



FUNERARY PRACTICES DURING THE BRONZE AND IRON AGES IN CENTRAL AND SOUTHEAST EUROPE

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of Funerary Archaeology in Čačak, Serbia
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Edited by
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PARS PRO TOTO: A WORLD IN A SMALL PLACE - THE EXAMPLE OF IRON AGE GRAVE GOODS FROM VIČJA LUKA

Martina Blečić Kavur
Boris Kavur

Abstract:

The graves from Vičja luka on the Island of Brač in Dalmatia, Croatia, have been known for over 45 years in the scientific literature. They have recently been mentioned in passing on several occasions, because of the large number of grave goods that bear witness to cultural or trading influences from different directions. The paper re-examines some of the jewellery and weaponry from graves 3 and 4. On the basis of these artefacts and their state of preservation it is possible to reconstruct the connections of the eastern Adriatic social elite in the economic and ideological currents of the 5th and 4th century BC in the region between the Aegean and the Alps.

Keywords:

Eastern Adriatic Coast, Vičja luka, Iron Age, grave goods, attire, weaponry, fragmentation, sign, symbol

Several changes in the social and economic but indirectly also in the ideological and religious concepts of the proto-urban societies can be observed on the territory of the eastern Adriatic coast in the later part of the Early Iron Age. These profound changes were triggered by new, for the eastern Mediterranean and the southern Balkans characteristic cultural traits influenced and transferred by the penetrations of the Greek, Macedonian and from *Magna Grecia* derived economies and propaganda which were present on the territory of the Adriatic basin from the end of the 6th century BC with the establishment of the colonies and emporia as well as military strongholds. These contacts introduced different objects of material culture, evidently differing from the local ones, such as military equipment, luxurious ceramic and metal vessels, which played the deciding influence in the transformation process of local communities and especially in the creation of local military and economic elites. From the alleged perspective the whole territory of the eastern Adriatic coast acted as a contact and crossing point of different worlds – their influences were transmitted and preserved until today in remains of material culture (Blečić Kavur 2012; Blečić Kavur 2015, p. 43-47). The later was mostly only fragmentary preserved since often its structure and composition were a consequence of intentional fragmentation – "... of a metaphor or symbol which was hidden to be recognized only by those who knew what or how to look for it" (Gombrich 1991, p. 38).

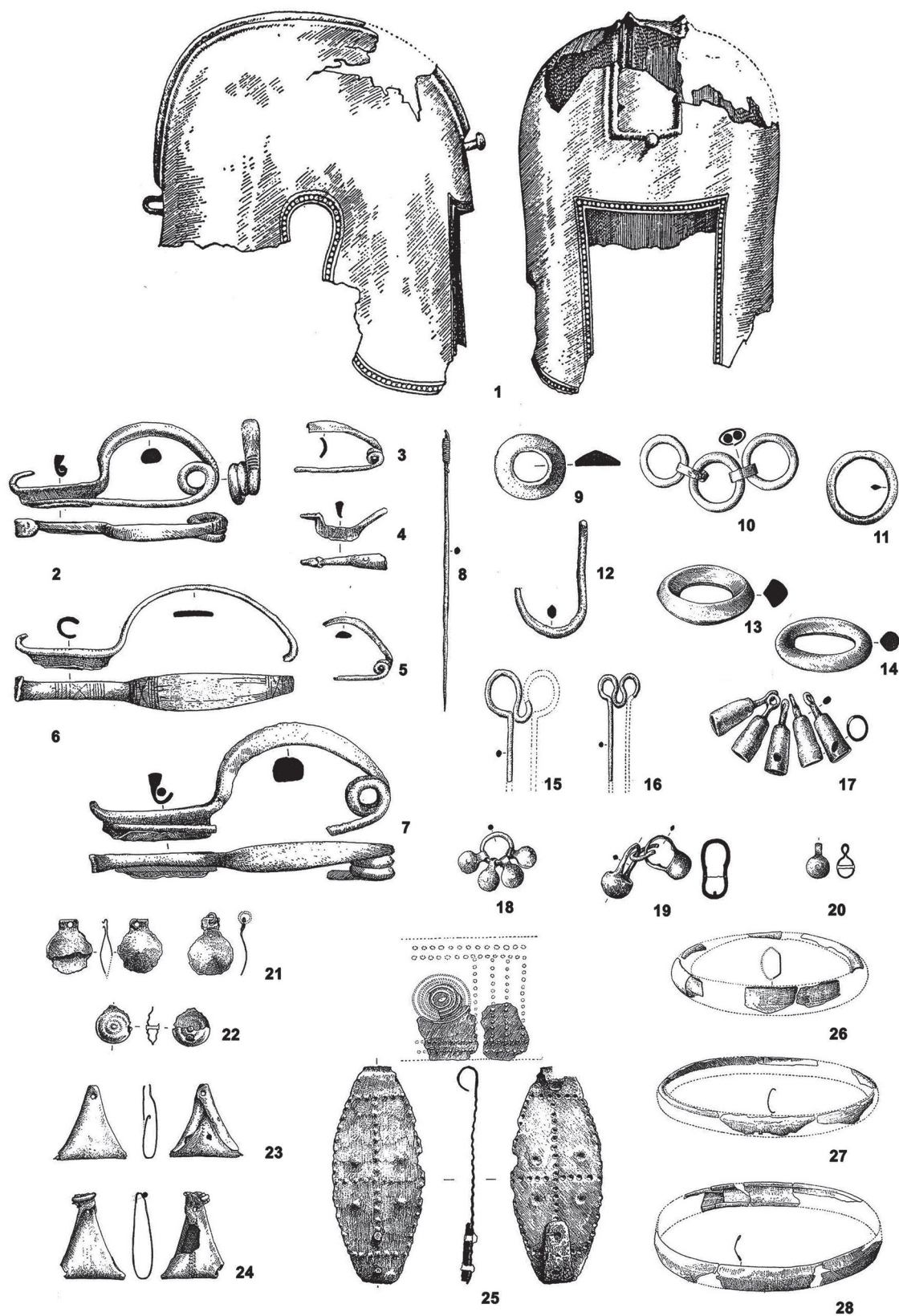


Fig. 1 - Selection of finds from grave 3 of the necropolis in Vičja luka on the island of Brač (adapted from Marović and Nikolanci 1969).

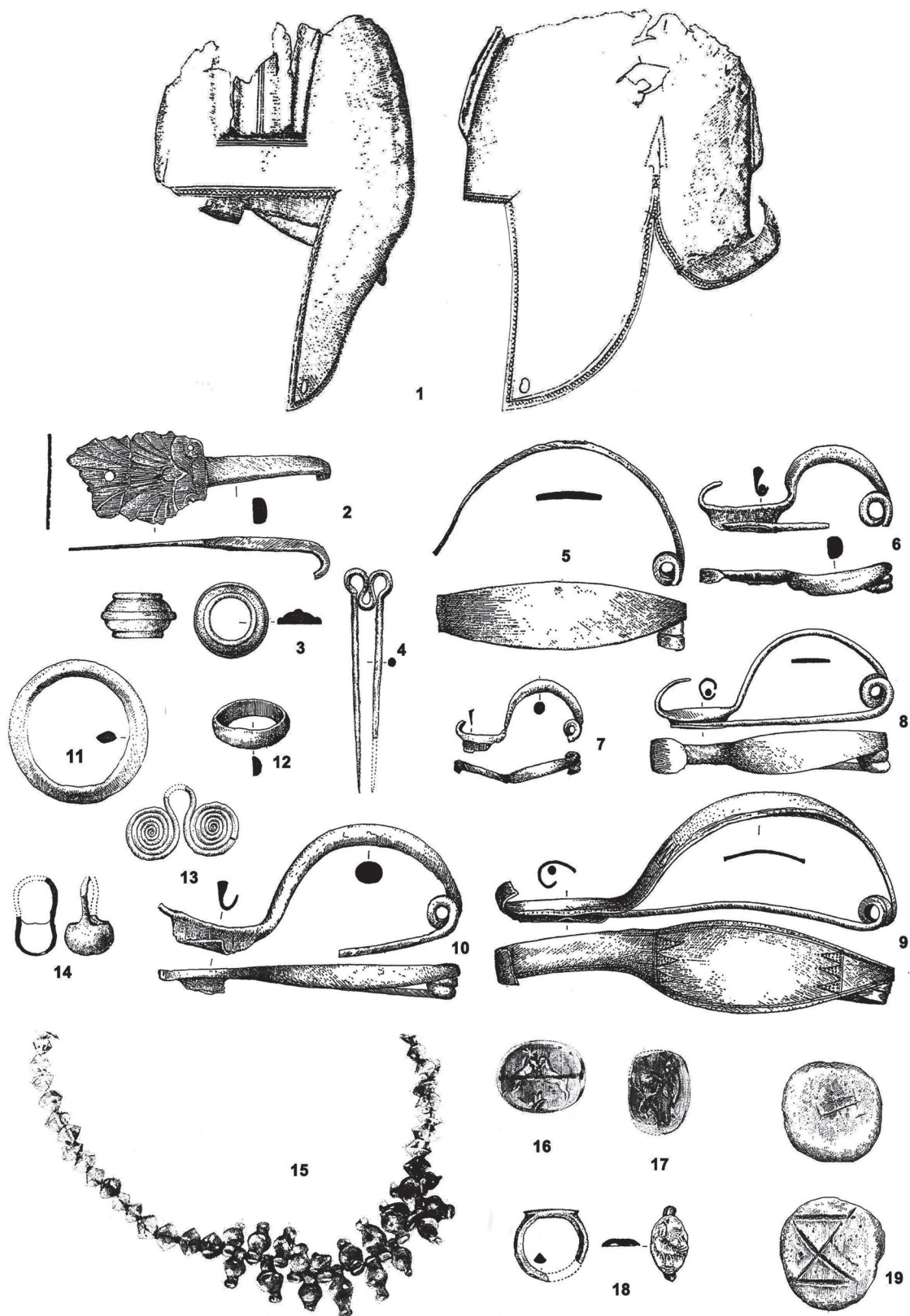


Fig. 2 - Selection of finds from grave 4 of the necropolis in Vičja luka on the island of Brač (adapted from Marović and Nikolanci 1969)

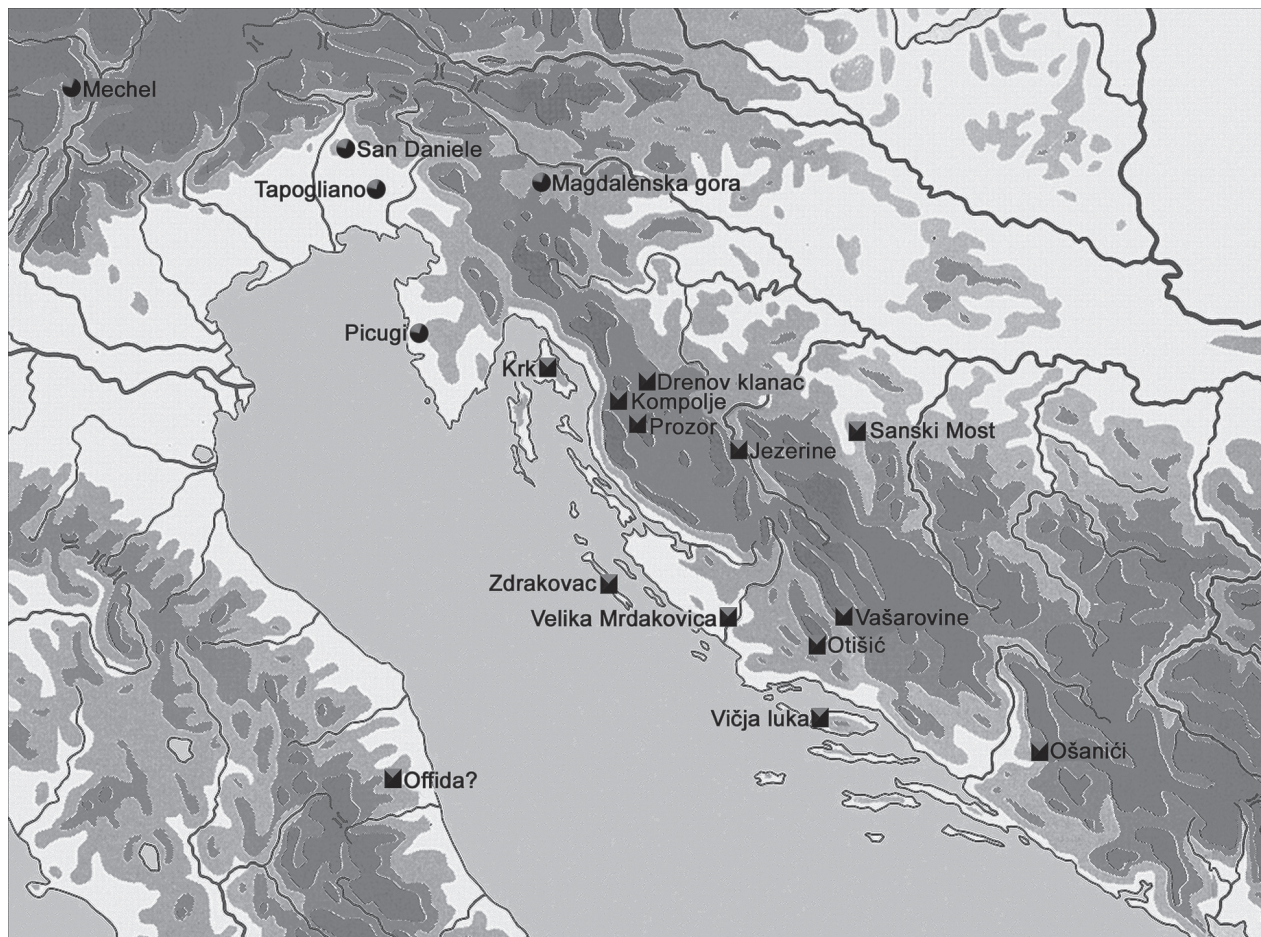


Fig. 3 - Distribution map of pseudocertosa type fibulae with a zoomorphic termination of the foot: 1 - Japodian variant (■) and 2 - *Caput Adriae* variant (●) (according to Blečić Kavur and Podrug 2014).

As an adequate example to illustrate this discussion several graves from Vičja luka on the island of Brač from the territory of central Dalmatia (Figs. 1, 2) could be used. Although they were known to the scientific public for almost 45 years (Marović and Nikolanci 1969), they still enable the formulation of new interpretations – interpretations which incorporate the finds into always new and different spatial and ideological as well as aesthetical connections. Consequently, the discussion will focus only on selected and significant artefacts from this graves which in a concrete nature and indirectly confirm this perspective of observation.

Although interesting discoveries of Iron Age material culture were well known from the discussed site (Bulić 1900; Barbarić 2006, p. 45-47) it was not earlier than in 1908 that smaller excavations were conducted in which 4 graves were discovered. In their original publication and analysis the authors attempted to present as detailed as possible the situation of the discovery as well as the complexity of the preserved finds (Marović and Nikolanci 1969) which in its essence did not change despite a recent revision attempt (Barbarić 2006).

Out of this exceptional material legacy we should, in the first place when observing the attire in the perspective of the Adriatic cultural *koiné*, focus on the fibula of the *pseudocertosa* type with a *zoomorphic termination of the foot* which was, although fragmented, discovered in the grave 3 (Marović and Nikolanci 1969, p. 18, fig. 9: 5) (Fig. 1/4). Taking into consideration its parallels it could be dated in

to the 5th century BC. It was a type of fibulae which were, with their almost identical typological and stylistic way of production, emblematic for the territory of the eastern Adriatic coast and its directly related hinterland – they are known from the territory of the Delmati tribe, but were more frequently on the territory of the Japodi and on the *Caput Adriae* area (Blečić Kavur and Podrug 2014, p. 9-65) (Fig. 3). Based on their stylistic features they can be divided into 2 groups. The find from Vičja luka should be included into the first group, the so-called Japodian variant characterised by the smaller dimensions and the schematisation of its shaping (Blečić Kavur and Podrug 2014, p. 63-64, fig. 15). On the opposite Adriatic coast these fibulae were discovered only exceptionally and only in the form of individual local/hybrid variants, even though animal fibulae were favoured on the Italic territory. There they were typologically and chronologically rather well-developed and numerous as well. In spite of all that, these fibulae were long time ago admitted among the guiding forms of fibulae of the Adriatic *koiné*, transported with maritime communications (Peroni 1973, p. 68, fig. 21: 6; Peroni 1976, p. 97, Fig. 1 - 6). What remains, however, is the still confirmed fact that these fibulae were intriguing items of most likely female attire in the eastern Adriatic cultural area, and its western Balkan hinterland during the 5th century BC. Their initial innovation and creation could be sought for on the Japodian territory and the related production centres which, it seems, were not so closed nor so explicitly conservative as frequently assumed (Blečić Kavur and Podrug 2014, p. 64-65).

We could include into the same cultural framework also the *basket-shaped pendants with a rounded bottom* – the most widely distributed form of all basket-shaped pendants which is considered being a superregional phenomenon on the European continent (Warneke 1999, p. 126, 128-129, fig. 63; Teßmann 2007; Blečić Kavur 2015, p. 86-89). They were, on the eastern Adriatic coast on the territory inhabited by the Liburni and Delmati, discovered mostly together with fibulae of the Baška type or isolated but only rarely together with other types of fibulae. This rule of their occurrence is confirmed and illustrated by the graves 3 and 4 from Vičja luka (Marović and Nikolanci 1969, p. 15, 27, Fig. 5 - 8; 15: 10) (Figs. 1/19; 2/14). If we observe their distribution and number on the discussed territory, they are forming a clear concentration on the territory of the Liburni – on the territory where their presence was until recently not so numerous or even completely ignored (Blečić Kavur 2010, p. 298-300, fig. 221). We can assume that they are not only imports from the large superregional centres of production, but also the products of local workshops which created forms of jewellery under the influence of the later (Grahek 2004, p. 152, fig. 41; Blečić Kavur 2015, p. 87, 89). As a result, we could claim that they were decorative or apotropaic as well as protecting small amulets which became a universal fashion in the period at the end of the Early and the beginning of the Late Iron Age. It is especially important to stress their role in the cultural development and interlacing of the Adriatic *koiné*, as it was long time ago defined in the framework of the relations between the Golasecca and Veneto on one, and the Liburnian, St. Lucija and Dolenjska cultural area on the other side (Blečić Kavur 2015, p. 89).

An exceptional case, which could also be observed in the framework of the Adriatic cultural *koiné*, but only as an Italic emblem, was the belt hook of a special appearance, form and decoration. It was a *belt hook with a palmette* discovered in the grave 4 that was the first such find published from the eastern shores of the Adriatic (Marović and Nikolanci 1969, p. 29, 41-42, Fig. 15 - 2) (Fig. 2/2). Soon followed the publications of two additional examples from Otišić (Marović 1984, p. 56, fig. 23: 12) unfortunately lacking the information about the context of its discovery and from the grave 4b from Dragišić (Batović 1981, p. 126: 298, fig. 11: 24; Brusić 2000, p. 8-9, T. IV: 9; Kukoč 2011, fig. 21) (Fig. 4). Finally the recent find from Podgrađe (*Asseria*) near Benkovac, although also lacking the information about the context

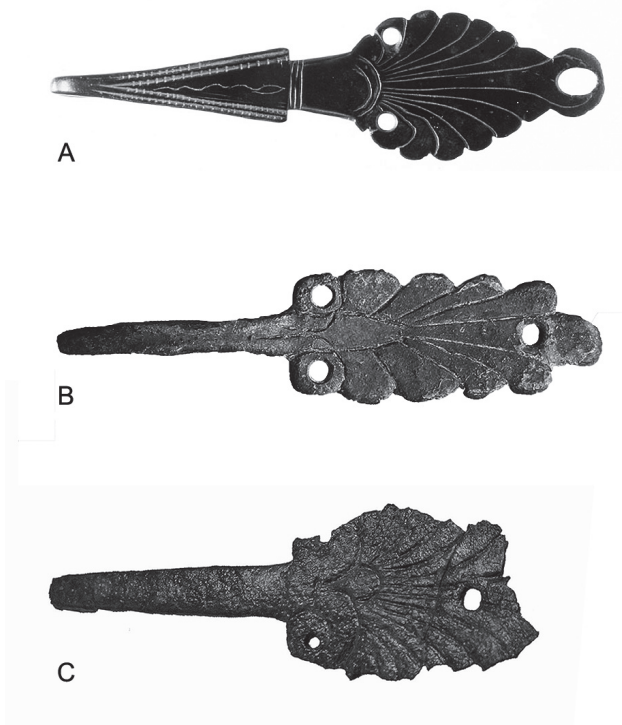


Fig. 4 - Italic belt hooks discovered on the sites on the eastern side of the Adriatic: A - Otišić (according to Kukoč 2011), B - Dragišić, grave 4B (Photo: Gradski muzej Šibenik), C - Vičja luka, grave 4 (Photo: M. Blečić Kavur).

of its discovery, is the best manufactured and preserved example from the eastern Adriatic coast characterised by a lavishly decorated palmette (Kukoč 2011, p. 16-17, 20-27, fig. 2-4). Typologically could all finds be included into the type of the so-called leaf shaped hooks with a palmette – the find from Otišić could be included into type 2B, the ones from Dragišić and Vičja luka into type 2C, while the belt hook from Podgrađe to type 1B according to the generally adopted typology of Marlene Suano (Suano 1991, p. 136-137, fig. 22).

Despite the sporadic nature of their occurrence on the eastern coast of the Adriatic analogous examples from the Italian peninsula are just too numerous to be listed (Fig. 5). Perhaps one should only put forward the finds from the necropolis of Oliveto Citra or Palomonte in Campania (Romito 1995, T. V: 2; XVII: c-d) and Pietrabbondante (Troccola, grave 2), Termoli (grave 97) and Guglionesi (grave 9) in Molise (Suano 1991, p. 137; Romito 1995, p. 59: 77, 60: 82, 79), where the largest numbers belong to the simple forms of the belt plates with leaf-shaped palmettes lacking any superfluous decoration. As a typical part of the Italic warrior's attire, especially of the Sanitti and Sabini, these were parts of luxurious belt garnitures intended for special purposes. They were mostly called Sannitic or Sabelo-sannitic belt plates, but due to their distribution, it would be more appropriate to call them *Italic belt plates* (Rebuffat-Emmanuel 1962; Sannibale 1998) (Fig. 5). The only finds discovered outside the territory of southern and central Italy were discovered in Tunisia and Greece (Sannibale 1998, p. 140), Germany and Tirol (Zemmer-Plank 1980, p. 365-367, fig. 1; 4, T. 16: 1-2; Suano 1991, p. 138), France (Boucher 1980, p. 26) and Hungary (Jacobsthal 1969, p. 141, 148; Szabó 1972, p. 388-389, fig. 1) (Fig. 5). Unfortunately, reproaches were presented claiming that these came to the large museums at the end of the 19th century as objects of collections and Marlene Suano claimed that such belt hooks were never discovered in safe context outside of Italy (Suano 1991, p. 138). On contrary, lately further examples were discovered outside of the "accepted" area where, except from Croatia, they were discovered in Italy in Trento (Marzatico 1997, p. 354-358; Marzatico 2004, p. 380) and Artegna (Càssola Guida and Vitri 2002, p. 184) as well as in Puig de la Nau in Spain (Benicarló) (Graells 2010, p. 169-172) (Fig. 5). Despite numerous discussions of mostly Italian researchers in the last decades (Suano 1991; Romito 1995; Saniballe 1998) the finds from the eastern Adriatic coast were ignored (Blečić Kavur 2010, p. 241-242).

Thus it is important to stress that the belt hooks from Vičja luka, Podgrađe, Dragišić and Otišić are first of all Italic products of exceptional value which were as imports transmitted from the territory of central or southern Italy to the central Dalmatia (Blečić Kavur 2010, p. 236-237; Kukoč 2011, p. 12, 40-45). When discussing them, they should be installed into the consideration about the correlations of

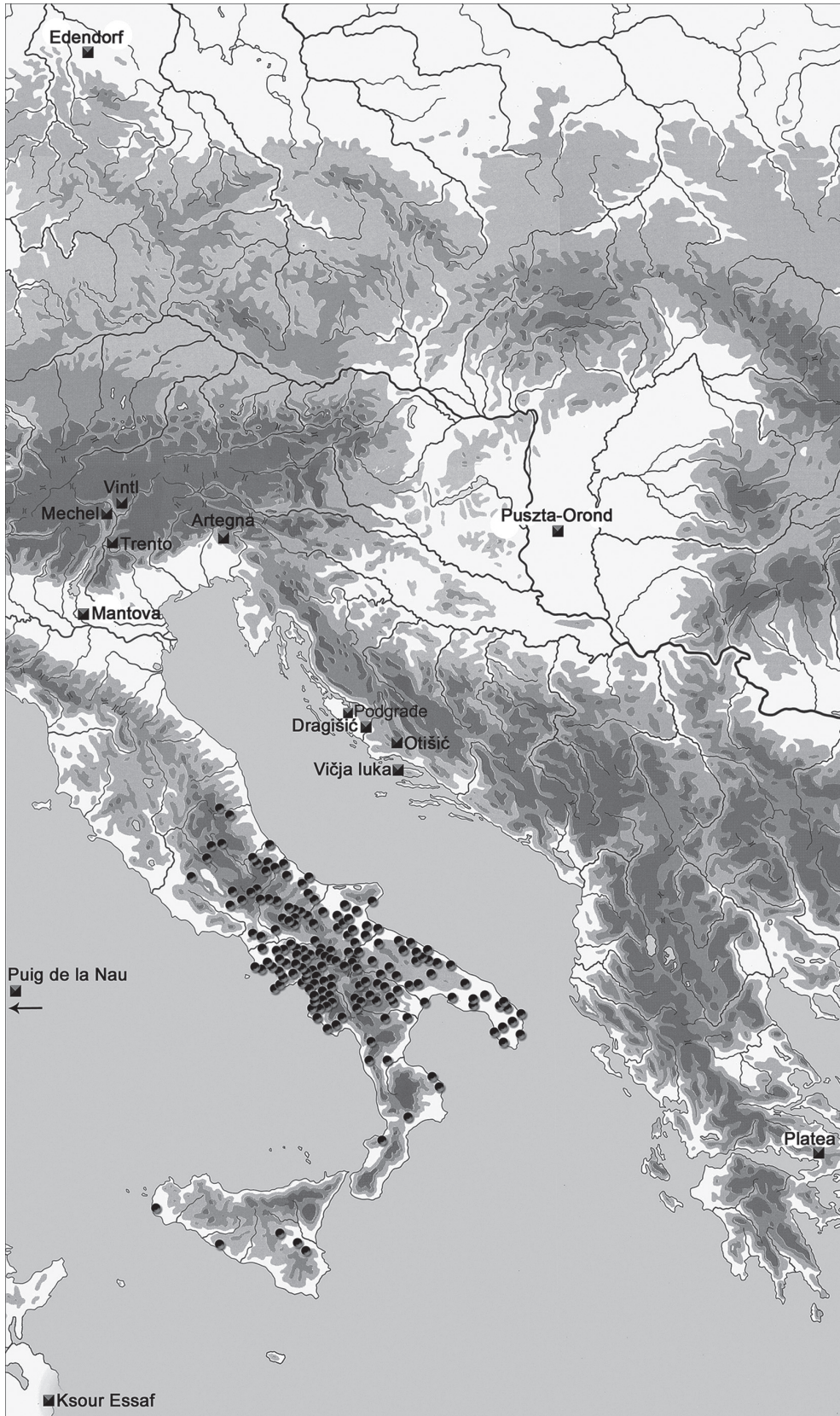


Fig. 5 - Distribution of Italic belt hooks with a concentration on the Italic peninsula (●) and examples from beyond that territory (■) (supplemented after Sannibale 1998).

constant cultural contacts and relations between both shores into which one should include also without any problems the completely standardized understanding of southern Italic pottery and specific forms of jewellery discovered on the territory of northern and central Dalmatia. Finally, we have to keep in mind that the Campanian or Apulian pottery discovered in the graves of Vičja luka (Barbarić 2006, p. 51-54) comes from the territory where numerous such belt hooks are known today (Suano 1991, p. 137; Romito 1995, p. 28; Blečić Kavur 2010, p. 242).

The Italic belt and its hooks were a status symbol. They would represent prestige and wealth inside a social group and consequently they were holders of specific symbolical identification of their owners. That is why the belt hooks were used for a long time and were even kept in the family as demonstrated by the marks of old repairing (Suano 1991, p. 138; Romito 1995, p. 12; Riccitelli 2001, p. 197). In accordance with the circumstances of their discovery these belts on the territory of Italy clearly distinguish the burials of warriors from the burials of civilians. But besides the two, also the third category should be added and considered – burials of adolescents. If dealing with a warrior, as demonstrated by the tomb paintings, the belts are fastened around the waist of the deceased. It was a symbolical manifestation of freedom since for the Italic warriors, especially Sanites, the loss of freedom was symbolically represented as the loss of the belt. In cases where the deceased were civilians, for example high ranking public officials, these belts were deposited beside their bodies (Suano 1991, p. 138). Such a habit was clearly demonstrated by the finds of unarmed individuals from sites such as Oliveto Citra, Altavilla Silentina and Pietrobondante (Suano 1991, p. 138). In children's graves or in the graves of adolescents such as Paestum, Pietrobondante or Guglionese they were not only perceived as the symbols of status but also together with other grave goods as a metaphor of growing up or respectively as a mark of the transitional period leading to the incorporation among the fully entitled members of their community (Suano 1991, p. 138; Romito 1995, p. 12-14, T. III).

The position of defined and understandably structured grave goods, as observed in Italy, could not be directly projected to the finds from the eastern Adriatic coast. Despite that we can, based on other present finds in the grave, assume that the preserved belt hook from Vičja luka was a part of the attire of an adult man – a warrior and/or aristocrat. Unfortunately it was heavily damaged, which might have been an indication of its long use and even eventual repair – an argument supported by a hole on an uncommon position in the central part of the palmetto. Since it was obviously repaired and it belonged to an only partially preserved set we can assume that the belt hook was in a certain period in the past intentionally torn from the metal belt which was most probably in the family kept piece of equipment. Although representative it is together with the Illyrian helmet a chronologically less sensitive element of the grave inventory. But due to its state of preservation it demonstrates a possibility that it was a piece of a fragmented garniture, a recognizable symbol of the whole belt, added into the grave. This brings us to the conclusion that we can observe prestigious items and among them the Italic belt hooks from Dalmatia from several different but complementary perspectives – in the first place we can observe them as the consequence of economic and other military/political and cultural contacts with the Italic populations. Especially, one should bear in mind, as means of mediation the presence of the fleet of Dionysius the Elder from Syracuse on both sides of the Adriatic at the end of the 5th century BC. But we can also think of war trophies, collections or simply souvenirs from the Italian territory. Still in every case we have to observe them as a symbol of status and the phenomenon of *pars pro toto* manner of exposing the status role the deceased had during his life – individually and as well familiarly in the society (Blečić Kavur 2010, p. 242-244).

On contrary, if we reflect the so-called Balkan cultural *koiné*, we have again to pay our attention to several noteworthy finds. Most numerous artefacts present are *the double pins*, known also as omega pins or so-called *Trebenište type* of the later (Barbarić 2006, p. 50-51). These are simple pins made from bronze wire, members of the IVa group of double pins with an "M" – shaped head according to the typology of Rastko Vasić (1982, p. 241-250, fig. 12; Vasić 2003, p. 123-128, T. 69). All together 18 examples were discovered in the discussed graves 3 and 4 (Marović and Nikolanci 1969, p. 21, 29, Fig. 10 - 4-5; 15: 8) (Figs. 1/15-16; 2/4). Observing their distribution, their occurrence is centred on the territory of western and southern Balkans and they appear over a long period from the 8th to the 2nd century BC. But they especially mark the horizon of the so-called "princely graves" on the central Balkans (Čović 1987, p. 631, T. LXII: 38; LXV: 1, 11; Vasić 1987a, p. 645, T. LIX: 13; LXXVII: 1-2; Vasić 2003, p. 123-128). A little bit more precisely is the period of their use determined on territory of western Bosnia and Herzegovina, Dalmatia and Lika where they appear most numerous in the 5th and 4th century BC (Vasić 1982, p. 248; Vasić 2003, p. 126; Blečić Kavur and Miličević-Capek 2011, p. 34-39, Figs. 3; 4).

In the rich grave 3 were, together with these pins, discovered also 7 fragments of *pins with the loop-shaped head* (Marović and Nikolanci 1969, p. 21, Fig. 10 - 1) – the so-called *Schlaufennadeln* according to the typology of Imma Kilian-Dirlmeier (1984, p. 281-283, T. 112; 113) (Fig. 1/8). They are most numerously represented on the territory of southern and western Balkans and on central and south-eastern Adriatic coast (Jevtić and Djordjević 1991, p. 30-31, T. V; Vasić 2003, p. 100-101). Luxurious variants of these pins made from silver or gold were discovered in princely graves such as Novi Pazar and in wealthy warriors graves from Sindos, Kozani and Kuç i Zi (Vasić 1987a, p. 645; Jevtić and Djordjević 1991, p. 31, T. V: 15-16, 22-23). In the surrounding region (Dalmatia and Herzegovina) they were discovered in the warriors graves in Kačanj (Marić 1976, p. 107, T. II: 14) and Neum (Blečić Kavur and Miličević-Capek 2011, p. 39, cat. no. 19-25), in Gubavica and exceptionally on Gradina and in the hoard from Ošanići (Marijan 2001, p. 92, T. 14: 10; Jevtić and Djordjević 1991, p. 3, 13; Vasić 2003, 101), as well as in Stari Grad on the island of Hvar (Jeličić Radonić 1995, p. 103, k. 70). Representatively they are furthermore present in the tumulus Čitluci II/6 on Glasinac where they were dated in to the IVc1 horizon of the Glasinac culture and interpreted as a possible import from the area of the southern Balkan (Čović 1987, p. 609, fig. 35: 32; Jevtić and Djordjević 1991, T. V: 17; Vasić 2003, p. 101; Blečić Kavur and Miličević-Capek 2011, p. 39-40).

An even closer phenomenological significance and a close association to the discussed area present the *helmets of the Illyrian type*. All of the discovered helmets from Vičja luka were severely damaged, but what is most important, they were typologically interestingly heterogeneous. In the grave 3 a helmet of the III B type was discovered (Marović and Nikolanci 1969, p. 21-22, sl. 11). A form with the typical lateral opening for the ears beside the cheek guards (Fig. 1/1) is characteristic for the territory of the south-western part of the Balkan Peninsula. They generally correspond with the territory of today's Albania while individual examples are known from Greece and Italy (Teržan 1995, p. 87-88, 119, fig. 8; Vasić 2010, p. 40, 44-47) (Fig. 6).

The second helmet, discovered in the grave 4, could be included in to the type III A2-b (Marović and Nikolanci 1969, p. 30, fig. 16; Blečić Kavur and Pravidur 2012, p. 73-82, Fig. 17 - 1) (Fig. 2/1). The main characteristic is the decorative and apotropaic motive of arrows incised on lateral sides of the helmet. It is particularly distinctive for the territory of Dalmatia (Blečić Kavur and Pravidur 2012, p. 76-79, fig. 14) (Fig. 5). According to its decoration it could be differentiated from the universal and more numerous helmets of the III A2-a type, typical for the area of the western Balkan and Macedonia

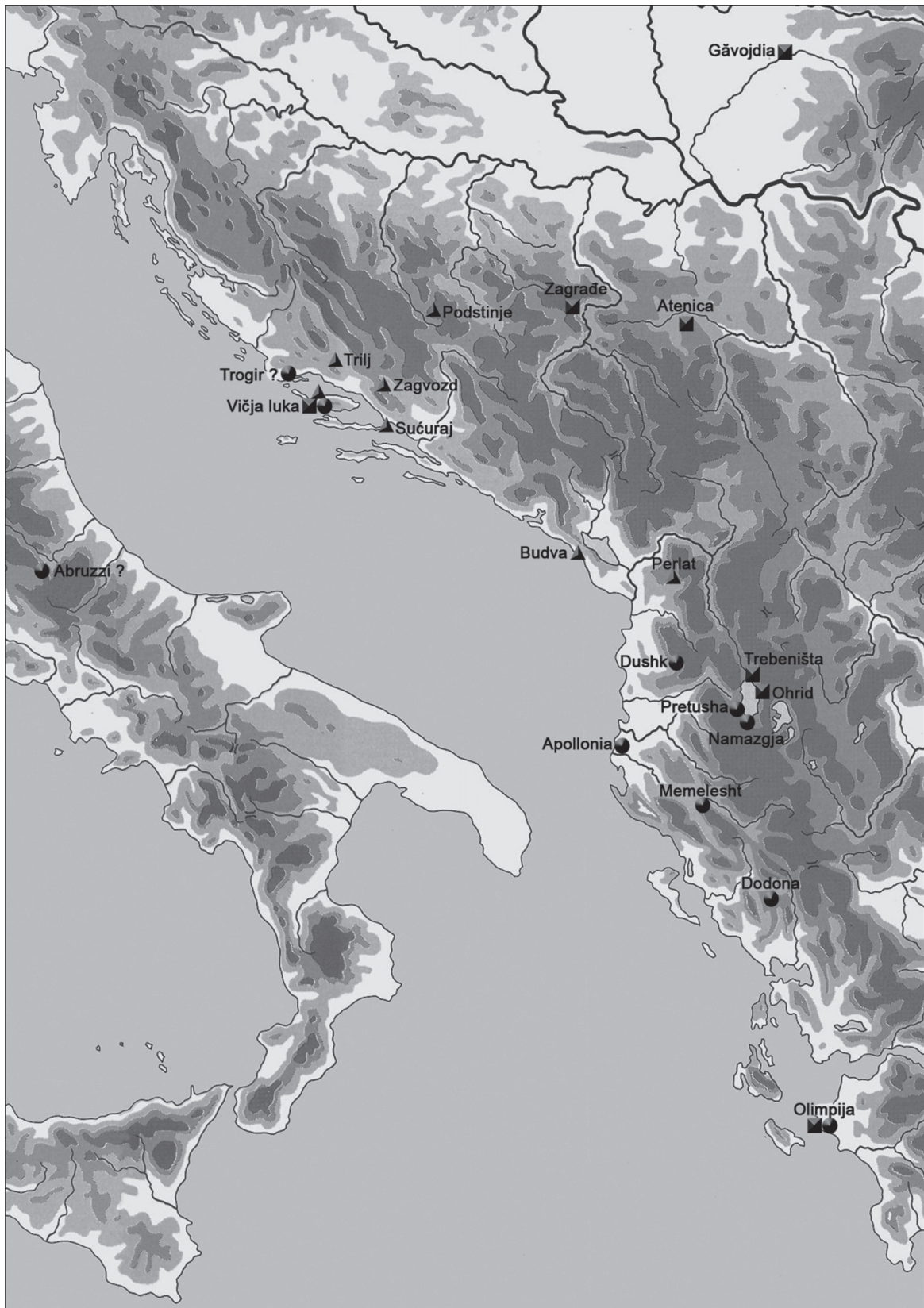


Fig. 6 - Distribution map of Illyrian helmets of variants III A1-b, with individual finds of bronze/silver plaques as decorations on helmets of variant III A1-b (■), III A2-b (▲) (according to Blečić Kavur and Pravidur 2012) and III B (according to Teržan 1995).

(Blečić Kavur and Pravidur 2012, p. 63-73, fig. 14). One helmet of this type was discovered in the grave 2 (Marović and Nikolanci 1969, p. 11, fig. 4; Blečić Kavur and Pravidur 2012, fig. 12), while another one was already known from the old excavations on the site (Bulić 1900, p. 28, T. III: 1-2).

Besides that, we have to point out again the observation of a long time ago lost find that was mentioned in 1900 by Frane Bulić and afterward reinterpreted by Mladen Nikolanci and later again by Vedran Barbarić. The initial report refers to "...pieces of metal sheets with the depiction of lion, jaws agape, a barebacked horse and a naked bareback rider". They were discovered in a bronze vessel in the grave of the "warriors" equipped with helmets, greaves and other jewellery, among which the author exposed, the golden finger rings (Bulić 1900, p. 27; Nikolanci 1959, p. 84; Barbarić 2006, p. 45-46). In the description we can instantaneously recognize the remains of the most luxurious type of the Illyrian helmets – of the III A1-b type (Blečić 2007, p. 82, fig. 4, Pl. IV). They were marked by an applied heraldic concept of a boar located in the middle of two lions on the front and two naked mounted horseman on the cheek-guards made from gilded silver metal sheets (Blečić Kavur and Pravidur 2012, p. 60-61). Such an array is known from the necropolis in Trebeništa (Filow 1927, p. 29, fig. 25, T. V). We should also add the finds of almost identical metal sheet appliqués of boars from grave 1 from Zagrađe (Čović 1987, p. 616, T. LXIV: 1; Blečić Kavur and Pravidur 2012, p. 54-56, fig. 8) and from the peripheral grave of the younger man from the tumulus I in Atenica (Djuknić and Jovanović 1966, p. 17-18, T. XI: 1; XIX: 1; XXIX-XXXIII; Vasić 2004, fig. 15; Blečić Kavur and Pravidur 2012, p. 56-57, fig. 9) (Fig.5). These appliqués were of the same dimensions, made in an identical way from thin silver or gilded silver metal sheets and of the same technological and typological characteristics. It seems that they were the products of the same workshop centre which had sufficient high knowledge on the manufacture and treatment of precious metals and which should be most probably located on the cultural area of ancient Macedonia (Blečić 2007, p. 83-87; Blečić Kavur and Pravidur 2012, p. 57-60). Therefore it is suitable to assume that the listed appliqués of boars, as well as the silver appliqués of lion, horse and naked horsemen from Vičja luka, which were present in the graves as parts of the whole, should be considered as the representatives of the complete concept of known attributes from real Illyrian helmets. They should be comprehended as in the graves deposited symbols which reflect a specific idea or were as metonymies added into the graves (Theodossiev 1998, p. 360-362; Theodossiev 2000, p. 199-200; Blečić Kavur and Pravidur 2012, p. 61-63). Identified as symbols, which were not present on common helmets, they were not symbols of the warrior's class as such, but indicated the pinnacle of the prehistoric aristocracy of a military or political nature (Babić 2001, p. 87-88; Babić 2004, p. 108; Blečić 2007, p. 86-90). Such a status or attained level of internal organization of the society were for sure not formed or achieved without solid foundations and long lasting traditions. We are entitled to claim that beside the geopolitical situation, which was determined by the natural resources and the control of communications, an important role was played by the, into the mythological stories, wrapped up appeal on the status and the role of ancestors (Blečić 2007, p. 87-92). We can search for it in the custom of multiple inhumations in to the tombs – for example in the graves 3 and 4 from Vičja luka we can speak also about multiple successive burials as suggested by several authors (Marović and Nikolanci 1969, p. 32; Barbarić 2006, p. 56). Of course such an opinion is supported by the inhumations from Dragišić where the only the centrally positioned deceased was cremated (4B) while the other two were not (4A and 4C) (Brusić 2000, p. 6-9, T. III, V).

Evaluating the typological heterogeneity of the Illyrian helmets from the graves in Vičja luka, which could be approximately dated in to the 5th with a possible duration in to the beginning of the 4th century BC, and considering their distributions and groupings of individual types (Fig. 5), we can

affirm that individual pieces originated from different cultural areas and workshops. In this manner, like a *World* in a small place, they represent symbols of different traditions, of different communities from the Balkan area and demonstrate a specific, but important metaphor in the associative program, which was intentionally created, sustained and tended, but most importantly understood by their owners, their ancestors and their descendants.

At the end we have to point out another important find from the grave 4 – it is a massive bronze ring-shaped artefact with a profiled outer and straight inner side (Marović and Nikolanci 1969, p. 29, sl. 15: 1). In the initial publication the authors considered it being a spindle-whorl – an opinion later accepted by V. Barbarić (2006, p. 51) (Fig. 2/3). But to understand it we have to determine the artefact precisely and later move towards its interpretation – we have to observe it in the context of the complete repertory of the deposited grave goods. Due to its size, form, profile, massiveness and large central opening, it is less possible that we are looking at a spindle-whorl. Taking into consideration its dimensions as well as the technological and stylistic features, the ring shaped artefact corresponds exactly to the bronze ring on the *sauroter* (Blečić Kavur 2010, p. 235-236). Therefore it should be considered as an element of the spear, more precisely a metal part strengthening the spear-butt. Such spear-butts were made mostly from iron or even bronze, the socket was round and hollow, the terminal part on the other hand as forged into a point with a triangular or square cross-section. At the end of the socket to reinforce the transition in to the point a massive bronze profiled ring was put on (Baitinger 2001, p. 54-72; Sekunda 2010, p. 447-449). This makes it an element of the hoplite weaponry which was used for the special techniques of fighting in a phalanx (Baitinger 2001, p. 54-55; Schönfelder 2007, p. 311-313, fig. 4), an grave good fitting closely in to association with other pieces of military equipment discovered in the grave.

Among the artefacts, deriving from the southern Balkan area, which were discovered in the graves 3 and 4 in Vičja luka, we should consider also a larger number of light yellow glass amphora (*amphoriskos*)-shaped pendants (Marović and Nikolanci 1969, T. VII; IX: 1; Blečić Kavur and Pravidur 2012, Fig. 17 - 15; Kukoč 2011, fig. 31) (Fig. 2/15). The later were several times discussed and some authors attributed their production without arguments to the Greek workshops (Schönfelder 2007, p. 308). Today it seems that they were mostly the products of Macedonian workshops, a trade good, which was in the period of intensification of the contacts between the Celtic world and the Macedonian empire in the second half of the 4th century BC (Lt B1 respectively), exported towards the north on to the territory of the western Balkans and Pannonia (Popović 2000, p. 273-274; Barbarić 2006, p. 55; cf. Bitrakova Grozdanova 2011, p. 171, H-59). In the same relations we should understand the modest amount of such finds from the Italic territory in the 4th century BC coming mostly from the northern, by the Celts dominated, territory of Padania where they were discovered exclusively in wealthier tombs with numerous grave goods of different origins (Vellani 2000, p. 42-45, fig. 1). Their presence in this context and in this concept demonstrates that they were not just of a trendy Macedonia origin, spreading towards the continental Europe, but they demonstrate a long lasting identificational connection with the territories of the central and southern Balkans.

With these beads were indivisibly connected two glass seals which, together with a bronze ring, designate the uncommon items from the Adriatic region with exceptional symbolic value (Marović and Nikolanci 1969, p. 29, Fig. 15 - 7, T. VII; IX; Nikolanci 1976, p. 276-277, T. III: 6-7; Majnarić-Pandžić 1998, p. 322-324, fig. 144; Kukoč 2011, fig. 30-31a; Blečić Kavur and Pravidur 2012, p. 81-82, Fig. 17 - 16-18;

Ignatiadou 2013, p. 204-205, fig. 168.1) (Fig. 2/16-18). Seals were cast from light-yellow glass with greenish shade, of larger dimensions and perforated horizontally. On the more damaged seal is depicted an image of a hero – Herakles holding a winged lion/lioness (Fig. 2/17) while the second, better preserved seal is adorned with a depiction of two confronting standing goats (Marović and Nikolanci 1969, p. 29, Fig. 15 - 7, T. VII; IX; Majnarić-Pandžić 1998, fig. 144; Ignatiadou 2013, fig. 168.1) (Fig. 2/16). The production of light glass seals achieved a peak of popularity in the 4th century BC when they were massively produced in Macedonian workshops, mainly in the Pydna area, according to the glyptic art, sculpture or money (Boardman 1970, p. 210-211; Ignatiadou 2013, p. 328-330, 334-336). Exactly the motive of two standing confronting goats is, as an emblem, observed on Macedonian art, jewellery and coins from the 4th century on – the most similar depictions could be found on coins of Amphipolis from the 2nd century BC (Ignatiadou 2013, p. 204-205, fig. 168.2; Ignatiadou 2014, p. 49, Pl. VIII.1). The depiction of Herakles, the image of a bearded and naked male remained a favourite motive from the 4th century BC onwards – especially on elongated seals for the decoration of finger rings. Consequently, almost identical analogies could be observed on the territory of Halkidiki, e.g. at the seals from Olynthus (Ignatiadou 2013, p. 204, fig. 167.1-3; cf. Marović and Nikolanci 1969, p. 48, fn. 113).

Seals from Vičja luka, interpreted in different ways (Marović and Nikolanci 1969, p. 47-48; Batović 1974, p. 218; Majnarić-Pandžić 1998, p. 322-324; Barbarić 2006, p. 55-56), were imported items of formally and stylistically characterised superior artistic creations which could be closely linked to the late Classic Macedonian cultural environment and dated approximately earlier than the middle of the 4th century BC (Ignatiadou 2013, p. 204-205). Although described as female attire (Barbarić 2006, p. 55-56) they had in their essence a many sided value since we know, that their primary function in that period was that of stamping and with the later the warranty of presence, of direct connections and of means of identifications (Boardman 1970, p. 13-15; Nestorović 2005, p. 13). The decorative or apotropaic power of glass seals is recognisable in their use as jewellery, especially as pendants, as specific gifts (*doron*), dedicated votives and as recognisable gifts of Macedonian aristocracy and diplomacy (Plantzos 1999; cf. Ignatiadou 2013).

This thesis is further confirmed by the bronze ring from the same grave (Fig. 2/18) which could be due to its formal characteristics ascribed to rings of Type VI according to the typology of John Boardman – to profiled rings with an oval surface which were used mostly during the 4th century BC (Boardman 1970, p. 212-214). Such examples made from bronze were, especially with depictions of domestic animals, particularly cocks, made less carefully than the golden and silver finger rings (Boardman 1970, p. 230-233). Supporting this theory one should also pay attention to the three golden rings from old excavations which were linked to the finds of wealthy equipped warriors (Bulić 1900, p. 27).

To summarize the "narrative" observable in the grave goods from the burials in Vičja luka – the material remains never directly attest the outer limitations. They are just products of a culture which is mediated through a specific system of symbols and values. To be able to adequately interpret the finds discovered in the graves, to consider them as symbols, the whole context of the grave and the interpretation of the burial rite as well as the status of the deceased should be observed semiotically. The meanings of human activities are multilayered, numerous and complex – as also the grave goods. Every social practice is laden with symbolism – no tools, no activities, no artefacts are completely devoid of meaning – we are constantly surrounded by symbols. And sometimes, especially in the case of grave goods, we should read archaeological data as symbols.

For a basic definition what a symbol is still the most appropriate is the scholastic definition stating that a symbol *stat aliquid pro aliquot* – that it is something referring to something else, as far as possible for something more than the artefact itself. To be able to understand the symbol, its role and sue it is necessary to observe it in two forms of semiologies as defined by Michael Herzfield – in the form of the semiology of communication and the semiology of representation (Herzfield 1992, p. 16). In the first case the symbol is an instrument of human communication, while in the second one it is a substitute which was replaced on a cognitive base. With the combination of both concepts we can explain also the here presented archaeological finds from Vičja luka – on the Apennine peninsula the bronze belt was a symbol of a social status, while on the territory of the eastern Adriatic coast the belt hook was recognized as a part of the belt – as a part of the status symbol and of the demonstration of status on one and as a metonymy of the fragmentation process and the system of connections between individual actors on the other side. In the framework of theories dealing with information and communication it is important not to forget that a symbol is something "meaning" something to someone. With other words the symbol was created to fulfil this role – to tell it directly. On the cognitive level the symbol has got the chance to create another symbol in the mind of the beholder. Of course every transmission, production and consumption of a symbolic artefact assume that both parties involved into the process understand it – that they consider the artefact/symbol in the same way.

It is a simple process in which the perception of artefacts triggers the activation of different cognitive processes. Of course the primary perception is based on the physical characteristics of the objects, but a key role is played by the semantic perception based on previously acquired knowledge about the specific artefact (Martin 1998, p. 72). The latter is an assemblage of characteristics and attributes determining the artefact – with other words in our case it is not just about the observation of a single defined artefact but about the perception of the whole group of artefacts, about the understanding of human activities, about the recognition of symbolically codified identity and of the role of an individual in the society. And if the identities are results of activity and as well the means to self-activity (Yelvington 2002, p. 242), then they are created as a dynamic relation between the cultural determination of behaviour and the "*situational totalitarianism*". The first one can be observed in the frameworks of the traditional conception of an archaeological culture while the second one could be perceived as individual activities of specific formation arrangements of artefacts in a context. We can deduce that people create a more or less wilful concept of themselves as active participants in relations and proportions to more or less objective identities. They mediate this information through culturally constructed activities which include the formation of obligational relations between the included.

Even more complex are the connections between the deceased – when the artefacts are destroyed or respectively deposited in to the grave, the current of obligational relations which was based on the mediation of the artefact, is interrupted – terminated. The artefact is excluded from the circulation - with this act the status of deceased is created on a symbolical level. Louis Nebelsick pointed out that the clearly structured burial rite is actually a substitution of the chaotic effect of death with a clearly structured and recognizable activity – the rite of transition of the deceased from the structured world of the living in to the imaginary community of the dead is ending with a violent act of cremation (Nebelsick 2000, p. 167). As if cremation would be the negation of the structured world of the living – remains of the pyre, the deceased and the destroyed grave goods become one – even if they are together dumped into a pit or scattered on the surface and around the tomb.

Creating a major problem with the observation of the ritual is the fact that not only the small artefacts, for which we could assume that they would become destroyed or even partly lost, were discovered incomplete, but also the large and precious artefacts were discovered in a fragmented state. Their damage and deposition of only selected parts could be ascribed only to the intentional acting of the mourners. In cases where the artefacts were intentionally disassembled in to their recognizable constitutional parts, we have to observe them as symbols in the frameworks of cognitive criteria, the artefacts don't stand for themselves but they symbolize some larger material entities which had consecutively a social or ritual value.

In the case of the grave 4 from Vičja luka it is worth pointing out the profiled bronze ring and the Italic belt hook. The profiled bronze ring activates the process of recognition of a *sauroter*, a part of the *doryos*, a part of the hoplite armament, a symbol of a specific style of combat, a symbol of equality of warriors, a symbol of the distant Macedonian or respectively Greek cultural area ... While the broken-of Italic belt hook activates the recognition of the Italic belt, a symbol of the social elite, a symbol of freedom, a symbol of the distant Italic cultural area ... But the artefacts were ritually destroyed; the whole was taken to pieces and deposited together with the socially constructed community of the dead while some parts remained included in to the realm of the living. Sometimes it seems as if the precious objects, the symbols of power, would need a savage negation and a violent process of transformation before they could be deposited (Nebelsick 2000, p. 165-166). And through fragmentation and division of parts the world of the deceased remains connected to the world of the living.

It becomes clear that there exist in the Bronze and Iron Age aristocracies parallel with the process of fragmentation and division another social practice. Preservation and as part of the burial rite the later deposition of old artefacts (Guggisberg 2004, p. 187) was a practice observable also in the grave inventories from Vičja luka – it seems as if the relations with the ancestors were codified with the collections of fragmented symbolic artefacts preserved from burials. Artefacts which would in a specific moment later in time be returned into the tomb with another member of the family – as in the case of Vičja luka also the family tombs consolidated the connections between the ancestors and descendants and on an demonstrative level manifested the maintenance of the status and the conveyance of the political and moral authority in the community.

Consequently, the fragmentation and destruction of artefacts in the process of sacrifice and deposition does not present the destruction of luxurious equipment with an economic and symbolic value, but a metaphorical demonstration of the termination of the status of the deceased in this world and the transition of a part of artefacts which, metonymically *pars pro toto*, illustrate his status in the afterlife. It was a material removal of the deceased from this world, a cancellation of his status here and the translation, the creation of his status in another form of existence. It was a process where the living would control the status of sojourn of the deceased – process observable through the act of fragmentation.

The living noblemen fragment their artefacts which are symbols of their status and divide them between the living and with the deceased. In this way a part of the personal attire of the deceased remains in possession of his living relatives – all this to confirm on a symbolical level the continuity of their status in the society. They create networks of interlaced connections based on obligational relations deriving from these transactions. It is on the base of semantic recognition that in the eye of the beholder the broken-of Italic belt hook, a broken fibula or a clearly recognizable helmet becomes the *status symbol* of the owner creating an assemblage reflecting a *World* in a small place. And it is through the known

history of the artefacts owned, their history of circulation and fragmentation that they become the links between objects, people and places creating the enchainment between them. These objects with their mnemonic, metaphorical and metonymic references turn into holders of information about the social connections of the owner, their relational identities and their social status or statuses of their ancestors and antecessors in the region.

These are situations which on a symbolical level with the pretentious rhetoric of the so popular and opulent prehistoric vocabulary of *pars pro toto* demonstrate how the peak of the social aristocracy inhabiting the eastern Adriatic coast perceived their role in the processes of the cultural and economic contacts between the eastern and western coast of the Adriatic, between the Aegean and the Alpine area, and how they kept themselves and their ancestors living on the crossroads of worlds in the memory as active and creative participants of these relations.^[1]

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