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Archaeology, Ethnology, or History? Vodoča Necropolis, Graves 427a and 427, the First Half of the 19th c.

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From the grave units uncovered thus far within the Vodoča necropolis, the graves marked as 427a and 427 represent a rarity of their kind as well as the richest family burial of this locality because of the specificity of the burial manner and grave form, the number and uniqueness of the finds, as well as the time to which they belong.

From the time when Jovan Ananiev uncovered the graves in 1993, certain ideas about them have been developed from the authentic descriptions in the Book of Excavations, the Inventory book, and the architectural sketches made by their discoverer.

At 0.99 m below the surface level, at the south-eastern corner of Quad. C_{16} , the western part of the slabs covering the cist-type grave construction appeared in a W-E layout orientation. This formation, by way of successive numeration, was originally marked as Grave 427.

The sides of the grave cist were constructed "by vertically placed stone slabs, stones, and broken tiles." The grave covering was composed of smaller, crude, irregularly broken slabs (Fig. 1a).

From the East, the cist penetrates into Quad. D₁₆.

"A pile of human bones and numerous finds" were discovered by fine clearing of the western parts of the grave. The bones and finds had been enclosed with a vertically placed slab on the eastern side, in this way creating a grave chamber with an almost quadrangular form measuring about 0.40x0.40 m. The remains of older burials on this site were separately buried in the chamber. For these reasons, this separate section was named Grave 427a (Fig. 1b).

East of this walled-off chamber, a skeleton in situ of another individual

had been discovered; this skeleton had certainly been buried later. This is Grave 427 (Fig. 1b). In this grave, a skeleton had been placed in the extended position "with hands placed on the pelvis" – according to the description in the Book of Excavations.

The anthropological and anthropometrical analysis of the osteological material show that the chamber of Grave 427a contained bones from two skeletons of children aged 5-6 (?), while in Grave 427, a female person about 50 years old with a graceful body frame had been buried.¹

Apart from the bone fragments in Grave 427, numerous finds were discovered "partly collected in an earthen vessel" (Fig. 2). The most common finds are pendants; four crosses; two small angels – putti, one with an inlaid decorative "small gem"; and one amulet – a horse with a human head on the horse's back (Fig. 3-10). Two bracelets (Fig. 13-14) and a part of a necklace (Fig. 11) were also found. The two round perforated tin parts seem to be appliqués on the garment (Fig. 12). As part of the garment, there are also eight buttons, (Fig. 15) a clutch device in the shape of a hook (Fig. 15), and a fragmented belt buckle (Fig. 17), while the six miniature nails are the remains of shoes (Fig. 18).

Of the six coins, five are Turkish and illegible, (Fig. 19-23), while one, although partially weathered and worn as a pendant, has been identified as a coin from the Kingdom of Greece of 1833² (Fig. 24).

The perforated pendant attached to a small chain is also considered as part of the garment (Fig. 25).

The little porcelain coffee cup, with a broken handle, seems to have been used as an oil candle (Fig. 26).

A part of these finds has already been published³; however, here, all finds of Grave 427 are analyzed as an integral part.

The bronze cross (field no.772) (Fig. 3), cast in a two-sided mould, (dimensions: 30x21x1-2mm) portrays the Crucifixion of Christ with a skull at the base of the front, while the reverse is not precisely shaped, with a central barely visible rosette.⁴

A tin mould, dated to the middle of the 18th century from an unknown

Bank of the Republic of Macedonia for assistance in identifying this coin.

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¹ For this accomplished analysis, I owe gratitude to anthropologist Fanica Veljanovska. ² I owe gratitude to Katerina Hristovska from the numismatic cabinet of the National

³ Манева 2007, cat. по. 32-36.

⁴ Ibid, cat. no. 32.

workshop in Kosovo, is similar to this cross.⁵

The other *bronge cross-shaped pendant* (field no. 773) (Fig. 4) is also familiar to the scholarly world.⁶ It had been cast in a monolithic mould (dimensions: 32x23x1-1.5mm) with one side leveled and one decorated with a bas-relief containing a rosette in the central part. Beside the penetration casting and the baroque playfulness of the outer edge, decorated with coiled shoots placed between the points of the cross, its formation is of lower quality. An analogous form and presentation are also found in a tin mould, dated from the end of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th century, which is from an unknown workshop in Kosovo.⁷

The two *cross-shaped pendants* (field no.778 and 99) (Fig. 5 and 6) are made of a white-green glass material, cast in a monolithic mould. Their reverse sides are flat, while bas-reliefs decorate only the front, visible surfaces. *On the first cross* (Fig. 5) (dimensions: 45x29x5mm), olive branches are presented on the crossbar, with stylized plant motifs on the vertical bar. *On the second cross* (Fig. 6) (dimensions: 35x24x4mm), the decorations consist of repetitions of the bas-relief in the cascading profile of the outer edge with emphasized, criss-crossed leaves placed in the middle.

In the decorative schema of both glass crosses, a relief emphasis of an isosceles cross is noticeable in the central part with another repetition of the decorative motif in the lower part of the vertical bar.

Due to the increased presence of glass jewelry in the first half of the 19th century, witnessed in Graves 427a and 427,⁸ it can be inferred that the mentioned glass crosses are, as a matter of fact, a cheap and effective substitution for the metal specimens.

The two *little baroque putti angels* made of bronze have almost an identical appearance (dimensions: 30x27x2mm)⁹ (Fig. 7, 8).

Both of them are cast in a monolithic mould, which has a rough back surface, while on the front side, a naively stylized head is seen (with a round face and emphasized features) placed between two wing-feathers. There is a similar

⁵ Муливановић 1993, 73, сат. по. 101.

⁶ Манева 2007, cat. по. 33

⁷ Миловановић 1993, 77, cat. no. 112

⁸ Манева 2007, cat. по. 38-3938-391-5; Аνωνά ρаζ 2006, 434.

⁹ One specimen has been published. Maneva 2007, cat. no. 34

example from the 18th century from Prilep.¹⁰ Smiliarly crafted appliqués for church paraphenalia from the end of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th century have been discovered at Vraca in Bulgaria.¹¹

The bronze *pendant* with a decorative little "gem" (field no.771) (Fig. 9) is cast from church glass paste in a monolithic mould (dimensions: D-28, cross section: 3-6mm).¹²

Similar specimens, dated between the 17th and the beginning of the 19th century, have been discovered in the territory of neighboring Serbia and Bulgaria.¹³

However, among the most provocative finds—not only in the grave unit marked as 427a, but also in general at the Vodoča Necropolis—is the bronze *amulet of a horse with a stylized head on the horse's back* (field no.772, dimensions: h-26, length: 32, cross section: 1-2mm) (Fig. 10).

The importance and characteristics of this pendant have already been written about.¹⁴ This object was also cast in a monolithic mould with an undecorated back and a small piece of fine silk preserved on it.

The horse is represented in a characteristic galloping pose, with a pointed mouth, emphasized halter, and belts on the neck, with sheaves of transversal lines on the body – like fur or as an association of a dappled or "spotty" horse. On his back, an anthropomorphic presentation is placed – a man's head with emphasized eyes, nose, and moustache, as well as a long beard which changes to a saddle, while the tall cap is also a loop used for attachment. All in all, it represents an iconographic picture of "a deity on the roads riding a dapple horse".

These amulets are connected to Shamanistic beliefs. Some theories assign the amulets to Proto-Bulgarians and date them to the Christianization of this people group in the ninth century, at the latest.¹⁵

The amulets are explained as an emanation of mediating deities that connect the worlds—the underworld, the earth, and the skies—to establish a rela-

¹⁰ Иванић 1995, cat. no. 381.

¹¹ Георгиева, Бучински 1959, Т. LXXIV, 2-4, LXXV, 1.

¹² Манева 2007, сат. по. 35

¹³ Георгиева, Бучински 1959, Т. LX-LXII; Ivanic 1995, 115-117, cat. no. 353-364; Stojishic 2005, 107, 112, Т. II, 8, 9.

¹⁴ Маневаа 2007, сат. по. 36. Еаd., 2007/3, 169-183.

¹⁵ Мавродинов 1959; Овчаров 1984, 136-139.

tionship between deities (or God) and people passing on their pleas.¹⁶

The dilemma surrounding the possibility of such an amulet being found in Grave 427a at Vodoča in the 19th century could be answered indirectly by the presence of recent finds of such amulets in neighboring countries.

In the Braničevo region of Serbia, such an amulet has been found in a "contemporary" grave,¹⁷ while a second one was comes from the vicinity of Vranje, as part of a scattered deposit of jewelry from the "Turkish period."¹⁸ An identical gilded bronze amulet is kept at the Archaeological Museum in Sofia. It had been crafted at Vlaca, Bulgaria at the workshop of goldsmith Dim. Berberski (1858-1924).¹⁹

From what has been said above, it seems that this type of amulet had been copied even a millennium after its authentic use. The Vodoča specimen is excellently preserved; it had not been used for a long period, and probably, it had been crafted in the first half of the 19th century as an imitation of the ancient amulets in some of the active workshops of the time (perhaps even in Vraca?).

The question of what sort of a symbolic significance this presentation had been assigned in the 19th century or the beginning of the 20th century remains enigmatic.

The two *glass bracelets* from Grave 427a (field no. 762 and 763) (Fig. 13, 14) are similar to the five found intact in Grave 472²⁰ and are thus dated to the first half of the 19th century.

They are crafted by spinning clusters of hot bars made of white glass. In one specimen, an inserted *blue pastel* swatch of textile can be seen in the middle of the coil (dimensions: D = 5mm) (Fig. 13) while on the other, more fragile one (Fig. 14) (dimensions: D = 4mm) the same swatch cannot be seen.

The inner diameter is similar in these two bracelets (D = 36mm), but different from the bracelets from Grave 427 (D = 42 to 46mm) (Fig. 27-31) mimicking the difference in the age of the deceased.

Eight beads are also a part of the glass jewelry found in the graves: seven tiny whitish cylindrical ones and a larger barrel-shaped one made of blue glass

¹⁶ Similar amulets existed were made by the Varyazis until the 19th century and by the Altay people until the 20th century. Цидрова 1989, 247-257, n. 23, 33.

¹⁷ Иванишевић 1991, 97-104.

¹⁸ Стојичић 2001, 103-114, Т. II, fig. 14.

¹⁹ Георгиева, Бучински 1959, Т. XXX, 13.

²⁰ Манева 2007, сат. по. 391-5.

paste (field no. 710-797) (Fig. 11). Due to the fragility of the material, they are, probably, the preserved part of a larger necklace, from the stock of glass craftsmanship from the first half of the 19th century.

The two miniature, round *metal appliqués perforated in the middle* (D = 8-8mm; cross section = 0,5mm) had been originally treated as elements of a neck-lace (field no. 789-799) (Fig. 12). In accordance with folk costumes and the embroidery and embellishments of the local garb of Macedonia, similar applications were noticed sewn on the garment and fastened with a tiny bead in the middle.²¹ In the local dialects, they are known as "*puleyki*", and their main aesthetic value consisted of the effects produced by the shimmering of the smooth metal surface.

The eight *mushroom-shaped buttons* with fully cast heads and a grafted metal loop on one side (field no. 780-787) Fig. $15/_{1-8}$ were most likely the more expensive parts of the garment. One of them has a white porcelain head, while the other five are made of glass, two in blue and five in a dark brown almost black color (Dimensions: D = 10mm; h = 11-12mm).

The quality and unified craftsmanship leads to the conclusion that these were "industrially made."

The presence of a *clutch-hoop*, made of iron wire, partly corroded (field no.788) (Fig. 16), indicates the penetration of "industrial production" predicting changes in dressing.

This type of *clutch-hoop* resembling the "omega" loop for buttoning can still be found on older garments from the region.

Finally, the fragmented *iron waist belt buckle* (field no.789) could also be of similar industrial make (Fig. 17).

The six small *pyramidal nails* (filed no.801-806) were certainly used to make finer shoes, which have not been preserved (Dimensions: length: 1015mm, head 5-6mm. (Fig. $18/_{1-6}$). Of the six discovered *coins*, five are Turkish: three silver aspras and two copper mangirs (field no.766-770) (Fig. 1923).

All the coins are extremely worn out and had been used for a long time; their edges are chipped and hardly anything can be discerned on both their front and back.

The three fragile silver coins (Fig. 19-21) are perforated near the outer edge and without a doubt were secondarily strung as pendants. The copper mangirs, which are more massive, probably served as a grave gift, i.e. "Charon's obol"

²¹ Манева 2007, fig. 15.

(Fig. 22-23).

The silver coin with a value of a quarter drachma from the newly formed Kingdom of Greece (field no.765) (Fig. 24) represents a self-evident surprise and an important *terminus post quem*.

It is also perforated and had been strung as a decorative (and valuable) detail.

On the front, the right side profile of a man's head can be seen, while the text is worn smooth.

Within a wreath of olive branches on the reverse, a crown can be seen with the coat of arms under it and the year of minting at the base; despite the perforation of the third digit, the year 1833 can still be determined.²²

Despite the great age of some of the objects due to their "long tradition" with more generations in one family,²³ the discovery of this secondarily used coin shifts the date of graves 427a and 427 to the middle of the 19th century.

A pendant with a little chain made of round-cut tin (D = 15mm x 0,5mm) with seven indents is arranged in the form of rosette. One of the sides of the little chain (h = 30mm) was attached to the garment. The chain is thickly knitted with a thin wire (field no.775)²⁴ (Fig. 25).

Most of the abovementioned objects from Grave 427a were gathered in a reconstructed *ceramic vessel* with all fragments preserved (field no.761) (Fig. 2). Its bottom is leveled (D = 10cm) with the receptacle obliquely widened toward the opening (D = 14,6cm, h = 4,5cm). The mouthpiece is ribbon-like with a serrated outer edge. The vessel has a pale reddish finish, while the inside, as customary with these Ottoman forms, is glazed. The glaze is green. These features are characteristic of Turkish ceramics from the 19th century.

The small porcelain coffee cup with a missing handle (field no.764) (Fig. 26) has no designation of the place where it was discovered. Due to the well-preserved receptacle, it seems to have been used as an oil candle. This phenomenon is still present in Macedonian cemeteries. The possibility has not been excluded that the cup might have been brought to the grave later as part of a grave site ritual by the family of the deceased in graves 427a and 427. This is supported by the recent-looking appearance of this "industrial" product.

²² The coin had been minted in Munich during the reign of the Greek King Otto (1832-1862); cf. n. 2.

²³ Cf. n. 3-7, 7, 9, 10.

²⁴ Кличкова, Петрушева 1963; Т. XVIII, XXI еtс.

Grave 427 continues east of the grave chamber with the older remains marked as Grave 427a (Fig. 1a, 1b).

The following finds were discovered in this grave in situ:

- three bracelets on the right hand;

- three bracelets on the left hand;

- amber beads and glass under the neck and on the chest; and

- a belt buckle on the waist.

The following finds are without a designation of origin:

– an iron nail;

- a worn smooth coin;

- a pendant of round tin; and

- a round button.

The five glass bracelets found on the forearm (field no.820-824) (Fig. 27-31) are of the same type as those from Grave 427a (Fig. 13, 14) with details about them already published.²⁵

Their inner diameter, which is from 42, 43, 44 to 46 mm, testifies that they suit the older deceased woman from Grave 427.

These bracelets are also crafted from interwoven glass wires. In the center of the coil, a thread of pastel colors (yellow, dark blue, orange, and turquoise) had been inserted.

The crafting of these bracelets is dated to the first half of the 19^{th} century, further confirmed by the findings in Grave $427a^{26}$ (Fig. 13-14).

Due to their fragility, it is not thought that they might have been used for a longer period.²⁷

Under the chin of the deceased woman from Grave 427, 27 round beads of yellow amber were found (field no. 825)²⁸ (Fig. 32).

Cylindrical and tube-shaped *glass beads* (field no. 826), the majority of which are black (465) alongside about a hundred white, are presented in the documentation as a necklace²⁹ (Fig. 33). However, the possibility has not been excluded that they might have been sewn onto the garment. Among the beads, there is a round-cut *puleyka* of perforated tin (Fig. 33), identical to the two ex-

²⁵ Манева 2007, сат. по. 391-5.

²⁶ Cf. No. 8.

²⁷ Бабиќ 1986, 283; Аντωνά ας 2006, 434.

²⁸ Манева 2007, сат. по. 37.

²⁹ Ibid, cat. no. 38.

amples from Grave 427a (Fig. 12).

The iron belt buckle, (field no.827) (Fig. 34) despite its fragmented state and corrosion, (dimensions: $54 \times 52 \times 4$ -7mm) shows certain resemblance in the frame with the example from Grave 427a (Fig. 17). "Industrial" production needed for the garment can also be confirmed in this case.

The coin from Grave 427 (field no.824) is completely worn out, slightly chipped, and illegible (Fig. 35). It probably played the role of a "Charon's obol."

The round-cut tin pendant perforated in four places with deep holes, loops, and a preserved strand of the little chain used for attaching (field no.830, dimensions: D = 16mm, cross section: 0,5mm) is similar to decorative folk details,³⁰ like the one from Grave 427a (Fig. 25).

The button with a concave profile, round form, and two holes used for sewing it on (field no.831, Dimensions: D = 14mm, cross section: 1,5mm) (Fig. 37), by its "modern design" and the fact it is made out of glass, further confirms the idea about the penetration of industrial products in the region of Vodoča around the middle of the 19th century.

The massive broken (?) iron *nail* (field no.828, dimensions: 75 x 1116mm) indicates the existence of a wooden coffin (Fig. 38).

* * *

Graves 427a and 472 represent an unusual family burial. The bones and the finds from the older internments of the two young children were collected from a separately walled-off small quadrangular chamber (Grave 427a) in the western part of the stone cist. Grave 427, belonging to an adult female, was uncovered in the continuation of the cist, placed *in situ*.

Beside the damages and the later secondary use as a pendant, the coin of the Kingdom of Greece dating from 1833 plays an important role in dating this burial place. The coin represents an important *terminus post quem*, foremost for Grave 427a, as well as for the more recent Grave 427 as because of it, both graves can be dated around the middle of the 19th century.

Having in mind the *la longue durée* phenomenon, the long-term use of certain objects (the bronze crosses, the pendants in the shape of small putti angels, parts of the coins, etc.) can be at times measured in decades, even in hundreds

³⁰ Cf. n. 24.

of years from their production till the time of their presence in the grave (Fig. 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 19-24).

A part of the grave inventory talks about the changes in the jewelry, typical for the first half and the middle of the 19th century (glass crosses, bracelets, beads, *puleyki*, amber beads, etc.) (Fig. 5, 6, 11-14).

The buttons with porcelain or glass heads, and especially the flat glass button with a "modern" shape, the iron belt buckles, the clutch-hook, as well as the little iron shoe nails witness the intrusion of industrial products and elicit the impression that traditional garb changed through the addition of certain "urban" details (Fig. $15/_{1-8}-18_{(1-6)}$).

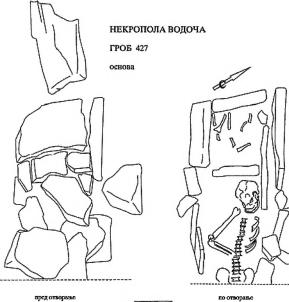
Additionally, there are replicas of old objects (Fig. 10)!

The discovery of graves with rich and varied inventory, as found in grave units 427a and 427, bears witness to social changes within the Christian population from the end of the 18th and the first half of the 19th century. These artifacts confirm the existence of a wealthier, urban stratum that had emerged from the *raya*.

The study of this relatively recent burial site from the Vodoča necropolis shows that funeral archaeology in Macedonia has enough to discover from the material domain of culture embedded in the necropolises of the National Revival period from the end of the 18th to the first half of the 19th centuries, which has so far been studied through the scholarly methods of history, art history, and ethnology.

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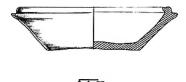


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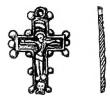


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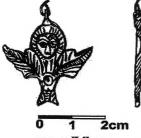
fig. 1 – 3

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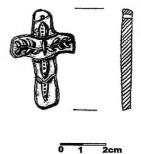


цртеж: Д.Спасова

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НЕКРОПОЛА ВОДОЧА

ГРОБ 427 а

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НЕКРОПОЛА ВОДОЧА

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0 1 2cm цртеж: Д.Спасова

НЕКРОПОЛА ВОДОЧА

ГРОБ 427 а

инв. бр. 771



0 1 2cm цртеж: Д.Спасова

НЕКРОПОЛА ВОДОЧА

ГРОБ 427

инв. бр. 772



0 1 2ст цотеж: Д.Спасова

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Archaeology, Ethnology, or History?

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ГРОБ 427 а

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НЕКРОПОЛА ВОДОЧА

ГРОБ 427 а

инв. бр. 762



0 1 2cm цртеж: Д.Спасова

НЕКРОПОЛА ВОДОЧА

ГРОБ 427 а

инв. бр. 763

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цртеж: Д.Спасова

2cm

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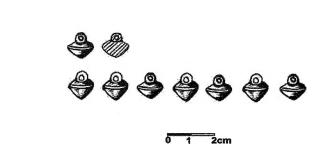


fig. 12 – 15

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ГРОБ 427 а

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НЕКРОПОЛА ВОДОЧА

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2cm

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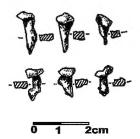


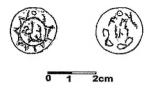


fig. 16 – 19

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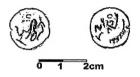
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НЕКРОПОЛА ВОДОЧА

ГРОБ 427 а

инв. бр. 769

НЕКРОПОЛА ВОДОЧА

ГРОБ 427 а

инв. бр. 770



fig. 20 – 23

НЕКРОПОЛА ВОДОЧА

ГРОБ 427 а

инв. бр. 765



2cm ñ 1

НЕКРОПОЛА ВОДОЧА

ГРОБ 427 а

инв. бр. 775



0 1 2ст цртеж: Д.Спасова

НЕКРОПОЛА ВОДОЧА

ГРОБ 427 а

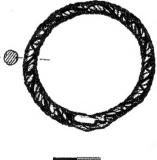
инв. бр. 764

0 1 2cm

НЕКРОПОЛА ВОДОЧА

ГРОБ 427

инв. бр. 820



0 1 2ст цртеж: Д.Спасова

fig. 24 – 27

НЕКРОПОЛА ВОДОЧА ГРОБ 427 инв. бр. 821



0 1 2ст цртеж: Д.Спасова

НЕКРОПОЛА ВОДОЧА

ГРОБ 427

инв. бр. 822



0 1 2ст пртеж: Д.Спасова

НЕКРОПОЛА ВОДОЧА

ГРОБ 427

инв. бр. 823



0 1 2cm пртеж: Д.Спасова

НЕКРОПОЛА ВОДОЧА

ГРОБ 427

инв. бр. 824

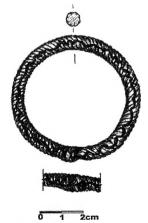


fig. 28 – 31

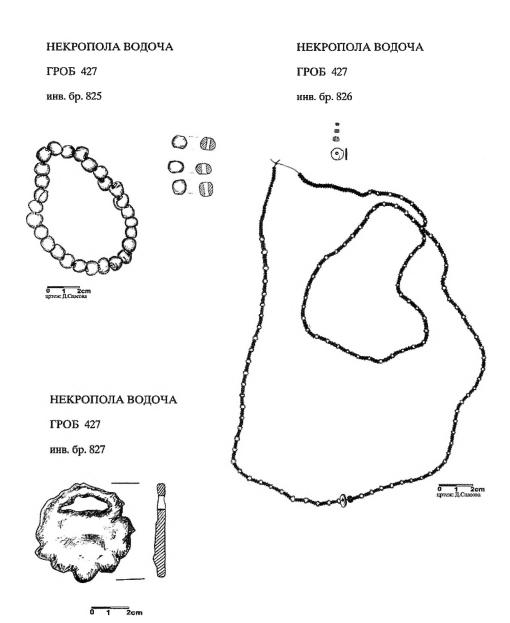


fig. 32 – 34

НЕКРОПОЛА ВОДОЧА ГРОБ 427 инв. бр. 829



0 1 2cm

НЕКРОПОЛА ВОДОЧА

ГРОБ 427 инв. бр. 830



0 1 2cm

НЕКРОПОЛА ВОДОЧА ГРОБ 427 инв. бр. 831

2cm

0 1

НЕКРОПОЛА ВОДОЧА

ГРОБ 427

инв. бр. 828

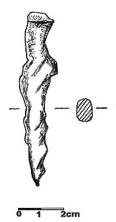


fig. 35 – 38

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