

INTRODUCTION TO THE TFAHR BYLAZORA PROJECT

by

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The city of Bylazora received scant mention in ancient sources; it is mentioned by Polybius and Livy, but neither described it in detail nor precisely located it. Most modern archaeologists and historians had long associated Bylazora with (Titov) Veles, a large city in the center of the Republic of Macedonia. The association was made on a rather superficial similarity between the names. And although an ancient site has been discovered at Veles, it appears far too small (3.5 hectares) to be Bylazora.

In 1976 Dr. Ivan Mikulčić suggested investigating a site in the Ovce Pole (Sheep Plain) near the town of Sveti Nikole. Four kilometers from Sveti Nikole is the village of Knezje, dominated by a plateau of close to 20 hectares commanding the surrounding plains and roads. The lay of the land and a collection of artifacts suggested that this site might be the fabled Bylazora. Exploratory soundings in the 1980s uncovered further architectural and ceramic evidence that seemed to confirm Mikulčić's suggestion. In 1994 road crews, looking for road base material near Knezje, accidentally uncovered the remains of a large well built (apparently) subterranean structure, which has been at times called a tomb, a reservoir, a ritual bath, or a fortified cistern.



Sveti Nikole, seen from Bylazora.



Road base material excavated from the side of the hill of Bylazora.



Sheep grazing in the "Ovce Pole."



Left, the subterranean structure discovered at the base of the hill of Bylazora.



The village of Knezje, from Bylazora.



Topographical map of Bylazora. The numbered red areas are the sectors we investigated.

In 2008 TFAHR was invited by the People's Museum of Sveti Nikole to cooperate on a systematic excavation of this site, which many are now convinced is the Bylazora of the Paionians. That year we divided the site into six sectors, based on the previous trial soundings and the lay of the land. In 2008 we worked intermittently in all six sectors; Sector 3, on the acropolis, proved the most promising, so we concentrated all our efforts there in 2009.

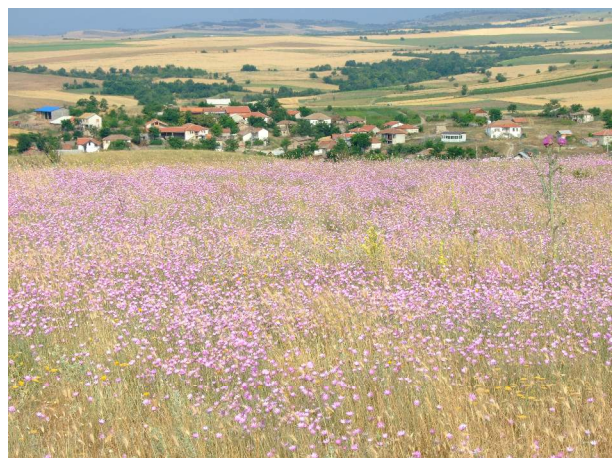
In July of 2009 there was a public presentation at the site of Bylazora of our findings to the Macedonian press corps. Dr. Mikulčić was present and seemed satisfied that the results of two years of work confirmed his hypothesis that this site was, indeed, the legendary Bylazora.



Dr. Ivan Mikulčić (left) visiting the site of Bylazora.



Sveti Nikole seen at dawn from Bylazora.



Knezje village beyond the wildflowers on Bylazora.