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A Contribution to Some Earrings in the Central Balkans and in Transylvania

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Abstract: *In the Copper Age princely tumulus of Gruda Boljevića in Podgorica/Montenegro, almost 200 skeletal medieval graves with characteristic stone tombs from the 12th and 13th century A.D. were excavated. In the grave inventories mostly earrings were found; simple bronze as well as silver rings and quality filigree earrings made of bronze or silver with one wreath and a small bead made of 8 tiny granules. The latter type of earrings represents a common form in the wide area of the Posavina and Podunavlje region and all the way through the region of the Little Carpathians and Oltenia. Across the Pomoravlje district, their distribution is connected with some necropolises in northern Macedonia.*

In the Middle Age necropolis of Gruda Boljevića in Podgorica, in grave no. 146, also extraordinary fine filigreed pair of silver earrings with large beads and two wreaths of granules on each side, with a loop and a hook for fixing were excavated. As it seems these were beautiful earrings worn especially in the Morava River basin, and are unique in the Zeta plain in Montenegro.

An analysis of the earrings enables their tracking to the places of their origin in the central Balkan and Podunavlje region and identifying the common trends of medieval and post-medieval burials and consequently recognition of the common clothing and religious customs of that time.

Key words: *Podgorica-Gruda Boljevića, earrings, Middle Ages*

For this solemn occasion the most appropriate way to show our respect to the work of Elica Maneva is by writing an article about women's jewelry - the theme, which was the most popular in her life opus. For that occasion we chose a special type of earring with a wreath and granulation of wide prevalence that is also found on medieval Macedonian necropolises in Mokrimo, Negotino, Demir Kapija, Debrešte and Struga. Although that precious earring-type like ours on Fig. 1 is uncommon in Macedonia, it was the subject of research in several publications by Maneva or in representative monographs about Macedonian jewelry.¹

In grave inventories from the 12th and 13th century and also in some sporadic findings in the central Balkans, earrings with one petite or more filigree made wreaths were found (fig. 1). More than 50 years ago they were recognized by Slavenka Ercegović-Pavlović² as a special earring-type, spread in the central Balkan area.

¹ Манева Е. 1992; Maneva 2005, etc.

² Ерцеговић-Павловић С. 1972.

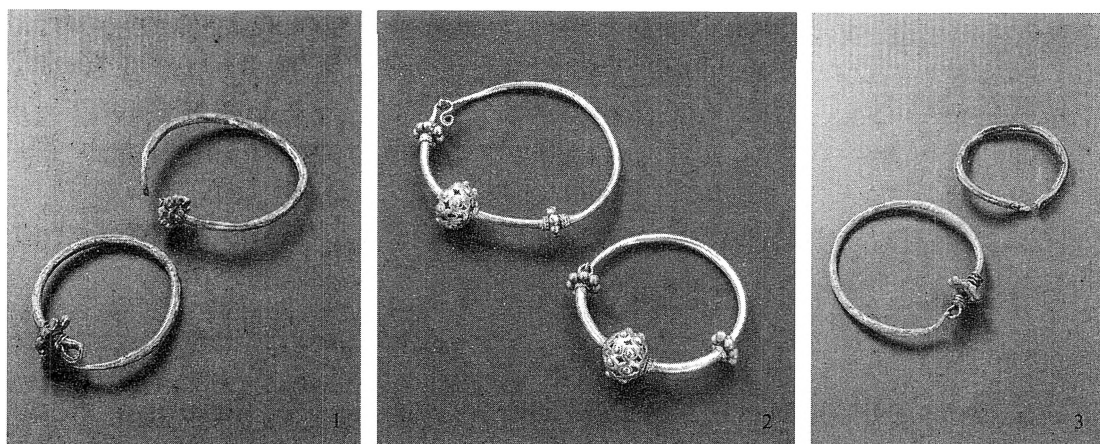


Fig. 1 Podgorica-Gruda Boljevića, earrings from grave no. 35 (1), 146 (2) i 177 (3). 1, 3 bronze, 2 silver (photo Tomaž Lauko, Narodni muzej Slovenije, 2003).

In the medieval necropolis of Gruda Boljevića in Podgorica/Montenegro, which was dug into the surface of the tumulus of the Copper Age, nearly 200 skeletal burials in the characteristic funerary architecture of stone slabs were discovered in 2001.³ There were in them proportionally little grave goods or clothing and also jewelry was preserved only by the smaller part of deceased female. Female jewelry consists of single pieces or pairs, especially in the form of simple open bronze or silver small rings, and some of them have thickening or a glass bead. Only in three grave inventories were found quality medieval earrings (Fig. 1; 2).

For this occasion we want to represent these earrings of extraordinary beauty which stand out in their precise filigree work of the applied wreaths and granules. Five earrings were found in three graves: two pairs and one single earring. Bronze or silver earrings with one wreath and a small bead made of 8 tiny granules are present in the necropolis in Podgorica-Gruda Boljevića in graves no. 35 and no. 177, and an extraordinary fine filigree made pair of silver earrings (with a large bead and two wreaths of granules on each side, with a loop and hook for fixing) was excavated in grave no. 146 (Fig. 1; 2).

Earrings from these three graves are exceptional examples of the jewelry in the necropolis in Podgorica. As we will see they are represented in some other medieval necropolises, although not in large numbers. Earrings with one wreath composed of a simple circlet, which on one side ends with a loop, but on the other side with a hook for closing (Fig. 1: 1, 3). The earring is on the clasp adorned with a wreath of granules – a bead made of 8 tiny uniform granules. That type of earring, with one wreath and a small bead made of 8 tiny granules (named also earring with astragal; after Teicu 2012, 51) is known all over the central Balkans as well as in Romania.

The best analogy for the earrings with a wreath, loop and hook for closing from Gruda Boljevića is an example from the grave no. 223 from Mačvanska Mitrovica⁴,

³ Bulatović-Saveljić L. et al. 2014.

⁴ Ercegović-Pavlović S., 1980, PL. XXII.

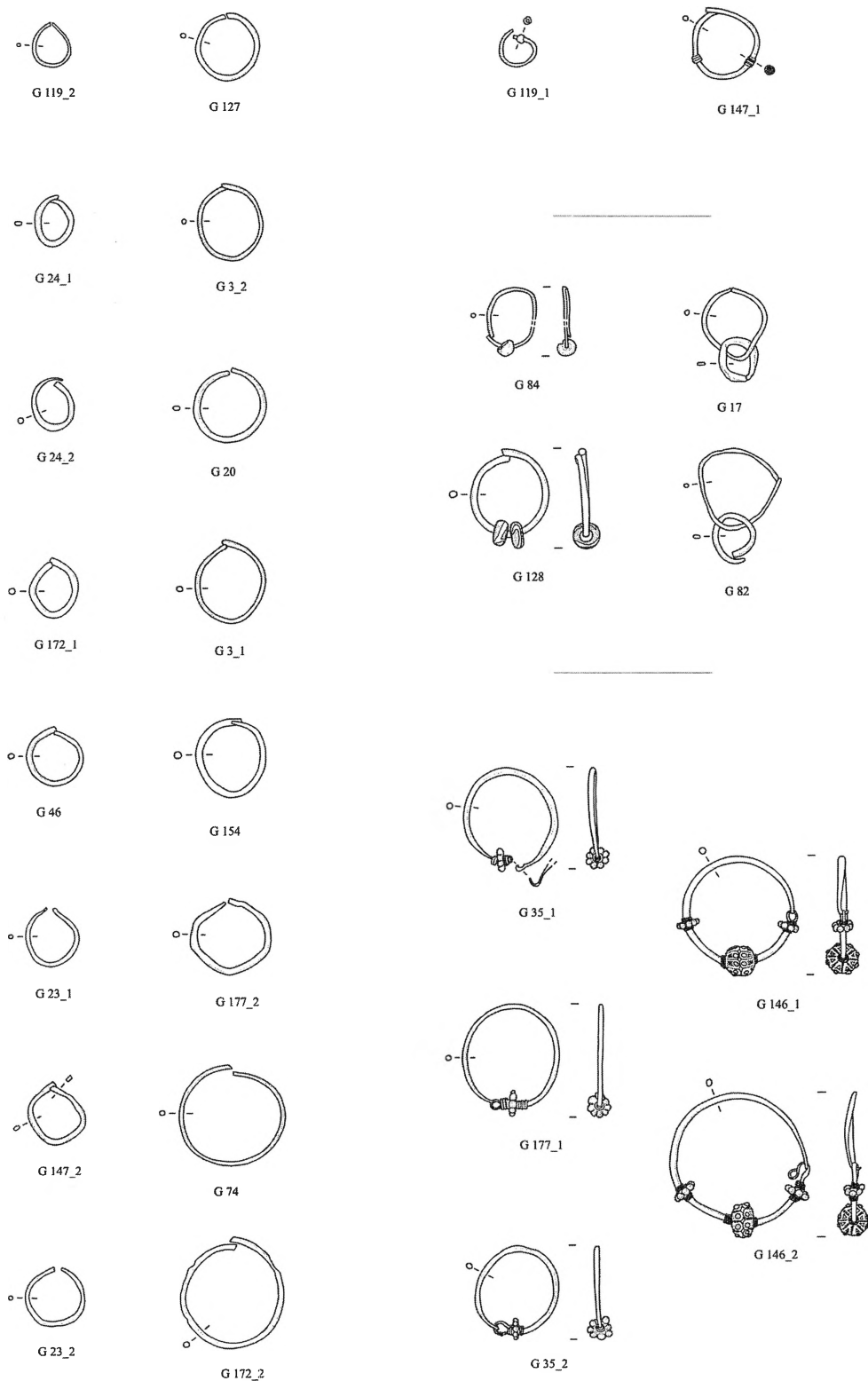


Fig. 2 Podgorica-Gruda Boljevića, types of medieval earrings, M=1:2 (drawing Janja Tratnik Šumi, Institut za dediščino Sredozemlja Univerza na Primorskem 2003)

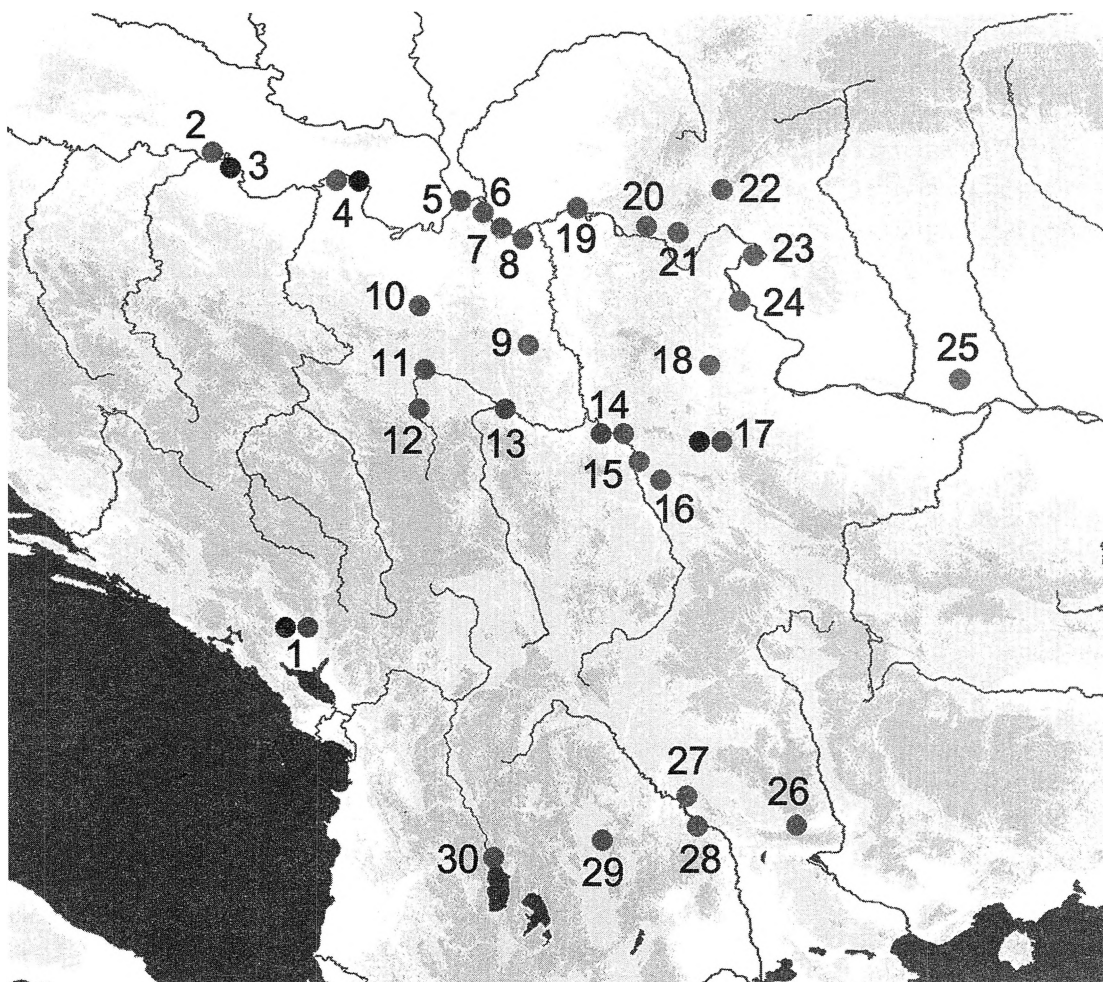


Fig. 3 Distribution of earring types discussed in text: green: earrings with a big bead and two granulated rings, blue: earrings with a granulated ring and end with a loop and a hook, red: earrings with a granulated ring without a loop:

- 1 Podgorica** (sl. 1: 1, 2); **2 Županja** (Vinski, 1949, T. VII:52-53); **3 Bošnjaci** (Čečuk, Dorn, 1967, 407); **4 Mačvanska Mitrovica** (Ercegović-Pavlović, 1980, Pl. XX- graveno. 51; XXII – grave no. 223); **5 Beograd** (Marjanović-Vujović, 1989, Sl. 25); **6 Mirijevo** (Бајаловић Бурташевић, 1960, T. VII: 3-4; Бајаловић-Хаджи-Пешић, 1984, T. I: 9); **7 Vinča** (Ерцеговић-Павловић, 1972, Sl. 4); **8 Brestovik** (Ерцеговић-Павловић, 1972, Sl. 4; Čorović-Ljubinković, 1956, Fig. 4); **9 Rogojevac** (Ерцеговић-Павловић, 1972, Sl. 4); **10 DoničkoBrdo** (Ерцеговић-Павловић, 1972, Sl. 4); **11 Vrane** (Ђурић, 1995, sl. 5-6); **12 Dobrača** (Ерцеговић-Павловић, 1972, Sl. 4; Гарашанин, Гарашанин, 1955, Sl. 11: a); **13 Ratina** (Љамић-Валовић, 1988, T. I); **14 Trnjane** (Марјановић-Вујовић, Томић, 1982, pp. 65, 66, cat. no. 360; Марјановић-Вујовић, 1984, T. VIII: 103-2; XI: 149/1-2; XXIV: 319-2); **15 Donja Toponica** (Ерцеговић-Павловић, 1972, Sl. 4); **16 Niš** (Ерцеговић-Павловић, 1972, Sl. 4); **17 Guševac** (Радичевић, 2002, pp. 63, 64, 88, T. I: 1-2; II: 3); **18 Veliki izvor** (Ерцеговић-Павловић, 1972, Sl. 4); **19 Kostolac** (Марјановић-Вујовић, 1989, Sl. 26); **20 Gornea** (Ђеицу, 2002, Fig. 18: 3); **21 Šopotu Vechi** (Ђеицу, 2002, Fig. 18: 10); **22 Cuptoare** (Ђеицу, 2002, Fig. 18: 1-2, 4-9, 11-13); **24 Prahovo** (Ерцеговић-Павловић, 1972, Sl. 4); **25 Obarșia Nouă** (Grigorov, 1999, T. I: IF-3); **26 Mokrin** (Манева, 1992, T. 13: 89/11; Манева, Ананиев, 1987-1989, Sl. 1); **27 Negotino** (Maneva, 2005, Cat. no. 17b); **28 Demir Kapija** (Aleksova, 1966, T. XIII: 71, 73; XXIII: 4; Манева, 1992, T. 13: 31/137 and 31: 11); **29 Debrește** (Манева, 1992, T. 13: 67/10); **30 Struga** (Манева, 1992, T. 13: 86/6a,b).

and a similar earring is recorded in the find at Gruševac.⁵ Conceptually the same types of earrings (although it consists of one bead of two lines of tiny granules) are known from the location at Daražin Bošnjaci⁶.

These earrings with a small bead are widely spread reaching from the Zeta plain in the south (Podgorica) until the southern edge of the Posavina and until the Podunavlje region in the northwest (Mačvanska Mitrovica, Bošnjaci)⁷. In one case these earrings were found below the massif Stara planina at Svrljiga in the Guševac⁸ find (Fig. 3).

Much more numerous are the similar earrings with wreaths of eight tiny granules which are set on the simple open ring made of bronze round wire. Its edge is pointed and has no hook for closing. That type of earring is a common find in a wide area reaching from the Posavina and Podunavlje regions to the Little Carpathians and Oltenia. Across the Pomoravlje district their distribution is connected with some necropolises in northern Macedonia (Fig. 3).⁹

A quite extraordinary find is an earring with a bead and two wreaths composed of a simple ring which has on one half a loop and on the other half a hook for closing (Fig. 1: 2; 3: 146). Below the loop is a decorative wreath made of granules – beads of 8 tiny uniform granules. An equally formed wreath is set opposite to the wreath on the ring. In the middle is set a large bead made with a filigree technique and with granulation in two equal halves.

Earrings of this production belong to a wider group of earrings with three wreaths of granules, a group which is well known in jewelry production from the 10th century onward. For that type is characteristic three uniform beads. During this development there were added one or three larger beads and therefore the latter type represents late middle-aged jewelry. Technically, the wreaths of tiny granules are usually fastened circularly on the silver ring at three places on the lower half. On both sides of each of those filigree wreaths there could be on the ring coiled and twisted silver wire.

An extraordinary fine filigree made pair of silver earrings (with a big bead and two wreaths of granules on each side with loop and hook for closing) is found in a female grave no. 146 in Gruda Boljevića (Fig. 1; 2). Its only analogy is provided by a pair of earrings in the grave no. 149 on the necropolis of Trnjana at Aleksinac¹⁰, between the mountains Rtanj and Jastrebac in the upper stream of the southern Morava River.

Another two similar examples (though different variants) were discovered in the finds Ratina kod Kraljeva¹¹ in western Morava and in Guševac below Stara planina¹².

⁵ Радичевић Д., 2002, 88, Т. II: 3.

⁶ Čečuk B., Dorn A., 1967, 407.

⁷ Mačvanska Mitrovica: Ercegović-Pavlović S., 1980, PL. XX; Bošnjaci: Čečuk B. Dorn A., 1976, 407.

⁸ Радичевић Д., 2002, Т. I: : 1, 2; II: 3.

⁹ We cite only a part of the recent literature Бајаловић-Хаджи-Пешић М. 1984, Т. I: 9, Манева Е., Ананиев Ј., 1987-1989, 222, сл. 1; Maneva E. 2005, 51, cat. no. 17ab; Bikić V. 2010, 58, sl. 30: 10.

¹⁰ Bikić V., 2010, 63, sl. 33: 13.

¹¹ Љамић-Валовић Н., 1988, Т. I.

¹² Радичевић Д., 2002, 63-64, Т. I: 1-2.

Those sites clearly show that the crossroads of Southern, Western and Great Morava is the area with the largest concentration of these types of earrings (Ratina, Trnjane, Guševac), whereas only one pair is found far to the south in Podgorica in the Zeta valley of Montenegro (Fig. 3).

Not only for the specimen of earrings with a big bead and two wreaths of granules, but also for those simpler ones with one or two wreaths, in which one edge is pointed (with or without a loop and hook for fixing) values the dating of Vesna Bikić, stated from the 11th century until the first decade of the 13th century.¹³ The finds in Romania are dated between the mid-12th and mid-13th century¹⁴ which more or less corresponds to the time span of burials in the necropolis at Gruda Boljevića in Podgorica.

Conclusion

On the basis of the wreath of granules, thin wire wound around the wreaths and the ring with a loop and hook for fixing, both types of earrings belong to the related group and therefore they could originate from the same workshop.

An analysis of the jewelry, in our case earrings, enables its tracing to the areas of its production in central Balkan and Podunavlje region, as well as the recognition of common trends in medieval and post-medieval burial cultures, thus the common clothing and religious customs of the period.

These cultural and religious connections are also affirmed by the funerary architecture, which in the case of stone tombs consists of larger slabs and is significantly related to the natural sources of stone. That architecture is usual for the Middle Ages, as it is found in the wider area from Herzegovina to Albania.

Beside two medieval necropolises in Podgorica, Gruda Boljevića and Momišići, some comparable Macedonian necropolises with stone tombs were published by Elica Maneva: Krstevi (64 graves) and wasteland Čukarka (42 graves)¹⁵. Both locations (regarding their appearance and structure) resemble the necropolis in Gruda Boljevića. That type of architecture is quite common for Macedonia and the tombs are similarly built of stone slabs of different sizes what is confirmed also by A. Mitkovski for the surroundings of Prilep¹⁶ and by L. Blaževska for the village Bistrenci¹⁷ with the burials, dating between the 11th and 14th century.

¹³ Bikić V. 2010, 58.

¹⁴ Ţeicu D., 2012, 52.

¹⁵ Манева Е., 1996; 2000; 2004.

¹⁶ Mitkovski A., 2002.

¹⁷ Blaževska L., 1995; 2005.

Прилог кон познавање на обетките на Централен Балкан и во Трансилванија

Резиме

На тумулот наречен Груда Бољевица во Подгорица (Црна Гора), од времето на бакарното доба, пронајдени се околу 200 инхумирани средновековни гробови од XII и XIII век. Меѓу гробниот инвентар, пред сè, се издвојуваат обетките, едноставни бронзени, како и сребрени во вид на алка-обетки со квалитетна филигранска изработка од бронза, односно сребро, со еден венец и мала перла со осум ситни гранули. Овој тип на наушници претставува чест наод на широко подрачје и е застапен од Посавје и Подунавје до областите на Малите Карпати и Олтеније, а преку Поморавје нивната дистрибуција се поврзува и со неколку некрополи во северна Македонија.

На некрополата Груда Бољевица во Подгорица, во гробот 146 е пронајден извонредно фино, филигрански изработен пар сребрени наушници, со голема јагода и два венци со гранули од секоја страна, со јамка и кука за закопчување. Како што е прикажано, овие прекрасни обетки носени се, главно, во областа на сливот на реката Морава и претставуваат своєврсен уникат, длабоко на југ, во зетската рамница во Црна Гора.

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