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CENTRAL BALKANS BETWEEN THE GREEK AND CELTIC WORLD: CASE STUDY KALE-KRŠEVICA

• **ABSTRACT:** Archaeological investigations at the site Kale in Krševica near Bujanovac (southeast Serbia) have revealed in the course of excavations conducted from 2001 to 2005 that it is a unique site in the Južna Morava valley where the significant remains of two civilizations – Greek and Celtic – have been encountered. The most massive layers with buildings, ramparts and other structures as well as abundant finds of imported and local pottery made after Greek models date from the fourth and the first half of the third century BC. Such organized settlement as a single urban centre within wide territory could have attracted the attention of antique writers and as possible identification are quoted the data of Strabo who mentions ‘ancient city’ and Damastium.

Later horizon yielded pottery characteristic of the Late La Tène production in the territory of Scordisci and of local shapes from the neighbouring areas. Remains of fortification at the acropolis turned out to be in the second / first century BC important stronghold used by the Scordisci and other barbarians in their plundering campaigns against the Romans in Macedonia as is witnessed in the antique sources.

Thanks to the initiative of Prof. Garašanin and Prof. Benac within the project of investigation of hillfort settlements in the Vranje-Bujanovac and Preševo valley, site survey and test trench excavations had been undertaken between 1976 and 1978. I worked there in this region for the first time and I visited Kale in Krševica in the autumn of 1977 when I wanted to convince myself in Professor’s words ‘nous nous trouvons cette fois réellement en présence d’un site urbain bien défini’ (Garašanin 1975, 118). Many years later the results of investigation at Krševica confirmed his words. He could not, however, assume how important would be the remains of Greek civilization at this site in the middle of the Balkans and even less that abandoned acropolis could have been used as the Celtic stronghold.

Excavations at Krševica started already in 1966 but after some unsuccessful attempts they were not resumed until 2001 (Mikulčić, Jovanović 1968). For the five following years it became obvious that the settlement with an

acropolis and *suburbium* covered around four hectares and until these days we investigated *ca* 1500 square meters.¹ Kale (Turkish term for fortification) is situated at a well-selected spot where slopes of the Rujen mountain descend towards the Vranje basin and Južna Morava valley. This exceptional strategic position had been used in the Late Bronze and Early Iron ages but the settlement with acropolis was established at the turn of the fifth to the fourth century BC and it existed until the first half or the middle of the third century BC (Popović et al. 2004; Popović 2005; 2005b).

The plateau is surrounded from three sides by steep slopes while easily accessible side was protected by wide and deep trench with prominent earthen barrow. The plateau with acropolis was in its north-western side protected by a natural ridge, which in the lower segments continues into 2.80 m thick rampart. According to the most recent results, the rampart followed the edge of the plateau and then descended along the north-eastern slope. It is considerably damaged since local inhabitants, like in other sectors of the site, were for many years taking out the stone for their building activities. Moreover, the entire elevation was made of sandstone and there is no stone in the immediate vicinity. Plateau where the excavations were conducted since 2001 until today covers the area of approximately 85 x 40 m, so the acropolis is so far the best investigated segment of the settlement. An intense building activity left here the deepest marks. The entire plateau is covered with remains of structures and abundant archaeological material within layers which are about two meters thick. The most reliable stratigraphic situation was encountered in the central area of the acropolis, where we discovered a complex of build-

¹ Illustrations: field documentation M. Jeremić, A. Đorđević, N. Radojčić, P. Popović; material N. Borić.



Fig. 1 Kale Krševica, aerial photograph from SW, 2003

ings with walls deeply dug into the earlier layers. From the earliest level date the remains of a structure with wall and fragments of Attic pottery from the late fifth and the first decades of the fourth century. However, it is difficult to say anything more precisely about the first habitation horizon, as we reached the virgin soil level only in the summer of 2005. We have more information for the upper layers thanks to the structures in one segment of this complex that were reliably stratified within three building phases. First two phases relate to two superimposed house floors with circular altars made of well-burned earth. From the third phase dates the building with walls traversing these earlier structures (Fig. 2). Sun-dried bricks were used as main building material in all three phases but in comparison with only small amount of stone in the foundation zones of the earlier structures the buildings of the third phase had solid stone foundations, which supported roof structure covered with large-size tiles (Popović 2005, 28–33).

Northern building, by all appearances, consisted initially of a single room, square in plan (7 x 7 m), only two sides of which have been preserved. In the process of

construction of this building, a column base and a corner limestone block, which could originate from some representative building, were used (figs 3–4). Walls enclosing an asymmetrical area with one larger and one smaller room of rhomboid shape were subsequently added. This building is connected with much larger structure of rectangular plan that was divided by a partition wall into two uneven rooms, the total area of which is over 250 square meters (13.5 x 19 m). It is identified as the eastern building and it extends from the central area to the edge of the plateau facing the valley of the Krševica river. Due to the configuration of the terrain, it has deep foundations on one side, but nearer to the slope it is considerably damaged or almost entirely devastated (figs 3,4 13; Popović 2005, 34–36). Within the zone of the northern building, which is completely investigated, we discovered archaeological material dating from the beginning of the fourth century BC to roughly the first half of the third century BC. Eastern building has been only partially investigated and material dates from the Hellenistic period.

According to all available data, considerable segment of the settlement had not been on the acropolis but



Fig. 2 Acropolis, building phases, 2004

on the slopes facing to the northeast. They are now under dense vegetation but according to the information obtained from local inhabitants, many chance finds, geophysical investigations and finally limited test trenching it was possible to conclude that these were the structures located on the terraces (Popović 2005, 37 ff). Descending gradually from the acropolis down the slope, we reach the bottom of the site in the immediate vicinity of the river where large-scale excavations were conducted in more recent time (Popović 2005, 38 ff). This entire area was considered to have been the *suburbium* ending in the river valley but the new results achieved in the autumn of 2005 exceeded all our expectations.

At the very bottom of the site, at the depth of over two meters, was discovered a stone-paved platform, which is in the south section, towards the village, damaged along its entire length while on the other side is a face of massive rampart made of carefully dressed stone blocks of large size (Figs 5, 6). From the platform and up the steep slope run two diverging ramparts creating some kind of funnel bordered with ashlar. To the south of the platform at the depth of over 2.5 m breaks out



Fig. 3 Acropolis, room of the northern building with earlier layers, 2005

Fig. 4 Acropolis, segments of northern and eastern buildings, 2005



the stream of water that is flooding the lowest parts of the site. It comes from a spring which could be located somewhere above the rampart. Platform does not end at this level but it continues over two steps downwards towards the present-day bed of the Krševica river. According to the words of the eldest locals, the river was once flowing closer to the village and under the slope, so the damaged platforms could possibly be the remains of an embankment damaged by the river erosion. Thus this segment could have protected structures situated downstream, i.e. to the north of the rampart. Along the vertically cut edge of sandstone at one side and the line of ashlar at the other, a structure of approximately rectangular plan was additionally built. It consisted of one room while the other one, like some kind of porch, was open to the river (figs 6, 7). Large amount of material particularly tableware of fine fabric, including plates, skyphoi, kantharoi, jugs or fragments of amphorae or hydriae dating from the fourth / third century BC, was found in this area (figs 8.6; 9–11).

These brief pieces of information from the recent excavations in the Krševica river valley should be understood



Fig. 5 Suburbium, rampart segment, 2003



Fig. 6 Suburbium, platforms with ramparts and building, 2005



Fig. 7 Suburbium, platforms with ramparts and building, 2005

as first impressions, as material has not been studied yet and the entire complex covers the large area boundaries of which could not be traced on either side. Ramparts related to the water raise up the slope and could have been the elements joining the nearest upper terrace and structures at the bottom; near the bottom of the south profile is visible a layer indicating the river bed and consequently

some kind of embankment; the edges of the platforms extending towards the river could easily be determined after the removal of river deposits, whereas the structures and layers downstream of the rampart clearly indicate that the settlement extended further to the north. In this situation if we wish to solve any of these problems the only solution can be provided by further excavations.



Fig. 8 Imported Attic pottery from the acropolis (1-5) and suburbium (6), fourth century BC (scale 1:1- 1, 2, 4, 5; 1:2 2, 6)



Fig. 9 Suburbium, skyphos, fourth / third century BC (scale 1:2)



Fig. 10 Suburbium, south, fourth / third century BC (scale 1:2)



Fig. 11 Suburbium, plate with stamp E (scale 1:3)



Fig. 12 Local pottery, fourth–third century BC

Large quantity of archaeological material, pottery in particular, was discovered during investigations at Krševica so it will take considerable time to study this material and present it in an adequate way. Imported vessels, first of all the Attic pottery, makes smaller percentage of this material but it has irreplaceable role for chronological and cultural attribution of this site. These finds are already known to a certain degree and include standard Greek shapes often decorated with diverse motifs. The most frequently found are fragments of bowls, skyphoi, St Valentine vases, kantharoi, kraters and the like but many of these fragments of luxurious pottery are difficult to ascribe with certainty to the distinct shapes (Krstić 2005). Considering their main characteristics, group of these vessels dates from the fourth century BC and another group belongs to the Hellenistic production, which is less easily determinable from the chronological point of view (figs 8–10). This is also one of the main reasons why the end of life in this settlement

is rather roughly dated in the first half or middle of the third century BC (Popović 2005, 40 ff).

Fragments of amphorae were discovered throughout the entire area and permanent new finds do not permit more precise analysis of this material. The only specimens with stamps originate from Thasos and it is very probable that most of these vessels came from the Thasos workshops, though Mende and other centres in the North Aegean played considerable part in the distribution of these products (Popović 2005, 41).

The most part of the discovered material is made up of local vessels produced after Greek models like the pottery of Paeonia or Thrace (Antić, Babić 2005). Considerable amount and diverse repertoire of shapes could be a good indicator of large concentration of population and the level of standard of the inhabitants (Fig. 12). However, I want to mention here just one fact, which could be of wider importance for this settlement. It is a stamp encountered on various types of vessels and recorded



Fig. 13 Acropolis, central plateau with complex of buildings, 2003

so far in over a dozen instances. The stamp consists of lunar letter E (epsilon) always created in the same way and impressed in soft clay before firing (Fig. 11). For the time being there is enough reasons for the assumption that anonymous settlement by the Krševica river satisfied its needs from the local pottery workshop (Popović 2005, 42).

There is much smaller amount of the metal finds. When jewellery is concerned there are mostly hinged or Thracian fibulae, pins, earrings, glass beads and few finger rings. Worth mentioning is also an object found at the acropolis. It is the bronze die, which was by all appearances used for the of making boat-shaped fibulae of gold, silver or bronze foil (Popović 2005, 44, T. V.3). Presence of craftsmen at this place was not accidental and it speaks by itself what kind of settlement this was. Numismatic finds are relatively few. Discovered coins include a bronze piece of Philip II, silver drachmas of Alexander the Great, few bronze coins of Cassander

and Antigonos as well as a silver specimen of Pelagia. Fragments of bronze objects and plenty of corroded iron tools, nails, rivets and many small knives were discovered, but there were no weapons encountered at this site so far (Popović 2005, 43 ff).

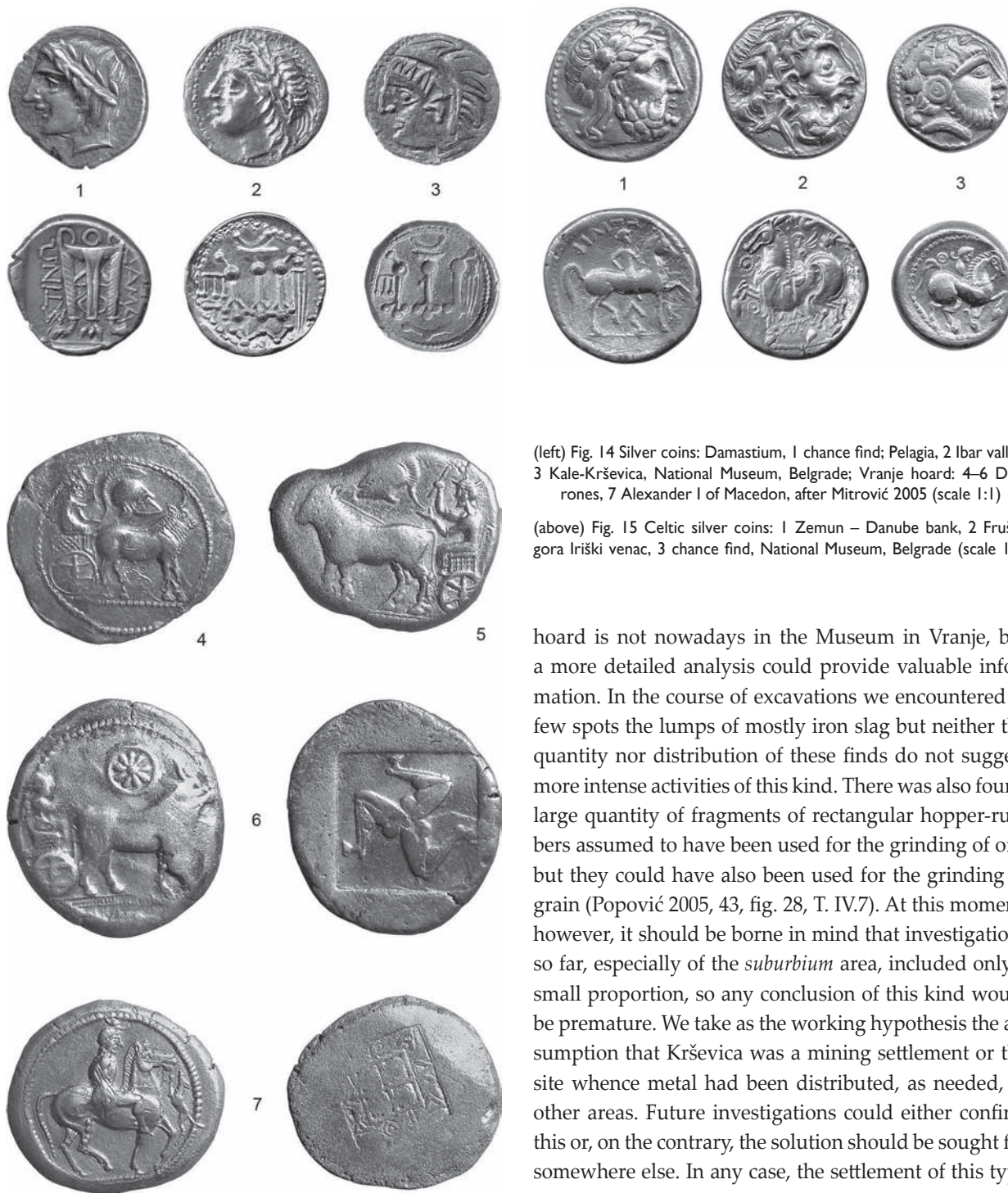
Kale in Krševica, according to the already achieved results, could be classified among the most important sites of the pre-Roman times in the central Balkans. Year after year, with the increasing of the investigated area, clearer and clearer contours of an urban settlement, established under very specific circumstances, become more apparent. The fact that it was situated rather far to the north and in barbarian surrounding, was not an obstacle for the establishing of the community with many characteristics of the Greek civilization in the Južna Morava valley. Buildings situated at the acropolis were of public character and we could expect here the tower (room with square plan), storehouse (eastern building) and shrine. Two structures with altars constructed at the

same spot, one on the top of the other confirm the continuity of the cult area in the immediate vicinity of this complex (Fig. 2). It is not impossible that some of the rooms of the northern building were used for the cult rituals in the final phase. *Suburbium* on the north-eastern slope ends in monumental ramparts, building and stone platforms that regulated the access to the Krševica river. It is obvious that these great building activities at the bottom were of particular importance for the functioning of the settlement in general. All this is accompanied by imported pottery, vine amphorae, jewellery and coins that arrived from the Aegean centres to the north along the commercial routes running through the valleys of the Vardar, Pčinja or Struma (Strymon) rivers.

Such organized settlement as a single urban centre within this area could have drawn attention and left certain traces in the antique sources. Strabo (VII, 5, 7) when speaking about the Dardanians mentioned the Galabrii in whose territory existed 'an ancient city'. Considering these territories as Dardanian, M. Garašanin brought his words into relation with our site ('site urbain de Krševica que nous aimerions identifier à la πόλις αρχαία "attribuée par Strabon aux Galabrii" see Garašanin 1991, 29). Expansion of the Dardanians in this area should not be expected before the end of the fourth century BC and F. Papazoglu observed, and with a reason, that it was more probable that this settlement initially had belonged to the Paeonians (Papazoglu 1988, 191, n. 67). In any case these entirely vague pieces of information could not solve these problems but such possibility should not be rejected as mentioning of an 'an ancient city' could be related to the regions around the Južna Morava as well. By the way, it should be mentioned that Krševica is placed without substantial evidence within the context of the well-known events of 175 BC, when the Bastarnae invaded the country of the Dardanians (Kale was identified as the camp of Bastarnae and Oraovica near Preševo as the Dardanian stronghold see Mirdita 1975, 206 f.).

Another information is well-known and it concerns Damastium, the mining town in Illyria mentioned only by Strabo on two occasions (VII, 7, 8; VIII, 6, 16). On the basis of this testimony, there were for a rather long time many attempts to locate more precisely the silver mines and the town, which was minting coins (Fig. 14.1). There is a comprehensive literature concerning this problem and I consider worth mentioning the fact that it has been assumed in recent times that Damastium should be looked for in the territory of Kosovo because of the rich silver deposits there (Ujes 2002). At the same time, it seems to be

forgotten that there are deposits of gold and silver ore of the metalogenetic zone Lece–Chalcidice extending from the Aegean coast and the Pangaeum mountain towards the Serbian-Bulgarian border (Gržetić, Jelenković 1995). An intense exploitation commenced in these regions at the end of the sixth century BC and resulted in the appearance of silver coins of substantial weight minted by local communities and dynasts. In subsequent periods these rich mines under the control of the state provided precious metal for the mints of Macedonian and Paeonian rulers (Hamond, Griffith, 1979, 69 ff; Petrova 1999, 93 ff). Perhaps Damastium should be looked for in that direction, since its coinage indicates close relationship with Olynthus and Chalcidice League and later with Paeonia (May 1939, vii). Precisely located finds of these coins are rare and they are mostly recorded in the area from the eastern part of FRY Macedonia towards the Morava valley, Kosovo and Metohija and western Bulgaria (Ujes 2002, 111 ff). One of the largest hoards of the Damastium coins was discovered in the valley of Kutinska river to the southeast of Niš and the only finds from archaeological excavations come from Pernik in western Bulgaria and from Krševica (Ujes 2002, 116; Jurukova 1981, 220, T. 1.2). The coin of Pelagia close to the coinage of Damastium was found at the Kale acropolis (Fig. 14.3; Popović 2005, 44, T. V.5; May 1939, 182 ff.). The largest hoard of coins so far, ascribed to the Derrones, Paeonian tribe inhabiting the areas between the Vardar and Struma rivers, particularly regions around Zletovo and Kratovo mines, was discovered in the periphery of Vranje in 2003 (Fig 14.4–7). Only 24 pieces of this rare currency are preserved for the Museum in Vranje, while one specimen is the issue of Alexander I (495–450). The analysis of this material has revealed that silver was most probably obtained by panning from the streams (Mitrović 2005). In this case it is quite possible that in the searching for the deposits of precious metals the panning was the initial stage and most easily available, and once discovered deposits were later intensely exploited by the using of mining shafts until the limits of profitability. The resources of this part of the Balkans were later exploited to such an extent, from the Romans to the Saxons, by the use of more modern methods that only the application of the most sophisticated technology could provide satisfactory results. It also relates to the already mentioned rich deposits around Kopaonik and in Kosovo. After all, in this territory, far in the Balkan interior, there is still no convincing evidence about the Greek presence and let alone the site that could be identified as Damastium.



(left) Fig. 14 Silver coins: Damastium, 1 chance find; Pelagia, 2 Ibar valley, 3 Kale-Krševica, National Museum, Belgrade; Vranje hoard: 4–6 Der-
rones, 7 Alexander I of Macedon, after Mitrović 2005 (scale 1:1)

(above) Fig. 15 Celtic silver coins: 1 Zemun – Danube bank, 2 Fruška
gora Iriški venac, 3 chance find, National Museum, Belgrade (scale 1:1)

Authors of the first excavations at Krševica claim that the site is situated in the ore-bearing region and explain the prosperity of this settlement as a consequence of the ore exploitation. Mention of small hoard of high quality cerussite, found by chance at the bottom of the site, certainly relates to the silver ore prepared for smelting (Mikulčić, Jovanović 1968, 371 ff). Unfortunately this

hoard is not nowadays in the Museum in Vranje, but a more detailed analysis could provide valuable information. In the course of excavations we encountered at few spots the lumps of mostly iron slag but neither the quantity nor distribution of these finds do not suggest more intense activities of this kind. There was also found large quantity of fragments of rectangular hopper-rubbers assumed to have been used for the grinding of ore, but they could have also been used for the grinding of grain (Popović 2005, 43, fig. 28, T. IV.7). At this moment, however, it should be borne in mind that investigations so far, especially of the *suburbium* area, included only a small proportion, so any conclusion of this kind would be premature. We take as the working hypothesis the assumption that Krševica was a mining settlement or the site whence metal had been distributed, as needed, to other areas. Future investigations could either confirm this or, on the contrary, the solution should be sought for somewhere else. In any case, the settlement of this type in the Južna Morava valley could hardly be explained for the time being as a commercial centre or a tribal centre of some local dynast.

Strabo (VIII, 6, 16) states that refugees from the Aegina island and colonists from the town of Mende during the Peloponnesian War founded the town Damastium in Illyria. If we assume that this valuable information concerns the settlement at Krševica it seems that it needs to be verified as much as this possibility should be rejected

on the basis of arguments. When Illyria is concerned, this statement should not be taken too seriously, since the authors that Strabo used did not know much about these parts of the Balkans, and the Južna Morava valley is in the region dividing Illyria from Thrace. Taken in general, the settlement at Krševica leaves a strong impression at every step, since strong Greek influence could be felt in almost every aspect. To put it briefly, it could be concluded that urban structure, luxurious goods, coins and complete way of life at this place were so different in comparison with neighbouring regions that only Greek immigrants could have caused such drastic cultural changes. If instead of the stamp E letter Δ was impressed on the vessels from Krševica we will be closer to the solution, but the question of Damastium is to remain open for some more time.

From the fifth century BC gradual hellenization and urbanization of the Thracian and Paeonian regions extends more and more to the north and thanks to the elaborate networks of communications, direct and indirect Greek influences reached as far as the Južna Morava valley (Popov 2002, 45 ff; Petrova 1999, 75 ff). The remains of a fortified settlement where above the horizons of the Early Iron Age was found the fifth / fourth-century BC Attic pottery, were discovered at the site Kacipup in Oraovica near Preševo. Besides fragments of the imported vessels, local pottery produced after Greek models similar to the pottery from Krševica was also found. These test trench excavations revealed that this settlement existed in the Hellenistic period as well, and that the life at this site came to an end in the Late La Tène period (Vukmanović, Popović 1982, 196 ff; Popović 2003, 198 ff). Site Kale, which we discuss above, is situated about thirty kilometers to the northeast in the vicinity of the confluence of the Krševica river and the Južna Morava. Towards the Grdelica gorge and further to the north, Greek or hellenized pottery was encountered only sporadically (Đorđević-Bogdanović 1994). In the archaeological literature concerning these parts of the Balkans there are not many data about the end of the Early Iron Age and only historical events in a dramatic way bring the inhabitants of the Morava valley in contact with the Celtic conquerors.

Having occupied large parts of the Carpathian basin, the Celts populated from the end of the fourth century BC the areas around the Sava and the Danube. Pannonia and the Danube basin became the starting points whence troops of the belligerent Celts overflowed parts of the Bal-

kans and in 279 BC the storm of atrocious warriors poured into Macedonia and Greece and attacked famous shrine in Delphi (Papazoglou 1978, 272 ff). One of the main routes was the Morava valley and settlement at Krševica was situated at such a place that it could have hardly remained unnoticed. It could be expected that these events brought to the end life at Kale but the investigations so far could not confirm such an outcome. This certainly is an interesting question, since the Celtic invasion of Greece is well-known from the antique sources but archaeologically it did not leave any convincing traces. As it is known, groups of the Celts after heavy defeat near Delphi retreated along the same routes and 'a band of them settled near the confluence of the Danube and Save and called themselves Scordisci' (Papazoglou 1978, 274 ff.).

In the ensuing period, the Scordisci dominated the areas around main communications of the south-eastern Europe and were crucial political factor until they lost their independence in the end of the first century BC. We do not know much about their relationship with the Hellenistic world in the third / second century BC and it is probable that they were engaged as mercenaries in the armies of Macedonian rulers. Something that was a direct consequence of the Greek influence on the Scordisci is the introduction of money. From the mid-third century BC they minted tetradrachmae after popular issues of Philip II of Macedon with representation of Zeus on the obverse and horseman on the reverse and inscription ΦΙΛΙΠΠΙΟΥ. They minted coins inspired by these pieces but, inclined to schematization, they introduced certain new details close to the Celtic iconography, achieving thus entirely distinct visual appearance (Fig. 15). Although in the course of time because of the stylistic changes they drifted away from the original models, they still maintained some essential characteristics of the earlier idea until the cessation of minting in the first century BC (Popović 1987). However, something that brought closer the Scordisci and other Balkan tribes to the Hellenistic regions in the south was the expansive policy of Rome in the Balkans.

After the fall of Macedonia (168) and establishing of the province (148) the situation changed radically. In the ensuing decades followed frequent plundering campaigns when Scordisci as one of main organizers took part in this actions together with other Balkan barbarians. In these actions they penetrated deeply towards the south raging the rich areas and Romans frequently had problems to resist the aggressive and more numerous enemy. These conflicts continued with varying suc-

cess until the first decades of the first century BC. When Scordisci with Maedi and Dardanians in one attack plundered and burnt down the shrine in Delphi, it provoked the decisive Roman reaction. Around 84 BC Roman commander Cornelius Scipio Asiagenes managed to defeat the Scordisci severely and to expel them to the north towards the Danube and their home territories. We are informed about these events from the antique sources but certain data we are now able to compare and supplement to some extent thanks to the results of investigations at Krševica (Papazoglou 1978, 284 ff; Popović 2005a).

At the beginning of the excavations at the acropolis, we were surprised by the increasing quantity of La Tène pottery recorded in the surface layers considerably damaged by soil cultivation. It was generally concentrated in the south-western section of the plateau but with the extension of works it turned out that the largest quantity of material was discovered in the pits in the central area, in the vicinity of and within the complex with buildings. These pits were dug into earlier layers and they all have some specific characteristics. They were mostly filled with stone, fragments of daub, bricks and fragments of vessels, which we expect to be reconstructed completely. Six pits have been investigated so far and because of large quantity this material is still mostly in the hands of conservators. Generally speaking, the pottery shapes could be ascribed to few basic categories. Considerable amount consists of vessels characteristic for the Late La Tène production from the territory of Scordisci, particularly from the region around the Sava and the Danube. It is worth mentioning that besides standard forms, like 'S' shaped bowls, pseudo-kantharoi and the like, there are specimens revealing conspicuous Hellenistic influence – like two-handled high-footed vessel of the kantharos type with burnished ornament, deep bowls inspired by the 'Megarian' cups or the vessel with lid resembling *lekanis* (Fig. 16.1–3). It is obvious that their stay in the south had consequences also when pottery is concerned. Coarse pottery mostly includes pots with broomstroke ornament, which is frequent among the Scordisci as well as among the Dacians but 'Dacian' cups encountered in the layers and in the pits very clearly suggest their origin (Fig. 16.4). Other vessels of coarse fabric, often of large size are of simple and chiefly functional shapes and could date from the final phases of the Early Iron Age as such vessels could stay in use for a very long time without any essential changes (Fig. 17). Hellenistic pottery is for the time being relatively rare in these pits. Sin-

gle metal find from this horizon is just the fragmented a Middle La Tène fibula made of iron wire. By all appearances, the pits were of cult character and according to the main characteristics of the finds they date from the final decades of the second and the beginning of the first century (Popović 2005a).

On the basis of this material we can draw few interesting conclusions. Vessels of kantharoi type with elbow-shaped handles are similar to the specimen from grave 1 from Ajmana near Kladovo (Fig. 17; Stalio 1986, fig. 41; Popović 1991, fig 5.3). This necropolis, like other necropolises discovered in the 1980s in the area downstream the Iron Gates, provided enough arguments to locate Strabo's Lesser Scordisci in the areas around the Danube including the neighboring regions of eastern Serbia and Oltenia (Popović 1991, 196 ff; 1994, 19 ff). Grave associations from the necropolises Ajmana, Konopište or Vajuga-Pesak confirm close relations of the Scordisci and Dacians and something similar could be concluded considering the finds discovered at the acropolis in Krševica. Frontinus (II, 4, 3) also confirms that they together took the actions against the Romans. It is absolutely possible that just the Lesser Scordisci and Dacians during their stay in the Južna Morava valley left numerous traces of their presence at the Kale plateau (Popović 2005a).

Acropolis in Krševica because of its exceptional position with the remains of fortification had become an important stronghold used by barbarians for their campaigns toward the Vardar valley and Macedonia. Judging by the finds from this site, the diverse coarse pottery could have belonged to Dardanians, Triballi or the neighbouring Thracians. Thus, the impression is that Balkan barbarians, having certain joint interests, established some kind of 'anti-Roman coalition' and for decades jeopardized Roman territories. Krševica was not the only site of this kind, since similar La Tène finds have been discovered at the site Kacipup in Oraovica, also a strategic point on the edge of the Preševo basin (Vukmanović, Popović 1982, 201, T. V. 1–2; IX. 1–5). More recent site survey and small-scale excavations revealed that La Tène material is present at some other sites and all this indicate that Scordisci dominated the Južna Morava valley from the second half of the 2nd century. Only now it becomes clear how much the Romans were permanently endangered by the enemies in their immediate neighborhood. The consequence was a decisive intervention and around 84 BC Scipio Asiagenes expelled the Scordisci far from the Roman frontiers. It



Fig. 16 La Tène pottery, second / first century BC



Fig. 17 La Tène pottery from pit I/2001, second / first century BC.

could be assumed on the basis of the archaeological data that this clash could have happened somewhere in upper course of the Južna Morava river, most probably in Vranje-Bujanovac or Preševo basin. At that time Scordisci abandoned also their strongholds Krševica

and Kacipup and at these sites life has not been resumed (Popović 2005a).

Investigations at Krševica revealed that a prosperous urban settlement was established next to the Krševica

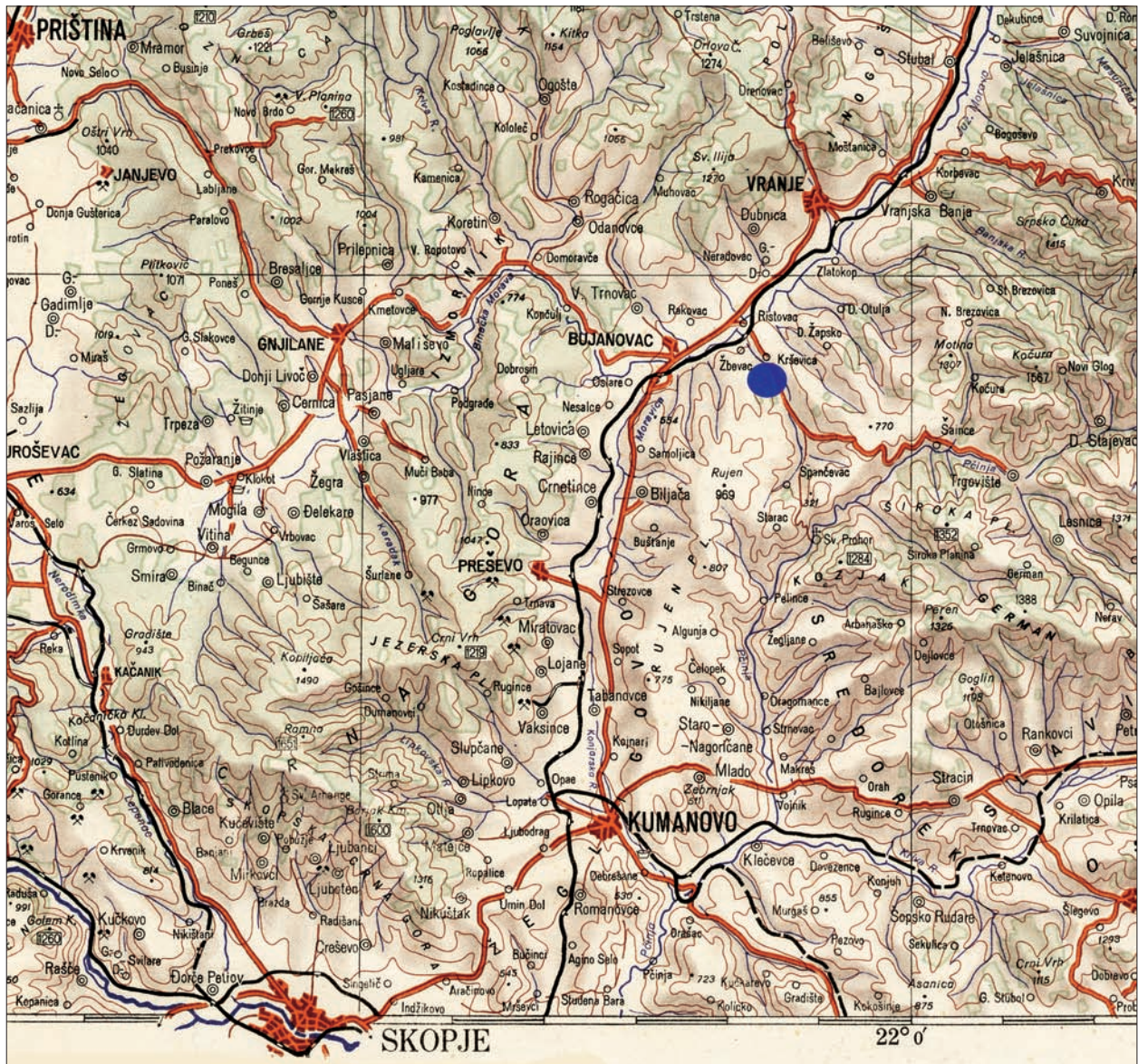


Fig. 18 Map

river and in the vicinity of the Južna Morava along the one of the most important routes of the southeast Europe and surrounded by rich natural resources. This settlement rather far away from the civilized regions existed for over hundred years. Through Paeonia and Thrace, direct or indirect influences made their way northward and in this process of hellenization the farthest point showing such distinct Greek characteristics was Kale in Krševica. Excavations conducted in last few years rather opened up some crucial questions than it was possible to reach more comprehensive answers. For instance the question of ethnic origin of population was asked from the beginning but archaeological finds do not offer

enough evidence to identify the people of Krševica as Paeonians, Agrianes, possibly Dardanians or Thracians. After all, the investigations are still in progress and there is no room for numerous assumptions and premature conclusions as we investigated so far only the smaller segment of the site, so new surprises could be expected in the course of future investigations.

Krševica and Kacipup were the southernmost strongholds held by the Scordisci. They pertain to an episode of their history when they finally did not achieve glory but information of antique writers about their destruction and retreat on the Danube islands are exaggerated (Papazoglou 1978, 323ff.). Already to the north of Grdel-

ica gorge, in the vicinity of Leskovac and Niš towards the Velika Morava there are the sites with Late La Tène pottery indicating that Scordisci occupied these parts of the central Balkans until the arrival of the Romans.

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