

CELTIC SACRED PLACE NEAR RAM VILLAGE (2)

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The village Ram is located at the 1077th km of the Danube River, upstream from the confluence. It is located in the extreme northwest offshoot of Paleozoic shale of Gorica Hill. Gorica Hill is a branch of the Carpathian mountain massif that tectonic movements separated from the basic mountain mass, with which below of the Danube River does the same orogenetic whole. Geological Survey has found that in the geological past the Danube flowed from the west side of Gorica, of which still testifies his, with sand buried fossil riverbed. At Ram ends golubacko-ramska sands, which over the Danube continues to Deliblato sands. The Danube is widest at the Ram. A hydrographic image at Ram is very interesting. At a short distance, into Danube flow several rivers. On the left side, from the Carpathian Mountains, in it flow rivers Caras and Nera, while from the right side, from the mountains of Homolje flow rivers Mlava and Pek. It is important to note that the 20 km upstream of Ram, Velika Morava flows into the Danube, and which in it bring large amounts of gravel, sand and other alluvial deposits. The layers of Paleozoic slates at Ram are layers of milky-white, gold-bearing quartz. The exploitation of slates – Ram's green stone, for construction purposes is used continuously since ancient times and the middle Ages to the modern times. From that stone it was built the ancient Lederata, Viminacijum, the medieval town Smederevo of Despots Djuradj Branković and Turkish fortress of Ram. Ram's stone (greeny stone) is a stone that is easily torn into blocks and slabs and it is resistant to physical and chemical influences of different weather conditions. It is not suitable for finer processing. Traces of the old exploitation of this stone are visible on the banks of the Danube below the Ram fortress and Roman Lederata, as well as in the valley of Šajica stream.

Ram is one of the most important points of the Southeast Europe. Here are touching (meeting point of) Balkan, Carpathian and Pannonian regions. The Hill Gorica offers a wide view of the Vrsac Mountains and the Carpathians, on Avala, Kosmaj and Rudnik at the west and the mountains of Homolje to the south. Danube at Ram comes out of the endless Pannonian plain and slowly enters in the pre Djerdaps funnel. Here he hits (splashes) the first branches of the Carpathian Mountains and thirty kilometers downriver made the biggest and grandest gorge in Europe. Due to the specific hydrological situation Danube at Ram makes a two larger and one smaller island. These are the Kostolac's island, which is 24 long and 3–5 km wide, and proceeds from the confluence of the Velika Morava River and stretches all the way to Ram and geomorphologically and anthropogeographically is part of Banat. Other island is Kisiljevačko, or Velikogradištansko, which starts from the village Zatonja and extends to Veliko Gradiste. Third is the island Sapaja which is smaller in size and was located between the confluence of the Nera

and Karas Rivers. These three islands are not river island, but the island in the true sense, which was made the Danube separating the part of mainland from the hinterland. Upstream of Ram is a large Danube's river island called Čibuklija.

Sector of the Danube, between the confluence of Velika Morava and Ram Village is the largest resting area of migratory birds in their primordial road north – south. During the winter in this area one can find numerous flocks of wild geese, ducks, cranes, cormorants, white and gray herons, river gulls and other birds. Swans are also not rare, after which one river bays was called Swans pane. This zone of the Danube is a large spawning of fish and represents one of the richest fishing grounds. Fishing is still very present occupation of the Ram's inhabitants. From quality fish are represented catfish, perch and sturgeon, and in significant number are present pike, carp, crucian carp, tench, asp, bream and others.

Dredging of gravel and sand from the bed of the Danube at Ram it was found a large number of fossil bones of Pleistocene animals that lived in the Danube region before the ice age, which ended about 10 000 years BC. Bones findings of bison, wild cattle, elk, fallow deer and mammoth tell us that they lived in this part of the Danube basin. They were chased by prehistoric hunters and probably because of them they came to this region. Located remains of a mammoth at the open pit Drmno, deep beneath the foundations of the ancient Viminacium testify to us that these animals live in our region.

Veliko Brdo (fig. 9) is located on the suspension of about 1 km southeast of the oppidum and 1.3 km northwest from the top of a nearby Gorica Hill (282 m above sea level). At its top, on the surface of the 400 to 300 m is a unique complex of stone skerries and ceremonial stone structures with numerous traces of processing. This indicates that it is a unique ritual complex, a shrine in the open, such as those known in the Celtic world.

Sacral complex on the Veliko Brdo (fig. 10) is characterized by monumentality and variety of forms. They are widespread over a large area of about ten acres, at the very top of the hill, and on its northern slope facing the Danube. From this spot spreads a broad perspective on the whole Danube region both upstream and downstream from the Celtic oppidum Lederata. In north, across the Danube one can see the entire range of the Vrsac Mountains and in the distance the northeast branches of the Southern Carpathians are visible. To the west at a distance of about 100 km the mountains Avala and Kosmaj are clearly observed. Sunset from this place is perhaps the most beautiful in the entire Serbian Danube region.

Sacred objects are carved from the living rock of crystalline slates of whom the whole hill was built. On the stone objects, which can be single-solitary or in groups that make up the ritual structure, are clearly visible traces of processing, etched grooves and lines in different directions and the larger and smaller circular, rectangular or elliptical depressions. For sure it can be conclude that these objects do not represent the natural creation. First of all, they were made of high hardness stone, unsuitable for finer processing, which is not susceptible to physical and chemical influences of the atmospherics.

Artificial cavities on the certain structures could be used for sacrifice. In the modern population of the Ram village, there is no data related to the tradition of this unique complex. Cultural and ethnic preference were made on the basis of the immediate vicinity of the Celtic oppidum Lederata and sufficiently numerous Celtic findings, both in the Danube river basin (fig. 7), and in the context of the oppidum (fig. 6). Monumentality, impressiveness and mystique of this space, ranks it among the most important remnants of the Celtic spiritual heritage in Europe.

Skerries are a great lonely stone (fig. 11–12) that is naturally linked to the ground. At the skerries from Ram are visible traces of human activity. At some of them can sense the rough contours of the human face. The essence of the religious beliefs of the ancients was that the

stone contains the elemental forces of nature in the first place of the fire. Stone is the habitat of the human soul, the life-giving forces and the god itself. In the old Serbian Religions, there is also the understanding, where such skerries called living stones, living rocks and lively. On the territory of Serbia is known for a series of such stones and which regularly has a name: Marko's stone, Stag stone Moma's stone, Girl's rock, Sava's stone, etc.

The ritual structure 1 (fig. 13) is located on the southwest slope of the Veliko Brdo. It occupies an area of approximately 10×10 m. It is made up of several large stones skerries. In this structure stands out a large boulder in the shape of a truncated cone whose in central part is depressed by deep trough 1m width and 0.60 m deep. Artificially made recess is oriented in a direction north – south. This great skerry is located in the center of the ceremonial structures 1. Around him are four small, perfectly arranged skerries, arranged at the corners of an imaginary square. From this ceremonial structure there is a wide view toward the northwest and on the entire Pannonia's plain.

The ritual structure 2 (fig. 14) is of rectangular shape. It is carved in the living rock. The dimensions of the structure are 3.5 to 3m. Interior of ceremonial structure has a square shape measuring about 2×2 m. On three sides is surrounded by a monumental pieces of live rocks, while the west side is open. It is possible that on this side was the entrance in the most sacred part of the ritual structure. On the western side of the structure there is a large monolith in the form of a truncated pyramid measuring 1.5×1.5 m and a height of 1.5 m, with visible traces of processing. This stone block represents the altar, because their regular geometrical shape and size stands out from its surroundings. The ritual construction 2 represents pre-designed space. His fully realized geometrization, is clearly visible both in the horizontal and vertical planes, as well as a remarkable position in relation to the wider environment, indicates that it was a separate sacred space from with a view on the Danube River and the confluence of the Nera and Karas. The location of ceremonial structures 2 plays an important role in defining the cult.

The ritual structure 3 (fig. 15) is in the form of an elongated stone promontory, which provides a broad view of the Danube and the Pannonia's plain. It is directed straight at the confluence of the rivers Danube and Karas. Construction is approximately 20 m long and 1.5–2 m wide. Upper grade level of structure rises about 1–1,5 m from the surrounding terrain. Much of it is in its southern part covered with sand and overgrown with grass. The northern part is stripped with some minimal traces of human processing. This part is a kind of vantage point from with a wide view on the Danube and the Pannonian Plain. Seen from the southern part of the ritual construction of the 3, it can be notice that it virtually cuts across its entire length a broad river and visually makes the stone bridge – the way through it.

Ritual structure 4 (fig. 16) consists of a complex of monolithic stone blocks arranged on the surface of about 15×15 m. Stands out a large skerries with traces of processing. Monolith itself has a rough form of animal, under whose trapezoidal head is a large rectangular niche with visible traces of hematite in dark red color, which can be derived from the fossilized blood of sacrificed animals. Traces of dark brown, red hematite are registered only on central monolithic stone of ceremonial structure 4. Hematite iron ore represents an oxide, Fe_2O_3 , which occurs in variations of yellow (ocher), red and brown color. During prehistory it was profusely used in ritual purposes, especially in the funeral rites. Red ocher – hematite is a symbol of life. According to its chemical composition it is completely identical to dry residue of the blood, after it the science of blood is called hematology. The ancient name of the Stara Planina – Hem comes from the rich deposits of this ores on it. In the area in geological oasis of Paleozoic slates at Ram, hematite deposits are not recorded, but it appears in various shades of green, and local population called it Ram's stone – greeny. Traces of hematite on the ceremonial rock structures 4 in

Ram were formed after breaking off from the head of a large stone block. This can be explained only by applying fresh blood on it and its subsequent curing. Blood is very easy bonding to the substrate, where it became fossilized and mineralized, so that it may remain preserved for a long time. In our nation, there is a belief that the bloody saber, sword or knife, when the blood dries it cannot be removed from the covers anymore. All these elements indicate that traces of hematite in the ritual structure 4 come from the blood of sacrificed animals.

Ritual structure 5 (fig. 17) consists of great skerries with dimensions 5×5 m and a height of 2 m, which dominates the surrounding area. On the flat top part is allocated large artificial hollow in shape of ellipsoid pelvic dimensions 50×25 cm and depth of 20 cm, in which it retains water from atmospheric precipitation. From that recess, which had the role of the altar (fig. 18), starting a long groove in V cross section, through which is drained sacrificed liquid. On the surface around the stone are visible long curved lines (fig. 19) which extend in different directions. The orderliness of their production and the fact that they were cut out in a very hard surface to be visible, indicating to us that they should have a very specific meaning. The ritual structure 5 is perhaps the most complex religious object on the Veliko Brdo. The central place is occupied by a large monolith stone carved with an ellipsoidal recess with a spout. Very rounded and polished edges of recess indicate that it was used as an altar in a long period, from the arrival of the Celts in these areas at the end of the 4th century BC, until their disappearance from the historical scene in the 4th century AD. In the recess of the altar after the rains and melting of snow water is retains long time, and its traces are clearly visible on the walls.

The ritual structure 6 (fig. 20) is the dominant part of the Veliko Brdo. The structure is made of one large and three smaller stone blocks with traces of processing. In these blocks were registered several regular circular recess diameter of 5cm and depth of 3–5 cm. On the big stone block there are systems of vertical incisions that can be interpreted as a Celtic rune letter (fig. 21). Cuts are arranged in five horizontal rows and they are consisting of vertical lines and slashes. Although the whole block is covered with lichen and moss, the inscription is clearly visible.

The ritual construction 7 (fig. 22) represents a group of four large stones with clearly visible traces of human activity such as grooves, cut lines and dashes, circular depressions. The whole structure has square base, measuring 3.5×3.5 m, at the corners of the square are rough-cut monoliths in the form of irregular blocks.

The ritual structure 8 (fig. 23) is located at the dominant spot of the Veliko Brdo. It occupies an area of almost 10×10 m. It consists of a number of large roughly fitted stone in the form of blocks. On them are clearly visible traces of processing, in order to highlight the individual blocks and to make specific regular recess.

The ritual structure 10 (fig. 25) is located in the eastern part of the Veliko Brdo. It covers an area of about 20×20 m. Through the central part of this site there is a wider Valum on whose sides are seemingly chaotically scattered stone skerries in the form of blocks, with minimal traces of human activity. Based on the facts and curved details on skerries whole area has elements of isolation and sacredness. The size and sprawl of this holy space does not allow us complete evaluation and definition.

In the eastern part of Mount Velika Gorica, about 1000 m from the top, there is a “**landscaped area 1**” of rectangular shape and dimensions of 10×6 m, which is dig into a rocky ground to the depth of 1.30 m. The space is oriented north – south. It is covered in lichens, moss and grass low, so it is very difficult to define it without cleaning this area. In any case, it is the landscaped area set on the one of the dominant peaks of Velika Gorica.

Landscaped area 2

Landscaped area has the shape of a stone wall carved into the living rock. External, east side is 1m lower than the western side. Its length is approximately ten meters. It consists of partially processed massive blocks, width of about 1m, and its orientation is north – south. Although everything is covered with lichen, moss, grass and low shrubs, there are visible traces of rough processing.

In the middle of the eastern part of Gorica in regard to the top and base, stands out one big mound with diameter of 10 m and height of 2 m. On the mound are big skerries, next to which is a young oak tree. It is important to note that on the entire area of Gorica, because of unfavorably rocky and sandy substrate there isn't this kind of wood. On the stone monolith, there are numerous, clearly visible traces of human activity (fig.27). This mound with the monolith and a whole series of skerries located around is defined as **ceremonial structures 11** (fig. 26).

The ritual structure 12 (fig. 28) is located on the eastern slope of Gorica and represents a sacred space carved in the live rock. It consists of one big irregular stone block and landscaped square space with dimensions of 3.5 to 3.5 m, next to it.

The ritual structure 13 (fig. 30) is located on the eastern slopes of Gorica. It consists of large blocks of „living stones” that are processed in the proper form of blocks arranged in a specific order. The whole ritual structure represents a regulated and designed space with dimensions of 10 × 10 m. On the stone blocks there are series of proper circular recess with diameter of 6–10 cm and depth of 10 cm. Although the ritual structure is covered with lichens and moss and overgrown with grass and low shrubs it looks very powerful. Stone blocks are rough-cut in properly designed elements which dominate the ambience. This ritual structure also contains enough elements to confirm its sacred function. Celtic sanctuaries had never been in the form of specific structure, but they were adapted natural environments.

The ritual structure 14 (fig. 31, 32, 33) is located on the eastern slope of Gorica. It consist of one big stone skerries made in incorrectly ovoid form, length of 7, width 3 and the height of 1.5 m. In the upper part is artificially made horizontal recesses in the form of a groove wide of 40cm and a depth of 20 cm. At the foot of the stone it is clearly seen his profiling. On the sides are properly chiseled grooves of rectangular cross-section. The ritual structure 14 with its size and preservation is one of the most important facilities objects within the Celtic sacred space in Ram.

The ritual structure 15 (fig. 34) is located on the eastern slope of Gorica on location Orljak – Grdilište. It consists of several large stone skerries grouped in one place, with visible traces of human processing. Toponym Orljak is of uncertain origin and its base is the same as the name of the village Orlje in Rudnik. Toponym Grdilište possibly comes from noun grdnja (scold) and suffix ište (untranslatable) which indicate places where once existed a building. That's toponym is the same type like: the location of the village (selište), the location of the house (kućište), the location of the church (crkvište), the location of the monastery (manstiriste), the location of the refuge (zbegovište), the location of the camp (taborište) and similarly. In this case Grdilište would be the place where it was performed scolding and vituperation, or verbal punishment and a warning to members of the community. Another possibility is that the word derives from the adjective grdan which means large and in that case, this place would be something big and important. It is obvious that different interpretations intertwines and complement each other.

The ritual structure 16 (fig. 35) is located on a protruding point called Grdilište (222 m above sea level), which dominates over the Danube, with a panoramic view to Veliko Gradiste. Below that point there are two strong wellsprings of Mika's water and Hajdučka water (Brigand's

water). At the top of the Grdilište, there is a giant stone in the shape of block, his dimensions are 6×3 m and a height is about 5 m. The stone is divided with geometrical, natural and artificial cracks on 7 smaller blocks. The upper part is flattened. In several locations on the entire surface of the ceremonial structure, the traces of finishing are visible. The numerous grooves, cut lines and the circular recesses are registered on it.

The ritual structure 17 (fig. 36) is located fifteen meters below the ceremonial structure 16. It is composed of processed skerries in the form of blocks with different traces of finishing.

The ritual structure 18 (fig. 37) is a continuation of ceremonial structure 17. This is a very complex and disjointed object with very similar characteristics like previous structure, located on an area of 30×15 m. It consists of several boulders with traces of human activity and represents a monumental natural and regulated space redolent with a unique beauty and divine power. The whole structure is particularly impressive on the north side of the Danube

Number of ceremonial structures on the Gorica Hill, near the village Ram, is certainly much higher than the number of monuments presented in this paper. This requires a detailed micro reconnaissance of entire complex, cleaning the monument of vegetation and detailed technical survey and positioning of all sacral objects.

On the existence of a large religious complex in nature pointed M. Stojic in 2003 by publishing results of research on the site of the Veliki Vetren, on the mountain Juhor in the basin of Velika Morava River. Based on the rich and diverse archaeological material find this site is culturally and chronologically determined in the Celtic period, or at the time of 2–1 century BC¹. S. M. Petrescu in 2012 has published a very similar findings in the Banat Mountains (Mountainous Banat) around Caransebes, at sites Borlova and Little Mountain (Muntele Mic), which are defined as altars form Dacian culture². Very similar stone monuments, with artificial recesses made into the living rock, are registered in South Tyrol in Austria³. G. Lazarovici and associates in 2014 presented, in detail 46 large stones from the mountain Task (MunteleTeasc)⁴, that both St. Kovacs in 1914⁵ and G. Bako in 1962 and 1968. G. Bako in 1962 defines the drawings on the big stones on MunteleTeasc as a testimony of the Bulgarian presence northern of the Danube, and in 1968 the same complex defines as the Neolithic. G. Lazarovici and associates present very detailed observation of the entire site, pointing out the great complexity of its chronological and cultural determination. They point to the great similarity of drawings carved on large stones on MunteleTeasc with signs and symbols from the Neolithic and Copper Age, as well as the possibility of Paleolithic origin of some of them⁶. The great similarity between the sanctuary in Ram and MunteleTeasc indicated the fact that in both cases it is „sanctuary in nature,” and that classic archaeological traces are not registered. On the possibility that some objects on MunteleTeasc may belong to Celtic spiritual circle pointed a monument in the shape of a bear (Piatra 31) and idol with concentric circles and incised lines (Piatra 15).

Cultural and chronological determination, of the sacred complex in Ram, is performed on the basis of a wider archaeological context in which the site is located. Right next to this site is Lederata, ancient Roman military camp from which the emperor Trajan organized a huge march on the Dacians in the 2nd century AD⁷. Roman military camp was built in the northeast corner of a large Celtic oppidum (fig. 1–2), from who remained preserved the mighty earthen

¹ Stojic 2003

² Petrescu 2012

³ Menara 1992

⁴ Lazarovici et all, 2014: 25–60

⁵ Kovacs 1914

⁶ G. Lazarovici et all. 2014: 76.

⁷ Mirkovic 1968: 13.

ramparts and entrance gates. On the north side it is protected by a rocky, impassable section above the Danube. On the western side is provided by the steep slopes of a stream Velika Šajica, and on the east by stream called Trešnjin potok. These sides of oppidum were reinforced with earthen walls, which are preserved in width of 3 and height of about 1 m. In the middle of the eastern earthworks there is a passage, from whom leads a footpath for the descent to the shores of the Danube. Trešnjin potok separates oppidum of the Veliko Brdo. The etymology of the name of the stream is in relation to the verb shake, punch, and the noun bang; these terms are used in meaning thunder, and not in connection with fruit trešnja (cherry). Veliko Brdo, itself is frequently exposed to lightning strikes. On the south side, which is easily accessible, oppidum is protected by a high earthen wall. On this side is the main entrance to the oppidum. The entrance gate (fig.3–4) has a width of about 5 m. On the right, eastern side gate is flanked by large earthen walls long 50m, 10m wide and 5 m high. The gate is on the left, west side flanked by conical elevations with diameter of 10 m and height of 5 m. Oppidum has a trapezoid shape, whose wider side facing the Danube. The dimensions of the fortifications are: length of the north side is 350 m, 390 m in the west, 200 m in the south and 350 m in the east. By its dimensions it belongs in the group of big oppida with surface of 10 ha.

For building of earthen walls around the oppidum were spent at least 2 500 cubic meters of earth. If we add to this construction of a wooden palisade along the accessible side of oppidum, whose length is 940 m, and that it was built of wooden poles with a diameter of 0.20 and a minimum height of 4 m, we obtain that for its construction was spent 600 cubic meters of wood. Floor substrate on which oppidum was built is rocky, exposed to strong blows of Košava wind (this is a cold, very squally southeastern wind) from the Carpathians. The earth of which were built earthen ramparts is being transported from the Danube coastal, from a distance of about 1.5 km. All these data tell us, convincingly that the construction of the oppidum in Ram represented a major construction project. Finds of Celtic material from oppidum in Ram are not numerous, primarily because of the lack of cultural layers. Rocky substrates and high exposure to strong winds did not allow their formation. In addition, Celtic architecture made of wood, earth, grass and cane could not leave marks on the ground and to preserve the numerous remains of Celtic material culture. The Romans, with their arrival in this part of the Danube Region will bring construction of stone, brick and lime mortar and such architecture in Lederata is preserved only in the lowest, basic zone. All the researchers of this site agree that the Romans, after construction of military fortification far smaller than the oppidum, taken earlier Celtic name of this city. Original meaning of the name is still a mystery. One such large fortified object in the Danube region surely represented a Celtic base camp for their further expansion. Celtic graves located in Kostolac Village, Požarevac, Živica, Malo Crnice, Boževac and Kumane, talk about their numerous presence on the territory of Braničevo District from 3rd to 1st century BC⁸.

From ancient Greek historians we learn that Alexander the Macedonian, in 335 BC, before the march on Persia and India, organized the great march to Triballs, who lived in the wider area of river Velika Morava. He then broke out on the Danube in the place where the coast was very steep and high. The defeated Triballs sheltered themselves at the Danube islands. This description completely matches with the bank of the Danube at present Ram. On that occasion, on the Danube banks, Alexander meets with Celtic emissaries. The Celts arrived in the Serbian Danube in late 4th century BC, moving inside of the Carpathians arch from Central Europe. Alexander the Macedonian has concluded peace with them on condition that they do not exceed Danube. After Alexander's death in 323 BC Celts crossed the Danube and in a large march coming to the

⁸ Stojić/ Jacanović 2008,p. 63

Delphi in Greece. There were defeated „over the will of the gods rather than force of arms,” and from there they back into the Danube region, where they continue to live a quiet life⁹.

By archaeological investigations of the site Šajica, archaeologist Mladjan Cunjak discovered late antique tombs with typical Celtic material, such as bronze-torque necklace and bracelets. This tells us that in the area of ancient Lederata during the 4th century AD lives the Celts, mentioned by Ammianus Marcellinus. During previous research of Lederata a series of random surface Celtic findings has unveiled. The most numerous are fragments of bracelet astragals type, bronze fibulae of component construction and spurs with a drift. A particularly important finding is fragmented iron belt buckle Laminci type, dated to the second century BC (1). The buckle is decorated with embossed arched lines and concentric circles. About the presence of the Celts in the Lederata testify findings of the upper part of the pitcher made of wrought iron (2). It is shaped in the form of a horse's head with a plastic modeled mane. Objects as zoomorphic belt buckle (3), bronze handle of containers (4), pre-monetary agency of payment (5) and iron spurs (6), testify us of a significant Celtic presence in the oppidum Lederata.

A special group of Celtic archaeological findings related to opidum in Ram, represents objects found during the excavation of gravel from the Danube, on the lower tip of now submerged river island called Ada Čibuklija. Mentioned findings from the Danube River at this location could reach along with drifts of Velika Morava which is continuously deposited in this sector. Another way is that they were accidentally dropped in water while crossing the river. About this possibility testify toponym Katanski Brod, located in the immediate vicinity. By toponym Brod is marked the crossing of a large river, and toponym Katanski (katana – a soldier) indicates that this is a militarily crossing. A third possibility is that the items are deliberately thrown into the river. There are notes with the ancient writers that the Celts, when coming up to the big water, threw into it their weapons and tools. Among the findings stands out the ceramic water jar, two iron spears, bronze fibula, the iron of the car in the form of a stylized ram head and the upper part of the iron musical woodwind instrument.

The Celts, using the best natural crossing over the Danube, entered into the region of Balkan straight at the village Ram. It is worth mentioning that the same crossing was used by the Emperor Trajan during the conquest of the old Dacia, which is immortalized on Trajan's Column in Rome. On this high rocky plateau Celts built large fortifications – oppidum, one of the largest in the Celtic world. It will become a base camp for the Celtic expansion to the south.

To the Celtic conception, the world is one large area with a central tree. In respect of the cult of the dead, stands out the understanding about an island of the blessed, where happiness reigns and where happy, immortal soul, continues to live and in the end moved to another living being. The cult of the dead is accompanied by various rituals. Specific natural forces are respected along with the rituals performed in the natural ambient of sacred groves. The cult of the sacred forest was widespread over a large area of the Celtic displacement. The stone was especially honored, according to Celtic belief; the stone was residence of the souls of heroes and unborn children. They believed that the droids can be turned into the stone. The sanctuary is represented designated area separate and away from the village, within which was a single shrines and cult objects. They are choosing places where a lot of people could gather and where the natural conditions provide the basic elements of the cult.

The whole area of the Gorica hill has provided such conditions. Dominating position near a large river with a wide view on the surroundings, numerous large skerries and a whole range of springs gave enough elements for the conversion of a great natural environment in a sacred place.

⁹ Kruta 1976.

Natural elements are with minimal human activities turned into sacred objects. It was enough to roughly fit lonely rock, etched into it groove, line or character, carve larger or smaller recess for sacrifice, for it to be turned into an altar or in the entire sacrificial structure. Religious objects at Lederata are scattered in a very wide area that has almost identical characteristics. With preliminary reviewing this space can be divided into two major sections, East and West. Celtic shrines reflect the overall Celtic mythology, in which stone sublimate their understanding of the cosmos. Such shrines are known in France and on the British Isles, and for their construction stone was transported from great distances. These shrines were not only places for offerings, but they were kind of paleo-astronomical observatories from which they were observed movement of celestial bodies, which was necessary for the calendar knowledge and orientation in time. With the eastern part of the complex is very interesting to observe the sunrise on the horizon and to register moving of his position. From the western part it can be followed sunset throughout the whole year. All these calendar components were necessary for the accurate determination of the date of certain annual holidays and the timing of certain agricultural activities. Ceremonial structure at Lederata is in the base of the square, which is characteristic for the time of 2–1 century. It is worth noting that in organization of the whole area a major role plays orientation of some stone structures, as well as their mutual layout because of celebration of certain calendar festivities. Such holy objects are associated with cosmogonies myths about creation of the world, where the main role is played by the very axis of the cult place, directed towards the position of sunrise during the winter solstice, which for the Celts represents the beginning of the new year. Similar structures are known in Hungary, the Czech Republic, Austria and Romania. In the cult places there were sacrificed various cult animals, primarily pigs and deer. An important characteristic of the Celtic cult places is their continued existence at the same place and its immobility on their original locations. Like most Indo-European people, the Celts in their beliefs respected natural forces, celestial body, fire and water. All these ceremonies were focused on the development of the fertility cult. They expressed appreciation of rivers and springs. Defining of Celtic sacred place is considerably more difficult by the fact that the immediate surroundings of the village have been turned into a shrine. These are the places and objects of natural origin, in whose creation human activity was minimal. These are monumental, sometimes processed stones, trees, forests, springs, hills and mountains thoughtfully fitted into large cult complexes.

About continuity of sacral stones at Ram, very impressive testify the existence of a unique ancient sanctuary (fig. 38–39) in the rock beneath the medieval Ram fortress. In a very steeply cliff that rises above the Danube, is carved the flattened space, only 4 m long and 1.5 m wide, to whom leads a narrow and steep path. On the rock is a carved Latin inscription in the form of classical Roman *tabula ansata* with the votive text: *I. M. O. VEXIL. LEG. VII CL. SUB CURA G. LICIN. RUFIN* (fig. 40)¹⁰. The inscription testifies that Gaius Licinius Rufin, gonfalonier of VII Claudius' legions, made a vow to Jupiter, the best and the biggest of all gods. In the hard green stone, are shallowly engraved the letters and the table frame, which are accentuated by applying red paint, whose traces are still visible. This, fortunately preserved inscription, is only, but a strong argument that this carved place in the living rock represents a sanctuary of supreme Roman god. It was a place where the people appeal to God with the inscription and without it. In that and such context, we must observe the whole Celtic area around Lederata, space on which so far has been registered numerous and diverse traces of human activity carved or engraved in the living rock.

We must have in mind another element when we talk about the Celtic sacred space at Ram. It refers to the historical data according to which, in some antique sources, Lederata is mentioned

¹⁰ Mirković 1968, p. 100

as Literati¹¹. The basis of this name is the Latin word *litera*-the letter. This data indicates the possibility that the ancient town Lederata – Literati got its name because of the numerous curved signs and „letters” in the rocks and stones of Celtic sacred space. The hill Gorica, itself, where the space is located, is a giant landmark that stands out clearly it's and easily observed from a distance of several dozen kilometers. This sacred mountain is clearly visible even from Kostolac, Veliko Gradište, Bela Crkva and Vršac.

After preliminary reviewing the whole sacred complex on the hill Gorica near Ram, above the Celtic oppidum and ancient Lederata, it can be concluded, that by characteristics belonging to the Celts, which according to archaeological data, lived here since the end of the 4th century BC, to the 4th century AD. This area is geo-morphologically clearly separated from the wider environment. It is special for its flora and fauna inhabited on it. Various types of lichens, mosses, ferns and other plants can't be find in dozen of kilometers around. This unique oasis of flora and specific forms of relief certainly attracted attention of the ancient people, and therefore the Celts, whose spiritual life is closely connected with nature and the natural elements. That space, which itself is a mystical and mysterious, is also rich with very interesting and distinctive individual names of places, such as toponyms Gorica, Trešnjin potok, Orljak and Grdilište. In this area without some great needs no one comes. Although today the local population of the villages Ram and Zatonje, there is no memory of the sacral character of this area, in the fact that it is still a forbidden – tabooed zone, is contained his basic religious character.

Celtic sacred place near Ram is located on a large area and can't be viewed from one location. It is 3 km long, 300–500 m wide; with an altitude difference of 200 m between the highest and lowest identified sacral points. In this area, during previous research it has been found 18 different religious structures and two large ceremonial spaces. This is unique and unusual archaeological site where can't be applied classical archaeological research methods. On this site there is no archaeological layer, stratigraphy, nor are classic archaeological finds. Offerings did not have to be objects, but they are, since sanctuaries are in the nature, some plants, animals, water, milk, blood and various other drinks, fruits and food. Such situation corresponds completely to the „place of cult inscription” recorded in the Serbian ethnological practice, where members of the rural community several times a year gathering up under the sacred tree, usually oak, praying to God, the priest carves cross in the tree, pour wine on it and lights wax candle, everyone sings ritual and devotional songs, ceremony ends with food and drink. By the classical archaeological research method, only a few months after performing the last rites, can't be found any of classical archeological traces, although at that place the ritual is performed over a century.

These facts speak in favor of the study of ambient archeology as a new methodological concept, with a specific research methodology, based on specific archaeological traces on the field, as is the case of the Celtic sacred space at Ram. Such traces are usually physically modest, drab and unattractive at first sight, and as such they have been neglected so far. Any emphasis of some stone, it's marking and giving him any name, turn an ordinary stone in the habitat of the soul and God itself, and transforms it into a mark whose task is to be a major landmark in space and time and to be unbreakable and constant link between man and God. On such stone does not have to be engraved sign or symbol. The essence of its sacredness is contained in the different rituals that are performed near it or on it, and in the secret knowledge that this stone is kept and which are known only the chosen ones.

¹¹ Mirković 1968, p. 99

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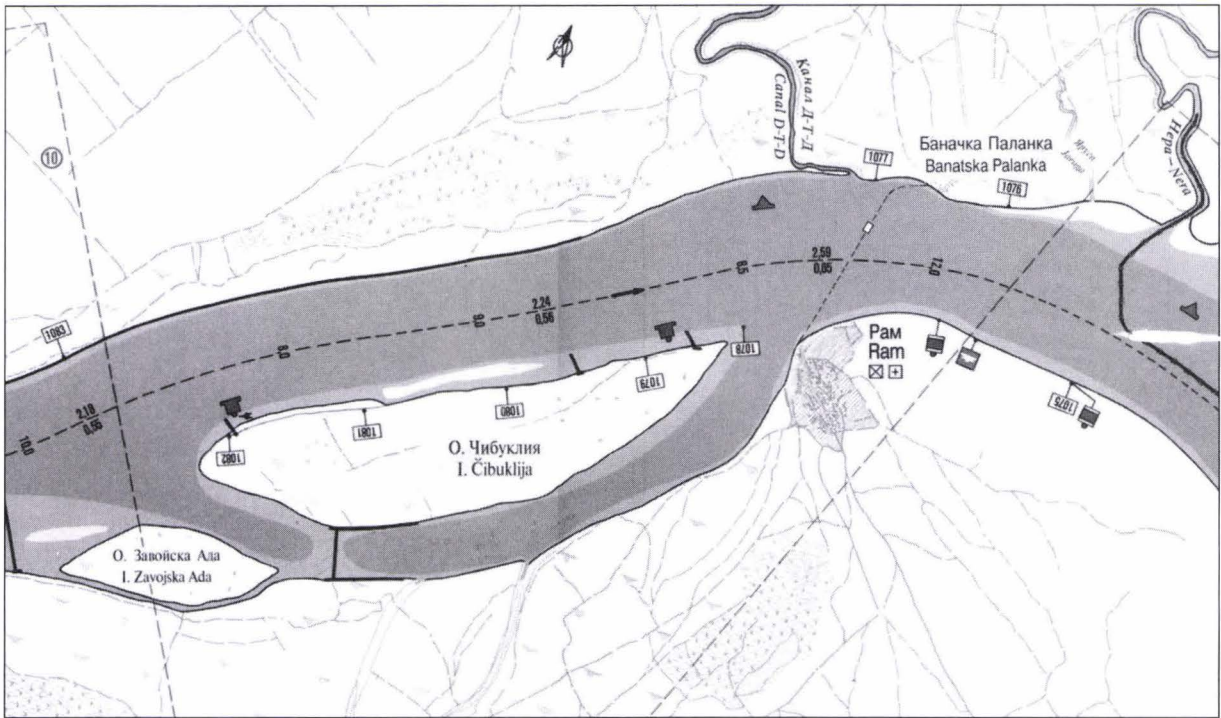
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ZONA SACRĂ CELTICĂ DIN APROPIERE SE SATUL RAM (2) (Abstract)

Село Рам се налази на једној од кључних геостратегијских тачака у југоисточној Европи. На овом месту, где Дунав удара у прве огранке Карпата и где се у Дунав уливају Караш, Нера, Млава и Пек, спајају се Балкан, Карпати и Панонија. Крајем 4. века у овај део Подунавља стижу Келти. На подручју села Рам они су оставили значајне трагове. Они се могу груписати у три категорије: налази из келтског опидума; водени налази из Дунава и келтски свети простор. Келтски опидум Ледерата је један од најочуванијих јужно од Дунава и Саве. У оквиру опидума пронађен је читав низ келтских археолошких предмета. Сачувани су земљани бедеми са улазном капијом. Вађењем шљунка из Дунава, између аде Чибуклије и села Рам, пронађен је велики број келтских предмета: копља, фибуле, керамичке посуде и друго. Келтски свети простор налази се на доминантном узвишењу изнад опидума. Чини га комплекс природних камених споменика са бројним, јасно видљивим траговима људског деловања. Чине их у камен удубљене посуде са изливником, урезане линије и кружна удубљења. Поједини урези су веома слични келтским рунама. У селу Рам постоји римско светилиште на стени, посвећено Јупитеру, јединствено такве врсте у Подунављу. Нови налази указују на могућност тумачења имена села Рам преко словенске речи (х)рам и имена античке Ледерате – Литерате, преко латинске речи литера – слово. Налаз келтског светилишта указује на потребу археолошких истраживања амбијенталних целина, где акценат није дат на покретан археолошки материјал, већ на ритуалне конструкције које представљају природне камене облике дорађене људском руком.



Map 1. Celtic sites in Braničevo District



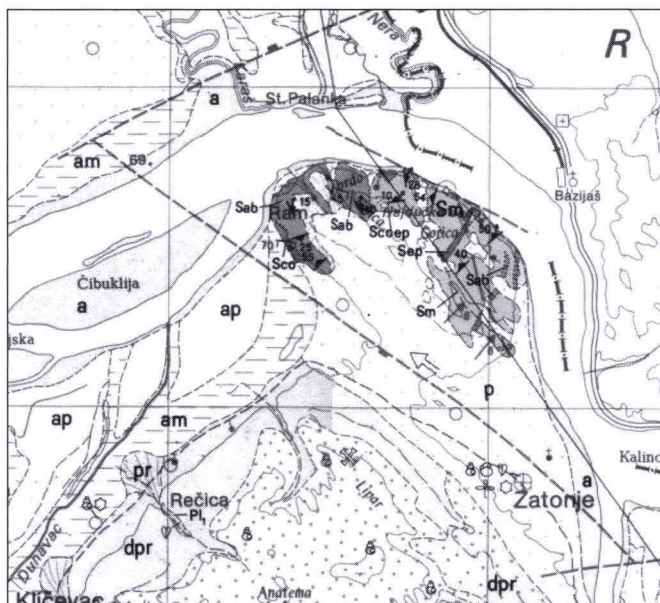
Map 2. The Danube waterway near Ram



Map 3. Topographic map of Ram



Map 4. General Staff map of Ram, form 19th century



Map 5. Geological map of Ram



Figure 1: Satellite image of the Celtic oppidum and Roman fortifications at Ram

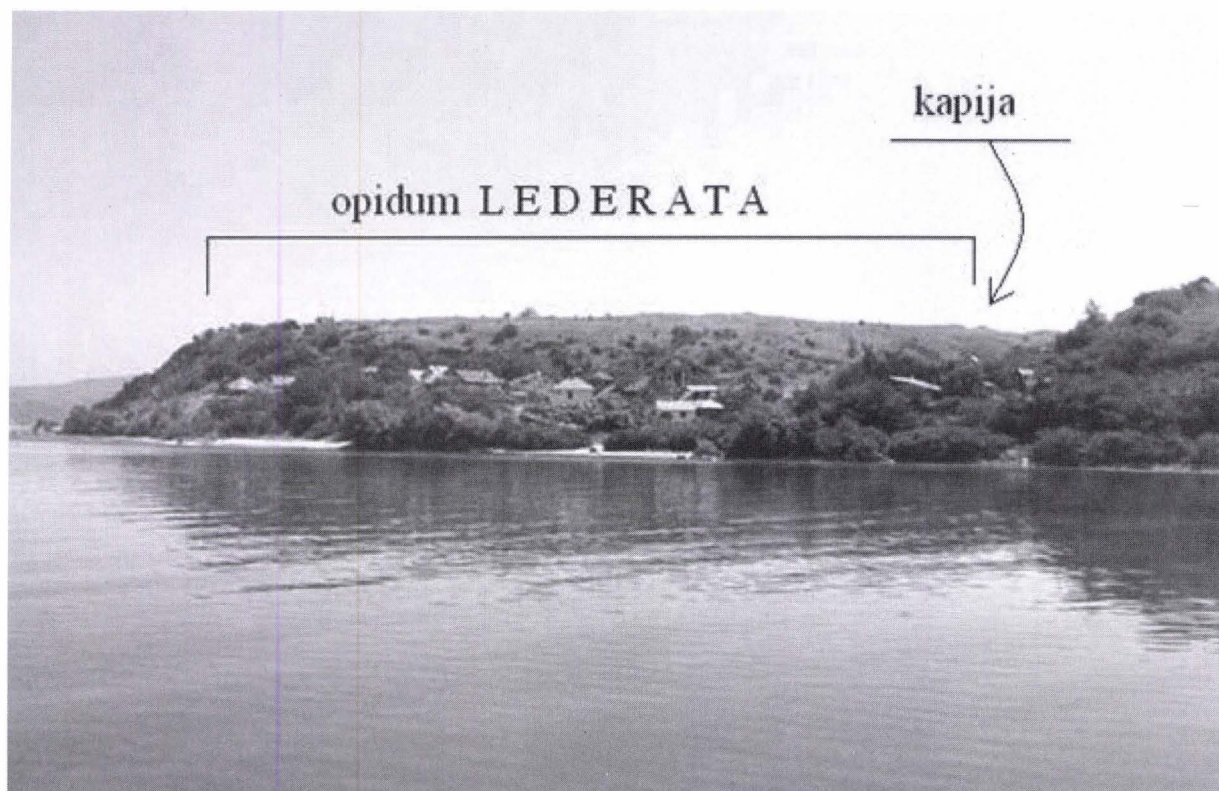


Figure 2. Celtic oppidum Lederata, the view from the Danube



Figure 3. The entrance to the Celtic oppidum Lederata



Figure 4. Entryway of the Celtic oppidum Lederata



Figure 5. Celtic oppidum from southwest

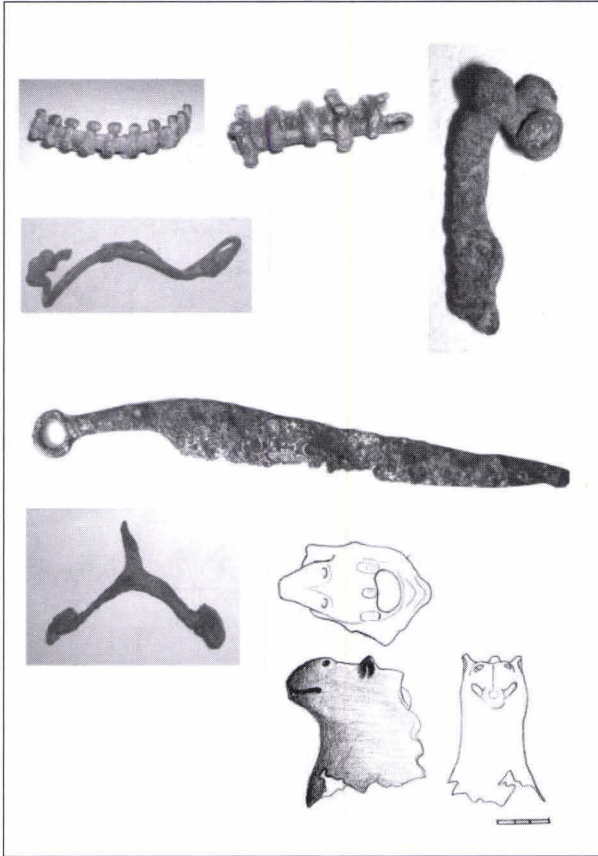


Figure 6. Celtic surface finds from Lederata

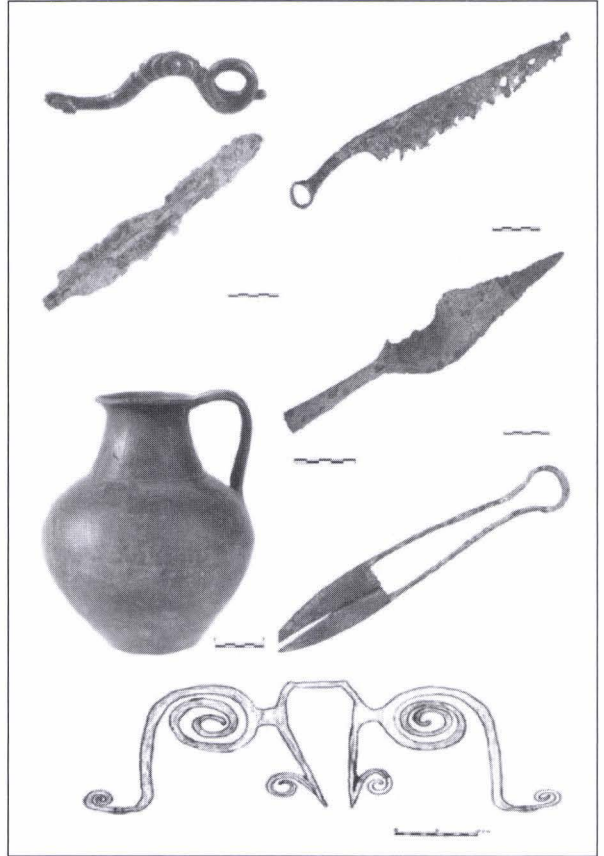


Figure 7. Celtic finds from the Danube River at Ram

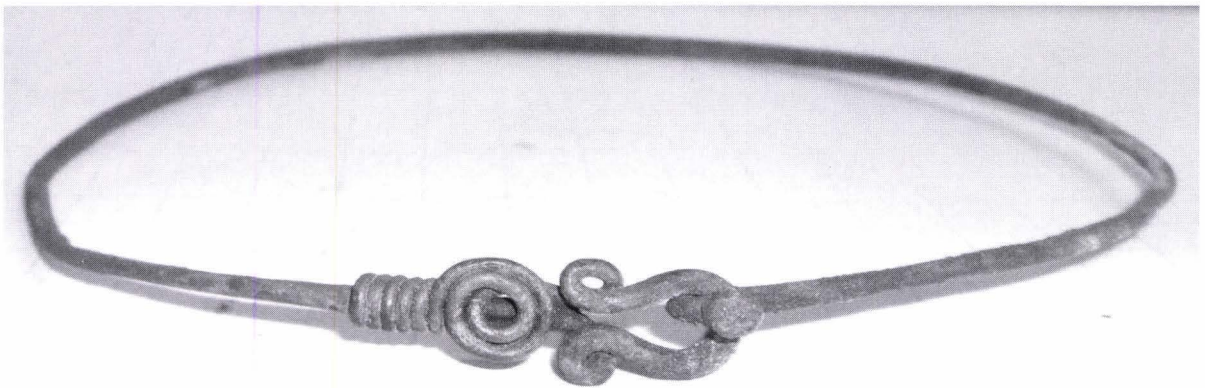


Figure 8. Celtic bronze torque found in an ancient tomb in Lederata



Figure 9. Veliko Brdo



Figure 10. View of the Celtic oppidum from the (Great hill)Veliko Brdo



Figure 11. A lonely stone skerries



Figure 12. A lonely stone skerries



Figure 13. The ritual construction 1



Figure 14. The ritual construction 2



Figure 15. The ritual construction 3



Figure 16. The ritual construction 4



Figure 17. The ritual construction 5



Figure 18. Construction 5, detail of the altar



Figure 19. Construction of 5, detail of the altar and the engraved lines



Figure 20. The ritual construction 6



Figure 21. The ritual structure 6,
detail with carved signs



Figure 22. The ritual construction 7



Figure 23. The ritual construction 8



Figure 24. The ritual construction 9



Figure 25. The ritual construction 10



Figure 26. The ritual construction 11



Figure 27. The ritual structure 11, a detail of circular recesses



Figure 28. The ritual structure 12



Figure 29. The ritual structure 12, a detail of the recess

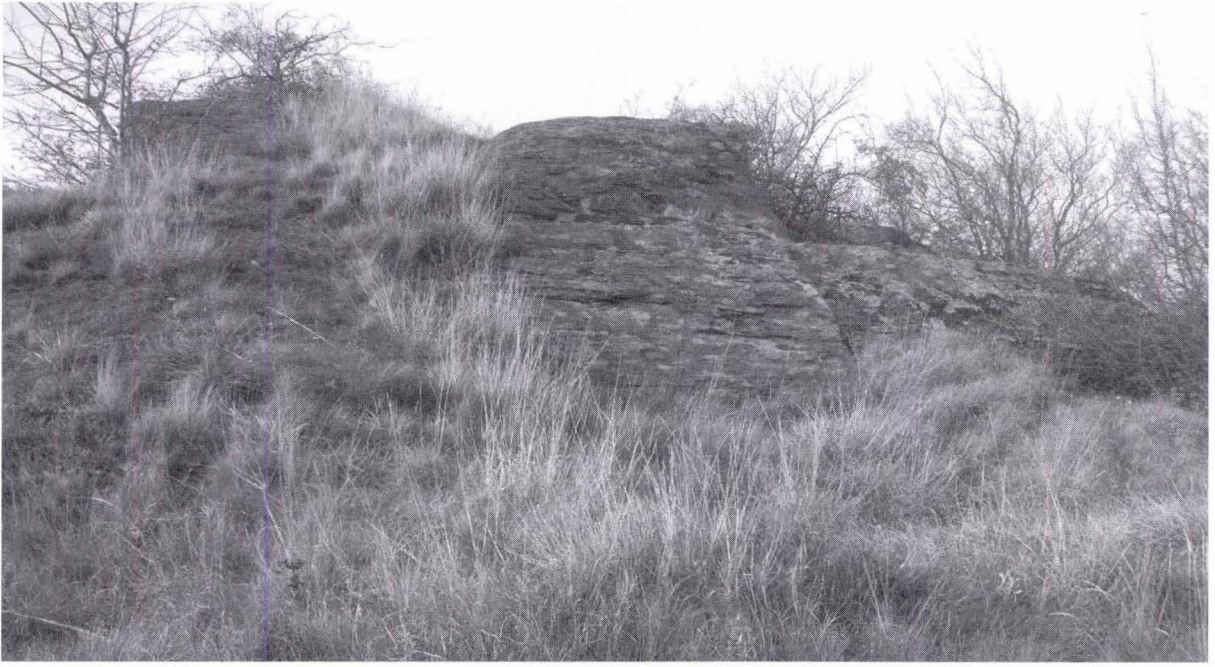


Figure 30. The ritual construction 13



Figure 31. The ritual construction 14



Figure 32. The ritual structure 14, a detail



Figure 33. The ritual structure 14, a detail



Figure 34. The ritual construction 15



Figure 35. The ritual construction 16



Figure 36. The ritual construction 17



Figure 37. The ritual construction 18



Figure 38. Roman Temple in the rock beneath the medieval Ottoman fortress

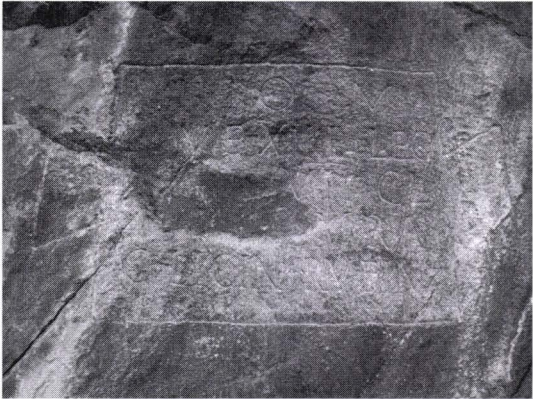


Figure 39. Roman temple in the wall with the inscription. Figure 40. Inscription dedicated to Jupiter from Ram

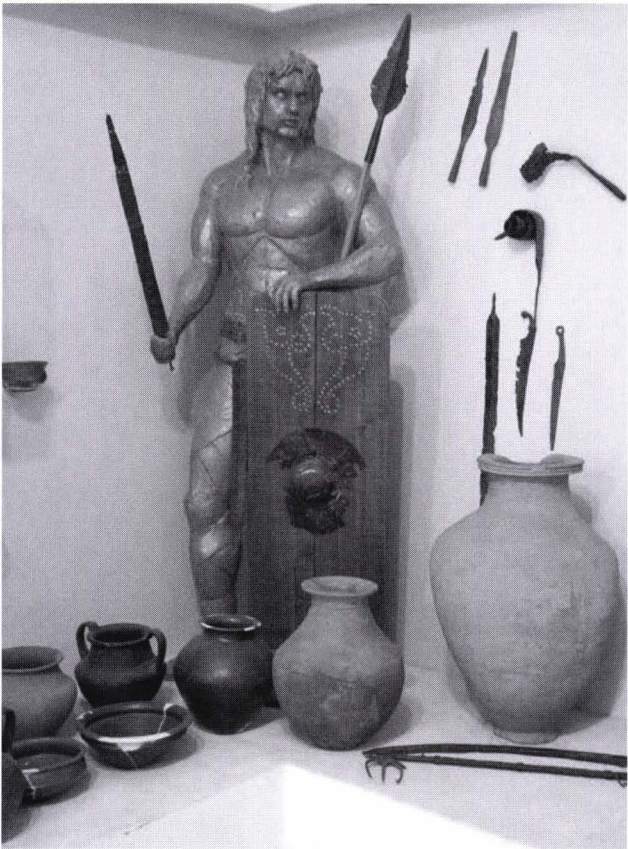


Figure 41. Celtic warrior. Part of permanent exhibition in The National Museum in Pozarevac