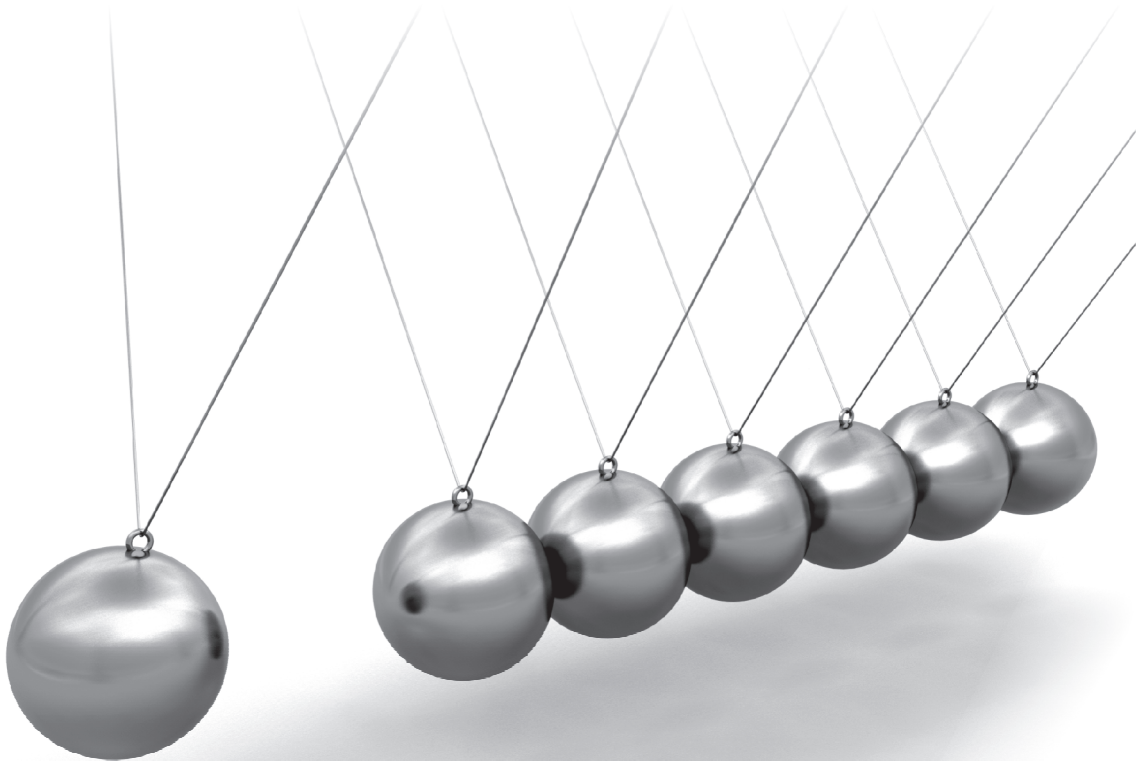


HUMANS AND SOCIETY IN TIMES OF CRISIS

Archaeology of Crisis

Edited by Staša Babić



1838

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For the publisher
Prof. Dr. Miomir Despotović
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Reviewers
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Lucy Stevens

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Archaeology (in Times) of Crisis

EDITOR'S NOTE

In December 2019, a previously unknown coronavirus was registered and the severe and potentially fatal illness it causes swiftly spread around the world. On January 30, 2020, the World Health Organisation declared a state of Public Health Emergency, followed by the declaration of a pandemic on March 11 of the same year.¹ More than a year later, while this volume is submitted for publication, the world is still struggling with a plethora of severe problems initiated by, but by no means reduced to, the medical aspects of the current crisis. The disturbances in the economic and social activities further induce profound distress in everyday lives around the globe. Depending on the current state of the epidemic curve, we are advised to observe more or less rigorous measures of caution, most of them limiting our movements and contacts. While maintaining distance in the real world, we are connected virtually, various technologies enabling us to compare experiences of restricted interactions. One can thus get a glimpse of the diverse ways in which people around the world make sense of their changed worlds. Many express their thoughts in words, but some use other means. Like, a photo series that invites us to choose and arrange objects that are essential to us under the current predicament.² The similarities in created assemblages (an assortment of face masks, hand sanitizers, laptop computers, comfort food, books...), as well as idiosyncratic objects reflecting particular lifestyles (dog leash, musical instruments...), illustrate eloquently what archaeologists know so well: our lives are framed in materialities that shape and are being shaped by our practices. Under the drastically changed circumstances, such as the ones we are currently enduring, our relationship with our material surroundings also changes, creating new possibilities and constraints to our practices. Our present experiences are not unique and throughout the history of our species, human groups have faced various crises, caused by a wide range of factors. From massive changes in their environment, population movements and violent conflicts, to profound shifts in attitudes, beliefs and value systems, these events have caused disruptions in everyday practices of communities and have invariably been reflected in some material form.

1 <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>

2 <https://www.collater.al/en/paula-zuccotti-lockdown-essentials-photography/>

Bearing this in mind, the purpose of this collection is to investigate some of the instances of crises that afflicted past populations of the Central Balkans and adjacent regions, via the material traces accessible through archaeological investigation. The knowledge of the causes of disruptions and of the responses devised for overcoming them in the past may bring us closer to solutions applicable in our present. At the same time, the aim of the volume is to offer an insight into the vast range of approaches currently practiced by archaeologists, their possibilities and limitations, as well as synergies created in the domains of theoretical concepts and methodological procedures. The authors share the same working environment – the Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade, and specifically its Department of Archaeology – but follow diverse research paths, illustrating the current state of the discipline in general, its many theoretical and methodological ramifications. It is our hope that our specific disciplinary knowledge of the past may contribute to more efficient responses to crises in the present and future.

Belgrade, May/June 2021

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Monika Milosavljević*

THE REUSE OF ANCIENT REMAINS IN MORTUARY PRACTICES IN THE MIDDLE AGES IN THE WESTERN BALKANS

Abstract: The need to articulate a conception of the past is all too human; what matters is how this articulation is shaped. The previous ages had their own respective reference frames for history as well. These are overlooked in the Western Balkans and require further examination. The goal of this study is to gain more complex views on mortuary practices in societies of the Middle Ages, so as to understand how they reflected on their own past; particularly, how ruins of material structures were incorporated into their contemporary identity. The analysis thereof is carried out on burial practices found among the medieval inhabitants of the Western Balkans, where inhumation was repeatedly done in prehistoric mounds as well as Roman architectural structures. Such burials may shed light on medieval identity construction as being a mirror appropriation of the past for (the then) present purposes.

Keywords: reuse, old structures, prehistoric mounds, medieval cemeteries, identity

Introduction

This chapter seeks to assert that the past ages also had respective reference frames for their own past. The need to articulate a conception of the past is inherently human, but it brings about the question of how this articulation is shaped. Albeit any point in the past could be used to respond to this query, the Middle Ages and its visions of the past are sufficiently distant yet familiar enough to provide an answer. The relationship between the Middle Ages and the times that had preceded it, its knowledge and views on prehistory and antiquity, may be observed from the

* Monika Milosavljević is an Associate Professor at the Department of Archaeology, Faculty of Philosophy at the University of Belgrade, as well as a Research Associate on the project *Sciences of the Origin* funded through the University of Oxford project. E-mail: monika.milosavljevic@gmail.com

present day through the utilization of differing archeological perspectives to illuminate our understanding of medieval times. The goal of this paper is therefore to examine the relationship from the angle of material structures in order to gain more complex understanding of the society of the Middle Ages, to understand them the way that they saw themselves in relation to their past.

When a demarcation line is set for any historical narrative, distinguishing one time from another, it brings about the common misconception of a complete discontinuity that separates them. Such a stereotype exists for Antiquity being clearly cut off from the Middle Ages. The settlements of “barbaric” tribes into the empires of Late Antiquity are frequently used as common-sense evidence of an apparent shift into the Middle Ages. It is now generally accepted that this was not at all the case (Milosavljević, 2014, pp. 32–35). This paper, therefore, brings into question the observation of a distinct cultural change from the perspective of binary oppositions. The answer is not found in simply confirming the existence of continuity or discontinuity between the Middle Ages and its past, but in the whole spectrum of individual solutions between extreme interpretive standpoints based upon the contextualization of circumstances (Semple, 1998, pp. 109–126; Newman, 1998, pp. 127–141; Driscoll, 1998, pp. 142–158).

The medieval societies replacing the societies of Antiquity were surrounded by ancient ruins; the attitude towards them was equally diverse. As a consequence, there are numerous examples of the complexity of the medieval relationship with ancient material culture (Settis, 2006). The arrival of the “barbarians” in the early Middle Ages has largely been interpreted as a large scale “treasure hunt” where material culture was either appropriated or ransacked (similar to the crusades into the East, through Byzantium, when artifacts were taken as holy relics for Christendom or as reaping the rewards of pillaging). Such a position overlooks the sporadic economic crises and insecurity marking the early Middle Ages, especially true at its outset. Therefore, any additional possessions or properties became the spoils for all society, from the mighty to the meek. From the 5th century onward, the Roman emperors strove to control every piece of treasure looted or found, bringing about fiscal measures that allowed for the confiscation or control and extortion of specialized grave robbers (Schnapp, 1997). Put more succinctly, the shift from Roman antiquity, through transitional Late Antiquity, to the early Middle Ages (Džino, 2021a, pp. 70–71) is evident when desacralizing domains that has previously been an anathema (such as grave robbery) suddenly became acceptable. Yet, a break from the past is not observed, as these same items (from Roman antiquity) were found to hold important cultural meaning beyond their original value (Schnapp, 1997, pp. 80–88).

This research is not directed towards providing a general evaluation on the Middle Ages, since the concept of historical period is a matter of an overly broad chronological and territorial phenomenon which is, by and large, a consequence of the modern classification of the past following the European tradition. The scientific classification reached within modernity is neither relatable nor applicable when examining the manner in which those who actually lived in the Middle Ages examined and viewed their own past. As with any other culture that regarded the past valuable enough to compile a history and draw on it, the cultures and societies of the Middle Ages did so from their own vantage points based upon what they deemed “historically valuable” to their existence (Yitzhak & Innes, 2000). Therefore, it should be acceptable to treat reused material culture in the Middle Ages originating from prehistory and antiquity as part of the same phenomenon. The people who reused and manipulated monuments or ancient artifacts did not draw lines between “historic” and “prehistoric” heritage as would be otherwise thought (Gilchrist, 2008, pp. 139–144).

The Significance of Medieval Reuse

The theme of reused material culture or the architectural structure of historical origins from the past during the Middle Ages is a familiar topic in European research contexts and has been touched on repeatedly within literature. In his pioneering paper “Ancient Landscapes and the Dead: The Reuse of Prehistoric and Roman Monuments as Early Anglo-Saxon Burial Sites” Howard Williams points out that the practice of monument reuse has often been observed but rarely discussed in archaeology (Williams, 1997, p. 1). In an article on the same phenomenon, “Monuments and the Past in Early Anglo-Saxon England” (1998), he delved into the widespread and frequent practice of reusing monuments of earlier periods as an illustration of the manner in which the mythical past was employed to construct ethnic and political identities in the centuries following the end of Roman Britain. In the case of Anglo-Saxon England, this practice became more popular from the 7th century and was adopted by the elites as indicator of their status. Williams remarks that: 1) confirming the frequency of the phenomenon is challenging; 2) round Bronze Age barrows were the most reused type of ancient structure; 3) additionally, Roman structures such as villas, bathhouses, forts, barrows, mausolea, cemeteries, temples, and roads, were intentionally reused; 4) monument reuse was not reduced to single, individual graves, nor to certain regions as was believed, but was widespread; 5) there was an increase in

the tendency to reuse ancient monuments, which came to a change from the 5th to the 7th century, as is evident at communal burial sites (Williams, 1998, pp. 92–96).

Based on the concept of the invention of tradition, Florin Curta wrote the article “Burials in Prehistoric Mounds: Reconnecting With the Past in Early Medieval Greece” (2016). He interprets these funerals not as privileged burials, but as a sudden interest in ancestors in response to political instability. He suggests that these burials were carried out in order to preserve a sense of community in a shifting landscape. In his analysis, Curta concludes from the distributional maps that only two areas in the Balkans produced sufficient evidence of early medieval graves in prehistoric mounds, Thrace and southern Albania (Curta, 2016, pp. 269–285). Consequently, general questions by Howard Williams may be applied to a broader context that could supplement Florin Curta’s approach to emerging new identities in the early medieval Balkans. Demonstrating a similarity in his research into Late Antiquity and the early medieval eastern Adriatic coast and hinterland, Danijel Džino is of the opinion that the “old Croatian” cemeteries built on ancient structures or in prehistoric mounds show the need of the local community to appropriate the past for the sake of identity construction¹ (Džino, 2021, pp. 65–67). All three of these authors concur that the reuse of ancient structures is a social reaction to identity crisis and the pursuit of appropriation, rooting, and stabilizing oneself through the appropriation of visible structures in the landscape. These phenomena are associated with the early Middle Ages in England, Dalmatia, and Greece.

The aim of this paper is to apply this hypothesis to a similar archaeological record in the Western Balkans² and to examine whether reuse in this context can be related to the crisis caused by the decline and fall of the Roman Empire and the stabilization of new identities in the early Middle Ages. Despite the rare exception, this exact theme has yet to be duly recognized in Western Balkan archaeologies. Therefore, the narrower goal of this paper is to show whether the phenomena of reusing material structure from the past in this area existed, in which time-frame it occurred, and which patterns of occurrence it manifested. This study therefore does not rely on a complete systematic overview of all contexts that could be

1 Danije Džino noted that the reuse of prehistoric barrows in Late Antiquity is also evident in the Dalmatia province (Džino, 2021, pp. 65–66).

2 The term Western Balkans is here understood to mean the territory of the following countries: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia (including Kosovo but excluding Vojvodina). The focus of this paper will be on examples from Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as Serbia, while archaeological evidence from other Western Balkan countries will serve as a comparative framework.

found in archeological evidence, but rather of distinct reference examples that may ascertain the point for the areas cited.

The diachronic perspective on cultural memory and the social life of things may provide a new approach to the archaeological phenomenon of the reuse of material structures and artifacts. Archaeologists approach stratigraphy as a reflection of time layers; yet, strangely, they rely epistemologically on social anthropology in their search for a reconstruction of cultural dynamics that generally illuminate the social aspects in specific time frames, not from a diachronic, large-scale perspective. Serious challenges in this specific case study are scarce if not nonexistent due to the unfortunate, outdated style of documentation of archaeological records used at the time of their excavation. Unfortunately, documented evidence is modest due to poor forms of archaeological practice on recording the reuse of material culture. Yet, evidence of reuse is breaking through in the strangest ways beyond archaeological approaches, and beyond research questions and aspirations. The stubborn existence of such facts, despite neglect, is most often the result of a responsibility taken seriously towards documenting excavations and preserving material culture and documentation, for which we usually have to thank the curators of museum collections at small, local museums. In most cases, the common tradition of archaeology has left such artifacts and structures unseen, turning in effect a blind eye to the phenomenon of reuse. In that sense, the intention of this paper lies in pointing to the ways of observing structure in documented archeological contexts that were until now considered irrelevant in the tradition of Western Balkan archaeological practices.

Theories of Reuse in Brief

When the reuse of material culture from one historical age into another comes to light, archaeologists resort to a number of various approaches, some of which are woefully inadequate to address the issue of its appearance. The most basic of all and, seemingly, the least probable one, is the bare functionalist standpoint, which merely relegates the reused artifacts and monuments to the category of simple reuse as raw materials (Kurasinski, Purowski & Skóra 2015, pp. 151–157). This standpoint generally over-assumes that individuals and societies from medieval times were too incompetent to realize the significance of the objects or artifacts they encountered (Milosavljević, 2014, p. 34). Although such a relationship of pure reuse as recycled material undoubtedly occurred on frequent occasions, this is not the case with burial. Here the focus is on the context of the reused material culture where its added meaning is highly evident, as

it is presented within the context of being used deliberately and with forethought in funerary practices (Šućur, 2017, pp. 118–119).

If research focuses merely on any one particular, individual context of archeological evidence, the identity of its respective medieval context does not come properly to light. In order for archaeology of the Middle Ages to uncover a better understanding of the past, it must incorporate a multitude of perspectives (Yitzhak & Innes, 2000). Byzantium, as one illustrative example, had an discrepant identity between its political center and its provincial periphery as well as an identity gap between its social elite of urban centers and the rural masses who populated the expanse of its territory. Given the rich tapestry of the Byzantine world's social foundations, such medieval identity questions are, by default, multifarious and highly complex (Stouraitis, 2014, pp. 195–197). Therefore, medieval archeological examples may only be discussed clearly when put into their context of disparate social accords from which they arose.

The Life of Things

The archaeologist commonly concerns him or herself with the search for the cultural and chronological determination of the archeological record. However, the majority of artifacts may flow from one context to another. Therefore, the assumption that an object is fixed in its space and time must be overcome in certain instances when the context of the object's discovery negates its previous history – specifically, in cases of reuse.

For reused objects, places, and monuments, Arjun Appadurai put forth a common theoretical basis which he coined “the social life of things – commodities in cultural perspectives.” As objects participate in social interactions, they derive their significance from their cultural contextualization in relation to their social context. Under these circumstances, the use of the object may be freed from its inherent *teleios* properties. The same object can be valued, used, and labeled differently, varying from context to context. Thanks to the social life of objects, the norms and patterns of the object's hosting communities may be evaluated. Appadurai argues that, while the economic value of commodities is still a consequence of the exchange itself, consumption is subject to social control and political redefinition. In their circulation, if commodities transcend their extensive spatial, temporal, or institutional distances, the knowledge of them becomes fragmented, contradictory, modified – which can lead to rising demand given their rarity and sensationalization (Appadurai, 1986, pp. 3–63). Igor Kopytoff further extends the basis of this approach, simultaneously observing the process of production as both a cultural and cognitive process. He questions what an ideal career for an object is

and when it does finally become a commodity, introducing the important theoretical *topos* of the biography of things as derived by the genealogical method (Kopitoff, 1986).

“The biography of things can make salient what might otherwise remain obscure. For example, in situations of culture contact, they can show what anthropologists have so often stressed: that what is significant about the adaptation of alien objects – as of alien ideas – is not the fact that they are adopted, but the way they are culturally redefined and put to use” (Kopytoff, 1986, p. 67).

While this combined approach of Kopitoff and Appadurai is indeed quite promising, commencing solely from a “biography of things” is problematic in its application to the context of archaeological fieldwork. When reusing the material culture of the past, there is the common archaeological interpretation of the “after-life” of objects, presenting the somewhat implicit reduction of value of the object’s life in later phases as compared to the original purpose; i.e., later appearance within the record removes the original inherent purpose or intent of the object. As an object does not necessarily lose function – outside of its utilitarian aspects where the Ship of Theseus is both its original and copy in function – an “after-life” is a problematic concept since it implies that the objects have been given a fixed purpose and path beforehand. Moreover, although a biographical approach to places and landscapes may contribute to the creation of the first step in an object’s liberation from various stereotypes, it is clear that the phenomenon of reuse in archaeology demands new conceptual categories and new language as to place objects properly within the expanse of history which occurs over millennia, not one distinct period (Díaz-Guardamino, García Sanjuán, Wheatly, 2015, p. 13).

Among the varied conceptual articulations of reuse as a phenomenon, the approach offered by Estella Weiss-Krejci highlights the notion of “appropriation” of the past through several seemingly convincing historical examples. In political struggles, for instance, appropriated monuments or ones subject to dispute actually present the need to express proclamations of power in shifting political environments. The key distinction given by her is that continuity does not follow from reuse, hence an insistence on discontinuous reuse in practice within contexts. The significance in the reuse of objects from the past is not in providing a statement about the past itself, rather to place the past in the current, desired projection of the present. Examining the life of objects from this perspective, the key terms come to the fore of evocation, appropriation, property, possessions, and the past under constant re-interpretive attack by the present through monument appropriation (Weiss-Krejci, 2015, pp. 307–309).

Cultural Memory

Theoretical approaches to material culture reuse that possess sufficient interpretive strength inevitably arrive at studying the cultural memory of ancient societies. Memory is not an entirely independent entity that exists outside the mind, but is inherent to cultural contexts in the creation of memory itself. While the mechanisms of appropriation have varied throughout history, the principle has been the same. Therefore, as Jan Assmann recommends in his work, instead of approaching the past under the construct of universal laws, one should question what compelled someone in their respective contexts to develop the need to preserve fragments of the past from their own perspective of culture (Assmann, 2011, p. 24).

While cultural memory is a universal phenomenon, it does not refer upwards from the micro-level of the individual to the group, rather always from the group downward to the individual; i.e., culturally inscribed memories in the community forge it together as one. In order to apply this approach to specific archaeological cultural contexts, affirmations of the collectively repeated reuse of material culture must first be discerned (Van Dyke & Alcock, 2003, p. 3). The cultural memory itself is traceable to a triumvirate of layers forming a whole narrative of the cultural-historic memory. The first is that of the most recent knowledge of the historic past within the culture, which retains the largest amount of data available for ready reconsideration. The second is wrought with insecure remembrance of details. The third is the deepest, relegating itself to the murky and mythical with the passage of time. The occurrence of “the floating gap” or the phenomenon of the “dark ages” occurs between the second and the third layer of memory, from the inner perspective of the society’s view of tradition (Assmann, 2011, pp. 21–42).

The genealogy itself within the society may serve as a structure that can be utilized to connect unbridgeable time frames, such as the recent and mythical past. However, as an invention of tradition, genealogy is subject to the tradition itself, whereby medieval societies legitimized ancient places and artifacts by drawing connections with the past through constructing their identities. More often than not, the same lines being connected to the past stem from the need to express and/or invent origins to legitimize governance or leadership of a group. Therefore, the retrospective aspect of cultural memory is observed through the necessity of the alliance of governing, remembrance, and forgetting (Assmann, 2011, pp. 113–140). The medieval community, when mourning and connecting to their dead, selected ancient places in the landscape which were viewed through the community’s historical and cultural context as well as in its mythical terms (Holtorf & Williams, 2006, pp. 247–249).

There is a vital interest in society to strengthen the past by creating tradition through constructing a canonical, commemorative essence of remembering, due to the tendency to remember and forget the past according to the needs of the present (Yitzhak & Innes, 2000). The dead (ancient, recent, as well as their mythological interconnections) are an ideal subject for modeling and appropriating the past for the ideological pretenses of emerging social forms (Driscoll, 1998, pp. 154–155). Cultural memory itself relies on external support, such as texts, paintings, monuments and rituals, owing to which cultural memory can be temporally boundless as opposed to the limits of an individual's life or even oral aspects of group remembrance. The primary technique of cultural memory is generally the connection of a group to a commemorative place, inscribed with meaning resulting from, in the main, past events or attachments (Asman, 2011, pp. 58–62).

The focus on mortuary practices in this paper, therefore, is certainly pertinent to the better understanding and shaping of cultural memory in forming identity. For the utilization of the concept of cultural memory, establishing links between kin who are dead and an ancient past in the Middle Ages, it is crucial to recognize the repetition and communal nature of mortuary practice. Although individual graves can arouse our curiosity in particular, to understand the phenomenon, the repetition of medieval burial practice(s) found within an ancient site is a key indicator.

An Overlooked Phenomenon

“[...] conventions of archaeological publications often make it difficult to identify potential relationships between separate chronological phases at a particular site. If the importance of such relationships was not identified during excavation, then the evidence for reuse might be easily overlooked, especially when cemeteries remain partially excavated” (Williams 1997, p. 4).

The main issue at hand as concerns the phenomenon of reuse in excavation is that although archaeologists approach stratigraphy as a reflection of layers in time, some layers are considered more archaeologically important at the time of excavation than others. The medieval interruption of previous layers was perceived as marginal or completely separate and, therefore, not deserving importance. A clear example is the Church of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul, or Peter's Church near Novi Pazar, built on an iron-age burial mound. Prehistorians from the Balkans all are familiar with this Iron Age find; besides, Medievalists are quite aware of the importance of Peter's Church for emerging Christianity and the state of Raška

of the early Middle Ages. Yet, it had not been analyzed until recently as to why the mound was selected for the site of the Church (Babić, 2015, pp. 248–264). This reuse is clearly a context analogous to early medieval Scotland, where the historical context of reuse of ancient monuments coincides with the emergence of new political structures in the early Middle Ages. This reuse incorporated royal activities performed at ancient structures for political ownership and to claim legitimacy (Driscoll, 1998, pp. 154–155).

There are numerous sites that may be considered prehistoric mounds as well as Roman or Late Antiquity structures used for medieval cemeteries in the Western Balkans. They are not as rare as they may seem based on the most cited literature on medieval archaeology of the Western Balkans. Many Roman structures that originally served another purpose were reused as medieval burial sites in modern-day Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Kosovo, Montenegro, and Albania. When the evidence is published in detail, which is not generally the case, they can be better studied from the perspective of the biography of things and places (Čirić, 2013). Medieval cemeteries were dug into areas of previous civic or military use as well as Roman cemeteries or near early Christian basilicas (Grujić, 2009). There are also examples of prehistoric mounds reused for medieval burials found in the Western Balkans (Veseličić, 2009, p. 103). However, the medieval cemeteries in place of prehistoric mounds have been dominantly perceived by researchers as an obstacle to the fascinating prehistoric finds below.

Although *Bosnia and Herzegovina* is extremely rich in traces of the phenomenon of reuse, few excavations have been carried out here. Based on surface survey, it is known that a substantial number of monuments classified as *stećak* tombstones³ have been placed on sites of prehistoric mounds. Since it is known that these are medieval tombstones, carved from the 12th to the 16th century, the usage of these locations is a phenomenon extending well into the late Middle Ages. According to the research conducted by Edita Vučić, in West Herzegovina there are 35 necropolises containing tombstones located on prehistoric tumuli (Vučić, 2018). In the region of Kupres, eight prehistoric tumuli with such tombstones have been recorded (Ivić, Huseinagić, Čurković, Mihaljević, Mijoč, 2013). Alojz Benac excavated two such instances, at the Dokanova glavica site from the 14th–15th century and at the Pustopolje site, where medieval burials date back to the 14th century (Benac, 1986, pp. 95–101). The reuse of prehistoric mounds was common in the Middle Ages on the Glasinac plateau, but the data is not precise (Džino, 2021, p. 65). In the vicinity of Bileća,

3 The *stećak* tombstones are not exclusively related to Bosnia and Herzegovina, but do exist in large numbers in present-day Croatia, Montenegro, and Serbia.

in the village of Orah, a small necropolis from the late Middle Ages was discovered containing 15 graves, with grave construction made of stone slabs (Čović, 1982, p. 25). At the Hatelji site in Dabarsko polje, one mound was found containing 13 stećak tombstones. The partial excavation of the mound discovered seven children's graves, their respective ages ranging from infant to six years old, among them those not oriented according to Christian customs (Grahek, Milosavljević, Čaval, 2020, pp. 24–25). In mound no. 5 at the Gubavica site near Mostar, five late medieval graves were buried in a prehistoric mound. An unusual example of grave no. 2 from this mound shows an unusual burial of a child (probably 3–4 years of age) in a “well-shaped” tomb, placed in a sitting position, with his back against the edge of the tomb, and a medieval lock on top of the grave, while the tomb is covered with stone slabs (Čović 1982, pp. 23–24).

In *Serbia*, several authors have explored the problem of the reuse of older structures and material culture in the Middle Ages in more detail. In her master thesis “Medieval Necropolises within the Area of Sacral Buildings from the Roman Period” (2009), Ivana Grujić analyzed examples of medieval cemeteries created in the area of martiria/memorias/baptisteries, in the area of early Byzantine basilicas and churches, as well as that of Roman temples. She also identifies this phenomenon at sites in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, North Macedonia, and Bulgaria. Even more interestingly, her research has shown that medieval cemeteries were positioned on the remains of Roman structures, regardless of any possible presence of a sacral building. Thus, it was not unusual for medieval cemeteries to be formed on the site of Roman baths or on Roman structures in general (Grujić, 2009, pp. 72–76, 82–84). Focusing on Roman coins in medieval graves, Gordana Ćirić demonstrated the presence of anachronistic Roman material culture in medieval cemetery contexts in Serbia (Ćirić, 2013, pp. 239–254; Ćirić, 2016, pp. 732–747).

Analyzing the corpus of finds from the collection of medieval objects in the National Museum in Čačak, Milica Radišić (Veseličić) made the observation that a significant number belongs to graves dating to the Middle Ages or the post-medieval period, and located at prehistoric mounds. This is a rare example of a regional approach, in which the author has demonstrated the phenomenon to have first appeared in this area within 12th and 13th-century burial practices, which carried on into the late Middle Ages and the post-medieval period. More importantly, she also pointed out that some prehistoric mounds in this same area were used for individual burials, found mainly in mountainous areas; however, in valleys and at lower altitudes, communal cemeteries possessing a higher number of burials were also found to have been constructed upon prehistoric mounds (Veseličić, 2009, pp. 84–104).

The overlap of the reuse of old structures, places, and artifacts is evidenced by the example of the Guševac site in Mrčajevci, where amber beads, originating from a prehistoric context, were transferred to medieval grave no. 9. Namely, on the left side of the skeleton from grave no. 9, supine on the central stone structure of the prehistoric mound, positioned directly next to the hand, as well as around the pelvis, around 30 intact and a large number of fragmented amber beads were found (Radičević, 2000, p. 64). Similar to the Čačak area, medieval burials in prehistoric mounds in Serbia have almost by definition been excavated as a side effect of the original research goal of excavating prehistoric mounds⁴. They are dated to the 12th–13th centuries, with examples from the 10th to the 13th or 15th centuries. Of the sites known in Kosovo and Metohija, medieval burials in prehistoric mounds are known to be at the Široko site near Suva Reka, dating back to the 10th–11th centuries, the Prčevo-Boka site near Klinina from the 10th–12th centuries, and Vlaštica near Gnjilane in the 11th–12th centuries (Srejšević, 1998, pp. 394, 396, 405).

In *Montenegro*, at the Gruda Boljevića site in Podgorica, a medieval cemetery was developed over a prehistoric mound where 192 medieval graves were discovered dated to the 12–13th centuries or the 14th century the latest (Baković, 2012, p. 380). A similar example is the site of Borovica near Pljevlja, where a medieval cemetery with 150 graves was found on a Bronze Age tumulus. The material culture corresponds to the same period as Gruda Boljevića. Similar phenomena were found in *North Macedonia* at the Čukarka site with 42 graves buried in a Roman tumulus, and at the Stragata site near the village of Kruševica a medieval necropolis of 77 graves buried in an Iron Age tumulus was found (Saveljić-Bulatović 2015, p. 51). The burial of medieval cemeteries in prehistoric mounds was also observed in *Albania* – the tumulus of Rehovë and tumulus of Luaras are the most prominent cases (Lera, Oikonomidis, Papayiannis, Tsonos, 2017, p. 225). In Albania, similarly to Serbia, this phenomenon continues into the modern day (Šućur, 2017, p. 119).

The examples presented here certainly do not exhaust the corpus of existing evidence but do indicate the frequency and importance of reusing older structures, specifically Roman architectural remains and prehistoric mounds, for mortuary practices.

4 The sites are Radovašnica near Šabac (Cerović, 2008, pp. 18–23), Dobrača near Kragujevac (Garašanin & Garašanin, 1956, pp. 191–204), Moravac near Aleksinac (Vučković-Todorović & Todorović, 1959, pp. 287–289), Bandera, Belotić-Bela crkva (mound no. 1) in the vicinity of Mionica (Garašanin & Garašanin, 1958, pp. 17–46), Vrane near Arilje (Đurić, 1995, pp. 41–48), Staničenje-Madžilka near Pirot (Milanović 2015, p. 21).

Conclusion

The phenomenon of the reuse of older structures in the Western Balkans spans from the 10th to the 15th centuries in some sites, as well as to the post-medieval period. This work focuses on these practices as social-anthropological phenomena, examining them through the lens of medieval archaeology, leaving the historical context in the background. However, what this preliminary research shows is that building within older structures in the earliest cemeteries (from 10th century onward) was most frequently done within Roman structures, very rarely in prehistoric mounds. Conversely, starting from the 12th century, one finds medieval burials in prehistoric mounds. What is especially unusual is that such examples also exist in the late Middle Ages. That such a large number of cemeteries containing *stećak* tombstones in Bosnia and Herzegovina were placed over prehistoric mounds is noteworthy. These multiple indications show that the hypothesis that reuse was a response to the crisis of the post-Roman world and the emerging of medieval complex collective identities cannot be entirely commensurable in the Western Balkans. According to Jure Šučur, the reuse of prehistoric mounds in Dalmatia is noticeable for graves from Late Antiquity as well as the early Middle Ages and late Middle Ages, which may be related to social crises. Before the results of future excavations, it is unclear whether this reasoning can be applied to examples from the Western Balkans (Šučur, 2017). Since the evidence remains scarce, conclusions should be cautiously constructed in line with meticulous excavations conducted in the present day.

Confronting existing hypotheses from other contexts with archaeological records from the Western Balkans raises more questions than it provides concrete answers. However, what can be gleaned with some certainty is that the reuse of old structures and especially prehistoric mounds is not exclusively an early medieval phenomenon; indeed, there are numerous instances of reuse of prehistoric burial mounds in the late medieval and post-medieval period. In fact, some ancient burial mounds may act as rural cemeteries even today (Veseličić, 2009, p. 60; Šučur, 2017, p. 119). Although the evidence is unsystematic and this is a phenomenon largely neglected, it is noticeable that there are structures used for individual burials (1–5 graves) and those serving as communal burial sites were used among successive generations (15–200 graves). Although it may be hypothesized that individual high medieval graves in prehistoric mounds are for outcasts, criminals, and the marginalized, while collective cemeteries may be a response to emerging identities (Holtorf & Williams, 2006, p. 249), there are examples of late medieval cemeteries in prehistoric mounds

in the Western Balkans that directly contradict this idea (Radičević, 2000; Veseličić, 2009; Vučić, 2018). Reuse situations are classified by inertia as indicators testifying to the notion of continuity. However, relying on the approach by Estella Weiss-Krejci, exactly the opposite may be concluded: that the appropriation of space and existing structures and mythical places is an indicator of discontinuity and the need for rooting one's collective identity (Weiss-Krejci, 2015, pp. 307–324).

Before future research that treats the phenomenon of reuse with due care is undertaken, it is difficult to state whether it may be linked to the rise of new identities associated with the emergence of late 12th-century social complexity in the Western Balkans. Due to the variety and specificity shown by the archaeological records, the phenomenon of reuse should be approached regionally. As Holtorf and Williams noted: “how people relate to the past and its remains is not subject to some unchanging principles but is always governed by the specific agendas and interests of the people involved” (Holtorf & Williams, 2006, p. 253).

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Моника Милосављевић*

ПОНОВНА УПОТРЕБА ДРЕВНИХ ОСТАКА У ПОГРЕБНИМ ПРАКСАМА СРЕДЊЕГ ВЕКА НА ЗАПАДНОМ БАЛКАНУ

Апстракт: Потреба за артикулацијом идеје прошлости је изразито људска, али је кључно како је ова потреба обликована. Претходна раздобља су такође имала своје референтне оквире прошлости. Овај феномен је готово занемарен на Западном Балкану и захтева даље истраживање. Циљ ове студије је да се укаже на сложеније погледе на посмртне обреде у средњовековним друштвима, како би се кроз њих разумело како се гледало на сопствену прошлост; посебно како су рушевине материјалних структура из прошлости биле уклопљене у њихов тадашњи идентитет. Због тога је анализа спроведена на погребним праксама констатованим међу средњовековним становницима Западног Балкана, где су средњовековни гробови изнова и изнова укопавани у праисторијске хумке и римске архитектонске објекте. Такве сахране могу расветлити разумевање средњовековног идентитета пошто су својеврсна огледала присвајања прошлости за потребе оновремене садашњости.

Кључне речи: поновна употреба, старе структуре, праисторијске хумке, средњовековна гробља, идентитет

* Моника Милосављевић је ванредни професор, Одељење за археологију, Филозофски факултет, Београд; сарадник на пројекту Sciences of the Origin, који финансира Фондација Џон Темплтон и подржава Универзитет у Оксфорду. monika.milosavljevic@gmail.com

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While writing the texts collected in this volume, the authors have been living through an extraordinary experience, coping with everyday tasks made more complex by the crisis we have been facing, and creating new habits necessary to navigate the new environment. Although exceptional from our point of view, our present experience is far from unique, and the human history is replete with turbulent periods of crisis, profoundly disrupting the habitual order.

The aim of this collection is therefore to investigate some of the situations of crisis in the past from the archaeological perspective, in a search for insights that may help us to better understand and cope with the present one. At the same time, the papers demonstrate some of the vast possibilities of archaeological investigation to contribute to our understanding of the world we live in, as well as of the past societies whose material traces we study.

