



Baština Akademije nauka i umjetnosti Bosne i Hercegovine

Godišnjak 45: Godišnjak/Jahrbuch

Govedarica, Blagoje

2016

Akademija nauka i umjetnosti Bosne i Hercegovine

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The stratigraphy of Tumulus 6 in Shtoj and the appearance of the violin idols in burial complexes of the south Adriatic region

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Abstract: The paper presents the violin-shaped idols from Shtoj, Rakića Kuće and Apollonia that date to the beginning of the Bronze Age in the area of the southern Adria. A relationship is indicated between the appearance of these idols and the abstract-schematic forms of the Early Cycladic period. Further, the question of contacts between the study area and the Pit-grave culture of the steppe region, with its local derivatives in the eastern Balkans, is discussed. To this end, the emergence of the pit graves under tumuli in the area of the Adria, in which the idols were discovered, is also considered. The links with the Aegean and the eastern Balkans, including several reliable radiocarbon dates that fit within the local framework, offer for the first time the possibility of placing the beginning of the Adriatic Bronze Age in the context of cultural advancements of the first centuries of the 3rd millennium BC. At the same time, it represents the first age determination for this period based on definite indicators of the absolute chronology. The emergence of tumuli and violin idols, as well as rich “princely” graves is an explicit reflection of the important cultural innovations that mark the final break with the former Neolithic traditions. That makes the southern Adriatic, above all the coastal areas of present-day Montenegro and northern Albania, the initial centre of the development of the Adriatic Bronze Age.

Key words: violin idols, the Cyclades, tumuli, pit graves, Early Bronze Age, southern Adria

1. Introduction

The anthropomorphic figurines that, by their shape, resemble the body and neck of the violin – so-called ‘violin idols’ – represent a specific form of cult objects characterising the Cycladic culture of the eponymous islands in the central Aegean over the period spanning the end of the fourth and beginning of the third millennium BC – period Early Cycladic I (EC I). Numerous, though not entirely adequate, analogies for these idols are found in the nearby region of south-west Anatolia. On the other side of the Aegean, in the southern Balkans, only three such finds were known until recently (from Yunazite IV, Maliq IIIc and Lerna IVb); they were the first indicators of the possible presence of these forms in the European continent. However, the Balkan examples were dated to Early Helladic III (EH III) and Middle Helladic (MH) phases, that is, to a much later period, and this immediately im-

peded any attempt of identifying a relationship between these instances. The situation changed markedly after the discovery of a set of tumuli containing rich “princely” graves, such as those in Mala and Velika Gruda dating to the beginning of the third millennium and showing multiple links with the Aegean and the wider area of the Mediterranean.¹ In several of these tumuli located in present-day Montenegro and Albania a significant quantity of violin idols was discovered (eleven until now). It is of particular importance that there, similar to the examples from the Cyclades, the idols were found in graves and that they typologically correspond with the Cycladic abstract-schematic forms to a great degree.

The largest group comprising six such figurines was encountered in Tumulus 6 in Shtoj near the town of Skadar (Albania). Initially, the specific circumstances surrounding the ritual

¹ Primas 1996, 11 ff.



Fig. 1: 1 Shtoj; 2 Rakića kuće; 3 Apollonia; 4 Maliq; 5 Yunazite; 6 Lerna; 7 Milos; 8 Paros

offering of these figurines caused some uncertainties and erroneous interpretations in relation to the content and dating of the earliest phase of use of the tumulus. Ultimately, indicative archaeological finds enabled the correct interpretation of the main strata and the graves. Fortunately, the primary finds were relatively well preserved, which is rarely the case in early tumuli in this area. Overall, Tumulus 6 in Shtoj emerged as a key site of the Early Bronze Age in the southern Adriatic.² The characteristic finds and the stratig-

raphy of the tumulus render it a very good example and a starting point for both investigations on the appearance of violin idols in the Adriatic and research on the development of tumuli and other novelties of the funerary cult that mark the beginning of the Bronze Age in the region. For this reason, and considering the aspects of the research mentioned above, here the relevant cultural layers and finds from the tumulus will be examined first.

2. Tumulus 6 in Shtoj

In the plain of the village Shtoj that extends immediately to the east of Lake Skadar and to the north of Skadar (Fig. 1,1) ca. 160 tumuli were

² The designation 'south Adriatic' refers to the most south-eastern part of the Balkan coast of the Adriatic Sea and its hinterland. In geographical and archaeological literature, the entire Balkan coast is usually called 'eastern Adriatic' as opposed to the Apennine coast which is referred to as 'western Adriatic'. Through most of the Holocene, the Balkan side of the Adriatic, including its immediate hinterland, constituted an independent geo-cultural entity consisting of three local regions: northern Adriatic (Istra, Kvarner, Ve-

lebit), central Adriatic (Dalmatia) and southern Adriatic (Montenegro, north Albania). See Govedarica 1989, 7 ff.

documented, eleven of which were excavated in 1980-1990.³ The excavations brought forth some very interesting results that were partially published on several occasions, but are slightly contradictory. It was only with the comprehensive publication presented in 2012 that detailed considerations and investigations of the tumuli became possible.⁴ Tumuli 6 and 10, in which burial began in the Early Bronze Age, turned out to be the earliest among those excavated, and also most likely represent the earliest such monuments along the Adriatic. Particularly interesting in view of the objects that it yielded and the stratigraphy is Tumulus 6, which was excavated in 1984. Excavations revealed 14 graves within the mound (which was 1.7 m high and 18 m in diameter). The stone cist detected below the accumulation of stones in the centre of the tumulus was identified as the primary grave; in it, as a grave good, was a characteristic pot of the Cetina culture, placed next to the buried individual (grave number 14).⁵ Graves 1-13 represent later burials associated with the Glasinac-Mati culture of the Early Iron Age. In addition, six violin-shaped anthropomorphic figurines were discovered at the very base of the tumulus, ca. 0.40 m underneath Grave 14. In accordance with the determined stratigraphy, the figurines were attributed to the Cetina culture grave.⁶

However, this ascription was problematic from the very beginning, because neither anthropomorphic representations nor any other such figural depictions have been recorded in the Cetina culture. The excavators themselves had difficulties in interpreting the situation; so they re-visited the site in 1985. During the renewed excavations another grave was detected, beneath the stone cist in Grave 14, and dug into the virgin soil; the six idols were clearly associated with this particular grave. Moreover, the discovery of this burial place – Grave 15 – offered a basis for a detailed understanding of the stratigraphy and architecture of the tumulus, as well as the identification of two phases of mound construction and three phases of interment. It became obvious

that Grave 14, at the outset described as the primary grave, stems in fact from the second phase of the construction of the tumulus, i.e. the second burial phase, whereas the initial phase, that is the first burial horizon, is represented by the newly discovered Grave 15. The remaining 13 graves constitute the third phase of burying that falls within the Early Iron Age. There was no further building activity at the tumulus during this last phase; instead, the Iron Age graves were dug into the existing accumulation created over the period of the Cetina culture.⁷

2.1 Primary tumulus with Grave 15

The architectural elements and dimensions of the primary tumulus can be examined only from the aspect of the condition in which it was encountered at the moment of excavation and that aspect, due to a number of factors, diverges from the tumulus' original state to a small or a great degree.⁸ At the time of discovery, the earthen mound of the primary tumulus together with the stone cover was ca 0.44 m in height and ca. 8 m in diameter (Fig. 2,a,b). The total diameter of the primary tumulus, including the layer of humus preserved between the stone cover of the initial mound and the secondary stone accumulation, is ca. 11 m (Fig. 2,c). As already emphasised, the preserved dimensions cannot be taken as an accurate reflection of the original state. However, the described elements provide a sufficient basis for the reconstruction of the 'development' of the tumulus, that is, the method of its construction and enlargement, whilst they offer some indirect possibilities for examination of the original dimensions of the mound. Thus, the existence of the layer of top soil above the stone covering unambiguously demonstrates that the primary tumulus stood independently for some time. The intensity of humus deposition along its edge suggests that this period was considerably long, i.e. long enough for the effect of the natural processes of sedimentation and erosion to become highly evident. As a consequence of these processes,

³ For the geographical position and history of research of the tumuli in Shtoj, see Koka 2012, 15-21.

⁴ Koka 2012.

⁵ Koka 1985, 241 ff.; Govedarica 1989, 189-190.

⁶ Koka 1985, 241-249; Govedarica 1991, 105-106; Bodinaku 1999, 14-15.

⁷ The researchers mention only two Bronze Age phases of the construction and burial as evidenced by graves 15 and 14, without explicitly defining the Iron Age graves as a separate, third burial phase. See Koka 1990, 27 ff.; 2012, 36-37.

⁸ All of the data presented here are based on the 2012 comprehensive publication (Koka 2012).

the height of the tumulus decreased, whereas its perimeter increased (Fig. 2,a,b,c).

The relatively long time period between the raising of the primary tumulus and the construction of the secondary mound was also necessary from a socio-religious perspective. That is to say, the construction of the secondary mound obscured the main function of the primary tumulus as a visible symbol and an authentic memorial. This means that there was no direct relationship between the individual interred in the primary grave and the builders of the secondary tumulus; otherwise the earlier burial mound would not have been covered and, practically, obliterated. Already during the Cetina culture the primary tumulus obviously lost its significance as a personalised tomb requiring special honouring and piety. Only a general memory of the burial place remained. Secondary use of tumuli as final resting place was a common practice in prehistory, which also occurred in later periods. To this end, it is only in prehistory that former mounds were extended to accommodate new graves, whereas the later ones were chiefly used as prominent locations suitable for placing new burials.⁹ The examples from other regions demonstrate that the respect for 'old graveyards' started to be shown as early as the Early Copper Age and is evident even in cases of flat cemeteries. It appears that visible traces of a gravestone were not instrumental for this kind of remembrance, but that it could have been determined by the importance of the buried individual, following the principle: the greater the importance, the more lasting the memory.¹⁰

The subsequent use of the burial place located in Tumulus 6 in Shtoj and the accumulation of the secondary stone covering halted the process of erosion of the primary mound. This suggests that the dimensions of the primary tumulus, as measured at the time of the excavation (8 m between the edges of the stone cover and 11 m in diameter of the humus layer, Fig. 2,b,c), adequately reflect the state at the time of mound's enlargement.

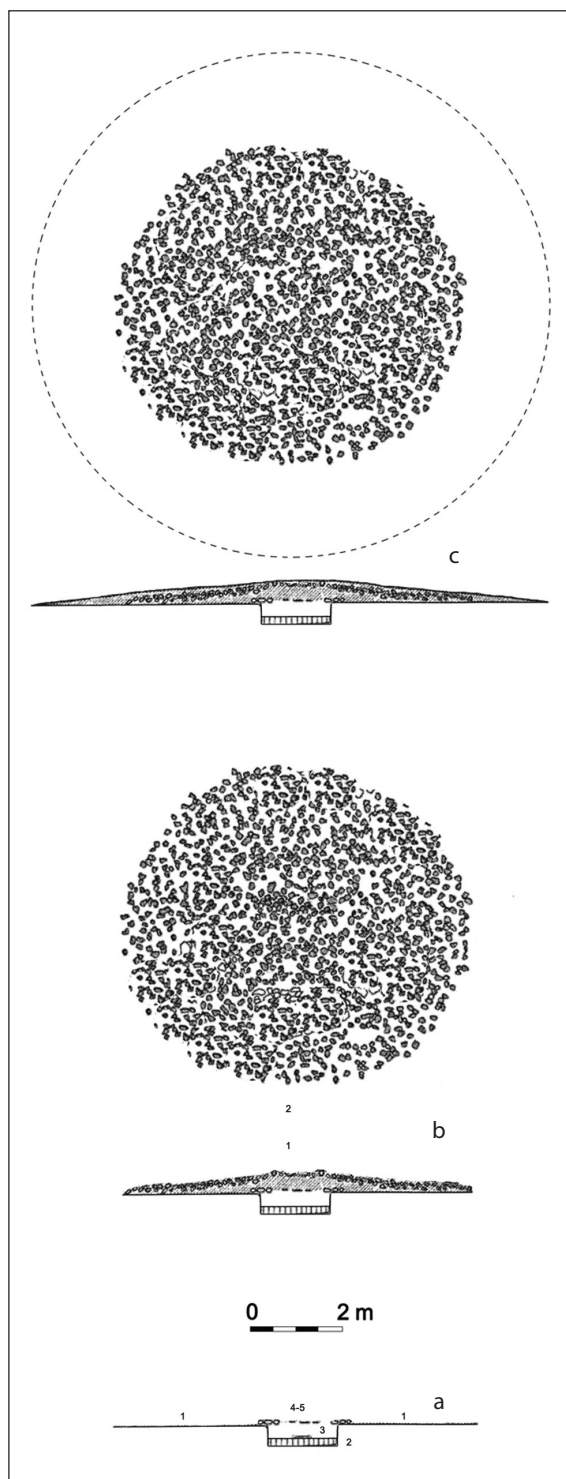


Fig. 2 Tumulus 6 in Shtoj, primary mound

This gives significance to the available measurements, as they can be taken as valid for the point in time at which the Cetina culture burial was made – a time that is much closer to the period of construction of the primary mound. This,

⁹ Govedarica 2011, 34-37, Abb. 1; 5.

¹⁰ An illustration of this form of continuity is the site of Giurgiulești in the south of the Republic of Moldova where, on the place of five flat graves dominated by the tomb of a local leader from the time of the Early Copper Age, ca. 1500 years later a monumental tumulus of the Pit-Grave culture was created. See Govedarica 2004, 85 ff.

however, refers only to the circumference, not to the height. Whereas the pressure exerted by the weight of the new accumulation suspended erosion and further horizontal expansion of the bulk of the primary tumulus, it increased the settling of the sediment and reduced the mound's height. The process of settling of sediment constituting the primary mound, which started already at the time of its construction and increased in intensity after the build-up of the mass of the secondary accumulation, continued up to the time of the excavations, although naturally with decreasing effect over time.

The primary mound of Tumulus 6 was built as part of the burial of the individual in Grave 15 and was intended as a memorial; there were no other graves within the mound. Together with this grave, the mound represents an intact symbolic and chronological entity, which from an archaeological point of view gives it unique importance. In addition, the very well-expressed constructional and cult elements of Grave 15 offer numerous possibilities for examining the internal stratigraphy of the grave itself, i.e. understanding the phases of its construction and infill, as well as the associated ritual activities. This information is highly indicative and can serve as a model for explaining the situation encountered in other Early Bronze Age graves in the region of the southern Adriatic where similar elements occur, but are not as distinct, are less well preserved or not documented in detail.

The funerary ritual in Grave 15 and the raising of the primary tumulus to function as a grave monument for the inhumed individual, entailed the following seven essential ritual activities and undertakings:

1. purification (?) and marking of the sacred area of the tumulus (Fig. 2,a.1);
2. digging the pit in the centre of the sacred area and spreading a layer of sand on its bottom (Fig. 2,a.2; 2,a.3);
3. a) interring the deceased and b) depositing ceramic grave goods upon the sand bedding (Fig. 2,a.3; 3,a.1; 3,b.1-3);
4. filling the pit and creating a stone border along the perimeter of the covered grave (Fig. 2,a.4);
5. offering figurines and a vessel within the stone-bordered area of the grave covering (Fig. 2,a.5);

6. construction of the tumulus using the soil collected in the surrounding area (Fig. 2,b1);

7. laying the stone covering over the earthen mound of the tumulus (Fig. 2, b2).

2.1.1 Grave 15 (*ritual activities 2–5*)

Grave 15 was located in the central part of the tumulus, in a rectangular pit of 1.5 x 1.1 m in dimensions, in NW–SE orientation and dug into the virgin soil to a depth of 0.45 m. The bottom of the pit was covered with a 15 cm-thick layer of yellowish sand (ritual activity No. 2; Fig. 3,a) like a bedding. It was upon this pallet that the deceased, judging from the poorly preserved skeleton, was placed in a flexed position, on the left side, with the head towards the N–NW and the face towards the E–NE (ritual activity No. 3a; Fig. 3,a1; 3,b1). Discovered in front of the chest were two pots: a conical bowl and inside it a jug with a handle (ritual activity No. 3b; Fig. 3,b.2.3). The jug has a spherical body, a flat base and a gently curving neck. The upper end of the loop handle sits on the rim, whereas the lower end is attached where the body is at its widest (H: 9.5 cm; Dm of the rim: 9 cm; Dm of the body: 10.1 cm; Pl. 1, 5). The conical bowl has a flat base and a flattened rim under which are four symmetrically placed protrusions (H: 7.5 cm; Dm of the rim: 18 cm; Dm of the base: 6.2 cm; Pl. 1, 4).

Following the interment, the burial pit was in-filled with brown soil up to the level of the surrounding area. Subsequently, a rectangular border was built, up to 0.40 m wide, by placing several rows of stone slabs around the pit (ritual activity No. 4; Fig. 3,a.4; 3,c). This stone edging, combined with finely crushed stone, gravel and fragments of reddish mineral spread over the in-fill of the burial pit, formed a platform of 2.19 m x 1.64 m, which at the same time represented the grave cover (Fig. 3,c). Discovered in the southern part of the bordered area were six ceramic figurines in the shape of a violin as well as a small vessel, all organised in two clusters: the cluster to the west comprised four figurines and the pot (fig. 3,c.1–4.7), while the cluster to the east consisted of two figurines (Fig. 3,c.5–6). All of the figurines, except for No. 3, were placed on their back. The ritual encompassing the deposition of

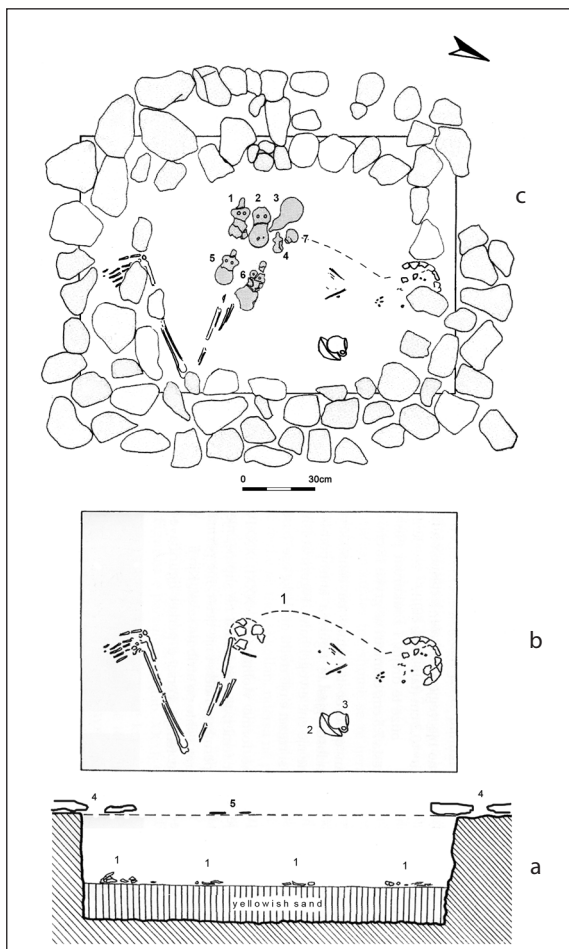


Fig. 3 Tumulus 6 in Shtoj, Grave 15

the statuettes and the pot constitutes ritual activity No. 5.

After all of the activities related to the inhumation of the deceased and the closure of the grave had been completed, the construction of the mound as the external marker of the grave commenced. For this purpose, ritual activities nos. 6 and 7 were performed and included building the mound of earth and covering the mound with a layer of stone that was supposed to protect and reinforce the thus formed grave monument (Fig. 2,b.1.2).

2.1.2 Description of the finds reflecting ritual activity No. 5 (six violin idols and a vessel)

Idol Nr. 1: made of clay, broken into several pieces, but mostly preserved, placed in the southern part of the western cluster with the head pointing towards the SW (Fig. 3,c.1; Pl. 1.1). The dark brown surface has a matte finish with sporadic

traces of reddish and whitish colour (possibly deriving from the surrounding soil matrix). The body is flat and schematised in the shape of a violin. The head at the top of the flat neck is tilted backwards. There are two knobs in the upper part of the body, representing female breasts (dimensions: 16 cm x 8–9 cm x 1 cm).

Idol Nr. 2: made of red baked clay, with a dark brown matte surface, broken into two pieces, head missing, found to the right of Figurine 1 of the western cluster and pointing towards the SW (Fig. 3,c.2; Pl. 2.1). The flat body in the shape of an '8' has two small protrusions in the upper part representing secondary characteristics of female body, whereas the lower part of the body, where the primary gender characteristic was depicted, is damaged (dimensions: 14.7 cm x 7.8–8.1 cm x 1.5 cm).

Idol Nr. 3: in the shape of a violin, made of red baked clay, with a dark grey polished surface, placed on its front diagonally from the first two figurines of the western cluster, its head pointing to the SE (Fig. 3,c.3; Pl. 2.2). The upper, significantly narrower part of the body gradually becomes a moderately modelled neck. In the lower part of the body is the formed representation of male genitalia, partially preserved (dimensions: 18 cm x 5.5–8 cm x 1.5 cm).

Idol Nr. 4: partially reconstructed, made of grey-red baked clay, with a dark brown rough surface, found in the eastern part of the western cluster of figurines, head pointing to the SW (Fig. 3,c.4; Pl. 1.2). It possesses all of the elements typical for the other figurines, but has no decoration, i.e. no gender attributes. For this reason and basing on its small dimensions, it can be considered as the representation of a child (dimensions: 6.5 cm x 3.3–3.6 cm x 0.8 cm).

Idol Nr. 5: the second, eastern cluster of figurines includes a relatively well preserved statuette made of red baked clay, with a grey-brown matte surface, and lying with its head pointing to the W-SW (Fig. 3,c.5; Pl. 3.1). Below the neck, on the left side, in the area of the neck and the head and in the belly areas are single or double rows of circular indentations. Similar dents are visible in the lower part of the statuette, where they are organised in two groups – one group consisting of 13 and the other comprising eight depressions. The two usual protrusions representing female

breasts are visible in the upper part of the body (dimensions: 13.7 cm x 6-7 cm x 1 cm).

Idol Nr. 6: the other figurine in the eastern group is fragmented into many pieces and lay parallel to Figurine 5, also pointing towards the W-SW (Fig. 3,c.6; Pl. 3.2). The two knobs in the upper part of the figurine with grey matte surface indicate another representation of a female (dimensions: 17.7 cm x 7.5–9.7 cm x 1.9 cm).

The pot: at the northern edge of the western cluster of figurines, immediately next to Figurine 4. It is a small vessel with a spherical body and indistinctly modelled curving neck (Fig. 3,c.7; Pl. 1.3). The pot is made of clay of the same quality as the clay used for creating the figurines and has grey-brown matte surface.

2.2 Secondary tumulus with Grave 14

At the top of the central part of the primary mound, and partly dug into it (Fig. 4,a), was the stone cist of Grave 14 constructed out of two long and two short slabs which form the inner space that is 1.15 m long, 0.75 m wide and 0.30 m deep.¹¹ This structure was covered with small slabs that later collapsed into the cist itself. One of the slabs damaged the skeleton of the deceased, which, as indicated by its preserved remains, had been placed on the left side in a tightly flexed position, the head pointing towards the SE and the face towards the SW (Fig. 5).

An amphora made of well-baked clay with a polished, dark brown matte surface had been placed upright near the pelvis of the deceased (Fig. 5,b; dimensions of the amphora: H: 14.5 cm, Dm: 15.7 cm). The round body of the vessel with flat base gradually tapers into an indistinct neck and a slightly everted rim. Two 'X'-shaped handles extend from the rim to the indiscernible shoulder. The vessel is decorated with three horizontal rows of triple incised lines with encrustation; the two upper rows end near the handles and there they bend in an acute angle; the lower row runs around the whole pot and forms the same bend in the area where the handles are attached to the body (Pl. 4.1). All of the described

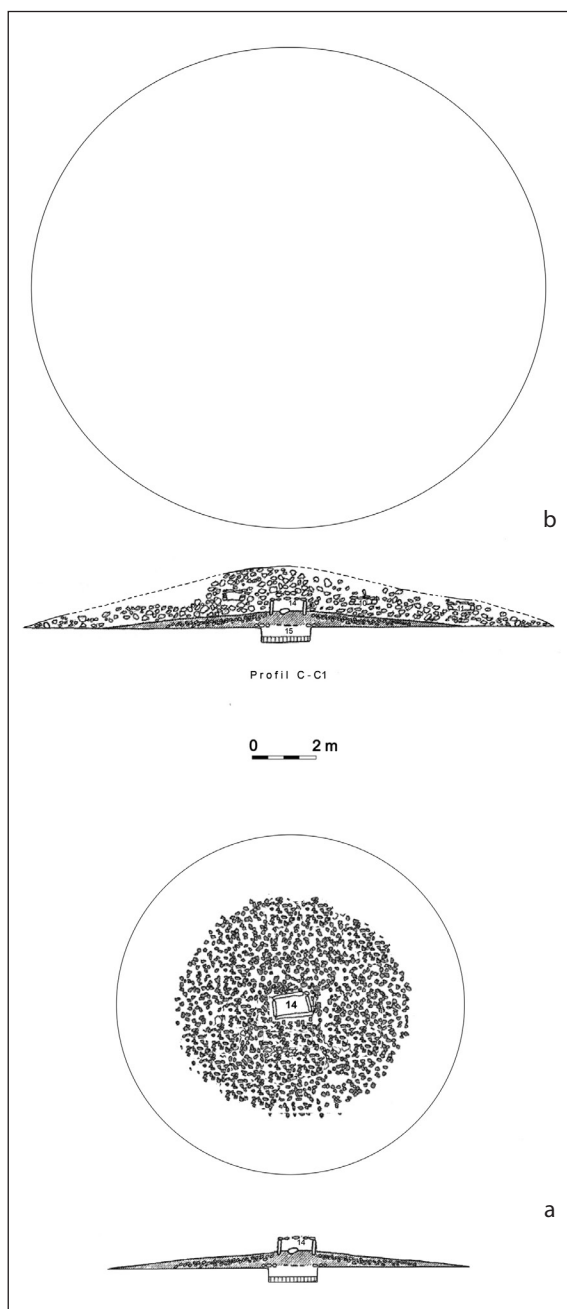


Fig. 4 Tumulus 6 in Shtoj, secondary mound

elements suggest that the pot is typical of the classical phase of the Cetina culture.

Following the funeral and closure of the stone cist in Grave 14, the erection of the secondary tumulus took place. This accumulation, together with the thin layer of modern humus, gave the current shape to the tumulus which is 1.7 m high and 18 m in radius (Fig. 4). Yet, the composition of this accumulation is not entirely clear. There are not sufficient data about it in the published

¹¹ This is calculated based on the scale provided in the photography and drawings of the grave. Hence, the dimensions of the cist given in the text, i.e. 1.5 x 0.8 m, do not correlate with the actual dimensions. See Koka 2012, 40.

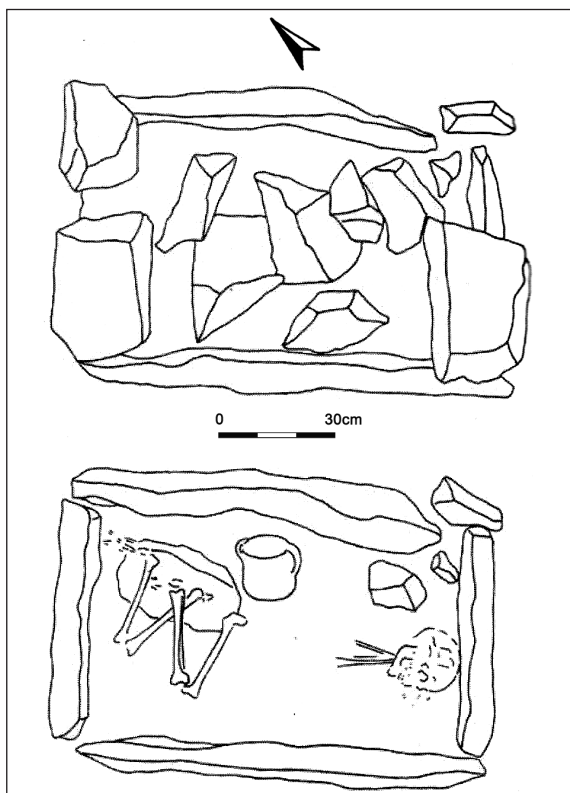


Fig. 5 Tumulus 6 in Shtoj, Grave 14

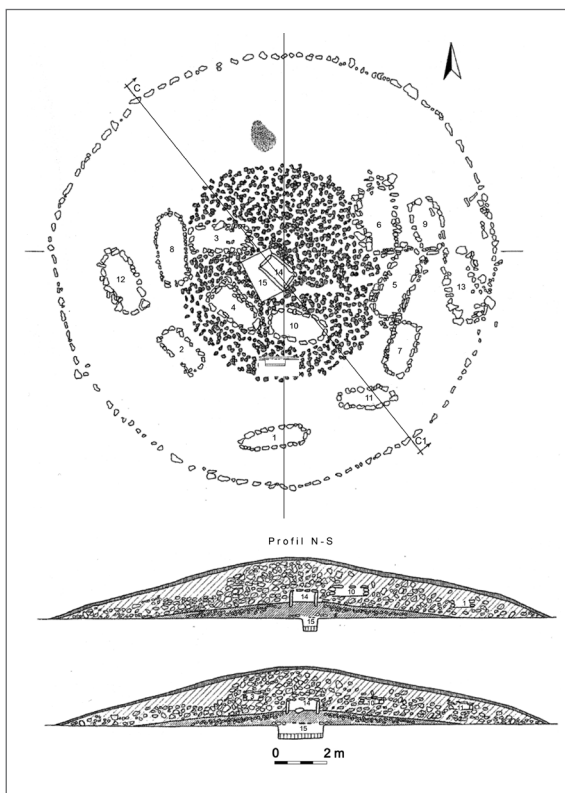


Fig. 6 Tumulus 6 in Shtoj, general layout

reports. According to the profiles available in print, the secondary mound was entirely built of stone, but was disturbed in several places due to graves dug there during the Iron Age. However, in the general plan of the tumulus only the stone covering of the primary mound is shown, whereas traces of the stone accumulation along the edge are missing (Fig. 6). Thus, the wider area of the mound must have been covered with earth, and this contradicts the situation presented in the published profiles. Furthermore, detected at the perimeter of the tumulus was a border constructed of a row of stone blocks, but the method and timing of this construction have not been clarified. These discrepancies relate mainly to the outermost edge of the secondary tumulus and to the issue of intrusions from the time of the Iron Age. They should thus be resolved as part of investigations of the third burial phase of the mound. In any case, these questions are not within the scope of the considerations presented here, which focus on the grave goods and the stratigraphic relationships of the primary mound and its enlargement during the time of the Early Bronze Age.

3. Other burial complexes with finds of the violin idols

3.1 Tumulus 'Rakića Kuće'

This tumulus is located in the area of the hamlet Rakića Kuće in Čemovsko Field, ca. 2 km to the west of the motorway that runs from Podgorica to Tuzi and continues to Skadar (Fig. 1.2).¹² The stone covering of the tumulus was used as a source of building material for the construction of a local road in 1989 and is almost entirely dismantled. During the quarrying for stone, a grave in the middle of the tumulus was disturbed; three violin-shaped figurines, the head of a figurine and a small ceramic vessel with a lid were discovered in the grave. During the salvage excavations that immediately followed, six more graves were discovered and an empty pit as well as half of a wall made of pebbles and gravel that initially enclosed an area of 14 m in diameter within which the graves were contained (Fig. 7). All of the

¹² All of the data on the finds from this tumulus that will be presented below are based on the excavation report published in 1995 (Velimirović-Žižić 1995, 21 ff.).

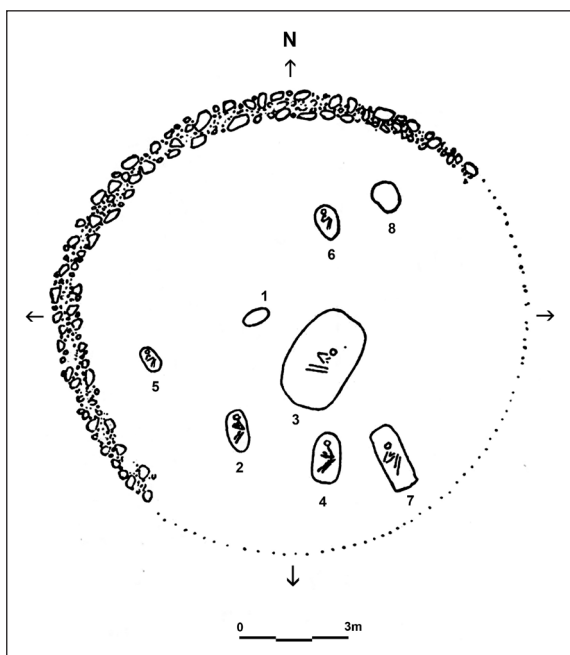


Fig. 7 Rakića Kuće tumulus, general layout

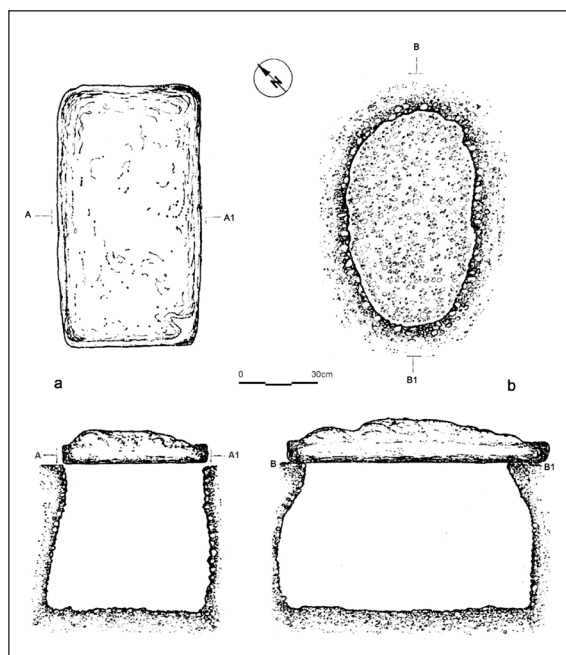


Fig. 8 Rakića Kuće tumulus, Grave 1

recorded graves were dug into the natural soil. Based on the multitude of shared characteristics, they belong to one and the same, primary burial horizon.¹³ Given the unusually large concentration of pit graves, the graves will be presented in more detail in the text below.

Grave 1 (destroyed during road construction work) was located in the central part of the base of the tumulus, in an oval pit in NE–SW orientation; it was dug into the natural conglomerate to the depth of 0.55 m (Fig. 7.1). The base of the pit was rectangular, 0.85 x 0.55 m in size, and covered with small-sized river pebbles. In its south-eastern part were displaced elements of the leg of an infant skeleton, which radiocarbon dated to the period 2503–2288 cal BC (2σ).¹⁴ The pit was filled with dark soil and covered with a large stone slab, whose dimensions are: 1.10 m x 0.55 m x 0.14 m (Fig. 8).

According to the statement from the workman who dismantled the grave, immediately underneath the stone slab were the above-men-

tioned four ceramic statuettes and the pot with a lid.¹⁵

1. Well-baked, truncated in the upper part, but completely preserved flat figurine with a body in the shape of a violin that tapers into an indistinctly modelled neck and an amorphous head (Pl. 4, 2). On the compact and polished, dark brown surface are three protuberances interpreted as indicating the female gender (dimensions: 16 cm x 6.8–8.6 cm x 1 cm).
2. The badly preserved violin-shaped figurine made of poorly baked clay and with a porous grey-tan surface was broken into five fragments in the course of the excavation and because of this was partially reconstructed (Pl. 5, 2). In the upper part of the flat body two asymmetrically placed knobs represent female breasts (reconstructed dimensions: 13 cm x 5.8–6.8 cm x 0.5 cm).
3. The figurine is flat in outline, made of well-baked clay and displays a somewhat stylised form of the violin; the head is broken off (Pl. 5, 1). Two modelled protuberances on the grey polished surface symbolise fe-

¹³ Possibly the aforementioned stone enclosure wall belonged to the primary burial horizon as well. However, due to the lack of stratigraphic data, a later use of the primary mound and subsequent emplacement of the stone circle cannot be excluded.

¹⁴ Guštin, Preložnik 2015, 32, Fig. 15.

¹⁵ The finds were afterwards collected around the grave and from the dump of the removed mound material.

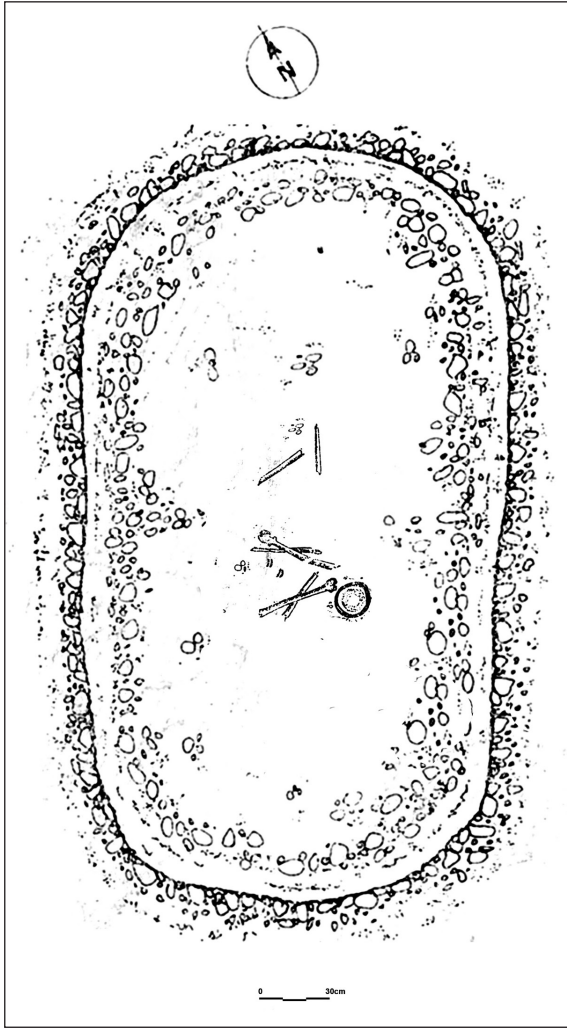


Fig. 9 Rakića Kuće tumulus, Grave 2

- male breasts and arms (dimensions: 9 cm x 4.5-6.3 cm x 0.6 cm).
4. Head and part of the body most likely of a male figurine with schematically depicted facial features (eyes, nose, lips and ears), made of well-baked clay and with a tan polished surface (Pl. 6, 1; dimensions: 7 cm x 5.6 cm x 0.7 cm).¹⁶
 5. A small vessel with a round body, flat base, short neck and gently everted rim, made of clay with sand inclusions. The surface is of tan colour and slightly burnished (H: 7 cm; Dm of the opening: 5 cm). Found next to it

¹⁶ The figurine was probably broken and most fragments lost during the construction works.

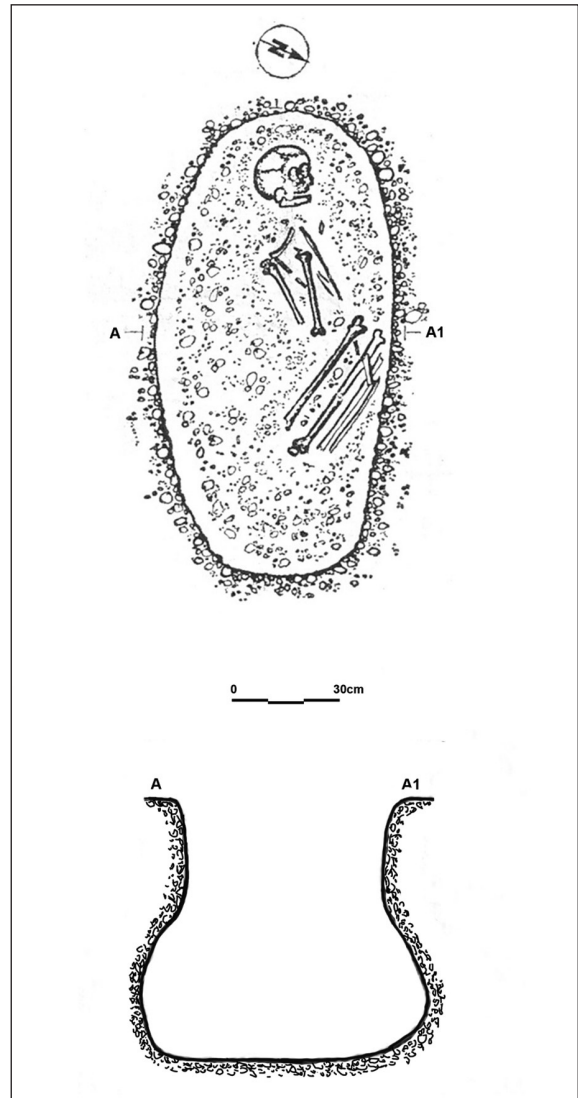


Fig. 10 Rakića Kuće tumulus, Grave 3

was a concave lid with a perforation in the centre (Dm: 7 cm).¹⁷

Grave 2 was situated ca. 2.5 m to the south of Grave 1, in an oval pit oriented in SW-NE direction, 1.25 m x 0.58 m in size, and dug into the virgin soil to the depth of 0.7 m. Similar to Grave 1, here as well the pit broadens in the lower portion and becomes rectangular at the base. In the NW part lay the skeleton of an adult individual, flexed, placed on the right side and with tightly bent legs. Adjacent to the legs were fragments of a poorly-baked, dark grey vessel (Fig. 7.2; 9).¹⁸

¹⁷ Velimirović-Žižić 1995, 27. Neither the pot nor the lid was illustrated. According to the information supplied by colleagues in Podgorica, both artefacts were lost.

¹⁸ Unfortunately, no further details about this find are available; it was likely lost.

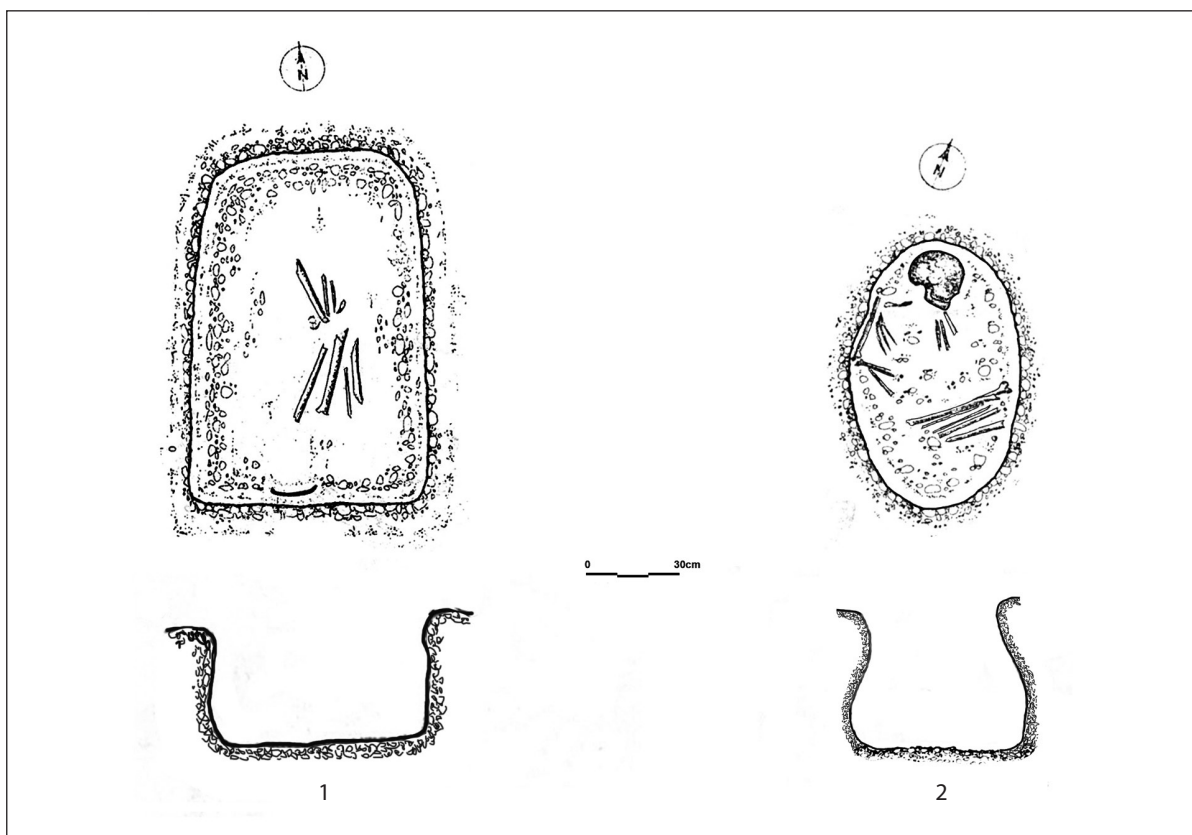


Fig. 11 *Rakića Kuće* tumulus, Grave 4 and Grave 5

Grave 3, located almost in the centre of the bordered area of the tumulus, consisted of an unusually large, rectangular pit (3 m x 1.8 m x 0.75 m), oriented NE–SW and dug into the virgin soil to the depth of 0.75 m (Fig. 7.3). Discovered in the centre of the bottom of the pit were the poorly preserved skeletal remains of an adult; the body lay on its left side in flexed position, with the head pointing to the NE. As an offering, next to the knee was a pot with a loop handle, vertical neck, biconical body and gently rounded base. The vessel has thin walls and is made of low-quality fabric; thus, as it was lifted from the pit, it disintegrated.¹⁹ The burial pit was densely filled with large pebbles and dark grey earth (Fig. 10).

Grave 4 was positioned ca. 0.8 m to the south of Grave 3 and comprised a rectangular, 1.2 x 0.82 m large pit with rounded corners, oriented N–S and dug 0.4 m depth into the natural soil (Fig.

7.4). In the central part of the pit were the remains of poorly preserved skeleton, lying in flexed position on its right side (?), without the skull. The pit's fill was composed of reddish soil containing gravel and a few larger pebbles (Fig. 11.1). On the surface of the grave, next to its southern edge, a ceramic vessel – an offering – was encountered; it is fragmented and highly friable.²⁰

Grave 5 was detected ca. 2.5 m to the W–SW of Grave 1 and consisted of an oval pit oriented NW–SE (Fig. 7.5; dimensions: 0.9 m x 0.58 m; 0.5 m deep). The relatively well-preserved skeleton of a young individual was discovered inside the pit, tightly flexed, on its left side, with the head pointing towards the NW (Fig. 11.2). There were no offerings in the grave.

Grave 6 was located some 2 m to the north of Grave 3, in an oval pit oriented NW–SE (Fig. 7.6; dimensions: 1.13 m x 0.8 m; depth 0.52 m). The base of the pit was not flat, but had an oval depression along the longer axis. There were well-preserved skeletal remains of an adult in-

¹⁹ The pot fell apart during the excavation and hence could not be documented in its entirety (Velimirović-Žižić 1995, 25, 27). The description provided suggests that it could correspond to forms of the Adriatic type of the Ljubljana culture (cf. Govedarica 1989, 94 ff.).

²⁰ There are no further data on this vessel; it is likely that it also fell apart during excavation.

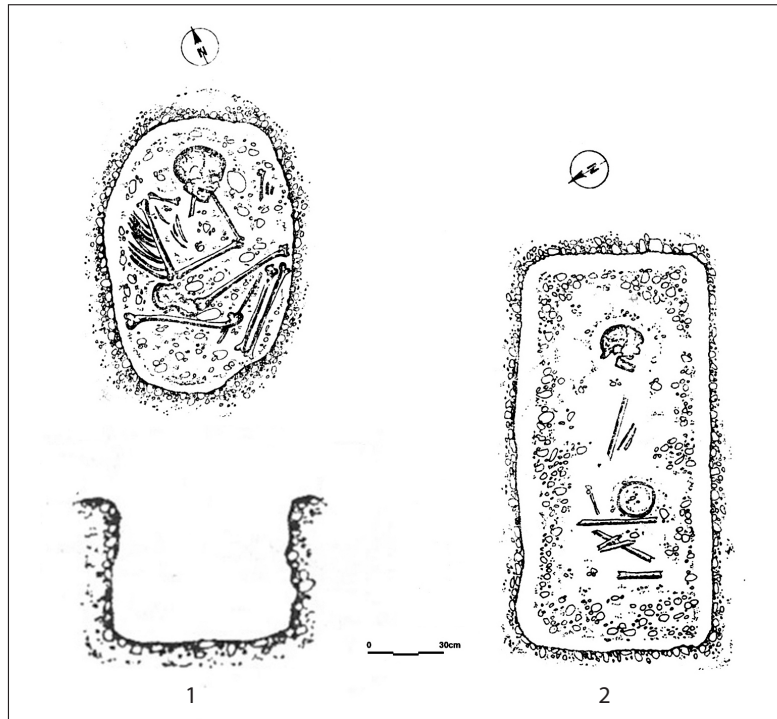


Fig. 12 Rakića Kuće tumulus, Grave 6 and Grave 7

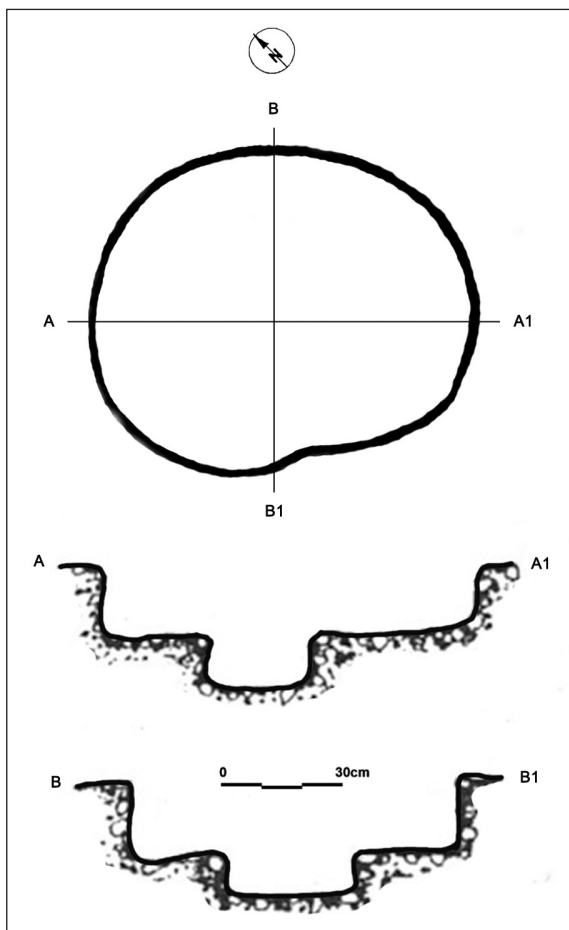


Fig. 13 Rakića Kuće tumulus, Pit 8

dividual in the pit, placed on the left side in a tightly flexed posture. The skull, resting on a river pebble, was tilted towards the chest; the arms were bent and the hands placed in front of the face. The severely flexed legs resulted from the feet being placed under the pelvis (Fig. 12.1). Similar to the previously described Grave 5, this position was dictated by the small dimensions of the pit. The burial pit was filled with dark soil. There were no offerings in the grave.

Grave 7 was situated at the SE edge of the bordered area of the tumulus, ca. 1 m to the east of Grave 4 (Fig. 7.7). It was composed of an elongated rectangular pit with the dimensions 1.62 m x 0.82 m, dug to the depth of 0.25 m into the natural soil and oriented NW-SE. The skeletal remains were those of an adult in flexed position, on the left side, with the head pointing towards the NW (Fig. 12.2). Above the femur was a pot made of poorly baked clay, which fell apart during the excavation. The pit was packed with reddish soil and large river pebbles.

Ritual pit (?): recorded ca. 1.5 m to the north-east of Grave 6 (Fig. 7.8) was an oval pit, 1.05 x 0.85 m large, in NW-SE orientation and dug into the virgin soil to the depth of 0.3 m. The base of the pit was rectangular and had a small rectangular depression in the centre, filled with dark soil

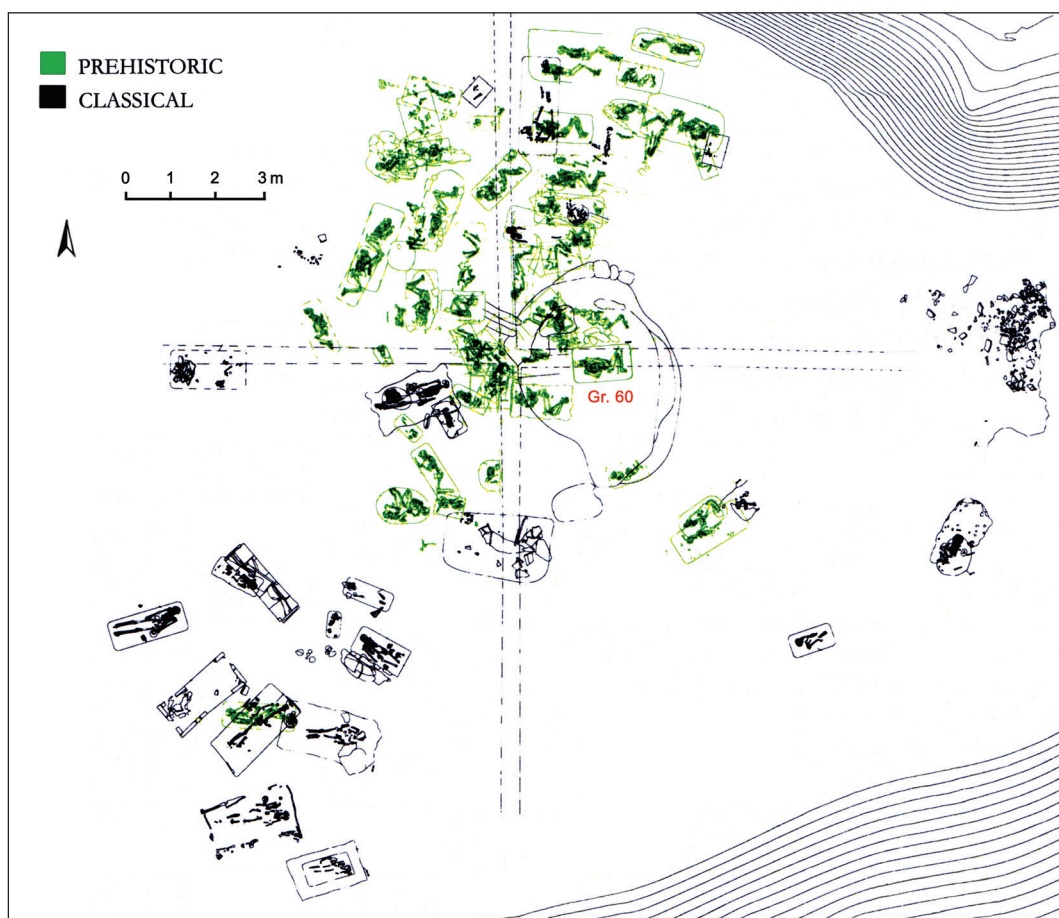


Fig. 14 *Tumulus 10 in Apollonia, general layout*

and gravel (Fig. 13). There were no other finds in the pit. The function of this pit within the Rakića Kuće tumulus remains unclear.

3.2 Tumulus 10 in Apollonia

In the territory around the Greek city of Apollonia, over an area of 1.5–2 km², was once a large necropolis with tumuli, many of which were destroyed and levelled over time. This prevents establishing their exact number, but it is estimated that there could have been 100–300 tumuli. Investigations have been conducted in this area since the 1950's and have revealed that most of the burials date to the Classical and Hellenistic periods. Tumulus 10 is of particular interest for this study as there burying already began during the Early Bronze Age, which makes this tumulus the earliest among the so far excavated burial mounds at this necropolis. Together with two other mounds, the tumulus belongs to a group (No. 9, 10 and 11) located on a low hillock ca. 2

km east of Apollonia (Fig. 1.3); it was explored during the excavation seasons 2002–2006.²¹

Despite the fact that this prehistoric burial mound was largely damaged by subsequent burials and other activities, 77 graves with inhumations were discovered in it, of which 48 were of prehistoric age.²² The better preserved west and north-west parts of the tumulus indicate that, in general, the prehistoric graves were closely arranged in several irregular rows around the centre of the tumulus (Fig. 14). The majority of the prehistoric graves did not contain any grave goods and this makes their chronological determination difficult.

²¹ The information on the finds within the tumulus derives from the comprehensive publication printed in 2010 (Amore 2010; 2010a) and 2016 (Amore 2016, 57 ff.).

²² Amore lists 49 prehistoric graves in this tumulus (Amore 2016, 69). However, Grave 74 is here excluded because, as is described in the further text, it does not represent a burial complex.

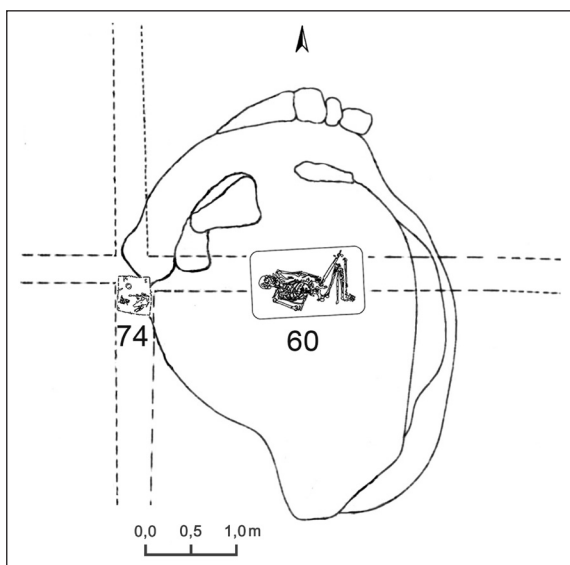


Fig. 15 Tumulus 10 in Apollonia, central platform with Grave 60 and “Grave 74”

3.2.1 The central part of the tumulus with Grave 60 and “Grave 74”

Grave 60 is located at the centre of the base of the tumulus, underneath a small earthen platform, or alternatively, a heavily damaged mound that, as indicated by its preserved part, was covered with stones and lined with river pebbles (Fig. 15; 16). The burial was made in the middle of this space, in a pit dug into the virgin soil to the depth of 0.38 m. The stratigraphic position alone signals that this is the earliest grave in the tumulus.

The burial pit had the shape of a rectangle with rounded corners, was oriented W-E, and measured 1.37 x 0.70 m. In the middle of the pit lay the skeleton of a grown individual (age 25-30), placed on the back with the legs bent and turned to the left. The left arm was stretched next to the body, with the hand resting on the hip; the right arm was bent and the hand was placed on the belly (Fig. 17). The grave did not contain offerings.

Two bone samples extracted from the skeleton for C¹⁴ dating gave the following results: 2528±53 and 2679±174 cal BC (2580-2475 and 2852-2505 cal BC).²³

3.2.2 “Grave 74”

On the western periphery of the small mound that covered Grave 60, ca. 0.5 above the level of



Fig. 16 Tumulus 10 in Apollonia, central platform with Grave 60 during the excavation

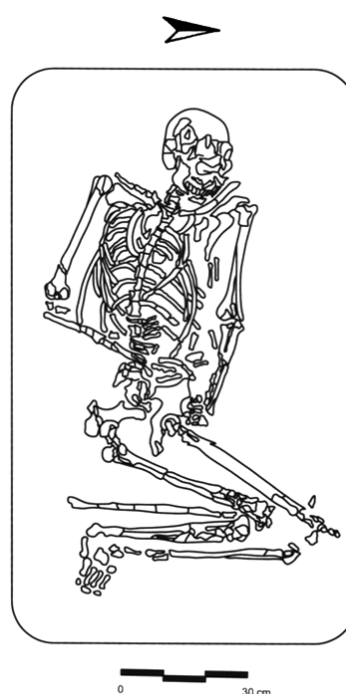


Fig. 17 Tumulus 10 in Apollonia, Grave 60

this grave, traces of a certain ritual activity were found, which at the time of the excavation were incorrectly determined as Grave 74 (Fig. 15). There in an area of 0.48 x 0.40 m, an anthropomorphic figurine and a ceramic vessel were unearthed, as well as very friable long bones belonging to the *Ovis* genus.²⁴ The pot had the shape of

²³ Amore 2010a, 331; 2016, 68.

²⁴ The type of the bone and the species were determined through osteological analysis. See Amore 2010a, 254.

single-handled kantharos; it fell into pieces during the excavation. The figurine, although broken into several fragments, could be reconstructed to a large extent. Thus, this find complex is not a grave of any kind. It is, in fact, the remnant of a cultic ritual, which judging by its stratigraphic position and typological characteristics, was in direct relationship with Grave 60.²⁵

The figurine has the shape of a violin; the upper part extends into the neck and the head, and the lower part has a slightly flattened base (L: 17.3 cm; W: 8.3 cm; thickness: 1.9 cm; Pl. 6, 2). One side of the figurine (the front?) was elaborately decorated with incised lines on the upper and lower part of the body, arranged along a deep groove that runs along the middle from the neck to the transition to the lower part of the body. The other side of the figurine is polished and without decoration. No gender attributes are depicted (Pl. 6.2).

4. Comparative analysis of the violin idols

In the graves in Shtoj, Rakića Kuće and Apollonia ten relatively well-preserved statuettes in the shape of a violin were discovered, as well as the head of one other figurine that likely was of the same form. These are rare finds of this specific type that derive from apparently stratified grave complexes, a context that notably increases the amount of information that they can offer. The goal of the typological and chronological determination discussed in the following text is to mobilise this information potential, that is – to examine the culture-historical circumstances in which these interesting figurines appeared in the region under study.

The first glance already reveals a great resemblance between the figurines from Shtoj and Rakića Kuće, whereas the find from Apollonia stands out in its form and decoration. So, two typological groups can be distinguished here: one group in the north represented by the nine statuettes from Shtoj and Rakića Kuće, and the other group in the south, which for now includes only the find from Apollonia. As will be shown below, these two groups diverge not only in terms of

style; the differentiation also has an actual cultural dimension. In the northern group, Figurine 6 from Shtoj and Figurine 2 from Rakića Kuće display the greatest similarity. In fact, besides a certain difference in size and slight dissimilarities in the modelling of the lower part, these two idols are almost identical (Pl.3,2; 5,2). Figurine 1 from Shtoj bears great resemblance to them; it differs only by the head tilted backwards and the somewhat wider round parts (Pl. 1,1). Figurine 1 from Rakića Kuće is distinctive in its faintly modelled neck and uniform representation of primary and secondary gender attributes (Pl. 4,2). The female figurine No. 2 from Shtoj, the head of which is not preserved, can be distinguished by its unusual proportions (Pl. 2,1); solely in this case is the upper part of the body larger than the lower. Figurine 5 from Shtoj differs from the others in the northern group through the presence of decorations that could represent the schematised depiction of hair, necklace, belt and ornaments on the clothes (Pl. 3,1). Figurine 3 from Rakića Kuće is characterised by arms and breasts implied by small protrusions (Pl. 5,1).

On the basis of the gender attributes, six statuettes in this group can be securely identified as female representations (No. 1.2.5.6 from Shtoj and 2 and 3 from Rakića Kuće). The determination of gender of Figurine 1 from Rakića Kuće is difficult due to the unusual portrayal of the primary gender attributes (Pl. 4,2); the representation of a hermaphrodite cannot be excluded. Figurine 3 from Shtoj (Pl. 2,2) is the only one that can be considered male without doubt, whereas Figurine 4, based on its small dimensions and absence of gender attributes, might be the depiction of a child (Pl. 1,2). The head from Rakića Kuće, described as belonging to a male, is stylistically most distinctive within the entire northern group (Pl. 6,1). In this case, unfortunately, the largest part of the figurine is missing, and this impedes a more reliable identification.

Leaving aside the sphere of cultural interpretations, it can be stated that in the grave in Shtoj four representations of a woman, one of a man and one of a child are discernible. Among the figurines from the Rakića Kuće tumulus there are two female representations, one portrayal of a hermaphrodite (?) and one most likely male figurine. With the exception of the fragmentarily preserved and thus problematic Figurine 4 from

²⁵ Amore 2010a, 240, 324.

the Rakića Kuće tumulus, all of the aforementioned typological differences can be considered as either the unintentional consequence of modelling by hand, or as deviations created with the intention of expressing gender characteristics and special attributes indicated by decoration. These variances are, in any case, of secondary importance in terms of the typological and cultural determination of the figurines. That this regards the same local community is evidenced by the significant resemblance of the graves that yielded the figurines, as well as the insignificant distance between them, which is only 35 km as the crow flies. Far more revealing are the elements of style of these figurines, which not only confirm their affiliation with a unique figural type, but also support the notion of a single workshop, if not a single modelling hand.

Nonetheless, as already stressed, the statuettes represent a novelty in the local developments. Hence, a fundamental question arises: in which culture-chronological context could they have developed in the region of southern Adriatic? Or, in other words: where else have similar finds been registered? Namely, there are no corresponding forms in the western Balkan hinterland. Two figurines from the area of the Boleráz culture, from the Šošari-Saç tumulus in eastern Bosnia and the settlement of Likodra in western Serbia, in which only the upper part is preserved, bear some resemblance to the examples from the Adriatic, based on the method of depicting the breasts and arms. However, as indicated by the preserved fragments, they do not have the shape of a violin, but are instead elongated.²⁶ This feature would point to the anthropomorphic figurines of the Cernavodă III culture and the late Tripolye culture (Vyhvatynsky, Serezlievka, Usatovo), in which the upper part of the body is flat and rounded, and the lower part is elongated, or they are overall pillar-shaped and voluminous.²⁷

In contrast to the situation in the north, in southern parts of the Balkans individual analogies are encountered that are quite similar to the finds from Shtoj and Rakića Kuće. The geographically nearest parallel is the female figurine with flat and somewhat elongated but generally

rounded lower part, which was discovered in layer IIIc of the settlement in Maliq (Fig. 1,4). Basing on the stratigraphic position, this example is attributed to the earlier phase of the Middle Bronze Age in Albania. It is especially the way of modelling the upper part of the body that shows great resemblances to Figurine 3 from the Rakića Kuće tumulus (in both cases the head is missing).²⁸ Similar to these, but without gender characteristics, is the statuette from the Middle Bronze Age layer (layer IV) of the tell settlement Yunazite in Thracian Bulgaria (Fig. 1,5).²⁹ A further parallel is the figurine from layer IVb of the settlement in Lerna on the Peloponnese (Fig. 1,6), which corresponds to the end of the Early Helladic period (EH III).³⁰ This is an example of the classical violin form and is thus entirely analogous to the finds from the south Adriatic. Its only distinguishing characteristic is the very high quality of manufacture and the painted ornaments in the form of brown ribbons on the tan background.³¹

All three of these objects represent exceptions within their find contexts and are in a very uncertain typological connection with the settlement layers in which they were discovered. The figurine from Yunazite was described as a vestige from the previous early Bronze Age period,³² and the same observation could apply to the finds from Maliq and Lerna. Because of this, despite the striking concordance in terms of style, the figurines cannot be used as a reliable basis for more precise cultural and chronological determination of the finds from the region under study. In this perspective the situation in the central Aegean is much more favourable. Copious parallels to the northerly group of figurines can be discerned among the abstract-schematic mar-

²⁸ Prendi 1978, Pl. IV, 8.

²⁹ Katinčarov, Macanova 1993, 158 Fig. 18.5.

³⁰ The figurine from layer V of the settlement in Aegina, of which only the upper part is preserved and which I, in a previous paper, tried to bring into connection with the violin idols, most likely belongs to the Cernavodă III-Boleráz type of idols, just like the above-mentioned finds from the interior of the western Balkans (Likodra i Šošari-Saç). See Govedarica 1991, 108 T. II, 14; Walter, Felten 1981, 41-42 Taf. 101:265, XXII. The same could be valid for the figurine of a layer IIIb from settlements in Dikili Tash. See Séfériades 2001, 109 ff., Fig. 42, 2.

³¹ Caskey 1955, 43, Pl. 22,j, k; Govedarica 1991, 108, T. I, 3; Maran 1997, 186, Abb. 3,1.

³² Katinčarov, Macanova 1993, 158.

²⁶ Govedarica 1997, 150-154, Abb. 4,8; 2001, 367, Abb. 3, 2,4.

²⁷ See Dergačev, Manzura 1991, Fig. 8,3. 4; 15,8; 86,2,3,9,10,18; Patokova et al. 1989, Fig. 16, 1-6; 22,1-3; 35,3- 5; Roman 2001, Taf. 1; 2; 4,1.

ble idols from the Cyclades, particularly within the groups Pelos and Plastiras on the islands Milos and Paros (Fig. 1,7.8). Here it is important to note that these idols represent offerings found in cist graves, or objects for which the information about the find spot is insecure, but which probably derive from looted graves.³³ With the exception of the type of material employed (marble), and the peculiarly high neck (also dictated by the hardness of the material), these idols have the same features as the figurines of baked clay from Shtoj and Rakića Kuće. Especially characteristic are the classical abstract-schematic forms from Grave 103 in Pyrgos,³⁴ Graves 115 and 117 in Krasades,³⁵ as well as examples from Paros, Antiparos and in the Basel collection.³⁶ In many of these, e.g. the finds from Grave 9 in Naxos and from Akrotiri, the female breasts are represented by protuberances, just as on the figurines found in Shtoj and Rakića Kuće.³⁷ The engraved ornaments on some of the idols from Amorgos, and also on examples in the collection in Karlsruhe, suggest the representation of a necklace and a belt, which reminds of Figurine 5 from Shtoj.³⁸ The depiction of the upper part of the body of one of the Cycladic idols from the collection in Geneva is in agreement with the female idols of ours above defined northerly group, whereas the representation of the vulva as well as the position of arms point to – like the head from Rakića Kuće – so-called hybrid idols.³⁹ The idols within the Pelos group, which represent typical abstract-schematic forms lacking naturalistic elements, correspond to the beginning of the EC I period (EC Ia1), whereas the somewhat more developed forms of the Plastiras group, with distinct decorative elements, belong to the following period EC Ia2. Jörg Rambach, whose focus recently was mostly on this topic, designates both of the groups as the ‘Panajia-complex’, which spans the earlier phase of the EC I period, that is, the period 3100–2800 cal BC.⁴⁰

³³ Rambach 2000, 21.

³⁴ Ib. Taf. 13, 13-19.21-23; 14, 1-4.

³⁵ Ib. Taf. 17, 1.4-14.

³⁶ Thimme 1976, 221-222 Abb. 26. 29. 30, 427-428.

³⁷ Rambach 2000, Abb. 88,17; Thimme 1976, 226, Abb. 42, 430.

³⁸ See Thimme 1976, 223 Abb. 35.36, 429; Steinmann 2015,21; Schulze 2015, 14.

³⁹ Thimme 1976, 226 (Abb. 42), 430; Schulze 2015, 14

⁴⁰ Renfrew 1969, 1 ff.; 1976, 61 ff.; Rambach 2000, 21.

As already emphasised at the beginning, violin idols of the abstract-schematic type have also been encountered in south-western Anatolia, mostly as the variant made of baked clay, although marble ones also occur. The ceramic examples essentially have a body in the shape of a violin, and the modelling of the head is very reminiscent of the south Adriatic finds (for instance, the statuette from the collection in Solothurn).⁴¹ However, these figurines are not flat in profile like the classical abstract-schematic type, but are instead more-or-less voluminous and oval in cross-section. Also, they are, as a rule, decorated with the encrusted Furchenstich (stabs).⁴² They show very little resemblance to the idols of our northern group; in this view more similarity can be observed in the form and decoration of the finds from Apollonia. Particularly indicative there are the examples of the so-called Çaykaner type, dated to the Early Bronze Age I–II period, as well as two finds from Alişar in central Anatolia, which were quite confidently attributed to the phase Alişar Ib, i.e. the transition from the Chalcolithic to the Early Bronze Age I (ca. 3000 cal BC).⁴³

5. Cultural and chronological determination

With respect to the cultural and relative chronological determination of the violin idols of the Adriatic, their stratigraphic position is of fundamental importance, that is, their association with the primary graves in the tumuli in which they were discovered. Of particular significance is the stratigraphy of Tumulus 6 in Shtoj, where the primary grave was overlain by a later accumulation containing a cist grave of the Cetina culture. This is the first time that a priority of a pit grave in relation to the cist graves is stratigraphically confirmed. However, this is relevant only for the cist graves belonging to the classical Cetina culture, but not for cist graves of the Ljubljana and Proto-Cetina culture that precede the Cetina graves. There are as yet no clear stratigraphic sequences

⁴¹ Thimme 1976, 557, Abb. 539 (Provenance of the find unknown. The object comes from a private collection).

⁴² See Thimme 1976, 394 Abb. 539, 541, 557.

⁴³ Bittel 1934, 75, Taf. IX,5.7; Bossert 1942, 61 Abb. 288, 293, 294; Höckmann 1976, 185 ff.

pertinent to these relationships and, thus, the issue of their interaction must be approached differently.

Given that all three graves with violin idols are, to a smaller or a greater extent, dug into the natural soil, they can be considered pit graves, and so the question ensues of their connection with the steppe culture under the same name. The shape of the pits and the position of the skeleton in Grave 60 in Apollonia suggest this possibility. In contrast, not a single one of the grave goods found in these graves supports the notion of contacts in this direction. As indicated by the previously described analogies, the violin-shaped idols cannot be correlated with the steppe cultures. The particularities of their style and manufacture clearly demonstrate that they were local products developed under the influence of Early Cycladic idols of the abstract-schematic type. On the other hand, pottery offerings display local characteristics. The vessels from Shtoj as well as the ceramic finds from the area of the tumulus correspond with forms of the Ljubljana culture registered in the Adriatic and the sub-Alpine regions.⁴⁴ According to their description, the vessels from the Rakića Kuće tumulus and from Apollonia, which were not documented in full detail due to their poor preservation, would also belong to this cultural zone. The presence of autochthonous pottery is, without doubt, of key importance for the cultural attribution of the graves. Furthermore, it is a secure indicator that the buried individuals were members of communities of the local, south Adriatic expression in the Ljubljana culture identified within the time frame of the initial phase of the Early Bronze Age in the Adriatic region (Br. Ia).⁴⁵

The aforementioned facts do not entirely rule out possible links between these graves and the Pit-grave culture, at least in terms of basic funerary ritual. All the more so, given the fact that in the area of the southern Adriatic there are tumuli such as in Ljeskova Glavica in Ljubomir, Shtoj 10, Pazhok, Piskovë and Dukat, whose primary graves contain clear elements of this ritual.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Koka 2012 Pl. XXX, 81-94. Govedarica 1989, T. VIII, 1.3.8; IX., XVIII, 5; XXII, 8; XLIII, 2.

⁴⁵ See Govedarica 1989, 178 ff.

⁴⁶ For further details on pit graves see: Jovanović, 1979, 381 ff.; Govedarica 1989, 212 ff; Bodinaku 1999, 15-16; Guštin, Preložnik 2015, 21-22.

Highly distinctive is Grave 3 from Tumulus 10 in Shtoj, in which seven silver earrings – typical for the Pit-grave culture – were detected.⁴⁷ The closest analogies for the earrings are noted in the east Balkan region, in the burials of the Pit-grave culture, as well as in local variants of this culture, which were on the whole dated to the period 3100-2850 cal BC.⁴⁸ Nevertheless, the ceramic offerings in both pit graves found in the mountainous eastern Balkans and those in Montenegro and Albania generally display local characteristics.⁴⁹ Besides these the pit grave in Gruda Boljevića can be included, near which, among other objects, luxurious pots of the Ljubljana type were offered that correlate with the princely graves in Montenegro.⁵⁰

In sum, all of the pit graves in this region in which identifiable finds were recorded derived from the local form of the Ljubljana culture, i.e. the first phase of the Early Bronze Age in the Balkan part of the Adriatic region. This shows that the funerary ritual of the local Ljubljana culture encompasses, besides cist graves such as those in the princely mounds of Velika and Mala Gruda, interment in simple pit graves. This is also where pit graves containing violin idols belong. However, in contrast to the authentic steppe burials, where the pits are dug into the natural soil to considerable depths (not less than 0.80 m, generally 0.80 m-1.20 m) and where the deceased were regularly sprinkled with ochre, the depth of the Adriatic graves is frequently ca. 0.30 m and almost never exceeds 0.80 m. Sprinkling with ochre occurs only as an exception. In fact, the burial ritual of the south Adriatic Ljubljana cul-

⁴⁷ Koka 2012, 110-111, Pl. 39, 2-8.

⁴⁸ Goran Slatina, Tarnava, Plačidol et al. See Panajotov, Aleksandrov 1991, 4-5; Kaiser, Winger 2015, 120 ff.

⁴⁹ For the eastern Balkans, Panajotov, Aleksandrov, l.c. and pertinent references. Noted in the Adriatic region are mostly fragments bearing characteristics of the local variant of the Ljubljana culture (See Koka 2012, Pl. 39. 9-23; Bodinaku 1999, 17, Pl. 1-11, 15 and Govedarica l.c. note 45). The fragments with cord decoration in Ljeskova Glavica, considered by some authors as “steppic elements”, do not have much in common with the finds from the Pit-grave culture; instead they represent a version of cord-ornaments widely distributed across the area of south-east Europe. See Čović 1983, 106 f.; Jovanović 1979, 383-384; Roman u. a. 1992, 61-65, 93-102, Taf. 29, 14; 30, 1; 60, 1-12; 61, 2, 17; Séfériadès 2001, Fig. 38-39.

⁵⁰ Baković, Govedarica 2009, Sl. 9-11; Govedarica 2010, 105-108, Abb. 4-6.

ture integrates three different components: one comprises the elements of the steppe culture visible in the rectangular or oval shape of the pits dug into the virgin soil, in the position of the skeleton and, very rarely, in the presence of steppe-type grave goods; another component is the Mediterranean tradition expressed in the presence of the stone cists, violin-shaped idols and some ornamental forms, seen especially in pottery from the princely graves; and the third component is local features observable in the Ljubljana type pottery.

Some other aspects of the funerary practice point to further local distinctions of the cultural development in this region, and they are best recognisable in the context of offering a 'ritual set' – the violin idol and a pot. The situation in Tumulus 6 in Shtoj is of principal relevance here: the ritual activity No. 5 reflects the ritual conducted at the already covered primary Grave 15. On this occasion on a special platform lined with stone slabs, a ritual of offering six violin idols and a pot occurred. A similar practice took place in Grave 2 in the Rakića Kuće tumulus, where four figurines and a vessel were laid on top of the already infilled grave, and were subsequently covered with a stone slab. The situation in the ritual pit ("Grave 74") at the edge of a small mound/elevation that covered the primary Grave 60 in Tumulus 10 in Apollonia is also indicative. In this case, an activity can be identified that is essentially identical to the ritual activity No. 5 recognised in Shtoj: there also on the platform that covered the central grave and bordered with stones, the ritual offering of a violin idol and a pot was performed.

The selection of important offerings and their deposition on top of a closed grave is not only related to the burials with violin idols; indeed, this was a widespread practice at the beginning of the Bronze Age in this region. This is evident in case of the Gruda Boljevića tumulus in Podgorica, which was built as a grave monument for the deceased, who was interred in the central burial pit. There the rich princely grave goods were not placed next to the deceased, but within the mound of the tumulus that accumulated above the grave. The set of ritual vessels (a jug, a funnel and a censer) used in the act of censuring and libation during the funeral, as part of the separate offering of the goods, and in the ritual associated with the completion of the mound construction, was afterwards deposited in the surface layer of

the tumulus.⁵¹ Performing special ritual acts at the grave or around can be observed in the other early tumuli in this area (for example, the princely graves of Mala and Velika Gruda, the primary grave from Pazhok, and the central grave in Dukat).⁵² It was adopted as a custom in the further development of the Early Bronze Age, in Proto-Cetina and Cetina culture.⁵³

For the purpose of absolute chronological determination of the violin idols found in the territory of Montenegro and Albania, as well as the initial phase of the Early Bronze Age of the eastern, respectively Balkan Adriatic Area (phase Bronze age Ia) to which they have been attributed, seven radiocarbon dates from five sites are available:

1. Grave 1 in the Rakića Kuće tumulus: 2503-2288 cal BC (Guštin, Preložnik 2015, 32, Fig. 15);
2. Grave in the Gruda Boljevića tumulus: 3090-3044 cal BC (Guštin, Preložnik 2015, 31-32, Fig. 14.);
- 3-4. Grave 60 in Apollonia: 2852-2505 and 2580-2475 cal BC 2σ (Amore 2010, 331);
5. Grave 1 in the Velika Gruda tumulus (3081-2866 cal BC 1σ) (Primas 1996, 48-51)
6. Layer of the primary mound of the Velika Gruda tumulus (3076-2917 cal BC 1σ) (Primas 1996, 49-51)
7. Layer VIb in the cave dwelling at Odmuť (3036-2754 cal BC [1σ]) (Della Casa 1996, 131).

Of the listed dates, four were obtained on the samples of human bone (Gruda Boljevića, Rakića Kuće and Apollonia); the results are not reliable due to the so-called marine reservoir effect.⁵⁴ The remaining three dates were derived basing on the radiocarbon measurement of wood and bones of ruminants, in which the radiocarbon content is not affected by this factor, and so they can serve as a solid basis for absolute dating. The dating of Grave 1 and the associated layer of the primary mound in Velika Gruda indicate a time span between 3081 and 2866 cal BC, which, combined with the dates for the Ljubljana layer VIb in Odmuť, would cover the period of 3081-2754 cal BC (1σ).

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Bodinaku 1999, 12 ff.

⁵³ Govedarica 1989, 117.

⁵⁴ For details on the reservoir effect see Philippsen 2013, 1 ff.

The radiocarbon date for the grave in Gruda Boljevića (3090-3044 cal BC) fits well in the beginning of the time span of Velika Gruda and Odmuť VIb, while the first date for Grave 60 in Apollonia (2852–2505 cal BC) corresponds partly with the later part of this interval. It can thus be assumed that the human bones that provided these dates were not contaminated with aquatic food. The first date of the grave in Apollonia, although not truly precise can be well interpolated in phase Bronze age I–II in Anatolia, to which the aforementioned parallels of the Çaykaner type were assigned. Accordingly, the typologically most divergent idol from Apollonia cannot be linked to origin Cycladic forms, but rather to their Anatolian variations.

However, the second date for Apollonia (2580-2475 cal BC) and the date for Grave 1 in Rakića Kuće (2503-2288 cal BC) are entirely conspicuous in the obtained framework, perhaps indicating an insecure dating possibly due not only to the reservoir effect, but also to the low amount of radiocarbon preserved in the samples. In any case, although they relate to the graves containing violin idols that are of primary interest for this study, these two samples remain unreliable and unusable.

Taking into account the above-mentioned valid dates, a time span can be defined of ca. 3050/3000-2700 cal BC, which would refer to the period of duration of the first phase of the Early Bronze Age in the south Adriatic region (phase Bronze age Ia).⁵⁵ The graves with violin idols would then fall within this time frame, although those from Shtoj und Rakića Kuće would probably correspond with the earlier part of the stated period.

6. Conclusion

The stated attribution of the violin idols from the territory of southern Adriatic to the first phase of the Early Bronze Age in the east Adriatic area, including their dating to the first centuries of the 3rd millennium BC, is a corollary to the available absolute-chronological indicators and the relevant parallels chiefly from the Aegean. Such a determination departs from the accepted abso-

lute chronology of the Bronze Age in the south Adriatic region, which to a great extent is reliant upon the central European system developed by P. Reinecke, on one hand and, on the other, the analogies in the framework of the Helladic chronology established by A. Wace and C. Blegen. As a result, two divergent chronological systems exist, one of which is valid in Dalmatia and Montenegro, and the other in Albania. The use of two different and mutually poorly correlated systems in this relatively small and in the cultural sense largely unified area complicates the picture of development in prehistory far more than it contributes to its understanding. On such a basis it is not possible to devise satisfactory chronological synchronisms nor further cultural syntheses.

A comprehensive revision and harmonisation of the existing chronological systems for the region was clearly not the aim of the present study, nor was it feasible within this paper. Nevertheless, new investigations, in particular on the highly indicative finds from so-called princely graves in the territory of Montenegro, as well as the graves containing violin idols described here, including the several reliable radiocarbon dates obtained in this regard, offer a number of opportunities to examine the outset of the Bronze Age in the context of the cultural advancements at the end of the 4th and the beginning of the 3rd millennium BC. This is, at the same time, the first dating of the period on the grounds of definite absolute-chronological indicators.

During this period in the region of the southern Adriatic, primarily in the coastal areas of present-day Montenegro and northern Albania, several important innovations emerged that marked the final break from the preceding Neolithic tradition and that turned this territory into a centre of the development of the Bronze Age in the eastern Adriatic. These novelties can at present be best perceived in the funerary cult. To this end, the main reference point is the appearance of burials under tumuli, which will remain the only form of grave monument throughout the entire Bronze Age and most of the Iron Age in this region. Excavations in Velika Gruda and Gruda Boljevića have demonstrated that the tumuli with cist graves and pit graves, as well as the objects made of tin-bronze and arsenic bronze occur in this area already at the beginning of the 3rd millennium, if not even a little earlier

⁵⁵ Govedarica 1989, 203 ff.

than that. Such a date for the first tumuli and along with them the start of the Bronze Age is reinforced by the graves containing violin idols and their relationship with the Aegean. Of special significance here is the Early Cycladic Pelos culture, within which not only the best analogies with the violin idols have been documented, but also the corresponding cist graves and, moreover, some similarities with the luxurious pottery of the Montenegrin princely graves.

Intensive communication between this part of the Adriatic and areas to the north and east, particularly the often-underlined Vučedol culture and the Pit-grave steppe culture, is not adequately confirmed by the archaeological evidence. In particular, insisting upon the genetic relationship with the late Vučedol culture runs into chronological and likewise typological barriers. It is increasingly evident that the so-called Vučedol culture elements in the Adriatic have better parallels in the Mediterranean; thus, even if direct links with the Vučedol complex existed, it is more likely that the cultural impulses spread in the direction from the Adriatic to Pannonia rather than the other way around.

The frequently discussed intrusion of the Pit-grave culture communities all the way to the Adriatic can neither be confirmed by the material record. All of the investigations show that during their migration from the East to the West, the Pit-grave culture communities settled only in steppe regions or in similar lowland areas. In the west they reached Pannonia, i.e. the territory of the Vučedol culture, and in the south-west they arrived at Dobruja and the Black Sea coast. There are no integral elements of this culture in the mountainous regions of present-day Bulgaria and Serbia. However, there are influential trends, visible to a greater or smaller degree, taken in by the local populations principally in the territory of today's Bulgaria. Indeed, the steppe elements noted in the Adriatic and considered here represent influences transmitted by the indigenous cultures of the eastern Balkans. This may also

have been the route by which the first tumuli appeared in the Adriatic. However, with respect to the introduction of this kind of tomb, whose appearance is understood as the fundamental spiritual division between Neolithic and Bronze Age cultures in the region, some other traditions cannot be excluded. This issue certainly demands a broader discussion that is beyond the scope of this paper.

The intensive upheaval that commenced in south-east Europe during the transition from the 4th to the 3rd millennium BC, as a by-product of the spread of the Pit-grave culture from the Volga region to Pannonia and the west Black Sea coast, could not have passed without certain repercussions, even in the areas not reached by the Pit-grave culture communities. The events that took place along the line of the direct interaction, and in the Balkans this line extended across the sub-mountain areas of present-day Bulgaria, were echoed as far as the Aegean and the Adriatic. The effect of these turbulences was reflected very well in the delicate sphere of spirit and art, that is, in the sudden departure from the entrenched expression in the traditionally strong culture centre like the Cyclades. The Cycladic anthropomorphic sculpture, clearly defined already in the Neolithic and characterised by naturalistic representations, at one point completely lost its identity and was reduced to depersonalised abstract-schematic forms. This dramatic change happened exactly at the time when the said upheaval began around 3000 BC. The new abstract style continued throughout the first subsequent centuries, after which figural depictions gradually returned to the fore. Thus, the appearance of the violin-shaped idols and the large-scale spread of burials under tumuli in the south-west Balkan region are in full agreement with the trends of the epoch and the changes that, in this part of Europe, led to the development of a new culture-historical period, a period which in the absence of a better term is called the Bronze Age.

Stratigrafija tumula 6 u Štoju i pojava violinskih idola u grobnim kompleksima na južnom Jadranu

U tekstu su prezentirani violinski idoli iz grobova pod tumulima u Štoju, Rakića Kućama i Apoloniji koji odgovaraju početku bronzanog doba na području južnog Jadrana. Radi se o jedanaest figurina priloženih u kontekstu jamnih grobova koji ujedno predstavljaju i primarne sahrane u odgovarajućim tumulima. Pojava ovih idola dovodi se u vezu sa apstraktno-šematskim formama iz ranokikladskeg perioda. Takođe se raspravlja pitanje kontakta ovog područja sa stepskom kulturom jamnih grobova i njenim lokalnim derivatima iz istočnog Balkana. U tom kontekstu se i pojava tumula i jednostavnih jamnih grobova na južnom Jadranu razmatra kao jedan od "pseudostepskih" elemenata koji je pristigao posredstvom istočnobalkanskih kultura. Veze sa egejskim i istočnobalkanskim prostorom, uključujući nekoliko pouzdanih radiokarbonskih datuma iz lokalnog okvira, dale su po prvi put mogućnost smještanja početaka jadranskog bronzanog doba u kontekst kulturnih događanja iz prvih vijekova trećeg milenija BC. To je ujedno i prva datacija ovog razdoblja koja se zasniva na konkretnim absolutnohronološkim pokazateljima. Pojava tumula, kneževskih grobova i violinskih idola jasan je odraz važnih kulturnih inovacija koje označavaju definitivni prekid sa starom neolitskom tradicijom i koje područje južnog Jadrana, a prije svega priobalni prostor današnje Crne Gore i sjeverne Albanije, čine inicijalnim jezgrom razvoja bronzanog doba na širem prostoru istočnojadranske obale i njenog mediteranskog zaleđa.

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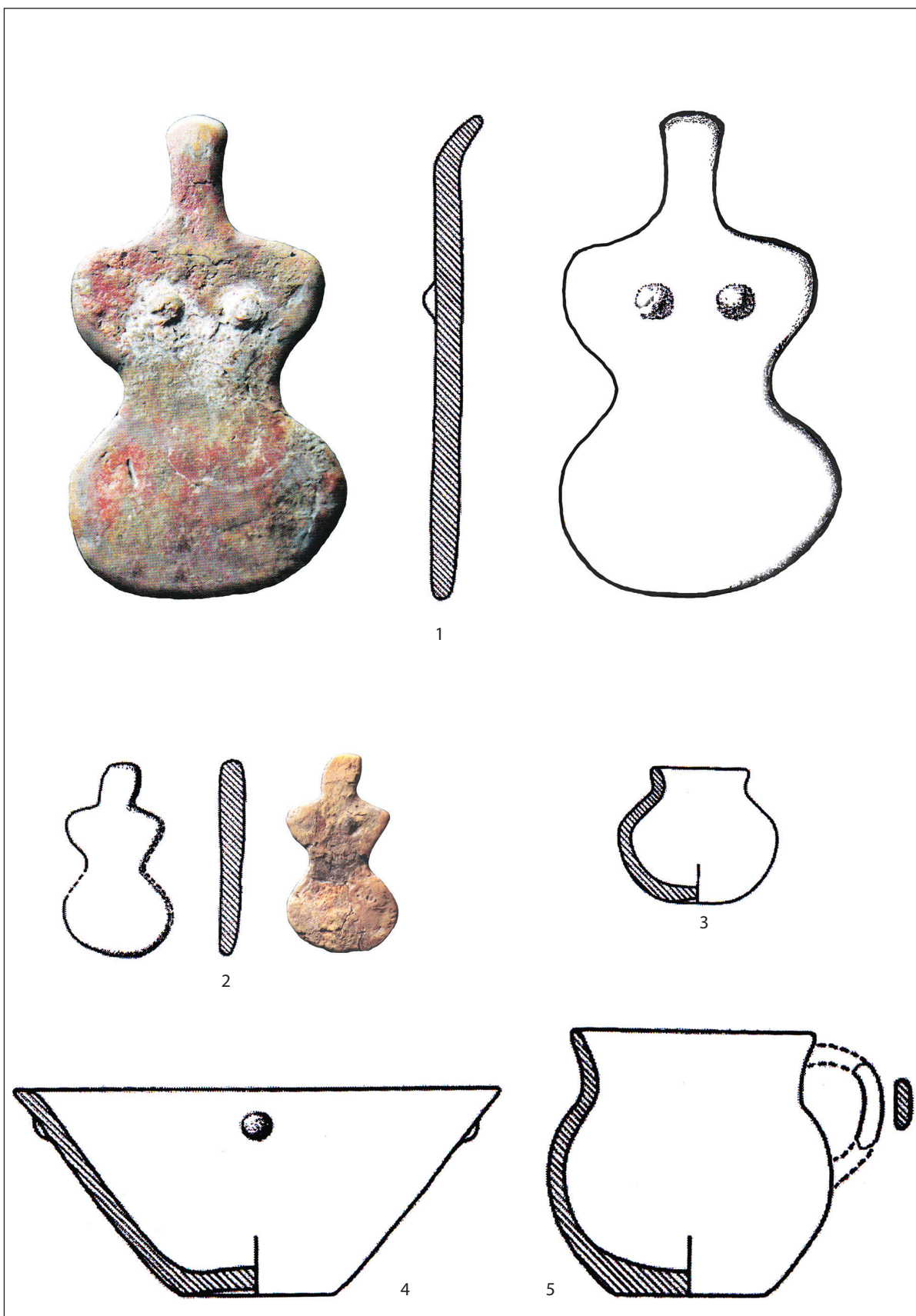


Plate 1. Tumulus 6 in Shtoj, Grave 15 – 1: Figurine 1; 2: Figurine 4; 3: vessel from the grave covering;
4-5: vessels from the grave (1-5 scale 1:2)

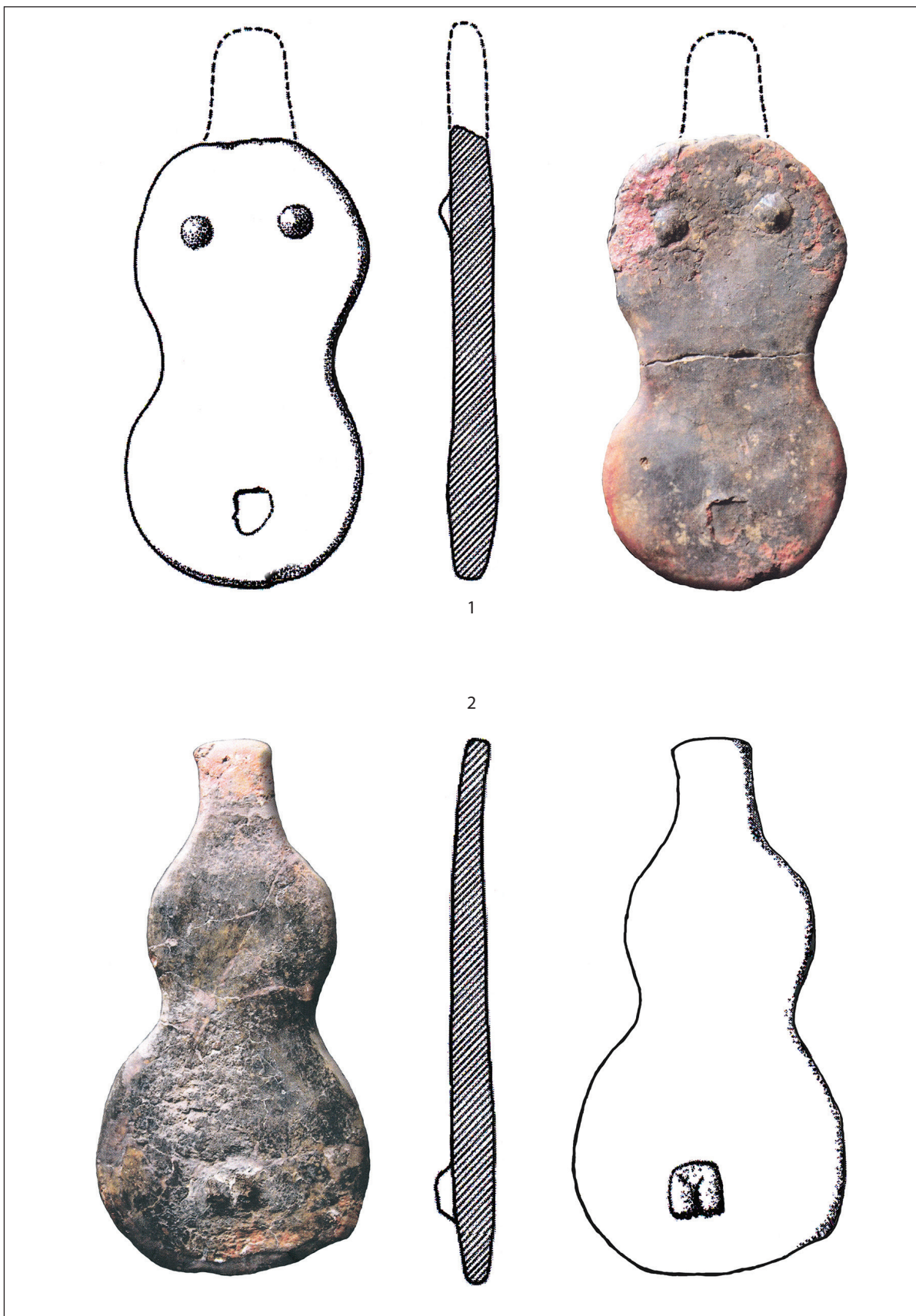


Plate 2. Tumulus 6 in Shtoj, Grave 15 – 1: Figurine 2; 2: Figurine 3 (1-2 scale 1:2)

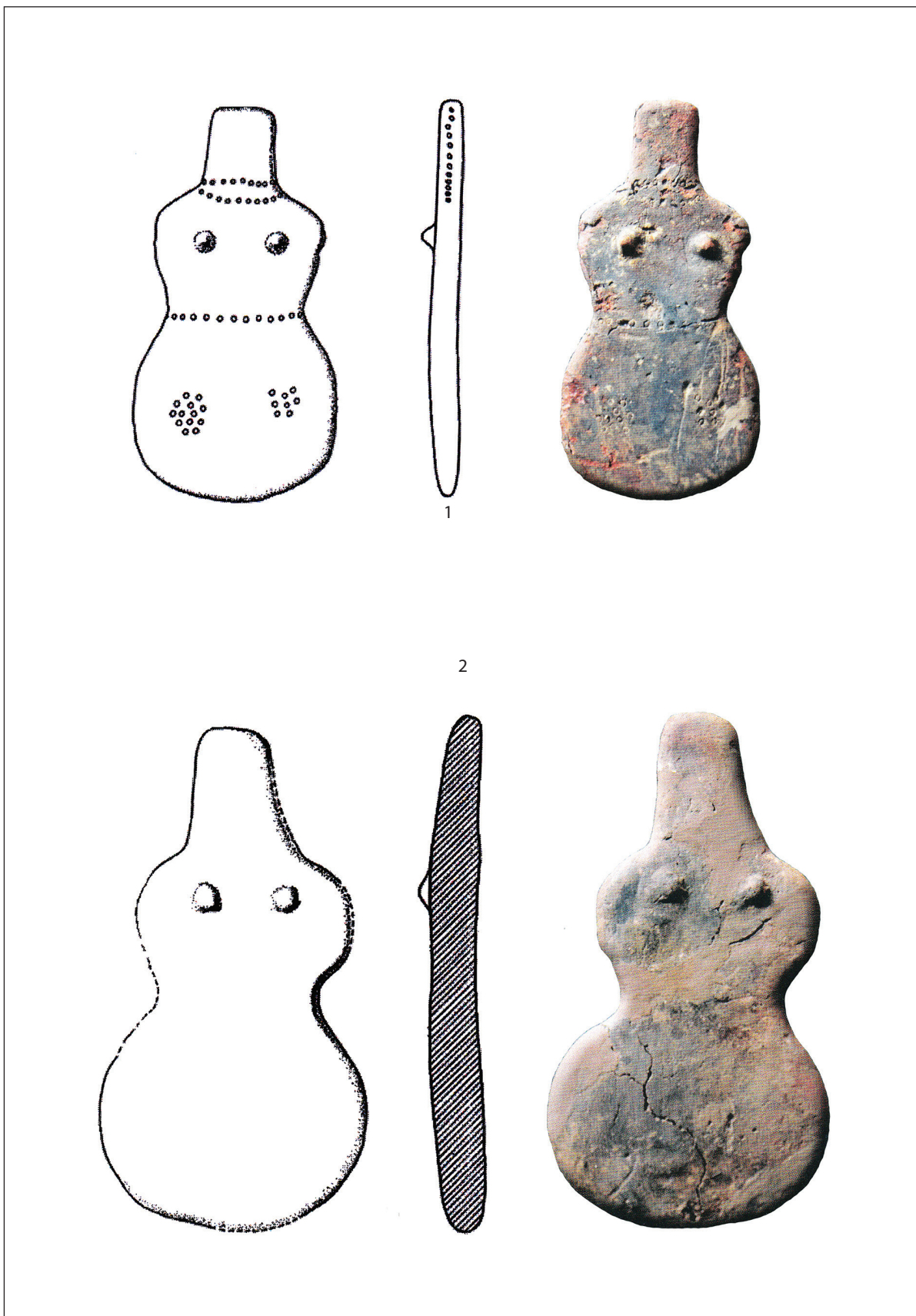


Plate 3. Tumulus 6 in Shtoj, Grave 15 – 1: Figurine 5; 2: Figurine 6 (1-2 scale 1:2)

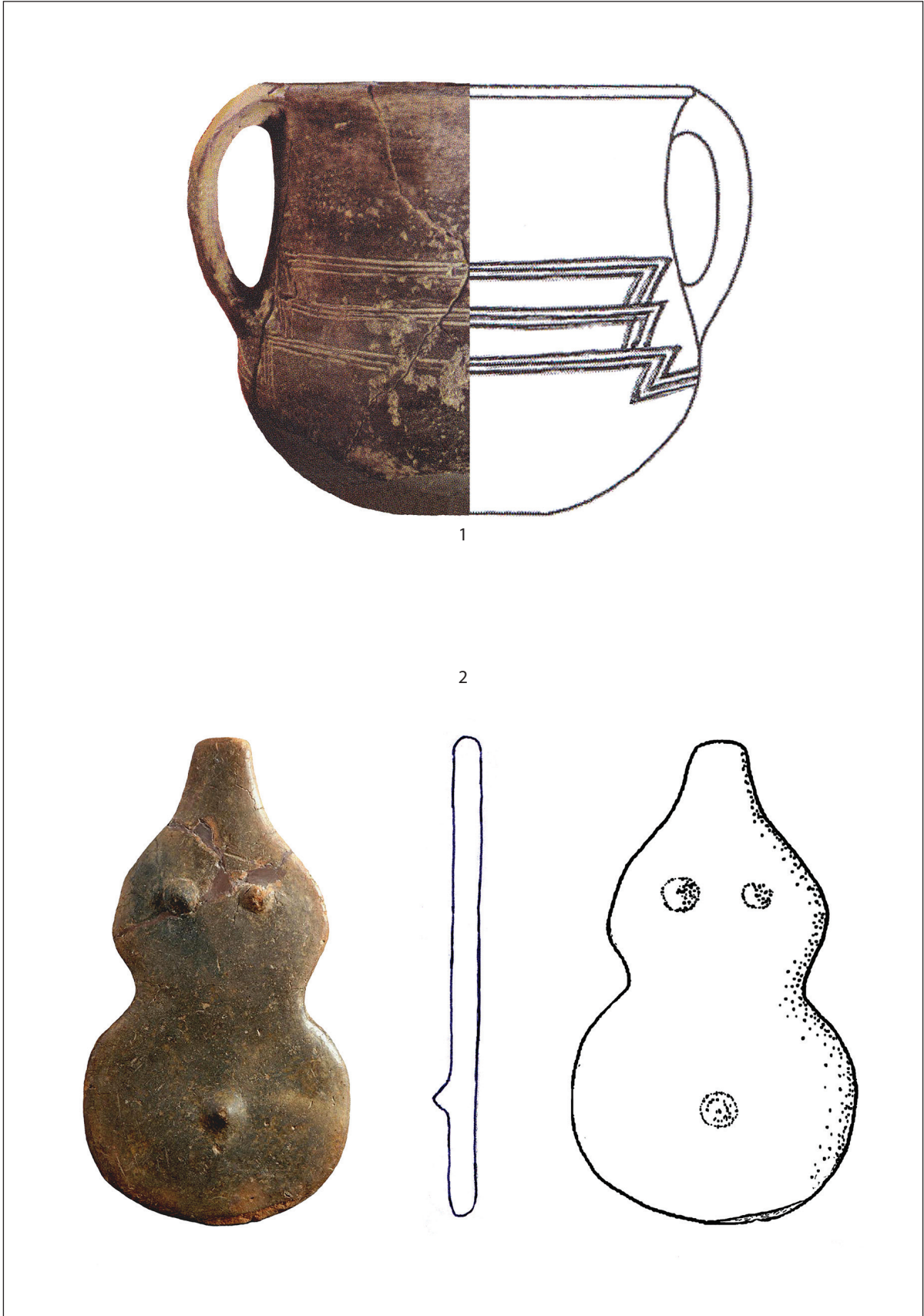


Plate 4. 1: *Tumulus 6 in Shtoj, Grave 14*; 2: *Rakića Kuće tumulus, Grave 1, Figurine 1* (1-2 scale 1:2)

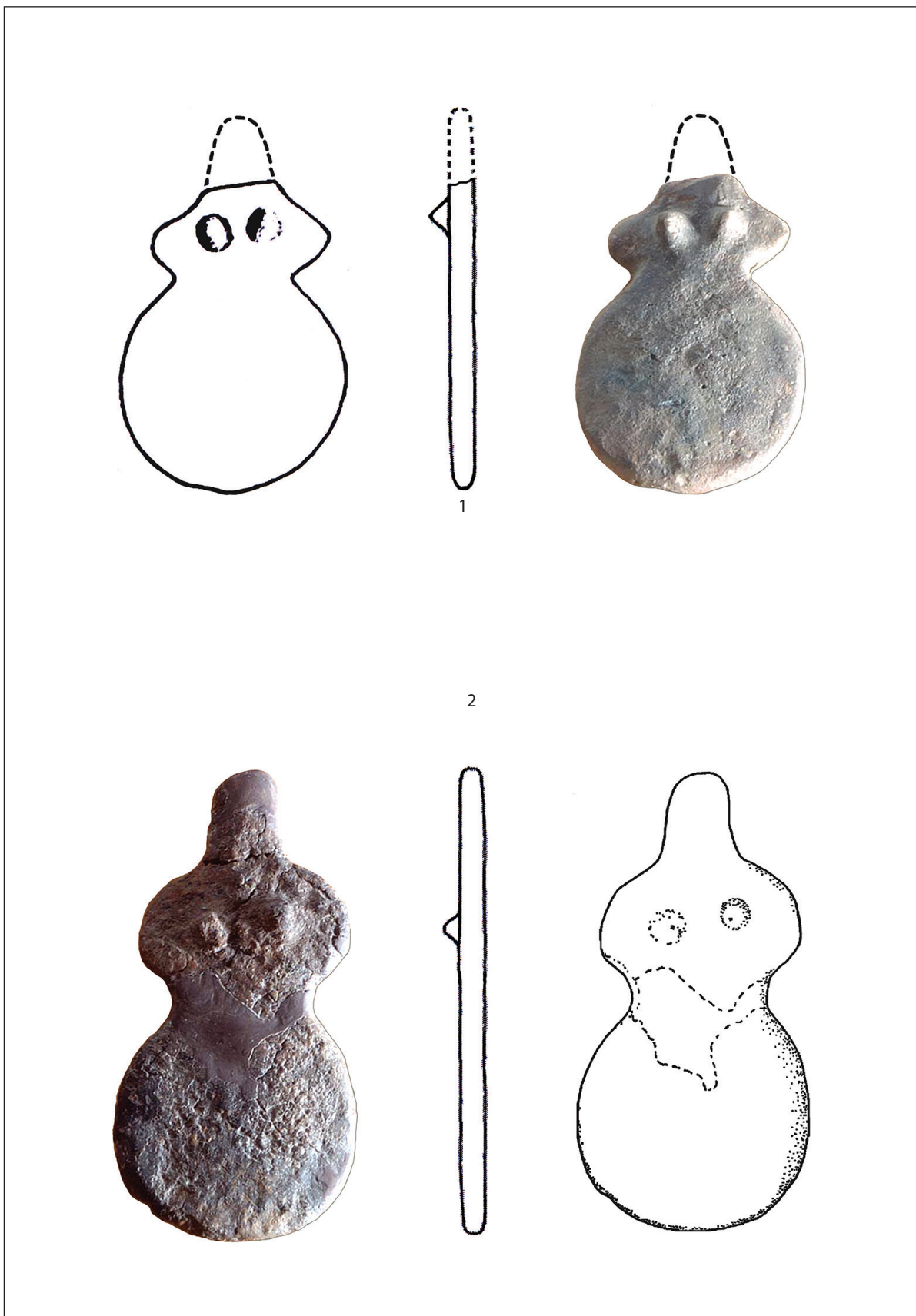


Plate 5. *Rakića Kuće* tumulus, Grave 1 – 1: Figurine 3; 2: Figurine 2 (1-2 scale 1:2)

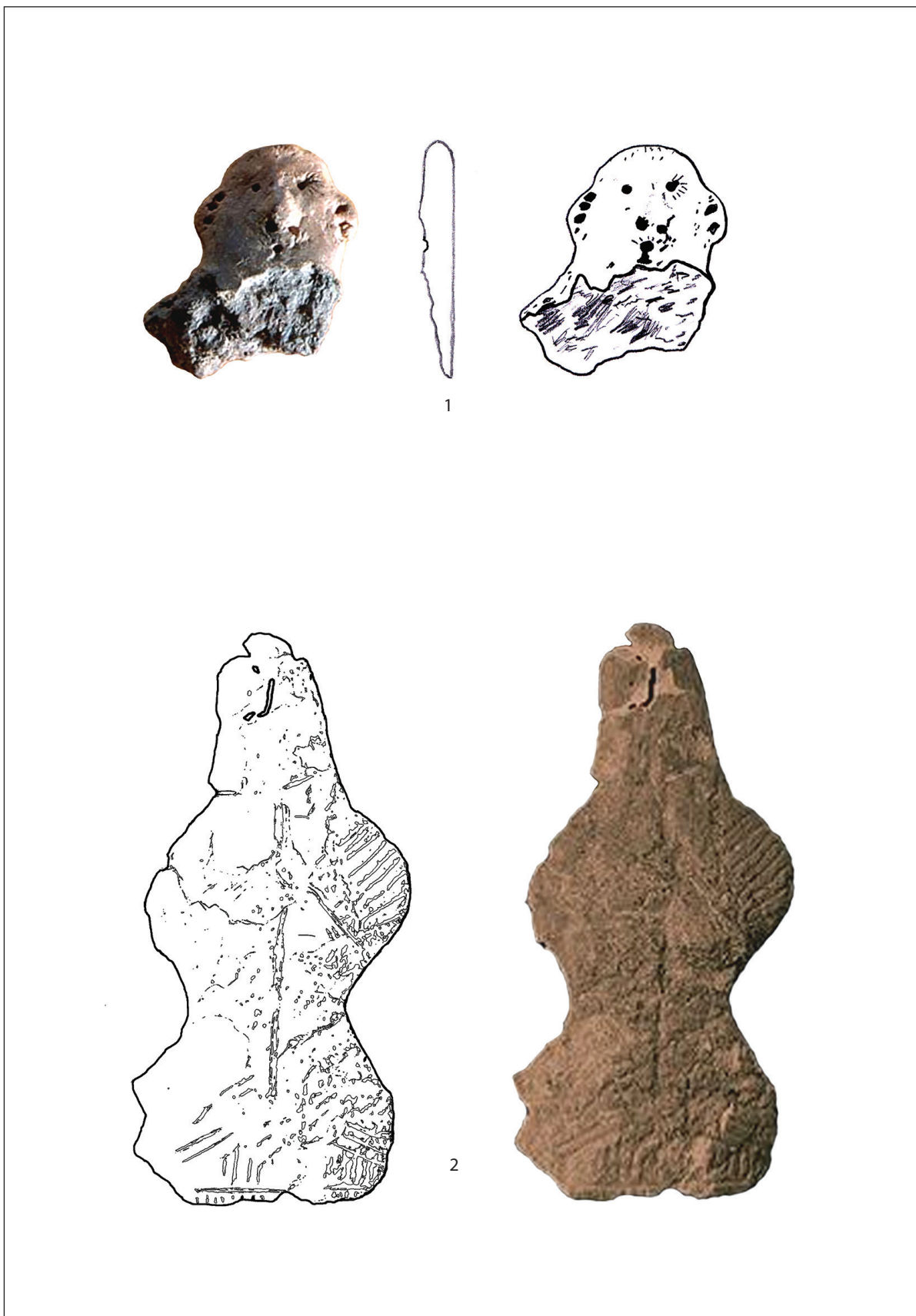


Plate 6. 1: Rakića Kuće tumulus, Grave 1 – 1: Figurine 4; 2: Tumulus 10 in Apollonia, figurine from “Grave 74”
(1-2 scale 1:2)