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A VIEW OF VINČA FROM CAMBRIDGE: MINNS' REVIEWS OF THE 1930s PUBLICATIONS BY VASIĆ

Abstract: The article provides close readings of a series of book reviews of Vasić's Vinča publications in the journal *MAN* of the Royal Anthropological Institute in Britain written in the 1930s by Russian and Eastern European studies expert and Cambridge-based archaeologist Sir Ellis Hovell Minns, including his unpublished notes and annotations of the volumes that are kept in the Cambridge University Library. In three installments, first in 1933 and then twice in 1937, Minns reviewed Miloje Vasić's seminal four volumes of *Preistoriska Vinča* I-IV, which were published in 1932 and 1936. In these reviews Minns gives his own interpretation of the dating and significance of the site of Vinča-Belo Brdo near Belgrade, but also echoes the majority opinion of leading experts about the finds at the time. The reviews, which have not previously been discussed in literature, provide penetrating glimpses for the history of archaeological thought, especially in Serbia, and reveal important aspects of the international reception of Vasić's works and his erroneous dating of the site. The purpose of this piece is to contribute to a critical evaluation of foundational figures in Serbian archaeology and can be seen as an extension of a conversation started by Palavestra and Babić in several previously published articles. The article ends by asking to what extent these early omissions in Serbian archaeology set the tone for structuring tropes and persistent traditions that have endured in this regional archaeological school ever since.

Keywords: Miloje M. Vasić, Vinča, Neolithic, Ellis Hovell Minns, history of archaeology, archaeological theory.

It is with reluctance that one differs from an excavator who has given so many years to the study of one site, but he himself furnishes the material on which one can base one's own opinion and one must freely use what he himself furnished.
(Minns 1937: 68)

Don't cling to a mistake just because you spent a lot of time making it.
(Anonymous)

1. Introduction

Early excavations at Vinča-Belo Brdo have for some time been the cherished legacy of Serbian archaeological history along with the personality of its excavator Miloje Vasić (1869–1956) (Fig. 1). Vasić was one of the founders of the 20th century archaeological discipline in Serbia and for better or worse is at the roots of the genealogical

tree from which spawned most of the subsequent tendencies and traditions of the Serbian archaeological school. An important part of the by now exoticized ethnography of Vasić's early 20th century excavations at Vinča belongs to commemorative foundationalism with little critical discussion of Vasić's controversial theories in which Vinča was for almost half a century persistently (one could also use the adverb 'stubbornly') interpreted at first as an Early Bronze Age site established by groups originating in the Cyclades and then as an even later Ionian colony. The interpretation of Vinča as a Neolithic site was only accepted internationally ever since the results of Vasić's excavations became available in printed form. According to the dictum that even problematic traditions are better than no traditions, this central aspect of Vasić's work has often been underplayed as a minor eccentricism among Serbian archaeologists who have previously evaluated Vasić's contribution and influence.¹ Moreover, part of the pride taken in Serbian archaeology regarding Vasić also stems from the cosmopolitan nature of his excavations in which various, in particular, British archaeologists or benefactors took part either by providing academic support (John Linton Myres from the University of Oxford) or financial backing (Sir Charles Hyde, a philanthropist and proprietor of the Birmingham Post & Mail Company). Vasić himself promulgated and emphasized these connections by giving names to some of the valued objects excavated at Vinča after such persons.

Recently, Palavestra² and Palavestra and Babić³ provided superb deconstructions of such dominantly uncritical and commemorative perceptions of Vasić's views (see also Babić's earlier accounts that started the debate⁴). Systematically, Palavestra⁵ has shown that even before the first spade of dirt was turned at Vinča, Vasić had had a pre-formed idea of the date and significance of the site on which he would be focusing his research efforts for almost 30 years. It was an admiration for Greek antiquity that completely tainted any critical understanding of the discoveries being made at Vinča by Vasić himself. Palavestra's long overdue analysis of various biases that shaped Vasić's perception of Vinča is an important stepping stone and casts into sharp relief the growing need for critical discussion about the true extent of Vasić's legacy and, for that matter, that of other key figures in the history of Serbian archaeology.

The analysis also has important implications for archaeological methodology and theory. It is one of the clearest cases in which ideas, theories and models formulated by a person's background, academic or otherwise, remained unchallenged by the weight of the evidence encountered. This is a supreme example of anti-reflexivity and anti-flexibility.⁶ Instead of allowing the finds from his extensive excavations in Vinča to open up unknown and unexpected conceptual horizons, and to remain open to new theoretical outlooks and models, Vasić was determined to make the best use of that evidence to strengthen his pre-formulated ideas. Such a case remains relevant in current archaeological practice as it shows an extreme instance of the importance of theoretical pre-understanding, which can effect

¹ E.g., Srejšović 2001; Nikolić and Vuković 2008.

² Palavestra 2011; 2012; 2013.

³ Palavestra and Babić 2016.

⁴ Babić 2002; 2008.

⁵ Palavestra 2012.

⁶ Cf. Hodder 1997.

methodologies and descriptions. One cannot sustain a theory-free archaeological practice despite all those who wish the death of archaeological theory.⁷

Palavestra is certainly right in suggesting that this particular “received idea”, by which only desirable parts of Vasić’s legacy are chosen to be celebrated and other problematic ones are ignored “with sympathy”, must critically be re-examined. This should certainly not be seen as hair-splitting or as a subversive attempt to undermine or compromise this key foundational figure and his legacy. However, if members of the Serbian archaeological community are to orientate themselves adequately in relation to the heritage of their archaeological forebears they must critically re-examine all aspects of the received traditions. Moreover, as will be argued at the end of this paper, there are symptomatic examples of a similar pattern of reasoning in Serbian archaeology amongst Vasić’s students who went to become very prominent archaeologists and who also used the evidence uncritically to support preferable theories and chronologies, occasionally showing little regard for the resistance of the archaeological evidence and opinions of their international academic peers.

This paper represents an extension of the critical evaluation of this particular case, the foundations of which were laid down by Babić and Palavestra. It focuses on the hitherto unexamined perception of Vasić’s Vinča publications among leading academics, focusing on the eastern European archaeology in the 1930s and includes some archival documents published here for the first time.

2. Cambridge University Library copies of Vasić’s Vinča with accompanying notes and Sir Edward Hovell Minns

The idea for this paper first arose after I accidentally stumbled upon some interesting documentation in 2009 regarding reviews of Vasić’s 1930s Vinča publications by Cambridge-based professor of archaeology Ellis Hovell Minns. While researching for a paper on the chronology of the Vinča culture⁸ at the Cambridge University Library I looked for Vasić’s four volumes where the results of his excavations at the site of Belo Brdo in Vinča were published.⁹ I discovered that these volumes were kept in the Rare Books Room of the library (UL class mark CCA.40.1), where particularly valuable and rare works are stored and special care is taken in handling non-borrowable pieces of printed work. Despite the nuisance of not being able to check out the volumes I was after, and geared up with a paper and a pencil, I visited the Rare Books Room on a cold January day and found that the library held three volumes of Vasić’s Vinča monographs, lacking volume II. Volume I was accompanied by the notes of Sir E. H. Minns and a copy of the journal *MAN*, volume 33, nos. 182–201, which contained his review of the work in the pocket inside the back board. Volume I also contained numerous handwritten notes on the margins of the book. Volume IV of Vasić’s Vinča contained Minns’ hand-written draft review of this last work.

⁷ Cf. Bintliff and Pearce 2011.

⁸ Boric 2009.

⁹ Vasić 1932; 1936a,b,c.

Born on July 16th, 1874,¹⁰ Ellis Hovell Minns (Fig. 2) was a British academic and archaeologist specializing in Eastern Europe and the Russian Steppe. He was educated at Charterhouse, which was considered “a breeder of Classical scholars”,¹¹ and was admitted to Pembroke College, Cambridge on October 1893, studying the Classical Tripos. True to the Cambridge college tradition of loyalty, he remained a student, Fellow, College Librarian, President of Pembroke (1928–1947) and Senior Fellow, and until his death occupied the same room through all these different roles.¹² In 1897 he lived briefly in Paris studying at *L'École des Chartres* and *L'École des Langues Orientales Vivantes*, where he learned Russian from Professor Paul Boyer, opting for a different academic trajectory from that of a typical classical scholar at the time.¹³ In 1898–1899 he visited Russia and in 1900–1901 he spent time in St Petersburg as a Craven student, working in the library of the Imperial Archaeological Commission as one of the first British scholars who studied in Russia with interests ranging from archaeology and history to ethnology. During this time he established lasting contacts with certain Russian scholars. In 1901 he returned to Cambridge and became Lecturer in Russian as well as Librarian at Pembroke, but despite his ambition he was not chosen as University Lecturer in Slavonic Studies. In his obituary of Minns, Phillips stresses that “[h]e was no communist” despite his continuing interaction with Russian scholars after the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917.¹⁴ As Librarian he built up a formidable collection of books and manuscripts related to Slavonic studies, kept today at the Cambridge University Library and the Slavonic Faculty Library while some of the icons he collected are kept by the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge. From 1906 to 1927 he was University Lecturer in Palaeography and was a world-leading expert in this field. He also taught Greek and Latin at the Faculty of Classics.

Minns’ appointment as Disney Professor of Archaeology, a prestigious Cambridge endowed chair, came in 1927, and he held it until his retirement in 1939. In this post, his predecessor was Sir William Ridgeway while his successor was Dorothy Garrod. While “[h]e was himself never a digging archaeologist”¹⁵ his interest in archaeology and history qualified him for this position sufficiently. He became Fellow of the British Academy in 1925 and Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries in 1920. Phillips notes that “[h]is knowledge of East European languages was used during the 1914–18 war in the Uncommon Language Department of the British Censorship. In the war of 1939–1945 he was again engaged for linguistic work, this time by the Admiralty”.¹⁶ Minns was knighted in 1945.

One of his celebrated articles is “Parchments of the Parthian Period from Avromian in Kurdistan”, regarding parchments written in Greek in Aramaic script dating to the 1st century BC, discovered in 1909, which he was the first to interpret.¹⁷ He authored the

¹⁰ Information about the life and works of Sir Ellis H. Minns are largely derived from three published obituaries: Clark 1985; Hill 1953; Phillips 1954.

¹¹ Phillips 1954: 168.

¹² Clark 1985: 599.

¹³ Cf. Clark 1985: 597.

¹⁴ Phillips 1954: 169; cf. Hill 1953: 237.

¹⁵ Phillips 1954: 170.

¹⁶ *Ibid.* 169.

¹⁷ Minns 1915.

seminal work *Scythians and Greeks*,¹⁸ a topic that later featured in his lecture “The Art of the Northern Nomads”, which discussed the origin and diffusion of animal style motifs in art.¹⁹ Minns was an authority on Slavonic icons. He translated from Russian and edited N. P. Kondakov’s *The Russian Icon* (Oxford 1927). He also composed an inscription in Russian that was engraved on the ceremonial “Sword of Stalingrad” presented by King George VI on behalf of the British people in homage to the defenders of the Russian city of Stalingrad. He received an honorary degree in Literature from the University of St Vladimir, Kiev and was a Corresponding Member of the Russian Academy of the History of Material Culture in Leningrad, as well as a member of the Finnish Archaeological Society and the Bulgarian Archaeological Institute, and honorary member of the Kondakov Institute in Prague. Ellis Hovell Minns died on June 13th 1953 at the age of seventy-nine, when he was still academically active.

Like many other books from his extensive library, the Vinča volumes, together with the issue of the journal *MAN* containing Minns’ review and other hand-written notes ended up in the Cambridge University Library. The fate of volume II remains a mystery. A possible hint about the fate of certain books from Minns’ library could perhaps be found in the words of Grahame Clark, a student of Minns who himself went on to become Disney Professor. In the last paragraph of Clark’s obituary for Minns he writes: “In his will he was thoughtful enough to bequeath a book of my choice from his personal library. Since his copy of the *Scythians and Greeks* with his personal annotations was very properly left to the University Library, I chose his copy of Rostovtzeff’s *Iranians and Greeks* ...”.²⁰

3. Minns’ review of Vasić’s *Preistoriska Vinča I*

Amongst the notes accompanying *Preistoriska Vinča* volume I, there was a hand-written note on a 20 by 13 cm piece of stationary with the printed heading of the Royal Anthropological Institute and the address 52, Upper Bedford Place, London, W.C.1. The note was dated March 10th 1933 and read as follows: “Dear Professor Minns, We have received ПРЕИСТОРИСКА ВИНЧА [Preistoriska Vinča] by МИЛОЈЕ М. ВАСИЋ [Miloje M. Vasić] for review. Can you earn my undying gratitude by reviewing it for R.A.I. please? Yours very sincerely, RM Fleming” (Fig. 3).

The note was in all likelihood signed by Rachel Mary Fleming who in 1930 moved from Aberystwyth, where she worked as assistant secretary of the Geographical Association, to London to become Librarian of the Royal Anthropological Institute (RAI).²¹ This post must have been connected with the publication of the journal *MAN*, which published numerous expert reviews of archaeological and anthropological publications, which the Library of the RAI Institute must have received. Fleming was trained as a linguist and specialized in Russian. It was possibly her familiarity with the work of Ellis Minns, the leading expert in Russian and Slavonic studies at the time, as well as the fact that Vasić’s

¹⁸ Minns 1913.

¹⁹ Minns 1942.

²⁰ Clark 1985: 601.

²¹ Maddrell 2009.

publication of Vinča was printed in the Cyrillic alphabet only that guided her decision (or the decision of the journal editor and others at the RAI) to send this volume for review to Minns and not, for instance, to the leading prehistorian in Britain at the time, Vere Gordon Childe. Only a few years earlier, in 1929, Childe had published his seminal work *The Danube in Prehistory*²² where among other sites he mentioned the finds from Vinča-Belo Brdo. Another reason for this choice of a reviewer might have been that Vasić in some way was able to influence this choice. It is possible that Vasić might have viewed Minns as a sympathetic ear for the ideas presented in his book, and intentionally wanted to avoid Gordon Childe, knowing that Childe had dated the site to the Neolithic. Vasić was already in correspondence with Minns in January of the same year, before the book was received for review (see below). This last explanation for choosing Minns as the reviewer seems very likely especially in the context of Minns' work *Scythians and Greeks*, where he was the first to provide an in-depth discussion regarding contacts and interactions between the Greek colonies on the Black Sea and the Scythian nomadic groups in the wider hinterland of that region. Vasić was possibly even influenced by the main narrative of Minns' work and might have considered that he had discovered an analogous meeting of two different worlds at Vinča.

In the same year that the request for review was sent to Minns, in the November issue of the 1933 journal appeared Minns' review of Vasić's first publication of Vinča (Fig. 4). Just after Minns' review, Childe's review of the publication about early excavations at the site of Cucuteni by Hubert Schmidt was published in the same issue of *MAN*.²³

Minns starts his review (Fig. 5) by noting that Vasić's book represents the first installment of a planned five-volume publication of the site, noting that Professor Vasić had informed him of what each of the follow-ups will contain. This, as well as a letter that Minns mentions in the review that was sent to him by Vasić, dated January 20th 1933, proves that Minns was in direct contact with Vasić several months before Minns was officially asked to review the book by the Librarian of the RAI. It remains unclear how the contact between the two of them was established in the first place. Minns goes on to inform the prospective readership that the follow-up volumes of Vasić's Vinča are to be expected shortly and indeed three other volumes were published in 1936 (see below). However, Volume V, mentioned in the review as the one that would have been dedicated to small objects, was never realized.

In his review, Minns²⁴ underlines Vasić's opinion on the importance of cinnabar as the key reason for the existence of a settlement at Vinča-Belo Brdo in this particular location, suggesting that the ore was obtained from Mount Avala some 20 km distant from the site. He also provides further details about Vasić's reading of the site as a specialized centre for exporting metallurgical raw materials, which the inhabitants used as pigments for the production of black and red-colored cosmetics and which were stored in vases made in human and animal shapes such as the well-known Hyde vase shaped as "a human-headed

²² Childe 1929.

²³ At the beginning of his review, Childe makes a memorable remark regarding the period of more than 20 years of delay in the publication of the Cucuteni finds, excusing the excavator: "The pardonable delay has not robbed of its worth the scientific publication—the penalty which generally awaits unwarranted postponement...." (Childe 1933: 184). This must to this day remain the *momento mori* of all practicing archaeologists.

²⁴ Minns 1933.

bird”. Minns mentions Vasić’s insistence on the presence of Aegean influences at the site and the “belief” that the site represented “a colony from the Cyclades founded soon after 1580 B.C.” Commenting on Vasić’s dating of various finds at Vinča, Minns seems inclined to take into consideration the time necessary for the accumulation of strata in the vertical sequence of the site and expresses an opinion that he would expect an earlier date for the basal deposits at Vinča, closer to 2000 BC, but also mentions that in Vasić’s letter (which was in German) to him, the excavator equated the time of the founding of Vinča with the founding of Troy IV, around the time of Amenhotep III, i.e. c. 1400 BC. In the polite phrase “[w]e shall await his reasons with interest”, Minns seems to express skepticism about such a conclusion.

In the third paragraph of the review Minns quotes Vasić’s insistence that his results should not be judged before the publication of the whole material from the site, and promises that he will “accordingly abstain from discussing his [Vasić’s] main position.” He does not entirely follow through with his promise though. In discussing the holes present in some of the figurines from Vinča and other sites in south-east Europe, Minns considers Vasić’s explanation that these are signs that they had been bound in order to restrain their movement and prevent them from fleeing from their worshiper, an interpretation that like many others found in Vasić’s writing was influenced by Greek literature. Unable to reconcile Vasić’s interpretation with the evidence, Minns plainly states that “this one seems rather far-fetched”. Furthermore, in his discussion of Vasić’s central narrative directly connecting the mythical story of the Hyperborean²⁵ maidens and their offering to the temple at Delos “with a sending from Vinča to its mother-land in the Cyclades”, Minns states that this “juxtaposition is, like any other explanation of the Hyperboreans, too good to be true”.

Finally, Minns makes a note that the book is entirely in Serbian without a foreign language summary, but states that various articles were published in German or English about the site, including some popular ones “with good illustrations”, published in the *Illustrated London News* on October 18th and November 1st 1930. However, his recommendation to Vasić was to “supply a summary in some better-known language” in the forthcoming volumes. Here, Minns’ linguistic background becomes apparent. He states that he did not regret reading the book in Serbian and notes that since the language reform by Vuk Stefanović Karadžić the imperfect and aorist tenses “seem to have dropped out of use” in Serbian. Pencil marked annotations in the margins of this volume where Minns translated particular words and phrases from Serbian to English, along with two small sheets of handwritten notes taken from various important pages in the book found in the accompanying papers of Minns’s copy of *Preistoriska Vinča I* (Fig. 6), testify to the fact that he did indeed carefully read the work. With his knowledge of Russian and other Slavic languages and his familiarity with the Cyrillic script, Minns must have been uniquely placed to be able to review Vasić’s book. At the end of the review, Minns urges Vasić to make “swift progress” with further publications, adding the disclosure “even in these hard times”. This most probably relates to the devastating economic impact of the Great Depression of the 1930s, but possibly also the political impact of Hitler’s rise to power in Germany in 1933.

²⁵ In Greek mythology, the Hyperboreans are the mythical people mentioned by Herodotus who lived “beyond the North Wind”.

4. Minns' subsequent reviews of Vasić's *Preistoriska Vinča* II-IV and unpublished notes

If Minns' first review of *Preistoriska Vinča* I was kind and amicable and moderately refrained from criticizing Vasić, his tone significantly changed in his reviews of the subsequent installments of the *Vinča* publication that appeared in 1936. In the April 1937 issue of *MAN* (Fig. 7), Minns begins by noting that Vasić paid no attention to his previous advice to supply a summary in a foreign language. Furthermore, he directs the reader to the critical assessment of *Vinča* by American archaeologist Vladimir J. Fewkes, who in 1935 and 1936 published different views on the chronology of *Vinča*-Belo Brdo and Neolithic sites in eastern Yugoslavia, largely based on the results of the Harvard University's Peabody Museum expedition to Serbia that he and Hetty Goldman led in 1931–1932. It is during this programme that he conducted the first excavations at the site of Starčevo-Grad near Pančevo, the eponymous site of the so-called Early/Middle Neolithic Starčevo culture.²⁶ In his review, Minns summarizes Fewkes' point about how over time Vasić changed his opinion regarding the dating of *Vinča*. In 1906 he considered it to be a Neolithic site; in volume I, published in 1932, he interpreted it as an Early Bronze Age settlement dated between 1580 BC and AD 6; in volumes II and III he claimed that it was founded in 600 BC as a polis of Ionian colonists in order to extract cinnabar mines in the Avala Mountain, thus becoming a trading centre in the Middle Danube region. Minns' frustration is evident in his statement: "This change of opinion is most remarkable in my opinion. Dr. Vasić asks readers to suspend opinion on it if they have not seen all the material collected in the Belgrade museum. But in these three volumes he gives us grounds for judgment and it is no longer possible to refrain. This later dating seems pure illusion, in its origin quite unaccountable, subsequently supported by secondary illusions". Minns also notes that Vasić referred to alternative opinions held about *Vinča* by many other scholars at the time as "Neolithic mirage".

Minns goes on to dismiss Vasić's dating based on analogies between *Vinča* figurines and later Greek artifacts. Although no expert in the archaeology of south-east Europe and partly relying on ideas published by Fewkes, Minns reaches the conclusion that "*Vinča* is a central example of the great culture of the Danube valley and neighboring regions, which beginning in Neolithic times seems to have lasted into the Early Bronze Age". He also notes Fewkes' important conclusion that, despite previous divisions of the sequence into *Vinča* I and II at around 5.5 m as proposed by Childe and Menghin, a more important division in the stratigraphy of this site is between the lowermost levels, at 9 m. These layers are defined by pit features and later wattle-and-daub houses and align with the chronological distinction between Early/Middle Neolithic Starčevo and Middle/Late Neolithic *Vinča* taxonomic units that is accepted today.

Minns notes with regret that "[g]iven the language difficulty, and the strange views of the excavator, the use of these well-produced volumes becomes rather restricted" concluding that "[i]t is with reluctance that one differs from an excavator who has given so many years to the study of one site, but he himself furnishes the material on which one can

²⁶ Fewkes 1936.

base one's own opinion and one must freely use what he himself furnished".

A much shorter note, was written by Minns in the November issue of *MAN* in 1937 (Fig. 8), regarding the fourth volume of the Vinča publication. A hand-written version of this text also survives on a piece of paper accompanying the Cambridge University Library Volume IV (Fig. 9). In this brief overview, Minns states that his opinion has not changed from that expressed in his reviews of previous volumes, affirming that "all [Vinča] analogies are with the Neolithic settlements of Bulgaria and Romania". When discussing Vasić's comparison between Vinča and the early Ionic settlement of Berezán, situated on an island off the coast of the Black Sea at the mouth of the Dnieper River, Minns points out that in contrast to Berezán, at Vinča not a single piece of typical Ionian ware had been found.

5. Structuring tropes, persistent traditions and reflexive critical thinking

After World War II, one of Vasić's former students, Milutin Garašanin, voiced strong disagreement with Vasić on the dating of Vinča. He wrote of his former teacher:

It is regretful that in the scientific world these views did not spark appropriate timely criticism, and were instead overlooked either due to insufficient information about Vasić's works (the monograph of Vinča was published without a foreign language summary), or out of respect for his reputation. Apart from M. Grbić²⁷ and V. J. Fewkes,²⁸ no one at that time scrutinized them with a serious critique. This was done only much later, after World War II,²⁹ when a new generation of Yugoslav archaeologists with strong arguments showed his views to be unsustainable and are completely rejected today.³⁰

The reviews by Minns discussed in this paper clearly show that timely criticism of Vasić was voiced immediately after the publication of his four volumes. The critical notices were published in one of the most prestigious periodicals of the time, in which many other prominent British scholars reviewed scholarly productions in archaeology, ethnology and anthropology from across Europe and around the globe. As was clear from these publications, as well as Minns' unpublished notes, the language barrier that Garašanin mentions did not stop Vasić's works from being adequately and promptly evaluated in the international sphere. It is probable that Garašanin was not aware of Minns' reviews, but it is also possible that he was attempting to pay homage to his own generation of scholars and inflate their contribution towards Serbian and Yugoslav archaeology in debunking Vasić's misconceptions. As Garašanin admits, both Milorad Grbić and Vladimir Fewkes clearly criticized Vasić back in the 1930s, and Minns can also be added to this list.

Those who look with sympathy on Vasić's fundamentally erroneous dating of Vinča have argued that at the time of his writing, and especially without the help of radiocarbon dating, different interpretive pathways were possible. Minns' reviews of Vasić's four volumes make such an apology difficult. They demonstrate that the majority scholarly

²⁷ Grbić 1933–1934.

²⁸ Fewkes 1936.

²⁹ Garašanin 1949; Korošec *et. al.* 1951.

³⁰ Garašanin 1984: 8 cited by Palavestra 2013: 689; my translation from Serbian.

archaeological opinion at the time did not maintain the extravagant and inconsistent interpretive *salto mortale* offered by Vasić. The modes of deduction and induction evident in the comparative, culture-historical and typological methodologies of archaeological reasoning that were the paradigms of the day clearly allowed for broadly accurate conclusions to be made that stood the test of time even in the absence of science-based dating techniques. This is one of the main reasons for the need to properly contextualize Vasić's place in the history of archaeology, critically revealing both his flaws (such as a tendency to interpret evidence at his whim with no reflective thought) as well as his virtues (such as the hard work put into recording his finds with relative precision, as well as his relatively swift and comprehensive publications of results) as an archaeologist. But there is a further reason why it is a useful and important exercise to disentangle with accuracy various aspects of the development of particular ideas, their reception and criticism.

As already hinted at by Palavestra³¹ and Palavestra and Babić,³² this problem is particularly important in considering the way local and regional archaeological traditions are built on foundational figures such as Vasić, who could shape the way the disciplinary field is practiced in a particular tradition of an archaeological regional or national "school". There are also many other "received ideas" in Serbian archaeology that need discussion but remain muted. One hypothesis could be that Vasić's erroneous dating of Vinča might have had a significant influence on various other erroneous positions held among later generations of Serbian archaeologists (despite the fact that the first generation of his students who went on to become professional archaeologists, such as Draga and Milutin Garašanin, strongly opposed his dating of Vinča and for this reason had to present their doctoral dissertations in Ljubljana rather than in Belgrade).³³ At the very least, Vasić's positions may have influenced some of his archaeology students early on, and negatively impacted on the pace of the adoption of certain modern methodological standards in Serbian archaeology.³⁴ Two examples will suffice here to show the potentially damaging consequences of such early errors, which remained inadequately evaluated in this tradition of scholarship.

The first example is the innovation of radiocarbon dating, which completely revolutionized prehistoric chronologies in the late 1950s and early 1960s, including the dating of Vinča. Radiocarbon dating revealed the site to date to a much older age than previously thought, not only by the estranged Vasić but even by the majority opinion of

³¹ Palavestra 2011; 2012; 2013.

³² Palavestra and Babić 2016.

³³ Babić and Tomović 1996; Palavestra 2012.

³⁴ As an anonymous reviewer of an earlier version of this article rightly noted, one should specify what conditions enabled such transmissions of negative attitudes in this archaeological tradition. A possible factor could be that the Serbian school of archaeology was in many ways similar to an older German tradition of scholarship, where obedient following of one's professor/mentor represented a well-trodden path towards a successful academic career (cf. Härke 1995), as suggested by V. Mihajlović (2014: 656) in his discussion of Branko Gavella's attitudes toward Miloje Vasić. Throughout much of the 20th century Serbian archaeology in many ways followed the German academic model and one should be reminded that Vasić himself received his doctorate in Germany. This type of generational academic dependence might have hindered divergent views of subordinated younger academics and inhibited their critical evaluations of the older generation, thus perpetuating backward opinions and attitudes.

people such as Stuart Piggott,³⁵ the leading British prehistorian of Europe in the 1950s, who himself was not a strong believer in radiocarbon chronologies. At the time, even before calibrations of radiocarbon dates, the first ¹⁴C measurements suggested that rather than being dated to the 3rd millennium BC, as many who believed it to be Neolithic had thought, Vinča was placed into the 5th millennia BC.³⁶ It appears that among Serbian archaeologists at the time, only one person expressed ample excitement and enthusiasm about the possibilities brought about with the advent of radiocarbon dating³⁷ which was Miodrag Grbić (1901–1969).³⁸ In a short, one-page article published in the Serbian prominent periodical *Starinar* in 1969, the same year Grbić died, he wrote positively about the consequences of new radiocarbon dates for the reconstitution of Neolithic chronologies, going against the grain of the very strong contemporary voice of the prominent German scholar from Heidelberg, Vladimir Miložčić, who rejected radiocarbon dating. In 1938 Serbian-born Miložčić was also a student of Miloje Vasić at the University of Belgrade. It may be that Miložčić, even though he did not accept Vasić's late dating of Vinča, in many other ways inherited the backward attitudes of his former teacher. Moreover, Grbić and Vasić were bitter enemies,³⁹ among other things, due to the fact that Grbić criticized Vasić in his 1933–1934 review of *Preistoriska Vinča I*. Despite Grbić's active and important research accomplishments in the period before World War II, Vasić never allowed him to become a university professor.⁴⁰ Between the two world wars, Grbić closely collaborated with foreign scholars such as Vladimir Fewkes and several others involved in the Harvard University's Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology expedition to Serbia. Together with these American scholars, he co-directed excavations at the site of Starčevo-Grad in 1931–1932. The biography of Grbić and his various international contacts and engagements⁴¹ testify to the fact that he was much more cosmopolitan in his attitudes and open to many more different views than Miloje M. Vasić.

Others, such as Milutin Garašanin, and post-war students of Vasić such as Dragoslav Srejšević, Borislav Jovanović and Nikola Tasić, all three of whom became key figures of Serbian archaeology in the second half of the 20th century, did not reject the importance of radiocarbon dating methodologies in the style of Miložčić, but were closely wedded to the

³⁵ Piggott 1965.

³⁶ E.g. Renfrew 1976.

³⁷ A possible exception to this generalization is Branko Gavela, Professor of Archaeology at the University of Belgrade, who was at first a faithful disciple of Miloje Vasić and who obediently defended Vasić's theories up until Vasić's death in 1956 (see footnote 34). However, in the years that followed he began to express different views, including an acceptance of the validity of the radiocarbon dating of Vinča (cf. Gavela 1965 cited by Mihajlović 2014: 661).

³⁸ Cf. Gačić 2005.

³⁹ Babić and Tomović 1996: 80.

⁴⁰ Grbić's university ambition became realized during the Nazi occupation of Serbia when he was elected as a professor at the Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade, which was closed during the war years. This somewhat tainted his reputation and was a source of police interrogations immediately after the war when Grbić was politically and academically marginalized. However, soon after, in 1946, he obtained a state job in Novi Sad and, later, in 1949, became a researcher at the Institute of Archaeology in Belgrade (Gačić 2005, cf. Babić and Tomović 1996).

⁴¹ Gačić 2005.

culture-historical comparative method, and only reluctantly and superficially used radiocarbon dates in their work. This dominant paradigm inhibited the full potential of radiocarbon dating results to be realized in the study of prehistoric periods in the central Balkans for a very long time, perhaps until very recently. The reluctance of this generation of Serbian archaeologists to appreciate fully the significance of radiocarbon dates, as well as (possibly) other implicit and subconscious influences coming from the teachings and general attitudes of Miloje Vasić, continued to have damaging consequences for the study of Serbian prehistory.

The second example discussed here regards the dating and interpretation of the celebrated and iconic site of Lepenski Vir, and the personality of its excavator Dragoslav Srejović. When Lepenski Vir was discovered in the 1960s, it was at first thought to be a typical Early Neolithic Starčevo site due to large amounts of Starčevo style ceramics found at the start of excavations in 1965. However, by the end of the second season of excavation in 1966 and the beginning of the third campaign in 1967, it became obvious that the site harbored some previously unknown and exceptional features, such as limestone floors with trapezoidally shaped bases, rectangular stone-lined hearths in the centers of these dwelling structures and, most fascinating of all, a sculpted tradition of sandstone boulder artworks never seen before in World Prehistory. All these finds prompted the excavator of the site to evoke here a pre-Neolithic tradition with strong Mesolithic roots, and to suggest that the aceramic deposits of the phases with trapezoidal buildings were clearly separated from the Early Neolithic Starčevo layer (phases IIIa-b), which contained abundant ceramic finds.⁴² In this way, Srejović stressed the narrative of early prehistoric origins for the sequence he excavated, exploiting with pride superlatives such as “the first” and “the earliest”.⁴³

However, this understanding of the main phase of trapezoidal buildings was partly at odds with both a relatively large series of radiocarbon dates from these features, which suggested a chronological overlap with Early Neolithic settlement in the surrounding areas of the Balkans, and the discoveries that Borislav Jovanović was at the time making at the contemporaneous site of Padina, located only 5 km upstream the Danube from Lepenski Vir. At Padina, the same type of trapezoidal structures were discovered, but associated with abundant finds of Early Neolithic Starčevo ceramics on building floors. Jovanović maintained that both sites belonged to the Early Neolithic historical context.⁴⁴ These contradictions brought the two researchers—Srejović and Jovanović—into a bitter and long-lasting row over the chronological place of the Lepenski Vir culture and its cultural origins in the prehistory of the Balkans. Moreover, as with Vinča-Belo Brdo, in the aftermath of the Lepenski Vir excavations, the evidence from the site started to be evaluated by leading world prehistorians,⁴⁵ who almost unanimously agreed that the main phase at

⁴² Srejović 1969, 1972.

⁴³ This kind of “originary” narratives are frequent in archaeology (cf. Gamble 2007) and implicit or explicit ways of boosting the national pride. Such narratives are often appealing to the general public that consumes them with a limited understanding and can inspire nationalist and identitarian politics. A recent example of such a sensationalist narrative about early metallurgy in the context of the Vinča culture in Serbia can be found in the article by Radivojević *et al.* (2013). For a critique of this particular case see Šljivar and Borić (2014).

⁴⁴ On the details of the debate see Borić 1999; 2002; 2007a, b and references therein.

⁴⁵ E.g. Ehrich 1977; Gimbutas 1976; Milisauskas 1978.

Lepenski Vir must have been contemporaneous with Early Neolithic settlement in the Balkans, in contrast to the excavator's opinion. These developments made Srejović relatively isolated in the international academic community for most of the 1980s and up to his death in 1996. Until his death he remained unmoved by different opinions and new evidence regarding the chronological place of Lepenski Vir and maintained the same position as in his early publications.

Uncertainties about the exact dating also inhibited the usefulness of Lepenski Vir and other Mesolithic-Neolithic sites in the Danube Gorges in wider discussions about forager-farmer, Mesolithic-Neolithic transitions, despite being some of the best case studies for such inquires. Srejović's stubborn reluctance to acknowledge the full complexity of evidence from Lepenski Vir, its dating and alternative interpretations abundantly expressed by his academic peers, firmly sticking to his initial narrative about the antiquity of the site despite mounting evidence to the contrary, seems to be analogous to the behaviour of his former professor Vasić. Vasić's and Srejović's agendas were of course different⁴⁶, but their modes of reasoning, ways of evaluating the archaeological contexts of the sites they excavated and reactions in the face of external criticism were remarkably similar. It is only with the generation of Srejović's students, and the students of Srejović's students, that Lepenski Vir has been allocated to the correct chronological position.⁴⁷ Despite this, a small number Srejović's students and collaborators continue to either ignore⁴⁸ or oppose⁴⁹ new chronological redefinitions of the site's stratigraphy.

Perhaps the reader will consider it far-fetched to suggest that some of the errors made by various key figures in Serbian archaeology during the second half of the 20th century could have been avoided had a healthy critical discussion of Vasić's early misconceptions ever taken place. One should not however underestimate the importance of establishing a clear theoretical and conceptual basis for empirical research, which can never be done in a vacuum, independently of received ideas. This paper hopes to advocate constant critical evaluation of the potential biases and tendencies that shape archaeological production of knowledge about the past. Some preparatory sketches have been made in the preceding pages inviting open and honest discussion, reflection and dialogue.

⁴⁶ However, see Palavestra's (2011) discussion of Srejović's views on ethno-cultural continuity, which show him to have similar interests to Vasić. Palavestra and Babić (2016) also cite examples of Srejović elaborating certain features of Mesolithic/Neolithic Lepenski Vir by evoking Hellenistic analogies in a style reminiscent of Vasić.

⁴⁷ Cf. Borić 1999, 2002, 2016; Borić and Dimitrijević 2009; Garašanin and Radovanović 2001. One should note that Ivana Radovanović, who was Srejović's student, defended her PhD dissertation in 1992 with the title "Iron Gates Mesolithic" (in Serbian "Mezolit Đerdapa"), which was later turned into a book (Radovanović 1996), and which contains a very limited mention of the debate regarding the chronological context of Lepenski Vir and other sites in this region. As the example given in footnote 37, in the case of this doctoral dissertation, a critical evaluation was inhibited and postponed (until after Srejović's death) due to the need to make dissertation work passable in the eyes of the supervisor.

⁴⁸ Babović 2006; for a critique see Borić 2008.

⁴⁹ Bogdanović 2012; Perić and Nikolić 2011.

Acknowledgements

I acknowledge the research leave in the academic 2015–2016 at the Center for Comparative Archaeology, University of Pittsburgh during which I wrote this article. Here I would like to express my overdue gratitude to Nenad Lemajić from whom, at the age of fourteen, I learned many things, among which was the craft of critical thinking, researching and writing in the field of historical sciences. I thank Divna Gačić for providing her exhibition catalogue on Miodrag Grbić. Dragan Jacanović provided the photo of Miloje Vasić used in Figure 1. For comments on earlier drafts of this paper I am grateful to Aleksandar Palavestra, Susan Stratton, Alasdair Whittle, Genevieve Carver and James Whitley. I also thank an anonymous reviewer for very constructive comments and suggestions on an earlier version of the paper. However, I take full responsibility for the factual accuracy of the various statements and opinions expressed herein.

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Fig. 1 – Miloje Vasić at Viminacium in 1907.

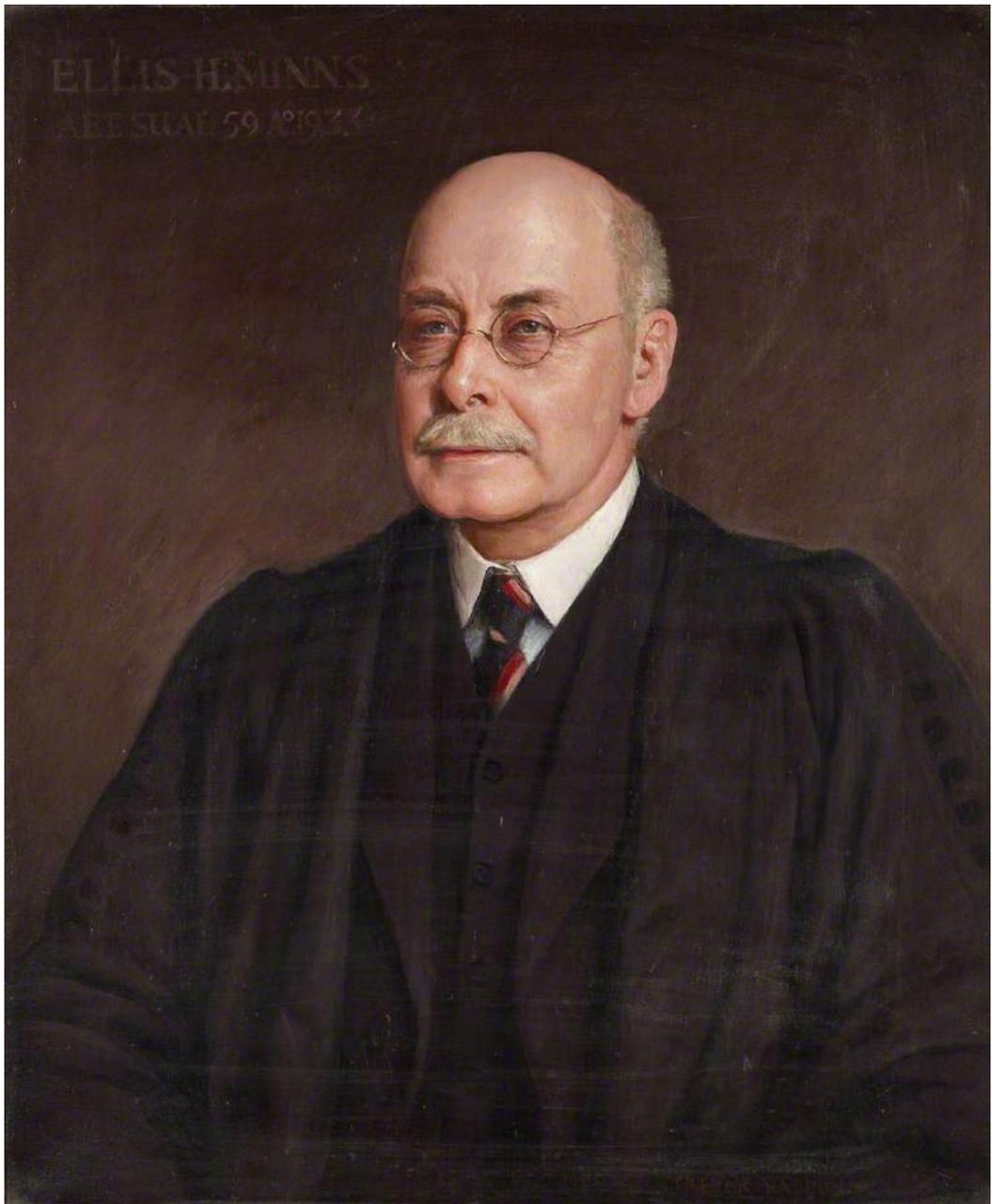


Fig. 2 – Sir Ellis Hovell Minns. Painting by Arthur Trevor Haddon (Oil on canvas, 60 x 49 cm).
Collection: The Haddon Library, University of Cambridge.

TELEPHONE: "2980 MUSEUM."

The Royal Anthropological Institute,
52, UPPER BEDFORD PLACE,
LONDON, W.C.1.

10.3. 1933

Dear Professor Minns,

We have received

ПРЕИСТОРИСКА ВИНЧА

by МИЛОЈЕ М. ВАСИЋ

for review. Can you earn my
undying gratitude by reviewing
it for R.A.I. please?

Yours very sincerely,
C. R. W. Fleming

Fig. 3 – A facsimile of a hand-written note sent to Ellis Minns in 1933 asking him to review the first volume of *Preistoriska Vinča I* by Miloje Vasić for the journal *MAN* (Cambridge University Library).

Vinča. I.

MAN

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Fig. 4 – Front cover of the journal MAN, November 1933 (Cambridge University Library).

- 1922-33. *Richard Schomburgk's Travels in British Guiana, 1840-44.* Translated and edited by W. E. R. Georgetown.
1929. Additional studies of the arts, crafts, and customs of the Guiana Indians, with special reference to those of southern British Guiana. *Smithsonian Institu-*

tion, Bureau of American Ethnology. Bulletin 91. Washington.

Acknowledgement is due to the *Daily Argosy* and the *Daily Chronicle*, both of Georgetown, British Guiana, for some of the information included in the above notice.

KINGSLEY ROTH.

REVIEWS.

ARCHÆOLOGY:
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 Belgrad, 1932. 4to. 159 pp., 149 illustrations, 4 coloured plates.

This is the first instalment of a complete publication of the important site at Vinča, 14 km. east of Belgrad on the Danube. This part deals with the cinnabar industry which Professor Vasić regards as the *raison d'être* of the settlement and so logically to be put first, and with the use of cinnabar (mercuric sulphide), galena and green pigment for cosmetics as witnessed by their actual occurrence in lumps and on palettes, and by the painting of statues found on the site. He informs me that Part II will discuss the lower layers with pit-houses, the interments and Egyptian influences; Part III, the plastic; Part IV, the ceramic; Part V, various small objects. These are far advanced and may be expected shortly.

The book is entirely in Serbian, without any *résumé*, but a great deal of its contents is summarized with good illustrations in the *Illustrated London News*, 18 October and 1 November, 1930, pp. 664 and 752. Earlier results may be found in *Prach. Zt.* ii, p. 12, in Professor Gordon Childe's 'The Danube in Prehistory,' and in reports of meetings of the British Association, see *MAN*, 1930, 151. Recent excavation has been financed by Sir Charles Hyde.

Professor Vasić says again and again that his results are not to be judged until his whole material has been published, save by such as have seen it set out in the museum at Belgrad. I will accordingly abstain from discussing his main position. The deposits are 10-50 metres deep, and the site was occupied from very early times to the coming of the Romans in A.D. 6, when the mines were unable to compete with those in other parts of the Roman world. Below 9 m. were found round huts sunk in the earth (Vinča I), above, rectangular houses (Vinča II). Childe (*op. c.* p. 26) puts the division at 5-5 m. from the top. The ore was obtained from Šuplja Stena in Mt. Avala about 20 km. to the south where the workings can still be seen. It was roasted and prepared at Vinča, where, as far as 9 m. down, were found sheds containing 3 or 4 kilns precisely adapted for saving the precious mercury. For warming their houses the inhabitants used braziers, not hearths. Certain statuettes apparently wearing gas-masks may represent the operators or their patron deities; such masks are described by Dioscorides and Pliny. The inhabitants were no doubt exporters, but themselves used their black and red pigments as cosmetics, for their statuettes have faces and bodies painted in these colours, as shown on the coloured plates. The pigments were kept in little vessels in human and beast shapes. The best, called after Sir Charles Hyde, is in the form of a human-headed bird streaked with a black pitch-like substance. These vases may imitate imported metal-ware. It is curious that the

Agathyrsi, who lived hereabouts, were proverbially *picti*.

Professor Vasić insists on the many evidences of Ægean influences or of influences from further east and south which came through the Ægean. In this book he states his belief that Vinča was a colony from the Cyclades founded soon after 1580 B.C.; he compares the description in Herodotus of the Hellenic colony of Gelonus in Scythia and the Babylonian colony of which the records have been found at Kul-Tepe in Cappadocia. The colonists seem to have come up the Danube rather than through Macedonia. The most important guide in dating is the occurrence of a ware derived from 'Minyan' ware (M.H.I. say 1700 B.C.) in a pit-house 7 metres down and with it ware with black spirals on a red ground. The time necessary to accumulate the 4 m. below it would seem to put the origin of Vinča somewhere not far after 2000 B.C.

But in his letter to me of 20 January, 1933, Professor Vasić says "Die Gründung von Vinča ist vielleicht gleichzeitig mit der Gründung von Troja VI; sie ist nicht älter wie die mykenische *Korä* . . . dessen Anfang "etwa nur in die Zeit des Amenhotep III, d.h. um "1400 v. Chr. zu setzen ist." We shall await his reasons with interest.

Appendix I deals with 'The Bound Deity'; there are a few references in Greek literature to statues of deities being bound to prevent their deserting their worshippers, just as Victory at Athens was wingless so that she should not fly away. Our author maintains that the familiar Artemis Ephesia, whose statue was hung with *καίβες* (some sort of fillet or ribbon), was bound in this way. He thinks that the holes in the stumpy limbs of figurines found at Vinča and at other sites in south-east Europe and also the lines and stripes across their bodies are evidence of a similar usage. I do not know of any really satisfactory explanation of such holes, but this one seems rather far-fetched. People love tying things on to cult-objects, e.g., images of Our Lady and of the Bambino; that is not the same as tying down a statue to its place.

Appendix II suggests that the story of the Hyperborean maidens, who brought offerings wrapped in straw to the shrine at Delos, had to do with a sending from Vinča to its mother-land in the Cyclades. The shrines of the maidens have recently been found and prove to be tombs of the Mycenaean period when Vinča flourished, but the juxtaposition is, like any other explanation of the Hyperboreans, too good to be true.

We hope that Professor Vasić will even in these hard times make swift progress in his great task of publishing in detail the results of the chief scientific excavation in his part of the world. May we ask him to supply a summary in some better-known language? Not that I regret having read right through a book in Serbian. May I note that since the language was reformed by Vuk Stepanović, less than a century ago, the imperfect and aorist tenses, interesting survivals of Indo-European forms, seem to have dropped out of use, I only noticed one aorist; and the infinitive seems only to occur after the word 'can'?

ELLIS H. MINNS.

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Fig. 5 - A facsimile of Minns' 1933 published review of Vasić's *Preistoriska Vinča I* (Cambridge University Library).

p 28. Vinča founded about transition
 from MM III to LM I p 63 before spread of
 Karaj LM III

Minyan ware p 37. 88 really Bucchero.
 > Bucchero in Lesbos, Minyan found with redware
 kamars p 90.
 in Cyclades.

p 44 comparisons with Troy II.
 at Orakonemos Minyan. specimens □ being.

130 found in Zenebudek in Vinča I
 Minyan ware p 97. Given context from
 Vinča
 not founded. Schezr. Steak & Domic (190).

Chisamen p 92 MM III 97. c 1600 BC - E AD
 LM I.

p 93 Vinča not before beginning of Mycenaean in Greece
 & the graves at Mycenae after 1500
 XXX. 1930 No 11
 Main ~~1906~~ p 200

Stammar 1906, 1908. 19 Oct 1930 p 66 f. 8
 (Christy) Lamb. News. 1 Nov 1930. p 753

Chilce Danubio Vinča
 26-32 51 64-70 III 200 99) 411 417

Fig. 6 – A facsimile of Minns' hand-written notes taken while reading Vasić's *Preistoriska Vinča I* (Cambridge University Library).

REVIEWS.

ARCHAEOLOGY.

Preistoriska Vinča II. By Mилоје M. Vasić. Belgrad, 1938, 207, 200 pp., 367 figs., 21 coloured plates.

80 III, xxx, 170 pp., 640 figs.
Volume I of this work was noticed in MAN, 1933, 186, but the author paid no attention to my plea for a summary in some other language than Serbian. Accordingly I must refer a reader who wishes to know what is in these volumes to his article "Colons grecs à Vinča" (*Revue Interne, des Études Balkaniques*, I, i, p. 65, Belgrad, 1934). I would also draw attention to two articles by Vlad. J. Fewkes, "On the Interpretation

"and Dating of the Site of 'Belo Brdo' at Vinča in Yugoslavia," (*Proc. Amer. Philos. Soc.* lxxv (1935) 7, p. 651) and "Neolithic Sites in the Moravo-Danubian Area (Eastern Yugoslavia)," *Amer. Sch. of Fresh. Research*, Bulletin 12, May 1936, pp. 5-81.

Dr. Fewkes has set out how Professor Vasić has changed his opinion about the date of Vinča, from Neolithic (1906), by Early Bronze Age (1905 and 7), and 1580 B.C.—6 A.D. (1932, *l.c.*, Vol. 1), to his present position (1938, Vols. II, III), and his article "Colons Grecs") that Vinča was founded about 600 B.C. and formed a "polis"

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1938, 207, 200 pp., 367 figs., 21 coloured plates.

of Ionian Greeks, who exploited the cinnabar mines at Suplja Stena nearby, and the advantages of a site at a kind of river cross-roads on the Middle Danube, inviting trade in every direction.

This change of opinion is the most remarkable in my experience. Dr. Vasić asks readers to suspend opinion on it if they have not seen all the material collected in the Belgrad museum. But in these three volumes he gives us grounds for judgment and it is no longer possible to refrain. This later dating seems pure illusion, in its origin quite unaccountable, subsequently supported by secondary illusions. Dr. Vasić regards his settlement as similar to the mysterious wooden city of Gelonus in Scythia (Herodotus, IV, 108) said to be inhabited by Greeks driven out of the trading stations. But he entirely fails to account for the absence on a site, according to him inhabited by Ionians from the VIIth to the 1st Century B.C., of any metal objects to speak of, of money, and of ordinary Greek pottery such as he calls luxury wares. (II, 176.) He supports his main thesis by the strange idea that the rough and ready rendering of eyes and nose on terra-cotta figures and face-shaped vase-covers, which he formerly interpreted as gas-masks to protect cinnabar workers, really represented Greek Corinthian helmets; so the lines upon the heads representing hair, are for him crests, and those on the bodies the complete armour of a Greek hoplite with cuirass, tassets and greaves. He speaks of the general opinion as to Vinča and other such sites as the "Neolithic Mirage."

In discussing particular objects he usually finds some resemblance to Cycladic or L.M., dismisses it, and ends by discovering his closest analogies in Cyprus of the VIth century B.C., which he conceives as having exercised its influence over Vinča through the Ionian colonization.

If we compare the objects he figures with those figured by Dr. Fewkes in his second paper coming from various sites in Eastern Yugoslavia, if we go further afield to Butmir in the West, to the Wallachian finds in the East, to Moldavia, Transylvania and Hungary, we see that Vinča is a central example of the great culture of the Danube valley and neighbouring regions, which beginning in Neolithic times seems to have lasted into the Early Bronze Age. Its relations to the Aegean area are not at all clear—attempts to derive the culture of either area from the other have failed—and Greece does not really help much with the problem of dates. Fewkes, who knows the whole region suggests somewhere before 2500 B.C. for the beginning of Vinča and down to about 1800 for its later stages. He points out that the whole depth of the deposit being about 10-5 meters, the distinction between Vinča I and Vinča II set by Menghin and Childe at about 5-50 metres below the original surface, does not answer to anything very definite, the real distinction being between the round pit-houses below about 9 m., and the square wattle-houses above. Vasić regards these as not much separated in time, the pits representing the first settlement of his Ionians—anyway there seems curiously little difference in wares and artifacts through the ten metres of accumulation.

Given the language difficulty, and the strange views of the excavator, the use of these well-produced volumes becomes rather restricted: one can but say that in Vol. II there are many sections of the mound showing the pit-houses, the wattle-houses and post-holes, internments, particularly a large tomb approached by a dromos, and cremations at various levels through the mass; there are two plans of the ribbon-shaped area dug away, showing the position of some of these remains and, most interesting, what appears to be a defensive ditch (Erdős and Cucuteni alone have ditches as far as I

know).

Then we have pottery of many types, including a great pitthos some 1.28 m. high, a whole class of pots with covers in the form of faces, which Dr. Vasić calls "Mystic Eyes," one flat copper axe, one iron axe, one gold chain, a Roman (?) group of Aphrodite and Eros, one specimen of wheat. The colour and texture of the pottery can be well judged from the coloured plates. In the descriptions an inverted triangle denotes the depth from the surface at which an object was found. Vol. III shows hundreds of terra-cotta figures, interpreted in the strange fashion of which I have spoken, but the plates do show them.

It is with reluctance that one differs from an excavator who has given so many years to the study of one site, but he himself furnishes the material on which one can base one's own opinion, and one must freely use what he himself has furnished.

ELLIS H. MINNS.

The Mesolithic Settlement of Northern Europe.

81 By J. G. D. Clark, M.A., Ph.D., F.S.A., Cambridge University Press, 1936. xvi + 283 pp., 8 plates, 74 illustrations in the text and loose map in folder. Price 25s. net.

In his earlier book, "The Mesolithic Age in Britain," Dr. Clark demonstrated the distribution of the Mesolithic cultures in this country and their relation to those which preceded and followed them. In this new and important volume he has provided a critical and comprehensive study of the complex series of cultures which are present in Northern Europe, or, as the sub-title of the book states, "a study of the food-gathering peoples of Northern Europe during the early post-glacial period." On current chronology this period is assumed to have occupied six millennia. The region studied is the portion of the plain of Northern Europe defined to the west by the mountain backbone of Britain, to the south by the highlands of Southern Germany, to the north by the mountains of Scandinavia, and to the east by the plains of Russia. Over this region the author has travelled extensively and studied intimately the rich store of archaeological material preserved in the museums and various private collections of Holland, Denmark, Norway, Sweden and North Germany. His conclusions are therefore based upon personal knowledge both of the cultural material and of the sites discussed. Equipped with the information and scientific training acquired during his studies under Mr. Miles Burkitt, and others, in the School of Archaeology at Cambridge, supported by practical experience gained in the excavation of Fen-Land and other Mesolithic sites in England and his extensive study of the British Mesolithic cultures, Dr. Clark was exceptionally well qualified to undertake the larger and more difficult task of disentangling the evidence in Northern Europe which his journeys disclosed to him. The outcome is a book of outstanding value to the archaeologist and, for the first time, brings into reasonable and orderly perspective the complex series of cultures known to exist in this region. The influence exercised by physical environment upon the development of primitive cultures has, as the author points out, long been a commonplace of archaeological and anthropological research, but the various factors have not hitherto been regimented and presented to the student in the concise and convincing manner which this book provides. Chaos has been resolved into a resemblance of order and the development of the cultures logically explained. These results have been made possible, and the general conclusions immensely strengthened, by the synchronization of independent researches by geologists, biologists, archaeologists and botanists; in particular by the modern system of pollen analysis. The book is a striking example of what can be achieved by co-operation

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Fig. 7 - A facsimile of Minns' 1937 (April) published review of Vasić's *Preistoriska Vinča II-III*.

a little to the west in the Tazili hills a number have been discovered and to me these are of special interest in view of the striking similarity which some of them bear to the amazing group of figures at "Impey's Cave," near Fort Victoria, in Southern Rhodesia. Dr. Impey always claimed that these were Egyptian, and though his claims were disallowed the paintings admittedly did form a very inexplicable group. And now, 10 years after the Impey Cave discussion died down, here we have almost identical figures which can be seen on Pl. LXXXI from Ido. There is little doubt, I think, that the South African art group as a whole and that of North Africa must be connected. Probably the increasing drying-up of the area drove the inhabitants to migrate and all information that can anyhow be extracted from these to-day inhospitable regions is very welcome to prehistorians, who must therefore be grateful to Dr. Frobenius for what he has done.

M. C. BURKITT.

The Palace of Minos at Knossos : Index Volume. By Dr. Joan Evans. London : Macmillan & Co., 1936. vi + 221 pp. Price 31s. 6d.

206 This volume forms the coping-stone of Sir Arthur Evans' monumental work on Cretan civilization, described round the framework of his own excavations at Knossos, the most important of the Cretan sites. Without a full index the scholar would have found difficulty in using the work, which, though so written that no one would grudge reading it through again and again, yet also contains such a storehouse of facts that it ranks as the encyclopædia of Cretan civilization.

The volume contains a single index, in which personal names, place-names and subject-matter are catalogued together. The multiplication of indices makes consultation the more difficult, and as every heading contains a few words of analysis, no saving of space would have been effected by a separate topographical index. Thus, so far as is possible, this index enables the reader to find, without delay and without hunting through a mass of irrelevant references, the passage which he is seeking.

It might have been wise to index as far as possible with cross-references all the page-headings and illustration-captions, some of which find no mention under any of the key-words, as many general readers would remember these better than the text. There is no table of text-illustrations in any of the volumes, and a list of illustrations is as difficult to wade through as a table of contents, and needs indexing. It would be better to refer to every illustration specifically in the general index. There ought further to have been more cross-references, and occasionally an object is entered only under one heading instead of two; for instance, under *Ingot* there is a reference to one from Ras-Shamra, but this is omitted under the place-name. But one must not criticize harshly such a valuable aid to scholarship, which accentuates to the value of the book which it accompanies.

OLIVER DAVIES.

Preistoriska Vinča IV: Keramika. By Miloje M. Vasić. Belgrad, 1936. xxvi + 172 pp., 77 pl. with 242 fig. and many in text.

207 Volume I of this work was noticed in MAN, 1933, 186, II and III, MAN, 1937, 80 : IV gives further illustrations of the Ceramics on the same lavish scale, and with an elaborate description of each piece. There are two appendices—I, a comparison between Vinča and Berezán', the early Ionic settlement on an island off the mouth of the Dnepr, and II, on the fish-hooks and harpoons illustrated by Pl. Ixxvii, also available in

French in the *R. Internat. des Ét. Balkaniques*, iii (1936) 83. With regard to the work as a whole I have nothing to change in my view expressed in former notices. Professor Vasić compares Vinča with Berezán' regarding both as settlements of Ionians about the seventh century B.C.; yet in Berezán' any amount of the typical Ionic decorated ware has been found, whereas Vinča has not yielded one sherd, and all its analogies are with the neolithic settlements of Bulgaria and Rumania.

ELLIS H. MINNS.

The Archaeology of Sussex. By E. Cecil Curwen. (*The County Archaeologies*, edited by T. D. Kendrick, F.S.A., No. 8.) London : Methuen, 1937. Crown 8vo, xxviii + 338 pp., 32 plates, 89 text illustrations. Price 12s. 6d.

The resumption of the County Archaeologies series with a volume on Sussex should be welcomed by a large and diverse band of readers. The Editor has been fortunate in securing an author in Dr. Curwen, who has lived most of his life there and knows and loves every mile as few others have even of that much known and much loved county. But his qualifications are far greater than that alone would imply, for he has devoted the spare time of 24 years, following and together with his father, to the archaeology of prehistoric and Roman times. His first book, *Prehistoric Sussex*, appeared in 1929, and since then, as before, with an ever-growing band of supporters, he has pursued the unremitting course of excavation and field-work which since the war has transformed our knowledge of three thousand years of human settlement. The 'open-air' side of the subject, healthily dominant in the first book, has here not only been more fully exploited, but also admirably supplemented by comparative research covering a full range of archaeological method and interpretation. And the result is an eminently straightforward and readable book.

It is safe to say that it will be read by everyone interested in the prehistory anyhow of Southern Britain. A reviewer for MAN may perhaps go further and recommend it, modestly but with confidence, to anthropologists for whom British prehistory and the archaeological approach are not habitually a prime concern. There are several reasons for this suggestion. Firstly, the well-marked and familiar geographical features of the Weald, the South Downs, and the coastal plain make Sussex an excellent field for observing the relationships between early man and his physical environment. Secondly and conformably, the great preponderance of the Downs and the coast in the tale of human settlement, together with the wonderful capacity of chalk country for the preservation of its remains, has enabled the intensive exploration here summarized to present a picture far closer to effective completeness than is usually possible in the present state of British archaeology. Thirdly, by reason largely of its Continental accessibility and the resistance offered by its Wealden hinterland to cultural backwash and disturbing survival, the sequence of prehistoric cultures in Sussex is, on the whole, clear-cut and innocent of such confusions and confusions as may often drive an archaeologist rather to technical obscurities than to generally intelligible direct contributions to the study of man. Certainly Dr. Curwen is guiltless of such avoidance. He uses his archaeology throughout as a vehicle of approach to the social and economic life of human beings.

Fourthly, this book may perhaps help to mark a stage in the advance of British prehistoric studies when ethnographic comparison may return to a more useful place in their equipment. That the weighty pioneering of General Pitt-Rivers appears in this regard as yet so

Fig. 8 — A facsimile of Minns' 1937 (November) published review of Vasić's *Preistoriska Vinča IV*.

Minns' review

:Keramika

Preistoriska Vinča IV, By Milojko M. Vasić. Belgrad, 1936.
 xxvi, 172 pp., 77 Pl with 242 fig. + many in text.

Volume I of this work was noticed in Man 1933, 186, II and III, Man, 1937, 80:
 IV gives further illustrations of the Ceramics on the same lavish scale,
 and with an elaborate description of each piece. There are two appendices,
 a comparison between Vinča and Berezán', the early Ionic settlement
 on an island off the mouth of the Dniepr, and on the fish-hooks and
 harpoons illustrated by Pl. LXXVII, and available in French in the
R. Internat. des Et. Balkaniques, III. (1936) 85. With regard to the work
 as a whole I have nothing to change in my view expressed in former
 notices. Professor Vasić compares Vinča with Berezán' regarding both
 as settlements of Ionians about the VIIIth century BC.: yet in ^{Berezán'} Vinča
~~no single piece of~~ typical Ionic decorated ware has been found,
 whereas Vinča has not yielded one shred, and all its analogies are
 with the neolithic settlements of Bulgaria and Rumania.

Ellis H. Minns.

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VINČA

Fig. 9 – A facsimile of Minns' 1936 unpublished hand-written review of Vasić's *Preistoriska Vinča IV*.

DUŠAN BORIC

Univerzitet u Kardifu/Univerzitet u Pitsburgu

**POGLED NA VINČU IZ KEMBRIDŽA:
MINSOVI PRIKAZI VASIĆEVIH PUBLIKACIJA IZ 1930-TIH**

Rezime

Članak nudi detaljna čitanja serije prikaza knjiga o Vinči Miloja M. Vasića, koje je u časopisu MAN (Kraljevskog antropološkog instituta Britanije) objavio stručnjak za ruske i istočnoevropske studije i arheolog sa Kembridža, Ser Elis Hovel Mins. Rad takođe obuhvata i njegove do sada nepublikovane beleške i napomene o izdanjima *Preistoriske Vinče*, koje se čuvaju u Biblioteci Univerziteta u Kembridžu. U tri navrata, najpre 1933.g, a potom dva puta u toku 1937.g., Mins je prikazao Vasićeva prekretnička četiri toma *Preistoriska Vinča I-IV*, objavljena 1932. i 1936. g. U ovim prikazima Mins jasno izražava svoje mišljenje o datovanju i značaju lokaliteta Vinča-Belo Brdo kod Beograda, ali takođe prenosi ondašnje većinsko mišljenje vodećih stručnjaka o ovim nalazima. Prikazi, kojima do sada nije poklanjena pažnja i koji nisu razmatrani u literaturi, pružaju prodorne uvide za istoriju arheološke misli, naročito u Srbiji, i otkrivaju važne aspekte međunarodne recepcije Vasićevih dela i njegovog pogrešnog datovanja lokaliteta. Svrha ovog priloga je doprinos kritičkom vrednovanju rada osnivačkih figura arheologije u Srbiji, i on se može shvatiti kao produžetak diskusije započete od strane A. Palaveste i S. Babić u nekoliko radova koje su prethodno objavili. Članak se završava pretpostavkama o pitanju do koje mere su rani propusti u srpskoj arheologiji postavili osnove za struktuirajuća uvrežena mišljenja i uporne tradicije koje sve do danas istrajavaju unutar ove regionalne arheološke škole.

Ključne reči: Miloje M. Vasić, Vinča, neolit, Elis Hovel Mins, istorija arheologije, arheološka teorija.

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