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# REVISITING OLDER DISCOVERIES. THE LATE IRON AGE FINDS FROM BOSANCI AND VORNICENII MICI (SUCEAVA COUNTY)

**Abstract:** The early phase of the Late Iron Age is characterized throughout the Carpathian-Dniester region by a significant dynamism and diversity in funerary discoveries. Of particular interest is the situation in the northern sector of the Suceava Plateau, a region somewhat peripheral to the main area of diffusion of the so-called “Getic culture”. Although this area has been relatively well investigated, the funerary landscape remains rather poorly represented, in contrast to the earlier timeframe, marked by the spectacular finds belonging to the North-western Podolian group. To date, only two sites with funerary finds attributable to this chronological horizon are documented in the specialized literature: one at Bosanci – La Pod la Rediu, and another at Vorniceni Mici, both first reported more than half a century ago. Unfortunately, the discoveries Vorniceni Mici are beset by numerous questions and uncertainties. At this moment we cannot say if we are dealing with a necropolis or not, so the finds have to be seen, for the moment, with a degree of caution. With regard to the situation at Bosanci, it is our assessment that the two graves most likely represent a peripheral sector of a larger necropolis; of special interest is the presence of the „Scythian-type” handmade jar, which, just-like in the case of similar vessels found in the Strahotin – Ponoare necropolis from neighbouring Botoșani County, constitutes a strong argument in favor of the coexistence in this area, alongside the local population, of other groups with origins or cultural affiliations in the North Pontic region.

**Keywords:** *Late Iron Age, Funerary Rites, Incineration, Necropolis, Getae.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

The early phase of the Late Iron Age is characterized throughout the Carpathian-Dniester region by a significant dynamism and diversity in funerary discoveries. These findings offer important insights into the cultural specificities of the human groups that lived in this area, located at the western margins of the vast Eurasian steppe, which, during the 5<sup>th</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries BCE, constituted a zone of intersection between the northern Thracian world and the steppe nomads.

Of particular interest is the situation in the northern sector of the Suceava Plateau, a region somewhat peripheral to the main area of diffusion of the so-called “Getic culture”<sup>1</sup>. Although this area has been relatively well investigated,

<sup>1</sup> From an archaeological perspective, during the 5<sup>th</sup>–3<sup>rd</sup> centuries BC, in the region between the Carpathian Mountains, the Dniester River, and the Stara Planina Mountains, a culture developed (ȘIRBU 2004, 39) that, despite exhibiting more or less pronounced regional variations, remains overall surprisingly unified (BERCIU 1974, 14; MÂNDESCU 2010, 15). This culture –



Figura 1. Localisation of the archaeological site Bosanci – La Pod la Rediu.

with a considerable number of settlements dated to the 4<sup>th</sup>–3<sup>rd</sup> centuries BCE known<sup>2</sup>—including hillforts such as those from Merești<sup>3</sup> and Fetești<sup>4</sup>—the funerary landscape remains rather poorly represented, in contrast to the earlier timeframe, marked by the spectacular finds belonging to the North-western Podolian group<sup>5</sup>.

To date, only two sites with funerary finds attributable to this chronological horizon are documented in the specialized literature: one at Bosanci – La Pod la Rediu, and another at Vorniceni Mici, both first reported more than half a century ago<sup>6</sup>. The present study seeks to revisit these discoveries by providing some additional data and clarifications.

## II. THE NECROPOLIS AT BOSANCI – LA POD LA REDIU

### II.1. Geographical Setting

The archaeological site of Bosanci – *La Pod la Rediu*/

north of Danube – has been attributed by Romanian archaeologists largely to the Getae, mentioned in written sources, and has consequently been named the “Getic” or “Thracο-Getic” culture. Obviously, the real ethnic and demographic situation was probably far more complex, but for the sake of simplicity, in this paper we will use the term “Getic culture”, even if, we would prefer using a more neutral terminology (BERZOVAN 2022, 24).

<sup>2</sup> See for example ANDRONIC 2016, *passim*. In Romanian historiography, finds from the 4<sup>th</sup>–3<sup>rd</sup> centuries BCE period when not attributed to the Getic or Thracο-Getic culture, were often classified either as „Late Hallstatt” or „Early Latene”.

<sup>3</sup> NICULICĂ *et alii* 2021, 139–162.

<sup>4</sup> IGNĂTESCU *et alii* 2023, 137; IGNĂTESCU *et alii* 2024, 140.

<sup>5</sup> IGNAT 1976; IGNAT 2006.

<sup>6</sup> IGNAT 1973, 533–577; IGNAT 1976, 108.

Ipotești – *La Pod la Rediu* (Fig. 1–6), well-known within academic circles for its systematic excavations and productive field surveys<sup>7</sup>, is situated in the northern sector of the Fălticeni Plateau subunit of the Suceava Plateau, itself a component of the larger Moldavian Plateau<sup>8</sup>.

Cartographic analyses—including orthophotoplans and the 1:25,000 color map, sheet L–35–17–B–a (DTM 1985 edition)—indicate that the site lies at the boundary between the communes of Ipotești (to the north) and Bosanci (to the south), and is traversed longitudinally from north to south by county road DJ 208A. To the west, the site is clearly demarcated by the slopes of Anton Hill (elevation 425 m) and the Rediu Forest (elevation 397 m), while to the north-west it is bordered by Soloneț Hill (397 m). In the vicinity of the Rediu Forest is the archaeological point known as La Saivan, where previous discoveries have included materials from the Cucuteni culture, the Bronze Age (Noua culture), the Early and Late Iron Age periods (notably Getic and Bastarnic ceramics)<sup>9</sup>.

Additionally, in the immediate proximity of the *La Pod la Rediu* point, there are substantial springs (located in the Rediu Forest area) that feed the Rogoza stream. This stream, flowing eastward, joins the Rediu Variș stream, and together they supply the Suceava River approximately 2 km to the

<sup>7</sup> ANDRONIC / BATARIUC 1992, 19–20, point no. LX, notes 55 and 56 and fig. I; NICULICĂ 2007, 19–20.

<sup>8</sup> POPP *et alii* 1973, 39–40; GHEORGHIU / LUPU-BRATILOVEANU 1992, 479–487; BRÂNDUȘ / CRISTEA 2013, 48–49; TEODOREANU – NICULESCU 2002.

<sup>9</sup> ANDRONIC / BATARIUC 1992, 19, point no. LVIII and fig. I.

**THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE BOSANCI - "LA POD LA REDIU"**  
**HYPSONETRIC MAP**

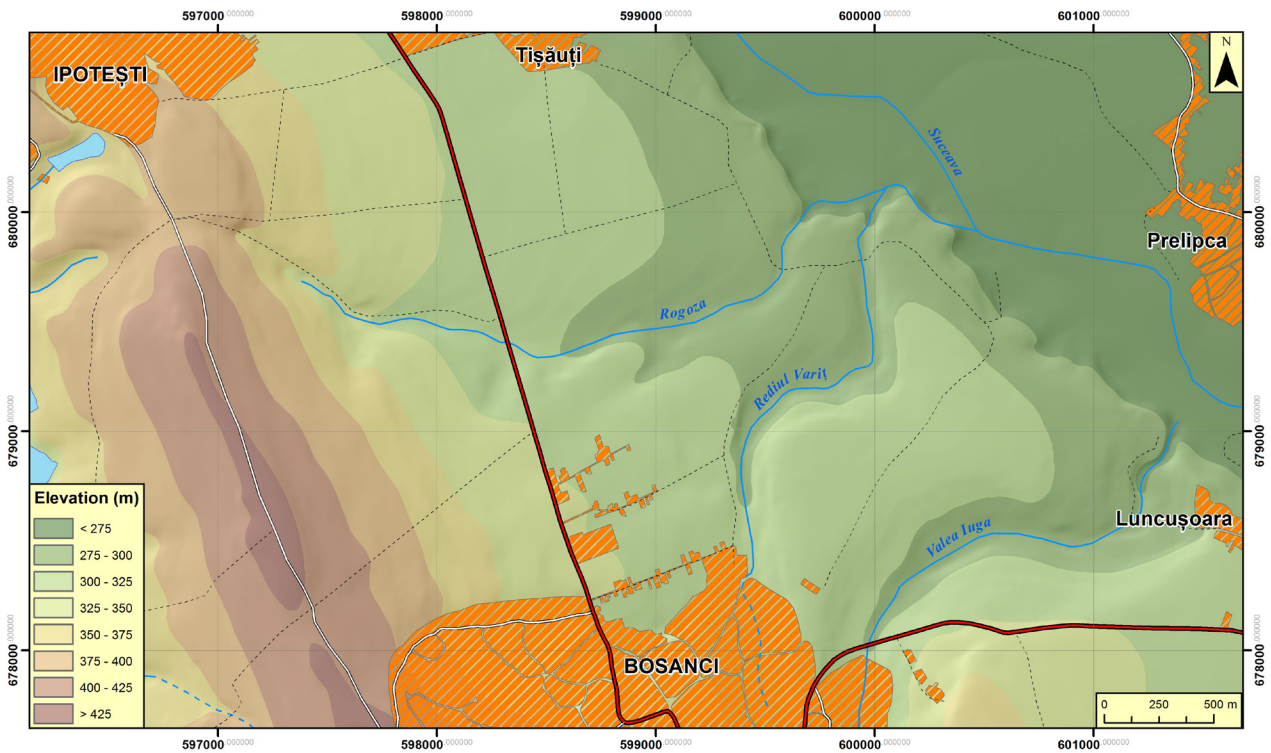


Figura 2. The archaeological site Bosanci – La Pod la Rediu. Hypsometric Map.

**THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE BOSANCI - "LA POD LA REDIU"**  
**ASPECT MAP**

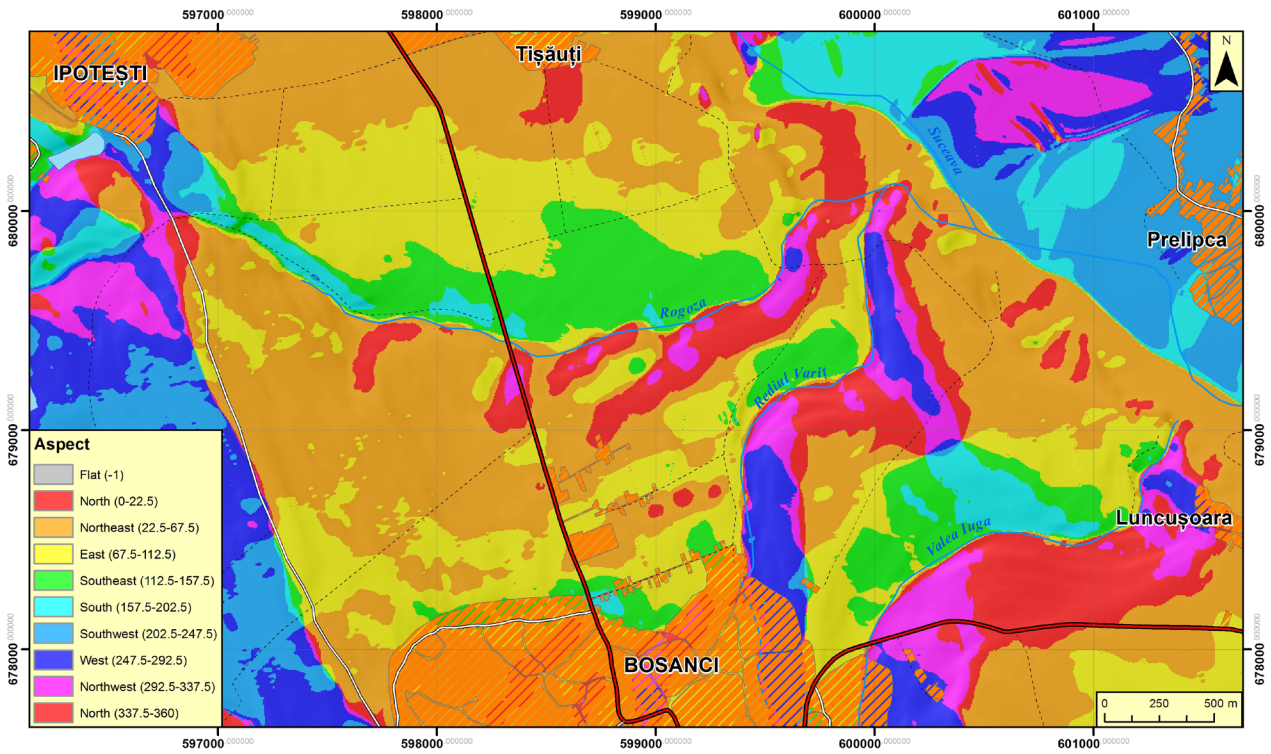


Figura 3. The archaeological site Bosanci – La Pod la Rediu. Aspect map.

**THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE BOSANCI - "LA POD LA REDIU"**  
**SLOPE MAP**

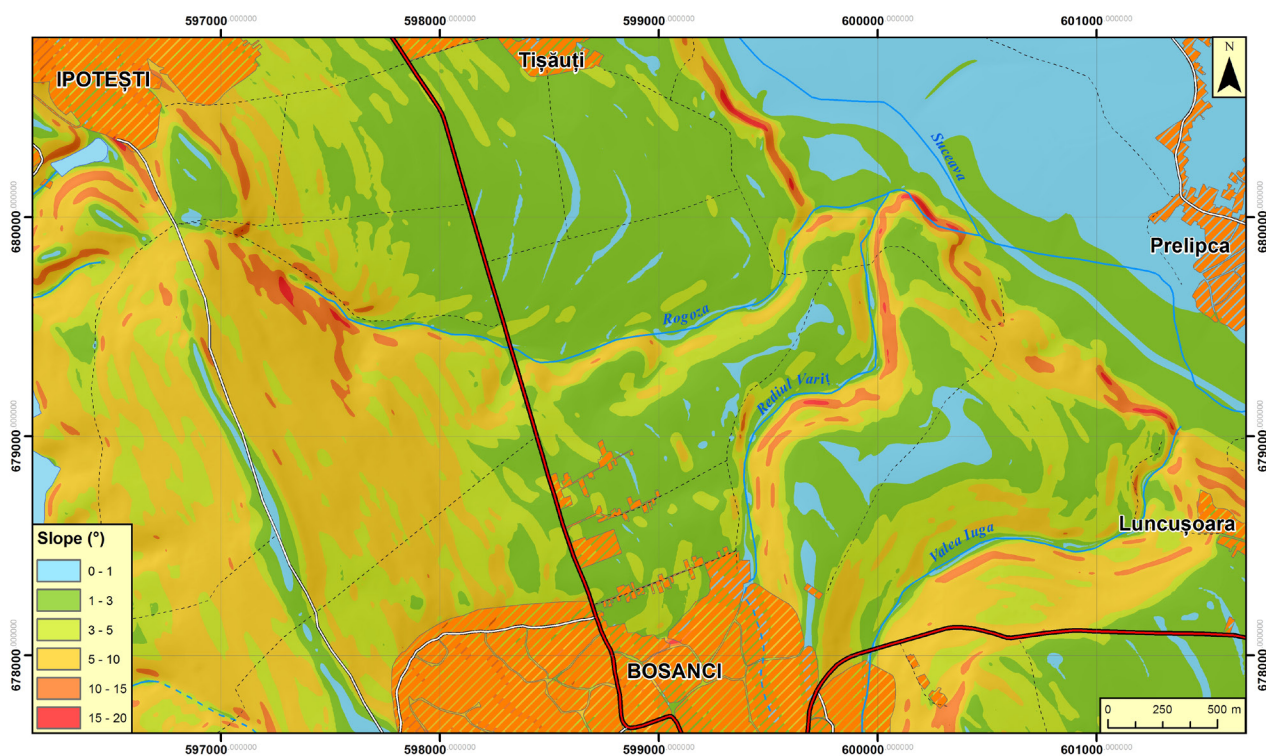


Figura 4. The archaeological site Bosanci – La Pod la Rediu. Slope map.

**THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE BOSANCI - "LA POD LA REDIU"**  
**SOIL MAP**

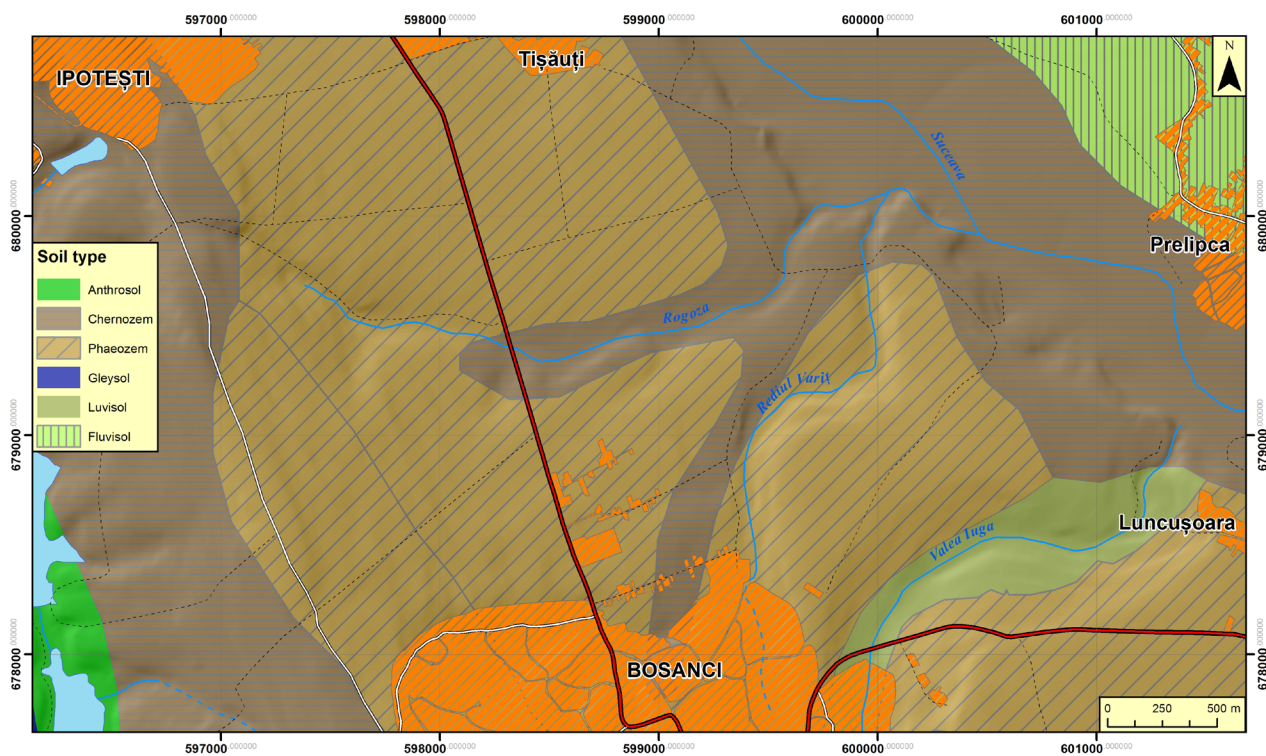


Figura 5. The archaeological site Bosanci – La Pod la Rediu. Soil map.

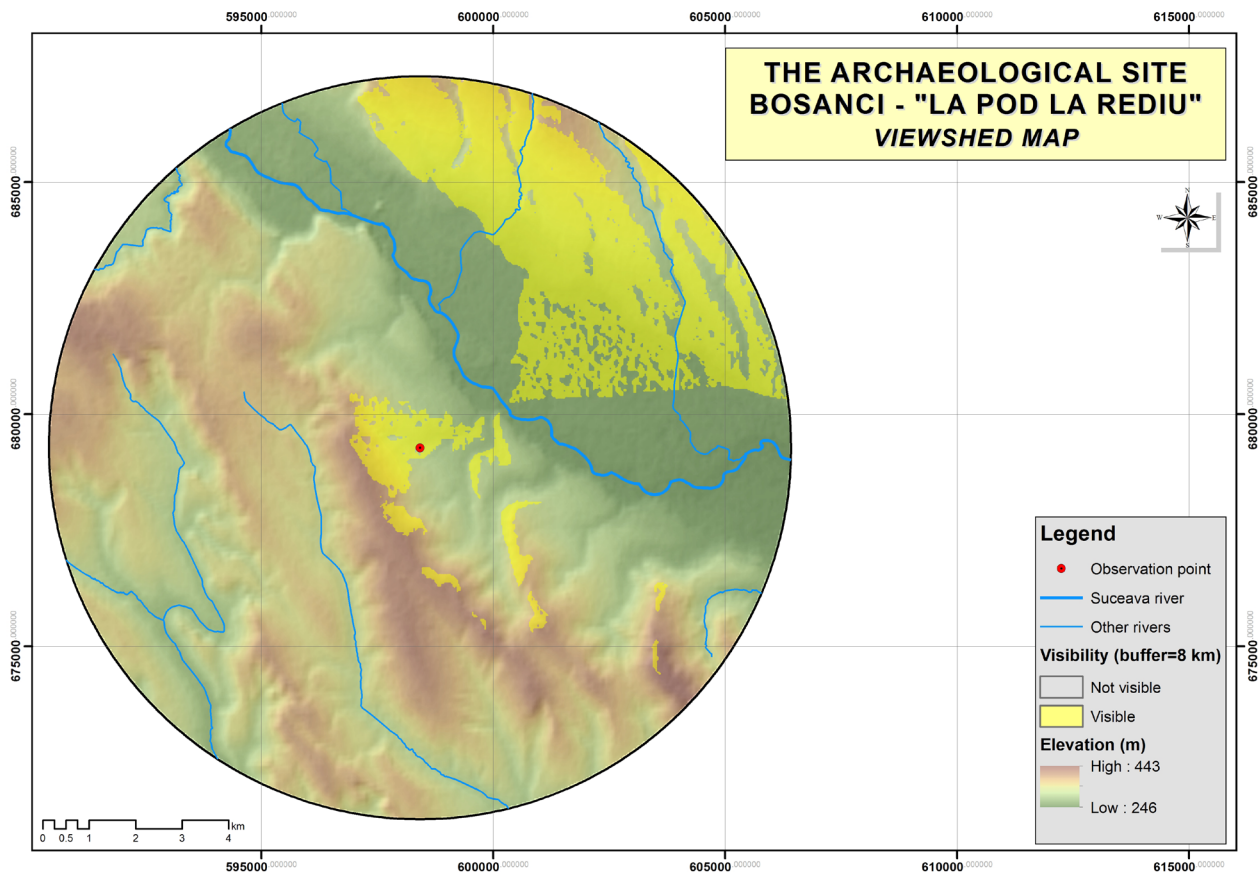


Figura 6. The archaeological site Bosanci – La Pod la Rediu. Viewshed map.

east-northeast. It is important to note that surface archaeological investigations conducted over the past six decades have demonstrated that the finds at La Pod la Rediu extend across both the right and left terraces of the Rogoza stream, a right-bank tributary of the Suceava River.

The absolute elevation of the site ranges between 320 and 330 meters, while the relative elevation—measured from the Rogoza stream, which traverses the site from west to east—is approximately 10 meters. In terms of general topographical features, as corroborated by the attached maps, the site occupies a slightly elevated position relative to the Rogoza stream valley. The terrain slopes gently towards the east and northeast, consistent with the regional geomorphology, with an inclination of 3–5°, which provides optimal conditions for surface water runoff and effective drainage.

With respect to current soil conditions, the presence of faeoziums is noted—soils that developed historically under deciduous forest vegetation, primarily hornbeam and oak. Regarding visibility from the central point of the Bosanci – La Pod la Rediu archaeological site, it is limited in the immediate surroundings; however, towards the east-northeast and northeast, the Suceava corridor becomes visible at distances exceeding 2–4 kilometers.

Consequently, irrespective of the historical period under consideration, it is evident that human communities deliberately chose to establish their settlements in areas that were relatively well-concealed within the landscape, naturally protected by surrounding elevations, yet with access to the Suceava River floodplain. This floodplain should

be understood as both a communication route and a vital resource for subsistence, while the terrain itself, as indicated by the observations above, was highly favorable for the establishment of settlements.

## II.2. The archaeological finds

The site at Bosanci – *La Pod la Rediu* was found accidentally in the summer of 1971 by Ioan Negriuc<sup>10</sup>, who was at that time a high school student from Ipotești. He immediately informed the archaeologists working in the Suceava Museum<sup>11</sup>. The initial discovery was facilitated by the engineering works on the Bosanci – Ipotești communal road, as the excavations for the construction of the embankment uncovered numerous fragments of ceramic vessels from various historical and prehistoric periods.

The wealth of discoveries prompted archaeologist Mircea Ignat to conduct two small-scale archaeological excavation campaigns, the first in 1971 and the second in 1972, the latter of which also involved Paraschiva-Victoria Batariuc<sup>12</sup>. In 1988, M. Ignat and P.-V. Batariuc carried a third archaeological campaign, with the participation of Vasile Demciuc<sup>13</sup>, further field surveys in the site being made in the following years by various other archaeologists from Suceava.

<sup>10</sup> Who later became a prominent poet of the Ukrainian community from Suceava County (see SATCO / NICULICĂ 2018, 666–667; MARTINEAC 2023).

<sup>11</sup> IGNAT 1973, 533; BATARIUC 1980, 33; ANDRONIC / BATARIUC 1992, 19–20.

<sup>12</sup> IGNAT 1973, 533; BATARIUC 1980, 33.

<sup>13</sup> NICULICĂ / ANDRONIC 1998, 9.

\*

Unfortunately, the authors of the excavations provided rather sparse information regarding the archaeological situation, and these details were scattered across a relatively large number of publications. Despite persistent efforts, we were unable to identify any plans or stratigraphic profiles for any of the sections. Therefore, we will attempt to reconstruct the archaeological situation based only on the brief data that has been published.

The first section (S 1), excavated in 1971 and oriented east-west, was located on the west side of the Ipotești – Bosanci road, measuring 15 meters in length and 2 meters in width<sup>14</sup>. It is reported that in this section were discovered vestiges from Precucuteni Culture<sup>15</sup>, various materials dating to the Cucuteni culture (phase A), others artifacts from the transitional period to the Bronze Age, with more consistent remains belonging to the Sântana de Mureș-Cerneahov culture (4<sup>th</sup> century CE). Here were identified the *two graves* from the early phase of the Late Iron Age<sup>16</sup>. The presence of

broken pottery shards from the same period (**Fig. 9**), found both in the excavation as well as at the surface indicates the potential existence of other graves (or structures) that were either damaged or destroyed due to later interventions.

In order to uncover more graves from the Late Iron Age necropolis, in 1972 Section no. 2 (S 2) was excavated, located 20 m north from the first one. It had a length of 26 meters and a width of two meters. According to the authors, only Precucuteni archaeological materials were found. Due to severe weather, the research of this section had to be abandoned<sup>17</sup>. Section no. 3 (S 3) was excavated in 1988 on the left side of the communal road, parallel with it, having a length of 30 meters and width of two meters. With the exception of a Sântana de Mureș – Cerneahov period inhumation grave (4<sup>th</sup> century CE) no other features were identified in it<sup>18</sup>.

### II.3. Late Iron Age finds

The first grave featured an oval-shaped pit measuring 0.60 m in length and 0.45 m in width, with a depth of

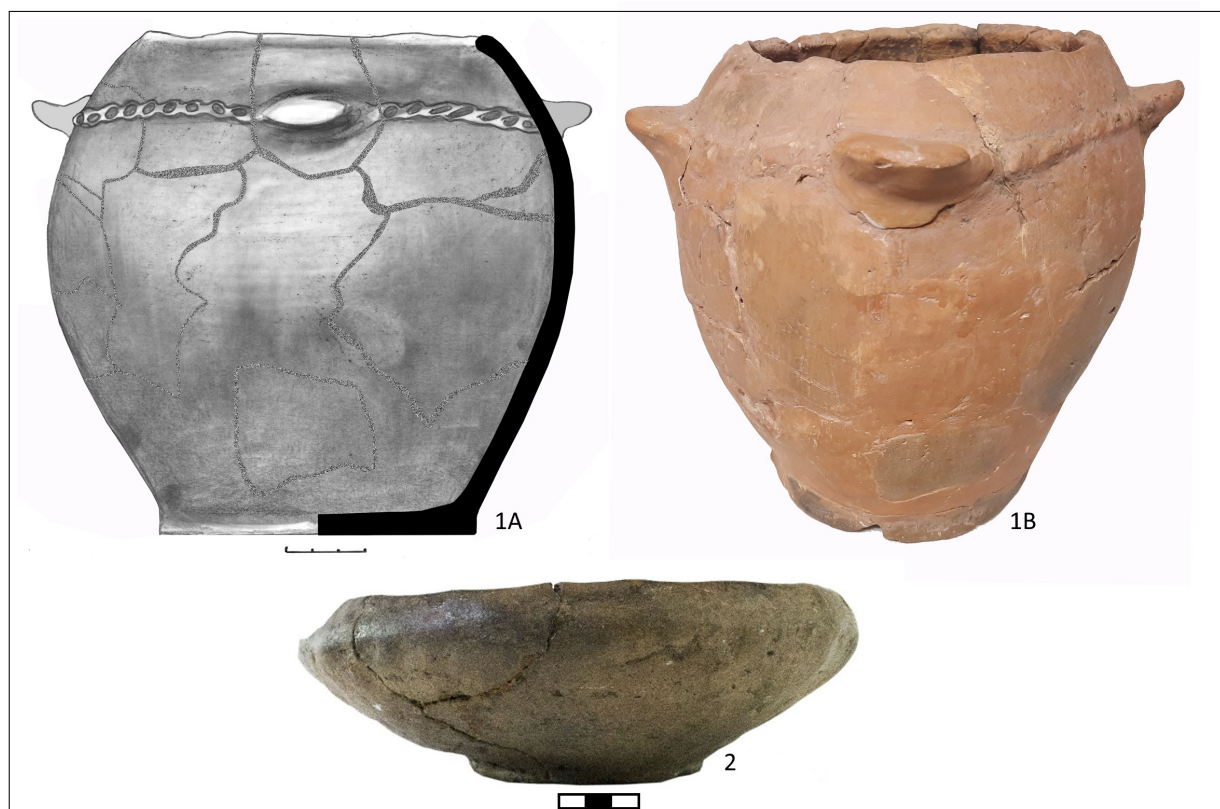


Figura 7. The archaeological inventory of grave no 1 from Bosanci. 1A. Urn (drawing; 1B. Urn (photo A. Berzovan); 2. Lid (photo C. Aparaschivei)

<sup>14</sup> BATARIUC 1980, 33.

<sup>15</sup> Regarding the stratigraphy and finds from S 1, we draw attention to an inconsistency regarding the existence of a Precucuteni dwelling. It was first mentioned in M. Ignat's study (IGNAT 1973, 533), while in a newspaper article published in 1972 by N. Ursulescu and M. Ignat, it is stated that during the investigations, "traces of a dwelling were sectioned, in which a significant amount of archaeological material was found, consisting of pottery, stone and flint tools, idols, and others" (URSULESCU / IGNAT 1972, 2). However, in 1977, N. Ursulescu and M. Ignat do not mention anymore any dwelling, referring only to a Precucuteni III cultural layer with a thickness of 0.15–0.20 m (URSULESCU / IGNAT 1977, 319). In her study dedicated to the Pre-Cucuteni discoveries at Bosanci (BATARIUC 1980), does not mention any dwelling, asserting instead that the numerous and varied material she published was collected only from surface surveys and from the cultural layer.

<sup>16</sup> IGNAT 1973, 533; BATARIUC 1980, 33.

approximately 0.60 m. At its center, a jar-type vessel, characteristic of the 5<sup>th</sup>–3<sup>rd</sup> centuries BC, was discovered, covered by a bowl. Inside the jar were a few calcined bones, several small pieces of wood charcoal, and another ceramic fragment<sup>19</sup>.

The jar (**Fig. 7. 1A-B**), used as an urn, exhibits the following morphological characteristics: an inverted rim with a beveled lip, a flat base, and a very weakly profiled foot. Its dimensions are as follows: mouth diameter: 13 cm; maximum diameter: 20 cm; base diameter: 12 cm; total height: 19 cm; upper height: 7 cm; lower height: 12 cm; wall

<sup>17</sup> BATARIUC 1980, 33.

<sup>18</sup> NICULICĂ / BATARIUC 2006, 39–40.

<sup>19</sup> IGNAT 1973, 533.



Figura 8. The archaeological inventory of grave (?) no 2 from Bosanci. 1A. Vessel (drawing); 1B. Vessel (photo A. Berzovan); 3. Knife fragment (after Ignat 1973).

thickness: approx. 0.7 cm. The firing of the vessel was uncontrolled, predominantly oxidizing, with slight traces of secondary firing visible. The paste is brownish-brick-red, lightly smoothed on both sides. Inclusions consist of a small quantity of pebbles. The ornamentation consists of four ovoidal knobs, symmetrically arranged above the median diameter, and connected by a horizontal alveolar band.

The bowl (**Fig. 7.2**) that served as a lid has the following morphological characteristics: a slightly inverted rim with a beveled lip, a flat base, and no foot. Its dimensions are as follows: mouth diameter: 20.5 cm; base diameter: 9.1 cm; total height: 6.1 cm; wall thickness: approx. 0.5 cm. The firing of this vessel was uncontrolled, predominantly reducing. The paste is grayish-brown, with both walls slightly smoothed. Inclusions consist of small quantities of sand and pebbles. Ornamentation is absent.

Unfortunately, the burnt osteological material is no longer preserved. Despite our efforts, we were unable to locate it within the deposits of the National Museum of Bucovina in Suceava.

\*

The second grave (?) was discovered at a distance of 5.50 m from the first, its outline appearing at a depth of -0.50 m. According to the author, its corresponding pit could not be discerned. The grave (?) consisted of a vertically deposited vessel, surrounded at its base by several river and sandstone rocks, some of which showed traces of burning. A fragment of iron, which appears to be from a knife, was found among these stones. According to the discoverer, no remains of calcined bones were found inside the vessel nor in its vicinity<sup>20</sup>.

<sup>20</sup> IGNAT 1973, 533.

The vessel (**Fig. 8. 1A-B**), a type of jar unspecific to local Getic pottery, is deformed and presents the following morphological characteristics: a flared rim with a beveled lip, a flat base, and a weakly profiled foot. Its dimensions are as follows: mouth diameter: approx. 18 cm; neck diameter: approx. 16 cm; maximum diameter: 29 cm; base diameter: 13.5 cm; total height: 30 cm; lower height: 17.5 cm; upper height: 12.5 cm; neck height: 2.9 cm; wall thickness: 0.5 – 0.7 cm. The vessel's firing was uncontrolled, predominantly oxidizing. The paste is brownish-brick-red on both sides, lightly smoothed. Inclusions consist of a small quantity of large-grained sand and pebbles, as well as crushed ceramic vessel fragments. Ornamentation is absent.

Regarding the knife fragment (**Fig. 8/2**), it could not be identified in the deposits of the National Museum of Bucovina in Suceava as of the time of this writing.

### III. A NECROPOLIS AT VORNICENII MICI (MOARA COMMUNE, SUCEAVA COUNTY)?

The mention of a necropolis dating to the early phase of the Second Iron Age at Vornicenii Mici was first brought to scholarly attention in a 1976 article by Mircea Ignat<sup>21</sup>, which published a jar-type vessel characteristic of the 5<sup>th</sup>–3<sup>rd</sup> centuries BCE period, provided to him by the historian and archaeologist Emil Ioan Emandi<sup>22</sup>.

The data given by M. Ignat about the Vornicenii Mici vessel was as laconic as possible, but nevertheless, the information further disseminated in the specialized literature,

<sup>21</sup> IGNAT 1976, 108.

<sup>22</sup> He was specialized in the study of the Middle Ages. For a short biography on Emandi and his scholarly activities, see CHEPTEA 1998, 221–224.

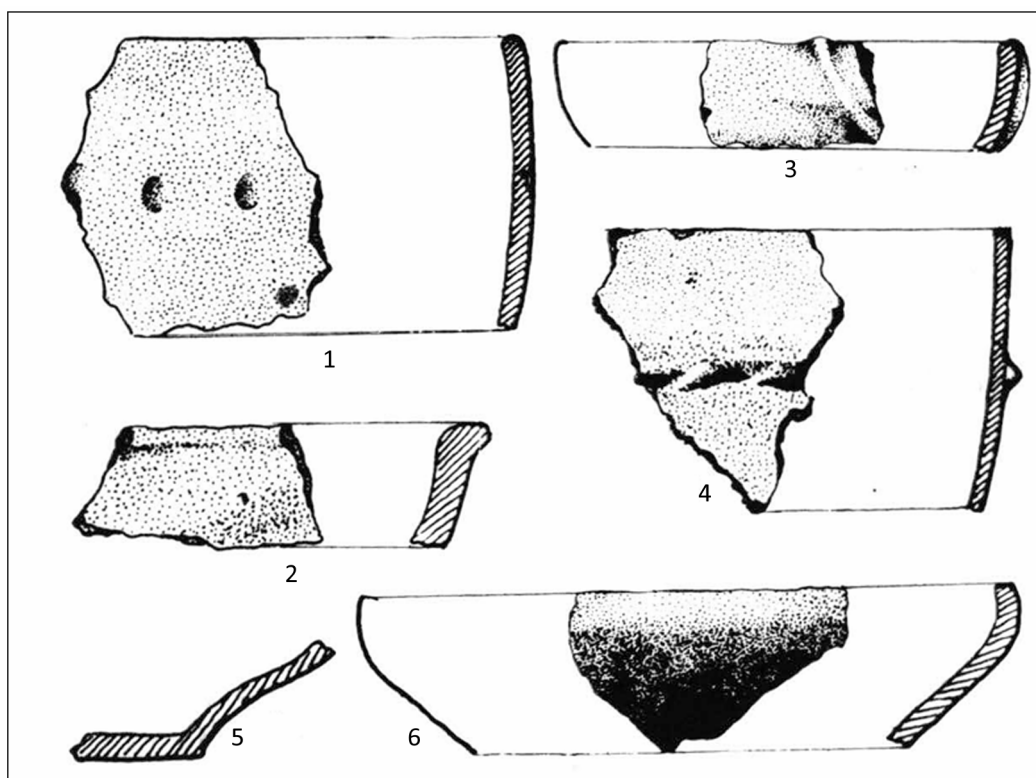


Figura 9. Various hand-made pottery shards from the Late Iron Age found in the Bosanci – La Pod la Rediu site (after Ignat 1973).

unfortunately with *some extra additions that remain hard to explain...* For example, in the seminal work of Silvia Teodor, at Vornicenii Mici the following are mentioned: “archaeological excavations. Plain necropolis of incineration in urns, from 4<sup>th</sup>–3<sup>rd</sup> centuries BCE period”<sup>23</sup>. No extra reference is given outside the article of M. Ignat. For Tudor Arnăuț, on the other hand, we are dealing with a (single) incineration grave found somewhere on the territory of the village, with the calcified bones deposited inside the vessel<sup>24</sup>. He also does not quote additional information outside the study of M. Ignat. Considering these confusion, what can we tell precisely about the Vornicenii Mici find?

The vessel in question (**Fig. 10**) was readily identified within the collections of the Bucovina Museum in Suceava, where it is catalogued under inventory number C/169. Morphologically, the vessel displays a slightly everted rim with a beveled edge and a flat base lacking a foot. Its dimensions are as follows: rim diameter, 19 cm; maximum diameter, 19.5 cm; base diameter, 10.5 cm; total height, 18.6 cm; lower height, 16 cm; upper height, 2.6 cm; wall thickness, 0.5–0.7 cm. The firing is weakly oxidizing, with faint traces of secondary firing. The paste is yellowish-brown, smoothed, and contains sparse pebble inclusions and vegetal matter. Ornamentation consists of four ovoid bosses symmetrically arranged at the vessel’s maximum diameter.

At first glance, the context appears straightforward: an urn-type vessel, discovered by chance, presumably originating from a cremation necropolis. However, upon closer examination, the situation proves to be considerably more

complex, raising substantive doubts regarding the nature of the find.

In an article dedicated to the local museum at Liteni-Moara, which he founded, Emil Emandi refers to a 4<sup>th</sup>-century BCE jar-type vessel *brought to him by a villager*. No mention is given about the place of the find, nor the context of its discovery<sup>25</sup>. Further in his paper, while describing one of the museum’s showcases, Emandi mentions “material specific to the Daco-Getic period from the 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE to the 3<sup>rd</sup> century CE”, including a fragment of a jar-type vessel, and notes in footnote no 11<sup>26</sup> that “the urn vessel from Vornicenii Mici” had already been published by Mircea Ignat. As there were no other 4<sup>th</sup>-century BCE jar-type vessels in the Liteni village museum collection, it is reasonable to assume that the vessel brought by the villager and the “urn vessel” published by Ignat are one and the same artifact. E. Emandi also mentions 12 settlements and two necropolises from the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC – 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD period, without any specific details<sup>27</sup>.

The aforementioned study of Emandi contains no mention of the vessel’s contents; there is no reference to the presence of calcined bone remains inside the pot, or found anywhere in its vicinity by its discoverer. We consider this omission to be *significant*, as such details are usually recorded even in cases where urns are discovered accidentally by non-specialists.

The only author that mentions the presence of calcified bones inside the vessel is, paradoxically, an archaeologist from the Republic of Moldova, Tudor Arnăuț, but as

<sup>25</sup> EMANDI 1978, 554, note 6.

<sup>26</sup> EMANDI 1978, 555.

<sup>27</sup> EMANDI 1978, 555. The information from E. Emandi is mentioned by M. Andronic in his archaeological repertoire of Bucovina, without any further details (ANDRONIC 2016, 285–286).

<sup>23</sup> TEODOR 1999, 184. In Romanian: „Săpături arheologice. Cimitir plan de incinerare în urnă din secolele IV–III î.d.Hr.”

<sup>24</sup> ARNĂUȚ 2003, 277.

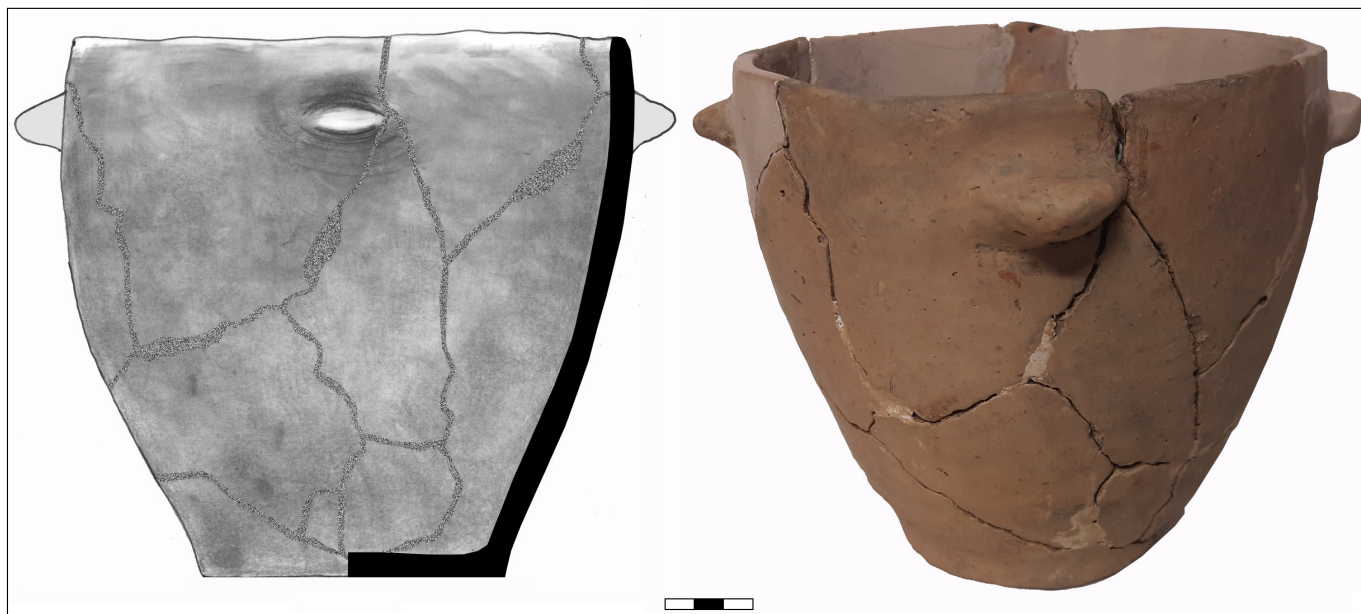


Figura 10. The vessel from Vornicenii Mici (drawing and photo A. Berzovan).

he quotes only the article of M. Ignat, his exact source – if any (!) – remains uncertain. In the introduction of his work, while he mentions a number of archaeologists that helped him and a significant number of museums that he visited, there is *not a single mention of any visit to Suceava or cooperation with archaeologists from here*<sup>28</sup>. In the light of the above, his description of the situation from Vornicenii Mici could be a confusion, if not an embellishment, just like in the case of Silvia Teodor who mentioned a plain necropolis and „archaeological excavations”.

Having at our disposal so little verifiably written data, a cautious approach is necessary. Of course, we cannot exclude the possibility that the vessel did indeed originate from a necropolis and that it was used either as a funerary urn in a cremation burial or, alternatively, as a grave offering. However, equally we cannot exclude that the vessel, a common jar after all, represents an entirely fortuitous find, maybe recovered from the area of an open settlement in the vicinity of Vornicenii Mici *and its interpretation as a funerary urn* was given subsequently by the pen of archaeologists.

#### IV. CONCLUDING REMARKS

As demonstrated, the discoveries at Vornicenii Mici are beset by numerous questions and uncertainties. At this moment we cannot say if we are dealing with a necropolis or not. Only future investigations—such as magnetometric surveys or, potentially, targeted archaeological soundings in the area of the locality are likely to yield definitive evidence. For the present, we consider it prudent to maintain the requisite scientific reservations until such data become available.

With regard to the situation at Bosanci, it is our assessment that the two graves most likely represent a peripheral sector of a larger necropolis. This may account for the absence of further burials in sections 2 and 3. Grave no. 1

is, in all respects, highly typical of the 5<sup>th</sup>–3<sup>rd</sup> centuries BCE period; regrettably, the limited chronological specificity of the associated grave goods precludes a more precise dating at this time.

The second grave (?), however, presents additional interpretive challenges. The lack of detailed drawings or even relevant photographs significantly impedes to a certain degree any analysis. The presence of the stones near the vessels – some burnt and some not, is of interest. But the most noteworthy element is the jar-type vessel, which, as previously noted, is not characteristic of the local material culture but rather aligns with ceramic traditions from the southern region of present-day Ukraine.

Mircea Ignat correctly identified the “foreign” origin of this vessel type, drawing analogies particularly with finds from the Dobrogea region (Histria) and southern Ukraine<sup>29</sup>. Its dating in 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE, based on the same analogies, remains valid. Nowadays, however, to these geographically distant analogies, we may add closer ones from the contemporary necropolis at Strahotin (Dângeni Commune, Botoșani County), where a similar vessel was found deposited as an offering in Grave no. 24 (inhumation), and another one was found in Section XXXI, maybe also associated with a destroyed inhumation grave<sup>30</sup>. It is also worth noting that the ceramic assemblages from the Stâncești fortress (Mihai Eminescu Commune, Botoșani County) include a number of “eastern” ceramic fragments—whether “north-west Podolian” or “Scythian” in type<sup>31</sup>.

It seems unlikely that the vessel under discussion acquired its deformation as a result of “earth pressure,” as posited by M. Ignat<sup>32</sup>. Once fired, ceramics lose their plasticity and, when subjected to pressure, tend to fracture rather

<sup>29</sup> IGNAT 1973, 535–536.

<sup>30</sup> BERZOVAN *et alii* 2020, 83.

<sup>31</sup> BERZOVAN 2018. The full processing of the old finds from Stâncești as well as the novel excavations that hopefully will start in 2026 will likely bring more information.

<sup>32</sup> IGNAT 1973, 533.

<sup>28</sup> ARNĂUT 2003, 6.

than deform. Deformation of a vessel could only result from intense secondary firing, yet no evidence of such a process is visible; thus, it is most probable that we are dealing with a *manufacturing defect*. The presence of a similar manufacturing defect is visible on the vessel found in Section XXXI in the Strahotin necropolis<sup>33</sup>.

Regarding the significance of this vessel, we contend that the hypothesis of importation or imitation should be discounted. In cases of ceramic imitation or borrowing, it is typically a form that is technologically or aesthetically more advanced, or that fulfills a specific functional need (e.g., vessels for transporting particular foods or for specialized procedures), that is bought or adopted. In this instance, however, the vessel in question does not appear to be superior to local wares in any respect.

The presence of deformation, both here and in the case of Strahotin vessel raises interesting questions. We might think that the vessels were produced by persons from different cultural area, probably with a different lifestyle, that had little tradition or experience in pottery production, or that we are dealing with „failed products”, maybe not suitable for everyday use but good enough to accompany a deceased person as offering.

In any case, without completely excluding other possibilities, we consider the presence of this vessel to constitute a strong argument in favor of the coexistence, alongside the local “Getic” population, of other groups with origins or cultural affiliations in the North Pontic region.

Whether these were entire groups or individual persons integrated into local communities through matrimonial alliances or other mechanisms is difficult to determine. It is perhaps not coincidental that, at Strahotin, such vessels are found in a somewhat peripheral area of the necropolis, possibly indicating that, although the deceased were regarded as part of the community, their social status (not necessarily the economic one) might have been different, due to maybe religious reasons.

In any case, the presence of these elements in the region is neither unexpected or unusual. The northern part of Moldova, which for the moment appears to coincide with the northern boundary of the Getic culture<sup>34</sup>, represents „a limit” that remains insufficiently defined and which clearly warrants further investigation in the coming years.

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<sup>33</sup> BERZOVAN *et alii* 2020, Pl. 17.

<sup>34</sup> BERZOVAN 2022, 178–179.

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