

## And now, what's going to happen to us without barbarians?<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract:** This article focusses on the notion of barbarians and the process of barbarization in the archaeological interpretations. The main question is how can scholars identify the presence of barbarians starting from the material record? In other words, why are the processes of barbarization, disintegration and destruction usually associated with particular ethnicities?

**Key words:** archaeology, epistemology, barbarization, disintegration, destruction

The quote from the famous poem of Constantine Cavafy '*Waiting for the barbarians*'<sup>2</sup> is used here as the title and as an invitation for reassessing the basis of archaeological epistemology, that is, for assessing the way we formulate archaeological categories (e. g. population, artifacts, research). In the broadest sense, the aim of this paper is to reconsider the construction of past collective identities, specifically the kind of identities that are identified as barbarian. I will firstly deal with the contextualization of interpretive tools that are related to the notion of barbarism, and then discuss some of the key interpretations of barbarians and the barbarization in the history of Serbian archaeology.

To begin with, one should note that archaeology benefits from different approaches to *epistemology*. These approaches, as superior frameworks of

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<sup>2</sup> [www.cavafy.com](http://www.cavafy.com), 15. 09. 2013.

to accept that its (academic) language is all but neutral. Furthermore, this constructivist type of analysis emerges as a considerable challenge. Following this, reasons emerge for reconsideration of understanding of barbarism and barbarization; those concepts are often used, but rarely clearly articulated. The very fact that these concepts are assumed or implied (used as 'commonplaces') requires an archaeological problematization.<sup>5</sup>

The present aim is to investigate the confrontation of writing strategies in archaeology on one hand, and, on the other hand, barbarism as a matrix which can store 'commonplaces' and, by virtue of its generality, can establish most diverse stereotypes of the Other,. The term barbarism in Serbian archaeology can be seen as a consequence of accepting *a priori* categorization of past communities, taken from historical sources, especially the classical ones, with rudimentary impacts of unilinear social evolutionism.<sup>6</sup> As Alojz Benac (archaeologist from the times of former Yugoslavia) remarked:

'It is widely known from ancient sources that wide groupings, here listed, consisted of a multitude of small and large tribes or tribal communities. It is of a great interest to determine what the essential meanings of these terms are. It is known that in the definition of 'tribe' there are different perceptions and interpretation, as it is the case with the term 'ethnos'. This term is used in many regions of the world, in the so-called primitive societies, then in the ancient times and during the Middle Ages in Europe.'<sup>7</sup>

This paper's intention is not to reconsider the 'tribal' communities that archaeology deals with, but rather to address the mechanisms that bring out the anachronistic phenomena behind the concept of tribe and the ways those phenomena are used in the interpretation of the past.

The work of Geertz *Works and Lives: The Anthropologist as Author*<sup>8</sup> is a good starting point when it comes to problematizing archaeological writing. One of the problems Geertz pays particular attention to is the question of what author actually creates through the act of writing. Referring to the French philosophers Michel Foucault and Roland Barthes<sup>9</sup>, Geertz points out the importance of the author as 'the founder of discursivity': apart from creating his own work, the author creates possibilities and rules for the formation of further texts. The author is of crucial importance not only for the development of an intellectual discipline, but for its nature as well. In that way, an author creates a theory, tradition or discipline in which other books and authors can

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5 Shanks 2001, 284-305; Stoczkowski 2008, 350-351; Babić 2009, 123-132.

6 Tasić, 1979, 12, 17; Mihajlović, *in press*.

7 Benac 1987, 740.

8 Geertz 1988.

9 Barthes 1977, 142-154; Barthes 1982.

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position themselves.<sup>10</sup>

On the other hand, approaching concepts of barbarism and barbarization as alterity relies on postcolonial discourse theory as a theoretical framework for research. The key work that determined this theoretical approach is *Orientalism* by Edward Said, which, as a research strategy, promotes an analysis of discursive formulation of the 'Other'. It is done independently from the fact that the formulation is used for imperial purposes, economic and political dominance or formation of partial, and stereotypes and prejudices favorable for a certain political moment.<sup>11</sup> Therefore, from this perspective, barbarity is to be understood only as a relational phenomenon and a stereotypical way of observing the Other, and not as a stable category readily recognizable in the archaeological material record. In addition, this approach deems meaningless the extended terms, such as *barbarization*, in which a cultural change is recognized bearing certain degrading characteristics. However, it is not only about formal concepts – abandoning the usage of the words *barbarism* and *barbarization* does not eliminate the interpretative mechanisms behind them. This is also about questions, research strategies and explanations that are probably strongly connected.<sup>12</sup>

Starting from the post-processual perspective, that is: considering archaeology as a present practice with its necessary responsibility, the proposed approach contributes to the insight into what scholars do, and into the mechanisms and ways in which archaeologists create disciplinary knowledge. The concept of barbarism carries many layers of meanings which can be used when necessary, and, moreover, the concept can be politically instrumentalized as a part of archaeologically revealed reality.<sup>13</sup> According to Kristiansen, the European archaeological tradition has produced myths about the origins, based on the explanations related to terms barbarism and civilization, and positioned them in the basics of archaeological discipline. These myths have two general forms. The first refers to the ancient Graeco-Roman's legacy to Europe and to the barbaric destruction of those civilized values, that is, to the 'naturalness' of affirmative civilizing influence upon barbaric population and destruction as an innate barbaric practice. By way of contrast, in Central Europe, under the influence of the German nineteenth-century historicism, the idea of indigenous European barbaric roots of people was developed; those barbaric roots became symbols of unspoiled freedom and vitality, as opposed to despotism of restrictive 'civilization'.<sup>14</sup>

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10 Geertz 1988, 1-24; Pruitt 2011, 11-44.

11 Dietler 2005, 33-68; Harding 1998; Liebmann & Rizvi 2008.

12 Jahoda 1999, 1-13; Džino 2008, 415-424; Babić 2008, 73-89.

13 Rawson 2001; Kuper 2005, 20-36; Todorov 2010, 26.

14 Kristiansen 1996, 138-143.

### **Colonization, destruction and disintegration**

More specifically, this paper aims to reconsider the understanding of particular material culture (or changes in material culture) in Serbian archaeology as indicators of barbarian ethnicity.<sup>15</sup> This means that the processes identified as barbarization, disintegration, destruction are without sufficient evidence considered as indicators of presence of a particular barbaric population. Those processes are interpreted in that manner due to the understanding of changes in material culture, burdened with value judgments characteristic for understanding intercultural communication as disproportionate relation between civilization and barbarism. In fact, the possibility emerges here for an analysis of the mechanisms justifying the 'detection' of a barbaric population in the archaeological record, through observed changes in the material culture. From the perspective of modern values, the changes are regarded either as a deterioration in style, imitation, destruction, or as gaining distance from the imagined original.<sup>16</sup>

In that respect two relevant texts for the analysis of Serbian archaeological discourse will be discussed: *Archaeology and History of Barbaric colonization of South Slavic area from the fourth to the beginning of the seventh century* written by Jovan Kovačević (1960)<sup>17</sup>, and the article *The Disintegration and Ruralization of the city in the eastern Illyricum from the fifth to the seventh century* by Vladislav Popović (2003 [1982]).<sup>18</sup> Although many similar texts can be used for this particular analysis, the two above mentioned are selected because of their influence and long presence in the syllabi within the study of archaeology at the Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade. Furthermore, the fact that the authors of these texts were eminent professors and 'founding fathers' in their research area contributed to their reception, for they were recognized as the texts of authority.

### **The law and order of the barbaric world**

Professor Jovan Kovačević (1920-1988), the author of the study *Archaeology and History of Barbaric colonization of South Slavic area from the fourth to the beginning of the seventh century* (1960), deserves our full attention. Namely, in 1954, a completely new course called *Slavic archaeology* was introduced to the Department of Archaeology at the Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade. The Courses which he held during his 64 semesters of teaching included broad fields of interest. Professor Kovačević wrote a series of books that are fundamental for Serbian medieval archaeology and many of his students went on to become prominent figures in the particular

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15 Lucy 2005, 88-109; Jones 1999; Babić 2002, 309-322; 2006, 655-659.

16 Myers 2006, 267-284; Curta 2011a, 403-478; 2011b, 537-548.

17 Kovačević 1960.

18 Popović 2003, 27.

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field. The *Archaeology and History of barbaric colonization of South Slavic areas from the fourth to the early seventh century* is one of essential works for medieval archaeology in Serbia. However, the very fact that this work has been traditionally considered as essential, a source of scientific authority in Serbian archaeology, means that the ideas presented there should be critically reviewed.<sup>19</sup>

In the preface to the book, the author provides an overview of the work and humbly states that his book is merely a review:

‘These lines attempt to provide an overview of barbaric colonization of South Slavic areas from the fourth century to the beginning of the seventh century, relying on archaeological material, written sources and toponomastic data. For the systematization of these, essentially heterogeneous data, territorial system of major historical geographic units was chosen, so that the archaeological sites and toponyms which can be related to barbaric peoples, as well as data from written sources, are classified in smaller areas, while only in conclusion an attempt was given of characterization of barbaric colonization in general terms.’<sup>20</sup>

Thus, the notions of barbarity and barbaric colonization are introduced as something that is obvious, and the focus of the problem is moved away from explaining those key notions toward presenting the catalogue of the phenomena which are defined by them. In that way, Kovačević’s text appears as separate from any kind of interpretation and theoretical basis, offering the only possible solution - an ‘objective’ review, that is, a catalogue of archaeological artifacts. However, one can argue that even ‘stating’ the absence of theoretical approach *is* a theoretical approach; in this particular case, when Kovačević refuses to provide a theoretically based interpretation and turns toward the description of material culture by naming, categorizing and hierarching he actually provides an interpretation that is based on some initial, more or less unspoken, assumptions.<sup>21</sup>

‘This work is intended only to show material culture from archaeological record from the already mentioned period, and to link it with the basic historical facts of the Avar colonization of the Balkans and the South Slavic part of Pannonia, on the basis of the currently known material culture and the present state of research without getting into any new hypotheses.’<sup>22</sup>

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19 Jovanović 1990; Curta 2009, 191-196 (all translations from Serbian by the present author).

20 Kovačević 1960, 6.

21 Sommer & Gramsh 2011, 7-39; Novaković 2011, 440-451.

22 Kovačević 1960, 9.

Although Kovačević intends only to describe the artifacts, in his book, for example, two contrasting images of the barbaric world order are to be found, inspired by written sources, which can serve as a useful illustration of the author's assumed theoretical agenda, that is, of what can be read between the lines of the text. The first of the selected quotes gives an image of the barbaric Other through fascinating horrors:<sup>23</sup>

‘So the Goths from the second half of the third century showed the true meaning of *timor barbaricus* to the Balkan part of the Eastern Roman Empire. Perhaps, the most eloquent characteristic of the condition in the eastern part of the Empire is presented in the letter of Saint Jerome to Heliodorus of Altino, from the year 396, in which it is stated that for more than twenty years, blood flows between Constantinople and Julius Alps, and the Goths, Sarmatians, Kvads, Alans, Huns, Vandals and Markomans are ravaging, plundering and destroying Scythia, Thrachia, Macedonia, Dardania, Dacia, Thessaly, Achaia, Epirus, Dalmatia and both Pannonias. He continues his dark description by pointing out to the murdering of women, capturing of bishops, killings of clergy, destruction of churches and desecration of altars, and to the dissipation of relics of martyrs - horror and death are all around!’<sup>24</sup>

However, there is more to the image of the barbaric Other than just ‘horror and death’<sup>25</sup> - Kovačević also recognizes differences among barbarians and their behaviour, depending on whether they dwell on one or the other side of the Roman *limes*. The following lines are also the conclusions about the archaeology and history of barbaric colonization.

‘Roman *limes* is actually the border between the two worlds - the ancient and the barbaric - which were different in their essence. The differences were diametric in terms of the economic base, social unit, material culture, religion, etc. In this regard, an anecdote recorded by a rhetorician Priscus is very characteristic. In Attila's capital, Priscus encountered a Greek who was a slave of Onegesius, significant Hunnic nobleman. He had to go into battles with his master until he collected enough money from his own plunder to repurchase himself. This Greek, who otherwise was a builder and a wealthy merchant from Viminacium, remained among the Huns, and he gives Priscus the following reasons for his actions: during the war the Romans are in constant danger of being destroyed due to the inability of the military commanders, and during peacetime conditions are even worse because of the ruthless collection of taxes and the helplessness of citizens when confronted with wealthy lawbreakers.

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23 Todorov 1998; Jahuda 1999.

24 Kovačević 1960, 9.

25 Hall 1991; Jahuda 1999, 113-128.

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Contrary to this, the Greek explained, among the Huns, 'after the war, people spend their time in idleness, everyone enjoys what they have, and at the same time they do not disturb each other at all or very little. In fact, the 'law and order of the barbarian world' for this Byzantine merchant was healthier than the late antique.'<sup>26</sup>

This idyllic scene of primitive or natural barbaric life, established first in Tacitus' *Germania* as a moralizing mirror and a critique of one's own 'civilized' society, developed from an anecdote into a historical context for archeological interpretation.<sup>27</sup>

The large number of plates with drawings of material culture or isolated details throughout the book contributes to the persuasiveness of what is said in Kovačević's work. This is particularly important precisely because the past material culture is perceived (by the general public and often among archaeologists) as speaking for itself. However, the multiplicity of possible interpretations, together with the tangibility of interpreted material culture certainly leaves space for a wide range of abuses, stereotypes and legitimizing 'commonplaces'. For example, when we think of barbarians, we often see uncivilized features, promoted within the paradigm of unilinear social evolutionism. Although such perspectives have long been subjected to a thorough critique within the scale of social and cultural anthropology, these rudimentary influences of unilinear social evolutionism have been entrenched in Serbian archaeology for a very long time.<sup>28</sup>

Not without reason, a striking description of 'the downfall of Sirmium' (Sremska Mitrovica in today's Serbia) found its way into Kovačević's survey. John of Ephesus notes that the city was destroyed a year before the Avar-Slavic conquests 'because barbarians could not put out the fire; instead, they ran for their lives, away from the burning city. The Roman population of Sirmium vanished from the town, and the despair of people before the Avar-Slavic destruction of the city is well illustrated by a Greek inscription scratched into a brick, found in Sirmium, in which the anonymous writer calls upon God to save Byzantine Empire, the city and himself from the Avars.'<sup>29</sup>

It is interesting that a very old idea is used in a review of one segment of the past of an archaeological site such as Sirmium, the idea that primitive, wild and barbaric groups are not familiar with fire. This motif, which is often found in medieval literature, is, for Lewis Henry Morgan, one of the key criteria for the characterization of the uncivilized societies.<sup>30</sup>

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26 Kovačević 1960, 46.

27 Jahuda 1999, 129-194; Gruen 2012, 159-179.

28 Stocking 1968; Trigger 1998; Mihajlović, *in press*.

29 Kovačević 1960, 17.

30 Morgan 1877, 3-49.

To sum up the first example, the monograph *Archaeology and History of barbaric colonization of South Slavic area from the fourth to the beginning of the seventh century* presents itself as neither theoretical nor interpretive, providing a review of the state of research in the chosen field. However, due to an implicit theoretical position, one finds a sequence of stereotypical images of the barbaric Other in the study. Nevertheless, professor Jovan Kovačević is remembered by generations of students as self-critical and cautious in his academic work.<sup>31</sup>

### Footprints of the Barbarians

The article *Disintegration and Ruralization of the city in the eastern Illyricum from the fifth to the seventh century* is just one of many studies written by professor Vladislav Popović (1930-1999). This particular study is known for its interpretations and it can still be found in the course syllabi at the undergraduate studies for archaeology at the Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade. Much like Jovan Kovačević, Vladislav Popović was interested in the late antiquity and the early Middle Ages. For more than two decades, he lectured the course *Methodology of archaeological research* to undergraduate students of archaeology. In the history of Serbian and Yugoslav archaeology he is remembered for organizing the excavation of the famous archaeological sites of *Caričin Grad* and Sirmium (he was the director of the Yugoslav-American excavation project of *Sremska Mitrovica* and Yugoslav-French excavation project of *Caričin Grad*).<sup>32</sup>

Popović's text about disintegration and ruralization is based on his fieldwork experience. In Serbian archaeology, field experience is the essence of being an archaeologist; and 'becoming' an authority in archaeology is inseparable from the researcher's presence and his involvement in the birth of the 'facts' in the field. Furthermore, it should be noted that the power of an authority (and power in general) is not simply a strong and homogeneous domination of one group of individuals over the other, but it rather circulates in the community, passing through individuals connected into the network of relationships.<sup>33</sup>

Consequently, this article is not about a critical review of the work of the late antique/early medieval Serbian archaeology founders, but a critical review of the 'frozen' reception of later generations. The authority that an article *Disintegration and Ruralization of the city in the eastern Illyricum from the fifth to the seventh century* is based on are meticulous observations about the towns between late antiquity and the early middle ages. Persuasiveness of the given arguments is related directly to the 'authentic' field experience of

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31 Jovanović 1990, 129-136.

32 Vasić 2003.

33 Foucault 1986; Pruitt 2011.

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the author of the archaeological text, and thus the field experience is taken as an incubator of 'real facts'.<sup>34</sup>

At the beginning of his article, Vladimir Popović defines the notion of a city, so that he could, on that basis, define the urbanization's opposites. Similar to the culture in traditional interpretations, human characteristics are metaphorically attached to a city, the result of which are its predetermined phases of development:

'The city, in certain sense, can be defined as the concentration of population in a certain land, within which its material and spiritual needs find their spatial solution. Its creation, transformation and ending are mutually connected with a series of interdependent components.'<sup>35</sup>

Popović's text aims to show how the Byzantine cities in the 7th century in the Balkans were converted 'into more or less isolated episcopacies, without a wider hinterland, with limited opportunities for production and trade'.<sup>36</sup> Furthermore, it is said that cities 'got into a situation' to become well-fortified rural agglomerations.

'...the growing pressure and more frequent intrusions – later forming settlements - of barbarians on the territory of the Empire should be noted as well. The invasions resulted in the devastation of fertile and arable land, weakening, or even the loss of the most important economic sources of all strata of the urban population in the affected areas. In the provinces, near the conflict zone with the enemy, great landed estates remain abandoned, a layer of wealthy people flees to safe places, cities become strongholds of strategic importance or protected areas where the remaining population cultivates the land, and above all seeks salvation. It leads to disintegration of the city, termination of its original role as an economic, administrative and cultural center of the region. Under such circumstances, it is inevitable for the city to experience a significant change in its internal structure.'<sup>37</sup>

This leads to presenting the barbarians primarily by using a distorted image of the *Other* taken from written sources, then supporting or illustrating it with the help of archaeological perspective. The result is the suggestion that what we find in the written sources must necessarily be found in the archaeological records as well.<sup>38</sup>

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34 Lucas 2001; Yarrow 2006, 20-39.

35 Popović 2003, 239.

36 Popović 2003, 239.

37 Popović 2003, 243.

38 Champion 1997, 79-95.

‘The process of disintegration and ruralization of towns in Illyricum is not known to us only from written sources, but it echoes from the archaeological traces as well.’<sup>39</sup>

This correspondence between written sources and material culture then becomes a research aim.<sup>40</sup> This is the case with Sirmium and with a number of similar archaeological sites as well.

‘Although only fragments of the city are known to us, based on the results of previous excavations, however, one can conclude that the city was distinguished by well-thought spatial solutions, well-planned network of streets with densely arranged and clearly defined building complexes in between. Between these massive buildings of public and private character, sometimes even on their ruins, a horizon of housing was identified, the basic characteristics of which were construction without a plan, changes of the function of original space, complete degradation of construction techniques and raising of cemeteries within the city walls.’<sup>41</sup>

More precisely, ‘in the magnificent buildings’ or ‘public spaces’, within the wider ordered structure, what is noted as distinctive is the following - ‘shanty huts made of light materials or broken bricks connected with clay’, burial areas created by digging into the mosaic floors, the presence of a number of quern-stones and agricultural tools and hearths in the churches.<sup>42</sup>

### **Without barbarians**

Basic coordinates of otherness of the Middle Ages<sup>43</sup> as well as of barbaric alterity<sup>44</sup> are defined in relation to the seemingly monolithic Greco-Roman civilization. However, the ways in which images about those *Others* came to exist in the European tradition and in the modern humanistic disciplines rely greatly on the concepts established in antiquity. Even so, the way we see ‘decadence’ today, opposed to the ‘re-discovery’ of classics and classical origins of certain phenomena, results primarily from the priorities articulated in modern days.<sup>45</sup>

‘Aristotle suggested that ‘it is likely that every art and every philosophy

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39 Popović 2003, 241.

40 Andren 1998, 9-36; Gerrard 2005, 185-231.

41 Popović 2003, 243.

42 Kovačević 1960; Popović 2003.

43 Brown 2000, 547-574; Bull 2005; Ganim 2008, 83-107.

44 Jones 1971, 376-407; Hartog 1980; Hall 1991; Gillet 2002.

45 Goldhill 2005, 95-159.

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has been discovered and entirely developed on many occasions, only to be lost once again'. However, the ancients never fully formulated a model of historical development based on rebirth following a 'death' of culture and art. It was only in the modern age that the model of biological parabola was taken to its ultimate conclusion: the final stage of evolutionary paradigm of ancient art was used, on Pliny's authority, to exalt fifteenth and sixteenth-century Italian art. As the arts were dead at the end of antiquity, they could be reborn, and were in fact reborn. The concept of the history of art used by ancient writers, which was passed down the generations by Pliny in a summarized but recognizable form, thus became profoundly absorbed into our thinking and put to new purposes. The model of biological parabola which ends in decadence and the death of the arts became, with the addition of rebirth, a cyclical model that tends towards infinite repetition through a succession of cultural catastrophes and rebirths.<sup>46</sup>

When we address the notions of barbarism and barbarization from this perspective- with a reminder that those notions are often associated with negative stereotypizations – it becomes apparent on what grounds these concepts should be deconstructed. Their strength is primarily derived from the authority of the 'founders of discursivity', rather than from the valid archaeological arguments.<sup>47</sup> As mentioned before, since authority is not a power to be possessed but it rather exists in a network of relationships, (de) sacralization of the traditional ideas is the responsibility of contemporary scholars. If the reception of the traditional interpretation is 'frozen', that is, if there exists, in later generations, only a very strict repetition and summing up of what was said by previous generations<sup>48</sup>, there is little space left for critical reflection on, in this case, the 'barbarians'. Thus, in later generations, the barbarians can be 'detected' in the archaeological record only according to those repeated modules.

However, if we abandon this kind of 'frozeness', we can still wonder what these archaeological contexts - observed by Jovan Kovačević, Vladislav Popović and their numerous students - mean. That is, how to interpret this unusual reuse of space and material culture, which, by the standards of our time, is called destruction, ruralization and barbarisation?

One of the most striking examples from the Balkans comes from the site of Heraclea Lyncestis, located in the south-western Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia near Bitola. It is a multi-layered archaeological site where people lived continuously since the mid-4th century BC until the end of the 6th century AD. The example that I would like to refer to is a modest settlement

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46 Settis 2006, 72.

47 Babić 2002, 309-322; 2006, 655-659; Novaković 2011; Babić, *in press*.

48 Pruitt 2011.

established in Heraclea after the abandonment of the city in the late Roman period. In the settlement, the houses, made of stone and clay, appeared in the place of a former antique theatre. The theatre was damaged sometime before the middle of the 5th century AD, and after its disuse, its central part was filled with a thick layer of erosive sediment. The oldest buildings were built above the orchestra, after which this group of buildings spread over the entire surface of the theatre. The buildings are mostly small in size, made up of one or more small rooms, mostly with earthen compacted floors.<sup>49</sup>

Particularly noticeable are the Heraklea's buildings made of stone and clay in which parts of a 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD Roman portico are incorporated. One of the objects has two marble statues built in it, each one with a stand and an engraved inscription. The first inscription is dedicated to the goddess Nemesis, and the second one to the high priest Titus Flavius Orestes. Gordana Cvetković-Tomašević, writing about this archaeological context, notes that the builders of these rustic objects actually saved the two Roman statues, though not intentionally nor consciously. She argues that the sculptures had no special meaning for them, other than being a good foundation material for the house.<sup>50</sup>

This excursus raises the questions about how past people dealt with material culture from their past. One might expect a relation full of respect for the antique material culture, but in the case of Heraclea Lyncestis we see quite the opposite. However, is it possible that people who used the mentioned statues as building material could not differentiate them from any other stone? Breaking the usual images of the barbarians at the very least brings this possibility into question. In other words, does the treatment of ancient material culture in the early Byzantine period have to be necessarily incorporated into the expected standards of the Western attitude towards the 'ruins'.

'For the Western tradition, ruins denote both a presence and absence: they demonstrate, indeed they are, the point where the visible and the invisible meet. The one that is invisible (or absent) is summoned up and accentuated by the fragmentation of ruins, their useless and occasionally incomprehensible nature and their loss of purpose (or at least their original purpose). However their obstinate visible presence demonstrates, far more than loss of utility, the longevity and indeed eternity of ruins and their victory over ineluctable course of time [...] Not only do ruins challenge time, they also inspire reactions. Thus they can be looked upon and acquire status in their new codified role as precisely what they have become – ruins.'<sup>51</sup>

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49 Janakievski 1978, 696.

50 Cvetković-Tomašević 1987, 17-18.

51 Settis 2006, 72.

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Can we, in fact, in the case of Heraclea Lyncestis, speak about a deliberate destructive opposition to the 'order of ancient world'? Was it kind of revolt or any kind of intentional act? For example, early Christianity defined itself by contrast and downright antagonism against the classical world. This may be seen in the attitudes to the human body - mortification of the body as opposed to the beautiful body. Goldhill remarks:

'...museums curators keep the penises that have been knocked off statues, along with other objects which the Christian tradition covered with fig-leavers'.<sup>52</sup>

On the other hand, Settis argues that the preoccupation with decay, ruins and 'classical' past is precisely European and the effect of collective trauma following the collapse of the Roman Empire. This situation differed from the Chinese Empire which always enjoyed a high degree of continuity. The idea of the 'classical' has changed over the time. Every era invented a different idea of classical - barbarian opposition to make its own identity. No culture can invent itself if it does not have other societies in other times and places to act as benchmark. 'Classical' is not a dead culture we inherited, but something that is a powerful stimulus to understand the barbaric Other.<sup>53</sup> Anyhow, the 'barbaric acts' are good to think about.

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52 Goldhill 2004, 29.

53 Settis 2006.

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