

THE STARČEVO—CRIȘ SETTLEMENT FROM POIENEȘTI (VASLUI-COUNTY)

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Among the numerous vestiges discovered on the territory of the village Poienești there is also the Starčevo-Criș settlement in the point so-called „In the Field/At the Forge“, known the old times also under the name „Stan's Spring“¹.

The settlement, partially investigated, is situated on the middle terrace of the Stream of Houses (an affluent of Racova), to approximately 200 m from this one and it has a surface at about 300/200 m. Within this perimeter, together with the neolithic materials, remains of bastarn ceramics appear sporadically too, these ones coming from an uninvestigated settlement, which superpose in part the Starčevo-Criș settlement. From the present situation of the place, as well as from the villagers information, we have concluded that the zone has been affected by different buildings and arrangements against the erosion of the ground, situation which has affected in part the archaeological structures.

The investigation undertaken by us took place within a part delimited by the road which links the headquarters of C.A.P. Poienești with the Poienești vineyard and a ramification of this one, which goes towards the Valley of Houses. Within this zone there have been identified four surface houses and many pits. The archaeological remains appear directly under the actual humus, in general, between 0,25—0,50 m (meters), in the dark brown soil, very damp and only the pits penetrate into the gluey, yellow soil with small calcareous concretions or into the sandy yellow one, which is usually archaeologically sterile.

The discovered dwellings (Fig. 1, 2, 3, 5, 7) are surface houses of rectangular form, typical to other Starčevo-Criș settlements². No arrangements of the footbridges have been identified and no signs of post-holes have been identified either. Generally the houses are more deepened in the central part. The remains of the houses are concentrated and

¹ R. Vulpe, *Săpăturile de la Poienești din 1949, Materiale*, vol. I, București, 1953, p. 477 și 448.

² Gh. Lazarovici, *Neoliticul Banatului*, Cluj-Napoca, 1979, p. 26, fig. 1; N. Ursulescu, *Unele observații privind locuințele culturii Starčevo-Criș din Moldova, Hierasus*, VII—VIII, 1988, p. 8.



Fig. 1. Plan of dwelling nr. 1 from S I;

1 — anthropomorphic idol; 2 — flint, obsidian; 3 — axe; 4 — zoomorph idol;
5 — stone; 6 — burned stone; 7 — hearth; 8 — adobe; 9 — fragments of pottery;
10 — animals bones.

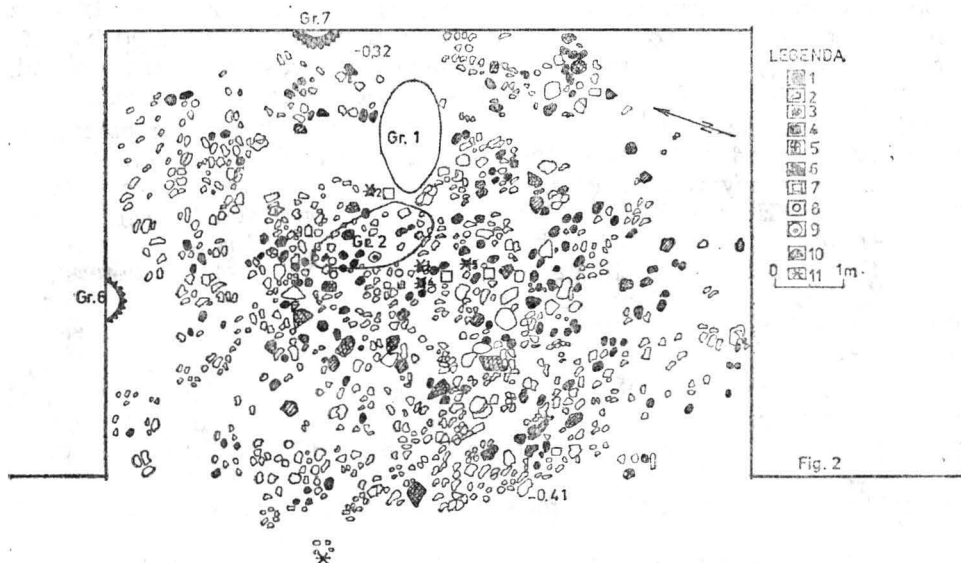


Fig. 2. Plan of dwelling nr. 2 from S II:

1 — adobe; 2 — fragments of pottery; 3 — galet; 4 — stone; 5 — animals bones;
6 — hearth; 7 — axe; 8 — fragmentary altar; 9 — firing pin; 10 — burned stone;
11 — flint, obsidian.

they consist of fragments of ceramics (some of them coming even from bowls of great dimensions), stones (especially grit stones, from which some ones are burnt), tools made of different raw materials, burnt clay and animal bones (in an advanced state of desintegration). Only in two of the investigated houses there have been discovered hearths and in both cases they are placed in the south-east part of them. The biggest hearth (1.20×1.60 m) comes from the dwelling No. 3. It had one level, it was made of small solderings with a thickness of 3—5 centimetres, placed directly on the ground. Some discovered fragments were upside down, otherwise, this situation was found in other dwellings belonging to the same culture³. Fragments of hearth solderings appear sporadically in the other two investigated houses mixed up with the remains of the archaeological materials.

The pits from Poienеști have different forms and dimensions. Usually they are found near houses or even inside them. Most pits contain a little archaeological material. The filling ground of the pits is dark brown and it is as compact as the soil the houses are in. The pits are not very deep. Among the pits discovered at Poienеști, the more interesting are those connected with the houses No. 3 and 4 (Fig. 4, 6, 7). The importance of these pits primarily consists in the fact that they prove the existence of two levels of habitation, probably between short periods of time, since there are no differences between the ceramics coming from the pits and those from the dwellings.

The pit No. 8 (Fig. 4), discovered within the perimeter of the dwelling No. 3, near the hearth, was of circular form (2.40×2.40 m)⁴. Just under the level at which it was identified (-0.38), hearth solderings mixed up with fragments of ceramics have come out, some coming from a bitronconic cup which has been completed afterwards. Under the fragments of this cup, the skull of a buried man came out. After removing carefully the ground and the archaeological remains, ceramics, which covered him, a young, inhumed adult, in a crouched position, placed on the left side was put himself forward. The skeleton, (Fig. 4), orientated NVV 6000° — SSE 2800° , was lying at -0.50 m, was in a very bad state of preservation, and from some portions, very vague traces were still preserved. In spite of all this, there had been observed that the legs were strongly bent, and the heels had been attached to the pelvis. The right hand was with the arm in prolongation of the body, the forearm orientated towards the knee, and the left one was strongly bent from the elbow and it had the palm opposite the skull. The skull was placed on the left parietal bone facing the east. The cranial calotte was very thick⁵.

Under the buried body remains of different vessels were found out, a horn of burnt clay, silex and obsidian blades, a pintadera, and towards the bottom of the pit an anthropomorphous idol came out.

³ Eug. Popușoi, *Săpăturile arheologice de la Trestiana, comuna Grivița jud. Vaslui, Cercetări istorice*, XI, 1980, p. 128; N. Ursulescu, *op. cit.*

⁴ Eug. Popușoi, *Sondajul arheologic de la Balș, Arheologia Moldovei*, IX, 1980, p. 7; Eug. Zaharia, *Considérations sur la civilisation de Criș à la lumière de sondages de Let, Dacia N. S.*, VI, 1962, p. 12.

⁵ The anthropological determination was made by the colleague Nicolae Mișoiu, to whom we express our gratitude in this way too.

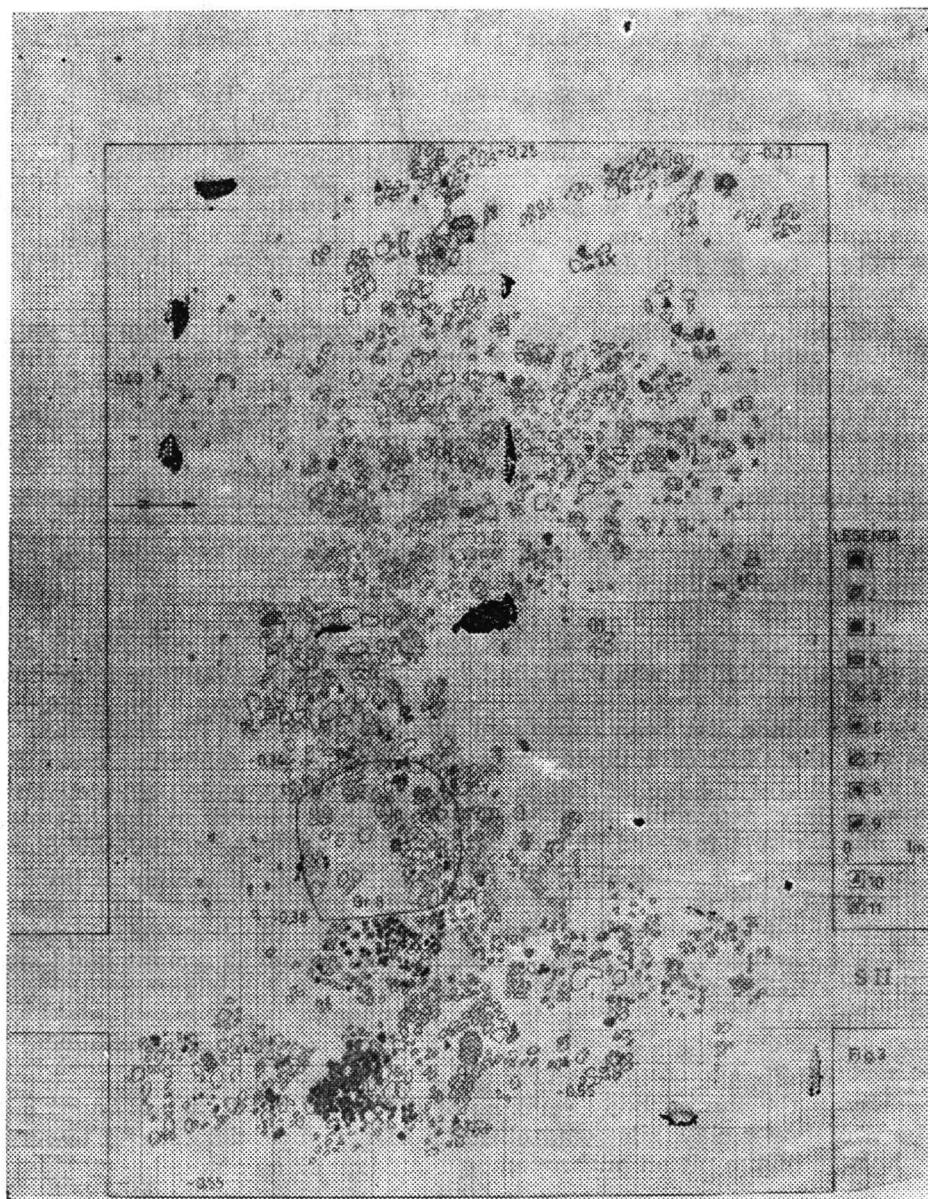


Fig. 3. Plan of dwelling nr. 3 from S III:

- 1 — hearth; 2 — stone; 3 — adobe; 4 — burned stone; 5 — axe; 6 — animals bones; 7 — grinder; 8 — fragmentary altar; 9 — firing pin; 10 — flint, obsidian; 11 — fragments of pottery.

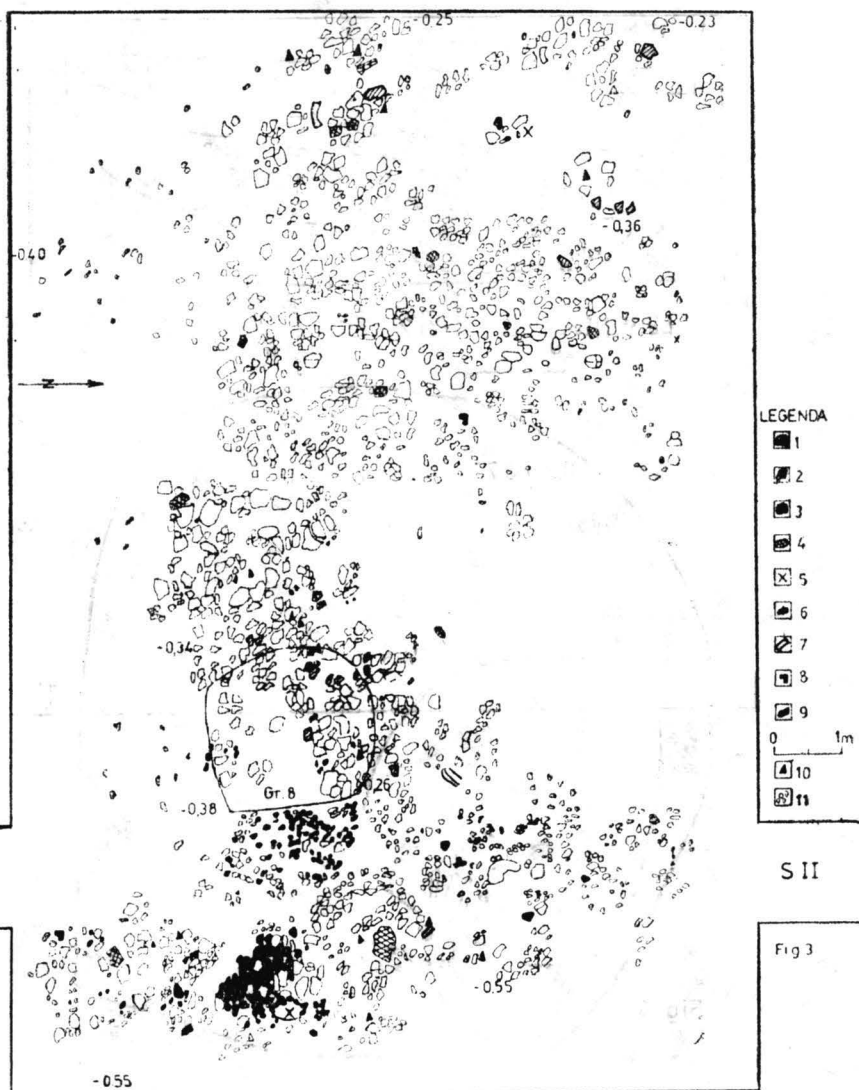


Fig. 3 b

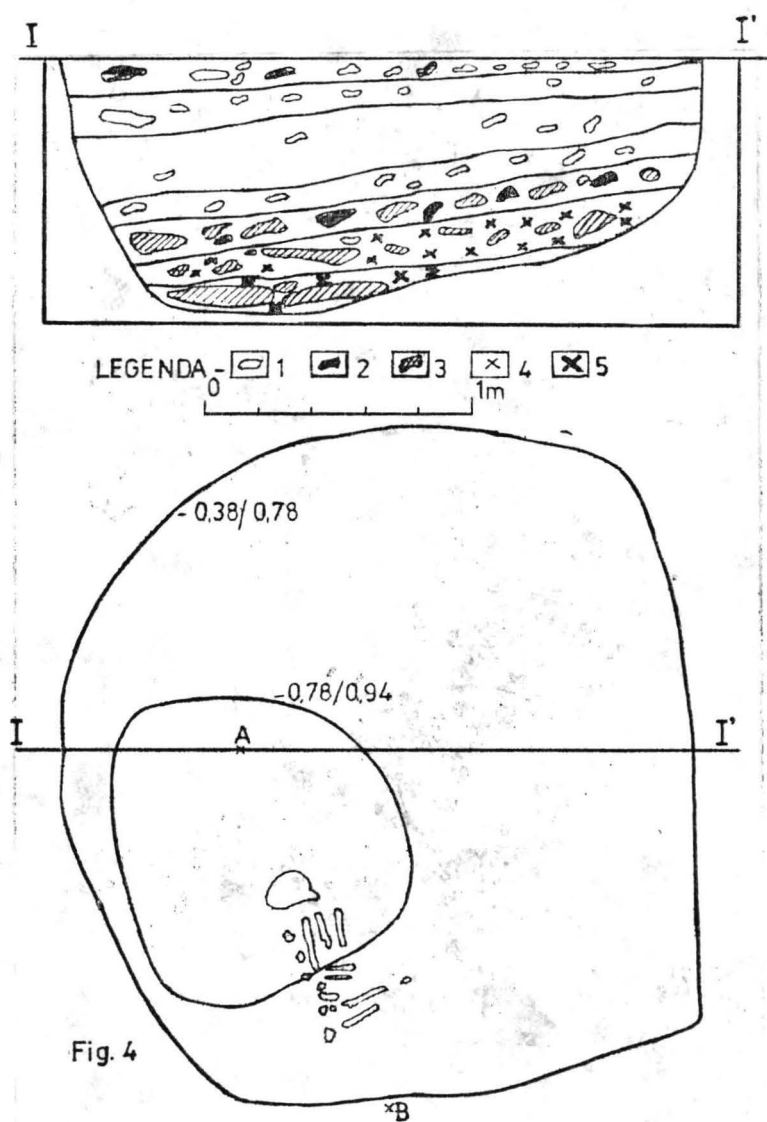


Fig. 4

Fig. 4. Pit nr. 8: the plan and the profile (I—I'):
 1 — fragments of pottery; 2 — hearth; 3 — stone; 4 -- charcoal; 5 — burned clay.

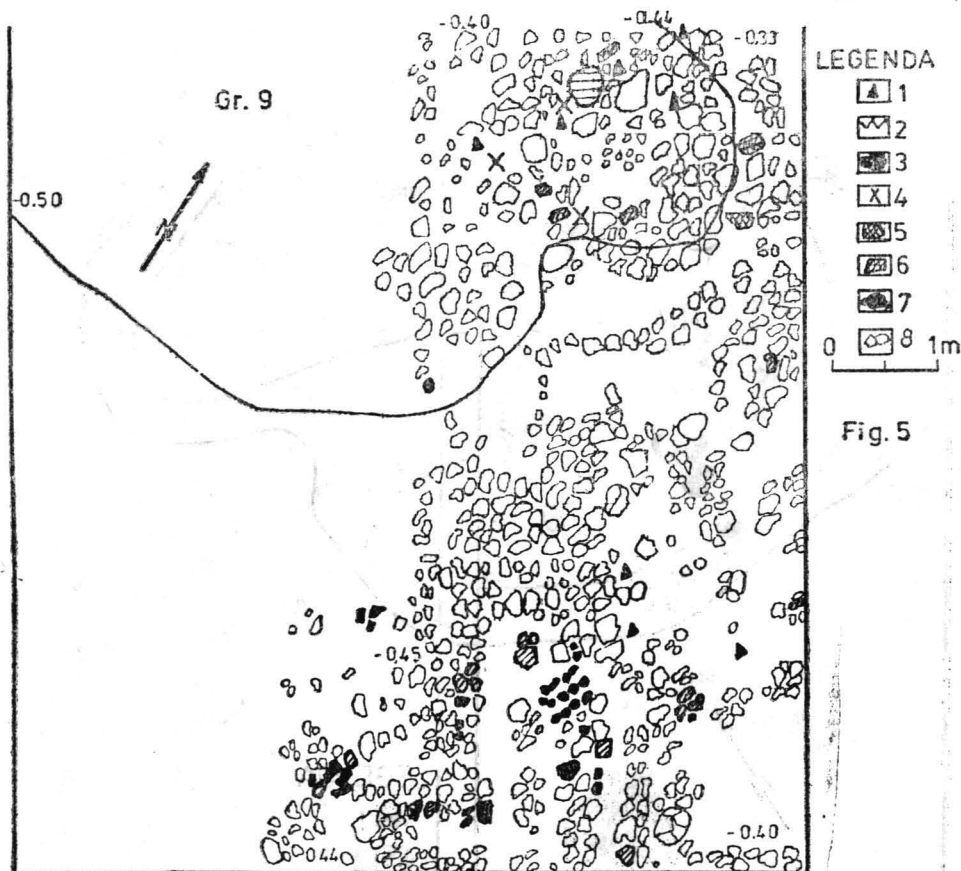


Fig. 5. Plan of dwelling nr. 4. from S IV:

1 — flint; 2 — fossilised wood; 3 — grinder; 4 — axe; 5 — burned stone; 6 — stone;
7 — hearth; 8 — fragments of pottery.

The tomb from Poienești, covered with ceramics and under which there were ceramics again, presents analogies with some discoveries from Trestiana⁶, unlike the other sites, as that from Valea Lupului⁷ or Let⁸ where the dead body was only in part covered with crocks.

The ceramic material constitutes the greatest part of the inventory of the investigated dwellings. More categories are distinguished — rough, semifine and fine. The rough ceramics is moulded from a yellowish-reddish paste, yellowish or rarely dark grey. The chaff was used, as an

⁶ Eug. Popușoi, *Săpăturile arheologice de la Trestiana, comuna Grivița, jud. Vaslui, Cercetări istorice*, S. N., Iași, 1980, p. 129—130.

⁷ E. Comșa, *Contribuție cu privire la riturile funerare din epoca neolitică de pe teritoriul țării noastre, în Omagiu lui C. Daicoviciu*, București, 1960, p. 85; I. Nestor, *Cultura ceramicii liniare în Moldova (pe baza săpăturilor arheologice de la Glăvănești Vechi, Iași)*, SCIV II, 1952, 2, p. 19.

⁸ Idem, *Raport asupra sondajelor de la Let-Vârhegy, Materiale*, III, 1957, p. 61.

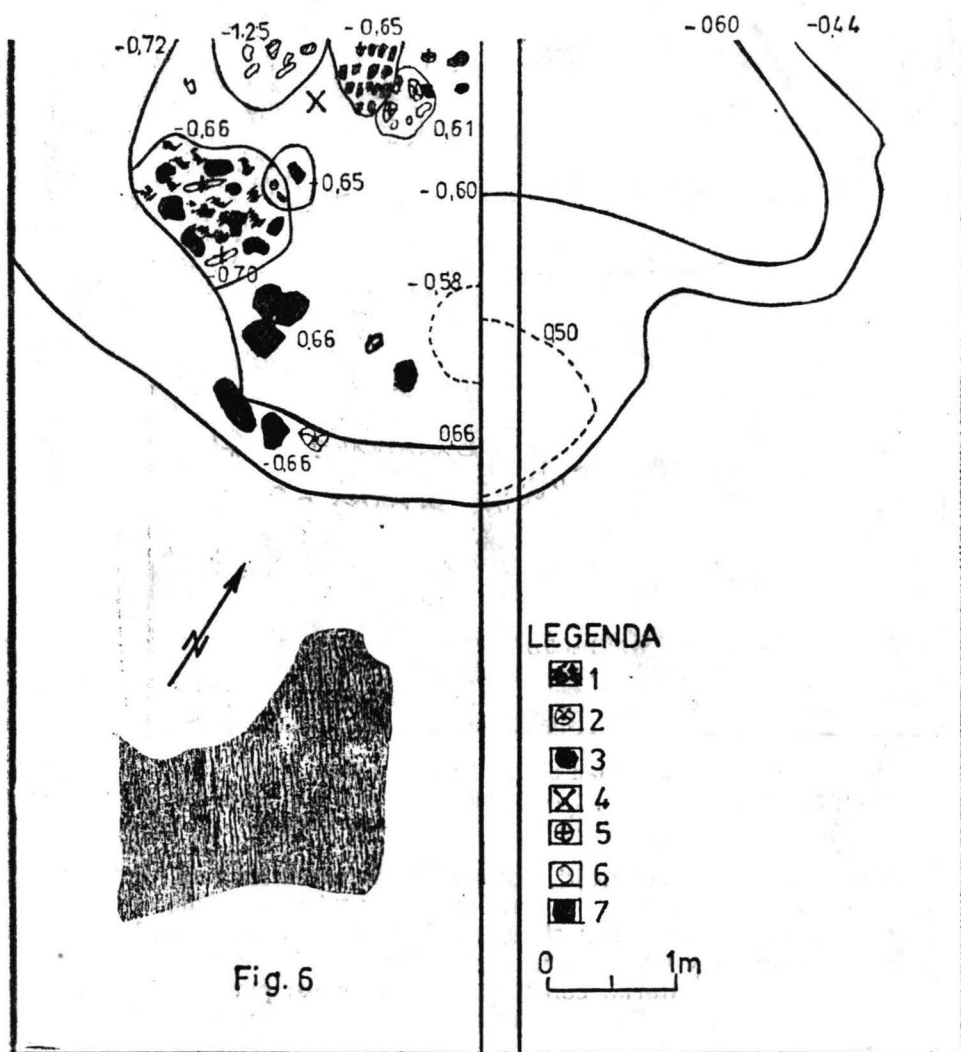


Fig. 6. Pit nr. 9 — plan;

1 — burned clay; 2 — unburned adobe; 3 — fragments of hearth; 4 — axe;
5 — animals bones; 6 — fragments of pottery; 7 — adobe.

ingredient and the burning of the vessels was incomplete. Most fragments come from the vessels of the pot/jar type-big or middle. A great part of the fragments belonging to this category are simple, undecorated. The chain grab with all its variants is present at the decorated ones. Other times the chain grab was combined with other decorative motives, such as the conic prominences and alveolar belts or motives of the meandric type. Among other motives used we mention the decorative prominences,

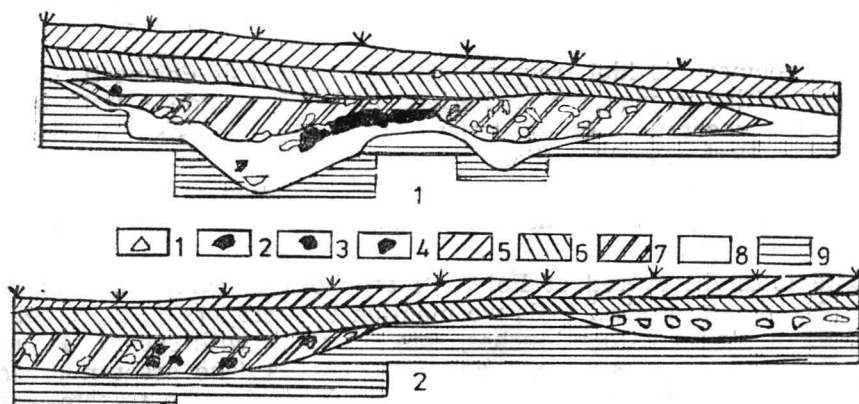


Fig. 7. Dwelling nr. 4 from S IV:

I — The profile of the NV wall; II — The profile of NV-SV wall:

- 1 — fragments of pottery; 2 — burned stone; 3 — adobe; 4 — fragments of hearth;
 5 — vegetal soil; 6 — brown dark soil, very wet; 7 — brown soil with black pigmentations; 8 — brown light soil; 9 — yellow soil archaeologically sterile.

which are sometimes associated with impressions ornamental belts and the nail pinches (made with the nail).

The semi-fine ceramics, yellowish-reddish, red or even grey-ash-coloured, is more carefully prepared and it contains as ingredient together with sand also straw hackad into very small pieces or fragments of mica. Sometimes at this category too, the burning was not uniform, a fact which is reflected into the colour of the vessels too. As types we can remark the pot/jar, the tureen and the cup.

The ornamental motives used are relatively varied and they consist of nail pinches, spirals in relief, ornamental buttons, alveolated circular belts and rarely channels.

The last category of ceramics, the finest one is moulded from a homogenous paste, with much sand in composition. Its colour is usually yellowish-ash-coloured grey or even black. Because of the fact that the conditions the ceramics lay was precarious, in a very acid soil, few fragments perserve the initial lustre or small spots of painting with red. The types of vessels are the tureens or the cups, the latter ones being in fact best represented.

In almost all dwellings fragments of altars were discovered. Two types have been reconstituted: the first one is of quadrilateral type, with short legs, completly undecorated; the second type is triangular, the legs are relatively high and decorated with incisions. The third type of altan could not be reconstituted thoroughly. Taking into account the preserved

fragments we can state precisely that the legs were slightly raised and they had small prominences on the exterior side. The analysis of these materials allowed the finding of some similarities with the pieces belonging to the Starčevo-Criș area in Romania, such as Moldavia (Vermești)⁹, Banat¹⁰, of further zones such as Yugoslavia, Hungary or Greece¹¹.

Within the investigations from Poieniști two anthropomorphic idols type of the column have appeared, one of them with incisions in zigzag on the back, which rendered the hair. The discovered pieces present analogies with similar ones from Moldavia (Trestiana)¹², Banat (Beșenova)¹³ or Yugoslavia.¹⁴

The zoomorphic idol fragmentarily discovered at Poieniști, presents analogies with the pieces from Perieni, and the pintadera, with incised, meandering decoration, of the labyrinth type, indicates similitudes with pieces from Perieni and Trestiana.¹⁵

Among the artifacts from Poieniști we mention also a fragmentary horn of diatomit, with rectangular section, identical with a whole piece, coming from the Grumăzești settlement.¹⁶

The tools discovered at Poieniști are both of carved and polished stone. Among the typical tools we mention the scrapers, one geometrical piece, more blades with retouches, some of them with specific lustre to the harvesting of cereals, axes and little chisels. The great number of untypical chips, discovered in the houses pleads for the transformation of the carved stone tools on the spot.

The raw material used for making the tools is extremely various, in comparison with the local possibilities and it indicates different zones of source. Maybe some raw materials come from the local area too, but others indicate The Prut Valley (the silex), Muntenia (the diatomit of Pătirlagele), the extra-carpation flysch (different types of grit-stones, marl, the black schist of Audia), the Maramureș (obsidian) or the pre-Balkan zone (the brown silex).¹⁷

We shall try, in the lines that follow, to draw some conclusions concerning the Poieniști settlement and to discuss, at the same time, the relation between it and other settlements from the same cultural area from Moldavia.

In this respect we shall try to bring into discussion the elements which offer the best possibilities of comparison and we shall refer in the first place to the archaeological inventory. In the settlement par-

⁹ D. Monah, *Sondajul de salvare din așezarea neo-eneolitică de la Vermești-Comănești, Carpica*, I, 1976, p. 7—23.

¹⁰ Gh. Lazarovici, *op. cit.*, p. 35, pl. XB (19—22, 28—31).

¹¹ *Ibidem* and the notes 193—195.

¹² Eug. Popușoi, *op. cit.*, p. 129, fig. 8/6.

¹³ Gh. Lazarovici, *op. cit.*, p. 18, fig. 10/1—2.

¹⁴ Ida Kutzián, *A. Körös-Kultura, Dissertationes Pannonicae*, sr. II, nr. 23, 1944, p. 74, fig. LIV/4, 5, 7.

¹⁵ M. Petrescu-Dîmbovița, *Sondajul stratigrafic de la Perieni, Materiale*, 1957, III, p. 73, fig. 8/4—7; and. Information Eug. Popușoi.

¹⁶ Information from dr. Silvia Marinescu-Bîlcu to whom we thank in this way for kindness.

¹⁷ M. Mantu, A. Mantu, I. Scortănu, *Cîteva date în legătură cu așezarea Starčevo-Criș de la Poieniști (jud. Vaslui)*, *Acta Moldaviae Meridionalis*, IX—X, under print.

tially investigated by us, the rude, undecorated ceramics is predominating. This situation is met in the majority of the late settlements of this culture, from Moldavia, such as Grumăzești, Vermești, Balș, Trestiana¹⁸.

In the case in which the ceramics of this category is decorated it is seen that the potters from Poieniști used particularly the decoration with the alveolated belt or different combinations of prominences, as well as those from Grumăzești, and Valea Lupului.

Another element which helps us to place the investigated station into the final stage of this culture is the great number of cups with an empty lag, tronconic, high, loworquadrilobated, from the semifine category¹⁹.

Also within this category of ceramics it is worth mentioning the presence of the strongly bitronconic tureens which have small prominences on the maximum diameter. These vessels, of *vinčan* influence are only in small number at Poieniști, unlike the other settlements as like that from Grumăzești.

The analysis of the decoration within this category of ceramics allows us the observation of another element common to the settlements from Poieniști and to those already mentioned.

It is seen that there are very few fragments decorated in the form of „corn ear“ or with delicate impressions made with the nail.

It would be worth mentioning the fact that, unlike the late settlements from Moldavia, where the ceramics belonging to this category is especially decorated with incisions, at Poieniști it is mostly used the decoration achieved by means of nail pinches.

In order to place into the late stage of the Starčevo-Criș culture of the style under discussion, the presence of tronconic and bitronconic cups with articulated rim, from the category of fine ceramics, pleads too.

Such vessels appear in great number not only at Poieniști but also at Grumăzești and Valea Lupului.

From the presented data we can conclude that the Poieniști settlement with all its peculiarities, could be placed into the final stage of the Starčevo-Criș culture, in our opinion at the beginning of the phase IV B.

The comparative analysis of the type of habitation and of the archaeological inventory allowed the discovery of some analogies with settlements, from Moldavia, and we are referring in the first place to those from Grumăzești, Valea Lupului, Vermești and Balș.

¹⁸ E. Comșa, *Așezarea de tip Criș de la Valea Lupului, Arheologia Moldovei*, XIV, under print; D. Monah, *op. cit.*, p. 15; Eug. Popușoi, *Sondajul Arheologic de la Balș, Arheologia Moldovei*, IX, p. 7; *Idem*, *Săpăturile arheologice de la Trestiana*, p. 118.

¹⁹ E. Comșa, *op. cit.*; M. Petrescu-Dimbovița, *op. cit.*, p. 69, fig. 3/9—10.