

# Settlement Organisation In The Ohrid Region

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## ABSTRACT

The settlement area of the Ohrid region extends on the shores of a homonymous lake shared between the Republics of Northern Macedonia and Albania. Despite its mountainous framing, the geographical setting of the Ohrid region provides the broadest accessible link between the Aegean and the Adriatic regions in the southern Balkans and was, *vice versa*, an eminent pre-condition for the formation of supra-regional networks in the past. Placed on this communication route, which is embodied by the widely known *Via Egnatia*, the region represented an important hub in the cultural connectivity between the Aegean, the Adriatic see, and the Balkans. As a response to the lacking of systematic investigations, this paper presents a reconstruction of the pre- and protohistoric habitation in the region. Reviewing past archaeological discoveries and recent data collected during the first two field seasons conducted within the frame of the project *Frontier Studies*, this paper focuses on the settlement organisation and traces its development as well as corresponding phenomena, such as connectivity and response to environmental changes, diachronically from the Neolithic down to Late Antiquity.

## KEYWORDS

Macedonia; Lake Ohrid; habitation; Bronze Age; Iron Ages; Archaic period; Hellenistic period; Roman period.

## INTRODUCTION

The region around Lake Ohrid occupies the central part of a much broader geographical area, which extends from the Albanian coast to the estuaries of Rivers Axios/Vardar and Strymon/Struma. This geographical location forms the southern border of the central Balkans and mainland Greece, and consequently the question of the proximity and adherence/affinity to the Aegean and Adriatic has been symptomatic of the scholarly interest for a long time, especially in connection to the wider Mediterranean networks.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, the topographic configuration of this area characterised by river valleys, gorges, plains, and mountain ranges has been an object of extensive discussions in relation to its role as a key vehicle for connectivity between the local prehistoric communities and proto-state structures in the Aegean and the surrounding areas, in particular the western and northern Balkans, the Apennine Peninsula, and the Carpathian basin. Numerous contributions attempted to describe the area of the modern Greek administrative districts of Macedonia and Epirus as well as the southern part of Albania and the Republic of North Macedonia as merely peripheral or buffering

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1 See HAMMOND 1972, 210–211; GARAŠANIN 1983, 703 and VASIĆ 1987, 571 for the area around the Thermaic Gulf; VASIĆ 1994 for the area of North Macedonia; TERŽAN 2015 and TSONOS 2016 for modern Albania; GIMATZIDIS 2015 for present-day Greece.

zones of the Aegean *koiné*.<sup>2</sup> However, the understanding of the role of the region has gradually changed following the postcolonial turn and the recent scholarship points out to the existence of complex cultural networks connecting the Balkans and the Mediterranean. Likewise, the intensive work over the last 25 years, that is since the early 1990s, and outstanding finds form to an image of a heterogeneous cultural region consisting of several distinct, albeit interconnected, areas (cf. GIMATZIDIS 2015 with further reading). It was not until the period after 400 BC that this vast area became fully incorporated into the Aegean *koiné* (cf. GREENWALT 2010; HATZOPOULOS 2011).

In the last three decades, systematic exploration and surveys of pre- and protohistoric sites have produced a number of important contributions to the understanding of long-term settlement histories on the Adriatic coast (cf. HANSEN *et al.* 2007; ÇIPA 2016; AGOLLI 2019) and in central Albania (cf. LERA *et al.* 2009; GORI – KRAPP *in print*), as well as the area around the Thermaic Gulf and the neighbouring Chalcidice Peninsula or the Strymon/Struma estuary (cf. TODOROVA – STEFANOVICH – IVANOV 2007; ASLAKSEN 2013; GIMATZIDIS 2015; DESPINE 2016). In the Republic of North Macedonia, the ongoing archaeological excavations in the Vardar Valley and adjacent regions of the Bregalnica and Kumanovo plains as well as in Pelagonia reveal important data (cf. MITREVSKI 1997; DONEV 2015; MITREVSKI 2016; NAUMOV *et al.* 2017). In spite of the above mentioned, there are still several blind spots in the region, so to speak – one of them is the central area situated around the Lakes of Ohrid and Prespa in the western part of the country.

Until recently, the habitation history of the Ohrid region with its centre in the city of Ohrid (ancient *Lychnidos*) had been studied mainly through the literary evidence (cf. HAMMOND 1972, 420–441), which was supplemented by only a few archaeological findings. The main bulk of the archaeological research has been attested via pottery scatters by either brief rescue excavations or surface prospection; only 19 sites were verified by systematic archaeological excavations and published in detail or in a form of preliminary reports (cf. WEISSOVÁ *et al.* 2018, 100 with further reading). All the data were summarised during the endeavour of mapping all the archaeological sites within the territory of former Yugoslavia during the 1980s and 1990s. The publication *Археолошка карта на република Македонија* (Archaeological Map of the Republic of Macedonia, further abbreviated as the AKM) contains a list of archaeological sites known at the time of its completion, together with basic topographical, material, and chronological description. The value of the AKM is, however, decisively diminished by its unreliability in terms of precise geographical positioning and chronological indications; the latter reflects the different strategies of data collection and the lack of fixed chronological sequences verified by archaeological excavations and subsequent analysis of finds.<sup>3</sup>

Moreover, the different scholarly traditions directed the archaeological examinations of the Ohrid region to specific carefully selected, yet diverse, phenomena. Specifically, the systematic prehistoric research in the wetlands where lake sheds came to light informs the development of the first (Neolithic) cultures in the region and their characteristic settlement type, the pile-dwelling (cf. KUZMAN 2013a; NAUMOV 2016). The research on the Archaic, Hellenistic, and Roman period emphasised primarily the study of material culture and largely

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2 Overview with further reading in HOREJS 2007; TERŽAN 2015. – For general overview of essentialist models and their criticism cf. DE ANGELIS 2013; ULF 2015.

3 For further discussion of the methodological difficulties in working with the AKM cf. WEISSOVÁ *et al.* 2018, 102–103, 129–131. Absolute dates based on both radiocarbon and dendrochronological dating are available only at two sites so far: Ohridati/Penelope (KUZMAN 2017, 150) and Plocha Michov Grad (NAUMOV *et al.* 2018, 16–19).

neglected the overall social or economic context of these periods (cf. BITRAKOVA GROZDANOVA 1990; 1995; GUŠTIN – KUMAN – MALENKO 2012; KUZMAN – POCHUCHA-KUZMAN 2014). Likewise, the focus restricted on selected centres within the region led to a simplistic assumption of a longstanding significance, processes of urbanisation and issues of centrality of distinct historical sites and areas (cf. BITRAKOVA GROZDANOVA 2003; KUZMAN 2017). In consequence, our knowledge of habitation patterns and socio-cultural developments in terms of a *longue durée* approach has been until recently very limited in both rural and mountainous landscapes and still requires further exploration.<sup>4</sup>

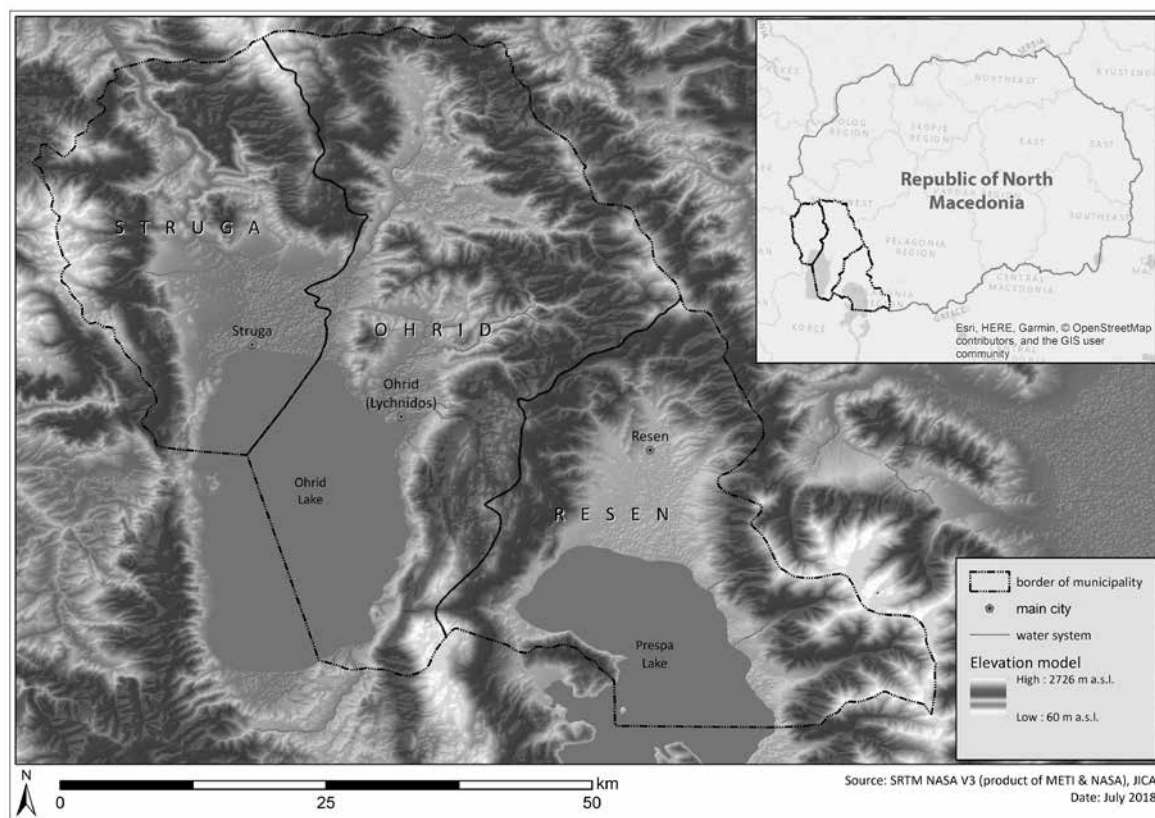
As a response to the lacking of systematic investigations, this paper presents a reconstruction of the pre- and protohistoric habitation in the region. Reviewing past archaeological discoveries and recent data collected during the first two field seasons conducted within the frame of the project *Frontier Studies*,<sup>5</sup> this paper focuses on the settlement organisation and traces its development as well as corresponding phenomena, such as connectivity and response to environmental changes, diachronically from the Neolithic down to the Late Antiquity. However, this paper does not claim to be an exhaustive study. Rather, it is a brief overview of the topic and addresses the challenges and potentials of the investigation – in terms of both general considerations and specific questions concerning every period of focus. The structure of this paper thus follows the chronological development in the region, and each chapter includes a contribution to a specific research question. Finally, this paper defines the framework for the further regional research in the last chapter and raises new questions in order to unlock the potential of this historical landscape, where longstanding and intriguing socio-cultural development took place.

## SETTING THE STAGE – THE SURROUNDING LANDSCAPE

Transboundary Lake Ohrid is shared between the Republic of North Macedonia and Albania. The lake is about 30.4 km long (N-S), 14.7 km wide (E-W) and covers an area of 360 square km at an altitude of 693 m.a.s.l. (**Fig. 1**). It is presumed to be one of the oldest existing lakes in Europe (WAGNER *et al.* 2017, 2039). In the earliest stage of its existence during the older Pleistocene/Pliocene, it was a part of a much more extensive lake group, which lay within the orogenic belt of the Dinarides – Albanides – Hellenides mountains and included Small Prespa Lake, situated between Greece and Albania, as well as Lake Maliq, which was originally located in Albania but dried up in the 1950s (FOUACHE *et al.* 2010; WAGNER *et al.* 2010, 3187). Today, the basin of Lake Ohrid is framed by the Galichitsa Mountain range (with peaks up to

4 A different approach aiming a comprehensive study of whole area of the Ohrid region in ARDJANLIEV 2018; ARDJANLIEV *et al.* 2018.

5 The project *Frontier Studies. Investigation into Identity and Cultural Contacts in the Border Area of Ancient Macedonia* was initiated by the Charles University in Prague and the National Archaeological Museum of North Macedonia in cooperation with the Commission for Ancient History and Epigraphic at the German Archaeological Institute, the University of South Bohemia, and the Czech Geological Service. Within the framework of the project, several interdisciplinary studies will be conducted to reveal the historical landscape and to explain the dynamics of the habitation patterns with regards to geological, environmental, and socio-cultural changes in order to address questions regarding the construction of the identities, emergence of proto-state structures, and centralisation phenomena at the northern contact zone of the Aegean cultural *koine* between the Bronze Age and the Late Antiquity; for the main aims and the project methodology as well as the results of the 2017s campaign see WEISSOVÁ *et al.* 2018.

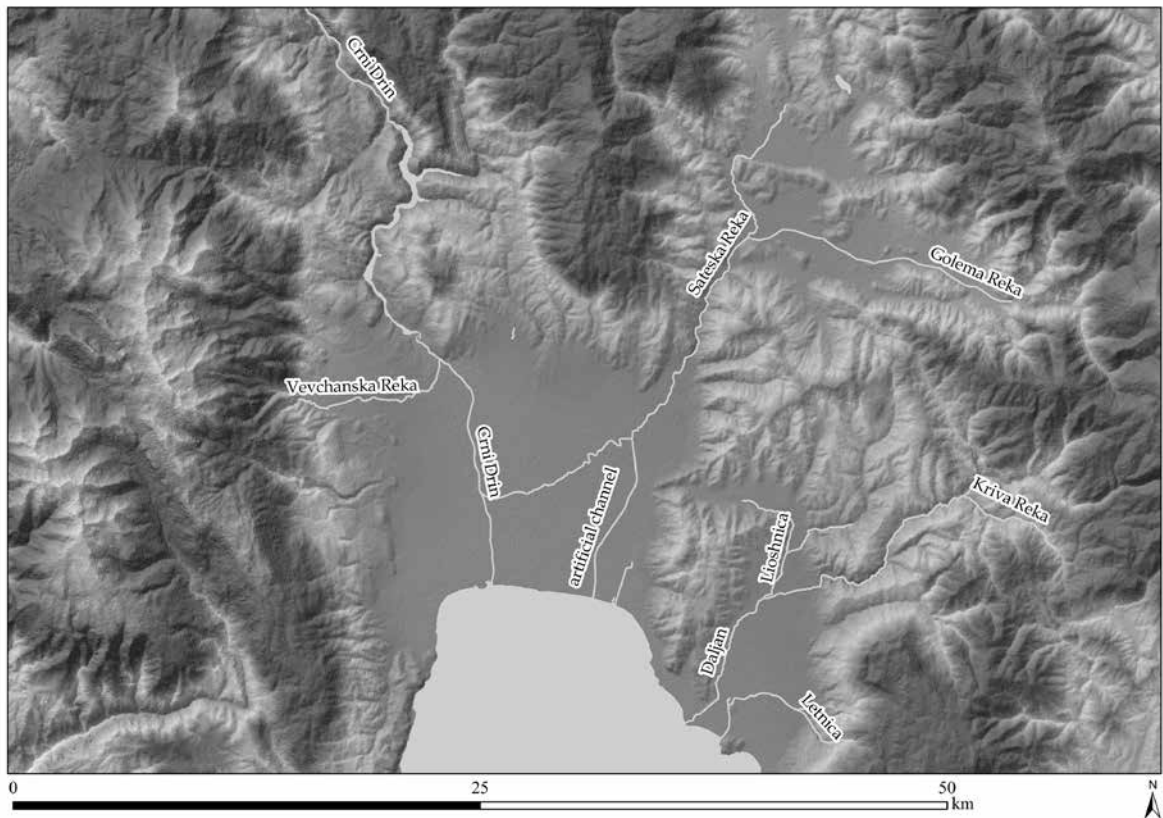


**Fig. 1: Map of wider geographical context area and the Ohrid region (map by B. Weissová).**

2,250 m.a.s.l.) in the east and the Mokra Mountain range (with peaks up to 2,200 m.a.s.l.) in the west. Despite the mountainous framing, the basin provides the broadest accessible link in the south Balkans between the Aegean and the Adriatic regions. This configuration was therefore an eminent geographical condition for the formation of the supra-regional connection widely known from the Roman period onwards as Via Egnatia (FASOLO 2003; JOVANOVA 2013, 842–844). Moreover, the valleys of the Crni Drim River and the Sateska River connected the region with the central Balkans and with the Danube Plain further on (MIKULČIĆ 2002, 30–47; BURKHARDT – DAUBNER 2012). Finally, the road along the western and eastern shores of the lake connected the Ohrid region with Korçë plain in present-day Albania and led either via the valley of the Devoll River to the Adriatic coast or to Epirus in the south (PAPAZOĞLU 1985, 101). These routes, which were used in the Roman period at the latest, enhance the geographical significance of the Lake Ohrid Basin as an important communication hub between the Balkans and the northern Greece as well as Italy.

As described by the English traveller Mary Edith Durham in 1905, the ancient city of *Lychnidos* – the centre of the Ohrid region – is situated on a small hill, stretching along the flat northern shore of a lake.<sup>6</sup> The micro-regional landscape is indeed characterised by mountain ranges intersected by small plateaus and deep river valleys that give way to narrow plains near the lake – this geographical setting constitutes a typical inland basin type distinctive of the Balkans. The eastern and western shorelines of the Lake Ohrid are straight and were modelled by neotectonic movements along the faults (REICHERTER *et al.* 2011); the lakeshore is, thus,

6 DURHAM 1905, 136; cf. also BURKHARDT – DAUBNER 2012, 77.



**Fig. 2: Map of the main tributaries of the Ohrid Lake (map by P. Tušlová).**

very steep, and the mountain ranges of Galichitsa and Jablanitsa rise immediately behind it, letting only a narrow flat strip of land left. The northern and southern parts of the basin are characterised by plains. The larger one around the city of Struga in the north is drained by the Crni Drim River. Its original main tributary, the Sateska River, was regulated in the 1960s and today flows into the lake (**Fig. 2**). In its upper course, the 31.2 km long Sateska River formed a long narrow valley between the Plakenska Plateau and the Ilinska Plateau, which is separated from the Struga plain by the Botunskata Gorge; in this way, it constitutes another settlement area, yet one that is historically connected with the lakeshore. The flat shore around the city of Ohrid represents the second, smaller plain to the north of the lake. It extends some 15 km to the north where it is framed by the Plakenska Plateau and the Galichitsa Mountain range. The Gabavski Hilllock in the west divides the Ohrid and Struga plains. The major fluvial inflows from the rivers Cerava and Voljorek formed distinct deltas in the southern part of the lake around the cities of St. Naum and Podgoritsa, which are separated by a low hilllock, which is the present-day border between the Republic of North Macedonia and Albania. In this area, a high inflow is observed from multiple karstic springs and the spring of the Crni Drim River is located here.

The basin of Lake Ohrid forms one of the most seismically active zones in Albania and the Republic of North Macedonia. Major earthquakes followed by destructive floods were documented already in the Late Antiquity (WAGNER *et al.* 2012). Other geomorphological determinants, such as alluvial sedimentation and erosion of steep hillslopes in combination with anthropogenic interventions (agriculture, deforestation, and channel construction), have further changed the surrounding landscape and actively influenced the patterns of habitation during

the historic periods. As a result, the plains to the north and south of the lake are dominated by clastic input (alluvial soils mixed with eroded limestone), whereas the western and eastern shores comprise a coastal marsh/lagoon environment caused either by a rapid lake-level drop or tectonic activity (HOFFMANN *et al.* 2012; NAUMOV *et al.* 2018). The finest examples of such changes are the Neolithic to/or Bronze Age pile-dwelling settlements of Ohridati/Penelope and Plocha Michov Grad, which were originally built in the wetlands of the lake, but are today situated either below the alluvial deposits of the lake shore or under the lake.

## THE EXPLORATION OF THE REGION – SETTLEMENT TRENDS AND PATTERNS IN THE OHRID REGION

The dynamic and biologically diverse landscape made the Lake Ohrid basin a preferred region for habitation since the Early Neolithic and subsequently displays a long continuity of human activity; a synopsis of the regional periodization of the cultural and historical development in the Ohrid region can be seen in **Tab. 1**.

Within the lake basin, the city of Ohrid – in ancient times known as *Lychnidos* – represented an important hub and at the same time a historical centre of the region. No later than in the middle of the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BC, it assumed a vital role in the connectivity between the Aegean *koiné* and the Balkans in the north as well as the Adriatic region in the west – first as a part of the Argead Kingdom of Macedonia (4<sup>th</sup>–3<sup>rd</sup> century BC), later on within the independent territory of Dassaratia (3<sup>rd</sup>–2<sup>nd</sup> century BC) and, finally, in the Roman provinces of *Macedonia* and later *Epirus Nova* from the middle of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC (cf. ARDJANLIEV 2017; DAUBNER 2018). In the early medieval times, the churches and monasteries in and around Ohrid became the major cultural centres of the Bulgarian, Greek, and Serbian empires in the southern Balkans (cf. KUZMAN 2016a).

The summary data used in this synthesis were obtained from archaeological records in the AKM, which were reviewed during the two campaigns of site and extensive survey within the framework of the *Frontier Studies* project (cf. WEISSOVÁ *et al.* 2018). The data were used to create a database of sites and chronologies focusing predominantly on the period from the Bronze Age until the Late Antiquity, which will be supplemented by the recent data concerning the Neolithic (cf. KUZMAN 2016b; KUZMAN 2017) for the purpose of this synthesis. The collation of the survey results records a total of 142 archaeological sites so far, of which 13 features epigraphic monuments or *spolia* in secondary or tertiary deposition. 78 archaeological sites can be classified as settlements dating within the scope of this study (**Tab. 2**); another 14 Neolithic sites/settlements can be included. The term settlement is used to define an area of permanent or temporary habitation, as opposite to the superordinate concept of a site defined as an area with evidence of past activity (cf. WEISSOVÁ *et al.* 2018 for methodology). If necessary in terms of the understanding of the overall settlement context, other types of archaeological sites such as necropoleis or single funeral depositions will be discussed as well.

Years BC/AD	Period	Important sites in the region	Identifier
6500–5500	Early Neolithic	Zlastrana, Dolno Trnovo	N
5500–4500	Middle Neolithic	Ohrid (Ohridati)	
4500–3500/3200	Late Neolithic / Eneolithic	Ustie na Drim	
3500/3200–1550/1600	Early / Middle Bronze Age	Trebenishko kale	BA
1550/1600–1000	Late Bronze Age	‘Bay of Bones’, ‘Bay of Goats’, ‘Bay of Bombs’	
1000–750/700	Early Iron Age (Transition)	Vrbnik, Ohrid (Plaoshnik), Ohrid (Ohridati)	EIA
750/700–550	Developed Iron Age	Ohrid (Plaošnik)	IA
550–450	Late Archaic	Trebenishte, Ohrid (Gorna Porta), Delogozhda, Radolishta	A
450–330	Classic	Ohrid (Plaošnik)	C
330–168/148	Hellenistic	Trebenishko kale, Delogozhda, Ohrid (Deboj), St. Erasmo - Kulishta	Hell
168/148–395	Roman	Ohrid (Lychnidos), Plocha Michov Grad	R
395–6 <sup>th</sup> c. AD	Late Antiquity	Ohrid (Lychnidos)	LA
6 <sup>th</sup> c. AD–1018	Early Medieval period (Byzantine, Bulgarian)	Ohrid	EMA
1018–1395	Medieval period	Ohrid, Struga	MA
1395	Ottoman conquest	Ohrid, Struga	Ott

**Tab. 1: Periodization of the cultural and historical development in the Ohrid region (based on KUZMAN 2010; 2016; 2017; MITREVSKI 2013; JOVANOVA 2013; BLASEVSKA 2013; NAUMOV 2016).**

OH_ID	Village	Site	Type	Chronology	Elevation (masl)
2000	Ohrid	Antichki teatar	Settlement	Hell, R, LA	736
2004	Ohrid	Samoilova tvrđina	Fortress	IA, A, C, Hell, R, LA	784
2014	Mesheishta	Sv. Ilija	Settlement	IA, A	908
2015	Mesheishta	Sv. Ilija	Scatter	Ott	744
2016	Gorentsi	Trebenishte	Necropolis	IA, A, C, Hell	714
2017	Orovnik	Pod tsrkvata	Necropolis	IA	735
2018	Orovnik	Orovnik	Settlement	Hell, R	731
2019	Orovnik	Orovnik	Settlement	R	758
2020	Orovnik	Trojani	Necropolis	R	1030
2021	Vapila	×	Scatter	Ott	751
2022	Vapila	Gorna Gorica	AC scatter	none	747
2024	G. Lakocherej	Gorica	Settlement	R	743
2025	G. Lakocherej	Gorica	Necropolis	R	740
2026	D. Lakocherej	Gradishte	Settlement	BA	922
2027	Kosel	Gradishte	Settlement	BA	804
2028	Kosel	Sred Selo	Necropolis	Hell	747

OH_ID	Village	Site	Type	Chronology	Elevation (masl)
2029	Leskoets	Goritsa	Settlement	BA, EIA, R, LA, MA	767
2030	Velgoshti	Olmets - Kulishte	Fortress	IA, A	1004
2031	Ohrid	Sv. Erasmo	Fortress	IA, A, Hell	733
2032	Ohrid	Antichna Phurna	Kiln	LA	709
2033	Orman	×	Scatter	Ott	733
2035	Peshtani	Plocha Michov Grad	Pallafite Settlement	N, BA, EIA	689
2036	Peshtani	Gradishte	Castrum	R	700
2047	Radozhda	Kaldrma	Road	R (?), Ott	754
2048	Velgoshti	×	Structure	LA (?), Ott (?)	865
2051	D. Lakocherej	Lak-Predikamintsa	Settlement	R	883
2052	D. Lakocherej	×	Spolia	R	849
2053	Radolishta	×	Road	R (?), Ott	714
2054	Radolishta	Kamen most - Opale	Bridge	R (?), Ott	726
2055	Radolishta	Kamen Most - Opale	Settlement	N	693
2056	Radolishta	Ciganski Grobishta	Church	LA	693
2057	Radolishta	Ciganski Grobishta	Necropolis	EMA	724
2058	Shum	Arapski grobishta	Necropolis	Hell	697
2059	Delogozhda	Padarnitsa	Settlement	R	762
2060	Delogozhda	Sv. Ilja	Necropolis	A, Hell, R, EMA	754
2061	Delogozhda	×	Road	R (?), Ott	757
2062	Delogozhda	×	Necropolis	Modern (?)	757
2064	Delogozhda	Gradishte - Kale	Fortress	IA, Hell, LA, MA	1005
2065	Oktisi	Vajtos - Gradishte	Fortress	Hell, LA	1155
2066	Oktisi	×	Road	R(?), Ott	1148
2067	G. Tateshi	Kale	Fortress	LA	956
2068	Struga	Ustie na Drim	Pallafite Settlement	N	695
2069	Trebenishta	Trebenishko Kale	Necropolis	Hell, R	944
2070	Trebenishta	Trebenishko Kale	Fortress	BA, IA, Hell, LA, EMA	995
2072	Rechitsa	Zadrushni Shtali	Necropolis	A, R	1013
2073	Rechitsa	Lozishta	Depot	IA/A	1064
2075	Kosel	×	Spolia	LA	757
2076	Ohrid	×	Scatter	R (?), LA (?), Ott	718
2077	D. Lakocherej	Banik	Necropolis	R	746
2078	D. Lakocherej	Sv. Nedela	Settlement	R	726
2079	D. Lakocherej	Sv. Nedela	Necropolis	R	724
2080	Orovnik	Orovnik	Necropolis	Hell, R	731
2081	Leskoec	Goritsa	Necropolis	MA	771
2082	Mesheishta	Sv. Ilija	Church	MA	908



<b>OH_ID</b>	<b>Village</b>	<b>Site</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Chronology</b>	<b>Elevation (masl)</b>
2083	Radolishta	Kamen Most - Opale	Necropolis	A	694
2084	Velgoshti	Na Lazoj	Settlement	R, LA	825
2085	Leskoets	Sv. Petkina Niva	Necropolis	Hell, R	773
2086	Leskoets	Leleshnitsa	Necropolis	R, LA	831
2087	Orman	Orman	Necropolis	R, LA	706
2088	Ohrid	Chermeleja	Settlement	R, LA	695
2090	Trebenishta	Zabrdo	Settlement	IA, Hell, LA	787
2091	Volino	Sv. Kliment	Necropolis	R, LA	707
2092	Volino	×	Scatter	Ott	707
2095	Kalishta	Lozja-Buzelitsa	Settlement	R, LA	708
2096	Phrangovo	Dzelino	Settlement	R, LA	807
2097	Kalishta	Kalishta (Vrbnik)	Pallafite Settlement	N, BA, EIA, A (?)	x
2099	Mesheishta	Radesh	Settlement	R, LA	753
2100	Mesheishta	Cheshmite - Magda	Settlement	R, LA	748
2101	Mesheishta	Gorno Pole	Settlement	R, LA	741
2102	Zlesti	Stranshta	Settlement	EIA, A, Hell, LA	894
2103	Gorno Sredoreche	Zlastrana	Settlement	N	797
2104	Velmej	Pashina Goritsa	Necropolis	R, LA	812
2105	Velmej	Kutlina	Settlement	N, BA, EIA, IA, Hell, R	861
2106	Slatino	Gradishte	Fortress	LA	1289
2108	Godivje	Kula	Settlement	R, LA	983
2109	Konjsko	Gradishte	Fortress	Hell	1039
2110	Ljubanishta	Turski Grobishta	Necropolis	R, LA	737
2111	Ljubanishta	Stara Koliba - Koshot	Settlement	R, LA	692
2112	Ljubanishta	Buchila	Necropolis	R, LA	703
2113	Ljubanishta	Sv. Atanasija	Necropolis	R	711
2114	Ljubanishta	Gradishte - Vilicite	Fortress	Hell, LA	857
2115	Trpejtsa	Kale	Settlement	R, LA	744
2116	Ljubanishta	×	Settlement	BA, LA	858
2117	Brezhani	Vo Seloto	Settlement	N	1022
2118	Brezhani	Gradishte - Kula	Fortress	BA, EIA, IA, Hell	1088
2119	Brezhani	Brezhansko Gradishte	Fortress	LA	1223
2121	Leshani	Gradishte	Fortress	BA, EIA, LA	1067
2122	Velmej	Buchishta	Settlement	LA	856
2122	Velmej	Popov Dol	Necropolis	LA	856
2124	Vranishta	Tsrkveni Livadi	Pallafite Settlement	N, BA	x
2125	Velmej	Pette Dabje	Necropolis	R, LA	865
2126	Velmej	Gramagje	Necropolis	Hell	884

OH_ID	Village	Site	Type	Chronology	Elevation (masl)
2127	Velmej	Gladnitsa	Settlement	R, LA	884
2128	Velmej	Gradushte - Gorno Polsko	Fortress	LA	1004
2130	Velmej	×	Settlement	R, LA	859
2131	Velmej	×	Settlement	R, LA	855
2132	Velmej	Gorni Javorets	Settlement	R, LA	976
2133	Pesochani	Kula	Settlement	BA, EIA, LA	970
2134	Zlesti	Gradishte	Settlement	BA, EIA	1104
2136	Velevstovo	Racha	Settlement	R, LA	738
2137	Ohrid	Guminshite-Invalidsko odmaralishte	Necropolis	R, LA	709
2138	Elshani	Kupejntsa	Settlement	R, LA	898
2142	Phrangovo	Petrin Dol	Necropolis	Hell, R	729
2143	Zagrachani	Babush	Settlement	R, LA	718
2144	Dolna Belitsa	Krasta	Settlement	BA, EIA, IA, A	764
2145	Velmej	Pisan Kamen	Necropolis	Hell	997
2146	Zagrachani	×	Road	R (?), Ott	721
2148	Trpejtsa	Tsrna Pesh - Krston Sad	Cave	N	689
2149	Mislodezhda	Sred Selo	Necropolis	R, LA	977
2150	Prisovjani	Kula - Gradishte	Fortress	R, LA	991
2151	Selci	Kale	Settlement / Fortress	BA, EIA, Hell	1321
2152	Oktisi	Goncharovska Kuka	Necropolis	R, LA	856
2153	G. Tateshi	Begova Niva - Kele	Settlement	R, LA	766
2154	G. Tateshi	Tsrkva - Kisha	Settlement	R, LA	777
2155	G. Tateshi	Shtrati	Settlement	R, LA	711
2156	Dobovjani	Plachi Krusha	Necropolis	R, LA	691
2157	Dobovjani	Plachi Krusha	Settlement	R, LA	698
2158	Tashmarunishta	Gradishte	Road	R (?), Ott	813
2159	Tashmarunishta	Gradishte	Castrum	R, LA	836
2160	Modrich	Gradishte	Fortress	Hell, LA	947
2161	Lukovo	Oreo	Settlement	BA, EIA, IA, Hell, LA	826
2162	Jablanitsa	Kale	Settlement	BA, EIA, LA	956
2163	Koroshishta	Kale	Fortress	BA, EIA, Hell, LA	879
2164	Koroshishta	Grobishta - Chiflik	Necropolis	R, LA	739
2165	Koroshishta	Grobishta - Chiflik	Settlement	R, LA	726
2166	Koroshishta	Garamidnica	Settlement	R, LA	739
2167	Vevchani	Pleshets	Settlement	Hell, R, LA	740
5005	Ohrid	Ohridati/Penelopa	Settlement	N, BA, EIA	690

**Tab. 2: Overview of the sites surveyed in 2017–2019. The chronology is based on the AKM, updated with our survey results (based on the evaluation of pottery and architectural remains). The abbreviations stand for: D. = Dolno, G. = Gorno. For the chronology see Tab. 1.**

## NEOLITHIC

The Neolithic belongs to one of the best researched archaeological periods in the region, even though it caught the attention of scholars at a relatively late stage (cf. KUZMAN 2016b; KUZMAN 2017). Systematic excavations took place on eight sites<sup>7</sup> and additional material was collected by rescue excavations, brief surveys or stray finds on at least 15 sites – all represent settlement-type sites (KUZMAN 2016b, 31, map 1). From the data so far collected a picture has been drawn in regard to the earliest settlement activity in the region and the subsequent questions of the direction and the chronology of the dispersion of significant economic and social processes (cf. NAUMOV 2016; NAUMOV *et al.* 2018). Therefore, we will refer to these results in the following – although the development in the Neolithic exceeds the scope of our research – as the settlement pattern constituted in this period determined the further development of the habitation in the region until the early 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BC.

Multilayer settlements in the plains to the north of the lake at Dolno Trnovo and Zlastrana (ID 2103) in upper Sateska River valley mark the beginning of the settlement development in this region in the Early Neolithic (KUZMAN 2016b; 2017). In the final stages of the Early Neolithic (ca. 5800/5500 BC), the habitation shifted toward the lakeshore or the nearby coastal plains. On such marshy and overgrown terrain, houses were raised on separate platforms of roughly cut beams placed on pointy wooden spikes stuck in the marshy layer and in solid ground underneath. The settlement expanded, but the platforms were individual for one or several houses, while those closest to each other were most probably linked with wooden bridges (KUZMAN 2013a, 306–309). The first pile-dwelling occupied the site Ohridati/Penelope (ID 5005) within the city of Ohrid (cf. KUZMAN 2017, 149–151), and was followed by several pile-dwelling settlements constructed around the lake in the Late Neolithic (ca. 4600/4400 BC).<sup>8</sup> In addition to them, dispersed settlements occupied the hillslopes in the valley of rivers Sateska, Daljan, and Sushitsa and in the plains around the lake as attested by pottery scatters. The number of pile-dwellings at Lake Ohrid started diminishing gradually at the end of the period and only three sites can be dated to the subsequent Eneolithic: Tsrkveni Livadi (ID 2124), Ohridati/Penelope (ID 5005), Ustie na Drim (ID 2068). This decline in settlement pattern beginning in the middle of the 4<sup>th</sup> millennium BC was also observed in other areas of the Balkans and is interpreted as a consequence of climatic changes in the region (TODOROVA – VAISOV 1993; NAUMOV 2013/2014, 17).

The communities inhabiting the Ohrid region established solid networks and common identity in regard to wetland environment and farming economy as early as the 6<sup>th</sup> millennium BC. Numerous finds of white painted pottery and anthropomorphic house models indicate dynamic contacts with the nearby region of Pelagonia as well as other areas in the Central Balkans (Kosovo, Serbia), while the monochrome vessels with incised decoration are in favour of a communication to north-eastern Albania around the Tsrni Drim River (NAUMOV 2016, 175; KUZMAN 2017, 147). The regional networks between wetland communities were firmly maintained in the Late Neolithic and the Eneolithic as attested by the production of black polished pottery and stamps with identical patterns in the Ohrid re-

7 Systematic excavations were conducted at Tsrvenitsa (Openitsa), Tsrkveni Livadi (Vranishta; ID 2124), Dolno Trnovo (Ohrid), Ohridati/ Penelope (Ohrid; ID 5005), Plocha Michov Grad (Peshtani; ID 2035), Ustie na Drim (Struga; ID 2068), Vrbnik (Kalishta; 2097), Zlastrana (Gorno Sredoreche; ID 2103); for further reading cf. KUZMAN 2016b.

8 Fixed stratigraphic sequence is only available for the following sites: Plocha Michov Grad (Peshtani; NAUMOV *et al.* 2018, 22), Ustie na Drim (Struga; TODOROSKA 2016), Vrbnik (TODOROSKA 2010).

gion, Pelagonia, and the Korçë Valley in Albania (cf. NAUMOV 2016). On contrary, the over regional connectivity, with the northwardly regions of the Vinča culture in particular, is currently under discussion.<sup>9</sup>

## BRONZE AGE AND IRON AGE

During the Bronze Age, the number of settlements in the region increased again and remained relatively constant until the end of the Early Iron Age or the so-called Transitional period, 1000–750/700 BC (Pl. 1/1). Only a few of the sites that had been inhabited already during the previous period retained stability, even if with certain gaps in habitation, from the middle of the 5<sup>th</sup> millennium to the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BC. The pile-dwelling settlements of Tsrkveni Livadi (ID 2124), Ohridati/Penelope (ID 5005), Plocha Michov Grad (ID 2035) and Vrbnik (ID 2097) yielded finds dated to the Bronze Age, even if the amount of the material is lower when compared to that of the Neolithic (KUZMAN 2013a, 351–361, 367–370, 383–389; NAUMOV *et al.* 2018, 15–16). In addition, further changes can be observed in the architecture; the large and long poles utilised in the construction of platforms of pile-dwellings of the Bronze Age indicate the presence of larger platforms for several houses. These houses were now made of wooden frames filled with a strong and stable mixture of mud and straw as connecting material (cf. KORKUTI 2003, 225–234, figs. 5–8; KUZMAN 2013a, 334–350, fig. 33, 38, 41–43).

The second settlement type comprise the hilltop sites, both fortified or without enclosing walls. The sites situated on the top of small hills or promontories of mountain ranges – often called *gradishte* or *goritsa* – represent one of the most visible Bronze and Iron Ages features in the Republic of North Macedonia and the Balkans in general. The practise of establishing hilltop settlements in the region has been widely assumed to reflect the emergence of central places of production and exchange, whereas the sites located near the lake shore have been interpreted as fishing places (NAUMOV 2013/2014, 18 with further reading). However, in the absence of systematic excavations and detailed information about the organisation of space, it is not possible to do more than speculate on the precise means by which these sites operated within the settlement system of the period (cf. HARDING 1992, 25 and GIMATZIDIS 2015, 461 for the sites in neighbouring Albania and Greece).<sup>10</sup> Moreover, the ceramic material from the sites with continuous and known stratigraphic sequence of the Bronze and Iron Ages are still either under study or unpublished so far.<sup>11</sup> This situation has left the exact chronological classification of the hilltop settlements under consideration open to discussion. Despite this, the detailed study of M. Gori and T. Krapf on the pottery from the pile-dwelling settlement at Sovjan in the Korçë plain, located south of the Lake Ohrid, can help us in forming a basic picture of the development of the habitation during this period (GORI – KRAPF 2015). By studying pottery distribution patterns, the authors argue in favour of the existence of a ceramic network connecting the Prespa-Maliq-Ohrid Lake system, which displays cultural

9 Cf. KUZMAN 2013a, 354 and KUZMAN 2017, 151 for connection to the Vinča culture. – NAUMOV 2013/2014, 17 and NAUMOV 2016, 183–184 emphasises the distinct pottery decoration (hatched incised triangles and dotted stripes) more likely as a westward feature from Pelagonia and Western Anatolia.

10 Systematic archaeological investigations were conducted only at Trebenishko Kale (ID 2090; LAHTOV 1959), St. Erazmo (ID 2031; KUZMAN – DIMITROVA 2010), and Kutlina near Velmej (ID 2105; LAHTOV 1961, 39).

11 A brief sketch of the ceramics from the Ohrid region can be found in the systematic study on LBA and EIA pottery from the territory of the North Macedonia by A. Papasovska (unpublished PhD. thesis, St. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje).

homogeneity throughout the Early and Late Bronze Age as well as the Early Iron Age.<sup>12</sup> This network has been also fully integrated into supra-regional networks crossing the southwestern Balkans almost during the whole period under analysis (KRAPF 2014, 585; GORI – KRAPF 2015, 121; GORI – KRAPF *in print*).

The AKM mentions 31 sites in the region dated to the Bronze Age, Early Iron Age or Developed Iron Age. During their verification and extensive surveys conducted in 2017 and 2019, merely 15 of these have been confirmed by diagnostic datable material. In fact, the majority of the sites in the AKM are dated not by finds of pottery or other archaeological materials, but on the basis of resemblance of the extent of the area or the fortification plan to sites that had been dated.<sup>13</sup> In terms of the latter, the natural geological formations in the area could have been at times misinterpreted during the earlier survey as fortification walls, i.e. at Kosel-Gradishte (ID 2027; cf. WEISSOVÁ *et al.* 2018, 109).

The hilltop sites became increasingly popular in the Late Bronze Ages, although habitation activity at some of these settlements began already in the Late Neolithic/Eneolithic or the Early Bronze Age: that is the case of Goritsa in Leskoets (ID 2029), Trebenishko Kale (ID 2090), and Velmej-Kutlina (ID 2105). The earliest ceramic material (WEISSOVÁ *et al.* 2018, 170, fig. 4:1-2) is analogous to the finds from not only the well documented pile-dwelling settlements in the region, but also from the Korçë plain (GORI – KRAPF 2015, 101-107, fig. 4-6) and recently from Pelagonia as well (NAUMOV *et al.* 2017, 12-14, tab. 4-5). Information about the Middle Bronze Age is still sparse and the scarcity of contexts from this period is recorded in the whole Macedonian and Albanian region; only a small number of Middle Bronze Age sites has been identified in the Korçë plain (cf. GORI – KRAPF *in print*), near Kumanovo and Skopje and in the Vardar Valley (MITREVSKI 2013, 179-181). For this reason, the Middle Bronze Age remains a highly problematic period. Throughout the second half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BC, the ongoing tectonic movement and fluvial sedimentation gradually reshaped the coastline of the lake as well as the surrounding fluvial plains (HOFFMANN *et al.* 2012, 107). Pollen records indicate an increasing human impact correlated with deforestation and subsequent erosion at that time as well (WAGNER *et al.* 2008, 421, 425). As a result, the landscape as well as settlement structure kept changing in the Early Iron Age. At the end of the 8<sup>th</sup> century BC at the latest, the habitation shifted from the vicinity of the lake and the rivers to the higher grounds of the large plains. The pile-dwelling settlement in Vrbnik (ID 2097) was the last to be abandoned sometime during the Developed Iron Age (TODOROSKA 2010). Based on the collected samples and data gathered from the topographic and satellite maps by the *Frontier Studies* project in the Ohrid region, the bulk of the sites dating to the Early and Developed Iron Ages feature some uniformity in terms of their location at a minimal elevation of 700 m.a.s.l. These data, thus, seem to confirm the results of the geological analysis of the lake sediments (WAGNER *et al.* 2017; **Pl. 1/2**).

12 The Middle Bronze Age represents a ‘bottleneck’ in terms of supra-regional connectivity. According to the study of M. Gori und T. Krapf (GORI – KRAPF *in print*), the contacts with central and northern Balkans can be traced with difficulty in ceramic production starting from this period. On the contrary, a stronger southern influence in pottery manufacture emerged, perhaps already in this period.

13 Cf. similar observation of A. Harding (1992, 23) in regard to the Albanian hill-top sites in Albania.

## LATE ARCHAIC TO HELLENISTIC PERIOD

The supposed high water level of the Lake Ohrid and frequent river floods in the plains located north and south of the lake effected the settlement structure in the region also in the Late Archaic as well as most probably in the Hellenistic period (**Pl. 1/3**). So far, there has been no identified flatland settlement dating to the 6<sup>th</sup>–4<sup>th</sup> century BC in the Ohrid region, except for the last surviving pile-dwelling settlement at Vrbnik (ID 2097). Four Hellenistic settlements situated on hillslopes or at the feet of mountain ridges are mentioned in the *AKM* (ID 2018, 2105, 2144, 2167), of which only one was verified by excavation, Orovnik (ID 1989; RISTESKI 1989, 20–22; WEISSOVÁ *et al.* 2018, 104). In the proximity of this settlement, a new type of archaeological point of interest began to emerge from the 7<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> century BC, at the latest (ARDJANLIEV 2017; PAPAZOVSKA – HEILMANN 2018): the necropoleis. They have been identified at Delogzhda (ID 2060), Deboj-Ohrid, Radolishta (ID 2054), and Trebenishte (ID 2016), and all of them were characterised by inhumations in supine position in a grave plot (cf. PAPAZOVSKA – HEILMANN 2018). No single burial mounds with inhumations in a pit or stone box (cist), occurring in large numbers in neighbouring Albania and Epirus (cf. OIKONOMIDIS – PAPAYIANNIS – TSONOS 2011; BEJKO 2014), and Pelagonia (cf. MITREVSKI 1997; MITREVSKI 2013), have been discovered in the region before the Developed Iron Age. The results of the field surveys in 2017 and 2019 indicate a high degree of human disturbance of the past landscape in the region, including recent constructions, agriculture, and looting, which might account for their absence. Data for the burial customs dating to the 8<sup>th</sup> century BC and later are only provided by recent excavation in the necropolis at Ohrid-Plaoshnik (cf. KUZMAN 2016a, 141, pl. 9; KUZMAN 2017, 151–152, pl. 3; PAPAZOVSKA – HEILMANN 2018, 177).

The flood-threatened fertile plains and hillslopes were overviewed by a number of hill-top settlements, which experienced their heyday in the Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age. However, the continuity of the hill-top settlements after the 8<sup>th</sup> century BC is still hard to specify, since the Developed Iron Age is characterised by relative poverty of material culture in the region (cf. MITREVSKI 1997; MITREVSKI 2013, 224–227). Based on the information provided by the scarce dataset in terms of absence of systematic excavations – and thereby fixed stratigraphic sequence so far – it seems that the majority of the hilltop sites was abandoned in this period, with only a few of them being resettled at a much larger scale around the middle of the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BC (cf. WEISSOVÁ *et al.* 2018, 109, fig. 9; ARDJANLIEV – VERČÍK 2018).<sup>14</sup>

The Classical and early Hellenistic fortified settlements at St. Erazmo (ID 2031), Gradište near the village of Delogzhda (ID 2064), Koroshishta (ID 2163), Ljubanishta-Vilicite (ID 2114), Selci-Kale (ID 2151), Trebenishko Kale (ID 2090), Vajtos-Kulishta (ID 2065), and Zlesti (ID 2102) are very different in both shape and character from the small hilltops of the earlier periods. Most of the sites are characterised by impressive fortified *enceintes* built in *opus quadratum*, and their position on carefully chosen strategic locations, which enables the control of main routes as well as entrances into the Ohrid region. Furthermore, an entire system of visual communication existed between the fortified settlements, indicating that they created a central and complex regional defence system within this region (**Pl. 1/4**). The most characteristic examples are the fortification of Koroshishta (ID 2163) overlooking the Botunskata Gorge,

14 A similar phenomenon was also observed in the Mallakstra hills (Greece) in the hinterland of Apollonia (Albania) and in southern Epirus (Greece); cf. HARDING 1992, 23–25; DOUZOGLI – PAPADOPOULOS 2010, 12. In contrast, the Bronze Age hilltop sites in the Korça basin (Albania), south of the Lake Ohrid, reveal a continuity of activity until the Classical and Hellenistic periods (AGOLLI 2017, 51).

and the Ljubanishhta-Vilicite (ID 2114) fortress in the pass leading to the Korçë plain along the Cerava River; the latter pass revealed a considerable importance also during the subsequent Roman period as attested by the recent find of a milestone.<sup>15</sup> This is further corroborated by the newly identified settlement at Ljubanishhta-Janograd (ID 2116) dated by the ceramic material to Bronze Age and Late Antiquity. The communication route leading to the Korçë plain along the Cerava River complemented thereby the main route along the western shore of the lake via Podgradets (cf. MIKULČIĆ 2002, 36–37; **Pl. 1/5**).

The available archaeological and numismatic evidence suggests that centralisation of the economic, social, and political way of life occurred in the 4<sup>th</sup>/3<sup>th</sup> century BC and began in the central point of the Ohrid plain, in the city of Ohrid, or ancient *Lychnidos* (cf. BITRAKOVA GROZANOVA 2001; GUŠTIN – KUZMAN 2016 with further references also to written sources). No other site in the region has revealed such a longstanding settlement tradition, in this case dating back to the Middle Neolithic. The site was transformed at the beginning of the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BC, when it changed its location and character from a pile-dwelling (Ohridati/Penelopa, ID 5005) to a hilltop settlement (Plaoshnik). Situated on a hillside plateau south of the fortified acropolis known as Samuilova Tvrđina (ID 2004), the settlement developed into a proto-urban centre during the Classical period at the latest (KUZMAN 2017). The settlement layers, which have been gradually excavated since 2007,<sup>16</sup> yielded, among other finds, imported red-figured pottery from Athens and southern Italy as well as entire or partly preserved bronze vessels (cf. ARDJANLIEV – VERČÍK 2018 with further bibliography). The nearest parallels to these extraordinary finds are spectacular grave goods from the so-called ‘princely graves’, such as golden funeral masks found at the site of Trebenishte (ID 2016) and Gorna Porta in particular; the latter is located only a few hundred meters from the site at Plaoshnik (KUZMAN 2013b; KUZMAN – POCHUVA-KUZMAN 2014). Both the proximity as well as the quantity and quality of the imports suggests a clear interdependence between the necropolis and the settlement at Plaoshnik, the inhabitants of which had the capacity to produce sufficient surplus in order to acquire prestige goods, which were deposited during funerals and came from various parts of the Greek world, the Balkans, and the Italian peninsula. Furthermore, after the region became a part, or a dependence of, the Argead Kingdom, a new development can be recognised through the first monumental construction here – a theatre and impressive Macedonian type stone-built tombs of the local élites at Ohrid-Varosh, with decoratively painted internal walls and either imitating or with actual vaulting (BITRAKOVA GROZANOVA – KUZMAN 1997). Finally, the recent discoveries also clearly document the transition and continuity of life at *Lychnidos* from the Late Classical to the Early Hellenistic period, which is strongly linked with the Celtic presence in the region in the context of the Celtic invasion of the southern Balkans between 300–280 BC (cf. BLASEVSKA 2013, 637–641; GUŠTIN – KUZMAN 2016). Several well-known local graves were equipped with an eastern Celtic type of equipment and one Celtic warrior grave was discovered at Gorna Porta (GUŠTIN – KUZMAN – MALENKO 2012) and Deboj (ARDJANLIEV 2013) necropoleis. This can be complemented by the Celtic-style ceramic material from the settlement at Plaoshnik dated to the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC (ARDJANLIEV 2017, 142 footnote 30).<sup>17</sup>

15 The publication of the milestone is in preparation.

16 The preliminary publication of the recent excavations is in preparation under the auspices of P. Kuzman.

17 The ceramic material has not been published yet.

## ROMAN PERIOD AND LATE ANTIQUITY

The Argead Kingdom of Macedonia ceased to exist after the Roman conquest in 167 BC. Subsequently, four regions (*merídes*) were established on the territory of the kingdom, with Macedonia I in the central part around the former capital Pella, Macedonia II in the area east of the Axios/Vardar, Macedonia III in former Upper Macedonia, and – finally – province Macedonia IV included the plain of Pelagonia just east of the Ohrid and Prespa Lakes (cf. ERRINGTON *et al.* 2006; DAUBNER 2014a). The former territory of the *Dassaretioi* around Lake Ohrid had initially remained free and was only incorporated into the Roman Empire after 146 BC, when a larger province of Macedonia was established across a much broader geographical area, which extended from the Albanian coast to the estuaries of Rivers Axios/Vardar and Strymon/Struma (ŠAŠEL KOS 2006; BURKHARDT – DAUBNER 2012). From the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD onwards, the Ohrid region belonged to the province of Epirus Nova. During this time, the region was ravaged several times by plundering hordes roaming this part of the Roman Empire. Only in the 5<sup>th</sup> century AD, a short economic, cultural, and social recovery set in, interrupted by a massive earthquake that destroyed all major centres in the province (MIKULČIĆ 2002, 16–21; WAGNER *et al.* 2012; PAVLOVSKI – BLAŽEVSKA 2017–2018).

In contrast to the overall political development, the transition between the Hellenistic and Roman period still reveals gaps in our understanding of the long-term settlement history of the Ohrid region. The research gap stems from a very few documented sites (ID 2018–2020, ID 2060, ID 2069, ID 2105, ID 2142), whereas only the urban centre of the region at *Lychnidos* has been excavated systematically in the past (cf. JOVANOVA 2013, 824–828). Unfortunately, the rich archaeological material from both the settlement and the necropoleis in Ohrid has not been published yet. For this reason, only a brief overview of the topic will be presented in the following section. In order to point out general trends in the development of the regional habitation, the archaeological material will be further complemented by epigraphic and numismatic evidence. Not only can it shed additional light on the processes of centralisation, but also can be helpful in the reconstruction of settlement patterns in rural areas which are so far almost unknown, even if the written sources mentioned densely populated villages around the city of *Lychnidos* (Polyb. *Hist.* V, 108; for further references cf. ARDJANLIEV 2013).

## THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEYS

The sites described as dating to the Roman period and Late Antiquity were reviewed during the first two field seasons conducted within the frame of the project Frontier Studies. In the next step, extensive field surveys were planned, with the aim to verify selected sites in the cultivated flatlands and hillslopes of the Ohrid and Struga plains, at which the concentration of archaeological material – pottery and ceramic building material in particular – have been observed (cf. WEISSOVÁ *et al.* 2018, 126 for methodology). The ability to reveal shorter-term trends is, however, hampered by the insufficient regional-scale of research of ceramic material from both urban and rural areas. Only in some cases (ID 2024, ID 2085, ID 2105), sites can be attributed to particular time period(s) with certainty. In this regard, the era under consideration is represented by ceramic collections dated either to the transitional phase between the Hellenistic and Roman times, 2<sup>nd</sup>–1<sup>st</sup> century BC, or to the Mid to Late Roman period, 3<sup>rd</sup>–4<sup>th</sup> century AD (WEISSOVÁ *et al.* 2018, 106, fig. 3). Interestingly, the period of the Principate is still barely detectable in the region. These results, however, gain on significance – although the total number of pieces collected during the surveys so far is too small to rely on a statistical analysis – if placed in the context of the developments on the opposite shore of Lake Ohrid by



Podgradets, in which there is an apparent decline after the Roman conquest (LERA 1975; SPAHIU 1975; FENN *et al.* 2010). Thus, only further systematic investigations can shed light both on the short-term developments in the Roman period and Late Antiquity and the issue of interdependence between the rural and urban areas during the Roman period and Late Antiquity.

The transition between the Hellenistic and Roman period is characterised by an increase of settlements in general, from 21 to 59 (Pl. 1/6). The political changes following the establishment of the Roman province of Macedonia do not seem to have significantly affected the settlement pattern in a negative way. Rather, the higher site numbers in this time-period may be the result of a number of positive processes. Firstly, it seems reasonable to suggest that the security and agricultural prosperity – the so-called *pax romana* – would have encouraged population growth, or at least movement into the area, and thus leading to settlement expansion, even if only in terms of smaller agricultural village sites. Only *Lychnidos* became a major regional hub. Secondly, the development of road networks under the Roman control may have influenced positively the stability of the settlements; in some cases (ID 2047, ID 2061, ID2158), the Roman roads were possibly re-used and overlaid by later Ottoman roads.

In contrast to the Hellenistic period, the habitation pattern changed as well, and the settlements situated on the hillslopes dominated the area until the End of Late Antiquity. There was, again, a growth of fortress-type settlements during this period (cf. MIKULČIĆ 2002). This is likely the result of, on the one hand, political and economic disruptions of the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> century AD – accompanied by several strong earthquakes (cf. WAGNER *et al.* 2012; PAVLOVSKI – BLAŽEVSKA 2017–2018) – and, on the other hand, the increasing need to secure the main communication route passing through the Ohrid region, *Via Egnatia* (cf. BITRAKOVA GROZDANOVA 1996; JOVANOVA 2013, 841–844; Pl. 1/5). Moreover, surveyed hill-top settlements, such as Slatino Gradishte (ID 2106) or Brezhansko Gradiste (ID 2119), bear testimony to the link between the occupation, resource (iron-ores) extraction, and metal processing, which took place at these sites (cf. MIKULČIĆ 2002, 48–50). Whether these resources were also used before the Roman period is a question for future research.

#### EPIGRAPHIC MATERIAL FROM LYCHNIDOS AND ITS HINTERLAND – A SHORT SUMMARY

As recorded in the *Inscriptiones Graecae*, around 60 inscriptions dating from the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC to Late Antiquity were discovered in the Ohrid region (IG X 2,2,352–411). Most of them were written in Greek, with only a few exceptions; two milestones, three dedications, and one grave inscription written in Latin (IG X 2,2,364–366. 378–379. 387). These few Latin monuments were erected by Roman magistrates or soldiers and can be taken as a sign of the Roman presence in *Lychnidos*. Nearly all of the known inscriptions were found in the centre of the settlement, underlining the importance of the city as an urban centre in the Roman times. Only a few exceptions from the hinterland of *Lychnidos* are known: two inscriptions were found near the church of St. Erazmo (IG X 2,2,358 – a dedication – and IG X 2,2,375 – a building inscription under a strategos), one in Trebenishko Kale (IG X 2,2,354 – a Hellenistic inscription), two in Kalishta (IG X 2,2,359 – a Latin dedication to Jupiter Optimus Maximus; IG X 2,2,367 – a honorary(?) inscription for strategos Nikias), one in Lakocherej (IG X 2,2,379; IG X 2,2,397 – a gravestone), an inscription on a milestone was found in Struga (IG X 2,2,379), three inscriptions in Delagozhda (IG X 2,2,380 – a gravestone; IG X 2,2,388 – a gravestone; one unpublished text, also a gravestone), one in Dzhepin (IG X 2,2,385 – a gravestone),<sup>18</sup> two in Opejntsa (IG X 2,2,386 –

18 Additional inscriptions can be expected from Struga (notification by Dr. Slavitsa Babamova, The National Archaeological Museum of North Macedonia in Skopje).

an elaborate gravestone made of marble; the inscription is written in verses), one in Goritsa (IG X 2,2,391 – a gravestone), two in Volino (IG X 2,2,392 and IG X 2,2,393 – gravestones), one in Radolishta (IG X 2,2,394 – a gravestone), one in Kosel (so far unpublished), and one at the monastery of St. Naum (IG X 2,2,396 – a gravestone). As we know from Polybius, small villages probably existed in the territory of the *Dassaretioi*; the scarce epigraphic evidence can be taken as a sign that the epigraphic habit was rare and a phenomenon of the urbanised elites only.<sup>19</sup> Moreover most of the inscriptions found in the villages were probably not located *in situ*. Therefore, it is quite possible that at least some of them were moved from *Lychnidos* to the surrounding villages.<sup>20</sup> The same trend applies to the city itself, where most of the known inscriptions were found as *spolia*, reused for church building. One exception might be the category of gravestones, as most of them were found in villages close to necropoleis. At a first glance, the expensive marble seems to have been quite common, but the names on the gravestones suggest a major social stratification in terms of who received such a funerary marker, which in turn can be taken as a sign that the use of inscribed gravestones was a more widespread phenomenon. However, as these inscriptions are still not numerous, these assumptions must remain hypothetical until further investigations.<sup>21</sup>

In terms of chronology, the epigraphic habit seems to have developed relatively late – inscriptions from the Classical and Hellenistic times are extremely rare.<sup>22</sup> The earliest known inscription on stone is a grave stele with a short greeting formula from Amyntas, son of Alexandros, accompanied by a relief showing a dressed soldier with, next to him, a smaller figure of a servant holding the reins of a horse. The inscription was dated to the late 2<sup>nd</sup>/early 1<sup>st</sup> century BC and was found in the necropolis below the Trebenishko Kale fortress, tentatively identified as Hellenistic.<sup>23</sup> The remaining inscriptions can be dated roughly to the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries AD. However, only a few are more precisely datable. Most important among those are honorary inscriptions for different emperors: two for Septimius Severus (196 AD) set up by the *archontes*, *boule*, and the *demos* of the *Dassaretioi*, one for Gordianus III (238–244 AD; IG X 2,2,364), and one for Decius (249–251 AD). Later honorary inscriptions were written in Latin and set up by Roman officials: between 260 and 268 AD, the *dux* Aurelius Augustianus (PIR2 II XVII A 1463a) and the *praepositus vexillationum* Clyentus Synforianus, together with the *vexillationes legionum II Parthicae* and *III Augustae* provided an honorary inscription for Iupiter Optimus Maximus (IG X 2,2,364. I) and the *salus* and the *incolumitas* of the Emperor Gallienus. Between 351 and 354 AD, the *praeses* of the newly designed province *Epirus nova*, Flavius Hyginus, set up an honorary inscription for Constans, and between 351 and 354 AD,

19 Pol. Hist. V 108: τῆς δὲ Δασσαρήτιδος προσηγγμένον πόλεις, τὰς μὲν φόβῳ, τὰς δ' ἐπαγγελίας, Ἀντιπάτρειαν, Χρυσονδύωνα, Γερτοῦντα (...) = '[King Philip] had won over by promises some cities of the Dassaretiae, namely, Phibotides, Antipatria, Chrysondym, and Geston'. This dedication attests two *komarchoi*, village chiefs, setting up the inscription for Herakles Megistos, cf. IG X 2,2,355.

20 For example, the exceptional honorary inscription for Marcus Aurelius D(...), of which two fragments were built into the wall of Gorna Porta (IG X 2,2,377a and c), and one was reused as a decorative part of the wall of St. Nedela in Lakocherei (IG X 2,2,377b).

21 Necropoleis from the Hellenistic and the Roman times contemporary with this inscription have been found, e.g. in D. Lakocherej (ID 2079), Kosel (ID 2028), Trebenishko Kale (ID 2069), and Delagozhda St. Ilja (2060).

22 The oldest inscriptions are written on a 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC helmet (βασιλέως Μονουνίου, cf. IG X 2,2,352), which has been connected with the Illyrian king Monunius. See also Pomp. Trog XXIV prol., and a 3<sup>rd</sup> century ring from a grave in Delagozhda St. Ilja (ID 2060 – Συβρινος εἰμί / Ταταὶ δίδοι, cf. IG X 2,2,353).

23 IG X 2,2,354: Ἀμύντας Ἀλεξάνδρου / χαῖρε. = Amyntas, son of Alexander, farewell.

the *praeses* Sofronius, who is otherwise unknown, honoured the Emperor Constantius Gallus (IG X 2,2,365. See also PLRE I Hyginus 4). The bulk of inscriptions cannot be securely dated, which is especially regrettable in relation to the formation and activities of the *Dassaretioi* in Imperial times. Very little detailed historical information can thus be obtained from the epigraphic evidence, which is discussed in the following section.

First, the inscriptions can contribute to the understanding of the different buildings in imperial *Lychnidos*. The *Dassaretioi* honoured Quintus Iulius Pacchus, because, while being a *gymnasiarchos*, he gave out ointments to the *demos* for one day (IG X 2,2,368).<sup>24</sup> Pacchus is probably the son of Quintus Iulius Pacchus, his father bearing a homonymous name, who was a *strategos* in *Lychnidos* (IG X 2,2,375). In the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD, the *ducenarius* Marcus Aurelius D(...) built or renovated additional buildings, or at least a greater building complex, out of his own funds, but only the information about the inner colonnade (τῆ ἔνδον στοᾶ) has survived (IG X 2,2,377). His activities must have been impressive, because the letter size of his inscription is monumental (13.5–15.5 cm) and the letters seem to have been coloured. Apart from Marcus Aurelius D(...), another citizen became somewhat famous: Aurelius Crates was honoured for his great *paideia*, which had reached such a high level that even the Athenians erected a statue in his honour in the Asclepieion on the Athenian Acropolis (IG X 2,2,371).<sup>25</sup>

A continually puzzling phenomenon, which needs further investigation and thus cannot be discussed in detail, is the relationship between the *Dassaretioi* and the city of *Lychnidos*. The tribe of the *Dassaretioi* was already present at *Lychnidos* in the Hellenistic period when they were responsible for coin emissions bearing the name of the *Dassaretioi* (ΔΑΣΣΑΡΗΤΙΩΝ). Around the same time, coins in the name of *Lychnidos* with the inscription ΛΥΧΝΙΔΙΩΝ were minted as well.<sup>26</sup> In Imperial times, the *Dassaretioi* were mentioned in many inscriptions as either dedicants or having an executive power. The highest official was, most probably, the *strategos* and his seat was located in *Lychnidos*.<sup>27</sup> Interestingly enough, the *polis* of *Lychnidos* was also responsible for some dedications (IG X 2,2,373f). The *Dassaretioi* and the *polis* were not mentioned together in a single inscription, and the two entities even dedicated almost identical texts to Aurelius Crates, who has been mentioned already (cf. BITRAKOVA GROZDANOVA 2017).<sup>28</sup> Therefore they seem to have been separate entities from the Hellenistic period onwards. V. Bitrakova-Grozdanova has suggested that the *Dassaretioi* and the city of *Lychnidos* might have formed some kind of a *koinon*, a political confederation that could be based on the unification of different tribes (as in Epiros) or different cities and villages.<sup>29</sup> Most of these confederations existed in the Classical and Hellenistic periods and as a type of political organisation were quite widespread in the Balkans. Some of them survived until Imperial times, such as, for example,

24 ἀγαθῆ τύχη] / Δασσαρ[ητίων] / ἡ βουλή καὶ ὁ [δῆμος] / Κ(οῖντον) · Ἰούλιον Κ(οῖντου) · υἱὸν [Πιάκ] / χον τὸν γυμνασία[ρχον] / ἀλείψαντα πανδημ[εῖ] / δι' ὅλης ἡμέρας. vac. 'To good fortune. *Demos* and *boule* of the *Dassaretioi* honored Quintus Iulius Pacchus, son of Quintus, *gymnasiarchos*, who anointed the whole *demos* for a whole day.'

25 A similar second inscription was found in the year 2000, cf. BITRAKOVA GROZDANOVA 2017.

26 BITRAKOVA GROZDANOVA 2001 and ARDJANLIEV 2018. Moreover, the city of *Lychnidos* minted coins under its own name in the 3<sup>rd</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC, cf. KREMYDI-SICILIANOU 2012, 287–298.

27 Only one more magistrate is known, Dryas, son of Caepius, a *prostate*, whose specific function is not defined more clearly in the epigraphic record. Dryas was also a part of an embassy to the Emperor, cf. IG X 2,2,369. The office of the *prostates* is otherwise not attested in Macedonia, but, only as the office of the *stratego*i in Epiros with different functions.

28 One IG inscription is dedicated in the name of the *Dassaretioi*, the other one in the name of the city of the *Lychnidians*.

29 Cf. BECK 1997, 135–145 with the organisation of the *koinon* of the Epirotes.

in the neighbouring territory of the Bylliones (cf. СЕКА 2012). Much more interesting for our case are the allies of the Romans in their campaigns in Macedonia, such as, for example, the Orestis or the *Dassaretioi*, who were declared independent afterwards and who organized themselves as autonomous political units (PFEILSCHIFTER 2005, 114).

Third, the inscriptions give us an important insight into the significance of Via Egnatia. As mentioned, most of the datable inscriptions, set up for emperors or by Roman magistrates, can be dated to the late 2<sup>nd</sup> or the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD. These dates correspond with the rising importance of Via Egnatia for military operations, especially against the Parthians, as the road offered a direct connection to Asia Minor. The Severans initiated reparation and building works mainly in the Balkan part of Via Egnatia,<sup>30</sup> and new milestones from the reign of Caracalla with the distance measured from *Lychnidos* document similar undertakings in Macedonia (IG X 2,2,378. 379). The presence of *vexillationes* in *Lychnidos* is remarkable and demonstrates the importance of the city as a station for military units. These *vexillationes* had originally been stationed in Alba and Lambaesis and were probably relocated to *Lychnidos* because of the German tribe of the Herulians, who raided the Balkans for some time until their defeat in 268 AD.<sup>31</sup> The city remained an important station after the formation of the new province of *Epirus nova* and in Late Antiquity, as the inscriptions set up by different magistrates demonstrate.<sup>32</sup> Christian inscriptions are rare and limited only to a few mosaic inscriptions, which are beyond the scope of this paper.

To sum up, the inscriptions give us some detailed information about the political and administrative status of *Lychnidos* as well as its growing importance as a strategic centre in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD. This increasing importance was only possible because of the significance of Via Egnatia as a link between the western part of the Empire and the Parthians. Nevertheless, the epigraphic habit did not develop as much as in other areas, and the use of inscriptions remained limited to the city and was, with an exception of the gravestones, not a widespread phenomenon in the surrounding villages. The reasons for the meagre presence of epigraphic material and its consequences for the patterns of representation of the elites of *Lychnidos* might only be solved by examining the archaeological material. More interesting – particularly in combination with the numismatic material – is the analysis of the relationship between the city of *Lychnidos* and the *Dassaretioi*, between the city and the villages, and between the Ohrid region and its neighbours from the Hellenistic to Imperial times in order to recognise patterns of settlement, centralisation processes, structures of political and administrative organisation, and cultural influences, as all these aspects were formed and changed over a long period of time.

30 Near Thracian Traianopolis, the governor Q. Sicinius Clarus organized reparation works in 202 AD, dividing the *Via Egnatia* into building lots and allotting them to different *phylae* or *komae*: cf. МОУТАС 1989, 101–103; also ПÉКАРЫ 1968, 129–131 with the letter of a governor of Macedonia probably in hadrianic times about the cost allocation for a new paving of the *Via Egnatia*.

31 IG X 2,2,287. Cf. JOHNE 2008, 287 for a more detailed argumentation and DAVENPORT 2019, 523–526, for the creation of the *legio II Parthica* as one of the most important legions, which formed the core of the forces against the Parthians in later times.

32 The only grave inscription written in Latin was found in connection with the military presence of the Romans, because the man it commemorated, Marcus Ulpius Masbal (interestingly, his name is probably Punic), thanked his *patronus*, Marcus Ulpius Candidus, who was *evocatus Augusti*, meaning that he held a military rank, cf. IG X 2,2,387.

## NUMISMATIC EVIDENCE

During the Hellenistic and Roman periods, the city of *Lychnidos* seldom minted its own coinage as the centre of the Ohrid region.<sup>33</sup> The city depended on currency influx from other cities, and money was brought to *Lychnidos* via Via Egnatia, one of the most important long distance roads in Antiquity. Despite this, the numismatic evidence is abundant and can address many important questions, including the manner of circulation of different coinages in the region, the processes of centralisation and urbanisation as well as the transition from the Hellenistic to the Roman period and processes like ‘Hellenisation’ and ‘Romanisation’. Moreover, the evidence from coin distribution can give us a detailed insight into the economic importance of Via Egnatia under different rulers as well as into the significance of *Lychnidos* as a (pre)-urban centre from the Archaic to Late Antique times.

To answer these questions, different methods of numismatic analysis can be used. By analysing the percentage of coinage from different mints found in *Lychnidos*, it is possible to identify the main coin suppliers from the Archaic period to Late Antiquity. Since when and how often was coinage in use in the Ohrid region? Which cities were important suppliers of coins? Can we compare the sample from *Lychnidos* with coinage from other cities?<sup>34</sup> For example, the Illyrian cities of Apollonia and Dyrrhachium had important mints in Hellenistic times, but stopped producing coins in the first century BC.<sup>35</sup> Not only did the newly founded Roman colonies along Via Egnatia such as Dium and Cassandrea start minting their own coinage, but so did the more important free cities such as Thessalonica, Amphipolis, Beroia, and Stobi (KREMYDI-SICILIANOU 1996; JOSIFOVSKI 2010; DAUBNER 2014b, 110). Moreover, the significance of different minting authorities, like the various Hellenistic kings and cities, the Roman authorities, and the Macedonian *koinon*, can be examined.

In addition to these questions, the historical background is even more important, not least because of the scarcity of evidence in other sources about the history of *Lychnidos* during the transitional phase from the destruction of the Macedonian kingdom to the establishment of the Roman province of Macedonia. Do the coins indicate any deep social and political changes of the Macedonian society in the wake of Roman advance and the growing presence of the Romans in *Lychnidos*? Can they therefore be taken as evidence of the Romanisation process?<sup>36</sup> Can we observe different degrees of Romanisation that might correspond with the remoteness of *Lychnidos* in comparison to other cities or its special status as a free city? Or alternatively, did Via Egnatia play such an important economic and strategic role in Hellenistic and Imperial times that the Romans used *Lychnidos* as a military and political centre?<sup>37</sup> All of these questions

33 Except for an important and rare issue of the *Dassaretioi*, an Illyrian tribe that minted coins in Hellenistic times, cf. BITRAKOVA GROZDANOVA 2001 and ARDJANLIEV 2018.

34 A first analysis of the coin circulation in Macedonia was done by TOURATSOGLU 1993.

35 Cf. UJES-MORGAN 2012, who concentrates mainly on the chronology and the reasons for the appearance of large silver coin hoards in the Balkan hinterlands.

36 Modern research tends to focus on the Roman colonies, but the fact, the *Lychnidos* probably came under Roman control quite early, seems to play a much more important role for the Ohrid region. Especially F. Daubner postulated in his habilitation thesis the destruction of the former Macedonian elites after the Pydnian war (DAUBNER 2018).

37 The city was especially important in Hellenistic times, because it protected the borders of the Macedonian kingdom, cf. KREMYDI-SICILIANOU 2012, 288. Typical for the view that *Lychnidos* was literally at the edge of the Roman province, is for example BARTELS 2009, 98: ‘Im albanischen und obermakedonischen Bergland verzögerten die Abgelegenheit vom Meer und die kargeren Lebensbedingungen eine städtische Entwicklung, so daß diese Gebiete erst in römischer Zeit

can only be addressed by taking into account the coins found in the city and along Via Egnatia. Of special interest for the monetarisation and circulation of coinage are the numerous hoards found in the region.<sup>38</sup>

Besides specific historical events, the hoards might also contribute to answering questions regarding processes of centralisation. Other sources imply a growing importance of *Lychnidos* as the sole urban centre at Lake Ohrid, especially during the Imperial times, but this centralisation of influence did not lead the city to minting its own coinage. The study of the composition and dissemination of the coin hoards in the region as well as the presence and composition of hoards in the city and its nearest surroundings can elucidate which coinage was used in the city as a substitution for its own issue.

A part of the coins found in the 2001–2010 Plaoshnik excavations have already been published in 2016 by Sanja Bitrak in form of a catalogue, consisting of roughly 300 Imperial period coins (1<sup>st</sup>–4<sup>th</sup> century AD; cf. BITRAK 2016). Moreover, especially the coin collections of the National Bank of the Republic of North Macedonia and of the Ohridska Banka have been thoroughly published and can be taken into account in the analysis as well (cf. BITRAK 2016 with a short overview). Nevertheless, none of these questions can be answered without considering the coin finds from the Plaoshnik excavations as an entire assemblage, a worthy project for the future.

## OVERVIEW AND CONCLUSIONS

The diachronic evaluation of the settlement history of the Ohrid region from the Neolithic to the Late Antiquity aimed to reconstruct the broad regional habitation patterns in the pre- and protohistoric periods. It, thus, tried to respond to the lack of systematic investigations with respect to both the urban spaces and areas outside the city of Ohrid, ancient *Lychnidos*. Although this paper did not make any claim to an exhaustive study, it allowed for an identification of *longue durée* trends and dynamics of interaction between the humans (in terms of their choices) and the impact of environmental, economic, and socio-historic factors through time. This included identification of several key moments in history when preceding patterns of occupation and land use were interrupted, which at times corresponded with major transitions between archaeological periods. One has to be aware, however, that not all of these transitions coincided with major shifts in settlement organisation, which could actually show strong continuity.

The dataset created by reviewing past archaeological discoveries and recent collections gained during the two field seasons, conducted within the frame of the project *Frontier Studies*, point to the following important breaks in the settlement pattern in the Ohrid region: during the Early Iron Age (1000–750/700 BC), at the beginning of the Roman period (2<sup>nd</sup>/1<sup>st</sup> century

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zumindest stadtähnliche Strukturen entwickelten. Nur Herakleia Lynkestis und – mit Abstrichen – Styberra gelangten hier zu Bedeutung<sup>6</sup>.

38 For a first impression regarding the coin hoards in the (ancient) kingdom of Macedonia and the methodological problems especially for the Ohrid region cf. KREMYDI-SICILIANOU 2004, with a special focus on the four administrative districts. In pages 142–143 she assumes wrongly that the hoard evidence for Ohrid is scarce, bringing it into connection with either a limited scale of excavations or a limited monetary use. Actually, more hoard finds are known now, see for example BITRAK 2016, 15–16 for a short overview. In Plaoshnik a large, still unpublished, silver hoard consisting of tetradrachms from Apollonia and Dyrrhachium was found. Hoards consisting of Hellenistic silver and gold coins were much more often buried in the kingdom of Paeonia (e.g. PAVLOVSKA 2015; 2017).

BC), and prior to the Late Antiquity (4<sup>th</sup>–6<sup>th</sup> century BC). Each of these ruptures constituted a major change in the habitation and, thus, probably demography in the region. They are then followed by a different pattern of settlement organisation.

The first rupture is marked by a shift of the Bronze Age settlements from the vicinity of the Lake Ohrid and the rivers that flow into it to the higher grounds of the large plains north and south of the lake. The ongoing tectonic movement and alluvial sedimentation caused the prevailing settlement type, the pile-dwelling settlements, to be gradually abandoned in favour of hilltop settlements at the beginning of the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BC. The exact date for the highest intensity of this rupture has the potential to be traced relatively well by future paleo-environmental research.

The next settlement cycle marked by a major impact began during the last centuries of the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BC and continued until Late Antiquity – it therefore covers the entirety of the Roman period. Moreover, it represents the first substantial phase of human landscape occupation in the Ohrid region in terms of the use of lower positions (below or around 700 m.a.s.l), either in the flatlands or on the hillslopes; the latter were used during the Late Archaic and Hellenistic periods only for the establishment of new necropoleis. Consequently, settlement numbers started to increase in the Roman period and possibly reached a climax during its middle to late phase in the 3<sup>rd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> century BC. The growth of settlements was also influenced by the exploitation of natural resources such as iron, and access to main communications, in particular *Via Egnatia*. The first significant evidence of major human impact on the natural landscape around Lake Ohrid in terms of deforestation occurred already during the Late Classical and Hellenistic period as recorded in pollen diagrams. The Roman period was overall marked by relative stability and growth, and this development suggests a clear continuity from the Hellenistic period, with no evidence (so far) of widespread site abandonment or destruction as a result of political impact.

In contrast, settlement pattern from the end of the Roman period into Late Antiquity exhibit a major change, with many sites abandoned and new ones being re-founded after several centuries of habitational hiatus. The latter trend concerns both newly-established hillforts and old fortified settlements, which were occupied during the Early and Developed Iron Ages. This new settlement cycle caused by political and economic disruption continued into the Early Medieval (Byzantine and Bulgarian) period, and was interrupted only by short economic, cultural, and social recoveries, such as those during the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC.

There are, of course, limitations to models of settlement organisation reconstructed from material culture only. The ability of archaeological data to present fully *longue durée* trends and patterns of habitation that had occurred in the Ohrid region during pre- and protohistory is constrained due to the dataset, which lacks information from systematic investigations of particular archaeological periods, especially the Middle Bronze Age, the Developed Iron Age, and the transition between the Hellenistic and the Roman period. The reviewed and newly collected data, thus, identify the overall trends in settlement patterns, but not the more complex details of the short-term trends or certain specific phenomena, such as the regional settlement structure during the Middle Bronze Age, the (dis)continuity of the hilltop settlements between the Iron Ages and the Late Archaic Period, or the establishment of new rural sites in the flatlands at the beginning of the Roman period. The apparently straightforward conclusions concerning the cultural and historical development of the Ohrid region in general and of these archaeological phases in particular, must nonetheless be approached with caution. Therefore, studies of hitherto poorly researched periods – or phenomena of material culture such as local ceramic chronologies – are necessary in order to address new research questions. Moreover, interdisciplinary studies are important components of any project aiming at a diachronic

settlement history with respect to the dynamic or even dramatic changes of the environment, on the one hand, and the unexploited potential of the extensive epigraphic and numismatic evidence, on the other hand. However, their value is, again, directly dependent on the quality and resolution of the analysed data. Given that there are gaps in our understanding of the pre- and protohistorical landscape around Lake Ohrid, this overview was intended as a first step in a broader analysis, presenting the limitations, challenges and potentials of an investigation of long-term cultural and societal changes in a region, which has been an important node on the communication routes connecting the Aegean, the Adriatic sea, and the Balkans.

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**Pl. 1/1: Habitation pattern in the Bronze Age, Early Iron Age, Developed Iron Age (map by M. Jančovič).**



**Pl. 1/2: Model of water level raising in the Ohrid Lake (map by M. Jančovič).**



Pl. 1/3: Habitation pattern in the Archaic, Classical and Hellenistic period (map by M. Jančovič).



Pl. 1/4: Model of visual communication between Hellenistic hill-top forts (map by M. Jančovič).



Pl. 1/5: Map of the communication network in the region and pathway model to the Korçë plain (map by M. Jančovič).



Pl. 1/6: Habitation pattern in the Roman period and Late Antiquity (map by M. Jančovič).