

On some fundamental problems in the study of Balkan prehistory

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Abstract: No other discipline is determined by external issues to such a degree as is archaeology. Let it suffice to mention the fact that very important archaeological finds are usually not discovered by archaeologists, but by amateurs and farmers in fields. Further, the direction of archaeological investigations is generally not defined by scientific reason, but by cultural, political and economic interests, including tourism and construction activity. Hence, one consequence is the lack of systematic research strategy. This inevitably leads to a poorly argued scientific synthesis, which has to be corrected every few years, or completely rejected. Such problems burden archaeological practice in all parts of Europe, yet the discipline has still not developed a comprehensive strategy for the systematic resolution of these issues. Due to a combination of different circumstances, all of these problems are particularly prominent in the study of prehistory of the Balkans, and this will become apparent from the tree examples presented in the paper.

Key words: Balkans, Glasinac, Varna, Lepenski Vir

Introductory remarks¹

The Balkan Peninsula has always been an important transit area and a zone of interest for numerous mobile groups and conquerors, thanks to its position as protruding foothills of Central Europe, i.e. a kind of subcontinent located on the border between the Mediterranean and the Black Sea. Many traces, both visible and hidden in the ground, bear witness to the immense influence that numerous migrations and conquests had on the overall cultural and historical development of this area. For this reason we do not err when we state that this area represents the most neuralgic geostrategic point in the whole of Europe. Two communication routes were decisive here during the prehistoric period: One route ran in a south-north-south direction along the Vardar and Morava rivers, through the central part of the Balkan Peninsula, enabling the shortest and most convenient connection between Anatolia and the Middle East with Central Europe, and

vice versa. The second route ran in an east-west-east line, along the northeastern periphery of the Balkans, following the course of the lower Danube River. This communication represents the best link between cultures from the area of the Black Sea steppes and those from Pannonia and the Pre-Alpine area.

In addition, it should be stated that the Balkans were not just a transitory stop at the crossroads of spheres, but often, thanks to new impulses and/or autochthonous tradition, they acted as a significant source of innovation and cultural progress. Here to bear in mind are cultures such as Lepenski Vir, Starčevo, Karanovo, Sesklo, Vinča, Butmir, Gumelnița or Varna. All of these are authentic, largely autochthonous creations that clearly indicate that this area had reached a very high cultural level, at least during the Neolithic and Copper Age. Some of them, like Lepenski Vir, Vinča or Varna, have no equal, neither in Europe nor in the wider area of the ancient world. Unfortunately, this has not been evaluated to an appropriate extent, because previous research on prehistory has not been carried out in a way that would enable adequate recognition of the cultural-historical importance of this

¹ This contribution is an updated and expanded version of the paper presented at the 25th annual meeting of the EAA in Bern in 2019 (session 173 “Archaeology of Mountainous Landscapes in Balkan Prehistory”).

area on a European and wider scale. There are several reasons for this, both of generally cultural and political nature, and those that have a fundamental scientific character. Namely, it is evident that the study of prehistory, even today, almost two hundred years after Christian Jürgensen Thomsen's periodization and the birth of scientific archaeology, this discipline still suffers from childhood diseases caused by its initial antiquarian nature, as well as the constantly present excessive dependence on various exogenous factors.²

As with all fundamental sciences, the activity of archaeology largely depends on the support of the wider social community. However, no other discipline is determined by external factors to such an extent as archaeology, and especially the field of prehistory, which represents the most authentic part of archaeology. Here it should suffice to mention the fact that the most attractive prehistoric finds are usually not discovered by professionals, but by farmers, construction workers and other lucky laymen. Only after that the finds reach the hands of archaeologists, but usually with reduced documentation. Until recently, this happened spontaneously and accidentally, but lately the situation related to such uncontrolled findings has drastically worsened. Technically equipped pseudo-researchers and fake amateurs are increasingly destroying entire sites in search of unusual finds that can be illegally sold. Thus, the findings that were discovered in this way mostly remain lost to science, since most of them end up in closed private collections around the world.

It is even more problematic that the scope and direction of archaeological research is often not defined by scientific criteria, but is directed and limited by cultural, political and economic interests, including tourism and all kinds of construction activities. Under such conditions, many archaeologists do not have the opportunity to consistently conceptualize their work, meaning that they are not able to organize their research according to the principles and needs of science, but are forced to adapt to external factors. As a result, archaeology increasingly acts not as a clearly conceived science, but as an auxiliary discipline in museology, or a strictly directed contractor in the context of cultural heritage protection, or a tool of cultural policy. Of course, these

²For detailed overview see Eggert 2012, 29 ff.

are all useful activities, but from a scientific point of view they are mostly underrated.

The key consequence of this is the lack of a systematic research strategy and the frequent exaggeration of the importance of archaeologically better-researched areas, which are imposed as such, basing less on proven scientific relevance, but more as a result of research in a wider area that resulted from a legally mandated protection of endangered heritage, or because of the achievement of another externally defined goal.³ The sum of such activities is unscientifically located partial research which, by the nature of things, results in incomplete results and ephemeral conclusions. This leads further to weakly argued syntheses that have to be corrected every few years, or completely rejected. Such problems burden archaeological practices in all parts of Europe, because this science has not yet developed a comprehensive strategy for systematically solving the relationship with the aforementioned external factors.⁴ Due to a combination of different circumstances, this critical situation appears especially in studies of the prehistory of the Balkans. We shall illustrate this here, basing upon the examples of the following three cases.

Case 1: The Glasinac culture (Eastern Bosnia)

Shortly after the Austro-Hungarian monarchy in 1878, occupied the western province of the Ottoman Empire Bosnia and Herzegovina according to the decision of the Berlin Congress, an extraordinary archaeological discovery was made in that country. During the construction of the road through Glasinačko Polje in the east of Bosnia, unearthed Austro-Hungarian soldiers in March 1880 the stone embankment of a large mound and discovered a richly equipped grave. Among the grave goods was a unique and now well-known cult wagon made of bronze (Fig. 1; 2).⁵ The findings from this mound were immediately sent to Vienna, with the information that there are thousands of such burial mounds in the Glasinac area.⁶

³This belongs to the domain of the question of the archaeological sources quality. See Eggert 2012, 114 ff.

⁴Ibid. 103 ff.; Govedarica 2006, 27 ff.

⁵Govedarica 2020, 45 ff.

⁶Hochstetter 1881, 289 ff.



Figure 1. *Cultic wagon from Glasinac* (photo B. Govedarica; L 18.5 cm; H 15 cm; after Govedarica 2020)

The Glasinac discovery had a great resonance in the scientific circles of Europe. This encouraged new political government to show its power and to implement the so-called action of Europeanization in this country, which was “terra incognita”, not just in a scientific sense, by enabling the hidden wealth of its cultural heritage to be discovered and shown to the world.⁷ For this purpose, the National Museum in Sarajevo was established first, and not long after, years-long excavations were carried out in the wider area of Glasinac (Fig. 2). Within a period of ten years (1888–1897), a total of 1,234 mounds with about 3,500 graves were excavated.⁸

Although these researches did not provide such great results as the first discovery in Glasinac made by the Austro-Hungarian soldiers,⁹ they still brought forth very important findings. In addition, systematic archaeological research was started in other parts of the country as well. Indeed, this was really the birth of scientific archaeology in Bosnia and Herzegovina.¹⁰

All of the above-mentioned sounds confirming and undoubtedly had a great significance for the initiation of archaeological work in Bosnia and Herzegovina. However, seen from a

purely scientific point of view, the excavations at Glasinac at that time brought more harm than good. Franz Fiala spent six relatively short research seasons from 1892 to 1897 investigating 868 burial mounds with almost 2,500 graves in the Glasinac area (about 140 burial mounds and over 400 graves each year). This clearly shows that the work was done in haste, without appropriate field documentation and without taking into account the vertical and horizontal stratigraphy of the excavated tumuli. The result was the complete lack of precise plans of tumuli and graves, as well as a selective collection of finds, especially when it comes to anthropological material and ceramic objects.

The problem of the lack of documentation and the discerning selection of findings has not been seriously addressed until now, because it was tacitly understood that such excavation methods were characteristic of that time. However, such a point of view is clearly refuted by the excavations that were carried out in Austria and Hungary and in other parts of Europe prior to or at the same time as the first researches in Bosnia and Herzegovina. A prime example of this are the excavations in Hallstatt, which were carried out 40 years before the start of the systematic excavation of the Glasinac tumuli. Most of the 980 explored graves in Hallstatt have been comprehensively documented, with the positions of skeletons and grave goods accurately represented.¹¹ Detailed documentation was also an integral part of the excavation of the princely grave in Leubingen in Thuringia in 1877.¹²

The difference is that the excavations at Glasinac were not scientifically motivated, but were part of a cultural-political offensive that, under the guise of Europeanization, was supposed to show the supremacy of the new government and justify the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina that would follow in 1908. In general, the collection of materials for the showcases of the newly founded National Museum in Sarajevo was carried out, so the amount of representative finds was more important than precise and complete documentation.¹³ True, after each excavation season the excavation reports have

⁷ About so called action of Europeanization of Bosnia and Herzegovina see Scheer 2018, 1 ff.

⁸ Govedarica 2017, 39-40.

⁹ Confirming of the statement made above that the best artifacts usually are not discovered by professionals but by laymen.

¹⁰ Govedarica 2021, 71 ff.

¹¹ Pertlwieser 1980, 3 ff.

¹² Höfer 1906, 1 ff.

¹³ Scheer 2018, 7.



Figure 2. Important sites of Glasinac (1) and Glasinac area (2) (after Govedarica 2017)

been published, but only in a very condensed form.¹⁴ Detailed publication and scientific evaluation of the excavated material followed in the middle of the 20th century, and even then only a small number of graves which were scientifically relevant according to the criteria valid at the time.¹⁵ Today, some 120 years after the excavations at Glasinac, we have a situation in that only about 10% of the Glasinac material deposited in the National Museum in Sarajevo has been comprehensively published.¹⁶ The other 90% still awaits scientific study and publication.

Regardless of all the shortcomings of those first investigations, Glasinac already had become a world-wide famous archaeological area at the end of the 19th century. Due to the large number of excavated graves and the uncritical assumptions that there are at least 20,000 tumuli, the prevailing opinion among European archaeologists was that this plateau was a kind of campus sacer, i.e. a sacred area where at least half of Iron Age Europe ritually transported and buried their

dead.¹⁷ This provided the basis for the definition of the unique Glasinac culture to a large extent.¹⁸ It was only much later, thanks to frequent excavations in this area and the surroundings, that it could be shown that the Glasinac area was not a sacred field at all, but an ordinary settlement area. In addition, there are evermore indications that this was not an independent cultural group, but a part of a much wider cultural entity that some authors define as the ‘Glasinac-Mati culture’.¹⁹

All of these statements are quite plausible, but still insufficiently documented and, in a broader sense, insufficiently known indications. For this reason, the term ‘Glasinac’, especially outside Bosnia and Herzegovina, is still viewed with much misunderstanding.²⁰ We believe that an objective interpretation of the cultural history of the Glasinac graves will be possible only after a modern interdisciplinary evaluation of the entire collected material. Until then, the case of Glasinac remains as a “flagship example” of externally, that is, politically motivated research

¹⁴ Truhelka 1889; 1890; Fiala 1892, 389 ff; 1893, 717 ff; 1894; 1895, 533 ff; 1896, 7, 58.

¹⁵ Benac / Čović 1956; 1957.

¹⁶ Čović 1963, 42; Govedarica 2017, 40.

¹⁷ Munro 1900, 159.

¹⁸ About it see Benac / Čović 1956, 5-6; Čović 1988, 79.

¹⁹ Čović 1987, 575 ff.

²⁰ See Govedarica 2020, 47-48.

that initiated the development of archaeology in Bosnia and Herzegovina and which achieved its cultural-political, but not scientific, mission. Due to the lack of a complete publication and relevant evaluation of all findings, this research has not yet been scientifically defined. Thus, Glasinac continues to be the subject of various weakly founded and sometimes sensationalist interpretations.

Case 2: Varna I necropolis (eastern Bulgaria)

The area of Southeastern Europe has long been in the focus of research as a possible source of early metallurgy and as the place of origin of the cultural-historical period, which would be most correct to call the *Copper Age proprie dicti*. This term refers to an epoch characterized by the systematic production of objects from pure (unalloyed) copper.²¹ It is a technologically and socio-culturally specific stage that can only arise under the conditions of the intersection of

several characteristic natural and social factors: the existence of appropriate resources, mastery of metallurgical technology, as well as a developed system of demand and supply of copper products.

It follows from this that there is no general causality in prehistoric development, i.e. Neolithic does not always have to be followed by the Copper Age, but that change in the cultural-historical scene can only occur where the previously mentioned factors are fully present. Although this is not yet sufficiently accepted in science, among other things because some key localities have not yet been fully published, all recent research indicates that the appropriate coincidence that led to the emergence of the *Copper Age proprie dicti* occurred in the first half of the 5th millennium BC in the area of the Central and Eastern Balkans.²² At the same time, the Stone Age still continued in other European areas (in Northern Europe the Mesolithic, in other parts of the continent different phases of the Neolithic period).²³

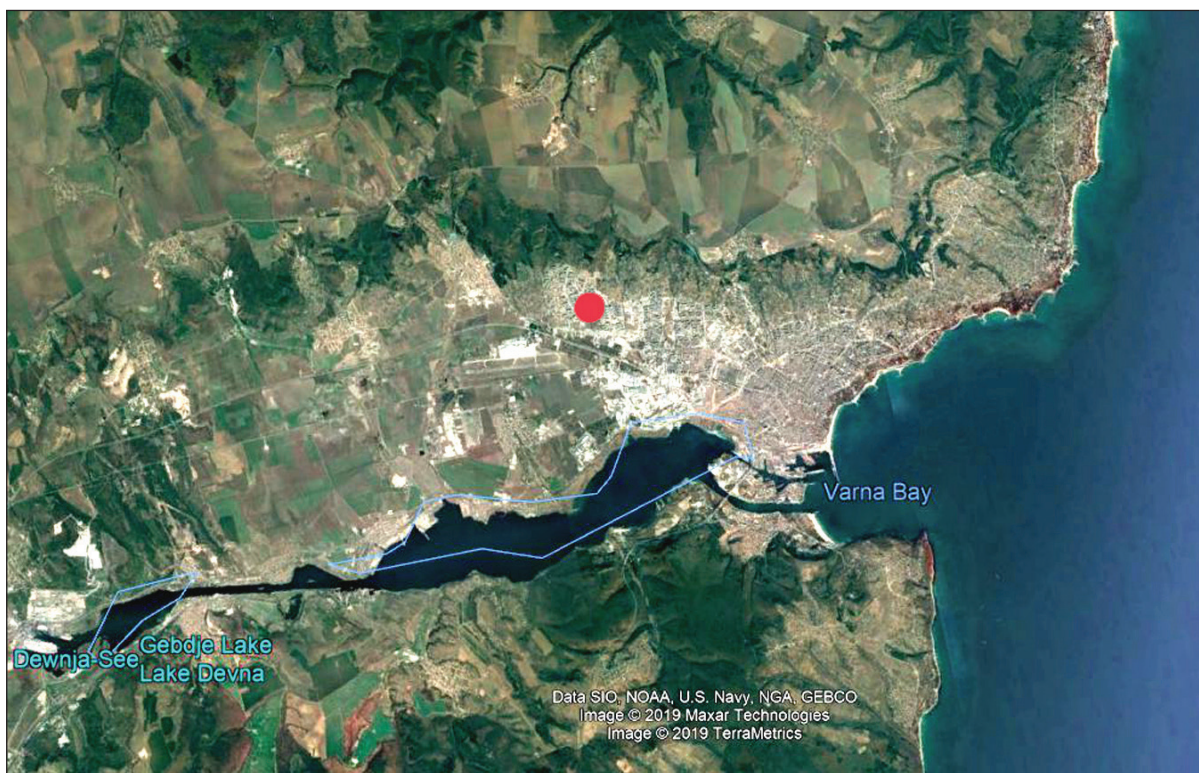


Figure 3. Position of the Copper Age necropolis Varna I

²¹ Regarding the origin and definition of this period, see Govedarica 2009, 60 ff.; 2016, 12-23 and further literature listed there.

²² Govedarica 2016, 16 ff.

²³ Govedarica 2009, 68 ff.

The most cited and significant Copper Age site in the Balkans is the Varna I necropolis, which contained at least 310 graves.²⁴ However, Varna I is also one of those key, but also disputed localities that have not been published in a satisfactory manner. Although it was discovered more than 50 years ago, this necropolis still largely remains unpublished and insufficiently known to the interested scientific public.

The Varna I necropolis was located in the western industrial zone of the large port city of Varna (Fig. 3). According to the bizarre rule mentioned above, it was also discovered quite by accident by a layman. In this case, the first grave finds were discovered by the driver of a bulldozer while digging a cable channel in 1972.²⁵ Immediately after the discovery and recognition of the exceptional value of the grave goods, the Archaeological Museum in Varna took over the care of the site. In the same year, excavations began, which were led until 1991 by Ivan Ivanov, the curator of the prehistoric collection, and later the director of that museum (Fig. 4). As a skilled excavator, Ivanov carried out the excavations systematically and proficiently, but priority was given to the museum presentation of the richest graves, whereas the scientific evaluation and complete publication of the findings remained in the background. Until his death in 2001, Ivanov maintained a monopoly on processing and publishing material from Varna, gradually publishing only selected graves (a total of 36 graves), mostly in representative catalogues of exhibitions held in several world museums, as well as within promotion of large sports and cultural events.²⁶ With this, the author of the excavation showed a great talent for archaeological marketing, successfully promoting Bulgaria, the city of Varna, as well as the Museum that he managed. Certainly this material has already sufficiently demonstrated that this is one of the most significant archaeological discoveries in Europe in the last hundred years.

The published graves were reviewed both culturally and chronologically, and soon it became clear that without this necropolis there can be no more serious talk about the European Copper Age. Based on the findings from Varna, Devnja



Figure 4. Ivan Ivanov 1974 by digging Grave 36 in Varna I (after Slavchev 2009)

and Durankulak, a special cultural group was defined that characterizes the developed or late Copper Age of the western coast of the Black Sea, and which was called the Varna Culture.²⁷ However, the material presented of that culture did not show sufficient consistency in relation to the Kodjadermen-Gumelnița-Karanovo (KGK) VI complex, so the definition of this new cultural entity has not yet been widely accepted.²⁸ We believe that this is largely due to the lack of a comprehensive publication of the necropolis from Varna, without which and precisely because of the immense splendour of most of the published graves, one can get an incorrect picture of the character of the necropolis, which is also the eponym of that culture.

The case of Varna I is presented here as an example of an extremely important archaeological site, i.e. a cultural monument that was threatened by construction works, but was mostly documented and saved by the prompt engagement of museum workers and the protection service. The museum and conservation component played a primary role, while the scientific aspects remained in the background. That the interest of archaeology was completely subordinated to the interests of museology and the service of cultural heritage protection is evidenced by the fact that scientific study and evaluation,

²⁴ Slavchev et al. 2016, 141.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ivanov 1982; 1991, 125 and forward. See also Govedarica 2004, 292 ff.; Slavchev 2010, 192 ff.

²⁷ Todorova 1986, 281 ff.; 1990, 233 ff.; 2002, 37 ff.

²⁸ Krauß 2008, 232-133; Krauß et al. 2018, 283.

as well as the publication of excavation results, were completely left to the subjective choice of the research author. At the same time, the results of the excavations were presented selectively and sensationally. Therefore, it should not be surprising that today we know that approx. 3000 gold objects, or almost 6 kilograms of pure gold, were found in the necropolis of Varna I, whereas the funerary characteristics of the necropolis and even the exact number of discovered graves are still unknown.

Case 3: Culture of Lepenski Vir (Đerdap Gorge)

The Đerdap gorge (Iron Gate) is a unique penetrating valley 134 kilometers long, which was created in the southern Carpathian Mountains by the swelling of the Pannonian Sea and the action of the Pre-Danube and Danube rivers during the Pliocene period. This longest gorge in Europe today forms the border between Serbia and Romania. During the construction of



Figure 5. *Lepenski vir culture distribution map (after Borić 2002)*



Figure 6. *Settlement of Lepenski Vir during the excavation in 1969 (after Srejšović 1972)*

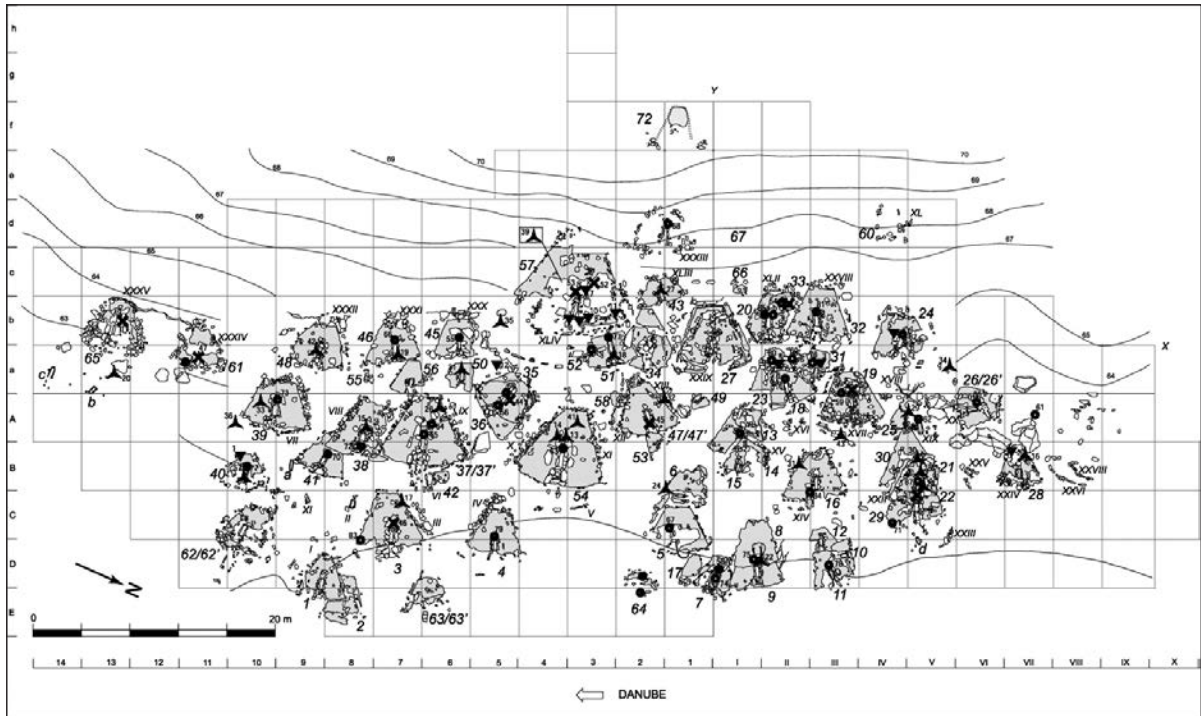


Figure 7. Plan of Lepenski Vir settlement with phase I–II trapezoidal building features and distribution of sandstone sculptures (after Borić 2018)

the dams for the Đerdap I and II power plants, from 1964 to 1971 and 1978 to 1990, extensive archaeological research and heritage protection measures were carried out on the Serbian and Romanian sides of the gorge. This was one of the rare examples of the complete synchronization of the interests of archaeological science and the service for the protection of cultural monuments. Since the coastal zone of the entire Đerdap Gorge was threatened by the rising water level, it was necessary to intervene in the entire area and carry out systematic research and documentation of cultural monuments and biocultural units. Thanks to this, many archaeological sites from prehistoric, Roman and medieval periods were discovered, which have completely changed the archaeological picture of this part of Europe.²⁹

Undoubtedly, the most significant discovery is that of the settlements and graves of the community, which is named the Lepenski Vir culture, according to the eponymous site (Fig. 5). This cultural phenomenon dates to the early Holocene, actually to the Epipaleolithic, Mesolithic and Proto-Neolithic periods.³⁰ Even then, the Đerdap gorge was a specific ecological

niche with a climate that corresponds to today's Mediterranean climate, which provided conditions for a relatively comfortable life. Although the representatives of the culture of Lepenski Vir, like other human communities of that era, mainly lived from hunting and fishing, material and spiritual attainments were achieved there and are not found in other areas. The bearers of this culture were the first that had well-organized permanent settlements in Europe, not in caves but under the open sky, with solidly built houses, neatly arranged along the Đerdap banks of the Danube (Fig. 6; 7; 8a). Particularly noteworthy are artistic creations in the form of stone sculptures (Fig. 8b). The high level of the Lepenski Vir culture is unique in their time and space, so its creators can rightly be considered the bearers of the oldest post-Pleistocene culture in Europe and the founders of today's European civilization.

However, despite much new knowledge, many questions related to this culture remained unsolved. This especially refers to the eponymous settlement in Lepenski Vir, which was the largest agglomeration and probably the most important centre of this culture. The settlement was discovered in 1960 and explored in the period

²⁹ Bošković 1983, 9 ff.; Kondić 1987.

³⁰ Srejšević 1972; Srejšević / Babović 1983; Borić 2002, 1026 ff.

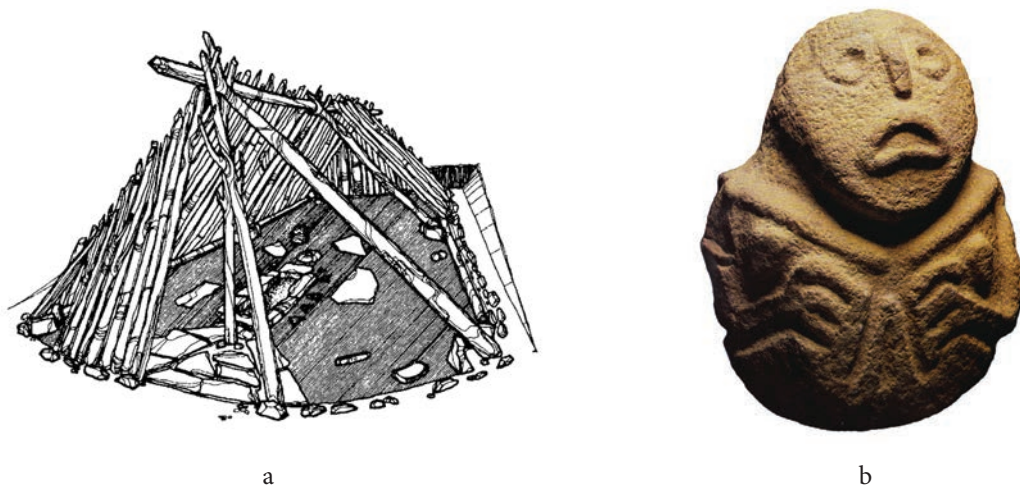


Figure 8. a) Graphic reconstruction of roofs of the trapezoid house in Lepenski Vir (after Srejović 1972), b) Sandstone sculpture from Sanctuarium No XLIV in Lepenski Vir II (after Srejović / Babović 1983)

from 1965 to 1971.³¹ Similar to the previously mentioned case of Varna, this site was also the subject of numerous studies and discussions, which could certainly be expected due to the great attractiveness of this settlement. However, the unsystematic and selective way of publishing left many important questions unresolved there as well. Thus, there is still no agreement regarding the exact character of the settlement, i.e. whether it was a profane or a sacred settlement.³² Also, the stratigraphy of the settlement has not been sufficiently clarified. The insistence on the pre-ceramic character of the Lepenski Vir II phase by the Dragoslav Srejović, leader of excavation, was not accepted by many scientists due to the insufficiently documented relationship of that phase with the subsequent Starčevo settlement (Lepenski Vir III).³³ This makes it much more difficult to gain a final picture of this unique settlement as well as the significance and meaning of the Lepenski Vir culture at the beginning of the cultural development of Holocene Europe in general.

Conclusions

As the examples described above show, that the absence of a systematic research strategy and especially the lack of studies and selective publication of excavated material, represent

fundamental problems for prehistoric research in the Balkans. In fact, it is shown that archaeology in the Balkans works better as an auxiliary museum and conservation discipline, rather than as a science with a defined concept and clear goals. Moreover, the cases described and other examples show that traces of antiquarian romanticism and sensationalism are still present in archaeological practice.³⁴

When it comes to the perspectives of prehistoric research in the Balkan area, the major nature of the study of prehistory should be addressed first. Along with many other difficulties, the basic theoretical and epistemological dilemma is still present: whether it is even possible to discuss historical aspects in the period that preceded the invention and use of writing, that is, whether prehistoric archaeology is a cultural or a socio-historical discipline.

The experience gained in recent years in a broader European and world context indicates that this dilemma has become redundant. Therefore, it can be safely stated that prehistoric archaeology as a cultural discipline, which functions exclusively within its typological-stratigraphic method, practically no longer exists. Modern prehistoric archaeology does not appear as an independent discipline. Instead, it

³¹ Srejović 1969; 1972.

³² Borić et al. 2018.

³³ See Garašanin / Radovanović 2001, 118 ff.; Borić 2019, 9 ff.

³⁴ Recently, even the “Indiana Jones syndrome” has begun to take root in State universities. In this regard, see the doctoral dissertation of dr. Semir Osmanagić: *Non-technological Mayan Civilization versus Modern Technological Civilizations*, which was defended at the Faculty of Political Sciences of the University of Sarajevo in 2009.

represents a synthesis of cultural, historical, and natural sciences that work together to illuminate the biological and social processes that shaped the development of prehistoric communities. This new approach has already resulted in significant improvements in chronology and periodization, while there is still work to be done on redefining other traditional postulates of this discipline. Hence, the perspective of prehistoric archaeology stands in interdisciplinarity.

With regard to the Balkan region, as much as it seemed contradictory, the current priority task of the such perceived scientific discipline should not be the execution of new scientifically conceived excavations. Instead, in this moment it is more necessary to launch a projects of comprehensive interdisciplinary re-evaluation and publication of the abundance of long-excavated and mostly unpublished material that is still kept in museum warehouses. That is the only efficient way to bring the informative potential of the existing archaeological material to full expression and most conducive for establishing Balkan archaeology in the context of the modern development of this science.

Rezime

O nekim fundamentalnim problemima izučavanja balkanske praistorije

U članku se na primjerima dosadašnjeg istraživanja Glasinačke kulture, nekropole Varna i Lepenskog Vira pokazuje da nepostojanje sistemske istraživačke strategije, a posebno nedostatak studija i selektivno objavljivanje iskopanog materijala, predstavljaju fundamentalne probleme za praistorijska istraživanja Balkana. U stvari, pokazuje se da arheologija na Balkanu bolje funkcionira kao pomoćna muzeološka i zaštitarska disciplina nego kao nauka sa definisanom koncepcijom i jasnim ciljevima. Štaviše, navedeni i drugi primjeri pokazuju da su u arheološkoj praksi i dalje prisutni tragovi antikvarkog romantizma i senzacionalizma.

Kada su u pitanju perspektive praistorijskih istraživanja na ovom području, na prvom mjestu se treba pozabaviti pitanjem same prirode proučavanja

praistorije. Uz mnoge druge poteškoće, ovdje je i dalje prisutna osnovna teorijska i epistemološka dilema: da li se uopšte može raspravljati o istorijskim aspektima perioda koji su prethodili pronalasku i upotrebi pisma, odnosno je li praistorijska arheologija kulturološka ili društveno-istorijska disciplina.

Međutim, iskustvo stečeno proteklih godina u širim evropskim i svjetskim okvirima jasno pokazuje da je ova dilema postala suvišna. Dakle, sa sigurnošću se može reći da praistorijska arheologija kao kulturološka disciplina koja funkcionira isključivo u okviru svoje tipološko-stratigrafske metode, praktično više ne postoji. Moderna praistorijska arheologija više i ne nastupa kao samostalna disciplina. Umjesto toga, ona predstavlja sintezu kulturoloških, istorijskih i prirodnih nauka koje zajedno rade na rasvjetljavanju bioloških i društvenih procesa koji su oblikovali razvoj praistorijskih zajednica. Ovaj novi pristup je već rezultirao značajnim poboljšanjima u hronologiji i periodizaciji, dok još predstoji rad na redefinisavanju drugih tradicionalnih postulata ove discipline. Dakle, perspektiva praistorijske arheologije je u interdisciplinarnosti.

Što se tiče balkanskog regiona, ma koliko to djelovalo kontradiktorno, prioritetni zadatak tako shvaćene naučne discipline u ovom momentu ne bi trebalo biti izvođenje novih naučno koncipiranih iskopavanja. Umjesto toga neophodno je pokrenuti projekat sveobuhvatne interdisciplinarne revalorizacije i publikovanja obilja davno iskopanog i uglavnom neobjavljenog materijala koji se još uvijek čuva u muzejskim skladištima. Tek nakon toga bi informacioni potencijal postojećeg arheološkog materijala mogao doći do punog izražaja, a to je i najpogodniji način uključenja balkanske arheologije u kontekst savremenog razvoja ove nauke.

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