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VERBICIOARA CULTURE IN THE CARPATHIAN AND
BALCANIC SPACE

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All the published Verbicioara archaeological discoveries from Romania have been gathered in this paper. Thus, some general considerations about these must be emphasized: the evidence of the discoveries through publications, their territorial distribution and characteristics, their categories and signification, their relative chronology and their synchronizing with other former or later discoveries.

It is necessary that we should make a new order of the information about Verbicioara Culture, because the archaeologists have published researches regarding either a certain area of this culture or the entire area of the culture, relying on the most important archaeological discoveries or making a general presentation of the culture.

The archaeological researches made in 1949- 1951, 1955 and 1957 at Verbicioara in the place “La Trestie” by D. Berciu, were very important for the definition of the culture, which is mainly placed on the territory of Oltenia. The culture was dated in the Age of Middle and Late Bronze. Afterwards, D. Berciu dated the archaeological material discovered at Verbicioara in two periods. In 1961 he established the final division into periods of Verbicioara Culture. The first three periods were dated in the Age of the Middle Bronze, and the last two periods were dated in the Age of Late Bronze. The last period was also divided into two subperiods – a and b.

From 1961 till present some Romanian archaeologists have dated Verbicioara materials in D. Berciu's chronologic system. However, in this period, there have been objections regarding the classical division into periods of the culture. For instance in 1976, B. Hansel considered that there were only two distinct periods of the culture. The old one that includes the first, the second and the third periods after D. Berciu, represents Verbicioara Group and the fourth and fifth - b periods represent Govora Group.

N. Tasic, using the criterion of the ceramics typology, divided Verbicioara Culture into three periods.

In 1996 M. Nica established a new chronologic system for Verbicioara Culture. He divided the evolution of this culture into six periods.

It is considered that the criterion of ceramics typology was more important than the stratigraphic one, in defining Verbicioara Culture. That is why a chorological study, made by sorting many elements from this catalogue, has brought extra information about Verbicioara Culture.

As far as the quality of the research is concerned, it is considered that the archaeological material resulted from five categories of researches: accidental discoveries, surface researches, rescue diggings, systematic diggings and soundings. Statistically speaking 34,24% from Verbicioara materials resulted from accidental discoveries, 33,24% resulted from surface researches, 3,08%

resulted from rescue diggings, 18,49% resulted from systematic diggings and 10,95 % resulted from soundings.

Taking into account all these information, we can say that there is a high degree of relativity in defining Verbicioara Culture. With reference to the quality of the researches, we notice that many places, where Verbicioara materials have been found, are in the neighbourhood of towns like Râmnicu Vâlcea, Slatina, Craiova, Drăgășani and other places from the South – East, South – West and North – West of Oltenia haven't been unexplored yet.

The combination between the geographical relief forms, where the archaeological settlements are placed and the periods in which Verbicioara Culture is dated, determined the following observations: 43 sits with ceramics from the early periods (I –III) of Verbicioara Culture versus 34 sits with ceramics from the late periods (IV- V) of the culture are in „open” areas – meadows; only 19 sits with ceramics from the early periods (I – III) of Verbicioara Culture versus 44 sits with ceramics from the late periods (IV-V) of the culture are in high areas; another type of sit is „zolniki” with ceramics from the late periods of Verbicioara Culture and others from caves with ceramics from the early periods of the culture and with ceramics from the late periods, too.

Ceramics from the late periods of Verbicioara Culture can not be found in the same places with ceramics from the early periods of the culture. This fact is proved by some discoveries presented in the catalogue.

We notice in the specialized literature about, that there are discoveries in which the ceramics of the late periods is associated or superposed with the early hallstatt ceramics, but there are discoveries in which the late periods ceramics is associated or supraposed with Basarabi, Ferigile or La Tene ceramics. All these facts prove that there is not always a continuity between the settlements of Verbicioara Culture, the fourth and fifth period, and the early Hallstat.

As far as the archaeological funeral discoveries of Verbicioara Culture are concerned, there have been found incineration tombs, which were dated in the early periods, in eight sites. Inhumation tombs have been discovered in four sites, but they can hardly be dated in one period of Verbicioara Culture. We can notice that the incineration tombs from the early periods are placed only in the south of Oltenia, very closed to the Danube. They were found in small groups of two or five tombs and, therefore we can not speak about necropoles. The incineration tombs from the late periods of the culture are less than the ones from the early periods and they were discovered in the hilly area of Oltenia.

In conclusion, we can say that the division into periods, made by D. Berciu in 1961, is not available anymore. In addition, a division into periods made exclusively on the criterion of ceramics typology, the placing of the

materials, discovered lately into this period and the uncertain stratigraphic conditions have led in time to disagree between archaeologists regarding the division into periods of the ceramics. We can not place any archaeological materials into the second period of the culture as long as other ceramic types with specific forms and decorations are not discovered. As we mentioned before, it seems that Gornea – Orlești and Verbicioara discoveries – the first period – is a different group, as well as the Verbicioara group - the fourth and fifth periods. We must also see if that the ceramics from the third period forms a distinct group or is associated with the ceramics from the early periods – Gornea – Orlești ceramics.

All in all, the matters of Verbicioara Culture can not be entirely solved until the archaeological researches are extended to a larger scale, in Bulgaria and Serbia, too.