

## IRON AGE GIRL IN A BRONZE AGE PIT? A CHILD BURIAL OF THE CIUMBRUD CULTURAL GROUP FROM OROSIA (HU: MAROSOROSZI), MUREŞ COUNTY

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Adrian URSUȚIU

Institutul de Arheologie și Istorie Artei, Cluj-Napoca, Romania

e-mail: ursutiu@yahoo.com

Malvinka URÁK

Institutul de Arheologie și Istorie Artei, Cluj-Napoca, Romania

e-mail: urak.malvinka2@yahoo.com

**Abstract:** *The rescue excavation of a Late Bronze Age settlement led to the discovery of a pit, containing the skeletal remains of an Infans I female. The vessels and personal ornaments placed as grave goods date the discovery to the 6<sup>th</sup> -5<sup>th</sup> centuries B.C.*

*The type of feature – a pit – used for inhumation purposes, its peculiar positioning within the topography and context of a Late Bronze Age settlement, and its exceptional characteristics, when compared to the other archaeological contexts of the Late Bronze Age settlement, indicate a special kind of burial.*

**Rezumat:** *Cercetarea arheologică preventivă din cadrul unei aşezări de epoca bronzului a dus la descoperirea unei gropi, care conţinea scheletul unui copil, Infans I, prezentând caracteristici feminine. Vasele şi bijuteriile depuse ca inventar funerar se datează în secolele VI-V a.Chr, însă forma complexului, alături de poziţionarea sa în contextul locuirii din epoca bronzului conferă un caracter aparte descoperirii funerare analizate.*

**Keywords:** *Iron Age, Middle Mureş Valley, skeletal remains, Ciumbrud cultural group.*

**Cuvinte cheie:** *Epoca fierului, Valea Mureşului Mijlociu, resturi osoase, grupul Ciumbrud.*

### INTRODUCTION

Preceding the Transylvania Motorway construction works, between August and September 2016, a team of researchers from the Institute of Archaeology and Art History in Cluj-Napoca carried out rescue excavations between Luduş and Iernut (Mureş County), uncovering five prehistoric sites. One site was occupied by a settlement which, amongst other features, also revealed the burial that is the subject of our present paper and is situated south of the Orosia village, on the high terrace of the Mureş River. It has natural boundaries on three sides. In the north, the valley of a stream marks its limit, while the western and southern borders are set by the Mureş floodplain (Pl. 1/1-2). The absolute altitude of the plateau is around 300 m, approximately 30 m above the flood plain. This placement offers a great visibility over the region (Pl. 1/1-2). The archaeological features covered a surface of 4.2 ha, and mainly consisted of Late Bronze Age household pits, some of them being turned into refuse pits. Out of the total number of 173 archaeological structures (also counting four Middle La Tène features), the pit to be presented in the following pages is the only recorded unit belonging to the chronological sequence of the sixth and fifth centuries B.C, the so called Ciumbrud cultural group<sup>1</sup>. Its uniqueness lies not only in the dating, but in its content as well. The relatively well preserved

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<sup>1</sup> For an understanding of the term, see Vasiliev 1980; Vulpe 1970; Vulpe 2010.

skeletal remains of an Infans I girl were placed at the bottom of the pit. The feature, conventionally referred to with the no. 09 excavation ID, was located at a seven meter distance from the north-eastern boundary of the researched area (Pl. 1/3). However, we cannot rule out the possible existence of a contemporary cemetery outside the researched perimeter, as the rescue excavation was confined within the limits set by the motorway construction project.

## DESCRIPTION OF FINDS

Once the topsoil was mechanically removed, the archaeological features were outlined by the different color of their fill, which was easily retraceable in the grayish yellow sandy clay, the geological subsoil. The no. 09<sup>2</sup> feature, with the upper contour shaped as an oval, had a north-south orientation. The walls with undercut edges resulted in an hourglass-shaped pit (Pl. 2/1) with an uneven bottom. The diameter of the opening was relatively large, measuring  $0.99 \times 0.89$  m. The bottom was tighter, having  $0.66 \times 0.58$  m. At the point where the walls were undercut, the recorded measurements were  $0.81 \times 0.76$  m. Its maximum depth was of 0.56 m, as measured from the identification level. The fill of the pit suggested a single phase, the one consisting of a dark brown, loose soil, with charcoal and adobe pigments. The surface scraping revealed the presence of a clay spindle whorl (Inv. No. 13.092<sup>3</sup>, Fig. 1/9, Pl. 3/5), and the gradual removing of the fill also exposed some Bronze Age pottery fragments, almost certainly in a secondary position.

At the bottom of the pit, the remains of a human skeleton were observed laying in anatomical connection. The body was crouched, leaned on its right side, with the chin touching the right shoulder. The arms were elongated beside the body. The long bones were relatively well preserved, whereas the small ones were in an advanced state of weathering. The skeleton had a south – north orientation, with the head to the south (Pl. 2/2).

As grave goods, two ceramic vessels were placed right in front of the deceased. The bowl with inverted rim and four knobs (Inv. No. 13.078; Fig. 1/12; Pl. 3/7) had an almost central positioning inside the pit (Pl. 2/2.1) and the truncated cup with raised handle (Inv. No. 13.079; Fig. 1/11; Pl. 3/6) was placed in a cavity delimited by the bottom and the undercut wall of the pit (Pl. 2/2.2). The soil surrounding the neck was scattered with different types of beads (Pl. 2/2.8-2.10), suggesting a necklace. Following their recovery, 112 whole pieces and several fragments of undecorated, cylindrical beads (Inv. No. 13.086; Fig. 1/10; Pl. 4/1), a spherical glass bead with little knobs (Inv. No. 13.087; Fig. 1/3; Pl. 4/3), five pieces of yellow, conical, glass paste sticks (Inv. No. 13.088; Fig. 1/1; Pl. 4/2) and two fragments of very small bluish glass shards (Inv. No. 13.089; Fig. 1/2) were identified. Near the femora and the poorly preserved pelvic bones an iron object (Inv. No. 13.083; Fig. 1/8; Pl. 3/1) was unearthed along with four decorated kaolin beads (Inv. no. 13.084; Fig. 1/5a, Pl. 4/4; Inv. no. 13.085; Fig. 1/5b; Pl. 4/7; Inv. no. 13.090; Fig. 1/5c; Pl. 4/5; Inv. no. 13.091; Fig. 1/5d; Pl. 4/6). Not far from these finds four fragments (Pl. 2/2.5) of a bronze saltaleone (Inv. No. 13.082; Fig. 1/4; Pl. 3/4) were observed. On the western side of the body, in the pelvic area, surrounding the poorly preserved bones of the left wrist (Pl. 2/2.3-2.4), two twisted bronze wire bracelets with overlapping, conical terminals were observed (Inv. No.13.080-13.081; Fig. 1/6-7, Pl. 3/2-3).

<sup>2</sup> The spatial coordinates of the feature are given in STEREO 70, and indicate the two ends of the drawing axis: A = X: 550538.342; Y: 434554.176; Z: 303.219; B = X: 550538.217; Y: 434555.282; Z: 302.222.

<sup>3</sup> For the time of processing, the archaeological material was stored at the IAIAC, to be transported and deposited to the Mureș County Museum under the inventory nos. 13.078-13.091.



Fig. 1. Inventory of the burial.

## DESCRIPTION OF THE GRAVE GOODS

### 1. Bowl with inverted rim (Inv. no. 13.078; fig. 1/12; Pl. 3/7)

Hand-made bowl with inverted rim, with four knobs placed on the maximum diameter of the vessel. The execution of the pottery was not accurate and the shape is slightly asymmetric, because the bottom is off-center. The outer surface shows traces of a sloppy burnishing. Trimming and smoothening marks are visible at the interior. The exterior color is an uneven cappuccino, while the inner side is brownish-grayish black. Irregularities are palpable on the surface; holes and cracks are visible as well. Silver mica and fine tempered sand were added to the paste, which was poorly mixed. The brick red spots on the bottom are the result of secondary burning.

Measurements: upper diameter: 18 cm; lower diameter: 8.5 × 9 cm; height: 7.6–9.1 cm; thickness of the wall: 0.8 cm.

### 2. Cup with raised handle (Inv. no. 13.079; fig. 1/11; Pl. 3/6)

Hand-made, conical mug with missing raised handle. The broken surface of the handle was smoothened while the artifact was still in use. The handle had a round section. The firing is uneven, as the interior surface was affected by an oxygen-rich firing, and the exterior coloring accounts for the opposite situation. The color of the smoothened surface is varying from brick red and cappuccino to dark grayish brown. Quartzitic sand and mica are visible in the paste.

Measurements: upper diameter: 11.5 cm; lower diameter: 6.5 cm; height: 6.9 cm; thickness of the wall: 0.7 cm.

### 3. Twisted wire bracelet with conical extremities (Inv. no. 13.080; fig. 1/6; Pl. 3/2)

Twisted bronze wire bracelet with overlapping extremities, forming an almost perfect circle. Undecorated.

Measurements: diameter: 3.7 × 4; round section of 0.2 cm; weight: 2.7 g.

### 4. Twisted wire bracelet with conical extremities (Inv. no. 13.081; fig. 1/7; Pl. 3/3)

Twisted bronze wire bracelet with overlapping extremities forming an almost perfect circle. The thicker end is decorated with oblique incisions, resulting in a braided motif.

Measurements: diameter: 3.85 × 4 cm; round section of 0.15 × 0.2 cm; weight: 3g.

### 5. Saltaleone (Inv. no. 13.082; fig. 1/4; Pl. 3/4)

Bronze fragmentary saltaleone shaped through a hammering technique.

Measurements: diameter: 0.4 cm; weight: 2.3 g.

### 6. Deteriorated ring (Inv. no. 13.083; fig. 1/8; Pl. 3/1.)

Fragmentary iron ring with a round cross-section.

Measurements: diameter: 4.3 × 4.4 cm; weight: 5.2 g.

### 7a. Conical bead with grooved decoration (Inv. No. 13.084; fig. 1/5a; Pl. 4/4.)

A well preserved kaolin bead with conical shape, decorated with vertical grooves. Chalk white. Lusterless.

Measurements: upper diameter: 0.8 cm; lower diameter: 1.4 cm; height: 0.7 cm; weight: 1.1 g.

### 7b. Conical bead with grooved decoration (Inv. No. 13.085; fig. 1/5b; Pl. 4/7.)

Deteriorated kaolin bead with an initial conical shape, decorated with vertical grooves. Chalk white. Lusterless.

Measurements: upper diameter: 1 cm; lower diameter: 1.2 × 1.1 cm; height: 0.7 cm; weight: 0.6 g.

### 7c. Conical bead with grooved decoration (Inv. No. 13.090; fig. 1/5c; Pl. 4/5.)

Conical bead made of kaolin, with vertically grooved decoration. Its bottom side shows green coloration as a result of the contact with a bronze object. Chalk white. Lusterless.

Measurements: upper diameter: 0.8 cm; lower diameter: 1.2 × 1.4 cm; height: 0.9 cm; weight: 1.2 g.

7d. *Conical bead with grooved decoration* (Inv. No. 13.091; fig. 1/5d; Pl. 4/6.)

Deteriorated bead with an initial conical shape with vertical grooves, made out of kaolin paste. Its bottom side shows green coloration as a result of the contact with a bronze object. Chalk white. Lusterless.

Measurements: upper diameter: 0.9 cm; lower diameter: 1.2 cm; height: 0.8 cm; weight: 0.8 g.

8. *Undecorated cylindrical beads* (Inv. No. 13.086; fig. 1/10; Pl. 4/1)

112 beads made of glass paste, with cylindrical shape, and different pastel colors. 21 of them are light-bluish green, six are chalk white, and 85 have a yellowish beige color. Lusterless.

Measurements: diameter: 0.2–0.4 cm; thickness: 0.15–0.25 cm; total weight: 3.3 g.

9. *Spherical bead with knobs* (Inv. No. 13.087; fig. 1/3; Pl. 4/3)

Glass bead of spherical shape, with six knobs placed in zigzag on the margins. Yellowish-white color, nacreous surface.

Measurements: maximum diameter: 0.9; height: 0.6 cm; weight: 0.7 g.

10. *Conical sticks* (Inv. No. 13.088; fig. 1/1; Pl. 4/2)

Five imperforated conical sticks with round section made of yellow, lusterless glass paste.

Measurements: diameter: 0.2 cm; length: 0.7 cm; total weight: 0.1 g.

11. *Glass fragments* (Inv. No. 13.089; fig. 1/2)

Two small fragments of transparent, light blue glass shards of an unidentified object.

## ANTHROPOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF THE SKELETON<sup>4</sup>

The subadult skeleton shows a fairly good degree of preservation, both with regard to osseous inventory and quality of tissue. Based on dental development<sup>5</sup>, the age at death was estimated between 12 and 18 months, with a slightly lower value recorded when looking at long bone length (between 6 and 12 months)<sup>6</sup>. A number of 22 teeth were recovered, out of which 11 are deciduous erupted teeth, 7 are deciduous unerupted teeth, and the remaining 4 are permanent unerupted teeth. No pathological features were identified on the dentition, including hypoplastic defects. Out of the seven long bones available for analysis, the right tibia and both femora showed slight periosteal inflammation at the site of muscle attachment. Extended areas of abnormal porosity and inflammation were identified on the cranial bones. Though the exocranial surface shows no defects, hair on end lesions were noted on the endocranial surface, particularly on the parietal and occipital bones. Both orbital roofs display active *cribra orbitalia*, with layers of new bone deposited on the orbital surface. Abnormal porosity was seen on the sphenoid, while the zygomatic bone was not recovered. A particular finding was the obturation of the left maxillary sinus with deposits of spongy new bone, compared with the right sinus which shows no pathological changes. Abnormal porosity was also seen on the metaphyses of the superior and inferior long bones.

The skeletal lesions documented on the cranial elements, particularly the hair on end lesions, *cribra orbitalia* and new bone formation in the sinus cavity, are nonspecific skeletal responses which are suggestive for multiple conditions. The changes seen in the sinus cavity

<sup>4</sup> We would like to express our gratitude to Claudia Radu (Faculty of History and Philosophy, BBU, Cluj, claudia.radu20@gmail.com) for the help provided with the analysis of the osteological material.

<sup>5</sup> Buikstra, Ubelaker, 1994, 51.

<sup>6</sup> Stloukal, Hanakova, 1978.

are pointing to respiratory disease, though lack of associated lesions on the ribs, vertebrae and scapula suggest the disease was limited to the upper respiratory tract. In ethnographic studies, maxillary sinusitis was associated with smoke exposure from indoor cooking<sup>7</sup>. Women and young children are most affected due to their increased time spent indoor and consequent exposure to pollutants. *Cribra orbitalia* further adds to the poor health status of this individual, as it suggests nutritional deficiencies in the form of either iron or vitamin B deprivation<sup>8</sup>. Hair-on-end lesions are a result of meningeal haemorrhaging, with diverse etiologies, including scurvy<sup>9</sup>. As the differential diagnosis includes limited periosteal reactions on the long bones, porosity on the metaphyseal surfaces, patches of new bone formation on the orbital vault, porosity on the sphenoid bone and hair on end lesions, scurvy is a very likely diagnosis<sup>10</sup>. Furthermore, the possibility of co-morbidity cannot be entirely ruled out, as the child could have suffered simultaneously from maxillary sinusitis and scurvy, both as a response to faulted environment and nutrition.

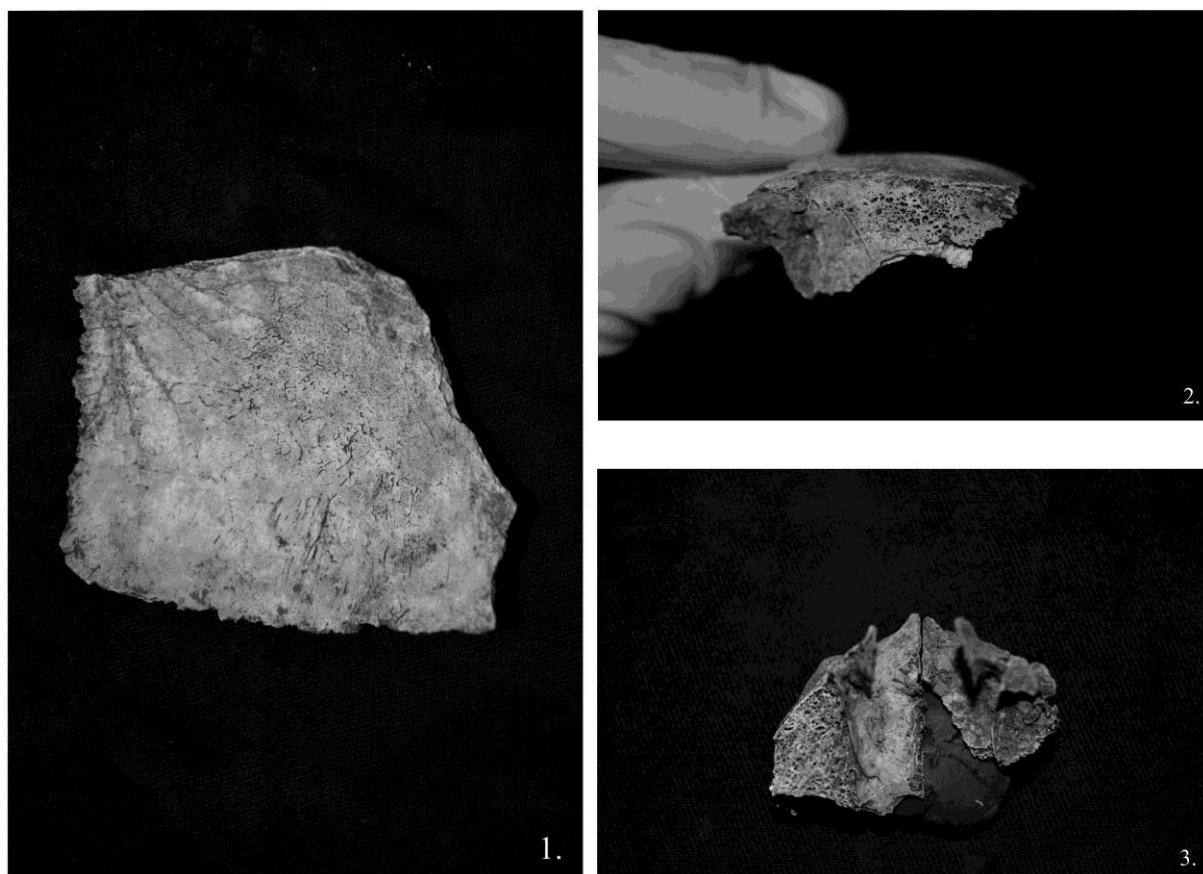


Fig. 2. 1. Endocranial surface of the parietal bone showing hair-on-end lesions; *Cribra orbitalia* left orbital roof; The interior of the maxillary sinuses, with the left one showing deposits of new bone formation, while the right one has normal appearance.

<sup>7</sup> Roberts, Manchester, 2005, 174-176.

<sup>8</sup> Walker et al. 2009, 115-116.

<sup>9</sup> Lewis 2004, 85.

<sup>10</sup> Klaus 2014, 35.



## ANALYSIS OF THE DISCOVERY<sup>11</sup>

### 1. The deceased

The bio-anthropological analysis of the skeletal remains does not only reveal information from the field of paleopathology, but also confers insights into the life and health condition of the deceased. From a biological point of view, the subject of our discussion is an Infans I girl. The observed pathological lesions are pointing at harsh environmental and nutritional conditions. The possibility of a simultaneous maxillary sinusitis and scurvy, as cause of death, is not excluded. Despite the fact that no contemporaneous settlements were unearthed in Transylvania, the information revealed by the investigation of same period settlements from North-Eastern Hungary, for instance, allows us to discuss the dwellings' architecture of the time. The pit-houses with indoor ovens are not unaccounted for in the settlements of the Alföld group<sup>12</sup>, so the correlation between the upper respiratory tract infections, triggered by smoke pollution, as a result of indoor cooking, is plausible. The scurvy as a second diagnosis on the other hand was observed in individuals belonging to very young age groups, with the first symptoms documented as early as eight months of age. It can be explained by nutritional disturbances or early weaning, both highly occurring phenomena in the case of past communities. Some consideration should be given also to the possible effects generated by the malnourishment of the mothers.<sup>13</sup>

On a different note, the analysis of the garment accessories reveals a perfect integration of the grave within the overall picture of the researched children burials<sup>14</sup>. Furthermore, it is one of the wealthiest graves of the sixth and fifth centuries B.C. in the region.

The twisted bronze wire rings with overlapping, conical ends is a characteristic<sup>15</sup>, but also controversial find of the Ciumbrud group. The question that presents itself is whether these jewellerys were used as hair locks or bracelets. The scientific controversy is augmented by the scarce number of publications revealing the dimensions and the exact location of these types of finds. In the case of our closest parallels, the hair locks from the grave no. 1 in Blaj (cat. no. 1) and grave no. 6 in Ozd (cat. no. 6), the exact positioning relative to the body was recorded: the vicinity of the mandible and/or under the skull. Based on the rings' location within the present grave, we can strongly argue for their employment as bracelets. Another argument is conferred by the age of the deceased (eight, maximum 16 months), that excludes the chances of long braided hair as coiffure. At the same time, judging by the size of our specimens, the assumption that the objects were originally manufactured as hair locks, but placed as bracelet on the small wrist of the deceased, should not be completely ruled out.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>11</sup> For the interpretation of the finds we opted for the five-step research method developed by L. Bonnabel (Bonnabel 2010, 101, fig. 2), thus placing the discovery into the context of the child burials from Transylvania. As a consequence, the presented analogies consist exclusively of infant graves of the Ciumbrud cultural group.

<sup>12</sup> Czifra 2006, 173.

<sup>13</sup> Brickley, Ives 2010, 45.

<sup>14</sup> See the inventory of each grave, presented in the catalogue.

<sup>15</sup> Vlassa 1961, 40, n. 9; Vasiliev, Zrínyi 1974, 113.

<sup>16</sup> In order to observe any kind of pattern, we pieced together the published information about the objects. All the following items were recovered from adult graves. Roska is the only researcher to publish the funerary finds as bracelets, referring to the oral information provided by the finder (Roska 1913, 234, 236). Unfortunately, we do not know the diameters of the artifacts. Reinecke, while publishing the

The bronze saltaleoni are frequent garment accessory of the analyzed graves. The grave no. 17 from Ciumbrud (cat. no. 5) and both graves from Ozd (cat. nos. 6 and 12) contained fragments belonging to this type of artifact. Based on their position within the grave, and on their association with beads, they are either interpreted as necklace components, when found around the neck and chest, or as bracelet elements, when near the wrist.<sup>17</sup>

The iron object discovered on the right area of the hip could be interpreted as a possible girdle or belt.<sup>18</sup> The child grave no. 1 from Blaj (catalog no. 1) provides a good analogy for the location of the object relative to the body.

The kaolin beads with conical shape and grooved vertical decoration were documented in the child grave no. 6 from Ozd (cat. no. 6). A bead of similar shape and decoration, but made of bronze was found in grave no. XVII from Ciumbrud (cat. no. 5). Based on their place of discovery, often near saltaleoni fragments, the publishers of the Ozd cemetery considered these finds part of a bracelet.<sup>19</sup> The green corrosion on the back of two beads from our discovery indicates a similar situation. (Inv. no. 13.090; Inv. no. 13.091)

The undecorated kaolin beads with cylindrical shape were often uncovered in the Scythian-type burials. These were present in the graves no. 1 from Blaj (cat. no. 1), as well as the graves no. III and XVII from Ciumbrud (cat. nos. 3 and 5). They can appear in various quantities, ranging from a few pieces to large numbers. Their exclusive presence inside female burials was documented at the cemetery from Blaj, where in most of the cases were surrounding the neck and/or the head; thus, interpreted as necklace or diadem elements.<sup>20</sup>

A distinct aspect within the general context of the funerary inventory is set by the discovery of five yellow glass paste objects of conical shape, up to the present, unique finds of the Ciumbrud group.

## 2. The arrangement

The orientation and disposal of the body displays peculiarities, while the type and arrangement of the grave goods are following the general trend of the so-called Scythian-type burials.

Despite the fact that a uniform orientation and disposal of the body could not be observed in the cemeteries of the period, a tendency of placing the graves on a north-west – south-east axis – with the head pointing towards north-east – can still be noted. This is the case, with one exception, of all the graves from the Ciumbrud cemetery.<sup>21</sup> Nevertheless, cemeteries with totally random orientation, such as Blaj<sup>22</sup> or Ozd,<sup>23</sup> are also known, but the south – north orientation is not very common. The crouched general position of the body is a

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material from an accidentally discovered grave, mentioned the find as having 7 cm in diameter, without giving its exact positioning. Its circumference must be the reason behind his decision to name it an arm ring (Reinecke 1897, 16-17). The other discoveries, including those without details on their position, were published as hair locks. Their sizes are ranging between 4, 6 (Vasiliev 1972, 26), 5 (Kovács 1915, 258), 5.2 (Vasiliev 1972, 27) and 6 cm (Crișan 1965, 59).

<sup>17</sup> Vasiliev, Zrínyi 1974, 111.

<sup>18</sup> Vasiliev, Zrínyi 1974, 113.

<sup>19</sup> Vasiliev, Zrínyi 1974, 110.

<sup>20</sup> Vasiliev 1972, 45.

<sup>21</sup> Ferenczi 1966, 51-52.

<sup>22</sup> Vasiliev 1972, 39-40.

<sup>23</sup> Vasiliev, Zrínyi 1974, 101.



rare occurrence, with the supine position being the 'canonic' way of placing the body. This is, at least, the case of all the skeletons from Ciumbrud, with the exception of the grave no. XVII.<sup>24</sup> A burial with crouched or slightly flexed skeletons are grave no. 3 from Blaj, excavated in 1938, graves no. 1 and 4 from the excavation in 1968<sup>25</sup>, grave no. 8 from Cristești<sup>26</sup>, two burials from Gâmbaș<sup>27</sup> and grave no. 1 from Războieni.<sup>28</sup>

As grave goods, pottery vessels were placed on the upper-right side of the body. Two of the so called 'pottery tirades',<sup>29</sup> a frequent ceramic type, are also present in this case: the bowl with inverted rim and the cup with raised handle. The bowl, a well-known pottery type of the Early Iron Age, with minor variations regarding the number of the knobs placed on the maximum diameter, was often used as container for animal parts.<sup>30</sup> It was uncovered in the children graves no. III (holding animal bones) and XVII from Ciumbrud (cat. nos. 3 and 5), grave no. 12 from Ozd (cat. no. 7) and grave no. 6 (containing animal bones) from Teiuș (cat. no. 10). The semi-conical cup with raised handles is almost every time associated with bowls with inverted rims. These finds occur within children burials, such as graves no. III (two pieces), and XVII from Ciumbrud (cat. nos. 3 and 5), grave no. 38 from Sântana de Mureș (cat. no. 8), grave no. 7 from Târgu Mureș (cat. no. 9) and the grave no. 6 from Teiuș (cat. no. 10). It is possible that some of the cups had buttons on their handles, because several cases with missing handles have been documented<sup>31</sup> and the piece from Orosia is no exception.

### 3. The feature

At the moment of discovery the pit was considered one of the many Late Bronze Age household pits. Its placement (Pl.1/3), outline and fill were similar to several of the previously excavated features of the site. Moreover, the surface scraping and the first spits unearthed a clay spindle whorl and Late Bronze Age potsherds in the dark brown, loose soil, larded with charcoal and adobe pigments. All the signs were pointing to the secondary use of a storage pit for domestic waist.

When analyzing the shape of the feature a challenging situation presents itself. By reviewing the graves of the published funerary sites from Transylvania, we can observe the overwhelming majority of the rectangular burial pits (with or without rounded corners). Trapezoidal or slightly oval<sup>32</sup> graves were also recorded, but the hourglass-shaped pit, according to our knowledge, is still unaccounted for within the region. Settlement features with human remains, a well-known phenomenon of the earlier prehistory, were reported for a number of sites around North-Eastern Hungary. Here relatively large settlements have been excavated, and pits containing human parts<sup>33</sup> or complete skeletons<sup>34</sup> were identified. However, none of the mentioned pits contained inventory that can be considered grave offering.

<sup>24</sup> Ferenczi 1966, 54.

<sup>25</sup> Vasiliev 1972, 38.

<sup>26</sup> Crișan 1965, 59.

<sup>27</sup> Pârvan 1926, 352.

<sup>28</sup> Crișan 1965, 71-72, fig 22-23.

<sup>29</sup> Ferencz 1967, 23, 26.

<sup>30</sup> Ferenczi 1966, 71.

<sup>31</sup> Ferenczi 1967, 23.

<sup>32</sup> Ferenczi 1966, 52-54; Vasiliev 1972, 32.

<sup>33</sup> Scholtz 2007, 55; Király 2017, 7.

<sup>34</sup> Nagy 2007, 31; Patay 2007, 18; Rácz 2007, 37; Scholtz 2007, 55; Király 2017, 7.

#### 4. The site

As this is still an isolated find, it is not possible for us to make important statements regarding the chronological or spatial positioning of the feature. The existence of a cemetery or maybe a settlement somewhere in the north-eastern vicinity of the researched area it is not excluded. Concerning its placement on the river's first terrace, we have to underline the fact that it fits the general tendency of the period and region, as displayed for instance by the nearby cemeteries from Sântana de Mureș,<sup>35</sup> Târgu Mureș,<sup>36</sup> Cristești,<sup>37</sup> and Cipău-Ogra.<sup>38</sup> All of these were placed on the first or second terrace of the Mureș. The relatively small number of graves discovered in the aforementioned cemeteries does not allow final conclusions. However, we can easily notice that the children graves were not marginalized, but aligned with those of the adults.<sup>39</sup>

#### 5. The region

The Middle Mureș Valley was an intensely inhabited region of the Transylvanian Basin, rich in archaeological sites dating back to early prehistory. It was also a main artery for the sedentary or migrating population during the sixth and fifth centuries B.C. Consequently, an important, if not the biggest part of the Ciombrud-group discoveries is concentrated in this area<sup>40</sup>.

### CONCLUSION

The lack of similar finds within the area of the Ciombrud cultural group makes the present discovery a particular case.

The deceased, a girl in the first months of her earthly existence, was facing serious health problems and humble living conditions, even if the relatively rich inventory points to a seemingly wealthy familial background. A general tendency of the studied cemeteries, regarding the spatial positioning of the children graves, could not be witnessed, yet, their integration in burial groups, next to the adults, could still be observed. Thus, our feature is a singular find, up to the present. The choice of burying her in a feature not specially designed for this purpose, as all the signs are pointing to, is hard to be explained and understood in the lack of analogies.

The qualitative excavation, documentation and publication of the upcoming finds might serve a solution in the understanding of this yet unusual phenomenon within the Ciombrud cultural group.

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<sup>35</sup> Kovács 1912.

<sup>36</sup> Kovács 1915.

<sup>37</sup> Crișan 1965, 55-63.

<sup>38</sup> Vlassa 1961.

<sup>39</sup> Vasiliev 1972, pl. I, b.

<sup>40</sup> See Ghenghea 2014, 77, fig. 8.1

CATALOG<sup>41</sup> OF CHILDREN BURIALS DISCOVERED IN TRANSYLVANIA<sup>42</sup>1) **Blaj, Alba County, Grave no. 1.**

1. Unearthed in 1968 at the depth of – 0.30 m, the inhumation grave was part of a small cemetery. The outline and orientation of the grave were unspecified. Some long bones and the skull of an eight to ten years old child, crouched on her right side, were discovered. The head was placed to the east. Based on the inventory, the authors attributed the skeletal remains to a female.
2. A bowl with inverted rim, a grooved rib and two knobs, placed on the left side of the skull, with sheep bones inside and around it; a bi-truncated pot with two knobs, situated next to the bowl; twisted wire hair lock with conical endings, found under the mandible; 16 beads around the neck of the deceased (14 out of kaolin paste, one made of amber and one cast? in bronze); one iron ring and three perforated money cowry (*Cypraeamoneta*) between the femora and the basin; an unknown iron object retrieved from unknown position was also part of the discovered grave goods.
3. Vasiliev 1972, 22, pl. I; pl. II, a; pl. V, 1-9.

2) **Blaj, Alba County, Grave no. 5**

1. Inhumation grave excavated in 1968 as part of a small cemetery. The grave was destroyed by agricultural work. The only proof of its existence were the skull cap fragments of a child, recovered from the relative shallow depth of – 0,35 m.
2. Without funerary inventory.
3. Vasiliev 1972, 27, pl. IV/a.

3) **Ciumbrud, Alba County, Grave no. 3**

1. Excavated in 1958 inside a cemetery discovered following a grapevine plantation, the grave had a north-west – south-east orientation. The skeleton of an adult? female was lying on its back, accompanied by the cremated remains of a two to three years old child placed next to her left wrist, inside a conical cup. A second cup was covering the first vessel.
2. Biconical vessel with decorated upper body, next to the right humerus; fragment of an iron knife next to the biconical vessel; bowl with inverted rim, holding the bones of ruminants, in the vicinity of the waist; clay spindle whorl next to the left elbow; snail shells, glass and iron beads, as parts of a necklace, surrounding the neck.
3. Ferenczi 1965, 93, 98, fig. 3/4; fig. 8, nr. 3; fig. 8, nr. 36; fig. 9, nr.1; fig. 11, nr. 3-4; fig. 12; Ferenczi 1966, fig. 15

4) **Ciumbrud, Alba County, Grave no. 10**

1. The grave was discovered in 1958, in the cemetery accidentally revealed during earthworks. The inferior half of the east – west oriented grave was destroyed. In its undisturbed upper part two skulls were observed. Left to the preserved skull, scapula and humerus of an adult woman, the head and the ribs of a seven to eight years old child were observed.
2. Green, polished stone and a small fragment of adobe near the child's skull were the only grave goods.
3. Ferenczi 1965, 99-100; Ferenczi 1966, fig. 17/2.

<sup>41</sup> For the description of the graves we are using the following system: 1– brief presentation of the discovery; 2 – listing of the grave goods; 3 – bibliography.

<sup>42</sup> The present catalog includes all those funerary features which were interpreted as child burials by the authors of the cited publications. The estimation of the age and sex as outlined by the catalogue is based exclusively on the field observations of the excavating archaeologists, by evaluating the bones' length and the types of associated grave goods.

**5) Ciumbrud, Alba County, Grave no. 17**

1. Excavated in 1958, as part of the cemetery identified due to a grapevine planting. The grave with irregular shape nestled inside the slightly crouched skeleton of a child with north-west – south-east orientation. The upper limbs were twisted
2. A bowl with inverted rim decorated with grooves, containing small animal bones, close to the femur; conical cup with raised handle near the left knee; conical bronze bead with vertical grooves, a saltaleoni, and several beads made of white mealy paste in the chest area.<sup>43</sup>
3. Ferenczi 1965, 103-104, fig .8, nr. 18; Ferenczi 1966, fig. 17/3.

**6) Ozd, Mureș County, Grave no. 6**

1. Unearthed during excavation, the grave, with poorly visible outlines was part of a cemetery consisting of 16 graves, uncovered accidentally and partly the object of rescue excavation, between the years 1965 and 1971. The preserved skull and long bones are suggesting a north-west – south-east orientation of the body, belonging to an approximately six year old girl, laid on her back. The left femur is deformed, visibly shorter and curvier in comparison with the other.
2. Two small ceramic vessels and fragments of a third one, with a rabbit humerus right of the skull; four perforated money cowry (*Cypraeamoneta*) around the neck; a bronze hair lock with conical extremities under the mandible and a second one under the skull; three pieces of decorated kaolin beads next to proximal extremity of the right femur; five fragments of a saltaleone near the right wrist; two bronze rings next to the proximal extremity of the left femur, covering an iron blade; at relative distance from the right femur an iron knife with curved blade and another fragment of saltaleoni.
3. Vasiliev, Zrínyi 1974, 92, pl. IV/b; XI/3-21.

**7) Ozd, Mureș County, Grave no. 12**

1. Unearthed during excavation, the shallow grave with unidentifiable outline and orientation was part of a cemetery consisting of 16 graves, uncovered accidentally and partly the object of rescue excavation, between the years 1965 and 1971. Based on the length of the bones and on the inventory, the grave was attributed to a newborn girl, whose remains were poorly preserved.
2. Bowl with inverted rim, decorated with four knobs; bronze saltaleoni.
3. Vasiliev, Zrínyi 1974, 95, pl. XV/1-2.

**8) Sântana de Mureș, Mureș County, Grave no. 38**

1. In 1903, during the excavation of the migration period cemetery, a singular Iron Age grave with the poorly preserved skeletal remains of a child was unearthed. The grave had a west-north-west – east-south-east orientation. The body had an extended supine position.
2. Lead ring with thickened, open ends near the right temporal bone; conical cup with raised handle, next to the left hand.
3. Kovács 1912, 296-288, 47-49. kép

**9) Târgu Mureș, Mikszáth Kálmán street, Mureș County, Grave no. 7**

1. The excavations carried out in 1910 and 1911 have revealed a sixth and fifth century B.C. cemetery. Inside the west – east orientated grave the poorly preserved skeleton of a child was uncovered.
2. Small, biconical pot with four knobs, placed on the right side of the skull; cup with raised handle, situated between the pot and the skull.
3. Kovács 1915, 262-264, 27. kép 2-3; 32. kép 1-2.

<sup>43</sup> In the paper discussing the burial rite of the cemetery from Ciumbrud, the inhumation is accidentally mentioned as grave XVI (Ferenczi 1966, 54, referring to the fig. 17/3). However, based on the drawings and its earlier publication, there is no doubt that the author refers to grave XVII.

**10) Teiuș-Cetățuia, Alba County, Grave no. 6**

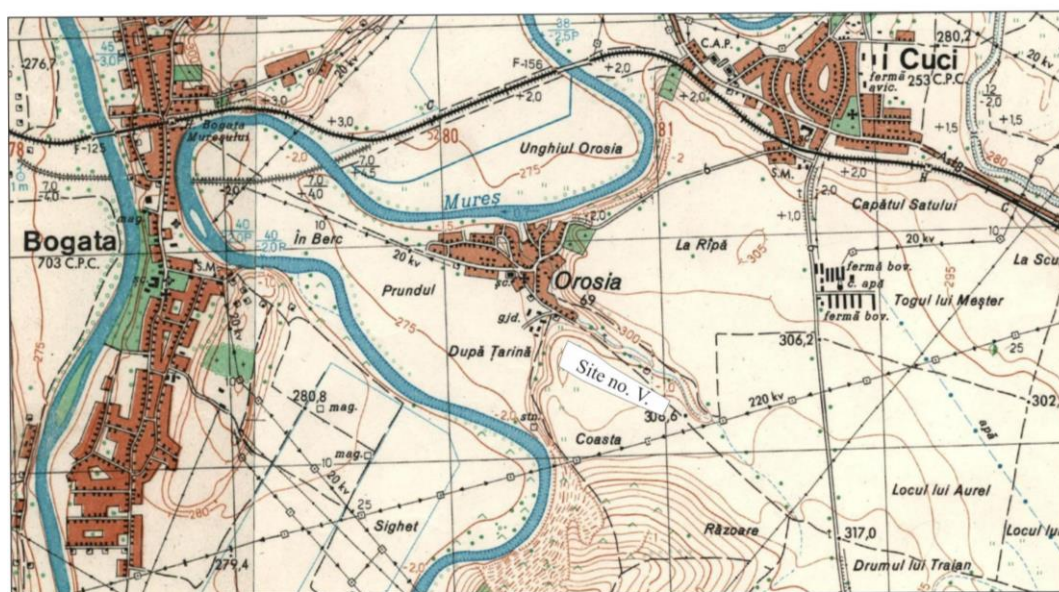
1. Discovered during a small scale excavation in 1972, the rectangular grave pit with rounded corners contained the heavily weathered human remains of a newborn with an east – west orientation. The inventory was placed in the south-eastern corner of the grave. Charcoal pigments were observed in the chest area and around the pelvic bones.
2. Bowl with inverted rim, decorated with four knobs, containing an incomplete iron knife and a cow phalanx; biconical pot with four knobs holding inside a conical cup with raised handle.
3. Vasiliev 1975, 53-54, Pl. XXI; Pl. XXII; Pl. XXIII/1-4.

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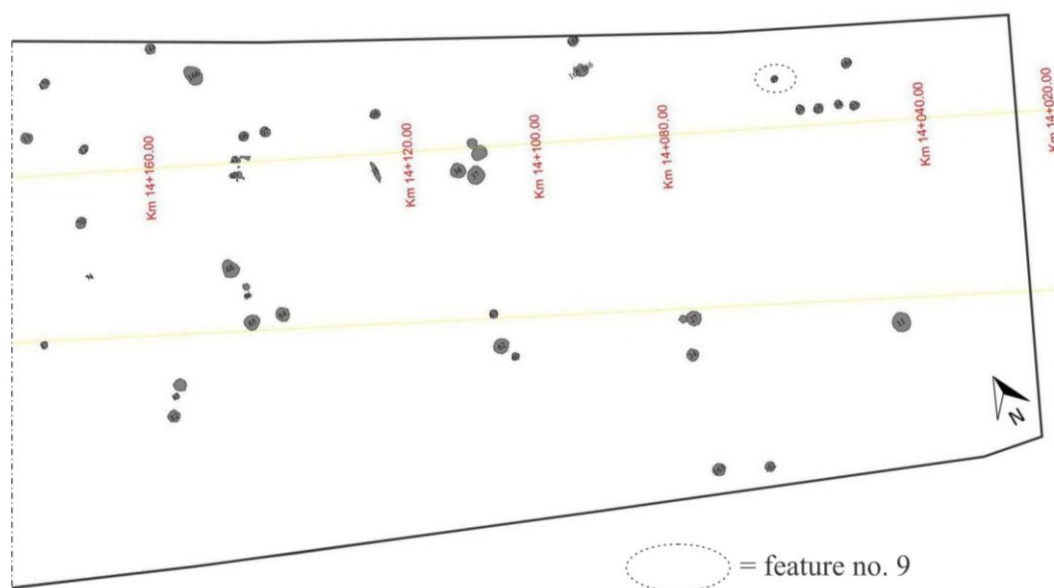




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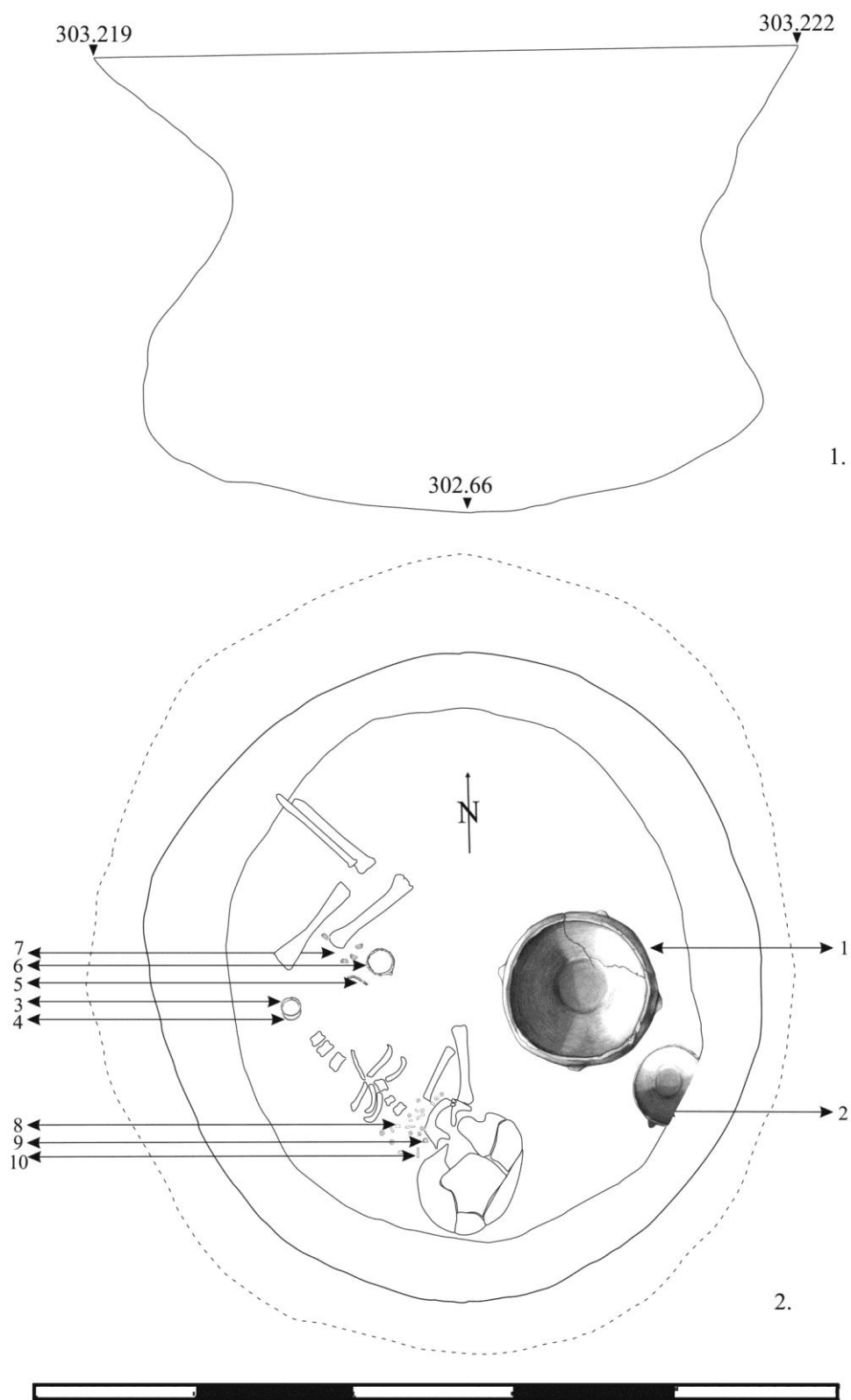


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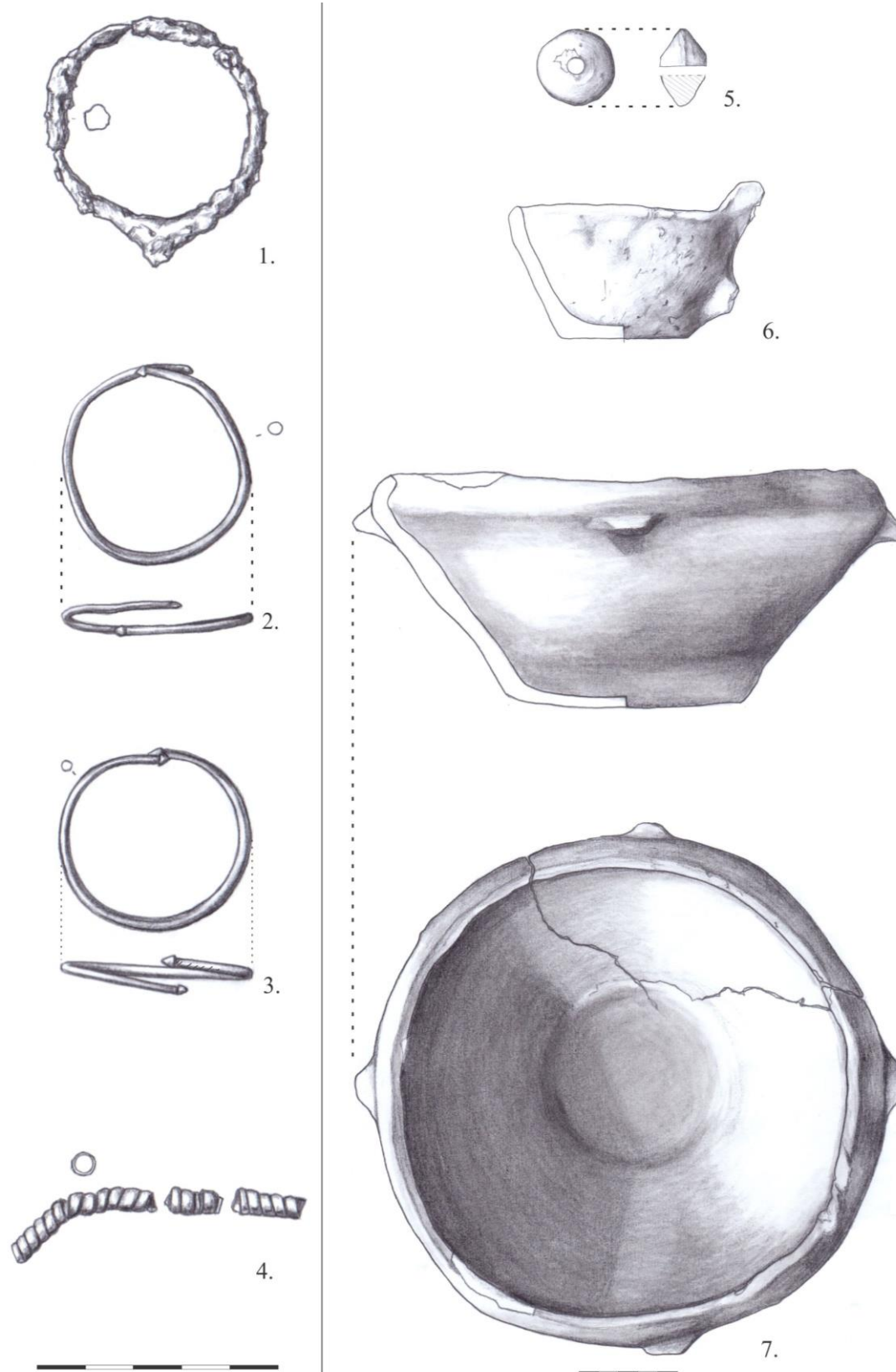


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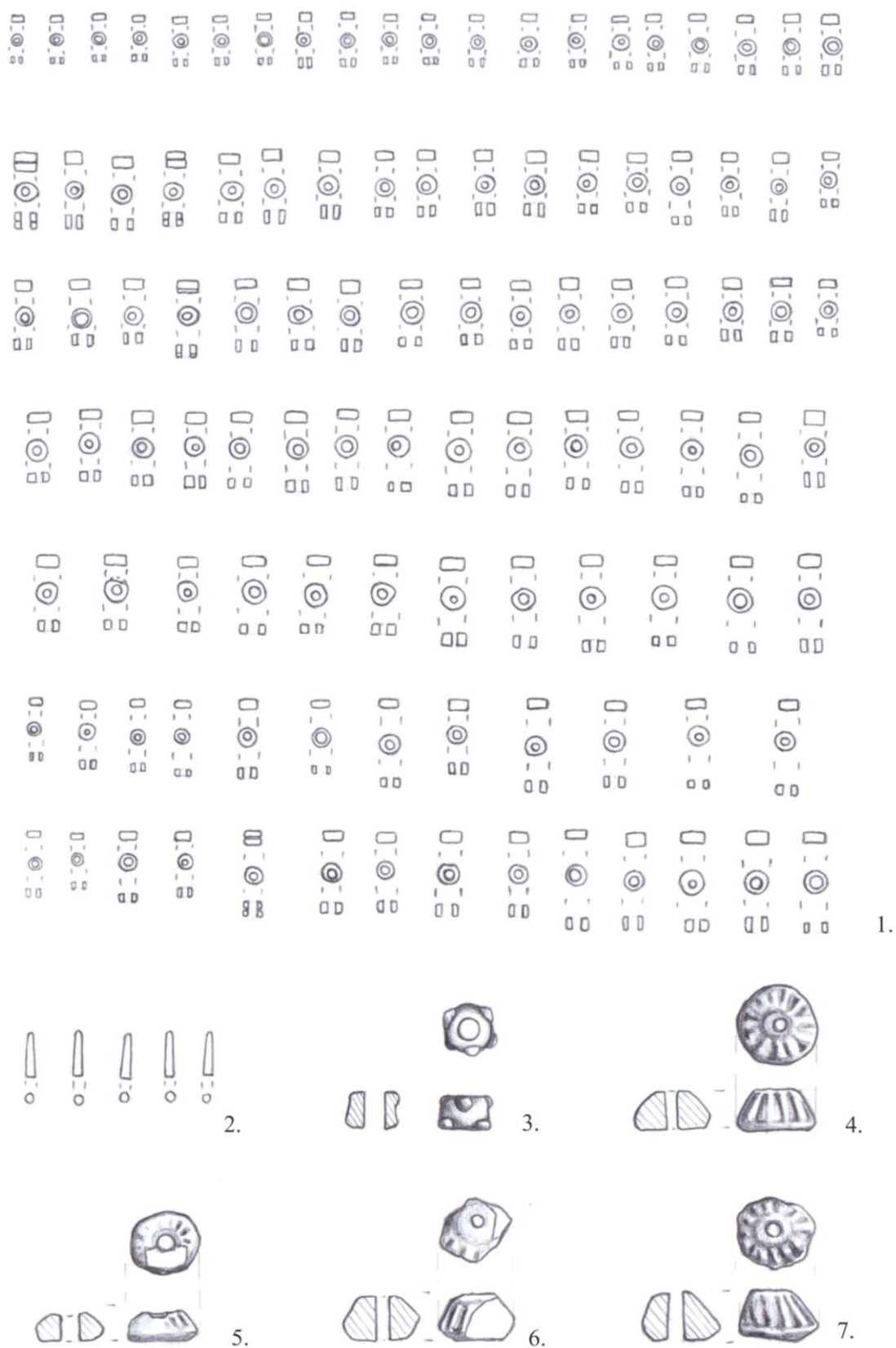
Pl. 1. 1. Geographic location of the site; 2. Aerial view of the site; 3. Topographic location of the feature within the Late Bronze Age settlement.



Pl. 2. 1. Section drawing of the feature; 2. Ground plan of the feature with the exact location of the findings.



Pl. 3. 1. Deteriorated ring; 2. Twisted wire bracelet with conical extremities; 3. Twisted wire bracelet with conical extremities; 4. Saltaleone; 5. Spindle whorl; 6. Cup with raised handle; 6. Bowl with inverted rim.



Pl. 4. 1. Undecorated cylindrical beads; 2. Conical sticks; 3. Spherical bead with knobs; 4. Conical bead with grooved decoration; 5. Conical bead with grooved decoration; 6. Conical bead with grooved decoration; 7. Conical bead with grooved decoration.