

ANCIENT THRACE: MYTH AND REALITY

THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE THIRTEENTH
INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS OF THRACOLOGY
KAZANLAK, SEPTEMBER 3 – 7, 2017



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КОНГРЕС ПО ТРАКОЛОГИЯ
КАЗАНЛЪК, 3 – 7 СЕПТЕМВРИ 2017 Г.

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Светлана Янакиева, Христо Попов, Анелия Божкова,
Майя Василева, Юлия Цветкова, Маргарит Дамянов,
Петя Илиева, Юлий Емилов

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The four organizing institutions of the 13th International Congress of Thracology in 2017 have each celebrated important anniversaries thereafter:

- 130 years since the foundation of the National Museum in Sofia (1892) [now the National Archaeological Museum affiliated to the National Archaeological Institute];
- 120 years since the foundation of the Museum Iskra in Kazanlak (1901);
- 100 years since the establishment of the Department of Archaeology at the St. Kliment Ohridski University of Sofia (1920);
- 100 years since the foundation of the Bulgarian Archaeological Institute (1921);
- 100 years since the establishment of the Department of Classical Philology at the St. Kliment Ohridski University of Sofia (1922);
- 50 years since the foundation of the Institute of Thracology at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (1972) [now a Center of Thracology affiliated to the Institute of Balkan Studies].

The editors dedicate the publication of the congress proceedings to the commemoration of these six events.

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BETWEEN THE ILLYRIAN AND THRACIAN WORLDS: SOUTHWEST SERBIA AND NORTHERN MONTENEGRO AT THE TURN OF THE NEW ERA

Marija Đ. Ljuština, Jelena Lj. Cvijetić

Already the first glance at most general maps with emphasized Thracian ethnic and cultural space reveals the specific position of the focal zone of the present study.¹ During the 1st millennium BC and at the turn of the new era Southwest Serbia and Northern Montenegro were an integral part of the Illyrian world, but on the threshold of the Thracian. The wider area shared between the modern states of Serbia and Montenegro bears traces of human presence, which go back to the Palaeolithic. In spite of the fact that in the 1970s and 1980s and even later an intense archaeological research of the area was performed, resulting in the discovery of a number of sites from late prehistory and the Roman period,² the state of exploration is still not satisfactory. One of the reasons for that lies in the environmental diversity. On the one hand the valleys of important rivers provided good connectivity. For example, considering that the Novi Pazar area is rich in smaller river flows belonging to the Raška and Ibar watershed, it is obvious how easily the influence from the south could reach the inhabitants of these valleys. On the other hand, the highlands shared today by Serbia and Montenegro and the wide Pešter plateau offer completely different life conditions. The Pešter plateau is sharply separated from the surrounding zones by both its height and its geomorphological characteristics. It is an area without forest, with an average height of 1100 – 1250 m above sea level, having the characteristics of the karst and with very little water. It makes the shortest connection between the Raška and Lim valleys, and in a broad sense

between the Morava valley and the river Drina, i. e. between the eastern and the western parts of the Central Balkans. There is a shortage of fertile soil, and the climate is not convenient for planting every sort of cereals and fruits. Fortunately, pasture is very spacious and rich in grass for grazing. Inside the Pešter plateau, the best life conditions can be found at Peštersko polje and Koštam polje – two troughs surrounded by hills and relatively rich in water – which are inhabited with a high density even today, as it was the case in the past.

The archaeological picture of the studied area is dominated by a significant number of tumular necropolises. The greatest number of tumular burials belong to the final horizon of the First Iron Age/Hallstatt period. It is under no doubt that in the Late Hallstatt the area was incorporated in the cultural complex Glasinac – Mati. In spite of the fact that the ethnic attribution of the complex was Illyrian in a wider sense, some of the graves have specific material which can be connected with the north-Thracian cultural circle.

Thanks to the priority the Glasinac plateau got with the early start of excavations of the tumuli and hillforts, already in the 2nd half of the 19th c., the complex of archaeological sites from the territory of the Autariatae was attributed to the bearers of the Glasinac culture. On the other hand, even a glimpse into the geographic map provides enough information to claim that the area of SW Serbia and N Montenegro is in the heart of the Glasinac cultural complex or the territory of the Autariate. Consequently, archaeological sites from the region chronologically attributed to the Hallstatt period are memorabilia

1 Cf. Fol, Popov, Yordanov 2014, 10.

2 Летица 1982; Јевтић 1996.

of the Autariatae.³ Two areas of the region, the Novi Pazar area and the Pljevlja area, were chosen for the study due to their specific development inside the vast cultural complex. Each one of them revealed its own cultural development and final destiny.

The material culture of the Autariatae from Northern Montenegro is well known due to the archaeological excavations of tumuli. The region of the city of Pljevlja is of particular importance, since tumular necropolises were explored in Gotovuša, Ljutići near Mataruge, Lever Tara, Borovica and Otilovići (**Fig. 1**). In most of the mounds, built of earth and stone, with outstanding complexity of funerary practices and several burial horizons, there were graves of inhumed deceased in supine position, with jewellery and elements of attire (most of them made of bronze, such as massive cast bracelets, decorated circular plates, arch fibulae and decorative pins), weapons and pottery. The ceramic repertoire is reduced to greyish beakers with one or two handles and incised geometric ornaments. In spite of the fact that in the Pljevlja area more than ten mounds with a significant number of graves from the Hallstatt period have been explored, the archaeological material from the graves indicates the middle of the 5th c. BC as the latest date. In contrast to this, in the Glasinac area and the Drina valley there were graves from later periods, which testified to the prolonged and continual presence of the Autariatae, unlike in the region of Pljevlja.⁴

The greatest number of tumular burials in the Novi Pazar region belong to the final horizon of the Halstatt period. Apart from the Novi Pazar princely grave, the remains of graves belonging to this horizon were found at more than ten sites (villages Crnoča, Glogovik, Delimeđe, Gračane, Melaje, Raspoganče, Doljani, and Novopazarska Banja), most of them being found under tumuli at the Pešter plateau. The picture of funerary practices during the Hallstatt period in the Novi Pazar area reveals neither chronological nor ethnical unity. Two groups of graves can be sorted out: an older one, with skeletal burials in supine position within massive, rectangular or oval stone grave constructions, like the mound I from the site Latinsko Groblje in

Glogovik (**Fig. 2**), with grave inventory resembling the one from the mentioned region of Pljevlja, and a younger one, in which cremations predominate, with human remains scattered across foundations made of pebbles and broken stones. According to grave goods (more elaborated and refined jewellery and ceramic vessels, sometimes imported or made under the influence of material from north Greece or south Macedonia, or even from the Thracian world as it is the case with the Latinsko Groblje fibula), these younger bi-ritual burials are much more connected to Kosovo and the southern parts of the Balkan peninsula, in contrast to the older ones, which are incorporated in the wider complex Glasinac – Mati.⁵ The mentioned find of a small arc fibula⁶ (length 2.4 cm) of Thracian type from tumulus II at Latinsko Groblje (**Fig. 3**) is from the same period or slightly later in time in comparison to the black-brown varnished bowls of Greek production, which came mostly from cremated burials at several sites at the Pešter plateau. The fibula is dated at the end of the 4th or in the 3rd century BC.⁷

The thorough analysis of the funerary practice of the older period revealed that a number of Basarabi elements were recognised in the material from the mound with incinerations in Melaje. At the base of the mound there was a large circular area, lined with a row of broken stones, with traces of intense fire. Pottery sherds were spread all over the earthen covering of the mound. Except for the numerous fragments decorated with the false cord technique (**Fig. 4**), there were some fragments of wheel-made vessels of Greek provenance, and also some handmade pottery of Greek influence. Two burial horizons could be distinguished on the basis of the ceramic material: a horizon with false cord pottery of Basarabi style and a horizon with Greek imports. The fragments of vessels decorated in Basarabi style form a separate group of pottery. Parts of vessels decorated with rows of false cord came from the base of the mound. It is worth mentioning that no trace of pottery with the “S” stamps decoration was found there, which is in contrast with the Basarabi pottery from the hillforts in the Novi Pazar area.⁸ There

3 Венас 1987; Čović 1987; Лазић, Церовић 2013.

4 Лазић, Церовић 2013.

5 Jevtić, Ljuština 2013.

6 Jevtić 1990, 116, kat. 150.

7 Vasić 2000, 15-19.

8 Јевтић 1992, 8; Јевтић, Лјуштина 2008, 43.

is a tempting idea, according to which a woman originating from the Triballi tribe (or generally from North-Thracian ethnical space) was cremated and buried among some local inhabitants of North-Dardanian origin. The ethnic attribution of the deceased is confirmed by both the sherds of Basarabi bowls found at the mound base and the small ceramic cogged tool used for the pottery decoration. Such tools have been found mainly in the western part of the vast Basarabi complex, where the tremolo pottery was most common, and to which the early Triballi can be cautiously connected.⁹

What strikes us as odd is that the latest date of the prehistoric finds from the region can be the 3rd century BC. The following centuries BC left almost no trace in an archaeological sense. If this observation about the chronology of the archaeological finds from the Hallstat period in the Pljevlja region and other parts of the territory of the Autariatae is connected with historical sources, it can lead to interesting and tempting hypotheses. M. Lazić and M. Cerović¹⁰ emphasized the often-quoted information on the movement of the Autariatae towards the east and their conflict with the Triballi. The migration of the Autariatae is not chronologically positioned with precision, although some historians, F. Papazoglu above all, consider it to have taken place after 335 BC. It was the most convenient moment to defeat the Triballi and expel them from their homeland, after the defeat by Alexander III of Macedon. However, the archaeological material from the Pljevlja region suggests different solutions. The absence of finds later than the 5th c. BC in the area prompts an assumption that the Autariatae left it for good exactly in that period.

The absence of material from the Late Iron Age in this territory makes it difficult to deal with the problems of ethnic and cultural continuity and the question about who had lived there in the several centuries prior to the Roman conquest.¹¹

The first archaeological evidence of the inhabitants of this region after the Autariatae dates from the 1st century AD. During systematic re-

searches in Komini near Pljevlja (the ancient *Municipium S.*) carried out from 1964 to 1976, almost seven hundred graves were discovered, mostly cremated deceased buried from the 1st to the 4th century.¹² According to the research, there were two ancient necropolises, an older one, necropolis I, situated in the area of Bijelo brdo, and a later one, well-known in scientific literature as necropolis II, placed at the foot of the eponymous hill. The necropolis I, with about 400 graves of cremated burials of native non-Romanized population, dated to the 1st and the beginning of the 2nd century AD and contained a few grave forms, which could be divided into two groups: graves with recipient and graves without a receptacle for the ashes of the dead. The first includes graves with an oval/circular pit with remains from the pyre as well as rectangular pits with burned sides. The other group is represented by circular grave pits with a ceramic urn (mostly hand-made), which is often covered by a stone slab, or placed in a ring of stones, i.e. surrounded by stones (**Fig. 5**). The graves with stone caskets for the ashes of the dead also belong to this group; they are concentrated in one section of the necropolis, while the other graves of necropolis I are distributed without any particular order.¹³

Graves from the older necropolis in Komini contain simple grave goods, mostly composed of ceramic vessels (hand- or wheel-made) and metal objects (bronze fibulae of the Aucissa type, rare bronze coins, rings and earrings), while the graves with long knives and spears with their tip dug into the earth are especially interesting (**Figs. 6, 6a**).¹⁴

As we have already seen, according to the several investigated tumuli, cremation was not known in the earlier burial tradition, i.e. the native population used only inhumation under mounds. With the beginning of the new millennium, with the Roman occupation or even earlier, the burial

9 Јевтић 1992, 15; Јевтић, Ljuština 2008, 45.

10 Лазич, Церовић 2013.

11 The missing link should be sought in the inhumation burials under tumulus from Krajinovići (2nd/1st century BC) (Zotović 1985; Gabrovec, Čović 1987, 907; Jovanović 1987a, 828, 848; 1987b, 813).

12 See Cermanović-Kuzmanović (Цермановић-Кузмановић) in bibliography.

13 Cermanović-Kuzmanović 1980b; Цермановић-Кузмановић 1998; 2009.

14 This custom is also familiar to the Iapodes. Some links and analogies with the Iapodean pottery are notable as well (Cermanović-Kuzmanović 1980a, 227-232; Цермановић-Кузмановић 1998; 2009; Ружић 2009). Aleksandriņa Cermanović-Kuzmanović also denoted a significant similarity with the material from the Cetina river (the Delmate region) (Цермановић-Кузмановић 1998; 2009).

rite changed.¹⁵ Since there is no evidence that the native population had cremation in their own sepulchral tradition and according to the grave forms and material from them, which cannot be ascribed to the Romanized population, it is believed that the new grave forms were probably adopted from the neighbouring regions, where cremation was the dominant burial form in the pre-Roman period.¹⁶ So far, several assumptions have been made in relation to this issue. Grave forms and grave goods (especially pottery finds) are indicative of relations with the Iapodean, Dalmatian, Desidiatean and Dardanian cultural circles.¹⁷ According to the opinion of prof. Aleksandar Jovanović, grave pits without a recipient for the ashes of the dead, with the remains of the pyre or the pits with burned sides are older and belong to the native population.¹⁸ He supposes that this models came from the east or from the neighbouring territory of the Dardanians (the basic forms of the graves of Mala Kopašnica Sase type) at the turn of the new era, i.e. with the beginning of the Roman domination. The other grave form, the pits with urns or ash-chests (Aucissa type fibulae, long knives) appeared at the beginning of the 2nd century with the arrival of population from central Dalmatia.¹⁹ Moreover, it has been suggested that this depopulated area was resettled by groups of refugees of the Scordisci and Dardanians during the 2nd or the 1st century BC.²⁰

However, we are of the opinion that we could count on varied ethnic components in this territory in the pre-Roman and early Roman period, but we should also be very careful with any conclusions about the indigenous population. All of the suggestions should be taken with

caution, because the results of the excavations in Komini have not been completely published. They are the subject of a study which is in preparation.

On the other hand, the epigraphic material from the younger necropolis in Komini, dated between the second half of the 2nd century and the middle or the second half of the 4th century AD, is well known and published.²¹ The completely different picture of necropolis II indicates that the population buried in this necropolis was mostly Romanised. Besides the simple grave pits with a container for ashes of the dead (an urn or a stone ossuary), several monumental tombs of the so-called Aquileian type were built by notable citizens of Municipium S. who were, according to the onomastics, mostly of Illyrian origin (**Fig. 7**).²² However, we could consider the presence of varied (Celtic, Thracian) ethnical entities, too.²³

Thracian personal names are epigraphically attested during the 2nd and 3rd centuries AD in the mining area of present-day Northern Montenegro and Southwest Serbia. Several names from the Pljevlja and Prijepolje region, such as *Teres*,²⁴ *Bessus* and *Bessio*²⁵ could be of Thracian origin. But it is important to note that these few Thracian names should not be necessarily connected with the native population. It should be kept in mind that certain individuals or families could have been moved from other parts of Balkans to this territory during the Roman period.²⁶ The ethnic names are common in the epigraphic material from this region. From that point of view especially interesting are the names *Bessus* and *Bessio* which could be ethnics, or could derive from name of the Thra-

15 Jovanović 1984, 66.

16 This custom is characteristic after the middle of the I millennium BC in the wider Illyrian region, from the Iapodes in the north-west to southern Serbia and Kosovo in the south-east. It is suggested that this form could have been adopted from the north-western territory of the Illyrian/Pannonian tribe of the Daesidiates, or from the east, from the Illyrian-Thracian tribe of the Dardanians, as suggested by A. Jovanović. More about this issue: Cermanović-Kuzmanović 1980a, 227-232; Jovanović 1984, 66; and others from the bibliography.

17 Cermanović-Kuzmanović 1980a; Jovanović 1984; Цермановић-Кузмановић 1998; 2009.

18 Expanding on an idea of Evans (1885, 38), Jovanović suggested that the Pirustae were an autochthonous population, or one that resettled in the region of modern Northern Albania and North-Eastern Montenegro. About this problem see also Wilkes 1969; Цермановић-Кузмановић 2009; Jovanović 2011; 2012.

19 Jovanović 1984, 64-68.

20 Лазић, Церовић 2013.

21 Mirković 2013.

22 Wealthy members of the population were buried in grave pits with an ash chest (ossuary) of stone, often decorated, which frequently contained rich and various material imported from the farthest provinces of the Empire. The notable population of this Roman town also included veterans and soldiers from the legions and auxiliaries. Several graves with cremated remains containing weapons or equipment for the members of the auxiliaries were excavated in the necropolis II (see Cvijetić 2017).

23 Cermanović-Kuzmanović 1967; 1969; 1980b; Jovanović 1984; Mirković 2013 and others.

24 Alföldy 1965, 15, 98; Mirković 2013, 45, 48, 101 (Terens, Teres and Bessus); Katičić suggests that *Teres* (from *Terent*) and *Bessus* are Illyrian names (Katičić 1963, 264, 277).

25 It is interesting to note that the name *Bessus* is present in Dalmatia, Gallia, Noric, Dacia and Moesia Superior, but not on the territory of Thrace (see: Mirković 2013, 45).

26 Mirković 2013, 44-50.

cian tribe Bessi.²⁷ If we read carefully the historical sources, we will find a significant note in Appian. As he testifies, the Romans made war against the Bessi somewhere in the territory of Illyricum during the Second Triumvirate (35-33 BC).²⁸ A part of this Thracian tribe was then moved to Dalmatia by the order of M. Antonius. Some of them could have been settled in this metalliferous part of the province for the exploitation of silver.²⁹

According to the opinion of G. Alföldy, two more names from the territory of ancient Municipium S. could be of the Thracian origin. The name *Plares* is noticed in the region of Pljevlja and Prijepolje,³⁰ and the other one is known from Komini and Lever Tara. The name of *Aurelius Argyrianus*³¹ is mentioned with the function of imperial procurator on the inscription from the Mithras temple in Lever Tara. The official, by all accounts, carried out the administration of the mines in this area during the seventies of the 3rd century (**Fig. 8**).³² A couple of inscriptions from Čadinje near Prijepolje and Bijelo Polje confirm the exploitation of mineral resources in northern Montenegro and southwestern Serbia.³³

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Finally, a very attractive assumption is made by A. Jovanović. According to him, ancient *Thermidava*, listed by Ptolemy among the towns of the province of Dalmatia,³⁴ should probably be sought somewhere in the territory of northern Montenegro or northwest Albania. In his opinion, the etymology of the place name – *Thermidava* – a compound of the prefix *therme* – spa and the suffix *dava* – the Thracian name for a settlement, suggests a settlement developed near hot springs, and which has a Thracian component.³⁵ The connection between hot springs and mines is clear, but unfortunately from the archaeological point of view this territory is still a *terra incognita*.

In the end, we can only conclude that one of the most challenging but also the most difficult questions for the archaeologists is the problem of the development of an indigenous settlement into a Roman town. One of the most important tasks for the future exploration is at least a partial enlightening of the structure of the population the Romans found in this area at the turn of the new era.

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27 M. Mirković also suggests that this name could be also of Celtic origin, according to the significant number from the Gallic territories (Mirković 2013, 46; Lőrincz 2005, 289).

28 App. Ill. 1.16.

29 Alföldy 1965, 67-69; Јовановић 2012, 156.

30 According to the opinion prof. M. Mirković, *Plares* (also *Plarens*) belongs to the Illyrian names (Mirković 2013, 100).

31 According to G. Alföldy, the name Argyrianus/Argurianus could be of Thracian or Celtic origin (1964, 124). On the other side S. Loma suggested an Illyrian origin (Лома 2003-2004, 48) and M. Mirković reminds us that the reading of the name on a monument from Lever Tara is unsure. Further about this problem see Mirković 2013, 114, 99, note 114.

32 Loma 1999, 193-202; Лома 2003, 12, 21. About the organization of mining in the province of Dalmatia see Душанић 1980. On the administrative status of Eastern Dalmatia and eastern Dalmatian mines, see further Loma 1999; Лома 2003.

33 CIL III, 12715; Mirković 1975, 105, 106; ILJug 137, No. 1817; No. 1685; Лома 2003, 12, ref. 5; Cvijetić 2014, 64.

34 Ptol. 2.16(17).

35 Јовановић 2012, 155, 156.

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Figure 1. Prehistoric necropolis near Otilovići, Pljevlja, Montenegro. Documentation of Archaeological Collection, Faculty of Philosophy, Belgrade.

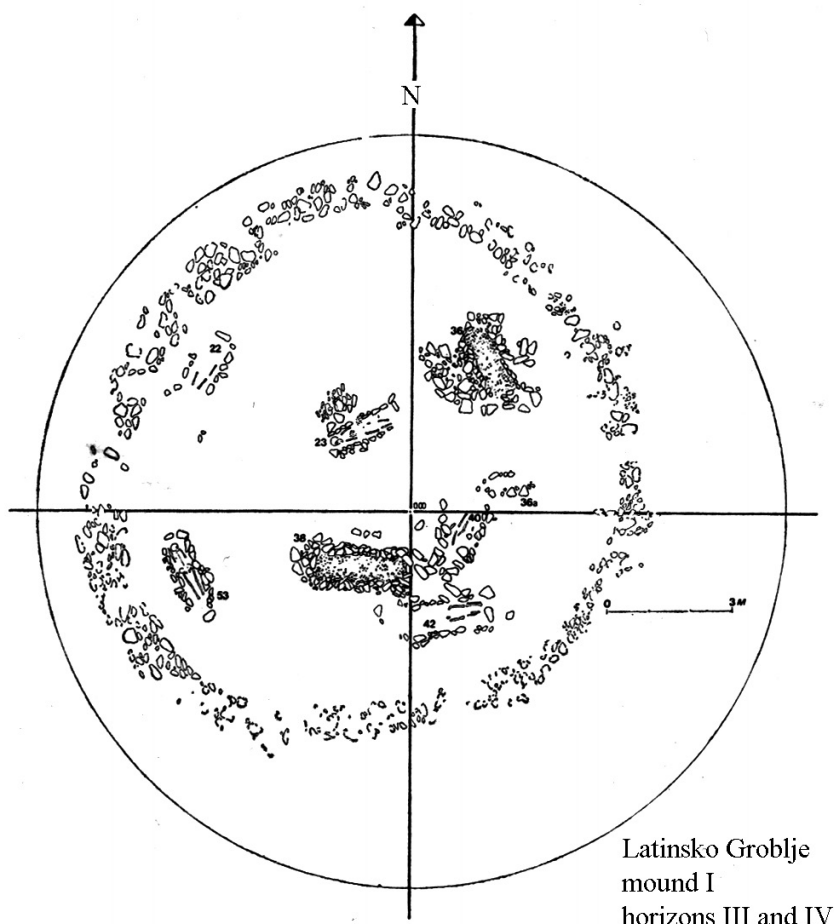


Figure 2. Glogovik, Latinsko Groblje, Serbia: Mound I (Ilemuqa 1982).

Latinsko Groblje
mound I
horizons III and IV



Figure 3. Glogovik, Latinsko Groblje, Serbia: fibula from Mound II (Jevtić 1990).

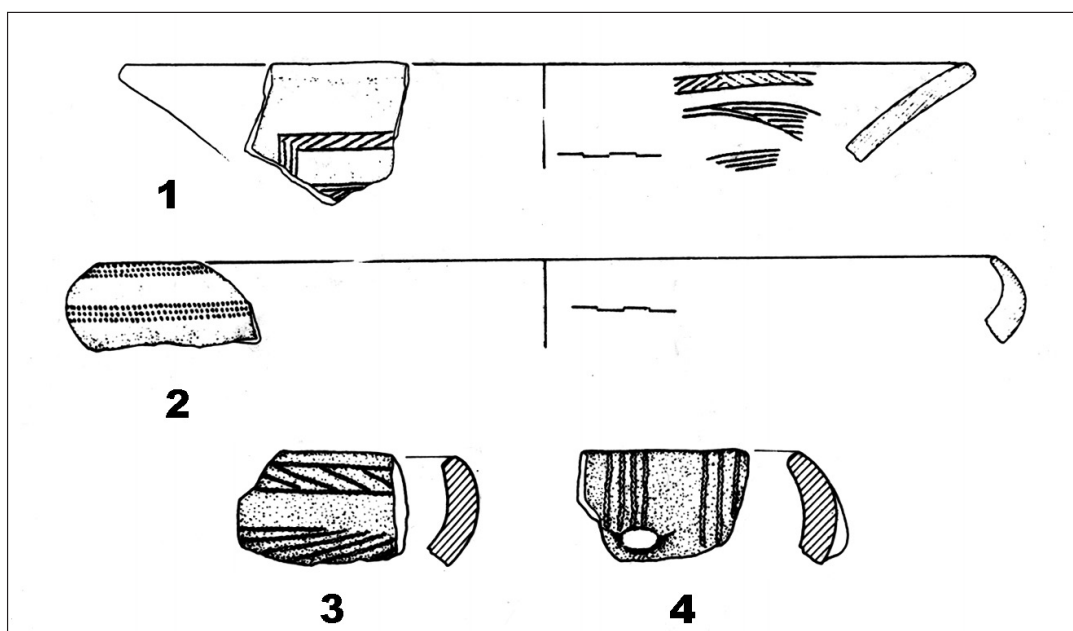


Figure 4. Melaje, Livada kod džamije, Serbia: Basarabi pottery (Jesmuh 1992).



Figure 5. Komini, Montenegro: ceramic urn covered and surrounded by stones from necropolis I. Documentation of Archaeological Collection, Faculty of Philosophy, Belgrade.



Figure 6. Komini, Montenegro: grave with long knife, necropolis I. Documentation of Archaeological Collection, Faculty of Philosophy, Belgrade.



Figure 6a. Komini, Montenegro: long knife, necropolis I. Documentation of Archaeological Collection, Faculty of Philosophy, Belgrade.



Figure 7. Komini (Municipium S.) Montenegro: monumental tomb of the so-called Aquileian type, necropolis II. Documentation of Archaeological Collection, Faculty of Philosophy, Belgrade.



Figure 8. Lever Tara, Montenegro: Inscription from Mithras temple. Documentation of Archaeological Collection, Faculty of Philosophy, Belgrade.