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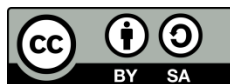
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A forgotten cemetery at the edge of Lake Brateș. Funerary finds unearthed in the area of Vînători-La Jolică archaeological site

Tudor MANDACHE¹, Adrian ADAMESCU², Sorin Cristian AILINCĂI³

Abstract: *This paper presents the preliminary study of a cemetery, dated between the second half of the XVIth century and the beginning of the XVIIth century, uncovered in the northern part of the Vînători-La Jolică archaeological site area. The site was first excavated in 1972-1974 by archaeologists M. Florescu and M. Nicu, when, among other discoveries, they managed to identify a previously unknown “feudal” necropolis. Unfortunately, none of these findings have ever been rigorously published, only mentioned. The present article strives to continue the effort of publishing inedited materials and archaeological contexts that are part of the new excavations carried out in the Vînători-La Jolică dig site which refer, at this time, to the Late Mediaeval/premodern period.*

Rezumat: *Acest articol reprezintă un studiu preliminar privind cimitirul identificat în partea de nord a zonei ocupate de situl arheologic Vînători-La Jolică, care a fost datat între a doua jumătate a secolului al XVI-lea și începutul secolului al XVII-lea. Situl arheologic a fost pentru prima dată excavat în perioada anilor 1972-1974, de către arheologii M. Florescu și M. Nicu, unde a fost identificat, printre altele, un cimitir „feudal” necunoscut anterior. Din păcate, aceste descoperiri nu au fost niciodată publicate în literatura de specialitate. Astfel, ne propunem să continuăm efortul de a publica materiale și contexte arheologice inedite, care fac parte din noile săpături arheologice realizate în situl Vînători-La Jolică, și care fac referire, de această dată, la perioada medievală târzie/premodernă.*

Keywords: Vînători-La Jolică, Galați County, cemetery, grave goods, Late Medieval period, premodern period.

Geology and topography

The perimeter of the archeological site from Vînători-La Jolică is located in the southern part of the Covurlui Plain, on a high terrace near the western shore of the former Brateș Lake, now the Brateș meadow. It is part of an area with a very long geological evolution that has two very different structural floors: a crystalline foundation and a land-cover. The current

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terrain of the area is of fluvial accumulation: villafranchian fluvio-lacustrine plain, covered with loessoid deposits, terraces and meadow. Located at approximately 8 km north of the city of Galați, the archeological site Vînători-*La Jolică* occupies an area of approximately 4 ha, which is furrowed by deep torrents with a West-East direction⁴ (Fig. 1).



Historical and archeological background

The current territory of the Vînători village „has continually been inhabited by a sedentary population, in the middle of which, for a rather long period of time, between the beginnings of the Bronze Age to the 3rd-4th centuries AD, different migratory tribes had come to settle”⁵. This assertion, made by M. Brudiu, summarized the starting point for all the field surveys carried out to understand the evolution of human communities in the area of the Vînători commune.

Starting from written historical records we can ascertain the existence of the village of *Scândureni* established before the reign of Stephen the Great. The document is mentioned in that of the ruler Ieremia Movilă, from April the 8th, 1603⁶ with which it notarized the purchase of this village by Cârste Ghenovici from Neagul pârçălab, his brother Nica and their

⁴ For newer approach on the geology of the Brateș Lake and its stratigraphy see ȚUȚUIANU *et alii* 2018, 43-55.

⁵ BRUDIU 2003, 54-59.

⁶ DIR, A, XVII, I, 85-86 no.124

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sister, Maria, the heirs of Ionașcu Scândureanu⁷. The village estate started from the shore of the “Brateș Fen”, occupied a part of the space between the villages Vînători and Costi, extending over the Mălina brook, to the “big spring”, where “Odaia lui Ibraim turcu” was, now the modern Cișmele village from the Smârdan communes.

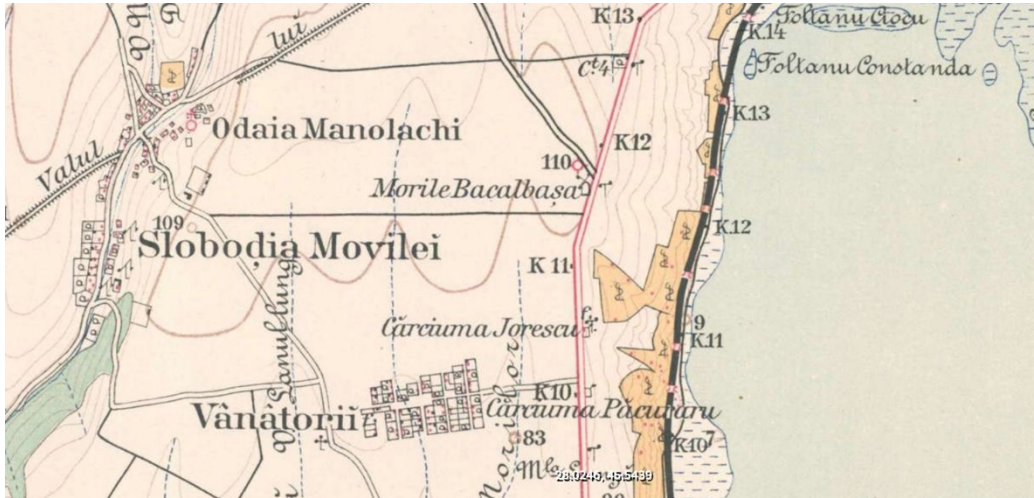


Fig. 2. Topographical map of Moldavia (1892-1898). Detail of the area of Vînători-La Jolică archaeological site (<https://maps.arcanum.com/en/map/romania-1892> accessed 11.11.2021).

We also have to mention that, in the time of Vasile Lupu, to the north of the village of Odaia Manolachi, parallel to the border with Tulucești village, a „Slobozie”⁹ was established by the ruler from the “sword” for the “fish hunters”. This situation is mentioned by Vasile Lupu's son, Ștefăniță, in a deed issued on August the 14th, 1660, in which this small village was offered to the Three Hierarchs Monastery from Iași¹⁰.

This “Slobozie” was populated with “Muntenians”, inhabitants of villages from Wallachia, bordering the Siret River, probably in the short period of good relations between rulers Vasile Lupu and Matei Basarab. Almost two decades later, on June 9, 1678, “Slobozia” is considered a “village” called Five Dogs¹¹. The meaning of this name is no longer known, but it has endured well into the 19th century AD¹².

⁷ See CHELCU, CHELCU 2003, 136, n. 183.

⁸ PĂLTĂNEA 2004, 10

⁹ A small village of settlers (natives or foreigners) who, for a period of time, were exempted from paying taxes.

¹⁰ ZAHARIUC 2017, 121

¹¹ DJAN Iași, Documents Fund, 101/12.

¹² TTRM, I, 1, 787.

Returning to the current subject matter, we have to first mention that the area of the Vînători village (Fig. 2) is rich in archaeological points of interest¹³. Of them, the Vînători-*La Jolică* site, has made its appearance in the archaeological literature in the 1970s, when it was discovered, following a series of field surveys undertaken by M. Brudiu in the area of southern Moldavia¹⁴. Following this initial identification, the first ample archaeological research was carried out in 1972-1974 by M. Florescu and M. Nicu¹⁵. The findings of these initial excavations have remained relatively unpublished till recently¹⁶. No plans, profiles or other drawings were identified, till now, but, fortunately, two small field notebooks with very short descriptions of the excavations carried out in the 1972-1974 campaigns still exist¹⁷.

These investigations were continued in the 1979 by M. Brudiu, who excavated two small ditches in the southern part of the site, above a series of old terraces made by the waters of the former Brateş Lake. This new excavation furthered the understanding of the settlement by identifying, once again, the aforementioned Hallstattian horizon, to which it added a series of artifacts specific for the Sântana de Mureş-Černjachov culture (4th century AD)¹⁸.

From this point forward, the site has become a pivot point in the discussion about the existence of an „early hallstattian horizon with incised ceramics” in the area of the Lower Danube. Archaeologists B. Hänsel, M. Brudiu or A. László used the information uncovered in the Vînători-*La Jolică* archaeological site, among others, to build a theoretical model explaining the beginning of the Iron Age in this area¹⁹.

Archaeological context

Newer field surveys and studies²⁰ have nuanced the general discussion concerning the prehistoric inhabitation of Vînători-*La Jolică* and it became obvious that a new archaeological excavation is necessary in order to better understand the stratigraphy and the chronology of this site. As such, between 2017 and 2019, four archaeological dig areas have been excavated

¹³ see BRUDIU 1970, 513; BRUDIU 1980, 398-406; BRUDIU 1983, 407-414; BRUDIU 2003, 54-59, 114-116 (n. 222-231); CROITORU 2013, 175-178.

¹⁴ BRUDIU 1970, 513, fig. 3-6.

¹⁵ FLORESCU A., FLORESCU M. 1983, 77, n. 19.

¹⁶ AILINCĂI 2013; MIHAIL, ADAMESCU 2013; AILINCĂI, ADAMESCU, MIHAIL 2014.

¹⁷ We would like to thank the *Teodor Cîncu* History Museum from Tecuci, and especially museographer Paul Ciobotaru, for helping us in retrieving M. Nicu`s field notebooks for the 1972-1974 excavations from Vînători-*La Jolică*.

¹⁸ BRUDIU 1980, p. 400.

¹⁹ BRUDIU 1981; HÄNSEL 1976; LÁSZLÓ 1986; BRUDIU 1991; BRUDIU 1992; LÁSZLÓ 1997.

²⁰ AILINCĂI 2013; AILINCĂI, ADAMESCU, MIHAIL 2014.

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on the southern edge of the site to verify the information that formed the basis of the theories regarding the beginning of the Iron Age in the Lower Danube area²¹.

The area is heavily affected by landslides, which have created a series of torrents that split the site into five different terraces. We have, thus, numbered them 1 to 5 from the South to the North, for an easier understanding of the site's morphology. As a result of the non-invasive archaeological research, terrace n. 2 was chosen for the first excavation, Surface 1 (S1). As such, the opened dig areas do not follow terrace numbering: terrace n. 1-S2; terrace n. 3-S4 and terrace n.5-S3 (Fig. 3).

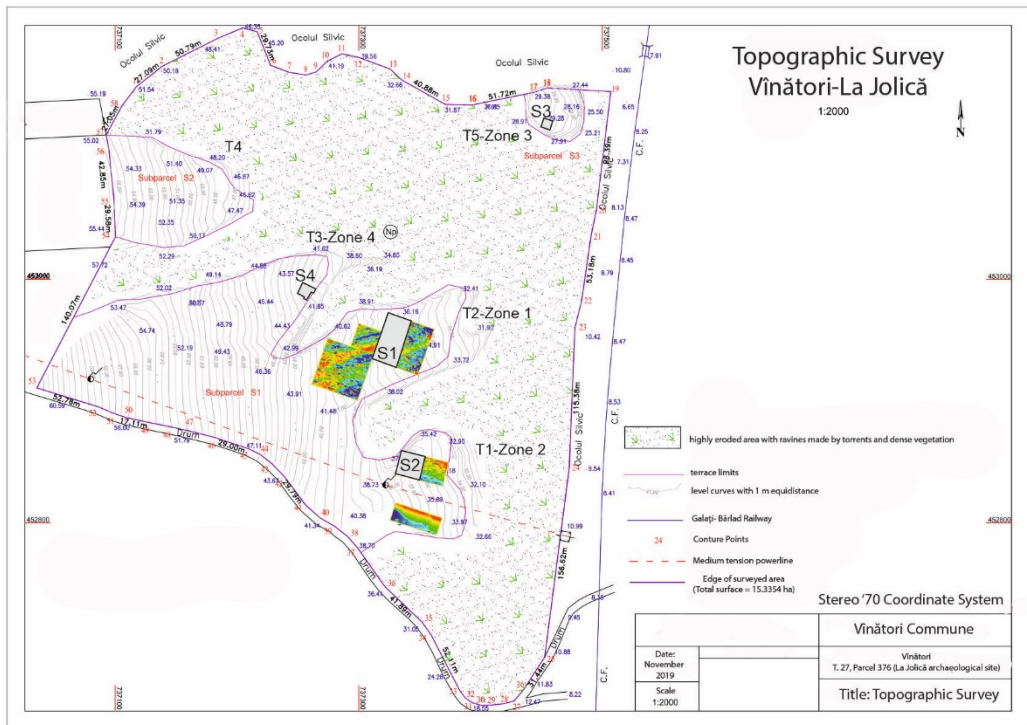


Fig. 3. Aerial view of the Vînători-La Jolică archaeological site.

In the S1 (800 m²) and S2 (400 m²) dig areas, we identified several dwelling structures (pits and houses) and uncovered new information about the evolution of cultural groups from the end of the second millennium-beginning of the first millennium B.C. in the area of the Lower Danube²². The carbon-14 dating indicates at least two distinct sequences of inhabitation. One, from the 15th-14th centuries BC, which can be attributed to a horizon contemporary with the

²¹ AILINCĂI *et alii* 2019a and 2019b; AILINCĂI *et alii* 2020.

²² AILINCĂI *et alii* 2019b, 244.

Noua culture, and another that broadly dates to the 11th-10th c. BC, even 9th century BC. The pottery identified for the second sequence shows similarities to artifacts uncovered in the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, attributed to the Belozerka culture or the Hansca-Holercani group²³. These similarities are also reinforced by metal, bone and stone objects that have many analogies in the North Pontic space. It seems that the Belozerka settlement begins to exist in the 11th century BC and probably continues till the Xth century BC, when imports from the Babadag area make their appearance (printed pottery being present in a very small percentage only in the structures from the 10th century BC)²⁴ (Fig. 3).

S3 (64 m²), researched on the northern terrace of the site, was opened in the 2019 campaign and led to the identification of a medieval necropolis (16th-17th centuries AD), of contemporary housing structures with those from S1-2 and some that can be dated to the early or middle period of the Bronze Age (Fig. 4).

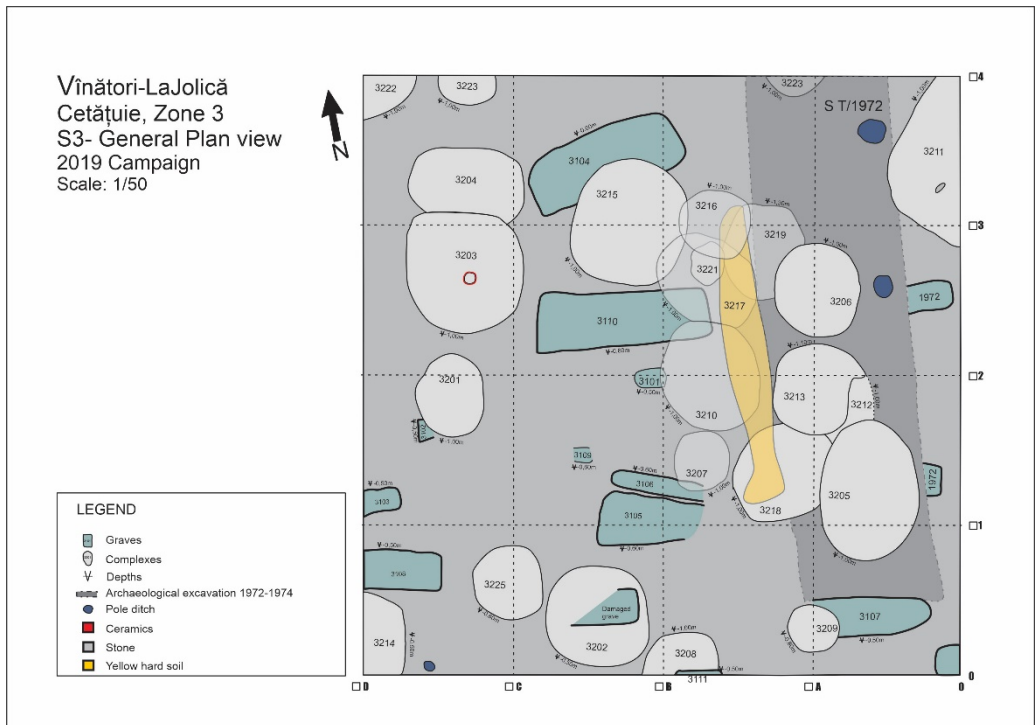


Fig. 4. General plan of S3/2019 from Vînători-La Jolică archaeological site.

²³ AILINCĂI *et alii* 2020, 431.

²⁴ AILINCĂI *et alii* 2020, 432.

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During the 2019 campaign, the team also researched Surface 4 (100 m²) which led to the discovery of three structures: a double burial tomb, with analogies to Stoicani²⁵, Revărsarea-Cotu Tichilești²⁶ and Kartal-Orlovka²⁷ (8th-7th centuries BC), a supply pit with atypical material and a hoard composed of eight bronze bracelets, buried at a shallow depth (Fig. 3).

The inhabitation of this archaeological site seems to span, with interruptions, from the beginning of the Bronze Age to the first half of the 17th century AD. Despite this large number of different types of archaeological complexes and artifacts, our article will focus on the funerary discoveries dating between the second half of the 16th century AD and the first half of the 17th century AD. This study aims to both analyze materials already published²⁸, as well as unpublished ones, which we will try to discuss for the first time in more than 40 years after their initial unearthing.

Stratigraphy

First and foremost, when talking about the stratigraphy of this archeological site, we did not have any plans, profiles or other drawings from the archaeological excavation carried out between 1972 and 1974 or 1979. The only initial information we had, came from the surveys conducted by M. Brudiu, allowing us to sketch a broad stratigraphic scheme. Thus, in all the researched ditches, the stratigraphic picture starts with the topsoil (40-50 cm); followed by a gray soil (40-50 cm), with pea granulation, containing ceramic shards belonging to the Sântana de Mureș-Černjachov culture. The next layer, of a dark soil (10-60 cm), is culturally sterile. It is followed by a somewhat brown soil (30-120 cm) unearthing materials specific to the Early Iron Age (Babadag culture?)²⁹. Unfortunately, M. Brudiu did not mention the final layer of the research and, implicitly, the maximum depth of the excavation. It became clear, in light of the newer excavations, that the five terraces of the site have a slightly different general stratigraphy; this fact being extremely obvious for terrace n. 5, which has become somewhat of a solitary headland, because of the torrents. Actually, this is the part of the site we will be focusing this study on, as it is the only one to offer information about the usage of this area in the 16th and the 17th centuries AD, until now.

²⁵ PETRESCU-DÎMBOVIȚA 1953, 166-185.

²⁶ AILINCĂI 2010, 343-347.

²⁷ BRUJAKO 2008, 139-145.

²⁸ AILINCĂI *et alii* 2020.

²⁹ BRUDIU 1980, 398.

M. Nicu, in collaboration with M. Florescu, started the 1972 campaign with the intention of excavating all of the terraces. As such, on this “lonely citadel”(terrace n. 5), the two archaeologists opened ditches “L” and “T” with the intention of researching a possible Early Bronze Age settlement³⁰. However, excavation uncovered a more recent inhumation grave, located between meters 1.60-2.40 of ditch T at 0.70 m of depth. It is noted that the grave profile shows the grave pit starts at the base of the topsoil and continues through the prehistoric layers to the sterile soil. The excavation of that area is halted, soon after, for the 1972 campaign³¹.

In 1974, the research of the site is resumed and a “feudal” necropolis is identified on terrace 5³². The research team manages to unearth a number of 58 graves, as it was recorded in the field notebook³³. It seems that, of those graves, 21 contained the skeletal remains of children and the rest were well preserved skeletons of adults. The remains of the wooden coffins are very clear, but the inventory of the graves is scarce. The two archaeologists also conclude that, based on the surface area and density of the burials, this “feudal” cemetery can contain as many as 600 individuals³⁴; a situation that should be verified by further excavations.

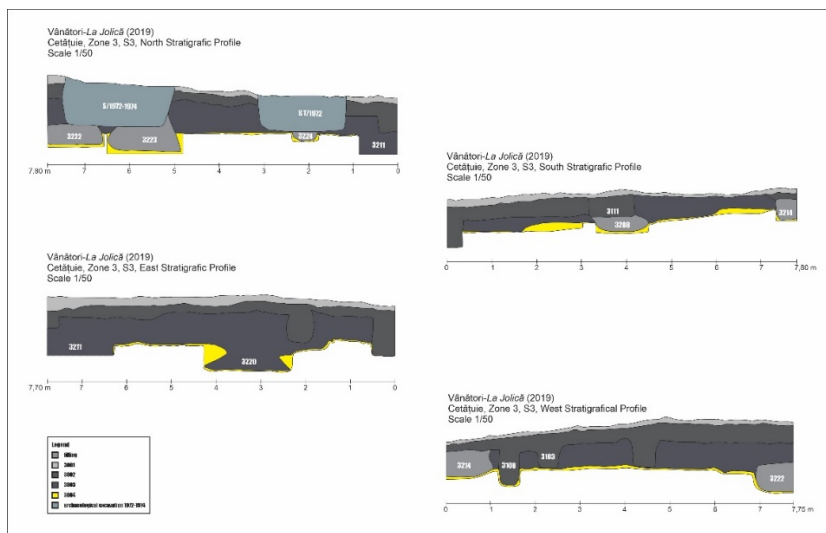


Fig. 5. Stratigraphy of Surface 3 (S3): northern, southern, eastern and western profiles

³⁰ Vânători – Notebook 1, 1972 campaign, 11.

³¹ Vânători – Notebook 1, 1972 campaign, 13.

³² Vânători – Notebook 2, 1974 campaign, 29.

³³ Vânători – Notebook 2, 1974 campaign, 1-28.

³⁴ Vânători – Notebook 2, 1974 campaign, 29-30.

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The 2019 campaign marked the opening of a dig area on terrace n. 5, named Zone 3. A small unit (Surface 3) was opened in the south-east area of Zone 3 (8 by 8 m) and had an east-west general orientation. From a stratigraphic point of view, the situation is as follows: U.S. 3001, top soil, 10-20 cm thick, followed by U.S. 3002, granular layer, with traces of late medieval material, 30-80 cm thick. Next is the U.S. 3003, with a thickness varying between 80-100 cm, gray layer containing artifacts and complexes dated both to the First Iron Age and to the Early Bronze Age. The last layer is U.S. 3004, the sterile soil that contains no presence of cultural material. Interestingly enough, this excavation also led to the identification of ditch "T" from the 1972 campaign that had a width of 2 m and a length of 7 m inside S3, as it extends beyond the north edge of the 2019 dig area (Fig. 5).

A description of the funerary finds

As stated above, we will only discuss the several funerary findings identified and researched in S3/2019. We are talking about 11 graves, part of a rural cemetery, 2 of children, a possible reburial and 8 adults.

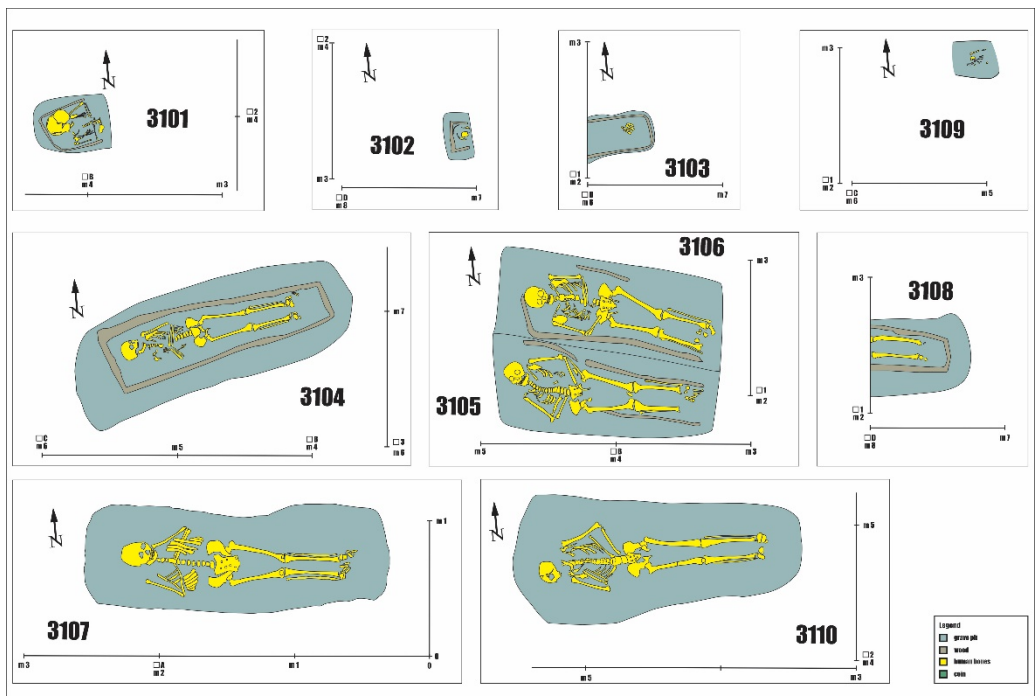


Fig. 6. Plan view of funerary finds, graves 3101-3110.

Cx. 3101 – Is the grave of a child, identified in □2-3 B-C, at a depth of -0.40 m from the current ground level. The pit was oval in shape, with clearly visible traces of a coffin. The orientation was East-West, slightly deviated towards the south. The deceased was deposited in a rectangular pit, in a supine position. Unfortunately, the tomb was sectioned from the waist down, as such the lower part is missing; also, the pelvic bones are not in anatomical connection. The skull was compacted by the weight of the earth above it and fell slightly to the left. His hands were placed on his chest.



Fig. 7. Image of Cx. 3101: 1-general view; 2. Detail of coin found from Cx. 3101.

The width at the shoulders is 0.21 m. The total length kept is 0.40 m. Inventory: an earring was discovered under the skull as a strongly oxidized mass; the defunct also had a coin placed in the chest area, together with a small clothing hook (Fig. 6, 7).

Cx. 3102 - Identified in □2 D, at a depth of -050 m, possibly the grave of a child. The grave pit is rectangular in shape, with traces of a wooden coffin. The orientation is East-West. The defunct was laid in a supine position. The bones are in approximate anatomical position. The grave was disturbed, but a skull and several cervical vertebrae could be identified. No inventory (Fig. 6)

Cx. 3103 – Evidenced in the western stratigraphic profile, in □2 D, at a width of -0.50 m. It is oriented E-V. It was partially unearthed, more precisely the lower part of the deceased was recovered (Fig. 6)

Cx. 3104 - Identified in □4 B-C, at a depth of -0.60 m. The grave pit is rectangular in shape with traces of the coffin clearly visible. The defunct is laid in a supine position, hands on the chest and an East-West orientation. The individual was measured at 2 m height and a width of 0.80 m at the shoulders and 0.40 m at the feet. Inventory: a coin identified in the chest area (Fig. 6, 8).

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Fig. 8. Image of Cx. 3104: 1-general view; 2. Detail of the defunct from Cx. 3104with a bronze coin.

Cx. 3105 – The funerary remains of an adult individual, whose grave was first identified at a depth of -0.50 m, in □1-2 B-C. The grave pit is rectangular and slightly intersects with no. 3106. The length of the pit is about 2.00 m and the width is about 1.00 m. The bones are in anatomical position. The deceased is oriented East-West and placed in a supine position with his right hand on his chest and his left hand at the pelvis. No inventory. [Fig. 6, 9]

Cx. 3106 – Grave of an adult identified at a top depth of -0.50 m, in □1-2 B-C. The pit is rectangular in shape with a length of 2.00 m and a width of 0.80 m. The deceased was oriented East-West and placed in a supine position with his right hand on the pelvis and his left hand on his chest. A coin was found under the upper part of the spine. [Fig. 6, 9]

Cx. 3107 – Evidenced in □1 A-B, at a depth of -0.50 m from the current ground level. The pit is rectangular in shape with a length of 2.20 m and a width of 0.73 m. The deceased is oriented E-V and placed in a supine position. The length of the deceased is 1.70 m, the width at the arms is 53 cm. The hands are crossed on the chest and the skull is slightly tilted to the left. No inventory (Fig. 6, 9).



Fig. 9. Image of graves from S3/2019: 1. Cx. 3105-3106; 2. 3107.

Cx. 3108 - Identified in the Western stratigraphic profile, in □ D, at a depth of -0.60 m from the current ground level. Only the lower limbs of the deceased were excavated in S3, the rest of the grave will be researched in future dig areas. The tomb had traces of the wooden coffin. The defunct was oriented E-V and laid in a supine position. No inventory (Fig. 6, 7).

Cx. 3109 - Unearthed in □2 C, at a depth of 0.60 m. We were unable to clearly identify a grave pit. Basically we are talking about a mass of human bones discovered along with a coin. We suspect that this is a reburial (Fig. 6, 10)



Fig. 10. Image of graves from S3/2019: 1. Cx. 3109; 2. 3110.

Cx. 3110 - Visible in □3 B-C, at a depth of -0.60 m. The pit is rectangular in shape with a length of 2.17 m, a width of 0.60 cm. The deceased was placed in a supine position with the right arm brought to the shoulders and the left one placed towards the lumbar vertebrae. It is oriented East-West with the head slightly dropped to the right and the jaw clenched. He appears to have been tied to his knees. The length of the deceased is 1.68 m and a width of 52 cm at the shoulders. No inventory (Fig. 6, 10)

Cx. 3111 - The grave pit was observed on the South stratigraphic profile, in □ 2 B, at a depth of -0.50 m. On the stratigraphic profile it is possible to see the grave pit, rectangular in shape, oriented East-West. A coin was recovered during the cleaning of the dig area edge.

A description of the artifacts

As mentioned above, for the 1974 campaign, the inventory of the graves unearthed on terrace n. 5 is quite scarce. As a rule, the grave pits greatly impacted on the Hallstattian and Early Bronze Age layers. Only five of the funerary remains excavated in S3 contain a typical inventory, which will help in also understanding the general chronology of this necropolis.

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We are talking about a piece of jewelry, a clothing accessory and five coins. All of the artifacts identified in the excavation from *Vînători-La Jolică* site have been cleaned and conserved in the “Paul Păltănea” History Museum Department of Conservation-Restoration.

1. Silver coin, good condition, used, dimensions 16x18 mm, smooth edge, 0.90 grams. Very hard to comprehend, a possible Turkish coin. Discovered in the chest area of the defunct from grave 1101, Zone 3, S3, □2-3 B-C, -0.50 m (inv. 42939). [Fig. 11]

2. Fragmentary earring of bronze wire with a diameter of 0.1 cm composed of two loops with one of the ends turned outwards and a fragment of a small bronze sheet (probably decoration). Dimensions: the upper loop 25 mm diameter; the lower loop 20 mm diameter; 9 mm by 14 mm for the bronze sheet decoration. Discovered near the skull of the individual buried in grave 3101, Zone 3, S3, □2-3 B-C, -0.50 m. [Fig. 11]

3. A simple copper alloy wire blunt hooked clasp. The construction is very simple as it involves bending a heavy gauge wire back on itself to form a hook; also the ends are curled into a pair of flanking attachment loops. Discovered in the chest area of the defunct in grave 3101, Zone 3, S3, □2-3 B-C, -0.50 m. [Fig. 11]

4. Silver coin, denarius, good condition, used and damaged, 15x13 mm in dimension, smooth edge, 0.05 mm width, 0.20 grams. Obverse: The heraldic shield of the Hungarian monarchy and the inscription [*FERDI]NAND • D • G • R • VNG* 155[4]. Reverse: Crowned Madonna with baby Jesus in her arms separating the inscription PATRON[A] [VNG]ARIE . Discovered in grave 3104, Zone 3, S3, □4C, -1.00 m (inv. 42935). [Fig. 11]

5. Silver coin, denarius, good condition, used and damaged, smooth edge, 15x14 mm in dimension, width 0.05 mm, 0.39 grams. Obverse: The heraldic shield of the Hungarian monarchy and the inscription [R]UD • II • RO • I • S • AUG • H • B • R. Reverse: Crowned Madonna with baby Jesus in her arms separating the inscription [P]AT[R] [15]80 H[VNG]. Discovered at the base of grave 3106, Zone 3, S 3, □2B, -0.90 m (inv. 42937). [Fig. 11]

6. Silver coin, poor condition, used and 50% missing, 14x10 mm in dimension, smooth edge, 0.09 grams. Almost unreadable, possibly a RO • I on the obverse. Discovered in grave 3109, Zone 3, S3, □2C, -0.70 m. (inv. 42938). [Fig. 11]

7. Silver coin, ½ Groschen, used and drilled in the lower part, dimensions 17x17 mm, smooth edge, 0.67 grams. Obverse: The heraldic coat of arms of the Polish monarchy and the inscription + [M]O[N]ETA+ I +[ALBER]TI. Reverse: Polish crown and inscription + REG[IS] * * [POL]ONIE. Discovered in grave 3111, Zone 3, S 3, □1B, -0.55 m (inv. 42936). [Fig. 11]



Fig. 11. Grave finds from S3/2019: 1 (Cx. 3101); 2 (Cx. 3104); 3 (Cx. 3106); 4 (Cx. 3109); 5 (Cx.3111).

Discussion

From the inventories of the graves we will first discuss the numismatic finds. Of the five coins, inv. 42935³⁵ and 42937³⁶ can clearly be attributed to the House of Habsburg emperors, in their role as kings of Hungary, minted at Kremnitz. These Austrian denarii start to circulate consistently after the first half of the 16th century AD, and, it has been argued that they start to become dominant in the area east of the Carpathians in the seventh or eighth decade of that century³⁷. Inventory number 42938 is missing a large part, but it is possible for this coin to be similar to 42937 and, thus, be dated in the reign of Holy Roman Emperor Rudolph II. Coin n. 42936 has the general appearance of a coin from the polish area and is poorly centered on both sides. The studied coin seems to have been minted during the reign of king John I Albert at Kraków³⁸. The last silver coin has an unusual, oval, shape and, unfortunately,

³⁵ HUSZÁR 1979, 143, n. 935a type.

³⁶ HUSZÁR 1979, 162, n. 1059 type.

³⁷ APARASCHIVEI *et alii* 2019, 240.

³⁸ MUNTEANU, MIHĂILESCU-BÎRLIBA, OBERLÄNDER-TÂRNOVEANU 2006, 59, n. 45.

is almost unreadable. It is possible for it to be an ottoman coin, *medin* or *para*, issued by sultan Süleyman I, Quanuni³⁹.

The dressing hook is quite possibly the simplest form of clothing fastening, made of a single piece of wire; it would have been, of course, paired with an eye-clasp. It appears that this form had a long life and it must have been relatively common in day to day life. Their construction made it easy for them to be made in all sorts of workshops including rural ones; such workshop was identified at Radovanu (Călărași County)⁴⁰. Surely, these are below the middling sort, though we must not dismiss the use of simple, yet practical, hooks, by all in society, especially if they were out of view. This artifact appears to have been used throughout the Post-Medieval period and well into modern times and, as such, it becomes a common find in funerary contexts, analogies can be found all over the current territory of Romania, the closest ones being those excavated from other cemeteries located in Galați County⁴¹.

The earring is made from a single length of copper-alloy wire, twisted along its length and then formed into two ovals, by twisting and then uniting the ends. The upper part has one of the ends bent towards the exterior in a loop like shape. Single loop earrings of this type have been found in many funerary contexts from the territory of Romania, for example at Brad⁴², although artifacts of a very similar construction were excavated at Enisala-Medieval Necropolis⁴³. Its discovery, in connection with a silver coin, seems to clearly infer that the grave can be dated to the 16th century AD⁴⁴.

It seems to be clear that we are talking about the cemetery of a rural settlement from the second half of the 16th century-beginning of the 17th century AD. This situation becomes clearer when we take into account the excavations of another archaeological site, located slightly to the north, named Vînători-Admiral⁴⁵. M. Brudiu conducted a series of excavations on the path of a new irrigation pipe that passed through this particular area. Its chronology starts in the 4th century AD with a Sântana de Mureș-Černjachov settlement, then an Early Medieval inhabitation and, finally, an inhabitation during the period of the 16th century AD⁴⁶.

³⁹ DAMALI 2010, 642 (10-MR-G2b).

⁴⁰ COMȘA 1986, 231.

⁴¹ ILIE, MANDACHE, ADAMESCU 2017, 120; 152, fig. 31; Ilie, Mandache, Adamescu 2019, 76-77.

⁴² URSACHI *et alii* 2020, 58; 418; 459, fig.1; 663, pl. CLXV/5-8.

⁴³ MĂNUCU-ADAMEȘTEANU 1980, 622, fig. 3/6-7; 624-625.

⁴⁴ URSACHI *et alii* 2020, 446.

⁴⁵ BRUDIU 1983, 407-414.

⁴⁶ BRUDIU 1983, 407.

The research unearthed two huts of rectangular shape, an East-West orientation and partially buried. At the base of each of these huts the archeologist was able to identify two Hungarian coins, two ceramic pipes and an iron auger⁴⁷. Interestingly enough, the two coins are minted in the times of two Holy Roman Emperors mentioned above, 1551 (Ferdinand I) and 1587 (Rudolph II). As such, we consider that the two excavations are connected, meaning that the cemetery from *La Jolică* Point served the small rural settlement identified in *Admiral* Point. Of course, terrace n. 5 and the *Admiral* Point would have been connected in that period, but now, because of landslides, a large scarp sits between the two areas (Fig. 3). Furthermore, the identification of an auger inside hut II can entail that the occupation of these inhabitants could be connected to woodworking and, maybe, the area is an abandoned part of the Scândureni village mentioned above. Actually, in the area of the Vânători commune, another abandoned cemetery was identified in the year 2021, south of Costi village, near the Vânători Lake⁴⁸.

Some conclusions

Summarizing the findings presented above, on the basis of the newer excavations made between 2017-2019, we can conclude that on terrace n. 5 from Vânători-*La Jolică* site area we have located the necropolis of a rural settlement that has since disappeared. We consider that it is safe to infer that it belonged to a Romanian, Christian population. The observation of the distribution of the graves allows ascertaining that, by the middle of the sixteenth century, as the dating of earliest tomb entails, the entire surface of the terrace was slowly being occupied by graves.

Of the 11 graves we have identified, four are in a very bad condition, mainly because of the afforestation attempts made for the area. The holes made for the planting of trees have somewhat destroyed parts of the funerary finds (3101-3103, 3109). Cx. 3108 is incomplete and will be unearthed completely in future excavations. Cx. 3104-3107 and 3110 are in a relatively good state and will be the subject of a future anthropological analysis. The graves of children are very shallow and all of them seem to stop at a depth of about 0.60 m; the majority of the adult graves holes seem to have a depth of approximately 1.50 m. We can also say that we can

⁴⁷ BRUDIU 1983, 413-414.

⁴⁸ An accidental discovery made by an individual who brought some artifacts (glass beads, 2 coins and a bronze ring) to DJC Galați. A field survey was carried out afterwards and a series of 12 possible graves were identified in that area, some very damaged by earthworks. The cemetery, which will be inducted in the National Archaeological Repertoire, can be dated in the period of the 16th-17th centuries AD.

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identify a single level of burials that can be dated between the second half of the 16th century AD and the beginning of the 17th century AD. The written sources, as mentioned above, present two possible villages for this area, but, still, it is possible we are talking about the cemetery of a small settlement on the edge of Brateş Lake that may not have been mentioned in written records.

The funerary finds mentioned above can be connected to those from *Lieşti-Biserica veche* (2007), *Galaţi-Protoierie* (2013, 2017), *Negrileşti-Grădiniţă* (2019-2020), identified in relatively newer excavations. All of these new discoveries have nuanced the research of rural Late Medieval/Premodern settlements in the area of Galaţi County and can provide factual evidence for written sources.

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