

# ARCHAEOLOGICAL DATA ON EVERYDAY LIFE IN THE 9<sup>TH</sup>–10<sup>TH</sup> CENTURIES UNFORTIFIED SETTLEMENT NEAR THE TOWN OF MIZIA, VRATSA REGION

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**Keywords:** *Mizia, 9<sup>th</sup>–10<sup>th</sup> centuries, unfortified settlement, kiln.*

**Cuvinte-cheie:** *Mizia, secolele IX–X, așezare nefortificată, cuptor.*

**Abstract:** *The reconstruction of the settlement network and material culture in the Early Middle Ages also presents a picture of the “ordinary life” of the local population, no less exciting or significant than the life in the political centre. It is in the light of this ordinary daily life of the rural population that the data yielded by the survey of the settlement in the land of today’s town of Mizia in the province of Vratsa, will be presented. Eleven dwellings were partially excavated. All of them are of the same type and feature half-dug structures of a rectangular plan up to 0.30–0.60 m below the then terrain. The excavation also exposed fourteen thermal structures located throughout the terrain. They all have a similar arrangement: a clay screed about 2 cm thick, blackened by repeated firing, is laid on a bed of small, round river pebbles. The walls are of earth baked to red. Its inhabitants’ way of life, livelihood and occupations are materialized in the presented finds and allow the reconstruction of an ordinary rural daily life. The absence of materials from the 11<sup>th</sup> century suggests that life at this place ceased in the troubled years at the turn of the 10<sup>th</sup>–11<sup>th</sup> centuries, and it seems that the settlement was abandoned in an organized manner.*

**Rezumat:** *Reconstituirea rețelei de așezări și a culturii materiale din Evul Mediu timpuriu prezintă și o imagine a „vieții obișnuite” a populației locale, nu mai puțin incitantă sau semnificativă decât viața din centrul politic. În lumina acestei existențe cotidiene obișnuite a populației rurale, vor fi prezentate datele obținute cu prilejul investigării așezării din ținutul orașului de astăzi Mizia, din provincia Vrața. Unsprezece locuințe au fost parțial excavate. Toate sunt de același tip și prezintă structuri semi-adâncite, până la 0,30–0,60 m sub terenul de atunci, de plan dreptunghiular. Cercetarea a scos la iveală și patrusprezece structuri termice situate pe tot terenul. Toate au un aranjament similar: o șapă de lut de aproximativ 2 cm grosime, înnegrită prin arderi repetate, este așezată pe un pat de pietre*

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*mici de râu, rotunde. Pereții sunt din pământ copt, până la roșu. Modul de viață, traiul și ocupațiile locuitorilor săi se concretizează în descoperirile prezentate și permit reconstituirea unei vieți rurale obișnuite, de zi cu zi. Absența materialelor din secolul al XI-lea sugerează că viața în acest loc a încetat în anii tulburi de la cumpăna dintre veacurile X–XI și se pare că așezarea a fost abandonată într-o manieră organizată.*

The study of the early medieval settlement network in the territory of today's north-western Bulgaria is distinguished by a lack of systematicity and regularity, which is the basis of the claim that this area was settled only after "the border [of Bulgaria – authors' note] was shifted to the Middle Danube area"<sup>1</sup>. The provided opportunity to study the region, albeit in the limited area of easements of new infrastructure projects, allows the lack of information about its habitation in the period of interest to be overcome to a certain extent and its potential properly assessed. The reconstruction of the settlement network and material culture in the Early Middle Ages also presents a picture of the "ordinary life" of the local population, no less exciting or significant than the life in the political centre. It is in the light of this ordinary daily life of the rural population that the data yielded by the survey of the settlement in the land of today's town of Mizia in the province of Vratsa, will be presented (Fig. 1/a). The study was carried out in connection with the new gas transmission network construction and had a rescue character, not allowing a comprehensive survey of the rescheduled easement comprising an area 35 m wide and 250 m long. The short time and the vast area also determined the trial trenching and the exposure of the registered structures only.

The site is located on a low slope, to the east of the Skat River, 3.9 km from the centre of the town of Mizia, with a gradient from east to west of about 1.40 m. The approximate area of the site, judging by the scattered ceramic material, is over 60 decares (Fig. 1/b). The terrain features arable agricultural land, with the trial trenches exposing a thickness of the chernozem (black) soil exceeding 2.68 m. Prior to the rescue survey start, a geophysical scan was carried out within the easement-defined area, to the east of the roadway, the area being divided into four polygons each one 50 m long<sup>2</sup>. A high concentration of anomalies of probable anthropogenic nature was registered in the western part of the area planned for the study (Fig. 1/c). In the course of the archaeological excavation, structures and materials from other periods were also recorded: a grave and ceramics decorated with the specific cord-shaped ornament from the Early Iron Age (11<sup>th</sup>–6<sup>th</sup> centuries BC); ceramics, fibulae and coins from the Roman period (2<sup>nd</sup>–3<sup>rd</sup> centuries), to which two trash pits could also be attributed; the Late Antiquity period was attested by coins of the emperors of the Constantine dynasty, a copper *folles* minted at Cyzicus in 557, during the reign of Emperor Justinian I (527–565), and by the fragmentary ceramic material; the copper coins (*scyphates*), with clipped planchets, one of them secondary pierced, mark the period of occupation of the area after the 13<sup>th</sup> century; the Ottoman period, represented by the most recent materials, namely coins and fragments of the specific glazed ceramics found in the surface layer and dated from the second half of the 15<sup>th</sup>

<sup>1</sup> RASHEV 2008, p. 149.

<sup>2</sup> We express our gratitude to Dr. Hristiyan Tsankov from the Department of "Applied Geophysics" of the University of Mining and Geology "St. Ivan Rilski", in Sofia.

to the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Most archaeological materials are moved, therefore they cannot be associated with specific structures and a cultural layer. Only the occupation of the area during the time span from the 9<sup>th</sup> to the 11<sup>th</sup> centuries has left a distinguishable cultural layer and structures that reveal the settlement character of the site.

## Dwellings, kilns and pits

Eleven dwellings were partially excavated (**Fig. 2**). All of them are of the same type and feature half-dug structures of a rectangular plan up to 0.30–0.60 m below the then terrain. Their visibly preserved dimensions reach up to 3.50 × 2.80 m. In the thick chernozem soil they are distinguished by the fired to red floor levels of a thickness of 3.5–4 cm, in places covered with a layer of coals, such as those in Dwellings 1 and 4 (**Fig. 3/a**). The dug-in part of some dwellings is stone-lined and during the clearing they could be detected because of the stone pilings, similar to those cleared in Dwellings 2 and 7 (**Fig. 3/b**). The construction of the dwellings in height is wattle and daub. Their fills contained fragments of plaster fired to brick-red with impurities of organic matter and imprints of thin sticks and stakes, similar to those found in the medieval stratum above ancient Augusta<sup>3</sup> (**Fig. 3/c**). Sockets from the stakes of the load-bearing structure are noticeable in the control profiles as regularly spaced breaks in the baked to brick-red floor of Dwellings 5 and 6, and as quarter-shaped hollows in the corner of the stone facing of Dwelling 8 (**Fig. 3/d**). In some cases, the floor screed itself is also laid on a network of horizontally set round stakes fixed on their still preserved beds below the red-baked level of Dwelling 1. The absence of material traces of roof structures suggests the use of perishable materials such as straw for their construction.

The half-dug dwellings were the most widespread in the 7<sup>th</sup>–11<sup>th</sup> centuries. They are known from a number of sites in northeastern Bulgaria and Dobruja (at Pliska<sup>4</sup>, Gradishte<sup>5</sup>, Odartsi<sup>6</sup>, Topola<sup>7</sup>, Brestak<sup>8</sup>, Suvorovo<sup>9</sup>, Trastika<sup>10</sup>, etc.), in north-western Bulgaria (at Bezhanovo<sup>11</sup>, Brestnitsa–Poletto<sup>12</sup>, Kalenik<sup>13</sup>, Dolni Lukovit<sup>14</sup>, Antimovo<sup>15</sup>, etc.) and in Romania (at Bucov<sup>16</sup>, Dridu<sup>17</sup>, Gornea-Căunița de Sus<sup>18</sup>, Vlădeni-Popina

<sup>3</sup> LUKA 2013, p. 622, fig. 3.

<sup>4</sup> MIHAYLOVA 1992, p. 170–184; DONCHEVA-PETKOVA 1993, p. 79–83; GEORGIEV 1993, p. 15–19; BALABANOV 2004, p. 101–167; KONSTANTINOV 2015a, p. 15–31.

<sup>5</sup> IVANOV, TOTEV 2020a, p. 1132–1133.

<sup>6</sup> DONCHEVA-PETKOVA, NINOV, PARUSHEV 1999, p. 11–48.

<sup>7</sup> BOBCHEVA 1976, p. 122–130; BOBCHEVA 1981, p. 198–201; CHRISTOVA 2015, p. 297–306.

<sup>8</sup> DIMITROV 1969, p. 113–116.

<sup>9</sup> SLAVCHEV 2015, p. 319–326.

<sup>10</sup> IVANOV, TOTEV 2020b, p. 1139, оѡр. 3; HRISTOV, MARINOV 2020, p. 1141–1144, оѡр. 3.

<sup>11</sup> VAZHAROVA 1961, p. 317–326.

<sup>12</sup> IVANOV 2023, p. 16–20.

<sup>13</sup> IVANOV, CHOLAKOV 2020, p. 1168–1169.

<sup>14</sup> DIMITROV, KUZOV 2019, p. 1246–1250.

<sup>15</sup> LALOV 2012, p. 102–110.

<sup>16</sup> COMȘA 1978, p. 16–24.

<sup>17</sup> ZAHARIA 1967, p. 19–54.

<sup>18</sup> TEICU, LAZAROVICI 1996, p. 18–30.

Blagodeasca<sup>19</sup>, etc.). The half-dug dwellings near the western fortress wall of Pliska and Dwelling 1 in the settlement near Dolni Lukovit are dated with coins of Leo VI (886–912).

The excavation also exposed fourteen thermal structures located throughout the terrain (**Fig. 2**). They all have a similar arrangement: a clay screed about 2 cm thick, blackened by repeated firing, is laid on a bed of small, round river pebbles. The walls are of earth baked to red. Three types are identified:

1. Massive kilns of an irregular elliptical shape and a large diameter, thicker walls with multiple vent holes and a domed roof – kilns 6, 7, 11 and 14 (**Fig. 4**). The entrance of most kilns is on the south. For some of the installations (Kiln 7) there is evidence of the internal space being divided into several combustion chambers by means of transverse curbs of hard-baked earth. The preserved internal height varies from 0.15 m to 0.30 m, and the external diameter from 1.20 m to 1.40 m. The fill layer contained a small amount of charcoal, fragmented animal bones and sherds of medieval pottery (pots) with the characteristic bands of incised straight and wavy lines, such as on the pot unearthed *in situ* in Kiln 14, as well as on a fragment of another pot in the facility wall. Radiocarbon analysis of the osteological material from Kiln 11 in trench 36 and Kiln 14 in trench 32 yielded calibrated dating from the second quarter of the 9<sup>th</sup> to the beginning of the 10<sup>th</sup> century. Household ovens of similar dimensions and characteristics have been published from the early medieval settlements near Vetrino<sup>20</sup>, Belogradets<sup>21</sup>, Dolni Lukovit<sup>22</sup>, etc. Household ovens of adobe superstructure measuring a diameter of 2 m, a domed roof and a height of 1.30 m, studied at Pliska have been interpreted as “bread ovens”<sup>23</sup>. The specific design of these structures, for which no direct parallels were ever found, was the reason for the gamma spectrometric analysis of samples of them, which confirmed their domestic use<sup>24</sup>.

2. The second type of kilns is represented only by Kiln 10 (**Fig. 5/a**). It has a round base and a truncated cone shape. The 2 cm to 3 cm thick walls made of clay hard-baked to red are tapering in height and narrowing. The entrance to the interior is shaped on the south. Inside, fallen stones, probably serving to seal the entrance, were found at different depths. Isolated fragments of medieval pottery and animal bones were found inside the oven and no material to suggest a function other than domestic. An analogous kiln of a conical shape and small dimensions exposed in the southern sector of the western fortress wall of Pliska was studied and published. L. Doncheva-Petkova notes that it is very similar to the iron smelting furnaces, but no traces of metallurgical production have been found<sup>25</sup>.

3. Round kilns/ovens of a small diameter and a dome-shaped roof, in which there is a vent hole – Kilns 2, 3, 8, 12 and 13 (**Fig. 5/b**). The fill of Kiln 3 contained

<sup>19</sup> CORBU 2013, p. 28–40.

<sup>20</sup> MANEV, IVANOV, KARASTOYANOV 2020, p. 1108–1111.

<sup>21</sup> TOPALILOV, SLAVKOVA 2020, p. 1111–1114.

<sup>22</sup> DIMITROV, KUZOV 2019, p. 1247.

<sup>23</sup> MIHAYLOVA 1992, p. 181, oбp. 19.

<sup>24</sup> The analysis was performed in the laboratory of Shumen University “Bishop Konstantin Preslavski”, by Prof. N. Arkhangelova, for which we thank her.

<sup>25</sup> DONCHEVA-PETKOVA 1993, p. 80–81, oбp. 5.

pieces of brick-hard clay, which we associate with the collapsed dome. Medieval pottery was found in the fill of the facilities, as well as in the layer around them. Similar kilns have been published from a number of sites (Pliska<sup>26</sup>, Zavet<sup>27</sup>, Brestrnitsa-Poleto<sup>28</sup> etc.).

Grouping of dwellings around household kilns of type I was recorded in the excavated part of the settlement, which is clearly developing outside the deferred easement. They were apparently used by several households, which is a situation confirmed by other studied sites (Brestrnitsa-Poleto<sup>29</sup>).

Three trash pits – Nos. 1, 2 and 7 – are also associated with the medieval levels. Their fills abound with fragmented ceramics, iron and bone items, typical of the 9<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> centuries, which sheds additional light on the life of the medieval population.

## Life and livelihood

During the investigation of Dwelling No. 5, *in situ* fragments of medieval pots decorated with incised belts of straight and wavy lines (typical of the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries), fragmented bones of animals used for food, burnt and brick-baked plasters, charred boards and charred grain were found, all they confirming the practising of agricultural activities (Fig. 6/a). Cereal-based food is evidenced also by the collected fragments of hand-operated grinding stone (Fig. 6/b). Osteological analysis reveals that the population was engaged in animal husbandry (Fig. 7). The breeding of cattle prevailed, which was undoubtedly due to the favourable natural conditions. The rearing of small ruminants – sheep and goats – had a significantly smaller share, followed by pig farming. Breeding of horses and dogs is also evidenced. The presence of poultry is rather symbolic. The clear preference for dairy animals suggests that milk and milk products played an important role in the life of the local population. Among the wild animals, surprisingly, the top position is occupied by the turtle, which probably served as food, followed by the deer.

Among the materials discovered during the archaeological research, the most numerous are the ceramic fragments (Fig. 8–13). Morphologically, over 90% of them can be related to pots. All are made on a slow potter's wheel from clay mixed with sand. They are decorated with incised patterns of straight and wavy lines, sometimes in different combinations – straight and wavy lines, obliquely placed bundles of straight lines, etc. They are baked to a brown, red-brown or greyish-brown colour. Conical pots with narrower or wider shoulders predominate. The bottoms are uneven and have relief marks. It is important to note that there is no variety in these signs – they are mainly diametrically set lines resembling 'spokes' (Figs. 8/f, 9/h). This may be an indication of a local workshop. Although rare, fragments are also found suggesting contacts of the local people with the large urban centres in north-east of Bulgaria. Such are the fragments of amphora-shaped pitchers, some of which green-glazed (Fig. 14/a-b). The ceramics coated with a monochrome glaze is well represented in a number of settlements in north-east Bulgaria and Dobruja,

<sup>26</sup> ANTONOVA, VITLYANOV 1985, p. 62–63; BALABANOV 2004, p. 130, 140–141.

<sup>27</sup> VASILEV 2006, p. 58.

<sup>28</sup> IVANOV 2023, фиг. 15/1–3.

<sup>29</sup> IVANOV 2023, p. 21.

where it is associated with 10<sup>th</sup>–11<sup>th</sup> centuries strata: Pliska<sup>30</sup>, Preslav<sup>31</sup>, Skala<sup>32</sup>, Tsar Asen<sup>33</sup>, Silistra<sup>34</sup>, Păcuiul lui Soare<sup>35</sup>, Cernavodă<sup>36</sup>, Capidava<sup>37</sup>, Hârșova, Oltina<sup>38</sup>, etc. A graffiti resembling the Cyrillic letter Ж is placed on the handle of an unglazed amphora-shaped pitcher from Dwelling 3 (Fig. 14/c). The single fragments of amphora walls found in the burned layer of Dwelling 5 can be defined as the latest chronological benchmark for the medieval settlement. With a great deal of caution, these fragments could be associated with the amphorae of type I in Günseinin's classification<sup>39</sup> (Figs. 10/g, 13/c). The completely restored pot found in pit 7, with its elongated proportions, is closer to the pottery of the Valchedram – Yakimovo group, associated with the Slav population that settled in the area after the 7<sup>th</sup> century<sup>40</sup> (Fig. 12). Similar pottery was also found in trench 9 of the medieval settlement near Antimovo, Vidin region, where it is also broadly dated from the late 7<sup>th</sup> to the early 9<sup>th</sup> century<sup>41</sup>. Considered in its entirety, the pottery from the medieval settlement near Mizia finds its direct parallels in the ceramic complexes from the medieval layer just above ancient Augusta<sup>42</sup>, Altimir<sup>43</sup> and Brestnitsa-Polet<sup>44</sup> in northwestern Bulgaria, as well as in the 10<sup>th</sup>–11<sup>th</sup> centuries layers of almost all the studied settlements in northeastern Bulgaria, Dobruja and Romania.

The iron objects recovered during the exploration of the medieval settlement near Mizia, among which a whole group of knives stands out – intact or fragmented, are widely used in a number of activities of a daily nature (Fig. 15/a-c). The two iron hooks intended for fishing can be associated with a more specific use (Fig. 15/h-i). The proximity of the Skat River, which is renowned for its high water, obviously played a significant role in the practice of this livelihood. The arrowheads found in many places could have had a different use – combat or hunting (Fig. 15/d-f). Functionally related to the arrows is the quiver represented by the triple separator (Fig. 15/g). Analogous separators are known from Preslav<sup>45</sup> and Odarts<sup>46</sup>, where they are dated to the 9<sup>th</sup>–10<sup>th</sup> centuries. The practice of hunting is attested by the osteological material, especially by the deer antlers (Fig. 16/a). They were used in bone working, judging by the cut ends of the horns, as well as by some unfinished bone objects – actually bone billets (Fig. 16/b-e). This was a home-practised craft, primarily for making knife

<sup>30</sup> MILCHEV 1979, p. 171, obr. 104; DIMITROV 2004, p. 191; DONCHEVA-PETKOVA 2015, p. 184, obr. 26/a–g; CHRISTOVA-PENKOVA 2018, p. 213–214, fig. 10, 17/3.

<sup>31</sup> CHANGOVA 1957, p. 264–266.

<sup>32</sup> YOTOV, ATANASOV 1998, p. 78.

<sup>33</sup> DIMITROV 1993, p. 113.

<sup>34</sup> KOLEVA 2009, p. 277–278, fig 1/17, 18.

<sup>35</sup> VÎLCEANU 1972, p. 89–92.

<sup>36</sup> BARNEA 1960, p. 77–78, pl. I/4–7.

<sup>37</sup> CURSARU-HERLEA 2016, p. 152.

<sup>38</sup> PARASCHIV-TALMAȚCHI 2017, p. 271–285.

<sup>39</sup> GÜNSENIN 1989, p. 269–271.

<sup>40</sup> ANGELOVA, KOLEVA 1992, p. 173–179.

<sup>41</sup> LALOV 2012, p. 105.

<sup>42</sup> LUKA 2013, p. 642–664.

<sup>43</sup> LUKA 2009, p. 250–255.

<sup>44</sup> IVANOV 2023, p. 30–35, фиг. 34–40.

<sup>45</sup> VITLYANOV 2007, p. 248, cat. no. 34–35, tabl. I/13–14.

<sup>46</sup> DONCHEVA-PETKOVA, NINOV, PARUSHEV 1999, p. 110, cat. no. 734, fig. 136.

handles and small plates designed to be mounted on objects from non-durable material, such as chests or leather goods (**Fig. 16/f-g**). The tool with a pointed tip on one side and a spade-shaped profile on the other, which was found in trench 1 together with unfinished bone objects, can also be associated with bone working (**Fig 16/h**).

Other crafts such as spinning and leather working were carried out in domestic setting, as evidenced by the discovered spindle whorls and bone awls (**Fig. 17/a-e**). They are spherical or bi-conical in shape and made from clay. Their analogies originate from the medieval layer of Odartsi<sup>47</sup>.

## Elements of the costume and ornaments

Clothing elements are rarely found and belong to only two categories of items – buckles and belt mounts and ornaments designed to decorate various parts of clothing. Two buckles originate from the settlement (**Fig. 17/f-g**). One of the two is similar to the widespread oval-framed buckles with a pentagonal plate, known from numerous sites – Pliska<sup>48</sup>, Preslav<sup>49</sup>, Skala<sup>50</sup>, the Pernik fortress<sup>51</sup>, the Krivina village over the ruins of the antique castellum of Iatrus (Ruse region)<sup>52</sup>, Smyadovo (Shumen region)<sup>53</sup>, Yakimovo (Montana region)<sup>54</sup>. The difference is that the buckle is not attached onto the belt by a solid plate, but only by its frame, i.e. it may be related to a group of double-framed buckles known from settlements such as Odartsi<sup>55</sup>. The belt buckle is crafted from copper and was found in the layer around Dwelling 1. The second buckle is ordinary, square in shape and made of iron. Simple and functional, these buckles were also widespread throughout the Middle Ages. They are also found in necropolises such as the one at Balchik<sup>56</sup> and in settlements such as Odartsi<sup>57</sup>. The round mount, similar to those found in a number of settlements – Pliska<sup>58</sup>, Markeli<sup>59</sup>, Skala<sup>60</sup>, Starmen<sup>61</sup>, medieval settlements around Varna<sup>62</sup>, etc. is also connected with the functional belt elements (**Fig. 17/h**). A round button-like applique with a loop can be defined as a garment decoration. It consists of two joined hemispheres decorated with radial lines (**Fig. 17/i**). A similar item, incorrectly identified as a button<sup>63</sup>, was found in the medieval settlement near Odartsi<sup>64</sup>.

<sup>47</sup> DONCHEVA-PETKOVA, NINOV, PARUSHEV 1999, p. 155–157, tabl. XL, XLIXLII.

<sup>48</sup> KONSTANTINOV 2015b, p. 203, fig. 3/6.

<sup>49</sup> STANILOV 1995, p. 113, fig. 3/19–21; VITLYANOV 2007, p. 245–246, tabl. I/1, 3, 5.

<sup>50</sup> YOTOV, ATANASOV 1998, p. 107, fig. 3/3.

<sup>51</sup> CHANGOVA 1992, p. 142–143, fig. 130/5.

<sup>52</sup> GOMOLKA-FUCHS 2002, p. 494, Abb. 1.

<sup>53</sup> ANTONOVA, PETROVA 1983, p. 7, fig. 22/3.

<sup>54</sup> MILCHEV 1963, p. 34, fig. 14.

<sup>55</sup> DONCHEVA-PETKOVA, NINOV, PARUSHEV 1999, p. 104, fig. 134, cat. no. 651.

<sup>56</sup> DONCHEVA-PETKOVA, APOSTOLOV, RUSEVA 2016, p. 131–132.

<sup>57</sup> DONCHEVA-PETKOVA, NINOV, PARUSHEV 1999, p. 104, оѡр. 134, кат. no. 636, 637.

<sup>58</sup> KONSTANTINOV 2015b, p. 210, fig. 5/23, 24.

<sup>59</sup> MOMCHILOV 2015, p. 401–402, fig. 1/1–2.

<sup>60</sup> YOTOV, ATANASOV 1998, p. 110, pl. CXV/454.

<sup>61</sup> HENSEL *et alii* 1970, fig. 7/8.

<sup>62</sup> PLETNYOV, PAVLOVA 1994–1995, pl. IV/58–78, V/79–84.

<sup>63</sup> The designation of these items as buttons is only due to formal proximity to later ones, but they did not actually serve to close/fasten an opening on a garment, but rather were sewn on as decoration.

<sup>64</sup> DONCHEVA-PETKOVA, NINOV, PARUSHEV 1999, p. 104, оѡр. 133, кат. no. 633–635.

A bronze earring with a profiled pendant was found in the layer around kilns 8, 9 and 10 (**Fig. 17/i**). It belongs to type III.2 according to V. Grigorov's classification<sup>65</sup>. This type of earrings was widespread in the 9<sup>th</sup>–10<sup>th</sup> centuries both in necropolises (Sultana, Galiche, Valchedram, Gradeshnitsa, Dolni Lukovit 1, Batin, Tabachka, etc.) and in settlements (Pliska, Preslav, Okorsh, etc.)<sup>66</sup>. In the settlement near the village of Yakimovo, region Montana, a similar earring was found in a half-dug dwelling and dated with coins of Leo VI (886–912) and Constantine VII and Zoe (913–919)<sup>67</sup>.

The archaeological research in the region of Mizia, although limited in scope, provided valuable information on the life of a medieval village. Its inhabitants' way of life, livelihood and occupations are materialized in the presented finds and allow the reconstruction of an ordinary rural daily life. The absence of materials from the 11<sup>th</sup> century suggests that life at this place ceased in the troubled years at the turn of the 10<sup>th</sup>–11<sup>th</sup> centuries, and it seems that the settlement was abandoned in an organized manner.

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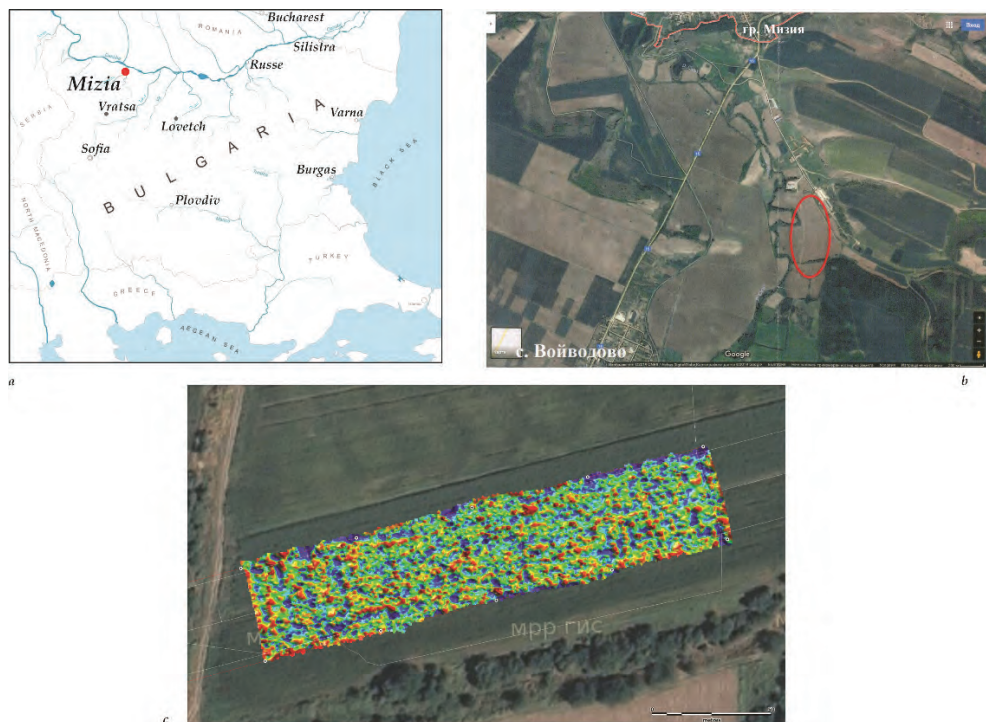


Fig. 1. a – Location of Misia; b – Site area; c – Geophysical survey of the object.

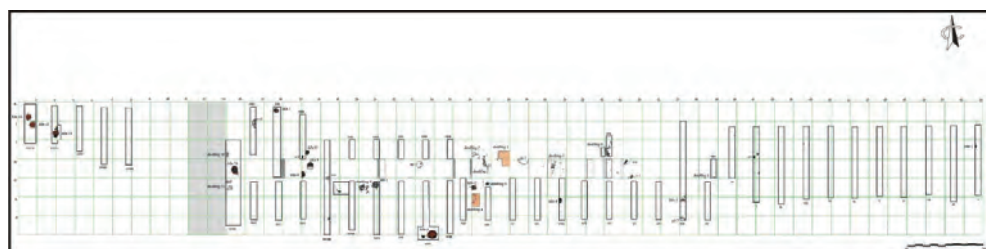


Fig. 2. Plan of the excavated area.

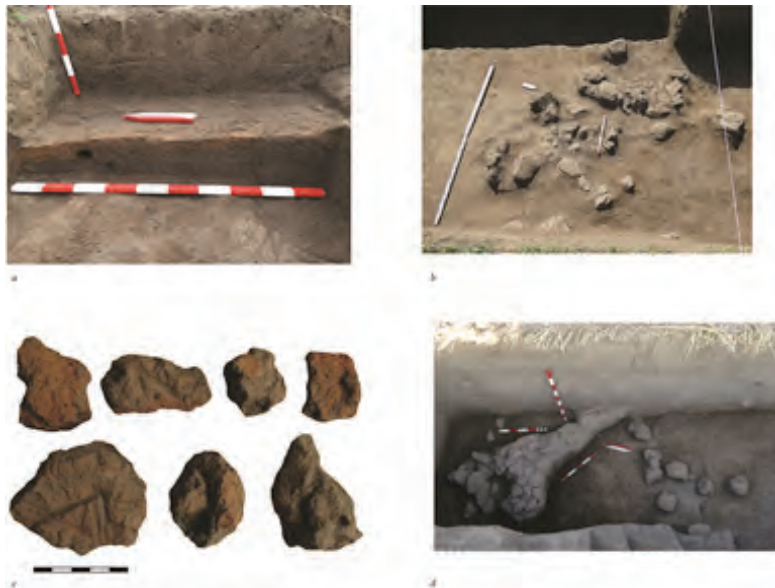


Fig. 3. a – Floor level of Dwelling 1; b – Dwelling 2; c – Plaster with impurities of thin sticks and stakes; d – Dwelling 8.

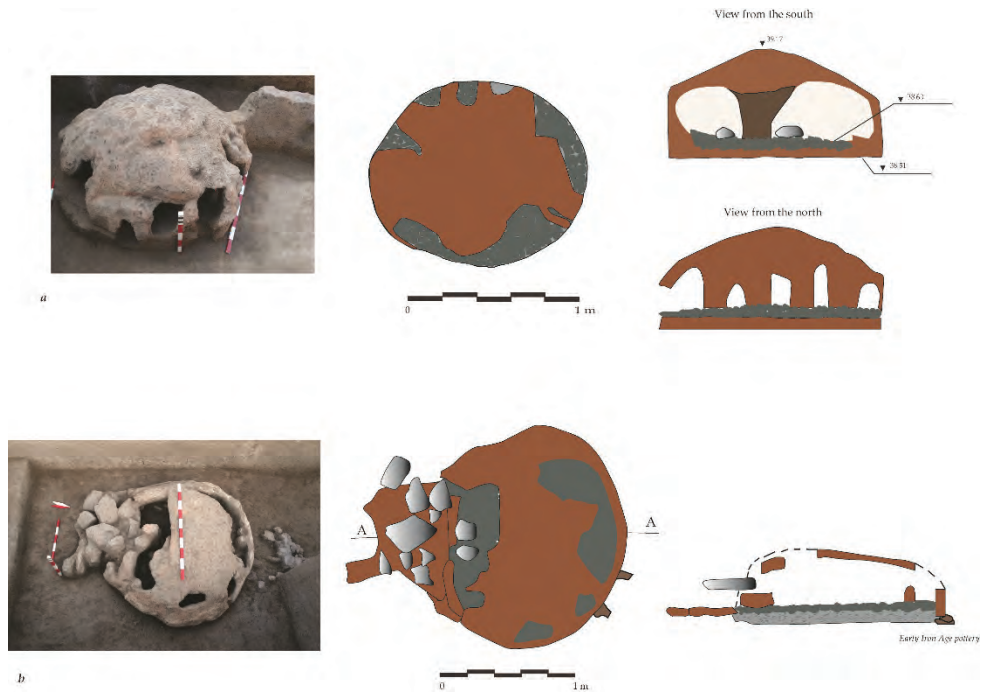


Fig. 4. a – Kiln 6; b – Kiln 11.

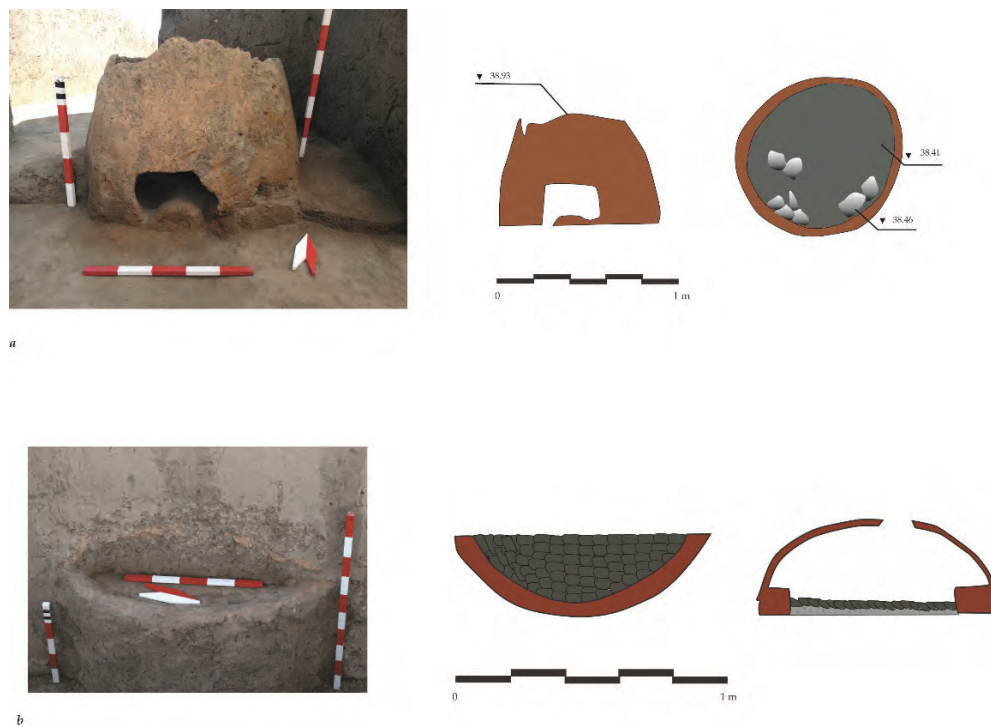


Fig. 5. a – Kiln 10; b – Kiln 2.

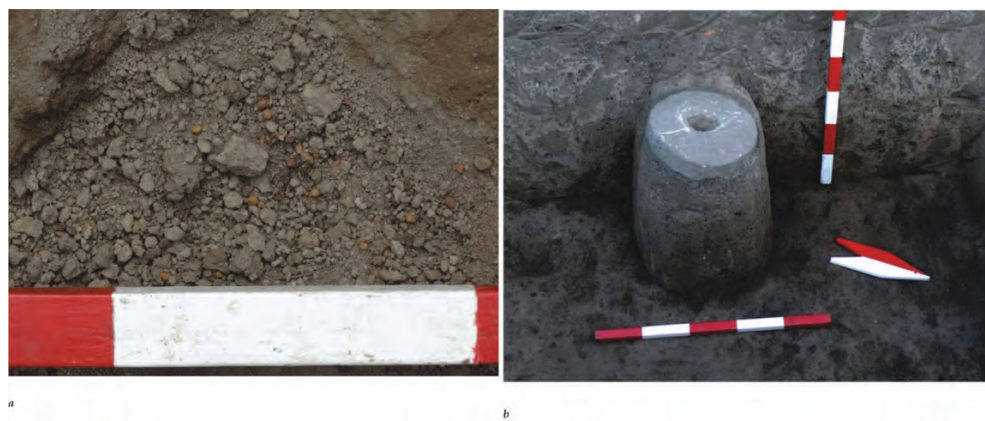


Fig. 6. a – Charred grain in Dwelling 5 (*in situ*); b – Grinding stone (*in situ*).

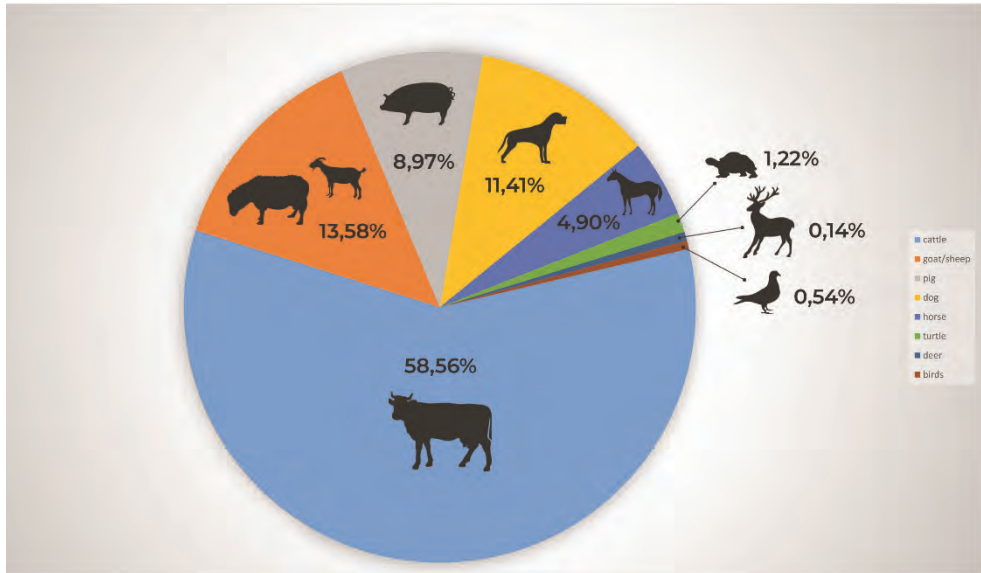


Fig. 7. Species distribution of animal bones (in percent).

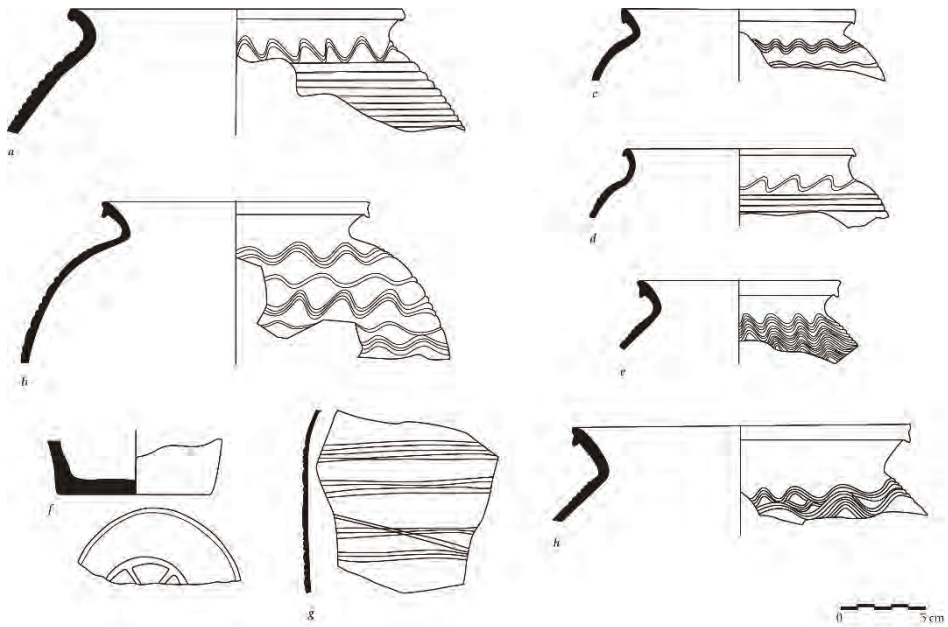


Fig. 8. a-e – Ceramics from Dwelling 8; f-g – Ceramics from Dwelling 4; h – Ceramics from Dwelling 6.

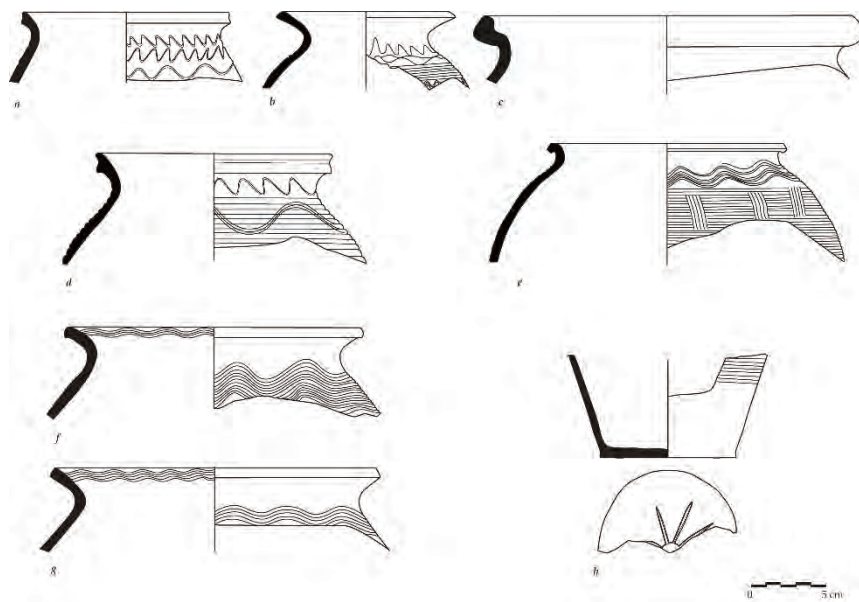


Fig. 9. a-b Ceramics from kiln 5; c – Ceramics from kiln 10; d – Ceramics from kiln 8; e – Ceramics from kiln 9; f-g – Ceramics from kiln 11; h – Ceramics from kiln 7.

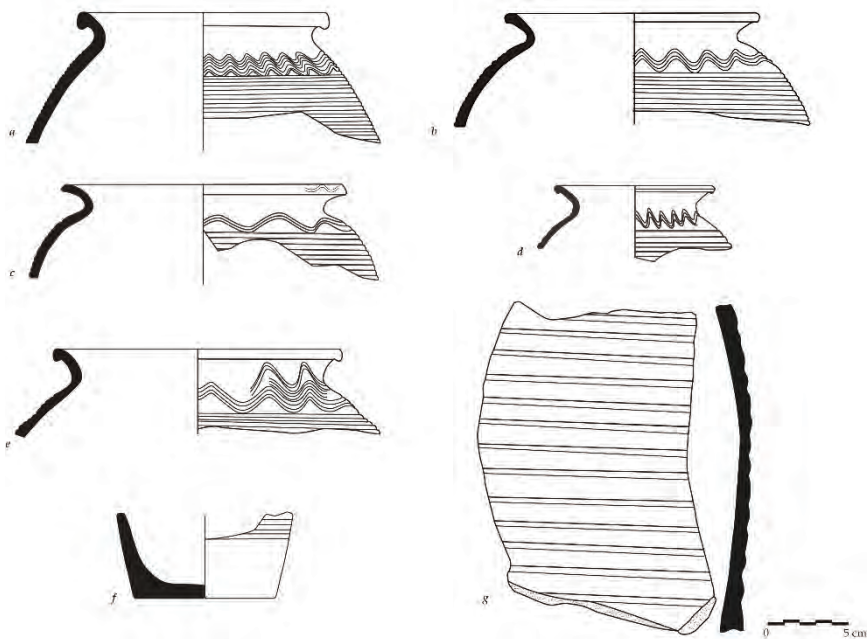


Fig. 10. Ceramics from the burned layer in Dwelling 5.

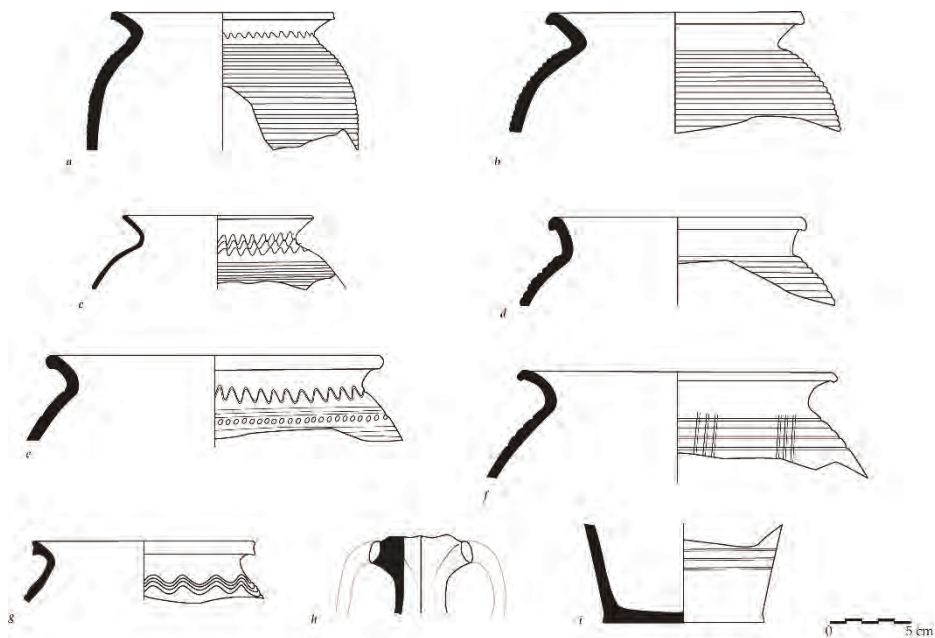


Fig. 11. Pottery from the medieval layer.



Fig. 12. Pot from pit 7.

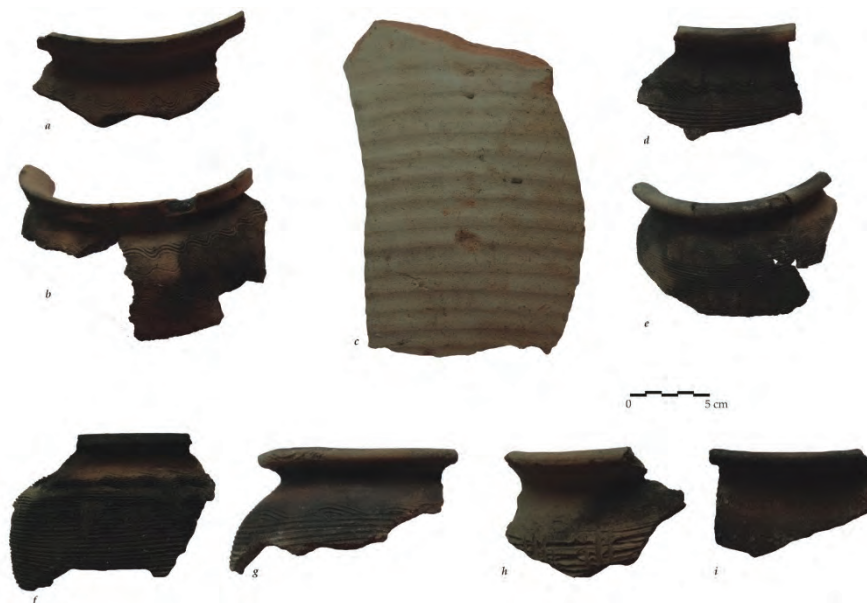


Fig. 13. a-b – Ceramics from Dwelling 8; c-e – Ceramics from Dwelling 5; f – Pot from kiln 9; g-i – Pottery from the medieval layer.



Fig. 14. a-b – Glazed ceramic from Dwellings 5 and 8; c – A graffiti placed on the handle of an unglazed amphora-shaped pitcher.



Fig. 15. a-c – Iron knives; d-f – Arrowheads; g – Separator for quiver; h-i – Iron hooks.



Fig. 16. a – Deer antlers (*in situ*); b-c – Cut ends of the horns; d-g – Bone billets; h – Tool with a pointed tip on one side and a spade-shaped profile on the other.



**Fig. 17.** a-b – Spindle whorls; c-e – Bone awls; f-g – Belt buckles; h – Belt mount; i – Round button-like applique; j – Bronze earring.