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Visualizing Cultural Diversity The typology of one-looped bow fibulae with asymmetrical and rectangular plates

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Abstract: The category of one-looped fibula type with asymmetrical plate has been discussed since the late 1980s, especially with regard to their connection with Greek “geometric” models. The aim of the paper is first to supplement the previous studies about the fibula type by re-examining the typological details and to propose several variants. The integration of one-looped bow fibulae with square/rectangular plate into the discussion as well as the spatial distribution of the proposed variants shall complete the study. The heterogeneity of the type and even the variants lead to chronological problems regarding the exact dating within the first horizon of the Early Iron Age (8th/7th century BCE). Therefore, the chronological position of the fibulae variants is discussed based on existing relative chronological systems taking into account the local contexts in which the fibulae in question occur.

Key words: Iron Age, fibulae, female attire, central balkan chronology, contacts

Research History – Between South and East

In 1987 D. Mitrevski² and R. Vasić³ distinguished independently of each other a group of fibulae from the spectrum of Balkan one-looped bow fibulae with an asymmetrical plate due to their shape and time of origin. Since 1999 these are classified as fibula type “Radanje”, mainly distributed in the region of Valandovo/Gevgelija as well as the Bregalnica Valley.⁴ In general, the constructions of the fibulae are comparable, but at the same time, they differ from each other in the form of the plates, bows and decoration. The examples of the type show a great heterogeneity when compared to each other, which can be regarded as an expression of chronological depth.

Therefore, fibulae of the type “Radanje” are in general dated to an early phase of the Iron Age, between the 8th and 6th centuries BCE. Examples showing typological characteristics which are directly comparable to examples known from Central Greece have been generally dated earlier as later, local developments.⁵ Most of the examples are considered as products of local workshops situated in the Vardar and Bregalnica Valleys, where they occur in graves as part of the attire. However, the impulse for the design and style of the fibulae derives from Greek-geometric models known from Central Greece⁶, whereby attention has already been drawn to the chronological hiatus between the appearance in Greece and the Balkans.⁷ In their studies of this particular fibula

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² Mitrevski 1987.

³ Vasić 1987a.

⁴ Vasić 1999, 72–74; 1987a; R. Vasić nevertheless distinguished single examples and points to chronological differences within the fibula type.

⁵ Ibid. 73; Mitrevski 1987, 38; D. Mitrevski regards the early representatives as Greek imports and as evidence for the opening of the north to the south.

⁶ Vasić 1987a; Mitrevski 1987; in general fibulae known from Thessaly and Western Chalkidike are used as points of comparison, as are finds from Attic graves from the 9th century BCE.

⁷ Vasić 1987a, 41; see Pabst 2008 for the dating of especially the fibulae from Milci grave 31/35 to the 9th/8th century BCE and the implications for Balkan chronology.

type, R. Vasić and D. Mitrevski focused both on the Central Balkan Region and the Vardar Valley. As a result, the focus of the discussion was on fibulae distributed within this area. However, this fibula type is distributed also in the Rhodope Mountains, which led K. Kilian to discuss it in the context of his “Thracian fibulae”.⁸ When dealing with fibulae from Bulgaria, D. Gergova classified the fibulae with asymmetric plate into her types A II 1 and 2. Due to their formal characteristics, she associates them with fibulae known from the Greek islands (“Inseltypen”). However, due to the design of the plates she assumes a local development and compares them with examples from the Bregalnica Valley.⁹ While the distribution of the type “Radanje” within the region of the Rhodope Mountains was noted also by D. Mitrevski and R. Vasić,¹⁰ a further discussion about the mutual connection of these two regions was not initiated but rather marginalized in order to emphasize the relations with the South. It is certainly true that the fibula type “Radanje” is not comprehensible without Greek models. However, this fact should not lead one to disregard stylistic influences from the Rhodope Mountains. As such, the following discussion of typological details, the variants proposed and their spatial distribution aims to supplement the earlier studies in this account.

Detailed typology

It has already been stated that the fibulae grouped under the type “Radanje” are less homogenous and it is possible to further subdivide them based on some details. For an analysis, 31 published objects are available, distributed in two different regions. On the one hand, they can be found in Macedonia along the Vardar and the Bregalnica (20 pieces), on the other hand, they have been registered in the mountainous landscape of the Rhodopes (11 pieces). In general, the fibulae can be subdivided into several variants based on the shape and design of the plate, their measurements and the design of the bow. Variant 1 comprises fibulae corresponding most closely to type “Radanje” and D. Gergova's type A II 1, whereas

variant 2 corresponds to type A II 2. In addition, a third variant shall be introduced that encompasses all one-looped fibulae with a square/rectangular footplate, which are locally produced but show typological connections to Attic-Boeotian fibulae. (Figure 1)

Variant 1 / “Type Radanje”

Variant 1 incorporates examples which are characterized by a sloping, knee-shaped plate, which can be either slightly concave or straight on one side of the plate. Based on the length of the fibulae as well as the design of the bow, two sub-variants can be described.

Representatives of variant 1a have dimensions between 8.5 and 14.7 cm (median 10.5 cm). The bow is generally round-shaped in section, only the fibulae known from the eponymous location of Radanje are rhombus-shaped in section.¹¹ Occasionally, the bow is decorated with grooved lines.¹² The stem is rhombus-shaped in section, which is characteristic for finds known from the Bregalnica and Vardar Valleys. A further local characteristic is the decoration in *Tremolierstich*, which occurs exclusively in the region of the Bregalnica and Vardar Valleys.¹³

According to the observations of D. Gergova, these fibulae are generally comparable to Greek fibulae of the so-called “island types”. However, the characteristic feature of the sloping, knee-shaped plate is not found on the Greek fibulae, which led D. Gergova to consider this as a characteristic of “Thracian” fibulae.¹⁴ The fibula known from the burial mound of Čepelare could be classified as a relatively early representative of a fibula with sloping plate, which is associated with an iron bow fibula type B I 1 (Gergova) and seems to date the find to the Early Iron Age.¹⁵ The feature of the sloping plate that appears on fibulae found in the Bregalnica and Vardar Valley can therefore possibly be associated with Rhodian examples. In contrast, fibulae of this variant found at locations in the Rhodope Mountains rarely show a rhombus-shaped stem which is more typical for “geometric” fibulae known from

⁸ Kilian 1975, Tab. 81. 108.

⁹ Gergova 1987, 27.

¹⁰ Mitrevski 1987, 31, Fig. 2; Vasić 1987a, 42.

¹¹ Vasić 1999, nr. 544.

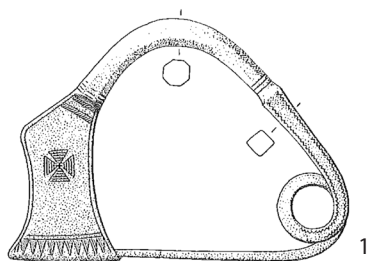
¹² Ibid. nr. 544. 545; Damyanov 2005, Fig. 4.

¹³ Vasić 1999, nr. 544. 545. 546. 562.

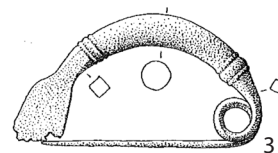
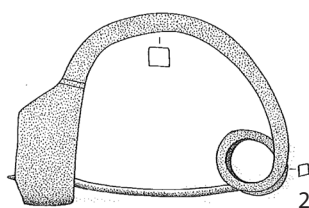
¹⁴ Gergova 1987, 27.

¹⁵ Ibid. 38.

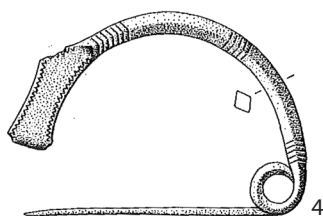
Variant 1a



Variant 1b



Variant 2



Variant 3

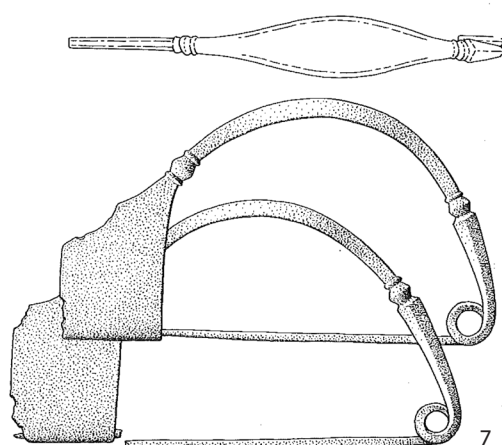
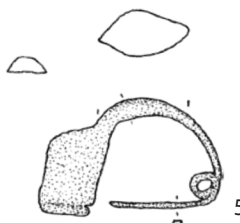


Figure 1: Variants of one-looped bow fibulae with asymmetrical plate

1. Radanje (Kilian 1975, pl. 46,5), 2. Progled (Gergova 1987, nr. 38), 3. Gevgelija (Vasić 1999, nr. 536), 4. Suva Reka, Gevgelija (Vasić 1999, nr. 550), 5. Agrosydia, Giannitsa (Chrysostomou 2007, pl. III.B.1), 6. Almopia (Chrysostomou 1995, fig. 4), 7. Milci 31/35 (Vasić 1999, nr. 539–540), 8. Early fibula type of Attic-Boeotian fibulae (DeVries 1972, Fig. 1)

the Central Greece.¹⁶ The different characteristics refer to the hybrid character of representatives assigned to variant 1a.

Fibulae designated as variant 1b show a smaller format in general with measurements between 3–13 cm (median: 7.9 cm). Because of the sloping, knee-shaped plate of the small-for-

mat fibulae they are considered close to variant 1a. Due to the smaller format of the fibulae, the sloping edge of the plate is only weakly defined. The height of the footplate encompasses about half of the total fibula height.

Only three representatives can be assigned to this variant. Those fibulae known from Geveglia show single bead mouldings on the bow, which

¹⁶ DeVries 1972.

distinguish the bow from the plate as well as the bow from the stem. The fibula from Bukri (Fig. 2, nr. 10) is decorated with grooved lines on the bow. All fibulae are round-shaped in section while the stem is rhombic in section.

Due to the design of the plate, which can be described as sloping and knee-shaped, the variant is ascribed to type “Radanje” in general, but with significant regional specifications.

Variant 2 / Type A II 2

Representatives of variant 2 show long, narrow plates with no or hardly any slope. The bows are round-shaped in section und not decorated.¹⁷ Because of the distribution within the Rhodope Mountains this could be interpreted as a regional type.

According to D. Gergova, this variant corresponds to the variant A II 2,¹⁸ which is directly compared to bow fibulae known from the Greek islands. Based on the design of the plate as well as the undecorated bow, which is round-shaped in section, this variant can also be compared to type II b (Sapouna-Sakellaris), distributed on Chios, Crete, Rhodes, Thera and Samos. There, these fibulae occur within Late Geometric/Archaic contexts.¹⁹

Variant 3 / “Attic-Boeotian variant”

Clearly distinguishable is variant 3 with its nearly square plate, which is not sloping, but straight. Variants characterized by larger measurements known from Suva Reka, Vinica and Agrosykia show bows which are round-shaped in section. The stem is mainly rhombic in section. The fibula of the smaller variants known from the cemeteries of Agrosykia and Almopia have a spread bow which seems to be thin and hollowed. The section of the stem is round-shaped.

In contrast to the narrow, long-rectangular plates of the “island types”,²⁰ (nearly) square plates tend to be more typical for the Greek mainland.²¹ The spread bow is also found in connection with Attic-Boeotian types of fibula (see below).

Besides the fibulae known from the cemetery of Radanje, the fibulae from the grave Milci 31/35 are to some extent regarded as the “prototype” of the type “Radanje”. However, it is hardly possible to clearly link it to any of the proposed variants. The size and design of plate brings them close to the variants 1. However, the plate is strictly speaking not sloping but arched, and the spring is relatively small by comparison with the representatives from variant 1. Also the bead mouldings with fillet above as well as below, as well as the widely spread bow are not characteristic for variant(s) 1 or type “Radanje”, but correspond to representatives of variants 3. In contrast, the fibulae known from Milci 31/35 are typologically close to fibulae from Central Greece.²² Even if models from Thessaly are consulted, the comparison with Attic-Boeotian types is most likely possible.²³ Decisive reasons are especially the wide spread of the bow, the bead mouldings as well as the rhombic-shaped stem. The rather rectangular plate might indicate a direct import²⁴ but a local imitation seems more likely. Therefore, these fibulae shall be assigned to variant 3.

Distribution of the variants

Variant 1a seems to connect the regions along the Vardar and the Bregalnica Valleys and the Rhodope Mountains as represented in both regions. (Figure 2)

The small-scale variant 1b can be regarded as a local derivate of the larger variant 1a. Due to the quantitative focus within the Rhodope Mountains variant 2 appears to be specific for this region. A genetic connection to variant 1 is not sufficiently clear. Variant 3 is also region-specific and restricted to the area west of the Vardar. (Figure 3)

¹⁷ Exceptions are Vasić 1999, nr. 550 (Suva Reka) as well as Damyanov 2005, Fig. 6 (Gela).

¹⁸ Gergova 1987, 27.

¹⁹ Sapouna-Sakellaris 1978, 45–47.

²⁰ DeVries 1972, 112.

²¹ Sapouna-Sakellaris 1978, 73.

²² Pabst 2008, 618–620; Mitrevski 1987, 30; Vasić 1999, 73.

²³ Blinkenberg 1926, 147–185.

²⁴ Gavranović 2016, 126, Fig. 2; with the exception of the fibula known from Rakitno (Ljubuški) direct imports of one-looped fibulae with asymmetrical or rectangular plate are hardly to locate within the Southern Balkan region.

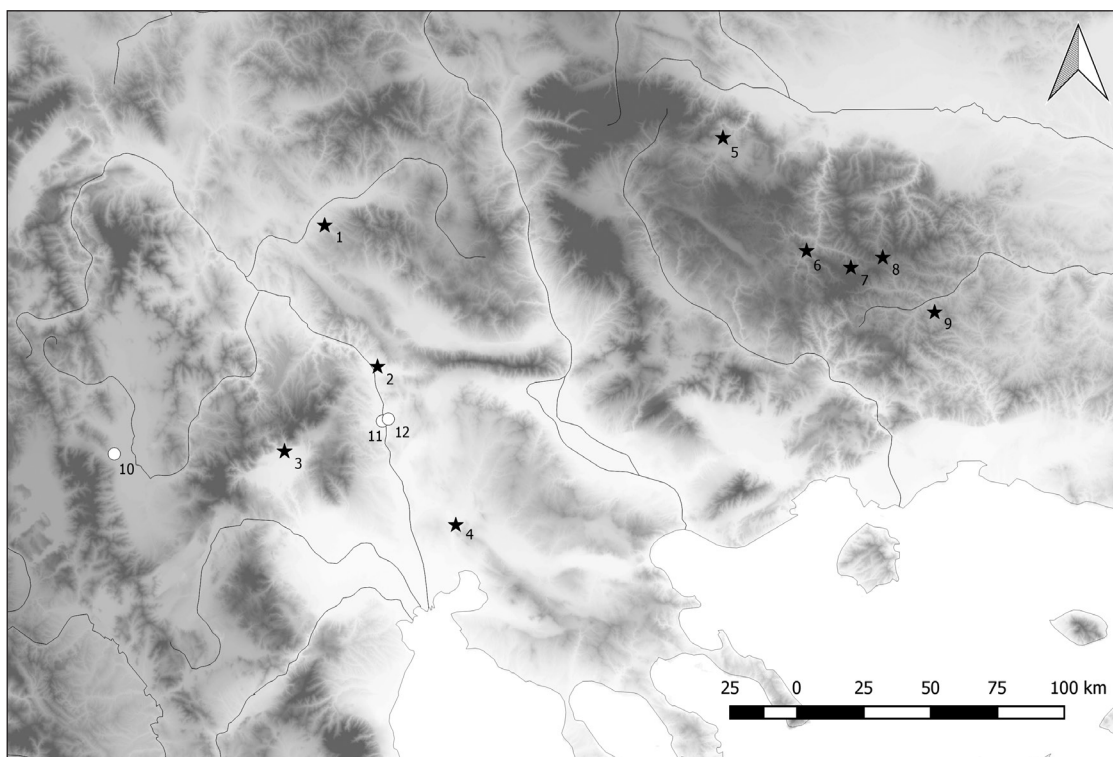


Figure 2: Variant 1 / “Type Radanje”

Star: 1. Radanje (Kilian 1975, pl. 46,5; Vasić 1999, nr. 544–547), 2. Valandovo (Vasić 1999, nr. 552), 3. Almopia (Chrysostomou 1998, Fig. 4), 4. Nea Philadelphia (Misailidou-Despotidou 1998, pl. 224.a), 5. Dragino (Katincharova 2002, Fig. 1.2), 6. Grohotno, Devin (Damyanov 2005, Fig. 1), 7. Gela, Smoljan (Damyanov 2005, Fig. 4), 8. Prohled (Gergova 1987, nr. 38), 9. Madan (Damyanov 2005, Fig. 3)

Circle: 10. Bukri (Popov 1918, Fig. 4), 11. Milci (Vasić 1999, nr. 537), 12. Gevgelija (Vasić 1999, nr. 536)

The context of the fibula variants and their chronological position

Variants 1 / “Type Radanje”

Due to at least four examples of bow fibulae with asymmetrical footplate from the cemetery of Kunovo Čuki – Radanje, R. Vasić denominated them as type “Radanje”.²⁵ The entire cemetery is located near a small river in a plain setting. The original structure of the necropolis is difficult to reconstruct due to agricultural use of the area. The site itself was discovered by chance and no structures were visible on the surface.²⁶ However, due to several sections the stratigraphy of the location, grave constructions as well as burial

rites are comprehensible. Altogether, D. and M. Garašanin described five grave constructions / low tumuli, which have been paved with stone slabs.²⁷ Stone material of different sizes as well as stone slabs in the cultural layer suggests that the constructions were once covered with them. The remains from grave 1, 2 and 4 indicate single inhumations. A total of four individuals have been registered in grave construction 5. Individuals 1, 3, and 4 are oriented north-west while individual 2 was laid out in the opposite direction.²⁸ One of the fibulae was found in grave number 4 beneath the left shoulder of the deceased individual.²⁹ According to the interpretation of the excavation

²⁵ Ibid. 15.

²⁶ Ibid. 19–23.

²⁷ Ibid. 19–23; Kilian 1975, Tab. 46; Vasić 1999, 73 mentioned three more fibulae of this type from the necropolis Kunovo Čuki – Radanje, which are not included in the report of Venedikov I. Venedikov also mentioned a grave containing several identical fibulae made of bronze (Venedikov 1948b, 91).

²⁵ Vasić 1999, 72–74.

²⁶ Venedikov 1948a, 90–91; Garašanin / Garašanin 1959, 10–12; D. and M. Garašanin assumed low, irregular mounds, but could not rule out the possibility that the mounds may have been higher and broader originally.

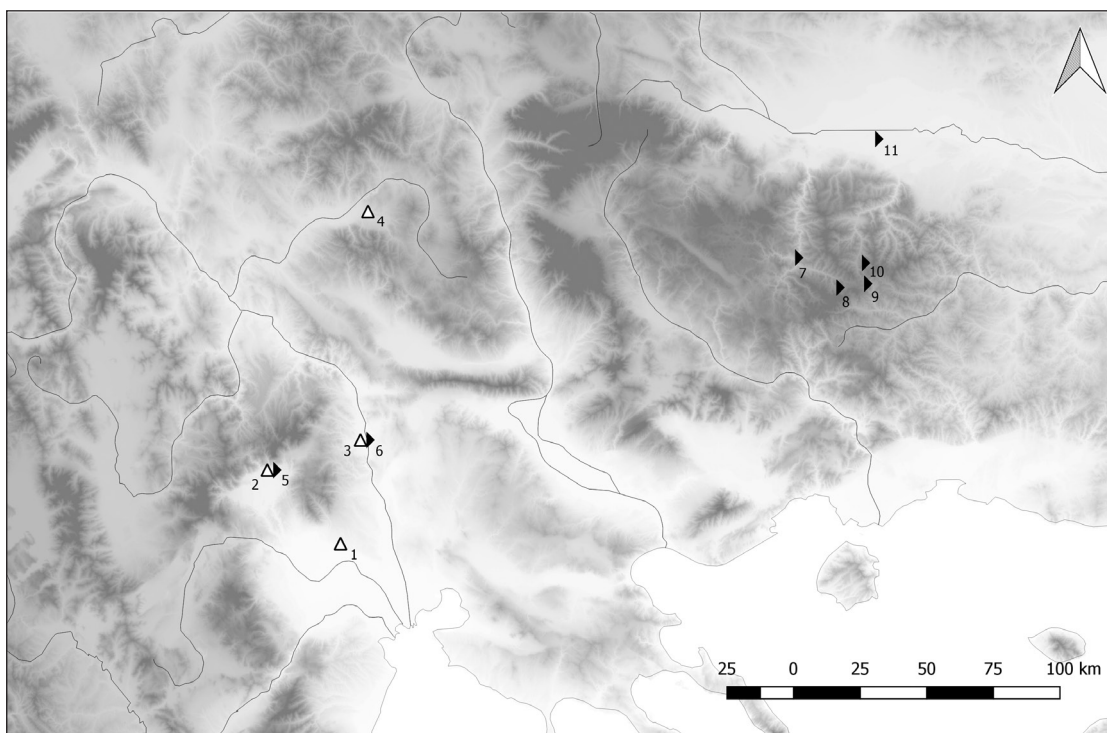


Figure 3: *Variants 2 / 3*

Triangle white: 1. Agrosykia, Giannitsa (Chrysostomou 2007, pl. III.B.1; III.Γ.4–5), 2. Almopia (Chrysostomou 1995, Fig. 4), 3. Suva Reka, Gevgelija (Vasić 1999, nr. 551), 4. Vinica (Museum Vinica, unpublished)
Triangle black: 5. Almopia (Chrysostomou 2000, Fig. 9), 6. Suva Reka, Gevgelija (Vasić 1999, nr. 550), 7. Devin (Damyanov 2005, Fig. 5), 8. Gela, Smoljan (Damyanov 2005, Fig. 6), 9. Pamporovo (Damyanov 2005, Fig. 7), 10. Čepelare (Damyanov 2005, Fig. 2)

report, grave 2 is stratigraphically above grave 4, which contained the fibulae type “Radanje” as well as a vessel decorated with D-shaped impressions (*Nagelzier*).³⁰ It is further worth noting that grave number 2, the later one, contains a pyxis pendant, whereas the fibula type “Radanje” is not combined with certain characteristic types of Macedonian bronzes, which are otherwise abundant at the site.³¹

During recent excavations of the tumulus necropolis “Kokolov Rid” near the modern town of Vinica, several graves from the Iron Age were discovered.³² In the southern part of tumulus 1, which is encircled by a stone ring (diam. 8 m),

three identically constructed graves occurred: An inhumation in supine and outstretched position was bedded in a burial pit, surrounded by amorphous stones and covered with stone slabs.³³ Besides bi-conical pendants and an armlet, grave 3 contained two fibulae type “Radanje”, found together as a pair under the left shoulder of the individual. The grave further contained a jug with D-shaped impressions around the neck.³⁴

Another fibula which can be ascribed to variant 1a due to its sloping plate has been recognized within the cemetery of Nea Philadelphia. Nea Philadelphia is known for its settlements dating to the Bronze and Iron Age as well as for its extended flat cemeteries dating to the 9th–7th century as well as to the 6th–3rd century BCE.³⁵ The cemetery with the earlier graves is dated to the “Iron Age” and differs from the “archa-

³⁰ Kilian 1975, 91.

³¹ Unfortunately, in almost all cases the context of the Macedonian Bronzes from Radanje is unclear. Only grave 2, which is overlapping grave 4, is recorded with a pyxis pendant (Kilian 1975, 91, Tab. 46–51).

³² I would like to thank Blagica Stojanova and Julijana Ivanova (Muzej “Terakota” Vinica) for their hospitality and for presenting the site as well as the objects displayed in the museum with such gusto and patience.

³³ Stojanovska / Ivanova 2015, 135.

³⁴ Displayed at the museum Vinica; Stojanovska / Ivanova 2015, Abb. 8,4.

³⁵ Misailidou-Despotidou 2008.

		Vasić 1977	Kilian/Bräunig 2013	Kilian 1975	Mitrevski 1991
Ha C1	750-700	Horizon 1	Vergina IIIC late	Macedonian Iron Age I B3	Phase I
	700-650		Early Archaic Vergina IVA	Macedonian Iron Age II A	Phase II
Ha C2/D1	650-600	Horizon 2	Late Archaic Vergina IVB		
	600-550			Macedonian Iron Age II B	Phase III
	550-500	Horizon 3		Macedonian Iron Age II C	Phase IV
Ha D2/3	500-450				

Figure 4: Chronological systems regarding the Macedonian Iron Age

ic” cemetery less by grave construction or burial rite³⁶ but rather by the material culture. The bow fibula was found in the “Iron Age” cemetery, which is mainly characterized by inhumations in pit-graves or stone cists as well as local types of pottery and attire. The context of the fibula is not published.

Also the example from Suva Reka (Gevgelija) comes from the context of a flat cemetery, mainly with stone cist graves. Together with handmade pottery it was found beneath grave 41.³⁷ In general within the cemeteries in the Gevgelija/Valandovo regions, ritual grave openings are well documented as well as the deposition of bones and furnishing of primary burials outside the graves.³⁸ The group of objects near grave 41 is to interpret also in this context. In contrast, D. Mitrevski argues for a destroyed grave, suggesting a

preceding horizon with tumuli.³⁹ However, within the area of the flat cemetery no traces of a tumulus have been recorded. Even if grave disturbances are usually documented, destructions of graves within the Iron Age are not typical for the burial communities of the Lower Vardar Valley. Therefore it is most likely that one-looped bow fibulae of this type occurred in the context of flat cemeteries, as they did at Nea Philadelphia.

The chronological position of the graves of Radanje is not sufficiently clear. The material from the cemetery of Radanje was initially assigned to the “Kumanovo phase”, which represents the first phase of M. Garašanin’s “Macedonian Hallstatt Period” and which was at that time parallelized with Reinecke’s phase Ha C.⁴⁰ Towards the end of the 1950s, M. and D. Garašanin conducted further excavations within the necropolis of Radanje. In discussing the chronological classification, they once more insisted upon the proposal to separate an earlier Hallstatt phase

³⁶ In both of the cemeteries inhumations in an outstretched position in pit-graves or stone cists prevail. Cremations in urns are indeed registered within the “Iron Age” cemetery, but to a much lesser extent (see Misailidou-Despotidou 2008).

³⁷ Pašić 1978, 26, Fig. 13.

³⁸ Georgiev 1980.

³⁹ Mitrevski 1987, 31.

⁴⁰ Garašanin 1956, 40.

from a younger one⁴¹ in Macedonia, analogous to the situation in Central Europe. By comparing mainly Macedonian Bronzes with examples from the Mediterranean, they confirmed the dating in the Ha C period.⁴² In the meantime several tumuli from the necropolis of Orlova Čuka have been investigated, which were also assigned to Garašanin's (Macedonian) Iron Age II.⁴³ On the one hand, a chronological differentiation of the graves from Radanje and Orlova Čuka is assumed, because typical Macedonian Bronzes are completely absent from the monumental tumuli of Orlova Čuka. On the other hand, it was not possible to argue for a further subdivision of the Iron Age II in the Bregalnica Valley because of the comparable pottery style known from both sites.⁴⁴ However, in the course of describing central and eastern Macedonia within the fifth volume of the "Prehistory of Yugoslav lands", R. Vasić undertook the chronological classification of the finds made until 1987. He mainly used the system established by M. Garašanin but he also observed some differences in the ornamentation of the pottery. Vessels from Orlova Čuka were mainly decorated with grooved lines and oval pricks, whereas vessels from Radanje are additionally characterized by rectangular impressions. He also pointed to an earlier beginning of the Orlova Čuka necropolis in comparison to the graves of Radanje. In his view, the first burials in Orlova Čuka were made at the end of the 8th ct. BCE, while the graves known from Radanje had been laid out at the earliest from the 7th ct. BCE on.⁴⁵ Within the spectrum of the pottery of the mentioned cemeteries, K. Kilian distinguished two phases, separating jugs with sloping rim (ME II A) from channeled jugs with horizontal rims (ME II B). This is according to him supported by the stratigraphy of overlapping graves.⁴⁶ However, by comparing pottery and analyzing attire, he assigns graves from Orlova Čuka and Radanje to his ME II A as well as ME II B and does not

clearly separate the cemeteries chronologically.⁴⁷ As such, at this point it hardly seems possible to date the necropolis and the fibulae from Radanje exactly and confine them to a certain phase.

The tumuli known from Kokolov Rid near Vinica have been erected in the Early Bronze Age and re-used in the Iron Age. The grave with the fibulae is dated to the 8th/7th century,⁴⁸ which coincides with the general dating of the Iron Age cemetery of Nea Philadelphia.⁴⁹

"Attic-Boeotian" variants

Two pairs of fibulae with asymmetrical plate have been registered in grave 31/35 within the cemetery Milci-Gevgelija. Because of the tumular architecture, the grave has been identified as one of the earliest within the cemetery.⁵⁰ The small, oval mound of measures 2.50–2.80 m (diameter) and is filled up with river stones. In the western part of the low mound an inhumation in stretched position was registered.⁵¹ The attire is found in functional position, whereas the affiliation of the pottery to the buried individual remains unclear. As per the drawing of the grave, the large bow fibulae with asymmetrical plates were positioned below the right and left shoulder.⁵²

Fibulae of this type were also found in the region of Almopia, Northern Greece. At Xirika (Pella prefecture) a cemetery consisting of at least 40 tumuli, with diameters between 8–14 m, has been registered. Tumulus 5 contained a grave chamber with a dromos leading towards the grave. According to the position of the skeletons in chamber of tumulus 2 several individuals were probably successively buried inside. The bronze fibula with the large asymmetrical foot plate originates from mound 5, and was found outside the stone chamber between the stones forming the tumulus, and is dated to the 8th/7th century by A. Chrysostomou.⁵³

Several fibulae designated as variant 3 are known from Agrosyria. The cemetery has been largely destroyed by agricultural activities. In the years 1990/1 it was possible to document remains

⁴¹ Ibid.; Garašanin / Garašanin 1959, 59; the younger "Trebenište phase", parallelized with Ha D, differs in terms of numerous Greek imports from the phase before, which the authors argue shows a social and economic development within the Iron Age.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Garašanin 1975, 16–17.

⁴⁴ Ibid. 16.

⁴⁵ Vasić 1987b, 694.

⁴⁶ Kilian 1975, 57.

⁴⁷ Ibid. 91. 93.

⁴⁸ Stojanovska / Ivanova 2015, 135.

⁴⁹ Misailidou-Despotidou 2008.

⁵⁰ Husenovski 1999, 92; Mitrevski 1991.

⁵¹ Georgiev 1982, 66.

⁵² Ibid. pl. 1.

⁵³ Chrysostomou 1998, Fig. 4, 165.

of at least 10 graves. It is not sufficiently clear if a – today completely leveled – tumulus covered the graves – a hypothesis made plausible due to the orientation of the graves – or if these graves were part of a flat cemetery.⁵⁴ Although the bones are badly preserved, it is assumed that the graves contained inhumations in an outstretched position and were once covered by long-rectangular stone material. The furnishings reveal a differentiation by gender, with the fibulae appearing exclusively in graves of adult women. Well documented is grave Δ. Besides the bow fibula, the grave contained a golden hair ring, a torque, a pair of ear-rings, an amber bead as well as jug and kantharos.⁵⁵ As for the date of the context, A. Chrysostomou followed the proposal of R. Vasić and D. Mitrevski, dating the grave in the 8th/7th century.⁵⁶

The dating of the fibula variants depends mainly on the fibulae known from the grave Milci 31/35, published initially by Z. Georgiev at the beginning of the 1980s. He dated the context to the 1st half of the 7th century due to the comparison of the metal finds with those from the tumular necropolis of Orlova Čuka as well as Chauchitsa.⁵⁷ However, the dating of the grave continues to be controversial.

Although R. Vasić 1987 referred to the proposed chronological dating, he noticed that it cannot be verified with absolute precision⁵⁸ due to the fact that the further attire within the grave is characteristic for the whole 7th century.⁵⁹

S. Pabst also noted the divergence of the fibulae from grave 31/35 from the other representatives of the type and compares them with Attic and Euboean examples.⁶⁰ By identifying certain typological characteristics that corresponds to fibulae dating to the middle of the 9th century, S. Pabst proposed the dating of the fibulae from Milci within the 9th century. This would solve the problem of the already earlier observed chronological hiatus between the Greek and Macedonian fibulae. It is possible, however, to minimize the chronological differences with the help of a

study of the Attic-Boeotian fibulae. In fact, the fibulae from Milci 31/35 mainly correlate with the Attic variant dating to the 9th century.⁶¹ The traditional craftsmanship specific for this type is however still visible when it comes to the Boeotian variants, described as “Early Stage”, which can be recognized at least up to the middle of the 8th century.⁶²

D. Mitrevski dated this context to his Iron Age Phase I (750–700 BCE), which is interpreted as “tumulus horizon” preceding the horizons characterized by flat cemeteries with stone cist graves.⁶³ The main reason for differentiating phases I and II are the grave constructions themselves. As such, the tumulus-shaped grave of Milci 31/35 is pointed out as an example for this phase.

The following phase II (700–650 BCE) includes fibulae of the type “Radanje” with sloping plate which indicates that they are supposed to be younger. The same phase contains the classical canon of “Macedonian Bronzes”.⁶⁴

According to this, phase II in Milci can be connected with the Macedonian Iron Age IIA or Chauchitsa II (Kilian). Phase I can be synchronized with Macedonian Iron Age I B 3, which K. Kilian regarded as a Transitional Phase between the Early Iron Age and the developed Iron Age.⁶⁵ Following K. Kilian, D. Mitrevski further included a certain type of falera as indicative of his Phase I.⁶⁶ However, the published grave context of Marvinci 15 – better known as the “priestess grave” – shows the combination of this type of falera with a pyxis pendant, which is typical for ME IIA / Phase II.⁶⁷

For Phase I after Mitrevski also (iron) flange hilted swords are described as a diagnostic form. Within the region of Gevgelija/Valandovo two iron swords are known, both found in the cem-

⁵⁴ Chrysostomou 2007, 213.

⁵⁵ Ibid. 220–221.

⁵⁶ Chrysostomou 1998, 158–159.

⁵⁷ Georgiev 1982, 67.

⁵⁸ Vasić 1987a, 60.

⁵⁹ Ibid. 23.

⁶⁰ Pabst 2008, 617–619.

⁶¹ see DeVries 1972, 114, in contrast to fibulae of DeVries’ Boeotian groups, where bow and stem are clearly set apart from each other, the bow and stem of Attic fibulae form a continuous curve.

⁶² Ibid. 114–115.

⁶³ Mitrevski 1991, 153.

⁶⁴ Ibid. Tab. 1; Vasić 1999, 73, also Vasić implied a chronological priority of the fibulae from Milci 31/35 before those from Radanje.

⁶⁵ Kilian 1975, 82–83.

⁶⁶ Mitrevski 1991, Tab. 1; Kilian 1975, 75; Kilian assigned open-worked falera to Chauchitsa.

⁶⁷ Videski 1999.

etery of Milci. One example was discovered outside a stone cist, more specifically on the north-western edge of grave 7, together with a jug and a kantharos.⁶⁸ The second example originates from a single grave, covered with amorphous stone material. Besides the sword, the grave contained only a *Schälchenkopfnadel* (bowl-head needle), which is not typical for this region and therefore cannot be used as a marker for the local relative chronology.⁶⁹

At least one other iron flange hilted sword is known from the necropolis of Agrosykia (Ginannitsa). The cemetery is generally dated to the Early Iron Age.⁷⁰ The richly furnished female grave Θ, can be linked to local contexts. It contained among others an anchor-shaped attachment as well as protome-shaped attachments.

These types are known from Chauchitsa where they are combined with pyxis pendants.⁷¹ The early archaic grave LXV AA from Vergina also contained an anchor-shaped attachment.⁷² Consequently, the grave from Agrosykia can be dated to Kilian's phases Chauchitsa IIA / Vergina IV / ME II A.⁷³ In Agrosykia male graves typically contained spear heads as well as swords, though only the example from grave Γ can be identified as an iron flange hilted sword.⁷⁴ Given the differences in furnishing, a systematic chronological correlation of the female and male graves from Agrosykia is not possible. However, due to the spatial proximity of the graves as well as the comparable grave construction,⁷⁵ a certain chronological proximity of the graves is to be assumed. Therefore, it is probable that the iron swords from Agrosykia also date to ME II A. However, these contexts do not permit us to determine with certainty if iron flange hilted swords can be restricted to Phase I.

Nevertheless, the relative chronological position of Milci 31/35 and its contextualization within local environment are still difficult to determine. On the one hand, due to the limited

number of objects which can be exclusively assigned to Phase I, it is difficult to argue for a separate phase.⁷⁶ On the other hand, clearly established diagnostic forms are absent from the grave context of Milci 31/35, which prohibits us from clearly assigning the assemblage to ME IIA. In order to tackle this problem, further parts of the assemblage shall be discussed in the following.

The double-looped bow fibula with round plate is a diagnostic form of horizon 1 according to the chronological system of R. Vasić, but this fibula type is distributed mainly in Northern Macedonia / Kosovo.⁷⁷ In order to gain a better understanding of the relation between the grave assemblage and its local context, the bronze hair-ring as well as the threefold buckle ("proto-astragal") shall be discussed. The hair-ring consists of a spiral wire, with one end turned back to form eight-shaped loops.⁷⁸ Hair-rings of this type are known from Chauchitsa as well as Vergina. In Vergina, mound I, grave B, the hair-ring is found together with a skyphos, dated not before the middle of the 8th century.⁷⁹ In Chauchitsa grave 12 (1922) a hair-ring of this type is found together with a cup which is in grave 9 (1922) combined with a pyxis pendant and therefore dated to ME IIA.

Threefold buckles ("proto-astragal") are known particularly from graves assigned to Horizon 2 (Vasić)⁸⁰ or stone cists graves which are dated to the 7th/6th century in general.⁸¹ Only the grave Marvinci 15, with several buckles of this kind, can be ascribed to ME IIA.

As already stated, the grave context Milci 31/35 doesn't provide explicit diagnostic forms for a dating to ME IIA. However, several objects with direct local comparisons as well as typological details finally leave the option to connect

⁶⁸ Pašić et al. 1987, 78.

⁶⁹ Mitrevski 1991, pl. 1; the *Schälchenkopfnadel* from Milci is hardly comparable to Central European examples (see Vasić 2003, 94–95).

⁷⁰ Chrysostomou 1994.

⁷¹ Casson 1925, 9–11, grave 13; Kilian 1975, pl. 34, grave C.

⁷² Bräuning / Kilian-Dirlmeier 2013, Fig. 153.

⁷³ Kilian 1975, 75–76. 84.

⁷⁴ Chrysostomou et al. 2007, 218, pl. III A 2.

⁷⁵ Chrysostomou 1994, Fig. 1.

⁷⁶ Pare 1999, 336–339; in discussing the beginning of the Iron Age in Macedonia, Chr. Pare also noticed that both of Kilian's phases, I B3 and II A [which correspond to D. Mitrevskis Phases I and II], include material which is comparable to material representing his phase Glasinac I B. This makes it possible to suggest a combination of the two initially separated phases.

⁷⁷ Vasić 1999, 54–55.

⁷⁸ Bräuning / Kilian-Dirlmeier 2013.

⁷⁹ Ibid. 64; however, the authors did not assign the grave to any of the Vergina phases.

⁸⁰ Filipović / Mladenović 2017, 155.

⁸¹ Dedeli Graves 1, 14, 25, 29; Marvinci Grave 13; Suva Reka (Gevgelija) Grave 33.

grave Milci 31/35 with contexts which can be dated to ME IIA. Therefore, at the current state of research, it seems plausible to integrate Phase I and II to one chronological horizon – though this may have to be revisited once further material is published.

Nevertheless, the unique character of the grave construction, the assemblage as well as the unique design of the fibula set has usually led to a differentiation regarding the chronological position of the context. However, until now it is not at issue if the social position of the individual – and not the chronological position – led to the unique character of the grave.

The furnishing of the individual with 2 pairs of armrings and in total six bow fibulae as well as a spectacle fibula is remarkable in a comparison with other graves within the region in this period. Indeed, given the smaller quantitative occurrence of fibulae in graves of the Gevgelija/Valandovo region they can be considered as an attire component which does not regularly occur in graves of adult individuals.⁸² Male individuals usually receive a single bow fibula. Graves denoted as women's graves are usually furnished with either a pair of spectacle fibulae or a set of bow fibulae, usually of the same type. By comparison with other compositions, the set of fibulae from grave Milci 31/35 is thus remarkably diverse and comprises various different types, making it standing out within the region.

Worth noting is also the furnishing with a single hair-ring. In the graves of the tumulus necropolis of Vergina, the golden hair-rings are part of female graves with opulent headdresses. An argument has been made for their representative character.⁸³ Golden hair-rings are also part of the richly furnished graves of Agrosykia (Gimnitsa). Even if the hair-ring known from the grave of Milci is not made of precious metal, a symbolic character of the object should not be excluded.

In considering the attire composition set of grave Milci 31/35, the diversity of types should be noted. The fibula set of type “Radanje” is clearly linked to Central Greece by its design. The local

forms however oscillate between northern and central Macedonia. Such diversity in the composition of assemblages has been recently used as an argument for the outstanding position of certain female individuals within the society.⁸⁴ The phenomenon of richly furnished women bearing a certain social role is in fact also discussed for the regions of the Vardar Valley. The main focus is however put on the so-called “priestess graves” – which are so far best illustrated by the well-known grave Marvinci 15. Of particular interest are in this case the “Macedonian Bronzes”, which are thought to have had a cultic function. Because of this and the exceptional attire set, this female individual is regarded to have had a religious/cultic function within the society. Due to the fact that the individual known from grave Milci 31/35 was not furnished with “Macedonian Bronzes” it is not regarded as “priestess” and therefore so far not included in the discussion of richly furnished women and their social position.

Summary

The survey of the single-looped bow fibulae with asymmetrical plate clearly reveals their heterogeneous character as well as the difficulties regarding their chronological position and cultural affiliation. So far, this type of fibula occurs mainly along the Vardar as well as in the Rhodope Mountains, though the regions of the Bregalnica and Vardar Valleys have been the main concern of this paper. It is hardly possible to date the fibulae exactly. For that reason they are only classified to the first horizon of the Early Iron Age, which can be described with the help of Horizon 1 (Vasić) as well as ME II A (Kilian). This first horizon of the Early Iron Age of the Vardar and Bregalnica Valleys has certain difficulties of both a chronological and a cultural nature, which impede a clear understanding of the cultural development of the region. The understanding of the region is mainly based on grave findings, with different kinds of tumuli architecture as well as flat graves showing a diverse picture of burial rituals and material culture. This diversity leaves us with a cultural picture which appears almost

⁸² On the basis of 136 graves known from the Valandovo / Gevgelija region, which can be denoted as graves of adult individuals, only 18% are furnished with one fibula or a set of fibulae.

⁸³ Bräuning / Kilian-Dirlmeier 2013, 54–55.

⁸⁴ Gavranović 2016, 131. 139–140.

fragmentary, making it difficult to understand the connections between the burial communities and to integrate them into a larger entity like an (archaeological) group. In contrast to younger phases of the Early Iron Age, where types of bow fibulae are distributed on a supra-regional level, the types of the first horizon of the Early Iron Age seem to be much more restricted to local surroundings, with local tastes dominating over supra-regional trends.

The discussion of the contexts of the fibulae indicates that single-looped bow fibulae with asymmetrical plate are linked to individuals archaeologically determined as women. Based on the small number of published grave contexts it is difficult to discover if those artifacts were reserved for women bearing a certain role within the communities. While this is indicated by grave Milci 31/35, only further systematic research can provide an answer to this question.

The author

Sažetak

Vizualiziranje kulturne razlike tipologija jednopetljastih lučnih fibula s asimetričnim i pravougaonim pločama

Istraživanje jednopetljastih lučnih fibula s asimetričnim pločama jasno pokazuje njihov heterogeni karakter, kao i poteškoće u pogledu njihove hronološke pozicije i kulturne afilijacije. Ovaj tip fibule se do sada pojavljivao većinom oko Vardara, kao i na Rodopima, iako su tematika ovog rada područja oko Bregalnice i Vardarske doline. Teško je sasvim precizno datirati fibule. Iz tog razloga klasificirane su u prvi horizont ranog željeznog doba, što se može odrediti pomoću Horizonta 1 (Vasić), kao i ME II A (Kilian). Prvi horizont ranog željeznog doba Vardara i doline Bregalnice ima nejasnoće i kod hronologije i kulture, što sprečava jasno razumijevanje razvitka kulture na ovom području. Razumijevanje kulture ove regije bazirano je na predmetima iz grobova s različitim tipovima tumulске arhitekture, kao i ravnim grobovima koji daju različitu sliku ukopnih rituala i materijalne kulture. Različitost nam daje kulturnu sliku koja se pojavljuje

većinom u fragmentima, otežavajući tako shvaćanje povezanosti između ukopa zajednica i njihovih integracija u veći entitet kao (arheološke) grupe. U kontrastu s mlađim fazama ranog željeznog doba, gdje se tipovi lučnih fibula distribuiraju na nadregionalnoj razini, tipovi prvog horizonta ranog željeznog doba su više ograničeni na lokalno okruženje, s lokalnim primjesama koje dominiraju nad nadregionalnim trendovima.

Rasprava oko konteksta fibula pokazuje da su jednopetljaste lučne fibule s asimetričnom pločom povezane s pojedincima, arheološki definirane kao žene. Na temelju malog broja publiciranih sadržaja grobova teško je otkriti da li su ti artefakti namijenjeni ženama koje su imale određenu ulogu u zajednicama. Iako na ovo ukazuje grob Milci 31/35, samo dalja sistematska istraživanja mogu dati odgovor na ovo pitanje.

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