

The paperwork, with the title “Noua culture in the basin of the Bârlad River”, deals with the end of the Bronze Age in the hidrographical basin of the Bârlad River. We intend to discuss, in our analysis, the geographical, cultural and chronological coordinates. From a geographical point of view, we refer to the region drained by the Bârlad River and by its tributaries, located in the southern part of the Eastern region of Romania. From a chronological point of view, we intend to study the third phase of Bronze Age, framed, roughly, between XVIth-XIIIth/XIIth centuries b. c. During this time, the region we study was occupied by the communities of Noua culture, part of the cultural ensemble Sabatinovka-Noua-Coslogeni.

We think that it is necessary to re-discuss the theme due to many reasons. The corroboration of the finds from the last decades and their integration in the existing database deepens the knowledge about Late Bronze Age in the study space. Also, filling in the known data with new ones, gained after studying an important part of the unpublished material from archaeological collections from some museums, along with checking some of the sites, has the potential of gaining a detailed picture of the subject we study. Also, this approach is a continuity of the archaeological monographies dedicated to Late Bronze Age in different regions (The Moldavian Plain, The Suceava Plateau, The Transilvanian Plateau). Reconsidering some of the aspects, as a result of recent research of the funerary behaviour, or regarding Late Bronze Age sites, can lead to the diversification of the study and interpretation, if we apply them for the region of the Bârlad River. Furthermore, the southern region of the Eastern part of Romania plays an important role in understanding the genesis of Noua culture; so, recent research in Middle and Late Bronze Age sites brought new data about the role of the Monteoru culture to the changes that accompanied the transition to the last phase of the Bronze Age.

To understand and interpret the role of the study region in a macro-regional context, I used the centre-periphery (-margins) model, not before making some methodological remarks about applying it.

The paperwork contains seven chapters, each of them followed by illustration, and at the we can find the illustration list, the abreviations and the references.

In Introduction, after some remarks on the necessity of re-discussing the theme and some methodological issues, I focused on the geographical definition of the study space.

Out of the large area occupied by the communities of Noua culture, I chose to study the hydrographical basin of the Bârlad River, region that overlaps, roughly, the Bârlad Plateau, part of the Moldavian Plateau. The study of different aspects indicated that the basin of the Bârlad River is not the most suitable for inhabitation: the rivers freeze or dry, when they don't flood their valleys, the termic differences lead to long winters, disadvantageous for the cattle, and the area is not rich in ores or other resources, the soil is poor, with low productivity for most of the crops. I also pointed out the advantages and disadvantages of inhabiting this region, but also the location of the Bârlad River between regions (the transilvanian, the north-pontic and the balcan ones) different from a cultural point of view.

Regarding the research, the objectives and the historiographical implications, I identified three major phases in researching the Late Bronze Age in the southern region of the Eastern part of Romania. The first phase is prior to the publishing, in 1960, of the first volume from *The Romania's History Treaty* (ed. resp. C. Daicoviciu); during this, first mentions of some sites appear, as a result of accidental discoveries or some small sondages. The second phase is between 1960 and 1991, period defined by the proliferation of archaeological research (field research, sondage or sistematic digging). During this phase, reports of archaeological diggings, articles and counties' repertories are written. In 1991 (when the Colloquium from Călărași, dedicated to the Sabatinovka-Noua-Coslogeni cultural complex, took place, but also the year when A. C. Florescu's repertory was published) the current research phase begins, which is defined by a smaller number of sondages and diggings, but, on the other side, by the amplification of the quality and accuracy of the archaeological data. The study of the bibliographical field also indicated the impact of the existence or absence of some projects of micro-regional researches for a better knowledge about Late Bronze Age. In this respect, I noticed that the research of Late Bronze Age was different in the region I study; so, the archaeologists' attention was directed mostly to the southern part of the Bârlad Basin, for which it is known the activity of researchers like Adrian C. Florescu, Marilena Florescu, Viorel Căpitanu, Eugenia Popușoi, Vasile Palade and others.

An essential step in achieving the aims of the thesis, I realised a database, that appears in the paperwork as a corpus of sites, which overlaps the second chapter. This sequence includes data about four main types of discoveries: settlements, isolated graves and cemeteries, bronze

depositions outside the settlements and isolated finds. In order to draw this chapter I corroborated data from the bibliographical field with the ones from my own field researches, but also with those ones gained from studying some collections kept by the museums from Iași, Vaslui, Bacău, Bârlad and Tecuci. In some cases, I added data about the geographical specific of the region by studying the topographical maps, scale 1:25.000 and 1:100.000. The archaeological “points” can be found, through different symbols for each type, in the distribution map containing Late Bronze Age sites from the Bârlad Basin.

The third chapter is dedicated to the settlements. Their analysis was divided, following both the outside features and internal structure, but also the interaction between the communities and the environment. In the first part of this chapter, I followed aspects like: the area, the existence/absence of the “ashmounds”, the organisation and the stratigraphy of the settlements. Most of the settlements have less than ten “ashmounds”, unlike those ones from the region between Pruth-Dnestr rivers or the northern part of Moldavian Plain. The available data indicates that the “ashmounds” contain dwelling platforms. Regarding the interaction between communities and the environment, according to the known data, the Bârlad Basin joins the specific of Noua culture: the settlements appear in plateau region, in low places, with relative altitudes around 5-10 m, cu favourable exposure. The distribution of the settlements indicate that in the southern part of the region, at the transition from plateau to plain regions, their number decreases drastically.

The fourth chapter was dedicated to the funerary behaviour. The starting point for this approach were the recent paperworks published by E. Sava (2002) and I. Motzoi-Chicideanu (2011). Therefore, I added to the known data information about some funerary discoveries (as those from Gârbovăț, Pogana and Trestiana), I pleaded for the significance of the discoveries from Tăcuta and I re-discussed some ritualic indicators (like destroying parts of the vessels before placing them into the grave).

The fifth chapter, an important part of the paperwork, was dedicated to the analysis of different types of artifacts: pottery, metal items, bone and stone artifacts. Pottery was among the richest types of finds, and this is the reason why it benefited from an extensive study, in which I followed the preparation technique, through which I identified two types: coarse and semifine. Through this criteria, I noticed that, comparing the pottery from Bârlad basin with the one from

the region between Pruth-Dnepr rivers, I noticed a bigger proportion of semifine pottery in the study region, as a result of the impact of the previous cultural environment. Vessel types were identified, ornamentation was defined and, using those features, suggestions about the function were made. The study, accompanied by charts and distribution maps, indicated the overwhelming proportion of jars, of coarse paste, which indicates that the study area is part of a bigger cultural region. The transfer of some aspects from the Monteoru cultural field, in the first phase of Noua culture, is a peculiarity of the Bârlad Basin in the area of Noua culture. Also, comparing the pottery from settlements and graves, I noticed that in funerary contexts, most of the pots have roots in the previous cultural setting, which indicates that they were made especially for funerals.

The second part of the chapter was dedicated to bronze items, that came from settlements, depositions, but were also isolated finds. This approach had as a result the identification of main types, and also building some suggestions about the function of the depositions. Using the metal types, I identified connections both with the transilvanian centre, and also with the north-pontic one, Krasniy-Mayak. The study of the place of discovery, the arrangement *in situ*, the association of types and the possible manner of fragmentation, indicated that at least a part of the depositions can be interpreted as non-functional, ritualic.

To analyze the bone artifacts, in the third sequence of the chapter, I used a criteria of the conformation of the active part; therefore, I noticed that those with the sharp, punctate active part predominate, artifacts associated to leather working. Few bone objects, like psalia or buttons, are decorated. The quantity and diversity of this category has no parallel in the previous times in the Carpathian-Balkan region; instead, this is a characteristic of the north-pontic region, and this reflects the significance of the eastern factor in the genesis of Noua culture.

The chapter dedicated to the artifacts ends with those made of stone and flint. The typological and functional study indicated different types of artifacts. Some of them, like axes, knives, grinding stones, reflect a transfer from the previous cultural settings, but types such as sceptres and cudgels are the result of north-pontic influence.

Having as a base the different types of studies performed in the paperwork, in the sixth chapter there some observations about the chronological framework and the periodisation were made. Therefore, I considered necessary to keep using, for the study space, the notion of “Noua

I". Regarding the genesis of Noua culture, having as argument the major changes of material culture that accompany the beginning of the Late Bronze Age, I suggested that this is due to the major eastern influence. Also, I indicated the possibility of a third phase of Noua culture, as reflected by the levels without "ashmounds" from Tăvădărești and Cavadinești. Radiocarbon data, increasingly more, indicate the appearance and the end of Noua culture different in various regions. So, the beginning of Noua culture can be placed before 1500 b.c., and the end seems to have happened earlier, comparing to the intra-carpathian region.

In the last chapter, corroborating the data about the material culture indicated the viability of the centre-periphery (-margins) model. So, during Late Bronze Age, the north-pontic elements infiltrated toward West, in the Eastern part of Romania and, from here, to the Carpathian Basin and, through the West-Pontic shore, in the Balkan region. The lack of a cultural response, equal as intensity, from these centres, indicate that the model I suggested is not appropriate, so it is not possible to see the Bârlad basin as a "buffer zone" between a centre and its periphery (peripheries).

During this approach, I wanted to point out, using the available data, the characteristics of the Bârlad basin, through which this area is peculiar or similar to other regions of Noua culture. I believe that, through this approach, we succeeded in creating a detailed picture of the Late Bronze Age both in the Basin of the Bârlad River, and also in the north-west pontic region. We also hope that we succeeded in creating a new step in the research of Noua culture in the Bârlad basin.