

IRENA V. LJUBOMIROVIĆ¹

UNIVERSITY OF NIŠ
FACULTY OF PHILOSOPHY
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

THE EPIGRAPHIC AND ARCHEOLOGICAL WORK OF NIKOLA VULIĆ ON THE TERRITORY OF MACEDONIA

ABSTRACT. This work is a result of decades long archaeological excavations by Nikola Vulić on the territory of Macedonia. The work also comprises of his compilation of epigraphic monuments. During the systematic excavations on numerous sites in Macedonia, Vulić achieved significant results which served as a base for future projects. His work on Greek and Roman epigraphy has been fundamental for understanding the ancient history of the Balkan Peninsula. The paper also presents the newest results.

KEYWORDS: Nikola Vulić, archaeology excavations, epigraphic monuments, ancient settlements.

Vulić's travels, for the purpose of collecting epigraphic monuments, were interrupted after 1908, only to be continued again from 1924. In the following seven years, Vulić visited the whole of Serbia, Macedonia, and Montenegro. He particularly stayed in the area of Prilep and Bitola, where he visited almost every single village and collected a large number of monuments, which were later transferred to the Museum of Skopje (Vulić, 1958, p. 23).

He published his results in *Spomenik of RAS* in 1931. He collected inscriptions, reliefs, and statues, and always presented inscriptions first and then the material remains. The sites were arranged alphabetically by larger settlements and districts. He noted the

¹ irena.ljubomirovic@filfak.ni.ac.rs

descriptions and measures of the monuments, what it was made of, what shape it was, what the inscription field looked like. He also indicated where the monument was discovered and whether it was known, when it was found and where it would be preserved. If he had a photograph of the monument he would attach it too, and would decode the text below the photo (Vulić, 1931, n. 101; n. 209; n. 110; n.1).

In the second part of *Spomenik XCVIII*, a collection of monuments which Vulić entitled “*Thracian Horseman and Other Icons from Ancient Times*” was published (Vulić, 1941–48, pp. 283–318). All the monuments discovered on the territory of Serbia and Macedonia, where the so-called Thracian horseman was presented, found their place there. Tombstones with the representation of the Thracian horseman were only reported in Macedonia. Vulić pointed out to the well-known fact that the image of the Thracian horseman first emerged in Greece not in Thrace; therefore, the Thracian horseman could not be the Thracian supreme deity. The cult of the deceased and their final rites could be transferred from Greece to Thrace, hence the final rites of the deceased on horseback were numerous in the territory of Thrace (Vulić, 1925, pp. 87–89).

In 1924, he began examining the place Čepigovo, where the remains of massive walls were discovered on a large area. With these excavations, Vulić has confirmed the earlier hypothesis of a French archaeologist L. Hojzej that there was a settlement in Čepigovo in Roman times (Papazoglu, 1974, pp. 271–297). Namely, Vulić presumed that there could be cities Stubera and Deriop near Čepigovo, mentioned by the ancient writers Polybius, Titus Livius, Strabo, and Stephen the Byzantine (Vulić, 1933, pp. 25–34; Polibii *Historiae*, ed. Th. Büttner-Wobst, 1989, XXVIII 8 (=Pol.); T. Livis, *Ab urbe condita*, recognovit P. G. Walsch, Leipzig 1998, XXXIX 53 (=Liv.); Strabonis *Geographica*, ed. Gustavus Kramer, volumen III, Berolini 1852, VII 326; Stephanus *De urbibus*, ed. Gu. Xylander, Basilae 1568). Inscriptions on which Stubera and Deriop were mentioned were found in Čepigovo, but as Vulić suggested, signs could also be brought from some other place, which was not a rare case (Vulić, 1931, pp. 186–188). In the last work dedicated to this problem, Vulić noted that Deriop was not a village but the area whose capital was Stubera (Vulić, 1939, pp. 221–230). Later, his opinion was verified by F. Papazoglu who would point out that Stubera was organized as a polis with its own administrative bodies, and was the center of the wider area of Deriop. Yet another

inscription found during the archaeological activities in 1953 confirmed that the traces of the village near Čepigovo were remains of the city of Stubera. The inscription recorded the following formulation “the Council and People of Stubera” were honoring “their own” citizen (Papazoglu, 1957, pp. 215–217). From the text of the inscription, found at the site next to Čepigovo, it is clear that the monument was erected in the Stubera itself.

During 1928, Vulić was researching several sites in Macedonia. (Vulić, 1931, pp. 22, 150, 174–176). He first organized excavations near the village of Kažani, 16 km from Bitola, on the road Bitola–Resan (Vulić, 1931, p. 22). At this point he discovered the remains of a Roman fortress shaped like a square with towers at the corners of the walls. Vulić was not able to establish exactly when the fortress was built, but he dismissed the suggestion of J. Kromajer that it was built in 200 BC during the time of war of the Roman consul Sulpius Galba against the Macedonian King Philip V (Vulić, 1926, pp. 21–38). Presumably, The Roman consul was moving with the army on the way Elbasan–Bitola and the fortified camp was erected at the Bitola plain, but Vulić held that it could not be the fortress he had discovered, since, as he noted, “At that time, the Romans did not build camps with towers, they would do it much later” (Vulić, 1931, p. 22). According to Vulić, the excavated remains at Kažani could rather suggest to Castra, mentioned by ancient itineraries *Itinerarium Burdigalense* and *Itinerarium Antonini* (Vulić, 1926, p. 32). In 1928, Vulić was excavating in Macedonia near Prilepac (Vulić, 1931, p. 174). There he discovered an ancient necropolis with a large number of tombs where one extinguished itself particularly in size and rich findings. Although it was robbed, Vulić found the remains of golden jewelry beside the tomb, probably taken out by the tomb robbers. As a sepulchral slab, a tombstone of another person was used. A Greek inscription was built in the tomb that actually had no connections with the tomb itself, but it was not rare that the tombstones were used as building material (Vulić, 1931, p. 175). Vulić submitted the movable property from this site to the Museum of Skopje, thus keeping it from further deterioration (*Politika*, n. 8402, 30. IX. 1931).

Vulić began a systematic research of Trebenište in 1931, but he came to no new conclusions. Vulić was not discouraged and continued excavations at Trebenište in 1932. This time he had more luck and the outcome was very positive: he discovered four new graves from VII–VI century BC (Vulić, 1933, pp. 1–31). He marked the

graves with numbers IX, X, XI, XII, and collected the findings from each of them. Vulić grouped the found objects according to the materials they were made of. Among the most significant findings made of gold, there was a death mask which, unlike the earlier findings, was covering a female face (Vulić, 1933, p. 9). Also, female sandals made of thin gold were found, as well as two pins, earrings of oval shape, a pendant in the form of four-sided pyramid, two large earrings, and a massive ring (Vulić, 1933, pp. 10–13). In addition to the description of the above mentioned findings, Vulić enclosed photos of the items. One part of the findings from the site in Trebenište was submitted to the National Museum in Sofia, one part found its place in the National Museum in Ohrid, while some were brought to the National Museum in Belgrade (Popović, 1966, pp. 15–30). All findings from the necropolis in Trebenište were recently published in the *Catalogue of the findings from the necropolis at Trebenište* by author Lj. Popović (Поповић, 1956).

In recent years, archaeological excavations in the Ohrid area were organized in 2002 when the fifth golden funerary mask was found in the necropolis 13 km away from Ohrid and Trebenište (Proeve, <http://micnews.com.mk/node/8020>, 14. 09. 2017).

On the basis of this and other findings, it was estimated that the necropolis was in continuous use from the VII to IV / III century BC which confirmed Vulić's thesis that the indigenous population was buried there. Since the tombs with rich grave inventory were discovered, it confirmed the existence of the local aristocracy. Vulić also pointed out that only the leading class of the society could build such luxurious facilities with rich interior. Golden masks have been used in the funeral rituals of Macedonian tribes so they covered the bare body parts with golden ornaments; face with a mask, palms with gloves, feet with sandals (Proeve, 2017). According to the belief of tribes that were buried in graves of Trebenište, sandals were necessary to a deceased in order for them to go to the other world by land route. Sandals may have been funeral offerings for the lower strata of the society too, but were not preserved because they were made of perishable materials. At Trebenište necropolis, there were buried wealthy people who could afford golden "sandals" (Cermanović, 1956, pp. 307–313).

Vulić, recalling anecdotes from his life, gladly remembered these researches in Macedonia. During the excavations at Čepigovo, he sought a shelter in the house of a villager. When he saw that the house and the garden were terribly dirty, he decided to spend a few

nights in the cemetery (NLS, R 432/7, 59). He slept on a large panel on which the deceased used to be lowered before the funeral service. In his notes, he wrote about it, “And when at night it was too uncomfortable for him, he would come out to the cemetery and sit there on the graves, watching the wonderful sky full of stars and listening to the pastoral musicians” (NLS, R 432/7, 60).

Vulić’s desire to bring archaeological works successfully to an end was great and often it forced him to expose himself to discomfort, but also to various dangers. In the village of Podmol (near Prilep), he discovered a magnificent tomb. He wanted to excavate it as soon as possible and that was why he was digging it from all sides so that one day a large amount of land fell down on him and buried him. He was injured and had to spend several days in hospital in Skopje (NLS, R 432/7, 62).

Another significant finding of Vulić in Macedonia was the discovery of the remains of the Roman Theater in Skopje (Vulić, 1935, pp. 749–750; Vulić, 1961, pp. 1–24; NLS, R 382/2, pp. 12–13.). The excavations lasted three years, from 1935 to 1937. The funding was provided by the Museum of Skopje and the works were led by Vulić and Milovan Kokić, a curator of the Skopje Museum (Vulić, 1961, p. 4). Kokić was the first to notice remains of the theater not far away from Zlokućane and subsequently initiated works on the site. The theatre was located on the site where once stood the town of *Scupi*, 5 km west from Skopje, between the villages Zlokućane and Bardovci (Vulić, 1935, p. 749). The building was large, well-built, and richly decorated. The earthquake that completely destroyed Skopje in 518 also largely damaged the theater. The works started in 1935; upon completion of the research, Vulić was able to make comparisons of this theater with the Roman theater in Stobi.

Works in Stobi and Scupi were difficult because both theaters were filled with earth and rubble. Additionally, the theater in Stobi was backfilled with rubbish, while the one in Scupi was covered in layers of sludge accumulated over centuries. Huge layers of sediment were making exploration difficult and therefore in Stobi, during the five years, only a small portion of cavea and insignificant part of orchestra were recreated. In three years in Scupi, an entire orchestra and scene as well as a larger part of the audience was recreated (Vulić, 1961, p. 5). In his report to the Serbian Royal Academy, Vulić described the theater in detail, which he then compared to the theater in Stobi, but also with other theaters in the

Roman world (Vulić, 1961, pp. 18–20). Vulić's conclusions influenced a clarification in the differences between Roman and Greek theaters because he showed that the theater in Stobi represented the Greek type, while the one in Scupi belonged to the Roman type of theaters. Vulić held that both theaters were built in honor of the Emperor Hadrian, when visiting Stobi and Scupi on his way through the Roman provinces (Vulić, 1931, p. 209, n. 555, 556). He also confirmed this claim with milestones found in Stobi erected in honor of the Emperor Hadrian. According to the inscription found near Zlokućane, in which the colony Scupi was called *Aelia*, Vulić concluded that it had been given to the colony in honor of the Emperor Hadrian, because *Aelius* was his gentile name (Vulić, 1941–48, p. 219, n. 434, p. 220, n. 435). In support of his thesis that the Emperor Hadrian visited Southern Serbia at that time, Vulić relied on the results published in a study *Untersuchungen zur Geschichte des Kaisers Hadrianus* by W. Weber (Vulić, 1961, p. 21).

The earthquake that destroyed Scupi in 518 also destroyed the theater. Vulić called for the writer Marcelilinius Komes and his *Chronicle*, which stated that the city was destroyed, but that the population was saved and began to build a new village using the material from the Scupian Theater (Vulić, 1961, pp. 22). Parts of the Scupian Theater were used as the building material during the construction of the Skopje fortress as evidenced by the photos of the fortress that Vulić submitted at the end of the report (Vulić, 1961, n. 55).

Vulić organized archaeological trips to collect new inscriptions, but also to obtain data for the archaeological map which he was preparing (NBS, R 467/78-Г, 1–3). With this aim, he visited the area of Bitola and Prilep and the Kavadarci area (Vulić, *Arhcäologische Karte von Jugoslavien: Blatt Prilep-Bitolj*. Jugoslavischer Ausschuss des Internationalen Verbandes der Akademien, Beograd, E. Pelikan, n. 1–54 and one map; N. Vulić, *Arhcäologische Karte von Jugoslavien: Blatt Kavadarci*. Jugoslavischer Ausschuss des Internationalen Verbandes der Akademien, Beograd, E. Pelikan. n. 1–23. and one map; N. Vulić, *Arhcäologische Karte von Jugoslavien: Kavadarci*. 1938, p. 295). During the summer months of 1936, he visited the Prilep area, where he discovered graves and tombs carved into the rock that otherwise did not exist in the territory of Serbia and Macedonia. The tombs were excavated in the villages of Suvodol, Gornje Selo, followed by Markov grad and Treskavce.

Vulić's dedicated work in the field of archeology put him in the order of our prominent archaeologists whose contribution to the national, but also to the world science, is of great importance. Significant results in the field of archeology could only be achieved by systematic research, which demanded considerable amount of money. If we consider the time in which Vulić lived and worked, a war and inter-war period, it was not possible to rely on greater investment in this scientific discipline. However, using the available funds, and often by his own self-funding, Vulić was able to explore some of the most important sites in the territory of Macedonia. By the results he obtained during archaeological excavations in Macedonia, he justified an earlier claim that Macedonia is a real archaeological California, promising big surprises of the past, therefore a particular attention should be paid to these archaeological investigations (Vulić, 1958, p. 22).

SOURCES

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ИРЕНА В. ЉУБОМИРОВИЋ

УНИВЕРЗИТЕТ У НИШУ
ФИЛОЗОФСКИ ФАКУЛТЕТ
ДЕПАРТМАН ЗА ИСТОРИЈУ

РЕЗИМЕ

ЕПИГРАФСКИ И АРХЕОЛОШКИ РАД НИКОЛЕ ВУЛИЋА
НА ТЕРИТОРИЈИ МАКЕДОНИЈЕ

Током Вулићевих вишегодишњих истраживања које је предузео на територији Македоније у деурипској области недалеко од места Чепигова је открио остатке града, али није утврдио о ком граду је реч. Каснија ископавања и проналазак нових натписа са тог локалитета показала су да су трагови насеља поред Чепигова остаци града Стубере. У Македонији, Вулић је испитао и локалитет код села Дебришта, где се задржао врло кратко и открио је само рушевине једне велике тврђаве. Тек су систематским истраживањима овог локалитета, у периоду од 1976–1978. године, утврђени културни слојеви и остаци насеља као и некрополе.

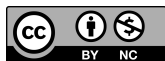
Захваљујући пре свега методски добро припремљеном истраживању 1930. године у Требеништу је открио пет нових гробова са богатим инвентаром. Током новијих археолошких радова у Требеништу и његовој околини дошло се до открића која су омогућила извођење нових закључака. Резултати истраживања

дали су одговоре на питања која су Вулић и други научници (Б. Филов) само отворили, а тицала су се етничке припадности становништва сахрањеног у откривеним гробницама. Вулић је управо захваљујући открићима у некрополи у Требеништу постао познат светској археолошкој науци.

Значајно је било и Вулићево откриће позоришта код Скупа. Он је открио све делове позоришта и упоредио га са тада познатим позориштем у Стобима. Вулић је установио да је позориште у Скупима грађено у II веку н. е, тачније за време цара Хадријана. Ископавањима у периоду од 1970–1974. године дошло се до нових налаза (новац цара Марка Аурелија) који су потврдили Вулићеву тезу о изградњи позоришта или бар једног његовог дела у II веку н. е.

Захваљујући исцрпном раду на прикупљању античких натписа, Вулића можемо сматрати утемељивачем епиграфике као научне дисциплине у Србији. Највећи број натписа прикупио је на територији Македоније, где је вршио и опсежна археолошка истраживања. Вулић је прикупљањем и објављивањем великог броја натписа дао значајан допринос истраживању античке прошлости Македоније.

Кључне речи: Никола Вулић; археолошка истраживања; епиграфски споменици; античка насеља.



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