

# THE BLAGOTIN AMULETS AND THEIR PLACE IN THE EARLY NEOLITHIC OF THE CENTRAL BALKANS

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**Abstract:** *This paper presents a detailed typological analysis of 65 amulets found inside the architectural structures of a Neolithic settlement at Blagotin. The aim of this paper is to emphasize the importance of this excessively large number of this kind of finds in relation to other contemporary sites, as well as the importance of the context and their spatial distribution within the structures, especially the fact that 25 specimens lay on the virgin soil of a pit-dwelling. The importance of the amulets as chronologically sensitive finds characteristic of the earliest phase of the Early Neolithic, i.e. the phase Proto-Starčevo is indicated.*

**Key words:** *Blagotin, Starčevo culture, amulets, Early Neolithic, context, spatial distribution, chronology.*

The small “T” or “Y” shaped finds collected at Early Neolithic sites are often named amulets in the literature. Although they are very rare at most sites, with only one or two specimens present, their importance seems to have been underestimated in the literature. The scant information given is usually limited to a rough description, and data about the number of such artifacts and their context and spatial distribution are completely lacking. In spite of this, their function is discussed frequently and the opinions expressed on the matter are usually contradictory.

In the course of the systematic excavations conducted between 1991 and 2002 at Blagotin, a considerable number of these objects, made of different materials, were found within the investigated area covering 300 m<sup>2</sup>. Given the quantity and the archaeological context, these finds represent an important collection that may be employed as a basis for the study of early Neolithic amulets.

## *Classification and Typology*

The group of amulets includes small sculpted “T” or “Y” shaped forms, with small horned extensions in the upper part as their main characteristic.

The body of an amulet, however, may have various forms (Stanković 1992: 162). Sixty-five amulets were found at Blagotin, and most of them are made of clay (47 specimens). Twenty-two specimens have a medium fabric, mostly sand-tempered, and 21 a fine fabric, with the admixtures of fine sand. The colour of the ceramic amulets varies from red to brown. The amulets made of various kinds of stone are the second best represented group (15 specimens), while the group of the amulets made of bone comprises only three samples. The height of the amulets varies from 0.8 cm to 9.3 cm. In contrast to other Starčevo sites, no decorated samples have been recovered at Blagotin.

The typological analysis of the amulets from Blagotin is made according to the typology suggested by Stanković (1992: 165–168, table 7). Nine basic types, with many variants, are distinguished:<sup>1</sup>

1. *Type B*. Represented by amulets circular in cross section, with spindly bodies and symmetric profiles. This is the most frequent type of amulet found at Blagotin and is represented by 19 specimens – all of them made of clay (fig. 1/1–3). The amulets of this type show a wide variety of dimensions: the height ranging between 1.3 and 4.9 cm. A sample with an asymmetric profile, *i.e.* a shape with flattened rear and convex front part of the body, represents a specific variant of this type (fig. 1/4).

2. *Type C*. This type is represented by a “shortened” shape: with an emphasized upper part with horned extensions, the lower part of the body, being very short and massive, looks as if it were cut. Only one specimen (fig. 1/5) made of clay belongs to this group.

3. *Type D*. Represented by samples shaped like a spool, *i.e.* forms with upper and lower parts modeled in the same manner, with horned extensions. Three samples, made of clay (fig. 1/8), and one made of stone (fig. 1/6) were found.

4. *Type E*. The amulets with bodies modeled in the shape of a wedge, circular in cross section and with a symmetric profile, are the second most frequent type of amulets at Blagotin. They are made of various materials: ten of clay (fig. 1/9), two of stone and two of bone (fig. 1/7, 10). Two bone amulets have bodies ellipsoidal in cross section – a form that was possibly conditioned by the kind of material. The amulets with very short horned ends represent a specific variant (type E1). There are also some samples with a flattened rear part of the body (fig. 1/9). The amulets of this type are of somewhat larger dimensions, varying in height from 3 cm to 5.7 cm.

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<sup>1</sup> Stanković's Type A, (1992: 165–168, table 7), represented by tongue-shaped amulets with a broad body, is completely absent at Blagotin.

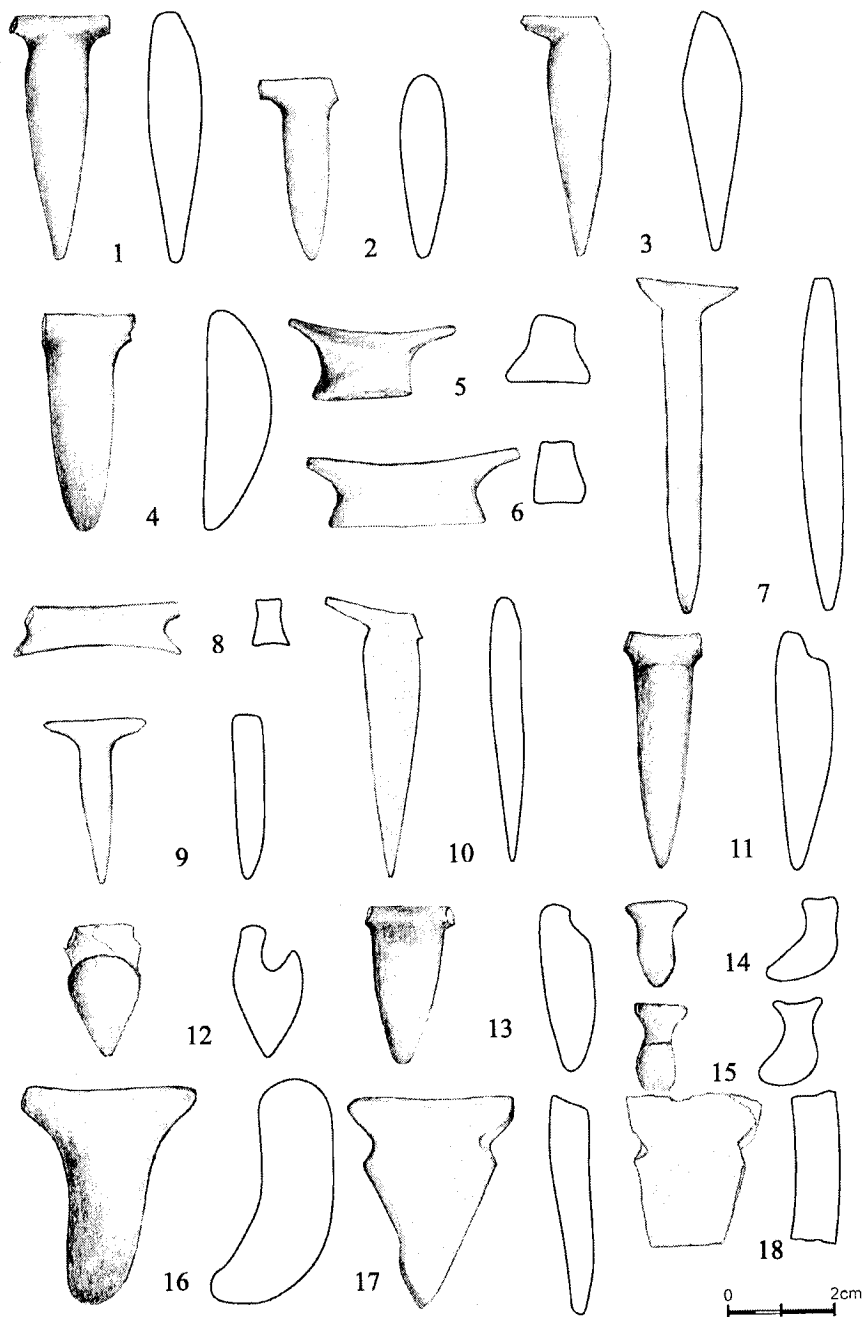


Fig. 1. Amulets.

5. *Type G*. This type differs from all others in that it has a shallow or deep groove on the upper part of the body, immediately below the horned extensions. The variants of this type can be distinguished according to the shape of the body (spindly, tongue-shaped, wedge-shaped, etc.). Four samples made of clay were found at Blagotin. Two samples with spindly bodies (fig. 1/11, 13) have a very shallow, slightly profiled groove. A variant of this type features a specific shape characterized by a short, stocky body and a very deep groove (fig. 1/12). Within this type, it is not uncommon to find a flattened rear part of the body (fig. 1/11). The variant with globular body, which is most frequently represented at the sites in the Danube Gorges (Stanković 1992: T. 39), is completely absent at Blagotin.

6. *Type H*, is represented by amulets with arched body, curved inwards. This type is rare at Blagotin – only three specimens. The example in fig. 1/16 has short horned extensions, but is comparatively large in size (height of 3.8 cm). The two others are better considered as a variant of this type than as classical representatives of it. They are very small in size (less than 2 cm high) (fig. 1/14, 15), with very short extensions.

7. *Type K*. This group consists of amulets with various forms, made of stone (12 specimens). They are characterized by large dimensions and careless, “rustic” workmanship. Since this group of amulets is published in detail elsewhere (Stanković 1996) we shall not describe it here.

8. *Type L*. This type differs from other types in the shape of the body. These amulets have spindly or wedge-shaped forms, without horned extensions. Their upper part is modeled as a circle. This type is characteristic of the Neolithic in Thessaly (Budja 2003: 118). Only two specimens made of clay were found at Blagotin.

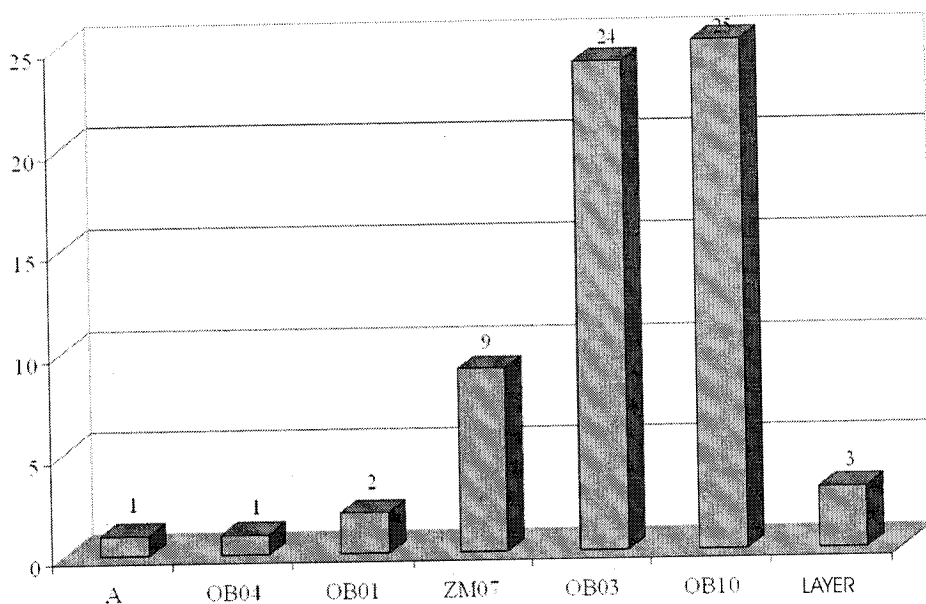
9. *Type O*. This is a special type which provides evidence of secondary use of fragments of ceramic vessels. The amulets of the type O were made of the bodies of broken vessels. The vessels were of fine fabric and had burnished surfaces (fig. 1/17, 18).

Finally, five fragmented amulets, which are typologically unclassifiable, should also be mentioned.

It is important to point out that the typological analysis focused in part on the identification of marks of use. With the exception of the earlier published stone amulets, the marks are noted on only one bone amulet (fig. 1/7). These are very fine notches, visible immediately below the horned extension. The question is whether these are marks of use or tying, or if they were created in the course of production. No marks can be detected on any other specimens.

*Archaeological Context and Spatial Distribution*

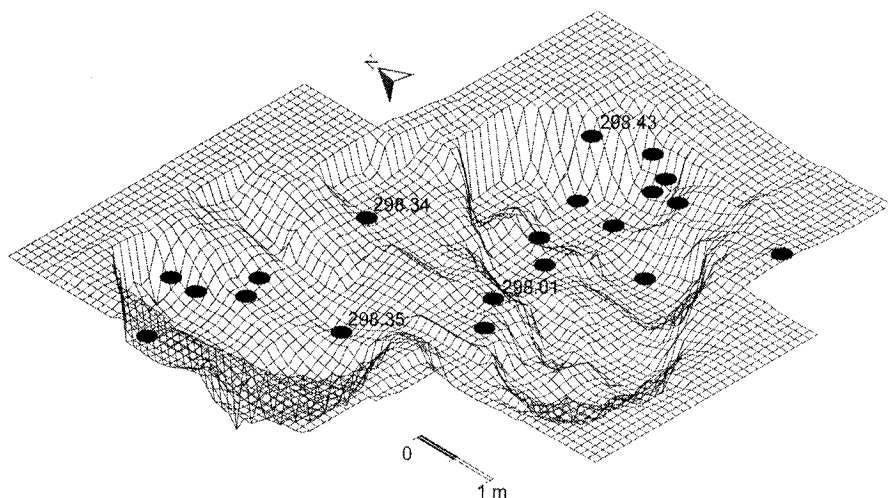
Solving the issue of the context and spatial distribution of the amulets is an essential step in order to shed some light on their function. At the beginning, it should be noted that only three amulets were found within the cultural layer, while all others were discovered in dwelling structures (fig. 2). Most amulets (24 and 25 specimens) are from two dwelling structures (OB03 and OB10). It may come as a surprise that in the place of cult worship, the so-called shrine (ZM07), where a large number of cult objects were found (sacrificial altars, models of wheat grain, figurines, and two figures of large dimensions), only eight specimens of amulets were found. In other structures one or two specimens were found in each.



**Fig. 2.** Archaeological context of amulets at Blagotin.

Only one detailed analysis of the spatial distribution of amulets in an individual structure has been made so far – the one concerning structure 10 (fig. 3).<sup>2</sup> The frequency of the types in the structure is as follows: the amulets with spin-

<sup>2</sup> The picture shows the position of 20 amulets. As for the other five, we know only about the quadrant and the excavation layer, while coordinates have not been taken. Although the coordinates of the quadrant base which they came from allows assumption that most likely they were lying on the virgin soil, they are excluded from this drawing.



**Fig. 3.** Spatial distribution of amulets in structure 10.

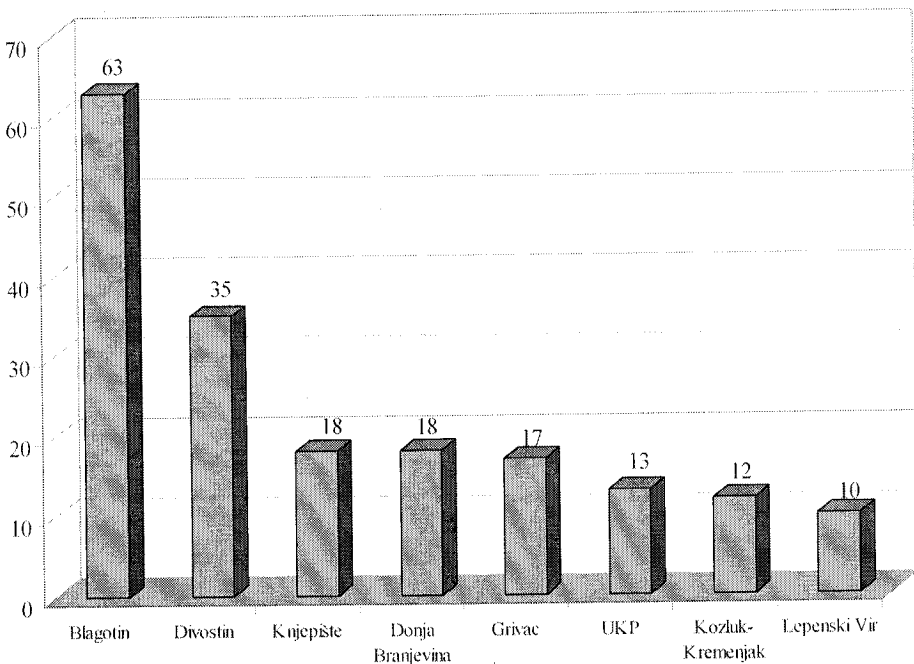
dly and wedge-shaped bodies (types B and E – nine and six samples respectively) are most frequent, followed by roughly made stone amulets – five samples, and other types – all together only five specimens. There is no regularity in the horizontal distribution of the amulets; they were more or less evenly distributed over the whole surface. But their vertical distribution is surprising. All amulets in this structure were lying on the virgin soil regardless of whether they were found in one of the two rooms or in the bank between them. At present, we are pretty certain that at least two amulets found in another structure (OB03) were also lying on the virgin soil.

The fact that the two above-mentioned structures were initially used as dwellings (semi pit-dwellings), but were later abandoned and used as a waste pits has to be pointed out. An unusually large amount of material, especially pottery (Vuković 2004), provides evidence for this assumption. At first, it was not clear whether the 25 amulets lying directly on the virgin soil could be considered part of the pit-dwelling inventory, or if they were among the first objects deposited in the waste pit. The first possibility seems more likely. It seems unlikely that residents of the settlement at Blagotin first cleared the rubble of the older pit-dwelling down to the level of the virgin soil, and after that started using the cleared pit to deposit their waste. Therefore, there should be no doubt that the amulets belong to the pit-dwelling inventory.

*Amulets from Blagotin in Relation to Finds from Other Sites*

Blagotin differs from all other contemporary sites is that in yielded a large number of amulets from the Early Neolithic layer. Amulets are known from at least 22 sites in Serbia and Montenegro (Stanković 1992; Bogdanović 2004; Vetnić 1974: 134; McPherron, Rasson and Galdikas 1988; Marković 1985; Јовановић 1968; Todorović 1968). However, at most sites only a small number of amulets were found, one or a few specimens. The sites with more amulets are rare (fig. 4). Blagotin, with an unusually large number of amulets (65 specimens) tops the list. The second on the list is Divostin, with about half the number (35 specimens) of amulets found at Blagotin. For this reason, the amulets from Blagotin, with carefully noted context and positions, have to be taken as a reference collection and the basis for studying and interpreting these finds.

We do not have much data about the context of the amulet finds at other Starčevo sites. Twenty amulets from Divostin are known to have been found in clearly defined contexts, mostly inside pit-dwelling 4 (14 specimens), or within other units, while 8 samples came from the layer (McPherron, Rasson and Galdikas 1988: 326–327). However, no data about their distribution inside the pit-dwelling is available.



**Fig. 4.** Early Neolithic (Proto-Starčevo) sites with amulets.

The question why the number of amulets varies from one or a few to many – as is the case for Blagotin, remains unanswered. Even at Blagotin itself a disproportionate number of amulets were found in individual dwelling structures. Only two amulets were found in structure 1, and only one in pit-dwelling A and structure 4. One plausible answer might be that the presence of amulets was linked to the wealth or standing of their holders in the community. However, there is no evidence to support this assumption, so, for the time being, the question must remain open. Considering the number of amulets found there, Blagotin could be seen as sort of regional centre. This said, we should not forget that Divostin, the site with the second largest collection, and Grivac are both located in the surrounding area.

Data on the spatial distribution of amulets inside an architectural structure is rare in the literature. At Lepenski Vir, as in OB10 at Blagotin, a group of five amulets was found on the floor of a house (Јовановић 1968). The situation at Knjepište is similar – four samples were found at the bottom of a pit-dwelling (Stanković 1992: 179). An amulet was lying on the floor of a dwelling structure dug into the ground at Ušće Kameničkog Potoka (UKP) (Stanković 1992: 179). As for the amulets from the other sites (Grivac, Donja Branjevina), we can only say that, in the broadest sense, they came from dwelling structures – pit-dwellings.

When amulets are discussed, some sites in Bulgaria should be mentioned. A large number of amulets (a total of 21 specimens) came from the site of Rakitovo (Matsanova 2003: 65). Most amulets (12 specimens) were found around the entrance to the cult structure, where many ritual objects were also found.

### *The Function of Amulets*

In contrast to the lack of information regarding the context and distribution of the amulets apart from the summarized typological attribution, the function of the amulets has been frequently discussed in the literature.

One of the dissonant opinions perceives the amulets as “labrets” or “labial wedges” (Karmanski 1987). Although the author relied on ethnological parallels, this opinion is supported by some archaeological data. The use of identical objects as “labial wedges” has been confirmed in the Neolithic of southwestern Iran (Hole, Flannery and Neely 1969: 235–237). Labrets were found in situ in graves next to mandibles. Furthermore, the abrasion caused by contact with a labret was confirmed on the outer surfaces of the incisors. However, in spite of the similarity in shape, it is unlikely that the Starčevo amulets can be used in this way since abrasion would have appeared on their upper part as a result of contact with the teeth. The issue of the context seems to be even more important. Graves from the Early Neolithic are rare in the region,



but amulets have never been found as part of grave goods. As we have already explained, the amulets are exclusively connected with houses.

According to a more recent opinion, amulets are objects used for counting and storing of goods (Budja 1998). This view is based on the existence of small objects with various, but standardized shapes in the Near East, that have been interpreted as a calculation and goods registering system emerging in the process of the transition towards an agricultural economy. They are mostly objects with geometric shapes (cones, discs), but some other shapes also appear. According to the author, in the Early Neolithic the population of southeast Europe developed their own forms of these objects, that do not necessarily display a typological relation to those from the Near East. Amulets as well as zoomorphic figurines may be among these objects. The main argument supporting this view is the standardized form of these objects. However, it remains unclear why new forms of objects related to new economic conditions were created in southeast Europe in the Early Neolithic, which had been “imported” from the East, while in the Late Neolithic the same forms, common in the Near East back in the times of the transition to agricultural economy, were re-introduced.

This view can certainly be supported by the fact that there are no marks left of use or tying on any amulets. But, how can we explain the distribution of the amulets inside structure 10 at Blagotin? The large number of amulets found there may justify the interpretation of this structure as kind of a “trade centre”, or a place where records on the exchange of foodstuffs were kept. But this explanation fails to explain why we have traces of “records” for only one kind of commodity when it would be logical to expect at least one other kind of object with a standardized form. Similarly, if the amulets were tokens of this kind, they would surely have been kept together, not evenly “scattered” over the whole of the pit-dwelling floor area. Neither does this explain their exclusive presence on the floor or even below the floor of the dwelling structure.

Most commonly, these small finds are interpreted as cult objects. Sometimes they are considered to be bucranions (Matsanova 2003; Elenski 2004), or anthropomorphic representations (Matsanova 2003; Elenski 2004). This dualist interpretation was offered in one of the first works on this kind of object (Јовановић 1968). When interpreted as representations of the bull, the important characteristics of the animal (strength as a male principle and fertility) and the fact that cattle were important game animals in the economy of Early Neolithic communities are usually emphasized (Stanković 1992: 162).

This view is further supported by the fact that at Blagotin and other sites, the existence of any marks left by use or tying could not be confirmed on the amulets (Stanković 1992: 179; Јовановић 1968: 16–17). Therefore, it was assumed that the amulets could have been carried wrapped in leather or somewhere in clothes (Stanković 1992: 173). According to this interpretation, an amulet is any object carried by an individual for spiritual protection. But, as we

have already pointed out, as far as the context is concerned, the amulets are always connected with dwelling structures. This justifies the assumption that they are connected with the cult activities of individual households, that is to say a family or a household. Blagotin is a very good example of this, if we compare the contents of the structures 3 and 10 and the cult site (ZM07). Although the cult site is very rich in various ritual objects (Nikolić and Zečević 2001; Stanković and Leković 1993), the number of amulets present here is much smaller than the number of the amulets in the dwelling structures. We think it important to reemphasize the fact that all 25 amulets in structure 10 were lying on the virgin subsoil. As already mentioned, such a situation is not unknown at other sites (Lepenski Vir, Knjepište, Ušće Kameničkog potoka). The only possible interpretation of the way the amulets were distributed seems to be to connect them with cult, especially if we consider that the practice of laying of amulets in the house floors for protection is known in some other geographical regions (Budge 1968). Here we should be reminded of the finds from Rakitovo, with the amulets found inside the entrance to the cult structure.

Finally, the possibility of interpreting the amulets as utilitarian objects with a function yet to be explained should not be discarded. The shape of type E undoubtedly resembles a wedge, and the shapes of types C and D resemble spools. Accordingly, the wedge-shaped amulets found on the floor of the structure 10 could be interpreted as wedges for a kind of a tent-like structure. At first sight, the grooves on the amulets of type G also indicate a utilitarian function. There are some interpretations arguing that the amulets are composite objects with the grooves functioning as joints (Stanković 1992: 170). A powerful argument opposing this interpretation is the fact already mentioned that no marks of use or tying have ever been detected on any specimen. This is especially true for the amulets with grooves, because they are so burnished and uniform that any idea of their possible daily use must be rejected. Sometimes amulets can be small in size, which also excludes the possibility that they may have been used as some sort of tool. In addition, if they were utilitarian objects, a more or less uniform number would be present at all sites, as is the case for other types of tool.

#### *Relative Chronological Importance of Amulets*

The position that the amulets hold in the relative chronological relations is an important issue that warrants our attention. The chronological associations of the amulets, if mentioned at all in the literature, are very vague: they are said to be characteristic of “the earliest phases of Starčevo culture” (Stanković 1992: 178), the Early Neolithic in the Balkans (Јовановић 1968: 18), Proto-Starčevo culture (Срејовић 1997: 859), etc. On the other hand, some authors, although they admit that amulets appear in the monochrome phase, do not exclude the possibility of their occurrence in the late phases as well –

notably in Stačevo, Kereš and in Transylvania (Budja 2003: 120). These are very general, sometimes contradictory statements however, and it seems advisable to look for other characteristic small items that are usually found with the amulets.

When the features of the most common portable material – ceramic vessels – from the sites where amulets were found are observed, the picture becomes somewhat clearer. As explained in the table 1, this pottery is always of the kind typical of the early phases of the Starčevo culture, or more precisely, the Proto-Starčevo phase.<sup>3</sup> Based on detailed analysis (Vuković 2004), the pottery from structure 03 at Blagotin is dated to the very end of Proto-Starčevo II, according to the periodization scheme suggested by Srejević (Срејовић 1969), or the end of the stage Linear-A, according to periodization of Dimitrijević (1974). The pottery from other sites where amulets were also found displays similar characteristics. It is important to note that amulets have never been found at any site assigned to the late phases of Starčevo culture, *i.e.* as the literature commonly describes it – the Middle Neolithic.

In addition, we should not forget to look at the chronological position of amulets from other sites in the Balkan Peninsula. In Greece, they have been found at Nea Nikomedia (Rodden 1962: 285), Achileion, Sesklo, Yanitza and some other sites – all associated with the Early Neolithic (Budja 2003). They have also been found in Bulgaria at a number of sites: Rakitovo (Matsanova 2003), Koprivec (Vajsov 1998; Elenski 2004), Pomoštica, Orlovec, Salsko, Džuljunica-Smardeš (Elenski 2004). They are all dated to the Early Neolithic and are associated with the cultural group Koprivec I (Vajsov 1998: 134, fig. 12; Elenski 2004: 17).

On the basis of this summarized survey of the relative chronological position of the sites in Serbia and Montenegro, but also in the broader region of the Balkan Peninsula, where amulets were found, the conclusion that amulets occurred only in the Early Neolithic can be clearly drawn. Accordingly, they should be seen as chronologically sensitive finds.

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<sup>3</sup> Unfortunately, material from most sites has been published only in summary, so that it is not always possible to find sufficient data that may allow chronological association. We cannot discuss in detail the issues of relative-chronological division of the Starčevo culture here, because it would go beyond the scope of this paper. For more information about the criteria for chronological associations of material (first of all the presence/absence of impresso and barbotine, but also the quantity of decorated pottery, etc.) see: Nikolić (2001); Vuković (2004).

**Table 1.** Starčevo sites, with pottery characteristics and number of amulets found.

Site	Pottery Characteristics	Number of Amulets	Source
Banja-Arandelovac	Rectangular vessel with C-shaped spiral; impresso, applied bands, ribs, knob-shaped ornaments (Banja I); impresso, incisions, barbotine (Banja II)	4	Bogdanović 1988 McPherron <i>et al.</i> 1988
Bukovče	1/5 decorated; impresso is most frequent; no organized barbotine	1	Vetnić 1972
Divostin	Applied C-shaped spiral, impresso prevails in decorated pottery	35	Bogdanović 1987 McPherron <i>et al.</i> 1988
Dobanovci-Cigłana	Undecorated pottery prevails; impresso is most favoured ornamentation technique; no barbotine; fine red-coloured pottery, decorated with applied bands forming circles or spirals	4	Todorović 1968 Stanković 1992
Donja Branjevina	Decorated pottery is scarce, impresso prevails; fine monochrome red pottery	18	Karmanski 1979 Stanković 1992
Drenovac	Impresso prevails; shell imprints; barbotine is rare; implement imprints	unknown	Vetnić 1974
Zmajevac	Monochrome pottery prevails; globular, hemispherical, pear-like and oval shapes; decoration: impresso prevails, applied knob-shaped ornaments; monochrome with burnished slip	unknown	Katunar 1988
Grivac	Conical plates prevail; impresso prevails; applied sticking elements decorated with finger impression; arched applied bands; applied C-shaped spirals, quadrangular vessels	17	Bogdanović 2004
Idvor	Not published	1	Stanković 1992
Jasenovik	Not published	1	Stanković 1992
Knjepište	Undecorated pottery prevails; red slip from both sides is common; decoration techniques – impresso; white painting	18	Stanković 1986a Stanković 1992
Kozluk – Kremenjak	Mostly monochrome, red; conical bowls prevail; amphorae and pithoi with pronounced curves that stick out; undecorated pottery prevails	12	Јовановић 1968
Kremečtica	Incision and impresso prevail, but with some barbotine too; applied wavy bands; simple shapes, globular and C-profiled vessels	2	Marković 1985
Kučajna	Undecorated pottery with burnished surfaces prevail; random impresso is most common; a few fragments with barbotine	1	Stanojević 1990 Stanković 1992
Lepenski Vir	Decorated pottery is scarce; impresso prevails; finely modeled ribs on fine pottery and applied bands on coarse pottery; applied C-shaped spiral	10	Срејовић 1969 Stanković 1992
Magareći Mlin	Monochrome pottery; globular and hemispherical forms; decoration: impresso, incision, applied bands; fine pottery with finely burnished slip	1	Leković 1988 Stanković 1992
Minine Vode	Not published	1	Stanković 1992
Ornice-Makrešane	Arched applied bands; fine pottery with burnished red slip; coarse and intermediary pottery decorated with impresso and applied bands; barbotine is rare	2	Stanković 1988 Stanković 1992
Rudnik – Kosmet	Monochrome red polished pottery is most frequent; impresso prevail in decoration techniques on coarse pottery; barbotine is rare; applied spiral	4	Tasić 1998
Ušće Kameničkog potoka	A small percent of pottery is decorated; red slip from both sides is common; mostly coarse and intermediary; decoration techniques: impresso, applied bands	13	Stanković 1986b Stanković 1992
Velesnica	No painting; impresso prevails – organized or random, incised lines; barbotine is rare	2	Vasić 1986 Stanković 1992

## CONCLUSION

Finally, we deem it necessary to draw attention to some further facts. The amulets from Blagotin constitute the biggest collection of these finds from Starčevo culture sites. Their spatial distribution on the virgin soil inside pit-dwellings is very indicative and, in spite of many suggested interpretations, most probably indicates cult purposes. Since there are no marks of use, it is not very likely that these objects were ever actively used during any ceremony. However, their passive role may be assumed – they are objects that were not often moved or employed, and that were laid on the floor or under it for the protection of house and its residents. On the basis of the characteristics of the pottery found at the sites where amulets were also found, amulets are noted to be lacking at the sites associated with the late phases of the Starčevo culture, so that they may be considered characteristic of the Proto-Starčevo phase. Therefore, there is no doubt that these objects are chronologically sensitive, or in other words, they are an important chronological indicator.

It follows from this that amulets deserve much more attention; the issue of their function, however, should not be the first step. On the contrary, since the information on the amulets is sketchy, the first task for researches to undertake should be to define in detail their context, their spatial distribution inside architectural structures and their relations to other kinds of portable finds. The number of amulets inside individual structures at the same site, their interrelations, and the relation between amulets from different sites expressed in numbers, are all important subjects to be studied. The disproportionate frequency of amulets also remains an open question with no answer so far. Only when sufficient information about these issues becomes available will it be possible to achieve an appropriate interpretation, and explain their function with more certainty.

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ЈАСНА ВУКОВИЋ

АМУЛЕТИ СА ЛОКАЛИТЕТА БЛАГОТИН И ЊИХОВО МЕСТО  
У СТАРИЈЕМ НЕОЛИТУ ЦЕНТРАЛНОГ БАЛКАНА

## Резиме

На старијенеолитском локалитету Благотин код Трстеника у централној Србији, у току истраживања у периоду између 1991. и 2002. на површини од око 300 m<sup>2</sup>, откривен је изузетно велики број амулета, укупно 65 примерака. Амulette са Благотина су у највећем проценту израђени од керамике (47 примерака), а нешто мање их је од камена (15 примерака) и кости (3 примерка). Извршена је типолошка анализа. Највећи број амулета припада типу амулета са вретенастим телом (тип Б) (сл. 1/1–3), на другом месту су амulette у форми клина (тип Е) (сл. 1/7, 9–10). Поред њих, заступљени су и облици „калема” (сл. 1/6, 8), облици који су издвојени као посебан тип на основу присуства плићег или дубљег жлеба непосредно испод рожастих продужетака (сл. 1/11–13), затим амulette са телом лучно повијеним ка унутра (сл. 1/14–15), амulette посебних форми израђени од камена, као и примерци израђени од трбуха поломљених посуда (сл. 1/17–18). Ни на једном примерку нису констатовани трагови употребе. Посебно је значајно питање контекста и просторне дистрибуције амулета у оквиру стамбених објеката. Највећи број амулета са Благотина потиче из два стамбена објекта (25, односно 24 примерка). У оквиру култног места, тзв. „светилишта” (ЗМ07) пронађено је, супротно очекивањима, свега 8 примерака (сл. 2). Анализа просторне дистрибуције, извршена за објекат 10, показује да су сви амulette из овог објекта лежали на здравици (сл. 3). Када је у питању други објекат, за сада се са сигурношћу може рећи да су најмање два амulette такође лежала на здравици. Амulette су пронађени на 22 старијенеолитска локалитета у Србији и Црној Гори. На већини је пронађен веома мали број примерака. Локалитети на којима је пронађен већи број су ређи; Благотин, са необично великим бројем амулета (65 примерака) предњачи, док први следећи, Дивостин, броји скоро дупло мање (сл. 4). Зато се амulette са Благотина морају схватити као полазна, референтна збирка и основа за проучавање и интерпретацију ових налаза. О контексту налаза амулета са других старчевачких локалитета има веома мало информација. Углавном је познато да су пронађени у оквиру земуница, односно стамбених објеката, али о просторној дистрибуцији у оквиру њих готово да нема података. Амulette су на подовима земуница потврђени само на Лепенском Виру, Књепишту и Ушћу Каменичког Потока. О функцији предмета које називамо амuletима било је много различитих мишљења. Они се некад сматрају „лабретама”, односно „усним клиновима”, међутим, ово становиште се, по нашем уверењу, мора одбацити јер контекст налаза указује на то да су они везани искључиво за кућни простор. Према другом мишљењу,

ради се о предметима који служе за пребројавање намирница. У прилог овом мишљењу свакако би ишла чињеница да на амулетима никада нема трагова коришћења или везивања. Оно што, међутим, овом објашњењу недостаје јесте одговор на питање зашто на Благотину имамо трагове „записа” само о једној врсти намирница. Друго, уколико се ради о оваквим предметима, амулети би сигурно били похрањени заједно, а не би били уједначено „распршени” по целој површини земунце. Такође, овиме се не објашњава чињеница да се они налазе искључиво на поду или чак испод пода стамбеног објекта. Тако долазимо до најчешће интерпретације амулета као култних предмета, било да се они сматрају букранионима или шематизованим антропоморфним фигуринама. Ако се прихвати овакво тумачење, амулети су предмети који су полагани на под или испод њега ради заштите куће и укућана. Значајан је и хронолошки положај амулета. Наиме, на основу особина осталог археолошког материјала, првенствено керамике са старчевачких локалитета (табела 1), јасно је да се амулети јављају искључиво у најстаријим фазама старчевачке културе, тј. протостарчевачкој фази. Зато се намеће закључак да би амулете требало сматрати хронолошки осетљивом врстом налаза. Амулети са других налазишта на Балканском полуострву, из Бугарске и Грчке, потврђују овакво становиште јер потичу са локалитета који се увек опредељују у најстарије фазе неолита. Коначно, важно је поново истаћи да се амулетима облика слова „Т” или „У” мора посветити много више пажње. Питање функције ових ситних налаза не би требало да буде почетни корак. Напротив, с обзиром на то да су информације о амулетима изузетно штуре, први задатак истраживача био би детаљно утврђивање контекста и њихове просторне дистрибуције у оквиру архитектонских објеката, као и односа са другим врстама покретних налаза. Бројчана заступљеност амулета у оквиру појединачних објеката на једном локалитету и њихови међусобни односи, као и бројчани односи амулета са више локалитета, такође представљају веома важно поље истраживања. Тек када буде доступан довољан број информација о овим питањима, са већом сигурношћу моћи ће да буде понуђена одговарајућа интерпретација, односно тумачење њихове функције.

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