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ON THE ISSUE OF AN OSSUARY – PIT DWELLING Z IN THE OLDEST HORIZON AT VINČA

Abstract. – This paper deals with the issue of a common grave or so-called ossuary with entrance hall – found in the deepest layer at Vinča. The paper is based on the research conducted by M. Vasić in 1931 and 1934. The published information and interpretations of the grave have been corrected and supplemented with analysis of unpublished field documentation and study collection.

Key words. – Vinča, ossuary, pit-dwelling Z, Starčevo culture, Vinča culture.

One of the most important elements on which M. Vasić rested his interpretations of Vinča is the common grave, or so-called ossuary with entrance hall (*kosturnica sa dromosom*), where nine skeletons were found. In spite of the significance attributed to this structure, Vasić's numerous publications do not allow the possibility to see the so-called ossuary and pit-dwelling Z (*zemunica Z*), connected to it, as one unit.¹ Their relations to the pits dug into loess subsoil, which Vasić interpreted as the first, temporary dwelling structures at Vinča, contemporaneous with the ossuary,² is even more vague.

Researchers of Vinča generally agree that the pits dug into loess really do represent Vinča's oldest horizon. These pits have not been published in detail until now. Vasić published only a modest selection of finds from them, only a few which can be linked with certainty to Starčevo culture. As a result the discussion of the possibility that a Starčevo settlement existed at Vinča, which was generated almost immediately after the publishing of the fourth volume of *Prehistoric Vinča (Preistoriska Vinča)*, has never progressed from the level of assumption and speculation. The argument ranges between two apparently completely opposite views. On one hand, some authors hold that all the pits in Vinča's deepest layer were made by the representatives of Starčevo culture,³ and on the other there are those who conclude on the basis of architectural remains that all the pits, without exception, and including the so-called ossuary, i.e. pit-dwelling Z, should be associated with the representatives of Vinča culture.⁴ When discussing the relation between Starčevo culture and

Vinča culture at the Vinča site, almost all researches seem to agree on the issue of the »tomb with entrance hall« (*grobница sa dromosom*) (ossuary–*kosturnica*), but disagree on the issue of pit-dwelling Z. Most authors think that the ossuary is to be associated with the representatives of Starčevo culture, but when it comes to pit-dwelling Z, its character and contents, the views differ quite considerably – as, indeed, is the case for all the other pits at Vinča.

The ossuary is mentioned for the first time in the first volume of Vasić's *Prehistoric Vinča*. Without any elaborate explanations, Vasić simply informs us that in 1931 »an ossuary (*kosturnica*) with an entrance hall (*dromos*) where nine bodies were buried« was detected »in the deepest part of the cultural layer – in the layer and in the age of the pit-dwellings«.⁵ Neither the position of the investigated area nor its stratigraphic position in relation to the later layers and structures are given. However, he specifies that the corridor of the ossuary begins at ∇9.3 m, and that the deepest part of the ossuary lies at ∇11.4 m.⁶ He further points out that apart from bodies with heads, except in two cases, facing towards the periphery of the tomb, and the lower

¹ Although inadequate, terms ossuary (pit grave) and pit-dwelling Z (complex grave structure) are broadly accepted.

² Васић 1932, 102; 1936, 9.

³ Letića 1968.

⁴ Сталио 1984, 35.

⁵ Васић 1932, 26.

⁶ Васић 1932, 102.

parts faced inwards, no other objects were found.⁷ But soon after, Vasić mentions »objects, and especially pottery fragments« lying »immediately above collapsed parts of a wooden roof structure above the skeletons«, as well as »objects found immediately above the skeletons, but not with them«.⁸ Only one of these objects has been published – a fragment of a conical bowl with surface in barbotine relief, accompanied with an explanation that »it was found above burnt wooden structure of the roof over the ossuary at Vinča, and accordingly is assigned to the layer and age of the pit-dwellings«.⁹

The second volume of *Prehistoric Vinča* provides a detailed analysis and reconstruction of the tomb.¹⁰ When it was published, with a text which had been prepared and gone to press much earlier (in 1933), Vasić's excavations at Vinča had already been brought to an end.¹¹ Unable to change the text that he had already submitted, Vasić stated in the introduction that the information on the tomb with nine skeletons was updated in 1934 after it had been learned that it represented an integral part of pit-dwelling Z. This was illustrated by a layout showing their relation.¹² He also announced that the fourth volume would provide complete information on this structure.¹³

However, it seems that the promised detailed clarification was not destined to be. The statement, already expressed in Volume II, that the tomb is part of the large pit-dwelling Z, is simply reiterated in Volume IV.¹⁴ Volume IV does not provide any supplements or comments on the analysis of the technical data (relative depth and measurements of the »grave chamber« and »access corridor«, layers in the southwest and northwest profile above the grave, the thickness of the original humus layer, level of loess occurrence) or the conclusion (that it is a tomb with a wooden roof, where, given the number of skeletons, burials took place over a prolonged period). The claim, already made, that only two loom-weights were found in the grave is also restated.¹⁵ The occurrence of »parts of human skeletons« (a mandible and fragments of skulls) »around the tomb and the entrance hall« in the layers above »skeleton I« is not explained.¹⁶ The only new information is that two vessels, lying not far from the skeletons, and five figurines were found in pit-dwelling Z.¹⁷ Taking into consideration that the tomb lay inside pit-dwelling Z, one may conclude that the tomb was accessible from that gradually sloped pit-dwelling.

For a long time, the grave in the deepest layer of Vinča was considered a unique example of mass burial in the Starčevo culture area. Here graves mostly occur

as pits where one, or, very rarely, two or more bodies were buried. The number of graves is relatively small if compared to the number of the registered and excavated Starčevo sites. Consequently, seldom has burial practice in the Neolithic as a whole been the focus of archaeological work or discussion. This can be attributed partly to incomplete information on the investigated graves, unpublished material and documents, but also to the diverse modes of burial observed in the Starčevo culture. Similarly, the »ossuary with entrance hall« has rarely been mentioned in the literature. References are mostly made within larger syntheses on the topic of Starčevo culture, or in the studies of the stratigraphy of Vinča and the character of pits in the deepest layer at that site; in other words, in papers which do not deal with the interpretation of burials.

In one of these works V. Miložević mentions pit Z and the »tomb with nine skeletons«, stating that they, together with pit B and pit V9.51, were the only pits at Vinča containing exclusively Starčevo material.¹⁸ It is worth noting that he refers to pit Z and the so-called ossuary (the tomb with nine skeletons) as two separate structures, although Vasić's publications give the impression that they constitute one complex structure.

On the other hand, J. Korošec argues that pit-dwelling Z (with so-called ossuary) had actually been a dwelling pit which was later used as a grave.¹⁹ Based on the fact that in the so-called ossuary, along with nine skeletons found at the bottom of the pit, dislocated parts of other skeletons were found at the higher level, he concludes that those could indicate subsequent burials in the already existing grave. Vasić's reference to part of a charred beam found in the ossuary leads him to the assumption that the dead were laid into a dwelling pit with a wooden roof structure, which was accidentally or intentionally set on fire leaving some parts of the skeletons calcined. Although Vasić does not mention

⁷ Васић 1932, 102.

⁸ Васић 1932, 102, 148.

⁹ Васић 1932, 91, сл. 133.

¹⁰ Васић 1936, 9–14.

¹¹ Васић 1936, VII.

¹² Васић 1936, сл. 209.

¹³ Васић 1936, IX.

¹⁴ Васић 1936a, 150.

¹⁵ Васић 1936, 13; 1936a, 150.

¹⁶ Васић 1936, 10.

¹⁷ Васић 1936a, 150, сл. 1–3.

¹⁸ Miložević 1950, 112.

¹⁹ Korošec 1950, 157; 1953, 11.

any grave goods (except two ceramic loom-weights), J. Korošec assumes that the grave should be associated with representatives of the Starčevo culture, because, according to him, along with Vinča material, Starčevo material is also present in the deepest layers.²⁰

In her synthesis of the Starčevo culture D. Garašanin states an opinion that the ossuary and pit-dwelling Z make up one structure where Vinča material is present along with Starčevo material.²¹ She sees pit-dwelling Z as a structure of large dimensions, irregular, »but mostly quadrangular in shape«, which, due to the unclear picture left after the uncompleted excavations of 1931, was designated a tomb with entrance hall, although there was no hall there.²² After analysis of the information of the ossuary with entrance hall and pit-dwelling Z provided by M. Vasić, she concludes that »the existence of a grave connected to pit-dwelling Z has to be ruled out, since the pit-dwelling itself was used as a grave«, adding that the skeletons lay one over the other in spite of Vasić's claim of a certain regularity in their disposition.²³ This interpretation does not clarify if pit-dwelling Z was primarily used for occupation, and if so for how long, or if it was a structure that, although it took the form of a pit-dwelling, was never used for occupation.

On the other hand, B. Stalio in her works dedicated to the analysis of dwelling structures at Vinča, in which she does not discuss the contents of pits, assigns all pits to the beginning of the Vinča culture. She notes a specific feature of that phase of the Vinča settlement: most detected pits formed a ring around a bigger pit-dwelling abode (pit-dwelling Z). This abode is described as a complex pit-dwelling with three interconnected rooms and a subsequently dug pit with an access in its southeast end, in which the skeletons were found.²⁴ However, no arguments are presented supporting the conclusion that pit-dwelling Z was subsequently extended by the digging of a grave pit (ossuary).

D. Garašanin presents views about the ossuary with entrance hall which differ from the above in her discussion of complex issues of religion and cults in the central Balkans²⁵. Without getting involved in the disputes over the cultural and chronological categorization of the pits at Vinča, she assumes that their circular disposition around the central pit-dwelling Z may indicate a place of cult »where people, probably sacrificed in a rite that cannot be fully understood, were buried«²⁶. Her work does not clarify if pit-dwelling Z was primarily used for occupation or burials. She notes that the skeletons of nine individuals, irregularly piled into the pit, were found in pit-dwelling Z (i.e. the ossuary with hall), and points out that several elements (skele-

tons »found in disorder in pit-dwelling Z«, the position of the pit dwelling, the number of bodies, »position of bones in total disorder«) indicate that it was not »an ordinary burial or a disaster, but more likely a rite involving human sacrifice the meaning of which cannot be grasped in detail«.²⁷

Firstly, the information about the position of the skeletons is incorrect. Secondly, it is almost impossible to accept the explanation that the contents of the pit, consisting of the skeletons of eight men and one woman, could be result of a sacrifice. The explanation seems to be wholly wrong, since there could hardly be any reason why a Neolithic community would deliberately deprive themselves of almost half of their adult population.

The first work dealing more elaborately with the issue of the contents of the pits and the relation between the Starčevo culture and the Vinča culture at Vinča (though without appropriate illustrations) appeared more than 30 years after the last volume of *Prehistoric Vinča* was published.²⁸ Only the contents of the pits were discussed then. After an insight into the whole material excavated between 1929 and 1934, the conclusion was made that all the pits, where Vinča pottery predominated and the Starčevo material made up nothing more than an insignificant part of the total pit contents (excluding the so-called ossuary), belonged, without exception, to representatives of the Starčevo culture.²⁹ The skeletons found in the ossuary were not mentioned. The content of the ossuary (which according to Vasić did not hold any finds except two loom-weights) was said to have included 108 Starčevo fragments, two Vinča fragments, and five Vinča figurines, but no further comments were made. The disproportion in relation to the contents of other pits was not commented on either.

M. Garašanin states that the Starčevo »tomb with an entrance hall« represents, in fact, a pit in the shape of a dwelling-pit with steps at the entrance, which cannot be positively claimed to have been originally used for occupation.³⁰ He further argues that the solution to the

²⁰ Korošec 1950, 158; 1953, 12.

²¹ Garašanin 1954, 22.

²² Garašanin 1954, 31.

²³ Garašanin 1954, 32.

²⁴ Сталио 1968, 79.

²⁵ Гарашанин 1968.

²⁶ Гарашанин 1968, 253.

²⁷ Гарашанин 1968, 257.

²⁸ Letica 1968.

²⁹ Letica 1968, 15.

³⁰ Гарашанин 1973, 28.

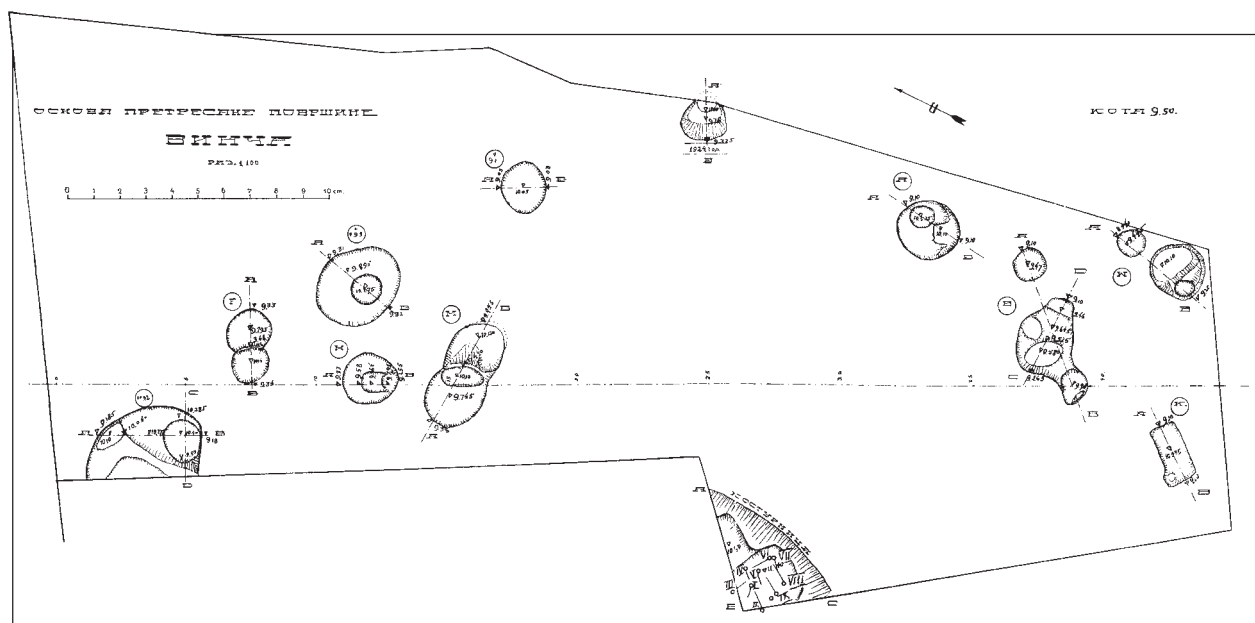


Fig. 1. Excavations in 1931 – plan with pits (Vasić 1936, sl. 8)

Сл. 1. Ископавања 1931. године – основа са јамама (Васић 1936, сл. 8)

issue of the grave, which exhibits characteristics which suggest developed and complex burial rites and a cult of the dead, cannot be expected until the cultural associations of the other pits at Vinča are clearly resolved. Another assumption is interesting. He believes that all the pits, if contemporaneous and belonging to the »era of a degree of direct contact between the Starčevo and Vinča groups«, were arranged along an almost regular arc around the tomb, which would support the view of the existence of a certain rite.³¹ However, this interpretation of chronological and spatial relation between the tomb and the other pits raises doubts. Firstly, most authors, including M. Garašanin himself, agree that fluvial erosion destroyed a considerable part of the site, which makes it impossible to be sure about the original position of the pits in relation to the tomb, even if they were contemporaneous. Besides, the position of the excavated pits (Fig. 1, 2) does not offer enough evidence to conclude that they were regularly grouped around the tomb. The main argument against this assumption is presented in the cultural character of the small finds from the tomb and other pits.³² There is no doubt that the pottery finds in the tomb belong to the Starčevo culture, while the presence of Starčevo pottery in other pits is a matter of dispute,³³ and has not yet been fully resolved.³⁴

A few years later, M. Garašanin expresses different ideas. He now sees the so-called tomb with entrance hall

as only a pit in which »skeletons were flung without any specific burial rite«. ³⁵ The arguments behind this dramatic change in view are not given. He assigns the tomb to the very late, degenerate phase of the Starčevo culture by virtue of »vessels found immediately above the tomb and a statuette discovered there«. ³⁶ The tomb and the Starčevo finds from the later layers are seen as likely to have been contemporaneous with the beginning of Vinča culture. He also points out that their stratigraphic position and degenerate character could indicate contact between Starčevo culture and Vinča culture after the end of phase III, in the phase designated as Starčevo final, or type Ždralovi. ³⁷ This interpretation of the

³¹ Garašanin 1973, 28.

³² Letica 1968.

³³ Milojević 1950; Garašanin 1954; Letica 1968.

³⁴ Our analysis of the whole material from the pit-dwelling layer indicates the conclusion that, based on the pottery finds, other pits can be considered to belong to the Vinča culture (Perić, Nikolić – in preparation).

³⁵ Garašanin 1979, 123. This wording may suggest secondary burials, which is not the case of the Vinča grave. The author probably meant flung bodies, not skeletons.

³⁶ Garašanin 1979, 123. This is likely to be another slip: no statuette was found in the so-called tomb, and the mentioned vessels were found in a depression of pit-dwelling only a few meter away from the pit with skeletons.

³⁷ Dimitrijević 1979, 143; Garašanin 1979, 137.

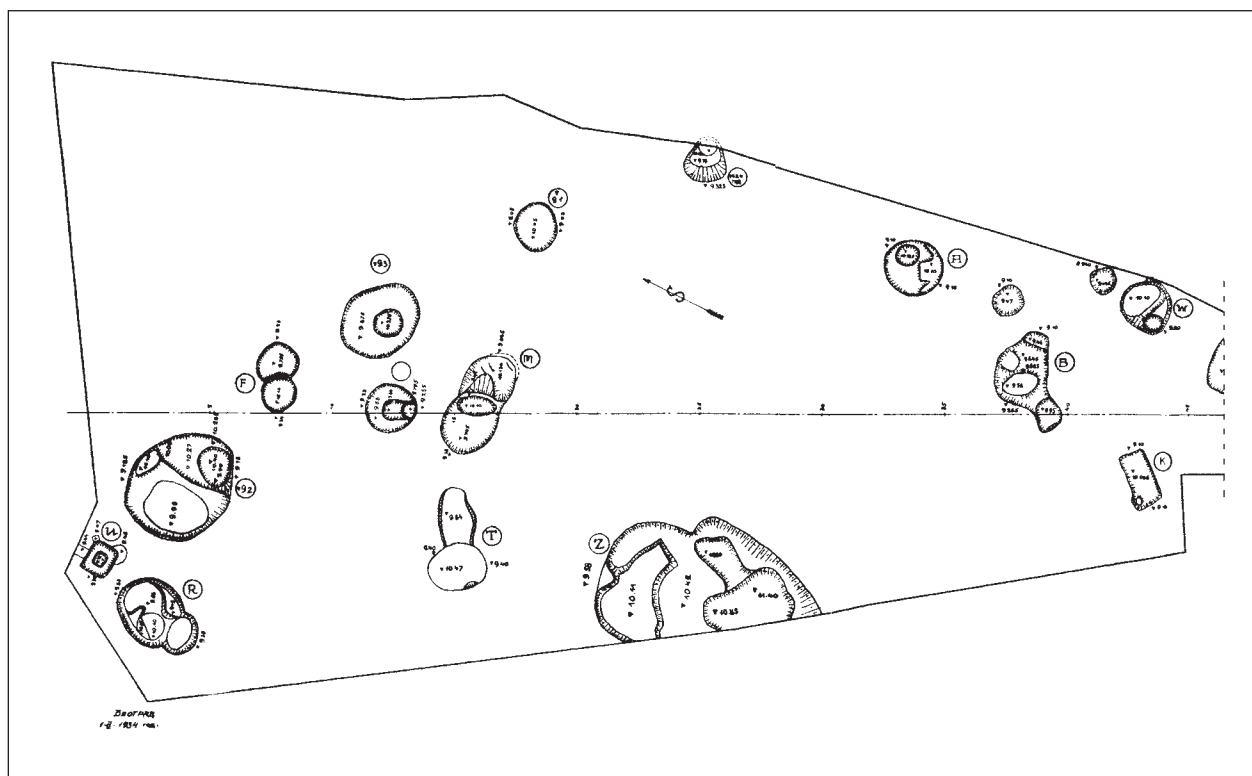


Fig. 2. Excavations in 1931 and 1934 – plan with pits (Vasić 1936, sl. 209)

Сл. 2. Ископавања 1931. и 1934. године – основа са јамама (Васић 1936, сл. 209)

relation between the Vinča and Starčevo cultures raises new questions which go beyond the scope of this work.

One of the last papers dealing with the issue of Starčevo finds at Vinča was published more than two decades ago. D. Garašanin returns to the still unsolved issue of the Starčevo finds at Vinča with new views and a new approach which sees the so-called tomb with entrance hall as the possible clue to that issue.³⁸ She reanalysed all published material related to the ossuary and pit-dwelling Z and came to conclusions which differ greatly from those presented in previous works on the same topic. After making the groundless assertion that Vasić rejected his original interpretation of the structure as a tomb-ossuary after completion of the excavation, D. Garašanin concludes that the ossuary and pit-dwelling Z are two separate structures created at different periods.³⁹ She sees the ossuary as an older, deeply dug pit, where skeletons of representatives of Starčevo culture were found. In her opinion, this is further supported by two globular Starčevo pots said to have been found beside the tomb. Although those vessels were found in pit-dwelling Z, D. Garašanin notes that they may not belong to the pit-dwelling but to the ossuary, because, according

to her analysis, they lay under the bottom of pit-dwelling Z.⁴⁰ She dates the origin of pit-dwelling Z to the period of the early Vinča phase, and sees the pit-dwelling as a larger dug-in structure which encompasses the ossuary. She does not explain in what way pit-dwelling Z was larger than the ossuary, and how this conclusion was made. In this context, the statement that two Starčevo pots lay »under the bottom of pit-dwelling Z« seems

³⁸ Гарашанин 1984.

³⁹ Wrongly cited and interpreted illustrations from *Prehistoric Vinča II* occur in the text several times. They, due to mismatch to the text, may lead to wrong conclusions. For example, Fig. 9 (Vasić 1936) does not show the original situation of the ossuary and pit-dwelling Z, as stated in the text (Гарашанин 1984, 20), but the vertical cross-section and layout of the section defined in 1931 as the ossuary with the entrance hall. Also, it is wrongly stated that in the general plan of the »pit-dwelling layer«, showing the situation with dug-in objects excavated in 1931 (Vasić 1936, fig. 8), the designation of that structure is changed and is marked as pit-dwelling Z (Гарашанин 1984, 20). The structure designated as pit-dwelling Z and its relation to the »ossuary« is shown in the 1934 plan (Vasić 1936, fig. 209).

⁴⁰ Гарашанин 1984, 20.

completely ambiguous. Furthermore, the reasons for the conclusion that the ossuary belongs to the Starčevo culture do not seem any clearer, especially when she notes, quoting Vasić's statement that only two loom-weights were found in the pit, that they could be associated »with the Starčevo culture as much as with the Vinča culture.«⁴¹ And finally, borrowing Z. Letica's inaccurate information on the finds in pit-dwelling Z, she draws the incorrect conclusion that »Starčevo material found in the pit-dwelling comes from the layer with which the ossuary had been filled and which was later disturbed by subsequent digging activity.«⁴²

It has to be admitted that, although the arguments on which D. Garašanin based her conclusions about the existence of two chronologically different structures in the section encompassed by the ossuary and pit-dwelling Z were false, they led her to the right conclusion. Surmising that within the Starčevo structure there must be a younger Vinča structure, she tried to address the lack of original field documents and information on the study material from the ossuary and pit-dwelling Z by turning to M. Vasić's publications. She hoped that they would support her claims, but actually they could not provide all the information necessary for the interpretation of the ossuary and pit-dwelling Z. As a result, although she correctly recognized the younger Vinča structure (not mentioned at all in Vasić's works), which disturbed the Starčevo grave, she mistakenly identified it as pit-dwelling Z.

Unlike D. Garašanin, B. Stalio has not changed her views. She maintains, in her last work on the Vinča architecture, that pit-dwelling Z was originally only one of the dwelling structures, though central and the largest of a pit-dwelling settlement which is to be connected with representatives of the Vinča culture. In her opinion, this pit-dwelling was converted into a tomb when occupation was terminated.⁴³ She does not say, as in her previous work, that the pit with skeletons was subsequently dug, but the same conclusion, although not explicitly stated, remains: representatives of the Vinča culture were buried in the ossuary.

In the light of the various above stated interpretations of stratigraphic, chronological and cultural relation between the ossuary and pit-dwelling Z, and their contents and relation to other pits, it seems necessary to examine in detail each of those elements which can be found in the available material, including the unpublished documentation and study collection.

To date the main issue remains unresolved – namely: what was the »tomb with entrance hall« (ossuary) and what is its relation to the structure designated as pit-

dwelling Z. Prior to giving a definite answer to the question of whether there was only one structure – pit-dwelling Z – which also included the so-called ossuary with hall, or if there were two separate structures, possibly chronologically different, we should point to several facts which may explain how the conflicting views presented in the literature originated and which seemingly led M. Vasić himself to confusion during the actual excavations.

Some misunderstandings and contradictory interpretations have arisen partly due to a lack of agreement on the terminology applied. For example, the so-called ossuary is designated in different ways in different works by Vasić. It is mentioned as: an ossuary with access corridor, an ossuary with entrance hall, a tomb in the shape of a room with access corridor, a tomb with entrance hall, a tomb with nine skeletons, a tomb with corridor, and often as simply a tomb. Although it may appear that there is no great difference between these, it has to be noted for the sake of clarification of the stratigraphy and content of the ossuary that the last designation most frequently implies neither the whole structure nor the grave pit as a whole, but only the bottom floor of the pit with the skeletons and a thin layer immediately above them.⁴⁴ The publications, however, do not state this clearly. Furthermore, the term pit-dwelling adds to the ambiguity. Vasić designates almost all dug-in structures as pit-dwellings, regardless of their proportions or contents. He notes, without any further explanation, that the »so-called hall (*dromos*) and tomb (*grobница*) are an integral part of pit-dwelling Z.«⁴⁵ In addition, some authors were not familiar or were only partly familiar with the content of that structure, so they were prone to change their views on the same issue, sometimes even dramatically. Finally, it is worth mentioning that excavation of the structure was not conducted continuously, which not only affected the way in which the results were published, but perhaps also created a false impression of the existence of horizontal stratigraphy inside the structure, that is, of the possibility of subsequent extension of the originally dug grave or dwelling pit.

⁴¹ Garašanin 1984, 21

⁴² Garašanin 1984, 21.

⁴³ Stalio 1984, 35.

⁴⁴ Vasić 1936, 11; 1951, 36.

⁴⁵ Vasić 1936a, 151. Vasić's indiscriminate use of the term »pit-dwelling«, even for shallow very small pits, presents a major problem for interpretation of the deepest layers at Vinča.

In the 1931 campaign an area lying in the deepest layer and dug into the loess was excavated. Although its shape and content indicated a separate unit, not all of it was excavated. The excavation journal informs us that the western and southern profile of the »depression (pit)« »remained in the wall« (Fig. 1).⁴⁶ The photographs of those profiles corroborate this statement (Fig. 5, 6).⁴⁷ Since the structure consisted of two »depressions«, with nine skeletons in the deeper one, Vasić defined it as an ossuary (tomb) with entrance hall.⁴⁸ It should be noted that even then M. Vasić compared the shape of the »ossuary« to dwelling structures. He wrote in the journal: »The ossuary has the shape of a circular pit-dwelling. The skeletons, except for the first one, were lying at the bottom of the pit-dwelling with their heads facing toward the periphery; ... The pit-dwelling with skeletons was located at the end of an original humus layer«. ⁴⁹ Although the term pit-dwelling was used in this description, we think that the discovered structure was not functionally equated to a dwelling structure. The term pit-dwelling was used as a comparison, with the intention to help clarify to a certain degree the meaning of the burial custom. On 10th August 1931, after cleaning of all the skeletons in the pit, Vasić noted: »The skeletons arranged in this manner in this pit – pit-dwelling remind us of pit-dwellings used for occupation, and consequently support the opinion that the graves of the dead were made in the form of dwellings for the living, that is in the form of pit-dwellings«. ⁵⁰

The 1931 excavation journal does not provide a detailed description of the ossuary. Having cleaned the skeletons, Vasić made a sketch of the cross-section and layout of the ossuary (Fig. 7) and commented briefly that the pit – pit-dwelling with skeletons lay at the end of the original humus layer. He gave the length of the »steps« (1.4 m and 3.6 m) and assumed that: »The access, perhaps entrance hall to the ossuary was from that side, but it cannot be confirmed because no further excavation was possible«. ⁵¹ The description of the ossuary is supplemented in the published works and an explicit definition of the grave pit as an ossuary having an access corridor is provided. ⁵² The pit (tomb) is said to have had a square base with rounded angles and a funnel-shaped bottom. The edge of the pit was 1.4 to 1.5 m long, and the deepest part of the bottom lay at 11.4 m. A graded entrance hall led to the tomb. The hall began in the humus layer, but its outline could be clearly distinguished in the subsoil only at 9.3 m. ⁵³ The dimensions of both »steps« lying at 9.75 m, and 10.60 m, are given more accurately (1.36 m and 3.0 m) and are different from the dimensions given in the journal (Fig. 3a). ⁵⁴

There are some discrepancies between the data provided in the text and shown in the published plans regarding the depth of individual parts of the ossuary. The drawing of the western, or more accurately north-western profile of the ossuary (Fig. 3a), presents $\nabla 10.6$ m as the depth of the second step in the hall, while the layouts from 1931 and 1934 (Fig. 2, 3b) show the depth of $\nabla 10.8$ m. The different measurement points are marked in the drawings. The difference of 0.2 m may indicate that the bottom of the so-called entrance hall was not flat, or in other words that the second step may have been one of the depressions noted in the excavated structure. The drawings of the northwest profile also present different values of the deepest point in the grave pit: 11.4 m in Fig. 3b, and 11.2 m in Fig. 3a. Taking into consideration that »the centre of the funnel-shaped floor of the ossuary lies at $\nabla 11.4$ «, ⁵⁵ we may assume that in figure 3b the depth measured at the deepest section of the pit was mistakenly marked as the depth measured at the profile (which was 11.2 m). With regard to the 1931 layouts, the difference in the presented shape of the area where the skeletons were discovered should also be pointed out (Fig. 3a, 3b). The comparison between those layouts and the layout of pit-dwelling Z made in 1934 (Fig. 2) reveals that the shape of the bottom floor of the grave pit is more truthfully presented in Fig. 3b.

The other section of the structure, designated as pit-dwelling Z, was excavated in 1934. In volume IV of the *Prehistoric Vinča*, Vasić emphasizes that his previous explanation of the ossuary was incomplete, since he wrongly concluded, due to the limited area of excavation, that the ossuary and the entrance hall were the only elements of that structure. ⁵⁶ The following sentence remains slightly ambiguous in this context: »In that year, a trench of the appropriate width was dug on the newly leased land so that the western section of pit-

⁴⁶ Васић 1931, 122. The northwest and southwest profiles are meant here, although the excavation journal and all Vasić's work refer to the western and southern profile of the ossuary.

⁴⁷ Васић 1936, сл. 10–11.

⁴⁸ Васић 1932, 26.

⁴⁹ Васић 1931, 126.

⁵⁰ Васић 1931, 127.

⁵¹ Васић 1931, 127.

⁵² Васић 1936, 9.

⁵³ Васић 1951, 35.

⁵⁴ Васић 1936, 9, сл. 9.

⁵⁵ Васић 1936, 9.

⁵⁶ Васић 1936а, 150.

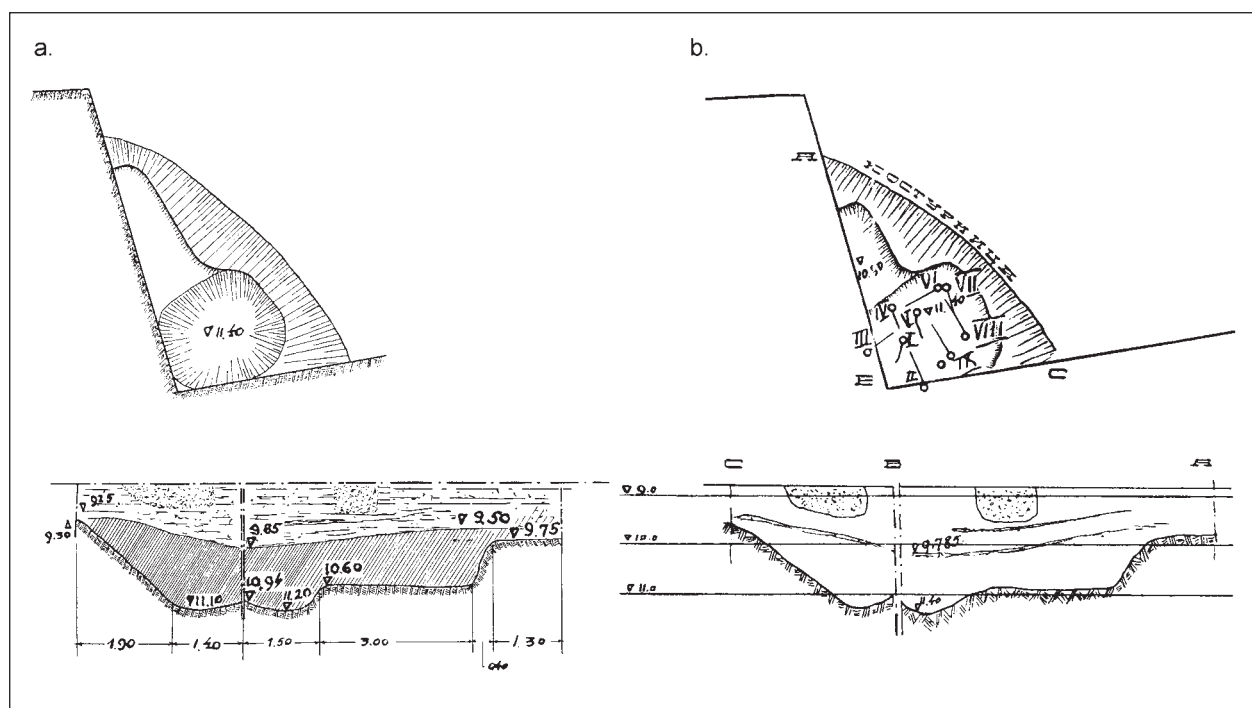


Fig. 3. »Ossuary with entrance hall« – lay-out and cross-section (Vasić 1936, sl. 9, 8)

Сл. 3. »Костурница са гробосом« – основа и пресек (Васић 1936, сл. 9, 8)

dwelling Z could be investigated«. ⁵⁷ This could mean that Vasić, even before the excavation of the areas northwest of the »tomb with entrance hall«, was completely sure that only a part (ossuary with entrance hall, i.e. the southeastern part of pit-dwelling Z) of a considerably larger structure (pit-dwelling Z) had been discovered in 1931.

The excavation journal does not provide a definite solution to this dilemma. On 25 August 1934 Vasić wrote: »Clearing work has begun in the northwest area above the tomb with entrance hall, and it will be continued.« ⁵⁸ Since the layer immediately above the subsoil, or perhaps already in the loess, was being excavated at that moment, this sentence may indicate that Vasić expected to find a part of the tomb in the deeper layer. The following day, still working at the same place, Vasić noted in the journal: »We are continuing with clearing of the area lying northwest of the tomb with entrance hall... We have already excavated in the loess, containing black soil, in the area northwest of the tomb. The levels of the objects are marked as 34V8.75 m (+0.50 = V9.25 m), which means that we are in a pit-dwelling lying in the loess (which was later confirmed)«. ⁵⁹ This quotation may lead to the conclusion that Vasić was writing about a structure (pit-dwelling)

which was not connected to the grave. This impression is further supported by the fact that the structure was designated as pit-dwelling Z on the same date. Its description does not indicate any possible connection with the ossuary – quite the contrary – it prompts the conclusion that pit-dwelling Z and the ossuary present two separate structures lying next to each other: »To the northwest of the (ossuary) tomb with entrance hall at V8.7 m ⁶⁰ the contour of pit-dwelling Z appeared. It was definitely captured later... It descends with three steps into three sections... This pit-dwelling Z is deepest in the third, lowest, section, near the tomb. There, to the length of 26.2 m along the main axis, and at 7 m from the axis towards the wall, the pit-dwelling reaches the depth of V10.85 (absolute)«. ⁶¹ In addition to the summarized description of pit-dwelling Z, the

⁵⁷ Vasić 1936a, 150.

⁵⁸ Vasić 1934, 77.

⁵⁹ Vasić 1934, 78.

⁶⁰ According to Vasić, this was the »relative depth«, while the »absolute depth« is calculated by adding 0.5 m to all the values measured in trench P, where pit-dwelling Z was also located. (Vasić 1934, 1).

⁶¹ Vasić 1934, 80.

journal provides the descriptions, accompanied with a drawing in the margins, of some finds from that pit (Fig. 8). The mode of their marking in the journal and the marks on the finds themselves are highly unusual. Unlike the finds from other pits, which always bear the mark of the pit they came from, the finds from pit-dwelling Z display the mark of the year of excavation and the relative depth. The reasons why the finds were marked without reference to the pit are unknown. The journal, however, explicitly states that they came from pit-dwelling Z.

It is likely that Vasić formed his final view on pit-dwelling Z after completion of the 1934 excavation by comparing and connecting the plans showing the situations in 1931 and 1934 regarding the dug-in structures at loess level (Fig. 1, 2). He could reach the conclusion that the tomb and the entrance hall were not a separate structure, but rather parts of pit-dwelling Z, perhaps after he had connected the unpublished sketch of pit-dwelling Z from 1934 and the sketch of the ossuary from 1931, and re-established the fact that the deepest point of pit-dwelling Z, which was mentioned in the journal, did not lie in the vicinity of the tomb but inside it. The excavations in 1934 revealed that the grave pit (ossuary) did not have the shape of a »circular pit-dwelling« and that its base was not a »square with rounded corners«. ⁶² The drawing of the pit-dwelling Z layout shows that all depressions in that pit, including the ossuary and the entrance hall, were irregular in shape (Fig. 2). However, a detailed description of pit-dwelling Z has never been published. The grave pit was described in later Vasić works in the same manner as at the time when only the southeast section of pit-dwelling Z had been uncovered. ⁶³

In the introductory part of the second volume of *Prehistoric Vinča* Vasić hinted at a new approach to the tomb and pit-dwelling Z. He definitely elaborated it in his fourth book where he noted: »All this information, considered together with that about the presence of parts of human skeletons in the so-called entrance hall at the depths of ∇10.29 m – ∇10.92 m proves that both hall and tomb are integral parts of pit-dwelling Z, which belonged to its deepest section«. ⁶⁴ Based on this statement and the drawing of the pit-dwelling Z layout (Fig. 2), we can draw the conclusion that Vasić thought that pit Z had been dug as a single structure in the shape in which it was discovered by excavation, or in other words that there had not been any extensions for occupation or burial purposes. We consider this fully acceptable.

Unlike later authors, Vasić did not get involved in discussion about the possibility that the structure had

originally been used for occupation, and that one of its parts was later (and if so, how much later) used for the burial of nine bodies. However, the analysis of the stated descriptions of the tomb and pit-dwelling may help us to get to some answers about Vasić's view on this issue. His claim that the tomb and entrance hall are an integral part of the pit dwelling can be the grounds for the assumption that he thought that the primary purpose of this structure was occupation. However, one of Vasić's above-quoted notes about the section of the structure excavated in 1931 and entered in the field journal should not be disregarded. It points out that the disposition of skeletons bears a resemblance to pit-dwellings for occupation, which corroborates »the opinion that graves for the dead were made in the form of dwellings for the living, i.e. in the form of pit-dwellings«. ⁶⁵ Given his opinion expressed later in one of his publications that the tomb with entrance hall was made »on the same principle as pit-dwellings at Vinča«, ⁶⁶ we can justly assume that Vasić regarded this structure, in spite of its form of a pit-dwelling, as a tomb, seeing burial as its primary and sole purpose. Many misunderstandings and dilemmas as to whether Vasić viewed occupation as the primary purpose of this structure seem to have arisen from his inadequate method of designating all the dug-in structures as pit-dwellings. We assume that this pit, although deeper and larger in size than the others, was designated as a matter of routine as pit-dwelling without any intention of implying what its purpose may have been. All this considered, one does not get an impression that in his interpretation of the 1931 and 1934 excavations Vasić was concerned (or at least not to the same extent as those who interpreted the results later) to provide a solution to the dilemma of whether the pit where nine bodies were buried had previously been used for occupation.

The vertical stratigraphy seems more difficult to grasp due to the number of distinct layers and the failure to note changes in the base, but also, at least partly, to the inconsistency of the researcher in designating individual units and different data provided on the levels of certain stratigraphic units. Taking into consideration the stratigraphic changes and their depths registered by Vasić and described in the second volume of

⁶² Васић 1931, 126; 1936, 9.

⁶³ Васић 1951, 35.

⁶⁴ Васић 1936a, 150.

⁶⁵ Васић 1931, 127.

⁶⁶ Васић 1936, 11.

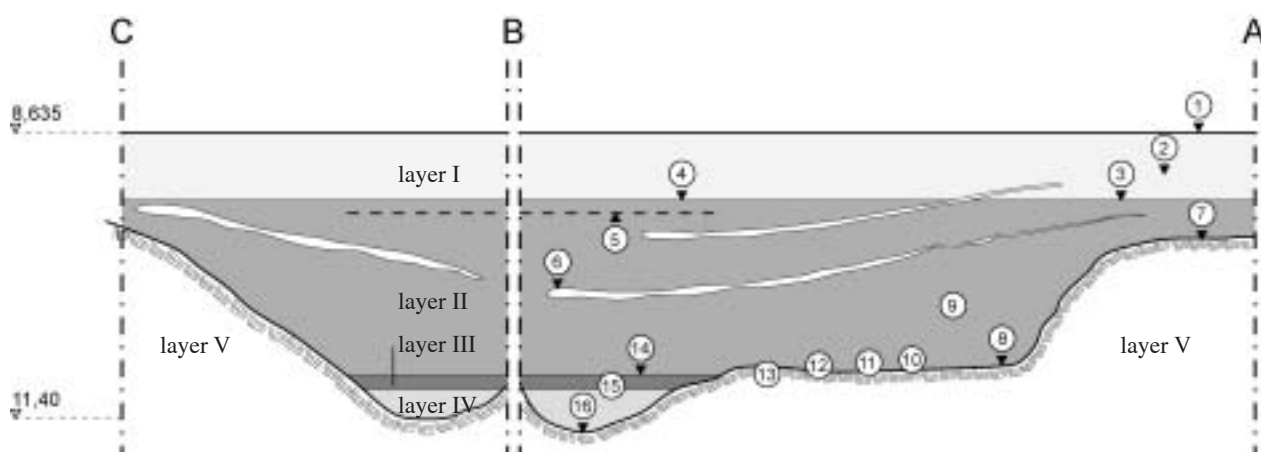


Fig. 4. »Ossuary with entrance hall« – southwestern and northwestern profile

Сл. 4. »Костурница са дромосом« – југозападни и северозападни профили

Prehistoric Vinča, we have selected the most significant points of pit walls, layers and small finds, which could be used for reconstruction of the vertical stratigraphy of the grave pit and the so-called entrance hall.⁶⁷ Vertical cross-sections borrowed from Vasić's publications⁶⁸ and a diagrammed reconstruction of the cross-section (Fig. 4), showing stratigraphic layers in relation to the parts of skeletons found outside the grave pit, were used as illustrations to facilitate understanding. 16 points are taken from Vasić's description (Fig. 4):

Point 1 – $\nabla 8.635$ m represents the top level of the original humus layer.⁶⁹ Although this level was not marked in any cross-sections, we have conditionally located it above the upper line of the cross-section.

Points 2 and 3 – $\nabla 9.1$ m and $\nabla 9.3$ m are the depths where loess appears. The level 9.3m is at the same time the depth at which the beginning of the hall was defined.

Point 4 – $\nabla 9.335$ m ($\nabla 9.4$ m) represents the depth of the bottom level of the original humus layer. At the same time, it marks the assumed upper level of the pure soil layer interpreted as the tomb ceiling.

Point 5 – $\nabla 9.433$ m marks the depth at which, according to Vasić, the lower surface of a thin pure soil layer (i.e. the lower surface of the tomb ceiling) lay.

Point 6 – $\nabla 9.783$ m where a thin layer of ash and soot was noted (in the original humus layer).⁷⁰

Point 7 – $\nabla 9.75$ m is the depth of the first step of the dromos.

Point 8 – $\nabla 10.6$ m where the second step of the entrance hall was noted.

Point 9 – $\nabla 10.29$ m at which a human jaw was noted (in the entrance hall).

Point 10 – $\nabla 10.64$ m at which parts of a human skull were found (in entrance hall).

Point 11 – $\nabla 10.7$ m at which a human skull without the jaw was found (outside the entrance hall and tomb).

Point 12 – $\nabla 10.79$ m at which new pieces of human skull were found (in the entrance hall).

Point 13 – $\nabla 10.92$ m at which a human mandible was found (in the entrance hall).

Point 14 – $\nabla 10.9$ m at which a 0.1 m thick layer of pure soil was distinguished in the northwest profile of the ossuary.

⁶⁷ Vasić 1936, 9–11.

⁶⁸ The cross section in Fig. 8 of *Prehistoric Vinča II*, with the auxiliary lines at 9, 10 and 11 m and the upper line conditionally marked as the highest level of the structure, i.e. the top level of original humus, was used for reconstruction (Fig. 3b).

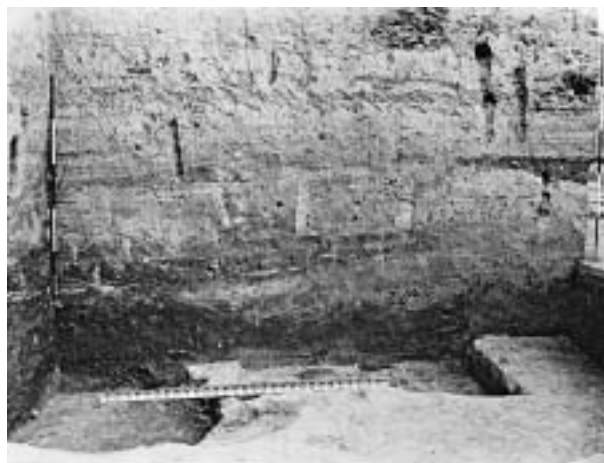
⁶⁹ $\nabla 8.659$ is also said to be the depth of the upper surface of original humus (Vasić 1951, 35). The difference of 2.5 cm is irrelevant for our discussion.

⁷⁰ Fig. 3a and 3b give different values for the ash and soot layer. Fig. 3b marks $\nabla 9.785$ and fig. 3a $\nabla 9.85$. The journal entry on 08.08.1931 and the description of the ossuary in the second book of *Prehistoric Vinča* (Vasić 1936, 10) inform that the ash and soot layer was at $\nabla 9.783$, so that this mistake could possibly be interpreted as unintentional omission of figure 7 in marking of this level. $\nabla 9.785$ in Fig. 3b is clearly drawn under the 10 m depth line. In Fig. 3a the stated level is marked in the same section of the layer as in Fig. 3b, so that we assume that it was a mistake made in drawing, not in wrongly marked level point. The photographs confirm this (Vasić 1936, сл. 10 i 11). The 10 m point is clearly marked, and an ash layer can be noticed some 20 cm above it (Fig. 5, 6).



Fig. 5. »Ossuary« – southwestern profile

Сл. 5. Југозападни профил »костурнице«

Fig. 6. »Ossuary with entrance hall«
– northwestern profileСл. 6. Северозападни профил
»костурнице и гробоса«

Point 15 – $\nabla 11.03$ m at which the skull of skeleton I was found.

Point 16 – $\nabla 11.40$ m at which the bottom of the tomb lay, i.e. the deepest point of the pit.

Out of those sixteen points, six (9–3, 15) have to do with small finds, three (7, 8 and 16) with parts of the pit walls, and seven with stratigraphic units (1–6, 14) (Fig. 4). With regard to the vertical stratigraphy, point 1 refers to the top level of the original humus layer or, in other words, to the assumed level from which the pit was dug – $\nabla 8.635$ m, while point 16 represents the pit bottom at $\nabla 11.4$ m. The difference between the highest level (8.635 m) and the lowest level (11.4 m) is 2.765 m. Five stratigraphic units, i.e. layers, can be distinguished from the highest level to the lowest level (Fig. 4):

Layer I – The layer of original humus, 0.7 to 0.75 m thick, stretching from point 1 to point 3.

Layer II – The layer of black soil, between points 4 (5) and 14.

Layer III – The 0.1 m thick layer of pure soil between point 14 and the 11 metre line.

Layer IV – The layer of soil immediately covering the bodies, between the 11 metre line and point 16.

Layer V – The layer of loess, or subsoil, appearing at the depths of 9.1 to 9.3 m, i.e. at the levels of points 2 and 3.

If we consider all of this, two data seem unlikely: the depth of the pit (2.765 m) and the thickness of the original humus layer (0.70–0.75 m), where the depth of the pit is contingent on the determined thickness of the original humus layer. Regardless of whether it was a pit-dwelling or tomb, the depth is unusually great for a Neolithic pit of the Starčevo and Vinča group.

With regard to the thickness of the original humus (layer I), it should be emphasized that Vasić, when describing pit-dwelling pits, noted that the contours of the pits became clearly visible in the loess between 9.1 and 9.3 m, but the rims of all pits, including the tomb, lay in the original humus with the upper surface at $\nabla 8.653$ m below 0 point.⁷¹ Level 9.335 was designated as the loess surface level, and the thickness of the original humus was estimated at 0.70 to 0.75 m. But this seems quite unlikely. Experience tells us that the thickness of layers of original humus at Neolithic settlements is usually between 0.20 and 0.30 m. Therefore, we think that the thickness of the original humus would probably correspond to the difference between depths 9.1 m and 9.3 m at which, according to Vasić, pure loess occurred. If that is the case, the level from which

⁷¹ Васић 1936, 8; 1951, 35.

the pit was dug could be 9.1 m, since it is obvious that structures noted in the loess may have been dug only from the upper surface of original humus and absolutely not under it.

Vasić believed that the 10 cm thick loess tomb ceiling had originally lain under the original humus. Such a loess layer (between point 4 and 5) was neither noted during the excavation nor was it visible in any profile. It is mentioned here because it was an important element in Vasić's reconstruction of the ossuary.⁷² He assumed that the ossuary and the hall which provided an access to it were dug into loess – not from the level of original humus, but in the manner of the graves dug into rocks. Consequently, he concluded that loess represented the ceiling of the tomb. During excavation, Vasić, of course, did not find such a situation. Therefore, he argued that the 10 cm thick loess noted at V10.9 (our layer III) actually represented the remains of the collapsed ceiling which had existed under the original humus, between V9.33 and V9.43.⁷³

There is not much information about layers II and IV, and the data about them are contradictory. Therefore, we shall begin our discussion on those layers from layer III, which was clearly defined during the excavation and which, to a large extent, allows an insight into the cultural and chronological character of the layers above it (layer II) and beneath it (layer IV).

Layer III is a thin layer of pure soil, noted at V10.9 (above the skeleton at the pit grave bottom). Vasić interpreted it as remains of the collapsed ceiling.⁷⁴ He used different terms to describe this layer. The first reference to it was made on 8 August 1931 in the excavation journal after the discovery of a dislocated mandible at V10.29 m and a skull at V10.7 m: »A layer of compacted buff soil, some 10 cm thick, appeared in the western profile at V10.9. Skeletons were found below it.«⁷⁵ This layer is also described in publications as the layer of »pure soil«, »pure loess« and »pure buff soil«.⁷⁶ Since this layer was continuously emphasized in the descriptions of the tomb, it may be justly assumed that it really existed and that it was a tight, compacted, and, considering the use of the word loess, most probably a sterile layer. The situation presented in the sketch of the cross-section of the »tomb with entrance hall« from the excavation journal (Fig. 7),⁷⁷ as well as in the published cross-sections of the »tomb with entrance hall« (Fig. 3a, 3b), does not corroborate the statements and remarks presented in the publications: »Above the 10 cm thick layer of pure loess, over the skeletons, the soil is black...; Above the layer of pure buff soil, but in the layer of black soil above the tomb with entrance hall...«⁷⁸

No individual layer stretching immediately above the skeletons is marked there (Fig. 3, 7). The same hatching denotes the pit bottom where the bodies were buried (our layer IV), the filling of the »entrance with hall« and the filling of the pit above the skeleton (our layer II). It should be noted, however, that the »pit with skeletons« is marked off by a curved, arch-shaped line (Fig. 7). If this line is understood to be a thin loess layer covering the skeletons, based on the same hatching denoting the filling of the whole structure, described as »black soil with fragments«, the conclusion could be made that, having been laid at the bottom of the pit, the bodies were first covered with a thin layer of soil with pottery fragments, then with a loess layer, and eventually the whole structure was filled with black soil of the same character and with the same content. However, Vasić's publications, excavation journal and pottery finds from the »black soil« (under and above the sterile loess layer of 10 cm thickness) do not support this conclusion. On the contrary, everything points to chronological and cultural difference between the two layers of »black soil« (layers II and IV), separated by a thin sterile layer.

We think that the presence of a loess layer immediately above the skeleton can be easily understood if we do not consider it as remnants of the ceiling, but view it in the light of the facts that the pit grave is the oldest structure in the so-called pit-dwelling layer, that it was dug into loess and that the whole pit was filled with the same soil after burial. The question of the absence of a loess layer on the whole base right above the skeleton arises immediately, since loess was not noted in the southwest profile.

A part of the answer can be found in the above quoted description of that layer (layer III). In addition to this, Vasić emphasized: »10 cm of the loess layer covering skeleton I should be added to the level of the loess surface at 9.335 m.«⁷⁹ This skeleton lying over skeletons II and III in the ossuary was closest to the surface. According to Vasić, it belonged to the individual

⁷² Васић 1936, 9.

⁷³ Васић 1936, 10.

⁷⁴ Васић 1936, 10.

⁷⁵ Васић 1931, 122.

⁷⁶ Васић 1936, 10.

⁷⁷ Васић 1931, 126.

⁷⁸ Васић 1936, 10, 14.

⁷⁹ Васић 1936, 10.

⁸⁰ Васић 1936, 11.

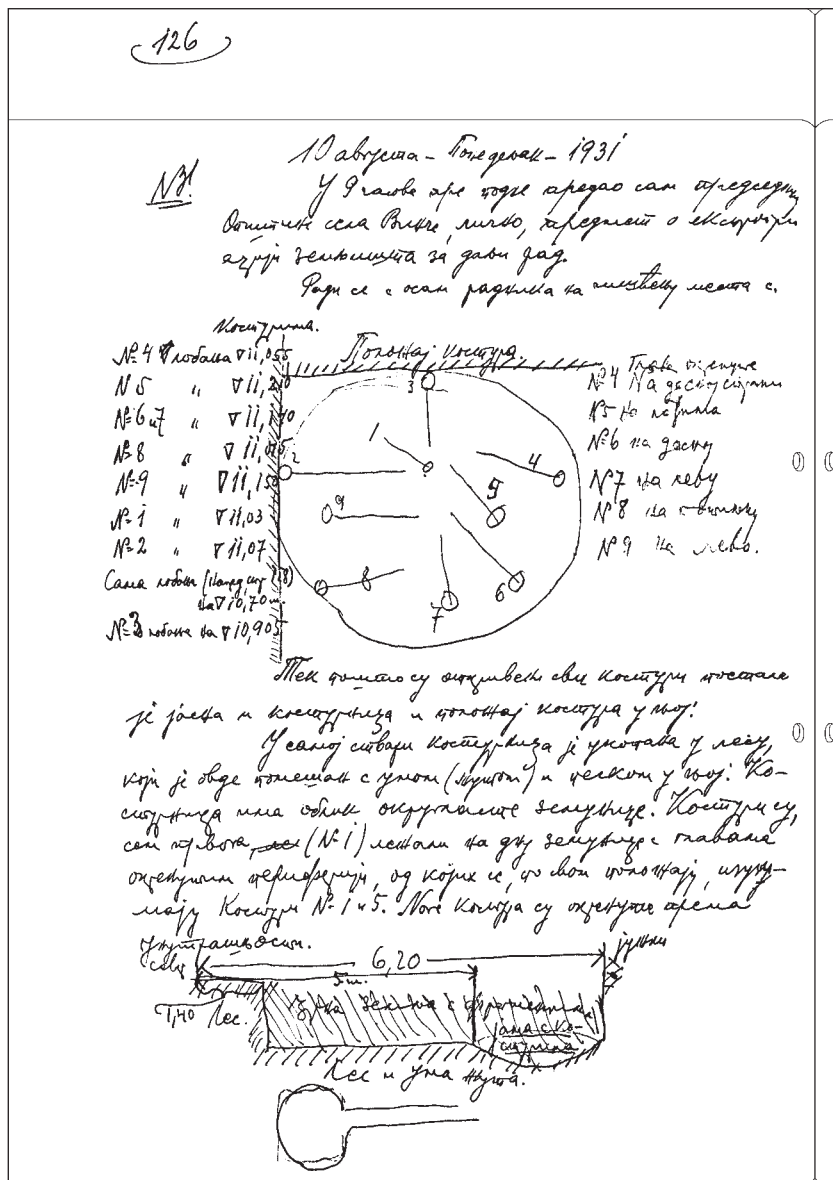


Fig. 7. Excavation journal 1931

Сл. 7. Дневник ископавања 1931. године

who was last buried in that grave.⁸⁰ The skeleton did not lie immediately along the pit wall, but inside the western section of the ossuary (Fig. 3b, 7),⁸¹ so it can reasonably be assumed that the loess layer reached at least that part of the ossuary base. Two more interconnected things may help shed some light on our dilemma. Skeleton III stretched into the northwest profile (Fig. 3b, 7), and the excavation journal reads: »It is lying almost parallel with skeleton I, but its head, for the time being, is in the western wall and cannot be seen.«⁸² Vasić's statement that a 10cm thick loess layer could be

seen at 10.9 m in the western (more precisely north-west) profile⁸³ should mean that the layer of pure soil was reliably confirmed when skeleton III was found and that its existence is indisputable. There is no such layer in the southwest profile, although the journal informs us that »compacted buff soil of a special kind«

81 Vasić 1931, 126.

82 Vasić 1931, 123.

83 Vasić 1936, 10.

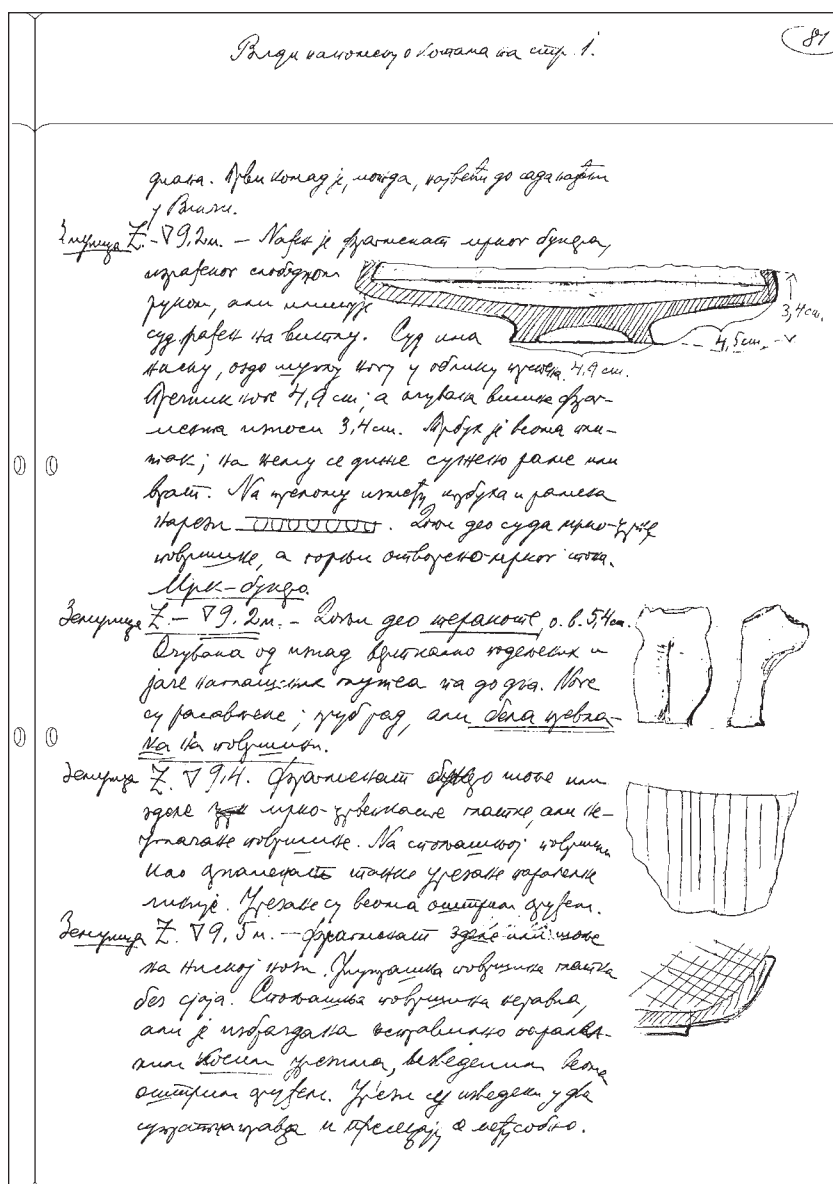


Fig. 8. Excavation journal 1934

Сл. 8. Дневник ископавања 1934. године

appeared above skeleton II.⁸⁴ The skull of that skeleton lay near the southwest profile, but it was not in the profile (Fig. 3b and 7).⁸⁵

Two assumptions can be made to explain the fact that the loess layer did not exist in the rest of the grave pit (especially in its eastern section). The first – that only a part of the grave pit may have been filled with loess, which seems less likely; and the second that all the skeletons in the pit may have been covered with a thin loess layer which was noticed only at some places during the excavation because the content of the grave

pit and the loess covering the skeletons had been subsequently disturbed. Since the same hatching marks the filling of the whole »tomb with entrance hall« in the journal sketch of the ossuary, it is necessary to determine the character of the layer with which the bodies were immediately covered (layer IV). In addition, in order to solve this issue, the content of the black layer in

⁸⁴ Васић 1931, 122.

⁸⁵ Васић 1936, сл. 8 и 13.

the shallower zones of the pit (in the so-called entrance hall and the part of the grave pit above the loess layer) (layer II) as well as the conditions in which it was formed should be defined.

The answer to the question about the character of the layer with which the bodies were immediately covered (layer IV) may be the most complex, because there is little information on its character, and the information provided by Vasić on the content of the layer is contradictory. The publications do not make any reference to the layer in the deepest part of the tomb, and the information given in the journal is insufficient, probably because Vasić was preoccupied with the discovery of the skeletons. This layer and layer II are mentioned only in the entry of the journal dated 10 August 1931 in the part with a comment or description of the ossuary sketch (Fig. 7): »The pit-dwelling pit with skeletons was located at the end of an original humus layer (that is black soil where everyday activities took place), which is found in the whole of excavated area. At the distance of 1.4 m from the edge of the excavated section, the black soil goes deeper and keeps that depth for 3.6 m until it reaches the edge of the pit and falls into the pit with skeletons«. ⁸⁶ This description offers a few pieces of the essential information: the pit was located »at the end of the original humus layer«, which implies that Vasić noted digging activity only under the original humus layer at $\nabla 9.3$ m; the original humus layer consisted of black soil; and something very important – that layer existed all over the excavated section. Vasić maintained that at the time of pit-dwelling pits this was the area of everyday activities, which means that the content, that is the cultural character of the small finds, should correspond to the content of the pit-dwellings, as the content of that layer had formed in the earliest phase of occupation of the Vinča settlement. At the end, the description of the ossuary includes the information that the layer of black soil descended from the edge of the excavated pit to the levels of the »steps of the entrance hall« (layer II) and fell into the pit with skeletons (layer IV) (Fig. 3a, 7).

However, the difference in the content of those layers, in other words in the cultural character of the pottery finds in »black soil« above loess layer (layer II) and the finds in the layer with which the skeletons were covered (layer IV), remains unclear, in spite of the fact that they were, at least partly, separated by a thin sterile layer (layer III).

The data on the pottery finds from the tomb (ossuary in the strict sense) which were found under the loess

layer at 10.9 m are contradictory. On one hand, Vasić emphasized in all his works that, apart from two ceramic loom-weights and several charred cornel-cherry stones, no other objects had been found in the ossuary. ⁸⁷ On the other hand, his notes in the excavation journal on the pottery content of the ossuary are unusually detailed. For example, following the discovery of skeletons I and II and parts of skeleton III, he wrote on August 8th that »fragments of rough vessels decorated with finger imprints and nail stabbing« were found in the ossuary. ⁸⁸ On the following day, after cleaning of skeleton III, and the partial discovery of another skeleton, the pottery fragments found that day were briefly described: »Among pottery fragments, fragments with ornaments executed by fingers, then incised, and executed by finger and nail imprints were found«. ⁸⁹ Some of them were then described in greater detail and almost all of them were illustrated on the margin of the journal. Having completed cleaning of all the skeletons at the bottom of the grave pit, on August 10th Vasić wrote one of the last notes in the 1931 journal describing the pottery found in the ossuary on that day: »Besides rough fragments of vessels from the ossuary (see p.123 and later) with finger imprints, fine vessels are also found in the ossuary, along with vessels on a special foot, and especially globular vessels on a low foot«. ⁹⁰ This is followed by the description of some of important finds. Based on these quotations and drawings of the pottery fragments, the conclusion could be clearly drawn that pottery featuring recognizable elements of the Starčevo cultural group was found in the ossuary, under the loess layer at $\nabla 10.9$ m.

At present, we do not know the reasons which led Vasić to claim that there were no pottery finds in the ossuary. Some fragments from ossuary, described and drawn in the journal, appeared in his publication, though with a remark that they had been found »above the burnt wooden structure of the roof over the ossuary« or »above the tomb with the entrance hall«. ⁹¹

Although Vasić interpreted the 10.90 m thick loess layer as remnants of the tomb ceiling, and maintained that a charred beam found in the ossuary proved the existence of a wooden structure, the notes in the journal

⁸⁶ Васић 1931, 127.

⁸⁷ Васић 1932, 102; 1936a, 151.

⁸⁸ Васић 1931, 123.

⁸⁹ Васић 1931, 124.

⁹⁰ Васић 1931, 127–129.

⁹¹ Васић 1932, 91; 1936, 14, 20.

show that all the published Starčevo fragments were actually found in the »tomb«, under the loess layer (layer III), and that between 8th and 10th August, when the discovery and cleaning of the skeletons at the grave bottom took place, fragments of Starčevo pottery were found in the thin layer of black soil covering the skeletons (layer IV). Today, 120 fragments labelled »ossuary«, written in Vasić's well-known handwriting (Pl. I), are kept in the Archaeological Collection of the Faculty of Philosophy. Only three fragments can be associated with certainty to the Vinča culture. All the other fragments, based on their typological and stylistic features, can be assigned to the late phase of Starčevo culture.

Unlike the thin layer of black soil holding fragments of Starčevo pottery, with which the bodies at the bottom of the grave pit were covered (layer IV), the layer of black soil above the thin sterile layer constitutes most of the filling in the »entrance hall« and the grave pit (layer II). Several elements indicate that it was not the original filling of the pit. The description of the content of that layer clearly shows that it consisted of Vinča pottery: »Above the layer of pure buff soil, in the layer of black soil above the tomb with entrance hall some bone and stone tools, and also fragments, mostly pottery for everyday domestic use, were found. The fragments belong to vessels of various shapes. All three main ornamentation techniques at Vinča are present: the technique of incised ornaments, bucherro vessels, and black polished ornaments.«⁹² It should be noted that the layer is said to have stretched »above the tomb with entrance hall«, which reveals that what is meant by the »tomb« is only the deepest part of the pit with skeletons »closed« by the loess layer, i.e. pure buff soil, and that the layer of black soil above the loess is considered not to have been an original part of the »tomb«. Vasić's interpretation of the loess layer as remains of a collapsed wooden roof structure of the »tomb«, implies, although it is not explicitly stated, that the black soil layer »above the tomb« formed later, »after the collapse of the ossuary ceiling«.

A casual remark that the ossuary lay under so-called base $\nabla 9.3$ m and the excavation journal explain the conditions under which layer II was formed as well as its different content.⁹³ It turns out that so-called base $\nabla 9.3$ m was actually a Vinča pit noted at the depth of 9.3 m, although at the beginning, due to daub pieces, it had been wrongly thought to be the remains of an above-surface structure.⁹⁴ In the journal, the filling of this pit was described as »black soil« – *smonica*.⁹⁵ There on 6th August a human mandible was found at $\nabla 10.29$ m, and on the following day a skull at $\nabla 10.7$ m.⁹⁶ Unlike

the other Vinča pits dug directly into loess subsoil, most of pit »base $\nabla 9.3$ « was dug into the Starčevo »tomb with entrance hall«. ⁹⁷ Those digging activities probably penetrated the loess layer hiding the skeletons, because of which dislocated parts of one or more skeletons were found at a considerably higher level than the undisturbed skeletons.⁹⁸ In this way, insignificant mixing of pottery materials, that is the presence of three Vinča fragments in the »tomb« and two Starčevo fragments in pit »base $\nabla 9.3$ «, can also be explained. Although the material from the Vinča pit is not described in the journal, it is very likely that Vasić's description of the finds in the »black soil above the tomb« actually refers to the material which is at present kept at the Archaeological Collection of the Faculty of Philosophy with the »base $\nabla 9.3$ « label.⁹⁹

Undoubtedly, layers II and IV were separated by a loess layer approximately 10 cm thick (layer III), which had remained from the original filling of the grave pit after the burial, preventing mixing of the contents held in the layers under and above it, or in other words mixing of the Starčevo material from the grave and the Vinča pottery from pit »base $\nabla 9.3$ «.

Naturally, the issue of the dimensions and contours of this Vinča pit arises here. Due to the lack of technical documentation, this problem, for the most part, will remain largely unresolved for ever, but to a certain degree the photograph of the 1931 (Fig. 5) south-western excavation profile may help in this matter. In this photograph a contour of another digging activity is discernable. It could be the contour of pit »base $\nabla 9.3$ «. The level from which that later pit was dug seems to have been somewhat higher than the level from which the grave was dug. The pit was partly dug into the black soil layer covering the skeletons in the ossuary. Vinča pit »base $\nabla 9.3$ « stretched into the southwest and north-west profiles of the excavated area, as did the ossuary, so that undoubtedly it also stretched over the section excavated in 1934.

Thin layers of ash and soot were noted in this pit. They are visible in the photographs of profiles taken in

⁹² Васић 1936, 14.

⁹³ Васић 1931, 11–18; 1932, 118.

⁹⁴ Васић 1931, 112; Nikolić 2007.

⁹⁵ Васић 1931, 116.

⁹⁶ Васић 1931, 11–18

⁹⁷ Nikolić 2007.

⁹⁸ Васић 1936, 10.

⁹⁹ Васић 1936, 14.

1931 (Fig. 5, 6) and in the cross-sections of the ossuary (Fig. 3a, 3b). They are something common and expected in pits, so that Vasić's assumption that those ash layers above the grave were formed as the result of occasional burning of a fire »lit in the performance of the cult of the dead«¹⁰⁰ seems quite unusual and cannot be accepted. This interpretation cannot be sustained even if Vasić's reconstruction of the shape and character of the tomb is accepted, because the ash layers were noted below the depth of 9.433 m, denoted as the level of the lower surface of the grave pit ceiling, in which case fires must have been burnt inside the tomb, which is hard to imagine.

The fifth distinguished layer is the subsoil, which is loess, appearing at a depth between $\nabla 9.1$ m and $\nabla 9.3$ m. There is no dispute regarding this layer, but the extent and form of the unevenness of the ground (subsoil and humus) at the time when the settlement was founded will always remain unknown.

Unlike the »tomb and hall« whose vertical stratigraphy and content of individual layers were reconstructed on the basis of the information provided in the excavation journal, Vasić's publications and small finds from the ossuary and pit »base $\nabla 9.3$ «, the second part of the grave structure so-called pit-dwelling Z, excavated in 1934, could not be reconstructed in this way. The publications and the journal do not offer any descriptions of the layers. It is only said that a pit (pit-dwelling Z) was noted at $\nabla 9.2$ m and that it consisted of three »rooms« with its deepest point established in the room near the tomb.¹⁰¹ There is no data either on the character of the filling in that section of the structure or on possible different layers. Consequently, any conclusion about that section can only be reached indirectly from the notes in the journal about the finds from »pit-dwelling Z« and the conclusion that pit »base $\nabla 9.3$ «, which was partly dug into the Starčevo grave, extended into the southwest and northwest profile above the grave pit. Although the journal does not provide any evidence that a part of that Vinča pit was noted in 1934, it is most likely that one of its parts was also dug into pit-dwelling Z.

Owing to the already mentioned unusual way of marking the finds from pit-dwelling Z, it is possible, with a high degree of probability, to explain the allegedly heterogeneous content of pit-dwelling Z. Together with the Vinča figurines, which we have already mentioned, and two Starčevo pots found at the bottom of the pit, two other fragments were published as the contents of pit-dwelling Z. Only one of those fragments is said to have been found in pit-dwelling Z at $\nabla 9.4$ m.¹⁰² The other one is accompanied with the relative depth

only ($\nabla 9.2$), which may imply that it was found in the layer not in any pits.¹⁰³ However, this fragment (Fig. 8; Pl. II/4) is published in the chapter »Pottery from pit-dwellings« so that the information that it was found in pit-dwelling Z may have been omitted by mistake.¹⁰⁴ Apart from the published objects, 14 fragments of vessels and a sacrifice altar with labels confirming that they came from pit-dwelling Z are kept today at the Archaeological Collection of the Faculty of Philosophy.

The journal offers descriptions and drawings of the figurines, sacrifice altar and some fragments.¹⁰⁵ Compared to the content of the grave pit (ossuary), the content assigned to the northwest section of the grave structure (pit-dwelling Z) seems considerably poorer, but culturally varied. Together with the figurines and sacrifice altar, eight out of 16 fragments belong to the Vinča culture. On the other hand, two vessels from the pit bottom and eight vessel fragments belong to the Starčevo culture.

The notes in the excavation journal indirectly confirm our views that a part of pit »base $\nabla 9.3$ « was investigated during the excavation in 1934 and that all Vinča finds assigned to pit-dwelling Z actually represent the content of pit »base $\nabla 9.3$ «. The recorded relative depths of all the finds assigned to pit-dwelling Z indicate that almost all the Vinča finds were found in the shallower sections of the pit ($\nabla 8.75$; $\nabla 8.9$; $\nabla 9.2$ m). For example, four Vinča figurines and a fragment of sacrifice altar were found (immediately after the contour of digging activity had been noted) at $\nabla 8.75$ m, which was, as stated in the journal, the absolute depth of 9.25 m.¹⁰⁶ On the other hand, the Starčevo finds came from deeper sections of the pit ($\nabla 9.1$; $\nabla 9.2$; $\nabla 9.4$; $\nabla 9.5$; $\nabla 9.9$ m).¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁰ Васић 1936, 34.

¹⁰¹ Васић 1934, 79–80.

¹⁰² Васић 1936, 164, сл. 346.

¹⁰³ Васић 1936a, 10, сл. 10.

¹⁰⁴ The excavation journal, with the drawing and description of the fragment, confirms that it was really found in pit-dwelling Z (Васић 1934, 81). The publication fails to provide the information that it came from the pit and gives, instead of the absolute depth, the incorrect »relative« depth at which the fragment was found. For explanation of »relative« and »absolute« depths in the trenches excavated in 1933 and 1934 (trenches P and Q) see Васић 1936, 109. In this case the »absolute« depth is 9.7 m.

¹⁰⁵ Васић 1934, 72–82. Two fragments mentioned in the journal are not in the Archaeological Collection (the foot found at $\nabla 8.75$ m and the fragment with impresso ornaments from $\nabla 9.5$ m).

¹⁰⁶ Васић 1934, 72–79.

¹⁰⁷ So-called relative depths are recorded both in the journal and on the finds. On the other hand, the publications also give so-called absolute depths.

The excavation journal does not give any information as to which part of the structure the Starčevo finds came from. Based on the small number of finds and owing to the fact that in 1934 a small part of the ossuary, which had remained under the profile in 1931, was also excavated, but not mentioned in the excavation journal, it can be assumed that they made up the content of the »black soil« layer with pottery fragments (layer IV), with which the dead bodies were covered after being laid at the pit bottom. If this is the case, all fragments from layer IV and two intact vessels laid in a depression near the ossuary were elements of a funerary rite, which leads us to believe that there were no other Starčevo finds in any other sections of the complex grave structure.

There are two main reasons why all authors have connected the Starčevo pottery from the ossuary, two vessels from the northwest section of pit-dwelling Z and the Vinča figurines with the same archaeological, and also cultural and chronological context: ignorance of the presented facts and the lack of any reference to pit »base V9.3« in the publications. But if we accept the interpretation that the Vinča pit was partly dug into that section of the Starčevo structure, the reality of the presence of Vinča figurines, belonging to the other structure and the other cultural and chronological context, immediately above two Starčevo vessels, becomes understandable. The place where those vessels were found was a part of the grave structure and they represented grave goods which were part of a complex rite.

Naturally, the question why two Starčevo vessels which lay at V10.4 m (i.e. »relative« V9.9 m), in other words not as deep as the skeletons in the »ossuary«, were not dislocated or damaged by the Vinča pit may be raised here. The only logical explanation can be that the later pit (»base V9.3«) was narrower and shallower in this section. What was the purpose of the later pit, then? We think that the possibility that it was used for occupation should be rejected, because if that had been the case, we would not have found parts of human skeletons. However, the reason for digging of this pit remains ambiguous. The pit itself could be conditionally seen as a kind of the waste pit.

At the end of the analysis of Vasić's views on the common tomb we shall discuss several details mainly concerning the position in which the skeletons were found, or in other words the position of the bodies when they were laid into the grave. Vasić himself, like others, interpreted the position of the skeletons in this grave in various ways. In order to understand Vasić's dilemmas we shall present how he felt about this find. The discovery of the skeletons was preceded by the

excavation of »base V9.3«, which lasted for several days. At its bottom, which was not noticed during the excavation, a mandible and a skull were found at V10.29 m and V10.7 m respectively. Vasić wrote in the journal: »The mandible we found may have belonged to this head. If so, this place is simply a dump not a grave. A grave – certainly not!«¹⁰⁸ On the following day, after first whole skeletons were cleaned, this was entered in the journal: »What does this ossuary represent? – A common grave? Or a place into which the bodies of the dead were thrown? These are not ordinary, regular graves, because the skeletons are in disorder, and there are no objects which could be used for various purposes.«¹⁰⁹ It is obvious that in the beginning Vasić himself thought that during the burial no attention had been paid to the position of the bodies in the grave. The following was recorded in the diary after all nine skeletons had been cleaned: »Only after all the skeletons had been found did the ossuary and the skeleton positions within it become clear... The skeletons, save the first one (N.1), lay at the bottom of the pit with their heads facing towards the periphery, with the exception of skeletons N.1 and 5 whose positions were different. The legs were placed inwards.«¹¹⁰ Later, in his publication, Vasić pointed to a certain regularity in the skeletons' positions, without emphasizing this fact though. He made it clear that the heads had been facing toward the periphery, while the lower parts of the skeletons had been positioned inwards (except skeletons I and V), although, based on the published photographs¹¹¹ and a sketch in the journal (Fig. 7)¹¹² one may get the impression that skeleton V was found in the same position. The dead had been laid on their backs, but the position of arms and legs was not clear. Skeleton I lay on skeletons II and III, which prompted the conclusion that it was the skeleton of the last individual to be buried in that grave. Based on the disposition and positions of the skeletons the conclusion was drawn that burials took place occasionally but over a longer period.¹¹³

The quotations from the publications make it clear that M. Vasić rightly changed his original views on the position of skeletons in the tomb, and consequently stated in every description that certain rules had been

¹⁰⁸ Васић 1931, 118.

¹⁰⁹ Васић 1931, 123.

¹¹⁰ Васић 1931, 126–127.

¹¹¹ Васић 1936, сл. 15, 16.

¹¹² Васић 1931, 126.

¹¹³ Васић 1936a, 150.

obeyed when the dead had been laid into the grave. It is obvious that the position of the bodies directly depended on the depth and measurements of the grave pit. Considering the depth of the pit which, at best, reached between 2.10 m and 2.30 m, the shape of the deepest section of the grave and the area it covered, it seems logical that nine bodies could not have been laid in any other way. Furthermore, we could wonder whether it was possible at all to lay the bodies of nine adults in such a small space in the same position so that they did not touch each other. Of course it was not. It should not be forgotten that three dislocated skulls were also found in the grave, which may indicate that more than nine individuals were buried in the grave.

On the other hand, it is not possible to accept Vasić's presumption of a degree of continuity of burials in this tomb, that is to say that the tomb was in use all the time the pit-dwellings existed. We have already said that the tomb represents the oldest structure in this part of the site at Vinča and that it will be very difficult to prove that it was contemporaneous with pits dwelling-pits (this may be the topic of a possible analysis of this layer in the future). However, it has to be pointed out that there is no argument supporting the assumption that all the bodies were not buried at the same time. Perhaps, the most convincing argument supporting our view is the existence of a pure loess layer immediately above the skeletons, as well as the fact that the skeletons had remained undisturbed all the time until they were discovered by Vasić.

Finally, we must turn to the key issue regarding this tomb, that is to determine who was buried there and why, and at the same time to clarify if those who were buried there lived in Vinča or not.

As stated above, the opinion of most researchers that representatives of the Starčevo group were buried in so-called pit-dwelling Z can be accepted. The act of burial, pit dimensions, the evident order in which the bodies were laid, traces of rituals with goods, and perhaps the ritual breaking of vessels immediately above the dead individuals, all can confirm that, although all the bodies were buried simultaneously, they were not buried in a hurry or in exceptional circumstances. The conditions of the finds also indicate the conclusion that the burial was not conducted by a community who upheld different convictions or beliefs. Culturally homogeneous Starčevo material was found in the sections of the tomb which had not been damaged by subsequent digging, and the act of mass burial was performed in a manner not unknown to representatives of the Starčevo group.

Although all Starčevo graves which have been investigated until now were located inside settlements, due to the character of the small finds in other pits, we shall assume that those who were buried in this grave were not residents of Vinča, but of some other Starčevo settlement.¹¹⁴ In this case, and knowing that those buried in the tomb were representatives of the Starčevo group, we should focus on perhaps the most sensitive issue – the cause of their death. We agree with the opinion that group or mass burials which take place at the same time are mainly a sequel to exceptional circumstances or events which can cause the death of a substantial number of residents in a settlement.¹¹⁵ One of possible causes appears to be an epidemic, but in this case there would have been children among the dead since it is not likely that an epidemic could affect only the most resilient members of the community. The other possible cause may be an accident. A group of representatives of the Starčevo group may have searched for a suitable location to establish a new settlement and had an accident, or clashed with another group of contemporaries, which resulted in the deaths of a large number of their members. The survivors, in accordance with their beliefs and burial practice, dug a pit in the shape of a pit-dwelling, the size of which was determined by the number and age of those for whom it was prepared to be their eternal home. Then they buried their fellow tribesmen with appropriate grave goods, but they did not settle in Vinča. They left the place instead.

All previously analyzed elements of the Starčevo common grave at Vinča provide evidence that its characteristics differentiate it to a great extent from ordinary one-man burials in simple pits inside the settlement, which were predominant in the Starčevo culture.

The complex grave structure, designated as pit-dwelling Z, has the shape of a multi-celled pit-dwelling. The bodies of the dead were laid in the deepest part of the structure, a so-called ossuary with relatively small dimensions. Such complex forms of grave structure have not been registered in the Starčevo culture area. Two graves at Zlatara (grave structures A and B) are the only structures known at present which resemble, to a certain degree, the grave at Vinča. The literature connects these graves with only one section of pit-dwelling Z (the so-called ossuary with entrance hall). They are said to be

¹¹⁴ This assumption is based on our opinion that the existence of a Starčevo settlement in the excavated section of the settlement in Vinča cannot be proved. The paper on this subject is in preparation.

¹¹⁵ Сталино 1992.

made up of a so-called grave pit with a body (bodies) and a »ramp« (shallow digging) which can be associated with the »entrance hall« of the Vinča grave.¹¹⁶ The form and unusually large size of such grave structures could supposedly be explained by the high status of the buried individual. The shape of the grave at Vinča prompted M. Vasić to conclude that, »the graves of the dead were made in the form of the dwellings of the living, i.e. in the form of open pit-dwellings«.¹¹⁷ The researcher of Zlatara interpreted the complex grave structures in a similar manner – as eternal houses for the dead, which, for that reason, both in a symbolic and a literal sense, took the form of (semi) pit-dwellings for occupation.¹¹⁸

The large number of individuals buried inside one grave unit had been considered to represent a unique manner of burial in the area of the Starčevo culture until common graves (pits of roughly circular shape) were discovered at Ajmana and Valesnica. Here the sex

and age of the individuals were different, though. 17 skeletons were found at Ajmana: 12 children, four men and one woman.¹¹⁹ At Valesnica in grave 2 seven skeletons were found (five complete and two partly preserved).¹²⁰ Five were identified: two children, one man and two women. On the other hand, the grave at Vinča comprised skeletons of adults only: one woman, eight men and one of unidentified sex,¹²¹ which may point to the extraordinary and unusual circumstances in which those people died. Any conclusion about their status is premature in the light of insufficient knowledge on social relationships in the Starčevo culture. However, it is not unlikely that the status of the individuals buried in pit-dwelling Z was defined posthumously, specifically due to their extraordinary deaths which led to an unusual and for all we know now unique burial. The fact that they were buried outside the settlement makes the interpretation of the grave even more complex.

¹¹⁶ Leković 1985.

¹¹⁷ Васић 1931, 127.

¹¹⁸ Leković 1985.

¹¹⁹ Сталио 1992.

¹²⁰ Vasić 1986.

¹²¹ Schwidetsky 1971.

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Резиме:

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О ПРОБЛЕМУ КОСТУРНИЦЕ – ЗЕМУНИЦЕ Z У НАЈСТАРИЈЕМ ХОРИЗОНТУ ВИНЧЕ

Један од најважнијих елемената на које се М. Васић ослањао у својим интерпретацијама Винче је колективни гроб, тзв. костурница са дромосом у којој је нађено девет скелета. Објекат је истражен 1931. године, а с обзиром на то да је укопан у лесну здравицу, приписан је најстаријем хоризонту насеља на Винчи. У радовима М. Васића који су настали непосредно после открића тог објекта, изглед »костурнице и дромоса« су детаљно анализирани и реконструисани. Своје закључке о облику колективног гроба М. Васић је допунио и знатно кориговао после ископавања 1934. године. Тада је закључено, наиме, да тзв. костурница и дромос представљају саставне делове знатно већег и сложенијег објекта, означеног као земуница Z. Детаљнији подаци о изгледу и садржају земунице Z, у чијем саставу су били тзв. костурница и дромос, нису публиковани. Нису наведени ни разлози због којих је гробни објекат означен као земуница. (Иако неадекватни, термини костурница, дромос и земуница Z су прихваћени у стручној литератури, најчешће као синоними за колективни гроб.)

Због Васићеве тврдње да све јаме укопане у лес представљају прве, привремене стамбене објекте на Винчи, истовремене са костурницом, односно земуницом Z, скромног обима публиковане грађе и документације, расправе о културном карактеру и односу костурнице и земунице Z, садржају јама укопаних у лес и могућности постојања старчевачког насеља на Винчи, остале су на нивоу претпоставки и неусаглашених, често и супротстављених ставова. Чини се да су ставови готово свих аутора јединствени само када је у питању гробница са дромосом (костурница), али не и земуница Z. Већина истраживача сматра, наиме, да костурница припада носиоцима старчевачке културе, док се о земуници Z, њеном карактеру и садржају, као уосталом и о свим осталим јамама на Винчи, ставови знатно разликују.

Гроб у најдубљим слојевима Винче је веома дуго представљао јединствен случај колективног сахрањивања на територији старчевачке културе у којој су гробови углавном представљени јамама у којима је сахрањен најчешће по један, веома ретко два или више покојника. Због тога је вероватно костурница са дромосом у стручној литератури ретко помињана, најчешће у оквиру већих синтеза о старчевачкој култури, или у расправама о стратиграфији Винче и карактеру јама у најдубљим слојевима тог локалитета, односно у радовима који не подразумевају и покушај тумачења таквог облика сахрањивања.

Различита тумачења стратиграфског, хронолошког и културног односа костурнице и земунице Z, њиховог садржаја и односа према осталим јамама, наметнула су, у циљу разјашњења колективног гроба, детаљну анализу целокупне расположиве грађе, непубликоване документације и студијске збирке покретних налаза. Треба напоменути да су неки од неспоразума и контрадикторних интерпретација најста-

ријих слојева и објеката на Винчи делимично проузроковани чињеницом да гробни објекат није истражен у континуитету, што је утицало на начин публиковања резултата ископавања, као и на могуће стварање погрешног утиска о постојању хоризонталне стратиграфије унутар објекта, односно накнадног проширивања првобитно ископане гробне или земуничке јаме. Други могући узрок неспоразума лежи у чињеници да су сви објекти укопани у лес, без обзира на њихове димензије, облик и садржај, означени као земунице. Због тога је до данас остало неразјашњено да ли термин земуница Z означава сложу гробну структуру у облику вишећеличне земунице у чијем саставу се налазе и тзв. костурница и дромос; стамбени објекат који је секундарно искоришћен за сахрану већег броја покојника, или су земуница Z и костурница са дромосом два различита објекта међу којима постоји, можда, и културно-хронолошка разлика.

Чини се да су ставови М. Васића, али и његове недоумице, најјасније исказани у дневницима ископавања. Наиме, у кампањи 1931. године истражен је у најдубљем слоју, укопан у лес, простор који је својим обликом и садржајем одавао утисак засебне целине. С обзиром на то да се укопани објекат састојао од два »удубљења«, са девет скелета у дубљем, дефинисан је као костурница (гробница) са дромосом. Због специфичног облика објекта закључено је да су гробови покојника у најдубљем хоризонту Винче израђивани у облику станова за живе, тј. у облику земуница.

Други део гробног објекта укопаног у здравицу истражен је 1934. године. Теренски дневник сведочи о томе да је он током ископавања, иако у непосредној близини »костурнице«, схваћен као посебна целина коју чине три укопана »одељења«, и по инерцији, као и остали укопани објекти, означен као земуница (Z). Неуобичајен је, међутим, начин на који су покретни налази из тог објекта означени у дневнику, као и ознаке на самим налазима. За разлику од налаза из осталих јама, на којима се увек налази ознака јаме из које потичу, на налазима из земунице Z уписана је година ископавања и релативна дубина. Разлози таквог обележавања налаза, које изоставља ознаку јаме, нису познати, иако се у дневнику јасно наглашава да потичу из земунице Z.

Свој коначан став о земуници Z (функцији, димензијама, »удубљењима« која се налазе у њеном саставу) М. Васић је формирао тек након завршетка истраживања 1934. године, упоређивања и повезивања основа које приказују ситуацију са укопаним објектима на нивоу леса из 1931. и 1934. године. Вероватно је тек након повезивања скице земунице Z из 1934. године и скице костурнице из 1931. године и утврђивања чињенице да се, у дневнику поменуто, најдубља тачка земунице Z не налази у близини костурнице, већ у оквиру ње, био у могућности да закључи да костурница и дромос не представљају самосталан објекат, већ саставне делове земунице Z. С обзиром на то да у публикацијама о Винчи назив

објекта није измењен, могло би се претпоставити да Васић, као примарну, наглашава стамбену функцију тог објекта. Чини се, међутим, да откривени објекат није у функционалном смислу изједначаван са стамбеним објектом, већ је термин земуница коришћен са намером да се донекле објасни смисао погребног обичаја.

Детаљнији опис земунице Z никада није публикован, а гробна конструкција је и у Васићевим каснијим радовима често означавана као костурница са дромосом или гробница у облику собе с прилазним ходником, што је за последицу имало различите интерпретације облика, садржаја и функције земунице Z у радовима каснијих истраживача Винче.

Анализа публиковане документације, теренских дневника и скица омогућила је сагледавање и реконструкцију вертикалне стратиграфије тзв. костурнице и дромоса, односно делова гробне конструкције који су истражени 1931. године. При томе смо се у првом реду ослањали на прецизно наведене коте зидова гробне јаме, слојева и покретних налаза које је М. Васић, као основне елементе на којима је темељио своју реконструкцију костурнице, детаљно пописао. На основу тога је издвојено пет стратиграфских целина које разјашњавају услове настанка тог објекта.

Костурница је, наимае, укопана са нивоа првобитног хумуса (слој I), иако је њен обод јасно уочен тек у лесу, на дубини 9,3 m. Дно гробне јаме, на које су положени покојници, је левкастог облика, а његова најдубља тачка се налазила на $\nabla 11,40$ m. Након полагања у јаму покојници су засути танким слојем земље (слој IV). О карактеру тог слоја, осим напомене да га чини »црна земља«, нема много података, док су Васићеви подаци о керамичким налазима из тог слоја контрадикторни. С једне стране, Васић у свим својим радовима изричито наглашава да у костурници, осим два керамичка пршљенка нису нађени никакви предмети. С друге стране, његове белешке у дневнику ископавања су неуобичајено детаљне када је у питању керамички садржај тог слоја, па се на основу описа керамичких налаза и њихових цртежа на маргинама дневника јасно закључује да се у костурници налазила керамика са препознатљивим елементима старчевачке културне групе. За сада нису јасни разлози који су Васића навели да тврди да у костурници није било керамичких налаза. У Археолошкој збирци Филозофског факултета данас се налази 120 фрагмената на којима се налази ознака »костурница«, исписана препознатљивим Васићевим рукописом. За три фрагмента се са сигурношћу може тврдити да припадају винчанској култури, док се сви остали фрагменти, на основу типолошких и стилских карактеристика могу приписати позној фази старчевачке културе.

Према наводима у дневнику и публикацијама, гробна јама (костурница у најужем смислу) је »затворена« танким слојем леса (слој III) који је констатован на $\nabla 10,90$ m. Тај слој, највероватније стерилан, јер се описује као слој »чисте земље«, »чистог леса« и »чисте жуте земље«, видљив је у северозападном профилу, а М. Васић га тумачи као остатке срушене таванице гробнице. Та слој није констатован на целој основи изнад скелета, као ни у југозападном профилу. Објашњење такве ситуације се може наћи у чињеници да је, иако су сви скелети у јами били покривени слојем леса, тај слој током ископавања уочен само на појединим местима јер су садржај гробне јаме и лес који покрива скелете накнадно поремећени. Ову претпоставку потврђују делови ске-

лета нађени ван тзв. костурнице и дромоса, као и неколико винчанских фрагмената у првобитној испуни гробне јаме.

Слој црне земље изнад танког стерилног слоја леса представља највећи део испуне дромоса и гробне јаме (слој II). Неколико елемената указује на то да он не представља првобитну испуну јаме, а на основу Васићевог описа садржаја тог слоја јасно је да га чини винчанска керамика. Осим тога, наглашавање да се тај слој налазио »изнад гробнице с дромосом« показује да се под гробницом подразумева само најдубљи део јаме са скелетима »затвореним« слојем леса, и да се слој црне земље изнад леса не сматра саставним делом гробнице. С обзиром на то да Васић слој леса (слој III) интерпретира као остатке срушене кровне конструкције гробнице, подразумева се, иако се то експлицитно не наглашава, да је слој црне земље »изнад гробнице« формиран касније, после урушавања таванице.

Једна успутна напомена о томе да се костурница налазила испод тзв. основе $\nabla 9,3$ m и дневник ископавања разјашњавају услове настанка и садржај слоја II. Показало се, наимае, да тзв. основа $\nabla 9,3$ представља, у ствари винчанску јаму констатовану на дубини 9,3 m. Њеним укопавањем је вероватно делимично пробијен слој леса који је покривао скелете, због чега су се, на знатно вишем нивоу у односу на непоремећене скелете, нашли дислоцирани делови једног или више скелета. Као и костурница, винчанска јама је залазила у југозападни и северозападни профил ископаног простора, па је сасвим извесно да се пружала и на делу терена који је истражен 1934. године.

О другом делу гробног објекта, тзв. земунице Z, који је само сумарно описан у дневнику, постоји знатно мање података. Осим керамичких фрагмената, М. Васић као садржај земунице Z наводи пет винчанских фигурина и два старчевачка лонца нађена на дну јаме, у непосредној близини костурнице. Керамичке налазе чини укупно 16 фрагмената. Захваљујући томе што су на свим фрагментима забележене релативне дубине, могуће је констатовати да су готово сви винчански налази (фигурине и 8 керамичких фрагмената) нађени у плићим деловима јаме, док старчевачки налази потичу из дубљих слојева јаме. Овакав садржај земунице Z објашњава чињеница да је део винчанске јаме »основа $\nabla 9,3$ «, која је делимично укопана у старчевачки гроб, био истражен и током ископавања 1934. године, односно да је један њен део био укопан и у земуницу Z. То би значило да сви винчански налази приписани земуници Z, представљају, у ствари садржај винчанске јаме, док се за мали број старчевачких налаза може препоставити, иако у дневнику ископавања о томе нема података, да се налазио у делу костурнице који је такође истражен 1934. године.

Сви анализирани елементи потврђују закључак М. Васића да земуница Z представља комплексну гробну конструкцију у којој су сахрањени носиоци старчевачке културе. Елементи сахране (димензије јаме, правилност у начину полагања покојника, трагови ритуала у виду остављања прилога, а можда и ритуалног разбијања посуда непосредно изнад покојника) говоре да сахрањивање није извршено на брзину и у неким ванредним околностима. Услови налаза наводе и на закључак да сахрањивање нису извршили припадници заједнице другачијих назора и схватања јер се у деловима гробнице који нису оштећени накнадним укопавањима налазио културно једнородан старчевачки материјал, а сам чин

колективне сахране изведен на је на начин који, такође, није био непознат носиоцима старчевачке групе.

Иако су се сви до сада истражени старчевачки гробови налазили у оквиру насеља, због карактера покретних налаза у осталим јамама истраженим на Винчи, претпостављамо да на Винчи није постојало старчевачко насеље, односно да покојници сахрањени у земуници Z нису били становници Винче, већ неког другог старчевачког насеља. Групне и колективне истовремене сахране углавном се тумаче као последица неких ванредних догађаја који су могли довести до смрти већег броја житеља једног насеља. Епидемије се често наводе као могући узрок смрти. У случају колективног гроба на Винчи ову могућност сматрамо мање вероватном јер би, сасвим сигурно, међу покојницима било и деце, а тешко је и претпоставити да би од епидемије страдао само најотпорнији нараштај. Једно од могућих објашњења подразумева да је мања група припадника старчевачке културе, можда у потрази за локацијом на којој би основали ново насеље, доживела неку несрећу или се сукобила са члановима друге заједнице, при чему је страдао већи број њених чланова. Они који су преживели су, у складу са својим схватањима и погребним обичајима, ископали јаму у облику комплексне земунице, са гробном јамом чије су димензије биле условљене бројем и узрастом оних за које је припремљена као вечно станиште, сахранили своје саплеменике са одговарајућим гробним прилозима и отишли не наставивши се на Винчи.

Такви комплексни облици гробних конструкција нису регистровани на територији старчевачке културе. Два гро-

ба на Златари (гробне конструкције А и Б) представљају за сада једине објекте који сличним, али једноставнијим обликом гробне конструкције у извесној мери подсећају на гроб у Винчи. Претпоставља се да су облик и неуобичајено велике димензије таквих гробних конструкција условљени изузетним статусом покојника. Облик гроба на Винчи је М. Васића навео на закључак да су гробови покојника израђивани у облику станова за живе, тј. у облику земуница. На сличан начин су интерпретиране и гробне конструкције на Златари – као вечне куће покојника које су због тога симболично и буквално у облику стамбених (полу)земуница.

Велики број покојника у оквиру једне гробне целине представљао је, све до открића колективних гробова на Ајмани и Велесници, јединствен облик таквог начина сахрањивања на територији старчевачке културе. Полна и старосна структура покојника у тим гробовима се, међутим, знатно разликују. Наиме, гроб у Винчи садржао је скелете само одраслих индивидуа: један женски, осам мушких и један неутврђеног пола, што наводи на помисао да су покојници сахрањени на Винчи умрли у изузетним и неуобичајеним околностима. О њиховом статусу је, због недовољне проучености социјалних односа у оквиру старчевачке културе, прерано закључивати. Могло би се, међутим, помишљати да је статус покојника сахрањених у земуници Z тек постхумно одређен специфичним обликом смрти, што је и условило неуобичајен и за сада јединствен начин на који су сахрањени. Чињеница да су они сахрањени ван насеља додатно усложњава интерпретацију тог гроба.

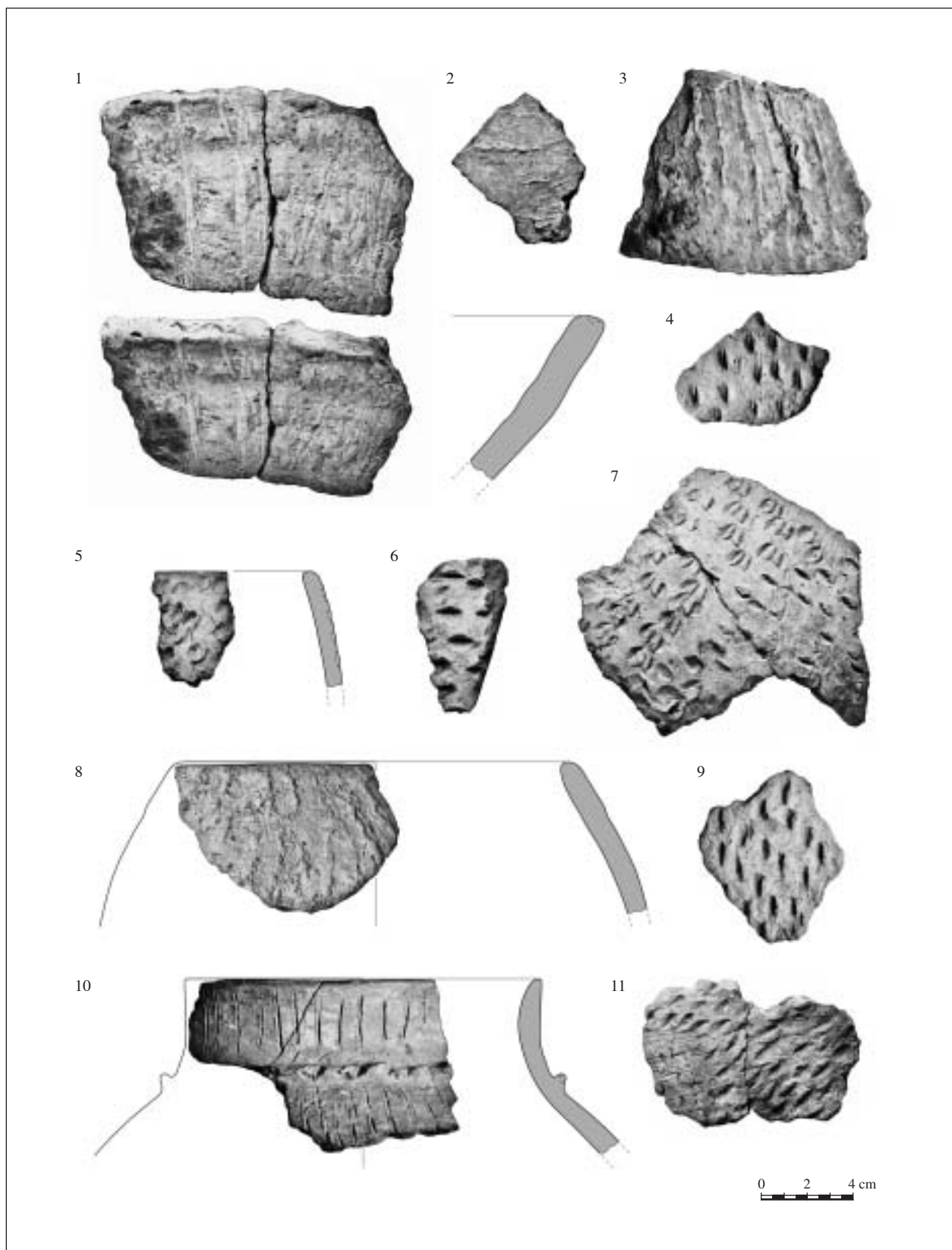


Plate I – Pottery from »ossuary«
Табла I – Керамички налази из »костурнице«

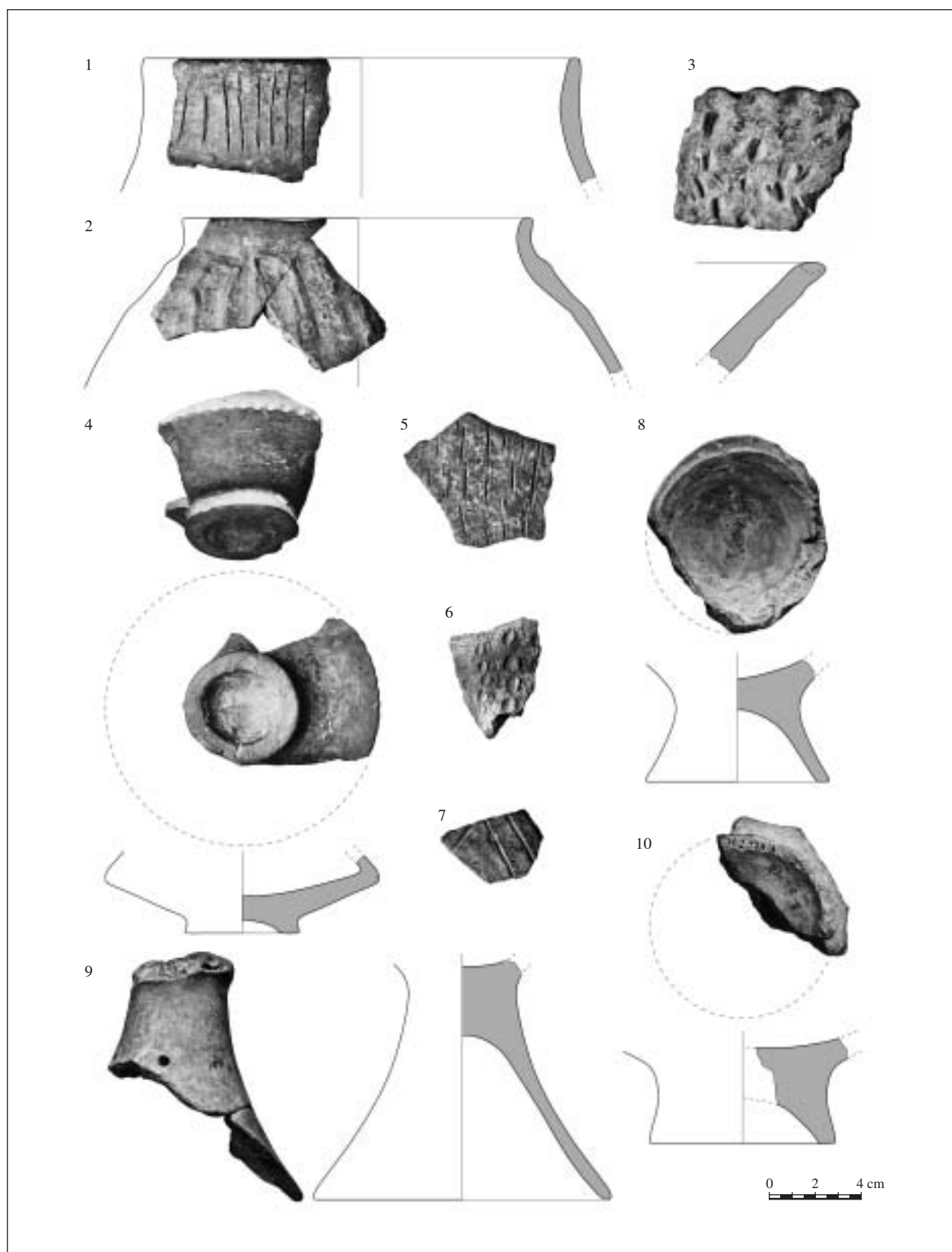


Plate II – Pottery from »pit-dwelling Z«

Табла II – Керамички налази из »земунице Z«