

# THE MISTRESS OF DOGS AND WARRIOR INITIATION AT ARCHAIC TREBENISHTE

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*The paper analyses and interprets the symbolic meaning of an iconographic composition consisting of a central Gorgon flanked by two canines, present on a bronze tripod from the archaic necropolis of Trebenishte, near Ohrid (6th–5th centuries BC). After introducing and describing the subject of interest, the author goes on to analyse the Gorgon in the symbolic role of ‘Mistress of Dogs’, comparing it to similar representations from geographical and chronological aspects. This is followed by an overview of the symbolic role of canines in the prehistoric and ancient Balkans as part of a wider Indo-European cultural milieu. The observed findings are then analysed in relation to the archaeological con-*

*text of the tripod itself, which was deposited, along with a complementary krater, in the ‘princely grave’ of a high-ranking male individual with a warrior identity belonging to the archaic community buried at Trebenishte. The final conclusions of the author are that the iconography of the tripod reflects symbolic notions of liminality and transformation, whereby the object was probably intended to be used in initiation rituals that derive from the Indo-European traditions of the ‘Männerbünde’.*

**Keywords:**

Trebenishte, princely graves, archaic period, iconographic and symbolic analysis, Mistress of Dogs, initiation rituals, Indo-European Männerbünde.

## Trebenishte and its enigmatic bronze kraters

The archaic necropolis of Trebenishte, north of Lake Ohrid (Republic of North Macedonia), represents one of the most well-known examples of the cultural phenomenon labelled as ‘princely graves’ in the Central Balkans during the transition from prehistory to history.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, since its initial discovery in 1918, the Trebenishte necropolis and its contents have been the topic of numerous archaeological discussions and publications. Most of these works have dealt with the historico-cultural aspects of the necropolis and the economico-commercial relations which it had with major production centres in the wider region. In contrast, studies dealing with the iconographic, symbolic, religious and social values of the Trebenishte necropolis and the finds therein, despite the emphasized importance of such research in contemporary archaeological theory, have been few. Before commencing our study of one iconographic and symbolic com-

position from Trebenishte, we feel obliged to mention and give our due respect to several works that we consider to be the most important on topics relating to the symbolic aspects of the finds from Trebenishte.

The earliest of them is a paper published by A. Cermanović in 1956, which deals with the symbolic meaning of the golden sandals from Trebenishte. According to her, the sandals had a “chthonic-apotropaic” function to protect and help the deceased in their passing to the other world.<sup>2</sup> Several decades later, in 1998 and 2000, N. Theodossiev published a two-part study about the funerary customs of ‘princely graves’ with golden masks in the Central Balkans, including the examples from Trebenishte. In his study, among other things, Theodossiev also considered some possible religious concepts connected with these golden-mask

<sup>1</sup> General overview of the Trebenishte necropolis with an extensive bibliography see Ardjanliev et al. 2018.

<sup>2</sup> Цермановић 1956.

burials, such as heroization, deification, belief in the afterlife and rebirth.<sup>3</sup> In 2016, D. Gergova published a paper regarding the symbolic aspects of the golden sandals found in ‘princely graves’ in the Central Balkans. She interpreted them through the lens of Orphism, and even hypothesized a common Indo-European root with some ideas in Buddhism.<sup>4</sup> A seminal work in studying the symbolic values of the archaic finds from Trebenishte came in 2010, by the hand of N. Chausidis, who directed his attention to the large bronze kraters from the necropolis. He analysed the iconography and symbolism of the snake-legged Gorgons and the figural friezes between them in a wider cultural context, and then interpreted a possible local variant of said symbolism.<sup>5</sup> We shall return to Chausidis’s study later in our paper. Another important work worth mentioning was published by S. Babić in 2018. In it, she elaborates on possible complex social roles and symbolic identities among the members of the archaic community buried at Trebenishte.<sup>6</sup> Finally, we want to point out a study by M. Stankovska-Tzamalīs, published in 2019. Her interest was the meaning of a bee depicted on one of the golden masks from Trebenishte, and she concluded that it symbolized “the soul of the dead and maybe even the perpetuity of life”.<sup>7</sup>

In this paper, we will focus our attention on another archaic object from Trebenishte, which to our knowledge has so far not been analysed and interpreted holistically in terms of its iconography and symbolic meaning: the bronze tripod of the large volute krater from Grave VIII (Pl. 1).<sup>8</sup> The feet of this support object are shaped like lion paws. Above each paw there is a figure of a standing winged Gorgon executed in the archaic manner, with a protruding tongue, arms bent at the elbows, and hands placed at the waist, as well as two snakes protruding out of the figure’s neck, i.e. back. The Gorgon is symmetrically flanked by two canines facing outwards: according to some, a dog to the right and a fox to the left. Placed between these compositions of canine-flanked Gorgons are upside-down palmettes with nine petals (Pl. 1: 1). The tripod was meant to support a complementary bronze krater with an ovoid body and cylindrical neck, adorned by plastic volute handles of winged Gorgons with serpentine legs. Between the two snake-legged Gorgons, there are four figures of horsemen galloping to the right, grouped in two pairs: one placed on each side of the neck of the krater (Pl. 1: 2). Although the Peloponnese, or Southern Italy, has previously been suggested as the place of origin of the large vessel, on the basis of stylistic comparisons, more recent mineralogical studies of remnants of the clay mould indicate that it was probably produced on the island of Aegina in the Saronic Gulf.<sup>9</sup> Whether the iconography of the set reflects the traditions of Aegina, or the preferences of its

buyers in Trebenishte, or of archaic culture in a wider regional sense, is up for debate. But what is certain is that the large vessel and its tripod found their way to Trebenishte and were incorporated into, adapted to, or reinterpreted for the local culture, perhaps even influencing its further development.

The bronze krater and tripod were deposited in the wealthy Grave VIII, which has also yielded several objects made of gold foil (mask, two sandals, hand with a solid finger ring, other bands and appliqués), warrior equipment (a bronze helmet, iron sword in sheath, iron spearhead, fragments of bronze greaves), various types of jewellery (silver belt, pins, bracelets, fibulae, hoops/rings, bronze buckle, and double rings), vessels (a silver rhyton, three silver goblets, a bronze amphora, fragments of a bronze bowl, fragments of other smaller bronze vessels, the bronze krater and tripod that are the subject of our interest, another simpler bronze tripod, and a clay pot), several amber beads, a glass amphoriskos, a silver-coated fragment that may have been part of a mirror, silver bar fragments of perhaps a miniature carriage, and other miscellaneous items (Pl. 1: 3). The burial is dated to the end of the 6th or the beginning of the 5th century BC. It is one of the so-called ‘princely graves’ at Trebenishte, being the resting place of a prominent male individual in the local community.<sup>10</sup> The funerary practices observed with Grave VIII and other ‘princely graves’ at Trebenishte are characteristic of the wider Macedonian region, as evidenced by similar synchronous burials at Gorna Porta - Ohrid, Berantsi - Bitola, Archontiko - Pella, Sindos - Thessaloniki, and Chalcidice.<sup>11</sup>

The figure of the Gorgon on the tripod, viewed independently of the canine figures that flank it, has been used previously by Chausidis as comparative material in his semiotic analyses of mythical anthropomorphic characters with two symmetrical zoomorphic protomes protruding from their shoulders. He generally interprets the two protomes as symbols of the dual nature of mythical characters so depicted.<sup>12</sup> The snake-legged Gorgons and galloping horsemen on the large complementary krater have also been studied by Chausidis, and were the focus of his aforementioned paper on the iconography and symbolism of the kraters from Trebenishte.<sup>13</sup> On the basis of comparisons with analogous figures from Europe and Asia, the author thinks that characters with such features represented “the primordial mythical woman”, whose functions were connected with “the cosmic proto-woman in childbed, Mother-Earth, proto-woman in childbed of the Ethnos, but also with the Goddess of Death”. Put in the local context of the Enchelii that inhabited the Lake Ohrid region at the time, he proposes that the serpentine legs

3 Theodossiev 1998; 2000.

4 Gergova 2006.

5 Чаусидис 2010.

6 Babić 2018.

7 Станковска-Самали 2019.

8 The finds from Grave VIII of Trebenishte are on view at the National Museum in Belgrade. General information about the grave see Вулић 1932; Krstić 2018. A catalogued overview of the finds see Ardjanliev *et al.* 2018, 271–294.

9 Description of the complementary set of krater and tripod: Ardjanliev *et al.* 2018, 291, cat. no. 134 (author V.K.). On the origin of the krater see Bottini 2011; Krstić 2018, 47, n. 3; Mutafchieva 2018, 90.

10 See note 8 in this paper.

11 Theodossiev 1998; 2000; Ardjanliev *et al.* 2018, with presented bibliography.

12 Чаусидис 2005, 247, 248; Чаусидис 2017, 105, 119–121; Chausidis 2022, 406–422.

13 Чаусидис 2010.

of the Gorgon were in fact identified with eels – a possible totemic animal of this ancient tribe (whose ethnonym most probably derives from the Ancient Greek word ἔγκελυς/*énkhelus*, meaning ‘eel’). Therefore, the snake-legged Gorgons were probably viewed by the locals as a representation of their primordial mythical mother-goddess. Regarding the galloping horsemen between the Gorgons, Chausidis thinks that they were “symbolizing motion and epiphany of the sun’s deification, which, like the deceased, dies and is born in the same circle of life”. In combination, the Gorgons and horsemen would reflect the concept of being born, devoured and then reborn by the mother-goddess. Furthermore, Chausidis also addresses the symbolic reason why these vessels could have been placed in the Trebenishte grave:

“... the presence of these mythical creatures inside the graves of the Trebeniste monarchs (perhaps applied on vessels that were used as urns) could be explained by the concept according to which the death of the monarch was considered as a marriage between him and the Mother Earth. A marriage that will result in mastering death (- as personal deification, i.e. heroisation of the deceased monarch - as a continuation of the dynasty in the name of his heirs)<sup>14</sup>.”

We generally agree with the interpretations presented by Chausidis regarding the local symbolic meaning of the Gorgons and horsemen on the tripod and krater from Grave VIII, which will be taken into account in this study.

## The Mistress of Dogs

As we have previously noted, the focus of this paper is the iconographic composition of a standing Gorgon flanked by two canine figures, depicted on the bronze tripod from Grave VIII at Trebenishte (Pl. 1: 1). At its core, it reflects the age-old archetypal image of the so-called ‘Mistress of Animals’ (*Potnia Theron*), which with its male counterpart (the ‘Master of Animals’) is present in various cultures all over the world, in general terms expressing a mythical character with dominion over the various opposites of nature (creation–destruction, birth–death, progressive–regressive, etc.).<sup>15</sup> Such potential symbolism fits well with the Gorgon figures from Trebenishte, which in themselves could embody and even unite opposing functions such as birth and death – as has been noted previously by Chausidis. The dual nature of our Gorgon on the tripod is amplified by the wings on its back and the two snakes protruding from its neck, signifying the unity of celestial and chthonic. Adding to this unity, i.e. balance, of opposites are also the possible complementary meanings of the two canines that symmetrically flank it, if we accept that they represent a dog and a fox.<sup>16</sup> This could either express a symbolic

contrast of ‘domestic’ dog versus ‘wild’ fox or even the categories ‘male’ versus ‘female’, respectively.<sup>17</sup> In this case, it is also interesting to note the myth of the paradoxical chase between the Teumessian fox, which could never be caught, and the dog Laelaps, which could catch everything it pursued.<sup>18</sup>

But if the general symbolic role of the Gorgon in our composition as ‘Mistress of Animals’ is relatively clear, the same cannot be said for the two canine animals that flank it. Although the image of the ‘Mistress of Animals’ was quite common in archaic Mediterranean and synchronous Near Eastern cultures, the presence of canines in such an iconographic arrangement is rare. The animals that usually flank the Mistress are felines (lions, panthers), bulls, goats, deer, birds, snakes, or various composite/mythical animals such as gryphons and sphinxes. Some chronologically proximate pictorial analogies to our canine-featuring variant are the painted examples on a 7th-century-BC Boeotian amphora from Thebes, in Greece,<sup>19</sup> and on a 6th-century-BC Etruscan-Corinthian skyphos from Pontecagnano, in Italy.<sup>20</sup>

The first example (Pl. 2: 1), now kept in the National Archaeological Museum in Athens, shows a standing female character with open arms that are bent upwards at the elbows. She is dressed in geometrically decorated garments and flanked by several animals oriented towards her, in three vertical zones. In the upper zone, there are two birds placed symmetrically to left and right of her head, above the arms. (The arms lack hands and are hatched with lines similar to the birds – maybe the arms allude to wings?) In the middle zone, below the arms, there is a bovine head to the left, and an object that we cannot clearly identify to the right (perhaps the leg of the bovine animal?). In the lowest zone, the ‘Mistress’ is flanked by two seemingly carnivorous animals with elongated snouts, wide-open toothed mouths with protruding tongues, small pointy ears, slender bodies, four legs (one front paw raised towards the central female character), and long spirally curved tails (the left one raised upwards, the right one lowered downwards). The female character also has a vertically depicted fish on her skirt. In the spaces between the anthropomorphic character and zoomorphic figures there are several swastikas of varying size. The carnivorous animals are hard to identify and could have denoted the general category of ‘beast’ rather than a specific animal. However, due to their elongated snouts and the small pointy ears, one cannot exclude the possibility that they represented canines (dogs or wolves). We are encouraged in our identification of the beasts as canines by E. Neumann’s interpretation of the scene as “goddess flanked by wolves”, whereby he states that she represents the “opposition of life and death”, also expressed by the “life-giving swastikas and by the bull’s loins and bull’s head as symbols of death, cas-

14 Чausидис 2010, 172.

15 In general on this archetypal image see Neumann 1963, 268–280; Чausидис 2005, 146–147. Examples of the ‘Mistress/Master of Animals’ in the ‘Old World’ see Counts, Arnold (eds.) 2010; in Sub-Saharan Africa see Obenga 2011; in the Americas see Goldwater et al. 1969, cat. no. 624; Cleland, Shimada 1992, 201, Figs 1, 7, 13-b, 13-c, 14, 15; Waselkov 2006, 453–457; in Oceania see Goldwater et al. 1969, cat. no. 172.

16 On the two canines as a dog and fox, as described in the catalogue entry see Ardjanliev et al. 2018, 291, cat. no. 134 (author V. K.).

17 In the Ancient Greek language there were two nouns denoting a fox – ἄλωπιξ and κερδῶ – both of which were considered grammatically feminine in their default form. In contrast, the word for dog (κύων) was neuter, while the word for wolf (λύκος) was masculine. The same is also true of the Latin words for fox (*vulpēs*), for dog (*canis*), and for wolf (*lupus*).

18 Apollod., *Bibl.*, 2.4.6–7; Paus., 9.19.1.

19 Wolters 1892, 219–220, Pl. 10: 1; Boeotian amphora 1952; Neumann 1963, 275, 276, Pl. 134; Kahil 1984, 626, cat. no. 21.

20 D’Agostino 1974, 211; *Lupo cattivo* 2020.

tration, and sacrifice”.<sup>21</sup> We would also add that she seems to be of macrocosmic proportion, whereby the depicted animals denote the three cosmic zones: birds = sky, bovine animal = middle world, ‘beasts’ and fish = the chthonic realm.<sup>22</sup> In that context, the wavy lines that go along her skirt, from the waist down to the bottom, similar in their form to her hair, could symbolize the celestial waters (rain) pouring down to earth.

The second example, the skyphos from Pontecagnano, in Campania, Italy, depicts a very simplified (one could say even caricaturized) Gorgon figure with snakes in her hands (Pl. 2: 2). On the left, this figure is flanked by a carnivorous animal with an elongated snout, an open mouth full of teeth, protruding tongue, and small pointy ears (very likely a canine, or more specifically a wolf). Due to this animal figure, the painter of the kotyle is often referenced as ‘Painter of the Bad Wolf’.<sup>23</sup> Above the back of the animal is an eight-petal rosette. However, the animal is not replicated on the right side of the Gorgon. Instead, there is a smaller bird standing on top of a raised surface with sloping sides.

Another important analogy, although slightly later, is found on a silver jug that was part of the now famous Rogozen hoard discovered in Bulgaria, dated to the 4th century BC. The jug features two figural friezes executed in relief. The upper frieze depicts a winged female figure in a long dress with two smaller animals by her side, usually interpreted as dogs, which she holds by their front paws (Pl. 2: 3). On either side, the ‘Mistress’ is approached by composite hybrid figures consisting of a horse’s body, human head, and wings (i.e. ‘winged centaurs’). In the lower frieze there is a kneeling bull in the centre, approached on both sides, i.e. ‘attacked’, by two carnivorous animals (presumably lions).<sup>24</sup>

There is literary and iconographic evidence from the Classical period onwards that canines were associated with various ancient female deities of the Balkans: primarily with Artemis, Bendis, Persephone, Hecate and Enodia, but also with others.<sup>25</sup> These goddesses are generally connected either with the spheres of hunting, i.e. wilderness and wildlife, or with the crossing of boundaries and the underworld, i.e. the liminal and chthonic.

Such determination of their mythico-religious role could prove itself an important indication in our interpretation of the ‘Mistress of Dogs’ on the Trebenishte tripod.

There is some archaeological evidence pointing to the veneration of Artemis and of Hecate/Persephone on the north coast of Lake Ohrid in later times. A ring from the Hellenistic period featuring a goddess holding torches (Hecate/Persephone/Demeter?) has been found at Delgozhda, near Struga, while from Roman times there is a fragmented marble statue of Artemis as a huntress wearing her quiver, discovered at Kalishta, near Struga.<sup>26</sup> However, neither of these examples featured preserved depictions of canines. On the other hand, it should be noted that syncretic variants of Enodia with Artemis and Hecate have produced multiple pictorial representations featuring canines, usually alongside horses, during the Hellenistic and Roman periods in the nearby regions of Elimeia (Pl. 2: 4), Eordaia, and Pelagonia (Pl. 2: 5).<sup>27</sup>

The geographically closest analogy to our ‘Mistress of Dogs’ is dated to the Roman period. This is the bronze plaque from Preator, near Resen, in the neighbouring Prespa Lake region (about 35 kilometres southeast of Trebenishte), which was discovered in a secondary context during agricultural work. The plaque features the Cappadocian goddess Ma (Pl. 2: 6). She stands frontally in full battle gear with a solar crown, holding a double axe in one hand, and a shield in the other. Depicted to her left is a free-standing sword, while above her right shoulder there is a pair of cymbals. The goddess is flanked by two canines sejant, facing the goddess with raised heads. The composition is framed by a naiskos in the Corinthian order. The tympanum of the naiskos features a human head with a solar crown, flanked by horse heads in profile, angled downwards.<sup>28</sup>

According to N. Proeva, who has studied this artefact most extensively, the goddess is depicted with solar and military features. Regarding the presence of canines – dogs, according to her – she comments: “Probably it is related to the warlike character of the goddess, which brings her closer to the chthonic divinities”.<sup>29</sup> She also connects the canines with an ancient Macedonian military ritual that was carried out “at the beginning of the military season”, in the month of Xanthus. The ritual consisted in the symbolic purification (*lustratio*) of the army by its passing between the two halves of a sacrificed dog.<sup>30</sup> According to V. Bitrakova-Grozdanova, the goddess has a “clear military character”, and she is also a “victorious or triumphal goddess”.<sup>31</sup> This all corresponds to the syncretization of Ma with the Greek war-

21 Neumann 1963, 275–276, Pl. 134.

22 On the concept of encoding the cosmic zones through animals see Чаусидис 2005, 144–146, 210.

23 D’Agostino 1974, 211; Lupo cattivo 2020.

24 Marazov et al. 1998, 152, cat. no. 80.

25 In general on dogs in Ancient Greek literature and iconography see Trantalidou 2002. Iconographic examples of Artemis with dogs see Kahil 1984, cat. nos 130, 191, 192, 196, 203, 210 (marble relief from Bulgaria, Roman period, Artemis flanked by two dogs as ‘Mistress of Dogs’), 215, 216, 217, 218, 221, 224, 226, 227, 233, 234, 237, 239, 242, 244, 247, 251, 260, 276, 279, 280, 284, 287, 289, 291, 292, 296, 299, 300, 302, 306, 307, 308, 325, 328, 332, 337, 339, 359, 364, 384, 385, 397a, 407, 414, 415, 416, 417, 419, 424, 425, 431, 432, 433, 434, 435, 436, 439, 442, 444, 457, 469, 470, 473, 477, 478, 481, 485, 488, 491, 493, 494, 496, 497, 499, 503, 506, 514, 528a, 532, 622, 624, 631, 647, 671, 675, 676, 683, 686, 687, 708, 733, 741a, 771, 772, 882, 885, 886, 900, 923, 933, 947, 953, 955, 962, 976, 982, 988, 1016, 1018, 1074, 1075, 1085, 1183, 1189, 1198, 1202, 1257, 1279, 1288, 1318a, 1338, 1339, 1383, 1395–1417, 1428, 1429, 1450; of Bendis with dogs see Gočeva, Popov 1986, cat. nos 7, 10, 11; of Enodia with dogs see Moustaka 1986, cat. nos 4, 5; of Hecate with dogs see Sarian 1992, cat. nos 34, 51, 64–68, 75, 79, 95, 96, 121, 122, 128, 129, 138, 147, 153, 155, 163, 166, 171–173, 181, 183, 184, 228, 235, 238, 242, 255–259, 280, 295, 302, 325, 327; of Persephone with the hound of the underworld, Cerberus see Güntner 1997, cat. nos 86, 197, 231, 234, 260–278, 280, 283, 286, 301–303, 306, 307, 312, 313.

26 For the statue see see Bitrakova-Grozdanova 1999, 44, 45, 53, Fig. 9. For the ring see see Битракова-Грозданова 1987, 79, 80, T. IV: 5; Битракова-Грозданова, Маленко 1997, 43, 60, No. XXVII.

27 Битракова-Грозданова 1987, 137, 138, T. X: 1; Bitrakova-Grozdanova 1999, 172–177, 181–183, Fig. 12, Fig. 13, Fig. 15; Chatziniolaou 2010, 210–215.

28 Proeva 1983; Проева 2014, 88–93, Таблa 11: Сл. 17; Bitrakova-Grozdanova 2015, 15–17, Fig. 4; Чаусидис 2017, 768, 770, ф47: 4.

29 Proeva 1983, 174.

30 On the connection of this ritual with Ma see Проева 2014, 89. On the ritual in general with cited historical sources see Проева 2014, 98–99, 178–179.

31 Bitrakova-Grozdanova 2015, 16.

goddess Enyo, as well as with her Roman equivalent Bellona. Additionally, as with the Gorgon on the Trebenishte tripod, we think that the goddess Ma on the Pretor plaque also reflects a potential union of celestial and chthonic opposites, through the presence of the solar crown and the two canines, if we treat the latter as chthonic symbols (see further). The presence of the double axe can also be treated as a possible indication of her dual nature.<sup>32</sup> Although Ma cannot be directly connected to the Mother of the Gods,<sup>33</sup> due to their relatable Anatolian component, we think that it is noteworthy to reference the Homeric hymn dedicated to the latter:

“I Prithee, clear-voiced Muse, daughter of mighty Zeus, sing of the mother of all gods and men. She is well-pleased with the sound of rattles and of timbrels, with the voice of flutes and the outcry of wolves and bright-eyed lions, with echoing hills and wooded coombs. And so hail to you in my song and to all goddesses as well!”<sup>34</sup>

### The liminal symbolism of canines

The second element that constitutes the iconographic composition of our interest is the pair of canines that symmetrically flank the central Gorgon. Generally, and even stereotypically, the symbolic meaning of canines, specifically dogs, is interpreted as being connected to the chthonic – as guardians of the underworld, or as companions that guide the souls of the dead towards the underworld. This is most clearly manifested in the nature of mythological characters such as the Greek Cerberus, the Nordic Garm, the Egyptian Anubis, and the Aztec Xolotl.<sup>35</sup> In the case of the Ohrid Lake region, where Trebenishte is located, such a meaning can be related to the deposition of earrings and necklaces with canine protomes inside graves dated to the 3rd–2nd centuries BC (Pl. 3: 1).<sup>36</sup> There is also a dog accompanying a horseman (of the so-called ‘Thracian rider’ type), presumably in the afterlife, on a funerary altar discovered at Grnčari, in the neighbouring Prespa Lake region, and dated to the late 2nd century AD.<sup>37</sup> In contrast to the ‘guardian’ and ‘companion’ symbolism of the dog, its wild cousin, the wolf, has generally been as-

sociated with ‘savagery’ and ‘aggression’, while the fox with the categories ‘cunning’ and ‘trickery’.<sup>38</sup>

However, we think that, in order to reveal the more specific symbolism of the canines on the tripod from Trebenishte, one should explore the way that these animals were actually treated in the geographical proximity of that site. This would be best attested by archaeozoological material; but, unfortunately, we are unaware of published archaeozoological analyses in the Ohrid region. However, archaeozoological analyses have been done at the relatively close prehistoric settlement of Sovjan, once on the shore of the former Lake Maliq, about 50 kilometres south of Trebenishte. Based on the archaeozoological material from the layers dated from the Middle Bronze Age to the Iron Age, it has been concluded that the humans living at Sovjan probably consumed dogs among other animals: “The dog, whose consumption is also attested, constitutes an additional contribution with 6.3% of the remains and 12.3% of individuals”.<sup>39</sup>

The use of dogs for human consumption has also been indicated by the material from the prehistoric settlement of Kastanas in the Lower Axios Valley, in Central Macedonia. According to K. Trantalidou: “At both Kastanas and Kastro [in Crete], the cut marks on canid bones are indicative of processing for consumption”. In relation to dog remains from other sites such as Eretria and Tegea, Trantalidou also points to the practice of dog sacrifice, as indicated by the archaeological contexts in which they were found.<sup>40</sup> Relatively clear archaeological contexts of dog sacrifice have been discovered on ancient Paeonian territory in today’s R. N. Macedonia, dated to Early Antiquity, at the sites of Bylazora and the Skopje Fortress, both about 120 kilometres northeast of Trebenishte.

The dog sacrifice at Bylazora, buried in a pit with pottery fragments dated to the 5th century BC, was found immediately next to the eastern wall of the ‘Royal Palace’ (Pl. 3: 2). In fact, it seems that the sacrificial pit was deemed so important by the builders of the palace that they made a completely illogical corner in the eastern wall just to avoid its disturbance, as suggested by D. Mitrevski, with which we agree.<sup>41</sup> Perhaps it was a sacrifice made during a foundation ritual aimed at the magical protection of the building. A similar idea probably underpinned the dog sacrifice at the aforementioned Tegea, where, at the sanctuary of Athena Alea, a dog mandible fragment with cut marks was found in the post-hole of a building, dated to the second half of the 8th century BC.<sup>42</sup> Such rituals have been archaeologically revealed in Italy, as well: at Fidenae, Ariminum, Paestum, and at Porta Mugonia and Meta Sudans in Rome.<sup>43</sup> The second example from Paeonian territory, from the Skopje Fortress, was discovered in

32 On the symbolism of the double axe see Чаусидис 2017, 653–778; specifically on the dual symbolism of the double axe see Чаусидис 2017, 715–721; on the symbolic relation of double axe to woman see Чаусидис 2017, 766–771; on the Pretor plaque depicting Ma within this context see Чаусидис 2017, 768.

33 Hatzopoulos (1987, 404, n. 26) believes that Ma and the Mother of Gods were identified, or at least had a common cult, in the ancient Macedonian town of Edessa. Bitrakova-Grozdanova (2015, 15–16) treats Ma as an epiphany of the Great Mother and “quite close to Cybele”. On the other hand, Proeva (2014, 89–90) opposes the identification of Ma with the Mother of Gods.

34 “μητέρα μοι πάντων τε θεῶν πάντων τ’ ἀνθρώπων / ὕμνει, Μοῦσα λίγεια, Διὸς θυγάτηρ μεγάλοιο, / ἢ κροτάλων τυπάνων τ’ ἰαχὴ σύν τε βρόμος αὐλῶν / εὔαδεν ἡδὲ λύκων κλαγγὴ χαροπῶν τε λεόντων / οὐρέα τ’ ἠχήμεντα καὶ ὕληεντες ἔναυλοι. / καὶ σὺ μὲν οὕτω χαῖρε θεαί θ’ ἅμα πάσαι ἀοιδῆ” (Hom. Hymn 14; Evelyn-White 1914, 438, 439).

35 On the general symbolism of dogs see Chevalier, Gheerbrant 1990, 239–245.

36 As discovered in Grave 140 at the necropolis of ‘Deboj’ (Битракова-Грозданова, Маленко 1997, 41, 59, no. XXV), and Grave 268 at ‘Samuel’s Fortress’ in Ohrid (Кузман 2021, 291, 309, TVIII: 11, 20).

37 Cermanović-Kuzmanović 1982, 68, no. 95, TLVI: 95.

38 On the general symbolism of the wolf see Chevalier, Gheerbrant 1990, 582–584; of the fox see Chevalier, Gheerbrant 1990, 805, 806.

39 Gardeisen *et al.* 2002, 45.

40 Trantalidou 2017, 638–639.

41 Митревски 2018, 10, 29, Fig. 5.

42 Vila 2000, 198; 2014, 554; Trantalidou 2017, 638.

43 Mazzorin, Minniti 2002, 65.

a pit covered with stones (Pl. 3: 3). The pit was part of the Early Antique horizon of the site, dated to the 5th–4th centuries BC. The dog was buried with fragments of pottery and a terracotta canine head (Pl. 3: 4). According to excavation director Mitrevski, the pit was a case of either a “funeral” or a “sacrifice” of the dog.<sup>44</sup>

Dogs were also used as sacrificial animals at various ‘princely graves’ (6th–5th centuries BC) in the Central Balkans: Atenica (in Čačak), Čitlucima (in Glasinac) and Klina (in Kosovo).<sup>45</sup> Slobodan Čače concludes that such finds confirm the role of the dog as a sacrificial animal in the Central Balkans and connects these sacrifices on a general level to Indo-European sacrificial rituals.<sup>46</sup> The funeral pyre raised above Tomb II in the Great Tumulus at Vergina (possibly belonging to the Macedonian king Phillip II), dated to the 4th century BC, has also yielded various animal bones, including remains of cattle, goat, sheep, birds, fish and four horses, as well as two dogs.<sup>47</sup>

Ritual use of canines during the Iron Age has also been indicated at the northernmost peripheries of the Balkans, in Slovenia and Romania, but also in Central Europe.<sup>48</sup> In Scandinavia, dogs were sacrificed from the Neolithic up to the Middle Ages.<sup>49</sup> It can also be identified in the Russian steppes during the Bronze Age, supporting the idea of common Indo-European notions regarding the sacrifice of canines, especially in association with initiation rituals of young male warriors, as suggested by D. W. Anthony and D. R. Brown (see further).<sup>50</sup> On the other hand, it was also present among some Native American communities, again in a militaristic context, as presented in detail by R. A. Cook regarding the archaeological site of Sun Watch Village in the Middle Ohio Valley, as well as regarding ethnographic material of Central Algonquian and Siouan/Plains tribes.<sup>51</sup> The latter fact points to the even wider, perhaps archetypal, character of this phenomenon. This is also reinforced by the following diachronic example from the Balkans.

Ritualized cruelty towards dogs persisted in the folklore of the Balkans up to the 20th century, as evidenced by ethnographic material from the regions of Kosovo, Macedonia, Thrace, Epirus, Thessaly, Attica, the Peloponnese, and even the Aegean Islands and Western Asia Minor.<sup>52</sup> Although, generally, these rituals did not usually have a clear sacrificial character, dogs did in fact die during their performance. In the Macedonian ethnographic ex-

amples, it was practiced during the Orthodox New Year and consisted of ritualized conflict between young boys and dogs. The performers were young boys, because the practice was deemed ‘unworthy’ of ‘real men’ who would have an unjust advantage over the dogs. Analysing all the constitutive elements of the practice, A. Svetieva has put forward the opinion that it reflected a type of male initiation ritual.<sup>53</sup>

Going back to the initial archaeozoological example from Sovjan and keeping in mind the widespread ritualized use of canines – quite often involving cruelty towards them and their sacrifice – it cannot be excluded that the ‘consumption’ of dogs at the aforementioned prehistoric site also had a ritual component. Such a possibility is encouraged by the many clear instances of canine sacrifice in the neighbouring regions. Therefore, we think that the inhabitants of the lake region in Western Macedonia (Ohrid–Prespa–Maliq) were probably familiar with ritual canine sacrifice and even consumption in the 1st millennium BC, including the archaic community buried at Trebenishte.

But why? Why would canines be sacrificed? What was their symbolism? Comparing the ancient archaeological and literary material, it can be seen that canines and canine sacrifice were most commonly associated with: the spheres of the wild and uncivilized, the underworld and funerary contexts, rites of initiation and purification, practices of healing and childbirth, calendrical rituals of agriculture, and rites of foundation and magical protection of buildings.<sup>54</sup> In fact, all of these aspects can come under one category: the liminal, i.e. the boundary between life and death, civilized and uncivilized, clean and unclean, this world and the other, between here and there, the previous and the forthcoming phase of a time cycle, etc. The archetypal liminal symbolism of the dog can best be explained by the following quote put forward by J. Serpell:

“In symbolic terms, the domestic dog exists precariously in the no-man’s-land between the human and non-human worlds. It is an interstitial creature – neither person nor beast – forever oscillating uncomfortably between the roles of high-status animal and low-status human.”<sup>55</sup>

The wolf, in turn, as the wild cousin of the domestic dog, was the representative of the dog’s wild and aggressive nature, i.e. the beast within. The other wild cousin, the fox, was the transgressive and cunning trickster. Such liminal, and thus potentially dual, symbolism of canines fits well into our symmetrical iconographic composition of the ‘Mistress of Dogs’ on the Trebenishte tripod, where the Mistress, i.e. the Gorgon, represents the factor of control or dominion over the two opposites represented by the two canines in a general sense. Furthermore, we think that this generalized interpretation can become more specific if we observe the iconographic composition of interest within the archaeological context of its discovery.

44 Mitrevski 2016, 152–155, 167, Fig. 214, Fig. 223, Fig. 224, Fig. 226, Fig. 227. The author also points to a similar terracotta canine head discovered at Vardarski Rid, near Gevgelija (probably the ancient Macedonian town of Gortynia, about 120 kilometres to the south-east of today’s Skopje), in a context dated to the early 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC (Mitrevski 2005, 50, Fig. 31-d).

45 Čače 1985, 18, 20, n. 26a.

46 Čače 1985.

47 Archibald 2013, 306.

48 In Slovenia see Škvor Jernejčič, Toškan 2018. In Romania see Bălăşescu, Ailincăi 2020. In Austria see Galik 2000.

49 Gräslund 2004.

50 Anthony, Brown 2017.

51 Cook 2012.

52 Svetieva 2002; Sergis 2010.

53 Svetieva 2002.

54 Mazzorin, Minniti 2002.

55 Serpell 2017, 312.

## The sacred drink, canines and warrior initiation

As was elaborated in the introduction, our ‘Mistress of Dogs’ is found on a tripod supporting a large bronze krater, deposited in the ‘princely’ Grave VIII at Trebenishte (Pl. 1). To begin, we should pose the question of why the ‘Mistress of Dogs’ would be associated with a large vessel for holding some kind of liquid, most likely an alcoholic one – as was usually the case with luxurious kraters. Subsequently, one should also consider the symbolic and ritual nature of liquids, especially alcoholic ones, and the vessels in which they were kept.

Tatyana Shalганova has done a good job addressing the latter question as part of her analysis of a large bronze hydria from the archaic period, kept in the V. Bozhkov collection. She concludes that the liquid found inside the hydria, presumably water, was a liminal symbol of transformation: “water/washing in the ancient Greek ritual symbolically marks the transition between inside and outside, between human and animal, between life and death, the boundaries between sacred and non-sacred space, between sacred and non-sacred time periods”. Such symbolism is also inherent to the vessel that held it, regarding which she further notes that “the hydria itself is a sign of the boundary between culture and nature, because the function of this product of culture is to shape, structure and limit, immobilize the amorphous and ever-moving natural substance”. Furthermore, in combination with the two figural pairs of nude human youths that adorn the hydria (one pair consisting of a female and male, the other of two males), she places the hydria in relation to initiation rituals of youths.<sup>56</sup>

The transformative symbolic and ritual character of liquids and the vessels that contain them would be amplified even more if the liquid was alcoholic or a type of ‘sacred drink’ with psychoactive properties, given their power to change the state of mind, i.e. cross the line between different mental states. The presence and characteristics of the ‘sacred drink’ in the prehistoric and archaic cultures of the Central Balkans, and even wider in Indo-European frames, has been studied in detail by Chausidis. He even relates another large bronze krater with snake-legged Gorgons found at Trebenishte, this time in Grave I, with such cultural traditions.<sup>57</sup> In fact, the proposed symbolic and ritual role of liquids and the vessels that contain them corresponds to our previous observations on the meaning of the ‘Mistress of Dogs’ rooted in concepts of duality and liminality.

Now, if we observe the complementary set of krater and tripod addressed here in relation to the probable place of origin of the large vessel, the island of Aegina, one could connect it with the cult of Hecate – goddess of boundaries, and a ‘Mistress of Dogs’ in her own right. In fact, at Aegina, she was honoured the most of any deity, with mystic rites every year, a tradition said to have been introduced by Orpheus the Thracian.<sup>58</sup> The krater and tri-

pod may have been originally intended for use during such ‘mystic rites’, which possibly included a transformative component, given the liminal character of both Hecate and Orpheus,<sup>59</sup> and the fact that it was an annual event, i.e. possibly connected to a certain date marking the end and beginning of some yearly cycle. Although Pausanias strictly describes the image of Hecate at the temple in Aegina as being with “one face and one body”,<sup>60</sup> it is nevertheless enticing to suggest the possible connection of Hecate’s triple form with the triple multiplication of our ‘Mistress of Dogs’ figure on the Trebenishte tripod.

However, Aegina aside, we are more inclined to observe the krater and tripod within the context of the location where they were deposited: Grave VIII at Trebenishte (Pl. 1: 1). So, how does the bronze set, then, with everything previously elaborated, fit within the context of Grave VIII? How was it used before its deposition, and what was its symbolic meaning? As was described in the introduction, this grave belonged to a high-ranking individual within the archaic community buried at Trebenishte. In addition to the items made of gold foil that were an important aspect of the funerary practice itself, the jewellery and various miscellaneous objects (amber, glass, possible mirror and miniature carriage parts), the rich grave also consists of two large groups of items that we think were a crucial part of the identity of the deceased: military equipment and drinking equipment. The latter, in addition to the krater and tripod addressed here, also included a silver rhyton, three silver goblets, a bronze amphora, another bronze tripod, fragments of a bronze bowl and of other smaller bronze vessels, and a clay pot. The military equipment laid with the deceased consisted of a bronze helmet, an iron sword in sheath, an iron spearhead, and fragments of bronze greaves.<sup>61</sup> These armaments probably reflected the warrior identity of the deceased, while the luxurious drinking equipment was probably used in some communal gathering – a kind of symposium – before its deposition in the grave.

The combination of communal rituals, warrior identity, and the symbolism of the ‘Mistress of Dogs’ and of the canines themselves, prompts us to revisit the Indo-European initiation rites of young male warriors. Comparative analyses of various Indo-European mythological, historical and ethnographic sources have outlined a common initiatory ritual, which consisted in male adolescents of a given community forming war-bands (academically usually referred to as ‘Männerbünde’) that took on the identity of a pack of wild dogs or wolves. Their symbolic transformation into dogs or wolves was represented through the sacrifice and consumption of dog or wolf meat, and by wearing dog or wolf skins. Then, after their ritual transformation, the war-

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established among them. Within the enclosure is a temple; its wooden image is the work of Myron, and it has one face and one body. It was Alcámenes, in my opinion, who first made three images of Hecate attached to one another, a figure called by the Athenians Epipurgidia (on the Tower); it stands beside the temple of the Wingless Victory” (Paus., 2.30.2; Jones, Ormerod 1918, 408–409).

59 We should bear in mind that Orpheus, too, is associated with the crossing of boundaries, specifically the one between this world and the underworld, between life and death.

60 See note 58 in this paper.

61 Вулић 1932; Krstić 2018; Ardjanliev et al. 2018, 271–294.

56 Шалганова 2012.

57 Чausидис 2017, 379–444, on the Trebenishte krater from Grave I: 424.

58 “Of the gods, the Aeginetans worship most Hecate, in whose honour every year they celebrate mystic rites which, they say, Orpheus the Thracian

band would wander off to live in the wild for a certain amount of time. During this period, they would raid and steal various riches, livestock and also women of other communities. After the appropriate amount of time had passed, they would return to their homes fully integrated as adult men.<sup>62</sup>

There is also certain evidence that points to relations between the 'sacred drink' and wolves (usually the mythological wolf as an adversary that steals the sacred drink), but also to the 'sacred drink' as a stimulant of warrior strength. Both have interesting connotations if one considers the examples of symbolic equation of the 'sacred drink' with a female character. One example that combines these elements is the story of the mythical Edo-nian king Lycurgus (from Ancient Greek λύκος/lykos = wolf), who assaulted the nymph Ambrosia – the nurturer of Dionysus, and at the same time a personification of the eponymous sacred drink of the gods.<sup>63</sup>

Another 'wolfman' was Lycaon, the mythical king of Arcadia. He is associated with the Arcadian religious festival Lykaia on Mount Lykaion, under the patronage of Zeus Lykaios, which included a nocturnal initiation ritual of adolescent males. Supposedly, the ritual consisted of sacrifice and communal feasting. It was said that the sacrificial meal was made of animal entrails mixed with those of humans. The participants that would consume human flesh would turn into wolves. They could regain their human form only if they abstained from human flesh until the next such ritual, at the end of a nine-year cycle. It is highly probable that this ritual was a remnant of the previously outlined Indo-European initiatory paradigm.<sup>64</sup> Regarding our subject of study, it is interesting to point out that, according to some mythological traditions, Lycaon was the father of Macedon – the eponymous progenitor of the Macedonians.<sup>65</sup>

When discussing this topic, one cannot ignore the legend of the twin founders of Rome, Romulus and Remus, who were suckled by a she-wolf, i.e. drank its life-sustaining milk as a symbolic substitute of the sacred drink.<sup>66</sup> The twins were sons of the war-god Mars, a deity closely associated with wolves. The Lupercal cave, where the suckling happened, was the focal point of a ritual sacrifice during the purification and fertility festival of Lupercalia (from the Latin *lupus* = wolf), on February 15th every year. At the Lupercal altar, the presiding priests sacrificed goats and a dog. The sacrificial knife was used to anoint the foreheads of two young boys. After the sacrifice, the Luperci, i.e. the 'brother-

hood of the wolf', participated in a communal meal with large amounts of wine, and then ran a race in the nude around the Palatine Hill – the oldest settled part of Rome. During this race, they used goatskin strips to strike people, especially women, and thus stimulate their fertility.<sup>67</sup> The festival was associated with the pastoral god Faunus – an equivalent of Pan, who, in turn, was connected with the aforementioned 'wolf-festival' of Lykaia in Arcadia.<sup>68</sup>

Another interesting example is that of the Iranian steppe tribe Saka Haumavarga, which appears in Achaemenid inscriptions. According to some interpretations, their name can be translated as 'Saka haoma-wolves', i.e. 'Sakas who turn themselves into wolves through haoma-intoxication', haoma being the sacred drink of the Iranians. However, it should be noted that some researchers do not agree with such a translation, and opt for the variant 'Saka laying the haoma'.<sup>69</sup> If one accepts the first option, then the reason for such a name can be explained by the belief of warriors that drinking haoma would make them invulnerable while being intoxicated with fury ("raging like the wild beasts", as described by B. Lincoln).<sup>70</sup> According to A. Ahmadi, besides "ritual werewolfism" as a common trait of male youth bands in the Indo-European sphere, including Indic and Iranian traditions, the "ingestion of the drink of immortality *soma/haoma* must have had a pivotal place in the esoteric ritual of the Indo-Iranian masculine society".<sup>71</sup>

A visual representation of one such Indo-European initiation ritual can be recognized on a plate of the famous Gundestrup cauldron, discovered in Jutland, in Denmark, and dated to the 2nd–1st centuries BC. The cauldron shows a combination of Thracian and Celtic features and motifs.<sup>72</sup> The plate that is of our interest is, of course, the so-called 'Warriors' Frieze' on the interior of the cauldron (Pl. 3: 6). The plate is horizontally divided into two friezes by a vegetal motif, viz. a tree. The lower frieze, from right to left, consists of three carynx players, in front of whom is a shieldless swordsman with a boar-topped helmet (a commander?), in front of whom, in turn, are six infantrymen with shields and spears. All of them, marching to the left, are led by a canine figure towards the roots of the tree. There, they are met by a giant human figure, probably a deity (of a male or female sex according to varying interpretations), which stretches the entire height of the plate. The giant figure holds a smaller human figure upside down (the same size as the infantrymen) and seems to be dipping it into an object usually interpreted as a cauldron or bar-

62 Wikander 1938; McCone 1987; Kershaw 1997, 176–337; Das, Meiser (ed.) 2002; Speidel 2004, 10–33; Mallory 2007; West 2007, 450–451; Cebrián 2010; Jackson 2016; Anthony, Brown 2017; Ahmadi 2018; Daryae 2018; Kaliff, Oestigaard 2022, 42–69.

63 On the relation of sacred drink to wolves see Чаусидис 2017, 411–413. On the relation of sacred drink to warrior strength see Чаусидис 2017, 443–444. On the relation of sacred drink to woman see Чаусидис 2017, 421–426. On Lycurgus and Ambrosia see Чаусидис 2017, 296, 413, 422.

64 Burkert 1983, 84–93; Borgeaud 1988, 38–42. On Zeus Lykaios see Cook 1914, 63–99.

65 Apollod., *Bibl.*, 3.8.1. Also see Чаусидис 2017, 296.

66 Chausidis (2017, 424) has suggested the identification of the Roman she-wolf as a female personification of the sacred drink.

67 Dumézil 1970, 346–350; Anthony, Brown 2017, 135–136.

68 Borgeaud 1988, 43. Even the Romans themselves connected the two festivals see Cook 1914, 87; Borgeaud 1988, 220, note 264.

69 On 'haoma-wolves' or 'laying the haoma' see Daryae 2018, 41. On 'Sakas who turn themselves into wolves through haoma-intoxication' see Wikander 1938, 64–65; Kershaw 1997, 199–200; and Марзоев 1992, 105 (the last one according to Чаусидис 2017, 413, n. 96).

70 Lincoln 1981, 130–131 (according to Daryae 2018, 41). It is also worthwhile noting that the concept of 'animalistic fury' and 'rage', in association with warriors and wolves, was reflected in the Ancient Greek language through the lexeme λύσσα/lyssa: a feminine abstract of λύκος/lykos = wolf (see: Kershaw 1997, 200; Cebrián 2010, 346).

71 Ahmadi 2018, 26–27.

72 Kaul *et al.* 1991; Kaul 2011.



rel (but can also be identified as a schematized vulva). The upper frieze of the plate shows four armed horsemen, moving from left to right, i.e. from the roots of the tree towards its top, led by a serpent with ram's horns. The whole scene, 'read' clockwise from bottom right to top right, probably depicts the revival, reincarnation, or initiation of the infantrymen: soldiers of a lower rank, to horsemen of a higher rank. This is done by their (symbolic) 'death' at the roots of the tree – the underworld – dipped into the cauldron/barrel, i.e. vulva (as *regressus ad uterus*), whence they are 'reborn'.<sup>73</sup> To us it is important that this is done through the mediation of the canine figure that leads the infantrymen to their 'death', and the presence of the cauldron/barrel or vulva as an instrument of their 'revival'. Perhaps the Gundestrup cauldron itself, on which this scene is depicted, was meant to be used in such an initiatory ritual.

With everything elaborated so far, we think that a similar symbolism and function may have followed the complementary set of tripod and krater from Trebenishte (Pl. 1: 2), precisely because it was deposited in the grave of a high-ranking member of the local community with a clear warrior identity, perhaps even a commander or the primary war chief of that community, who actually presided over an initiatory ritual of the type described. The initiatory symbolism of the tripod and krater may even be encoded in their iconography, especially if we observe both bronze items as forming one compositional whole, given their functional complementarity. Thus, we could equate the Gorgons of the krater (conditionally 'upper frieze') with those of the tripod ('lower frieze') as epiphanies of one and the same mythical character. In a similar fashion, we could also mutually equate the figures that are found between them: the horsemen of the 'upper frieze' with the canines of the 'bottom frieze'. Thereby, considering the spatial placement of both groups of figures, the canines would represent the young warriors in the 'underworld' that will be initiated into the higher rank of horsemen in the 'upper world'. This is comparable with the meaning of the two friezes on the 'warriors' plate' of the Gundestrup cauldron (compare Pl. 1: 2 with Pl. 3: 6). Consistently with such a comparison, the Gorgons of our krater and tripod would have the same symbolic function as the giant figure on the 'warriors' plate' of the Gundestrup cauldron: the divine factor that symbolically presides over and enables such an initiatory transformation, the one that takes life, but also restores it. This would correspond to the independent interpretation of Chausidis regarding the symbolism of the snake-legged Gorgon on the krater as the primordial mother-goddess that gives birth to, devours and rebirths the depicted horsemen.<sup>74</sup> We think that the 'sacred drink' potentially stored in the krater would have been seen as the instrument by which the intended transformation and initiation would be actualized, perhaps even understood as the 'milk' or 'blood' of the mother-goddess. This, in turn, corresponds to another interpretation of Chausidis, regarding the snake-legged Gorgon on the similar

bronze krater from Grave I at Trebenishte, as a potential female personification of the sacred drink.<sup>75</sup>

In support of the presence of some kind of ritual connecting warriors and canines in the ancient Macedonian cultural sphere, we could once again mention the historically recorded rite of purification of the Macedonian army in the month of Xanthus. It involved the sacrifice of a dog, which was divided into two halves, whereby the army had to pass between those two halves. It is obvious that these two halves formed a line, a symbolic boundary which had to be crossed by the warriors, supporting the proposed liminal symbolism of the dog. This is also accentuated by the fact that the ritual took place annually, i.e. at a point symbolizing the transition between two yearly cycles. As we have seen, Proeva connects this historically recorded ritual to the 'warlike character' of the goddess Ma on the Pretor plaque, flanked by two canines.<sup>76</sup> In fact, we would build upon this relation by proposing that the earlier warrior traditions in the Macedonian cultural sphere might have provided the necessary basis and local context for the acceptance of the cult of the Cappadocian Ma in the region. Or, in other words, we could treat Ma, especially as she is depicted on the Pretor plaque, as a later, transformed and syncretized version of the 'Mistress of Dogs' from Trebenishte.

Another potential piece of evidence in favour of the relationship between warriors and dogs in this region would be the theonym Candaon, identified as an equivalent of the war-god Ares among the Crestonians – a tribe situated north of Chalcidice. According to some scholars, his name could be connected with the Phrygian word for wolf – 'daos' – while, according to others, in a similar fashion, it could be translated as 'dog-strangler'. However, there are also other opinions, which connect this theonym with the meanings 'kindle' or 'blaze'.<sup>77</sup> The connection between warriors and canines is, however, clearly reflected in the account of Herodotus describing the Paeonian attack on Perinthus, mentioning that the Paeonian army consisted of men, dogs and horses.<sup>78</sup>

The historical notes presented above clearly point to the association of warriors and canines in the cultural sphere of the Macedonians and their immediate neighbours. They also confirm what was already archaeologically ascertained in the region: the sacrifice and possible consumption of canines during the 1st millennium BC. However, the relation of canines and the 'sacred drink' in the specific region is harder to ascertain. We should note the possibility presented by Chausidis that some types of pendants from the circle of the 'Macedonian and Thessalian Bronzes' dated to the Iron Age (7th–6th centuries BC), which the

73 Marazov 1991; 2015; Kaul 2011, 100–101, Fig. 19. On the option that the 'cauldron' depicted in the scene is perhaps a schematized vulva see Чаусидис 2017, 297.

74 Чаусидис 2010.

75 Чаусидис 2017, 424.

76 On the ritual see Curt., X.9.11–12; Polyb., XXIII.10; Titus Livius, XL.6; Проева 2014, 98–99, 178–179. On the possible connection with Ma see Проева 2014, 89.

77 On the different interpretations of this theonym see Чаусидис 2017, 296. On Candaon and other war deities in Macedonia see Проева 2014, 97–102. Here we should also mention that young Spartan boys sacrificed dogs to another equivalent of Ares, named Enyalios, during a nocturnal initiation ritual (Maz-zorin, Minniti 2002, 62; Sergis 2010, 71; Проева 2014, 100, 178, 179).

78 Hdt., 5.1. It should also be noted that there was a Paeonian ruler named Lykkeios (359/8–340/335 BC), whose name is derived from *lykos* = wolf, and who minted coins depicting a wolf on the reverse (Petrova 1999, 101–103).

author connects with traditions associated with the sacred drink, feature a four-legged animal that in some cases could have represented a dog or wolf (Pl. 3: 5) – symbolizing either the guardian or thief of the sacred drink, as argued by certain mythological parallels.<sup>79</sup> One mythical manifestation of such a relation could in fact be reflected in the aforementioned story of the Edonian Lycurgus and Ambrosia, perhaps as a paradigm of some kind of ritual game involving warriors, symbolically identified as wolves, trying to steal the ‘sacred drink’.

## Conclusions

The archaic necropolis at Trebenishte is one of the most important of its kind in the Central Balkans, primarily well-known for its rich burials of high-status individuals, the so-called ‘princely graves’. In one of them, numbered as Grave VIII, deposited alongside numerous other valuable items (vessels, armaments, gold-foil appliqués) was a luxurious complementary bronze set of a tripod and krater. The tripod features a triplicated iconographic composition of a Gorgon flanked by two canines, which was the initial focus of our study. These are the material facts that have been ascertained by archaeology. However, we believe that these (arte)facts would be useless if devoid of their essence, that is, the symbolic meanings they possessed within the specific cultural context. As J. E. Robb once rightfully so posed a rhetoric question of key importance to archaeological science: “In many ways, the question is not whether we can find symbols archaeologically, but whether we can find anything cultural that is not symbolic”.<sup>80</sup> This study has aimed to reveal the symbolic value of the aforementioned iconographic composition, the object which it adorned, and the reasons why it was deposited in the grave in which it was, and thus present their true cultural value. By analysing the symbolic meaning of the ‘Mistress of Dogs’ and of the canines as the distinctive element of this composition within its specific archaeological context, we have come to the following conclusions:

- the ‘Mistress of Dogs’, i.e. the Gorgon on the tripod, was probably viewed within the given cultural context as a mythical character of dual nature which presided over the crossing of symbolic boundaries, such as in rituals of initiation;
- canines were perceived as symbolically liminal animals that had the ability of crossing spiritual boundaries, whereby in Indo-European initiatory rituals they often served as symbolic equivalents or guides of the initiates, usually male adolescents;
- such initiatory rites often included a ritual feast or a ‘sacred drink’, which would explain why the ‘Mistress of Dogs’ would be placed upon a tripod that supported a large luxurious krater;

- the deposition of a complementary set of tripod and krater with such iconography into the grave of a high-ranking male individual with a warrior identity might indicate that he was the one who physically presided over an initiation ritual of the kind described above.

We are fully aware that these conclusions, regardless of how much comparative evidence one presents in support of them, may forever remain in the sphere of the speculative. However, they open a new perspective (and hopefully discussions!) on the cultural characteristics and values of archaic communities in the Central Balkans, perhaps as part of the wider Indo-European traditions of the ‘Männerbünde’.

## SAŽETAK

### “GOSPODARICA PASA” I INICIJACIJA RATNIKA U ARHAJSKOM TREBENIŠTU

U radu se analizira i tumači simboličko značenje ikonografske kompozicije na brončanom tronošću iz arhajske nekropole kod Trebeništa, u blizini Ohrida (6–5. st. pr. Kr.). Kompozicija se sastoji od središnje smještene Gorgone, kojoj su s obje strane postavljene dvije psolike životinje. Nakon uvoda i opisa predmeta interesa, autor prelazi na analizu Gorgone u simboličkoj ulozi „Gospodarice pasa“, uspoređujući je sa sličnim prikazima s geografskog i kronološkog aspekta. Slijedi pregled simboličke uloge pasa i srodnih životinja na prapovijesnom i antičkom Balkanu, kao dijelu šireg indoeuroopskog kulturnog miljea.

Promatrani nalazi zatim se proučavaju u odnosu na arheološki kontekst samog tronošća, koji je položen, zajedno s kraterom, u „kneževski grob“ visokorangirane muške osobe ratničkog identiteta, koji je bio pripadnik arhaičke zajednice čiji su se pripadnici ukapali kod Trebeništa. Autor zaključuje da ikonografija tronošća odražava simboličke predodžbe o liminalnosti i transformaciji, pri čemu je predmet vjerojatno bio namijenjen za upotrebu u ritualima inicijacije koji proizlaze iz indoeuropske tradicije „Männerbünde-a“.

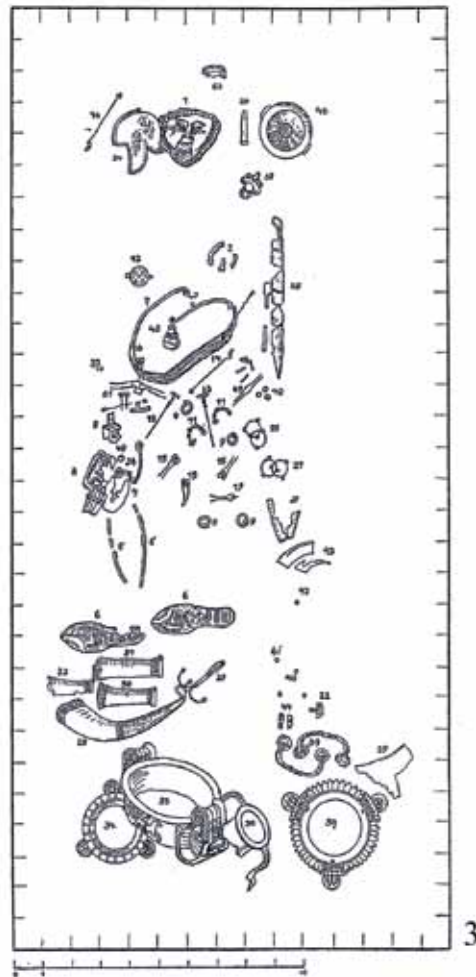
79 Чаусидис 2017, 22, 291–298, 411–413.

80 Robb 1998, 331.

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**PLATE 1:**

1. Bronze tripod (detail), Grave VIII, Trebenishte, 6<sup>th</sup>–5<sup>th</sup> centuries BC, kept in the National Museum in Belgrade (Ardjanliev *et al.* 2018, 32).  
 2. Bronze krater and tripod, Grave VIII, Trebenishte, 6<sup>th</sup>–5<sup>th</sup> centuries BC, kept in

the National Museum in Belgrade, inv. nos 174/I, 174a/I (Ardjanliev *et al.* 2018, 291).

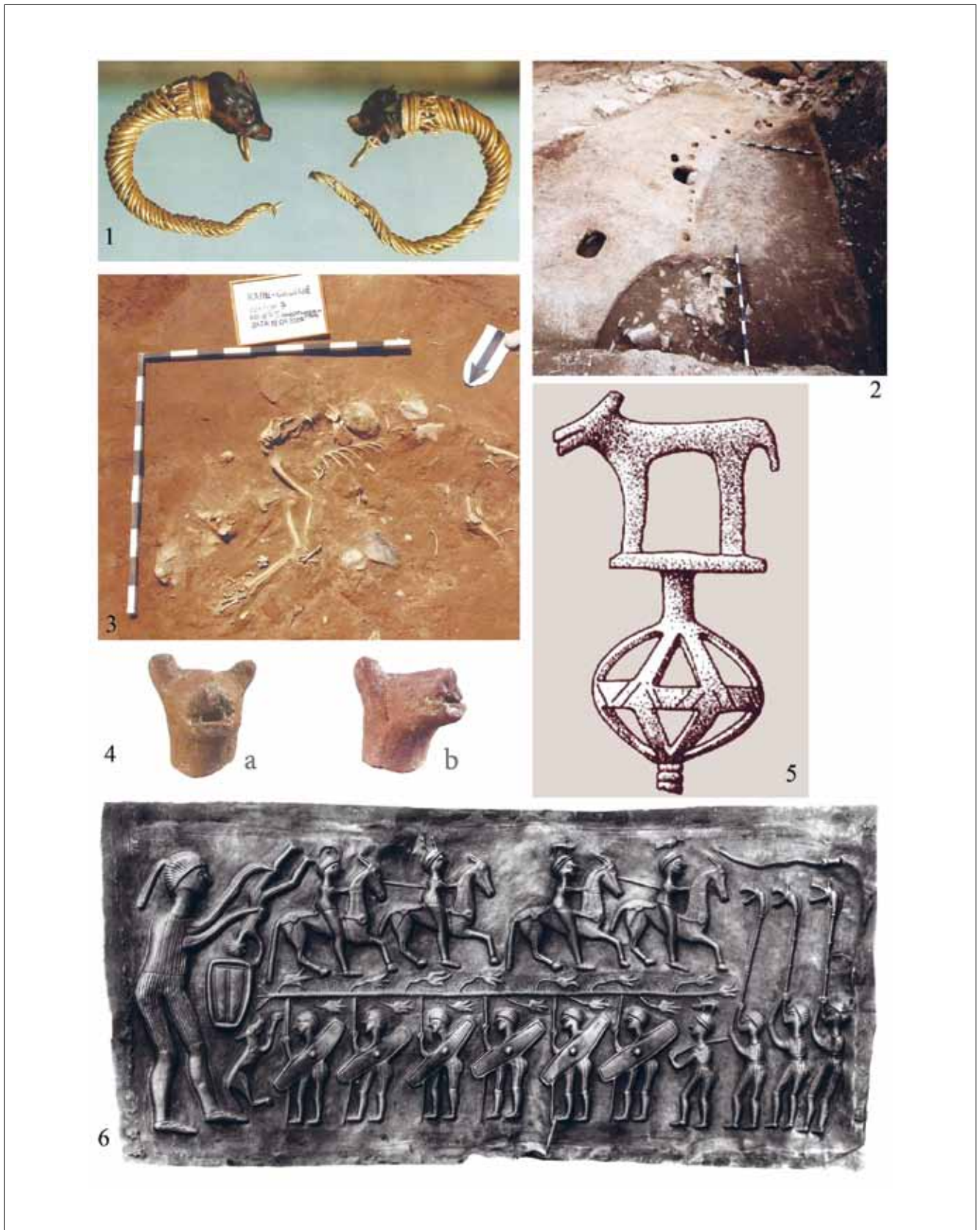
3. Drawing of Grave VIII, Trebenishte, 6<sup>th</sup>–5<sup>th</sup> centuries BC (Вулић 1932, 7).



**PLATE 2:**

1. Ceramic amphora (detail), Boeotia, 7<sup>th</sup> century BC, kept in the National Archaeological Museum in Athens (Wolters 1892; Neumann 1963, Pl. 134).  
 2. Ceramic skyphos (detail), Pontecagnano, 6<sup>th</sup> century BC, kept in the National Archaeological Museum in Pontecagnano (D'Agostino 1974; Lupo cattivo 2020).  
 3. Silver jug (detail), Rogozen, 4<sup>th</sup> century BC, kept in the National Museum of History in Sofia, inv. no. 22458 (Marazov *et al.* 1998, 152, no. 80).

4. Marble stele, Kozani, 2<sup>nd</sup>–1<sup>st</sup> centuries BC, kept in the Archaeological Collection of Kozani (Chatzinikolaou 2010, 211, Fig. 25).  
 5. Ceramic sculpture, Debreshte, 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC (Bitrakova-Grozdanova 1999, 181, Fig. 12).  
 6. Bronze plaque, Pretor, Roman period, kept in the Archaeological Museum in Skopje (Bitrakova-Grozdanova 2015, 17, Fig. 4).

**PLATE 3:**

1. Earrings, Deboj - Ohrid, 3<sup>rd</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> centuries BC (Битракова-Грозданова, Маленко 1997, 59, no. XXV).
2. Pit with dog remains, Gradishte - Knezje (Bylazora), 5<sup>th</sup> century BC (Митревски 2018, 29, Fig. 5).
3. Pit with dog remains, Skopje Fortress, 5<sup>th</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> centuries BC (Митревски 2016, 155, Fig. 224).

4. Ceramic canine head (a: front view; b: side view), Skopje Fortress, 5<sup>th</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> centuries BC (Митревски 2016, 155, Fig. 227).
5. Bronze pendant, Ithaka, 7<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> centuries BC (Чаусидис 2017, 282, Б60: 1).
6. Gundestrup cauldron (detail), Jutland, 2<sup>nd</sup>-1<sup>st</sup> centuries BC, kept in the National Museum of Denmark (Kaul 2011, 100, Fig. 19).