

# FOLIA ARCHAEOLOGICA BALKANICA

## IV

*In honorem professoris  
Viri clarissimi ac doctissimi  
Viktor Lilčić Adams*

FAB vol. IV

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Burton James Stone



Ordanče PETROV

## A NEWLY DISCOVERED EARLY CHRISTIAN BARREL-VAULTED TOMB IN DEMIR KAPIJA

UDK: 726.821(497.714)“653”

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**Abstract:** *This paper concerns a newly discovered barrel-vaulted tomb in the site of Kale-Strezov Grad the village of Čelevec. This archaeological find simply confirms the idea about the availability of this type of sepulchral monuments on the territory of the Republic of Macedonia, which has twice been the topic of interest of professor Lilčić-Adams. The tomb was open and raided in the Middle Ages or earlier and it started to be reused in the 13th-14th century. According to the typological characteristics of the tomb form and the stylistic characterisations of the painted decoration which is preserved in the interior, the building of the tomb is dated from the 6<sup>th</sup> century.*

**Key words:** barrel-vaulted tomb, painting, Early Christianity, Demir Kapija, Prosek, Middle Ages

The Late Antiquity was a period of changes that would essentially affect all aspects of life. The mass conversion to Christianity would change the belief in the afterlife, too. As a result, the idea of Heaven as a place abounding with material earthly riches and luxuries (represented through the Elysian Fields) was transformed and turned into a perception of the Christian Heaven of an afterlife, the main goal of which was to save the souls of the righteous.<sup>1</sup> The new religion reflects the essential belief that the grave is a place where the dead sleep until the Last Judgment, when it is expected for the dead to resurrect; the righteous will inhabit the Kingdom of Heaven and the human souls will be saved.<sup>2</sup>

Starting with the 4<sup>th</sup> and lasting until the 6<sup>th</sup> century, the Late Antiquity necropoleis clearly show the changes brought about by the Christian religion in terms of burial rites, grave forms, goods and burial images and symbols. The barrel-vaulted tombs represent a separate grave form, intended for the rich civil population, as well as for the church dignitaries, which were especially common on the territory

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<sup>1</sup> E. Kourkoutidou-Nicolaidou, 1997, 128.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, 130.

of the prefecture of Illyricum. These grave forms have various typological variations, and are quite often painted with Christian motifs and symbols. In the course of the 2017 research, one such tomb was unearthed on the site of Kale-Strezov Grad, near the village of Čelevec in Demir Kapija. This paper is centered on the abovementioned tomb.

### *Place of Discovery*

The archaeological site of Kale-Strezov Grad, village of Čelevec is located on the left bank of the Vardar River, in the Demir Kapija gorge (fig. 1). The location is firmly protected on the three sides with a meander that is formed here by the Vardar River, as well as the rocky massive called *Kamenot* (the stone) which, along with the canyon



**Fig. 1** Panoramic view of the Archaeological Site Kale - Strezov Grad, village Čelevec, Demir Kapija

of the river of Čelevec, protects this position from penetrations from the north along the valley of the Vardar River through the Middle Povardarie.<sup>5</sup> Mutafčiev<sup>4</sup> located the medieval town of Prosek in Demir Kapija at the very beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century without providing an exact location of its fortress. During the upcoming period, the researchers agreed with this identification of the space, all the while try-

ing to precisely locate the position of the settlement and the fortress of Prosek.<sup>5</sup> According to the latest archaeological research<sup>6</sup> taking place on the site of Kale - Strezov Grad, the village of Čelevec, it seems that the premise of I. Mikulčić is the most precise one. He located Medieval Prosek on this site and identified it as the largest early Byzantine and Medieval fortress in this region.<sup>7</sup> This theory is buttressed by the description provided by the contemporary of the Prosek-related events, the Byzantine chronicler Niketas Choniates.<sup>8</sup> The archaeological excavations in this

<sup>5</sup> C.f. The location of the fortresses along the Demir Kapija gorge can be explored in the works of Viktor Lilčić: В. Лилчиќ, 2008, 2-26.

<sup>4</sup> П. Мутафчиев, 1925, 114-120.

<sup>5</sup> The different presumptions may be found in: Т. Томовски, 1999, 198-206; В. Aleksova, 1966; В. Aleksova, 1997, 245-246.

<sup>6</sup> О. Петров, 2018, 135-141; Р. Михајловски и Петров, О., 2017, 227-231.

<sup>7</sup> И. Микулчиќ, 1988-1989, 65-87; I. Mikulčić, 2002, 331-336, kat. 262-267; Н. Чаусидис, 1987, 171-196; Г. Микулчиќ, 1987, 177-194, kat. бр. 53.

<sup>8</sup> Chon. *Hist.*

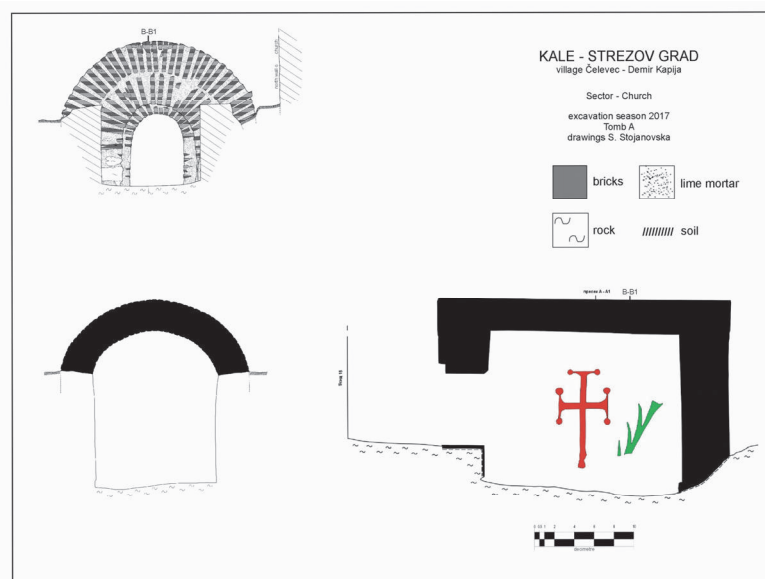
area started in 2015 and are still ongoing. During the excavation on the northern plateau, which is located in front of the first defense line of the fortress, a church with at least five phases of building was unearthed, accompanied by a necropolis. The tomb is attached to the church on its northern side (fig. 2).



Fig. 2 Orthophoto of the excavated area

### *Architectural Analysis and Analogies*

The tomb is barrel-vaulted with a rectangular foundation and the external length of the tomb chamber amounts to 2.85m, while the total length along with the



Pl. I.



entrance amounts to 4.45 m. The internal dimensions of the chamber are 1.87 x 1.14-1.16 m. The total internal height of the tomb is 1.44 meters. It is oriented towards the west-east with an entrance in the form of a shaft on the west side. The entrance is connected through a vaulted opening in the western wall of the tomb with the tomb chamber and its dimensions amount to 0.97-1.03 x 0.80-0.94 m (Pl. I). The shaft was sealed with a horizontally placed massive slab with dimensions of 1.30 x 0.87 x 0.10 m (fig. 3). The vaulted opening, with a width of 0.5 m and a height of 0.7 m was additionally sealed with a thin vertical stone slab (fig. 4). The floor is located at 0.3 m and is dug-in under the threshold of the tomb entrance (fig. 5). The northern and eastern wall were built of stones of irregular shape, and the southern wall was cut into living rock. The western wall of the tomb was also cut into the rock until the threshold level, and a wall of fired bricks was erected above it. The roof of the tomb in the form of a barrel vault was made of 29 rows of fired bricks with dimensions 0.40-0.45 x 0.3 x 0.04-0.05 m. The floor was made of the partially leveled rock under the grave, paved with bricks of various dimensions. The floor was almost completely damaged during the raids and the reiterative use of the tomb. Only three intact bricks were preserved, one of which is in the northeastern edge and two are near the northern wall (fig. 6). The imprint of the pavement bricks can be noticed on each of the walls, namely on the section where the mortar cladding ends. One of the preserved bricks is with dimensions 0.26 x 0.17 m, whereas another one has a width of 0.31 m; they are decorated with embossed traces made with fingers before the firing. White lime mortar was used as a binder during the construction process. The external part of the roof was plastered, whereas there was no plaster on the inside, because it probably fell off. The internal walls have been coated with white lime mortar which served as a foundation for a painted decoration, the remains of which were preserved on the northern, southern and eastern wall. The decoration on the southern and western wall was only slightly visible, whereas it was best preserved on the northern wall. A Latin cross was painted in the central area, at the top of this wall,



**Fig. 3** Tomb A closed with the stone slabs, before the excavating

ring the raids and the reiterative use of the tomb. Only three intact bricks were preserved, one of which is in the northeastern edge and two are near the northern wall (fig. 6). The imprint of the pavement bricks can be noticed on each of the walls, namely on the section where the mortar cladding ends. One of the preserved bricks is with dimensions 0.26 x 0.17 m, whereas another one has a width of 0.31 m; they are decorated with embossed traces made with fingers before the firing. White lime mortar was used as a binder during the construction process. The external part of the roof was plastered, whereas there was no plaster on the inside, because it probably fell off. The internal walls have been coated with white lime mortar which served as a foundation for a painted decoration, the remains of which were preserved on the northern, southern and eastern wall. The decoration on the southern and western wall was only slightly visible, whereas it was best preserved on the northern wall. A Latin cross was painted in the central area, at the top of this wall,



**Fig. 4** The Entrance to the Tomb A



**Fig. 5** The Inside of the Tomb A and the entrance on the west wall of the Tomb A



**Fig. 6** Painting decoration on the north wall of the Tomb A



in intense red and decorated with droplets or pearls on each of the sides. The cross was flanked with motifs of vegetation on the left and the right side painted in dark olive green. The total preserved height of the cross amounts to 0.69 m, whereas the width amounts to 0.36 m (fig. 7). It may be sensed that an identical motif was painted on the southern wall as well, whereas only a Latin cross was visible on the eastern one, but we cannot for sure confirm the existence of a floral decoration.



Fig. 7 Remains of the paved floor along the north wall of the Tomb A

The tomb was most probably raided in the Medieval Ages or earlier, with its interior side being fully cleared up. The paved floor made of bricks was dismantled and removed.

#### *Typological Attributes (Characteristics)*

According to the typological specifics, the tomb belongs to barrel-vaulted tombs. This type of tombs was quite common between the 4<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> century. They are especially common on the eastern and western necropoleis in Thessaloniki,<sup>9</sup> the necropolis Jagodin Mala in Niš,<sup>10</sup> and a large number of these were unearthed under the church of Saint Sophia in Sophia.<sup>11</sup>

At least 58 barrel-vaulted tombs have so far been discovered on the territory of the Republic of Macedonia dated from the early Christian period (map 1). This number is inconclusive, taking into consideration the fact that only a few of them were

<sup>9</sup> Е. МАРКН, 2006.; E. Kourkoutidou-Nicolaidou, 1997, 128-142.

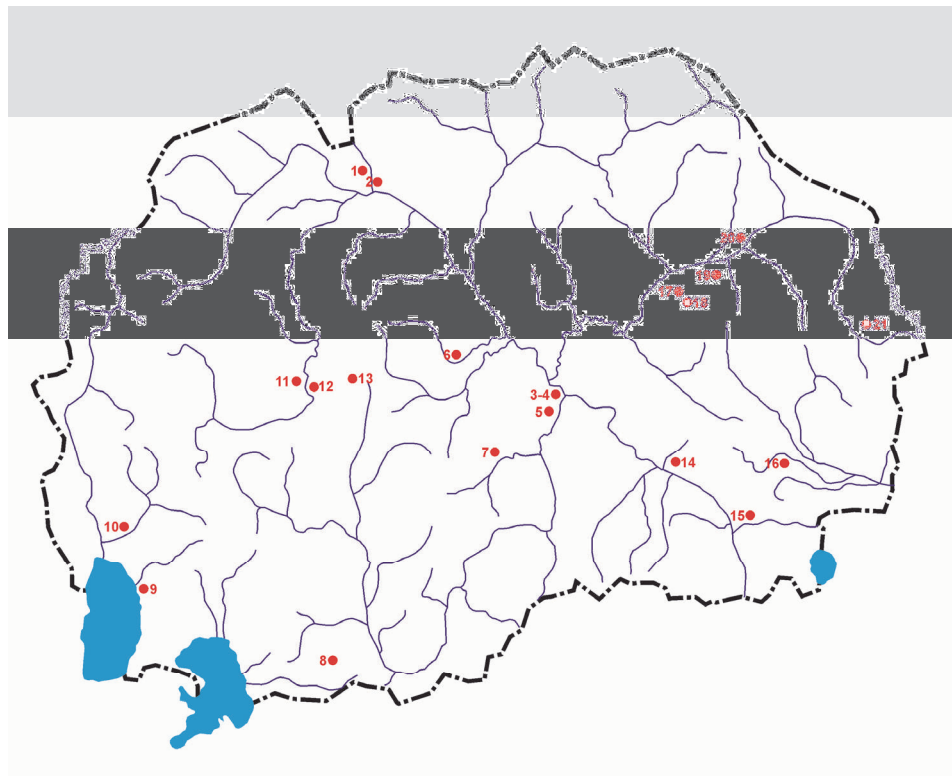
<sup>10</sup> L. Zotović, 1961, 171-175.; L. Mirković, 1956, 85-100.; *Late Antique necropolis Jagodin mala (catalogue from exhibition)*, 2014.

<sup>11</sup> Б. Филов, 1913, 61-69.



adequately published. V. Lilčić-Adams is the only researcher who managed to map them twice.<sup>12</sup> This situation makes it difficult to make further and deep typological analysis of the variations of these grave forms on our territory.

The closest analogy to the tomb A from Kale – Strezov Grad, according to the typological characteristics of the tomb form, are the necropoleis of Thessaloniki where this type of tombs is as common as the type G according to the classification of Marki. The identical variant of the necropoleis in Thessaloniki was present with 9 samples.<sup>13</sup>



Map 1 - Map of barrel-vaulted tombs on the territory of the Republic of Macedonia: (1) East necropolis of Scupi, Skopje; (2) village Orman, Skopje; (3) Cemetery Basilica in Stobi; (4) Episcopal Basilica in Stobi; (5) village Palikura near Stobi; (6) village Elovec, Veles; (7) village Rakle, Prilep; (8) Heraclea, Bitola; (9) Ohrid; (10) Livadi, Struga; (11) Podragište, village Slatino, Makedonski Brod; (12) Pešna, village Dević, Makedonski Brod; (13) Zrze, Prilep; (14) Kale – Strezov Grad, village Čelevec, Demir Kapija; (15) Krstot, village Pirava, Valandovo; (16) Sv. 15 Tiveriopolski Mačenicici, Strumica; (17) village Crvulevo, Štip; (18) village Kalauzija, Štip; (19) Morodvis, Kočani; (20) village Orizari; (21) village Čiflik, Berovo: After В. Лилчиќ-Адамс (1983), сл. 1.

<sup>12</sup> В. Лилчиќ, 1983, 85-108; В. Лилчиќ 1981-1982, 143-151.

<sup>13</sup> Е. МАРКН, 2006, 113.

### *Painted Decoration*

The painted decoration of the tomb A on the site of Kale – Strezov Grad is best visible on the northern wall, which is a lateral wall of the tomb. Painted decoration traces are visible on the opposite southern wall, as well as on the front eastern wall. Since these are not that well preserved, it is impossible to determine with certainty whether the crosses of these two walls were flanked by vegetational motifs, as it is the case with the decoration painted on the northern wall. The representation of a cross on the two sides flanked with plants and flowers is a simplified variant of the topic of Heaven, in the centre of which the victorious cross is located. This topic has many variations that differ only according to the type of plants surrounding the cross. These are usually located on the top of a red stripe with dark edgings, but this is not always the case. The cross is made in Latin style with droplets or pearls and it was enlarged near the middle of the 6<sup>th</sup> century, eventually dominating in the whole representation, which is connected with the hagiography and identification of the cross with Christ.<sup>14</sup> The cross decorated with tears, i.e. droplets, shows the passion of Jesus through the symbolic form of his blood spilled on the cross. The droplets were transformed into a decorating element of the representation of the cross as symbolic drops of the victim of Christ, which were spilled for the redemption of the ancestral fault, and which sum up the significance of his victory through resurrection and the Universal triumph of immortality and the general saving of humanity.<sup>15</sup> This is confirmed with the text written around the representation on the Vinica relief decorated with a Latin cross with droplets, which, with the triumphal character of the verses, emphasises the idea of saving through the victory over death.<sup>16</sup>

On the territory of the Republic of Macedonia, there is information of paintings on only a small part of the researched tombs, among which is one tomb of the Cemetery basilica of Stobi,<sup>17</sup> an early Christian tomb of the village of Kalauzija,<sup>18</sup> in the area of Štip, two tombs of the church *Holy Fifteen Tiberiopolis Martyrs from Strumitsa*<sup>19</sup> and one grave from the site of Manastir, Demir Kapija.<sup>20</sup> The closest analogy

<sup>14</sup> E. МАРКН, 2006., 197-200.

<sup>15</sup> E. Dimitrova, 2012, 196-197.

<sup>16</sup> The full text is: CRUX CRISTI VINCE ET VINCERE PRESTA OMNIBUS SPERANTIBUS IN TE // O CROSS OF CHRIST, WIN AND BRING VICTORY TO ALL WHO BELIEVE IN YOU. E. Dimitrova, 2012, 196-197.

<sup>17</sup> К. Петров, 1975, 153-175. В. Лилиќ, 1983, 100-101, fig. 3а-в.

<sup>18</sup> З. Белдедовски и Штерјов М., 2010, 309-320.

<sup>19</sup> Д. Коцо и Петров К., 1978, 93-97.; V. Lilčić-Adams mentions that sixteen barrel-vaulted tombs are found on this archaeological site, but only three are published, according to Лилчиќ, 1983, 105-106.

<sup>20</sup> The only thing that is mentioned is a painted cross on one of the front tombs of a cist tomb. Unfortunately, this necropolis, which was researched until the end of the 40s of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, has not

to the painting in the tomb A is seen in the symmetrically placed vegetational motifs in the tomb of the Cemetery Basilica in Stobi, the difference being that the representation of a cross between the motifs is lacking here.<sup>21</sup> A cross with droplets or tears can be seen in the central tomb of the church *Holy Fifteen Martyrs of Tiberiopolis*, but two Latin crosses are painted here in one of the side walls with droplets or tears with the absence of the vegetational motifs, therefore this representation cannot be included in the representations of the topic of Heaven. The baptistery of the episcopal basilica in Stobi is helpful for dating this type of cross. Namely, the baptistery contains an early representation of a figurine of the evangelist Matthew, over which a Latin cross, with droplets on each of the sides was painted during the first decades of the 6<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>22</sup>

If we take a look at our neighbouring regions, we can find examples comparable to the painting on the tomb A in the necropoleis in Thessaloniki. Apart from the large number of barrel-vaulted tombs on these necropoleis, there are numerous examples of tombs with pictorial representations dated from the 4<sup>th</sup> to the 7<sup>th</sup> century. There are ten tombs among them with the same iconographic representation as the one in Demir Kapija, dated from the 6<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>23</sup> According to the examples of Thessaloniki and of Stobi, the paintings of the tomb A of Kale – Strezov Grad can be dated in the 6<sup>th</sup> century, according to the characteristics of the cross, which was most probably painted towards the middle of the century.

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been published and there are no sufficient documents about it. The excavation process can be monitored through short information in the excavation diaries run in other sectors.

<sup>21</sup> According to the only drawing of this tomb, it may be noticed that it was a representation of the topic of Heaven, the cross in this tomb was most probably damaged and only the symmetrically placed vegetational ornaments have been preserved.

<sup>22</sup> E. Dimitrova, 2012, 36.

<sup>23</sup> According to E. МАРKH, 2006, 197-200, cat. No. 67, 68, 83, 103 and similar. И cat. No. 43

*Grave goods*

## Catalogue of Finds

## 1. Earring (Pl. II.1)

Diameter of hoop 24 mm, bezel diameter 17 mm,  
length of oval prominences 12 mm.

Bronze/silver.

Tomb A – under group AI.

Museum collection Demir Kapija Inv. No. A 512

An earring with one round bead decorated with granulation and four hollow striped applications placed on each of the sides. The hook has not been fully preserved and was made with a different technique on each end. On one end it is made of two bronze wires twisted together, whereas on the other end it is made of a single bronze wire around which a thin filigree wire is twisted.

Unpublished.

## 2. Ring (Pl. II.2)

13-14century

Diameter of hoop 21 mm, bezel diameter 14 mm

Bronze.

Tomb A entrance.

Museum collection Demir Kapija Inv. No. A 505

Solid casting with a hoop that gradually expands towards the top forming a flat oval bezel which is decorated with a motif of fleur-de-lys (three-petaled lily) engraved in a round field. The two shoulders of the ring were decorated with geometrical motifs in the form of rhombi.

Unpublished.

## 3. Ring (Pl. II.3)

13-14century

Hoop diameter 24mm, bezel diameter 17mm,  
length of oval prominences 12 mm.

Bronze.

Tomb A – under group AI.

Museum collection Demir Kapija Inv. No. A 513

Solid cast ring with a hoop that gradually expands towards the top, thus forming a flat, nearly round surface decorated with a fleur-de-lys with two sprouts towards the bottom of the lily, engraved in a round field. There is a decoration of engraved motifs in the shape of rhombi on the upper parts of the ring shoulders, and right under them, there are oval wart-shaped prominences with engraved lines following the form of the prominence.

Unpublished.

## 4. Ring (Pl. II.4)

13-14century

Hoop diameter 22 mm, bezel diameter 14 mm  
length of oval prominences 11 mm.

Bronze.

Tomb A entrance.

Museum collection Demir Kapija Inv. No. A 507

Solid casting with a hoop that gradually expands towards the top, thus forming a flat, nearly circular surface decorated with an engraved element on a round field split with a Y letter shaped form, and motifs in the form of the letter X are engraved on both sides. A decoration of engraved motifs in the shape of rhombi is located on the upper parts of the ring shoulders, and there are oval wart-shaped prominences with engraved lines that follow the line of the prominence underneath it.

Unpublished.

## 5. Button (Pl. II.5)

Diameter 15mm, total height 12 mm.

Bronze.

Tomb.

Museum collection Demir Kapija Inv. No. A 506

Bronze button with a bell-shaped oval form that is hollow and a circular wire loop.

Unpublished.

## 6. Button (Pl. II.6)

Diameter 16mm, total height 11mm.

Bronze.

Tomb.

Museum collection Demir Kapija Inv. No. A 510

Same as catalogue no. 5

Unpublished.

## 7. Button (Pl. II.7)

Diameter 15 mm, total height 12 mm.

Bronze.

Tomb.

Museum collection Demir Kapija Inv. No. A 521

Same as catalogue no. 5

Unpublished.

## 8. Button (Pl. II.8)

Diameter 15 mm, total height 12 mm.

Bronze.

Tomb.

Museum collection Demir Kapija Inv. No. A 522

Same as cat. no. 5

Unpublished.

## 9. Button (Pl. II.9)

Diameter 9mm, total height 12 mm.

Bronze.

- Tomb.  
Museum collection Demir Kapija Inv. No. A 508  
Bronze button made of two hemispherical soldered halves and a bronze wire loop.  
Unpublished
10. Button (Pl. II.10)  
Diameter 11mm, total height 16mm.  
Bronze.  
Tomb.  
Museum collection Demir Kapija Inv. No. A 509  
Same as cat. no. 9  
Unpublished
11. Button (Pl. II.11)  
Diameter 9mm, total height 15mm.  
Bronze.  
Tomb.  
Museum collection Demir Kapija Inv. No. A 511  
Same as cat. no. 9  
Unpublished
12. Button (Pl. II.12)  
Diameter 12mm, total height 17mm.  
Bronze.  
Tomb.  
Museum collection Demir Kapija Inv. No. A 514  
Same as cat. no. 9  
Unpublished
13. Button (Pl. II.13)  
Diameter 9mm, total height 14mm.  
Bronze.  
Tomb.  
Museum collection Demir Kapija Inv. No. A 515  
Same as cat. no. 9  
Unpublished
14. Button (Pl. II.14)  
Diameter 9mm, total height 13mm.  
Bronze.  
Tomb.  
Museum collection Demir Kapija Inv. No. A 516  
Same as cat. no. 9  
Unpublished
15. Button (Pl. II.15)  
Diameter 9mm, total height 16mm.  
Bronze.  
Tomb.  
Museum collection Demir Kapija Inv. No. A 517  
Same as cat. no. 9  
Unpublished
16. Button (Pl. II.16)  
Diameter 9mm, total height 14mm.  
Bronze.  
Tomb.  
Museum collection Demir Kapija Inv. No. A 518  
Same as cat. no. 9  
Unpublished
17. Button (Pl. II.17)  
Diameter 9 mm, total height 15mm.  
Bronze.  
Tomb.  
Museum collection Demir Kapija Inv. No. A 519  
Same as cat. no. 9  
Unpublished
18. Button (Pl. II.18)  
Diameter 9mm, total height 15mm.  
Bronze.  
Tomb.  
Museum collection Demir Kapija Inv. No. A 520  
Same as cat. no. 9  
Unpublished
19. Button (Pl. II.19)  
Diameter 9mm, total height 16mm.  
Bronze.  
Tomb.  
Museum collection Demir Kapija Inv. No. A 523  
Same as cat. no. 9  
Unpublished
20. Button (Pl. II.20)  
Diameter 8mm, total height 9mm.  
Bronze.  
Tomb.  
Museum collection Demir Kapija Inv. No. A 527  
Same as cat. no. 9, only the upper half is preserved  
Unpublished
21. Button (Pl. II.21)  
Diameter 8mm, total height 4mm.  
Bronze.  
Tomb.  
Museum collection Demir Kapija Field Inv. No. KCF019/2017  
Same as cat. no. 9, only the lower half is preserved  
Unpublished
22. Undefined object (Pl. II.22)  
Length 12 mm, width 8 mm.  
Bronze.  
Tomb, Škulil AI c.



Museum collection Demir Kapija Field Inv. No.  
KCF015/2017  
Small bronze flat object with an undefined shape.

Unpublished

### *Typological Analysis of the Burial Finds*

All the unearthed finds originate from the secondary use of the tomb A. They were part of the jewelry and the clothes of the deceased. These can be classified into head ornaments, arm jewelry and clothing decorations.

*Head ornaments.* There is only one sample of a head ornament, which is an earring with one bead<sup>24</sup> (cat. no. 1, Pl. II.1.). The sample from the A tomb may not be fully preserved, but it is a specific one because it contains in itself a combination of several samples, such as a sphere bead decorated with granulation, where four small tubular accessories are set in a radial direction and a hook on one side manufactured in a technique of twisting of two wires, whereas the other end of one wire is twisted with a thin filigree wire. This earring does not have identic parallels in the finds from the Republic of Macedonia and from the neighbouring areas, but, according to the bead and the hook, this earring's closest analogy is the pair of earrings from Gorni Milanovac,<sup>25</sup> whereas according to the bead and the tubular accessories it is similar to the type VII, which is among the finds of the Necropolis near the Yantra village.<sup>26</sup> According to the hook made of spirally twisted wire, the 13<sup>th</sup> century is the earliest from which the earring can be dated, since the spirally twisted hook has not appeared before.<sup>27</sup> The earrings from Gorni Milanovac and the area along the Danube are dated from the 13<sup>th</sup> century, whereas the earring from the Necropolis near Yantra dates from the 14<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>28</sup> although, according to certain characteristics, it is similar to the luxurious earrings with three beads from the group finds near Usje<sup>29</sup>, near Skopje, and the finds in Mihailovgrad,<sup>30</sup> as well as to one earring from an unknown site from along the Danube area.<sup>31</sup>

*Hand jewelry.* When it comes to hand jewelry, a total of three solid cast rings with a flat bezel and elaborate decoration on the bezel and hoop were found. One of

<sup>24</sup> Only one bead has been preserved, however, there is a possibility that the earring had three beads which have not been preserved.

<sup>25</sup> V. Bikić, 2010, 74.

<sup>26</sup> И. Бъчваров, 1993, 25, обр. 12, Т. 6.

<sup>27</sup> V. Bikić, 2010, 74.

<sup>28</sup> V. Bikić, 2010, 74; М. Бајаловић-Хаџи Пешић, 1984, 76-77, кат. бр. 182; И. Бъчваров, 1993, Т. 6.

<sup>29</sup> Е. Манева, 2006, 329-339. *Terminus post quem* of the group finds is the 1321.

<sup>30</sup> Г. Александров, 1984, 29-38. The group finds are dated from the XIII-XIV Centuries.

<sup>31</sup> М. Бајаловић-Хаџи Пешић, 1984, кат. бр. 182, XXVI/1.

the rings has simply decorated shoulders where rhombi are engraved (cat. no. 2, Pl.II.2), whereas in the case of the remaining two, there is one oval prominence on each side (cat. no. 3-4, Pl.II.3-4). The form has become especially popular in the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>32</sup> Their form is similar to the engagement ring of the young king Radoslav, commissioned to him after he announced his engagement to Ana, the daughter of Theodor I Angel, with a precise dating in the period between November 1219 and February 9, 1220.<sup>33</sup> The decoration of the two rings is in favour of this dating (cat. no. 2 and 3), which are decorated with engraved motifs of three-leaved lily. The lily is one of the most prevalent decorations from the Medieval period in the territory of Byzantium until the coast of the English Channel. On the Balkans, the representations of lily became more popular near the beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> century and can be seen until the 15<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>34</sup> The lily is also known as an attribute of the Mother of God, of the chastity and virginity and is quite commonly represented on the female rings, especially the ones dating from the 13<sup>th</sup> century when the cult of the Mother of God reached its zenith in this region.<sup>35</sup> One of the best and earliest dated rings with a representation of lily originates from Bulgaria and dates from 1208 and was known as the seal ring of the despot Slav who ruled in the Rhodopes region.

In addition to the two rings shown in the tomb A from the necropolis of Kale – Strezov Grad, there is another unpublished ring with a prominent heraldic iconography, the main symbol on which is the lily placed in a shield. Although it is still early, the representations of a lily on the rings of the Kale – Strezov Grad lead to the conclusion that the cult of the mother of God was especially strong in Prosek in the course of the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> century<sup>36</sup>. This may be connected with the fact that there was a church in Prosek dedicated to the mother of God mentioned in the 1348 *Dušan's Code*, which confirms the properties and rights of the monastery *Hilandar*.<sup>37</sup> Although B. Aleksova located this church on the site of Crkvište<sup>38</sup> on the right bank of the Vardar River near Demir Kapija, it still seems that it is more probable that the church on the site of Kale Strezov Grad could be the church dedicated to the Mother of God mentioned in the sources.

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<sup>32</sup> Е. Манева, 1992, 90-93.

<sup>33</sup> V. Bikić, 2010, 95; Б. Радојковић, 1969, 90-94, Т. 17 и 18.

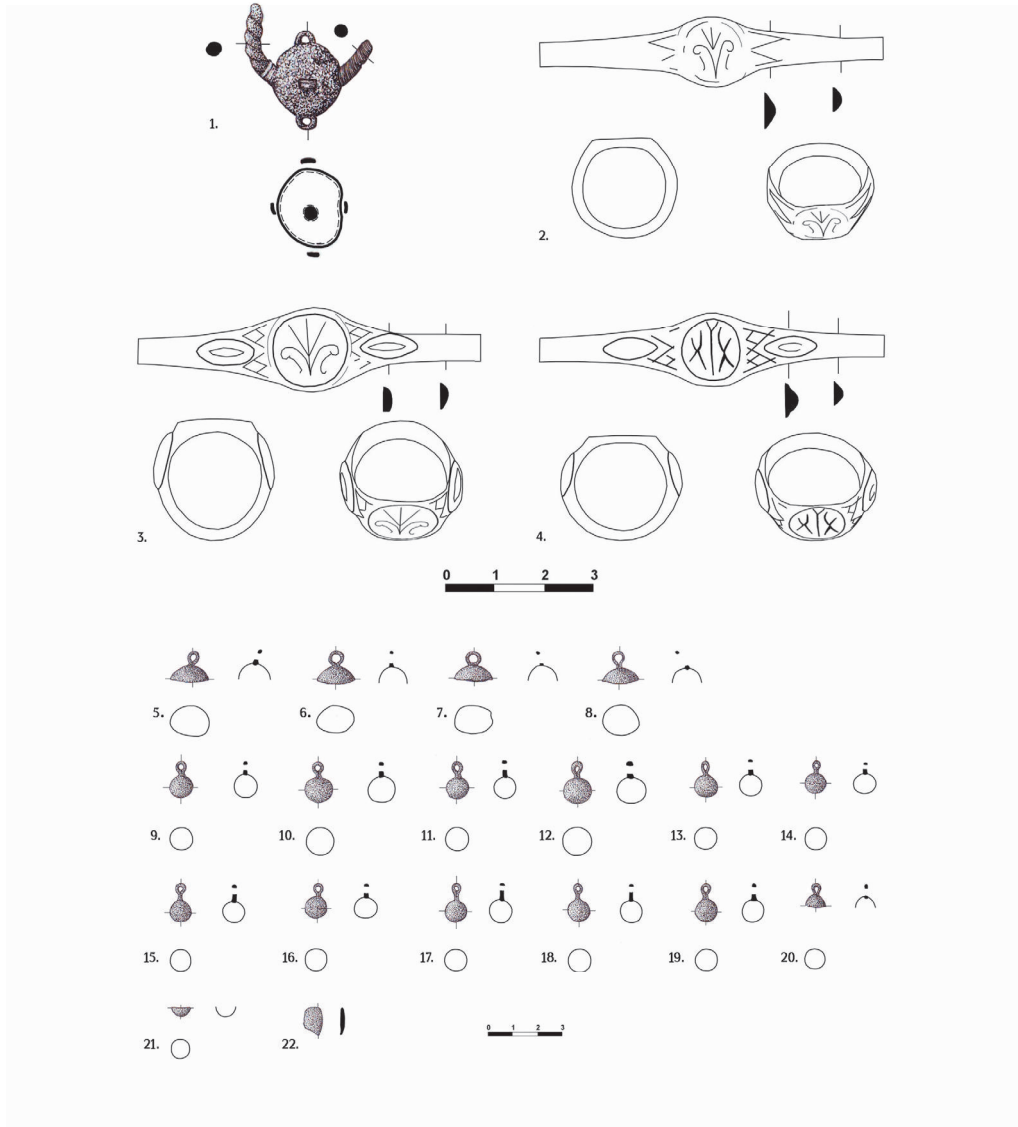
<sup>34</sup> Радојковић, 1969, 113-115; Манева, 1992, 93.

<sup>35</sup> Б. Радојковић, 1969, 113-115; Е. Манева, 1992, 93.

<sup>36</sup> The cult dedicated to the Mother of God in the Demir Kapija region is still quite strong. The Mother of God is the protector of Demir Kapija, and the newly built church from the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is dedicated to her. The holiday of the Dormition of the Mother of God was especially observed in Demir Kapija and a fair is organised on this day.

<sup>37</sup> „Оу Просѣцѣ црковѣ Мати Божіа съ метохоми си“. С. Новаковић, 1912, 422.

<sup>38</sup> B. Aleksova, 1966, 22.



Pl. II. Grave goods from the Tomb A: (1) Earring, (2-4) rings, (5-21) buttons, (22) undefined object



*Clothes Decorations.* The most common find on the necropolis of Kale-Strezov Grad are the bronze buttons that serve for buttoning up and decorating clothes. A total of 15 intact and 2 semi preserved buttons were found in the tomb. These may be classified into two variants, namely: bell-shaped and spherical buttons. The bell-shaped buttons were made of one bell shaped hemisphere on the top of which a round wired loop was soldered (cat. no. 5-8, T. II, 5-8). These buttons are quite similar to the later bell-shaped buttons, the lower surface of which was either fully closer or decorated with a perforated sealer. The buttons of Tomb A may be considered as a prototype of the buttons with a decorated lower part, which are most often dated from near the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> and throughout the 15<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>39</sup>

The second group of buttons made of two hemispheres with a bronze wire shanks is the most common type of buttons (cat. no. 9-21, T.II, 9-21). Since these are usually the only finds in the tombs, their dating is widedspanned, from the 10<sup>th</sup> to the 14<sup>th</sup> century, and this form of buttons kept being used all throughout the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> century. The current knowledge leads to the conclusion that it is necessary to shift the terminus post quem of their appearance to the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century or more probably, the beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> century. This is done by analysing the burial material of the necropoleis which are precisely dated in the period between the 10<sup>th</sup> and the 12<sup>th</sup> century, such as Trnče-Strea near Pepelište, Krstevi near Korešnica, Zadna Reka-Grmajte near the village of Vitolište, Trpčeva church near the village of Dunje.<sup>40</sup> Such findings are fully absent from these necropoleis, and only solid cast buttons can be found in some places. None of the graves dated before the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century contains this type of buttons in its inventory. This situation was reflected in the Medieval necropoleis of the region. The newer publications also shifted to a later date, the terminus ad quem of this type of finds, which can be found in the burial inventory of up to the 17<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>41</sup> although, in the 15<sup>th</sup> century they can already be seen in a visibly changed form by adding one plastic wart-shaped prominence on the lower part of the button.<sup>42</sup>

### *Skeletal Remains*

Two intact buried skeletons were found in the tomb, namely, the first skeleton (A1) (fig. 8) right next to the entrance oriented towards the west-east, whereas the second skeleton (A2) (fig. 9) is oriented towards the southern wall. Two larger groups of bones were also found in the tomb, one near the northern wall and the ot-

<sup>39</sup> E. Maneva, 2013a, 92-99, fig. 5; E. Zečević, 2006, 118-133, kat.no. 118-120.

<sup>40</sup> E. Манева, 2000a; E. Манева, 2000b; Л. Кепеска, 1995; Л. Кепеска, 2008.

<sup>41</sup> E. Maneva, 2013c, 125-147b.

<sup>42</sup> E. Zečević, 2006, 118-133, kat. No. 100-103. E. Maneva, 2013b, 101-123, fig. 9-12.



**Fig. 8** Skeleton A1 and the group AII from the tomb A



**Fig. 9** Skeleton A2 under the group AII from the tomb A



**Fig. 10** Group of skeleton remains A1 (left) and AII (right) in the eastern part of the tomb A

her near the southern one placed across the skeleton A2. The group near the northern wall (group AI) contains three crania (AI a-c) placed next to each other. The group near the southern wall (groupAII) is bigger and contains four crania (AII a-d) (fig. 10). The tomb contains the bones of minimum ten individuals of both sexes, as well as of at least one grown child. The age of the adults is between 20 and 50. The skeleton A1 belonged to a young woman deceased at the age between 20 and 25.<sup>45</sup>

### *Dating of the Tomb*

As it was emphasized in previously, no osteological remains, nor grave goods from the initial burial, have been found in the tomb. The overall material from the tomb originates from its secondary use. This situation allows the dating to be done only through parallels on the basis of typological specifics of the tomb form and the stylish characteristics of the painting on it. This type of burial forms were widespread on the territory of the Illyricum dated between the 4<sup>th</sup> and the 6<sup>th</sup> century. According to the stylish characteristics of the paintings discovered in the tomb A, it may be dated in the 6<sup>th</sup> century. The tomb was plundered in the Medieval Ages, or perhaps earlier, but its reuse started between the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> century, when two individuals were buried in the tomb and osteological remains from at least eight individuals were placed inside. This coincides with the renewal of the fortress in the time of the independent ruler of Prosek, Dobromir Chrysos, who, according to the written sources, moved his seat from Strumica to the abandoned fortress of Prosek near the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century.

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<sup>45</sup> The initial analysis of the skeleton remains on the field was conducted by PhD Fanica Veljanovska and I cordially thank her for that. The detailed analysis of the anthropological finds has not been completed; it is due in the near future and will be separately published. In order to check the anthropological specifics of the skeletal remains discovered in the excavations of Kale-Strezov Grad in 2015 and 2016, c.f.: F. Veljanovska, 2017, 115-125.

Орданче ПЕТРОВ

## **НОВООТКРИЕНА РАНОХРИСТИЈАНСКА ГРОБНИЦА СО ПОЛУЦИЛИНДРИЧЕН СВОД ОД ДЕМИР КАПИЈА**

### *Резиме*

Во текот на 2017 година на археолошкиот локалитет Кале – Стрезов Град, с. Челевец, Демир Капија се откри видана гробница со полуцилиндричен свод. Гробницата се наоѓа од надворешната страна на еднокорабната ранохристијанска црква. Гробницата има влез во вид на шахта на западната страна, а од шахтата се преминува во гробната комора преку засводен отвор во западниот ѕид. При истражувањето се утврди дека таа не е интактна и е реупотребена во средниот век. Целокупниот движен материјал од гробницата потекнува од нејзината секундарна употреба. При реупотребувањето е уништен и подот на гробната комора којшто бил изработен со поплочување од градежни тули. Датацијата на гробницата може да се направи единствено по пат на паралели врз основа на типолошките карактеристики на гробната форма и стилските карактеристики на сликарството од истата. Овој тип на гробни форми се широко застапени на територијата на префектурата Илирик притоа датирани од IV до VI век. Според стилските одлики на сликарството откриено во гробницата А, неа ја датираме во VI век. Гробницата била ограбена во средниот век, или можеби порано, но таа била повторно употребена во периодот на XIII-XIV век, кога во гробницата се погребани две индивидуи и во истата се поставени остеолошки остатоци од најмалку осум индивидуи. Ова, временски соодветствува со обновата на тврдината во времето на самостојниот господар на Просек, Добромир Хрс кој, според пишаните извори, својата престолнина ја преместил од Струмица во напуштена-та тврдина Просек, кон крајот на XII век.

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