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MACEDONIA AND THE MYCENAEAN WORLD (The Mycenaean Influence in Macedonia)

Abstract: The influence of Mycenaean centers penetrated the region of Lower Macedonia from the Late Bronze Age. In the Republic of Macedonia till now are only few sites with finds influenced by Mycenaean World. Pelagonia and the Upper and Middle flow of Axios are the region where we can follow Mycenaean traces in the northern regions, but the following excavations can provide more data about the relations between Macedonia and Mycenaean World.

My professor M.D.Petruševski spent a big part of his scientific career working on the problems concerning the Mycenaean culture. His interest was pointed to the Mycenaean script Linear B and the Mycenaean society. In spite of the fact that my interest went in the other direction, I want to contribute to this subject as a tribute to my professor with an archaeological point of view of Mycenaean culture, especially the Mycenaean influence in Macedonia.

The Mycenaean influence in Macedonia is strongly confirmed in the Late Bronze Age i.e. the Transitional Period, but the situation in the region can be followed even from the Middle Bronze Age.

The number of finds connected with the Mycenaean World are especially abundant in the area of Lower Macedonia. However, in this article we are interested to present archaeological find with Mycenaean Influence further north on the territory of the Republic of Macedonia.

In the course of the Middle Bronze Age, a degree of stagnation is recorded in the Lower Macedonia region. Finds of pottery show that the Early Bronze Age tradition was basically followed. Lower Macedonia and Chalcidice developed separately during this period, and are treated as such in the study of the Middle Bronze Age in the Balkans.

The strata dated to the middle of the 2nd millennium support such claims, as do the numerous finds of Mycenaean pottery in Lower Macedonian sites. Mycenaean pottery appears quite frequently

in Lower Macedonia, not as an import, but as local manufacture modeled after Mycenaean specimens. Only a small number of the unearthed fragments are Mycenaean imports¹.

The situation in Pelagonia is rather complex, although this part of the Republic of Macedonia has been explored in more detail and more information about it is available. No changes and ethnic migrations were recorded in Pelagonia during the Middle or Late Bronze Ages. The extended period over which the mounds were settled indicate a permanent agricultural way of life and cultural development, which underwent no significant change. These can be traced through the entire 2nd millennium. During the Late Bronze Age and Transitional period, similarities can be noted between the burial methods (burial under tumuli) of these regions and those of the southwest, which suggests that they were in close touch with southeast and south Albania. Burials in double tumuli were recorded during the Middle Bronze Age in the regions of central and southern Albania, while in the Late Bronze Age, that is, during the Transitional period, burial practices corresponding to those described above were used in Pelagonia. A case in point is the site of Visoi, where it is very likely that burials were performed in tumuli. Cist-graves were constructed around a central grave of a considerably earlier date. The later graves were arranged towards the periphery of the tumulus, while the central grave, which is also a cist of smaller dimensions, contained a skeleton in foetal position². This case of a double tumulus twice covered with soil, a frequent method of burial in neighboring Albania, points to the presence of the Brygian population in this region; this has been confirmed both with material culture finds from later periods and through references in the historical records until the time of Roman supremacy³. It is assumed that in Pelagonia, burials in tumuli were performed in Visoi only.

The initial grave structure in Visoi (Grave No. 37) contained one vessel and a labrys-shaped bronze razor. The vessel was painted from its base up to the belly with vertical lines. Its shape corresponds with Granary-style pottery characteristic of LH IIIC1, but judging from its manufacture, it is probably a local product from the LH IIIC2 phase⁴. K. Kilian classified the vessel as a kylix from the sub-Mycenaean period⁵. Judging from the shape, dimensions and narrowness of the vessel, it is probably a skyphos.

¹ W.A.Heurtley 1939, 111, 121-123; N.G.L. Hammond 1972, 251-253, 278-280; A. Hochstetter, 1982, 201-219; M. Garasanin, 1988, 45 and Note 93.

² I. Mikulcic, 1966, 7-8; M. Garasanin, 1983, 786-792; M. Garasanin, 1988, 48-49.

³ E. Petrova 1996, 55-58, 100-102 120-122; 157-158 and the cited sources.

⁴ M. Garasanin, 1983, 786-792; M. Garasanin, 1988, 48-49.

⁵ K. Kilian, 1975, 79.

In addition to this grave structure, there are several other cist-graves in Pelagonia not covered with tumuli and of different sizes that belong to the Transitional period in the Macedonia region. Some of these cists are of gigantic dimensions. The size difference is related to the position of the deceased: in the small cists they are in buried in fetal position, and in the larger ones they are stretched out. The smaller cists containing skeletons in fetal position probably belong to an earlier period. The cists from Prilep belong to this group of smaller graves. Four graves have been excavated in this area. The most important is Grave 2, which contained one ceramic jug and a bronze sword. The jug corresponds with finds from Vergina from the LH IIIB period. The shape of the sword, which resembles the long Mycenaean rapier, links to the group of central European swords classified by K. Kilian as belonging to the Catling group I.⁶ M. Garasanin believes that this sword is a hybrid shape manufactured in some local workshop. The grave, according to all the data available, could be dated to LH RIB -LH IIIC, that is, to the IA period of the Iron Age in Macedonia⁷. Grave 2 from Sivec also belongs to this period, as does the sword from Krklino, which probably comes from a cist-grave. This sword and a plate-shaped addition has been classified as the Catling type II of the 12th century BC. The contents of Grave 2 from Sivec include a sword sheath made of bone, a bronze ring and a bronze sword; Grave 11 from Saraj also belongs to this group of early graves. Its most common find is a fibula with a leafy arch and a long pin, which has been dated to the sub-Mycenaean period. The other graves belong to later periods⁸.

Until a decade ago the Late Bronze Age was rarely recorded in other parts of the Republic of Macedonia, but recent research is changing this. The Late Bronze Age, i.e. the Transitional period and the beginning of the Early Iron Age, are represented in a number of sites along the upper and middle flow of the Vardar. It is especially important to stress the fact that Mycenaean imports of weapons have been recorded, as well as local imitations of Mycenaean pottery from Lower Macedonia. The presence of Mycenaean ware and/or imitations in northern regions is undoubtedly related to changes in trade routes, including the amber trade. Until the 13th century BC, trade with the Aegean world was conducted via sea routes, but after 1250 BC trade moved across central Europe⁹; consequently, this region lay at the cross roads of north-south trade routes. The earliest finds

⁶ K. Kilian, 1975, 79.

⁷ M. Garasanin, 1958, 124-125, illustration 26; M. Garasanin 1983 786-792. I. Mikulcic 1966, 7-10.

⁸ M. Garasanin, 1983, 786-792, E. Petrova, 1996, 58.

⁹ A. F. Harding, 1976, 157-162; A. Palavestra, 1994, 281-288.

include a sword from Tetovo which N. K. Sandars classified as a Mycenaean rapier, type C1.¹⁰ Except in central Greece such swords have also been discovered in Dodona in Epirus: the Tetovo sword is very similar to the Peramatos sword from Ioanina. These swords date to the LH WA period and belong to the earlier phase of Mycenaean import to the region¹¹. As we have already noted, Mycenaean ware reached the area to the south in larger quantities during 13th century BC, and a find from the necropolis in Klucka-Madzari is of particular importance. In 1989 wild boar teeth were discovered in an urn. The teeth were cleft length ways and perforated on the edges¹²: in other words, they resemble the weapons of the Achaean heroes under Troy described in *The Iliad*. It is believed that the wild boar teeth formed a helmet that was characteristic of Mycenaean arms until the 13th century BC, i.e. until the LH IIIB period. Finds of wild boar teeth are frequent in Mycenaean graves, but this particular find is the most northern Mycenaean arms specimen unearthed thus far. The earliest grave in this necropolis contained an encrusted ball-shaped kantharos belonging to 14th to 13th centuries BC, that is, to Br. CD. Garasanin dates the entire necropolis to the 12th century and finds similarities with materials discovered in the regions to the south and in neighboring regions, and in particular with the Donja Brnjica cultural group. The biconal urns from Madzari, which in Donja Brnjica belong to the first group of urns, support his conclusion¹³.

Two particular important sites in the region along the middle flow of the Vardar belong to the Transitional Period. The first is the Vodovratski Pat site in the village of Vodovrati, dated to the Transitional period. In 1954, tomb structures cist built with stone slabs were discovered. In 1992 24 tombs structures dated to the 13th to 12th centuries BC were discovered. Skeletal burials with the deceased in the fetal position were performed in cist or pits.

The Dimov grob site in the village of Ulanci has been dated to approximately the same period i.e. between the 13th and 12th centuries BC. Between 1992 and 1994 about 50 structures - cists containing skeletons in fetal position -built with stone were explored. The most characteristic and important finds from these grave structures include locally manufactured matt-painted pottery and local ware manufactured after Mycenaean examples, usually in the shape of alabastron.

The metal finds include long bronze pins and hairpins. The miniature double labrys and among the weapons the bronze knives

¹⁰ N. K. Sandars, 1961, 145-146.

¹¹ N. K. Sandars, 1963, 117-144; N.G.L. Hammond, 1967, 319, 326.

¹² D. Mitrevski, 1994, 115-124; D. Mitrevski, 1995, 61-89.

¹³ M. Garasanin, 1996, 201-218.

should be also mentioned as examples of probable southern influence.

The painted pottery is especially important. It is usually made of high quality clay painted ochre or red. It is analogous to pottery from the sites in Lower Macedonia and to the pottery from Kastanas site, which is dated from 1200 to 1190 BC¹⁴.

An important fortified settlement, Kamenska Cuka, stood on the middle flow of the Struma. The finds discovered during the excavations here point to strong influences from the south, and even to Mycenaean imports. This confirms the directions in which Mycenaean influences spread along the flow of the Vardar¹⁵.

The Lower Macedonia region was especially significant during the Early Iron Age IA. In this region, changes in the material culture towards the end of the Bronze Age and the beginning of the Iron Age are multiple, characteristic and numerous. This was ascertained by W. A. Heurtley and S. Casson more than 50 years ago when they explored sites in Lower Macedonia and found significant changes in the way of life and, in particular, in the pottery finds of the period. Research conducted over the past few decades in Kastanas reached similar conclusions. In a large number of sites along the Vardar valley, including Axiokhorion (Vardarophtsa), Limnopotos (Vardino), Kilindria (Kilindir) and others, a burnt layer was found which is associated with the qualitatively new pottery and new populations from the north. These changes that have been stated over the past six decades have been differently named. These changes that have been investigated and classified differently over the previous six decades basically point to certain conclusions regarding the origin of the bearers of the new culture from the central and lower Danube¹⁶. Recent research has shown that changes caused by the arrival of new populations occurred in other sites in the Vardar valley as well¹⁷, which were named by Garasanin as Balkan and Lower Danube populations¹⁸.

W. A. Heurtley described the pottery from the burnt layer in Lower Macedonia sites as being gray with a dark polished surface; among these finds, the most typical were wide vessels with indented rims of the type known as turban dishes; two-handled kantharos-shaped vessels; one-handled jugs with fluting on the belly and twisted handles¹⁹. Some specific features of this pottery have been recorded

¹⁴ D. Mitrevski 1995, 57-66. A. Hochstetter, 1984, 261, 273-274, T.46.

¹⁵ M. Stefanovic, A. Bankoff, 1998, 255-338.

¹⁶ W.A. Heurtley 1939; W. Kimig, 1964.

¹⁷ A. Hochstetter, 1984, 276-283.

¹⁸ M. Garasanin, 1988, 45, 46 and note 13.

¹⁹ W.A. Heurtley 1939 98-99 217-218.

to a smaller extent in Epirus as well, and also in central Greece. This kind of pottery occurred in south Italy and in the very centers of Mycenaean civilization, such as Mycenae and Tyrins²⁰. In all of these areas and sites, this pottery is linked with the arrival of new populations, which of course did not consist of the bearers of one ethnic community only. Similarities between the pottery from the Mediana group, Thrace, Lower Macedonia and Troy VIIb2 point to related populations, which had settled the entire region before they settled in Asia Minor. Especially useful in the precise dating of the pottery from the burnt layer in the above sites is the Mycenaean pottery, or the pottery manufactured after Mycenaean models. The pottery from the upper burnt layer is Granary style, that is, belongs to the LH IIIC 1 b period, which corresponds with strata 12 and 13 in Kastanas. In Axiokhorion (Vardarovca), a violin-bow fibula with a leafy arch has been discovered on the very bottom of the burnt layer; it is dated between LH IIIC 1 and the sub-Mycenaean period²¹.

According to these above presented facts we can conclude that in spite of the far distance with centers of the Mycenaean culture, the influence penetrated to the northern regions. It is the question of time when we will find more finds on the Mycenaean import and stronger influence of the Mycenaean World in the Republic of Macedonia.

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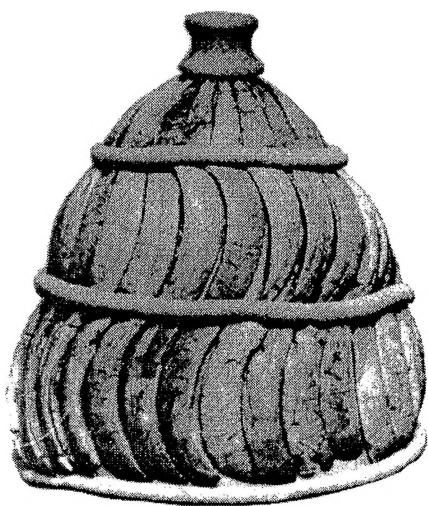
²⁰ M. Garasanin, 1983, 772, according to K. Killian, 1978.

²¹ W.A. Heurtley 1939, 96, 103, 123, 217-218; A. Hochstetter, 1984, 281.

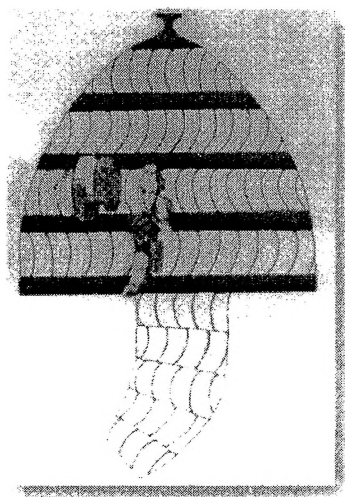
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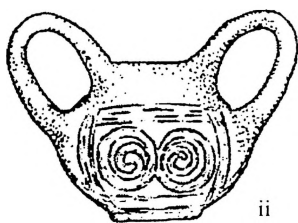
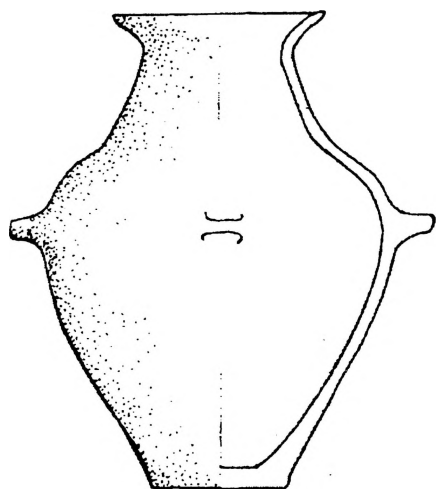
1. Head with Mycenaean helmet - Mycenae (Das Mykenische Hellas, 1988)



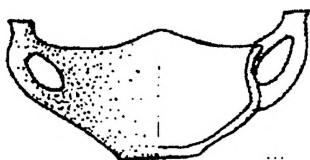
2. Mycenaean helmet with teeth of wild boar - Spata (Das Mykenische Hellas, 1988)



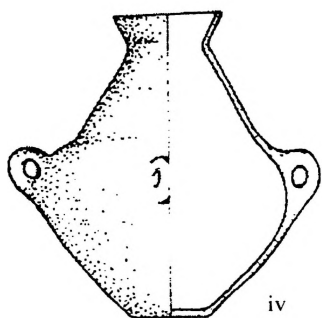
3. Reconstruction of Mycenaean helmet - Klučka, Madjari - Skopje



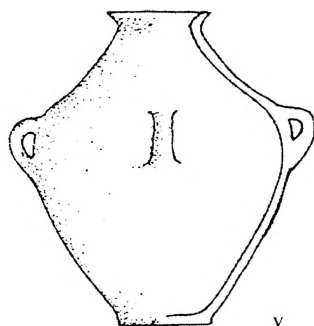
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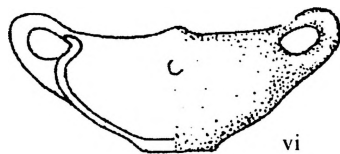
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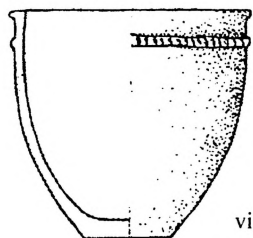
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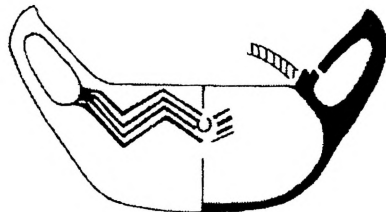
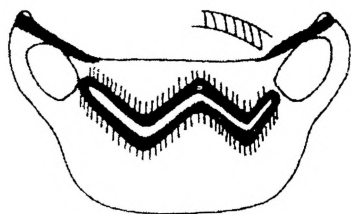
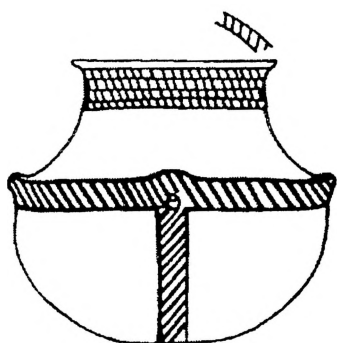


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4. Pottery from graves: i-ii grave 9; iii-iv grave 3; v-vi grave 7; vii grave 8; viii grave 4 (Klučka-Madjari, Skopje, D. Mitrevski, 1994)



5. Matt painted pottery - middle flow of Axios (D. Mitrevski, 1994)