

BALCANICA

ANNUAIRE DE L'INSTITUT DES ETUDES BALKANIQUES

XXVI

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BELGRADE

1995



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STRONGHOLDS OF POWER The Territorial Aspect of the Princely Tombs of the Early Iron Age in the Central Balkans

Abstract: Princely tombs of the Early Iron Age in the Central Balkan region have been discussed here as the symbolic strongholds of livestock breeders' communities and their territories. Hypothetical borders of these territories have been delineated using the Thiessen polygon model. As territorial marks and symbols of social power, the princely tombs probably functioned on three levels: ritual, territorial and tribal.

The princely tombs of the Central Balkans are the topic often discussed in Yugoslav prehistoric archaeology. They owe their name both to luxurious and abundant grave goods, and to monumental dimensions of the mounds - which all implied high social rank of the deceased. Although the preliminary archaeological reports on some of the major graves of this horizon have remained unpublished - even several decades after their discovery - this problem has been discussed in a number of studies. In this way the importance of the phenomenon has been emphasized in its wider European framework;¹ comparative grave analysis has been performed,² there have been attempts at solving the problems of imported material;³ the relation between the graves and trade routes,⁴ as well as some ritual and cult aspects of the princely tombs have been discussed.⁵ There is also a number of works on indi-

1 A. Palavestra 1984, 1988, R. Vasić 1987.

2 A. Palavestra 1984; B. Jovanović 1979; B. Čović 1979.

3 M. Parović-Pešikan 1960, 1988; B. Čović 1983; R. Vasić 1986, S. Babić 1990.

4 A. Palavestra 1989, 1994.

5 A. Stipčević 1984; S. Čače 1985.

vidual graves, e.g. the monograph on Atenica,⁶ and various archaeological reports, some very thorough and the others concise⁷

One of the aspects of the princely tombs that was never discussed is the study of the position of each tomb within its micro-region and of its relation with wider geographic area. Huge and conspicuous mounds, constantly in the public view, were beyond any doubt clear and intelligible symbols of power of the local chieftains. However, it is not likely that such symbolic occupation of an area was merely the expression of individual wealth and vanity. It should be rather assumed that it had precise, well-determined meaning for the entire community.

Although built for the deceased, graves, particularly monumental ones, have exceptional importance for the living members of a community. Leadership of an individual within larger social groups, such as those established in prehistoric Europe after the "agricultural revolution", needed to be recurrently confirmed by external insignia. Although adequate for smaller groups and generally characteristic of primates, constant confirmation of leadership in leader's personal contacts with the community members was impossible within complex social structures.⁸

According to some interpretations, there were three levels on which monumental megalithic tombs of the Neolithic and Bronze Ages of Western Europe played their decisive role in maintaining the social structure. The first was the ritual level, on which the religious rites at the grave directed the attention of the entire community to prominent individuals, no matter whether the latter were chiefs, priests or both. On the second level, the tombs designated the centers which determined and directed the allegiance of an individual to his group in terms of territory, thus enforcing the centripetal tendencies in the community. The latter aspect was particularly important for those communities which claimed certain territory even if they did not inhabit it continually, either due to extensive agriculture or to nomadic migrations. Finally, burials of the prominent individuals pointed out the power of living leaders, especially if their power was the result of kinship with the deceased or was inherited in some other way.⁹

6 M. Duknić, B. Jovanović 1966

7 Đ. Mano-Zisi, Lj. Popović 1969; M. Zotović 1984, 1985; D. Srejšević, Č. Marković 1981; D. Srejšević, O. Vukadin 1988.

8 A. Fleming 1973:188.

9 A. Fleming 1973: 189-190.

The princely tombs of the Early Iron Age in Western and Middle Europe, a cultural phenomenon similar to the princely tombs of the same horizon in the Balkan Peninsula,¹⁰ also had clear territorial and regional significance. The term *Fürstengraberkreis* was even proposed in order to denote the territorial surroundings of a princely tomb both in geographical, and in socio-political sense.¹¹ Besides the fact that their huge mounds are easily perceptible, the importance of these tombs as clear and vivid signposts is also confirmed by prominent overground symbols, such as the stone stelae and monuments in Hirschlanden.¹² One can only imagine how many of such monuments made of perishable wood must have marked and decorated the mighty princely tombs throughout Europe and the Balkan Peninsula, although there is scarce evidence of their existence.¹³ A wider social and ritual dimension of the princely tombs in Middle Europe was also confirmed by the existence of ritual "quadrangle enclosures" (*Viereckshanze*) in the vicinity of the mounds.¹⁴ However, in Western and Middle Europe, the territorial spheres of the princely tombs were closely related with the settlements as regional centers (*Fürstentzitze*), themselves very important focal points of power and influence in a territory. The relationship between inner social structure and regional matters, based on the study of princely centers and tombs, was discussed in a number of studies.¹⁵ For the princely tombs of the Central Balkan region a somewhat different cultural model has been recently proposed. The absence of big "central" settlements as economic, trading and ritual centers of the region as well as the distribution of princely tombs along major communications, suggested a cultural model of the society based on seasonal cattle-breeding, as well as on the control over the pastoral and trade routes.¹⁶

The nomadic and transhumant cattle-breeding,¹⁷ with its variants and regional differences, could be documented in the Balkans from the beginning of the Eneolithic period.¹⁸ This branch of economy, domi-

10 A. Palavestra 1988.

11 S. Champion 1994: 146.

12 H. Zürn 1970, J-P. Mohen 1987: 45-46.

13 K. Bittel 1981: 92.

14 K. Bittel 1981.

15 S. Frankenstein, M Rowlands 1978; S. Champion 1994.

16 A. Palavestra 1989; 1993: 281-288; 1994.

17 In the nomadic cattle-breeding model, the entire population migrates with its herds, while in the transhumant model only the herders migrate. There are many variants of these two basic types see F. Braudel 1990: 85-102; N. Dunare 1976.

18 M. Garasanin 1977, 1994.

nant in the Balkans and the Mediterranean¹⁹ from the prehistory to our days, left indelible marks in the culture, life style and customs of the population of the region, but we shall leave this complex problem aside. The Early Iron Age population of the Central Balkans, as well as many generations who lived in the region, practiced cattle-breeding. The fact was confirmed in Classical written sources. A well known and often cited speech that Alexander the Great delivered to Macedonians, as quoted by Arrian, depicts contemporary Balkan population concisely and vividly: "Philip found you living as poor nomads, dressed mostly in hides, grazing your scarce herds, and fighting over them without much success, with Illyrians, Triballi and Thracians"²⁰ Other sources, too, affirm that the paleo-Balkan population was very mobile owing to nomadic and semi-nomadic cattle-breeding, and often in conflict over herds or salt-licks, so important for the cattle.²¹

Numerous forms of life and economy of ancient Balkan pastoralists have remained almost unchanged for centuries. Perhaps one of the reasons was a limited choice of cultural models - the societies of transhumant and nomadic cattle-breeders were similarly shaped, which was determined by the very structure of their economy. On the other hand, conservatism and traditionalism of these communities helped preserve their institutions for centuries (legal standards, rituals, costume, housing, exploitation of pasture-land, patriarchal - tribal societal structure). A good example is the allocation of pasture-land to community members every eight years which was customary among paleo-Balkan population, but among the farmers of the medieval period as well²²

Abundant ethnographic and historical material and literature on Balkan pastoralists in the Middle Ages and the modern epoch, provide sufficient data for bringing forward hypotheses on paleo-Balkan cattle-breeders.²³ Isolated as they are, relicts of the ancient life in the Balkan Peninsula cannot serve as analogies in the interpretation of archaeological data. However, if set into a firmer methodological framework suggested by modern balkanology, ample ethnographical and historical data on cattle-breeding in the Balkans offer a solid basis for establishing an archaeological model, subject to further examination, and

19 F. Braudel 1990: 85-102.

20 F. Papazoglu 1969: 16.

21 F. Papazoglu 1969: 361-364.

22 M. Suic 1967: 103-104; E. Pašalić 1967: 115-116; S. Čače 1979: 118-119.

23 V. Čubrilović (ed.) 1976; D. Antonijević 1982.

thus to verification or refutation.²⁴ In methodological sense, this balkanological framework includes, on the one hand, the archaeological implications of the "long-term history" as proposed by Fernand Braudel and *The Annales* historiographical school, and, on the other hand, the anthropo-geographical dimension of J. Cvijić's balkanology.²⁵ In the discussion about the problems of the Iron Age in the Central Balkans, and especially the princely tombs of the Early Iron Age of the region, it was this methodological approach that paved the way for the establishment of certain archaeological models.²⁶

The princely tombs of the Early Iron Age are located in the parts of the Central Balkans famous for centuries for the intensive transhumant and nomadic cattle-breeding.²⁷ If the fact is borne in mind that they all appeared within a rather narrow span of time - from the last decades of the 6th to the first decades of the 5th century BC - the major concentration of power over the same period and the relatively limited space must be counted on. This would suggest - at least judging by the princely tombs, that several centers of power existed in the region delimited by the River Drina in the west, the River Ibar in the east, the River Zapadna Morava in the north and the Beli Drim and Erenik rivers in the south. Some of the wealthier graves of the Glasinac complex, situated either in the culture's home area on the left bank of the Drina, or in Herzegovina and in the Zeta river valley, could also be included as related phenomena and comparative material.²⁸ Regarding the pastoralist character of the paleo-Balkan population and the distinctive geo-morphological conveniences of the region for transhumant and nomadic cattle-breeding, the princely tombs of the Early Iron Age in the Central Balkans - as symbolic strongholds of power and centers of communities - may be also viewed from the aspect of nomadic migrations and territories. In order to establish better basis for the hypothesis that the princely tombs were landmarks of cattle-breeders' territories - i.e. the territories for seasonal pasturing controlled by a certain group, it is necessary to provide a more thorough insight into the very position of the graves.

24 I. Hodder 1982.

25 I. Hodder 1987; J. Bintliff 1991; P. Novaković 1992; A. Palavestra 1994a.

26 A. Bankoff, A. Palavestra 1986; A. Palavestra 1989, 1993, 1994.

27 J. Cvijić 1922; R. Ršumović 1976.

28 A. Palavestra 1984. 60-65.

The monumental tomb in Pilatovići, the earliest one in the group of princely tombs (dated to the second half of the 6th century BC), is located near Užička Požega, south of the River Zapadna Morava, on the right bank of the River Moravica, in the vicinity of its confluence with the Zapadna Morava. It is situated in the river valley (at the altitude of 310 meters), while the necropolis with mounds, dated back to the Early Iron Age, is located some 500 meters to the south. Mt Krstac, a branch of the Stari Vlah mountain range which descends towards the Morava river valley, rises above the princely tomb.²⁹ The big mound contained a rich princely tomb with the central grave made of broken stone, two peripheral graves and an outer circular drywall. Remains of the *bustuarium* were discovered in the central grave, while the peripheral grave holding a female skeleton contained abundant and luxurious material: gold bracelets, bronze vessels from Greek workshops, amber beads as well as local jewelry and pottery. In the central grave one scarabaeus was discovered, characteristic of the Orientalizing style of Italic centers of the 6th century BC.³⁰

Two princely mounds in Atenica are located in the southeastern suburbs of Čačak, on the right bank of the Zapadna Morava (altitude 237 meters). Slopes of Mt Jelica, also a part of the Stari Vlah mountain range, rise to the southwest. Although merely 23 kilometers as the crow flies from Pilatovići, these sites are clearly separated by Mt. Jelica and the Ovčar-Kablar Gorge into two distinctive micro-regions. Wealthy graves of similar construction were discovered under both mounds in Atenica; the central grave was made of broken stone, containing remains of the *bustuarium* and a large number of various grave goods. The graves yielded very rich gold and silver jewelry, luxurious material of Graeco-Italian provenance (bronze vessels, pottery, amber, bone items, beads of glass paste, as well as remains of a chariot with accessories). The larger mound contained also three ritual rectangular structures made of broken stone with sacrificial pits.³¹

In the foundations of the medieval church of St. Peter, on an elevation situated above the confluence of the Deževa and Raška rivers, about 2 kilometers north of Novi Pazar, archaeologists discovered a rich grave which entered into the literature as the Novi Pazar finding. The natural elevation on which the mound had been erected is situated on

29 M. Zotović 1985: 80-83

30 M. Zotović 1985: 80-100.

31 M. Đuknić, B. Jovanović 1966.

the right bank of the Deževska River and dominates the river valleys near the confluence and the Raška (altitude 500 meters). Across the Raška, the slopes of the Golija mountain range rise toward the northwest, while Mt. Rogozna rises in the southeast and east. Numerous objects made of gold, silver, raw and carved amber, glass beads, silver and bronze utensils and black-figure pottery from Greek centers in southern Italy were found in the grave (or perhaps the hoard of grave goods).³²

The princely mound of Pećka Banja is located in Metochia, on the northern fringes of the Beli Drim river valley, on its left bank (approxim. altitude 500 meters). The slopes of the high mountains Rusulija and Mokra Gora rise toward the north, and the fertile valley of the Beli Drim spreads toward the south. The place is the crossroads of two routes, one leading from the mountainous region of Rožaje to Metochia, and the other going through the Gorge of Rugovo. The mound contained two graves with silver jewelry, carved amber beads, helmets of the Graeco-Illyrian type, weapons, horse equipment and imported Greek pottery.³³

Another wealthy grave that could be regarded as a princely tomb, though not as rich, was discovered at the site of Lisijevo Polje near Berane, in the Lim river valley, on the river's right bank (approxim. altitude 670 meters). The Lim valley and Lisijevo Polje are surrounded by high mountains, with the highest peaks on Bjelasica in the west and Mokra Planina in the southeast. Lisijevo Polje, too, is located on the crossroads of routes leading through mountains, gorges and river valleys. Bronze jewelry, weaponry, equestrian equipment, pottery and very fine specimens of amber beads and plates made in the South-Italian workshops were found in the grave with the remains of a skeleton.³⁴

It is not difficult to derive common characteristics shared by all princely tombs. They were all built in river valleys, on flat terrain or smooth slopes, which enhanced the visibility of the mounds. All of them have mountainous hinterland suitable for cattle-breeding, and all are located along the roads that lead from the mountains to the valleys (and vice versa), often on the most important "strategic" nodes that were used for centuries for trade and seasonal pastoral migrations. It was

32 D. Mano-Zisi, Lj Popović 1969, 1969a.

33 A. Palavestra 1984: 58-60; J. Jeftović (ed.) 1990: 185-187

34 D. Srejšević, Č. Marković 1981.

easy to control trade and other movements from these positions,³⁵ and also to demonstrate the excellence of the graves to all travelers. It is not unusual to find graves along roads, and there is also evidence that burial along herders' routes was a custom highly praised among Balkan cattle-breeders, aimed to enable the deceased "to watch over" his herds.³⁶

It is noteworthy that other rich graves of the same horizon, but obviously of lower-ranking individuals, were discovered in the neighbourhood of some of the abovementioned princely graves. The Halistatt necropolises were discovered near Pilatovići (Uzići, Ražana, Godljevo, Kriva Reka).³⁷ At the Guševac site in Mrčajevci,³⁸ and in Ljuljaci³⁹ not far from Atenica, there is also a few rich graves with mounds. Another luxurious find, a few decades younger than the grave near St. Peter's church, was discovered north of Novi Pazar (25 kilometers as the crow flies), in the village Kruševica.⁴⁰ Necropolises with mounds, such as Dojevići or Glogovik on Mt. Golija, were also excavated.⁴¹ We have a similar situation at Pečka Banja, with the Boka necropolis, and some other graves from the Iron Age in its vicinity.⁴² A stratified social structure may be corroborated by these finds, but before drawing any relevant conclusions it would be necessary to perform a comparative analysis of all the graves, which is beyond the range of this study.

The territorial disposition of the princely tombs could depict the hypothetical borders of the Early Iron Age regional groups in the Central Balkans, particularly in the light of the "stock-breeders hypothesis". If the princely tombs may be regarded as hypothetical, symbolic centers of the territories, the boundaries of these territories could be partly reconstructed in a schematic form by means of the well-known "Thiessen" polygons. Thiessen, or Dirichlet polygons, have the property of enclosing within them the areas that are nearer to the enclosed point (center) around which they are constructed than to any other given center.⁴³ This method is frequently used in geography as an in-

35 A. Palavestra 1989.

36 D. Antonjević 1982: 133.

37 M. Zotović 1985.

38 A. Palavestra 1984: 68; 1994: 147.

39 D. Srejšević 1990.

40 D. Srejšević, O. Vukadin 1988.

41 Z. Letica 1979, 1982.

42 N. Tasić 1979.

43 B. Goodall 1987: 129-130.

strument of territorial analysis, but has also been present in archaeology for decades now. In archaeology, it is important to make sure that the sites which represent the centers of the polygons are of the same chronological horizon, and of similar importance and (or) size⁴⁴ Thiessen polygons were used to determine "individual territories" around the large Neolithic mounds in the south of England, emphasizing social, ritual and territorial aspects of these graves⁴⁵ Although its use in archaeology was criticized for its abstractness and schematism,⁴⁶ this model can be applied in determining, at least roughly, the spheres of influence and control of a certain group

The author of this paper used the Thiessen polygon method in the attempt to draw hypothetical borders of the territories whose centers could be the princely tombs of the Early Iron Age in the Central Balkan region. This archaeological model has also incorporated neighbouring regions, the Glasinac area on the one hand, and the "warrior's" mound near Romaja in Metochia on the other. The princely tombs at Glasinac suggest a somewhat different social structure from the one represented by the princely tombs east of the River Drina⁴⁷ The cultural model of the warrior's graves at Romaja differ significantly from burials in Novi Pazar or Pećka Banja. The issue of complicated comparisons and interpretations of funerary rites and social structures of the Iron Age societies in the Balkan Peninsula cannot be raised in this paper. The sites of Glasinac and Romaja have been shown within this model merely as representatives of the regions and spheres of influence bordering upon the princely tombs areas of the Central Balkans. The map shows that the Thiessen polygon model for the princely tombs of the Central Balkans is not complete, and that only hypothetical borders rather than entire enclosed polygons were depicted. The reason is the limited number of princely tombs and the lack of accessible archaeological data. Hypothetical as they are, these borders, nevertheless, suggest the existence of enclosed territories with the princely tombs as their symbolic, ritual and perhaps political centers.

Therefore, the site of Pilatovići may have been the center of the territory which covered Mts. Zlatar and Zlatibor, the Zapadna Morava and Moravica river valleys, and, perhaps, the slopes of Mts. Povlen and

44 D. Clarke 1971: 509-510; J. Hodder, C. Orton 1989: 59-60.

45 C. Renfrew 1973: 544-547.

46 M. Braithwaite 1984: 96.

47 B. Čović 1979, A. Palavestra 1984: 60-64.

Maljen in the north across the Morava. The sphere of influence of Atenica stretched over Mt Jelica, the Zapadna Morava valley and the slopes of the mountains of the Šumadija region north of the Zapadna Morava valley. The territory of the princely tomb in Novi Pazar covered Mts. Golija, Rogozna, Kopaonik and the Novi Pazar valley - the only lowlands in the region - as well as the gorges of the Ibar, Raška and Deževa rivers. The territory "controlled" from Pečka Banja extended over the eastern slopes of Mts. Prokletije, Rusulija and Mokra Gora, the Gorge of Rugovo and the northern part of Metochia. The site of Lisijevo Polje, settled in the Berane basin, in the Ibar river valley, was in the center of the region bordered by Mts. Bjelasica, Crni Vrh, Jadovnik and Giljeva.

All these regions, particularly highlands, have been well-known for their intensive transhumant and nomadic cattle-breeding. It is not necessary to quote large geographical, ethnographical and historical literature which confirms this. It is, however, interesting that J. Cvijic, when listing all these mountains as highly appropriate for stock-grazing, said that "the richest and finest pastures in the Peninsula are located on the southern and western slopes of Mt. Rusulija, between Peć and Rožaje"⁴⁸ which is exactly above Pečka Banja. The highest summit of Mt. Jelica above the Atenica site - the mountain which is no longer famous for cattle-breeding - is called Ovčar (ovčar - an shepherd), which points to the cattle-breeding history of this region. The toponym of Pilatovići also implies the same origin, since it was derived from the name of a seasonal station that belonged to the Vlach fraternity of Pilatovac or Pilatović, referred to in the medieval sources.⁴⁹

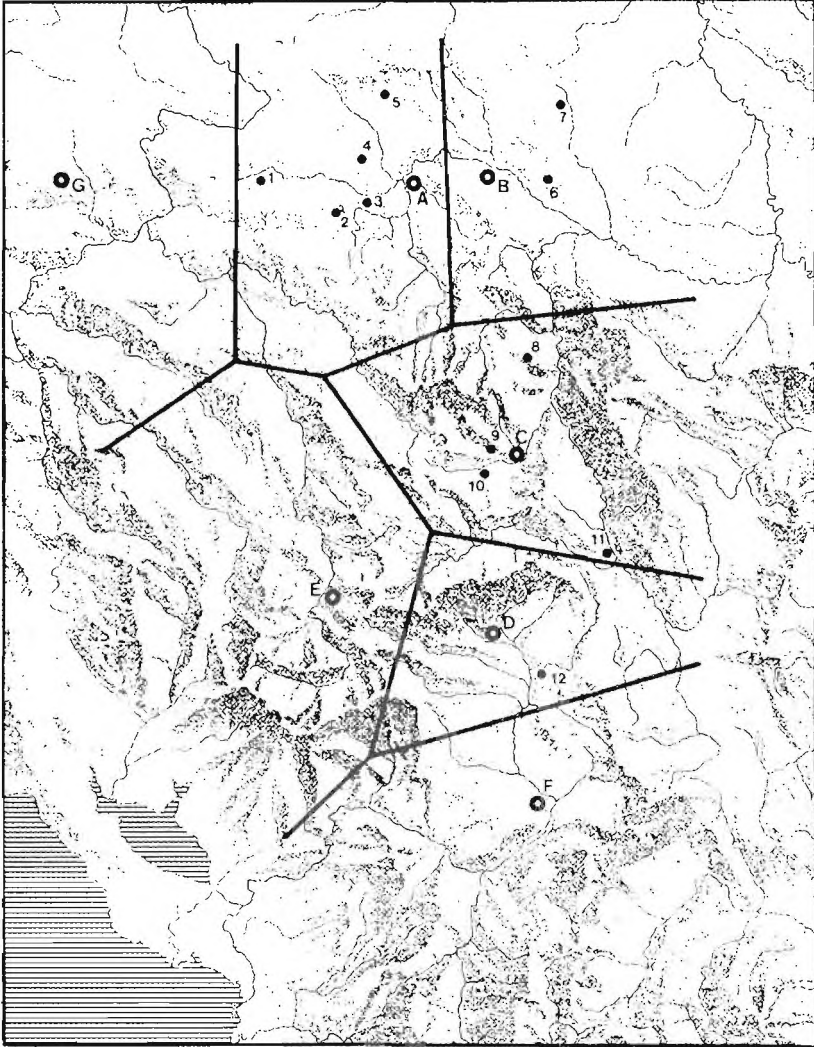
As stated above, the princely tombs are located in lowlands, beneath high mountain pastures, on the ages-old cattle-breeders' routes conditioned by rare mountain passes, gorges and river valleys. Lowlands and river valleys with their mild climate were as important for the nomadic and transhumant cattle-breeding as the mountains. They were the regions of wintertime pastures, without which livestock-breeding in the Balkans would be impossible.

Data on seasonal cattle-breeding in the Balkans clearly show the importance attached to the territory controlled by a community - either a fraternity, *katin*,⁵⁰ or a tribe. Constant battles had been fought over

48 J. Cvijic 1922: 85-86.

49 M. Filipović 1963: 62, 64.

50 *Katin* - cattle-breeders' mountain settlement and a form of social organization.



*A – Pilatovići, B – Atenica, C – Novi Pazar, D – Pečka Banja,
 E – Lisijevo Polje, F – Romaja, G – Glasinac, 1 – Kremna,
 2 – Kriva Reka, 3 – Uziće, 4 – Godljevo, 5 – Ražana, 6 – Mrčajevci,
 7 – Ljuljaci, 8 – Kruševica, 9 – Glogovik, 10 – Dojevići,
 11 – Karagač, 12 – Boka-Prčevo*

pastures and livestock-breeders' routes, and the duty of each community member was to defend the territory once it was occupied. For a community, boundaries of the occupied territories and pastures were marked with "their dead", i.e. their graves and monuments.⁵¹ Seasonal movements between winter and summer pastures were strictly regulated by the "mountain regime" - i.e. the customs of traditional law which meticulously regulated the relations among cattle-breeders, their departure into the mountain (*izdig*), and return to the lowlands (*zdig*), the roads, the use of pasture and water, the habitations etc.⁵² For the Balkan cattle-breeder, an ideally conceived territory would contain summer pastures in the highlands, winter pastures in the valleys, abundance of water and convenient roads, easy to control and defend. Livestock-breeders and their herds migrated constantly during the year between "upper" and "lower" mountains, and winter stations in the lowlands.⁵³ Although other nomadic movements also took place in the Balkans, seasonal movements mostly occurred within such territorial entities.⁵⁴ If a community had been prevented from performing the annual cycle in its own territory, due to the geo-morphological character of the terrain or bad weather, it had been forced to move further with its herds. The crossing of other tribes' territory, which was strictly regulated by the standards of customary law, must have put them on severe trials.⁵⁵ This was especially the case with winter stations, which were harder to find in the mountainous regions and therefore extremely valuable. It has been recorded that, due to severe climate, cattle-breeders migrated all the way from Vasojevići (Montenegro), or from Mt. Tara, to the Zapadna Morava valley and the vicinity of Cačak (near Atenica).⁵⁶ The control of winter pastures was very important and even more profitable than agriculture, which was testified by the documents from the period of Turkish occupation.⁵⁷

The Balkan cattle-breeders of the Iron Age must have controlled their territories with as much care. Scarce winter pastures, river valleys, basins, and particularly "neuralgic spots" and crossroads of pastoralists' routes, had to be protected with extreme "jealousy". Among

51 M. Lutovac 1976: 25.

52 V. Čubrilović (ed.) 1976; Đ. Krstić 1979.)

53 M. Lutovac 1976: 26-27.

54 N. Dunare 1976; R. Ršumović 1976; M. Lutovac 1976

55 V. Čubrilović (ed.) 1976

56 M. Lutovac 1976: 32-33.

57 D. Antonijević 1982: 41-42.

other reasons, it was in order to symbolically lay the claim to a territory that the big mounds of the princely tombs were erected on such spots. According to one of the hypotheses, the big prehistoric mounds of the Wessex culture in the south of England also had marked the cattle-breeders' territory.⁵⁸ Extremely opulent "princely" tombs at Altai, of the same chronological horizon as the Balkan princely tombs, seem also to have been the landmarks of cattle-breeders' territory. According to the authors of the excavation, the Ukoka mound (Altai), recently discovered and extremely well-preserved, was the landmark of the winter pastures that belonged to the semi-nomadic inhabitants of this plateau.⁵⁹ It was also recorded that Darius, during the conquest of Thrace, used to erect stone mounds in order to claim the newly occupied territories.⁶⁰ According to some authors, the Thracian Odnisian rulers also used to build big mounds as landmarks of the region they controlled and as frontiers towards neighbouring tribes.⁶¹

The princely tombs of the Early Iron Age in the Central Balkans are also likely to have played their role as symbolic spiritual *stožer* or strongholds of cattle-breeders' communities.⁶² Hypothetical borders of these territories have been suggested here by the Thiessen polygon archaeological model. Outlines were captured of a few regions famous for their seasonal cattle-breeding, with high summer pastures, wintertime river valleys and basins, with routes suitable for seasonal migrations and trade. The princely tombs are located on dominant points of such regions - on winter pastures by the communications, even on the crossroads. Moreover, a few findings indicate that the settlements had existed in the vicinity of some of these rich graves. This could be the case at the site of Postenje not far from the Novi Pazar grave, where rich archaeological material, dated into the Iron Age, was detected.⁶³ The existence of permanent settlements in the vicinity of winter pastures would go along with the transhumant tradition.⁶⁴

It is most likely that the princely tombs, as centres of social power, probably functioned on all the three abovementioned levels: rit-

58 A. Fleming 1971. 1973: 580-581.

59 N. Polosmak 1994.

60 N. Theodossiev 1995: 383.

61 S. Topalov 1994: 133.

62 *Stožer* – communal and indivisible piece of land which belongs to the entire commune or fraternity of the Dinaric region. J. Cvijić 1922: 275.

63 J. Jeftović (ed.) 1990: 209.

64 P. Vlahović 1976: 42.

ual, territorial and tribal.⁶⁵ The ritual level, on which the attention of the community was directed to the leader both in cult and religious aspects, has been confirmed in the case of the Balkan princely tombs. During the burial in Atenica, complex sacrificial rites were carried out. Six animals, three aurochs, two pigs and a dog, were sacrificed on the previously prepared base of the mound. The rite is associated with Indo-European triadic sacrifices, similar to Roman *suovetaurilia*.⁶⁶ According to S. Čače, the elaborate sacrificial structure within the mound (also used for other sacrificial rituals), the spatial orientation towards the Poles, and the symbolism of numbers stand as evidence of a complex theology and suggest that the deceased may have been "the king" in the archaic sense of the term which also meant the chief priest.⁶⁷

On the second, territorial level, the mounds functioned as symbolic centers of cattle-breeding regions. They were located on winter pasture lands, in the valleys where all the livestock-breeders of the region congregated during the winter season. It was probably the right place, and time, for the enhancement of cohesive and centripetal trends in a mobile community, otherwise dispersed over the vast area of summer pastures. Winter season was the perfect timing for engaging extra labourers for the construction of big mounds. Monumental mounds such as Pilatovići and Atenica could hardly have been built during summer, when almost entire population had left the valleys with their herds. This hypothesis could be either confirmed or refuted by a pollen analysis, but, unfortunately, it has never been performed. These mounds may have also been the secondary burials of the chieftains who died in the mountains during the summer or got killed on the battlefield. The custom of performing secondary or repeated burials is frequent among Balkan livestock-breeders even in modern epoch.⁶⁸ The mounds also served as focal points of territorial loyalty for various groups - fraternity, *katun* or some other social structure, which subsequently grew into more compound social structures (tribe, the tribal alliances, etc.). The similar process of evolution of cattle-breeders' communities into tribes also occurred in the medieval period, which was ascertained by written sources.⁶⁹

65 A. Fleming 1973: 189.

66 S. Čače 1985.

67 S. Čače 1985.

68 D. Antonijević 1982: 135.

69 B. Đurđev 1963: 165-166.

The third, clan level, could not be taken into consideration apart from the previous two. The true significance of the family or the clan can be deduced from the examples of family burials in Pilatovići, Atenica and Pećka Banja. According to some explanations, the princely tombs even testify to the divinization and heroization of the deceased.⁷⁰ The kinship with the former ruler and his family could certainly enhance the power of the new one. The clan structure of the society, and prominent individuals as leaders are the characteristic of Balkan cattle-breeders. In the Middle Ages, the leader in the Balkans had great authority among his fellowmen, no matter what his title was - *katunar*, *čelnik*, *čehaja*, *celingas* (all meaning the leader) or even *knez* (the prince). Although the leader was sometimes called out spontaneously, by tacit consent, the leadership over a *katun* was often inheritable which eventually led to the establishment of prominent families.⁷¹ In the light of the princely tombs, there is no doubt that leadership implied religious dimension. Whether the deceased was "the archaic king-priest" or not, such dimension must have heightened the position of his clan.

The princely tombs of the Early Iron Age in the Central Balkans might have been important symbolic, cult and social centers of the cattle-breeders' territories. Cattle-breeding communities in general, not only those of the Balkan Peninsula, are conservative, loaded with ancient relicts and obsolete social institutions. Archaeological models can, therefore, be easily built on the basis of ethnographic and historical data.⁷² They can be tested and modified in comparison with the archaeological material. The princely tombs of the Iron Age reflect the social structure and territorial organization similar, but not identical to those of the Balkan cattle-breeders of the historical periods. These prehistoric graves point to a considerably greater social power of the deceased, probably based on the ritual role of the archaic "king-priest". The chronological horizon of the princely tombs is rather limited: they all emerge simultaneously, at the peak of the power and wealth of a clan society. Their sudden disappearance, however, suggests that the princely tombs, as an external manifestation of power, were the agonizing endeavour of an archaic social structure, and the last effort of a hierarchy to remain in power. Archaeological data show that this effort

70 A. Stupčević 1984; S. Čaće 1985.

71 M. Filipović 1963: 81-91. D. Antonijević 1982: 48.

72 D. Gibson 1988.

was a failure, and that after the "princely tombs" horizon the societal systems in the Balkans, as well as in Europe, changed to some extent.

СТОЖЕРИ МОЋИ
- ТЕРИТОРИЈАЛНИ АСПЕКТ КНЕЖЕВСКИХ ГРОВОВА
СТАРИЈЕГ ГВОЗДЕНОГ ДОБА НА ЦЕНТРАЛНОМ БАЛКАНУ
Резиме

Један од углова из којих проблем кнежевских гробова централног Балкана до сада није до разматрап, је сагледавање положаја тих гробова у оквирима њихових мпкрорегија и шире географске целине. Огромне хумке, упадљиве и надалеко видљиве биле су, без сумње, јасни и разумљиви симболи моћи локалних поглавара. Није вероватно да је овакво симболично запоседање одређеног простора било само израз индивидуалног богатства и таштине, већ се може претпоставити да је имало одређено, сасвим специфично значење за читаву заједницу.

Кнежевски гробови старијег гвозденог доба, налазе се у оним деловима централног Балкана, који су вековима били познати по интензивном трансхумантно и номадском сточарству. Ако се узме у обзир да су сви настали у релативно уском хронолошком хоризонту, од последњих деценија VI в. до првих деценија V в. п.н.е., онда се мора рачунати са већом концентрацијом моћи у исто време, на релативно ограшченем простору. То би подразумевало да је на подручју које је, оквирно, на западу ограшчено Дрпном, на истоку Ибром, на северу, Западном Моравом, а на југу Белим Дрпмом и Ереншом, крајем VI и почетком V в. п.н.е. - барем судећи по кнежевским гробовима - постојало неколико центара моћи.

С обзиром на сточарски карактер палеобланског стаповништва, и изразиту геоморфолошку погодност наведеног подручја за трансхумантно и номадско сточарство, кнежевски гробови старијег гвозденог доба на централном Балкану - као симболични центри моћи и фокуси ширег интереса заједнице - моли би се посматрати и из угла сточарских кретања и њихових територија. Ако се кнежевски гробови могу сматрати хипотетичним, симболичним, центрима територија, шематски се границе тих територија могу донекле сагледати путем познатих "Тисеових" полигона. Пилатовићи би тако били у средишту територије која је обухватала Златар, Златибор, долине Западне Мораве и Моравице, а можда на северу, преко Мораве и обронке Повлена и Маљена. Подручје утицаја

Атенице протезало се на планину Јелшцу, долину Западне Мораве и обронке ниских шумадијских планина северно од долине Западне Мораве. Територија кнежевског гроба из Новог Пазара, захватала је Голицу, Рогозну, Копачишк, Новоназарску котлину - једину шизују у региону - као и клисуре Ибра, Ранке и Дежеве. Област коју је "контролисала" Пећка Бања, простирала се на источне обронке Проклетја, планине Русулију и Мокру гору, Руговску клисуру и северни део Метохије. Лиснјено Поље се налазило у Берањској котлини, у долини Лима, у средишту подручја које омеђују планине Бјеласица, Црни Врх, Јадовник и Гилјева.

Оцртани су обриси неколико области познатих по сезонском сточарству, са висинским летњим пашињацима, речним долинама и котлинама за зимовник и природним комуникацијама погодним за сточарска кретања и трговину. Кнежевски гробови смештени су на кључним тачкама тих области: испод висинских планинских пашињака, на зимским испашама, уз комуникације - штавише уз њихова чворинга - на вековима утабаваним сточарским путевима, чiji су правци вазда били диктирани ретким планинским превојима, клисурама и речним долинама.

Као стожерни друштвене моћи, кнежевски гробови деловали су вероватно на три нивоа: на ритуалном, територијалном и родовском нивоу. Ритуални ниво, који је фокусирао пажњу заједнице на водећег појединца, и то на култном и религијском плану, осведечен је у балканским кнежевским гробовима, а посебно у Атеници. На другом, територијалном нивоу, хумке су служиле као симболични центри сточарских области, постављене на зимским пашињацима, у долинама, где су се током зиме стицали сви сточари једне области. Трећи, родовски ниво, на којем су деловали кнежевски гробови, не може се одвојити од претходна два, а значај породице и рода може се наслутити из породичних сахрана у Пилатовићима, Атеници и Пећкој Бањи.

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