

STRATIGRAPHIC SEQUENCE AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL COMPLEXES OF THE LATE BRONZE AGE BALEY SETTLEMENT (NORTH-WEST BULGARIA)

ALEXANDROV Stefan *, HRISTOVA Tania **, IVANOVGeorgi ***

Abstract. *The article discusses the prehistoric site Baley in North-West Bulgaria. It is located on the right bank of the Timok River, some 2 km from its confluence into the Danube River. In the course of the eighteen excavation seasons (from 1970 to 1989) forty-two residential features came to light including twelve houses with positively established plans and dimensions, as well as eight hearths and ovens not associated with a particular floor level. The settlement was not fixed within specific boundaries. Maps reveal a horizontal south–north shift with each new construction phase (level). There is ample evidence in support of the interpretation offered by the excavators and the present authors, with several instances of recorded stratigraphical continuity of the construction phases. The 2010 saw the discovery of the necropolis associated with the Baley settlement, presented here in summary.*

Keywords: *Late Bronze Age, Incrusted Pottery Culture, Settlement, Settlement-Necropolis relation.*

The prehistoric site Baley sits on the right bank of Timok River, approximately 2 km from the Danube River. The settlement occupies a low plateau – the second non-flood river terrace and was thus spared flooding and miring from both Timok and Danube rivers. The settlement covered a vast area but its proximity to the contemporary village precipitated its rigorous destruction in the last two centuries – the cultural layer from north-eastern and the south-eastern sectors of the site have been removed in the late 19th – 20th century in order to provide clay for bricks used to build houses; a locust grove planted in the south-western section annihilated the top layers of the cultural deposits in the southern part during the mid 20th century. Thus, the untouched part of the site covered approximately 4000 square meters in the beginning of the excavations.

History of Research

The site was first registered in the 1960s by Jordanka Atanassova (Vidin Museum). The archaeological excavations started in 1970 lasting eighteen non-consecutive seasons (1970 to 1977; 1979 to 1987; 1989) under the direction of Dr. Rumen Katinčarov (NIAM-BAS) and Ana Iocova (Vidin Museum). Four occupation Late Bronze Age (LBA) phases have been established, tentatively called construction phases (I to IV). These are detected at respectively: 0-0.10 m (level I); 0.40-0.50 m (level II); 0.80-0.90 m (level III); 1.30-1.40 m (level IV). Additionally, investigations recovered also pits with Early Iron Age (EIA) materials. A flood occurring sometime between the fourth and the third construction phases is recorded between depths 1.20-0.90 m.

*Senior Researcher, National Archaeological Institute with Museum – Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (NIAM-BAS); stefanalexandrov@abv.bg.

**Researcher, National Archaeological Institute with Museum – Bulgarian Academy of Sciences; tnaidenova@abv.bg.

***Researcher, National Archaeological Institute with Museum – Bulgarian Academy of Sciences; ivanov.georgi@yahoo.com.

Despite the almost 20 years of excavations the publication of the results is scanty, usually as brief summaries in annual archaeological reports¹ as well as a concise overview contributed by prof. G.I. Georgiev.² The site is also mentioned in several analytical articles on the Incrusted pottery culture³. The Baley assemblage was the core of two dissertations, parts of which have appeared as papers and studies.⁴ More data on the small finds and the ornamental motives appears in a study of T. Shalganova;⁵ a small fraction of the EIA assemblage is published by A. Agre.⁶ There is only one available ¹⁴C date coming for level IV (3190 ± 55; Bln-1577 BP), calibrated to 1620-1400 BC. M. Şandor-Chicideanu revised the calibration of this date proposing— OxCal. v3.4 ± 1σ 1515–1505 BC, 1500-1425 BC; ± 2σ 1530–1390 BC.⁷

¹ Катинчаров, Р., А. Йоцова, Разкопки на праисторическото селище до с. Бaley, Видински окръг. *Археологически открития и разкопки през 1976*. София, 1977, р. 32-34; *idem*, Разкопки на праисторическото селище до с. Бaley, Видински окръг. *Археологически открития и разкопки през 1979*. София, 1980, 48-50; *idem*, Разкопки на селище от късната бронзова епоха до с. Бaley, Видински окръг. *Археологически открития и разкопки през 1980*. София 1981, 36-39; *idem*, Разкопки на селище от късната бронзова епоха до с. Бaley, Видински окръг. *Археологически открития и разкопки през 1981*. Михайловград 1982, 24-25; *idem*, Разкопки на селище от късната бронзова епоха до с. Бaley, Видинско. *Археологически открития и разкопки през 1983*. Смолян, 1984, 41-42; *idem*, Разкопките на праисторическото селище до с. Бaley, Видински окръг. *Археологически открития и разкопки през 1975*. София, 1976, 26-27; *idem*, Разкопките на праисторическото селище до с. Бaley, Видински окръг. *Археологически открития и разкопки през 1977*. София, 1978, 43-44; *idem*, Селище от късната бронзова епоха до с. Бaley, Видински окръг. *Археологически открития и разкопки през 1982*. Плевен, 1983, 26; *idem*, Селище от късната бронзова епоха до с. Бaley, Видинско. *Археологически открития и разкопки през 1984*. Сливен, 1985, 60-61; *idem*, Селище от късната бронзова епоха до с. Бaley, Видинско. *Археологически открития и разкопки през 1985*. Велико Търново, 1986, 45-46; *idem*, Селище от късната бронзова епоха до с. Бaley, Видинско. *Археологически открития и разкопки през 1986*. Разград, 1987, 68-69; *idem*, Селище от късната бронзова епоха до с. Бaley, Видинско. *Археологически открития и разкопки през 1987*. Благоевград, 1988, 46-47; *idem*, Селище от късната бронзова епоха до с. Бaley, Видинско. *Археологически открития и разкопки през 1989*. Кюстендил, 1990, 33-34.

² Georgiev, G. Die Erforschung der Bronzezeit in Nordwestbulgarien. In: B. Hänsel (ed.) *Südosteuropa zwischen 1600 und 1000 v.Chr. Prähistorische Archäologie in Südosteuropa*, 1, Berlin, 1982, p. 194-197. The cup published by G. Georgiev *ibid*, Abb. 3/1 in fact does not come from Baley. It is a stray find from the territory of the neighbor-village Vrav, dated to the EBA. Neither of the other vessels included in the table *ibid*, Abb. 3/3,4,5 have been found at Baley. They are stray finds from the nearby village of Novo Selo.

³ Hänsel, B., *Beiträge zur regionalen und chronologischen Gliederung der älteren Hallstattzeit an der Unteren Donau*. Bonn, 1976, p. 64-65; Morintz, S., *Contribuții arheologice la istoria tracilor timpurii*. București., 1978, p. 29; Şandor-Chicideanu, M., *Cultura Ţuto Brdo-Gârla Mare. Contribuții la cunoașterea epocii bronzului la Dunare Mijlocie și Inferioară*. vol. I, Cluj-Napoca 2003, p. 20-21.

⁴ Зунг, Л., Развитие на къснобронзовата култура Бaley-Орсоа в Северозападна България. *Археология*, XXXI, 1989, 2, 20-24; Шалганова, Т. Относно гребеновидния мотив в украсата на културата на инкрустираната керамика по Долния Дунав. *Марица-Изток. Археологически проучвания*. 2, София, 1994, р. 111 – 117; Shalganova, T. About an ornamental pattern of the incrustated pottery culture along the Lower Danube. In: P. Roman, M. Alexianu (eds) *Relations Thraco-Illiro-Helléniques*. București, 1994, 170–177; Shalganova, T., Das Auftreten der kannelierten Keramik und der Übergang von der Spätbronzezeit zur frühen Eisenzeit in Nordwestbulgarien. In: *The Early Hallstatt Period (1200–700 BC) in South-Eastern Europe*. Biblioteca Musei Apulensis, I, Alba Iulia, 1994, 185-195. Shalganova, T., The Lower Danube Incrusted pottery culture. in: D. Baily and I. Panayotov (eds) *Prehistoric Bulgaria*. Monographs in world archeology No. 22. Prehistory press. Medison Wisconsin, 1995, 291-309.

⁵ Шалганова, Т., *Изкуство и обред на бронзовата епоха. Културата на инкрустираната керамика по Долен Дунав*. Монографии 3. МИФ. София 2005.

⁶ Agre, A., Quelques remarques sur la periode VIII-VI siecles av. J.-C. en Bulgarie du Nord-Ouest. *Cultura și civilizație la Dunarea de Jos.*, XXIV, 2008, p. 126-128.

⁷ Boyadziev, Y., Chronology of prehistoric cultures in Bulgaria. In: D. Bailey, I. Panayotov (eds) *Prehistoric Bulgaria*. Monographs in world archaeology No. 22. Prehistory press. Madison Wisconsin, 1995, p. 177; Şandor-Chicideanu *op.cit.*, p. 208-209.

In 2009–2011 a team of NIAM-BAS and Vidin Museum archaeologists studied in entire collection accrued during the near two decades of archaeological excavations at Baley. The project was funded by *The Shelby White and Leon Levy Program for Archaeological Publications*.

EXCAVATED ARCHAEOLOGICAL STRUCTURES

EARLY IRON AGE (Plate 1)

Out of context many EIA artifacts are retrieved during all the archaeological seasons. Of this date are also two pits (no3/1976 – grid square B-10/C-10 and no17/1976 – grid square D-9/E-9). This occupation phase is synchronous to the Basarabi Culture and dated to the end of its I and the first half of its II phase; in terms of calendar years – the second half of the VIII – first half of the VII c. BC.⁸

LATE BRONZE AGE

LEVEL I (Plate 2)

Floor levels are detected at the depth of 0.10 m. **Sections of four dwellings** are studied in grid-squares I-3, J-5/K-5, J-4/K-4, and J-7/I-7. A row of post holes in grid-square I-12/J-12, found in proximity with the main control profile, is likely associated with a dwelling from level I. The integrity of those structures is disturbed, rendering their reconstruction impossible. Evidence of heating devices is also deficient. The floors have been made of 0.08–0.10 m thick, highly compacted, clayish soil.

Fifteen pits can be assigned with certainty to level I (nos. 4/1976; 26-28/1979; 1, 2, 4, 5/1980; 1-3/1981; 1/1984; 1-2/1986 as well as a pit in grid-square I-13/H-13, marked as pit no. 3/1980, 1/1982 and 14/1983). The pits are round or oval, up to 1.50 m wide and up to 1.80 m deep. The pit in grid-square I-13/H-13 is an elongated oval, 2.90 m (east-west) by 5.20 m (north-south) wide, over 2 m deep.

LEVEL II (Plate 3)

Dwellings with registered plan – four such have been found, in grid-squares D-12/D-13 (1981), I-12/J-12 (1972, 1980), H-16/I-16 (1981), and L-17/M-17 (1981). Three of these are characterized by irregular trapezium shape; one is rectangular, divided into two compartments. This latter one is quite large - 9.80/9.85 by 4.10 m. One of the walls in two of the dwellings is apsidal. The number of recovered hearth-, or oven- remains in each residence differed, and the volumes of wall-plaster fragments are similarly variable. A better preserved hearth is found in grid-square J-12,

⁸ D. Agre. *op.cit.*, p. 126–128, fig. 1–3.

associated with the second dwelling. The dwelling entrances likely coincide with the voids in the rows of post holes. A bottom grind stone was found in grid-square H-16.

Sections of ten dwellings have been found in grid-squares C-9/C-10/B-9/B-10 (1973, 1974), D-10/E-10 (1973, 1974), F-16/G-16 (1981), G-17 (1981), C-14 (1980), and F-13/F-14 (1972, 1980), G-13 (1972, 1980), H-12 (1971), I-13/H-13 (1971), H-14 (1971). These are identified based on post holes, traces of floor platforms, or hearth fragments. Better preserved are the remains of the six dwellings in grid-squares G17, F-16/G-16, D-10/E-10, F-13/F-14, C-14, C-9/C-10/B-9/B-10. A large half-sunken clay vessel was found in proximity with the floor vestiges in grid-square G-13. In 1973 in grid-square E-10, near the north wall of the dwelling found here, was discovered a bronze celt.

Ovens/hearths, not positively associated with particular dwellings are registered in grid-squares G-14 (1980), L-12 (1980), and H-17 (1981). It is recorded that their platforms are built upon arrangements of pottery sherds.

To level II belong also **21 pits**: nos.1/1970; 1/1973; 1/1975; 5, 6/1976; 8-10/1976; 12/1976; 14-16/1976; 18-20/1976; 21-25/1977; 13/1983.

LEVEL III (Plate 4)

Dwellings with registered plan – five such have been discovered, in grid-squares F-14/F-15/G-15 (1982), J-18/J-19/J-20 (1986), F-18/G-18 (1986), F-19/F-20/G-19/G-20 (1987), and K-14/K-15 (1983). Three are irregular trapezoids, two – rectangular in shape. The dwelling in grid-squares F-19/F-20/G-19/G-20 is bipartite, with hearth remains found in both compartments. No hearth/oven was recovered in the dwelling in grid-squares J-18/J-19/J-20.

Sections of dwellings have been found in four locations, in grid-squares H-18/H-19/I-19/I-20 (1986), F-18 (1986), L-14 (1983) and F-9 (1974). Two are registered based on post-holes rows, two – by floor fragments.

Ovens/hearths, not linked to particular dwellings – five such structures have been found, in grid-squares B-10 (1974), E-10 (1974), F-4 (1974), I-16 (1982) and J-12 (1982). Particularly well-preserved is the oven in grid-square B-10 extending into the adjacent A-10 grid-square. The oven has an oval plan, likely opening to the south-east. The floor by the oven door have been completely destroyed and thus the shape and the size of the adjacent platform remain undetermined. The south-western section of the foundation of the oven dome is well preserved and stands up to 15 cm high from southeast. The dome was made of 0.05 m thick twigs, as demonstrated by the preserved holes in the oven platform, spaced at 0.12 m intervals. Upon the oven floor was found a 0.10 m thick layer of burnt clay – the debris of the collapsed dome. The oven's floor is best preserved in the

south-eastern sector, where it is 3 to 4 cm thick and sits on a 4 cm layer of yellow clay. The oven is cut by Level II post holes. The platform of the oven in grid-square E-10 sits upon an arrangement of pottery sherds, underlined by a thin layer of fine gravel. The gravel itself sits on an extra-thin layer of yellow clay, resting upon the cultural deposits of the previous level. The center of the eastern periphery, and the western periphery of the oven are destroyed by four level II post holes.

To level III belong the following **four pits**: nos. 1/1972; 1, 2, 3/1983.

LEVEL IVa (Plate 5)

Three dwellings with securely registered plan are found in grid-squares D-5/D-6/D-7/E-5/E-6/E-7 (1975), B-12/C-12 (1983) and E-12/E-13/F-12 (1983). All three are rectangular, bipartite, with one featuring an extra compartment – a porch. Hearths are registered in all three; the hearth in the latter dwelling is situated at its center, its platform is severely damaged. The floor plaster of this hearth is 0.07 m thick, very carefully smoothed and mechanically polished. Of particular interest is the first dwelling(?) described by the excavators as “*megaron*”. **Sections of dwellings** are registered in grid-squares A-11 (1975) and B-7/B-8 (1975). Similarly to the previous two levels, these are identified by the vestiges of posts and floors.

The **following pits** can be assigned to level IVa: nos. 4-12/1983, and 1-2/1987.

LEVEL IVb (Plate 6)

To this occupation phase belong pits nos. 1, 2, 7, 11, 13/1976. Their stratigraphic position is sealed by Level IVa structures, a fact which grants them stratigraphic precedence to level IVa.

STRATIGRAPHIC EVIDENCE

Excavators remarked that the settlement was not spatially “fixed” in particular boundaries during the four constructive levels; in fact, mapping the features discovered illustrates a south-north shift with each consecutive construction phase. There is ample stratigraphic evidence in support of the proposed by the excavators, and the authors of this article, internal division in four construction phases. The sequence I-II-III construction phase is clearly manifested in grid-squares I-12/J-12. Structures from level I and II overlap stratigraphically in grid-squares I-13/H-13. The level II-III-IV sequence is stratigraphically attested in grid-squares A-10, A-11, and B-10. Stratigraphically, structures from levels II and III intersect in grid-square E-10 (1974). The I-III-IV construction phase stratigraphic sequence is documented in grid-squares K-14/K-15. As it has already been noted, some of the pits studied in 1976 are stratigraphically succeeded by level IVa structures, and are thus distinguished by us as level IVb. This pertains also to the artifacts found below the floors of

the level IVa dwellings. The upper level of the EIA pits is fixed at and below the 0.50 m depth, but the nature of the artifacts in their fill categorically assigns them to a period approximately 200-300 years later than level I.

GENERAL OUTLINE

Level IVb

Pits nos. 1,2,7,11,13/1976 are located underneath level IVa dwellings. Their attribution to an earlier occupation phase is also justified by the artifacts discovered below those same floors during the 1977 and 1979 excavation seasons. The lumping of the pits and the out-of-context materials within a single construction phase is still tentative; however, if trusted, its dwellings should be sought south/south-east of the opened by the excavations area.

Level IVa

The level IVa structures are found in the south-eastern part of the excavated area, along the A-F/5-12 corridor. Three dwellings with a securely fixed plan and two more residential structures are established, with a total roofed area of approximately 1000 sq. m. The eleven pits of this level are grouped ca. 30 m northwest of the dwellings. It is logical to assume that the primary built area of this level was south/south-east from the opened by the excavations area, i.e. in the sectors destroyed by the clay extraction for bricks, and/or below the modern village.

Level III

The Level III structures are located in the western part of the excavated surface – over a 30 by 45 m area, and in the eastern sector – over a 35 by 40 m area. The total roofed area of this level is approximately 2300 sq. m. with fifteen dwellings, the plan of five of which is positively fixed. Two groups of dwellings emerge: in the western section, along the F-K/12-20 corridor (with 11 residential structures, the plan of five of which is securely established) and in the eastern sector, along the A-F/4-11 corridor (with 4 residential structures). The two zones are separated by the discovered in 1982 1.30m wide passageway (street?). It is made of grey-black compacted earth, dividing the excavated area along the south-west – north-east axis – from grid-square E-18 to grid-square H-11.

To this level four pits also belong, situated in-between the two residential groups.

Level II

The level II structures are localized in the western sector – over an area of 60 by 30 m, and in the eastern sector – over an area of 20 by 10 m. The total roofed area of this construction phase is approximately 2000 sq. m, with fifteen residential structures, the plan of four of which is positively identified. Three groups of residences are distinguished: along the B-E/10-14 corridor (with four

residential structures); along the F-J/12-14 corridor (with five residential structures) and along the F-I/16-17 corridor (with four residential structures). Aside from these three groups remain two residential structures detected in the northern excavation sector, along the L and M corridors. In-between the three groups of residences emerge five-meter wide open spaces. The excavated 21 pits are located east of the build-up space.

Level I

The dwellings have most likely been located in the north-eastern section of the site, destroyed during the construction of the brickyards and soil extraction. The fifteen excavated pits are situated south/south-west of the known residential structures.

Early Iron Age

Positively of this date are pits nos. 3/1976, № 17/1976, and the pit in grid-square D-12/1980. In all excavation seasons artifacts from this age appeared over the entire surface, which suggests the presence of more EIA pits, destroyed by anthropogenic activity. These were situated primarily in the southern section of site.

DWELLINGS AND RESIDENTIAL STRUCTURES

During the 18 years of archaeological investigations 42 structures of residential nature have been studied. The plan and size of 12 of those dwellings are securely established (3 from level IVa; 5 from level III; 4 from level II), 22 are sections of residential (?) structures, detected by floor levels (2 from level IVa; 5 from level III; 10 from level II; 5 from level I) as well as 8 ovens and hearths (5 from level III; 3 from level II) not associated with a particular floor level.

Construction method

The dwellings were built according to the typical for the age method – driven into the ground posts, intertwined with sticks, and then plastered with clay. There isn't sufficient evidence to indicate wall thickness, but judging by some plaster fragments from the pits, there were at least a few 0.15-0.20 m thick walls. Some of the wall plasters preserve a ca. 0.01 m layer of white substance, possibly a finishing coat. The excavated dwellings are rectangular, irregular trapezoids, or apsidal. According to their internal division they are uni- and bipartite. In one instance (the “*megaron*”) there is also a portico. The floors were made of heavily compacted clay, the color of which is described by the excavators as “*whitish*” or “*yellowish*”. The floor levels are 0.01 to 0.08 m thick, usually 0.025 to 0.05 m. Some are described as “*intensely cracked*”, suggesting also possible post-compacting firing of the floors. No repairs have been noted for any floors.

Ovens and hearths

More than 20 hearths (or hearth platforms) have been found, and in only one instance the oven dome was partially preserved. The hearths are oval or round, averaging 1 m across. Most are destroyed; only the platforms are better preserved. These are made of plastered-over arrangements of sherds of larger vessels. The floor is made of highly purified clay, up to 0.05 m thick. Often it was also mechanically burnished. The oven from level III (grid-square B-10) is oval, domed. The dome is preserved up to 0.15 m tall. It is constructed of up to 0.05 m thick twigs, driven into the oven floor, at 0.12 m intervals.

THE NECROPOLIS

The necropolis of the Baley settlement was found in 2010. It is situated on an elevation, ca. 450 m south-east from the settlement. The discovered burial assemblages can be assigned to three chronological phases. The earliest one is contemporary with Verbicioara III Culture. No synchronous materials were found within the settlement site. The middle chronological phase is synchronous to the Incrusted Pottery Culture (Baley-Orsoia, Dubovac-Žuto Brdo/Cîrna-Gârla Mare) of the LBA, and the final one is synchronous to Vîrtop Group.⁹

North of the Danube there are several registered settlement sites with associated necropolises. Two necropolises are registered near Ghidici-Balta Țarova site, Oltenia, – the first one is found approximately 300 m west of the settlement (synchronous to the Incrusted Pottery Culture), and the second one - 40 m away (with Bistreț and Vîrtop type pottery).¹⁰ The Cîrna-Rampa necropolis is found approximately 300 m north of the settlement.¹¹ The Gârla Mare necropolis is located approximately 200 m north of the settlement.¹² The situation is identical in the Iron Gates region. At Ostrovul Corbului the necropolis is ca. 400 m east of the settlement site.¹³ At Mala Vrbica the necropolis was registered approximately 200 m south of the habitation site, and at

⁹ Христова, Т., Г. Иванов, Н. Казашки, Бaley-некрополът. Археологически проучвания през 2011 г. *Археологически открития и разкопки през 2011 г.* София, 2012, p. 119-121; Александров, С., Г. Иванов, Т. Христова, Н. Казашки, Некрополът на праисторическото селище Бaley. In: З. Димитров (ed.) *Българска археология 2011. Каталог към изложба.* София 2012, p. 16-17; Alexandrov, S., G. Ivanov, T. Hristova. Baley: New Discoveries. *Bulgarian e-Journal of Archaeology*, vol. 1, n.1, 2011, p. 127-136.

¹⁰ Nica, M., Locuințe de tip Gîrla Mare și hallstattian descoperite în așezarea de la Ghidici (județul Dolj). *Thraco-Dacica*, VIII, 1987, p. 10; *ibid*, Nica, M., Date noi cu privire la sfârșitul epocii bronzului și începutul epocii fierului pe teritoriul Olteniei. In: G. Simion (ed.) *Prima epocă a fierului la Gurile Dunării și în zonele circumpontice.* Biblioteca Istro-Pontica. Seria Arheologie, 2, Tulcea, 1997.

¹¹ M. Șandor–Chicideanu *op.cit.*, p. 159.

¹² Crăciunescu, G., Epoca bronzului în insula Gârla Mare. *Drobeta*, XIX, 2009, p. 91.

¹³ Roman, P., Aufzeichnungen aus den Grabungsheften zu den Forschungen in der bronzezeitlichen Ansiedlungen von Ostrovul Corbului und Ostrovul Moldova Veche. In: *Die Kulturen der Bronzezeit in dem Gebiet des eisernen Tores.* Bucurest, 1998, p. 20; *ibid*, Morminte de incineratie din epoca bronzului. In: P. Roman, A. Dodd–Oprițescu (eds) *Ostrovul Corbului între km. 911-912. Morminte și unele așezări preistorice.* Dunarea – axă a vechilor civilizații europene. Regiunea Porților de Fier. Seria monografii. I, București, 2008, p. 111.

Korbovo – 150 m south of the periphery of the settlement, now eroded into the Danube.¹⁴ The situation is similar at Novo Selo, Bulgaria, according to observations contributed by Mikov.¹⁵ The necropolises near Orsoia and Kutovo¹⁶ occupy non-flood terraces, following the typical for the Incrusted Pottery Culture fashion.¹⁷

* * *

With its five occupation phases the Baley settlement emerges as one of the largest in the Incrusted Pottery Culture area. Most of the settlements of this territory are characterized by thin cultural deposits;¹⁸ still, the stratigraphic situation attested at Baley is not exceptional. Several levels (construction phases) are registered also at Ghidici – Balta Țarova I. The following stratigraphic situation is registered in a test trench from 1989: the earliest feature is an up to 1.50 deep pit, indicated as level I; it is succeeded by level II, marked by an oval oven, above which sit dwelling no. 6 – marked as level III, and dwelling no. 5 – marked as level IV. According to the M. Nica, within the same settlement to levels I and II belong also the pit and oven excavated in 1989 respectively, while level III is represented by three dwellings – nos. 3, 6, and 10; level IV is marked by dwellings nos. 1,3(?),4,5,11. The same author suggested that the life on the settlement continued through two more stages - one indicated by dwellings (nos. 2 and 9), which he refers to Gârla Mare – Bistreț-Ișalnița – Verbicioara IV, and a second stage, linked by him to the Vîrtop group.¹⁹ The existence of these latter two stages, however, has not been attested stratigraphically at Balta Țarova I. If the published material, and their analogies to the Baley materials, is taken into consideration alongside the established correlation of the Balta Țarova I dwelling no.7 assemblage with the early Basarabi Culture,²⁰ we are inclined to agree with the proposed presence of only one late LBA layer

¹⁴ Vukmanović, M., P. Popović, *Recherches archeologiques sur la localité "Livade" pre de Mala Vrbica. Берданске Свеске*, III, 1986, p. 14; Крстић, Д., *Гламија. Некропола бронзаног доба у Корбову*. Народни Музеј Београд, Археолошке Монографије, Београд 2003, p. 7.

¹⁵ Миков, В., *Материали от последния период на бронзовата епоха в Северна България. Археология*, XII, 1970, 3, p. 49-50.

¹⁶ Филипов, Т., *Некропол от късната бронзова епоха при с. Орсоя, Ломско*. София 1976; Александров, С., Т. Христова, А. Попова, А. Йоцова, О. Миланова, И. Цветков, Ф. Филипова, *Археологически проучвания на два обекта в м. Гриндур, землище на с. Антимово и Кутово, о-на Видин. Археологически открития и разкопки през 2007 г.*, София, 2008, 129-130.

¹⁷ M. Șandor-Chicideanu, *op.cit.*, p. 159.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 159.

¹⁹ M. Nica, *op. cit.*, *Thraco-Dacica*, VIII, 1987; *idem*, Date noi cu privire la sfârșitul epocii bronzului și începutul epocii fierului pe teritoriul Olteniei. In: G. Simion (ed). *Prima epocă a fierului la Gurile Dunării și în zonele circumpontice*. Biblioteca Istro-Pontica. Seria Arheologie, 2, Tulcea, 1997, p. 19-41; Nica, M., P. Rogozea, Șantierul arheologic Ghidici punctul „Balta Țarovei”, campania 1994. *Cercetări arheologice în aria nord-tracă*, I, 1995, p. 199-217.

²⁰ Nica, M., Câteva date despre necropola și locuințele din așezările hallstattiene timpurii de la Ghidici, punctul „Balta Țarova” (județul Dolj). *Cercetări arheologice în aria nord-tracă*, I, 1995, 236-246; *Ibid.*, La genèse, l'évolution et relations chronologique et culturelle de cultures Verbicioara et Gârla Mare dans le contexte des civilisations de l'âge du bronze de l'Europe centrale et du Sud-Est. In: P. Roman (ed.) *The Thracian world at the crossroads of civilizations*. II,

at Ghidici- Balta Țarova I. Provided this propositions is proved, the Balta Țarova I stratigraphic sequence will be identical to that of Baley – pits in the earliest level, four LBA levels with residential structures followed by EIA Basarabi Culture materials. Some other Incrusted Pottery Culture sites proved not to be with “thin cultural deposits” as well. The Ostrovul Corbului settlement in the Iron Gates area has three construction phases, identified on the basis of ground dwellings.²¹ We should also mention the Mala Vrbica settlement from the same area, where below the layer of plaster concentrations and floor sections excavators registered shallow pits.²² However it is worth noted that for now the multi-layer settlements of the Incrusted Pottery Culture are quite a few, Baley being the largest one.

The longstanding investigations of the Late Bronze Age settlement Baley and the obtained results, including stratigraphic evidence, information on residential architecture and planning, distinguish it as one of the primary reference sites for the Incrusted Pottery Culture of the Lower Danube. With its five construction phases the site makes possible diachronical analysis of the surviving to-date evidence of the life of the inhabitants and the changes occurring over a long section of the Bronze Age, coinciding with almost the entire late stage of the epoch.

Bibliography

- Agre, A., Quelques remarques sur la periode VIII-VI siecles av. J.-C. en Bulgarie du Nord-Ouest. *Cultura și civilizație la Dunarea de Jos.*, XXIV, 2008.
- Alexandrov, S., Ivanov G., Hristova T.. Baley: New Discoveries. *Bulgarian e-Journal of Archaeology*, vol. 1, n.1, 2011.
- Boyadziev, Y., Chronology of prehistoric cultures in Bulgaria. In: D. Bailey, I. Panayotov (eds) *Prehistoric Bulgaria*. Monographs in world archaeology No. 22. Prehistory press. Madison Wisconsin, 1995.
- Crăciunescu, G., Epoca bronzului în insula Gârla Mare. *Drobeta*, XIX, 2009.
- Dodd-Oprițescu, A., Așezarea și complexele aparținind culturii Gârla Mare de la Ostrovul Corbului. In: P. Roman, A. Dodd-Oprițescu (eds). *Ostrovul Corbului între km. 911-912. Morminte și*

București, 1997, 151-180, Nica, M.. S. Lazăr, Locuințele hallstattiene descoperite în așezările de la Ghidici, punctele „Balta Țarovei I și II” (județul Dolj). *Cercetări arheologice în aria nord-tracă*, II, 1997, 87-112; *Ibid*, Quelque problèmes concernant le premier âge du fer en Oltenie. in: P. Roman (ed.) *The Thracian world at the crossroads of civilizations*. II, București, 1997, 506-518.

²¹ Hänsel, B., P. Roman, Siedlungsfunde der bronzezeitlichen Gârla Mare Gruppe bei Ostrovu Corbului östlich der Eisernen Tores. *Prähistorische Zeitschrift*, 59, 1984, 2, 188-229; Dodd-Oprițescu, A., Așezarea și complexele aparținind culturii Gârla Mare de la Ostrovul Corbului. In: P. Roman, A. Dodd-Oprițescu (eds). *Ostrovul Corbului între km. 911-912. Morminte și unele așezări preistorice*. Dunarea – axa a vechilor civilizații europene. Regiunea Porților de Fier. Seria monografii. I, Editura Academiei Romane. 2008, 169-178.

²² Vukmanović, Popović *op.cit*.

unele așezări preistorice. Dunarea – axa a vechilor civilizații europene. Regiunea Porților de Fier. Seria monografii. I, Editura Academiei Romane. 2008.

Georgiev, G., Die Erforschung der Bronzezeit in Nordwestbulgarien. In: B. Hänsel (ed.) *Südosteuropa zwischen 1600 und 1000 v.Chr.* Prähistorische Archäologie in Südosteuropa, 1, Berlin, 1982.

Hänsel, B., *Beiträge zur regionalen und chronologischen Gliederung der älteren Hallstattzeit an der Unteren Donau*. Bonn, Rudolf Habelt Verlag 1976.

Hänsel, B., Roman, P., Siedlungsfinde der bronzezeitlichen Gîrla Mare Gruppe bei Ostrovu Corbului östlich der Eisernen Tores. *Prähistorische Zeitschrift*, 59, 1984, 2.

Morintz, S., *Contribuții arheologice la istoria tracilor timpurii*. București. Editura Academiei, 1978.

Nica, M., Locuințe de tip Gîrla Mare și hallstattian descoperite în așezarea de la Ghidici (județul Dolj). *Thraco-Dacica*, VIII, 1987.

Nica, M., Câteva date despre necropola și locuințele din așezările hallstattiene timpurii de la Ghidici, punctul „Balta Țarova” (județul Dolj). *Cercetări arheologice în aria nord-tracă*, I, 1995.

Nica, M., Date noi cu privire la cronologia și periodizarea grupului cultural Gârla Mare, pe baza descoperirilor din așezarea și necropola de la Ghidici, punctul „Balta Țarova”. In: P. Roman, M. Alexianu (eds) *Relations Thraco-Illiro-Helléniques*. București, 1994.

Nica, M., Date noi cu privire la sfârșitul epocii bronzului și începutul epocii fierului pe teritoriul Olteniei. In: G. Simion (ed). *Prima epocă a fierului la Gurile Dunării și în zonele circumpontice*. Biblioteca Istro-Pontica. Seria Arheologie, 2, Tulcea, 1997.

Nica, M., La genèse, l'évolution et relations chronologique et culturelle de cultures Verbicioara et Gârla Mare dans le contexte des civilisations de l'âge du bronze de l'Europe centrale et du Sud-Est. In: P. Roman (ed.) *The Thracian world at the crossroads of civilizations*. II, București, 1997.

Nica, M., Rogozea, P., Șantierul arheologic Ghidici punctul „Balta Țarovei” , campania 1994. *Cercetări arheologice în aria nord-tracă*, I, 1995.

Nica, M., Lazăr S., Locuințele hallstattiene descoperite în așezările de la Ghidici, punctele „Balta Țarovei I și II” (județul Dolj). *Cercetări arheologice în aria nord-tracă*, II, 1997b.

Nica, M., Lazăr S., Quelques problèmes concernant le premier âge du fer en Oltenie. in: P. Roman (ed.) *The Thracian world at the crossroads of civilizations*. II, București, 1997a.

- Roman, P., Aufzeichnungen aus den Grabungsheften zu den Forshungen in der bronzzeitlichen Ansiedlungen von Ostrovul Corbului und Ostrovul Moldova Veche. In: *Die Kulturen der Bronzezeit in dem Gebiet des eisernen Tores*. Bucurest, 1998.
- Roman, P., Morminte de incineratie din epoca bronzului. In: P. Roman, A. Dodd-Oprițescu (eds) *Ostrovul Corbului între km. 911-912. Morminte și unele așezări preistorice*. Dunarea – axă a vechilor civilizații europene. Regiunea Porților de Fier. Seria monografii. I, Editura Academiei Romane, 2008.
- Șandor-Chicideanu, M., *Cultura Țuto Brdo-Gârla Mare. Contribuții la cunoașterea epocii bronzului la Dunare Mijlocie și Inferioară*. vol. I and II, Cluj-Napoca 2003.
- Shalganova, T. About an ornamental pattern of the incrustrated pottery culture along the Lower Danube. In: P. Roman, M. Alexianu (eds) *Relations Thraco–Illiro–Helléniques*. București. Repro–Art S. R. L, 1994.
- Shalganova, T., Das Auftreten der kannelierten Keramik und der Übergang von der Spätbronzezeit zur frühen Eisenzeit in Nordwestbulgarien. In: *The Early Hallstatt Period (1200–700 BC) in South-Eastern Europe*. Biblioteca Musei Apulensis, I, Alba Iulia, 1994.
- Shalganova, T., The Lower Danube Incrustrated pottery culture. in: D. Baily and I. Panayotov (eds) *Prehistoric Bulgaria*. Monographs in world archeology No. 22. Prehistory press. Medison Wisconsin, 1995.
- Vukmanović, M., P. Popović, Recherches archeologiques sur la localité “Livade” pre de Mala Vrbica. Ђердапске Свеске, III, 1986.
- Александров, С., Христова, Т., Иванов Г., 2011. Балей-Некрополът. In: З. Димитров (ed.). *Българска археология 2010. Каталог към изложба*. София 2011.
- Александров, С., Иванов, Г., Христова, Т., Казашки, Н., Некрополът на праисторическото селище Балей. In: З. Димитров (ed.) *Българска археология 2011. Каталог към изложба*. София 2012.
- Александров, С., Христова, Т., Попова, А., Йоцова, А., Миланова, О. , Цветков, И. , Ф. Филипова, Археологически проучвания на два обекта в м. Гриндур, землище на с. Антимово и Кутово, о-на Видин. *Археологически открития и разкопки през 2007 г.*, София.
- Зунг, Л., Развитие на къснобронзовата култура Балей-Орсоя в Северозападна България. *Археология*, XXXI, 1989.
- Катинчаров, Р., А. Йоцова, Разкопки на праисторическото селище до с. Балей, Видински окръг. *Археологически открития и разкопки през 1976*. София, 1977.

- Катинчаров, Р., Йоцова, А., Разкопки на праисторическото селище до с. Балеи, Видински окръг. *Археологически открития и разкопки през 1979*. София, 1980.
- Катинчаров, Р., Йоцова, А., Разкопки на селище от късната бронзова епоха до с. Балеи, Видински окръг. *Археологически открития и разкопки през 1980*. София 1981.
- Катинчаров, Р., Йоцова, А., Разкопки на селище от късната бронзова епоха до с. Балеи, Видински окръг. *Археологически открития и разкопки през 1981*. Михайловград 1982.
- Катинчаров, Р., Йоцова, А., Разкопки на селище от късната бронзова епоха до с. Балеи, Видинско. *Археологически открития и разкопки през 1983*. Смолян, 1984.
- Катинчаров, Р., Йоцова, А., Разкопките на праисторическото селище до с. Балеи, Видински окръг. *Археологически открития и разкопки през 1975*. София, 1976.
- Катинчаров, Р., Йоцова, А., Разкопките на праисторическото селище до с. Балеи, Видински окръг. *Археологически открития и разкопки през 1977*. София, 1978.
- Катинчаров, Р., Йоцова, А., Селище от късната бронзова епоха до с. Балеи, Видински окръг. *Археологически открития и разкопки през 1982*. Плевен, 1983.
- Катинчаров, Р., Йоцова, А., Селище от късната бронзова епоха до с. Балеи, Видинско. *Археологически открития и разкопки през 1984*. Сливен, 1985.
- Катинчаров, Р., Йоцова, А., Селище от късната бронзова епоха до с. Балеи, Видинско. *Археологически открития и разкопки през 1985*. Велико Търново, 1986.
- Катинчаров, Р., Йоцова, А., Селище от късната бронзова епоха до с. Балеи, Видинско. *Археологически открития и разкопки през 1986*. Разград, 1987.
- Катинчаров, Р., Йоцова, А., Селище от късната бронзова епоха до с. Балеи, Видинско. *Археологически открития и разкопки през 1987*. Благоевград, 1988.
- Катинчаров, Р., Йоцова, А., Селище от късната бронзова епоха до с. Балеи, Видинско. *Археологически открития и разкопки през 1989*. Кюстендил, 1990.
- Крстић, Д., Гламија. *Некропола бронзаног доба у Корбову*. Народни Музеј Београд, Археолошке Монографије, Београд 2003.
- Миков, В., Материали от последния период на бронзовата епоха в Северна България. *Археология*, XII, 1970.
- Филипов, Т., *Некропол от късната бронзова епоха при с. Орсоа, Ломско*. София 1976.
- Христова, Т., Иванов, Г., Казашки, Н., Балеи-некрополът. Археологически проучвания през 2011 г. *Археологически открития и разкопки през 2011 г.* София, 2012.
- Христова, Т., Иванов, Г., Филипова, Ф., Балеи-некрополът. Археологически проучвания през 2010 г. *Археологически открития и разкопки през 2010 г.* София, 2011.
- Шалганова, Т. Относно гребеновидния мотив в украсата на културата на инкрустираната

керамика по Долния Дунав. *Марица–Изток. Археологически проучвания*. Т. 2, София, 1994.

Шалганова, Т., *Изкуство и обред на бронзовата епоха. Културата на инкрустираната керамика по Долен Дунав*. Монографии 3. МИФ. София 2005.