

# OBSERVATIONS ON THE SARMATIAN GRAVES IN WALLACHIA IN WHICH HANDMADE POTTERY WAS DEPOSITED

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**Key-words:** handmade pottery, Sarmatians, Wallachia, graves, grave goods.

**Abstract:** The present contribution attempts to outline the main coordinates of the handmade pottery deposit in the Sarmatian graves of Wallachia. The handmade pottery was discovered in 55 graves of Wallachia which were attributed to the Sarmatians. 11 graves of the 55 graves examined are isolated; the remaining 44 funerary structures originate from 23 groups. The age of the buried individuals is known only in the case of 35 graves of the 55 analyzed: 19 adults, 15 children, one teenager. The typology of the handmade vessels deposited in the Sarmatian graves in Wallachia is not very varied: jars (with seven sub-types), bowls, mugs, vessel with spherical body, perforated vessels. The handmade Dacian ceramic comprises mugs and lids. The vast majority of the graves (42) is characterized by the deposit of a reduced number of inventory items, ranging between one and three. Among the handmade vessels found in the Sarmatian graves in Wallachia, there are not only vessels characteristic for the discoveries attributed to the Sarmatians, but also vessels with analogies in the Dacian pottery (Râmnicelu M. 19, Măriuța M. 2) or the Przeworsk culture (Grădișteța-Coslogeni). The handmade pottery was discovered in 14 graves belonging to children. It is interesting to note the very low number of items in the vast majority of these graves: 12 graves with one or two grave goods. The relation between the graves determined or assumed as belonging to men and the handmade pottery seems to be rather occasional – only four graves, at least in the current stage of research. Although questioned by the existence of a very high number of undetermined graves in terms of the sex of the deceased (36), the relation between the handmade pottery and the graves belonging to women has other features than the ones noticed in the case of men's graves. Of the 19 funerary structures which benefit of the determination or the assumption of the sex of the buried individual, 14 belonged to women and only four to men. One last observation takes into account the dating of the graves in which handmade pottery was deposited. Such tombs are documented in all the stages of penetration of the Sarmatians in Wallachia: 13 burials in the first stage (starting with the last decade of the first century AD and the first decades of the following century), four graves in the second century AD, 32 funerary structures in the second stage (subsequent to the Marcomannic wars), two in the last stage (the end of the third century). A possible predominance of the custom to deposit handmade pottery in the graves in the second stage of penetration of the Sarmatians in Wallachia seems to be only an impression, easily explainable by the numerical imbalance documented in certain areas between the graves dated in the first stage of the Sarmatian presence in Wallachia and the ones of the second stage.

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**Cuvinte-cheie:** ceramică lucrată cu mâna, sarmați, Muntenia, morminte, inventar funerar.

**Rezumat:** Contribuția de față încearcă să contureze principalele coordonate ale depunerii ceramicii lucrate cu mâna în mormintele sarmatice din Muntenia. Ceramica lucrată cu mâna s-a descoperit în 55 de morminte din Muntenia care au fost atribuite sarmaților. 11 morminte din cele 55 analizate sunt izolate, iar restul de 44 de complexe funerare provin din 23 de grupuri. Doar în cazul a 35 morminte din cele 55 analizate se cunoaște vârsta celor inumați: 19 adulți, 15 copii, o adolescentă. Tipologia recipientelor lucrate cu mâna depuse în mormintele sarmatice din Muntenia nu este foarte variată: borcane (cu șapte sub-tipuri), castroane, căni, vas cu corpul sferic, vase perforate. Ceramica dacică lucrată cu mâna cuprinde ca tipuri căni și capace. Marea majoritate a mormintelor analizate (42) se caracterizează prin depunerea unui număr mic de piese de inventar, cuprins între una și trei. Printre recipientele lucrate cu mâna găsite în mormintele sarmatice din Muntenia se înregistrează nu numai vase caracteristice descoperirilor atribuite sarmaților, ci și recipiente cu analogii în repertoriul ceramicii dacice (Râmnicelu M. 19, Măriuța M. 2) sau în

cel al culturii Przeworsk (Grădiștea-Coslogeni). Ceramica lucrată cu mâna s-a descoperit în 14 morminte aparținând unor copii. Interesant de remarcat este numărul foarte mic de piese al mării majorități a acestor morminte: 12 morminte cu una sau două piese. Relația dintre mormintele determinate sau presupuse ca aparținând unor bărbați și ceramica lucrată cu mâna pare să fie una mai degrabă ocazională – doar patru morminte, cel puțin în stadiul actual al descoperirilor. Deși pusă sub semnul întrebării de existența unui număr foarte mare de morminte nedeterminate ca sex al decedaților (36), relația dintre ceramica lucrată cu mâna și mormintele aparținând unor femei are alte caracteristici decât cele remarcate în cazul mormintelor de bărbați. Din cele 19 complexe funerare care beneficiază de determinarea sau presupunerea sexului persoanei înmormântate, 14 aparțineau unor femei și doar patru unor bărbați. O ultimă observație are în vedere datarea mormintelor în care s-a depus ceramică lucrată cu mâna. Asemenea complexe se înregistrează în toate etapele de pătrundere a sarmaților în Muntenia: 13 înmormântări în prima etapă (începând cu ultimul deceniu al secolului I p. Chr. și primele decenii ale secolului următor), patru morminte în secolul al II-lea p. Chr., 32 de complexe funerare în etapa a doua (posterioră războaielor marcomanice), două în etapa ultimă (sfârșitul secolului al III-lea). O eventuală predominare a obiceiului depunerii în morminte a ceramicii lucrate cu mâna în etapa a doua de pătrundere a sarmaților în Muntenia nu mi se pare a fi altceva decât o impresie, care poate fi foarte ușor explicată prin dezechilibrul numeric, înregistrat în anumite zone, dintre mormintele datate în prima etapă a pătrunderii sarmaților în Muntenia și cele din a doua etapă.

*The* handmade pottery is generally difficult to analyze. The typological uniformity, the persistency of the same types of vessels with relatively few changes for long periods of time<sup>1</sup>, the processing accidents (such as the asymmetry of the vessels) are all impediments that leave a mark upon a discussion about the handmade vessels and upon the attempt to date them.

The handmade vessels have already been discussed in two volumes dedicated to the Sarmatians from the eastern<sup>2</sup> and southern<sup>3</sup> Wallachia. The present contribution attempts to exceed the territorial limitation of the analysis in the two above mentioned volumes and to outline the main coordinates of the handmade pottery deposit in the Sarmatian graves of Wallachia. The analysis undertaken in the following lines has the advantage of reuniting in a coherent entirety the information published so far in a disparate manner and within this entirety certain features stand out visibly.

The handmade pottery was discovered in 55 graves of Wallachia which were attributed to the Sarmatians. Finding the percentage represented by the 55 graves of the total of funerary structures attributed to the Sarmatians of Wallachia incurs a major difficulty which has already been underlined<sup>4</sup> – the lack of knowledge of the exact total number of Sarmatian graves in Wallachia. The existence of certain novel funerary structures about which there are only brief mentions in the literature (Chirnoji, for example) or which have been pub-

lished only recently (M. 6-10 in Călărași<sup>5</sup>), graves which were initially attributed to the Sarmatians but were excluded following a thorough analysis as they belonged to another periods (Râmnicelu M. 12 and M. 18, for example<sup>6</sup>), uncertain discoveries in terms of dating or whose origin from the graves is not at all certain, discoveries which were documented as graves but proved to be something else rather than funerary structures following a closer analysis of the archaeological excavations notes (Vărăști<sup>7</sup>) are just as many difficulties leaving their mark on the answer to an apparently simple question – how many graves attributed to the Sarmatians have been discovered so far in Wallachia. This is one of the reasons I have favoured an area analysis (Brăila Plain, southern Wallachia) to the detriment of a synthesis about the entire Wallachia, in which details such as the ones mentioned above might have been maybe overlooked. Several years ago, we estimated a number of 238 Sarmatian graves in Wallachia<sup>8</sup> (but 12 of them were under question, leaving us with the number of 226<sup>9</sup>), added by the burials from the necropoleis in which graves attributed to both the Sarmatians and the Sântana de Mureș-Cerneahov culture were discovered, which raises the total number to 282 graves. The publication of new Sarmatian graves, the exclusion from the funerary structures of certain discoveries, the existence of a still high number of graves which were not published systematically but merely mentioned in short excava-

<sup>1</sup> Vaday 1988-1989, 174.

<sup>2</sup> Oța, Sîrbu 2009, 150-152 and 155.

<sup>3</sup> Sîrbu *et alii* 2014, 102-104.

<sup>4</sup> Oța 1999, 885; Oța, Sîrbu 2012, 130; Oța, Sîrbu, Matei 2013, 325-326.

<sup>5</sup> Sîrbu *et alii* 2014, 27-31 and 37-38.

<sup>6</sup> Oța, Sîrbu 2009, 138.

<sup>7</sup> Sîrbu *et alii* 2014, 85.

<sup>8</sup> Oța, Sîrbu, Matei 2013, 325.

<sup>9</sup> Oța, Sîrbu 2012, 130.