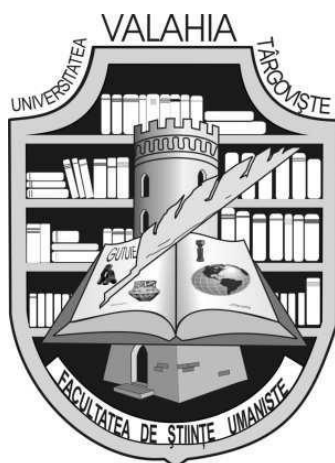


**Ministère de l'Education
L'Université Valahia Târgoviște
Faculté de Sciences Humaines**

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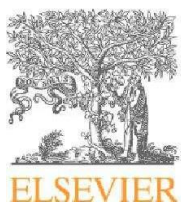
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Sommaire

MARIN CÂRCIUMARU, MARIAN LEU, FLORIN-IONUȚ LUPU, THE PALAEOLITHIC IN THE MOUNTAIN SECTOR OF THE BISTRIȚA VALLEY – OLD AND NEW INTERPRETATIONS	7
VASILE COTIUGĂ, ANDREI ASĂNDULESEI, ABOUT OLD DISCOVERIES AND NEW ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH IN THE CUCUTENIAN SETTLEMENT FROM FEDELEȘENI-DEALUL CÂNEPĂRIEI, STRUNGA COMMUNE, IAȘI COUNTY, ROMANIA	93
CRISTIAN EDUARD ȘTEFAN, MIHAI ȘTEFAN FLOREA, DIGGING IN THE ARCHIVES: THE TELL SETTLEMENTS OF MĂRIUȚA AND ȘEINOIU, SOUTHERN ROMANIA	111
EMILIA ELENA COLAN, MARIN CÂRCIUMARU, POST-PALAEOLITHIC ANTHROPOMORPHIC REPRESENTATIONS IN ROMANIA ROCK ART	136
MIRCEA NEGRU, CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE KNOWLEDGE OF MILITARI-CHITILA CULTURE. RECENT ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH AT BUCHAREST-MILITARI BOJA FIELD	168
CLAUDIU-ION NEAGOE, SUR LE VOYAGE D’UN NOBLE FRANÇAIS À TRAVERS LA VALACHIE, EN 1574 : JEAN DE SAULX, VICOMTE DE TAVANNES	190
DIANA GRIGOR, FEW THOUGHT REGARDING THE DEMOGRAPHIC DYNAMIC OF WALLACHIA MAIN CITIES (16TH-17TH CENTURIES)	197
CLAUDIU DRĂGHICI, ENVIRONMENTA SEVERAL RURAL RESIDENCES OF THE BĂLĂCENI BOYARS (17th-18th CENTURRIES)	216

The Palaeolithic in the Mountain Sector of the Bistrița Valley - Old and New Interpretations

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Abstract: The Bistrița Valley is located in the north-east of Romania, crossing the entire Eastern Carpathian chain. To the Palaeolithic communities in Eastern and Central Europe, the Carpathian arc must have been a difficult obstacle to overcome. In the mountain sector of the Bistrița Valley, the two areas of concentration of Palaeolithic settlements – the Răpciuni Basin (Ceahlău) and Bicz-Izvorul Alb – have been variously addressed in terms of the extent of the archaeological investigations. In this study we have tried to take a different view regarding the definition and chrono-cultural sequence of Palaeolithic sites in the mountain sector of the Bistrița Valley. The idea of the existence of an Aurignacian in this area has been abandoned, as the arguments provided by the absolute chronology definitely exclude such an assumption, whereas the occupations attributed to the Gravettian have been adapted to the sequence of this culture at Poiana Cireșului. Therefore, one may now speak of a Gravettian I and II in the Ceahlău Basin.

Keywords: Palaeolithic, Aurignacian, Gravettian, Cultural sequence, Chronostratigraphy, the Bistrița Valley.

I. Introduction

The Bistrița Valley is located in the north-east of Romania, crossing the entire Eastern Carpathian chain. Along its route, several areas of concentration of Palaeolithic settlements have been identified, among which, from upstream down to its mouth, the small basins Răpciuni (Ceahlău) - Izvorul Alb, Secu, Bicz - Piatra Neamț – Buda, Lespezi stand out ([fig. 1](#)).

In the mountain sector of the Bistrița Valley, the two areas of concentration of Palaeolithic settlements – the Răpciuni Basin (Ceahlău) and Bicz-Izvorul Alb – have been variously addressed in terms of the extent of the archaeological investigations. There is a large number of settlements in the Ceahlău Basin and many of them have been excavated on large

The Palaeolithic in the Mountain Sector of the Bistrița Valley-Old and New Interpretations

areas over the entire thickness of the deposits in those particular terraces, whereas the settlements in the Bicaz-Izvorul Alb region are fewer and their research has been restricted to



Fig. 1 – Areas of concentration of Palaeolithic settlements in the Bistrița Valley. 1- Romania's geographic position in Europe; 2- location of the Bistrița Valley settlements in Romania; 3- concentration of Palaeolithic settlements in the Bistrița Valley (cartographic sources Google Earth and visualwallmaps.com).

small surveys.

In the Ceahlău Basin, the first stage of archaeological investigations, which occurred between 1955 and 1958, was the most important, given that extensive excavations were conducted in the most significant settlements and relevant surveys were carried out in others in order to define the cultural layers. Small-scale research was also conducted in 1964-1971 and 1980-1986 (fig. 2). The results of the first stage of investigations in the Ceahlău Basin were dealt with in the first synthesis study on the Palaeolithic in the Bistrița Valley (C. S. Nicolăescu-Plopșor et al., 1966). It was then that the succession of communities attributed to the Aurignacian, the Gravettian and the Epigravettian in the Ceahlău Basin was discussed for the first time. The cultural classification of those layers was made based strictly on the technotypological studies of the lithic materials in each settlement. In his palaeoclimatic and geochronological study of the deposits in a number of important sites in the Ceahlău Basin,

Marin Cârciumaru (1980) would draw attention to the very young age of the Aurignacian in these settlements. Later, several C-14 dates were to confirm the hypotheses regarding the much too young age of the Aurignacian in the Ceahlău Basin (K. Honea, 1981, 1984; Al. Păunescu, 1984). All confirmations on the late age of the Aurignacian in the Bistrița Valley were not enough to make Al. Păunescu (1998) revise his opinion regarding the attribution of the respective layers to the Aurignacian culture. Moreover, some C-14 dates were only considered



Fig. 2 – Images of the archaeological investigations in the settlements at Bistricioara-Lutărie I-II and Dârțu in various stages. 1-Bistricioara Lutărie – excavations carried out in 1957-1958 (Alexandru Păunescu in the foreground); 2-3 Dârțu – excavations in 1957-1958 (2- Alexandru Păunescu in the background; 3- Florea Mogoșanu and Alexandru Păunescu in the background); 4- The appearance of the Bistricioara Lutărie II settlement in 1975, when samples were taken for the palynological study; 5- The profile at Dârțu from which samples were taken for the pollen analysis in 1975 (acc. to M. Cârciumaru et al. 2023).

selectively, with the author stating that “we shall discuss only those C-14 dates we deem accurate or those which point to an age close to the one considered plausible” (Al. Păunescu, 1998, p. 116). Had that been the case, we cannot but wonder how the ages of $26,700 \pm 1,100$ B.P. (GrN 14633) for the Cetățica II Aurignacian, $23,890 \pm 290$ B.P. (GrN 14630) from Cetățica I, $24,760 \pm 170$ B.P. (GrN 11586) for the Aurignacian from Bistricioara- Lutărie II or $24,390 \pm$

The Palaeolithic in the Mountain Sector of the Bistrița Valley-Old and New Interpretations

180 (GrN 12673) for the Dârțu-Ceahlău Aurignacian were considered “accurate” (p. 117), given the fact that all these ages were not consistent with the limits allowed for the duration of the European Aurignacian period.

During this time, the issue of the Aurignacian in the Bistrița Valley, which was too

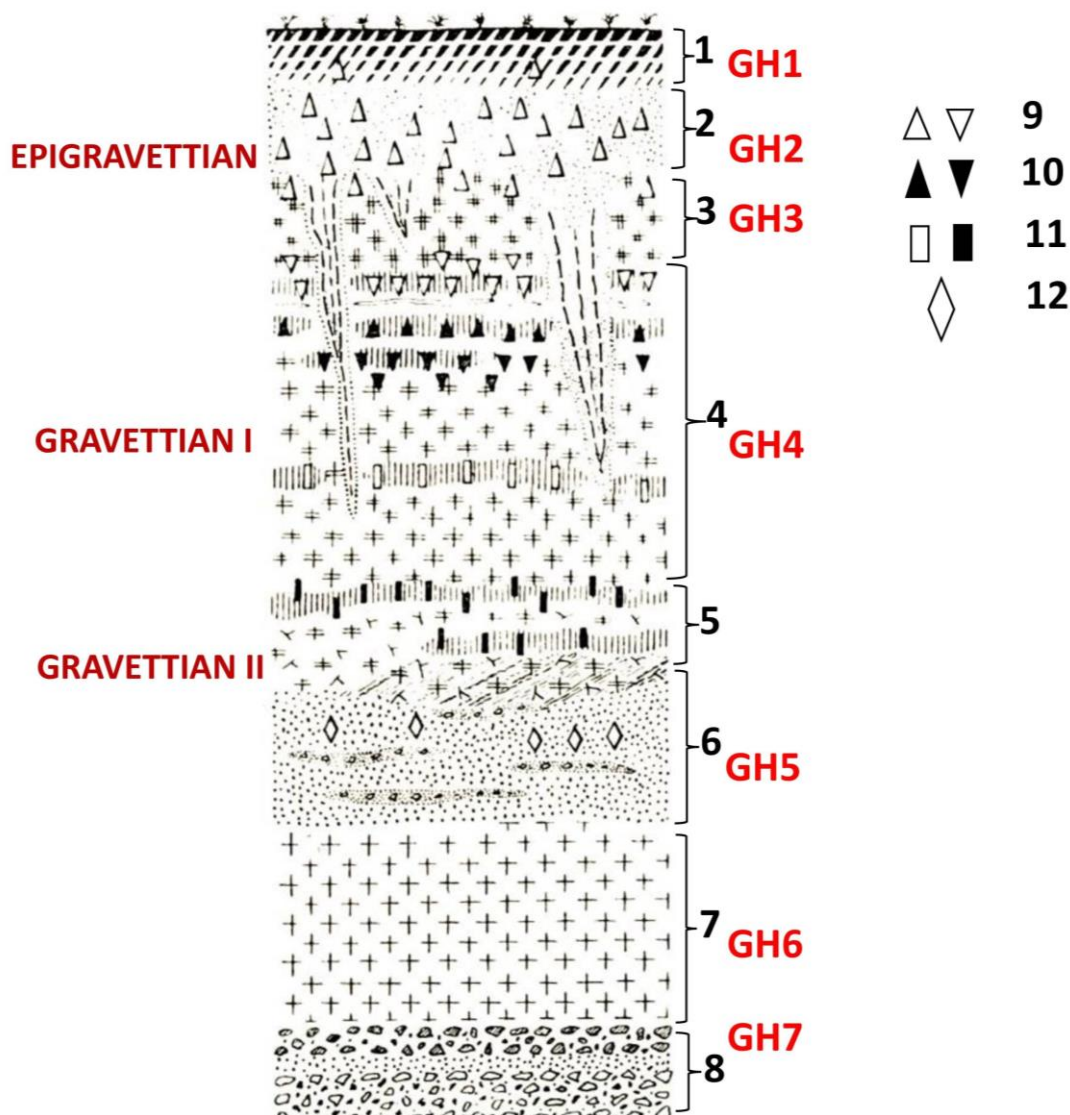


Fig. 3 – Integrated stratigraphic profile of the Gravettian and Epigravettian settlements in the Râpciuni Basin (Ceahlău). 1 current soil; 2 pale-yellow loessoid layer; 3 brown-reddish layer; 4 reddish-yellowish loess layer; 5 grey calcareous pseudo-mycelian loessoid layer with sedimentation due to congelifluction; 6 runoff deposit; 7 yellowish micaceous loessoid deposit; 8 stratified deposit with calcareous concretions, sands and gravels; 9-12 Palaeolithic lithic tools at various levels (acc. to [C. S. Nicolăescu-Plopșor et al., 1966](#)); GH1-GH7 – geological horizons (according to [C. Schmidt et al., 2020](#)).

young compared to its chronological development in other parts of Europe, was once again highlighted in a monographic work on the Palaeolithic in Romania ([M. Cârciumaru, 1999](#)). It

was only in 2009 that a new assessment of the Aurignacian in the Ceahlău Basin was made, indicating that the respective layers actually belonged to the Gravettian, in full agreement with their absolute age and the evolution of the two cultures in Eurasia ([L. Steguweit et al., 2009](#)).

In this study, we have chosen to adopt the hypothesis that rejects the existence of an Aurignacian in this region, as the arguments provided by absolute chronology unequivocally exclude the presence of this Palaeolithic culture in the Bistrița Valley. Furthermore, the techno-typological elements of the lithic material, with the exception, to some extent, of the lithic inventory from Cetățica I, do not support an Aurignacian presence in the Bistrița Valley, as the “guide fossils” in this regard are practically missing. The items from Cetățica I, which appear to have a different techno-typological nature, have been found at the contact with terrace gravels, suggesting that they originated from a deposit that had been washed and reshuffled.

Considering the reality imposed by C-14 dating, we have tried to adapt the cultural succession of the Gravettian communities in the mountain sector of the Bistrița Valley according to the model proposed at Poiana Cireșului-Piatra Neamț ([M. Cârciumar, E.-C. Nițu, 2018](#); [M. Cârciumar et al., 2016, 2023](#)), a multilayered site with a complete sequence for the Gravettian in Romania and a highly coherent C-14 chronology, based on a considerable number of dates. For example, while at Poiana Cireșului at least three Gravettian cultural sequences have been identified (Gravettian I, Gravettian II and Gravettian III), in the mountain sector of the Bistrița Valley, the absolute chronology as well as the sedimentological features and succession of layers only allow for the existence of two Gravettian sequences (Gravettian I and Gravettian II). It is very interesting how this model works well even if we consider only the existing C-14 dates.

Under these conditions, we shall try to present the cultural evolution of each settlement in the Ceahlău Basin based on this objective reality. In order to eliminate any confusion regarding the stratigraphic position of the old layers previously attributed to the Aurignacian, we shall refer to the description of the geological layers and the position of the cultural levels initially established ([C. S. Nicolăescu-Plopșor et al., 1966](#)) and subsequently maintained in certain descriptions regarding the cultural succession and the presence of the Aurignacian in the Ceahlău Basin ([fig. 3](#)).

As for the settlements in the Bicz-Izvorul Alb sector, most of them belong to the Gravettian and Epigravettian periods, and sometimes important collections, such as those from Izvorul Alb, lack a clear archaeological context.

II. The settlements in the Răpciuni Basin (Ceahlău)

The Răpciuni Basin, the most important concentration area of Palaeolithic settlements in the mountainous sector of the Bistrița, is located in the middle course of the valley, at the foothills of the Ceahlău Mountains, between the confluence with the Bistricioara and the narrowing of the valley near Cetățica. Its genesis is undoubtedly related to the multitude of tributaries received by the Bistrița River on the right side, such as the Bistricioara, the Schitu, the Răpciunița and the Pârâul Mare, which led to its asymmetric development. These tributaries exerted a constant pressure, pushing the course of the Bistrița River to the left, where a steep slope was created. This favoured the formation of terraces on the right side (fig. 4). The existence of these terraces is essential for the selection of encampment by Palaeolithic

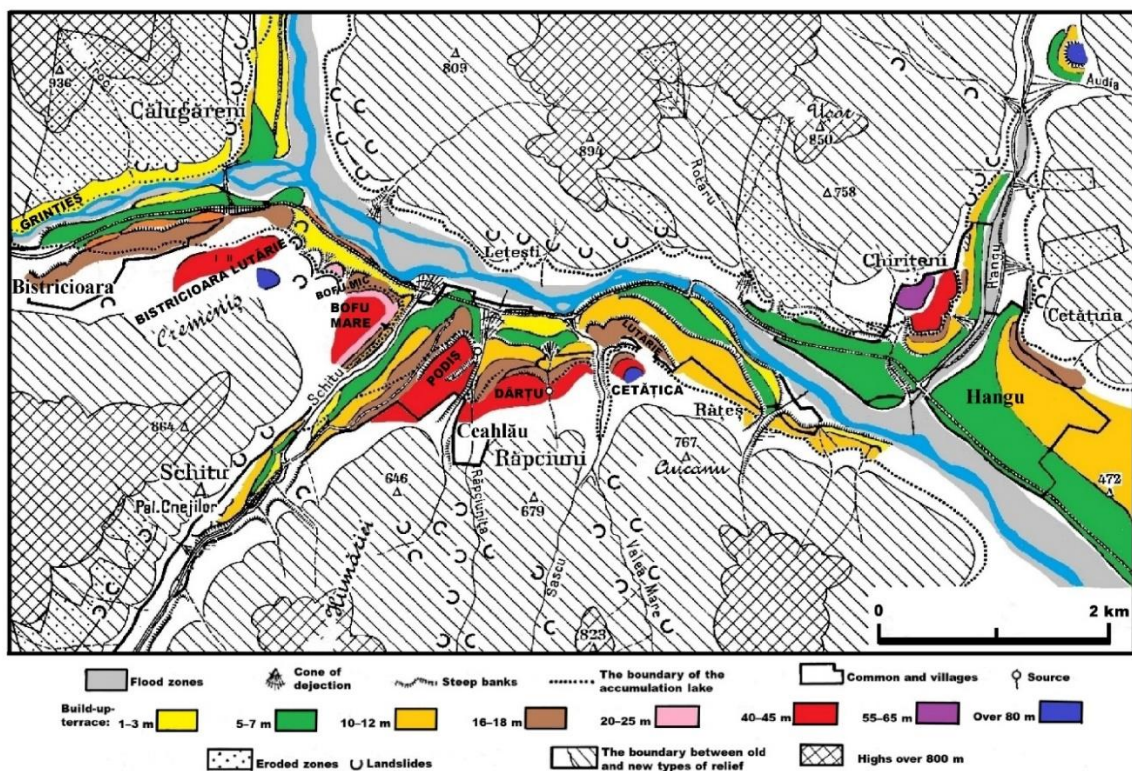


Fig. 4 – Geomorphology of the Bistrița Valley in the Răpciuni Basin before the construction of the reservoir (modified after C. S. Nicolăescu-Plopșor et al., 1966) (acc. to M. Cărciumaru et al., 2023).

communities. Under these conditions, within the Bistrița Valley, the Răpciuni Basin was preferred by Palaeolithic humans, and it is not coincidental that all the settlements discovered so far are exclusively located on the right side of the Bistrița River, where well-defined terraces

develop, providing ample living spaces, whereas the steep left slope only offers similar conditions in the area of the Hangu commune, where an important succession of terraces can be observed (figs. 1, 4) (M. Cârciumar et al., 2023).

II.1. Bistricioara Lutărie

The Bistricioara-Lutărie settlement is located on the northern side of the Răpciuni Basin (Ceahlău), on a terrace at a relative altitude of 45 metres, in the east-northeast part of the Bistricioara commune. Archaeological research has been conducted in several stages: 1957-1958, 1980-1984 and at present.

At Bistricioara-Lutărie, several points are known: Bistricioara-Lutărie I and II, which have been studied since the 1950s, and Bistricioara-Lutărie III and the “La Mal” point, which have been investigated more recently.

Depth (cm)	Layer	Material	AMS Lab. Nr.	Age B.P. (uncal.)	Age (cal.B.P) (95.4 % probability)
87-96	Epigravettian	Charcoal	GrN 10.528	16.150±350	20.364 – 18.754
108-118	Gravettian I	Charcoal	GX 8.728	18.800±1.200	25.900-20.140
118-122	Gravettian I	Charcoal	GX 8.729	20.995 ± 875	27.289-23.450
140-148	Gravettian I	Charcoal	GrN 12.670	18.330±300	22.885-21.455
132	Gravettian I	Charcoal	GrN.16.982	20.310±150	24.942-24.022
135-146	Gravettian I	Charcoal	GX 8.726	20.300±1.300	27.649-21.851
150-165	Gravettian II	Bone	GX 8.727-G	23.450+2000 /-1450	
195-220	Gravettian II	Charcoal	GrN 10.529	24.100±1300	31.211-26.011
195-220	Gravettian II	Charcoal	GrN 11.586	24.760±170	29.236-28.420
200-215	Gravettian II	Charcoal	GX 8.845-G	23.560+1150 /-980	
200-215	Gravettian II	Charcoal	GX 8.844	27.350+2100/-1500	

Tab. 1 – C-14 dates at the Palaeolithic settlement of Bistricioara – Lutărie II (red – dates with small margin of error).

The stratigraphy of the deposit and the sequence of cultural levels (fig. 3) at Bistricioara-Lutărie I and II are almost identical, but the abundance of lithic material and settlement structures are quite different. For example, only 526 lithic items have been discovered at Bistricioara-Lutărie I, while at Bistricioara-Lutărie II, the number reaches 7,697, given that only half of the investigated area in point II has been excavated in point I, totalling 188.50 m².

At Bistricioara-Lutărie I and II, an *Epigravettian* has been identified in the pale-yellow loess layer, defined by the presence of 780 lithic pieces, of which 157 are tools. The most

The Palaeolithic in the Mountain Sector of the Bistrița Valley-Old and New Interpretations

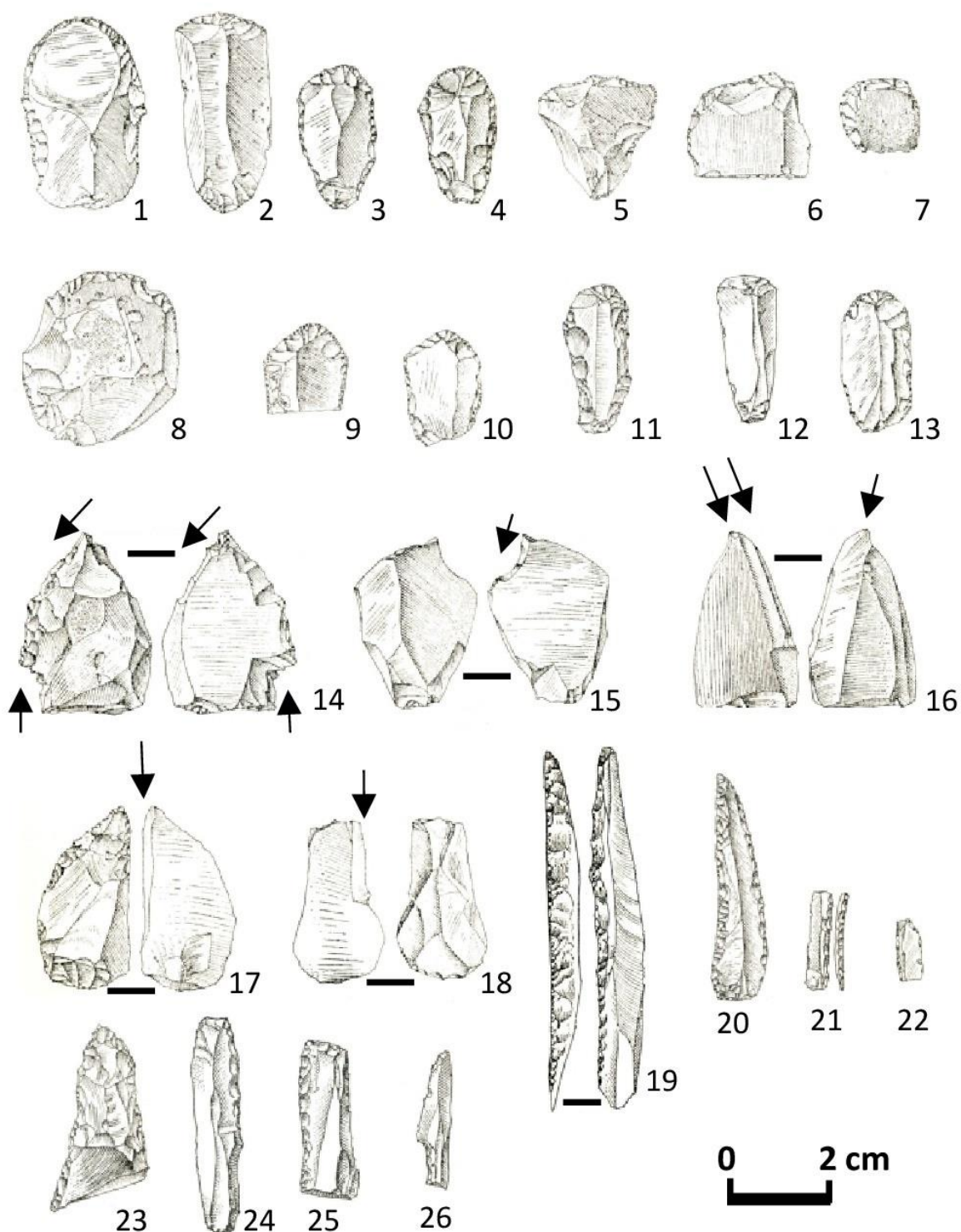


Fig. 5 – Lithic tools from the Epigravettian level at Bistricioara-Lutărie I-II. 1-13 endscrapers; 14-18 *burins*; 19 “la Gravette” point; 20-22 blades *à bord abattu*; 23-25 truncated blades; 26 atypical *à cran* point (drawings reworked after C. S. Nicolăescu-Plopșor et al., 1966).

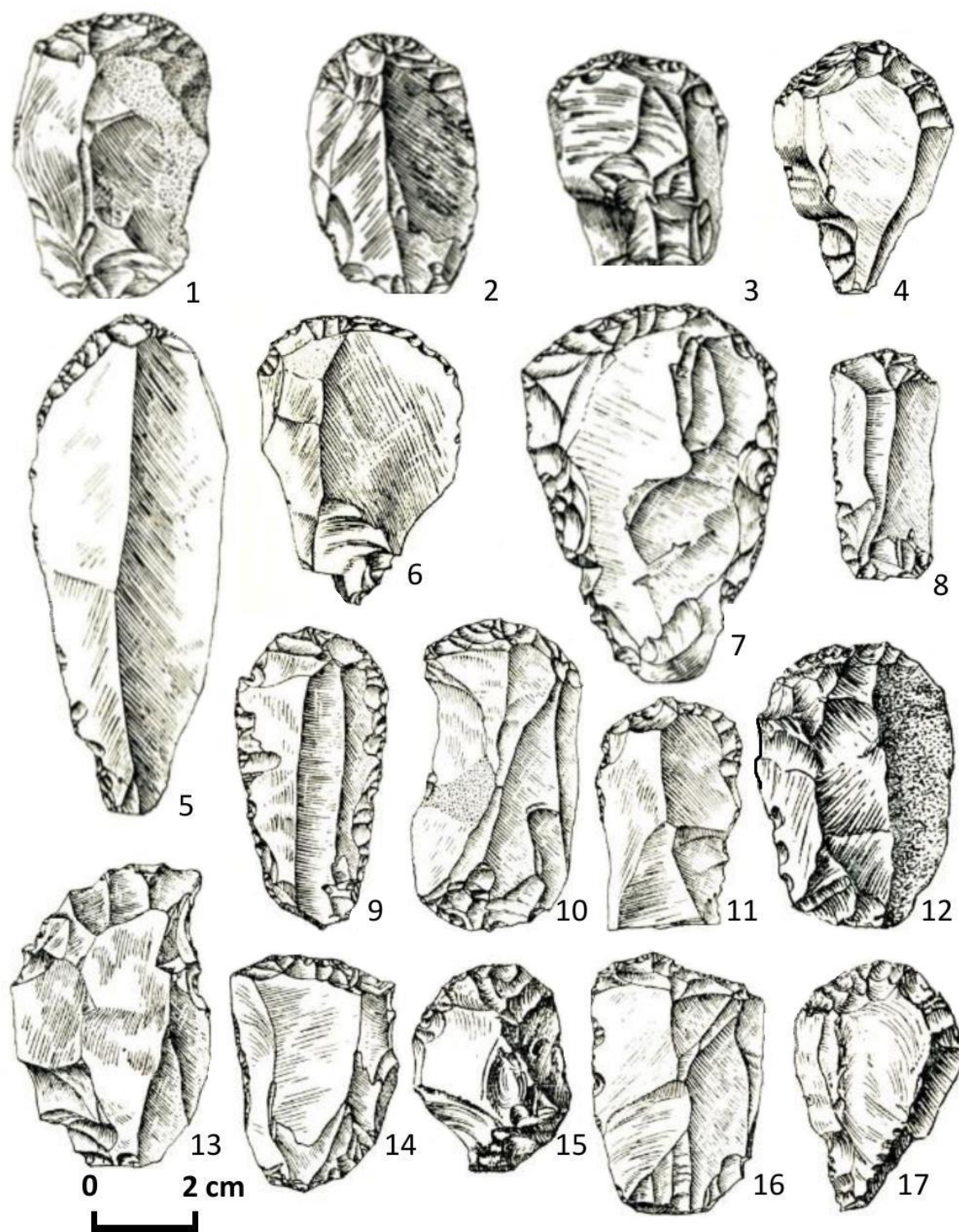


Fig. 6 – Endscrapers in the Gravettian I at Bistricioara-Lutărie I-II (drawings reworked after [C. S. Nicolăescu-Plopșor et al., 1966](#)).

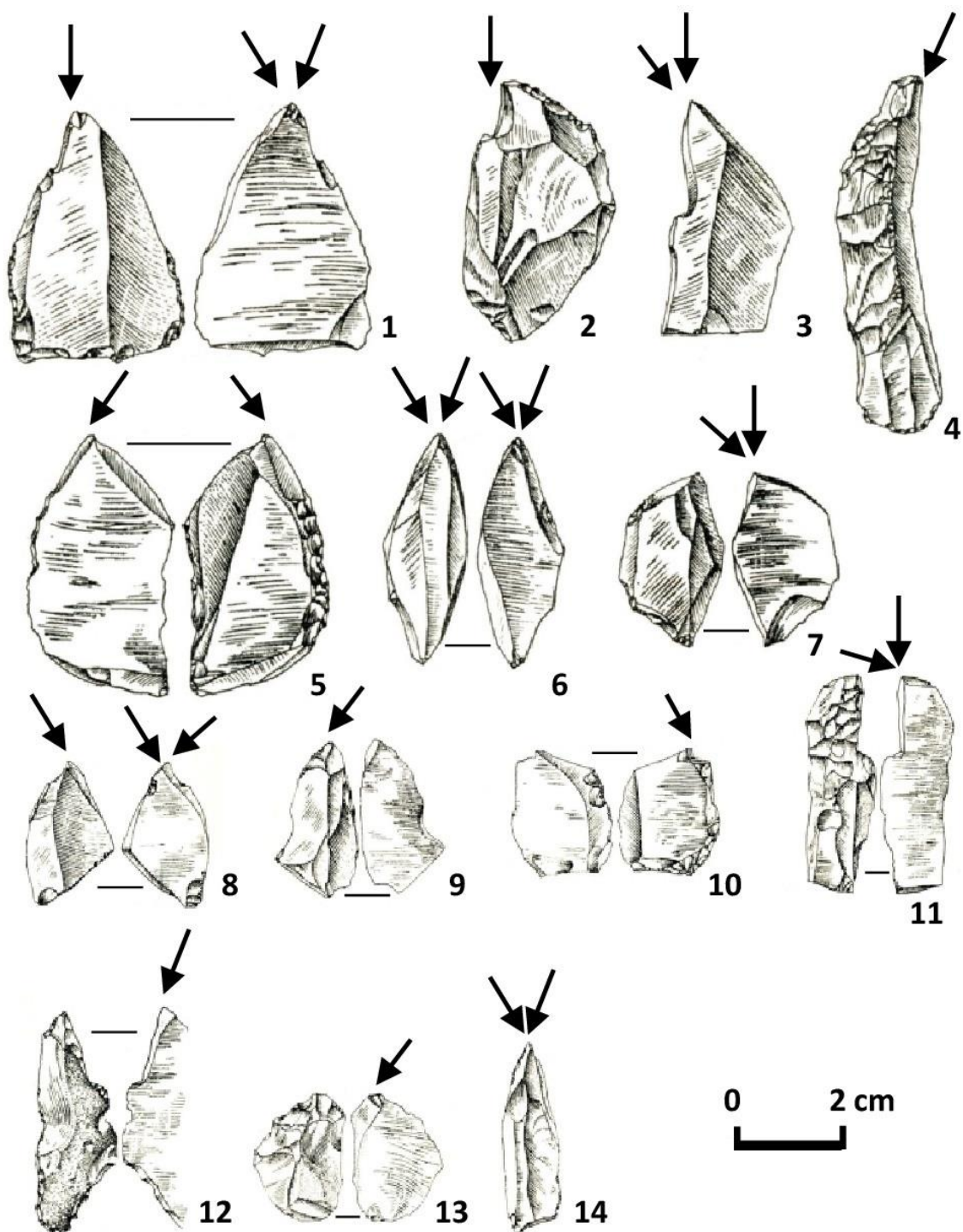


Fig. 7 – *Burins* in the Gravettian I at Bistricioara-Lutărie I-II (drawings reworked after C. S. Nicolăescu-Plopșor et al., 1966).

representative tools are the endscrapers (22.28%), especially the simple ones, on blade or flake, as well as the thumbnail endscrapers, *burins* (19.07%), mainly dihedral (dihedral angle and break angle) and burins on retouched truncation, backed bladelets (11.46%), items with notches and denticulate tools, a typical drill (1.27%), blades à *bord abattu* (2.54%), truncated items

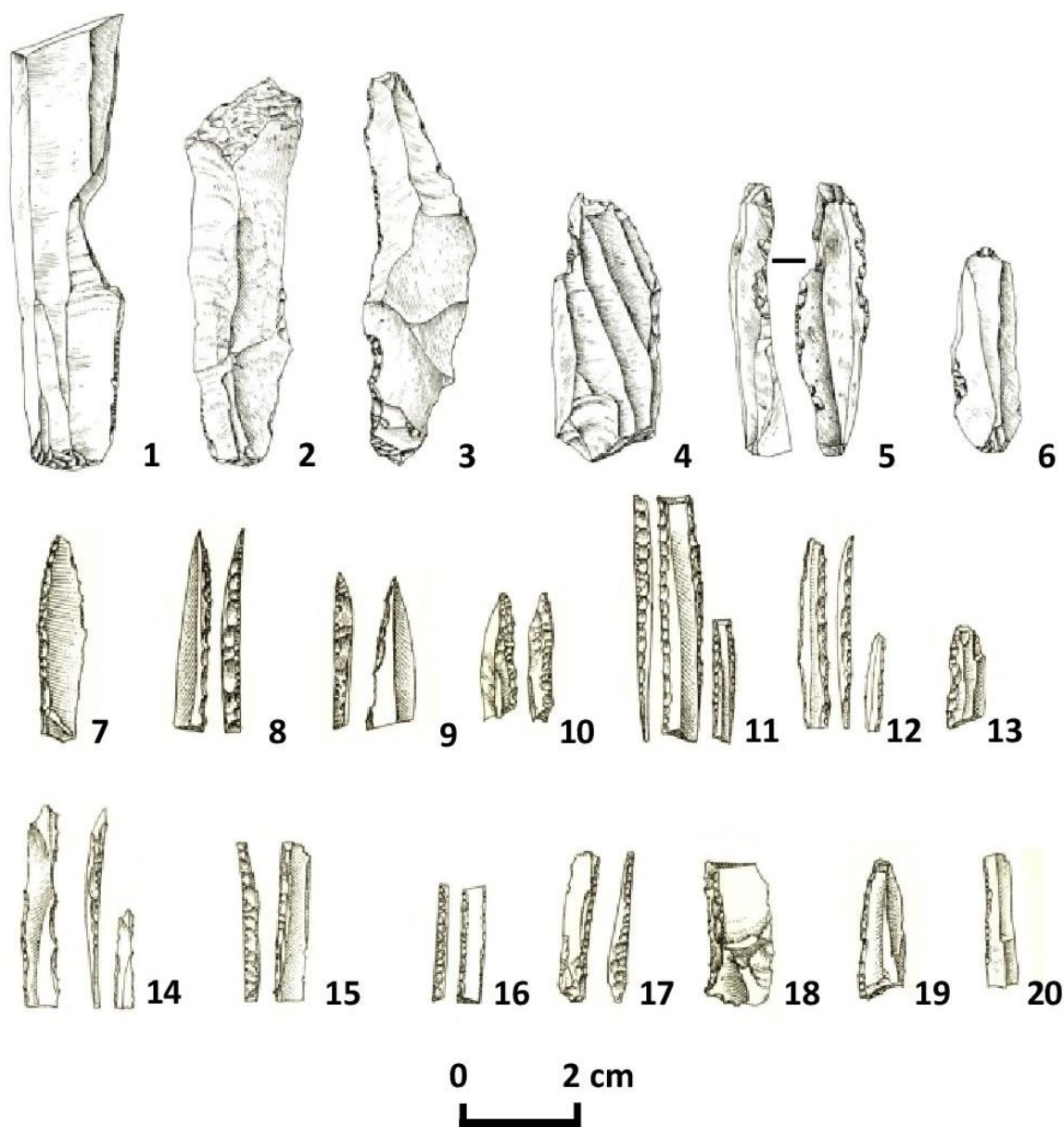


Fig. 8 – Lithic tools in the Gravettian I at Bistricioara-Lutărie I-II. 1-6 partially retouched blades with oblique retouches and small notches; 7-10 *la Gravette* points; 11-20 blades à *bord abattu* (drawings reworked after C. S. Nicolăescu-Plopșor et al., 1966).

(6.37%), etc. (fig. 5). These are made of menilite (58%), flint (26.60%), glauconitic siliceous sandstone (5.50%), black shale (5.25%) etc. No combustion structures or faunal remains have

The Palaeolithic in the Mountain Sector of the Bistrița Valley-Old and New Interpretations

been found in the excavated areas (Al. Păunescu, 1998). A C-14 date might indicate the age of this layer as $16,150 \pm 350$ B.P. (GrN 10,528) (tab. 1).

Starting from the boundary between the reddish-brown layer and the reddish-yellow loess layer to the upper part of the grey pseudo-mycelian layer, what we call the **Gravettian I** level developed at Bistricioara-Lutărie. The lithic industry consists of endscrapers-27.79% (fig. 6), burins-26.97% (fig. 7), items with notches over 10%, retouched blades-8.85%, denticulate tools-4.57%, and in smaller percentages *la Gravette* points and *microgravettes*, truncated backed blades, etc. (fig. 8). The raw materials used were flint (42.29%), menilite (28.90%), black shale (19.67%), glauconitic siliceous sandstone (5.73%) etc. In the Gravettian I, combustion structures have been identified in most of the excavated sections (fig. 9).

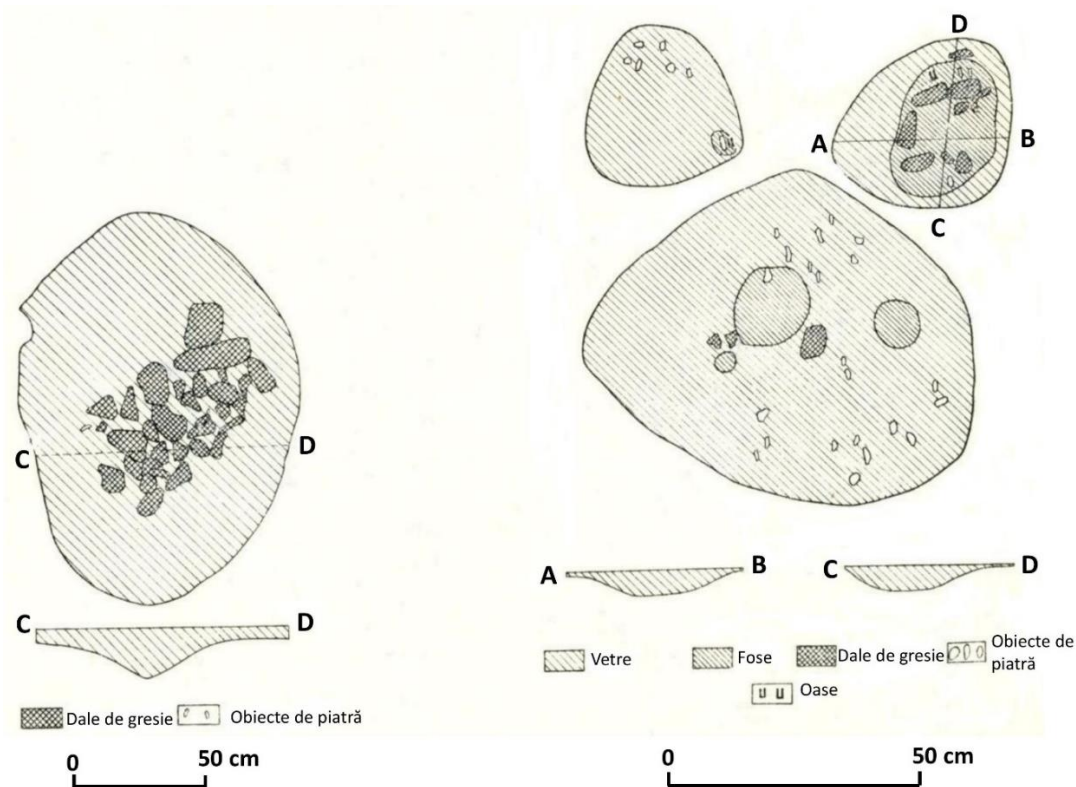


Fig. 9 – Combustion structures in the Gravettian I at Bistricioara-Lutărie I-II (acc. to C. S. Nicolăescu-Plopșor et al., 1966).

The fauna has been poorly preserved, with only a few species identified based on a small number of recovered remains: *Equus transilvanicus*, *Bison priscus*, *Rangifer tarandus*, *Capra ibex*.

According to existing C-14 dates with a small margin of error, the Gravettian I at Bistricioara I and II occurred between $20,310 \pm 150$ B.P. (GrN 16,982) and $18,330 \pm 300$ B.P. (GrN 12,670) (tables 1, 2).

In the middle part of the grey pseudo-mycelian loess layer, a Palaeolithic level has been identified, initially considered to be Aurignacian (C. S. Nicolăescu-Plopșor et al., 1966), but more recently attributed to the Gravettian (L. Steguweit et al., 2009). We shall refer to it as the **Gravettian II** level. The lithic assemblage is represented by endscrapers (29.21%) (fig. 10/1-10) (the majority being simple, but there are also some carinated ones (fig. 10/1-3), retouched blades (15.72%) (fig. 10/12-16), items with notches (13.48%), scrapers (12.36%) (of simple convex, straight or concave type) (fig. 10/20-21), dihedral burins or burins on concave retouched truncation (6.76%) (fig. 10/11). *Dufour* bladelets are very rare.

Depth (cm)	Layer	Material	AMS Lab. Nr.	Age B.P. (uncal.)	Age (cal.B.P) (95.4 % probability)
70/80-100	Gravettian I	Charcoal	Erl 11.854	21.541±155	25.549-26.090
70/80-100	Gravettian I	Charcoal	Erl 12.164	22.181±112	26.069-26.748
95-103	Gravettian I	Charcoal	GX 8.730	19.055±925	25.485-21.005
135	Gravettian II	Charcoal	Erl 9968	24.213±299	27.725-28.805
134	Gravettian II	Charcoal	Erl 9967	24.370±300	27.795-28.976
125	Gravettian II	Charcoal	Erl 11855	24.396±192	27.967-28.812
170	No archaeological context	Charcoal	ER 9.970	26.869±447	29.964-31.576
180	No archaeological context	Charcoal	ER 9.969	28.069±452	31.141-33.136

Tab. 2 – C-14 dates at the Bistricioara Lutărie I settlement (red – dates with small margin of error).

The industry on animal hard materials is represented by a spearhead made from a lateral horse metapodium, roughly shaped at the base and with a post-depositionally broken point (fig. 11). Its current dimensions are 12.8 cm in length, 1.3 cm in maximum width and 1.2 cm in maximum thickness.

Combustion structures associated with pits, sandstone rocks, bones and lithic objects have been noted (fig. 12).

The Palaeolithic in the Mountain Sector of the Bistrița Valley-Old and New Interpretations

The mammal fauna is more diversified than in the Gravettian I, represented by *Equus transilvanicus*, *Bison priscus*, *Rangifer tarandus*, *Megaceros giganteus*, *Lepus* sp., *Vulpes*

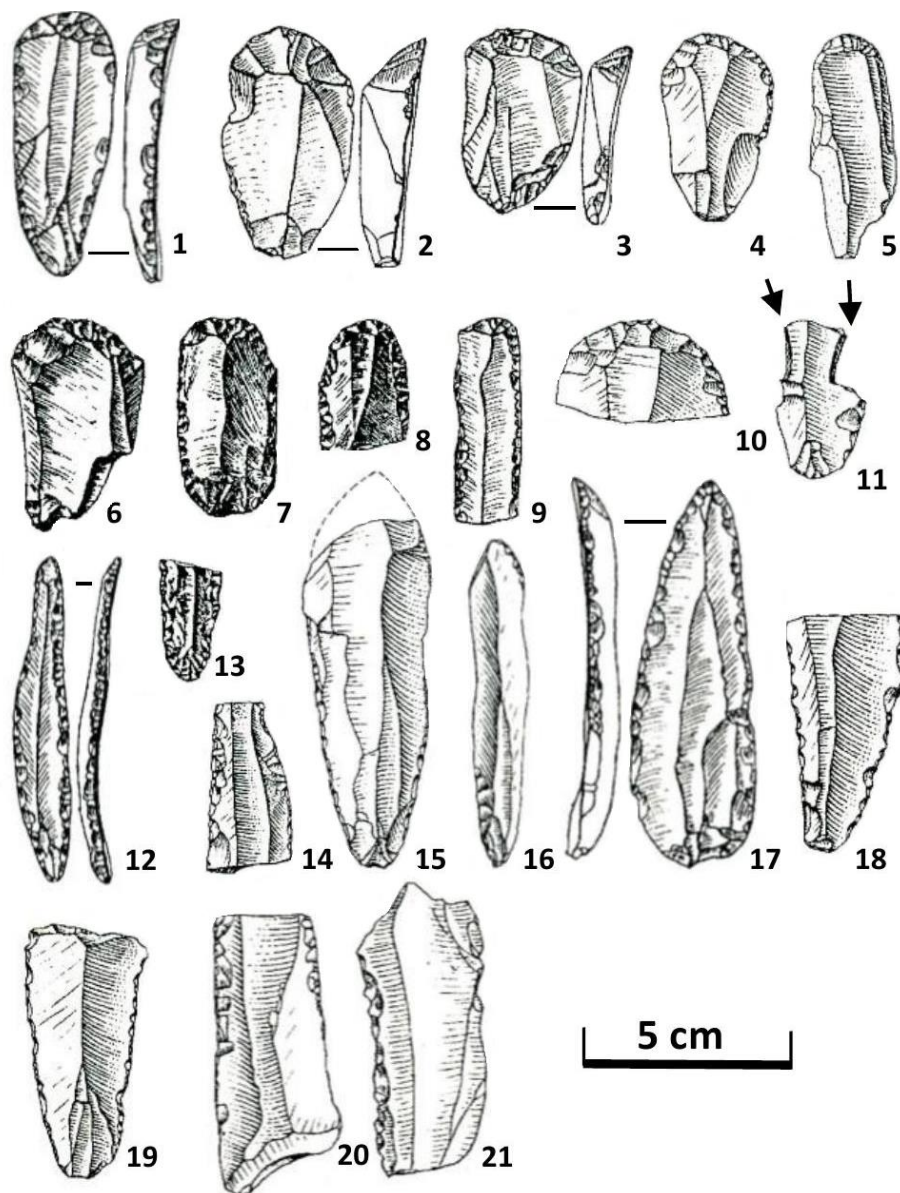


Fig. 10 – Lithic tools in the Gravettian II at Bistricioara-Lutărie I-II. 1-10 endscrapers; 11 burin; 12-16 retouched blades; 17 pointed blade; 18-19 denticulate tools; 20-21 scrapers (drawings reworked after [Al. Păunescu, 1998](#)).

vulpes ([Al. Bolomey, 1966](#)). The malacological fauna was studied by A. V. Grossu and includes the species *Pupilla muscorum*, *Succinea oblonga*, *Clausilia pumila*, *Vallonia enniensis*, *Trichia sericea*.

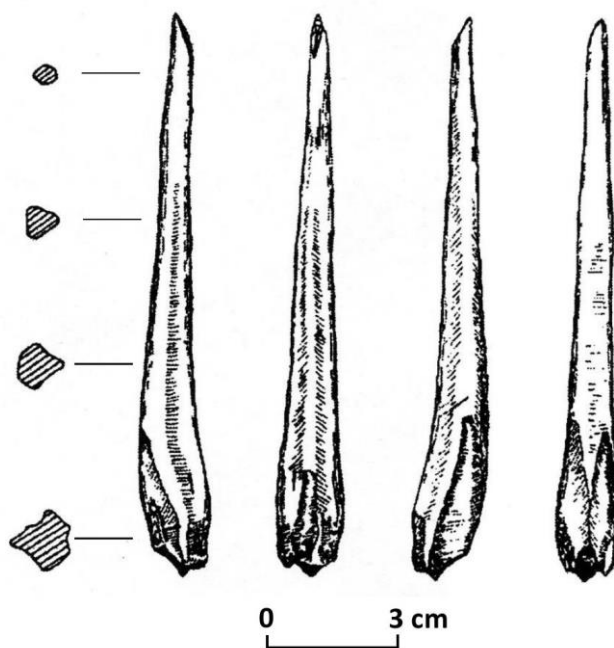


Fig. 11 – Spear point in the Gravettian II at Bistricioara-Lutărie II, made from a horse metapodium (acc. to [Al. Păunescu, 1998](#)).

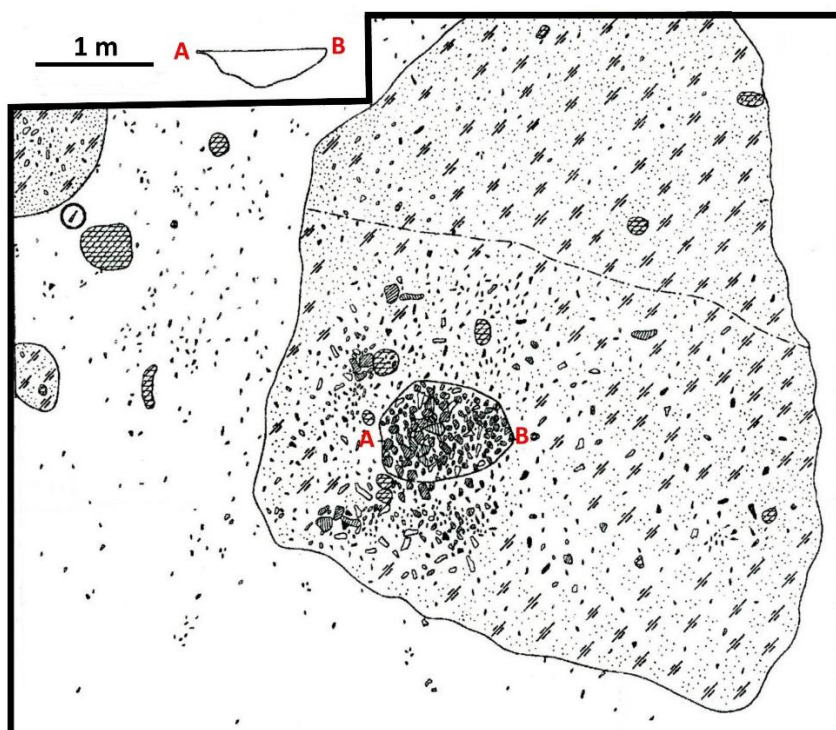


Fig. 12 – Combustion structure in the Gravettian II, associated with pits, sandstone rocks, bones and lithic items found in trenches H-L at Bistricioara-Lutărie II (reworked after [Al. Păunescu, 1998](#)).

The Palaeolithic in the Mountain Sector of the Bistrița Valley-Old and New Interpretations

C-14 dates for the Gravettian II at Bistricioara-Lutărie I and II generally range from 23,000 to 24,000 B.P. However, a single charcoal sample recovered 200-215 cm deep at Bistricioara-Lutărie II has provided two significantly different ages with very large margins of error: GX 8.844: 27,350 + 2100/-1500 B.P. and GX 8.845-G: 23,560 + 1150/-980 B.P. Two other dates, however, offer ages closer to 24,100 ± 1,300 B.P. (GrN 10529) and 24,760 ± 170 B.P. (GrN 11586).

Bistricioara-Lutărie III was discovered on 3 August 2005 by Marin Cărciumaru and Ovidiu Cîrstina (fig. 13/1-2), and the first significant embankment of the respective slope was performed one year later, on 19 August 2006, by the team of archaeologists led by Marin Cărciumaru and the archaeologists from Erlanger University in Germany, with whom Valahia

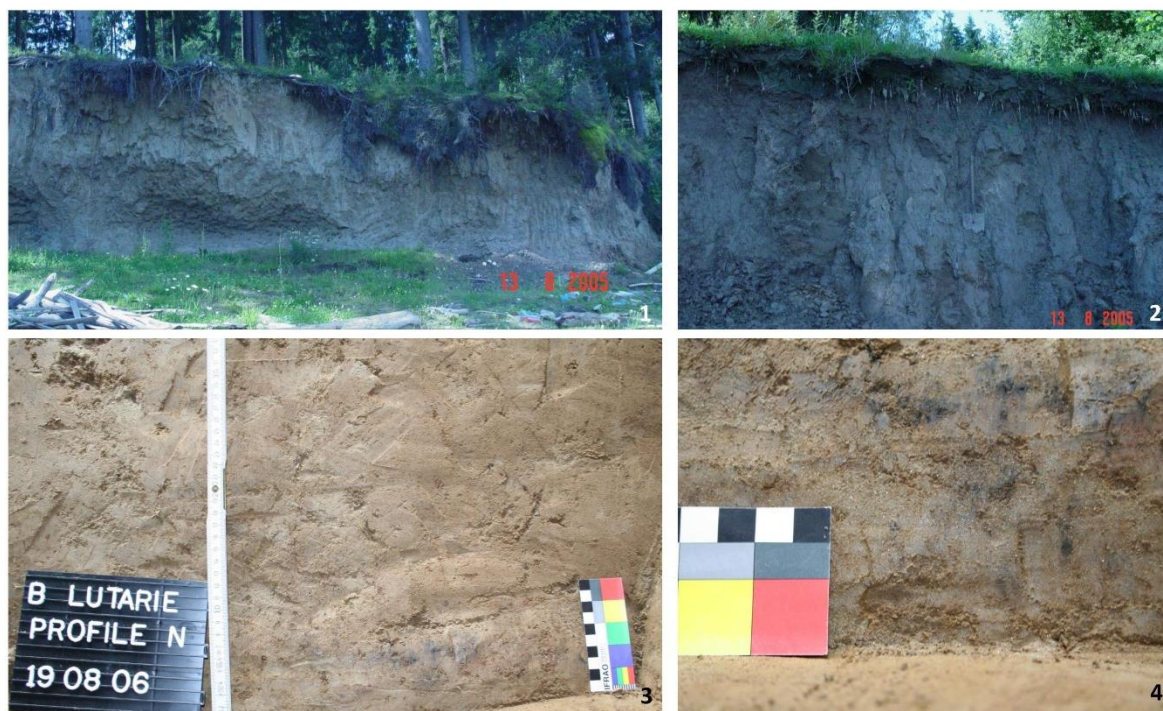


Fig. 13 – The first pictures of the discovery of the Bistricioara-Lutărie III settlement in 2005 (1-2) and of the embankment in 2006 (3-4).

University was collaborating on a project (fig. 13/3-4). Subsequently, the responsibility for the research at Bistricioara-Lutărie III was handed over to Mircea Anghelinu, in order to continue the investigations along the Bistrița Valley together with the German team.

It should be noted that the Bistricioara-Lutărie III settlement was discovered in 2005, not in 2007 as stated in the studies on this settlement: “BL III is located on the right bank of the

Bistrița River and was identified during a field survey along the river terraces in 2007” (M. Anghelinu et al., 2021, p. 212).

The archaeological excavations were carried out systematically between 2008 and 2023, and the excavated area is just over 30 m², while the explored area is 36 m² (trenches T0/2008, T1 and T2/2015, T3/2018, T4/2019), which is very small compared to the estimated perimeter of the 2,000-m² site. The stratigraphy was not correlated with that known from other settlements in the Ceahlău Basin, but an attempt was made to assign a new name to the layers, which actually represents the old stratigraphic sequence published by C. S. Nicolăescu-Plopșor, Al. Păunescu, F. Mogoșanu (1966), presented in a different terminology (fig. 3).

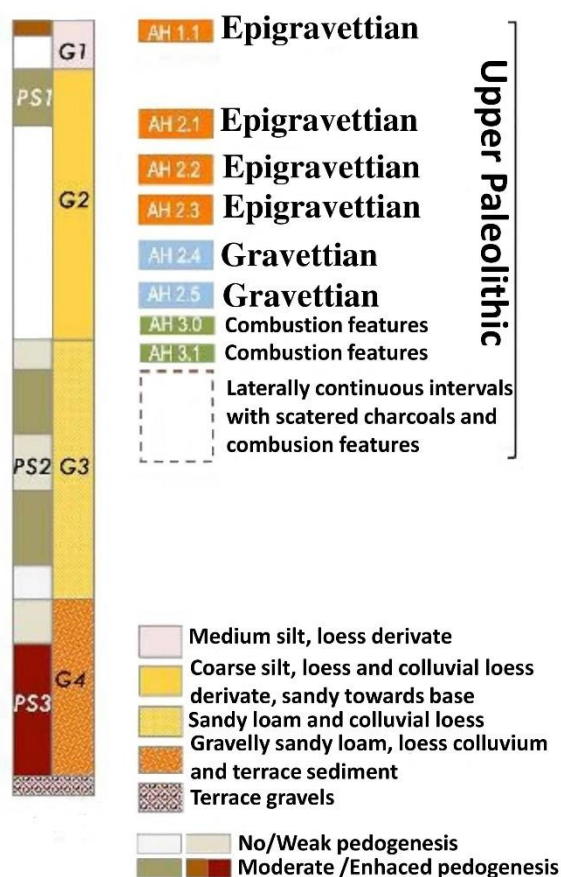


Fig. 14 – Stratigraphy and Palaeolithic levels at Bistricioara-Lutărie III (acc. to M. Anghelinu et al., 2021- simplified).

Although the complicated stratigraphic situation at Bistricioara-Lutărie III and the possible recent contributions to the formation of the deposit are recognised, “The gentle slope of the terrace at BL III (ca. 10° to the northeast) and the physical connection to the higher level

The Palaeolithic in the Mountain Sector of the Bistrița Valley-Old and New Interpretations

of the middle terrace in the south are indications for the crucial role of colluvial input at BL III. Sediment relocation from deposits uphill (i.e., deposits from the middle 40–50 m terrace and higher slopes) is indicated by the omnipresent occurrence of small-scale sand and gravel admixture, especially noticeable in the lower part of the sediment sequence (C. Schmidt et al., 2020)” (M. Anghelinu et al., 2021, p. 212), the authors present an ideal stratigraphy of the 15–18 m terrace of the Bistrița River (fig. 14).

On the other hand, studies conducted at Bistricioara-Lutărie III have systematically ignored pollen analysis from the nearby Bistricioara-Lutărie II settlement and from Dârțu in the same area. This has led to a series of unacceptable omissions, such as the identification of the brownish-red layer as a fossil soil by C. S. Nicolăescu-Plopșor, Al. Păunescu and F. Mogoșanu (1966) based solely on its colour, while pollen analysis has revealed that it is actually contemporaneous with a cold stadial period (M. Cărciumaru, 1980). Maintaining the classification of the brownish-red layer as a fossil soil, referred to as PS1 (M. Anghelinu et al., 2018, 2021; C. Schmidt et al., 2020), lacks substance, especially since the same authors state that “the PS1 layer witnessed in its last formation phase harsh frost events creating small-scaled polygonal features with ice wedges and frost lamination reaching in places more than 1 m into unit G2. These features together with the many root channels and other bioturbation features hinder a clear definition of PS1’s lower boundary. PS1 can be interpreted as a polygenetic, gelistagnic cambisol, typical for arctic ecozones today. The onset of pedogenetic processes in PS1 can only be estimated based on immediately underlying TL ages ranging between 17.3 and 14.9 ka (C. Schmidt et al., 2020)” (M. Anghelinu et al., 2021, p. 214). In addition to the importance of prioritising the definition of sedimentary conditions for the reddish-yellow layer in a stadial environment, we believe that the aspect of vegetation in which the sedimentation of the brownish-red layer occurred, and the specific climate would complement and enhance the lithological and pedogenetic study.

According to the new proposal, the stratigraphy of the Ceahlău Basin, as described by C. S. Nicolăescu-Plopșor, Al. Păunescu, and F. Mogoșanu in 1966, should be as follows: GH1-soil recently attributed to the Holocene; GH2-yellowish loess layer of aeolian origin, attributed to the Würm III; GH3-reddish paleosol with prismatic structure (Würm II-III interstadial); GH4-red-yellow loess derivative with “rhythmic stratification” (i.e., lenses of finer/coarser washout material, slope material) in the upper part and carbonate accumulations in the form of

pseudo-mycelia and traces of congelifluction in the lower part, attributed to the Würm II stadial; GH5-reddish paleosol, rich in angular gravel, concretions and lenses of gravel and yellowish clay resulting from slope washout (Würm I-II); GH6-sandy loess with intercalations of mica-rich fine sands (Würm I stage); GH7-terrace sands and gravels (C. Schmidt et al., 2020) (fig. 3). As can be seen, apart from the introduction of the GH (1-7) terms and the PS (1-3), the description used at Bistricioara-Lutărie III does not represent any novelty, as it uses the GH names from 1 to 7 for the old layers, as they were initially described and with the estimated ages at that time, in relation to the Alpine chronology, which is difficult to accept today.

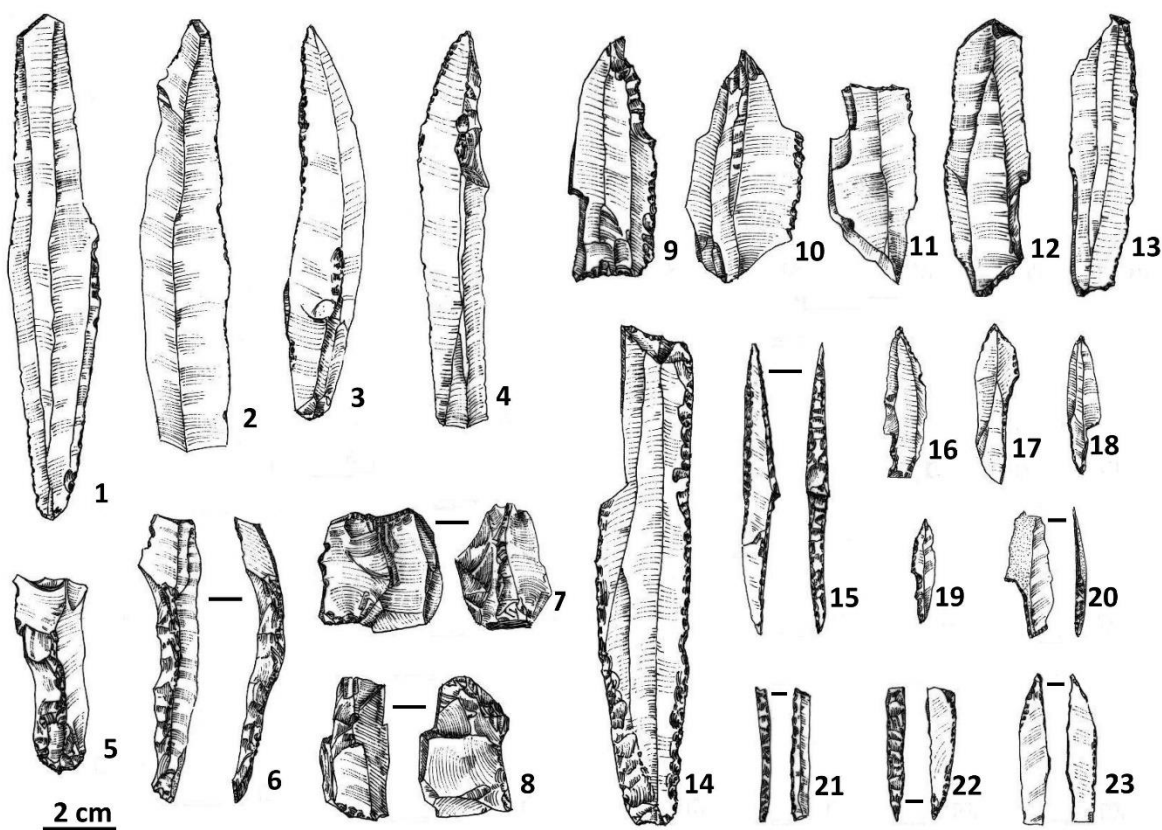


Fig. 15 – Lithic items in level AH 2.5 at Bistricioara-Lutărie III. 1-3 blades; 5-6 crested blades; 7-8 cores; 9-14 *burins*; 15-20 points; 21 bladelets; 22 *microgravette*; 23 pointed blade (acc. to M. Anghelinu et al., 2021).

Six archaeological horizons (AH) are mentioned, which are concentrated in the upper part of the deposit, specifically in the lithological units G2-G1, and are enclosed by PS2 and PS1 (or the Holocene soil) (M. Anghelinu et al., 2021). This suggests that the oldest Palaeolithic

occupations at Bistricioara-Lutărie III are contemporaneous with the period of deposition of the yellowish loess layer of aeolian origin, according to the old stratigraphic scheme of the Ceahlău Basin.

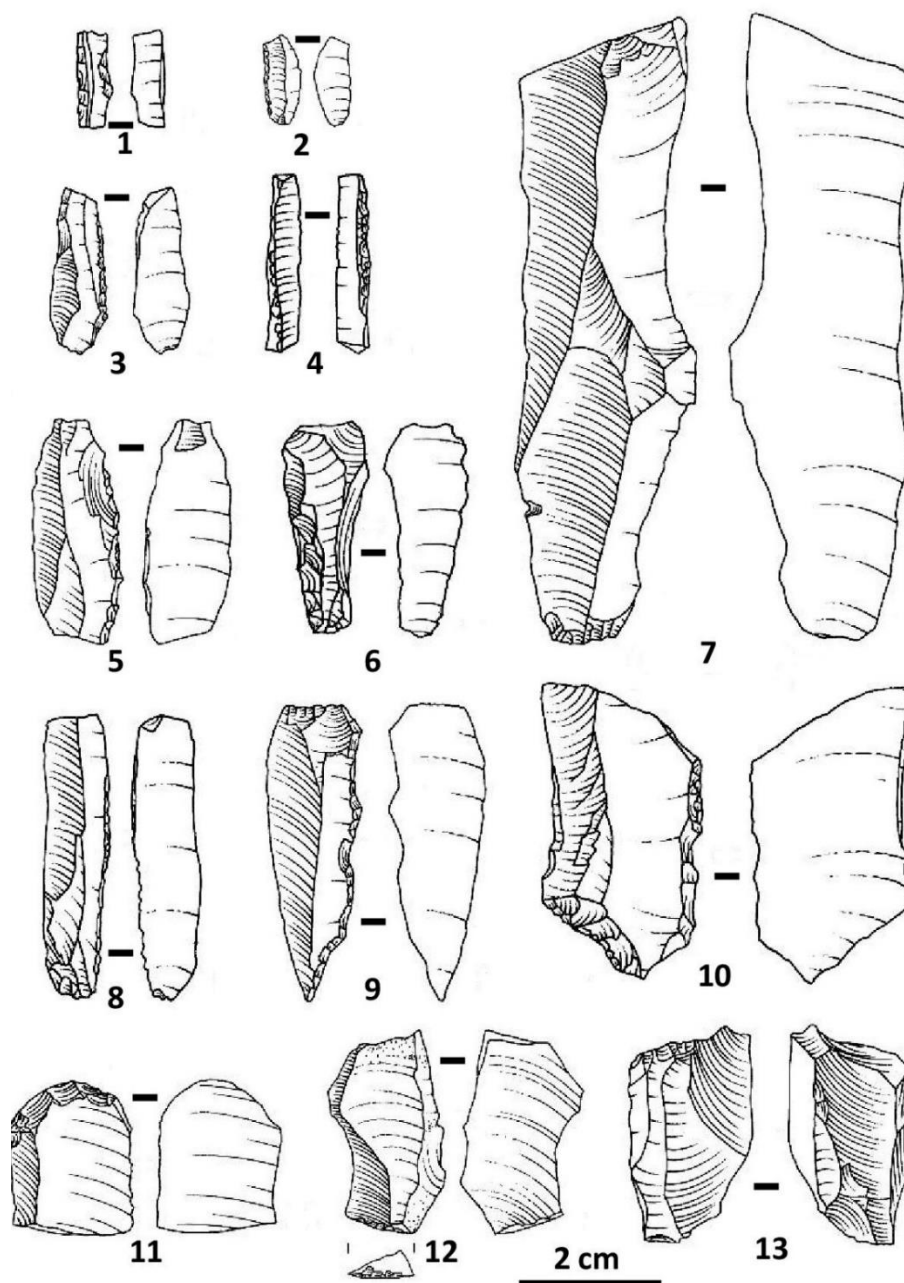


Fig. 16 – Lithic tools in level AH 2.3 at Bistricioara-Lutărie III. 1-4 cores; 5-6 endscrapers; 7, 9-12 blades; 8 crested blade; 13 secondary flake (acc. to [M. Anghelinu et al., 2021](#)).

An unambiguous correlation of layers from different sections or trenches is quite difficult, as claimed ([M. Anghelinu et al., 2021](#)). The earliest evidence of human presence at Bistricioara-Lutărie III would only be some combustion structures found at the base of G2, but

their presence is questioned due to erosion and relocation processes. The oldest certain archaeological level, defined by lithic tools as well (AH 2.5) (figs. 14-15), found approximately 2 metres deep in the lower half of G2, is techno-typologically attributed to a late Gravettian, for which there is also a date of $23,284 \pm 139$ B.P. (RoAMS 1413.101) (tab. 3). It is mentioned that this level is affected by slope and solifluction processes but there are sufficient arguments to consider it *in situ*. A more secure occupational level seems to be AH 2.4, at a depth of 1.7

Depth (cm)	Layer	Material	AMS Lab. Nr.	Age B.P. (uncal.)	Age (cal.B.P) (95.4 % probability)
			DeA 7465	16.949±57	20.630-22.228
			DeA 7574	18.378±66	22.438-21.994
G2	Epigravettian	Charcoal	RoAMS1067.101	18.992±121	23.232–22.515
	Epigravettian		DeA 7575	19.486±98	23.777-23.111
115	Epigravettian	Charcoal	Erl 12.851	19.749±149	23.393-24.154
G2	Epigravettian	Charcoal	RoAMS1411.101	19.864±94	24.180–23.620
G2	Epigravettian	Charcoal	RoAMS1069.101	20.108±141	24.525–23.829
G2	Gravettian I	Charcoal	RoAMS1418.101	21.543±129	26.059–25.604
176	Fără context arheologic	Charcoal	DeA 3685.1.1	21.950±90	25.940-26.419
	Fără context arheologic		DeA 7577	22.257±111	26.922-26.145
G2	Gravettian II	Charcoal	RoAMS1413.101	23.284±139	27.754–27.300
G2	Gravettian II	Charcoal	RoAMS1070.101	23.332±185	27.824–27.274
186	Gravettian II	Charcoal	DeA 7462	23.342±133	27.346-27.773
G2	Gravettian II	Charcoal	RoAMS1417.101	23.699±137	28.051–27.551
196	No archaeological context	Charcoal	DeA 3688.1.1	24.153±112	27.873-28.515
276	No archaeological context		DeA 4462	24.490±99	28.270-28.783
222	No archaeological context	Charcoal	DeA 4466	27.249±240	30.879-31.488
	No archaeological context		DeA 7466	29.243±207	33.868-32.944
246	No archaeological context		DeA 4460	30.249±169	33.929-34.623
237	No archaeological context	Charcoal	DeA 7464	31.938±279	35.180-36.384
G3			RoAMS1415.101	23.450±152	27.851–27.391
G3			RoAMS1236.101	28.142±100	32.442–31.511

Tab. 3 – C-14 dates at the Palaeolithic settlement of Bistricioara Lutărie III (red – dates with small margin of error).

metres, overlaid by two other levels (AH 2.3 and AH 2.2) attributed to the Epigravettian (fig. 16). They are separated by a 15-cm sterile layer. These levels, in turn, are not without problems of stratigraphy and artefact relocation. Their age would be around 24 cal ka BP and 23 cal ka BP.

The Palaeolithic in the Mountain Sector of the Bistrița Valley-Old and New Interpretations

A younger Epigravettian level (AH 2.1), estimated to be between 20 and 15 ka cal BP, extends in G2, until it reaches the lower part of PS1 (boundary hard to determine), between 0.9 and 0.6 metres deep. AH 1.1 is a scattering of lithic materials, without being able to speak of *in situ* situations. In conclusion, as mentioned by the researchers at Bistricioara-Lutărie III, the deposit has been affected by geomorphological phenomena that have caused serious disturbances and have disrupted the accumulation process, leading to the relocation of sediment and, consequently, the position of the archaeological material. The habitation structures appear eroded, which explains the absence of artefacts. AH 2.5 layer has certainly been affected by periglacial phenomena and cryoturbation and slope processes. Moreover, levels AH 2.3 and AH 2.2 have been visibly disturbed by the presence of polygonal structures caused by prolonged freezing. An even more worrying situation is the sloping position of the habitation structures, which led to the fan-shaped arrangement of materials. (M. Anghelinu et al., 2021). This situation can only be the consequence of an extremely active dynamics of the deposit at Bistricioara-Lutărie III, which makes it difficult to imagine coherence of lithic assemblages, their belonging and classification to well-defined techno-typological facies.

II.2. Dârțu

The settlement of Dârțu, along with the one at Bistricioara-Lutărie, has been the subject of extensive archaeological research, in terms of excavated areas and interdisciplinary studies.

Depth (cm)	Layer	Material	AMS Lab. Nr.	Age B.P. (uncal)	Age (cal. B.P) (95.4 probability)
108-113	Epigravettian	Charcoal	GrN 12.672	17.860±190	22.155-21.068
170	Gravettian I	Charcoal	GrN 16.985	21.100+490/-460	
164-174	Gravettian II	Charcoal	GrN 12.673	24.390±180	28.800-27.987
168-171	Gravettian II	Charcoal	GX. 9.415	25.450+4450/-2850	
230	No archaeological context	Charcoal	Erl 9.971	30.772±643	36.123-33.748
230	No archaeological context	Charcoal	Erl 12165	35.775±408	41.331-39.528

Tab. 4 – C-14 dates at the Palaeolithic settlement of Dârțu (red – dates with small margin of error).

It lies in the southern part of the Ceahlău commune, on the same terrace at a relative altitude of 45 metres, bordered in the west-northwest by the Râpciunița rivulet, in the east-southeast by the Dârțu valley and in the north-northeast by the Bistrița Valley. The spur on which the

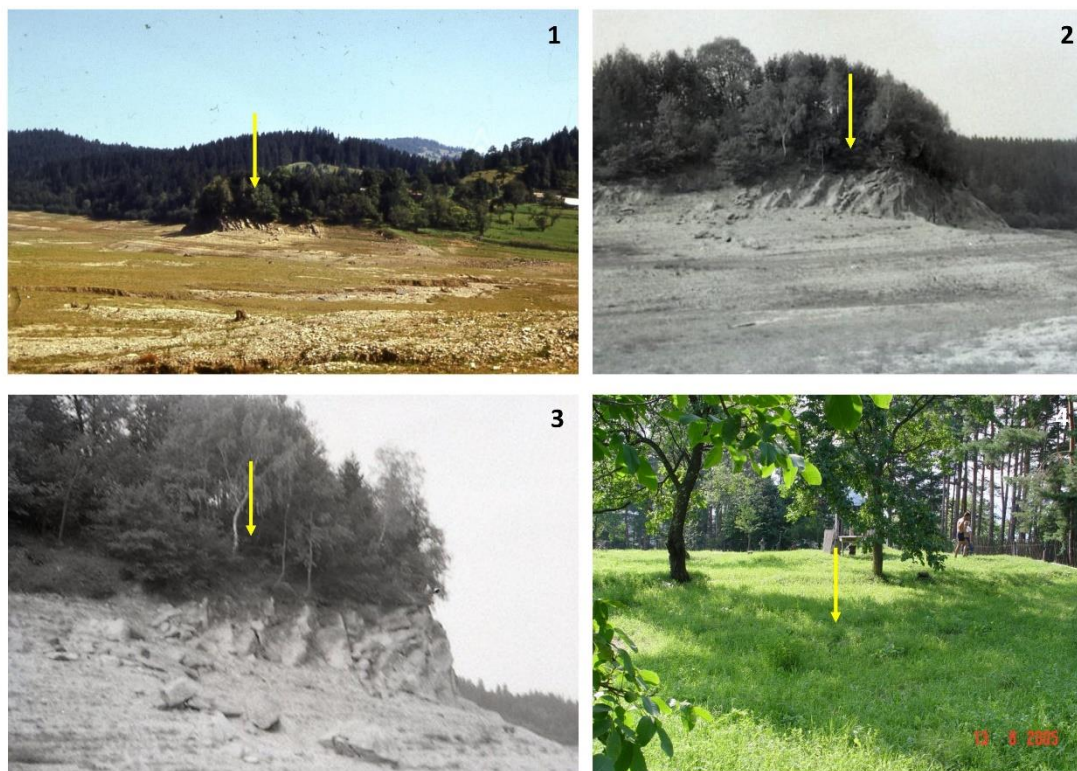


Fig. 17 – The Dârțu-Ceahlău settlement. 1-3 Pietricica spur on which the Gravettian settlement is located; 4 terrace surface.



Fig. 18 – The last stage of archaeological excavations at Dârțu in 2006. 1 the beginning of one of the sections; 2-3 the 2006 section; 4 stratigraphic profile.

The Palaeolithic in the Mountain Sector of the Bistrița Valley-Old and New Interpretations

settlement is located, known as Pietricica, is actually a pedestal of conglomerates on which Pleistocene sediments have been deposited (figs. 17-18).

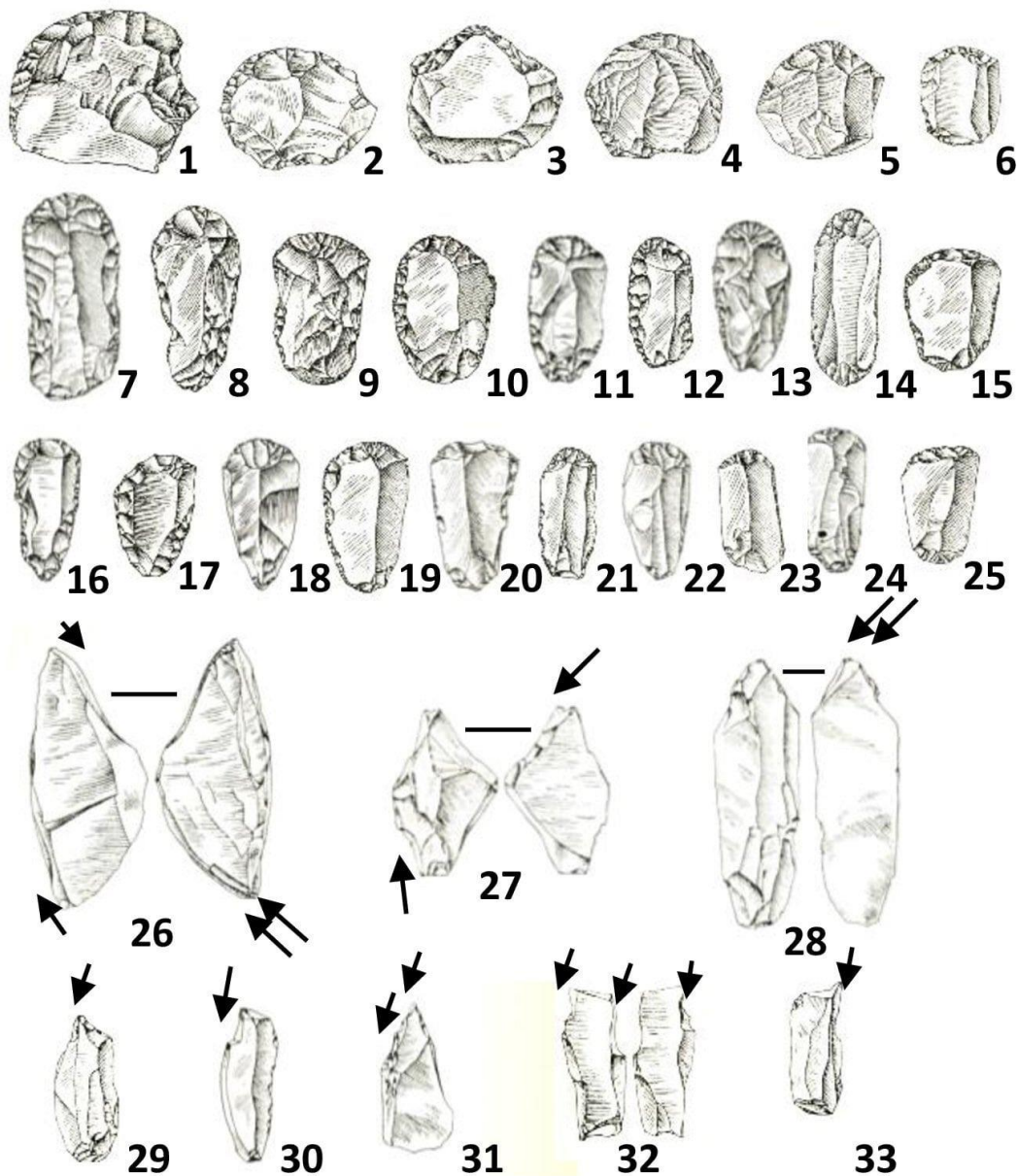


Fig. 19 – Lithic tools in the Epigravettian at Dârțu. 1-25 single and double endscrapers on flakes and blades; 26-33 *burins* (drawings reworked after C. S. Nicolăescu-Plopșor et al., 1966)

The following cultural levels can be identified within the deposit at the Ceahlău-Dârțu settlement: the Epigravettian level, found within the layer of pale-yellow loess and at the upper part of the reddish-brown layer; Gravettian I level, which extends from the upper limit of the

reddish-yellowish loess layer to the lower limit of the reddish-brown layer; Gravettian II level, identified in the greyish pseudo-mycelian loess layer.

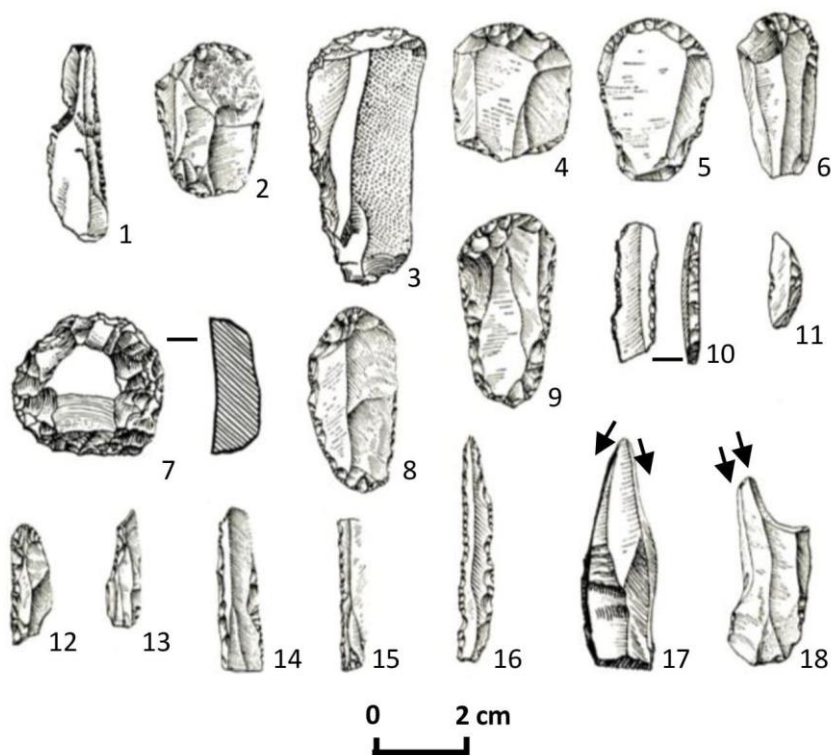


Fig. 20 – Lithic tools in the Gravettian I at Dârțu. 1, 10-15-bladelest à bord abattu; 2-9 – endscrapers; 16- *la Gravette* point; 17-18 – *burins* (acc. to C. S. Nicolăescu-Plopșor et al., 1966).

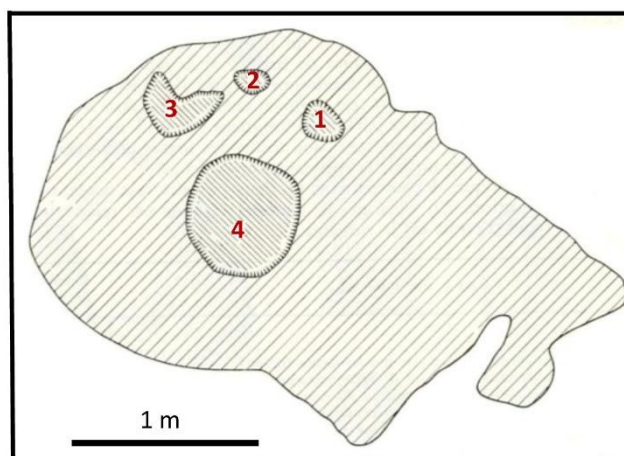


Fig. 21 – Hearth with pits inside in the Gravettian II at Ceahlău-Dârțu (reworked after C. S. Nicolăescu-Plopșor et al., 1966).

The **Epigravettian** level lacks occupation structures and is defined only by lithic items of menilite (47.20%), black shale (24%), often patinated flint (22.65%), glauconitic siliceous

The Palaeolithic in the Mountain Sector of the Bistrița Valley-Old and New Interpretations

sandstone (2.58%), radiolarite (0.73%) etc. Over 2% of the artefacts are calcined (Al. Păunescu, 1998), which is a curious phenomenon considering the complete absence of combustion structures in this level. It is not excluded that there may be confusion between calcination and exposure to sunlight. Microlithic pieces, as expected, represent 73.70%. The lithic assemblage consists of endscrapers (28.70%), especially simple ones, but also on retouched blade, double endscrapers or on flake, backed bladelets (24.40%), burins (8.56%), mainly dihedral ones, notched items (6.97%), *la Gravette* points (5.54%) etc. (fig. 19).

The **Gravettian I** is dominated by endscrapers, both simple and double, accounting for approximately 40%, followed by backed bladelets at over 15%, and notched items at almost 10% (fig. 20). These artefacts were primarily made from flint, with a generally patinated surface, as well as menilite, and much less from black shale and other types of rocks.

In the **Gravettian II**, the lithic assemblage was very poor, as only 1,596 lithic items were recovered from the large area that was excavated (37 sections, 15 trenches, etc.), of which only 144 represented tools. The following categories have been identified: endscrapers (38.57%), generally simple, on a blade or retouched flake, retouched blades (24.33%), notched pieces (55.65%) etc. The most commonly used rocks were siliceous sandstone with glauconite (55.65%), black shale (28.50%), menilite (9.15%), flint (4.40%) etc.

On the other hand, combustion structures seem to be quite frequent as compared to the discovered lithic material, and their variety is notable, as is the existence of pits (fig. 21).

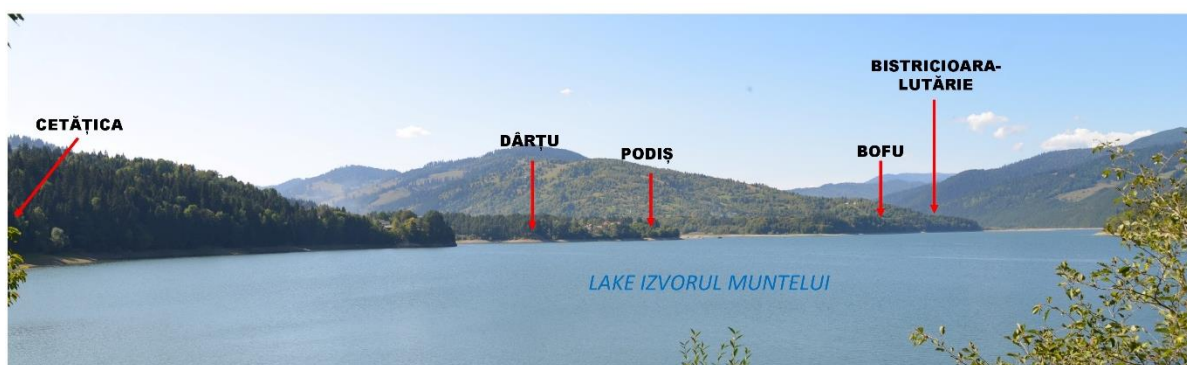


Fig. 22 – The main Palaeolithic settlements in the Răpciuni Basin (picture near the settlement of Cetățica).

For the Gravettian I, there is a radiocarbon date of $21,100 \pm 490 / -460$ (GrN 16.985), while for the Gravettian II, a date with an acceptable margin of error sets the age of this level at $24,390 \pm 180$ (GrN 12.673) (tab. 4).

II.3. Bofu

There are actually two settlements, Bofu Mare and Bofu Mic. The former is located on a terrace at a relative altitude of 55-65 m, while the latter lies on a terrace at a relative altitude

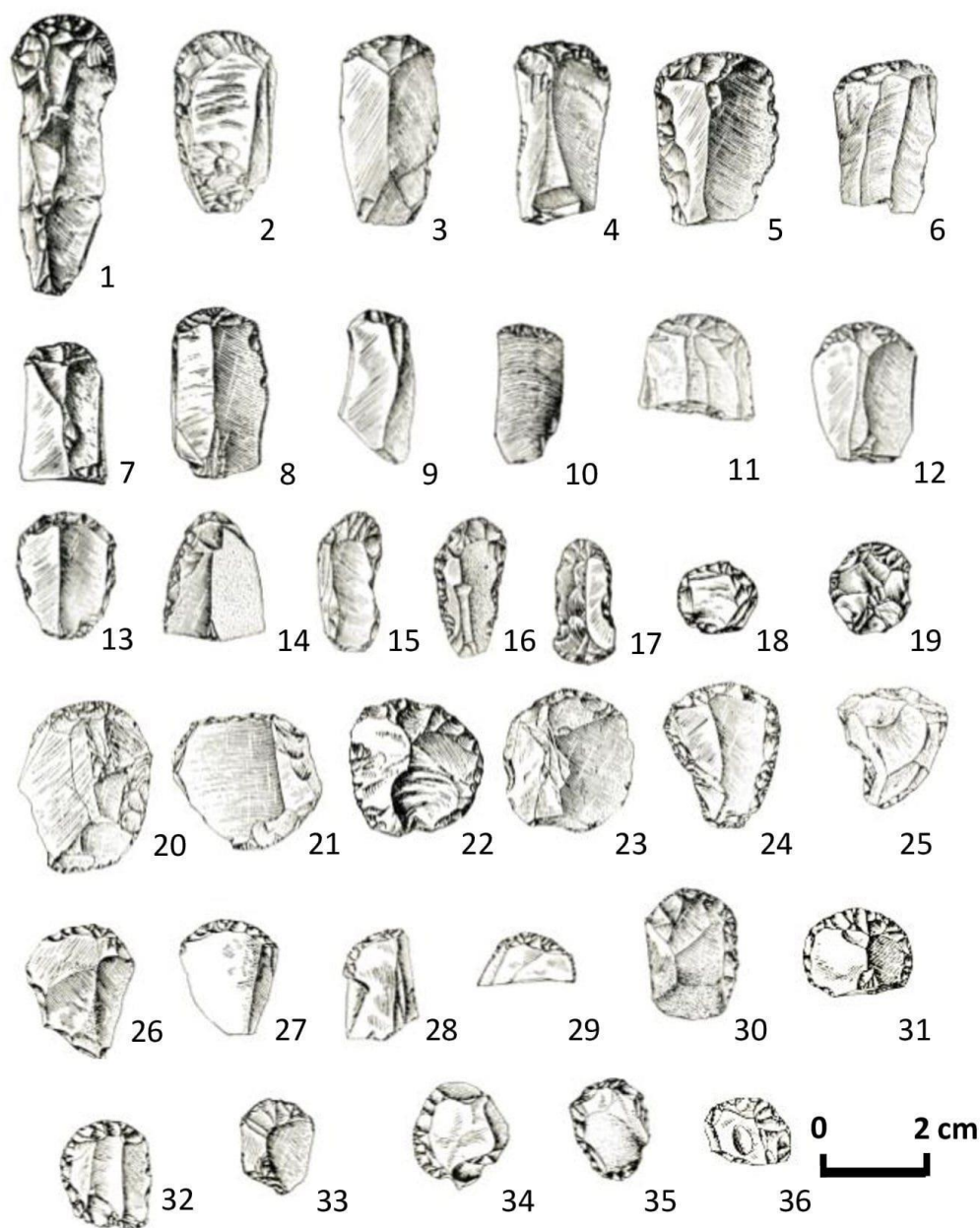


Fig. 23 – Various types of endscrapers in the Epigravettian level at Bofu Mic (acc. to [C. S. Nicolăescu-Plopșor](#) et al., 1966, modified).

of 45-55 m. The Bofu Mare settlement is less significant because the stratigraphy here is relatively short, in that, only the upper layers have been preserved, namely the current soil, the

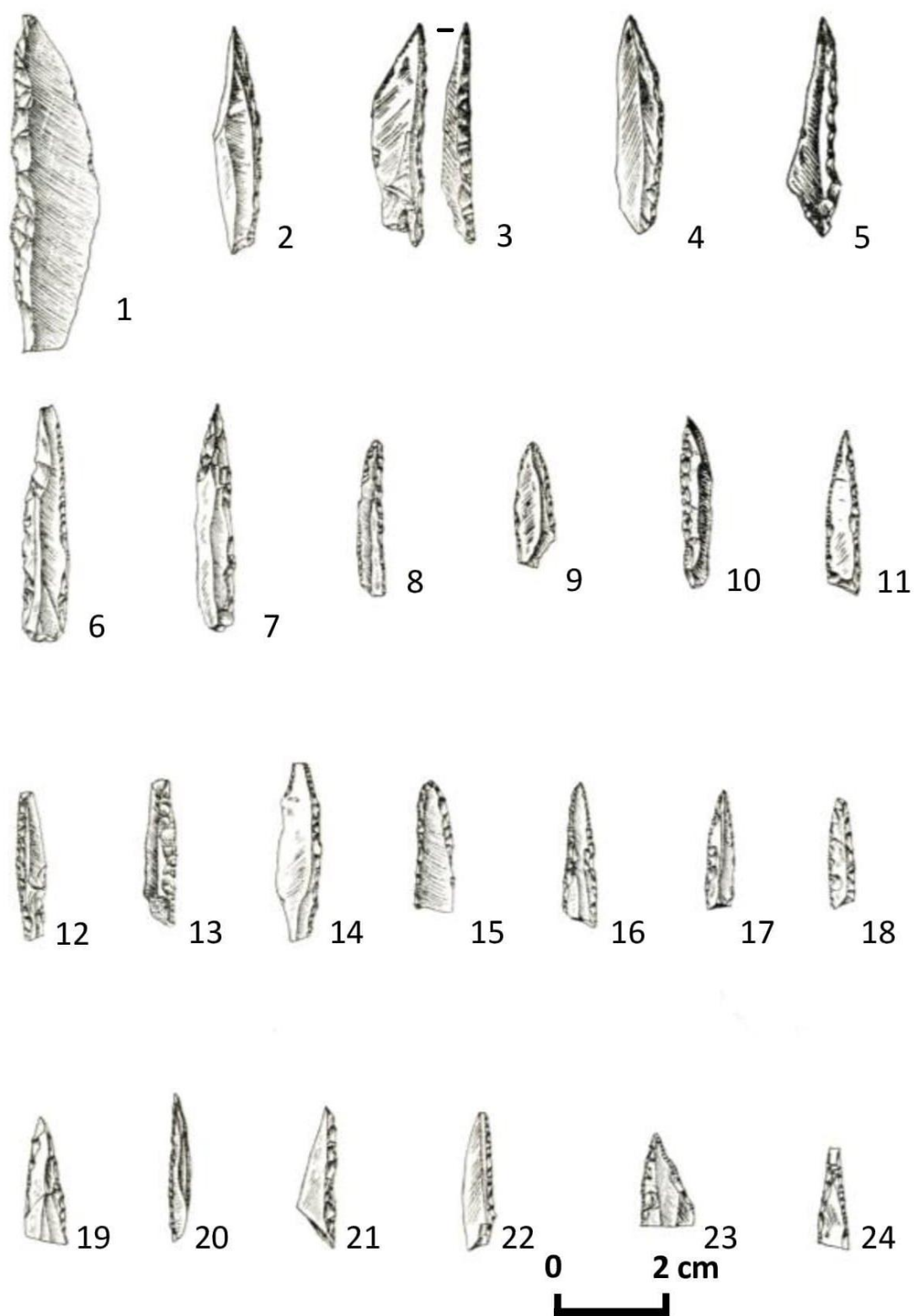


Fig. 24 – *La Gravette* points in the Epigravettian level at Bofu Mic (acc. to [C. S. Nicolăescu-Plopșor et al., 1966](#)).

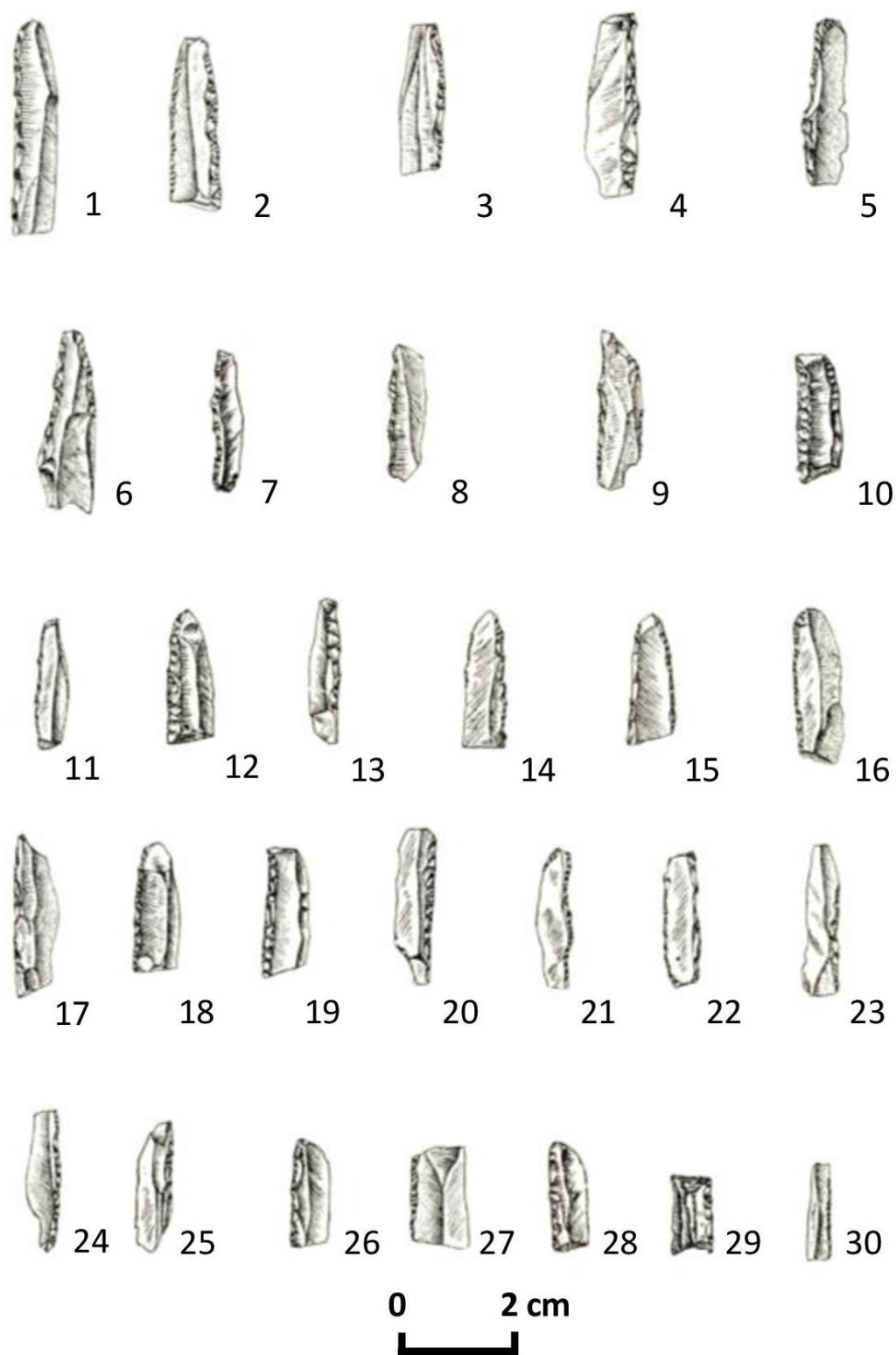


Fig. 25 – Bladelets à *bord abattu* in the Epigravettian level at Bofu Mic (acc. to [C. S. Nicolăescu-Plopșor et al., 1966](#)).

The Palaeolithic in the Mountain Sector of the Bistrița Valley-Old and New Interpretations

pale-yellow loess layer, the brown-reddish layer and the yellow-reddish layer with pseudo-mycelia at the base. Next, there are fluvial deposits in the form of sand and gravel. Very few items have been discovered only in the pale-yellow loess layer and they most likely belong to the Epigravettian.

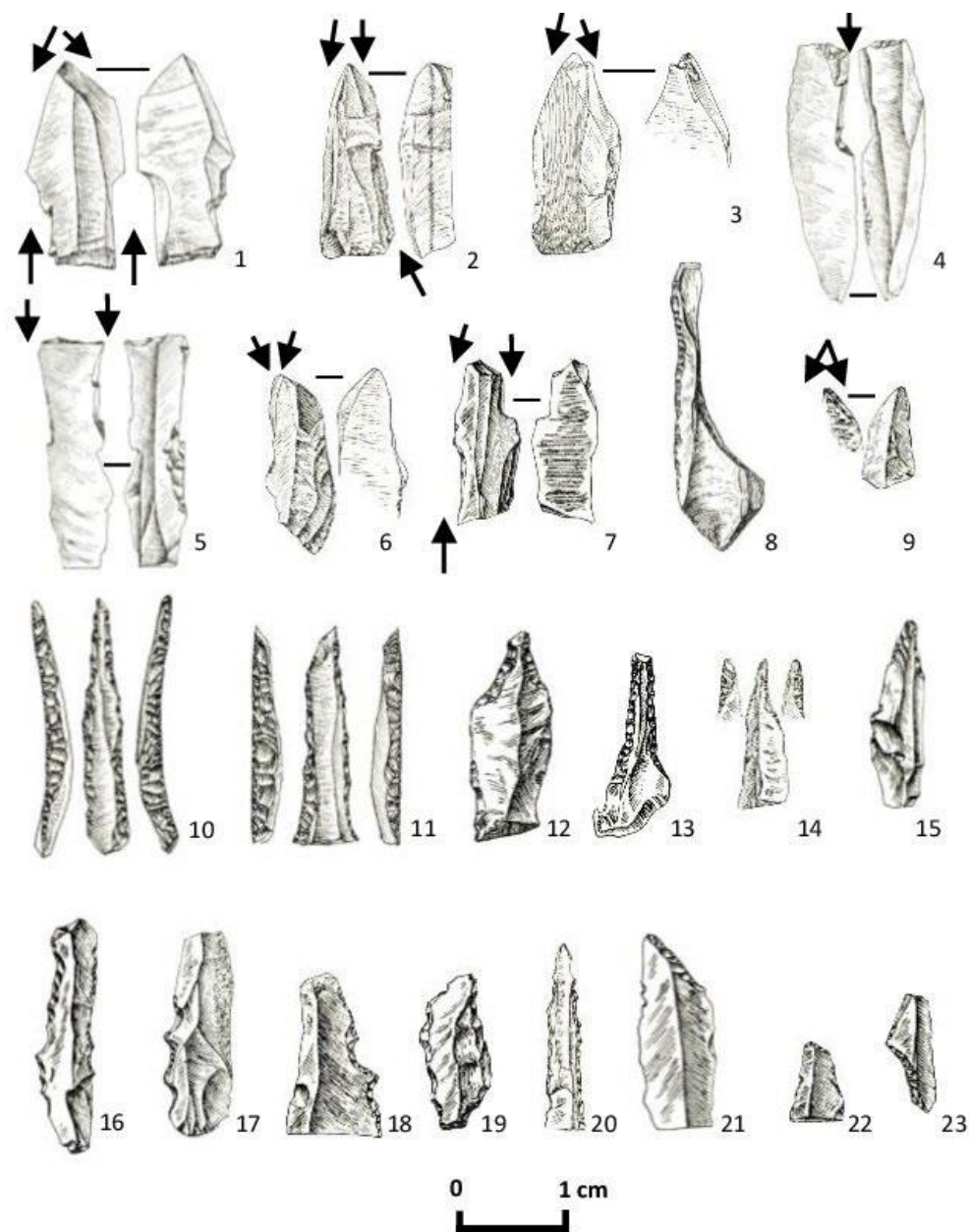


Fig. 26 – Lithic tools in the Epigravettian level at Bofu Mic. 1-7, 9 - *burins*; 8- *burin spall*; 10-15 – *drills*; 16-20 – *denticulate blades*; 21-22 – *oblique truncated blades*; 23- *atypical à cran point* (modified after C. S. Nicolăescu-Plopșor et al., 1966).

The Palaeolithic settlement of Bofu Mic is located on the same terrace as the Bistricioara- Lutărie I-II and Dârțu settlements, on the west-northwest edge of the Ceahlău

village (fig. 22). The stratigraphy of the deposit does not entirely preserve that of the two mentioned settlements: the current soil; the pale-yellow loess layer; the brown-reddish layer; the reddish-yellowish layer; the dark red layer, which lies on sand and gravel. As can be seen, the grey pseudo-mycelian loess layer is missing, probably due to the cryogenic structures observed in this deposit.

From the pale-yellow layer of loess, a small number of lithic items belonging to the **Epigravettian** stratigraphy have been recovered. The lithic assemblage is dominated by endscrapers, accounting for over 24% (fig. 23), most of them on blades or flakes with signs of reuse. Circular and thumbnail endscrapers are also present. “*La Gravette*” points and *microgravette* points (fig. 24) are well represented (7.68%), as are blades *à bord abattu* (fig. 25). Burins make up 6.68%, mostly dihedral ones and on retouched truncation (fig. 26/1-7, 9). Multiple burins have also been encountered, while burins-cores are extremely rare. Drills are typical, with long points with bilateral steep retouch that can reach over 8 cm in length (fig. 26/10-15) (C. S. Nicolăescu-Plopșor et al., 1966; Al. Păunescu, 1998). As we have seen, the stratigraphic situation at Bofu Mic does not fit into the general pattern of deposit formation specific to the 45-55 m terrace, as it is likely affected to a greater extent by glacial processes, such as ice wedges, which have already been reported. Consequently, the evolution of Gravettian cultural layers has been largely affected, making this site less important solely based on its attribution to the Epigravettian, which, compared to other settlements in the Răpciuni Basin, appears to be one of the richest. It has been better preserved because, chronologically, it is posterior to the Glacial Maximum, which is responsible for the intense periglacial processes that disturbed the lower layers.

II.4. Podiș

The Podiș settlement is located in the village of Ceahlău, flanked to the north-northwest by the Schitul rivulet, to the east by the Răpciunița rivulet, and to the north-northeast by the Bistrița River (figs. 4, 22). Archaeological excavations were carried out in two points, labelled A and B, which are very close to each other, separated by a ravine, much like the Bistricioara Lutărie I and II settlements. Of these two points, extensive research was conducted at point A, located near the area known as Dealul Delenilor or Dealul Cantacuzinilor. Here, in 1956-1958, an area of approximately 473 square metres was excavated. A smaller area, of only 72 square metres, was also excavated in 1962. The long and narrow trench system was also employed here, generally oriented in the E-NE to S-SW direction, not far from the edge of the terrace,

The Palaeolithic in the Mountain Sector of the Bistrița Valley-Old and New Interpretations

about 150 metres away. For example, trench I had a length of 110 metres and a width of only 1 metre. Naturally, such a system can have some advantages when investigating the extent of the settlement. However, as a systematic excavation method, we consider it to be completely deficient, as there is a high risk of cutting through habitation structures without the possibility of making a revealing reconstruction of these structures.

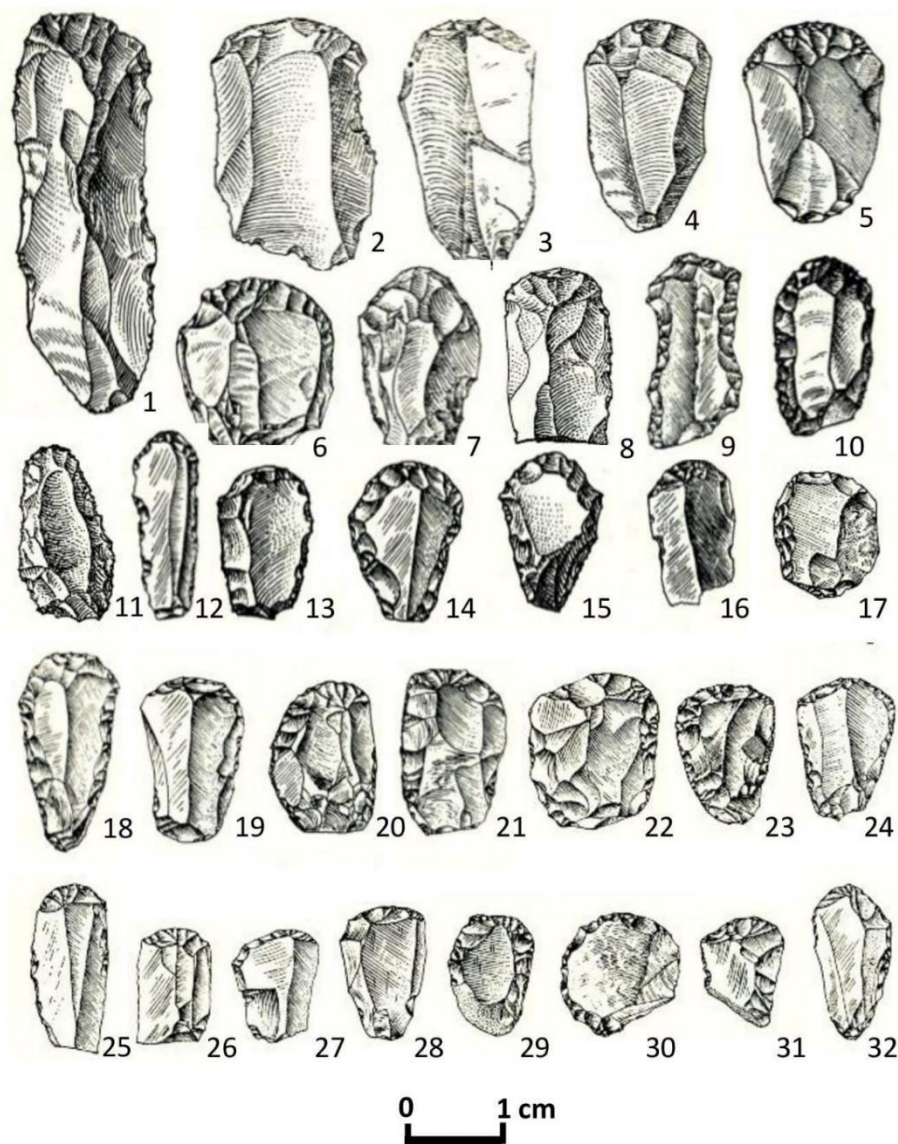


Fig. 27 – Various types of endscrapers in the Epigravettian level at Podiș (modified after [C. S. Nicolăescu-Plopșor et al., 1966](#)).

The succession of geological layers is very similar to the situation at Bofu Mic and somewhat different from the lower part of the deposit described at Bistricioara-Lutărie I-II and Dârțu. From top to bottom, the following have been identified: the current soil; a pale-yellow

loess layer; a reddish-brown layer; a reddish-yellow layer; and a dark reddish layer (whose lower boundary has not been reached). The same periglacial processes, as at Bofu Mic, have

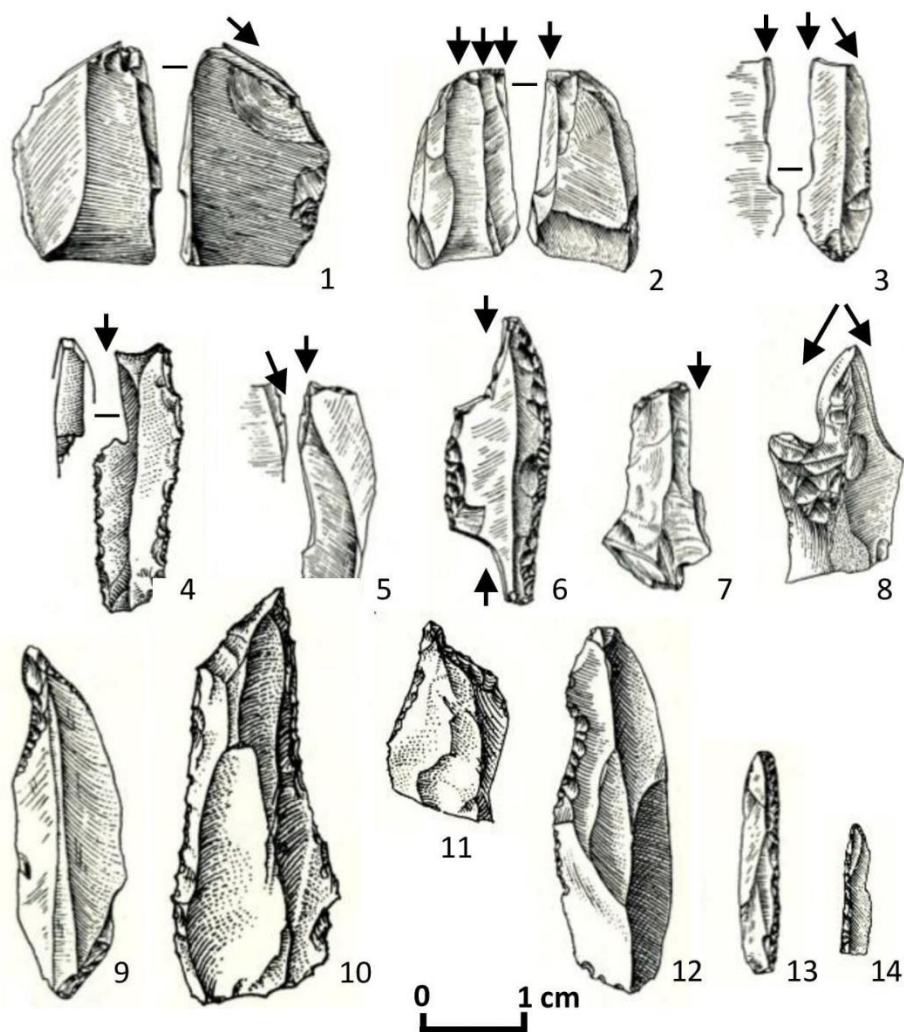


Fig. 28 – Lithic tools in the Epigravettian level at Podiș. 1-8 – *burins*; 9-11 – *drills*; 12 – notched blade; 13-14 – *la Gravette* points (modified after C. S. Nicolăescu-Plopșor et al., 1966).

affected the deposit, especially the ice wedges that originate from the base of the pale-yellow layer, in perfect accordance with the climatic character of the underlying brown-reddish layer. These ice wedges, which often penetrate the lower layers as deep as 90 cm, logically formed during a glacial period, in this case during the deposition of the brown-reddish stratum, which, as has long been established through palynological studies, was contemporary with a glacial stage (M. Cărciumaru, 1980).

The Palaeolithic in the Mountain Sector of the Bistrița Valley-Old and New Interpretations

A number of lithic items have been identified in the pale-yellow loess layer beneath the current soil, whereas combustion structures are completely absent. A total of 3,730 lithic pieces have been recovered, of which only 352 have been attributed to tools. The dominant ones are

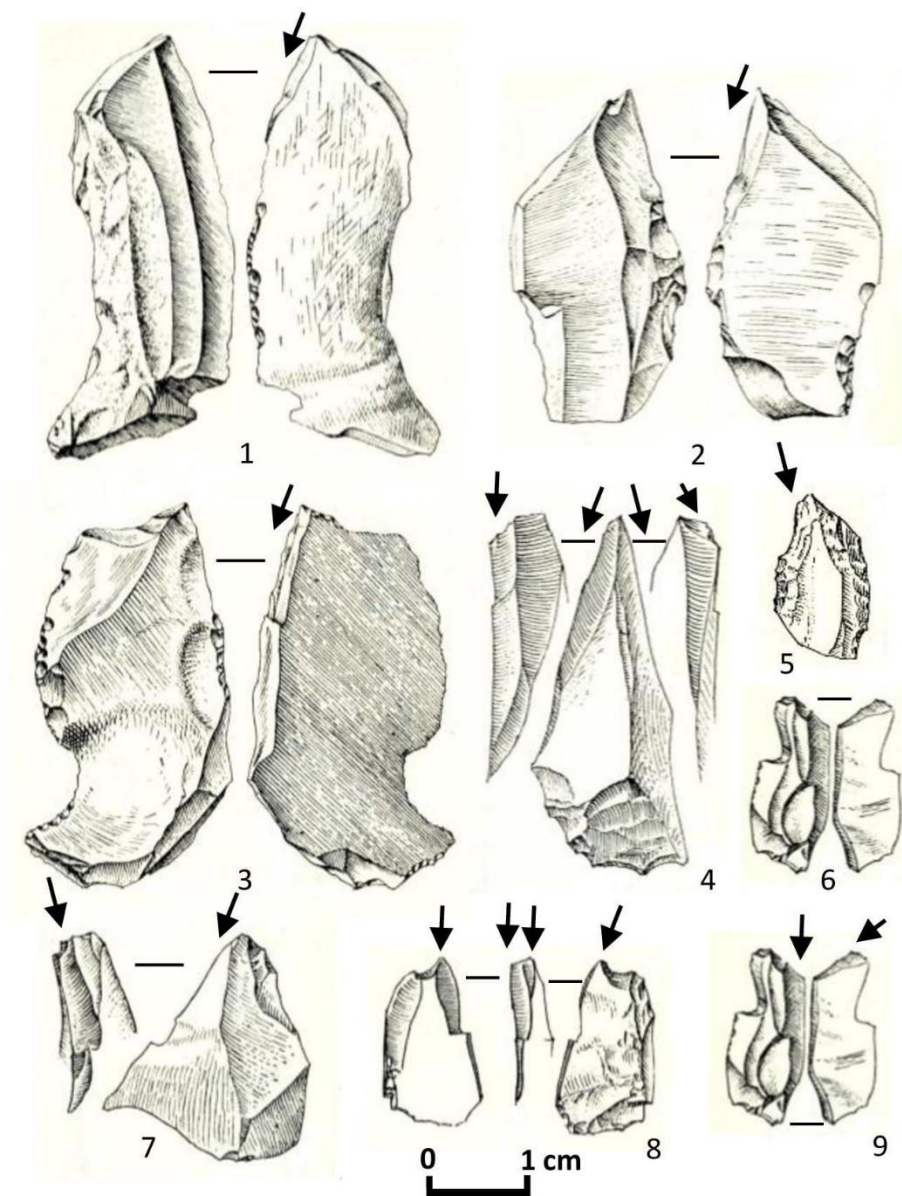


Fig. 29 – *Burins* in the Gravettian I level at Podiș (modified after [C. S. Nicolăescu-Plopșor et al., 1966](#)).

the endscrapers - 23.29%, represented by simple ones, on retouched blade, double ones, on flake, thumbnail ones, and even atypical carenated ones ([fig. 27](#)). Backed bladelets are also well represented - 19.88%, some of which are pointed; there are also burins, which account for

9.36%, mainly the dihedral ones (excelling in angle burins) (fig. 28/1-8), bladelets à bord abattu - 7.67%, notched items - 6.82% (fig. 28/12), *la Gravette* points (fig. 28/13-14), and *microgravettes* - 4.26%. Surprisingly, Dufour blades are also present at 4.54%. The lithic material was obtained from melinite - 54%, flint, often patinated - 30%, black shale - 11%, glauconitic siliceous sandstone - 2.80%, radiolarite - 0.40% etc. (Al. Păunescu, 1998). We consider that this level belongs to the **Epigravettian**, as is the case with all the occupations within the pale-yellow loess layer located at the upper part of the 45-55 m terrace in the Ceahlău Basin.

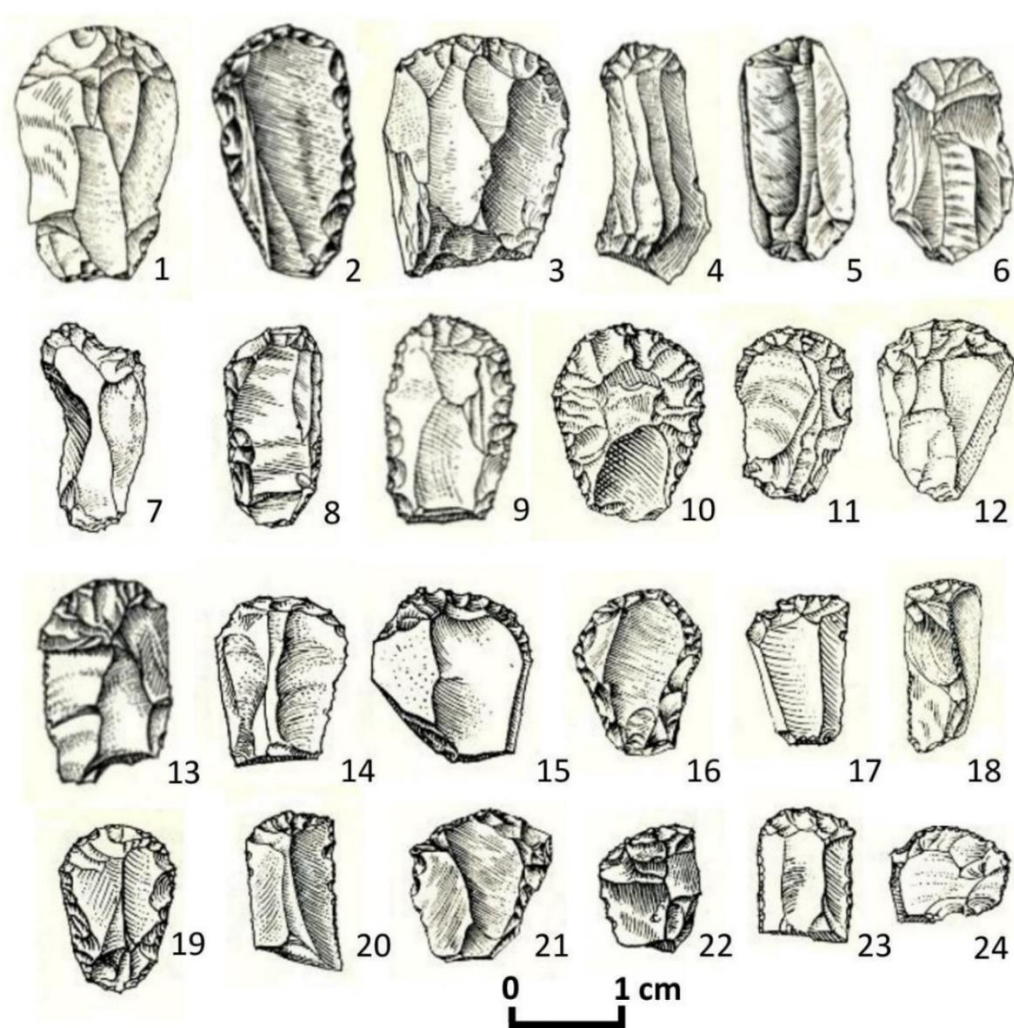


Fig. 30 – Endscrapers in the Gravettian I level at Podiș (modified after C. S. Nicolăescu-Plopșor et al., 1966).

The reddish-yellowish layer contains the occupation assigned to the **Gravettian I**. Overall, the lithic industry is dominated by burins at 23.90% (fig. 29), and notched items

The Palaeolithic in the Mountain Sector of the Bistrița Valley-Old and New Interpretations

(13.21%), endscrapers (12.13%) (fig. 30) and backed bladelets (10.11%) have appeared in similar percentages. The *burins* were represented by the dihedral ones, *déjeté*, angle and on a break, while among the endscrapers, the most numerous were the simple ones. In addition to these tools, retouched blades, several Dufour bladelets, denticulate blades etc. were also recovered from the Gravettian I. The raw materials used for making the tools were dominated by the presence of melinite with over 50%, followed by flint (generally patinated) with just over 20%, glauconitic siliceous sandstone with around 10% and black shale below 10%.

For the Gravettian I at Podiș, we only have one date, which has provided a much younger age compared to the development of the Gravettian I in other settlements in the Răpciuni Basin (Ceahlău): GrN 14,640: 16,970 ± 360 B.P.

II.5. Cetățica

Several Palaeolithic sites have been found at Cetățica, each located on one of the five terrace levels, which are at different altitudes: Cetățica I on the 55-65-m terrace, Cetățica II on the 45-55-m terrace, Cetățica III (or the New Church Cemetery) on the 20-25-m terrace, Cetățica IV (or the New Church Courtyard) on the 15-18-m terrace, and Cetățica V (or the

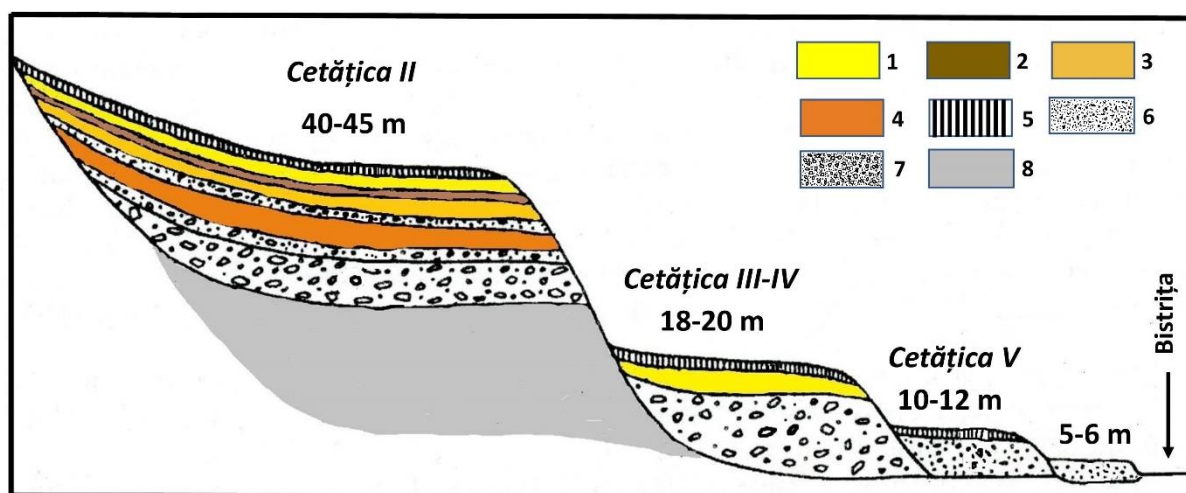


Fig. 31 – The sequence of terraces at Dârțu and the possible arrangement of some of the Cetățica settlements on the treads of certain terraces of the Bistrița. 1- pale-yellow loess layer; 2- brown-reddish layer; 3- yellowish-reddish loess layer; 4- yellowish-grey loess layer with calcium carbonate deposits; 5- current soil; 6-layer of sheetwash sands and gravels; 7-terrace gravels; 8-sandstone substrate.

Heroes' Cemetery) on the 8-12-m terrace (fig. 31). It can be said that Cetățica is one of the most complex Palaeolithic settlements in the Ceahlău Basin, both in terms of the number of sites,

their layering according to the stepped arrangement of terraces and the composition of some of the cultural layers, particularly in the Cetățica I site. Cetățica, or Dealul Cetățica ('Cetățica Hill'), is located in the south of the village of Ceahlău, about one kilometre away, and its western boundary is formed by the confluence of the Pârâul Mare with the Bistrița River (fig. 4). Dealul Cetățica extends like a spur towards the Bistrița Valley, creating a narrower area of the Bistrița River and thus delimiting the Răpciuni Basin (Ceahlău) (fig. 22).

The terrace tread on which the settlement of **Cetățica I** is located is bordered on three sides by steep slopes. The archaeological excavations were conducted in several stages (1956-1957, 1981, 1985-1986) and covered an area of almost 250 square metres.

The succession of geological layers is as follows: current soil; a layer of pale-yellow loess; a brown-reddish layer; a yellowish-reddish loess layer with a pseudo-mycelian base; a runoff and washout layer; terrace gravels.

Culturally, an **Epigravettian** level can be distinguished in the pale-yellow loess layer, in line with the position of this culture in other settlements in the Răpciuni Basin. The **Gravettian I** level is contemporary with the sedimentation period of the yellowish-reddish layer, and a **Gravettian** level is found within the runoff and washout layer with rare pebbles, which is stratigraphically difficult to correlate with other Gravettian levels in the Bistrița Valley.

Depth (cm)	Layer	Material	AMS Lab. Nr.	Age B.P. (uncal)	Age (cal. B.P) (95.4 probability)
152 -159	Gravettian I	Charcoal	GrN 14.631	19.760 ± 470	25.084-22.727
213-220	Gravettian II	Charcoal	GrN 14.630	23.890 ± 290	28.583-27.545
270-280	Gravettian II	Charcoal	GrN 14.629	>24.000	-

Tab. 5 – C-14 dates at Ceahlău-Cetățica I (red – dates with small margin of error).

According to previous research, the **Epigravettian** at Cetățica I is poorly represented, as only 269 lithic items have been discovered, of which only 38 are tools, mainly endscrapers and burins, along with a few *la Gravette* points and *microgravettes*, truncated notched pieces etc. They were made using black shale, glauconitic siliceous sandstone and, to a lesser extent, flint.

The **Gravettian I** at Cetățica I is found in the upper half of the yellowish-reddish loess layer with a pseudo-mycelian base. Burn marks have been found, some interpreted as hearths, as small pieces of sandstone have been discovered inside them. The lithic inventory contains a

The Palaeolithic in the Mountain Sector of the Bistrița Valley-Old and New Interpretations

total of 213 items, of which only 32 are notches, denticulate tools, *à cran*, *à bord abattu*, truncated tools etc. (fig. 32). The majority of lithic items were made from black shale, glauconitic siliceous sandstone, menilite and much less flint and other rocks.

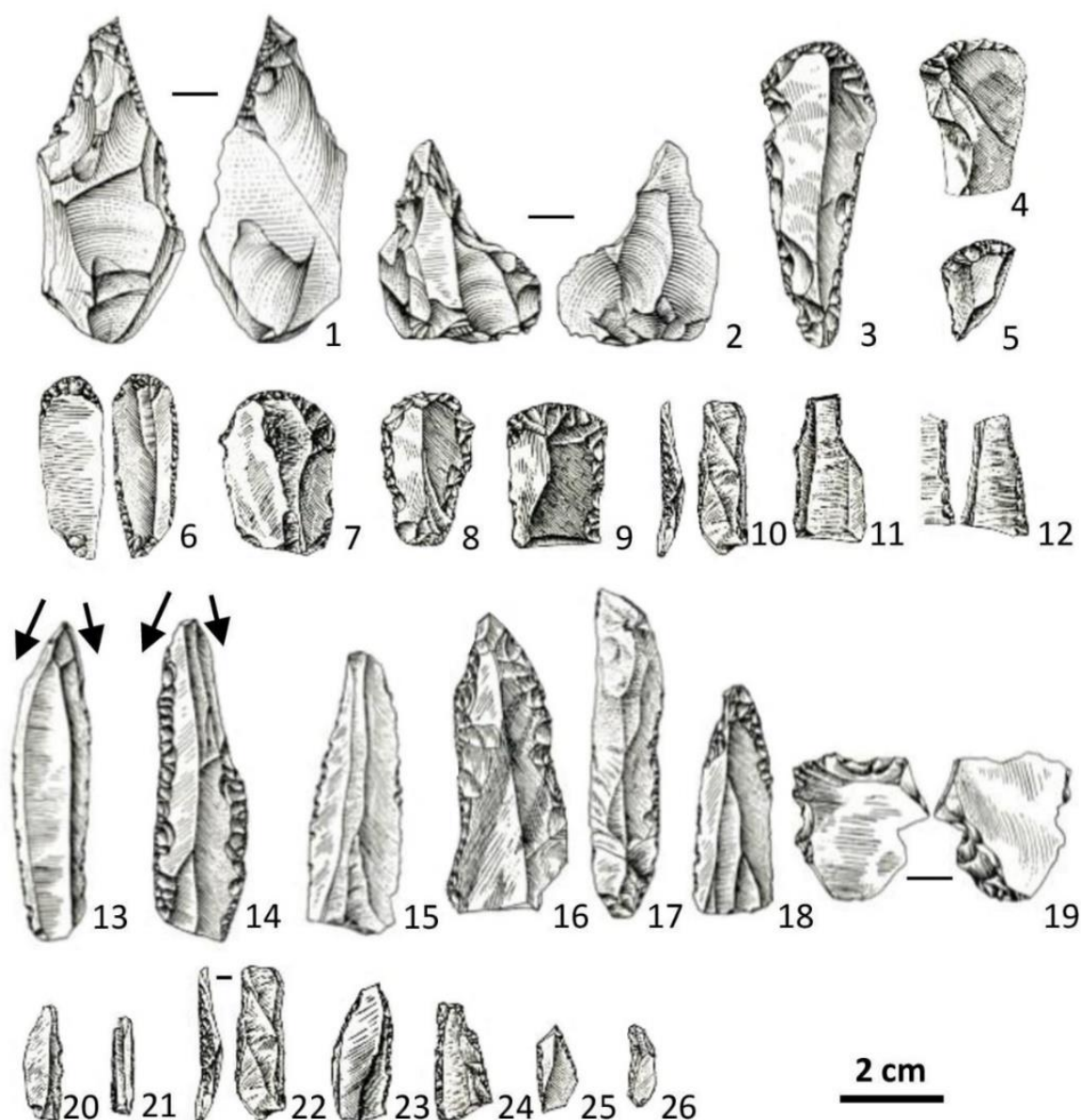


Fig. 32 – Lithic tools in the Gravettian I at Cetățica I. 1-9 – various endscrapers; 10- *la Gravette* point; 11- *à cran* tool; 12, 20-21 – *Dufour* bladelets; 13-14 *burins*; 15-denticulate tool; 16-18 – retouched blades; 19- retouched flake; 20-26 – backed bladelets (redefined after C. S. Nicolăescu-Plopșor et al., 1966; Al. Păunescu, 1998).

For the Gravettian I at Cetățica I, we also have a C-14 date of $19,760 \pm 470$ B.P. (GrN 14.631) (tab. 5).

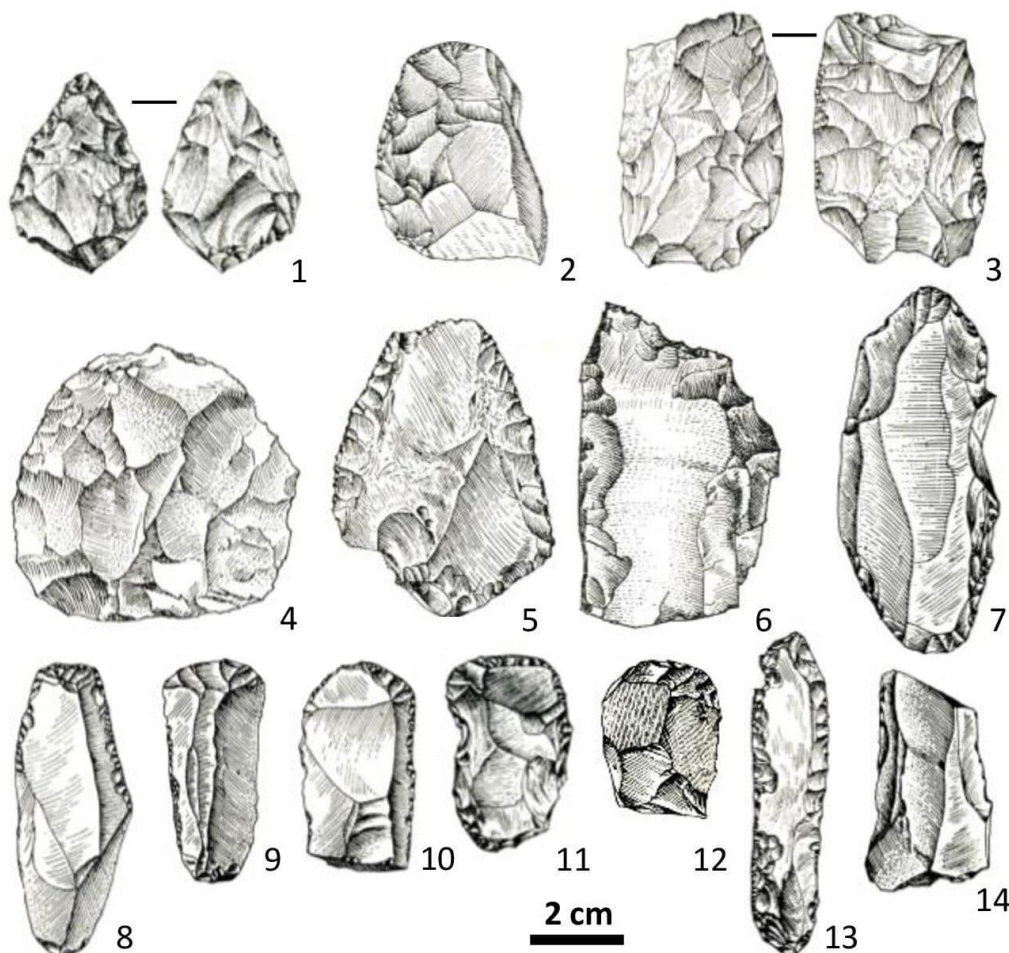


Fig. 33 – Lithic tools in the Gravettian II level at Cetățica I. 1, 3-foliate tools; 2, 7-12-endscrapers; 4- bifacial disc; 5-scraper; 6-retouched flake; 13-retouched blade; 14-blade with use retouch (modified after C. S. Nicolăescu-Plopșor et al., 1966).

The lithic items, recovered from above the terrace gravels at the Cetățica I site, which are difficult to strictly classify within specific cultural facies, consist of 266 pieces, of which 70 can be attributed to tools. It should be noted that most of the tools are made on flakes. The most common tool categories are endscrapers, notched items, scrapers (mostly falling into the category of simple straight ones, with steep or even flat retouches) etc. Of course, the three bifacial items (fig. 33/1, 3) as well as the denticulate tools remain extremely interesting (C. S. Nicolăescu-Plopșor et al., 1966; Al. Păunescu, 1998). A C-14 date places the age of this layer

The Palaeolithic in the Mountain Sector of the Bistrița Valley-Old and New Interpretations

at $23,890 \pm 290$ B.P. (GrN 14.630) (tab. 5). This age suggests that this level is contemporaneous with the **Gravettian II**.

In 1956, the first excavations were carried out on the 45-55-m terrace at *Cetățica II.*, Small surveys were subsequently conducted in 1981 and 1985 to recover charcoal and bone samples for C-14 dating. Combined, the archaeological excavations at Cetățica II did not exceed 64 m in depth. The stratigraphy of the deposit does not differ greatly from that described at Cetățica I.

The **Epigravettian** level was identified in the pale-yellow loess layer, and it was found to be quite poor based on excavations conducted in the 1950s and 1980s. Only 112 lithic items were discovered, mainly consisting of broken gravel and simple flakes (82 items). Only 10 retouched blades, 1 microlithic endscraper, one burin-core, 3 notched items and one denticulate and truncated blade were retained as tools. These were made using siliceous sandstone, black shale, menilite and very rarely flint.

Depth (cm)	Layer	Material	AMS Lab. Nr.	Age B.P. (uncal)	Age (cal. B.P) (95.4 probability)
144-147	Gravettian I	Charcoal	GrN 14.632	21.050 ± 650	26.825-23.870
174-177	Gravettian II	Charcoal	GrN. 14.633	26.700 ± 1.100	33.630-28.778

Tab. 6 – C-14 dates at Ceahlău-Cetățica II.

The **Gravettian I** is very poor in terms of the lithic material. Stratigraphically, it is located in the upper part of the yellowish-reddish pseudo-mycelian loess layer. A series of burn marks were discovered, but since they were not accompanied by other lithic materials or faunal remains, they are viewed with great doubt, as they might be the result of natural fires. Only 6 lithic items were found, including 5 simple quartzite and sandstone flakes and one unretouched mesial blade made of black shale. Under these circumstances, the C-14 date obtained must be viewed with some reservations, as it practically does not date a well-structured and defined cultural level with relevant archaeological materials. It provided the age of $21,050 \pm 650$ B.P. (GrN 14,632) (tab. 6).

Attempts have been made to define the **Gravettian II** solely based on some unconvincing burn marks and a few unremarkable lithic items, consisting of 30 pieces

represented by 3 broken quartzite pebbles, 6 simple flakes made of sandstone, 10 flakes, some atypical cores etc. Without a clear cultural context with interpretable combustion structures as origin, the C-14 dating must be taken with some reservations: GrN 14,633: $26,700 \pm 1,100$ B.P., not to mention the approximation coefficient that is hard to accept.

Cetățica III is located on the terrace tread at a relative altitude of 20-25 m, nearby the new church Cemetery. Excavations were carried out only in 1956, on a limited surface of 60 m², in some sections on a thickness of 4.50 m, when the terrace gravels were reached. On such a lower terrace it is abnormal for a thicker deposit to accumulate above the terrace gravels, unless we accept the possibility of landslide inputs coming from the deposits of the upper terraces.

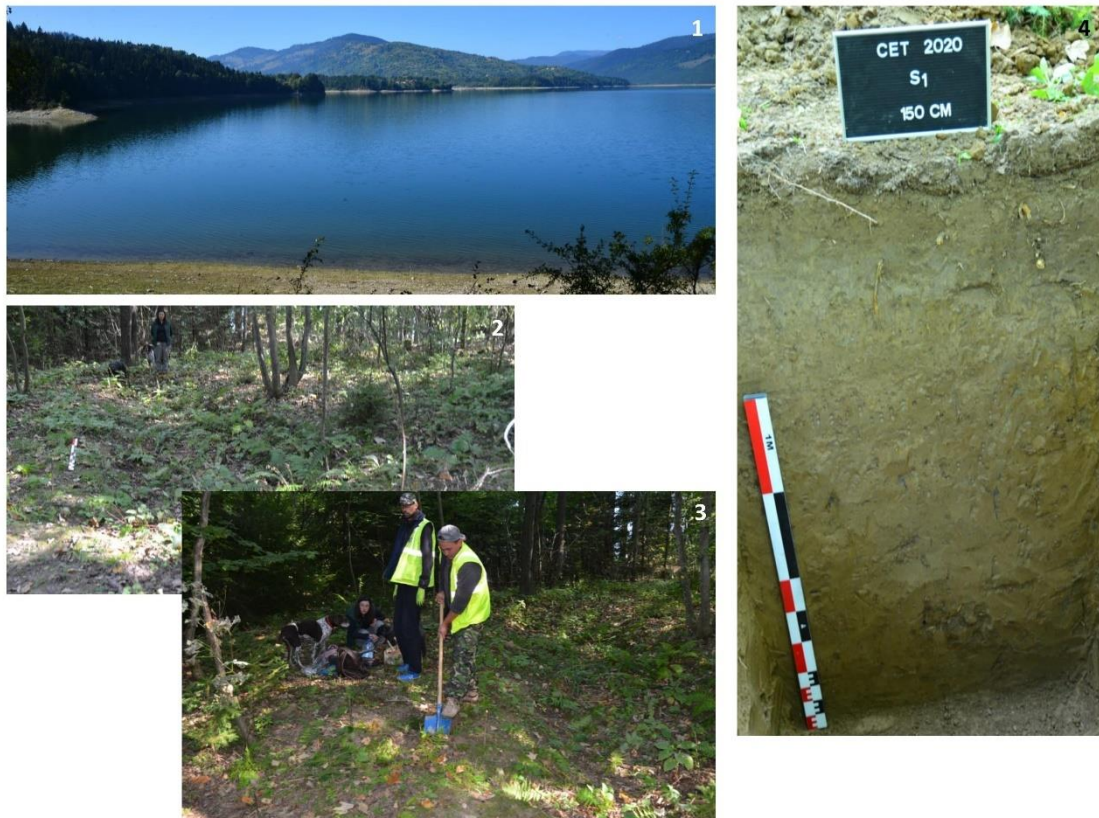


Fig. 34 – Resumption of excavations at Cetățica in 2020. 1-general view from the approximately 20-m terrace at Cetățica; 2-the area of the old archaeological excavations at Cetățica II; 3-the start of a first survey; 4-the obtained stratigraphic profile.

In the pale-yellowish loess layer, an **Epigravettian** level was specified, based on simple microlithic endscrapers on a flake, a small drill, *microgravette* points, notched items, a backed

The Palaeolithic in the Mountain Sector of the Bistrița Valley-Old and New Interpretations

bladelet etc., obtained from glauconitic siliceous sandstone, black shale, menilite and a little flint, often with a bluish patina.

In the **settlements of Cetățica IV and V**, very few lithic items have been recovered from the pale-yellow loess layer attributed to the **Epigravettian**.

II.5.1. Recent research at Cetățica

In 2020, the team of Palaeolithic researchers from the Museum of Human Evolution and Technology in the Palaeolithic within the “Princely Court” National Museum Complex in Târgoviște, made up of Elena-Cristina Nițu, Marin Cârțumaru, Marian Leu, Ovidiu Cîrstina, Florin-Ionuț Lupu and Horia Ghiță, resumed the excavations at Cetățica. In the initial phase, their objective was to identify the previous excavations, mostly carried out in the 1950s, and then conduct verification surveys (fig. 34).

In 2022, the team of Palaeolithic researchers returned to Cetățica, accompanied by the renowned Italian Palaeolithic investigator Marco Peresani, for a new real assessment of the potential of this area. Taking advantage of the very low water level of the reservoir, the research



Fig. 35 – Survey on the terrace above the beach that yielded significant amounts of lithic tools.

took on new values, as the extremely wide beach allowed for the recovery of a significant number of lithic items. Considering the impressive density of artefacts left on the beach as well as the coherence of the material, in that, it was quickly observed that several pieces could be refitted together, a different strategy for collecting the material was resorted to. As the items

were identified, their location was marked with a stick, and then, through extremely meticulous and laborious work, the position of each of them was recorded before being recovered in a plastic envelope, on which the coordinates were noted using a Garmin GPSMAP 64st GPS. At the same time, surveys were carried out on the terrace treads at various heights, for stratigraphic verifications and the detection of occupation levels (fig. 35).

The appearance of the reservoir has greatly changed the landscape of the Răpciuni Basin, and at Cetățica, more than in other settlements, a number of sites have been affected, especially those located on lower terraces. With the rising waters of the lake, or even at its



Fig. 36 – Aspects of the beach where a high density of lithic tools has been found. 1-floodable area which is usually below the lake level; 2-4 the beach littered with Palaeolithic lithic items.

normal fill level, only Cetățica I and II usually remain above the water level. Therefore, the chance to encounter low water levels is quite rare, and in 2022 we fully benefited from such a situation (fig. 36). In our opinion, the beach where we discovered over a thousand items in two

The Palaeolithic in the Mountain Sector of the Bistrița Valley-Old and New Interpretations

days belongs to the Cetățica III site, and the terrace where it is situated is either the 18-20-m relative altitude (relative to the old bed of the Bistrița River) (fig. 31), or the 20-25-m terrace, usually less well-preserved. Considering the thickness of the deposit in our surveys, which reached the terrace gravels at approximately 2.50 m, we incline to the view that it is the 20-25 m terrace.

Studies regarding the older excavations at Cetățica mention that the Cetățica III settlement, located nearby the new church cemetery, on a terrace of 20-25 m, yielded a rather poor lithic inventory after excavating an area of approximately 60 m².

Certainly, the area we have researched is not located at the site of the new church cemetery. Under these conditions, if we are indeed in the settlement of Cetățica III, it means



Fig. 37 – Marking the items on the beach surface (1-2, 4-5) and recording them with Garmin GPSMAP 64st GPS (3-6).

that we have managed to discover an area much richer in lithic material, compared to the old excavations. It is not excluded that this might be the true settlement of Cetățica III, or in other words, the true nucleus of the Cetățica III settlement.

The rigorous method of recovering the material from an area of approximately 2 hectares, the precise GPS recording of the position of each item as well as the subsequent technological studies of the lithic equipment give us the certainty that the material has not been moved significantly from its initial position within the cultural layer (figs. 36, 37). In a few cases, when the items were very close, they were recorded as a single point (fig. 38).

To verify whether the items originated from gliding and sliding down from the upper terraces or were brought by the lake water as a result of waves crashing against the shore, we carried out shallow scraping of the sediment in the areas where lithic artefacts were concentrated. The surprise was huge when we found that at a shallow depth relative to the



Fig. 38 – Particular density of items (1), well-defined typological characteristics of some of them (2, 4) and recording method (3).

current beach surface, there were items in place, unaffected and unmoved by the lake water (fig. 39). This led us to conclude that we were indeed on the settlement and the items currently visible on the beach were relatively close to their original location. The water only revealed

The Palaeolithic in the Mountain Sector of the Bistrița Valley-Old and New Interpretations

them and did not move them significantly. It was a great chance for us to encounter such a situation. The fact that the material was recorded with precise coordinates allowed for a reconstruction close to that of an excavation in a normal deposit, undisturbed by floods. At the same time, recording all items with precise coordinates, using a high-performance GPS, allows us, for the first time, to have a Palaeolithic site in the complex of settlements at Cetățica, whose position is known with great precision and can be identified at any time without any ambiguity. Through the approach of an unprecedented situation, such as the one encountered on the beach resulting from the retreat of the lake water, we believe that a model for the recovery of prehistoric artefacts in such circumstances has been established (E.-C. Nițu et al., 2023).



Fig. 39 – Areas of higher concentration of lithic tools (1-2) and the superficial surveys which proved the existence of items in the layer (3-4).

Once the position of each item, along with all the coordinates, had been recorded with the Garmin GPSMAP 64st GPS, it was extremely important to process and transpose them onto a general distribution plan. This was achieved not only with specific Garmin GPS programs,

but also using QGIS data processing programs. The techno-typological study of the lithic material will be the subject of a separate study.

The research did not only focus on the recovery and recording of the lithic material from the beach and possible superficial surveys intended to verify the existence pieces still in place, unaffected by the lake water or other erosion and destruction processes. In order to gain a better understanding of the origin of the respective materials and of the chronostratigraphy of the deposit from which the beach pieces originated, we conducted an initial survey (S-I) that reached a depth of 2.50 metres (fig. 40). In this way, it was possible to recover some items *in situ*, to better understand the succession of geological layers, to collect samples for C-14 dating etc.



Fig. 40 – Survey I from 2022 (September-October) in the southern part of the beach. 1- general view; 2, 4-survey I; stratigraphic profile; 5-items *in situ*.

The ages obtained are as follows: Beta 646476: $11,690 \pm 40$ B.P. (13,607-13,459 cal. B.P.) and Beta 646477: $9,680 \pm 30$ B.P. (11,201-11,071 cal. B.P.). Thus, the level we have identified at Cetățica III becomes the youngest Epigravettian determined by radiocarbon dating

The Palaeolithic in the Mountain Sector of the Bistrița Valley-Old and New Interpretations

in the Bistrița Valley, completing a long sequence of Palaeolithic settlements in the intramountainous sector of the Bistrița Valley. At the same time, the site we discovered represents the location with the highest density of lithic material in the settlement at Cetățica, providing a premise for future research in this settlement.

II.6. Scaune

The settlement at Scaune is located at an absolute altitude of 1,328 meters, at the foot of Mount Ocolașul Mare in the Ceahlău Mountains.

Extensive archaeological research was conducted at the Scaune settlement in 1957-1958, when an area of over 700 square metres was excavated, following a 3 square metre survey the previous year (fig. 41). Between 1983 and 1986, a series of additional surveys were

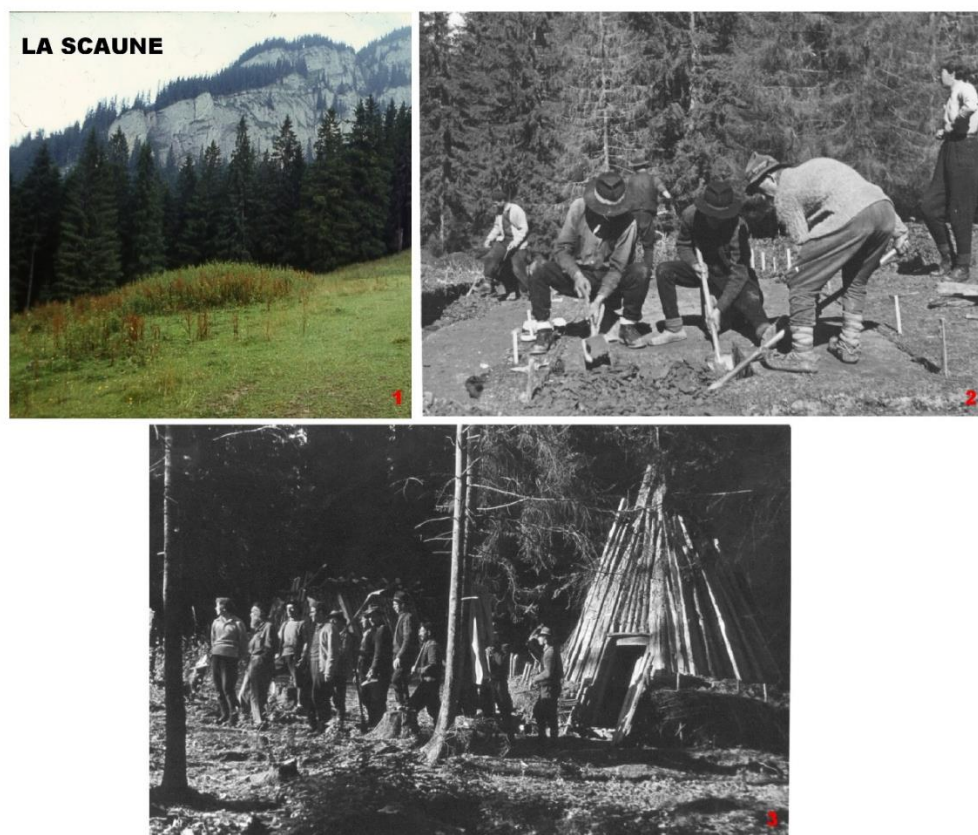


Fig. 41 – The Palaeolithic settlement of La Scaune. 1-general view of the La Scaune glade; 2-the first excavations in the 1950s; 3-cottage built of wood in traditional style which accommodated the team during the excavations (image 2, right, the palaeontologist Alexandra Bolomey, image 3, left, the archaeologists Maria Bitiri, C. S. Nicolăescu-Plopșor and Lucian Roșu) (acc. to [M. Cârciumar](#) et al., 2023).

conducted, covering an area of 19 square metres, for the collection of sediment sampling and especially of charcoal for C-14 dating ([Al. Păunescu, 1998](#)).

The deposit is very thin, only 1 metre thick, and the succession of layers is as follows: 1- current soil; 2- yellowish-grey layer; 3- yellowish loessoid layer; 4- dark yellow layer with many friable fragments of sandstone; 5- rock substrate belonging to the Carpathian flysch.

From a cultural perspective, although lithic objects appear on the surface in the current soil, it has been noted that a Swiderian cultural level develops in the yellowish loessoid layer.

Based on the arrangement of the lithic material, one might speak of a workshop settlement. This hypothesis is supported by the significant number of debitage remains (the overwhelming majority of the approximately 14,000 lithic items recovered) and even the over 100 prismatic and conical cores (fig. 42), as well as over 800 unretouched blades. Among the tools, a large quantity of endscrapers (over 150) stands out (figs. 43, 44), while burins are present in a modest number (fig. 45), just over 20 specimens, and among the weapons, the striking tanged points (figs. 46-77).

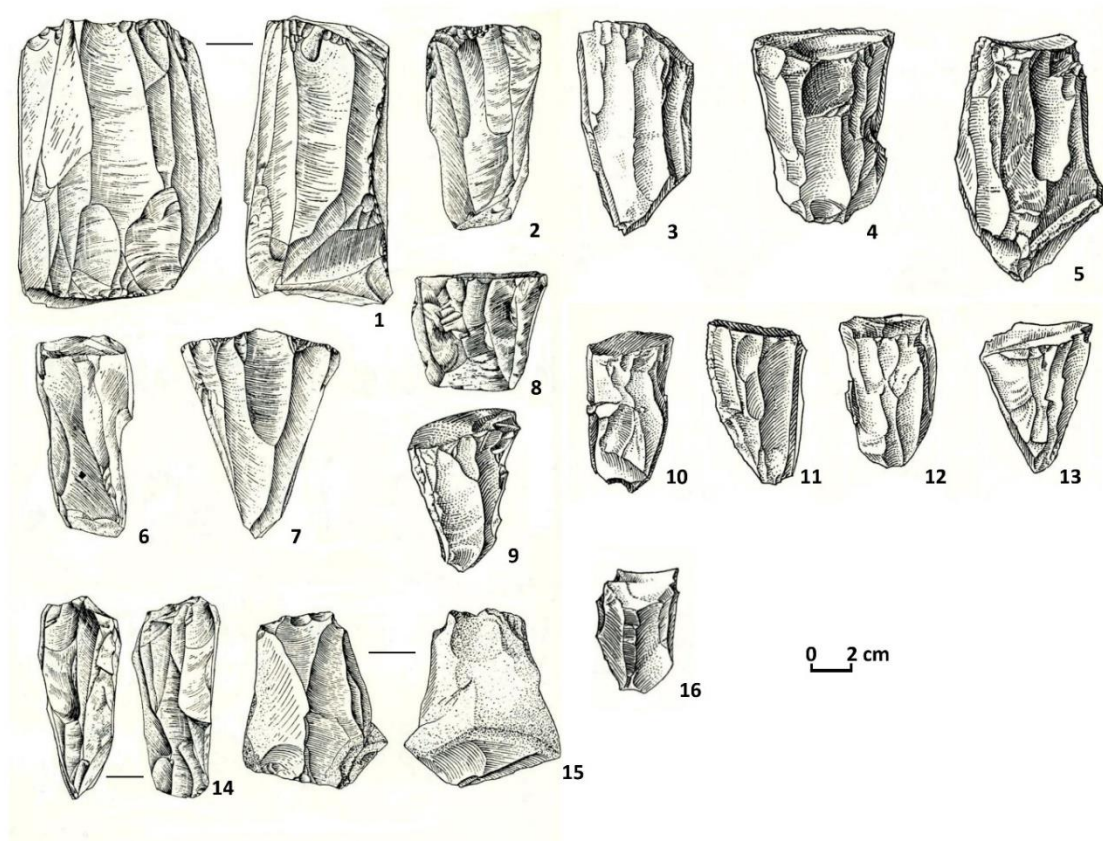


Fig. 42 – Cores of various types in the settlement of Scaune (reworked after C. S. Nicolăescu-Plopșor et al., 1966).

The reason why the Scaune settlement was attributed to the Swiderian in the 1960s was probably the presence of tanged points, knowing that this culture is characterised by such items.

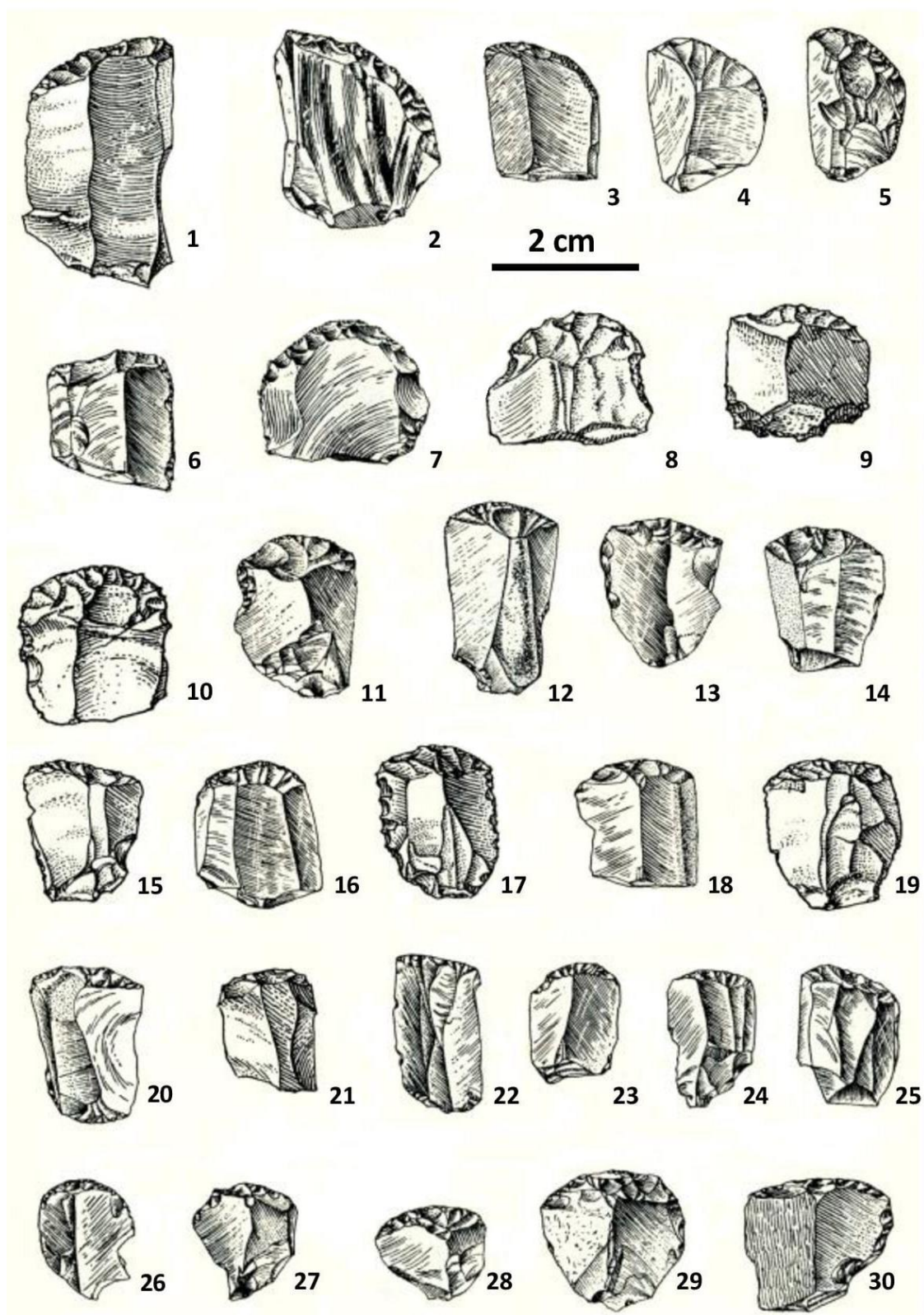


Fig. 43 – Endscrapers of various types in the settlement of Scaune (after C. S. Nicolăescu-Plopșor et al., 1966).

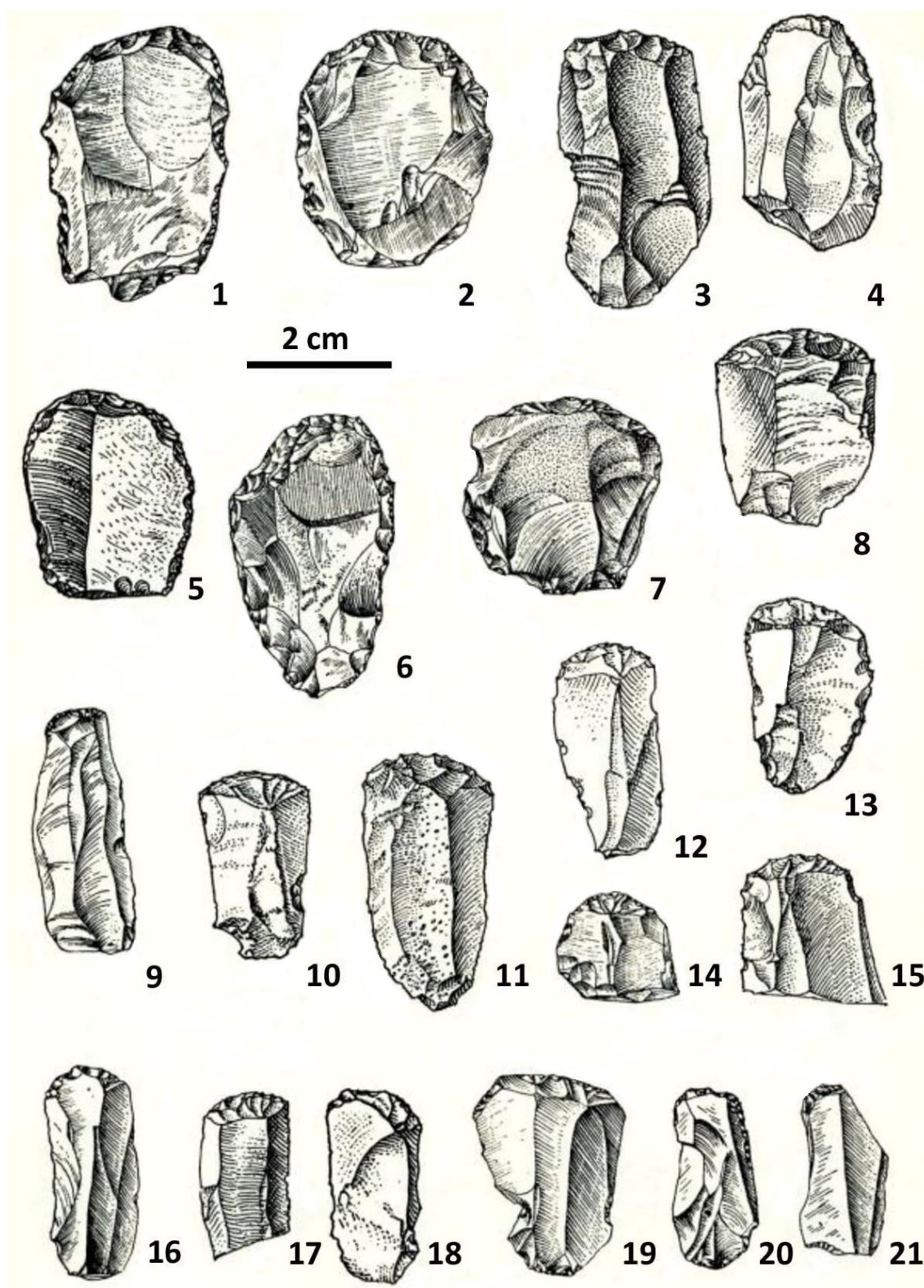


Fig. 44 - Endscrapers of various types in the settlement of Scaune (after C. S. Nicolăescu-Plopșor et al., 1966).

The Palaeolithic in the Mountain Sector of the Bistrița Valley-Old and New Interpretations

However, less consideration was given to the fact that Swiderian is a culture spread in the plain areas of Central-Eastern Europe, with the respective communities preferring mainly sandy dune relief, a completely different environment from the high mountain area of Ceahlău. The Swiderian, in its area of origin, developed after the Dryas III, generally between ca. 10,800 and 9,900 B.P. (A. Leroi Gourhan, 1988).

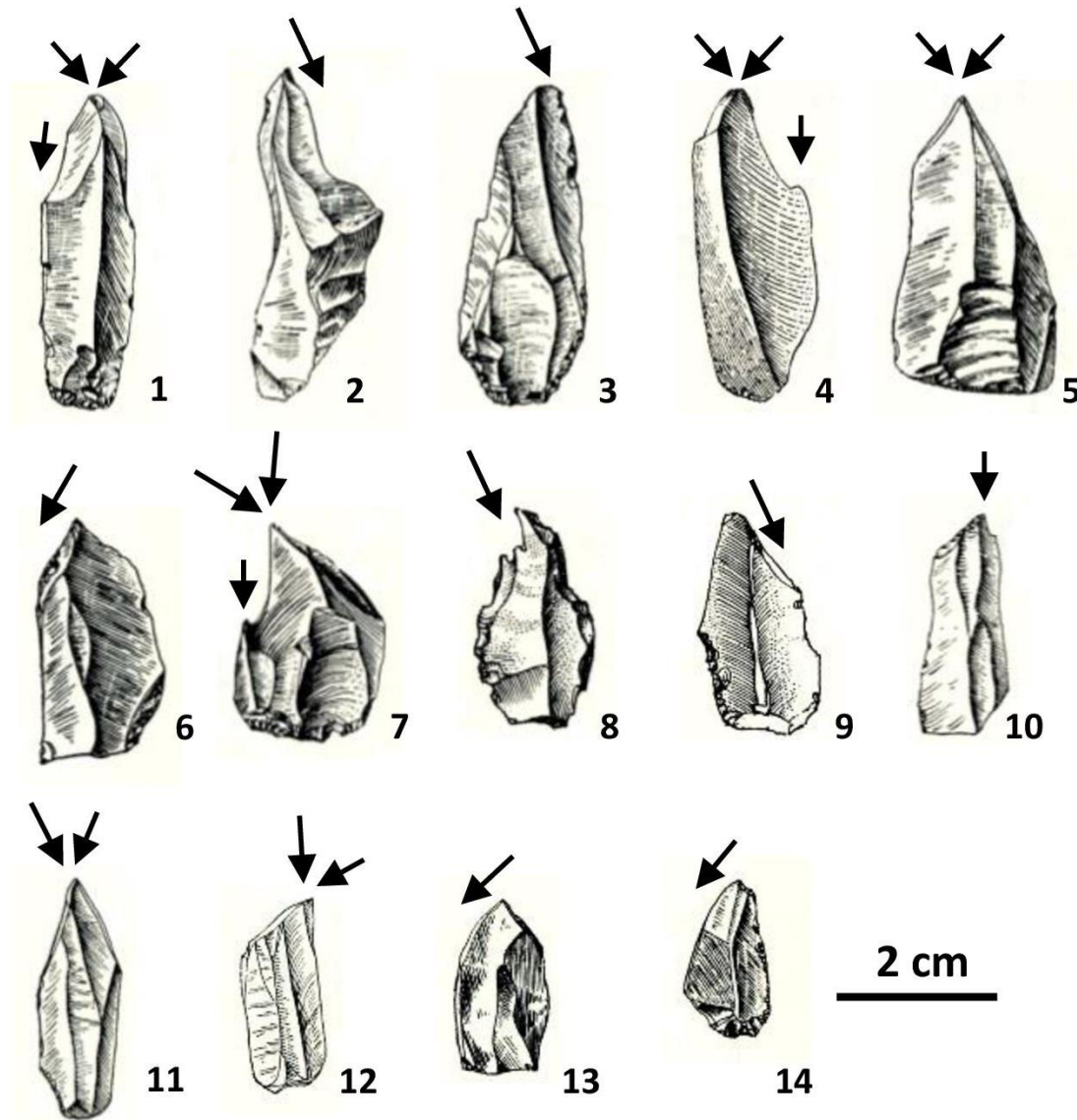


Fig. 45 – *Burins* in the settlement of Scaune (modified after C. S. Nicolăescu-Plopșor et al., 1966).

The first indication of the delayed character of the deposit in the La Scaune clearing was provided by the results of the pollen analysis (M. Cărciumaru, 1980). The results of the palynological study specified that the deposit is Holocene, sedimented during the *phase of spruce, mixed oak and hazel*, as defined by E. Pop (1929) for the vegetation evolution in the

Eastern Carpathians. The *phase of spruce, mixed oak and hazel* is accepted to have occurred during the Boreal and Atlantic periods, specific to the Holocene. A C-14 date of $5,330 \pm 80$ B.P. (6,281-5,940 cal. B.P.), obtained later, fully confirmed the aforementioned assumption.

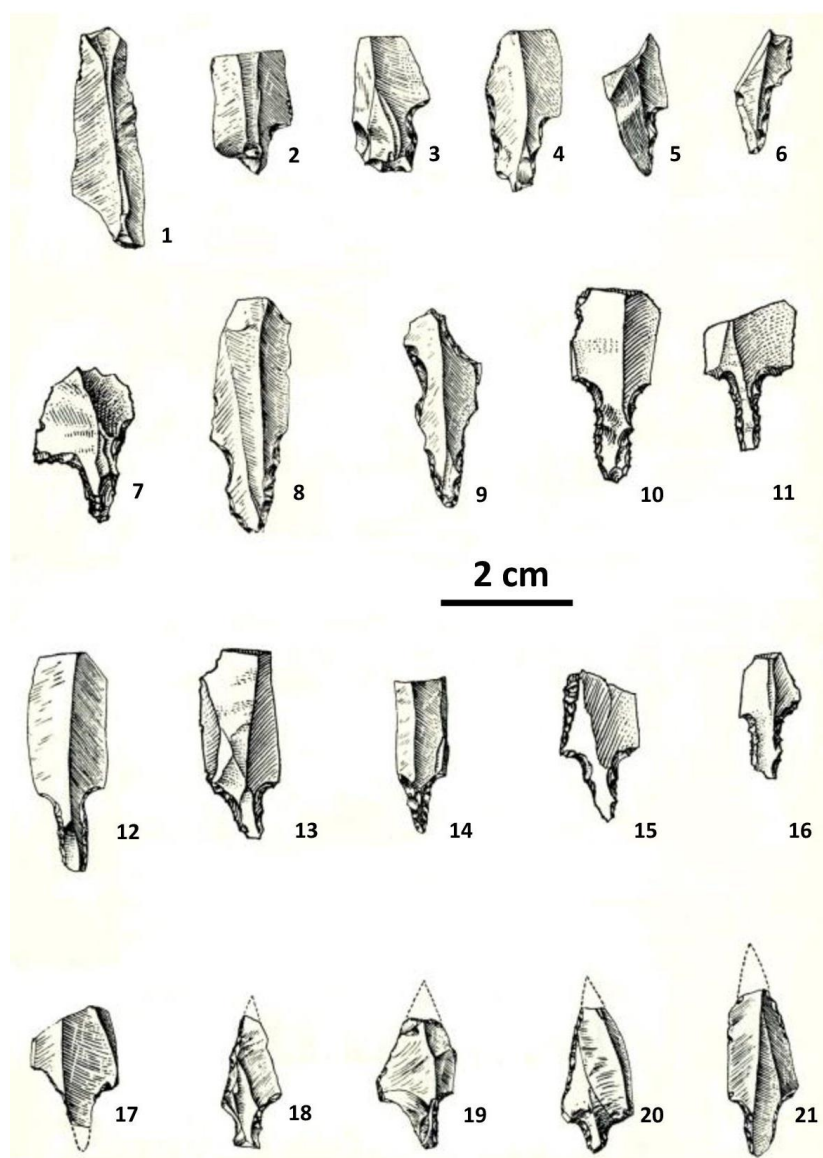


Fig. 46 – Arrow tanged points at Scaune (acc. to [C. S. Nicolăescu-Plopșor et al., 1966](#)).

This means that the settlement in the La Scaune clearing, defined as Swiderian, actually appeared much later than it was assumed for this culture in Central Europe. We do not exclude the hypothesis of the existence of ecological niches in the mountainous area of Ceahlău, which persisted until the Holocene, favouring the survival of small groups of hunter-gatherers who arrived here from the Bistrița Valley in pursuit of cold climate game, such as *Capra ibex*,

The Palaeolithic in the Mountain Sector of the Bistrița Valley-Old and New Interpretations

Rupicapra rupicapra, *Marmota marmota* etc. However, such a hypothesis is difficult to sustain, as it is challenging to explain the survival of these communities for over 4,000 years, in order to label them as Palaeolithic.

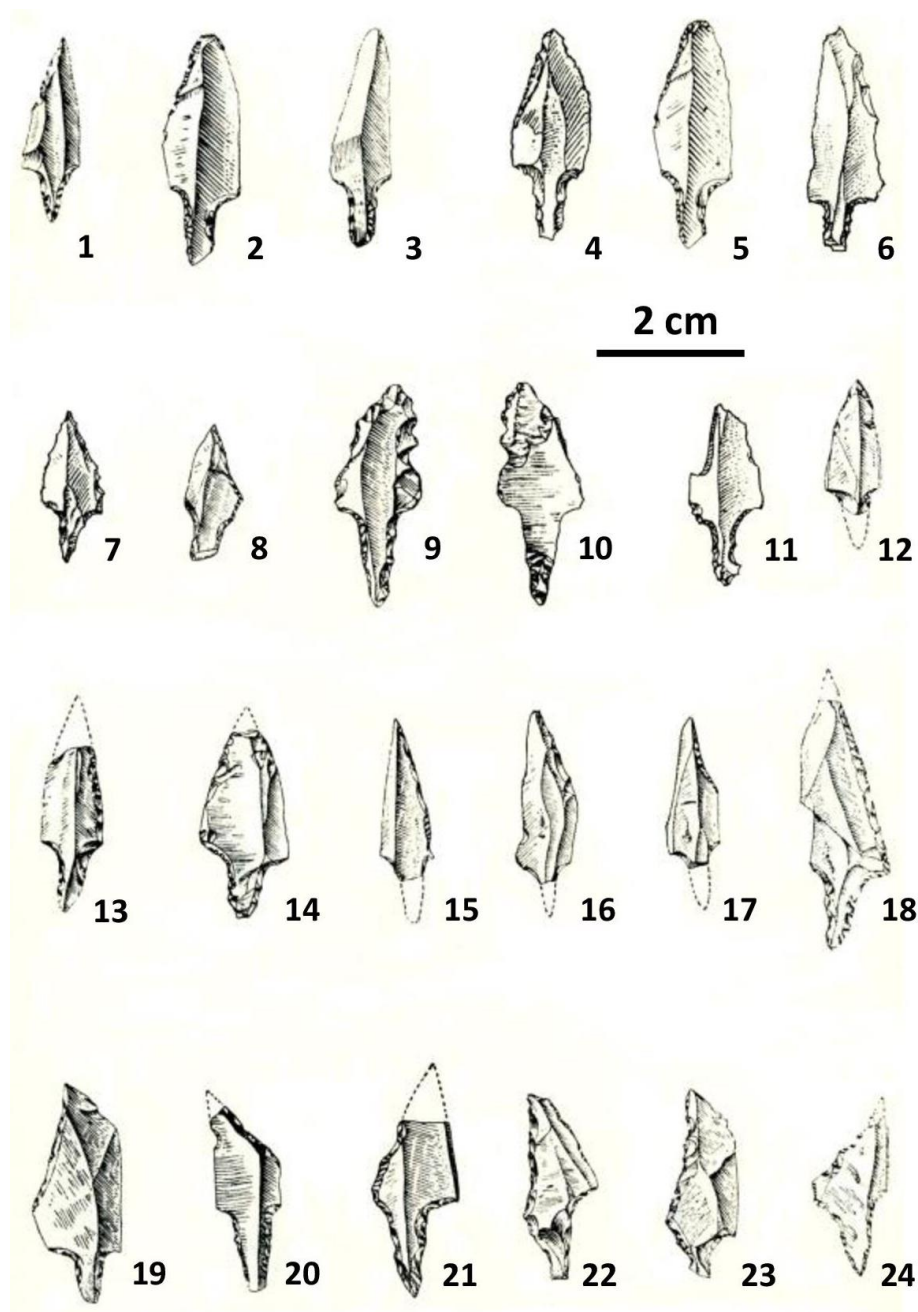


Fig. 47 - Arrow tanged points at Scaune (acc. to [C. S. Nicolăescu-Plopșor et al., 1966](#)).

Considering the new reality offered by relative chronology studies, but especially by carbon-14 absolute dating, it is more plausible to accept that at Scaune we are dealing with some Neolithic hunters who arrived in the mountainous area in search of game at these altitudes.

This option was also favoured by the presence in the area of lithic raw material sources necessary for the manufacturing of specific weapons, mainly spear points. This explains why the Scaune settlement has been defined as a workshop for lithic tool manufacturing.

III. The settlements in the Bicz-Izvorul Alb sector

As mentioned, the second concentration of Palaeolithic settlements in the mountainous area of the Bistrița Valley is represented by the Bicz-Izvorul Alb sector. In fact, from an administrative point of view, all the settlements in this sector belong to the town of Bicz, even though the distance between Izvorul Alb and Bicz is quite significant.

III.1. Bicz-Ciungi

The settlement of Bicz-Ciungi is located on the 15-18-m terrace of the Bistrița River, at an absolute altitude of 425 meters. This particular terrace, also known as Ciungi, is situated near the confluence of the Bicz with the Bistrița, on the right side of both rivers.



Fig. 48 – The settlement of Bicz Ciungi. 1- the gas station built right on the Bicz-Ciungi settlement; 2-3 the edge of the terrace greatly transformed by anthropic works.

The settlement was found during the construction of a gas station in the centre of the town of Bicz. The first surveys, covering an area of 36 square metres, were carried out in 1964 by [M. Drăgotescu](#) (1968), as an initial intervention after several lithic pieces had been recovered by the workers involved in the construction. Unfortunately, the settlement had already been largely

The Palaeolithic in the Mountain Sector of the Bistrița Valley-Old and New Interpretations

destroyed by previous constructions, a railway, the local houses etc. (fig. 48). Archaeological excavations continued in 1967, 1969 and 1971, led by Maria Bitiri, covering a total area of 72 square metres, which exhausted the entire area of the settlement (M. Bitiri et al., 1989). On this occasion, the following stratigraphic succession was established: the current grey soil; a pale-yellow layer; a dark layer with a grainy structure; a yellowish clay-sand layer with rusty and ash-coloured spots.

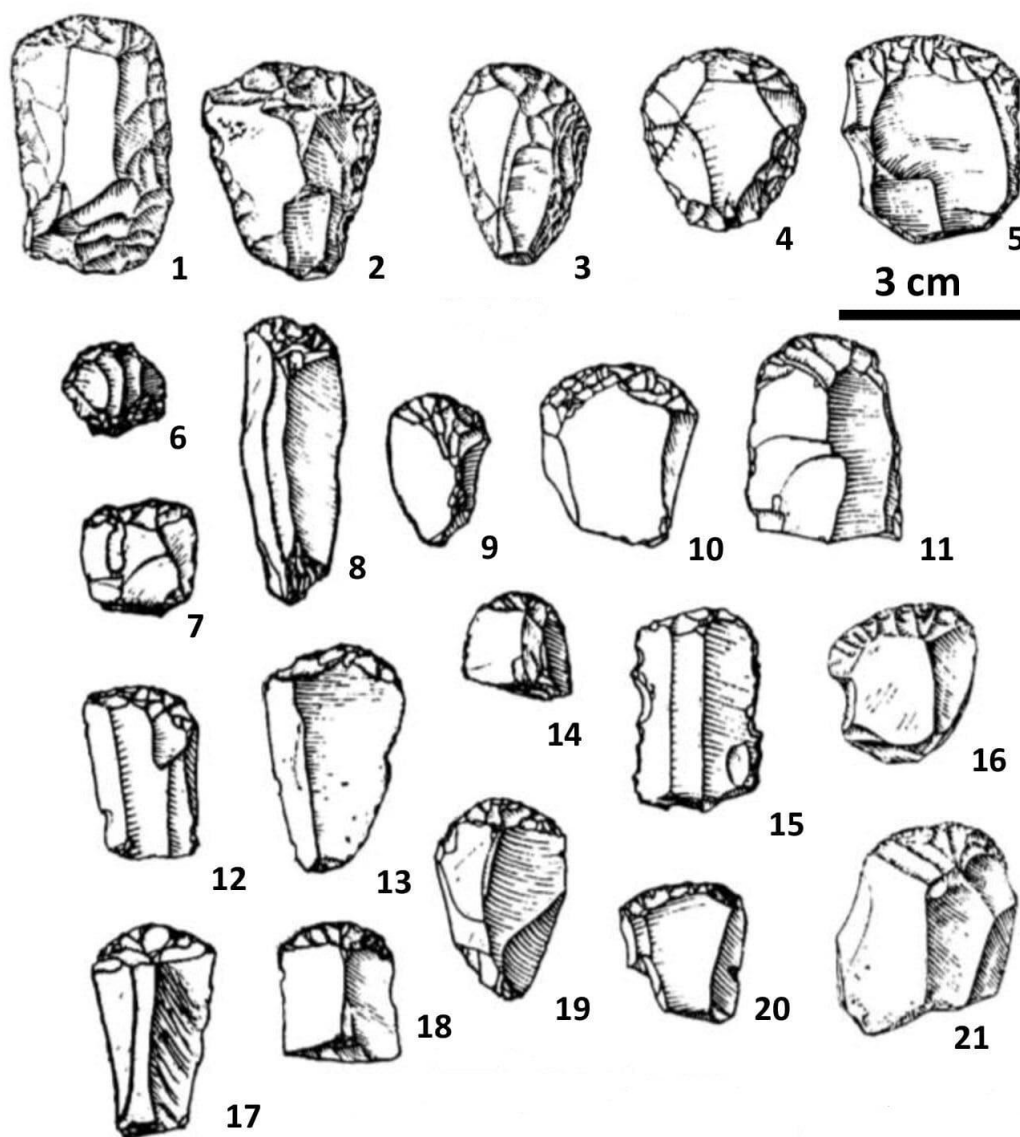


Fig. 49 – Endscrapers in the settlement of Bicaz-Ciungi (acc. to M. Bitiri et al., 1989).

The lithic items are quite scattered both vertically and horizontally. A greater concentration of lithic items and combustion structures was observed at the upper part of the

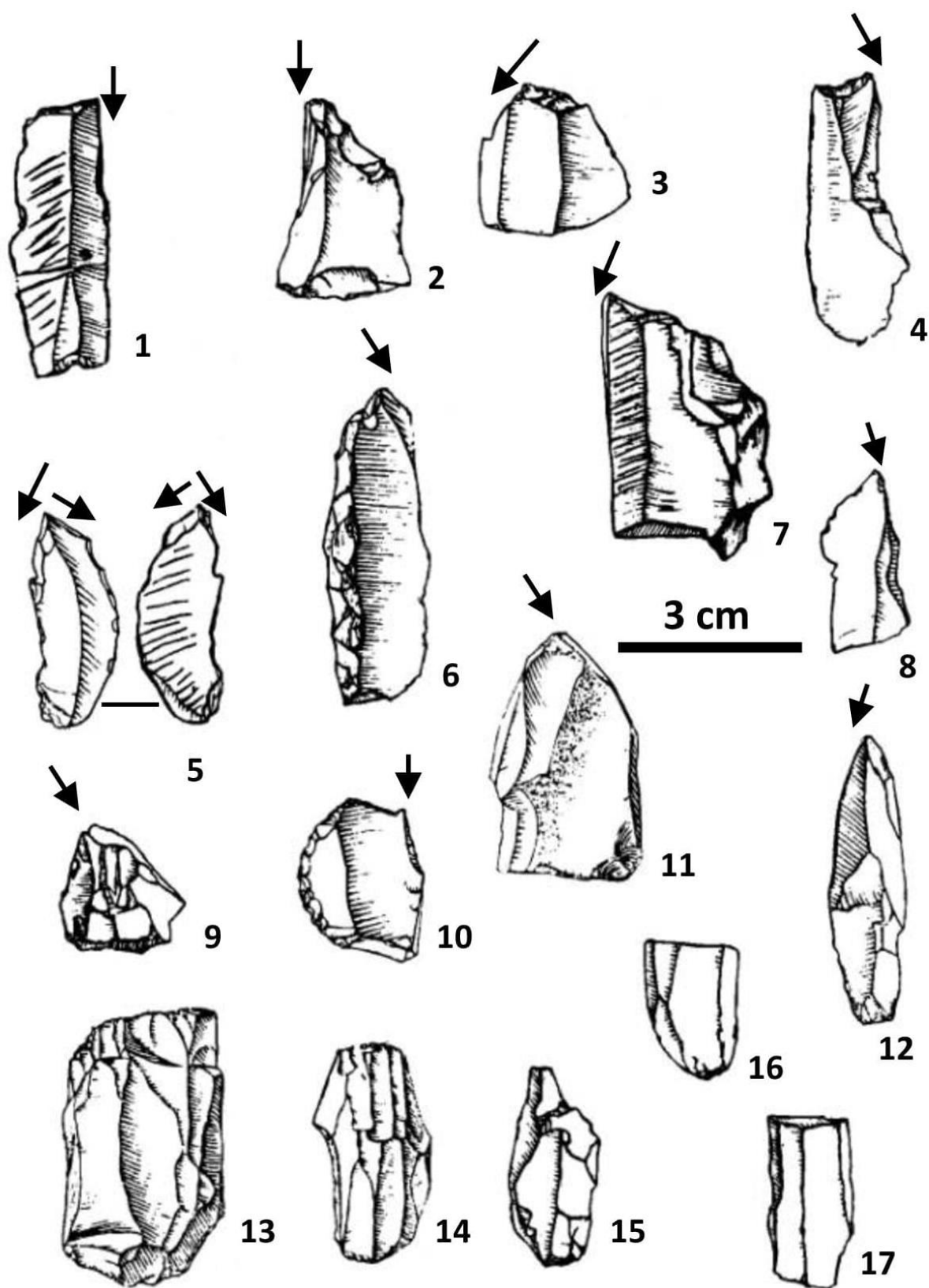


Fig. 50 – *Burins* (1-12) and *cores* (13-17) at Bicăz-Ciungi (acc. to [M. Bitiri et al., 1989](#)).

The Palaeolithic in the Mountain Sector of the Bistrița Valley-Old and New Interpretations

yellowish clay-sand layer with rusty and ash-coloured spots, at a depth of approximately 170-140 cm. From the lower part of this layer, sandstone pieces were recovered, which seem to come from a carving workshop. Despite the distribution of the pieces throughout the deposit, one might talk about an upper level between 170-140 cm and a lower level between 260-220 cm.

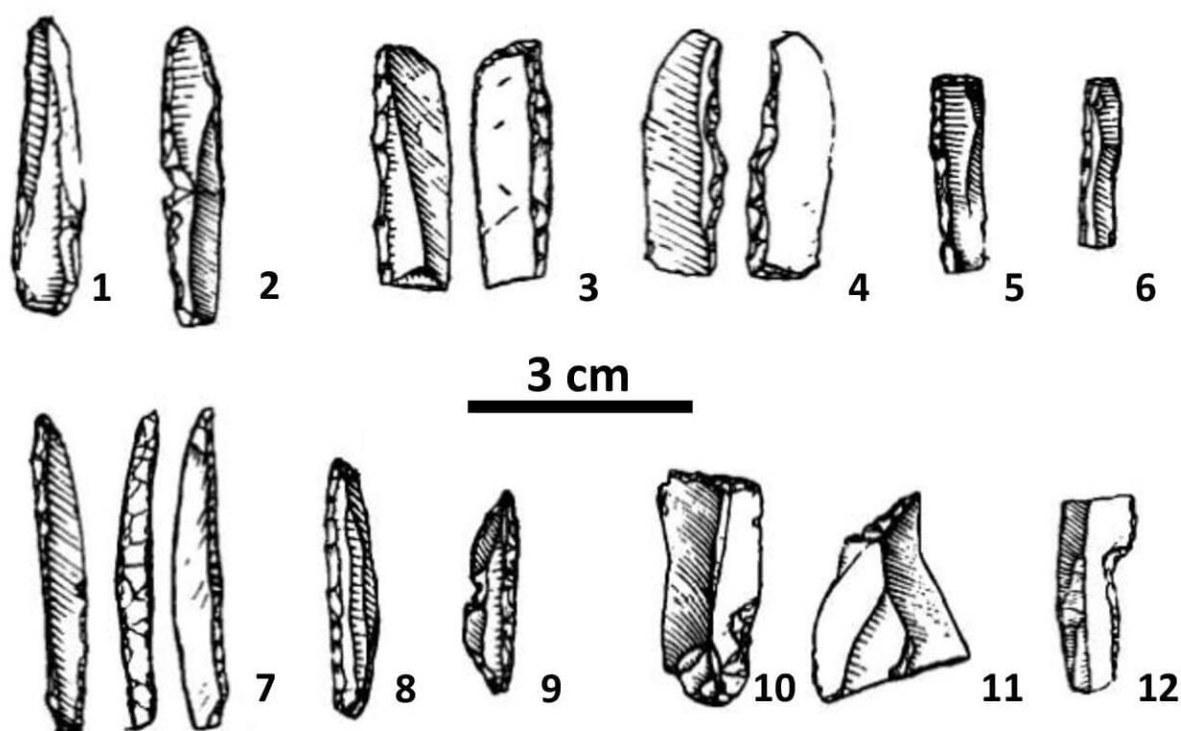


Fig. 51 – Lithic tools at Bicaz-Ciungi. 1-6 backed bladelets; 7-9 “la Gravette” points; 10-11 truncated retouched tools; 12 *à cran* tool (reworked and redefined after [M. Bitiri et al., 1989](#)).

The total number of lithic items recovered is 2,335, being made of menilite (61.97%), sandstone (17.60%), flint (16.27%), black shale (2.78%) etc. Among these, only 176 tools were identified (approximately 22%), distributed as follows: endscrapers - 47.73% ([fig. 49](#)), backed blades and *La Gravette* points - 32.39%, finely retouched blades - 8.52%, burins - 6.82% ([fig. 50](#)), truncated blades - 3.98% etc. ([fig. 51](#)).

We do not exclude the possibility that the settlement of Bicaz-Ciungi belongs to a relatively late Gravettian period, considering the fact that it was identified on a low terrace at an altitude of 15-18 metres. The endscrapers are simple, usually made on blades and small

flakes, often with retouched edges (fig. 49). Very few are double. Burins are much rarer than endscrapers, being made on blades and flakes, angle on a break and on truncated blades (M. Bitiri et al., 1989).

III.2. Curmătura Bardosului

The settlement at Curmătura Bardosului lies north of Bicaz Gorges, more specifically to the east-southeast of the Lapoș rivulet, on its left side, before the small gorges it has carved. The settlement is located in Gavril Lungu's courtyard in the village of Bicaz-Chei. Geographically, it is the area of the Hăghimaș Mountains, and the settlement is situated on a kind of mountain saddle or suspended depression, at an altitude of 1,135 m. Even just the position of the Curmătura Bardosului settlement and its high altitude were sufficient arguments for C. S. Nicolăescu-Plopșor to initially link it to the settlement at Scaune (M. Bitiri, V. Căpitanu, 1967).

The deposit of the settlement has been visibly affected at its upper part by erosion processes. Its stratigraphy is as follows: current soil; brown-yellowish layer; reddish-brown layer with a coarse structure; reddish-violet clayey layer, with angular limestone debris; reddish-bluish layer with greenish spots in places; deposit representing the alteration crust.

The cultural layer is at the surface, in the brown-yellowish layer, just below the Holocene soil. 250 artefacts have been recovered, of which 99 have been attributed to typical items. The lithic material is striking due to the absence of cores, given that the site is considered a workshop settlement, especially since no combustion structures have been discovered. It has been stated that the cores were fully exhausted because raw materials were quite a distance away (M. Bitiri, V. Căpitanu, 1967). We argue that this cannot be seen as an argument, given that the Hăghimaș Mountains excel in sources of high-quality raw materials such as jaspers, radiolarites and even flint (M. Cârciumaru et al., 2007). Additionally, the lithic inventory includes decortication flakes and carving flakes. In our opinion, flint, which was widely used by the prehistoric communities of Curmătura Bardosului, could very well have been obtained from flint plates attributed to the Ladinian, found in the outcrops of Dealul Criminișului, Hăghimaș, and Piatra Crăpată. Furthermore, V. Mutihac and L. Ionesi (1974) mentioned the presence of siliceous accidents in limestone along the Hăghimaș rivulet and in the area of Roșu Lake.

Backed bladelets are predominant, 45.71% (fig. 52/12-15), followed by endscrapers (20%) (fig. 52/1-9). Notched blades (8.57%) (fig. 52/17), burins (5.71%) (fig. 52/10-12), tanged

The Palaeolithic in the Mountain Sector of the Bistrița Valley-Old and New Interpretations

points (fig. 52/18-19) etc. have also been recovered. The artefacts as a whole are of small dimensions, especially the backed bladelets and *microgravette* points. Dark or bluish-violet flint was used in 95% of the cases (M. Bitiri, V. Căpitanu, 1967; M. Bitiri et al., 1989).

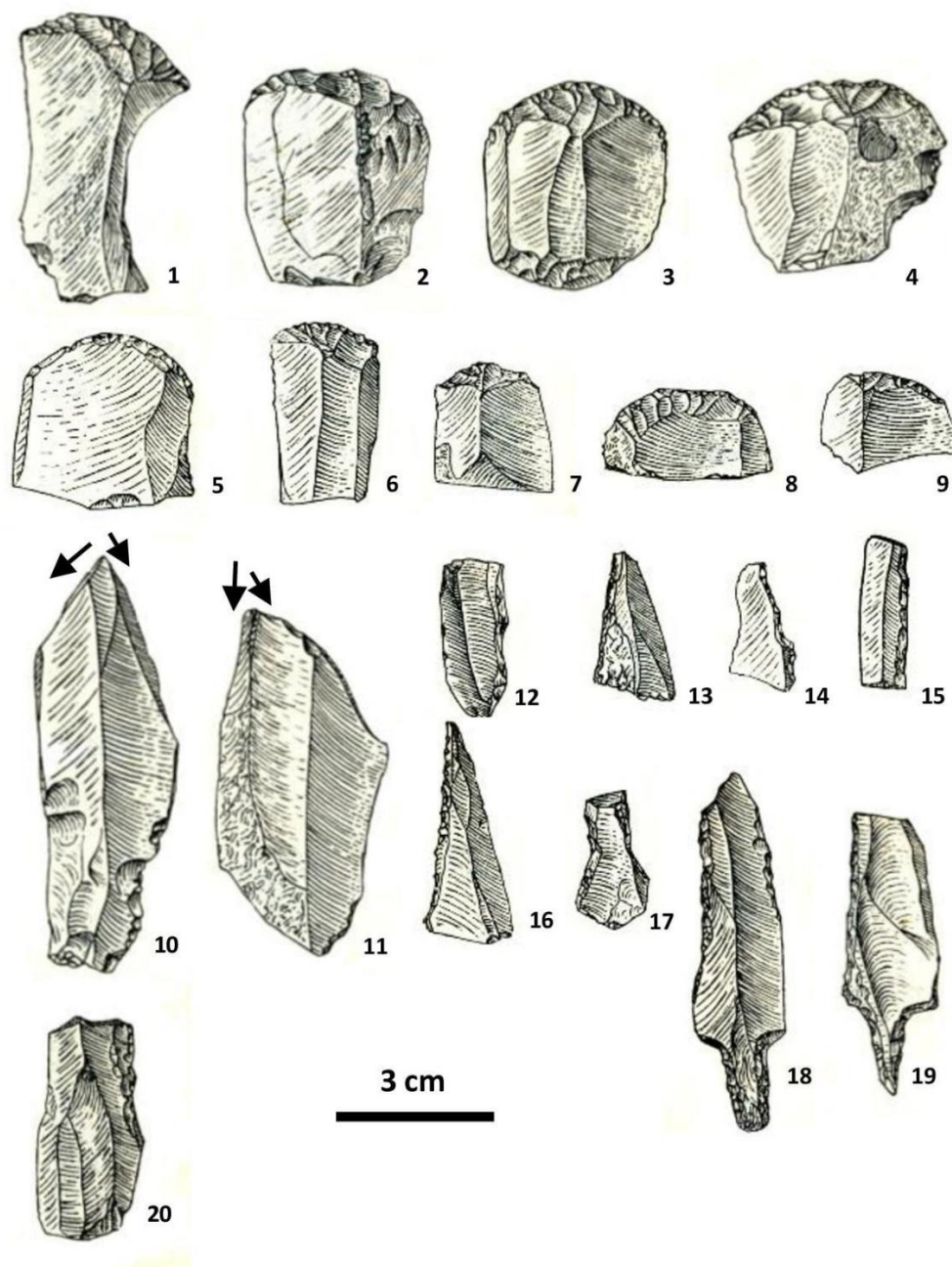


Fig. 52 – Lithic tools at Bicăz-Curmătura Bardosului. 1-9 endscrapers; 10-11 *burins*; 12-15 backed bladelets; 16 “la Gravette” point; 17 notched tool; 18-19 tanged points; 20 fragmented blade retouched on one side (reworked and redefined after M. Bitiri et al., 1989).

Due to its location at an altitude of over 1000 metres, the position of the cultural level just below the current soil and the lithic inventory, particularly the presence of tanged points,

the Curmătura Bardosului settlement has been associated with the settlement at Scaune, considered Swiderian for a long time (M. Bitiri et al., 1989). However, as we have seen, the myth of the Swiderian in the Eastern Carpathians should be abandoned. Based on sufficient arguments of a chrono-climatic nature and absolute C-14 dating data, it can be concluded that at Scaune and, consequently, at Curmătura Bardosului, one cannot speak of Palaeolithic communities but possibly a series of Neolithic populations who arrived in the mountainous area to hunt.

III.3. Izvorul Alb

The village of Izvorul Alb, along with Secu in its immediate vicinity, are administratively part of the town of Bicăz, which is over 10 km away (fig. 53/1). At Izvorul Alb, two points have been discovered that have provided rich and interesting Palaeolithic lithic artefacts, the Baicu Ridge and Piciorul Gol (fig. 53/1-2). Both are located at the confluence of the Izvorul Alb stream with the Bistrița River: Baicu Ridge on the right side of Izvorul Alb (figs. 53/1; 54-65), and Piciorul Gol on the left side. Both settlements are located on the right side of the Bistrița River.

Geomorphologically, Baicu Ridge appears as a fan-shaped succession of terraces formed at the confluence of Izvorul Alb with the Bistrița River, which penetrate deep into the Bistrița Valley like a spur (figs. 53-56). Thus, in this area, the Bistrița Valley was severely narrowed down and pushed towards the left bank, resulting in the emergence of a basin similar to the Răpciuni Basin, marked by the spur at Cetățica.

The most developed terrace is at an elevation of 35-40 metres relative to the old course of the Bistrița River, and above it, there are terraces at elevations of 55-65 metres, 80-100 metres, and even spurs with higher terraces (fig. 56).

Archaeological research began at Izvorul Alb in 1979 as a result of occasional discoveries of lithic items by the locals and later by Mihai Matei, the museographer at the Bicăz Museum at the time. Between 1979 and 1984, archaeological investigations were conducted almost every year, consisting of the recovery of items from the soil surface; and the first excavations in 1979-1980 revealed the presence of multiple occupation phases at both Baicu Ridge and Piciorul Gol. During that time, 85 flint items were discovered at different depths, representing the first lithic artefacts found *in situ* at Izvorul Alb (F. Mogoșanu, M. Matei, 1981).

The stratigraphy of the deposit specified as a result of these investigations is as follows (fig. 57): 1- current soil; 2- heavily disturbed loess layer, grey-yellowish in colour, with reddish

The Palaeolithic in the Mountain Sector of the Bistrița Valley-Old and New Interpretations



Fig. 53 – Palaeolithic settlements at Izvorul Alb. 1-general view of the two sites: Baicu and Piciorul Gol; 2-3 - Baicu spur (photo 2 [Cristian Preutu](#)).



Fig. 54 – Culmea Baicului with the sequence of terraces (photo [Cristian Preutu](#)).



Fig. 55 – The Izvorul Alb settlement in a winter landscape, probably similar to that encountered during the Ice Age (photo [Ion Panaite](#)).

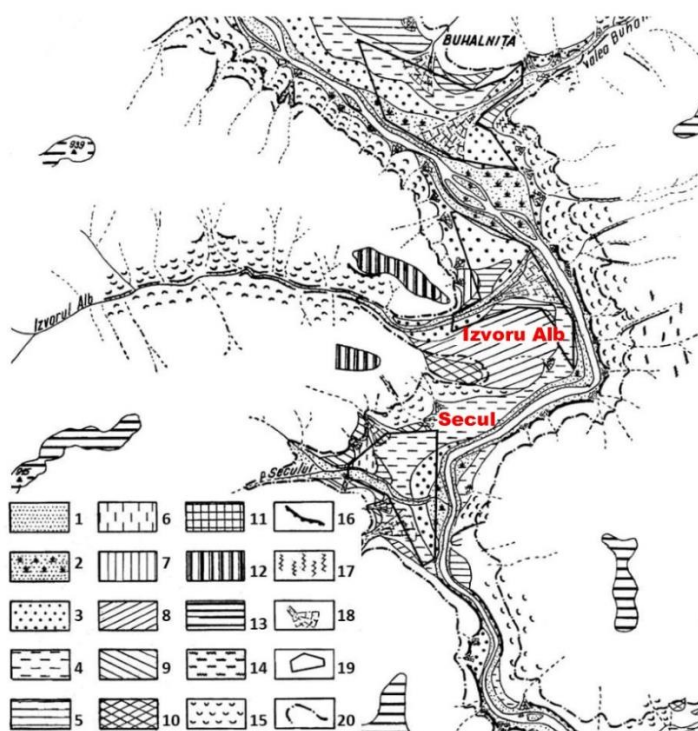


Fig. 56 – Geomorphological map of the Bistrița Valley between the confluences with the rivulets Hangu and Potoci (modified after L. Badea and Gh. Popa, 1961). 1-current riverbed; 2-major riverbed; 3-the 1-3 m terrace; 4-the 4-6 m terrace; 5-the 8-12 m terrace; 6-the 15-17 m terrace; 7- the 20-25 m terrace; 8- the 35-40 m terrace; 9- the 55-65 m terrace; 10- the 80-100 m terrace; 11- the 130-150 m terrace; 12- the 200-240 m terrace; 13-the 900-1000 m level; 14-solifluctions; 15-slides, 16- steep erosion; 17- torrential erosion; 18- outfall; 19-outline of villages; 20- approximate limit of the lake (acc. to [M. Cărciumaru et al., 2023](#)).

The Palaeolithic in the Mountain Sector of the Bistrița Valley-Old and New Interpretations

spots; 3- layer with loessoid aspect, reddish-yellowish; 4- very hard reddish-brown layer; 5- compact layer, brown with yellowish shades and vertical greyish-blue infiltrations; 6- reddish layer with increasingly bright shades towards the base; 7- terrace gravels and sands (F. Mogoșanu, M. Matei, 1981).

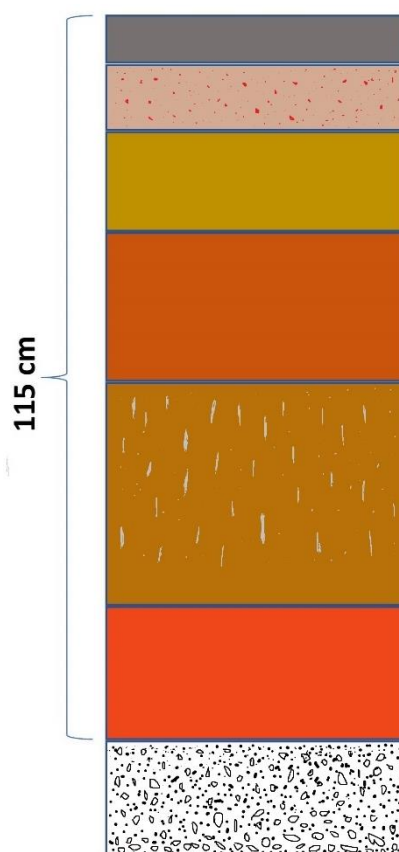


Fig. 57 – Reconstruction of a stratigraphic profile at Baicu-Izvorul Alb. 1- current soil; 2- highly re-stratified loess layer, grey-yellowish in colour with reddish spots; 3- reddish-yellowish layer with loessoid aspect; 4- very hard brown-reddish layer; 5- compact layer, brown with yellowish shades and vertical grey-bluish infiltrations; 6- reddish layer with increasingly bright shades towards the base; 7- terrace gravels and sands.

In 1981, the excavations focused mainly on the Piciorul Gol area, as the high-water level of the lake did not allow similar research on the low terrace at Baicu. The very steep slope of Piciorul Gol hill led to numerous deposit slides, sometimes in compact packages. This allowed for archaeological excavations to be carried out in such a displaced baulk, without affecting the horizontality of the layers, over a thickness of approximately 250 cm. The recovered items led to the identification of two levels of Gravettian occupation (F. Mogoșanu, M. Matei, 1983).

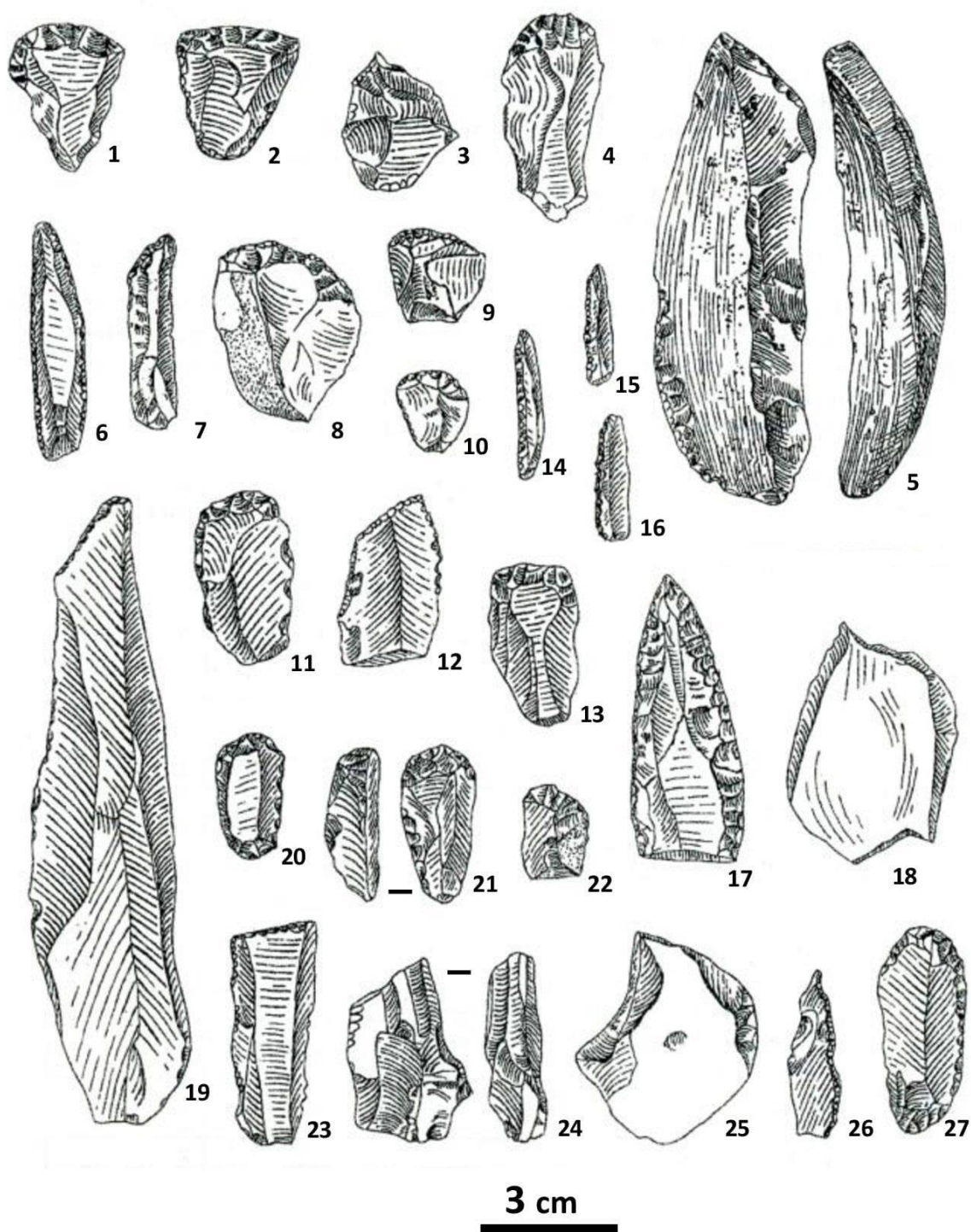


Fig. 58 – Lithic tools at Izvorul Alb: Baicu (1-18) and Piciorul Gol (19-27). 1-2, 4, 8-11, 22 – endscrapers; 3, 5, 18, 24-25 - *burins*; 6 – retouched blade; 7, 12, 19, 23 – oblique truncated blades; 14-15 – *microgravette*; 16 – backed bladelet; 17 – double scraper on large blade; 20-21, 27 – double endscrapers; 26 – atypical *la Gravette* point (acc. to Al. Păunescu, 1998).

The Palaeolithic in the Mountain Sector of the Bistrița Valley-Old and New Interpretations

In 1982, excavations were resumed on the Baicu terrace, which had emerged from the water in the form of the well-known beach in this area (figs. 53, 54). A long section, reaching almost to the tip of the terrace, did not yield the expected results. Instead, one of the smaller sections, located close to the mouth of the Izvorul Alb stream on the lake, on the northern side of the terrace, near the old pier, offered the opportunity to discover several items *in situ*. The most consistent Gravettian level seems to concentrate at a depth of approximately 90-120 cm, within the reddish-yellowish loessoid deposit. The oldest items were found at the contact between the reddish layer 6 with increasingly bright shades towards the base and the brown layer 5 with yellowish shades and vertical greyish-blue infiltrations (fig. 57). The lithic inventory from this level, though limited in number, consisted of push-plane (*rabot*) scraper, an endscraper on a long sandstone blade end, a dihedral burin made of menilite and another multiple burin made of black shale. The artefacts from the upper Gravettian levels are predominantly made of flint, represented by endscrapers and blades (fig. 58).

Therefore, the research conducted by F. Mogoșanu and M. Matei (1981; 1983) identified two levels of Gravettian occupation at Piciorul Gol, and several Gravettian levels and possibly one Epigravettian level on the Baicu terrace.

III.3.1. Recent research at Izvorul Alb

The impressive collection, resulted from the recovery of artefacts over the years, from 1979 until the present, totals nearly 3,000 lithic items. This is a significant reason for the particular interest in surface finds in this area. The discovery of such a large number of artefacts on the surface was entailed by the multitude and variety of landslides that affected this region, from isolated landslides along torrential valleys to landslides on extensive surfaces and even the displacement of sedimentary deposits in packages, which led to the emergence of numerous diluvial-colluvial irregularities on terrace treads. The most extensive landslides and ground degradation occurred on the southern slope of Izvorul Alb rivulet. Landslides still occur today, mainly on the right slope of the stream, where mass movements have dammed the valley in its middle third (C. Brânduș et al., 2006).

However, after the surveys conducted in 1979-1982 (F. Mogoșanu, M. Matei, 1983), the settlements at Izvorul Alb remained overshadowed for a long time. The repeated visits to Izvorul Alb in the past 10 years of the team of Palaeolithic researchers from the Museum of Human Evolution and Technology in the Palaeolithic in Târgoviște, the consultation of the

impressive lithic material collection stored at the Museum in Bicăz, the ongoing recovery of many lithic items from the surface of the Baicu terrace and even from Piciorul Gol led to a series of surveys being carried out in 2019 and 2020, deep enough to identify the entire sequence of geological layers of the terrace deposit at a relative altitude of 35-40 metres. The rationale for such a decision was mainly driven by the fact that the study of the collection at the Museum in Bicăz, conducted by Elena-Cristina Nițu, concluded that the lithic materials have a certain coherence, as they even allowed for reassembling.

The research conducted by the team from the Museum in Târgoviște was to begin with an elaborate study of a unique collection of lithic materials collected by Mihai Matei in 1977 and 1978, before the research coordinated by F. Mogoșanu in 1979. This collection was not included in the subsequently published articles (F. Mogoșanu, M. Matei, 1981, 1983; A. Păunescu, 1998).

The collection analysed by our team comprises a total of 262 items, with 216 collected from the Baicu site and 46 from Piciorul Gol (E.-C. Nițu et al., 2018).

III.3.1.1. Considerations on the sources of raw materials

It has been established that the lithic items from Piciorul Gol were mainly knapped from translucent smoky flint, with a bluish or white patina. However, at Baicu, the raw material used is much more varied, including flint, cherts/menilites, Audia black shale, siliceous sandstone, jasper etc. Flint is present in several varieties: translucent smoky, translucent whitish, brown etc. At Baicu, the most commonly used was chert/menilite, as also shown in other published collections from Izvorul Alb (F. Mogoșanu, M. Matei, 1981, 1983; A. Păunescu, 1998).

The different proportion of raw materials depending on the general technical categories is especially interesting. Thus, most flakes were carved from flint, while laminar products (blades and bladelets) and cores were obtained from chert/menilite.

Most of the artefacts are patinated. These post-depositional modifications are complex, their origin being determined by various factors, such as the alkalinity of the deposit from which the items come, the hydration of the materials after being extracted from the initial deposit and exposed to the sun (D. Stapert, 1976; A. L. Van Gijn, 1989).

The patina on the items is uneven and its intensity differs at Piciorul Gol and Baicu. There are items with patina only on one side, while the other surface has a fresh appearance. From our observations, the formation of patina on the artefacts from Izvorul Alb was generated by prolonged exposure to the sun, going through two phases. Initially, a bluish film formed,

The Palaeolithic in the Mountain Sector of the Bistrița Valley-Old and New Interpretations

which later turned white (D. Stapert, 1976). Considering these two phases, it has been found that the bluish film is more present on the artefacts recovered from the Baicu site, while the bluish-whitish film is more present on the artefacts from Piciorul Gol (fig. 59).

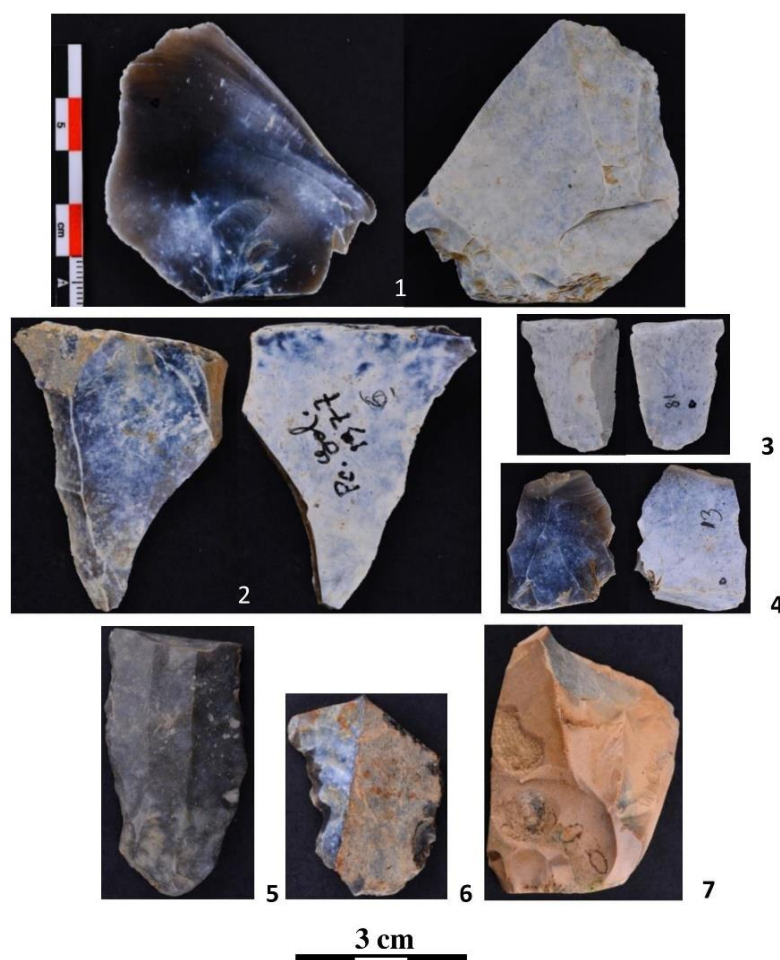


Fig. 59 – Post-depositional surface changes of lithic materials at Piciorul Gol (1-4) and Baicu (5-7). 1-4, 6 patina on flint flakes; 5 rubbing, abrasion, polish on the retouched blade fragment; 6 abrasion, polish and damage of edges; 7 gelifraction (acc. to E.-C. Nițu et al., 2018).

Among other aspects that caused post-depositional alterations to the items, processes such as rubbing, abrasion, polish, damage to the edges of the pieces due to trampling etc. have been observed. The Piciorul Gol items have been much less affected by such processes (only three pieces) than those from Baicu (around 10%). However, considering that the lithic pieces were collected from surfaces periodically freed from the lake waters, the proportion of post-

depositional modified artefacts is low. There is a supposition that the items from Baicu originate from deposits on the terrace at a relative altitude of 35-40 metres.

III.3.1.2. The lithic material from Piciorul Gol

The lithic inventory consists of 3 cores, 26 flakes (5 of which are smaller than 25 mm), 10 blades, 2 bladelets (including one burin), and 5 debitage residues.

The cores are highly characteristic, with two being made of flint and one made of menilite. The flint cores were produced with the same intention of obtaining bladelets, but through different methods: one with a single narrow striking platform, the other with a double striking platform. The menilite core is laminar, with a double-facet striking platform and a debitage surface (fig. 60).

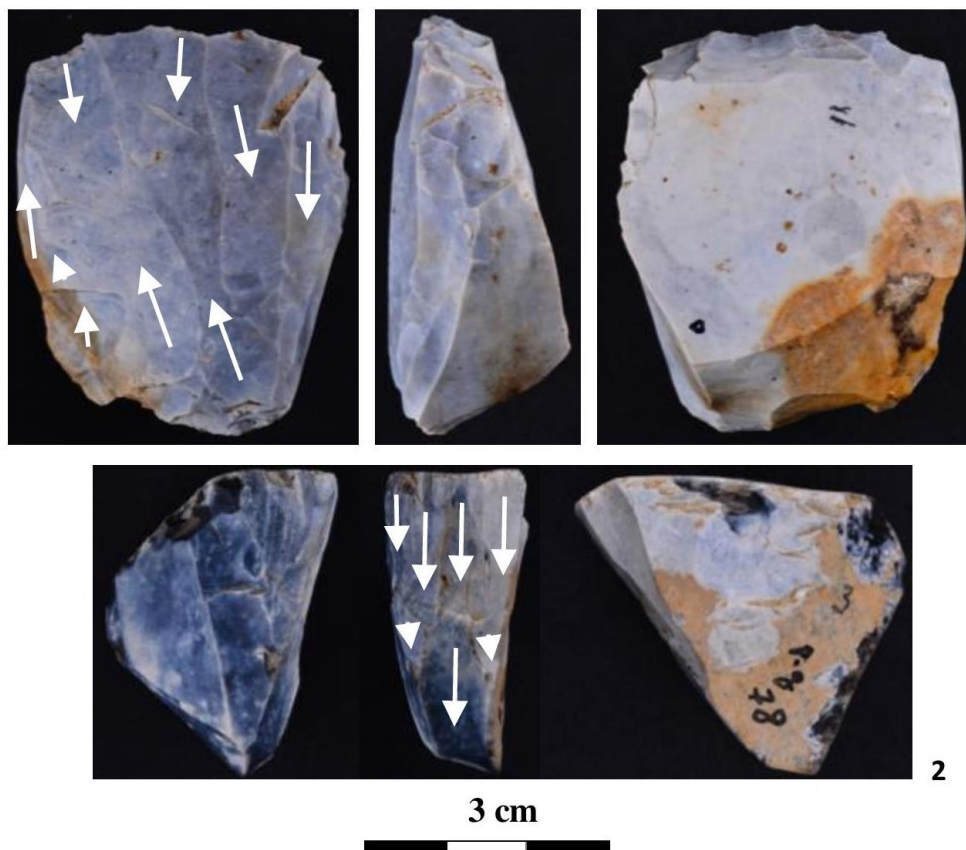


Fig. 60 – Cores at Izvorul Alb-Piciorul Gol (acc. to [E.-C. Nițu et al., 2018](#)).

As for cortical products, they are scarce, as are the technical items resulting from core shaping, which are represented by a few flakes and 4 blades for rejuvenating debitage surfaces

The Palaeolithic in the Mountain Sector of the Bistrița Valley-Old and New Interpretations

or core edges. The blades are fragmented, with only one being intact, even though it was obtained from joining two fragments. Similarly, the two bladelets are fragmented.

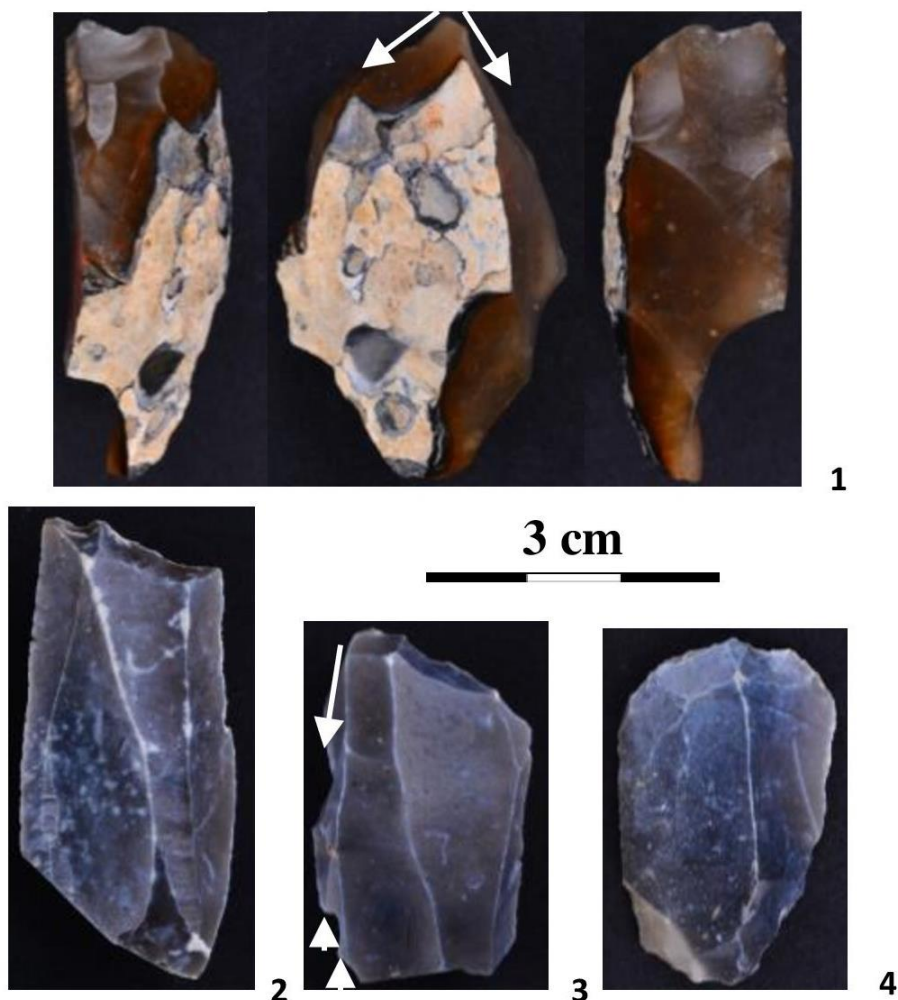


Fig. 61 - *Burins* at Piciorul Gol. 1 carenated burin (thermal alteration is to be noted); 2 truncated blade; 3 burin on truncation; 4 endscraper (acc. to E.-C. Nițu et al., 2018).

Regarding the dimensions of the items, it can be said that the majority of flakes have lengths between 30 and 50 mm, but there are also flakes smaller than 20 mm. As for the blades, due to the fact that they are highly fragmented, only their width has been measured, ranging from 20 to 25 mm.

In terms of the techniques used, they vary depending on the products. Hard percussion is used for flake and partial blade debitage, while soft percussion is used for obtaining blades and bladelets. Typologically, 3 burins (dihedral, carenated, and on oblique truncation), 2

oblique truncated blades, 1 retouched blade, and 1 endscraper on retouched flake have been identified (fig. 61).

III.3.1.3. The lithic material from Baicu

The lithic inventory from this collection recovered from the Baicu terrace consists of 9 cores, 87 flakes, 68 blades, 18 bladelets and 33 debitage waste.

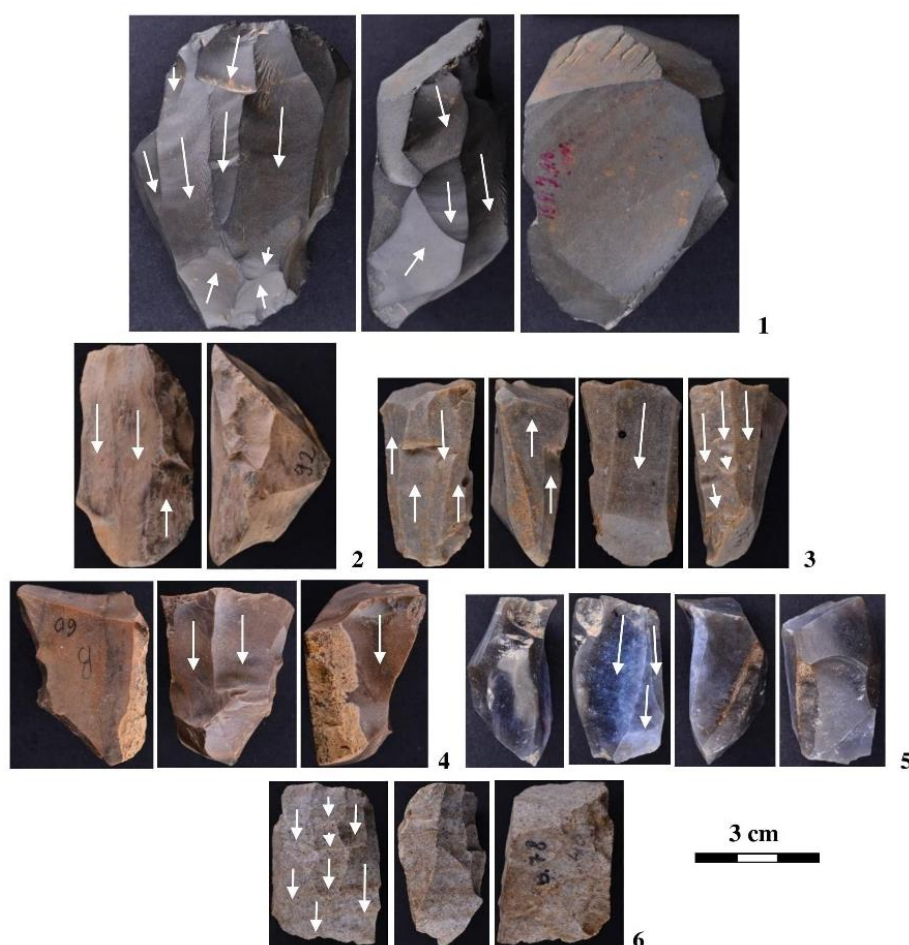


Fig. 62 – Various types of blades and bladelets cores (acc. to E.-C. Nițu et al., 2018).

Most cores are the result of blade and bladelet production, often alternating from the same core. There is one exception, where the last flakes from a core were small in size, indicating that the initial production purpose may have been different.

The production stages reflect a volumetric exploitation of cores through multiple methods (fig. 62): frontal reduction, cores with a single striking platform, unipolar scars (3); semi-rotating reduction, single or double platform cores, with one or two debitage surfaces, and

The Palaeolithic in the Mountain Sector of the Bistrița Valley-Old and New Interpretations

unipolar scars (4); rotating reduction, double platform cores, bipolar scars (1). The cores from Baicu are generally exhausted, except for one made of Audia black shale that was abandoned. Most of them are between 30 and 40 mm long, and the last scars are often blades or microlithic items. Microlithism is also exhibited in the case of other technical categories of the collection (flakes, blades).

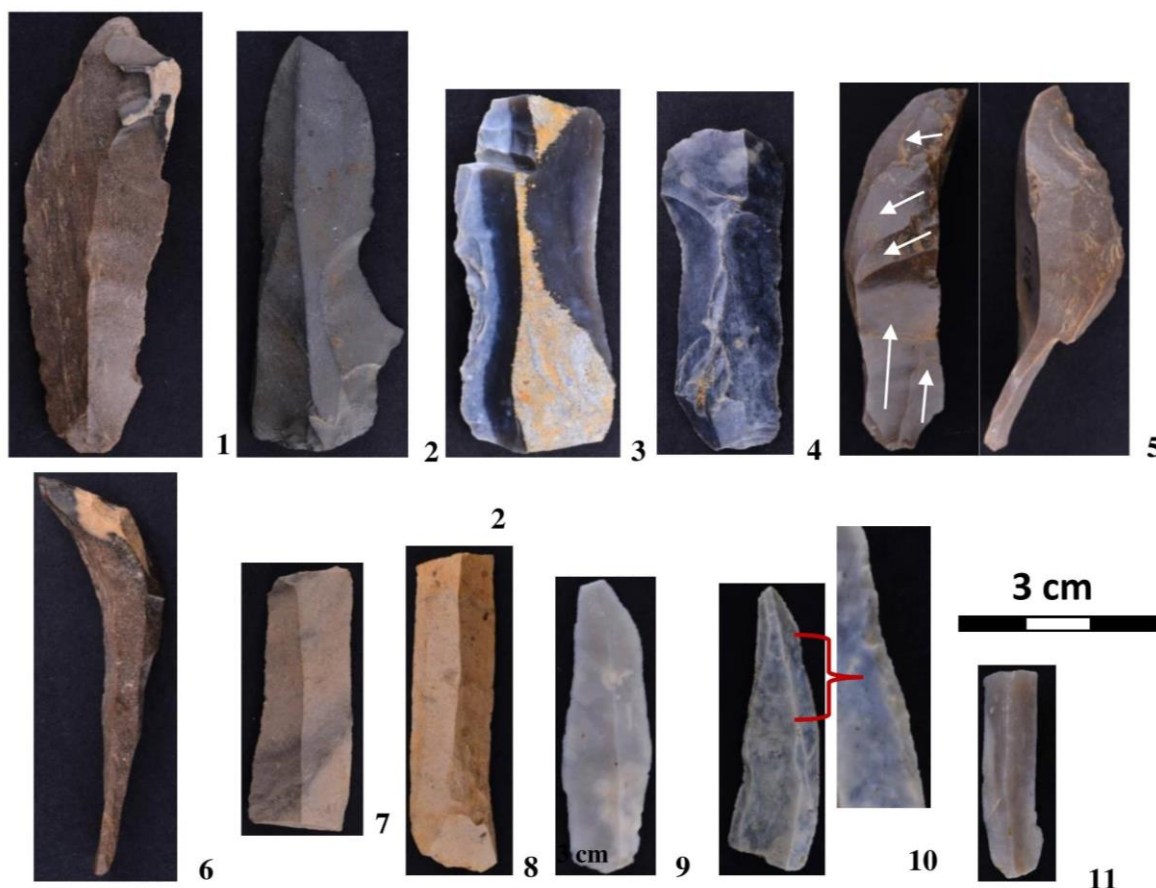


Fig. 63 – Laminar products. 1-5 blades; 6-11 bladelets (acc. to E.-C. Nițu et al., 2018).

Half of this collection consists of laminar products, but they are highly fragmented, with around 70% of blades in this state (fig. 63). Hard percussion is the most commonly used technique, as only 20% of blades are produced through soft percussion. Marks from accidental knapping are also present. It is interesting that half of the blades are products of core preparation and maintenance, such as the crested blades and secondary semi-finished products from the rejuvenation of core debitage surfaces. In 60% of cases, the dorsal scars on their surface are unipolar. The blanks have small widths (13-20 mm), the longest items being two sandstone blades measuring 80 mm, while the rest of the products are 30 to 60 mm long (fig. 63/1-5).

The bladelets are just as fragmented (fig. 63/6-11). There are larger bladelets that are actually burin spall detachments resulting from the transformation of some flakes into cores, which might represent a particularity of the lithic assemblage from the Baicu ridge.

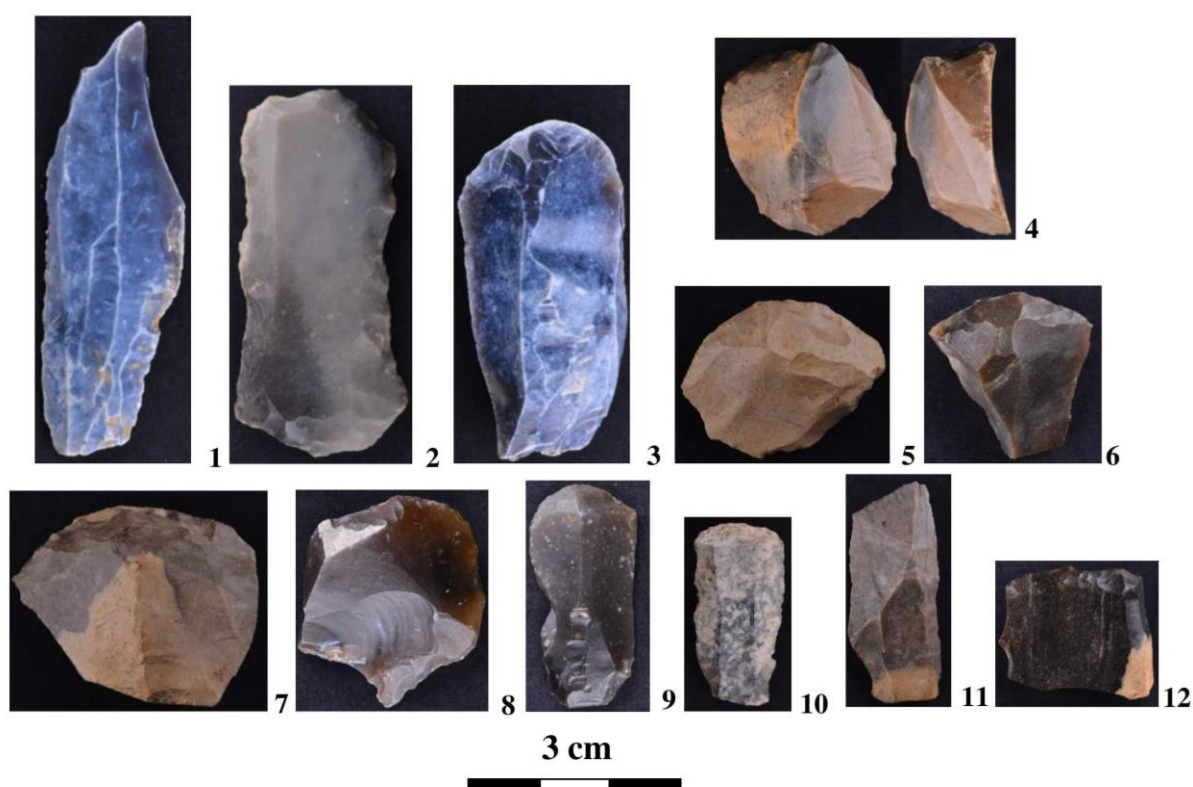


Fig. 64 – Tools at Baicu. 1 burin on truncated blade; 2-10 enscrapers; 11-12 truncated blades (acc. to E.-C. Nițu et al., 2018).

A significant part of the flakes (70%) are small in size, under 40 mm, with many of them falling into the category of micro-flakes (≤ 20 mm). They are primarily derived from the preparation or maintenance of laminar cores, although cortical products resulted from the removal of cortex or the extension of the debitage surfaces are also present. The majority of these flakes have unipolar dorsal scars on their surface, and many of them are laminar. The most commonly used technique was direct hard percussion, although soft percussion was not completely absent.

Overall, it can be argued that the artefacts from Baicu primarily represent the production of blades and bladelets, often obtained alternately from the same type of core. An interesting

The Palaeolithic in the Mountain Sector of the Bistrița Valley-Old and New Interpretations

aspect is the production of certain blades through thickness exploitation of flakes, even those of larger dimensions.

Among the tools, endscrapers are predominant ([fig. 64](#)), with 9 specimens, and among them, the microlithic ones are quite numerous. They were mostly worked on small-sized flakes. Additionally, two fragments of truncated blades, one on a truncated blade and a drill on a bladelet, were identified.

The items found on the Baicu terrace do not exhibit the same homogeneity as those from Piciorul Gol. The explanation may be that at Baicu, the waters of the lake have eroded at least two occupational sequences, one of which is very late, most likely belonging to an Epigravettian or even Epipalaeolithic period, considering the significant microlithic component.



Following the study of the lithic material of this collection, conducted by Elena-Cristina Nițu ([E.-C. Nițu et al., 2018](#)), as well as the observations made on the materials collected from Izvorul Alb in 1979-1982, stored at the Museum in Bicaz or at the Museum of Natural Sciences in Piatra Neamț, a first hypothesis may be formulated, according to which there are some differences between the items collected in the two places, Baicu and Piciorul Gol. In addition to the differences in the raw materials used, the technical features and composition of the debitage products, other distinguishing elements have also been identified.

It has often been argued that the bluish or white flint, identified in all settlements along the Bistrița Valley, originates from the Prut Valley, located approximately 200 km away. Our conclusions have specified that the flint used at Izvorul Alb, even though it shows the same type of patina as the one in the Prut Valley, differs, at least macroscopically. On the other hand, the occurrence of various technical categories made from this raw material, including products resulting from cortex removal and cores, points to local manufacturing and probably a supply from an area near the settlements ([E.-C. Nițu et al., 2018](#)). Because the oldest levels in the Bistrița Valley (24-27 ka uncal. B.P.) have a higher percentage of flint compared to other sources of raw material, it has been considered that this aspect is an argument in favour of the assumption that the items from Piciorul Gol are older than those discovered at Baicu ([F. Mogoșanu, M. Matei, 1981, 1983](#)). From the very outset, it should be emphasised that the

proportion of raw material cannot constitute a chronological argument. Our studies have revealed that the presence of microlithic tools at Baicu and their absence in the materials from Piciorul Gol can rather be an argument for the older age of the items found in the latter spot.

Without a clear stratigraphic context and without any dating, materials are difficult to classify chrono-culturally. In general, some of the items found on the beach at Baicu come from a rather late Palaeolithic level, Epigravettian or even Epipalaeolithic. The rest of the materials may belong to Gravettian traditions *sensu lato*, especially since among them, there are some backed bladelets and *la Gravette* points in some collections.

III.3.1.4. Recent surveys at Baicu

Considering the large number of lithic materials collected over time, the identification of geological deposits that could preserve potential Palaeolithic occupations has become a necessity at Izvorul Alb. However, the endeavour is difficult due to the highly complicated geomorphology of the land, characterised by large-scale landslides and the potential destruction of deposits containing Palaeolithic occupations. On the other hand, at least one settlement, indicated by the significant number of artefacts collected from the lakeshore at Baicu, has been irretrievably lost due to erosion caused by fluctuating water levels. Nevertheless, the area of Izvorul Alb has potential for possible Palaeolithic discoveries, which might connect the settlements located in the Ceahlău basin with the site at Poiana Cireșului-Piatra Neamț. All of these factors served as important arguments that prompted the group of Palaeolithic researchers from the Museum of Human Evolution and Technology in the Palaeolithic (Târgoviște) to conduct surveys at various points along the Baicu ridge, starting in 2019.

The geomorphology of the area, with the terraces at the confluence of the Izvorul Alb stream with the Bistrița River arranged in a fan-shaped pattern, gives the landscape an amphitheatre-like appearance (figs. 53-54). Undoubtedly, this feature was also attractive to the Gravettian communities that moved along the Bistrița Valley from the Subcarpathian region deep into the mountains, reaching even the foothills of the Ceahlău Mountains. Furthermore, a well-defined basin along the Bistrița Valley, similar to the one at Cetățica, further enhanced the appeal of the area, as already mentioned (fig. 65). All of these elements presented a challenge for the team of Palaeolithic researchers to initiate a new phase of archaeological research in the respective area.

As a strategy, a cartographic documentation of the area was carried out, using maps made before the formation of the reservoir, in order to delimit all the terraces, including those

The Palaeolithic in the Mountain Sector of the Bistrița Valley-Old and New Interpretations



Fig. 65 – Location of surveys on Baicu terrace (photo [Cristian Preutu](#)).

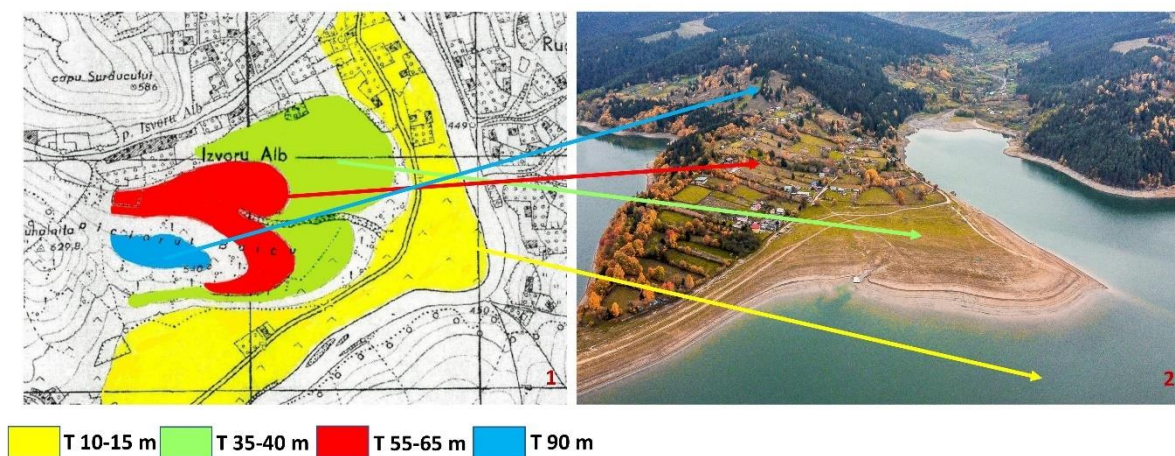


Fig. 66 – Marking of terraces at Izvorul Alb using the topographic map (1- the 10-15 m terrace; 2- the 35-40 m terrace; 3- the 55-65 m terrace; 4- the 90 m terrace) and their correlation with the current situation.



Fig. 67 – Baicu - Survey I. 1-general view; 2- items *in situ*; 3- stratigraphic profile (1- curent soil; 2-highly re-stratified loess layer, grey-yellowish with reddish spots; 3- reddish-yellowish layer with loessoid aspect; 4- very hard brown-reddish layer; 5- compact layer, brown with yellowish shades and vertical grey-bluish infiltrations.



Fig. 68 – Baicu - Survey III.1-2 images during the excavation; 3-4 stratigraphic profile.

The Palaeolithic in the Mountain Sector of the Bistrița Valley-Old and New Interpretations



Fig. 69 – Baicu – Survey IV. 1-2 images during the excavations; 3-4 stratigraphic profiles (1- current soil; 2- highly re-stratified loess layer, grey-yellowish with reddish spots; 3- reddish-yellowish layer with loessoid aspect; 4- very hard brown-reddish layer; 5- compact layer, brown with yellowish shades and vertical grey-bluish infiltrations).



Fig. 70 – Baicu – Survey V. 1-2 general images; 3-survey; 4-5 – stratigraphic profiles (1- current soil; 2- highly re-stratified loess layer, grey-yellowish with reddish spots; 3- reddish-yellowish layer with loessoid aspect; 4- very hard brown-reddish layer; 5- compact layer, brown with yellowish shades and vertical grey-bluish infiltrations).

currently submerged (fig. 66/1). Thus, the terraces that could potentially serve as attraction areas for Palaeolithic humans were identified. Among the four cartographically delimited terraces, the 10-15 m terrace, where the old Izvorul Alb village and the main road of the locality were situated, is now covered by the lake's waters and even during significant water level decreases, it remains submerged (fig. 66/1-2). It is not excluded that the possible Epigravettian occupation, indicated by the typology of certain items frequently found on the Baicu beach, could be embedded in the deposits of this terrace. This would explain their emergence after each lake level decrease, as a result of wave action that displaced them from the cultural layer within the deposit of this terrace.

On the topographic map, the 35-40 m terrace, which easily corresponds to the spur at Baicu (fig. 66/1), has been delineated quite revealingly. The 55-65 metre terrace is also well delimited, both on the map and in the field. The front of this terrace has been worn off due to erosion and denudation processes, as well as anthropogenic activities. Currently, it is densely populated and used for agriculture. These two terraces, 35-40 m and 55-65 m, along with the 10-15 m terrace that had existed before the lake appeared, have contributed to creating this amphitheatre-like aspect of the area.

Based on these elements, we proceeded to locate the placement of the first surveys. We adopted a method of conducting relatively small but sufficiently extensive surveys to identify possible clusters of lithic artefacts and combustion structures. The surveys were at least of 2/1 m in size.

After several years of visiting Izvorul Alb, especially the 35-40 m terrace when it was exposed, in order to identify the locations where Palaeolithic lithic items were concentrated, we conducted the first surveys in 2019. The first survey was located on the right side of the Izvorul Alb stream (fig. 67), and the second one was a short distance away, further south, i.e., slightly further from the shore. Survey III actually represented the deep embankment of the southern slope at Baicu, specifically on the southern side facing Secu (fig. 68). Survey IV was located on the northern side, slightly downstream from survey I (fig. 69).

In 2020, considering the limited time we had, we only carried out one survey, labelled V. It was conducted in close proximity to survey I (fig. 70).

It was only in surveys I, IV and V that the succession of layers, which we presented in the form of a stratigraphic profile, based on the descriptions by F. Mogoșanu and M. Matei (1981; 1983) (fig. 57), was identified, sometimes with some difficulty. Naturally, we tried to

The Palaeolithic in the Mountain Sector of the Bistrița Valley-Old and New Interpretations

maintain the same numbering of the layers. Survey II did not yield anything of interest, so it was not further discussed, and survey III, located on the southern side of Baicu, in our opinion, revealed a completely re-stratified deposit, lacking the structure and succession of any layers. Consequently, the artefacts occasionally found on the surface of the soil in this area are likely the result of intense denudation processes.

As for the presence *in situ* of Palaeolithic lithic items, the only surveys that produced materials were I and V, which were, in fact, very close to each other. This means that this particular area represents a gain in this respect because, even though the abundance of materials is not very high, it is a starting point that gives us hope for future research.

Combining all the aspects of the investigations carried out at Izvorul Alb, which were initiated in 1979 and continued until 1982 by [F. Mogoșanu](#) and [M. Matei](#) (1981; 1983), and then our own research from 2019-2022 ([E.-C. Nițu, 2018](#)), we may say that the sites at Izvorul Alb warrant further investigation, as the potential of the area is undeniably worth considering.

IV. Conclusions

The Carpathian arc certainly posed a formidable obstacle for Palaeolithic communities in Eastern Europe and those in Central Europe, especially during certain stages of the Late Pleistocene glaciation, such as the Last Glacial Maximum (LGM). In this context, the importance of the Bistrița Valley lies in the fact that it is deeply embedded in the mountainous landscape, with an extended route in the Subcarpathian area and a generous opening towards the east into the plateau region and further towards the vast Russian Plain. On the other hand, following the course of the Bistrița Valley towards its sources, especially along its tributary the Bistricioara, there are sufficient mountain passes that could have provided relatively easy routes for Palaeolithic communities towards the Transylvanian Plateau, and from there, through the valleys of the Someș and Mureș rivers, towards Central Europe.

In terms of the number of investigated Palaeolithic settlements as well as the richness and variety of archaeological materials, the Bistrita Valley represents a landmark of the Palaeolithic period in Romania. Unfortunately, the quality of archaeological research on Palaeolithic settlements as a whole is quite uneven. The archaeological research in the 1950s in the Răpciuni Basin, at least in terms of its scope, focused more on the settlements of Bistricioara-Lutărie and Ceahlău-Dârțu, despite the fact that they presented the greatest risks in terms of the preservation of their deposits. We are referring to the damage caused to the

settlement of Bistricioara Lutărie by the soldiers' trenches during the First World War, as well as the almost continuous exploitation of clay by the locals, and the fact that the cemetery of the Ceahlău commune overlapped with the settlement at Dârțu before the hydroelectric system was established in the region. One justification for this concentration of investigations in these two settlements may be the wealth and even the quality of the lithic material found in each of them, but this situation might be explained precisely by the significantly larger excavated surface compared to the other sites. On the other hand, at that time, there was great enthusiasm because these were among the first Palaeolithic discoveries in the Bistrița Valley. However, surprisingly, subsequent research for the sampling required for interdisciplinary studies (palynology, granulometry, chemical analysis) (Al. Păunescu et al., 1977) as well as the recovery of materials for C-14 dating (K. Honea, 1981, 1984; Al. Păunescu, 1984) adapted to this preexisting situation and also focused on these two settlements. Perhaps, to the extent that a re-evaluation of the Palaeolithic in the Răpciuni Basin is attempted, it would be more advisable to focus on the discovery of other sites in the vicinity of those already known, or in other areas of the region. This approach would not be devoid of meaning, given the potential of the Răpciuni Basin, already demonstrated by the countless existing settlements. This new attempt might be made through a new, modern approach in all respects.

The results so far reveal the actual chronostratigraphic boundaries of the Răpciuni Basin in terms of deposit age and, consequently, the identified Palaeolithic layers. Existing C-14 dates, with a reasonable margin of error, indicate ages younger than 25,000 B.P. However, considering the lithic material characteristics at the settlement in Cetățica, where there is a possibility of an Early Upper Palaeolithic, we believe that future research should focus on this area. Surveys conducted between 2020 and 2023 do not rule out the existence of older layers. Future research in the Răpciuni Basin should consider higher terraces with older deposits, which may have been inhabited by earlier Palaeolithic communities than those discovered in the terrace with a relative altitude of 40-50 metres. Additionally, reassessing the results from Scaune and Curmătura Bardosului offers an opportunity to intensify research in the mountainous region in order to identify prehistoric hunters at altitudes higher than 1,000 meters, who can be better defined in terms of chrono-culture.

We have attempted to adopt a different perspective in defining the chrono-cultural succession of Palaeolithic sites in the mountain sector of the Bistrița Valley. We have preferred the hypothesis that dismisses the existence of an Aurignacian in this region because the

The Palaeolithic in the Mountain Sector of the Bistrița Valley-Old and New Interpretations

arguments provided by absolute chronology categorically exclude such a supposition (L. Steguweit et al., 2009; M. Cârciumaru et al., 2023). Furthermore, the techno-typological elements of the lithic material, with the possible exception, to some extent, of the lithic inventory from Cetățica I, do not suggest an Aurignacian in the Bistrița Valley either, as the “guide fossils” are practically missing in this regard.

Taking into account the reality imposed by C-14 dates, we have tried to adapt the cultural succession of the Gravettian communities according to the model documented at Poiana Cireșului-Piatra Neamț. While at Poiana Cireșului, at least three Gravettian cultural sequences have been identified, in the mountain sector of the Bistrița Valley, the absolute chronology as well as the sedimentological characteristics and sequence of layers only allow for the existence of two Gravettian sequences (Gravettian I and Gravettian II).

We believe that the approach of our research has provided sufficient arguments regarding the still significant potential of the Bistrița Mountain area for Palaeolithic research. In this regard, several findings should be considered. There are some old settlements that appear to be exhausted, such as the one at Dârțu. Besides being deeply affected by the old cemetery of the Ceahlău village being superimposed upon it, the development of the Palaeolithic settlement towards the edge of the terrace has caused the action of the lake waters to accentuate the degradation processes of the deposit. The settlement at Bofu Mic would deserve further investigation, considering the lithic inventory, but the deposit needs to be carefully reanalysed because the lower layers do not fit into the general scheme of the settlements at Bistricioara I-II and Dârțu. This is due either to non-existent sequences in the two settlements or to some sedimentological restratifications and relocations under the influence of intense periglacial processes. However, the settlement remains extremely important for the Epigravettian occupations in the Ceahlău Basin. The settlement at Podiș remains generally less known, perhaps because the deposit has been severely affected by ice wedges. Nevertheless, it should remain the focus of investigations in the coming years. As recent research has revealed, the settlements at Cetățica have provided unexpected surprises, by identifying, on the terrace at approximately 20 m, one of the most inhabited areas in the Epigravettian along the Bistrița Valley. It gives us hope for future research.

In conclusion, the mountainous sector of the Bistrița Valley is far from being an exhausted region in terms of potential archaeological investigations in the years to come. We are convinced that by approaching this part of the Bistrița Valley with great determination,

sufficient material resources and a methodology suitable for current archaeological research, the results will not be long in coming.

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About old discoveries and new archaeological research in the Cucutenian settlement from Fedeleșeni–Dealul Cânepăriei, Strunga commune, Iași County, Romania

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Abstract: After older research (1928) and numerous recent incursions, the Fedeleșeni–Dealul Cânepăriei settlement continues to arouse the interest of specialists, especially due to the unprecedented discoveries made over time. It is precisely these recent pieces of information, the most interesting of which come from the excavation notebook of I. Nestor, unpublished until 2015, that have led to a new campaign of non-invasive investigations in this settlement. The main purpose was to assess the degree of site preservation and to clarify certain planimetric aspects. LiDAR measurements and magnetometer surveys have provided new data about the internal spatial organization and extent of the site. From the analysis of the altitudinal model, it seems that the site was much larger than it is preserved today, and the internal organization is much more complex. Elements of fortification/delimitation, as well as other types of structures (dwellings, pits, ovens), have been documented, especially in the plateau area of the site.

Keyword: Eneolithic, Romania, Moldova, Cucuteni culture, magnetic survey.

Introduction

Archaeological research brings to the forefront, equally, both new discoveries, following some field research or archaeological excavations, as well as older findings, whose results are re-analysed and reinterpreted based on new investigations, aimed at providing clarification on unresolved or controversial aspects.

This is also the case with this study, through which we aim to bring to the specialist's attention new archaeological information about a site discovered almost a hundred years ago, which provided an important find that was extensively discussed. However, until recently, not much was known about the site. We are referring to the Cucutenian settlement located at *Dealul Cânepăriei* near Fedeleșeni, Strunga commune, Iași County ([fig. 1](#)).

Historiography of the site

As we mentioned, for a long time, the settlement was known for an exceptional discovery: a zoomorphic stone sceptre stylized in the form of a horse's head. Unearthed during

**About old discoveries and new archaeological research in the Cucutenian settlement
from Fedeleşeni–Dealul Cânepăriei, Strunga commune,
Iaşi County, Romania**

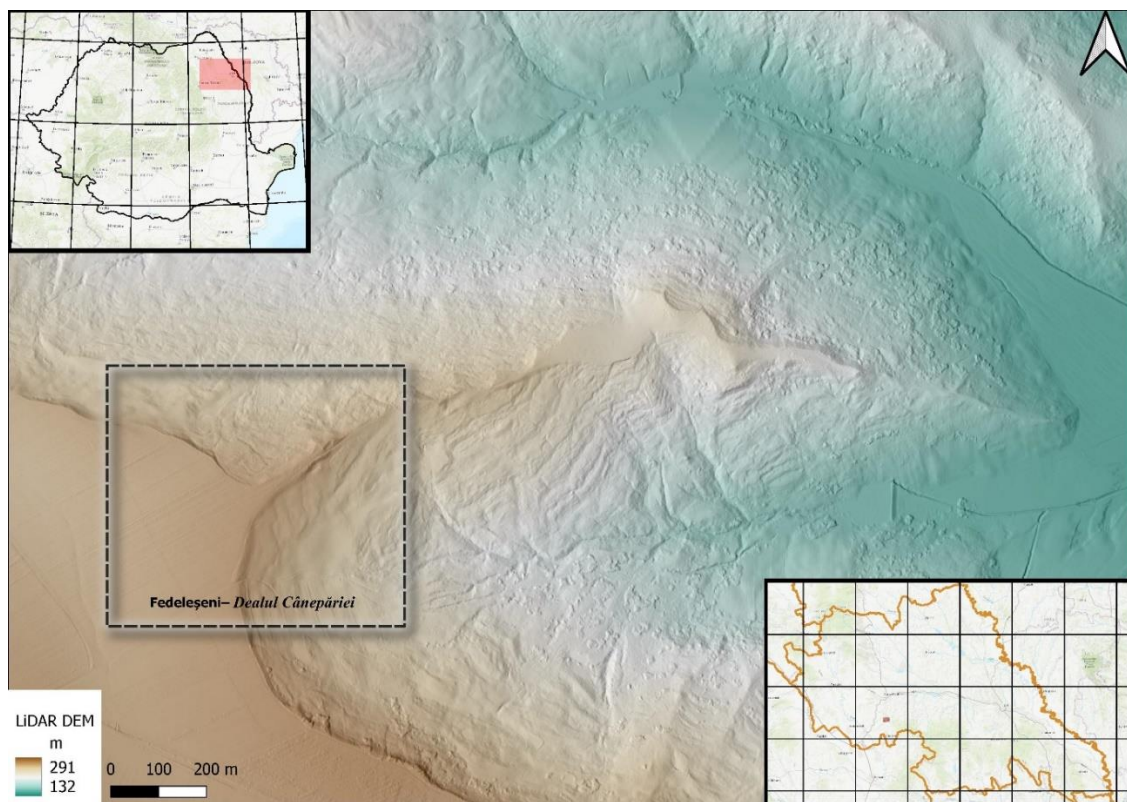


Fig. 1 - The location of the Fedeleşeni–*Dealul Cânepăriei* settlement within Romania and Iaşi County (LiDAR elevation model from Romanian water administration).

archaeological excavations in 1928 (on the history of the research, see the recent study by [N. Ursulescu \(2015\)](#)), the artifact was immediately published by [I. Andrieşescu \(1929\)](#) and [I. Nestor \(1933\)](#), rapidly capturing the attention of archaeologists in Eastern Europe. Alongside similar discoveries (Sălcuța, Casimcea, Terekli Mektev, Suvorovo, Suvodal, Fitionești, Drama, Rezevo, Vințu de Jos etc.) ([I. Andrieşescu, 1929](#); [D. Popescu, 1941](#); [A. Dodd–Oprîţescu, I. Mitrea, 1983](#); [N. Harţuche, 2005](#)), and together with other stylized stone scepters ([B. Govedarica, E. Kaiser, 1996](#); [Fl. Burtănescu, S. Țurcanu, 1997](#); [N. Ursulescu, 2013](#)) or shaped like birds ([N. Ursulescu, V. Cotiugă, 2012](#)), this piece provided an opportunity to trace the relationships and the manner in which the pastoral Eneolithic communities from the North Pontic region entered into the northern Balkans, particularly in the Lower Danube Plain ([Vl. Dumitrescu, 1934; 1954; 1955; 1972](#); [D. Berciu, 1954](#); [E. Comşa, 1978](#); [M. Gimbutas, 1989](#); [B. Govedarica, 2004](#); [B. Govedarica, I. Manzura, 2011](#); [Petrenko 2013](#); [N. Ursulescu, 2013](#)). This phenomenon, along with other factors, eventually led to the end of Eneolithic civilization

of farmers and the emergence of the Bronze Age warrior civilization.

Unfortunately, until 2015, information about the other discoveries at Fedeleșeni were limited, mainly consisting of a general presentation of ceramic pieces or categories following their study on the deposit of the National Museum of Antiquities in Bucharest, today “Vasile Pârvan” Institute of Archaeology. Additional archaeological details are provided by I. Nestor, the one who conducted the excavation, in the well-known synthesis of the prehistory of Romanian territory, mentioning that several houses have been discovered. Among them, one stands out with a richer inventory, possibly belonging to a leader (“*Häuptlings*”), containing, in addition to ceramic fragments, the stone sceptre, a copper chisel, and a clay capital (I. Nestor, 1933).

A female statuette discovered at Fedeleșeni, notable for both its incised decoration and, especially, a plastic representation of a necklace with a pendant, was published by I. Andrieșescu (1939) in his synthesis on prehistoric art.

Although a presentation of the pottery found at Fedeleșeni has not been conducted, painted ceramics discovered here have been discussed for a long time. Even though it was not illustrated, except for an ornamental motif drawn by D. Precuianu and published by R. Vulpe (1930), later reproduced by I. Nestor (1933), it has been appreciated as even more valuable than the pottery from the eponymous settlement (R. Vulpe, 1930). Thus, the first to provide more extensive references to it was I. Nestor himself. In a review of H. Schmidt’s monograph and later in a study on the pottery from Șipeniț, he stated that the painted ceramics from Fedeleșeni should be classified between the painted ceramics from group A, found on *Cetățuia* from Cucuteni, and the painted ceramics from group A–B, discovered in the *settlement from the valley* (Cucuteni–*Dâmbul Morii*). He considered this as a connecting element between the two groups, even though, in his opinion, it leans more towards group A-B (N. Ursulescu, 2009, 2015).

I. Nestor's opinion regarding the framing of the ceramics at Fedeleșeni was later adopted and discussed by Vl. Dumitrescu. After publishing the Hăbășești monograph, Dumitrescu attempted to establish the evolution of the Cucuteni culture based on new archaeological discoveries, especially after the Second World War. In his well-known synthesis of the history of Romania in 1960, the settlement at Fedeleșeni was placed at the end of stage A3, with the absence of incised ceramics being noted (Vl. Dumitrescu, 1960). However, in his renowned study on the origin and evolution of Cucuteni culture, the prominent prehistorian identified a

**About old discoveries and new archaeological research in the Cucutenian settlement
from Fedeleșeni–Dealul Cânepăriei, Strunga commune,
Iași County, Romania**

new stage, A4, in which he placed the discoveries from Ruginoasa and Fedeleșeni. Furthermore, regarding the painted pottery at Fedeleșeni, Dumitrescu mentioned that alongside the polychrome category, in three colours, there is also a bichrome pottery, new and different from the first two stages. This bichrome pottery is said to be closer to the ceramics from the A–B phase (he even hypothesizes the separation of a stage A5 if discoveries similar to those at Fedeleșeni will become more numerous) (Vl. Dumitrescu, 1963).

Anton Nițu classified the discoveries from Fedeleșeni also in a later stage of the Cucuteni phase, called subphase A3b. Furthermore, he spoke of a specific ceramic type at the Fedeleșeni settlement, the trichrome pottery on a brown background, with narrow and very narrow strips and a wide white interspace. This ceramic type continued “in the first phase of the AB period at Corlăteni, but with linear white” (A. Nițu, 1979, 1980).

In fact, these characteristics of the painted pottery from Fedeleșeni defined what would be called the “Fedeleșeni type” or “style” at the end of phase A, characterized by white stripes or narrow bands, black-brown on a shiny white or reddish-brown background of the vessels, in spiral shapes. This style is distinct from the “Drăgușeni style”, with wide bands, found in the northern part of Moldova (Vl. Dumitrescu, 1963 ; 1974 a, b ; 1979 ; E. Comșa, 1963 ; 1976).

Similarly, the unpainted pottery of “type C” discovered at Fedeleșeni was discussed by archaeologists. The first to refer it was the author of the excavations on *Dealul Cânepăriei*. Thus, in a study on the transition from the Neolithic to the Bronze Age in the Cucuteni and Gumelnița cultures, I. Nestor mentioned numerous fragments of vessel that fit into the category of Cucuteni “type C” pottery due to their shattered shell content, shapes, and comb-made decorations (I. Nestor, E. Zaharia, 1968). Unfortunately, these are the only published pieces of information about this ceramic category. Other specialists, considering these findings along with similar discoveries in late Cucuteni A settlements, spoke of early relationships with the pastoral Eneolithic communities of the North Pontic region (Șt. Cucuș, 1985).

In the last quarter of the previous century, the site was mentioned in two additional brief papers by L. Roșu and E. Zaharia. The first classified the discoveries in the A-B phase of the Cucuteni culture (L. Roșu, 1980), while E. Zaharia, include them in phase A4. Furthermore, Zaharia, who had the opportunity to directly examine the ceramic material, provided more details about the pottery found at Fedeleșeni. According to her, there is evidence of trichrome painted pottery with narrow bands, featuring four types of decorative motifs. Additionally, there

is unpainted pottery decorated on the rim and shoulder with incised horizontal and undulating lines bordered by round impressions. There are also comb impressions, as well as round or oval impressions and incisions on the rim (E. Zaharia, 1996).

Obviously, the Fedeleșeni site has been included in local archaeological repertoires, unfortunately often with limited archaeological information (D. Monah, D. N. Popovici, 1985; D. N. Popovici, 2000; M. C. Văleanu, 2003; D. Boghian, 2004; A. Asăndulesei, 2015; D. Boghian et al., 2018), sometimes even without mentioning the toponym of the site, known since 1954, from the well-known monograph of the Cucuteni settlement at *Holm* from Hăbășești (N. Gostar, 1954). Furthermore, in the extensive archaeological repertoire of Moldova, published in 1970, the site is not presented (N. Zaharia et al., 1970). In the *Archaeological Repertoire of Iași County* it is mentioned among isolated discoveries in the commune of Strunga, without precise mapping (V. Chirica, M. Tănăsachi, 1985).

The year 2015 brought new and important information about the Fedeleșeni site through the publication of three other studies by the professor Nicolae Ursulescu from Iași. He published the I. Nestor excavation notebook. This copy was generously offered by another esteemed professor, Mircea Babeș, from the University of Bucharest. Thus, in the first study, after an extensive critical history of the research, N. Ursulescu makes very clear statements on the location of the site before presenting the archaeological data resulting from the excavation notebook. In the annexes are presented the transcriptions of I. Nestor's notes.

From what has been presented, we learn that the excavations took place between August 3 and September 17, 1928 under the coordination of I. Nestor, assisted by Dinu V. Rosetti. Nestor returned to Fedeleșeni on October 12 to create the general plan of the excavation. Thirteen trenches and four rectangular surfaces were excavated. In total, eight dwellings and 11 pits were identified, revealing numerous ceramic fragments made by rough pasta, from storage vessels, as well as from painted pottery, predominantly found in pits and among the remains of the dwellings. Additionally, various figurines made of fired clay, a copper chisel, animal bones, and the famous stone sceptre shaped like a horse's head were discovered during the excavations (N. Ursulescu, 2015).

In the second study, conducted by a team coordinated by N. Ursulescu, several geographical details are provided concerning the area occupied by the Cucuteni settlement. Based on the distribution of archaeological materials on the surface, and the interpretation of

About old discoveries and new archaeological research in the Cucutenian settlement from Fedeleşeni–Dealul Cânepăriei, Strunga commune, Iaşi County, Romania

geographical data, it is estimated that the settlement covered an area of approximately 3 hectares (N. Ursulescu et al., 2015).

The latest study presenting new archaeological data about the Fedeleşeni site belongs to A. Asăndulesei. In a volume dedicated to non-invasive investigations in Cucutenian settlements from Romania, Asăndulesei provides data on cartography and archaeological topography (fig. 2), including photogrammetry and aerial photography (A. Asăndulessei, 2015).

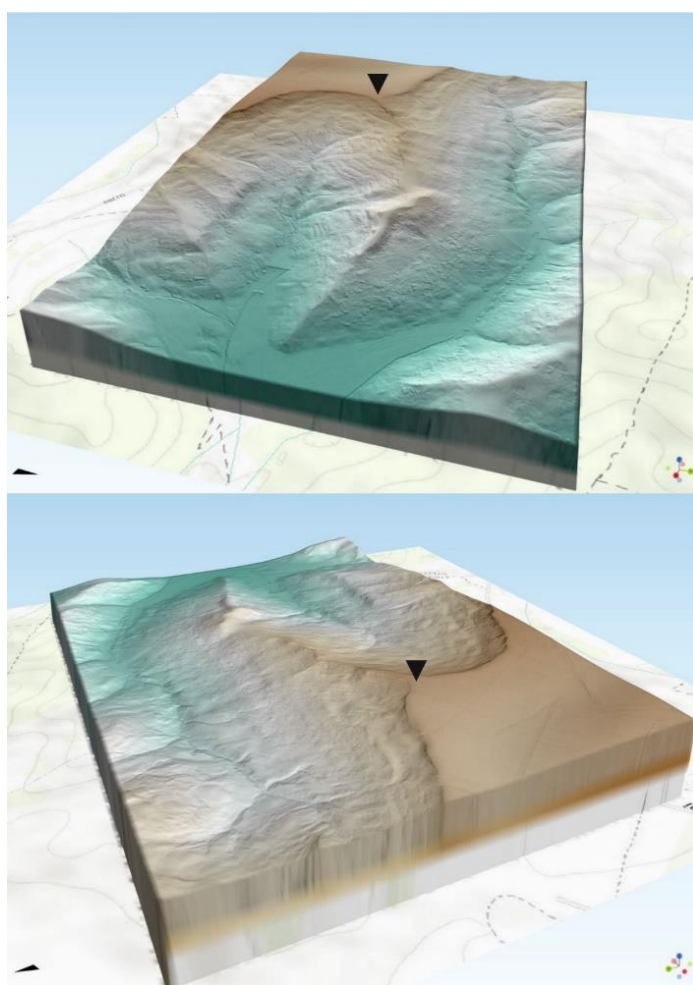


Fig. 2 - Three-dimensional perspective of the site area.

Recent research (LiDAR measurements and magnetic surveys)

Interest in understanding the situation of the Cucutenian site on *Dealul Cânepăriei* has persisted, especially given that the area where it is located is agricultural, posing a real danger

that the cultural level might be further affected than it already has been due to documented hazards in the area (landslides). Up until now, there has been no available data on the degree of preservation of the archaeological monument. Obtaining clearer information about the internal organization of this settlement, based on magnetometer surveys, has been another reason why we have once again focused on it.

The methodological aspects underpinning our recent research stage involve the analysis of LiDAR measurements (derived digital elevation model with a resolution of 1×1 m/pixel) available for the study area, as well as magnetometer surveys. The latter were conducted using a fluxgate gradiometer with 5 probes, spaced at intervals of 0.5 m on a mobile cart. The total area covered was 3 hectares.

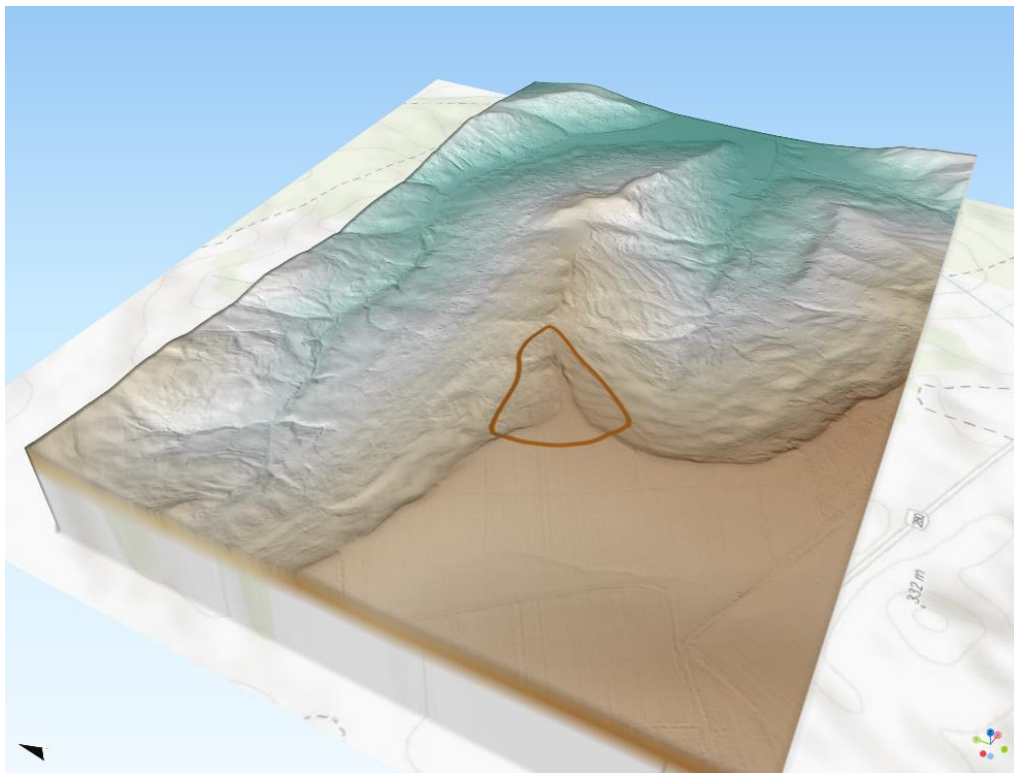


Fig. 3 - Three-dimensional perspective of the site area with the overlay of a possible initial boundary based on the archaeological material at the surface, as well as the morphology of the relief form.

The digital elevation model derived from airborne three-dimensional laser scanning for the studied area reveals important aspects regarding the integrity of the site. Clear

**About old discoveries and new archaeological research in the Cucutenian settlement
from Fedeleşeni–Dealul Cânepăriei, Strunga commune,
Iaşi County, Romania**

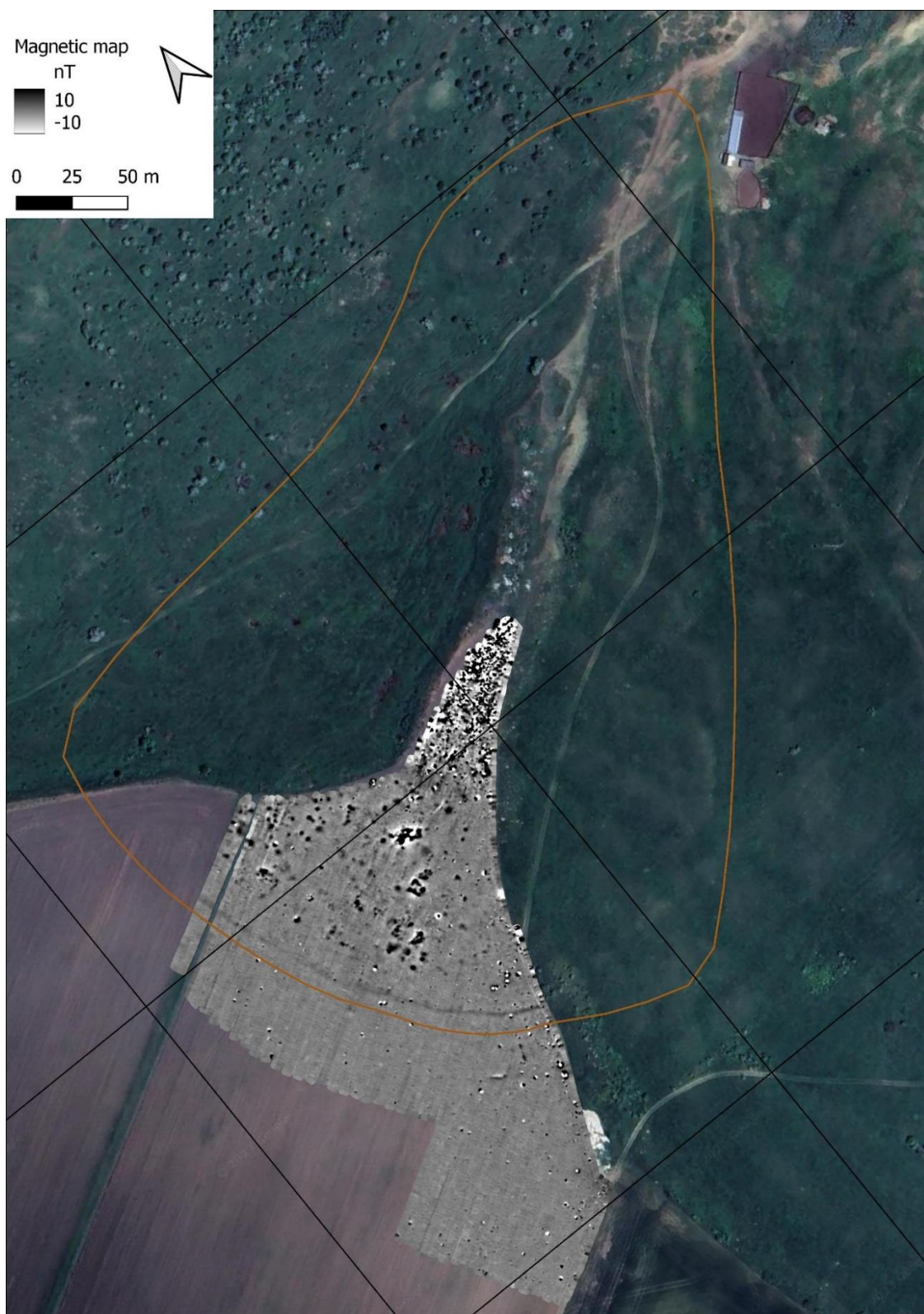


Fig. 4 - Magnetic map (-10+10 nT, white-black) of the site are.

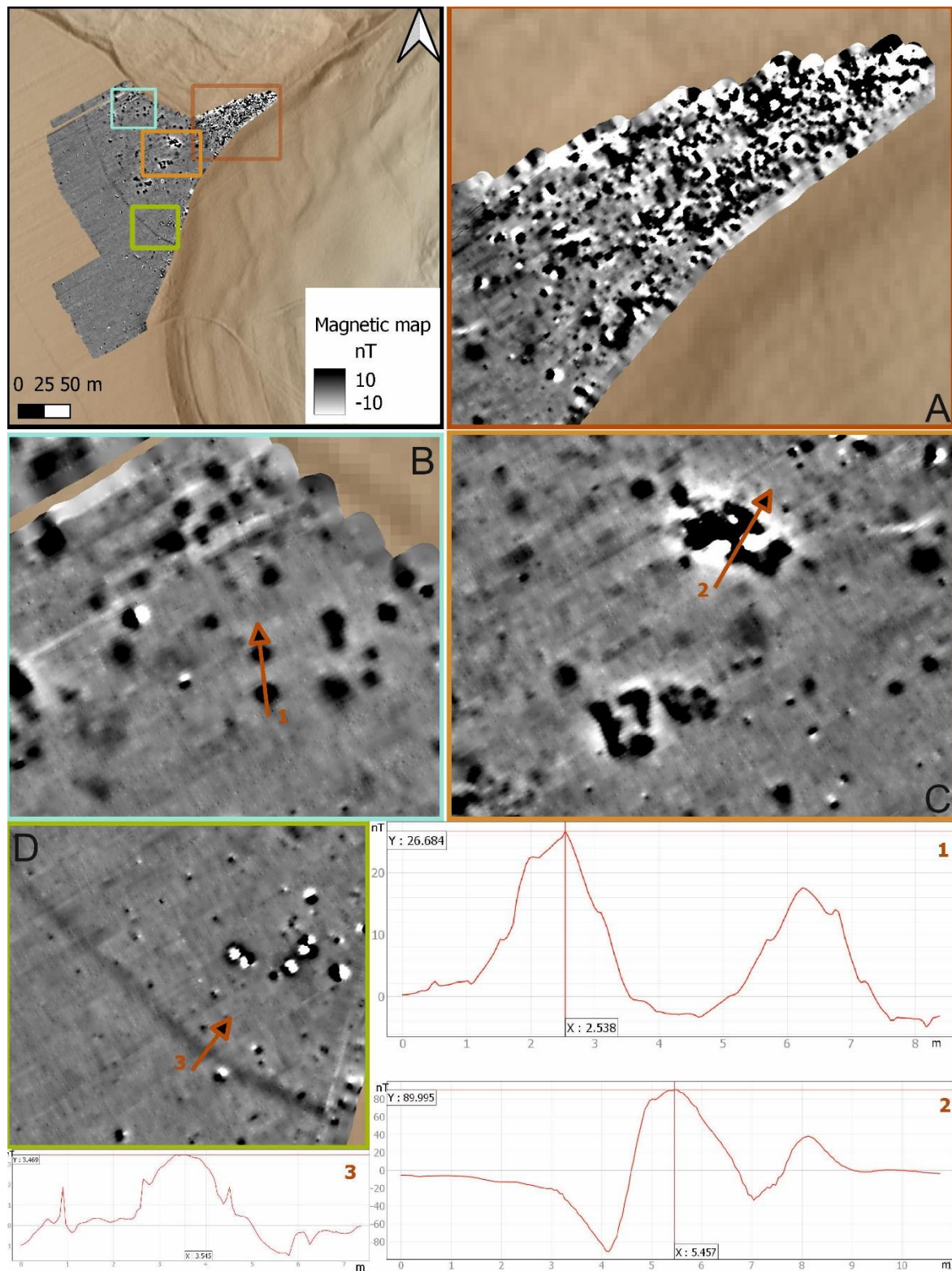


Fig. 5 - Magnetic map detailing some areas of interest and specific structures (perturbed area – A; pits or possible pottery kilns-B; burnt dwelling-C; ditch-D) with graphic profiles (1-3).

**About old discoveries and new archaeological research in the Cucutenian settlement
from Fedeleșeni–Dealul Cânepăriei, Strunga commune,
Iași County, Romania**

geomorphological risks are visible, which have affected or are currently manifesting within and in the proximity of the site (fig. 3).

The sliding steps from the north and south seem to be largely stabilized. Archaeological materials are found on their surface, which could have either fallen from the plateau area or, in clear areas, where the archaeological level is visible in ruptures, flow channels, or small gullies. In a previous work (N. Ursulescu et al., 2015), we made some estimations regarding the site's surface (approximately 3 hectares), but without having precise information about its extension towards the west, into the plateau area.

The magnetic measurements (fig. 4) clearly define this western limit, revealing a distinct positive arched anomaly that delineates the habitation in this direction. This anomaly corresponds to a defensive ditch, which Professor N. Ursulescu (2015) mentioned as possibly existing based on satellite images. Therefore, today, the unaffected surface of the site is approximately 2 hectares. Taking into account the two sliding steps from the north and south, where archaeological materials were discovered, the initial total surface of the site could have been approximately 8 hectares.

The habitation in the western area, on the plateau, is the best-preserved today. Here, in addition to the defensive/delimitation ditch, several positive anomalies of various sizes are visible. Most of these, with good susceptibility contrast, can be attributed to pits that were most likely clay borrowing pits, later filled with household waste. Some larger burnt structures (with thermoremanent magnetism), anomalies generated by the presence of burnt remnants of dwellings, are also discernible. In this area, several possible ceramic burning ovens are also visible (fig. 5).

The surface of the promontory, continuing towards the east and narrowed by landslides, is strongly disturbed by a waste disposal area (fig. 6). Here, the interpretation of the distribution of relevant archaeological anomalies is challenging.

On the other hand, field researches have provided ceramic and lithic materials much further to the east than the estimates from the interwar period and recent ones. As a result, on the east-west axis, the settlement now has a length of approximately 350 meters. At the eastern end, we discovered some artifacts that provide new information. Thus, we have identified two menilite pieces, an axe almost of the chisel type (length = 9,54 cm, width = 1,93 cm, thickness



Fig. 6 - Image of eastern part of the site towards the tip of the promontory (source: [V. Cotiugă](#)).



Fig. 7 - Archaeological materials from Fedeleșeni–Dealul Cânepăriei.

**About old discoveries and new archaeological research in the Cucutenian settlement
from Fedeleșeni–Dealul Cânepăriei, Strunga commune,
Iași County, Romania**

= 3,43 cm, blade length = 5,34 cm) and a small chisel (length = 7.53 cm, width = 1.80 cm, thickness = 2.06 cm, blade length = 2.38 cm), both polished and retaining traces of carving, especially on the sides. Both findings have analogies in the settlement from Hăbășești (fig. 7).

Among the fragments of clay, the head of a female statuette stands out, preserving a tall cylindrical neck. The face is modelled by pinching the clay to depict the lobes of the face and the nose, while the eyes are marked by two perforations (fig. 7). Moreover, based on the modelling technique, the fragment is closer to the statuettes from phase A-B, but the same facial modelling style can be found in the final stage of phase A, excepting the neck height (D. Monah, 2012).

Among the ceramic fragments, three pieces stand out, each with important characteristics. Two of the fragments are made from dense paste, typical of the Cucuteni culture. One has a greater thickness (1.1 cm) and originates from a large-sized vessel, while the second has a thickness of 0.4 cm, placing it in the category of fine pottery. On the first fragment (fig. 7), we find traces of a narrow band with white, bordered with brown colour (1.8 cm). The second fragment preserves a motif with a bicolour linear decoration, black-brown, on the red background of the vessel, forming a network of intersecting lines grouped into small squares, similar to the so-called “textile” style. This motif is classified within what has been defined as phase A3b or A4 (A. Nițu, 1979; Vl. Dumitrescu, 1979).

The third ceramic fragment represents a novelty for the Cucuteni settlement at Fedeleșeni, as it can be more likely classified within the pottery of the Precucuteni culture. The fragment is made from poorly kneaded clay, with many crushed ceramic fragments mixed in, and has incomplete firing. The core is black, and the surface presents a brown-yellowish colour on a thickness of 1.5 mm. Despite not having a well-smoothed surface, the fragment preserves an incised decoration with parallel lines measuring 3.34 mm in width and 1.8 mm in depth, interspersed with small incisions of 3.36 mm.

We made these clarifications because, in our opinion, the decoration is not in the style of those found on the unpainted Cucuteni pottery from Hăbășești (which would have meant that this pottery, with incised ornaments, is present also in phase A3b or A4, the phase in which the settlement at Fedeleșeni was classified), but rather typical for Phase III of the Precucuteni culture. This discovery prompts us to wonder whether at the forefront of the promontory where the Cucuteni settlement is located, there might have been an earlier Precucuteni habitation.

Conclusions

Based on the new archaeological research, especially the results obtained through magnetometer survey, we consider that the Cucuteni A4 settlement on *Dealul Cânepăriei* at Fedeleșeni seems to fit, in terms of planimetry, into the typology of settlements that benefited from external habitation, extensions from outside the main fortification elements. Such situations have recently been documented at Cucuteni–*Dâmbul Morii* (A. Asăndulesei et al., 2020) or Cucuteni–*Cetățuia* (A. Asăndulesei et al., 2023). Although other fortification elements are not visible on the magnetic map, they may have been existed further inside the promontory and may have caused the appearance of ravines towards the ends of the ditches, leading to much more extensive natural destructive processes.

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from Fedeleșeni–Dealul Cânepăriei, Strunga commune,
Iași County, Romania**

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Digging in the archives: the *tell* settlements of Măriuța and Șeinoiu, southern Romania

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Abstract: In this contribution the authors analyze some excavations results from the 1980s researches of Mihai Șimon in the *tell* settlements of Măriuța and Șeinoiu, Călărași County. The wider context was the intention of the Institute of Land Improvements to develop the Mostiștea Valley for irrigation. Many archaeological sites and current localities were to be flooded by the rising water level. The survey made in the 70s (re)identified many archaeological sites in the Mostiștea Valley including seven Gumelnița *tell* settlements (Măriuța-*La Movilă*, Șeinoiu-*Movila din cimitir*, Măgureni, Vlădiceasca-*Ghergălăul Mare*, Vlădiceasca-*Ghergălăul Mic*, Sultana-*Malu Roșu*, Chiselet-*Măgura Fundeanca*). The settlements of Măriuța and Șeinoiu were in danger to be destroyed in order to use the earth for nearby roads and bridges. In this context, extensive archaeological excavation was made in both sites by Mihai Șimon (first as a school teacher, then as a researcher at the Institute of Archaeology in Bucharest). We found a rich documentary material in the Institute's archives (field notes, drawings, archaeological reports) only partially published due to the unexpected death of Mihai Șimon in the early 90s. In this contribution we expose this data to the public as a tribute to hard work and ethics of Mihai Șimon in saving this archaeological site from destruction.

Key words: Gumelnița, settlement, *tell*, archives, *restitutio*.

Introduction

The *tell* settlements from Măriuța-*La Movilă* and Șeinoiu-*Movila din cimitir* were excavated in the 1980s, both mounds being under threat to be destroyed in context of land improvements works related to Mostiștea Valley (figs. 1-2). The settlements were researched by Mihai Șimon from the Institute of Archaeology (Bucharest), in difficult circumstances; despite that, Șimon conducted the rescue excavations with high professionalism and great work ethic, these monuments being saved from destruction (M. Șimon, 2014).

Digging in the archives: the *tell* settlements of Măriuța and Șeinoiu, southern Romania

Măriuța-La Movilă

The site is positioned at 200 m north-est of the village (figs. 3-5), on a terrace surrounded by water on three sides and rises at 12 m above meadow level (T. Ignat, 2018). Two layers of habitation were established during research, belonging to Gumelnița culture, A2 and B1 phases,

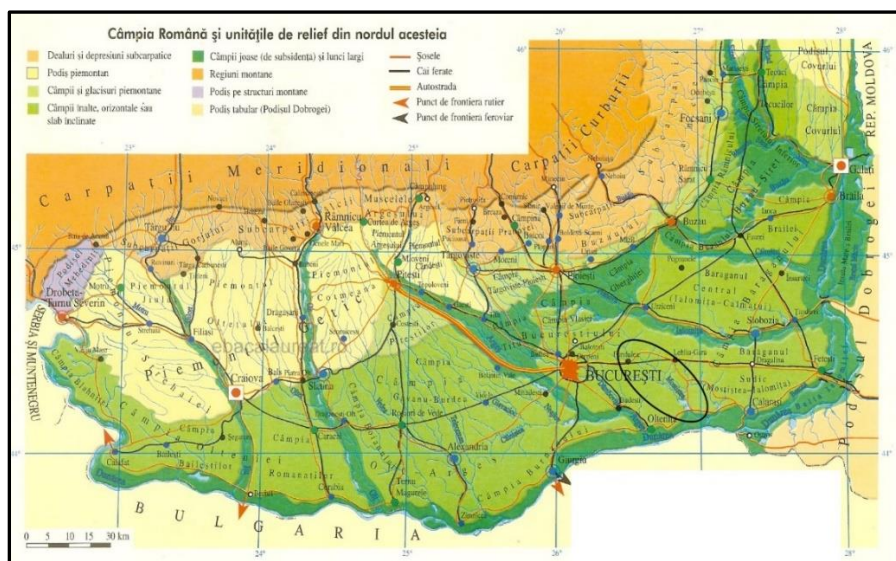


Fig. 1 - The Mostiștea Valley

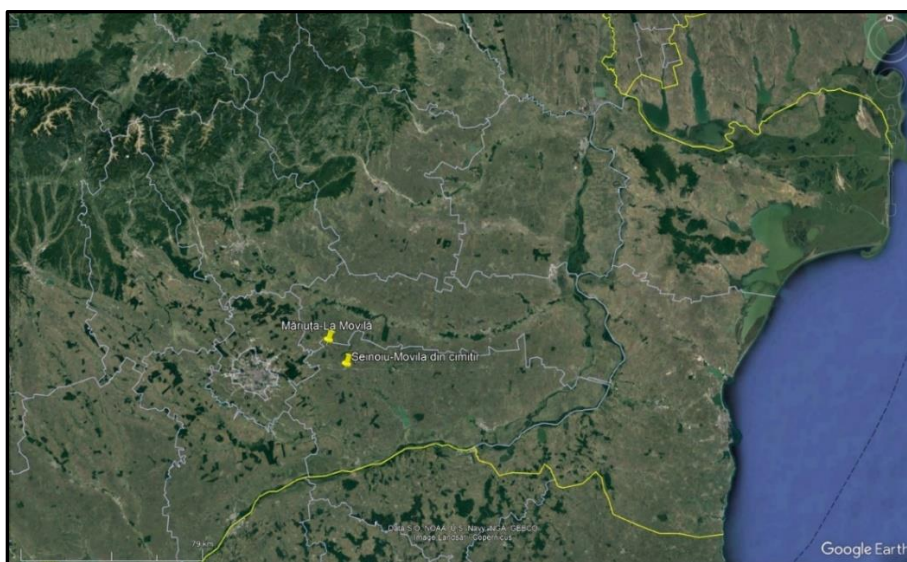


Fig. 2 - The geographic positions of the *tell* settlements at Măriuța and Șeinoiu (Google Earth)

with an intermediate one appeared as a consequence of leveling (fig. 6). During the seven archaeological campaigns Mihai Șimon uncovered six surface dwellings, unburnt, positioned in a

row from north-east to south-west (figs. 7-8). Also, some Boian traces were found at the bottom of the habitation and five graves (D. Șerbănescu, B. Șandric, 2012). Three of them were prehistoric (fig. 9) and two belonged to Late Medieval Age (D. Șerbănescu, B. Șandric, 2012).



Fig. 3 - The *tell* settlement at Măriuța-La Movilă (Google Earth)

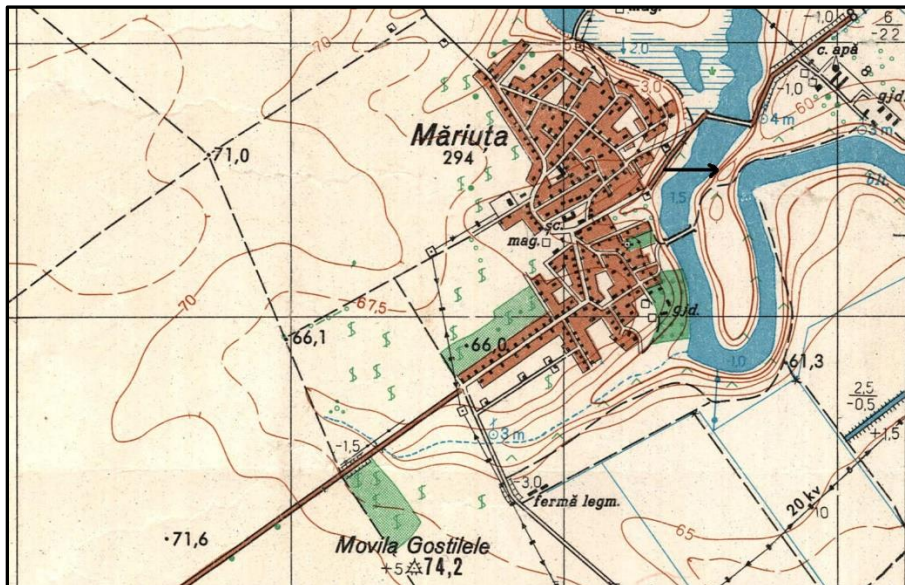


Fig. 4 - The *tell* settlement at Măriuța- La Movilă (Military Topographic Department Map, Sc. 1:25000)

Digging in the archives: the *tell* settlements of Măriuța and Șeinoiu, southern Romania

After 2.000 the archaeological researches were resumed by a team from Călărași County Museum with very good results: both archaeological layers were assigned to Gumelnița B1 phase, surface dwellings were discovered also in the upper layer and an important observation was made

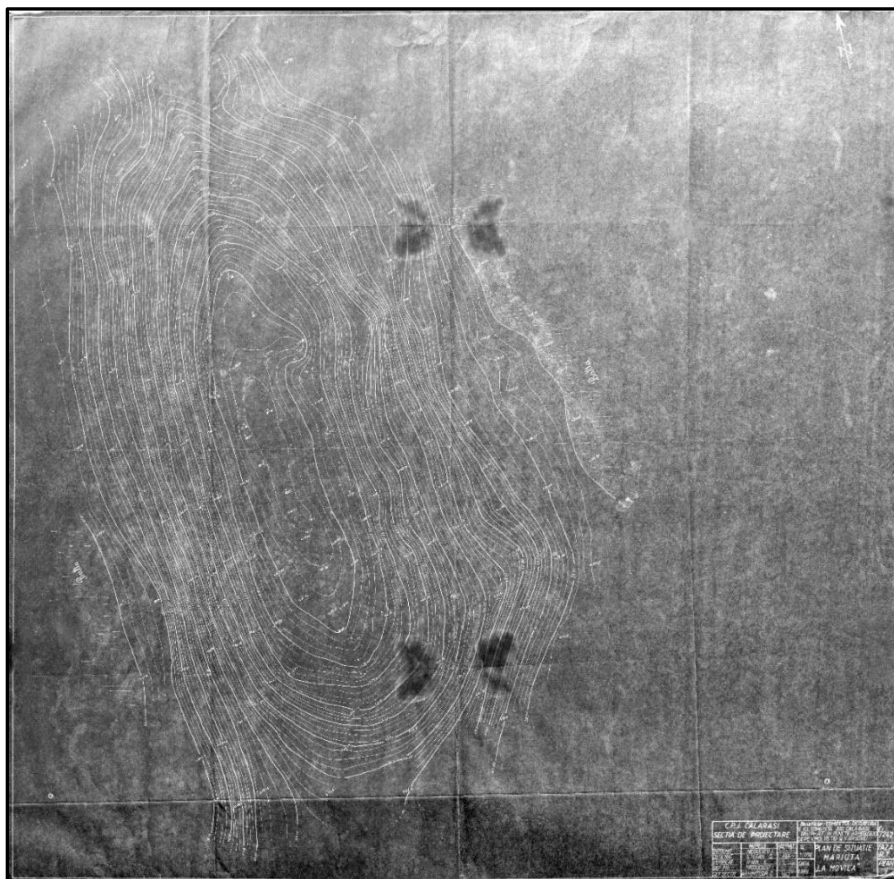


Fig. 5 - Topographic survey of the Măriuța-La Movilă *tell* settlement in the 1980s (IAB Archives)

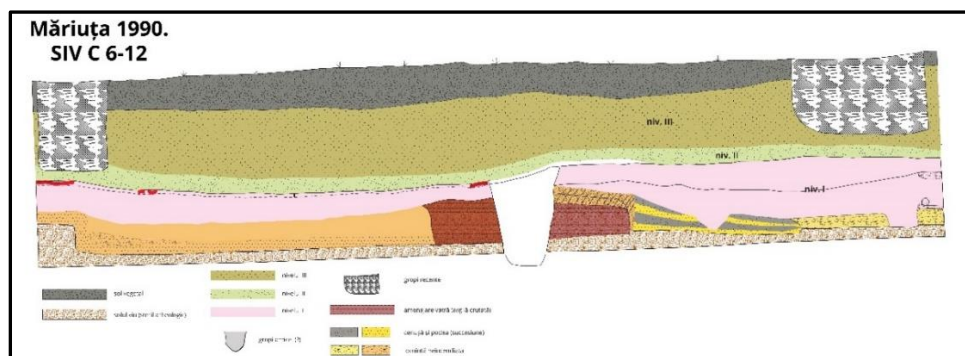


Fig. 6 - Măriuța 1990, S. IV, western profile (drawings [M. Șimon](#), IAB Archive, digitally worked by M. Florea)

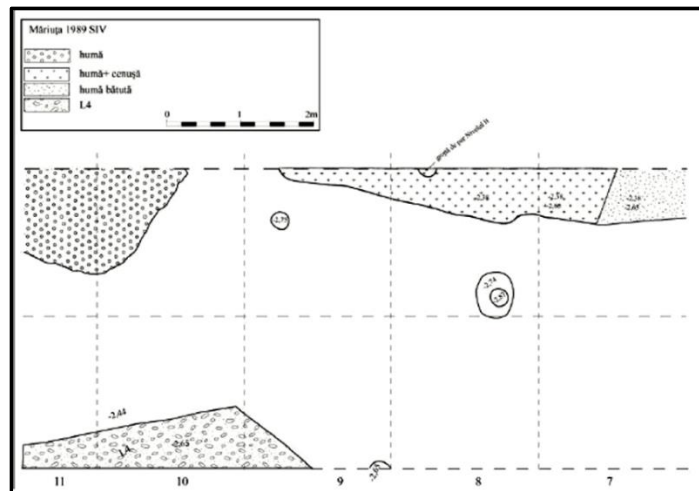


Fig. 7 - Măriuța 1990, S. IV (after [M. Șimon 2014](#))

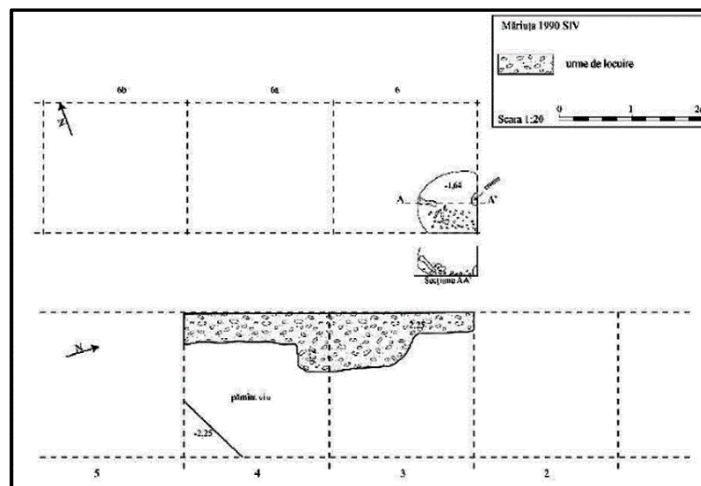


Fig. 8 - Măriuța 1990, S. IV (after [M. Șimon 2014](#))

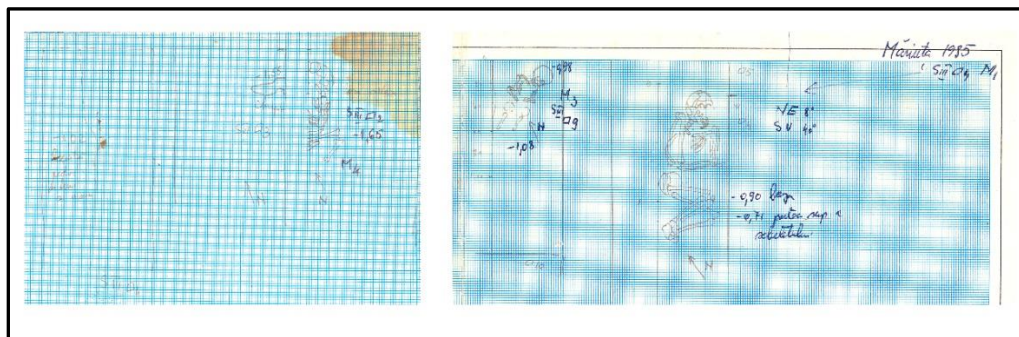


Fig. 9 - Măriuța 1985. Graves M1, M3 and M4 (M. Șimon's original drawings, IAB Archives)

Digging in the archives: the *tell* settlements of Măriuța and Șeinoiu, southern Romania

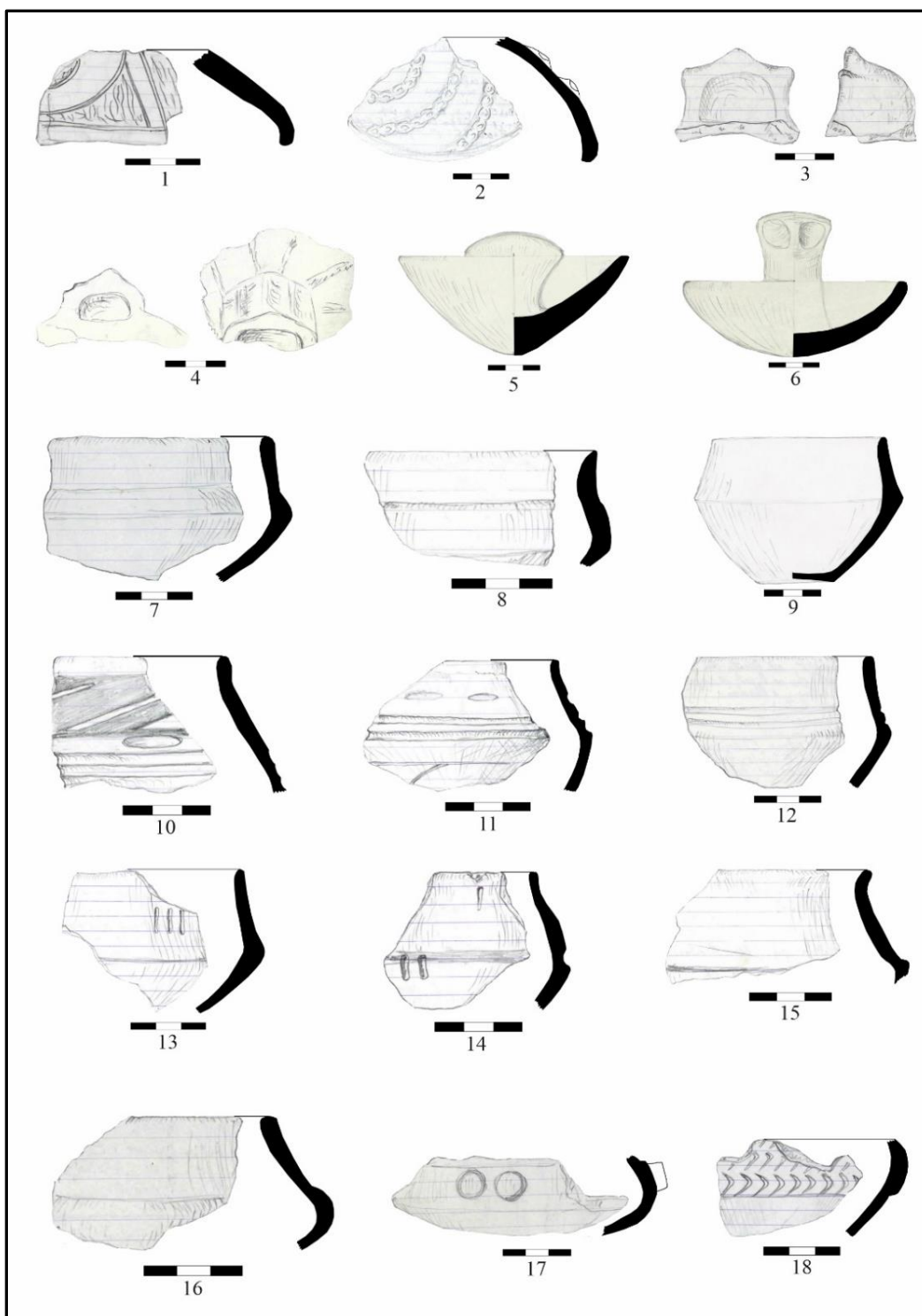


Fig. 10 - Măriuța-La Movilă. Pottery (drawings [M. Șimon](#), IAB Archive, digitally worked by C.E. Ștefan)

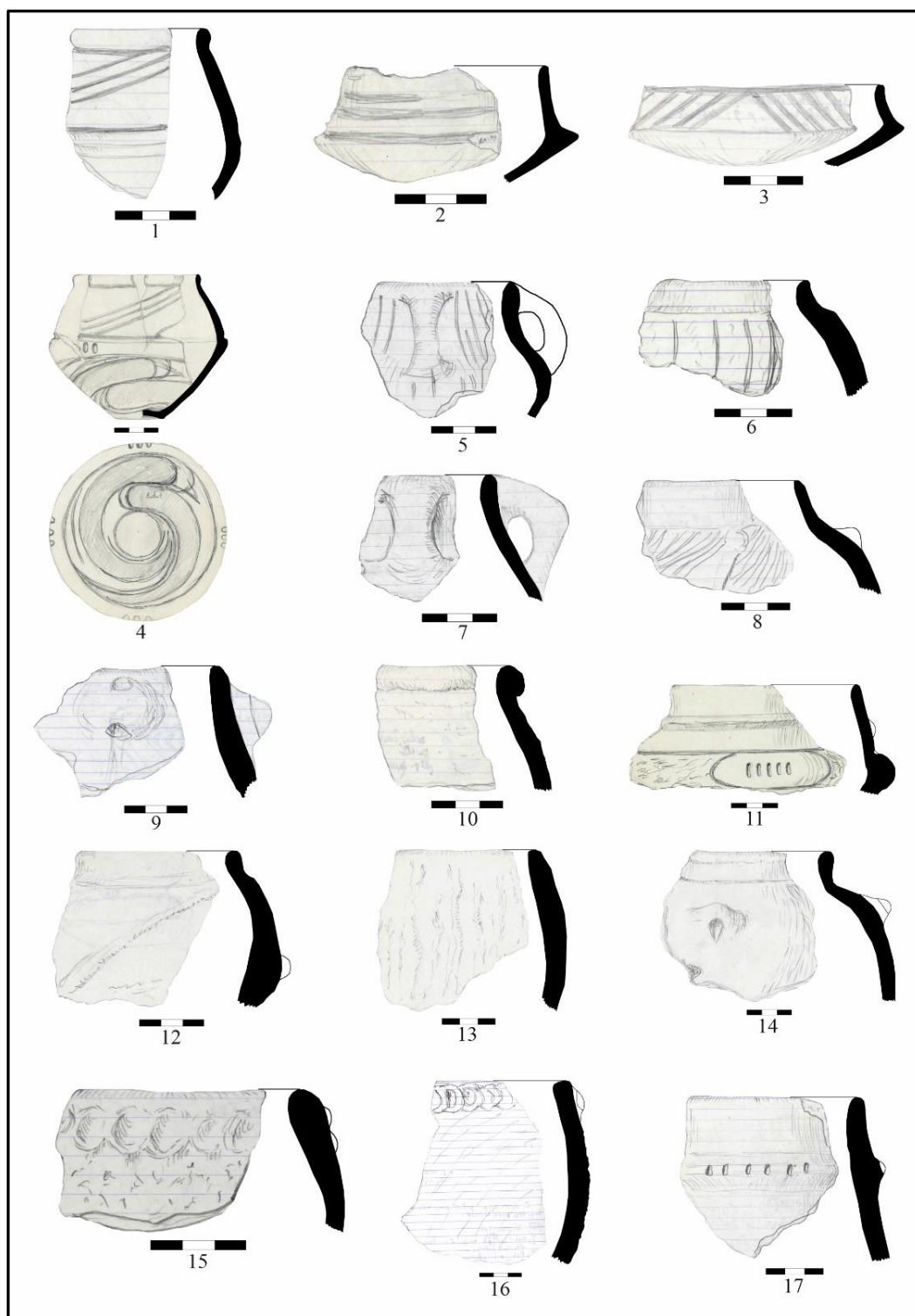


Fig. 11 - Măriuța-La Movilă. Pottery (drawings [M. Șimon](#), IAB Archive, digitally worked by C.E. Ștefan)

Digging in the archives: the *tell* settlements of Măriuța and Șeinoiu, southern Romania

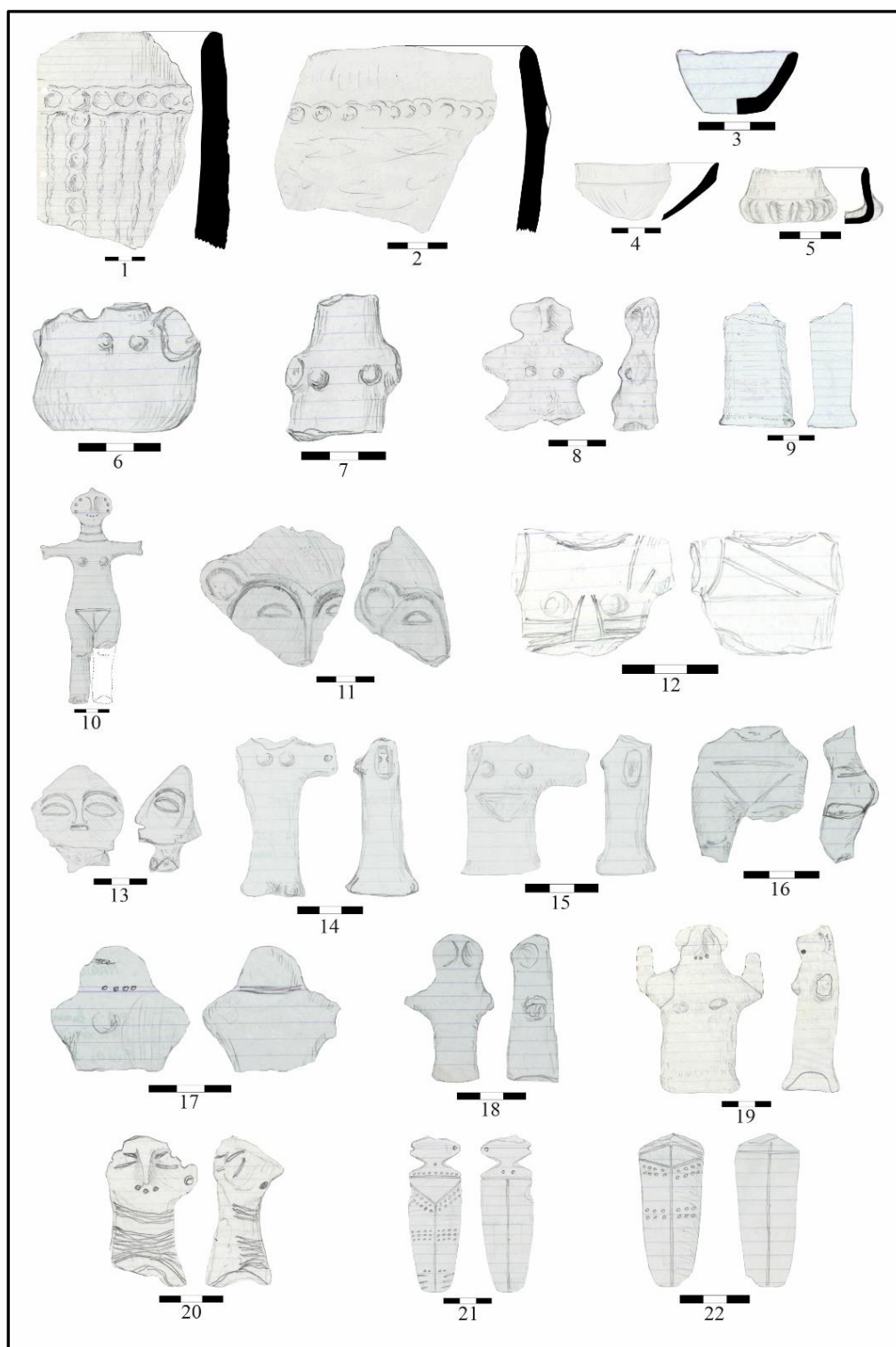


Fig. 12 - Măriuța-*La Movilă*. 1-5. Pottery; 6-20. Clay Figurines; 21, 22. Bone figurines (drawings [M. Șimon](#), IAB Archive, digitally worked by C.E. Ștefan)

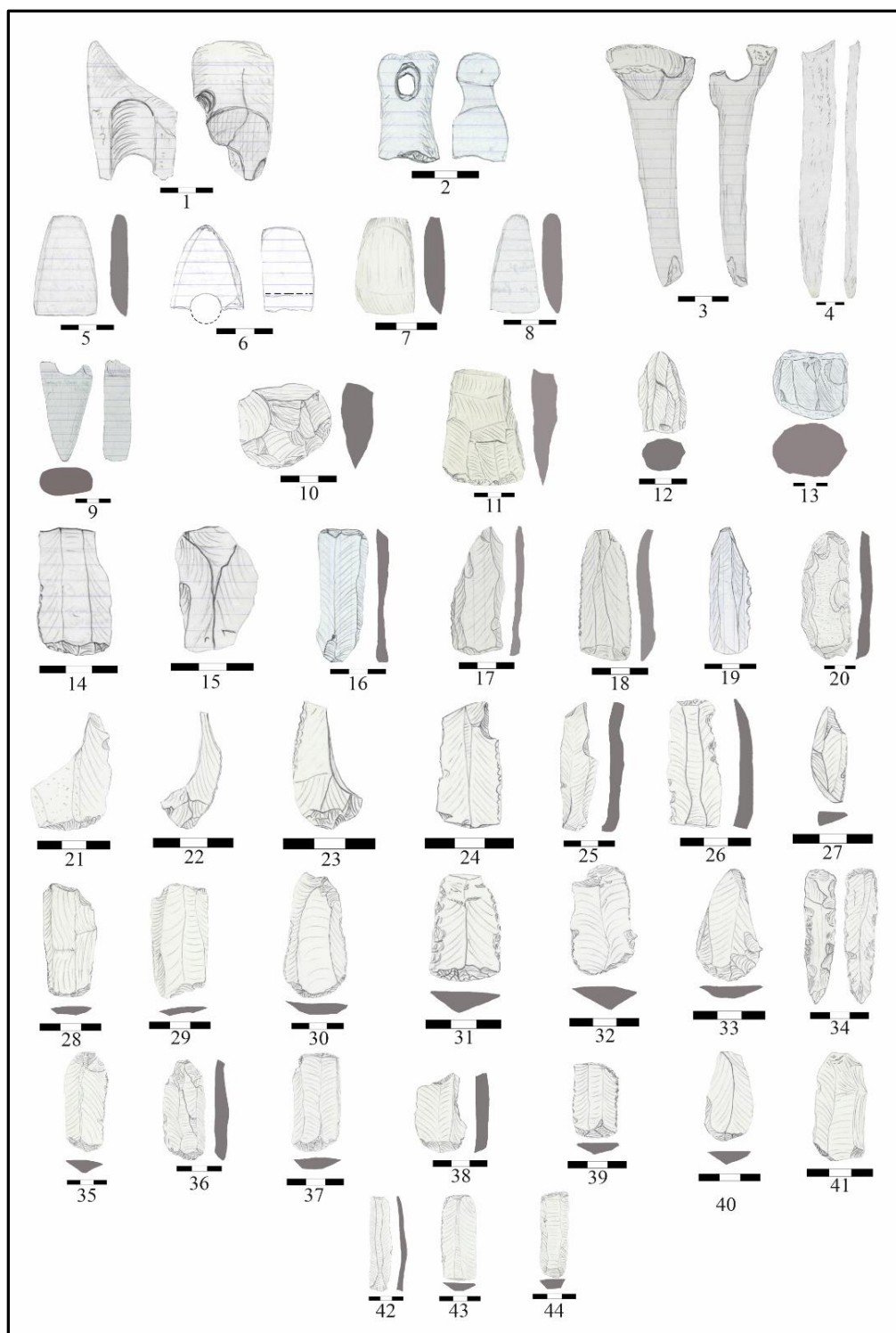


Fig. 13 - Măriuța-*La Movilă*. 1-4. Bone and antler tools; 5-9. Polished stone artifacts; 10-44. Flint items (drawings [M. Șimon](#), IAB Archive, digitally worked by C.E. Ștefan)

Digging in the archives: the *tell* settlements of Măriuța and Șeinoiu, southern Romania

in the sense that the Gumelnița habitation of the *tell* was thicker than Șimon previously noted (V. Parnic, C. Dumitru 2001). Also, the efforts to locate the eneolithic cemetery were successful, at the terrace opposite to the tell a few graves being documented (C. Lazăr, V. Parnic, 2007).

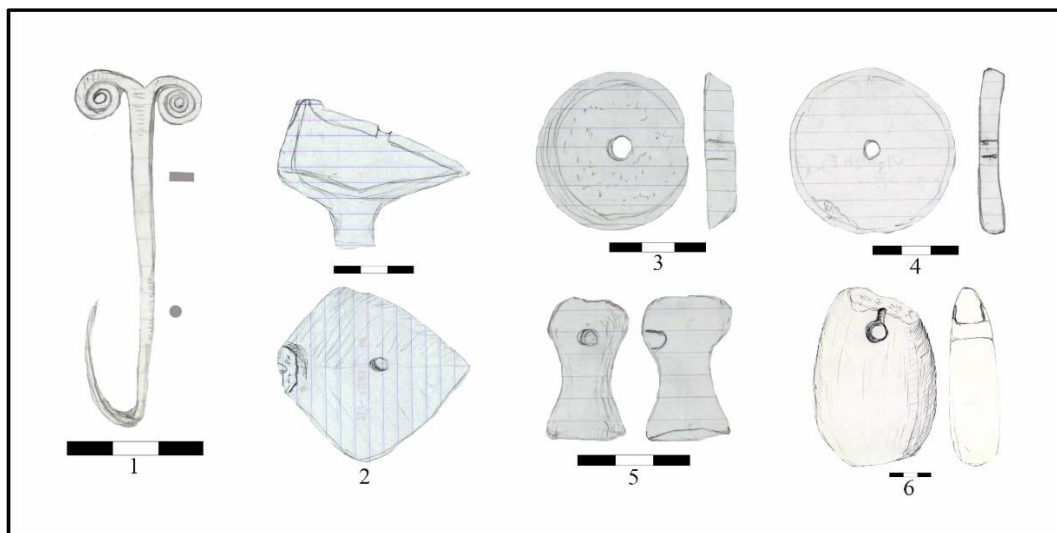


Fig. 14 - Măriuța-La Movilă. 1. Copper pin; 2. Bird-shaped vessel; 3, 4. Spindle whorls; 5. Clay item; 6. Clay weight (drawings M. Șimon, IAB Archive, digitally worked by C. E. Ștefan)

During the seven campaigns in the 1980s M. Șimon collected a good quantity of archaeological material which now are in the custody of the Călărași County Museum. A few of them were published on different occasions (see M. Șimon, 2014, p. 13, note 1). In this short note we used the sketches found in the field notes of Mihai Șimon, to illustrate some of the artefacts. We try to keep our intervention to minimum in order to present the drawings of the author as accurate as possible. Most of the finds illustrated here were recovered from the archaeological layers, at different depths.

Pottery is characteristic to Gumelnița culture and includes several shapes as lids (fig. 10/1-6), some of them with oven-like handle or anthropomorphic traits, bowls (fig. 10/7-8), cups (fig. 10/9-18; fig. 11/1-4), pots (fig. 11/5-14), storage vessels (fig. 11/15-17; fig. 12/1, 2) and miniature vessels (fig. 12/3-5). A number of 15 clay anthropomorphic figurines were recovered from Măriuța, all in fragmentary state (fig. 12/6-20), but also two flat bone statuettes (fig. 12/21-22).

Hard animal material industry is represented by four items (fig. 13/1-4) and the polished stone industry by five pieces, three adzes (fig. 13/5, 7-8) and two axes (fig. 13/6, 9).

The chipped stone industry consists mainly of blades, but also we depicted endscrapers, nuclei reused as strikers, trapezoidal axes, splints and a beautiful knife (fig. 13/10-44). In the *miscellanea* category we can put a copper pin with double volute, specific to Gumelnița culture (fig. 14/1), a bird shaped vessel (fig. 14/2), two spindle whorls made from sherds (figs. 3-4), a clay object (fig. 14/5) and a clay weight (fig. 14/6).

Șeinoiu-Movila din cimitir

The site is positioned on a terrace on the left side of Mostiștea river, has a circular shape and a diameter of 40-60 m (figs. 15-19). The rescue excavations were made here in 1981-1985 by M. Șimon, the tell being in danger to be excavated in order to use the soil to build a bridge upstream. The research was very difficult because on the surface of tell the modern village cemetery was in use (T. Ignat, 2018; D. Șerbănescu, B. Șandric, 2012).



Fig. 15 - The *tell* settlement at Șeinoiu-Movila din cimitir (Google Earth)

Five layers of habitation were established assigned to Gumelnița culture, A2 and B1 phases (fig. 20). Also, a few surface dwellings were documented, burnt and unburnt, unfortunately the

Digging in the archives: the *tell* settlements of Măriuța and Seinoiu, southern Romania

specific conditions of research being unfit to draw conclusions regarding the spatial arrangement of houses (T. Ignat, 2018). One of the dwellings has been entirely uncovered in Section V, being well documented in the literature (M. Simon, V. Parnic, 2001).

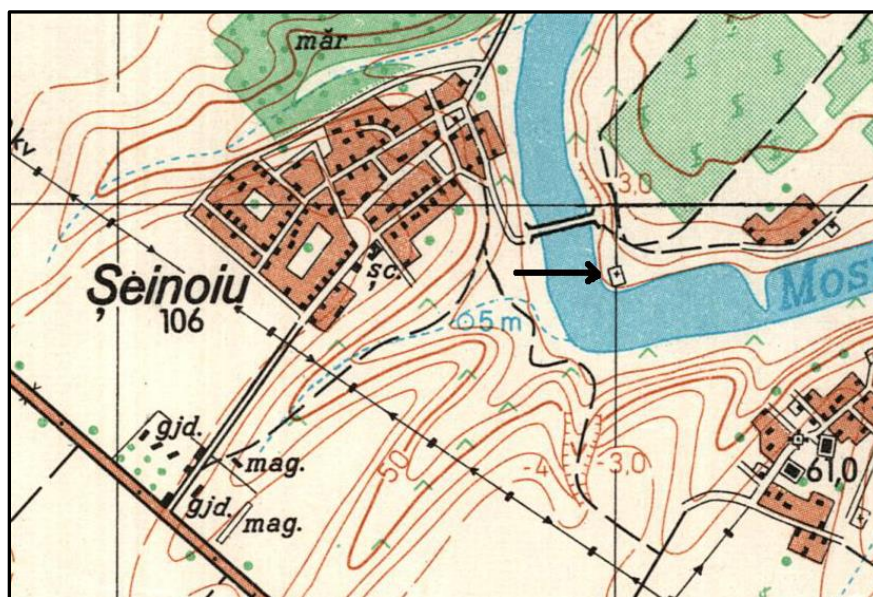


Fig. 16 - The *tell* settlement at Şeinoiu-*Movila din cimitir* (Military Topographic Department Map, Sc. 1:25.000)



Fig. 17 - The *tell* settlement at Şeinoiu-Movila din cimitir with the enclosure (sketch by M. Simon, IAB Archives)



Fig. 18 - Topographic survey of the Șeinoiu-Movila *din cimitir tell* settlement in the 1980s (IAB Archives)



Fig. 19. The tell settlement at Șeinoiu-Movila *din cimitir* (view from South-East)

Digging in the archives: the *tell* settlements of Măriuța and Șeinoiu, southern Romania

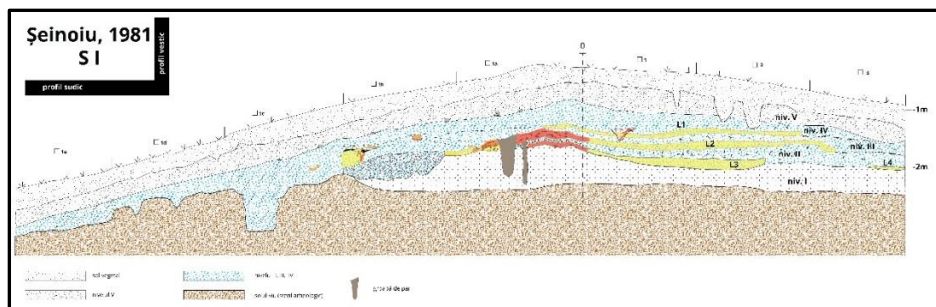


Fig. 20 - Șeinoiu 1981. SI with the five layers (drawings [M. Șimon](#), IAB Archive, digitally worked by M. Florea)

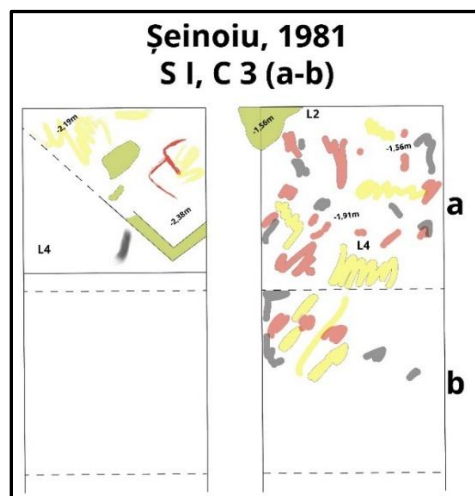


Fig. 21. Șeinoiu, 1981, SI, square C3, a-b. Dwellings L2 and L4 (drawings [M. Șimon](#), IAB Archive, digitally worked by M. Florea)

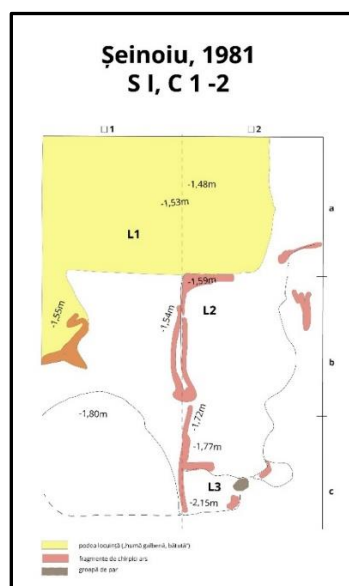


Fig. 22 - Șeinoiu, 1981, SI, squares C1-2, a-b-c. Dwellings L1, L2 and L3 (drawings [M. Șimon](#), IAB Archive, digitally worked by M. Florea)

The five layers of habitation from Șeinoiu were documented clearly in the western and southern profiles of the Section I (fig. 20). We can see in the profiles the traces of dwellings and the post holes and also the sediments of different colours and textures ([M. Șimon, 2014](#)). Also, from the Șimon's sketch, topographic survey and photo (figs. 17-19) we can suppose the existence of an enclosure in the northern part of the *tell*, which probably isolated the settlement in periods with great floods.

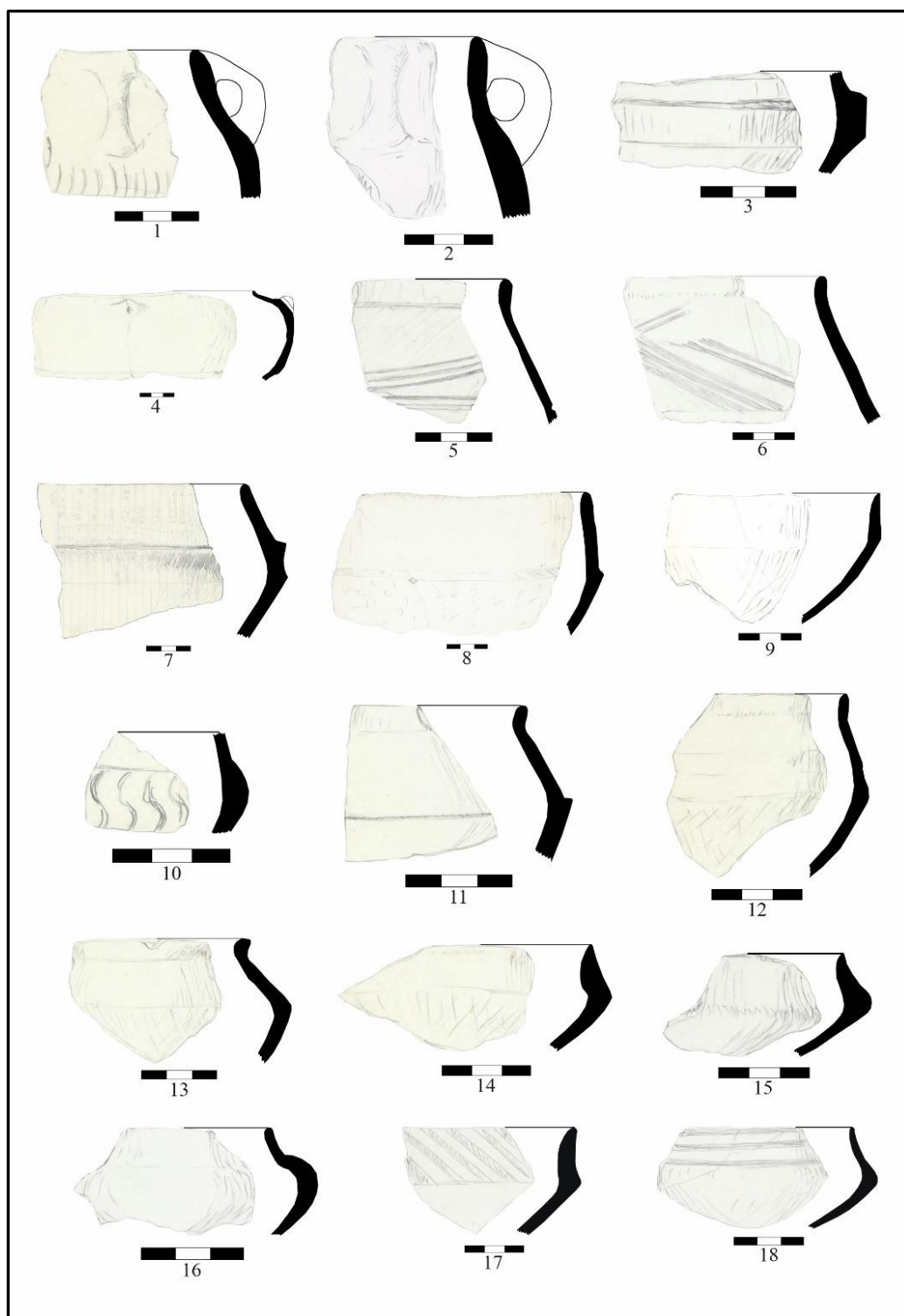


Fig. 23 - Șeinoiu-Movila din cimitir. Pottery (drawings [M. Șimon](#), IAB Archive, digitally worked by C.E. Ștefan)

Digging in the archives: the *tell* settlements of Măriuța and Șeinoiu, southern Romania

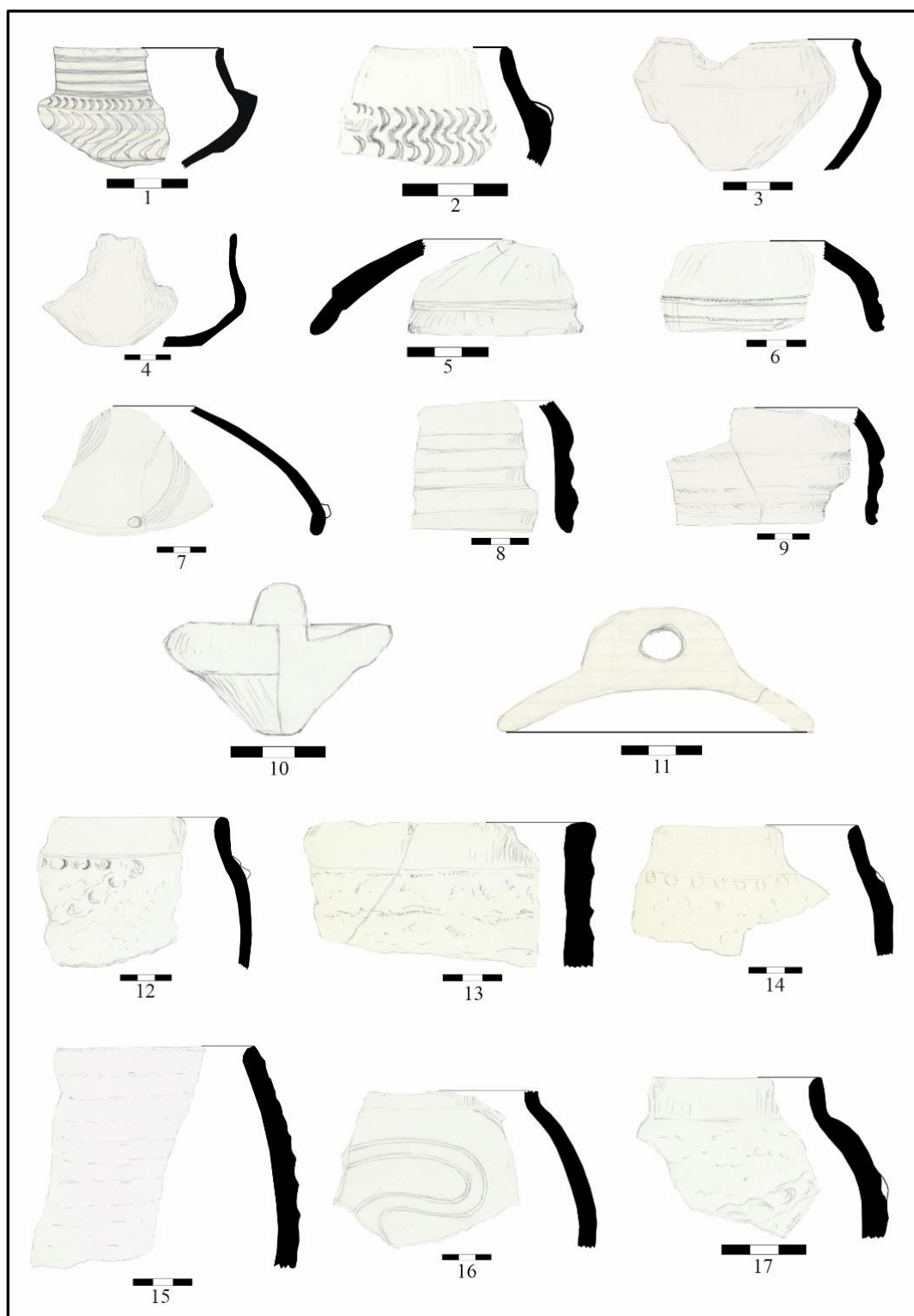


Fig. 24 - Șeinoiu-Movila din cimitir. Pottery (drawings [M. Șimon](#), IAB Archive, digitally worked by C.E. Ștefan)

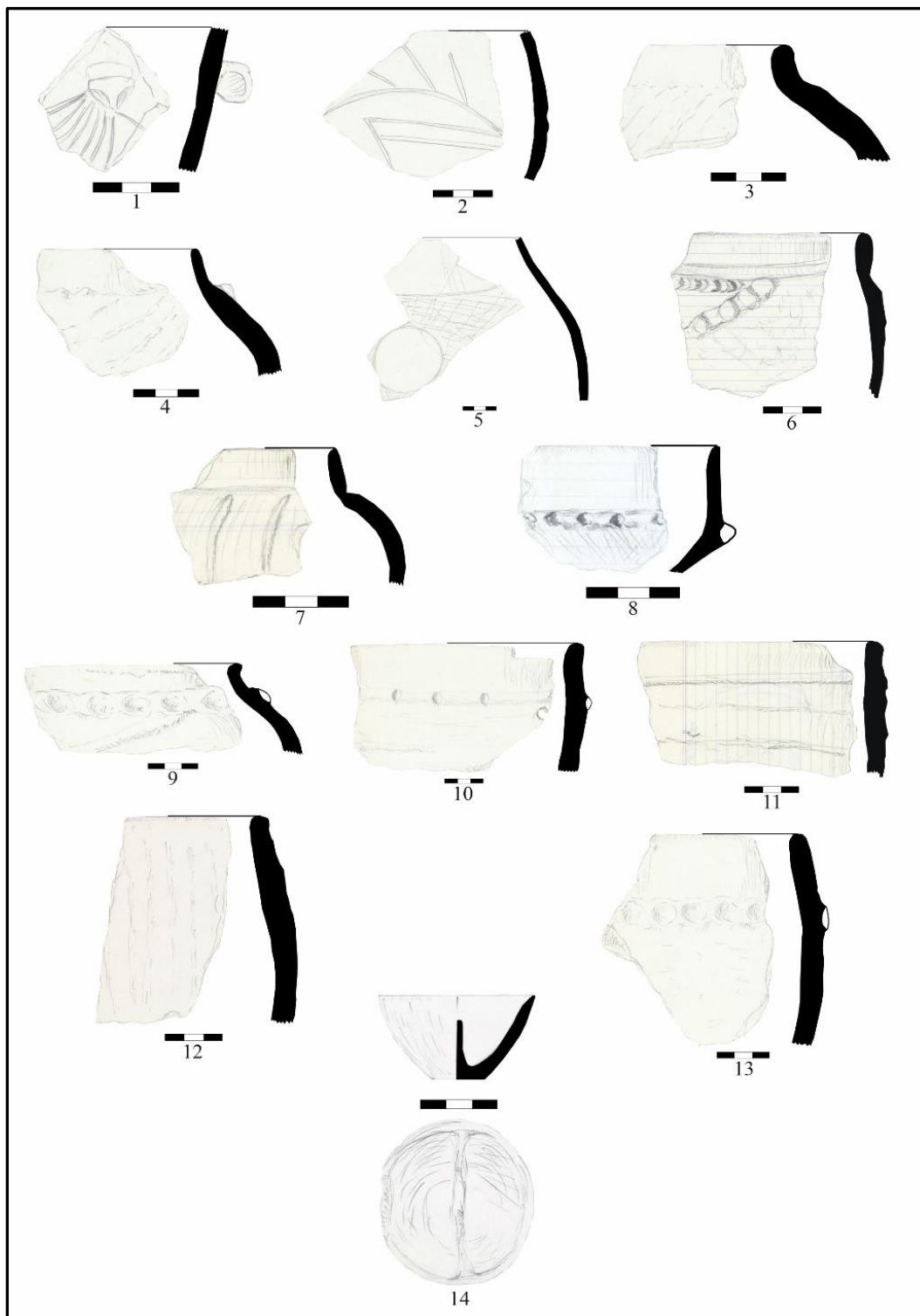


Fig. 25 - Șeinoiu-Movila din cimitir. Pottery (drawings [M. Șimon](#), IAB Archive, digitally worked by C.E. Ștefan)

Digging in the archives: the *tell* settlements of Măriuța and Șeinoiu, southern Romania

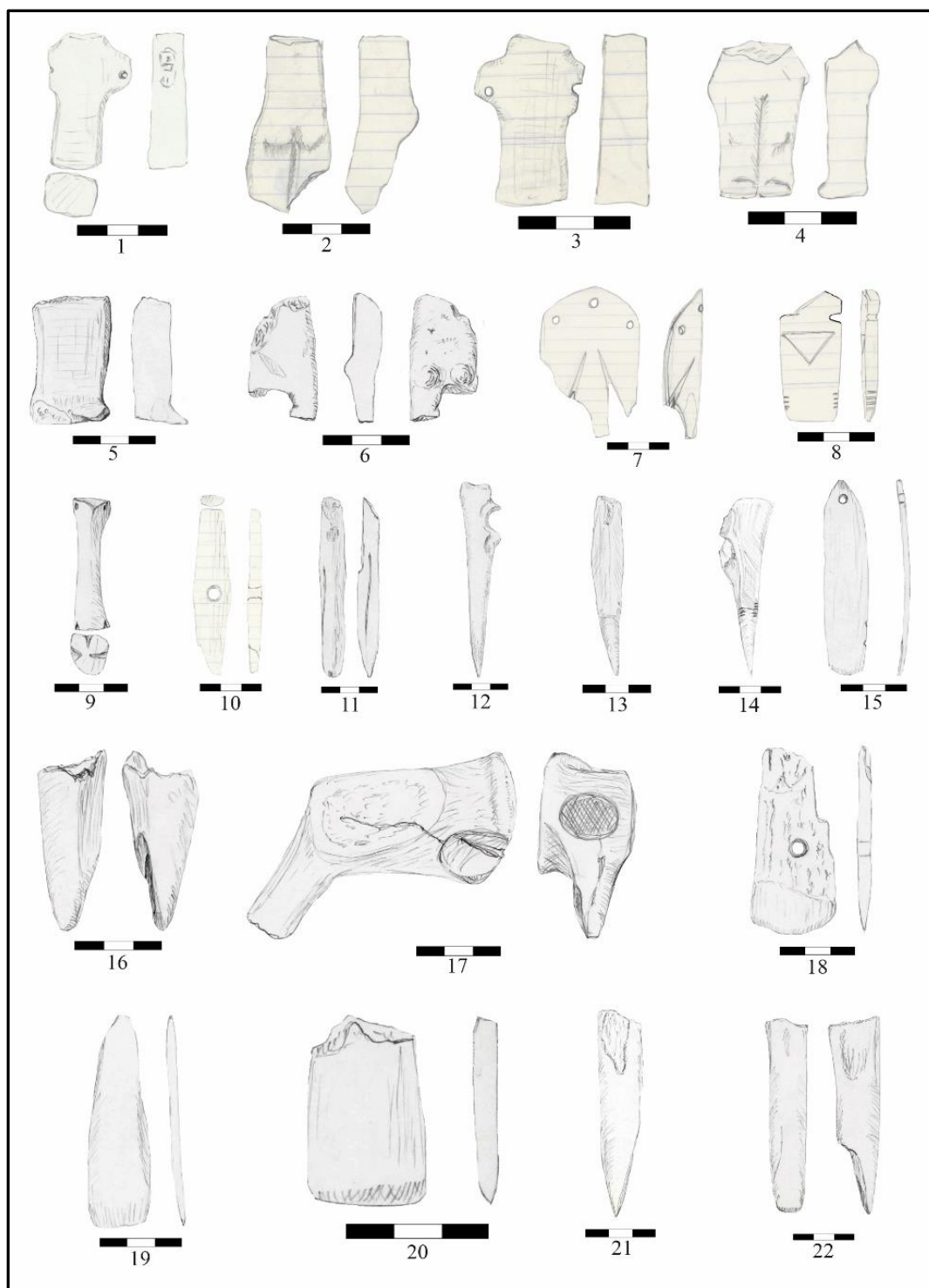


Fig. 26 - Șeinoiu-Movila din cimitir. 1-6, Clay figurines; 7, 8. Flat bone figurines; 9. Prismatic figurine; 10-22. Hard animal bone industry (drawings [M. Șimon](#), IAB Archive, digitally worked by C.E. Ștefan)

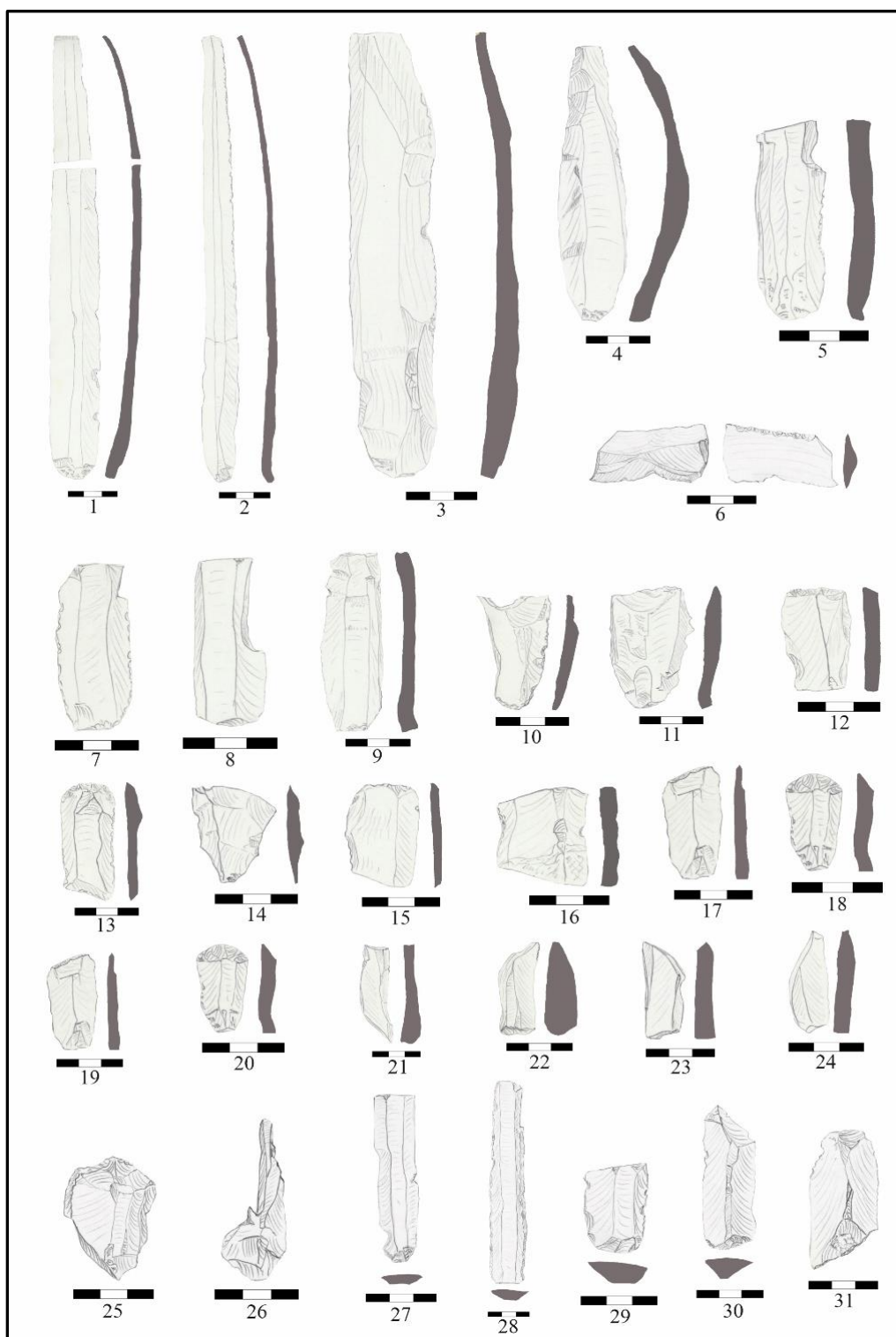


Fig. 27 - Șeinoiu-Movila din cimitir. Chipped stone industry (drawings [M. Șimon](#), IAB Archive, digitally worked by C.E. Ștefan)

Digging in the archives: the *tell* settlements of Măriuța and Șeinoiu, southern Romania

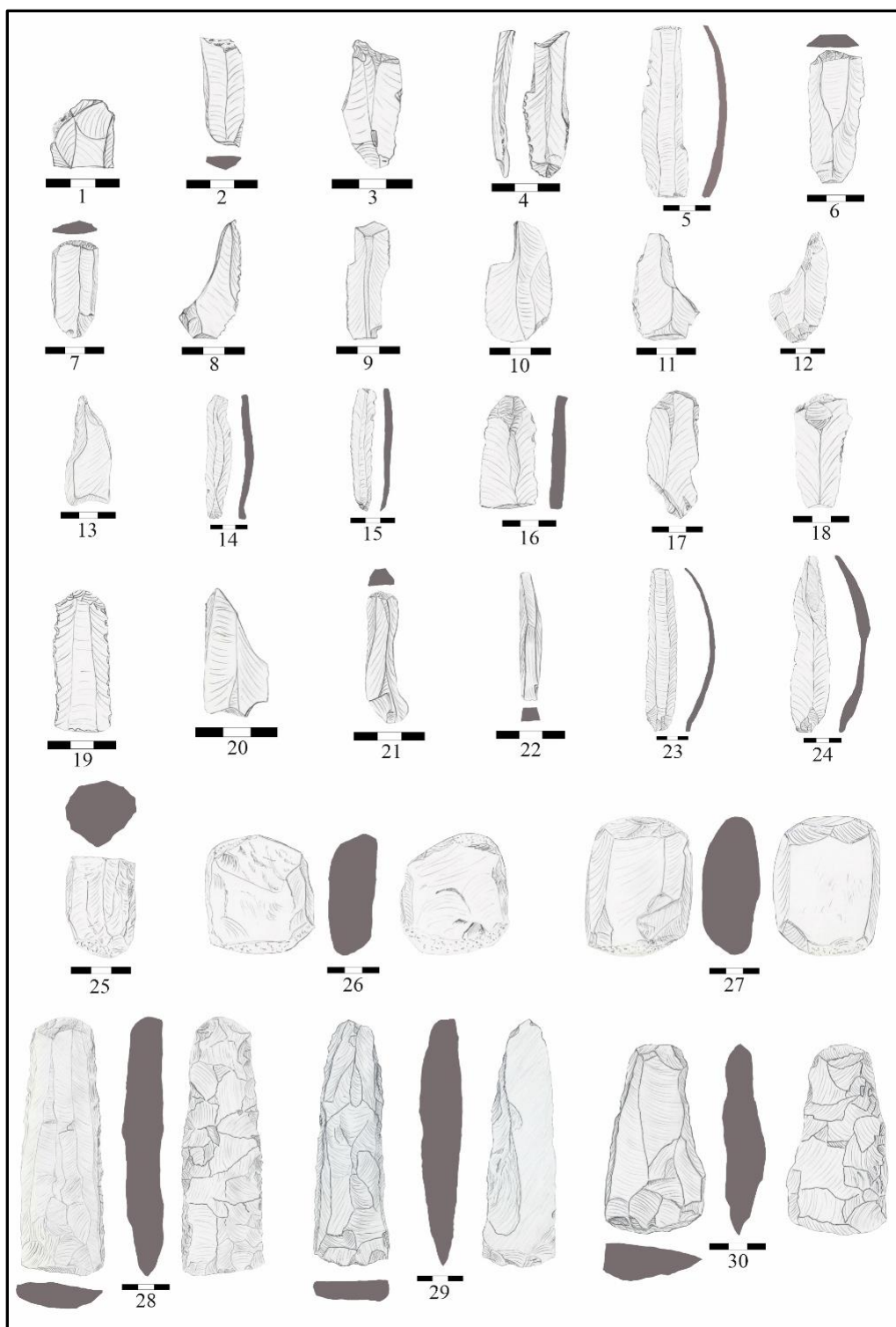


Fig. 28 - Șeinoiu-Movila din cimitir. Chipped stone industry (drawings [M. Șimon](#), IAB Archive, digitally worked by C.E. Ștefan)

The dwellings observed in the profile (*see infra*) were also partially uncovered in the C1-C3 squares, a lot of debris, post holes, archaeological materials and fragments of floors being documented (figs. 21-22).

The pottery of Șeinoiu fits well in B1 phase of Gumelnița culture by shapes and decoration (E. Comșa 1976). We can document here amphorae (fig. 23/1, 2), bowls (fig. 23/4-9), cups (fig. 23/10-18; fig. 24/1-4), lids (fig. 24/5-11), pots (fig. 24/12-17; fig. 25/1-8) and storage vessels (fig. 25/9-13). A special form is illustrated at fig. 25/14 representing a cup with two compartments made probably for substances that can not be mixed.

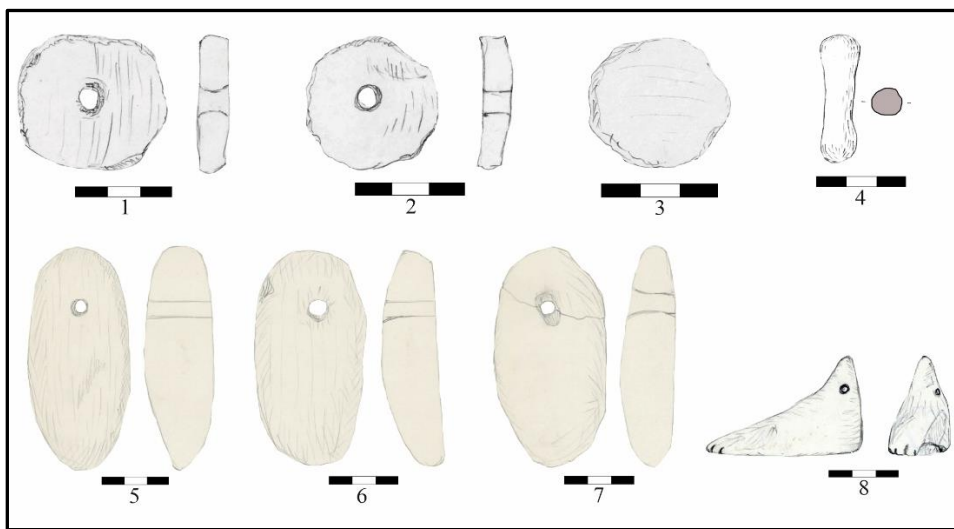


Fig. 29 - Șeinoiu-Movila din cimitir. 1-3. Spindle whorls; 4. Clay item; 5-7. Clay weights; 8. Clay foot (drawings M. Șimon, IAB Archive, digitally worked by C.E. Ștefan)

Concerning anthropomorphic figurines six clay items of this type were recovered, in a fragmentary state (fig. 26/1-6), two of flat bone (one of them belonging to so-called *en violon* type) (fig. 26/7, 8) and one of prismatic shape (fig. 26/9). The hard animal bone industry is represented by awls, chisels, two possible hoes, a pendant and a dibble (fig. 26/10-22).

From the chipped stone industry we have three pieces that stand out by size (fig. 27/1-3), which belong to the category of *long blades* obtained from a nucleus by pressure. Most of the other pieces are blades (with or without retouches), endscrapers, points and splints (fig. 27/4-31; fig.

Digging in the archives: the *tell* settlements of Măriuța and Șeinoiu, southern Romania

28/1-24). A nucleus (fig. 28/25), two strikers (fig. 28/26, 27) and three trapezoidal axes (fig. 28/28-30) were also recovered from habitation layers.

In the *miscellanea* category we can mention three spindle whorls made by sherds, two of them finished (fig. 29/1, 2) and one in progress (fig. 29/3), a clay object (fig. 29/4), three clay weights from Dwelling 1 (fig. 29/5-7) and a clay foot (fig. 29/8) (M. Șimon, D. Șerbănescu, 1987; C. E. Ștefan 2010).

Conclusions

Why we consider that is very important to reanalyse and eventually publish old excavations? First, the archaeological material existing in the museums repositories can be linked with old plans and put into context in the happy case that it can be recovered in a good preservation. Secondly, in some cases is the only way to know any data about a certain site who was affected a great deal or destroyed entirely. Thirdly, is better to know exactly where the old trenches are placed in order to help the modern research involving new methods (core drilling, geophysics, new excavations, etc.). Fourthly, the old material can be used in new ways in order to obtain as much information as possible (radiocarbon dating, isotopes, lipids, archaeometry, etc.). Finally, the old excavations involved sometimes a substantial human and logistical effort that deserves to be highlighted and properly published.

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Post-Palaeolithic Anthropomorphic Representations in Romanian Rock Art

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Abstract: Post-Palaeolithic anthropomorphic representations are one of the relatively frequent subjects encountered in Romanian rock art, especially after the discovery of sites following recent research. If we were to refer to rock art in Europe, where there are extensive regions with numerous concentrated sites, such as the Levantine or Scandinavian areas, in Romania, only the north of Gorj might stand out; here, several sites have been identified in caves or on gorge walls, such as those of the Olteţ or Sohodol. In this study, we have only referred to the anthropomorphic representations, attempting to establish some analogies with European post-Palaeolithic rock art and maybe to specify the possible relative age of some of them, as well as a significance better anchored to interpretations from other areas.

Keywords: anthropomorphic, rock art, symbolism, post-Palaeolithic, cave art.

Introduction

Although the first rock paintings and engravings in Romania were reported in the early 20th century, due to the interest shown by the great Palaeolithic archaeologist C. S. Nicolăescu-Plopşor (1926, 1928, 1931), no systematic concerns in this respect were recorded in the period that followed. Even more so, training specialists dedicated to the study of rock art was out of the question. Thus, in the following stages, such finds were to be accidental. Even in these conditions, the first discovery of a cave painted by the Palaeolithic man, at Cuciulat, on the valley of the Someş River, was published in 1979 (M. Cârciumară, 1981, 1983, 1985, 1987, 1988; M. Cârciumară, M. Bitiri, 1979, 1980); after a long time, the second cave in Romania with paintings attributed to the Palaeolithic was to be discovered at Coliboaia (Bihor County) (M. Besesek et al., 2010; J. Clottes et al., 2012). Post-Palaeolithic

Post-Palaeolithic Anthropomorphic Representations in Romanian Rock Art

rock art finds, which were somewhat more consistent, were to be further mentioned, especially those that include anthropomorphic representations.

The History of Discoveries

The first representations of rock art were reported by [C. S. Nicolăescu-Plopșor](#) in 1926 in Gorj County, northern Oltenia. Their authenticity was to be confirmed by H. Breuil in a letter: “Ils ne sont pas paléolithiques, mais rentrent très bien dans le style néolithique-énéolithique. Mais le plus probable pour vos peintures est qu’elles sont énéolithiques ou néolithiques. Leur ressemblance avec les peintures, tant espagnoles que scandinaves, de ces époques est très grandes” ([C. S. Nicolăescu-Plopșor](#), 1928, p. 4-5). Among these first discoveries of rock drawings and engravings, the anthropomorphic representations were perhaps the most numerous, being quite schematic, with tendencies towards abstraction ([M. Cârciumaru](#), 1987, 1988; [M. Cârciumaru](#), [R. Cârciumaru](#), 1999-2000). Many are dominated by sun worship. All are made with a black pigment most likely obtained from charcoal.

Some of the first found caves with rock paintings are Pârcălabu and Peștera Muierilor (‘Women’s Cave’) at Baia de Fier (Gorj County).

The importance of Peștera Muierilor is major because it has delivered a Mousterian and Upper Palaeolithic with valuable vestiges as well as human remains attributed to *Homo sapiens*. In addition, a series of rock paintings with anthropomorphic representations have been described on its walls.

In a number of small caves located along the Șușița river, near Vaidei commune (Gorj County), black drawings representing stylised human figures were found. The stylisation of the anthropomorphic representations is certainly much more pronounced in the case of those discovered on the walls of the Olteț gorge at Polovragi, also made in black. Out of the numerous drawings on the walls of the aforementioned gorge, [C.S. Nicolăescu-Plopșor](#) (1929) considers that some represent extremely stylised riders that are difficult to interpret as such.

The drawings and engravings observed on the walls of the Sohodol gorge, near the commune of Runcu (Gorj County), seem to be much more stylistically diverse.

For a long period, silence fell over the rock art of Romania. It was not until 1977 that [V. Boroneanț](#) published spectacular images of red-coloured paintings, depicting a wide variety of subjects, from the Gaura Chindiei cave (Pescari commune, Caraș-Severin County) in the Danube Gorge at the Iron Gates. Among them, alongside the superb birds stylised in the most

spectacular ways, solar, plant, cruciform representations, handprints etc., there were also interesting anthropomorphic representations.

That same year, a study was published on the black paintings in the Limanu cave, among which there were also several anthropomorphic representations, some even in the form of riders ([V. Boroneanț, R. Ciuceanu, 1977](#)).

The history of the Limanu cave's discovery is quite interesting, in the sense that the first mention of it belongs to C.N. Ionescu, who visited it in 1916; ten years later, he mentioned that the cave was organised by delimiting rooms for living, access corridors and ventilation systems intended for the local population in the face of migratory invasions.

The attraction of the cave grew, because in 1926 it was visited by A. Chappuis, and in the following years by O. Tafrali, during the archaeological excavations carried out at Callatis. Serious speleological research was undertaken between 1958 and 1964 by Margareta Dumitrescu and Traian Orghidan ([M. Cârciumaru, 1987](#)).

In 1988, engravings from the caves of Nucu-Bozioru (Buzău County) were published, in which, among numerous representations of weapons such as spearheads, arrow points, daggers etc., the “head and bust without arms of a man” were also identified ([V. Boroneanț, 1988](#), p. 52). In fact, the engravings in the Buzău Mountains had been reported in several studies some time before ([V. Drâmbocianu, 1980](#); [C. Ștefan, V. Drâmbocianu, 1980](#)).

The first synthesis of rock art in Romania was also published in 1988; it presented the stage of such finds up to that date ([M. Cârciumaru, 1988](#)). Later, the repertory of rock art was enriched with other discoveries that were interesting in terms of post-Palaeolithic representations.

It was also in 1988 that a first study of the engravings in the Cizmei cave was published; here, among numerous circular representations, an anthropomorphic ithyphallic representation was identified ([M. Cârciumaru, M. Nedopaca, 1988](#)). The engravings on a first megalith discovered at the foot of the Călimani Mountains, in Gura Haiti (Suceava County), were also mentioned ([T. Naum, M. Cârciumaru, E. Nițoi, 1988](#)). In 1989, the two anthropomorphic representations from the cave “with incisions” were published ([M. Cârciumaru, P. Brijan, 1989](#)).

Following research carried out in the 1980s, interesting paintings were discovered in the Popii cave located at the entrance from the commune of Runcu (Gorj County), in the Sohodol gorge ([M. Cârciumaru, R. Cârciumaru, 1999-2000](#)).

Post-Palaeolithic Anthropomorphic Representations in Romanian Rock Art

Recently, several stone blocks with engravings or rock drawings, which have enriched the repertory of prehistoric representations of this kind in Romania, have been reported in the mountainous area of the Carpathians (J. Bejenariu, R. Pop, 2013; Gh. Lazarovici, C.-M. Lazarovici, 2019; Gh. Lazarovici, R. Pop, 2015, 2016, 2017; Gh. Lazarovici et al., 2011, 2019; I. Mândricel, V. Bortaş, 2008; Mârza I., 1996).

Anthropomorphic representations – meaning, age, analogies

Pârcălabu Cave

The small Pârcălabu Cave is located on the right side of the Galben River, near Baia de Fier commune (Gorj County) (fig. 1). It is a quite difficult cave to access, with a very small area, but with a wide entrance. Due to these aspects, it was not inhabited in prehistory, and the existence of paintings is proof of its use rather as a place of worship.

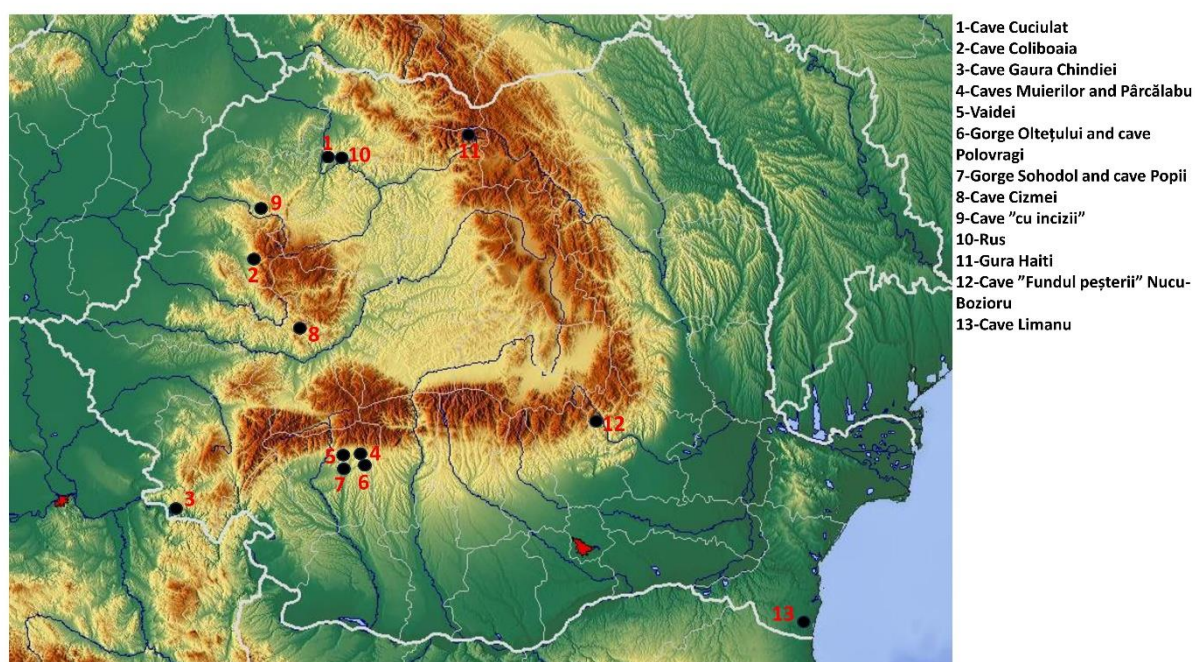


Fig. 1 – The geographic location of rock art sites in Romania.

This is how some of the anthropomorphs identified in this cave were initially interpreted: representations of warriors (fig. 2/1), human figures in motion (fig. 2/3), ithyphallic representations (fig. 2/4, 5) (C.S. Nicolăescu-Plopşor, 1926 b, 1928, 1931). Some human figures in this cave may be associated with the cult of the sun (fig. 2/8), the evil spirits

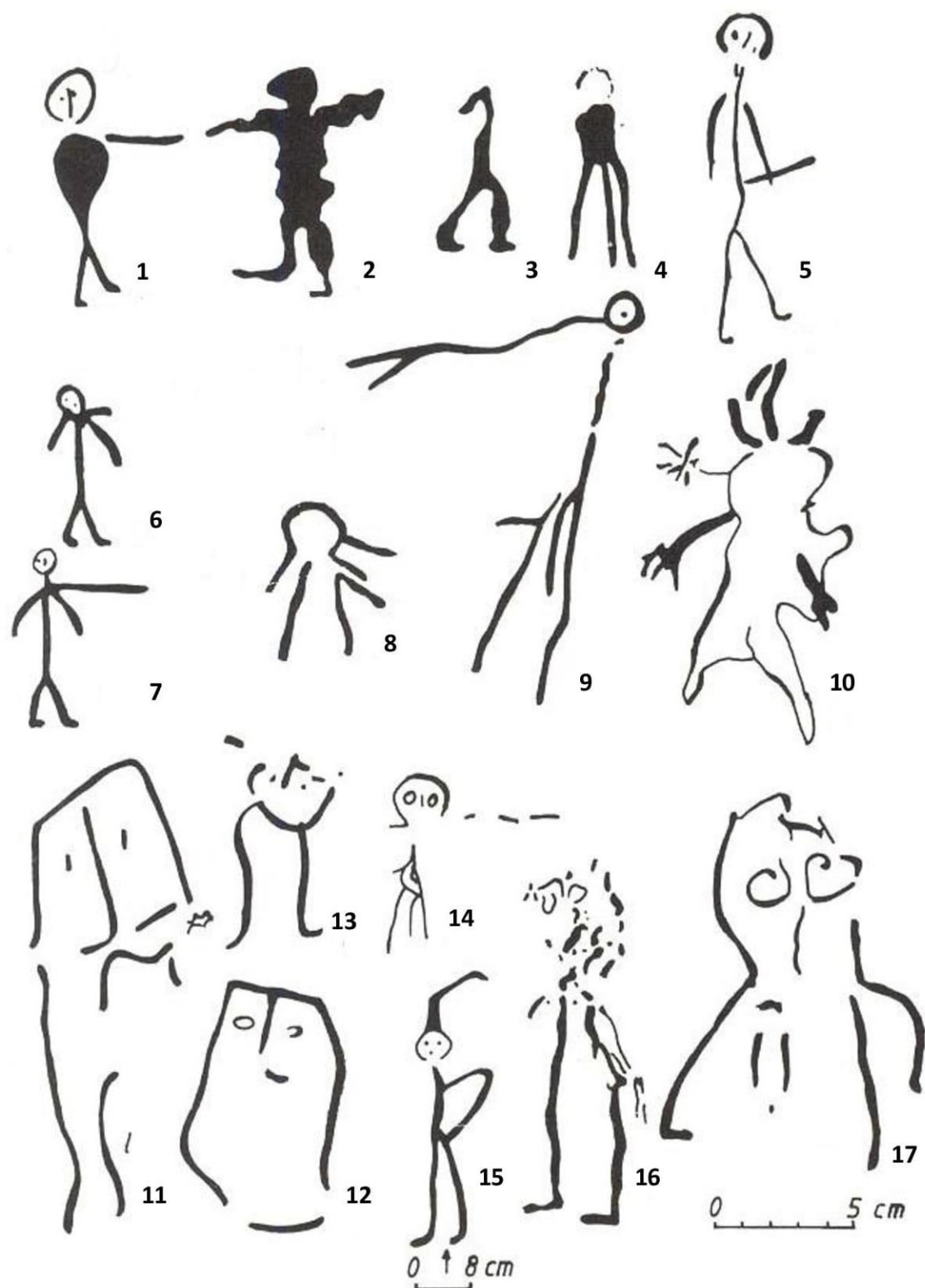


Fig. 2 – Rock paintings in Gorj County, in the caves Pârcălabu (1-10) and Muierilor (11-17) (acc. to C. S. Nicolăescu-Plopșor, 1928, 1931).

Post-Palaeolithic Anthropomorphic Representations in Romanian Rock Art

representing the devil (fig. 2/10) (M. Cârciumaru, 1987, 1988; M. Cârciumaru, R. Cârciumaru, 1999-2000).

The ithyphallic representations find their analogies at Naquane, which are attributed to the Iron Age (E. Anati, 1978). The feminine human silhouette (fig. 2/9; fig. 3/2) has stylistic similarities with those from Runcu in the Sohodol Gorge (fig. 4/12, 13, 16) and with those from the Grand Pere Cave at Ussat in Ariège (France) (A. Glory, 1947), or with a representation that is the schematic expression of a male-female couple from the linear art at Tune de la Varaime-La Bergerie des Maigres in southeastern France (Ph. Hameau, 2005) (fig. 3).

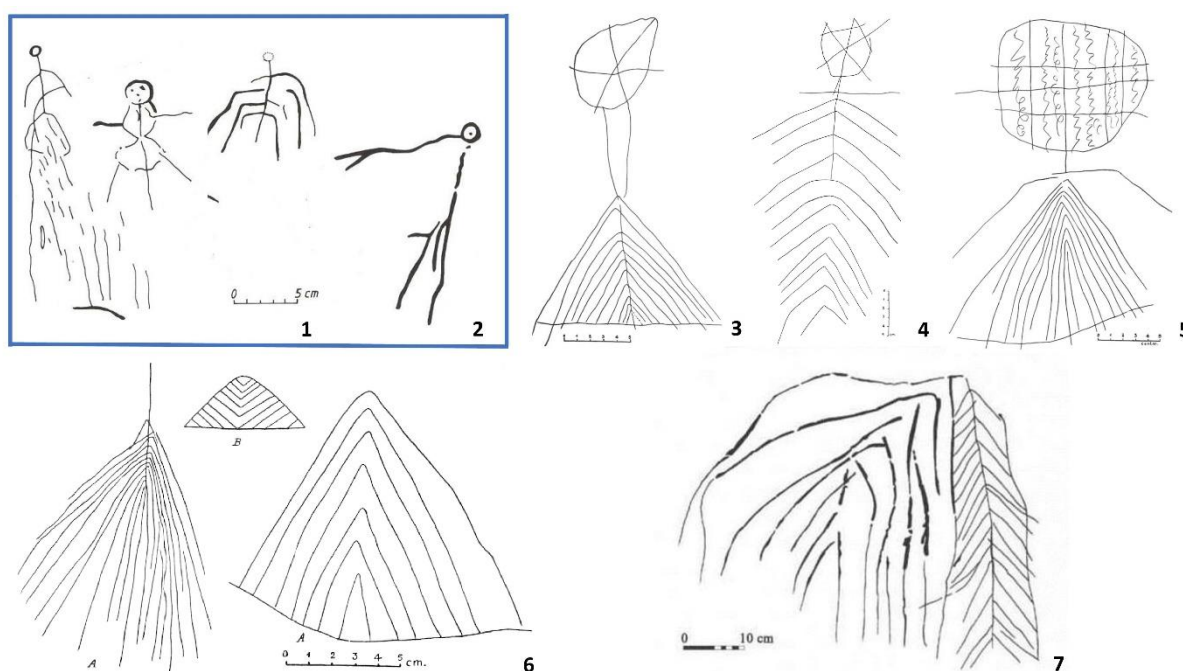


Fig. 3 – Analogies of the female representations from the Sohodol Gorge and the Pârcălabu Cave. 1 Runcu – Sohodol Gorge; 2- Pârcălabu Cave; 3-6- Grand Pere Cave at Ussat in Ariège; 7-schematic representation of a male-female couple in the linear art of Tune de la Varaime-La Bergerie des Maigres in southeastern France (3-6 acc. to A. Glory, 1947; 7 acc. to Ph. Hameau, 2005).

According to A. Glory (1947), schematic linear art is a very late artistic manifestation, even reaching historical times. Such engravings are usually made with a fine metallic tip, similar to writing. That is why it was called linear. Highlighted initially at Val Camonica, it has sparked many controversies regarding its age. Certainly, linear representations are

posterior to dotted engravings, and implicitly to the Bronze Age. Furthermore, they may be the work of shepherds from the Middle Ages and even later periods.



Fig. 4 – Rock paintings in the Șușița Valley, near Vaidei (1-4), on the Olteț Gorge walls at Polovragi (5-10) and rock paintings and engravings on the Sohodol Gorge walls at Runcu (11-16) (acc. to [C. S. Nicolăescu-Plopșor, 1928, 1931](#)).

The representations belonging to linear art follow some stereotypical code and conventional themes that suggest a kind of symbolic writing. Linear art themes have even

Post-Palaeolithic Anthropomorphic Representations in Romanian Rock Art

been established, including cruciform, arrow-shaped, arboriform, arciform, crossbow, “phi”-shaped, pectiniform, scalariform etc. motifs. Typical sites for linear art are encountered mainly in southern France with the Eastern Alps and the Pyrenees, extending to Portugal (J. Abelanet, 1986).

Several human representations from the Pârcălabu cave (fig. 2/1, 5-7) stylistically resemble some anthropomorphic figures from the Tage valley (J. Abelanet, 1986) in the Atlantic area, typical of Galician-Portuguese art, characterised by figures often sexualised in a semi-naturalistic style, with broad bodies, contoured heads, legs and arms, as well as linear-schematic and symbolic ramiform silhouettes, with evident arms and legs. Other anthropomorphic figures from the Pârcălabu cave may also fit into this model. It is not excluded that such representations are contemporaneous with the Metal Ages (J. Abelanet, 1986).

The human silhouette in fig. 2/2 from the Pârcălabu cave is stylistically similar to some described at Aussois in Savoie (France) contemporary to the year 1000 B.C. and the immediately following period (F. Ballet, Ph. Raffaelli, 1980), and to the anthropomorphic figures from Seradina (Capo di Ponte) and Naquane (Val Camonica) (Italy), dated to the Iron Age and interpreted as mythological representations (E. Anati, 2020).

In fact, it may be said that this kind of representation is part of the characters typical of the Mont Bego region (H. de Lumley, A. Echassoux A., 2009; N. Bianchi, 2013). The human figure that seems to have its head adorned with feathers (fig. 2/10) would find its analogies in the warriors from Naquane (Val Camonica), in a period characterised by an artistic creative explosion, even if sometimes the engraving technique may seem quite crude, contemporaneous with the Iron Age (E. Anati, 1978).

Peștera Muierilor

Like the Pârcălabu Cave, Peștera Muierilor is located on the right side of the Galben River, in the commune of Baia de Fier (Gorj County). A series of rock paintings with anthropomorphic representations (fig. 2/11-17) have been described on its walls. Their general appearance seems to be idol-like representations, similar to those at Luine (Val Camonica) (E. Anati, 1978). Among them, a representation considered to be female has been identified (fig. 2/17). The human heads (fig. 2/11-12) are reminiscent of the schematic anthropomorphic figures from Sierra Morena (H. Breuil, H. Obermaier, 1913). The anthropomorphic figures lacking the torso are also interesting (fig. 2/13, 17). The human figure in fig. 2/15 evokes

those from Cueva de Los Letreros de Vales Blanco, Almeria, as well as the human stylisations from Andalusia and Murcia ([J. Abelanet, 1986](#)).

Vaidei

The village of Vaidei (Stănești commune, Gorj County) is located in the Șușița Valley. The drawings have been identified in several caves located in the Șușița Valley, near the village of Vaidei. The human representations ([fig. 4/1-4](#)) are reminiscent of those from the Pârcălabu Cave in Baia de Fier and those from the Sainie-Eulalie Cave (Santo Aulasio-Ariège), created in the linear style. Their schematisation follows an intentional code practised by the respective artist and may date back to around 1,300-1,000 B.C. ([A. Glory, 1947](#)).

Polovragi

Near Polovragi monastery, the spectacular gorge of the Olteț river stretches, with several rock paintings identified on its walls, including anthropomorphic figures depicted in a rather schematic manner ([fig. 4/5-10](#)), which remind of the drawings from Tirisn Alm and the Palanli cave in Anatolia ([E. Anati, 1972](#)). Analogies could even be drawn with the human figures in schematic art from the Iberian Peninsula at Zarzalon, Las Batuecas, Penarrubia, as well as with a human silhouette from Seradina (Valcamonica) dating back to the Bronze Age. The “phi” symbol ([fig. 4/5](#)) may be considered similar to that on the dolmens at Cluin Fioun Loch (Ireland), the engraved representations at Pla de Vall en So (Ria-Conat) or those at Valat de la Figuerassa (Tarerach) in the Eastern Pyrenees. A human representation with particular features ([fig. 4/8](#)) has meandering arms similar to those at Mas de Carles (Tarragona), without ruling out the possibility that it suggests the arboriform style, such as those at Abri Georgeot (Var) in southern France ([J. Abelanet 1986](#)) or at Palanli (Anatolia) ([E. Anati, 1972 b](#)).

Runcu – Sohodol Gorge

Near the village of Runcu (Gorj County) there is the spectacular Sohodol Gorge. On the limestone walls of the gorge, a series of schematic and even abstract cave paintings and engravings have been described. A few human silhouettes ([fig. 4/12, 13, 16](#)) are reminiscent of the female figures with skirts ([fig. 3/3-5](#)) or only the skirts, without heads and arms ([fig. 3/6-7](#)), from the Grand Pere cave in Ussat, Ariège (France) ([A. Glory, 1947](#)), or of the representation of the female-male couple in the linear art of Tune de la Varaime-La Bergerie des Maigres ([Ph. Hameau, 2005](#)). [A. Glory \(1947\)](#) considers schematic linear art to be a very late artistic manifestation, even reaching historical times. A rather curious painting found in

Post-Palaeolithic Anthropomorphic Representations in Romanian Rock Art

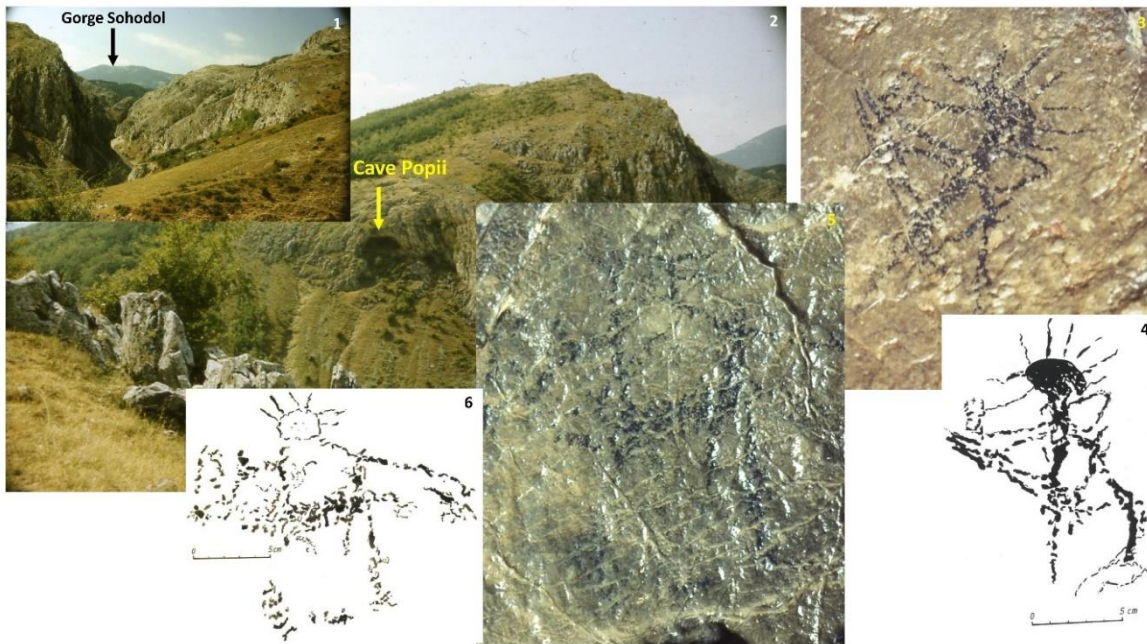


Fig. 5 – The Popii Cave in the Sohodol Gorge. 1- Sohodol Gorge; 2- Popii Cave entrance; 3-4 – archer or warrior; 5-6 anthropomorph.



Fig. 6 – Analogies for the archer-warrior in the Popii Cave. 1- Popii Cave; 2- Ermites I rock shelter (Spain); 3- Cova Centelles (Spain); 4- Cova dels Rossegadors (Spain); 5- Levantine rock art archers (a-c - cueva Saltadora, Valltorta, Castellon; d-Els Secans, Teruel; e-Cingle de la Mola Remigia, Castellon; f-cueva de la Vieja, Alpera, Albacete); 6- cervid hunting scenes from La Valtora; 7-archers and hunters from La Valtora and Remigia Cave (2-4 acc. to [R. Viñas, G. Morote, 2015](#); 5-7 acc. to [J. Abelanet, 1986](#)).

the Sohodol Gorge is the one in [fig. 4/11](#), which has some vague similarities to a representation from Anatolia in the Beldibi region ([E. Anati, 1972 b](#)).

Popii Cave

The Popii Cave is located at the entrance to the Sohodol Gorge, from the commune of Runcu (Gorj County), opposite the slope where [C. S. Nicolăescu-Plopșor \(1928\)](#) discovered the first representations of rock art in this area. The cave paintings in the Popii Cave mainly consist of two anthropomorphic figures made with black colour, alongside of two other smaller human representations made in a linear style, so probably much later, placed laterally, quite isolated, on a cornice of the cave ceiling ([fig. 5](#)) ([M. Cârciumaru, 1987, 1988](#); [M. Cârciumaru, R. Cârciumaru, 1999-2000](#)).

The two main anthropomorphs ([fig. 5/3-6](#)) are protected by a calcite crust which is fairly dark due to permanent pollution, as the paintings are located right at the mouth of the cave. Because of this, the paintings are not visible at first sight, but only after moistening the wall with water.

Undoubtedly, the most interesting is the anthropomorphic representation that may suggest an archer or warrior ([fig. 5/3-4](#)). The style in which it was made and the meaning of this representation are typical enough to identify a series of analogies with those in ([fig. 6](#)), the Ermites I shelter, Cova Centelles, Cova dels Rossegadors, all from Spain, the Levantine rock art archers (a-c - cueva Saltadora, Valltorta, Castellon; d-Els Secans, Teruel; e-Cingle de la Mola Remigia, Castellon; f-cueva de la Vieja, Alpera, Albacete), the cervid hunting scenes from La Valtora, archers and hunters from La Valtora and the Remigia cave etc. (after [R. Viñas, G. Morote, 2015](#); [J. Abelanet, 1986](#)).

The second anthropomorph in the Popii cave ([fig. 5/5-6](#)) might find its analogies in an idol-shaped figure from Val Camonica from the II C period attributed to the Neolithic ([E. Anati, 1978](#)).

Gaura Chindiei Cave

The Gaura Chindiei Cave (Pescari commune, Caraș-Severin County) is located in the Danube Gorge at the Iron Gates, having a fairly large entrance, 2.75 m wide and 1.70 m high ([fig. 7/2](#)), after which a gallery of approximately 60 square metres develops. Due to its position, it is well lit, especially in the afternoon, when the paintings on the north and northeast walls can be seen very well ([fig. 7/3-4](#)). The paintings in the Gaura Chindiei Cave are characterised by a great variety, including naturalistic-schematic representations attributed

Post-Palaeolithic Anthropomorphic Representations in Romanian Rock Art

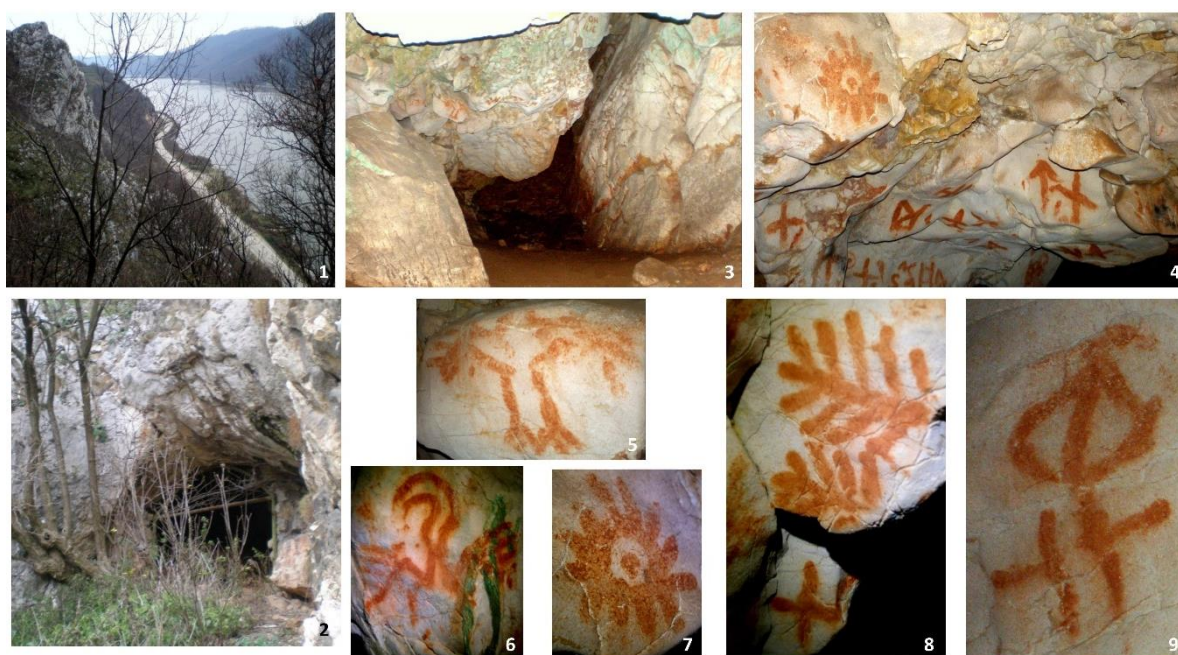


Fig. 7 – Gaura Chindiei Cave. 1- The Danube Gorge at the Iron Gates; 2- cave entrance; 3-4 – painted walls inside the cave; 5-6 – stylised birds; 7- astraliforme in the shape of the sun; 8- fir-shaped pictorial; 9- stylised human silhouette.

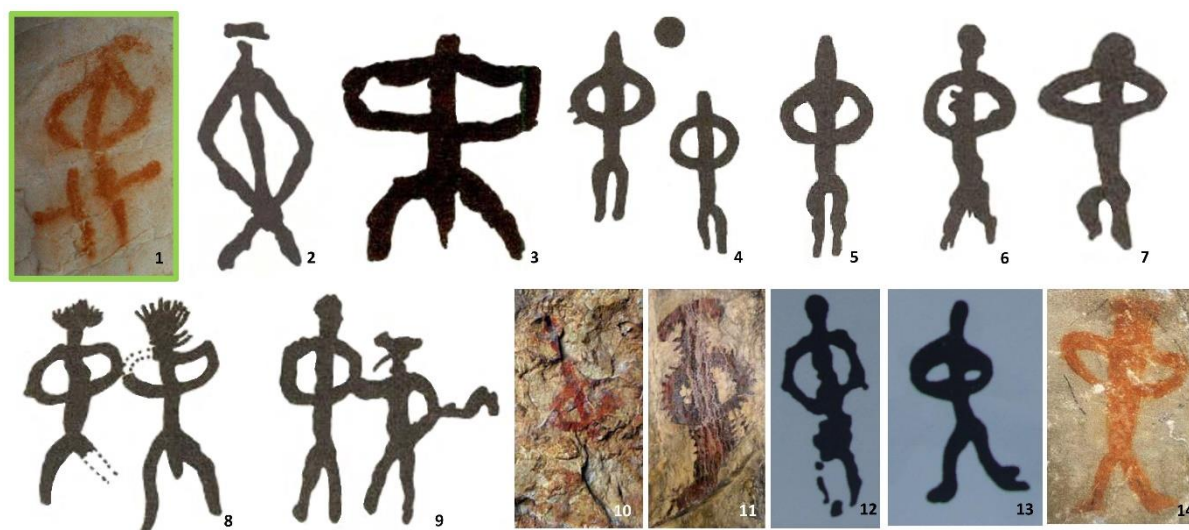


Fig. 8 – Analogies for the human figure in the Gaura Chindiei Cave. 1-Gaura Chindiei; 2- Monier Cave (Ollioules); 3- Graja Cave, Jimena (Jaén); 4-6 Baranco de la Cueva, Fuencaliente (Ciudad Real); 7-Cova del Pi, Tivisa (Tarragona); 8-Graja, Jimena (Jaén); 9-Las Vereas, Moclin (Granada); 10-11 –Sima de la Serreta Cave; 12-Aussois (Savoie); 13- Lanslebourg (Savoie); 14- the rock shelter Socuevas de San Miguel, Alava (2-9 acc. to J. Abelanet, 1986; 10-11 acc. to A. J. Gásquez Milanés, 2009; 12-13 acc. to F. Ballet, Ph. Raffaelli, 1980; 14 acc. to R. de Balbín Berhmann, P. Bueno Ramírez, 2016).

to birds (fig. 7/5-6), floral motifs (fig. 7/8) encountered in various aspects from the Neolithic to historical ages, signs in the form of a cross, circles with a dot in the middle, barred, framed by vertical lines, various shapes of triangles, squares, S- or Z-lines, astraliforme symbols in the form of a sun (fig. 7/7), a wide variety of crosshatches, crosses, dots etc.

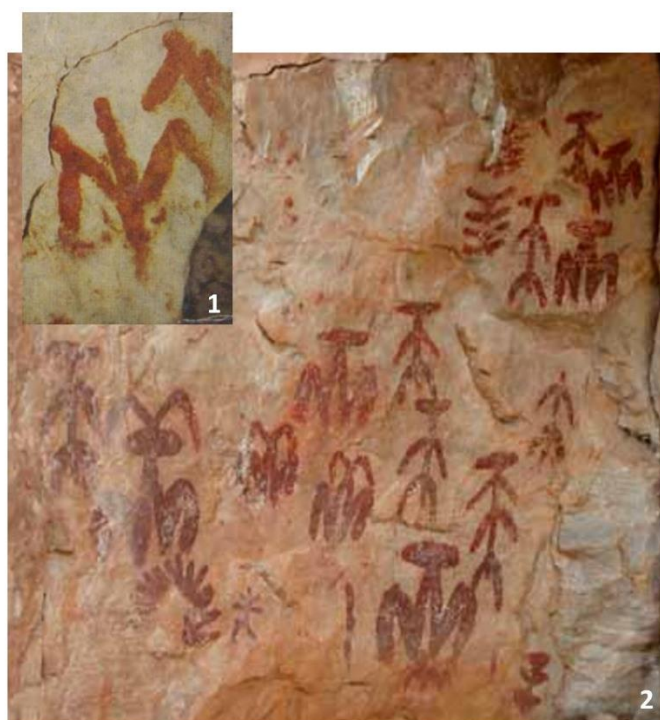


Fig. 9 – Analogies for the human representation from the Gaura Chindiei Cave. 1 - schematic human representation in the Gaura Chindiei Cave; 2-representations of astraliformes and abstract human silhouettes in the shelter of Peña Escrita, Fuencaliente (Espagne) (2 acc. to [J. F. Quintos, 2009](#)).

The most interesting stylised human silhouette in the Gaura Chindiei Cave (fig. 7/9, fig. 8/1) finds its analogies at the beginning of the Metal Ages in Monier Cave (Ollioules) (fig. 8/2) ([J. Abelanet, 1986](#)), Aussois (Savoie) (fig. 8/12), Lanslebourg (Savoie) (fig. 8/13) ([F. Ballet, Ph. Raffaelli, 1980](#)) (France), Graja Cave, Jimena (Jaén) (fig. 8/3), Baranco de la Cueva, Fuencaliente (Ciudad Real) (fig. 8/4-6), Cova del Pi, Tivisa (Tarragona) (fig. 8/7), Graja Cave, Jimena (Jaén) (fig. 8/8), Las Vereas, Moclin (Granada) (fig. 8/9) ([J. Abelanet, 1986](#)), Sima de la Serreta Cave (fig. 8/10-11) in Spain ([A. J. Gásquez Milanés, 2009](#)), Socuevas de San Miguel rock shelter, Alava ([R. de Balbín Berhmann, P. Bueno Ramírez, 2016](#)).

This is a period of major changes in the approach to artistic sense; art begins to ignore the presentation of scenes concerning historical events, using other artistic means more

Post-Palaeolithic Anthropomorphic Representations in Romanian Rock Art

closely related to writing than to art, in the form of signs and symbols suggesting the artist's tendency towards the religious. It is an abstract and symbolic art that was to become increasingly schematic. To be understood by members of the community, initiation in several stages from the concrete to the abstract was necessary. When this was achieved, a kind of symbolic writing may be said to have been reached (J. Abelanet, 1986). The anthropomorphs of Savoie, from Aussois and Lanslebourg, have been considered similar to those in Val Camonica, dated to 1000 and 850 B.C. (F. Ballet, Ph. Raffaelli, 1980).

In the Gaura Chindiei Cave, there are also other schematic representations suggesting the human silhouette, which find their analogies in Levantine rock art (fig. 9).

In this way, through the better circumscribed chronology of human representations, the rock paintings in the Gaura Chindiei cave may be considered to belong mostly to the Metal Ages, if we consider the analogies invoked.

Limanu Cave

The Limanu Cave, also known as Caracicola Cave or “the cave at the pond”, formed in an anticline belonging to the Upper Sarmatian, more specifically Bessarabian-Kersonian. It is

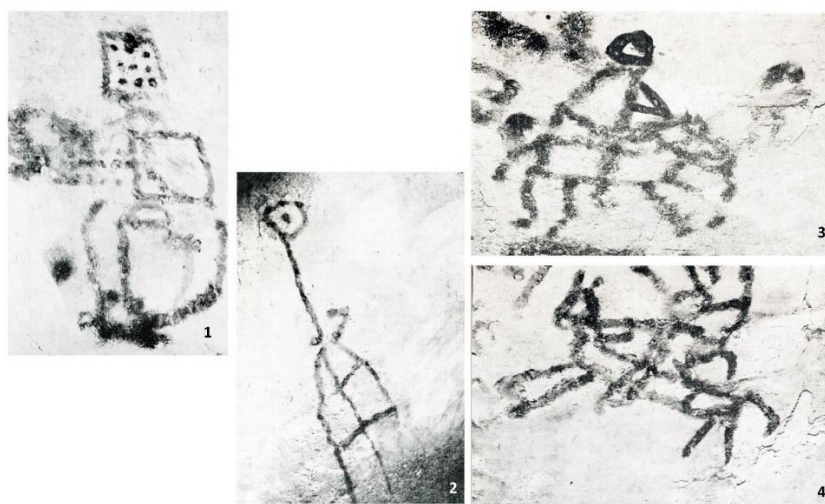


Fig. 10 – Anthropomorphic paintings in the Limanu Cave (Constanța County) (acc. to V. Boroneanț, R. Ciuceanu, 1977).

over 3 km long and has an entrance 1.50 m high and 3.50 m wide. Administratively, it belongs to Limanu commune, Constanța County. Among the animal representations, solar symbols, cruciform motifs, writings in Slavic etc., a number of anthropomorphic representations have also been identified (fig. 10).

Cizmei Cave

The Cizmei Cave lies in the Metaliferi Mountains, the Apuseni Mountains, and is located in the karstic area of Grohot, not far from the town of Brad. Administratively, it is part



Fig. 11 – Cizmei Cave. 1-the limestone wall in which the cave formed; 2-upper gallery with engravings; 3-cave entrance; 4-7 engravings in the form of concentric circles; 5-bottom right – anthropomorphic representation.

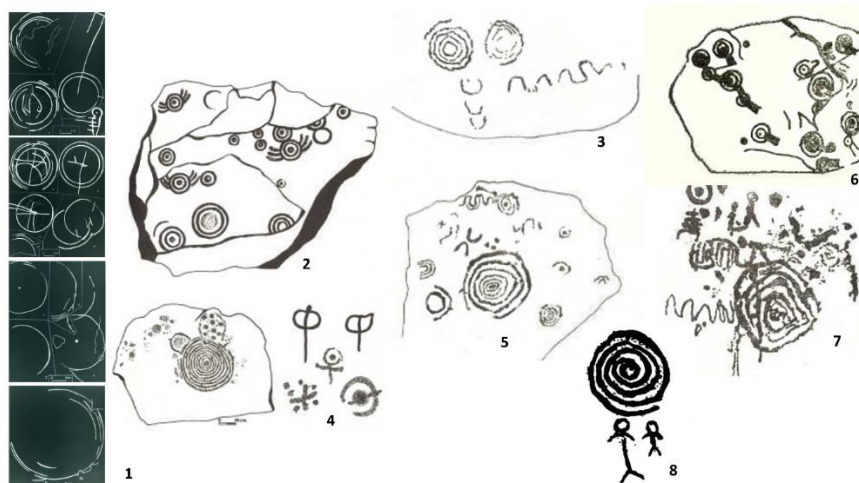


Fig. 12 – Analogies for the circular engravings in the Cizmei cave. 1- Cizmei Cave; 2- engraved dolmen stone at Caillou de Téberne (Pyrénées-Atlantiques); 3-rock engravings at Carnanmore (Ireland) ; 4-rock engraving on the County Cork dolmen (Ireland); 5-rock engraving at Tara (Ireland); 6-rock engraving at Loughcrew (Ireland); 7-engraved block on the Ilkley dolmen (Great Britain); 8-Tage (Fratel) (acc. to [J. Abelanet, 1986](#); [E. Anati, 1960](#); [1978](#); [E. Shee, 1972](#)).

of the village of Ribicioara, Ribița commune in Hunedoara County. The cave opens in the right slope of the Ribicioara valley, at an absolute altitude of about 420 m and a relative

Post-Palaeolithic Anthropomorphic Representations in Romanian Rock Art

altitude of 75 m, and is 69 m long (fig. 11/1-3) (M. Cârciumar, M. Nedopaca, 1988).

The engravings in this cave are represented, to an overwhelming extent, by simple or concentric circles, sometimes with the centre marked by a small indentation, circles intersected by vertical and horizontal lines etc. (fig. 11/4-7). Near one of the circles, a human silhouette was engraved, with the head outlined in the shape of an arc with a dot in the centre (fig. 11/5).

In the rock art in the Tage Valley (Fratel), the Iberian Peninsula (fig. 12/8), there are two anthropomorphs associated with a spiral, similar to the human representation in the Cizmei Cave (fig. 11/5). The circular motifs are sometimes associated with a line that starts from the centre outwards, as is the case with several circles in the Cizmei Cave (fig. 11/4-7). Concentric circles are commonly found in dolmenic rock art, at Caillaou de Tèbene, Buzy in the Atlantic Pyrenees, attributed to the Bronze Age, on a series of engraved blocks at Youghal, County Cork, Tara, Loughcrew and Carnanmore in Ireland, or on an engraved dolmen at Ilkley in Great Britain. Concentric circles are also encountered in the Swiss Alps at Carschenna (Grisons), where they are widespread and are provided with a central point as an indentation (J. Abelanet, 1986; E. Anati, 1960; 1978; E. Shee, 1972). E. Shee (1972) provides an interesting typology of rock representations on the megaliths of Ireland, in which circles of various forms occupy a special place. The mystical significance of these circles may be cosmogonic in nature, in that, the spiral, in terms of the passage of time, represents the beginning and the end. These circular motifs are associated with the Bronze Age (J. Abelanet, 1986).

The cave "with incisions"

The cave "with incisions" is located not far from the village of Fânațe, in the commune of Câmpani, Bihor County. Physico-geographically, the region in question is the depression of Crișul Negru, towards the mountainous area of Bihor, at an absolute altitude of 500 m (fig. 13) (M. Cârciumar, P. Brijan, 1979).

The cave shelters two human engravings made in a linear style, with one of them being in an astraliforme manner, the head surrounded by rays and fingers suggesting the same thing (fig. 13/3-4). The latter finds its analogies in the Catalan Pyrenees at Coll de la Font-Roja (Caixas) (J. Abelanet, 1986), as well as in the Paris Basin on the ceiling at Auvent du Chevalier (Coquibus), at Milly-la-Forêt (Essonne) (fig. 14). Rendering the sex (fig. 13/4 –

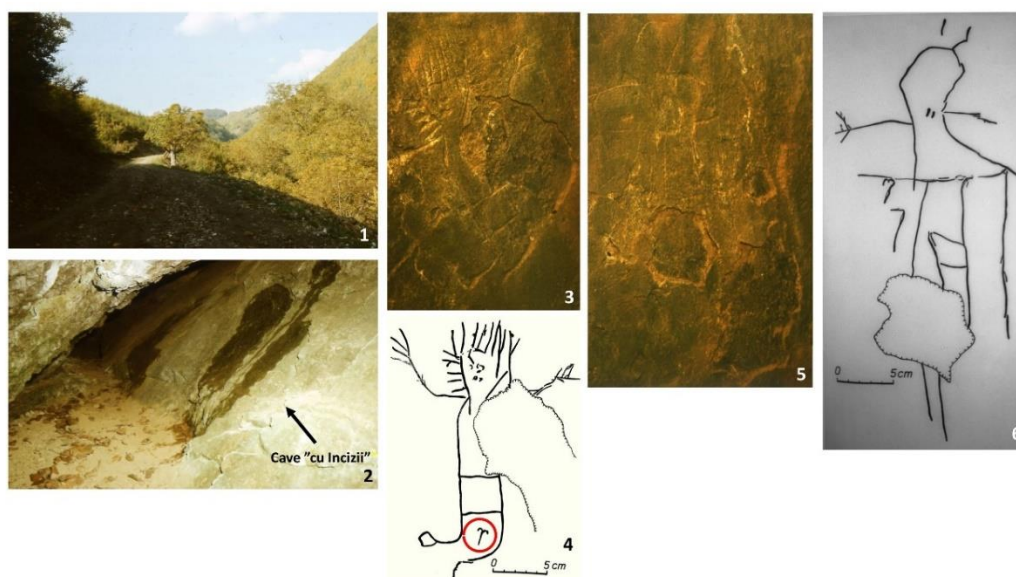


Fig. 13 – The cave "with incisions". 1-route to the cave; 2-limestone spur on which the engravings are arranged; 3-6 anthropomorphic engravings.

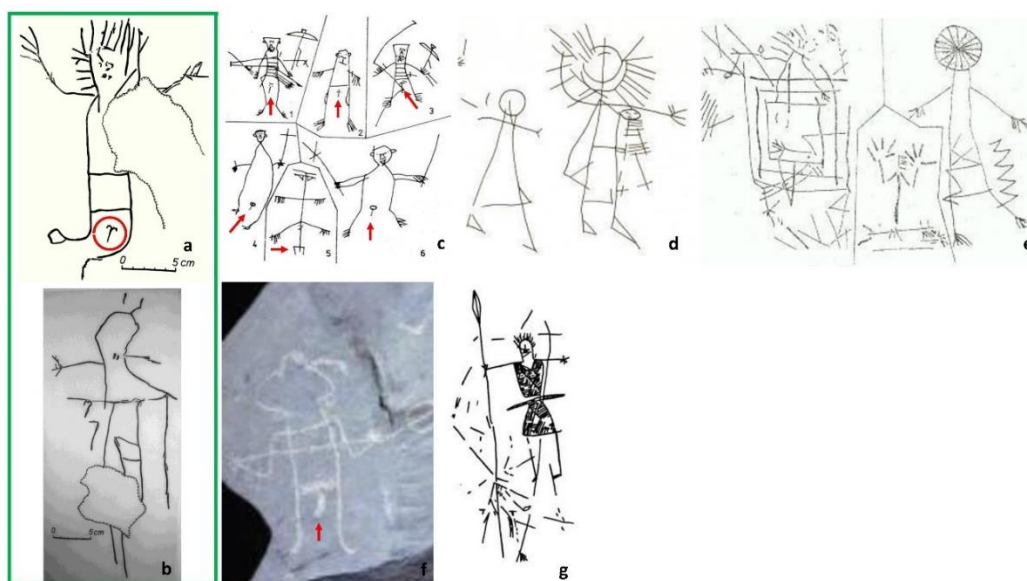


Fig. 14 – Analogies for the anthropomorphs in the cave with incisions. a-b anthropomorphic engravings in the cave "with incisions"; c - 1 anthropomorphic figure on the ceiling of Auvent du Chevalier (Essonne); 2-stone engraving at Arad (Israel); 3-human figure at Peyra Escrita, Formiguera commune (Pyrénées-Orientales); [All silhouettes in c display the male gender sign in the lower part of the body (marked with a red arrow), similar to the soleiform human silhouette (a) in the cave with incisions (marked with a red circle)]; d- engraved anthropomorphs at Coll de la Font-Roja, Caixas (Catalan Pyrenees); e-manners of rendering the human figure in relation to the cult of the sun; f-human representation at Adrar des Iforas (Sahara) dated to the last two thousand years BC (c-e acc. to [J. Abélanet, 1986](#); f acc. to [C. Dupuy, 2007](#)).

Post-Palaeolithic Anthropomorphic Representations in Romanian Rock Art

marked in red) is common to a number of similar representations from the Eastern Pyrenees at Peyra Escrita (fig. 14/c).

Rus – the Someș Valley

Anthropomorphic representations, interpreted as hunters, are depicted on the limestone cliffs of the Someș River at Rus-Haltă (Rus commune, Sălaj County) (fig. 15). Three representations have been described, noted as hunter I, whose outline was filled with red by the authors of the study (fig 15/1), hunters II (fig. 15/1) and III (fig. 15/2) only outlined in red (Gh. Lazarovici, C.-M. Lazarovici, 2019). We believe that these anthropomorphic figures are

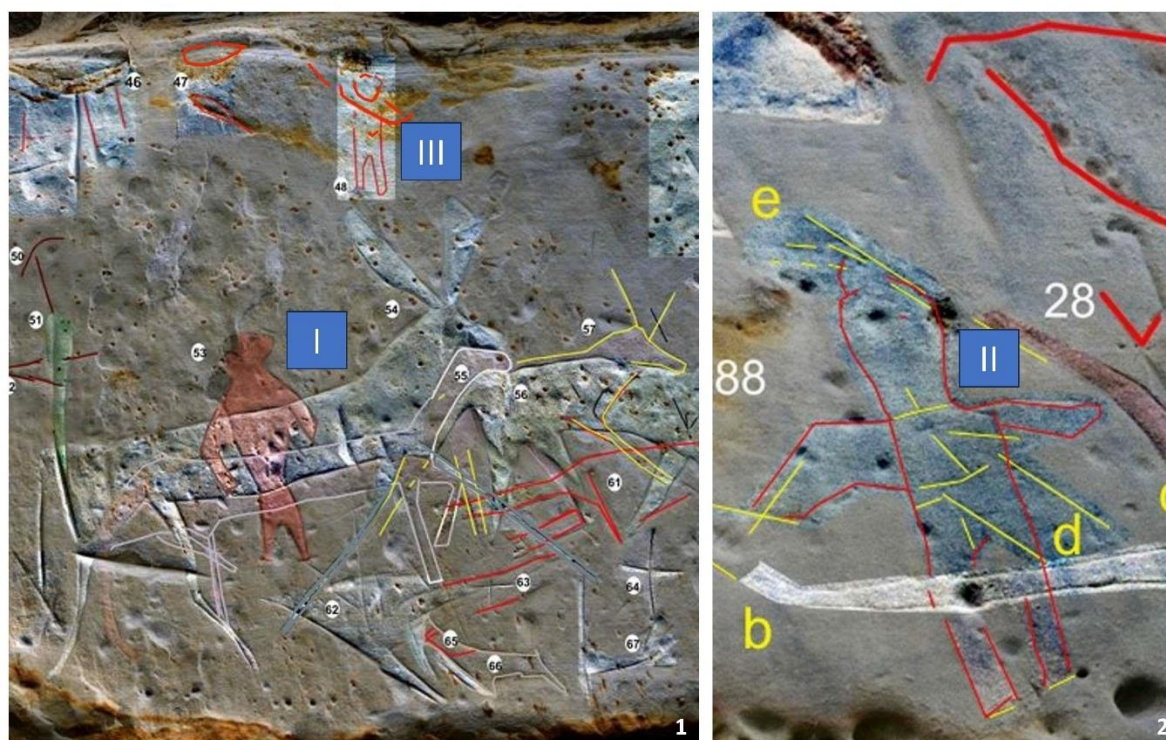


Fig. 15 – Anthropomorphic engravings on the cliffs of the Someș River near Rus, interpreted as hunters (acc. to Gh. Lazarovici, C.-M. Lazarovici, 2019).

interpreted as hunters without the typical stylistic arguments to define representations of this kind (fig. 6). The spears, arrows or lasso mentioned to accompany these representations do not really exist to define them as belonging to hunters or warriors (see for example L. Dams, 1984; J. Abelanet, 1986; J. Guilaine, J. Zammit, 2001). The notion of warrior often has much deeper implications, which go as far as interpretations of a cosmogonic nature (M. Philbert, 2003). Furthermore, the arrow quiver seems to be an exaggerated interpretation. Naturally, the

proposed analogies with some representations of hunters from Çatal Hüyük or Tassili do not seem relevant.

On the other hand, the deer should be seen as a solar animal, to the extent that the branches of its antlers have been assimilated with the sun's rays, as is the case with the Chalcolithic pottery from Las Carolines (Madrid), that from Reboso in Sierra de la Virgen del Castillo (Ciudad Real), or even the rocks of Val Camonica, where they were frequent themes until the Christian era ([J. Abelanet, 1986](#)).

Gura Haitii

The andesite megalith at Gura Haitii was found at the confluence of the Paltinu and Haitii streams, at an elevation of 1055 m ([fig. 16](#)) ([T. Naum, M. Cârciumaru, E. Nițoi, 1988](#)). The engravings consist exclusively of incised astraliformes, in the form of circles of various sizes (circles with a central point, concentric circles, with “turbine” rays probably executed with a metal tool - [fig. 17](#)).



Fig. 16 – Engraved megalith at Gura Haitii. 1-2 general view of the megalith; 3-circle-shaped engravings.

The circle with turbine rays has the largest diameter (21.5 cm), and above it, smaller circles were engraved, two of which have the centre marked with a dot. On the right side of the circles with turbine rays, there is an extremely complex engraving, which is probably the most interesting representation on this megalith. It is a circle with a diameter of 5.8 cm, which has a smaller circle and three semicircles engraved inside the circumference in such a way as

Post-Palaeolithic Anthropomorphic Representations in Romanian Rock Art

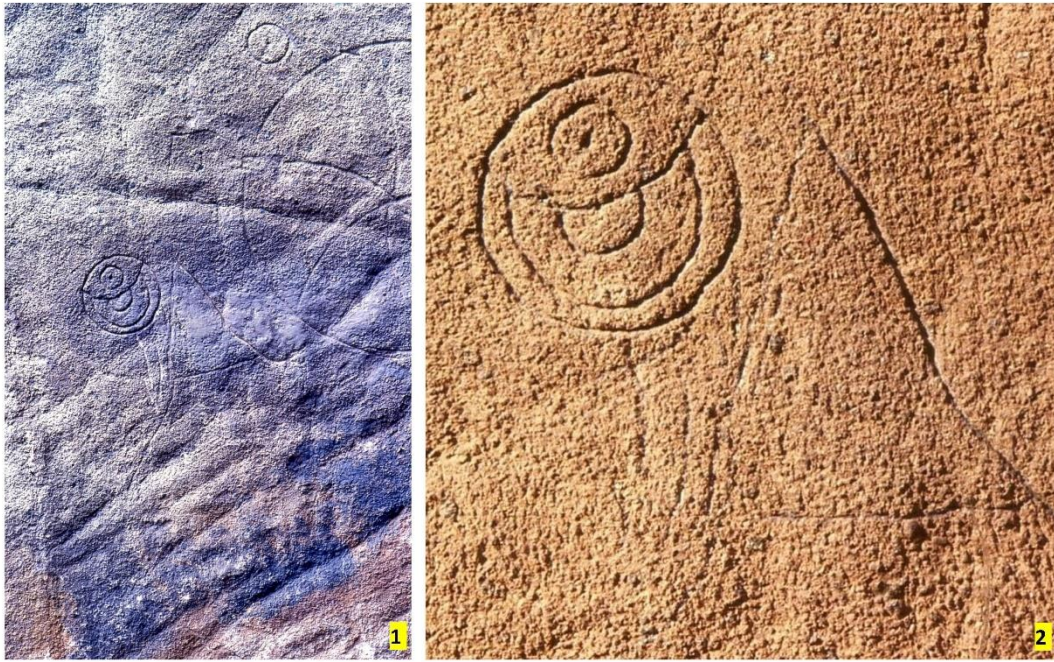


Fig. 17 – Detail of the engravings on the Gura Haitii megalith.

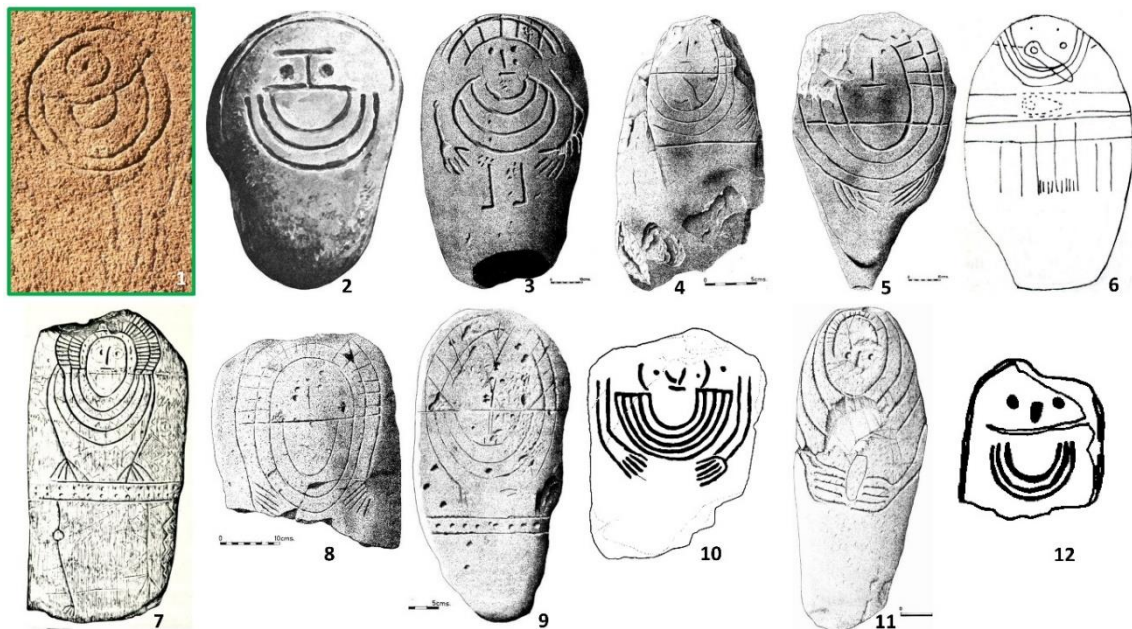


Fig. 18 – Analogies for the human representation on the Gura Haitii megalith. 1-Gura Haitii; 2-Quinto do Couquinho; 3- Praça do Trigo, Ciudad Rodrigo (Salamanca); 4, 5, 8, 9- Hernán Pérez, Cáceres; 6-Arribats; 7- Granja di Toniñuelo (Badajos) (2-5 acc. to [A. M. V. Correira, 2010](#); 6 acc. to [J. Landau, 1977](#); 7 acc. to [E. Anati, 1973](#)); 10-Castro da Barrega (Braga); 11-Agallas (Salamanca); Cabeço da Mina, Assares (Bragança) (acc. to [A. M. V. Correira, 2010](#)).

to suggest a human representation in an abstract manner (fig. 17/2). We believe that, through this representation, in an abstract manner, an attempt was made to represent the human figure, some kind of idol in a cosmogonic composition, considering the entire ensemble, more precisely a large circle with turbine rays, which might point to the sun, and the eight smaller circles around it, possibly the stars. The sun is very much invoked in post-Palaeolithic rock art, from Brittany to Lusitania in the course of the third millennium, symbolising its beneficial influence, the main exponent of life. This hypothesis is justified by several engravings on a series of menhirs, such as the one at Quinta de Couquinho (Bragança) (fig. 18/2) and Crato in Portugal, Praça do Trigo, Ciudad Rodrigo (Salamanca) (fig. 18/3), Hernán Pérez, Cáceres in Spain (fig. 18/4, 5, 8, 9) where there is an evident tendency towards simplification and stylisation of the head. Most are considered to belong to a specific period of the Chalcolithic and Bronze Age (J. Landau, 1977; A. M. V. Correira, 2010). Somewhat similar examples are to be found at Granja di Toniñuelo (Badajoz) in Spain (E. Anati, 1973) and Les Arribats in France (J. Arnal, 1979), Castro da Barrega (Braga) (fig. 18/10), Agallas (Salamanca) (fig. 18/11), Cabeço da Mira Assares (Bragança) (fig. 18/12) (A. M. V. Correira, 2010).

The cave “Fundul peșterii” at Nucu-Bozioru

The cave is located in the Buzău Subcarpathians, at an altitude of 728 m, and opens on the eastern wall of the Crucea Spătarului massif, developing in sandstone formations over a

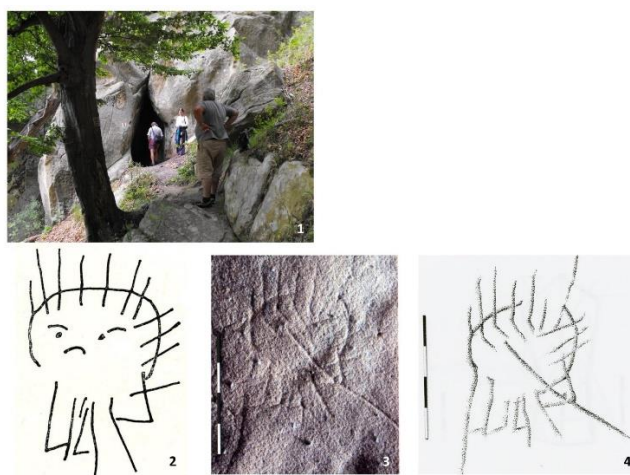


Fig. 19 – “Fundul peșterii” Cave at Nucu-Bozioru. 1-cave entrance; 2-4 anthropomorphic representation (2 acc. to V. Boroneanț, 1988; 3-4 acc. to T. Soroceanu, V. Sîrbu, 2012).

small length of about 7 m. The constitution of the walls favoured the execution of engravings of a great variety, the dominant representations being of weapons, such as lance and spear

Post-Palaeolithic Anthropomorphic Representations in Romanian Rock Art

heads or arrows, attributed either to the Bronze Age or the Middle Ages. Among them, there is also an anthropomorphic figure consisting only of the clumsy representation of the head (fig. 19/2-4). In our opinion, the style in which it is made is linear, known to belong to more recent periods, in this case most likely the mediaeval period.

Discussions

In his synthesis on rock art, [Robert Kühn \(1956\)](#) would mention that while Palaeolithic art is a sensory art, in that, the artist accurately and skilfully reproduces what his eye can see in the reality around him, post-Palaeolithic art, in this case from the Metal Ages, is an imaginative art, composed of symbols and conventional signs. Vis-à-vis R. Kühn's concepts, [E. Anati \(1960 b\)](#) drew attention to the fact that each group (in the sense of period) of rock art has a beginning and an end, and that the individual works of art reflect the personality of their author, a psychological state resulting from a certain social organisation and technological level. Therefore, each regional group of post-Palaeolithic rock art follows its own evolutionary cycle, determined by the characteristics of the environment and the features of the spiritual and technological evolution of the respective populations.

The idea that post-Palaeolithic rock art is based on an exclusively religious motivation ([R. Kühn, 1956](#)) is difficult to generalise, given that purely aesthetic or narrative reasons cannot be excluded, as has been proven, for example, with the Eskimos in Alaska or nomadic populations in the desert regions of the Middle East ([E. Anati, 1955, 1956](#)). There are sites, such as Val Camonica, where representations with a certain magical-religious value are encountered in the initial phases and, in the later phases, they acquire deep meanings related to everyday life, without any religious connotations. Similarly, in Levantine rock art, many commemorative scenes, without any religious significance, have been identified ([E. Anati, 1960 b](#)). The Metal Ages bring new themes in art and begin to be increasingly marked by a spirit of schematisation towards abstraction, when the artist starts to ignore reality and manifests himself in a hermetic world of symbols, which can only be understood after previous initiation to be able to read the meaning of this symbolic writing. The appearance of schematism is not a consequence of the artist's lack of talent. It is determined by a desire to surpass the concrete and to focus exclusively on its meaning ([J. Abelanet, 1986](#)).

The rock art analogies in Romania must be related to the main regions of rock art in Europe, specifically to the groups in Spain, Northern Europe, the Italian Alps and France, each with its specific characteristics. The subjects in Levantine art excel at the beginning

through hunting scenes, and then in the semi-naturalistic phase in the Iron Age, the rarity of human figures is remarkable. Rock art in the Alps, especially that of Mont Bego, is the work of groups of shepherd farmers who practiced transhumance, even though they also had a sedentary life with stable dwellings organised in true settlements. In France, post-Palaeolithic rock art is influenced by a specific psychology of shepherds, similar to the schematic paintings in Spain (E. Anati, 1960 b).

As regards Levantine art, C. Blasco Bosqued (1980) attempted to specify a typology of human representations: somewhat natural figures maintaining proportions between body and extremities; largely stylised figures with detailed feet and a filiform body; stylised figures with filiform body and extremities, without anatomical details; and totally schematic figures.

Lya Dams (1984) considers that in Levantine rock art, anthropomorphic representations are certainly the most numerous, and can be divided into several types:

1- Naturalistic figures were represented proportionally, relatively tall, with long legs and evident musculature. Lower and upper limbs were generally small in relation to the body;

2- Cestosomatic figures are represented asexually, with a tiny head, most commonly ovoid, and a triangular torso, long and exaggeratedly muscular legs. This mode of representation is considered a transition between naturalistic and filiform;

3- Filiform figures and their variants are the most numerous in Levantine art. Male specimens are slender, with a small head adorned with feathers, and the phallus and testicles are sometimes depicted in red, which might have a specific symbolic or cultural significance related to fertility rites.

Analogies of rock art with other regions in Europe are also necessary because there are better dated areas and periods, particularly for the stones accompanying the British, and especially Irish dolmenic structures. For example, the engraved tumuli in Ireland are dated to between $2,925 \pm 40$ B.C. (Knowth) and $1,930 \pm 150$ B.C. (Tara), whereas in Great Britain the ages determined vary between $3,890 \pm 300$ B.C. (Kercado, Carnac, Mor Bihan) and $2,835 \pm 125$ B.C. (Mane Kebna Playe), and in the Iberian Peninsula - between $2,640 \pm 65$ B.C. (Carapito, Aguiar da Beira) and $3,110 \pm 50$ B.C. (Caste Nairos) (J. Robb, 2020).

As regards the human representations in post-Palaeolithic rock art, it may be said that, among the painted or engraved subjects, they represent the most frequent and varied cases of schematisation. Abstraction manifests itself through the deformation or exaggeration of some details, such as the hands, the eyes etc., the distortion of human silhouettes, the omission of

Post-Palaeolithic Anthropomorphic Representations in Romanian Rock Art

body parts, body elongation with a view to highlighting the symbolic nuance of those figures. There are cases of curious branched anthropomorphic motifs, which have been referred to as arboriform or ramiform, even leading to interpretations such as fir-people, due to the specific decoration of conifers. It is generally accepted that there is a transition from the Neolithic art, dominated by geometric, sometimes schematic motifs, to the Bronze and Iron Ages with images largely portraying individuals, animals and identifiable objects, often depicted in real scenes ([J. Robb, 2020](#)).

The symbolic variety of human representations has certainly stimulated the imagination of those interpreting them, with discussions and contradictions in this regard. There are also debates on the human representations in post-Palaeolithic rock art in Romania, characterised by a sufficiently large stylistic variety anyway. What may be said, without a doubt, is that all representations are socially and culturally associated, in the sense that a representation is only aesthetic and rather connected to a cultural and symbolic context ([R. White, 1997](#)).

Direct dating of rock art representations is difficult to achieve in most cases. Sometimes, even the stylistic analogies between rock art representations from different regions are complicated and even risky because the manner in which they are made often transcends time and space. It is enough to just take a look at the rock art in Mexico ([D. Ballereau et al., 1988](#)) and in Europe ([E. Anati, 1978](#); [L. Dams, 1984](#); [J. Abelanet, 1986](#)) to realise how striking the thematic and stylistic similarities are.

Hypothetically, we shall try to refer to the relative age of rock art in some of the mentioned sites in Romania, based on the analogies that have been possible with rock art from various regions of Europe. The anthropomorphic paintings in the Pârcălabu cave, Muierilor cave and Vaidei stylistically resemble similar drawings from the Iron Age, and even from later periods, perhaps from the Middle Ages. The drawings on the walls of the Olteț gorge at Polovragi recall some from the Bronze Age at Seradina (Val Camonica) or on the dolmens at Cluain Fioun Loch (Ireland).

The anthropomorphs on the walls of the Sohodol gorge seem to have been executed in a linear schematic manner chronologically considered to be quite late. On the other hand, the two anthropomorphs in the Popii cave find their rather early analogies in Val Camonica and in Levantine rock art, which can go back to the beginning of the Bronze Age, as does the most interesting stylised human silhouette in the Gaura Chindiei cave. Based on comparisons of the

circular representations in the Cizmei cave with those from the dolmenic art of the Atlantic Pyrenees or Ireland, the small anthropomorphic figure in this cave might be implicitly contemporary with the Bronze Age. The two anthropomorphic representations in the cave with incisions seem to have been made in a linear style, potentially making them contemporaneous with the Middle Ages.

The stylistic similarities between the human representation in the form of the cosmogonic idol on the megalith at Gura Haitii and those adorning the menhirs in Portugal and Spain point to its contemporaneity with the Bronze Age. The rock art in the “*Fundul peșterii*” cave at Nucu-Bozioru, as mentioned, can chronologically pendulate between the Metal Ages and the Middle Ages. It should be mentioned that the ages invoked for certain rock art sites in Romania are hypothetical, as they are based exclusively on stylistic considerations.

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Contributions to the knowledge of Militari-Chilia culture. Recent archaeological research at Bucharest-Militari Boja Field

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Abstract. The purpose of this article is to bring new information on the Militari-Chilia culture, attributed to the Getae of Wallachia in the 2nd-4th centuries AD. The study refers to the preventive archaeological research that took place in 2016, in sector D, in the western part of the archaeological site. During the archaeological excavations, within the Militari-Chilia type settlement, several dwellings and pits were discovered and researched, respectively a furnace for firing clay vessels. *The dwellings* discovered here had approximately rectangular shapes, with rounded corners. They were oriented N-S or NV-SE. In terms of location relative to ground level, they were half-buried. *The pits* identified here were round-oval in plan, and the profile was bell-shaped, with a wider underside. The presented ceramic material is a case study, which contributes to the knowledge of the late phase of ceramics of the Militari-Chilia culture, through the detailed analysis of the pottery discovered in a pit, archaeological complex nr. 8/2016.

Keywords: Militari-Chilia culture, settlement, dwellings, pits, ceramics

Natural setting

The archaeological site Bucharest-Militari Boja Field is located in the western part of Bucharest, in the Militari neighbourhood, south of Lake Dâmbovița, on both sides of Câmpul Boja Street (fig. 1/1-2). Archaeological vestiges were identified on the surface along the high terrace of Dâmbovița, between the Red Channel and the bend that the terrace makes downstream towards Ciurel point. The maximum altitude of this high terrace of the Dâmbovița River is 92.37 m, and the minimum is 89.66 m, compared to the riverbed which is only 81.23/82.35 m.

Following systematic, preventive research and delimitation surveys in 1994-2004, its area was estimated at approximately 120,000 sqm. Depending on the research history and its topography, the archaeological site was divided into four sectors: sector A - in the central-western part; sector B - in the north; sector C - in the east and Sector D - in the west.

Contributions to the knowledge of Militari-Chilia culture. Recent archaeological research at Bucharest-Militari Boja Field

Brief history of the research

The first information about this site was provided in 1922 by [Constantin Nicolăescu-Plopșor \(1922\)](#), then completed in 1929 by [Dinu V. Rosetti \(1929\)](#). In 1958, the first archaeological excavations began, led by Vlad Zirra and Margareta Tudor ([Vl. Zirra, Gh. Cazimir, 1961](#)).



Fig. 1 - Location of the archaeological site (1) and the researched land (2)

The archaeological site includes vestiges of habitation from the Neolithic (Boian culture), Bronze Age (Glina culture, Militari cultural group, Tei culture), the first Iron Age, 4th-3rd and 2nd-1st centuries BC, 2nd-4th centuries AD (Militari-Chilia culture), 5th-7th (Ipotești-Cândești culture), 9th-10th (Dridu culture) and 18th-19th. The Militari-Chilia type settlement, which can be classified from the 2nd century to the beginning of the 4th century AD, was the main objective of the archaeological excavations undertaken, since 1958, in this site. During the archaeological campaigns of 1958-2016, a number of 128 archaeological complexes belonging to the Militari-Chilia culture were discovered, of which 40 dwellings, 3 kilns, 1 bronze processing workshop, 5 cult pits, 80 pits for supplies and housekeeping.

Over time, several books have been published in *Seria Militari-Campul Boja. Un sit arheologic pe teritoriul Bucurestilor-* Military-Field Boja series. An archaeological site on the territory of Bucharest ([M. Negru, C. Schuster, 2000](#); [C. Schuster, M. Negru, 2007](#); [M. Negru, 2007](#); [M. Negru, C. Schuster, A. Bădescu, A. Comșa, A. Morintz, 2009](#)).

Mircea Negru

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This article aims to bring new information on the Militari-Chilia culture, attributed to the Getae of Wallachia in the 2nd-4th centuries AD. The study refers to preventive archaeological research that took place in 2016 in sector D, in the western part of the archaeological site. This



Fig. 2 - Potter's kiln (Cx. 20)



Fig. 3 – Archaeological context no. 121. 1-plan; 2-profile from the west

sector was identified following surface research followed by preventive archaeological excavations undertaken in 1994. Subsequently, systematic archaeological excavations were carried out in this sector in 2002, respectively preventive archaeological excavations in 2007-2008, 2012 and 2015.

Contributions to the knowledge of Militari-Chilia culture. Recent archaeological research at Bucharest-Militari Boja Field

The purpose of the excavations was to investigate an area located near the western boundary of the archaeological site. The objective of preventive archaeological excavations was to identify archaeological remains from the Bronze Age, 2nd-4th, 5th-7th and 18th-19th centuries, from sector D of the archaeological site.

The project of preventive archaeological excavations consisted of practising sections oriented approximately north-south, perpendicular to the terrace of the Dâmbovița River, where Lacul Morii (Dâmbovița) is located today. A total of 8 trenches were practised. They had a width of 4.00 m, variable lengths depending on the topographic configuration of the investigated area and witnesses between them with a thickness of 1.00 m. In cases where the complexes merged with the witnesses, they were decommissioned. The total excavated area was 3393.4 sqm, out of the total 5024 sqm of the investigated land.

The stratigraphy of the site was as follows: it was heavily affected by the work that has been carried out, over the last half century, in this area.

The first identified layer is of compact soil of light grey colour, constituting of topsoil. It was located from the current stepping level (0) to depths of -0.20/-0.40 m. At some points of the investigated surface, contemporary anthropogenic interventions were identified, which changed the stratigraphy of the area. Thus, a discontinuous layer of yellow clay, mixed with contemporary materials and pebbles was observed. It is thicker in the north-eastern part of the investigated surface (up to 40 cm) and thinner in the north-west (about 5 cm), being situated between 0 m and -0.35/0.40 m elevation.

Another contemporary intervention is a water adduction channel (Cx. no. 100), which was covered with a layer of yellow clay deposit, mixed with a greyish-blackish soil. It was located in the southern part of the investigated land. It was discovered between 0 m and -0.50 m. It is followed by a layer of dark grey earth, homogeneous, compact, with a thickness varying between 10 and 50 cm, containing ceramic fragments from the 3rd-4th and 5th-7th centuries. This layer was identified from a depth of -0.50 m to a depth of -1.20 m. The next layer is one of yellow, homogeneous soil, without archaeological vestiges. It was identified between -1.20 m and -2.80 m. Finally, the last identified layer is of light-yellow soil, with high carbonate content, archaeologically sterile soil, identified between -2.80 m and -3.30 m.

Mircea Negru

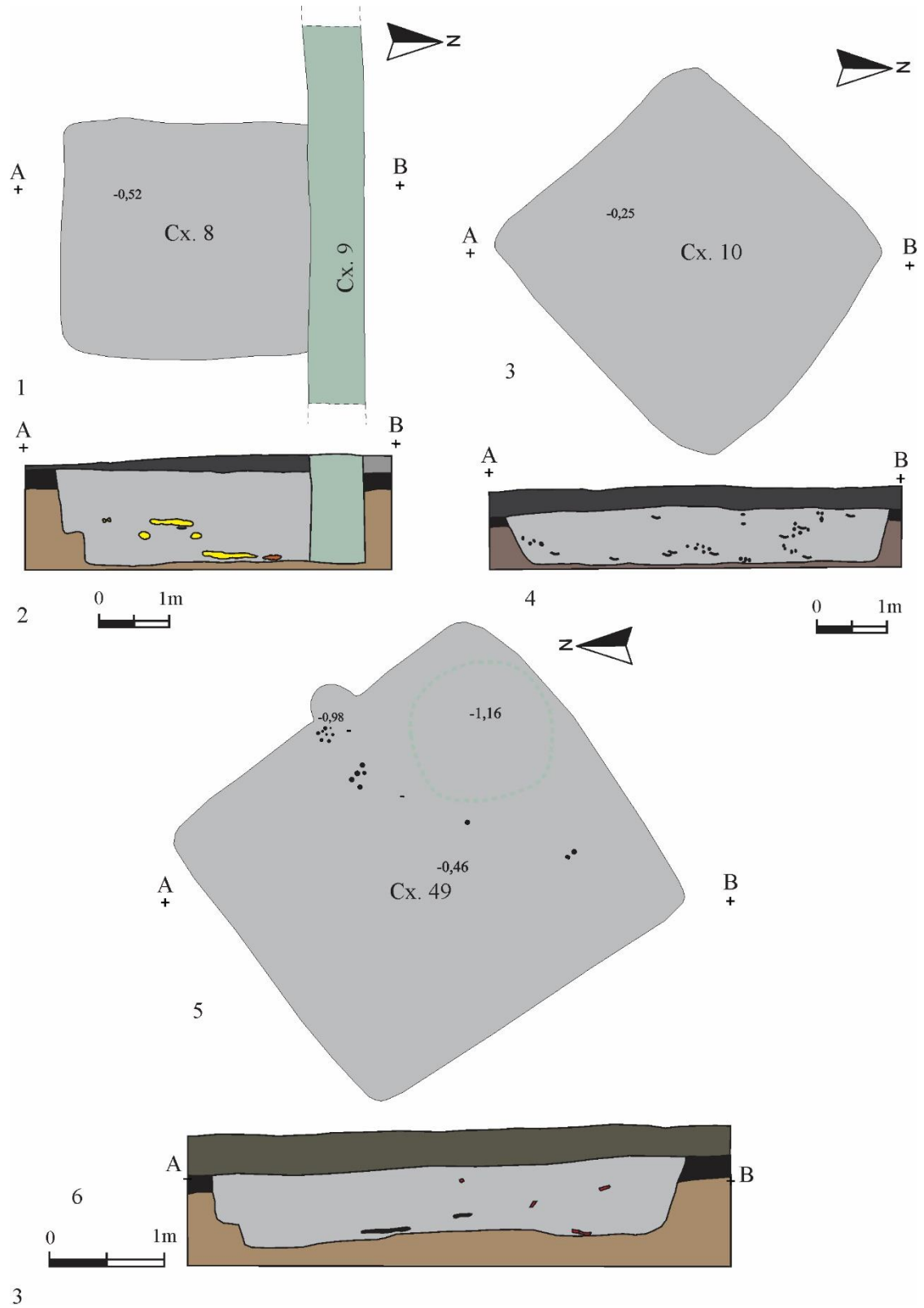


Fig. 4 - Archaeological contexts. 1- Cx. nos. 8 and 9. 2- Cx. no. 10. 3- Cx. no. 136

Contributions to the knowledge of Militari-Chilia culture. Recent archaeological research at Bucharest-Militari Boja Field

Archaeological structures

During the archaeological excavations, within the Militari-Chilia type settlement, several dwellings and pits were discovered and researched, respectively a kiln for firing clay vessels (fig. 2/1-2), several pits (fig. 3/1-2) and dwellings (fig. 4/1-3) were discovered.

The dwellings identified here had approximately rectangular shapes with rounded corners (Cx. nos. 8, 58, 96, 131, 136). They were oriented N-S (Cx. nos. 8, 131), and NV-SE (Cx. nos. 58, 96, 136). Their areas ranged from 6.00 sqm (Cx. no. 96) to 14.50 sqm (Cx. no. 136).

In terms of location relative to ground level, they were half-buried. The floor was at depths ranging from 1.13 m (Cx. no. 136) to 1.50 m (Cx. no. 8) from the current ground level (fig. 4/1-3).

The housing infrastructure was made of wooden beams. No traces of pillar pits were discovered, but, in some cases, fragments of burnt clay from their walls were identified, which had traces of twigs. The floors of these houses did not show signs of special arrangements, being made of simple clay, which was beaten during the use of the dwelling. In one case, the burnt lower part of the dwelling wall was observed *in situ* (Cx. No. 131).

The half-buried dwellings of rectangular hut type, with rounded corners, were also discovered in previous archaeological campaigns on this site (M. Negru, C. Schuster, D. Moise, 2000), respectively in the Militari-Chilia type settlements from Mătăsar (Gh. Bichir, 1984), Chilia (Gh. Bichir, 1962), Dulceanca (S. Dolinescu-Ferche, 1974), etc.

Surface constructions

In the 2016 campaign, several alignments of pillar pits from surface constructions were discovered. Unfortunately, due to the intense agricultural exploitation of the land where they were located, no other construction details were captured.

Pits

The pits identified were round-oval in plan, and the profile was bell-shaped (fig. 2/1-2), with a wider lower part (Cx. nos. 7, 14-15, 17, 23, 93, 80, 108, 121, 122, 138, 140, 147). They were taken from various depths, namely -0.22 m (Cx. no. 45), -0.46 m (Cx. no. 36), -0.60 m (Cx. no. 7), -0.95 m (Cx. no. 15), -1.10 m (Cx. no. 108). Their dimensions varied in diameter, from 0.58

Mircea Negru

m to 1.74 m, and the maximum depth reached was 2.64 m from the current trampling level (Cx. no. 7).

The filling of these pits contained greyish-blackish dirt (Pl. 3:1-2), with fragments of adobe, ceramic fragments, fragments of burnt wood, and compact yellow clay lenses. Pits similar in shape were discovered in other Militari-Chilia settlements, such as those at Mătăsar, Scornicești and Dulceanca (Gh. Bichir, 1974).

The potter's kiln (Cx. no. 20) discovered here is the third in this archaeological site. It is the central-pillar type. In front of it was a feeding pit, approximately oval in plan, in which fragments of its grill and support pillar were found, dismantled after its decommissioning (fig. 3/1-2).

Kilns similar in type were discovered in previous campaigns in this archaeological site (M. Negru, C. Schuster, D. Moise, 2000), respectively in the Militari-Chilia type settlements (Gh. Bichir, 1984), in the environment of the free Dacians east of the Carpathians, in the Roman environment in the province of Dacia (Gh. Bichir, 1973), being a type spread to other civilizations of the ancient world.

The complexes and the archaeological materials discovered during the archaeological research in the Militari-Chilia type settlement can be dated to the 3rd century, without excluding the possibility of their continuation in the 4th century (M. Negru, C. Schuster, D. Moise, 2000; M. Negru, 2007).

Archaeological material. Case Study

The archaeological material discovered in the archaeological complexes of the Militari-Chilia type settlement is numerous, consisting of fragments of ceramic vessels, hand-made or wheel-thrown.

A relevant complex due to the large number of ceramic fragments is the complex Cx. no. 8, a half-buried dwelling. In this complex, the hand-made ware represents approx. 58%, while Wheel-made ware represents about 42%, which indicates a predominance of wheel-shaped pottery, specific to the late phase of the Militari-Chilia culture, from the middle of the 3rd century to the beginning of the 4th century BC.

**Contributions to the knowledge of Militari-Chilia culture. Recent archaeological research
at Bucharest-Militari Boja Field**

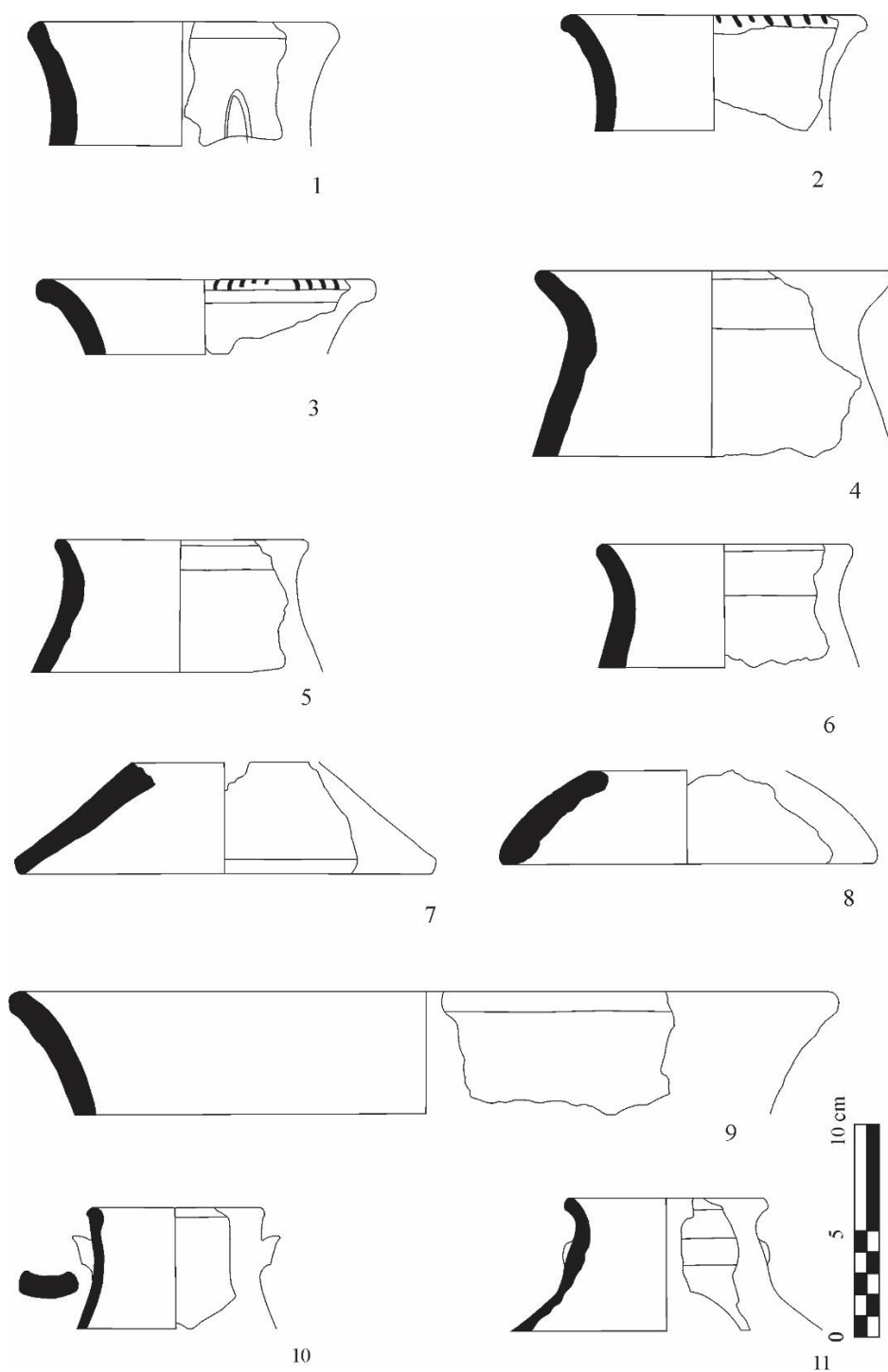


Fig. 5 - Hand-made (1-9) and hand-wheel ware (10-11)

Mircea Negru

Hand-made ware

Hand-made ware is made of coarse, often friable fabric, containing crushed ceramic fragments or sand and mica. Generally, the dishes have slip on the outside. They were fired both completely and incompletely. On the outside, the brick colour of various shades predominates, respectively the core has a blackish colour.

The majority of vessels are medium-sized, pots with a bulging or ovoid body. In addition, lids and large vessels (ewers) were also discovered. The décor is rarely present and consists of oblique incised lines on the rim or a girdle with a wavy line.

Pots

In the case of hand-made ware, medium-sized pots predominate, which can be used equally for preparing food in the kitchen, for dining, or for temporary storage of food.

The first type of vessel comprises fragments of pots with slightly bulging bodies, which have a long rim, slightly everted or outplayed (fig. 5/1-3). Some of these were decorated with oblique notches on the outer edge of the rim (fig. 5/2) and with an incised wave in the neck area (fig. 5/3). They were moulded from compact coarse fabric, completely oxidized fired, of light brick-red colour. The vessels were discovered in archaeological contexts dated to the late 3rd century and the 4th century AD, within Cx. no. 8 (fig. 5/2-3) and Cx. no. 10 (fig. 5/1).

Similar shaped vessels were discovered at Bucharest-Militari Boja Field (M. Negru, 200; 2007), Mătăsar (Gh. Bichir, 1984) and Dulceanca (S. Dolinescu-Ferche, 1981), within the Militari-Chilia culture in Muntenia, respectively at Poiana Dulcești – Varniță (Gh. Bichir, 1973), in the environment of the free Dacians east of the Carpathian Mountains.

They were dated to the 3rd century at Militari-Boja Field, (M. Negru, 2000), respectively to the second half of the 2nd century AD, and the beginning of the 3rd century AD (M. Negru, 2007), the third quarter of the 3rd century AD (M. Negru, 2007). In Mătăsar, they were dated in the 2nd and early 3rd century AD, in the 3rd century in Dulceanca, and in Poiana-Dulcești in the 2nd-3rd centuries AD.

The second type of vessel comprises pots with a less bulging, ovoid body and a short, outplayed rim (fig. 5/4-6). They were moulded from compact coarse fabric, complete oxidised firing, of light brick-red colour. The vessels were discovered in Cx. no. 8 (fig. 5/4) and Cx. no. 10 (fig. 5/5-6), being dated to the end of the 3rd century and the first half of the 4th century AD.

Contributions to the knowledge of Militari-Chilia culture. Recent archaeological research at Bucharest-Militari Boja Field

Similar vessels have been discovered in previous campaigns at the archaeological site of Bucharest-Militari Boja Field (M. Negru, 2000; 2007), at Locusteni (Gh. Popilian, 1980) and in the Roman camp at Buciumi (E. Chirilă, N. Gudea, V. Lucăcel, C. Pop, 1972). They were dated to the 3rd century AD (M. Negru, 2007) and the third quarter of the 3rd century AD at Bucharest-Militari Boja Field (M. Negru, 2000), respectively in the 2nd-3rd centuries AD at Buciumi.

Lids

During the discoveries, two types of lids were identified, with conical, and hemispherical bodies respectively.

The first type is represented by a lid with a conical body and the rim in continuation of the walls, narrower than them (fig. 5/7). It was moulded from compact, coarse, complete oxidised firing, of light brick-red colour. It was discovered in archaeological contexts dated in Cx. no. 10, which was dated to the end of the 3rd century and the first half of the 4th century AD.

This lid has analogies in previous discoveries from Bucharest-Militari Boja Field (Negru, 2000; 2007) and Timișoara-Freidorf (D. Benea, 1996), where they were dated to the 3rd century AD (M. Negru, 2000; 2007), respectively in the 2nd-4th centuries AD (D. Benea, 1996).

The second type includes a lid with a hemispherical body, with the rim in continuation of the walls, narrower than them (fig. 5/8). The vessel was moulded from coarse porous fabric, evenly oxidised firing. Light brick color. It was discovered in Cx. no. 8, which was dated to the end of the 3rd century AD and the first half of the 4th century AD.

Lids similar in shape were discovered at Bucharest-Militari Boja Field (M. Negru, 2000; 2007), Mătășaru (Gh. Bichir, 1984), Dulceanca (S. Dolinescu-Ferche, 1981) and Bucov (Gh. Bichir, 1984) in Muntenia, respectively in Timișoara-Freidorf in the environment of the free Dacians in western Romania (D. Benea, 1996).

Chronologically, they can be dated from the second to the last quarter of the 3rd century AD at Bucharest-Militari Boja Field, from the middle of the 3rd century AD, to the beginning of the 4th century AD at Mătășaru, in the 3rd century AD at Dulceanca and in the 3rd-4th centuries at Timișoara-Freidorf.

Mircea Negru

Supply ware

Large storage vessels made of coarse, oxidised firing, brick-red coloured fabric were also identified during the discoveries.

Among these, we mention a large vessel with a high ovoid body, a slightly arched rim on the outside, and the base was flat (fig. 5/9). Coarse, porous, friable fabric with cracks. Incomplete firing, blackish colour, brick on the outside. They were discovered in archaeological contexts dated in Cx. no. 8, dated to the end of the 3rd century and the first half of the 4th century AD.

Similar vessels were discovered in previous Bucharest-Militari Câmpul Boja campaigns (M. Negru, 2000; 2007), in the Militari-Chilia type settlements from Mătășaru (Gh. Bichir, 1984) and Dulceanca (S. Dolinescu-Ferche, 1981), respectively in the environment of the free Dacians east of the Carpathians, at Poiana Dulcești – Varniță (Gh. Bichir, 1973).

They were dated in the 2nd and early 3rd centuries AD at Mătășaru, in the 3rd century in the settlement of Dulceanca, in the third quarter of the 3d century AD at Bucharest-Militari Boja Field, and in the 2nd-3rd centuries AD at Poiana Dulcesti – Varniță.

Wheel-made ware

During the research, fragments of imported and locally produced ceramic vessels were discovered, the latter predominating clearly. Local Wheel-made ware can be divided into two broad categories: semi-fine and coarse (gritty). The dishes made with the first category of fabric were used for dining, while those in the second category were used in the kitchen, in preparing food.

The second category of fabric, used in locally produced vessels, is the result of an unusual process of diffusion of a pottery technique outside the Roman Empire. This is explained by the fact that Muntenia, although it was only briefly included within the Roman Empire (101-117 AD), was surrounded, on three sides, by the borders of the Roman Empire, being constantly controlled and in its zone of security and influence.

In imported ceramics, fragments of amphorae, porringers and pitchers of fine fabric, sometimes with colour-coating or red paint, were identified.

Amphora with bulging body, conical neck. The lip is everted, with the edge cut obliquely (fig. 5/10). Semi-fine fabric, containing sifted sand and mica. Complete oxidised firing, grey colour, with blackish paint on the outside.

Contributions to the knowledge of Militari-Chilia culture. Recent archaeological research at Bucharest-Militari Boja Field

Amphoras

Similar vessels were discovered in previous campaigns at this archaeological site (M. Negru, 2007), dated to the last quarter of the 3rd century AD, the first half of the 4th century AD. A similar vessel was discovered at Chilia, where it was dated to the 3rd century AD (Gh. Bichir, 1984).

Local amphora with bulging body, conical neck. The rim is everted, with the edge cut obliquely (fig. 5/11). Semi-fine fabric, containing sifted sand and mica. Complete oxidised firing, greyish colour. Dating to the second half of the 2nd century and the beginning of the 3rd century AD (M. Negru, 2007).

Imported ware

Few fragments of ceramic vessels belong to this category of ware. The most relevant, including as a chronological landmark, is a fragment of the wall of an amphora of type LR 2, decorated with horizontal striations made by incision. The amphora was shaped from compact, fine, completely burned, light, brick-yellowish fabric. It was discovered in the archaeological complex Cx. no. 10, and contributes to its dating to the first half of the 4th century AD (fig. 6/1).

LR 2 amphorae are frequent in the Lower Danube region, especially south of the Danube. The diffusion range included parts of the entire Roman Empire, from Moesia Inferior, Moesia Superior, and Scythia Minor, to North Africa, Britannia and Spain. The origin of this type of amphorae seems to have been in Ionia and the island of Cos. These amphorae have a general dating in the 4th-7th centuries AD (P. Dyczeck, 2001). The Bucharest-Militari Boja Field fragment can be dated to the first half of the 4th century.

Tableware

The dishes used for dining were made of semi-fine fabric, predominantly grey, sometimes with black slip or paint. The main forms of ware discovered are pots, porringers, bowls, cups, pitchers and lids.

Porringers

The first type are the porringers with a short conical body, with a shoulder marked by a threshold, short rim everted obliquely, modelled from semi-fine fabric containing sand, and mica,

Mircea Negru

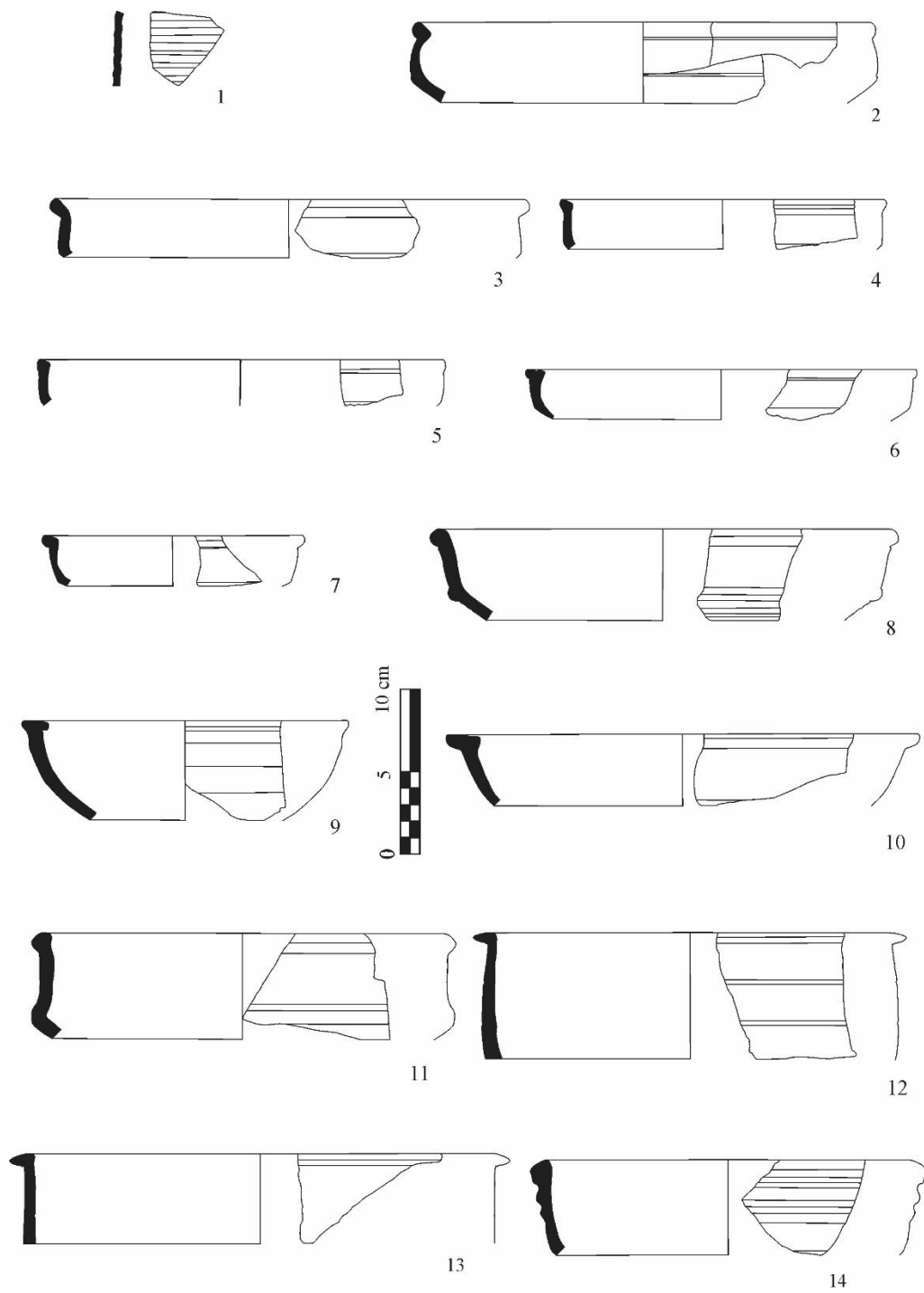


Fig. 6 - Wheel-made ware

Contributions to the knowledge of Militari-Chilia culture. Recent archaeological research at Bucharest-Militari Boja Field

oxidised firing, light brick-red colour (fig. 6/2-4). The vessels were moulded from fine gritty fabric, with fine sand and mica, completely oxidised firing, light yellowish (fig. 6/2-3), respectively from semi-fine fabric with sand and mica, the oxidised firing of light brick-red colour (fig. 6/4). They were discovered in contexts Cx. no. 10 (fig. 6/2-3), Cx. no. 8 (fig. 6/4) dated to the late 3rd and early 4th centuries AD.

Similar vessels were discovered in previous campaigns at this archaeological site (M. Negru, 2000; 2007). Similar vessels were discovered at Mătăsar (Gh. Bichir, 1984). These vessels were dated to the second and third quarters of the 3rd century AD at Bucharest-Militari Câmpul Boja, respectively to the middle of the 3rd century AD and the beginning of the 4th century AD.

A second type of porringer has a conical body, vertical shoulder and short rim everted obliquely, with a groove on the inside and rounded edge (fig. 6/5). Semi-fine fabric, containing frequent sand and mica. Oxidised firing, which is incomplete. Blackish core, brick-red colour on the outside. The vessels were discovered in Cx. no. 10, dated to the late 3rd century AD, and the beginning of the 4th century AD.

Similar vessels were discovered in previous campaigns at this archaeological site (M. Negru, 2007), where they were dated to the 3rd century AD, respectively to Colonești-Măruței (Gh. Bichir, 1984), where they were dated from the middle of the 3rd century to the beginning of the 4th century AD.

Also, there were found porringers with short conical bodies, marked shoulders, and horizontal rims (fig. 6/6-7). Semi-fine fabric containing sand and mica, incomplete firing, blackish core, greyish-blackish colour on the outside. Blackish paint on the outside (fig. 6/6), and the other vessel was made of fine gritty fabric, with fine sand and mica, complete oxidised firing, and light yellowish colour (fig. 6/7). One of the vessels was discovered in Cx. no. 10 (fig. 6/6), the other in Cx. no. 8 (fig. 6/7), where they were dated to the late 3rd and early 4th centuries AD.

Similar vessels were discovered in previous campaigns at this archaeological site (M. Negru, 2007). A similar vessel was discovered in the territory inhabited by the free Dacians east of the Carpathians at Văleni (I. Ioniță, 1988), where it was dated from the second half of the 2nd century AD to the middle of the 3rd century AD (I. Ioniță, 1988).

Mircea Negru

Porringers with conical body, shoulder marked with an embossed girdle, short rim slightly everted. The vessel was discovered in an archaeological complex dated to the 3rd-4th centuries AD (fig. 6/8). Porringers with hemispherical bodies and wide horizontal rims (fig. 6/11-12), where they were dated to the 3rd century AD (M. Negru, 2007).

Porringer with the biconical body, with the wider upper part. On the maximum diameter, the porringer has a sharp edge. The short rim is slightly everted, with a groove on the inside, for the lid (fig. 6/11).

The vessel has analogues in earlier campaigns, where it was dated to the 3rd century AD (M. Negru, 2007). Similar vessels were discovered at Mătășaru (Gh. Bichir, 1984), Iași-Fabrica de Căramizi (I. Ioniță, 1966). They were dated from the middle of the 3rd century AD to the beginning of the 4th century AD in Mătășaru, respectively in the 4th century AD at Iași-Fabrica de Căramizi.

Bowls

Bowls with deep globular bodies and short rims, outplayed horizontally, slightly narrowed towards the edge (fig. 6/12-13) Cx. no. 136, dated to the 3rd century AD. The vessels were moulded from semi-fine fabric, containing sand and mica, oxidise firing, and light brick-red colour. Similar vessels were discovered in previous campaigns at this site, where they were dated to the 3rd century AD (M. Negru, 2007). Hemispherical body bowl with rounded rim on the outside. In its upper part, it has horizontal grooves (fig. 6/14). It was dated to the 3rd-4th centuries AD.

Similar vessels were discovered at Bucharest-Militari Boja Field (M. Negru, 2000; 2007), at Locusteni (Gh. Popilian, 1980), in the Roman camp at Buciumi (E. Chirilă, N. Gudea, V. Lucăcel, C. Pop, 1972). They were dated to the 2nd and early 3rd centuries AD at Locusteni, in the 2nd-3rd centuries AD at Buciumi, in the 3rd century AD (M. Negru, 2007), the second and third quarters of the 3rd century at Bucharest-Militari Boja Field (M. Negru, 2000).

Beaker

Fragments of a beaker, of which the upper part was preserved, with an everted rim. Oxidised firing, semi-fine fabric, grey at the core, greyish-yellow inside and outside. These beakers were discovered in Cx. no. 10 (fig. 7/1-2), dated to 3rd-4th centuries AD.

**Contributions to the knowledge of Militari-Chilia culture. Recent archaeological research
at Bucharest-Militari Boja Field**

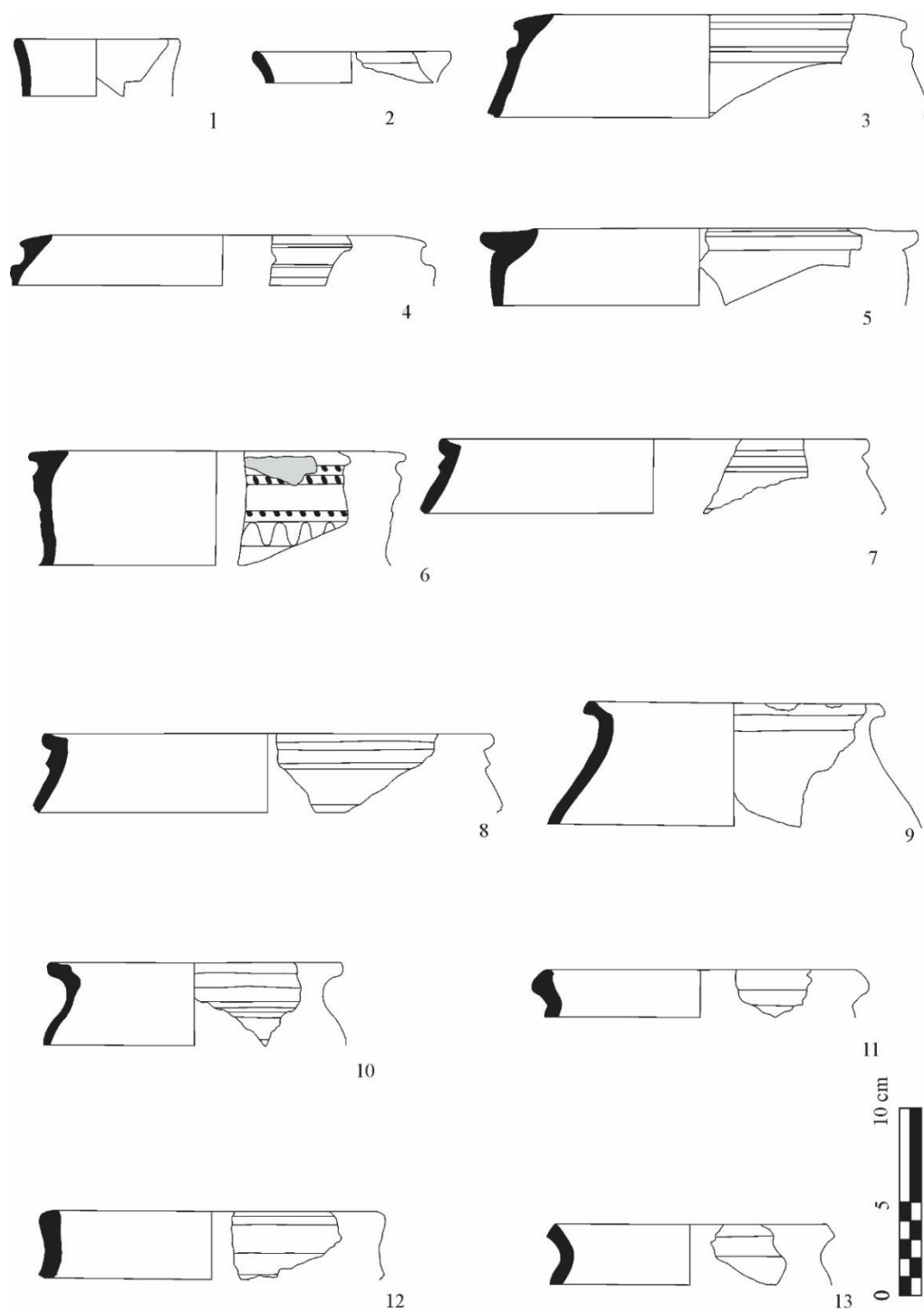


Fig. 7 - Wheel-made ware

Mircea Negru

Storage ware

Vessels with a high bulged body. The rim is wide, slightly turned inwardly, with an obliquely splayed brim on the outside. On its shoulder, it has an embossed girdle (fig. 7/3-4). Vessels with a high bulged body. The rim is horizontally wide on both sides of the wall (fig. 7/5).

In vessels with a high bulged body, the short rim is turned obliquely to the outside. On the shoulder of the vessel, there is an embossed girdle (fig. 7/6-9). A similar vessel was discovered at this site, where it was dated to the 3rd century AD (M. Negru, 2007).

Kitchenware

Coarse (gritty) ceramics, used in the preparation of food in the kitchen, are predominantly greyish, less often blackish or brick-red.

Pots

Pot with a bulging body, everted rim, with a groove for the lid on the inside (fig. 7/9). The vessel has analogues at this site in previous campaigns, where it was dated to the 3rd century AD (M. Negru, 2007). Similar vessels were discovered in Scornicești, settlement no. 1, where they were dated to the 2nd-3rd centuries AD (Gh. Bichir, 1984). Pot with a strongly bulging body, outplayed rim, wide horizontal, with a groove on the inside for the lid (fig. 7/10). On the shoulder, on the outside, it has grooves.

The vessel has analogues at this site in previous campaigns, where it was dated to the last quarter of the 3rd century AD, and the first half of the 3rd century AD (M. Negru, 2007). Pot with a bulging body, short outplayed rim, with oblique edge and channel for lid on the inside (fig. 7/11). The vessel has analogies in previous archaeological campaigns at this site, in a context dated to the 2nd-3rd centuries AD (M. Negru, 2007).

Pot with a bulged body, the rim is vertical, with a groove for lid on the inside (fig. 8/7). It was dated to the 3rd century AD. A similar vessel discovered at this site was also dated to the 3rd century AD (M. Negru, 2007).

Pot with bulging body and outplayed rim, with edge cut obliquely (fig. 7/13). Similar vessels were discovered in previous campaigns at this archaeological site (M. Negru, 2000; 2007), in the Roman province of Dacia Inferior (Malvensis) in the necropolis of Locusteni (Gh. Popilian, 1980) and the Roman camp at Buciumi (E. Chirilă, N. Gudea, V. Lucăcel, C. Pop, 1972).

**Contributions to the knowledge of Militari-Chilia culture. Recent archaeological research
at Bucharest-Militari Boja Field**



Fig. 8 - Wheel-made ware

Mircea Negru

Vessels of this type were dated to the 2nd century AD and the beginning of the 3rd century at Locusteni (Gh. Popilian, 1980), in the 2nd-3rd centuries AD, at Buciumi (E. Chirilă, N. Gudea, V. Lucăcel, C. Pop, 1972), in the second and third quarters of the 3rd century AD at Bucharest-Militari Boja Field (M. Negru, 2000), respectively in the third century AD (M. Negru, 2007).

Fusaioles

During archaeological excavations, a series of ceramic fusaioles appeared in huts Cx. no. 8 (fig. 8/1), Cx. no. 15 (fig. 8/2), Cx. no. 40 (Pl. 8: 3), Cx. no. 49 (fig. 8/4-5). One of them, was discovered in Cx. no. 49 (fig. 8/5) finds analogues in Brad (Gh. D. Hânceanu 2009), where it was dated to the 3rd century AD.

Stone objects

During the research, in the huts, there were discovered some objects made of abrasive stone used as creases for sharpening metal tools and utensils in Cx. no. 12 (Pl. 8: 6), Cx. no. 58 (fig. 8/7), as well as in Cx. no. 121 (fig. 8/8).

Bronze objects

In 2016, a small bronze object was discovered. It is probably a piece of harness (fig. 8/9-11), discovered in a complex dated to the 3rd century AD. The object has a quadrilateral base (2x2 cm) to which is attached a bulging part, with four legs. Probably, through the formed space, thin stars were pulled.

Abbreviation: Cx. = Context (s)

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at Bucharest-Militari Boja Field**

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Sur le voyage d'un noble français à travers la Valachie, en 1574: Jean de Saulx, vicomte de Tavannes

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Abstract: Throughout the 16th century, Wallachia was visited by a number of foreign travelers, who left more or less interesting evidence for today's Romanians, depending on the attention paid by them to political and social realities in the Romanian space between the Carpathians and the Danube, at the edge of Christian, civilized Europe. In the present article we have looked into some brief accounts left by a French nobleman, Jean de Saulx, Viscount of Tavannes, after his journey around Wallachia in 1574. For this French aristocrat, going to Constantinople through Wallachia was not at all easy, as will be seen in the following article since the lords of Wallachia and Moldavia were in conflict at the time.

Key-words: Wallachia, noble, journey, adventure, danger.

Avec le XVI^e siècle, l'esprit de la Renaissance se fit de plus en plus sentir en Valachie aussi ([A. Alexianu, 1973](#)), grâce à des aventuriers et des voyageurs étrangers qui y sont venus ou qui ont traversé cette principauté roumaine ([C. Neagoe, 2020](#)). Parmi ceux-ci se trouve le noble français Jean de Saulx, vicomte de Tavannes (1555-1629), dont nous allons nous occuper dans le présent article.

Jean de Saulx fut le fils du maréchal Gaspard de Saulx, comte de Tavannes. D'abord, celui-ci détint le titre de vicomte de Ligny, pour que, par la suite, après la mort de son frère, Henri de Saulx, en 1565, il reprenne le titre de vicomte de Tavannes*. En tant que membre d'une vieille et prestigieuse famille aristocratique française, Jean de Saulx jouit d'une bonne éducation, tout comme les autres jeunes gentilshommes de son époque ([P. Burke, 2000](#)). Dans sa formation,

Sur le voyage d'un noble français à travers la Valachie, en 1574: Jean de Saulx, vicomte de Tavannes

l'accent fut particulièrement mis sur l'instruction militaire et politique. Jean de Saulx se fit connaître dans la haute société française durant les règnes des premiers rois de la dynastie des Bourbon*.

Adepte de la monarchie centralisée, catholique modéré, détaché des adversaires acharnés du protestantisme, le vicomte de Tavannes se tint à l'écart du sanglant massacre de la nuit de Saint-Barthélemy (23/24 août 1572), même sauvant la vie et prenant sous sa protection trois gentilshommes huguenotes, à savoir La Neuville, Béthune et Baignac*. Plus tard, Henri de Navarre, devenu Roi de France sous le nom de Henri IV de Bourbon, allait s'en souvenir et remercier le vicomte de Tavannes*.

Après une brève période passée au service du duc Henri de Valois, devenu roi de Pologne (1573)**, Jean de Saulx se mit en route vers Constantinople, en 1574, passant à travers la Hongrie, la Transylvanie et la Valachie*. Une fois arrivé dans la principauté de Valachie, il fut le témoin de certains événements importants. Durant l'année mentionnée, le prince de Moldavie, Ioan cel Viteaz, s'était révolté contre les Ottomans, ayant l'intention de faire sortir la Moldavie et la Valachie de la domination de ceux-ci****. Le contexte international semblait assez favorable à une telle entreprise, à ce moment-là. Trois ans auparavant, en 1571, les flottes chrétiennes avaient vaincu les flottes ottomanes dans la bataille de Lépante (N. Koslinski, 1991), écrasant ainsi le mythe de la toute-puissance ottomane et mettant en doute la domination ottomane dans la Méditerranée (N. Davies, 1998). A ce moment, durant cette période, l'esprit des anciennes croisades semblait ressuscité dans la mentalité des élites aristocratiques européennes, gardant encore vivante l'idée d'un « saint combat » contre l'Islam, tout comme l'idée d'une « *pax Christiana* » (J. Huizinga, 1993, p. 104), et l'intérêt des grandes puissances européennes pour l'espace roumain devint de plus en plus évident (N. Davies, 1998).

L'action de révolte anti-ottomane du prince moldave débuta avec une brillante victoire à Jiliște, le 24 avril 1574 (V. Atanasiu, 1974), malgré le fait que celui-ci n'avait pas bénéficié d'appui étranger. Ensuite, la prince de Moldavie entreprit une action contre la Valachie, avec l'intention évidente de faire remplacer Alexandru Mircea, qui était sujet des Turcs*, avec le

Claudiu-Ion Neagoe

prétendant Vintilă, l'un des fils de Pătrașcu cel Bun (C. Rezachevici, 2001).

Jean de Saulx fut témoin de ces événements*, connaissant de sources certaines la défaite et la mort de ce « chrétien révolté contre le Turc ». Un détail digne à remarquer est celui lié à la mort du prince Ioan, dont on dit qu'il avait été remis aux Turcs par les Moldaves même*. Il s'agissait de la trahison des boyards moldaves durant la bataille de Rășcani, du 10 juin 1574 (M. Soreanu, 2021), lors de laquelle le prince fut obligé de se rendre, le 11 juin (C. Rezachevici, 2001). La fin du prince moldave fut dramatique: à l'ordre du commandant ottoman, Cigalзадé Iusuf *aga*, Ioan voïvode fut décapité, et son corps, attaché à deux chameaux, fut déchiré (C. Rezachevici, 2001).

Poursuivant son voyage, accompagné par cinq nobles chevaliers français, le vicomte de Tavannes fut attaqué, dans un village, par quelque 200 individus, dont certains disent qu'ils étaient « turcs »***. Il réussit à peine s'échapper de la maison où il se trouvait, avec ses compagnons, maison qui venait d'être incendié, se forgeant chemin, parmi les agresseurs, l'épée à la main*. Durant le conflit, l'un de ses compagnons, « le sieur Destaix », fut gravement blessé de neuf coups de fourche et deux coups d'épée*. Malgré sa résistance, le vicomte fut pris prisonnier, étant ensuite libéré sur l'ordre du prince valaque Alexandru Mircea (1568-1577), récemment vainqueur devant le prince moldave, à l'aide des Turcs*.

Après être resté quelques jours à la Cour Princière de Bucarest, le temps pour Destaix, son compagnon, se fit guérir les blessures avec des remèdes autochtones, à savoir un baume fait d'herbes et de racines, mis sur la blessure avec une feuille de chou au lieu d'un plâtre*, le vicomte de Tavannes quitta la Valachie, se dirigeant vers Constantinople. Arrivé là, il allait raconter son histoire à François de Noailles, évêque d'Acqs, ambassadeur de France auprès de la Haute Porte (1571-1574) et à d'autres nobles français, de son entourage, tel Pierre Lescalopier***, que nous allons mentionner plus tard. Plus encore, ces histoires parvinrent aux oreilles de son père, le maréchal Gaspard de Saulx, qui se présenta, avec grande fierté, devant le roi Charles IX et sa Cour*.

Concernant l'incident qu'avait eu à affronter le vicomte de Tavannes durant son voyage à travers la Valachie, il faut préciser qu'il y en a une autre variante, beaucoup plus drôle que la première et, semble-t-il, beaucoup plus vraisemblable. Elle appartient à un autre voyageur

**Sur le voyage d'un noble français à travers la Valachie, en 1574:
Jean de Saulx, vicomte de Tavannes**

français, à savoir Pierre Lescalopier, mentionné ci-dessus, qui était venu en Valachie à peu près durant la même période que Jean de Saulx, vicomte de Tavannes. Lescalopier était venu à la cour de Bucarest avec procuration de l'ambassadeur de France et du grand vizir « de demander la restitution certains objets volés en Valachie au vicomte de Tavannes » (P. Cernovodeanu, 1960, p. 43). Une fois arrivé ici, ce fut avec grande surprise que Pierre Lescalopier apprit une autre histoire concernant les péripéties du vicomte de Tavannes. En réalité, le vicomte avait failli de brûler vif, dans un taudis du village Vulpești, sur la vallée de Snagov, près de Bucarest, où Lescalopier lui-même avait passé la nuit le 19 juin 1574: « ceci avait pris feu par la négligence de l'un de ses compagnons qui, après avoir allumé la bougie, l'avait pendue au mur en bois et adobe et s'était endormi »***. Par conséquent, le taudis prit feu tout de suite. Effrayés, les villageois « coururent vers le feu et, croyant qu'il y avait des hommes du voïvode moldave, se ruèrent sur eux et les blessèrent »***. Le vicomte de Tavannes s'en échappa en s'enfuyant dans la forêt puis, « arrivant le lendemain à Bucarest, fut accueilli avec toute la bonté par le voïvode, qui fit envoyer des servants avec l'ordre de récupérer pour lui presque tout ce qu'il avait perdu et qu'on fasse ramener les blessés, auxquels il envoya un guérisseur [...] »***.

Par conséquent, les exploits racontés par Jean de Saulx, vicomte de Tavannes, à Constantinople étaient loin d'être héroïques, mais plutôt honteux. C'est peut-être justement ceci qui avait déterminé le vicomte, touché dans son orgueil d'aristocrate et de guerrier, de fausser la vérité ou, mieux dire, de changer les détails de l'histoire à sa faveur. En tout cas, les péripéties du vicomte de Tavannes restent assez intéressantes. Cela ne fait que mettre en évidence quelques-uns des comportements et des mentalités de l'époque. Animé par cet esprit d'aventure, spécifique aux nobles de l'époque, Jean de Saulx fit naître une histoire héroïque, s'entourant d'une gloire rappelant celle des chevaliers médiévaux ou celle des héros de légende de l'Antiquité. Sans doute, cette chose était-elle possible dans cet espace oriental, tentant et en même temps dangereux, situé « aux confins » de l'Europe (B. Murgescu, 1999).

Claudiu-Ion Neagoe

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Few thoughts regarding the demographic dynamic of Wallachia main cities (16th-17th centuries)

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Abstract: Regarding the most important towns in 16th century from Wallachia we don't have much demographic information and for the 17th century, it is mostly based on foreign travelers' reports. Documentary information from the 17th-18th centuries provides a somewhat richer perspective on the demography of Wallachia compared to the previous period. Even if the available data do not allow a precise estimate of the inhabitant's number in the region between the Carpathians and the Danube, we can nevertheless observe that the towns in Wallachia were wide and their population was not very numerous. The town's population could fluctuate temporarily, increasing during periodic fairs that attracted foreign merchants and inhabitants from the surrounding areas, or decreasing due to negative demographic factors such as armed invasions, periods of drought and famine, epidemics or locust invasions. These factors had a negative impact on the population of the country and, by extension, of the cities. In Wallachia, the urban population was diverse in terms of the origins and occupations of its inhabitants. Documents mention, as early as the 15th century, the significant presence of foreign merchants settled in the southern Carpathian towns. Unfortunately, the lack of precise data on the number, density and structure of the population, as well as demographic fluctuations, prevents us from accurately reconstructing the demographic landscape of Wallachia during the 16th-17th centuries.

Key words: Urban population, towns, demography, catholic, schismatic.

The lack of statistical sources, the absence of treasury records in Wallachia made it extremely difficult to establish a demographic record for the cities or at least for the most important extra-carpathian cities (Bucharest, Târgoviște, Câmpulung, Craiova, Râmnic, etc.). Unfortunately, today we do not have much demographic information and the earliest information dates only from the 16th century end. However, by the 17th century, demographic information is somewhat more abundant in this aspect.

Romanian historians have proposed various figures for the number of inhabitants in the main cities south of the Carpathians, with emphasis on the two capitals, but for other cities we have no estimate. Unfortunately, most reconstruction efforts are based on information provided by foreign travelers. These foreign travelers stories and some internal documents reveal some important characteristics of Wallachia: the richness of the romanian

Few thoughts regarding the demographic dynamic of Wallachia main cities (16th-17th centuries)

land in contrast with dispersion of the settlements and the small number of souls that populated them. The demographic information concerning the 16th -17th centuries is approximate and consequently the conclusions of historians who have dealt with this aspect are also approximate. Thus, according to some opinions, in the 15th century, Wallachia had a population of about 300.000 souls (B. Murgescu, 1999; C. Neagoe, 2019) and according to others about 400.000 inhabitants (M. Bărbulescu, D. Deletant, K. Hitchins, 2014). The end of the 16th century was characterized by a significant decrease in population, some researchers estimate that the number of inhabitants could have reached 150.000 in that period (Șt. Ștefănescu, 1974; L. Rădvan, 2004). For the 17th century, taking as a starting point the estimated number of villages, it was assessed that the population of Wallachia would have been between 300.000 and 550.000 inhabitants (V. Căndea, 2003), exceeding 600.000 in the time of Constantin Brancoveanu (B. Murgescu, 1999). However, according to a more recent research, which took into account both internal and narrative documents, the population of Wallachia, at the time of Constantin Brancoveanu, would have around 500.000 inhabitants (C. Neagoe, 2014).

Documentary information from the 17th -18th centuries gives us a broader perspective on Wallachia demography compared to the previous period. However, the lack of censuses or statistical data allows us only a fragmentary understanding of the demographic phenomenon. The actual number of the population served as an elementary defense function necessary for the reign against the increasingly pressing demands of the Ottoman Empire (The Turks invoked population growth as an argument to justify imposing additional burdens on Wallachia, according Șt. Papacostea (1966). At the same time, the interest of the nobility in maintaining their properties, the peasants' fear of increasing tax obligations (Șt. Papacostea, 1966) and the mobility of the population, caused by abuses and wars, were just some of the social and economic reasons characteristic of the socio-demographic structures of that period, which made it almost impossible to draw up a „statistic” as close as possible to the reality of Wallachia population.

Starting with 1737 we have information that reflects, to some extent, that time demographic reality (Șt. Papacostea, 1966). Although they are not „rigorously accurate”, they give us a general picture of Muntenia population after completing and corroborating them with the catagraphs drawn up by the Austrians in Oltenia in the same period. Thus, for

Wallachia the demographic data record 83.900 *Capita Familiarum* (Șt. Papacostea, 1966). Adding the demographic data for Oltenia, provided by the Austrian catagraphy from 1735, which indicated 34.346 families (E. Hurmuzaki, 1878; Șt. Papacostea Șt., 1966), we obtained a total of 118.246 families, i.e. 591.230 inhabitants (E. Hurmuzaki, 1878). It is important to note that this number is an underestimate, because the existence of tax-exempt categories, which represented a significant percentage of the population, must also be taken into account. Therefore, it was estimated that the total population of Wallachia in the first half of the 18th century was above 600.000 inhabitants, without being able to determine how much it exceeded this level (E. Hurmuzaki, 1878).

Although the available data do not allow an exact determination of inhabitant's number in the Romanian area between the Carpathians and the Danube, at least until the end of the 18th century, we can capture some aspects concerning the human settlements south of the Carpathians in foreign travelers' records, but these must be used with great caution because, in some cases, significant discrepancies between their estimates are observed. For example, around 1584, Franco Sivori found „thousands of villages” *** (p. 14) here, indicating a relatively high density of rural population. An anonymous description from 1587 mentioned the existence of „4.000 villages” *** (p. 203). A similar estimate was made in 1620 by Montalbanus, from whom we learn that he visited Wallachia around 1570. At that time he found, „apart from the towns and cities”, more than „fourty thousand”. But later, because of the many wars and the frequent rebellions, most of them were „so [...] devastated” that hardly „half of the country inhabitants remained” ***** (p. 143); Șt. Ștefănescu, 1972, p. 85). Certainly, Montalbanus' estimates of villages number must be taken with great caution, given the significant time interval between his visit and the time he wrote his travel accounts. But it is clear that, at least in the last quarter of the 16th century, the number of villages in Wallachia was significant. We also note the exaggerated account, in our opinion, of the Venetian merchant Tommaso Alberti who estimated, towards the end of 1612, that there were „24.000 villages” in Muntenia**** (p. 361).

Following extensive research based on the primary sources analysis and a rigorous scientific approach, Ion Donat identified a number of 3.220 settlements (villages and towns), which existed on the territory of Wallachia, permanently or temporarily, between 1352 and 1625. It is important to mention that the author acknowledged that this number was probably lower than the real one (I. Donat, 1956), an observation confirmed by other historians who

Few thoughts regarding the demographic dynamic of Wallachia main cities (16th-17th centuries)

estimated that the settlements number could not have been less than 3.000 ([I. Donat, 1956](#)). There is a debate about the villages number in Wallachia at the end of the 17th century. Lia Lehr contests Ion Donat's estimate, claiming that he influenced the figure by including toponyms, which, according to the researcher, is not correct because some toponyms later became villages while others disappeared. For this reason, Lia Lehr considered as villages only those that were mentioned as such in the documents of the time. According to his calculations, at the beginning of the 17th century, Wallachia had about 2100 villages, and this number increased to about 2800 villages at the century end. ([L. Lehr, 1974](#)).

Concerning the towns demographic in Wallachia, their population was not very large. Information about it was mainly transmitted by foreign travelers, especially by catholic missionaries who were directly interested in the city's catholic communities of Wallachia. We must have in mind that, with the exception of the data about Catholics, the demographic information provided by travelers is subjective and it is unlikely that they could have obtained an accurate picture of the urban population size in Romanian territory. However, it is important to mention and analyze these data because they are the only demographic sources on urban settlements available to us for this purpose.

About the town of Argeș and its inhabitants we have information in the visit report of Andrei Bogoslavič, probably written in 1623, in which he mentioned that the Catholic church had been taken over by the Orthodox, because in the town there were only 30 houses of Catholic believers****. If we apply the demographic index 5 (conventionally accepted by historians) to the Catholic population of 30 houses mentioned in the report, we get a result of 150 souls. However, we have no specific information on the number of Orthodox populations in the town. Presumably the Orthodox population was much larger than the Catholics, since this population had taken over the Catholic Church in the town. The takeover of the Catholic church by the Orthodox probably took place in the second half of the 16th century, a period when the Saxon communities suffered from the Reformation ([L. Rădvan, 2004](#)). The town of Argeș, one of the main towns of Wallachia during the 14th -15th centuries, experienced a slow decline from the second half of the 16th century onwards. The move of the seat ruler during the reign of Neagoe Basarab and the decrease of economic relations with the cities of Brasov and Sibiu had a negative impact on the population and economic development of Argeș. In 1640, the Catholic missionary Petru Bogdan Bakšić, who later became the Catholic bishop of

Moldavia and Wallachia, arrived in the city and mentioned that although Catholics existed initially, over time they became heretics and schismatics. According to him, the town situation was due to the settlement location near the mountains and the borders of Hungary and as the Catholic inhabitants came from those lands, they „easily pulled towards Transylvania” ***** (p. 212-213).

From the second half of the 16th century, more precisely with the reigns of Mircea Ciobanul (1545-1552, 1553-1554, 1558-1559), Bucharest became the main residence of Wallachia. During this period, the city expanded both horizontally and vertically ([P. I. Panait, 1971](#)), thus making a clear demarcation between the settlement itself and the area of the royal court ([G. I. Ionescu-Gion, 1899](#)). The Voivode paid particular attention to the building aspects, rebuilding the Old Court and bridging the town „with tree trunks” ** (p. 426). These measures certainly contributed to the increase in the town inhabitant’s number.

Although the prince Mircea Ciobanul was noted for the restoration and expansion of his residence in Bucharest, at the end of his second reign he was banished (March 1554) ([C. Rezachievici, 2001](#)), on which occasion the city suffered from the devastation and looting carried out by the Turks who came to banish him and take him under guard to Constantinople. At the same time, several „court servants of the Voivode, especially Romanians and Greeks, were pitifully killed and slaughtered” ** (p. 111).

The situation in Wallachia, and therefore in towns here, became worse considerably because of money need, following the fighting in 1574. (The city of Bucharest was conquered by the army sent from Moldavia by Ioan Voda, who occupied the city and appointed Vintilă as ruler (c. 21 April 1574 - c. 3 May 1574). He was killed not two weeks later by the boyars sent by Alexander II Mircea ([C. Rezachievici, 2001](#)). Alexander II, Voivode of Wallachia, had to adopt a stricter fiscal policy and introduce new taxes (He introduced a fee on sheep without lambs named barren sheep tax *****; See also at [D. Pleșia, 1972](#)). These measures came against the backdrop of a difficult period marked by the famine that swept through all Romanian lands, followed by the outbreak of a plague epidemic in 1576 ([C. Rezachievici, 2001](#)). Describing the situation, the Polish traveler Andrei Taranowski, passing through Bucharest in the spring of that year, reported on the situation in the city, where people were fighting among themselves for a piece of bread as a result of poverty and hardship **.

Few thoughts regarding the demographic dynamic of Wallachia main cities (16th-17th centuries)

At the beginning of the 17th century, the most important cities of Muntenia were severely damaged in the context of the invasion of the Transylvanian prince troops Gabriel Báthory (1610-1611). First, the Transylvanian armies attacked and plundered the city of Câmpulung, where they desecrated the old tombs of the Voivodale church, which later became Negru Vodă monastery (P. Chihaiia, 1974; C. Neagoe, 2003). Then, the Transylvanian armies went and installed themselves „at the seat of Targoviste”, and after three weeks they seized Bucharest as well.

Surprised totally unprepared, the Wallachian ruler, Radu Șerban (1601-1611), found refuge, along with his faithful boyars and his family, at Constantin Movilă court in Iasi *****. According to some accounts belonging to a monk from St. John the Baptist in Bucharest, Wallachia would have suffered a wave of looting and cruelty, during this period, from the invaders of the reformed confession of the Transylvanian lands. The monasteries were apparently the worst affected, with many monks having to flee either to Moldova or south of the Danube to the Ottoman Empire (F. Andronikos, 2002).

The new rules imposed by the Ottomans, Radu Mihnea (1611-1616), was unable to put an end to the unrest because the outlaws rebelled against him when they heard that Radu Șerban had returned home with mercenary armies from Moldavia. It was only in September 1611 that Radu Mihnea was able to take the Wallachia throne, after Radu Șerban had been forced to take the road to Austria (Șt. Ștefănescu, 1996).

In the summer of 1640, the Catholic missionary Petru Bogdan Bakšić recorded some estimated demographic data, but he was deceived by the appearance and size of Bucharest (L. Rădvan, 2004), an urban settlement characterized by „houses that are far apart, each with its own garden [...] with various trees” ***** (p. 372) as well as orchards, vineyards and empty spaces. It mentions, exaggeratedly, we believe, the existence in the town of 12.000 schismatic houses and more than 100.000 inhabitants *****. The population of the city at that time could not exceeded 30.000 inhabitants (L. Rădvan, 2004) and, during the reign of Constantin Brancoveanu, at most 40.000 souls (Șt. Ștefănescu, 1974). The Catholic missionary stories provide an interesting insight into the population and urban settlements of Wallachia in the 17th century. However, his information must be treated with caution and interpreted in the specific context of the time and the available sources. It is important to have in mind that the demographic estimates of that period were based on personal observations

and subjective impressions. We believe that Bakšić's figures on the population numbers cannot be considered even approximate, as there are discrepancies between his estimates and the actual numerical values at that time.

As far as the population of Bucharest is concerned, we believe that Petru Bogdan Bakšić exaggerates both the number of houses and the number of inhabitants, the figures estimated by the Catholic missionary being impossible to accept for the 17th century (P. Cernovodeanu, 1972). If Bucharest had three times as many houses and five times as many inhabitants as Targoviste, this cannot be supported by the time historical realities. An argument for this discrepancy would be the fact that the Wallachia Voivode, Matei Basarab (1632-1654), established his residence in Targoviste in 1639 (The capital move from Bucharest to Targoviste is likely to have taken place between 29 October 1639, when the last document was issued by Matei Basarab in Bucharest ***** and 26 November 1639 *****, when the prince issued the first document from Targoviste). This decision undoubtedly led to the movement of an important population part (nobles, merchants, courtiers) from Bucharest to Targoviste (D. Berindei, 1963).

Sometime later, between 1655 and 1660, the Wallachia settlements suffered a demographic decline due to some significant events. These included the Seimeni uprising (1655-1656) *****, the Turkish-Tatar invasion (1658-1659) (V. Căndea, 1970) and the anti-Ottoman uprising led by Radu-Mihnea III (1659-1660) *****; *****. These events had a major impact on the Wallachia population and settlements.

The Bucharest city was considerably affected and this was also noted in the descriptions of foreign travelers. During this period the number of Bucharest houses suffered a significant decrease. If in 1656 there were „12.000 houses” in Bucharest, according to Evlia Celebi's accounts ***** (p. 716.), two years later, in 1658, the number would be reduced by half, or „about 6,000 houses” ***** (p. 252), according to Paul of Aleppo. Multiplying this figure by the generally (conventionally) accepted population ratio for a household, it can be estimated that the city's population may have numbered about 30.000 souls. From a demographic point of view, this figure seems to be more credible in the historical context of the time (Șt. Ștefănescu, 1974).

At the beginning of the 18th century, Bucharest, „the capital of Wallachia and the Orthodox Archdiocese” attracted the attention of foreign travelers as „a sprawling and scattered city”. The Englishman Edmund Chishull, noting the difference between the city

Few thoughts regarding the demographic dynamic of Wallachia main cities (16th-17th centuries)

centre and its suburbs, observed that the outlying areas were very poor and largely made up of thatched and thatched houses ***** (p. 199).

The most beautiful houses in Bucharest were located near the palace, most of them built of stone, with courtyards and gardens surrounded by oak trunks set close together. Instead of streets, Chishull noted that the city was crossed by what appeared to be „an unbroken bridge” covered with „massive cupboards” ***** (p. 199).

However, despite the considerable size of the town, its population was estimated by the Italian Anton Maria del Chiaro to be about 50.000 *****. Given the unfavorable demographic factors of the Brancovene period, including the Austrian armed incursions and plague epidemics of 1689, 1697 and 1707, as well as the famine years caused by drought and locust invasions in 1688-1692 and 1696-1697, which had a negative impact on the potential urban population, we think that the estimate of 50.000 inhabitants is exaggerated (Cl. Neagoe, 2014).

From these factors perspective and assuming that each family had a household, it can be estimated that Bucharest had around year 1700 at most 8.000 houses. The distribution of households in the city varied, depending on their position, either in the commercial centre or on the outskirts, and on the owner social status. The manor court, whose perimeter had been delimited since the 15th century, remained the town central point (P. I. Panait, 1992).

Regarding the situation and population numerical evolution in the Câmpulung town during the Middle Ages, we note that the available data are scarce and often controversial or incomplete.

The first information on the structure and population number of Câmpulung were left to us by the Franciscan monk Jeronim Arsengo, who details the situation of the Catholic churches in Wallachia in 1581. According to him, at that time, the Câmpulung settlement had „900 homes, all of them Romanian”, but there were also „houses of Catholic Saxons with 400 souls (...), a total of 250, <probably houses>” ** (p. 510). Using this information and demographic ratio of 1.6 we were able to estimate the average Catholic population density (persons/household). For the Orthodox community, applying the overall population coefficient of 5 would result in a population of approximately 4.500 souls. Estimates of the Câmpulung total population in that period are considered „far too generous” and it is thought that about 4.000 souls might be a more realistic figure (Cl. Neagoe, 2004, p. 204).

After only fifteen years, in 1596, according to data provided by Botero, there were still „900 households” in Câmpulung, of which 40 belonged to the Catholic Saxons **** (p. 576). Thus, estimates suggest that there were about 3.440 Orthodox and about 160 Catholics living in the town, making a total population of about 3.600 individuals (Cl. Neagoe, 2004).

Historical demographic studies have revealed an unprecedented decrease in the Wallchia population in the last two decades of the 16th century. The decrease was, of course, caused by a number of factors such as excessive taxation, the plundering of Turkish armies and Tatar hordes, plagues amplified by robbery and famine, as well as the spread of the epidemic plague. (Șt. Ștefănescu, 1972). A demographic regression is also observed in the Câmpulung Catholic population, the community going from 400 souls to about 160 and from 250 Catholic homes (families) to only 40. This demographic regression trend can be attributed both to the factors mentioned above and to the confessional changes that have taken place in the Romanian area (See Cl. Neagoe, 2004).

Only four years after the data provided by Botero, we have information on the Câmpulung Catholic community through the missionary Francesco da Castro letters of 30 March 1640 and that of Antonio da Via of 10 May of the same year, which mentions a community of 500 Catholics in the town (Al. Ciocîltan, 2015).

Also in 1640, during his first visit to Câmpulung, the missionary Petru Bogdan Bakšić recorded a Saxon community of 500 souls, of which „400 of communion age and 100 children” ***** (p. 209), but also „400 schismatic houses making more than 2000 Romanian souls” ***** (p. 211).

Regarding the town Orthodox population, it is possible that there was an increase in their number, through the „strangers” arrival and settlement here „from earlier times until the days of Alexander Vodă Iliăș” (Șt. Trâmbaciu, Gh. Pârnuță, 1999, p. 174; see also Cl. Neagoe, 2004).

Four years later, in his second visit to Câmpulung, on 20 January 1644, he estimated approximately the same number of Catholics, that is „around 400” for communion and „around 100 or a little less children”. In detailing the inhabitants’ occupations, the missionary described the fact that most of them were not in the town, he was able to confirm only 141 of the Catholics in the town, as „most of them are not at home, since almost all of them are called merchants, but poor [...], selling little things and trading in order to live”. At the same time, Bakšić identifies a major problem for the Saxon community in Câmpulung, namely the

Few thoughts regarding the demographic dynamic of Wallachia main cities (16th-17th centuries)

burden of high taxes: „These people are heavily burdened by high taxes” (Fr. Pall, 1975, p. 227). From the text it is clear that the Saxons were subject to the same tax obligations as the rest of the Câmpulung inhabitants (Fr. Pall, 1975).

During his visit at the end of 1648, the same bishop found in Câmpulung a different Catholic community situation in the sense that the number of Catholic believers „had greatly diminished” and their economic situation had deteriorated due to heavy debts, which made them leave for Transylvania or other parts of the country. Thus, the number of Catholics „of the old Saxon stock” had dwindled to only 229 ***** (p. 264).

In February 1653, Bishop Bakič was again in Câmpulung and held a mass during which he confirmed 41 children. He noted that in the town there were „more than 250 souls of the Catholic rite” living under the same high taxes***** (p. 270).

It can be seen that, over time, in Câmpulung, from a town with a significant number of Catholic believers *****, foreign travelers found fewer and fewer adherents of this confession, their numbers dwindling, so that in 1650, there were only 40 families of Catholic Saxons in the town, who were led by the Franciscan Reformed priests *****.

The evolution of Targoviste population in the Middle Ages is closely related to the economic development of the settlement, especially during the periods when the seat of the kingdom was established here. In general, a trend of demographic growth can be observed during this long period, although there were also fluctuation moments caused by natural disasters and military conflicts as well: destruction caused during battles or armed incursions in 1442, 1462, 1476, 1522, 1595, 1603, 1611; earthquakes in 1411, 1517 and 1636; battles in 1655, 1658, 1659; epidemics in 1456, 1567, 1659-1661, 1705; famines in 1598, 1605, 1659-1660 and the fire of 1712 (G. Mihăescu, E. Fruchter, 1977).

Concerning Targoviste demographic situation, from an Italian traveler story we found that during the reign of Vlad the Drowned (1530-1532), it was „a not very large town, set in the plain and surrounded by walls” * (p. 322). Until 1550, the urban settlement held the primacy, in terms of the high number of inhabitants, this being, according to Anton Verancsics records, the most significant city and the main seat of Muntenia *.

In the second half of the 16th century, Targoviste continued to be the settlement with the largest population, although Bucharest had become the main residence of the country. During Mihnea II first reign (1577-1583), according to the Franciscan monk Jeronim

Arsengo (1581), Târgoviște ranked first among the settlements of Wallachia, with 1.022 houses and about 5.240 inhabitants **. Under the reign of Petru Cercel (1583-1585), Targoviste undoubtedly experienced a significant demographic increase. Franco Sivori, the private secretary of this prince, would record that here, in Targoviste, there were at that time „much better and prouder dwellings, a greater abundance of necessities and a more beautiful and pleasant settlement, well and richly populated” *** (p. 11-12). At the same time, the nobles and great merchants of Bucharest, following the ruler example, moved to Targoviste, to be near him and the royal court here, so that „quickly, quickly the city grew a lot” *** (p. 13). Between 1583 and 1584, thanks to the building measures adopted by the prince, the city of Targoviste changed its aspect in a short time ***.

Starting with Mihnea II second reign (1585-1591), the country main residence was moved again to Bucharest ***. However, Targoviste inhabitants' number did not decrease very much since, in 1596, Giovanni Botero mentioned that there were 1.000 houses inhabited by Romanians of the Orthodox rite and 22 inhabited by „German and Hungarian-speaking Catholic Saxons” **** (p. 576).

It should be noted, however, that the battles with the Turks in the period 1594-1596 affected not only Bucharest, but also Targoviste from a demographic point of view ***.

For the first three decades of the 17th century, there is no information regarding population numerical situation in the large towns of Wallachia. However, we do know that Targoviste was a very large open city, with many houses in which many rich merchants lived ****.

According to reports of the Catholic missionary Petru Bogdan Bakšić, in 1640 he found about „20.000 souls” **** (p. 216). It is worth mentioning that many of them were merchants ****, so a significant number of the inhabitants were likely foreigners from the South Danube region, namely Bulgarians, Serbs, Greeks, and Armenians. However, in about two decades the town's population was halved. Nevertheless, the figure given by the Catholic missionary it is of course exaggerated, the real population probably did not exceed 10.000 (Șt. Ștefănescu, 1974). An unjustified disproportion in town souls' number can be seen in the records of the Italian Bartolomeo Locadello, who a year later, in 1641, found „7.000 wooden houses covered with shingles or reeds, inhabited by some 40.000 souls” **** (p. 35).

After a long period in which Targoviste played an important political, economic and commercial role, events such as the revolt of the Seimeni (1653-1655) *****, the

Few thoughts regarding the demographic dynamic of Wallachia main cities (16th-17th centuries)

revolts against the Ottomans led by the rulers such Constantin Serban and Mihnea III and the invasions of the Turkish-Tatar armies in Wallachia (1658-1660) ***** led to a gradual but obvious decline of the city. Thus, towards the end of the 17th century, Constantin Brancoveanu „seeing this old, broken and abandoned castle” tried to restore the city's former splendour by building „ruler houses”. The Voivode initiative had a certain echo, since in the document from 20 February 1712 it is mentioned that „the townsmen and other foreigners came, building houses here in Targoviste” (M. Bîzgan, 2009, p. 515).

More accurate information about Targoviste population appears only in the second half of the 18th century. In 1810, at the request of the Russian military authorities, a „catagraphy” was drawn up by the priests in order to record the payment of taxes. According to this catagraphy, at that time the town of Targoviste had 474 houses and 1.815 inhabitants (T. Svințiu, 1972). These data provide important information on the town demographic dimensions at that time and serve as an essential point of reference for understanding the population evolution in previous centuries.

Demographic information regarding other towns in Wallachia also comes from the writings of foreign travelers. Thus, from some accounts, we find that Buzău, Gherghița, and Râmnicu Vâlcea were regarded as smaller cities or towns **.

During Mihnea II second reign (1585-1591), influenced by administrative country center move back to Bucharest ***, Buzău experienced a significant demographic and commercial growth. Thus, around 1589 or 1590, it was characterized as a „large town with wooden houses”, frequented by a significant number of merchants from Cyprus *** (p. 294).

According to Petru Bogdan Bakšić's reports, who visited Wallachia in 1640 and left descriptions of the main urban wallachian settlements at that time, the towns demographic situation through he passed was as follows: Craiova had 200 schismatic houses, which meant more than 1.000 souls, Slatina had 100 houses inhabited by Romanians, making more than 500 souls, Caracal counted 150 Romanian houses, totalling more than 700 souls, while Pitesti counted 200 Romanian houses, or about 1.000 souls, who were considered „somewhat more riches” ***** (p. 207-208).

In 1641, according to the Italian merchant Bartolomeo Locadello testimonies, the most important towns at that time, such as Gherghița, Buzăul, Râmnic (Vâlci), Focșanii,

Slatina, each had around 200 hearths (houses), which meant, therefore, around 1.000 inhabitants for each settlement *****.

Between 1655 and 1660, other towns, such as Argeş and Câmpulung, also experienced a significant reduction in population as a result of the Seimeni uprising (1655-1656) *****, the Turkish-Tatar invasion (1658-1659) (V. Căndea, 1970) and the uprising against the Ottomans led by Radu Mihnea III (1659-1660) *****, *****.

According to historian Radu Stefan Vergatti (2002) analysis, from the second half of the 17th century, Curtea de Argeş experienced a demographic decrease, while Câmpulung stagnated and Piteşti experienced a slight demographic increase.

At the end of the 17th century and the beginning of the 18th century, with the Austrians occupation of Transylvania and in the context of an economic crisis in the region, the abuse over the Orthodox and the Kuruts conflict, cases of wandery increased. For example, following an investigation carried out in 1697 by the Austrian authorities, it was found that in recent years 508 men and their families had left only from Țara Făgăraşului and 150 families had left the six villages from Comana county. This situation worsened in the following years, so that in 1706, 904 families were recorded as having chosen to wander. Of these, 42% crossed the mountains to Wallachia (Ş. Solcan, 2014).

Information about an increase in population number can be found, for example, in one document from 23 January 1705 issued by the chancellery of Constantin Brancoveanu. It explained to Brasov city council the reasons for the introduction of a new tax, namely „tax for two cows” (we are talking about the fee for cattle farming). This tax applied both to wallachians inhabitants and to those who were „foreigners”, i. e. to the merchants of Braşov. The main reason given by the Voivode was the difficulty of country situation managing, which had become very difficult. The news had spread at the Ottoman Empire, concerning Wallachia, that „so many people and so many cattle’s have gathered in this country, both in the Turkish country and in the Hungarian country and in Moldova, that it is full of people and cattle’s” (N. Iorga, 1905). Therefore, we can conclude that was a significant increase in population during that period.

The lack of exact data on the number, density and structure of the population, as well as on demographic variations, prevents us from establishing in any way the population numerical situation of Wallachia during the 16th-17th centuries.

**Few thoughts regarding the demographic dynamic of Wallachia main cities
(16th-17th centuries)**

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(16th-17th centuries)**

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Several rural residences of the Bălăceni boyars (17th-18th centuries)

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Abstract: The Bălăceni boyar family was a large family, with two large branches separated, in the 17th century, from the two sons of Barbu (I) and Sima, Badea (III) and Pătrașcu (I) Bălăceanu. It is practically impossible to be able to locate the entire material heritage of the Bălăceni family, from the countryside, in the absence of archaeological evidence. We will try, in the present study, using the results of the archaeological research undertaken so far, bringing our modest contribution, where appropriate, to present only some of the secular constructions of the Bălăceni boyars, whose ruins can still be seen observed even today in the places where they once had their estates.

Keywords: Wallachia, Bălăceni, boyar family, XVIIth-XVIIIth century, boyar court, ruins.

The Bălăceni boyar family was one of the oldest noble families of Wallachia, but despite this, we have quite little information regarding the rural residences, which some members of this noble family built, in the 17th-18th centuries, due to the fact that only a few archaeological investigations have been undertaken, on the places where they are still today, which is right only at the stage of ruins.

The boyar courts in Bălaci. Being the home village of the Bălăceni, it is obvious that they had boyar courts in those lands, but unfortunately there is no archaeological or documentary evidence about the existence of any boyar court in Bălaci, before Constantin (I) Bălăceanu.

In our opinion, Badea (III) Bălăceanu, a prominent member of this boyar family, with an impressive political career of more than four decades, former *vel vornic* of Wallachia between the years 1678-1687 (N. Stoicescu, 1971) had his boyar courts in Bălaci. His son, Constantin (I) Bălăceanu, once he had become *vel aga* and son-in-law of prince Șerban Cantacuzino (1678-1688) (N. Stoicescu, 1971), started the construction of other, much more imposing, boyar courts.

Several rural residences of the Bălăceni boyars (17th-18th centuries)

From the very beginning, it must be mentioned that today there are two hypotheses, regarding the stage of the construction of the boyar courts at Bălaci, Teleorman County, belonging to *aga* Constantin (I) Bălăceanu, at the time when he was sent by Șerban Cantacuzino, in the diplomatic message in Vienna, in October 1688. After this date, he returned to the country only for a short period of time in the winter of 1689-1690, and then he died, as is known in the battle of Zărnești on August 11/21, 1690 [*](#); [**](#); [***](#); [****](#).

A first hypothesis, of “unfinished courtyards” is based on oral tradition, which speaks of “*started [...] and unfinished walls*” in Bălaci ([G. G. Tocilescu](#), p. 63), being supported by historians such as [Șt. D. Grecianu \(1913\)](#), but also the results of the archaeological research undertaken between 2000-2002 by a group of archaeologists from the Teleorman County Museum, under the leadership of the renowned archaeologist Nicolae Constantinescu from “Vasile Pârvan” Institute of Archeology of the Romanian Academy ([N. Constantinescu et al., 2001, 2002](#)).

A second hypothesis formulated by the architect Anca Brătuleanu claims that in fact the boyar courts at Bălaci were completed and even housed the *aga* Bălăceanu family, his mother-in-law, Maria Cantacuzino and his brother-in-law, Gheorghe Cantacuzino, in the winter of 1689-1690 ([A. Brătuleanu, 1993](#)). As far as we are concerned, we consider that, although started sometime in 1684, the Bălaci boyar courts were never completed. Even though the construction of the chapel church of the courtyards was finished in 1684, it remained, as we will see, unplastered and unpainted.

The archaeological research from 2000-2002 sought, among other things, to clarify the issue of the completion and habitation of the Bălaci boyar courts. The insignificant archaeological material collected, but especially the non-existence of small fragments of stove tiles, give us clear proof of the impossibility of habitation of these boyar courts, during the winter. Obviously, more was built than what is preserved today, as evidenced by the diary of the pastoral visit made in 1747 in his diocese, by Metropolitan Neofit, who on August 5th, 1747 arrived in Bălaci where Hrizea Bălăceanu had his estate, noting that in the village he found “*a large deserted stone church, a large deserted vaulted stone cellar and a large fish tank*” ([Ghenadie, 1890](#), p. 723).

The boyar residence of *vel aga* Constantin (I) Bălăceanu belongs to the typology of residential sites of the pre-Brâncoveanu era, being a complex consisting of a house, two cellars,

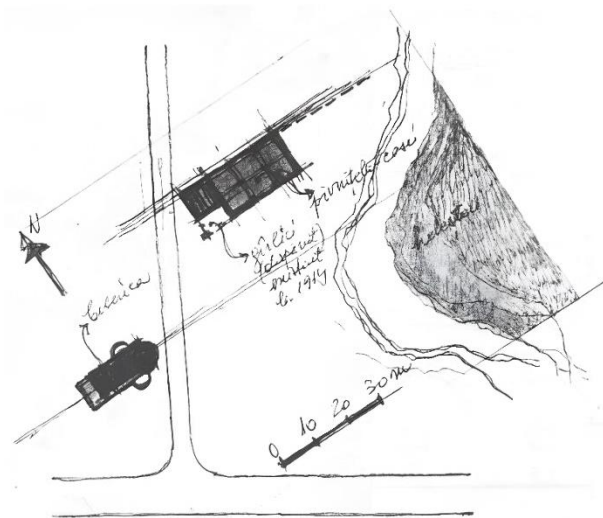


Fig. 1 - Sketch of the location of the boyar court in Balaci (after A. Brătuleanu, 1993)

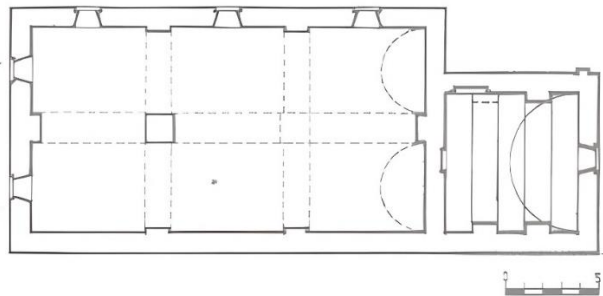


Fig. 2 - The ruins of the house, plan and longitudinal section (after A. Brătuleanu, 1993)



Fig. 3 - The church from Balaci, side view.

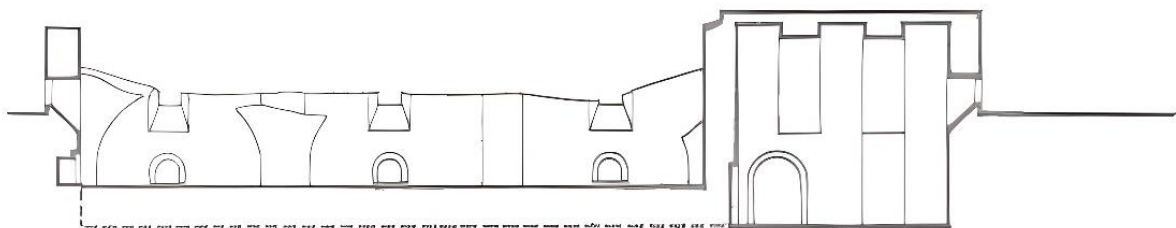


Fig. 4 - Cross section through the small cellar (after A. Brătuleanu, 1993)

Several rural residences of the Bălăceni boyars (17th-18th centuries)

a chapel church, even having a stream. The house was attached to the northern wall of the enclosure wall. (figs. 1, 2).

What remains today is the chapel church (fig. 3), but also the ruins of the imposing cellars of this boyar residence, which testify to the complexity of this noble architectural

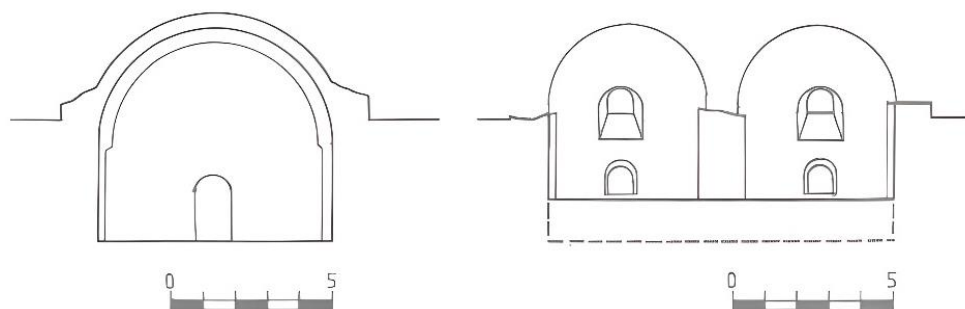


Fig. 5 - Cross section through the large cellar, with a view of the east wall (after A. Brătuleanu, 1993)



Fig. 6 - Ruins of the large cellar

complex. The best-preserved cellar is the smallest one, measuring 7.25 meters long and approximately 7 meters wide. It was covered with an extremely well-made vault, supported by double arches (fig. 4).

From the large cellar, which had considerable dimensions, 21.50 meters long and 10.80 meters wide, which is today in a state of almost total damage, there are still traces of two vaults (fig. 5), supported by walls, but also on a median longitudinal archway, which was reinforced transversely by double arches supported by two strong pillars, of which only one is still preserved. The cellar was provided with windows finished in semicircular arches (fig. 6).

Above the small entrance (gârlici), which provided access to both cellars, there was a gazebo as assumed by archaeologists (N. Constantinescu et al., 2002). In the absence of consistent archaeological evidence, which should have been present even in the perimeter of the cellars, if the boyar residence had been inhabited, even for a short period of time, we can draw the conclusion that the Bălaci courtyard was never inhabited, especially since, if a former lord's wife and her son had lived there, even temporarily, they would have been followed by a suite of servants, who would certainly have left behind a rich archaeological material.

In the 17th century, the boyar court was the faithful mirror of political power, prestige, wealth, and why not even the place that the ruling boyar occupied in the hierarchy of the princely court (A. Brătuleanu-Stolnici, 1993). Son of the *vel vornic* of Wallachia and son-in-law of a prince, aga Constantin (I) Bălăceanu wanted his rural court to reflect his prestige and economic power, as evidenced by the imposing dimensions of the cellars of this boyar court.

We express our opinion that the destruction of the boyar courts, at the stage at which the construction was at that time, was due to the two foreign invasions, the Tatars and the Turks.

The first of them occurred in the winter of 1689-1690. As revenge for the traitorous boyar, ruler Constantin Brâncoveanu (1688-1714) sent the Tatars, whom he himself had brought to the country, to chase away the imperial troops led by general Donat Heissler, together with his troops, of course to guide them, over the villages of Constantin Bălăceanu (of course Bălaci and the surrounding estates belonging to Bălăceanu family members), before February 12/22, 1690, „*să le pârzolească, să le prădeze, norodul să-l omoare*” ***** (“*to burn them, to loot them, the people to kill them*”).

A second destruction, this time carefully supervised even by Constantin Brâncoveanu, who personally traveled to kaza of Turnu Măgurele, took place in the summer of 1690, after the official start of the Ottoman campaign to expel the imperial troops from Transylvania. While the Ottoman army was crossing the Danube at Nicopole, the Turks from Turnu raid entered Wallachia, burning the villages of Constantin Bălăceanu and Barbu Merișanu (Merișani

Several rural residences of the Bălăceeni boyars (17th-18th centuries)

village)*****, and of course completed the destruction of the boyar courts of Constantin (I) Bălăceanu.

Built in 1684 by aga Constantin Bălăceanu, to serve as the chapel church of the boyar court, the church in Bălaci was consecrated on August 5, 1684, as testified by the *pisania*

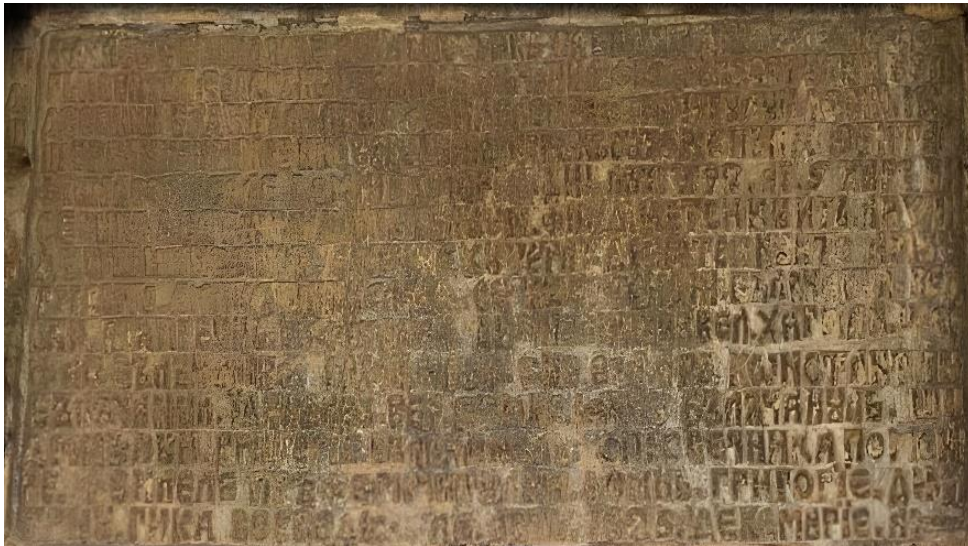


Fig. 7 - The *Pisania* of the church in Balaci



Fig. 8 - The votiv painting and the iconografic images of the ban Constantin (III) family -The church in Balaci

(inscription placed) on December 1, 1825 by the care of the *vel ban* Constantin (III) Bălăceanu and to his sons (V. Drăghiceanu, 1914) (fig. 7). The church remained unplastered and without

interior painting, but only in 1825 Bălăceanu took care of its exterior plastering and decorated the interior with the fresco painting of the founders, the painting of the masonry capstone, the tower vault and the altar.

We believe that only after the completion of the construction of the church, did *vel aga* Constantin (I) Bălăceanu begin the construction of the monumental courtyards, which, as I stated previously, were not finished.

As an architectural style, the church belongs to the Wallachian style of Matei Basarab's era, having a rectangular shape, an open porch, with seven arches supported on robust pillars, the nave separated from the nave by a wall supported by cylindrical stone pillars painted in emerald color, with ribs that imitates marble. The bell tower rises above the *pronaos* with the image of the Pantocrator, flanked by the four evangelists, painted on the dome. The altar has a polygonal shape, with a painted girdle, and on the ceiling is painted the Mother of God with the baby in her arms.

The *catapeteasma* (iconostasis) has four registers. The first of them, that of the altar doors, is separated from the second by a belt with vegetal-floral motifs. The second register contains the icons of the twelve royal feasts, and the third, Jesus Christ surrounded by the twelve apostles. The fourth register includes two icons in a medallion, surrounded by plant motifs. Flanking the door at the entrance to the church, the votive painting includes the founders, *vel aga* Constantin (I) Bălăceanu and Maria Cantacuzino (right), the *vel ban* Constantin (III) Bălăceanu and Sultana Pârșcoveanu (left), and on the walls of the *pronaos* are painted the four sons and two daughters of the *vel ban*.

We note the painter's care for the clothing details, the *vel aga* wearing a cap made of sable fur, brick-red front, with a fur collar, black borders and golden hem, and underneath a mustard yellow kaftan, while Maria Cantacuzino wore a calpac beneath which protruded a piece of white cloth and a brick-red front with a fur border, beneath which can be seen an emerald-green kaftan, pendant earrings, a pearl necklace and two rings on the left hand.

Next to the two is painted their son, Ion (I) Bălăceanu, a child, wearing a kaftan and an Ottoman-inspired turban on his head. The *vel ban* Bălăceanu wore a calpac, a dark brown cloak with collar and fur trim, under which he had a kaftan in a shade of green. The clothing of the Sultana, but also of the daughters, Maria and Elena, are of Western inspiration, with bonnets, empire dresses and shawls, while the sons, Ștefan, Constantin, Ioan and Grigore had calpaces or islices, anterii and kaftans. (V. Drăghiceanu, 1915) (fig. 8).

Several rural residences of the Bălăceni boyars (17th-18th centuries)

The church is quite large for a boyar chapel, measuring 18.65 meters long, approximately 5.70 meters wide and 18.65 meters high, with walls 1.13 meters thick. The exterior is decorated with eyelets, separated by two raised, jagged belts. The long and narrow windows end with oriental rosettes worked differently (V. Drăghiceanu, 1915). Between the church and the ruins of the boyar courts there is a distance of about 100 meters, the locals know from the village elders the legend according to which an underground tunnel connected the church to the boyar courts, exiting somewhere in the nearby hills.

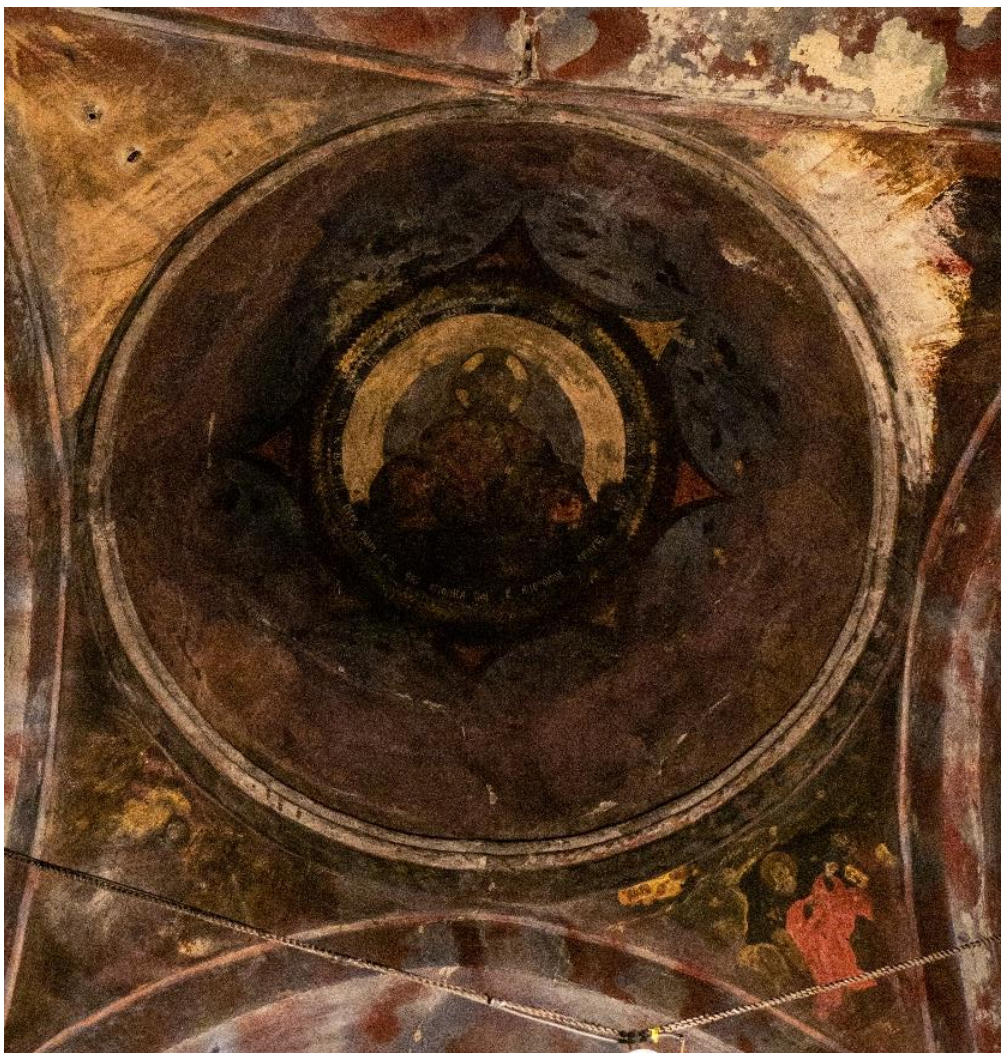


Fig. 9 - The Pantocrator spire of the church in Balaci

Today, the place of worship is in a state of severe deterioration, with pieces of plaster coming off on the outside, and on the inside there are deep cracks that endanger, in the event of an earthquake, especially the spire (fig. 9).

Claudiu Drăghici

We leave room for future archaeological research, which will confirm or refute our hypothesis, regarding the impossibility of living in the courtyards of *vel aga* Bălăceanu, especially in winter, in the absence of heating sources, traces of which are completely missing.

The boyar courts of Doicești. The *vel pitar*, Drăghici (III) Bălăceanu, had stone houses in Doicești, either inherited from his father, Pătrașcu (I), or built sometime before 1699, which he sold on December 10, 1699, to his brother, Barbu (II), together with his share of the Doicești estate, vineyards and his share of the villages of Priboi and Bărbătești, with the mill ford as well as the village of Șotânga, for the price of 1000 thalers, of which 650 he received in hand, and for the account of 350 thalers he received half of the Răzmirești estate.

The houses ended up, together with the entire domain of the Doicești, in the hands of the *vel ban*, Cornea Brăiloiu, on account of an unpaid debt of Matei (I) and Barbu (II) Bălăceanu, on March 20, 1702, and the *vel ban* of Oltenia, in turn, sold to Constantin Brâncoveanu, on May 1, 1702 ([Șt. D. Grecianu, 1913](#)).

A clarification is necessary, regarding the purchase, by Constantin Brâncoveanu, on October 16, 1705, of the estate and houses of Mihai Barbătescu, the son of *vornic* Constantin Bărbătescu. He sold to Constantin Brâncoveanu 180 *stânjeni* in Doicești and 87 *stânjeni* in Bărbătești inherited from his father, together with a modest house, an old mill, two vineyards and some orchards, for the price of 550 thalers, to pay off some debts ([Șt. D. Grecianu, 1913](#)).

Constantin Brâncoveanu did not build his residence in Doicești on the site of Mihai Bărbătescu's houses, but only transformed the stone houses of Drăghici (III) Bălăceanu, giving them the appearance of voivodeship courts. Even if the chronicler Radu Greceanu described them as „*case vechi, surpate și nesăbuite*” ** (“*old, broken and reckless houses*”), in order to highlight the role of the lord as the founder of the ensemble from Doicești, we consider that, although it could not rise to the height of a voivodal foundation, the Doicești court of Drăghici (III) Bălăceanu was a typical court of the Brâncoveanu period, with plastered brick houses, annexes and obviously a spacious cellar, being located in a famous wine-growing area. The ensemble of Brâncoveanu courtyards from Doicești, made up of brick houses, annexes, a chapel church and even a stream, was given by the lord to his eldest son, Mateiaș**. Archaeologist Virgil Drăghiceanu, who in 1909 investigated the ruins of Brâncoveanu courtyards from Doicești, described the modest Bălăceanu houses, later enlarged and decorated in Brâncoveanu style, at the disposal of the new owner, as having dimensions of 14.60 meters long and 8.10 meters wide, a cellar, above which the rooms rose, being finished, on the north side with a fairly

Several rural residences of the Bălăceni boyars (17th-18th centuries)

generous gazebo (8.10 meters long and 6.20 meters wide). The Bălăceni houses were surrounded by a wall of boulders and bricks (V. Drăghiceanu, 1909), measuring in the places where it is still preserved, approximately six meters in height, being provided with ramparts and rectangular buttresses, which were added later (M. Oproiu, 1970).

The perimeter of the enclosure has the shape of an irregular rectangle, with a length of approximately 140 meters and a width of approximately 115 meters (V. Drăghiceanu, 1909), having the entrance in the southern part, where traces of the gates can still be distinguished (fig. 10).

The house also had other annexes or “dichise”, as *vel ban* Cornea Brăiloiu briefly described them, in the deed of sale, to Constantin Brâncoveanu, dated May 1, 1702, which were enlarged and reconfigured by the lord, by building other annexes on the western side of the enclosure walls (barns, stables, servants’ quarters) (M. Oproiu, 1970).



Fig. 10 - The plan of the Brâncoveanu' princely courts in Doicești (after M. Oproiu, 1970)

In 1910, Virgil Drăghiceanu presented in a short communication the discovery, among the ruins of some walls belonging to a former tenant of the Doicești estate, of some columns of the open porch of the Brâncovenesti houses, from Doicești, noting their refined ornamentation but also the capitals, which decorate “on each side an s-shaped leaf ornament, and at the corners the classic crochets “ (V. Drăghiceanu, 1910, p. 48).

After the assassination of Constantin Brâncoveanu, the princes, Ștefan Cantacuzino (1714-1716), by the deed issued on July 3, 1714 and Nicolae Mavrocordat (1716, 1719-1730),

Claudiu Drăghici

by the deed issued on March 10, 1716, returned to the Bălăceanu family the domain taken abusively by the former lord, Drăghici (III) Bălăceanu and his grandchildren, Hrizea and Pătrașcu (II), paying the price that the former lord had given to *vel ban* Cornea Brăiloiu for the Bălăceni estate.

The widow of Constantin Brâncoveanu, Marica Brâncoveanu, returned from exile, in 1716, took over the villages that belonged to the Bălăceanu, but Nicolae Mavrocordat, in his second reign, through the acts of December 19, 1723, January 20, 1724 and April 24, 1730, returned to the *vel pitar* Drăghici (III) Bălăcenu the villages of Doicești and Bărbătești. ([Șt. D. Grecianu, 1913](#)). The aforementioned documents also mention the houses on those estates, which means that the Bălăceni also took over the princely courts resulting from the modification and expansion of the boyar court of Drăghici (III) Bălăceanu.

The sons of Matei (I), Pătrașcu (II), and Hrizea, sold, by two deeds, dated May 25 and 26, 1732, to *serdar* Mihai Bărbătescu their share of the Doicești and Bărbătești estates, with the houses, vineyards, mills, streams, the mill, with the price of 165 thalers previously bought back from the reign, with 1000 thalers, of which 250 thalers were given by the two brothers, and the rest of the amount, their uncle, Drăghici (III) Bălăceanu ([Șt. D. Grecianu, 1913](#)).

Catrina Bălăceanu, the wife of Drăghici (III) Bălăceanu, would also, after her husband's death, alienated her part of the Doicești domain together with the Brâncoveanu houses, as we learn from the act concluded before Metropolitan Ștefan II, on February 1st, 1734, by which the *postelnic* Constantin, the son of the *vel sluger* Asan (Hasan), the son-in-law of Drăghici (III) Bălăceanu, sold to *serdar* Mihai Bărbătescu for 752 thalers, the parts he owned from the estates Doicești and Bărbătești, which he had received from Catrina and from her grandson, Constantin (II) Bălăceanu ([Șt. D. Grecianu, 1913](#)).

Constantin Asan handed over to *serdar* Barbătescu the documents issued by Ștefan Cantacuzino and Nicolae Mavrocordat, by which they had returned the mentioned estates to Drăghici (III) Bălăceanu, as well as the deed of assignment of these parts of the estates, dated June 1, 1733, signed by Catrina and Constantin (II) Bălăceanu, to pay an older debt, which her late husband had towards the *postelnic* Constantin Asan ([Șt. D. Grecianu, 1913](#)).

Due to the material shortages that Catrina Bălăceanu had after the death of her husband, along with the estates she also sold the Brâncoveanu houses, but these, like the entire domain of the Doicești family, were in a rather advanced state of decay, the reason being „*dintru întâmplarea vremilor și din neputința noastră*” (“*from the fate of the times and from our*

Several rural residences of the Bălăceni boyars (17th-18th centuries)

helplessness”), as she herself testified in the act of June 1st, 1733 (Șt. D. Grecianu, 1913, p. 188).

Even the *postelnic* Constantin Asan, who was selling the estate received from Catrina Bălăceanu to *serdar* Mihai Bălăceanu, mentioned the state of degradation of the estate, „*casele, viile și nămeștiile fiind stricate și părăginite*” (“*the houses, vineyards and farms being damaged and desolate*”) (Șt. D. Grecianu, 1913, p. 188).

Serdar Mihai Bărbătescu, who had bought in 1732 the parts owned by Hrizea and Pătrașcu (II) Bălăceanu from the Doicești and Bărbătești estates, by buying the part formerly owned by Drăghici (III) became the owner of the entire domain of Doicești, but he built other bigger houses (20 meters long and 18 meters wide) discovered by Virgil Drăghiceanu, who carried out research at the Brâncoveanu courts in Doicești (V. Drăghiceanu, 1909).

The inscription, in Cyrillic letters “*MB mare comis, May, 13, 1737*”, discovered in the yard of a former tenant of the Doicești estate on a stone and erroneously translated by Virgil Drăghiceanu, the initials M.B. being attributed by the renowned archaeologist to Manolache Brâncoveanu (V. Drăghiceanu, 1909, p. 110) is clear proof that Mihai Bărbătescu, the one who bought in 1732 and 1734 the parts owned by Bălăceni from the former domain of Doicești, finding the Brâncovești houses “*damaged and derelict*” made others, outside the walls of the former princely residence and Bălăcenești (M. Oproiu, 1970).

The boyar courts of Lipia. On December 1, 1695 Drăghici (III) Bălăceanu received through the dowry of his wife, Catrina Lipianu, the houses in Lipia, Argeș County, belonging to her father, “*with the yard and all the gardens*” (C.B.-Stolnici, 1990, p. 99). We believe that Drăghici (III) lived here, especially since in 1699 he alienated his houses in Doicești, selling them to his brother, Barbu (II). Even Constantin Brâncoveanu, in the royal letter of confirmation of several estates, bought or inherited by Drăghici (III) Bălăceanu, from March 29, 1713, testified that his house was in Lipia*****.

We do not know how these houses will have looked, but being the home of the Lipien family, they were, of course, modest houses, of small country nobles. It is possible that Drăghici (III) Bălăcianu reconfigured and enlarged them, adding other annexes. We do not know how long Drăghici (III) Bălăceanu lived in those houses.

The boyar courts of Tătăraștii de Sus. In the village of Tătăraști Hrizea Bălăceanu, the son of *vătaf de aprozi*, Matei (I) Bălăceanu owned two estates, about which we learn from an *anaphora* addressed to the lord Alexandru Ipsilanti (1774-1782, 1796-1797), on May 8, 1777,

about the four boyars charged with judging the cause between the Hrizea's son, the *șetrar* Ioniță Bălăceanu*****.

He owned one of the estates before 1758, when he abusively bought, using his right of protimisis, the estate of the peasants in Tătăraști, from a certain Radu Bădălan from the village of Râca, to whom the peasants had pledged the estate, for a debt of 42 thalers. Even though after analyzing the evidence presented by the peasants, the lord decided that they should receive their estate back, returning to Ioniță Bălăceanu the money that his father had given for it, Hrizea Bălăceanu's other estate remained in the possession of the second wife of Hrizea, Zoica.

Although Ștefan Grecianu, not knowing Zoica's place in the Bălăceni genealogy, placed her among the disaffected Bălăceni ([Șt. Grecianu, 1913](#)), and the art critic Rada Teodoru considered her Hrizea's sister ([C. Bălăceanu-Stolnici, 1995](#)), the late scientist Constantin Bălăceanu-Stolnici considered her as the second wife of Hrizea Bălăceanu. He also expressed his opinion that the one who started the construction of the monumental fortified courtyards at Tătăraștii de Sus was Hrizea, so that later Zoica, remarrying a rich Greek, Anghelache Amiraș, would finish them ([C. Bălăceanu-Stolnici, 1990](#)). As far as we are concerned, we share the opinion of the late Academician Constantin Bălăceanu-Stolnici, regarding the founder of the ensemble, considering that Hrizea Bălăceanu, although he fulfilled the duties of *postelnic* and *pitar* ([Șt. D. Grecianu, 1913](#)), did not have the necessary funds to be able to finish an architectural ensemble on the same scale as the one from Tătăraști.

It is possible that he only started the construction of the monumental courtyards, but he certainly could not complete them.

The one who must be considered as the founder of the ensemble, being buried right inside the small enclosure, where the church was built around 1816-1817, was Anghelache Amiras, whose tomb was discovered by the archaeologist Virgil Drăghiceanu, in the church from the small enclosure ([V. Drăghiceanu, 1914](#)). The boyar court from Tătăraștii de Sus subordinates all its other functions, such as representation or residence, to defensive needs ([A. Brătuleanu, 1997](#)).

With the help of a topographic plan, made by engineer Laurențiu Popescu ([fig. 11](#)), but following field investigations, we can describe this architectural complex.

Spread over an area of 5875, 26 m², according to the land register, the enclosure, surrounded today, in the gaps in the wall, with a board and net fence, is composed of two fortified courtyards, unequal in surface. The large courtyard extends over an area of

Several rural residences of the Bălăceni boyars (17th-18th centuries)

approximately 3774 m², having a square shape, being once surrounded by brick walls, preserved today only in fragments. The entrance wall has a bell tower, placed above some massive gates, which were once provided with a barricade system. The tower, today in ruins, stood on 3 levels (fig. 12).

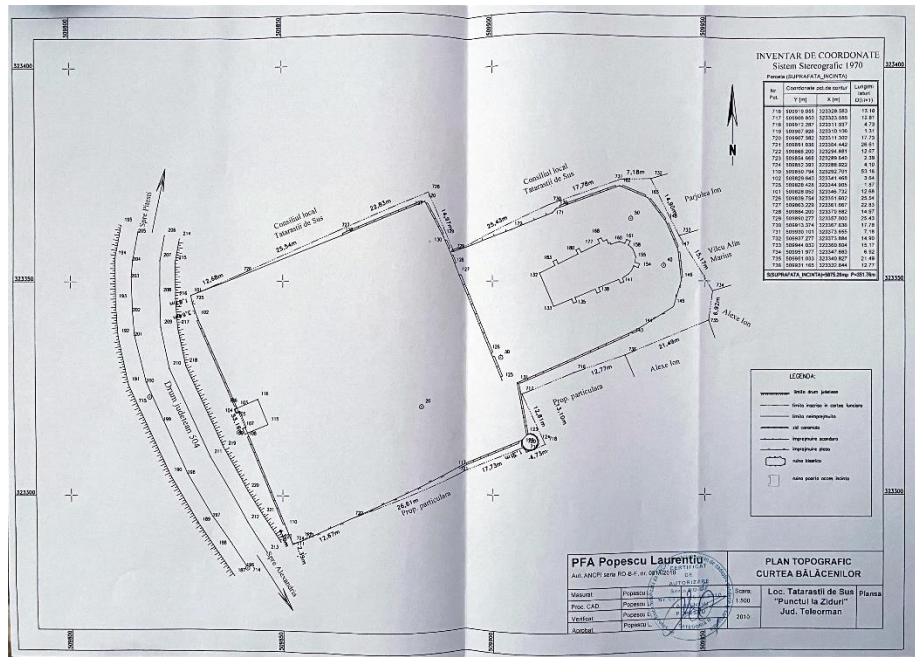


Fig. 11 - The boyar court in Tătăraști de Sus-Topographical plan (ing. cad. [L. Popescu](#))

On the second level, traces of the gabled roof of an observation balcony, made of wood, can still be seen on the plaster. You can also see the traces of the wooden stairs printed in the masonry, on which you could go up to the floor of the tower. The walls were provided in the corners with four cylindrical towers, finished with ramparts, of which today only the tower on the southeast side is preserved, the other three being observed only at the level of the foundations. The buildings of the house were arranged on the southern side, today only the ruins of the cellar remain, which had a cradle-shaped vault. On the north side there were other annexes, probably the stables and storehouses, traces of some brick walls can still be observed, one of them dividing this respective building, and the second being the outer wall, from the north side of the enclosure wall.

The kitchen was positioned near the northeast wall. Three gates were arranged on the eastern wall of the large courtyard, two of them communicating with the exterior, and a third,

Claudiu Drăghici

centrally positioned, communicating with the smaller courtyard. The smallest courtyard has a polygonal shape, a size of approximately 1628 m², being also surrounded by brick walls,



Fig.12 - The boyar court in Tătăraști de Sus-the central tower, view from inside the court.



Fig. 13 - The boyar court in Tătăraștii de Sus-chapel church view from the southeast side

partially preserved today, on the northeast, east and south sides. The east wall was reinforced inwards with twelve buttresses. A three-room brick building, the foundations of which can still be seen, was located on the southwest side. The church is preserved at the level of the enclosure

Several rural residences of the Bălăceni boyars (17th-18th centuries)

walls, having a rectangular plan, with a semicircular apse (fig. 13). In addition to the three classical compartments (altar, naos, pronaos), it had an open porch with semicircular arches,

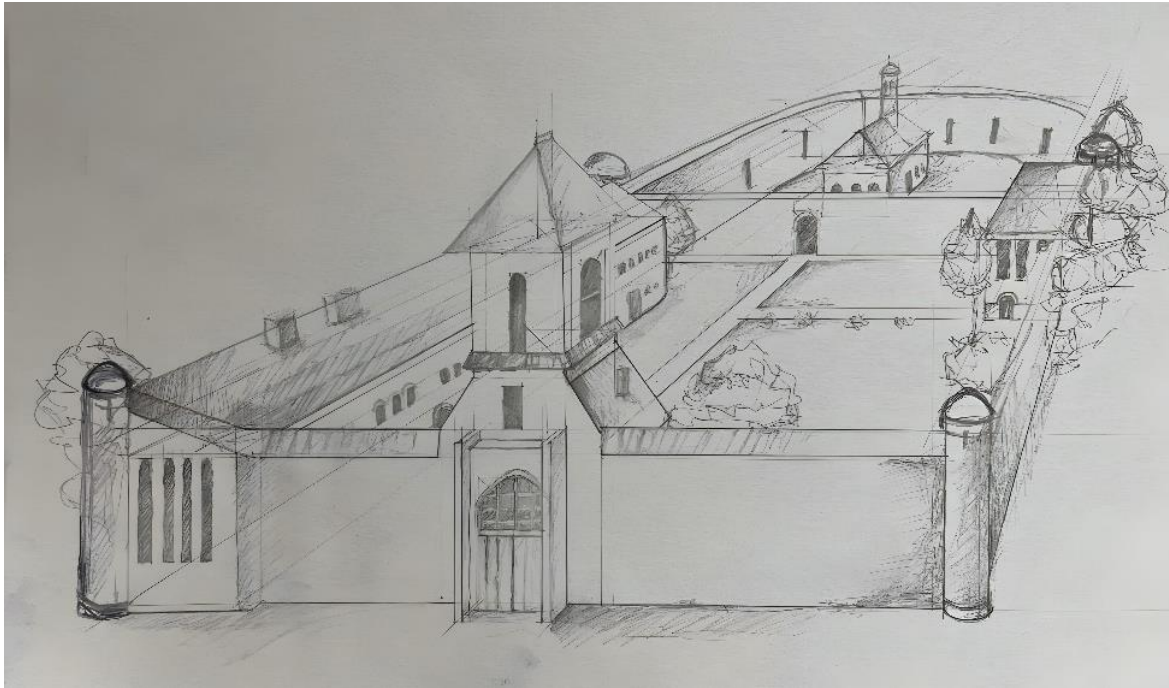


Fig. 14 - The boyar court in Tătăraștii de Sus-probable reconstruction (Arh. [G. A. Andrei](#))

and the arches that made the transition from the pronaos to the naos, like those of the masonry catapetesma, were closed with a broken arch. There are still two wall frescoes, quite damaged, on the right and left walls of the entrance to the nave. The church probably had a steeple, raised above the nave. A buttress was later added between the porch and the nave, which was built over the girdle of the church plinth. The tombstone of the founder, mentioned by Virgil Drăghiceanu, no longer exists in the pronaos, having probably been moved or destroyed. The church had the role of a chapel of the courts but also a necropolis for Anghelache Amiras, whose tomb we believe was contained in the pronaos of the place of worship, most likely built around 1816-1817.

The state of decay of the boyar courts has two major causes. The first would be the disinterest that the *vel logofăt* Ștefan Belu, designated as epitropa of the church and administrator of the ensemble, by Zoica Bălăceanu, showed towards the boyar courts, which, although they were the reason for a trial with Zoica's descendants, remained in his possession. ([Șt. D. Grecianu, 1913](#)).

Claudiu Drăghici

A second cause would be the very strong earthquakes, such as those of 1802, 1838, 1940 and 1977, which led to the ruin of the buildings, the church and the surrounding walls, which were originally plastered with mortar. It can still be seen on certain portions of the masonry.

Archaeological research was carried out at Tătăraștii de Sus, for just a few weeks, in July 2006, by a team of archaeologists coordinated by Daniela Mihai, the scientific director of the National Heritage Institute, with the aim of obtaining archaeological data necessary for a later restoration project, which unfortunately never took place.

The results of the rather brief research were later published in *the Bulletin of the Historical Monuments Commission* (D. Mihai et al., 2008).

With the support of an architect specialized in the reconstruction of historical buildings, we can present a probable sketch of the architectural ensemble, at the time of its completion (fig. 14), taking into account our observations, the results of the archaeological research from the summer of 2006, but also the topographical plan of the architectural ensemble from Tătăraștii de Sus.

Eroded over time but also due to the carelessness of the state institutions, charged with the preservation of historical monuments, the Bălăceni buildings are today in an advanced state of decay, which requires urgent intervention to preserve and restore them, because, in the event of a major earthquake, their ruins they will surely collapse. New archaeological research is also required, which can clarify certain problems, related to the functionality of the interior spaces, but also to the form these architectural ensembles would have had, at the time of their construction.

In Teleorman County today, there are only a few ruins of some boyar courts, unfortunately all of them are in an advanced stage of decay, and the Bălăceni courts from Bălaci and Tătăraștii de Sus can benefit from a restoration project, which would put them in value, given their importance to local history.

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The submitted manuscript should be arranged as follow: (1) title, (2) author's names, (3) author's affiliations, (4) abstract, (5) keywords, (6) manuscript, (7) references, (8) figure captions, (9) figures, (10) tables.

Title: This should be short, specific and informative and be written in Time New Roman, size 13, in bold and centered.

Authors: Write the full name(s) of author(s) in TNR, size 12, font italic, centred below the title.

Affiliation: Write the affiliation(s), complete postal address and e-mail address in TNR, size 10, justify, below the author's name.

Abstract: It contains between 300 – 500 words and should not contain abbreviations or reference citations. The abstract should be brief and objective, and represent a summary of the paper that includes the methods used, the main results and conclusions. It should be written in TNR size 10 and the word “abstract” has to be in bold, as well as the translation of the title.

Key words: Five to six keywords should be given below the abstract. When there is a second abstract the key word will be translated also in the language of this abstract.

Main text:

1. Follow the structure shown below for the headings:

-First level (Bold capital and lower case, left)

-Second level (Bold capital and lower case, left)

-Third level (Bold italic, capital and lower case, left)

2. Italics should be used for terms or abbreviations in other languages “et al.”, et collab, “etc”.

3. Measure units must be represented by their symbol in the International System of Units.

4. Chemical and isotopic analyses as well as radiometric and paleontological dating must be referred to sampling locality and include coordinates.

5. References cited:

a) References are cited in the text by the initial of the author, last name of the author and the year (M. Otte, 1995). In the case of a citation of a paragraph, this will be put in quotation and the page will be cited (M. Otte, 1995, p.56-57)

b) If the authors' name is part of the sentence, only the year is bracketed: “M. Otte (1995) determined...”

c) For references with two authors use the initial followed by their names and the year, (M. Otte, P. Noiret, 2004) and for those with three or more authors, use the last name of first author followed by “et al” (M. Otte et al., 2006).

d) References cited should be arranged chronologically; use a, b, c, etc. for references to one author in the same year. Separate with coma the references to same author and with semicolon the references to different authors: (M. Carciumaru, 2002 a; M. Carciumaru, 2002 b; M. Anghelinu, 2005).

Printing norms

References

1. The title "References" will be written in TNR, size 11, bold, centered, upper case.
2. Include only references cited in the text, figures, captions, and tables.
3. Arrange the references alphabetically by first author and then alphabetically by second author. If more than one reference of the same author(s) is included, arrange them chronologically.
4. For references with more than two authors, list alphabetically by first author and then chronologically.
5. Do not abbreviate journal titles or publisher names
6. For the most common cases, follow the examples:
 - a) Papers in periodical journals
Last name(s), Initial(s), Year, Article title (italic font), Journal title, volume, pages.
Demars P.-Y., 2008, *Paleogeographie de l'Europe dans la premiere partie du Paleolithique superieur – Premiers travaux*, Annales d'Université Valahia, Targoviste, Section d'Archeologie et d'Histoire, Tome X, Numero 1, p. 29-45.
 - b) Books
Last name(s), Initial(s), year, Book title (Italic, bold), Publisher, City of publication, no. of pages, no of figures, tables, ISBN
Carciumaru M., Anghelinu M., Nitu E.-C., Cosac M., Muratoreanu G., 2007, ***Geo-Archeologie du Paleolithique moyen, Paleolithique superior, Epipaleolitique et Mesolithique en Roumanie***, Editura Cetatea de Scaun, Targoviste, 187 p., 48 fig., ISBN 978-973-8966-38-3
 - c) Chapters in books
Last name(s), Initial(s), year, Chapter title (in Italic), in Last names(s), Initial(s) (ed(s).), Book title (Italic, bold), Publisher, City of publication, No. pages and figure, ISBN, chapter pages.
Carciumaru M., 1978, *Studiul paleoclimatic si geocronologic asupra unor statii paleolitice din Banat*, in Florea Mogosanu, ***Paleoliticul din Banat***, Editura Academiei Romane, Bucuresti, 152 p., 53 fig., p. 83-101.
 - d) Proceedings from symposia and conferences
Last name(s), Initial(s), Year, Title (Italic), in Symposia/conference name (Italic, bold), Publisher (Italic), City of publication, ISBN, pages.
Carciumaru M., 1994, *Paleoenvironnement et chronostratigraphie du Paleolithique moyen et superior en Roumanie, Paleoeologie et*

geochronologie des industries du Paleolithique superieur ancien de la Roumanie, in ***El Cuadro geochonologico del Paleolítico superior inicial***, Museo y Centro de Investigacion Altamira. Monografías, No.13, ISBN 84-8181-024-X, p. 15-23.

e) Unpublished thesis or reports

Last name(s), Initial(s), Year, Title, University, company, etc, City, Type of work, pages.

Geneste J-M., 1985, *Analyse lithique d'industrie moustériennes du Perigord: une approche technologiques du comportement des groupes humains au Paleolithique Moyen*, These presentee a L'Universite de Bordeaux I pour lobtention du titre de Docteur, Universite de Bordeaux I, 577 p.

f) Maps

Author(s), Initial(s), Year, Type, Title and map number, scale, Publisher, City of publication, Map series, number of sheets.

Patrulus D., Dimitrescu R., Dessila-Codarcea M., Gherasi N., Popescu I., Popa E., Bandrabur T., 1968, *Harta geologica, Scara 1:200.000*, Brasov, Comitetul de Stat al Geologiei, Institutul Geologic, Bucuresti, 68p

Figure captions

A list of figure captions should be supplied on a separate sheet(s), numbered consecutively and included after the list of references.

The captions should include the figure number and a figure description. The description should be precise and contain the explanation of all symbols and abbreviations used.

Figures

Each figure (maps, graphs, photographs) must be submitted on a separate sheet, be clearly identified with figure number and first author name.

Submit figures as close to the final size as possible.

Lettering should be between 8 and 12 points type size. Use graphic scale and include units of measure.

Maps must indicate the North, have at least two coordinate data on each axis, and have a graphic scale. Localities mentioned in text, should be included in maps.

Good, clear contrast black and white photographs are acceptable. The color photographs are accepted with restrictions (ask about this the

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editor managers). All the photographs should show the object of interest in an adequate size.

References to figures in the text should appear as Figure 1.

Tables

Tables should be submitted on separate sheets, numbered consecutively, and be identified by author's names.

1. Size of the tables should be of 21X29 cm.
2. References to tables in text should appear as Table 1.

The manuscript should be submitted to be published in a complete format and it has to fulfill the format specifications of the journal.

The Editor has the right of returning the manuscripts to the authors for further corrections.

If the manuscript will be returned to the authors twice, its publication will be postponed for a further volume of the journal.

If the manuscript will be returned three times the paper will be rejected for the publication in this journal.