



Antique Settlement Near the Village of Slivarovo of Malko Tarnovo Municipality in the SE Corner of Bulgaria

Lyudmil Vagalinski¹ 



¹Corresponding author:

Lyudmil Vagalinski (Prof. Dr.), National Archaeological Institute with Museum - Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Sofia, Bulgaria
E-mail: LfVagalinski@gmail.com
ORCID: 0000-0002-2870-0688

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ABSTRACT

The inhabitation of a mountain settlement near the village of Slivarovo in Malko Tarnovo Municipality in southeastern Thrace lasted from the 8th-6th centuries BC until around 1300 AD. Local people mined and worked iron throughout this time. Perhaps this output was the main reason for the centuries-old habitation of the locality and the prosperity of its residents.

Keywords: Ancient settlement, antiquity, Thrace, Slivarovo, Kladarsko gradishte

Preface

An ancient settlement situated along the Bulgarian-Turkish border in Strandzha Mountain south of the village of Slivarovo was studied archaeologically for the first time in 2010-2011 over a total of two months.¹ The archaeological site is known as *Kladarsko gradishte* after

¹ Вагалински et al. Антично селище край село Сливарово, Малкотърновско. – *Археологически открития и разкопки през 2010 година*, 2011, p.372-374; Антично селище край село Сливарово, Малкотърновско. – *Археологически открития и разкопки през 2010 година*, 2012, p.372-374. The archaeological research was attended by the colleagues Ivo D. Cholakov and Sirma Alexandrova (National Archaeological Institute with Museum – Bulgarian Academy of Sciences); Nicolay Sharankov (Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski") and Ivelina Ivanova and Dobrina Harbalieva (City Museum of History – Malko Tarnovo). Atanas Kamenarov† performed the geodetic surveying. Digging was only done by hand with workers hired in the city of Malko Tarnovo. Thanks to all for their dedicated intensive work in the conditions of heavy rains on difficult mountain terrain! Lazar Ninov (NAIM-BAS) carried out the archaeozoological study. Vladimir Penchev (National Museum of History – Sofia) identified the coins that were found. The archaeological excavations were financed by the municipality of Malko Tarnovo.



the old name of the village. The area is a peninsula with steep slopes, towering about 60 m above the bordering Rezovska aRiver, which surrounds it on three sides (Fig. 1).

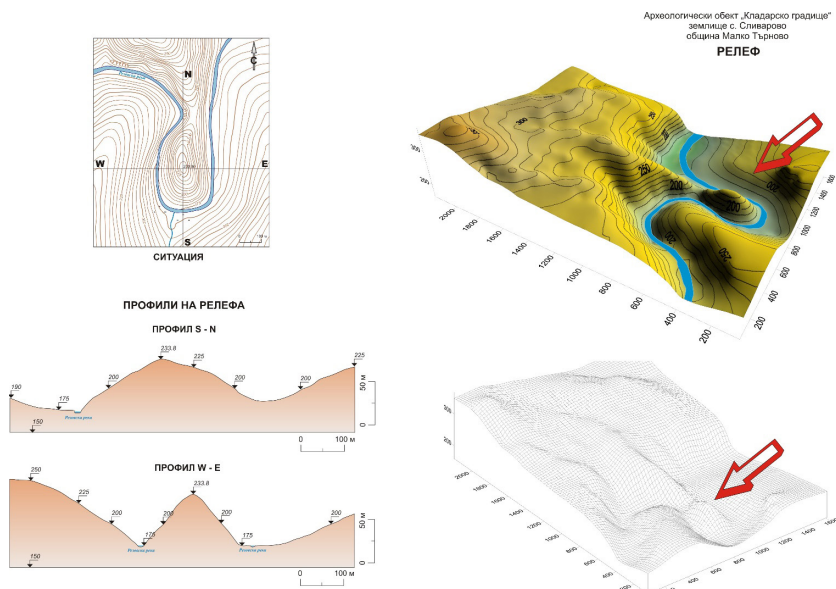


Figure 1. Topography of the site (Atanas Kamenarov).

The purpose of the publication is to introduce this ancient settlement into scientific circulation. The article will mainly present its chronology in synthesized form and is based only on the stratigraphic results. A full publication with a description of the discovered archaeological structures and a catalogue of the numerous and varied artifacts that have been found has not yet occurred.

Chronology

According to the pottery found at the site (Варалински et al. 2011, 372, обр. 2; Figs. 2[14] & 3[trench 7]), the earliest traces of permanent habitation date back from the second phase of the Early Iron Age Period (8th-6th centuries BC). This village had been burned.

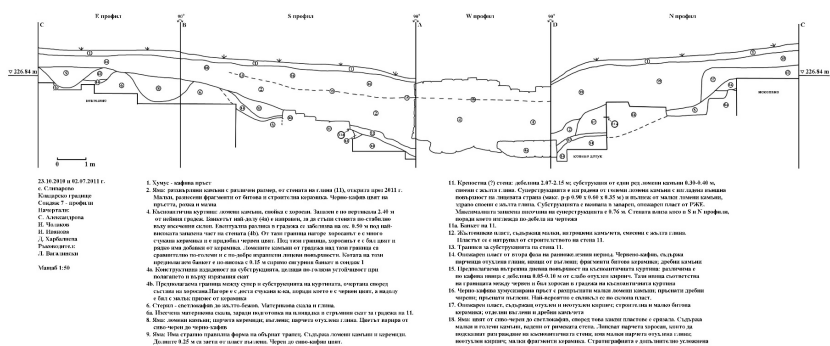


Figure 2. Stratigraphic cross-sections in trench 7; see fig. 3 (Lyudmil Vagaliniski).

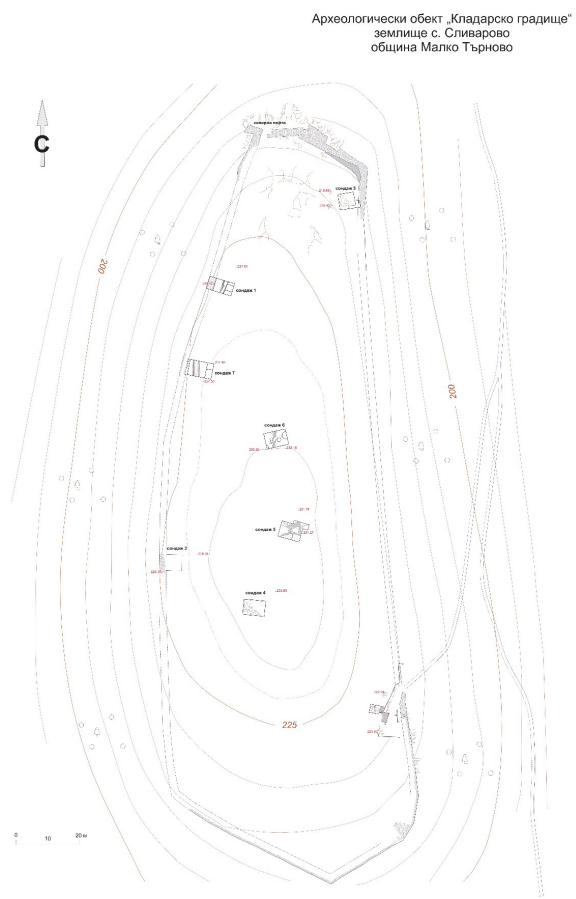


Figure 3. Plan of the late antique fortress and location of the archaeological trenches (Atanas Kamenarov / Lyudmil Vagalinski).

Life resumed in the Hellenistic period, with its early Hellenistic period being represented by a cultural layer and cult pits (Figs. 3[trench 6], 4, & 5[2]). An amphora stamp of Thasos dating to about 309 BC (Fig. 6)² was discovered in one of these pits. Two bronze coins (Thracian imitation of *Maroneia* from the second half of the 4th century BC³ and a Thracian imitation of Lysimachus dated from 323-280 BC)⁴ confirm habitation of the terrain during the early Hellenistic period. Fragments of black slip ware and lenticular clay weights for vertical looms also were dated to the Hellenistic period. At that time, a fortification was built whose walls had been erected of stones mortared with clay. Only part of its west wall was studied, which was found to be about 2 m thick (Figs. 2[11], 3[trench 7], & 8). On the living surface of this fortress wall (Fig. 2[12]), a second amphora stamp of Thasos was found that dates to about 275 BC (Fig. 7).⁵ This date is the *terminus ante quem* for the fortress wall. The end of the Hellenistic settlement is marked by severe burning, whose sure *terminus post quem* is noted by a very rare bronze coin of the Odrysian King Sadalas II from between 48-42 BC.⁶

2 Ch. Tzochew, *Amphora Stamps from Thasos* (The Athenian Agora, XXXVII), Princeton/New Jersey: American School of Classical Studies at Athens, 2016, No. 186/a-e. The amphora stamp (field inv. No. 88/2011) was identified by Kalin Madzarov (NAIM-BAS).

3 Field inv. No. 30/2011; V. Pentshev, "Vier interessante antike Münzen aus der Befestigung beim Dorf Slivarovo, Gemeinde Malko Tarnovo, Südost-Bulgarien," *Archaeologia Bulgarica*, 17/2 (2013), p.55-56, Abb.1.

4 Field inv. No. 4/2010.

5 Tzochew, period VI. See an exact parallel in Y. Garlan, "Quelques nouveaux ateliers amphoriques à Thasos," *Bulletin de Correspondance Hellénique Supplément*, XIII (1986), p. 252, fig. 38/o. The amphora stamp (field inv. No. 88/2011) was identified by Kalin Madzarov (NAIM-BAS).

6 Вагалински et al., Археологически открития и разкопки през 2011 година, p.372; field inv. No 13/2010.

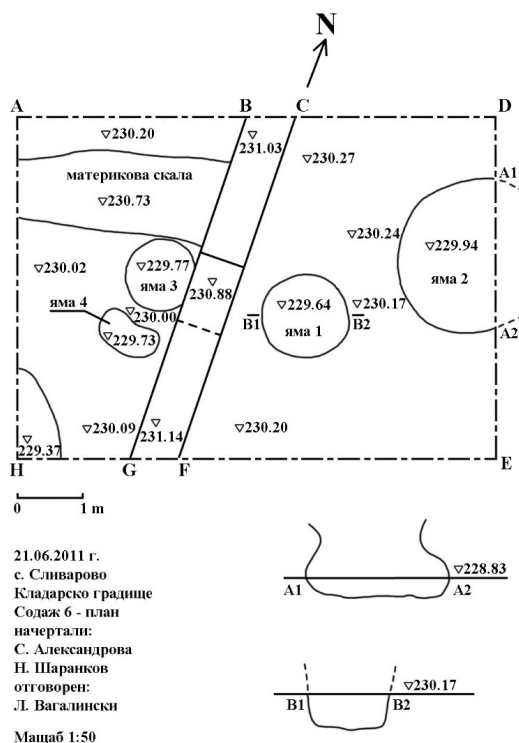


Figure 4. Plan of Hellenistic pits and a Roman wall in trench 6; see figs. 3 and 5 (Lyudmil Vagalinski).

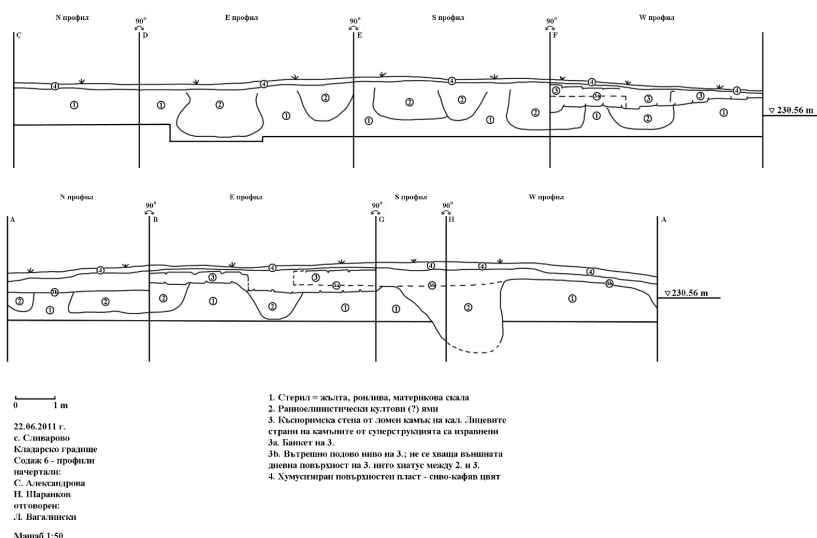


Figure 5. Stratigraphic cross-sections in trench 6; see figs. 3 and 4 (Lyudmil Vagalinski).



Figure 6. Amphora stamp of Thasos, *ca.* BC 309 (Lyudmil Vagalinski).



Figure 7. Amphora stamp of Thasos, *ca.* BC 275 (Lyudmil Vagalinski).



Figure 8. Early Hellenistic western fortress wall, view from the north; see trench 7 in fig. 3 (Lyudmil Vagalinski).

Life in the settlement continued during the Roman imperial era (1st-3rd centuries AD). This cultural layer contained the most numerous and varied finds, such as bronze and silver coins, fibulas, glass vessels, clay lamps, iron tools, spindle whorls, clay loom weights, and amphorae. The combination of hand-made pottery decorated in the spirit of the Thracian ceramic tradition and use of red-slip tableware are impressive, with the vessels from the first group having probably been used for cooking because wheel-made pottery was rare in kitchens. The village inhabitants kept cattle, goats, sheep, pigs, horses, donkeys, and dogs, with cattle having the greatest numbers. These people preferred to consume calves and small pigs, which was a luxurious diet suited to a wealthy community. Large dogs with a height at withers of 67 cm were also bred. The age composition of the domestic animals shows the settlement to have been inhabited year-round. The bones of wild animals (e.g., deer, roe deer) are negligible at a total of 0.5%.

Graffiti on pottery with Greek and Roman names (i.e., [Δι]ονυσίου, [Σα]ρπνε[ί]ου)) reveal a literate people,⁷ with a tombstone from the 3rd century possessing a Latin inscription confirming this (Fig. 9).⁸ Similar tombstones also dating to the 3rd century AD are known about

7 The graffiti was noted by Nicolay Sharankov.

8 The inscription was noted by Nicolay Sharankov.

from the territory of Perinthus.⁹ The walls in the settlement had been built from stones and adobe mortared with clay (Figs. 10, 11[7, 8]). The roofs were covered with both tegula and imbrex tiles. According to the latest coins found in the ruins (fig. 11[2]), the settlement had burned down after AD 177. In the same trench but in a Roman layer disturbed by later pits (Fig. 11/5), coins were discovered of the Emperors Caracalla (198-217 AD) and Elagabalus (218-222 AD).¹⁰ No coins were found dating to the end of the 3rd century. Therefore, 218 AD may very well be the *terminus post quem* for the burning of the Roman settlement.



Figure 9. A piece of a tombstone with Latin inscription, 3rd C AD (Lyudmil Vagalinski).

9 A. Slawisch, A. *Die Grabsteine der römischen Provinz Thracia*, Langenweissbach: Beier & Beran, 2007, Taf. 5/ P5, P7, P8, P10, P11a-P11b.

10 Field inv. Nos. 16 & 15/2011, respectively.

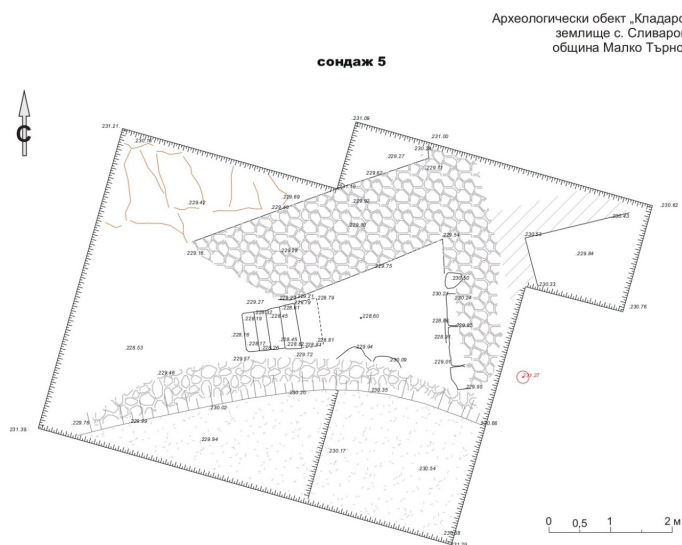
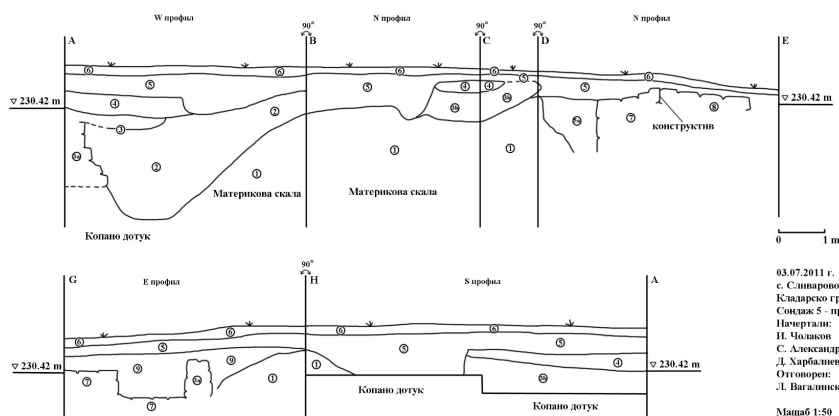


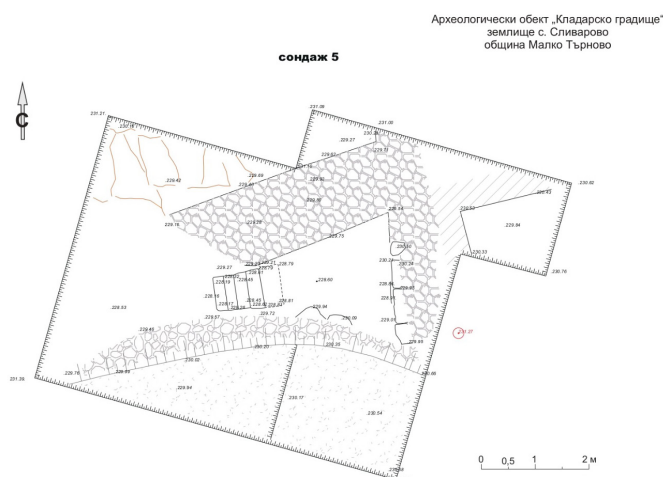
Figure 10. Plan of structures in trench 5 (see figs. 3 and 11): corner of Roman premises with staircase; curve late antique(?) wall (Atanas Kamenarov / Lyudmil Vagalinski).



1. Жълта рохлява материкова скала
2. Римски покрив: минава отгледана глина (кирпичи); възлени фрагменти от битова и строителна керамика; ломени камъни; животински кости
3. Дивна повърхност на "кривата" стена на кал
- 3a. "Крива" стена, изградена от ломени камъни на глинена спойка, чиито субструкция е закопана в римския покрив; помещението се е развляло на юг; неговото вътрешно подово ниво е маркирано с жълта, пясъчлива глина (от материковата скала?), до които сме стигнали до копачки покрив S профила на сондажа
- 3b. Опокарен пласт, принадлежащ на 3a; сиво-кафив; има разсечени възлени, отделни фрагменти от строителна и битова керамика
4. Пласт от изветряла, жълта, материкова скала
5. Сиво-черен пласт с разпръснати фрагменти от строителна и битова керамика; разпръснати възлени; отделни ломени камъни
- 5a. Яма за грабък на римските стени на глина. Съдържа недоизградени ломени камъни и разсечена жълта материкова скала, което е причина за жълто-кафивия цвят. Отделни парчета битова керамика; отделни възлени, вероятно от 3b.
6. Хуруе - кафив, с доста корени и разпръснати фрагменти от керамика

7. Стена, изградена от ломени камъни на жълта, глинена спойка. Лицевите камъни са като правило по-големи, с изравнени външни повърхности. Тя е на конструктив със стена със същия градеж и дебелина, която е ориентирана почти E-W. Стратиг рафска този ъзъл от масивни стени на глина съответства на римския покрив. Възможно е тези масивни стени да са изградени около н.е., когато тракийското царство, макар и васално на Рим, пазил някаква форма на самостоятелност. Това би обяснило наличието на тракийски монети от втората половина на I в. пр. Хр. (на Садила I, на Реметале/ Август)
8. Стена на конструктив със 7., от която сме разкрили малка част от S-лице. Тя продължава в южната посока и не е в надлъжна ос със стената покрай N профила на сондажа. Стена 8. има най-вероятно същия градеж, като масивните, конструктивно свързани помежду си римски стени
9. Протоплен по склона (терепът се е спуснал от юг на север) пласт, съдържащ смесен материал, включително фрагмент от чернофинишов, елинистически съл. Пластът е с кафив цвят.

03.07.2011 г.
с. Сливарово
Кладарско градище
Сондаж 5 - профили
Начертал: Н. Чолаков
С. Александрова
Д. Харбалнева
Отговорен: Л. Вagalinski
Мащаб 1:50



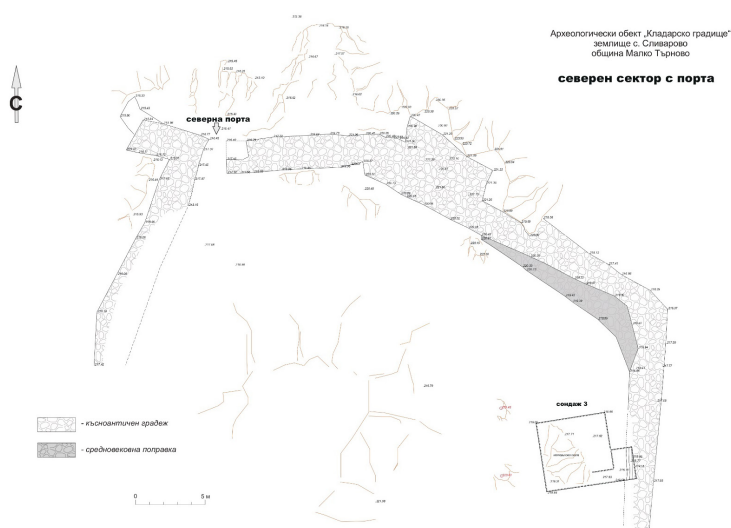


Figure 12. Plan of the northern part of the late antique fortress with the pedestrian gate/entrance (see fig. 3); dark grey – medieval repairs (Atanas Kamenarov / Lyudmil Vagalinski).

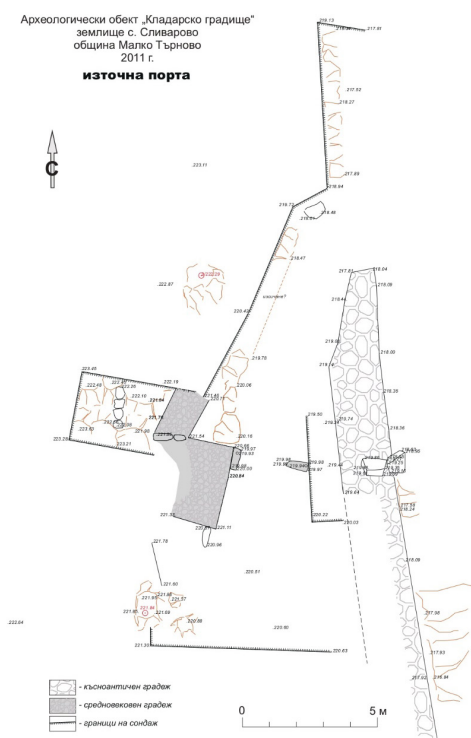


Figure 13. Plan of the eastern gate of the late antique fortress (see fig. 3); dark grey – medieval narrowing (Atanas Kamenarov / Lyudmil Vagalinski).

Conclusion

Judging by the presence of foundry pots, lumps of slag and tools found during all these settlement periods, the inhabitants apparently mined and worked iron. This production was probably the main reason for the centuries-old habitation of the site and the good well-being of the local people.

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Conflict of Interest: The author has no conflict of interest to declare.

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