

## THE ROCK-CUT ROOM ON THE ACROPOLIS AT GOLEMO GRADIŠTE, KONJUH: DATE AND PURPOSE

The anonymous city at the site of Golemo Gradište at the village of Konjuh, R. Macedonia, belongs to the period of Late Antiquity; the evidence indicates that it was founded in the 5<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>1</sup> The lower town on the northern terrace was reconstructed, probably during the second quarter of the 6<sup>th</sup> century, but the inhabitants abandoned it, for the most part, later in that century and fled for refuge to the acropolis, where a settlement continued to exist into the early 7<sup>th</sup> century. Earlier material, beginning with the Late Neolithic and continuing sporadically through Bronze Age to Hellenistic, has been documented at the site; a Roman settlement may have been located nearby but not at Golemo Gradište itself, and there is evidence for Byzantine and Turkish occupation.<sup>2</sup> Despite this overall understanding of the chronology of occupation at the site, one of its most attractive features has remained a mystery, uncertain in date and purpose.

The acropolis consists of a long ridge that runs east-west through the middle of the fortified city. (Fig. 1) It is an outcropping of bedrock, of volcanic origin but soft enough to be worked without great difficulty; many such cliffs are

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<sup>1</sup> Following a pilot season in 1998, the site has been under investigation by a Macedonian-American project, sponsored by the Museum of Macedonia in Skopje and Gettysburg College, since 2000. The co-directors since 2007 have been Goran Sanev and Carolyn S. Snively. In addition to articles cited below, see C.S. Snively, *Golemo Gradište at Konjuh: an Unidentified Late Antique City and its Churches*, Acta XV Congressus Internationalis Archaeologiae Christianae 2008, (Vatican City, 2013) 403-44; *eadem*, *The New Basilica at Golemo Gradište, Konjuh: a Late Antique Church in the Province of Dardania*, Niš and Byzantium 9 (Niš, 2011) 187-201; *eadem*, *Golemo Gradište at Konjuh, 2005 and 2006 Seasons: The Northern Terrace*, Macedoniae Acta Archaeologica 19, (2004-2006) [Skopje, 2010] 375-389; *eadem*, *Golemo Gradište at Konjuh: Report on the Excavations in 2000*, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 56 (Washington DC, 2002) 297-306; G. Sanev, C. S. Snively, and M. Stojanoski, *Excavations on the Northern Terrace at Golemo Gradište, Konjuh, 2007-2010*, Macedoniae Acta Archaeologica 20 (2012, Skopje), 347-364; C. S. Snively and G. Sanev, *Late Antique Residences at Golemo Gradište, Konjuh, R. Macedonia*, Niš and Byzantium 11 (2013, Niš) 157-172.

<sup>2</sup> Clearly identifiable if not closely datable Byzantine pottery was found in one area on the acropolis in 2000; it has not been published. Konjuh (*Chonuche*) was mentioned in 1373 in a written source; see S. Radojčić, *Црква у Коњуху*, Зборник Радова Византолошког Института 1 (Beograd, 1952) 152 and note 17.



Fig. 1. The acropolis ridge of Golemo Gradište, from the southwest. #1 marks the terrace where Room 1 is located, #2 the ravine that cuts the western end of the ridge off from the rest, #3 the lookout post, #4 the bedrock west wall of section D, and #5 is the eastern plateau C.

Сл.1. Гребен акропоља на Големом Градишту, са југозапада. #1 означава терасу где се налази просторија 1, #2 јаруга која одесеца западни део гребена од осталог дела, #3 видиковац, #4 западни зид бедема секције Д, а #5 је источни плато Ц.

found along the Kriva River and in the wider region. This natural fortification was certainly one reason for the establishment of a city here in Late Antiquity when the need for defense overrode other issues such as the unpleasantness of living on a cold northern terrace between the acropolis and the river.

In the 6<sup>th</sup> century, in the second quarter of that century probably as part of the Justinianic fortification and refortification of the empire, a fortress was created on the inhospitable terrain of the acropolis.<sup>3</sup> A relatively level plateau (C) was created at the east end of the hill by quarrying away the very top of the bedrock ridge and constructing a terrace and fortification wall along the south slope; filling in the space north of the wall resulted in a terrace or plateau, ca. 140 x ca. 20 m, that sloped gradually to east and south. Rectangular foundations left in the surface of the bedrock are visible along the north side of the plateau. A gate, centrally located in the south wall, provided access to the fortress from the southern section of the city, between the foot of the acropolis and a ridge further south. A second gate complex stood at the east end of the plateau and gave access to people coming up from the lower town on the northern terrace and from

<sup>3</sup> C. S. Snively, *Golemo Gradište at Konjuh, Republic of Macedonia: Prolegomena to the Study of a Late Antique Fortification*, Niš and Byzantium 4 (Niš, 2006) 229-244. For other descriptions of the acropolis, see I. Mikulčić, *Средновековни Градови и Тврдини во Македонија*, Скопје, 1996, 223-226; idem, *Антички Градови во Македонија*, Скопје, 1999, 358-361; idem, *Spätantike und frühbyzantinische Befestigungen in Nordmakedonien: Städte, Vici, Refugien, Kastele*, Munich 2002, 128-133; B. Georgievski, *Ранновизантијски скални објекти од района на Крива река, Република Македонија*, Археологија 38, 2-3 (Sofia, 1996) 73-74; and D. Georgievski, *Early Byzantine rock-cut settlements in the northeastern Republic of Macedonia*, Acta of Symposium Days of Justinian I, Skopje, forthcoming. The articles of B. Georgievski 1996 and D. Georgievski forthcoming are surveys and discussions of sites with rock-cut architecture in the Kriva valley and the northeastern region of R. Macedonia.



Fig. 2. The entrance to Room 1, from east. Note the cliff into which the room was carved and the stairs going up to the ledge.

Сл. 2. Улаз у просторију 1, са истока. обратите пажњу на литицу у коју је урезана просторија и степенице које иду горе на зараван.



Fig. 3. The entrance to Room 1, detail.

Сл. 3. Улаз у просторију 1, детаљ.

garrison<sup>5</sup> followed by a more crowded occupation by refugees from the lower town. A large number of storage vessels for food, including many pithoi, are characteristic of this second phase, and suggest that the inhabitants were taking precautions against a siege.

North of both plateau C and section D to the west, at a lower level at the foot of the bedrock outcropping of the top of the ridge, a narrow sloping terrace A ran east-west. Several ramps and staircases quarried into the bedrock connect this terrace with the eastern plateau. If a wall once protected the north edge of the terrace from the steep drop to the lower town on the broad northern terrace below, it collapsed down the hill long ago. Two test trenches on terrace A revealed densely packed houses, apparently representing only one phase of occupation, which has been interpreted as belonging to the refugee settlement of the late 6<sup>th</sup> to early 7<sup>th</sup> century.

To the west of eastern plateau C, the top of the ridge rose to a somewhat higher elevation. This section of the fortress (D) continued to the west as far as a formidable bedrock wall with a postern gate. The top of the ridge had been shaped into a number of fairly large rooms, some of whose bedrock walls still stand 2 m or more in height. Similar rooms had been quarried into the inner, eastern face of the bedrock fortification wall at the west end of the fortress.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Snively, 2006; C. S. Snively, *Archaeological Excavations on the Acropolis of Golemo Gradište, Konjuh, Kratovo*, *Macedoniae Acta Archaeologica* 18 (2002-2004) [Skopje 2008] 335-351.

<sup>5</sup> The scope of the land forming required to create the fortress on the acropolis points to intervention at the imperial or at least the provincial level. The fact that the city apparently served as the administrative center for a mining district also argues for a garrison to protect the mines, miners, ore, and products.

<sup>6</sup> See, for example, fig. 10 in Snively 2006.

the east end of the southern section.<sup>4</sup> The two major phases visible on the plateau appear to represent its initial strategic and defensive use by a military



Fig. 4. The interior of Room 1, looking northwest. Note the grave at lower left, the bench along the north wall, and the damaged doorjamb at right.

Сл. 4. Унутрашњост просторије 1, гледајући са северозапада. Обратите пажњу на гроб у доњем левом делу, клупу дуж северног зида и оштећен отвор врата десно.

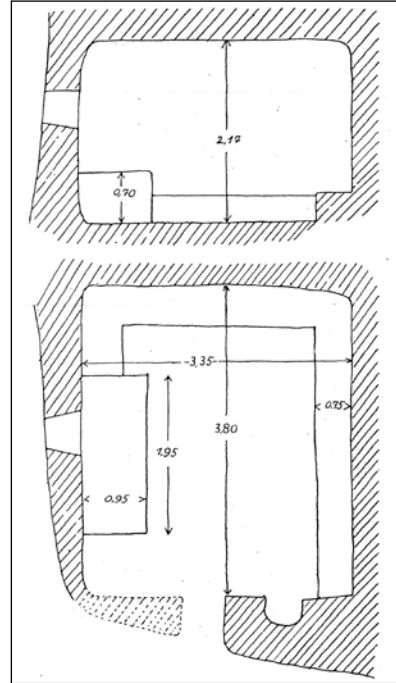


Fig. 5. Section and plan of Room 1, from Radojčić 1952, figure 4.

Сл. 5. Одељак и план просторије 1, по Радочића 1952., сл. 4.

The southern slope of section D appears at present to be a labyrinth of rooms, streets or paths, stairs, drains, and other features, whose overall arrangement and identification of individual spaces require excavation and detailed mapping.

Although a few spacious rectangular areas may be discerned, the plan appears somewhat *ad hoc* and shows numerous rooms of irregular shape and smaller than those along the top of the ridge or on the eastern plateau.<sup>7</sup> One room formed by bedrock walls on three sides, apparently a small habitation, was partly investigated in 1998; the collapse of the roof and upper built part of the walls had smashed pottery vessels on the floor, early in the 7<sup>th</sup> century. A sheer drop at the south edge of the slope removed any need for a fortification wall along section D.

Gates at the east and south sides of plateau C, as noted above, allowed access to the fortress. From the postern gate located near the north end of the west side of section D, a path now leads precariously down beside the bedrock wall and then west across a bare, sloping rock face (between #s 2 and 4 on fig. 1), which ends at a ravine. Thus it was possible with some difficulty to reach the postern gate from the southwest. An easier method of access to the fortress area at present is to climb to the top of the ridge just east of the terrace marked #1 on figure 1, go down the north side of the bedrock outcropping, and follow it along as far as the west end of terrace A, i.e., the northwest corner of the fortress,

<sup>7</sup> Excavation of the area could change this view.

from which one can cross into section D through the rooms quarried into the ridge.<sup>8</sup>

A lookout post on the top of the ridge was located above and west of the bedrock wall that marked the west edge of section D. From that lookout post one could see the room on which this article is focused. (Fig.2)

The feature of the acropolis that has most intrigued visitors to the site is the room quarried horizontally into a vertical bedrock cliff near the western end of the acropolis ridge. (Fig. 3) The rectangular room, ca. 3 x 4 m in size, included a niche, a bench or shelf around two sides of the space, a wider shelf for a bed, a window, and an apparent grave dug into the bedrock floor. (Fig. 4) Svetozar Radojčić first described the room and published a plan and section;<sup>9</sup> (Fig. 5) only the grave, apparently not

visible at the time of his visit, is missing. Room 1<sup>10</sup> and its features were created with care; the inner faces are smoothly worked with square corners and flat surfaces. A number of regular round holes were cut into the walls, probably for wooden posts from which to hang things or for supports for wooden shelves. Despite the damages caused by erosion and vandalism, part of the lintel above the door is still visible, with cuttings and sockets for a substantial door or gate. (Fig. 6)

Radojčić, as mentioned, provided a description, a plan, and two photographs of the room. His description is puzzling at first reading, because he refers to rooms in the plural, connected by steep staircases cut into the bedrock cliff.<sup>11</sup> The rooms are said to be of regular shape, similar dimensions, and the same interior arrangement. He then describes Room 1, in the singular, in detail, and implies that the other rooms were similar.

Room 1 opens onto the west side of a small, southern-facing terrace. Three square cuttings in the cliff face just above the doorway were not intended for icons or fresco but for the ends of wooden beams; they suggest that at least one additional room was located in front of Room 1 and that both were part of a larger complex. Radojčić was certainly correct about multiple rooms.



Fig. 6. View into Room 1, looking southwest. Note the remains of the lintel at the top, the window at left, and the grave in the floor.

Сл. 6. Поглед у просторију 1, гледајући са северозапада. Обратите пажњу на остатке греде на врху, прозор лево и гроб у поду.

<sup>8</sup> If another postern gate was located at the northwest corner of the fortress, this route would have been much less obvious than the one across the rock face to the postern in section D.

<sup>9</sup> Radojčić 1952, 148 and figs.2-4.

<sup>10</sup> As the room will be described for convenience; no others are numbered at present.

<sup>11</sup> Radojčić 1952, 148.



Fig. 7. The small terrace and the face of the cliff with tiers of spaces; from southeast.

Сл. 7. Мала тераса и лице литице са просторима у нивоима; са југоистока.

Examination of the area around the terrace reveals remnants of bedrock walls that once formed a number of rooms. Other spaces, small and irregular in shape, probably served for storage. (Fig. 7)

Partly preserved walls for three or four rooms are visible in the base of the cliff just north (to the right as one faces Room 1) of the entrance to Room 1. Two shallow spaces may be seen in the cliff face just above these rooms; their floors would have been at roughly the same level as the beams above the entrance to Room 1. The hypothesis that a two-storied structure rose above this side of the terrace is strengthened by two long straight cuttings visible in the bedrock above the entrance to Room 1; they appear to mark the end of a pitched roof. On the second level but beyond the terrace to the right or east, the curved northern side of a space with a possible rock-cut bench may be seen; it is unclear whether this was a closed room or a porch with a view that included the road running to the east from the bridge over the Kriva River and into or around the city.

From the east side of the terrace, steps cut in the bedrock lead up to the north, curve to the west above the rounded space just described, and finally arrive at a third level. A long ledge runs northeast across the cliff, from a point just above Room 1. Bedrock in front of the ledge partly conceals it from view from the terrace or even from further east. The ledge, rising and narrowing toward the northeast, would have provided an exit from this third tier of rooms, not only high above the small terrace but also with access to the path leading up to the top of the acropolis ridge and perhaps around to the northwest corner of the fortress.

The features visible at present<sup>12</sup> do not support Radojčić's assumption that the rooms around the terrace were of regular shape and with similar dimen-

<sup>12</sup> Comparison of the photograph in Radojčić's figure 2 with the present situation shows little change outside Room 1. Excavation and cleaning of the entire complex might reveal details not now visible under vegetation and layers of earth and debris. Garbage and earth was cleaned from the grave in July 2013.

sions and interior arrangement to Room 1. The bench in the curved area on the second tier is the only other example of furnishings now to be seen. Although erosion, vandalism, and re-use may account for many irregularities in size and shape, the people who created the rooms seem to have taken advantage of existing features of the bedrock, especially in the second and third tier, where curved spaces are more common and walls less evenly cut.

The evidence points to the existence of a community located around the small terrace. Quite a number of people could have lived here, in rooms partly quarried into the cliff and partly constructed of other materials as well as in spaces completely built of rubble, wood, or wattle & daub. Additional rooms might have been located south of and just below the terrace as well.

The obvious questions about the room quarried in the cliff and the surrounding complex are who, when, and why. And the possible answers depend on one another.

Radojčić, by using the term *ispovnica* with a meaning of “hermitage”, identified the rooms as monastic or ascetic in purpose. He recognized the problem of giving a date but tentatively suggested the 11<sup>th</sup> century, thus connecting the spaces with the development of monasticism in the region.<sup>13</sup>

The flat surfaces and sharp corners of Room 1 and the magnitude of the task of creating it are reminiscent of the landscaping carried out on eastern plateau C or along the top of the ridge in section D in order to create the fortress on the acropolis, and they suggest a Late Antique date. It should be noted, however, that significant differences exist between the enclosed area of Room 1, which was entirely quarried out of a cliff by removing several cubic meters of stone, and the exploitation of spaces carved into the face of a cliff. Perhaps a gradation of skill and technique should be seen around the small terrace, beginning with Room 1, followed by the relatively well executed rooms near it and the curved room with bench, and ending with the less regular spaces found on the higher tiers.

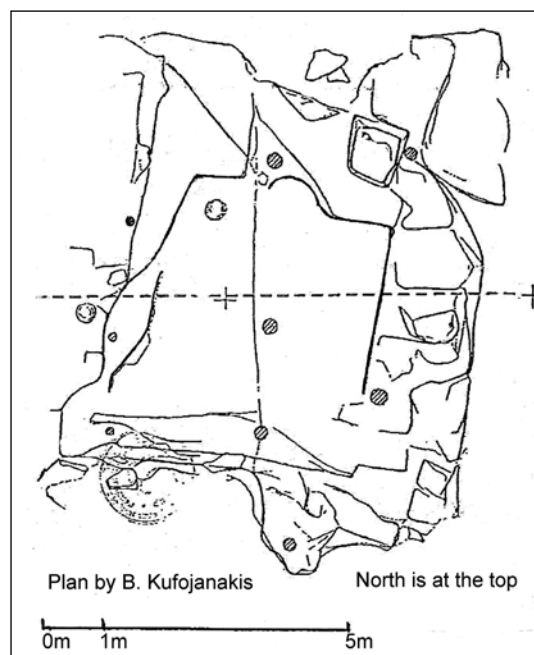


Fig. 8. Plan of foundations of house, with later post holes.

Сл. 8. План темеља куће, са касније насталим отворима.

Mikulčić 1999, 359, identified the grave as the mouth of a tunnel that led down to the level of the Kriva River; in fact, there are no openings in the solid bedrock of the bottom and sides of the grave.

<sup>13</sup> Radojčić 1952, 151.



Fig. 9. Cocev Kamen; from northeast. Note the spaces and features carved into the bedrock.

Сл. 9. Цоцев Камен, са североистока. Обратите пажњу на просторе и облике урезане у стену.

Attempting to date this complex and to identify its function, however, illustrates very effectively the difficulties involved in the study of rock-cut architecture. The usual stratigraphic approach of archaeology may not be effective, especially if the people who originally created and used a rock-cut construction were clean and tidy. All the pottery and other material from that period may have been swept away, while artifacts actually found may have washed in, been thrown in, or may be associated with later occupation(s) and thus have no connection with the original construction. Pottery and other material found in the vicinity may provide clues to the time or times when the rock-cut constructions were created and used but must be treated with caution.

Function is sometimes quite obvious, e.g., staircases or bedrock foundations for stone and mortar walls. But rock-cut constructions may be re-used and altered to suit the needs of later users; unless the alterations are carried out in such a way as to be obvious, they may leave no identifiable traces and thus may confuse the original function with the later one. This situation may be illustrated by showing a rock-cut construction from the fortress on the acropolis, where we believe that we understand the two phases of use. This structure, located on the slope between eastern plateau C and section D, has been identified as a house, although it could have served another purpose. (Fig. 8) It displays rock-cut foundations of the kind that were used elsewhere on the acropolis as the base for stone and mortar built walls. But it also shows a series of post holes cut into the bedrock that appear not to be related to the presumed walls; it seems likely that in a second phase of use, wooden posts supported walls of wood or wattle & daub.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>14</sup> In a third phase of use in the 21st century, an even more flimsy structure of wooden poles and thatch served as a shelter for archaeologists.



Fig. 10. The window in Room 1, from north and inside. Note the entrance at left, the irregular shape of the window, and the flat surfaces to right and left of the window.

Сл. 10. Прозор у просторији 1, са севера и изнутра. Обратите пажњу на улаз лево, неправилан облик прозора и равне површине десно и лево од прозора.



At Golemo Gradište, we are clearly dealing with a Late Antique city and most of the rock-cut architecture appears to belong to that period. The rectangular buildings resting on rock-cut foundations on the eastern plateau functioned together with the terrace/fortification wall and with other stone-built structures of the fortress constructed in the second quarter of the 6<sup>th</sup> century. The rooms preserved along the top of the ridge in section D are also rectangular with square corners and relatively smooth wall faces. Although comparison of quarrying or chiseling techniques for dating rock-cut constructions is problematical, nevertheless the assumption made here is that the rectangular foundations on the eastern plateau and the large rooms in section D reflect Roman approaches to landscaping and Roman techniques that were employed in the first half of the 6<sup>th</sup> century. The southern slope of section D, however, appears somewhat different in construction and purpose, although it too functioned as a part of the 6<sup>th</sup> century fortress, which in turn formed part of the larger Late Antique city.

A road<sup>15</sup> running through the ravine that separates Golemo Gradište from the cliff (Gadin Kamen) to the east provided communication between the lower town on the northern terrace and the eastern end of the southern section as well as the Rotunda church outside the city to the south. The bedrock was cut back at the sides of the ravine to provide sufficient width for the road, and large stone paving slabs filled in the uneven floor of the ravine. The clear association of the road with the city provides another piece of evidence for dating the majority of the rock-cut architecture and other features at Golemo Gradište to Late Antiquity and probably to the 6<sup>th</sup> century.

Other sites in the Kriva river valley show similar architecture of the same period; the best example is Dolno Gradište at Opila, on the right bank of the Kriva river, northeast of Konjuh. Numerous rooms, stairs, niches, and other features were quarried into the soft bedrock of the acropolis fortress of a large settlement near the Scupi-Pautalia road.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>15</sup> The road is described by V. Lilčić, *Размислувања околу убицајата на Транупара*, Културно Наследство 17-18 (1990-91) [Skopje, 1994] 33-47.

<sup>16</sup> See *Археолошка Карта на Република Македонија II*, Skopje, 1996, 194-195; Mikulčić 2002, 244-246; and Georgievski 1996, 74-75.

Interesting sites with rock-cut architecture from other periods have also been investigated in the region. Perhaps the most famous is Kokino, northeast of Kumanovo, a site dated to the Bronze Age and sometimes identified as a prehistoric observatory.<sup>17</sup> A more relevant site for our investigation, however, is Kostoperska Karpa or Žegligovski Kamen, located ca 10 km east of Kumanovo at the village of Mlado Nagoričine. This basalt mesa, another natural fortification, towers above the surrounding territory; it was inhabited from the Eneolithic period to modern times. A Late Antique phase of occupation, including a three-aisle basilica, has been documented.<sup>18</sup> But the most fascinating feature of the site is the underground complex quarried into the soft volcanic tufa below the mesa. The excavated part consists of an angled entrance tunnel, a large oval room with a stone bench carved against one wall, and several niches of varying size and shape; the complex continued for an unknown distance but was not further investigated. It was unclear whether the structure served for habitation or the collection and storage of water. The excavator pointed out that all similar rock-cut constructions found east of Kumanovo, in the Kriva Palanka and Kratovo regions, were associated with Early Byzantine settlements and fortresses. He therefore proposed a similar date for the underground complex at Kostoperska Karpa.<sup>19</sup>

A site located only ca. 2 km east of Konjuh has become controversial in recent years, because of attempts to identify it as a Neolithic observatory.<sup>20</sup> This is Cocev Kamen, also known as Pešter or Tron Pešta, at the village of Šopsko Rudare. Pottery observed or collected at and around the site can be dated to the Neolithic and Late Antique periods, and probably to intervening periods as well.<sup>21</sup> Even a superficial examination of the site, which consists of another bedrock cliff, indicates that the purpose of many of the rock-cut features was to collect and store water. Some of those features, however, e.g., the cuttings for a gate at the entrance to a natural courtyard within the cliff, demonstrate sufficient similarity to those on the acropolis at Golemo Gradište to indicate that, whatever may have been happening at this site in the Neolithic or other periods, it was also being exploited in Late Antiquity.

<sup>17</sup> O. Kuzmanovska-Barandovska, and J. Stankovski, *The Role of Astronomical Alignments in the Rituals of the Peak Sanctuary at Kokino, Macedonia*, *Journal of Astronomical History and Heritage* 14 (Muang District, Chiangmai, Thailand, 2011) 221-229.

<sup>18</sup> For general discussions of the site, see B. Georgievski, *Zegligovski Kamen/Kostoperska Karpa. Multistrata site*, *Arheološki Pregled* (Ljubljana, 1987) 56-58; *Arheološka Karta* 213-215; and Mikulčić 2002, 133-135.

<sup>19</sup> Georgievski, B., *Подземниот објект кај Куманово*, *Лихнид* 7 (1989), 94-95. Georgievski 1996, 78, is less certain about the date.

<sup>20</sup> The article by E. Masson and D. Aleksovski, *Le site pré/protohistorique de Cocev Kamen (Macédoine): ses analogies avec des sites européens*, *Zbornik Matice Srpske za Klasične Studije* 9 (Beograd, 2007) 7-20, is useful in that it calls attention to the higher hill to the northeast of Cocev Kamen, on which stand intriguing megalithic stones. But the complete omission of bibliography and footnotes does not inspire confidence in the authors' conclusions.

<sup>21</sup> Brief excavations carried out since 2011, under the auspices of the Kumanovo and Kratovo museums, have not yet determined all the periods of occupation at the site.

Against the background of other sites in the region, Room 1 at the west end of the acropolis of Golemo Gradište may be considered in a clearer context. One extremely interesting feature is the window, now roughly oval in shape. Examination of the walls beside the window, however, suggests that it was originally created as an arrow slit, i.e., with obliquely carved walls on either side of a narrow vertical aperture. This feature, together with the fragmentary remains for a gate at the entrance, allows us to suggest that this room was originally a part of the fortification system of the acropolis; guards stationed there were in a position to prevent unauthorized access to the west end of the acropolis and thus to the northwest corner of the fortress as well as access to the postern gate in section D.

It is impossible to say what other features were associated with Room 1 at the time of its creation, probably in the 6<sup>th</sup> century. The spaces beside Room 1 on the same level and those on the second level above it would make sense as part of a two-storey structure, the floor of whose second storey rested on wooden beams supported by a combination of bedrock and rubble walls of the lower storey. Because the gate at the entrance to Room 1 would no longer be necessary if other rooms had been built in front of it, that hypothetical two-storey structure would belong to a second phase. Perhaps the stairs and the rooms on the third tier followed, as more spaces were sought.

A possible time for the construction of the additional spaces around the nucleus of Room 1 would have been the late 6<sup>th</sup> century when the inhabitants of the lower town—and possibly of the surrounding area as well—fled to the fortified acropolis for safety. The densely packed structures on steeply sloping terrace A suggest a crowded situation, in which people looking for shelter might have taken advantage of any nook or cranny on the acropolis. A comparison can be made between the small, irregular, rock-cut rooms on the steep slope of section D with the rooms created around and above the small terrace at the west end of the acropolis; both might reflect a desperate search for housing during a crisis. A late 6<sup>th</sup> century date for the auxiliary spaces around Room 1 cannot be proved, but local inhabitants with quarrying skills seem more likely candidates for the construction of these rooms than members of a monastic community a few centuries later.<sup>22</sup>

This hypothesis brings us back to the one question raised above that has not been dealt with specifically so far, i.e., who created the rock-cut architecture and other features at Golemo Gradište. It is not necessary to imagine immigrants from Cappadocia with experience and skills in rock-cut architecture. Sites such as Kokino and Cocev Kamen demonstrate that the local inhabitants already during prehistory were capable of and accustomed to molding the landscape to their needs. It must be pointed out that in parts of the isolated Kriva River valley, stone was often utilized for every conceivable purpose, e.g., house walls and roofs, well heads, troughs, etc., until the last 20 or 30 years, when modern bricks and roof tiles began to be used on a regular basis. The ability to work stonewas essential in a region where useable stone was plentiful but good

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<sup>22</sup> This does not rule out re-use of the spaces by hermits or a small religious community during the medieval period.

clay was not readily available. In Late Antiquity when the Kriva River valley was intensively developed for the first time as a mining region, Roman technology met the long-standing local stone-working tradition, and the result was the rock-cut architecture at sites such as Dolno Gradište at Opila and Golemo Gradište at Konjuh.<sup>23</sup>

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ПРОСТОРИЈА УСЕЧЕНА У СТЕНУ НА АКРОПОЛИСУ НА ГОЛЕМОМ  
ГРАДИШТУ, КОЊУХ: ДАТУМ И СВРХА

Анониман град на налазишту Големо Градиште у селу Коњух, Р. Македонија, основан је у V веку. Становници су напустили доњи град на северној тераси крајем VI века, и пребегли тражећи уточиште на акропољу, где је насеље наставило да постоји све до раног VII века. Пре тога је у VI веку била направљена тврђава на негостољубивом терену акропоља. Релативно раван плато (В) направљен је на источном крају брда вађењем самог врха стеновитог гребена тако стварајући нагнуту терасу. Две главне фазе видљиве на платоу изгледа да представљају његову првобитну употребу најпре од стране војног гарнизона након чега је следило његово многобројније заузимање од стране избеглица из доњег града.

Део тврђаве (Г) западно од источног платоа В пружао се дуж великог каменог бедема са стражњом капијом. Врх гребена и источно лице каменог бедема обликовани су у велике просторије. Са видиковца лоцираног на врху бедема и западно од секције Г види се просторија на коју се фокусира овај рад.

Просторија је усечена хоризонтално у вертикалну стеновиту литицу близу западног краја гребена акрополиса. Обухватала је нишу, клупу или полицу, прозор и видљив гроб укопан у стеновити под. Просторија је пажљиво направљена; њено унутрашње лице је глатко обрађено са четвртастим угловима и равним површинама. Упркос оштећењима изазваним ерозијом и вандализмом, део греде изнад врата је још увек видљив, са урезима и кутијама за већа врата или капију. Испитивање прозора указује да је првобитно обликован као прорез за стреле. Очигледна питања у вези просторије и комплексу који је окружује су: ко, када и зашто.

Упоређивање ове просторије са другим облицима урезаним у стене на Големом Градишту и другим налазиштима у региону илуструје тешкоће у проучавању архитектуре урезивања просторија у стене али такође пружа доказе о касно античком датовању. Ова просторија је можда служила као део система утврђења акропоља, чувајући западни прилаз тврђави. Датум и сврха осталих простора око и изнад мале терасе на којој се отвара соба, мање су сигурни; једна од могућности је да су били коришћени као простор за становање када је акрополис постао уточиште за избегле становнике доњег града а могуће и околних области. Његова поновна употреба у средњем веку од стране испосника или монашке заједнице не може се искључити. Упркос хипотезама о досељеницима из Кападохије или других области где је архитектура урезивања просторија у стене уобичајена, оближња праисторијска налазишта указују на стару каменорезачку традицију у и око долине Крива; када су се римска технологија и однос према уређењу околине сусрели са локалном традицијом, резултат је била архитектура урезивања просторија у стене на Големом Градишту и другим налазиштима.

<sup>23</sup> I express my thanks to dr Miša Rakocija and Ana Misić and the other folks in Niš, who made the symposium in 2013 a pleasant and productive experience, and to Gettysburg College, which has supported my research at Golemo Gradište through numerous Research & Professional Development grants.