

ABOUT AN ORNAMENTAL PATTERN OF THE INCRUSTED POTTERY CULTURE ALONG THE LOWER DANUBE

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During the Late Bronze Age, the Incrusted Pottery Culture extended in the Iron Gate region and along both banks of the Lower Danube. It is known in the Romanian studies mostly as Gîrla Mare culture. The recent excavations of some settlements with fixed stratigraphy belonging to the culture discussed as Ostrovul Corbului (Romania)¹⁾ and Baley (Bulgaria)²⁾ have given proof of distinguishing three phases in the culture development – an early (Br.A3-Br.B1), a classical (Br.B2-Br.C) and a late one (Br.D-Ha A1).

The ornamental system is a determinative element for the culture's style and differentiates it from all synchronous and neighbouring cultural phenomena. The presence of decoration on most of the clay objects, especially on those found in the graves (over 50% of the latter are richly ornamented) is a characteristics feature of the culture (tab. 1). The percentage of ornamental vessels is high and it is approximately identical for the classical and for the late phase of the culture.

The ornamental system is chronologically sensitive. A range of decorative patterns was typical for certain of its phases only, while others were used during the whole time span of the culture, as the percentage of their share in the decoration varied, or their appearance changed. Typical to the early phase only are the reticulated ornament, the wavy line lay in litzen technique, the covering of the whole vessel with horizontal lines only, and decoration that based on a pattern consisting of small circles forming a figure. During the classical phase of the culture seven new patterns appeared among which the M-shaped pattern, the big separate "S"-es and the meander are to be noted. Novelties for the late phase of the culture are the big geometrical patterns, the inside of which is often filled with incrustation paste, as well as the negative ornament bands and the flute. The patterns that are characteristic to the early phase only have their direct prototypes in the Transdanubian Incrusted Pottery culture, both in its Southern and Northern groups, and some of them are also to be found in the Madjarovce III and Vatyá III cultures. Very similar stylistic features and identical patterns are to be found in the early phase of the culture, and in Seremle and Bjelo Brdo cultures. The ornamentation system was completely developed during the classical phase of the culture. The leading patterns have no exact analogies in the neighbouring and synchronous cultural phenomena. Separate patterns only have their parallels in Verbicioara culture but they occupy a subordinate position in the ornamental system. It was not until the classical phase of the culture that a number of patterns (geometrical, spiral) which were leading for its decoration system,

had their analogies again in neighbouring cultures (Belegish-Cruceni II, Verbicioara V, Tei V).

The focus of this report is one of the leading ornamental patterns of the culture (table 2, 3), whose presence in the ornamental system is attested in the all three phases and to a great extent may be terminated as a culture indicator. The analyse is based on the finds from the settlements near Baley and Ostrovul Corbului and from necropolises at At³⁾ and Kovin⁴⁾ (Yugoslavia), Balta Verde⁵⁾ and Cârna⁶⁾ (Romania) and Orsoya⁷⁾ (Bulgaria).

The pattern studied is still unnamed in the literature, although it has inspired some scholars to describe the decoration of the culture as baroque. The pattern is constructed of lines – straight, arched and spiral. The circle is often seen among its constructive elements also. The technique of fulfilment is *furchestich*. The reproduction of the pattern is individual and creates the impression on the variety and uniqueness of the decoration of every object.

The pattern is attested in the decoration of the clay finds from the three culture phases. It is fixed among the early phase materials from Ostrovul Corbului, At and Kovin, among the objects from classical phase – the 4-th and 3rd building horizons in Baley, Cârna and Balta Verde, and among the finds from the late phase – the 2nd building horizon of Baley, and Orsoya. The percentage of its use during the different phases varies.

Two types of this pattern can be distinguished on the basis of its construction. **Type 1** (tab. 2) has two variants: 1a – the lateral spiral lines are not plotted and 1b – the spiral of lateral lines is turned inside.

Type 1 is registered in sites that belong to the early phase of the culture – At, Ostrovul Corbului, Kovin. It is evidenced also (in both of its variants) in Szeremle⁸⁾ and Bjelo Brdo – Dalji cultures⁹⁾ as well as theirs preceding Transdanubian Incrusted Pottery culture of whose southern group it is typical¹⁰⁾. The latter is ground to suppose that the Incrusted Pottery culture along the Lower Danube is genetically linked with Transdanubian Incrusted Pottery culture and the former reproduces in its decoration some motives that are culturally determinative for the latter. So this is an additional argument to the hypothesis, that there is a synchronisation between the early phase of Gârla Mare culture and Szeremle and Bjelo Brdo – Dalji cultures. Yet another support to this thesis is the absence of the pattern from the decorative variety along the Middle Danube during next period.

Type 2 is characterized by its complicated treatment of the spiral. It is also known in two variants (table 3): 2a – the spiral is turned inside and 2b – the spiral is turned outside. It is impressive, that unlike type 1b, type 2a is rather complicated by using certain elements and their composition and by the compound forming of the lateral spirals. In the sites where type 2a is registered it is rather an exception than a rule. Type 2 is discovered in sites dating from the classical or from the late phases. For the period of time synchronous with the classical phase of the culture, the pattern is not evidenced in the decorative variety of any of the neighbouring cultural phenomena. Type 2 can be regarded as determinative and distinguishing cultural element.

The quantitative share of the pattern in the decoration of the clay objects varied during the separate phases of the culture. While it has been a main element of the ornamental composition on all kinds of clay objects during the early phase, in the classical phase it ranked the fourth and was used only on two sorts of finds – bowls and amphora-like vessels (tabl. 4). With all kinds of finds that have the pattern laid on them, its position is strictly defined – it is always on the body of the vessel, being an element of the main ornamental belt composition. The composition consists of four elements, the patterns used being two. The most frequently found composition was variant of the classical phase, when the studied pattern was combined with M-shaped pattern. Its presence in the late phase was completely sporadic and in Orsoya necropolis it is represented on a single object. The quantitative results here presented are mainly based on the published materials from necropolises, but the same tendency is fixed when comparing the finds from different horizons of Ostrovul Corbului and Baley.

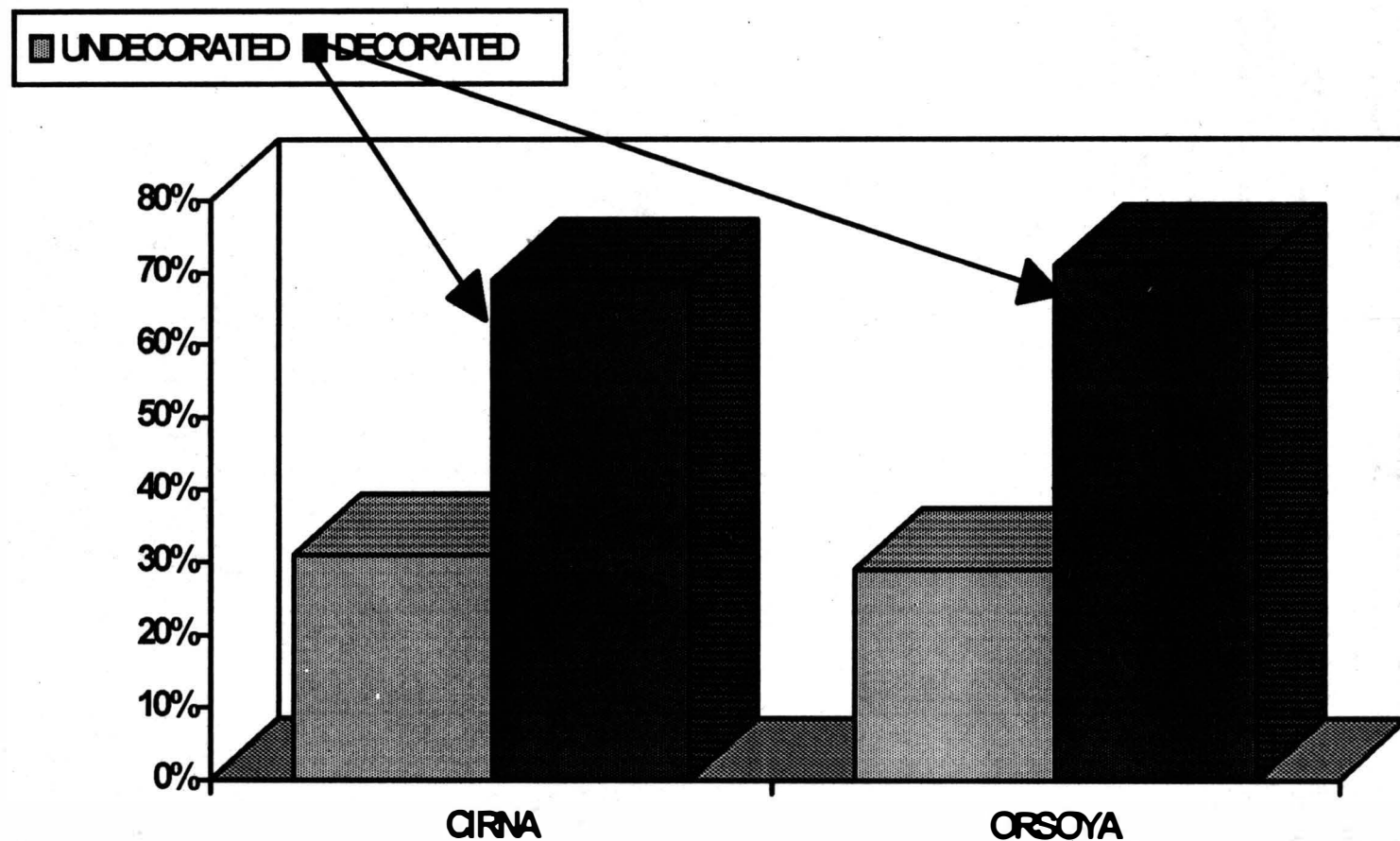
The established changes of the pattern in the course of the development of the culture, as well as the decrease of its percentage in the decorative variety, are one of the evidences for the ways of formation of its ornamental system. In the early phase the latter preserved to a great extend the individual elements, the compositions and their percentage, typical for the Transdanubian Incrusted Pottery culture. In the course of the development of the culture the pattern was transformed and elaborated gradually losing its importance till its use during the late phase became sporadic.

The decoration, and in particular its leading patterns among which is also the pattern herein briefly studied, as a style-determining and chronologically sensitive element of the Lower Danube Incrusted Pottery culture, is one of the indicators of the alteration of the latter during the different phases of its development in the area occupied by it. During the early phase the culture spread along the two banks of the Danube river. To the North it reached the region of the town of Vrsac, to the West – the Morava River, and to the East – Iron Gate. The most eastern registered monument dating from the early phase of the culture, is Ostrovul Corbului. During its classical phase the culture occupied a wide area, spreading not only to the West but also far to the East of Iron Gate. In the West and North its area was partially occupied by the Belegish-Cruceni culture developed on the basis of Vatina culture. The eastern boundary of the culture was marked by the Ogosta River. Its southern and northern boundaries coincided with the outlines of the Danubian strip. During the late phases of development of the culture, its area was largely confined to the West, and the area occupied by it spread mostly to the East of Iron Gate.

NOTES

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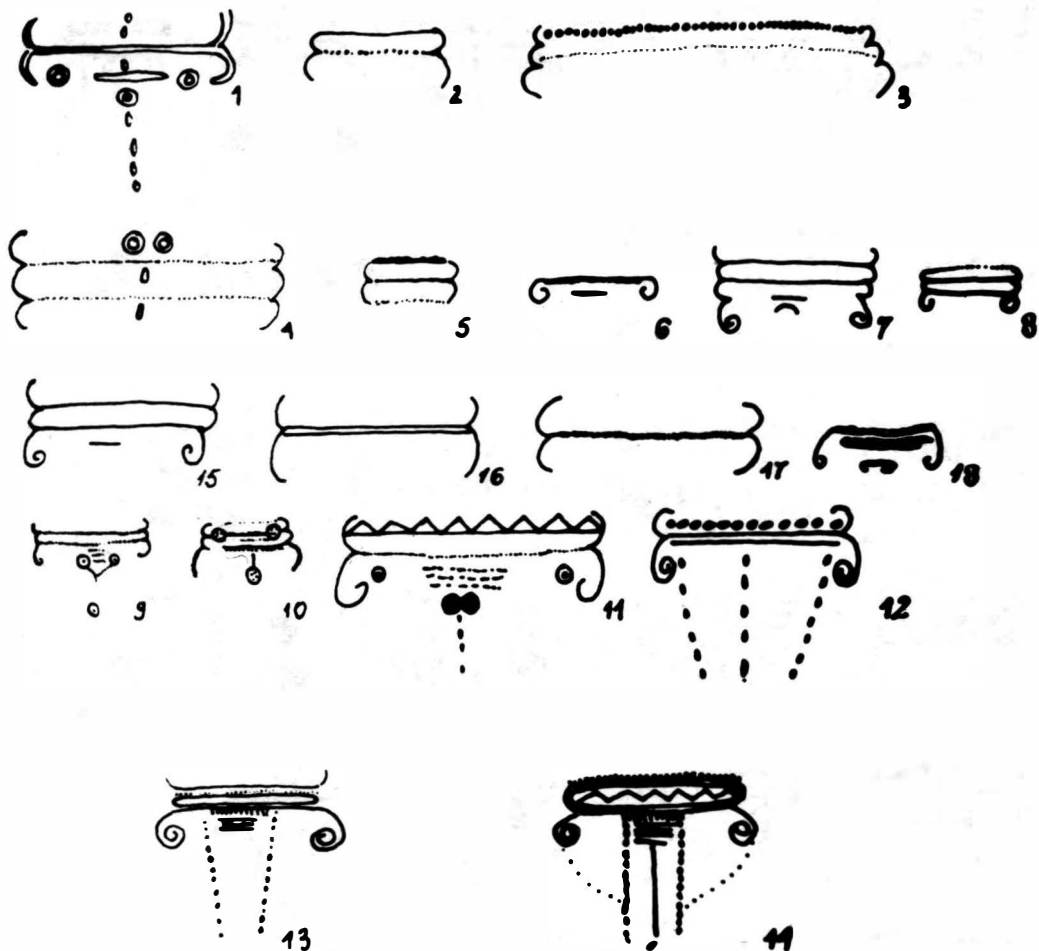
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Tab.1. The percentage of the clay objects in the culture.

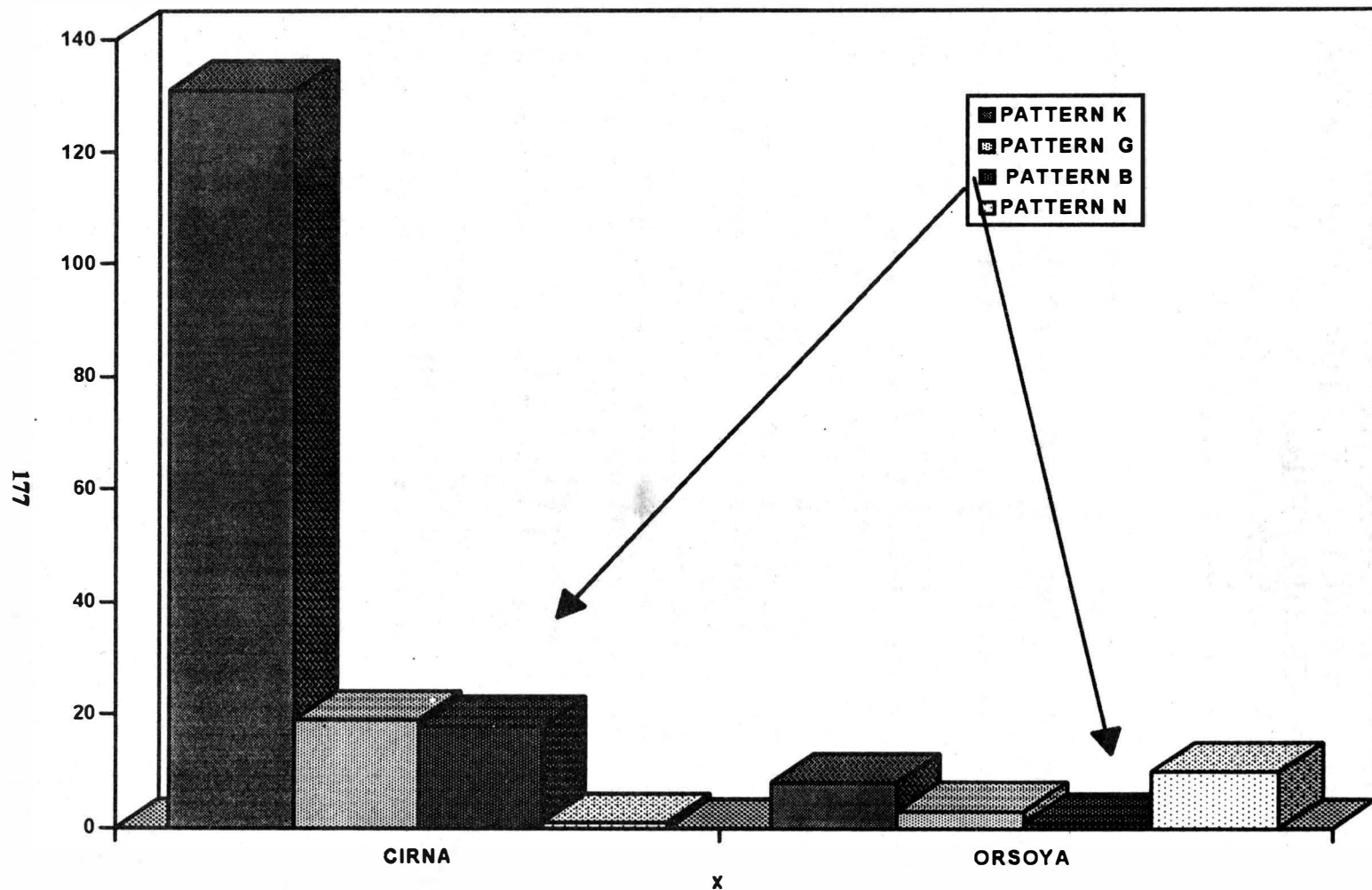


Tab.2. The ornamental pattern of the culture. Type 1.



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Tab.3. The ornamental pattern of the culture. Type 2.



Tab.4. The precentage of the patterns of the clay objects of the culture.