

Proceedings of the first PeBA Conference
Perspectives on Balkan Archaeology – The Early Iron Age: Methods and Approaches

Preface

The idea of **PeBA - Perspectives on Balkan Archaeology** was born in 2015 and choosing Sarajevo as the conference venue for the first PeBA conference seemed the perfect decision. The Conference was held on April 8-9, 2016 in the National Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina with the 21 participants from Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Czech Republic, Croatia, Republic of Macedonia, Germany, Serbia and Slovenia. In the meantime, a second conference took place in Belgrade in 2017 and a third one is scheduled for 2020.

Daniela Heilmann and Marek Verčík, both of whom were members of the Munich Graduate School for Ancient Studies “Distant Worlds” at the Ludwig-Maximilians-University at that time, approached me with the idea to organize an international conference on the Early Iron Age in the Balkan lands. This conference about “The Early Age: Methods and Approaches” was designed to specifically give younger researchers a chance and a forum to introduce their work and discuss their ideas. Aleksandar Jašarević from the Regional Museum of Doboj, Bosnia and Herzegovina, enthusiastically supported the idea and with Mario Gavranović from the Institute for Oriental and European Archaeology (OREA), Austrian Academy of Sciences in Vienna, the team was complete.

I was very impressed by this initiative and very happy to see, what positive side effects a doctoral dissertation can produce. Daniela Heilmann’s travels to various now independent countries of former Yugoslavia in the course of her efforts to collect information for her doctoral dissertation resulted in contacts with many col-

leagues working on problems of the Early Iron Age in this region. This network of scholarly exchange between Balkan Scholars which transcends state and ideological borders is integral to the concept of PeBA. Of course, those contacts existed before, but sometimes outsiders have a better starting point in creating a new perspective on seemingly familiar matters.

The idea to intensify and to re-establish exchange among researchers of Balkan Archaeology from different countries made Sarajevo an ideal meeting place. As is commonly known, that the city had suffered during the Yugoslav Wars, in the course of which the once famous National Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina/ Zemaljski muzej Bosnia i Hercegovina had to close, the collections were stored away and were partly inaccessible for a long time. The enormous symbolic value to come together in Sarajevo, an iconic place evoking the conflicts during the Yugoslav Wars, but also the place of renewal and recovery was obvious to us. All the more so as the city was once a famous centre of Balkan Archaeology - with a long tradition of research starting in the late 19th century and flourishing under the Habsburg Monarchy right into Yugoslav times. I think it was the impression and the feeling of all participants that we were witnessing that something new and promising was about to start. Sarajevo and the vast collections of the National Museum were once a cradle of Balkan Archaeology; thus, the reopening of a small part of the Iron Age collection during the PeBA conference held on the 8th-9th April 2016 was of great importance and a crucial signal to the scientific community. I am writing this from

the outside perspective of a German archaeologist and university professor who sees it as one part of her obligations to teach students that archaeological studies should not be confined by modern national borders and that it is important to reach out and bring together people and ideas from various places and backgrounds.

I will avoid a discussion of what “Balkan Archaeology” actually means at this point, but would rather like to emphasize that many colleagues followed the conference call of the four organizers. Researchers participated with talks or chaired the various sessions. The wide array of topics included research perspectives on the western Balkans with talks about communication networks, settlement structures in a regional perspective or studies concerning aspects of material culture in Bosnia and Herzegovina and beyond. Another session focused on chronological questions of the Early Iron Age in the southern Carpathian Basin, the Slovenian Dolenjsko or the continuity of Iron Age cultural groups in northeastern Serbia. The third session was titled ‘Approaching Identities’ in the Iron Age with contributions on female costumes, theoretical concepts or socioeconomic aspects in areas such as the southeastern Adriatic. A fifth session dealt with ‘Supra-regional Approaches: Communications and Cultural Dynamics’ such as the distribution of weapons in the central Balkan region and surroundings or contacts between southern Pannonia and the northern Balkans. The final session took a regional focus again, examining the burial rights in the Republic of Macedonia, including the contacts to Greece during the Archaic Period, or a case study about burial customs in the contact zone of the Vardar and Bregalnica river valleys.

The large variety of topics offered plenty of opportunities for fruitful discussions. Most im-

pressive was the conference excursion to many famous sites of the Iron Age Glasinac Culture which showed once more that the autopsy of a geographical setting is vital for understanding cultural, in this case archaeological, phenomena.

This first PeBA conference was a big success, from a scholarly as well as - and perhaps even more importantly - from a personal perspective. We owe this experience to many people whom I would like to thank again on behalf of the participants and for myself. Our thanks go to the organizers Daniela Heilmann, Mario Gavranović, Aleksandar Jašarević and Marek Verčík; but also to the colleagues in the NMBiH in Sarajevo, especially Andrijana Pravidur. Our gratitude also goes to the Munich Graduate School for Ancient Studies “Distant Worlds” and the Südosteuropa Gesellschaft Munich which generously granted financial support and thus made the conference possible.

Not all participants found the time to hand in their contributions, mainly because for some time the form in which the conference contributions would be published, was unclear. Thanks to the initiative and financial as well as editorial support offered by my colleague Blagoje Govedarica (Eurasienabteilung, German Archaeological Institute, Berlin and the Centre for Balkan Studies, Academy of Sciences and Arts of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sarajevo) the proceedings of the first PeBA/Perspectives on Balkan Archaeology conference in Sarajevo held in April 2016 are now presented in this volume of *Godišnjak/Jahrbuch*.

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