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**CONTRIBUTIONS REGARDING THE LATE BRONZE AGE FROM
CENTRAL TRANSYLVANIA. THE SETTLEMENT FROM VLAHA-PAD**

ABSTRACT OF THE PHD THESIS

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Keywords:

Late Bronze Age; Central Transylvania; Wietenberg, Cehăluț, Noua cultures; the Wietenberg-Cehăluț horizon; settlement, features; daily life; crafts; spirituality; pottery; bronzes; archaeozoology; intercultural relations, relative chronology; absolute chronology.

The goals and the methodology of the research

The present work has a monographic character and tries to give an overview picture about the Late Bronze Age settlement from *Vlaha-Pad*. The prehistoric settlement was researched by the archaeologists from the Institute of Archaeology and Art History from Cluj-Napoca, during the rescue excavations preceding the construction of the Bor –Brașov highway between 2004 and 2007. The different questions regarding the Wietenberg culture, but mainly the inner periodisation of the culture, the relations with other neighbouring/contemporaneous cultural groups have been repeatedly approached.

The multilayered prehistoric settlement from *Vlaha-Pad* is one of the largest settlements of the Wietenberg culture, having a 16.000 m² surface, which is almost entirely excavated. The site offers the possibility for a detailed horizontal and vertical archaeological analysis as well. Being a multilayered settlement different habitation layers were identified from the Late Bronze Age and the Early Iron Age as well. The present research focuses only on the features from the Late Bronze Age. Thus the main goal of the thesis is the monographic presentation of the Late Bronze Age settlement from *Vlaha-Pad*, which can be linked to the Wietenberg–Cehăluț cultural horizon. For this purpose the most important objectives were: establishing the vertical and horizontal stratigraphy, analyzing the archaeological features and defining their character (attempting also to distinguish some household features), processing and analyzing the artefacts which were discovered within the features, their cultural and chronological determination through the comparative typo-chronological method, defining the character of the settlement with the help of organic and inorganic material. The 82 archaeological features offered us the possibility to observe the ways of interactions and relations between the different cultural phenomena within the same feature, thus very often mixed or influenced cultural patterns could be outlined. The identification and documentation of such phenomenon was a main goal of the thesis. Thus the realization of a catalogue with similar findings from Central Transylvania was a natural target.

For accomplishing these objectives we turned to some traditional but also to some modern methods. The typo-chronological analysis of the artefacts is considered already a

traditional method. Thus the archaeological material was documented through drawings and photos and was registered in a database specially created for this purpose. After this a statistical and comparative analysis was carried out. Through modern methods important complementary information were obtained regarding the horizontal stratigraphy of the settlement, the fauna from the site and the surroundings (with the help of the archaeozoological analysis). The most important results were obtained with the help of radiocarbon dating, which offered us the possibility to date in absolute terms the Wietenberg–Cehăluț horizon and the Early Iron Age habitation layer as well. These results complete the very few ¹⁴C dates available so far for the Late Bronze Age and the Iron Age from Transylvania. Beside these achievements I believe that we must not forget those multidisciplinary methods, which due to lack of financial support, couldn't be accomplished.

Finally we can state that the main goal of the research was the reconstruction of the historical background of the daily and religious life, and the evocation of the historical events which took place in this part of the country, through the analysis and synthesis of the archaeological records. Thus the study of the archaeological material itself is not a goal, but rather a mean to reconstruct the historical process in a well defined time span. Furthermore the thesis helps us to obtain a better picture about the cultural phenomenon from the Late Bronze Age of Transylvania, from the perspective of the discoveries from *Vlaha–Pad*. The integration of the settlement from *Vlaha–Pad* into the cultural background of the Late Bronze Age from Central Transylvania and the relation with other contemporaneous sites is the ultimate goal of the thesis.

The structure of the thesis

The PhD work consists of nine chapters: I. Introductory problems, II. *The catalogue of the features from Vlaha–Pad*, III. *The inner structure of the settlement from Vlaha–Pad. The habitations from the Late Bronze Age*, IV. *The archaeological and archaeozoological material*, V. *Daily life and the spirituality*, VI. *The settlement from Vlaha–Pad from the perspective of the Late Bronze Age*, VII. *Conclusions*, followed by the *Abbreviations*, *Literature*, *List of figures* and *Plates*.

The first chapter has an introductive character, and offers an overview picture over the geographical situation of the settlement and its surroundings, and over the methodology of the excavations carried out in Vlaha. The foundation and the most consistent part of the thesis is represented by the catalogue of the archaeological features from *Vlaha–Pad* (Chapter II.) Each context/ feature sheet contains information about the character of the discovery, the

visual documentation and the detailed description of the material. The cultural classification of the features was realized based on the analysis of the archaeological material, based mostly on the ceramic material in a dominant quantity. The study of this ceramic material has confirmed the presence of the Wietenberg, Cehăluț and Noua cultures.

The following chapters are focusing on the evaluation of data from Chapter II. In Chapter III we tried to outline some domestic households within the settlement. Two different habitation layers were distinguished: the earlier was assigned to the Wietenberg–Cehăluț cultural horizon, followed by some scattered Noua finds with good information regarding the inner structure of the settlement. The Bronze Age settlement was followed and covered partially by a settlement from the Early Iron Age, and later by a 6th century Gepidic necropolis. Thus some features were disturbed by later habitations, which were worsened by the agricultural works from the past decades.

In Chapter IV a traditional typo-chronological analysis of the ceramic material was carried out, which helped to distinguish the different cultural horizons within the settlement. The clay, stone, bone and bronze objects, discovered in extremely low numbers, only complete the inner chronology of the settlement, and offer some clues regarding the daily and spiritual life of the prehistoric Vlaha. These questions are treated in Chapter V.

The main goal of the Chapters VI and VII is to insert the prehistoric settlement from Vlaha–*Pad* into the background of the Late Bronze Age of Central Transylvania. The catalogue of the sites which are contemporaneous with the settlement from Vlaha, the outline of the intercultural relations between the different communities on a larger Transylvanian scale, and the debates over the relative and absolute dating of the Late Bronze Age only emphasises the place, role and importance of the site from Vlaha.

In the last part of the work the literature, abbreviations, the list of figures and plates can be found.

Conclusions

The main importance of the settlement from Vlaha–*Pad*, although in some cases incomplete, consists in the ability to offer a significant picture about the Wietenberg–Cehăluț habitation period. The importance of the site is supported also by the exhaustive character of the excavations, which gave us the possibility to outline an overall image about the prehistoric habitation and about the vertical and horizontal stratigraphy. The site from Vlaha appears as an open settlement, with a long duration, having a pastoral-farming character, dominated

mainly by surface structures or by semisubterranean dwellings, with different household annexes and ritual features. The recovered archaeological material consists mainly of pottery sherds, but also clay, bone, stone and bronze items. The statistical analysis of the ceramic material gave us the possibility to sketch the very characteristic shapes of the Wietenberg–Cehăluț habitation layer. Different fragments were also identified which arrived to Vlaha from northern and western Transylvanian regions, namely from the area of the Suci de Sus and Mureș culture. The presence of foreign cultural elements in variable quantities within Wietenberg sites is very characteristic for the Late Bronze Age cultural background in Transylvania. The very few Noua elements represent a different and later habitation layer, which overlays the earlier settlement.

The most important contribution of the thesis is the establishing of the inner relative chronology of the settlement through traditional methods, and correlation of these results with the absolute data from different features. The comparative typo-chronological analysis of the ceramic material made it possible to assign the settlement from Vlaha–*Pad* to the Wietenberg–Cehăluț horizon, which can be dated in the BzC–beginning of BzD period. The main characteristic of this period is the mixing of the late Wietenberg IV stage with the first stage of the Cehăluț group, and the presence of other cultural elements as well, namely the Suci de Sus and Mureș culture. The absolute ^{14}C data offered the opportunity to sketch the exact time span of the Wietenberg–Cehăluț and the Early Iron Age settlement. The samples taken from two Bronze Age features with Wietenberg and Cehăluț pottery placed the evolution of the settlement roughly in the 16th and the beginning of the 15th century BC, between 1610–1440 cal. BC. Thus an open settlement of the Wietenberg–Cehăluț cultural horizon can be outlined, situated in the north-western extremity of this cultural phenomenon from the Late Bronze Age. The analysis of the archaeological items based on traditional methods, and was completed by archaeozoological studies and absolute dating. The thesis reflects the summary and interpretation of all these information, and enriches our knowledge about the Late Bronze Age from Central Transylvania. The most important contribution is represented by the first absolute data regarding this mixture habitation horizon. From the perspective of these new ^{14}C data we have to take into consideration an earlier dating of the Wietenberg–Cehăluț horizon. Evidently the dating of the last phase of the Wietenberg culture needs to be changed as well, namely in the Reinecke BzC period, contrary to earlier opinions which accepted the BzD phase, based exclusively on typological argumentations.

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