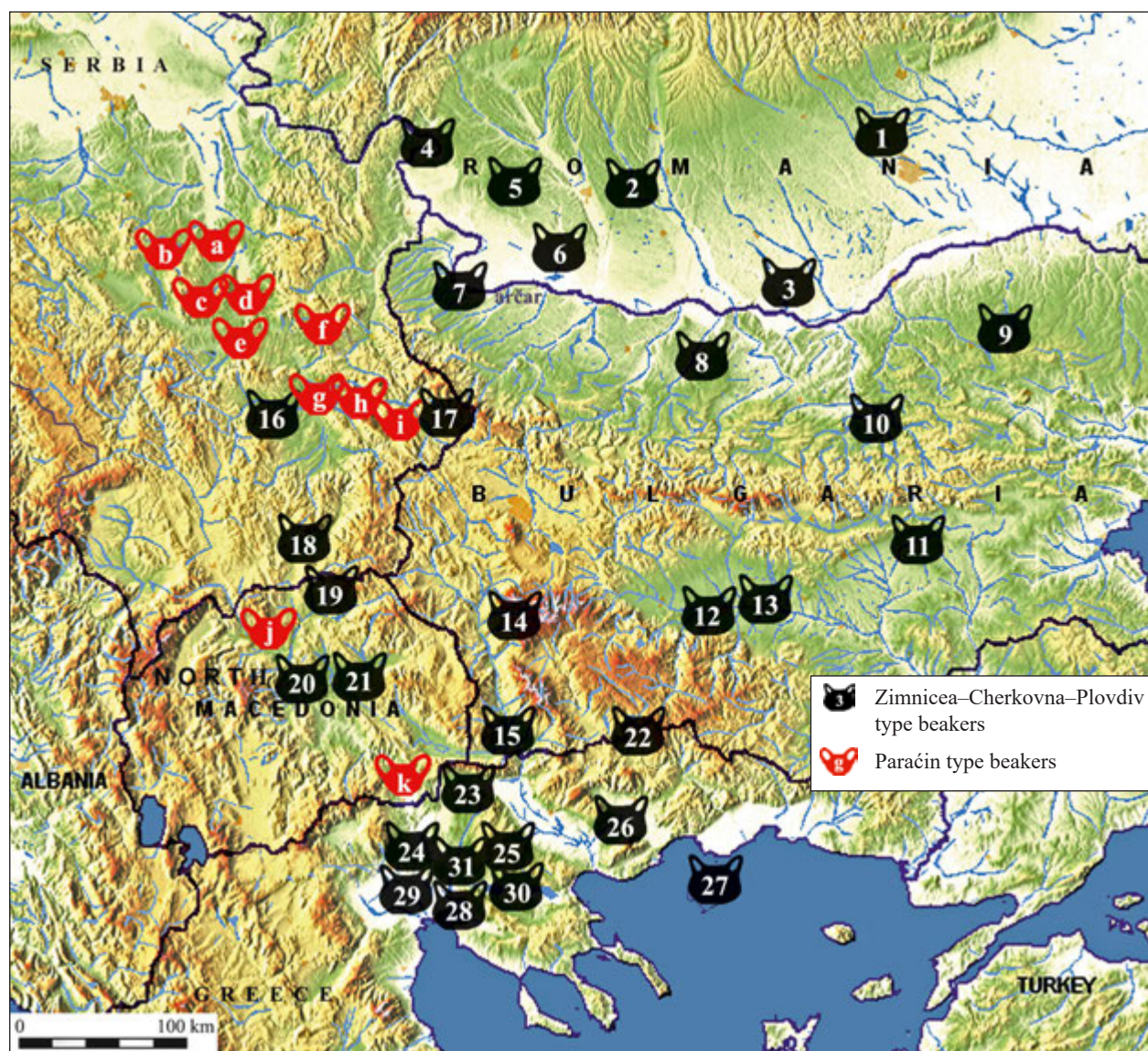


Fig. 3. Sites with globular beakers of the Zimnicea–Cherkovna–Plovdiv and Paraćin types

1. Tei; 2. Govora sat; 3. Zimnicea; 4. Zbradila; 5. Verbicoiara; 6. Barca; 7. Archar; 8. Pleven; 9. Tserkovna; 10. Varbovka; 11. Nova Zagora; 12. Plovdiv; 13. Razkopanica; 14. Kamenska čuka; 15. Marikostinovo; 16. Donja Toponica; 17. Velika Lukanja; 18. Končulj; 19. Kokino; 20. Manastir; 21. Ulanci; 22. Potamoi; 23. Tsautsica; 24. Kastanas; 25. Asiros; 26. Statmos Agista; 27. Kentria; 28. Tumba, Thesalonike; 29. Vardarophsa; 30. Saratse; 31. Akbunar. a) Sarina međa; b) Krajujevac; c) Čuprija; d) Paraćin; e) Obrež; f) Rutevac; g) Vrtište; h) Medijana; i) Velika Lukanja; j) Klučka; k) Vardarski Rid.

Сл. 3. Локалитети са налазима лоптичастих њехара типова Параћин и Зимничеа–Черковна–Пловдив

1. Теу; 2. Говора саи; 3. Зимничеа; 4. Збрадила; 5. Вербичоара; 6. Барка; 7. Арчар; 8. Плевен; 9. Черковна; 10. Варбовка; 11. Нова Загора; 12. Пловдив; 13. Разкојаница; 14. Каменска чука; 15. Марикустиново; 16. Доња Тојоница; 17. Велика Лукања; 18. Кончуљ; 19. Кокино; 20. Манасиџир; 21. Уланци; 22. Појамои; 23. Чаушица; 24. Касијанас; 25. Асирос; 26. Сџајмос Ајусија; 27. Кенџирија; 28. Тумба, Солун; 29. Вардарофца; 30. Сараце; 31. Акбунар. а) Сарина међа; б) Крајујевац; в) Ђуџирија; д) Параћин; е) Обреж; ф) Руџевац; г) Врџиштије; х) Медијана; и) Велика Лукања; ј) Клуџка; к) Варгарски Рид

material typologically related to the Belegiš II–Gava group has been recorded throughout the Morava and Vardar/Axios valleys and as far as the Aegean coast, demonstrating a long chain of interacting societies. Importantly, this distribution of Belegiš II–Gava style pottery began after the abandonment of most or all mega-fort sites and related cemeteries in the Pannonian Basin.¹⁴⁸

* * *

We will turn now to a brief overview of material from the Vardar/Axios valley, because this provides us with a context to evaluate the full regional extent of the impact of the introduction of Belegiš II–Gava pottery to this wider area. In the Late Bronze Age, people living in the Vardar/Axios valley used material culture characterised as the Ulanci group. The material culture characteristic of this group has been clearly defined by others.¹⁴⁹ According to D. Mitrevski, the group existed from the end of the 14th to the end of the 12th century BC, after which he argues the people making and using this were replaced by a “North and Central Balkan population”. For Mitrevski, the appearance of new pottery and a new type of burial rite, cremation burials placed in urns, is used to support that mass-migration model. The earliest known cremation burials have been recorded at Skopje (Klučka), Veles, Bitolj and Štip and are dated to this period of change in the 12th century BC (Fig. 2).¹⁵⁰

A clear example illustrating the relationship between the older rite of inhumation and the newly introduced rite of cremation, is the recently investigated cemetery of Mali Dol near Negotin.¹⁵¹ In this cemetery, inhumation burials of the Ulanci group represent the earliest phases of the late 12th century BC. Then, in the 11th to 10th century, a horizon of cremation burials in urns was deposited (Fig. 4). The urns in question are clearly closely related to the Brnjica group from the Južna Morava region. On the basis of the typology of needles from graves from both phases of the cemetery, the chronology might need to be shifted to slightly earlier dates.¹⁵² We await absolute dates from this cemetery as part of ongoing work, and these phases are based on relative ceramic chronology currently.¹⁵³

It is relevant that a vessel with channel decoration on the belly was deposited in the older phase of the cemetery alongside pottery characteristic of the Ulanci group. The decoration is similar to bowls with a channel-decorated belly from the Brnjica group.¹⁵⁴ This could indicate mutual contacts between the Ulanci

and Brnjica groups even before the later phase of the Mali Dol cemetery was established.¹⁵⁵ No pottery of Belegiš II–Gava influence or type has been recorded in this cemetery. Slightly farther to the north, that latter pottery style has been documented in a cremation cemetery with urn burials at Klučka.

The cemetery of Klučka lies on the eastern outskirts of the city of Skopje.¹⁵⁶ At this site, the mortuary rite and most of the material culture correspond to features common to both the Brnjica and Paraćin groups. However, the relationship between the pottery from the graves and the cultural layers at the nearby settlement is not clear with respect to chronology and stratigraphy. The pottery from the settlement was dominated by vessels with characteristics of Belegiš II–Gava style. Channel-decorated pottery was discovered in the cultural layer among the stone constructions of the graves and could therefore stratigraphically belong to the period during which the cemetery was in use. However, it is notable that no graves contain vessels of this type of pottery. Ultimately, it is quite possible that this pottery was deposited very soon after the cemetery ceased being used and was associated with a short-lived settlement using Belegiš II–Gava pottery in this same location. If so, it is interesting that a settlement with occupants utilising a new material culture tradition was built above a very recently used, and presumably still visible, cemetery. Whether from a settlement or mortuary context, this introduction could represent a very visible symbol of a change in the nature or makeup of the community.

¹⁴⁵ Alexandrov et al. 2016, Figs. 5–9.

¹⁴⁶ Sava 2020; Molloy et al. 2020.

¹⁴⁷ Bulatović 2019. Compare: Sava 2020, Fig. 16/1H, Fig. 17.

¹⁴⁸ Sava, Gogâltan, and Krause 2019; Lehmpuhl et al. 2019; Gumnior and Stobbe 2019; B. Molloy et al. 2020.

¹⁴⁹ Mitrevski 2003, 46–51.

¹⁵⁰ Митревски 1997.

¹⁵¹ Papazovska 2019.

¹⁵² Vasić 2003.

¹⁵³ This is currently being conducted by A. Papazovska and B. Molloy under the remit of the ERC “The Fall of 1200 BC” project.

¹⁵⁴ Папазовска 2019, Т. I.

¹⁵⁵ In Pelagonija, urns of the Brnjica type with a typical Brnjica rim, as well as a deeper bowl with a grooved belly were recorded in a hoard of vessels at the Varoš site in Prilep (Kitanoski 1980; Bulatović 2011, T. II / 10). This could be evidence of direct or indirect contacts of the Pelagonija population and the Central Balkans.

¹⁵⁶ Mitrevski 1994.

We must also briefly consider the cemetery in Stobi. At this site, an urn with features resembling the Brnjica style was found along with a bowl with an inverted fluted rim. Unfortunately, the contribution this site may make to any discussion of the stratigraphic-chronological relationship between “Brnjica” pottery and Belegiš II–Gava in the Vardar Valley has been lost because the site was completely destroyed in modern times.¹⁵⁷

A similar situation to that seen in the Morava Valley with respect to changes in settlement occurs in the

lower Vardar Valley. At Vardarski Rid, a large hillfort settlement was built on a dominant hill next to the Vardar river, not far from the present state border of Northern Macedonia and Greece. The hillfort was inhabited by the LBA (settlement Vardarski Rid II – 13th to 11th century BC) by people using pottery of the Ulanci group.¹⁵⁸ Alongside this, some pottery characteristic of the Brnjica group, urns in particular, was used. As for the local architecture, houses were characterised by walls constructed with daub.¹⁵⁹ It is not clear whether there was a hiatus between this and the

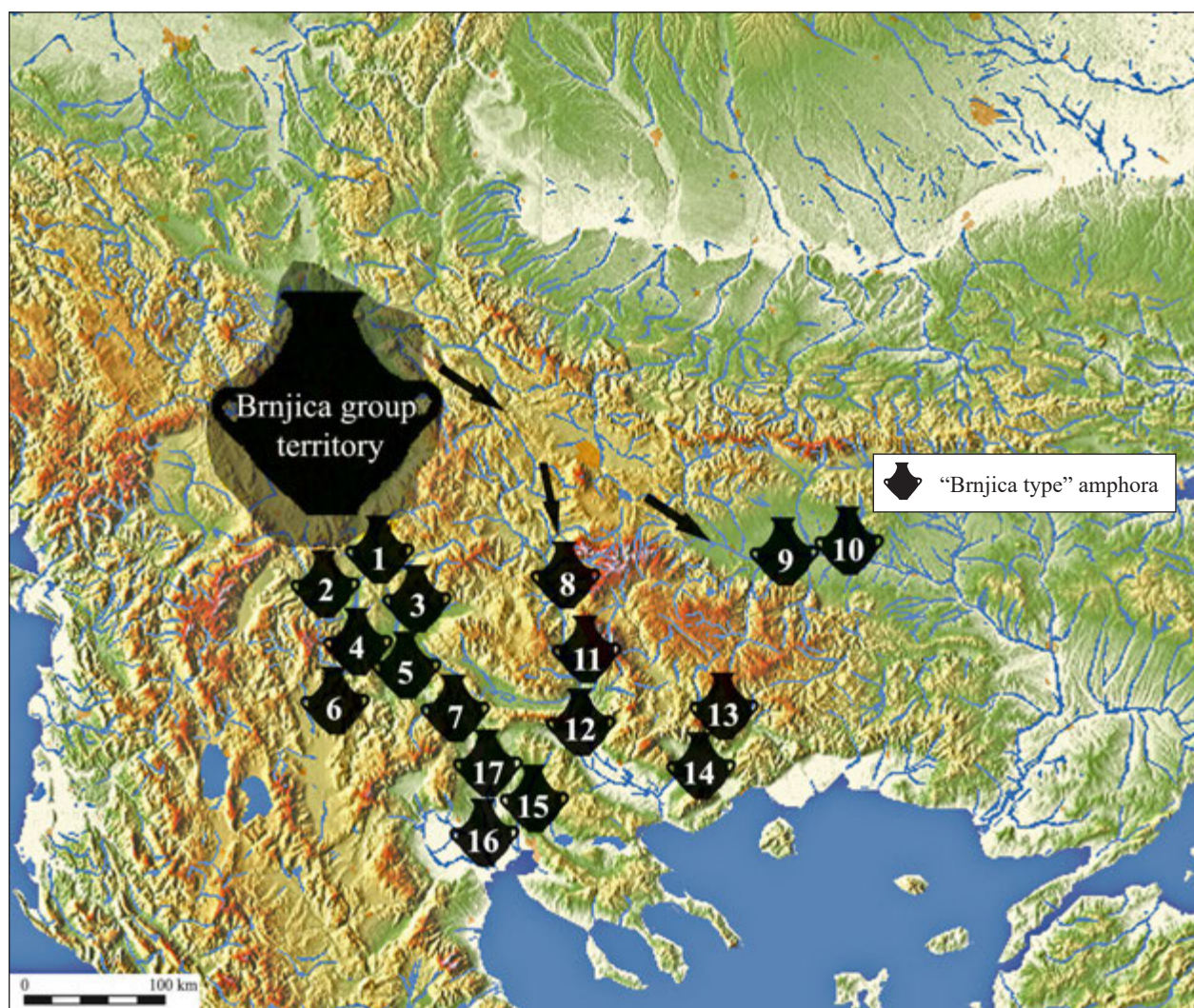


Fig. 4. Sites with Brnjica group type “amphorae”

1. Kokino; 2. Klučka; 3. Štip; 4. Manastir; 5. Stobi; 6. Prilep; 7. Vardarski Rid; 8. Kamenska čuka; 9. Plovdiv; 10. Razkopanica; 11. Sandanski; 12. Faia Petra; 13. Potamoi and Eksohi; 14. Statmos Agista; 15. Asiros; 16. Kastanas; 17. Vardarophtsa.

Сл. 4. Локалитетите на „амфорама“ брњичке групе

1. Кокино; 2. Клучка; 3. Штип; 4. Манастир; 5. Стоби; 6. Прилеп; 7. Вардарски Рид; 8. Каменска чука; 9. Пловдив; 10. Разкопанца; 11. Сандански; 12. Фаиа Пејра; 13. Пошамои и Ексохи; 14. Стаймос Агиста; 15. Асирос; 16. Кастанас; 17. Вардаропфта.

next phase of settlement at this same location (Vardarski Rid III), which has material culture characteristic of the Early Iron Age. This change is visible, in any case, in the completely different pottery that characterises each phase. According to Mitrevski, a possible scenario is that the inhabitants of the LBA settlement, or a component of them, withdrew from Vardarski Rid to the nearby higher and more difficult to access hillfort on Kofilak hill. This was seen as possibly relating to major turbulent events. Pottery used at the site after this horizon is mostly of northern origin,¹⁶⁰ but on the Kofilak hillfort, pottery of LBA forms was found and associated with different architecture that is characteristic of Central Balkan traditions (wattle and daub technique). The settlement from the Early Iron Age, which is dated to the 10th–9th century BC, is characterised by Belegiš II–Gava pottery, though only in small quantities.¹⁶¹

Farther south, in the lower course of the Vardar/Axios river, clear changes are also documented in the pottery inventory of settlements. In the oldest phase of the LBA tell settlement of Assiros Toumba (phase 9), among other things, spherical cups decorated with spirals filled with white inlay were recorded. During a later phase at this settlement (phase 6) urn-like vessels of the Brnjica group appeared,¹⁶² as seen at this time in the upper and the middle course of the Vardar/Axios river. Phase 9 of Assiros is dated to the middle of the 14th century calBC, while phase 6 is absolutely dated to the 13th century (95.4% of probability) and possibly to the second quarter of this century.¹⁶³ This indicates the existence of clear contacts between groups in the Central Balkans and those in the lower Vardar/Axios valley. Pottery with characteristics of the Belegiš II–Gava group has not been recorded at this site but an amphora with twisted handles was found in Phase 3.¹⁶⁴

At the settlement of Kastanas, globular beakers decorated with spiral and other geometric motifs, often filled with inlays, were recovered from the 17th layer. In this same layer, the first vessel reminiscent of urns of the Brnjica group was recorded.¹⁶⁵ Ornaments in the form of spirals, ribbons filled with impressions, hatched triangles and similar decoration techniques common to the LBA groups of southern Pannonia, Oltenia and Transylvania, appear in Kastanas as early as the 19th layer, together with local matt-painted pottery, and continue to appear in subsequently deposited layers. This pottery seems to be most numerous in layers 14b–13,¹⁶⁶ which has been dated to the first quarter

of the 12th century BC.¹⁶⁷ This is an important horizon, because changes can be recognised in the pottery assemblage. In the 13th layer, wide oblique channels set on the belly of vessels sporadically occur. These are on forms of bowls seen in Brnjica group assemblages. Plastic extensions on handles, which are known in the Brnjica group, and twisted handles characteristic of pottery in the Velika Morava Valley with Belegiš II–Gava influences are both documented at Kastanas and the nearby cemetery of Palio Gynakokastro.¹⁶⁸ These elements become more frequent in layers 12 and 11 at Kastanas. In the 12th layer (last quarter of the 12th century BC)¹⁶⁹ new pottery with elements of the Belegiš II–Gava style appears in the form of bowls with an inverted and faceted rim, bowls with inverted and fluted rims, handles of slatina-type and handles with plastic extensions on their top. In addition to the channel decoration of the Belegiš II–Gava type, the wider oblique channels on the bellies of bowls, characteristic of the Brnjica group, occur alongside matt-painted vessels and more numerically dominant local forms.¹⁷⁰ In the 11th layer (the beginning of the 10th century BC), channel decoration is even more frequently attested. From the 10th layer (middle of the 10th century), only channel decoration of Belegiš II–Gava type is present, and vessels with channel-decorated bellies and vertical plastic ribs appear.¹⁷¹ These same forms and ornaments were recovered from Hisar feature 7 (Tab. 1/7, 9

¹⁵⁷ Митревски 1997, 313.

¹⁵⁸ Mitrevski 2001; Videvski 2005.

¹⁵⁹ Mitrevski 2001, 20–21, Pl. I.

¹⁶⁰ Mitrevski 2001, 22–23.

¹⁶¹ Mitrevski 2001, Pl. I; Papazovska 2005, T. I/5, T. III/24.

¹⁶² Wardle, Wardle 2007.

¹⁶³ Wardle et al. 2014, fig. 2, Tab. 1. The start of phase 6 would be between 1300–1253, and the end between 1265–1203.

¹⁶⁴ Wardle, Wardle 2007, 473. pl. 18.

¹⁶⁵ Hochsteter 1984, Taf. 10/1, Taf. 13/5

¹⁶⁶ Hochsteter 1984, Taf. 40, 47, 48/1, 7, Taf. 50, 56/7–9, 60/1, 5–9

¹⁶⁷ Weninger, Jung 2009.

¹⁶⁸ Hochsteter 1984, Taf. 71/2, 3, Taf. 73/10. Savvopoulou, Th, 2001, “Παλιό Γυναικόκαστρο. Το νεκροταφείο των “περβόλων”” in Stampolidis, N. (ed). Καυσεις Στην Εποχη Του Χαλκου Και Την Πρωιμη Εποχη Τουσιδηρου. Athens: Archaeological Etaireia, pp: 169–184, 174.

¹⁶⁹ Weninger, Jung 2009.

¹⁷⁰ Hochsteter 1984, Taf. 76/1, Taf. 78/2,3, 6, Taf. 80/8, Taf. 82/5–7.

¹⁷¹ Hochsteter 1984, Taf. 117/4, 8, 10.

– approximately the 12th century BC) and Ranutovac feature 45 (Tab. 1/11 – last third of the 12th to last quarter of the 11th century BC). This pottery feature, which is common in the Morava Valley, appears relatively late in relation to other channel-decorated features on ceramics of the Belegiš II–Gava type at Kastanas.

According to the analysis of pottery and on the basis of stratigraphic horizons, it seems that the occu-

pants of Kastanas were in contact with groups from the north as early as layers 19/18 (Br C/1450–1325/00 BC). This was contemporary with the early Brnjica group and related groups from Oltenia and southern Transylvania, directly or indirectly. By the 12th century BC, consumption of pottery of the Belegiš II–Gava type began and this was intensified considerably in the 11th and 10th centuries BC.¹⁷² This adoption is also seen at

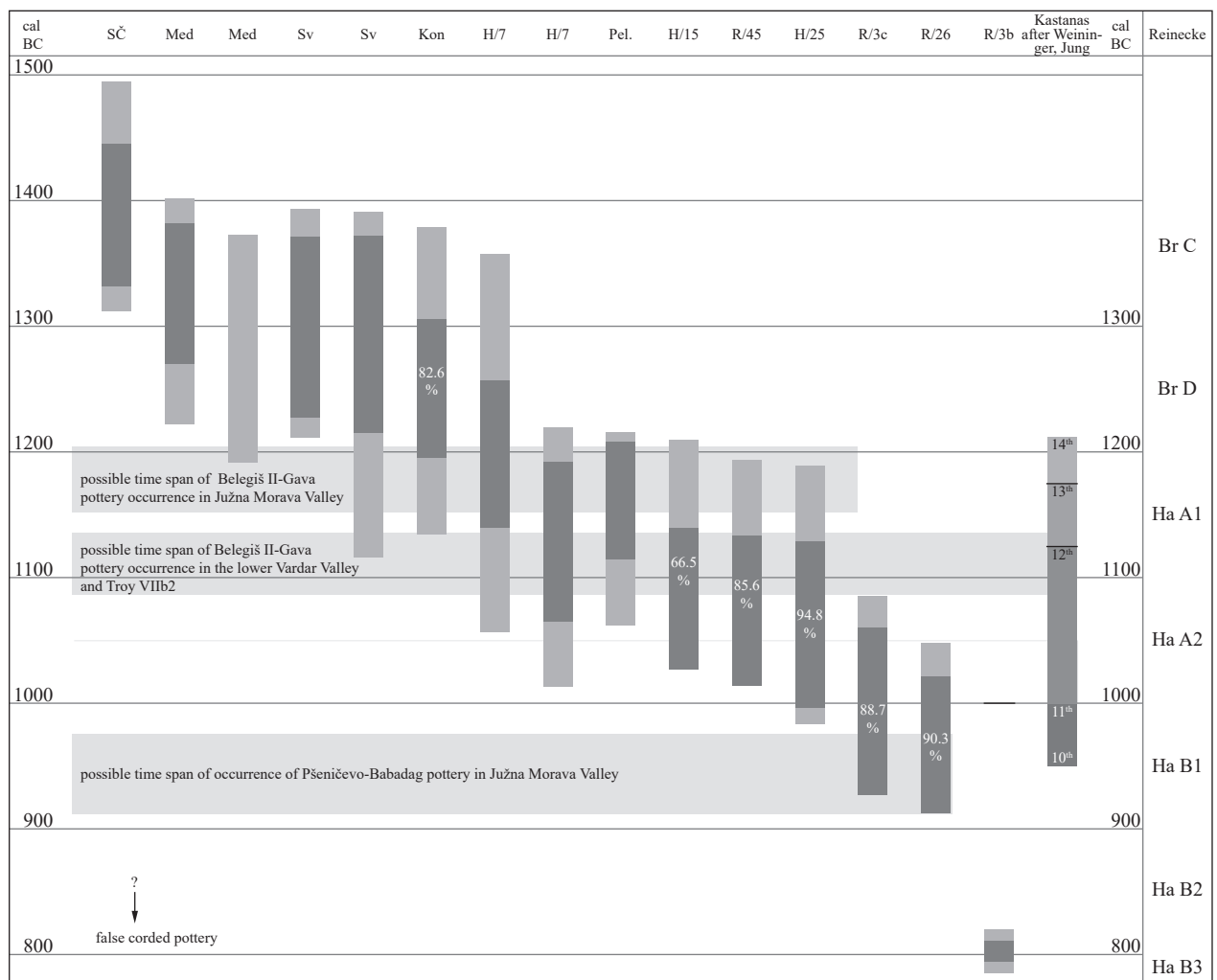


Fig. 5. Chronology of the LBA and Transitional period in the Južna Morava and Vardar/Axios Basins

Abbreviations:

SČ – Svinjarička Čuka; Med – Medijana; Sv – Svinjište; H/7 – Hisar, objekat 7; Pel – Pelince; H/15 – Hisar, objekat 15; R/45 – Ranutovac, feature 45; H/25 – Hisar, feature 25; R/3c – Ranutovac, feature 3c; R/26 – Ranutovac, feature 26; R/3b – Ranutovac, feature 3b.

Light grey in the date bars represents a time span of 95.4% probability; dark grey in the date bars represents a time span of 68.2% probability or the other value inscribed in the bar.

Сл. 5. Хронологија позној бронзаној доба и прелазној периода у долинима Јужне Мораве и Вардара

Скраћенице:

SČ – Свињаричка чука; Med – Медијана; Sv – Свињиште; H/7 – Хисар, објекат 7; Pel – Пелинце; H/15 – Хисар, објекат 15; R/45 – Ранутовац, објекат 45; H/25 – Хисар, објекат 25; R/3c – Ранутовац, објекат 3c; R/26 – Ранутовац, објекат 26; R/3b – Ранутовац, објекат 3b.

Светло сиви сиубићи представљају временски оквир са вероватноћом од 95.4%, тамно сиви сиубићи представљају временски оквир са вероватноћом од 68.2%, или других вредности најомених у сиубићу.

the nearby cemetery of Palio Gynaikokastro, where bowls with inverted, channel-decorated rims are known.¹⁷³

At Vardarophitsa in the lower Vardar/Axios basin, a vessel of the Brnjica urn type was recorded in the LBA layer, together with globular beakers and other characteristic pottery of the time.¹⁷⁴ Above this stratum, burnt layers derived from at least two phases of settlement were excavated and together were 1.5 m deep. Within these, sherds of what was once called “Lausitz” pottery, now termed Belegiš II–Gava, were recovered.¹⁷⁵

W.A. Heurtley read this as a clear example of an invasion (though not necessarily violent) of Belegiš II–Gava pottery bearers at the end of the Mycenaean era. A similar situation was recorded in Vardina (today Limnotopos, Greece). There, the youngest of three layers of settlement had Belegiš II–Gava pottery found side-by-side with locally made ceramics, including some Mycenaean forms.¹⁷⁶ At the lowermost burnt layer in Vardina, an Orlea-type fibula with a leaf-shaped arch was found. This piece was dated by pottery from the same context to the Submycenaean period, but also to the Mycenaean IIIC Late phase.¹⁷⁷ This corresponds to the first half of the 11th century BC,¹⁷⁸ but potentially as early as the second half of the 12th century BC, according to Wardle et al.¹⁷⁹ A fibula of this type was found in tomb XI at the cemetery at Brod (Saraj) in Pelagonija, North Macedonia, with many finds that, according to Hammond, originate from the north, and can be dated to the 12th century BC.¹⁸⁰ Orlea type fibulae are common in Pannonia, and are dated there to the Ha A1 period, though the justification of this dating remains unclear.¹⁸¹ It has been argued that they originated in today’s southern Germany and Austria during the period Br D–Ha A.¹⁸² It is also salient that a hoard of vessels from Pelagonija (Prilep, Varoš) with several types characteristic of the Brnjica group has been documented, providing further context to the fibula from nearby Saraj.

A final note with respect to the distribution of Pannonian channel-decorated pottery is that the Belegiš II–Gava type also reached the Troy VIIb2 settlement in Anatolia. In this layer there are twisted handles, vessels whose belly is decorated with vertical plastic thickening and channels (the so-called Morava variant of the vessel) and instances of vessels with vertical or oblique narrow channels on their bellies.¹⁸³ According to P. Hnila, who follows Wardle et al.’s suggestion, this layer can be dated to 1140–1120 cal-

BC, based on painted Mycenaean and Protogeometric pottery.¹⁸⁴ One must not, however, neglect the conventional date for layer VIIb2, which corresponds to the middle of the 11th century BC, so it is most reasonable to date this layer to the period from the second half of the 12th to the middle of the 11th century.¹⁸⁵ Such vessels have also been documented in Thrace, for example in phases II and III at Gluhite Kamani, which correspond to the second half of the 12th to the 10th–9th century (possibly the first half of the 9th century) (Fig. 5).¹⁸⁶

Discussion: Of Aegean Migrations, Dorians and new mobility paradigms in archaeology

It is perhaps easy to understand why a model for “Aegean migrations” was developed as an explanation for culture change, and pottery in particular, in the area between the Morava Valley and north Aegean coast around 1200 BC based on the appearance of (broadly) Carpathian pottery styles in northern Greece. It is clear that the areas between were central to any form of personal or cultural mobility. Indeed, the very idea of culturally bounded social or political groups defined almost entirely by the pottery they used moving from point A to B over such distances is rarely, if ever, found in current literature. At the same time, it is aiming for an easy target to contest that detailed studies of the development of “named” pottery groups as

¹⁷² Булатовић 2011.

¹⁷³ Savvopoulou 2001

¹⁷⁴ Heurtley 1939, cat.no. 408.

¹⁷⁵ Lausitz pottery or Danube pottery were previous terms for the pottery from the Vardar Valley that appeared in the last quarter of the 2nd millenium. Today, this pottery could be identified as Belegiš II–Gava pottery; handles decorated with narrow grooves, twisted handles, vessels with obliquely, horizontally or vertically grooved belly, etc. (Heurtley 1939, Fig. 87).

¹⁷⁶ Hammond 1972, 305–306. It is not clear whether was Mycenaean import or local imitations.

¹⁷⁷ Stefanovich 1973, 151.

¹⁷⁸ Weninger, Jung 2009.

¹⁷⁹ Wardle et al. 2014, 7, Tab. 1.

¹⁸⁰ Hammond 1975, 707–708.

¹⁸¹ Vasić 1999, 21.

¹⁸² Vasić 1999, 21.

¹⁸³ Hnila 2012, cat.nos. 446, 671, 676, 685, 710, 712, 715, 811, 812, 813, 929.

¹⁸⁴ Hnila 2012, 20; Wardle et al. 2007.

¹⁸⁵ Desborough 1964.

¹⁸⁶ Nekhrizov, Tzvetkova 2018, Figs. 4/7, 6/6, 12

coherent and often spatially constrained bodies of material are old fashioned or equate to “pots = people”. This is particularly the case in our study area because we spatially move through four to five distinct cultural ambits; The Carpathian Basin, Oltenia and the areas immediately south of the Danube, the Morava Valley, the Vardar/Axios valley and northern Greece.

Differences in material culture in each area abound at particular times and at other times they are reduced and imports, adaptations and entanglement of styles are recognised. Why do we consider the migration model to have been an understandable paradigm? Because during a brief window of time, common elements in the pottery styles of these four to five areas emerge. This is not prestige, high-value pottery that may be considered a trade item, but rather mundane and basic domestic pottery, material which was consumed at a household/family unit level. At the same time, we witness changes in settlement patterns with evidence for increased defensibility in some cases and site destructions in others around this same horizon. Contemporaneous to this, we can also document the spread of burial practices in a north-south direction with flat cremation cemeteries using urns reaching the north Aegean.¹⁸⁷ While we do not argue for a mass-migration model, we also cannot consider these particular and deeply embedded changes to be the result of passive diffusion. It is also clear that we cannot identify any form of core-periphery or high to low culture kind of emulation framework that might justify the adoption of the Belegiš II–Gava and Brnjica styles beyond the areas in which they were originally developed. Change occurred at variable paces and intensities at different settlements and cemeteries, indicating the presence of regular networks of interaction that expanded over time towards the south. Migration may well have driven this expansion, but the cultural impact emerged through the continuance of networks established in this way. As a consequence, new ideas/styles became embedded alongside existing ones for a period, either increasing (Morava) or decreasing (Northern Greece) in prevalence and fidelity (with respect to ‘original’ forms) between 1200 and 1000 BC.

With this in mind, we turn briefly to one of the root causes of the old migration models, that of the Dorian invasion.¹⁸⁸ This myth largely arose from the specific academic climate of the late 19th and early 20th centuries and constituted what O’Brien termed “parables of decline”.¹⁸⁹ This invasion model is so completely defunct, we merely state here that it was

based on a highly selective and colonialist reading of Classical Greek texts to argue for hordes of invading Barbarians raiding Greece and bringing about the collapse of Bronze Age palatial society there. Here we wish to briefly revisit the original texts, not this invasion model, because apart from this 19th century fantasy Dorian Invasion, some elements of the texts themselves are revealing. We recognise these were written 600–700 years later than the events they purport to discuss and that they were written within the intellectual and political milieu of the Classical period, rife with agendas of the time of the writers. Counting them as vague echoes of the past or folk memories at best, some points of relevance to our paper can be identified.

Herodotus says the following:

“The Pelasgian race has never yet left its home; the Hellenic has wandered often and far. For in the days of king Deucalion it inhabited the land of Phthia, then the country called Histiaeian, under Ossa and Olympus, in the time of Dorus son of Hellen; driven from this Histiaeian country by the Cadmeans, it settled about Pindus in the territory called Macedonian; from there again it migrated to Dryopia, and at last came from Dryopia into the Peloponnese, where it took the name of Dorian.”¹⁹⁰

In advance of commenting on this, we should clarify two things discussed in more detail elsewhere.¹⁹¹ Pottery of Pannonian and Balkan influence extends only into the very north of Greece and even though metalwork, being more mobile as personal or trade objects, reaches as far south as Crete, it is most common north of the Gulf of Corinth. Moving south, maritime influences are more in evidence, as seen through the combined presence of objects of Italian inspiration from across the Adriatic as well as objects of Carpathian influence in southern Greece.¹⁹² The point made here is that the maritime connections which archaeology tells us were operating in the heartlands of

¹⁸⁷ There is a certain probability that the urns with cremations were covered with low mounds.

¹⁸⁸ Miložević 1948/49; Desborough 1964; Garašanin 1973; Stefanovich 1973; Catling & Catling 1981; Mitrevski 2003 and others.

¹⁸⁹ Maspero 1896; Sanders 1985; O’Brien 2013.

¹⁹⁰ Herodotus 1.56:2–3.

¹⁹¹ Molloy 2016, 2018

¹⁹² Jung 2009; Jung and Mehofer 2013; F. Iacono 2013; B. P. C. Molloy 2016b.

the Mycenaean world do not receive a mention in Herodotus, nor indeed do those lands themselves. Rather, the focus is on incursions from the north.

However, Herodotus does not speak of mass invasions. Rather, what we read of is increased mobility of groups and a process of ongoing reconfiguration of identities over time as groups fuse and disintegrate and move through the landscape. Given the time-scale and short distances involved, this may better be read as a period of increased mobility triggered by both instability and processes of the emergence, and importantly here the abortive emergence, of socio-cultural identities. There is not a linear path between pre-Classical and Classical cultural/political identities, but a world of “might have beens” alongside the eventual successful identities.

Taking this as a vague echo of the past or even abstractly as a heuristic, this does not conflict with the archaeological narrative as set out in this paper and we feel this viewpoint is a more reasonable and testable model than the Dorian Invasions or Aegean Migrations of old. In such a model, individuals and small groups with myriad identities were involved in new networks and there was experimentation on the one hand, but also perhaps a darker and more violent side as hegemonies were sought to be enforced and small groups pushed themselves into new lands and actively sought to assimilate or transform over time to suit emergent social agendas. Another hypothetical reading might be that the area in which all of this chaotic reordering was taking place was in the northern parts of Greece and the southern Balkans before people in Greece “had constant rest and [were] shifting their seats no longer”.¹⁹³

Accepting this combination of Classical history and prehistoric archaeology as tenuous at best, our key point is that if such a reading of the texts is at least closer to the archaeology, then in turn it removes any support whatsoever for large-scale migration narratives. It also leaves the door very much open to the emergence of networks through which people moved with diverse motivations, under changing historical circumstances and at varied scales. None of this was linear or predictable but appears quite chaotic. We cannot begin to estimate how that may translate into archaeological traces. The cultural impact of mobility read in this way can be detected with the settlements and cemeteries throughout the study area, where change is evident but lacks a consistent pattern. Furthermore, taking away the core-periphery undertones of

the migration model in which the Morava and Vardar/Axios valleys were passive conduits through which people moved to more “interesting” areas, it is apparent that communities there were actually the drivers of interaction linking areas north and south. This does not preclude the movement of some groups farther to the south, but that would be for different reasons, perhaps periodic, and presumably outside of the network defined through domestic assemblages in this paper.

This was a period of change in which migration played an important role but, in our view, rather than revealing movement towards the previous palatial heartlands, this migration contributed directly to the growing prosperity within the overland corridor linking the Aegean and continental Europe. These were dynamic communities in which ideas from the north and south were adopted and modified and spread further. We believe that part of this dynamic arose from migration into the Morava Valley, which triggered a new cultural vibrancy there. That, in turn, articulated with regions to the south over short and long distances. It seems plausible to us that the data from the north Aegean is consistent with regularised, protracted and intense mobility that had an impact on the domestic sphere. This is visible in ceramic and metalwork forms being consumed over centuries and, importantly, ceramic forms suggest this took place in domestic contexts rather than in venues of prestige-good consumption. That suggests people, more than objects, were mobile.

We can take the case of the adoption of characteristic turban-dishes, bowls with oblique channel-decorated surfaces, from the Pannonian Plain repertoire. Aslaksen considers these to be a key marker for this new cultural dynamism.¹⁹⁴ For bowls of modest aesthetic value, the capacity for their cultural value to have been established through interaction and encounters involving the physical use of objects is important. Aslaksen sees the bowls as transcultural objects serving as modulators between locals and travellers during encounters in northern Greece. This allowed them to engage in commensal activities in a common manner, stimulated initially by migration of small groups, possibly of elite status, from north to south.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹³ Thucydides 1.12.

¹⁹⁴ Aslaksen 2012.

¹⁹⁵ Aslaksen 2012: 269; see also Eder and Jung 2005 for a similar model for the consumption of Mycenaean pottery in southern Italy.

Looking farther north, new packages of ceramics displacing preceding traditions, as seen with Belegiš II–Gava assemblages of the Juzna-Morava Valley, requires more systematic interactions or, we would argue, a permanent presence of some migrants. This signals that the river valleys connecting the Aegean and Carpathian ambits became important hubs of cross-cultural interaction in their own right following collapse in those two influential but distant regions.

It has commonly been argued that the Mycenaean world represented a pull factor for groups from the north, whether this was incoming mercenaries in service of the palaces or groups on the periphery trading metal or finished objects to an Aegean core.¹⁹⁶ The gravity in such a model is presumed and while often framed in terms of World Systems Analysis, it retains strong, if implicit, tones of the *Ex Oriente Lux* mindset, the lower social orders of the “barbarian” periphery looking to the “civilised” core. The logic, however, is undermined primarily on the basis of chronology. The vast majority of Italian and Carpathian type objects found in the Aegean are dated after the mid 12th century, that is, decades after the palaces had collapsed.¹⁹⁷

The draw of the Aegean world was thus, to one extent or other, perhaps not so strong at that point. Looking to the north, two further things are relevant. It is clear that crises in the Po Valley led to depopulation there in the first half of the 12th century BC.¹⁹⁸ This created a push factor for outward movement of people, documented for example in finds from this time in southern Italy.¹⁹⁹ Though our knowledge of the precise chronology of developments in the Pannonian Plain is in development, it is clear that most of the massive enclosed sites which had dominated this region, and where Belegiš II pottery had first developed, were destroyed and/or abandoned between 1300 and 1200 BC.²⁰⁰ The same can be said for cemeteries in the plain, the available data suggests many were abandoned within that same century. It is not currently possible to define at what point in that century this change took place. However, it can be mooted that, like the situation in the Po Valley, a collapse in settlement systems in the Pannonian Plain provided a possible push factor encouraging outward movement of people who had commonly used Belegiš II pottery. This may be seen, for example, in the appearance of Belegiš II pottery in southern Poland and an increase in settlement in the Transylvanian Plateau in the 12th century, as well as the situation described here for the Morava and Vardar valleys.²⁰¹

Thus, the changes we have discussed occurred after collapse in the Aegean, Po Valley and Pannonian realms. These changes in mobility patterns, short and long distance, were taking place as a consequence of the collapse of the powerful nodes that had dominated networks. In our study area, due to inward migration and necessary new economic and social networks in the wake of reorganisation across the wider region, societies saw a brief boom in prosperity between 1200–1000 BC. During this time, increased mobility drove a form of transculturalism from the Morava to North Aegean, witnessed in objects consumed in domestic and mortuary venues.

Conclusion

In this paper we have revisited a long-standing discussion in Balkan archaeology related to the existence and potential impact of a so-called Aegean migration around 1200 BC. More specifically, we focused on the internal transformations of communities lying in the Morava and Vardar/Axios valleys and their hinterlands during a period of known social change (1200–1000 BC). Through a detailed overview of both ceramic and metalwork finds, supported by new absolute chronological data, we were able to demonstrate that basic phasing can be defined in the pace and character of change in these two stretches of valley. Though seen as a passive conduit in migration models, we have argued that the evidence rather points to the Morava Valley being a dynamic zone of cultural interaction and change, whose influence spread southward during the centuries identified as the “Transitional Period”. Local settlement and mortuary trajectories were disrupted in the late 13th to 12th centuries BC, visible in shifts in site locations, ecological/topographic niches occupied and domestic pottery. Metalwork forms and tin isotope analysis suggest a north-south bias in communication networks, with fewer links to communities to the east and west (even those geographically much closer).

We have proposed a model in which influence from the Pannonian Basin may be read as a gradual

¹⁹⁶ Sherratt 2003; Catling 1961; Jung and Mehofer 2013.

¹⁹⁷ Bouzek 1985, Harding 1984.

¹⁹⁸ Cardarelli 2009.

¹⁹⁹ Iacono 2019.

²⁰⁰ Molloy et al. 2020, Lehmpful et al. 2019, Sava et al. 2019.

²⁰¹ Przybyła 2010; Bóka 2012; Ciugudean 2012; Metzner-Nebelsick 2012; Bălen 2013; Dietrich 2015.

inward migration spanning decades, in part as a consequence of depopulation of settlement networks there. This is seen in the gradual uptake of Belegiš II–Gava pottery and an initial split in settlement conventions between those focussed on the plains of the Morava Valley (embracing Belegiš II–Gava pottery) and others which were focused on defensible hilltop sites (lower levels of initial uptake of Belegiš II–Gava pottery). We stress this is a model that requires further systematic excavation and absolute dating to be tested.

After a period of consolidation, interaction increased with areas to the south that had been part of exchange networks since the time that Brnjica pottery was predominant in the Morava Valley. The increasing visibility of Balkan ceramic forms at sites such as Kastanas (in particular), Palio Gynakokastro, Assiros and Toumba is testament to new types of interaction visible in domestic and mortuary venues. We interpret this as migration within newly expanded and enhanced community interaction networks. That is, this is not an invasion and displacement, but the development of a new social environment accommodating mobility. Importantly, this includes the introduction of cultural ideologies and practices in both domestic and mortuary spheres, indicating that this was people as well as objects moving across boundaries. The suddenness of change in some areas coupled with increased defensibility and/or destruction at sites suggests this

was not all an equitable process. We believe social re-configuration was a key part of these new dynamics and that this could have and did lead to conflict and violence, followed by conciliation and consolidation

It is plausible to us that pressures arising from the outward movement of people from the Pannonian Plain led to a domino effect of small-scale movements and associated tensions and conflicts. This may have extended as far as Troy, where some channel-decorated pottery users settled in the 12th century BC. These same micro-scale pressures and knock-on effects were argued to be part of the process that pushed groups from the Velika Morava and Južna Morava or the Vardar/Axios basin farther south to the North Aegean (seen in pottery) or even beyond, in smaller numbers (seen in the metalwork). There is no material support for mass-dislocations and migrations of entire communities. The evidence points to many short-term and at times short-distance transformations triggering re-configuration of social-political networks. These micro-histories were central factors shaping shared cultural changes from the Morava to the north Aegean between 1200 and 1000 BC.

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Резиме: АЛЕКСАНДАР БУЛАТОВИЋ, Археолошки институт, Београд
 БЕРИ МЕЛОЈ, Универзитетски колеџ Даблин, Даблин
 ВОЈИСЛАВ ФИЛИПОВИЋ, Археолошки институт, Београд

ПРОМЕНЕ У МАТЕРИЈАЛНОЈ КУЛТУРИ И ОБРАСЦИМА НАСЕЉАВАЊА У ПОЗНОМ БРОНЗАНОМ ДОБУ НА ЦЕНТРАЛНОМ БАЛКАНУ У СВЕТЛОСТИ НОВИХ ПОДАТАКА

Кључне речи. – Позно бронзано доба, Моравско–Вардарска комуникација, Егеја, апсолутна хронологија, канелована керамика Белегиш II–Гава, локална померања популација, миграције

Одавно је примећена сличност у материјалној култури позног бронзаног доба и тзв. прелазног периода из бронзаног у гвоздено доба на централном Балкану и у доњој долини Вардара, која се у археолошкој литератури различито тумачила. Када је реч о питањима карактера и порекла ових сличности, нарочито у извесним керамичким формама и орнаментима, аутори су имали различита мишљења, али су се у једном слагали – постојање веза између заједница ова два региона сасвим је извесно.

У раду се анализирају материјална култура (Т. I–VI) и образац насељавања у басену Јужне Мораве у позно бронзано доба (15–13. век пре н. е.) и у прелазном периоду (12–10. век пре н. е.) уз нове податке, као што су апсолутни датуми (Табела 1), анализе изотопа калаја бронзаних предмета, резултати нових ископавања, палеоботаничке анализе и др.

У позно бронзано доба басен Јужне Мораве насељавала је популација која је била носилац тзв. брњичке групе, са препознатљивом керамиком, познатој у литератури, и махом низијским насељима (Сл. 1). Поред керамике карактеристичне за ову групу, у њеном керамичком инвентару регистроване су форме и орнаменти карактеристични за групе које су насељавале јужну Панонију, Олтенију и јужну Трансилванију. Ове стилско-типолошке карактеристике (лоптасти пехари, инрустација, спирално украшавање и др.) евидентирани су у и доњој долини Вардара, а реч је о периоду 15–13. века пре н. е. (Сл. 3). Метални налази са централног Балкана из овог периода указују на везе са југом, западом и истоком, док се тек поједини примерци могу повезати са севернијим областима.

У једном тренутку, током позног бронзаног доба, вероватно од 13. века пре н. е. у долини Јужне Мораве, на самом ободу долине, подижу се бројна градинска насеља, од којих су многа била и утврђена, а неке од ових фортификација су гореле (Кончуљ, Хисар, Прибој) (Сл. 1). Осим обрасца насељавања, промене су уследиле и у материјалној култури, па се у великој мери на локалитетима у долини Јужне Мораве јавља канелована керамика типа Белегиш II–Гава (Т. VI–X; Сл. 2). Појава ове керамика према датуму из једне јаме са канелованом керамиком типа Белегиш II–Гава са Хисара у Лесковцу (Т. VI/1–4), може се одредити у крај

XIII и прву половину XII века пре н. е. (Табела 1). За овај период може се узети и интензивније коришћење проса, као и појава „централноевропских“ типова бронзаних предмета на централном Балкану, који се у овом случају јављају у ужој зони око комуникације Морава–Вардар. Ту се, на првом месту, мисли на бронзане мачеве са језичастом дршком, пламенаста копља и поједине типове игала и фибула, који своје порекло имају далеко у централној Европи и областима око Алпа. Они се пак у овом периоду не јављају у периферним деловима Балкана, већ је њихово присуство регистровано искључиво на трасама најзначајнијих природних балканских комуникација.

Ове промене на централном Балкану утицале су у извесној мери на материјалну и духовну културу у долини Вардара, где се након XII века пре н. е. појављују керамика у виду тзв. брњичких амфора/урни и других централно-балканских керамичких форми, као и за ову територију потпуно нов обичај сахрањивања – кремација (Сл. 2 и 4). Приближно у истом периоду (нажалост услед недостатка апсолутних датума није детерминисан хронолошки однос ових догађаја) у долини Вардара јавља се и канелована керамика Белегиш II–Гава типа, а судећи по стратиграфији и датумима са Кастанаса, ова керамика се спорадично користи већ од XII века, али је њено присуство најинтензивније у XI и X веку пре н. е. (Сл. 5).

На основу анализе свих промена које су од краја XIII века пре н. е. настале у материјалној и духовној култури, економији, обрасцу насељавања дуж коридора Велика Морава – Јужна Морава – Вардар, као и на основу анализе динамике и карактера тих промена (дистрибуција и типови керамике и металних предмета) и хронологије ових промена, закључено је да је током ових промена долазило и до извесних померања заједница од јужне Паноније, преко централног Балкана до Егеје.

Ово нису биле интензивне миграције, које су према неким ауторима у старијој литератури могле бити један од узрока тзв. Дорске миграције, већ су пре била померања становништва мањих размера са домино ефектом, односно ланчаним реакцијама које су условљавале даља померања у правцу југа.

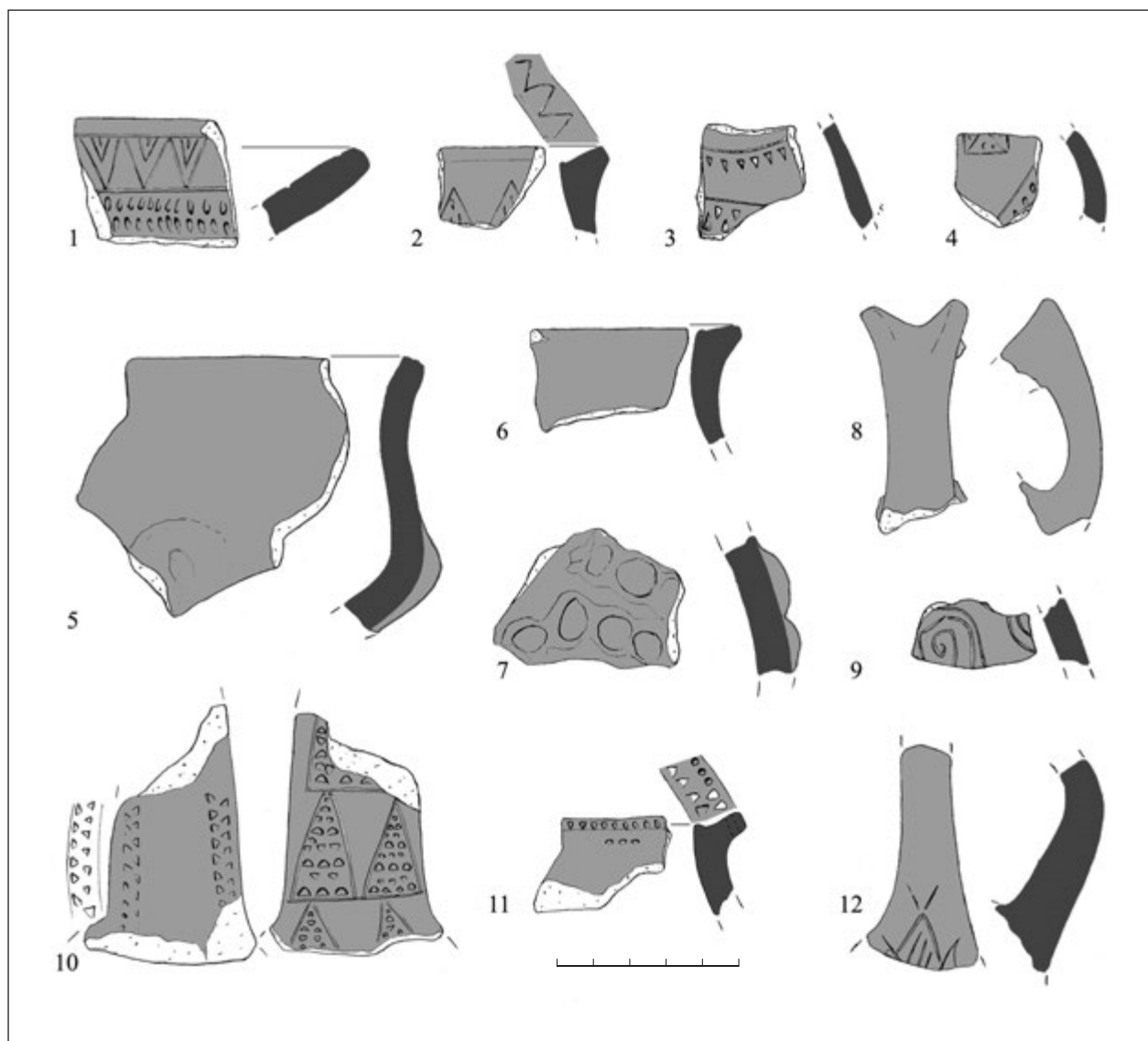


Plate I – Svinjarička Čuka. Pottery from LBA (Brnjica group) layer

Табла I – Свињаричка чука. Керамика из слоја позној бронзаној доба (брњичка група)

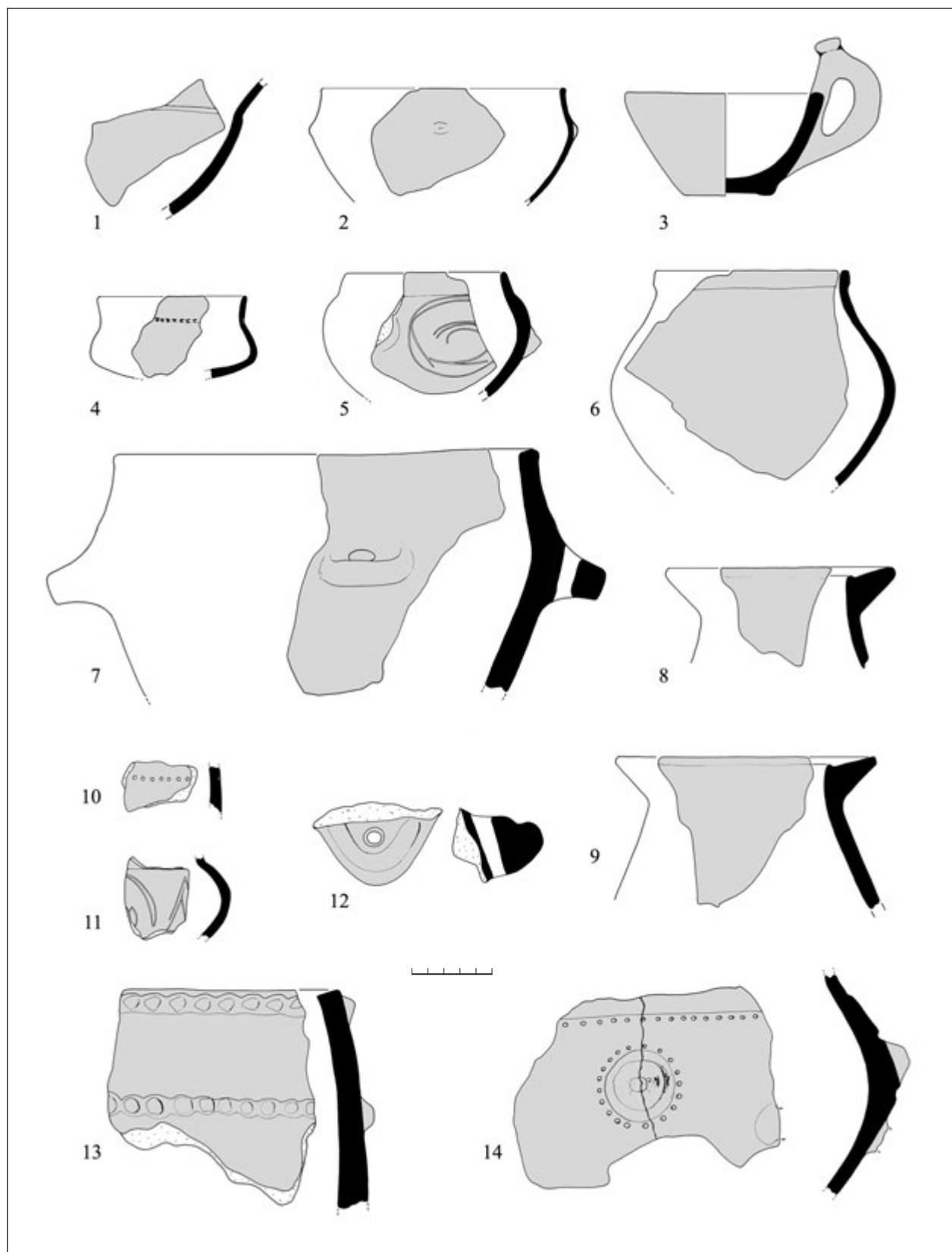


Plate II – Medijana, Pottery from LBA house

Табла II – Медіјана. Керамика из куће њозној бронзаној доба

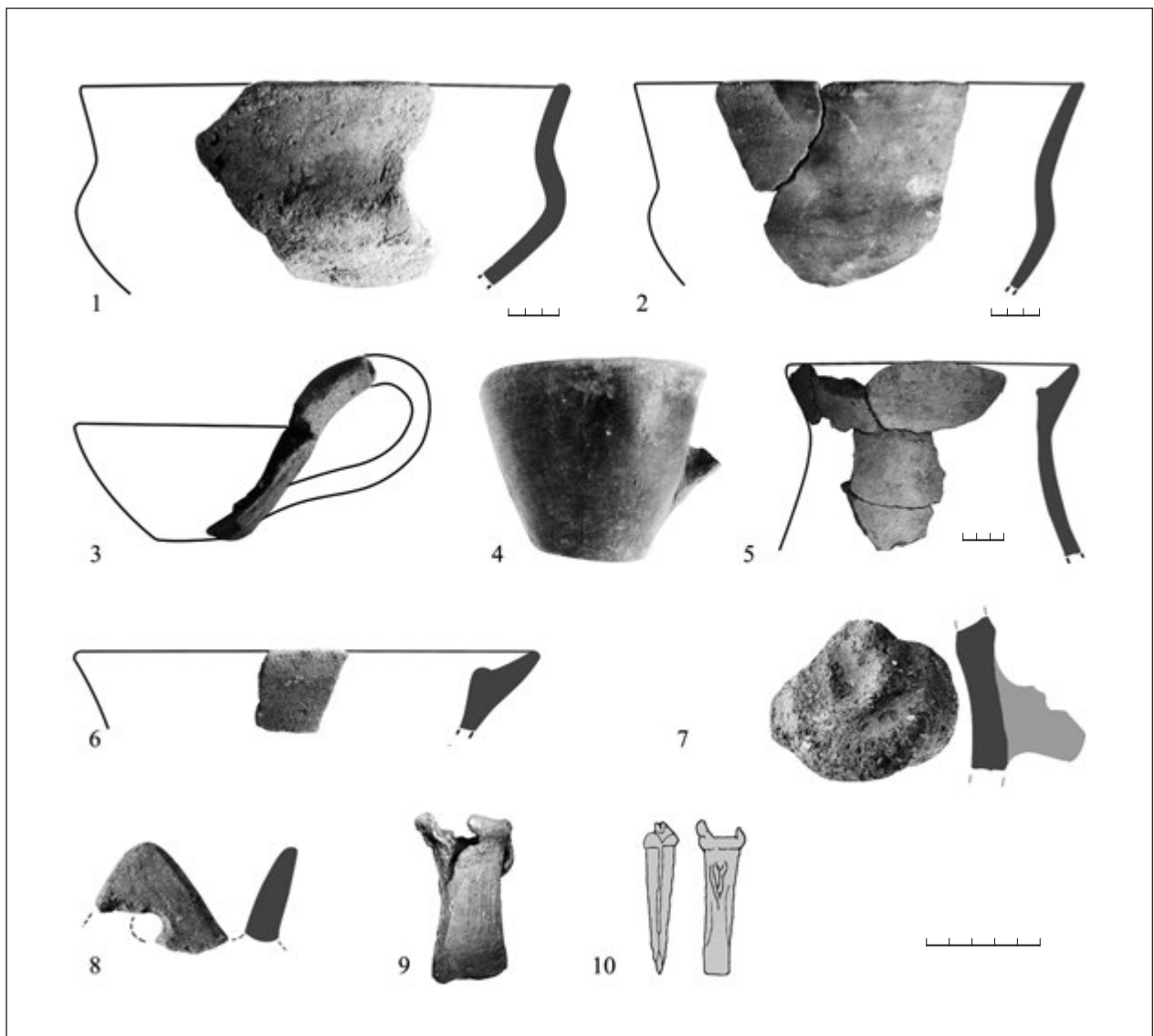


Plate III – Svinjište, Gradina. Pottery and metal objects from house and LBA layer

Табла III – Свињиштије, Градина. Керамика и метални предмети из куће и слоја позној бронзаној доба

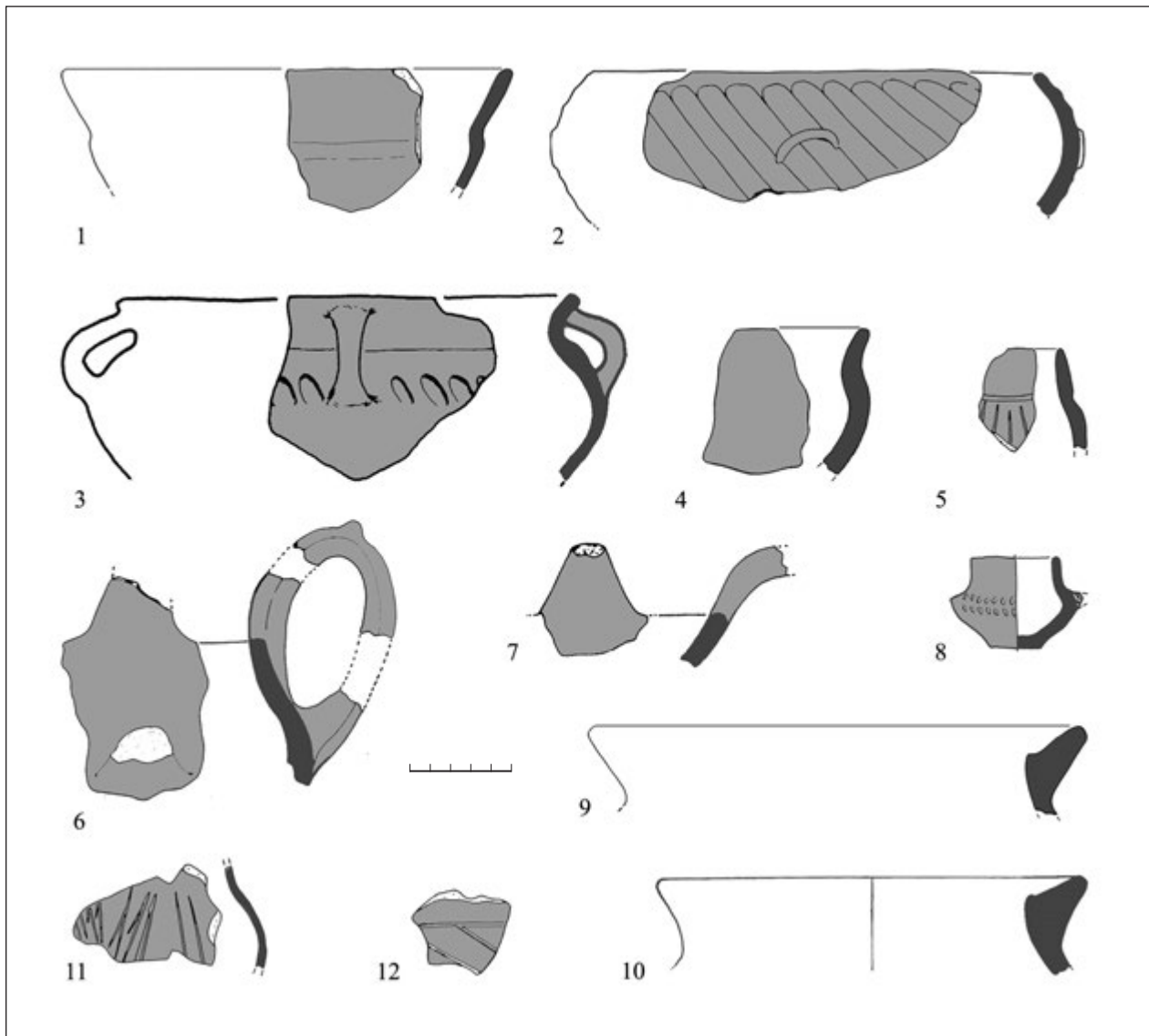


Plate IV – Končulj, Gradište. Pottery from the oldest layer at the site

Табла IV – Кончуљ, Градиште. Керамика из најстаријеј слоја локалитета

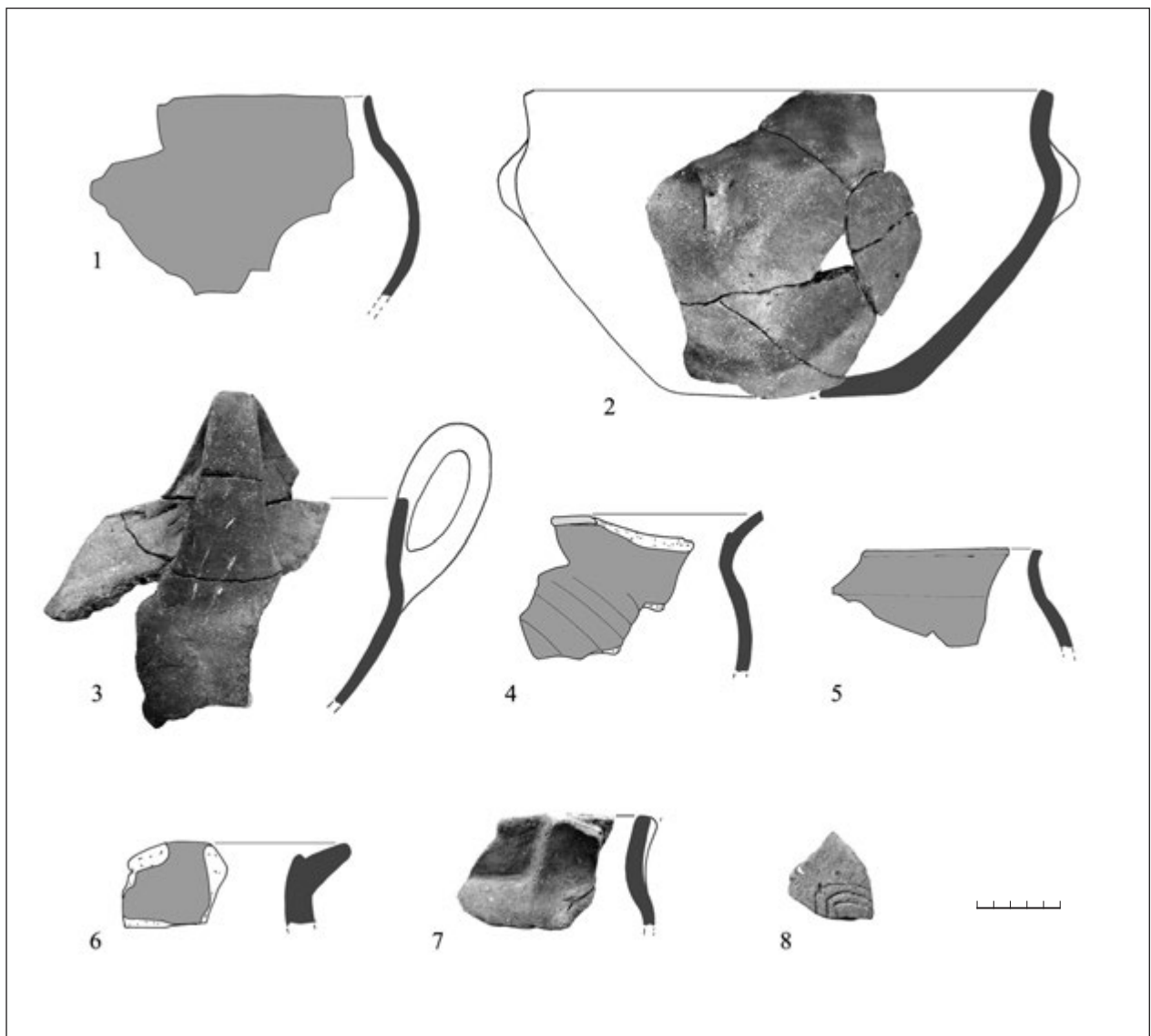


Plate V – Pelince, Dve Mogili. Pottery from LBA ritual pits

Табла V – Пелинце, Две Могили. Керамика из ритуалних јама позној бронзаној доба

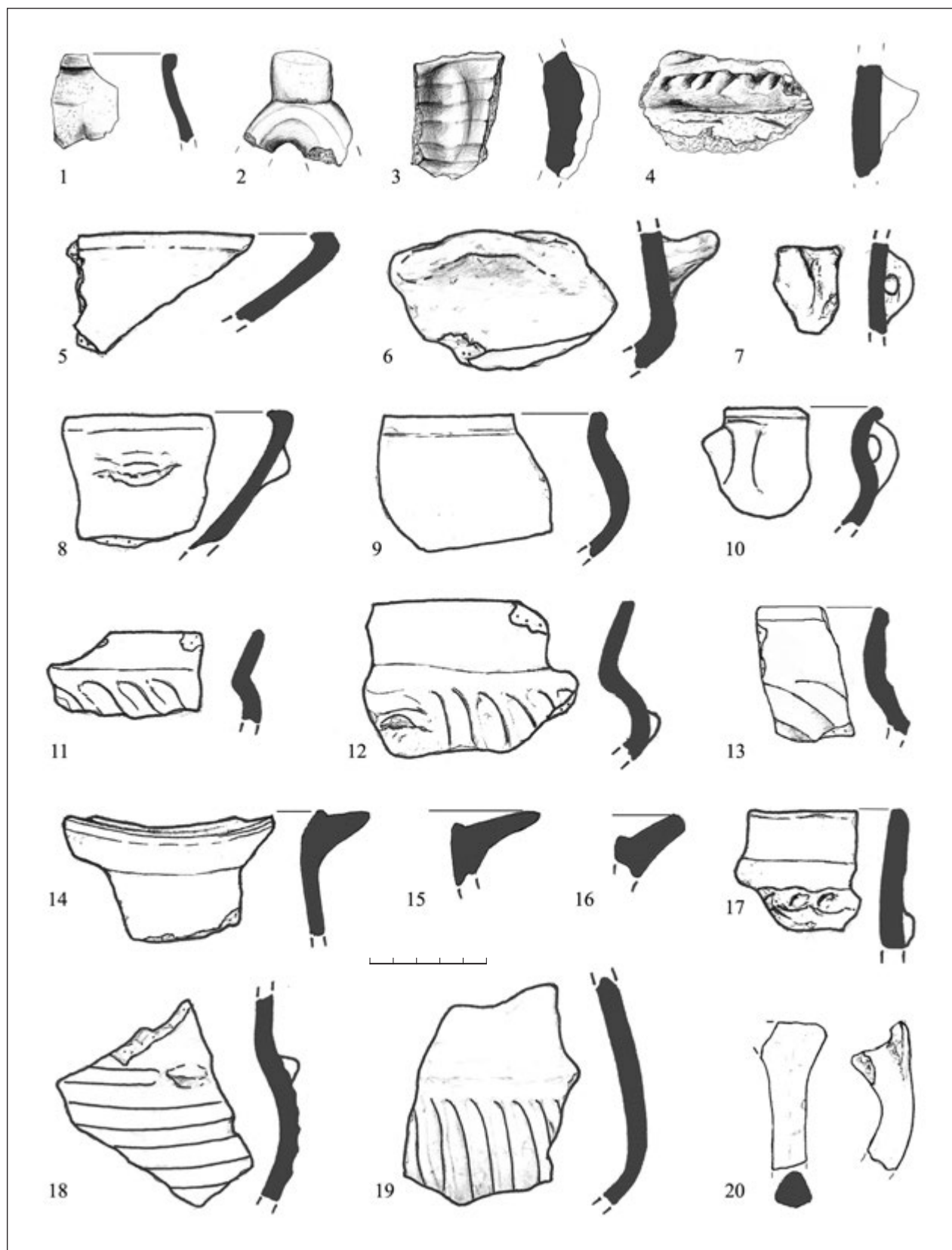


Plate VI – Leskovac, Hisar. 1–4. feature 7/2006; 5–7. feature 15/2002; 8–20. feature 25/2002

Табла VI – Лесковац, Хисар. 1–4. објектум 7/2006; 5–7. објектум 15/2002; 8–20. објектум 25/2002.

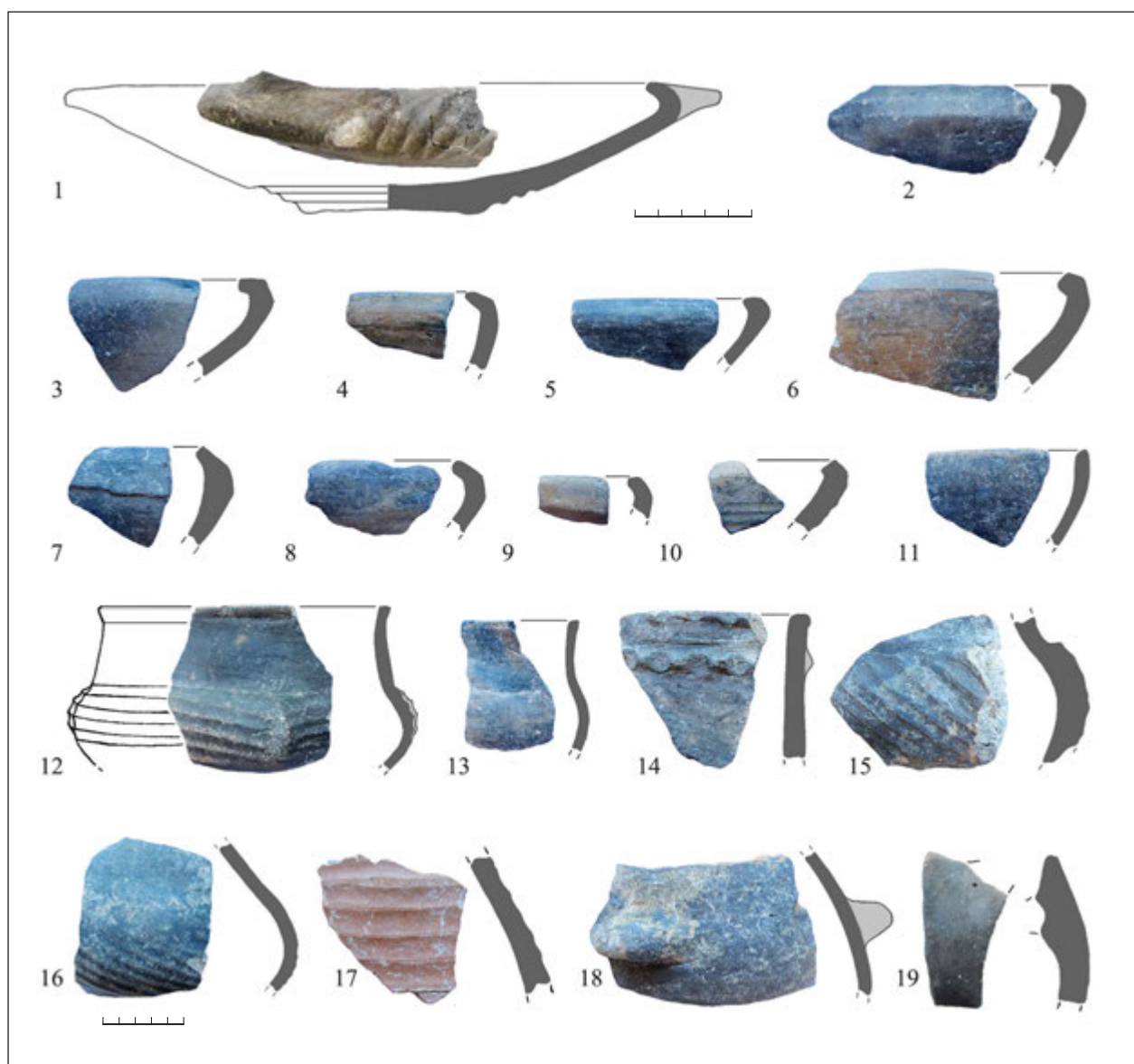


Plate VII – Ranutovac, Meanište, feature 45

Табла VII – Ранутовац, Меаниште. Објекат 45

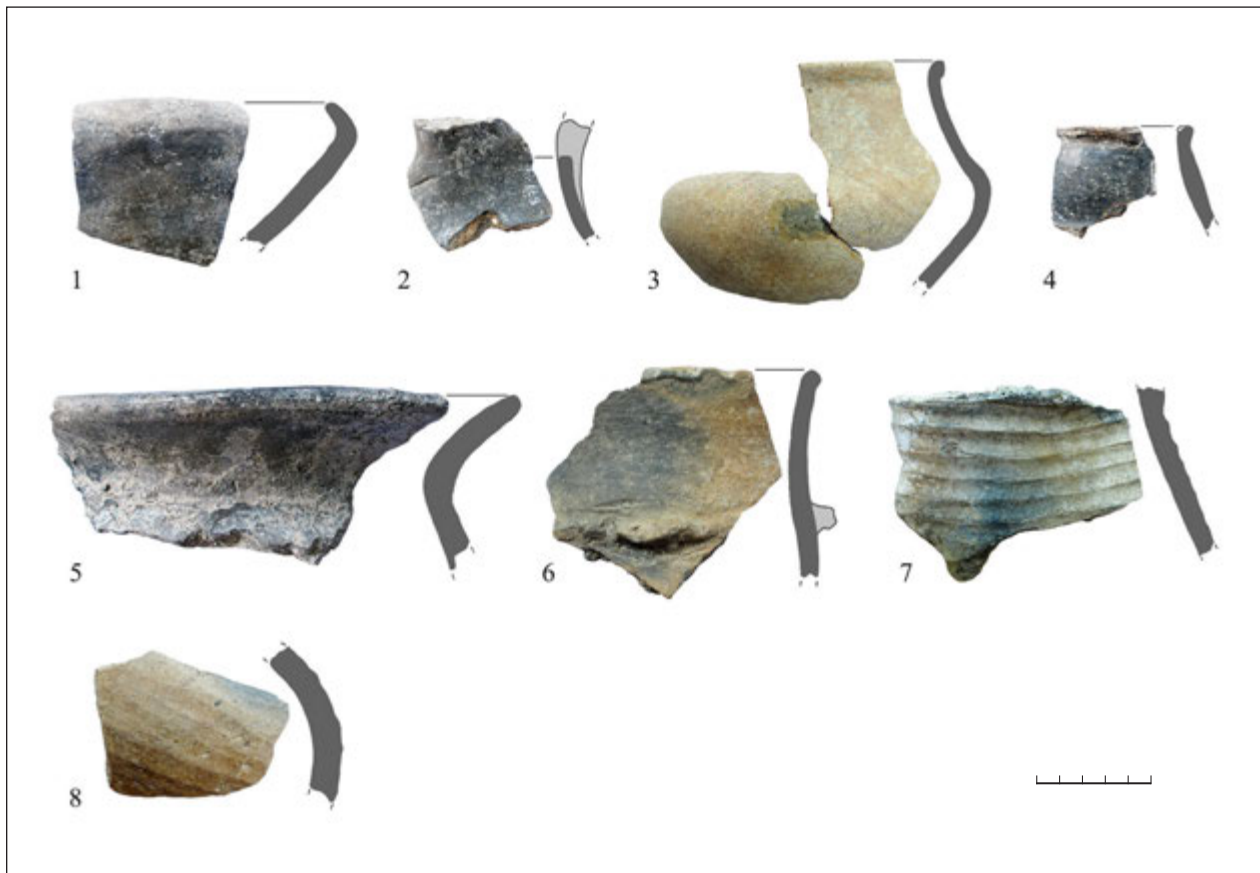


Plate VIII – Ranutovac, Meanište, feature 3c

Табла VIII – Ранутоовац, Меаниште. Објекат 3с

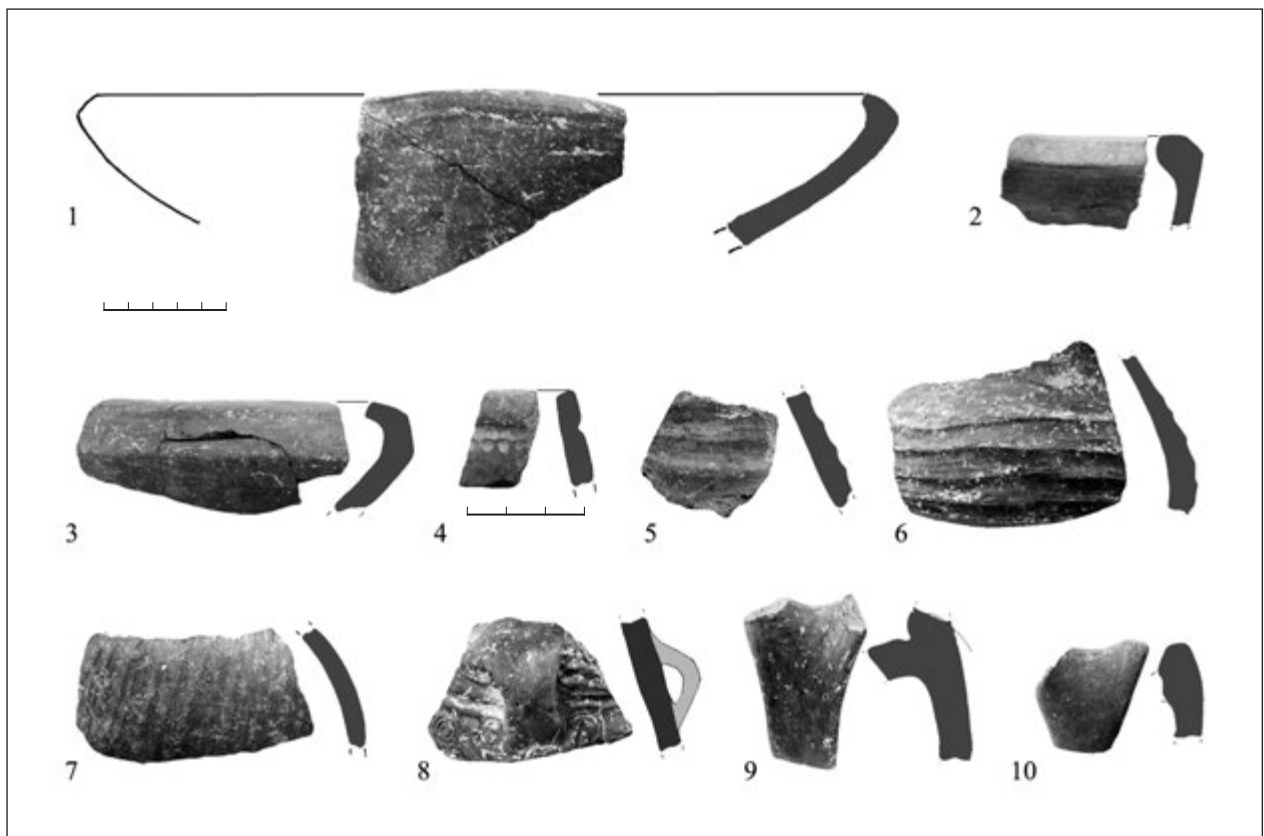


Plate IX – Ranutovac, Meanište, feature 26

Табла IX – Ранутовац, Меаниште. Објекти 26

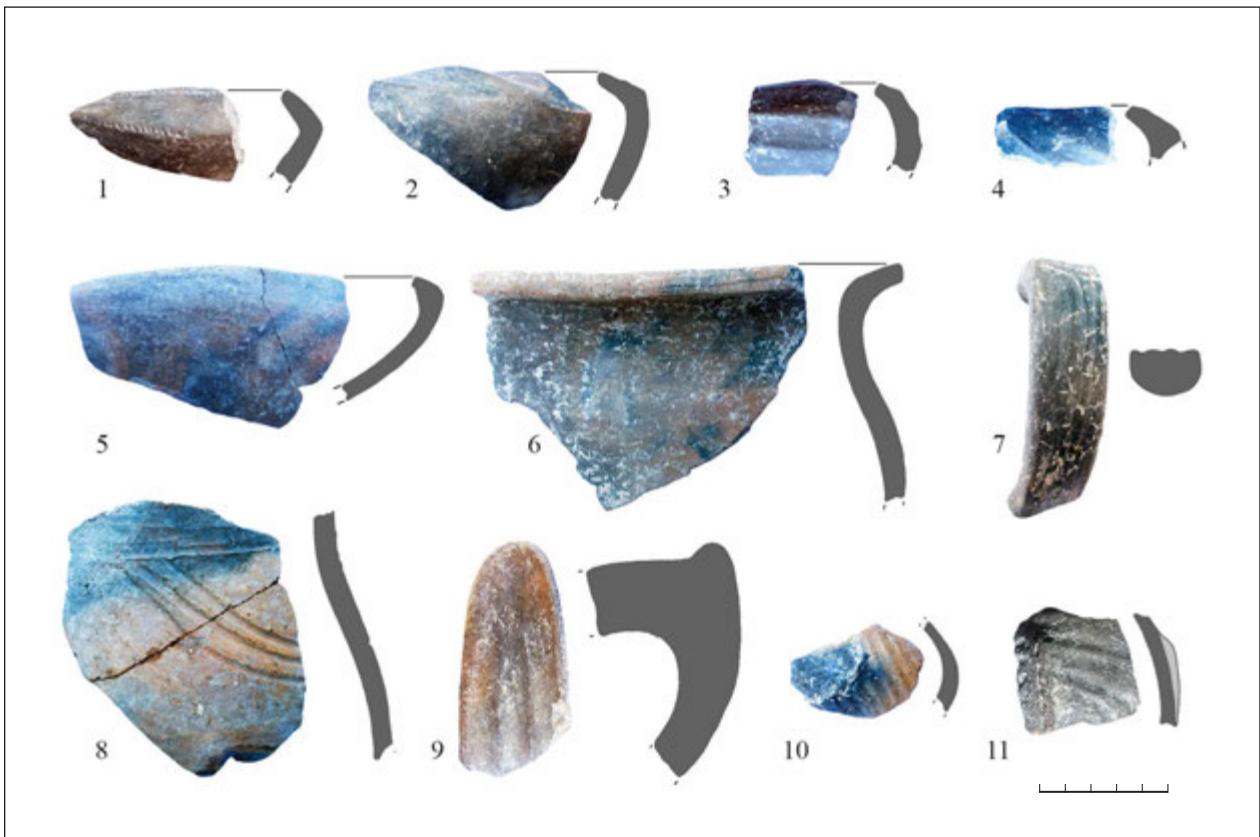


Plate X – Ranutovac, Meanište, feature 3b

Табла X – Рануџовац, Меанишће. Објекти 3б