

**ZBORNÍK NA POČESŤ**  
**DARINY BIALEKOVEJ**

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## AN UPDATE FOR „IPOTEȘTI-CANDEȘTI CULTURE"

EUGEN S. TEODOR

Present contribution is aiming to enlighten some recent issues of the Romanian research in post-Roman archaeology, less known abroad, if any. Ipotești-Cândești culture<sup>1</sup> is defining the archaeological landscape between Southern Carpathians and Lower Danube<sup>2</sup>, in the time gap between the end of the Huns Confederation and the arrival of the Bulgars. There is a very well known fact that the most Romanian archaeologists are classifying this culture within the long process of acquiring the Romance identity, as a final stage. The international literature, for a change, takes this culture as the southern variant for „Praga-Korchak-Zhitomir", i. e. early Slavic culture, based on similarities on handmade pottery<sup>1</sup> or house building<sup>4</sup>. As usual in a deaf folks' argument, the both parts are partly right. Nevertheless, the right average is not a simple task.

The basic works for Ipotești-Cândești culture are now at least 20 years old (*Dolinescu-Ferche 1984; Teodorescu 1964*)<sup>5</sup> and they are still usable as a descriptive lecture. In the early '80s, when Suzana Dolinescu-Ferche were writing the last study, even in the early '90s, when Eugenia Zaharia concluded a lifetime activity in early middle age archaeology, Oltenia<sup>6</sup> was still a white spot on the map. The field research brought some data about the beginning and the end of the culture on the stake only from 1993 to day. This is why I am making here an update.

We should start with a brief and essential description of the main items of the material culture. The opened settlements near the water streams are the most usual ensembles of Ipotești-Cândești culture. They are used just for a few years, the inhabitants choosing to change place each 5 to 10 years<sup>7</sup>. As a consequence, there are no anthropic deposits between the settlement features. There are few exceptions from the rule (like Budureasca or BSleni)<sup>8</sup>, but only

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<sup>1</sup> This archaeological culture is known in multi-format names, like Ipotești-Ciurel-Cândești (*Dolinescu-Ferche 1984*), Ipotești-Cândești-Ciurel (*Teodor D. 1994-1995*) or just Ciurel (*Diaconu P. 2000*, with conceptual differences), and others (!), but "Ipotești-Cândești" is the first name (*Teodorescu 1964*) and the most usual. There are recorded attempts to get off this ever changing identity (*Diaconu Gh. 1979*), but the proposal („the Romance culture") is tendentious and partially wrong. I am using the international established "Ipotești-Cândești" only for avoid the increasing of confusion. I should choose „Late post-Roman period", which is culturally neutral and could also be used for other territories (Moldavia, for example).

<sup>2</sup> The title "Ipotești-Cândești" from the most recent encyclopedic work in Romania (*EncAR 1996*, 266-277, signed Radu Harhoiu) makes the surprising statement that Ipotești-Cândești culture „has been identified in alt over Carpathian-Danubian territories" (i. e. all Romania). The similarities between various cultures inside or outside Carpathian Basin have been observed long time ago, better put in the collocation „Botoșana-Bratei-Ipotești" (*Dan Gh. Teodor*). The extrapolation of „Ipotești-Cândești culture" outside Valachia is rather confusing.

<sup>3</sup> Until very recently no one put the real limits of these similarities on a trial. That was in fact what I tried to do in my PhD dissertation (*Teodor E. 2001*).

<sup>4</sup> The latest echoes of this point of view came just from Romania (*Stanciu 1998-1999; 2001*, with a developed bibliography of the issue). See also *Salkovsky 2001*, the most complete and recent synthesis work about dwellings in the 6th-7th cent.

<sup>5</sup> Extensive parts of other works are dedicated to the main frame of the Ipotești-Cândești culture. I should cite here at least Eugenia Zaharia's latest contribution (*Zaharia 1994-1995*, 314-320, 328-334). The Senior archaeologist from Bucharest brought yet nothing new in her approach, which is captive to the national vision from the former decades.

<sup>6</sup> The western part of Vallachia, between Carpathians, Danube and Lower Olt River, known also like "Little Valachia".

There are any strong-places within Ipotești-Cândești culture. The time-life for one settlement: *Dolinescu-Ferche 1992*, 173. The single explanation so far would be the crop rotation or the fallow of the land, for fertility reasons (the last argument in *Curia 2001*, 276). There are hazed at least two facets of the problem. First, the land from Romanian Plain is richer and more fertile than that from Eastern or Northern Moldavia, for example, where the villages were used for longer time. Second, it is ridiculous to believe that necessities of food for 70 to 100 people could waste large meadows fields in 5 years. It is obvious that the explanations have to be found somewhere else.

*Teodorescu et al. 1993*, 365 for Budureasca 4. The situation is similar, in gross, for the other sites (like 3, 5, 7) from Budureasca valley. I had the opportunity to check in the field the assertion, in 2001. For Baleni see *Muscă/Muscă 1980*. By affability of Mrs. Luciana Muscă I had access to field documents. The report for Gropsani is also mentioning an anthropic layer for the 6<sup>th</sup> cent. (*Popilian/Nica 1998*, 37), yet the published drawing (*Popilian/Nica 1998*, fig. 26) lead to conclusion that the layer is due to the third century settlement

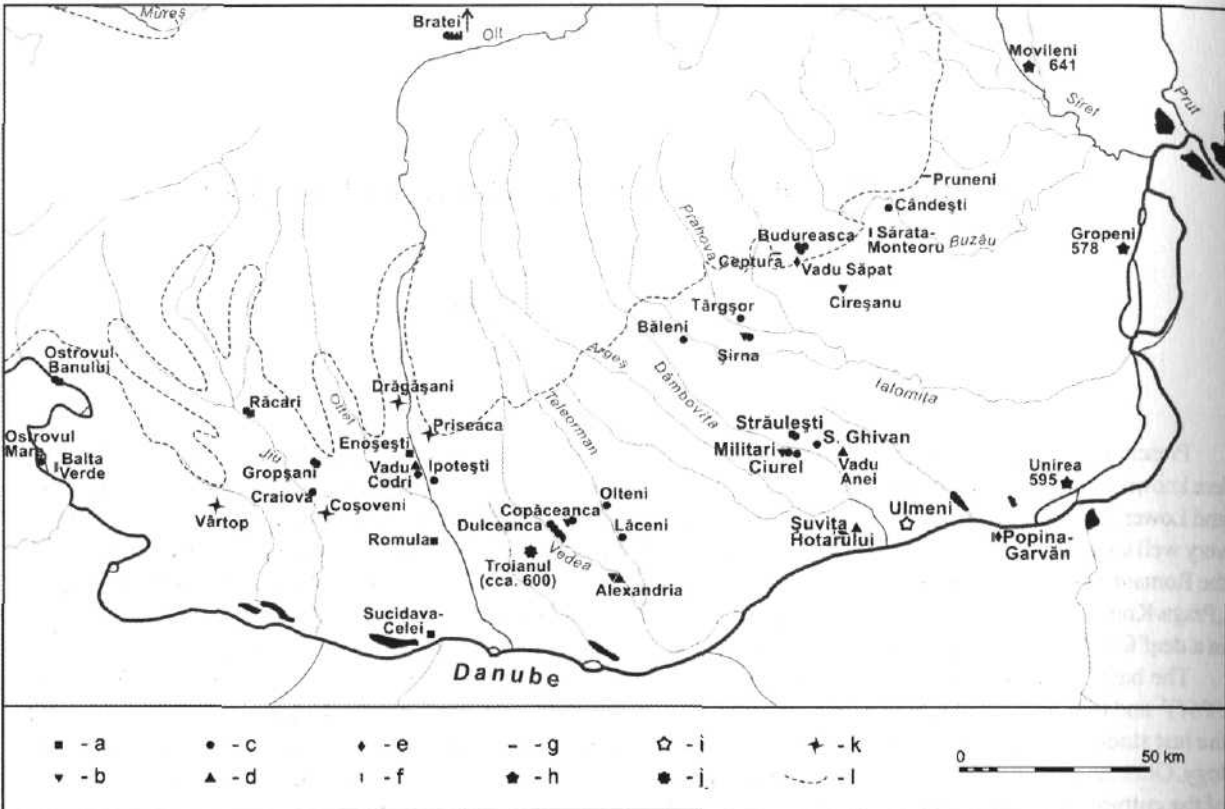


Fig. 1. Sites mentioned in text. Legend: a - Roman camps; b - settlements shortly before the Ipotești-Căndești culture; c - settlements belonging the Ipotești-Căndești culture; d - settlements within Vadu Codri horizon; e - settlements shortly after the Ipotești-Căndești culture; f - cremation burials (6<sup>th</sup> and early 7<sup>th</sup> cent.); g - inhumation burials (6<sup>th</sup> and early 7<sup>th</sup> cent.); h - coin treasures (late 6<sup>th</sup> and first half of the 7<sup>th</sup> cent.); i - uncertain coin treasure; j - treasure with fractional coins; k - treasures buried around 680; l - 500 meters elevation.

in the upper plain or between hills. Sometimes the new settlements are quite close to formers, as in case Dulceanca 1, 2 and 4 {*Dolinescu-Ferche 1992, 172, 173*}<sup>9</sup>, positioned only to one km each other, but we don't know how far were dispatched the inhabitants in all other cases. In some settlements there was revealed a second habitation phase on the same spot, as Dulceanca 1, Ciurel, Băleni, Budureasca 4 and 5, Gropșani, Vadu Codri<sup>10</sup>. The houses are mostly of partially buried type, usually half meter. The inside sole level is extremely rare lower than 0,8 m. At the opposite situation, there are known few settlements with ground level structures, like Străulești-Lunca, Dulceanca 1, Olteni, Copăceanca, Lăceni<sup>11</sup>, all associated with meadows, and most of them (the last four) clustered in a little area from

<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, it is quite unsure that the inhabitants from Dulceanca 1 moved directly to Dulceanca 2, and so on, even if we agree the order Suzana Dolinescu-Ferche gave (but I don't). Without any certitude, I should say that probably Dulceanca 1, 2 and 4 were only *some* of the chain links in the area. There are also other closed neighbored settlements (around one kilometer), like Ciurel and Militari, in western Bucharest, like Străulești-Măicănești and Străulești-Lunca in northern Bucharest, or like Copăceanca (Teleorman county), one in the meadow, one up on the terrace, or like the three settlements from Băleni (Dâmbovița county), or the settlements 1 and 2 from Bratei (Sibiu county, in southern Transylvania, nevertheless considered as a Ipotești-Căndești appendage, see *Zaharia 1994-1995*). The examples are, in fact, richer. More important seems to me here to point out that in each of those cases the settlements are different locations of the same community, offering great opportunities to study the dispatching habit, and, maybe, one day, understand it better.

<sup>10</sup> Dulceanca 1: *Dolinescu-Ferche 1974*, Ciurel: *Dolinescu-Ferche/Constantiniu 1981*; Budureasca 4: *Teodorescu et al. 1993*; Budureasca 5: Dan Lichiardopol personal communication; Gropșani: *Popilian/Nica 1998*; Vadu Codri: *Nica/Deleanu 1994*. For Dulceanca 1 and Gropșani the authors did not infer the existence of two habitation episodes, the fact being established by inventories analyses (*Teodor E. 2000b* for Dulceanca; *Teodor E. 2001*, § 9.1, 145 for Gropșani). For Ciurel the authors asserted two habitation episodes, but in a wrong way. For Vadu Codri see below. For the location of the sites see Figure 1 (map).

<sup>11</sup> See the general outlook in *Dolinescu-Ferche 1984*, 123, 124. For Lăceni - recent diggings, information Sorin Oantă. For locations - see fig. 1.

Western Muntenia. In this area the submerged huts themselves are not deepened more than half meter (as in Dulceanca 2 and 4). The differences between central and western Muntenia are not due to „emblemic styles“<sup>12</sup>, but to the simple fact that the clay layer is closer to the surface for the last. All houses, from this period ahead, are provided with heating facilities inside, in contrast with the cultures until the fourth century for which such devices are encountered only about on tenth from all.

This major misfitting, along others, concurred to the conclusion that the inhabitants within Ipotesti-Candesti culture couldn't be the aftermaths of the Chilia-Militari or Sântana de Mureș-Chernyakhov cultures. There are few to consider the possibility that a change of the climate could be on the roots of such a behavior, unless the same argument is validated for Ukraine or Poland territories (*Donat 1970,261; Stanciu 1998-1999, 127*).

All structures devoid of heating facility are not living houses, but household annexes. The heating devices are basically of two types: clay ovens (usually caved in native clay) and stone ovens. The first is exclusive for the low plain (the Southern half of Valachia), where there is any stone in substratum or rolling stones along rivers. Both types are encountered in upper plain, the second being dominant. This fact produced doubts if the natural conditions versus cultural causality should be determinant in establishing one type or another (*Curta 2001, 284, 285*)<sup>13</sup>. Of course, both types were extracted from the northern horizons (*Comșa 1978, 114, 115; Parczewski 1993,99; Rappoport 1972, 229 and others*)<sup>14</sup>, unless local archaeology for third to fifth centuries could provide at least some of the requested examples (*Dolinescu-Ferche 1995*). The matter is not a simple one and should worth a detailed study. In this synthesis frame I should give in only two hints. First, the caved clay ovens are more lasting as stone ovens, just because we recovered by digging more complete installations caved in clay. Second, there is a third type of house oven, made by bricks (recovered from Roman sites), encountered in Oltenia only<sup>15</sup>. The type has a long history in the area, including within Roman camps<sup>16</sup>, and is frequent in Illyricum too.

The ovens are disposed in the most exposed corner to the winter winds, facing north-east. The hut pits are rather small, usually from 10 to 16 square meters. The building structure is not always obvious. There are few examples with four or more post holes. In most of the cases the archaeologists found only two of them, if any. Of course, the house structure has to lay down on something. The only possible explanation is the fact that the house is larger than the pit and the structure was raised on the soil level. The fact is difficult to illustrate, due to the fact that antic soil is often disturbed by ploughing. There are structures laid on sills too (on Baleni, for example), but they make a minority.

The archaeological inventories are made mainly from pottery. In a large perspective above all Ipotesti-Candesti sites, exactly half of it is handmade pottery. The other half is made from fast wheel pottery (90%) and arguably slow wheel pottery. This average is made yet from very different figures. There are sites from western Muntenia and Oltenia in which the fast wheel pottery makes the rule (90 to 95% from all pots, as Ipotesti, Copaceanca, features from Gropșani). There are also settlements devoid of wheel products. The missing homogeneity is operating also to the design level. The morphologies with arguably Roman analogies are rising to 90% in Oltenia, 66% for western Muntenia, but only to 25% in some of the Bucharest sites, in central Muntenia (*Teodor E. 2001, § 14*). Of course, one can inquiry if, in given conditions, we are aloud to talk about one single culture, whatever the name.

Another spicy subject within „Ipotesti-Candesti culture“ is the funerary one. In spite of the greatest cemetery within the epoch, from Sârata Monteoru<sup>17</sup>, the matter is far from being clear. There are a few isolated inhumation burials, in the same north-eastern area. To the opposite part of the territory, there are two cremation burials at Balta Verde, and that's all<sup>18</sup>. Between Ceptura and Balta Verde there is a gap, 300 km wide and 150 km stretched, with some dozens known settlements, but without any funerary features. This is unlikely „Slavic archaeology“.

<sup>12</sup> This is a key collocation in *Curta 2001* (all over, like pp. 33, 44, 197, 203, 204 etc.) for denominating differences that define a specific culture.

<sup>13</sup> The connection between resources and the house ovens is also well documented for Lower Somes. (*Stanciu 1998-1999, 124*).

<sup>14</sup> There is a second opinion, that oven fitting has not (always) to be connected with cultural background (*Gavritukhin 1993, 108*).

<sup>15</sup> *Insula Banului (Diaconu/Roman 1967)*, *Ostrovul Mare-Vadu Morii (Boronean/Stingă 1978)*, *Piatra Sat-Vadu Codri (Nica/Deleanu 1994)*, *Fârçașele (Marin Nica, not published)*.

<sup>16</sup> *Romula (Gh. Popilian and M. Nica, not published)*, *Sucidava (Tudor et al. 1980; see also CCA 1993; 1994)*. For strong places with brick ovens, in Balkan area, see *Salkovsky 1993, 73*.

<sup>17</sup> Not published yet, after three decades from the digging was concluded. See *Fiedler 1992, 74-88; Nestor/Zaharia 1959; 1961*.

<sup>18</sup> *Balta Verde: Berciu/Comșa 1956; Fiedler 1992, 88, 89*; there is another published „cemetery“ (*Boronean/Stingă 1978*) on *Ostrovul Mare* island (on Danube, downstream Iron Gates), that is in fact a ...settlement. The arguments used for the children cremation burials within the settlement from Dulceanca 4 (*Dolinescu-Ferche 1992, 133, 134*) seem to me highly doubtful.



Western Muntenia. In this area the submerged huts themselves are not deepened more than half meter (as in Dulceanca 2 and 4). The differences between central and western Muntenia are not due to „emblemic styles"<sup>12</sup>, but to the simple fact that the clay layer is closer to the surface for the last. All houses, from this period ahead, are provided with heating facilities inside, in contrast with the cultures until the fourth century for which such devices are encountered only about on tenth from all.

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All structures devoid of heating facility are not living houses, but household annexes. The heating devices are basically of two types: clay ovens (usually caved in native clay) and stone ovens. The first is exclusive for the low plain (the Southern half of Valachia), where there is any stone in substratum or rolling stones along rivers. Both types are encountered in upper plain, the second being dominant. This fact produced doubts if the natural conditions versus cultural causality should be determinant in establishing one type or another (*Curta 2001*, 284, 285)<sup>13</sup>. Of course, both types were extracted from the northern horizons (*Comșa 1978*, 114, 115; *Parczewski 1993*, 99; *Rappoport 1972*, 229 and others)<sup>14</sup>, unless local archaeology for third to fifth centuries could provide at least some of the requested examples (*Dolinescu-Ferche 1995*). The matter is not a simple one and should worth a detailed study. In this synthesis frame I should give in only two hints. First, the caved clay ovens are more lasting as stone ovens, just because we recovered by digging more complete installations caved in clay. Second, there is a third type of house oven, made by bricks (recovered from Roman sites), encountered in Oltenia only<sup>15</sup>. The type has a long history in the area, including within Roman camps<sup>16</sup>, and is frequent in Illyricum too.

The ovens are disposed in the most exposed corner to the winter winds, facing north-east. The hut pits are rather small, usually from 10 to 16 square meters. The building structure is not always obvious. There are few examples with four or more post holes. In most of the cases the archaeologists found only two of them, if any. Of course, the house structure has to lay down on something. The only possible explanation is the fact that the house is larger than the pit and the structure was raised on the soil level. The fact is difficult to illustrate, due to the fact that antic soil is often disturbed by ploughing. There are structures laid on sills too (on Băleni, for example), but they make a minority.

The archaeological inventories are made mainly from pottery. In a large perspective above all Ipotești-Cândești sites, exactly half of it is handmade pottery. The other half is made from fast wheel pottery (90%) and arguably slow wheel pottery. This average is made yet from very different figures. There are sites from western Muntenia and Oltenia in which the fast wheel pottery makes the rule (90 to 95% from all pots, as Ipotești, Copăceanca, features from Gropșani). There are also settlements devoid of wheel products. The missing homogeneity is operating also to the design level. The morphologies with arguably Roman analogies are rising to 90% in Oltenia, 66% for western Muntenia, but only to 25% in some of the Bucharest sites, in central Muntenia (*Teodor E. 2001*, § 14). Of course, one can inquiry if, in given conditions, we are aloud to talk about one single culture, whatever the name.

Another spicy subject within „Ipotești-Cândești culture" is the funerary one. In spite of the greatest cemetery within the epoch, from Sărata Monteoru<sup>17</sup>, the matter is far from being clear. There are a few isolated inhumation burials, in the same north-eastern area. To the opposite part of the territory, there are two cremation burials at Balta Verde, and that's all<sup>18</sup>. Between Ceptura and Balta Verde there is a gap, 300 km wide and 150 km stretched, with some dozens known settlements, but without any funerary features. This is unlikely „Slavic archaeology".

<sup>12</sup> This is a key collocation in *Curta 2001* (all over, like pp. 33, 44, 197, 203, 204 etc.) for denominating differences that define a specific culture.

<sup>13</sup> The connection between resources and the house ovens is also well documented for Lower Someș (*Ștanciu 1998-1999*, 124).

<sup>14</sup> There is a second opinion, that oven fitting has not (always) to be connected with cultural background (*Gavritukhin 1993*, 108).

<sup>15</sup> *Insula Banului (Diaconii/Roman 1967)*, *Ostrovul Mare-Vadu Morii (Boroneanț/Stingă 1978)*, *Piatra Sat-Vadu Codri (Nica/Deleanu 1994)*, Fărcașele (Marin Nica, not published).

<sup>16</sup> Romula (Gh. Popilian and M. Nica, not published), Sucidava (*Tudor et al. 1980*; see also *CCA 1993*; 1994). For strong places with brick ovens, in Balkan area, see *Salkovsky 1993*, 73.

<sup>17</sup> Not published yet, after three decades from the digging was concluded. See *Fiedter 1992*, 74-88; *Nestor/Zaharia 1959*; 1961.

<sup>18</sup> Balta Verde: *Berciu/Comșa 1956*; *Fiedler 1992*, 88, 89; there is another published „cemetery" (*Boroneanț/Stingă 1978*) on Ostrovul Mare island (on Danube, downstream Iron Gates), that is in fact a ...settlement. The arguments used for the children cremation burials within the settlement from Dulceanca 4 (*Dolinescu-Ferche 1992*, 133, 134) seem to me highly doubtful.

The living and death areas are exclusive, in sixth century Valachia, but this isn't the only exclusivity. The settlements and the coin treasures do not share the same geography, too. Isn't that odd?<sup>19</sup>.

One of the major contributions from the latest years is the publication of the Gropșani diggings (Dolj county), the first monography for a 6\* cent. site from Oltenia {*Popilian/Nica 1998*}<sup>20</sup>. There are two settlements there, Ovrei and Gura Gurgotei. For the last the ceramic inventory statistics revealed that in 9 features the fast wheel products give 80 to 98%, but in other 8 features the same figures are limited to 25-50%. Such a contrast for such an archaic society is a hint for two habitation episodes, despite the absence of stratigraphical superpositions. The first configuration inventory feature came as a necessary probation for older diggings from Fântâna lui Obedeau (Craiova), or disputed digging from Ipotești (Olt county), where a similar inventory came from the only two and half habitation features excavated, in rescue conditions<sup>21</sup>. Diggings from the last five years showed up a similar set of inventories in Copăceanca (the spot „Cotu lui Pantilie", Teleorman County)<sup>22</sup>. It wouldn't be uninteresting to emphasize the fact that all the four points are westward Teleorman River.

At the time of discovering, as well as in all syntheses works until now, Ipotești was considered the older aspect of the so called Ipotești-Cândești culture. That would be rather difficult, as a „spontaneous" generation. The most slippery aspect of culture 's geneses is to enlighten the transition from Sântana de Mureș-Chernyakhov culture. The theoretical frame is not so sophisticated. The end of Germanic domination outside mountains put an end to the production of gray pottery, more demanding than the red one. The red „kitchen" type, either handmade or fast wheel shaped, survived from Roman times in tiny proportions for the fourth century, and became the single pot type for the next centuries. I had the opportunity, in the summer 2003, to see that between Roman kitchen pot (third century) and Ipotești-Cândești wheel made pottery there is any difference as fabrication, at least for the camp from Răcari (Dolj county, Oltenia)<sup>23</sup>.

If the theoretical frame was easy, the archaeological evidence for the expected transition came hard and not fully convincing. In 1961 was published a dwelling from Alexandria (Teleorman county) in which there was mixed unthinkable stuff together: Chernyakhov pottery and „Slavic" pans (*Preda 1961*, see dwelling 4). More than 20 years later was reported the second case, in Șirna settlement (Prahova county), where in the same dwelling were associated gray dishes, pans and lots of handmade pottery, situation that reminds more the next culture than the former {*Olteanu/Neagu 1983*, 384, fig. 2). Other 15 years had to come for experiencing myself something new: on the spot named „Vârcan" from Copăceanca village (Teleorman County) I found two ceramic features, but nothing else, nor the slightest sign of arrangement, even a little pit. The both features look the same, with sherds dissipated 5-6 meters around, with the same distribution of inventory. The pottery was divided in three categories, sensitive equal, as fine gray pottery, sandy gray pottery, and red-gray sandy pottery, both fast wheel and handmade. The third category had an „Ipotești-Cândești" look, especially those known for the early settlements, like Ipotești (the gray tente, the so called „unintentional" decoration). The next discoveries came recently from București-Militari (point „Câmpul lui Boja"), where in 2001 and 2002 were unearthed two huts with the same mixture, including the pans<sup>24</sup>. There is to note that both dwellings have clay ovens.

How should date those discoveries? There are extremely few facts that could help in a strictly archaeological manner. The cultural facies Cireșanu, from Northern Romanian Plain, is the single fact we can compare, for the Hunnic period. In the settlement with the same name there are two episodes of living, with separate deposit layers. The dwellings from the first episode are not equipped with heating facilities, as a general rule, but those from the second episode have all a hearth or oven (*Teodorescu et al. 1993*, 390). The archaeological inventory is similar and addresses a late Chernyakhov tradition. Victor Teodorescu dated those for the end of the fourth century, for the first episode, and into middle of the fifth, for the second. I should say that the inventory does not recommend such a late date, and the second episode of living from Cireșanu settlement is not overflowing the first quarter of the century. There is to add here that the „Slavic" pans are absent, and the handmade pottery is casual, so far.

<sup>19</sup> A study about „exclusivities" is ready to be published.

<sup>20</sup> The authors are not specialized in Dark Age, yet they made a fair digging and report.

<sup>21</sup> Fântâna lui Obedeau (Craiova) is not properly published. I lay on verbal information provided by Marin Nica. Ipotești is fully (?) published (*Roman/Dolinescu-Ferche 1978*), but there were harsh attacks about (*Curta 2001*, 232; *Diaconu P. 1993*, 229)

<sup>22</sup> The research from Copăceanca area (two points excavated, but more in the field) are not concluded, so, there is any final report. See the annual reports (Teodor E. in *CCA 1997*; 1998; 2002).

<sup>23</sup> This remark is already made from many years (*Dolinescu-Ferche 1986*, 130).

<sup>24</sup> *Negru 2002*, 63-71, for 2001 diggings. The results for 2002 were displayed in the National Session of Archaeological Reports, June 2003 (See *CCA 2002*). Gray pottery associated with „Ipotești-Cândești" pottery was discovered in the campaign from 1960, not published (*Negru 2002*, 70).

By comparison, the discoveries previously cited came lately, somewhere in the middle of the fifth century or later. The earlier seems to be Copăceanca-Vârcan, with those two round ceramic features that are suggesting a tent-dwelling experience. Comes next the huts from Șirna and Militari, in which the gray pottery seems to give the final breath, with dominance for handmade pottery and the presence of the pans. So, where ends the Chernyakhov tradition and where begins the Ipotești-Cândești culture? This archaeological profile doesn't fit any. The situation strongly reminds the situation from Kodyn (*Rusanova/Timoshchuk 1984,21,22,48*), Bukovina, and the chronology looks the same, in the second half of the fifth century.

There are long-term historical processes, and short-time developments that could contradict the general trend. There are some long-term processes that we can describe, for the interval between the third and the seventh centuries. The appearance and generalization of the hitting facilities inside the dwellings is one of them. The shrinking of the functional types range of the pottery is another. The result is that the pot without handles became, step by step, the almost exclusive functional shape. For example, along second and third centuries, in Chilia-Militari culture (within Valachia too), the handleless pot made 46 to 57% from all ceramic items. For the end of the fourth and the beginning of the fifth century, in Cireșanu cultural horizon, the same handleless pot made 67 to 71% from pottery. For Dulceanca settlements the same figures slipped from 70 to 90% (70% for settlement 4; 76% for settlement 2; 90% for settlement 1).

Another long-term process affecting pottery is the shrinking of average capacity of recipients. The pots from Ipotești-Cândești culture have, in average, only 59% from the capacity of Chilia Militari culture, for wheel made recipients, and 86% for handmade pottery. The comparison with the contemporary pottery from certain Slavic territories is worst: Ipotești-Cândești pots average capacity is only 75% from those from Southern Poland, and only 64% from Korchak sites. The overall image is a shrinking society. A deeper analyses amplifies the effect, because there are some presumably early settlements, like Târgșor, Budureasca, Groșani, that have big figures, sometimes bigger than Slavic settlements from the 6th-7th cent., and presumably later settlements, with figures cut out to half, in the same comparison (as Ciurel or Dulceanca 1). What is happening is not a diminishing of dimensions for each pot, but the evanishment of middle pots classes (6 or 3 liters, the last considered the boiling recipient by excellence - *Pleinerová 1986, 162*), as a sign of diminishing the average number of members in a family.

The attempts for a chronology guided of „secured” objects - mainly metal works - produced so far peculiar results, in my opinion. The hypothesis of dating the most part of the settlements in the second half of the sixth century or later, as Florin Curta wrote, seems unlikely. That would mean that for the relatively peacefully century, between the Hunnic disaster and the arrival of the Slavs<sup>25</sup>, we have northern of Danube virtually nothing, for no reason; consecutively, there is the next half of century, marked of wars, by the ceasing of monetary fluxes, but we have to suppose that then was flourishing a new civilization - a modest one, as matter of fact - usually named „Ipotești-Cândești culture”. The historical judgment is not the safest mode to think archaeological chronology, indeed, but it is very difficult to admit that settled societies, like those from Ipotești, Groșani and Copăceanca, could be established in those troubled years from the second part of the 6th cent. That is why I suppose that the settlements within the wheel made pottery on top, should be relatively contemporary with the time when the monetary influx from the Roman Empire is closest to the idea of „monetary circulation”, that would be for the fourth decade of the sixth century<sup>26</sup>. Why like that? Because the production of fast wheel pottery couldn't be active in a pure „natural” society, with exchanges limited to the „symbolic” gifts, women or com, and *never* was.

The last decade brought the evidence of a cultural horizon that was previously ignored, that I already named by the first published report about, *Vadu Codri*. The main traits are the almost absent wheel pottery, the absence of imports of any kind and the absence of „Slavic pans”. The dwellings and the handmade pottery are the connections with the main „Ipotești-Cândești” aspect.

In 1994 the archaeologist Marin Nica from Craiova (better known for Neolithicians) published the late '80s diggings from Piatra Sat, on the spot „Vadu Codri”. Along a complex Neolithic three stages settlement and a Late Middle Age cemetery, there where three buried dwellings with ovens made by Roman bricks, with no less than 6 entire pot shapes (*Nica/Deleanu 1994,63, fig. 2*). I was intrigued by such an unusual display of facts and I resumed diggings in 1997 and 1998. The result was the unearthing of two other dwellings, few but relevant (*Teodor E, in CCA 1998,85,86*). First of them, the Dwelling 4, was intersected by Nica's digging and the Dwelling 1. Old digging was stopped on the floor of Dwelling 1, but Dwelling 4 was deeper. This last dwelling was used twice, with complete rearrangements, and

<sup>21</sup> *Curta 2001*, chapter 6, for dating sites. Florin Curta denies the migration as the main process in Slavs formation, on Lower Danube (see mainly the seventh chapter and the final conclusions). This is a very challenging idea, which has to be attentively evaluated.

<sup>26</sup> The maximum for bronze coins in Muntenia is for 532-537 (*Oberländer-Târnoveanu 2000, 213*). The severe drop-down began with 545 (*Oberländer-Târnoveanu 2002, 169*).

had the same brick made oven, but larger. The handmade pottery was the same, but along plenty of good fast wheel pottery. After the abandonment of the dwelling, the hut pit served as garbage deposit, the inventory structure of that being the same as the living stage of the feature. There are no dwellings found for this stage of the settlement's existing. The second dwelling uncovered in 1998 (D. 5) was of the same type with those published by Nica: a little brick made oven, large parts from environ 12 pots, all handmade and extremely coarse (the worst ever saw), found around the oven, as usual. The statement produced by 1998 diggings is essential for defining *Vadu Codri* horizon: the handmade exclusivity is *posterior* to the main Ipotești-Cândești aspect. The issue is confirmed by not published yet diggings from Șirna (*Olteanu/Teodorescu/Neagu 1980*), where also encountered significant superpositions.

The second site within *Vadu Codri* horizon was published in 1996, about some diggings from the late '80stoo<sup>27</sup>, on the right part of the Argeș embouchure. In spite of the extended rescue diggings, there were uncovered only two features that could interest this part of the archaeology, on the spot Șuvița Hotarului, near Chirnogi. There are only two half sunken dwellings, with clay ovens, containing only two entire pots and other environ 9 larger parts from others. One of them is a rim from a fast-wheel jug - an errant sherd, most probably. Another ceramic fragment is arguably a slow wheel product. All the rest is handmade pottery, three of them being decorated with finger impressions on the lip (as well as one from *Vadu Codri*). There is any fragment of „Slavic pans", as in this entire horizon.

The third settlement was revealed by large digging research on *Vadu Anei* (12 km eastern from Bucharest), in 1991 - 1993<sup>28</sup>. As expected, the ovens are caved in the native clay, but in a special variant, encountered in the next centuries too, with a „chimney" added on top. There are also only two entire shapes, and sherds from other environ 30 different pots. All ceramic mass is handmade, with a usual fabric for 6\* cent. pottery from central Muntenia, with incidentally crushed sherds in sandy clay, barely burned, turning red to gray. There is any decoration, any „Slavic pan", any import. For a change, there is one slow wheel upper half pot, with a shape close to those habitual in the 8\*-10\* cent., not decorated yet (fig. 2).

A few years ago, pipe works in downtown Alexandria brought out a ceramic collection composed exclusively from handmade pottery. There are big fragments from about a dozen pots, similarly to Ipotești-Cândești pottery. There is any information about the archaeological context. The discovery - unpublished yet - is nevertheless important, because is the first (and lonely so far) sign for a late living within Ipotești-Cândești culture, in all Vedeia river basin.

The settlements within *Vadu Codri* horizon can't be dated by themselves. We know positively that they are later than what we usually name by „Ipotești-Cândești culture". When did regular settlements disappear? The numismatic statistics on isolated coins shows that the first syncope in circulation has been produced in 545-553 (*Oberländer-Tămoeanu 2002*, 61). Ernest Oberländer supposed that those would be the years of Slavic establishment in the area (*Oberländer-Tărnoaveanu 2000*, 214); I suppose that this is the beginning of the end for the developed pottery industry. The second shock came in 574-578, at the reprisal of Sclaveni raids against Empire. The end came in 594, when Valachia became a regular battlefield. No copper coins crosses Danube from now on, except plundered treasures. This could be the end for „classic" Ipotești-Cândești settlements.

The next chronological mark is the late settlement from Dulceanca IV, dated by discoverer in the final 7\* or early 8\* cent. (*Dolinescu-Ferche 1992*, especially 153-172).<sup>29</sup> The most part of the inventories are composed by slow-wheel sandy pots, comb-like decorated, of that common kind that covers large parts of the continent for 8\*-10\* cent., contemporary with Bulgarians domination on Lower Danube. Comes next the gray polished pottery, with diagonal net pattern, with a short handle on the shoulder but mostly without, that is strictly connected with Bulgars presence on Lower Danube, at least in chronological terms<sup>30</sup>. There are a few handmade pots, as the single bridge to former settlement from the 6\* cent., but no pans. The inventories are too different to suppose that the reprisal of the site for living is a fallow thing, happened in the same generation<sup>31</sup>.

<sup>27</sup> *Damian 1996*, with plate 137; take note that the drawings from 137/ 4, 6 7, 10 and 11 are doubtful (they don't match entire shapes known within Ipotești-Cândești culture).

<sup>28</sup> *Teodor E. 2000a*, 125-133, with plates 1 (general survey), 2, 3 a-c (dwellings), 5 (sections), 8 (pottery). In the same report (written most in 1994, published in 2000) I named this horizon *Vadu Anei*. This orgolious lapse will be not considered, in favor in what I named, in 2000 too (with my PhD dissertation), the *Vadu Codri* horizon.

<sup>29</sup> This settlement superpose the 6<sup>th</sup> cent. settlement about we have previously discussed.

<sup>30</sup> It have been suggested that this is Pastyrsk pottery (Florin Curta, in a recent personal communication), therefore it could be dated on the half of the seventh century. Obviously, the two gray wares types are somehow related, but Pastyrsk type has a larger decoration patten palette (*Prikhodniuk 1998*, fig. 58: 19; *Rashev 2000*, fig. 58: 1, 4; 59: 1-5, 8). See also related Volincev pottery (*Artamonov 1969*, fig. 3: 1-5). The single pot that could be ascribed to Pastyrsk type in România could be found in the lobby of Prahova county museum (Ploiești), misdated in the 5<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> cent. within Dridu culture, resulted from an older salvage digging from *Vadu Săpat* (*Diaconu Gh. 1978*), a few km southward from Budureasca valley.

<sup>31</sup> As *E Curta (2001, 276)* believes.

A good similarity for *Vadu Codri* horizon one can find only in southern Transilvania, at Bratei. The habitation phase C from settlement 1 is defined by the quasi-exclusivity of the handmade pottery and a few slow-wheel turned shapes (Bărzu 1994-1995, 243). Something resembling happened in settlement 2, phase A, probably just a little bit earlier, because there are any of wheel products. Both were dated with the beginning of the seventh century. The phase B from Bratei 2 settlement is dominated by slow-wheel pottery<sup>32</sup> Just like Bratei 2 cremation cemetery (Zaharia 1977; see also Zaharia 1971), and dated also in the late 7\* cent. or later.

We can't get much of help looking more around. From Moldavia couldn't come any suggestions. The southern Moldavia is almost not known; more than that, the major cultural traits eastern and southern Carpathians looks from the 6<sup>th</sup> cent. forward less and less alike. Southern Danube there is anything similar to *Vadu Codri* horizon. The Popina-Garvăn cultural horizon is also a mixture of pottery techniques, but the slow-wheel prevails, and his beginning is beyond the half of seventh century, if no later".

Concluding, what we actually know about the 7<sup>th</sup> cent. in southern România is restricted to *Vadu Codri* horizon, for the beginning of the interval, the late settlement from Dulceanca IV, for the end of it, and probably the settlement from Vadul Săpat (Prahova county), most of it not published. We can add partly of the not completely published necropolis from Sărata Monteoru, and, possibly, some of the discoveries from Sima settlement (not published). We can add further some treasures buried with the occasion of Bulgarians invasion, collected from 650 forward (*Oberländer-Târnoveanu 2000, 159-164*)<sup>34</sup>, and some other isolated discoveries. That isn't much. The simple fact that the isolated and fortune discoveries make the maj or part of the evidence, for the seventh century, expresses a kind of reality far from the sixth century usual facts. Some facts yet resemble. There is any certain settlement to illustrate the gap 650-680, when the coin treasures were established, that reminds the phenomenon „treasures without settlements" from the late 6<sup>th</sup> cent. Obviously, somebody made up that fortune, and behind we can guess a whole social system; but we can't see it, for real. Although the archaeology is built by solid facts, the history seems sometimes more discrete.

There are lots of facts that are impossible to explain by tradițional meanings of archaeology. The main reason why Florin Curta rejected the migration as a vehicle for Old Slavs formation (*Curta 2001, 335-350*), northern of Lower Danube, is, as far as I can see, the simple fact that the Slavic migration is impossible to be proved by archaeological testimonies. I concluded my PhD dissertation independently, in the same time (March 2001) and with the same conclusion: the Slav migration is almost impossible to be revealed directly by studying the archaeological evidence - in my case, the pottery. This double checked reality can't be surmounted as long as we suppose that migrating Slavs were living the same with those left in Northern habitats. But why should we do believe that? Because Procopius and *Strategikon* said so? Procopius gained his knowledge from interviews taken 1000 kilometers far from the place, by interpreters. For the case he ever passed the Danube, the author of *Strategikon* was interested by ethnology as much as Cortez's officers in their devoutly activities from the New World. All migrating tribes we know, within the same troubled times, lived in tents, at least for a while. That would explain much.

<sup>32</sup> Zaharia 1994-1995, 301-307 for phase A, 307-311 for phase B, and 312-314 for their chronological relationship. Note that settlement 1 and 2 from Bratei are separated only by 300 m, therefore they couldn't be exactly contemporary.

<sup>33</sup> For a date beginning with the half of seventh century see Koleva 1992; F. Curia (2001, 233) is pushing the date later, but all his chronological system seemed to me in delay.

<sup>34</sup> There are involved the treasures from Prișeaca (Butoi 1968), Drăgășani (Butnariu 1983-1985; Mitrea 1975), Coșoveni (Nestor/Nicolăescu-Ploșor 1938), Vârtop (Mitrea 1977). See also Madgearu 1997, especially p. 88, with a very explicit table about gold and silver coins from the 7<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> cent. from southern România

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