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Pointed-base cups from Tell Yunatsite (Abstract)

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During the first investigations of Tell Yunatsite in 1939, V. Mikov distinguished as completely unknown to that moment a group of vases from Layer B (Bronze Age), among which the pointed-base cups were most prominent. As early as they were discovered, these vases were identified as one of the major chronological markers for the periodization of the Bronze Age. As their number steadily grew, it became necessary to prepare a complete publication of the pointed-base cups from Tell Yunatsite – both from V. Mikov's collection, numbering 10 intact vases with one handle and three with two handles (Fig. 1), and from the later excavations (1977-1980, Levels I-IX), numbering 15 intact cups and 36 fragments (Fig. 2 *a-b*). The detailed study of the stratigraphy of the Bronze Age cultural deposits of Tell Yunatsite allows specifying the exact stratigraphic position of the pointed-base cups, comparing their morphological features

and juxtaposing the stratigraphic data of the two collections.

The article offers a detailed morphological description with the use of some dimensions and ratios of the pointed-base cups (Fig. 3; Graphics 1-5). The analyzed proportions and dimensions indicate that the variations of the cups belong to the same homogeneous group. The standard that is manifested within the group was probably dictated by their functional purpose as drinking vessels.

The collection of pointed-base cups from Tell Yunatsite is also uniform regarding their distribution by stratigraphic levels (Graphic No. 6). Cups (intact and fragmentary) were found in Levels I-X. Intact vases were found in Levels I-VI and they are most numerous in Levels III-V – 10 intact cups and 8 fragments. The concurrence between these depths and those provided by Mikov allows attributing the cups from 1939 excavations to Levels

IV-II of the multilayered settlement.

There are nine ¹⁴C dates for the EBA Levels VIII-I of Tell Yunatsite, covering in compact manner the period between 2500 and 2000 BC. For the EBA III stage, one should emphasize the compact group of four dates for Levels V-III, covering the period of use of pointed-base cups.

This type of cups is known from other sites as well: Devetashka Cave, Tell Razkapanitsa-Manole, etc. There are very few sites, where they are attributed to specific stratigraphic layers (Ognyanovo-Maltepe, Levels VI-V of Nebet Tepe in Plovdiv).

Pointed-base cups are most numerous (more than 50) in the northwest part of the Thracian Plain, on a compact group of sites: Yunatsite (25), Maltepe-Ognyanovo (5), Kostievo (1), Nebet Tepe (5), Razkapanitsa-Manole (12), a chance find from Chernichevo, a few fragments from Dabene-Sa-

rovka, and from the funerary and ritual complexes at the village of Dabene (10).

These vases occur also to the northwest of the Thracian Plain: Lovech, Devetashka Cave, Sadovets, Yakimovo, Lepitsa. However, these are isolated and fragmentary specimens. Beyond present-day Bulgaria, they are rarely found: in North Greece (Sitagroi Vb), East Serbia (Velika Humska Čuka and Bubanj), and North Macedonia (Gradishte-Pelince). Pointed-base cups are most typical of the west parts of the Thracian Plain, where they are most numerous. This fact enabled S. Alexandrov to conclude that the Yunatsite Culture area is the primary one, the homeland of pointed-base cups, and Central and Northwest Bulgaria are a secondary area of distribution. Such localization suggests an independent development of Yunatsite Culture and influences and contact with Northwest Bulgaria in EBA III.