

## ON THE LATE BRONZE AGE MORTUARY PRACTICES IN NORTH-WESTERN BULGARIA

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**Keywords:** Bronze Age, Incrusted Pottery Culture, Early Urnfield period, funerary practices, cremation, pottery.

**Abstract:** This article has two aims: I. to provide a comprehensive review of all available information for all burial contexts from the Late Bronze Age in North-Western Bulgaria by critically assessing data from publications and from museums; II. to characterize the burial rites from the perspective of cultural historical archaeology, the dominant paradigm in the region; i.e. archaeological cultures (the Lower Danube Incrusted Pottery Culture, the Verbicioara culture (IV and V phases) and the Bistreț-Ișalnița *group*, as well as the so-called Plovdiv-Zimnicea *complex*) are used as a reference frame. The article identifies the similarities of the burial customs from North-Western Bulgaria with those known from the neighboring regions as well as the differences, of which the most important is the ubiquitous use of cremation throughout the whole Late Bronze Age.

**Cuvinte cheie:** Epoca Bronzului, cultura ceramicii încrustate, perioada timpurie a câmpurilor de urme, practici funerare, incinerare, ceramică.

**Rezumat:** Articolul de față își propune în primul rând să ofere o informație documentată asupra contextului funerar din bronzul târziu în nord-vestul Bulgariei. În al doilea rând să caracterizeze raportul dintre cultura ceramicii încrustate de la Dunărea de Jos, cultura Verbicioara IV și V, și practicile funerare din perspective culturilor arheologice, și anume grupurile de tip Čerkovna, Govora, Plovdiv-Zimnicea și Gârla Mare.

For a topic such as the burial practices to contribute to the solution of main archaeological research issues, it is tempting to follow innovative approaches, to verify principle theoretical tendencies and to explore details, which would bring to light specific phenomena and interactions. The current stage of the Balkan Late Bronze Age studies, however, requires a special attention on the specifics of the published information related to the problem in the Bulgarian territory. This is why this paper<sup>1</sup> reviews the published data on Late Bronze Age burial contexts from Northwestern Bulgaria, i.e. the region between the rivers Timok and Iskur as west and east borders, and the Danube River and the Balkan Mountain as north and south borders.<sup>2</sup> Its first aim is to bring together the information available for each burial context and to critically assess it (I). Then, it will attempt to characterize the burial rites from the perspective of cultural historical archaeology, the dominant paradigm in the region (II). This means that the norms, the

<sup>1</sup> The author owes gratitude to Assoc. Prof. Dr. T. Shalganova, who was kind enough to review the Bulgarian text and to Dr. Nona Palincaș and one anonymous reviewer for observations on the English version.

<sup>2</sup> The author's dissertation "Late Bronze Age Burial Practices in the Bulgarian Lands" contains detailed reviews of the assumptions on the chronology, periodization and cultural characteristics in the entire territory of the country, including juxtapositions to neighbouring Balkan regions. The research concentrates on the specifics of the burial sites, facilities, materials and all the elements of the mortuary contexts, supplemented by the possible correlations and combinations between them, their chronological and spatial distribution, general tendencies and local specifics. Additionally, the work also refers to the possible sequence of burial rite actions. The aim of the present paper however is to represent the characteristics of the published information. It follows those *traditional approaches* laid down as a basis of Bulgarian historiography and provides a source for discussion on the sufficiency of data and the possible results offered according to traditional, cultural-historical researches.

burial customs will be searched for using the archaeological cultures as a reference frame: the Lower Danube Incrusted Pottery Culture, the Verbicioara culture (IV and V phases) and the Bistreț-Ișalnița group, as well as the so-called Plovdiv-Zimnicea complex. So, Bulgarian sites are presented in a wider cultural context, consistent with the stage of research.

**I. SITES RELATED TO THE PROBLEM OF THE LATE BRONZE AGE BURIAL PRACTICES. A REVIEW OF THE DATA.** The information about Late Bronze age sites from the North-Western part of the country includes settlements and burials, dated to the later phases of the period. The only clearly defined archaeological culture in the region is the Incrusted Pottery Culture, of which a rather large number of sites are known. However, even in this case, only one cemetery – at Orsoya, near Lom, Montana region – was continuously and systematically excavated. This stage of research sets severe limitations on the discussion of burial practices in north-western Bulgaria, since one cannot extrapolate the characteristics of a single site to the whole cultural area. It most probably accounts for the disagreements concerning the territorial limits of the Lower Danube Incrusted Pottery Culture in Bulgaria<sup>3</sup>, for otherwise the latter is easily identifiable. Thus, sites, which are viewed by some authors as characteristic of this culture, according to others are located outside its distribution area or represent diverse cultures; the discrepancies among authors widened in later publications (as table 1 shows)<sup>4</sup>.

In the case of the sites belonging to other archaeological cultures the situation is even more confusing.

The review in the first section of the work follows the geographical location of the sites – they are presented from west to east, comprising the Vidin, Montana and Vratsa regions (map 1)<sup>5</sup>. Special attention is paid to those cemeteries, situated farther from the Danube River banks. Being dispersed in various sources – single mentioning, listing of sites, preliminary reports or regular publications – the data gathered is rather comprehensive about certain sites and scanty about others. Included are details on the documentation of the contexts and finds, as excavated and published – site features, researchers'

<sup>3</sup> The denomination follows the updated definition of the culture, otherwise indicated also as Cârna-Gârla Mare, Žuto Brdo, Baley-Orsoya, etc. In some sections of the paper it is consistent with the denomination, offered by the quoted author, see below.

<sup>4</sup> Table 1 bibliography: A. Chilingirov, *Predistorichni nahodishta kray Dunava, ot Timok do Vit*, Izvestiya na Bulgarskoto arheologicheskoto drujestvo (IBAD), 2, 1911 (1912), p. 147-174; B. Nikolov, *Selishta i nekropoli ot bronzovata epoha vuv Vrachansko*, ArheologijaSofia 2, 1964, p. 69-77; V. Mikov, *Materiali ot posledniya period na bronzovata epoha v Severozapadna Bulgaria*, ArheologijaSofia, 1970, 48-63; B. Nikolov, *Sofronievo, Vratsa*, 1971; Tr. Filipov, *Keramika i idolna plastika ot kusunobronzoviya nekropol pri s. Orsoya, Mihaylovgradski okrug*, ArheologijaSofia 2, 1974, p. 12-23; Idem, *Nekropol ot kusunata bronzova epoha pri s. Orsoya, Lomsko*, Sofia, 1976; Idem, *Idolna plastika ot kusunobronzoviya nekropol pri s. Orsoya, Mihaylovgradski okrug*, Muzei i pametnitsi na kultura 2, 1978, p. 9-17; B. Nikolov, *Nekropol ot kusunata bronzova epoha ot s. Gradeshnitsa, Vrachanska oblast*, Izvestiya na muzeite ot Severozapadna Bulgaria 2, 1978, p. 19-29; G. Alexandrov, *Novootkriti prastoricheski selishta v Mihaylovgradski okrug*, Izvestiya na muzeite v Severozapadna Bulgaria, 6, 1981, 29-45; G. Georgiev, *Die Erforschung der Bronzezeit in Nordwestbulgarien, Prähistorische Archäologie in Südosteuropa* 1, Berlin, 1982, p.187-202; Zung, *Razvitie na kusunobronzovata kultura Baley-Orsoya v Severozapadna Bulgaria*, ArheologijaSofia, 2, 1989, p. 20-24; I. Panayotov, D. Vulcheva, *Arheologicheskite kulturi ot kusunata bronzova epoha v bulgarskite zemi*, Vekove, 18, Bulgaria, Balkanite, Evropa 1, 1989, p. 5-15; B. Nikolov, *Ot Iskur do Ogosta, istoriya na 151 sela i gradove ot bivshiya Vrachanski okrug*, Sofia, 1996; A. Bonev, *Ranna Trakiya. Formirane na trakiyskata kultura – kraya na vtoroto-nachaloto na purvoto hilyadoletie pr.Hr.*, Razkopki i prouchvaniya 31, 2003, Sofia; T. Shalganova, *Izkustvo i obred na bronzovata epoha. Kultura na inkrustiranata keramika po Dolen Dunav*, Monografii 3, Mitologiya, izkustvo, folklor (MIF), 2005, Izdatelstvo na NBU, Sofia; Sv. Ganeva, *Problematika na nekropola pri Orsoya*, in (ed. G. Kitov, D. Dimitrova), *Zemite na Bulgaria, lyulka na trakiyskata kultura*, Sofia, 2005, p. 40-44.

<sup>5</sup> The sporadic data, the focus on the easily distinguished Incrusted Pottery culture, its presumable territorial diffusion and the problem of the attribution of certain sites, located farther from the river, justify the preference of the location principle instead of the alphabetical order. Thus, it is easier to trace the cultural characteristics and variations conditioned by the detachment of certain sites – in eastern or southern direction – from the core dispersal area of the culture. The approach is balanced by the numbering of the sites, presented in Map 1, which corresponds to their listing in the text.

observations on terrain, opinions about the characteristics of the burial rite, the cultural attribution and specifics of the materials, a comparison between primary and later publications, as a result of which the number of the “typical sites” of the examined culture is reduced. As a result of the review some problems and conventions connected with the finds are emphasized, the specifics of the published information are examined and where necessary – the cultural and chronological affiliation of sites, facilities and materials is discussed.

(1) **Vruv, Vidin region** (approx. 44°11'33.54''N; 22°44'10.33''E). What in fact is a settlement of the Incrusted Pottery Culture at Vruv,<sup>6</sup> erroneously appears in one recent publication as “cemetery”.<sup>7</sup>

(2) **Novo Selo, Vidin region** (approx. 44°09'42.90''N; 22°47'02.85''E). From sites located close to Novo Selo and dated to Late Bronze Age (“third Bronze Age period”) were published: several sherds, few entire vessels, a “boat model” and an anthropomorphic figurine<sup>8</sup>. Those with a supposed burial context are later described<sup>9</sup> and attributed with probability to the classical phase of Incrusted Pottery Culture (phase II, Br B 2-Br C)<sup>10</sup>.

**Novo selo-Tuhlarnitsite.** “Remains of a cemetery”<sup>11</sup> were registered near an accidentally found settlement at Novo selo. The finds, described by V. Mikov, discovered before 1947 and published in 1970, were collected from several localities. One of them – **Tuhlarnitsite**, to the east of the village – is in fact a Late Bronze Age settlement. Most of the materials found in the *Tuhlarnitsite* neighborhood were destroyed; only few of them were gathered in the museum collection of the local community cultural center. In 1974, during a survey on an area of 20 decares, destroyed hearths, plaster, pottery fragments, ashes and charcoal pieces, found at random spots, were documented at a depth of 0, 30-0, 40 m below the surface and interpreted as signs of a sizable settlement; due to the depth of the finds this was believed to have one layer.<sup>12</sup> Another publication indicates the presence of settlement remains, registered to the east of the village (west of a military guard post), where “graves have also been found”.<sup>13</sup>

**Novo selo-“wine cellar”.** Close to the settlement registered in the *Tuhlarnitsite* locality, during construction of a drainage canal for a wine cellar, “around the cemetery area” were found – according to the original publication – more than 25 cups, one urn and small finds preserved in the collection of the local school.<sup>14</sup>

**Novo Selo-“upland slopes”.** In an area located “to the north, near the settlement” and closer to the Danube River bank, on a spot described as *upland slopes*, several sherds similar to those of the *Tuhlarnitsite* location were found. Based on information from the locals – who described vessels filled with ashes and burned bones – V. Mikov located at the higher part of the slope a cemetery of the Incrusted Pottery Culture<sup>15</sup>. These vessels were not preserved; previously the local teacher also gathered materials for the school collection from this area.

The context of the preserved finds, the precise location and the characteristics of these sites remain unclear. Also, there is no way to separate the published Late Bronze Age materials according to site. The finds from “the settlement and the necropolis at Novo selo” are separated between three institutions: the local school collection, the Vidin Museum and Archaeological Museum in Sofia<sup>16</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> For example see Zung, *op. cit.* p. 20; Panayotov, Vulcheva, *op. cit.* p. 7.

<sup>7</sup> Ganeva, *op. cit.* p. 41. The source followed by her is most probably Tr. Filipov (see table 1).

<sup>8</sup> Mikov, *op. cit.* p. 50-54.

<sup>9</sup> A. Bonev, *The Late Bronze Age Cremation Graveyard of Orsoya (a typology of the ceramic finds and problems of interpretations)*, in (ed. L. Nikolova), *Reports of Prehistoric Research Projects*, Vol. II-III, Sofia, 1999 (2000), p. 19.

<sup>10</sup> Shalganova, *op. cit.* p. 176.

<sup>11</sup> Mikov, *op. cit.* p. 49.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>13</sup> V. Mikov, *Predistoricheski selishta i nahodki v Bulgaria. Materiali za arheologicheskata karta na Bulgaria*, *Izvestiya na narodnia arheologicheski muzei* 30, Sofia, 1933, p. 103. No other data is available.

<sup>14</sup> Mikov, *Materiali ot posledniya period na bronzovata epoha...*, p. 49.

<sup>15</sup> Mikov, *op. cit.* p. 50. The definition used by the author is “Novo selo culture”.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibidem*. Those published by V. Mikov are from the collection of the Archaeological Museum in Sofia.

Some authors offer lists of Novo selo sites which outnumber those from the initial publication. Four are included by M. Șandor-Chicideanu, all of them related to the Gârla Mare culture. These appear in her catalogue as: no. 201 (where a figurine was found, the site defined as a probable cemetery, unknown location), no. 202 (Tsarina [written Carina], surface finds mentioned by B. Hänsel and a site defined as a cemetery), no. 203 (Tuhlamitsite) and no. 204 (a higher terrain).<sup>17</sup> B. Hänsel on the other hand mentions five locations of settlements or graves, supplemented by information about single vessels defined as belonging to the *Čerkovna* pottery group – a spherical short-neck kantharos, a cup of a similar type, having a Gârla Mare ornamentation and a stemless vessel,<sup>18</sup> but no further specifications of their context has been offered.

The initial publication describes seven pieces that are kept in the collection of the Archaeological Museum in Sofia<sup>19</sup>, and later Bulgarian authors include two whole vessels and an anthropomorphic figurine, yet again without an indication whether they are grave goods or not.<sup>20</sup> These Incrusted Pottery Culture finds were made of well purified clay and according to the author the wholly preserved vessels he examined were made by the use of a potter's wheel rotated by hand. The published material includes two cups, a boat model, a richly decorated anthropomorphic figurine, ornamented and unornamented ceramic sherds (one – from an urn, one with a band decoration and a third – with a main motif of S-signs).<sup>21</sup>

**(3) Kutovo (former Zlaten Rog), Vidin region** (approx. 44°01'48.79''N; 22°57'59.92''E). The earliest information about a *cemetery* in the region was published in 1911.

**Kutovo-“Gredovi”.** The site is situated to the south-west of Kutovo village, on a flat terrain which has not been flooded by the Danube River. That cultivated area (a field and a vineyard) was covered by numerous ceramic potsherds and charred bones; in the lack of materials specific for settlements, the site was referred to as a cemetery. During agricultural activities, one wholly preserved middle-sized vessel was found, together with a smaller one, positioned inside the bigger and filled with ashes. According to the author's terrain observations from 1908 and 1910, the cemetery covers an area of at least 1-2 decares and contains hundreds of urns. The published fragments belong to more than ten various, predominantly ornamented vessels. Preserved in only one undecorated vessel – about 20 cm high, with flat base and four handles placed at its upper part<sup>22</sup> –, but it is not possible to say how it relates to those mentioned above, i.e. whether it is the bigger container or the smaller pot found inside. The clay used was well-purified and practically contained almost no quartz admixtures. Specifying the similarities to Žuto Brdo materials, the author underlines the absence of only two types of decoration among the Kutovo materials – the relief and triangle ornaments. The decoration is defined as consisting of *Rahmenstil* incised or *stamped* and incrusted geometric motives, combined with motifs representing adornments or metal objects.<sup>23</sup> Later on, it was specified that the ceramic sherds collected by A. Chilingirov were preserved at the Sofia Archaeological Museum,<sup>24</sup> but it is impossible to accurately define whether they belong to the classical (second period) or to the late (third period) of the Lower Danube Incrusted Pottery Culture.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>17</sup> M. Șandor-Chicideanu, *Cultura Țuto Brdo-Gârla Mare. Contribuții la cunoașterea epocii bronzului la Dunărea Mijlocie și Inferioară*, Cluj-Napoca, 2003, p. 244.

<sup>18</sup> B. Hänsel, *Beiträge zur regionalen und chronologischen Gliederung der älteren Hallstattzeit an der unteren Donau* (Beiträge zur ur- und frühgeschichtlichen Archäologie des Mittelmeer-Kulturräume für das Institut für Frühgeschichte der Universität Heidelberg, Band 16), 1976, Bonn, p. 64, 79, 81-82, Pl. 35, 2, 3, 4. It should be underlined that these vessels, together with some finds from Archar, Dolno Linevo, Orechovo, Galiche and Burdarski geran have no context. Because of their good preservation and the lack of data about specimens containing bones, the author presumes that they could be related to inhumation graves (Idem, p. 78-79), which gives no sufficient grounds to include them as reliable evidences in the present work.

<sup>19</sup> Mikov, *op. cit.* p. 50-54.

<sup>20</sup> Bonev, *op. cit.* p. 19.

<sup>21</sup> Mikov, *op. cit.* p. 52, 53, fig. 4, fig. 5, fig. 6, fig. 7 and fig. 8.

<sup>22</sup> Chilingirov, *op. cit.* p. 149-151, fig. 3

<sup>23</sup> Chilingirov, *op. cit.* p. 153-154.

<sup>24</sup> Mikov, *op. cit.* p. 49.

<sup>25</sup> Shalganova, *op. cit.* p. 176. A minor discrepancy has slipped into the quoted publication – Zlaten Rog is not the present-day name of Kutovo, but its former one.

**Kutovo-“Grindur”.** In 2007 certain attempts to locate the Late Bronze Age cemetery have been made. A concentration of ceramic sherds was registered in an arable land area situated higher in relation to the surrounding flat terrain. At a depth of 0.40 m, bone fragments and *in situ* fragments of a common vessel were found, the latter separated in “two groups at a distance of 10 centimeters away from each other”. No well-defined burial pit outlines were registered. The structure was interpreted as an urn cremation grave. Of this, only the lower part of a four-handled vessel was preserved. Other ceramic sherds were found in other parts of the archaeological trenches: shallow bowls with inverted rim, deep bowls with outturned rim and deep vessels with geometric ornamentation. The finds were interpreted as belonging to the *cemetery* from the “second-third phase” of the Incrusted Pottery Culture reported by A. Chilingirov in 1911. Considering that the materials from 2007 are rather archaic in character and that there are a great number of fragments with flute decoration, the authors attributed the cemetery to the later period of the Incrusted Pottery Culture. The site is located in close proximity to an area where pits were researched and dated to the end of the Late Bronze Age and the beginning of the transition to the Early Iron Age.<sup>26</sup>

**(4) Makresh, Vidin region** (approx. 43°46′07.38″N; 22°39′36.44″E). To the south of Makresh, in close proximity to the *Gradishteto* location, two “urns” filled with bone fragments were found. It seems that, after a failed attempt of restoration, these remains were not preserved.<sup>27</sup> The initial attribution of these graves to the Lower Danube Incrusted Pottery Culture was challenged later, the main argument being the remoteness of the site from the Danube.<sup>28</sup>

**(5) Archar, Vidin region** (approx. 43°48′34.79″N; 22°55′10.12″E). The situation is analogous to that of the site near Vruv. The single recent mention of a *cemetery* is made by Sv. Ganeva,<sup>29</sup> while all other authors indicate a settlement there.<sup>30</sup>

**(6) Orsoya-“Plyoska”, Montana region** (approx. 43°46′39.54″N; 23°05′41.61″E). Excavated in the course of a decade, the site is traditionally referred to as the major cemetery of the Lower Danube River Incrusted Pottery Culture, as it has the greatest number of researched graves (fig. 1-8).<sup>31</sup> Unfortunately, little can be done with the data from this cemetery due to a great number of factors – location and circumstances of the discovery of the site, the way it was published (lack of details, divergent data published by various authors) and the condition of the preserved material and documentation.

The site is located at about 3 km to the north of the Orsoya village, in a boggy, often flooded region, with high level of underground water. Situated at the bank of the Danube River, the cemetery was found by chance by a Lom resident in August 1969. The excavations started in the same month, directed by the head of the City Museum of Lom Tr. Filipov<sup>32</sup>, who also conducted all archaeological campaigns

<sup>26</sup> St. Alexandrov *et alii*, *Arheologicheski prouchvaniya na dva obekta v m. Grindur, zemlishte na s. Antimovo i s. Kutovo, obshchina Vidin*, Arheologicheski otkritiya i razkopki prez 2007 godina, (AOR), Sofia, 2008, p. 128-130.

<sup>27</sup> Mikov, *op. cit.* p. 49 and note 7. In 1961 V. Mikov examined the vessel in question.

<sup>28</sup> Shalganova, *op. cit.* p. 179.

<sup>29</sup> Ganeva, *op. cit.* p. 41. Both the sites near Vruv and Archar, inaccurately indicated as cemeteries by the author, are previously indicated as such by Tr. Filipov.

<sup>30</sup> For example Mikov, *op. cit.* p. 49; Zung, *op. cit.* p. 20; Panayotov and Vulcheva, *op. cit.* p. 7. See also note 7. T. Shalganova mentions “a cemetery” near Archar (Shalganova, *op. cit.* p. 173), but the site is not included in the review of the cemeteries of the culture (Shalganova, *op. cit.* p. 175-179) and the source, cited by her, gives no specific information about the characteristics of the site.

<sup>31</sup> see Bonev, *Nyakoi problemi, svurzani s kusunobronzoviya nekropol pri s. Orsoya, Mihaylovgradski okrug, in Bulgarskite zemi v drevnostta do suzdavaneto na bulgarskata durzhava, Dokladi, 6, Vtori mezhdunaroden kongres po Bulgaristika, 23 may-3 yuni 1986, Sofia, 1987, p. 48-52* and the similar to the quoted work article of Sv. Ganeva, *op. cit.*

<sup>32</sup> Tr. Filipov, *Keramika i idolna plastika ot kusunobronzoviya nekropol pri s. Orsoya, Mihaylovgradski okrug*, Arheologija Sofia 2, 1974, note 1; Idem, *Nekropol ot kusunata bronzova epoha pri s. Orsoya, Lomsko*, Sofia, 1976, p. 6. The site is located in proximity to the villages of Orsoya and Slivata (Mikov, *op. cit.*, p. 49).

at the site. Later the materials were also examined in details by A. Bonev and T. Shalганova<sup>33</sup>. A. Bonev indicates the exact duration of the excavations – from 1969 till 1979 –, as well as some details on the circumstances of the discovery of the site.<sup>34</sup>

The earliest publication, that from 1974, states that between 1969 and 1972, 220 graves were excavated<sup>35</sup>. Later the author mentions that the square-grid area covers 6500 m<sup>2</sup> and the number of the excavated cremation graves is 267.<sup>36</sup> The figure 343 is stated as the final number of the examined burial contexts and a 6300 m<sup>2</sup> cemetery area is defined as completely researched<sup>37</sup>. Besides the urn cremations, four other “later” inhumation graves were registered, containing two males, one female and one juvenile.<sup>38</sup> At variance with the data given by the excavation director, G. Georgiev mentions 301 excavated graves and five inhumations graves.<sup>39</sup>

According to the initial publication, the cemetery, located on the right bank of the Danube, was “oriented in a southeast-northwestern direction”.<sup>40</sup> No site plan or topographic documentation was included,<sup>41</sup> although it is communicated that they had been prepared<sup>42</sup>. The burial rite was cremation that took place outside the perimeter of the cemetery – a suggestion grounded on the lack of any traces of a pyre.<sup>43</sup> The graves were flat, registered at an equal level in the sandy layer; covered by two loess deposits – delimited by 10 cm thick streaks of sand – and humus layers with total thickness ranging from 0.55 to 1 m. Owing to the alluvial deposits, the depth of the graves varies from 0.80 to 3 m measured from the surface. The structure of the “wet sandy layer” prevented determination of the shape and dimensions of

<sup>33</sup> Some of the works on the Orsoya materials and the Lower Danube Incrusted Pottery Culture in general include T. Shalганova, *Razvitie na kulturite prez kusunobronzovata i nachaloto na starozhelyaznata epoha v Severozapadna Bulgaria*, Avtoreferat na disertatsiya za prisuzhdane na nauchna stepen “kandidat na istoricheskite nauki”, Sofia, 1993; T. Shalганova, *Otnosno grebenovidniya motiv v ukrasat na kulturata na inkrustiranata keramika po Dolniya Dunav*, in *Maritsa-Iztok, Arheologicheski prouchvaniya*, 2, Sofia, 1994, p. 111-117; T. Shalганova, *Glineni bradvi ot teritoriyata na kulturata na inkrustiranata keramika po Dolni Dunav*, *Problemi na izkustvoto* 3, 1994, p. 21-24; Shalганova, *About an Ornamental Pattern of the Incrusted Pottery Culture Along the Lower Danube*, in (ed. P. Roman, M. Alexianu), *Relations Thraco-Illyro helléniques. Actes du XIVe Symposium national de Thracologie (à participation internationale), Băile Herculane (14-19 Septembre 1992)*, Bucharest, 1994, p. 170-177; T. Shalганova, *The Lower Danube Incrusted Pottery Culture*, in (eds. D. Bailey et alii), *Prehistoric Bulgaria (Monographs in World Archaeology No. 22)*, Madison-Wisconsin, 1995, p. 291-308; T. Shalганova, *Antropomorphni figuri ot kusunata bronzova epoha*, *Problemi na izkustvoto*, 3/4, 1997, p. 53-58; T. Shalганova, *Pogrebalniyat obred-izvor za rekonstruktsiya na sotsialnata struktura (vurhu materialite na kulturata na inkrustiranata keramika po Dolni Dunav)*, *Problemi na izkustvoto* 1, Sofia, 2002, p. 26-30; and a summarized study in T. Shalганova, *Izkustvo i obred na bronzovata epoha. Kultura na inkrustiranata keramika po Dolni Dunav*, *Monografii* 3, Mitologiya, izkustvo, folklor (MIF), Izdatelstvo na NBU, Sofia, 2005.

<sup>34</sup> The discoverer – “a famous treasure-hunter and a collector of antiques” – chanced upon several urns in the profile of the river-bank after the summer decrease of the water level. According to A. Bonev ‘the number of the initially discovered urns remains unknown, as well as the exact number of the graves, researched during the excavations– information which later is confirmed by the author. A. Bonev, *The Late Bronze Age Cremation Graveyard of Orsoya (a typology of the ceramic finds and problems of interpretations)*, in (ed. L. Nikolova), *Reports of Prehistoric Research Projects*, Vol. II-III, 1999 (2000), p. 3; A. Bonev, *Ranna Trakiya. Formirane na trakiyskata kultura – kraya na vtoroto-nachaloto na purvoto hilyadoletie pr.Hr.*, *Razkopki i prouchvaniya* 31, 2003, Sofia, p. 14.

<sup>35</sup> Tr. Filipov, *Keramika i idolna plastika ot kusunobronzoviya nekropol pri s. Orsoya, Mihaylovgradski okrug*, *Arheologija*Sofia 2, 1974, p. 12.

<sup>36</sup> Tr. Filipov, *Nekropol ot kusunata bronzova epoha pri s. Orsoya, Lomsko*, Sofia, 1976, p. 6.

<sup>37</sup> Idem, *Idolna plastika ot kusunobronzoviya nekropol pri s. Orsoya, Mihaylovgradski okrug*, *Muzei i pametnitsi na kulturata*, Sofia, 2, 1978, p. 9.

<sup>38</sup> Idem, *Nekropol ot kusunata bronzova epoha pri s. Orsoya, Lomsko*, Sofia, 1976, p. 6.

<sup>39</sup> G. Georgiev, *Die Erforschung der Bronzezeit in Nordwestbulgarien*, PAS 1, 1982, p. 197.

<sup>40</sup> Filipov, *Idolna plastika ot kusunobronzoviya nekropol pri s. Orsoya, Mihaylovgradski okrug*, *Muzei i pametnitsi na kulturata*, Sofia, 2, 1978, p. 9.

<sup>41</sup> I. Panayotov, *Otziv za Trayko Filipov. Nekropol ot kusunata bronzova epoha pri s. Orsoya, Lomsko*, *Muzei i pametnitsi na kulturata* 1, Sofia, 1978, p. 71.

<sup>42</sup> Filipov, *Nekropol ot kusunata bronzova epoha pri s. Orsoya, Lomsko*, Sofia, 1976, p. 6.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 7.

the grave pits. A certain arrangement of the urns placement was detected – they were organized in “irregular rows, oriented in south-east to north-western direction”, situated on the right river bank, parallel to the river flow.<sup>44</sup> The vessels containing the human remains<sup>45</sup> were covered by wide shallow bowls apart from only two instances when another type of vessel, designated as “complementary”, was used. There was no specific information on how many and which urns exactly were covered by those “lids”. The grave goods were found predominantly *inside* the urns, rarely *around* them and in the two above-mentioned exceptions the small vessels were placed *on top* of the urns.<sup>46</sup>

The publication is problematic also with regard to the number of objects discovered.<sup>47</sup> Until 1974 the author mentions 50 small vessels, 11 anthropomorphic figurines, two of which are interpreted as deliberately broken, 8 zoomorphic vessels in the shape of birds and a horned animal, 4 models of “cult axes”, 22 stone beads placed in a zoomorphic vessel, bronze knives, copper and bronze adornments and two appliques.<sup>48</sup> In 1976 the described inventory contains spherical and biconical vessels, cups, small ceramic double-vessels (also called “salt containers”), axe models, “cult table models”, zoomorphic vessels, figurines, flint and later materials – “fibulae, rings, bracelets, earrings, small knives, appliques and others”.<sup>49</sup> According to the 1978 information concerning the anthropomorphic figurines, the total number of finds includes 21 well-preserved “idols” and 7 fragments from “deliberately broken” figurines.<sup>50</sup> Later on, the total number for the discovered ceramic models of axes is indicated to be 8.<sup>51</sup>

These finds were very variously approached<sup>52</sup>. An analysis of the materials published by Tr. Filipov, A. Bonev and T. Shalganova as well as of the still existing artefacts was carried out by the present author.<sup>53</sup>

*Initial publications.* The earliest publication is that of the field researcher. It contains data on pottery and ceramic figurines, a brief information on the site, the number of excavated graves and finds.

<sup>44</sup> Idem, *Keramika i idolna plastika ot kusunobronzoviya nekropol pri s. Orsoya, Mihaylovgradski okrug*, ArheologijaSofia 2, 1974, p. 12; Idem, *Nekropol ot kusunata bronzova epoha pri s. Orsoya, Lomsko*, Sofia, 1976, p. 6-7; Idem, *Idolna plastika ot kusunobronzoviya nekropol pri s. Orsoya, Mihaylovgradski okrug*, Muzei i pametnitsi na kulturata, 2, Sofia, 1978, p. 9.

<sup>45</sup> The vessels illustrated by Tr. Filipov as urns belong to graves no. 1, 5, 8, 14, 15, 16, 17, 19, 20, 25, 27, 29, 31, 34, 37, 39, 43, 44, 52, 53, 55, 67, 59, 74, 77, 80, 82, see Filipov, *Nekropol ot kusunata bronzova epoha pri s. Orsoya, Lomsko*, Sofia, 1976.

<sup>46</sup> Filipov, *Nekropol ot kusunata bronzova epoha pri s. Orsoya, Lomsko*, Sofia, 1976, p. 6.

<sup>47</sup> The terminology used here naturally follows that of the three initial publications, without being accepted as appropriate.

<sup>48</sup> Filipov, *Keramika i idolna plastika ot kusunobronzoviya nekropol pri s. Orsoya, Mihaylovgradski okrug*, ArheologijaSofia 2, 1974, p. 12.

<sup>49</sup> Idem, *Nekropol ot kusunata bronzova epoha pri s. Orsoya, Lomsko*, Sofia, 1976.

<sup>50</sup> Idem, *Idolna plastika ot kusunobronzoviya nekropol pri s. Orsoya, Mihaylovgradski okrug*, Muzei i pametnitsi na kulturata 2, 1978, p. 11.

<sup>51</sup> Shalganova, *Glineni bradvi ot teritoriyata na kulturata na inkrustiranata keramika po Dolni Dunav*, Problemi na izkustvoto, 3, 1994, p. 21. Four of these models are published by Tr. Filipov, found in graves no. 59, 100, 137, 254. A specimen from grave no. 346 is preserved at the National Historical Museum Sofia and three other axes are kept in the Museum of Lom (Shalganova, *op. cit.* note 3). Five of those finds are illustrated by T. Shalganova (Shalganova, *op. cit.* fig. 1), and two of the latter are supplemented by information about specific burial context – grave no. 346 and no. 287 (Shalganova, *op. cit.* p. 23).

<sup>52</sup> See the three initial publications of Tr. Filipov, the works of A. Bonev (Bonev, *Trakiya i egeyskiya svyat prez vtorata polovina na II hilyadoletie do n.e.*, Razkopki i prouchvaniya, Sofia, 1988; Bonev, *The Late Bronze Age Cremation Graveyard of Orsoya (a typology of the ceramic finds and problems of interpretations)*, in L. Nikolova (ed.), *Reports of Prehistoric Research Projects II-III*, 1999 (2000); Bonev, *Ranna Trakiya. Formirane na trakiyskata kultura – kraya na vtoroto-nachaloto na purvoto hilyadoletie pr.Hr.*, Razkopki i prouchvaniya XXXI, 2003, Sofia and note 42.

<sup>53</sup> T. Dzhhanfezova, *Towards the Late Bronze Age burial practices in North-Western Bulgaria. The Orsoya cemetery*, International Scientific Conference “St. Cyril and St. Methodius University of Veliko Tarnovo and the Bulgarian Archaeology”, 27-29 November 2008, Veliko Tarnovo, forthcoming publication. The commentaries and specifications resulting from the comparison between data from earlier and later works, and the detailed list of the published finds, are not presented here due to the considerable volume of information.

The stratigraphy, burial rite, location of urns, as well as the difficulties of establishing the context of some of the finds are also mentioned<sup>54</sup>. The author grouped the ceramic,<sup>55</sup> which he described partly in a very general manner,<sup>56</sup> partly more precisely.<sup>57</sup> An classification of the vessels, containing human remains is offered. Designated as *burial urns*, these pots are divided in three groups<sup>58</sup>: 1) biconical vessels with two subgroups, defined according to proportions and shape of the middle part of the body and neck; 2) spherical urns, which according to the handles are divided in two groups and 3) "storeyed" vessels with three "types/variants". For some of the finds analogues are offered, mainly with the material from the cemetery at Cârna. The Orsoya site is attributed to the Late Bronze Age, more specifically to the third quarter of the second millennium BC. Filipov relates it to a culture which developed on the Danube river-banks, and cites some analogous sites based on information published by V. Mikov<sup>59</sup>

In a *later work of 1976* the burial inventory is examined in more details. The typology of the urns corresponds to the previously published one, and the indicated analogues are the same.<sup>60</sup> The information about lids and spherical vessels is also identical to that from the first publication, but the comparison of the otherwise numerous illustrations with the descriptions reveals discrepancies. A new category is that of the biconical vessels. According to Filipov they are characterized by the presence of two handles; they resemble typologically the spherical vessels, but at the same time lack some of the variants of the latter. Contrariwise stands the definition of the spherical pots, i.e. "some of them have no handles, others carry one or two high handles",<sup>61</sup> which added to the general similarities of the whole shape of the body complicates Filipov's classification. The cups with regular and flattened body are those described in 1974 as cups with *Buckel*-decoration.<sup>62</sup> A new *category* of ceramic double vessels, called "salt-vessels" (salt and spice containers) is added – they are with or without decoration and are found inside the urns.<sup>63</sup> The "cult axe" models are represented in more details, as well as another novel category – the models of "cult tables", covered by complex ornamentation. Vessels in the shape of a duck, a swan, and a horned animal are the subgroups established for the zoomorphic pots.<sup>64</sup> The anthropomorphic figurines are described in details, and supplemented by more analogies. It is specified that the majority of them were placed inside the urns, and according to the author some were deliberately broken before that.<sup>65</sup>

In the third publication – *that of 1978* – special attention is given to the anthropomorphic figurines, described as a material of "first-rate significance".<sup>66</sup> The elements considered basic for the description of these finds, as well as the close-ups themselves repeat those previously published by the author, while the typology reproduces that of 1976 with minute alterations.<sup>67</sup> Particular etceteras are added in the presentation of the types. The published figurines and their interpretations correspond to the earlier ones by the same author (figurines from graves no. 82, 41 and those found in close proximity to graves no. 41, 74,

<sup>54</sup> Filipov, *Keramika i idolna plastika ot kusunobronzoviya nekropol pri s. Orsoya, Mihaylovgradski okrug*, ArheologijaSofia 2, 1974, p. 12-13.

<sup>55</sup> "Burial urns, lids, small vessels with various shapes, sizes and decoration, idol-figurines, zoomorphic vessels, cult axes models" (*Ibidem*).

<sup>56</sup> "lids", "spheric vessels", vessels with "cups shapes", decorated with Buckel-ornaments, "cult axes", flint "blades".

<sup>57</sup> "zoomorphic vessels" – a vessel with an incised image representing "lyre", "anthropomorphic figurines – from grave no. 148 (small figurine, placed in a bigger one) and a figurine with a "swastika" motif.

<sup>58</sup> There is no clear typological distinction between the categories "group" and "type" (see Filipov, *Keramika i idolna plastika...*, p. 13), as well as exact implementation of "subgroup", "type" and "variant".

<sup>59</sup> Filipov, *Keramika i idolna plastika...*, p. 22, notes 16 and 17.

<sup>60</sup> Filipov, *Nekropol ot kusunata bronzova epoha...*, p. 13-16.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 11-12.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 9.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 13.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 15.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 16-25.

<sup>66</sup> Tr. Filipov, *Idolna plastika ot kusunobronzoviya nekropol pri s. Orsoya, Mihaylovgradski okrug*, Muzei i pametnitsi na kulturata 2, 1978, p. 11.

<sup>67</sup> For example the indented decoration (Filipov, *Nekropol ot kusunata bronzova epoha...*, p. 25) is excluded from the list of the applied techniques presented in the later publication – the definition "indented line" is transformed into "incised" (Filipov, *Idolna plastika...*, p. 16).

91, 148, 151, 176, 259); included are finds, discovered in the sand adjacent to graves no. 182, 201, 226; and without being illustrated, some “new” finds are presented (those closer to graves no. 211, 241, 289, 302). Elaborated data is offered on the so-called figurine with the swastika sign, found in grave no. 41<sup>68</sup>. Unknown until 1978 is the description of a grave no. 310 – a “cult scene” comprising a “bed” or “seat”, one laid down figurine and two boat-models placed behind the indicated finds.<sup>69</sup> With the exception of Vatina, all the sites described as analogous to Orsoya do not differ from those listed in 1976.<sup>70</sup>

*The commentary* on the initial publications<sup>71</sup> is based on the 1976 article and includes observations of which mentioned here are only those concerning more general problems. These include the number of the published graves; the number of the vessels defined as urns; the definition of various categories of vessels as urns; certain typological ambiguities and necessary clarifications, which concern the presence of differing shapes in the same category; the presence of identical forms, distributed in different categories, and others. The abovementioned 1976 work presents the largest number of illustrations ever published for the site, a characteristic which could have turned it into a good source for the reconstruction of burial contexts and a good starting point for further interpretations. Yet, it contains a variety of discrepancies in the description of the material, the correlation between the text and the illustration, and many others. Further discrepancies appear between Filipov’s initial publications and those of later authors. The most important of them result in: the difficulties in the identification of the published finds and the “doubling” of objects, presented as belonging to several different graves; the so-called “newly found” objects, which in fact are old ones simply labeled with a different grave number; the presence of metal finds, dating to considerably later periods. Inconsistencies in some definitions of the applied decoration techniques (see above) are also registered.

*Later publications.* In his *treatise of 1988* A. Bonev elaborates a typology of the ceramic finds from the Orsoya cemetery, which is also used as the foundation in his later publications.<sup>72</sup> In his work of 1999 (published in 2000) the presentation of these types is completed by the indication of every included specimen; this makes possible the juxtaposition with the data given in the initial publications of Tr. Filipov.

The 1988 publication contains a typology of burial urns, kantharos-type vessels<sup>73</sup>, cups, deep bowls, lids, “kyathoi”, double “salt-vessels” (two small oval containers, attached to each other, with a handle between them), zoomorphic vessels, anthropomorphic figurines and models of “cult axes”. There are four groups of urns: the first is characterized by truncated-cone urns and has six types; the second, similar to the shapes of the kantharoi, four types; the third group is represented by two vessels; and a fourth group, has a single specimen; for groups four and five the types were not specified. Kantharoi were divided into three types, and the cups include two categories. From the deep bowls only one specimen is published; the bowls serving as lids of the urns are said to be typologically analogous. A new designation is that of kyathoi, referring to two specimens (found in grave no. 73 and 78). As finds without parallels are indicated one boat model (grave no. 88), one urn model (grave no. 93), one cylindrical “stand” (grave no. 147), models of cult tables (graves no. 62 and 41) and the so-called “cult scene” from grave no. 310. Special attention is given to the absence of completely matching ornamental combinations, and the presence of specific selection of motives in the decoration of various categories of finds.<sup>74</sup> In addition to the anthropomorphic figurines and zoomorphic vessels, these motifs are considered as indicators of Aegean influence on the Lower Danube River cultures.<sup>75</sup> According to the author’s statement the

<sup>68</sup> Filipov, *Idolna plastika...*, p. 12.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibidem*, p.15.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibidem*, p.17.

<sup>71</sup> See note 53.

<sup>72</sup> A. Bonev, *Trakiya i egeyskiya svyat prez vtorata polovina na II hilyadoletie do n.e.*, Razkopki i prouchvaniya, Sofia, 1988; Bonev, *The Late Bronze Age Cremation Graveyard of Orsoya (a typology of the ceramic finds and problems of interpretations)*, in L. Nikolova (ed.), *Reports of Prehistoric Research Projects*, Vol. II-III, 1999 (2000).

<sup>73</sup> A definition offered for the first time about the Orsoya material in 1979 (A. Bonev, *Retseziya za Trayko Filipov. Nekropol ot kusnata bronzova epoha pri s. Orsoya, Lomsko, Album*, Sofia 1976, Arheologija Sofia 1979, p. 57-58.

<sup>74</sup> A. Bonev, *Trakiya i egeyskiya svyat prez vtorata polovina na II hilyadoletie do n.e.*, Razkopki i prouchvaniya, Sofia, 1988, p. 49.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 71.

typology was intended to be simple, especially with regard to the zoomorphic vessels and anthropomorphic figurines.<sup>76</sup> In fact, at that time this was the most detailed classification of the Orsoya finds. The beginning of the cemetery is set in the middle or at latest in the second half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century BC, and 1100 BC is indicated as an endmost date – which according to the author coincides with the great migration of the Aegean population.<sup>77</sup> He remarks the impossibility to determine phases in the use of the cemetery – a circumstance which he considers to have been caused by the nature of the initial publications<sup>78</sup>. With this occasion, A. Bonev also reiterates his earlier ideas<sup>79</sup>. In 1999 more comprehensive information on the categorization of the preserved grave finds is offered – the work comprises over 180 ceramic objects (no. 1-184), divided in 28 types. The urns are divided in five groups (having up to five types and variants), some of which are represented by single specimens.<sup>80</sup> Bonev specifies that it is disputable whether all the vessels described by Tr. Filipov as urns had that very function (for example the urns of type III-1, with height around 10-12 cm), but the definition from the initial publication is provisionally kept. The second most widespread category – the kantharoi – has three types.<sup>81</sup> The cups are presented by two types<sup>82</sup> with the comment that it is not clear whether they were actually covered by lids, as illustrated by Tr. Filipov. A separate type with a single representative is the bowl found in grave no. 1. Bonev notes that the use of bowls to cover urns is rare in Orsoya, in contradistinction to Cârna, where such bowls are both frequent and typologically varied.<sup>83</sup> A photograph of the site however reveals that the number of urns covered by deep bowls<sup>84</sup> is larger than stated in the album. There are two vessels defined as a “local ceramic shape – kyathos”, as well as grave finds which according to the author are made especially for the burial.<sup>85</sup> Several categories are established: double vessels (small salt-containers), zoomorphic vessels in the shape of birds and a horned animal, anthropomorphic figurines (the so-called bell-idols), models of cult axes, models of boats, a model of urn, a stand and a model of a four-legged cult table.<sup>86</sup> The ornamentation techniques are described as false-cord technique, combined with white incrustation, incision and stamps, and the motives are divided into linear and curvilinear groups.

A recent work of the present author<sup>87</sup> identifies the graves mentioned only in the later publications (i.e. missing in the earlier ones); the finds that were missing in the initial publication and were added later, those that were presented in the older publications, but were abandoned in the later ones; cases of similar urns that were doubled as well as assigned to separate types; cases when the same specimens were described as having different sizes; cases when one and the same vessel is included in two unrelated categories (as urn and as a cup for example). One further problem is that the main researchers share different opinions on whether certain vessels are “similar” or “identical” and sometimes textually describe analogies between vessels that are not justified by the presented illustrations. Again, there are discrepancies in the definitions, and the illustration.

*Specific problems with regard to the Orsoya cemetery.* While some *problems*, mentioned in the bibliography cited here, are more general in nature,<sup>88</sup> others are more specific. Only the latter will be discussed below.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 48.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 73.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 57.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 53.

<sup>80</sup> A. Bonev, *The Late Bronze Age Cremation Graveyard of Orsoya (a typology of the ceramic finds and problems of interpretations)*, in (ed. L. Nikolova), *Reports of Prehistoric Research Projects, II-III*, 1999 (2000), p. 5-12.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 12-19.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 19-21.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 21.

<sup>84</sup> Filipov, *Nekropol ot ksnata bronzova epoha...*, fig. 1.

<sup>85</sup> Bonev, *The Late Bronze Age Cremation Graveyard ...*, p. 21.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 21-28.

<sup>87</sup> See note 53.

<sup>88</sup> These are 1) origin of the Incrusted Pottery Culture, the basis of its emergence and development; 2) the reasons for the appearance and the exceptional distribution of anthropomorphic and zoomorphic objects; 3) the emergence of the complex ornamental system; 4) the nature of the “cult scene” found in grave no. 310; and 5) the historic destiny of the bearers of the Incrusted Pottery Culture (Bonev, *Nyakoi problemi, svurzani s kusnobronzoviya*

*Location.* The fact that the cemetery is situated in a region with boggy terrain and with high level of underground waters, on a loose riverbank, and that its northern part has been regularly flooded resulted in disturbed contexts and dispersal of the objects in the sand that make identification of some of the graves impossible.<sup>89</sup> The terrain researcher specifies that the majority of the urns are broken or taken away by the water<sup>90</sup>, their arrangement is compromised<sup>91</sup> and the northern sector of the cemetery is in fact located in the very riverbed.<sup>92</sup> He presupposes that the cemetery area is almost completely researched and states that no corresponding settlement could be identified, probably due to the landslides in the region.<sup>93</sup>

*Discovery of the cemetery and present state of the finds and the documentation.* The number of the initially found urns remains unknown.<sup>94</sup> Authors, having made attempts to study the material, indicate that it is already impossible to precisely document the finds.<sup>95</sup> The greater part of the objects remains unpublished at the Lom Museum depository and the terrain documentation has not been preserved. Thus, according to A. Bonev, all data of the terrain researcher concerning the graves could not be confirmed and his conclusions should be taken with caution<sup>96</sup>.

*Specifics of the publications.* The initial publications – altogether three, offering similar information – contain some discrepancies. The most detailed publication of Tr. Filipov is considered to be closer to a printed collection of pictures<sup>97</sup> while in fact the cemetery remains unpublished.<sup>98</sup>

*Conventions of the work with the materials.* There are various types of discrepancies concerning the data: 1) in the information given by one and the same author, 2) between the initial publications and the later articles or 3) between the statements of the two “later” authors, who worked with the materials after Tr. Filipov.

*Number of graves.* The existence of 343 graves could not be verified. Less than one-third of that number were included in the initial articles of Tr. Filipov, and according to some authors the published finds in fact represent 19% of the total material found.<sup>99</sup> A. Bonev communicates that the number of graves, described in the publications of Tr. Filipov, is 74.<sup>100</sup> T. Shalганова states that from the mentioned 343 burial contexts, data about urns is presented for 66 graves; in 52 of those cases amphora-type urns were used, and in 14 other cases various vessels were utilized as containers of the bones.<sup>101</sup> According to R. Krauß, the number of the published graves amounts to 77.<sup>102</sup> A detailed review of the presumable number of graves, as well as that of the various categories of finds, was presented in another article and will not be included here.<sup>103</sup>

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*nekropol...*, p. 49-50). For each of these some possible answers are searched and 18 years later a work stating the same problems was published (Ganeva, *op. cit.*).

<sup>89</sup> Filipov, *Nekropol ot kusnata bronzova epoha...*, p. 7.

<sup>90</sup> Idem, *Idolna plastika ot kusnobronzoviya nekropol pri s. Orsoya, Mihaylovgradski okrug*, Muzei i pametnitsi na kulturata 2, Sofia, 1978, p. 11.

<sup>91</sup> Idem, *Keramika i idolna plastika ot kusnobronzoviya nekropol pri s. Orsoya, Mihaylovgradski okrug*, Arheologija Sofia 2, 1974, p. 13.

<sup>92</sup> Idem, *Idolna plastika ot kusnobronzoviya nekropol pri s. Orsoya, Mihaylovgradski okrug*, Muzei i pametnitsi na kulturata 2, Sofia, 1978, p. 9.

<sup>93</sup> Bonev, *Prouchvaniyata na kulturata s inkrustirana keramika po Dolni Dunav (obsht istoriografski pregled)*, Godishnik na Departament Arheologija – Nov Bulgarski Universitet, 1996, note 87.

<sup>94</sup> Bonev, *The Late Bronze Age Cremation Graveyard ...*, p. 3, note 5.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 4.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 5.

<sup>97</sup> Shalганова, *Pogrebalniyat obred-izvor za rekonstruktsiya na sotsialnata struktura (vurhu materialite na kulturata na inkrustiranata keramika po Dolni Dunav)*, Problemi na izkustvoto 1, 2002, Sofia, p. 26.

<sup>98</sup> Bonev, *The Late Bronze Age Cremation Graveyard ...*, p. 4.

<sup>99</sup> Shalганова, *Pogrebalniyat obred-izvor za rekonstruktsiya...*, p. 26.

<sup>100</sup> Bonev, *Prouchvaniyata na kulturata s inkrustirana keramika po Dolni Dunav...*, note 86.

<sup>101</sup> Shalганова, *Pogrebalniyat obred-izvor za rekonstruktsiya...*, p. 26.

<sup>102</sup> R. Krauß, *Die Prähistorische Besiedlung am Unterlauf der Jantra vor dem Hintergrund der Kulturgeschichte Nordbulgariens*, Prähistorische Archäologie Südosteuropa 20, Rahden/Westf., 2006, p. 131.

<sup>103</sup> See note 53.

*Doubling of urns and other categories of vessels.* Further, the way the data were published does not allow any detailed analysis: information about graves is limited to illustration of the finds; there are several cases of doubling of same vessels, by inclusion in more than one burial context. Further confusion derives from the comparison of authors' opinions: according to some authors, vessels from different grave numeration are the same (T. Shalганova), while other researchers accept them as similar, but not identical (e.g., the kantharos from grave 121/154 and the urn from grave 82/160).<sup>104</sup>

According to A. Bonev doubled are the urns from graves 25/19, 43/20; a zoomorphic vessel from grave 43/128; a cup from grave 121/67 (and consequently the kantharos from grave 154/121 and the urn from grave 82/160 are not considered as identical, i.e. doubled, and are not included in the list). T. Shalганova also notes the presence of identical vessels in different graves: the urns from the contexts numbered as 20/43, and 82/160; zoomorphic vessel from 43/128; one-handled vessel from 67/121; a kantharos from 121/154.<sup>105</sup> She obviously accepts as identical the two finds, excluded from A. Bonev's list of identical objects, and does not indicate as a doubled vessel the urn from grave 25/19, mentioned by him. T. Shalганova's opinion is shared by M. Şandor-Chicideanu, who also adds the urn from grave no. 135 as corresponding to that from grave 154.<sup>106</sup> It remains unclear whether, based on the mentioned doubling, the number of urns (and the count of graves respectively) should be reduced or not, because it is possible that certain vessels, which were considered as better illustrating a type, were used as representative of similar, less well preserved examples from different graves.

Determination of the *number of finds* is impossible, as it is affected by the abovementioned factors. A. Bonev describes 184.<sup>107</sup> T. Shalганova reports 380 vessels (five small jugs with rounded body, three loops on their broadest part and one high handle;<sup>108</sup> 96 – of the 104 known to her – kantharos-like vessels with rectangular body and elliptic or diamond-shaped rim, and the further eight with rounded-type body; ten other similar vessels with decoration of vertical cannelures along the body; several amphora-like vessels decorated with channels,<sup>109</sup> about which we are told that they stand for a much larger and unspecified number of similar, unpublished, vessels,<sup>110</sup> for the rest of the inventory see above).

*Research limitations.* The impossibility to verify the number of the published graves and finds was already stated. The mixture of categories, the doubling of finds and the differences between the descriptions given by various authors, the reference to vessels only in terms of their function (as urn, or lid), the variability in the number of finds – reduced by some researchers and increased by others (depending on their opinions about the doubling of the finds in the initial publications and on their access to the material), the numerous discrepancies in and between the publications are part of the research difficulties.

It remains impossible to accurately determine the internal grave grouping within the cemetery, the mutual relation between the graves, the content of the graves (number of buried individuals, grave goods and their location), and possible chronological differences among graves, let alone to anthropologically diagnose the human remains or to identify the surviving evidence of acts accompanying the burial practice.

**(7) Dolno Linevo–“Sadovete”, Montana region** (approx. 43°50'34.89''N; 23°19'32.09''E). Published information is offered about two one-handled cups, very similar to the *Novo Selo* type, that have been found under unknown circumstances in the *Sadovete* location. Initially they were kept at the City Museum of Lom, later one of them has been moved to the Vratsa Regional Museum, and the other – transferred to the Sofia University Museum collection.<sup>111</sup>

<sup>104</sup> See Bonev, *The Late Bronze Age Cremation Graveyard* ..., p. 8, 16.

<sup>105</sup> Shalганova, *Pogrebalniyat obred-izvor za rekonstruktsiya*..., p. 30, note 2.

<sup>106</sup> Şandor-Chicideanu, *op. cit.*, p. 21, note 97. There is information on the problem also in a previously printed article (M. Chicideanu-Şandor and I. Chicideanu, *Contributions to the study of the Gîrla Mare anthropomorphic statuettes*, *Dacia N.S.*, 34, 1990, p. 53-75).

<sup>107</sup> Bonev, *The Late Bronze Age Cremation Graveyard* ..., p. 5.

<sup>108</sup> Shalганova, *The Lower Danube Incrusted Pottery Culture*, in (eds. D. Bailey et alii), *Prehistoric Bulgaria (Monographs in World Archaeology No. 22)*, Madison-Wisconsin, 1995, p. 297-298.

<sup>109</sup> Shalганova, *op. cit.* p. 298.

<sup>110</sup> Krauß, *Die Prähistorische Besiedlung* ..., p. 131.

<sup>111</sup> Mikov, *Materiali ot posledniya period na bronzovata epoha v Severozapadna Bulgaria*, *Arheologija* Sofia 1970, p. 49, 62, note 6.

Other authors specify that the sites, situated in the Dolno Linevo vicinity, are most probably cemeteries, and are in fact two: the first one located in *Sadovete*, where the two cups (that were lost afterwards) had been discovered, as well as a kantharos-type vessel published by B. Hänsel,<sup>112</sup> and attributed to the Čerkovna Group<sup>113</sup>. According to M. Șandor-Chicideanu the finds from Sadovete should be related to the Gârla Mare culture; most probably the author refers to the two one-handed cups.<sup>114</sup> T. Shalganova communicates that during a field walking survey to the south-east of the village, one almost wholly preserved one-handed cup with *Buckel* decoration was found by chance and it should be included within the group of objects attributed to the Lower Danube Incrusted Pottery Culture.<sup>115</sup> No further detailed information is offered about the find, and most probably it remained unpublished. The vessel is viewed as representative for the later (third) chronological phase of the culture. During surveys in the following years, made in the vicinity of the village by A. Bonev, no evidences of the presence of a site, belonging to this culture, have been registered.<sup>116</sup>

**(8) Mokresh-“Grobishteto”, Montana region** (approx. 43°45′01.24″N; 23°23′49.79″E). At a distance of 1 km to the east of Mokresh and 8 km to the south of the Danube River, during a rake out of soil by bulldozer, three vessels full of burned bone ashes were found.<sup>117</sup> Their rims are more specific – having spurs, shaped as zoomorphic elements on one of the pots, as triangles on the second, and as two double opposite, combined with two single opposite elements on the third.<sup>118</sup> Having no analogues from Bulgaria and Serbia, the vessels were compared by Alexandrov with the materials from Cârna; the latter were considered to be more simplified shapes.<sup>119</sup> These parallels were later accepted by A. Bonev, who found similarities with specimens of the Wietenberg Culture, and dated them generally to the Late Bronze Age. In the trenches made during the terrain research in 1979 in the *Grobishteto* locality no materials possibly related to a cemetery were found. An authors’ assumption is that the zone where the site is located would have played a role of a “contact area”.<sup>120</sup>

T. Shalganova states that the deep bowls having this type of protuberances represent a very popular form among the material of the Bistreț-Ișalnița Culture.<sup>121</sup> As exact parallel is indicated the material from the Bechet cemetery; these vessels are considered contemporaneous with the Bistreț-Ișalnița Culture and with the late, third phase of the Lower Danube Incrusted Pottery Culture. Still it is not possible to assign with certainty the Mokresh cemetery to an archaeological culture. The hypotheses put forth are the following: 1) given the specific shape of the vessels, the cemetery could represent the third phase of the Lower Danube River Incrusted Pottery Culture, but here these vessels function as urns, a fact atypical for the culture in question; the lack of other finds and the remoteness of the site from the Danube River are further arguments against his assignment; 2) the site is related to the Bistreț-Ișalnița Culture developed on the right Danube bank (its location is just opposite to the eponymic sites on the left bank of the river); and 3) the cemetery is situated in an area, related to the southern boundary of the Lower Danube Incrusted

<sup>112</sup> Shalganova, *The Lower Danube Incrusted Pottery Culture* ..., p. 176; B. Hänsel, *Beiträge zur regionalen und chronologischen Gliederung der älteren Hallstattzeit an der unteren Donau* (Beiträge zur ur- und frühgeschichtlichen Archäologie des Mittelmeer-Kulturräumens für das Institut für Frühgeschichte der Universität Heidelberg, 16, 1976, Bonn, Taf. 34-1.

<sup>113</sup> Hänsel, *op. cit.*, p. 79, 81, a spherical short neck kantharos. See note 27.

<sup>114</sup> Șandor-Chicideanu, *op. cit.*, p. 228.

<sup>115</sup> Shalganova, *Izkustvo i obred na bronzovata epoha. Kultura na inkrustirana keramika po Dolen Dunav*, Monografii 3, Mitologiya, izkustvo, folklor (MIF), Izdatelstvo na NBU, 2005, Sofia, p. 176.

<sup>116</sup> After Shalganova, *op. cit.*, note 38. Sv. Ganeva (*op.cit.*) also indicates the lack of cultural remains; the arguments repeat those published by T. Shalganova.

<sup>117</sup> G. Alexandrov, *Novootkriti praistoricheski selishta v Mihaylovgradski okrug*, *Izvestiya na muzeite v Severozapadna Bulgaria* 6, 1981, p. 40.

<sup>118</sup> Alexandrov, *op. cit.*, p. 41, fig. 8 a, b, c; fig. 9.

<sup>119</sup> Alexandrov, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

<sup>120</sup> A. Bonev, *Ranna Trakiya. Formirane na trakiyskata kultura – kraya na vtoroto-nachaloto na purvoto hilyadoletie pr.Hr.*, Razkopki i prouchvaniya XXXI, 2003, Sofia, p. 31-32.

<sup>121</sup> T. Shalganova, *Izkustvo i obred na bronzovata epoha. Kultura na inkrustirana keramika po Dolen Dunav*, Monografii 3, Mitologiya, izkustvo, folklor (MIF), Izdatelstvo na NBU, 2005, Sofia, p. 176.

Pottery Culture, where during its third phase a “contact zone” was formed between the Verbicioara and the Lower Danube Incrusted Pottery Culture, which had resulted in its diverse manifestation, resembling in many ways that of Bistreț-Ișalnița; the same cultures have taken part in the process of modeling of the latter culture (Bistreț-Ișalnița). The graves in Gradeshnitsa and Hurllets, having similar “mixed” characteristics, are indicated as evidence confirming this supposition.<sup>122</sup>

**(9) Gradeshnitsa – “Malo pole”, Vratsa region** (approx. 43°29'10.47''N; 23°28'50.46''E). The terrain was researched through trenches in order to establish the western border of a Neolithic site in the *Malo Pole* locality, 3 km west of Gradeshnitsa. In one of these trenches – 15 m long (east-west), 1 m wide (north-south) and 1 m deep – five cremation urn graves have been found.<sup>123</sup> The graves are single; no grave markers are registered. B. Nikolov relates these graves to a settlement, situated between the localities Malo Pole and Madanska Bara.<sup>124</sup> The site is dated to the final period of the Bronze Age, based on similarities with ceramics found in the graves of the Lower Danube Incrusted Pottery Culture and also in Zimnicea, where however no anthropomorphic figurines were found and the rite is inhumation. *Grave no. 1* consists of a highly fragmented urn containing ashes, pieces of coal, burned human bones and an upper part of an anthropomorphic figurine.<sup>125</sup> The latter is schematic, with a decorated front part incrustated with white paste. The interpretation of the incised decoration on the head of the figurine as an insect was accepted also by later authors.<sup>126</sup> In *grave no. 2* one of the vessels was used as urn, the other as lid covering the remains. *Grave no. 3* contains a similar combination of an urn and a lid<sup>127</sup> and *Grave no. 4*, whose burial pit is closer to the surface, contains an urn, fragments of a shallow container and pottery of various other shapes. The urn is not restored; the recovered biconical vessel has a flat base and an outwards elongated rim.<sup>128</sup> The urn and the lid found in *grave no. 5* are very similar to those from graves no. 2 and no. 3. Fragments from several other vessels have also been found. The urn and the lid are not restored, but the vessel that has been recovered, and defined as biconical,<sup>129</sup> is rather closer to the kantharos-type vessels.

Some authors expressed their reserves towards these research results;<sup>130</sup> they even question some of the published data and particularly the finding of the anthropomorphic figurine.<sup>131</sup> Other researchers include the cemetery in the later phase of the Gârla Mare Culture – a statement grounded on the presence of ceramic shapes typical for that culture, represented by the finds from grave no. 1.<sup>132</sup> Yet others define the pottery found in four of the graves as belonging to the fifth phase of the Verbicioara Culture.<sup>133</sup> On the other hand, the combination of an amphora-type vessel with an anthropomorphic figurine fragment – as in the case of grave no. 1 – represents a ritual element characteristic of the Lower Danube Incrusted Pottery Culture. T. Shalganova's conclusions refer to migration processes or trade and cultural interrelations,<sup>134</sup> when she suggests the following: 50 km to the south of the Danube River was situated a cemetery of a different culture, most probably Verbicioara, with which the Lower Danube Incrusted Pottery Culture maintained interrelations, as we know from similar cases in Oltenia.<sup>135</sup> If the presence of the anthropomorphic figurine fragment is accepted as an authentic fact, its discovery in a region which is

<sup>122</sup> Shalganova, *op. cit.*, p. 176-177.

<sup>123</sup> B. Nikolov, *Nekropol ot ksnata bronzova epoha ot s. Gradeshnitsa, Vrachanska oblast*, *Izvestiya na muzeite ot Severozapadna Bulgaria* 2, 1978, p. 19.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 21, fig. 1, 2.

<sup>126</sup> G. Georgiev, *Die Erforschung der Bronzezeit in Nordwestbulgarien*, PAS 1, 1982, p. 198.

<sup>127</sup> Nikolov, *Nekropol ot ksnata bronzova epoha ...*, p. 24, fig. 3, c, d.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 24, fig. 4, a.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 24-25, fig. 4, b.

<sup>130</sup> A. Bonev, *Ranna Trakiya. Formirane na trakiyskata kultura – kraya na vtoroto-nachaloto na purvoto hilyadoletie pr.Hr.*, Razkopki i prouchvaniya, XXXI, 2003, Sofia, p. 32.

<sup>131</sup> Bonev, *Ranna Trakiya...*, p. 53, note 9.

<sup>132</sup> Șandor-Chicideanu, *op. cit.*, p. 233.

<sup>133</sup> Shalganova, *Izkustvo i obred na bronzovata epoha...*, p. 177.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>135</sup> Shalganova, *Izkustvo i obred na bronzovata epoha...*, p. 178.

remote from the Lower Danube Incrusted Pottery Culture area represents no isolated phenomenon.<sup>136</sup> However, in the present state of research both migration and trade as explanations are beyond proof, while the idea of cultural relations is too general. The fact remains, that if that find's context is real, it represents an evidence of interrelations between the bearers of those two cultures or at least proves some chronological parallelism. In the present work the site is considered as related to the Verbicioara Culture.

**(10) Kozloduy, Vratsa region** (approx. 43°46'42.80''N; 23°43'17.97''E). At the very Danube riverbank, during excavations for a sewerage pipeline, dozens of graves, dated to the Bronze Age and the Roman Era, have been destroyed. Two whole vessels dated to the Bronze Age were kept – a cup and an „urn”.<sup>137</sup> The context is interpreted as an undisturbed grave, most probably from the end of the Bronze Age, but in fact these vessels date to a later period. B. Hänsel defines them as belonging to the second phase of the classical stamped pottery<sup>138</sup> and recent publications explicitly define them as Early Iron Age pottery specimens.<sup>139</sup>

In the main text of her article L. Zung argues that the association, in Baley, of several Early Iron Age vessel shapes with shapes known the cemetery at Kozloduy suggests that the Lower Danube Incrusted Pottery Culture extended until the Early Iron Age.<sup>140</sup> According to the summary in French (which is also used by M. Șandor-Chicideanu), pursuant to “some finds from Baley and the Kozloduy cemetery” it is possible to assume that the culture has continued its development until the Early Iron Age.<sup>141</sup> Her conclusion also refers to data from an earlier article, which includes two “fragmented figurines that are typical for the Gârla Mare Culture”.<sup>142</sup> Both specimens have only the upper part preserved and are stray finds, mentioned only in one work.<sup>143</sup> Despite the supposed relation to a grave context,<sup>144</sup> these data are not reliable. However, in case we accept them as correct, they would define, in Bulgaria, the eastern limit of the distribution of anthropomorphic figurines typical for the Incrusted Pottery Culture.

**(11) Hurllets, Vratsa region** (approx. 43°42'26.05''N; 23°49'48.32''E). According to published data, the earliest materials found in the lower layers of the Avgusta fortress date to “the end of the Bronze and the beginning of the Early Iron Age, the end of the II millennium” BC<sup>145</sup>. The site is located 2.5 km to the north of Hurllets, on a naturally protected elevated plateau at the left bank of the Ogosta's ancient riverbed.<sup>146</sup> Two cremation graves were found, consisting of urns with cremated bones, dated to the “end of the Bronze Age”, and the presence of a Thracian settlement in the surroundings of Hurllets has been suggested.<sup>147</sup> Three cremation graves with “urns... from the end of the Bronze and the beginning of the Iron Age” are mentioned in another communication.<sup>148</sup>

<sup>136</sup> A situation known from Zimnicea (A.D. Alexandrescu, *La nécropole du bronze récent de Zimnicea (dép. de Teleorman)*, Dacia N.S. 17, 1973, p. 81, Pl. 1, 1-4).

<sup>137</sup> Nikolov, *Selishta i nekropoli ot bronzovata epoha vuv Vrachansko*, Arheologija Sofia 2, 1964, p. 73, fig. 6 a, b.

<sup>138</sup> Hänsel, *Beiträge zur regionalen und chronologischen Gliederung der älteren Hallstattzeit an der unteren Donau* (Beiträge zur ur- und frühgeschichtlichen Archäologie des Mittelmeer-Kulturräume für das Institut für Frühgeschichte der Universität Heidelberg 16), 1976, Bonn, p. 171.

<sup>139</sup> Example in Wardle et alii, *Troy VII B<sub>2</sub> Revisited. The date of the transition from Bronze to Iron Age in the Northern Aegean*, in (eds. H. Todorova et alii), *The Struma/Strymon River Valley in Prehistory (In the steps of James Harvey Gaul, 2)*, Proceedings of the International Symposium Strymon Praehistoricus, Kjustendil-Blagoevgrad (Bulgaria), Serres-Amphipolis (Greece), 27.09-01.10. 2004, Sofia, 2007, p. 483, fig. 1.

<sup>140</sup> Zung, *Razvitie na kusnobronzovata kultura Baley-Orsoya...*, p. 23.

<sup>141</sup> Zung, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

<sup>142</sup> Șandor-Chicideanu, *op. cit.*, p. 239.

<sup>143</sup> M. Chicideanu-Șandor, I. Chicideanu, *Contributions to the study of the Gârla Mare anthropomorphic statuettes*, Dacia N.S. 34, 1990, p. 74, fig. 6-5 a, b; 6 a, b.

<sup>144</sup> Șandor-Chicideanu, *op. cit.*, p. 239.

<sup>145</sup> Sp. Mashov, *Avgusta*, 1980, p. 8.

<sup>146</sup> Mashov, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

<sup>147</sup> Mashov, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

<sup>148</sup> Sp. Mashov, *Razkopki na antichnata krepost Avgusta pri s. Hurllets, Vrachanski okrug*, Arheologicheski otkritiya i razkopki prez 1977, XXIII Natsionalna konferentsiya v gr. Vidin (rezymeta na dokladi), Sofia, 1978, p. 85.

In comparison to the location of the sites typical for the Incrusted Pottery Culture, this cemetery stands back from the river (approximately at the same distance as Mokresh) and according to T. Shalganova it is situated considerably further east than the distribution area of the Incrusted Pottery Culture. The author specifies that the registered cremation graves are two and the discovered pots are three.<sup>149</sup> Based on its shape and presence of four protuberances on its mouth, one of the vessels was attributed to the Lower Danube Incrusted Pottery Culture, with the difference that there is no decoration (as observed in the Mokresh case).<sup>150</sup> The second vessel represents a jug used as an urn, considered as a type characteristic rather for the Čerkovna (Plovdiv-Zimnicea) Group. The third vessel, an amphora, is designated as possibly belonging to both cultures. These observations made the author consider the cemetery as belonging to a “contact zone” in which an interfusion of cultural traditions is observed<sup>151</sup>. In the present work the site is not catalogued as a typical representative of the Lower Danube Incrusted Pottery Culture.

**(12) Butan, Vratsa region** (approx. 43°38'50.50''N; 23°44'56.63''E). In the *Sredoreka* locality which is situated to the west of Butan, during excavations for a sewerage pipeline in 1978, settlements from the “Bronze and Iron Age” were registered. “Burial urns” containing burned bones and ashes were found, the predominant vessels having spherical form and two high handles above the rim. Further “burial urns” were found during excavations for the Dam of Brestovets,<sup>152</sup> but without any other details.

**(13) Sofronievo, Vratsa region** (approx. 43°38'04.99''N; 23°47'05.65''E). In the northwestern part of the village, during vineyard cultivation, “burial urns” containing ashes and burned human bones were found.<sup>153</sup> Some of the vessels have oblique-cut rims; others have relief or incised decoration. The pottery type assigned to the end of the Bronze and the beginning of the Early Iron Age, at “the end of the second millennium BC”.<sup>154</sup> These vessels were neither described, nor illustrated; details were published only about later Sofronievo materials.<sup>155</sup> In the group, defined by A. Vulpe as *Vratsa*, B. Hänsel includes stamped fragments that have been found in a mound located close to the Sofronievo village,<sup>156</sup> with no reference of earlier materials. The present author does not consider these finds as reliable representatives of typical Late Bronze Age burial practices.

**(14) Galiche, Vratsa region** (approx. 43°33'33.11''N; 23°52'02.46''E). One *cemetery* located near Galiche is mentioned only by Zung, who says it is unpublished and the material kept in the Vratsa Historical Museum.<sup>157</sup> According to C. Schuster, some of the published finds from Galiche could in fact belong to the Early Bronze Age Zimnicea Group, and, considering their contexts, indicate the practicing of cremation.<sup>158</sup> On the other hand, B. Hänsel includes into the Čerkovna group an unpublished vessel from Galiche, as probably stemming from a grave context.<sup>159</sup> The vessel however is not ornamented and has unknown context. As any further information is lacking, there is no way to relate these finds to each other.

**(15) Burdarski Geran, Vratsa region** (approx. 43°32'52.48''N; 23°57'08.72''E). In 1976 B. Hänsel includes in the Čerkovna Group unpublished vessels found near Burdarski Geran (which he calls

<sup>149</sup> No further details or collocations are mentioned, see Shalganova, *Izkustvo i obred na bronzovata epoha...*, p. 178.

<sup>150</sup> Shalganova, *Izkustvo i obred na bronzovata epoha...*, p.178.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>152</sup> Nikolov, *Ot Iskur do Ogosta, Istoriya na 151 sela i gradove ot bivshiya Vrachanski okrug*, Sofia, 1996, p. 33

<sup>153</sup> Nikolov, *Sofronievo*, Sofia, 1971, p. 10.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>155</sup> B. Nikolov, *Trakiyski pametnitsi ot Vrachansko*, *Izvestija Sofia* 28, 1965, p. 166-170, 192-193.

<sup>156</sup> Hänsel, *Beiträge zur regionalen und chronologischen Gliederung ...*, p. 172.

<sup>157</sup> Zung, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

<sup>158</sup> Cr. Schuster, *Zur Bestattungsweise in Südromänien in der Bronzezeit*, in: (ed. R.Vasić), *Sahranjivanje u Bronzono i Gvozdeno Doba, Simpozijum, Čačak, 4-8 Septembar 2002 / Burial Customs in the Bronze and Iron Age. Symposium, Čačak, 4-8 September 2002*, Čačak, 2003, p. 112.

<sup>159</sup> Hänsel, *Beiträge zur regionalen und chronologischen Gliederung ...*, p. 79, pl. 35-1. See note 27.

*Badarski Geran*).<sup>160</sup> Because of their good preservation the author supposes that they are grave finds.<sup>161</sup> Most probably these are the same vessels mentioned afterwards by B. Nikolov, according to whom “urns containing ashes and bones” were found during ploughing, to the northwest of the village, on a spot called *Dinkov Han*.<sup>162</sup> The vessels are described as globular, having two symmetrical handles, which go over the rim. The proposed interpretation is “a Late Bronze Age cemetery”, but there are no further details.<sup>163</sup> In the present paper these materials are not considered as characteristic, reliable representatives of the Late Bronze Age burial practices.

**(16) Krushovitsa, Vratsa region** (approx. 43°37'33.69''N; 23°50'23.29''E). Located on the two banks of the Skut River, the village consists of an older part (on the right riverbank and the slopes of a higher hill) and a newer one (situated on the left riverbank).<sup>164</sup> In the *new part* of the village, during excavations for construction of a cultural center and a house, a large cemetery has been found, which was dated to the “end of the Bronze and the two periods of the Iron Age”.<sup>165</sup> “More than ten Thracian graves” were found, some of them – including vessels with one handle and slightly oblique-cut rim, while other containers have two vertical handles, protruding high above the rim.<sup>166</sup> Based on the composition of the clay, Nikolov considers that the vessels were produced in that very settlement; they are described in detail.<sup>167</sup> The cemetery is seen as evidence of the cultural shift from the end of the Bronze and the beginning of the Iron Ages.<sup>168</sup> This dating was, however, criticized by B. Hänsel,<sup>169</sup> who included the Krushovitsa finds into the Late Bronze Age Čerkovna Group.<sup>170</sup> Other authors use the term Zimnicea-Plovdiv for these vessels.<sup>171</sup> According to M. Șandor-Chicideanu the graves should be attributed to the Gârla Mare Group.<sup>172</sup> In the present work they are not taken as typical representatives of the Lower Danube Incrusted Pottery Culture.

**(17) Bukyovtsi, present-day Miziya, Vratsa region** (approx. 43°41'30.06''N; 23°51'17.38''E). In the *Rupite* locality, 2 km to the south of Bukyovtsi village,<sup>173</sup> during extraction of stones, several cremation graves were registered.<sup>174</sup> Three whole vessels have been preserved, dated to the “later period of the Bronze Age”.<sup>175</sup> Considering the characteristics of these vessels, they are not included in the present work on the Late Bronze Age burial practices.

**(18) Ostrov, Vratsa region** (approx. 43°40'31.83''N; 24°07'48.84''E). Three kilometers to the west of the Danube River port, during construction of an irrigation canal in the location called *Djamiiskoto*, four cremation graves were found. They consisted of cremated human remains found in urns, at a depth of 0.80 m. Four such vessels are kept in the museum:<sup>176</sup> two bigger and undecorated, and

<sup>160</sup> *Ibidem*, Taf. 34-4, 5.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 79. See note 18.

<sup>162</sup> Nikolov, *Ot Iskur do Ogosta...*, p. 39.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>164</sup> B. Nikolov, *Krushovitsa, Vratsa*, 1967, p.3.

<sup>165</sup> B. Nikolov, *Selishta i nekropoli ot bronzovata epoha vuv Vrachansko*, ArheologijaSofia 1964, 2, p. 75.

<sup>166</sup> B. Nikolov, *Krushovitsa, Vratsa*, 1967, fig. 5.

<sup>167</sup> Nikolov, *Selishta i nekropoli...*, p. 76, fig. 11a, b, c; 12 a, b; 13 a, b.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 77.

<sup>169</sup> Hänsel, *Beiträge zur regionalen und chronologischen Gliederung ...*, p. 77.

<sup>170</sup> Idem, *Beiträge zur regionalen und chronologischen Gliederung ...*, p. 77, 78, 79, 82, Taf. 35/5-11.

<sup>171</sup> See for example Cr. Schuster et alii, *The living and the dead. An analysis of the relationship between the two worlds during Prehistory at the Lower Danube*, Târgoviște, 2008, p. 68.

<sup>172</sup> Șandor-Chicideanu, *op. cit.*, p. 239.

<sup>173</sup> The name Bukyovtsi was used until 1970, after that it has been changed into Miziya (B. Nikolov, *Ot Iskur do Ogosta. Istoriya na 151 sela i gradove ot bivshiya Vrachanski okrug*, Sofia, 1996, p. 211). In the scientific literature however, the former one – Bukyovtsi – has been used.

<sup>174</sup> Nikolov, *Selishta i nekropoli...*, p. 75.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 75, pl. 9 a, b, c.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 71.

two smaller and ornamented. During a survey similar ceramic fragments were found, including a small vessel with high neck, broad body and a hollow base, decorated with incrustated geometrical motifs. It is highly probable that the latter is one and the same vessel with that referred to as very similar to the “little jug” from Novo Selo.<sup>177</sup>

A spherical vessel is included by B. Hänsel in the Čerkovna Group<sup>178</sup>, while St. Alexandrov pays attention to the little pot, decorated with parallel zigzag lines, saying that it should be assigned to the Cernavoda III-Coțofeni Horizon.<sup>179</sup> Later on, it was specified that of the four vessels (which in fact are five in the initial publication, four of them being illustrated), one should be assigned to the earlier Coțofeni Culture, while from the remaining three vessels only the jug is typical for the Lower Danube Incrusted Pottery Culture. The kantharos-type and the amphora-type vessels are described as shapes that are known in Verbicioara, Tei and Čerkovna Groups, and a comparatively close analogue from Cârna has been offered for the amphora.<sup>180</sup>

Most probably this is a case of mixture of materials from the Early Bronze to the Early Iron Age; it is not clear whether the Late Bronze Age vessel in question stems from a grave typical of the Lower Danube Incrusted Pottery Culture (it is implausible to define the site as a cemetery), or it is an “import” found outside the distribution area of the Lower Danube Incrusted Pottery Culture, as is the case with some Romanian sites. It should be also taken into consideration that Ostrov is one of the easternmost sites, related to the Incrusted Pottery Culture. B. Hänsel set the eastern border of Gârla Mare Group at the Iskur River mouth, and the easternmost find was found precisely near Ostrov.<sup>181</sup> M. Șandor-Chicideanu shares the same opinion and includes the discovered urns in the Gârla Mare Culture.<sup>182</sup> These materials are not included as originating from an indisputable context in the detailed analysis of the Late Bronze Age burial rites.

## II. LATE BRONZE AGE BURIAL RITES IN NORTH-WESTERN BULGARIA IN THE CONTEXT OF THE BALKAN CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT.

**1. Lower Danube River Incrusted Pottery Culture in Bulgaria – characteristics of the mortuary practices.** While most graves stem from systematically researched cemeteries, there are some isolated graves as well. Despite the difficulties outlined above, it is possible to describe some general characteristics of the mortuary practices.

*Burial rite.* The known contexts are flat cremation graves; so far Late Bronze Age burial mounds have not been registered in this region. According to the authors, cremation was practiced outside the perimeter of the studied sites, as no traces of pyres were found either in cemeteries or in the vicinity of the isolated graves. The cremated bones were placed in ceramic vessels, which were laid in burial pits; no *in situ* found graves had the human remains laid directly in the pit; in most cases the pits also contained grave goods.

*Relation to the relief.* The cemeteries and the isolated graves are located very close to the Danube River, most probably on the very riverbank.<sup>183</sup> Some cemeteries were situated on flat terrain (Orsoya and Kutovo-Gredovi) or on heights (Novo Selo and Kutovo-Grindur).<sup>184</sup>

*Grave facilities and containers.* The data is limited because of the fact that the archaeologically researched sites are few in number, and in many cases the finds are stray ones. The Kutovo grave is found at a depth of 0.40 m below the surface; in Orsoya the depth of the graves varies from 0.80 to 3 m below

<sup>177</sup> See Nikolov, *Selishta i nekropoli...*, p. 73.

<sup>178</sup> Hänsel, *Beiträge zur regionalen und chronologischen Gliederung...*, p. 78, pl. 36-6.

<sup>179</sup> St. Alexandrov, *Date noi despre epoca bronzului timpuriu în Bulgaria de Vest*, TD 14, 1993, 1-2, p. 47, fig. I-3, no. 1).

<sup>180</sup> Shalganova, *Izkustvo i obred na bronzovata epoha...*, p. 179.

<sup>181</sup> Hänsel, *Beiträge zur regionalen und chronologischen Gliederung...*, p. 64.

<sup>182</sup> Șandor-Chicideanu, *op. cit.*, p. 247.

<sup>183</sup> Shalganova, *Izkustvo i obred na bronzovata epoha...*, p. 180.

<sup>184</sup> Sites which geographically land in the area of the Lower Danube Incrusted Pottery Culture, but contain vessels attributed to the Zimnicea-Plovdiv type (or Čerkovna Group), are also located on riverbanks, but will be examined further in the text.

the surface, a fact that was explained as being caused by the specificity of the terrain. The shapes of the pits are not determined and exact data about their filling is lacking.

According to T. Shalganova the walls of some pit-graves were terraced.<sup>185</sup> Amphora and kantharos-type vessels were predominantly used as urns, most often they were covered by bowls functioning as lids and in two cases only by other types of vessel.<sup>186</sup> The majority of data comes from the Orsoya cemetery. From the 22 types of amphorae considered by M. Șandor-Chicideanu's as characteristic for the Gârla Mare pottery (fig. 9),<sup>187</sup> six types are known in Bulgaria: A 3,<sup>188</sup> A 8,<sup>189</sup> A 9,<sup>190</sup> A 10,<sup>191</sup> A 12,<sup>192</sup> and A 13.<sup>193</sup> The cemetery at Orsoya yielded several specific vessels shapes, some of which are singular even in this cemetery. Four types of "multi-storeyed" vessels (A 3, A 10, A 12 and A 13) are known only from the site in question, which otherwise is not characterized by the great diversity of shapes known from the sites north of the Danube. According to the majority of authors the use of decorated or undecorated amphorae or "other types" of vessels as urns is determined by the sex and the age of the deceased; Shalganova further distinguished between graves with the deliberately broken and intact vessels and interprets these differences in terms of ritual.<sup>194</sup> Due to the nature of the Orsoya publication, one can only state with probability that amphorae were preferred as urns. Further correlation between the shape of the urns and the presence-absence of decoration proved to be difficult. In cases when in a grave an amphora had been found, it was used as an urn only, and never also as an "offering", whereas many other ceramic categories fulfilled both these functions.<sup>195</sup> In the initial publications of Tr. Filipov the term "urn" is predominantly used for the amphora-type vessels – therefore in the present work the kantharos-type vessels and the remainder of the materials are provisionally considered in the inventory section. A necessary specification is that some kantharos-type vessels are described as urns; this is the case of the "small spherical urn with two high handles" from graves no. 170 and 196<sup>196</sup> and the "small spherical urn with one high handle" from grave no. 180.<sup>197</sup>

Data from neighboring regions show that the amphorae used as urns are predominantly decorated. As specified, in Orsoya the decorated urns are prevailing, but that could be due to the selection of finds for the publication (it was stated that the publication in question is not complete). The fragmentation of the bottom of some vessels, found in the graves from neighboring regions, is argued to have been intentional.<sup>198</sup> The observation could not be supported by definite data from Bulgarian sites. For the whole range of the culture, on the basis of the selection of urns, the amphorae are differentiated into three groups

<sup>185</sup> *Ibidem*, p.182.

<sup>186</sup> From the known variety of modes of laying human remains, characteristic of the Gârla Mare Culture (M. Șandor-Chicideanu, *op. cit.*, 163-168), in the Bulgarian lands there is information only about graves in which ceramic vessels were used as containers of the burned bones. The determination of the pottery is considerably complicated because of the various opinions on the presence of cultures or groups in the region, especially to the east of those "ascertained" sites, defined as belonging to the Lower Danube Incrusted Pottery Culture.

<sup>187</sup> The designated pottery types follow the typology elaborated by Șandor-Chicideanu (*op. cit.*).

<sup>188</sup> The type is defined as a later one on the grounds of the presence of flute decoration. In the Orsoya cemetery it is known from graves N° 14, 15, 16, 17, 20, 30, 67, 74, 98, 126, 132, 145, 147 and 227; Șandor-Chicideanu, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

<sup>189</sup> All specimens, representing the type, were found to the east of the Iron Gate. In Bulgaria it is known from grave no. 1 in Gradeshnitsa (Șandor-Chicideanu, *op. cit.*, p. 49).

<sup>190</sup> Characteristic Gârla Mare type, found most often to the north of the Danube River. The Orsoya vessel is from grave no. 254 (Șandor-Chicideanu *op. cit.*, p. 50).

<sup>191</sup> A South Danube River variant of A 9 type, which has been registered in Orsoya only, graves no. 82 (identical illustration for grave 160), grave no. 35 (identical illustration of a vessel from grave 154) and grave no. 142 (Șandor-Chicideanu, *op. cit.*, p. 50).

<sup>192</sup> A Gârla Mare type known only from Orsoya, grave no. 80 (Șandor-Chicideanu, *op. cit.*, p. 51).

<sup>193</sup> Another single type, representing "experimental" specimen or a hybrid shape of the "multi-storeyed" vessels and the kantharoi, known only in Orsoya, grave no. 121 (Șandor-Chicideanu, *op. cit.*, p. 51).

<sup>194</sup> Shalganova, *Izkustvo i obred na bronzovata epoha...*, p.188-191.

<sup>195</sup> *Ibidem*, p.188.

<sup>196</sup> Filipov, *Nekropol ot kusnata bronzova epoha...*, fig. LXIII, LXVIII.

<sup>197</sup> *Ibidem*, fig. LXVI.

<sup>198</sup> Shalganova, *Izkustvo i obred na bronzovata epoha...*, p.188.

– decorated (for adult individuals), intact and undecorated (for adult, adolescent and infants) and deliberately broken and undecorated (for various age and sex groups). The use of vessels from the other ceramic categories as urns seems to be correlated with age, as most such urns were used for infants.<sup>199</sup>

*Grave goods.* The *kantharoi* are predominantly found as “additional” inventory in graves where an amphora is used as urn. These are the types K 2,<sup>200</sup> K 3,<sup>201</sup> K 4,<sup>202</sup> K 6<sup>203</sup> and K 7 (the latter type K 7 is known from graves no. 2, 3, 4, 9, 10, 25, 27, 39, 44, 52, 80, 86, 88, 98, 100, 121, 135, 145, 154, 157, 164, 170, 176, 178, 180, 247, 250 and 267 in Orsoya). One find of this type was also discovered in Ostrov<sup>204</sup> – probably stemming from a burial context. Seven of a total number of 45 *deep bowl* types are known from Bulgaria: S 2,<sup>205</sup> S 6,<sup>206</sup> S 7,<sup>207</sup> S 24,<sup>208</sup> S 41.<sup>209</sup> Specimens of two other types – S 34 and S 35<sup>210</sup> – are registered in sites attributed to the Bistreț-Ișalnița Culture, and are also known in the second phase of Belegiš-Cručeni Culture.<sup>211</sup> In the Incrusted Pottery Culture the diversity of *cups* and *jugs* is considerable – there are 25 types defined, of which seven are also registered here – C 6,<sup>212</sup> C 7,<sup>213</sup> C 8,<sup>214</sup> C 9,<sup>215</sup> C 10,<sup>216</sup> C 21<sup>217</sup> and probably also C 14.<sup>218</sup> *Pyxides*, *spherical* and *zoomorphic vessels* established in Orsoya (graves no. 1, 5, 14, 17, 19, 31, 34, 126, 147 and 150) include P 1 type pyxis, which is attributed to the classical phase of the culture and is registered in a total of twelve Gârla Mare sites. A similar type is also known in the third phase of the Verbicioara culture.<sup>219</sup> The type P 5 – a zoomorphic vessel, characteristic of Oltenia and North-Western Bulgaria is detected in several sites, among which is Orsoya (graves no. 43, 128, 227, 242, 265 and other graves with “unclear reference numbers”).<sup>220</sup> The “lids” from

<sup>199</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 189-191.

<sup>200</sup> A widespread type, registered in the largest geographical area, having representatives also in the Szeremle-Belo Brdo Group range and in the 1<sup>st</sup> phase of Cručeni-Belegiš Culture. The vessel from Orsoya is found in grave no. 53 (Șandor-Chicideanu, *op. cit.*, p. 54-55).

<sup>201</sup> A highly distributed type as well, the Orsoya vessel is from grave no. 265 (Șandor-Chicideanu, *op. cit.*, p. 55-56).

<sup>202</sup> In Orsoya known from graves no. 5, 113 and 178 (M. Șandor-Chicideanu, *op. cit.*, p. 56).

<sup>203</sup> In Orsoya represented in graves no. 242 and 250 (Șandor-Chicideanu, *op. cit.*, p. 56-57).

<sup>204</sup> One of the basic ceramic forms of the so-called *Govora Group* and of *Zimnicea-Plovdiv*, which often appears also in the range of *Paračin Group* and the *Tei Culture*. According to M. Șandor-Chicideanu, the presence of K 7 type in the region of Gârla Mare Culture could be considered as an element brought in by the earlier cultures. Due to its rhomboidal shape it is defined as the K 11 type. The general conclusion is that these kantharos-type vessels are distributed to the east of the Iron Gate (Șandor-Chicideanu, *op. cit.*, p. 57). It is worth mentioning that the type is also defined as “Zimnicea-Plovdiv-Tei” (Șandor-Chicideanu, *op. cit.*, p. 178). None of these five types of the kantharos category (five established in Bulgaria from a total number of eleven Gârla Mare kantharoi types) is represented only in the region to the south of the Danube River.

<sup>205</sup> Grave no. 239 in Orsoya (Șandor-Chicideanu, *op. cit.*, p. 59).

<sup>206</sup> Graves no. 150 and 265 in Orsoya (Șandor-Chicideanu, *op. cit.*, p. 61-62).

<sup>207</sup> Graves no. 43 and no. 160 in Orsoya.

<sup>208</sup> The type is known in a total of three sites, one of which being Gradeshnitsa, grave no. 3; it will be examined in more detail further in the text (Șandor-Chicideanu, *op. cit.*, p. 67).

<sup>209</sup> Grave no. 1 in Orsoya (Șandor-Chicideanu, *op. cit.*, p. 70).

<sup>210</sup> These two types are also known from Mokresh-Grobishteto and will be examined in more detail further in the text (Șandor-Chicideanu, *op. cit.*, p. 69).

<sup>211</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>212</sup> Novo Selo and grave no. 16 in Orsoya (Șandor-Chicideanu, *op. cit.*, p. 72).

<sup>213</sup> Orsoya, graves no. 8 (illustrated as N° 160), no. 67 (illustrated as 121) and no. 140. The type is characteristic of the eastern zone of the culture (Șandor-Chicideanu, *op. cit.*, p. 73).

<sup>214</sup> In Orsoya it is from grave no. 82 (*Ibidem*).

<sup>215</sup> Novo Selo and Orsoya, graves no. 53, no. 93 and no. 142. The variant C 9 represents one of the typical shapes of the Gârla Mare Culture. It is probably a subsequent development of type C 4 (Șandor-Chicideanu, *op. cit.*, p. 73-74).

<sup>216</sup> Grave no. 15, in Orsoya; a rare type in the western zone of the culture (Șandor-Chicideanu, *op. cit.*, p. 74-75).

<sup>217</sup> Novo Selo; type known predominantly in the eastern zone of the culture (M. Șandor-Chicideanu, *op. cit.*, p. 77).

<sup>218</sup> Known in Bukyovtsi (M. Șandor-Chicideanu, *op. cit.*, p. 75-76).

<sup>219</sup> Șandor-Chicideanu, *op. cit.*, p. 78-79.

<sup>220</sup> *Ibidem* p. 80.

Bulgaria are also known by several types. Type X 1, from the classical phase of the Gârla Mare Culture, is registered in eleven sites in total, including Orsoya (graves no. 1, 14, 17, 19, 31, 34, 77, 95, 147 and 227). Orsoya is also one of the two cemeteries where the type X 4 was catalogued (graves no. 242 and 265). Type X 6 is more frequent, in Orsoya being detected in graves no. 43 and 128.<sup>221</sup> The category of the *double vessels* is represented by two types: D 1 has specimens in three sites, including Orsoya (graves no. 43, 135, 189 and 247); and D 2 was registered in a total of four Gârla Mare Culture sites, among which the cemetery at Orsoya (graves no. 20, 31, 35 and 113)<sup>222</sup>. Some ceramic finds defined as “cult objects” include the *table* from Orsoya (grave no. 41).<sup>223</sup> The *anthropomorphic figurines* from Bulgarian sites are attributed to type Φ I B (variant Φ I B 1), registered in grave no. 74 in Orsoya. The Gradeshnitsa find is included in type Φ II, while type Φ II A is known from the graves no. 91, 176, 310, 41, 151, 91 and 176 in Orsoya.<sup>224</sup> Subtype Φ I is dated to the later phase of the culture, and Φ II is even later, characterized by “retrograde-style” ornamentation.<sup>225</sup> The small ceramic models of *axes* found in Orsoya are assigned to type T 1, variant a (from graves no. 59, 100 and 254), probably variant b and type 2 (grave no. 137).<sup>226</sup> *Weaponry and tools* are not found in the Bulgarian area of this culture. There might have been though one knife in grave no. 145 from Orsoya.<sup>227</sup> No data is offered about objects made of bone, but the presence of flint is mentioned – pieces laid in close proximity to some of the urns in Orsoya.<sup>228</sup>

Establishing the *number of individuals* is complicated. In Orsoya grave no. 178<sup>229</sup> was defined as “double” simply because it contained two vessels described as urns.<sup>230</sup> In this logic, it is possible that the *Kutovo* grave, registered in 1911, was also double, as both vessels were referred to as urns; it should be noted though that one of these “urns” contained the other. In sites from neighboring regions, those examples of double/“collective” graves are interpreted as: grave of an adult (mother) and a child, of two children, of several adults and a child as well as other variants. According to Shalganova children’s graves might represent an “offering” to the adults buried in the same graves,<sup>231</sup> – a supposition, which in the present work is not yet accepted as categorically evidenced, on the basis of the Bulgarian materials. The same author indicates that the urns containing remains of male individuals are in equipollent position, while the remaining urns in the graves are subordinate to them; among the latter there are some graves of infants (e.g. grave no. 178 in Orsoya) which according to Shalganova were sacrificed.<sup>232</sup> As to the so-called cenotaphs or symbolic burials, there are no data from the Bulgarian area.

The *anthropological data* from cemeteries, where such analyses were carried out, are related to the finds in the following way: only amphorae are used for adult males; in graves, which are most probably designed for females, no consistent characteristics can be established – elements both from the male and infant contexts are represented. Clearly differentiated are the graves of the youngest buried individuals – where various categories of vessels, different from the amphorae, have been used as urns.<sup>233</sup> It is necessary to clarify that despite the differentiation of a “special group” of infant graves in the cemeteries attributed to the culture, in Orsoya, in many cases, the figurines (“idols”) are found in graves that contain one amphora used as urn (graves no. 176, 148, 91, 74). In some graves, in a common context are registered an amphora-type “urn”, combined with a ceramic axe (graves no. 100 and 59) or with a ceramic boat (grave no. 88). It is suggested that some figurines from infant graves are also deliberately broken before being laid down in the grave. Indicated is the very low percentage of the buried adolescent individuals, while the rate of infant mortality is the highest.<sup>234</sup>

<sup>221</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 81-83.

<sup>222</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 83-84.

<sup>223</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 89.

<sup>224</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 104-105.

<sup>225</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 108.

<sup>226</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 123.

<sup>227</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 145.

<sup>228</sup> Filipov, *Nekropol ot kushnata bronzova epoha pri s. Orsoya, Lomsko*, Sofia, 1976.

<sup>229</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>230</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>231</sup> Shalganova, *Izkustvo i obred na bronzovata epoha...*, p. 191-194.

<sup>232</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 193.

<sup>233</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 195-196.

<sup>234</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 196-198, 202.

The *burial rite characteristic for the entire range of the culture* is cremation – registered in a total of 52 sites, cemeteries and isolated graves.<sup>235</sup> The availability of a thorough research carried out by M. Șandor-Chicideanu on the culture spares the review of the wide-ranging scientific literature on the topic.<sup>236</sup> The most representative cemeteries are those at Liubcova, Ostrovu Mare-Bivolării, Balta Verde, Ghidici, Bistreț, Cârna-Grindul Tomii, Cârna-Ostrovogania, Izvoarele-Aria lui Mihalache Andreica (?), Žuto-Brdo, Dubovac, Vršac, Novo Selo and Orsoya.<sup>237</sup> As a general rule these simple-pit flat graves contain urns, and in rare cases the bones are clustered in a pile on the ground (as mentioned above, according to the publications the latter case is not registered in Bulgaria). The differences observed between the graves are examined as evidence of differences in social position, age and sex of the buried individuals. The urns used comprise amphorae and kantharoi, some of which covered by bowl or cups. There are also combinations with one to three additional cups, one to two pyxides having a lid, and rarely with one to two figurines. Metal objects are least frequently found in graves of this culture.<sup>238</sup> Flat cemeteries present a grouping of the graves in rows (as registered in Orsoya).<sup>239</sup> Three chronological and cultural phases have been defined: the earliest (a settlement near Ostrovu Corbului, cemeteries near Dubovac, Vršac, some graves in Cârna-Ostrovogania), the classical phase (Cârna-Grindul Tomii and single graves in Orsoya) and the late phase (single Cârna-Ostrovogania graves and the majority of Orsoya burials).<sup>240</sup> The presence of a detailed publication about the Cârna-Grindul Tomii cemetery renders it natural to use the site as a basis of the reviews on the Incrusted Pottery culture burial practices. The otherwise scanty anthropological data available for this cemetery indicate that the majority of the buried persons were adults and that most of them belonged anthropologically to the Mediterranean type. Other sites exhibit examples of graves that have been partially disturbed by later ones, graves containing greater number of individuals, or considerable amount of grave goods, different patterns of grouping, highest adult mortality rate in some cemeteries, etc.<sup>241</sup>

Incrusted Pottery Culture sites located in the present territory of Bulgaria are dated to the classical or late phase of the culture (phase II/III). The Novo Selo finds belong to the second, classical phase of the culture (Br B2-Br C); the Kutovo materials are also assigned to its II-III phase (these include the decorated fragments and the undecorated urn), while the Orsoya cemetery represents the latest, third phase. In relation to the Dolno Linevo site, cups of the Novo Selo type are mentioned; the graves are dated to the classical phase of the culture and the vessel with *Buckel* decoration, which is a stray find, is attributed to the third phase of the Incrusted Pottery Culture. This latter assignment has to be taken with caution as no archaeological researches have been carried out anywhere around Dolno Linevo.

<sup>235</sup> Șandor-Chicideanu, *op. cit.*, p. 158. In regions neighbouring Bulgaria some sites represent a special treatment of the bones – a further breaking of the bones, which preceded the burial, and in some cases – washing of the bones before they were laid into the grave (Shalganova, *Izkustvo i obred na bronzovata epoha...*, p. 182-183). There is no data from Bulgarian lands according to which it is possible to register such practices, and it is impossible to state whether bones of only particular parts of the body were selected. Furthermore, we lack clear evidence of the cemetery-settlement relation. Except for the Orsoya materials, the finds are predominantly stray, single vessels.

<sup>236</sup> Șandor-Chicideanu, *op. cit.*

<sup>237</sup> Cr. Schuster, *Zur Bestattungsweise in Südromänien in der Bronzezeit*, in: (ed. R. Vasić), *Sahranjivanje u Bronzani i Gvozdeno Doba, Simpozijum, Čačak, 4-8 Septembar 2002 / Burial Customs in the Bronze and Iron Age. Symposium, Čačak, 4-8 September 2002*, Čačak, 2003, p. 125. The site near Baley, which in fact represents a settlement, is also mentioned in the list.

<sup>238</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>239</sup> It was suggested that during the first phase (At cemetery) the grouping is concentric, during the classical phase (Cârna) the mortuary zones are two (eastern and western), and in the third phase (Orsoya) the new principle has developed under the Belegiš-Cruceni cultural influence (Shalganova, *Izkustvo i obred na bronzovata epoha...*, p. 182). The data representing these three phases is gathered from a total number of three sites and should be evaluated as provisional. It may be more likely that a grouping registered in a given cemetery is specific for each site, despite the necropoles attribution to the culture. The latter doesn't reject the suggested tendency, especially when the number of graves in these necropoles is taken into account, but it is a reminder of the quantitative limitations accompanying such observations.

<sup>240</sup> Schuster, *Zur Bestattungsweise ...*, p. 125.

<sup>241</sup> D. Nicolăescu-Plopșor, *Cercetări antropologice asupra osemintelor din necropola de incinerare de la Cârna*, in: Vl. Dumitrescu, *Necropola de incinerare din epoca bronzului de la Cârna*, Bucharest, 1961, p. 365-386; Schuster, *op. cit.*, p. 127, 129.

Although the dimensions of the Orsoya site and the number of graves in the researched cemeteries of the Lower Danube Incrusted Pottery Culture is impressive, it should be underlined that the level to which this region has been explored is a particularly important factor when attempts are made to compare it with the neighboring cultures in terms of burial customs. At this stage, with the exception of the Lower Danube Incrusted Pottery, for other cultures of the Late Bronze Age from the North-Western Bulgaria the number of the researched graves is very low, while in general, all types of finds are sporadic and isolated.

The only cemeteries from North-Western Bulgaria that can be attributed with certainty to the Lower Danube Incrusted Pottery Culture were found at *Novo Selo*, *Kutovo* and *Orsoya*. In other sites were found both vessels characteristic of the Incrusted Pottery Culture (Novo Selo type cup for example) and vessels of other cultures, mostly of the so-called Čerkovna Group. Such sites are Dolno Linevo (Novo Selo type cup and a Čerkovna type kantharos), Gradeshnitsa (typical of the Incrusted Pottery Culture amphora and a figurine in one of the graves, and vessels characteristic of the Verbicioara V in the others), Hurlets (Incrusted Pottery Culture vessels with four protuberances on the rim, but having no decoration, and a jug of the Čerkovna type), Ostrov (mixed materials of the groups Coțofeni, Čerkovna, Verbicioara/Tei/Čerkovna, and a vessel typical of the Incrusted Pottery Culture). Following some examples from Romanian studies, one can suggest that these finds probably represent certain interrelations between the late Bronze Age culture/cultures outside the Danube riverside area on one hand, and the culture of the Incrusted pottery, on the other. How exactly is the presence of vessels of the Incrusted Pottery Culture outside its distribution area to be explained is not yet clear. Explanation varied between grave goods laid with women who had entered the community of a different culture and imports or imitations.

Sites that cannot be defined as characteristic of the Lower Danube River Incrusted Pottery culture and fall out of its specific distribution area are those located near *Makresh*, *Gradeshnitsa* (despite the presence of typical Incrusted Pottery Culture materials in one of the graves), *Kozloduy* (related to the culture only because of the probable presence of stray finds, such as the anthropomorphic figurines), *Hurlets* (with one Lower Danube Incrusted Pottery vessel) and eventually *Ostrov* (containing one Lower Danube Incrusted Pottery culture vessel of unclear context). As mentioned above, it is possible that Ostrov marks the eastern “border” of the Lower Danube Incrusted Pottery culture in the Bulgaria – namely the Iskur River, or that this site represents one of the examples of cemeteries, located in other cultures’ territorial range, but demonstrating evidence of interrelations with the Lower Danube Incrusted Pottery Culture bearers. Thus in the Zimnicea cemetery, referred to the Zimnicea-Plovdiv *Culture*, have been found typical Incrusted Pottery Culture vessels. The vessel from Bukyovtsi, defined as type C 14, according to the Gârla Mare ceramics typology, represents a form, known also in the later Čerkovna Group (Plovdiv-Zimnicea).<sup>242</sup> From another point of view, sites where Čerkovna type pottery has been found (the characteristic undecorated vessels) are considered by some authors as containing Gârla Mare type pottery (examples represented by Dolno Linevo, Krushovitsa and others). However, in this article, these latter sites were included in the Zimnicea-Plovdiv (or Čerkovna) Group, following the current definitions of the Incrusted Pottery and the Čerkovna ceramics.

**2) Verbicioara IV-V Culture.** The gaps in the definition of its cultural characteristics and chronological phases, the debates on its interpretation as an individual cultural phenomenon and the scarce character of the preserved data make it difficult to indubitably determine graves of the Verbicioara IV-V Culture<sup>243</sup>. In its *suggested territorial range* in Northwestern Bulgaria a small number of graves could eventually be included; the most representative site in Bulgaria related to mortuary practices remains Gradeshnitsa.

**Burial rite.** The graves are flat and contain cremated remains. Since there is no data about a pyre in Gradeshnitsa (nor elsewhere) most probably the cremation was practiced outside the perimeter of the

<sup>242</sup> Șandor-Chicideanu, *op. cit.*, Pl. 195.

<sup>243</sup> On the other hand, apart from the data concerning the mortuary practices, there are opinions that, with regard to the issue of the Verbicioara Culture distribution in North Bulgaria, up to the present moment Verbicioara regular finds are not identified – the stray finds of the Devetashka Cave can be referred to the Govora Group and therefore, they belong to the same horizon as the Čerkovna Group (as R. Krauß, *Indizen für eine Mittelbronzezeit in Nordbulgarien*, *Archaeologia Bulgarica* 10, 2006, p. 11).

cemeteries. The burned bones were collected in urns, and then laid in burial pits. In some cases the urns are accompanied by grave inventory. According to data from Gradeshnitsa, a grave grouping is registered in a row or a bow.

*Relation to the terrain.* The known graves are situated on natural elevations.

*Burial facilities and inventory.* In Gradeshnitsa the graves are dug at a depth from 0.40 to 0.90 m below the surface. The pit shapes are not determined; there is no data about the filling either. Undecorated kantharoi are used as urns in four graves near Gradeshnitsa and in the sites mentioned above. A more peculiar situation is that of a typical Incrusted Pottery Culture undecorated amphora, also containing an anthropomorphic figurine (grave no. 1 in Gradeshnitsa). The kantharos-type vessels from these four graves are not discussed in the M. Sandor-Chicideanu typology, while the amphora is defined as an A 8 type.<sup>244</sup> The ceramic vessel found in grave no. 3 is indicated as S 24 type, which is known in a total of three sites attributed to the Lower Danube Incrusted Pottery Culture.<sup>245</sup> The fragmented figurine from grave no. 1 is defined as an  $\Phi$  II type, characteristic of the Lower Danube Incrusted Pottery Culture. No signs of “accompanying food”, weaponry, tools and adornments are registered.

*Bulgarian graves within the scope of the Verbicioara cultural frame.* Both inhumation and cremation are registered during different phases of the culture.<sup>246</sup> From its second to its fifth phase cremation was the only burial rite.<sup>247</sup> In earlier publications this culture’s range is included in the area considered as territory of the “urn-fields civilization”.<sup>248</sup> It has been suggested that cremation appeared under the influence of the Gârla Mare communities, coming from the west;<sup>249</sup> also, cremation was used as an argument in favour of the separation of the Verbicioara and Tei Cultures, as the latter’s burials are inhumations.<sup>250</sup> It is suggested that Verbicioara Culture did not influence the Tei Culture for the inhumation grave from the Verbicioara I phase should rather be considered as an exception to the norm.<sup>251</sup> Apart from the possibly resumed dating of the Işalnița site, in recent publications urn-graves discovered near Godeanu-Peștera Cincioarele and Râmnicu Vâlcea<sup>252</sup> are referred with a higher probability to the Verbicioara phase V, while earlier communications include slightly longer list of sites, referred to the culture in question.<sup>253</sup> The information about Verbicioara mortuary practices in most cases consists of a simple indication, general dating, or examination of sites according to their supposed cultural attribution. The graves are single, few of them are archaeologically researched and the majority is provisionally included in the cultural area in question. Other researchers define them as “uncertain” and recommend that the analyses are made after gaining new reliable information, resulting from more thorough terrain researches. The emphasis is put on the considerable obstacles for the definition and the dating of the culture, as well as the research of its mortuary rituals.<sup>254</sup> One of the problems is that there are only single

<sup>244</sup> Șandor-Chicideanu, *op. cit.*, p. 49.

<sup>245</sup> Șandor-Chicideanu, *op. cit.*, p. 67.

<sup>246</sup> D. Berciu, *Die Verbicioara-Kultur. Vorbericht über eine neue, in Rumänien entdeckte bronzezeitliche Kultur*, Dacia N.S. 5, 1961, p. 147.

<sup>247</sup> Schuster, *Zur Bestattungsweise ...*, p. 121; Cr. Schuster et alii, *Zu den Bestattungssitten der Tei-Kultur*, Pontica, 37-38, 2005, p. 65.

<sup>248</sup> Berciu, *Arheologia preistorică a Olteniei*, Craiova, 1939, p. 102.

<sup>249</sup> Schuster et alii, *Zur Bronzezeit in Südrumänien. Drei Kulturen: Glina, Tei und Verbicioara I, Verbreitungsgebiet, Siedlungen, Häuser und Bestattungen*, Ed. Cetatea de Scaun, 2005, p. 164.

<sup>250</sup> Schuster, *Zur Bestattungsweise ...*, p. 132.

<sup>251</sup> Schuster et alii, *Zur Bronzezeit in Südrumänien...*, p. 128.

<sup>252</sup> Schuster et alii, *The living and the dead. An analysis of the relationship between the two worlds during Prehistory at the Lower Danube*, Târgoviște, 2008, p. 64. According to some authors the grave facilities and materials from Râmnicu Vâlcea should not be referred to the Verbicioara culture, but belong to the defined by B. Hänsel Govora Group [I. Motzoi-Chicideanu, *Cu privire la descoperirile funerare ale grupei Verbicioara*, EA-online, December, 2004 ([www.archaeology.ro/imc\\_verb.htm](http://www.archaeology.ro/imc_verb.htm))].

<sup>253</sup> Including also Crivina (probably late Verbicioara?) and others (Schuster, *Zur Bestattungsweise ...*, p. 122-123; I. Motzoi-Chicideanu, *op. cit.*; Schuster et alii, *Zur Bronzezeit in Südrumänien...*, p. 162-164; and Schuster et alii, *The living and the dead...*, p. 62-64).

<sup>254</sup> “We can dealing today with 16 discoveries, most of them not at all sure from the point of view of the archaeological conditions and published in not at all professional conditions. The most part of these discoveries are concentrated in the southern part of Oltenia, such finds missing in the eastern part in spite of a large number of

graves and there is no way to determine whether this is due to destroyed cemeteries or to the smallness of the Verbicioara communities<sup>255</sup>.

The Gradeshnitsa graves are attributed to the fifth phase of the Verbicioara Culture, which confirms the interrelation of the culture with the Lower Danube Incrusted Pottery Culture.

**3) The Bistreț-Ișalnița Culture/Group.** It is possible that the cremation graves registered near Mokresh belong to the Bistreț-Ișalnița Group. The vessels found there are defined as belonging to the S 34 type.<sup>256</sup> Some authors consider the group as an independent phenomenon, and according to others it represents the latest phase of the Incrusted Pottery Culture in the region. Cremation graves attributed to the Bistreț-Ișalnița Group were found in Bistreț-Ciumați-Brânză, Cârna-Ostrovogania, Gruia, Balta Verde, Ostrovu Corbului, Salcia, Damian, Ișalnița, Nedeia, Bechet, Plosca, Ghidici-Balta Țarova, Potelu, Corabia, Râureni, Moldova Veche.<sup>257</sup> Deep bowls with characteristic protuberances are used instead of the decorated and undecorated amphora- and kantharos-type vessels, characteristic for the earlier phases. The data available allows for the suggestion that the cremation rite, typical for the region during the Late Bronze Age, was likewise preserved in the later period. M. Șandor-Chicideanu indicates that the distribution area of the Bistreț-Ișalnița Group covers Oltenia, Serbia and Bulgaria; among the Bulgarian sites she includes Mokresh and Gradeshnitsa. The characteristic ceramic shapes are represented by the types A 17, A 20-22, K 11, S 33-37, S 42-43, S 45, D 8-9 and O 5,<sup>258</sup> of which registered in Bulgaria are S 34 and S 35. The cultural attribution of Mokresh seems to be logical in the light of T. Shalganova's interpretation: at the time of the third phase of the Lower Danube Incrusted Pottery Culture, in its southern range, an interrelation zone has formed, where two traditions interweave – that of the Verbicioara and that of the Lower Danube Incrusted Pottery Culture. The result of that is the composite cultural aspect of the cemetery, which is generally similar to that of the Bistreț-Ișalnița Culture itself. The same two cultures participate in the genesis of the Bistreț-Ișalnița Culture and the graves near Gradeshnitsa and Hurlets<sup>259</sup> are indicated as additional evidence for this assumption.

**4) Burial Rites in the North-Western Bulgarian Lands and the Plovdiv-Zimnicea/Čerkovna Phenomenon.** The definition *Zimnicea-Plovdiv (or Plovdiv-Zimnicea Complex/ Culture/ Phenomenon)* was introduced in scientific literature by A. Alexandrescu in the early 1970's. Since then the term and its definition have been subject to numerous analyses, but even to the present moment a categorical statement on this problem has not been offered. The authors who accept the concept of "Plovdiv-Zimnicea Culture" (designated by B. Hänsel as "Čerkovna Group") place its distribution area between Zimnicea – near which a flat inhumation cemetery was found –, and Plovdiv – from where originates the well-known collective find of vessels.<sup>260</sup> They burial rite is inhumation in flat cemeteries. These are located close to the Danube– Zimnicea, Sultana, Stancea, Remuș and probably Izvoru.<sup>261</sup> To the south of the Danube, the grave finds at Krushovitsa (Vratsa Region) and Tsenino (Sliven Region) have been defined as belonging to the same cultural type.<sup>262</sup> There is no data about remains of "accompanying

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settlements... From the point of view of the character of research about 69% burials are due to systematic excavations but the available information are just a few or sometimes published in a nonprofessional way" (Motzoi-Chicideanu, *op. cit.*, fig. 2-3).

<sup>255</sup> Motzoi-Chicideanu, *op. cit.* Considering both the Verbicioara and Tei Cultures, the particularly small number of graves is emphasized, which furthermore are single, compared to the large number of established settlements (Schuster et alii, *Zu den Bestattungssitten...*, p. 175).

<sup>256</sup> Șandor-Chicideanu, *op. cit.*, p. 69.

<sup>257</sup> Schuster, *Zur Bestattungsweise ...*, p. 129.

<sup>258</sup> Șandor-Chicideanu, *op. cit.*, p. 187.

<sup>259</sup> Shalganova, *Izkustvo i obred na bronzovata epoha...*, p. 177.

<sup>260</sup> E. Zaharia, *Cultura Zimnicea-Plovdiv*, in: (eds. C. Stoica, M. Rotea, N. G. O. Boroffka) *Comori ale epocii bronzului din România / Treasures of the Bronze age in Romania*, Muzeul Național de Istorie a României, Bucharest, 1995, p. 288-290.

<sup>261</sup> Schuster et alii, *Zu den Bestattungssitten...*, p. 66; Schuster et alii, *Zur Bronzezeit in Südrumänien...*, p. 129-130.

<sup>262</sup> S. Morintz, *Contribuții arheologice la istoria tracilor timpurii I, Epoca bronzului în spațiul carpato-balcanic*, Bucharest, 1978, p. 58; Schuster, *Zur Bestattungsweise ...*, p. 124.

food”, weaponry, tools, adornments or cult objects. Grave markers are not registered; here as well the graves are flat. Due to the low number of graves, the internal arrangement of the cemeteries was not analyzed.

It is indicated that the area of the Plovdiv-Zimnicea comprises part of North Bulgaria – along the Ogosta River to the west and the Yantra River to the east, and to the south it theoretically extends to the valleys of the Maritsa and Tundzha Rivers. The most typical sites are the settlement at Popești<sup>263</sup> and the cemeteries at Zimnicea, Krushovitsa and Izvoru.<sup>264</sup> The connection between the Gârla Mare Culture (i.e. Lower Danube Incrusted Pottery Culture) and Plovdiv-Zimnicea has been studied on the basis of finds from Cârna, where vessels attributed to the Plovdiv-Zimnicea Group (undecorated vessels, which are typical for this phenomenon; found in graves no. 32, no. 52 and no. 71) were found together with decorated finds of Gârla Mare type.<sup>265</sup> Further, there are also “imports” into the Zimnicea cemetery (in grave no. 41 with a definite Gârla Mare vessel from the classical period; in grave no. 11 – kantharos with flute decoration; these seem to be corroborated by the presence, in grave no. 17, of one kantharos from the IV-V Tei period, as the latter is considered to be contemporaneous with the Gârla Mare Culture).<sup>266</sup> On the other hand, N. Palincaș has given a different interpretation to these contexts and rejected, on that basis, the contemporaneity of the Incrusted Pottery Culture, the Verbicioara IV-V phases and the Zimnicea-Plovdiv Group. According to her, the *Fundeni-Govora Group* (i.e. Verbicioara IV-V phases + Tei IV-V phases), together with Gârla Mare and Bistreț-Ișalnița, belong to the older phase of the Late Bronze Age, while the Zimnicea-Plovdiv cultural complex along with other groups belong to the younger period.<sup>267</sup> This opinion seems to be lately supported by the radiocarbon dates from Kamenska Čuka.<sup>268</sup> However various authors continue to share different opinions.<sup>269</sup> According to certain researchers, in Oltenia the

<sup>263</sup> N. Palincaș, *Valorificarea arheologică a probelor <sup>14</sup>C din fortificația aparținând Bronzului târziu de la Popești (jud. Giurgiu)*, SCIVA 47, 1996, 3, p. 239-288; N. Palincaș, *Social Status and Gender Relations in Late Bronze Age Popești. A Plea for the Introduction of New Approaches in Romanian Archaeology*, Dacia N.S. 48-49, 2004-2005, p. 39-53.

<sup>264</sup> Șandor-Chicideanu, *op. cit.*, p. 202.

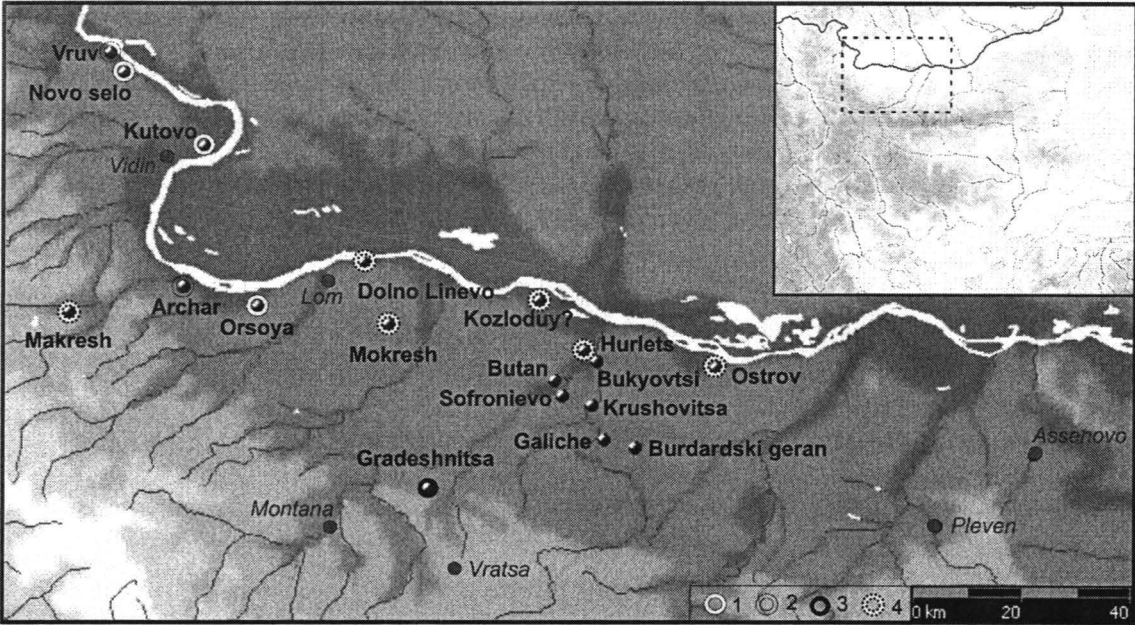
<sup>265</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 203.

<sup>266</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 202.

<sup>267</sup> Palincaș, *Valorificarea arheologică...*, p. 287.

<sup>268</sup> M. Stefanovich, H. A. Bankoff, *Kamenska Čuka 1993 – 1995. Preliminary report*, in: (eds. M. Stefanovich, H. Todorova, H. Hauptmann) *James Harvey Gaul – In memoriam*, Sofia, 1998, p. 279.

<sup>269</sup> According to A. Alexandrescu at a certain moment Gârla Mare and Čerkovna were synchronous. B. Hänsel indicates that the grave no. 41 at the north periphery of the Zimnicea cemetery dates from the same period, while the kantharos from grave no. 11 at the south periphery is from a later one. S. Morintz defines the vessel from grave no. 17 in Zimnicea as indicating concurrence between the cultures of Plovdiv-Zimnicea and Tei IVa, which are synchronous to the third period of Gârla Mare. On the other hand, N. Palincaș registered pottery of the Zimnicea type at Popești – in the Bronze III layer, where materials of the type Tei IV-V were also found. In this case the Gârla Mare Culture is related to periods IV and V of the Tei Culture and to the Govora Group (Govora-Fundeni). The pottery from Popești represents the traditional repertory of the Zimnicea-Plovdiv; an exception to it is a vessel from the Coslogeni Culture. In the argumentation of the connection between the *Govora-Fundeni* and the Zimnicea-Plovdiv it suggests partial synchronicity – the Zimnicea-Plovdiv was defined as being later. This was proven by chronological parallelism of the graves from the Gârla Mare Culture at Cârna (Grindu Tomii) and the Zimnicea-Plovdiv Culture. The vessel of the Tei type from grave no. 17 in Zimnicea is not related to the pottery forms of the Zimnicea-Plovdiv, but it indicates their simultaneity. S. Morintz synchronizes the Zimnicea-Plovdiv with the Govora Group, periods IV and V of the Tei, and period II of the Gârla Mare. According to N. Palincaș there was a time concurrence between the Zimnicea-Plovdiv and the Bistreț-Ișalnița Group (as signified by the Bronze III layer in Popești). She suggests a later presence of the Zimnicea-Plovdiv within this space – on the territory of the Gârla Mare Culture and the Govora Group at the time of the later Tei. The opinion of M. Șandor-Chicideanu is that the Čerkovna has developed during the classical period of the Gârla Mare Culture and of the Tei IV-V in Muntenia – evidenced by the amphorae in graves no. 28 and no. 42 in Cârna, which are typical for the Gârla Mare Culture. The Zimnicea-Plovdiv was later; it corresponds chronologically to the Bistreț-Ișalnița Group (kantharoi found in the Bronze III layer in Popești, similar to the vessel found in grave no. 11 in Zimnicea) and was spread in the area which was earlier occupied by the Tei (a summary as per Șandor-Chicideanu, *op. cit.*, p. 203-205).



Map 1. Sites mentioned in the text. Vidin region: Vruv (number 1 in the text), Novo selo (no. 2), Kutovo (no. 3), Makresh (no. 4), Archar (no. 5); Montana region: Orsoya (no. 6), Dolno Linevo (no. 7), Mokresh (no. 8); Vratsa region: Gradeshnitsa (no. 9), Kozloduy (no. 10), Hurlets (no. 11), Butan (no. 12), Sofronievo (no. 13) Galiche (no. 14), Burdarski geran (no. 15), Krushovitsa (no. 16), Bukyovtsi (Miziya, no. 17), Ostrov (no. 18). Legend: 1 – sites attributed to the Lower Danube Incrusted Pottery Culture; 2 – settlements of the LDIPC inaccurately indicated as cemeteries; 3 – site of the Verbicioara culture; 4 – sites, where some materials related to or resembling the LDIPC were found. Black dots – sites, related by some authors as representing Čerkovna materials. Gray dots – other sites and regional centers mentioned in the text.

Table 1

The sites, reviewed in the text, presented in the Bulgarian bibliography. (A) North-Western Bulgarian sites related to the Late Bronze Age burial practices in general. (B) Sites related by various authors to the Lower Danube. Incrusted Pottery Culture. For quotation of the sources see note

LBA BURIALS	Kutovo	Novo selo	Dolno Linevo	Orsoya	Makresh	Mokresh	Ostrov	Sofronievo	Gradeshnitsa	Krushovitsa	Archar	Vruv	Asenovovo	Galiche	Bukyovtsi	Kozloduy	Burdarski geran	Butan	Hurlets
Chilingirov 1911																			
Nikolov 1964, p.73-4																			
Nikolov 1971																			
Filipov 1974, 1978																			
Filipov 1976																			
Nikolov 1978																			
Alexandrov 1981																			
Georgiev 1982																			
Thi Mi Zung 1989																			
Panayotov 1989																			
Nikolov 1996																			
Bonev 2003																			
Shalghanova 2005																			
LDIPC BURIALS	Kutovo	Novo selo	Dolno Linevo	Orsoya	Makresh	Mokresh	Ostrov	Sofronievo	Gradeshnitsa	Krushovitsa	Archar	Vruv	Asenovovo	Galiche	Bukyovtsi	Kozloduy	Burdarski geran	Butan	Hurlets
Chilingirov 1911																			
Mikov 1970																			
Filipov 1974, 1978																			
Filipov 1976																			
Thi Mi Zung 1989																			
Panayotov 1989																			
Bonev 2003																			
Shalghanova 2005																			
Ganeva 2005																			

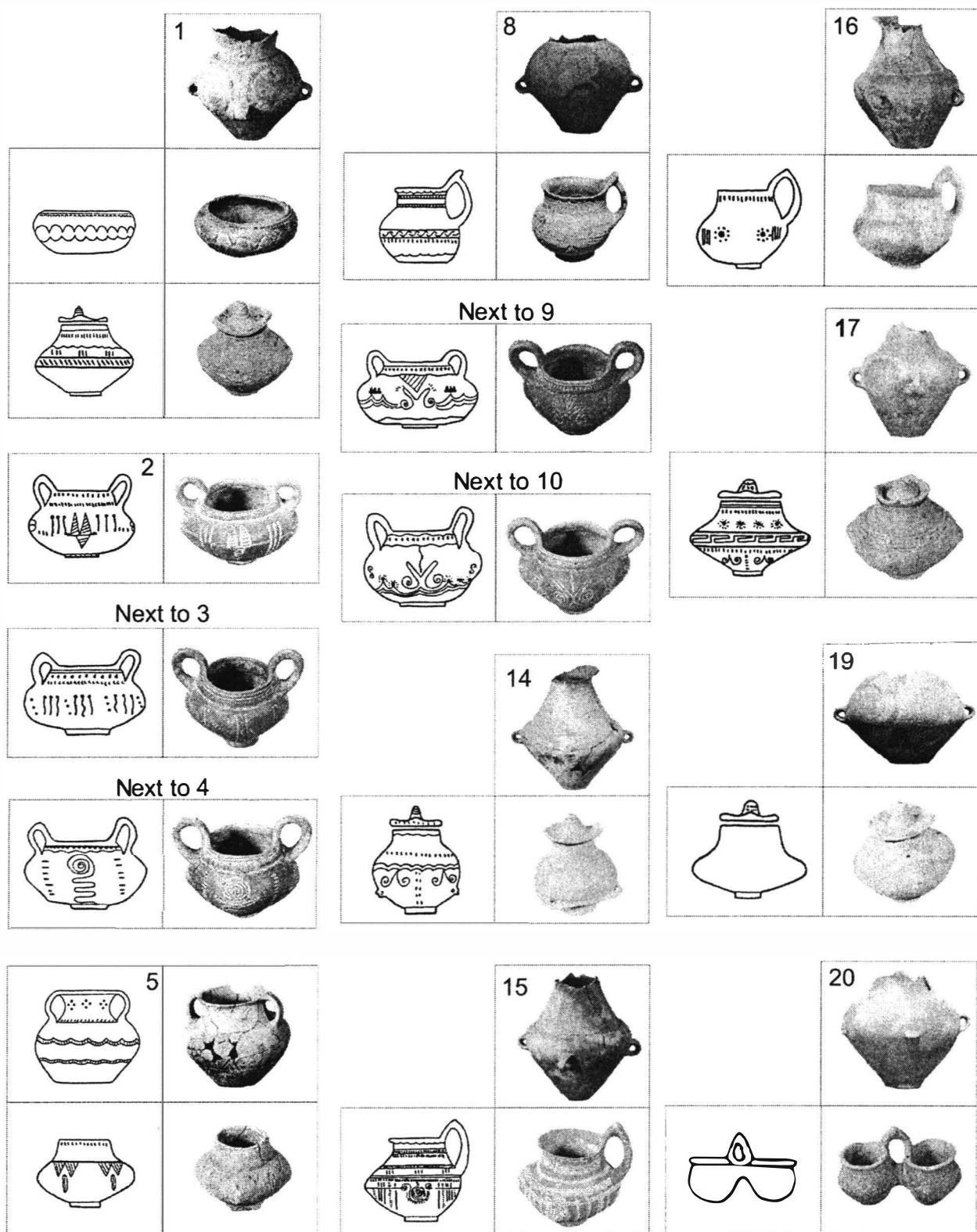


Fig. 1. Ceramics from the Orsoya cemetery (pictures after Tr. Filipov and drawings after A. Bonev 2000 [1999]).

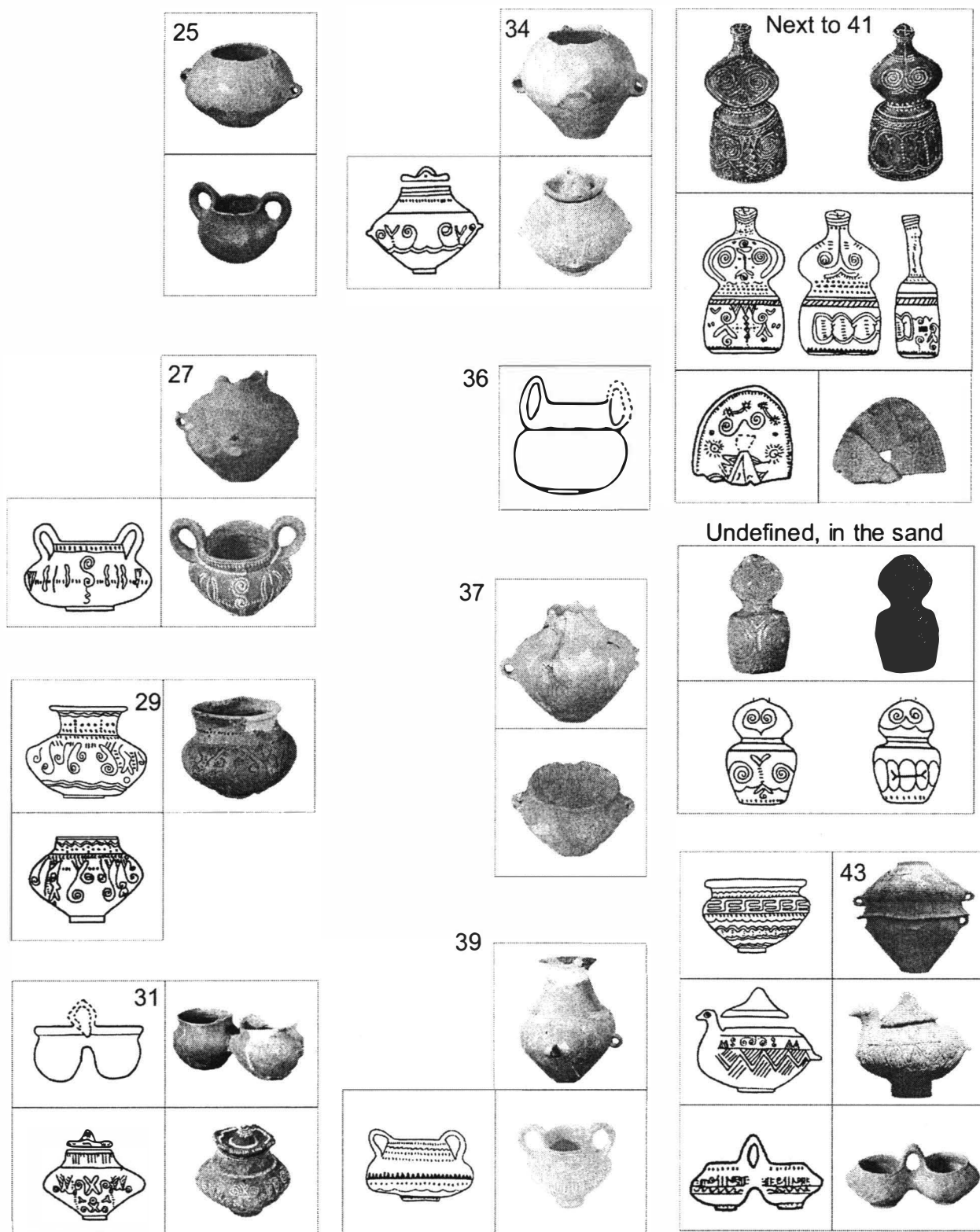


Fig. 2. Ceramics from the Orsoya cemetery (pictures after Tr. Filipov and drawings after A. Bonev 2000 [1999]).

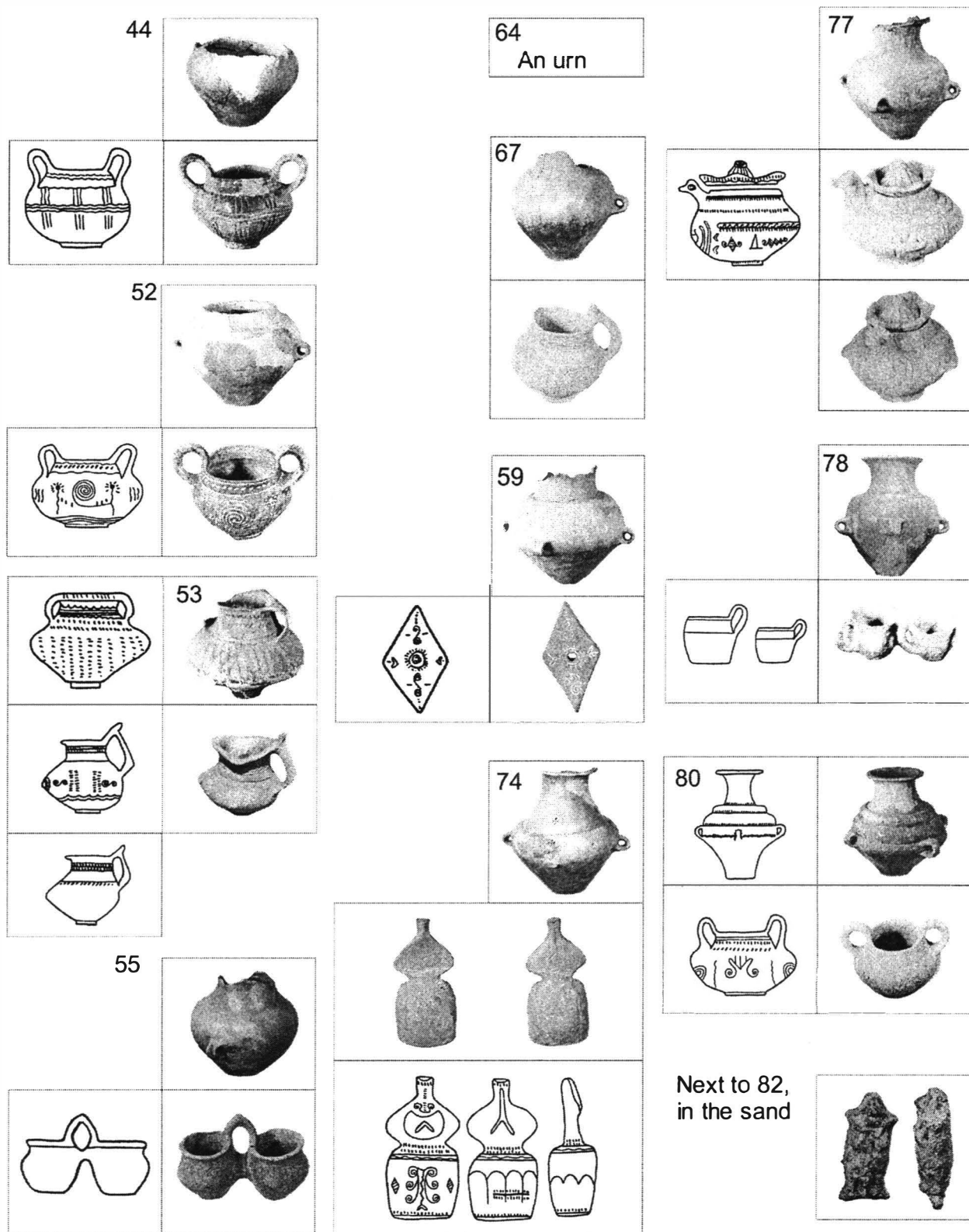


Fig. 3. Ceramics from the Orsoya cemetery (pictures after Tr. Filipov and drawings after A. Bonev 2000 [1999]).



Fig. 4. Ceramics from the Orsoya cemetery (pictures after Tr. Filipov and drawings after A. Bonev 2000 [1999]).

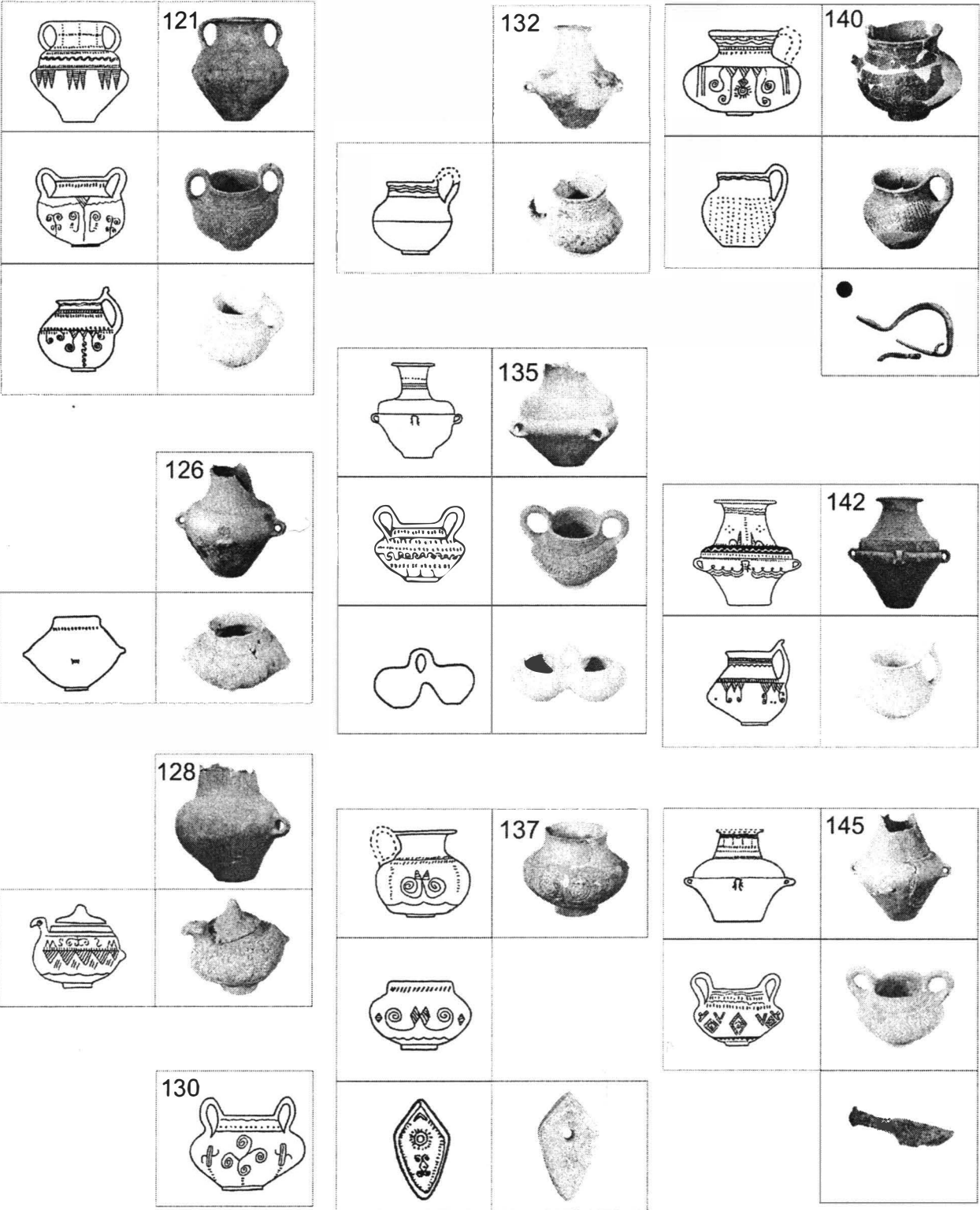


Fig. 5. Ceramics from the Orsoya cemetery (pictures after Tr. Filipov and drawings after A. Bonev 2000 [1999]).

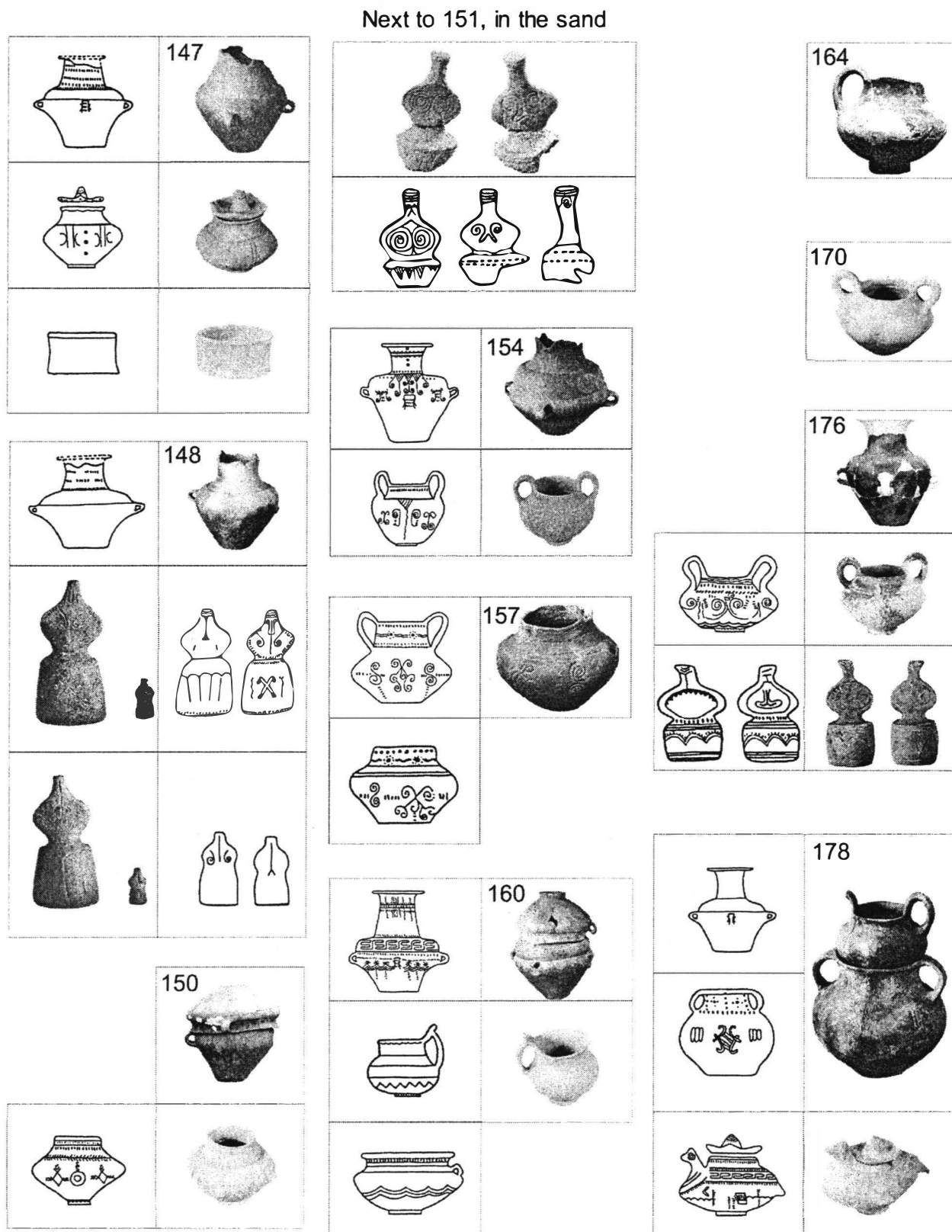


Fig. 6. Ceramics from the Orsoya cemetery (pictures after Tr. Filipov and drawings after A. Bonev 2000 [1999]).

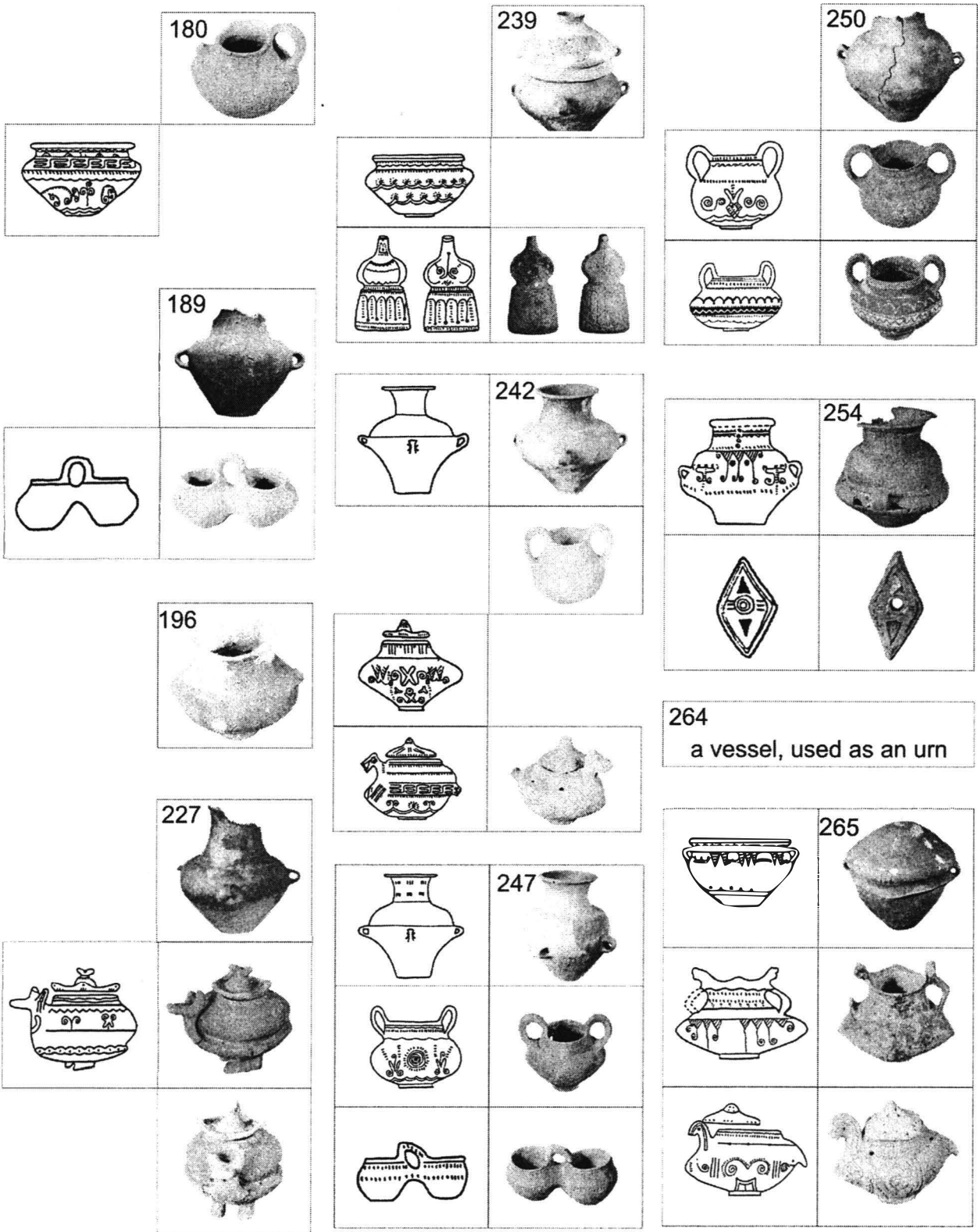


Fig. 7. Ceramics from the Orsoya cemetery (pictures after Tr. Filipov and drawings after A. Bonev 2000 [1999]).

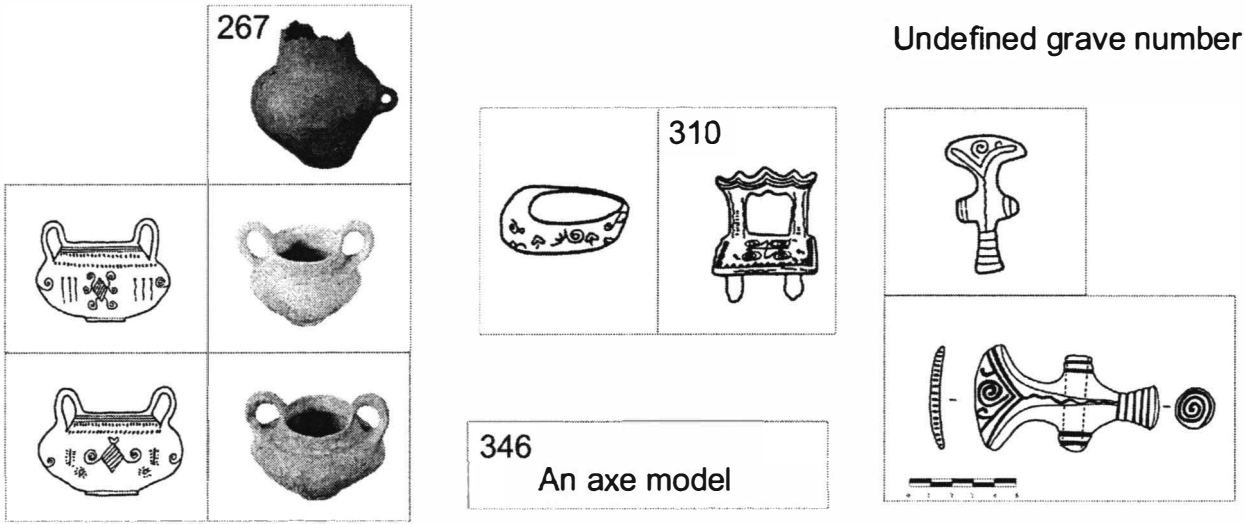


Fig. 8. Ceramics from the Orsoya cemetery (pictures after Tr. Filipov and drawings after A. Bonev 2000 [1999]; axe-model with unspecified grave number from T. Shalganova 1994, p. 23).

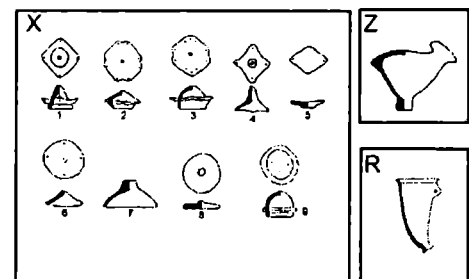
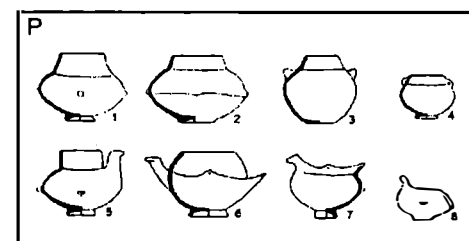
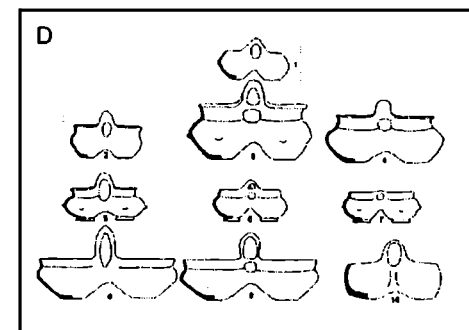
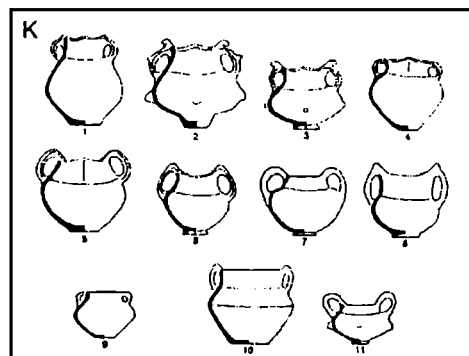
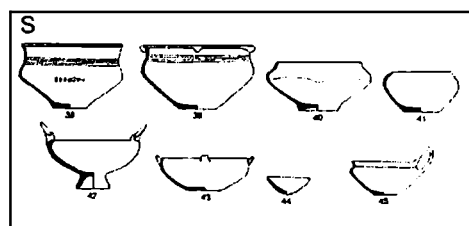
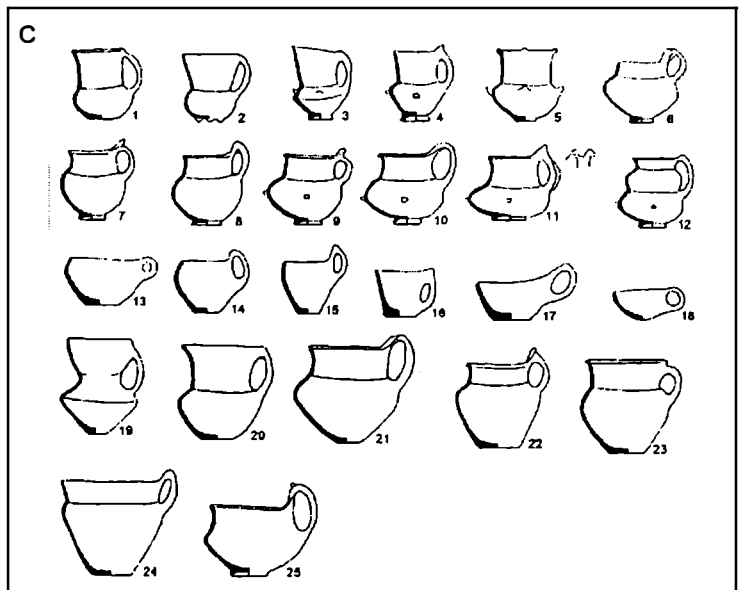
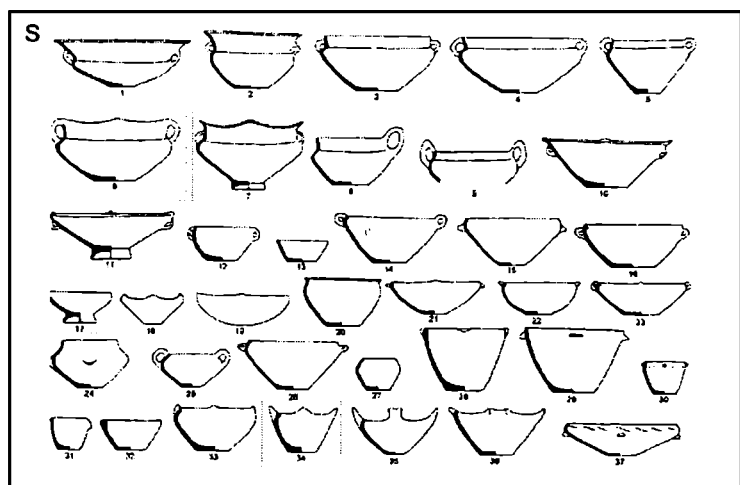
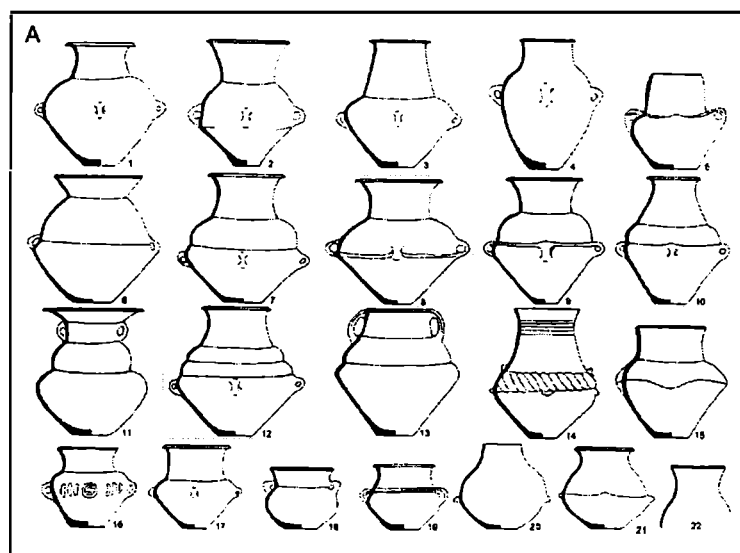


Fig. 9. Typology of Gârla Mare culture pottery (after Șandor-Chicideanu 2003, pl. 192, 193, 194, 195) and the types present in Bulgarian sites, mentioned in the text.

Gârla Mare tradition was “inherited” by the Bistreț-Ișalnița Group, a situation considered to be valid for the Bulgaria territory as well. As an example of this are indicated some of the graves in Orsoya (no. 25, 86 and 164), in which undecorated kantharos-like vessels of the *Čerkovna* type were found. Their shape is similar also to the Bistreț-Ișalnița kantharoi, which however are ornamented following the Gârla Mare style. Very often, these are amphorae with fine irregular flute decoration, typical for the Bistreț-Ișalnița Culture. Some “idols” have “degenerated shape”, but they are from a later period (from graves no. 41, 91, 176, 77, 148 and 230 in Cârna; and finds from the Orsoya cemetery).<sup>270</sup>

In the present work the opinion provisionally assumed is that the *Zimnicea-Plovdiv Culture* belongs to the same chronological period as the Bistreț-Ișalnița.<sup>271</sup> At this stage of the research in northwestern Bulgaria it is not possible to establish with certainty the characteristics of the burial customs; the Zimnicea-Plovdiv distribution area is uncertain as well – in fact, only some *characteristic* types of pottery are known, and not all of them have indubitable cultural belonging or undisturbed context. Considering what we know of the burial practices at the sites where such vessels were found, there is no similarity in the ritual.

At *Krushovitsa*, jugs, cups and kantharos-like vessels were found, which are related by some authors to the *Čerkovna* Group.<sup>272</sup> Near Butan and Burdarski Geran spherical vessels were registered with handles of the *Čerkovna* type (Zimnicea-Plovdiv), at Galiche and Hurllets – jugs; near Bukyovtsi (?) – probably a cup of the same type; Dolno Linevo and Ostrov are also included as representatives of such pottery according to certain authors. Notwithstanding the provision that some vessels in the Orsoya cemetery are related by certain authors to the Zimnicea-Plovdiv/ *Čerkovna* type, herein these are not examined as a product of such an influence, but as more common undecorated variants of ceramic shapes that are typical for the Lower Danube Incrusted Pottery Culture.

The considerable territory in North Bulgaria where no research has been carried out and the uniform character of the pottery – displaying similar types belonging to several *cultures*, both contemporaneous and subsequent – prevent the formulation of exact definitions. At this stage it is possible to presuppose that the presence of this type of pottery in North-Western Bulgaria could be related to the cremation rite. In consideration of the eventual synchronization with the Bistreț-Ișalnița and bearing in mind the context problem, the presence of *Čerkovna*-type pottery at sites with registered cremation confirms the fact that in this area the tradition was continued without exceptions, even to the latest period of the Late Bronze Age. On the other hand, it can be pointed out that the analysis of the grave complexes in the Bulgarian lands does not confirm the differentiation of the archaeological culture of Zimnicea-Plovdiv at this stage, and so far it rather supports its definition as a pottery style phenomenon.<sup>273</sup>

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According to the published data about North-Western Bulgarian sites it can be pointed out that throughout the Late Bronze Age, the burial practice was cremation. The graves were flat. Different types of urns were used: mainly decorated amphorae in the area of the Lower Danube Incrusted Pottery Culture, and undecorated kantharoi in the area of the Verbicioara Culture; while in the central and eastern part of the northern territory of the country the major practice was inhumation in a flexed position.

The problems of definition of the cultural development, the areas and interactions in North West Bulgaria still remain open. Probably the first task of the research at this stage should be the separation of the sites in clearly defined cultures – for instance the separation of the sites of the Incrusted Pottery Culture from those of the Verbicioara Culture. Due to the level of research, it is difficult to define the cultural belonging of some ceramic forms found in graves – e.g. various authors consider one and the same types of vessels as characteristic of *Čerkovna*, Verbicioara, Govora, Plovdiv-Zimnicea and even Gârla Mare.

<sup>270</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>271</sup> Șandor-Chicideanu, *op. cit.*, p. 205.

<sup>272</sup> Șandor-Chicideanu, *op. cit.*, p. 158.

<sup>273</sup> See Panayotov, Vulcheva, *op. cit.*

The critical study and analysis of the data on the burial complexes in Bulgaria provides the following possible conclusions. In North-West Bulgaria the sites correspond to the characteristics of the *Incrusted Pottery Culture* as they have been established outside the country; however it will be clear that the most common period here is its late phase (contemporaneous with Br D-Ha A), while the classical period (Br B2-Br C) is represented only by single and usually stray finds. The burial data confirm the distribution of the culture in the narrow strip along the Danube River, contrary to the opinion of some authors that consider this culture characteristic for whole North-Western Bulgaria. According to the data from the largest archaeologically researched cemetery on the territory of the country, the one near Orsoya, the population in this area was settled and used, for a longer period of time, one cemetery, probably intended for several settlements as well.

Bearing in mind the provisional character of the periodization and the characteristics of the Late Bronze Age phases of the *Verbicioara Culture*, some of the sites, which are in further inland locations, could be studied in connection with its cultural distribution. According to the present data, the burial rite here also consisted of cremation outside the flat cemetery; simple burial pits were used, and it is supposed that internal arrangement (as in Orsoya) had been applied within the cemetery (graves organized in rows/bows). The burned bones were placed in vessels – urns, and in some cases grave inventory was also found. The known cemeteries are located predominantly on natural elevations. The “cemetery” near Gradeshnitsa can be referred with a greater certainty to the fifth period of the *Verbicioara Culture*, which also represents evidence of contacts with the *Incrusted Pottery Culture*.

Some materials from the Bulgarian lands are related to the characteristics of the *Bistreț-Ișalnița Culture/Group*. The analysis of the grave complexes shows that the *Plovdiv-Zimnicea/Čerkovna “phenomenon”*, related to the latest period of the Late Bronze Age and probably synchronous to the *Bistreț-Ișalnița Culture/Group*, present similarity between the types of pottery. The different grave complexes in which they appear does not allow, at this stage, for its examination as a separate archaeological culture, in the sense of the traditional definition.