

ON THE SECRETS OF THE DACIAN FRUIT BOWL

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DIN SECRETELE FRUCTIEREI DACICE

REZUMAT: În anul 2010 a fost cercetat integral complexul C28, o locuință dacică patrulateră. În inventarul acesteia a fost descoperită o fructieră dacică întregibilă, modelată la roată, cu buza ornamentată cu linii lustruite oblice. Buza s-a păstrat pe alocuri fisurată longitudinal, pe jumătatea grosimii acesteia. Astfel s-au putut observa detalii ale confecționării acesteia. Lutul din partea superioară a buzei a fost aplicat peste partea inferioară după ce în prealabil aceasta a fost crestată pentru o aderență mai bună. Un fragment de fructieră cu tehnică de realizare asemănătoare, a fost descoperit în anul 2013, în același sit, doar că în periegează pe versantul nordic. Acesta confirmă faptul că această tehnică era relativ răspândită în sec. I î.Chr., cel puțin la Șimleu Silvaniei.

CUVINTE-CHEIE: Șimleul Silvaniei, Uliu cel Mic, tezaur dacice, fructieră, atelier

ABSTRACT: Known in the historical literature, due to the discovery of a silver Dacian jewelry and Roman coin hoard, the point called Uliul cel Mic is situated to the western part on the superior plateau of Măgura Șimleului hill, placed on the northern part of Șimleu Silvaniei town. After certain field researches made at the beginning of the year 2003, it

was discovered a very rich Dacian special materials (made by iron, bronze, silver).

The beginning of a sistematical research plan of the complex situated on the Măgura Șimleului Hill-Uliul cel Mic, in 2007, solve the chronological problems and the character of the site. Campaigns (2007–2011) aimed the northern sector of the hill where we discovered the rest of a Dacian metallurgical workshop.

During 2010 the entire complex C28 was investigated, a quadrangular Dacian dwelling. In its inventory, an entire Dacian fruit bowl was discovered, wheel modeled with polished rim decorated with oblique lines. The edge was kept in places cracked longitudinally in half its thickness. Thus, it was possible to see the details of its manufacture. The clay from the top of the edge was applied over the bottom after it has been pre-slit for better grip. A piece of fruit bowl with similar technical achievement, was discovered in 2013 at the same site, only on field reserach, on the northern slope. This confirms that this technique was relatively widespread during the 1st century at Șimleu Silvaniei.

KEYWORDS: Șimleul Silvaniei, Uliu cel Mic, Dacian hoards, fruit bowls, workshop

In 1951, Zoltan Szekely published his studies about a collection of Dacian archaeological materials, from the Sfântu Gheorghe Museum's inventory, under a generic title (*Tezaurul dacic de la Șimleul Silvaniei*), these objects – of great historical-archaeological significance, however, didn't reveal much about the nature of the discovery¹. The book provides conflicting information, probably due to the difficulties the well-reputed researcher encountered by having a written dialogue with the original discoverer of the published material. The purpose of these discussions, between Z. Szekely and Iosif Bede (mentioned as I.B.), the original discoverer, was to shed light on the conditions and context of these finds. The absence of

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¹ Szekely, 1951

professional knowledge from the latter, however, caused inaccuracies in the initial study, which in turn led to confusion in the specialty literature.

In the first sentence the year of discovery is specified (1948) after which it is reported that a student found numerous silver bracelets (5, one of which were in fragments) and coins (16 denarii), a bronze bracelet, a silver *torques*, 7 fragments of a silver necklace, 3 bronze fibulae, weapons and tools made out of iron, fragmented ceramics, spindles and 2 clay beads. In the same context there are 17 silver denarii mentioned. The final count of objects Z. Szekely worked with during this study is: 33 coins, wheel modeled Dacian pottery (17 fragments), hand modeled Dacian pottery (25 fragments), iron weapons (2 spear heads), a harness, a bridle chain, tools, utensils (23 pieces) from which 7 spindles, 2 so-called pottery modeling tools, 3 sharpening stones, a flint blade, an iron spit, 3 knives, a brace, 2 pieces of bronze sheets, 3 undistinguishable objects, 2 glass beads, bronze jewelry (3 fibulae, a ring, a bracelet, a bar), silver jewelry (5 bracelets, a *torques*, 7 fragments of a necklace)².

Of particular importance is the spatial and contextual information which the author provides, coming from the owner of the land and the late I.B. We are thus informed that the location of the discovery is “located east of Șimleul Silvaniei, at a distance of ½ km on one of the peaks of *Măgura* (*Munte de Frasin-Korishegy*). This ground, until 1946 a forest, was covered with trees. In 1946, when locals started vineyard cultivation with water drainage, some graves in mounds of round and oval shape have been found. When the mounds were uncovered the aforementioned objects were found at the depth of 1–1.5m in the rounded tombs and 2–2.5m in the oval ones. At one burial the bottom hasn’t been found even at 3m depth. The bracelets were uncovered in two round mounds, in one of them the bracelets being situated near the lower part of a large pot, containing human bones and charcoal. The coins (16 pieces) were in a small cup, in a large pot near which human bones and a bronze bracelet have been found. The rest, 17 coins and a fibula were in the other round mound, in a pot; on a fragment of pottery human bones have been found. The other fragments of ceramics³ were found around the graves. Even though osteological analysis didn’t take place (what happened to the calcinated bones is unspecified), we are well informed of the funerary complexes, although their inventory doesn’t necessarily point to such an interpretation. Moreover, the author of the discovery, after a brief introduction to the professional literature, identifies a series of complexes disturbed by him with overlapping graves of burial mounds, misinforming the author of the study about the so-called hoard.

From the total of 50 coins I.B. found on the spot, only 33 were sold to the Sf. Gheorghe Museum, their dating being irrelevant to the dating of the other objects found underground. The discovery of three other coins⁴, found later in the soil, disturbed by vineyard cultivation, didn’t change the established date⁵ proposed by Z.Szekely, II B.C- I A.D. It is not certain, however, that the other coins, which found way to other museum’s collections, are dated from later.

The first systematic excavations at the location of the original discoveries were made on the initiative of the Institute of History and Philosophy of R.P.R. Academy in July of 1949 following information received from Z. Szekely after he had acquired the pieces. The head of the project (Marius Moga) correctly located the spot (with the help of I.B., the original discoverer), without mentioning his name in the archaeological journal. In the copies of the original documentation of the dig site, which we acquired with the help of the late Florin Medeleț, M.Moga mentioned 1945 as the year of discovery, most of the objects from the site having been sold by then to the Sf.Gheorghe museum for the total sum of 20.000 lei.

A part of the pottery, which has been found by chance, was in the possession of various locals. The surveys conducted by the research team took place close to I.B.’s vineyard, covering 90 m. No archaeological

² Pop 2008, p. 71–79. Giving my thanks to the management of Muzeul Secuiesc from Sfântu Gheorghe, for setting to my disposal photo material on the finds from Șimleu Silvaniei.

³ Szekely, 1951, p. 43–44

⁴ Matei, 1979, p. 18, 29

⁵ Sășianu, 1980, p. 168–170

complex has been found, only fragmented Dacian ceramics. The rain, washing down the mud from the vineyard, helped the archaeologists realize that in fact on that spot “no proper settlement existed, but a single home and near it two cremation burials and two pits from which the material”, now at the Muzeul Secuiesc, was extracted from.

On a list from the same archaeological documentation, M.Moga describes 22 objects acquisitioned from I.B. (9 containers and bits of ceramics, 3 spindles, a cute, the upper part of an iron sickle, the lower part of an arrowhead, a spur or buckle, an unidentifiable object, both made out of iron, a *meta* broken in two, 3 roman denarii, 2 released in 90 B.C, one in 67 B.C). Furthermore, the list contains pottery collected during the systematic surveys, and an iron chisel found with bone fragments nearby, not specifying whether they were burned or not. The pieces seemingly are in the possession of the National History Museum of Transylvania, under inventory numbers V.21.601 – V.21.746. The coins are missing, but there are two knives and some Dacian pottery, numbering 145 pieces in total.

Later, with the publishing of the results obtained in relation to the problems of *Studiul graniței de Vest a Daciei și al traiului populației daco-romane și barbare*, M.Moga states that “we are not in front of a settlement, but only an isolated dwelling surrounded by two graves and two pits⁶”.

D. Protase contemplated in his first monograph dedicated to the funeral rites of Dacians and Daco-Romans, M.Moga “he doesn’t speak of burial mound, unlike Szekely, even though it could be named under the generic term of *grave*. He makes a clear distinction between the *two graves* and *two pits* found near a dwelling. Without lingering on the contradictory and unclear information given by the two researchers, we find that, unfortunately, today we can’t even tell the exact number of graves discovered on *Măgura* (two?), or their type (both sepulchral mound and burial mound, or only burial mound, or only pits) nor the distribution of items by graves, etc. The situation at Șimleul Silvaniei is very unclear, that is why there is a need for new excavations and precise observations at this archaeological complex.⁷”

New excavations took place only in the year 1978, when the County Museum of History and Art from Zalău (M.J.I.A.Z.) conducted six verification surveys (by the late Al. V. Matei), in the space renamed to *Kiskeselyu-Uliul cel Mic*. Previously (1975) with the occasion of an archaeological surface survey undertaken at *Măgura Șimleului*, the discoverer of the hoard, publicized by Z. Szekely, was identified, whom pointed the researchers to the exact spot of the find. Publishing the results of his surveys and discussions with Iosif Bede immediately, Al.V. Matei underlined, complicating the situation unwittingly, that „some of the objects transferred to Sf. Gheorghe were uncovered at shallow depth, approximatively 0.2 to 0.25 m, and the rest of the material was found in the approx. 5–7 pits identified and emptied which were discovered when the terrain was regulated. The Dacian silver ornaments haven’t been found in one place, but separately, not forming a proper hoard. The Roman coins, approx. 50 pieces, were collected in springtime, from the surface after constant raining washed the mud off them, hence they were easily spotted⁸”.

In 1975 M.J.I.A.Z purchased several pieces discovered by I.B. in the same area. Namely a whole cup worked with handle, two heavily shaped fibulas⁹, a cute, (rod?), and numerous Dacian pottery shaped with hand or by wheel.

Excavations by six research sections (Fig. 1) were conducted in 1978, leading to the discovery of complexes. The author of the research states that „[...] have been discovered, relatively clustered, 4 holes, unburned, with a circular diameter of approx. 0.4 m to 0.6 m, going to a depth of 0.6–0.8 m, penetrating approx. 0.2–0.3 m into the local rock. Found in these pits were fragments of Dacian ceramics modeled with wheel and by hand, numerous animal bones, and a few burned human bones, relocated towards the

⁶ Moga, 1950, p. 131–135

⁷ Protase, 1971, p. 48–49

⁸ Matei, 1979, p. 17

⁹ Rustoiu, 1997, p. 111

bottom of the pit. We consider these pits to be Dacian incineration burials”¹⁰. The surveys further revealed the remains of two dwellings (?) of Dacian origin, poorly preserved due to the sharp slope of the versant (30–45° inclination) and three Roman coins, from the area where the approx. 50 coins were found in 1948. The conclusion drawn by Al. V. Matei was that “[...] at *Uliul cel Mic* on Măgura Șimleului there was a small Dacian settlement, in the same zone having found pit incineration burials. There weren’t any mound burials found in this area”.¹¹ The chronological range proposed by the author was the end of II B.C (judging from the dating of the pottery) and the end of I A.D., at the time of the Roman conquest, dating vaguely on the basis of the strongly shaped bronze fibulae. The brief publishment of the 1978 survey results and its finds, the absence of osteological analysis at the time, preserved the confusion surrounding the *Uliul cel Mic* discovery. The contradictory information provided by the pioneer of the excavations here (I.B.) made a clean scientific approach nearly impossible.

Moreover, this thought was validated during a discussion I had (in 1990) with the author of the “misinformation”, who at the time was approx. 75 years old. He sustained that the works tied to the vineyard, which made the discovery possible, had begun between the years 1945–1946, when there was still snow on the ground. He also said that soil there never freezes, because of sun exposure. At his home he still had a piece of iron, supposedly from a mill, a spindle and fragments of Dacian ceramics. He remembered how he found 5 pits, arranged in approx. two parallel rows, with a distance of approx. 2.5–3 m between them, but also the burial mound flattened by the works on the vineyard. The pits, which had the forms of cylinders, were approx. 1.2m deep penetrating approx. 0.4–0.5m into the rock. The diameter of the mouth of these complexes was below one meter (approx. 0.8m). The coins they found, were scattered in the bottom of the pit, in a thick, black soil. The holes also contained burnt bones and ashes. The pits were found between calcinated bones, in one of which I.B. discovered a whole pot, found upside down. Besides the already known museum pieces, he remembered a bronze needle 10 cm long, a bronze ring, 7–8 bronze bracelets, a ring of stone (sic!), decorated with three blue stones arranged in a circle, with a triangular shape (probably pearl from glass paste, with an eye?), approx. 7–8 fibulae made out of bronze. The coins were found in two stages, first 18 pieces, two of which were stolen, then 17, all sent to Sf. Gheorghe. The other coins, found later, were sold to a medic from Zalău (6), Baia Mare (5), 5 more spread through sale, 3 also sold to a person from Șimleu, probably from M. Moga’s team.

There are, therefore, a total of 54 silver Roman coins and with the three found during the 1978 surveys, all in all 57 pieces. I.B. didn’t sell the coins personally, the transaction being made by a nun from Șimleu. Knowing how to read and write, he conversed by letters with Z. Szekely, thus having the opportunity to learn more about history and archaeology. The payment for the museum pieces came in two installments, first 15.000, then 8.000 lei in 1948. He was convinced that similar findings could be dug up on the opposite, northern slope, unexposed to sunlight, arguing that a local peasant found silver coins there which he gave to him.

Indeed, following the surface examination conducted in recent years, the presence of Dacian pottery was proven on both sides of the hill, the northern part having two access routes. From the west, approach is possible by climbing to the westernmost point of Măgura Șimleului, following the trail and passing by another peak located in front of the discussed one. The second route is the pass connecting the hill to the rest of Măgura, 2–5 m wide. Above Uliului cel Mic there is another hill, which hasn’t got a clear way of access, where more pottery has been found, dating identically to the ones found on Uliu. So far we’re unsure about the nature of this discovery, even though it can be linked to a possible surveillance point, with the scope of watching over the territory on *Uliul cel Mic*. This spot, however, not having good visibility towards the river gorge Crasna, couldn’t have had military purpose. The steep slopes do not encourage the settling of this area, nor does the lack of a close-by water source. Moreover, contemporary Dacian settlements were

¹⁰ Matei, 1979, p. 18

¹¹ Matei 1979, p. 18

identified at the base of Măgura Șimleului and the fortified residential areas were located on the highest plateaus of Măgura, dominating the entire Depresiunea Șimleului. And yet, in the wake of new archaeological research, opinions about the nature of the site were about to take an incredible turn.

In an article preceding the resumption of archaeological research on *Uliul cel Mic*, I was questioning¹² the existence of dwellings due to the lack of clear arguments and observations regarding this aspect. A fire place, discovered in 1978, doesn't necessarily imply the presence of a home, likewise, it can mean an *ustrium*. The analysis¹³ of the batch of 127 bones discovered by Al. V. Matei in 1978, states that 15 are animal bones, 2/3s being domesticated animals, most of them, by 33.3% pigs, followed by cattle, sheep and goats with 20%, the situation being different compared to the statistics from the contemporary fortified acropolis, located on the central superior plateaus at *Observator*¹⁴, where cattle predominate.

The dating of these older finds is partially supplied by Dacian ceramics found here, which in turn are dated with the help of the unearthed fibulae from the same area. The typology established by A. Rustoiu¹⁵ includes parts discovered in Șimleul Silvaniei, at the point mentioned earlier. Its timeframe ranges from middle of I B.C. to the middle of I A.D. The middle of I B.C. marks the start of settled living in the aforementioned location, although an earlier date could be possible. Just like the coins, the fibulae found confirms the first half of I A.D. to be the final date for dwelling in the area. These three precisely shaped fibulae¹⁶, with Western characteristics, types 19 a, 19 c, according to A. Rustoiu¹⁷ are chronologically between the second half of I. B.C. and the first half of I A.D. The fourth fibula, rather belongs to the Nauheim typology, than the filiform one, having a bilateral, short handle and interior chords¹⁸, "soldier-like"-type 9a, according to A. Rustoiu's classification¹⁹. The Nauheim model's Dacian timeframe extends from the middle of I. B.C. to the start of I A.D.²⁰, in this case, perfectly reaffirming the chronological frame provided by the other pieces. The fifth fibula from *Uliul cel Mic* was published by Z. Szekely and it belongs to the type 22 b "with broken arc", bilateral short handle and interior chord. According to A. Rustoiu's analogies²¹, the piece can be dated between the end of the I B.C. and first quarter of I A.D.²², again confirming the proposed timeframe for the discussed site²³.

Ornaments of bronze and silver do not really help with dating, but the chronology provided by the fibulae completes the picture suggested by the ceramic material, contemporary with the acropolis at *Observator*²⁴, discussed earlier, which in turn ceases to exist somewhere in the first of half of I A.D.²⁵.

Starting with the year 2007 archaeological research was restarted at Șimleul Silvaniei, *Uliul cel Mic*, and continued, uninterrupted, up to 2011. The research was focused on the northern slope, which was steeper, but untouched by archaeologist's tools.

The dig sites drawn in 2007, were numbered in compliance with the ones from 1978 (VII–VIII Fig. 1). The research in 2007 led to the recovery of 28 more denarii and two Dacian silver ornaments in

¹² Pop 2002, p. 41

¹³ Analysis performed by bone specialist researcher dr. Georgeta El Susi, to whom we thank again for the provided time and results.

¹⁴ Analysis performed by bone specialist researcher dr. Georgeta El Susi.

¹⁵ Rustoiu 1997

¹⁶ One first item was published by Z. Szekely (*Szekely 1950*, 48, fig. 4/16). The same fibula has been published by V. Crișan (*Crișan 2000*, pl. 114/4), as being from Comolău, probably due to some defects linked to the archives of Muzeul Secuiesc. The other two pieces of the same kind have been published by Al.V.Matei (*Matei 1979*, pl. VI/1–2).

¹⁷ Rustoiu 1997, p. 52–53

¹⁸ Szekely 1951, p. 48, fig. 4/13

¹⁹ Rustoiu 1997, p. 42–111

²⁰ Rustoiu, 1997, p. 46

²¹ Szekely 1951, 48, fig. 4/15. Due to same causes, V. Crișan publishes this item too as being from Comolău, (*Crișan 2000*, pl. 114/1).

²² Rustoiu 1997, p. 56

²³ A resumption of the fibulas at Pop 2007, Pop 2008

²⁴ Rustoiu 1996, p. 89–128

²⁵ Pop, Bejinariu 2000, p. 243–245

close proximity of the S IV²⁶, surveyed in 1978, and on the northern slope, uninvestigated, traces of anthropogenic terraces were found which hosted Dacian metal workshops (numbered upwards to the maximum altitude of the hill). The excavation units drawn in 2008 were a continuation of the ones from 1978 and 2007 (S IX–XI) and investigated only the northern slope of the hill. The archaeological complexes likewise followed the patterns from 1978 and 2007, in 2008 having discovered 5 such facilities (waste pits, post holes and fire places). The discovered archaeological inventory contains mostly classical Dacian era pottery, especially the I. B.C. The unearthed ceramics is usually fragmented, but on the T3 terrace whole containers have been found. Generally they are hand-shaped, only about 15% was made using the wheel. The handmade pottery inventory contains (most commonly) bowls, cups and mugs. The wheel modeled ceramics, on the other hand, are of a larger variety: fruit bowls, kantharoi, mugs, jugs, bowls and cups. From a numerical point of view, however, the prevailing materials are the metallic ones (iron, bronze, lead, silver), some discovered by field research on the northern slope. The variety and big quantity (mirror fragments, peaks of silver and bronze, iron and bronze fibulae, knives, arrowheads, building materials, waste pieces of iron and bronze etc.), unusual for a Dacian settlement in the given timeframe, the unfavourable conditions for human dwelling, forms a distinct image of the character of the surveyed site. 12 denarii come from the fill of the T3 terrace scattered on the slope and anthropogenic setting. These pieces can be seen as the raw material utilized in the workshops for the crafting of the silver ornaments, or maybe monetary replicas.

The zone labeled S XI (23 × 4m, Fig. 1) was drawn on the northern slope, in the area of the pass linking the hill to the Măgura Șimleului, because of a Roman denarii found during a field survey. No traces of habitation have been found in this area. The research led to the discovery of a small hoards spread on the steep northern slope of the hill. The hoard, consisting of 20 coins (the last one found in August) is the third discovered on this site and it's the subject of this study. Regarding find of its kind from Șimleul Silvaniei's territory, this collection is the 11th discovered here.

In the year 2009–2011 the research again focused on the northern part of the hill with the scope of conducting a thorough investigation regarding the anthropogenic²⁷ terraces. Directly on top of rock a fire place was detected, without any additional facilities. The hearth (complex C27) has an approx. circular shape with a diameter of 0.6m. On the T3 terrace only pile holes have been discovered (complexes C23–26) with shallow penetration into the rock (max 0.25 m) probably part of the sheds protecting the metal workshops observed with the help of specific parts earlier. The density of the materials recovered suggests that we are probably on the western outskirts of a landscaped area inhabited in antiquity.

Furthermore, lasts, spindles, cute, miniature pots, cute, nails, clasps and a fragmented iron knife have been found. From the category of special materials remarkable is a splendid whole fibula with Neuheim characteristics made out of bronze (S XIII, T3) and a bronze ring decorated with the image of a pony. The ring is unfortunately poorly preserved, lacking a big part of its link and presenting marks of strong corrosion. Other unearthed pieces are chips, iron tools (needles, chisels, screw taps, and an arrowhead). From the special material containing pieces a resort with a bronze fibula needle (S 19, T3) stands out.

Since the resumption of research an area of 504.7 square meters was investigated, by the 26 research units, having found 28 complexes on the 4 anthropogenic terraces identified on the northern slope (Fig. 1). The first hoard has been supplemented with 28 more coins and 2 more ornaments and a new hoard has been found (hoard 10 from Șimleul Silvaniei), out of 12 coins spread out on the terraces on which metal-working activity²⁸ took place. It is increasingly apparent that we are in front of a profane discovery, more precisely a settlement of Dacian craftsmen, probably serving the tastes of the aristocracy from the fortified settlement from *Observator*, situated at an approx. 500 m distance on the superior plateaus of Măgura Șimleului. Very likely, the dwellings of the master craftsmen were located on the terrace leaning off the

²⁶ Pop 2008, fig. 67–70

²⁷ Pop et alii 2007; Pop, Pripon 2009; Pop, Marchiș 2010; Pop 2011; Pop 2012

²⁸ Pop 2008, p. 94–95

southern slope, while the working space was located on the opposite slope, the northern one, with an opening, but subjected to cold drafts.

With the continuance of the research and its resumption on the southern slope, where the actual settlement seems to have been located, it will hopefully complete the image about a unique and unusual discovery in the north-western part of pre-Roman, Dacian Transylvania.

The 11th hoard from Șimleul Silvaniei (nr. 3 from *Uliul cel Mic*) is new proof of the prosperity of the Dacians living in the Depresiunea Șimleului, benefiting from the strategic location of the fortifications established here that controlled all trade routes, probably taxing trade, specifically salt trade, leading to the prosperity of the local aristocracy.

The accumulation of tribute provided the beneficiaries with both currency to exchange and raw material for the fabrication of ornaments, enhancing their prestige. We thus explain the large count of hoards found on the territory of Șimleu and workshops always present at sites throughout the Măgura Șimleului.

During the campaign of 2010 a house (C28) and a storage pit for provisions (C29) were discovered. The house has a rounded polygonal layout with rounded corners, oriented towards approx. E- W, like the landscaped terraces. The short sides, western and eastern, have a length of 2 m. The long sides have a length of 4 m. The construction was achieved by leveling the northern slope, by a maximum depth of 0.5m. Towards the slope traces of pillars, which reinforced the roof and walls, were found. In the same zone the leveling of the ground on a width of 1 m could signify the existence of a porch, aimed towards north, of the dwelling described above. A possible annex or another room to the east has been discovered by S20 tracing. This space has the same width, but greater length, probably 5m. In the C28 sector fragmented, but also unbroken pottery has been unearthed. There is a fruit bowl (Fig. 2/2, 3/2), and a jug with a handle, decorated with polished vertical lines and in patterns. At the bottom of the complex denarius from the time of Augustus has been found. So far only one such complex can be observed on the northern slope, even far into the narrow ridge of the hill. The fruit bowl discovered on the territory of the dwelling has an elegant shape, a height of 34 cm and a mouth diameter of 40 cm. The base of the footing, with a diameter of 9.5cm, is modeled, and likely, like the rest of the bowl, polished. The conditions of conservation of gray pottery, at this point, doesn't allow the preservation of this polished slip, apart from rare cases. In the same way, the polished ornament of the fruit bowl, was conserved only on a few spots, and consists of seven polished lines, which meet at the interior and exterior of the lips, alternated with other patterns of lines (Fig 2/2b). The container was crafted at the wheel out of a fine, stainlessly burned paste, thus coming to a gray colour. Most interesting is the peeling of fragments at the core of the lip, exactly where the artisan tethered the clay when crafting the piece. The lip is 7cm wide and 2cm thick. In this particular case, the degradation of clay fragments provided insight into the process of manufacturing this object. On the fragments with the lower part of the lip peeled down, carved oblique lines (Fig. 2/2a, 3/2) can be seen, which represent lines incised on the lower part of the lip (Fig. 3/2). These details help the reconstruction of the process of fabrication of the lip of the bowl, specifically its top, which was applied only after, previously, the bottom part, in raw state, was incised so that the clay, which was to be applied, adhered better to the already formed part of the bowl itself. This technique is widespread in construction, plastering and finishing works even today.

This case could be considered isolated if during the campaign of 2013, at the same spot, other ceramics with similar characteristics wouldn't have been found. The fragment (Fig. 2/1, 3/1), likewise, belongs to the lip of a fruit bowl and was spotted by a field research on the steep western slope of the hill. The other technical characteristics are identical to the piece described earlier. Again, the lip fragment peeled at the middle. The discovered part constitutes the superior part of the lip with marks of the incision on the inferior half. Unlike the previous case, the one found in 2013 has a network of lines which assured the maximal contact between the pieces of clay applied. However, the conditions of preservation and over 2000 years manufacture, spoke and allowed us to realize detailed observations regarding the making of this emblematic Dacian dish known under the term fruit bowl. Without knowing with certainty the use of this type of

container, we can assume that it was used in table service. Vessels of this type were found in large numbers in secular contexts, probably being used in household activities. The presence of a footing compensated the lack of furniture, a table inside the house. It is possible that the smaller bowls had individual use, when serving a table. The fruit bowl was probably the collective container at the table. The observation of repeated repairs suggest that this type of vessel was an expensive one at the time. The hardship of crafting such an object is reaffirmed by the technical data, described earlier for the pottery found at Șimleu. Because of this, the high number of repairs were needed, the possessor not having the money required for the purchase of the new one.

This find from Șimleul Silvaniei, is probably not an isolated one. Exfoliation of the fragments from here allowed the observation of details presented in this study. Since this discovery falls chronologically between the middle of the centuries I B.C. and I A.D., during the period of maximum development of the classical Dacian civilization, we have serious arguments suggesting the innovative spirit and the ability to adapt to complex situations of the Dacian potters. We do not know exactly where the fruit bowls, studied here, were made, but certainly not far from the place of discovery. In any case, they are either successful ceramic experiments or exceptions to the rules of manufacturing this type of containers. Even so, following the intent to shape this elegant design with rich material composition, the master potter invented a technique designed to increase the resistance and homogeneity of the final product, provided that it was to be burned at over 850° C and then transported, sold and used frequently in the everyday life of the buyer.

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ABBREVIATIONS

c.c = collection increase

D = diameter

G = weight

MIAZ = County Museum of History and Art Zalău, Sălaj county

Nr. Inv. = inventory number



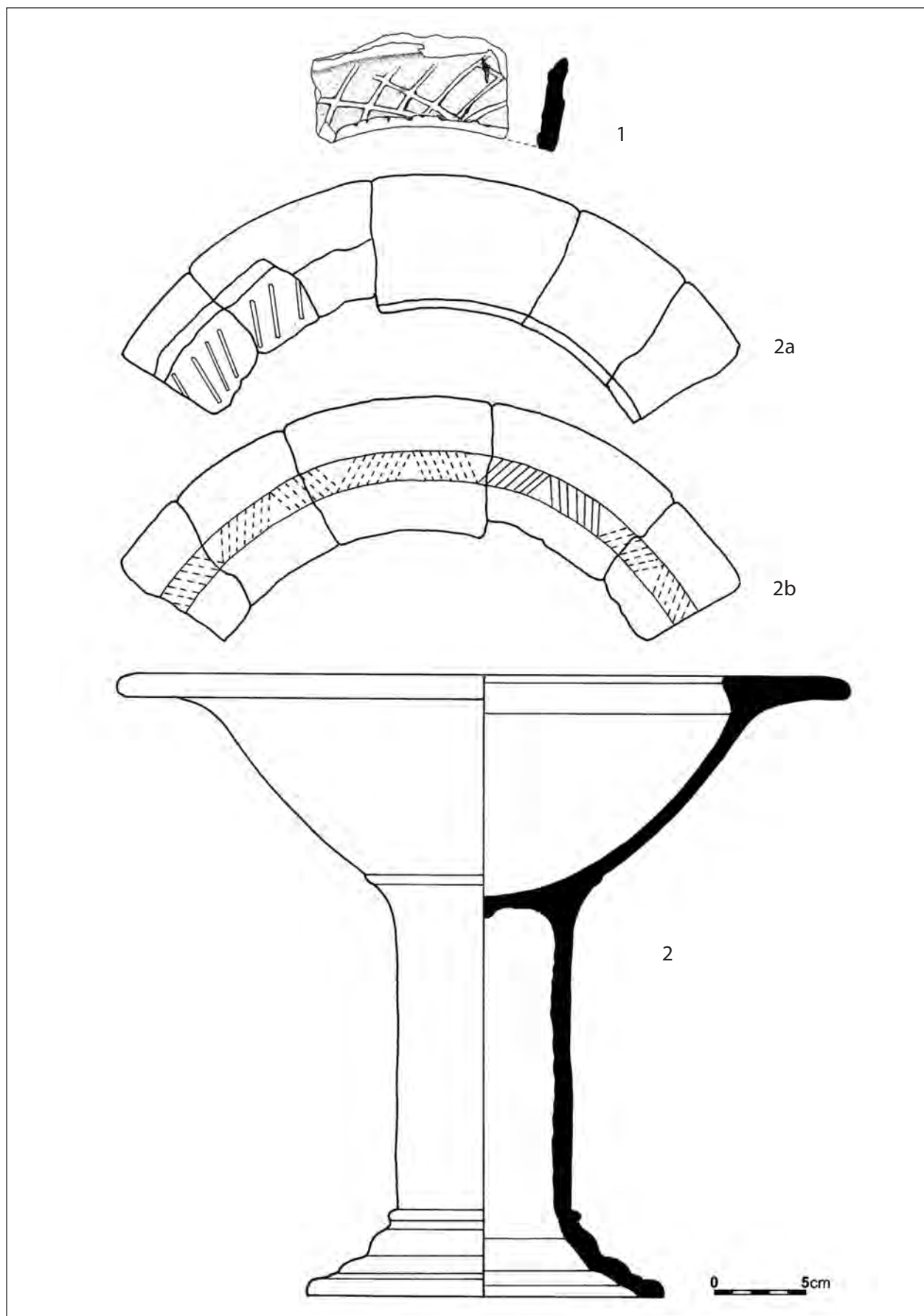


Fig. 2. 2/2. Șimleu Silvaniei-Uliul cel Mic, restorable fruit bowl found in complex C28.
Inferior part (2/2a) and superior (2/2b) of the rim.

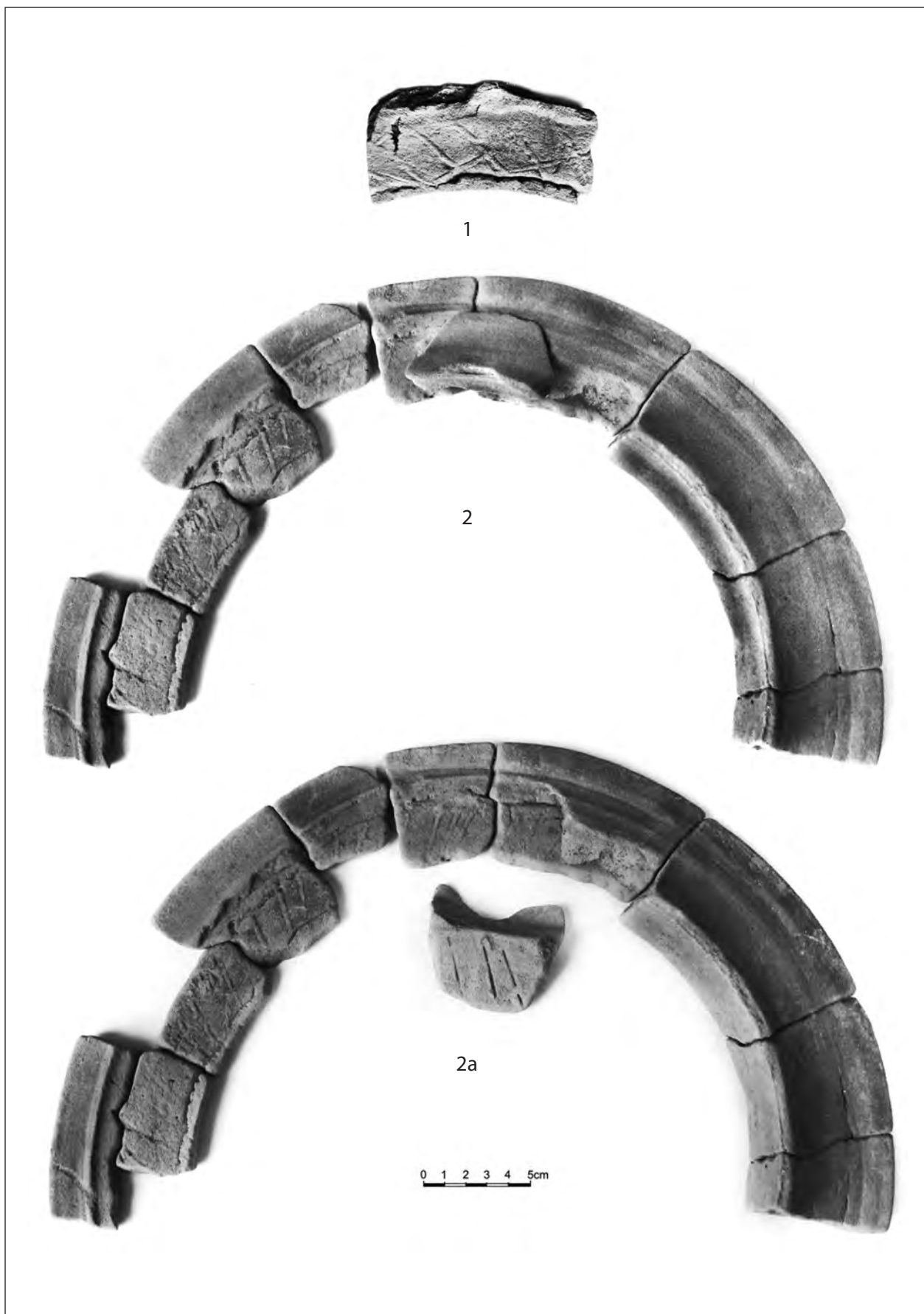


Fig. 3. 3/1. Șimleu Silvaniei-Uliul cel Mic, fruit bowl rim, inferior part 3/2 și 3/2a: Șimleu Silvaniei-Uliul cel Mic, restorable fruit bowl discovered in complex 28. The inferior part of the rim, with the incision prints.