

ELEMENTS OF SYMBOLIC PLASTIC ART BELONGING TO THE IRON AGE FROM ȘIMLEU SILVANIEI–OBSERVATOR

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Abstract

This study wants to introduce zoomorphic and anthropomorphic figurines of The Early Iron Age, as a result of the research done in the last decades in North-West Romania. Although we have a large amount of discoveries of this period, this type of representations are extremely few. All of them are from Șimleu Silvaniei *Observator* a very important fortified settlement.

All findings are made of clay and were discovered fragmented in pits or in various layers.

Either we are speaking of zoomorphic or anthropomorphic representations, the majority of specialists think somewhat unanimous that these objects are related with magical-religious practices, meant to assure fertility and fecundity.

Keywords: zoomorphic figurine, anthropomorphic figurine, fertility, fecundity, religion, magic.

Introduction. Zoomorphic and anthropomorphic plastic art from Early Iron Age has prompted intense interest from specialists, benefiting from extensive discussions and interpretations. For the importance of their synthesis or analysis and tangential observations about this topic, we mention K. Horedt¹, V. Sîrbu², V. Vasiliev³, Y. Maleev⁴, A. László⁵, C. N. Ursache⁶ or G. Jugănar⁷.

For our part, we want to introduce into the scientific circuit a series of artifacts founded in our area of interest, so far known only through brief references in some archaeological research reports⁸ or in various papers⁹.

The provenance of the artifacts exclusively from a single location, Șimleu Silvaniei *Observator*, can be explained by extensive systematic research carried out here in the last

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¹ Horedt 1963, 527-534.

² Sîrbu 1987, 91-157; Sîrbu 1999, 47-88.

³ Vasiliev 1985-1986; Vasiliev et alii 1991, 68-71, 145-150.

⁴ Maleev 1992, 13-24.

⁵ László 1994, 85-97.

⁶ Ursache 1999, 41-60.

⁷ Jugănar 2003, 75-90; Jugănar 2005, 42-46.

⁸ Bejinariu 1995, 2; Pop et alii 2001, 245; Pop et alii 2002, 305 sq.

⁹ Sana 2006, 60.

two decades; is not excluded that similar object to appear in other sites from the area¹⁰.

Geographic background. Being since ancient times, a favorable environment for living, the area which we refer, is a unit rather inhomogeneous from geographical and geomorphological perspective (Pl. IA), which comprises the upper slopes of the Măgura hill, north of Șimleul Silvaniei city.

Zoomorphic figurine. The only one artifact¹¹ of this kind found at Șimleu Silvaniei *Observator* (Pl. IB/1), representing most probably a bull, comes from the bottom of a pit¹². The artifact, carried in a naturalistic style, has 4 cm in length and 2.8 cm in height, including the sex of animal that it portrays. Modeling of various anatomical parts was made by pressing or pulling. Details of these are slightly stylized, respecting their natural proportion. It was made of clay of good quality, properly mixed, polished and burned red. The figurine is fragmented, with the left front and right back legs, tail and left horn partially broken.

Zoomorphic figurines are often found in many Gáva culture settlements, being considered, according to some views, a specific element of this culture¹³. As analogies for our artifact, we mention among bovine representations, the older discovery from Lechința de Mureș¹⁴ (Pl. IB/6), or the discoveries from Teleac¹⁵ (Pl. IB/4-5), Rîpa¹⁶, Grănicești¹⁷ (Pl. IB/2-3), Vărădia and Remetea Mare¹⁸, from Trinca¹⁹ or those from Poroszló²⁰ (Pl. IB/9), Visegrád²¹ and Lissičniki²² (Pl. IB/7-8). Zoomorphic representations also show up in other contemporary cultural backgrounds, as in Babadag culture²³, Kyatice culture from Hungary at Miskolc, Ozd and Sajószentpéter²⁴, in Urnfield culture area²⁵, in Cozia-Saharna culture surroundings²⁶, in the area formerly occupied by Gáva culture in eastern Slovakia, at Somotor, Zemplin and Trstené pri Hornáde in Middle and Late Hallstatt period²⁷, in the Lausitz culture²⁸, etc. All those really showing that we are not dealing with a defining part of a culture, but rather with a common symbol that we refer to the entire period, manifested even in the La Tène period²⁹.

As to the meaning, most researchers consider that such figurines were used in the magic or ritual practices connected with the cult of fertility and fecundity³⁰. In the Alpine area, the symbol of the bull in the Hallstatt culture is connected to the solar cult, its image

¹⁰ Scientific literature also record, among discoveries of this period one zoomorphic figurine made of clay which represent „a horse” having the following dimensions: 4,8 cm in length and 2,2 cm in width. The item comes from Moigrad „Pomet”, from antic city Porolissum area. A closer analysis show however, that we are dealing with a representation of an elephant, which certainly belongs to the Roman period and not to the Hallstatt period (see Lakó 1983, 83-84, Pl. IX/4).

¹¹ In the older literature (Dumitrescu 1974, 361) are mentioned „... small zoomorphic statuettes of clay ...” found in various places in Transylvania, including Berc hamlet, belonging to the Giurtelecu Șimleului village. This hamlet is located north of the Măgura Șimleului, not far from the upper plateau of Măguri, on which is the fortified settlement from Early Iron Age.

¹² Bejinariu 1995, 2.

¹³ László 1994, 90.

¹⁴ Horedt 1963, 527-534, fig. 2/4.

¹⁵ Mitrofan 1967, 436, Fig. 2/1, 3; Vasiliev et alii 1991, 68-69, fig. 27/10, 12.

¹⁶ Dumitrașcu 1974, 131, Fig. 4/2.

¹⁷ László 1994, 90, fig. 46, 47, 48/1-3.

¹⁸ Gumă 1993, 189-190, pl. XXXV/3.

¹⁹ Levițki 1994, 111, fig. 59/1.

²⁰ Kemenczei 1984, 72, Taf. CXXVII/12.

²¹ Gróh 1984, Fig. 4.

²² Maleev 1992, Fig. 3; Ursache 1999, 43, Fig. 8/2, 4, 5.

²³ Jugănar 2005, 45, fig. 10/49 – in quoted text, the reference at plate is mistaken.

²⁴ Kemenczei 1984, 45, Pl. LXXXIX/6, 13, XCVI/21.

²⁵ Szabó 1996, 36.

²⁶ Kašuba 2003, Fig. 5/5-6.

²⁷ Miroššayova 1987, Pl. X/10, XI/17, XIII/12.

²⁸ Coblenz 1981, Fig. 11/1-2; Buck 1996, 274-278.

²⁹ Sîrbu 1987, 104-108.

³⁰ Vasiliev et alii 1991, 149 sq.; Maleev 1992, 24; Sîrbu 1993, 136; Sîrbu 1999, 55; Ursache 1999, 45; Jugănar 2003, 80; Damian 2009, 12.

appearing as parts in the composition of vessels³¹. M. Eliade, quoting other older opinions link bovid horns from plastic art representations and iconography, to the Moon symbolism and fertility, this representation marking the presence of the Great Goddess of fertility³². In the Greek world of early Iron Age period (XI – VIII centuries BC) contextual analysis of zoomorphic figurines finds made in clay reveal their close connection with religious imagery but one to possible economic activities also³³.

Anthropomorphic plastic art. This category is represented in this area by four fragmented artifacts, all from Șimleu Silvaniei *Observator*. Of these, only two have clear attributes of the objects of this type, specific to the Early Iron Age.

The first artifact (Pl. II/1) was discovered in the upper part of G108/2001 pit, at 0.90 m depth from the actual level. The preserved part of the artifact is flat, with the lower area in the semicircle shape. Has 5.9 cm in width, thickness of 1.3 cm, and current height is 4 cm, being torn from ancient times. It was made from clay skimmed with sherds, smoothed and burned to red. The figurine has one side decorated with incised lines on one side, some arranged obliquely, forming the so-called “little-fir” motive and the others horizontally. It is considered that the ornament express the bottom part of the garment³⁴.

Close analogies for this type of decoration on these artifacts, we have at Teleac³⁵ (Pl. II/8), Alba Iulia *Dealul Furcilor-Monolit*³⁶ (Pl. II/9), at Căuaș and Racoș³⁷, from Biharkerestes *Lâncos*³⁸, Țahnauți³⁹ or at Krivče and Lissičniki⁴⁰ (Pl. II/10-11).

The second artifact (Pl. II/4) was discovered in the level which superimpose G 108/2001 pit or maybe from the complex, at -0.50 m depth from the actual level. This artifact is flat, elongated shape, having at the preserved edge, one protuberance which outlines the foot or rather the head. Torn from ancient times, the artifact has a length of 5.5 cm, width of 2.5 cm and 1.4 cm thick. From the same area comes one “spool” fragment, circular in shape, small impressions on the preserved side.

As shape, close analogies was found at Teleac⁴¹ (Pl. II/6) and Čala⁴², the differences consisting that artifacts from Teleac are rich in ornaments unlike our specimen which is not patterned.

The third artifact (Pl. II/3) is an fragment from the lower part of an anthropomorphic figurine, superficially smoothed surface and undecorated. The fragment was found in the pit C56/2008. The artifact is flat and has preserved length of 6.7 cm, maximum width of 5.7 cm and 1 cm thick, being made of clay mixed with sand and pebbles. The combustion was oxidizing and incomplete. Except that our specimen is trapezoid-shaped, with the long side at the top and is devoid of decoration, resembles with the finds from Teleac⁴³ (Pl. II/7), Căuaș and Racoș⁴⁴, Biharkerestes *Lâncos*⁴⁵ or from Krivče and Lissičniki⁴⁶. We should that our artifact is slightly narrower, specifically in the area that was broken; this fact could be seen on one side, which makes it resemble the above artifacts.

The last artifact (Pl. II/2) comes from the pit G47/1995, where was also discovered, among other things, a fragment of circular “spool”. Specimen to whom we refer here is flat, elongated, with rounded bottom. The artifact was broken in ancient times and is devoid of

³¹ Potrebica 2007, 270, Pl. LXXa-d.

³² Eliade 2008, 180, with the literature.

³³ Walcek Averett 2007, 137-141.

³⁴ Vasiliev et alii 1991, 69.

³⁵ Vasiliev et alii 1991, 69, Fig. 28/12.

³⁶ Lascu 2006, 136, Fig. 2/3.

³⁷ Apud Sîrbu 1999, 50 sq., Fig. 2/4-5.

³⁸ Szabó 2002, 2, Pl. 142/9.

³⁹ Kaşuba 2003, Fig. 5/27, 30.

⁴⁰ Maleev 1992, Fig. 5/a, B.

⁴¹ Vasiliev et al. 1991, 69, fig. 28/13, 17.

⁴² Apud Sîrbu 1999, 52, Fig. 12/1.

⁴³ Vasiliev et al. 1991, 69, fig. 28/14.

⁴⁴ Apud Sîrbu 1999, 50 sq., Fig. 2/4-5.

⁴⁵ Szabó 2002, 2, Pl. 142/9

⁴⁶ Maleev 1992, Fig. 5/a, B, Д.

any decor. Preserved length is 5.5 cm, maximum width of 3.1 cm and 1.3 cm thick, being made of clay mixed with crushed sherds and gravel. Burning was oxidizing, resulted a scarlet color. The fragment is well polished. As shape has close analogies to artifacts from Rîpa⁴⁷ and Grănicești⁴⁸ (Pl. II/5).

On the morphology and shape the pieces, as we already said, all are made of clay mixed with sand, sometimes with gravel, being burned oxidizing. The treatment of surfaces is different, mostly being smoothened and only in one case was polished as a way of finishing the piece.

Given their fragmented state, we can not discuss a framing based on typological criteria nor can we speak of respect for the natural proportions of the various anatomical parts, as with zoomorphic figurine. What is clear is only very schematic style, abstract, have been made, which not reproduce the major anatomical parts and the lack of decorations on most figurines.

As regards the structure of discoveries, seen from the above that most artifacts have been deposited in pits with pottery to be completed, in one case, the pottery is fired to vitrification, but not anthropomorphic figurines. We also notice the fact that in two cases, these figures are associated with the so-called "spools" with tapered ends and rounded section, one of them with eight small-tip impressions kept intact

About the significance of these objects has been discussed a lot, most researchers believing that such pieces were used in the practice of rituals related to fertility and fecundity cult⁴⁹.

Starting from fragmentary condition of artifacts or the presence of some holes and stitches, as well as lack of the artistic valence it is believed that are the result of "black magic" practices⁵⁰. Information from the Hittite texts, mention a kind of "anti-magic" ceremony used to provide a remedy to situations caused by witchcraft, sin or the wrath of some God, comes complete view above. The purification ceremony is performed through a ritual transfer, which involves a human surrogate, the most commonly used being clay, dough, fat or wax "puppets", domestic or wild animals (cattle, goats, pigs, mice, birds, fish, etc.). With the ritual completed, the substitute (human, animal or "symbolic doll") into contact with the impurity is destroyed or removed⁵¹.

From the above we observe the use in these ceremonies of anthropomorphic clay figurines and the animal substitutes. Regarding the latter, it is necessary to emphasize that among the first zoomorphic figurines of Early Iron Age abound representations of cattle, goats and pigs and occasionally birds⁵². All this may be the result of a ritual similar to the Middle East, which involves a clay substitute not only for humans but for animals too.

Other clues for the usefulness of both anthropomorphic and zoomorphic figurines come from Minoan Crete, where among numerous sanctuaries *have found many figurines of animals, human beings, and reproduction in clay of some limbs, such as hands and legs. The presence of a layer of ash make to believe that rituals practiced in these places assumed the use of fire*⁵³. All these are interpreted as votive figurines dedicated a great goddess of nature, the mistress of animals, of mountains and seas, of agriculture and war, the queen of living and the dead people⁵⁴.

We once again notice similarities of the above practices with those from our area. Also we emphasize the votive role of these figurines, the association with fire and the presence of

⁴⁷ Dumitrașcu 1974, 131, Fig. 3/1-2.

⁴⁸ László 1994, 64, Fig. 13/2; Sîrbu 1999, 50 sqq., Fig. 2/2.

⁴⁹ Sîrbu 1987, 133 sqq.; Vasiliev et alii 1991, 150; Sîrbu 1993, 132 sqq.; Boroffka 1994, 77 sq.; László 1995, 92 sq.; Sîrbu 1999, 54 sqq.; Damian (Costin) 2009, 7.

⁵⁰ Sîrbu 1993, 136; László 1995, 92 sq.; Sîrbu 1999, 55 sq.

⁵¹ Filoramo et alii 2008, 199 sqq.

⁵² Horedt 1963; Smirnova 1974, 366; Vasiliev et alii 1991, 68 sq., fig. 27, 28/1-8; Gumă 1993, 190; László 1994, 90, fig. 46-48; Levițki 1994, 111, fig. 59/1-2, 4; Ursache 1999, 43 sq. Fig. 4-13.

⁵³ Filoramo et alii 2008, 262.

⁵⁴ Eliade – Culianu 2007, 219 sq.

clay replicas of limbs, especially the human foot. Figurines deposition⁵⁵, association of such artifacts with fire⁵⁶ or representations of human foot are common findings in the Early Iron Age in the Transylvanian Plateau⁵⁷ and beyond⁵⁸. Human foot cast in clay in various forms is widespread as back as from Bronze Age⁵⁹. A possible sanctuary with anthropomorphic and zoomorphic figurines is attested at Lissičniki⁶⁰.

In the example above, somewhat contrary to that from the Hittite society, figurines, both anthropomorphic and zoomorphic, are used as offerings to gods offered, which shows that between religion and magic can not draw a clear line of demarcation as trying some scholars⁶¹, among those two there is a strong connection. *Regarding to magic, which accompany every moment of human life, from birth to death*, Hittites felt that it has divine origin, *being practiced by the Gods and people who have learned from them*⁶². Eloquent for this connection is the myth of Helios, which is not only chthonic God and Titan, an epiphany of generating energy, but has relations with the world of darkness: witchcraft and the underworld, being the father of Circe sorceress and grandfather of Medea⁶³.

Miniature wagon wheels. The archaeological campaign from 1994 at Șimleu Silvaniei *Observator* led to the discovery of six artifacts of this kind, most whole, only two of them from complexes assigned to the Early Iron Age

The first was discovered in the dwelling L1/1994 (Pl. IIIA/2). This specimen, different from the rest, about 45% preserved, had an estimated diameter of approximately 8 cm. It is flat, made of clay and mixed with sand crushed sherds. In the central area has a hole. Burning was strongly oxidized. On both sides has the impression circular 3 - 4 mm, not too deep, placed in a circle, at distances approximately equal, outlined the artifact. On one side, in addition to these impressions described above, there are other impressions asymmetrically arranged.

A second miniature wheel, also found in a fragmentary state, not represented here, was found among the pit G70/1999 inventory.

A final piece was discovered in S2/2001 section at m 10 and 0.43 m depth, in the palisade zone outsole, to the eastern profile. The wheel (Pl. IIIA/1) has a diameter of 4 cm and was made of clay mixed with sand, pebbles and broken ground, poorly paved and oxidizer burned.

The other wheels come from more recent cultural levels or complexes. We prefer not to present in this paper, since their framing in this period is uncertain⁶⁴, although the aspect of the clay body of which were made has the characteristics of those found in *reliable* contexts from the Early Iron Age.

About the morphology and shaping of artifacts, as we already said, all are made of clay mixed with sand, sometimes with gravel, being oxidized burned. The surfaces treatment is different areas, mostly just smoothed. In terms of typology, our wheels, as in the Bronze Age⁶⁵ are divided into two categories: with a pronounced thickening in the central area which suggests the wheel hub and a second type, with flat sides and slightly rounded edges. Artifacts of this last category were treated differently by different authors, many of

⁵⁵ Deposition is attested at Lechința de Mureș (Horedt 1963); at Krivče (apud László 1995, 86). We believe that zoomorphic figurine from G29/1995 pit from Șimleu Silvaniei *Observator* it was an offering, where along another materials appear one "babybottle" vessel and one miniature vessel cup, partially restorable.

⁵⁶ Vasiliev et alii. 1991, 149. Also as an association of this kind should be treated the figurine from Șimleu Silvaniei *Observator*, from G47/1995 pit, with some of the materials burned until the vitrification.

⁵⁷ Vasiliev et alii. 1991, 70 sq.

⁵⁸ Kemenczei 1984, Pl. LXIX/12, XCIII/18, CXXV/22; Levițki 1994, 110, Fig. 59/3 (here the references at page and at „Fig. LXXI/3” and „CXXXV/22” from Kemenczei 1984 are incorrect).

⁵⁹ Platon 1988, 203 sq; Schuster 1999, 261 sqq.

⁶⁰ Maleev 1992, 24.

⁶¹ Sîrbu 1993, 138; Sîrbu 1999, 54.

⁶² Filoramo et alii 2008, 199.

⁶³ Eliade 2008, 159 sq.

⁶⁴ At Șimleu Silvaniei *Observator* there is clear evidence of human presence during the Bronze Age, from early period, until the late period. We do not exclude the possibility that some of the wheels found in uncertain stratigraphic contexts or in secondary position in La Tène complexes to belong to this period.

⁶⁵ Schuster 1996, 118 sq.

them named these specimens as spindle whorl or as “discs”, putting into question their function as the miniature wagon wheels⁶⁶. However, we chose for the inclusion of whose diameter exceeds 3.5 cm, among the miniature wheels category, this rule is used for similar artifacts from earlier periods⁶⁷, but is not the only one criterion which we use. The most important is that a number of analogies blend attributes of both categories which we found on our wheels or other similar objects in the settlements of this period. We’re talking about the artifact found at Șuncuiuş⁶⁸ (Pl. IIIA/3) and a fragmented specimen from Sobiejuchy⁶⁹ (Pl. IIIA/4), both has a pronounced thickening in the central area suggesting wheel hub and small circular impressions arranged around it, just as they appear on the miniature wheel found in house L1/1994 home from Șimleu Silvaniei *Observer*.

We should mention also a flat specimen, decorated with impressions of the kind described above and with radial lines, like the spokes of a wheel, from Terňa (Pl. IIIA/5)⁷⁰. Spokes marking occurs at Teleac too, there being achieved by grooving⁷¹, or on the artifact made of stone, found at Cernatu⁷².

Whatever type of that belong, the analogies for these artifacts are quite numerous. Without proposing an exhaustive research on this subject, mention, besides those already mentioned above, findings from Cernatu⁷³, Teleac⁷⁴ and Chendu⁷⁵, in Banat, at Remetea Mare and in another settlements⁷⁶, in Moldavia, at Grănicești⁷⁷, Dănești⁷⁸, Trinca⁷⁹ and Țahnauți⁸⁰, in Hungary at Biharkerestes, Doboz⁸¹, Visegrád⁸², Sajószentpéter, Köröm and Prügy⁸³, in Piliny culture, at Emőd *Tüzép*⁸⁴ and Kyjatice culture⁸⁵ or among halstattian discoveries from Slovakia, at Terňa⁸⁶ and Nižný Tvarožec⁸⁷. We also mention here a specimen from Hansca⁸⁸, in the area of Holercani group from Moldova or more discoveries in the eponymous site of Kalakača culture⁸⁹.

Regarding the significance of these objects, there are two main ideas: one that sees them in connection with the solar wagons, copying bronze models, so in relation with the cult of the sun and other it considers as toys⁹⁰.

Fired clay disks (tokens). From Șimleu Silvaniei *Observer*, originate all 33 such objects, most discovered as a result of systematic research (Pl. IIIB/1-9). Such pieces have not been discovered in other Hallstattian settlements in the area we are dealing. Connected to discovery context, two artifacts come from the survey research, one specimen from

⁶⁶ Sîrbu 1993, 131; Levițki 1994, 112; Schuster 2007, 38 sq. with literature; Nicic 2008, 98.

⁶⁷ Schuster-Negru 2006, 53.

⁶⁸ Emődi-Hadnagy 1982, 386, Fig. 10.

⁶⁹ Harding et alii 2004, 45, 60, Pl. 22/21.

⁷⁰ Budinský-Kriča – Miroššayová 1992, Pl. 11/9.

⁷¹ Vasiliev et alii 1991, 74, Fig. 25/14.

⁷² Székely 1966, 25, Pl. 7/4.

⁷³ Székely 1966, 25, Pl. 7/5.

⁷⁴ Vasiliev et alii 1991, 74, Fig. 25/13-15.

⁷⁵ Vasiliev et alii 1991, 74; Ciugudean 1997, Fig. 34/3.

⁷⁶ Gumă 1993, 190, Pl. 34/4.

⁷⁷ László 1994, 64, Fig. 12/1, 3, 5, 7-8. Here, just the items 1 and 7 are considered by quoted author by us, wagon wheels, although all objects at which we refer has the characteristic of such artifacts.

⁷⁸ László 1994, 111.

⁷⁹ Levițki 1994, 112, Fig. 59/7.

⁸⁰ Kašuba 2003, Fig. 5/10.

⁸¹ Szabó 2002, Fig. 38/XL.A; 2, Pl. 141/11, 158/2-3.

⁸² Groh 1984, 56, Fig. 5/4.

⁸³ Kemenczei 1984, 143, Pl. XCVII/23, CXLIV/8, CXLVI/14, CLVII/5, 22.

⁸⁴ Hellebrandt 1991, 21, Pl. 4/4.

⁸⁵ Matuz, Nováki 2002, Fig. 110/18-19.

⁸⁶ Budinský-Kriča – Miroššayová 1992, Pl. 11/9-13, 21, 34. The items 9 and 11 have, like in the case of that from house L1/1994 from Șimleu Silvaniei *Observer*, flat body with small circular impressions.

⁸⁷ Miroššayová 1987, Pl. 12/11.

⁸⁸ Nicic 2008, 98, Fig. 46/4.

⁸⁹ Medović 1988, Fig. 29/5, 45/16, 60/7, 149/2, 302/2.

⁹⁰ Schuster 2007, 32; A significant finding for the interpretation of these miniature wagon models made of clay comes from Nižné Myšľa Otomani culture cemetery (eastern Slovakia). In one child tomb (no. 40) appeared one wagon model. The situation suggests that these pieces could be toys for kids – Gašaj - Olexa 1996, 20.

cultural layer and another one from a post hole from S1/2003 trench. Five pieces was founded in the fortification elements (ditch or wall), six from the pits, four out of household oven and 14 were found in the inventory of a house. Like in the miniature wheels case, discussed above, we can certainly attribute to the Early Iron Age habitation only those items found in secure contexts⁹¹.

In terms of morphology, all are made from the walls of vessels, most are in the shape of double truncated cone with double colors, black and red, and some with grooves, but also from bowls or more rarely, from "bag" type pots. Almost all are made of ceramic fragments which have at least one side polished. Their diameters vary between 3 and 6 cm. Their margins are in some cases, slightly smoothed due to use. More rarely breaks appear which makes the items to not be perfectly circular.

Analogies for these we have in the Gáva culture area at Petrușeni⁹² or in Hungary⁹³ and in Lausitz culture environment⁹⁴, and continue to exist even in the next period⁹⁵.

Related to the significance of these artifacts are two opinions. Some authors consider as solar symbols⁹⁶ or items in connection with magic⁹⁷ while others view them as household items⁹⁸ or game pieces⁹⁹.

Fired clay rings. In the house L3/2002 from Șimleu Silvaniei *Observator*, was found one fragment of a ring made of fired ring, about 9 cm in diameter and oval in section, approximately 2.5 cm thick (Pl. IVA/1). The artifact was made of oxidizing burn clay.

In Gáva culture, we have analogies in Romania, at Căuaș *Sighetiu*¹⁰⁰ (Pl. IVA/2) and Teleac¹⁰¹ (Pl. IVA/3), and in Hungary, similar artifacts were discovered at Prügy¹⁰², Baks-Temetőpart (Pl. IVA/4-5) and Hódmezővásárhely¹⁰³ (Pl. IVA/6).

Such items appear among the discoveries of Kyjatice culture¹⁰⁴ or in a series of graves from the Transdanubian area¹⁰⁵, artifacts found in the graves may have cultic significance in Kemenczei opinion¹⁰⁶. Gabor Szabo, in her PhD thesis dedicated to Gáva culture and its preliminary period, assume a more practical the use of these components, as the loom weights¹⁰⁷.

For a particular significance calls the artifacts from the eponymous settlement of Babadag cultures¹⁰⁸ (Pl. IVA/7-8). From here come the most numerous objects of this type found so far. These are pieces made from clay, burned poorly, with a diameter between 5.5 and 6 cm and oval section¹⁰⁹. Called by some authors, "donuts" or "bagels" are treated

⁹¹ Such artifacts, manufactured from Gáva pottery fragments inclusively have appeared along another made from dacian pottery in complexes assigned to the Second Iron Age settlement (La Tène) from Șimleu Silvaniei *Observator*.

⁹² Levițki 1994, 109, Fig. 59/15.

⁹³ Kemenczei 1984, 72, Pl. CXXXVIII/5, CXL/6, XLI/5, 14, CLVII/11; Hellebrandt 1990, 104, Pl. 9/3.

⁹⁴ Harding et alii 2004, 60, Pl. 22/3-6, 8-14, 16-18. Here are disks made from clay not only fabricated from pottery walls (see Harding et alii 2004, Pl. 22/1-2, 7, 15, 19).

⁹⁵ Sîrbu 1993, 130 sq.; Pop 1995-1996, 71 sqq. with literature.

⁹⁶ Vasiliev et alii 1991, 153.

⁹⁷ Sîrbu 1993, 130 sqq.

⁹⁸ Levițki 1994, 109.

⁹⁹ Harding et alii 2004, 60.

¹⁰⁰ Némethi 1990, Fig. 21/9.

¹⁰¹ From here comes an artifact entirely preserved and one in fragmentary status (Mitrofan 1967, 436, Fig. 2/2; Ciugudean 1979, Fig. 14/9), another well preserved item, unpublished, was discovered in a survey from the early '2000 by I. C. Bălțean colleague (kind information I. C. Bălțean).

¹⁰² Kemenczei 1984, 72, Pl. CXLVIII/18, CXL/4, CLVI/11, CLVII/17, 21.

¹⁰³ Kemenczei 1984, 72, Pl. CL/11, CL/19, CLVII/23-24; Szabó 1996, 36, Fig. 21/17-18, 39/11; Szabó 2002, 33, Fig. 38/XLI.

¹⁰⁴ Matuz, Nováki 2002, Fig. 91/14.

¹⁰⁵ Metzner-Nebelsick 2002, Pl. 5/24, 104/1-2.

¹⁰⁶ Kemenczei 1984, 72.

¹⁰⁷ Szabó 2002, 33.

¹⁰⁸ Jugănaru 2003, 76, Fig. 3, 4; Jugănaru 2005, 42-43, Fig. 10/38-46 (in this text the reference at plate is wrong).

¹⁰⁹ 22 of artifacts are mentioned by G. Jugănaru, but their number is confuse, given the fact that in plates we can count 25 exemplares (Jugănaru 2003, 76, Fig. 3, 4; Jugănaru 2005, 42). The number from plates seems to be correct, it is mentioned by V. Sîrbu too (Sîrbu 1999, 49).

as extremely rare pieces, “the only analogy”, in their view, was found in Pšeničevo type settlement at Konyovo¹¹⁰. In fact, they appear on a very wide area, from our region to

Central Europe¹¹¹. Other analogies come, as already we mentioned, from a “hoard” found in Pšeničevo culture at Konyovo (Bulgaria)¹¹². The latest analogy of Hallstatt period for such objects appear in Curteni settlement, dated in VI-V century BC¹¹³, but continue their existence even in La Tène Age, as proved by the discoveries from Poiana¹¹⁴ or from Hanska *Toltoacă*¹¹⁵. Returning to the Curteni artifact we must emphasize that this occurred in a pit with more than 40 spindle whorl, one clay disc decorated with anthropomorphic motif, massive wheels of wagon miniature, three “idols”, one phallic symbol, metal and bone fragments and several pottery, burnt adobe and “carved” stones and fragments of fireplace splice¹¹⁶.

Clay artifacts with ridge. The item from Șimleu Silvaniei *Observator*, only one of its kind from our area of interest is broken from ancient times (Pl. IVB/1). The preserved length measure 6 cm and 3 cm in height. It is worked of well smoothed clay; skimmed with sand after oxidative burning gaining a light brown color. It had an elongated side, slightly curved, with two sides that ended in the form of increased cross ridge pattern pulled out from the soft clay and the second side with two oval holes. One of the ridges, more narrow, it still retains traces of small raised bumps. It was discovered in L1/1994 house.

Similar artifacts have been discovered at Teleac¹¹⁷ (Pl. IVB/3-6), Rîpa¹¹⁸ (Pl. IVB/2) or in Hungary, at Doboz, Polgar¹¹⁹, Poroszló¹²⁰, Prügy¹²¹ and another one kept at the museum in Debrecen¹²². Other findings of the same category appear in the inventory of some graves from Transdanubian area, or in Serbia at Kalakača and other contemporary sites¹²³. We believe that the artifact from Cozia belong to this category too¹²⁴.

About the meanings of these artifacts, by some opinions are considered tools for decorating pottery¹²⁵. It should be noted that the ridge size and distance between them does not overlap with channeled vessels, which is why we can not consider as decorated pottery utensils, rallying us to those who assign magical-cult valence¹²⁶.

The chronology and cultural assignment of artifacts. In what concern the chronology, all the figurines was founded in contexts belonging to early and middle Hallstatt period, Hallstatt B and C respectively.

Form cultural point of view; these discoveries belong to Gáva culture. Because these artifacts had a symbolic value, we find these finds on a wider area. And this suggests the existence of some symbols which were specific to Urnfield culture community, early Hallstatt period in this part of Europe respectively. Implicitly these are evidence of an common imaginary but the supra-regional circulation of ideas in this period too.

¹¹⁰ Jugănaru 2003, 76; Jugănaru 2005, 42-43. In fact, such artifacts appear quite often in north Tracian environment, the literature listed by us being available at that time.

¹¹¹ A similar object was discovered in Hascherkeller settlement from Bavaria (Wells 1980, 317, Fig. 10/7).

¹¹² Apud Sîrbu 1999, 49, Fig. 13/15.

¹¹³ Iconomu 1978-1979, 220, Pl. 30/16, 31/12.

¹¹⁴ Apud Iconomu 1978-1979, 220.

¹¹⁵ Apud Sîrbu 1993, 139 sq., Fig. 3/5, 5/7.

¹¹⁶ Iconomu 1978-1979, 179 sqq.

¹¹⁷ Vasiliev et alii 1991, 75, Fig. 25/5-8.

¹¹⁸ This artifact was interpreted as zoomorphic figurine representing the head of an deer (Dumitrașcu 1974, 131, Fig. 4/1).

¹¹⁹ Szabó 2002, 33, Fig. 38/XLIV.

¹²⁰ Patay 1976, 199, Fig. 4/8-9; Kemenczei 1984, 72, Pl. CXXVIII/7.

¹²¹ Kemenczei 1984, 72, Pl. CLVII/20; Szabó 2002, Fig. 38/XLIV.

¹²² Patay 1976, 199, nota 11.

¹²³ Apud Vasiliev et alii 1991, 75, with literature.

¹²⁴ László 1972, 210, Fig. 4/4a-b.

¹²⁵ László 1972, 210.

¹²⁶ Patay 1976, 199; Kemenczei 1984, 72; Vasiliev et alii 1991, 75; Metzner-Nebelsick 1997, 596-597; Szabó 2002, 33; Kaşuba 2003, 192 sq., Fig. 5/16.

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