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HOUSING FROM THE 4TH TO THE 1ST CENTURY BC IN THE ANCIENT TOWN AT VARDARSKI RID

Introduction

The archaeological site of Vardarski Rid is located in the southern part of the Republic of Macedonia, in the Lower Vardar Valley. It lies on the right bank of the Vardar River, near the modern town of Gevgelia (fig. 1). In ancient times this region was known as Amphaxitis (Ἀμφαξίτης) – the land on both sides of Axios (modern Vardar River). It is one of the regions in Macedonia whose name has no connection to the tribal affiliation (fig. 2)¹. Mentioned by Thucydides² and Strabo³ as a land that once belonged to the Paionians, Amphaxitis became part of the Macedonian Kingdom in the 5th c. BC⁴. During the reign of Philip V, Amphaxitis was one of the five regions in Macedonia that had autonomy in minting coins⁵. In the literary sources it was mentioned in the beginning of the 2nd c. BC by Polybius for the first time⁶.

The site encompasses two rocky hills connected by a shallow saddle ridge (fig. 36). The Vardar River encircles the lower hill from the north and east (fig. 3), presenting a remarkable natural barrier, and from the west and south the slopes of the higher hill steeply descend towards the lowlands of the fertile Gevgelia plane. Thus, the site is naturally protected from all sides and is easily defendable.

The long-term systematic excavations have revealed a multilayered stratigraphy with six distinguishable settlements defined by a total of sixteen cultural layers⁷. The oldest remains belong to the Neolithic period; continuous life is confirmed from the Late Bronze Age to the first two c. of Roman domination in this region, though. The initial Late Bronze Age settlement was on the higher hill (Hill 1), but from the Iron Age on, the settlement expanded to the east, onto the lower hill (Hill 2). Later, the Classical and Hellenistic towns developed in the same area.

The only historical event known from the written sources that is clearly connected to our site is Thucydides' story about the expedition of the Odrysian king, Sitalkes, in 429 BC⁸. The same source tells us about the existence of several towns along the Axios river in the 5th c. BC, whose identification has been of interest to many scholars⁹. If we agree that Idomene should be identified with the site Isar, near the village of Marvinci, that Europos can be identified as the village of Ashiklar in the Gumenitsa district, and that Atalante is situated south of Europos near Ichne and Thessaloniki, then it is quite possible that Gortinia is located at Vardarski Rid¹⁰.

After a great natural disaster at the end of the 6th and the beginning of the 5th c. BC had destroyed the Iron Age settlement at Vardarski Rid, a new town developed during the 5th and 4th c. BC on the lower Hill 2.

¹ PAPAZOGLU 1988, 174.

² Thuk. 2, 99, 4.

³ Strab. Geogr. 7, frg. 11.

⁴ N. G. L. HAMMOND – G. T. GRIFFITH, *A History of Macedonia II. 550–336 B. C.* (Oxford 1979) 58 f.

⁵ PAPAZOGLU 1988, 174; BITRAKOVA-GROZANOVA 1987, 17.

⁶ Pol. 5, 97, 3.

⁷ For the general stratigraphy of the site see MITREVSKI 2005b, 16–32.

⁸ Thuk. 2, 98–100.

⁹ PAPAZOGLU 1988, 177–183, with quoted references. See also V. SOKOLOVSKA, *Isar-Marvinci i Povardarjeto vo antičko vreme* (Skopje 1986) 32–35; I. MIKULČIĆ, *Antički gradovi vo Makedonija* (Skopje 1999) 20–36.

¹⁰ PAPAZOGLU 1988, 181 f.; MITREVSKI 2005b, 55–57.

The growth of the town ceased, though, this time because of Celtic raid in 279 BC¹¹, which are well documented. A sudden interruption of life is evident through the buildings and movable finds; they confirm the devastation¹². A thick layer of ash covers the late 4th and early 3rd c. buildings at the Southern and Eastern Terrace, and, so far, no buildings have been found that date to the second half of the 3rd c. BC. What happened in the town after the Celtic campaign is an enigma yet to be solved.

The town flourished during the reign of Philip V and even more so in the time of his descendent, Perseus. In 168 BC, when the Romans conquered Macedonia, Amphaxitis became a part of the third *meris*, with its seat in Pella¹³. There is no archaeological confirmation for any disruption of life; on the contrary, excavation data shows a continuity of life in the existing buildings. This also stays the same in the period after 147 BC, when Macedonia officially became a Roman province.

However, other events of the late second and the first decades of the 1st c. BC are important; the excavation evidence shows that the whole town suffered from a severe conflagration. As we learn from the epigraphic monuments and written sources, during this time the Skordiskoi and other tribes from the Northern Balkans frequently endangered the security of the Roman province of Macedonia.

One inscription found in the village of Aivati near Thessalonica gives information on one of these attacks. The inscription dates to the year 29 of the Macedonian provincial era, i.e. 119 BC. It informs us about the decision of the town of Lete to honour the *quaestor* Marcus Anius for his victory over the Skordiskoi and the Thracian Medoi, who attacked Macedonia twice in that year¹⁴. The first attack took place near Argos (on the Axios River), but the defeated Skordiskoi returned, this time reinforced by the Medoi, and led by Tip, they marched to Lete.

This was not an isolated attack of the Skordiskoi on the province of Macedonia, though. In the following decade and a half, this hostile warrior tribe attacked Macedonia almost every year, for which scarce information can be found in Eutropius, Florus and Festus, based on the lost parts of Livy's History¹⁵. Most of these wars between the Roman army and barbarians took place far away from our town, but the next two events draw our attention.

In the year 106 BC two inscriptions were erected in Delphi and in the Macedonian town of Europos. Both are dedicated to the triumph of the Roman consul Marcus Minucius Rufus over the Skordiskoi, Besoi and other Thracian tribes in the years 110/09 BC¹⁶.

The second event took place three decades later. In the years 87 and 86 BC, Cicero mentioned a »rebellion of all the barbarians«. They ravaged Macedonia, penetrated into Greece and plundered the sanctuary in Dodona¹⁷. The written sources mention the Medoi and Denteletes as members of these barbaric hordes, and the Skordiskoi are not excluded. The king of Pontus, Mithridates, stood behind this huge rebellion. As Appianus informs us, he raised a rebellion of the Balkan tribes, and occupied Thrace and a major part of Macedonia in the beginning of the 80's. In the year 85 BC, Sulla stopped them. Where exactly these events occurred is not certain, but the town at Vardarski Rid was definitely destroyed in one of these attacks, although one cannot rule out the possibility that it was burnt in both of the mentioned attacks.

The data obtained during the excavations of Room 2 in the House of the Collector proves that the town at Vardarski Rid burned down in one of these wars. It was abundant in finds, esp. ceramic vessels; this is an excellent example of a well-dated closed context. After the severe fire, which affected the entire

¹¹ BITRAKOVA-GROZANOVA 1987, 19; PAPAZOGLU 1969, 209.

¹² B. HUSENOVSKI, A Hoard of Silver Tetrachmas from the Third c. BC, in: MITREVSKI 2005a, 323–345. A hoard of silver tetrachmas buried below the threshold of a partially excavated building at the Northern Terrace contained posthumous series of the coins of Alexander III, Philip III Aridaos, Lysimachos. The latest are those of Seleukos I Nikator (312–280), which coincide with the time of the Celtic raids.

¹³ BITRAKOVA-GROZANOVA 1987, 35.

¹⁴ BITRAKOVA-GROZANOVA 1987, 35; PAPAZOGLU 1969, 224–226.

¹⁵ PAPAZOGLU 1969, 226–234; BITRAKOVA-GROZANOVA 1987, 35 f. mention raids of other tribes, especially those of the Medoi and the Dardanians.

¹⁶ PAPAZOGLU 1969, 230 f. The erection of a votive monument at Europos leads to the assumption that some of these two conflicts, either with the Skordiskoi or with the Thracian tribes, occurred near the town.

¹⁷ PAPAZOGLU 1969, 239 f.

house, this room was rebuilt with a new floor level, leaving numerous finds sealed beneath¹⁸. The latest coin discovered here is a Republican fourée *denarius*, which bears a type issued in 114 or 113 BC by Mn. Aemilius Lepidus¹⁹. The movable finds, especially coins discovered in other rooms, confirm that the house was renewed soon after the destruction. In the courtyard (Room 6), a silver *denarius subearatus* minted in 82 BC by C. Mamilius C. F. Limetanus was discovered²⁰. The same destruction layer was discovered in other buildings on the Eastern and Southern Terrace and on the Acropolis.

Judging by the quick renovation of the houses on the same foundations and, in some cases, on the same floor levels, the town recovered soon after these events. Perhaps these events were the main cause for the renewal of the rampart on the Acropolis and the erection of a tower on the north-eastern part, as well. However, not for long. With decreased intensity and concentrated on the Eastern Terrace, life in the town continued for only one more century. The reasons for this are as yet unknown, but it is certain that this for the province of Macedonia turbulent time at the end of the 2nd and beginning of the 1st c. BC left serious marks on the population at Vardarski Rid. The situation was much restrained during the first decades of the Empire, and the town was finally abandoned in the second half of the 1st c. AD²¹.

Household Organisation

The settlement from the Classical period is insufficiently explored. The total area of the town is unknown, but it seems that it occupied a much smaller territory compared to the previous Iron Age settlement. The scarce data revealed by the excavations does not allow for a complete image of the town layout, mainly because the later Hellenistic buildings disturbed the earlier structures; additionally, they do not allow excavations on the wider area of the earlier deposits. A few dwellings from the late 5th c. and the early decades of the 4th c. BC are partially excavated on the Southern Terrace. During the 4th c. the same area became the town agora, where a *stoa* was built²². The Eastern Terrace revealed parts of modest houses (the House with Poles) from the same period, while its lower parts were used as a dump area, where a few large pear-shaped pits were discovered²³. Although sparse, this excavation data shows a tendency for organised town planning that includes separate areas for public building, private houses and dump areas.

Although the later buildings destroyed most of these dwellings, the main conclusion is that they followed the prehistoric building manner, well known from the previous Iron Age settlement. This means one-storied buildings made of a wooden scaffold construction and a combination of mud bricks and wattle and daub.

Two building manners are to be noted for the foundations. Foundations set in carved channels on the bedrock can be found on the partially excavated dwellings on the Southern Terrace dating to the late 5th and early 4th c. BC (fig. 4), as well as at the Acropolis (figs. 5, 40) and on the slope of the Eastern Terrace from the 4th c. BC (fig. 6). The later builders, aiming to use the bedrock as a firm surface for their own construction, thoroughly cleared away the debris from these earlier buildings; thus only cuttings in the bedrock remain: carved channels for the foundations of the walls, as well as postholes and pits. Since they were not found in a wider area, it is impossible to either reconstruct their ground plan or their inner division, or to determine the use of the individual rooms. We can only be certain of a storage room with *pithoi* or pits

¹⁸ MITREVSKI 2005c, 229–260. The selection of the pottery discovered in this room was presented by the author at the 7th Meeting for Hellenistic pottery held in April 2004 at Aigio, Greece; cf. S. BLAŽEVSKA, The Pottery from the House of the Collector, in: S. DROUGOU – H. SERVOUDAKI – A. DOULGERI-INTZESILOGLOU – I. TOURATSOGLU – M. PETROPOULOS (eds.), Ζ' επιστημονική συνάντηση για την ελληνιστική κεραμική, στ' Εφορεία προϊστορικών και κλασικών αρχαιοτήτων, Αιγίο 4–9 Απριλίου 2005 (forthcoming).

¹⁹ Obverse: diademed female bust to the right, ROMA */Three arches, above a horseman to the right holding a spear, MN.AE[]LIO. LEP; CRAWFORD 1974, 291. For the identification of the coins I am indebted to P. Josifovski, numismatist in the Museum of Macedonia; I. M. AKAMATIS, Αγορά Πέλλας 1995, AERgoMak 9, 1995 (1998), 95–105 esp. 101 f. fig. 14, the same republican denarius was found in the destruction layer at the agora in Pella dated to the end of the 2nd and beginning of the 1st c. BC, also confirmed by other numismatic material.

²⁰ JOVANOV 2005, 318 fig. 5.

²¹ For the end of the life at Vardarski Rid through the numismatic material, see JOVANOV 2005, 315–321.

²² E. SLAMKOV, Stoa. Part of the Classical Agora at Vardarski Rid, in: MITREVSKI 2005a, 159–179.

²³ MITREVSKI 2005b, 15–91 figs. 6, 7a.

dug into the bedrock, which is the only recognisable and common characteristic for all of the houses. There were no movable finds left except for a few coins and a few fragmented pottery vessels scattered about, which were imported as well as local products.

Regarding the foundations, the House with Poles on the Eastern Terrace, securely dated to 320–310 BC by the posthumous coin of Alexander III, represents a different building manner. They are made of a few rows of river stones and roughly cut stones bound with mud²⁴. The house is a rectangular building oriented in a north-western–south-eastern direction with the entrance to the southeast (figs. 7. 37). In the northern half, the postholes in the walls' foundation and at the inner side of the walls suggest that the architecture was simple, almost primitive; here a wooden scaffold construction was coated with mud. The upper parts of the walls in the southern half were made of mud bricks, and the absence of roof tiles suggests that the gabled roof was covered with hay.

Although no partition wall between the northern and the southern half exists, it seems that there are two rooms, judging by the different level of the floor in both halves. The hearth discovered in the northern half defines it as a kitchen facility, where most of the fragmented pottery was found as well. The absence of movable finds in the southern half of the house gives no possibility for determining its usage. The thin partition wall of wattle and daub on the northern side points to the existence of another room towards the north; unfortunately this part was destroyed by the construction of the new highway, though. Nevertheless, the House with Poles represents a fine example of the modest and basically prehistoric type of architecture of the Classical settlement.

During the reign of Philip V, an extensive building activity gives a new insight into town urbanisation, which is quite different from the previous period. Most of the buildings that define the basic features of the town date to this period. This actual Hellenistic town at Vardarski Rid is built in a somewhat irregular fashion. Ten houses have been identified so far²⁵, but only a few have been completely excavated. Most of them underwent several periods of rebuilding or re-modeling. On the Eastern Terrace ›luxury‹²⁶ houses were built – the House of the Collector, the House with the Sanctuary, the House with a Tub and the House with an Atrium (fig. 38)²⁷; on the Southern Terrace were workshops and stores – the House of Handicrafts, the Cult Building with Stores, the Workshop of Menek, the Metallurgy and Textile Workshop and the Building with a Kiln (fig. 39). A fortified large complex was built on the Acropolis, the so-called Central Complex (fig. 40)²⁸.

The houses are organised in quite irregular blocks separated by a network of streets. Within these blocks narrow alleys with drainage canals separate the houses. At this stage of exploration it is impossible to determine the number of houses in each block, since not a single block has been completely excavated. The two meter wide streets are mainly oriented in a north-south and east-west direction with slight inclinations, which depend on the sloping terrain of the terraces.

At the beginning it seemed that there was a strict division and difference between the characters of the houses in the different areas of the town. Since most of the workshops are concentrated on the Southern Terrace, this was designated as the industrial area, and the Eastern Terrace as a residential quarter. The

²⁴ S. KARPUZOVA, The House with Poles, in: MITREVSKI 2005a, 179–201 gives an extensive description of the house with an analysis of the finds.

²⁵ A few more houses are not numbered or labelled because of their poor state of preservation. Three more houses, two of them completely, were excavated in the season of 2007. They will not be presented here, since not all the data from the excavation has been processed yet.

²⁶ The term ›luxury‹ is not to be taken literally. Compared to the luxurious houses, e.g. in Olynthos, Pella, Delos, Ephesos and other large cities, the houses at Vardarski Rid are quite modest; they are luxurious in comparison with the houses built on the Southern Terrace, though.

²⁷ The names of the houses are working titles, given during the excavation process. Nevertheless, most of the names were kept, and are published as they are. This especially refers to the House with an Atrium, whose name does not mean that it represents a Roman house type. Therefore, I apologize to the readers for the confusion that may occur because of its name. Also, since this particular house has many building phases which can not be defined at this stage of the excavations. The determination of the usage of the rooms is difficult as well, therefore it will be excluded from the analysis in this article, except for the paved courtyard, which is the only area of the house that can be identified with certainty.

²⁸ For the mentioned buildings, see MITREVSKI 2005b, 34–91; for the House of the Collector, see MITREVSKI 2005c, 229–261; for the Central Complex at the Acropolis, see S. BLAŽEVSKA, Acropolis Sector. Research 1999–2000, in: MITREVSKI 2005a, 209–229.

so-called Central Complex on the Acropolis surrounded by a rampart and watch tower represents a large complex of rooms with different uses. Although this division is still in use, the latest excavations have shown that almost every house has small-scale industry, depending on the needs of the domestic economy²⁹.

The building manner and the type of the houses changed significantly in the Hellenistic period. Most of the houses are two-storied buildings with stone foundations, mud bricks and gabled roofs covered with Laconian tiles. The foundations were made of roughly cut stones or river stones bound with mud, up to the maximum height of 1 m. The upper walls were erected with mud bricks measuring $0.40 \times 0.40 \times 0.10$ m³⁰. All of them have earthen floors, except for Room 2 in the House of the Collector, where the floor was paved with mud-bricks³¹ (fig. 8). Plastered floors are rare. With the exception of the one in the House of Handicrafts that is connected with metallurgical activities, traces of plastered floors in private houses can only be found in Room C4 at the Central Complex. Pavements of stone slabs were usually found on the streets (northern street on the Eastern Terrace), on the alleys (the alley in front of the House with a Tub, alleys α and β in the Central Complex, the alley with a drainage canal on the Southern Terrace), but rarely inside the houses, except for the southern porch in the House of the Collector and the courtyard in the House with an Atrium (fig. 9). There is no painted wall decoration; the walls were coated with mud. So far, only a few architectural decorative elements were discovered: two sewers shaped as lion heads from the House with an Atrium (figs. 10a. b) and one fragment of a *sima* in the Central Complex at the Acropolis (fig. 10c).

None of the excavated houses belong to the known types of Greek houses – the *prostas*, *pastas* or peristyle type. It is impossible to find a pattern among the houses at Vardarski Rid, since none of the household organisations are completely the same, or to define a >type house<. Most of them are roughly rectangular, with a different number and arrangement of rooms, as well as a different orientation depending on the terrain, although most of them are oriented in a north-south direction with the main entrances either on the south or the east. The exception to this general principle of the orientation of the house towards the south are the houses built on the slope of the Eastern Terrace, which are oriented in an east-west direction with entrances towards the east, and the Central Complex at the Acropolis which, because of its position and specific character, probably had entrances on each side.

The irregularity in the urban layout can best be seen on the Southern Terrace, where several houses most probably formed the common crafts and trade area of the town with pottery workshops, blacksmiths, stores etc. (fig. 39). Houses within one block were built next to each other, sharing the same load bearing walls. This makes the division between them, the determination of the use of the rooms and their reconstruction even more difficult. On the Eastern Terrace the situation is slightly different; here the houses are more organised, but all four houses have a completely different architectural plan (fig. 38). The greater difficulty is presented by the fact that some of them have not been completely excavated. One can not find parallels to the irregular urban layout of Vardarski Rid at the large urban centres in Macedonia or elsewhere, but some town planning systems in smaller provincial towns are comparable, mostly those in Upper Macedonia, such as Petres, Amyntaion (ancient Kellis?)³², the Ag. Panteleimon hill near Florina³³, Aiani of Kozani³⁴ and Polymylos (ancient Euia?) in the Kozani district³⁵.

Unlike the widely spread *pastas* type of houses, where the rooms are arranged around an open courtyard³⁶, there is no general principle for the disposition of the rooms here. Regarding the organisation of the household space and the types of rooms, it seems that the owners adapted the rooms to different needs and purposes.

²⁹ Two pottery kilns were discovered within the houses on the Eastern Terrace, the first in the later building phase of the House with a Sanctuary, a second in one of the newly discovered house on the eastern slope.

³⁰ More on the architectural elements and building materials; see B. ΡΑΪΚΟΒΑ-ΚΥΦΟΙΑΝΑΚΗΣ, Architectural and Construction Material from the Ancient Settlement at Vardarski Rid, in: MITREVSKI 2005a, 347–373.

³¹ Cf. ADAM-VELENI 1998b, 59. A similar floor made of mud-bricks was found in private houses in Petres.

³² P. ADAM-VELENI – G. VELENIS, Η ελληνιστική πόλη των Πετρών. Ανασκαφικές παρατηρήσεις, AERgoMak 2, 1988 (1991), 5–19 fig. 4; ADAM-VELENI 1998a, 15–25; ADAM-VELENI 1998b, 47 figs. 3. 5. 5a.

³³ M. LILIMBAKI-ΑΚΑΜΑΤΙ – I. ΑΚΑΜΑΤΙΣ, Η ελληνιστική πόλη στη Φλώρινα, AERgoMak 4, 1990 (1993) 67–75; M. LILIMBAKI-ΑΚΑΜΑΤΙ – I. ΑΚΑΜΑΤΙΣ, Η ελληνιστική πόλη της Φλώρινας, AERgoMak 13, 1999 (2001) 587–597; M. LILIMBAKI-ΑΚΑΜΑΤΙ – I. ΑΚΑΜΑΤΙΣ, The Hellenistic City of Florina (Thessaloniki 2006) 18.

³⁴ G. KARAMITROU-MENDESIDI, Aiani of Kozani. Archaeological Guide (Thessaloniki 1989) 42–44 plan 1.

³⁵ G. KARAMITROU-MENDESIDI – M. VATALI, Πολύμυλος Κοζάνης 1999, AERgoMak 13, 1999 (2001) 369–398.

³⁶ CAHILL 2001, 75.

Despite the obvious irregularity, there are some general features and common characteristics for most of the houses, especially in regard to the usage of the rooms that can be identified on the basis of the finds or on the basis of certain architectural features. For now it is possible to identify kitchens, workshops, stores and places or rooms where the domestic altars were placed. One can also define the kind of domestic activities that occurred in porches and courtyards.

The analysis will refer only to the first building phase of the houses up to their destruction at the end of the 2nd or beginning of the 1st c. BC, and mainly to the houses on the Eastern Terrace and the Central Complex, with the exception of the workshops on the Southern Terrace, which are for now the only certain features in those houses.

Courtyards and Porches

Inner open courtyards are a common characteristic for the houses on the Eastern Terrace. They are usually rectangular or square, covered along the side walls with a single-sided roof supported on wooden pillars and open in the middle (figs. 32. 33). They occupied a different area and size in the various houses. The finds discovered in the courtyards show diverse activity, depending on the needs of the household. Most frequently they were used for food processing and preparation, as well as for storage.

The largest courtyard was uncovered in the House with an Atrium. It was paved with stone slabs and had a small cistern in the middle, which was equipped with a drainage system of *tubuli* in order to lead the rainwater out of the house. There are no movable finds, except for one oil lamp and a few coins that attest to certain domestic activities (figs. 9. 38).

The courtyard in the House with a Tub is the most uncertain. It is possible that the room to the south of Rooms 3 and 5 represented an inner courtyard, but it spreads into the unexcavated area. The small uncovered part yielded no artefacts (fig. 38).

In the House with a Sanctuary, the northern part of the courtyard lies in the unexcavated area, its major part is well documented, though (figs. 11. 38). The bread-baking platform discovered in the middle is a slightly raised square clay platform with a circular trace of burning in the middle, which probably came from the earthenware for bread baking³⁷. There is evidence that confirms that this was the area designated for cooking, since traces of ash and broken pottery were found around the platform. It is possible that the actual hearth is in the unexcavated area to the north, e.g. in the courtyard of the House of the Collector. This assumption is supported by the fact that no other room in the house can be defined as a kitchen facility. Since the house was destroyed in a fire, traces of heavy burning were found all over the floor; thus it is difficult to say whether a simple hearth on the floor existed somewhere in another room. Apart from the pottery fragments of different kinds of cooking and table ware discovered around the bread baking platform, a few storage vessels were discovered, indicating that the courtyard also served as a storage area. They were on the other side, leaning against the eastern wall. An interesting feature is the small semicircular area delineated with one row of stones in the southwest corner of the courtyard, where neither roof tiles nor finds were discovered. The absence of roof tiles suggests that this was an open area, but its purpose is unknown.

The courtyard in the House of the Collector is the most interesting (figs. 12. 38). It is not a single area, but is divided into two equal halves by a low partition wall with a wide door opening in the middle. Wooden pillars stood on built stone bases on both sides, in order to support the single-sided roof. In the corners are large *pithoi* that may either served to collect rain water from the eaves, particularly those between the pillars and the side walls, or for the storage of different kinds of food supplies. Apart from the *pithoi*, a couple of storage vessels – a transport amphora and a storage bin – were found in the courtyard as well as a few table vessels. These finds point to the fact that a major part of the domestic activities (cooking and food processing) took place in the courtyard, especially in its southern half. The hearth is simple – a shallow pit

³⁷ The same principle of bread baking in earthenware can still be seen in the rural areas and villages in the Republic of Macedonia. The earthenware is heated for a short time on a fire or hot charcoal. Afterwards the bread is placed inside, the earthenware is covered with a metal or clay lid, and hot ash is placed over the lid, away from the fire. The bread is baked within 2–3 minutes. These hearths are always placed in the courtyards.

with a few stones. On the eastern side of the hearth, separated by a low partition, is the bread baking platform. It is just like the one in the House with a Sanctuary, with a lot of ash surrounding it. Two square working platforms measuring 1×1 m are situated on opposite sides. They are built of stones to a height of 0.90–1 m. Both platforms were used for food processing, the one near the partition wall was used for grinding wheat, judging by the grindstone found on top of the platform³⁸.

Porches were identified with certainty on the eastern and southern side of the House of the Collector, as well as in the House of Handicrafts, where pottery kilns existed. The porches in the House of the Collector draw the most attention. Three small fire places were discovered in the eastern porch. They were formed as shallow pits with scorched side walls, in which embers for heating or for cooking were prepared (figs. 13. 38). The two best preserved ones contained pebble stones and fragmented roof tiles. There are also circular burnt traces on the floor, suggesting that bread was baked in earthenware. In addition, a grinding stone found in the near vicinity confirms that food processing took place here. Although the eastern porch does not have a direct communication with the rest of the house, it was used as a working space connected with the household activities. Besides these fireplaces in the eastern porch, hearths made of small cobble stones were found in the southern porch (figs. 14. 38) as well as in the small room to the north of the eastern porch. Similar hearths were discovered in House IV in Nemea³⁹. It is quite unusual for a household to need so many hearths and bread baking platforms. Could this house be the town bakery?

Porches as in the House of Handicrafts are a regular architectural feature where pottery kilns are concerned. The high temperature that they need for firing the clay object does not allow a closed space.

Kitchen and Baths

Besides in the courtyards and porches, hearths were also discovered inside the houses, in rooms that can be defined as kitchen facilities; e.g. in Room 2 in the House of the Collector (fig. 38), in Room 5 in the House with the Tub (fig. 38) and in Room C11 in the Central Complex (figs. 15. 40). They are very simple constructions, usually shallow pits dug into the floor. Sometimes they were delineated with a few stones as in the House of the Collector or in the House with a Tub, or built of stones as in the Central Complex. In some of the houses the kitchen also served as a storage room, e.g. in the House of the Collector, or had direct access to the storage room, which usually was the adjacent room, as in the Central Complex. This connection purely has a practical meaning. Only in the House with a Tub a similar arrangement as in Olynthian houses exists, consisting of a connection between the kitchen and the bath (figs. 16. 38)⁴⁰. The bathtub discovered in Room 3 in the House with a Tub is a unique find at Vardarski Rid, although it was frequently recovered at other sites.

Storage Rooms

Pithoi (whole vessels or fragments) or *pithos* lids were discovered in almost every house at Vardarski Rid, suggesting that every household stored different kinds and quantities of food supplies, according to their needs. There is no pattern for the location of the storerooms in the houses at Vardarski Rid, or for the places for storage. In most cases, there are one or two large *pithoi* or other storage vessels (amphorae or storage bins, or coarse storage vessels) placed in separate storage rooms, but most often in the courtyards or kitchen. *Pithoi* were placed on the floor leaning against a wall; their lower halves were rarely buried into the floor. None of the *pithoi* found at Vardarski Rid have been restored until now, but from the better preserved ones as in the House of the Collector, we can measure their average capacity, which is 150–200 litres. Since no analysis of their contents has ever been made, it is impossible to tell what kind of supplies they contained.

³⁸ ADAM-VELENI 1998a, 19 fig. 4.

³⁹ S. G. MILLER, Nemea. A Guide to the Site and Museum (Berkeley 1989). 102 fig. 32.

⁴⁰ CAHILL 2001, 80 f.

Larger-capacity storerooms have been attested in the House of the Collector and in the Central Complex. As mentioned above, five large *pithoi* were placed in the courtyard of the House of the Collector, where one can see an interesting arrangement (figs. 12. 38). Two of them are placed in the north-eastern corner surrounded by a light partition made of wattle and daub. Maybe such a protection was meant to keep them dry and cool for whatever contents they had, either grain or wine. The other two are in the middle of the courtyard, situated in the gap between the side walls and the wooden pillars which supported the roof. They may have served for collecting the rain water used for cooking or washing. The fifth one is in the south-western corner, in the gap in the wall that used to be a door entrance. This one was also protected with a low wattle and daub partition. Additionally, in Room 2, which served as a kitchen, more than 20 small *pithoi*, amphorae and storage bins were discovered among other kitchen and table vessels, along with an abundance of table ware (fig. 17). They stood on the floor, leaning against the southern and eastern wall. Some of the storage bins were placed on *pithos* lids. The floor of the room is below the ground level of the street; the difference is bridged by a ramp built into the entrance, which served to easier load or unload the products (figs. 18. 38). This kind of a subterranean cool room was suitable for the storage of grain and wine⁴¹. The room had another entrance towards the southern porch.

The Central Complex had two storage rooms (Room C9 and C10), where *pithoi*, basins and other types of storage vessels were dug into the floor (figs. 19. 40). Most of the *pithoi* were broken and repaired with lead clamps. There is no communication between the two storage rooms. From Room C9 an entrance leads to the kitchen (C11); Room C10 has an entrance to Room C12, where, judging by the discovery of two grinding stones on the floor, food processing took place. In order to keep supplies dry and cool, the floor in Room C9 is below the floor level of the kitchen.

The other houses have small quantities of food stored in different rooms or in the courtyards. Such is the case with the House with a Sanctuary, where a few *pithoi*, amphora, and storage bins were placed in Room 3 (figs. 20. 38); another group of storage bins, a *pithos* and an amphora were discovered in the courtyard, as well as an amphora and a *pithos* in the most western Room 7 (figs. 21. 38). The House with a Tub contained a few smaller *pithoi* and storage bins in the northern, narrow Room 4 (fig. 38).

Workshops and Stores

Most of the workshops were found in the houses on the Southern Terrace, where most likely the idea of the town agora from the Classical settlement has remained. Based on the finds, pottery production, weaving and metal processing can be determined in certain areas of the houses.

Local pottery production at Vardarski Rid is confirmed by the eleven pottery kilns discovered in different building phases⁴², the analysis of the pottery vessels where some local potters' names could be identified⁴³, the discovery of clay moulds for relief bowls and figurines and a lot of clay stands for drying pottery⁴⁴. Five kilns were discovered in what seems to be a porch in the House of Handicrafts (figs. 22. 39). Judging by the clay stands for drying pottery discovered on the floor, the large room to the north was probably connected with the pottery workshop. Two kilns, which belonged to two different building phases, were discovered in the so-called Building with a Kiln and two in the Workshop of Menek – a local potter whose name was stamped on fishplates.

Metallurgy workshops were discerned in two of the houses – the House of the Handicrafts (fig. 39) and the Metallurgy and Textile Workshop, based on the finds of blacksmiths' tools, as well as on the concentration of iron ore and dross. In the House of the Handicrafts (figs. 23. 24. 39), there is a room which is closely connected to metallurgy and blacksmith activities. It is paved with a plastered floor with slightly raised edges

⁴¹ CAHILL 2001, 94; e.g. the storeroom in the House of Many Colors at Olynthos.

⁴² For pottery kilns at Vardarski Rid see S. BLAŽEVSKA, Pottery Kilns, in: MITREVSKI 2005a, 261–281.

⁴³ S. BLAŽEVSKA, Naselbinska keramika od Vardarski Rid. Od sredinata na 4 do krajot na 1 vek pr. n.e., (Diss. University of Sts. Cyril and Methodius, Skopje 2006) 135–138.

⁴⁴ Apart from one mold for a terracotta figurine, a clay analysis was made for the Cybele busts found in the Central Complex, confirming their local production from local clay beds. In the Workshop of Menek, a female terracotta figurine was discovered inside the rectangular clay basin opposite the kiln and the figurine of Cybele on the floor.

and laid over a foundation of vertically placed fragments of roof tiles bound with plaster, intended to retain the heat or water. Maybe the owner was the town blacksmith.

Loom weights are the most common and frequent finds everywhere: When they are found concentrated in large numbers at one place, a weaving activity can be suggested with great certainty; such is the case in the House of the Handicrafts, the Workshop of Menek and the Metallurgy and Textile Workshop (figs. 25. 39). As we learn from the literary sources, weaving was a women's job in the house. The processing of the wool, the spinning the thread and the actual weaving on a vertical loom requires a well-lit area that was most probably situated in the upper storey⁴⁵. The finding of two large groups of loom weights (59 in the first group and 38 in the second) at the eastern wall of Room C10 in the Central Complex (fig. 40) is an example for this. The room has been defined as a storage room based on the discovery of the *pithoi*, basins and other storage vessels⁴⁶. There is not enough space for a loom, therefore it must have been placed on the upper floor. Similar are findings in the House of Handicrafts and the Metallurgy and Textile Workshop on the Southern Terrace.

The discovery of grinding stones points to the fact that food processing took place in certain rooms. In the Central Complex (fig. 40), this household activity is recorded in three rooms, where upper and lower grinding stones were discovered (Rooms C4 and C12); also in Room 4 (fig. 38) in the House of the Collector and in Room 7 of the House with a Sanctuary (figs. 21. 38) these could be found.

On the Southern Terrace small stores were identified in only two of the houses. The first was found in the Workshop of Menek, connected with the room where the pottery kiln was situated. It seems that the shop belonged to the potter, who sold his products here. In this small room, which is open to the street, different kinds of vessels (table amphorae, *laginos*, *hydria*) were found inside a large *pithos* with a broken top (figs. 26. 39). The other store is part of the so-called Cult Building with Store, although there is no direct communication between the store and the rest of the house (fig. 39). The store itself is open towards a small paved alley with a drainage channel. It contained two transport amphorae of the Italic type, a Cnidian amphora, two storage bins, a portable altar and different types of tableware.

Except for the pottery and metallurgy workshops, it is very difficult to judge if a certain household produced products for its own domestic use or intended to sell them on the market. This especially refers to weaving and food processing. We can assume that every household had at least one loom for making cloth for its own needs, although it is possible that they occasionally sold their products.

Large scale producing activities supporting the idea of large workshops existing in the town are not recorded, especially bearing in mind that the town at Vardarski Rid was a relatively small provincial town that occupied approximately 2,5 hectares, with a population of 4000–5000. Its economy was mainly based on agriculture, due to the fertile plains and the river. Therefore we can assume that the town workshops produced enough goods to satisfy the needs of the inhabitants and not for a large market or for export.

Domestic Shrines

The excavation data shows the existence of an area for cult activity in almost every one of the discovered houses, whether it was a separate room designated for ritual purposes or a special corner in a room that had another purpose, or even in the workshops. The large number of terracotta figurines and a few marble sculptures point to the fact that the inhabitants mainly worshiped female deities. Although most of the terracotta figurines are representations of young girls without attributes that can be linked to a certain goddess, there are elements to identify Aphrodite, Artemis, Demeter⁴⁷ and especially the Great Mother of the Gods – Cybele. Since no building was discovered at Vardarski Rid that can be identified as a temple, shrine or sanctuary, it seems that the citizens worshiped their gods in the domestic shrines.

⁴⁵ CAHILL 2001, 169–171.

⁴⁶ Cf. above.

⁴⁷ For identification of the marble sculptures, see V. BITRAKOVA-GROZDANOVA, The Sculpture from Vardarski Rid, in: MITREVSKI 2005a, 289–305.

The most indicative is the lower floor of Room 4 in the House with a Sanctuary (figs. 27. 38), where a bench was built to a height of 0.50 m against the northern wall. It was made of seven rows of nicely laid flat roof tiles over a stone foundation⁴⁸. On this pedestal were a few female terracotta figurines, along with a small tripartite vessel. Due to the fragmentary state of preservation of the figurines, it is not certain to which goddess this domestic shrine was dedicated. The altar in the House of the Collector was dedicated to Aphrodite; this identification is based on a marble statue of the goddess, which was found along with 16 female terracotta figurines (fig. 28).

One house on the Southern Terrace was named the Cult Building with Stores, based on the finds in one of the rooms: a few terracotta figurines, a phallus-spouted table amphora, a *thymiaterion* and a hanging oil lamp with three nozzles (figs. 29. 39). A small altar dedicated to Cybele was found in the first room of the Metallurgy and Textile Workshop; here a terracotta figurine of the goddess along with a *thymiaterion* and many river shells were recovered. A terracotta figurine of Cybele was also found in the Workshop of Menek (figs. 30. 39). It is quite possible that a small kiln in the same room served for making terracotta figurines, or the potter worshipped the Great Mother of Gods and prayed to her for the welfare of his family and his work. The domestic altar in the Central Complex which was situated in the upper floor above Room C12 was also dedicated to Cybele. Two busts of the goddess along with two relief *thymiateria* were discovered here (figs. 31. 40)⁴⁹. It seems that the Great Mother of Gods was worshipped a great deal among the population of Vardarski Rid. The cult of the Phrygian goddess is widespread in Ancient Macedonia, as is attested with the discovery of the sanctuaries devoted to her in Pella⁵⁰ and Vergina⁵¹. Other sites on the territory of the Republic of Macedonia along the Vardar River or in the region of Pelagonia⁵² have revealed images of the goddess in terracotta and marble confirming her widespread cult, especially among ordinary people.

Upper Storey

Based on the architectural features or finds, it is difficult to determine the rooms for other purposes in these houses; the only reasonable answer to the question of where the living rooms were, is the upper floor (figs. 32. 33). Wooden stairs do not leave any archaeological traces, but many other elements point to this conclusion. First, the arrangement of the rooms on the lower floor and the discovered finds show that in most of the houses this area was intended for domestic activities – food processing and cooking, storage or workshops. The best example that the living quarters were on the upper floor is the House of the Collector, which has approximately 140 sq. m without porches. Most of that area is occupied by the courtyard, the kitchen and a storage room. Of the three rooms on the lower floor, Rooms 2 and 3 represent the kitchen and storage facility, and Room 1 – apart from being too small and slightly subterranean – cannot be identified based on the finds. Thus, the upper floor is the only possibility left for living rooms. Furthermore, fragments that belong to the same terracotta figurine were discovered in both Rooms 1 and 2. Only if they had stood on the upper storey, could they be scattered like that. Similar situations can be seen in the House with a Sanctuary and in the Central Complex at the Acropolis, where the entire lower floor of the house was intended for household activities, storage and cooking⁵³. The position of the looms, e.g. in the House of the Collector at the entrance between Rooms 1 and 2 and a small domestic altar for female deities contribute to this assumption.

This arrangement requires an answer to the question of whether the household organisation in this provincial Macedonian town shows the same strict division of the men's and women's quarters in the house as

⁴⁸ Cf. ADAM-VELENI 1998, 65. – A similar separate small room used for religious purposes was discovered within the House of Iollas in Petres.

⁴⁹ For the identification of the terracotta busts from the Central Complex as Cybele see BITRAKOVA-GROZDANOVA 1999, 202 fig. 5.

⁵⁰ M. LILIMBAKI-AKAMATI, Το ιερό της Μητέρας των Θεών και της Αφροδίτης στην Πέλλα (Thessaloniki 2000).

⁵¹ S. DROUGOU, Βεργίνα 1990–1997. Το ιερό της Μητέρας των Θεών, AERgoMak 10A, 1996 (1997) 41–54.

⁵² For the Cybele cult on the territory of the Republic of Macedonia, see BITRAKOVA-GROZDANOVA 1987, 124–127. 136; BITRAKOVA-GROZDANOVA 1999, 124–146; V. SOKOLOVSKA, Likovni pretstavi na Kibela, MacActaA 9, 1988, 113–127.

⁵³ ADAM-VELENI 1998, 59–61, the same arrangement can be found in the private houses in Petres.

the evidence from the Greek houses shows in Olynthos and elsewhere in the Greek world⁵⁴. As the *andron* – the men’s room in the large houses of the *pastas* type – is identified by its position in the house next to the courtyard and even more by the architectural features, i.e. the mortar floor with raised edges for placing the beds along the walls, here such an identification cannot be made, neither by the position nor by the floor characteristics. Therefore, they were probably also on the upper floor, next door to the rooms of the female members of the family.

In general, the houses in the ancient town at Vardarski Rid have a more provincial character regarding the architecture and spatial organisation. The arrangement and usage of the rooms within the so far discovered houses point to the fact that there was no strict division and pattern; moreover, they were adapted for different purposes and whatever needs the owners had. There are many open questions, hopefully to be solved with further research that will bring new data concerning this subject.

List of Bibliographical Abbreviations

The citation follows guidelines of the German Archaeological Institute <www.dainst.org> (16.01.2009) and those of the Austrian Archaeological Institute <www.oeai.at/publik/autoren.html> (16.01.2009).

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Sources of Illustrations

- Fig. 2: after PAPAZOGLU 1988, map 5.
 Figs. 1. 3–30. 33–40: © photo documentation of the Project Vardarski Rid.
 Fig. 31: after MITREVSKI 2005c, fig. 39.
 Fig. 32: S. Blaževska.

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⁵⁴ CAHILL 2001, 80–82. 148–153; L. C. NEVETT, *House and Society in the Ancient Greek World* (Cambridge 1999) 4 f.

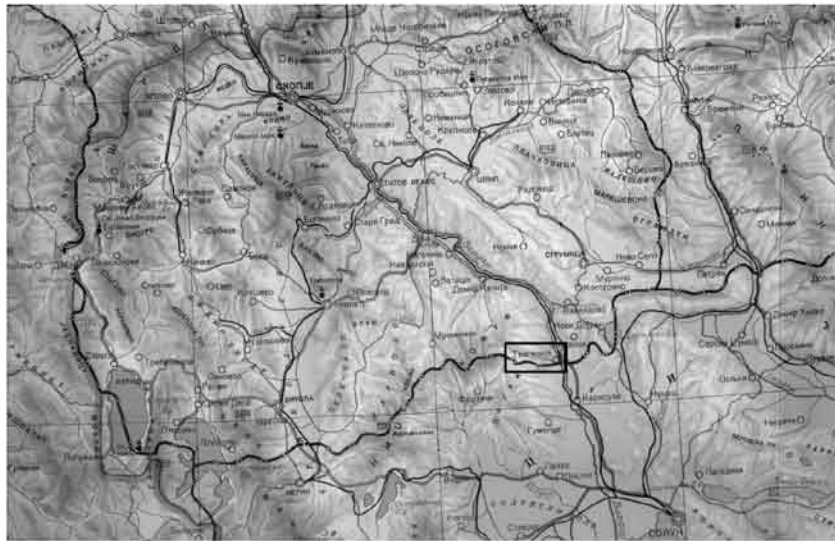


Fig. 1: Modern map of the Republic of Macedonia



Fig. 2: Ancient map of Amphaxitis



Fig. 3: Vardarski Rid, panoramic view from East



Fig. 4: Southern Terrace: foundations carved into the bedrock, 5th c. BC.



Fig. 5: Acropolis: postholes and pits carved into the bedrock, 4th c. BC.



Fig. 6: Eastern Terrace: postholes into the bedrock, 4th c. BC.



Fig. 7: The House with Poles, late 4th c. BC.



Fig. 8: The House of the Collector: mud bricks pavement of the floor in Room 2



Fig. 9: The House with an Atrium: paved courtyard



Fig. 10: Architectural decorative elements



Fig. 11: The House with a Sanctuary: courtyard



Fig. 12: The House of the Collector: view from South



Fig. 13: The House of the Collector: fire places in the eastern porch



Fig. 14: The House of the Collector: cobble stone hearth in eastern porch



Fig. 15: The Central Complex: kitchen (Room C11)



Fig. 16: The House with a Tub: clay bathtub



Fig. 17: The House of the Collector: storeroom (Room 2)



Fig. 18: The House of the Collector: ramp entrance into Room 2

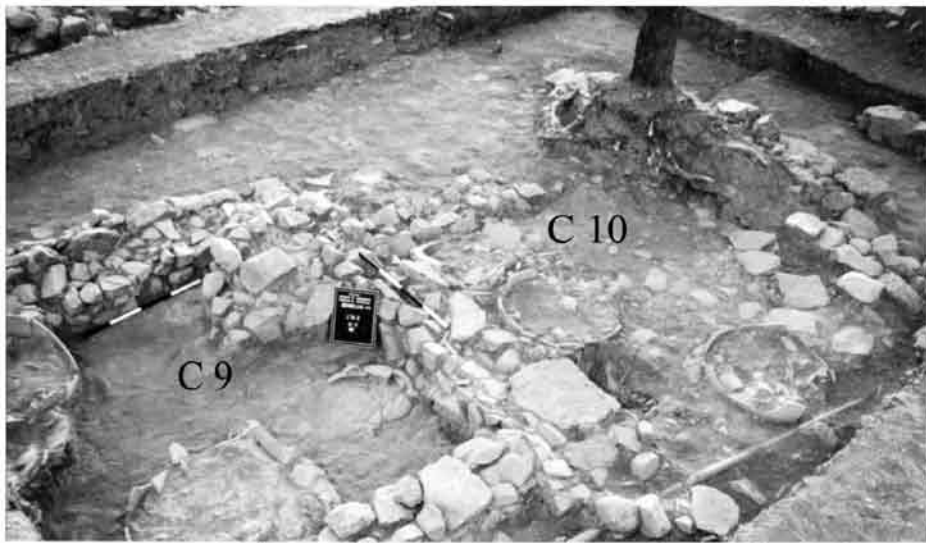


Fig. 19: The Central Complex: storerooms (Rooms C9 and C10)



Fig. 20: The House with a Sanctuary: storeroom (Room 3)



Fig. 21: The House with a Sanctuary: storeroom (Room 7)



Fig. 22: The House of the Handicrafts: pottery kilns



Fig. 23: The House of the Handicrafts: plaster floor



Fig. 24: The House of the Handicrafts: metallurgical tools



Fig. 25: The Metallurgy and Textile workshop: cluster of loom weights

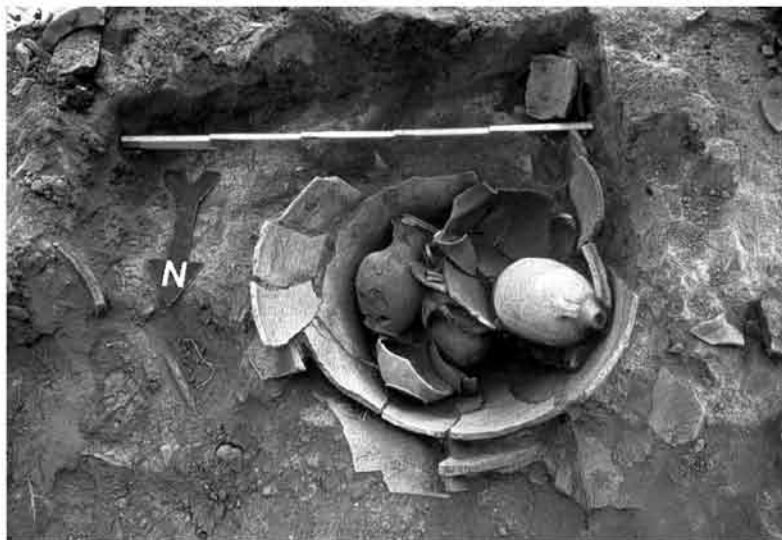


Fig. 26: The Workshop of Menek: pottery vessels inside pithos



Fig. 27: The House with a Sanctuary: room for domestic cult



Fig. 28: The House of the Collector: domestic altar dedicated to Aphrodite



Fig. 29: The Cult Building with Stores: domestic altar



Fig. 30: Domestic altars to Cybele: The Workshop of Menek



Fig. 31: Domestic altars to Cybele: The Central Complex

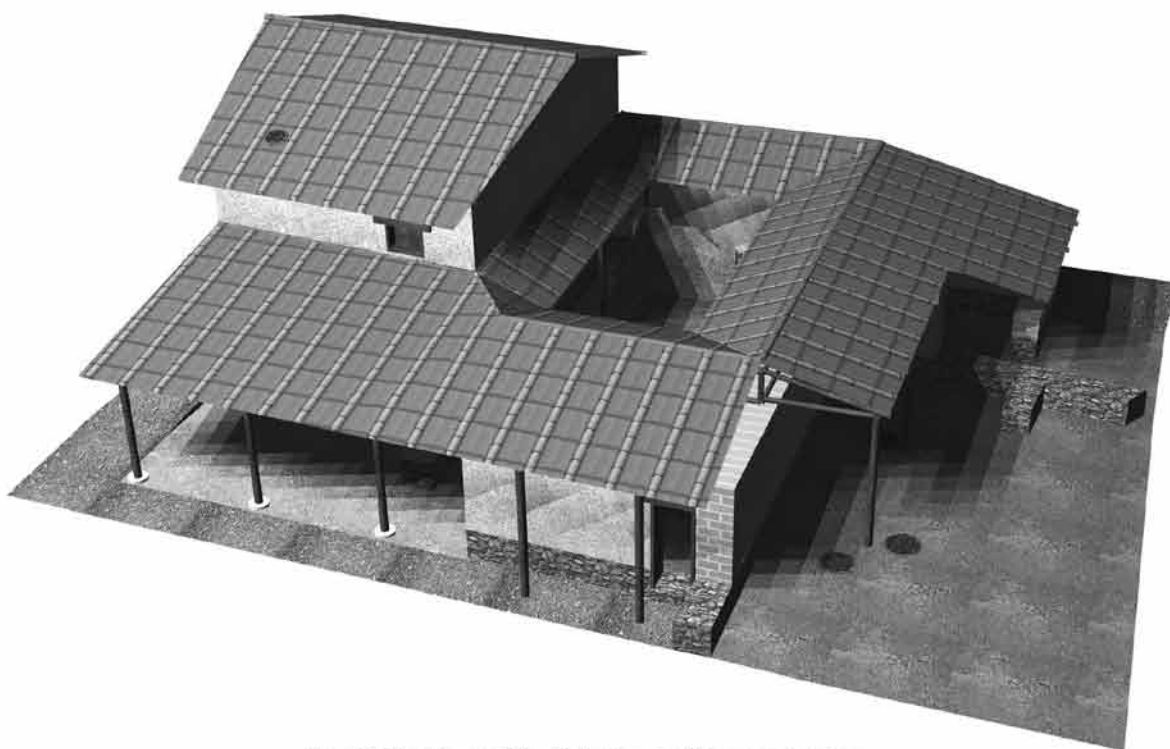


Fig. 32: The House of the Collector: possible reconstruction

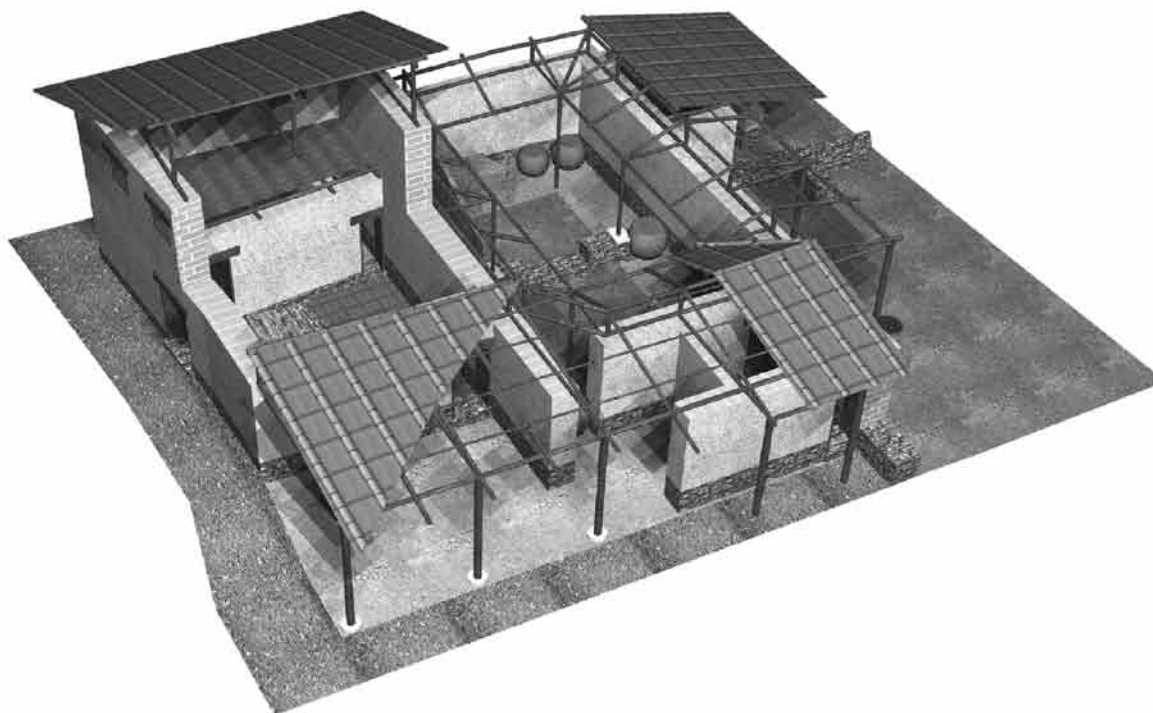


Fig. 33: The House of the Collector: possible reconstruction



Fig. 34: The House with a Sanctuary: possible reconstruction



Fig. 35: The House with a Sanctuary: possible reconstruction

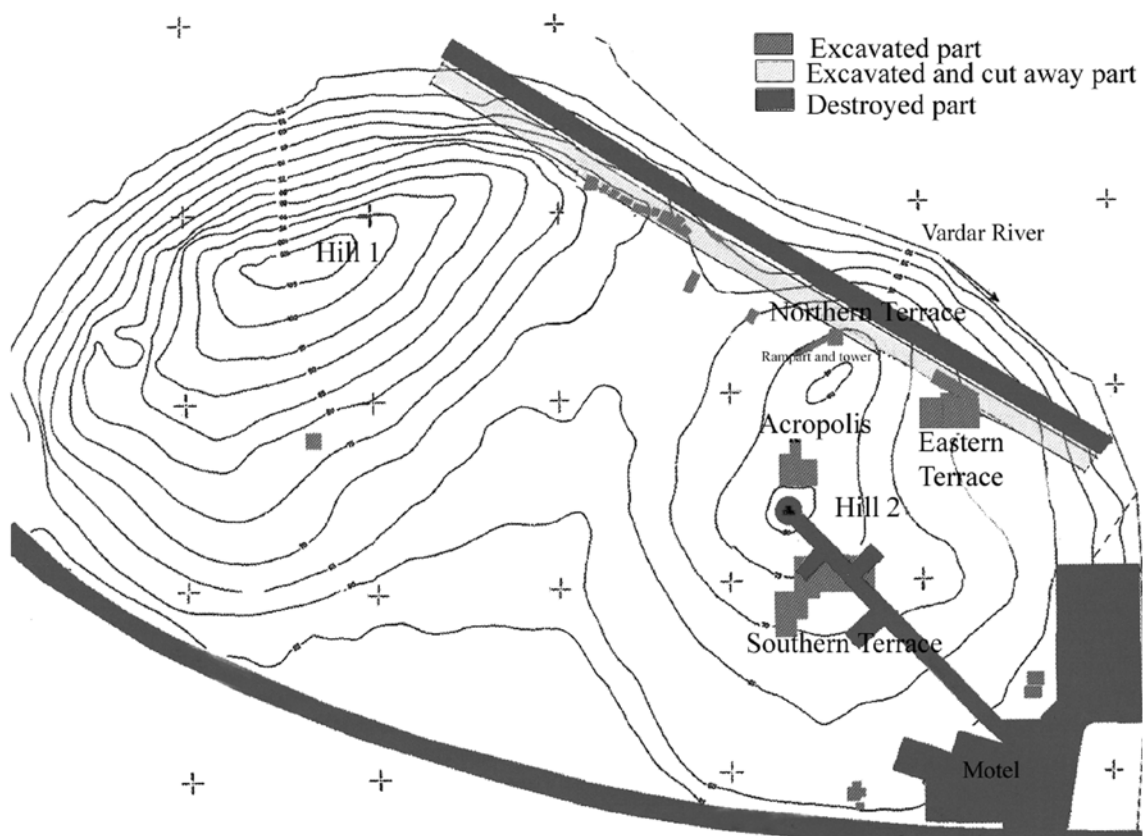


Fig. 36: Vardarski Rid – Gevgelija. Site map

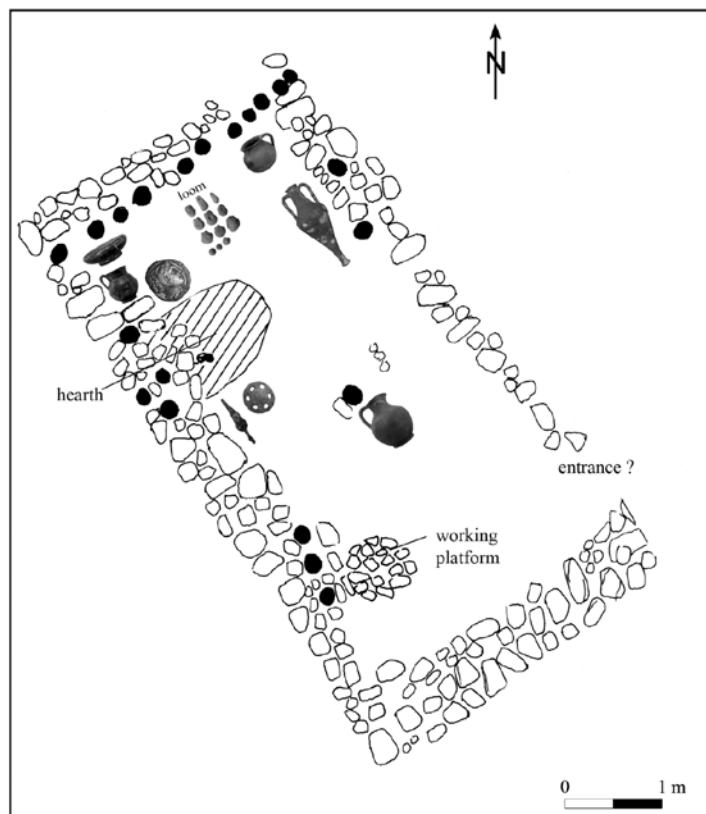


Fig. 37: The House with Poles. Ground plan



Fig. 38: Eastern Terrace Sector



Fig. 39: Southern Terrace Sector

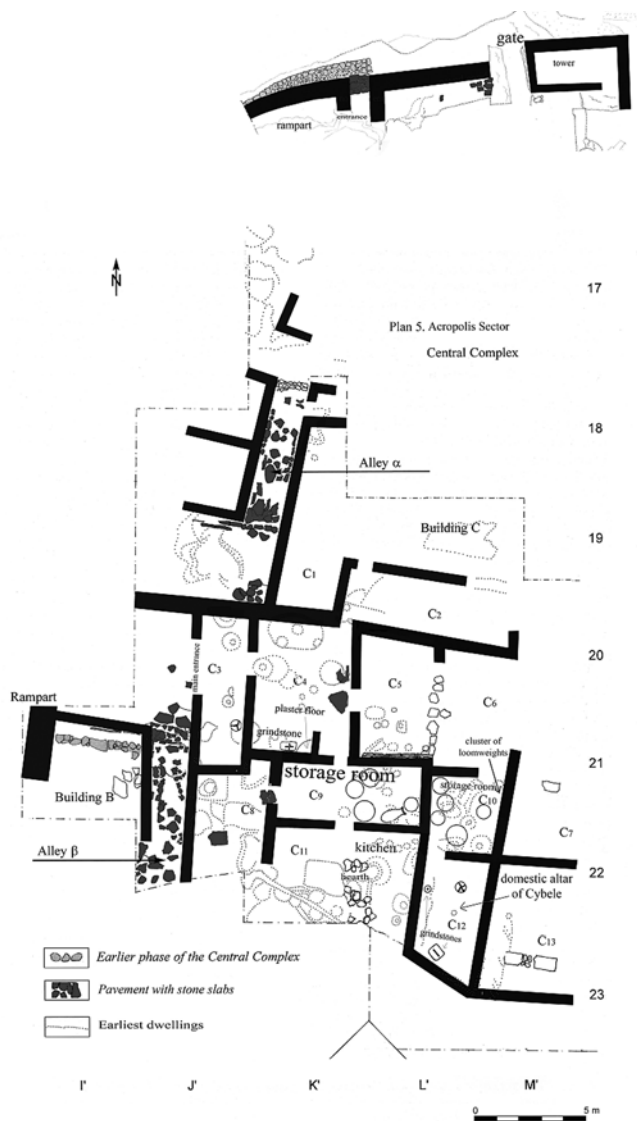


Fig. 40: Acropolis Sector, Central Complex