

RETRIEVING MATERIAL AND SPIRITUAL CULTURE

CONSIDERATIONS ABOUT THE HISTORY OF RESEARCH CONCERNING LATE BRONZE AGE AND EARLY IRON AGE IN OLTENIA

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Abstract: This article deals with the evolution of archaeological research regarding the ending of the Bronze Age and the Early Iron Age in Oltenia and neighboring area, starting the interwar period until present time. From the methodological point of view, the studying of the main characteristics of the researches must include the critical evaluation of the bibliographical sources and also the information offered by the archaeological information that we have.

Most of the information comes from the central publications, such are: “Dacia”, “Studii și Cercetări de Istorie Veche și Arheologie” (SCIV, SCIVA), “Materiale și cercetari Arheologice”, “Thraco-Dacica” etc. The specialized regional publications, and we are referring here especially to “Oltenia. Studii și cercetări”, “Arhivele Olteniei” or the local ones, such are “Drobeta”, “Buridava”, “Litua”, are on the second place as regarding the share. In the in the third category had been included works with monographical character (Vi. Dumitrescu, *Necropola de incinerare din epoca bronzului de la Cârna*, M. Gumă, *Civilizația primei epoci a fierului în sud-vestul României*, M. Șandor Chicideanu, *Cultura Zuto-Brdo Gârla Mare. Contribuții la cunoașterea epocii bronzului la Dunărea mijlocie și inferioară*, G. Crăciunescu, *Cultura Verbicioara în jumătatea vestică a Olteniei*, Ion Mozoi – Chicideanu, *Obiceiuri funerare în epoca bronzului la Dunărea mijlocie și inferioară*, S. Lazăr, *Cultura Vârtoș în Oltenia and Sfârșitul epocii bronzului și începutul epocii fierului în sud-vestul României*), or syntheses that cover certain aspects of the problems that we discuss here, or categories of items characteristic for this period, such are: M. Petrescu-Dîmbovița, *Depozitele de bronzuri din România* (with accent on the Late Bronze and the Early Hallstatt), B. Hänsel, *Beiträge zur regionalen und chronologischen Gliederung der älteren Hallstattzeit an der unteren Donau*, A. Vulpe, *Die Kurzschwerter, Dolche und Streitmesser der Hallstattzeit in Rumänien*.

Keywords: research history, archeology, Oltenia, Late Bronze Age, Early Iron Age.

This article encompasses a general overview on the history of the researches, in the context of the concepts evolution regarding the late Bronze Age and the passing to the First Iron Age.

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In the present paper, the Early Hallstatt is presented using the traditional terminology of the Romanian archeological school, in which we draw a distinction between the concepts of Bronze Age and Iron Age. This way of approaching is the consequence of applying the chronological system of Paul Reinecke, put forward for proposition at the beginning of the 20th century and used by Ion Nestor in the first stage synthesis of the Prehistory from Romania¹. In the Central Europe, this process that broadly includes the cultural-historic evolution of the 14th-9th/8th centuries B.C., is integrated today in the naming of “urn-fields period” (*Urnenfelderzeit*, *UFZ* for short)².

In the Romanian archaeological school, the beginning of the Iron Age, regarded from the perspective of the cultural (ceramic) groups attested nowadays in the Danube-Carpathian space, corresponds to the spreading in most of the areal of the ceramics decorated with grooves. So, though the process of “hallstattisation” (only a conventional term and questionable as regarding its meaning) we can understand, in the same time, the appearance and the spreading of this way of embellishing the ceramics³. We must underline the fact that the term “the First Iron Age” in the Danube-Carpathian cultural area might be justified from the phenomenological point of view, taking into account the fact that at present are known more than 50 discoveries of iron objects, dating from this early period⁴.

The period between 1200-800 B.C., known in the Romanian school tradition as the Early Hallstatt (corresponding to the periods Ha A and B, according to Reinecke), was considered by some of our researchers as tightly connected to the Bronze Age than to the next one, thanks to the presence in this interval of time of the great bronzes deposits⁵. The phenomenon could be therefore similar to that met in the Central Europe, where the historic period, dominated by the demographic increase, by the development and the perfecting of the bronze metallurgy and also by a remarkable cultural

¹ I. Nestor, *Der Stand der Vorgeschichtsforschung in Rumänien*, in “Bericht der Römisch-Germanischen Kommission des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts”, Frankfurt am Mein, 22, 1933, p. 80 and next.

² A. Vulpe, in *Istoria Românilor*, I, Bucharest, Enciclopedic Publishing, 2010, p. 220; A. László, in *Istoria Românilor*, I, Bucharest, Enciclopedic Publishing, 2010, p. 289 and next.

³ A. Vulpe, *Die Kurzschwerter, Dolche und Streitmesser der Hallstattzeit in Rumänien*, “Prähistorische Bronzefunde”, München, Stuttgart, 6, 9, 1990, p. 102 and next.

⁴ A. László, *Începuturile metalurgiei fierului pe teritoriul României*, SCIV, 26, 1, 1975, pp. 17-40; Idem, *Anfang der Benutzung und der Bearbeitung des Eisens auf dem Gebiete Rumänien*, in “Acta Archaeologica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae”, Budapest, 29, 1977, pp. 53-75; N. Boroffka, *Folosirea fierului în România de la începuturi până în sec. VIII î.e.n.*, “Apulum”, 24, 1987, p. 55 and next; A. Stoia, *The Beginning of Iron Technology in Rumanien*, in M.L. Stig Sørensen (editor), *The Bronze Age-Iron Age Transition in Europe. Aspect of continuity and change in European Societies c.1200 to 500 BC*, Oxford, 1989, pp. 43-67.

⁵ K. Horedt, *Istoria Comunei primitive* (course, Cluj, 1971), p. 79; V. Leahu, *Cu privire la conceptul “Perioada de trecere la epoca fierului” pe teritoriul României*, SCIV 24, 1973, 3, pp. 477-484.

stability, is conceived as a unitary chronological sequence, that of the “urn-fields” (UFZ), as we have previously mentioned. In the south-west of Europe, in the middle and inferior region of Danube, the final phases of cremation flat necropolis with incised ceramics (“the urn-field”) correspond to the beginning of this period. These are known in the literature as “the cultures” Szeremle, Bjelo Brdo, Žuto Brdo-Gârla Mare⁶, being followed by the cultural groups Bistreț-Ișalnița and, in a smaller degree, Cruceni-Belegiș.

Vasile Pârvan in his work *Getica*, which appeared in 1926, considered that the Getic protohistory had started since “the Bronze time”. The author wrote: “actually, we must consider that in Dacia, the Bronze Age is prolonged until the age of Scythians (the 7th century), although the Hallstadian influence proves to be strongly active here since the year 1000 B.C.”⁷. As a consequence, the beginning of the Iron Age, as a historical and cultural phenomenon, was situated, in Pârvan’s vision, around 1000 B.C. and from the phenomenological point of view (regarding the use of iron), around 700 B.C., once with the period that the considered to correspond to the appearance of the Scythians, although the current use of this metal was introduced in Dacia only when the Celts came (the La Tène culture), in the 3rd century B.C. as resulting from the text of the already mentioned work, Pârvan, when talking about Bronze III and IV (1400-700 B.C.), was tempted to understand a unitary period from the cultural-historical point of view⁸. We must therefore mention the resemblance between Pârvan’s intuition regarding the unitary approach of the mentioned period of time and the way we understand to regard the same period in the present work.

In 1933, Ion Nestor⁹, reconsidering the entire archaeological material from Romania, known up to that date and starting a chronological and typological, where the ceramics and the metals had played an important role, defined the main cultures of the Bronze Age. But, because of the archaeological information, reduced at that time, the Early Hallstatt wasn’t approached but tangentially. Nestor only enounced the thesis referring to the development of the Hallstatt, based on certain cultural groups from the Middle and Late Bronze periods from the south-west of the country ant to a classical attempt to classify the existent materials on stages and regional groups. For the first time, the Italic theory of Pârvan was combated, Nestor underlining the role that the middle Danube area had in the genesis of the Iron Age.

⁶ M. Șandor Chicideanu, *Cultura Žuto-Brdo Gârla Mare. Contribuții la cunoașterea epocii bronzului la Dunărea mijlocie și inferioară*, Cluj, Nereamia Napocae, 2003; Chr. Reich, *Das Gräberfeld von Szeremle und die Gruppen mit inkrustierter Keramik entlang der mittleren und unteren Donau*, Berlin, 2006.

⁷ V. Pârvan, *Getica o protoistorie a Daciei*, The Romanian Academy. Memoires of the section history, s. III, tom III, Mem. 2, Bucharest, 1926, p. 289 and next.

⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 191 and next.

⁹ I. Nestor, *op. cit.*, p. 104.

Dumitru Berciu¹⁰, studying the last period of the Bronze Age and the beginning of the Hallstatt, brings new contributions to this problem. There are valued most of the materials characteristic to the urn-fields from Oltenia and it is presented for the first time the group “Vârtoș-Ploșor” that, according to Berciu, kept the tradition of the anterior ceramics and had analogies in Banat in the group “Vatina-Vârșeș”¹¹. In the same work, the south-western region of Oltenia along with the Romanian and Yugoslavian Banat, the northern parts of Serbia, are treated as a unitary zone¹².

The identification and the researching, made in 1932 by Nestor and Berciu, of the necropolis from Balta Verde¹³ brought forward new elements. The digs continued in 1949 by Berciu and Eugen Comșa¹⁴ favoured the studying of new archaeological situation: in the same area, were found urn cremation tombs, characteristic for the Middle and Late Bronze (Žuto Brdo-Gârla Mare type) and tombs that, through the black ceramics, decorated with grooves, presented elements considered to be characteristic for the First Iron Age. The presence in the same area of several necropolises chronologically successive could have illustrated the genesis and the evolution of the First Iron Age in the Danube area from Oltenia. But the partial publishing of the results, without any details regarding the plan of the necropolises and without the integral illustration of the tombs’ inventory, leaves a series of questions without answers. We are referring especially the chronological and cultural relation of the graves and the explanation regarding the presence in a great number of successive funerary discoveries in the same area.

Later, the same author, after he had placed the beginning of the Romanian Hallstatt around 1150 B.C., considered that the connection between the Bronze Age and the First Iron Age as being genetically and evidenced both the great number of bronze hoards met in Ha A and B and the cultures from this period¹⁵. The rarity of the iron objects and the massive presence of the bronze ones, was explained though he technological difficulties in obtaining the iron and the intensifying of the bronze metallurgy that could have handled the already existent requirements¹⁶.

Afterwards, once with the occasion of the work appeared in 1966¹⁷, the author made the notice that the passing from Bronze to Hallstatt took place between 1300-1200 B.C., being characterized as a new stage in the ethno-cultural development of the communities from this territory and the formation of new cultural syntheses that replaced the anterior ones. Analyzing the archaeological cultures from the end of the Bronze Age from the south-west of Romania, Berciu reaffirmed the division in five stages of the culture Verbicioara, that the had

¹⁰ D. Berciu, *Arheologia preistorică a Olteniei*, Craiova, 1939.

¹¹ *Ibidem*, p. 158 and next.

¹² *Ibidem*, p. 102 and next.

¹³ D. Berciu, *Ein hallstädtisches Brandgrab aus Balta Verde (Rumänien)*, ESA 9, 1934, p. 165-174.

¹⁴ D. Berciu, E. Comșa, *Săpăturile de la Balta-Verde și Gogoșu*, “Materiale și Cercetări Arheologice”, Bucharest, 2, 1956, pp. 265-319 and pp. 466-476.

¹⁵ D. Berciu, în *Istoria României*, vol. I, Bucharest, Romanian Academy Publishing, 1960, p. 147.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 139.

¹⁷ Idem, *Zorile istoriei în Carpați și la Dunăre*, Bucharest, Scientific Publishing, 1966, pp. 150-151, 170 and next.

previously defined¹⁸ and believed that the end of this culture was due to what he called “the great Aegean migration”, conception that was very popular back then¹⁹. The Gârla Mare culture was considered contemporary with the Verbicioara culture and was believed to constitute a component of the cultural complex from the Pannonian Danube and from the north-west of Balkans. The presence of the urn-fields is seen as being a characteristic of this cultural complex that he named it “Vatina-Gârla Mare”. Trying to illustrate clearer and with more details the end of the Bronze Age and the genesis of Hallstatt, the author returned later on the periodization of the Verbicioara culture, dividing the phase V in V a and V b²⁰.

In 1961, Vladimir Dumitreşcu published exemplary the monography of the cremation necropolis from Cârna²¹, making possible the discussing of the internal periodization of the Gârla Mare culture, the chronological parallelisms with the zones and the cultures from the immediate neighbourhood, the evolution of the culture having from this point on, a more solid documentary basis.

Ion Nestor, in *Istoria poporului roman* from 1970, said that in Oltenia took place a penetration of populations from the west side that might also explain the modifications from the Verbicioara culture, a similar phenomenon being the explanation for the Tei culture from Muntenia. The author sustained the existence of an important mobility and mixing between the tribes linguistically related that hadn't affected the ethnic and cultural fond, generating, in exchange, starting with the 12th century B.C. “the counteroffensive of the Carpathian block”. This expression was understood as an expansion towards east of some groups of “warrior shepherders and farmers” that started from the Slovak Carpathians, the Apuseni Mountains, the Middle Danube and the north of Yugoslavia and “they assimilated on their way on groups that had been formatted during the final Bronze Period”²².

Knowing the beginning period of Hallstatt was completed through the studies elaborated by Kurt Horedt. Thanks to the material from the cremation necropolises from Cruceni and Bobda, explored in 1958 and exhibited in the museum from Timișoara, but remained unpublished, Horedt distinguished two phases for each of these discoveries. For Cruceni he proposed the definition of the first phase that was characterized by the more frequent presence of the bronze objects *Nackenscheibenaxt* and by a certain repertoire of forms with tradition decoration from the Bronze Age. The second phase was distinguished by the anterior one through the evident changes of the forms and vessels' decoration and through the more intense presence of the grooves. At Bobda, he noticed that the phase Cruceni wasn't present, but began to appear a phase Bobda I analogous to the second phase

¹⁸ Idem, *Die Verbicioara-Kultur. Vorbericht über eine neue in Rumänien entdeckte bronzezeitliche Kultur*, in “Dacia”, NS, 5, 1961, pp. 123-162.

¹⁹ The general presentation of this phenomenon at W. Kimmig, *Seevölkerbewegung und Urnenfelderzeit. Ein archäologisch-historiker Versuch*, in R. v. Uslar, K. Narr (editors), *Studien aus Alteuropa I. Festschrift für K. Tackenberg*, Köln, 1964, pp. 220-283.

²⁰ D. Berciu, *Date noi privind sfârșitul culturii Verbicioara*, in “SCIVA”, 27, 1976, 2, pp. 171-180.

²¹ Vl. Dumitreşcu, *Necropola de incinerare din epoca bronzului de la Cârna*, Bucharest, Romanian Academy Publishing, 1961.

²² I. Nestor, *Istoria poporului român*, Bucharest, Scientific Publishing, 1970, pp. 27-28.

Cruceni I, while the phase Bobda II presented similarities as regarding the forms and the decoration of the ceramics in the Gáva culture²³. Thus, though this succession, established especially on typological criteria, Horedt conceived a relation of the cultural development, starting with the Late Bronze towards the First Iron Age.

The archaeological documentation, improved meanwhile, allowed to Bernhard Hänsel, in 1968, to treat this problem from a position different from that of his predecessors. In the new tripartite chronological system, that he elaborated for the Carpathian Basin, the Vatina culture, along with the group Dubovac are placed chronologically in MD I (*mittlere danubische Bronzezeit* I) and is considered to evolve until SD I (*späte danubische Bronzezeit* I). With this opportunity, analyzing the necropolis from Cârna through the statistic (seriating) method, he proposed a placing in time that, according to his chronological system, it corresponded to the period: 1500-2000 B.C. This dating is similar to that proposed by Vladimir Dumitrescu, but, unlike him, Hänsel divided the evolution of the burials in three phases, dated during MD I and SD I²⁴. According to this chronological interpretation, the Gârla Mare culture became contemporary to the necropolises from Vatina and Dubovac and evolved until the end of the Bronze Age.

For the south-western area of Romania it is important the contribution brought by Nikola Tasić, regarding the end of the Bronze Age in Serbia. He is the first researcher that separated the Verbicioara ceramics by that typical for the culture Vatina, trying to present the Verbicioara culture in his own conception (different from that proposed by Berciu), where the phases I-II are unitary treated²⁵. Analyzing the origin of the Dubovac-Žuto Brdo culture, Tasić believed that it formed after a process of transformation in the style of the trans-Danube ceramics, based on the autochthon Vatina elements; thus, he took the theory of István Bóna, that saw in the genesis and the evolution of the urn fields from the Middle Danube, the result of the pressure exercised by the bearers of “the tumuli culture” on the printed trans-Danube ceramics culture²⁶. The end of this culture is related with the appearance of the Belegiš culture bearers and the tumular tombs culture, around 1400 B.C and for the Žuto Brdo-Gârla Mare culture, he proposed three phases of evolution²⁷.

In the paper from 1976, Hänsel raised again for discussion the data referring to the cultures Verbicioara and Gârla Mare. He considered that to the phases I-III, established by Berciu only on chronological criteria, corresponded only one stage, that he defined as representing the Verbicioara culture, while the phases IV-V (Berciu) were regarded as a cultural group with different characteristics, named “the group Govora”²⁸. In the same

²³ K. Horedt, *Problemele ceramicii din perioada bronzului evoluat din Transilvania*, in “Studii și comunicări”, Sibiu, 13, 1967, p. 147 and next.

²⁴ B. Hänsel, *Beiträge zur Regionalen und Chronologischen Gliederung der älteren Hallstattzeit an der unteren Donau*, Bonn, 1976, pp. 235, 239-142.

²⁵ N. Tasić, *Praistorija Vojvodine*, Novi Sad, 1974, pp. 457-458

²⁶ I. Bóna, *Die mittlere Bronzezeit Ungarns und ihre südöstliche Beziehungen*, Budapest, 1975, pp. 193-230.

²⁷ N. Tasić, *op. cit.*, pp. 460-465.

²⁸ B. Hänsel, *op. cit.*, pp. 57-65; see the review of A. Vulpe, in “Revista de Istorie”, no. 12, 1979, pp. 2381-2384.

paper, the culture Gârla Mare was discussed furthermore, according to the chronology established in 1968. With this opportunity, he criticised the internal periodization of the Cârna necropolis that he had proposed while Rolf Hachmann, in the review made for Hänsel's work from 1968²⁹, and considered that both the Gârla Mare culture and the Govora group stop their evolution around 1100 B.C., being followed by a sphere of Vârtope type grooved ceramics³⁰. He analyzed the problems concerning the emerging of the Vârtope group, after he had established the main types and decorative motives for the ceramics and suggested similarities in the forms and the decoration of the ceramics in the tumulus from Susani, in Banat, establishing in such way a parallel relation between the spheres Susani and Vârtope. The beginning of the Vârtope group is placed according to the development of the grooved motive for the ceramics belonging to Gârla Mare culture, around the 13th century B.C. As a phase intermediary between Gârla Mare and Vârtope, might be, according to Hänsel, placed the Işalniţa group³¹.

The problem concerning the genesis of the First Iron Age was also approached by Sebastian Morintz in his work from 1978³². The Bronze Age cultures from the south-west of Romania are analyzed relying on some new archaeological discoveries: the Vatina culture is better individualized, its end being placed between the periods Reincke Br B₂ – Br C, and the Cruceni-Belegiş is considered contemporary and believed to have an evolution almost parallel with Dubovac-Žuto-Brdo. In the Gârla Mare culture he identifies four phases and the Verbicioara culture is presented in five evolutive phases. The Işalniţa aspect, to which Hänsel gave a distinct position, he placed it in the stage Verbicioara Vb. In this manner, Morintz, tried to demonstrate the genetically connection existent between the last phase of the Verbicioara culture (Vb) and the First Iron Age³³.

The research made by Ion Stratan and Alexandru Vulpe and the publishing, in 1977, of the tumulus from Susani, Timiş County³⁴, improved consistently the information for the discussed period. The ceramic material discovered in the tumulus from Susani is rich (over 250 vessels) and the repertoire of shapes, the black colour of the vessels, the technique and the grooved decorative motives, attest an early "Hallstattian" group, entirely formatted, keeping the meaning of this terminology identical to that from the beginning of the present chapter. This tumulus is important in explaining the evolutive process towards the First Iron Age, because the ceramic material, varied as regarding the forms and grooved decorative motives, can be considered as representative from the beginning of a new age.

²⁹ R. Hachmann, *Germania*, 46, 1968, p. 368 and next (review).

³⁰ B. Hänsel, *op. cit.*, p. 101 and next.

³¹ *Ibidem*, pp. 104-105.

³² S. Morintz, *Contribuții arheologice la istoria tracilor timpurii*, I, Bucharest, Romanian Academy Publishing, 1978, pp. 22, 45.

³³ *Ibidem*, pp. 61-70.

³⁴ I. Stratan, A. Vulpe, *Der Hügel von Susani*, in "Prähistorische Zeitschrift", 52, 1977, pp. 228-60; later, Vulpe approached again this discovery: *Zur Deutung und Datierung des Hügels von Susani im Banat*, in B. Schmidt-Sikimić, Ph. Della Casa (editors), *Transeuropam. Festschrift für Margarita Primas*, Bonn, 1995, pp. 81-88.

More recently, for the end of the Bronze Age in Oltenia, important contributions have been brought by Ion Chicideanu who, thanks to his diggings from the Bistreț-Cârna area, defined a cultural group that he named Bistreț-Ișalnița and he chronologically placed between 13th-12th centuries B.C.³⁵. Its content is different in a certain extent from what Hänsel named the Ișalnița group. The ceramics of this group is presented in the Danube's meadow, from Clisură to the Olt's river mouth and could have represented the last manifestation of the Bronze Age in this area, being contemporary with the phase Crucești-Belegiș II and preceding the group Vârtoș³⁶. It appeared, according to Chicideanu, after grafting some western influences of Belegiș type on the local Gârla Mare elements. The materials placed by Chicideanu in the Bistreț-Ișalnița group had been considered for a long time as belonging to the last phase of the culture Gârla Mare, or to the phase V b of the Verbicioara culture (according to Berciu)³⁷. The same author published in the 2011 book that made a well-documented synthesis of Bronze Age funerary practices middle and lower Danube³⁸.

The Gârla Mare discoveries from the south Danube were reanalyzed by Tatiana Shalganova³⁹ who considered that in Bulgaria would exist, in the period that we are discussing, two chronological horizons represented first, by the classical phase of the cultures with incrustrated pottery and the second, by the grooved pottery, specific for the Early Hallstatt. Using the stratigraphic data that had been obtained in the settlements from Balej and from Vidin – “Peștera Magura”, but also the analogies with the similar discoveries from Serbia and Romania, the author tries to surprise the process of passing from the incrustrated ceramics of the Bronze Age to the one from the First Iron Age, characterized by the presence of the grooved decoration.

During the last years, Christine Reich had a new attempt of periodization the Cârna cemetery⁴⁰, starting from a proper typology, based on the combinatory analysis of the decorative forms and motifs, realized by putting in order the ceramic inventory from 49 tombs. She considered that the cemetery developed on three funerary parcels, belonging to three numerous families, for each part corresponding tombs from the four chronological stages, the older tombs situating in the middle of each zone. The author emphasized that it can't yet be mentioned a decoration specific for each family or groups of tombs⁴¹.

³⁵ I. Chicideanu, *Die Frühthrakische Kultur. Zur Bronzezeit in Südwest Rumänien*, in “Dacia”, NS, 30, 1986, 1-2, pp. 7-47.

³⁶ *Ibidem*, pp. 40-47.

³⁷ *Ibidem*.

³⁸ Ion Motzoi-Chicideanu, *Obiceiuri funerare în epoca bronzului la Dunărea mijlocie și inferioară*, Bucharest, Romanian Academy Publishing, 2011.

³⁹ T. Shalganova, *Das Antreten der kannelierten Keramik und der Übergang von der Spätbronzezeit zur frühen Eisenzeit in Nordwestbulgarien*, in “The Early Hallstatt Period (1200-700 B.C.) in South-Eastern Europe”, Alba Iulia, 1994, pp. 185-195; Idem, *The Lower Danube Incrustrated Pottery Culture*, in D.W. Bailey, I. Panayotov (editors), *Prehistoric Bulgaria, Monographs in World Archaeology*, 22, Madison, 1995, pp. 291-308.

⁴⁰ C. Reich, *Das Gräberfeld von Cârna*, “Prähistorische Zeitschrift”, 77, 2002, 2, pp. 159-179; Idem, *Das Gräberfeld von Szeremle und die Gruppen mit inkrustierter Keramik entlang der mittleren und unteren Donau*, Berlin, 2006.

⁴¹ *Ibidem*, p. 167.

A major contribution, realized through the critical analysis made to the older and newer discoveries of Gârla Mare type, but also to the definition of the cultural and chronological placing of those sites, is the work recently published by Monica Șandor-Chicideanu who considers unitary these kinds of discoveries from the middle and inferior Danube area, from the both banks of the river Danube⁴². The author placed the culture Žuto Brdo-Gârla Mare in the interval situated between approximately 1650-1250/1200, followed by the Bistreț-Ișalnița group that is considered to end its existence around 1100 B.C⁴³.

The discoveries of Gârla Mare type, most of them, come from the necropolises of cremation in urn, being known only few discoveries of settlements (more known are those from Ghidici, Ostrovul Mare in România and Balej in Bulgaria); in most of them hadn't been made systematical digs that would allow them to benefit by an adequate documentation.

An interesting situation can be seen in the south of Oltenia, in the site already mentioned from Ghidici, Dolj County. There uncovered many several dwellings, among which six belong to the Gârla Mare settlement (L 1, L 3, L 4, L 5, L 6, L 11)⁴⁴; two others had been attributed to the dwelling with ceramics belonging to the Bistreț Ișalnița type (L 2, L 9) and other four was found ceramics specific to the First Iron Age, of Vârtop type (L 7, L 8, L 10 and L 1 – “Balta Țarovei II”)⁴⁵. Other Gârla Mare settlements had been researched at Izvoarele, commune Gruia and at Ostrovul Mare-“Colonie”, both in Mehedinți County⁴⁶.

The value of these papers is based both on the personal researches of the authors and the information taken from different publications and comes especially from the interpretations that the presented materials offer. This is the situation of the recent publication of the important cremation necropolis from Hinova, where the authors propose a new way of approaching the problem regarding the chronological succession of the urn fields from the Danube⁴⁷.

⁴² M. Șandor Chicideanu, *Cultura Žuto Brdo-Gârla Mare. Contribuții la cunoașterea epocii bronzului la Dunărea mijlocie și inferioară*, Cluj, Nereamia Napocae Publishing, 2003.

⁴³ *Ibidem*, pp. 209-213

⁴⁴ M. Nica, *Locuințele de tip Gârla Mare și Hallsattiene descoperite în așezările de la Ghidici*, in “Thraco-Dacica”, no. 13, 1987, pp. 16-38; M. Nica, P. Rogozea, *Șantierul arheologic Ghidici, punctul “Balta Țarovei”*. Campania 1994, “Cercetări arheologice în aria nord-tracă”, 1, Bucharest, 1995, p. 199; S. Lazăr, *Contribuții la repertoriul arheologic al județului Dolj*, “Arhivele Olteniei”, SN, no. 14, 1999, pp. 19-37.

⁴⁵ M. Nica, S. Lazăr, *Locuințele Hallstatiene descoperite la Ghidici*, în “Cercetări arheologice în aria nord tracă” II, Bucharest, 1997, pp. 87-112; S. Lazăr, *Cultura Vârtop în Oltenia*, Craiova, Fundației Scrisul Românesc, 2005; Idem, *Sfârșitul epocii bronzului și începutul epocii fierului în sud-vestul României*, Craiova, Universitaria Publishing, 2011, pp. 36, 225-228.

⁴⁶ G. Crăciunescu, *Noi descoperiri arheologice din epoca bronzului de la Ostrovul Mare – Colonie*, in “Drobeta”, 4, 1980, pp. 43-58; Idem, *Așezare a culturii Gârla Mare la Izvoarele*, in “Thraco-Dacica”, 1-2, 1992, pp. 43-47; Idem, *Despre locuirile bronzului mijlociu din Ostrovul Mare*, in “Drobeta”, 16, 2006, pp. 143-164.

⁴⁷ M. Davidescu, A. Vulpe, *Urnfield in Hinova, Mehedinți county*, in “Dacia” NS, no. 54, 2010, pp. 5-54.

From this short presentation of the researches' history can be noticed that fact that existed a constant tendency to separate/delimitate the Bronze Age from the Iron Age, despite some different appreciation on the ambiguity of this dichotomy. As we have seen above, there had been different attempts to excel those terminological conventions in the Romanian literature (also see Berciu⁴⁸, Horedt⁴⁹, in a certain extent, even Pârvan in Getica). In 1970, Valeriu Leahu proposed even the definition of a "period of transition to the Iron Age", notion that, according to his opinion, might be justified through the fact of cumulating during this period, in the "economic, social, ethnic and cultural-spiritual structures", some elements specific for the Bronze Age, but with "proper features", in an incipient stage, those of the future era⁵⁰. It is remarkable the fact that such attempts are different especially through the searching of some criteria that seem to strengthen those conceptions. It is also obvious that notions such "passing" or "transition" cannot define a certain historical or cultural sequence and, therefore, are meant to fail because of their banality and ambiguity⁵¹.

A. Vulpe had proposed since 1990, in the work dedicated to the Hallstattian short swords, daggers and fighting knives from Romania⁵² and more recently, in *Istoria Românilor*, the unitary approach of the bronze and Iron Age, as "the metals age"⁵³, considering the delimitation, in the Romanian space, of the two eras from 1200 or 1150 B.C., "purely conventional", as a sequence of the inertness imposed by the tradition of the researching. On the other side, he saw, under chronologically aspect, a similarity with the periodization of the Helladic, a cultural-historical rhythmicity common to a wide area from the south-west of Europe, as the only justification with more important cultural-historical implications. In the same time, he considered that the term "Iron Age" partly entitled from the phenomenological point of view, because of the visible multiplication of the proves for the using of this metal starting with the beginning of the 1st millennium B.C.⁵⁴, although the extension of the iron processing technique would be realized only in the 8th century B.C., in the "Basarabi" period.

⁴⁸ D. Berciu, in *Istoria României*, Bucharest, Scientific Publishing, 1960, p. 147: "transition period".

⁴⁹ K. Horedt, *Istoria Comunei primitive*, Cluj, 1971, p. 79 and next.

⁵⁰ V. Leahu, *Cultura Tei*, Bucharest, 1966, pp. 477-484.

⁵¹ The same criticism mentioned Alexandru Vulpe for the notion of "transition period from Eneolithic to the Bronze Age", formulated by Petre Roman, transition that spread for more than a millennium (A. Vulpe, *Puncte de vedere privind istoria Daciei preromane*, in "Revista de Istorie", 32, 1979, 12, p. 2266, note 9).

⁵² Idem, *Die Kurzschwerter, Dolche und Streitmesser der Hallstattzeit in Rumänien*, in "Prähistorische Bronzefunde", München, Stuttgart, 6, 9, 1990, p. 102 and next.

⁵³ Idem, *Istoria Românilor*, I, 2010, p. 220.

⁵⁴ Idem, *Die Kurzschwerter, Dolche und Streitmesser der Hallstattzeit in Rumänien*, in "Prähistorische Bronzefunde", München, Stuttgart, 6, 9, 1990, p. 103, citing Milutin Garašanin (Actes II. Congrès international des études sud-est-européennes, Athena, 1970 (1972), II, p. 21 and next), that proposed the term "makedonische Eisenzeit", taken also in the literature that treats the problems of that age from the Balkans' region (for eg. K. Kilian, *Trachtzubehör der Eisenzeit zwischen Ägäis und Adria*, Prähistorische Zeitschrift, 50, 1975, p. 16 and next, pp. 101-102).