

ARHEOLOŠKA ISTRAŽIVANJA NA LERGOVOJ GRADINI

Archaeological
excavations at
Lergova gradina



Tijekom ožujka 2023. provedena su arheološka istraživanja na Lergovoj gradini, približno 20 km sjeveroistočno od Zadra, i to zahvaljujući novcu mještana Turnja, Alana Mandića,¹ koji je financirao i prva iskopavanja na tom lokalitetu poviše Gornje Slivnice, obavljena šest godina prije (Ilkić, Čelhar 2018: 617–620). Površina Lergove gradine je oko 3 hektara pa pripada liburnskim naseljima srednje veličine. Dominira krševitim terenom, uz čije je južno podnožje usko polje bogato vodom. Vizualno komunicira s nekoliko istovremenih sjevernodalmatinskih gradina, a s vrhom od 268 m nadmorske visine nadzire plovidbu južnim dijelom Velebitskog kanala.

Lergovu gradinu opasava kameni bedem, koji je dokumentiran metodom fotogrametrije (Ilkić, Čelhar, Grgurić 2020). Njegov je istočni opseg izgrađen od istesanih krupnijih blokova, često sačuvanih *in situ* u više redova. Na tome markantnom dijelu bedema uočljivo je nekoliko izvornih ulaza, čije je rubno kamenje istaknuto anatirozom. Znatno je slabije sačuvan zapadni fortifikacijski perimetar, koji je, čini se, bio podignut od lomljenog ili samo dijelom priklesanog kamena pločaste forme. U približno jugoistočnom podnožju Lergove gradine zamijećena je trasa prapovijesne komunikacije. Dijelom urezana u krš, pruža se nekoliko stotina metara u smjeru obližnjeg izvora s ovećom lokvom (Ilkić, Čelhar, Grgurić 2020). Na površini Lergove gradine razasuto je mnoštvo keramike, uglavnom ulomaka amfora, a naziru se i položaji mnogobrojnih nastambi pravokutne osnove, koje su na kosom terenu katkad urezane u živac (Čače 1985: 722–723, 815–816; Brusić 2000: 129–130, 133–136; Čelhar 2014: 143–149). Od pokretne građe do sada su objavljeni u većem broju raznovrsni predcarski numizmatički nalazi, među kojima dominira novac Kartage i Numidije (Ilkić, Šeparović 2023: 180–181). Otkriveni su pojedinačno te kao takvi svjedoče da su bili u optjecaju kao platežno sredstvo. Pojedini su lomljeni radi dobivanja sitniša, što također upućuje na monetarna, a ne simbolička ili neka drukčija korištenja novca. Uostalom, novčana struktu-

¹ Istraživanja su 2023. obavili djelatnici Odjela za arheologiju Sveučilišta u Zadru, i to izv. prof. dr. sc. Mato Ilkić (voditelj), doc. dr. sc. Martina Čelhar (zamjenica), izv. prof. dr. sc. Igor Borzić, dipl. arheol. Filipa Jurković Pešić (voditeljica Arheološke zbirke) i mag. arheol. Luka Bogdanić (dokumentarist) te studenti arheologije Mia Mandarić, Ivan Mašković i Miroslav Novak. Marin Lerga dao je suglasnost da na njegovoj parceli obavimo istraživanja, na čemu mu najljepše zahvaljujemo.

During March 2023, archaeological research was carried out at Lergova gradina, approximately 20 km northeast of Zadar, thanks to the funding by the resident of Turanj, Alan Mandić,¹ who also financed the first excavations at that site above Gornja Slivnica, carried out six years before (Ilkić, Čelhar 2018: 617–620). The area of Lergova gradina covers about 3 hectares, so it belongs to the medium-sized Liburnian settlements. It dominates the rugged terrain, at the southern foot of which is a narrow field abounding in water. It provides unobstructed visual communication with several contemporaneous northern Dalmatian hill-forts, and with a peak of 268 m above sea level, it ensures monitoring of the navigation in the southern part of the Velebit Channel.

Lergova gradina is surrounded by a stone rampart, which was documented by the method of photogrammetry (Ilkić, Čelhar, Grgurić 2020). Its eastern perimeter is built of larger dressed blocks, often preserved *in situ* in several rows. On this imposing part of the rampart, several original entrances can be seen, the edge stones of which are highlighted with anathyrosis. The western fortification perimeter

is not so well preserved, and it seems it was built of broken or only partially dressed flat stone. A pre-historic communication route was noticed approximately at the southeastern foot of Lergova gradina. Partly carved into the karst, it stretches several hundred meters in the direction of a nearby spring with a large puddle (Ilkić, Čelhar, Grgurić 2020). The surface of Lergova gradina abounds in pottery, mainly amphora fragments. The positions of numerous rectangular dwellings can be recognized, sometimes cut into bedrock on the sloping ground (Čače 1985: 722–723, 815–816; Brusić 2000: 129–130, 133–136; Čelhar 2014: 143–149). Of small finds, a large number of various pre-Imperial numismatic artifacts have been published so far, among which the coins of Carthage and Numidia dominate (Ilkić, Šeparović 2023: 180–181). They were discovered individually and as such testify that they were in circulation as means of payment. Some were broken in order to

¹ In 2023, the research was carried out by the employees of the Department of Archeology of the University of Zadar, associate prof. Mato Ilkić (PI), assistant prof. Martina Čelhar (vice PI), associate prof. Igor Borzić, Filipa Jurković Pešić (head of the Archaeological Collection) and mag. archaeol. Luka Bogdanić (documentarian) and archeology students Mia Mandarić, Ivan Mašković and Miroslav Novak. Marin Lerga gave his consent to carry out research on his plot, for which we are very grateful.



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Geografski položaj Lergove gradine
Geographical location of Lergova gradina



Segment bedema (foto: M. Parica)
Rampart segment (photo: M. Parica)





ra s Lergove gradine je u skladu s onima s drugih gradinskih naselja u Liburniji, ali i Japodiji. Dakle, objedinjuje ih uporaba goleme količine sjevernoafričkog novca.

U arheološkoj kampanji iz 2023. odlučeno je da se iskopavanja prostorno nadovežu na sondu 1 koja je istražena 2017. u južnom dijelu k. č. 651, i to na parceli u vlasništvu Marina Lerge. Naime, tada su otvorene dvije sonde na toj katastarskoj čestici koja je razdijeljena na dva nejednaka dijela. Otkrivena su dva suhozidna objekta, međusobno udaljena oko 50 m. Pripadaju razdoblju od kasnog 3. do druge polovice 1. st. pr. Krista. Navedeni kronološki okvir potvrđen je oblikom arhitekture, pratećom mnogobrojnom i raznovrsnom pokretnom arheološkom građom te dodatno dvama 14 C datumima koji su dali kronološki okvir od 204. do 46. pr. Krista. Međutim, tragovi korištenja prostora iz još starijeg razdoblja skoro su u potpunosti izostali. Iznimka je periferno uhvaćen stratum u kutu sonde 1, na mjestu gdje je uočljiv pad matične stijene. Tu je na malenoj površini utvrđen stariji kulturni sloj s keramičkom građom koja je prema makroskopskim i tipološkim odlikama određena u brončano doba. U kampanji 2023. nastojali smo istražiti prostor između navedene sonde i pravca pružanja bedema ne

obtain change, which also suggests monetary rather than symbolic or other uses of money. After all, the monetary structure from Lergova gradina is in line with those from other hillfort settlements in Liburnia, as well as in Japodia. Thus, they are united by the use of a large quantity of north African coins.

In the archaeological campaign of 2023, it was decided that the excavations would spatially adhere to trial trench 1, which was explored in 2017 in the southern part of cadastral plot 651, on a piece of land owned by Marin Lerga. Namely, two trial trenches were opened on that cadastral plot, which was divided into two unequal parts. Two dry stone wall buildings were discovered, about 50 m apart. They belong to the period from the late 3rd to the second half of the 1st century BC. The mentioned chronological framework is confirmed by the form of architecture, the accompanying numerous and diverse archaeological finds and additionally by two 14 C dates which gave the chronological framework from 204 to 46 BC. However, traces of the use of this space from an even older period are almost completely absent. The exception is the peripherally captured stratum in the corner of trial trench 1, in the place where the fall of bedrock is noticeable. There, on a small surface,



... Početna faza istraživanja sonde 3 (foto: M. Ilkić)
... Initial phase of the investigation of trial trench 3 (photo: M. Ilkić)



... Završna faza istraživanja sonde 3 (foto: M. Ilkić)
... Final phase of the investigation of trial trench 3 (photo: M. Ilkić)

bi li preciznije determinirali karakter i kronologiju starijeg naselja i potencijalno potvrdili ili demantirali dugi kronološki hijatus između prvotnog naseljavanja u brončanom dobu te kasnijeg korištenja pozicije tijekom mlađeg željeznog doba.

U sondi 3 (dimenzija 5 x 4 m) potvrđena je relativno jednostavna stratigrafija bez istaknutijih arhitektonskih ostataka, kakve smo zabilježili u onima iz 2017. godine. Riječ je o prostoru između objekta istraženog u sondi 1 i zakošenog ulaznog koridora u sklopu megalitskog bedema. Njegovi arhitektonski ostatci jasno su uočljivi u depresiji ispunjenoj golemom količinom obrađenog i lomljenog kamenja. Nakon uklanjanja površinskih naslaga, u sondi 3 uočen je očekivani subhumus s pokretnom arheološkom građom koja odgovara mlađem željeznom dobu. Ispod njega je dokumentiran masni kompaktniji sloj svjetlije crvenosmeđe boje koji prekriva matičnu stijenu i zapunjava procijepe u njoj. Njega karakterizira prisustvo brončanodobne lončarije. Od ove jednostavne stratigrafske slike odudara tek situacija u južnom dijelu sonde 3, i to u neposrednoj blizini gradinskog ulaznog koridora. Naime, tu je primjetan pad terena i veća depresija u matičnoj stijeni koja je zapunjena lomljenim kamenjem, po svemu sudeći, radi nivelacije hodne površine

an older cultural layer with ceramic material was defined, which, according to macroscopic and typological characteristics, was dated to the Bronze Age. In the 2023 campaign, we tried to investigate the space between the mentioned trial trench and the direction of the ramparts in order to determine the character and chronology of the older settlement more precisely and potentially confirm or deny long chronological hiatus between the initial settlement in the Bronze Age and the later use of the position during the Late Iron Age.

In trial trench 3 (dimensions 5 x 4 m), a relatively simple stratigraphy was confirmed without prominent architectural remains, as we noted in those from 2017. It is the space between the structure investigated in trial trench 1 and the slanted entrance corridor as part of the megalithic rampart. Its architectural remains are clearly visible in the depression filled with a huge quantity of worked and broken stones. The removal of the surface deposits uncovered the expected subhumus layer with movable archaeological finds that correspond to the Late Iron Age in trial trench 3. Beneath it, there was an oily, more compact layer, light red-brown in color, which covers the bedrock and fills the cracks in it. It is characterized by the presence of Bronze Age pottery. Only the situation





Ulomak keramičke posude s trakastom ručkom u sondi 3 (foto: M. Ilkić)
Fragment of a ceramic vessel with a strap handle in trial trench 3 (photo: M. Ilkić)

in the southern part of trial trench 3, in the immediate vicinity of the hillfort's entrance corridor, differs from this simple stratigraphic picture. Namely, there is a noticeable fall of terrain and a larger depression in the bedrock, which is filled with broken stones, apparently to level the walking surface next to the original entrance. In the stone fill, one occasionally comes across archaeological finds from the Late Iron Age, and only at the very bottom, above the bedrock, Bronze Age pottery was found. The depth of the investigated trial trench varies from approximately 40

organizirano tijekom srednjeg brončanog doba. Relativno jednoličan sloj s ujednačenom materijalnom građom ne ide u prilog nekom dužem kontinuitetu naseljavanja.

Za sada nije moguće pouzdano odgovoriti na pitanje što se događalo na Lergovoj gradini tijekom kasnog brončanog i starijeg željeznog doba. Još su intrigantniji problemi povezani sa zajednicom koja podiže svoje domove na ovom lokalitetu tijekom mlađeg željeznog doba. Naime, tada se na njemu odvija znatna graditeljska aktivnost, o čemu osobito svjedoče tzv. megalitski bedemi. Zsigurno je bila riječ o bogatoj i dobro organiziranoj autohtonoj populaciji, jer mnogobrojni i raznovrsni nalazi pokretne materijalne baštine nedvojbeno upućuju na njezino aktivno sudjelovanje u trgovačkim ak-

centimeters on the northern side to almost 1.5 meters on the southern side.

The Late Iron Age cultural layer contained numerous fragments of pre-Imperial pottery, primarily for storage purposes (probably early amphorae of the Lamboglia 2 type). Several fragments of fine Hellenistic pottery were also found. Among few metal objects made of copper alloy, several examples of north African coins from the late 3rd and 2nd centuries BC stand out. The pottery assemblage from the older layer is dominated by the characteristic vertical strap handles. They are sometimes decorated at the top with an extension in the form of a rounded protrusion, which is a typical feature of the pottery of the Dinara culture (Arena, Barbarić, Radić Rossi 2020: 27–28, fig. 2: 3, 7–8, 10, 3: 12–14).

uz izvorni ulaz. U kamenom nasipu povremeno se nailazi na pokretnu arheološku građu mlađeg željeznog doba, a tek na samom dnu, iznad matične stijene, pronađena je i brončanodobna keramika. Dubina istražene sonde varira od približno 40 centimetara na sjevernoj strani, do skoro 1,5 metara dubine na južnoj.

Kulturni sloj mlađeg željeznog doba sadržavao je brojne ulomke predcarske keramike, ponajprije skladišne namjene (vjerojatno rane amfore tipa Lamboglia 2). Nađeno je i nekoliko fragmenata fine helenističke keramike. Otkriveno je i ponešto kovinskih predmeta od bakrene slitine, među kojima se izdvaja više primjeraka sjevernoafričkog novca iz kasnog 3. i 2. st. prije Krista. U keramografskom korpusu starijeg sloja dominiraju karakteristične vertikalne trakaste ručke. One su katkad na vrhu dekorirane produžetkom u obliku zaobljenog izdanka što je tipična značajka lončarije dinarske kulture (Arena, Barbarić, Radić Rossi 2020: 27–28, sl. 2: 3, 7–8, 10, 3: 12–14). Uočljiva je i relativno učestalija pojavnost plastično oblikovanih ukrasa, poput jednostavnih okomitih plastičnih traka ili složenijeg mrežastog motiva. Sve navedeno upućuje na to da je naselje na ovoj poziciji

Sonda 3 po završetku istraživanja (foto: L. Bogdanić)
Trial trench 3 at the end of the investigation (photo: L. Bogdanić)





Ulomak keramike s plastičnim mrežastim motivom iz sonde 3 (foto: M. Ilkić)
Ceramic fragment with an embossed reticular motif from trial trench 3 (photo: M. Ilkić)

tivnostima, što vjerojatno uključuje i komunikacijske kontakte s vrlo udaljenim prekomorskim središtima. Prema dosadašnjim spoznajama, osobito numizmatičkim, život na Lergovoj gradini prestaje tijekom druge polovice 1. st. prije Krista. Njezino je napuštanje vjerojatno posljedica rimske prisutnosti, odnosno reorganizacije južne Liburnije pod novom vlašću.

Plastically shaped decorations, such as simple vertical strips or a more complex reticular motif are relatively more common. All of the above suggests the fact that the settlement in this position was organized during the Middle Bronze Age. A relatively uniform layer with uniform material does not suggest any longer continuity of settlement.

For now, it is not possible to offer a definite answer to the question what happened on Lergova gradina in the Late Bronze and Early Iron Ages. Even more intriguing are the questions associated with the community building their homes at this site during the Late Iron Age. Namely, at that time considerable construction activity took place on it, which is best illustrated by the so-called megalithic ramparts. It was certainly a rich and well-organized autochthonous population, because numerous and diverse archaeological finds undoubtedly indicate its active participation in trade activities, which probably also includes communication contacts with very distant overseas centers. According to current knowledge, especially numismatic data, life on Lergova gradina ends during the second half of the 1st century BC. Its abandonment was probably a consequence of the Roman presence and the reorganization of southern Liburnia under a new government.

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