

# A RITUAL CERAMIC POT *PYRAUNOS* TYPE DISCOVERED IN CARANSEBEȘ – BALTA SĂRATĂ

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The archaeological site of Caransebeș – „Balta Sărată”, was discovered on the second terrace of the river Timiș at about 8 km from the city of Caransebeș, in the place named by the locals „Câmpul lui Poșta”, from the topographic point of view in the Dubi point. From the territory of Valea Timișului (Cârpa), being the most important and most extensive prehistoric archaeological site in the Banat of Severin<sup>1</sup>.

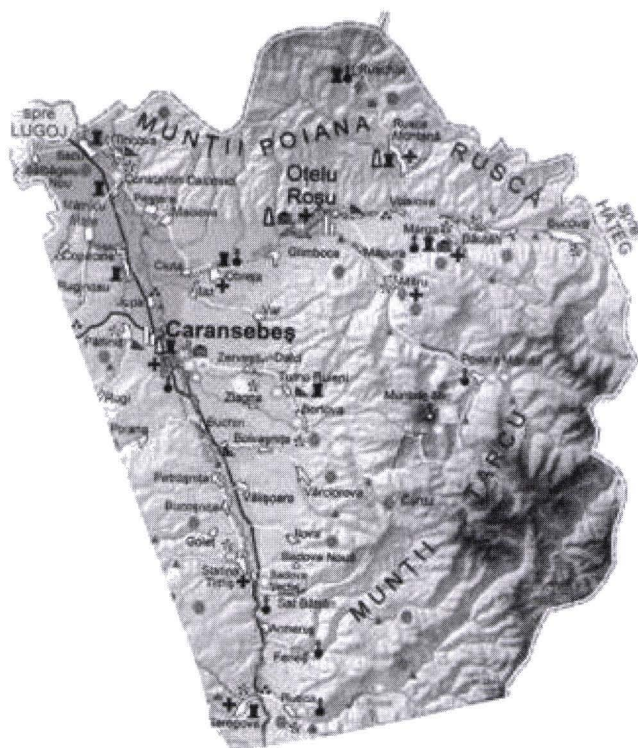


Fig. 1. Geographic map of the Caransebeș depression.

Geographically, the Depression of Caransebeș has a hill relief (Fig. 1), being separated from the Mehadica depression by the Domașnea (Oriental Gate) step, it is oriented to the SE – SE,

<sup>1</sup> Adrian Ardeț *et alii*, 2014, p. 185–193.

being bordered to the west by the Semenic Mountains with the peak Nemanul Mare and The hills of Corcana and Dealul Mare. To the east it is bordered by the Godeanu Massif, Muntele Mic and Țarcu Mountains with the tares Țarcu, Baicu, Mătania and the peak of Jigoria, and to the north it is bordered by Poiana Ruscăi Mountains with Rusca and Padeșul peaks<sup>2</sup>. Considered as a sub-mountainous depression, it separates the tall and massive mountains in the north and east, the low hills in the west and the northwest plain, with three relief forms, mountainous, hilly and plain<sup>3</sup>.

It has an approximate surface area of 1200 km<sup>2</sup> ranging from Constantin Daicoviciu village to Armeniș Gorge, 40 km long, including a portion of the Bistria Valley and Pogoniș from the village of Cornuțel to the east of the Bucova village, About 35 km.

Morphogenetic, the meadow area consists of alluvial deposits (pebbles, boulders and sands), and terraces in detritic formations such as gravels and sands, covered with proluvio-deluviale deposits (red clay).

Very good for living in the high area of the terraces is made of clay-marble deposits with sandy intersections, the altitude varies between 210–220 m in the meadow of Timiș and 260 m in the mountainous area.

The hydrographic network is represented by the river Timiș, with the SE-NV general flow direction. The meadow has an asymmetric development, more extensive on the right, where the transition to the higher part is made by 3–4 levels of terraces, while on the left there are only 1–2 levels with discontinuous extension<sup>4</sup>.

Geologically, the depression corridor of Timiș was formed in neogen on a fractured crystalline foundation and crossed by magmatic intrusions.

Neogene deposits are represented by Tortonian, made up of conglomerates, pebbles, sands and marl.

Follows the Pannonian disposed over the Tortonian or directly over the crystalline shale and consists of sandy clays with finely sandy intersections, gravel lenses and charcoal deposits.

In the quaternary period, gravel and sands are laid in a normal position, with coarser downsides and psamics or psefits above, and clays according to the glacial dictation cycles.

The origin of the deposits is alluvial, being formed by the transport and the deposition of eroded and disaggregated material by the river Timiș<sup>5</sup>.

The first archaeological researches were carried out by Ion Stratan between 1961 and 1962, followed by those of Sever Dumitrașcu in 1969<sup>6</sup>.

Systematic archaeological researches were carried out by Gheorghe Lazarovici between 1973–1975<sup>7</sup> and 1999–2004<sup>8</sup> in the Caransebeș – Balta Sărată

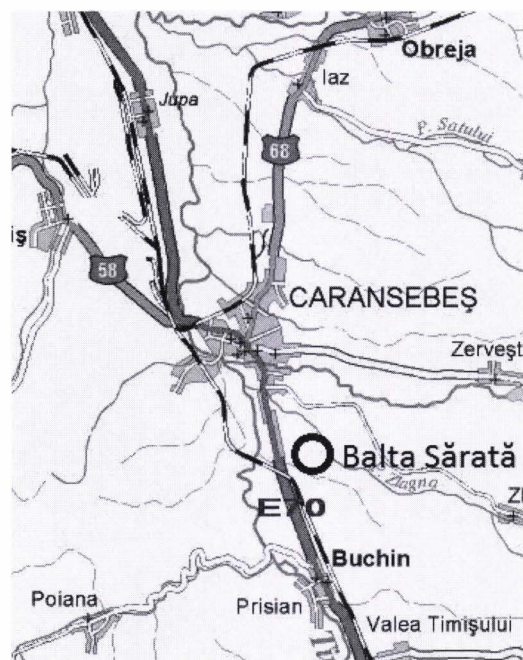


Fig. 2. Map with the location of the archaeological site Caransebeș – Balta Sărată.

<sup>2</sup> Petrescu-Burloiu, 1949, p. 47–45.

<sup>3</sup> Petrescu-Burloiu, 1949, pp. 24–27.

<sup>4</sup> Ardeț *et alii*, 2014, p. 185–193.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>6</sup> Dumitrașcu 1969, p. 517–518.

<sup>7</sup> Lazarovici, 1975, p. 13–34.

<sup>8</sup> Lazarovici *et alii*, 2003, p. 143–198; Lazarovici *et alii*, 2005, p. 157–182.

Sărată settlement, the „Câmpul lui Poșta” (Fig. 2), R. Petrovszky in 1977<sup>9</sup>, P. Rogoza in 1988<sup>10</sup> and those of Florin Gogâltan who together with Adrian Ardeț are investigating the area<sup>11</sup>.

Research from 1973–1975, as well as from 1999–2004 confirmed the existence of BS I Vinča A3 level, contemporary with the discoveries from Vinča BB phase 4, Vinča A3 at SCHIER<sup>12</sup>; BS II with several stages of habitation, with special architecture, with an uninterrupted local evolution for Vinča B1 – B1 / B2; BS III, a local retardation process, called Vinča B2-C at DRAȘOVEANU, Vinča C<sup>13</sup>, with numerous dwellings in the area<sup>14</sup>.



Fig. 3. Caransebeș – Balta Sărată. Ortofotoplan from 2011.

Due to the special importance of the Caransebeș archaeological site – „Câmpul lui Poșta”, from 2013, systematic archaeological researches (Fig. 3) are carried out by the college of the County Museum of Ethnography and the Border Regiment from Caransebeș<sup>15</sup>.

Following the archaeological discoveries made at Caransebeș – Balta Sărată, „Câmpul lui Poșta” in the 1970s, Richard Petrovszky and Marian Gumă observe major differences of the bronze age ceramics from this site to pottery from other cultures belonging to the Bronze Age. These differences of ceramics, along with other aspects, led to the conclusion that the archaeological discoveries made in the first levels of Balta Sărta „Câmpul lui Poșta” belong to a new cultural group from the Bronze Age, namely the Balta-Sărată Cultural Group<sup>16</sup>.

In 2010, there are ample archaeological researches on the area of approximately 1800 square meters, but this time has a rescue character.

<sup>9</sup> Petrovszky/Gumă 1979, p. 57.

<sup>10</sup> Rogoza 1992, p. 23–25.

<sup>11</sup> Gogâltan 1999, p. 89.

<sup>12</sup> Schier 1995, p. 145–146.

<sup>13</sup> Drașovean 1996, p. 34.

<sup>14</sup> Lazarovici/Lazarovici 2006, p. 130; Lazarovici 1974, p. 45–64; Lazarovici 1975a, p. 7–24.

<sup>15</sup> The research team is coordinated by Adrian Ardeț with: Dimitrie Pavel Negrei and Caius Săcărin.

<sup>16</sup> Petrovszky-Gumă 1979, p. 53–110.

Due to the fact that the variant of the Caransebeș belt road crosses the archaeological site in the south-west, during May-September 2010 the most extensive preventive archaeological researches carried out so far in this area by the collective of the Caransebeș Museum<sup>17</sup>.

In order to open preventive archaeological researches together with the West University of Timisoara, recourse was made to the use of modern methods, geomagnetic analyzes<sup>18</sup> were carried out on the whole area affected by the investment project (Fig. 4) but also by classical ones, by drawing a section with dimensions of 196 × 2 m.

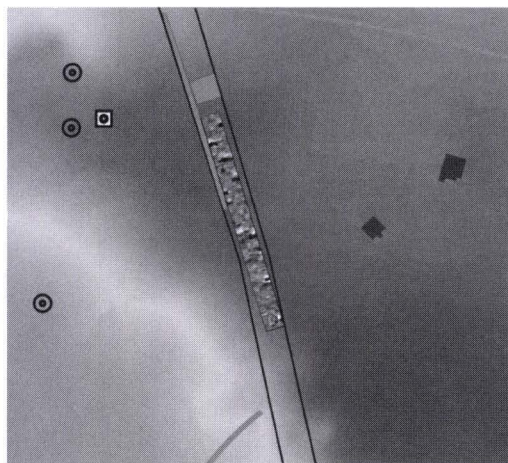


Fig. 4. Caransebeș – Balta Sărată. Plan of magnetometric prospects.

Perpendicular to the section, surveys were made from two to two meters, complexes of pre-historic dwelling were discovered, and surfaces were opened for the whole area to be researched (Fig. 5).



Fig. 5. Caransebeș – Balta Sărată. Air view on archaeological research in 2010.

In this archaeological campaign, numerous archaeological complexes have been discovered (dwellings, fireplaces, ritual pits, and pits). These are chronologically framed, some in the Neolithic – the Vinča culture, others in the Bronze Age – the Balta Sărată Cultural Group.

<sup>17</sup> The team was coordinated by Adrian Ardeț and formed by Dimitrie Pavel Negrei, Gheorghe Lazarovici, Lucia Carmen Ardeț and Caius Săcărin.

<sup>18</sup> The magnetometric research team of the West University of Timisoara was formed by Dorel Micle and Liviu Maruia.

The archaeological material discovered was extremely rich and varied, the most numerous being the Vinča, followed by that belonging to the Balta Sărată Cultural Group, but ceramic fragments from other eras and cultures were also discovered: the Eneolithic (the Tiszapolgár culture, the Sălcuța culture, the culture of the vessels With all the pastels), the Iron Age (Basarabi culture) and the early Middle Ages.

In the following study we will stop on a very important archaeological complex, named C11 and chronologically framed in the Bronze Age – the Balta Sărată Cultural Group.

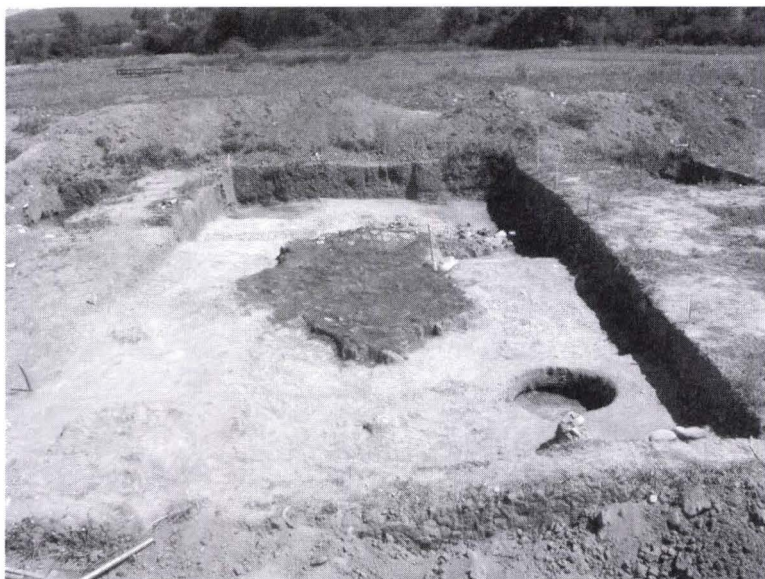


Fig. 6. Caransebeș – Balta Sărată. The archaeological complex C11



Fig. 7. Caransebeș – Balta Sărată 2010. The ritual pit discovered in the C11 complex.

Complex no. C11 / 2010 The ritual oval shaped grove, having the dimensions of  $0.80 \times 0.60$  m. It was identified in the 34B carcass at a depth of  $-0.40$  m. From the current ironing level, the bottom of the complex being reached at  $0, 60$  m. The pit fill is black, uniform, indicating a rapid filling. A portable oven (a *pyraunos* vessel)<sup>19</sup> was deposited in the pit.

<sup>19</sup> M.C. Inv. No. 58342.



Fig. 8. Caransebeș – Balta Sărată 2010. *Pyraunos* type oven discovered „in situ”.

*Pyraunos* type vessel, which holds only the bowl holder, which is  $31 \times 29$  cm in diameter, the height is 26.5 cm, the wall thickness is 12 mm, the paste is coarse, with pebbles and small, brown, burning good, shows secondary burning traces inside the vessel and above the ventilation holes.

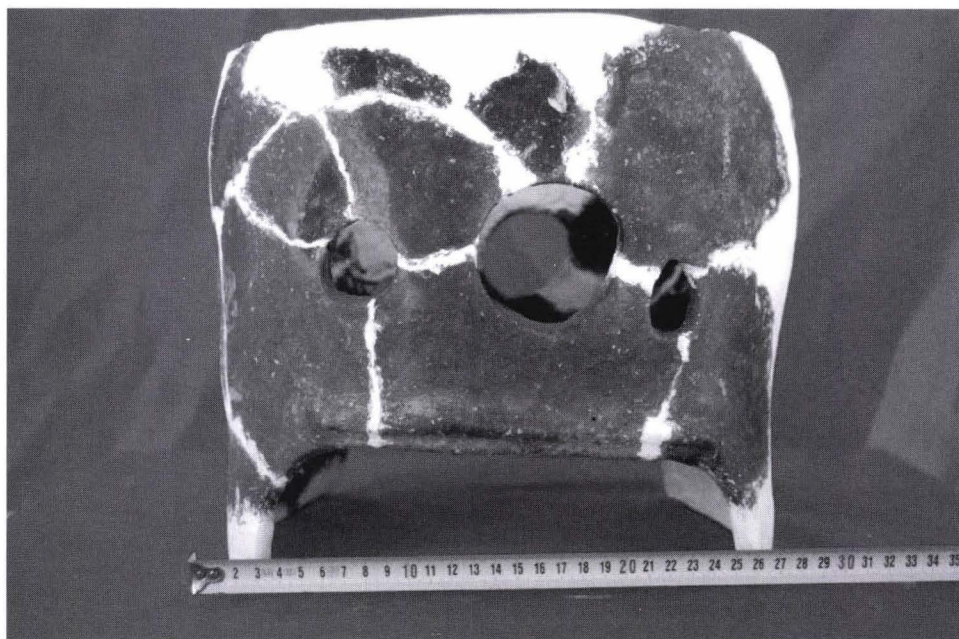


Fig. 9. Caransebeș – Balta Sărată. Portable oven „*pyraunos*” restored.

The support has a circular base with wide edge, arched walls and two trapezoidal aperture with rounded corners. Above it were three circular holes, the one in the middle being bigger. From the edge of the openings, a rectangular décor starts in the form of a strip.

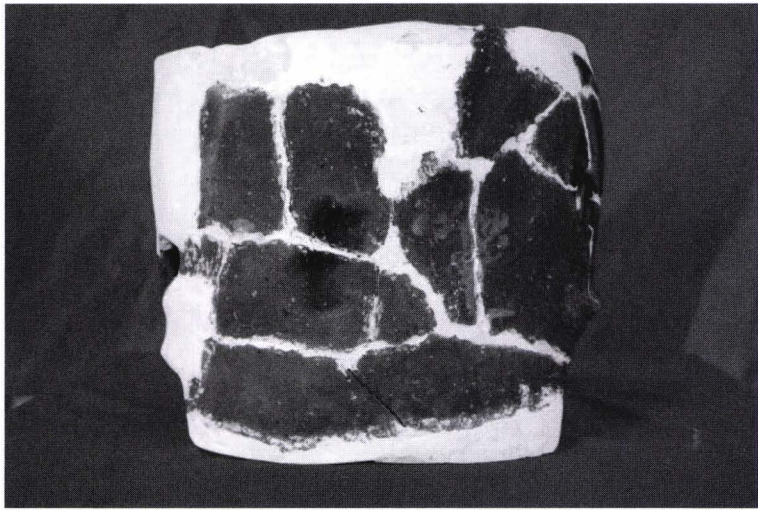


Fig. 10. Caransebeș – Balta Sărată. Portable oven type „*pyraunos*” view from the profile.

In the top of the bowl, the trapping marks are observed at the top. Ceramics fall into the category of coarse, the paste is brown brick with secondary burning traces. Inside the paste we find the presence of quartz fragments, limestone and small stone.

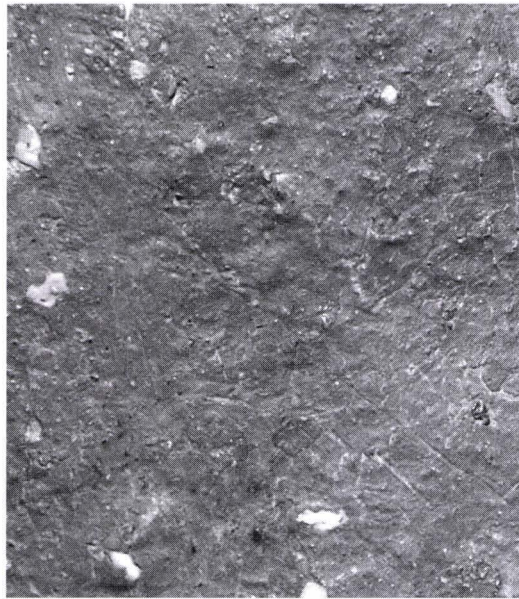


Fig. 11. Caransebeș – Balta Sărată. Petrological details on the portable oven.

From a typological point of view, the dish discovered at Caransebeș – „Balta Sărată” falls within type 2 of the „portable oven”, respectively „Portable oven with built-in bowl”<sup>20</sup>, or in type A, subtype A1, respectively *pyraunoi* with built- A large combustion chamber and a few holes for ventilation<sup>21</sup>.

We have the best analogies in Șoimuș – Teleghi<sup>22</sup>, where three complexes (C 31, C 42 and C 300) were discovered with *pyraunos* vessels.

These complexes are considered cultic pits<sup>23</sup>.

<sup>20</sup> Fischl, Kiss, Kulcsár 2001, p. 126.

<sup>21</sup> Romsauer 2003, p. 27.

<sup>22</sup> Rîșcuță 2015. P. 40–80

<sup>23</sup> Rîșcuță 2015. P. 45–49

The author's discoveries avoided giving an accurate chronological framing of these findings, noting just that they belong to the late Bronze Age<sup>24</sup>. They believe that the Șoimuș-Telegi settlement belongs to the „Deva-Românești” horizon<sup>25</sup>, in this horizon being encountered elements of the cultural groups Balta Sărată, Igrîța, Cruceni, Belegiș and the culture of the tomb graves<sup>26</sup>.

In the cultural group Balta Sărată, in which we have the cultural discoveries from Caransebeș – Balta Sărată, no cellars have been discovered until now, or if they have been discovered in other sites, this group has not been published or even mentioned in -a southern.

In the eponymous settlement, we have a possible ritual pothole, which is interpreted by some authors as finding a bronze incineration tomb, but at the end of the study they do not rule out the possibility that this discovery is not a cremation tomb. Well a ritual deposition<sup>27</sup>.

In the Zuto Brdo – Gârla Mare culture we have analogies to Kopopište in Serbia, where, in a cultic grove, considered to have a funeral role<sup>28</sup>, a *pyraunos* vessel was discovered alongside other vessels. In the settlement of Tell from Moșorin – Feudvar<sup>29</sup>, belonging to the Vatina culture, there was discovered a portable oven, similar to the one from Balta Sărată.

At Uroi-Sighet, Hunedora County, a house pit was discovered in the Wietenberg culture area, a portabel oven similar in shape<sup>30</sup>. The authors call this complex C143<sup>31</sup>, which we consider to be a ritual plume, due to the fact that in this complex, next to the portable oven, there have been discovered several embedded vessels and a bird-shaped vessel<sup>32</sup>. It should be noted that the portabel ovens were rarely discovered in domestic pits, most of the discoveries being considered ritual or funeral.

The most interesting and important discovered in this complex is portabel oven *pyraunos* type. These ceramic types appear since the beginning of the Bronze Age, but they know a quantitative and qualitative increase in the middle and late middle of the bronze. This type, *pyraunos*, have different forms and have been discovered in a rather large area covering Romania; Hungary, Serbia and Macedonia<sup>33</sup>.

A portable oven with a barbecue or a built-in bowl represents a novelty brought by the bronze civilization to pottery production.

On the territory of Romania, this type of *pyraunos*, especially occurs in the middle and late middle of the Bronze Age, in Transylvania appears in the Ottoman, Suci de Sus, Wietenberg, Mureș and *Cehăluț* Cultural Group areas<sup>34</sup>. In Wallachia, such discoveries have appeared in the Tei culture<sup>35</sup>, and for Oltenia, Verbicioara and Žuto Brdo – Gârla Mare cultures.

In Banat there are very few discoveries of this type, some of which have a double wall (probably belonging to this category)<sup>36</sup> discovered in Moldova Veche being chronologically framed in the Vatina Culture. Another fragment of a *pyraunos* vessel was discovered at Cruceni – Módosi út belonging to the Cruceni – Belegiș culture<sup>37</sup>.

<sup>24</sup> Rișcuță 2015, p. 40

<sup>25</sup> Popa, Totoianu 2010, p. 226

<sup>26</sup> *ibidem*

<sup>27</sup> S. M. Petrescu 2000, p. 161–163

<sup>28</sup> D. Popović, 1998, p. 148; A. Vulpe, 2014, p. 14

<sup>29</sup> Bukvic 1991, p. 138

<sup>30</sup> Marc 2013, p. 119.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>32</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>33</sup> Fischl/Kiss/Kulcsár 2001, p. 129; Schuster/Comșa/Popa 2001, p. 46.

<sup>34</sup> Fischl/Kiss/Kulcsar 2001, p. 125–156

<sup>35</sup> Schuster/Comșa/Popa 2001, p. 46–47.

<sup>36</sup> Crăciunescu 2015, p. 131–138.

<sup>37</sup> Szentmiklosi 2010, p. 296–297, Pl. III/2.



The most important discovery in Banat being the portable oven, described above, belonging to the Balta Sărată Cultural Group, discovered in the eponymous settlement.

The general opinion is that these *pyraunos* vessels have a domestic utility, being used in food preparation, both indoors and outdoors, in open air or open spaces<sup>38</sup>.

The combination of the combustion chamber and the vessel itself combines several important functions. Thus, the existence of a combustion chamber allows for better fire maintenance, lower fuel consumption and directing of heat to the bottom and walls of the vessel. Circulation is provided by the rear opening of the installation and a variable number of circular apertures practiced at the joining of the two constituent elements of the assembly. Cooking becomes more economical and faster. Attaching the firebox allows you to move and place the entire plant as needed. G. Crăciunescu believes that this type of vessel was used especially when a group of people are traveling at a certain distance from the dwelling<sup>39</sup>.

Along with the discoveries in the settlements, this type of material has been deposited in pits, considering that these deposits have a special character, a cultic role.

Such discoveries of the portable oven deposited in a hole, and having a cultic character, as in the case of the discovery of the Sarta Balta, are numerous forces. This practice of ritually depositing these *pyraunos* pieces is found in the Ottoman<sup>40</sup>, Suciul de Sus<sup>41</sup>, Wietenberg<sup>42</sup>, Vatina<sup>43</sup> and Žuto Brdo – Gârla Mare<sup>44</sup> cultures.

The few discoveries made during the archaeological researches allow the establishment of links with beliefs or practices in the religious sphere. In the absence of visual or narrative sources, the spiritual life of archaic communities is difficult to reconstitute. Some pieces discovered in the archaeological context, as is the case with the discovery of the Balta Sărată, may be elements of the props used in cultural ceremonies, but these objects are not always recognized as such by archaeologists.

However, in some cases, the pieces brought to light suggest, by their own characteristics, to which the association is added in an archaeological context, that they were part of the inventory used in ceremonies with a magical-religious role. Thus, based on the analysis of the archaeological material found in the complex from Caransebeș-Balta Sărată, we can advance, as a working hypothesis, the fact that we are facing the ritual deposition of a portable oven used in ceremonies with a cultic role.

The *pyraunos* pieces, the altars and the firewalls, can be linked to the magic of fire. The fire seen through the wide open eyes and mouth of the *pyraunos* vessel, as well as the smoke coming out through the escape holes, could have a powerful effect on the assistance. It is not excluded that in these *pyraunos* plants, they have boiled different ingredients to obtain magical potions.

In view of the above, we consider the discovery at Balta Sarata to be cultic deposits.

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<sup>38</sup> Fischl/Kiss/Kulcsár 2001, p. 126; Crăciunescu 2015 p. 131; Rișcuță 2015 p. 45–46.

<sup>39</sup> Crăciunescu 2015, p. 138

<sup>40</sup> Bader 1978, p. 48.

<sup>41</sup> Bader 1978, p. 72

<sup>42</sup> Chidioșan 1980, p. 44; Boroffka 1994, p. 165–166.

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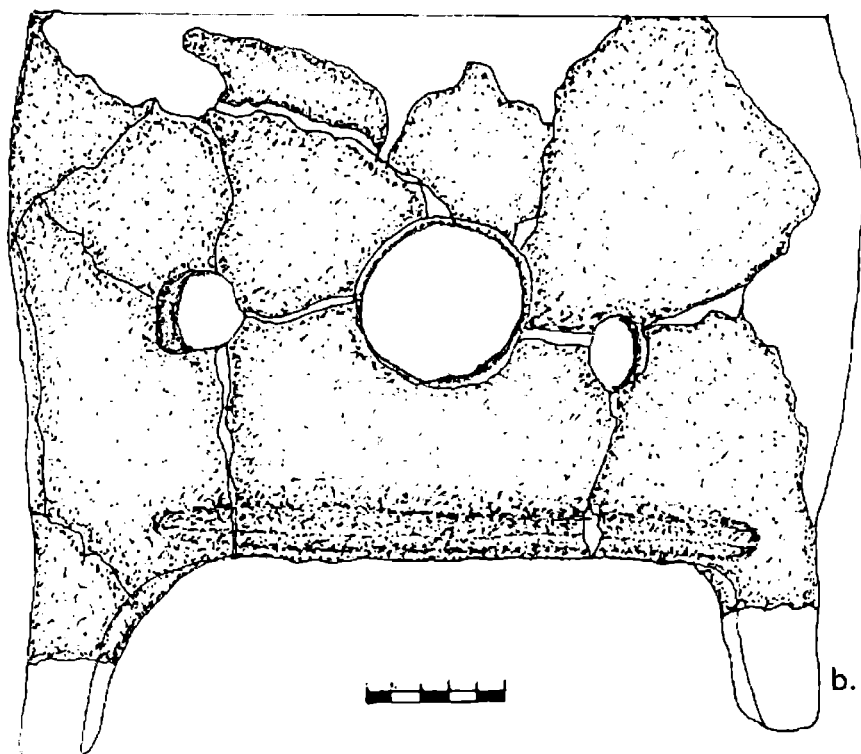
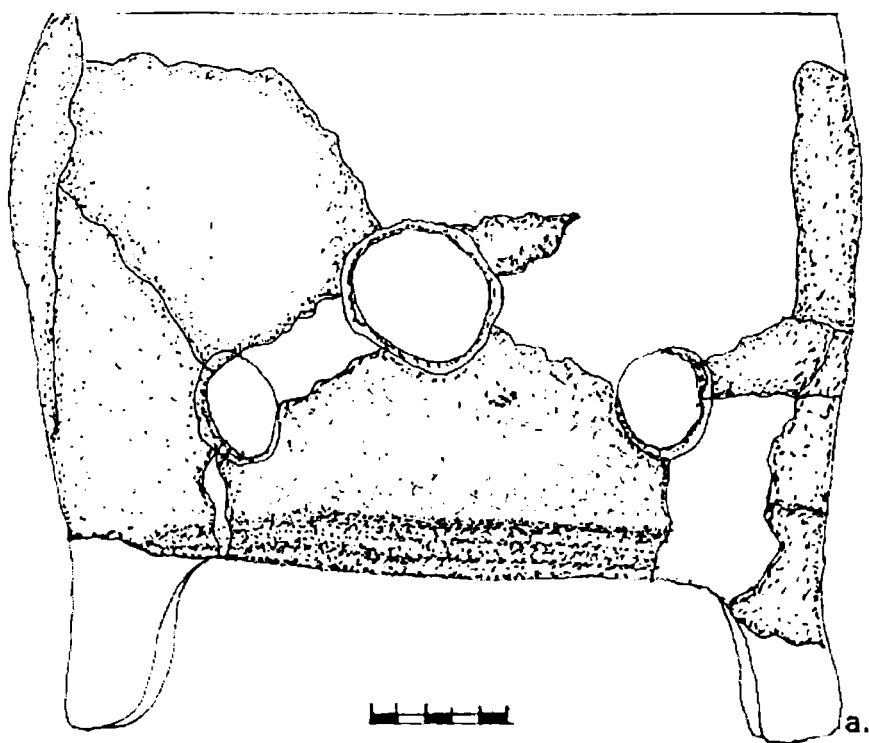
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## UN VAS DE CERAMICĂ RITUAL DE TIP PYRAUNOS DESCOPERIT LA CARANSEBEȘ – BALTA SĂRATĂ (Rezumat)

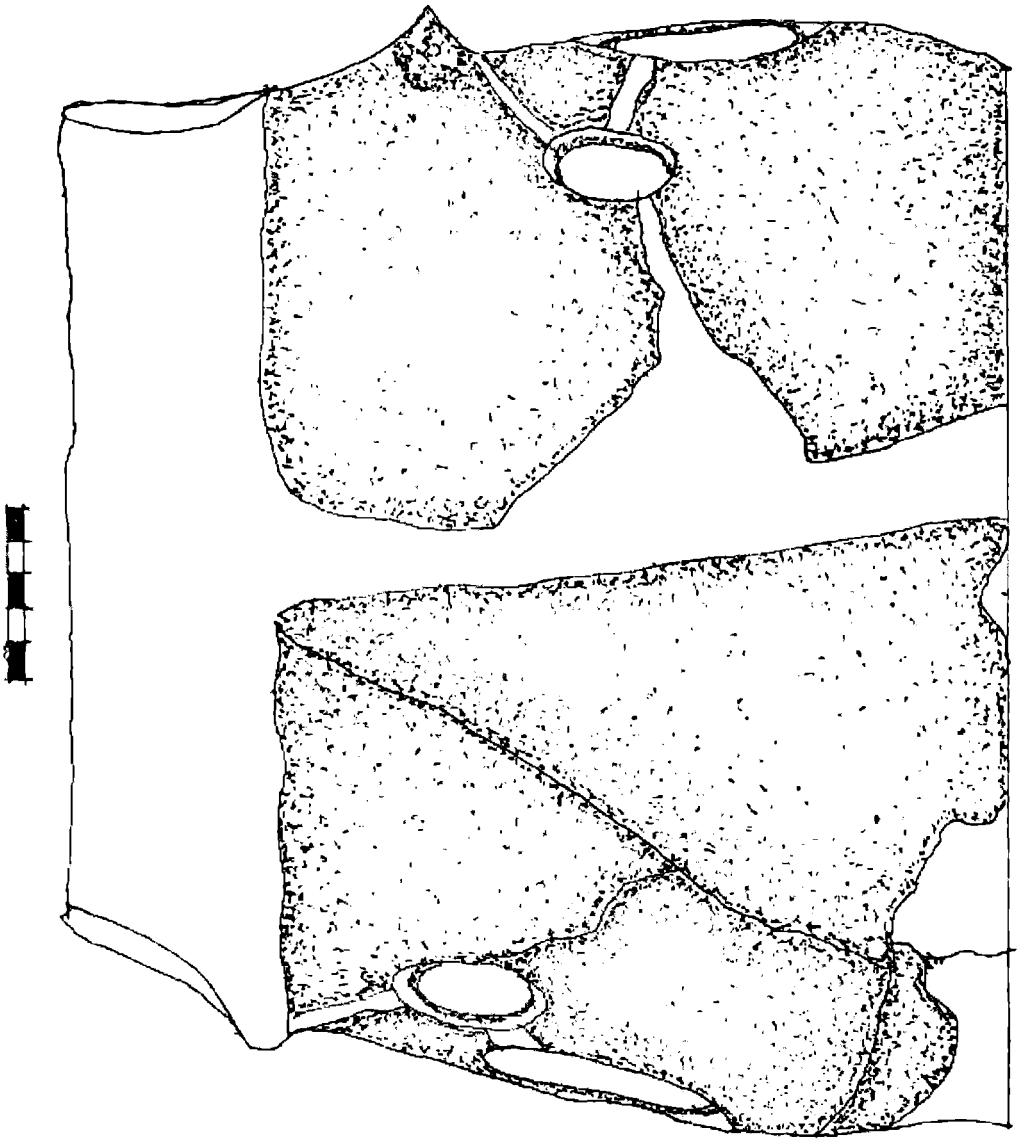
Vas de tip *pyraunos*, din care se păstrează doar suportul vasului, are diametrul de: 31 × 29 cm, înălțimea este de 26,5 cm, grosimea peretelui de 12 mm, pastă este grosieră, cu pietricele și mică, culoare brună, ardere bună, prezintă urme de ardere secundară în interiorul vasului și deasupra orificiilor pentru ventilație.

Suportul are baza circulară, cu marginea lătită, pereții arcuiți și două deschideri de formă trapezoidală, cu colțurile rotunjite. Deasupra acesteia se aflau trei orificii circulare, cel din mijloc fiind mai mare. Din marginea deschiderilor pornește un decor în relief, sub forma unei benzi. În interior, în partea superioară se observă urmele de prindere a vasului. Ceramica se încadrează în categoria celei grosiere, pasta este brun cărămizie cu urme de arsură secundară. În interiorul pastei constatăm prezența fragmentelor de cuarț, piatră de var și mică foarte fină.

Din punct de vedere tipologic, vasul descoperit la Caransebeș – “Balta Sărată” se încadrează în tipul 2 al „vetrelor portabile”, respectiv „vetre portabile cu vas încorporat”, sau în tipul A, subtipul A1, respectiv *pyraunoi* cu vas încorporat, o cameră de ardere mare și câteva găuri pentru asigurarea ventilației.



Pl. I. Pl. I. Caransebes – Balta Sărată. a. Portable oven, type *pyraunos*.  
Face A. b. Portable oven type *pyraunos*. Face B.



Pl. II. Caransebeș – Balta Sărată. Portable oven type pyraunos. Seen from the side.