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Commission:  
*Mortuary Practices  
in Prehistory and Protohistory*

GORJ COUNTY COUNCIL

GORJ COUNTY MUSEUM  
„ALEXANDRU ȘTEFULESCU”  
TÂRGU JIU

# Graves, Cenotaphs and Votive Deposits of Weapons in Europe *Bronze and Iron Ages*

Proceedings of the 20<sup>th</sup> International Colloquium  
of Funerary Archaeology

Târgu Jiu, Gorj County (Romania)  
7<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> October 2021

Editors: Valeriu Sîrbu, Cristian Schuster and Dumitru Hortopan

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# BRONZE AGE FUNERARY PRACTICES ON THE PEŠTER PLATEAU AND NEIGHBOURING REGIONS OF SOUTHWESTERN SERBIA

Marija LJUŠTINA (Belgrade - Serbia)

**Key-words:** *Bronze Age, Novi Pazar region, Pešter plateau, necropolises, tumuli.*

**Abstract:** *The Pešter plateau and neighbouring regions of southwestern Serbia are characterised by tumular necropolises from the Bronze Age. The earliest burial horizon, confirmed in two mounds at the site of Gomile in Crnoča and one smaller mound at the site of Glavica in Brnjica, can be cautiously connected with the Early Bronze Age. The horizon is characterised by cremation, cenotaphs and some traces of ritual activities which followed the funeral itself. The second horizon, chronologically positioned in the final phase of the Middle Bronze Age and the beginning of the Late Bronze Age, is represented by graves with inhumed deceased in mounds at the sites of Gračanska Polja in Gračane and Latinsko Groblje in Glogovik. The last burial horizon belongs to the bearers of the Late Bronze Age Brnjica culture, who settled the region during the second half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BC. Their standard funerary practice included cremation and placing bodily remains in urns covered with large bowls, well protected by stone constructions inside smaller tumuli with peripheral stone enclosures. Such necropolises were discovered at the sites of Humpa in Dojeviće, Igralište in Novopazarska Banja, Utrine in Delimeđe and Latinsko Groblje in Glogovik, and more recently at two sites - Vlaško Groblje and Grčka Crkva - in the village of Pružanj. Some uncertain finds from the sites of Tabočina and Ras - St. Peter and Paul church, and also unsystematically excavated sites in Miščići, Seosko Groblje in Dojeviće, and Mali Divič in Dunište, can be added to this burial horizon. Comprehension of funerary practices, despite being limited to less than fifteen necropolises in the region, sheds light on the Bronze Age communities, their mobility and connectivity during the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> millennia BC.*

## Introduction

Long tradition of research on prehistoric mounds in the territory of Serbia, which goes back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century AD, as well as increased interest in mortuary archaeology during the last decades, rendered the results of the excavations useful to recognize regularities specific for particular chronological and/or territorial units. In this geographically diverse region of the Central Balkans and southernmost part of the Carpathian Basin, the phenomenon of burying dead under mounds can be traced back to the final Eneolithic and the beginning of the Bronze Age (roughly the first half of the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium BC). The prolonged tradition is confirmed throughout the Bronze and Iron Ages.

Already the basic overview of the tumular necropolises, the starting point for which was the comprehensive book on the topography and typology of more than 1100 analysed prehistoric barrows in Serbia and Montenegro by M. Lazić (Лазич 1989), revealed some very interesting facts. There are sites in which tumuli from different periods of later prehistory can be found clustered within a restricted area – the earliest barrows from the Late Eneolithic are in northern part of Serbia, while tumular necropolises are the main characteristic of the Bronze and Iron Ages in western Serbia. Additionally, in some cases the same burial mounds were used by prehistoric populations from different periods, which means that several burial phases can be recognised within one tumulus. Moreover, some prehistoric mounds were even used as a special place for consecration in the Roman times, and some served as cemeteries for Christian communities in the mediaeval period.

In this respect, the South-Western corner of Serbia turned to be of particular interest. This region includes the territory of the city of Novi Pazar along with the Tutin and Sjenica municipalities. To the southeast of the region are the Ibar valley and Rogozna Mountain, to the north and northwest are the mountains Golija, Javor, Zlatar, to the west Jadovnik Mountain and the Lim valley, and to the south are the mountains Žilindar and Mokra Gora

with the Ibar valley. Two plateaus – Sjenica and Pešter - are between the mountains. The plateaus are divided by Giljeva Mountain and the basins of Štavica and Novi Pazar. The territory is by all means high mountainous zone, open to the north-east. A significant number of settlements is placed beyond the height of 1000m above sea level. Research into climatology showed that the Sjenica-Pešter plateau was the coldest and snowiest region in Serbia. The territory is characterised by temperate-continental and continental climate, despite proximity of the Adriatic (138 km) and Aegean (375 km) Valleys of important rivers provided good connectivity of the region, which is rich in smaller river flows belonging to the Raška and Ibar watershed. Those are potential routes through which the influence from the south could have reached inhabitants of these valleys. On the other hand, the wide Pešter plateau offers completely different life conditions. The Pešter plateau is sharply divided from the surrounding zones by both its height and its geomorphological characteristics. It is an area without forest, with average height 1100-1250 m above sea level, having characteristics of the karst and with very little water. It makes the shortest connection between the Raška and Lim valleys, and in broad sense between the Morava valley and the river Drina, i.e. between the eastern and the western parts of the Central Balkans. There is shortage of fertile soil, and the climate is not convenient for planting every sort of cereals and fruits. Fortunately, pasture is very spacious and rich in grass for grazing. Inside the Pešter plateau, the best life conditions can be found at Peštersko polje and Koštam polje – two troughs surrounded by hills and relatively rich in water – which are inhabited with high density even today, as it was the case in the past (Премовић-Алексић 2014, p. 7-8; Ljuština 2020).

### **Tumular necropolises of the Pešter plateau and neighbouring regions in the Bronze Age**

Comprehensive reviews on the prehistory (Летица 1982; Јевтић 1996) and generally archaeological heritage of Novi Pazar, Tutin and Sjenica municipalities (Premović-Aleksić 2012; Премовић-Алексић 2014) provided a solid base to claim that later prehistoric periods in the region were dynamic and with a significant number of sites enlightening funerary practices and settlement strategies.

The Pešter plateau and the neighbouring regions in the Bronze Age are characterised by tumular necropolises. Despite less than 15 prehistoric mounds have been excavated so far (Fig. 1), the practice of sharing the place of eternal rest during millennia of prehistory and early history has been confirmed at a number of necropolises.

The earliest burial horizon can be recognised at the sites Gomile in Crnoča and Glavica in Brnjica.

#### **Brnjica, the site of Glavica**

In the village of Brnjica, by the road Duga Poljana-Sjenica, at the site of Glavica, a smaller mound was excavated, but the results are still waiting final publication. According to M. Jevtić's observations (Јевтић 1996, p. 8), the mound comprised a central cremated burial with a poorly preserved undecorated urn. The urn's conical lower part with flat bottom was placed immediately below the stone mantle of the mound. Some pottery sherds found at the base and inside the earthen-stone cairn were attributed to the Early Bronze Age and provided the chronological frame for the whole grave unit.

#### **Crnoča, Gomile**

The site of Gomile is situated on the outskirts of the village of Crnoča, towards the Golać hill. A group of 11 mounds with diameters 12-20 m and heights 0.80-1.70 m could be recognised at the site. One of the mounds was excavated in 1978. Its diameter was 16.5 m, its core consisted of massive stone slabs, and its cairn - of broken stones and pebbles. There was

no trace of human remains inside the mound. Its cairn comprised pottery sherds and stone hammer-axes, typical for the end of Eneolithic or the Early Bronze Age (Летица 1982, p. 10; Јевтић 1996, p. 8; Премовић-Алексић 2014, p. 233).

Characteristics of funerary practices from the late phase of the Middle Bronze Age and the beginning of the Late Bronze Age can be found at the sites of Latinsko Groblje in Glogovik and Gračanska Polja in Gračane.

### **Glogovik, the site of Latinsko Groblje**

One of the most instructive was the necropolis at the site of Latinsko Groblje in the village of Glogovik (Летица 1982). It consisted of eight mounds, arranged randomly, one next to another, at the distance of some 10 m. The biggest of them is the mound I, which was 1.7 m high and 25 m in diameter. The heights of the rest of the mounds are 0.40-0.60 m, and their diameters 12-20 m. Burial practices were executed during three periods: the Bronze Age, the Iron Age and the Middle Ages.

Mound I is the only one to have revealed burials from all of the mentioned periods, so it has been used for comparison with archaeological finds from both the other mounds at Latinsko Groblje and the other Pešter necropolises that have been explored so far. Mound I was established by burials and their coverings, which had been laid down on several occasions. The primary mound was formed on a circular stone platform (10 m in diameter), from which a peripheral stone circle and two grave constructions (1<sup>st</sup> burial horizon) were preserved. Above it, but eccentric in position, was the younger mound with burials in urns (2<sup>nd</sup> burial horizon) (Fig. 2/1). Formation of the later, larger mound can be connected with the Iron Age burials. According to the graves' shapes, depths and inventory, two burial horizons can be sorted out. The final diameter of the mound (14 m) was reached by putting the peripheral stone circle. Neither the 4<sup>th</sup> nor the 5<sup>th</sup> burial horizon from the Middle Ages affected the shape of the mound (Летица 1982).

The first burial horizon, generally attributed to the end of the Middle and the beginning of the Late Bronze Age, is represented by two graves (44 and 54), the position of which inside the stone enclosure indicates much greater number of individuals. Inventory from some of the destroyed graves with inhumation was found among the stones from the cairn (Fig. 2/7-9). Grave construction of the burials 44 and 54 is the same (the deceased was enclosed and covered with stones), however the position of the body and grave inventory are different. The deceased in the grave 44 was in flexed position, while in the grave 54 only the upper part of the body was put on its left side and the legs were crossed. The deceased had their jewellery and elements of attire. In the grave 54 there were a bronze bracelet and a string of bronze coiled beads. The deceased in the grave 44 was buried with five bronze pins (Fig. 2/3-6) and coiled hair rings (defined as earrings in original publication) and a small two-handled beaker (Fig. 2/11) (Летица 1982, p. 14).

Graves of the second burial horizon (No. 1, 2, 3, 4 and 6, but total number was greater) were buried directly above the primary mound. These graves comprised cremated remains in shallow pits or ceramic urns protected by circles of pebbles and covered with lids or stone slabs. Only in the case of the grave 1 cremated remains were put in a shallow pit and protected by a large bowl (Fig. 3/5). The rest of the graves contained amphorae-urns. Inside the urn from the grave 2 (Fig. 2/10, 3/2) there were decorative bronze coiled hair rings (Noppenring)(Fig. 3/10) and three bronze buttons (Fig. 3/9). The urn from the grave 3 was protected by two large bowls (Fig. 3/1,4,6). There was no inventory inside the urn from the

grave 4 (Fig. 3/3), while the destroyed urn (Fig. 3/8) from the grave 6 comprised a bronze arrow (Fig. 3/11) (Летица 1982, p. 14). The second burial horizon is the confirmation of presence of bearers of the Brnjica group of the Late Bronze Age in this part of southwestern Serbia.

### **Gračane, the site of Gračanska Polja**

The site of Gračanska Polja, on the eastern edge of Pešter plateau (Fig. 4), revealed a large necropolis with 64 tumuli in total (Jevtić 1997; Премовић-Алексић 2014, p. 212). According to V. Vidosavljević, curator of the Museum „Ras“ in Novi Pazar, to whom I owe great gratitude for the information, the site is currently being damaged by construction works and some tumuli are already destroyed.

The smaller tumuli (6-10 m in diameter; only a few with diameter measuring up to 15m) are of stone-earthen construction, without mantles or peripheral enclosures, but with stone cairn easily recognisable from the south-eastern side due to severe winds. Five mounds were explored in 1986 and 1987. Two of them did not comprise graves. In the mound I, there were nine skeletal graves, belonging to two burial horizons. Older burial horizon is represented by two graves of adults and three children graves in which skeletons were placed in slightly flexed position and covered with finely crushed stones. They are attributed to the same horizon as the older graves from Latinsko Groblje - the end of the Middle and Late Bronze Age. The younger burial horizon is from the First Iron Age. The Bronze Age deceased were buried with jewellery and other personal belongings. Grave 1a belonged to a child and comprised only the remains of lower part of the skeleton, accompanied by a conical cup with a massive handle (Fig. 5/12). Another child, aged 6-8, was buried in the grave 9, along with a larger cup with elliptically modelled rim (Fig. 5/13). Grave 8 belonged to a female, up to 21 years old, lying on her left side, with a pin of Rollenkopfnadel type found at parietal part of the head (Fig. 5/17). Bronze spiral hair rings (Fig. 5/1,4) were found in the temporal zone.

There were 30 small and 5 bigger calotte-shaped buttons (Fig. 5/2-3) by the wrist. A string of amber and bronze coiled beads was detected by the chin (Fig. 5/5-6). Grave 5 belonged to a young child and was without inventory. In the grave 3 a robust male, up to 40 years old, was lying together with a baby, up to 1 year old, by his legs. He was wearing a sandstone pendant (Fig. 5/9), found in the chest zone, while a small ceramic vessel (Fig. 5/11) was placed by his right side. What strikes as odd is the bronze knife (Fig. 5/8) found below the mandible. The position of the hand bones indicates that the deceased held the knife's handle with both of his hands. It is presumed that the graves from this horizon belonged to a small family necropolis (Jevtić 1997).

The older burial horizon in the mound I is cautiously dated at the end of the Middle and the beginning of the Late Bronze Age and the period 1400-1200 BC (Jevtić 1997, p. 306), but was also brought into connection with the newcomers from the territory of the Brnjica group (Јлазић 2019), representing cohabitation and cultural influences in southwestern Serbia.

The communities recognised as the bearers of the Late Bronze Age Brnjica Group buried their dead in the already mentioned necropolis Latinsko Groblje in Glogovik, and also at the following sites: Humpa in Dojeviće, Utrine in Delimeđe, Igralište in Novopazarska Banja. Some uncertain finds from Tabačina and Ras - St. Peter and Paul church can be added to this group. Excavations of mediaeval necropolises in 21<sup>st</sup> century provided confirmation of the same funerary practices at the sites Vlačko Groblje and Grčka Crkva in Pružanj.

Unsystematically excavated sites in Miščići, Seosko Groblje in Dojeviće, along with Mali Divič in Dunište revealed pottery indicative of the Brnjica group burial grounds, too.

### **Dojeviće, the site of Humpa**

In the village of Ivanča-Dojeviće, at the site of Humpa near the crossroads Novi Pazar-Tutin and Novi Pazar-Sjenica, a part of prehistoric tumular necropolis was explored in 1975. Three sepulchral stone constructions were excavated, two of which – II and III – can be connected with the funerals of the Brnjica group, while the construction I is later (Letica 1979, p. 73, 76). The constructions II and III are circular in shape, 8m and 4m in diameter respectively, made of limestone blocks and slabs, pebbles and smaller crushed stones. Both of them were built in the same way: firstly, an enclosure of two lines of large blocks and slabs was formed, then the inner space was pebbled forming a platform. Central part of the platform was reserved for the urns. Some of the urns had additional stone stands. Finally, the construction was covered with pebbles. The construction II (Fig. 6/1) comprised three urns. It is presumed that the number of urns was bigger, since the inner part of the construction was damaged. The urn 1 with four handles with conical protuberances and four lugs (Fig. 6/3) had the central place and was the only one with a stone stand – a stone slab with a dent. It was protected by stone slabs and pebbles. Inside the urn there were remains of cremated deceased, over which a conical cup with a vertical handle was placed (Fig. 6/5). The urn 2 was found near the urn 1, at higher position indicative of later burial. Next to it there was a large bowl with two vertical handles with button-shaped protuberances (Fig. 6/2). The bi-conical urn 3, with profiled rim and four wide handles, was to the southwest from the urn 1, protected by pebbles and stones (Srejović 1977, p. 74; Letica 1979, p. 74-75). M. Lazić (Lazić 1996, p. 151) is of the opinion that the Dojeviće necropolis is one of the earliest burial places of the Brnjica group.

### **Dojeviće, the site of Seosko Groblje**

At the bottom of the slope with the prehistoric sites, to the left from the road Novi Pazar – Tutin, an active village cemetery (Serbian: seosko groblje) can be found. Its monuments are from the end of 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, and its eastern part is without any tombstones and covered by a thick grass cover. It is possible that even older, horizontally placed tombstone can be discovered there (Премовић-Алексић 2014, p. 260-261). D. Premović-Aleksić (Премовић-Алексић 2014, p. 261) mentions fragments of prehistoric pottery discovered while digging grave pits inside the cemetery, and illustrates it with the fragments which can be connected with the Late Bronze Age Brnjica group.

### **Delimeđe, the site of Utrine**

Necropolis inside a smaller tumulus at the site of Utrina is situated to the east of the Pešter village of Delimeđe, near two small rivers, next to the road to Sopoćani. It was discovered by chance in 1958 and systematically excavated in 1977 and 1978, but without final publication. Inside the mound (20 m in diameter) there were burials of both incinerated and inhumed deceased dug into a circular base lined with a stone ring. Two burial horizons can be recognised – the older belonging to the bearers of the Late Bronze Age Brnjica group, and the younger from the First Iron Age. The older burial horizon consisted of 13 incinerated deceased, covered by a layer of pebbles. Grave inventory comprised amphorae or bowls with bodily remains of cremated deceased. The amphorae-urns were covered with bowls, placed on the bases of tiny pebbles and protected by larger stones at the top. In some of the graves, bones were simply scattered on the pebbled bases and covered with bowls. One of the graves had elaborate construction: an upturned bowl was covered with pebbles and protected by a ring of larger stones (1,7 m in diameter). The pottery is greyish-brown and polished. The

amphorae can be either bi-conical with funnel-shaped necks and two vertical handles between which conical protuberances can be found, or with elongated belly and two vertical handles. The bowls can be bi-conical or with rounded shoulder (Lazić 1996, p. 9-11; Лазич 2019, p. 190-191, fig. 1).

### **Dunište, the site of Mali Divič**

The village of Dunište is situated in the connecting zone of the Mountains Javor and Golija. A bit further from the mounds located by the right side of the local road, on the plateau and the slope towards a rivulet on the left side of the road, there still are approximately ten mounds, 6-8 m in diameter and 0.40-0.70 m high. It is possible that the two groups of mounds make a whole, cut by the road. Surface finds were not found on either of the sites. One of the biggest barrows, 8m in diameter, was excavated in 2009. It was erected on the bedrock, with cairn consisting of larger stones mixed with soil and finely broken stones. There was no stone construction inside the cairn. The only portable artefacts found within the mound were two quernstone fragments and some pottery sherds. Near the bedrock, three fragments of a vessel with thin slanting walls ending in everted rim were found. The fragments are finely manufactured and have black-polished surface. One of the fragments has a lug and has analogies in the material of the Late Bronze Age Brnjica group (Премовић-Алексић 2014, p. 519-520).

### **Miščići**

To the left from the road Novi Pazar – Deževa in the village of Miščići, a prehistoric necropolis was discovered by chance. The owner of the estate rented a bulldozer to cut a path from the main road to his house and watermill. On that occasion a tumulus with an urn was damaged. In the section of the newly cut path it was possible to determine a layer of tumulus covering made of pebbles mixed with soil, and even the base of the urn. Preserved remains of the urn were brought to the Museum of Ras in Novi Pazar. Their characteristics connect the urn with the urns from the site of Delimeđe-Utrina (Премовић-Алексић 2014, p. 102).

### **Novopazarska Banja, the site of Igralište**

Novopazarska Banja (the Spa of Novi Pazar) is situated some 4 km to the northeast from Novi Pazar, near the confluence of the rivers Izbička and Raška, on the lowest northeastern slopes of Rogozna Mountain. Hot mineral springs of the spa have been known to the inhabitants of the region since the deepest past. To the east from the Turkish bath in Novopazarska Banja, there is a football playground (Serbian: igralište). During construction works around the playground in 1982 a Roman masonry tomb with a stela was destroyed.

Consequently, archaeological explorations were conducted from 1983 to 1989 (Јовановић 1995). Four mounds in which incinerated deceases had been buried in urns were discovered (Fig. 7/A:1-4). These funerary practices were characteristic for the Late Bronze Age Brnjica group (Fig. 8/1-2). It is important to emphasize that the explored zone is only a part of the necropolis, which was positioned in the southwestern part of the site. The main characteristics of the Brnjica graves are: cremation, placing remains from the pyre in the urns, putting the urns on the zones pebbled, encircled and covered with stones, and building a smaller mound with stone enclosure over the central zone with the urns. Mound mantle is created of pebbles and crushed stones. Mound 1 comprised two urns, while the rest of the mounds was for individual burials. Preserved height of the mounds was only 0.20 m because of agricultural activities, which also caused urns devastation. Mound 1 was the biggest in size, 5.60 m in diameter, and had two peripheral stone rings. Its two urns did not contain any grave goods. Mound 2 was smaller (5.10 m in diameter), had a single peripheral ring, and a central

zone with stone agglomeration and an urn, also without any grave goods. The situation is very similar in the mound 3 (4.60 m in diameter), where in the central urn a fragment of bronze coiled wire was found. Mound 4 (5.20 m in diameter) had the best state of preservation. It had a peripheral stone ring and a circular central zone, where next to the urn (Fig. 8/1) a base for a small beaker (Fig. 8/2) was found. The urn contained only a significant amount of remains from the pyre, without any personal belongings or offerings. According to A. Jovanović (Јовановић 1995, p. 32), all of the graves were simultaneous, forming a sacral chain of mounds, which could have indicated connectivity, perhaps kinship based, inside this community.

The site bears traces of burials during the Iron Age as well. The cult place was worshiped in the Roman times, too. Confirmation can be found in votive monuments dedicated to Jupiter and other deities of the place, found in Novopazarska Banja, where the cult of genius – protector of the mineral springs must have been developed. Remains of the Roman spa baths are situated to the southeast from the Turkish bath and the site of Igralište. In 1875 Novopazarska Banja was visited by English archaeologist Arthur Evans, who left precise descriptions of the bath, considering its central part to be remnants of the antique *thermae* from the 4<sup>th</sup> century (Премовић-Алексић 2014, p. 123).

### **Pružanj, the site of Vlaško Groblje**

The village of Pružanj is placed in the spacious plateau, to the north from the Koštam Polje. In the village, to the north from the mosque, there is a hummock called Vlaško Groblje by the local villagers. There are 15 mounds, with diameters 5-8 m and heights 0.50-0.70m, there. The central part with two mounds on the top of the hummock is damaged. According to a villager, the mounds at the top were damaged when the locals started building limekilns there. They found skeletons while digging and stopped the works. It was obvious that the site comprised remains of a necropolis with barrows, but also a later part of burial ground with grave pits covered with slabs. Remains of a church were noted, too (Премовић-Алексић 2014, p. 326).

Mound I, one of better-preserved mounds at the northern part of the Vlaško Groblje hummock, was explored in 2010. Its diameter was 8m. It was erected on rocky terrain. Its cairn consisted of broken limestones mixed with soil. Stratigraphical remarks indicate three burial horizons in it. The first two burial horizons are skeletal graves from the Middle Ages. The 3<sup>rd</sup> burial horizon within mound I is represented by three graves with incinerated deceased. The first of the urns was placed directly on the rock in north-eastern segment of the barrow. This grave did not have any stone construction. Cremated remains were scattered together with the fragmented urn. The second fragmented urn with human remains was discovered in the cairn, close to the central part of the mound. The urn was placed between two rocks and protected by stones of different size. There were cremated human bones inside the urn and some charcoal around the urn. The third grave is represented by a coarse bowl with a lug. A stone slab (23x35 cm) was placed over the bowl, inside of which there was a significant amount of burnt bones, charcoal and ashes. Some cremated bones were discovered to the southeast of the urn, too. The three urns of coarse manufacture were broken and not in a good state of preservation. No grave goods were found either inside the urns or near them. Stylistic-typological analysis revealed that the three urns from Vlaško Groblje had direct analogies in the urns from the nearby site of Latinsko Groblje in Glogovik (Премовић-Алексић 2014, p. 327-328).

### **Pružanj, the site of Grčka Crkva**

On the western side of Pružanj, there is the site of Grčka Crkva (Serbian: Greek church) with 10-12 low and stretched out barrows. Most of local villagers use the term „Grčka Crkva“ to name the biggest barrow at the site, the central part of which was dug over by treasure hunters. In 2012 a mound between the local road and „Grčka Crkva“ itself was explored. The mound's diameter was 6m and its height 0.60 m. It was built of stone mixed with soil. Its cairn had three layers: the lowest consisted of larger stones, the intermediate – of very small stones, and the uppermost – of larger stones. The intermediate layer of the cairn comprised two graves of cremated deceased. Grave 1 was discovered in the north-western segment of the mound, some 1.25 m from the centre. The urn of the grave was protected by smaller and bigger stones. Most of the cremated bones were inside the fragmented urn, while some were scattered around the grave zone, together with urn fragments. The brownish urn had thin walls without any trace of decoration. Two fragments of handle triangular in cross-section were found, too. Grave 2 was discovered in the north-eastern segment of the mound, ca. 1 m to the east from grave 1, at the same distance from the mound centre. The grave consisted of a significant number of fragments of burnt bones, among which there were two teeth without traces of burning. At the same zone there were a lot of pottery sherds belonging to the same vessel – urn, along with some snail shells, a cylindrical stone bead and a disc of coiled bronze wire. The north-eastern segment of the mound was damaged, and there were indicators (stone construction with pottery sherds, but without human remains) that another grave used to be in the vicinity of the previously mentioned two. It is important to mention that near the northern peripheral profile, on the edge of the cairn, a fragmented bowl with flatly cut rim and a lug was found. In its vicinity there were fragments of the same shape and manufacture. The material connects the burials with the Late Bronze Age (Премовић-Алексић 2014, p. 328-329).

### **Concluding remarks**

The Pešter plateau and neighbouring regions are characterised by tumular necropolises, which started to be erected in the Bronze Age. The earliest burial horizon, confirmed in two mounds at the site of Gomile in Crnoča and one smaller mound at the site of Glavica in Brnjica, can be cautiously connected with the Early Bronze Age. The horizon is characterised by cremation, cenotaphs and some traces of ritual actions which followed the funeral itself. The second horizon, chronologically positioned in the final phase of the Middle Bronze Age and the beginning of the Late Bronze Age, is represented by some graves with inhumed deceased in mounds at the sites of Gračanska Polja in Gračane and Latinsko Groblje in Glogovik. In M. Lazić's opinion (Лазич 2019), the skeletal graves are directly connected to the necropolises of the Brnjica culture and are restricted to its westernmost zone of spread. So, the last burial horizon at the Pešter plateau and neighbouring regions belongs to the bearers of the Late Bronze Age Brnjica culture, who settled the region during the second half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BC. Their standard funerary practice included cremation of the deceased and placing their bodily remains in urns covered with large bowls, well protected by stone constructions inside smaller tumuli with peripheral stone enclosures. Such necropolises were discovered at the sites of Humpa in Dojeviće, Igralište in Novopazarska Banja, Utrine in Delimeđe and Latinsko Groblje in Glogovik, and more recently at two sites - Vlaško Groblje and Grčka Crkva - in the village of Pružanj. Some uncertain finds from the sites of Tabačina and Ras - St. Peter and Paul church, and also unsystematically excavated sites in Mišćici, Seosko Groblje in Dojeviće, and Mali Divič in Dunište, can be added to this burial horizon. M. Lazić (Lazić 1996, p. 146, 150) separated the Brnjica graves into two types. One of the types comprised urns-amphorae surrounded by pebbles and smaller stones, while the other is the type of graves constructed by covering grave pits with stones, or simple pits without any

protective construction over urns in the form of amphorae or beakers. Grave inventory of the two types indicated that the first type had preceded the other. Having in mind that Dojeviće and Novopazarska Banja comprised only the first type of the graves, Latinsko Groblje had only the second type, while Delimeđe had both, it can be concluded that the Brnjica group either went through two development phases in funerary practices or had micro-local variations in southwestern Serbia.

Comprehension of funerary practices, despite being limited to little more than ten necropolises in the region, sheds light on the Bronze Age communities, their mobility and connectivity during the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> millennia BC. Potentially bi-ritual necropolises in Delimeđe, Glogovik and Gračane, where some deceased were inhumed side by side the of majority incinerated graves, can testify to regional characteristic in development of the Brnjica communities. This westernmost territory, separated from its original zone in the South Morava Basin and the main Central Balkan communication routes, was under strong influence from the neighbouring regions and different funerary traditions.

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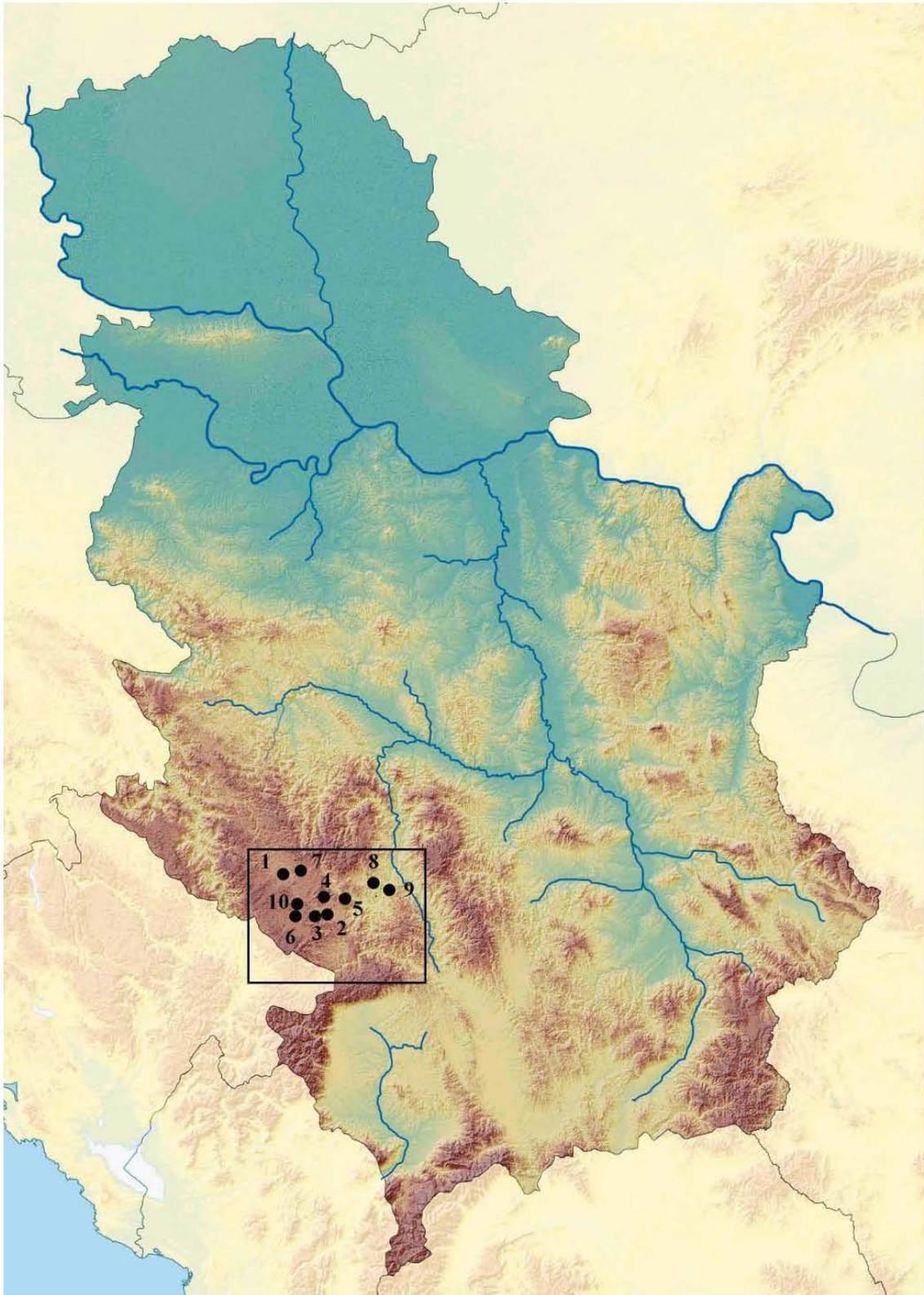


Figure 1: Map with Bronze Age necropolises in southwestern Serbia: 1 – Brnjica; 2 – Crnoča; 3 – Glogovik; 4 – Gračane; 5 – Dojeviće; 6 – Delimeđe; 7 – Dunište; 8 – Mišćici; 9 – Novopazarska Banja; 10 – Pružanj.

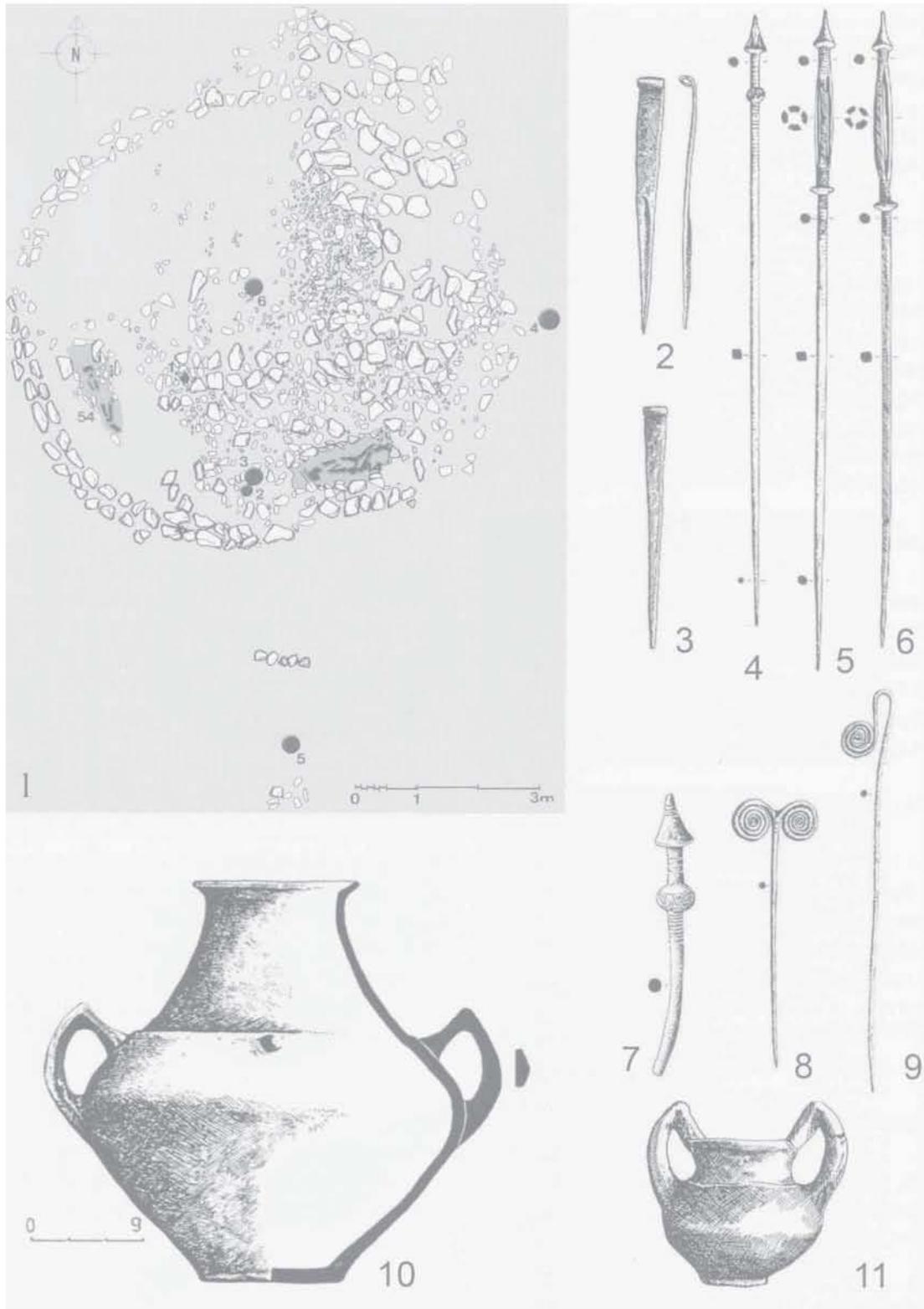


Figure 2: Glogovik, the site of Latinsko Groblje, mound I: 1 – graves of inhumed and cremated deceased; 2-6: inventory of the skeletal grave 44; 7-9: inventory from the destroyed graves of inhumed deceased; 10: the Brnjica group urn from grave 2 with cremation; 11: beaker from the skeletal grave 44 (Јазин 2019, Т. II).

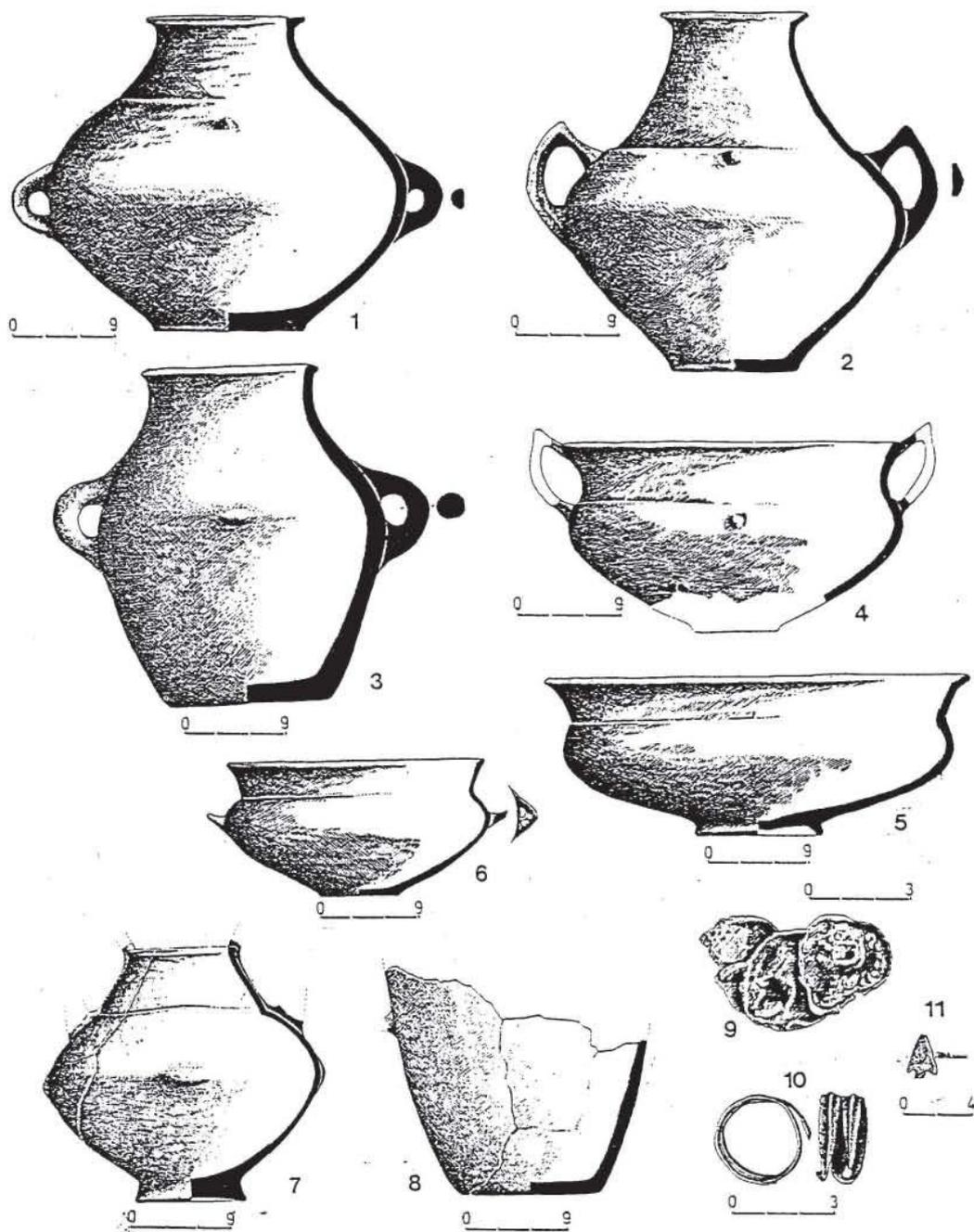


Figure 3: Glogovik, the site of Latinsko Groblje, mound I: 1, 4, 6 – grave 3; 2, 9, 10 – grave 2; 3 – grave 4; 5 – grave 1; 8, 11 – grave 6 (Летица 1982).



Figure 4: Gračane, the site of Gračanska Polja (photo: Irina Kajtez, courtesy of Vladan Vidosavljević, Museum „Ras“ in Novi Pazar).

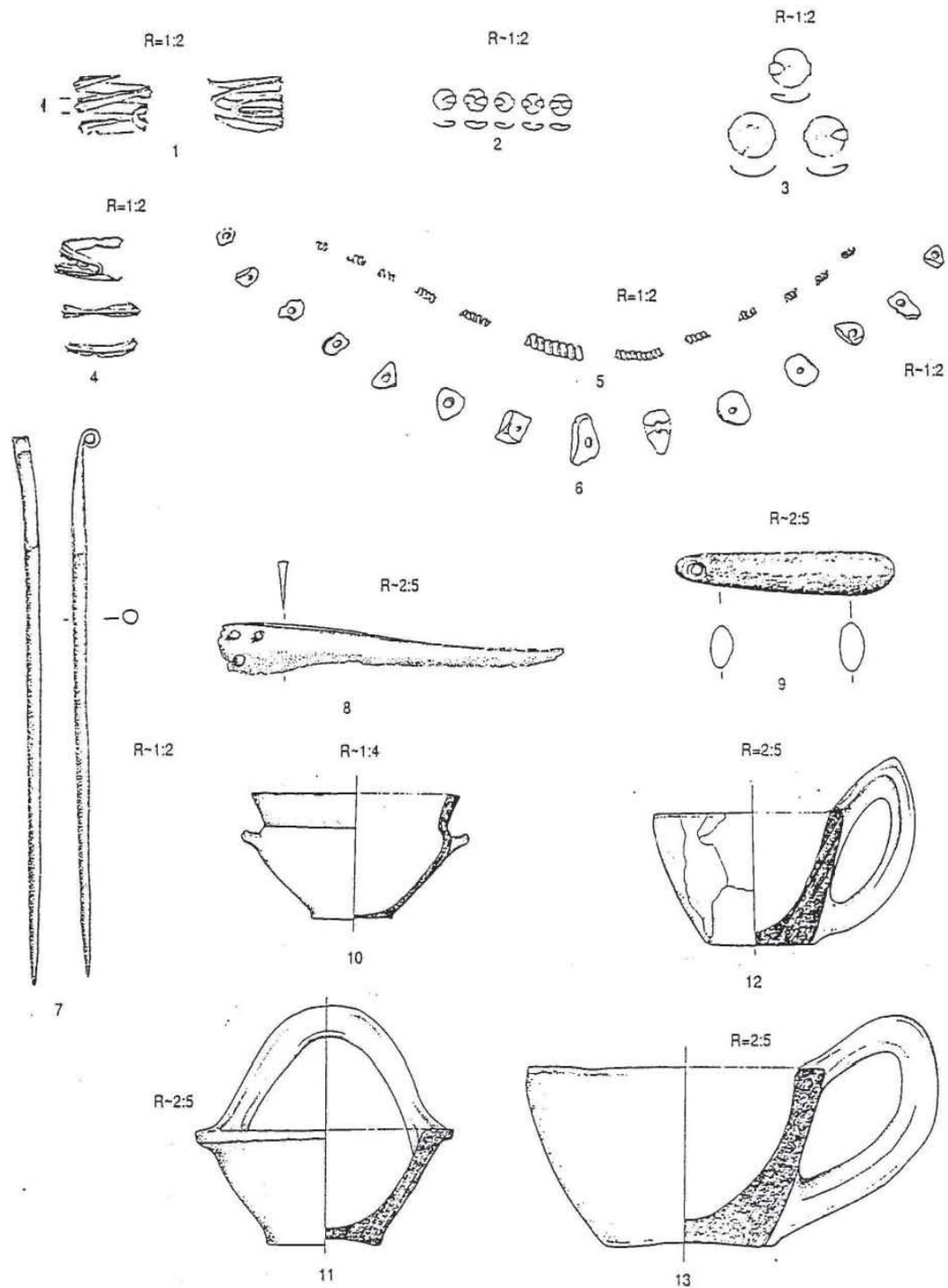


Figure 5: Gračane, the site of Gračanska Polja, mound I – inventory of the graves 1a, 2, 3, 8, 9 (Jevtić 1997).

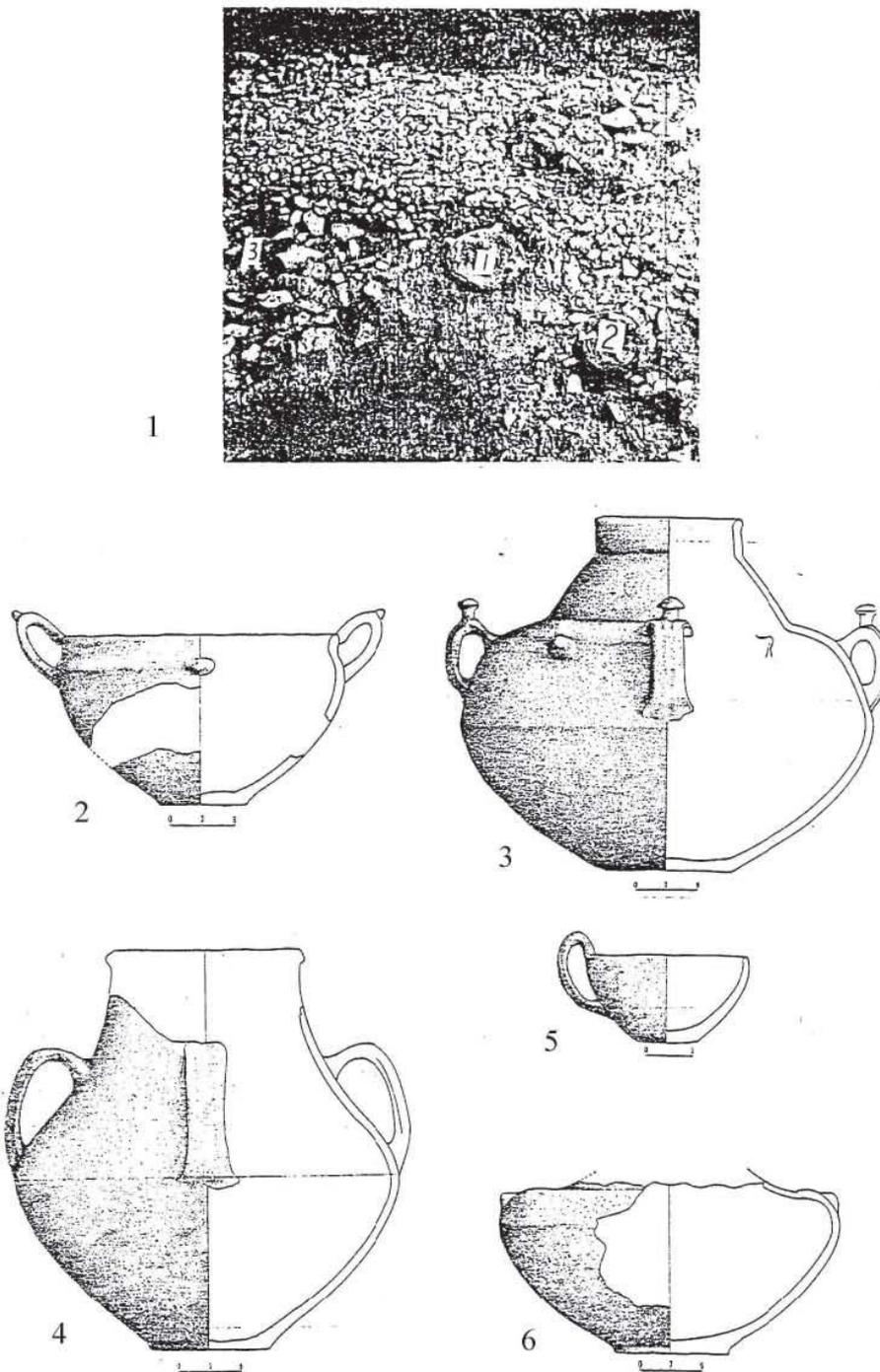


Figure 6: Dojeviće, the site of Humpa – 1- urn in the construction II (Срејовић 1977);  
 2-6 – urns and ceramics from the graves (Letica 1979).

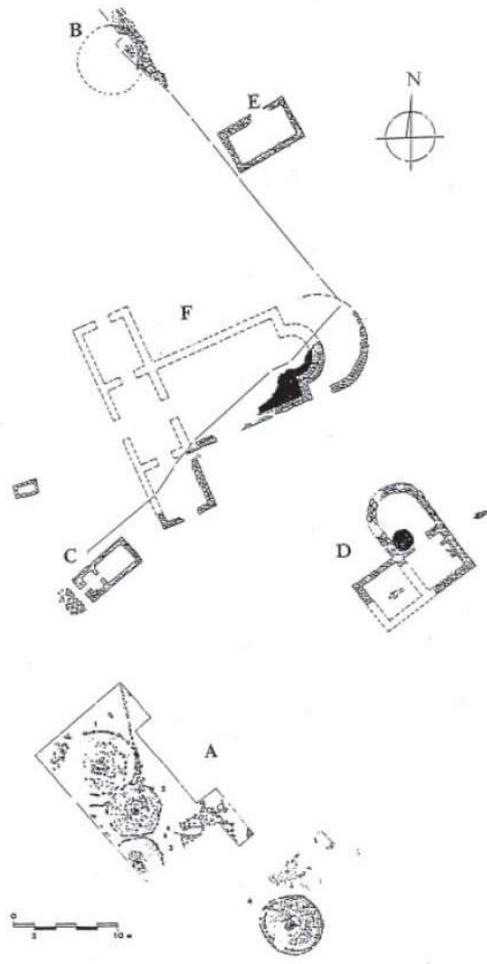


Figure 7: Novopazarska Banja, the site of Igralište – situation plan (Јовановић 1995).

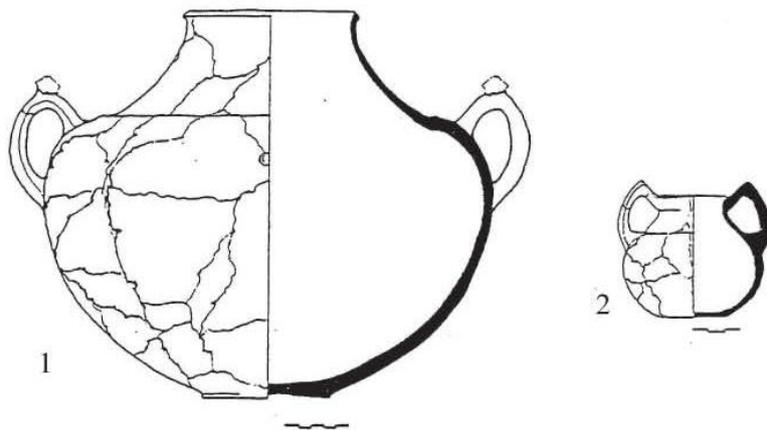


Figure 8: Novopazarska Banja, the site of Igralište – Vrnjica group pottery (Јовановић 1995).