



The most significant values
of the cultural and natural heritage

CAREVI KULI (TSAR'S TOWERS)



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This work has been published
with the financial support of the
Government of the Republic of Macedonia



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Skopje 2015



FOREWORD

MACEDONIAN CULTURAL AND NATURAL HERITAGE

Over the past 4.5 million years since the creation of Earth, the ancestor of the modern man, “the wise man - Homo sapiens”, appearing on the African continent 150,000 years before this day, quickly settled throughout the territories of the Middle East, Asia and Europe.

His cultural evolution is recorded in the Republic of Macedonia, as well.

While travelling through the prehistoric era of the Stone Age, the Bronze Age and the Iron Age, as well as the historical epochs of the Antiquity and the Middle Ages, man created civilizations on the soil of the Republic of Macedonia by introducing and using the natural resources. He established the magnificent kingdoms of the Agrianians, Paeonia, Pelagonia, Lyncestis, Macedonia, and the principalities of Deuriopus, Dessaretia and the Penestae.

The Roman Empire, Byzantine, the medieval states - all left a powerful civilizational imprint.

The belief in the natural phenomena, followed by the belief in the many gods, to finally worship our only God - all left indelible cultural traces.

All this enormous cultural and natural heritage of the Republic of Macedonia was subject of the capital project of the Government of the Republic of Macedonia, “Publications of the most significant values of the cultural and natural heritage,” carried out by the Cultural Heritage Protection Office.

130 monographs featuring the Archaeological Heritage, Sacral heritage, the Treasures of the churches and monasteries in Macedonia and the Natural heritage were created.

Macedonia - the high forest land in the heart of the Balkan Peninsula, as the name suggests, furrowed by the deep valleys of the Vardar tributaries and the river Drim, adorned with the blue - green waters of Lake Ohrid, Prespa and Dojran, with the proud giants Kozuv, Shar Mountain, Korab and Jablanica, Selecka Mountain and other mountain ranges, today lights 130 torches of its own, as well as the world's, cultural and natural heritage; a legacy to preserve, use wisely and pass on to future generations of the Macedonian road to eternity.

Prof. Viktor Lilchikj Adams, Ph.D.

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"The next morning after a full day of walking we arrived at a small town above the clouds which the locals called Strumica, thus positioned above a detached and diabolically high mountain, so that those who sat on the fortress, when seen from the valley, seemed like birds ...

With these words in the early 14th century the Byzantine writer Nicephorus Gregory describes the fortress above Strumica, known today as Carevi Kuli, in a letter to his friend Andronikos Zarida. This writer briefly visited Strumica in the spring of year 1324 while travelling on a diplomatic mission. Its impressive position captured even the attention of this Byzantine writer, who had travelled to most cities in Byzantium during his diplomatic missions.

Even today, the remains of this fortress rise above to a dominant position south of the city of Strumica and act as a silent witness of the epochs that marked the historic developments in the region. The fate of Carevi Kuli is closely linked to the fate of Strumica. Owing to archaeological research on Carevi Kuli, once again, we had an opportunity to explore the history of Strumica and the region around Strumica.



Dawn over Strumica, Strumicko Pole (Strumica Field), the mountains Ograzden, Pirin and Belasica

Carevi Kuli rise on the south side of the town of Strumica, at an average altitude of about 450 meters. The fortress has an elongated oval base and extends 210 meters in the direction east-west and 80 m north-south. From the northwest and southeast side of the hill descend steep ravines to the foot of the abundant rivulets Koritnice and St. Elijah. From these two sides the hill is almost completely inaccessible. On the south side, with a small passage, it is attached to the so-called Juzen Rid (South Hill), which continues as a hilly landscape and connects to the area Cam Ciflik. On the east extends a slope in a fan-like manner which is somewhat more accessible and connects the plateau of Carevi Kuli to the base of the city of Strumica. On the eastern slope there is another terrace above which the second wall extends and other objects which have not yet been researched. In addition to the fortress, the archaeological site also includes the necropolis Juzen Rid, the prehistoric settlement on the south-eastern slope and the east side walls.



Remains of the medieval fortress Carevi Kuli

Ever since ancient times, the hill above Strumica, placed at a dominant position over the fertile Strumicko Pole (Strumica Field), had been perceived by populations who inhabited this area as a place where, apart from offering a safe haven in unstable times, it could provide basic living conditions and development of a small but compact community. For this reason, there is almost no period in history when the hill was uninhabited.

The most ancient layers of life on Carevi Kuli go back to the first half of the 5th millennium BC, more precisely the Chalcolithic-Copper Age. At that time emerged the first terraced settlement on the south-eastern slope of the hill, on a strategically elected inaccessible terrain. After the disintegration of the Neolithic cultures in the late 6th and early 5th millennium BC, arise social and cultural changes due to the great migration of the steppe-Indo-European peoples.

Unlike the calm and stable Neolithic times, considerable changes accompanied by war and violence occur during this period prompting new inhabitants to select strategically inaccessible positions for building their settlements which possessed good visibility of the environment.

In addition to the south-eastern slope, research has also confirmed remains of settlements in the northwest and west areas, as well as on Juzen Rid. As previously mentioned, the Chalcolithic settlement expanded on the brim around the plateau and over the south-eastern slope, while on the plateau itself was probably the livestock fenced in a pen. The slopes had levelled terraces which later served as places for building dwellings inhabited probably by smaller communities-clans. Judging from the finds, they were communities that engaged in livestock breeding (cattle, sheep, goats, and to a lesser extent, pigs). Judging from the remains on the reindeer horns, hunting was also of great importance, but certainly not a priority for the economy of the population. In addition to animal breeding, the inhabitants of Carevi Kuli from the Chalcolithic era engaged in agriculture, as well.



The southeast slope during the research of the prehistoric settlement

Research has provided us with significant information about the organization of the dwellings, their structure and manner of arrangement. Unfortunately, due to the erosion which considerably damaged the cultural layers of the settlement, the results were not complete. It seems that the settlement suffered during the turbulent times in the middle of the 5th millennium. Several structures from that period which were probably built by partially digging into the terrace have been researched. The aboveground parts of the walls probably had a lightweight construction made of branches and clay brick and a roof made of branches and straw. It seems that the roof was additionally reinforced with smaller amorphous stones that stabilized it.

The largest concentration of dwellings was at the south-eastern terrace which was naturally protected from the northern winds and was exposed to sun during the day. Judging by the concentration of the findings, it is almost certain that the space of the dwellings was divided into different specialized areas. The remains of the parapet walls made of clay bricks, which most likely served to divide the rooms, point to the same conclusion. In both dwellings researched during 2008 and 2011 was observed a cult space located next to the furnace. Near the furnaces were found several anthropomorphic figurines, tools and jewellery, as well as flour mills. This space, in addition to its role in the preparation and heating of food, was likely linked to certain magical and cult activities. The floor substructure was built of pressed earth with woven straw mats probably spread on top. In and around the dwellings were also found several pits probably used for food storage. Certain areas were used in food preparation, judging by the high number of mills (oval stones with a recipient for grinding). Unfortunately, the dimensions of these dwellings could not be entirely identified due to the strong degree of erosion and damage. Judging by analogy from the neighbouring sites and the space on the south-eastern slope we can assume that the dwellings were 8-10 x 4 m.



Remains of two furnaces at the dwelling from the Chalcolithic

The collection of movable finds is also numerous and diverse and facilitates the determining of the Chalcolithic culture. Here, most importantly, we should mention the dishes of fine facture, almost without exception covered with graphite decorations, and in one case with white graphite. The most common shapes are the amphora vessels, often cannellured on the belly, with several protruding 'nipple' applications usually placed in concentric circles. The graphite is usually linear, but a significant number of vessels are decorated with curved motifs.

The graphite on the amphora vessels was usually arranged on the neck and belly, whereas on the wider bowls and other vessels, sometimes, beside the exterior, the interior of the vessel was also covered. We can also mention the vessels decorated by means of incision stamping in the so-called Gradesnica style, then, vessels decorated by cannelluring etc. These were mainly larger vessels in medium facture. Beside the fine, there are also vessel ceramics of a somewhat deeper facture used in everyday life, but their number is significantly lower compared to the vessels with fine and medium facture. The most prevalent forms are bowls, amphora vessels, larger vessels with and without handles, plates, smaller vessels known as salt-shakers etc.



Findings of the Chalcolithic horizon on the site Carevi Kuli

As the most appealing amongst the findings, we can mention the anthropomorphic figurines that appeared in different versions and almost all of them with characteristics of the female gender. Only in a few cases, where the head was planted on the body, they were most likely zoomorphic figurines. Most were broken off, and some of them were exposed to high temperatures. They were made from baked soil of different facture, degree of baking and colour. The figurines are of different dimensions, but none greater than 10 cm. Some of them were decorated by engraving with linear, zigzag, curved, staggered and circular lines (sometimes filled with white encrustation), some are perforated with holes, usually on the head and arms. Some figurines have steatopygia, protruding hips and pubic part, while the chest and hands are not particularly developed (except in one case where the hands are adhered to the body). Judging by their ubiquity, these figurines played a significant role within the settlements in cults and magical rites related to fertility.



Anthropomorphic plastic from the Chalcolithic facilities

Beside the figurines, within the Chalcolithic settlement was also found a ring-shaped pendant made of stone with two holes for inserting a string and a fragment of a pendant made of greenish-black malachite. Judging by the meticulous crafting of the pendants, we can conclude that the Chalcolithic community of Carevi Kuli applied advanced craft techniques and established strong trade links since the malachite amulet, almost certainly, came through trade.

Among the other features of Chalcolithic culture from the site Carevi Kuli are the objects used in everyday life, such as the polished tools, mostly axes and chisels, and in one case was found a perforated axe- hammer typical of this period. There also appeared a number of silex knives and scrapers which were probably inserted in wood, bone and horn and served as knives, sickles, or were used in the tanning of animal skin. Another interesting observation is that among them appeared knives made of volcanic glass which probably reached these parts through trade. The objects of bone and horn also appear in different forms- in particular, awls, needles and handles where polished axes were inserted. Most often it was the horns of cattle and deer. As a proof for the developed manufacturing of clothing and fabrics of the inhabitants of the Chalcolithic settlement on Carevi Kuli, stand numerous spindle whorls of bi-conical, oval and globular shape found on almost all areas around the settlement. It is interesting to note that a few of them were decorated by incision linear decoration.

From the layers of the Chalcolithic settlement was unearthed a copper awl with a length of 10 cm which was probably inserted into a handle of bone, horn or wood. This is, thus far, one of the oldest metal tools found in the Republic of Macedonia. Similar findings have been found previously on the sites along the river Struma, but this is the first such finding discovered in our country and confirms the already developed metallurgy processes in this area.

Apart from certain local characteristics, the Chalcolithic culture on the site Carevi Kuli with its overall features can be included in the complex of the Early Chalcolithic which at that time flourished in the valley of the river Struma, known as the complex Gradesnica- Slatino- Dikili Tash II. Although special physical or chemical analysis have not been conducted, judging by the analogous morphological and overall characteristics, the Chalcolithic culture on Carevi Kuli can be determined within the first half of the 5th millennium BC.

With further research of the layers on the south-eastern slope it was established that the epochs of the Early Bronze Age, with the possible exception of its final stages, left no significant traces and for a period of almost one and a half millenniums there is no information. Activities resume during the Middle Bronze Age, when over the Early Chalcolithic settlement was established a new settlement expanding over virtually the same terraces with an identical manner in setting the dwellings.



Bronze Age vessels from the south-eastern slope of the site Carevi Kuli

Research yielded invaluable information about the structure, content and process of inhabiting, as well as further morphological characteristics of the movable inventory which define the culture more narrowly. Unfortunately, the results here were also incomplete due to the serious erosion which considerably damaged the settlement horizons. Research during 2011 showed that at this position there are at least two stages of the process of inhabiting during the Bronze Age. The first, older stage, is from the transitional period at the very beginning, while the other, newer phase is from the middle of the Middle Bronze Age.

What distinguishes this horizon from the Chalcolithic is that here we did not find traces of violence, i.e. it seems that the Bronze Age inhabitants left the settlement at one point. Unlike the Chalcolithic, these dwellings were larger - about 10 m long and 4 m in width. They were probably rectangle and were oriented east to west. It seems that at least one of the objects had an apse ending on the east side. The dwellings were built with lightweight construction, i.e. stakes pressed into the ground and then woven with clay brick, straw, etc. The roof was also built by means of a wooden construction and possibly covered with straw. Here too, judging by the high concentration of small amorphous stones mixed with fragmented vessel ceramics immediately above the floor superstructure, applied the rule of covering the roof structure in order to ensure its stability during blasts of wind, rain, snow etc.



Remains of building from the middle Bronze Age

The movable finds are also numerous and diverse. In particular, we can mention the fragments of vessels that have emerged in different variants (cups, bowls with strap handles which stand higher than the crown of the container, large containers, etc.). Some forms have significantly enriched the fundus of the vessels of that period. In this case too, we can classify the ceramics into fine, medium and coarse. The fine is characterized by a very polished exterior and has an almost metallic lustre surface. Most vessels are brown to ochre and fewer with a dark-coloured surface. The decoration of the vessels is rare, except in one case, and usually consists of incised triangles or circular grooves executed on the body of the vessel or the handles. As previously mentioned, most vessels have strap handles with different shapes. Vessels with an S-profile and horn handles emerge, as well as containers with horizontally placed strap handles or vessels with composite handles i.e. with horn and horizontal handles



Containers of the Middle Bronze Age



What certainly distinguishes this culture is the emergence of the so-called *wish bone handles* i.e. handles in the form of a wishbone. These handles along with the “Baroque” decorated vessel with incised spirals in rectangular fields, an array of inscribed zigzag lines and engraved diamonds arranged into fields, undoubtedly determined the chronological and cultural background of the Bronze Age culture as a so-called *Minyan culture*. During the Middle Bronze Age this culture culturally united the space of Asia Minor in the east (research in Troy confirmed the presence of this culture and the site) to Thessaly on the west culturally. As it appears, Carevi Kuli, for the time being represents its northernmost instance. This culture existed somewhere from the 20th century to the end of the 16th century BC. If to this we add the first stage of inhabiting during the transition between the Early and Middle Bronze Age, we can safely conclude that the horizon of the Middle Bronze Age left important traces on Carevi Kuli.



View of the south side of Kings Towers

Virtually, no material evidence exists for the following millennium. However, at the end of 5th and the beginning of the 4th century BC there is suddenly a new tide of inhabiting on Carevi Kuli.

With research campaigns conducted in 2008, and especially in 2009, were discovered five large pits with a circular base containing exceptional material from the Macedonian Classical period, i.e. the 5th and 4th century BC. These pits were dug into a feldspar rock at the top of the hill and positioned in an east-west direction. The first pit was discovered during the research campaign in 2008 and was located near the area of the medieval church and the complex that consisted of a tank, well and a granary. Here, for the first time, was found material characteristic of the 4th century BC. It consisted mainly of pottery of local origin, but there was also black varnished ceramics and some forms of vessels that mostly relate to the Attic workshops. In this pit, beside the pottery, were found several remains of iron spears (unfortunately, severely corroded).

During the 2009 research of the central plateau, four other pits were discovered, two of which were of extensive dimensions and depth (pit 4 and 5). To illustrate, pit 5 has a depth of 4 m, width of the mouth 3.9 x 4.7 m and the bottom is 5.4 x 5.4 m. In these pits was found an enormous quantity of ceramics with shapes that point to local workshops, and to imported vessels, as well, mainly of Attic origin. Unlike the pit researched in 2008, this time, beside pottery, also appeared coins, weapons, everyday items and jewellery.

Some of the most representative ceramic findings are certainly the fragments of imported painted vessels with images of palmettos, genre scenes and so on. Judging by the fragments, they are likely remains of skyphoi. There were also black varnished vessels (kantharoi, kylikes, ehinus plates etc.). The other pottery findings, beside fragments of rough pitoi consist mostly of local grey ceramics; and of the shapes there are mostly hydrias, belly lekythoi, skyphoi, kantharoi, askoi, ehinus plates, amphorae etc.

Other highlights include jewellery consisting primarily of bronze arc fibulae of the type Asia Minor, bird-shaped bronze pendants, bronze bracelets, glass paste beads etc.

Weaponry includes fragments of iron spears, almond- shaped lead sling-bullets and bronze arrow tips.

Coins are in a very poor condition making their depicted images hard to discern. On some of them the head of Apollo could be noticed on the left side of the obverse, and others depicted a horse on the right side of the reverse, indicating the issuing of obols belonging to Philip II.

From the everyday items, despite the great presence of oval and pyramidal weights and other findings a ceramic cube (die) for social games also emerged.

It is interesting to note that the findings from the site Carevi Kuli from the 5th and 4th century BC were found exclusively in this context i.e. in pits of circular form that widen downward. All pits, without exception, were dug into the rock. The question regarding the context of the pits still remains open, and so far the only explanation is that they actually represent cult pits associated with cults, rites and rituals that locals practiced at the top of the hill.



Pit 5 of the 4th century BC during research

The excavations of the necropolis in the area of Juzen Rid during 2010 yielded disorganized remains of at least one burial of the 4th century BC. Several arrowlets were found, a ring and a gold foil-pectoral to cover body parts during funeral rituals. All finds were scattered on a limited area, which was likely devastated with subsequent activities of burial during the Macedonian-Hellenistic period and Late Antiquity.



Items from the Macedonian-Hellenistic period on the site Carevi Kuli

In the Macedonian-Hellenistic period activities on the site Carevi Towers suddenly intensify. At that time, there was probably some form of organized life on the plateau, although the context of inhabiting is still not clear. Nevertheless, many finds from that period were discovered on the plateau of the site Carevi Kuli as well as the necropolis in the area of Juzen Rid. Throughout the entire site were found coins, starting from the last Macedonian kings Philip V and Perseus, as well as the pseudo- autonomous coinage of the Macedonian cities, Thessalonica, Amphipolis and Pella. On the southeast corner of the plateau were found fragmented pitoi and remains of building structures built of carved stone bound by mud. On the northwest wall were found several pits containing exceptional material from the Macedonian-Hellenistic era. In the first pit was found a terracotta figurine of Hermes accompanied by a coin of Philip V and a fragmented lamp covered with black varnish. In the other pit were found remains of three terracotta figurines of Cybele, one of which containing preserved traces of colouring. This practice can probably be associated with cults and religious beliefs within the settlement.

Research of the necropolis proved that it was used during the Macedonian-Hellenistic period. Here were found several graves that represented a bi-ritual manner of burial i.e. by means of cremation and inhumation. These graves yielded invaluable material for further insight into the social structure of the population of the 3rd-2nd century BC. At this position were found various coins, vessels and jewellery that indicate an already developed social stratification in the city. As previously mentioned, here were found vessels typical of this era, such as, Megarian cups with erotic motifs, then the Megarian cups of the so-called Homeric type, with different representations of genre scenes, floral motifs etc. Other items include bowls, shallow plates-ichtya, larger vessels with and without handles, small storage containers for essential oils -unguentariums, ceramic lamps, some of them covered with black varnish and lavishly decorated with olive branches. But, as the most impressive we can mention the gold jewellery

finds discovered from two burials (one by cremation and one by inhumation). They are two pairs of earrings and a ring. One pair of earrings is designed as protoma with a shape of a lion's head, and the other pair is designed as Negroid heads. The ring bears a representation of a woman's head (or Dionysus?). Unfortunately, burials from the Macedonian-Hellenistic period were devastated by the later burials during the Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages.



Gold jewelry from the Macedonian-Hellenistic period in the area of Juzen Rid- Carevi Kuli

It is interesting to note that the findings from this period indicate the existence of a developed urban settlement, which was probably located under the foundations of present-day Strumica. The finds from the site Orta Džamija (Orta Mosque) where a wide horizon of the Macedonian-Hellenistic era was found suggest the same. Although there are still no finds bearing inscriptions that will unequivocally confirm this, it can be assumed that the material finds of the Macedonian-Hellenistic epoch may be associated with the ancient Astraion. In fact, linguistic evidence is in favour of this thesis, as well. We hope that future research will reveal the name of the Macedonian-Hellenistic city under present-day Strumica.

Research has shown that after the conquering of Macedonia by the Romans in the year 148 BC life on Carevi Kuli continues, but with a somewhat lesser intensity. Apart from the first years after the conquest when the activity is still not reduced, it later drops significantly. This is likely due to the invasion of the Celtic tribes Scordisci from the north who devastated these parts towards the end of 2nd century BC for quite some time. We still continued discovering remains of material culture from the so-called Late Hellenism, consisting of, mostly pottery, but coins, as well (Roman republican denarius, some pseudo - autonomous forging, etc.). Activities also continued in the necropolis Juzen Rid, where at least one burial is of that period - documented by the discovery of a Roman republican denarius - serratus of the 1st century BC.

The same intensity continues in the 1st century in the period of the Roman Empire. Here were found coins of the 1st century, mostly the type ΣΕΒΑΣΤΟΣ ΜΑΚΕΔΟΝΩΝ - the time of the emperors Tiberius, Claudius, Nero, Vespasian, etc. It appears that of the same period are the remains of ceramics, primarily *terra sigillata* of Eastern origin, some forms of pottery typical of the early imperial period, lamps etc.

In the period 2nd- 3rd century there is still some activity, though of a lesser intensity. The finds are predominantly pseudo-autonomous coins of the Macedonian "Koine" of Hadrian, Antoninus Pius, Marcus Aurelius, Alexander Severus etc. During this period, the findings of stamped ceramics also gradually intensify. This is especially evident in the second half of the 3rd century, when the activity of Carevi Kuli suddenly becomes vigorous. This happens due to the unstable period filled with civil wars and the first invasions of the barbarian tribes.

Namely, at the end of 3rd century these regions were devastated by the Gothic-Heruli invasion. They were particularly affected in the year 268, and already in 269 the Goths were defeated by Claudius II Gothic (268-270) at the Battle of Nish (Naissus) where 320,000 barbarians suffered. Therefore, in the beginning of the Late Roman period were registered major fortification interventions in the Balkans, on the borders as well as the interior, along the important roads and around major cities. Apart from the fortresses of Diocletian (285-305) there are also those of Constantine I (307-337).

By the end of 3rd and the beginning of the 4th century Strumica (Tiberiopolis) along with the fortress Carevi Kuli became a fortified city, probably owing to the activities undertaken by Diocletian and Constantine.

The writings of Theophylact of Ohrid indicate the same, who, when writing of the Fifteen Holy Hieromartyrs of Tiberiopolis, notes that the city was well established until the destruction by Avars (Aubrey). While describing the end of the city due to the invasion of the Avars he mentions that within its walls were located beautiful buildings and luscious temples of God which were destroyed.



Panoramic image of the medieval towers

At that time the fortress on the hill already existed with strong defensive towers and walls. The walls were built in the technique *emplekton*, i.e. by means of internal and external facade of carved stone, and the interior of broken stones thrown randomly into the mortar. This wall is about 1.60-1.80 m thick and is preserved in fragments on several positions at the borderline of the plateau. A small section with a length of about 20 meters, which is sharply in contrast to the medieval wall with regard to form, has been preserved on the north side. The best way to observe its length is on the south side where it reaches a length of about 50 meters. Here, basically, were preserved at least two Late Antique towers. But, despite its fragmented preservation it was possible to perceive the direction of the Late Antique fortress, its length and former structure.



Late Antique finds from the site Carevi Kuli

Recent archaeological excavations have given clear archaeological data for the end of the Late Antique fortress. Judging from the Life of Theophylact, it probably existed until the time of the Avar-Slavic migration. Some findings, such as the Byzantine buckle and a few coins from the time of Maurice support this thesis.

West of the acropolis was located a necropolis that was probably a section of the Late Antique fortress from the second half of the 4th century until the end of the 6th century. It yielded important information concerning the life of the population from the fortress and the urban population from Estreon (Tiberiopolis). Studies have shown that social differentiation was obvious and that there were certain social inequalities between people. This was particularly evident in the articles contained in the burials, as well as the construction of burials. During the second half of the 4th century burials contained an abundance of lavish articles, while their number decreased significantly in the second half of the 4th century. Most burials of the 5th and 6th century are extremely poor and rarely contain articles. Research showed that some inhabitants could afford luxurious items of gold and silver jewellery, glass vessels, bronze and imported lamps with relief representations, of which the most numerous are the ones bearing the representation of Achilles with Penthesilea and Athens.



Lamps with relief representations of Achilles with Penthesilea and Athens (3rd -4th century) and a cross pendant (4th- 6th century)

Lamps with gladiator scenes, rams, dolphins, etc. were also found. Almost all burials contained the so-called Charon's obol, sometimes accompanied by several tens of coins. An interesting fact is the discovery of medical instruments indicating that at that time there was a doctor practicing medicine on Carevi Kuli.

At the end of 4th century, after the fall of the Roman army at Adrianople (Edirne) in the year 378 year, Goth troops cruised freely through the interior of the Balkans. Their presence on the site Carevi Kuli has been documented through a number of findings, including diverse jewellery, coins and buckles characteristic of the Goths.

Here was discovered evidence that complemented the image of the city regarding the existence of a Christian community. Research proved that Christians were buried in the necropolis most likely in the 4th century. The discovery of a small cross-reliquary in the necropolis clearly speaks in favour of early Christianization of this region, which once again confirms the Life of the Holy Fifteen Hieromartyrs of Tiberiopolis written by Theophylact of Ohrid in the 11th 12th century. After the arrival of the Slavs in the 6th century, the area around Strumica was inhabited by the



Pottery and glass finds from the Late Antique period from Juzen Rid – Carevi Kuli

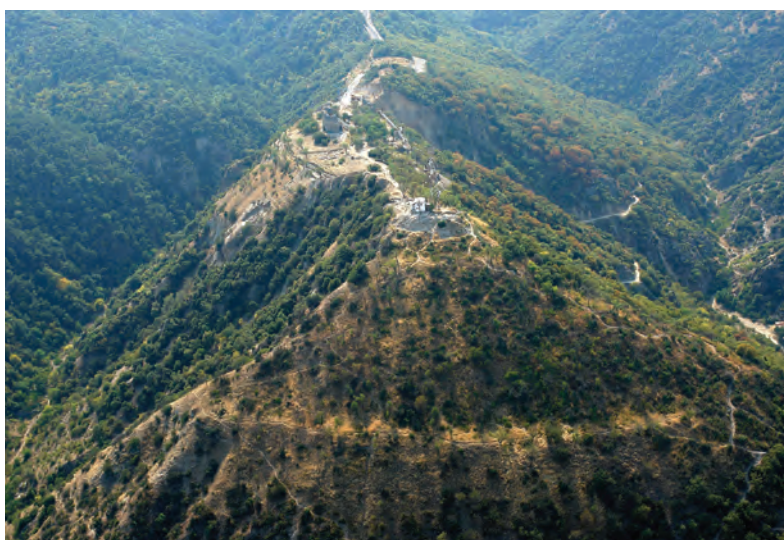
Slavic tribes Strumljani or Strimonci, most likely at the beginning of the 7th century. They renamed Astraion or Estreon into the Slavic version - Strumica. These developments also reflected the Late Antique fortress, where the activity almost completely faded away. The material finds also support this conclusion. Namely, the last coins that were found belong to the emissions of Maurice (582-602). After his rule other coins have not been found until the 11th century. This coincides with the data from the "Miracles of St. Demetrius of Thessalonica" where massive Slavic attacks of Thessaloniki in the year 584 and especially in 586 were mentioned. As of the end of the 6th century, until the time of Samuil's state, no findings have been observed on the site Carevi Kuli.

In Samuil's state the Strumica area played a significant role. The Byzantine emperor Basil II (976-1025) launched a major invasion against Samuil at the beginning of the 11th century. The main battle took place in the Strumica area near the Klyuch Klisura (gorge) where Samuil built a defensive wall (dema) in the gorge "Kleidion" near the village of Klyuch. He barred the road to the valley Kimva Long (Long Field) where Basil II was traveling from Istanbul to the interior of the Balkans.

The main sources of Samuel and his country, Skilitsa-Kedrin, communicate of the failed siege of Strumica by one of the generals of Basil II, the patrician David Arianit. After the defeat of Samuel in the Battle of Belasica during the year 1016, he held the city under siege, but failed to conquer it. He was only successful in conquering the fortresses Macukion and Termica. In the end, he delivered the keys of the city Strumica to the captain of Strumica - Dragomuzh, around the year 1018 for which he received the title Patrician.

With the research of Carevi Kuli we did not receive significant information regarding the siege of Strumica, which leads us to the conclusion that Samuel probably used the Late Antique fortress strengthening it and enabling it for defense. We assume that at the time, at the moment of his occupation, the defended space within the fortress was still in a relatively good condition. The necessary interventions were executed by means of drywall and wood, most likely to close off some gaps - Brescia, as well as to strengthen certain positions at the battlement. This state of the fortress probably remained until the end of 11th century.

The medieval fortress rises above Strumica toward the end of the 11th and the beginning of the 12th century, when the first contours of today's Carevi Kuli appear.



View of the northeast terrace on Carevi Kuli

The fortress was built with all its accompanying elements: pyrg- tower, ramparts around the entire plateau, defensive towers, water tanks, granaries, housing facilities, stables, blacksmiths and a medieval church. This happens probably due to the building activity of the Byzantine emperors from the line of Comnenus (1081-1185 year), driven by the threat of the arrival of the Crusaders and Normans. After the rule of Manuel I Comnenus (1143-1180) uncertain times take over the Byzantine Empire once again. These areas suffered from the invasion of the Normans probably between 1182 and 1185, who occupied Thessaloniki in 1185.

The next mention of Strumica is during the reign of Dobromir Chrysos (Hriz), who was probably appointed a Byzantine viceroy of Strumica and its surroundings around 1186. Dobromir Chrysos along with his five hundred men rebelled against the Byzantine Empire around 1194. First, he arrogated Strumica, after which he later moved his governing headquarters to Prosek. There is information that on the fortress Prosek were performed interventions for strengthening and according to research similar interventions probably took place at the fortress Carevi Kuli, as well. At certain positions, such as the south wall and the western tower, there are visible adjustments probably originating from that period.

Chrysos created a powerful independent principality stretching to Pelagonia and Prilep, on the west. This principality did not last long. According to their mutual agreement, the Byzantine Emperor Alexius III and the Bulgarian Tsar (Emperor) Kaloyan agreed to divide Chrysos's principality. According to the Byzantine chronicler N. Choniates, Strumica was conquered by means of "fraud" by the Byzantine Empire in 1202, and Bulgaria got the city of Prosek.

After Chrysos's rule, whose traces disappear somewhere around 1202, Byzantium again conquers this area. After the conquest of Tsarigrad (Istanbul) by the Crusaders during the 4th Crusade War in 1204, this area came under rule of the Bulgarian Empire (1204-1207). At that time in this region appeared the Prosek master Strez (1207-1214). After this independent master, these areas were first conquered by the Thessalonica Kingdom and later by the Epirus despotism under Theodore Angel.

According to historical facts, after the Battle of Klokotnica in the year 1230 these areas were conquered by the Bulgarian army under John Asen II. Sometime around 1246, this area was devastated by John Vatzes's Nicean armies. Bulgarians will again prevail under Michael Asen II, and after the restoration of the Byzantine Empire in 1261 this area is again under Byzantine rule of the Palaiologoi dynasty. Material findings of this site also support the historical data that speaks of a revival of activity in the fortress and around it.

The fortress played an important role in the Serbian-Byzantine clashes in late 13th and early 14th century. At that time the fortress Carevi Kuli, along with the fortresses Prosek and Melnik, constituted the defence of communications toward Thessaloniki and Serres in Byzantium. After the conquests of the Serbian King Milutin, which were directed to the south, Byzantium was suppressed all the way to Veles. The danger from the north prompted the Byzantines to strengthen their defence system in order to prevent Serbian progress towards the south.

In addition to the fortress Carevi Kuli, the defence system included the fortresses Prosek in Demir Kapija to the west and Melnik to the east. One protected the route along the river Vardar and the



Ideal reconstruction of the medieval fortress Carevi Kuli (view from the west)

other the route along the Struma. Between these two important fortresses was located the fortress Carevi Kuli, and in-between was the fortress in Petrich and the guard posts (phrouria) in Kolarovo, Mokrievno (pyrg- tower) to the east, Valandovo (Markov Tower) to the west, Konce to the north etc.

Before falling into Serbian hands, this region was operated by the independent feudal lord, Protosebastos Hrelja, who probably established vassal relations with Serbia. According to John Kantakouzenos we can conclude that in Hrelja's cities there were between 300 and 400 soldiers. This region came under Serbian rule around 1332 during the reign of the Serbian King Dusan (1331-1355). After his death, the brothers Dejanovic ruled this region.

All this indicates that in the Middle Ages Carevi Kuli was an important fortress-kastron, a regional center with urban clusters outside the fortress. It seems that in that period the city of Strumica was organized in a classic medieval manner as a complex fortified settlement. The fortress was located on top of the dominant hill and was of strategic and military character because of its location on an important communication road that led from Serres to Stip.

The fortress was surrounded by a serrated wall reinforced with towers and represented a defence and surveillance centre. Its inaccessibility at the top of the hill and the surrounding gorges enabled a fairly reliable defence. These advantages, due to the strategic position of the fortress, enabled an easy defence despite the relatively modest walls and towers. It was impossible to approach it by siege engines and due to the rocky surface it was also impossible to dig under the walls. Holding sufficient supplies of water and food, it was practically unconquerable. This was unmistakably evident to the contemporaries of that time as well, who, when speaking of fortresses that could not easily be conquered by an open attack actually meant the fortresses in Strumica, Melnik, Prilep and Prosek. Owing to research it is a known fact today that the medieval fortress was thoroughly renovated and spaciouly expanded. A complete destruction of the Late Antique fortress preceded this process.

During the process of rebuilding a significant part of the track of the Late Antique fortress was abandoned. Over the new track, which only partially covers the old, was raised an entirely new rampart. The rampart was executed by bricklaying of the lower parts, and over the lower walking path, in addition to the external, was executed an internal cover of the wall, as well. Depending on the location, the height of new wall was probably around 8-9 m. The wall ended in an upper walking path for movement of the guards. The path had a cannelured battlement with notched openings for shooting, and over the entrances was the so-called curtain wall (covered serrated battlement). A total of six defensive towers were established at certain distances with a square base that rise above the wall for about 1-2 m. The fortress was best defended at the west entrance, where it was enhanced by three towers at a distance from one another in the length of a spear. At this position the defence was further strengthened by digging an artificially deep trench - fossa.

Within the fortress there were different objects for commercial and everyday use, primarily intended for the staff - the servants and the guards. In addition to these facilities, there probably were stables, blacksmith workshops, barns, water tanks, grain warehouses, auxiliary buildings ... Some of these facilities are supported by the walls, while others stand independently in space.

Most facilities researched in the period 2005-2010 were probably houses erected on stone foundations built on a stone plinth in the lower sections, while the upper storey structures were built of wood or clay bricks (half-timber constructions).

At the east end within the fortification was located a small yard church whose remains indicated that it was a small single-nave church with a porch on the north and a chapel on the south side. Today, unfortunately, the majority of the church is located under the transmitter house.

Pyrg-tower (in French or Norman "dungeon" - *donjon*) is located at the highest point of the plateau and is set over a rock. The tower, which had at least 2-3 floors, functioned as a management centre of defence and at the same time was the yard space of the person in charge of the fortress. In its interior were the located the rooms, and the basement chambers had a water tank with the capacity of 270 m³. The tank was arched in a semicircle and occupied the entire interior of the tower. The atmospheric water was guided through ceramic pipes from the roof to the tank. This was a so-called "tank on a vault", found in many fortresses in the Balkans. Typically, these towers did not have an entrance on the ground floor, but on the upper floor. One could reach the entrance by means of external wooden stairs or a wooden bridge thrown over the wall, which could be easily lifted in case of danger. One could descend to the ground floor from the upper floor from the inside. The tower was first built on a rectangular base, to which was later added a sharp corner on the west and the east, probably due to the development of artillery. The tower itself has a length of 22 meters and a width of 8 meters. The largest preserved height is 10 meters.

The pyrg-tower is specific and unique in its kind in the Balkans. With regard to its elongated hexagonal base it only bears analogy to the donjon of Visegrad, the centre of the Hungarian kings, north of Budapest. Beside the fortress itself, the defence area included both fortification belts of the northern, south-eastern and eastern part.

On the western slope, a few dozen meters below the rampart is located a facility - *a small church (crkvichka)*. Most likely, it was initially used as a shelter for the staff of the fortress in case of invasion and, so far, there are no analogies to similar facilities of other forts in Macedonia.



Carevi Kuli, view from the west side

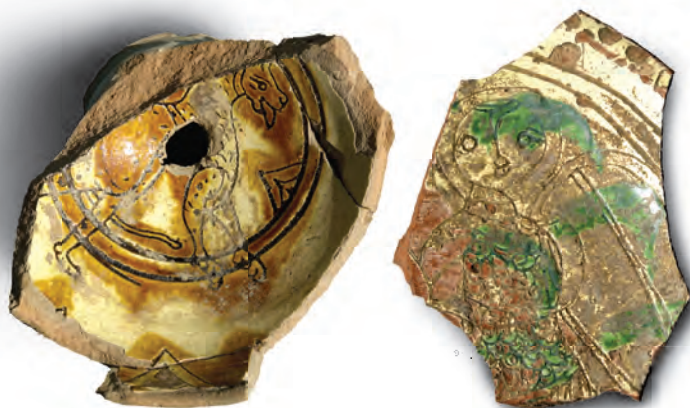
At the foot of Carevi Kuli, in the area Loven Dom were found the remains of a medieval church that has yet to be researched.

In the same area, next to the water supply tank, there are remains of the lower “urban” settlement. Somewhat below, on the road that leads to the Loven Dom there are remains of a defensive wall that has not been researched yet. Judging by analogy to other medieval cities, from the fortress descended walls that surrounded the base of the city. These walls also were most likely reinforced by numerous towers. Around the walls, the city extended with all its buildings, administrative and public facilities, churches, chapels, mansions, shops, craft workshops and houses. The staff that protected the entire settlement was in the fortress, and underneath were the houses of the urban population. In the suburb (the lower city) were often the houses and shops of the ruler and the people he governed. According to written documents of analogous fortresses in the neighbourhood, most houses were built of wood. On the space between the fortress and the lower town, the population of the surrounding areas would gather for the market, fair, meetings, religious feasts, courts etc. Even in peaceful times, the city was protected by guards - day and night. In addition to the professional soldiers, the city was guarded by citizens who were assigned that duty. These cities were usually locked at night, after which no one could enter inside.



Crosses and a bracelet from the site Carevi Kuli (11th -13th century)

Research showed that the most intensive layers on Carevi Kuli are from the medieval period and, at the same time, they are the most abundant in findings. Almost half of the excavated material thus far is from that period. The findings generally follow historical developments. The earliest findings are from the time of Samuil's wars, and they gradually increase through the 12th, 13th and 14th century, until the Serbian rule and the Ottoman conquest in the late 14th century. From that period are the many iron arrowlets found all around the fortress, but mostly beside the ramparts and towers, which indicates that the fortress was probably occupied in different time periods. Unfortunately, the findings of other types of weapons are poor, with the exception of a few maces, one of which has a bronze head. Here were found iron spears and many knives as well, but we cannot establish whether they were used in war purposes. Most findings represent remains of ceramic vessels of which the most impressive are the glazed table vessels from the 12th and 13th century. Most dishes are executed in the technique sgraffito, often decorated with geometric, floral, zoomorphic and anthropomorphic motifs. Especially interesting are the fragments of vessels representing a holy warrior and a leopard, as well as several fragments of the pottery champlévé with fragmented with zoomorphic representations the most common of which are the eagle and the lion.



Fragments of vessels decorated with a representation of a leopard and a holy warrior (12th-13th century)

The coin findings lavishly illustrate this period, as well. Thus far, the earliest are the so-called anonymous folles, originating from the period 976-1035. The most significant regarding quantity and emergence on Carevi Kuli is, nevertheless, the coin forgery of the Dynasty of Comnenus (1081-1185) and Angels (1185-1203). The Latin and Bulgarian imitations follow, some coins of the 13th century Bulgarian kings and coins of the dynasty Palaiologoi of the 13th and 14th century. It is interesting to note that the coin findings of the Serbian kings are represented only by means of a few samples of Milutin, Uros and Dusan (1228-1346).

As the most important findings here we can mention the lead stamp depicting the holy warriors of the 12th-13th century and two depots of medieval coins. One of about 4300 copper trachea from the second half of the 12th century and the first half of the 13th century and the other of about 82 Venetian coins from the 13th- 14th century. We assume that the large number of copper trachea finds was probably a military salary that had been forgotten in the turbulent times of the rule of Strez in this area.

After the Battle at the River Maritsa in 1371 the Ottomans were able to progress to the west. They probably conquered Strumica in 1382/83 after which it came under the sanjak (district) of Kjustendil, most likely formed in 1395. Turkish authorities called the city Ustrumdzhe.

After the conquest of Strumica by the Ottomans, the position of the fortress significantly changed since it remained deeply inside the territory and had virtually no defence significance. However, it seems that in late 14th and early 15th century it still had its defensive character, judging by the findings of the archaeological research. Modifications to the fortress are visible at certain places, such as the one of the western front of the west tower. On the other hand, on the central plateau several new buildings have been erected. The pottery and coin findings of that period are numerous. They mostly represent glazed vessels - bowls, pitchers etc. From documents of that period we discover that in the beginning of the 15th century the Ottomans repaired many fortresses, turning them into their own supporting points. Inside they placed garrisons and a huge military administrative network. This confirms the fact that the Ottomans, in addition to the fortresses in Skopje, Kicevo and Prilep, had garrisons in the Strumica fortress, as well.



Lead stamp and depot of Venetian and medieval coins 12th – 13th century

The latest reports regarding the fortress are from the 17th century. Judging by the description of Evliya Celebi, the fortress was abandoned long ago and had already started to erode. Part of its building material was probably used in the construction of residential buildings in Strumica. With research we established that the fortress was last utilized in military purposes in World War II when during the final operations for liberation of Strumica in the period October-November 1944, on the edges of the plateau were stationed German troops.

Carevi Kuli are a recognizable landmark of the city of Strumica. Today, Strumica is often called the "City under Carevi Kuli (Tsar's Towers)". According to written sources, Carevi Kuli had a significant role in the history of the city as its organic and inseparable part. Recent archaeological research has fully confirmed the great importance of the site for the history of the city of Strumica and the Republic of Macedonia.

By means of archaeological research major breakthrough in the understanding of the historical and cultural occurrences of the area has been made. Owing to research, we were able to enlighten a small portion of the events in the past and place them in their original historical context. Research has enabled us to gain insight into the social and spiritual structure of the population, the trade connections with the neighbouring countries, the degree of development of crafts and the development of military strategy throughout the ages. Everyday habits, the need for embellishment and sense of beauty, were also categories that were observed in the research. By means of this archaeological site we completed a unit in the context of other archaeological sites in the neighbourhood and along with the written historical sources we gave a more comprehensive picture of our past.

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Published by
Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Macedonia
Cultural Heritage Protection Office

For the publisher
Prof. Viktor Lilchikj Adams, Ph.D.

Editor
Kate Antevska

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Zoran Rujak

Translation from Macedonian
Dance Ristovska Kostadinova

Photos
Veselin Ristov
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Borce Atanasov
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Reconstruction of the fortress
Zoran Rujak

Graphic design and printing
PRINT PROJECT

Copies
200



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Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Macedonia
Cultural Heritage Protection Office

CIP - Каталогизација во публикација
Национална и универзитетска библиотека "Св. Климент Охридски", Скопје

940:72(497.742)"653"

RUJAK, Zoran
Carevi kuli (Tsar's towers) / Zoran Rujak ; [translation from
Macedonian Dance Ristovska Kostadinova ; photos Veselin Ristov ... и
др.]. - Скопје : Cultural Heritage Protection Office, 2015. - 32
стр. : илустр. ; 25 см

Библиографија: стр. [32]

ISBN 978-608-4549-16-1

а) Културно историски споменици - Струмица - Среден век б) Цареви
кули
COBISS.MK-ID 99471370

