

## Chronological problems in the continuity of Iron Age cultural groups in Northeastern Serbia

*Aleksandar Kapuran*<sup>1</sup>  
Belgrade

*Abstract:* During the last three decades, only four Late Bronze and Iron Age necropolises have been discovered on the territory of Northeastern Serbia. As a result of increased knowledge, there is a certain divergence from the established chronologies. Based on the new findings, this paper aims to point out the existing problems related to the changes in the chronological framework of activities of specific cultural groups.

*Key words:* Late Bronze Age, Early and Late Iron Age, necropolis, burial rites

### Introduction

Changes to chronological classifications are inevitable and reflect the development of archaeology as a science, on the one hand, and the number of new archaeological discoveries, on the other hand. Representative of such chronological adjustments is the situation in the Northeastern Serbia (Map 1). Although ancient historiographers provide direct and indirect testimonies for the end of the Early and the entire Late Iron Ages, in certain cases such accounts create many problems in interpreting the archaeological evidence.<sup>2</sup> This issue is further amplified by geography, specifically the link between Eastern Serbia and the Danube River valley, which was for millennia in the midst of numerous movements of prehistoric communities between Central to Southeastern Europe.

Every archaeologist studying the Early Iron Age in the territory of the Central Balkans (Serbia, Kosovo and Macedonia) at some point inevitably

faces the problem of differences between the established chronologies and the actual situation on the ground. This problem particularly surfaces when a new necropolis or settlement from the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BC is discovered. In Serbian archaeology, several chronological systems of the Iron Age are currently in use. Rastko Vasić is deemed among the foremost experts for the study of this period. He divided the Iron Age in Serbia into following stages:<sup>3</sup>

- Early Iron Age (Ha B3 – Ha C1: 950/900–800/750 BC)
- Older Iron Age (Phases I – to IV: 800/750–300 BC)
- Younger Iron Age (La Tène: 300 – until the beginning of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD).

However, a different division of the Iron Age chronology is used for the purposes of this paper, which deals with the territory of Northeastern Serbia. This chronology is based primarily on M. Garašanin's sequence, as described in his *Prehistory on the territory of Serbia*:<sup>4</sup>

- Iron Age I (Belegiš II – Gava and horizon of hoards: 1200–1000 BC)
- Iron Age II (Insula Banului – Kalakača and Basarabi: 1000–600 BC)

<sup>1</sup>Institute of Archaeology, Belgrade

<sup>2</sup>This is especially related to the testimonies of Herodotus and Thucydides and their use of geographic terms in the territory inhabited by the Triballi, which can be related to various regions in the Central Balkans. Similar can be said for the theories about the origin of Dardanians (see Papazoglu 2004, 47–48; Лазич 2008, 55–56).

<sup>3</sup>Vasić 1997, 343; Капуран et al. 2014, 74.

<sup>4</sup>Гарашанин 1973, 408; Капуран et al. 2014, 74.

- Iron Age III (Zlot and Ferigile groups: 600–350 BC)
- Iron Age IV (La Tène Culture: 350 BC – 100 AD).

## Late Bronze Age / Early Iron Age

Differences in the chronological systems used in classifying prehistoric cultures in Northeastern Serbia emerged in the investigation of necropolises dated to the end of the Late Bronze Age in the territory covering the confluence of the Mlava and Tumanska Rivers with the Danube, the entrance into the hinterland around the Iron Gates, and area of Ključ, located downstream from the Iron Gates before the Wallachian plain. As the number of systematic and rescue excavations increased, it became clear that graves and finds from the Žuto Brdo – Girla Mare and Gava cultures appeared side by side also in the sites the right bank of the Danube River.

Moreover, it has been assumed that the Žuto Brdo – Girla Mare culture emerged on the territory of Serbia during the later phases of the Middle Bronze Age, influenced by Transdanubian incrustrated pottery.<sup>5</sup> It is interesting that the sites of the Žuto Brdo – Girla Mare culture in Serbia are identified only in Southern Banat, exclusively on the banks of the Danube, while no settlements or burial places have been found in the river's hinterland. According to the current chronologies, the Žuto Brdo – Girla Mare culture lasted until the beginning Late Bronze Age (14/13<sup>th</sup> century BC) although there are some isolated arguments in favour of its end in the late 12<sup>th</sup> century BC.<sup>6</sup> Contrary to the situation with the Žuto Brdo – Girla Mare culture, the Gava culture complex, identified through the presence of the channelled and burnished pottery, is in the Serbian archaeology considered as the trigger of the transition from the Late Bronze to the Early Iron Age. It is, however, important to underline that in several rescue excavations of cremation necropolises discovered in the Serbian part of the Danube River valley and around the Iron Gates the stratigraphic division the two cultures has not been obvious.<sup>7</sup> In addition to the completely different

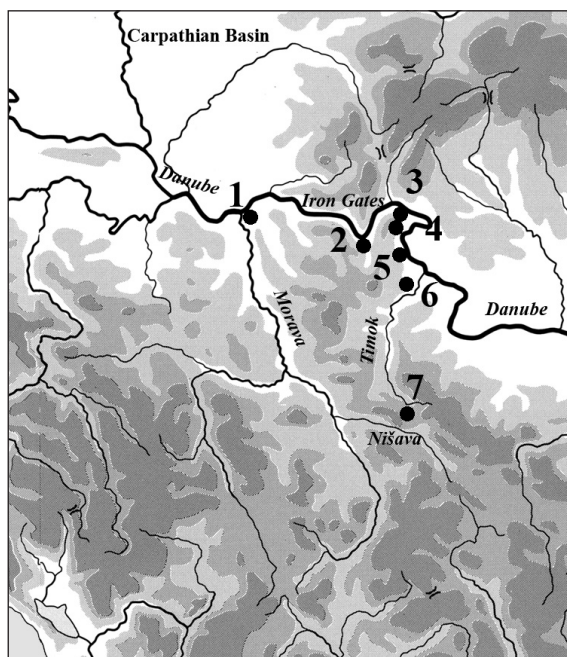


Figure 1: Map of sites mentioned in text. 1. Pećine, 2. Veliki Gradac, 3. Konopište, 4. Vajuga, 5. Ljubičevac, 6. Mokranjske Stene, 7. Signal

manner of pottery, the burials of the Gava culture contained a greater number of bronze objects. The relevant sites with finds of both Žuto Brdo – Girla Mare and Gava cultures discussed in this paper are Veliki Gradac, Konopište, Vajuga – Pesak, and Ljubičevac – Selo (Figure 1).

During the rescue excavations connected to the building of Đerdap I power station in the Roman castrum at Veliki Gradac, located in the area where the Paprenica Brook flows into the Danube (around 2 km downstream from Milanovac), three prehistoric graves were discovered (Figure 2). The finds from these graves were documented by a pure chance, during the review of the prehistoric collections in the depot of the Museum of Krajina in Negotin.<sup>8</sup> Detailed information about the state of these graves could not be obtained from the existing archaeological documentation. However, it could be determined that the finds from Graves 2 (Figure 2, 3–4) and 3 (Figure 2, 5–8) are diagnostic, especially those in Grave 3, in which ceramics typical for the Gava complex and Žuto Brdo – Girla Mare culture appear in the same context. Grave 2 included two finds, both representing characteristic finds of the Gava culture, a miniature biconical vessel decorated with

<sup>5</sup> Гарашанин 1973, 338; Тасић 1983, 84–85.

<sup>6</sup> Jevtić / Vukomanović 1996, 287.

<sup>7</sup> Тасић 1983, 104.

<sup>8</sup> Булатовић et al. 2013, 82.



Figure 2: Necropolis at Veliki Gradac. 1–2. Grave 1, 3–4. Grave 2, 5–8 Grave 3 (after Bulatović et al. 2013)

horizontal flute on the upper body (Figure 2, 4) and a cup with a highly protruding handle (Figure 2, 3). Grave 3 contained a vessel on a foot decorated with characteristic Žuto Brdo – Grla Mare ornaments (Figure 2, 6), two bowls with inverted rim (Figure 2, 7–8) and a cup with a highly protruding handle (Figure 2, 5). The finds of pottery of different origins and production techniques in a burial point to exchange of objects and techniques between the two groups, which is not an isolated case in the Iron Gates region.

The co-occurrence of the ceramic finds from these two cultures was also noticed in the stratigraphy of the Livade – Mala Vrbica site as well as the necropolis in Konopište (located 9 km east of Kladovo) (Figure 1, 3). During the first phase of archaeological investigations at the prehistoric settlement of Livade in 1980, it was impossible to separate stratigraphically the finds of Žuto Brdo – Grla Mare and Gava cultures in the cultural layers (Figure 3).<sup>9</sup> During the excavations, however, archaeologists managed to single out finds belonging to the Gava complex inside pit features, most probably belonging to mud huts.<sup>10</sup> In the necropolis located at Konopište, some 200 m southeast of the Livade site, it was also not possible to separate the graves by the means of stratigraphy. It is nonetheless obvious that thirteen graves belonged to the Žuto Brdo – Grla Mare culture while seventeen graves had finds

typical of the Gava complex.<sup>11</sup> As the burial pits had originally been cut into a sand terrace and the upper layers of the site were levelled by construction in course of the Roman dominion, it is not possible to detect differences between the levels from which the burials were dug into the substrate. According to the information from the last excavations at the necropolis of Konopište during 2015, it is only clear that graves of Gava culture were dug somewhat deeper than the burials assigned to Žuto Brdo – Grla Mare culture.<sup>12</sup> As the later burials did not disturb the earlier ones, there are only two possibilities: either the supposedly older Žuto Brdo – Grla Mare graves were marked on the surface, or people from both groups were buried simultaneously at the same place.

A similar pattern demonstrating the coexistence of the Žuto Brdo – Grla Mare and Gava elements at the same site are documented at Vajuga – Pesak necropolis, located on the right bank of the Danube downstream from the Iron Gates (Figure 1, 4). This site is important because of its burial continuity, which extends from Bronze Age to the Late Iron Age and Medieval period. The horizon with the Late Bronze and Early Iron Age cremation burials represents the earlier

<sup>11</sup> Popović et al. 1988, 82–83.

<sup>12</sup> The information was provided by the custodian Aca Đorđević, the director of research at the site of Konopište, excavated by the National Museum in Belgrade. The report from these excavations is in press.

<sup>9</sup> Вукмановић / Поповић 1984, 86–87.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. 12, Fig. 11.

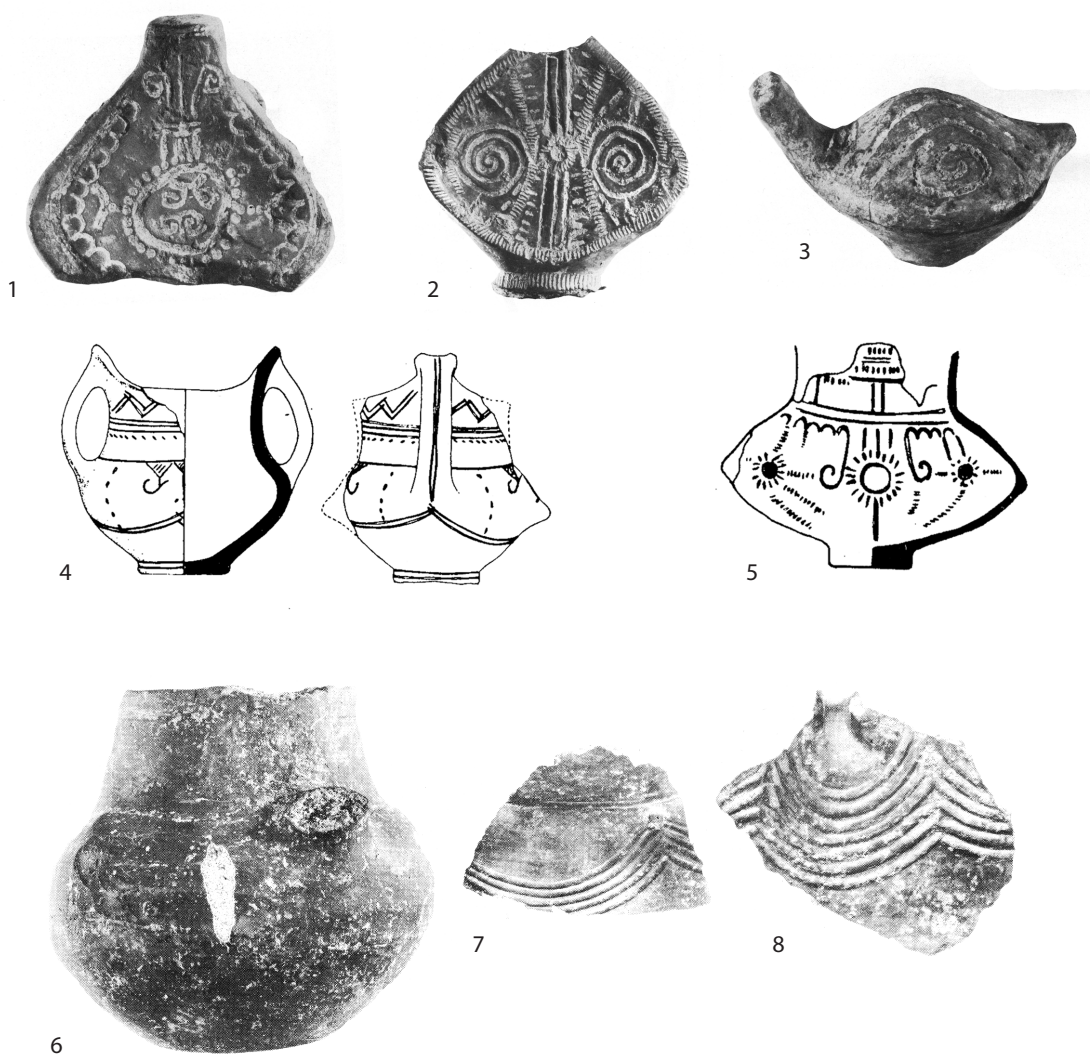


Figure 3: Finds from Livade. 1-5. Žuto Brdo – Grla Mare group, 6-8. Gava style pottery (after Vukmanović / Popović 1986)

phase of the necropolis. The chronological division is based not on the stratigraphy but rather on the stylistic and typological characteristics of grave finds.<sup>13</sup> According to the excavators of the Vajuga – Pesak necropolis, two burials date to the period of Late Bronze Age or Br D (Žuto Brdo – Grla Mare culture ) (Figure 5, 5-10. 11-16), while three remaining graves belong to the Gava culture complex or Ha A period (Figure 5, 1-4. 17-21). In terms of decorative technique of pottery, the typical Žuto Brdo – Grla Mare style (Figure 5, 5-7) started to change from the intensive application of white incrustation to

a polished surface without incrustation (Figure 5, 8-10).<sup>14</sup> Chronologically most important finds are a bronze fibula with a violin bow and burnished pottery, typical for the Gava culture complex (Figure 5, 21).<sup>15</sup>

Relatively small-scale excavations near the Ljubičevac village, toward the Selo settlement (2 km downstream from Ljubičevac), were carried out in 1970 by Z. Žeravica, who was the curator of the Museum of Krajina in Negotin at the time (Figure 1, 5).<sup>16</sup> The stratigraphy at the Selo site corresponded mostly to the stratigraphy at the

<sup>13</sup> Премк et al. 1984, 112-113.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. 112-113; Jevtić / Vukmanović 1996, 287.

<sup>15</sup> Премк et al. 1984, Fig. 98-100.

<sup>16</sup> Žeravica 1970, 30-31.

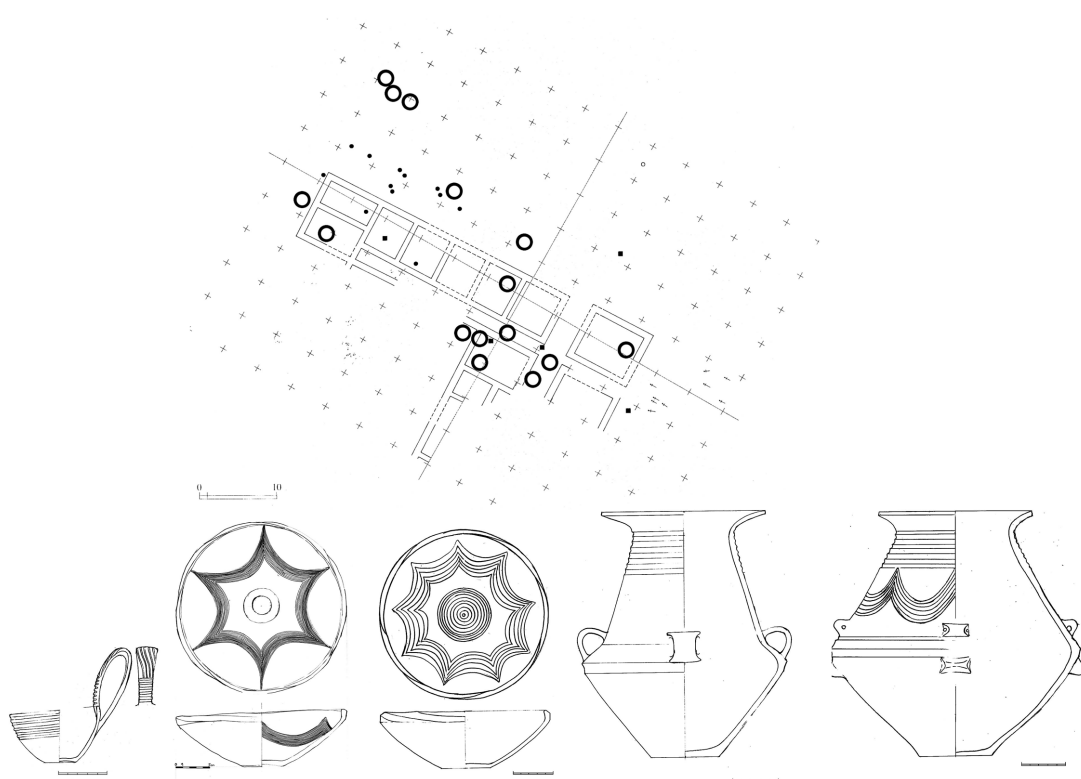


Figure 4: Necropolis Konopište – Livade. Gava pottery finds (after Popović 1998)Popović 1986)

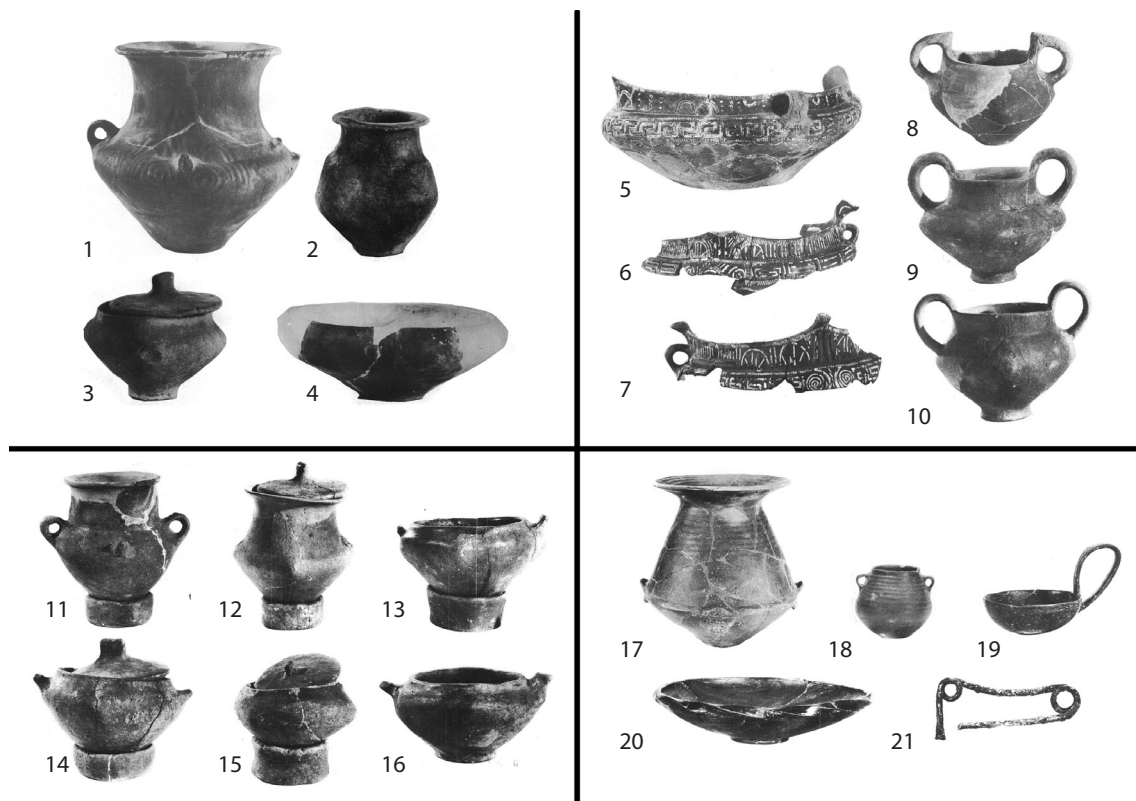


Figure 5: Finds from Vajuga – Pesak necropolis. 1–4. Grave 2, 5–10. Grave 3 and 4, 11–16. Grave 5, 17–21. Grave 1 (after Premk et al. 1984)

a

b

c

Figure 6: *Vajuga – Pesak necropolis. a) Distribution of the finds, b) Kalakača finds, c) Basarabi finds (after Popović / Vukmanović 1998)*



a



b

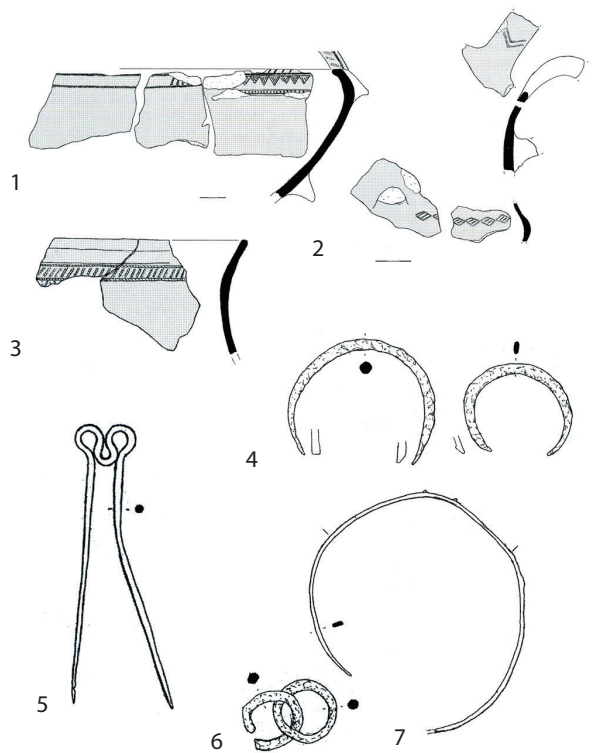


Figure 7: *Signal necropolis. a) Distribution of burials, b) skeletal remains, 1–3. Kalakača pottery, 4–7. bronze finds*

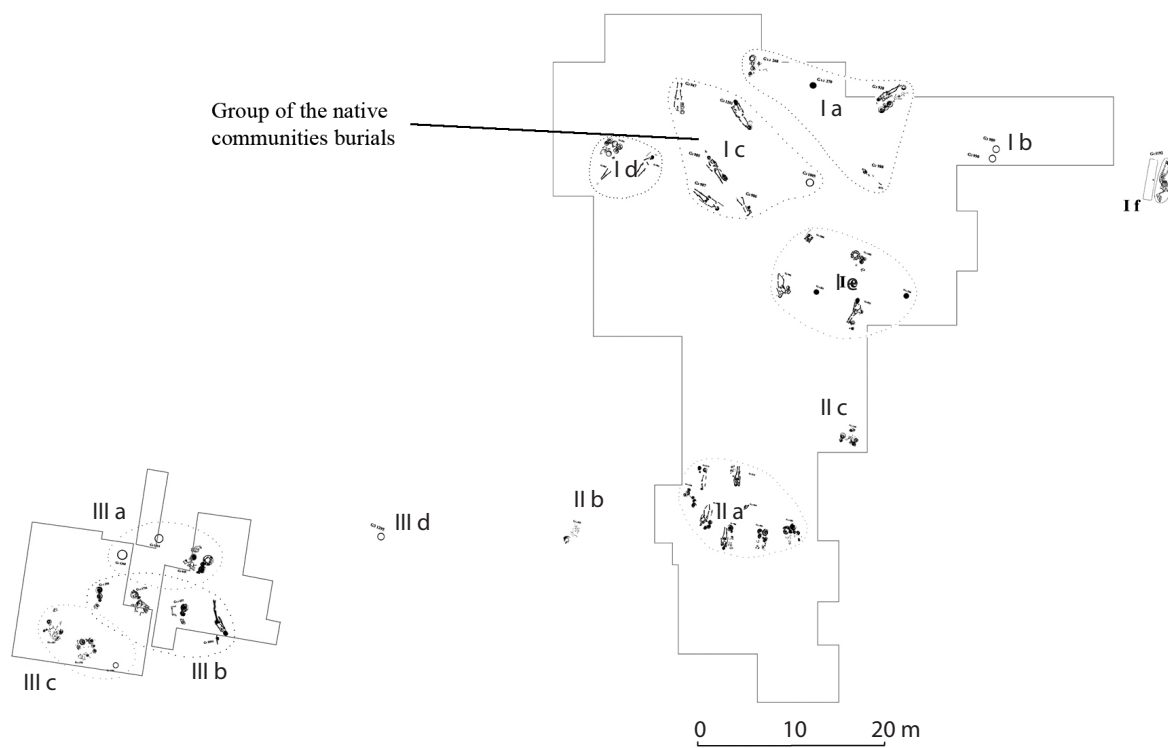


Figure 8: Necropolis Pećine (after Jovanović 1992)

site of Livade.<sup>17</sup> Although the author of the study suggested that the cultural layer was homogeneous and exclusively associated with the Žuto Brdo – Gira Mare culture, after a recent review of the finds in the Museum of Krajina, we discovered that some ceramic vessels from this site are also typical of the Gava culture, spanning the initial phase of the Early Iron Age. Downstream from Ljubičevac, the site of Ušće Slatinske Reke was also excavated. M. Jevtić and M. Vukmanović reported that one pit yielded an unornamented anthropomorphic figurine of Žuto Brdo – Gira Mare type and a lot of incusted pottery was found together with a larger amount of

channelled and burnished ceramics of the Gava culture.<sup>18</sup>

The last example of a close relationship between the Žuto Brdo – Gira Mare and Gava finds is demonstrated in the necropolis of Pećine in the vicinity of Kostolac (Figure 1, 1).<sup>19</sup> The excavator D. Jacanović observed that in all undisturbed contexts (or stratigraphic units) the Žuto Brdo – Gira Mare, Hügelgräber and Gava typical ceramic forms were found together.<sup>20</sup> This particularly applies to the four cremated burials with incusted and burnished pottery found together in same context. A similar mix was documented in 13 pits, most probably dedicated to ritual at this site. These instances caused some archaeologists to classify the last phase of the Žuto Brdo – Gira Mare culture in the territory of the Iron Gates as belonging to the period of Ha A1, which according to chronology of M. Garašanin covers

<sup>17</sup> According to a report from 1970, this site yielded remains of Žuto Brdo – Gira Mare settlement, with remains of burnt houses and with objects still in situ. A later analysis of the archaeological data was done in 2013 by the Museum of Krajina in Negotin by A. Kapuran and A. Bulatović. A considerable amount of finds from the older levels of the Iron Age was found in addition to the finds Žuto Brdo – Gira Mare culture. This pottery was most probably omitted from analysis by the author of excavations (Bulatović et al. 2013, 137–139).

<sup>18</sup> The authors informed me that this material is still unpublished (but see Jevtić / Vukmanović 1996, 286).

<sup>19</sup> Pećine Necropolis consists of burials belonging to the Late Bronze Age, Early La Tène, and Late Antiquity.

<sup>20</sup> Јаџановић 1991; 1997, 249–250, Pl. I.

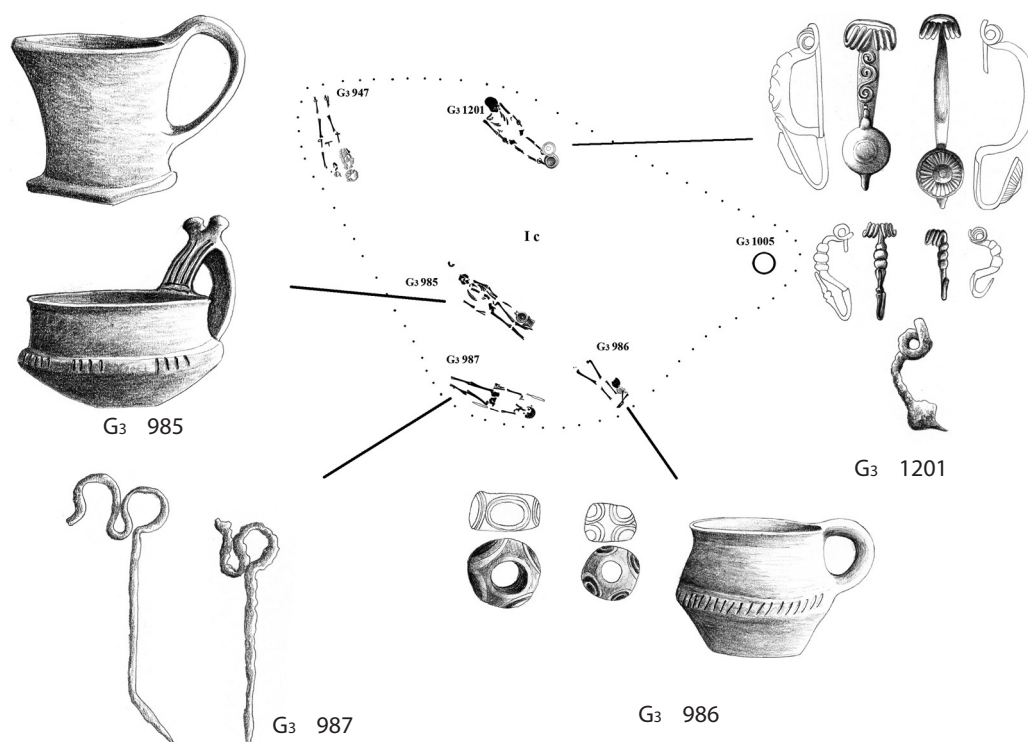


Figure 9: *Necropolis Pećine. G 985–987 Burials of domestic communities, G 1201 Celtic Burila* (after Jovanović 1992)

the transitional period between Late Bronze and Early Iron Ages.<sup>21</sup>

## Early Iron Age II

In this paper, the Vajuga – Pesak necropolis on the bank of Danube in the Ključ region, located downstream of the Iron Gates (Figure 1, 4),<sup>22</sup> is not considered as a case that requires a revision of its Early Iron Age chronology. It is, however, noted here as a specific example of cultural overlapping, which will be demonstrated by the specific case of the Signal necropolis.

The excavators dated the Vajuga – Pesak necropolis between Ha B3 stage, the very end of the Kalakača phase, and the beginning of the Basarabi phase.<sup>23</sup> In this necropolis, the deceases were buried on platforms made of river pebbles. The eastern part contained the oldest burial of the

necropolis (No 17). In its surroundings, several groups of pottery characteristic of the Kalakača phase (Figure 6, b) were discovered, while the rest of the pottery in and around the graves exclusively belonged to the Basarabi complex (Figure 6, c).<sup>24</sup> It should be stressed that the all metal finds from these graves have been dated to the Basarabi phase.<sup>25</sup> This closely related co-occurrence of two culturally and chronologically different pottery styles correlates with the change in burial rites as there is a shift from flexed inhumation, which prevailed during the Kalakača phase, to inhumation in extended position, characteristic of the Basarabi culture.

Another example of the complex chronological and cultural relations is to observe in the Signal necropolis near Svrlijig in Eastern Serbia (Figure 1, 7).<sup>26</sup> The site is situated near the village of Palilula, on a natural terrace by the right bank of the Trstenica River. The necropolis most

<sup>21</sup> Стојић / Јацановић 2008, 55. 64.

<sup>22</sup> Поповић / Вукмановић 1998.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid. 103.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. 81. 104.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid. 105.

<sup>26</sup> Filipović / Bulatović 2010.



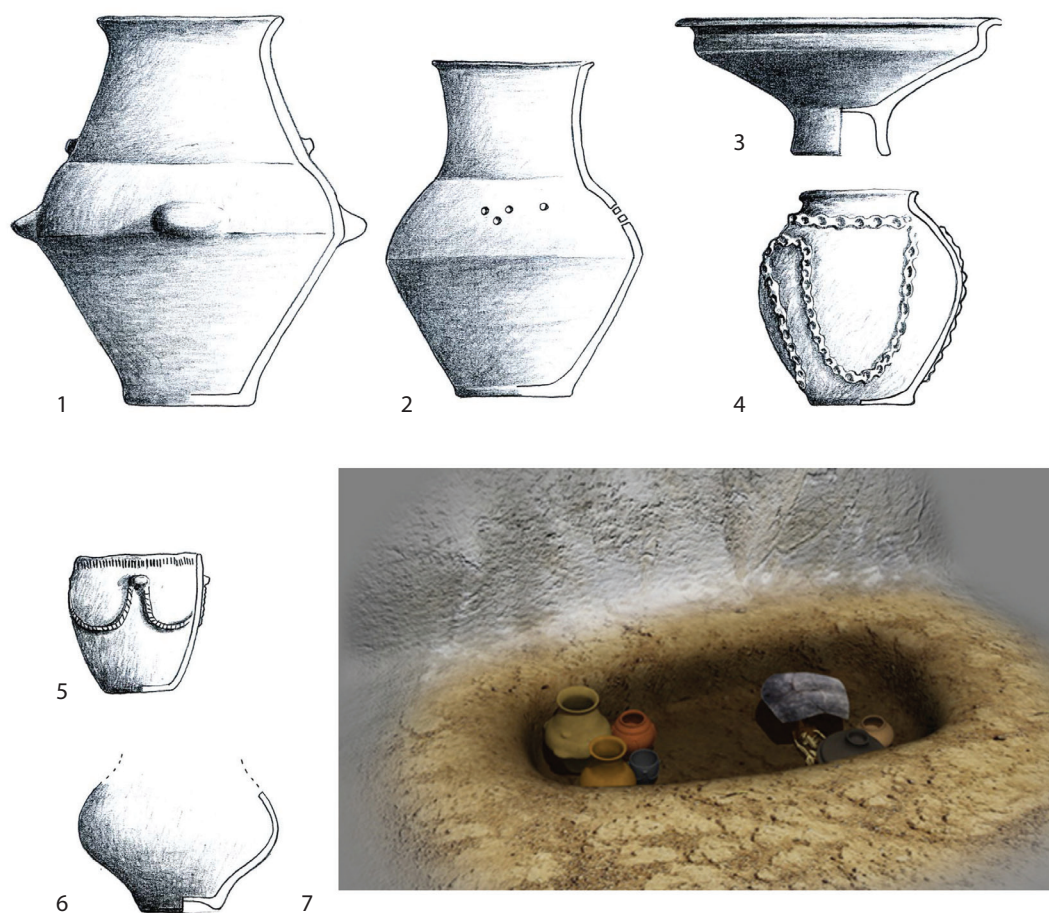


Figure 10: Mokranjske stene. 1–6. Pottery from the grave, 7. Ideal reconstruction of the burial (after Popović / Kapuran 2011)

probably belonged to the nearby hillfort of Oblik, located just above it. Excavations revealed four skeletal burials. The deceased were inhumed and eventually covered with a layer of stones (Figure 6, a–b). Stray finds of jewellery, which were probably grave goods, namely iron bracelets with banded cross-section, have parallels among finds from the necropolis of Vajuga – Pesak (Figure 7, 4, 6–7), belonging to Basarabi phase of 8<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> century BC.<sup>27</sup> Yet, the ceramic vessels from Signal are characteristic of the Insula Banului and Gornea – Kalakača cultural complexes of Ha B3 stage in the Danube River valley. The *terminus ante quem* in Signal is represented by a double pin with an “M”-shaped head (Figure 7, 5). According to R. Vasić, this type of double pin from

<sup>27</sup> Popović / Vukmanović 1998, 19, Fig. 10, Pl. 4, 8–18.

Western and Central Serbia can be dated to the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC.<sup>28</sup> In Signal, therefore, chronologically later metal finds appear together with the considerably earlier ceramics, which could indicate that some small conservative communities retained their burial rituals from the developed stages of the Early Iron Ages (Kalakača phase) until the very end of the Early Iron Age.

### Iron Age III/IV

The final phase of the Early Iron Age in the regions south of the Sava and Danube Rivers is represented by the cultural phenomenon defined as Rača – Ljuljaci horizon. Finds from tumuli indicate that the deceased were buried

<sup>28</sup> Vasić 2003, 126.

with weapons and a special type of the ceramics goods – cylindrical beakers with a three-leafed foot, a slanted rim, and a single highly elevated banded handle – considered characteristic of the ancient Triballi, with whom the Rača – Ljuljaci culture in Central Serbia is generally associated during 6<sup>th</sup>/5<sup>th</sup> centuries BC.<sup>29</sup> However, the stratigraphic sequence of the early La Tène phase of the necropolis of Pećine near Kostolac (Figure 8) points to some incompatibilities with the already established chronological and cultural connections. The necropolis dates to the second half of the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC and has material culture that shows close relationship to the Iron Age communities both in the Central Balkans and in the Pannonian plain.<sup>30</sup> In addition, the widespread cremation burials, which are generally connected to the new Celtic populations, a group of burials from Pećine reveals local traits related to the Rača – Ljuljaci culture (Figure 9, 985–987). To mention a few, the pottery shapes include the already-mentioned beakers with a single high handle, a slanted rim and a three-leafed foot, which are believed to have been used in Triballi communities during the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC.<sup>31</sup> This also holds true for pins with the double “M” heads (Figure 9, 987). However, as an example from Pećine reveals, the Celtic population was buried together with the local one. The finds from Pećine indicate that the Rača – Ljuljaci horizon certainly lasted up to the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC, as suggested by finds from the graves attributed to the Celtic population.

The last example of the presence of what have been considered chronologically diverse finds found in the same context in Eastern Serbia also belongs to the La Tène period. A solitary infant burial from the Mokranjske Stene site discovered in the hinterland of the Iron Gates in a vicinity of Negotin must be mentioned. The multi-layered site is located on an elevation surrounded by cliffs on three sides, above the deep canyon of the Sikolska River, just before the section where it flows into Timok River. From here, it is possible to control communication routes that lead through the Timok River valley to its confluence

with the Danube as well as those through the Wallachian plain to the east.

This burial was found unexpectedly in 2011 inside of a test trench (Figure 10, 7).<sup>32</sup> Inside the grave, an unusual burial custom of the Late La Tène communities in this region was noted. In the northern part of the burial pit, skeletal remains of a 1.5 year old infant were covered with a single large amphora fragment and one misshaped turned fructiera, typical of the late La Tène pottery (Figure 10, 3, 7). In the southern part of the grave fragments of one complete and one ritually broken vessel were found together (Figure 10, 1–2, 4–5). It was somewhat surprising to see that this ceramic ensemble was composed of pottery bearing characteristics of the latest phases of the La Tène period in Pannonia and the Danube basin (Figure 10, 3–5) and of pottery typical of local communities a few centuries earlier, at the end of Early Iron Age (Iron Age III), (Figure 10, 1–2). It is important to underline that the amphora fragment (Figure 10, 2) shows obvious similarities with the finds from the necropolis Ferigile in Oltenia where such vessels have been found whole as a part of pottery spectrum until 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC.<sup>33</sup>

## Conclusion

At the end, we can conclude that outlined examples demonstrate how the established chronologies of the Early Iron Age in Northeastern Serbia, which are based on stylistic-typological identification of finds, require certain corrections in light of the latest discoveries. These adjustments should also be considered from an extended geographical point of view, especially considering that this region situated between from Central Europe to the Mediterranean had experienced different cultural shifts. Certain discrepancies in stylistic and typological characteristics of finds from burial contexts are the most vivid example how some older traditions obviously remain to exist as a part of the ritual practice of following Iron Age customs. With respect to Northeastern Serbia and the specific cultural manifestation in this part of the Balkan Peninsula, following conclusions can be made.

<sup>29</sup> Срејовић 1991, 149; Jevtić 1983.

<sup>30</sup> Jovanović 1987; 1992, 87; 2010, 164; Sladić 1998.

<sup>31</sup> Jevtić 1983, 38. 42–43.

<sup>32</sup> Popović / Kapuran 2011, 297.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid. 301.

First, the span of the Žuto Brdo – Gira Mare culture which, according to the established chronologies, disappears during the Late Bronze Age (Br D),<sup>34</sup> should be broadened to include the Ha A stage or the time of the 12<sup>th</sup> century BC, as proposed by M. Jevtić and M. Vukmanović,<sup>35</sup> and as previously indicated by M. Garašanin.<sup>36</sup> The publication of the mentioned unornamented figurines from the site of Ušće Slatinske reke, which remain unavailable to the scientific public despite having been excavated five decades ago, would doubtlessly help in presenting a clearer argument in favour of the certain chronological overlap of incrustrated and burnished pottery. Moreover, the publication of the finds would also clarify the mutual relationships between groups with richly ornamented incrustrated pottery (Žuto Brdo – Gira Mare) and groups with burnished, channelled pottery (Gava cultural complex). One can assume that the mentioned examples from the sites of Livade, Konopište, Vajuga – Pesak, Selo, and Pećine also present evidence in support of this hypothesis.

Second, in course of the developed Iron Age or Iron Age II in the territory of Serbia, only a small number of inhumation burials has been discovered. The burials suggest the transition from cremation of the deceased, characteristic for the Late Bronze Age (Belegiš I, Žuto Brdo – Gira Mare cultures) and the following Gava cultural complex. In the subsequent Kalakača phase (9<sup>th</sup>/8<sup>th</sup> century BC),<sup>37</sup> inhumation burials prevail, most often with the deceased resting on the side, with grave goods comprising whole or ritually broken vessels (for example, at Pećine near Vrdnik, Jaša Tomić and Asfaltna baza in Zemun),<sup>38</sup> while at some other necropolises grave goods of iron artefacts occur (for example, at Mojsinje near Čačak, Mound V, Grave 4).<sup>39</sup> Two collective (mass) burials at the site of Gomolava I and II are not common custom and can be described as an exception caused by extraordinary circumstances.<sup>40</sup> However, a newly discovered graves of the the Kalakača phase from Mound V from the

necropolis of Mojsinje, point to certain changes of burial tradition. The deceased now begin to be placed in extended position lying on their back, with arms parallel to the body.<sup>41</sup> The most significant find from this necropolis is a double-looped iron fibula from Grave 4, the oldest fibula of this type in Serbia, which R. Vasić dated to 9<sup>th</sup>/8<sup>th</sup> centuries BC.<sup>42</sup> The Early Iron Age necropolis at Mojsinje also represents the hallmark of changing burial rites, which took place during the temporal span of the Vajuga – Pesak necropolis, at the very transition to the Basarabi horizon (ca. 800 BC). Skeletal burials at Vajuga – Pesak site are all also in extended position on back and dated between 775–725 BC.<sup>43</sup> Judging by the pottery and some jewellery (e.g., fibulae with a foot in shape of hourglass),<sup>44</sup> this necropolis can be assigned to the early stage of Basarabi culture. Another important change are the iron objects that appear in much greater numbers. If we take into account the similar phenomenon at Mojsinje, we can assume that the appearance of the precious new metal – iron – and new burial rite are closely connected. It is thus obvious that the introduction of the iron is related to the contacts with Basarabi culture. The close relationship of previous Kalakača phase and following Basarabi horizon is attested also in the eastern part of Vajuga – Pesak site where pottery characteristic of both groups was clearly intermixed. P. Popović and M. Vukmanović were right to suggest that these finds do not change the precise chronological dating of the Vajuga – Pesak necropolis,<sup>45</sup> but, as previously suggested, rather expose the strong influence of the preceding, older local traditions.

Third, in case of the Signal necropolis, located deep inside the mountainous region of Eastern Serbia near the town of Svrlijig, there is a pronounced paucity of grave goods (although the same graves are tied to the stray finds of iron bracelets), but the tradition of older cultural traditions persisting can also be observed. Specifically, the deceased were positioned in an extended position on their back, but their arms were crossed on their chest, as it is also the case of Graves 1, 5 and 6 at the site of Sutbarlija assigned

<sup>34</sup> Garašanin 1973, 349; Тасић 1983, 85; Крстић 2003, 118.

<sup>35</sup> Jevtić / Vukmanović 1996, 290.

<sup>36</sup> Garašanin 1983, 522.

<sup>37</sup> Medović / Medović 2011, 272.

<sup>38</sup> Медовић 1984–1985, 5, 8; 1999; Поповић 2010, 223–231.

<sup>39</sup> Никитовић et al. 2002, Tab, 3, 1.

<sup>40</sup> Tasić 1972.

<sup>41</sup> Никитовић et al. 2002, 51–52, Fig. 21.

<sup>42</sup> Vasić 2014, 207.

<sup>43</sup> Popović / Vukmanović 1998, 106.

<sup>44</sup> Vasić 1999, 55–56; Popović / Vukmanović 1998.

<sup>45</sup> Popović / Vukmanović 1998, 106.

to the Srem group of the Early Iron Age,<sup>46</sup> which P. Medović has dated to Phase IIIa of the Bosut culture (500–250 BC).<sup>47</sup> One further example of the grave from the final stage of Iron Age II (7<sup>th</sup>–6<sup>th</sup> century BC) comes from Moštanica near the town of Vranje in southern Serbia.<sup>48</sup> According to the author of the study, M. Jovanović, the interred deceased was put on his/her back and held an iron spear point in one hand on his/her chest. The grave contained also an iron fibula.<sup>49</sup> The pottery finds in Grave 4 from the Signal necropolis were modest goods of vessels, most probably ritually broken, with characteristics of the Pšeničevo – Babadag and the Insula Banului groups, and the Kalakača horizon.<sup>50</sup> There was also an iron pin with a, “M”-shaped head, which has been dated to the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC. Because of this combination of finds, the Signal necropolis should gain importance, as great caution is needed when defining absolute and relative chronologies of the Early Iron Age sites in the Central Balkans. The following dilemma remains. Should the span of the Kalakača phase in these remote regions be extended to the end of 7<sup>th</sup> and start of 6<sup>th</sup> centuries BC or are we simply dealing with more conservative societies in a mountainous area that retain certain cultural traditions even after these traditions disappear in areas along the main communication routes?

And finally, the case of the chronological discontinuity at the Early La Tène necropolis of Pećine points to a need to change the lower chronological boundary of the Rača – Ljuljaci group from the Early Iron Age (Iron Age III) to the end of 4<sup>th</sup> century BC. Burials with local indigenous characteristics at Pećine can be dated rather precisely by the finds from the contemporary Celtic graves. With regards to the burial rites, it would be an oversimplification to state that indigenous populations influenced their Celtic allies, as both communities practiced cremations and inhumations. Contrary to the situation at Pećine, a completely different arrangement can be observed in a child burial from the rock shelter of Mokranjske stene, dated to the

2<sup>nd</sup> century BC.<sup>51</sup> This particular example shows that funeral traditions are at times difficult to change and that the desire to distinguish individual identity is sometimes stronger than the actual technological and socio-economic changes of the society (or way of life), brought along with the emergence of the ancient Scordisci. The importance of this find is also suggested by the observation that from this period onward there are almost no burials that can be clearly assigned to the indigenous societies (the Triballi, Dardarians or Autariates). Child graves, furthermore, are exceptionally rare. The grave from Mokranje shows that in addition to the prevailing custom of cremation, a part of the indigenous society still practiced inhumation in graves supplemented by goods of pottery that demonstrated the strong traditional elements characteristics of late phase of the Early Iron Age.

Na engleski jezik preveo Stefan Milošević

## Rezime

### Hronološki problemi u kontinuitetu kulturnih grupa gvozdenog doba u severoistočnoj Srbiji

Arheolog koji se bavi gvozdenim dobom na području centralnog Balkana morao se suočiti sa određenim odstupanjima na relaciji postojećih hronoloških sistema i situacije na terenu. Problem se naročito aktualizuje u momentu kada dođe do otkrića neke nove nekropole ili naselja sa kraja II i u I milenijumu pre n. e. Mada se za kraj starijeg i celokupno mlađe gvozdeno doba mogu naći posredna i neposredna svedočenja antičkih istoriografa, čini se da nam ona u nekim slučajevima više odmažu nego pomažu da tumačimo arheološke zapise. Promene u hronološkim sistemima su neminovane proces i u skladu su sa razvojem arheologije kao nauke sa jedne i količine novih arheoloških otkrića sa druge strane. Ovo se vidi i na primeru kontinuiteta kultura gvozdenog doba severoistočne Srbije. Problem produbljuje i geografska povezanost istočne Srbije sa Podunavljem, koje se tokom milenijuma nalazilo na udaru pomeranja praistorijskih zajednica od centralne do jugoistočne Evrope.

<sup>51</sup> Popović / Kapuran 2011, 301.

<sup>46</sup> Medović 2007, 10–11. 16–19.

<sup>47</sup> Medović / Medović 2011, 272.

<sup>48</sup> Jovanović 1969, 72–74; Булатовић 2007, 104–108.

<sup>49</sup> Jovanović 1969, 73.

<sup>50</sup> Filipović / Bulatović 2010, 77.

Prvi slučaj koji izaziva određene nedoumice predstavljaju istraživanja lokaliteta i nekropola sa prelaza iz bronzanog u gvozdeno doba na ušću Mlave u Dunav, Velikog Gradca, Konopišta, Male Vrbice, Pesak – Korbovo i Ljubičevac selo u Đerdapu i nizvodno od njega. U ovim slučajevima radi se o prisustvu nalaza kultura Žuto Brdo – Girla Mare zajedno sa nalazima Gava kulturnog kompleksa u istom kontekstu. Sledeću hronološku nedoslednost pokazuje zajedničko prisustvo hronološki starijih elemenata Kalakača i elemenata Basarabi, kao hronološki mlađe keramike, u kontekstu grobova na nekropoli Vajuga – Pesak kod Korbova. Slična je situacija zatečena na nekropoli Signal kod Svrlijiga, gde je u skeletno sahranjenim grobovima otkrivena keramika tipa Kalakača zajedno sa hronološki dosta mlađim bronzanim iglama sa “M” glavom. Tokom VI–V veka pre n. e. na tribalskoj nekropoli Ljuljaci otkriveni su gotovo identični pogrebni prilozi kao i u ranolatenskoj nekropoli Pečine, koja je precizno datovana u sredinu IV veka pre n. e. Poslednji primer hronoloških neslaganja predstavljao bi grob jednog deteta iz Moranja kod Negotina. Zajedno sa keramikom karakterističnom za mlađu fazu latenske kulture u Srpskom podunavlju, javljaju se keramički oblici koji imaju karakteristike starosedelačkih zajednica sa kraja starijeg gvozdenog doba ili Ha C.

Kao zaključak izlaganja treba napomenuti da navedeni primeri pokazuju kako postojeće stilsko-tipološke i hronološke determinacije kultura gvozdenog doba u severoistočnoj Srbiji zahtevaju izvesne korekcije i prilagođavanja na koja ukazuju nova otkrića. Ove korekcije treba sagledati ne samo hronološki već i u okviru geografskih celina koje pokazuju različitosti u kulturnim kretanjima od centralne Evrope do Mediterana.

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