

ARCHAEOLOGICAL DISCOVERIES FROM RAMNICELU, BRĂILA COUNTY

Abstract: Satul Râmnicelu face parte din comuna Râmnicelu și este situat la marginea de nord – vest a Câmpiei Brăilei. Din punct de vedere al localizării administrative și teritoriale, satul Râmnicelu se află în partea de vest a județului Brăila, la 35 de Km de municipiul Brăila, pe drumul județean DJ 221. Am ales să prezentăm o scurtă sinteză a descoperirilor arheologice de la Râmnicelu, întrucât vestigiile cercetate sunt variate și datează din epoca neo – eneolitică (culturile Boian – faza Giulești, Gumelnița – faza A2, Cernavoda I – faza C), epoca bronzului, antichitatea târzie și evul mediu timpuriu. Prezentate separat, vestigiile arheologice descoperite la Râmnicelu nu par spectaculoase, dar o viziune integratoare conduce către imaginea unei ”aglomerări” umane care controla un punct de trecere între zona de câmpie și zona subcarpatică, precum și numeroase resurse materiale oferite de zonă.

Keywords: neo-eneolitic, bronz, medieval, Boian, Gumelnita, Cernavoda I.

Introduction

We choose to present this short synthesis of the Ramnicelu archaeological discoveries due to its various vestiges that belong to the neo-eneolithic period, bronze period, late ancient and also first medieval period.

If we look at these discoveries separately, we can say they are not spectacular but, looking at them as a complete vision, we obtain the image of a human crowd which controlled the passing point between the field zone and the subcarpathian zone and also various resources of the zone.

Geographical environment, localization and “survey” researches

Situated in the north-eastern side of Campia Romana, on the right upper and inferior terrace of the Buzau river, the archaeological complex of Ramnicelu has enjoyed a generous environment that provided the resources of living and surviving along the time. The approach of the Buzau river, two lakes from the Buzau meadow had provided the materials necessary for making tools, settlements, and all the things they needed to survive.

Very important were also the salted lakes that provided the very necessary salt: Batogu lake (30 km on the right of Ramnicelu), Movila Miresii (11 km), Caineni (19 km), Lacu Sarat (29 km).

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From the administrative point of view, Ramnicelu is situated on the west side of Braila, 35 km away from the city, on the DJ221 road.

The archaeological discoveries are as they follow: the Gumelnita hovels, Cernavoda I settlement, pottery fragments belonging to Cozia-Brad culture, a grave from bronze period, sarmatic graves, nomad horsemen grave - all of these discovered on a round hill (225x110m) called Popina; the materials belong to the Boian, Santana de Mures, Dridu cultures - on the upper terrace, north to the Ramnicelu village; the Sihleanu culture materials - on the centre and west of the same terrace (Dispensar and La Oglinda point); and the sarmatic materials were discovered in the west side of the village (Hartuche 1980a, p. 34; fig.1) (*fig.2*).

The new technologies in archaeological researches were also used. We mention the topographical measurements (in System 1970) made in 2008 by the museums specialists together with the Rom Survey SRL Braila. From these measurements has resulted a system of points and coordinates that localize more precisely the hill which also allows us to obtain a tri-dimensional images (*Fig.3; fig.4 a*). Thanks to this type of researches we can say that a central point of the hill has the next coordinates: Stereo 1970, X: 424200 and Y: 697900 and its height from the sea level is maxim 31 metres.

Also the GPS measurements were made (system WGS 84) during 2008 which facilitated us to include the Ramnicelu - *Popina* and its 4 sections into a global system. GPS localization is 45.17.376 latitude - 27.31.272 longitude and 45.17.477 latitude - 27.31.347 longitude (*fig.4*).

Archaeological researches

On the administrative zone that we've mentioned, there were many interesting finds from archaeological point of view. Most of them were already identified during 3 campaign made between 1968-1970 by the Nicolae Hartuche and Florian Anastasiu (Hartuche 1980a, p.33).

First surface researches were made in the autumn of 1958. In 1961 have also been taking a bearing and discovered "many pottery fragments mixed with smashed shells ornamented with strings" (Hartuche 1980a, p. 33). Systematic researches were accomplished 1968-1970 and 69 different sections were made. Most of them were concentrated on the half of the north-east side because there was supposed to be more dense populated. That is why it was completely studied by digging parallel and perpendicular ditches (Hartuche 1980a, p. 33). In the south-western sector only 8 sections were made and the living marks are rarely. The sections maximum depth was 1, 20 m and on the eastern edge was only 0, 40 - 0, 50 m.

In 2008 the archaeological diggings were restarted by Stanica Pandrea, Mirela Vernescu, Costin Croitoru and Viorel Stoian and the old excavations of Hartuche and Anastasiu were extended. The specialists of Braila's Museum reopened the archaeological researches and more 4 sections were accomplished (S1/2008-S4/2008). The sections are on the north side of the hill and are disposed like this: S1- north; S2- east; S3 and S4- north-west (*Fig.4b*).

Some archaeological discoveries were found during all campaigns:

- a) 2 hovels and pottery fragments belonging to the A2 faze of Gumelnita Culture.
- b) a settlement from Cernavoda I Culture.
- c) pottery fragments from Cozia –Brad aspect.
- d) a grave from bronze period.
- e) 18 sarmatic graves.
- f) a nomad horsemen grave.

The archaeological discoveries catalog

The archaeological remains were identified and studied in many areas of the Ramnicelu village:

“Ion Sion” Farm (today Stallion Yard)

During the agricultural works some pottery materials and silex slides from Boian culture Giulesti faze were discovered. Also during the construction of some mews was identified and searched a settlement – hovel - which contained fragment of vessels and utensils made of stone and bones also from the same culture.

“La Coman”

In the garden of Alexandru Coman had been discovered some pottery fragments from the Boian culture and other from the IV century B.C. (Anastasiu, Hartuche 1967, p. 19).

Ramnicelu - Stefan cel Mare Road

On this road were discovered 2 skeletons, 2,00-2,50 m away one from another. Both skeletons were positioned curled up and the heads were towards north-west. Near the heads were found homage vessels. Judging after the vessels` decoration we can say that the skeletons belonged to the late bronze period, probably Coslogeni culture (Anastasiu, Hartuche 1967, p. 19-20).

“Tudor Munteanu`s vineyard”

On the terrace of river Buzau were found some pottery fragments very much alike to the one discovered in the graves from the Ramnicelu- Stefan cel Mare road. Probably there was a settlement from the late bronze period, contemporary to the two graves. Also here were discovered some pottery fragments belonging to the IV century B.C. (Anastasiu, Hartuche 1967, p. 21).

“La Plasoi”

In the Stefan cel Mare village (also a part of Ramnicelu), on the Buzau terrace were discovered many pottery fragments belonging to the beginning of Medieval Period (X century A.C.). (Anastasiu, Hartuche 1967, p. 22).

“La cimitir”

On the west side of Ramnicelu village, near the edge of the terrace were identified pottery fragments from the IIIrd century A.C. (Hartuche 1980a, p. 34; fig.1).

“La Oglinda”

The old lake Oglinda was situated on the right side of Buzau river. Under the broken river side were discovered some fragments of pottery belonging to the end of the bronze period and the beginning of the iron period, during the Sihleanu cultural aspect (Hartuche 1980a, p. 34; fig.1).

“Popina”

The archaeological remains discovered are:

- a) eneolithic- 2 human settlements belonging to the Gumelnita culture- A2 faze.
- b) final eneolithic- more settlements and fire places belonging to the Cernavoda I culture - faze Ic.
- c) a grave from the end of the bronze period.
- d) pottery fragments belonging to Cozia- Brad aspect.
- e) 18 sarmatic graves.
- f) a grave of the nomad horsemen.

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a) Gumelnita archaeological remains.

There were searched 2 human settlements, hovel type (belonging to the Cernavoda I culture).

Hovel B6 was discovered in section S1, near the northern edge of the hill. It was at the 0,70 m depth and was round shaped. Its diameter had 4 m. In its interior were discovered many pottery fragments made of good clay, polished both in interior and exterior, decorated also in interior and exterior (Hartuche 1980a, p. 37).

Hovel B7 was identified in section S22, close to the north edge of the hill. It had oval shape with a diameter of 3,70x 4,20 m. In B7 had been discovered pottery fragment belonging to the Gumelnita culture - faze A2 and Cucuteni culture - faze A3. The fragments from Gumelnita culture were very much alike those discovered in Brailita settlement that is why we appreciate that they belong to the Gumelnita B1 culture from the Danube Valley.

b) Cernavoda I archeological remains

The Cernavoda I settlement from Ramnicelu was not fortified because the land had offered a natural protection. The settlement had one single living level

whose thickness was about 0,40 - 0,60 m. In the north-east side there were many remains but in the south- west they are missing. Also we discovered an important amount of ashes. In Cernavoda I had been discovered 20 living complexes - 10 houses and 10 external fire places.

There were not surface houses like those identified in Cernavoda, Oltenita-Renie. The human settlements from Ramnicelu are deep, hovel type and the holes had diameter of 3,70- 4,50 m and A= 0,75-1, 25 m. It had ashes filling mixed with pottery, broken bones and collapsed walls. Beside ashes another important discovery was charcoal. The external fireplaces measure 3,50x 4,00 m and were about 1 m diameter and 0,15-0,25 depth.

The most important archaeological complexes are:

Hovel B1- was identified in section S15 near the hill's centre and had L- 4,30 m and 1,00- 2,85 m and A- 1, 20 m. It was square shaped and full of ashes, bones, pottery and collapsed walls. The hovel was arranged:

1. the north entry had steps.
2. had a floor of beaten clay.
3. in the centre of the house was a hole that may belonged to the auxiliary prop that sustained the roof.
4. in the NE side was a fireplace in a hole with D=50 cm and A=20 cm.

The pottery materials could be belonging to the Cernavoda I and Cucuteni B2 cultures.

Hovel B2-was identified in section S11 near the hill's centre and had L=4,75 m and A= 1,00m. Its hole is in -75 cm and had oval shape. The filling was of ashes, bones, fragments of the wall. This hovel was also arranged:

1. the north side had steps.
2. there was a floor of beaten clay.

The remains of this hovel could also belong to the Cernavoda I and Cucuteni B2 cultures.

External fireplace Z2A was identified in the north-west of the hill and it had L-4,50 m and A=0,40-0,45 m and almost 12 mp (4mx3m).there were discovered many remains. It was build in a hole of 0,50 m diameter and 0,20- 0, 25 depth and we consider that was not used as a living place.

The archaeological remains discovered in these settlements are very various: agricultural implements, weapons made of bones, stones and antlers, fragments of domestic and wild animals, clay, copper. We identified also axes, bludgeon made of hard stone and without punch. Very interested is the fact that the vessels were made of mixed shells (Cernavoda I –Ic faze), they were coloured in black and grey and (Cernavoda III) and many vessel fragments (Cucuteni B2).

c) The grave from the bronze period

The Grave M10 is different from the other graves. It was discovered in the east part of hill in the 0,66 m depth and belongs to the bronze period. It has the oval shape. The skeleton was well conserved, in dwarfed position and oriented towards east-west (Hartuche 1973, p. 18-19). Besides the skeleton had been discovered a

pottery vessel, coloured in yellow both in interior and exterior. Its dimensions are: h= 0,145m; dg= 0,15m; df= 0,84m. Into his palms was discovered some fragments of an object made of bronze.

d) Sarmatic graves

The graves M1-9 and M11-19 were identified in the north part of the hill, towards NE and E (Hartuche 1980b, p.216).

M1. (A=0,30 m), oriented SV-NE, adult, fragmentary vessel, red coloured, burned, in shape of a jar (Hartuche 1980, p.216-217).

M2. (A=0,40), oriented V-E, adult, dwarfed position, no fragments (Hartuche 1980, p.217).

M3. (A=0,55m), oriented N-S, child, 2 glass pearls around the neck, with different shapes, and on their surfaces were drawn six white "eyes" (Hartuche 1980, p.217).

M4. (A=0,55 m) V-E oriented, child, normal position (Hartuche 1980, p.217).

M5. (A=0,50m) V-E oriented, child idem M3 (Hartuche 1980, p.217).

M6. (A=0,50) V-E oriented, child (Hartuche 1980, p.217).

M7. (A=1,10 m) oriented N-S, adult, a metallic object (probably belt) around the belly (Hartuche 1980, p.217).

M8. (A=0,50m), oriented V-E, child, no archaeological remains were found (Hartuche 1980, p.217-218).

M9. (A=0,90m) oriented V-E, child, two glass pearls and some metallic remains (Hartuche 1980, p.218).

M12. (A=0,60m) oriented N-S, adult, a fragment of gold piece, square shaped, punched in 2 places (L=2,2cm; l=2 cm) on the right hand. The surface was decorated with flowers and human motives (Hartuche 1980, p.218). Also here were discovered meet homage remains and a knife (L=11, l= 2,2 cm).

M13. (A=0,40m), oriented V-E, adult, bronze fragments near the right arm and leg (Hartuche 1980, p.218).

M14. (Ad=1, 80m), disturbed skeleton, with important objects near: 7 glass pearls coloured in dark red, a golden pendentive, a pottery vessel (Hartuche 1980, p.218-219).

M15. (A= 0,60 m), oriented V-E, adult, no objects (Hartuche 1980, p.219, 222).

M16. (A= 1,20 m) oriented V-E, pottery vessel (Hartuche 1980, p.222).

M17. (A= 0,8 m), oriented V-E, adult, metallic objects (iron) (Hartuche 1980, p.222).

M18. (A= 0,50), oriented V-E, adult, homage objects remains and fragmentary knife, bones (Hartuche 1980, p.222).

M19. (A=0,30), oriented V-E, adult, pottery vessel, grey colour (Hartuche 1980, p.222-223).

M20 - child, disturbed, no inventory (Hartuche 1980, p.223).

The archaeological remains discovered on Ramnicelu - *Popina* are from the II-III century A.C.

e) *The grave of the nomad horseman*

M11 (-1,05), identified in the NNE sector of the hill in 1969, oriented V-E, adult, normal position. Objects discovered: 2 earrings, made of gold, round shaped (diam.= 0,022m, gr= 7,85 g); near the head of the skeleton was a horse skull, an iron curb, and between the legs of the skeleton were 2 of the horse's legs (Hartuche, Anastasiu 1980, p. 263).

It is appreciated to belong to the Mongolian branch (Udrescu 1973, p.129).

Because of the objects discovered near him it is considered that the grave belongs to a petcheneg warrior.

During 2008 the archaeological diggings had started again (under S. Pandrea). Three sectors were made and into them also 4 sections were researched.

The results are as follow:

1. In the north part there is a previously excavated section and also a part of a hovel with Gumelnita A2 pottery.
2. In the east and west side there were not archaeological complexes but pottery materials belonging to Boian, Gumelnita, Cernavoda I cultures. We also noticed that the hill was lived from prehistoric times (*Fig. 5-6*).

We also confirm the information that the north-west side of the hill was permanently lived and the rest of his surface, just temporarily, is right.

The researches from the Ramnicelu along with those from Brailita, Pietroasele, Chirnogi, Ulmeni had contributed to the better acknowledgement of the Cernavoda I culture.

Away from the 2 settlements belonging to Gumelnita culture and the graves from bronze period on the hill was just a single living level- that belonged to Cernavoda I culture.

We hope that the 2008 researches (lately to be published) and those to the next years will bring new informations in this matter.

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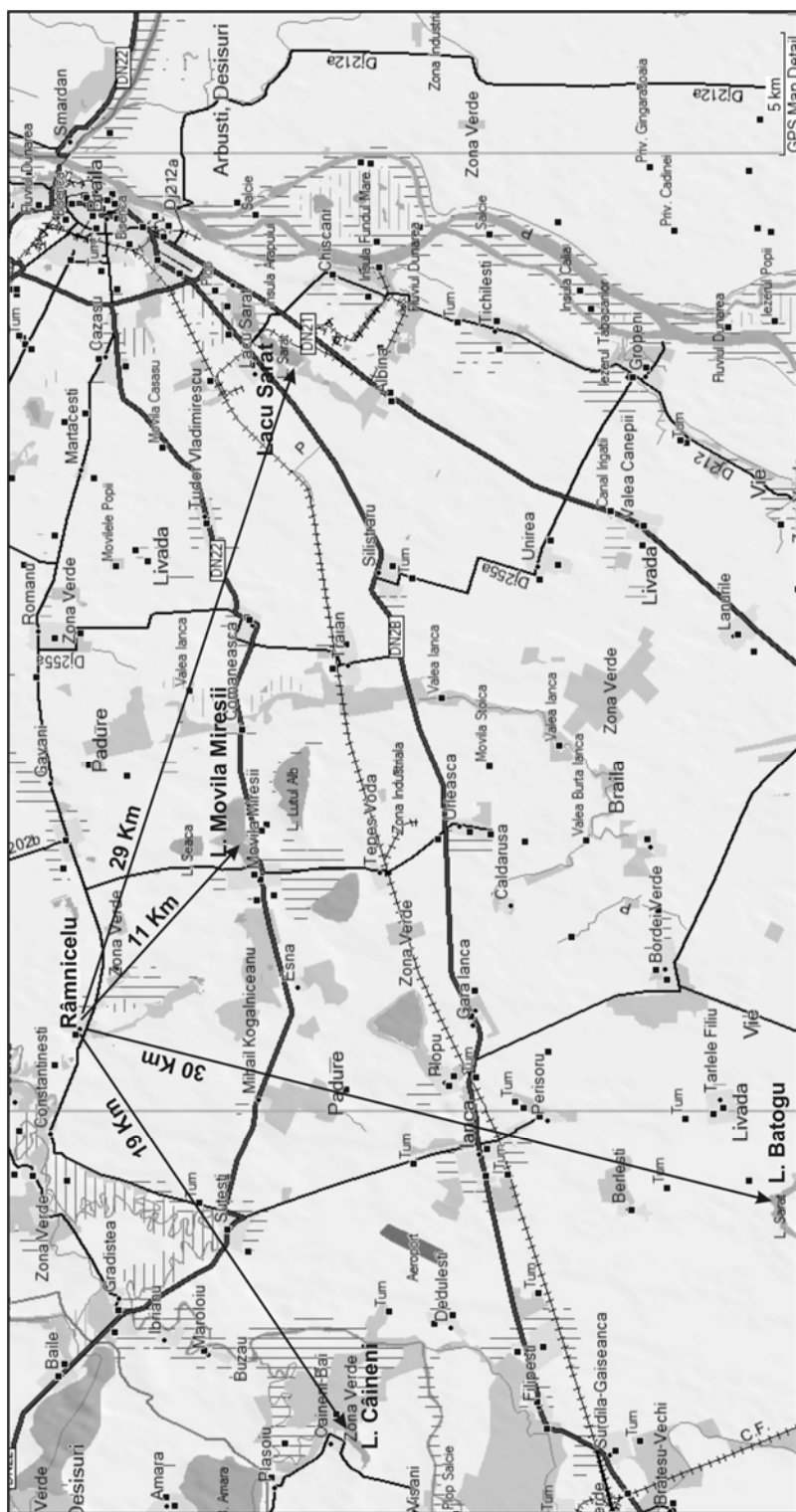
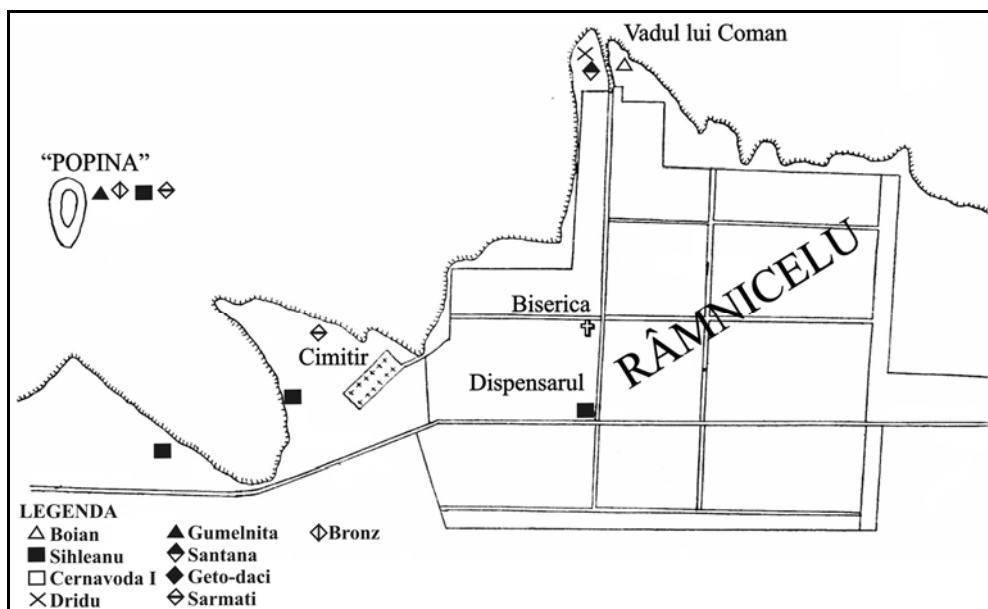
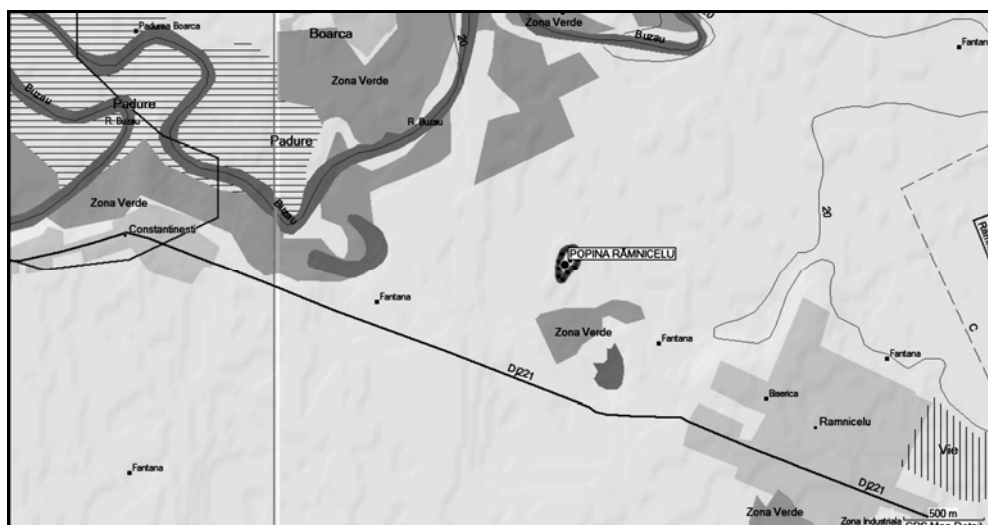


Fig. 1: Râmnicelu archaeological complex and salt lakes from Braila county. Map from RO.A.D 2006 GPS software.



a. Discoveries map (apud Nicolae Hartuche, 1980).



b. Village area map from RO.A.D 2006 software.

Fig. 2: Râmnicelu, Braila county.

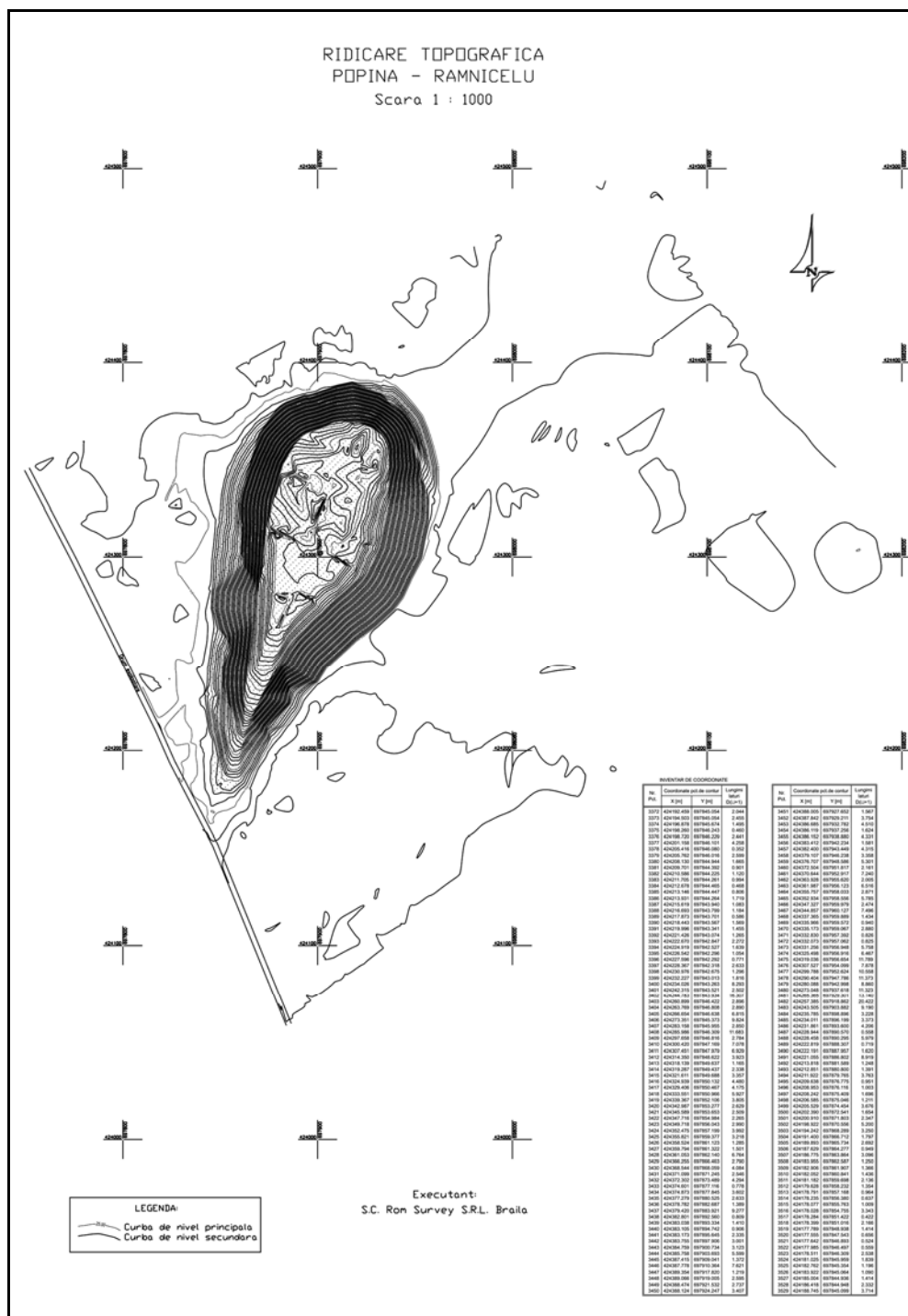
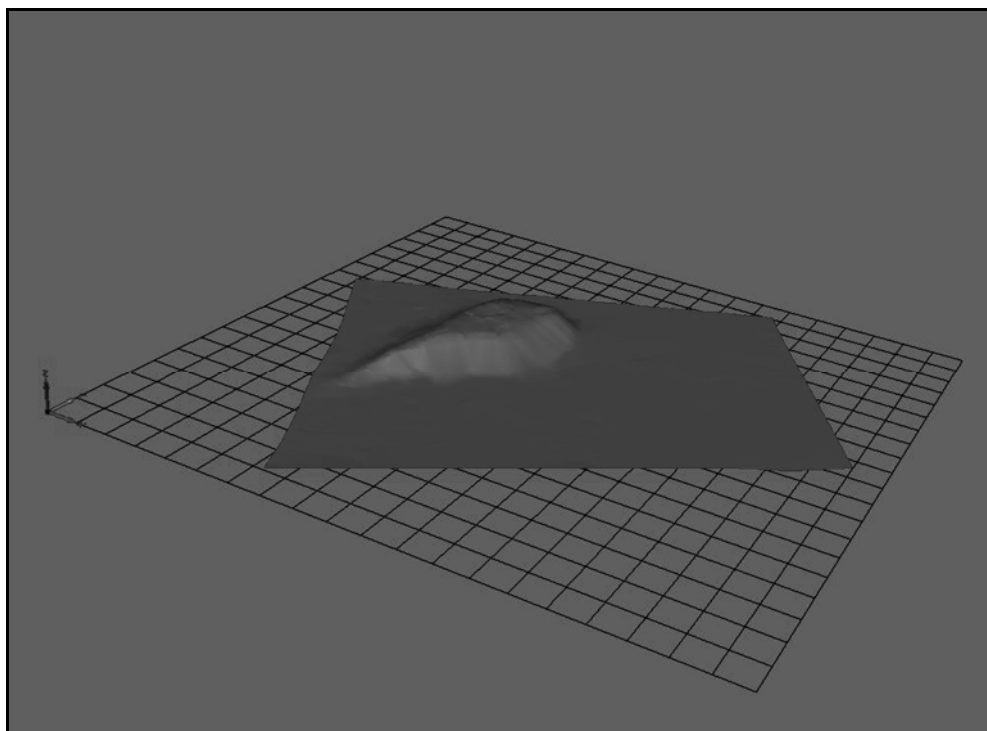
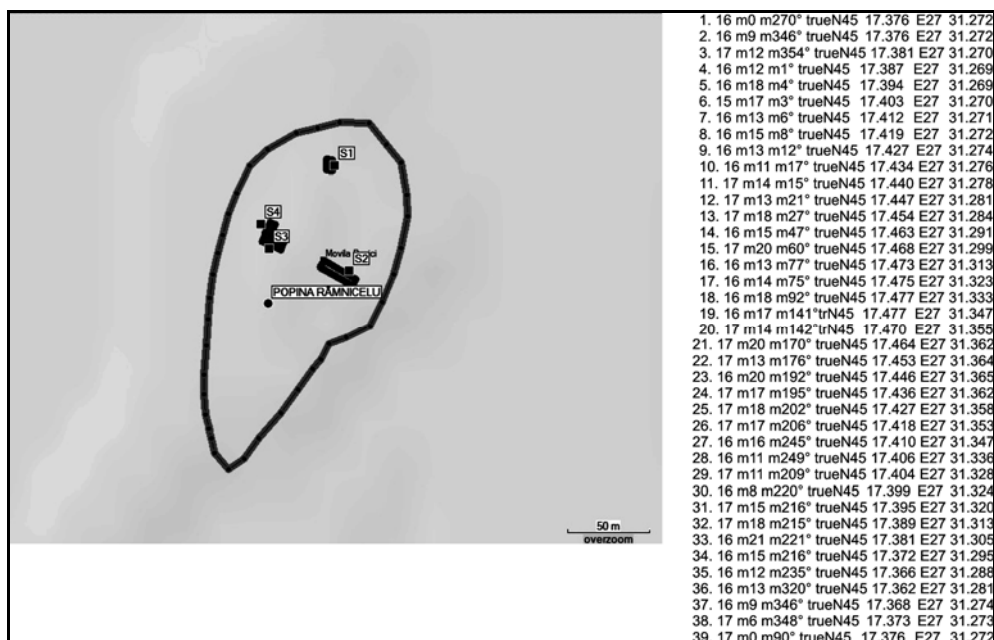


Fig 3: Râmnicelu - Popina, Braila county. Topographic plan (Scale 1:1000) and topographic coordinate points list.



a. Tridimensional Râmniceanu, point Hill, map



b. Râmniceanu, point Hill, GPS map (system WGS 84) and coordinate points list.

Fig. 4: Râmniceanu land survey maps.

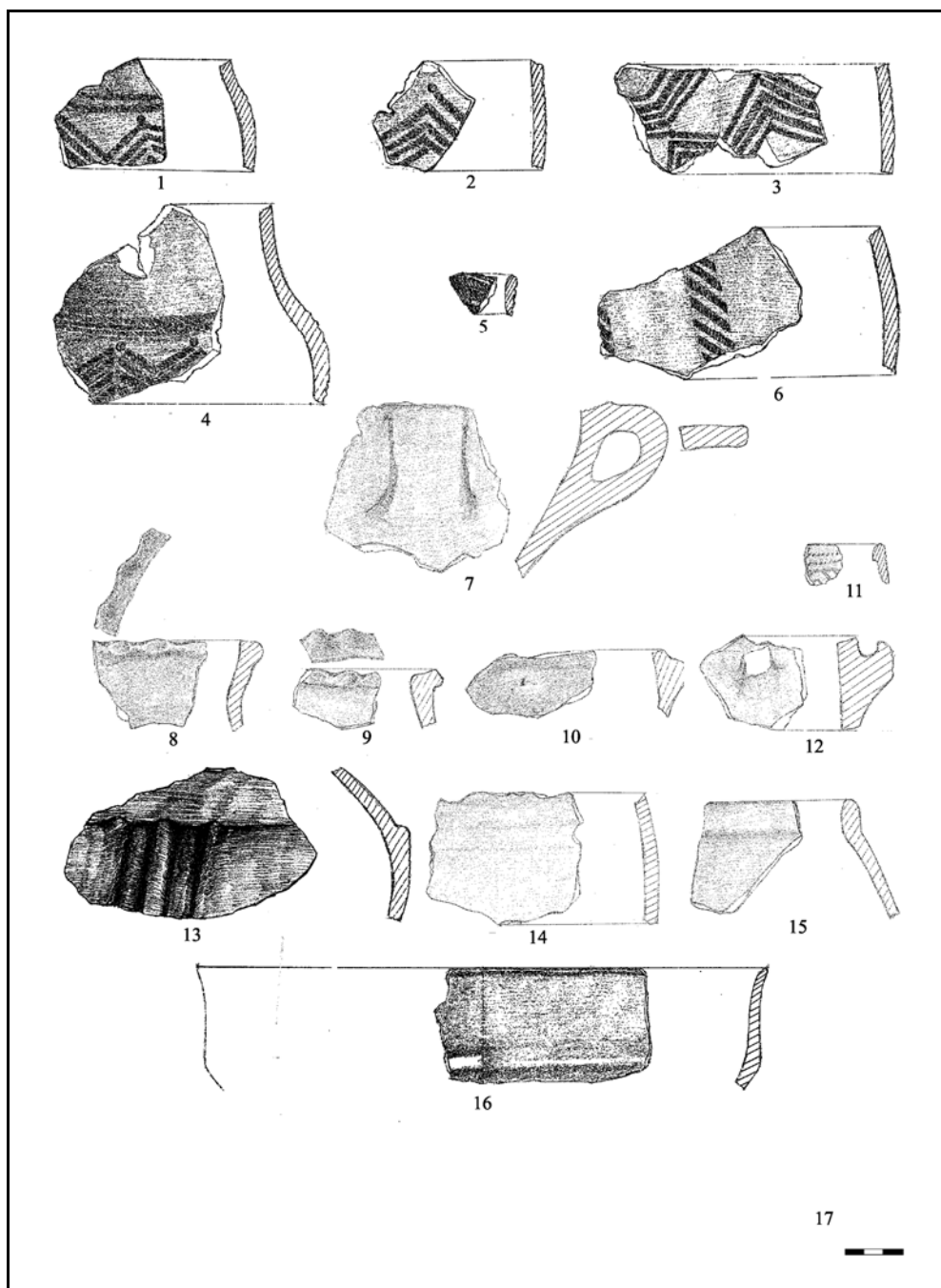


Fig. 5: Râmnicelu - Popina, Braila county. Clay vessels parts from different historical ages. 1-6 Cozia - Brad aspect; 7 - 10, 12 Cernavoda I culture; 11 Cernavoda II culture; 13-16 Gumelnita A2 culture; 17 Cucuteni culture.

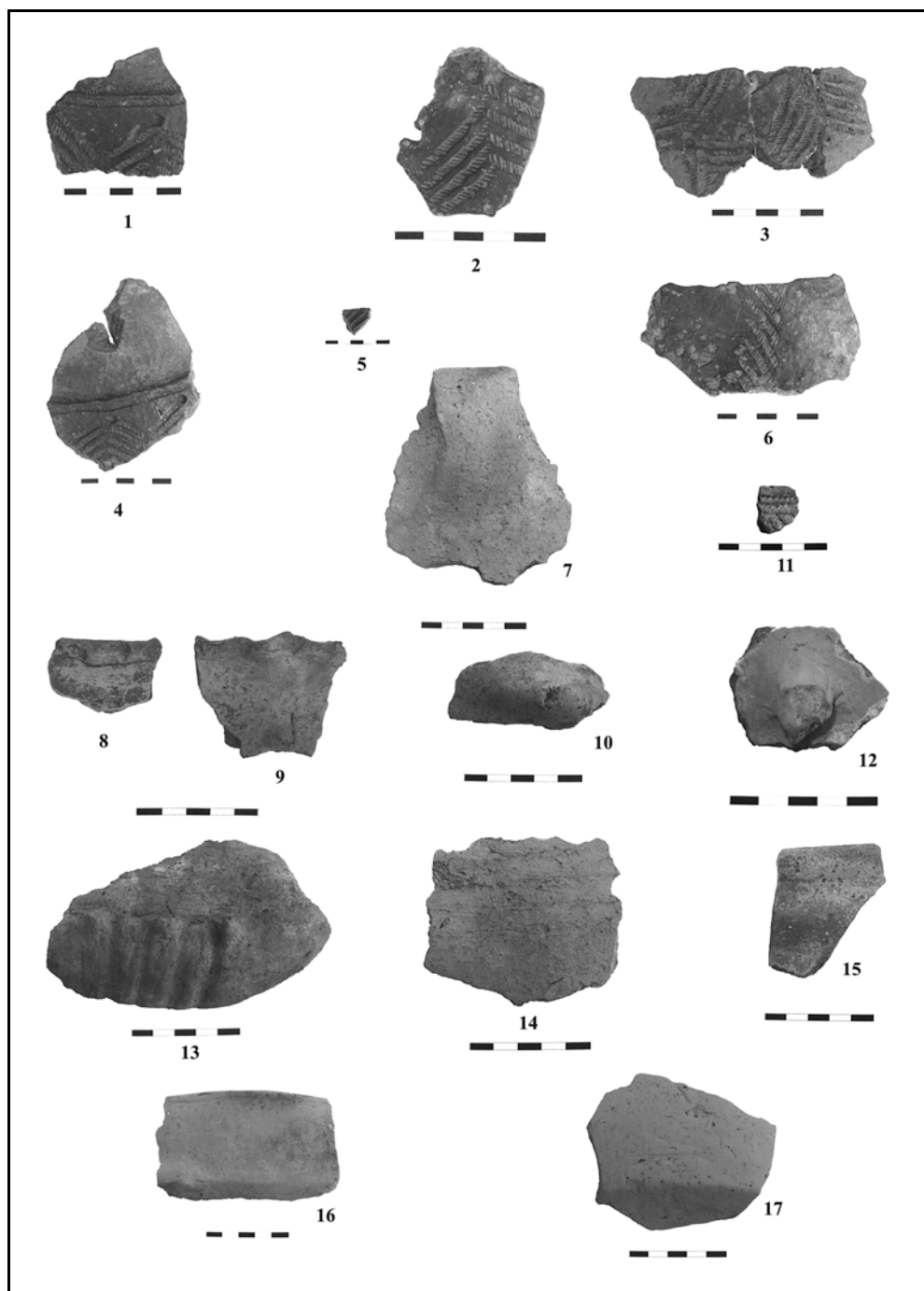


Fig. 6: Râmnicelu - Popina, Braila county. Clay vessels parts from different historical ages. 1-6 Cozia - Brad aspect; 7 - 10, 12 Cernavoda I culture; 11 Cernavoda II culture; 13-16 Gumelnita A2 culture; 17 Cucuteni culture.