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# ARHEOLOŠKO NAJDIŠČE IN LEGENDA O UMRLIH: PRIMER GORENJI MOKRONOG

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**Ključne besede:** mitična krajina, uhan s košarico, rekrstjanizirana ali sveta krajina, ajdje

Eno od značilnih in morda najbolj očitnih materialnih manifestacij smrti je vsekakor grobišče oz. pokopališče. Pri raziskovanju takšnih točk je sodelovanje med nekaterimi na videz nezdržljivimi strokovnimi področji nujno. V mislih imamo predvsem področje varovanja kulturne dediščine, ohranjanje ostankov ustnega izročila ob upoštevanju novih arheoloških in fizičnoantropoloških podatkov.

Nekatera stara pokopališča ali bolj grobišča v agrarnih okoljih osrednje Dolenjske imajo praviloma poseben status. Ponavadi gre za že znane lokacije, ki jih ljudje označujejo s tipičnimi imeni. Tem mestom dajo včasih namensko pridih skrivnostnosti, kar privede do postopne "mitizacije" celotne pokrajine (prim. Roymans 1995).

Lokalno prebivalstvo vsak devastacijski poseg na takšnem območju praviloma sprejme z neodbravanjem in odporom. Zanimivo, da je ta svojevrstna pieteta, ki se kaže v odnosu do skeletnih ostankov prednikov, zelo spremenljiv pojav, ki ni skupen vsem prebivalcem. Na nekem ozkem vzorčnem primeru se lahko giblje od precejšnje indiferentnosti do pravega "kulta mrtvih".<sup>1</sup> Čemu ta razlika? Zakaj niso v ljudski zavesti vse lokacije s skeletnimi ostanki umrlih obravnavane enako? Zakaj dvesto let opuščeno vaško pokopališče izginja iz ljudske zavesti, medtem ko se zgodbe o tisoč let starejšem poznoantičnem grobišču ali stari romanski kostnici ohranjajo? Paradoksalno je dejstvo, da domačinov na teh mitiziranih krajih celo prisotnost ne vedno najbolj priljubljenih raziskovalcev - arheologov, ne moti.<sup>2</sup> Naša teza je, da dobijo vrednost samo tisti elemen-

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<sup>1</sup> Spremenljiv odnos do skeletnih ostankov pokojnikov, ki se kaže npr. v prekopavanju grobov, se pojavi že v visokem srednjem veku in je znan iz pisnih virov (Makarovič G. 1995, 146). Potrjujejo ga tudi rezultati izkopavanj na srednjeveškem grobišču ob cerkvi Sv. Petra (slika 2-3). Za našo nadaljnjo obravnavo ostaja zanimiva lokacija poznoantičnega grobišča, kjer je odnos do grobov povsem drugačen, in ni naključje, da se večina legend veže ravno na to lokacijo (slika 1).

<sup>2</sup> Zdi se, da "sveti značaj" tovrstnih najdišč pomeni spregledan most med nepopularno državno službo (kot so npr. lokalni zavodi za varstvo kulturne dediščine) in lokalnim javnim mnenjem, ki bi ga bilo vredno v prihodnosti bolj spopularizirati

ti (sem sodijo npr. tudi skeletni ostanki), ki sodijo v kontekst povrnitve nikdar povsem izgubljene "stare slave" neke mitizirane pokrajine.

Arheologija s sodobnimi metodološkimi pristopi takšno "mitizacijo pokrajine" praviloma preprosto spregleda ali le površno citira. Interpretacij skorajda ni. Morda zato, ker imamo lahko precejšen del tega bogatega ustnega izročila v smislu postavke - "resnične preteklosti" v strogem empiričnem smislu za diskutabilen.

To potrjuje tudi analiza na prvi pogled bogatega ustnega izročila, ki se veže na arheološko najdišče Gorenji Mokronog na območju centralne Dolenjske. Vedenje o svetem značaju določenih delov obravnavane pokrajine se v našem primeru neposredno ohranja le v ledinskem imenu lokacije. Lokacija ob na novo odkritem poznoantičnem grobišču (*slika 1*), se imenuje "Orajk" ali "Vrajski breg", kar je narečna izpeljava lokativa imena "v raju" oz. v nebesih (krščansko) oz. v poganskem onstranstvu (Sl. SKJ 1985, 311). Ta toponim je torej tista točka, ki bi jo smeli označiti za "resnično preteklost" - potrjeno z empirijo arheoloških izkopavanj. Kljub prekinitvi izrabe tega prostora v tradiciji (izkopavanja so pokazala, da je grobišče časovno ozko omejeno na konec 6. in začetek 7. stoletja) so poganski oz. slovanski prišleki "svetost" te krajine ponovno prevzeli od staroselcev; zatem je mitična krajina poznoantičnega grobišča ob vnočnem pokristjanjenju zopet postala del krščanske kozmologije.

Zanimivo je, da si vse arheološke točke v prostoru ne "zaslužijo" mitizacije. V neposredni bližini - ob nekdanji župnijski cerkvi sv. Petra - je bilo odkrito visoko in poznosrednjeveško grobišče (*slika 2*). Rezultati izkopavanj kažejo, da je bilo grobišče konec 18. stoletja dokončno opuščeno, kar sovпада z zgodovinskimi podatki, ki kažejo, da se je dogajanje ob cerkvi po l. 1870 preneslo v novo župnijsko (nekdaj podružnično) cerkev sv. Križa na Trebelnem (Golob 1994, 9). Tu je, kot kažejo rezultati izkopavanj, odnos do mrtvih že precej podoben današnjemu. Grobove so zaradi pomanjkanja prostora v zadnji fazi pogosto prekopavali. Rotunda sv. Mihaela pa je služila kot kostnica, kjer so dolge kosti in lobanje iz teh prekopanih grobov odlagali. Grobišče je namreč umeščeno pod romansko rotundo sv. Mihaela in je, kot kažejo rezultati izkopavanj v kombinaciji z nekaterimi topografskimi podatki, zapolnjevalo ves prostor okoli barokizirane cerkve sv. Petra (*slika 2-3*). Morda se je zaradi pomanjkanja prostora v nekem trenutku spremenila celo lega mrliča v grobu, ki iz starejše tradicionalne usmeritve vzhod-zahod preide v smer sever-jug (*slika 3*). Značilno in za nas zanimivo pa je dejstvo, da je vse ustno izročilo, ki se je spletlo okrog obravnavane lokacije, v bistvu vezano na mitizirano lokacijo bližnjega poznoantičnega grobišča. Imeli smo srečo, da smo naleteli na gospoda Franca Hočevarja - mežnarja in vaškega kronista iz Mokronoga, ki je prava zakladnica tovrstnih podatkov. Za centralno slovenski in jugovzhodnoalpski prostor je to danes že prava redkost. Vsi njegovi podatki kažejo, kako so lokalni prebivalci neki mitični krajini postopoma vračali njen prvotni - očitno nikoli povsem izgubljen sveti pomen, ki se kaže v zelo konkretnem odnosu do skeletnih ostankov umrlih iz točno določene lokacije poznoantičnega grobišča. Romanska rotunda sv. Mihaela (iz prve polovice 13. stoletja) (*slika 4*), v kateri naj bi po legendi maševala Ciril in Metod in naj bi vanjo "še ajdje hodili", je hkrati kostnica in je še danes polna človeških kostnih ostankov (Hitzinger P, 1863,

19). Kosti so kot element *tremendum et fascinans* zopet vzbudile željo po mitizaciji, sam izvor legende o maševanju Cirila in Metoda pa je bolj banalen.

Ugotovili smo, da je mitizacija v tem primeru povezana z nekakšno “mitično slovanizacijo”, ki ima izvor v stari, tendenciozni časopisni objavi Aleksandra Kobeta alias Jurija Sodevskega iz prve polovice 19. stoletja (Kobe-Sodevski 1844, 115-116). Še danes izredno živa legenda, ki so jo domačini hvaležno sprejeli, se v tem primeru izkaže za reakcijo na realne politične razmere v prvi polovici 19. stoletja. Tako je pod vplivom takrat nastajajočega panslavizma v visoko srednjeveško romansko rotundo - kostnico sv. Mihaela samovoljno vpeto maševanje Konstantina (Cirila) in Metoda - slovanskih apostolov iz 9. stoletja. Ljudsko znanje smemo tu razumeti kot razumsko spoznanje sveta, kot ga doživljamo, ne glede na realnost preteklih stanj, kar zopet ni v nasprotju z visoko empiričnim pristopom radikalno konstruktivistične perspektive (prim. Holtorf C. J. 1997, 80).

Globoka potreba po mitizaciji ali “rekristjanizaciji” takšne svete krajine je stalna in se kaže v tem, da domačini vsako novost, ki sodi v ta kontekst, z veseljem sprejmejo. Že prihod tujca, npr. arheologa, in odkritje grobov sta lahko vzrok za nastanek novega “mitičnega konstrukta”. Starinokop J. Pečnik, ki je v teh krajih deloval v zadnji tretjini 19. stoletja, je odkril “čudne grobove, zložene iz kamnitih plošč in jako podobnih rimskim”, ki jih ni natančno lociral (Pečnik J. 1887, 28 in Pečnik F. 1989) (slika 5). Njegovo odkritje se je vtisnilo v spomin nekaterih zdaj že pokojnih domačinov. Do točne lokacije smo srečno prišli le na podlagi informacije, da je stari lastnik tega območja naključnim popotnikom in romarjem (po cesti teče znana božja pot) prepovedal opravljanje potrebe po bližnjem gozdiču Vrajku z besedami: “Ali doma tudi po britofu serjete?” Ta razlaga, pogojena s sedanjim oz. polpreteklim spoštovanjem do umrlih, torej zopet ne izključuje resnice o obstoju nekega preteklega stanja.

Navadno izvor legende ni povsem jasen in ga celo empirični pristop, kot je npr. interpretacija rezultatov arheoloških izkopavanj, ne more potrditi ali ovreči. Legenda o prvem misijonu in leseni cerkvi ob njej, za lokacijo katere v ustnem izročilu ni točnih podatkov, verjetno ni nepomembna.<sup>3</sup> Navezava na prej omenjeni panslovanski konstrukt seveda ni nemogoča. Vendar smo z izkopavanji odkrili ostanke jam za kole, ki skupaj sestavljajo neko preprosto ovalno strukturo umetno izravnane površine ob najvišjem delu izkopnega polja poznoantičnega grobišča (slika 1). Misel, da so slovanski, morda še poganski prišleki prepoznali poznoantično grobišče kot del mitične krajine, ki jo je potrebno označiti z nekakšno arhitekturo, po nekaterih analogijah ni neverjetna, a je z ohranjenimi materialnimi ostanki žal ne moremo dokazati.<sup>4</sup>

Je pa stroka (npr. arheologija) v sodelovanju z drugimi vedami sposobna v mnogočem dopolniti legendo o “pervih kristjanih”, ki naj bi bili ob leseni cerkvi pokopani, in s tem priskočiti na pomoč pri novodobni mitizaciji krajine. Dvajset pokojnikov je bilo položenih v plitve jame brez grobne arhitekture in le z osebnimi pridatki (slika 1). Da je šlo za zaprto samoskrbno skupnost, kaže obrabljenost in deloma celo unikatnost najdenih pridatkov, značilnih za konec 6. in začetek 7. stoletja. Dva uhana s košarico,

<sup>3</sup> Podatek mi je posredoval g. Franc Hočevar, za kar se mu na tem mestu najlepše zahvaljujem.

<sup>4</sup> Funkcija podobnih vkopnih jam, ki so verjetno stojke skromne lesene arhitekture, ostaja zvečina neinterpretirana; najdemo jih npr. na zgodnjerednjeveškem najdišču v avstrijskem Gusnu (Tovornik V. 1985, 187 in priloga).

izdelana v bronu, postaneta takoj bolj zanimiva, če povemo, da je prvega nosila neka več kot štirideset let stara ženska pred tisoč tristo leti na desni strani glave kot del lokalne noše, medtem ko je nekoliko mlajša ženska, morda sorodnica zgoraj omenjene (kar kažejo antropološke analize), v približno istem času nosila slab lokalni posnetek neke luksuzne starejše izvorno bizantinske narebrenne oblike uhana, ki v tem nevarnem času očitno ni bila več dostopna.

Zanimiva je tudi zgodba o preluknjanih odlomkih dveh poznoantičnih čaš, ki sami na sebi ne pomenita ničesar. Če pa vemo, da sta bili položeni v naročje štiri do pet let starega otroka, sta predstavljeni sliki neke daljne bolečine. Eden od njegovih najbližjih mu je na zadnjo pot položil v naročje njegovo ljubo igračo - ropotuljico.

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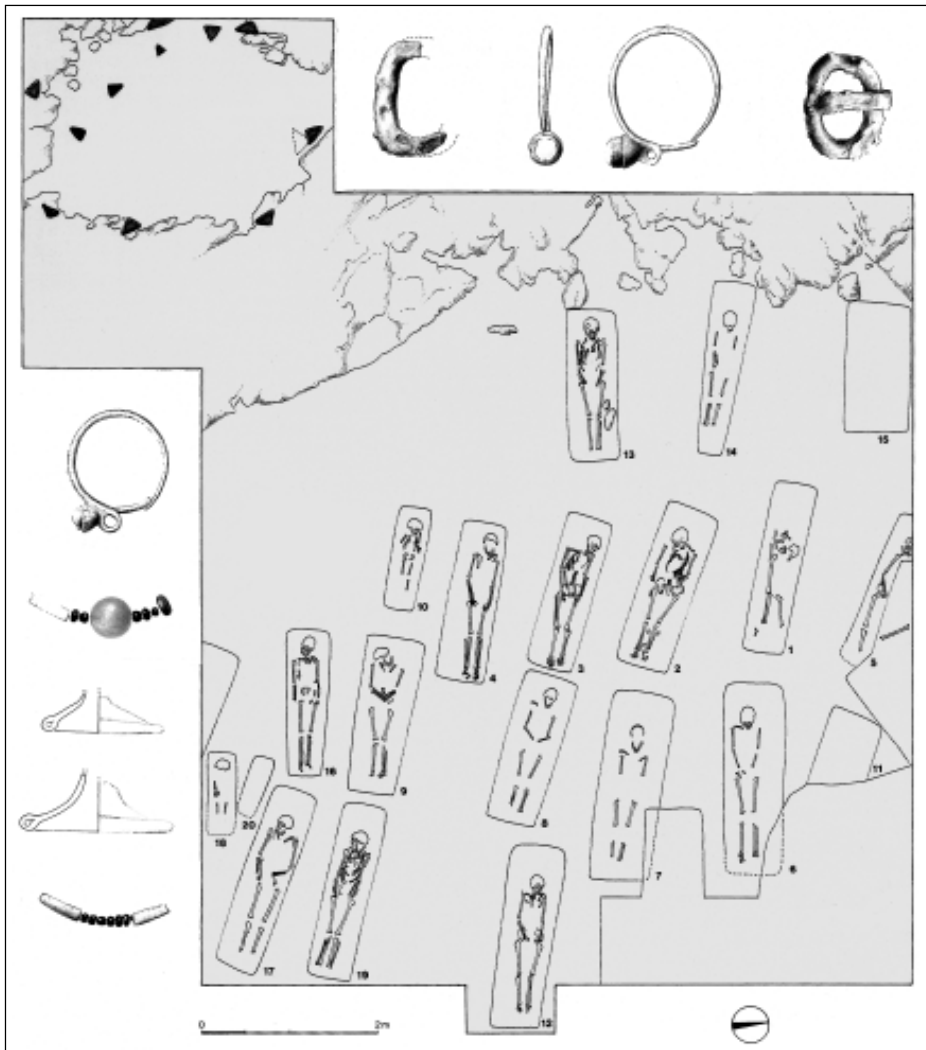
Antropološko poročilo je pokazalo približno enakovreden odstotek žensk (7), moških (6) in otrok (2). Če hočemo, lahko iz suhoparnih podatkov s področja fizične antropologije vedno izluščimo detajle, zanimive tudi za širšo javnost. Takšno je npr. dejstvo, da so si bili ti ljudje verjetno v sorodu, na kar kažejo nekatere fiziološke sorodnosti - npr. orlovski nos, ki se pojavlja tako pri moških kot pri ženskah. Zanimivo, da jih je največ umrlo v dobi adultus II (30-40 let), medtem ko starosti maturus II (50-60 let) na vzorcu te sonde ni nihče presegel.<sup>5</sup>

Mitično krajino uspešno dopolnjuje še arheološki podatek o obstoju poznoantične naselbine, ki se je v ustnem izročilu že izgubil in se ni ohranil niti v toponimu. Naselbina je bila odkrita ob gradu Obernassenfuss, ali natančneje: na terasah pod njim (slika 6). Možnost, da stika med staroselci in slovanskimi prišleki ni bilo, izključuje že sam obstoj mitične krajine. Morda na mestu same naselbine ni sakralnega objekta s svetimi močmi, ki bi bil vreden mitizacije. Sakralne objekte najdemo namreč na lokacijah večine poznoantičnih višinskih utrjenih naselij, ki imajo svoj poznoantični izvor večkrat skrit v imenu (npr. Ajdna nad Potoki, Ajdovski gradec). Tudi tu so izjeme, vendar arheologi le redko prebiramo pravljice izpred stotih let. V primeru hriba Vipota pri Celju se je npr. nekoč zapisana zgodba "o votlini, kjer so se skrivali kristjani pred srdom poganov", ki se je z najdbami zgodnjekrščanske cerkvene opreme potrdila kot zelo verjetna (Seidl 1881, 76).<sup>6</sup>

Naj na tem mestu prekinemo pogovor o legendah ali o arheoloških podatkih. Ni naša želja, da bi z interpretacijo skeletnih ostankov in arheoloških artefaktov sprožili nov mitični konstrukt. Ta je bil verjetno vzpostavljen že takrat, ko smo se na tem kraju pojavili prvič (naše delovanje je npr. postalo del gostilniških govoric). Temeljno vodilo našega prispevka je vendarle vzpostavitev novega odnosa do živih. Ravno zato se zdi ob ukvarjanju z umrlimi iz kateregakoli časa popularizacija sodelovanja med strokami nujna.

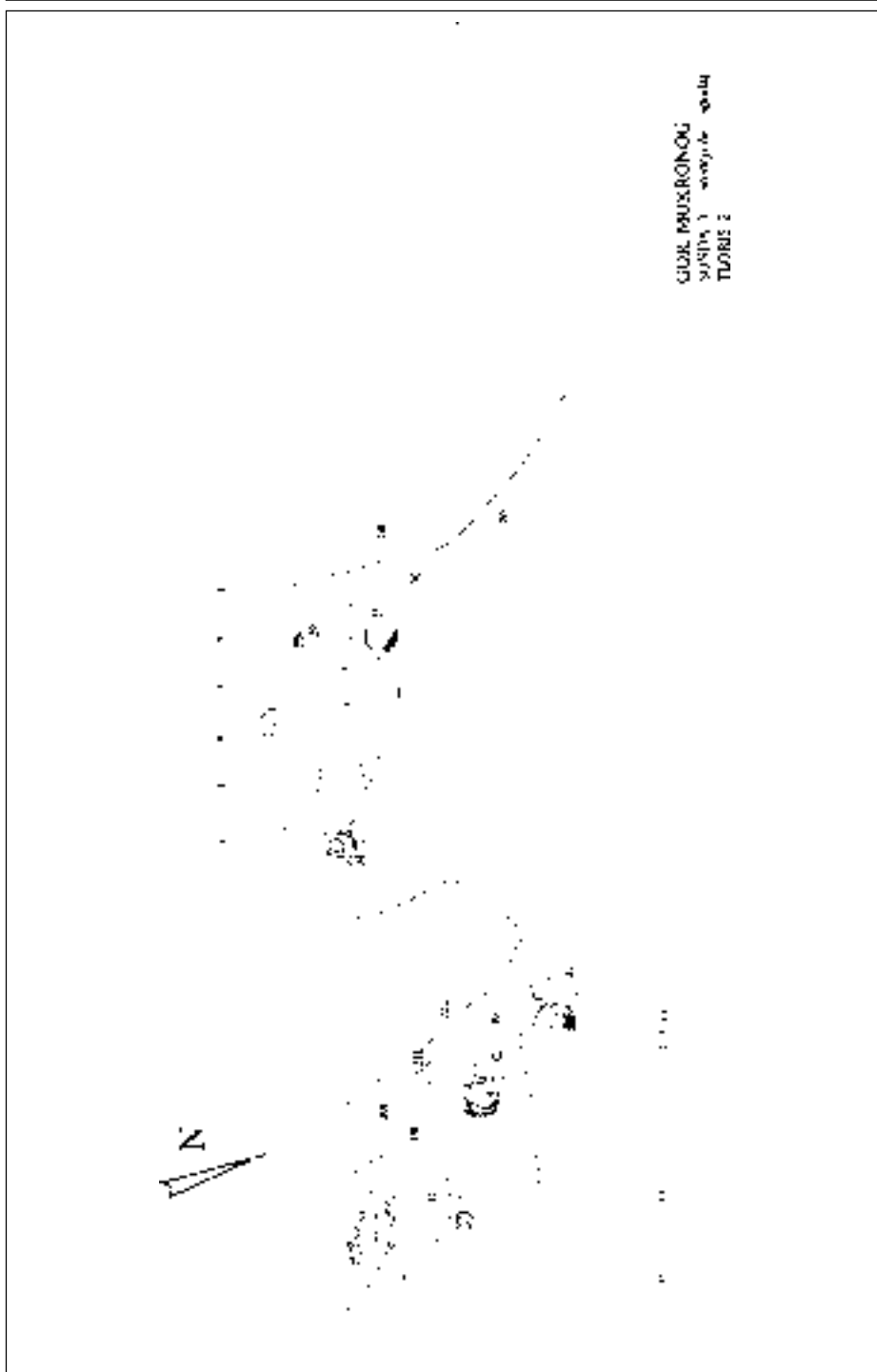
<sup>5</sup> Izčrpano antropološko poročilo dr. Petre Leben-Selakove hrani ZVNKD Novo mesto.

<sup>6</sup> Za prijazen napotek se na tem mestu najlepše zahvaljujem dr. Andreju Pleterskemu.



Slika 1 / Figure 1: Tloris dela poznoantičnega grobišča z ostanki vkopov za stojke neke ovalne in kasneje odstranjene lesene konstrukcije (sonda 1) in grobni pridatki iz grobov 2, 5, 7, 14, 18. ♦ A plan of the Late Roman cemetery and the remains of post holes for an oval wooden structure that was later removed (trench 1), as well as the grave goods from graves 2, 5, 7, 14, 18.

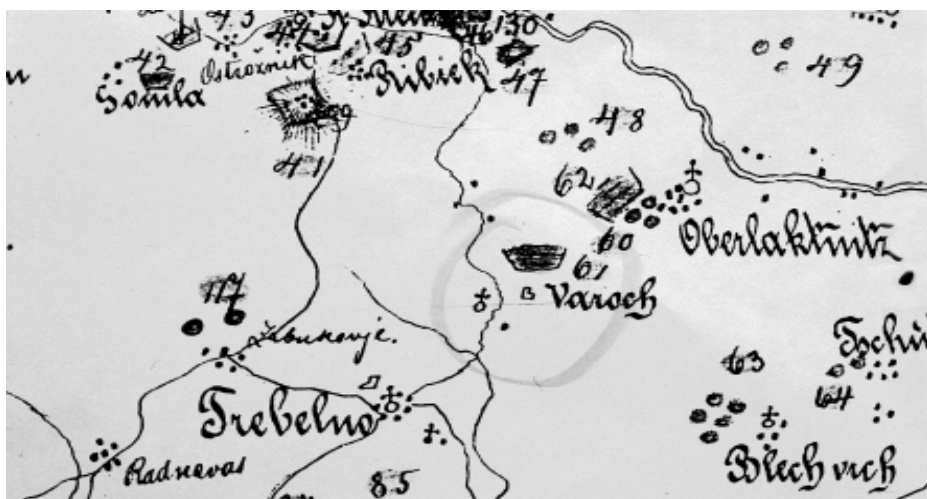




Slika 3 / Figure 3: Tloris dela poznosrednjeveškega grobišča (sonda 3) - faza 2. ♦ A plan of part of the Late Medieval cemetery (trench 3) – phase 2.

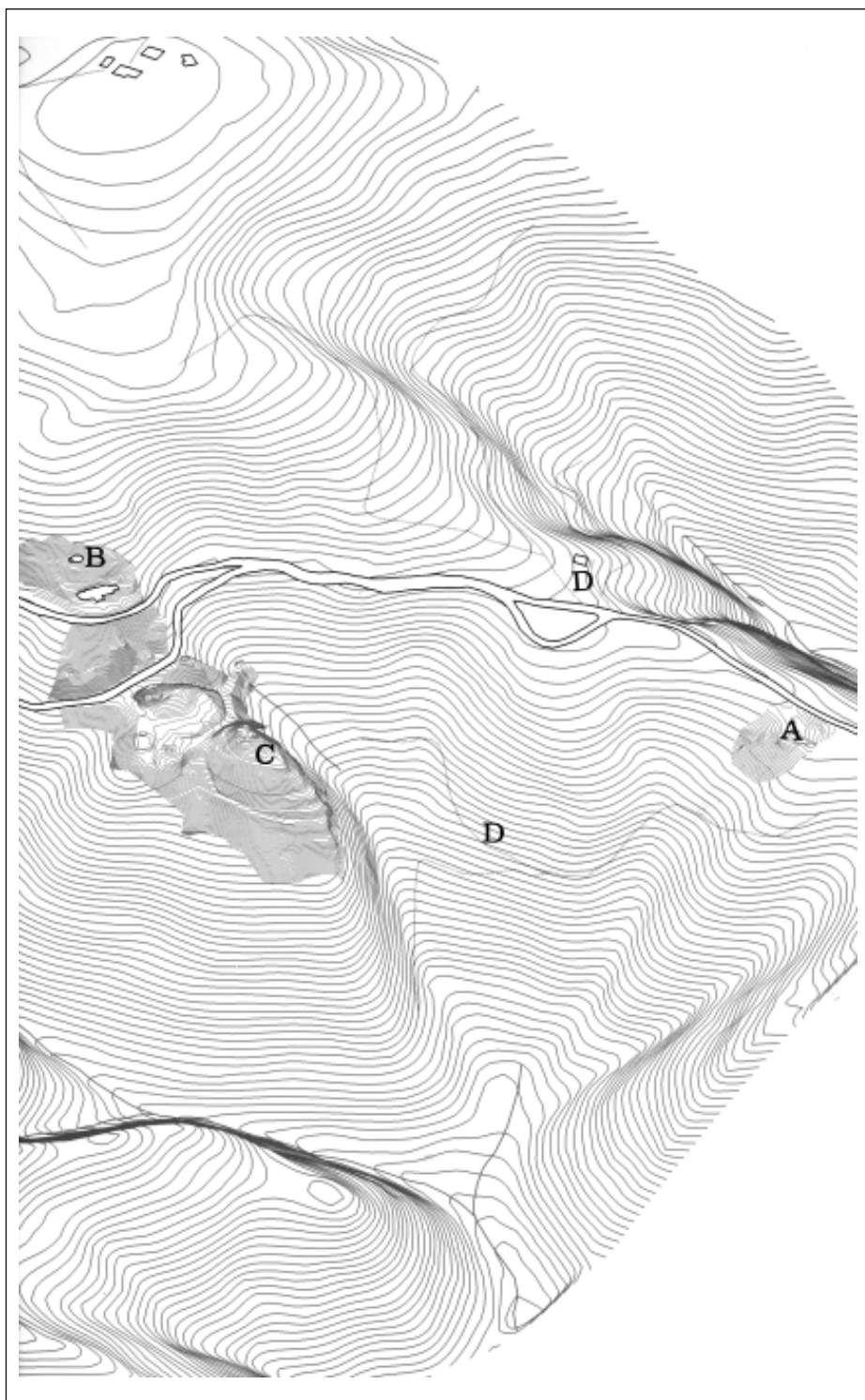


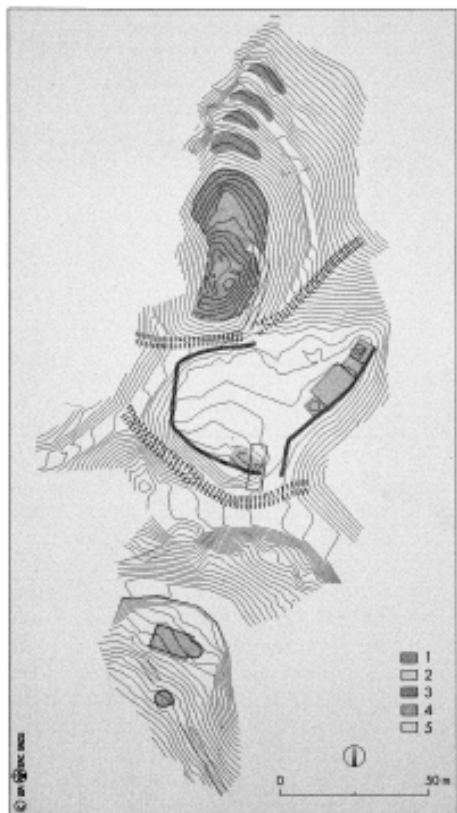
Slika 4 / Figure 4: Romanska rotunda sv. Mihaela (prva polovica 13. stoletja), foto M. Kapus. ♦ The St Michael Romanesque rotunda (first half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century), photo M. Kapus.



Slika 5 / Figure 5: Izsek karte iz dnevnih zapisov starinokopa Jerneja Pečnika. ♦ A section of a map from the daily records of the treasure hunter, Jernej Pečnik.







Slika 6 / Figure 6: Gorenji Mokronog - tridimenzionalni (axonometrični) geodetski posnetek terena. Vidne so naslednje lokacije: a) "Orajek" s poznoantičnim grobiščem; b) romanska rotunda - kostnica sv. Mihaela, kjer naj bi po tradiciji maševala sveta brata Ciril in Metod; c) sistem teras pod ruševinami gradu "Obnassenfuss"; d) fosilne poti. ♦ Gorenji Mokronog. A three-dimensional (axonometric) geodesic plan of the landscape. The following locations are visible: a) "Orajek" with the Late Roman cemetery; b) the Sv. Mihael Romanesque rotunda – ossuary, where Cyril and Methodius supposedly held a mass; c) the system of terraces below the ruins of the "Obnassenfuss" castle; d) the old routes.

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# AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE AND THE LEGEND OF THE DEAD: CASE-STUDY OF GORENJI MOKRONOG

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**Key words:** *mythical landscape, basket earrings, Christian landscape, indigenous romanised population*

A cemetery is certainly the most characteristic and perhaps also the most conspicuous material manifestation of death. Cooperation among select, seemingly incompatible professional fields is a necessity in the investigation of such sites. This largely refers to the field of preserving cultural heritage and oral tradition, whilst taking into account new archaeological and physicalanthropological data.

Certain ancient cemeteries maintain a special status in the rural areas of the central Dolenjsko region. These locations are known to the local population and as such are designated by specific toponyms. A breath of mysteriousness is sometimes deliberately bestowed upon these sites which consequently leads to the gradual ‘mythization’ of an entire landscape (e.g. Roymans 1995). Each and every intervention, which damages such a region, normally encounters disapproval and resistance from the side of the local inhabitants. It is fascinating that this peculiar piety should be expressed towards the skeletal remains of the ancestors. It appears to be a mutable phenomenon that is not collective. In this specific case it ranges from extreme indifference to a genuine “veneration of the dead”.<sup>1</sup>

Why do some sites of human burials receive special consideration in local consciousness, whilst others do not? How is it possible that a 200 year old village cemetery can vanish from local’s consciousness, whilst oral traditions of a thousand year older Late Roman cemetery or a Romanesque ossuary survived? It is paradoxical that even the presence of the somewhat less popular researchers, such as archaeologists, in these

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<sup>1</sup> The capricious relationship to the skeletal remains, which is often exhibited in the digging up of graves, was already present in the Middle Ages and is also referred to in the written sources (Makarovič G. 1995, 146). The practice is also reconfirmed in the results from the excavations of the Medieval cemetery by the church of St. Peter – Figure 2-3. In the continuation, the site of the Late Roman cemetery, where the relationship to graves takes on an entirely different manner, is of some consequence. It is certainly not a mere coincidence that most legends refer precisely to this location – Figure 1.

‘mythicized’ localities does not seem to be considered an intrusion by the locals.<sup>2</sup> It is suggested here that the only elements that gain in value are those (including skeletal remains), which conform to the context of reinstating the ‘old glory’ of a ‘mythicized’ locality, which was never entirely lost.

242 If archaeology only applies contemporary methodological approaches, it will simply overlook or inadvertently cite such ‘mythization’ of the landscape. Interpretations are all but omitted. This may be because a large part of this rich oral tradition, denoting “real past”, is considered debatable in a strictly empirical sense. This is also confirmed by analyzing the seemingly rich oral tradition concerning the Gorenji Mokronog archaeological site in the central Dolenjsko. Only the toponym of the locality directly retains the ‘sacred status’ of certain parts of the discussed landscape. The area around the newly discovered Late Roman cemetery – *Figure 1*, is referred to as “Orajk” or “Vrajski breg”, which is a dialect form of the locative name “v rajū”, in heaven (Christian), in the pagan otherworld (Sl. SKJ 1985, 311). This toponym is a point which can be defined as “real past”, and which is confirmed by the empiricism of archaeological excavations. In spite of settlement discontinuity in this area (the cemetery dates to the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 7<sup>th</sup> century), the incoming pagan population appropriated the “sacred status” of the area from the existing population; the mythic space of the Late Roman cemetery once again became a part of Christian cosmology when the region was Rechristianized. It is interesting that not all archaeological sites within the area have “earned” mythization. A cemetery dating to the High and Late Middle Ages was discovered in the direct vicinity to the former parish church Sv. Peter – *Figure 2*. Results from the excavation indicate the cemetery was finally abandoned toward the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. This coincides with the historical data, which indicates that activity by the church was transferred to the new parish, and formerly subsidiary, church of Sv. Križ at Trebelno after the year 1870 (Golob 1994, 9). Results from the excavations suggest a rather similar relationship to the deceased as at the present time. Due to a scarcity of space, graves were often dug up during the final phase. The Sv. Mihael rotunda, where long bones and skulls from these graves were then deposited, served as an ossuary. The cemetery is situated on the slope below Sv. Mihael, a Romanesque rotunda. Excavations, in combination with certain topographic data revealed that, it occupied the entire area surrounding the baroque style church of Sv. Peter – *Figure 2-3*. The scarcity of space may also have been the reason why the orientation of the inhumation was adjusted from an older and traditional East-West orientation to a North-South orientation – *Figure 3*. A characteristic and significant fact is that any and all oral tradition that concerns the above location is essentially bound to the ‘mythicized’ site of the nearby Late Roman cemetery.

It was by a stroke of luck that Franc Hočevár, the parish clerk and a village chronicler, was encountered; he contributed a treasure trove of such information. Today, this represents quite a rarity in central Slovenia and the south-eastern Alpine region as a

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<sup>2</sup> It seems that the “sacred nature” of such sites represents a bridge between unpopular state offices (e.g. local institutions for the preservation of cultural heritage) and local public opinion, which would be worth promoting in the future.

whole. His entire collection of information illustrates how the local inhabitants gradually restored the initial – and evidently never entirely lost – ‘sacred status’ to a mythic landscape. This was based upon a very specific relationship to the skeletal remains of the deceased from a precise location at the Late Roman cemetery. According to the legend, Constantine (Cyril) and Methodius held a mass in the Romanesque rotunda Sv. Mihael (from the first half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century), and to which ‘ajdje’ (indigenous romanised population) would also pay visits; at the same time, it served as an ossuary and even today is filled with human skeletal remains (Hitzinger P, 1863, 19) – *Figure 4*. These bones, as an element *tremendum et fascinans*, instigated the desire for ‘mythization’ once again, while the origins of the legend concerning Cyril and Methodius are more commonplace.

In this case, mythization is connected with same kind of the “mythic Slavicization”, which originated in the tendentious newspaper articles of Aleksander Kobet alias Jurij Sodevski of the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Kobe-Sodevski 1844, 115-116). The still living legend from Gorenji Mokronog exhibits a reaction to real political conditions in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which were reflected by the local people. Thus, under the influence of the nascent Pan-Slavism, the mass held by Constantine (Cyril) and Methodius, 9<sup>th</sup> century Slavonic apostles, was arbitrarily attributed to the Sv. Mihael Romanesque Rotunda. This is not in opposition to the highly empirical approach of radical constructivist perspectives, because this defines folk traditions as “knowledge and meaningful understanding according to cognitive and practical (that includes social) viability in the world as we experience it, not according to correspondence to a (past) reality” (see Holtorf C. J. 1997, 80). However, the deep need to mythicize or ‘Christianize’ such a sacred landscape is permanent and is reflected by the fact that the local people accept each new element that fits into this context. Already the arrival of strangers (archaeologists) and the discovery of graves can cause the construction of a new “mythic construction”. The treasure hunter J. Pečnik, who operated in the area during the last third of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, discovered “strange graves, lined with stone slabs and very similar to Roman graves” (Pečnik J. 1887, 28; Pečnik F.1989) – *Figure 5*. His discovery was imprinted in the memories of certain now deceased locals. The precise location was rediscovered on the basis of information that the old landowner refused to allow stray travelers and pilgrims (a well-known pilgrimage route follows the road) to obey the call of nature in the Vrajk woods with the words: “Do you also urinate on cemeteries at home?” This interpretation of the respective present reverence for the deceased does not exclude the truth of the existence of a former state.

The common origins of the legend are so equivocal that even an empirical approach, such as an interpretation of results from archaeological excavations, cannot confirm or refute their genesis. The legend that refers to the first mission and a wooden church nearby, yet eludes a specification of a precise location, is most likely of little importance.<sup>3</sup> A correlation with the above mentioned Pan-Slavic structure is of course impossible. Nonetheless, excavations revealed the remains of post holes at the upper part of the excavated area of the Late Roman cemetery, that in conjunction form a sim-

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<sup>3</sup> I would like to thank Mr. Franc Hočevar for providing this information.

ple oval structure with an artificially leveled surface – *Figure 1*. It is feasible according to certain analogies that the Slavic or even the pagan newcomers acknowledged the Late Roman cemetery as part of a mythic landscape and felt the need for some sort of an architectural structure to distinguish. However, the preserved material remains are insufficient proof.<sup>4</sup>

244 The combination of one discipline (e.g. archaeology) with other disciplines is fully capable of fulfilling the legend of the “first Christians”, who were supposedly buried by the wooden church, and thus contributes to the modern mythization of the landscape. Twenty individuals were placed in shallow graves, without any elaborate mortuary construction, and furnished with grave goods – *Figure 1*. The worn condition, and partially also the uniqueness, of the discovered artifacts, characteristic of the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 7<sup>th</sup> centuries indicate, that the society was a closed and self-sufficient one. The significance of two bronze basket earrings immediately increases with the additional piece of information that they were worn by a 40 year old woman on her right side as an integral part of a local attire 1300 years ago; at the same time, a somewhat younger woman, perhaps even a relative of the above mentioned woman (as indicated by the anthropological analyses), wore an inferior local imitation of an older, an elaborate ribbed-shaped earring whose origins derived from the Early Byzantine period, which was evidently not available anymore during this perilous age. Likewise also the story of the perforated fragments of two Roman glass beakers, which in themselves are inconsequential. When one is equipped with the additional information that they were laid in the arms of a 4 or 5 year old child they become a reflection of some remote anguish. One of his nearest and dearest placed his favorite toy – a rattle – in his arms for his final journey.

The anthropological report determined approximately equal percentages of women (7), men (6) and children (2). Of course we deal with a small sample size with an incomplete mortuary population. However, more engaging details for the wider public can always be extracted from among the tedious information presented by the field of physical anthropology. For instance, the fact that they were related to each other; whereupon physiological affinities were also detected, e.g. aquiline noses, among the men as well as the women. It is also interesting that the majority died during the adults II age (30-40 years), while no cases were detected from this sample exceeding the matures II age (50-60 years).<sup>5</sup>

The mythic landscape is also successfully supplemented by the archaeological information concerning the existence of a Late Roman settlement, already absent in oral tradition and not denoted in the toponym. The settlement was discovered near the castle Obernassenfuss, or more precisely, on the terraces below – *Figure 6*. The chance that there was no contact between the indigenous population and the Slavic newcomers is resolved by the mere existence of the mythic landscape. And yet there is no sacral structure with sa-

<sup>4</sup> The function of similar pits, which probably represent post holes for a modest wooden structure, for the most part have yet to be interpreted; they are present, for instance, at the Early Medieval site of Gusen in Austria (Tovornik V. 1985, 187 and addition).

<sup>5</sup> Dr. Petra Leben-Selak's comprehensive anthropological report is kept at the ZVNKD, Novo mesto.

cred powers at the very location of the settlement worth mythization. Ecclesiastical structures are found at the majority of Late Roman upland settlement sites, which often furnish their Late Roman origins in their names (e.g. Ajdna above Potoki, Ajdovski gradec). There are always exceptions, although archaeologists rarely read stories from centuries ago. In the case of the “Vipota near Celje” hill, the story written long ago “concerning a cave where Christians hid from the wrath of pagans” was credibly corroborated by the find of an Early Christian church accoutrements (Seidl 1881, 76).<sup>6</sup>

Let us conclude this discussion concerning legends or archaeological data. It is not our intention to create a new mythic structure with the interpretation of skeletal remains and archaeological artefacts. This was probably already established with our first visit to the site itself (perhaps our ventures became the subject of a tavern gossip). The main objective of this article is to contribute a new perspective to the living, precisely for this reason it seems that the promotion of the collaboration between disciplines is essential in taking an interest in the dead, from any point in time.

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REFERENCES see page 240

#### BESEDA O AVTORJU

Uroš Bavec, arheolog, po diplomu na Univerzi v Ljubljani je od leta 1992 deloval kot samostojni kulturni delavec, kasneje je bil kustos za arheologijo v Posavskem muzeju Brežice, zadnjih nekaj let pa opravlja delo konservatorja za nepremično dediščino na Zavodu za varstvo kulturne dediščine v Novem mestu. Specializacijo - mikroregionalne poselitvene študije: Sv. Jakob nad Dovškim (B.A.R 1988), Velike Malence (VS 1997), aplicira na podiplomski študij, ki posredno zadeva varovanje arheološke dediščine. Sodeluje tudi na mednarodnih tečajih in simpozijih, ki zadevajo dokumentacijo in rekonstrukcijo kulturne dediščine (npr. CEU Summer University Hungary - Poland 1998).

#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Uroš Bavec, an archaeologist, after attaining his degree at the University of Ljubljana in 1992, he worked as an independent cultural worker, he then became the archaeological curator of the Posavski Museum in Brežice and more recently he works as a conservator of cultural heritage at the Institute for the Conservation of Cultural Heritage in Novo mesto. Specialization – microregional settlement studies: Sv. Jakob above Dovško (B.A.R 1988), Velike Malence (VS 1997), applies to his post-graduate studies which indirectly concerns the preservation of the archaeological heritage. He takes part at international courses that concern the documentation and reconstruction of cultural heritage (e.g. CEU Summer University Hungary – Poland 1998).

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<sup>6</sup> I would like to express my gratitude to Dr. Andrej Pleterski for his kind information.

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