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Aleksandar Kapuran and Marek Verčík (Eds.)

Spheres of Interaction

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Perspectives on Balkan Archaeology

Volume 1

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FACULTY OF ARTS
Charles University



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Aleksandar Kapuran and Marek Verčík (Eds.)

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Contacts and Relationships between the Balkans and Adjacent Regions in the Late Bronze / Iron Age (13th–5th Centuries BCE)

Proceedings of the Conference held at the Institute of Archaeology, Belgrade
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Preface by the Editors of the Publication Series

With this volume, we are delighted to start a new publication series entitled **PeBA – Perspectives on Balkan Archaeology**. It assembles contributions of the participants of the second conference in the PeBA series, which was held in Belgrade in September 2017 at the Archaeological Institute.

The idea to organise a conference dedicated to Balkan Archaeology was born five years ago in Munich, when Daniela Heilmann and Marek Verčík, both then members of the Munich Graduate School for Ancient Studies “Distant Worlds” at the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München – LMU Munich, wanted to organise an international conference focused on the Early Iron Age phenomena in the Balkan lands. This plan reflected their research interests as doctoral and postdoctoral researchers. They intended to create a forum specifically for younger researchers to present their fieldwork and discuss their ideas. It was named “PeBA – Perspectives on Balkan Archaeology”, and the name stuck. The team was completed by Mario Gavranović of the Institute for Oriental and European Archaeology (OREA), Austrian Academy of Sciences in Vienna.

The first PeBA conference entitled “The Early Iron Age: Methods and Approaches” was financed by the Munich Graduate School and the Südosteuropa-Gesellschaft München. It was held in Sarajevo on April 8–9, 2016 in the National Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The 21 participants came from a range of countries, including Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Czech Republic, Croatia, Germany, the Republic of North Macedonia, Serbia, and Slovenia. This was the first international conference in this famous location since the Yugoslav Wars, and this fact has, therefore, carried a great scientific as well as symbolic meaning. The proceedings were partly published in the 47th volume of the *Godišnjak / Jahrbuch*, the journal of the Centar za balkanološka ispitivanja / Zentrum für Balkanforschungen of the Academy of Sciences and Arts of Bosnia-Herzegovina in 2018.

The success of the first PeBA conference encouraged the organisers, Daniela Heilmann, Mario Gavranović, and Marek Verčík, to continue with the endeavour and turn PeBA into a scientific brand, so to speak, a conference series that takes place every two to three years at different locations of the Balkan Peninsula. Its integral concept is to create and sustain a network of scholarly exchange among archaeologists that transcends modern state and ideological borders.

In order to disseminate the proceedings of the conferences to a wide academic community we decided to create a monograph series dedicated to the proceedings of the PeBA conference and widen the scope of the subsequent publications from the original focus on the studies of the Iron Age period. Because of continuing and new affiliations of the organising team, it made good sense to choose the Institute of Pre- and Protohistoric Archaeology and the Archaeology of the Roman Provinces, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München – LMU Munich, the Institute for Oriental and European Archaeology (OREA) of the Austrian Academy of Sciences in Vienna, and the Institute of Classical Archaeology (ICAR) of the Charles University in Prague as the editorial home for this new publication series. All three institutes share a profound interest in encouraging and conducting archaeological research in the Balkans. Stationed in central European countries with long-standing research traditions in the prehistory of the Balkans, the institutes see PeBA as a profound opportunity to strengthen and stimulate further these interests.

Colleagues working in southeastern Europe have provided valuable input for PeBA. In our view, this part of Europe covers one of the most exciting as well as challenging regions in prehistory. Over the past decades, the image of the Balkans as a cultural, geographical, historical, scientific or even political “entity” has been critically evaluated through the lens of various academic disciplines, including critical reflection on the diverse understanding of the term itself and theoretical concept of its meaning. In any case, from the perspective of the archaeology of Europe, the region in the focus of this new publication series is key in analysing and modelling the human past. The diverse, yet connected, landscapes as well as the culmination of various outcomes of cultural dynamics over millennia partially explain its attraction to the many generations of archaeologists from around the globe. This new series caters to young

as well as senior scholars interested in southeastern Europe and has an impact beyond geographical or political frontiers. In the future volumes, we aim to broaden our chronological scope to represent the entire human history from practical archaeological as well as theoretical viewpoints in order to offer new *Perspectives on Balkan Archaeology* holistically.

We are, therefore, profoundly pleased that the *grand seigneur* of Balkan Archaeology, Rastko Vasić, was so kind as to write an introduction to this volume, which expresses the intention of the entire PeBA project wonderfully.

As the series editors, we have to thank various people for their commitment. First of all, to the editors of this specific volume, Mario Gavranović (OREA), Daniela Heilmann (LMU), Aleksandar Kapuran (Arch. Inst. Beograd), and Marek Verčík (Charles University) for their immense effort in not only organising the conference, but also in editing the individual contributions of the second PeBA conference volume entitled “Spheres of Interaction. Contacts and Relationships between the Balkans and Adjacent Regions in the Late Bronze / Iron Age (13th–5th Centuries BCE)” held in Belgrade on the 15–17 September 2017.

The final cast into a printable monograph was conducted in the OREA Institute by María Antonia Negrete Martínez and Ulrike Schuh. The English texts have been revised by Jana Mokrišová (London). We thank all of them for their work. The visual design of the PeBA series was intensively discussed among the editors of the series and of this volume. Our thanks for the final cover design go to Angela Schwab (OREA).

All PeBA-volumes have and will continue to undergo international peer-review process organised and coordinated by the series editors in order to guarantee a high quality of the contributions and a wider recognition for the authors. We are deeply thankful to the reviewers for their time-consuming efforts.

Last but not least, we would like to thank our colleague Bert Wiegel, owner of the VML-Verlag, for including the PeBA series into his portfolio and for his large support in the publishing of this volume.

Finally, we should note that this preface is written in difficult times. The third PeBA conference, organised in collaboration with Pero Ardjanliev (National Archaeological Museum, Skopje) and scheduled for May 2020 in Ohrid, Republic of North Macedonia, was planned to have taken place by now, but due to the current Covid-19 crisis it has been postponed to the next year. Nonetheless, we truly hope that the spirit of this fairly new and enthusiastic initiative will thrive in the future and that **Perspectives on Balkan Archaeology** will find a large international audience.

Munich, Prague, Vienna, April 2020
Carola Metzner-Nebelsick, Peter Pavúk, and Barbara Horejs

Prologue

Dear colleagues, dear friends,

It is a great pleasure and at the same time a particular honour for me to have the opportunity to write a few introductory lines for the collection of papers of the second PeBA conference, held in Belgrade in September 2017.

Perspectives on Balkan Archaeology is a relatively new enterprise and one may say very successful. They embrace a very broad range of themes and all new finds, new views and new ideas are welcome to be presented. The papers of the Belgrade conference are very varied. Authors, older and young, distinguished scholars and talented new hopes, come from all the Balkan lands and beyond, they tackle the problems of the Bronze and Iron Age from various sides and the content fully justifies the conference's title "Spheres of Interaction – Contacts and Relationship between the Balkans and Adjacent regions in the Late Bronze and Iron Age". I am sure that the impact will be considerable and expect further successful PeBA conferences in the near future. I hope also that the momentum will last and that together with many other "brothers and sisters in arms" we will persist on the road to our final goal – the truthful answers to various archaeological questions.

It is true that we have been marching towards this goal already for more or less two hundred years, that gigantic steps forward have been made and that we know much more about our past than before. Yet there are thousands of questions which await to be answered.

For the end a verse from Longfellow's "The Psalm of life"

*Not enjoyment, and not sorrow,
Is our destined end or way;
But to act, that each to-morrow
Find us farther than to-day.*

Rastko Vasić

Similarities and Differences between Material Culture of the Belegiš II-Gava Group from the Southern Pannonian Plain and the Morava River Basin

Aleksandar Kapuran, Aleksandar Bulatović

Abstract

The process and different phases of the cultural influences between the communities with the characteristic “channelled pottery” from the southern Pannonian basin and the central Balkans has become much clearer in the last two decades due to new excavations and discoveries, especially in the region around the Velika and Južna Morava Rivers. From the prehistory until present times, the Morava Basin represents the main route from the north to the south of the Balkan Peninsula. The absence of the bronze hoards south of the Danube and Sava Rivers in Serbia, as one of the most typical features for the transitional period from the Bronze to the Iron Age in the Carpathian Basin, caused a lot of dilemma in the archaeological interpretations during the long history of research. Starting from the first discoveries at the site of Mediana near Niš and lasting until the latest excavations at the hillfort of Hisar in Leskovac, the question of channelled pottery has been the focus of archaeological research of the transition between the Late Bronze and Early Iron Age. Some of the recent absolute dates provide a better chronological determination at several multi-layered settlements in the Morava Basin, and on occasion they have led to significant changes in the generally accepted chronological system. The use of the purported Aegean migration in the earlier scholarship as a paradigm to explain cultural processes and shifts eventually generated a lot of criticism by the new generation of archaeologists, who claim that there is no evidence of it. In light of new discoveries, this paper seeks to provide a better understanding of the Belegiš II-Gava cultural complex, characterised by channelled pottery in the central Balkans, and to highlight the arguments for accepting or rejecting the migration hypothesis.

Zusammenfassung

Nach den in den letzten zwei Jahrzehnten stattgefundenen Ausgrabungen und neuen Entdeckungen, insbesondere in der Region der Flüsse Velika und Južna Morava, sind die Prozesse und verschiedene Stufen der gegenseitigen kulturellen Beeinflussung zwischen Gemeinschaften mit der charakteristischen „kannelierten Keramik“ am südlichen Rand des Karpatenbeckens und Gesellschaften in der Region des Zentralbalkans viel besser fassbar. Das Tal der Morava stellt seit der Vorgeschichte bis in die heutige Zeit die wichtigste Verbindung zwischen dem südlichen und nördlichen Teil der Balkanhalbinsel dar. Die Tatsache, dass die Depots mit Metallobjekten, als eine der bezeichnenden archäologischen Manifestationen der Übergangsperiode zwischen der Bronze- und Eisenzeit im Karpatenbecken, im Raum südlich der Save und Donau kaum auftreten, führte zu unterschiedlichen Interpretationsansätzen in der langen Forschungsgeschichte. Beginnend mit den ersten Funden der kannelierten Keramik am Fundplatz Mediana bei Niš bis hin zu den neuen Grabungen in der befestigten Siedlung Hisar bei Leskovac, die Frage nach der Ausbreitung der kannelierten Keramik war stets im Fokus der archäologischen Forschung der Übergangsperiode. Die in den letzten Jahren gewonnenen absoluten Daten ermöglichen bessere chronologische Einordnung einiger mehrphasigen Siedlungen im Morava Tal und tragen dazu bei, die allgemein akzeptierte Chronologie dieser Periode zu optimieren bzw. zu korrigieren. Der Gebrauch des Terminus „Ägäische Wanderungen“ in der älteren Forschung als dem Paradigma für alle in dieser Zeit stattgefundenen kulturellen Änderungen und Prozesse, wird bei der neuen Generation der Archäologen oft kritisch betrachtet, da stichfeste Beweise für eine große Bevölkerungsbewegung letztendlich fehlen. Dieser Beitrag soll, im Lichte der neuen Entdeckungen, zum besseren Verständnis des durch die kannelierte Keramik charakterisierten Kulturkomplexes Belegiš II–Gava“ im Raum Zentralbalkans beitragen, mit besonderer Rücksicht auf die Gründe, die für oder gegen einer Migrationshypothese sprechen.

Sažetak

Procesi i različite faze kulturnih uticaja između zajednica sa karakterističnom kanelovanom keramikom iz južnog dela Panonske nizije i prostora centralnog Balkana postali su znatno jasniji nakon zadnje dve decenije novih iskopavanja i istraživanja, posebno u regionu oko Velike i Južne Morave. Od prehistorijskih vremena pa do danas, dolina

Morave predstavlja glavnu komunikaciju između južnog i severnog dela Balkanskog poluostrva. Odsustvo ostava bronzanih predmeta na prostoru južno od Save i Dunava, kao jedne od karakterističnih manifestacija prelaznog perioda između bronzanog i gvozdenog doba u Karpatskoj kotlini, dovelo je do mnogih dilema u arheološkoj interpretaciji tokom dugog istorijata istraživanja. Počevši od prvih otkrića na lokalitetu Mediana kod Niša pa sve do novijih istraživanja na utvrđenom naselju Hisar kod Leskovca, pitanje kanelovane keramike i njenog širenja prema jugu ostalo je u fokusu arheološkog istraživanja prelaznog perioda između kasnog bronzanog i ranog gvozdenog doba. Nekoliko novih apsolutnih datuma pružili su jasniju hronološku sliku višeslojnih naselja u basenu Morave ali su ujedno doveli i do značajnih promena uobičajenog i opšte prihvaćenog hronološkog sistema. Korišćenje pojma "Egejska seoba" u ranijim radovima, kao paradigme koja objašnjava kulturne procese i promene u ovom delu Balkana, dovelo je do mnogih kritika među novijom generacijom arheologa. Ove kritike svode se na tvrdnju da ne postoje čvrsti dokazi koji govore u prilog "Egejskoj seobi". U svetlu novih otkrića, ovaj rad posvećen je boljem razumevanju kulturnog kompleksa poznatog kao Belegiš II–Gava sa kanelovanom keramikom kao jednom od njegovih najznačajnih manifestacija na području centralnog Balkana. Zaključno su navedeni razlozi za prihvatanje ili odbijanje hipoteze o migraciji stanovništva u prelaznom periodu.

Keywords

southern Carpathian Basin, central Balkans, Belegiš II-Gava culture, necropolises, settlements, bronze hoards

Introduction

Archaeological research conducted to the south of the Sava and Danube Rivers in Serbia led to a discovery of several settlements, hillforts, and different artefact clusters, which are, according to the accepted chronological system in Serbian archaeology, dated to the transitional period from the Bronze to the Early Iron Age, or, according to the central European chronology, to the period between Br D and Ha B1.¹ In Serbia, finds connected with the Urnfield culture and the Gava culture of channelled pottery are representative of this period. Generally, the Late Bronze Age in the central Balkans and the Morava River basin covers the period from Br C to Ha A1, and the transitional period covers the Ha A2/Ha B2² to Ha C in terms of chronological stages of the central European chronology.³ The transitional period is also the chronological boundary for the appearance of the Belegiš II-Gava culture in the central Balkans. The Gava group, as a broader supra-regional manifestation, style, or cultural complex, probably emerged from the post-Hügelgraber complex, or Bayerdorf-Velatice culture from which Gava, Belegiš, Čorva and other cultures in a wide area from Slovakia to the Middle Danube.⁴

If a broader picture of settlement and necropolis distribution in the territory of Serbia is taken into account, two different geographic and geomorphological areas can be distinguished, which span the north and the south of the Sava and Danube Rivers (**Fig. 1**). First region can be described as Pannonian-Danubian and includes southern Vojvodina, Srem and southern Banat, together with the river valleys of the Sava and Danube up to northwestern boundary of the Wallachian plain. The second is the region of the central Balkans, which covers the area to the south of the Sava and the Danube, with the Morava River as the main communication route and the Dinaric Mountain massif as the western boundary. Archaeological groups that dominated the Morava River basin during Br D to Ha A2 period are Paraćin and Brnjica cultures that continue, as will be shown later, into the Belegiš II-Gava group (**Fig. 2**). The northern part of Serbia was first to witness influences from the Urnfield and Gava cultures of the Carpathian basin, during the time when Belegiš Incrusted pottery and was present.

Southern Pannonian Plain

The most important bond between the Late Bronze/Early Iron Age societies in the Pannonian-Danubian region is visible in the funerary rites, which took place in flat necropolises, where deceased were cremated and their remains deposited in urns, in some rare cases together with bronze objects. Urns were most often decorated by channelling, and as a rule these necropolis also include graves with urns

¹ Vasić 2003, 3 fig. 2.

² Bulatović/Filipović 2017, 149.

³ Bulatović et al. 2017, 61.

⁴ Tasić 1983, 104.

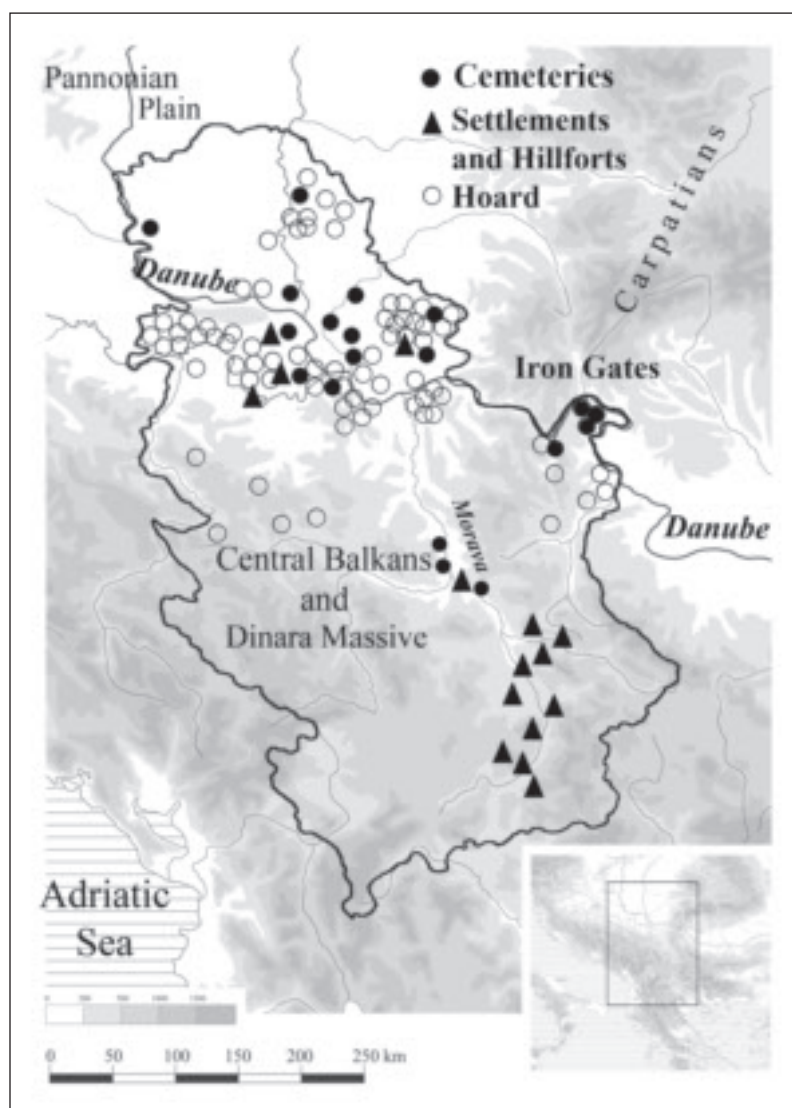


Figure 1 – Distribution of the settlements, cemeteries and hoards in the central Balkans (A. Kapuran/A. Bulatović)

of the Belegiš I culture. This can be observed in sites of Stojića Gumno,⁵ Kaluđerske Livade,⁶ Vojilovica I,⁷ Karaburma,⁸ and Ritopek,⁹ which all had been occupied already during the transition from the Middle to the Developed Bronze Age. However, there are certain burial sites, such as Vojilovica II-Refinery, where channelled pottery appears in each one of 179 discovered graves, and regularly comprising an urn with a lid.¹⁰ Contrary to P. Medović¹¹ and Lj. Bukvić,¹² who both have assumed that black burnished channelled pottery in Srem and Banat is unequivocally connected with the Gava culture, N. Tasić has argued that the contemporaneous presence of Belegiš I pottery (decorated with pseudo-corded decoration) and Belegiš II pottery (decorated with black burnished channels) within the cemeteries represents the evidence of continuity. According to N. Tasić, the development of the Belegiš cultural group is an example of an ethnically unique population group that gradually shifted their use from one pottery style to another. An important argument put forth by N. Tasić focuses on stylistic differentiations and a longer time between the first emergence of vertical and horizontal channels and later transition to oblique channelling, which

⁵ Vranić 2002.

⁶ Petrović 2006, 177–181.

⁷ Medović 1988-1989, 47; Bukvić 2002, 52–65.

⁸ Todorović 1977, 154–156.

⁹ Todorović 1966.

¹⁰ Medović 1988-1989, 48.

¹¹ Medović 1988-1989, 48.

¹² Bukvić 2000, 12–13.

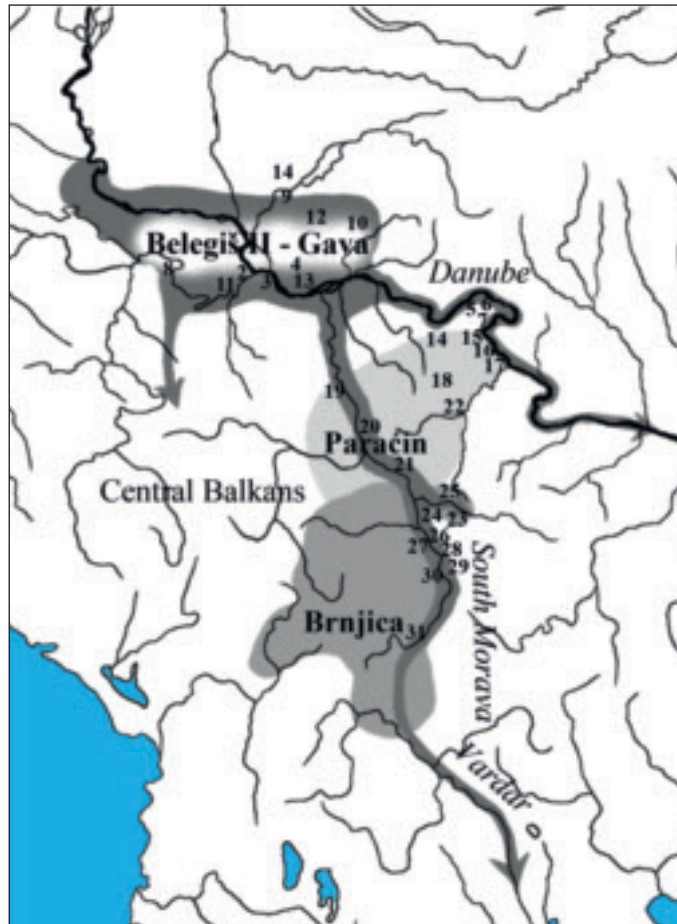


Figure 2 – 1 Belegiš. – 2 Kaluđerske livade. – 3 Karaburma. – 4 Vojilovica. – 5 Livade. – 6 Konopište. – 7 Vajuga-Pesak. – 8 Gomolava. – 9 Titel. – 10 Židovar. – 11 Ekonomija Sava. – 12 Opovo. – 13 Jabuka. – 14 Perlez. – 14 Topolnica. – 15 Alun. – 16 Urovića. – 17 Brza Palanka. – 18 Zlotska Cave. – 19 Gloždar. – 20 Maćija. – 21 Rutevac. – 22 Magura. – 23 Medijana. – 24 Bujanj. – 25 Humska Čuka. – 26 Gradac. – 27 Hisar. – 28 Kale-Grdelica. – 29 Piljakovac. – 30 Vranjski Priboj. – 31 Končulj (A. Kapuran/A. Bulatović)

were especially well documented in larger cemeteries such as Belegiš-Stojić gumno and Karaburma.¹³ Supportive of this assumption is the fact that earlier graves were not disturbed by later graves, a circumstance that indicates collective memory of communal resting places. M. Garašanin has argued that there were no significant differences in burial practices and cemetery organisation between the later and earlier graves, but the difference in the number of metal goods in graves was apparent.¹⁴ Yet, based on the appearance of channelled pottery at Mediana near Niš in southern Serbia, D. Garašanin came up with the hypothesis that the influence visible on channelled pottery went in the opposite direction, from the Morava to the Danube River basins, that is, from the south to the north, assuming that finds from Mediana were earlier than the phase of the channelled pottery of the Pannonian-Danubian region.¹⁵

We must stress that channelled urns with fired black exterior and fired red interior, characteristic of the Gava culture in the Carpathian basin, appeared in this shape in the area south of the Sava and Danube Rivers (in the central Balkans) only at the site of Rutevac, where they bore characteristics of the Urnfield horizon. Pronouncedly biconical urns with oblique channelled shoulders and different firing on the exterior and the interior were documented at several graveyards along the Danube, such as at

¹³ Tasić 1974, 246; Tasić 1983, 100; Tasić 2002, 176; Tasić 2003, 176.

¹⁴ Garašanin 1983b, 670.

¹⁵ Garašanin 1974, 36.

Livade,¹⁶ Vajuga,¹⁷ and Konopište¹⁸ in the Iron Gates. In settlements, similar kinds of pottery have been documented at Zlotska Cave and Kučajna in northeastern Serbia, Humska Čuka near Niš and Hisar in Leskovac in southern Serbia, which will all be discussed in this contribution.

Transition from the Late Bronze to the Early Iron Age in Serbia witnessed a large number of settlements with channelled pottery.¹⁹ Settlements of Belegiš II-Gava horizon in Pannonia are situated on smaller natural alluvial, or tell, hills and river terraces, clearly as a protection measure from floods. Stratigraphy at almost all excavated sites points to short-term presence of communities that used channelled pottery, as was the case at Gomolava,²⁰ Gradac near Belegiš,²¹ Titel plateau,²² and Židovar.²³ The absence of corresponding dwelling constructions underlines the argument of a short occupation of these sites. The simplest dwelling structures are semi-pit houses, found exclusively in lowland settlements, such as Ekonomija Sava and Opovo in Srem and Jabuka and Perlez in Banat,²⁴ while the traces of above-ground dwellings were so far not discovered in the Pannonian-Danubian region.²⁵

The most common finds in the transitional period between the Bronze and the Iron Ages in Pannonian-Danubian region are hoards with bronze objects, followed by graves. The appearance of bronze hoards hallmarked the end of Belegiš culture, which N. Tasić dated to around 1000 BCE.²⁶ In Tasić's opinion, the bronze objects from Group III²⁷ concentrate mainly in the regions of Srem, southern Banat, and the broader zones where the Sava, Morava, and Timok flow into the Danube. They are much rarer in the south, below a geographical line connecting the cities of Užice-Čačak-Kragujevac-Jagodina-Zaječar, envisaged as the southern boundary (**Fig. 1**).²⁸ Currently, there are more than 100 hoards from Serbia, altogether containing around 3000 objects. There are numerous assumptions about the reasons for depositing a large amount of precious metal into the ground far from settlements and routes. We argue that they represent offerings to appease the gods.²⁹ This is indicated by the fact that many of the metal objects, such as socketed axes were symbolically broken, which requires great strength and certainly holds some mystical significance. R. Vasić has argued that such offerings to the gods also functioned to show off the status differences between members of a society, with wealthy individuals sparing more objects than poorer for this purpose.³⁰ For Vasić, items indicative of wealth include cups of the Spišska Bela type made of bronze sheet, found in the Alun hoard in north-eastern Serbia as well as in one cenotaph at the necropolis of Vajuga-Pesak on the Danube.³¹ Moreover, it should be pointed out that hoards from Pannonian-Danubian region contained significantly more metal objects than graves, while the cemeteries in the central Balkans contained more metal objects, whereas hoards were underrepresented.

Morava valley – central Balkans

In terms of finds that can be connected with the Belegiš II-Gava culture in the region of the central Balkans, the situation is quite different when compared to the north. The extensive excavations, mostly in cemeteries, were conducted during the 1950's and 1960's in the Velika and Južna Morava and Nišava River basins at sites of Gloždar, Mačija, Rutevac, Mediana-Brzi Brod. Settlements from the end of the Bronze Age and the beginning of the Iron Age were excavated at the transition from the 20th to the 21st centuries at the sites of Medijana-Brzi brod, Vranjski Priboj, Kale in Grdelica, Hisar in Leskovac and Končulj (**Fig. 2**).

¹⁶ Vukmanović/Popović 1984, 87 fig. 59.

¹⁷ Premk et al. 1984.

¹⁸ Popović 1998, 148. New discovered graves from the Konopište necropolis in 2015 were presented by A. Đorđević and M. Dimitrijević at PeBA conference in Belgrade 2017. In to the same grave context appears red burnish channelled pottery from the inner side of the rim and black burnish channelled pottery from the inner side of the rim.

¹⁹ Uzelac 1996, 34 map 7; Tasić 2002, 172.

²⁰ Jovanović et al. 1965, 199–200.

²¹ Tasić 2002, 172.

²² Falkenstein 1998, fig. 239.

²³ Jevtić 1997, fig. 25.

²⁴ Tasić 1974, 242–243; Tasić 2002, 172.

²⁵ Medović 1988–1989, 47.

²⁶ Tasić 1974, 146–247, pl. 24.

²⁷ Tasić 1974, 247. In Tasić's terminology, groups I and II of metal objects date to the Eneolithic and Middle Bronze Age.

²⁸ Jacanović 1994, 51.

²⁹ Vasić 1998, 192.

³⁰ Vasić 1998, 192.

³¹ Vasić 1998, 189.

Apart from the low number of bronze hoards, the number of cemeteries containing channelled pottery is considerably smaller in the territory of the Paraćin cultural group that spread over the middle course of the Velika Morava River and in northeastern Serbia around the present day municipalities of Bor and Zaječar (**Fig. 1**). Typical of the Paraćin culture is cremation and flat urn cemeteries. In addition to Gloždar in Paraćin,³² burial loci with urns in flat graves are known from Maćija near Ražanj,³³ and Rutevac near Aleksandrovac in the Morava River valley.³⁴ Grave 1 from Gloždar shows all characteristics of the Late Bronze Age and included one needle of the Petschaftkopfnadeln type. On the other hand, Grave 2 contained an urn decorated with horizontal channels on the neck and vertical channels on the shoulder and covered with two bowls, also decorated with channelling (**Fig. 5,1–3**).³⁵ Except for cremated human remains, the urn in Grave 2 contained a fragmented pin, a bronze button, and a spiral-shaped wire. The funerary rite and the presence of two stylistically and typologically different funerary vessels point to a similar pattern of co-existence that was also observed at the sites of Belegiš group in the Pannonian-Danubian region.

At the necropolis of Školska Gradina in Rutevac, J. Todorović and A. Simović have reported three graves with urns characteristic of the Paraćin Group. There were also several pottery fragments decorated with horizontal and vertical channels, and the authors of excavations have assumed that they originated from graves destroyed sometime during the Iron Age.³⁶

Settlements where channelled pottery was found have been discovered in both central and north-eastern Serbia. In central Serbia sites of Novačka Ćuprija near Smederevo³⁷ and Sarina Međa I are prominent.³⁸ The sites of Zlotska Cave and Kučajna near Bor are situated at the eastern foothills of the Kučajske Mountains in northeastern Serbia. In Zlotska Cave, investigations yielded a relatively large amount of black burnished channelled pottery with a lighter colour on the interior (**Fig. 5,13**),³⁹ as well as pins belonging to Ha A1 (**Fig. 6,1**),⁴⁰ and two knives from approximately the same period (**Fig. 6,3–4**).⁴¹ Channelled pottery of similar manufacture as in the cave has been discovered also at the multi-layered site of Kučajna in the suburbs of Bor.⁴² Unfortunately, these sites underwent serious devastation, and therefore it is not possible to identify any kind of structures. The most numerous metal finds dating to this period from the region of northeastern Serbia are socketed axes. Based on typochronology most of them date to period Ha A – Ha B, including the pieces from village of Glogovica (**Fig. 6,2**),⁴³ Mali Izvor (**Fig. 6,6a–d**), and Gornja Bela Reka (**Fig. 4/7a–d**) near Zaječar.⁴⁴ Notable among metal finds is a spearhead discovered in an urn at the Magura necropolis near the village of Gamzigrad (**Fig. 6,5**).⁴⁵ This spearhead has a characteristic of the Late Bronze Age, but it belongs to a type characteristic for Bz D–Ha A1 or the time between 14th and 13th century BCE.⁴⁶

Further to the south, downstream along the Morava River, the influence of the Paraćin culture seems to cease and the cultural manifestation known as the Brnjica culture becomes more dominant in the Late Bronze Age. In the area of the confluence of the Zapadna (Western) and Južna (Southern) Morava Rivers, three settlements with channelled pottery have been identified: Varvarin, Grabujevac, and Bogomiljište.⁴⁷ Furthermore, two sites in the region of the already mentioned necropolis of Školska Gradina in Rutevac – Okučnica Saše Ristića and Bare – also belong to the same category.⁴⁸ Half a century ago, in 1962, during the excavations of the Imperial Roman palace at the site of Mediana-Brzi Brod in the region of Niš, a settlement or dugout dwellings (or pit-houses) with three occupation horizons has been discovered.⁴⁹ M. Garašanin has suggested that Horizon II exposed pottery with the Gava characteristics same as those known from the Danube River basin⁵⁰ The excavation took place in several

³² Garašanin 1970.

³³ Tasić 1965.

³⁴ Todorović/Simović 1959.

³⁵ Garašanin 1970, 118 fig. 11–14.

³⁶ Todorović/Simović 1959, 268 fig. 4.10.

³⁷ Krstić et al. 1986, 28–29.

³⁸ Stojić 1981, 141–143.

³⁹ Jevtić 2004, 137; Kapuran et al. 2015, 135 pl. 54.

⁴⁰ Jevtić 2004, 137; Vasić 2003, 59.73.

⁴¹ Jevtić 200, 137.

⁴² Kapuran et al. 2015, 89 pl. 10.

⁴³ Jevtić 2004, 137.

⁴⁴ Lalović 1976, 176 pl. 8.1–4; pl. 8.5–8.

⁴⁵ Srejović/Lazić 199 fig. 35.

⁴⁶ Vasić 2015, 47; Leshtakov 2015, 106 pl. 157 map 16.

⁴⁷ Stojić/Čađenović 2006, 76; 91–92.

⁴⁸ Bulatović 2009a, 126–127.

⁴⁹ Garašanin 1962; Garašanin 1983a, 762.

⁵⁰ Garašanin 1973, 308; Garašanin 1996, 213.

loci, but the large scale project took place during 1994/1995.⁵¹ On that occasion, a larger pit house settlement with pronounced horizontal stratigraphy was documented.⁵² Four decades ago, Coles and Harding published an absolute date from Mediana, which suggests a dating within the range 1290±90 BCE.⁵³ In a more recent investigation, A. Bulatović excavated one dwelling structure from Mediana's Phase I, and acquired an absolute date of 1396–1223 BCE (probability: 68.2%), which corresponds to Br C and first half of Br D, according to the central European chronology.⁵⁴ If we turn to typological analysis of pottery production, presented for this site by M. Garašanin, it is apparent that certain elements of earlier Brnjica pottery and later channelled pottery are significantly overlapping.⁵⁵ This points to the fact that Phase II, to which finds of channelled pottery are mostly attributed to, might represent a continuation of the settlement formed during the previous Brnjica phase with the same type of dwellings. The continuity from the end of Bronze Age to the beginning of Early Iron Age at Mediana-Brzi Brod leads to the conclusion that certain patterns of connections or coexistence observed at the cemeteries of the Belegiš II group in the Pannonian-Danube region are present also in southern Serbia. In the past few years, a revision of earlier archaeological excavations took place also at the site of Velika Humska Čuka near Niš, which brought a larger amount of black channelled urns, fired black on the exterior and light red in the interior.⁵⁶ This fact puts also Velika Humska Čuka on the map of the sites with channelled ware in south Serbia.

Contrary to the patterns observed in the southern Pannonian region, the geomorphology of the central Balkans and the hilly relief of the Južna Morava and Nišava River basins enabled the appearance of larger number of hilltop settlements. The hilltop sites concentrate in the region between the confluence of the Nišava and Južna Morava Rivers and the Preševo Valley in the far south of Serbia. They were erected on strategically important positions above river courses, gorge entries, and on protected high grounds from which it was easier to control the local landscape. In the Južna Morava River basin, thirteen hilltops have been documented thus far, eight of which have been partially excavated, and three of which display remains of defensive architecture.⁵⁷ Their advantageous strategic positions proved problematic for stratigraphic preservation, as habitation here continued. This led to devastation of prehistoric horizons by later building activities. The following hilltop settlements with naturally protected access should be highlighted, starting from the northernmost: Velika Humska Čuka and Bujanj near Niš, Gradac, Kale in Grdelica, Hisar in Leskovac, Vranjski Priboj, and Gradište in Končulje (**Fig. 2**).⁵⁸

Recent research conducted by M. Stojić and A. Bulatović in the basins of Leskovac, Vranje-Bujanovac, and Preševo led to discoveries of new sites with Belegiš II-Gava cultural characteristics. Excavations of the largest extent were conducted at the hillfort site of Hisar in Leskovac.⁵⁹ The site was divided in two sectors: the upper plateau with dwelling structures of a dugout type, which mostly belonged to Brnjica I horizon (Sector II), and a sector comprising the plateau and the southeastern slope of the hill with dwelling structures, which contained channelled pottery decorated in the Gava manner (Sector I).⁶⁰ During the historical periods, the upper plateau witnessed a larger degree of devastation due to erection of fortification walls, so that only objects buried in the lower levels remained undisturbed. Prehistoric defensive architecture with a deep ditch, rampart, and gate entrance was identified through radially placed trenches and geophysical prospection, including electric tomography (**Fig. 3a**).⁶¹ With the current state of excavations at the upper plateau, there is no evidence of structures that would correspond to Belegiš II-Gava horizon, but the assumption about their existence should not be completely disregarded. The situation is different on the southeastern slope. The steep slope on this side of the site leads into the flat plateau, or rather a cascade with well-preserved architectural remains of a single

⁵¹ Garašanin 1962; Garašanin 1969; Garašanin 1974; Garašanin 1983a; Perić 1996; Bulatović 2008.

⁵² Perić 1996, 293; Kapuran 2009, 78–88.

⁵³ Coles/Harding 1979, 452.

⁵⁴ This dating was conducted in Mannheim, Germany, the publication is in preparation; Harding 2000, pl. 1.1.

⁵⁵ Garašanin 1996, 2.

⁵⁶ Authors of this paper take part in excavations at the site of Humska Čuka.

⁵⁷ Bulatović/Filipović 2017, 150.

⁵⁸ Kapuran 2009, 65 fig. 23

⁵⁹ Bulatović/Jović 2010, 200; Stojić 2006; Stojić 2009; Bulatović 2009a; Stojić 2011; Kapuran 2009, 94–118.

⁶⁰ Kapuran 2017, fig. 1.

⁶¹ Kapuran 2009, map 3.

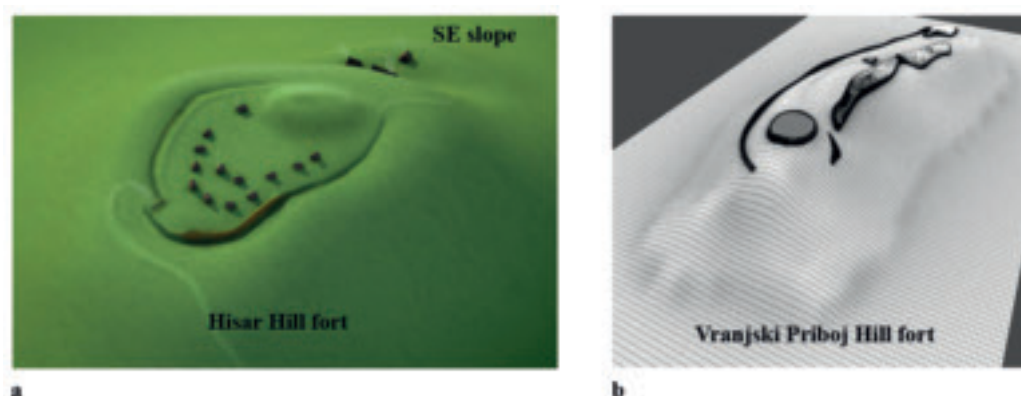


Figure 3 – a) Hisar Hill Fort. – b) Vranjski Priboj Hill Fort (A. Kapuran/A. Bulatović)

above-ground dwelling and several poorly defined pit houses.⁶² The rectangular house was erected on the virgin soil and had walls built in wattle and daub technique decorated with ornaments in the form of spirals and zig-zag lines (Fig. 4).⁶³ A bowl with oblique channels was discovered in situ within Layer VIII in the southern part of the house (Fig. 5,6). A. Bulatović has suggested that the channelled vessel belongs to the period between the 11th and the 10th century BCE, which would represent a terminus anti quem for the emergence of the settlement at this sector.⁶⁴ Numerous finds of channelled pottery here also confirm their prominence over the earlier Brnjica pottery culture, which clearly was in an intrusive deposit because of the erosion from the upper plateau (Fig. 5,4–5). Comparable rectangular houses are rare during the Belegiš II-Gava period both in the Pannonian-Danubian region and in the central Balkans. The surveys and test excavations in the surroundings of Hisar brought to light one lowland settlement at the site of Sastanci in the village Bobište near Leskovac and hillfort Kale in Grdelica at the very entrance to the Grdelica Gorge (Fig. 2).⁶⁵ The pottery found in both sites corresponds to the Belegiš II-Gava cultural complex.

In Trench A of Horizon III at the multi-layered site of Piljakovac near Vladičin Han in the Grdelica Gorge, pits containing channelled pottery have been discovered. The same occurred within the contemporary cultural layer in Trench B.⁶⁶ In one case an urn-like vessel found in situ had channel decoration on shoulder (Fig. 5,14).⁶⁷ According to M. Lazić, these finds correspond to the Mediana II group, although certain Brnjica-like forms have been noticed, thus indicating that indigenous populations were still present, though not as an own ethno-cultural group but rather as an assimilated minority.⁶⁸

Further to the south, the Vranjsko-Bujanovački Basin comprises the southernmost part of the Južna Morava River valley. In course of small-scale excavations and surveys, A. Bulatović was able to document a number of sites belonging to Belegiš II-Gava horizon: Surdulica, Resulja near Lučani, Gradište in Končulje, Reka in Svinjište, Tri kruške in Klinovac, Raskrsja in Rušac, and Đunke in Stropska.⁶⁹ The most important results have been achieved at the hillfort of Gradište in Končulj, positioned at strategically important place at the entrance to the Končulj gorge. The hillfort is enclosed by a rampart.⁷⁰ In the layer above the destroyed and burnt Brnjica-period settlement, pottery of poorer quality appears together with channelled ware that can be attributed to Ha A1 to Ha A2 or to time of 12th and 11th century BCE.⁷¹ The discovered sickle belongs to same period (Fig. 6,11). The dominance of channelled pottery over Brnjica-type pottery is apparent also at other already mentioned settlements in the lowlands. At the hillfort site of Ljanik, situated away from the main communication route through the Južna Morava

⁶² Kapuran 2009, fig. 52.

⁶³ Kapuran 2009, fig. 51.54.

⁶⁴ Bulatović 2009a, 98; Kapuran 2011, 11. To compare with absolute dates acquired from closed units containing vessels of same type in Slovenia see Teržan/Češnar 2014, fig. 13.10, 13.14, 14.1.9. and 14.1.14.

⁶⁵ Stojić 2003–2004, 193; 195.

⁶⁶ Lazić 2005, pl. 8.5–9; pl. 9.1–2.

⁶⁷ Lazić 2005, pl. 8.1; fig. 4.

⁶⁸ Lazić 2005, 155.

⁶⁹ Bulatović 2001.

⁷⁰ Bulatović 1990–2000, 24–33; Bulatović 2001, 169.

⁷¹ Bulatović 2007, 179.

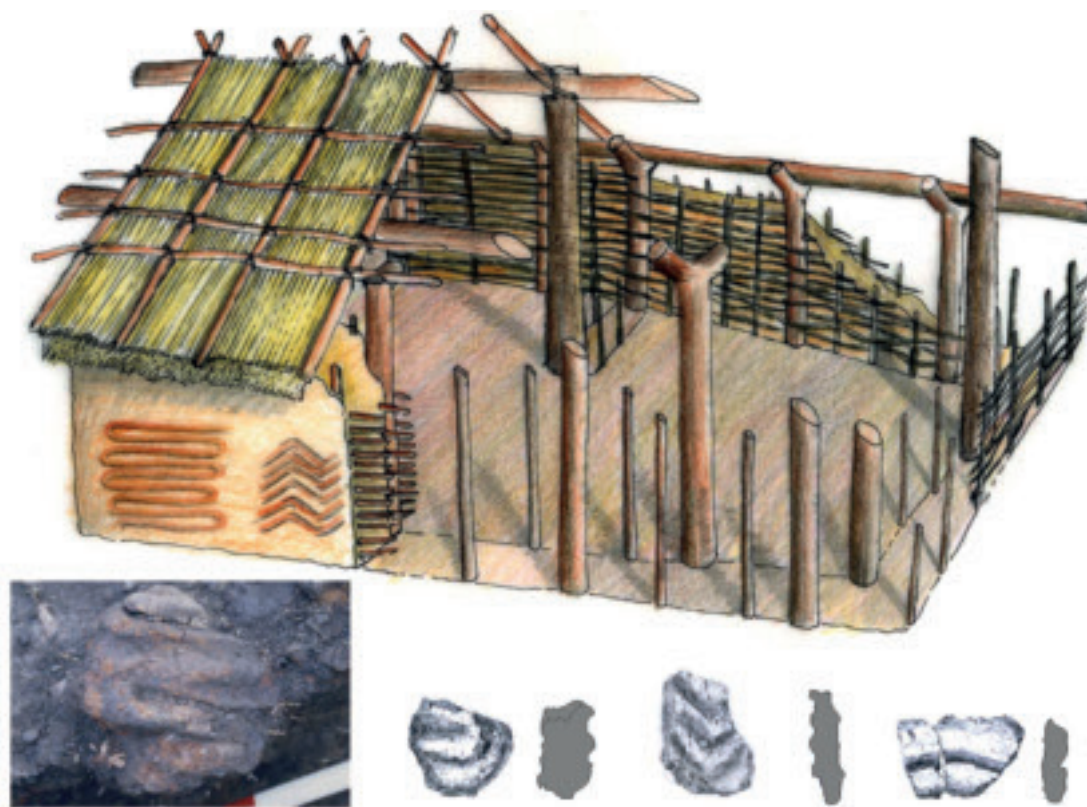


Figure 4 – Hisar, Belegiš II Gava house (A. Kapuran/A. Bulatović)

River valley, there were no traces of destruction. According to A. Bulatović, the sites of Brnjica culture in isolated areas remained sheltered and not as exposed to the new cultural dynamic as communities living in plains and on tell terraces.⁷² Another site with no traces of channelled pottery is Gradina in Priboj, situated on the main route at the very entrance to the gorge of the Južna Morava River. M. Vukmanović and P. Popović proposed that this site lasted for a short period during the 13th and the 12th centuries BCE, or at the very end of the Brnjica culture (Fig. 3b).⁷³ In short, we can assume that Brnjica societies were pushed from north into regions to the southeast of the Južna Morava, into the Bujanovačko-Preševski Basin, due to the invasion of populations that used channelled pottery. The large number of settlements on the riverbanks of the Južna Morava with finds of the Belegiš II-Gava culture predominating indicates assimilation of earlier population, in contrast to the situation in settlements in mountainous areas and perimeters of these basins.⁷⁴

Cenotaphs in Belegiš II horizon

In addition to material culture, which is the focus of this paper, it is necessary to point to a rare phenomenon that most probably represents a part of religious rites in the Early Iron Age societies. The archaeological manifestation of this rite are cenotaphs, which we assume are tied to cult practices of Belegiš II-Gava group, both in the region of the Iron Gates on the Danube River and in the Južna Morava River basin. The cenotaphs have been discovered at the cemeteries of Konopište (Grave 1),⁷⁵ Vajuga-Pesak (Grave 1) in the Iron Gates,⁷⁶ and at the Bubanj-Belo brdo near Niš in southern Serbia.⁷⁷ The absence of

⁷² Bulatović 1990-2000, 40.

⁷³ Vukmanović/Popović 1982, 203; Bulatović/Filipović 2017, 151.

⁷⁴ Bulatović 2007, 40.

⁷⁵ Popović 1989, 148.

⁷⁶ Premk et al. 1984, 112.

⁷⁷ Kapuran 2020.

human skeletal remains, the exclusive presence of animal bones, and the occurrence of fibulae of violin bow type have lead P. Popović to assumption that such finds represent cenotaphs.⁷⁸ The same configuration was observed in Grave 1 at the necropolis of Vajuga-Pesak. Although the inventory here was richer and it contained, in addition to violin bow fibulae, fragments of bronze vessels of the Spišska Bela type,⁷⁹ the assemblage was similar to the finds from the already mentioned hoard from Alun. Excavations at the site of Bubanj near Niš (**Fig. 2**) in 2013, led to a discovery of a ritual pit and a cenotaph, marked as unit No 79.⁸⁰ This closed context contained a binocle vessel (**Fig. 5,10**), an amphora (**Fig. 5,12**), a pot, fragments of pottery with channelled ornaments (**Fig. 5,11**), a spindle whorl, and a flint bladelet. The spindle whorl might indicate that the ritual might have been devoted to a woman. In the nearby surroundings, similar pottery as in Bubanj came from numerous sites of Belegiš II–Gava group. To name beside Konopište,⁸¹ are Hinova-Mala Vrbica in the Danube River basin,⁸² and the cemetery at the site Baley in western Bulgaria.⁸³

Pottery and metal finds of Belegiš II – Gava horizon

The common characteristic that connects Belegiš II–Gava cultural complex in the Pannonian-Danubian region with the areas of the central Balkans is certain aspects of material culture – pottery primarily and bronze objects to a lesser degree. Stylistic and typological characteristics as well as decoration and burnishing technique on the pottery from these two territories resemble to a great extent, which clearly points to certain cultural interaction. At cemeteries and settlements in southern Banat, pottery is black or brown, of fine fabric, with well-burnished surfaces embellished almost exclusively with horizontal flutes on the body and fluted girdles on the neck, and with vertical and diagonal flutes on the body often combine with buckle ornaments.⁸⁴ Biconical urns with inverted rims, high conical necks, and low bodies, and ornamented conical cups with high handles are also a part of the usual repertoire.⁸⁵ Biconical vessels with obliquely channelled shoulders appear at the cemeteries of Konopište, Mala Vrbica, and Vajuga-Pesak.⁸⁶ This pottery certainly shares most similarities with Gava, both in terms of fabric and firing colour, since it is dark on the exterior and lighter on the interior side. Identical firing technique and channelling can be detected at Humška Čuka near Niš⁸⁷ and also in Zlotska cave, but not at Hisar in Leskovac. This leads to the conclusion that Pannonian–Danubian region was in a zone of economic and cultural influence of the Gava channelled pottery during the transition from the Bronze to the Early Iron Age. Moreover, there is a striking similarity with stylistic and typological properties of pottery from the Južna Morava River basin.⁸⁸ In the territory of the central Balkans, urns decorated with channels on shoulders as well as channelled bowls appear at Mediana, Gradac and Hisar in Leskovac,⁸⁹ Humška Čuka in Niš, Piljakovac near Vladičin Han,⁹⁰ Turija, Ranutovac, Lučani, Kržinci, and Stropska near Vranje,⁹¹ as well as at Gradište in Končulje.⁹²

Metal finds from the transitional period in the central Balkans are rare and include mostly isolated finds of bronze weaponry such as swords, spears, socket axes, and knives. As noted earlier, larger number of bronze grave goods characterizes the earlier phase at the cemeteries of Brnjica and Paraćin cultures. In following period, during the channelled pottery horizon, there is a conspicuous absence of cemeteries and hoards in the central Balkan region. Hoards are mostly concentrated in northeastern and northwestern Serbia. Finds from Topolnica, Alun, Brza Palanka and Urovica come from the hinterland of the Iron Gates (**Fig. 2**),⁹³ with weaponry prevailing, while jewellery and bronze vessels are less frequent. In northwestern Serbia, hoards have been found at Konjuša, Trlič, Obajgora,

⁷⁸ Popović 1998, 148.

⁷⁹ Vasić 1998, 189.

⁸⁰ unpublished.

⁸¹ Tasić 1983, 101.

⁸² Gumá 199, 108 pl. 10.

⁸³ Alexandrov et al. 2016, fig. 5,7.

⁸⁴ Uzelac 1996, 34.

⁸⁵ Uzelac 1996, 34.

⁸⁶ Vukmanović 1989, 45 fig. 5–6.

⁸⁷ Authors of this paper both worked at mentioned sites for several years and studied finds.

⁸⁸ Medović 1988–1989, 48; Medović 2001, 220.

⁸⁹ Kapuran/Stojić 2001, pl. 9.43–50; pl. 10.17–30; pl. 9.1–4.10; pl. 13.1–10.

⁹⁰ Lazić 200, pl. 8; pl. 9.

⁹¹ Bulatović 2007, 40.

⁹² Bulatović 2007, 178–194.

⁹³ Jovanović 1975, 81; Srejić 1975, 93; Srejić 1975a, 96.



Figure 5 – 1–3 Gloždar-Paraćin. – 4–6 Hisar-Leskovac. – 7–9 Medijana-Brzi Brod. – 10–12 Bujanj-Niš. – 13 Lazareva Cave. – 14 Piljakovac (A. Kapuran/A. Bulatović)

and Kosjerić.⁹⁴ In the territory of the Južna Morava River basin, there is a huge difference between the distribution of metal finds and the number of registered settlements. Two swords with grip-tongue were discovered in the Vranje-Bujanovac Basin (Golemo Selo, Pavlovac) (**Fig. 6,13–14**), a sickle came from Končulj (**Fig. 6,11**), a chisel from Svinjište (**Fig. 6,10**), a socket axe mould from Klinovac, and two pins with ball shaped head came from Golemo Selo, Stari Glog (**Fig. 6,12–13**), all belonging to the

⁹⁴ Garašanin 1973, 426–430.



Figure 6 – 1.3.4 Zlotska Cave. – 2 Glogovica. – 5 Magura. – 6a–d Mali Izvor hoard. – 7a–d Gornja Bela Reka hoard. – 8 Sokobanja. – 9 Jelašnica. – 10 Svinjište. – 11 Končulj. – 12 Golemo Selo. – 13 Stari Glog. – 14 Golemo Selo. – 15 Pavlovac

Ha A stage, or the 12th century BCE.⁹⁵ A single edged knife was found at Sokobanja,⁹⁶ and has similarities with a knife from Devin in northeastern Bulgaria dated to the 14th–12th century BCE (**Fig. 6,8**).⁹⁷ One socket axe found in the vicinity of Jelašnica near Niš (**Fig. 6,9**) and a spearhead from Humska Čuka also belong to same period, Iron Age I, according to the chronology proposed by M. Garašanin.⁹⁸

⁹⁵ Bulatović 2007, 41.

⁹⁶ Stojić/Jocić 2006, fig. 83.

⁹⁷ Leshtakov 2008, 72 fig. 6.1.

⁹⁸ Garašanin 1971, 51, cat. no. 433.434.

Conclusion

In this paper, we intended to give a short presentation of general differences and similarities of the material culture and ritual of prehistoric groups from the southern part of the Pannonian-Danubian plain and the mountainous areas of the central Balkans at the transition from the 2nd to 1st millennium BCE. This insufficiently documented and most probably turbulent period seems, according to settlement stratigraphy, to have been characterised by activities of people who used channelled pottery, which, after a longer period of existence in southern Pannonia, started to move into the southern Balkans. The influence of the channelled pottery had started to spread along the Velika Morava River and into the hinterland of the Iron Gates even before this presupposed movement. The lack of cemeteries of the Belegiš II–Gava group in the Južna Morava and the Nišava River basins points to the swift advancement of population groups. Unstratified chance finds of symbolic nature, namely burials with cenotaphs, might support this assumption. There also seems to be an urgent need for weaponry during these aggressive migrations towards the south, perhaps related to the absence of bronze hoards with deposited metal objects. The advancement from the north into the territory of the Brnjica culture in the Južna Morava Basin is evidenced by a sudden cessation of habitation at the settlements of Končulj and Vranjski Priboj. These developments and the evidence from the recently excavated cemetery near Mali Dol-Negotino,⁹⁹ as well as other burial sites mentioned here,¹⁰⁰ in addition to the settlements in the Vardar River basin,¹⁰¹ point to certain contacts or movements between the central Balkans and the Vardar River basin. In a certain way, what has been described as the Aegean migration should not be completely ruled out, but which certainly should not be exclusively linked to the “Sea peoples” thesis. One should certainly avoid trivial, incomplete, or confusing conclusions that often rest exclusively on arguments that treat certain chosen aspects rather than the entire archaeological record.

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⁹⁹ Papazovska 2014, 9.

¹⁰⁰ Mitrevski 1997, 313–317.

¹⁰¹ Hochstetter 1984.

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