

# CONNECTIONS AND IDENTITIES IN OLTENIA AREA

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## SOME CONSIDERATIONS REGARDING THE PREHISTORIC HABITAT IN INTERDEPENDENCE WITH GEOMORPHOLOGICAL AND CLIMATIC ELEMENTS IN OLTENIA (I)

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**Abstract:** The peculiarities of the natural setting, together with the social-historical conditions inherent in the territory between the Carpathians and the Danube, played an important role in the process of appearance and evolution of the human settlements in this geographical area.

Human settlements can be found most often on the rivers, near the sources of drinking water, especially on the lower or middle terraces, where there were favorable conditions for cereal cultivation. They provided drinking water and an important source of food, fish, but also a great communication opportunity. Neolithic settlements have been identified in river beds, in flood-free areas, on the edges of terraces, on low terraces, on the Danube islands, on the edge of lakes, in caves or in shelters under the rock.

The archaeological documentation allows us to observe in the Bronze Age and the Iron Age that, in parallel with the existence of a “scattered” habitat, similar to the communities that used grazing to make a living, there are also some reinforced settlements which, with the proliferation of customs, shows the existence of leaders who were interested in affirming and maintaining social prestige.

**Keywords:** Oltenia, natural environment, human settlements, the prehistory, permanent housing.

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In the process of apparition and evolution of the human settlements, the elements of the natural environment have played an important part. The accessible relief, along with other particularities of the natural background (climatic and pedo-geographical conditions, the hydrographical network), contributed to the definition of the human and economic characteristics of the plain, constituting themselves in the support of the rural activities.

The presence and the inter-conditioning of the natural, historic and socio-economic factors have allowed an ancient and continuous dwelling, starting from the prehistory.

Oltenia is situated in the South-Western part of our country, being marked, first of all, by the natural course of the Danube, which forms the southern limit, starting from Orșova area to Islaz, the confluence with the river Olt. In the north, the area under consideration is bordered by the massifs Godeanu and Vâlcan, the Parâng and Căpățâni Mountains, and the Râmnicu Vâlcea area, and the inferior basin of the Olt river constitutes the eastern limit.

Between these limits, the territory of Oltenia includes all forms of relief: mountains, sub-Carpathian hills, highlands, plains, which come one after another from North to South, from 2,518 m (in Parâng Mountains) to 26–35 m (in Danube meadow).

The Neolithic settlements can be found in different places, but, in most of the cases, on rivers courses near springs with fresh water, especially on lower or middle terraces. These dwellings offered fresh water and another important food source, the fish, along with a great opportunity for communication that should not be neglected. In most of the cases, the main occupations of the group, and even of the individuals, determined the selection of a certain dwelling, where only one family or a small group lived.

The Danube and its valley, both because of the resources and of its function of access way that connects the center of the continent to the eastern regions, including the Black Sea, has had a special importance for the populations that has lived in this area since the Palaeolithic. Along it, in the south of Oltenia, there spreads Oltenia Plain, a complex unit of relief, in terms of morphology and morphogenesis. The influence that the river used to have in the past, related to the one carried out by the morphogenetic action of the entire hydrographic network from the area, determined a relief of erosion and fluvial accumulation.

An example of this can be the archaeological culture of the Bronze Age, *ŽutoBrdo-Garla Mare*. *ŽutoBrdo-Gârla Mare* type discoveries are concentrated along the two banks of the Danube in a geographical area delimited at west appreciatively by the Belgrade area and at east, by the river-mouth of Olt meeting the Danube, area that is encompassed entirely in the study region of the present thesis. This archaeological culture has been defined and studied especially on the basis of the necropolises. In Romania, the most important discoveries have been

made in the area Ostrovu Corbului<sup>1</sup>, Balta Verde<sup>2</sup>, Mehedinți County and in the south of Dolj County, around the pools from Ghidici<sup>3</sup>, Cârna<sup>4</sup>, Bistreț<sup>5</sup>. The most well-known sites from Bulgaria are at Balej, where there was dug a settlement with four levels of dwelling<sup>6</sup> and the necropolis with over 300 tombs of cremation in urn from Orsoja<sup>7</sup> or the older and newer discoveries around Novo Selo<sup>8</sup>.

The plain is composed of inter-fluvial areas and fluvial terraces that take a considerable extension after coming out of the mountainous area, downstream of Gura Văii. The Danube terraces are displayed as morphological stages, distributed along the valley in longitudinal stripes, starting from the North to the South, from the oldest, to the newest<sup>9</sup>. They have an ununiformed and unequal repartition. In the West of Baboia, it is spread the entire series of eight Quaternary terraces, up to the river of Desnățui there are seven, and towards the East, both the number and surface decrease. On most part of the Danube valley, the contact of the terraces with the Getic Platform, or with the high plain, is obvious and it is done through uneven areas of at last 10-15 m as opposing to the highest terrace<sup>10</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> D. Berciu, *Arheologia preistorică a Olteniei*, 1939, pp. 102–139; B. Hänsel, P. Roman, *Siedlungsfunde der bronzezeitlichen Gârla Mare Gruppe bei Ostrovu Corbului*, in “Praehistorische Zeitschrift”, 59, 2, 1984, pp. 188–229; M. Șandor Chicideanu, *Cultura Țuto-Brdo Gârla Mare. Contribuții la cunoașterea epocii bronzului la Dunărea mijlocie și inferioară*. Cluj, Nereamia Napocae Publishing, 2003; G. Crăciunescu, *Cultura Verbicioara în jumătatea vestică a Olteniei*, Craiova, Universitaria Publishing, 2004.

<sup>2</sup> D. Berciu, E. Comsa, Săpăturile de la Balta Verde și Gogoșu (1949 și 1950), in “Materiale și cercetări arheologice” 2, 1956, pp. 251–490.

<sup>3</sup> M. Nica, *Locuințele de tip Gârla Mare și Hallsattiene descoperite în așezările de la Ghidici*, in “Thraco-Dacica” 13, 1987, pp. 16–38; Idem, *Câteva date despre necropola și locuințele din așezările hallstattiene timpurii de la Ghidici, punctul „Balta Țarova” – județul Dolj*, in “Cercetări arheologice în aria nord-tracică”, 1, București, 1995, p. 236; M. Nica, S. Lazăr, *Locuințele Hallstattiene descoperite la Ghidici*, in “Cercetări arheologice în aria nord tracă”, II, 1997, pp. 87–112; S. Lazăr, *Contribuții la repertoriul arheologic al județului Dolj*, in “Arhivele Olteniei”, SN, 14, 1999, pp. 19–37; Idem, *Sfârșitul epocii bronzului și începutul epocii fierului în sud-vestul României*, Craiova, Universitaria Publishing House, 2011.

<sup>4</sup> Vl. Dumitrescu, *Cârna*, Bucharest, Romanian Academy Publishing House 1961, passim.

<sup>5</sup> I. Chicideanu, *Die Frühthrakische Kultur. Zur Bronzezeit in Sudwest Rumänien*, in *Dacia*, NS, 30, 1986, 1–2, pp. 40–47; M. Șandor Chicideanu, *op. cit.*, pp. 221–222.

<sup>6</sup> V. Micov, *Arheologija Sofia* 12, 1970, 3, p. 49; B. Hänsel, *Beiträge zur regionalen und chronologischen Gliederung der älteren Hallstattzeit an den unteren Donau*, Bonn, 1976, p. 64; G. Georgiev, *Die Erforschung der Brozezeit in Nordwestbulgarien*, in (ed. B. Hänsel) *Südosteuropa zwischen 1600 und 1000 v. Chr.*, PAS, 1, 1982, pp. 194–196; T. Shalghanova, *The Lower Danube Incrusted Potery Culture* în D. W. Bailey, I. Panayotov, *Praehistoric Bulgaria*, 1995, p. 291 and next.

<sup>7</sup> T. Filipov, *Nekropol ot kâsnata bronzova epoha pri s.Orsoja, Lomsko*, Lom, 1976; Idem, *Arheologija Sofia*, 16, 1974, pp. 12–23; A. Bonev, *Trakija i egeiskijat svjat prez vtorata polovina i hiljadoletio pr. n. e.*, Sofia, 1988, p. 39.

<sup>8</sup> V. Mikov, *op. cit.*, p. 49

<sup>9</sup> Regarding the terraces, see: \*\*\* *Geografia Văii Dunării românești*, Bucharest, Romanian Academy Publishing House, 1969; M. Ielenicz, *Metodica cercetării teraselor*, in „Terra”, year XX (XL), nr. 1, January–March, 1988; Popp M. Nicolae, *Les terrasses fluviales de la Munténie Centrale*, in BRSSG, tom LVII, Bucharest, 1938.

<sup>10</sup> \*\*\* *Geografia văii Dunării românești...*, pp. 32–34.

Oltenia Plane, has heights between 30 and 200 m and is made of the sub-units Blahnița Plain, Băilești Plain, Segarcea Plain, and Caracal Plain<sup>11</sup>. They are almost entirely made of the Danube terraces covered with sand dunes, disposed in parallel ranges, oriented North-West – South-East. In the southern side, the sedimentary formations that make Oltenia Field are represented on the surface by gravel, sand and quaternary fluvial-lacustrine clay and from fluvial alluvial deposits that belong to the terraces and the Danube meadow, from Aeolian sands<sup>12</sup>.

It can be observed, as a characteristic of the habitat, the existence of some small and short periods of habitation. Most of the sites mentioned as settlements, are presented actually under the form of familiar establishment groups situated at considerable distances one from another. There are few known examples of settlements in Oltenia, from the Early Bronze or the Late Hallstatt period, that have more levels of habitation, and these are usually in the privileged areas, with access to natural resources like the Danube River meadow.

Very well developed is the Danube meadow, which is the lowest relief unit, constituting a wide alluvial plane, of which monotony is reduced by the presence of the sand banks and of the numerous lakes (Fântâna Banului, Golenți, Rast, Călugăreni, Bistreț, Potelu) that are mostly drained today. To the alluvial plane also belong the aits from the Danube River bed (Ostrovlul Corbului, Calafatu Mare, Nebuna, Gâtanu etc.).

Most of the settlements from the end of the Bronze Age present, as we have mentioned before, only one cultural layer, showing us that they were habited for a short time. We find this situation in the Danube area and around the sloughs or in the islands close to the river, where settlements of Gârla Mare and Bistreț Ișalnița type are present, but also in the hilly and pre-mountain area, where we find few traces of habitation of Govora type.

In the ZutoBrdo – Gârla Mare area<sup>13</sup>, on the both sides of the Danube there are almost 40 confirmed settlements, but, most of them, were mentioned earlier, and they either did not benefit from systematic diggings, or they were presented very sketchy without digging plans and details regarding the habitation complexes. More information we have about nine settlements Balej, Cârna – Nasta, Cârna – Rampă, Ghidici – Balta Țarova, Ostrovu Corbului, Ostrovu Mare – Colonie, Hajduča Vodenica, Mala Vrbica – Livade, Usije – Grad<sup>14</sup>.

<sup>11</sup> \*\*\* *Geografia României*, V, Bucharest, Didactic and Pedagogical Publishing House, 2005; Petre Coteș, *Câmpia Olteniei*, Bucharest, Scientific Publishing House, 1957; Petre V. Coteș, *Câmpia Română. Studiu de geomorfologie integrată*, Bucharest, Ceres Publishing House, 1976; Anca Ceaulescu, *Așezările rurale din Câmpia Băileștilui (cu elemente de etnografie)*, Craiova, Universitaria Publishing House, 2011, *passim*.

<sup>12</sup> N. Oncescu, *Geologia României*, Bucharest, Technical Publishing House, 1965, p. 167; V. Pleniceanu and colab., *The rehabilitation of the Danube floodplain on Rastu-Corabia sector*, in "Annals of the University Craiova", Series Geography, vol. 9, 2006.

<sup>13</sup> Șandor Chicideanu, *op. cit.*, where the author synthesizes the information we have up to now, regarding the ZutoBrdo – Gârla Mare culture, in the same time offering a very utile inventory of the sites.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 40, where is presented the reference material for each site.

The hydrologic resources from this area are represented by permanent and temporary rivers, lakes, phreatic and deep springs. The entire hydrographical network is collected by the Danube, which, in this sector has a reduced slope for draining, and widens its bed favouring the alluvial deposits and forming aits (islands) (Ostrovul Corbului, Ostrovul Mare, Copanița).

Besides the conditions offered by the environment, the location of Neolithic settlements, were influenced by psychological factors bound to family and community. Depending on the abovementioned conditions, there can be structured the categories of region in which there were identified the settings: in river meadow, but in zones with no floods<sup>15</sup>, on the edges of terraces<sup>16</sup>, on low terraces in the valley of the Danube, on the islands of Danube<sup>17</sup>.

In the North of Oltenia Plain, there is the Getic Plateau<sup>18</sup>, whose southern limit towards the plain is situated through the localities of Drobeta Turnu Severin – Plenița – Radovan – Podari – Balș – Slatina. It is a piedmont unit, formed of sedimentary deposits brought by the mountain rivers, from the basis of the Sub-Carpathians. The altitudes decrease from 600-800 m, at the merge with the Getic sub-Carpathians, to 250-300 m, towards the South. The hills have a prolonged shape, with smooth slopes in South, and, from the petrographic point of view, the gravel is dominant, specific being Pietrișurile de Cândești. Within the plateau, there are individualised several sub-units: Piemontul Motrului, Gruiurile Jiului with a triangular shape and Piemontul Oltețului.

Motru Piedmont is made of a succession of heights that have the aspect of narrow plateaus, suspended as opposite to the wide valleys Jiu, Motru, Coșușa, Hușnița, constituting themselves as depression corridors. Towards south is unfolding Bălăcița Piedmont (the high plain of Bălăcița), lower and flatter relief unit, having the aspect of a wide piedmont plateau that is tilted towards South-East, descending from 280 to 120 m. On the same direction, to the south, the valleys of Argetoaia, Raznic, Urdinița, Pleșoi, Terpezița and Desnățui fragmentizes it in wide inter-rivers<sup>19</sup>.

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<sup>15</sup> Gh. Lazarovici, *Gornea – Preistorie*, Muzeul de Istorie, Caraș-Severin Publishing House, Reșița, 1977; S. A. Luca, *Așezarea aparținând culturii Starcevo-Criș de la Pojejena-Nuceț jud. Caraș-Severin. Campania anului 1986*, in “Banatica”, 13, 1, 1995, pp. 5–22; M. Davidescu, *O așezare de tip Criș la Turnu Severin*, in “Revista Muzeelor”, 6, 1966, p. 547; D. Ciobotaru, *Cronica săpăturilor arheologice din România, campania 2001*, CIMEC, 2002; M. Nica, *O așezare Starcevo-Criș lângă Basarabi*, in “SCIV”, 22, 1971, pp. 5–33.

<sup>16</sup> S. A. Luca, Z. K. Pinter, A. Georgescu, *Repertoriul arheologic al județului Sibiu*, Bibl. Septemcastrensis, 3, Sibiu, Economic Publishing, 2003, p. 320.

<sup>17</sup> E. Comșa, *Données concernant la civilisation Vinča du sud-ouest de la Roumanie*, in “Dacia”, 13, 1969, pp. 11–44.

<sup>18</sup> See: *Piemontul Getic*, Bucharest, 1971; Lucian Badea, Dragoș Bugă (coord.), *Geografia României, IV, Regiunile pericarpătice: Dealurile și Câmpia Banatului și Crișanei, Podișul Mehedinți, Subcarpații, Piemontul Getic, Podișul Moldovei*, Bucharest, Romanian Academy Publishing House, 1992; Vintilă Mihăilescu, *Geografia fizică a României*, Bucharest, Scientific Publishing House, 1969; Idem, *Dealurile și câmpiile României*, Bucharest, Scientific Publishing House, 1966, pp. 161–164.

<sup>19</sup> V. Mihăilescu, *Dealurile și câmpiile României*, Bucharest, Scientific Publishing House, 1972.

In Bățacița Piedmont, there were discovered numerous Neolithic settlements, among which there must be mentioned the one from Sălcuța, Dolj County. The tell-shaped settlement from Sălcuța was fortified with a defence ditch and vallum, on the right side of Desnățui stream<sup>20</sup>. The dwellings were surface oval huts, positioned in a row, close to one another. Later on, there appeared the surface type of dwellings that were usually oval or round, and, seldom, rectangular.

In the area that we study, there have also been discovered other few renowned Sălcuța settlements, at Terpezița, Vărtop, Verbița<sup>21</sup>, situated on high terraces, easily defended due to the presence of abrupt slopes, fortified with ditches. The settlement from Verbicioara<sup>22</sup> had a long ditch, with an almost semi-circular form, similar to that from Sălcuța.

Additionally, there were identified even more sites belonging to Coțofeni culture, among which, in the area of interest, the most well-known are those from Coțofenii din Dos, Plenița, Verbița<sup>23</sup>. At Verbicioara, there was identified a settlement on top of a hill. On its northern side, there is a ditch that separates the settlement from the platform<sup>24</sup>. At Orodel<sup>25</sup>, on the occasion of a surface research, there were discovered settlements from the Bronze Age and the beginning of the Iron Age. In the same area, there was discovered a bronze axe<sup>26</sup>.

Similarly, in this area, in Argetoaia<sup>27</sup> and Salcia<sup>28</sup>, there have been identified settlements dating from the end of the Bronze Age.

<sup>20</sup> D. Berciu, *Arheologia preistorică a Olteniei*, 1939, pp. 49–72, fig. 46–85; Idem, *Contribuții la problemele neoliticului în lumina noilor cercetări*, 1961, pp. 162–359.

<sup>21</sup> C. N. Pătroi, *Catalogul așezărilor și descoperirilor aparținând culturii Sălcuța*, in “Drobeta”, 17, 2007, pp. 17–35.

<sup>22</sup> D. Berciu ș. a., *Șantierul arheologic Verbicioara, Dolj*, in “SCIV”, 1, 1950; Idem, *Șantierul arheologic Verbicioara, Dolj*, in “SCIV”, 2, 1951, p. 229 and next.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 229.

<sup>24</sup> Idem, *Șantierul arheologic Verbicioara, Dolj, Șantierul arheologic Verbicioara, Dolj*, in “SCIV”, 1, 1950, pp. 103–107; Idem, *Die Verbicioara Kultur*, in “Dacia”, 1961, pp. 128, 149, 150, 159, pl. 1/3; G. Crăciunescu, *Cultura Verbicioara în jumătatea vestică a Olteniei*, Craiova, 2004, p. 53.

<sup>25</sup> M. Nica, *Date noi cu privire la geneza și evoluția culturii Verbicioara, Drobeta*, 7, 1996, pp. 19–23, 26; G. Crăciunescu, *L'Âge du Bronze moyen et final*, in *Rumänisch-Jugoslawische Kommission für die Erforschung der Region des Eisernen Tores. Die Kulturen der Bronzezeit in dem Gebiet des Eisernen Tores*, 1998, p. 118, pl. III, IV.

<sup>26</sup> D. Berciu, *Arheologia preistorică a Olteniei*, 1938, p. 288, pl. 174; Idem, *Probleme ridicate de săpăturile arheologice din Oltenia*, in “SCIV”, V, 3–4, 1954, p. 353; Idem, *Câteva probleme ale culturii Verbicioara*, in “SCIV”, 12, 2, 1961, p. 227, 231, 235, 236; Idem, *Die Verbicioara Kultur*, in “Dacia”, 5, 1961, pp. 151–152, 155; S. Morintz, *Contribuții arheologice la istoria tracilor timpurii I*, Bucharest, Romanian Academy Publishing House 1978, p. 61; G. Crăciunescu, *Cultura Verbicioara în jumătatea vestică a Olteniei*, Craiova, 2004, p. 42.

<sup>27</sup> S. Morintz, *op. cit.*, p. 65; M. Nica, *Noi date cu privire la cronologia și periodizarea grupului cultural Gârla Mare pe baza descoperirilor din așezarea de la Ghidici, punctul “Balta Țarova”*, in *Relations Thracico-Illyro-Helléniques. Actes du XIV e Symposium National de Thracologie*, Bucharest, 1994, p. 188; F. Ridiche, *Noi date privind cunoașterea culturii Verbicioara I*, in “Oltenia. Studii și Comunicări”, XII, 2000, p. 41; G. Crăciunescu, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

<sup>28</sup> M. Nica, *Date noi cu privire la geneza și evoluția culturii Verbicioara, Drobeta*, 7, 1996, pp. 28–29; G. Crăciunescu, *L'Âge du Bronze moyen et final*, in *Rumänisch-Jugoslawische Kommission*

The main valleys that pass through the Getic Piedmont represent, as they do in the sub-Carpathian area, varied aspects. Jiu and Olt Valleys have the shape of the depressions prolonged with 4-5 levels of terraces and wide meadows; others, such as Motru's, Gilort's, Amaradia's, Olteț's valleys have the aspect of corridors, delimited by less evolved mountain sides that offer proper conditions for the dwelling.

In such an area from the meadow of Olt river, there were discovered tell-shaped Neolithic settlements, such is that from Drăgănești<sup>29</sup>, where there have been identified dwellings, tools and stone and silex weapons, along with ceramics.

At the confluence of Palilula stream with Jiu river, in the village of Palilula<sup>30</sup>, Bucovăț commune, on a surface of approximately 100x50 m, on a high terrace, there were found traces of dwelling that belong to the late period of the Bronze Age.

Between the valleys of Motru and Gilort, there is identified the area called Gruirile Jiului, which is displayed as prolonged hills. Between Gilort and Jiu, on West, and Olt on East, there is Piemontul Oltețului, crossed by parallel summits, spread on tens of kilometres, such is Dealul Muierii, which ranges from under the mountain to far away into the plain.

In the Getic Platform, the disposal and the great thickness of the layers from the inferior Pleistocene that have a high permeability, allow the slow draining of the underground waters in the direction North-South and their placing at a depth of over 20 m in the inter-fluvial spaces. The valleys of the main rivers, Motru, Tismana, Jiu, Gilort, Olteț and Olt, with considerable alluvial deposits, offer the possibility for the accumulation of small altitude phreatic waters<sup>31</sup>. In this area, the springs appear in the boundary area with the plain, in the areal Turnu Severin – Vânju Mare, Corlățel on Drincea, Radovan on Desnățui, Podari on Jiu, Slatina on Olt.

The hilly area that stretches from the abrupt side of the Carpathians to the south plain represents, from the geological point of view, the Getic Depression. Immediately below the mountain, there are alternatively unfolded depressions and hills that constitute the sub-Carpathians (the Getic sub-Carpathian area) and, furthermore, in the south part of this area, the proper piedmont zone. The main feature of the sub-Carpathian area is the alternation of depressions and hills from North to South, parallel to the edge of the mountain. The sub-Carpathian depressions form a corridor between Mehedinți Plateau, the Southern Carpathians and the first range of sub-Carpathians hills from south. This includes the depressions of Pades, Tismana, Runcu, Bumbesti-Jiu, Novaci, Baia de Fier.

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*für die Erforschung der Region des Eisernen Tores. Die Kulturen der Bronzezeit in dem Gebiet des Eisernen Tores*, 1998, p. 118, pl. IV; F. Ridiche, *Noi date privind cunoașterea culturii Verbicioara II*, In "Oltenia. Studii și Comunicări", XIII, 2001, p. 45.

<sup>29</sup> M. Nica, T. Zorzoliu, M. Schuster, *Cercetări arheologice în tellul gumelnițean-sălcuțean de la Drăgănești Olt*, in "Cercetări arheologice în aria nord-tracă", 1995, pp. 10–19.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>31</sup> *Piemontul Getic*, Bucharest, Romanian Academy Publishing House, 1971, p. 37.

Generally, in the basin formed by the sub-Carpathian depressions, the altitudes range between 200–270 m, and in the small basins, to 290–350 m. The North-Eastern corner, between Sușița and Jiu, represents an exception, the feature of depression being less noticeable, due to the great thickness of the piedmont cover, where the altitudes pass over 450 m. The internal sub-Carpathian hills (Rasovei, Dealul Târgului, Bălăneștilor, Ciocadiei etc.) have altitudes between 300 and 400 m, with a high degree of fragmentation.

Where the growth of animals (horned cattle) is possible, the Neolithic settings are also situated. The existence of raw materials, as the clay and the salt, represents the main source of existence of the Neolithic settlements. The height of territorial surface is a condition of Neolithic locations necessary to supervise the surroundings in case of danger.

Along the area where Mehedinți Plateau and Getic Piedmont meet, there can be noticed numerous valleys, on the east being unfolded the real sub-Carpathian depression, that from Târgu Jiu, flattened not due to the erosion, but mostly to the recent accumulation of alluvial deposits. The depressions, either if they are placed in the corridor beneath the mountain or appear as local widening, scattered between the hills, define genetically the geographical particularities of the sub-Carpathian zone, constituting, in the same time, proper areas for the installing of the human settlements. In South, at the limitation with Getic Plateau, there are the external sub-Carpathians hills (Dealul Bran, Dealul Bârzei), with altitudes of approximately 300 m.

In the centre and in the North of Oltenia, unlike the South of Oltenia, where the progressive adopting of the grooved ceramics illustrates the process of a local organic evolution, the end of the Bronze Age is represented by the Verbicioara IV–V type discoveries, according to the classification made by D. Berciu or of Govora Type, according to B. Hänsel, phenomenon that, after the considering of its content that is exclusively ceramic, leaves the impression of a discontinuity in the cultural aspect.

In these areas, those of the piedmont hills and of the sub-Carpathian one, we can remark that the Verbicioara type ceramics, in its classical form – the phases I–III – was weaker represented (especially in the sub-Carpathian area). In this last region, after a period marked by the frequent presence of the Coțofeni and Glina type pottery, there appears a quite long interval of time when the Verbicioara type ceramics is present only sporadically. At some point appears the pottery called initially “the late Verbicioara” (or the phases IV–V of the Verbicioara culture).

The area of the discoveries attributed to this late phase includes, unlike the first three phases of the Verbicioara culture, the entire Oltenia and it is characterized through an expanded variety of motifs. It can be also remarked the apparition and the spreading of the solar motifs<sup>32</sup>.

The Getic sub-Carpathians in the Oltenia area are divided in two well-defined sectors: Gorj sub-Carpathian hills, which are characterized by the alternation of the

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<sup>32</sup> S. Morintz, *op. cit.*, p. 61.



sub-Carpathian and the intra-hilly depressions with even alluvial shales, and the sub-Carpathian hills of Vâlcea, that appear much more fragmented, being visible a reduction of the depression area between them<sup>33</sup>.

In Oltenia, we can distinguish, in the Late Bronze two cultural aspects (areas): one in the center and especially in the north of this territory, in the hilly sub-Carpathian region, characterized by discoveries belonging particularly to the group with Govora type ceramics (Late Verbicioara) and other along the Danube and Câmpia Olteniei, where the grooved ceramics, appears starting with the last phase of the Gârla Mare culture and becomes more frequent in what is called the Bistreț-Ișalnița group.

In the hilly, sub-Carpathian region of Oltenia, there are presently known two necropolis areas: one from Vâlcea-Argeș area, characterised by tumular necropolis from Ferigile, and another from Târgu Jiu depression, represented by the tumular necropolis from Telești-Drăgoești. In both groups the exclusive rite is the cremation.

Near Râmnicu Vâlcea, in Râureni, on the tall bank of the river Olt were dug, by Emil Moscalu, two necropolises, one of urn cremation attributed to the Early Hallstatt and another, tumular, that belongs to the Ferigile group from the Late Hallstatt<sup>34</sup>.

The necropolis from Ferigile, commune Costești (Vâlcea), that contains 150 tumuli, explored almost entirely, offered us a very rich pottery and metallic material<sup>35</sup>. This favourable situation allowed the establishment of a chronological scheme clearly enough defined and which is the reference point for the late Hallstatt chronology in the Carpathian and Danube space in general<sup>36</sup>. The evolution and the dating for the end of this group of necropolises have been mostly completed with the researches made along Valea Topologului (Tigveni, Cepar, Șuici)<sup>37</sup> so we can certainly say that the entire group evolved between the seventh and the fifth century B.C., consequently, three main stages could be relatively well defined and characterised chronologically and culturally.

Similarly, in the sub-Carpathian area of Oltenia, in the North-West of it, on Bistrița terrace, from the villages Drăgoești and Telești, there was discovered another incineration necropolis, dating back to about the same period.

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<sup>33</sup> *Piemontul Getic*, ... p. 29.

<sup>34</sup> E. Moscalu, *Probleme ale culturii traco-geto-dacice din Oltenia*, in "Oltenia Studii și Comunicări", Craiova, 3, 1981, p. 17; Idem, *Problèmes concernant la culture thraco-gète d'Oltenie*, in "Dacia", NS, 25, 1981, p. 343; Idem, *Ceramica traco-getică*, Muzeul National de Istorie Publishing House, Bucharest, 1983, p. 246; S. Purice, M. Iosifaru, *Probleme ale Hallstattului în nordul Olteniei*, in Symp. Thrac., 6, 1980, pp. 56–57.

<sup>35</sup> A. Vulpe, *Necropola hallstattiană de la Ferigile*, Bucharest, Romanian Academy Publishing House, 1967.

<sup>36</sup> Idem, *Zur Chronologie der Ferigile-Gruppe*, in "Dacia", NS, 21, 1977, pp. 81–112.

<sup>37</sup> A. Vulpe, E. Popescu, *Contribution à la connaissance des debuts de la culture geto-dacique dans la zone subcarpatique Vâlcea-Argeș (La necropole tumulaire de Tigveni)*, in "Dacia", NS, 16, 1972, p. 75; E. Popescu, A. Vulpe, *Nouvelles découvertes du type Ferigile*, in "Dacia", NS., 26, 1982, p. 77.

Oltenia territory can be compared to an amphitheatre that descends in steps from North to South. The highest step, bending on the North-Western and Northern side, is represented by the massifs Vâlcan, Godeanu, Mehedinți, Parâng and Căpățâni mountains.

The mountains Vâlcan, Godeanu, Mehedinți and Mehedinți Plateau are made especially from epimetamorphic crystalline schists, pierced by many granite pieces in the Vâlcan and Mehedinți Mountains and crystalline schists in the Godeanu Mountains and the Mehedinți Plateau. Vâlcan Mountains, between Jiu and Cerna, with a relief of gentle regions, have altitudes of almost 2.000 m (peak Oslea, 1.946 m). The karst forms of relief, represented by many gorges (The Gorges of Runcu, Sohodol, Motru) and caves (Cioaca cu Brebenei, Cloșani, Isvarna) are the dominant image for the southern and South-Western side of the mountain. Towards West, there are the Mountains Godeanu that have the highest altitudes (peak Godeanu 2.229 m), from the entire region.

On the western side, on the left side of Cerna, Mehedinți Mountains range, made mostly of calcareous rocks, having lower altitudes (Vârful lui Stan 1.466 m). The karst forms of relief are represented by gorge valleys (The Gorge of Cerna), calcareous abrupt parts, dolines that have high altitudes. A karst relief there is also in Mehedinți Plateau: the gorge of Topolnița and Coșușta, the caves of Topolnița (11 km in length, the second from the country), Bulba, Lazului, karst depression (Isverna, Nadonova, Cireșu, Balta), the natural bridge from Ponoare, precipices and dolines<sup>38</sup>.

Prehistoric human settlements were identified in caves at Dubova – the Cave of Climente, Veterani cave<sup>39</sup>, Valea Carașului, or in shelters below rock<sup>40</sup>.

Parâng Mountains are situated between Jiu and Olteț, having the orientation of the peaks from East to West, and the maximum altitude in the Peak Parângu Mare (2.527 m). The heights of over 2.000 m still present traces of glaciers: valleys, moraines. The glacial relief from the Parâng Mountains is well preserved on the northern sides and in the superior basin of the Lotru Valley. In North-Eastern part of Oltenia, there are Căpățâni Mountains, with the maximum altitude in the Peak Balota, 2.131 m.

The appearance of the settlements and necropolises in the Late Hallstatt in the sub-Carpathian area of Oltenia (the group of Ferigile and, then, later, the group Telești) is a phenomenon which takes place starting with the end of the necropolises from Danube (6th century BC). This might reflect the moving of flocks from the Danube area to the Carpathians, associated with relatively stable dwelling in the sub-Carpathian zone. It might be the most plausible picture of the way of life during this troubling period discussed in this study. We find ourselves in a moment in which

<sup>38</sup> Al. Roșu, *Subcarpații Olteniei dintre Motru și Gilort. Studiu geomorfologic*, București, 1967.

<sup>39</sup> V. Boroneanț, *Neoliticul timpuriu în zona Porților de Fier*, in "Comunicări", VII, 1968; Gh. Lazarovici, *Neoliticul timpuriu în clisura Dunării*, in "StCom", Caransebeș, 1979, pp. 27–31.

<sup>40</sup> Gh. Lazarovici, *op. cit.*, pp. 27–31.

the pastoral economy seemed to have a preponderant role, and the more intense presence in the sub-Carpathian area of the dwelling evidences and, along with this, the rarefaction or the absence of them in certain field areas, might have been the result of the changing in the economic structure of the communities.

The length of time a settlement has been inhabited is difficult to estimate, especially in prehistoric period. Unlike the dwellings made of unburnt brick from the Neolithic tell-shaped settlements, which were many times built during the existence of a generation, the houses with walls made of oak beams could last for many generations. The thick beams made from oak or beech tree, well preserved, were frequently used as building material for the new houses, a fact proven, from the ethnographic point of view, in the areas in which, until recently, the wood has represented the only or the main construction material.

It is highly probable that this circumstance to occur in case of the dwellings from the hilly and mountain areas, where such types of houses, made of wood, are difficult to be identified, archaeologically. Thus, in this manner, there can be explained why in the present stage of the information, the discovery of specific dwellings is made especially after the digging of the buried foundation (the case of the huts), or the precincts and the cremated deposits.

The archaeological documentation allows us to observe In the Bronze Age and the Iron Age that in parallel with the existence of a "scattered" habitat, similar to the communities that used the grazing for earning their living, there appeared some fortresses that, along with the proliferation of some pompous customs, were showing the presence of leaders in some communities, that were interested in the affirmation and the maintaining of the social prestige.

The change in the economic structure of the communities, we suppose had direct implications in the type of habitat. This might be explained also through the climacteric transformations on the level of the entire continent.

Among the important factors, which favoured the populating of the studied territory, there was the clime. Regarding the climate of the prehistoric period, which had an important influence on the natural environment and the way of life, we must specify that it corresponds to the Holocene<sup>41</sup> and experienced sequences with distinct features<sup>42</sup>. A first interval was characterized by dry, hot and long summers, while the second interval was dominated by short, cold and rainy summers<sup>43</sup>. Thus, after the "climatic optimum" characterized by a temperate climate, between 7 000–5 000 BC, there followed a period between 5 000 and 3 000/2 800 BC, in which the climate was

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<sup>41</sup> M. Tomescu, *Holocenul – date cronologice și climatice*, in "Cercetări Arheologice", VI, (1998–2000), 2000, pp. 235–270; T. Daróczy, *Environmental Changes in the Upper and Middle Tisza/Tisa Lowland during the Holocene*, in "Ziridava", 26/1, 2012, pp. 35–60.

<sup>42</sup> G. Gyulay, *Environment and Agriculture in Bronze Age Hungary*, in "Arheolingua", 4, 1993, pp. 7–47.

<sup>43</sup> M. Cârciumar, *Paleoetnobotanica. Studii în preistoria și protoistoria României*, Iași, Glasul Bucovinei-Helios Publishing, 1996; M. Tomescu, *op. cit.*, pp. 235–270.

warm and humid, to then become arid<sup>44</sup>. The arrangement of the two units, hilly and mountainous, plays an important role in the climatic manifestations. Thus, the average annual temperature registers a decrease from South to North, and the amount of precipitation increases in the same direction.

Therefore, the relief, through its morphological characteristics, in relation to other elements of the geographical environment (especially climate and hydrography), were and continue to be determining factors in establishing habitat types, in facilitating relationships between human groups, even in the development social and economic of society. Most of the human settlements are concentrated at low altitudes, below 300 m, on the river courses, especially on the lower or middle terraces, where there were fertile lands for growing cereals, water resources, food and favorable communication conditions.

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<sup>44</sup> *Istoria Românilor*, vol I, Bucharest, Enciclopedic Publishing House, 2010, p. 108.

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