

SPRAWOZDANIA ARCHEOLOGICZNE

INSTYTUT ARCHEOLOGII I ETNOLOGII POLSKIEJ AKADEMII NAUK



Archaeological Reports
66
Archäologische Berichte

**SPRAWOZDANIA
ARCHEOLOGICZNE**

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POLSKIEJ AKADEMII NAUK

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KRAKÓW 2014

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Na okładce: fragment zapinki brązowej, fot. Przemysław Dulęba

Adres Redakcji
Editor's Address
OŚRODEK ARCHEOLOGII GÓR I WYŻYŃ, INSTYTUT ARCHEOLOGII I ETNOLOGII PAN
31-016 KRAKÓW, UL. SŁAWKOWSKA 17

Druk i oprawa:
„TOTEM.COM.PL SPÓŁKA Z O.O.” SP.K.
ul. Jacewska 89, 88-100 Inowrocław

Nakład: 400 egz.

“*Sprawozdania Archeologiczne*” is regularly listed in the Central European Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities

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“Sprawozdania Archeologiczne” is regularly listed in the International Current Awareness Service: Anthropology. Selected material is indexed in the International Bibliography of social and Cultural Anthropology.

Indexed in:

IBZ – International Bibliography of Periodical Literature

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Urszula Bugaj*, Predrag Lutovac**, Maciej Trzeciecki***,
Miron Bogacki****, Małgorzata Chwiej, Mario Novak*****,
Zbigniew Polak*****

REMAINS OF THE NEGLECTED PAST. OTTOMAN FORTS ON PLANINICA HILL, MONTENEGRO

ABSTRACT

Bugaj U., Lutovac P., Trzeciecki M., Bogacki M., Chwiej M., Novak M. and Polak Z. 2014. Remains of the Neglected Past. Ottoman Forts on Planinica Hill, Montenegro. *Sprawozdania Archeologiczne* 66, 385–398.

Planinica – a hill situated on the edge of a vast mountain range delimited to the south-east by the Zeta Plain. It is a part of historical region known as Malesija inhabited mainly by the Albanians. During the field research on Planinica in 2012–2013 a group of stone structures was documented. It consists of circular stone tower surrounded by quadrilateral wall, several small enclosures of trapezoid or pentagonal plan and a network of roads leading to the top of the hill. The arrangement of the buildings indicates that the most likely function was military. They can be described as an observatory tower surrounded by small auxiliary forts. The complex of stone structures on Planinica was most probably built by the Turks after 1878 as a part of system of fortifications guarding newly established Turkish-Montenegrin border. The border survived until the Balkan War in 1912. After that Planinica was no longer been a point of military interest and the forts on its top have undergone progressive destruction. The stone structures on Planinica are not mentioned either in archaeological or historical

*Institute of Archaeology and Ethnology, Polish Academy of Sciences, Al. Solidarności 105, 00-140 Warsaw, Poland; bugaj.urszula@gmail.com

**Polimski Museum in Berane, Montenegro

*** Institute of Archaeology and Ethnology, Polish Academy of Sciences, Al. Solidarności 105, 00-140 Warsaw, Poland

****Institute of Archaeology, University of Warsaw, Krakowskie Przedmieście 26/28, 00-927 Warsaw, Poland

*****School of Archaeology, University College Dublin, Belfield, Dublin 4, Ireland

*****Historical Museum of the Capital City of Warsaw, Poland

publications in Montenegro, except the watchtower, which is interpreted as a prehistoric burial mound destroyed by the Turks. The buildings on Planinica hill remain “in the shadow” of the prehistoric stone tumuli, which represent a positively valorised, very distant past.

Key words: Montenegro, fortifications, watchtower, stone architecture, 3D modelling, orthophotography, Ottoman Empire, borderland studies, Balkan Wars

Received: 07.04.2014; Revised: 14.06.2014; Accepted: 21.07.2014

In “official” narratives of history of the Balkans the Turkish (Ottoman) heritage is regarded as at least bothersome or even unwanted (Baram 2009, 647–651; Todorova 2009, 162ff). The negative experiences of the nations that remained under Turkish supremacy for over 400 years intertwine with an “orientalist” – following E. Said (1978) – discourse of the “civilized” West regarding the “sick man of Europe”, as the Ottoman Empire has been labelled since the second half of 19th century (Todorova 2009, 3–20). It results in an excessive attraction to earlier periods that are presented as an opposition to the “dark ages” under Turkish rule; accompanied by an instrumental approach to the material relics of the Turkish past, being either utterly neglected or reinterpreted as monuments of a “traditional” culture usurped by the invaders (Bineri 2012, 535–539; Galaty 2011, 114–116). Precisely this could be said also about the Ottoman horizon in the Gruda region. The buildings on Planinica hill remain “in the shadow” of the stone tumuli, which represent a positively valorised, very distant past, or rather – like the watchtower – are interpreted as Illyrian burial mounds devastated by the Turks (recently: <http://www.pobjeda.me/2013/04/09/arheolosko-rekognosciranje-podgorice-praistorija-u-mitraljeskom-gnijezdu/#.Uv4d4-WJ5NIE>). On a general level, the issue of “neglecting” drives the topic outlined here to the wide field of history and memory studies.

Conceptually, the problem of the Turkish forts presented below can be allocated within the so-called “borderland studies”. The term itself is very often used, if not overused in archaeology (Green and Perlman 1985; Lightfoot and Martinez 1995 – see further literature). Generally however those studies are focused on what “connects” – intercultural contacts and trade routes – and thereby emphasize conventionality of the contemporary or recent divisions, and neglect the “material” or “landscape” aspects of borders. Relatively rarely – not including spectacular cases such as the Roman limes – the subject of borderland studies are the borders themselves (Power and Standen 1999; Curta 2005; Naum 2010, 101–108 – see further literature). The study of 17th century border of the Ottoman Empire in present Hungary, or of the Turkish-Habsburg border in present Bosnia and Croatia provide interesting examples of research close to our attempts presented above, both in terms of territory and methodology (Agoston 2009; Carlton and Rushworth 2009; see also Molnár 2013). These examples are essential inasmuch as they deal with a very complex and delicate issue – the reception of the heritage of the Ottoman Empire in the South-Eastern Europe, also encountered by us while studying the stone structures on Planinica.

This research scope, only briefly outlined above, gives a sort of “conceptual coordinates” of the problem, to guide the future research. This article is a preliminary presentation of data acquired during the two first, short fieldwork seasons.

Planinica (alb. Pllänices) hill rises to a height of 267 metres on the edge of a vast mountain range, delimited to the south-east by the Zeta Plain, extending to the Skadar Lake. It is a part of historical region known as Malesija (alb. Malësia e Madhe) inhabited mainly by the Albanians. Malesija covers mountain areas of northern Albania and eastern Montenegro north of the Skadar Lake (Jovićević 1923; Radusinović 1991a). The northwestern part of the region belongs to Montenegro only since 1913, as a result of the provisions of the Treaty of London ending the First Balkan War (Roberts 2007, 289–292). Planinica lies at the interface between two lands of diverse physiographic features, where two separate systems/models of life have been developed. In the west the fertile Zeta Plain, already populated in antiquity, is one of the most inhabited and cultivated regions of Montenegro even today. North, east and south of Planinica extend mountain areas accessible only for pastoralists (Fig. 1). The hill lies on the northwestern edge of the range, flowed around by the Cijevna river. The Planinica massif closes the 40 km long Cijevna valley, which further north takes the shape of a deep gorge and reaches the foot of the Prokletije massif. The Dečić mountain (584 metres) rises prominently northeast of Planinica.

Parallel to the Dečić mountain range, at the foot of Planinica hill, runs a road from Shkodra to Podgorica, leading through Tuzi — the administrative centre of the Montenegrin Malesija. The hill itself remains uninhabited, the closest, almost desolated settlement (Hadžaj) lies 1 km south-east. In the north-west foothills there is a hamlet now forming a part of Dinoša village, which administratively also includes Planinica. Dinoša lies opposite the hill, on the right bank of the Cijevna, at the foot of the Suka Grudska massif (1169 metres). As one of the oldest localities of historical Malesija, Dinoša is a part of the “tribal territory” of Gruda (alb. Grudë; Radusinović 1991b, 130–134).

Planinica’s hillsides are rather gently shaped with the highest exposure to the north. The slope descends mildly to the west ending with a small number of isolated hillocks along the Cijevna river (Fig. 2). Minor karst sinkholes surround the hill from the south-east. The summit forms a long, even ridge along a northeast-southwest axis, with a culmination in the central part. The entire hill is almost completely devoid of vegetation.

The field research on Planinica was a part of the project “The cultural landscape of Copper/Bronze Age Malesija, Montenegro”, conducted in 2012 and 2013 in the vicinity of Dinoša. The project has been carried out by the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnology Polish Academy of Sciences (Urszula Bugaj, Ph. D.) in cooperation with Montenegrin Academy of Sciences and Arts (Predrag Lutovac, MA). In 2012 fieldwork season participated also: Maciej Trzeciecki, Ph. D. (Polish Academy of Sciences, Institute of Archaeology and Ethnology), Zbigniew Polak, MA, Miron Bogacki, MA, Wisław Małkowski, MA (University of Warsaw, Institute of Archaeology), Mario Novak, Ph. D. (Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts, Centre for Anthropological Research, Zagreb). The fieldwork in 2013

was focused on anthropological survey in Dinoša and Pikalja. The fieldwork in 2012 was intended mainly to document the stone structures: the tumuli and remains of buildings. For the chosen objects and areas a photogrammetric documentation has been produced (Bugaj *et al.* 2012; Bugaj *et al.* 2013).

The stone structures in question are all located on the ridge of the hill (Fig. 3). They are dry stone buildings and a network of roads leads to the top of the hill. The building denoted as object I is situated in the highest point of the hill. Its main element is a circular stone structure (A) with the diameter 22–24 m, preserved up to the height of 5 m. It is surrounded by a wall of quadrilateral plan (B). Between the central construction and the enclosure wall there is a group of walls (C–X) much more poorly preserved and thus difficult to interpret (Fig. 4–5). In the circular structure there are fragments of concentric, thin walls built from irregular medium-sized stones (Fig. 5: 2). The gaps between these walls are filled with small stones and rubble. A circular wall of this kind surrounds the top of the structure, the inner part of this ring is filled with very small debris. The next, wider circle is formed by a wall leaning slightly inwards (Fig. 6: 1), delimited from the outside by another, least visible wall. A ramp situated on the southwest led to the top of the structure. From the outside the ramp was delimited with a wall constructed with large, flat slabs now forming an irregular heap on the surface (Fig. 6: 2). It seems that primarily the shape of the building was similar to two or three truncated cones mounted one on another, so that they formed a tower with an observation platform on its top.

At the base of the tower two narrow test-trenches (sondages) were excavated (Fig. 5: 2; 7). From the north-east stone rubble was removed and the well preserved outer façade of the wall was uncovered. It lies directly above the bedrock, 20–40 cm below the present ground level. No layers related to the functioning of the building had been preserved there (Fig. 7: 1). From the east, the foundation level of the building was uncovered and the sequence of layers related to the functioning and destruction of the building was recorded (Fig. 7: 2). The outer wall was founded approximately 60–80 cm below the present ground level, on the bedrock which was covered with a 20 cm deep layer of brown-grey dense, loamy humus related to the functioning of the building. Small and medium-sized rubble lying over it was thoroughly mixed with brown humus. It is probably related to a slow/gradual destruction of the tower. Higher up there was a layer of thick rubble and hewn stones from the façade of the walls (Fig. 7: 3). The destruction in this part of the tower proceeded faster and must have taken place quite recently.

The round tower is surrounded by the enclosure wall (B) on a rhomboid plan 70 x 76 m. The façades of the wall are made of hewn stones of different size, mostly large and very large (Fig. 6: 3–4). Some of them have been dressed in cuboid shape. The façades of the wall are constructed from stones with neither mortar nor any tendency for a regular pattern. The inside was filled with small rough-hewn stones. The course of the wall is clearly visible over the entire perimeter, its width is 1.10–1.50 m, its height is up to 2.2 m in the northern part and up to 1.2 m in the southern part. In the southern part of the wall, at its



Fig. 1. Location of Planinica hill in the Montenegrin part of Malesija. By M. Trzeciecki



Fig. 2. Planinica hill — view from the North-West. In the foreground — Dinoša village, next — the Zeta plain and outlet of the Cijevna valley. Location of the object I marked by arrow. Photo M. Trzeciecki

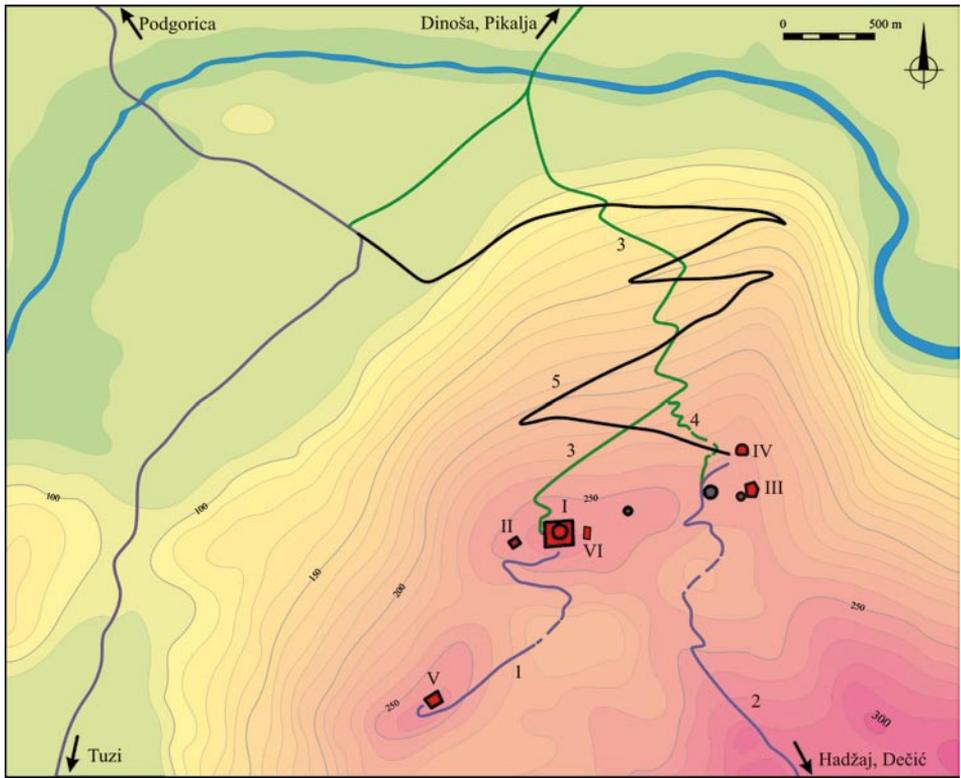
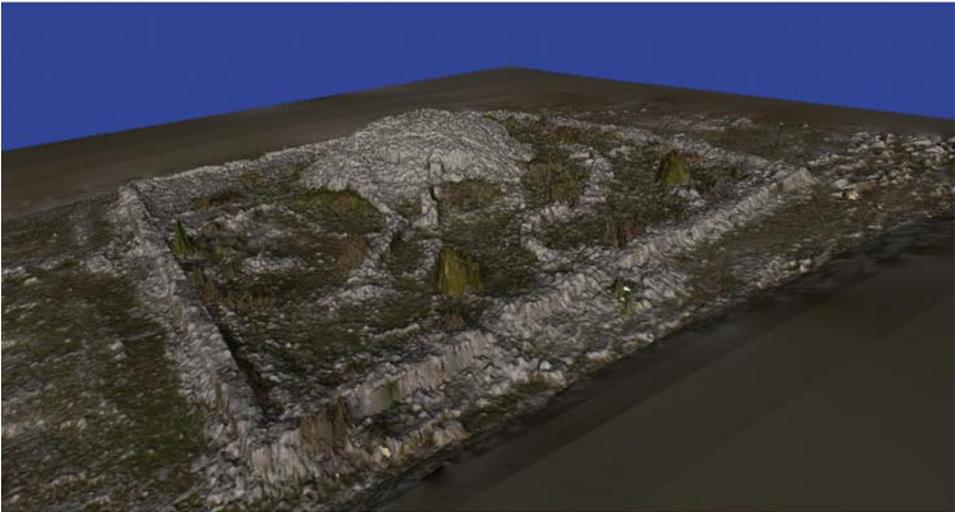


Fig. 3. Planinica Hill — location of stone structures (Latin numbers) and roads (arabic numbers). Prehistoric tumuli are marked in grey. By M. Trzeciecki

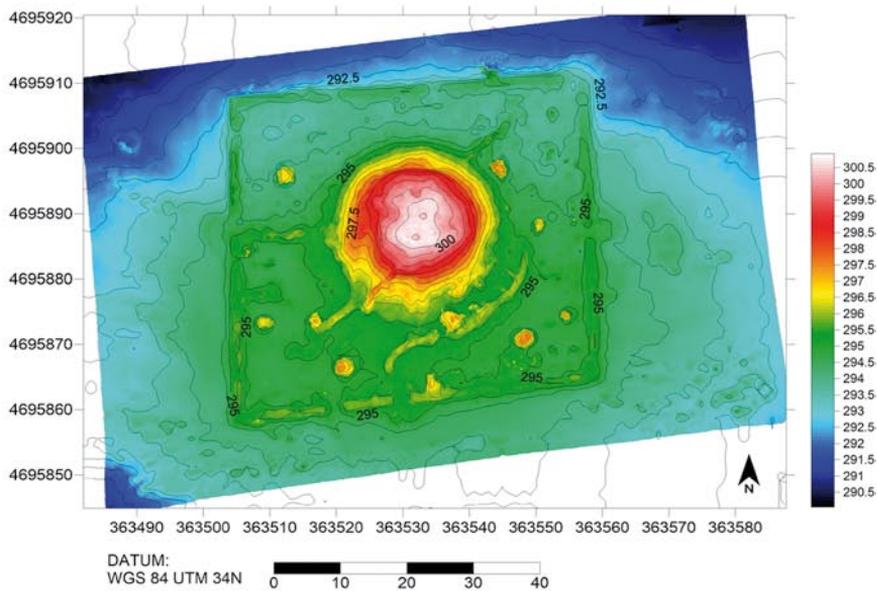


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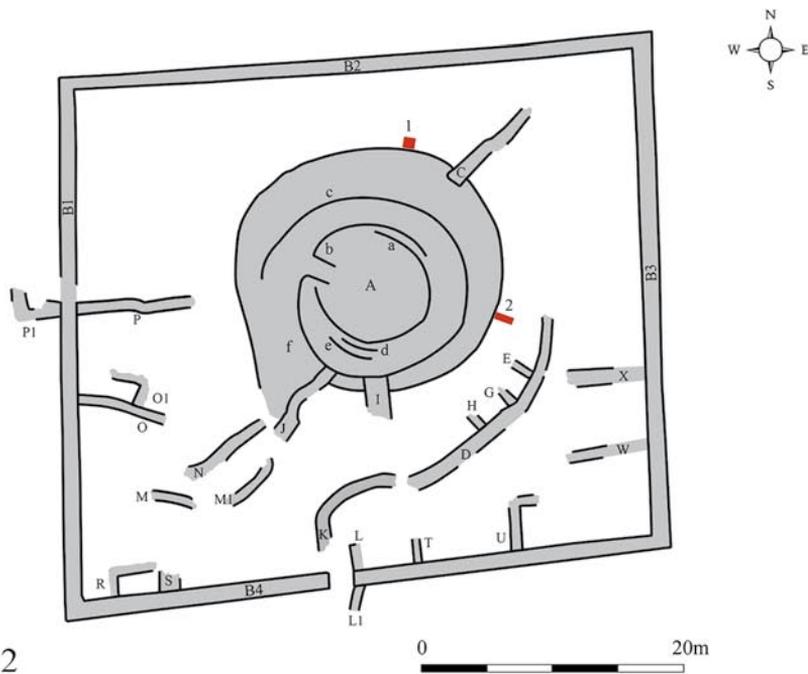


2

Fig. 4. Object I — bird's eye view (1), digital elevation model (2). By M. Bogacki



1



2

Fig. 5. Object I — digital surface model (1), plan of the wall relics. Sondage trenches marked by red (2).
By Z. Polak, M. Trzeciecki)



1



2



3



4

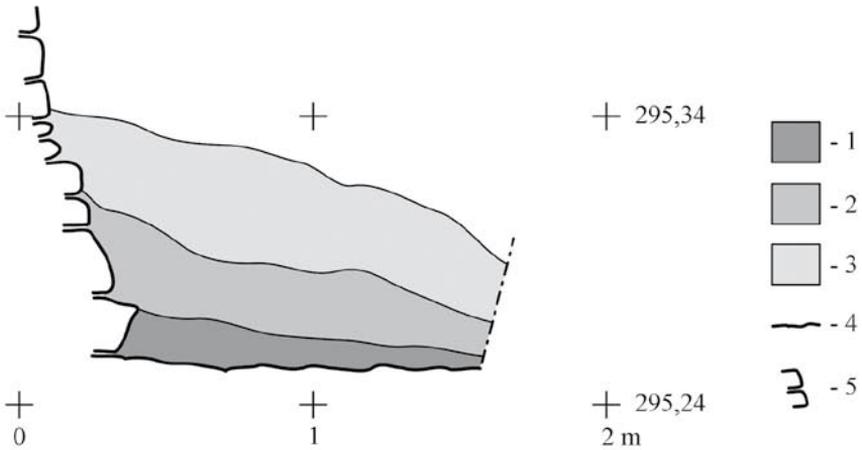
Fig. 6. Object I, structure A — southern façade with later added wall I (1), ramp leading to the top of the structure with later added walls J and M (2), western façade of the enclosure wall B (3), NW corner of the enclosure wall B (4). Photo M. Trzeciecki



1



2



3

Fig. 7. Object I, structure A. Sondage trench 1 — view from the South-West (1), sondage trench 2 — view from the South-East (2), North-Eastern profile of the trench (3): 1 — brown-grey humus, 2 — small and medium-sized rubble; 3 — thick rubble and hewn stones 4 — bedrock, 5 — façade of the wall.

By M. Trzeciecki



1



2



3



4

Fig. 8. Object 1 — SW part with walls B, J, K, M and N (1), relics of stone walls inside the enclosure: walls D, E, G, H (2), walls O, P (3), wall C (4).
Photo M. Trzeciecki



1



2



3



4

Fig. 9. Object II — ortophotographic map (1), object III — ortophotographic map (2), road No 1 — bird's eye view (3), road No 3 near object I — bird's eye view (4). Photo M. Bogacki

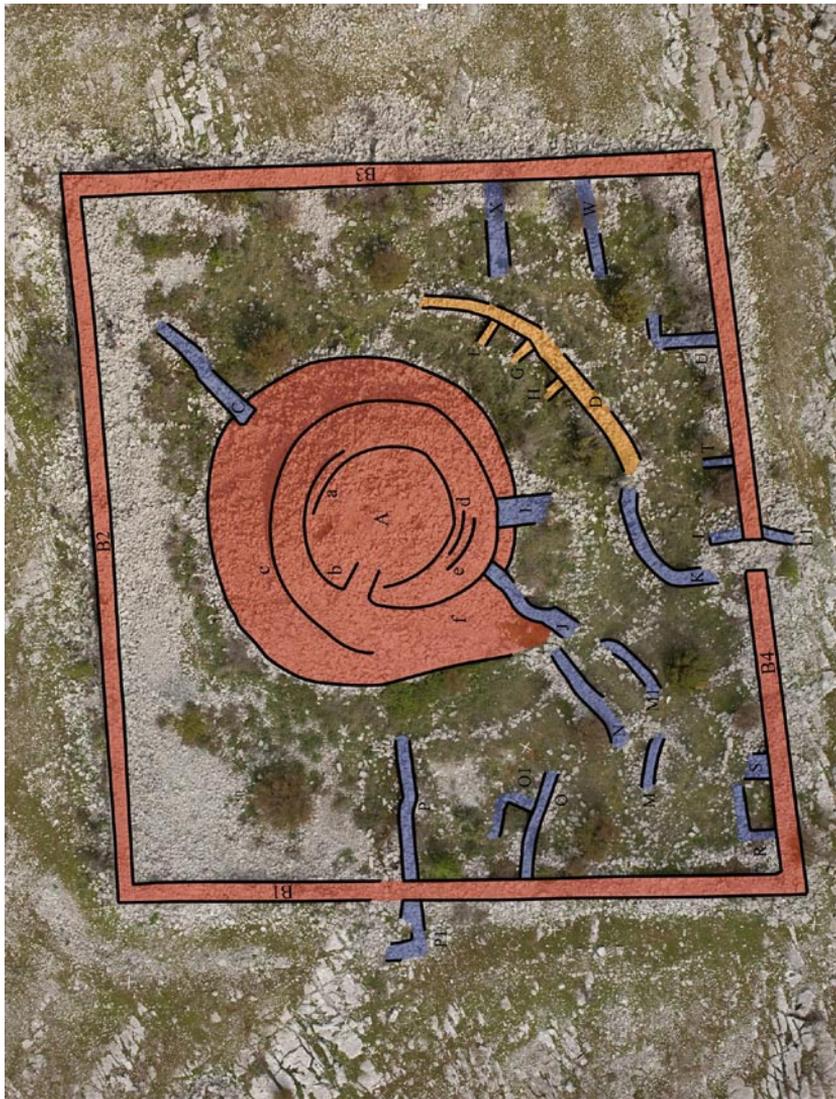


Fig. 10. Object I — orthophotographic map with the stratification of wall relics (by M. Bogacki, Z. Polak and M. Trzeciecki)

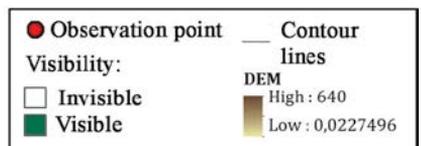
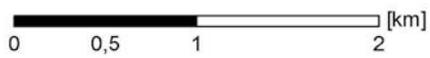
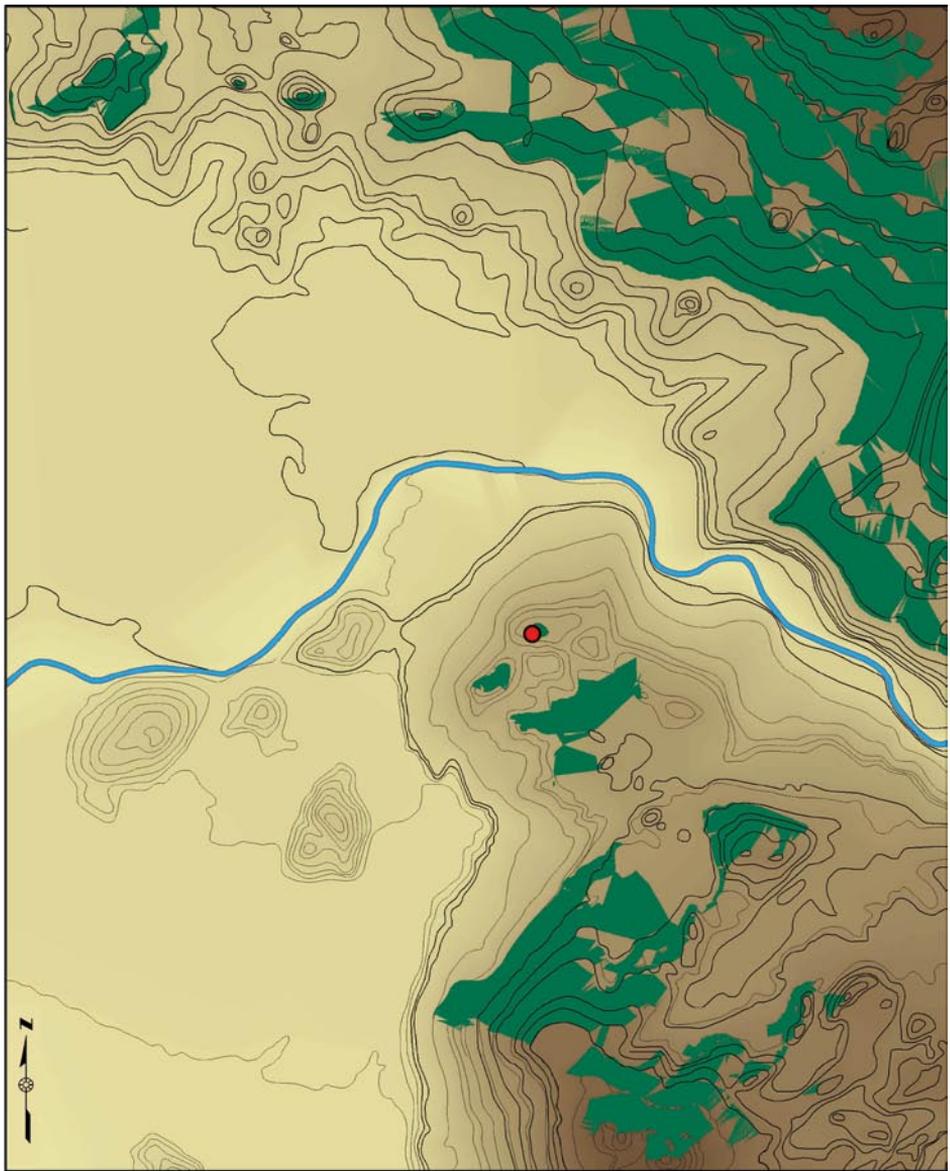


Fig. 11. Observatory tower on Planinica hill — visibility analysis. By M. Chwiej

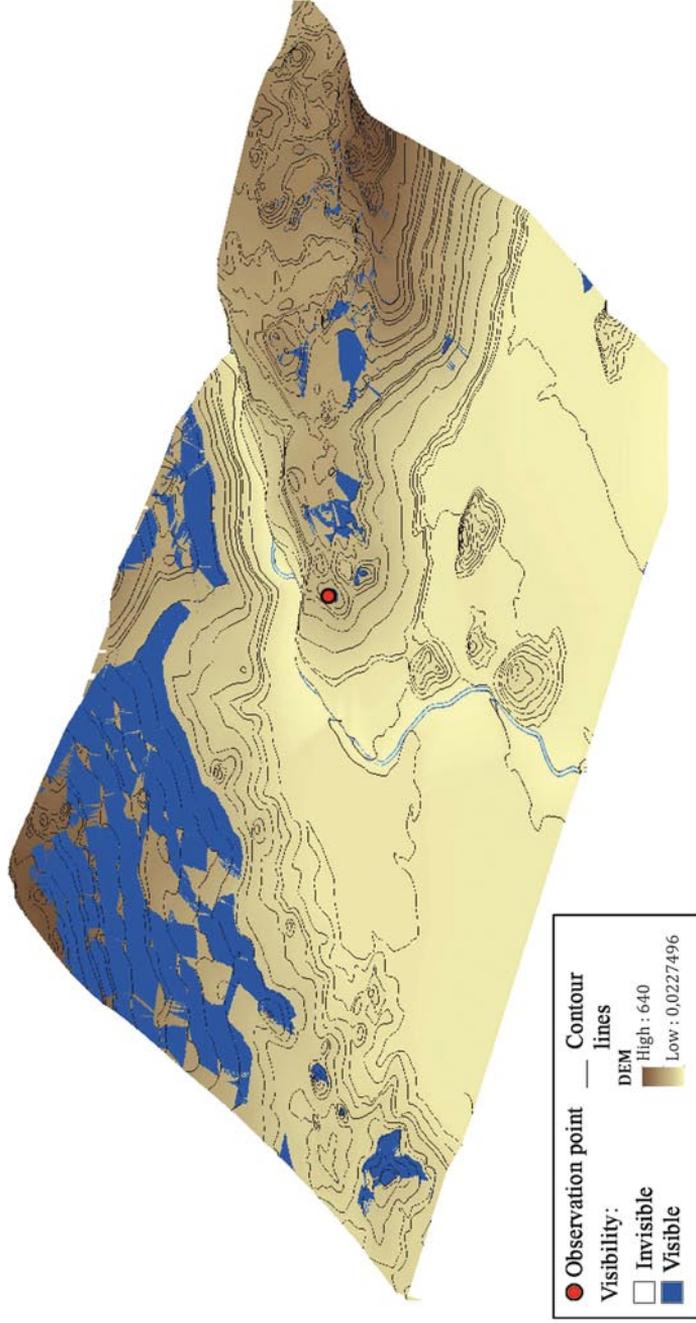


Fig. 12. Observatory tower on Planinica hill — visibility analysis imposed on digital elevation model. By M. Chwiej

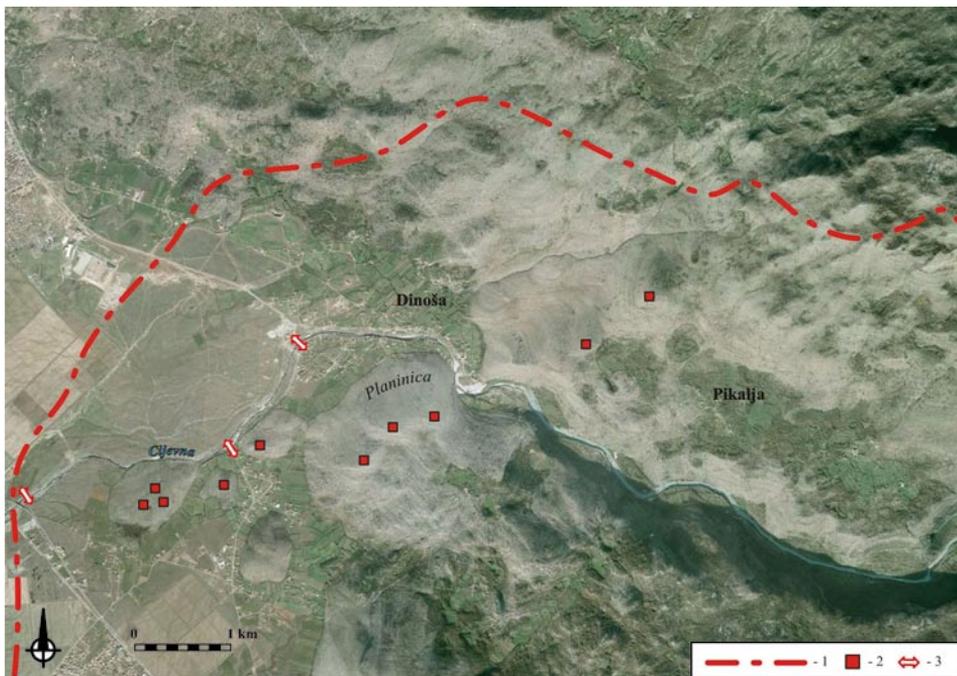


Fig. 13. Ottoman border control system in the area of Planinica hill. 1 — border line in the years 1878–1913, 2 — forts, 3 — bridges on Cijevna river. By M. Trzeciecki

mid-length, there is an entrance 2.3 m wide. Another entrance, broken into the existing wall, is situated at the mid-length of the western part of the wall.

Inside the enclosure there are relics of stone structures representing the subsequent phases of the functioning of object I (Fig. 5, 8). They are constructed much less carefully than both the tower and the enclosure. In their construction hewn or broken stones of different size were used. They were placed in a chaotic manner, usually with their longer sides inwards. These were rather provisional constructions that seem to have functioned relatively briefly.

The wall surrounding the tower from the south east (D) and the short walls perpendicular to it (E, G, H; Fig. 8: 2) are related to the initial period of the functioning of the tower. The remains of undefined constructions (O, P; Fig. 8: 3) adjacent to the “new” entrance within the western part of wall B, as well as the wall closing the ramp (J) together with some other badly preserved relics (M, N), most probably refer to a change in the disposition of space within the enclosure (Fig. 7: 2; 8: 1). Connected with this reorganization are probably also the wall sectors added to the tower from the south (I, Fig. 6: 1) and north east (C, Fig. 8: 4), as well as the remains of the wall (K, L) adjacent to the “older” entrance, completely covered with stones. The walls added perpendicularly to the inner façade of the southern and eastern parts of the peripheral wall (R–X) may have belonged to buildings existing during the functioning of the entire structure.

At the western edge of the top of Planinica, 52 m west of object I, a rectangular wall denoted as object II (Fig. 9: 1) was registered. It has a trapezoid plan (11.90 and 10.70 m), the walls are preserved to a height of 1 m. Its longest side is situated along the north-west axis. The object is structurally homogeneous, the façades are constructed with stones of different size with no mortar to bind them, showing no tendency for a regular pattern. The inner part is filled with small rough-hewn stones. The south western wall is the most badly damaged, parallel to a natural bedding fault. Clearly visible is only the outer line of the wall, hence the wall thickness there has not been defined. The other walls are better preserved, their thickness varies from 1 to 1.25 m. In the south eastern wall there is an entrance 1 m wide, situated closer to the north eastern wall and not on the axis.

At the eastern edge of the top of Planinica, approximately 370 m east of object I, another stone enclosure of pentagonal plan was registered, denoted as object III (Fig. 9: 2). The total length of the wall at the base of the perimeter is 19.9 m, the side walls are 16.8 m and 12.1 m long, the length of the walls forming the vertex of the pentagon is 15.2 and 13.5 m. The walls are 1–1.5 m thick, preserved to a height of 0.6–0.8 m. The façades of the walls are constructed from hewn stones of different size, with no mortar, the gap between the inner and outer side is filled with rubble. No entrance has been found. From the west a semicircular wall with rubble core was added. Inside the enclosure there are some badly preserved remains of inner sections: a wall situated along a south west axis and added to the northern wall of the perimeter, and a wall which runs from east to west, added to the north-eastern part of the enclosure wall. Due to the bad state of preservation it was not possible to decide whether the sections’ walls were joined into each other.

At a distance of 380 m north-east from object I, and 75 m north from object III another, badly preserved construction was registered (object IV). These are the remains of an outer façade of a semi-circular wall with a base of 15 m and a radius of 8 m. Only the first course of stones had been preserved, laying directly on the bedrock.

At a distance of 400 m south west from object I there is a rectangular wall with a trapezoid ground plan (object V). Its longer side is situated along a southwest-northeast axis, parallel to the ridge of the hill. The lengths of the trapezoid's base are 26 and 22 m, the height is 21 m. The entrance was situated in the northwest. The object is structurally homogeneous. The façades of the walls are constructed from hewn stones of different size, with no mortar, the gap between the inner and outer side is filled with rubble.

At a distance of 30 m from the round tower, close to the eastern part of the perimeter wall of object I, another badly preserved stone construction was registered (object VI). It has a rectangular plan measuring 9 x 4 m, its longer axis is aligned northwest-southeast. Only the stones from the first layer of the north-western façade, the northern corner and small parts of the south-western façade have been preserved. The core of the object is filled with small rubble.

An integral part of this group of constructions are stone roads connecting the objects and communicating with the foot of the hill (Fig. 3). They differ in terms of their length, course, building techniques and chronology, while they have only one thing in common — none of them are used continuously at present.

The road denoted as No 1 begins at the southern entrance to object I, leads to a karst sinkhole south of Planinica and climbs up the hill to where object V is situated (Fig. 9: 3). It has a length of 643 m a width of 2.3–3 m. Its part close to object I was formed as a mildly descending ramp, its outer edge either runs along natural faults or is constructed with large dry stones. The gap between the edge and the bedrock was filled with crushed stones. The construction of the part of the road close to object V required removing rubble, levelling the ground and marking the course with a row of large stones. It seems that the construction works were not completed — the road is not brought directly to the entrance to object I. Moreover, the surface close to object I is covered with rubble too thick to enable effective communication.

Road No 2 connects the top of Planinica with the village of Hadžaj. On Planinica it runs next to a prehistoric burial mound, then turns northeast and heads to object IV, where its course becomes unclear. It has no surface/pavement, but was just marked at the edges with stones (for a width varying between 0.9–1.3 m) and any unevenness of the ground was filled with rubble. It was documented over a distance of 722 m.

Road No 3 connects the top of Planinica with the foot in the north. It starts at the foot of the hill at the junction of the contemporary roads in “new” Dinoša. The road levels and slightly straightens until a series of short curves on the northern slope of Planinica. Just before reaching the top it straightens again at a distance of 600 m leading to the northern curtain wall of object I and then to the entrance in its western curtain wall (Fig. 9: 4). It has

no surface/pavement, but was just marked at the edges with stones (for a width varying between 1.2–1.8 m) and any unevenness of the ground filled with rubble. It was documented for a distance of 1148 m.

After construction of road No 3, using the same technique a section 300 m long running across the top of the ridge was built (road No 4). It heads with short curves to the prehistoric burial mound (tumulus II; Bugaj *et al.* 2013) where it meets the road No 2. After constructing this junction, the section of the road No 2 leading to object IV was longer been used.

Road No 5 (length — 2249 m, width — 2,1 to 2,6 m) connects the top with the foot of Planinica in its northern part. It starts at the foot of the hill at the junction of the contemporary roads in “new” Dinoša. At a few points it destroys roads No 3 and No 4, then reaches the top of the hill and breaks, next to object IV. The road was deeply cut in the ground in order to level its surface. It was covered with gravel and tamped down. The road was never completed, the last 300 m close to the top of the hill is lacking any pavement, only the edges are marked with stones.

The key element in the analysis of the function of objects on Planinica is to define the interrelations of the stone structures and the roads. Based on data collected in the field one can conclude that all of them had been constructed using the same technique. The rectangular wall encompassing the tower, enclosure walls denoted as objects II, III and V, as well as — most probably — object VI were built in *opus emplectum* technique. Stones of different sizes were being placed with no mortar, and a sort of pattern can only be observed in corners, where large, more carefully dressed cuboids were put. A slightly different technique was used to build the round tower and the enclosure wall of object I, however the façades are constructed as described above. It could be assumed that all these objects were built as parts of one construction plan.

The analysis of the interrelations of the walls of object I allows us to distinguish at least two phases of its exploitation (Fig. 10). First the round tower was erected together with the ramp leading to its top and the rectangular enclosure wall with an entrance in the southern curtain. Probably already then the structures within the enclosure were in existence — its remains are the arched wall D. The second phase is related to a new entrance in the western curtain and to the blocking of access to the ramp. The wall unit next to both entrances should also be regarded in the context of changes in communication system inside the enclosure. Road No 1 is functionally related to object I (connecting it with object V), as well as roads No 3 and No 4 heading to the foot of the hill. It seems that the roads No 1 and No 2 are the oldest — road No 1 is related to the older entrance into object I, while road No 2 in its final section had been destroyed by the construction of road No 4. Roads No 3 and No 4 represent one functional unit within the younger “horizon”. The youngest is the only partly completed road No 5, sections of road No 3 and No 4 had been destroyed by its construction.

Based on the interrelation of the roads and the stone structures, one can attempt to reconstruct the construction phases. The first phase included the construction of objects

I–V and roads No 1–2. As a result a complex consisting of a tower surrounded by a rectangular wall and minor stone structures (objects II–V) was formed. The second phase can be characterized by a reorientation of communication system on the hill. This meant a change in the location of entrance to the enclosure of object I from the southern to the western curtain, together with the blocking of access to the ramp and the construction of some new stone elements which are at present difficult to interpret. During this phase the construction of road No 1 had been stopped, and a new road (No 3) to connect object I with the foot of the hill *via* the northern slope was paved. There the new road converged with a road heading to the bridge on Cijevna river and on further to Dinoša, as well as with road No 2, which was still functioning. The third phase was the large scale construction of road No 5, the last constructional investment on Planinica. It headed from the main crossing on the Cijevna river to the top of Planinica, destroying the remains of an older road on its way. Road No 5 was never completed.

In order to evaluate Planinica as a strategic point a view shed analysis has been performed (Fig. 11–12). As one of the GIS tools it is being adopted by archaeologist to enhance seemingly invisible features of visual landscape. In order to perform such a task a digital elevation model (DEM) reflecting terrain is needed as well as a point feature representing location of observers. This study is focused only on one aspect of data derived from the Malesija region to assess the visibility from given viewpoints. The first step was to create a DEM of the area derived from digitized contours of the topographic map using ESRI software package. DEM, like any other raster, is a matrix of cells where each of them is assigned with a value approximating the elevation of area in that particular spot. Then a couple of arbitrary points are being chosen to produce a set of line-of-sight analyses that make up a new raster based on heights calculated on a model. Each cell in that raster has a unique value which is corresponding to appropriate viewpoint in the input feature class. For example, cells that cannot be seen from a given location are described with value of 0. Cells that can be seen are described with 1. As a result a series of simple raster based maps for each viewpoint is created. The differences between them are significant. Next step should be the creation of cumulative view shed analysis based on known site locations.

The arrangement of the buildings indicates that the most likely function was military. The top of Planinica is exceptionally inconvenient for settlement. There is no direct access to water. At present the only major activity on Planinica is sheep grazing. On the other hand the location and relief of the hill make it a natural fortress. The northern and western slopes are relatively gentle, but difficult to climb. At the same time a complete lack of vegetation and natural exposure guaranteed full control from the top. Climbing up the eastern side is not possible due to the steep slope and the river. The easiest access is by the southern slope, separated from the rest of the hill by a row of karst sinkholes.

An observatory tower built on the top of Planinica could have controlled the entire northern part of the Zeta plain down to Podgorica in the west and Tuzi in the south, together with the river crossings and a strategic road from Shkodra to Podgorica. The rest of

the object played probably an auxiliary role, such as the embankment of the tower controlling the slopes with potentially the easiest climbs. Moreover, object III made a convenient observation point for over a dozen kilometres of the Cijevna valley, while object V ensured control of the part of the plain between Tuzi and Milješ.

The relatively well aligned surface of the ridge allowed fast communication between the tower and the easternmost objects III and IV. To facilitate the communication between objects I and V the construction of a stone road was initiated but never completed. In the first construction phase the only road was heading south, to the vicinity of Hadžaj.

Neither the results of architectural research, nor the detailed archaeological survey carried out on the hill's culmination and slopes, provided data that would enable determining the time of construction of the buildings. The survey provided only numerous cartridges and projectiles of firearms, including a lead Berdan rifle projectile found in a layer related to the destruction of the tower. Berdan rifles was a standard issue in the Russian army from 1870 to 1891 and also used by army ground forces taking part in the Balkan War 1912–1913. After replacement by the Mosin–Nagant rifle in the Russian army, the Berdans were passed on to the armies of the states dependant or allied with Russia, *i.a.* Serbia and Montenegro (Ciepieliński and Woźniak 1994, 12–14). The archaeological survey's results showed that on the area under research there are no signs of human activity that could be dated to the period before the middle or end of 19th century — apart from the Bronze Age tumuli. The finds collected during the survey can only confirm the military function of the buildings.

As it has been emphasized above the tower and accompanying objects were built during one construction work/action on an unpopulated area. It seems to have been a rather simple albeit laborious task, which suggests a “field” nature for the complex. It could therefore be described as a “fort”. The following phases did not involve development of the complex (leaving aside object I), but changes in the communication system. One can get the impression that the fort functioned only for a short period of time.

The stone structures on Planinica are not mentioned either in archaeological or historical publications in Montenegro. Archaeologists were concerned only with the burial mounds then dated to the Early Iron Age. Interestingly, the round tower within object I has been classified also as a tumulus, despite evident differences in construction (Radusinović, 1991b, 125 — description of the tumuli extracted from the documentation of the conservation services; Marković 2006, 242).

The Albanians living at the foot of Planinica attribute the stone structures to the “Turkish time”. According to their story, the construction of road No 5 took place during the First World War as an initiative of the Austrian army using local villagers to do the task. Insofar as — already during the fieldwork — there seemed to us to be no justifiable reason to connect the stone structures in question with prehistory, the “Turkish” issue seemed to be at least noteworthy. It also appears in the description of Dinoša village as the “remains of fortifications from the Turkish times” (Radusinović 1991b, 131). However the “Turkish

times” in this part of the Balkans cover a period of over 400 years — from the introduction of the Turkish administrative system in 16th century until the Balkan War. The latter resulted in the boundary treaty and the present boundary regime (Roberts 2007, 103f; Czekalski *et al.* 2009, 110f). Planinica is situated on the border between two regions: rural, lowland Zeta and pastoral, highland Malesija, and each of them had a different position in the organizational structure of the Ottoman Empire. In the Zeta region the Turkish administration was introduced relatively quickly. The Turks established a new administrative centre in Podgorica, situated in a good, strategic position at confluence of the Zeta and Morača rivers. In a fortress built there a garrison was quartered to protect the road to Shkodra. This very road, leading to the foot of Planinica, was a part of an important commercial route, called by the Venetians *Via de Zenta*. One of its staging posts was Tuzi (Radusinović 1991a, 120f; 1991b, 256–257).

In Malesija however the course of events developed quite differently. Around the middle of 16th century the Turks finally gave up their attempts to enforce full administrative, military and fiscal control over the barely accessible highlands of northern Albania. Pashas of the Sanjak of Shkodra kept forming unofficial alliances with the chiefs of the clans, allowing Malissori to keep Catholicism, respecting their common law and not levying taxes. In return the Turks demanded only the participation of the highlanders in their military enterprises and desisting from attacking merchants’ caravans and lowland villages. The latter demand was impossible to fulfill, for plundering raids as well as clan vengeance formed the highlanders’ “way of life”. The result were retaliatory Turkish raids (Durham 1909, 18; Czekalski *et al.* 2009, 123–126). Nevertheless, for a few centuries in Malesija a specific *status quo* was maintained. The situation changed not before the middle of the 19th century with the rapidly progressing liberation of Principality of Montenegro from the authority of the Ottoman Empire. These events had a serious impact on the Zeta region, bordering Montenegro from the west as it did, resulting in a gradual breakdown of the Turkish administrative structure. Of central importance here were the events of 1876–1878, the Montenegrin-Turkish War. It ended with the Congress of Berlin in 1878, which aimed at organizing the politically complicated reality of the Western Balkans (Medlicott 1963). The Treaty of Berlin (1878) formally recognized the independence of the *de facto* sovereign Principality of Montenegro. In consequence the Zeta Plain with Podgorica became a part of Montenegro. Only a small part of the plain around Dinoša with strategic bridges on the Cijevna river remained in Turkish hands (Blumi 2003, 239–244). The new boundary agreement was not recognized by the Ottoman Empire and the following 30 years was marked with preparations for another conflict. It should be pointed out that Montenegro officially aired concern in that regard, and planned the annexation of lands around Lake Skadar as far as the Bojana river. The main purpose of this plan was to annex Shkodra — the capital of the Kingdom of Zeta in the Middle Ages, to which the independent Montenegro was to be a successor. These efforts were manifested in the systematic arming of the clans of Malesija and encouraging the highlanders to act against Turkey. The

same motivation stood behind Montenegrin military support for the highland clans in the so-called Malissori Uprising in 1911. The revolt started in the vicinity of Tuzi and affected the entire region, becoming one of the direct causes of the Balkan War (Treadway 1983, 74; Roberts 2007, 278–290). In 1911 battles were also fought on Planinica (Jovičević 1923, 112). Turkish activity was limited to fortifying the new border, and building military posts and strategic roads (Blumi 2003, 245–246). Watchtowers along the new border are also mentioned in reports written by travelers and scholars visiting Malesija at the turn of 19th and 20th centuries (Baldacci 2009, 24, 70–72; Durham 1909, 62), although none of the reports mention Planinica.

It appears that this was the time when the complex of stone structures on Planinica came into existence. The watchtower and the forts guarding it controlled the pivotal area between Podgorica and Tuzi. The latter became a new administrative and military centre for the region after 1878. It is very hard to find analogies for the stone buildings from Planinica. Only some structures from the border between the Ottoman and Habsburg Empires could be given here as examples. In the 17th and 18th centuries, along the Croatian Military Frontier a system of wooden watchtowers surrounded by a stockade was developed (Carlton and Rushworth 2009, 421). Although those are not direct analogies in terms of construction techniques, the very idea of a watchtower inside a rectangular enclosure seems to be common to both regions.

It is also hard to establish an exact date of construction of the Planinica watchtower. The definitive withdrawal of the Turkish troops from Podgorica in 1880 and the abandonment of the region to Montenegro provides the *terminus post quem*. The *terminus ante quem* is furnished by the publication by the Austro-Hungarian of the first precise map of the region in 1887 (*Generalkarte von Mitteleuropa*, 1869–1887, sheets: 37–42 *Scutari*, available at: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/category:3rd_Military_Mapping_Survey_of_Austria_Hungary).

The system of forts defending Tuzi from north and west — including the object on Planinica — is already marked on the map.

We do not know the date of the conversion of the fortifications that is evidenced by the laying out a new road heading to the foot of Planinica (No 3–4). Their courses suggest that it was still a Turkish investment for it leads to the bridge on the Cijevna river and further to Dinoša and other Turkish forts above the villages of Pikalja, Prifti and Lovka. Their function was to control the northern part of the new border, as well as the aforementioned villages. These villages situated in a barely accessible area and inhabited by the Catholics constituted the centre of the Gruda region (Jovičević 1923, 48–52). Their inhabitants were regarded as exceptionally averse to Turkish authority (Baldacci 2009, 71–72; Durham 1909, 62; Jovičević 1923, 13–16).

On the top of Planinica the new road joined the old one (No 2), which headed through the village of Hadžaj to a fort on the top of Dečić. At the foot of Dečić, there is Tuzi, then the site of the Turkish garrison. The Planinica watchtower was a part of a well-developed

border control system (Fig. 13). It seems very likely that there was something more to this idea than just a temporary military purpose. Forts and roads building can be regarded as the element of modernization of one of the most deprived regions of the Ottoman Empire, of the changes forced by political events. In those days the region of Gruda suddenly became an area of confrontation, as the Ottoman Empire parted the political arena and “young Balkan nations” descending into it, searching for their ways to independence (Blumi 2003, 237–?).

The border survived until the Balkan War in 1912 (Rabka 2010, see further literature). It is worth noting here that the first shots of this war were fired around Planinica, during a “dispute” between Turkish and Montenegrin soldiers (Özen *et al.* 2009, 134–135).

The Turkish-Montenegrin conflict started with sudden skirmishes to the north of the Cijevna valley, i.a. on the territory of Gruda, whereupon the Montenegrin army together with Albanian rebels attacked Tuzi. According to the reports by the Turkish commandant of the city defences, on the 2nd and 3rd of July 1912 the fighting for the Turkish posts continued on the slopes of Planinica. The wrestling of control over the Dečić and Planinica massifs by the Montenegrin troops made the defence of Tuzi pointless and the Turkish garrison left the city (Özen *et al.* 2009, 140). The conquest of Tuzi was an objective of great strategic importance as it provided a gateway to Shkodra. The congress held in London ended the war, and the independent Principality of Albania and a new border regime were established (Rabka 2010, 188–?; Roberts 2007, 289–292, Czekalski *et al.* 2009, 182–186). In 1913 Planinica fell to the Realm of Montenegro. The new authority could not have installed itself there before the First World War started in 1914. In early 1916 Montenegro and northern Albania were put under the control of Austrian army and remained under its occupation until the end of the war (Roberts 2007, 306–320). Probably just then the strategic significance of Planinica was for a short while revived again. The unfinished road No 5, which — according to the villagers of Dinoša — was built by the Austrian army, could be a trace of it. After 1918 the pre-war border was restored, however it was then already the Albanian-Yugoslav border. Planinica was no longer been a point of military interest and the stone structures on its top have undergone progressive destruction.

The system of forts and roads was the last Turkish investment in this region. It was meant to be a manifestation of the power of the Empire directed at its expansive neighbours. The system functioned relatively briefly, and — from a political point of view — was a failure. The Turkish forts are however, beside prehistoric stone burial mounds and stone houses in desolated villages, one of the most expressive features of landscape of this part of Malesija.

This seems to be a good starting point for studies focused not so much on the distant past, as on the present aspects of materiality of a borderland. A multidisciplinary approach of historical archaeology directs attention to how people have used and are using still their surroundings to legitimize their identity: by demarcating boundaries, eliminating “unwanted places” from a discourse, and replacing them with creations/commemorations of their real or imaginary roots.

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