

The archaeological site of Vardarski Rid

Country or territory:

"THE FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA"

Name of organisation

compiling the information:

National Museum, Gevgelija
Institute for the Protection of the Cultural Monuments of the Rep. of Macedonia, Skopje

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Name and address of building(s) or site:

THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE OF VARDARSKI RID (Vardar Hill), Gevgelija

Inventory reference number(s):

R.No.1040, from 27.07.1950/Inv.No.4-802-990/023 RND

Building type(s):

Archaeological site including several layers of settlements (Prehistoric and Classical).

Main date(s):

13th-1st century BC

Current use(s):

Archaeological park (project in progress)

Significance:

The archaeological site of Vardarski Rid is composed of six layers of different settlements, dating back to the period between the 13th and the 1st century BC. There are also indications of a Neolithic settlement (4500 BC) with organized social structure. Until now, study of the stratifications demonstrates the presence of the following cultural periods:

- Vardar Rid I, (5th - 4th millennium)
- Vardar Rid II, (13th - 11th century BC)
- Vardar Rid III, (10th - 9th century BC)
- Vardar Rid IV, (7th - 6th century BC)
- Vardar Rid V, (5th - 4th century BC)
- Vardar Rid VI, (3rd - 1st century BC)

The dimensions and the character of the site varied throughout the centuries according to the historic, economic, social and cultural context. The evidence of these changes can be seen in the layout and the perimeter of the six settlements.

In Prehistoric times, more specifically during the Iron Age (8th - 6th century BC), Vardarski Rid was the central settlement of the Paionians. This was confirmed by the numerous remains, excavated in the cemeteries of Suva Reka, Milci and Paragon. During the expansion of the

ancient Macedonian Empire, Vardarski Rid, one of several settlements of the Classical period set on the bank of the river Vardar (Axios), was probably the administrative centre of the Amfazitida region. The Roman occupation of Macedonia and the proclamation of this territory as the First Roman Province on the Balkans brought to an end the social structure in place, i.e. the settlement of the Vardar Rid VI.

The following buildings were excavated in the years 1994-2003:

- Public building - "Stoa", partially excavated (Vardarski Rid V);
- Fifteen private houses, completely excavated (Vardarski Rid VI-V);
- Over thirty private houses, partially excavated (Vardarski Rid VI-V);
- One private house, partially excavated (Vardarski Rid IV);
- Six ceramics workshops, partially excavated (Vardarski Rid VI)
- Two ceramics workshops (Vardarski Rid V);
- Blacksmith workshop (Vardarski Rid VI);
- Courtyard with fountain (Vardarski Rid VI);
- Ceramics, pottery store (Vardarski Rid VI);
- Tower and part of the City Wall, partially excavated (Vardarski Rid VI);
- Remains of streets, sewerage system (Vardarski Rid VI-V)

General information on the buildings

Stoa – Of monumental proportions (50x14m), this building was constructed in blocks of stone (opus "rubble core"). The typology of the Stoa reflects the commercial character of Vardarski in antiquity.

Private houses were built using river stones and mud bricks. The roofs were made of massive ceramic *tegula* tiles in combination with *imbrex*. In the excavated settlements of Vardarski Rid VI and Vardarski Rid V, houses display large quantities of movable objects, both imported and locally produced (ceramics of different value and function, such as cult figurines, as well as weapons, jewelry, coins, etc.) In one of the houses, a rare artifact, a ceramic bathtub, was excavated. An important amount of silver coins, *tetradrahmes*, was found on the floor of another house, dated from the time of Alexander the Great and his successors.

A recently discovered ceramics workshop contains the most significant remains of stoves, original examples of classical ceramic technology (Vardarski Rid VI). Several pieces of semi-products and final products were found together with blacksmith tools at the partially excavated Blacksmith Workshop (Vardarski Rid VI). The courtyard with a fountain (non existing today) represents a typical example of the original spatial organisation of a house section intended for resting (end of the 2nd century BC). On the "Trade Street", only the ceramics and pottery store were excavated. Three entirely preserved amphorae were found in this building. They are most probably imports from Rhodos (Vardarski Rid VI).

The Tower and the City Wall represent only a small part of the discovered Acropolis defence system constructed in the 3rd - 1st century BC. One part of the sewerage system in the Acropolis area is under reconstruction.

Categories of significance:

Of outstanding national importance

Vardarski Rid is one of the oldest known settlements in "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia".

Categories of ownership or interest:

The archaeological site of Vardarski Rid is of national interest.

Documentation and bibliographic references:

Documentation

Projects carried out in the period of 1994-2003 are fully documented:

- Inventory of movable objects
- Technical and photographic documentation of the conservation and restoration works
- Documentation for the preparation of the revitalisation projects for the site (the Archaeological Park Project)

Research activities were financed by the Ministry of Culture of the Rep. of Macedonia, the Foundation on Archaeological Researches from Houston (Texas, USA), The City Council of Gevgelija and the mobile phone operator "Mobimak".

Bibliography:

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11. B. Husenovski, Srebreniot stater od tip "kentaur i nimfa" od numizmatičkiot fond na lok. Vardarski Rid, Makedonsko nasledstvo, Skopje 2002 (in Macedonian, Cyrillic)
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Condition:

As a result of many years of continuous excavations (1994-2003), the condition of this cultural heritage site, in particular its movable and immovable components, is relatively good. The Stoa, the best preserved monument, is in good condition.

Houses, streets and other excavated buildings, constructed using the stonewall technique, are in fair condition.

Risk:

The main risk consists in further deterioration of the excavated buildings and of the several settlement layers because of insufficient means to carry out conservation and reconstruction projects.

Condition risk:

The conservation and restoration process is underway in three sectors: Stoa, Eastern Terrace and Acropolis.

Immediate risk: as a consequence of the project for the construction of the new highway E-75 (1998-2000), the Eastern Terrace is the most deteriorated part on the Vardarski Rid site. Other parts of the cultural layer in this sector (Vardarski Rid VI) are mainly a concentration of urban buildings. It is imperative to prepare and implement as soon as possible a conservation project for the remains of this sector.

Slow decay: the remains of two types of buildings can be found at the Acropolis: houses and a defence tower belonging to the City Wall. In 2000, conservation activities for the houses were undertaken, but due to insufficient financial support, they were interrupted. The deteriorated defence tower, the only known example of a preserved Classical tower (as part of a fortification) to be ever discovered on the territory of "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" necessitates a conservation and restoration project. There are also plans for conservation measures for the rest of the excavated buildings and the introduction of a responsible for the management of the site is foreseen.

Technical assessment and costings:

1995-2001	Excavation and research, financed by the Ministry of Culture (5,000 EUR)
1995-1996	Excavation and research, grant of the Texas Foundation (46,000\$)
1998	Excavation and research, sponsored by the City Council of Gevgelia
1994-2003	Compilation of the inventory and preparation of the documentation on excavated buildings, financed by the Ministry of Culture (5,000 EUR) and the mobile phone operator Mobimak
2000	Conservation activities at the Acropolis, sponsored by the mobile operator Mobimak (5,000 EUR)
1995-2001	Project for the Archaeological Park (proposals for the signalization, path zones, horticulture), financed by the Ministry of Culture and the City Council of Gevgelia (3,500 EUR)

Approximately 16,000 EUR are expected, as a financial support from the Ministry of Culture for the Project on Conservation, Reconstruction and Revitalization of the Tower and the City Wall, proposed for preparation in 2004.

Ownership:

The site is State property.

Occupation:

The entire perimeter of the site amounts approximately to 7,5 ha. Up to date, systematic excavations and preventive conservation have been carried out only on approximately 3,000 m².

Management:

The procedure for the assignment of an organisation responsible for the management of the site is underway. In case financial support were provided for protection measures concerning the immovable monuments, the Institute for the Protection of the Cultural Monuments of the Rep. of Macedonia would be responsible for their implementation. The National Museum of Gevgelia would be responsible for the excavated movable objects.

Summary:

Considering the relatively short period of archaeological excavations (1994-2000) and the extent of the excavated area (3,000 m²), the large number of discovered houses and public buildings, the traffic circulation system, as well as buildings for commercial and handicraft production, validate the importance of this Prehistoric and Classical settlement.

Although the final profile of the various settlements' layers will be explored over the next 30-40 years, this archaeological site offers the potential (in its "pioneer" stage) to become an Archaeological Park.

The priority level of intervention is *high*.

Sign. and date:

B. Husenovski and M. Ivanovski
Gevgelija and Skopje, 7.12.2003