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SOME TRACES OF A MINING COMPLEX ON THE RIDGE NEAR LESNOVO
PRELIMINARY RESEARCH

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Abstract: *On the archaeologically unexplored site on a ridge near Lesnovo, various cuttings on the rocks can be seen as well as ruins of a stone church, which most probably represent one part of a hitherto unknown mining complex founded or renewed by the Saxons, miners of German origin. Middle and second half of the 14th century as its full activity is assumed, at the time when this teritorry beloged to the estate of the Lesnovo monastery, while some ceramic finds points to an previous, early – Byzantine setllement on this locality. One of the boulders with different cuts, depressions, steps and a hollowed out seat is presented in more detail.*

Keywords: *Lesnovo, North Macedonia, early – Byzantine settlement, medieval mine*

The village of Lesnovo and the monastery of the same name dedicated to the Archangel Michael, situated at altitude of about 900 m, lie on the northern slope of a wide crater of the extinct Lesnovo volcano, whose age is estimated at 20 to 30 million years and the geological period of activity in the Oligocene-Miocene period. A shallow, destructively modified crater, a depression 1.5 km in diameter and 2.5 km2 in area, is surrounded by eruptive conical heights (*chuke*) and on the south –west side its annular frame is pierced by volcanic lava, into the recesses of which the Lesnovo River penetrated.[1] Before reaching the plain towards Zletovo, this river forms an canyon. In accordance with its current insignificant size, the locals call the river Lesnovo stream, Shtona,[2] the hill under Saint Trinity *chuka* on the left side of the gorge Gavrić, Garvić and, ear-

[1] Lesnovo crater has been on the list of the geoheritage of the Republic of Macedonia since 1995. As natural rarity since 1985, it is in the records of the Republic Institute for Protection of Natural Rarities, III category, according to the Law of Nature Protection (information posted on billboards along the road at the entrance to the villages Lesnovo and Dreveno); on the age of Lesnovo crater, eruptions, tectonic processes, composition of eruptive rocks and other geographical and geological issues – Јован Цвијић, *Основе за географију и геологију Македоније и Старе Србије*, I (Београд: SKA, 1906), 162 – 178 (for Zletovo – Kratovo region, especially: 171); Александар Апостолов et al., *Злетовска област. Географско-историски осврт* (Скопје: Собранието на општина Пробиштип, 1974), esp.: 7 – 133 (Тодор Кондев), 135 – 163 (Апостол Керамидчиев); Ивица П. Милевски, *Геоморфологија на Осоговскиот планински масив* (Скопје: online dissertation, 2006): 121–123, К-14, сл. 151; Стеван Симић, „Ерозија тла у околини града Кратова," *Geografski pregled* IV (1960): 137 – 146.

[2] Стеван Симић, *Лесновски манастир св. оца Гаврила задужбина српскога деспота Јована Оливера* (Београд: „Св. Сава"), 1912, 6, 67; v. note 13.



Fig. 1 Lesnovo – Dreveno ridge, view from the south-east (photo: S. Gabelić 1982)



Fig. 2 Lesnovo – Dreveno ridge, view from the west: 1– Belo Mesto; 2 – Exemplary boulder; 3 – Ručnik, with ruins of the church; 4 – Peštno, with caves (S. Gabelić 2020)

lier, Ugrvić,[3] while the opposite, partialy bare ridge at the entrance to the canyon – which is the focus of our interest – does not actually have a separate name (Fig. 1). The top of that ridge is marked as Belo Mesto (White Place), which is in fact the jagged rocky crown of this cliff with a spacious pit in the interior, a small plateau approximately in the middle with a ruined church as Ručnik, and the terrain down to the natural caves at the foot, near the river, is called Pesh(t)ni (Fig. 2).[4] In the lower aera of the ridge, toward river, as we assumed in a separate article, lies the medieval Peshtno (Peshtni) with Saint Procopius church, a former hamlet of the village of Dreveno, which – without sufficently precise territorial determinats – are recorded in written sources from the middle of the 14th century.[5] Interesting geographical and geological characteristics of the

[3] Симић, *Лесновски манастир*,73; Ефрем Карановъ, "Материали по Етнографията на нѣкои мѣстности въ Сѣверна Македония, които сѫ смежни съ България и Сърбия,"*Сборникъ за народни умотворения, наука и книжнина* IV (1891): 302.

[4] For the geographical position of the toponym Peštno (today: Pešni) – *Злетовска област*, 29 – 30, 64 – 65 (Кондев); Томо Томоски, *Македонија низ векова - Морозвиждска епископија* (Скопје: Матица Македонска, 1999), 182 (Peška, Pešnica „над Злетово, на патот кон Лесново" or as Pešni „под патот кај с. Древено"; Олга Иванова, „Исчезнатите месни имиња во областа по сливот на Брегалница", *Споменици за средновековната и поновата историја на Македонија*, V, ур. Владимир Мошин, Лидија Славева, (Прилеп: Институт за истражување на старословенската култура, 1988): 292, 294 („Peštnik," „Peštni").

[5] Smiljka Gabelić, „Crkva na grebenu u blizini Lesnova. Preliminarni rad," *Patrimonium.mk* 19 (2021) 263 – 274, with relevant literature; cf. notes 17 and 18.

Lesnovo region have long been noticed in science, thanks primarilly to the valuable research of Jovan Cvijić, who visited this area at the very beginning of the 20th century, 1900. and 1906. [6]

The region of Zletovo and Kratovo, with Lesnovo situated between, is famous for its mineral wealth, explioted since prehistoric and acient times and, with minor interruptions, until today. Numerous traces of old mining works testify to that, among which Kratovo, Dobrevo, Probištip and Zletovo are the largest and most famous mines.[7] At the same time, a great reputation to the region is brought by the important cult center, the old monastery of the Archangel Michael and Saint Gabriel of Lesnovo in the mountain village of Lesnovo. The monastery was founded in the 11th or 12th century and was completely renovated in the middle of the 14th centuray, thanks to Jovan Oliver, the great duke and later despot of the Serbian king and emperor Stefan Dušan (1331-1355). As is well known, this powerfull noblemen built a new, two domed church (1340/1341 to 1349), which after the establishment of the Serbian Empire in 1346 became an episcopal center.[8] Of special importance is the circumstance that in the immediate vicinity of this monstery existed a number of small sacral places, caves, chapels and hermitages, which continued the anachorite tradition of Gabriel of Lesnovo, famous local hermit, healer and miracle worker, celebrated as the original founder of the Lesnovo monastery.[9] There are also very numerous remains of late antique or early Byzantine masonry fortifications, on almost all the hills of this area, where different witnesses of human residence were found, various movable finds as poterry, pithos and ancient money.[10]

In this paper we will pay attention to a little-known and still archaeologically uninvestigated site along the cliff on the right bank of the Lesnovo river, in front of the entrance to the gorge, which streches on the line: Belo Mesto – Ručnik – Peshni, the lateral, protruding part of the hill (*chuka*) of Saint Athanas (Fig. 2). It is a separate part of the rocky masif resembling huge rock, about 2 km from Lesnovo. The upper part of this ridge starts at the sharp bend of the asphalt road to the nearby village of Dreveno and falls quite steeply towards the Lesnovo river. It could be approach either from above (from the north) descending from the bend

[6] Цвијић, *Основе за географију*, 163.

[7] Йордан Ивановъ, *Съверна Македония, Исторически издирваня* (София: 1906), 195 – 197, 237 – 243; Стеван Симић, „Историја Кратовске области," *Годишњица Николе Чупића* XXXIII (1914): 212 – 226; Vasilije Simić, *Istoriski razvoj našeg rudarstva*, (Beograd: Savet za energetiku i ekstraktivnu industriju, 1951): 293 – 300; Стеван Симић, „Рудник олова и цинка – Злетово," *Земља и људи* 5 (1955): 81– 85; *Злетовска области*, 33 – 40 (Кондев), 149 – 150 (Керамидчиев); *Rudarstvo Jugoslavije*, ur. Mehmed Džindić (11. Svetski rudarski kongres), Beograd (Zagreb: Privredni vjesnik, 1982), 123 – 127 (Gordana Tomović); Иван Микулчиќ, *Средновековни градови и шврдини во Македонија*, (Скопје: Македонска Академија на науките и уметностите и Македонска цивилизација, 1996): 62 – 63, 268 –270.

[8] The bibliography on the Lesnovo monastery is extensive. Here, we shall refer only to the monographic study on the history of this monastery and painting of its church – Смиљка Габелић, *Манасшир Лесново. Историја и сликарсшво* (Београд: Стубови културе, 1998): 15 – 22; as well as to the detailed descriptions of its architecture – Војислав Корач, *Сиоменици монументалне сриске архишекшуре XIV века у Повардарју* (Београд: САНУ DCLIV/26, 2003), 153 –188.

[9] Габелић, *Манасшир Лесново*, 239 - 245, ил. a – h; for cult and representations of Saint Gabriel of Lesnovo – *Ibid.*, 23 – 25, 107 – 112, 208, сл. 17, 40 – 44, 116, with literature.

[10] Ivan Mikulčić, *Spätantike und Frühbyzantinisnische Befestigungen in Nordmakedonien. Städte. Vici. Refugien. Kastelle* (München: Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2002), 247 – 254 (Probistip); *Злешовска области*, 135 – 163 (Керамидчиев); Апостол Керамидчиев, „Археолошки наоѓалишта во Пробиштипско," *Стремеж* год. VIII, бр. 6 (1962): 45 – 62; id.,"Археолошка наоѓалишта во долината на Белошица," *Стремеж* 4 (1964): 40 – 49; Снежана Филипова, *Архишекшонска декорашивна скулпшура во Македонија 5-6 и 11-12 век* (Скопје – Мелбурн: Матица Македонска, 1997), 30, 65, Т. XII/2; Виктор Лилчик, *Македонскиой камен за боговиште. Аншичка камена архишекшонска йласшика во Рейублика Македонија*, II (Скопје: Македонска цивилизација, 2002), 594 – 599; id., *Македонија во доцна аншика (Археологија)*, Македонија. Миленијумски културно – историски факти, 2, ред. Паско Кузман, Елизабета Димитрова, Јован Донев, Скопје 2013, 963 – 1032; cf. Михаило Милинковић, *Села. Рановизаншијска насеља у Србији и њеном окружењу* (Београд: Досије Студио, 2015), 261, сл. 192.



Fig. 3 Same, Late antique finds (S. Gabelić 1982)

of the road on rocky and loose soil with a little low vegetation, or from below (from the south-east), turning onto a dirt road to the right of the asphlat Zletovo – Lesnovo road (after 1 – 2 km) and then taking a path that first gradually goes up parallel to the river and than separates and climbes towards natural cave. On its north – eastern side, the rock is without vegetation, almost vertical and innaccessible. Under its vertical „wall", at the bottom, there are in fact two caves, the one to the south-west with large opening. The terrain inftont is sloping and falls towards the stream (Lesnovo river).

In the scholarlly literature, this ridge as a whole remainded unvisited and unknown until recently. The exception is its stone church, whose ruins were noticed at the beginning (Stevan Simić) and after the middle of the 20th century (Apostol Keramidčiev).[11] In the eighties of the last century, the carved traces of human activities on this rocky hill near the church and caves are mentioned for the first time (Smiljka Gabelić).[12] Dealing with contents of the soil of the Lesnovo crater (porphyry breccias and conglomerates), Jovan Cvijić pointed out the hardness of the breccia "in Gradište hill" on the right bank of the local river where, as he wrote, millstones were cut in many places.[13] Based on this, it should be assumed that by Gradište he meant the hill (*chuka*) of Saint Athanas, whose interior is hollowed out by a network of abandoned canals and pits, or Belo Mesto, which is peak of the ridge, but he does not speak of cuts and depressions visible on the surface of rocks. The term „Gradište", which appear not only in Cvijić but also in some other articles on Lesnovo region,[14] as elewhere preserves the indefinite memory of the ancient existence of objects built on a given location. Remaining for now in the use of the geographical term „ridge" (greben), it is possible that future more through reseach of the entire area around Lesnovo river will produce a more appropriate term.

[11] Симић, *Лесновски манастир*, 76; Керамидчиев," Археолошки наоѓалишта во Пробиштипско," 59 – 60, сл. 7.

[12] Смиљка Габелић, „Непознати локалитети у околини лесновског манастира," *Зборник за ликовне уметности* 20 (1984) 163 - 175: 170 – 171, сл. 6; ead., *Манастир Лесново*, 240 – 243.

[13] Цвијић, *Основе за географију*, 162–176; for the commposition of these rocks, especially: 163, 167, 172 (porphyry breccia and andesite conglomerates, covered with stratified tuffs and slag masses); *Злетовска области*, 33 (Кондев).

[14] Cf. – *Злетовска области*, 224, n. 29 (Апостолов); Карановъ, *Материали по Етнографията*, 302); Илија Велев, „Свети места во Лесново и неговата околина инкорпорирани во садржината на книжевно историскиот текст „Изјаснително писание" за лесновскиот манастир," *Balcanoslavica* 16 –18 (1989 –1991): 31; Mikulčić, Spätantike und Frühbyzantinische Befestigungen in Nordmakedonien, 249, Nr. 147, Abb 142.

During our first visits of this terrain (1981 and 1982),[15] we noticed and briefly described numerous traces of interventions along the entire lenght of the Lesnovo – Dreveno ridge on mossy rocks – niches and cuttings of various shapes and dimensions, as well as the ruins of a small church. Surface finds of potery indicated the late antique period of the settlement (Fig. 3), while some cuts on the boulders next to the church gave rise to the assumption of its medieval layer. We viewed the site as a monastic settlement, all the more so because according to the local oral tradition, there used to exist a monastic dwelling. However, after recent visits (2019-2021) and observation of this terrain with help of areal photograps made by dron (2020)[16] it seems most likely that this is a mining complex whose production facilities were carved into the rocks (pits, furnaces, troughs, etc.). With caution, we tied the lower part of the ridge to the toponim Peshtno (today Peshni), a former hamlet of the village of Dreveno with the church of Saint Procopius, which – as already mentioned – between 1340/41 and 1381 belonged to the estate of the Lesnovo monastery.[17] Identification with Saint Procopius at Peshtno, according to the founder's inscription above the portal of the church of the Lesnovo monastery from 1340/41 seems probable.[18] However, in the two charters that were later issued to Lesnovo and Chilandar by Tsar Stefan Dušan (1347)[19] and Constantine Dragaš (1381)[20], Saint Procopius church is marked as being in Drenovo Dol, probably south of Zletovo. In any case, this church, as well as in other mining centers of medieval Serbia, where a large number of Westeners lived, [21] could easily have been Catholic. „Latin" temples of unknown dedications, today as a rule in ruins, existed in the vicinity of Zletovo.[22] If the identification of the church on the ridge is correct, including its date and dedication, it can be assumed that it stood under the protection of the Czech (Bohemian) saint of the same name, Sv. Prokop (Saint Procopius of Sázava), who was respected as the patron saint of miners.[23] His cult was perhaps connected and ideo-

[15] Cf. n. 12.

[16] For the areal photos I am gratefull to Ordanche Petrov.

[17] Gabelić, *Crkva na grebenu*, 348-353. On topography of the Lesnovo estate accrding to sources from the 14th century - Гордана Томовић, „Повеља манастира Леснова," *Историјски часопис* XXIV (1977): 83 – 102; cf. - Йордан Иванов, *Българи старини из Македония* (1931), (София: БАН, Наука и изкуство, 1970), 157 – 158; Радослав Грујић, „*Епархијска властелинства у средњевековној Србији*," Богословље, год. VII, св. 2 (Београд 1932) 93-194, сл. 5 (мапа); Мирјана Живојиновић," Властелинство манастира Хиландара у средњем веку," *Манастир Хиландар*, прир. Гојко Суботић, Београд 1998, 71-90; ead, „Драгаши и Света Гора," *ЗРВИ* 43 (2006): 50 – 52.

[18] For the donor's inscription carved above the western portal of Lesnovo church - Иванов, *Български старини из Македония*, 157 – 158; Томовић, „*Повеља манастира Леснова*," 91 – 95, сл. 1; Габелић, *Манастир Лесново*, 27 – 28, сл. 98, црт. 1.

[19] Стојан Новаковић, *Законски споменици српских држава средњега века* (Београд: СКА, 1912): 678; Синиша Мишић, „Хрисовуља цара Стефана Душана о оснивању Злетовске епископије", *Стари српски архив* 13 (2014): 185 (83, 86).

[20] Новаковић, *Законски споменици*, 453 – 455: 454; Христо Матанов, *Княжевствовало на Драгаши: към историята на Североизточна Македония в предосманската епоха* (София: Гал-ико, 1997), 199, 219 – 221; Жарко Вујошевић, „Повеља Константина Драгаша Хиландару о манастиру Леснову", *Realia byzantino-balcanica. Studia in honorem LX annorum professoris Christi Matanov*, София 2014, 457, 466; Милош Ивановић, „Заборављени" ктитори у средњовековној Србији," *Иницијал. Часопис за средњовековне студије* 6 (2018): 63 – 65.

[21] Cf. Сима М. Ћирковић, *Рабошници, војници, духовници. Каштоличке парохије у средњовековној Србији*, (Београд: Equilibrium, 1997): 240 – 258: 243 – 252; Константин Јиречек, Јован Радонић, *Историја Срба*, II, 2. изд. (Београд: Слово љубве, 1978), 92 – 94; Михаило Ј. Динић, *Из српске историје средњега века* (Београд: Equilibrium, 2003): 459 – 463.

[22] *Злетовска област* (Апостолов), 100, 102, 105 (Neokazi, Petrišino i Strmoš); Simić, *Istoriski razvoj našeg rudarstva*, 295 (Kratovo).

[23] On Saint Procopius (Prokop) of Sázava, hermit and Benedictine abbot († 1053) – Leopold Schmidt, *Die Volkserzählung. Märchen. Sage. Legende. Schwank* (*Der hl. Prokopius als Bergbaupatron Böhemens*), (Berlin: Erich Schmidt Verlag, 1963): 240 – 242; *Bibliotheca Sanctorum*, dir. F. Caraffa, ed. Pontificia Universita Lateranese, Roma 1961 ff, vol. X, 1167 – 1173 (Jaroslav Kadlec, M. Ch, Celletti); *Lexikon der christlishen Ikonographie* 8, ed. Wolfgang Braunfels (Freiburg im Breisgau: Verlag Ferder, 1968), 228 – 229 (Emanuel Poche, *Prokopius von Böhmen/von Sázava*); Louis Réau, *Iconographie de l' art chrétien*, t. III (Paris: Presses Univeritaires d'France 1959): 1124. It is interesting to note that the „Procopius' Monastery" on the Sázava river, which was under his spiritual guidance,



Fig. 4 Lesnovo – Dreveno ridge, view from the south, exemplary boulder (O. Petrov 2020)



Fig. 5 Exemplary boulder on the ridge, view from the south (O. Petrov 2020)

logically equated with Saint Procopius of Jerusalem (Palestine), a more famous saint of the same name, based on the meaning of their names, which in Slavic languages refers to the same verb – to dig, to dig through [24]. Saint Procopius of the Czech, the assumed protector of the church on the ridge between the villages of Lesnovo and Dreveno, would meet the religious need of inhabitans of this mining settlement and mine, both Westeners, primarilly Saxons, and local Slavs.

On the basis of indirect indicators, it is also possible to hypothesize that the mining complex of the Lesnovo cliff represent the remains of a mining Saxon settlement. The topography of Zletovo – Kratovo, as well as the neighboring Osogovo area, clearly indicates the presence of the Saxons, German mines and supervisors, whose arrival in medieval Serbia in the middle of the 13th century greatly improved mining. The names of the villages of Štalkovica, Šlegovo, Sasa and Žguri are of Saxon origin, the village's names Tursko and Šopsko Rudari, Jamište, Rudarski Čukar, Rudarski Grobišta etc. indisputably speak of the former large presence of miners and mining activities,[25] as is the use of terms of German origin in the speech of the local population (for example, *vajlen, utman, furnik, šljaka*),[26] and the Lesnovo river itself used to be called Štona, from the German *stollen*, which means a horizontal corridor in the mines.[27]

Apart from the most famous mines in Kratovo, Dobrevo, Probištip and Zletovo, there are traces of old mining in the entire region, which is of volcanic origin.[28] Perhaps originially formed even earlier, historical circumstances suggest that the Lesnovo mining colony experienced the most extensive period of acivity in the mid-14th century, during the greatest territorial and economic expansion of Serbia, under King and Emperor Dušan and the direct rule of Jovan Oliver, the probable owner of the Lesnovo mine. The great influence and financial power of the despot Oliver were certainly based on incom obtained from the extraction and processing of ore.[29] The general assessment is that the expertise and systematic work of German miners, Saxons, professional supervisors and qualified workers, later also the owners of certain parts of the mines, led to the overall economic development of Serbian countries from the end of the 13th and during the 14th century.[30] The duration and separate periods of activity of the Lesnovo mine should certainly determine future archaeological reseach. It seems quite possible that it continued to operate later – since it is known that in 1390 the Turkish authorities approved the use of Kratovo mines [31]

practiced the liturgy in the Slavic language. It is considered to be one of rare credible biographical elements of this saint's vita – Petr Kubin, „Saint Procopius of Sázava between Reality and Fiction," *Revue Mabillon d'Histoire et de Litterature Religiuses* 27 (Turnhout 2016): 49 – 81. In the Orthdox Church he is celebrated on April 1, as „Sv. Prokopije Čeh." – Јустин Поповић, *Житија свеших за месец аирил* (Београд: Манастир Св. Ћелије код Ваљева, 1973): 21.

[24] Vid. n. 17 (Gabelić).

[25] *Злешовска области*, 34–35 (Кондев), 205–205 (Керамидчиев)

[26] Simić, *Istoriski razvoj našeg rudarstva*, 16 – 19, passim; *Злешовска* област, 35 (Кондев); Сима Ћирковић, Десанка Ковачевић Којић, Ружа Ђук, *Сшаро сриско рударсшво* (Београд: Вукова задужбина – Нови Сад: Прометеј, 2002), 30 – 31.

[27] Симић, *Лесновски манасшир*, 5, 73; id., *Исшорија Крашовске области*, 214; Simić, *Istoriski razvoj našeg rudarstva*, 25; Ћирковић, Ковачевић-Којић и Ђук, *Сшаро сриско рударсшво*, 31; Gabelić, *Crkva na grebenu*, 352, n. 27 – 30.

[28] Апостол Керамидчиев, „Римското рударство во Источна Македонија", *Гласник. Инсшишуш за национална исшорија* XVIII/1 (1974) 119 – 133: 120 – 126; v. note 7.

[29] Simić, *Istoriski razvoj našeg rudarstva*, 294; Томовић, "Повеља манастира Леснова," 96; Николај Овчаров, *Исшория и археология на Вардарска Македония ирез XIV в.* (София: Университетско издателство „Св. Климент Охридски, 1996), 64; Габелић, *Манасшир Лесново*, 29; Александар Атанасовски, „Пијанец под власта на феудалниот господар Јован Оливер" *Годишен зборник, Филозофски факулшеш на универзишешош „Св. Кирил и Мешодиј* 20/46 (1993): 106.

[30] Ћирковић, Ковачевић-Којић и Ђук, *Сшаро сриско рударсшво* 21, 29.

[31] Матанов, *Княжевсшвошо на Драгаши*, 139 – 140; Ивановъ, *Северна Македония*, 237, 239; Simić, *Istoriski razvoj našeg rudarstva*, 51, 287–288, 293–299; *Злешовска области*, 35 (*Т. Кондев*); Скендер Ризај," Рударството во Македонија од XV до XVIII век," *Гласник на Инсшишушош за национална исшорија*,



Fig. 6 The same boulder, front face (O. Petrov 2020)

– and especially in the 16th century, which opens the possibility of finding traces of the third layer of chronological activity on our ridge.

Among remains of the carved plants of the Lesnovo mine, we will present here an example (Fig. 4). It is a boulder composed of glued large rocks (height ca 3 m, at its front), whose position is on the northern (northwestern) side of the site, in its upper part and, seen from the top of this ridge, approximetly in second horizontal row of similar rocks. The boulder spreads in the direction east – west and has a basilically irregular rectangular, almost cubic shape (Fig. 5). It is surrounded by rare vegetation and unevenly covered with moss. Artificially made interventions are obseved on all its sides. On the upper surface there are two shallow basins, one above the other, one of which is wider and with more correctly shaped edges, and in the middle part two shallow troughs made next to each other, one lying horizontally and the other upright. On the front side of the rock, next to the ground, various cuts up to about 1.5 m high can be seen (the widest cut has a width of 74 cm). They also stand out visually by the light yellow color of inner surfaces. The east end of this massive rock looks like a large seat or throne (Fig. 6 – 8), made of several steps and a flat surface with a shallow depression at the top: two steps are aproxiatelly equal in size (width 30/35 cm, lenght 140 cm, height 34/35 cm), the third step is shaped like two seats (width 42/44 cm, depth 30/33 cm, height 45 cm) and the fourth is a shalow circular seat (?)

год. XIV, бр. 2 – 3 (1970): 94 – 95; Александар Стојановски, *Македонија во турското средновековие* (Кратовска нахија во XVI век), (Скопје: Култура, 1989): 459 – 453; Стеван Симић, „Историја Кратовске области," *Годишњица Николе Чупића* XXXIII (1914): 212 –226; id., „Рудник олова и цинка – Злетово," *Земља и људи*, св. 5 (Београд 1955) 81 – 85; *Злетовска области*, 35 (Кондев). „Gospodin" Constantine Dragash in 1381, among others, donated the „village Ridge" (selo Greben) to the estate of the Lesnovo monastery (cf. Вујошевић, *Повеља*, 457, 488), that we connected with our ridge (cf. n. 12); instead, it should probably be recognized as„mine Ridge" i. e. rudnik Grebena situated north-east of Lesnovo and Lukovo, especially active during the16th century – v. Ахмет Шериф, *„Рударството Во Македонија Во Време На Османлиското Владеење* (Скопје: Институт за национална историја, 2001): 124.





Fig. 7 (left) The same boulder (S. Gabelić 1982)
Fig. 8 (right) The same boulder, „Throne"(S. Gabelić, 1982)

with a very small backrest (width 60 cm, depth 42 cm, height 15 cm). Behind the „Throne" rises a large and bare square rock with rounded edges, which is pierced with several small holes of irregular circular or square cross-section, in which wooden beams were once stuck. On the front face of the boulder, a steep slope begins at a short distance, and it is approached laterally from the south by a wide hollowed-out staircase. Three shallow steps 180/150 cm long, 44 cm wide and 20/35 cm high are recognizable (Fig. 9). The access to the rock also seemed to be possible from the north, from the ground, where two low stone steps can be seen, which almost sank into the ground today, as well as over the north-west corner of the boulder and where another, wide staircase with a few shallow steps was dug.

About ten meters above the described boulder, at the bottom of a large separate stone, a carved triangular depression can be seen (Fig. 9, 10). A similar smaller triangle is located above the opening of a larger cave, close to the river (Fig. 11). These are most likely the boundary markers of the ore fields[32].

Certain similiarities of our Lesnovo site could be found with the archaeologically investigated medieval town of Prilep, i.e. its layer of Slavic settlement from the period from the second half of the 12th to the end of the 14th century, with traces of pits, troughs, presses, mill stones negatives, iron smelters, smithies, pottery workshops and numerous ore smelting furnaces.[33] Especially interesting is a large isolated and carved granite rock, near the church of Saint Athanasius, that dominates the space infront of it. It has a carved seat that was once surrounded on three sides by wooden beams in the form of shelter, and has been interpreted

[32] On measurement, as well as delimitation of the ore deposit with boundary markers of the triangular shape, according to the famous 16th century book on mining by G. Agricola – Г. Агрикола, *О геологији, рударству и металургији у дванаест књига*, приредили Зоран Петковић, Надежда Ћалић, Д. Миловановић (Београд: Југословенска инжењерска академија, 2007): 78, 82, 83, 103 – 111, 124.

[33] Бошко Бабиќ, *Материјална култура на Македонските Словени во светлината на археолошките истражувања во Прилеп. Прилог за историјата на културата на Македонскиот народ* (Прилеп: Институт за истражување на старословенска култура – Прилеп, 1986), 233 – 257, passim; Александар Дероко, „Маркови Кули – Град Прилеп," *Старинар*, н. с. V – VI (1956): 97, сл. 29.



Fig. 9 The same boulder from the east; access staircase, throne (in the middle) and boundary marker (above)

as a place to hold gathetings of the inhabitants of this city (Boshko Babich). Regarding the funcion of the Throne as an administrative facility in Prilep, an important socio-political center of the parish, it was assumed that it is where the most important community issuses, litigation, announcements, elections etc. were resolved, similary to the social institution of assembly which has been known in Slavic tribal communities since the time of settlement.[34] Such gatherings or assemblies are held in the open air or infront of a church on the islands of Brač, Lastovo and Mljet, in Paštrovići near Budva, from the 12th and 15th centuries, or Poljica near Split, and also at Tetovo in north-western Macedonia (joint assemly of nobility and local people held at the beginning of the 14th century).[35] In more recent



Fig. 10 The same boundary marker (S. Gabelić 2020)

times, a gathering near Lesnovo region has been recorded. Thus, near the village of Kalniště, northwest from Zletovo, on a cliff called "Trpeza", joint assemblies of residents of the surrounding villages of Kalniště, Dobrevo and Maričino were held.[36]

It seems possible that the described boulder on the Lesnovo cliff could have represented a kind of social center with a throne or seat, without a significant political role, but in the direct organizational and regulatory function of the mine and miners' settlement. At the gatherings near this large rock, important formalities that accompanied the mining work could be performed – issues as regulating relations, demarcation and allocation of ore fields, and the like. Work and technical issues could also be discussed, miners may have recieved wages there and this place may have function as a market.

[34] Бабић, op. cit., 214 - 217, црт. 22, сл. 70 - 72.

[35] *Ibid.*, loc. cit.,; Јиречек, Радонић, *Историја Срба*, II, 29 - 32. On the characteristics and differences between tribal gatherings and those in mining municipalities from the state and church councils of the Late Middle Ages - *Лексикон српског средњег века*, ур. Сима Ћирковић, Милош Благојевић (Београд: Knowledge, 1999), 222 - 228 („*Збор*").

[36] *Злетовска области*, 59 (Керамидчиев).



Fig. 11 The cave, boundary marker above the entrance (S. Gabelić 2020)

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A number of questions about this Lesnovo locality and its immediate surroundings – presented here on the basis of superficial observations, rare and imprecise written sources, general historical movements and to some extant analogies – will find their reliable answers after systematic archaeological investigations. For now, it seems that the recognized elements – „negatives" of processing facilities and other traces – indicate a chronologically multilayered mining complex situated on this ridge at the exit of the Lesnovo river from the gorge.

SUMMARY

НЕКОИ ТРАГИ ОД РУДАРСКИ КОМПЛЕКС НА ГРЕБЕНОТ КАЈ ЛЕСНОВО
ПРЕЛИМИНАРНО ИСТРАЖУВАЊЕ

Смиљка ГАБЕЛИЌ

Во трудот се разгледуваат делови од потешко достапни и археолошки неистражени локалитети на стрмниот гребен од вулканско потекло на неколку километри оддалеченост од манастирот и селото Лесново, кој веројатно представува дел на досега непознат рударски комплекс. Локалитетот се состои од меѓусобно изолирани карпести камења покриени со клесани интервенции, а приближно во средината на него се наоѓаат остатоци од урната камена црква. Помеѓу 1340/41 и 1381 година, областа на целиот гребен му припаѓала на имотот на блискиот манастир Лесново. Ако црквата (Св. Прокопиј?) била изградена во рамките на истовремена рударска колонија, се претпоставува дека била католичка, како и во другите рударски центри во средновековна Србија, и дека оваа населба најверојатно ја основале Саксонците, рудари со германско потекло. Судејќи според историскиот контекст и одредени извори поврзани со оваа област, лесновската рударска населба, иницијално можеби настала и порано, а веројатно била најактивна во средината на XIV век, во времето на економскиот пораст на целата оваа област (подоцна, и во османлиско време). Лесново бил под директна управа на моќниот голем војвода и деспот Јован Оливер, веројатниот сопственик на тој рудник и ктитор на познатата црква Архангел Михаил во Лесновскиот манастир, која во тој период се издигна до ниво на епископија.

Посебно внимание се посветува на масивниот камен, камената „конструкција“ со разни вештачки засеци, корита и вдлабнатини, која во еден дел наликува на големо седиште или тронот, во обид да се дешифрира неговата функција во рамките на заедницата на овој рудник.