

## THE ANTHROPOMORPHOUS CLAY FIGURINES FROM GUMELNIȚA TELL SETTLEMENTS AT TEIU (ARGEȘ COUNTY). A PRELIMINARY APPROACH\*\*\*

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**Abstract:** Localitatea Teiu situată în sud-estul județului Argeș este cunoscută în literatura arheologică prin intermediul celor două așezări preistorice de tip tell descoperite și cercetate în apropierea satului Teiu-Vale. Din punct de vedere geografic, cele două situri sunt amplasate în Câmpia Piteștiului, la o altitudine de circa 200 m, iar distanța între cele două telluri este de 3 km. Cercetările de suprafață efectuate în perioada 1956-1958 de Ion Nania, au atras atenția asupra potențialului arheologic al acestui sit preistoric (Nania 1967, 7; Nania 2004, 94). Colectivul de cercetare a fost alcătuit din Sebastian Morintz, responsabil, din partea Institutului de Arheologie, și de doi muzeografi de la Pitești, Ion Nania (1934-2009) și Marinela Popescu. Documentația șantierului arheologic de la Teiu nu s-a păstrat, astfel încât este imposibil de reconstituit imaginea de ansamblu a tehnicii de săpătură, a manierei de lucru și a evoluției cercetării. Așezarea-tell nr.1a fost împrejmuită cu un șanț circular și val de pământ. În privința stratigrafiei, informațiile de care dispunem nu sunt unitare și concordante. Astfel, Sebastian Morintz vorbește de trei niveluri de locuire arse (Morintz 1962, 279), pe când Ion Nania menționează cinci niveluri, punând accentul pe descrierea situației nivelului 2, cel mai bogat în depuneri arheologice (Nania 1976, 7-23 pe larg, sintetizat la Măndescu 2003, 61-63, fig. 3). Încadrarea ambelor telluri de la Teiu în faza B a culturii Gumelnița a fost făcută după analiza inventarului descoperit în locuințele de suprafață din cele două situri, inventar ceramic, numeroase figurine antropomorfe și zoomorfe, dar și material litic, unelte din os și corn (săpăligi, brăzdar de plug) etc. Piese de metal (cupru) sunt rare: un ac, două străpungătoare și un topor-ciocan – *Hammeraxe* – de tip Vidra (Morintz 1962, 278; Nania 1967, 17). Plastica de la Teiu are cele mai multe din caracteristicile și canoanele plasticii Gumelnița. Statuetele antropomorfe, zoomorfe, așa-numitele *reprezentări de mobilier*, vase și piese mininaturale cu valoare de simbol (pandantive-topor, greutăți de lut, coarne de consacrare) reflectă aspecte importante ale vieții spirituale ale comunităților Gumelnița B1 de la Teiu. În studiul de față ne-am propus câteva considerații preliminare asupra pieselor antropomorfe, urmând ca celelalte categorii ale plasticii de la Teiu să facă obiectul unui volum special. După aspectul general (pastă, modelare, gestualitate), plastica antropomorfă de la Teiu poate fi împărțită în două mari categorii. O altă trăsătură generală a lotului de la Teiu o constituie lipsa de preocupare pentru reprezentarea elementelor anatomice ale feței, redate invariabil prin tipul cu nasul

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ciupit și modelat *en bec d'oiseau* (în „cioc de pasăre”). Piesele au fost rupte intenționat, probabil în urma unor proceduri de magie. Statuetele antropomorfe descoperite la Teiu reprezintă majoritar personaje în picioare. Poziția mâinilor coroborată cu alte elemente are un rol precis ca semnificație în gestualitatea artei preistorice. Sugerarea stării de graviditate a fost realizată în mai multe modalități. Astfel, la unele statuete au fost rupte capul și mâinile în scopul evidențierii abdomenului fertil, redat printr-o bombare exagerată (2689, 2692). Fragmentul de statueta cu pântecul proeminent, denivelat sub forma unui sul ar putea fi legat de un ritual de fertilitate (1549). În privința îmbinărilor de semne care dau complexitate desenului, putem vorbi de niște structuri simbolice care aveau cu siguranță o anumită valoare și semnificație pentru membrii comunităților eneolitice de la Teiu. Pe numeroase piese s-au aplicat înțepături fine sau chiar împunsături în cadrul unor probabile ritualuri de magie. O discuție aparte merită așa numitul „decor” spiralic și în benzi formate din linii incizate mai mult sau mai puțin oblic, specific culturii Cucuteni, figurat pe statuetele gumelnițene care aparțin fazei B1(607, 1530, 1537, 1542, 1544, 1548, 1565, 1574, 2067, 2069, 2073, 2079 ). Statuetele reprezintă majoritar personaje feminine, dar piesele cu nr. 603, 1552 sau 1553 pot fi încadrate în categoria statuetelor androgine asemănătoare ca tradiție cu statuetele androgine descoperite în mediu cucutenian la Dumești, dar și în așezarea gumelnițeană de la Morteni. Analiza atentă a stilului modelării, dublată de cea a desenelor incizate pot atesta mai mulți „autori” ai statuetelor, fapt confirmat și de analizele microscopice și XRF calciu-titan. Din punct de vedere al semnificației considerăm că termenul de ornament sau decor este impropriu cel puțin pentru lotul de statuete de la Teiu, de aceea am preferat utilizarea expresiei *desen incizat*. Deci, desenul alcatuit din semne geometric-abstracte incizate pe suprafața statuetelor nu are o funcție decorativă, ornamentală, ci, mai degrabă, una simbolică, de reprezentare.

**Keywords:** eneolithic, Gumelnița, figurines, anthropomorph.

The Eneolithic clay figurines discovered at Teiu constitute a unitary group of special significance for the study of the Gumelnița communities' spiritual life and even for the identification of their cultural quiddity by certain practices and norms.

### Location

Teiu (the south-east of the Argeș County, at 37 km distance from Pitești) is known in the archaeological literature through the two tell type pre-historical settlements discovered and studied near the village Teiu-Vale. From a geographical point of view, the two sites are situated in Câmpia Piteștiului (Pitești Field), at about 200 m of altitude and the distance between them is about 3 kilometers (Pl. 1).

**Teiu Tell 1** is situated in the south of Teiu-Vale, on the left side of Mozacu River, in the floodable meadow. The inhabitants called this area "Siliște", while the archaeological site's point is known as "Măgura" (Morintz 1962, 278). The dimensions of Teiu Tell 1 are small: it has an eastern mild 1 meter high slope whose diameter is barely measuring 40 m (Morintz 1962, 278).

**Teiu Tell 2** is situated at about 2 km north-north-east of the village Teiu-Vale, on the left side of a dale which flows in the Neajlov River (Morintz 1962, 279; Nania 1965, 316). Its dimensions are slightly bigger than those of the Tell 1: it is maximum 1.2 m and has an about 50 m diameter (Morintz 1962, 279).

### **The history of the discoveries**

In 1947 the first prehistoric archeological pieces were discovered by chance in the Tell no. 1 from Teiu (the head of an anthropomorphous figure, flint blades and fragments of pottery)<sup>1</sup>. A decade later the surface researches performed between 1956 and 1958 by Ion Nania, revealed the archeological potential of this prehistoric site (Nania 1967, 7; Nania 2004, 94).

The research team was formed by the archeologist Sebastian Morintz (1927-1997), as leader and representing the Institute of Archaeology from Bucharest<sup>2</sup> and by two curators from Pitești, Ion Nania (1934-2009) and Marinela Popescu.

The first digging campaign took place in the summer and autumn of 1959 (July, August and October), Ion Nania excavated the tell no. 1, while Marinela Popescu excavated the tell no. 2 (Nania 2004, 96); the coordinator of the work was Sebastian Morintz (Morintz 1962, 278, note 7; Nania 1967, 7; Babeș 1997, 4).

The documentation of the Teiu archeological site was not preserved; thus it is impossible to reconstitute the image of the digging technique, of the way the work was performed and of the evolution of the research. The information regarding the campaign of 1959 in the tell no. 1 are scarce and non-concordant: Sebastian Morintz talks about ditches “dug in the direction of the rays of the tell” (Morintz 1962, 278), while Ion Nania mentioned the digging of two perpendicular ditches in the centre of the tell (that were eastern-western and northern-southern oriented, as well as a cassette in the quarter of the circle from the North-Western side) (Nania 1967, 8). The same passionate curator-archaeologist promises “the presentation of the excavation pattern and also a detailed description of the site’s stratigraphy in a future monograph dedicated to the archaeological researches from Teiu” (Nania 1967, 7) which unfortunately never was drafted.

A new campaign took place in 1963, but only in the tell no. 1. During July and August the tell was exhaustively studied (Nania 1965, 316) (Pl. 2). From this research comes the most of the clay figurines discovered at Teiu.

The last stage of the archaeological research of the two tells from Teiu took place in 1967-1970, when a series of surface researches was performed by Ion Nania, who at that time was a teacher of history at the school from Mozacu, a village situated in the proximity of the sites. Those researches led to the discovery of the vestiges from about 20 surface dwellings destroyed when the vineyard was planted on the terraces situated in the eastern side of the tell no. 1 (Nania 2004, 96-97).

### **Dating and synchronisms**

The including of the two tells from Teiu in the stage B1 of the Gumelnița Culture is based on the analysis of the inventory discovered in the surface dwellings of the two sites: pottery, a lot of anthropomorphous and zoomorphous

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<sup>1</sup> All of these artifacts being left behind by the treasure hunters.

<sup>2</sup> Because at that time the museum from Pitești did not have a qualified staff for performing an archaeological research study, a partnership with the Institute of Archaeology “Vasile Pârvan” from Bucharest was done in order to explore the two tells from Teiu.

figurines, as well as lithic material, tools made of bones and horn (weed hooks, plough share) etc. The pieces made of metal (copper) are rare: a needle, two piercing tools, a Vidra type *Hammeraxt*.

This micro-area certainly was very important in prehistory, here found a complex of settlements and tells showing a concentration and intensity of Eneolithic habitat. Thereby, both tells belong to phase B1 of the Gumelnița culture, they represent the most northern points of a compact nucleus of such *relatively contemporary* settlements (Pl. 3), - i.e. the tells from Zidurile, Negrași, Leșile and Morteni (Măndescu 2003, 59-60), the group spreading towards south: the tells from Vișina, Surdulești, Popești and Glavacioc (Mirea, Frânculeasa 2005, 55-74). The two tells from Teiu are situated towards the north-western periphery of the Gumelnița Culture (Ștefan 2010, 108-109, catalogue no. 237-238, pl. 18-21, 70, 72-73).

The figurines from Teiu have most of the features and canons of Gumelnita art. Anthropomorphic and zoomorphic figurines, so-called representations of furniture, miniature vessels and small artifacts having a symbolic purpose and value (pendants-ax, loads of clay, horns of consecration) reflects important aspects of the spiritual life of Gumelnița B1 communities from Teiu.

In this paper we set out some preliminary considerations only on anthropomorphic part of the collection. These and the other types of figurines from Teiu will be discussed in detail in a volume that we prepare, dedicated to this important collection of prehistoric art elements.

According to the general appearance (clay, modeling, gestures), the anthropomorphic figurines from Teiu are divided into two broad categories. To the first category belongs most part of the entire lot of figurines, made in a dirt sandy paste, the grease with lots of small pieces of ceramic, limestone and pebbles, and modeling (vernis too thin) and drawings were made negligently.

The unequal and uneven burning was done at a low temperature. The second category is characterized by the qualitative better paste, with chosen clay and a tight and more substantial vernis, and finally well burned to a brown or yellow-brick nuance. Laboratory analyzes confirmed our observations and identified two distinct categories of ceramic paste<sup>3</sup>.

Generally there is a relationship between the head of the figurines and their gestures. Thus, the face of the figurines are immobile and expressionless like a mask, probably deliberately shaped so, intended to capture and highlight the gestures of certain figurines and the dynamic of the incised design displaying signs repeated on several artifacts, in fact the main feature of the batch of figurines from Teiu.

Another general feature of this lot from Teiu is the lack of concern for the representation of anatomical features of the human face, invariably displayed by the type having the nose pinched and shaped *en bec d'oiseau* ("bird beak" like).

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<sup>3</sup> See in this respect the results of the laboratory tests performed by the MNIR specialists and published in this volume (Georgescu, Niculescu 2012).

Fragmentation is undoubtedly intentional. With a single one exception (598), the figurines were intentionally broken, probably as a result of certain magic procedures. Intentionality is clear, separate modeling of the head, legs and hands of the figurines are made for future breaks (1575, 1579). Incised design is highlighted by deliberately breaking various parts of the body. In the case of some figurines, the head, the legs and even the hands intended to reveal incised design of the basin (2067). For the same reasons others figurines have broken the head and all the right or left side, half figure with hands, trunk and legs (1575, 1579). Even the breakages of legs with thigh, torso or foot highlight the rows of spiral incisions placed on the back thigh or upper thigh. Signs incised on the lower leg are repeated in different combinations, most of them horizontal or slightly curved incisions (606, 1526, 1528, 1547, 1549, 1564, 2078).

A particular case is represented by the fragmentation of the figurines 1575 and 1579, with the highlighting and separate modeling of the head and limbs then in a secondary stage were intentionally broken. As noted above, we inclined to believe that intentionally breaking of various parts of the figurines body can be placed directly in connection with the evidence of design elements traced on the figurines' surface. However, one thing is undeniable: breakings are deliberate fragmentation, corresponding to behavioral practices, cultural values and beliefs that have become customary in the Neo-Eneolithic era, having a symbolic nature and functions of representation and representativeness<sup>4</sup>.

Anthropomorphous figurines discovered at Teiu displayed in majority characters that are standing, but the figurines 1549, 1552 and 1578, although strong fragmented, could depict others postures. Position of the hands, in conjunction with other elements, has a specific role as significance in the gestures repertory of the prehistoric art. Hands are placed on the hips (598), close together on the chest (595) or stretched sideways (596, 597, 601, 602, 604, 1532, 1552, 1556, 2315, 2535, 2687, 2689, 2692) to most of figurines. A special case is the figurine 2085 that very likely has one arm up (the right one) and the other down (the left one).

The face with "bird beak" shaped nose has widened and perforated sides (595, 597, 598, 599, 600, 601, 602, 605, 634, 1532, 1554, 1558, 2086). On some figurines the nose is highlighted by representation of the mouth through a few small holes, some of them careless horizontal (600, 1532), others disposed in a series of five holes deep and regularly drawn, which join in a unitary drawing with the ones prevailing on ear lobes (1554, 1558). Two figurines point out by a slightly grotesque expression and pragmatic manner to delineate the mouth of chin by a horizontal cut (599, 604). The two opposed sided figurine 599 has a well pronounced top of the head, crown, common to both faces having different poses and expressions. The mouth is represented only by two deep holes applied under the nose (598).

Suggesting a state of pregnancy by breaking the head and hands is done in order to emphasize the abdomen fertile, figured through an exaggerated swell

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<sup>4</sup> Thanks to Andreea Bîzu and Alexandru Paraschiv for their suggestions and support.

(2689, 2692). Not incidentally, both statues were a large dress and are empty inside. Add to this the figurine 601 that displays a character standing with early pregnancy and incised sexual triangle but without a representation of the breasts! Fragmentary figurine 1549 with prominent belly, uneven like a roll, could be linked to a fertility ritual.

Procedures of magic are strongly attested on the lot of figurines from Teiu, more clearly than in any other Gumelnița culture settlement. Precision of the drawing and the signs with magical significance on the statues 1553 and 1556 are undeniable. Thus, breaking limbs highlights one incised triangle on the front and rear, filled with strings of small circles imprinted (1556) or the V-like neck pendants (1532, 1553).

Reusing statues by the next generation belongs to certain tradition, by the transmission and conservation of practices and beliefs from one generation to another, from one phase of cultural evolution to another. The plastic art becomes an element of continuity through the intervention of a new grossly and negligent incised design applied over the original.

On some figurines were practiced two types of incisions<sup>6</sup>. On the figurines can be seen new signs incised and redrawn over the old motifs slightly grooved (1528, 1529, 1547, 1548, 1551, 1565, 1592). Looking the joints of signs (rarely or not at all can be observed isolated signs on the surface of the anthropomorphic figurines) giving the complexity of the design, we agree that we can talk about some symbolic structures. Signs designed by master merge together, unite and form the symbolic structures that are designed to convey a specific message to those who use them. These symbolic structures certainly had a certain value and significance for the members of the Eneolithic community from Teiu. On many figurines were applied fine needles or stitches in the evidence of magic rituals (1527, 1532, 1549, 1565). Representation of a possible home instead the classic incised triangle of life, make the figurine 2067 unique. Magic practices are also certified by the concentric circular and spiral rows of the buttocks, coupled with uneven but deep stitches on the fragmented body of the figurine.

A special discussion deserves the décor in spiral or in stripes motifs, formed by incised lines more or less oblique specific to the Cucuteni culture art, figured on figurines belonging to the Gumelnița B1 phase (607, 1530, 1537, 1542, 1544, 1548, 1565, 1574, 2067, 2069, 2073, 2079). This reality may be due to a craftsman came from Cucuteni cultural milieu or may be the result of a process of cultural contamination, hypothesis to which we agree. The members of Gumelnița community could take (not necessarily consciously planned) some Cucuteni elements (also vice versa happened, from the Gumelnița communities towards the Cucuteni ones). This would explain, in fact, close relationships between the two cultures. In support of this hypothesis comes one of three phalloi discovered in the settlement Gumelnița B1 from Teiu and the traditional Cucuteni spiral decor drawn

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<sup>6</sup> The analyses revealed two types of incisions, "the first large type, thickness of about 1 mm, and the finer second type, about 0.3 mm thick, both filled with a white paste, probably calcite" (Georgescu, Niculescu, 2012).

on the bottom of many of the figurines (607, 1530, 1537, 1542, 1544, 1548). The phallus from Teiu is anthropomorphous (635) and recalls the identical artifact discovered in the Cucuteni A3 settlement from Truşeşti-Ţuguieta (Cucuteni 1997, 148, no. 120-121; Monah 1997, 193, fig.261/1).

The figurines display in majority female persons, but the pieces having no. 603, 1552 and 1553 can be classified as androgynous personages. Careful analysis of the modeling style, coupled with the approaches on the incised designs can attest the works of many "authors" of the figurines.

We agree that, in general, the term of ornament or decoration is inappropriate / unsuitable at least for the group of figurines from Teiu, so we preferred the term of *incised drawing*. So, the drawing consists of geometric-abstract signs incised on the surface of the figurines does not have a decorative and ornamental function, but rather a symbolic representation.

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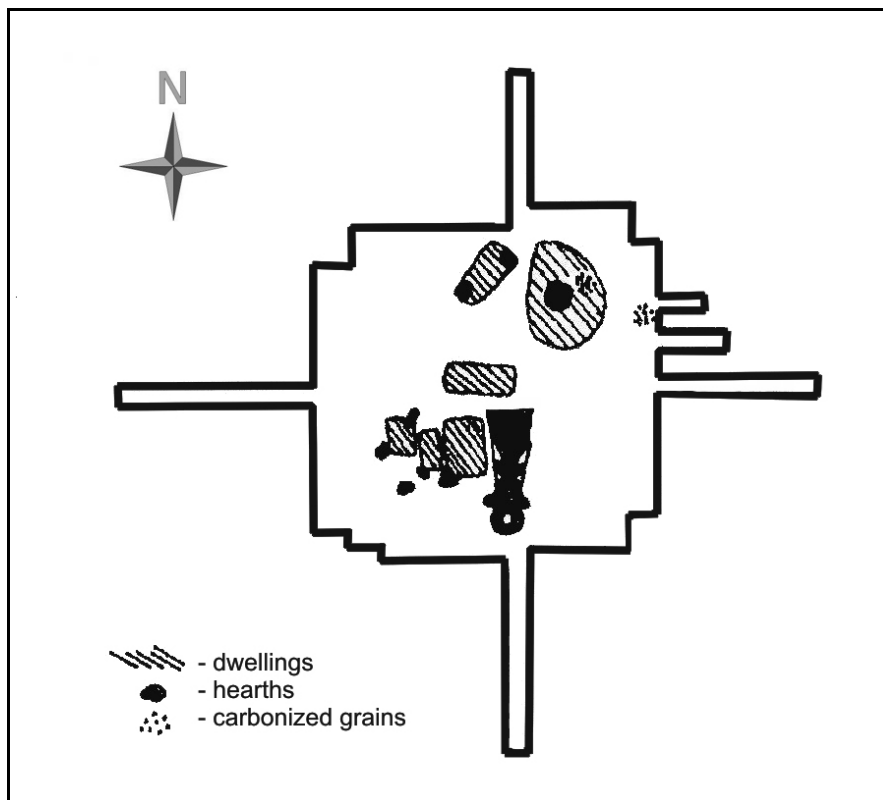
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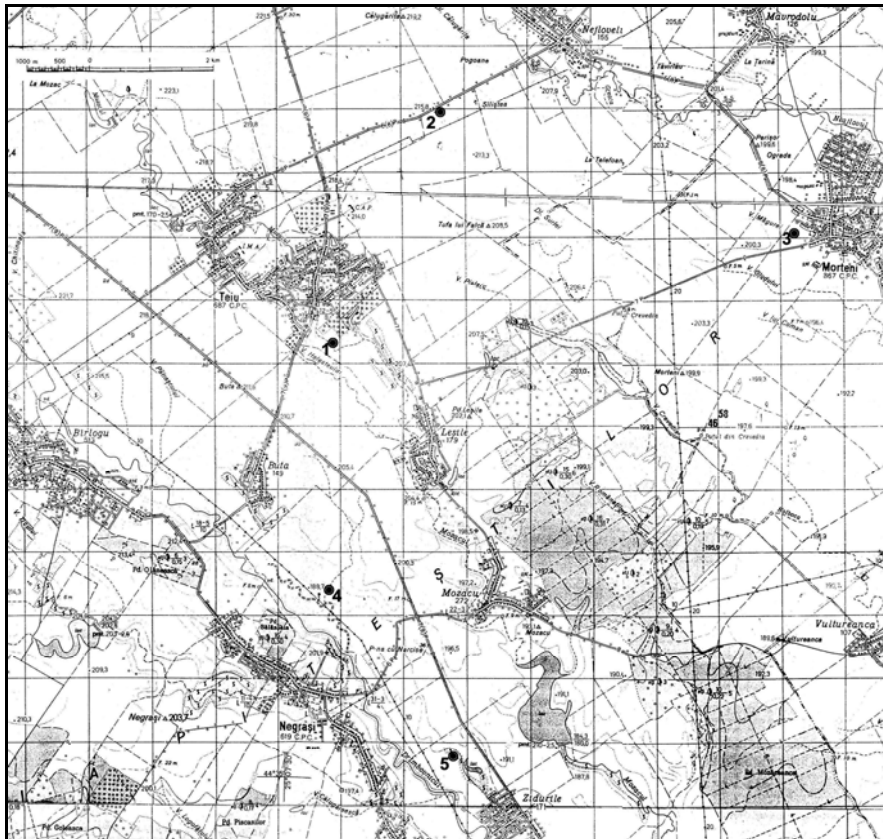


**Pl. 1.** The village Teiu and the two tells (Teiu 1 and Teiu 2). Satellite photography, according to Google.

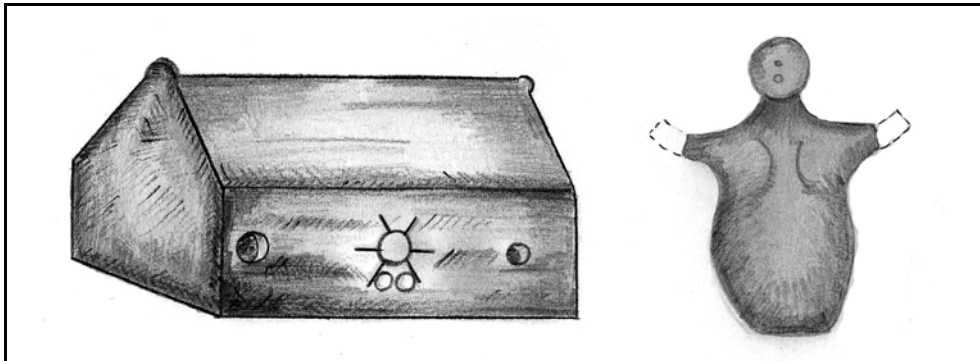




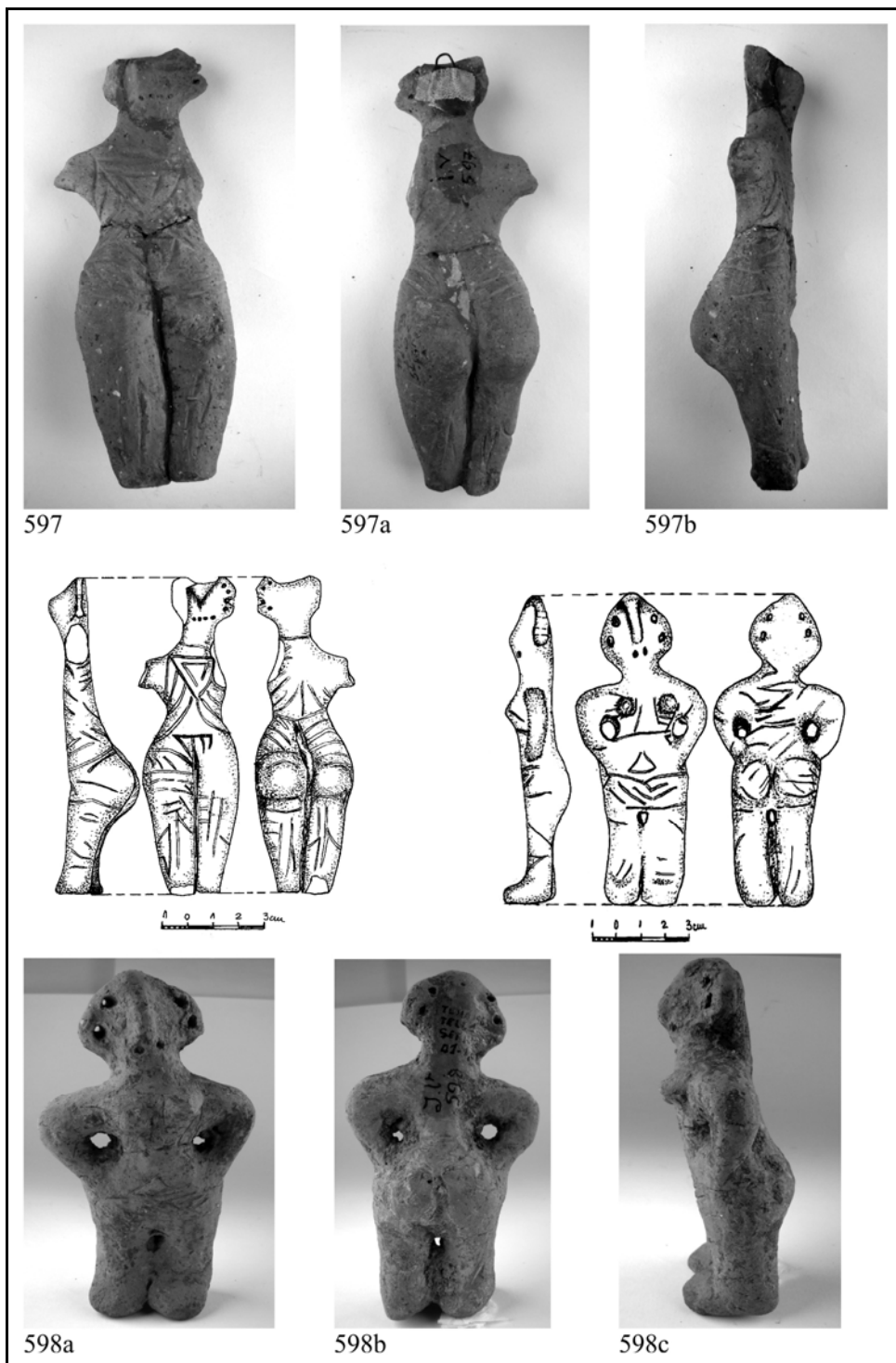
**Pl. 2.** Draft plan of the archaeological diggings at the tell 1 from Teiu, according a sketch displayed in the Argeş County Museum exhibition.



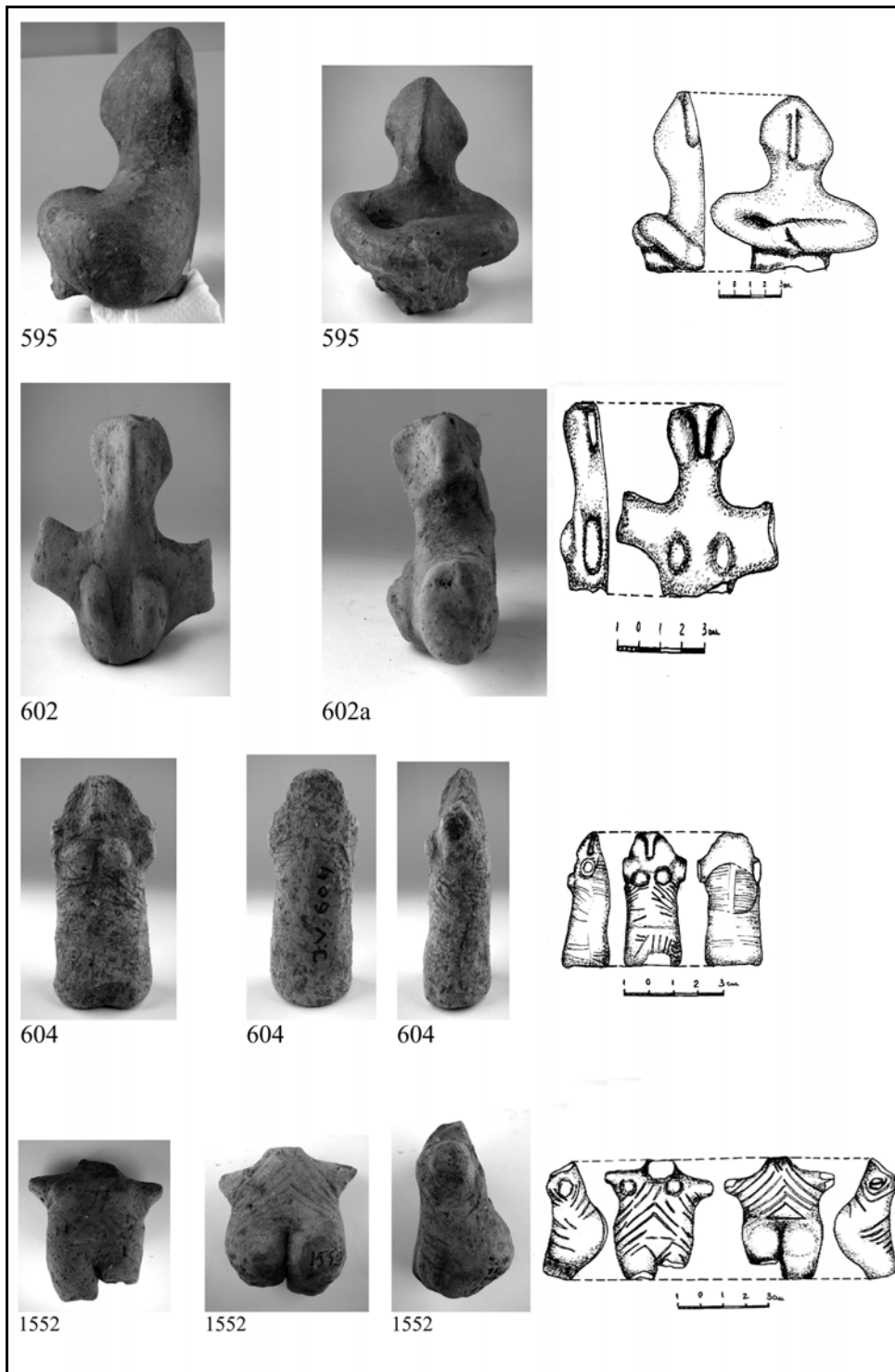
**Pl. 3.** Map showing the micro-area of Teiu tells. (1) tell 1 from Teiu, (2) tell 2 from Teiu, (3) tell from Morteni, (4) tell from Neagrași, (5) tell from Zidurile. Military map from the second half of 20th c.



**Pl. 4.** 1. Graphic reconstitution of the “building of worship” discovered in tell 1 from Teiu; 2. graphic reconstitution of the scorched clay “great idol” from the same complex (drawings by G. Dobre according to descriptions made by I. Nania); 3. Scorched clay fragment from the “great idol” displayed in the Argeș County Museum exhibition.



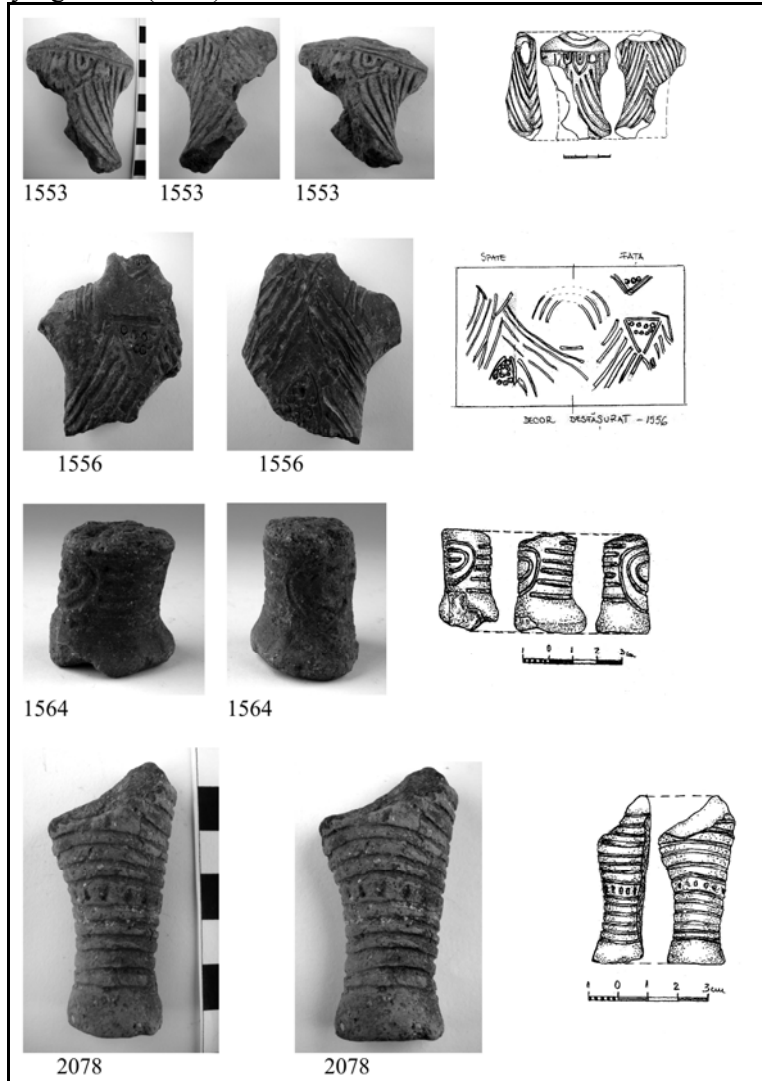
Pl. 5. Standing clay figurines with incised signs (597, 598).



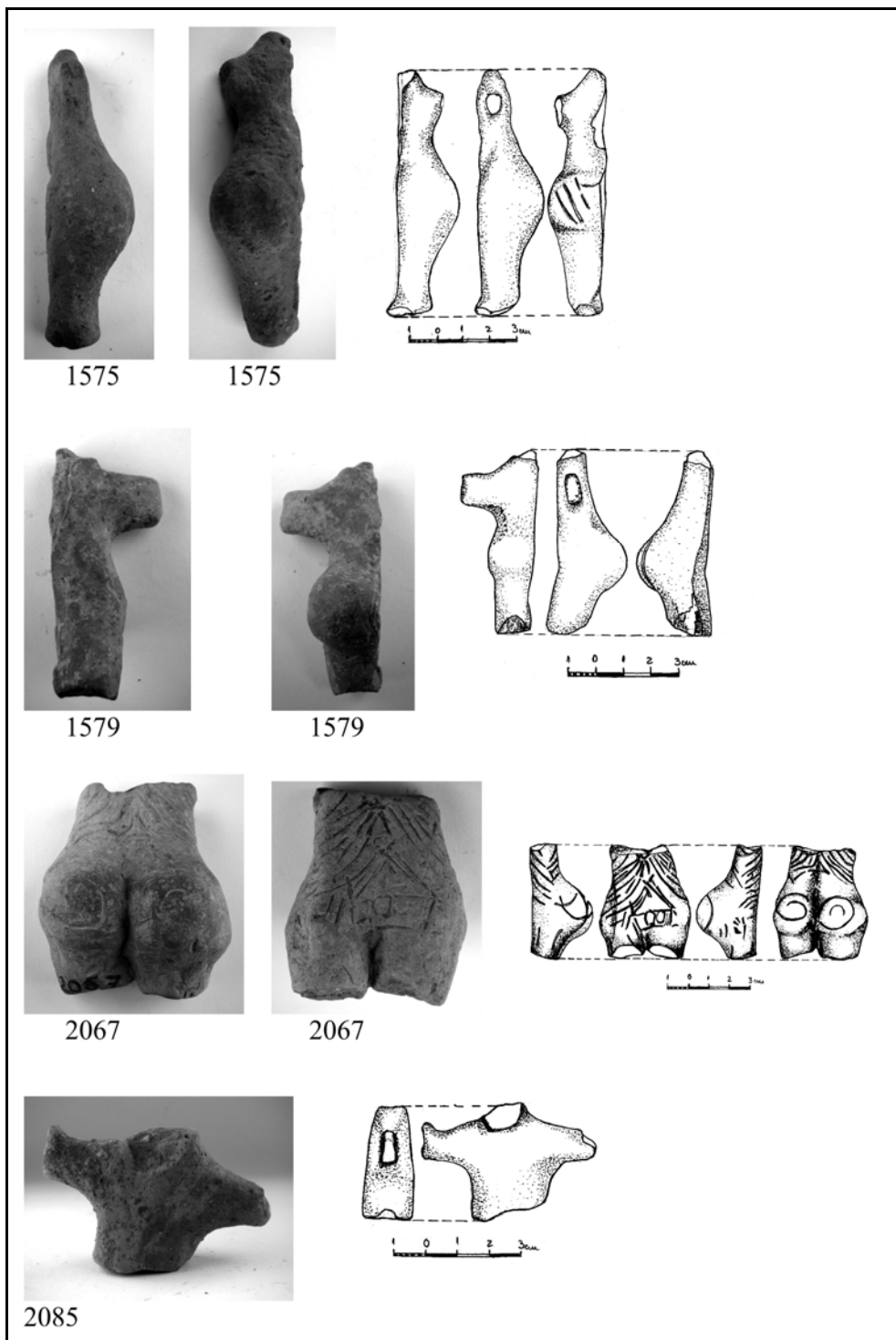
**Pl. 6.** Clay figurines showing various gestures (595, 602, 604,1552).



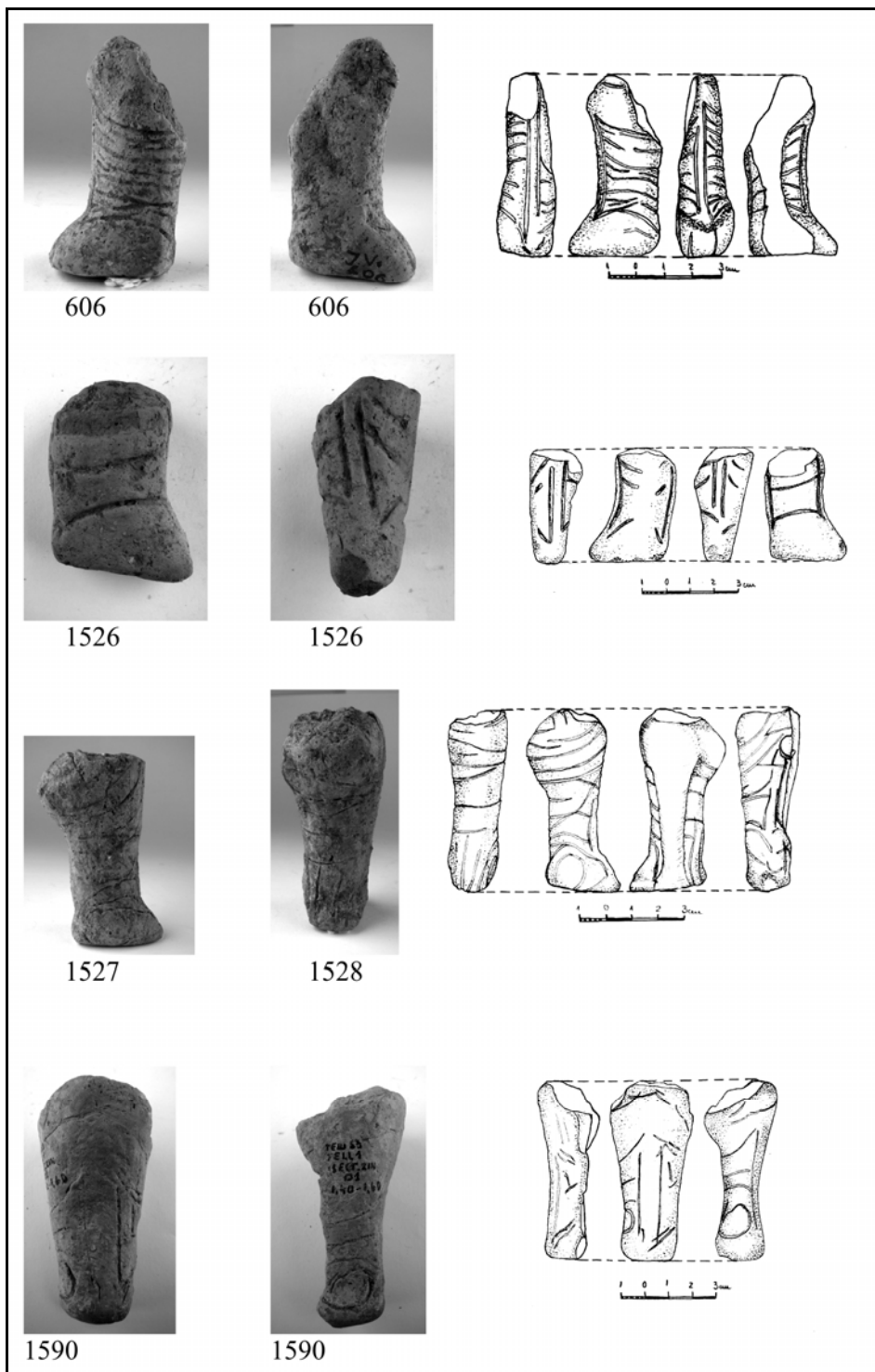
Pl. 7. Clay figurines (1552).



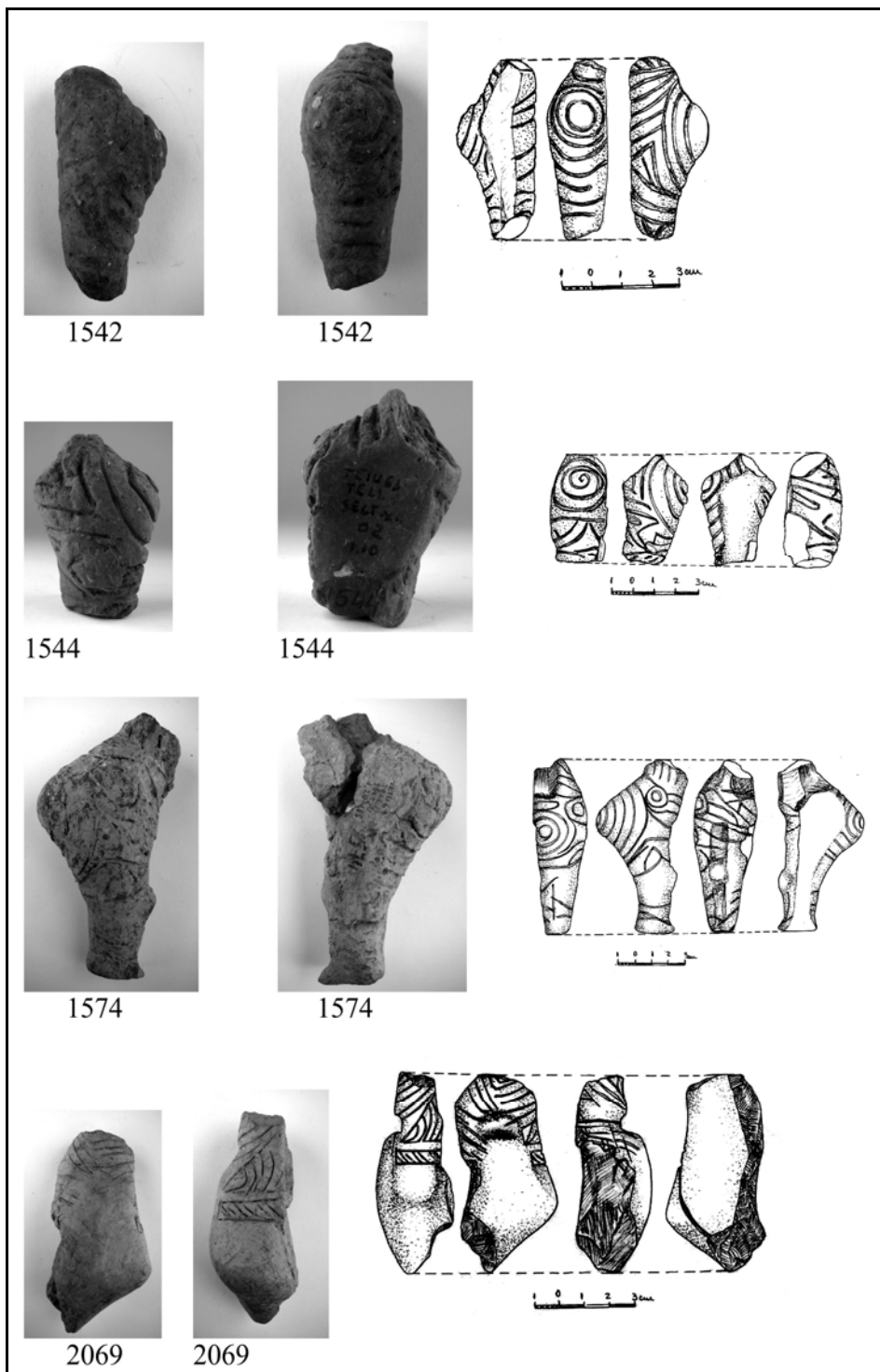
Pl. 8. Clay figurines with parallel rows of grooves and incised symbols (1553, 1556, 1564, 2078).



**Pl. 9.** Clay figurines designed to breakage (1575, 1579, 2067, 2085).

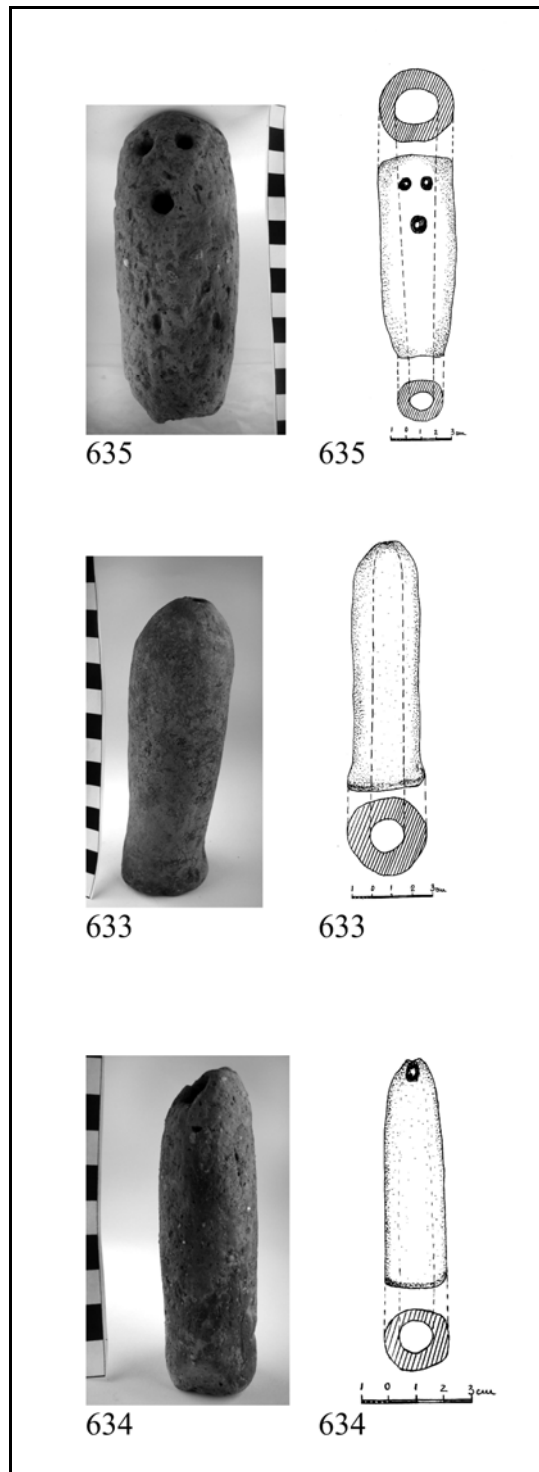


**Pl. 10.** Legs with successive incisions (606, 1526, 1528, 1590).

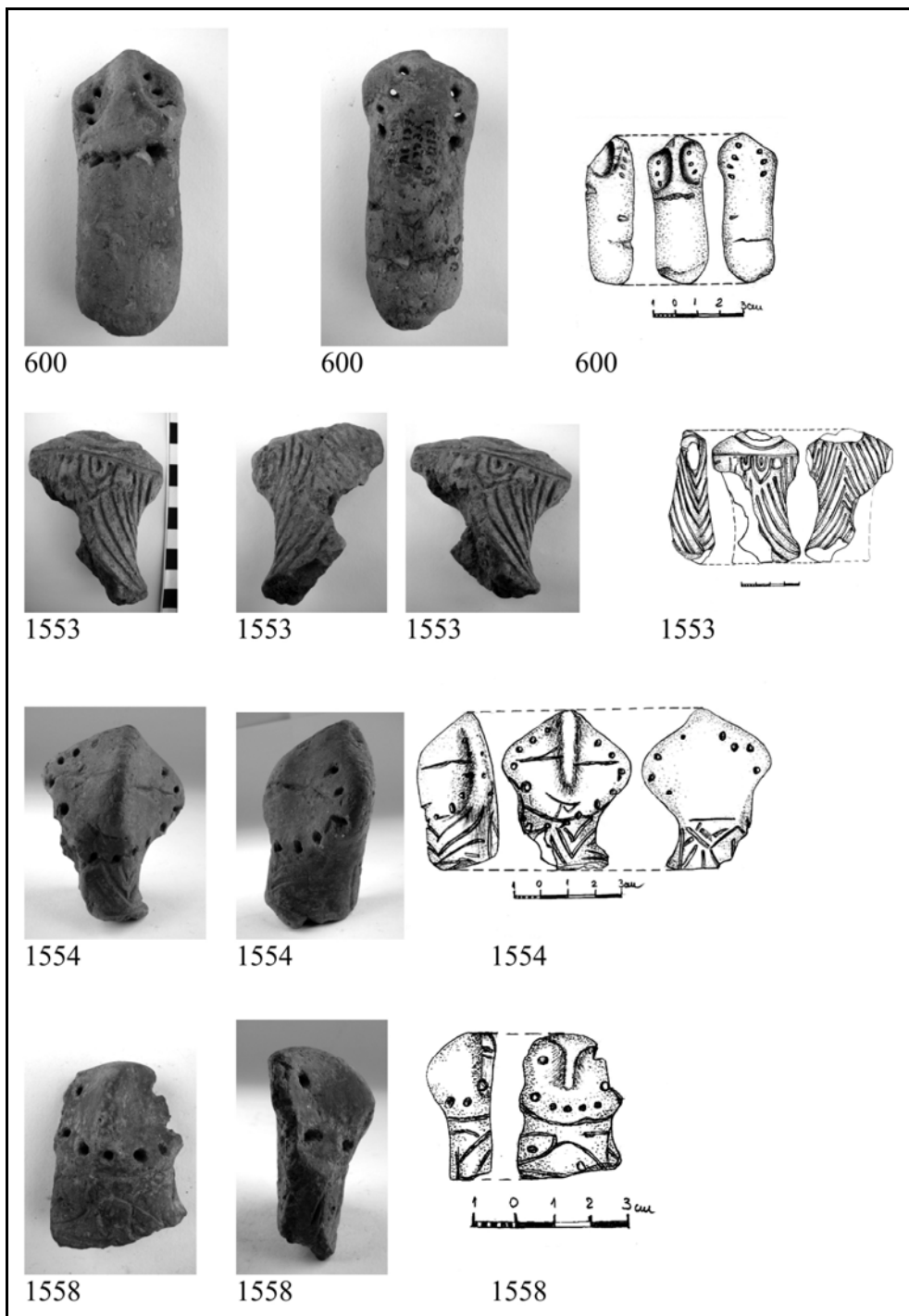


**Pl. 11.** Legs with incised symbolic decor (1542, 1544, 1547, 1574, 2069).





**Pl. 12.** Phalloi: a. anthropomorphous (635); b, c. cylindrical (633, 634).



Pl. 13. Ruptured heads (600, 1553, 1554, 1558).