

# SHORT CONSIDERATIONS ABOUT THE STARČEVO-CRIȘ FIGURINES FROM THE ȘOIMUȘ-TELEGHI ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE, FEATURE 176A (HUNEDOARA COUNTY)

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*Keywords:* south-western Transylvania, archaeological research, Starčevo-Criș cultural complex, anthropomorphic and zoomorphic representations, Near East

*Cuvinte cheie:* sud-vestul Transilvaniei, cercetare arheologică, complexul cultural Starčevo-Criș, reprezentări antropomorfe și zoomorfe, Orientul Apropiat

## *Introduction*

The preventive archaeology surveys conducted in the summer and fall of 2011 as part of the Deva-Orăștie Highway project (in south-western Transylvania)<sup>1</sup> led to the discovery of several extremely architecturally complex sites in the area between the villages of Șoimuș and Bălata (in the Șoimuș Commune, Hunedoara County); the sites date to the end of the 7<sup>th</sup> millennium BC and the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium AD. Through the intensity of the prehistoric, ancient, medieval, modern or contemporary settlements, almost all cultural sequences that succeeded in this area in the aforementioned timeframe had been discovered<sup>2</sup> (Pl. I/1–4).

Regarding the archaeological discoveries that belong to the Early Neolithic period, the present paper will focus on certain items from the category of anthropomorphic and zoomorphic figurines that belong to the Starčevo-Criș cultural manifestations; we must also mention the fact that the research

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<sup>1</sup> The sites located in the area around the village of Șoimuș (which, at the time of the archaeological research, were conventionally named Șoimuș 1 and Șoimuș 2) were researched by the archaeologists from the following institutions: The Museum of Dacian and Roman Civilization, Deva, the “Vasile Pârvan” Institute of Archaeology, Bucharest, and the National Museum of Romanian History, Bucharest.

<sup>2</sup> Damian *et alii* 2012, 279; Schuster *et alii* 2012, 291–292; Țuțuianu *et alii* 2012, 292; Bărbat 2013, 27; Bărbat 2015, 9–10, 12–14.

conducted in 2011 proved the presence of certain complexes and archaeological material on the outskirts of the Mureş high terrace (in the north, on the right bank), on the terrace tread between the villages of Şoimuş and Bălata (approximately 3 km long) and in three different areas locally known as *La Stean*, *Teleghi* and *Lângă Sat*. From a chronological viewpoint, based on the ceramic inventory and on the  $^{14}\text{C}$  data, the material can be attributed to the oldest phases of the Neolithic<sup>3</sup>.

In the case of the Şoimuş-*Teleghi* site, while researching the lower level of complex 176a, represented by a pit-house (Pl. I/4, II/1–2), three baked-clay objects resembling figurines with anthropomorphic and zoomorphic features were discovered, which represent the subject of the present archaeological note<sup>4</sup> (Pl. III/1–3, IV/1–3).

### *Description of the archaeological context*

From an architectural viewpoint, the feature in which the prehistoric plastic artifacts were uncovered, 176a (approximately  $5 \times 3.60$  m), had been unevenly dug; the four sides of the dwelling, unequal in size, outline a shape similar to a rectangular (with rounded edges). However, the long axis of the dwelling shows that the orientation of complex 176a is north-east – south-west<sup>5</sup> (Pl. II/1–2).

Due to its architecture, dwelling 176a from Şoimuş-*Teleghi* can be included among the archaeological complexes that are sometimes defined by the Romanian historiography as “curvilinear semi-huts”<sup>6</sup>. The appearance of the Early Neolithic dwelling is practically identical to the architecture of certain archaeological dugout or partially dugout complexes from the first stages of the Early Neolithic period, at the turn of the 7<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> millennia BC, which were frequently attested throughout Transylvania, in Gura Baciului<sup>7</sup>, Miercurea Sibiului-*Petriş*<sup>8</sup> and Ocna Sibiului-*Triguri*<sup>9</sup> or in the Banat region, in

<sup>3</sup> Bărbat 2013, 27, 64–65, 117–119, 122–126, 305–315; Bărbat 2015, 12–14.

<sup>4</sup> Bărbat 2013, 281–282, 286. We are grateful to Scientific Researcher Cristian Schuster PhD (from the “Vasile Pârvan” Institute of Archaeology, Bucharest), the scientific coordinator of the Şoimuş 1 site, for allowing us to process and publish the data regarding the Early Neolithic settlements from Şoimuş. We are also grateful to Nicolae Cătălin Rîşcuţa PhD and to Antoniu Tudor Marc PhD (The Museum of Dacian and Roman Civilization, Deva) for their help during the preventive archaeology surveys from the *Teleghi* point.

<sup>5</sup> Bărbat 2013, 118–119.

<sup>6</sup> Ciută 2005, 70–71.

<sup>7</sup> Lazarovici, Maxim 1995, 63–64, 71–79, fig. 13/2–3.

<sup>8</sup> Luca, Diaconescu, Suciu 2008a, 328–333, plan 4–10; Luca, Diaconescu, Suciu 2008b, 9–13, 27–29, 33, 35, 38, plan 4–10.

<sup>9</sup> Paul 1989, 3, 5, fig. 2; Paul 1995, 34–35, Abb. 5.

Foeni-Sălaş<sup>10</sup>. In the Balkans, in the region of present-day Serbia, for example, the dugout or partially dugout dwellings like huts – or architecturally similar dwellings – can often be found in the Starčevo-Criş sites from Blagotin<sup>11</sup>, Divostin<sup>12</sup>, Donja Branjevina<sup>13</sup>, Grivac<sup>14</sup>, Knjepište<sup>15</sup> etc. In the aforementioned locations, research was conducted on archaeological complexes that are architecturally similar to the 176a dwelling, which, from a chronological viewpoint, are from the same time period we mentioned earlier.

The archaeological context of the three prehistoric artwork items is, as I have already stated above, defined by the presence of the figurines inside a partially dugout Early Neolithic dwelling, 176a, which, as opposed to the rest of the archaeological complexes from the same time period, was located in the eastern part of the Şoimuş-*Teleghi* site (Pl. I/4). The figurines were discovered in the north-eastern corner of the complex, all at the same depth of approximately 0.90–1.00 m from the (arable) surface level of that time (2011) and the distance between the objects did not exceed 0.50–1.00 m.

Furthermore, we must also mention that the prehistoric artwork items were found in an area that contained much less ceramic, lithic or osteological material, which could indicate the existence of a space that was “dedicated” to the anthropomorphic and zoomorphic figurines within the 176a Early Neolithic dwelling. However, in the absence of other items or facilities of the dwelling complex, with the exception of several alveoli in the yellow, archaeologically sterile soil, it is difficult to make other assumptions regarding the architectural features of the north-eastern space of the dwelling, namely the place where the prehistoric ceramic artefacts were found. In the western side, the prehistoric ceramic items were approximately 3.00 m away from the hearth, towards the north-eastern wall of the complex.

### *The relative chronology of the feature 176a*

Before presenting the artefacts and before any other discussions regarding the analogies of the items, we must offer several further details on the chronological position of feature 176a, the place in which three items were found. We must mention that in the absence of certain <sup>14</sup>C data in the dwelling, the only element that can be used for dating remains the ceramics.

<sup>10</sup> Greenfield, Draşovean 1994, 61, 67–68, fig. 4; Lazarovici, Lazarovici 2006, 98–99, fig. II. 46.

<sup>11</sup> Greenfield, Jongsma 2006, 73–77, fig. 4–5.

<sup>12</sup> Bailey 1999, 153–154, fig. 1.

<sup>13</sup> Karmanski 2000, 17–88; Karmanski 2005, 14–35; Lazarovici, Lazarovici 2006, 86–88, fig. II.28.

<sup>14</sup> Bogdanović 2008, 31–33.

<sup>15</sup> Stanković 1986, 447, 449, fig. 1–2.

The number of potsherds found in the inferior level of complex 176a was around 80; the fauna and lithic material was even less present<sup>16</sup>. Regarding the ceramics, we must mention the fine nature of the materials (the most dominant feature was the blend of fine sand and tailing). The surfaces of the vessels were very well polished, the firing resulting in brown, cherry, vermillion and yellow colours. The shapes of the vessels were represented by open ceramic items, such as tronconic bowls, or globular and spherical items, with short, straight rims, sometimes slightly splayed. Regarding the very rarely encountered ornaments of the ceramics (almost every type of ornament corresponds with a potsherd), we must mention the fingernail impressions in the walls of the globular bowls or the rare impression of the rims of the tronconic vessels, or plastic applications, such as the alveolar girdles, as well as the pseudo-barbotine, the latter being an exterior surface treatment of the ceramics, rather than an ornamental motif.

Based on the analogies of the ceramic archaeological material with the one discovered in dwellings 18a and 18b from *Șoimuș-Teleghi*, for which we have certain <sup>14</sup>C data (Ro-AMS 11-1 – 7130 ± 32 BP; Ro-AMS 11-3 – 7019 ± 37 BP), from the perspective of the absolute chronology, the inferior level of complex 176a, where the prehistoric ceramic items were found, can be placed approximately in the 6000–5900 BC interval<sup>17</sup>. Furthermore, through the aforementioned data regarding the characteristics of the ceramic materials (their nature, the main types of vessels, the ornaments), as well as through the analogies that can be made between the ceramic inventory from dwelling 176a and the inventory from complexes 18a and 18b from the *Șoimuș-Teleghi* site, we can conclude that, in the relative chronology established by G. Lazarovici for the Starčevo-Criș cultural complex from Romania, the inferior level of 176a belongs to phases IC-IIA<sup>18</sup>. Moreover, we must mention that the same lower archaeological level of complex 176a was “sealed” by an archaeological layer of about 10 cm, in which the ceramic material was very fragmented and homogenous, from the perspective of their type. More precisely, the ceramics can be included in the “monochromes” category, bearing shades of red-tile or yellow, belonging to the Starčevo-Criș IIA phase, according to G. Lazarovici<sup>19</sup>.

<sup>16</sup> The fact that the dwelling overlapped with other complexes belonging to subsequent chronological periods limited the number of artefacts discovered in the Early Neolithic dwelling considerably.

<sup>17</sup> The <sup>14</sup>C data was obtained in the Horia Hulubei National Institute for R&D in Physics and Nuclear Engineering (IFIN-HH) laboratory, Bucharest, Romania.

<sup>18</sup> Lazarovici 1977, 34–37; Lazarovici 1979, 41–44; Lazarovici 1984, 58–62; Lazarovici 2006, 138, 140–141, 144; Maxim 1999, 34–45; Angeleski 2012, 154–155, 157–158; Tudorie 2013, 27, 56–60.

<sup>19</sup> Lazarovici 1977, 36–37; Lazarovici 1979, 43–44; Lazarovici 1984, 60–62; Maxim 1999, 40–45; Angeleski 2012, 155, 157–158; Tudorie 2013, 27, 59–60.



### *Description of the figurines*

The three clay figurines that can be considered art forms are as follows: a fragmented anthropomorphic item, a second, possibly also anthropomorphic item that is also fragmented and an almost intact zoomorphic figurine.

1. *Female anthropomorphic figurine*<sup>20</sup> (Pl. III/1a–1e, IV/1a–1f). The Early Neolithic figurine was made of clay, to which fine sand and organic materials were added, such as a very well-grounded tailing; the ceramic paste also contains mica and silt (?). The indent of a *Cerealia* caryopsis was also found on the foot of the statuette (Pl. III/1e, IV/1f). The item was not smoothed well, which gave it a semi-fine/ coarse appearance. The light reduction firing of the item gave it a brown-yellow colour. On the left side, in the abdominal area and partially on its bottom, there are tile-coloured traces of the slip that almost completely exfoliated off of the figurine's surface. Regarding its manufacture, the artefact was crafted in a realistic manner, the Neolithic artist emphasised elements connected to female sexuality – the figurine represents a pregnant woman on the point of giving birth. Although the top part of the item had been broken off in the past (the head and neck of the figurine are missing), the rest of the statuette remains in quite good condition. A close analysis of the anthropomorphic item, from top to bottom, starting from the shoulders, depicted through a greater width, shows that, at the time of its crafting, it had not been given upper limbs. The breasts are strongly emphasised through two spherical, deformed protrusions that had been attached to the body of the figurine. Viewed from the front, geometrically speaking, the figurine has a trapezoidal shape and, from the side, a triangular one. Through its bulging representation, the abdomen shows that of a pregnant woman, which thus draws our attention to it as the primary area of the item. The ceramic details can also be observed in profile – the clay thickens gradually, from the neck down, towards the bottom. The lumbar area is discernible on the surface of the object and it affords the Neolithic statuette more realism, thus indicating the maturity of the person who moulded the figurine. The bottom represents a base; therefore, besides the role played by the bottom in the item's iconography, it also bears the practical role support, since the anthropomorphic figurine can be sat on a relatively plane surface; the object is thus always in a vertical position. Its legs are short, spread, slightly prominent and conical in shape, and they contribute to the image of a pregnant woman, as an essential part of the depiction of female sexuality. Furthermore, we must

<sup>20</sup> Height max. 43.39 mm, width max. 26.71 mm, mass 19.60 g; Munsell 2012, 7.5YR 5/6 (for the colour obtained by the figurine as a result of the firing process), Munsell 2012, 2.5YR 4/8 (for the shade of the slip).

also mention that in spite of the clear elements showing that the item is a female representation, the pubic area is not outlined. Regarding the state of preservation of the ceramic object, the figurine is sufficiently well-kept, except for the head and neck that had been broken off in the past.

2. *Female anthropomorphic figurine*<sup>21</sup> (Pl. III/2a–2c, IV/2a–2c). The figurine was moulded from a clay mixed with fine sand and organic material, the latter of which is macroscopically almost indistinguishable. This item was not well smoothed, as was the case of the other figurine, which also gave it a semi-fine/ coarse appearance. The reduction firing of the item gave it a yellow-tile colour shade. Furthermore, traces of a brown-yellow slip (?) were also noticed on a very small portion of the figurine. Regarding the possibility of including the object in the plastics category, we must mention the fact that less than half of the figurine was preserved, as well as the fact that it bears exfoliated areas, which makes establishing its typology more difficult. For these reasons, we can only assume that we are faced with another female anthropomorphic representation, but one that is different in its iconography than the item previously described. A round socket found on the surface of the object could represent an open mouth (?), and a puncture suggests that it had been made from the back side of the item, probably at the level of the shoulders (?). Regarding the state of preservation of the item, it is fragmented, more than half of it is missing.

3. *Zoomorphic figurine*<sup>22</sup> (Pl. III/3a–3e, IV/3a–3e). The zoomorphic representation was moulded from a clay mixed with fine sand and organic material, both of which are macroscopically hard to distinguish; the item has a mealy texture. However, the mica that covers the entire body of the artefact is much more visible. The item was not well smoothed, it even bears bumps, and these aspects give it a semi-fine/ coarse appearance. The uneven reduction firing of the item gave it a brown-yellow colour; the bottom of the figurine is grey. The brown slip applied on the exterior of the item was partially preserved. Regarding the manner in which the ceramic object was crafted, we must mention that the body of the animal was represented through a cylindrical shape, almost round in section; the Neolithic artist emphasised the animal's slightly curved bucranium and the front inferior limbs, which together form an imposing statuette. The horns, the inferior limbs and the tail are short (between 7.12–10.79 mm) and their shape is almost conic; they were obtained by moulding the same piece

<sup>21</sup> Height max. 31.55 mm, width max. 25.12 mm, mass 12.29 g; Munsell 2012, 7.5YR 5/6 (for the colour obtained by the figurine as a result of the firing process), Munsell 2012, 5YR 5/8 (for the shade of the slip).

<sup>22</sup> Height max. 20.99 mm, width max. 21.73 mm, length max. 44.08 mm, mass 19.49 g; Munsell 2012, 7.5YR 5/6 (for the colour obtained by the figurine as a result of the firing process), Munsell 2012, 7.5YR 4/6 (for the shade of the slip).

of clay. Although the figurine gives the impression that it is in a static position, we cannot say the same regarding the left back leg that was raised almost to the level of the animal's tail. This detail is meant to show an animal/ heifer representation in motion (Pl. III/3c, IV/3a). Regarding the state of preservation of the item, we must mention that all of the morphological details of a representation from the bovine category are almost intact.

### *Discussions*

Generally, Early Neolithic plastics is found in archaeological complexes, particularly in dwellings and in pits of different natures (similar to deposits); some archaeologists even sustain that there is almost a “rule” that every dwelling from the early stages of the Starčevo-Criș cultural complex contains anthropomorphic and zoomorphic figurines<sup>23</sup>. In the case of the geographic space under scrutiny, north of the Danube, in the area covered by present day's Romania, it is known that at the Early Neolithic level, the anthropomorphic and zoomorphic representations for the earlier stages (phases I-II) of the Starčevo-Criș cultural complex are less common. Out of what has yet been published in archaeological literature, there are at most 50–60 artefacts that can be dated to the end of the 7<sup>th</sup> millennium BC and the beginning of the 6<sup>th</sup> millennium BC, a number that is by no means impressive.

What is truly interesting is that although eight archaeological complexes have been entirely or partially surveyed in the Neolithic site from Șoimuș-Teleghi, features that can be included among the dwellings characteristic to the early phases (IB/IC-IIB) of the Starčevo-Criș cultural complex (approx. 6050–5800 BC), some of which contained a rich archaeological material (reconstructable ceramic wares, painted ceramics, bone and horn tools), only one dwelling contained several plastics items, namely 176a (Pl. II/1–2). Paradoxically, complex 176a contained very few ceramic and osteological material from the dwellings that belong to the early horizon, namely from the end of the 7<sup>th</sup> millennium BC and the beginning of the 6<sup>th</sup> millennium BC.

Neolithic dwellings containing little anthropomorphic and zoomorphic plastics (between one and four items) from the earliest phases of the Starčevo-Criș cultural complex have been found before in the intra-Carpathian and extra-Carpathian areas in Romania; the items found in the Early Neolithic complexes from Foeni-Sălaș<sup>24</sup>, Gura Baciului<sup>25</sup>, Miercurea Sibiului-Petriș<sup>26</sup>,

<sup>23</sup> Ciută 2005, 101; Ciută 2009, 71.

<sup>24</sup> Ciobotaru 1998, 73–75, 80, 82, pl. I/9–10, III/4, 7, 11; Drașovean, Ciobotaru 2001, 6, 11, cat. no. 1–2; Drașovean 2007, 72, fig. 6–7; Drașovean 2009, 274, 280, fig. 2/5–6.

<sup>25</sup> Vlassa 1968, 374–375, fig. 3/3; Vlassa 1976, 74, 76, fig. 3/3; Lazarovici, Maxim 1995, 88, 148, fig. 23/9.

<sup>26</sup> Luca 2002, 97, 105–106, photo 1, Abb. 1; Luca 2004, 4–5, 24, fig. 1; Luca, Roman, Diaconescu

Ocna Sibiului-*Triguri*<sup>27</sup>, Șeușa-*La Cărarea Morii*<sup>28</sup>, Timișoara-*Fratelia*<sup>29</sup> etc. can attest to this fact. There are also some exceptions to this “rule”, more precisely in the case of a surface dwelling from Măgura-*Boldul lui Moș Ivănuș*, where there were seven items of anthropomorphic and zoomorphic plastics<sup>30</sup>. Another discovery, interpreted by S. A. Luca as a “ritual dwelling L1 = C140”/ “nest of huts”, was made in a complex recently surveyed in Cristian I, where ten figurines of zoomorphic plastics (bovines) were found<sup>31</sup>.

The presence of a small number of anthropomorphic and zoomorphic figurines in the Early Neolithic dwellings can also be connected to certain practices of the Starčevo-Criș community in their spiritual/ daily lives, practices we can only presume, such as collecting “items of value”, as are the artefacts from the plastics category, before abandoning the dwelling. However, the existence of a small number of anthropomorphic and zoomorphic items in the Early Neolithic complexes north of the Danube can also be explained through a phase of the research.

Another characteristic of the anthropomorphic and zoomorphic plastics found in complex 176a from Șoimuș-*Teleghi* is given by its proportions. The figurines are between 2 cm and 4.3 cm tall, which attests to the miniature nature of the items under scrutiny. The same observations on the small dimensions of the Early Neolithic plastics from the first phases of the Starčevo-Criș cultural complex (I-II) were also made by I. Paul while analysing the discoveries from levels Ib and IIa from Ocna Sibiului-*Triguri*<sup>32</sup>. Further observations regarding the existence of certain standards for the manufacture of plastics in the early phases of the Starčevo-Criș cultural complex were more recently made by M.-M. Ciută; the author insists on the small proportions of the anthropomorphic and zoomorphic plastics from the first phases of the North Danube Early Neolithic, the latter of which has very good analogies within the Protosesklo culture<sup>33</sup>. For example,

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2004, 101–102; Luca, Suci 2004, 15–16; Luca 2005, 34–35, 51, Abb. 1–2; Luca, Diaconescu, Suci 2008a, 332, 334, 337, fig. 6/4a-b, photo 3; Luca, Diaconescu, Suci 2008b, 12, 38–39, foto 3, fig. 6/4a-b; Luca, Suci, Dumitrescu-Chioar 2011, 108; Tudorie 2013, 36, fig. nr. 14; Luca 2014, 7, 12, fig. 1, photo 1.

<sup>27</sup> Paul 1995, 36, 42, 48–49, 52, Taf. VIII/7–8, XXIX/4–5, XXXII/4; Ciută 2005, 106, 189, pl. LXXXVIII/4–5, XCI/4.

<sup>28</sup> Ciută 2000, 70–72, 101, fig. 25/4, 6, 10–11; Ciută 2005, 102, 108, 189, pl. XCIV/4, 6, 10–11; Ciută 2009, 71–73, 154, 180–182, fig. 21a, pl. XXV/4, 6, 10–11, XXVI/a-e, XXVII/a-b.

<sup>29</sup> Drașovean 2001, 33–34, 40, pl. 4/4–5.

<sup>30</sup> Andreescu, Mirea 2008, 60–61, 75, fig. 11/1–7.

<sup>31</sup> Luca *et alii* 2014, 13–14, 21–23, fig. 1/1–6, 2/1–4, 3/1–6; Luca 2015, 146–147, photo 89–90, fig. 115/1–2, 116/1–3, 117/1–2, 118/1–3.

<sup>32</sup> Paul 1995, 49–51.

<sup>33</sup> Ciută 2005, 101; Ciută 2009, 71.

other studies made on the dimensions/ heights of the anthropomorphic figurines from the first horizons of the Neolithic in the Near East indicate, in the case of this plastics group, values between 1.80 cm and 5.50 cm, which demonstrates the existence of certain canons in the crafting of such figurines; “misconducts” were rare<sup>34</sup>. The same situation was discovered in Blagotin, in Serbia, where all of the early anthropomorphic Starčevo-Criș plastics was between 2 cm and 5.1 cm<sup>35</sup>.

Besides the similarities that can be established, based on the dimensions of the items, between the Neolithic figurines from Șoimuș-*Teleghi* and other similar objects from south-eastern Europe to the Near East, other analogies can be made based on the iconographic themes of the items.

The first figurine, the headless anthropomorphic representation (Pl. III/1a–1e, IV/1a–1f), which, based on the human physiognomy details, such as the depiction of the bust, of the prominent abdomen, or of the slightly spread legs, can be included in the category of female statuettes that illustrate the idea of pregnancy (the female sexuality is, in this case, more than obvious). The stencil used in molding the female anthropomorphic item that is in a sitting position, with its legs spread and that bears the aforementioned anatomical features discovered in the inferior level of complex 176a is an archaic one. The archetype of the item could be in the aceramic Neolithic from the Near East; the archaic versions of the item under scrutiny can be found in the Neolithic sites from Çayönü<sup>36</sup>, Jarmo<sup>37</sup>, Mureybet<sup>38</sup>, Netiv Hagdud<sup>39</sup>, Sarab<sup>40</sup>, Tell Aswad<sup>41</sup>, Tell Seker al-Aheimar<sup>42</sup> etc. In the south-eastern European space, such items that more or less resemble the item in question can be found in Serbia, in Blagotin<sup>43</sup>, in Knjepište<sup>44</sup>, and one figurine from Donja Branjevina<sup>45</sup>, but belonging to a later chronological horizon. From Macedonia we must mention a figurine from Anzabegovo<sup>46</sup> and a second,

<sup>34</sup> Nishiaki 2007, 123, fig. 5.

<sup>35</sup> Nikolić, Zečević 2001, 6.

<sup>36</sup> Broman Morales 1990, 60, 73, pl. 22/a; Hansen 2007, Taf. 21/5.

<sup>37</sup> Hansen 2007, Taf. 24/3.

<sup>38</sup> Hansen 2007, Taf. 8/1.

<sup>39</sup> Hansen 2007, Taf. 7/3.

<sup>40</sup> Broman Morales 1990, 17, 35, pl. 14/a; Hansen 2007, Taf. 25/7, 10; Lesure 2011, 174, fig. 74.

<sup>41</sup> Hansen 2007, Taf. 14/8–10, 14–17.

<sup>42</sup> Nishiaki 2007, 122, fig. 4/1.

<sup>43</sup> Nikolić, Zečević 2001, 6, photo 2, the second item from the left; Becker 2010, 168, 805, Taf. 118/7.

<sup>44</sup> Stanković 1986, 448, 451, fig. 4/1; Stanković 1992, 317, Tabla I/1; Hansen 2007, Taf. 132/4.

<sup>45</sup> Karmanski 2000, 95–98, 240–241, 254–255, Sl. 147, T. VI/3, XIII/1; Karmanski 2005, 38–39, 88, 95, pl. VI/3, XIII/1; Becker 2010, 805–806, Taf. 118/10, 119/3.

<sup>46</sup> Becker 2010, Taf. 163/6. Other good analogies for the female representation found in Șoimuș were discovered at Porodin (Grbić et alii 1960, 52–53, pl. XXXI/6–7; Naumov 2015, 260, 288, T. 27/1–3).

very different item from a typological viewpoint, originating from the Bulgarian territory, more precisely from the Sofia-*Slatina* Neolithic site<sup>47</sup>.

Although there are no typological correspondences for the female anthropomorphic figurine from complex 176a in the early Starčevo-Criș sites in Romania, since it represents an almost non-existent model north of the Danube and rare in the Balkans, we can establish certain similarities between the item under scrutiny and several statuettes from the Neolithic sites from Ocna Sibiului-*Triguri* and Foeni-*Sălaș*. Two items from Ocna Sibiului-*Triguri* can be mentioned here, the first of which is a male (according to some authors) anthropomorphic figurine which bears three prominences in its lower half (which resemble the feet of a stool, according to I. Paul), two of which resemble human, slightly spread legs<sup>48</sup>. The second artefact, considered to be a “hybrid goddess”/ “bird goddess” is comparable to the figurine found in complex 176a from Șoimuș-*Teleghi* due to the item’s foot<sup>49</sup>. Another item of prehistoric plastics, similar in certain ways to the female anthropomorphic figurine from 176a, was found in Foeni-*Sălaș*; D. L. Ciobotaru affirmed that it resembles the stance of a “sitting dog”<sup>50</sup>. In our opinion, the aforementioned item, due to the two slightly spread legs and its sitting position, could resemble a human representation.

In the case of the second (anthropomorphic?) fragmented item from the 176a dugout dwelling (Pl. III/2a–2c, IV/2a–2c), we cannot make many assessments; however, on the one hand, considering the paste out of which it had been moulded, as well as the way it was smoothed, we could consider that it belonged to the same stylistic canons, namely that it was part of the same network of findings described above. On the other hand, the details present on the item in question, namely the socket present in the medial region of the ceramic object (which sometimes represents the mouth of an anthropomorphic character), point to similar figurines from the early stages of the Starčevo-Criș cultural complex, discovered in Knjepište<sup>51</sup> and later, from the older phase of the 3<sup>rd</sup> level of the site from Cârcea-*La Hanuri*<sup>52</sup>.

The third and last figurine from complex 176a from Șoimuș-*Teleghi*, a zoomorphic figurine with distinctive anatomical features (Pl. III/3a–3e,

<sup>47</sup> Nikolov 2004, 11, fig. 3/1; Becker 2010, 855, Taf. 168/7.

<sup>48</sup> Paul 1995, 52, Taf. VIII/7, XXIX/5; Ciută 2005, 106, 189, pl. LXXXVIII/5; Becker 2010, 842, Taf. 155/6.

<sup>49</sup> Paul 1989, 12, pl. VII/3; Paul 1995, 52, 130–131, Taf. VIII/2, XXIX/1, Tafel I/1; Ciută 2005, 106, 189, pl. LXXXVIII/1; Becker 2010, 845, Taf. 158/6.

<sup>50</sup> Ciobotaru 1998, 74, 80, pl. I/2.

<sup>51</sup> Stanković 1986, 451, 447, fig. 4/2; Stanković 1992, 320, Tabla IV/1; Hansen 2007, Taf. 132/2.

<sup>52</sup> Nica 1977, 17, 28, fig. 4/1, 12/1; Hansen 2007, Taf. 132/5, 133/4.



IV/3a–3e), such as its horns, body, tail and back legs, has almost perfect analogies in the early Starčevo-Criș settlements in the intra-Carpathian and extra-Carpathian space in Romania, such as in Cristian I<sup>53</sup>, Gura Baciului<sup>54</sup>, Măgura-Boldul lui Moș Ivănuș<sup>55</sup>, Miercurea Sibiului-Petriș<sup>56</sup> and Ocna Sibiului-Triguri<sup>57</sup>. For example, there are zoomorphic figurines similar to the one under scrutiny in the Serbian space, in the sites Blagotin<sup>58</sup>, Divostin<sup>59</sup>, Grivac<sup>60</sup>, Velesnica<sup>61</sup> etc., all of which containing cultural horizons of early Starčevo-Criș ceramics, especially clay zoomorphic figurines similar to the item from Șoimuș-Teleghi. We must mention the fact that such zoomorphic representations, version D<sub>1</sub> in S. Stanković<sup>62</sup>, as is the case of the item from complex 176s from Șoimuș-Teleghi, in a rather abstract form, are less similar to the more realistic style of certain items of Early Neolithic plastics from Gura Baciului<sup>63</sup> or Șeușa-La Cărarea Morii<sup>64</sup>. The occurrence of certain features that create distinctions between the hypostases in which the bovines are depicted in the early stages of the Starčevo-Criș cultural complex shows that during the Early Neolithic, the ways in which certain items were moulded in clay were subrogated by the canons established by spirituality or the daily “needs” of the first agricultural communities.

In the end, we must discuss several aspects regarding the significance of the discovery of the Early Neolithic figurines “in the corner” of complex 176a, as well as make a few assessments regarding the importance of the connections between such objects within a Starčevo-Criș dwelling, a situation that was also encountered in other Early Neolithic settlements in the Carpathian Basin.

As we have already mentioned while describing the archaeological context,

<sup>53</sup> Luca *et alii* 2014, 13–14, 21–22, fig. 1/3–6, 2/1; Luca 2015, 146–147, fig. 116/1–2, 118/1–3.

<sup>54</sup> Vlassa 1968, 374–375, fig. 3/3; Vlassa 1972a, 180, 186, Abb. 3/8; Vlassa 1972b, 17, fig. 14/8; Vlassa 1976, 74, 76, 211, 230, fig. 3/3, 14/8; Lazarovici, Maxim 1995, 148, fig. 23/7; Ciută 2005, 102, 188, pl. LXXXIV/8.

<sup>55</sup> Andreescu, Mirea 2008, 61, 75, fig. 11/5.

<sup>56</sup> Tudorie 2013, 36, fig. nr. 12.

<sup>57</sup> Paul 1995, 48, Taf. XXXII/3–4; Ciută 2005, 102, 189, pl. XCI/1, 3–4.

<sup>58</sup> Nikolić, Zečević 2001, 10, photo 1, the second item from the first row; the third item from the second row; the second item from the third row.

<sup>59</sup> Bogdanović 1987, 11–12, fig. 9/6; Stanković 1992, 340, Tabla XXXI/5, 8.

<sup>60</sup> Stanković 1992, 337–338, Tabla XXVIII/2, XXX/1, 3; Bogdanović 2008, 121–122, 129, fig. 6.3/a, i, j.

<sup>61</sup> Vasić 1986, 269, 281, fig. 23/8; Vasić 2008, 234–235, fig. 16/3.

<sup>62</sup> Stanković 1992, 144, 148, Tabela 6/tip D1.

<sup>63</sup> Vlassa 1972a, 180, 186, Abb. 3/10; Vlassa 1972b, 17, fig. 14/10; Vlassa 1976, 211, 230, fig. 14/10; Lazarovici, Maxim 1995, 147–148, fig. 23/10; Ciută 2005, 102, 188, pl. LXXXIV/10.

<sup>64</sup> Ciută 2000, 71, 101, fig. 25/11; Ciută 2005, 102, 189, pl. XCIV/11; Ciută 2009, 71, 154, 180–181, fig. 21a, pl. XXV/11, XXVI/a–d.



we emphasised the fact that the Early Neolithic statuettes from complex 176a were found in the north-eastern area of the dwelling, in a space in which the archaeological items such as ceramics, osteological material and lithic technology are very scarce. Furthermore, we must also mention the fact that the figurines were found in the superior level of the inferior archaeological level of complex 176a, characterised by Early Neolithic ceramics from the IC-IIA Starčevo-Criş stages. Taking these aspects into consideration, we can assess that the area in which the figurines were discovered could represent the place in which such items were “worshipped”; it is not unlikely that there may have been a “place of worship” inside dwelling 176a<sup>65</sup> (?). However, the location of the figurines within the space of the dwelling could be explained through their stratigraphic position, more precisely on the upper layer of the level that contained the Starčevo-Criş IC-IIA ceramic materials from complex 176a. As such, there is also the valid hypothesis stating that all three artefacts had been “abandoned” or deliberately “laid-down” when dwelling 176a had been abandoned; this led to the transformation of the initial space of the archaeological complex in a storage space for waste disposal.

Regarding the fact that all three items were found together – a female anthropomorphic figurine, a second, uncertain figurine, possibly an anthropomorphic figurine nonetheless and a third, zoomorphic figurine depicting a bovine –, we must mention that this is not a unique situation; Early Neolithic dwellings often contained such groups of items of plastics, as indicated by the discoveries made in south-eastern Europe in the early Starčevo-Criş dwellings in Foeni-Sălaş<sup>66</sup>, Măgura-Boldul lui Moş Ivănuş<sup>67</sup>, Şeuşa-La Cărarea Morii<sup>68</sup> etc. There is no need to emphasize the significances and implications of the anthropomorphic and zoomorphic plastics in the Neolithic period, since there is already a vast literature that treats this topic<sup>69</sup>; we must merely assert that in the case of both the 176a complex from Şoimuş-Teleghi and the aforementioned Neolithic dwellings from the end of the 7<sup>th</sup> millennium BC and the beginning

<sup>65</sup> Banffy 1990–1991, 209–212; Banffy 2001, 59–60.

<sup>66</sup> As is the case of hut 23. Ciobotaru 1998, 74–75, 80, 82, pl. I/6, III/4, 7, 11.

<sup>67</sup> As is the case of one of the surface dwellings. Andreescu, Mirea 2008, 60–61, 75, fig. 11/1–7.

<sup>68</sup> As is the case of dwelling L1/1997. Ciută 2000, 70–72, 101, fig. 25/4, 6, 10–11; Ciută 2005, 102, 108, 189, pl. XCIV/4, 6, 10–11; Ciută 2009, 71–73, 154, 180–182, fig. 21a, pl. XXV/4, 6, 10–11, XXVI/a-e, XXVII/a-b.

<sup>69</sup> We must selectively make reference to part of the literature that treats this issue: Mellaart 1967, 77–131; Gimbutas 1974, 11–238; Lazarovici 1984, 77; Gimbutas 1989, 76–106; Broman Morales 1990, 1–30, 57–72; Lazarovici, Maxim 1995, 147–148; Banffy 2001, 53–67; Bailey 2005, 1–204; Ciută 2005, 102–109; Zalai-Gaál 2005, 16–23, 25–31; Falkenstein 2007, 121–136; Nanoglou 2009, 283–294; Twiss, Russell 2009, 19–30; Lesure 2011, 1–217; Spasić 2012, 295–308; Luca 2014, 135–136; Luca 2015, 146, 228; Tripković, Porčić, Stefanović 2017, 84–93.

of the 6<sup>th</sup> millennium BC, feminine figurines, often depicting women in labour, are accompanied by their “acolyte”, the wild bull (*Bos primigenius*).

### *Conclusions*

The Early Neolithic plastics found in feature 176a in the Şoimuş-Teleghi archaeological site – a female anthropomorphic figurine, a possibly anthropomorphic figurine (?) and a zoomorphic figurine –, although they are in different states of preservation, they are very important to the repertoire of prehistoric plastics from the first two phases (I-II) of the Starčevo-Criş cultural complex north of the Danube, a somewhat sparse complex that often contains fragmented artefacts.

Considering the fact that such objects temporally belong to the early horizons of the greater Starčevo-Criş cultural complex, their presence among the first Neolithic settlements in the intra-Carpathian space offers information not only on certain aspects regarding the spirituality of the prehistoric communities (the objects were most likely *idols*), but it also proves the existence of common traditions/ connections between the oldest groups of agricultural populations north of the Danube with the Balkans and the Near East at the end of the 7<sup>th</sup> millennium BC and the beginning of the 6<sup>th</sup> millennium BC.

Last but not least, we must mention that the publication of this small lot of items from the Early Neolithic plastics is made distinctive by the presence (in the “corner” of dwelling 176a) of three items that can be linked to the spirituality or belief system of the Early Neolithic communities. Future studies could prove whether or not a place of worship existed in dwelling 176a, a place reserved for spirituality, in which the anthropomorphic and zoomorphic representations presented above were “worshipped”, or whether we are faced with another “hazard” of such discoveries.

### *Acknowledgements*

We wish to express our gratitude for the English translation of the text, made by Anca Chiorean, from the “Lucian Blaga” Central University Library of Cluj-Napoca.

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**SCURTE CONSIDERAȚII DESPRE FIGURINELE STARČEVO-  
CRIȘ DIN SITUL ARHEOLOGIC ȘOIMUȘ-TELEGHI,  
COMPLEXUL 176A (JUDEȚUL HUNEDOARA)**

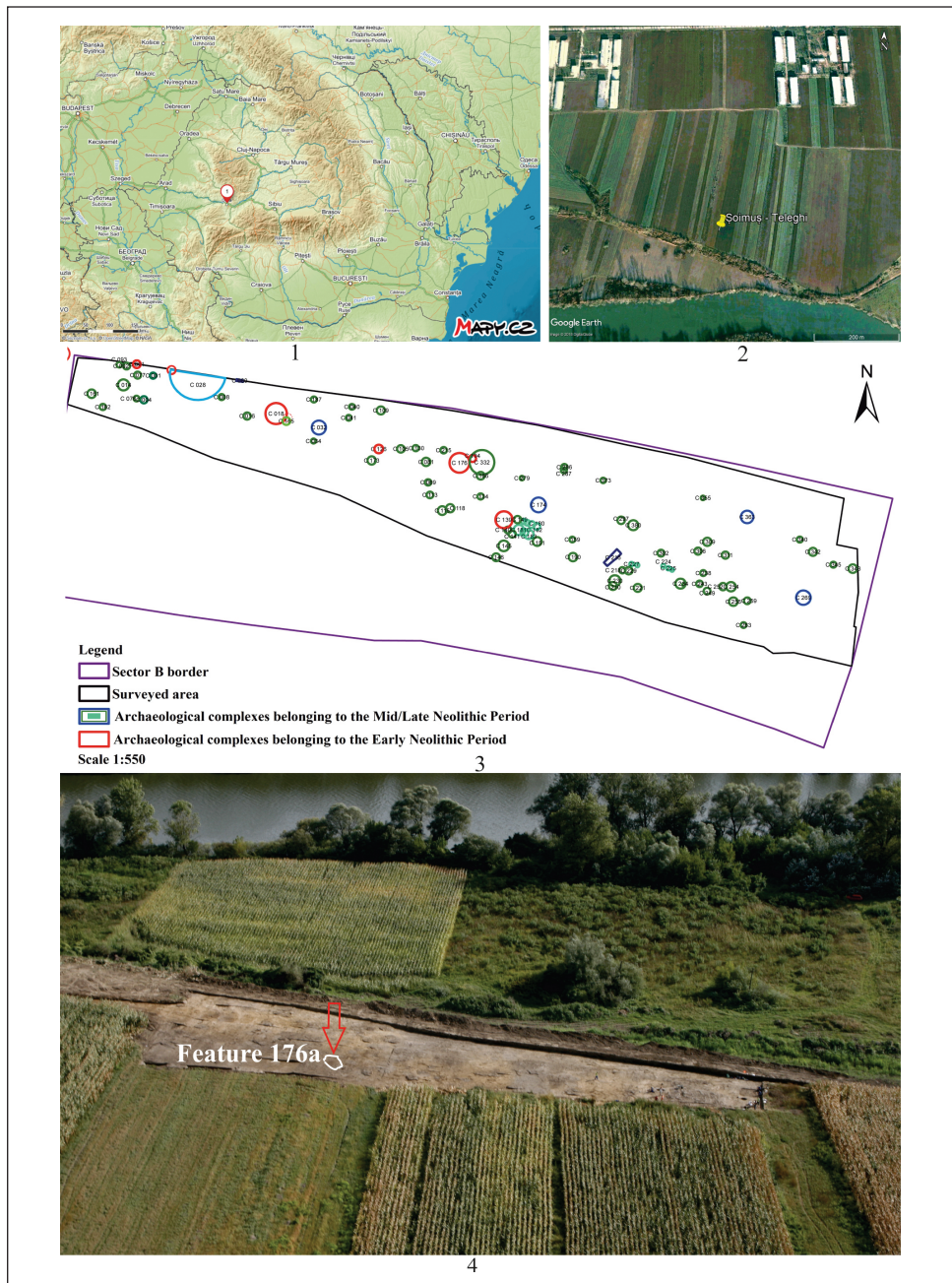
*Rezumat*

În nota arheologică de față ne propunem prezentarea plasticii antropomorfe și zoomorfe, caracteristice neoliticului timpuriu, descoperite în situl Șoimuș-*Teleghi*, județul Hunedoara, cu prilejul cercetărilor arheologice preventive la proiectul tronsonului de autostradă, A1, Deva-Orăștie, desfășurate în toamna anului 2011. Obiectele arheologice discutate au fost identificate în locuința adâncită 176a, a cărei cronologie relativă, pe baza trăsăturilor formelor și ornamentelor ceramicii, aparține etapelor IC/IIA și IIA, conform sistemului cronologic elaborat de G. Lazarovici pentru complexul cultural Starčevo-Criș.

Deși starea de conservare a pieselor discutate nu este cea mai bună, prin factura lor, dar mai ales prin maniera în care au fost confecționate, se poate distinge cu ușurință faptul că avem de-a face cu o categorie de obiecte speciale, diferite de restul inventarului ceramic prezent în locuința neolitică timpurie. Astfel, pe baza trăsăturilor care coincid cu fizionomia umană, am reușit identificarea unei figurine antropomorfe feminine, aflată în poziție șezândă, cu reprezentarea sânilor, căreia îi lipsește capul, detașat din vechime. O a doua reprezentare, posibil tot feminină, este discutabilă din toate punctele de vedere, ca urmare a stării fragmentare în care se găsește piesa amintită, dar și datorită morfologiei părților păstrate din artefactul amintit. Ultima piesă, de această dată păstrată integral, prezentând totuși amprenta trecerii timpului, este o figurină zoomorfă care prin particularitățile acesteia, reprezentarea coarnelor, a celor patru picioare și a cozii, ar putea fi încadrată în rândul reprezentărilor animaliere de bovidee.

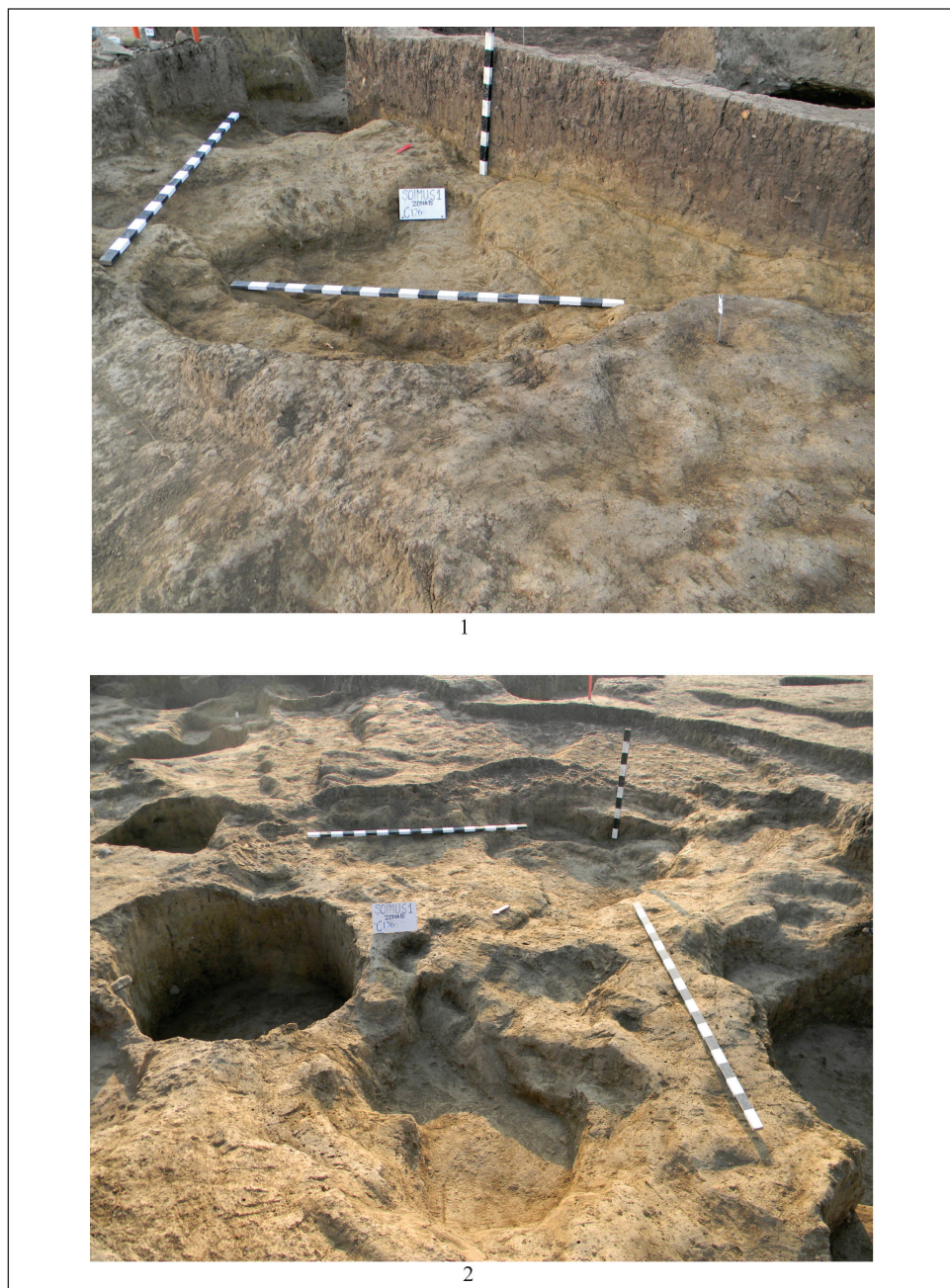
Cu toate că lotul de obiecte ceramice prezentat este unul restrâns și uneori nu foarte bine păstrat, putem conchide că plastica antropomorfă și zoomorfă descoperită în locuința 176a de la Șoimuș-*Teleghi* se încadrează perfect în canoanele artistice întâlnite în neoliticul timpuriu din Orientul Apropiat și sud-estul Europei, mai exact la mijlocul/ sfârșitul mileniului VII BC și la începutul mileniului VI BC.

Nu în ultimul rând, dorim să subliniem că toate artefactele prezentate ilustrează cel mai probabil o latură a spiritualității primelor grupuri de comunități agro-pastorale la momentul neoliticului vechi, în zona de sud-vest a Transilvaniei, acum aproape opt milenii în urmă.

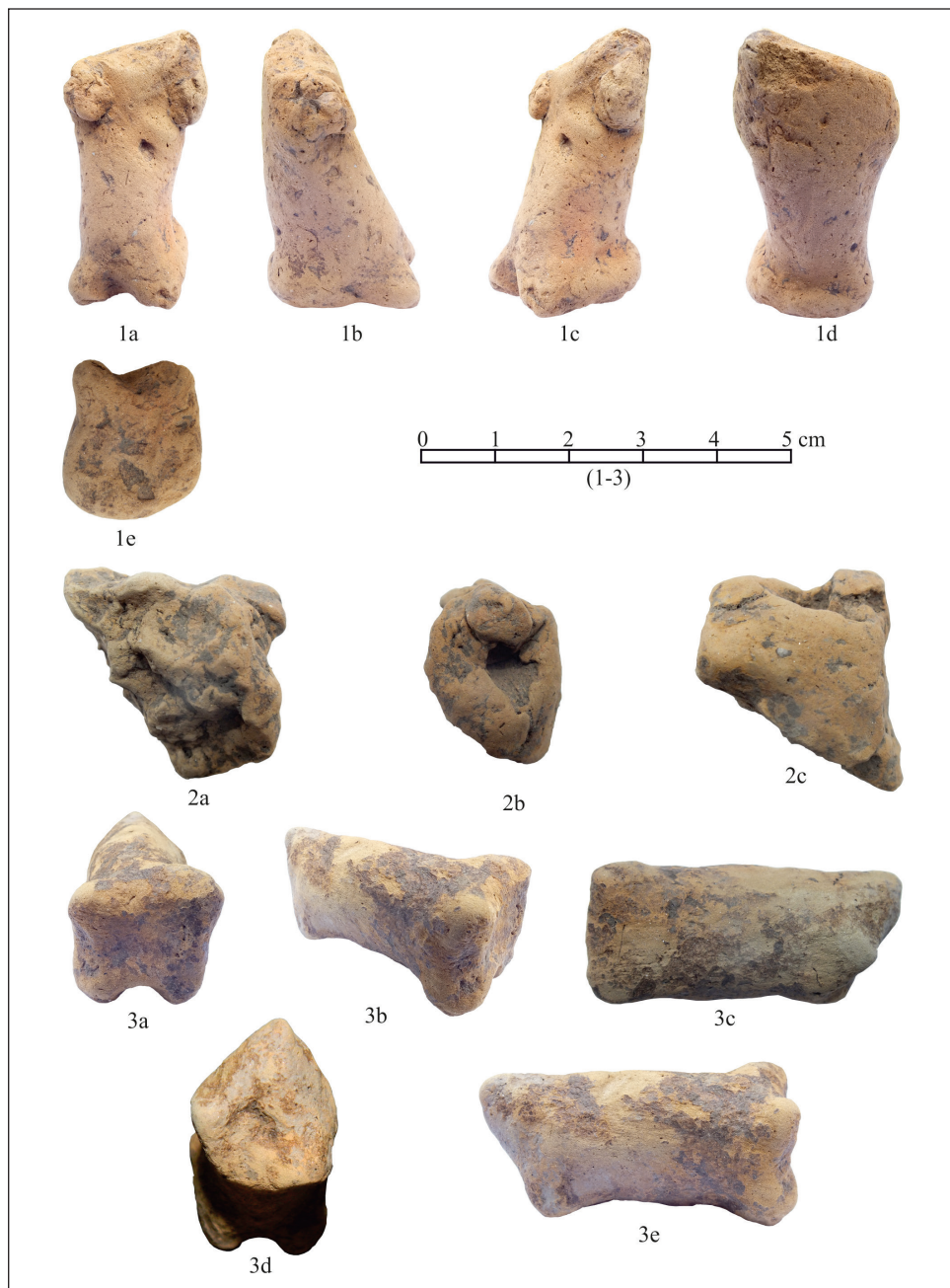


Pl. I. The Şoimuș – *Teleghi* archaeological site: 1. Location; 2. Satellite image; 3. Plan of the Neolithic settlement; 4. Aerial photo taken during the archaeological research (Photo: C. Bem). / Situl arheologic Şoimuș – *Teleghi*: 1. Localizarea; 2. Imagine satelitară; 3. Planul aşezării neolitice; 4. Fotografie aeriană din timpul cercetărilor arheologice (Foto: C. Bem).

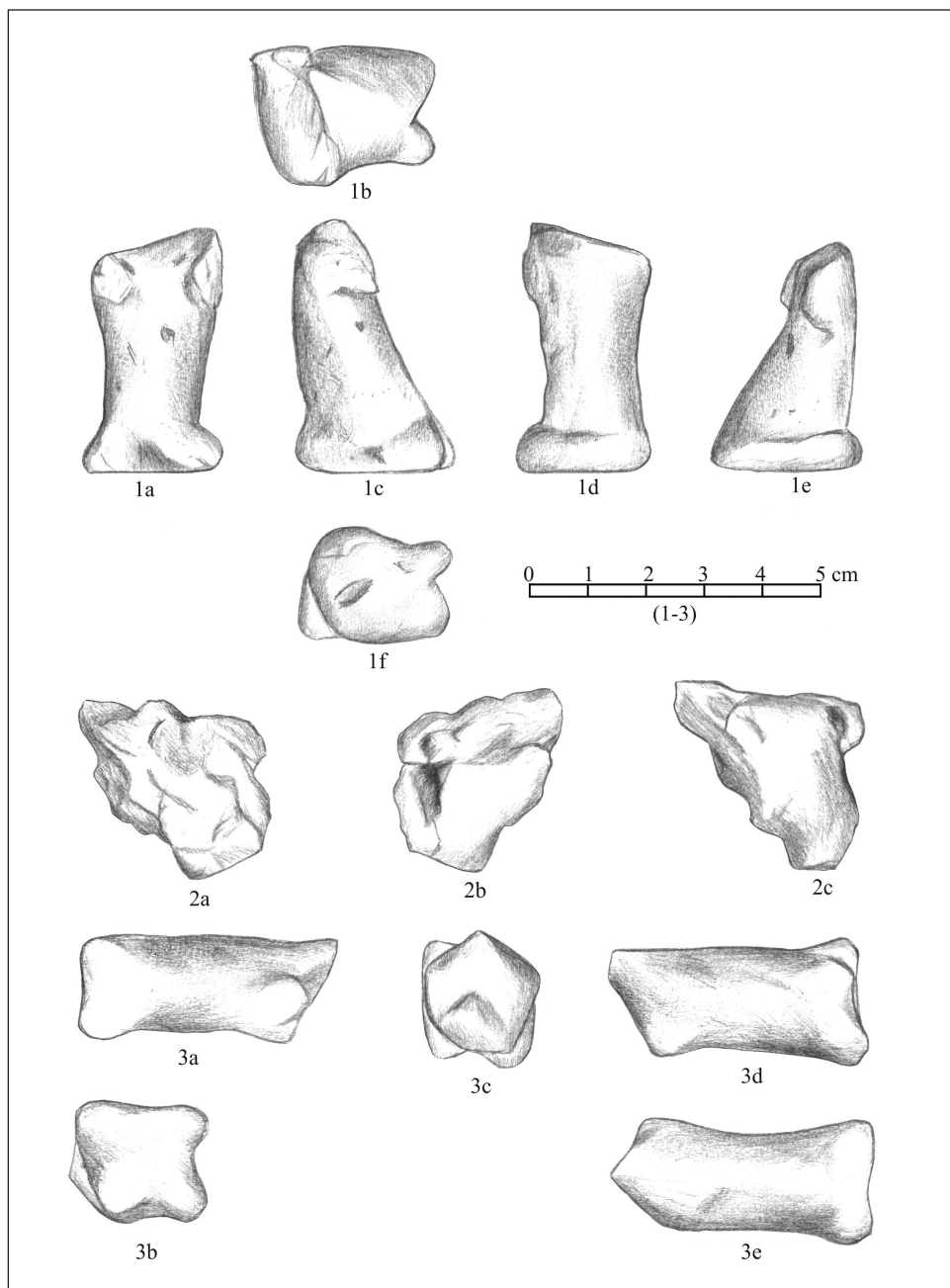




Pl. II. The Șoimuș – *Teleghi* archaeological site, complex 176a: 1. Photograph taken during the archaeological dig; 2. The pit-house at the end of the research. / Situl arheologic Șoimuș – *Teleghi*, complexul 176a: 1. Fotografie din timpul săpăturilor arheologice; 2. Locuința de tip adâncit în momentul finalizării cercetării.



Pl. III. The Şoimuş – *Teleghi* archaeological site, complex 176a: 1. Female anthropomorphic figurine; 2. Ceramic item, possibly anthropomorphic (?); 3. Zoomorphic representation of a bovine. / Situl arheologic Şoimuş – *Teleghi*, complexul 176a: 1. Figurină antropomorfă feminină; 2. Piesă ceramică posibil antropomorfă (?); 3. Reprezentarea zoomorfă a unui bovidu.



Pl. IV. The Șoimuș – *Teleghi* archaeological site, complex 176a: 1. Female anthropomorphic figurine; 2. Ceramic item, possibly anthropomorphic (?); 3. Zoomorphic representation of a bovine. / Situl arheologic Șoimuș – *Teleghi*, complexul 176a: 1. Figurină antropomorfă feminină; 2. Piesă ceramică posibil antropomorfă (?); 3. Reprezentarea zoomorfă a unui bovid.