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THE GOLDEN HOARD FROM TREMNIK – ORMANOV GROB*

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Abstract: *The village of Tremnik is located in the central part of the Republic of Macedonia, near the city of Negotino. This site is located on the southeastern fringe of the village of Tremnik. The level of its research is quite low, yet this site has fascinated both the Macedonian and the worldwide public with the 2008 discovery of extraordinarily hoard of Classic gold artifacts, with cumulative weight of 1200 grams.*

Keywords: *Tremnik, golden hoard, Philip II, Alexander III, Celts, Vardar valley, Paeonia, Macedonia*

The village of Tremnik is located in the central part of the Republic of Macedonia, near the city of Negotino. More than 15 sites have been noted in the vicinity of the village, all dating to different periods. The oldest archaeological remnants date to Late Bronze Age (13th -11th c. BC.) This territory holds several Iron Age burials, dated to the 7th-6th c. BC. The archaeological site of Čair Rid holds the remnants of a fortified town, which is presumed to exist through the Antiquity, from 6th c. BC to 4th c. AD. Also, several other sites show signs of inhabitance through the Middle Ages. This concentration of sites dated to different periods on a relatively small territory can be explained with the excellent location and the vicinity to the one of the most significant roads, used from Prehistory to modern times. The main communication route *Via Axia* is noted on the *Tabula Peuntingeriana* and the location of the modern village of Tremnik might correspond with the ancient city of Antigoneia. This city is situated between two well-known and well-researched ancient cities-Stobi (near Gradsko) and Stenae (near Demir Kapija.) The intensive archaeological research undertaken in the past several years have revealed many significant sites and finds; among them is the hoard from the archaeological site of Ormankov Grob.

Two theories exist for the location of the Antique city of Antigonea, one of them locates it at the site Gradishte, near Negotino[1], while the other places it near the village of

* This text is dedicated to Kiro Angelov, a colegue who has the most credit for the Tremnik depo

1 Иван Микулчиќ, „Проблемот на Антигонеја“, *Годишен зборник на Филозофски Факултет* 11(37) (1984). [Ivan Mikulčić, „The Issue of Antigonea“, *The Annual of Faculty of Filosophy in Skopje* No 11 (37) (1984).



Fig.1 - The gold hoard from Ormankov Grob (Foto: V. Kiprijanov)

Tremnik[2]. The intensive archaeological excavations that were conducted in the more recent years[3] have resulted in the discovery of several important sites and finds which confirm the second theory for the location of the city of Antigonea near the village of Tremnik. One of the most remarkable finds is the gold hoard of Ormankov Grob[4]. This discovery was the determining factor for the research of 2012 and 2013 (fig.1)

These archaeological excavations have revealed most of the Ormankov Grob site, as well as its borders and stratigraphy[5]. The theory that we argue about in this text is also confirmed with the excavations of the site named Jaka Chesma[6]. This is the site which revealed an aqueduct, which was subsequently researched and dated to the Roman period (1st-3rd c. AD.) This aqueduct is still functional and part of the village is supplied with water by it. Around 40 meters of the aqueduct have been researched. The preserved section of the aqueduct is 1 meter tall and 0. 60 meter wide. The only aqueduct similar to this one is discovered near Stobi, and this is another confirmation of a great urban centre. (fig. 2.)

Furthermore, the research on the site named Chair Rid have revealed a multitude of portable and non-portable material, which suggests the existence of a Bronze Age settlement that grew into a smaller town during the Classical and Hellenistic periods. The life of this town

2 Фанула Папазоглу, *Македонски ѓрадови у римско доба* : *Жива Анѓика*, пос. издања кн. 1, (Скопје : Сојуз на друштвата за антички студии на Македонија, 1957).

3 Excavations conducted under the supervison of M. Jovanov and A. Jakimovski

4 Kiro Angelovski, „Gold Treasure from Tremnik", *Macedonian Heritage* No. 34-35 (2010).

5 Recent excavations condicted under the supervison of M. Jovanov, while head of older excavations was Kiro Angelkovski, who published his results in the abovegiven article.

6 Excavations of 2013, under the supervision of A. Jakimovski



Fig. 2 - The excavated remnats of the aqueduct and its interior (foto: A. Jakimovski)

continued through the Roman Imperial period; three dome-shaped pottery furnaces have been dated to this time. These pottery furnaces confirmed the highly-developed pottery production in the Roman period. This is the backdrop on the gold hoard find from Ormankov Grob, the main focus of this article.

This site is located on the southeastern fringe of the village of Tremnik. The level of its research is quite low, yet this site has fascinated both the Macedonian and the worldwide public with the 2008 discovery of extraordinarily hoard of Classic gold artifacts, with cumulative weight of 1200 grams. The miscellaneous nature of the hoard introduces the possibility that these artifacts were collected through a longer time span. Yet, it is evident that their owner was enamored with gold and that was the main criterion for their collecting, as well as the supreme artisanship and craftsmanship.

We find the four Asia Minor fibulae as the most attractive finds, due to their fashioning, massiveness, and luxurious craftsmanship (figs. 3 a-d) Each of them is almost 10 cm long and weight around 140 grams; made of purest gold. These are one of the most precious Asia Minor fibulae finds ever discovered. They are all almost identical to each other; the head is shaped as stylized snake head, the body is decorated with 5 knobs, and the foot is decorated with stylized palmette. The fibulae pins are made of bronze and they are the only non-gold objects in this hoard. These fibulae were not for everyday wear; instead they were preserved for special events. Their owners were most probably nobles such as King Phillip II; almost identical fibulae were found in his tomb at Vergina.



Fig. 3 - a) Fibula 1. Dimensions 0.93 x 0.60 cm, weight of 141.9 grams b) Fibula 2. Dimensions 0.95 x 0.60 cm, weight of 141.9 grams; c) Fibula 3. Dimensions 0.94 x 0.65 cm, weight of 139.7 grams; d) Fibula 4. Dimensions 0.94 x 0.62 cm, weight of 141.7 grams (foto: V. Lilčić)

The same immaculate craftsmanship, which combines the techniques of filigree and granulation, can be seen on the small golden vanity box- a *pyxis* (fig. 4), with cylindrical body and lid. The flower that decorates this box was made by the hands of a Master Goldsmith and it is a proof for the skills of the Macedonian workshops in the Classical period-the zenith of Ancient Macedonia. This small objects weight only 30 grams, yet its beauty and flawless fashioning make it much more precious than the material it is made of.

This category of supreme goldsmithing of the Classical period should be enriched with the opulent necklace made of several segment (fig. 5) The ends were fashioned as palmettes and 30 small segments made the length. These segments are small spear-like beads attached to short chains; all together put make an impressive neck decoration. The palmettes are decorated with the finest of filigree; each of them is additionally decorated with small rosettes, identical to the ones attached to the necklace beads. This is work done by a highest ranking goldsmith, worthy of throat of Macedonian queen or a princess.

Another, perhaps little bit more modest necklace was also found. Its length was made of string of hazelnut-shaped beads, while the central decoration was made of a pair of acorn-shaped beads (fig. 6)

This precious collection of neck decoration is made of two more necklaces, identical to each other. The ends are fashion as a cylindrical reed and the length of the necklaces is made of tens of small golden hoops, each of it decorated with granulation (Fig. 7 and 8.) The

cylindrical ends are decorated with the minutest details in filigree and granulation. These hoop necklaces a bit older than the other artifacts. The hoops of which these necklaces are made of are quite frequent in the 5th century burials in the rich necropolises of Sindos, near Thessaloniki. The fastening ends of the opulent female necklaces were fashioned in the very same manner as the hoop necklaces from Tremnik. They were probably part of the inventory of a traveling goldsmith, which used them as templates for creating jewelry on the spot, complying with the taste and preferences of his customers. A grouping of them was made into necklaces and thus, they found their way into the central regions of Macedonia.



Figs. 4 - Vanity box, *pyxis*. Dimensions 0.30x0.25 cm, weight of 29.7 grams (foto: V. Kiprijanov)

The newest artifact of this hoard and simultaneously, the one with the humblest artistic and craftsmanship features, is the golden plaque- a relief appliqué representing Poseidon with his trident and flanked by hippocampuses ('ιππόκαμπος) (fig. 9) This massive appliqué, it weights around 70 grams, was most probably made during the last decades of 4th c. BC.

Lastly, this fantastic collection was enriched by two coins-staters of the most important Macedonian kings Phillip II (fig. 10a) and Alexander III (fig. 10b) This is most useful, as coin dating can give a more precise time setting for this find. This hoard was most probably deposited before the very well know Celtic invasion in 279 BC. After this date, a certain hiatus is noticed in the thriving of urban living in the Vardar River valley, as it is shown with the research on several sites (e.g. Demir Kapija, Isar Marvinci, Vardarski Rid.)[7].

Archaeologists are eternally grateful to the owned for this monetary addition, because it helps with the precise dating of the hoard. Sadly, we have no information on the owner(s) of this ancient treasure. One can think that this was treasure collected and circulated from

7 Dragi Mitrevski, „The Treasure from Tremnik and some Traces of the Celts in the Vardar Valey" in *The Eastern Celts: The Communities between the Alps and the Black sea*, ed. Mitja Gushtin (Koper : Univerza na Primorskem, Znanstveno-raziskovalno središče, Založba Annales, 2011).



Fig. 5 - Necklace 1 (foto: V. Kiprijanov)



Fig. 6 - Necklaces 2 (foto: V. Kiprijanov)

generation to generation during the 5th and 4th centuries BC, by the members of a Macedonian or Paeonian noble family, or that was intended as grave gift that somehow ended up as a hoard or some third option. This is a mystery for the future archaeologists to muse over and to give their opinion and comments on the matter. We are sure that their admiration and apprehension will be the same as the admiration of numerous generations of people who cherished the beauty of these magnificent gold pieces of art, before they were hidden away near the village of Tremnik in Macedonia.



Fig. 7 - Necklaces 3 (foto: V. Kiprijanov)



Fig. 8 - Necklaces 4 (foto: V. Kiprijanov)



Fig. 9 - Appliqué representing Poseidon flanked by hippocampuses. Dimensions 0.80 x 0.70, weight of 69 grams (foto: V. Kiprijanov)



Fig. 10 - a) Stater of Phillip II (359-336 BC.) Avers: Apollo with laurel wreath, turned on right/ Reverse: two-horse chariot/biga with the legend ΦΙΛΙΠΠΟΥ. Diameter of 0.18 cm, weight of 8.6 grams; **b**) Stater of Alexander III (336-323 BC.) Avers: Helmeted Athena, turned on right/ Reverse: Winged Nike with legend ΑΛΕΞΑΝΔΡΟΥ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ. Diameter of 0.18 cm, weight of 8.6 grams (foto: V. Kiprijanov)

РЕЗИМЕ

ЗЛАТНО ДЕПО ОД ТРЕМНИК – НЕГОТИНО

Марјан ЈОВАНОВ и Антонио ЈАКИМОВСКИ

Селото Тремник се наоѓа во централниот дел на Република Македонија, во близина на градот Неготино. На територијата на селото Тремник досега се пронајдени петнаесетина локалитети од различни периоди. кои потекнуваат од доцното бронзено време XIII – XI век пред н. е. се до средниот век.

Археолошкиот локалитет Орманков Гроб се наоѓа на југоисточниот раб на селото Тремник. Овој археолошки малку истражен локалитет ја фасцинираше македонската но и светската јавност во 2008 година, кога овде беше пронајдено неверојатно вредно депо со златни предмети од класичниот период, со вкупна тежина од 1200 грама. Разновидноста на предметите кои го чинат ова неверојатно откритие укажува дека биле собирани во еден подолг временски период.

Меѓу најатрактивните по својот изглед, масивност и луксузна изработка ги издвојуваме четирите фибули од малоазиски тип (сл. 3a-d). Долги по речиси 10 см, а тешки околу 140 грама, овие фибули изработени од најчисто злато, претставуваат едни од најскапоцените примероци на фибули од малоазиски тип откриени до сега.

Со истата беспрекорна изработка во комбинација на филигран и гранулација се одликува и малата златна тоалетна кутија – Пиксида (сл. 4) со цилиндричен рецепиент и капаче.

Во оваа категорија на врвни златарски остварувања од класичниот период секако треба да го вброиме и раскошниот ѓердан составен од две палмети на краевите меѓу кои се наоѓале триесетина други елементи (сл. 5)

Друг, за нијанса поскромен ѓердан бил составен од низа висулци во вид на лешник, а во средишниот дел биле поставени два полукружни висулци во вид на желади (сл. 6).

Скапоцената колекција на украси за врат ја дополнуваат уште два идентични ѓердани кои на краевите завршуваат со по едно цилиндрично цевче, а помеѓу нив се наоѓаат десетици мали златни алки украсени по надворешниот раб со минијатурни гранули (сл. 7 и 8).

Хронолошки најмлад, а уметничко-занатски најскромен предмет од ова депо е златната плочка, апликација, релјефна претстава на Посејдон с неговиот трозабец – тридент, фланкиран со коњски протоми – hipposamps (ιππόκαμπος) (сл. 9). Оваа масивна апликација, тешка 70 грама, веројатно е производ од последните децении на IV век пред н.е.

На крај фантастичната колекција на златни предмети, сопственикот ја дополнил со две монети, статери, на двата најголеми и најзначајни македонски кралеви – Филип II (сл. 10a) и Александар III (сл. 10b). Со овие две монети сопственикот на ова богатство како да сакал да им ја олесни работата на археолозите за попрецизно датирање на ова откритие.

За датацијата на депото можеме да се потрепеме на откриените монети. Како време на депонирање да се претпостави дека се случило пред познатата наезда на келтите во 279 год. пред н.е. После ова забележлив е одреден хијатус во животот по долината на Вардар, констатирано преку повеќе локалитети (Демир Капија, Исар Марвинци, Вардарски Рид).