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NECROPOLIS UNDER A TUMULUS AT VEPRČANI

Representative case of using sacred places
during several periods in the past*

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Abstract. – Six Late Roman graves and one prehistoric burial have been discovered under a tumulus in the course of investigations. The tumulus is around 11 meters in diameter and around 1 meter high and is situated at Veprčani, in the mountainous area of Mariovo in south Macedonia. The graves mostly contained cists of broken stones or slabs covered with stone slabs, one grave was carved into the rock and one consisted of a dislocated grave association. One prehistoric burial containing the remains of a cremated individual and grave goods was encountered under a small stone mound to the south of tumulus. Regarding the grave goods, mortuary practice and funerary rituals of the original tumulus as well as the prehistoric burials, and material from the mound have been dated to the Ha A period, while the antique graves were dated to the 3rd–4th century.

Key words. – tumulus, Mariovo, south Macedonia, Late Roman necropolis, prehistoric burials, transition period from the Bronze to the Iron Age.

The Mariovo region is situated in the south of Macedonia, between the mountains Selečka, Nidža, Kožuf, Kozjak and Dren. The river Crna flows through this region creating the longest (around 100 km long) canyon in Macedonia. The distinctive relief and geographic position of the region has an impact on the distinct climate characteristics of the area, which are considerably different compared to other regions in Macedonia. The mountains Dren and Selečka protect the region from strong north winds, while Mediterranean currents from the south spread along the Crna basin, and influences of continental climate arrive from the Pelagonia plain.

The village of Veprčani is situated in such a climatic and geographic setting, although in a hilly zone

on the north-western slopes of Mt. Selečka and at over 800 meters above sea level. It is around 20 km south-east of Prilep as the crow flies, or around 35 km along the road bypassing the southern slopes of Mt. Dren.

The site of Slamite is situated around 1 km to the west of the village of Veprčani, on the gentle rocky slope facing south. Stone building foundations and Roman pottery have been found in the north section of the site, while in the south section are a few relatively small tumuli grouped in pairs and arranged in a north-south direction.¹ Approximately 700–800 meters from the group of tumuli is the site of Gradište, which could

¹ Миткоски 2010, 50.

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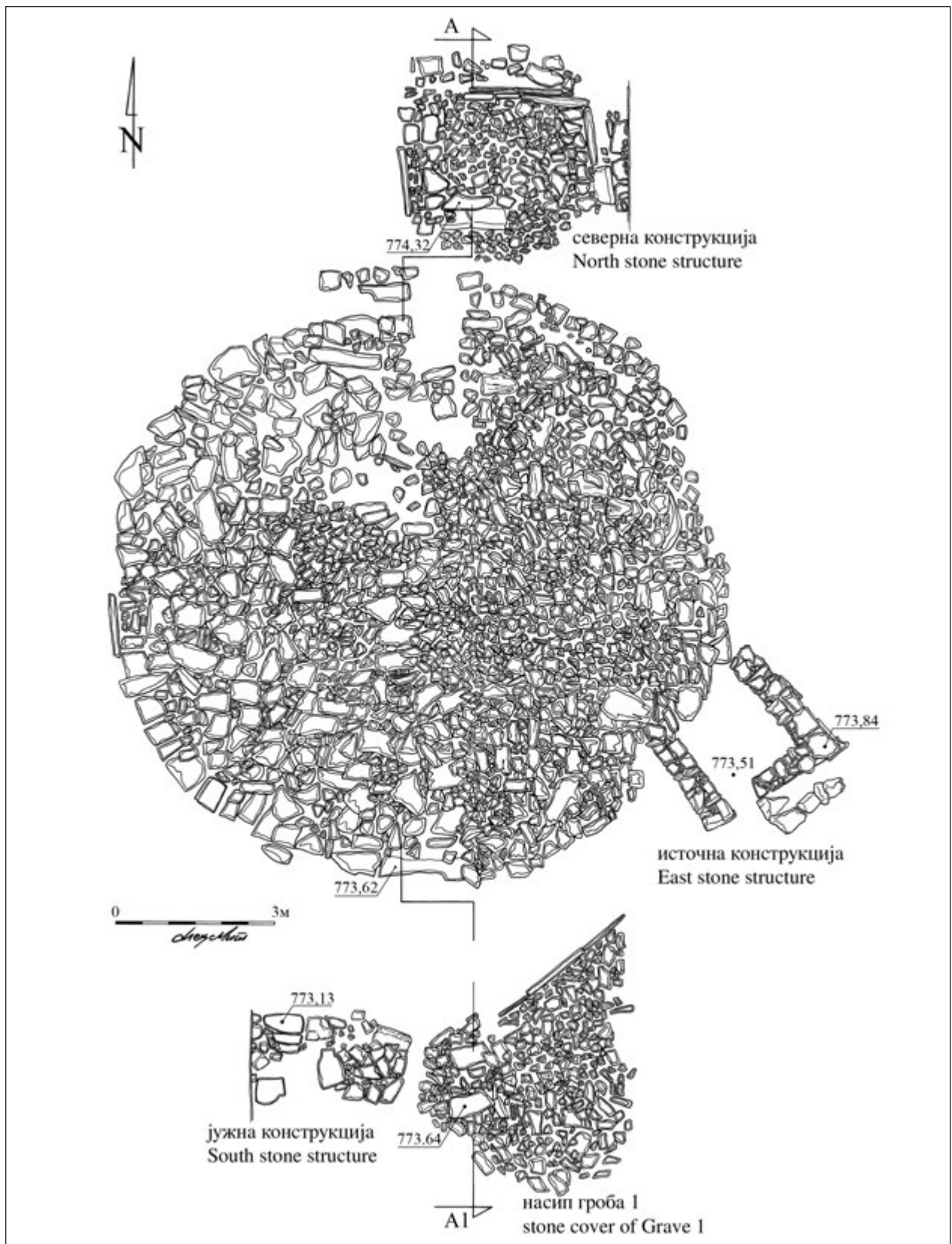


Fig. 1. Stone cover of tumulus 1 in Veprčani after cleaning

Сл. 1. Камени покривци тумула 1 (након чишћења) у Вејрчанима

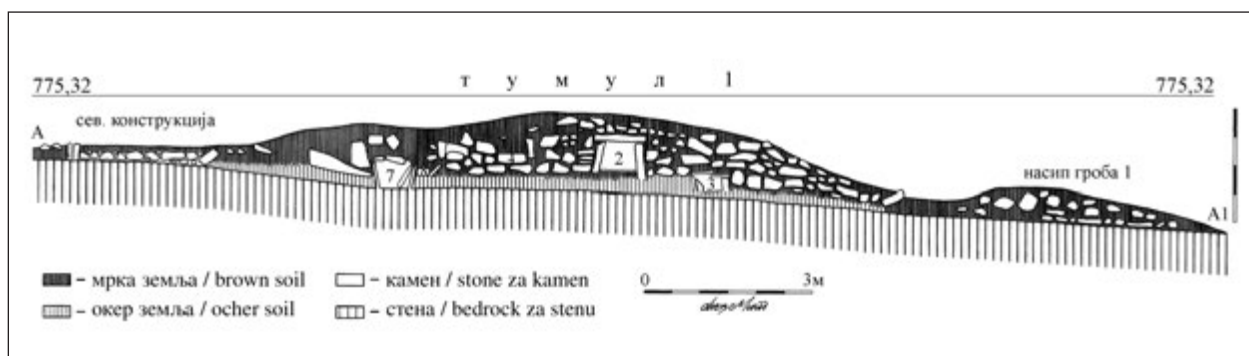


Fig. 2. North-south section of the tumulus

Сл. 2. Пресек тумула по правцу север–југ

have been the settlement of the population buried under these tumuli and the nearby tumuli at the site of Rado Rid.²

The tumuli at the site of Slamite are devastated to a considerable extent, due to the use of heavy machinery for the construction of the local road, in 2008. Rescue excavations of the tumuli were carried out in 2010 and 2012, when the most endangered tumulus 1 was explored.

ARCHITECTURE OF TUMULI AND FUNERARY STRUCTURES

Tumulus 1 is situated around 15–20 meters to the south of the local road and suffered the greatest damage in its north-western section. The outline of a rather large structure made of stone slabs was encountered to the north of tumulus, while to the south, there was a fairly small earthen mound of broken stones, with a smaller stone structure buried in its southeast section. The tumulus was of a symmetrical circular shape, 11.4 metres in diameter and approximately 0.9 metres high. It is probable that, judging by the stone recorded around the tumulus, it was originally slightly higher and the stones shifted due to erosion. It is particularly conspicuous where the enclosing wall or circle is concerned, where stone remained in its original position (fig. 1, 13).

The base of the tumulus rests on rock where around a 0.25 m thick layer of hard ochre coloured earth had been deposited (fig. 2). In the central zone of the tumulus were encountered large stone blocks, while the remaining mound consisted of amorphous stone or somewhat smaller stone slabs with small broken stones and pebbles. The tumulus was then covered with loose brown

soil, which was preserved only in some sections of the tumulus, particularly on the periphery.

After removing the tumulus cover, the enclosing wall (circle), which was made of smaller and larger broken stones and, in a few places, half-dressed stone blocks, was discovered resting on the mentioned layer of ochre packed earth. The stones were arranged in one or two courses, making a symmetrical, flat wall on the outside in the north and southwest section, while in the west and southeast it is poorly preserved, as a result of it having been made of smaller broken stones (fig. 3). The thickness of that wall is 0.6–0.9 m and its height varies between 0.25 and 0.70 m. A small portion of the wall is preserved at about 0.4–0.7 m to the north of the circle. It is made of small broken stones and pebbles in one or two courses, 0.30–0.55 m thick and up to 0.1–0.3 m high. Remains of the wall (the circle of the earlier tumulus) are preserved in the northeast and west segment of the tumulus, and the area between the circle of the tumulus and these ‘walls’ is paved with stone slabs at approximately the same level.

Investigations revealed nine funerary structures, eight of which were within the tumulus (graves 2–9), while one was out of the tumulus, around 3–4 meters to the southeast of the stone circle (grave 1).

It has been concluded, based on the discovered grave goods, i.e. grave offerings, that graves 1 and 4 are prehistoric burials, graves 2, 5, 7, 8 and 9 are antique graves and graves 3 and 6 are antique graves but they also contained prehistoric artefacts.³

² Миткоски 2010, 50. Т. XV

³ There will be more information regarding the chronological determination of the graves in the section concerning portable finds.

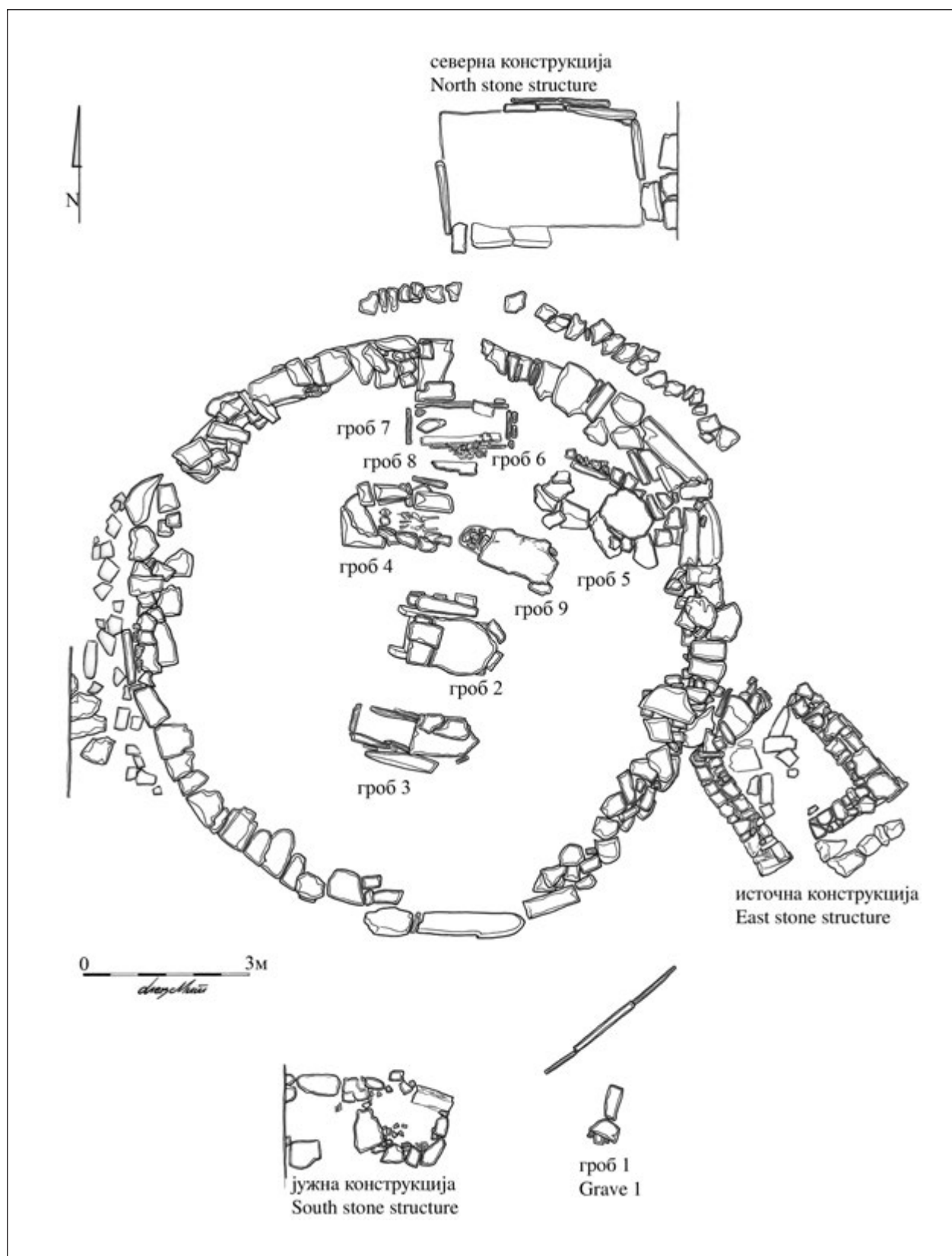


Fig. 3. Ground plan of tumulus after removing the cover

Сл. 3. Основа тумула након скидања насипа

The graves were of diverse structure and rituals, and the methods of interment were also different. Graves 2, 3, 7 and 8 are inhumation burials in cists made of stone slabs, two have structures of broken stones (graves 4, 5), grave 9 is carved into the rock, grave 6 consists of a dislocated grave association enclosed within stones and grave 1 contained the remains of a cremated individual.

The common feature of all the graves within the tumulus was the inhumation of the dead in an extended position and oriented in an east-west direction with a slight deviation.

The graves of the cist type had lateral sides made of one or more stone slabs and on the slabs from grave 7 were noticed traces of clay used as a bonding agent. All the cist graves had a covering slab or a few slabs, except grave 8 (figs. 5, 6, 9). The length of these stone cists varied between 1.7 and 2 meters and the width was 0.63 to 0.83 m, while the depth was 0.2 to 0.5 m. The inhumed remains of the deceased in the cists were not completely preserved and they were laid on the ground (graves 3 and 8), on rock (grave 7) or on a large stone slab, as in grave 2 (fig. 5). The deceased were buried in a supine position and, according to the position of the preserved arm bones, it could be concluded that the arms were placed on the chest or on the abdomen (graves 2, 7) (figs. 5, 9).

Funerary structures made of broken stone and partially dressed stone slabs were encountered in graves 4 and 5 and are partially damaged on the east and north-west side (fig. 3). The remains of the deceased in grave 4 were somewhat better preserved, and in both graves the deceased were laid in a supine position with the head towards the west or northwest (grave 5).

Only one grave (9) had been buried in a layer of hard ochre-coloured soil and then in the rock. The southeast segment of the grave was covered with a stone slab, while the other segment was filled with small pebbles. The deceased was inhumed in a supine position with the head towards the northwest. The dimensions of the grave are 1.7 x 0.4 x 0.2 m.

Possibly the most interesting discovery in the tumulus is grave 6, i.e. the grave association placed on the south longitudinal slab and on the covering slab of grave 7 (fig. 8.16). This dislocated grave assemblage was enclosed from the south within two rows of broken stone, from the east were a few quite large stone blocks and from the north just one stone. The skull of the deceased was placed in the east section of the structure and to the west of the skull were the long bones of the deceased, gathered in a pile. The skull had been

protected from the north and east with thin stone slabs inserted vertically in the ground. An antique wheel-made jug was protected from the southeast with a vertically placed thin stone slab, placed at around 0.25 m to the northeast of the skull. A prehistoric hand-made two-handled beaker was found on the pile of bones, and to the southwest were discovered an antique bronze bracelet with open ends shaped like a serpent's head and a small bronze object.

The last grave, which is distinguished totally from the previous finds by its position (out of the tumulus) and funerary ritual (cremation) is grave 1, which was situated around 3 meters to the southeast of the tumulus (fig. 3). Above the grave, of whose structure two partially dressed stones remained, an agglomeration of small stones in an approximately circular shape (the remains of a tumulus mound?) were encountered which had been enclosed in the northwest with an almost 3 meter long wall made of vertically arranged thin stone slabs (figs. 1–3). The remains of the cremated individual, intensive soot and ash, one complete prehistoric double vessel, a fragment of a cylindrical pottery stand and a fragment of a hemispherical bowl were encountered to the east of the stone blocks (fig. 4). The vessels were not subsequently burned, indicating that they were placed in the grave after the cremation of the deceased on the pyre. A large number of fragments of prehistoric hand-made pottery, as well as stone tools have been found beneath and within a stone mound, 5 x 4 meters in size, which covered grave 1.

Stone structures of unknown purpose were encountered next to and around the tumulus. Around 0.9 m to the north of the tumulus was a rectangular stone structure 2.65 x 2.50 m in size and its greatest depth was 0.35 m (figs. 12, 15). It was made of stone slabs and oriented in an east-west direction. The structure was filled with one layer of densely packed stone slabs and small and large stones, mostly pebbles, which also spread outside the structure walls in an area between the structure and the north tumulus circle/ring. Under that layer of stone was a layer of hard brown soil with small stones, within which were discovered fragments of a hemispherical prehistoric bowl made of baked clay with two handles highly surmounting the rim (fig. 12/1). Under that layer was the bedrock.

A structure of arranged stone slabs of approximately rectangular form, 2.75 x 1.65 m in size and oriented in a west-east direction was encountered around 2.5 m to the south of the tumulus and around 2 meters west of the grave 1 (fig. 11). In the course of removing

the single layer of stone slabs of the structure, many fragments of a prehistoric cooking vessel of coarse material, along with miniature vessels of fine material were found in the layer of hard brown soil (fig. 11/1–4).

A rectangular stone structure, 3 x 2.85 m in size, which is adjacent to the enclosing wall (ring) of the tumulus, is situated to the east-southeast of the tumulus (fig. 14). The walls of the structure, around 0.5 meters thick, were made of stones (pebble and broken stone) and mud, and the whole structure was resting on the bedrock (figs. 2, 14). The greatest preserved height of the structure wall is around 0.6 meters. The entrance to the structure is 0.5 meters wide and is in the south-eastern corner of the building, while the floor is paved with stone slabs, which are preserved only in the north-western section of the structure. There is, in the north-western corner, a rather thick layer of reddish clay which partially covers the west wall as well as some of floor stone slabs. In front of the southeast wall of the structure another wall was erected, 1.55 meters long, 0.7 meters thick and around 0.4 m high. The space between the two walls is filled with brown soil.

The structure of tumulus 1 at the site of Slamite is unique in the Mariovo region. Tumulus 2 at the site of Dolinac in Strnovac, near Kumanovo had, however, been made in a similar way, and is dated to the end of the Bronze Age and the beginning of the transition period.⁴

The double walls, i.e. the tumulus circles/rings, were also encountered in tumulus 12 at Belotic⁵, as well as in tumulus 3 at the site of Tri Dabici in Kruševica (Macedonia), which are also dated to the Bronze Age.⁶ Similar tumulus structures dating from the Bronze Age⁷ have been registered in western Serbia and also in Albania.⁸

Nevertheless, burial under tumuli is not characteristic of the Bronze Age in Macedonia and it does not appear before the transition period, approximately at the same time as the custom of cremating the dead.⁹ It is considered that the earliest tumuli in Macedonia are those from the necropolis of Visoi at Beranci, which also contain inhumed individuals in stone cists and are approximately contemporary with the tumuli in the south, in Vergina.¹⁰

Graves with cists under tumuli were also recorded in the closer vicinity (Čanište, Kruševica, Rapes),¹¹ as well as in north-eastern Macedonia (Orlova Čuka, Gorno pole, Babite)¹², Albania¹³ and western Serbia,¹⁴ while in the village of Orizari large Roman tumuli have been investigated and smaller Iron Age tumuli with graves in stone cists were discovered in their bases.¹⁵

Graves with structures made of broken stone, like graves 4 and 5 in Veprčani, are very frequent finds in tumuli in the immediate vicinity¹⁶ and in Pelagonia¹⁷, but also in the central Vardar basin and the Bregalnica valley.¹⁸

Rectangular structures around the tumuli are not common in tumulus architecture in the given period in Macedonia. In the course of exploring tumulus 1 at the site of Dolinac in Strnovac, one small stone paved platform was recorded in the south section, beyond the stone circle. Fragments of pottery vessels, animal bones and charcoal were discovered there, leading the author to assume that the platform was used for certain funerary rituals.¹⁹

A similar structure of circular shape, surrounded by a ring/circle of large pebbles and filled with smaller pebbles was encountered at the site of Klučka near Skopje, and is dated to the beginning of the transition period.²⁰ A large amount of objects, including mostly fragments of pottery vessels, animal bones and river shells, were discovered within that structure. A stone structure of approximately rectangular shape was discovered in the western section of necropolis II at Gornja Stražava that was the burial place of the bearers of the Brnjica culture²¹ and dated to the period Br D–Ha A1.²²

4 Станковски 2008, 135, figs 1 and 2, drawings 1 and 2.

5 Гарашанин 1973, 256, fig. 7.

6 Миткоски А., 2010, 55–56, Plan 2.

7 Дмитривић 2009, 67–68, Т. 22–24.

8 Prendi, Bunguri 2008, 210–221, Fig. 14–19.

9 Mitrevski 2003, 50–52.

10 Митревски 1997, 103–104.

11 Миткоски А., 1999, 40, Т. II, photo p. 53, 55, 57, 59–61; Миткоски А., 2002, 8, Т. I–VI, Т. X; Mikulčić 1966, 14, Т. III/6; Василева 1993, 75, figs. 3–6, 8, 9.

12 Пашић, Винчић 1972, 131, fig.3; Микулчић 1961, 49–50, Pl., 4/3, Т. I/6, Т. II/3.

13 Prendi, Bunguri 2008, Fig. 16.

14 Дмитривић 2009, Т. 25–28.

15 Санев 1978, 9, Pl. 2, 3; Митревски 1990, 68, drawing 3.

16 Миткоски 1999, 38, Т. I, plan 2, photo p. 51; Миткоски 2002, 9, Т. IV.

17 Mikulčić 1966, 15

18 Микулчић 1961, 49–51, pl. 3, 4; Гарашанин М. и Д. 1959, 24–27, Pl. VIII; Митревски 1997, 92–96; Нацев, Јованов 1996, 46–48, fig. 2, drawing 1.

19 Станковски 2008, 139–140.

20 Митревски 1995, 64, 70, figs. 2, 3, Plan 1.

21 Крстић 1992, 236, Т. II.

22 Лазић 1996, 145–153; Стојић 2001, 45–46; Булатовић, Станковски 2012, 133, 305–312.

It is worth mentioning that at that very necropolis a pin with a nail-shaped head, identical to the one found next to grave 1 at Veprčani, was also found, and this will be discussed in the following pages. Similar structures made of river pebbles or dressed stone slabs were recorded in the village of Orešane, near Skopje as well as at the necropolis with cremation burials at Donja Brnjica.²³

The phenomenon of using tumuli during several periods is common practice in neighbouring Albania, where burying in tumuli could have been carried out during four, or even more, different periods. Thus, the earliest horizon of interment in the tumulus in Burrelit, in central Albania dates from the transition period from the Bronze to the Iron Age (11th–9th century BC) and relates to a smaller central burial barrow, while in the three ensuing periods the barrow expands and the latest period of interment dates from the Late Roman period (3rd–4th century), as is also the case with the tumulus at Veprčani.²⁴

A similar situation was recorded in the tumuli in Barça, in south-eastern Albania where the earliest small central tumulus (tumulus I) was enlarged over the course of time and was finally surrounded by a new stone circle in the Late Bronze Age and in the transition period.²⁵

Additionally, the tumuli from the Dukat necropolis in south-western Albania consisted of a central grave with a barrow (in the first barrow, from the Early Bronze Age, in the second, the transition period), around which a necropolis under a large tumulus was subsequently established, while the latest interment horizon dates from the Roman period (tumulus I), and the medieval period.²⁶

However, in those tumuli in Albania dating from approximately the same time as the tumulus in Veprčani, the deceased had been mostly buried in grave pits surrounded by stones and rarely in cists, while the most frequent position of the dead was a crouched position on one side. Also, these tumuli do not have a stone structure surrounding the barrow like the tumulus in Veprčani, and they mostly have a central grave, so direct parallels regarding the structure of the tumuli could not be established.

The successive use of tumuli during several periods has also been recorded in south-western Serbia (Radoinja), where three horizons of interment have been confirmed in one tumulus – Eneolithic, Late Roman and medieval burials.²⁷

Funerary structures shaped like stone cists have been encountered in Macedonia since the advanced Bronze Age (Markova Sušica), but the skeleton in that grave

was in a crouched position on the right side. A similar manner of interment (stone cists with crouched skeletons) was also recorded in Prilep (Varoš).²⁸ Burying in stone cists within the tumuli had also been practiced in northern Greece²⁹ and western Serbia³⁰ and a similar situation was encountered in neighbouring Albania, where it was practiced since the Early Bronze Age.³¹ Stone cists were also used in Macedonia in the Roman period, but without tumuli (Demir Kapija)³²

Stone cists and stone in general as the material for funerary structures are not, however, essential indicators of ethnic origin, spiritual heritage or so called chronological indicators, but they should, rather, be understood as functional material resulting from the natural characteristics of the terrain where the necropoleis were located.³³ Hence, establishing wider analogies or cultural relationships on the basis of funerary structures is highly unreliable.

PORTABLE FINDS WITHIN GRAVE ASSOCIATIONS AND DATING³⁴

In **grave 1**, many fragments of a hemispherical vessel with thin burnished walls, a strap handle with a saddle-shaped top and highly surmounting the rim have been found with the remains of a cremated individual (fig. 4/2). In the same grave was found a double vessel with a burnished surface, two globular bodies

²³ Ристов 1997, 155; Srejić 1959–60, 102.

²⁴ Kurti 1977–78, 172.

²⁵ Andrea 1985, 218–229.

²⁶ Bodinaku 2001–2002, 9–24, 77–100.

²⁷ Zotović 1985, 27, fig. 3. Tumulus with graves from Late Bronze Age and Iron Age was also encountered at Delimedje at Pešter (Лазих 1996, 9–11).

²⁸ Митревски 1997, 21–23.

²⁹ Maniatis, Ziota 2011, 461, figs. 3, 4.

³⁰ Дмитровић 2009, Т. 25–28; Zotović 1985, 30–37.

³¹ Prendi, Bunguri 2008, 208–216.

³² Јовановић 1984, 136.

³³ In Novo Selo near Trgovište that is even today known for stone slabs used as building material at the site Crkvene Njive was recorded grave from the Bronze Age, with urn encircled by stone slabs. In the immediate vicinity are Hellenistic and Antique necropoleis with graves also made of identical slabs (Булатовић 2007, 242–243), while on other side of the village at the site Kupene Njive was encountered Late Antique grave with structure made of very same slabs (Bulatović 2008, 205), which speaks in favor of this thesis.

³⁴ For detailed description of funerary structures see the first part of this work.

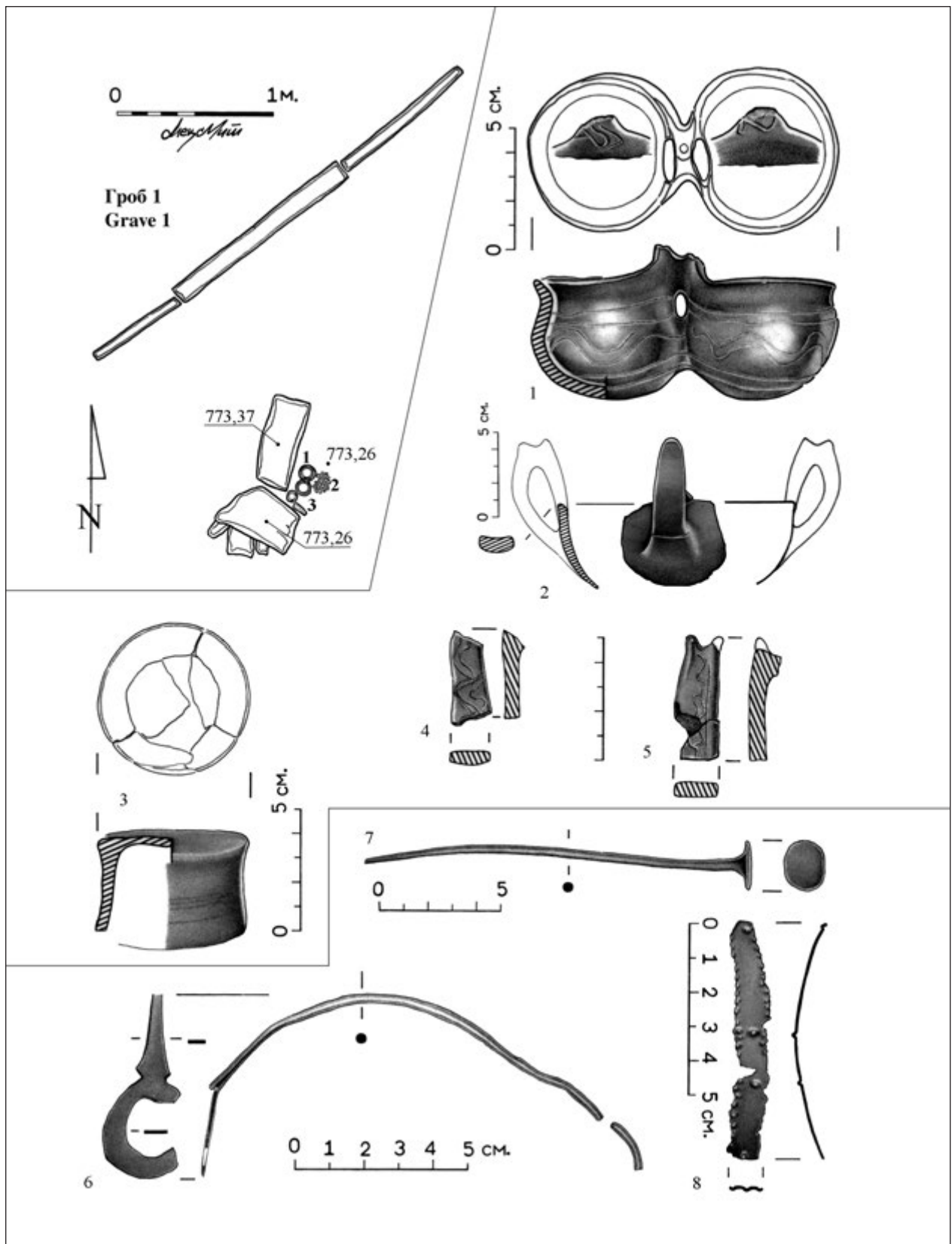


Fig. 4. Grave 1, with grave goods (1–5), finds immediately next to the grave (6–8)

Сл. 4. Гроб 1, са прилозима (1–5), налази непосредно поред гроба (6–8)

with a slight S profilation and joined the by bellies and rims; the upper part of the handle is missing. The vessel is decorated with engraved horizontal and wavy lines and the root of the handle was decorated on the outside with engraved ornaments (fig. 4/1, T. IV/1). A cylindrical vessel with thin walls and a burnished surface of ochre colour with traces of matt red paint was also found in grave 1 (fig. 4/3, T. IV/2). It is customary Late Mycenaean painted decoration consisting of horizontal lines.³⁵ Inside the grave were also discovered two strap handles decorated with engraved wavy lines, with one of them having its top shaped like two small horns resembling handles with a fan-shaped top characteristic of the Brnjica culture in the south Morava valley (figs. 4/4, 5).

Arched handles with a saddle-shaped top on hemispherical vessels are known from the Morava valley (phases Ib and Ic by M. Stojić),³⁶ but also from Albania (Maliq III d1)³⁷, and the double vessel shape has been recorded in the lower Vardar valley,³⁸ Albania³⁹, but also in the Morava valley⁴⁰ and the Danube basin⁴¹ and is generally dated to the Late Bronze Age and the transition period.

The cylindrical vessel was most probably used as a stand for a vessel (perhaps a hemispherical bowl) and such stands are known from the graves of the Žuto Brdo–Girila Mare and Vatin cultures.⁴²

Grave 2, the cist of stone slabs under the tumulus, contained just one wheel-made jug with a trefoil mouth (oinochos) and a concave base that was placed next to the legs of the deceased (fig. 5/1). This jug type with a very pronounced lower body has been found in the 4th century tomb in Jagodin Mala, in Niš,⁴³ while M. Todorovska identifies this jug type as type 5, which was used for a long time in the Roman culture.⁴⁴

A similar jug type with a concave base and pronounced lower body, but with the upper part of the neck and the rim shaped like a glass (fig. 6/1), was found by the legs of the deceased in **grave 3**, which was made of stone slabs in a cist shape. These jugs are classified as type 7 by M. Todorovska and they appeared in Macedonia until the late 6th century.⁴⁵ Such a jug type with a taller body was found in the tumulus in Burrel in Albania, where Late Roman interments were also encountered besides prehistoric burials.⁴⁶

Also in grave 3, in the chest area, a fragment of bronze spring wire was found (*saltaleon*) (fig. 6/2). These were frequently used in the Bronze and Iron Age and are chronologically irrelevant finds but undoubtedly date from prehistoric times.

Grave 4 was a structure of broken stone, and a hand-made globular vessel with a low body, a rather short conical neck and four vertically perforated tongue-shaped handles on the shoulder was found next to the head of the deceased in the grave (fig. 6a/1). The vessel was made of refined clay, well fired and with a burnished surface of ochre colour. It is a local variant of alabastron, a vessel shape originating from the south and is a copy of Late Mycenaean shapes.⁴⁷ They are very frequent in Macedonia in the Late Bronze Age and the transition period (Manastir, Ulanci, Vodovrati etc.)⁴⁸, and this type of vessel was discovered in horizon 14b in Kastanas, as well as at Kamenska Čuka in the Strumica valley, with both sites dating from the Late Bronze Age.⁴⁹

The structure of **grave 5** was made of broken stones and the concave base of a wheel-made vessel was found by the side of the deceased, while in the left hand area there was a fragmented silver earring (fig. 7/1, 2). The earring was made of thin silver wire of circular section, shaped into a hoop and decorated with shallow

³⁵ Митревски 1997, 55.

³⁶ Stojić 1986, T. 8/12, 14/13.

³⁷ Prendi 1982, Abb. 7/3.

³⁸ Kastanas, layers 14b, 12 (Hochstetter 1984, Taf. 44/1, 82/8). It is interesting that engraved motif on the handle of double vessel almost entirely identical to the motif on a vessel handle from layer 14b at Kastanas (Hochstetter 1984, Taf. 52/7).

³⁹ Петрова 1996, 70, 71–72, 75, 83, 91, 94, T. XXIX r. 90, T. XXVI r. 10, T. XXVII r. 22; Bodinaku 2001–2002, T. IX/1; Andrea 1985, T. II/4 (grave 10), IV/4 (grave 22), X/1 (grave 90). All those graves where have been found double vessels of almost identical shape as vessel from Veprčani come from tumulus 1 at Barča and are dated to the periods from 12th–8th centuries BC.

⁴⁰ Stojić 1986, T. IV/7, 8; Булатовић, Станковски 2012, T. VII/26; XXXV/1.

⁴¹ Бронзано доба Србије, кат. бр. 178/7; Крстић 2003, T. XXIII/1.

⁴² Бронзано доба Србије, кат. бр. 53/15, 75, 76, 185, 186/2; Лазич 1997, сл. 16.

⁴³ Gordana Jeremić from the Institute of Archaeology in Belgrade, director of investigations at that site (personal communication).

⁴⁴ Ончевска-Тодоровска 2010 а, 76; Јанакиевски 2001, 232, T. LXVIII.

⁴⁵ Ончевска-Тодоровска 2010 а, 76.

⁴⁶ Kurti 1977–78, T. XV/1 (grave 72).

⁴⁷ Митревски 1997, 55, fig. 14.

⁴⁸ Јовчевска 2008, 91, T. XXII; Видески 2006, 66, fig. 3, T. III, 1, 2, 3, T. IV, 2, 3; Митревски 1997, 55, fig. 14, 2.

⁴⁹ Hochstetter 1984, Taf. 43/5; Stefanovich, Bankoff, 1998, 279–282, fig. 27.

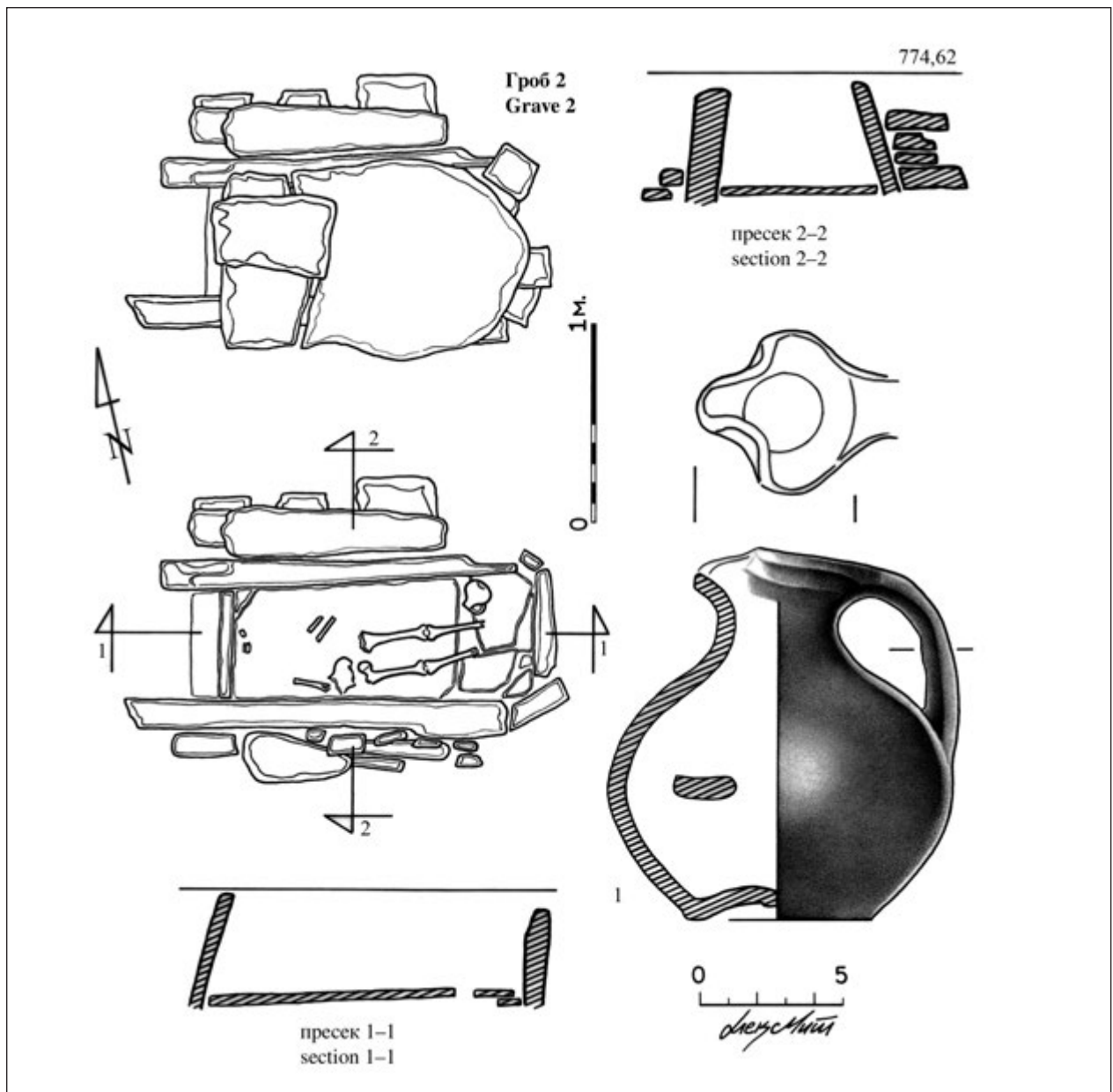


Fig. 5. Grave 2, before and after removing covering slabs and grave good (1)

Сл. 5. Гроб 2 (с покровним плочама и без њих) и гробни прилози (1)

engraved parallel lines in two places. Similar earrings (type 1, variant I2, by I. Popović) with one end finishing in a hook and ornamented with two engraved lines had been in use from the 1st to the 4th century, and hoop-shaped earrings also continued into the 5th century.⁵⁰

Grave 6 is a dislocated grave association surrounded by broken stones that contained the remains of one person. A bronze object made of wire of square section and with twisted ends finishing in a knot was found to the west of the skull (fig. 8/2). On the forearm was found

a bronze bracelet with open ends finishing in a serpent's heads depicted in profile and with perforated eyes (fig. 8/4, T. IV/6). The body of the bracelet is of square section and the neck of circular section. Next to the bracelet was a hand-made beaker standing on the bottom, with two handles with fan-shaped tops, an obliquely

⁵⁰ Поповић 1996, 16, cat. no. 9; Ananiev 1994, cat. nos. 277, 278, 279.

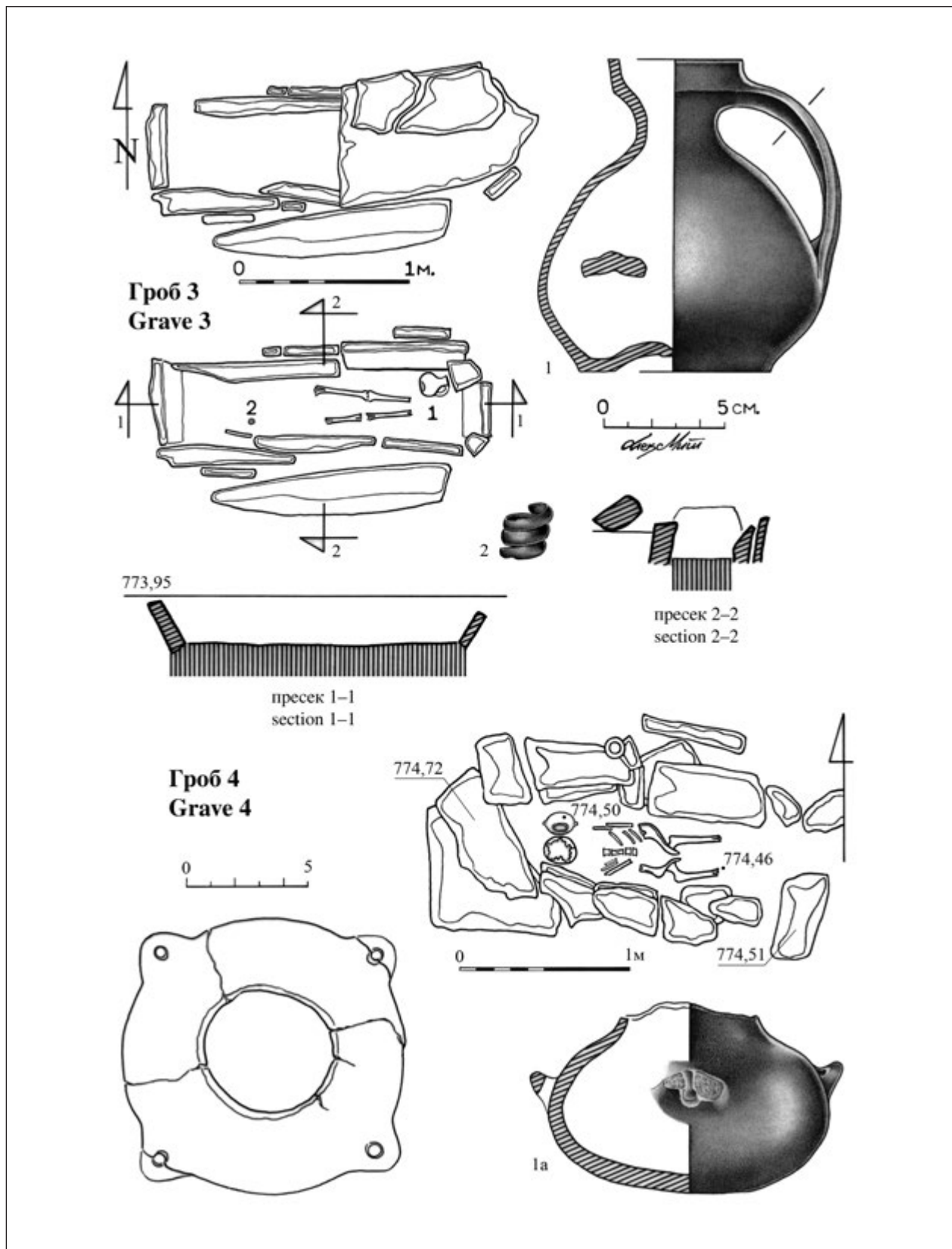


Fig. 6. Grave 3, before and after removing covering slabs and finds from the grave (1, 2); grave 4 and grave good (1a)

Сл. 6. Грoб 3 (с покрoвним плoчaмa и бeз њих) и нaлaзи из грoбa (1, 2); грoб 4 и грoбни прoлoи (1a)

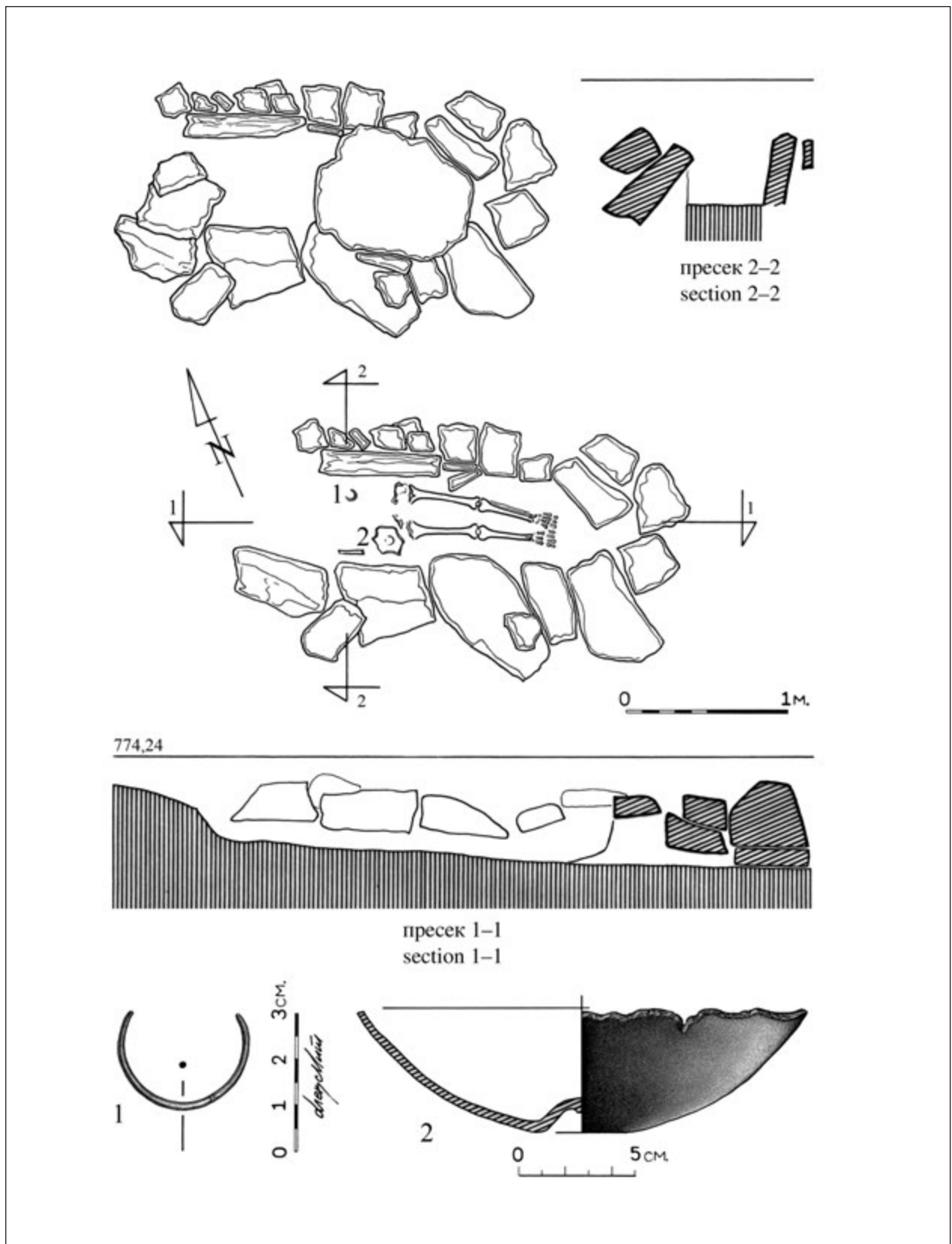


Fig. 7. Grave 5, before and after removing covering slabs and finds from the grave (1, 2)

Сл. 7. Гроб 5 (с покрвним плочама и без њих) и налази из гроба (1, 2)

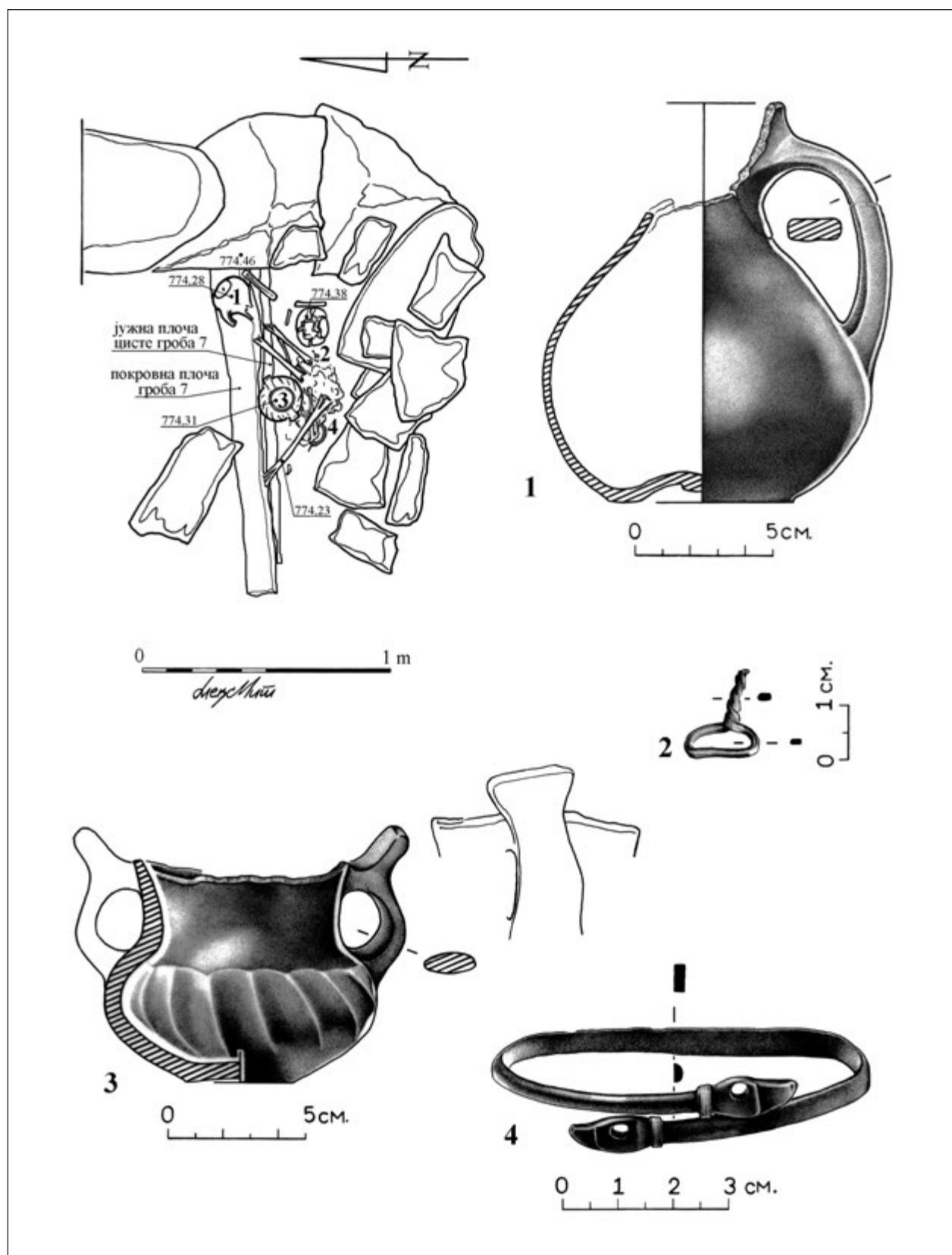


Fig. 8. Grave 6 (dislocated grave association) and finds from the grave (1–4)

Сл. 8. Гроб 6 (дислоцирана гробна садржина) и налази из гроба (1–4)

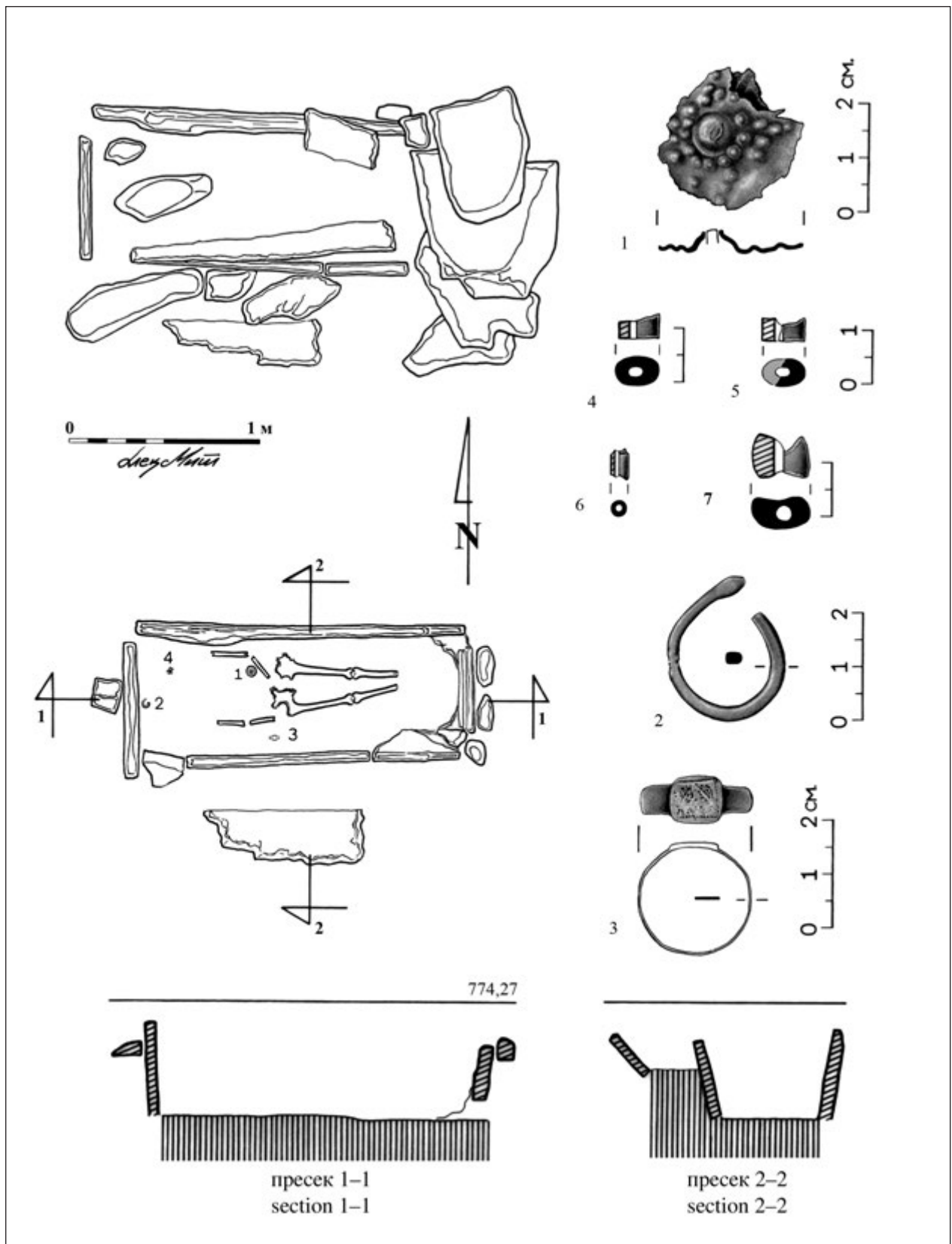


Fig. 9. Grave 7, before and after removing covering slabs and finds from the grave (1–7)

Сл. 9. Гроб 7 (с покрвним плочама и без њих) и налази из гроба (1–7)

channelled body and a burnished surface (fig. 8/3, T. IV/4). A wheel-made jug with a concave base, lying on the side, was found next to the skull, to the northeast (fig. 8/1). The jug resembles other jugs from the necropolis and a bracelet with a similar stylised representation of a serpent's head was found at a 3rd to 4th century cremation necropolis in the vicinity of Bosilegrad, however the heads are not perforated.⁵¹ Nevertheless, serpents' heads as ends of bracelets are known already from the Iron Age but are mostly depicted en face and continued until the Middle Ages.⁵² In the time of the Roman domination of these regions, bracelets with ends shaped as a serpent's head appear in the 2nd century as a Hellenistic component inherited from the Iron Age, and are also very frequent finds in the Late Roman period.⁵³

Pyriform beakers as well as arched handles with fan-shaped tops are characteristic of the Brnjica culture in the south Morava basin⁵⁴, as is obliquely channelled ornaments on the body of the vessels.⁵⁵ The stylistic and typological characteristics of the beaker are typical of the Morava basin in the Late Bronze Age, i.e. in the period of transition from the Bronze to the Iron Age, as is the cremation of the dead as a ritual, which previously had not been practiced in Macedonia. It is interesting that an almost identical vessel was found in grave 133 in tumulus 1 at Barča that has been dated between the 12th and 8th centuries BC.⁵⁶

A bronze object with the representation of a serpent's head, similar to that in the previous grave, was also found in **grave 7**. In this case it is an earring with open-ends, made of bronze wire of rectangular section, with one end modelled in such a way (fig. 9/2, T. IV/8). The earring was found in the west section of the cist grave, next to the stone slab above the head of the deceased. Similar pendants shaped as the letter S, with ends shaped as serpents' heads have been encountered in the area of Roman Dardania, and dated to the Late Roman times.⁵⁷

A fragment of an appliqué made of sheet bronze and decorated by embossing was recorded next to the left forearm (fig. 9/1). A finger ring made of sheet silver with the head shaped as a rectangular plate and the shoulder decorated with engraved motifs was discovered next to the right forearm, in the south section of the grave (fig. 9/3, T. IV/7). This type of finger ring was common in the first half of the 4th century⁵⁸ and was distributed throughout the Balkans. It has also been recorded in Sucidava, Beška, Scupi, Drezga and, at all these sites, was dated to the 3rd–4th centuries.⁵⁹

In grave 7 where, according to the position of other bones, the head should have been, four fragmented small beads made of blue and red glass paste were discovered. Such beads are actually frequent finds in Roman graves (fig. 9/4–7, T. IV/5).

Grave 8 is identified as a disturbed stone structure probably destroyed by the burial in grave 7. The remains of the deceased in grave 8 are most probably grave 6, because grave 8 actually consists of the remains of the funerary structure from which the deceased was dislocated (grave 6), most probably as a result of the construction of grave 7.

In the north-western section of **grave 9**, which was carved into the rock, an illegible, damaged bronze coin was discovered, while two jugs were encountered by the legs of the deceased in the eastern section of the grave. Both have a low spherical body and a concave base and one of them has the upper section of the neck and rim shaped like a glass, while the neck and rim of the other are missing (fig. 10/1, 2). This jug type was discussed in the previous section of this article when it was concluded that they most probably date from the Late Roman period.

The largest amount of finds outside the tumulus was discovered to the southeast of the tumulus, in the stone cover above grave 1. Besides pottery fragments, stone tools were found, along with many fragments of small pottery tiles of a rectangular shape and a few bronze objects. The bronze objects were found together in the furthest south-eastern section of this cover next to one pebble, so it is assumed that they came from the destroyed grave.

The bronze finds include a pin with a nail-shaped head (*Nagelkopfnadeln*), 15.9 cm long and with a head diameter of around 2.5 cm (fig. 4/7), fragments of a

⁵¹ Митровић 2010, cat. no. 67.

⁵² Лахтов, Кастелиц 1957, 62/3, Т. II/9, Т. IV/36, Т. VII/68; Бабиќ 1986, 282, drawing 61/2, 33, 62/9, 63/1; Манева Е., 1990, 173, Т. I, 3, cat. no. 3.

⁵³ Jovanović 1978, 23–25, figs. 23–32.

⁵⁴ Стојић 2001, Т. IX/1, 8, XIX/15; Булатовић, Станковски 2012, Т. XL/3, Т. LXIII/53.

⁵⁵ Булатовић, Станковски 2012, Т. XIX/6; XXVII/43, 51, 53, Т. XXVIII/64, 67, Т. LVIII/74.

⁵⁶ Andrea 1985, 230, Т. XIV/1.

⁵⁷ Jovanović 1978, figs. 154–156.

⁵⁸ Роровиќ 1999, 110, 111, fig. 58/12.

⁵⁹ Јанковић 1986., fig. 738; Даутова-Рушевљан 1995, 246–247, Т. II/9; Ончевска-Тодоровска 2010, 285/6, fig. 6; Николовски 2001, 62, fig. on p. 61.

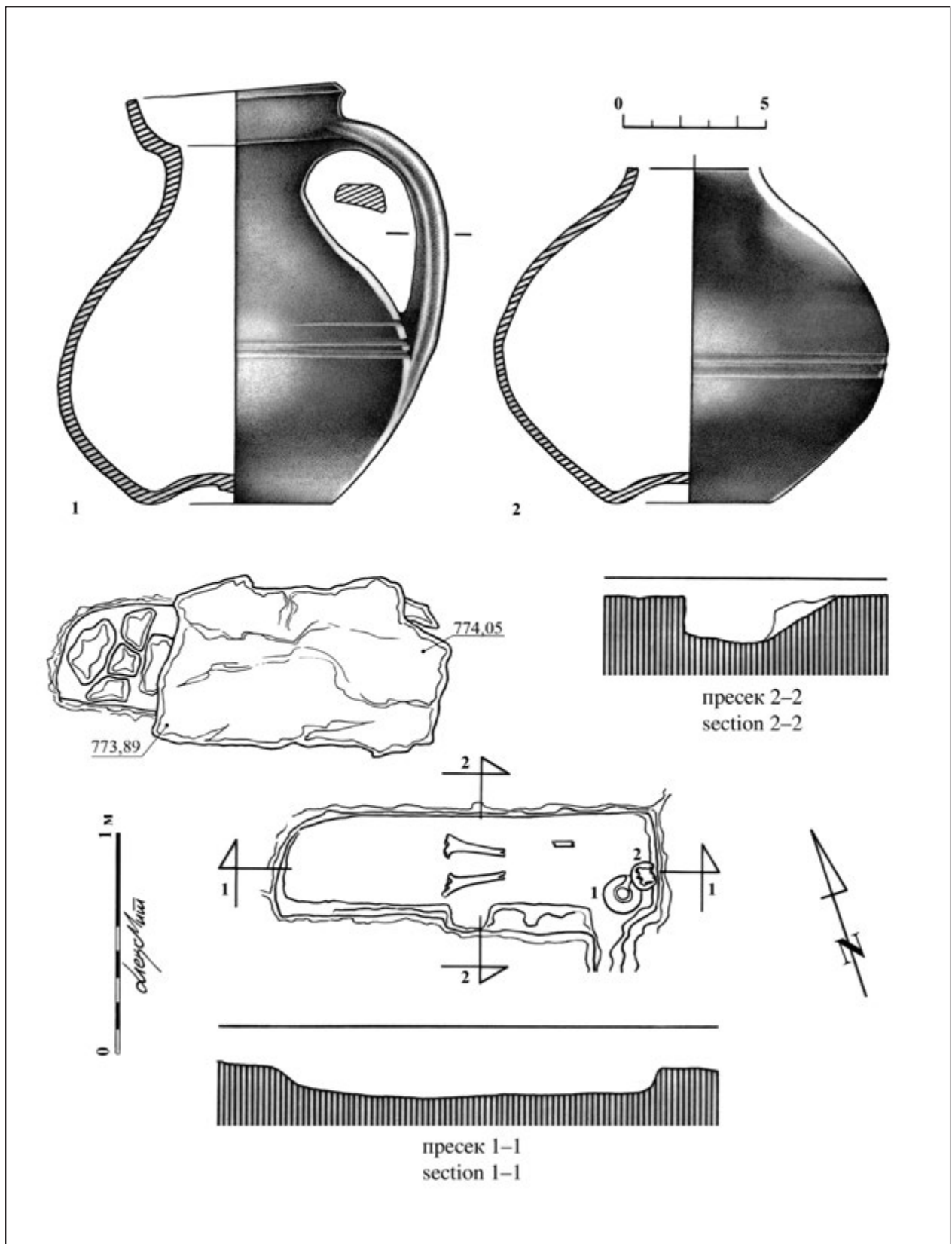


Fig. 10. Grave 9, before and after removing covering slabs and finds from the grave (1, 2)

Сл. 10. Гроб 9 (с покривном плочом и без ње) и налази из гроба (1, 2)

necklace (?) of thin sheet bronze decorated by embossing, 7.1 cm long, around 0.9 cm wide and 0.1 cm thick (fig. 4/8) and an object (hairpin?) made of bronze wire of circular section with a flat head shaped like a wide ring (fig. 4/6). The upper segment of the pin's neck, next to the head, is reinforced using a deltoid enlargement. The head and neck are of a strap section, the length is 10.6 cm and the head diameter is around 2.5 cm.

A pin with a nail-shaped head is one of the most widely distributed pin types in the Late Bronze Age in central Europe the Balkans. The specimen from Veprčani, according to the typology by R. Vasić, was, however, of the type with a small head (*mit kleinem kopf*), which was distributed throughout the Balkans and dates from the end of the Late Bronze Age and the beginning of the transition period.⁶⁰

There are no direct analogies for the pin with its head shaped as a broad ring of strap section. A similar pin with a somewhat smaller ring-like head was recorded at the Middle Bronze Age necropolis in Dunaújváros, and a pin with its head shaped into concentric circles, also discovered in Hungary, dates from the same period.⁶¹

The fragment of a strap-shaped necklace (diadem) resembles a specimen from the Brgula hoard, which was dated to the transition period,⁶² and a similar find was encountered in the hoard from Donji Petrovci, dated to the Ha A1 period.⁶³

The most frequent pottery shapes from the stone mound above grave 1 are hemispherical bowls with a slanting, everted rim and a burnished surface (T. I/1, 3, III/3–7), and large vessels with a smoothed surface, thick walls and a long conical or cylindrical neck (T. I/2, 4, 5, 8, III/10–14). There were also sporadic finds of vessels with a long funnel-shaped neck and a smoothed surface, hemispherical vessels with a burnished surface, a hollow cylindrical foot of a vessel with a smoothed surface (T. I/10, III/ 8, 9, 15) and the narrow pointed base of a vessel decorated with engravings (T.I/15). Besides the pottery, a small ground stone axe was also found (chisel) (T.I/17).

Hemispherical and spherical bowls with a short or long neck and a slanting everted neck are known from the Early Bronze Age in Albania (Maliq IIIa),⁶⁴ and are also known in earlier times in the lower Vardar valley⁶⁵, where they last until the Iron Age (Kastanas)⁶⁶ or to the transition from the Bronze to the Iron Age (Albania).⁶⁷ The difference is, however, the fact that the above mentioned vessels are not decorated, while specimens from Veprčani are decorated with engraved motifs including inscribed triangles, horizontal or zigzag lines surround-

ed by incised dots. Those ornaments are recorded at the Late Bronze Age sites in the southern part of the south Morava valley and in northern Macedonia (Brnjica culture).⁶⁸

Also, large vessels with funnel-shaped or conical necks were decorated with such motifs, as well as with moulded bands with finger impressions or with finger impressions on the rim (T.III/14).

Rather interesting is the short cylindrical foot of the vessel, as this is not characteristic of this area. Similar feet have, however, been sporadically recorded at Kastanas⁶⁹, from the Early Bronze Age and rather frequently, at the same site, from the Late Bronze Age.⁷⁰ Similar narrow and oversized bases, which imitate a foot, are common features on Late Bronze vessels in western Serbia and are also sporadically recorded in the Morava basin.⁷¹ Narrow elongated bases are known from layers 14b and 12 (Late Bronze Age and transition period) at Kastanas.⁷²

Worth mentioning are fragments of two small slabs of baked clay, decorated with engraved lines or grooves (T. I/14, 16, IV/3). Similar slabs, although made of stone, were discovered in the necropoleis of the advanced and Late Bronze Age in the vicinity of Zaječar, in eastern Serbia.⁷³

An arched handle with a moulded cylindrical top is characteristic of the Late Bronze Age cultures in the south Morava basin, in particular in the Paraćin culture,⁷⁴ but it also appears in Albania and the lower

⁶⁰ Vasić 2003, 43, Taf. 55.

⁶¹ Bóna 1975, Abb. 12/11, Taf. 80/8.

⁶² Čović 1980, 45, T. IV/ 3.

⁶³ Поповић 1994, 25–35, T. XXIII/1.

⁶⁴ Prendi, Bunguri 2008, T. VIII/2, 4, 8, IX, X/6, 7.

⁶⁵ Aslanis 1985, Taf. 65/1, 69/2, 94/1.

⁶⁶ Hochstetter 1984, Taf. 3/2, 3, 66/

⁶⁷ Bodinaku 2001–2002, T. III/10, 12, 13, V/5; Andrea 1985, T. XVII/3, T. XXI; XXII/9.

⁶⁸ Митревски 1997, 112; Папазовска–Санев 2012, 25; Булатовић, Станковски 2012, T. XV/1–5; XXXVIII/22–27; LXIII/46–50, 53, LXIV/62, 63.

⁶⁹ Aslanis 1985, Taf. 80/5

⁷⁰ Hochstetter 1984, Taf. 24/10, 33/9, 10, 48/1, 4, 5.

⁷¹ Дмитровић 2009, T. 40/6, 41/1, 2, 5, 6, 42/1–5, 43/2, 3–5; Филиповић 2008, сл. 20–22, 27, 37, 46 etc.; Стојић 2001, T. VII/7, XV/12.

⁷² Hochstetter 1984, Taf. 44/9, 86/1.

⁷³ Срејовић, Лазивић 1997, fig. 36–38.

⁷⁴ Булатовић, Станковски 2012, T. III/21, VI/8, 11, VII/28, 30, XXII/7.

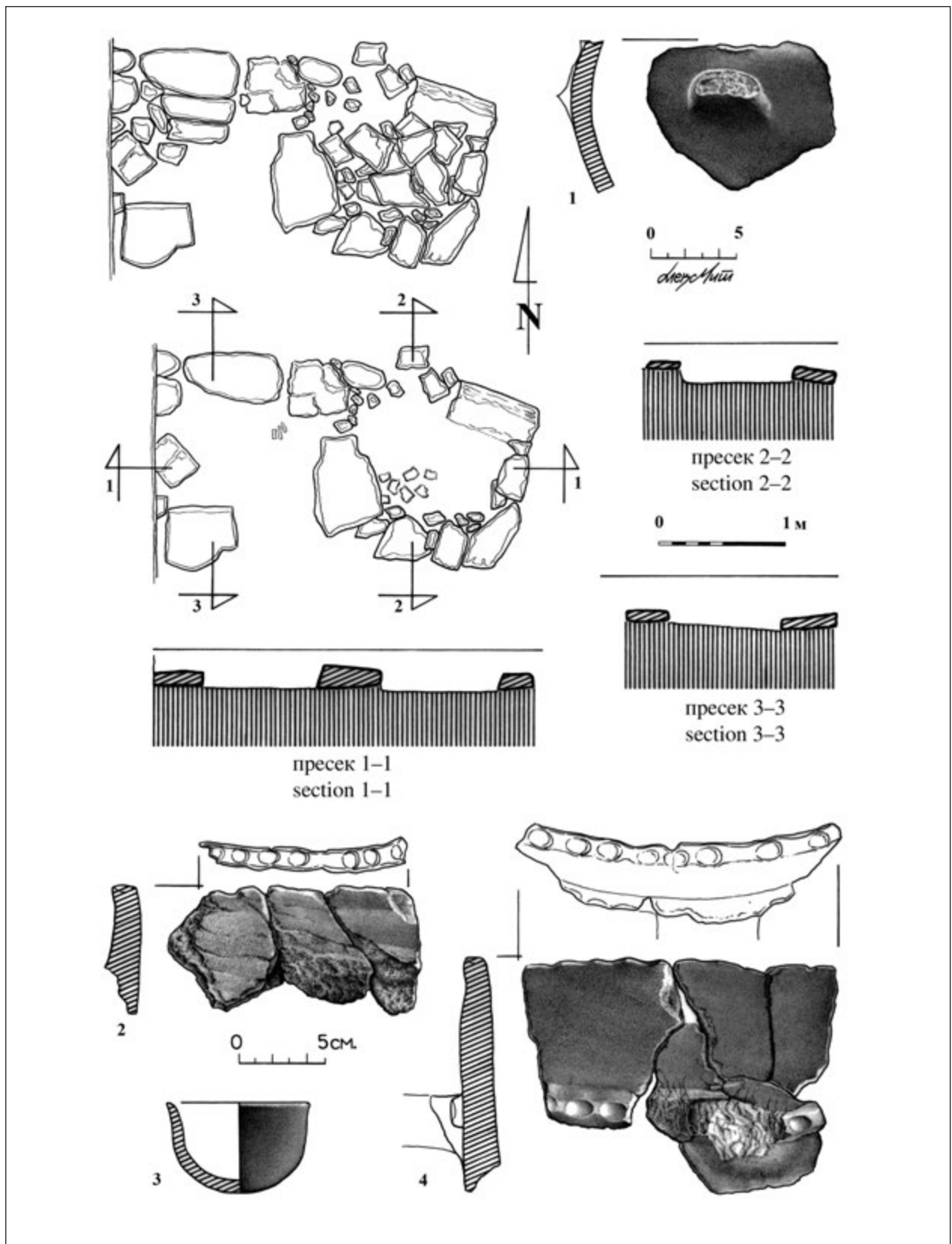


Fig. 11. South stone structure, with finds (1–4)

Сл. 11. Јужна камена конструија, са налазима (1–4)

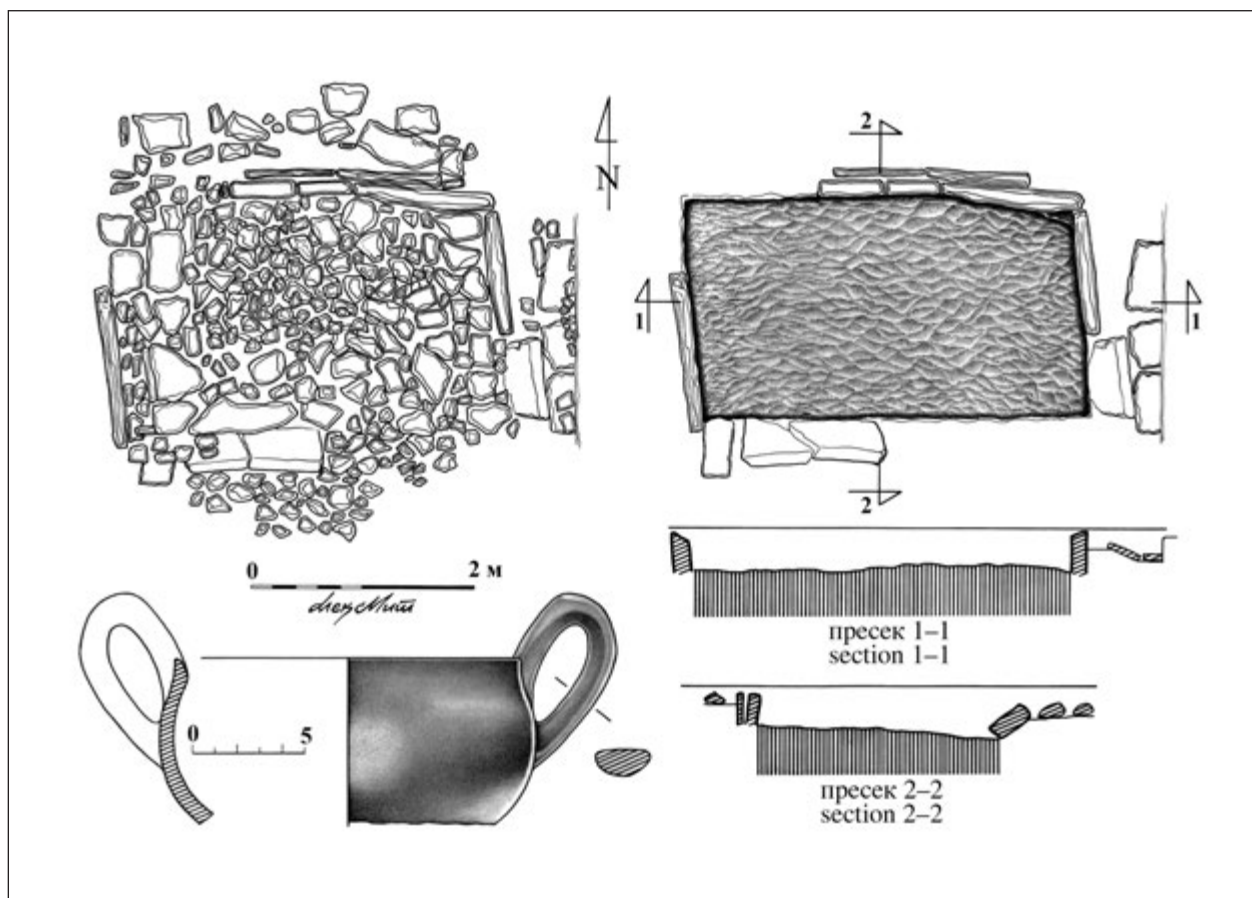


Fig. 12. North stone structure, with find (1)

Сл. 12. Северна камена конструкција, са налазом (1)

Vardar basin from the transition from the Bronze to the Iron Age.⁷⁵

A large quantity of pottery fragments was discovered in the tumulus cover and in the area between the graves as well as in the south segment of the tumulus, next to the stone circle/ring. A few fragments of diverse vessels were gathered together next to the stone circle including mostly hemispherical bowls with a burnished surface, large bowls with a cylindrical neck, large vessels with a long funnel-shaped or conical neck and a fragment of the pyraunos (T. II/9, 11, 12, III/22, 24).

Similar vessels including hemispherical bowls, vessels with long a funnel-shaped neck, spherical vessels with a slanting everted rim, pyriform beakers with two handles slightly above the rim, cups with a short cylindrical neck etc., were found in the tumulus cover (T. II/1–8, 10, 13, III/16–21, 23). Besides the pottery, ground stone tools and one conical, vertically perforated spindle whorl were also found (T. II/12, 13).

The vessels were decorated using various techniques; red matt painting on the spherical vessel (T. III/17), oblique grooves on the cup body (T. II/8, III/18), engraved lines depicting hanging triangles and spirals (T. II/1–6) and a series of cord impressions (T. II/7, III/21).

The two-handled beaker with strap handles (T. III/20) is characteristic in this area and more to the south, from the Early Bronze Age, i.e. the Armenochori culture, and the spherical vessel with a slanting everted rim (T. II/2, 3) could also be related to the earlier traditions in this region. The same could be concluded for matt painting and engraved spirals,⁷⁶ while cord

⁷⁵ Hochtetter 1984, Taf. 71/3, 102/3; Andrea 1985, T. XXV/2.

⁷⁶ Hochtetter 1984, Taf. 1/5, 6, 12, 5/7, 52/6. In Kastanas as well as in Kilindir, the motif of the spiral appears from the Middle Bronze Age (Heurtley 1939, 205, cat. 374).

impression ornaments are originally from the north but had been present in Pelagonia since the Eneolithic and into the Bronze Age,⁷⁷ so it is possible that such an ornament became an element of an autochthonous tradition. On the other hand, the corded ornament could have come to this area from the west, from Albania, where it was confirmed at the end of the Eneolithic and in the Bronze Age,⁷⁸ while there is a negligible possibility that it arrived from the central Balkans, i.e. the Morava basin, given that such ornamentation was unknown in that area in the Bronze Age.⁷⁹

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Analysis of the tumulus structure and the graves within it as well as the grave goods confirms, with certainty, that tumulus 1 in Veprčani was made in the Late Roman period, but at the location where a prehistoric tumulus previously existed. It is, however, not quite clear what the prehistoric tumulus looked like and what its size was and, by all appearances, grave 4 was within the tumulus. The only trace, which could help in defining the size of the prehistoric tumulus, is the above mentioned layer of hard packed ochre soil of even thickness deposited on the bedrock, which was probably some kind of tumulus foundation. This, so to say, foundation covered an area slightly wider than the present-day tumulus, so it could be assumed to have been the original perimeter of the prehistoric tumulus.⁸⁰ Grave 4 is the only preserved prehistoric grave, although it is not possible, considering the time span, to say with any certainty whether it was the only prehistoric grave or there were more within the tumulus, because other prehistoric artefacts in other graves (a fragment of *saltaleon* and a beaker with a channelled body) could have come from the partially damaged grave 4. The structure and orientation of grave 4 is almost identical to the Roman graves (graves 5 and 9) and differs only in the position of the grave offering (vessel), which was next to the head of the deceased and not by the legs, as is usual for all Roman graves in the tumulus.

The two-handed beaker with a channelled body, discovered on top of the dislocated grave association (grave 6), did not, perhaps, belong to another prehistoric grave but came from the damaged east section of grave 4, which had probably been destroyed by the interment in grave 9 (fig. 3). Concerning grave 8, which is represented by the segment of a stone structure bet-

ween graves 4 and 7 (fig. 3), it is, by all appearances, a Roman grave destroyed when grave 7 was constructed and the bones were gathered and placed on the stone structure of grave 7.⁸¹

Antique interventions on the tumulus could be also noticed in the various densities of the stone cover. Thus, burials in Roman graves (grave 7) in the prehistoric tumulus resulted in the north segment of the cover remaining considerably 'loose', while the east half of the tumulus, containing the remaining Roman graves, was covered with rather small stones. The west half of the tumulus, where there were no graves, was covered with larger stones and this might have been the original segment of the former prehistoric tumulus.

The stone structures around the tumulus certainly belong to the original tumulus, as exclusively prehistoric pottery was discovered in them and, as has already been mentioned, similar structures next to the tumuli or close to the graves are known from the Late Bronze Age and transition period in the Vardar basin, the Morava basin and in northern Macedonia. Their purpose is not completely clear but, according to certain analogies, they served a ritual purpose in the process of the interment of the dead.

The rather small circular structure made of small stones to the south-southeast of the tumulus is probably a smaller low tumulus (fig. 2) which lost its circular shape in the north section (fig. 1). In the cremation burial under the stone cover there were a few grave

⁷⁷ Bulatović 2014, 106, 122–124, Map. 1, 3, Fig. 2–8, 24; Миткоски 2010, 10, 1, Т. XI; Темелкоски 1999, 42–44, Т. III/1, 2.

⁷⁸ Bulatović 2014, 126–127, Map 3.

⁷⁹ Cord decoration (so-called litzén pottery) was characteristic of the Middle Bronze Age in the area of the Drava–Sava–Danube and in the Serbian Danube basin in the Late Bronze Age (Belegiš–Cruceni culture), while such decoration has not been recorded on the pottery from the Morava and the upper Vardar valley in that period.

⁸⁰ It covers the area between the south periphery of the stone circle and the south wall of the north stone structure, i.e., an area from the east stone structure to the external western circle.

⁸¹ During the deposition of the dislocated bones, care was taken to ensure the bracelet remained on the arm bone and for the jug to be in the eastern section of the grave, as in all Roman graves in the tumulus.

⁸² We must not disregard the possibility that the metal finds also belonged to grave 1 but were dislocated over the course of time. The same could be true of the stone structure around the grave.

⁸³ Bodinaku 2001–2002, 97; Andrea 1985, 219.

⁸⁴ See footnote 56.

⁸⁵ Митревски 1997, 106.

goods which, according to their stylistic and typological characteristics, could be dated to the Late Bronze Age or the beginning of the transition period. The metal finds, although discovered outside grave 1, are certainly grave goods, and could be dated to approximately the same period, indicating the existence of more graves at that location.⁸²

However, the question could be raised regarding the relationship between the cremation burial and the pre-historic inhumation burial within tumulus 1. Judging by the grave goods, they are almost contemporary, but tumuli or necropolises with bi-ritual interments have not been recorded so far in Macedonia. Such cases where, within one tumulus, cremation and inhumation burials were recorded are known from Albania (Dukat,

Barča),⁸³ so this parallel could explain the bi-ritual method of interment in Veprčani. The tumuli in Veprčani and in Barča are also connected by the beaker found in grave 6 that is almost identical to the specimen from grave 113 in Barča, with both being dated to the transition period.⁸⁴

It is considered that the first tumuli appeared in Macedonia, in particular in Pelagonia, at the beginning of the transition period as an influence from southeast Albania where tumuli as funerary structures are known from the earlier periods.⁸⁵ It seems that this method of interment spread quickly to the north, as a tumulus dating from approximately the same period as the earliest tumuli in Pelagonia was discovered in Strnovac, near Kumanovo. Additionally, a somewhat later tumulus from



Fig. 13. Tumulus 1 (in the background) and cover of grave 1 (tumulus?)

Сл. 13. Тумул 1 (у другом плану) и насип гроба 1 (тумул?)



Fig. 14. East stone structure

Сл. 14. Источна камена конструкција



Fig. 15. North stone structure

Сл. 15. Северна камена конструкција



Fig. 16. Grave 6

Сл. 16. Гроб 6

Vojnik, also near Kumanovo in northern Macedonia, was discovered earlier.⁸⁶

The situation whereby the prehistoric tumulus at Veprčani had been re-used by the population in the Roman times is not isolated in Macedonia (necropolis in Orizari), while in neighbouring Albania such cases are more frequent (Barça, Dukat, Burrel etc.). Therefore, it could be assumed, as it at least seems so at this stage of investigations, that these rituals reached Macedonia from the southwest and spread northward and eastward, avoiding the main natural communication routes.⁸⁷

The appearance of tumuli in Macedonia, in terms of the chronological aspect, corresponds with the appearance of cremation as a funerary ritual. The earliest cremation burials in Macedonia also date from the beginning of the transition period. They were not found under the tumuli; however, inhumation burials have been exclusively recorded under the barrows. Cremation as a funerary ritual seems to be more widely spread in Macedonia than burials under tumuli and it has also been recorded in the Vardar valley and eastern Macedonia (Stobi, Krivi Dol, Klučka). It seems, judging by the distribution of cremation burials, that this practice spread along the Vardar valley from the north, from Kosovo and the south Morava valley where, in the Late Bronze Age, the local population cremated their dead and deposited the remains in urns, often enclosed within a stone structure. The structure of grave 1 in Veprčani actually resembles the mentioned graves from the Brnjica culture and portable finds in the grave (handles with horn-like tops, an urn stand, and pins) have parallels in the Late Bronze cultures in the Danube basin and in the south Morava valley.

So, the tumulus in Veprčani reveals diverse cultural influences and connections in the Balkan territory, indicating a very complex social structure in that peninsula, also including this part of Macedonia, at the end of Bronze Age.

From a chronological point of view, the original tumulus, i.e. graves 1 and 4 could be dated to the Br D/Ha A period, based on numerous analogies with pottery and metal finds. However, considering that the earliest tumuli in Pelagonia and its surroundings, as well as the appearance of cremations, have been dated to the transition period⁸⁸, there is the possibility that the tumulus from Veprčani also dates from the Ha A period, according to central European chronology.

Where Roman graves are concerned, they could be dated according to the grave goods and orientation, as well as by the funerary ritual, to the end of the 3rd and

to the 4th, possibly even the 5th century, in other words to the Late Roman period.

Something that is rather conspicuous is the attitude of the Late Roman population of Mariovo towards the prehistoric tumulus. The very idea of burying the dead at a location considered sacred by some ancient population with whom they could not have had any connections due to the large time gap is a phenomenon which is exceptionally interesting and which should be studied from many different aspects. Unfortunately it is impossible to do so within the scope of this work. They certainly regarded that place as an ancient sacred area, considering the size and shape of the tumulus, which was easily noticeable, as well as the stone stelae which, by all appearances, were erected above the graves, i.e. on the tumuli.⁸⁹ However, the question arises as to why this area was used again for sacred purposes after such a long interval and why, at that time, the earlier grave associations and objects from the graves were treated with the utmost care.

The inheritance of sacred places was an exclusively spiritual choice of certain communities and had no practical background, and similar examples have been recorded among many populations in different periods in the past.⁹⁰ In such situations there is a certain degree of awe of sacred objects or places from the past, something that was inherited from the pre-Christian religions whose elements were obviously still present despite the fact that Christianity has already become the official legal religion. It is assumed that they regarded the dead buried in the original prehistoric tumuli as some kind of ancient ancestors, founding fathers of their clan or tribe as, in spite of all the Roman funerary

⁸⁶ Станковски 2008, 135–152; Митревски 1997, 286.

⁸⁷ Митревски 1997, 106.

⁸⁸ Mitrevski dates the earliest tumuli in Macedonia to the sub-Mycenaean period according to numerous finds and, in particular, the fibula of Liburnian or Dalmatian type (Митревски 1997, 103–105). Dating of fibula to 11th–10th century BC also supports R, Vasić (Vasić 1999, Taf. 70).

⁸⁹ Around 150–200 m to the southeast of tumulus in Veprčani was recorded dislocated stone stela 1.55 x 0.47 x 0.11 m in size and similar stela of smaller size was earlier recorded in NW cover of tumulus 2. Similar stelae are known from the Late Bronze Age necropolis at Ulanci (Митревски 1997, 39–40, fig. 7).

⁹⁰ Similar customs have been recorded even in other continents, for example among the natives of North America (Mann 2005, 1–10 and cited literature), and perhaps the closest parallel for re-using of sacred areas is the use of necropoleis in several different periods in the past that is very common practice throughout the world.

rituals, they continued their prehistoric manner of interment under the tumuli. The devoted attitude toward the dead from prehistory can be noticed in the carefully placed prehistoric beaker on top of the dislocated remains of the dead from the Late Roman period, as in grave 4 and the stone structures around the tumulus that were devastated in the course of the construction of the Roman graves and making the tumulus cover. It is indicative that soil used for the tumulus cover was taken from the local area and was not brought from afar.⁹¹ This also points to the strong wish of the Roman population to violate the entire sacred complex as little as possible and to keep it spiritually clean in order to establish a strong as possible connection with the ‘ancestors’. Such continuity should, by no means, be understood as ethnic (in most instances there are rather large time gaps between each period of use of the tumulus), but rather as a functional continuity of the sacred place. The tradition of burying under and in the tumuli in Roman times cannot be ascribed to any ethnic group, it has been recorded in many diverse regions in the Balkans (Bosnia, Albania, western Serbia, Macedonia etc), not even to the Thracians as they mostly

used one burial under the tumulus. Nevertheless, it has been recorded that antique tumuli are rare in comparison to Roman graves in earlier tumuli that are much more frequent and they were recorded only in the regions where the tumuli had been used in prehistory. It is also indicative that such funerary rituals date mostly from the Late Roman times, a fact that could be explained as a consequence of the general crisis in that period when autochthonous populations turned to their traditional values.⁹² It seems, on the basis of everything said above, that the tumuli in those regions in prehistory had a social connotation, i.e., they were characteristics of clan-tribal or family status, while in the Late Roman period and in the Middle Ages, burials under the tumuli had sacred meaning, with tumuli functioning as sacred places guarding ancestral spiritual tradition.

The tumuli in Macedonia had fallen into disuse by the end of the Iron Age, except among populations in the isolated regions of Pelagonia and eastern Macedonia who, by using tumulus burials for some time more, remained the guardians of tradition and spiritual heritage of the past.

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⁹¹ Material from the tumulus cover was exclusively of the prehistoric date.

⁹² Срејовић 2002, 44 sqq; Bulatović 2008, 212.

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Резиме:

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НЕКРОПОЛА ПОД ТУМУЛОМ У ВЕПРЧАНИМА**Пример коришћења сакралних места у више периода у прошлости**

Кључне речи. – тумул, Мариово, јужна Македонија, касноантичка некропола, праисторијски гробови, прелазни период из бронзаног у гвоздено доба.

У селу Вепрчани, које се налази у области Мариово на југу Македоније, око 35 км југоисточно од Прилепа, истражен је током 2010. и 2012. године антички тумул пречника око 11 m и висине око 1 m. Цео тумул је почивао на слоју тврде окер земље, дебљине око 0,25 m, која је, додуше, заузимала знатно већу површину од тумула и практично се подударала са ширим каменим прстеном, вероватно остатком старијег тумула. Испод насипа, који се састојао углавном од камена и мало земље, констатовани су пет римских гробова са инхумираним покојницима (гробови 2, 3, 5, 7 и 9), један праисторијски гроб (гроб 4), остаци камене конструкције једног гроба без покојника (гроб 8) и једна дислоцирана гробна садржина ограђена каменом (гроб 6). Сви покојници су били положени на леђа, у опруженом ставу, оријентације – глава на западу, ноге на југу. Гробови 4 и 5 су имали конструкције од ломљеног камена, док су остали гробови били формиранни од камених плоча (цисте). Око тумула, са јужне, источне и северне стране, налазиле су се правоугаоне камене конструкције, непознате намене, са малобројним налазима праисторијске керамике.

Изван тумула, око 3 m јужно, испод ниског насипа од ситног камена и земље, уз два камена блока су констатовани остаци спаљеног покојника, са неколико праисторијских посуда, а недалеко од њих је евидентирано и неколико бронзаних предмета (игла са ексерастом главом, део дијадеме и предмет налик укосници).

Сви налази се могу одредити у крај бронзаног доба и почетак прелазног периода. У праисторијском гробу 4 је уну-

тар тумула нађена посуда која се такође може одредити у приближно исти период.

Према покретним налазима у римским гробовима, некропола се може одредити у крај III и у IV век, евентуално у V, односно у касноантички период. Многобројни конструктивни елементи (шири камени прстен, камене конструкције око тумула, праисторијски гробови унутар тумулаи ван њега, подлога у виду тврде окер земље чија површина одговара ширем прстену, различита густина насипа) указују да је постојао и старији тумул, под којим се налазио гроб 4. Њему су, вероватно, припадале и камене конструкције које се сада налазе око тумула 1, а он датира са почетка прелазног периода из бронзаног у гвоздено доба (На А, према средњоевропској периодизацији).

Након анализе конструкције тумула и гробова унутар њега као и њиховог односа, затим дистрибуције покретних налаза те аналогија у окружењу, може се закључити да је у касноантичком периоду тумул био препознат као сакрално место, па је на том месту, иако то није био римски обичај, била формирана некропола под тумулом, вероватно у знак поштовања према прецима.

Из свега наведеног у тексту, чини се да су тумули на овим просторима у праисторији имали социјалну конотацију – били су обележја клановско-родовског или породичног статуса, док је у касноантичком периоду и у средњем веку сахрањивање под тумулима имало сакралну функцију – тумули су се користили као света места са предачком духовном традицијом.

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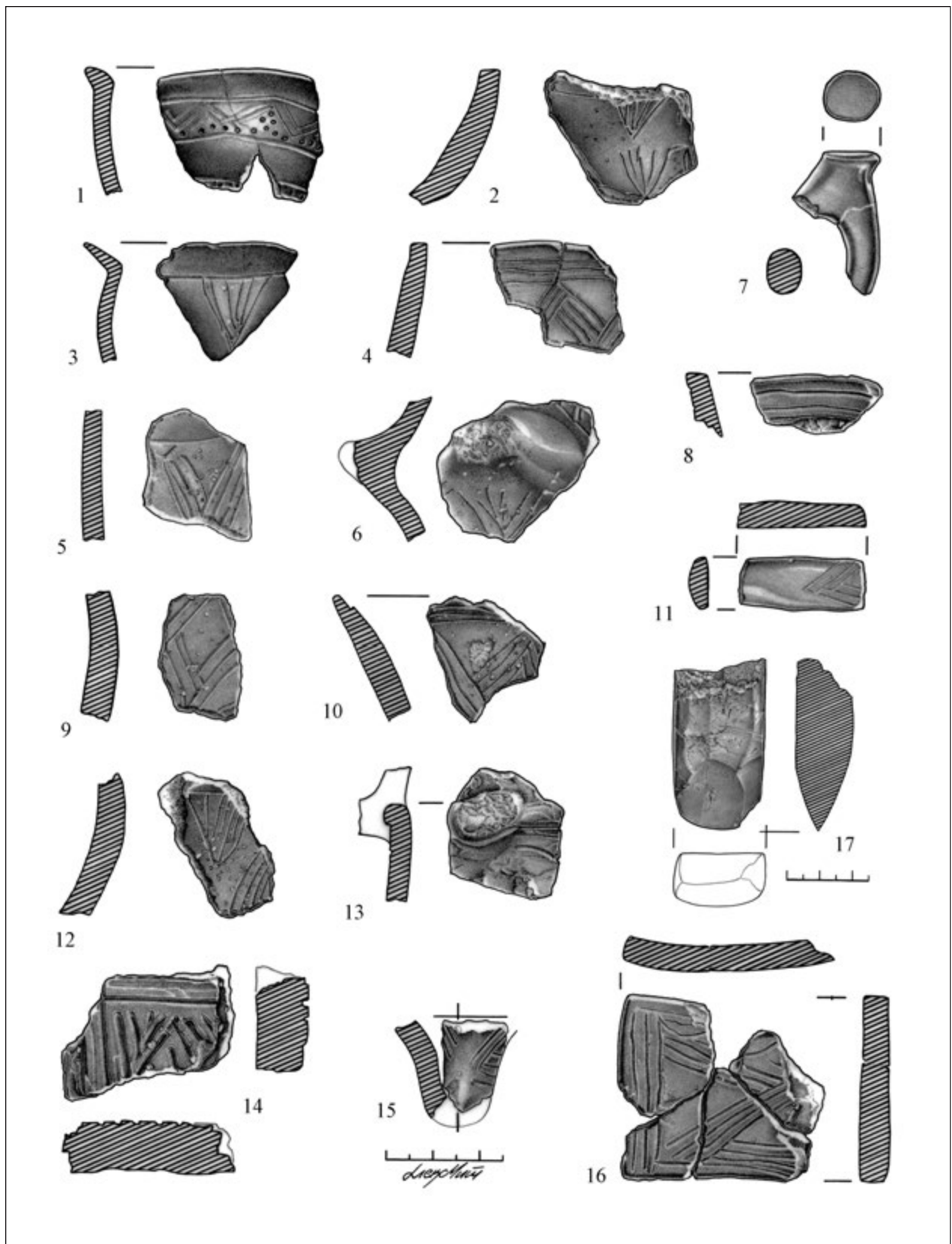


Plate I – Finds from the cover of grave 1 (1–17)

Табла I – Находи из насипа гроба 1 (1–17)

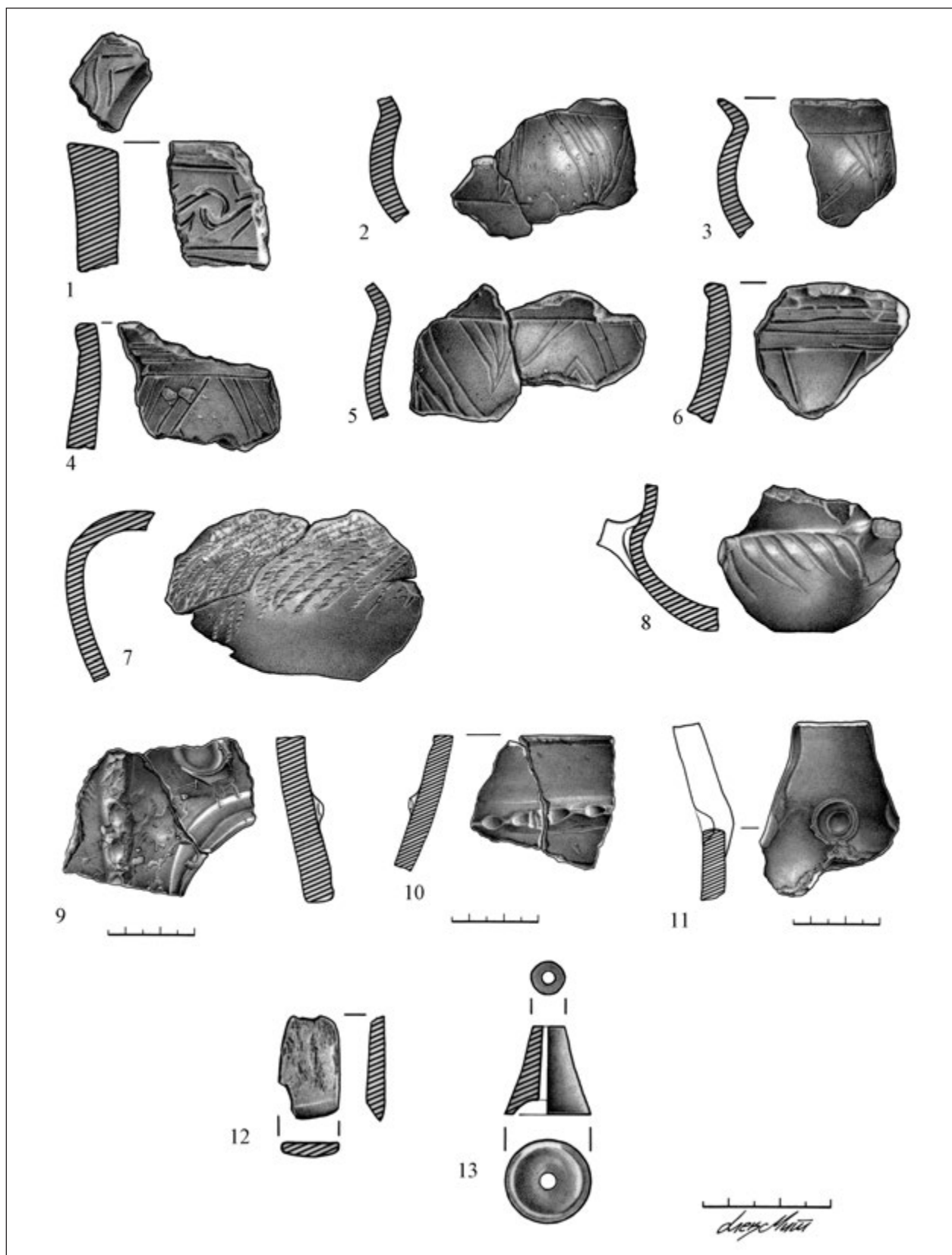


Plate II – Finds from the cover of tumulus I (1–13)

Табла II – Находи из насипа тумула I (1–13)

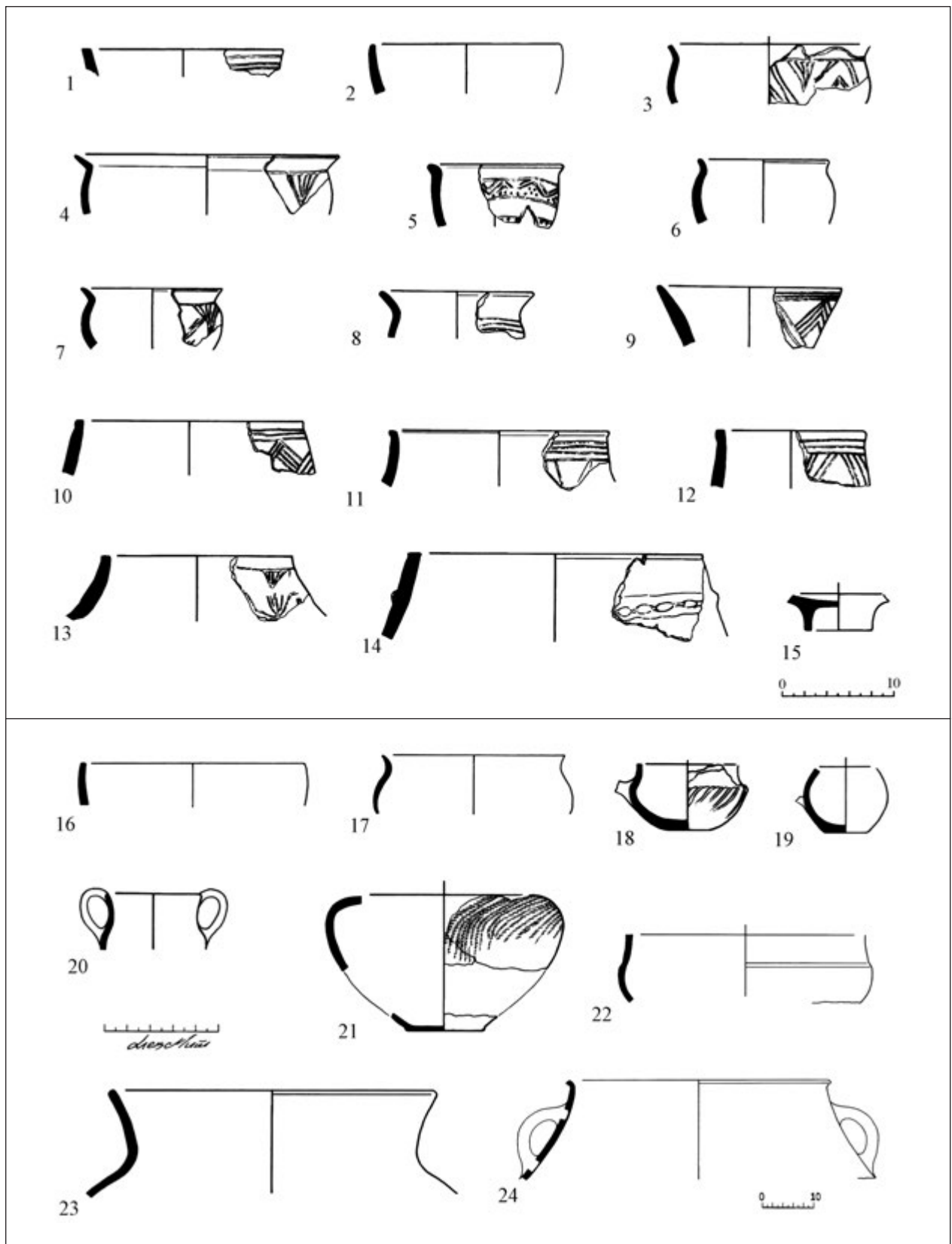


Plate III – Finds from the cover of grave 1 (1–15) and from cover of tumulus 1 (16–24)

Табла III – Налази из насипа гроба 1 (1–15) и из насипа тумула 1 (16–24)



Plate IV – 1–2 finds from grave 1; 3 find from cover of grave 1; 4, 6 finds from grave 6; 5, 7, 8 finds from grave 7
Табла IV – 1–2: налази из гроба 1; 3: налаз из насипа гроба 1; 4 и 6: налази из гроба 6; 5, 7 и 8: налази из гроба 7