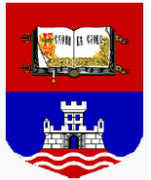


# Relevance of pottery ethnoarchaeology for the study of Late Neolithic households in Central Balkans

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# Pottery ethnoarchaeology and archaeology of the Late Neolithic in Central Balkans

- Is it possible to apply ethnoarchaeological results from different parts of the world in the context of Balkan Neolithic?
- Problem oriented approach
- Ethnographic data as a frame of reference (sensu Binford)
- Relevance and applicability of ethnoarchaeological knowledge for the household archaeology of Late Neolithic Balkans
- Illustration on two concrete research problems

# Late Neolithic in the Central Balkans – an archaeological background

- Chronology: 5300-4600 B.C.
- Culture-history: Vinča culture



# Archaeological record of the Vinča culture

- Permanent settlements
- Remains of burned wattle and daub houses
- Sealed pottery inventories from houses

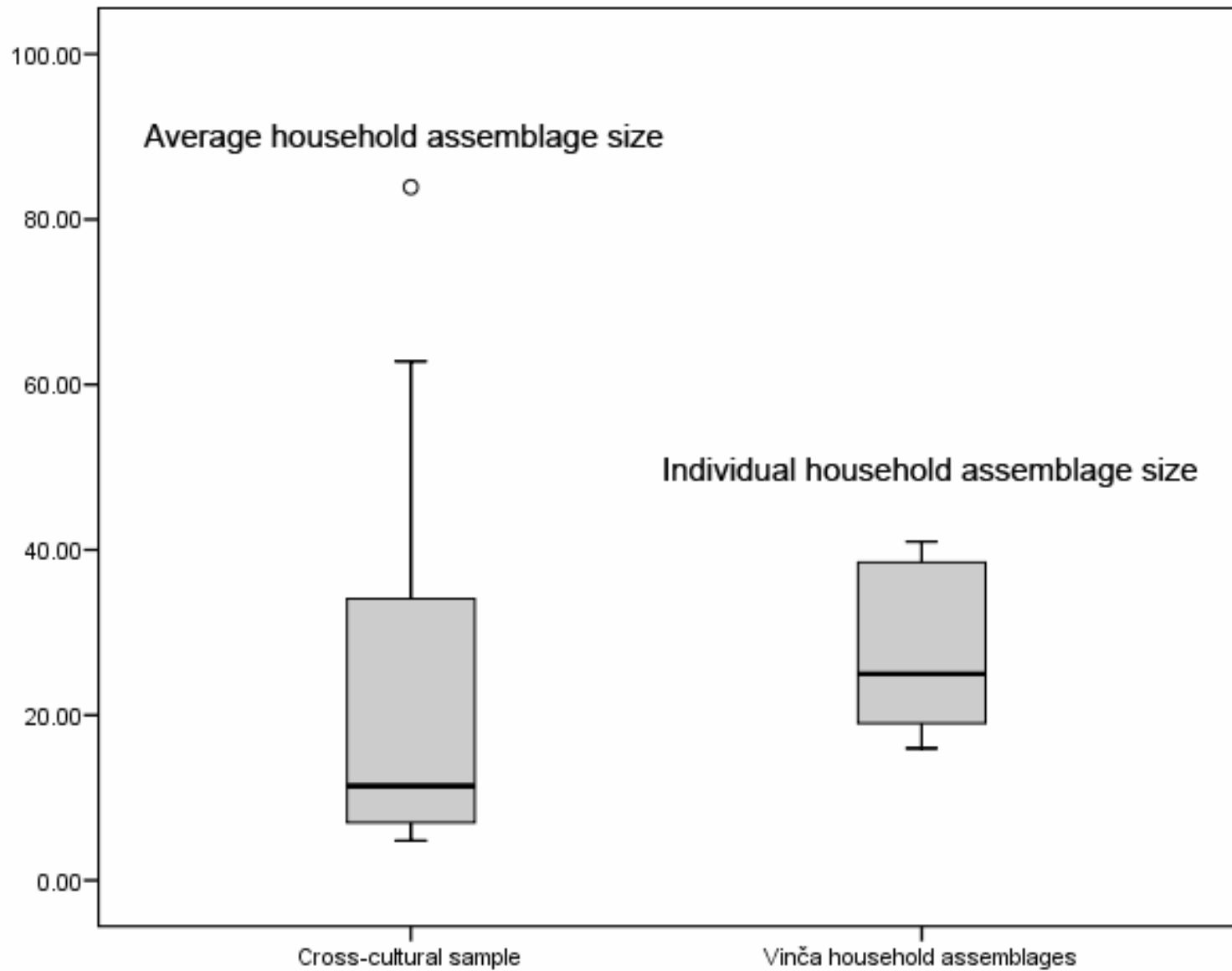


## Problem 1: The nature of household inventories

- John Chapman's hypothesis: Late Neolithic house assemblages from SE Europe are not everyday assemblages – they are deliberately deposited prior to house destruction as symbolic and ideological statement.
- In terms of behavioral archaeology (Schiffer 1976, 1987): are pottery assemblages from houses de facto refuse or a consequence of structured deposition?
- Chapman's argument: pottery assemblages from houses are unusual (e.g. unusual size).

# Unusual in comparison with what?

- The need for a frame of reference
- Ethnoarchaeological data as a frame of reference
- The 'unusualness' of Late Neolithic assemblage sizes can be assessed in the frame of reference provided by ethnography



data from Mills 1989

# Accumulated assemblages as a frame of reference

Projected size  
of the accumulated  
assemblage

$$T = \frac{St}{L}$$

$$L = ?$$

Observed structure  
of accumulated  
assemblage(s)

- Correspondence between house assemblages and accumulated assemblages
- Discard equation (Schiffer 1976, 1987)
- Average use-lives for vessel classes can be estimated on the basis of ethnoarchaeological research



## Projected accumulated assemblages

Site	Cooking	Serving	Storage
Banjica	45.74	37.06	17.20
Gomolava	59.38	36.65	3.97
Divostin	30.83	49.77	19.40
Jakovo	77.64	11.98	10.38
Predionica	18.91	58.35	22.75

## Observed accumulated assemblages

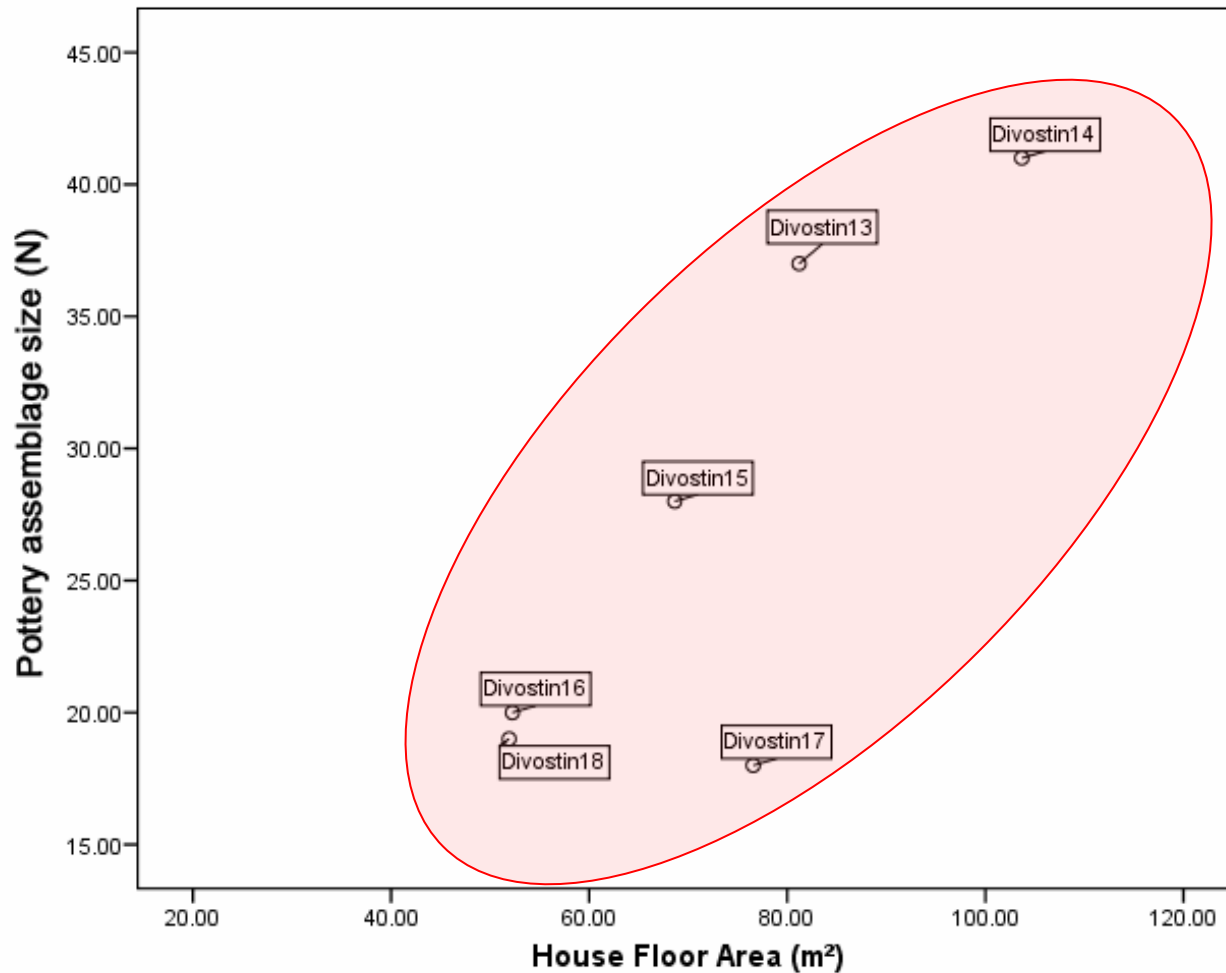
Based on published accumulated assemblages:

**20-30%** cooking vessels (pots and casseroles)

**50-60%** serving vessels (bowls)

**10-20%** storage vessels (amphorae and pithoi)

## Problem 2: Interpreting the patterns of assemblage size variation – the case of Divostin



## Ethnoarchaeological frame of reference

- Pottery assemblage size may be an indicator of household size (Arnold 1988; Arthur 2009; Hildebrand & Hagstrum 1999a; Nelson 1981)
- Pottery assemblage size may be an indicator of social status (Deal 1998, Smith 1987)
- Therefore, the observed patterns may reflect differences in household size and social status between different Divostin households.

# Summary

- Results of pottery ethnoarchaeology are highly relevant for testing specific hypotheses regarding the formation processes of Vinča culture house assemblages
- Ethnoarchaeological knowledge is a useful frame of reference for the social interpretation of the observed archaeological patterns

**Thank you for your attention!**