

A GETIC GRAVE WITH GOLD EARRING FROM ZIMNICEA – “CÂMPUL MORȚILOR” NECROPOLIS

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Keywords: Zimnicea – “*Câmpul Morților*”, cremation grave in urn with lid, earring with zoomorphic extremity (lion head), pottery (mug) with nervure at the base of the handle, typology, analogies, chronology.

Abstract: This paper describes in detail the **Grave 2** discovered in the Getic necropolis from Zimnicea – “*Câmpul Morților*” during the 2007 archaeological campaign. This particular grave is a cremation one, with a small quantity of bones and the inventory deposited in an urn with lid. The funeral inventory consists in a golden earring with a lion head extremity, obviously an import from the Greek area. This is the first time when an object of this type is discovered north of the Danube. We discuss here some aspects about the association between the imported earring and the local pottery used as urn. We also examine the typological and chronological aspects that are dating the grave at the boundary between the 3rd and the 2nd c. BC.

Cuvinte cheie: Zimnicea – „*Câmpul Morților*”, mormânt de incinerare în urnă cu capac, cercel cu extremitate zoomorfă (cap de leu), cană cu „mustăți” la baza toartei, tipologie, analogii, cronologie.

Rezumat: Articolul prezintă detaliat **mormântul 2** descoperit în necropola getică de la Zimnicea – „*Câmpul morților*”, în campania de săpături arheologice din anul 2007. Este un mormânt de incinerare în urnă cu capac în care a fost depusă o cantitate mică de oase umane calcinate și inventarul funerar. Singura piesă de inventar este în mod evident de import din spațiul grecesc: un cercel de aur cu o extremitate în formă de cap de leu. Este prima apariție a acestui tip de podoabă la nord de Dunăre. Sunt discutate aspecte legate de asocierea dintre podoaba de import și ceramica locală reprezentată de cana utilizată drept urnă, precum și aspecte de tipologie și cronologie, pe baza cărora mormântul ar putea fi datat la limita dintre secolele III-II a. Chr.

The research of the Getic necropolis from Zimnicea originates in the three so-called “archaeological explorations” (1871-1873) carried by Cezar Bolliac on a large area extended east of the point known as “*Cetate*”¹, who also named the site “*Câmpul de morți dacic*”². In the last quarter of the 19th century, two antiquary amateur archaeologists, Dimitrie Papazoglu and Dimitrie Butculescu, excavated the site area in search of antiquities. The first systematic excavations, using modern scientific methods, were organised after the Second World War by Ion Nestor (1948-1949)³ followed by Alexandrina D. Alexandrescu (1967-1974)⁴.

In the second half of the 19th century, there were excavated around 165 graves; other 166 graves were excavated by Nestor – Alexandrescu,

making the Zimnicea necropolis one of the most important known Getic cemeteries, relevant for the understanding of the material culture and the funerary practices, as well as the Iron Age chronology at the Lower Danube⁵.

In 2007, the archaeological research was resumed and continued until 2009, by a team lead by Mircea Babeș⁶. These last campaigns had an emergency nature caused by the rapid extension of the human habitat in the western limits of Zimnicea city, affecting a large area of the site⁷.

⁵ Măndescu 2010, 165-182, figs. 22-30.

⁶ Babeș *et alii* 2008, 331-332; Babeș *et alii* 2009, 232-233; Babeș *et alii* 2010, 208.

⁷ There were build houses, additional buildings, enclosures, new streets and electric networks. The new archaeological researches were requested by the Zimnicea City Hall in the regime of rescue excavations. The four archaeological campaigns were financed mainly by Zimnicea City Hall (September 2007, May 2008, August 2008 and July-August 2009). The last campaign was also financed by Teleorman County Museum and Ministry of Culture.

¹ Bolliac 1872, 2-4; Bolliac 1873, 1-2; Bolliac 1874, 1-2, 4; Măndescu 2009, 205-213.

² Bolliac 1872, 2.

³ Nestor 1949, 116-125; Nestor 1950, 93-102.

⁴ Alexandrescu 1980, 19-126.

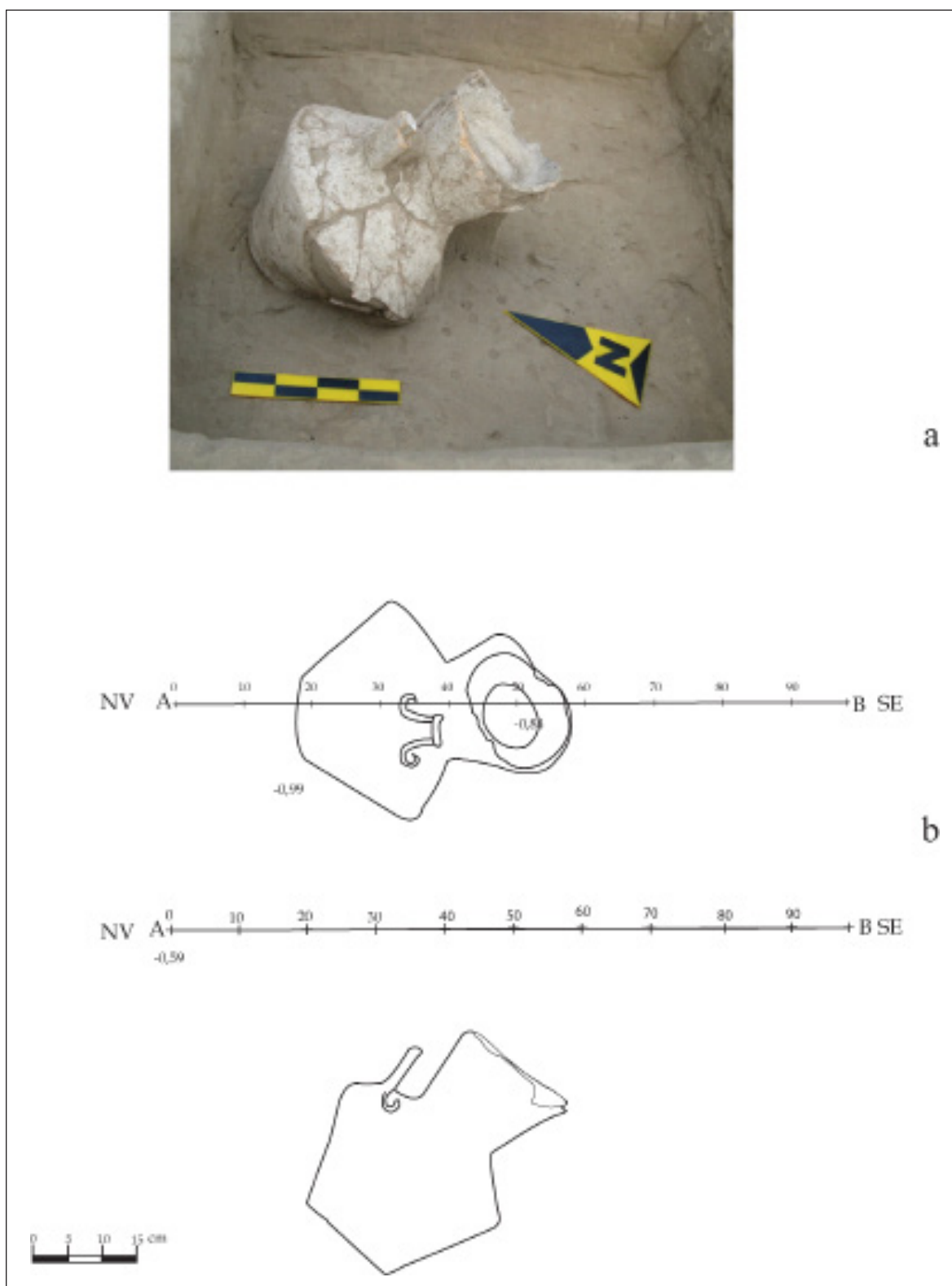


Fig. 1. Zimnicea – “Câmpul Morților” 2007, trench 2, square 5. Grave 2. Photo (a) and drawing (b).

In the four campaigns were excavated about 0.2 ha and there were discovered 51 plane graves: 41 cremation graves with the bones deposited in urns with or without lid, four graves with cremated bones in pits, three inhumations graves and three cenotaphs.

In the perspective of a future exhaustive monographic publication of our discoveries, we present

here only one grave from those 51. The reason for this choice is the fact that this grave is unique through its funeral inventory and the association of the elements.

Grave 2 was discovered in the first campaign of excavations (2007), in trench 2, square 5 and is located in the central-north area of the known

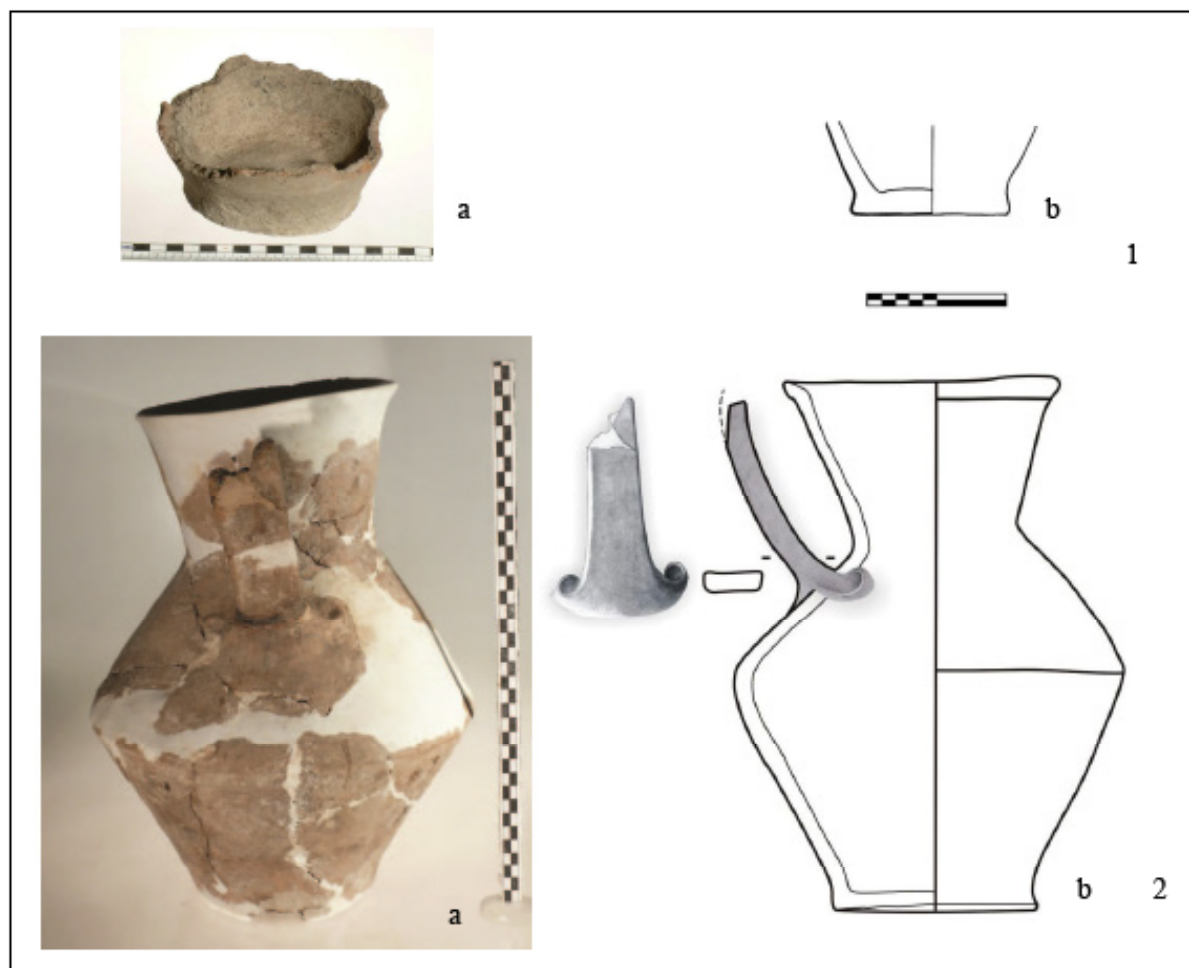


Fig. 2. Zimnicea – “Câmpul Morţilor”, Grave 2/2007. 1 – lid, 2 – urn. Photo (a) and drawing (b).

surface of the necropolis⁸. This area is located west of sector C7 (excavated by Ion Nestor in 1949) and is part of an important grave agglomeration. It is a cremation grave with the bones deposited in urn with lid (fig. 1/a, b). The lid was found at the depth of -0.7 m; the base of the urn was at -1.05 m depth. The grave pit could not be delimited, a common case for most of the graves from this cemetery. The urn was found slightly inclined with the upper part towards south-east; the lid was placed upside down above the urn.

As urn it was used a high hand made pot with a truncated neck (fig. 2/a, b), with straight cut rim. The band handle has nervure at the base (two embossed volutes). The pot is brown with a whitish surface. The upper part of the vessel is broken and the handle is fragmentary. Dimensions: 38 cm height; 28.5 cm maximum diameter; 18.5 cm rim diameter; 14.5 cm bottom diameter. The lid is represented by a bottom of a vessel, hand made, probably from a mug (fig. 2/1). The cremated bones, in small quantity (101.75 g)⁹, were deposited

at the lower part of the urn. The white colour of the cremate bones suggests that the body was burned at a temperature exceeding 600⁰.

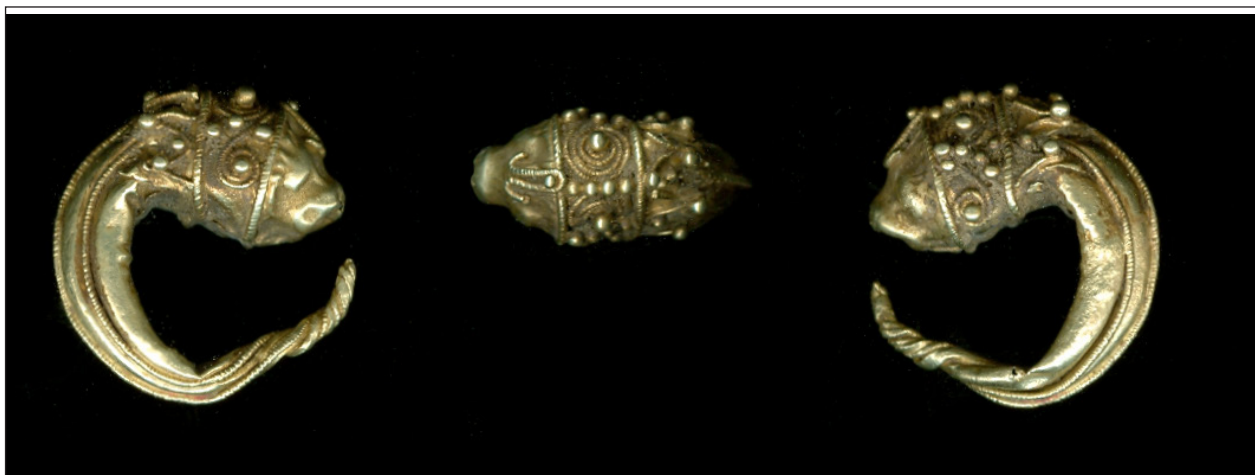
The funeral inventory consists in only one item, found among the bones (fig. 3). The earring is very well preserved without burning traces. The object is ring shaped with opened extremities¹⁰. Its maximum diameter is 2.25 cm and it weights 3.78 g. One extremity is fashioned as a lion head and the other one twisted and thinned out gradually. The zoomorphic extremity was separately made from gold foil, *au repoussé* style and after attached to the body of the earring. The lion head is realistic, with a prominent snout and opened mouth. The eyes are suggested by two prominences separated by a double filigree nervure, descending on the forehead, with curved extremities. The animal's crest is represented by various filigree geometrical motives (circularly, volutes and jag), combined with small welded granules. The earring body has a triangular section and is made from folded golden foil. On its body there are welded three longitudinal filigree nervure that are joining and interpenetrate

⁸ Alexandrescu 1980, 50, fig. 1.

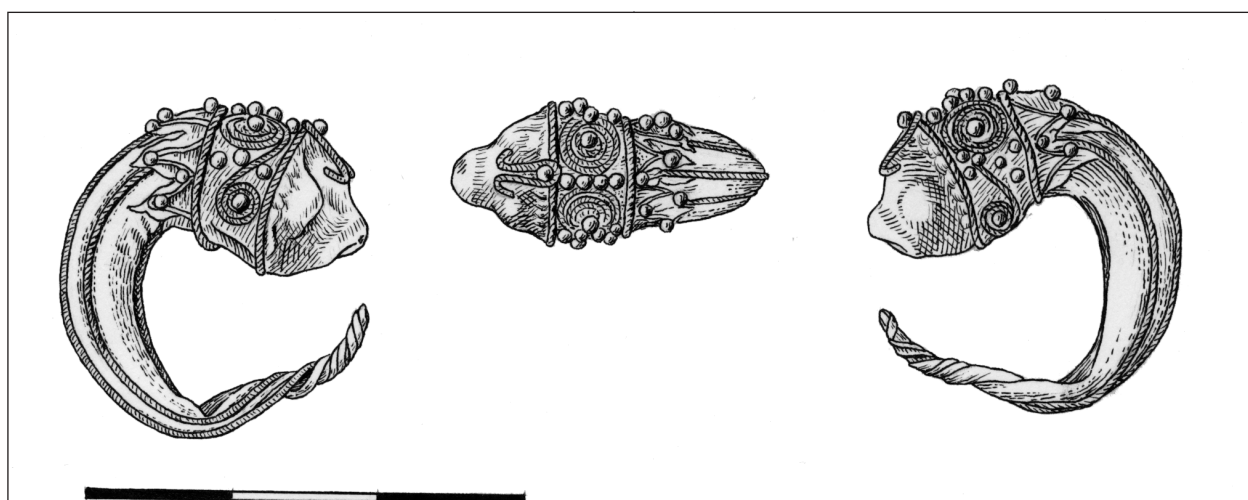
⁹ The anthropological analysis was carried by Laetitia Laquay for her master degree, and includes the entire human osteological

assemblage from Zimnicea necropolis (2007-2009).

¹⁰ Teleorman County Museum, Alexandria, inv. no. 27041.



a



b

Fig. 3. Zimnicea – “Câmpul Morților” 2007, **Grave 2/2007**. The golden earring. Photo (a) and drawing (b).

at the level of twisted thinned extremity. The object is obviously imported from the Hellenistic cultural area.

Considering the funeral rite and ritual, this grave follows the trend of the funeral practice observed at the Zimnicea necropolis and also in the general funeral behaviour of the Getic communities from the 4th-3rd c. BC. The cremation graves with the bones deposited in urn, with or without lid, are dominant in Zimnicea, representing 83.4% of all the graves that were discovered (181 cremation graves in urn with or without lid, out of all the 217 graves excavated between 1948 and 2009).

The body cremation took place on a pyre with unknown location¹¹. We have to mention here that neither the urn nor the lid displays traces of an

eventual secondary burning that may have happened at the pyre. The small bone quantity does not represent a particular case, by comparing it with the rest of the graves excavated in our four campaigns. According to the anthropological analyses, the bone quantity deposited in urns may vary between 23.19 g (M. 10) and 1,700.23 g (M. 12).

Due the ornament from the base of the handle, the pot used as urn is part of well documented pottery group, the so called pots with “moustache”. All known examples are hand made, with the handle in band or with rectangular section. Most of them were found at Zimnicea necropolis. Four mugs of this type were already known from older excavations made by Alexandrina Alexandrescu (fig. 4/1-4). They were discovered in graves that were dated around the 2nd c. BC¹² (C10 M61, C10 M118, C14 M1 and C15 M56). In the last campaign from Zimnicea, it was discovered a sixth pot, smaller, mug sized (M. 47) (fig. 4/5)¹³.

¹¹ In the entire excavated area of the site there was never found a place that could be considered as a pyre (Alexandrescu 1980, 42). Anyway, Bolliac mentions a discovery “in the extremity of Câmpul morților” consisting in “a round area where the soil is red and hardened by fire - a place for a pyre”, found at more than one meter depth (Bolliac 1872, 4; also see Măndescu 2001, 19).

¹² Alexandrescu 1972, 17, pl. II/1, 5; Alexandrescu 1980, 27, 31-32, 34, fig. 26/1-4.

¹³ Unpublished excavations Anca Ganciu, 2009.

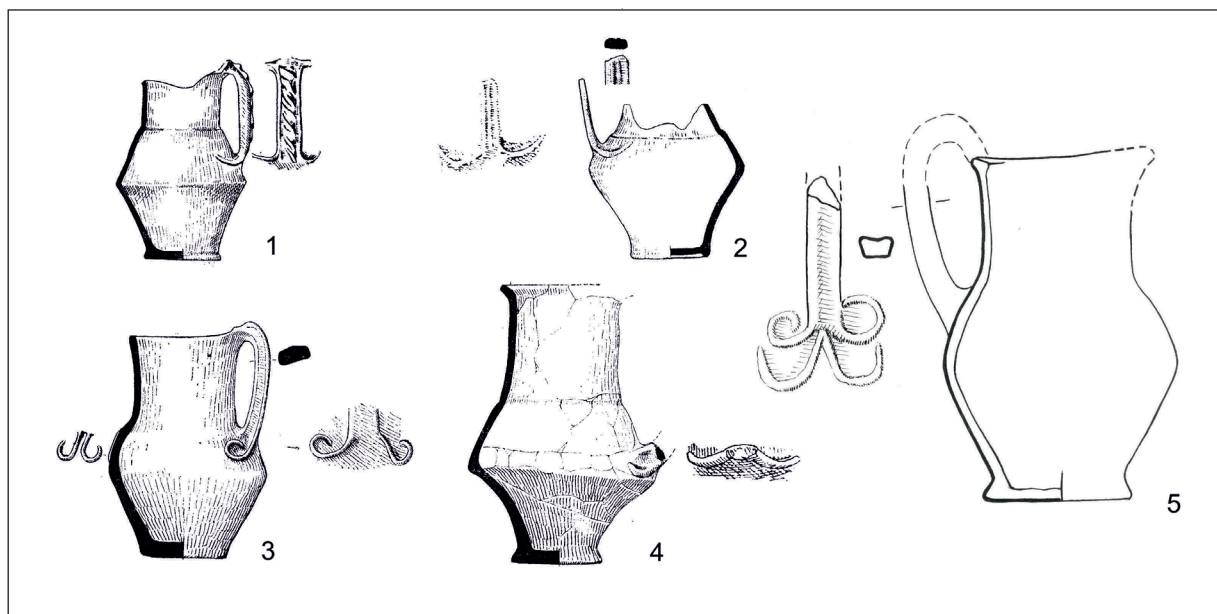


Fig. 4. Zimnicea – “Câmpul Morţilor” 2007, pots and one mug with “moustache” discovered in graves. 1 – C10 M118, 2 – C15 M56, 3 – C10 M61, 4 – C14 M1, 5 – **Grave 47/2009** (unpublished); different scales. 1-4, *apud* Alexandrescu 1980.

These pots were dated in the 2nd c. BC based on the association with discoveries considered typical for this century: hand made cups (in C14 M1 and C15 M56) and fibula of middle La Tène / LT C2 type (in C15 M56)¹⁴. Recent analysis of the necropolis confirms the dating of the graves with this kind of pots to the latest funeral horizon from “Câmpul Morţilor”¹⁵.

Other discoveries from the Geto-Dacian world are placing the evolution of the “moustache” pots into a chronological frame that widely covers the 3rd-2nd c. BC. Probably, the oldest mug from this category is the one found in Grave 260/2 (fig. 5) in Stelnică – “Grădiştea Mare” necropolis (4th-first half of the 3rd c. BC)¹⁶. Another mug was found in the fortified settlement from Satu Nou – “Valea lui Voicu” (fig. 6), in a pit from the eight level, dated at the middle 3rd c. BC¹⁷. For the first half of the 2nd c. BC we can mention here a mug discovered in the *dava* from Grădiştea (pit no. 184)¹⁸. The latest example from this type was found on the Mureş valley in a grave from Teleac, dated in La Tène C2 / La Tène D1¹⁹. Other pots with this ornament, with uncertain dating, were found in the Apahida necropolis and Getic *dava* from Coconi

and Crăşani²⁰. Even so, we may try to relate them with the general chronology of these site (La Tène C1, the 2nd half of the 3rd c. BC – beginning of the 2nd c. BC, for Apahida, respectively 3rd-1st c. BC for Coconi and Crăşani).

On the other part, the gold earring imposes a more detailed discussion. The reason for discussion resides in his unique present in Zimnicea necropolis. Despite a numerous funeral inventory imported from Hellenistic area, the number of golden inventory discovered at Zimnicea is relatively low. Were found here eight pendants by different types, discovered in four cremation graves (C6, C7 M1, C7 M4 and C17 M32)²¹. Due this situation, the importance of our discovery consist first in the possibility of framing the earring in a series of golden objects found at Zimnicea; and secondary needs to be mentioned here, is the fact that it is the only discovery so far at North Danube.

The typology of golden earrings with a zoomorphic extremity (lion head shape) was discussed a quarter century ago by Milena Dimitrova, in a study based on 24 objects (pairs or single finds) discovered in Bulgaria²². Regarding the golden earrings, the spreading area is much larger, from southern Italy – *Magna Graecia* (Tarent, Siracuse) to Minor Asia (Pergamon) and the Eastern Mediterranean basin (Crete, Melos, Cyprus, Antiochia); from northern Greece, Macedonia (Kožani, Thessaloniki, Amphipolis) to the western (Callatis, Tomis) and

¹⁴ Alexandrescu 1972, 17; Babeş 1988, 8, n. 15-17.

¹⁵ Măndescu 2010, 171, fig. 24.

¹⁶ Unpublished. Excavations Conovici, Ganciu, Matei. Cf. Conovici, Ganciu, Matei 2002, 299.

¹⁷ Unpublished. Excavations Conovici, Irimia, Ganciu. About the chronology and content of level eight see Conovici *et alii* 2011, with literature.

¹⁸ Sirbu 1996, 70, 76, fig. 64/4.

¹⁹ Moga 1982, 87, fig. 2/1a, b; Rustoiu 2008, 142, fig. 71/1.

²⁰ Crişan 1966, 50, figs. 20/2; 21/2; Vulpe 1924, 47.

²¹ Alexandrescu 1980, 51, figs. 50, 1, 5-6, 14-15.

²² Dimitrova 1989, 1-14.

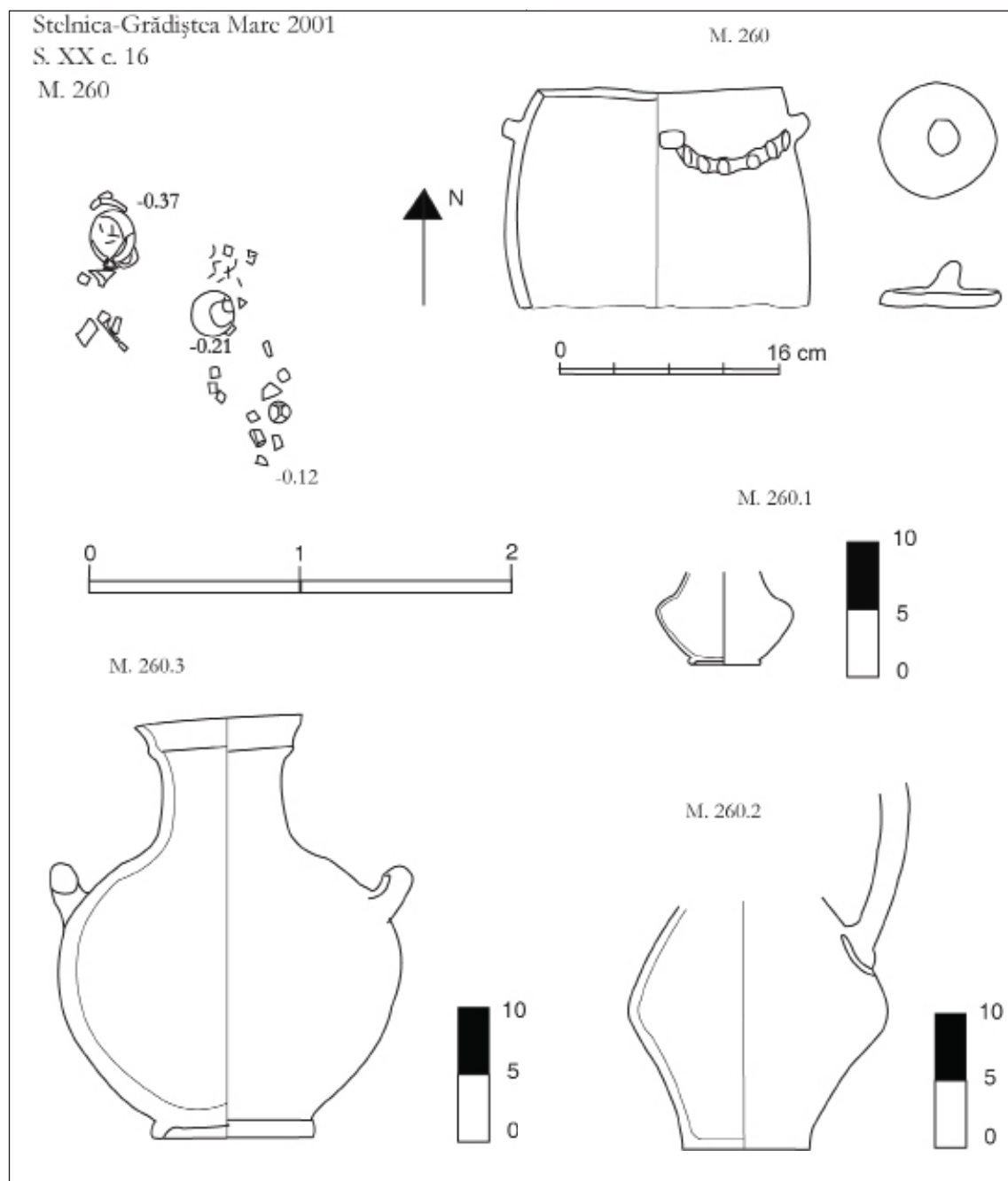


Fig. 5. Stelnică – “Grădișteea Mare”, Grave 260.

northern (Olbia, Chersones, Nymphaion, Pantikapaëum) shores of the Black Sea²³. According to her conclusions, these adornments from the Thracian area, based on dimensions, technique and ornaments can be divided into two different types, with specific chronological features. The first type appears at the end of 4th c. BC-first half of the 3rd

c. BC and persists even latter. The second type is specific to the 2nd c. BC, persisting also in the next century.

The most expressive parallels for the Zimnicea earring can be found in the first type described by Dimitrova.

As concerns the execution of the lion's head, the closest analogy is the earring from Kavarna²⁴. The head's ornament is closely related to the details displayed by an earring found at Sveštari – “*Ginina Mogila*”²⁵. The discovery of this type in the Sveštari necropolis, (in “*Ginina*” and 17 tumulus), in con-

²³ Dimitrova 1989, 7-8, fig. 18. For the samples discovered in Hellenistic cemeteries of the Greek colonies from the western shore of the Black Sea, see: Bucovaia 1967, 44-45, fig. 32 (Tomis, end of the 3rd-beginning of the 2nd c. BC), Preda 1966, 139-142, fig. 3/1-2 (Callatis, half of the 3rd c. BC), Bărlădeanu-Zavatin 1980, 223, pl. 4/2 (Callatis, end of the 3rd-beginning of the 2nd c. BC) and Tonkova 2007, 279-282, pl. 1/3 (Odessos, end of the 4th-beginning of the 3rd c. BC; an workshop for the production of these adornments is supposed to have functioned here).

²⁴ Dimitrova 1989, 3, fig. 1/5; 3 (photo); Tonkova 2007, 280, pl. 3/1 (drawing).

²⁵ Dimitrova 1989, 6, fig. 3, Kavarna), 9, Sveštari.

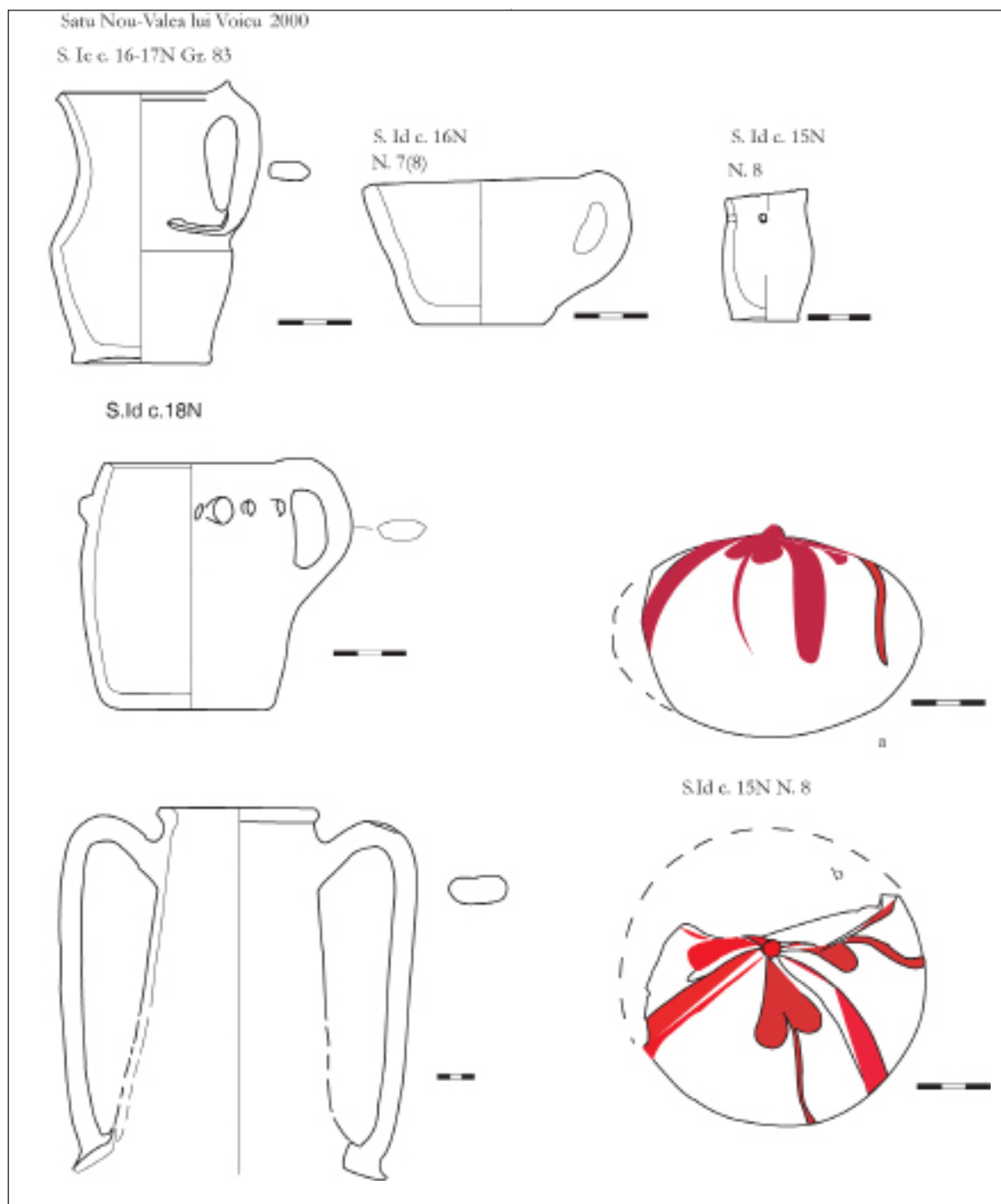


Fig. 6. Satu Nou – “Valea lui Voicu”. Pottery from level 8.

texts well dated in the first half and the middle of the 3rd c. BC²⁶, is a strong argument for the chronology of the earrings from the first type.

On the other hand, the discovery of a golden chain with lion head extremities in a Hellenistic grave from Mesembria necropolis, pleads for a latter dating, at the end of 3rd c. BC of this zoomorphic ornament. The chronology of the Mesembria

grave is based on a very rich funeral inventory (adornments and pottery)²⁷.

The body of Zimnicea earring is mostly untwisted, this being a distinctive morphological feature that separates it from all the other early earrings. A close analogy can be seen in a grave from Krän, dated in the 2nd c. BC²⁸.

²⁶ Dimitrova 1989, 12, n. 15, fig. 1; Gergova 1996, 16, pl. 4/6; Teleagă 2008, 26-47, Taf. 95; 98/1; 188/1-7; 190/4 (the author does not consider the earring from the “Ginina” tumulus to be an import and ignore it); Măndescu 2010, 185-186, 190, 413-414, fig. 33, pl. 292-294, 295/A, 296/A.

²⁷ Čimbuleva 1964, 57 ff.; Tonkova 2007, 285. The same type of chains, but with different zoomorphic extremities (antelope heads), were found in graves from Callatis associated with lion head earrings (Preda 1966, 139-140, fig. 3).

²⁸ Dimitrova 1989, 6-7, fig. 12.

The execution technique of the ornamental motives of the Zimnicea earring also suggests a latter dating than the majority of the objects belonging to the first type. The pseudo filigree and pseudo granulation are techniques widely use in the Hellenistic goldsmith of the west pontic colonies at the end of the 3rd c. BC, nonetheless in the second half of the century²⁹.

Considered to be one of the most significant proofs of the Balkan influences, the pseudo filigree and the pseudo granulation techniques are spreading also in the eastern Celtic art during the middle La Tène³⁰.

Even though the chronological relevance of the association of the two elements found in Grave 2, was already discussed by one of the authors of this paper³¹, we believe that a short resumption of this issue is welcomed. First of all we have to highlight the rarity of the case in the Zimnicea necropolis and generally in the Getic cemeteries, when both funerals inventory and the local pottery are key elements for the grave chronology. The chronologi-

cal frame of the mentioned objects (local pottery and the golden earring, associated in Grave 2) is not significantly wide and they certainly overlap during the last half of the 3rd c. BC³².

The possible dating of Grave 2 about 200 BC may constitute a chronological reference point for the last horizon of the Zimnicea necropolis. A possible slight anteriority of the earring, belonging to a type mainly dated in the first half of the 3rd c. BC does not change our dating of the grave. The hoarding of the golden earring for a longer time can be a probable explanation for the Zimnicea case, which is not unique in the Thracian world. The heritage from generation to generation of a golden adornment (an Italic type fibula) was already documented in a tumulus grave from Koprivce³³.

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²⁹ Tonkova 2007, 284.

³⁰ Szabó 1974, 147, ff.; Szabó 1992, 162-164; Kruta 1975, 68-71.

³¹ Măndescu 2010, 180, 182, pl. 374/2.

³² According to the opinion of Măndescu 2010, 180, **Grave 2** can be dated probably even later, in the beginning of the 2nd c. BC.

³³ Stančev 2004, 158, fig. 6.

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