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NEW DISCOVERIES OF THE NEOLITHIC AND AENEOLITHIC FINE ARTS AT MIERCUREA SIBIULUI- PETRIȘ, TĂRTĂRIA AND LUMEA NOUĂ¹

Abstract: Acest articol prezintă o serie de piese plastice descoperite în așezările neo-eneolitice de la Miercurea Sibiului-Petriș, Tărtăria-Gura Luncii și Alba Iulia-Lumea Nouă. Din așezarea de la Miercurea Sibiului-Petriș avem o singură piesă, de la Tărtăria-Gura Luncii provin 6 statuete antropomorfe și un fragment de altar, iar de la Alba Iulia-Lumea Nouă provin 6 statuete antropomorfe. Din punct de vedere cultural piesele aparțin culturii Vinča (piesa nr.1 de la Miercurea Sibiului-Petriș, piesele nr. 1 și 2 de la Tărtăria-Gura Luncii, piesele nr. 8, 9 și 10 de la Alba Iulia-Lumea Nouă), culturii Petrești sau unei faze a grupului cultural Lumea Nouă (piesele nr.3, 4 și 6 de la Tărtăria-Gura Luncii), grupului cultural Lumea nouă sau Turdaș (piesele nr. 11, 12 și 13 de la Alba Iulia-Lumea Nouă).

Keywords: neolithic, eneolithic, anthropomorphic figurines, altars.

The Description of the Neolithic Plastic Arts from Miercurea Sibiului-Petriș

1. Fragment of statue (protoma ?) (Fig.1/1). The statue is fragmentary and it represents, in all probability, a protoma placed on a vessel lid. It is brown with semifine sandy structure. The statue is degreased with chaff, too, and the burning is very good. The stratigraphic disposal of this piece is very important. It was discovered in dwelling 14 which was investigated in 2004. The dwelling is part of level IIB, at present being dated as Vinča culture, phase A₃-B₁. Analogies of this statue are frequent for this chronologic horizon (Bălănescu 1979, 1982; Lazarovici 1977, 1979; Luca 1998).

I have dealt with this fragment of statue as an introduction to this article because it is the best example – as far as the plastic art is concerned – for the strong relationship of the beginning of the Middle Neolithic in Transylvania with Vinča culture, phase A. At the same time, the Vinča pottery and plastic art from Miercurea Sibiului-Petriș is an evidence for the strong unity of the Vinča culture on wide areas, but it also has some peculiarities that will give birth, in a subsequent phase, to the Lumea Nouă culture and – later – to the Turdaș culture.

The prehistoric Settlements from Tărtăria-Gura Luncii and Alba Iulia-Lumea Nouă with Neolithic and Eneolithic levels, represent through the variety and quality of the Archaeological materials discovered there, a difficult attempt for any researcher preoccupied with the study of these periods in the History of Transylvania.

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Being situated in agricultural areas that are intensely cultivated nowadays, the materials of these two sites here, are and will still be rummaged and taken out incidentally. For this reason, these two sites are the base of several valuable private collections and have systematically been studied during several stages. The results of the systematic investigations as well as those obtained from field trips made these Settlements famous.

The Archaeological site from Tărtăria-*Gura Luncii* was known after a series of accidentally discoveries made by M. Roska (Roska 1942: 21, nr. 77).

The prehistoric settlement from *Gura Luncii* was the first time systematically investigated by Kurth Horedt during 1942-1943 (Horedt 1949: 44-57). Following excavations were made by Nicolae Vlassa in 1961 (Vlassa 1962: 23-30; 1963: 485-494; 1976: 28-43).

The last systematic investigations were made here in 1989 by Iuliu Paul².

The Description of the Neolithic and Eneolithic Plastic Arts from Tărtăria-*Gura Luncii*

1. Fragment of statue (Fig.2/3). Representing the head and the body from the neck down. Judging by its main features, this fragment of statue is one of the most recent of those belonging to the new series of incidentally discoveries made at Tărtăria. The mask of the statue is a developed type and slightly pentagonal. The eyes are made of two incisions, the right one being more oblique than the left one. The nose is round, one of the nostrils being rendered by an impression in the form of a tear. A very important feature for the Chronology of the statue is the fact that the top of the head is drawn towards the back like at many other representations from Banat and Transylvania belonging to this chronological and cultural level.

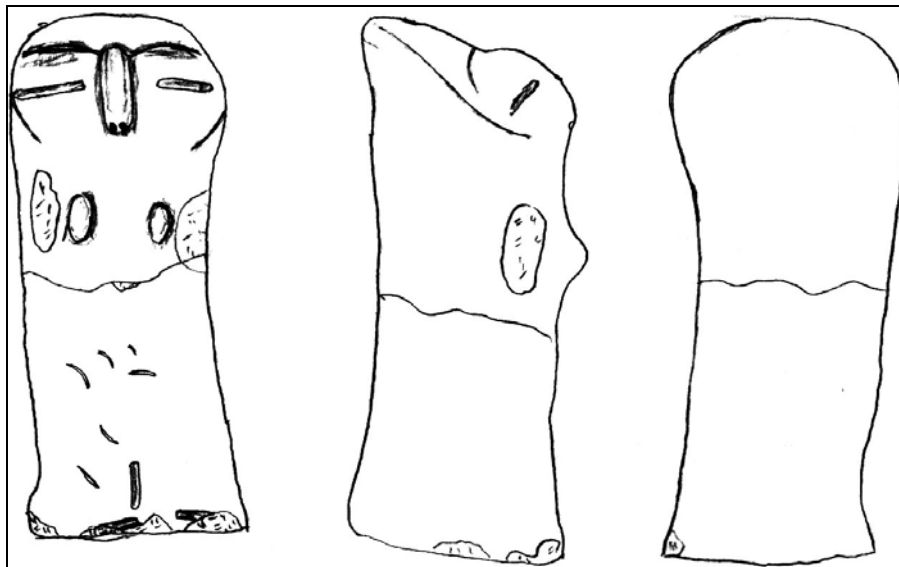


Fig.1 Statue found in a Vinča dwellind from Miercurea Sibiului-*Petriș*. Fragmentary statue. A protoma on a vessel lied (?), brown, semifine sandy structure, degraded with chaff, too, very good burning.

The statue is made of brown paste, sandy and for common use. The burning is good. The part that remained represents the Upper side of a "column idol" which evolved from those very characteristics of the Starčevo-Criș Culture and mainly found at the end of the Early phase of the Vinča Culture.

2. Fragment of statue (Fig.2/4). Representing the head of the statue. The work represents a triangular mask with a grate nose. A slight incision, interrupted by the nose, separates the face into two parts. The top of the statue is blunted and the look is pointed upwards. The slip, in days of yore, is totally gone. The statue is brick-coloured, sandy structure and light burning, the paste being baked.

The statue may culturally and chronologically belong to an Early phase of the Vinča Culture, the Transylvanian alternative.

3. Head of statue (Fig.2/6). As it appears, the head of the statue does not have a mask. The way in which the face is made points out the fact that the statue was accomplished under the influence of an extra-Carpathian culture (Gumelnița, Sălcuța, Precucuteni) that belongs to the Upper Eneolithic. Description: prominent eyebrows, the eyes rendered by incisions, in a slight oblique position as compared to the nose; the nose is represented in a realist manner, even the nostrils are rendered by two intrusions, round mouth.

The fragment is brown and there are liftings of burning on. The statue is cleansed with sand, chaff and has a very good burning. It is also polished and has slip (on the outside).

This representation may be chronologically and culturally attributed to one of the phases of the Petrești Culture or maybe to the Lumea Noua Culture.

4. Fragment of altar (Fig.3/3). The Piece of altar that was kept has two legs as pedestal and a fragment from a small container. It is also kept an anthropomorphic protoma with a round-pentagonal mask and the eyes situated almost perpendicularly on the nose are rendered by incisions. The eyebrows are well defined. The nose of the protoma is prominent and long.

The fragment is brick-coloured (and black on the inside), it has half-fine sandy structure, spatula retouches and good burning (as it seems secondary burning because of a fire).

The altar joins the other works which were found in the Eneolithic strata at Tărtăria and taking into account its structure and manner in which it was made, it probably belongs to the Petrești and Lumea Nouă Cultures.

5. Fragment of statue representing the head (Fig.3/4). The fragment had a pentagonal mask on its face whose inner part is not kept anymore, being broken a long time ago. The eyes are represented by deep incisions and the nose follows the model of a small protuberance. From under the nose another deep incision goes downwards. It is not known on what distance this lays but not on a very long one, anyway, as it certainly represents a nostril. The nape of the statue is blunted and so are its breasts. This representation is yellow coloured, has fine sandy structure, slip, and a very good burning.

All these features enable us to attribute this fragment of statue to the late Eneolithic strata of this site.

6. Fragment of statue (Fig.3/6). Only the torso, it is one of the most beautiful works of this lot of objects. The head, the arms – from the shoulders down – and the legs – from the thighs down – were broken in days of yore. The fragment that has been kept is a clear evidence of the special care of the Ancient author, to render correctly the anatomical details of the representation (e.g. the

number of the fingers). It appears that like many other statues of the Tisa I Culture, this one too sat on a throne.

The statue is brown, with grey slip and very good burning (the core of the structure is black) and cleansed with fine sand.

The features of the statue enable us to attribute it to the Petrești or Lumea Nouă strata of this site.

7. Head (?) made of a river rock (unillustrated). From Tărtăria, too, it comes a round river-boulder on which one may distinguish the features of a human face. There can be noticed the eyebrows and semicircular eyes. The mouth, too, is semicircular and broad. The details that make up the face which are in fact more grotesque than realistic and though schematic as the Neolithic art usually is, make us think that we are witnessing – in the best case – a product of the nature.

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The prehistoric settlement from Tărtăria-*Gura Luncii* is one of the most important Archaeological sites of Transylvania (Vlassa 1976: 28-31). Some of the statues that were incidentally discovered there may be attributed, at least by their typology, to the already known Stratigraphy of the Ancient villages of this area.

The first systematic excavations done by K. Horedt during 1942-1943 and published (Horedt 1949), are according to the picture of the article (Horedt 1949: Fig.1, 4-8), much more complex than those done by N. Vlassa in 1961 (Vlassa 1976: Fig.1-3). The latter added to the sections and A, C, D, E and B, F surface areas, which had been investigated during 1942-1943, the H Section and G surface, both having been done in 1961 Vlassa 1976: Fig.1. The most complex excavations are those made in the G surface, which in fact checked the profiles of the C surface, profiles that were analysed by the scientist from Sibiu.

After all these excavations, K. Horedt names the discovered levels (Tărtăria I – with mud-huts; Tărtăria II a, b and c – with surface dwellings) (Vlassa 1976: 53-54). It is also very important the parallel between Tărtăria II b and Boian A levels on the account of a pottery importation (Precucuteni I or II? Vlassa 1976:).

As I was saying before, N. Vlassa's excavations were only meant to check the already known Stratigraphy. I made use of N. Vlassa's conclusions in a quite recent publication, in order to parallel the Stratigraphy of Tărtăria-*Gura Luncii* with that of Turdaș-*Luncă* (Luca 2001b: 147-151).

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All these ideas, have been reminded to the reader for a better cultural and chronological classification of, at least, several of the statues of the collection dealt with. We speak about the statues mentioned at Fig.2/3-4, 6; 3/3-4, 6. According to their typological and stylistic features, these statues could be divided into, at least, two Groups, which would belong to two different chronological moments.

The former group includes the statues from Fig.2/3-4 and 3/3-4. This series could also be divided into subgroups because of the statue from Fig.2/3, on the one side, and of the statues from Fig.2/4; Fig.3/4 on the other side, and finally because of the altar from Fig.3/3.

These subgroups would also have chronological valences, the subgroup no 1 being the earlier, by the presence of the statue from Fig.2/3. On the account on Some similar statues, it was established the antiquity of the ritual complex discovered by N. Vlassa at Tărtăria (Vlassa 1976: 31, 34, 125, Fig.6). This one consists of 16 burned-clay statues, two Cycladic alabaster idols, a *Spondylus*-shell bracelet and three slates (little plates) with incised marks, none of these having been published before together with illustrations (the statues). Besides, there were also, the scattered bones of a human being about 35-40 years old, several of them burned and the others broken. N. Vlassa thought of a possible form of ritual cannibalism (Vlassa 1976: 31).

Judging by the image of the anthropomorphic clay statues from the Vinča area, of the approached chronological moment, it comes out that the anthropomorphic ones from Gornea (Bălănescu 1979; Lazarovici 1977), Balta Sărată (Bălănescu 1979; Lazarovici 1977) or Liubcova (level V–III Luca 1990; 1998) could be the typological model for those of the Tărtăria group. But none of the approached statues are so structurally compressed as the Transylvanian deposit. In my opinion, the Archaeological context discovered by N. Vlassa is truly ritual and has nothing to do with the Stratigraphy that has so far been known for this site, especially with Stratum no 1. The holy statues were buried in, having no relation with the habitation strata from Tărtăria. It rather belongs to an earlier phase, chronologically classified in a previous stage. The people that buried the statues were either passing by, or they were doing an initiation or devotion ritual. Its signification is still unknown to us, the sacred place having been inhabited only after the signification of the devotion ritual had been forgotten, or even the Neolithic population changed something in its specific manner of relating to the divine. This modification appeared together with the Turdaș culture as it is nowadays called.

Each time this complex of worship was investigated, it was very difficult that it should also chronologically suit (adapt) to the Stratigraphy in this case, as the typology of the statues urged their classification into an earlier phase, and the pottery allowed this only in a compulsory way (Milojčić 1965; Makkay 1990).

We think that our previous explanation is the solution to our problem regarding the chronological classification of the ritual complex from Tărtăria, but also regarding Some Ancient levels that have an already well-known Stratigraphy in Transylvania. The conservatism of the earlier Vinča – communities mentioned above – can be noticed in the perpetuation of some archaic Vinča features, in the Turdaș pottery and especially in the statues found in these stations. The Turdaș culture, at a chronological Vinča B or C phase, still observed the common laws that had already been imposed by the Vinča inhabitants during the A phase of their culture, while they had for a long time failed to observe them in their native places. How else could it be explained the fact that the mask of the Transylvanian statues is triangular – or slightly pentagonal –, plainly rendered throughout the Late Neolithic, like in the Turdaș culture. This is characteristic only to the earlier phases of the Vinča culture in Yugoslavia and in the Southern area of Banat (type a and b from Tasić 1973: 23, sl. II)? How could we explain the fact that all the Vinča and Turdaș statues in Transylvania have the eyes incised, according to the plainest Vinča pattern, but considerably complicated during the late phases of the culture in the mother-areas (Tasić 1973: sl. I – type a)? In order to give extra information, I can only refer to the recent discoveries at Romos (Luca 1995-1996: T. III) and Turdaș-*Luncă* (Luca 1997a; 2001b, p. 81, 88-91, Fig.6 and 7/7), and

also bearing in mind the previous discoveries at Turdaş (Roska 1928, 1941, 1942) and those at Tărtăria, dealt with by N. Vlăssă.

It is also symbolic the fact that the mask of *The Statue from Liubcova* is triangular and not pentagonal as required by the chronological and cultural phase to which the statue is attributed (Luca, Dragomir 1987; 1989; Luca 1989 (1990); 1991). It is also eloquent the case of the tell type settlement, from Chioşoda Veche where the statues, which followed an Ancient pattern, with triangular mask, are found in the same mud-huts together with those having pentagonal mask (Radu 1979: 67, pl. I–III). It comes out that the typology of the mask form does not always submit to the common laws, which have so far been established as basic rules, not even in the Vinča culture.

The latter group includes the statues from Fig.II/6 and III/6. The manner in which the face of the statue from Fig.II/6 is schematically created is almost similar to that characteristic for the cultures in the South of the Carpathians (Dumitrescu 1974: Fig.243, 251/1, 259-261), even if the procedure still has certain local influences.

Regarding the statue from Fig.III/6, we are certainly dealing with a statue that has its origins in the Eneolithic Petreşti levels in this site. The bust has analogies in the Vinča culture (Tasić 1973: T. XLVII/179, LIII, LXI, LXVIII), being possible for this statue to be related to those presented on a throne, in the Tisa I culture, too (Korek 1987: 53-57, Fig.14-16; Raczky 1987: Fig.32-35, 37; Hegedüs–Makkay 1987: Fig.7-10; * * * 1987: copertă; Gumelniţa culture - Dumitrescu 1974: Fig. 256-258).

Both types prove the spreading westwards and southwards of the Eneolithic Transylvanian World, and the cultural and trade connections of the epoch – why not?

These statues may come from a level, in which there is a synthesis between the Turdaş elements, those of Lumea Nouă and the Petreşti culture.

The station from Alba Iulia-*Lumea Nouă* has been known since 1942, when, after the construction of Some buildings of public utility, it was discovered a compact Stratum of burn traces and ceramics fragments. It was during the same year that the first scientific determinations, historical and Archaeological, concerning the site, were done. The proper researches took place in 1944, 1945 and 1947 (Berciu, Berciu 1949: 1-2). Further systematic excavations regarding this site were done in 1961 (Berciu 1968: 54-55).

The description of the Neolithic and Eneolithic statues from Alba Iulia-Lumea Nouă

8. Fragment of statue representing only the head (Fig.2/1). The mask on the face is pentagonal, bent. The eyes are rendered by short and oblique incisions as related to the position of the nose. This one is represented in a realistic manner, linked to the eyebrows and has a single nostril rendered by a round impression. The top of the head is blunted and cross-vertically perforated, here and there.

The statue is brick-coloured, sandy, smooth and with very good burning. It may belong to the earlier level from Lumea Nouă, more specific to the Vinča or Turdaş culture.

9. Fragment of statue representing the body (Fig.2/2). The statue is modelled according to the requirements of the realistic manner popular in Neolithic and Eneolithic. The pedestal of the bust represents the legs. On its base there are two short, parallel and overlapped incisions. In its lower part the pedestal has a round cell. The breasts, which demonstrate the female sex of the representation –

as well as the buttocks, firmly rendered – are modelled in a realistic manner, even the nipples being present. On the back of the statue one can see many incisions. From the buttocks two incisions go up towards the shoulders forming a triangle with its point headed downwards, and filled with a complicated series of short incisions. The arms of this representation are wide open.

This fragment of statue suggests that sometimes the incisions made on the Neolithic and Eneolithic statues may represent not only garments but also designs.

The statue is brick-coloured, sandy, half-fine and with very good burning. It may be attributed to the earlier levels of the site from Lumea Nouă, more specific to the Vinča and Turdaş culture.

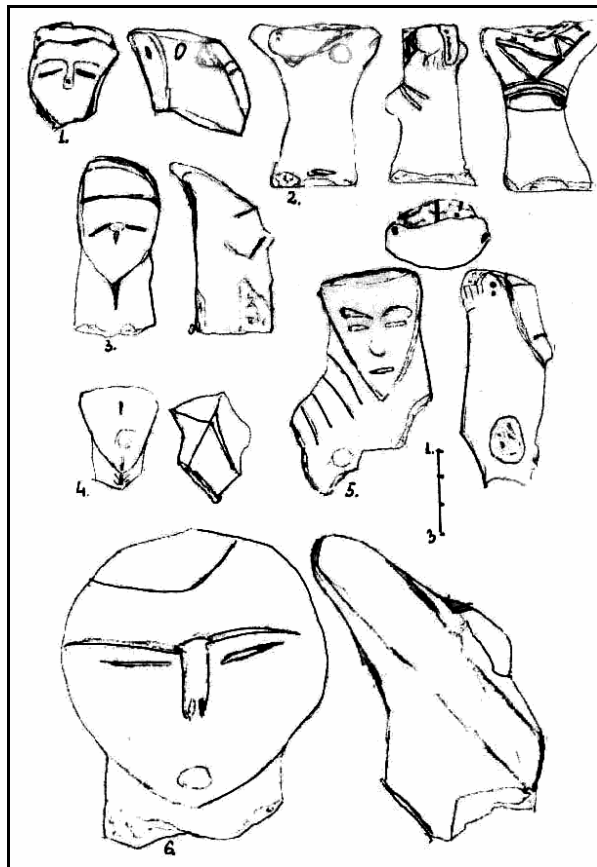


Fig.2 Plastic art from Lumea Nouă and Tărtăria settlements. 1. Alba Iulia-Lumea Nouă. Fragment of statue. Head. Redish, fine sandy structure, very good burning. 2. Alba Iulia-Lumea Nouă. Fragment of statue. Torso. Redish, semifine sandy structure, good burning. 3. Tărtăria-Gura Luncii. Fragment of statue. Head and something of the body. Brown, sandy, good burning. 4. Tărtăria-Gura Luncii. Fragment of statue. Head, brick-coloured, sandy structure, weak burning, baked. 5. Alba Iulia-Lumea Nouă. Fragment of statue. Head and some part of the body, beown-grey, degreased with sand and chaff, weak burning, baked. 6. Tărtăria-Gura Luncii. Head of statue. Brown with spots of burning, degreased with sand and chaff, polished, slip very good burning.

10. Fragment of statue representing the head and a part of the body (Fig.2/5). This statue represents one of the most realistically modelled from Lumea Nouă. The mask covering its face is triangular. The features of the face are more realistically rendered, similar to a portrait. The top of the statue is blunted and cross-vertically perforated, here and there. Moreover, on its extreme-lateral sides there are two perforated "tabs". The statue has also the right breast blunted, as well as the right shoulder, on which one can Notice several creases, and, by us, represent the manner of rendering the clothes for the Upper part of the body. The statue is brick-coloured, cleansed with sand and chaff, very weak burning, rather backed. This representation may belong to the level named as the settlement from where the group of statues comes.

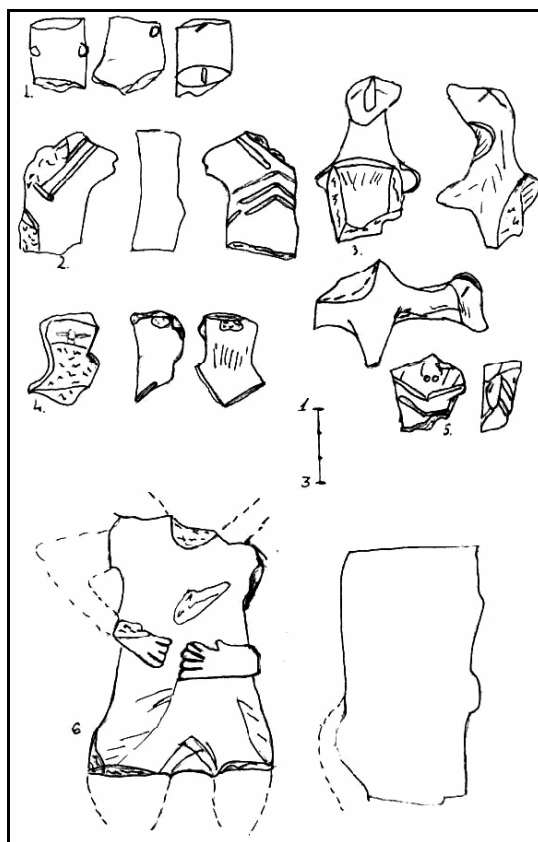


Fig.3 Plastic art from Lumea Nouă and Tărtăria settlements: 1. Alba Iulia-Lumea Nouă. Fragment of statue. Some part of the body. Black, semifine sandy structure, good burning. 2. Alba Iulia-Lumea Nouă. Fragment of statue. Some part of the body. Black, semifine sandy structure, good burning. 3. Tărtăria-Gura Luncii. Fragment of altar. Brick-coloured outside (black inside), semifine sandy structure, traces with spatula, good burning (secondary). 4. Tărtăria-Gura Luncii. Fragment of statue. Head, yellowish, fine sandy structure, slip, very good burning. 5. Alba Iulia-Lumea Nouă. Fragment of statue (protoma ?). Brick-coloured, semifine sandy structure, very good burning. 6. Tărtăria-Gura Luncii. Fragment of statue. Brown, grey slip, very good burning (black at the core).

11. Fragment of statue representing a part from a torso (Fig.3/1). What remained of the statue has sexual female features, namely the breasts which are rendered by two pointed nipples and the buttocks prominently modelled. The buttocks of this representation are separated by a deep incision. On its back one can see the extremity of an oblique incision (could it be part of the incisions representing the hair?).

The statue is black, half-fine, sandy, very good burning.

Judging by its structure and its basic features, the statue may be attributed to the levels of the Lumea Nouă culture, or probably of the Turdaş culture.

12. Fragment of statue representing part of a torso from the neck down up to the first quarter of the thighs (Fig.3/2). The statue is decorated with incisions. On the chest there is an incised triangle with its point headed downwards. Inside it, there are incisions parallel to one of the sides of the triangle. The back of the statue is decorated with three angular parallel incisions, which from the buttocks go up point headed. From the shoulders other angular incisions go down conversely arranged. These incisions may stand for a garment (probably a shirt). Something new is the fact that there is a modelled swelling on the lower part of the torso and there are no buttocks rendered. These details classify a male statue, one of the few examples of this kind throughout the Neolithic and Eneolithic.

The arms are lateral facing and perforated.

The statue is black, half-fine, cleansed with sand, good burning.

This representation may be considered to belong to the Lumea Nouă culture or probably to the Turdaş culture.

13. Fragment of statue (protoma?) (Fig.3/5). Its adjustment to a pot led to the very schematic representation of its essential features. The look rendered by the incised eyes is orientated upwards, its nose is long and the nostrils are in fact two round impressions. The incisions on the chest and on the back of the protoma suggest its "wrapping" like that of a mummy.

The representation is brick-coloured, half-fine, sandy, very good burning.

According to its structure and its main features the statue may come from the Lumea Nouă strata or, probably from those of the Turdaş culture.

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The Stratigraphy of the prehistoric settlement from Alba Iulia-*Lumea Nouă* has already been dealt with in two articles (Berciu, Berciu 1949: 1-18; Berciu 1968: 53-60). According to the former paper, the settlement has a Stratigraphy whose depth varies from 0,70 to 2 m. This Stratum is divided into three sub-levels more on the account of the typology of the pottery than on the difference in colours, in structure or architectural of the discovered levels (Berciu, Berciu 1949: 4).

These observations are complemented with those of the I. Berciu's article, which for a long time have been ignored. On this occasion we find out more complex and correct information, about the Stratigraphy of the site (Berciu 1968: 55-56).

These observations of vertical Stratigraphy, and complemented with the ones obtained from the Comparison of the different areas where excavations had been done at Lumea Nouă, determined the author of this work to draw conclusions valid at present, too (Berciu 1968: 56-58).

The first observation points (Berciu 1968: 56) out the participation of the Tisa culture to the genesis of the Petrești culture, even if the author claims that this influence is not necessary fundamental.

The second observation (Berciu 1968: 56-57) refers to the birth of the Vinča-Turdaș culture (read about the earlier A and B phases of the Vinča culture, and about the Turdaș culture formed on Vinča elements during the late Vinča B₂ phase). *We do not talk about the old Vinča-Turdaș culture* – earlier Vinča in our places – *that is A and B phases* – and as it has also been said in Some articles and books recently published, I totally agree with observation (Luca 1995-1996; 1997: 71-76; 1999: 7-14; 2000: 96-104; 2001b: 95-143, 147-152; Luca, Pinter 2001: 34-40, 81-90) – *concerning the relative dating of this civilisation. But it is about another phase of the ex Vinča-Turdaș background* – Early Vinča – *which developed under new circumstances, created by the Middle Neolithic of the central Transylvania*. This couldn't be more valid, as it also can be noticed – certainly, on a different scale and with other arguments – throughout my latest works (Luca, Ciugudean, Roman, Dragotă 2000, 2000a).

The statues dealt with in this article entirely represent moments of the late Chronology of the Middle Eneolithic probably of the Lower Eneolithic of the site Alba Iulia-Lumea Nouă.

Notes

1. The pieces of Tărtăria and Lumea Nouă belong to Gheorghe Alungulesei (Alba Iulia).
2. Excavation team: I. Paul, Al. Aldea, H. Ciugudean, Fl. Drașovean and S. A. Luca.

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