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TO "ACTA MUSEI TIBERIOPOLITANI vol. 2"

The National Institution "Institute for the Protection of Monuments of Culture and Museum" - Strumica, for almost a decade has persisted in its efforts to organize international symposia of archeology not only as a rare opportunity to present and assert its own research experience, but also to share it in front of its colleagues from the country and the wider region. The symposium days are atrue festivity dedicated to archeology as a profession and science.

Before us is a collection of papers presented at the Fourth international symposium of archeology titled "Vita est vita" held in November 2016 in the village of Bansko near Strumica, where about 20 participants from renowned institutions from Macedonia, Serbia, Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania, Ukraine, presented their works in the area of archeology.

All this, with the financial support of the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Macedonia, within its Annual Work-Program for 2017, enabled this collection to find its place among the readers' audience, highlighting new and exciting moments of research work in the field of archeology.

We hope that the publishing activity of the NI Institute and the Museum-Strumica will continue to follow every future edition of the symposium, which is why we expect new publications of this size and importance.

Vasilka Georgieva



THE 4TH INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM OF ARCHAEOLOGY

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STRUMICA MMXVI



part of the participants in 4 international symposia in archeology

LIFE IN WHITE:

SYMBOLISM AND IMPORTANCE OF THE WHITE COLOUR IN THE NEOLITHIC IN THE BALKANS

Dragana Antonović Institute of Archaeology, Belgrade, Serbia d.antonovic@ai.ac.rs

Selena Vitezović Institute of Archaeology, Belgrade, Serbia s.vitezovic@ai.ac.rs

Vidan Dimić Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade, Belgrade, Serbia vidandimic@rocketmail.com

Key words: Neolithic, Central Balkans, osseous industry, lithic industry, colour symbolism

Abstract

In the Neolithic and Early Eneolithic in the Central Balkans, the white colour seems to have had a particular importance. White stones were commonly used for production of cult and decorative objects, and in the late phase of the Vinča culture even for tools. Osseous raw materials, naturally white or whitish, were used for daily tools but they were also the preferred raw material for decorative items. The aim of this paper is to present the importance of the white colour and to give possible answers to the question on the significance and meaning of the white colour to inhabitants of the Central Balkans.

INTRODUCTION

Colour has an extreme importance in human experience since the dawn of humanity. Forms and colours encountered in nature, also different lights and shadows, etc., create, shape, modify and influence human perception of the world. Diverse colours existing in nature are meaningful for all living creatures and influence their behaviour: the colour of an animal or plant may attract or deter, mask or draw attention, and so on.

Colours are associated with everyday experiences, memories, feelings, on both individual and group level. Colours can be

used for communication, for masking, for warning, for attraction, and by using them we may send a message, create expectations, cause feelings (cf. Vollmar 2011). Colours have a strong importance in symbolic life; they may be valued or associated with taboos. Cultural attitude towards certain colours is also very important; the importance and meaning of a certain colour is not universal, but culture specific.

Despite its importance, colour has often been ignored or overlooked in archaeological research. Several studies appeared in the past few decades (cf., Gage 1999; Jones and Bradley 1999; Jones and Macgregor 2002; Merkevičius ed. 2007; Tsoraki 2011, inter

al.), but the research is still rather limited. Furthermore, the problem of preservation is very important; we know, for example, that the majority of ancient Mediterranean sculpture was painted, such as Cycladic idols, archaic, classical Greek sculpture and architecture, etc. Also, in some cases, we may not be sure whether the preserved colours were the same or different at the time of their use; metals change colour over time, some pigments change or dissolve completely, and so on. As Gage (1999, p. 109) noted, "All practising archaeologists are aware of the colour of the materials which they handle - be they stone artefacts, painted pots, prehistoric monuments (frontispiece) or historical buildings. Yet all too frequently these items are robbed of their colour when they are published as black and white photos, abstract plans or reductionist line drawings. Equally discouraging is the fact that original colours are frequently missing or faded, removed by the passage of centuries".

All past societies are concerned about colour, and such concern can be traced back to the Palaeolithic period. Early uses of red pigment were documented in South Africa between 270 000 and 170 000 years ago (Barham 2002). With the beginning of the Upper Palaeolithic we may note an already developed sense for colour diversity, strong symbolic importance of colour and even aesthetic and symbolic playing with polychrome, visible in numerous traces of the Palaeolithic art, in both cave paintings and in portable finds (e. g., Bahn and Vertut 1988; Leroi-Gourhan 1971, and references therein).

Studying the role of colours in the archaeological record is of crucial importance to understand the worldviews and cultural attitudes towards the immediate and distant environment. To what extent particular colours, such as red or black, have a cross-cultural significance is an altogether more difficult question. Colour awareness and colour sensitivity must, however, be an integral part of any archaeological analysis concerning the development and nature of

human cognition (cf. Gage 1999).

Three basic colours – red, black and white – were outlined by several authors as the basics for symbolic systems and as main components of the simplest scheme of categories (cf. Berlin and Kay 1969; see also Erdogu and Ulubey 2011, p. 1). According to Turner (1967, p. 89), red is the symbol of blood, white is the symbol of milk and semen, and black is related to faeces and urine. In different cultures, these colours can be associated with both life and death, passage rites (first kill or menstrual blood), and many more (Erdogu and Ulubey 2011).

Also, one must also take into account the wavelength and radiance each colour has and how it is perceived by the human eye; furthermore, specific environment may increase importance of some colours (blue, green, yellow, etc.). As Erdogu and Ulubey (2011 p. 1) noted, "Our ability to understand colour symbolism is related to the universal conception of colour engendered by cognitive psychology, as well as to ethnographic evidence from different societies. Studies associated with colour symbolism tend to view colour as naturally constituted, while the meanings associated with colours are culturally constructed".

ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

The Neolithic in the Central Balkans area is marked by Early / Middle Neolithic Starčevo culture, part of the Starčevo-Körös-Criş cultural complex (for absolute dates, cf. Whittle et al. 2002), followed by the Late Neolithic Vinča culture (for absolute dates, cf. Borić 2009; Tasić et al, 2015). Both communities were sedentary, their subsistence was based on farming and animal herding (cf. Orton 2012; Filipović and Obradović 2013; and references therein), and they practiced diverse crafts such as working in clay, bone and stone, leather, textile and wood processing, etc. (cf. Garašanin 1979; Vuković 2004; Вуковић 2013; Antonović 2003; Vitezović



Plate I. Diverse osseous artefacts: 1. Spondylus bracelets, Vitkovo, Vinča culture; 2. Perforated red deer canine, Divostin, Starčevo culture; 3. Bone copy of perforated tooth, Divostin, Starčevo culture; 4. Decorative object made from bone, Belovode, Vinča culture; 5. Globular pendant made from bone, Starčevo, Starčevo culture; 6. Diverse bone tools, carefully polished, Vitkovo, Vinča culture.

2007; 2011a, inter al.). Short- and long-distance trade and exchange may be noted via presence of lithic raw materials, obsidian, mollusc shells, etc. (cf. Трипковић 2001; Vitezović 2012; 2016a, inter al.).

Colours were very important for the Neolithic people: pots were made in lively colours, and were sometimes even polychrome. Important and at the same time most conspicuous colours in the Neolithic in the Central Balkans are red and black (including reddish and black nuances), mostly visible on ceramic artefacts (vessels, figurines, altars) (cf. Aranđelović Garašanin 1954; Garašanin 1979; Bacuħ 1931).

Beside these two colours, we also noted the importance and conspicuous role of white. White was occasionally present as decoration on ceramic and it was assumed that it was present in architecture as well (cf. Garašanin 1979). Here, we will focus on the role of the white colour as visible from osseous and lithic raw materials, used for both daily tools and non-utilitarian

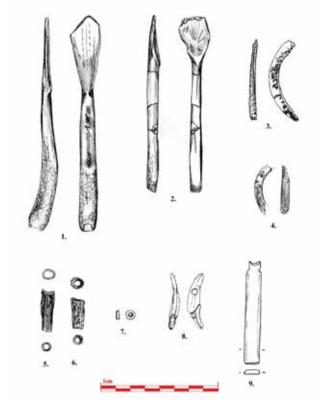


Plate II. Diverse osseous artefacts: 1. Spatula-spoon from Bos metapodial, Starčevo, Starčevo culture; 2. Spatula-spoon from Bos metapodial, Starčevo, Starčevo culture; 3. Spondylus bracelet, Starčevo, Starčevo culture; 4. Spondylus bracelet, Starčevo, Starčevo culture; 5. Dentalium bead, Starčevo, Starčevo culture; 6. Dentalium bead, Starčevo, Starčevo culture; 7. Shell bead, Drenovac, Starčevo culture; 8. Perforated tooth, Slatina-Paraćin, Vinča culture; 9. Fragmented pendant made from red deer antler, Vitkovo, Vinča culture:

artefacts, mainly decorative. Strict choices of white raw materials of different physical and mechanical properties for production of certain objects, as well as a lot of labour, skill and time invested in their production, long use and repair, suggest that these were valued objects and that the white colour was an important part of their symbolic display, either giving or emphasizing their prestigious role.

The importance of the white colour in the Neolithic is not new in the Balkans area; we may note abundant evidence for specific meanings of white in the Near East. From the Mesolithic and Pre-Pottery Neolithic period, we encounter finds of statues and masks covered with white plaster from the sites such as Ein Ghazal, Nahal Hemar, Jericho and many more (Simmons et al. 1988, p. 35-36, Strouhal 1973, p. 231-247). Jericho skulls even had shells inlaid as eyes, usually cowrie shells, white with brown details. These



Plate III. Diverse lithic artefacts: 1. Button-pendant made of marble, Vinča 7,0 m, Vinča culture; 2. Sleeve for a wooden handle made of marble, Vinča 7,7 m, Vinča culture; 3. Biconical bead, marble, Vinča 8,3 m, Vinča culture, 4. Figurine (semi-circular "head") made of calcite, Vinča 5,8 m, Vinča culture; 5. Zoomorphic figurine made of marble, Vinča 6,3 m, Vinča culture; 6. Anthropomorphic figurine made of marble, Vinča 6,1 m, Vinča culture; 7. Pendant made of marble, Vinča 5,6 m, Vinča culture.

sculptures are connected with the funerary cult and were probably related to honouring the ancestors, but we have evidence of white colour connected with the everyday, daily life (Kujit 2001; 2002). At Çatal Höyük, paintings were discovered inside houses with prominent white colour (Mellaart 1967), and white was used for architectural details on this and sites in Anatolia, such as Bağbaşı, Suberde, Hacilar, Can Hasan, Çayönü Tepesi Aşıklı Höyük and others (Arkun 2003, p. 22).

OSSEOUS RAW MATERIALS

Osseous raw materials include all animal hard tissue – bones, teeth, antlers, mollusc shells (cf. Christensen 2004). Their natural colour is white, whitish, yellowish,

and, in case of mollusc shells, it may be polychrome. When brand new, osseous artefacts are dazzling white and showy (Luik 2007). One of the important physical properties is also smooth, bright surface, especially in bones and shells, which may be increased even more by burnishing in polishing (Vitezović 2012).

In both Starčevo and Vinča cultures, we may note the use of diverse osseous raw materials: bones from domestic and wild animals, red and roe deer antlers, boar tusks, other teeth, and mollusc shells (*Dentalium, Spondylus, Glycymeris*) (Bačkalov 1979; Russell 1990; Vitezović, 2007; 2011a; 2011b; 2012; 2013). Predominantly, daily tools were produced: awls, needles, points, chisels, wedges, axes, spatulae, scrapers, hammers, retouching tools (plate II/6). Also, hafts and



Plate IV: Diverse lithic artefacts: 1. Palette with conical legs made of marble, Vinča 5,5 m, Vinča culture; 2. Bowl made of marble, Vinča 6,3 m, Vinča culture; 3. Palette with decorated rim made of marble, Vinča 6,9 m, Vinča culture; 4. Plate-pendant made of marble, Vinča 6,6 m, Vinča culture; 5. Plate-pendant made of marble, Vinča 8,4 m, Vinča culture; 6. Bucrania-shaped artefact made of marble, Vodica in Tomaševac, Starčevo culture.

sleeves were made, diverse containers, as well as weapons and fishing equipment: projectile points, fish hooks. They were never used for figurines, though, but they were the main raw material for personal ornaments.

In the Starčevo culture, we may note the presence of artefacts made from osseous raw materials that were particularly valued. They were produced with vast labour, skill and time investment, used for a very long time and often repaired. One group of these artefacts are spatulae-spoons (plate II/1, 2), specific techno-type, characteristic for the Early Neolithic in Anatolia and South-Eastern Europe (Vitezović 2016a). They were made from metapodial bones of large herbivores, almost exclusively Bos, and experimental results showed that it took approximately 25 hours to produce one spoon (Sidéra 2013). Their original function is unknown; despite their form, they were not used as cutlery, although they may have been used in preparation of medicines and/or for cosmetic purposes (cf. Vitezović 2016a; and references therein).

The second group are ornaments. They are not numerous in the Starčevo culture, yet they display diversity in forms and raw materials - pendants, beads, rings, buckles, etc. (Vitezović 2012) (plate II/3, 4, 5). Mollusc shells of exotic origin (Spondylus, Glycymeris), are not numerous, but they were still discovered on several sites - Starčevo (plate II/3, 4), Divostin, Drenovac (plate II/7), Međureč (McPherron et al. 1988, Vitezović 2011a, 2012; 2016b). *Dentalium* beads were discovered at Starčevo (Vitezović 2012) (plate II/5, 6). Long use is also noticeable on these artefacts, and even copies in other materials - copies of shell or teeth ornaments in bone or white stones (Vitezović 2012) (plate 1/2, 3).

Most of these finds come from settlements (Vitezović 2012 and references therein); however, it is interesting to note the presence of unworked shells in the graves (at Velesnica – Vasić 2008).

In the Vinča culture, personal ornaments were mainly made from osseous raw materials as well. At the eponymous site of Vinča-Belo Brdo, a particularly rich collection of jewellery was discovered - numerous bracelets, pendants and applications made from diverse shells (Glycymeris, Spondylus, Cardium), as well as Dentalium beads (Срејовић, Јовановић 1959; Dimitrijević and Tripković 2002; 2006; Димитријевић et al. 2010; Игњатовић 2008). Mollusc shells were less frequent on other sites, but this may be related to the sample bias, preservation, portion of the site that was excavated, but also to the fact that Vinča-Belo Brdo is the most extensively researched Vinča culture site. Mollusc shell ornaments were also noted at Selevac (Russell 1990), Divostin (McPherron et al. 1988), Drenovac (Vitezović 2007), Vitkovo (Vitezović 2013) (plate I/1), Pločnik (Vitezović in preparation a; see also Vitezović 2016a).

The most common mollusc ornaments were in the shape of bracelets, made



Plate V: Adzes made of magnesite from Pločnik, depot in Feature 9, excavation 2013.

by cutting the valve of shells such as *Glycymeris* or *Spondylus*, following its original shape and dimensions, discovered in diverse contexts – within settlements (e.g., at Vinča-Belo Brdo – Срејовић и Јовановић 1959; Dimitrijevć and Tripković 2006; Игњатовић 2008), even in rubbish pits (e.g., at Vitkovo – Vitezović 2013) or in graves (at Botoš-Živanića Dolja – Marinković 2010).

Beads were found in following shapes: flat and rounded, conical, biconical, or elongated (e.g. Vinča-Belo Brdo – Срејовић и Јовановић 1959; Botoš-Živanića Dolja – Marinković 2010; Pločnik – Vitezović in preparation a), and naturally elongated *Dentalium* shells were also used (e.g. Vinča-Belo Brdo – Срејовић и Јовановић 1959; Игњатовић 2008; Димитријевић *et al.* 2010).

Other ornaments included perforated teeth and diverse pendants, made from bone or antler, noted on Selevac (Russell, 1990), Divostin (McPherron *et al.*, 1988), Drenovac, Motel Slatina (Vitezović 2007; 2011b), Vitkovo (plate II/9), Stragari (Vitezović 2013), Belov-

ode (Vitezović in preparation b) (plate I/4). Pendants were made from antler or bone and include diverse shapes: rectangular, triangular, teardrop-like (e.g. Selevac – Russell 1990, p. 534), oval (e.g. Vinča-Belo Brdo – Игњатовић 2008, kat. 222) etc. Also, different teeth were transformed into pendants by adding a perforation: e.g., large herbivore incisives were discovered at Slatina, Paraćin (Vitezović 2007) (plate II/8); red deer canines found at Selevac (Russell 1990, pl. 14.8a) and Belovode (Vitezović in preparation b).

Buttons were produced from mollusc shell or bone and are known from Vinča-Belo Brdo (Срејовић, Јовановић 1959). Applications, buckles and decorative pins were manufactured from bone and antler. They occur relatively rarely, and do not have standardized forms (antler artefact with several perforations from Selevac may belong to this group, for example - Russell 1990, p. 534, fig. 14.9b). Spondylus and Glycymeris were also used for making different applications, and sometimes bracelets and other ornaments were remodelled after breakage into some sort of application by cutting, grinding and adding a perforation (e.g. Russell 1990, р. 535, Игњатовић 2008, kat. 219).

The mode of use and wearing of diverse ornaments may be reconstructed if usewear traces are preserved (cf. Bonnardin 2008), but also some indirect evidence may be obtained from anthropomorphic figurines (e.g., rich necklaces and other ornaments may be seen on figurines from Vinča-Belo Brdo: Игњатовић, 2008, kat. 9, 76, 90; see also Васић 1931).

LITHIC RAW MATERIALS

Lithic raw materials were widely used throughout the Neolithic period for diverse daily tools: axes, adzes, chisels, hammers, whetstones, grindstones, and many more (cf. Antonović, 2003, and references therein). Also, some non-utilitarian artefacts were used – ornaments, and possible amulets.

Stone beads, pendants and diverse other ornaments were objects for personal use and their manufacture implied a lot of skill, labour and time investment in order to obtain the desired artefact. Diverse types of rocks were used, predominantly of similar petrographic traits, and different in colours; however, white was the predominant one. Stones of white colour or of whitish nuances that were used for production of ornaments in the Neolithic in the Balkans were marble, marble-onyx, calcite, magnesite, porcelanite, quartzite, diverse siliceous rocks and white variants of flint.

In the Starčevo culture, a very interesting occurrence are bucrania-shaped artefacts of unknown function (plate IV/6). These object were made mostly from ceramics, however, there are several, rare examples made of white marble. They were discovered at the Early Neolithic Starčevo culture sites of Donja Branjevina, Drenovac, Divostin, Lepenski Vir IIIb (Кармански 1987, р. 101–106; Glumac 1988, р. 458; Srejović, Babović 1981, p. 92). It is uncertain at this moment whether they were used as some sort of pendants or some type of amulets, used in cult practices.

Rare jewellery pieces may be noted in both Starčevo and Vinča cultures, and include beads, pendants, buttons, etc..

Pendants made of stone were relatively rare in the archaeological material from the Neolithic sites in the Balkans (Antonović 2003, p. 67). The diversity of shapes, high quality manufacture and extraordinary beauty of these objects, obtained by burnishing and polishing, certainly makes these artefacts special, possibly prestigious objects, i.e., means for showing or emphasizing the status of their maker and/or owner (plate III/1, 7). They may have also had some role related to cult practices. Most of these artefacts were discovered at the site of Vinča-Belo Brdo, and they were also noted on following sites: Divostin (McPherron et al. 1988, p. 330), Belovode (Antonović 2000, p. 29), Coka (Banner 1960, p. 34), Zmajevac

(Katunar 1988, p.110), Supska, Žarkovo, etc.

Stone beads were also discovered in smaller numbers. Along with small conical beads of simple shapes, made mostly from grey limestone, biconical beads of larger dimensions were also made (Antonović 2003, p. 67). Those beads of quality production were made exclusively from marble and it is possible that they had a special positioning within a bead necklace, hence attributing a special significance to the person wearing it (plate III/3). Stone bracelets are found only exceptionally (few are known from Vinča-Belo Brdo) (Antonović 1992, p. 17).

Among the ornaments there are also plates-pendants of oval or rectangular shape, with two or more perforations, discovered at Vinča (Antonović 1992, p. 17) (plate IV/5-6). The most interesting ones were made of marble. They are in the shape of a disc and they most probably represent an imitation of similar objects made of *Spondylus* shells (Dimitrijević, Tripković 2002).

An also unique finding are fragments of some kind of planking (plate III/2), among which is one almost completely preserved sleeve for a wooden handle discovered at Vinča (Antonović 1992, p. 19), dated into the Late Neolithic Vinča Tordoš II (Vinča B).

On the Neolithic sites in Serbia zoomorphic, anthropomorphic and stylised figurines were also noted, of unknown meaning and role. Zoomorphic figurines are mainly in the shape of animal heads, and the species can be only guessed (dog, water birds...) (plate III/5). Anthropomorphic figurines are mainly represented with stylised human body and they may have perforations (plate III/6). Mushroom-shaped figurines and those in the shape of semicircular "heads" were also noted (plate III/4). Almost all of these figurines display traces of being tied with some sort of rope to be hung (Antonović 1992, p. 19). All figurines were made from marble, marble-onyx and calcite, rocks and minerals whose colour and beauty may be emphasized by polishing. Figurines were discovered at the sites of Vinča-Belo Brdo (Antonović 1992, p. 18–19), Belovode (Antonović 2000, p. 29), Crnokalačka Bara (Tasić, Tomić 1969, p. 53; Antonović 2003, p. 66), Pločnik (Grbić 1929, p. 17; Antonović 2003, p. 66), Jablanica near Međulužje (Гарашанин 1951, p. 9), Selevac (Voytek 1990, p. 442), Drenovac (Chapman 1981, p. 120, 374), Botoš-Živanića Dolja, Vršac, Aradac, Potporanj (Milleker 1938, p. 134), Čoka (Banner 1960, 34, 46) etc.

Stone containers, such as vessels and palettes, represent rare finds on the Vinča culture sites. They are very finely made, mainly from marble, and in most cases they were discovered fragmented, except for one almost completely preserved vessel discovered at Vinča-Belo Brdo (plate IV/2). Other artefacts of this kind, i.e. only fragments of them, were discovered at the sites of Belovode (Antonović 2000, p. 29), Crnokalačka Bara, Pločnik, Gradac, Drenovac (Antonović 2003, p. 66–67) and Selevac (Chapman 1981, p. 120).

Vessels were mainly bowls, while palettes were rectangular or oval flat objects with small conical legs and sometimes with a decorated rim (plate IV/1, 3). One of the assumptions was that they were used for preparing cosmetic pigments for body decorating. However, traces that may confirm such a hypothesis were not detected on any of these objects so far. The quality of their manufacture leads us to suppose these were luxurious objects that had a special purpose.

Transitional period from earlier phases of the Vinča culture into the phases Vinča-Gradac and Vinča-Pločnik is characterized by one of the most conspicuous changes when it comes to the production of ground stone artefacts (plate V). It is visible mainly in the sudden and mass use of a specific group of raw materials, usually labelled as "light white stones". This group comprehends magnesite, diatomaceous earth, tuff, porcelanite, flint, diverse siliceous stones, slate etc. At most of the sites in the Late Neolithic layers in Central and Western Serbia, ground stone tools were made from "light"

white stones", and they are represented in high percentage (above 60% and 70%) (Antonović 1997, p. 33-40; Димић 2015, p. 381-383). Tools made from these raw materials are axes, adzes, chisels and they were used for diverse woodworking tasks (Dimić 2015, p. 59-61).

Petrographic analyses of these tools from several Late Neolithic sites in Serbia showed that magnesite is the most commonly used "white light stone". Magnesite is the rock whose deposits are available in Central and Western Serbia. It is easily extracted, easily worked and tools made from these raw materials can be easily repaired if broken. Magnesite as raw material has some traits similar to copper, it is very resilient despite its low hardness, and this is the most important trait for tools with a cutting edge. The appearance of tools from these raw materials coincide with the appearance of copper tools in the Balkans area and it may be assumed that magnesite tools represent a less expensive substitute for copper (Antonović 1997, p. 39).

Polished stone tools made from magnesite do not stand out by the highest quality of manufacture, but it should be noted that several high quality examples do occur, for example at the sites of Lađarište and Pločnik.

One of the most interesting finds when it comes to these raw materials are depots from Pločnik, where 25 such tools of larger dimensions were found (Šljivar et al. 2006, p. 254–255; Dimić, Antonović, in preparation). In these depots, large adzes and axes prevail which are unknown in the Neolithic in the Central Balkans. It is, therefore, assumed that they had a symbolic meaning, and their special place within the Vinča culture is also indicated by them being treated as equally significant as massive copper tools, since they were placed together in those depots.

Finds like these, the large distribution of tools from "white light stones" and imitations made of other rocks of white colour provide data on the newly formed trend that appeared in the late phases of the Vinča

culture in the Balkans area and lasted until the early Eneolithic period, when copper tools overtook polished stone tools.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUDING REMARKS

Colours had an important role in everyday and symbolic life throughout the Neolithic in the Central Balkans. Beside black and red, white was important as well. White raw materials, osseous and some lithic materials, were a preferred choice for certain types of artefacts.

It is particularly important to note that numerous decorative and symbolic items were made from white raw materials – bone, antler, teeth, especially mollusc shells and white stones. Virtually all personal ornaments were white or whitish, and also virtually all stone symbolic and/or prestig-

ious artefacts – amulets, vessels, etc. were made in white stones. Furthermore, we noted copies of morphologically identical ornaments in raw materials different in origin and all other physical and mechanical traits except for one – the white colour. This suggests that white colour was an important trait of these objects, emphasizing and/or increasing their prestigious role, value and symbolic meaning.

The symbolic role and meaning of the white colour is difficult to determine with certainty. In diverse past and present communities, white is associated with both life and death (cf. Vollmar 2011). The variety and quantity of personal ornaments, the presence of both worked and unworked mollusc shells in graves in the Starčevo and Vinča cultures and the occurrence of white stone vessels and amulets in the Vinča culture may suggest that white was also connected with status and prestige.

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