

The catalogue of the brine wells and archaeological discoveries found on the Homoroade Valley

Drd. Dan Buzea, Andrea (Chiricescu) Deák

*Muzeul Național al Carpaților Răsăriteni, strada Gabor Aron, nr. 16, Sf. Gheorghe,
cod 520008, jud. Covasna
E-mail: buzealuci@yahoo.com; chiricescuandrea@yahoo.com

Key words: Transylvania, Homoroade Valley, salt, archaeological sites, archaeological vestiges, brine, brine wells

Mots clef : Transilvania, Valea Homoroadelor, sel, site archéologique, vestiges archéologiques, eau salée, fontaine d'eau salée.

Le répertoire des fontaines salées et des découvertes archéologiques de Valea Homoroadelor

L'article est un étude préliminaire des recherches ethnoarchéologiques qu'on a déroule à Valea Homoroadelor dans l'intervalle 2003 – 2005. Il s'agit des résultats partielles d'un projet de recherche appelle L'exploitation préindustrielle du sel dans le basin Carpatique. On a identifié aussi les sites archéologiques que les sources salées placées aux alentours. L'article présente 10 fontaines d'eau salée et 14 sites archéologiques proximales.

The geographic position of the Homoroade Valley in the context of the saline regions of Romania

Romania is one of the richest countries in Europe as far as salt deposits are concerned, having more than 300 salt massifs which were identified both on the outside and on the inside of the Carpathian Arch. Some specialists consider that due to the high quality of this salt and to the relatively easy exploitation conditions, our country is favoured on the globe, since the rock salt may be found quite often close to the surface (D. Ciobanu, 2003). Thus, the surface exploitation is possible, and it does not require complicated procedures as deep underground salt mines do.

The salt massifs string along the sub-Carpathian mountain chain, on the southern and eastern sides, and in the Transylvanian Plateau. In Transylvania the salt deposits appear in a straight line, from north to south: Ocna Șugatag, Ocna Dej, Turda, Ocna Mureș and Ocna Sibiului, while on the eastern side one

can find the Praid Saline (D. Ciobanu, 2003), massif which spreads out to the Homoroade Valley.

The Homoroade Depression belongs to the geographic district of the Odorheiu Secuiesc high hills. This geographic area is found at the bottom of the Harghita Volcanic Mountains, partially covering the Gurghiu and the northern side of Perșani Mountains, the Târnava Mare Valley and the Homoroade Valley. The area is characterised by high hills, with an average height of 700 metres, and only sometimes reaching out to 900 – 1000 metres. These hills were formed on an old piedmont fountain, thus this area is called the Odorheiu Secuiesc Piedmont.

The rivers have sculpted many depressions in the contact area between the piedmont and the volcanic mountains, phenomena which was enhanced by the presence of the underground salt massifs, which even nowadays sometimes emerge to the surface. Although the presence of so many and varied salt sources should have led to the establishment in the far past of smaller or larger communities in this region, the area hasn't been researched enough from an archaeological point of view (G. Ferenczi, I. Ferenczi, 1979). It is a known fact that salt has always been a first class necessity both for people and for animals, in order for them to survive. Both human and animal organisms need salt to function properly and healthful.

In this perspective the National Museum of Eastern Carpathians has begun an ethno-archaeological research project in south-eastern Transylvania regarding the pre-industrial exploitation of all salt sources, the Homoroade Valley being one of the most intensely researched areas. From an archaeological point of view we tried to identify those archaic settlements that are found close to the salt sources, and to prove, as far as possible, that the inhabitants of these settlements exploited the natural salt sources. From an ethnographical point of view we identified those localities where the salt sources were recently, or still are, exploited. Other areas were researched as well, and today we are able to make comparisons between different salt manifestations in Romania, and between the ways these sources were exploited and turned to good account.

The ethno – archaeological researches were made between years 2003 – 2005, by a complex team formed of: dr. Valerii Kavruk, Dan Buzea, Mariana Cristina Popescu, Bartha Istvan, Bota Adriana, Mirela Cotruță, Suci Ivan, Marius Domboși, Marius Dănilă, Kinga Ugron, Dorel Marc, Livia Marc, Dorinel Ichim, Andrea (Chiricescu) Deak.

Salt sources in the Homoroade Valley

There are suppositions that the rock salt seam that runs through this area is a ramification of the seam found at Praid – Sovata, and that it covers the territory bathed by the waters of the two Homorod Rivers (B. Orbán, 1868). This belief is found also among the inhabitants of this region, where people really believe in this underground connection, and even consider that the salt found here is qualitatively better than the one found at Praid. And they are not entirely wrong, since there are only slight chemical differences between the salt massifs in our country, determined by their origin and the geological eras they were formed in (D. Ciobanu, 2003), leading also to qualitative differences. The existence of rock salt underground was confirmed during the ethnographic researches by the inhabitants of this region, by clear proofs of old salt mines and by written testimonies related to archaic salt exploitations.

The presence of brine springs and brine wells is also a clear proof that confirms the existence of rock salt underground. In most cases these brine springs arise as result of the underground fresh water springs that go through the rock salt deposit and then emerge to the surface with an unstoppable strength. Since ancient times people built wells in those places where these springs strongly emerge, collecting brine in order to use it in the household, especially for preparing food.

Sometimes these brine springs and wells dry out, being covered with a layer of salt, becoming impossible to use, or they simply disappear, sign that the underground spring changed its course.

The brine wells are often affected by different circumstances that cause them to lose their salinity. This happens mostly when fresh rain water makes its way inside the brine well, turning it into fresh water. Thus the water of the well becomes useless: it is not salty enough to be used as before, but still it contains enough salt, being undrinkable, unfit for any other purpose. Rain water usually finds its way inside the brine well because of people's negligence, whom don't take care of their wells as they should, sometimes even replacing the old fashioned brine with salt bought in stores.

When the brine spring loses its strength the well doesn't fill up as it should and other fresh water springs make their way in. This is another cause for brine wells to lose their saltiness.

Sometimes the underground spring changes its course and the brine well dries out or fills up with fresh water. But in this case, the brine spring will almost surely emerge to the surface somewhere else, only a few metres further.

The rock salt sources, the brine springs, wells, ponds and lakes, as well as other saline manifestations can be easily identified by anyone, following some clues that nature itself offers. Thus, in the places where salt exists one

can find specific vegetation that only grows in a saline environment. These plants have specific folk names, the most familiar one being that of “salt flower”, a generic name used for a number of different plant species that grow in saline environment.

Another clue, and probably the most obvious one, consists of the salt crystal sediments that appear after water evaporates. Such layers of salt crystals can be seen around the brine wells, inside and on the constructions that cover these wells, around the brine springs and ponds.

The peasants and the shepherds know that animals have an instinct to find salt, especially cattle and sheep, thanks to their constant need to have salt in their organisms. This can also be considered a true way of finding those areas rich in salt or in identifying brine springs. But usually shepherds avoid these areas, since an animal could drink brine without stopping but that would surely kill it, too much salt being just as worse as none.

The catalogue of the brine wells found on the Homoroade Valley

The criterion used to catalogue the brine wells found on the Homoroade Valley is the geographic position of the wells along the two Homord Rivers, Homorodul Mic and Homorodul Mare, and their affluent. The wells are presented from north to south, following the course of the water, beginning with the wells found on the Homorodul Mic Valley, continuing with those found on the Homorodul Mare Valley, and ending with those found on the Homord Valley. The last catalogued well, that from Racoș, Brașov County, is not found in these valleys, but it is considered to be on one of the border points of this saline region (Pl. I).

Thus, on the valley of the Homorodul Mic River we can find 4 of the 10 catalogued brine wells. The first one is found at Lueta, followed, only a few kilometres away, by the one found at Merești. These are both in Harghita County. Between Merești and Jimbor, Brașov County, where we can find the third brine well, we can see on the map two other localities, Crăciunel and Ocland, where we found only small brine springs, but no wells. The last locality on this route where we found a brine well is Mărcheașa, Brașov County.

On the Valley of the Homorodul Mare River we found as well 4 brine wells, beginning with the one from Comănești, Harghita County. This well is also used by the inhabitants of Aldea village, placed south of Comănești, where we found only traces of brine springs. The next brine well is found in Mărtiniș, Harghita County. This is an area where the underground rock salt deposit is found quite close to the surface, being exploited in the past. At Sânpaul,

Harghita County, we found two brine wells, both being used by the inhabitants of the nearby villages as well. Here we found traces of salt mining belonging to the Roman period.

On the Homorodul Mic Valley the brine wells geographically cover its full length, but on the Homorodul Mare Valley the wells are concentrated around one point, and thus from Sânpaul to Homorod we found no brine wells or springs.

Regarding the last two catalogued brine wells, we can say that they close the Homoroade Valley region, Rupea, Braşov County, at the south-east and Racoş, Braşov County, at the south-vest. The connection between these two localities is strengthened by the fact that we identified brine springs at Băile Homoroade, but these springs also contain other chemical substances.

Depending on their geographical position, we can see on the map two areas in which they occur.

The position of each brine well was measured with a GPS, using the following coordinates: A = altitude; Er = measurement error; N = northern latitude; E = eastern longitude.

The catalogue of the archaeological findings on the Homoroade Valley

The Homoroade Valley is a region which was relatively little researched before, thus it is not too known from an archaeological point of view. The presence of salt (brine springs, rock salt massifs: Mărtiniş, Lueta, Crăciunel, Sânpaul – the last one being for sure exploited in antiquity) is a fact that lead, most surely, to the settlement of certain older or more recent historic communities in this attractive depression. Adding to this we can also mention the presence of iron ores, which were relatively easy to process even with primitive tools and methods, such as those found nearby Vlăhiţa and Lueta. These are still exploited and processed nowadays on the spot (G. Ferenczi, I. Ferenczi, 1979).

We shortly catalogue here the archaeological findings discovered and researches in the last century, and as well the more recent discoveries made during the project “*The pre-industrial exploitation of salt in the Eastern Carpathians*” (Pl. I).

The archaeological findings are listed according to: the GPS coordinates; the state of their property; preservation state; the history of the researches; placing; the character of the findings; cultural and chronological framing, and, where it was required, we also mentioned information related to the places where the archaeological materials are kept.

BĂDENI, village, Mărtiniş commune, Harghita County

1. The “Dealul Cetății” Dacian fortress (*Vârhegy-Bágyvár*), (Pl.IV/3).

GPS coordinates: A= 964; N= 46° 13' 32"; E=25° 20' 28.24".

The Dacian fortress is found north-west of the village, on a dominant spot. It was explored in 1983 by I. Ferenczi. On the south-eastern side it has a terrace (man-made?), and on the top an oval plateau (80 x 45 m), surrounded by a rampart and a ditch. In the three sections opened by I. Ferenczi Dacian archaeological material and a few Bronze Age fragments (*Wietenberg Culture*) were found. The fortification elements found on the edge of the plateau haven't been researched (V. Cavruc, 2000; V. Crişan, 2000).

State of preservation: the traces of older archaeological diggings can be seen at the surface of the terrain. The entire area is covered by a pasture, and we found no archaeological material during our survey.

The hill on which the fortress is found is used as a pasture and its administrative authority is Bădeni village.

2. Bădeni East. *Prehistoric settlement.*

GPS coordinates: A= 776; N= 46° 13' 18.25"; E= 25° 21' 12.04".

When entering into the village, on the Mărtiniş – Bădeni direction, we can notice a hill with a gentle slope on the right side of the country road. We found archaeological material spread on a surface of about 200 x 100 metres, above the freshly ploughed terrain. The archaeological material thus discovered belongs to different periods: *The Late Bronze Age – The Noua Culture*, a fragment stood out, it had an over-raised handle, with a knob, made of clay mixed with sand and pebbles, smoothed, reducing firing (Pl.V/3); *The First Iron Age* (fragmentary pottery material, well polished, black coloured on the outside and red on the inside); *The Medieval and Modern Period (?)* – pottery fragments made with a potter's wheel.

This point is a new finding.

The land on which the settlement is found is segmented in more private agricultural fields.

The archaeological material found at the surface of the terrain is kept in the deposits of the National Museum of Eastern Carpathians.

The villagers from Bădeni use in their households brine brought from the well found in Mărtiniş.

CRĂCIUNEL, village, Ocland commune, Harghita County

1. Crăciunel North. Settlement.

GPS coordinates: A= 646; N= 46° 11' 39.26"; E= 25° 26' 14.05".

On the right side of DJ 132 on the Ocland – Merești direction, when leaving Crăciunel, at about 800 metres north, there is a terrain with elevations. The soil is brown with lots of rocks at the surface. The settlement is found at about 100 metres east of the Homorodul Mic Valley, and it appears as a circular black land spot, with a diameter of about 50 metres. Here we found prehistoric (?) pottery fragments.

At about 100 – 150 metres north of the first point, there is another black land spot, with a resembling diameter, in which we found archaeological material. A few fragments stood out, they were made of clay mixed with sand and pebbles, hand-moulded, smoothed, ornamented with alveolar girdles and the firing was oxidizing (Pl. V/1,2). We cannot mention for sure whether these two points are the remains of the same settlement or they are two different settlements.

This is a new discovery.

The terrain on which the settlement is found belongs to the Ocland Local Council.

The archaeological material found at the surface of the terrain is deposited at the National Museum of Eastern Carpathians.

2. Crăciunel East. Settlement (?)

GPS coordinates: A= 651m; N= 46° 10' 16.47"; E= 25° 26' 32.40".

At the entrance in the village, on the Ocland – Crăciunel direction, on the right side of the road one can see a forest road that leads to the brine spring, found at about 400 – 500 metres far. Westward of the spring, up the hill, a few ceramic fragments were found. One of them can be considered as belonging to the *Bronze Age* (made of clay mixed with sand, hand-moulded, smoothed, reducing firing). Other ceramic fragments found here were made with a potter's wheel and belong to the modern period.

The land on which the settlement is found is segmented in several private properties.

The archaeological material found at the surface of the terrain is deposited at the National Museum of Eastern Carpathians.

LUETA

Lueta is a commune found in Harghita County, situated on the Homorodul Mic Valley. It was first mentioned in year 1332 (D. Ghinea, E. Ghinea, 2000). In 1868 the researcher Orbán Balázs mentions that Lueta is a locality formed of several hamlets, among which there was one called Sófalva [The Salt Village]. The houses of this hamlet were grouped around the brine well, thus proving its oldness (B. Orbán, 1868). The name of this old hamlet is preserved by the name of the street on which we can find the brine well today, Salt street, placed at about 500 metres away from the centre of the commune, on the left bank of the Homorodul Mic River. The same written source tells us that the well is placed on a thick rock salt deposit, which is found only a few feet deep, and it spreads on a large distance, reaching Sânpaul (B. Orbán, 1868). From the local population we found out that there have been many land slides in the past, caused by the rock salt deposits and the underground brine, which forced people to move their houses and leave the hamlets that were placed on these lands. It also looks like there has been a traditionally exploited salt mine in the area, but it was closed a long time ago. Today we cannot see its traces, since they are covered with vegetation, but the locals can still point us to the spot where the mines were found, somewhere half way on the road to Merești.

GPS coordinates: A = 636 m; Er = 10 m; N = 46°16,644'; E = 25°29,335'.

Administration. The brine well belongs to the commune. All natives of Lueta and its hamlets, as well as of other villages of the commune and neighbouring localities use this brine well. The well has a manager, but he is not paid by the local council. The well is open three days a week: Wednesday from 14:00 to 17:00, Monday and Friday from 06:00 to 10:00. In the winter it opens after 07:00, when the daylight brakes and it closes before sunset, in order to avoid accidents. But the György family, who administrates and lives only a few houses away from the well, opens it by request as well.

Description. The well is protected by a wooden construction, with a square draught, that looks like a unicellular house. The draught of the well-house is a perfect square, with its sides of 440 cm long, and the height of 200 cm. It has pyramidal hipped roof, covered with “fish scale” hollow tiles. The well-house has two doors, a main door, placed on its western side, towards the road, and a secondary one, placed on its southern side. The well is placed in the north-eastern corner of the room. The tube of the well consists of a hollowed out oak trunk, being about 3,50 – 4,00 metres deep. It has round shape, being placed at the top in a wooden square, with a side of 138 cm. On the bottom of the well the people placed hollow tiles, on which one can see salt crystal deposits along with a bluish mud when the well gets empty. The well is filled

up by an underground brine spring. The inventory of the well holds two wooden buckets, made of oak, with 3,00 – 3,50 metre long handles (Pl. II/1-2).

Dating. The oldest inscription found carved in the wood of the construction, on the outside, is the one that stands around the main entrance. This certifies that the well existed before 1866. The first part of the inscription stands right above the door and places the well in time „AZ 1866 DIK ÉVBEN TŰZÁLTAL ELPOZTULT” – “IT WAS DESTROYED IN THE FIRE OF 1866”. This inscription continues on the right side post of the door „JULIUS 3DIKÁN” - “ON THE 3RD OF JULY”. The locals tell us that the well was rebuilt in the same year.

State of preservation. Both the well-house and the well are in a very good state of preservation. They are very well taken care of, since brine is considered to be an aliment in this region, taking the place of fine salt in the households, and sometimes being used even in place of rock salt.

Archaeological findings:

The archaeological field surveys took around the brine well and around Lueta commune revealed no archaeological vestiges.

MEREȘTI

Merești is a commune found in Harghita County situated on the Homorodul Mic Valley. It was first mentioned in year 1333 (D. Ghinea, E. Ghinea, 2000). Just as in the case of Lueta, there are clear proofs regarding the existence of rock salt deposits underground. The brine well is found almost in the centre of the settlement, on the “Sóskút” street [hung. = brine well street], registered under number 450. It is positioned on the left bank of the Homorodul Mic River, that runs trough the locality.

GPS coordinates: A = 561 m; Er = 5 m; N = 46°14,311'; E = 25°27,574'.

Administration. The brine well belongs to the commune. All natives of Merești and its hamlets, as well as of other villages of the commune and neighbouring localities use it. The well has a manager, but he is not paid by the local council. It is locked all the time, and the manager opens it by request. Anyone can come to get water at any time, and the only condition is to find the manager. The locals do not pay for the brine, but the fee for other users was, in 2005, of 0,05 lei/litre. The schedule and the fees are posted on the gate of the manager, Szabo Tibor, who lives just a few houses away and everyone must pass his house to get to the well.

Description. The brine well, just as the one from Lueta, is protected by a wooden construction, with a square draught, and looks like a unicellular house. Its sides are 400 cm long and it is about 200 cm high. It has gable roof, covered with black tar boards. The floor of the room is made of thick wooden boards. The well-house has one entrance, placed on its southern side, facing the

road. The well is placed approximately in the centre of the room. The body of the well consists of a hollowed out oak trunk, being about 4,00 metres deep. Thus it has round shape, raising 10 - 15 cm over the floor. It is circumscribed in a round tube above the floor. The tube is made of coniferous staves, probably fir, tied together with a metal circle, held together with two screws. The cylinder is 70 cm high, being built for protection, to avoid accidents. The well is filled up by an underground brine spring. The inventory of the well holds a metallic bucket, which has a 2,28 metres long wooden handle. (Pl. II/7-8)

Dating. The oldest inscription is found carved on the outside, around the door, and it states that the well and its house existed at the beginning of the 19th century, in 1801. The locals also say that this year is only one of the many years it has been restored, that the well is much older than that. The first half of the inscription is found above the door and it is in Latin: „ANNO 1801” - “YEAR 1801”. Both at the beginning and at the end number 1 is stylized, and the second one ends with a flower, probably a tulip. Another inscription is found on the two sides of the door. It begins on the left side, saying „UJRAÉPÜLT” [hung.] - “IT WAS REBUILT”, and it ends on the right side saying “1860”.

State of preservation. The well-house is permanently locked, thus both the well and the building that protects it are in a good state of preservation.

Archaeological findings:

1. “Dâmbul Pipașilor”. Dacian fortress.

The fortress is found at the south-eastern extremity of Merești commune, at about 15 km far, at a height of 745 m from the datum line. The area is covered by a forest and vast mountain pastures. “Dâmbul Pipașilor” (the acropolis of the settlement) has conical shape, and it is surrounded by several terraces, all man-made and bearing inhabitancy traces. Its south-eastern, southern, western and north-western slopes are very abrupt, going down towards the Vârghiș Gorge.

The fortress is known in the archaeological literature (V. Crișan, 2000; V. Crișan, 2003; V. Crișan, 2003a).

2. Peștera Mare (Nagy Barlang/Orbán Balázs Barlang). (Pl.IV/7,8). [The Big Cave]

The cave is found in the Vârghiș Gorge, on the left bank of Vârghiș River, at about 10 – 20 metres above the actual river bed. The access to the cave is enhanced by metallic stairs built in the contemporary period.

The cave is dry and has several rooms. Unfortunately it is affected by the diggings made of poachers (treasure hunters and paleo-fauna hunters). The mouth of the cave has a relatively oval shape, with a width of 8 metres and a height of 5 metres. Prehistoric and modern age ceramic fragments were found in the area of the entrance and in the first room, in the ground scattered by poachers. We don't know if the other

rooms were inhabited, since the access into these is very difficult without proper equipment.

Among the recovered pieces an arrow head stood out. It was made of silex and it was well finished on one of its sides. Judging by its shape it could be attributed to a *prehistoric inhabitancy* (Pl.V/12). The pottery is fragmentary, and judging by its structure it belongs to *the Neo-eneolithic, the Middle Bronze Age* (Pl.V/10, 11) and the *medieval periods*.

This point is known in the archaeological literature (J. Emödi, 1980).

The land on which the cave is found belongs to the Vârghiș Local Council.

The archaeological material found in the cave is deposited at the National Museum of Eastern Carpathians.

3. Peștera Cailor (*Ló Barlang*). [Horses Cave]

The cave is easy to be found, it lays on the right side of Vârghiș River, at about 100 metres north of the *Peștera Mare* point and at about 200 metres of *Dâmbul Pipașilor*.

The mouth of the cave has triangular shape, with a base of 10 metres and a height of 4 - 5 metres. It seems like it has a 30 – 40 metres long corridor. It is possible that it has more rooms. It was strongly harmed by the diggings of the poachers. The cave is dry, assuring favourable inhabitancy conditions. When entering the first room one may see a digging on the centre of the corridor. Some prehistoric ceramic fragments were found here, among which one can be certainly attributed to the *Coțofeni Culture*.

This point is known in the archaeological literature.

The land on which the cave is found belongs to the Vârghiș Local Council.

The archaeological material found in the cave is deposited at the National Museum of Eastern Carpathians.

JIMBOR

Jimbor is a village found in Homorod commune, Brașov County. It is situated on the Homorodul Mic Valley. It was first mentioned in year 1342 (D. Ghinea, E. Ghinea, 2000). The brine well is found outside the village, on the right side of the river, at about 800 metres west of the actual river bed.

GPS coordinates: A = 475 m; Er = 5 m; N = 46°05,806'; E = 25°20,991'.

Administration. The well belongs to the commune, but it was abandoned, and now it is ruined. It was used in the past by the natives of Jimbor and the surrounding villages. Today it isn't locked any more.

Description. The brine well is protected by a wooden construction that looks like a unicellular house. It has rectangular draught, with the longer sides of 400 cm and the short ones of about 200 cm long. It has gable roof, covered with “fish scale” hollow tiles. The floor of the room is missing, the well being surrounded by settled ground. The construction had only one door, but it is also missing. The well itself is ruined, the wooden casings being spread all over inside the construction. The well had square shape, with a side of 1,20 metres, and today we cannot tell its depth. Judging by what the locals told us, it was probably more than 5 metres deep, and a thick layer of rock salt was found at its bottom. The inventory of the well held in the past a wooden roll on which a wooden bucket was hung, installation used to draw water from the pit. Today we found no traces of these items, besides a wooden ladder which was probably used when cleaning the well-pit (Pl. III/9).

Dating. Although the wooden beams that are part of the construction do not hold any inscriptions, we found out from the villagers that the well is at least 150 years old. There are legends that relate to it, as well as stories about the use of brine and rock salt, that is supposedly found under ground.

State of preservation. Both the well and the construction that protects it are very damaged. No one takes care of the well, the well-house is open and it falls apart. The wooden walls are deteriorated and the hollow tiles are falling off the roof. The floor of the room is entirely missing and after it rains it is impossible to get inside because of the mud. The brine has lost its salinity due to the advanced degradation of the construction that protects the well.

Archaeological findings:

Stone axes, a *Baniabic* copper sickle, as well as “*Cotofeni*” materials and “*Dumbrăvița*” (Glina III-Schneckenberg Culture) axes were found on the territory of Jimbor village in the past (F. Costea, 1995).

1. “Dealul Pietros - Sud” (*Köves Domb*). Settlement (Pl. IV/2). [Southern Rocky Hill]

GPS coordinates: A = 496 m; N= 46° 06' 059"; E= 25° 22' 666".

The settlement is found at the entrance into the village, on the Homorod – Ocland direction, on the right side of DJ 132. It occupies the first high terrace found on the left bank of the Homorodul Mic River, at about 60 – 90 metres far of the actual river bed.

The settlement is marked at north by the Fântâni Brook [Well’s Brook], at east by hills (700 metres high, at most), at south by a valley and at west by the county road. It has a relatively oval shaped plan, and it is 200 metres long (on a north-south direction) and 100 – 120 metres wide (on an east-west direction). North of the settlement there is an area where the wastes of the villagers are deposited nowadays, and they are burnt on the spot. Agricultural works are done on the land where the settlement is found, the

ground has brown colour and it contains a lot of stones. This land is a private property.

The archaeological material was found at the surface of the land, spread on the above mentioned area. Part of this material belongs to the *Middle Bronze Age* (Pl.VII/9). A piece stood out: a cylindrical knob, applied on the wall of the pot, made of clay mixed with fine sand, ornamented with a string of triangular pricks; the firing was reducing and its colour is grey (Pl.VII/12).

Most of the discovered ceramic fragments belong to the *First Iron Age*. They are made of clay mixed with sand and pebbles, hand-moulded, polished, reducing firing, of black colour on the outside and red on the inside, the ornaments being mostly grooves.

This point is a new finding.

The land on which the settlement is found is segmented in more private properties.

The archaeological material found here is deposited at the National Museum of Eastern Carpathians.

1. "Dealul Pietros - Nord" (Köves Domb). Settlement (Pl. IV/1).
[Northern Rocky Hill]

GPS coordinates: A= 505 m; N= 46° 07' 003"; E= 25° 23' 885".

The settlement is found at the exit of the village, towards north, on the right side of DJ 132, on the Homorod – Ocland direction. The settlement is marked at north by a lower area, a possible defensive ditch (?), at the south by the Unitarian Cemetery, at the east by a forest road and at the west by the county road. It has an oval shaped plan, being 150 metres long (on a north-south direction) and 90 – 100 metres wide (on an east-west direction). Its position is dominant, being placed about 10 – 15 metres higher than the easily flooded meadow of the Homorodul Mic River. The actual river bed of the Homorodul Mic is placed at about 200 – 300 metres westward.

After the spring agricultural works have ended one could see that the land of the settlement had brown colour, and the ground surrounding it was yellow. There are many rock boulders that appeared on this surface, and this is where this hill gets its name from. During the field research archaeological material was found here, tools made of obsidian (Pl.VI/2), silex (Pl.VI/1, 3-7), cornean (Pl. VI/8,10), as well as grinder fragments made of tuff (Pl. VI/9) and ceramic fragments.

After analysing the ceramic material, we have determined that it belonged to several prehistoric periods: *Neolithic* – ceramics in composition with husk; *the period of transition towards the Bronze Age – Coțofeni Culture* – fragments ornamented with nail made pricks (Pl.VII/1,3) and rafter shaped incisions (Pl.VII/2); *the Bronze Age – Wietenberg Culture* – semi-fine

ceramics, ornamented with an incised strip filled with incised lines, circular pricks and oblique grooves (Pl.VII/6) and girdles ornamented with incised “x”-is (Pl.VII/5, 7); *the First Iron Age* – a well polished fragment, ornamented with wide grooves on the outside (Pl.VII/8) stood out.

This settlement with superposed inhabitancy levels that dates back to *Neolithic* and reaches *the First Iron Age* is one of the most important findings made during the field researches undertaken in the Homoroade Basin.

This point is a new finding.

The land on which the settlement is found is segmented in more private properties.

The archaeological material found here is deposited at the National Museum of Eastern Carpathians.

MERCHEAȘA

Mercheașa is a village found in Homorod commune, Brașov County, situated on the left side of the Homorodul Mic Valley. It was first mentioned in year 1448 (D. Ghinea, E. Ghinea, 2000). The brine well is found outside the village, on the road that leads to Ocland, in the place called by locals “Slatină” (an other name for brine in Romanian). Here as well we can find rock salt underground, since the workers that were drilling for methane gas found it accidentally.

GPS coordinates: A = 471 m; Er = 6 m; N = 46°04,19'; E = 25°20,650'.

Administration. The brine well belongs to the commune, but it was abandoned now being destroyed. It had a manager that held the key and kept it clean. All natives of Mercheașa as well of neighbouring communities used this well in the past. Today it isn't locked any more, since the lock is permanently broken.

Description. It is different from other brine wells, since its house is built with other materials. The place of the old wooden house was taken by a construction made of cement bricks placed on a concrete foundation. The construction has a square draught, with a side of 3,20 metres and the height of 2,00 metres. It has pyramidal hipped roof, covered with “fish scale” hollow tiles. The well-house has only one entrance. The well is placed in the centre of the room. Its mouth is surrounded by a 0,70 metres high square shaped tube, made of oak, with a side of 1,00 metre. The depth of the well is of about 2,50 metres, measured from the top of the tube and until we reached the water. The walls of the well are planked with oak boards, very lasting in the presence of brine.

Dating. Since this construction is relatively new we couldn't find any signs of a precise dating. The age of the well itself is unknown.

State of preservation. The well-house is in a good state of preservation, except the roof, that shows some signs of degradation. The tiles have fallen off the roof and thus rain water gets inside the construction. This might lead to the desalination of the brine, as it happened in other such cases. The well itself is in a constant state of degradation, and if it is not cleaned, restored and taken care off it will be destroyed completely (Pl. III/7).

Archaeological findings:

The archaeological field surveys took around the brine well and around Mercheaşa commune revealed no archaeological vestiges.

COMĂNEȘTI

Comănești is a village found in Mărtiniș commune, Harghita County, and it was first mentioned in year 1566 (D. Ghinea, E. Ghinea, 2000). It is placed on the Homorodul Mare Valley. The brine well is found outside the village, at about 2 km north-west of the Unitarian Church. At about 20 metres far from the brine well the remains of salt mine exploited by the villagers of Aldea can be seen. The salt mine is now closed and filled up. In the same spot a brine spring can be found. There is also a brine bracket [hung. Sósviz], that flows into the Homorodul Mare River.

GPS coordinates: A = 570 m; Er = 5 m; N = 46°16,223'; E = 25°25,682'.

Administration. The brine well belonged to the village, but now it is abandoned. Just as other brine wells it was locked and guarded in the past.

Description. The well is protected by a unicellular wooden construction, with a square draught, with a side of 3,50 metres. The height of the walls rises above 2 metres. It has gable roof, covered with wooden boards. The door is missing. The floor of the room is still there. The well is square shaped, with the side of 1,1 metres. What differentiates it from other brine wells we saw until now is the way its tube is built. The casing of its walls is made of river stones, following the way fresh water wells are built. The mouth of the well rises 0,40 metres above the floor, being inscribed in a square wooden casing (Pl. II/5-6).

Dating. We cannot tell for sure the age of this well. The present construction is known since the 50s, but it must be hundreds of years old (the precise information was lost along the way).

State of preservation. Both the well-house and the well are in a precarious state. Though the brine is still salty enough, it won't stay like this for ever, unless it is cared for. Because the well-house is destroyed rain water flows easily into the well. The well is also exposed to other deterioration agents. Though in 2003 it was still used by a large number of villagers, today only a few of them use it, and since then its state strongly deteriorated. The

well was abandoned mostly because it is quite far away, and the villagers rather bring brine from Mărtiniș, considering it much better.

Archaeological findings:

Biserica Unitariană point. Settlement. [The Unitarian Church point]

GPS coordinates: A= 537 m; N= 46° 15' 918"; E= 25° 26' 142".

The settlement is found south of the Unitarian Church, on the right side of the road that takes us to the brine well. On a 20 x 40 metres surface, in the freshly ploughed soil, we found archaeological materials consisting of ceramic fragments. A small amount of these were hand-moulded and belong to the *Bronze Age*. Most of them are made by a potter's wheel, and belong to the modern period.

This point is a new finding.

The land on which the settlement is found is segmented in more private agricultural properties.

The archaeological material found here is deposited at the National Museum of Eastern Carpathians.

MĂRTINIȘ

Mărtiniș is a commune found in Harghita County, and it was first mentioned in year 1333 (D. Ghinea, E. Ghinea, 2000). It is situated on the Homorodul Mare Valley. Once again we found information regarding the fact that this settlement is placed upon a rock salt layer. Just nearby the brine well one can see the traces of an earlier drilling, made in order to find methane gas. The trial failed since the drill hit the rock salt deposit that is thought to be more than 700 metres thick. Orbán Balázs wrote in 1868 "the Mărtiniș region is so rich in salt deposits that even the cellars of the houses are dug in rock salt, but [the natives] aren't allowed to use this true blessing from God, they must bring salt from far away [from Praid]" (B. Orbán, 1868, p. 164). There are some pieces of information about the existence of a salt mine in this locality, mentioned by the Hungarian researcher: "the abandoned mine mouths and a fragment of a Roman inscription on an altar found inside the village's boundaries are proofs of the fact that the Romans and their descendents exploited rock salt here ...this inscription and other such proofs found at Sânpaul show us that the Romans were interested in exploiting these regions so rich in natural resources" (B. Orbán, 1868, p. 164). The brine well is found in the centre of the commune, on the right bank of Ghipeș Bracket that flows into Homorodul Mare River. The manager's house is at about 200 metres away.

GPS coordinates: A = 506 m; Er = 4 m; N = 46°14,007'; E = 25°23,196'.

Administration. The brine well belongs to the commune, being cared for by a manager assigned by the local council. He gets paid with a cartful of

firewood and he also keeps the fees paid for every bucket of brine. The brine well is opened by a certain schedule: on Mondays it is open for the natives of Lopodeni, on Tuesdays for the natives of Aldea and on Fridays for the natives of Mărtiniș. For other people the well is opened by request.

Description. The well is protected by a unicellular wooden construction, which has rectangular draught. Its longer sides are 4,00 metres long, while the short ones are 3,50 metres long. The walls are about 2,00 metres high. The door is found on the centre of the front wall. It has gable roof, covered with hollow tiles. The floor of the room is made of river stones, covered by a layer of salt crystals that gives it a lustreless aspect, of concrete. The well was modernized, it is more complex than other brine wells found so far. The brine is drawn out from the well with the help of a wooden installation: a bucket hangs on a wooden roll that is worked with a crank. The tube of the well is made of a hollowed out oak trunk, and it is about 5 metres deep. Above the floor a casing was built. It is square, with the side of 1 metre long, and it is about 1 metre high. It is built of wooden boards. The wooden poles that sustain the roll are attached to the casing. To ease the use of the well and to quicken the process of drawing out brine the manager of the well put in front of it a chair on which he placed a barrel that has a hose instead of a tap attached to it. The barrel is filled up with the bucket, and the plastic bottles that are used today to carry brine are filled up with the help of the hose. The inventory of the well also holds a wooden trough, placed on the back wall of the construction. The use of it is to direct brine outside the well, through special holes made in the walls of the construction, in order to fill up large barrels that cannot be taken inside. This trough is kept inside, it is covered all the time, and it is set up only when it is needed. (Pl. II/3-4)

Dating. We don't know the precise age of the well, but the natives say it is at least 800 years old. The wooden construction bears some carved inscriptions, made of natives and visitors, both on the outside and on the inside walls.

State of preservation. Both the well-house and the well are in a good state of preservation, being cared for and administrated properly. Here as well the natives consider brine an aliment, using it to cook and to assure the necessary salt amount for the animals. They look at it as being one of the most valuable belongings of the community, taking care of it properly.

Archaeological findings:

1. "Bögözi". Settlement (Pl. IV/5).

GPS coordinates: A= 613 m; N= 46° 14' 02"; E= 25° 23' 49".

Leaving the village on the Mărtiniș – Comănești direction, on the right side of DJ 131A one can see a terrace safe of flooding, found at about 300 metres west of the right bank of Homorodul Mare River. The settlement has an oval shaped

plan, and it is 300 metres long (on a north-south direction) and 150 metres wide (on an east – west direction). At the surface of the land the ground is black.

Agricultural works are done in this area and thus ceramic material appears at the surface of the land. We found ceramic fragments that seem to belong to the transition period towards the Bronze Age (*Coțofeni Culture*) and to the Middle Bronze Age (*Wietenberg Culture*). But most of the ceramic fragments discovered here belong to the *beginning period of the Iron Age*. They are made of clay mixed with sand and pebbles, hand-moulded, well polished, black on the outside and red on the inside. The pottery is decorated with wide grooves (Pl.V/4,5) and with an applied knob (Pl.V/6). We also found cornean splinters and a fragment of iron cross.

This point is a new finding.

The land on which the settlement is found is segmented in more private properties.

The archaeological material found here is deposited at the National Museum of Eastern Carpathians.

2. Biserica Unitariană. Settlement (Pl. IV/4). [The Unitarian Church]

GPS coordinates: A= 609 m; N= 46° 13' 49.98"; E= 25° 23' 17.39".

When entering the commune, on the Mărtiniș – Feliceni direction, on the right side of DJ 131A, one can see a church surrounded by a fortified wall, partially preserved, placed on a dominant terrain. The church was built in the 13th century and now it functions as the Unitarian Church of Mărtiniș.

South and west of this church, on a ploughed terrain, we discovered hand-moulded ceramic fragments. In this phase of the research we don't know exactly if these fragments are in their original ground or if they were dug out during the time the church was built and the cemetery was extended.

The ceramic fragments are spread on an area of about 50 x 40 metres. The settlement is marked at west by the county road, at north and east by the church and at south by a private house. The pottery fragments found here were made of clay mixed with sand and pebbles, hand-moulded. As for ornaments, we found a fragment of a vessel rim with an elongated knob on the neck of the vessel. The pottery may belong to the *Bronze Age* (Pl.V/7-9) but also to the beginning period of the *Iron Age*.

This point is a new finding.

The land on which the settlement is found is segmented in more private properties.

The archaeological material found here is deposited at the National Museum of Eastern Carpathians.

SÂNPAUL

Sânpaul village belongs to Mărtiniș commune, Harghita County, and it is found on the Homorodul Mare Valley. It was first mentioned in 1334 (D. Ghinea, E. Ghinea, 2000). Unlike other cases so far in the perimeter of this village we identified 2 brine wells. One of them was used by the natives of Sânpaul, while the other by the natives of a neighbouring village, Petreni. The presence of rock salt underground is certified here as well, since it was found by the workers that were digging in order to make two ponds at the border of the village. Possible traces of an antique salt mine were found here, thus a supervised rock salt exploitation might have been here once. This aspect is still researched. Orbán Balázs also mentions the existence of rock salt: "... nearby Sânpaul there are lands very rich in salt. The wide valley of the Homorod lies upon rock salt, covered with a layer of ground that is only a few feet thick. Even the well from Sânpaul [n.n. we don't know for sure which well is the one mentioned here by the author] is dug in rock salt ... There are clear proofs that the Romans exploited rock salt here. And now this treasure is left here unexploited, even if it is at the hands of the Seckler and the Transylvanian Saxon Lands" (B. Orbán, 1868, p. 168).

The 1st brine well. It is found at the entrance into the village, at about 2 km from the centre of the settlement, on the road that comes from Ocland. It is placed right beside the road, very close to the recently dug ponds.

GPS coordinates: A = 472 m; Er = 6 m; N = 46°11,001'; E = 25°23,467'

Administration. The brine well belongs to the community and it once had a manager. Today it isn't locked any more, it isn't guarded, and there are no fees for using the brine. From the natives we found out that no one uses this brine any more. Since the ponds were dug the brine was ruined. During rain the ponds overflow, fresh water and mud get into the brine-well and thus it is impossible to be consumed.

Description. The well-house looks like an archaic unicellular house, with square draught, with the side of 3,50 metres. The height of the walls doesn't go beyond 2,50 metres. It has pyramidal hipped roof, covered with hollow tiles. The floor of the room is only partially preserved. The well is placed in the middle of the room, facing the door. The casing of the well was detached and moved. It was built traditionally, joint in the corners as the traditional wooden constructions, with a technique called "wolf's teeth". It is square, with the side of 1 metre, just like the well. The brine used to be drawn out with a bucket that hung on a wooden roll and was worked with a metallic crank. The bucket is missing, but the roll is still there, being attached to the wall of the building. After this installation was destroyed the villagers used a

long wooden hook to handle the bucket. This system was found in other place as well (Pl. III/3-4).

Dating. The exact age of the well isn't known, but the walls of the well-house bear the traces of visitors and of the workers that restored it from time to time. These are at least 100 years old. But considering the fact that there is a large rock salt deposit underground we may say that the well must be hundreds of years old.

State of preservation. Being open all the time both the well-house and the well are in a continuous deterioration. It is also abandoned; no one cares for it any more. The fact that it is so close to the road makes it hard to maintain hygienically. Another unfavourable aspect is that of being too close to the ponds, which overflow every time it rains, thus flooding the whole area. The well fills up with mud and fresh water. The natives gave up using it and instead they go to Mărtiniş commune and bring brine from there, saying it is also much better and cleaner.

The 2nd brine well. It is found at about 1 km away from the 1st one, following a country road over the hill. It isn't as old as the 1st one, which is why we consider that the well Orbán Balázs mentions above is not this one.

GPS coordinates: A = 481 m; Er = 7 m; N = 46°10,643'; E = 25°23,341'

Administration. The well belongs to the community but it is mostly used by the natives of neighbouring villages, who get to it much easier, just crossing over the hills that separate the settlements. It has no manager, and though it still has a lock it is left unlocked all the time.

Description. The unicellular wooden construction that protects the well has rectangular draught, with the longer sides of 3,00 metres and the shorter ones of 2,50 metres. Its height goes a little over 2,00 metres. It has gable roof, covered with metallic sheets. The well-house has one door, placed on the southern side of the construction, left open all the time. The room has no floor, but an agglomeration of river rocks can be found in front of the well. The well is placed in the north-eastern corner of the room. It has a wooden casing, made of wide boards, joint in the corners with metallic nails. The well has square plan with the side of 1 meter. Its walls are boarded. We don't know its precise depth. The casting of the well has a wooden lid, made of boards, in order to protect it from pollution. The brine is drawn out with wooden hooks, made of branches, to the end of which the buckets are attached (Pl. III/1-2).

Dating. We couldn't establish the precise age of this well, but it is more recent than the 1st one.

State of preservation. Both the well-house and the well are in a continuous deterioration, since they aren't cared for. Due to the distance and its placing, the natives gave up using it.

Archaeological findings:

1. Castrul Roman. [The Roman Camp]

GPS coordinates: A= 601 m; N= 46° 11' 40"; E= 25° 22' 58".

The Roman Camp is found in the northern side of the village, on the right bank of Homorodul Mare River. The actual river bed is found at about 200 – 300 metres east of the settlement. The traces of the Roman Camp are preserved in the area of the Primary School and the Unitarian Church (built in the 19th century), up to the “Pârâul Cetății” and under the present buildings. Well burnt Roman ceramic fragments, made by the potter’s wheel, stood out. This point is well known in the archaeological literature (V. Cavruc, 2000).

At about 1,5 km east of the village, on the right side of the road that leads to Ocland commune, in the place called by the villagers “Fântâna sărată” [the salty well], the salt mines that were exploited by the Romans can be found. Here researchers found a votive altar that makes note of a *Salinarium leader*.

This point is well known in the specialised literature.

The land on which the camp is found belongs to several private properties.

The archaeological material found here is deposited at the National Museum of Eastern Carpathians.

2. Sânpaul-Est. Civilian settlement (Pl. IV/6).

GPS coordinates: A= 591 m; N= 46° 11' 44"; E= 25° 23' 06".

At about 100 – 150 metres east of the Roman Camp, on the right side of DJ 131, on the Sânpaul – Mărtiniș direction, on the first terrace of Homorodul Mare River, a civilian settlement can be found, contemporary with the Roman Camp. The remains of material culture are spread on an area of about 400 x 50 metres.

At the surface of the land the ground is black, and there are intense agricultural works made here. The archaeological material was found at the surface of the terrain and consists specially of pottery: hand-moulded or made by a potter’s wheel.

The few hand-moulded pottery pieces may belong to the *Bronze Age*, just as some stone made tools (of silex and grit stone).

Most of the ceramic material belongs to the roman inhabitancy (it is moulded with the potter’s wheel, of clay mixed with fine sand, oxidizing firing).

This point is well known in the specialised literature.

The land on which the settlement is found belongs to several private properties.

The archaeological material found here is deposited at the National Museum of Eastern Carpathians.

RUPEA

Rupea is a locality found on the valley of the Pârâul Mare Bracket, which is an affluent of the Homorodul Mare River. It was first mentioned in year 1433, as a rural settlement, and beginning with 1951 it became a city found in Braşov County (D. Ghinea, E. Ghinea, 2000). In the area of the city several drillings were made, attempts to find drinking water, especially between years 1993 – 1995. The drillings went about 120 metres deep, and the workers found both brine and fresh water, which was slightly salted, thus undrinkable. That is why the drillings were closed. In 1995 drillings were made at about 2,5 km far from the brine well, at a depth of 25 -30 metres, and the same salted water was found. Probably a salted water sheet dominated the area at that depth. In the same year drillings were made in the Cozubran district, in the corners of a triangle with the sides of 10 metres. Out of the 3 drillings, in two cases slightly salted water, while in the 3rd brine was found. Thus the conclusion was that under Rupea there is a quite large salted water sheet. This situation led the authorities to find a way to assure drinking water to the population, thus fresh water is drawn from the Dolca dam, found 18 km far. The brine well is found on the left bank of the Cozd Bracket, in the place called by natives “La Slatini”.

GPS coordinates: A = 455 m; Er = 5 m; N = 46°02,230'; E = 25°14,510'.

Administration. The well belongs to the community and it has two managers that hold the key. On the door of the well-house we can find the following inscription: “Brine well! The key is found at the City Hall! Room 14. Mr. Roşu Petru. Schedule: sv. 8⁰⁰ - 16⁰⁰”. The well is permanently locked, and who wishes to take brine picks up the key from the given address, takes brine and then returns the key to the manager.

Description. The brine well is protected by a reinforced concrete building, the first one of this type that we found during our field researches. It has rectangular draught, with the long sides of 3,50 metres and the short one of 3,00 metres. The height of the walls is of about 2,00 metres. It has shed roof, made of concrete, inclined towards the bracket. It has a metallic door, with two locks. The well was arranged by Mr. Petru Roşu. The tube of the old well was first cleaned with fresh water and it was boarded with oak planks. Then brine filled up the tube, the spring being very strong, flowing even after the old well was destroyed. The depth of the well is of 8 – 8,30 metres, but only 4 metres are filled up with water. The excess brine overflows permanently into the Cozd Bracket. The casing has rectangular draught, with the longer sides of 1,19 metres and the short ones of 1,10 metres. The casing continues above the floor, on a height of 0,90 metres. The brine is drawn out with the help of an installation that consists of a wooden roll worked by a metallic crank, on which the aluminium bucket is hung with a rope (Pl. III/5-6).

Dating. The well was reconstructed in 1994, because people felt the need of brine. Both the natives and the shepherders felt the absence of brine. The old well and the well-house were destroyed around the '60s. It dated back in the 19th century and it was built of oak, supposedly the most enduring material in a salty environment.

State of preservation. The well-house is in a very good state of preservation. The well is also in a good state, except its metallic parts, which have already rusted. We make reference especially to the metallic axis of the roll and its crank, and to the aluminium bucket.

Archaeological findings:

Our team did not make any archaeological researches in this area.

RACOȘUL DE JOS

Though Racoșul de Jos is a locality found on the Valley of the Olt River it was included in our study, since it closes, geographically and geologically, the south – western border of the territory comprised in our repertoire, dominated by salt sources. Racoș locality, found in Brașov County, was first mentioned in year 1421, bearing the name of Racoșul de Jos until year 1968 (D. Ghinea, E. Ghinea, 2000). The brine well is found on the bank of the Cold Bracket, at about 1,5 km far from the centre of the village, following a forest road.

GPS coordinates: A = 478 m; Er = 8 m; N = 46°02,363'; E = 25°24,641'.

Administration. The well belongs to the community. It was once locked, it functioned according to a schedule, but today it has no door, since it was stolen. There used to be a fee for brine. The natives of Racoș and Mateiaș did not have to pay this fee. The manager was a native that had his house at the end of the village, close to the well. Today the brine is for free, but this is the reason that the city hall does not care for it properly.

Description. The well is protected by a unicellular wooden construction, that has an almost square draught, with the side of about 2,70 metres. Its walls are about 2,00 metres high. It has pyramidal hipped roof, covered with wooden boards. The construction has one door, but only its frame is preserved after the door plank was stolen. The room has wooden floor. The well is found in the centre of the room. The well is 4,00 metres deep, and the water is 2,00 metres high. The tube of the well was boarded with oak planks. The brine is drawn out of the well with a plastic bucket tied to a rope (Pl. III/8).

Dating. We couldn't establish the exact age of the well, but people say that it has been here for a long time, at least since 1900. The natives also talk about a second brine well, that was found at about 4 km away from this one, but it was destroyed by them, since it was constantly robbed by strangers and shepherders, and it was too far away to be guarded.

State of preservation. The well-house is not in a very good shape, it is very unstable. It should be stabilized and consolidated. Its door is missing, thus it cannot be kept clean. The roof is also unstable and unfit, among its planks rain easily falls inside, and that will finally make brine lose its salinity. The well is in a good state of preservation, but it also requires improving, maybe even an installation to make brine easier to draw out. That would also protect its tube and boarding.

Archaeological findings:

No archaeological vestiges were found during the field researches taken around the brine well from Racoşul de Jos.

There are some known archaeological vestiges found in the Olt Pass from Racoş belonging to the prehistoric and Dacian periods. On the right side of the Olt River, there are known several vestiges belonging to the *First Iron Age*, the Burebista-Decebal period: a fortress with a stone wall (Tipia Racoşului) and two civilian settlements (Câmpul Caprei and Podul Mare). And on the left side of the Olt River: two fortresses with walls (Tipia Ormenişului and Piatra Detunată) and a fortification belonging to the Hallstatt Period, partially used by the Dacians as well (Dealul Varariei) (F. Costea, R. Ştefănescu, 2003).

*** This article has been published in Romanian language, in *Angustia 9. Arheologie – Etnografie*, Sf. Gheorghe: Editura Angustia, 2005.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- BUTURĂ, Valer, 1978. *Etnografia poporului român. Cultura materială*, Editura Dacia, Cluj-Napoca, 465 p.
- CAVRUC, Valeriu, 2000. *Repertoriul arheologic al judeţului Harghita*, Sfântu Gheorghe, 395 p.
- CIOBANU, Doina. 2003. *Exploatarea sării în perioada marilor migraţii (sec. I – XIII e.n.) în spaţiul Carpato - Dunărean*. Editura Alpha MDN, Buzău, 242 p.
- COSTEA, Florea. 1995. Repertoriul arheologic al judeţului Braşov (I). În: *Cumidava*, XV-XIX, 231 p.
- COSTEA, Florea, ŞTEFĂNESCU, Radu. 2003. Descoperiri arheologice recente în Defileul Oltului de la Racoş. În. *Catalogul Expoziţiei: Noi descoperiri arheologice în sud-estul Transilvaniei*, p. 11 - 30.

CRIȘAN, Viorica. 2000. *Dacii din estul Transilvaniei*, Editura „Carpații Răsăriteni”, Sfântu Gheorghe, 224 p.

CRIȘAN, Viorica. 2003. Așezarea dacică fortificată de la Merești. Județul Harghita. În: *Catalogul Expoziției Noi descoperiri arheologice în sud-estul Transilvaniei*, p. 119.- 128.

CRIȘAN, Viorica. 2003. The Fortified Settlement from Merești, Harghita County. În: *New Archaeological Discoveries in South-Eastern Transylvania. Exhibition Catalogue*, p. 40 – 42.

EMÖDI, János. 1980. Descoperiri arheologice din peșterile din Cheile Vârghișului. În: *Aluta*, XII-XIII, p. 429 – 431.

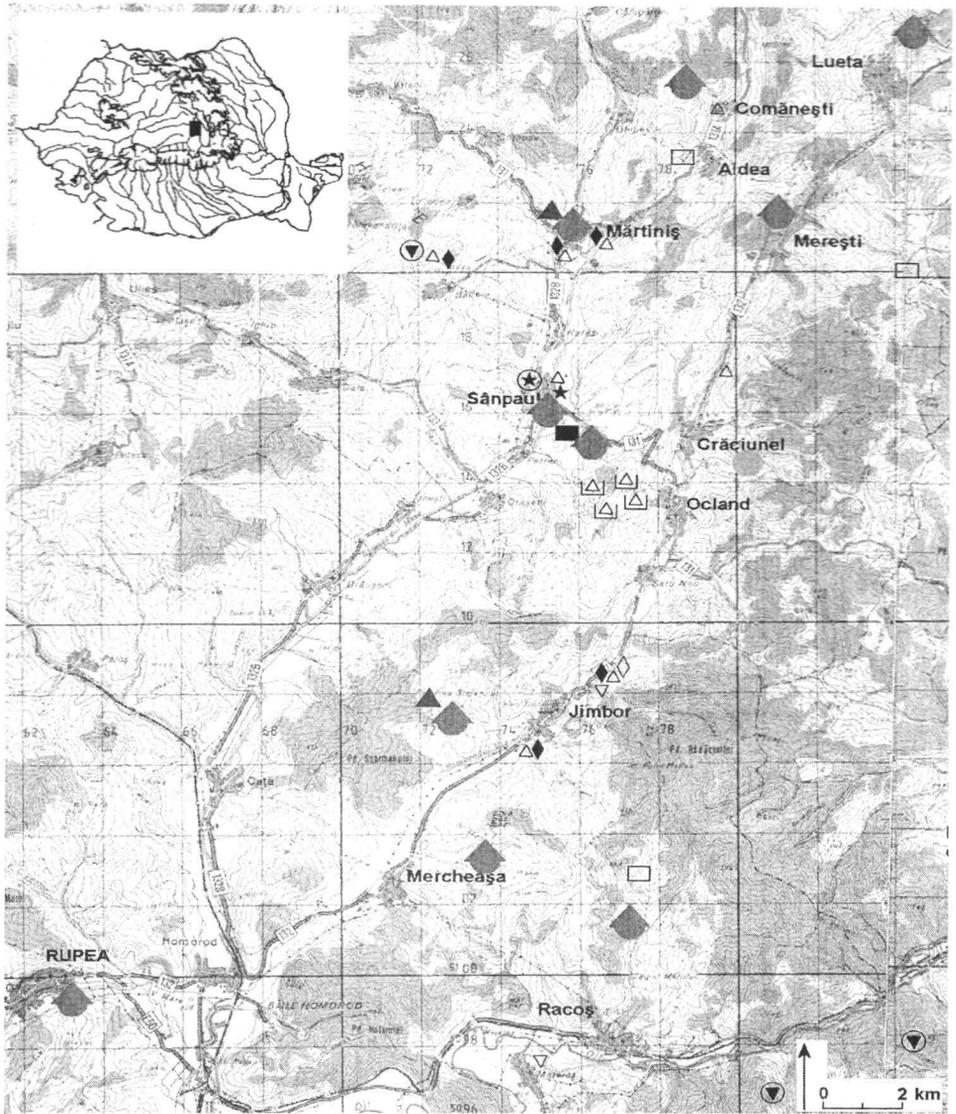
FERENCZI, Geza; FERENCZI, Istvan. 1979. Observații de topografie arheologică în partea superioară a Depresiunii Homoroadelor (Jud. Harghita) între anii 1957 – 1978. În: *AMN*, XVI, p. 411-430.

GHINEA, Dan; GHINEA, Eliza. 2000. *Localitățile din România. Dicționar*. Editura Enciclopedică, București, 500 p.

ORBÁN BALÁZS. *A székelyföld leírása. Történelmi, régészeti, természetrajzi s népismereti szempontból*. [Descrierea Ținutului Secuiesc. Din punct de vedere istoric, arheologic, geografic și etnografic]. Vol. I. Editura Rath Mor, Pesta, 239 p.

PRAOVEANU, Ioan. 2001. *Etnografia poporului român*. Editura Paralela 45, Brașov, 300 p.

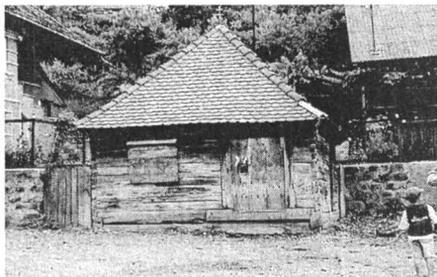
MARCU, Mariana. 1976. Vechi cercetări în peșterile de la Merești, jud. Harghita. În: *Muzeul Național*, III, p. 73 – 95.



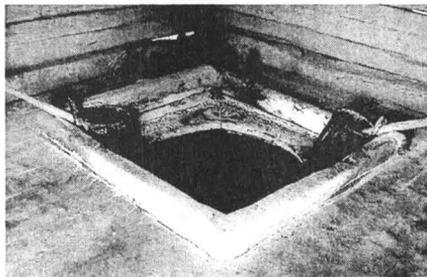
LEGEND

- | | | | | | | | |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| 1 - ▲ | 3 - ◆ | 4 - □ | 6 - ◇ | 8 - △ | 10 - ▼ | 12 - ▨ | 14 - □ |
| 2 - ● | 5 - ■ | 7 - ▽ | 9 - ◆ | 11 - ★ | 13 - ○ | 15 - □ | |

Plate I. The Homoroade Valley. The archaeological discoveries and the brine wells
 Legend: 1. rock salt; 2. brine springs; 3. brine wells; 4. salty muds; 5. salt water lakes;
 6. Neo-Eneolithic; 7. Transition Period; 8. Bronze Age; 9. First Iron Age; 10. La Tene;
 11. Roman Period; 12. Post-roman Period; 13. Fortifications; 14. Graves; 15. Ritual
 Deposits



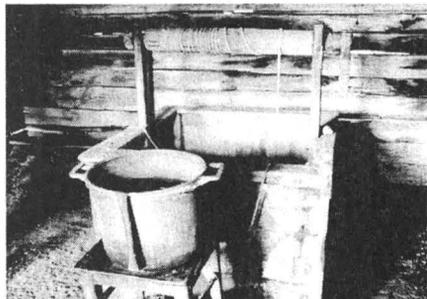
1



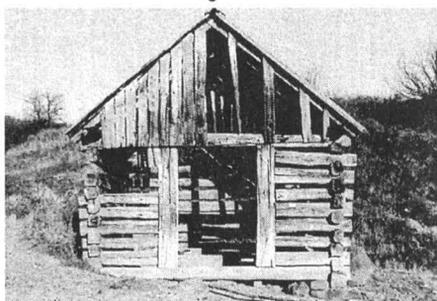
2



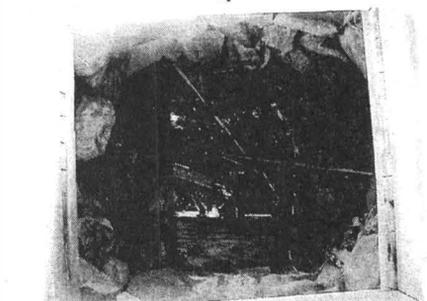
3



4



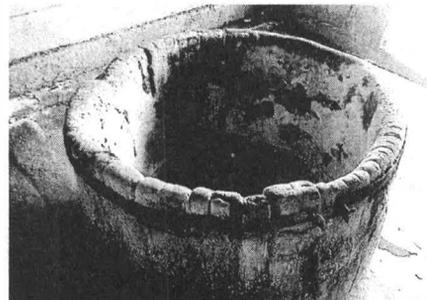
5



6



7



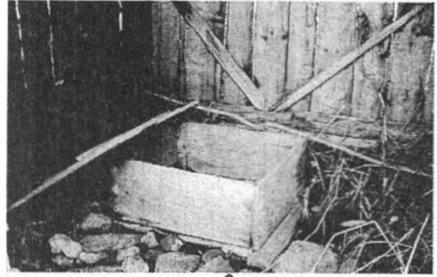
8

Plate II. Brine wells on the Homoroad Valley

1. Lucta – the house of the well; 2. Lucta – the brine well; 3. Mărtiniș – the house of the well;
4. Mărtiniș – the brine well; 5. Comănești – the house of the well; 6. Comănești – the brine
well; 7. Merești – the house of the well; 8. Merești – the brine well



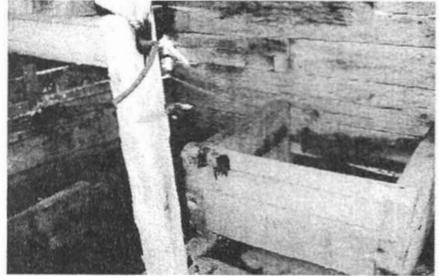
1



2



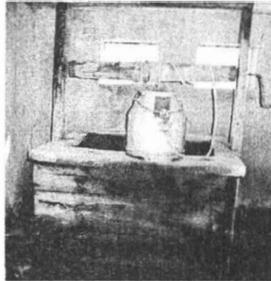
3



4



5



6



7



8



9

Plate III. Brine wells on the Homoroade Valley

1. Sânpaul 2 – the house of the well; 2. Sânpaul 2 – the brine well; 3. Sânpaul 1 – the house of the well; 4. Sânpaul 1 – the brine well; 5. Rupea – the house of the well; 6. Rupea – the brine well; 7. Merchțașă – the house of the well; 8. Racoș – the house of the well; 9. Jimbor – the brine well

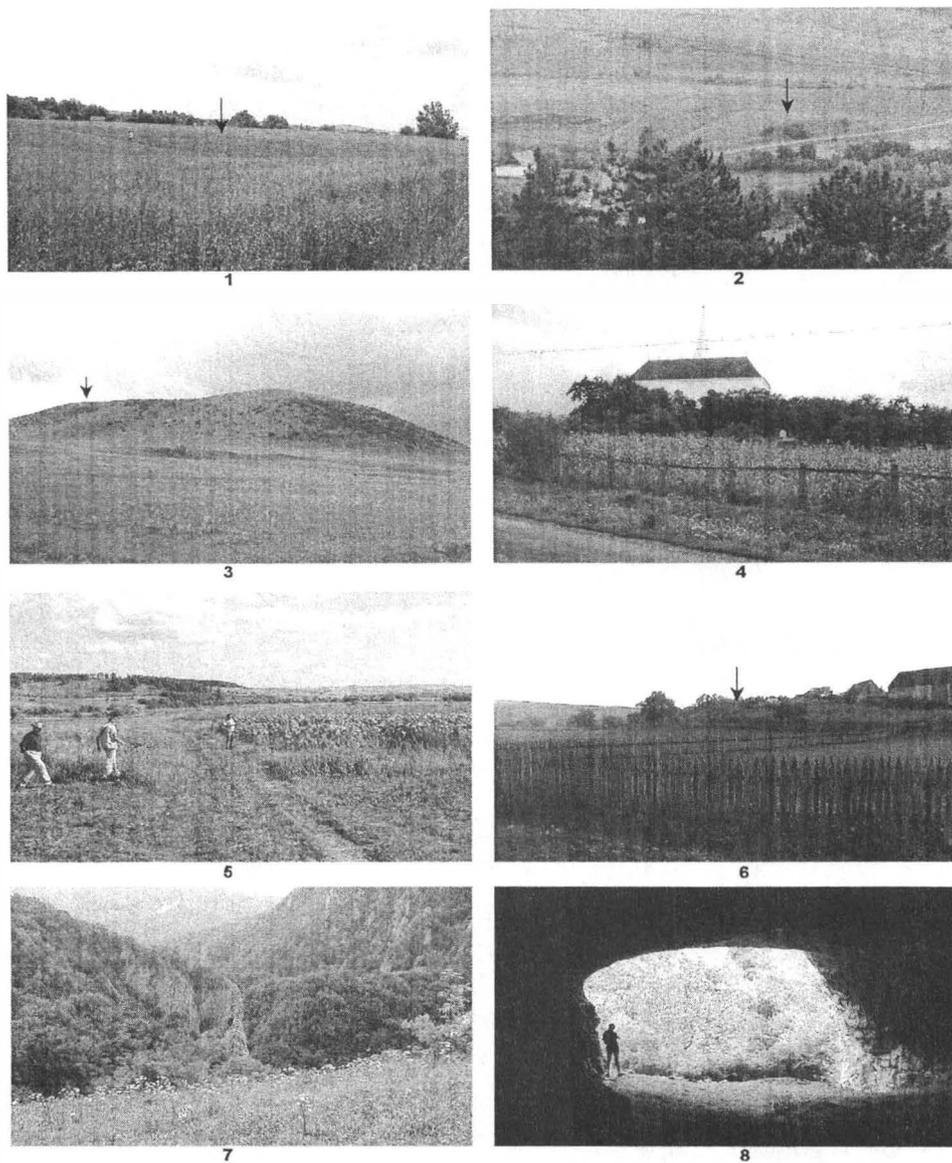


Plate IV. Archaeological sites from the Homoroade Valley

1. North Jimbor, general view from north-west; 2. South Jimbor, view upon the settlement caught from the Jimbor Fortress; 3. Bădeni, general view upon the *Hill of the Dacian Fortress*; 4. Mărtiniș, the Unitarian Church, view upon the archaeological site taken from south-west; 5. Mărtiniș, *Bogozî*, view from north. Aspects of the field study; 6. Sânpaul – Roman civilian settlement, view from north; 7. Merești – the Big Cave, general view; 8. Merești – the Big Cave, view from the inside

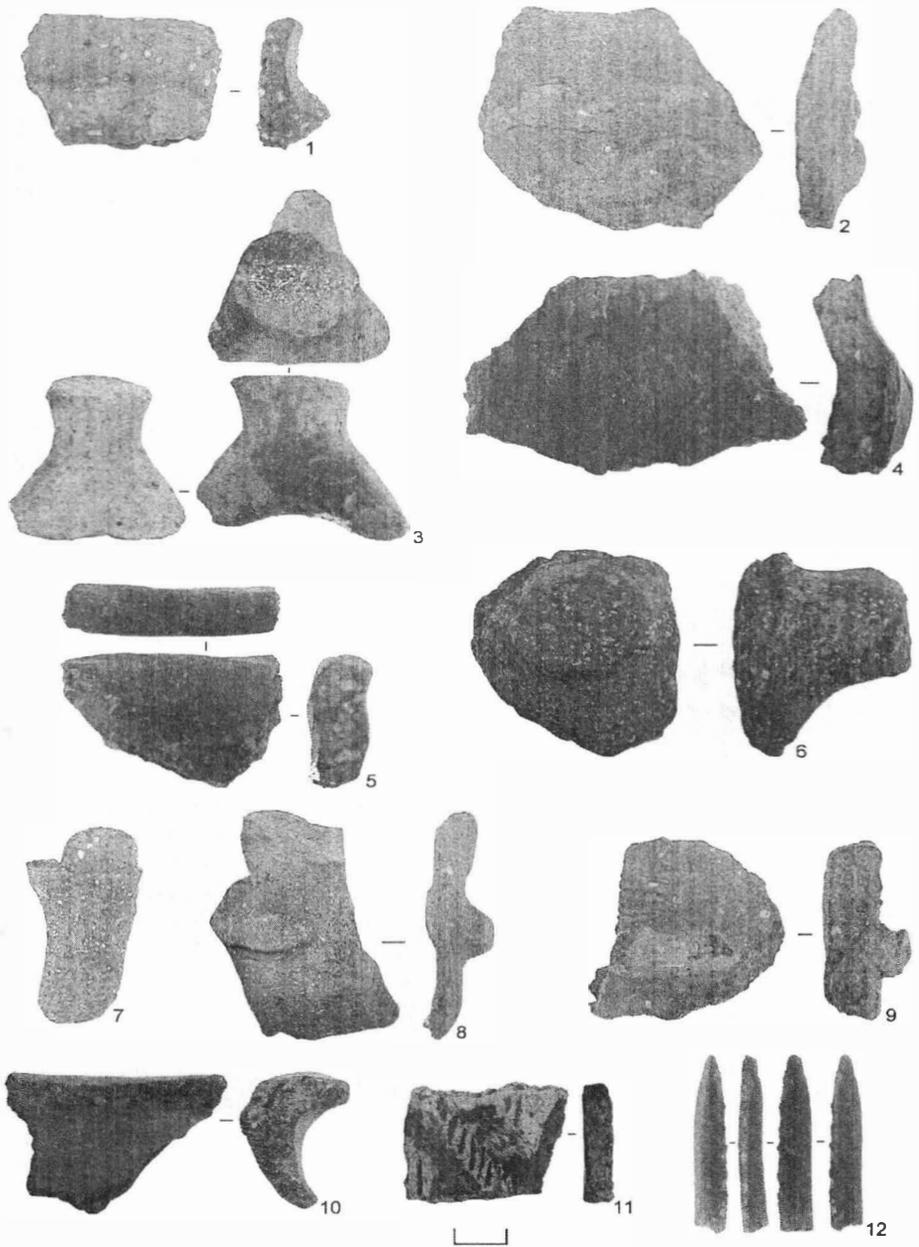


Plate V. Archaeological material discovered in the Homoroade Valley
(1-11 pottery; 12 - silex); 1-3, 7-11 - Bronze Age; 4-6 - First Iron Age, 12 - Arrowhead made of silex: 1, 2 - Crăciunel; 3 - Bădeni; 4-6 - Mărtiniș, Bogozî; 7-9 - Mărtiniș, Unitarian Church; 10-12 - Merești, The big Cave

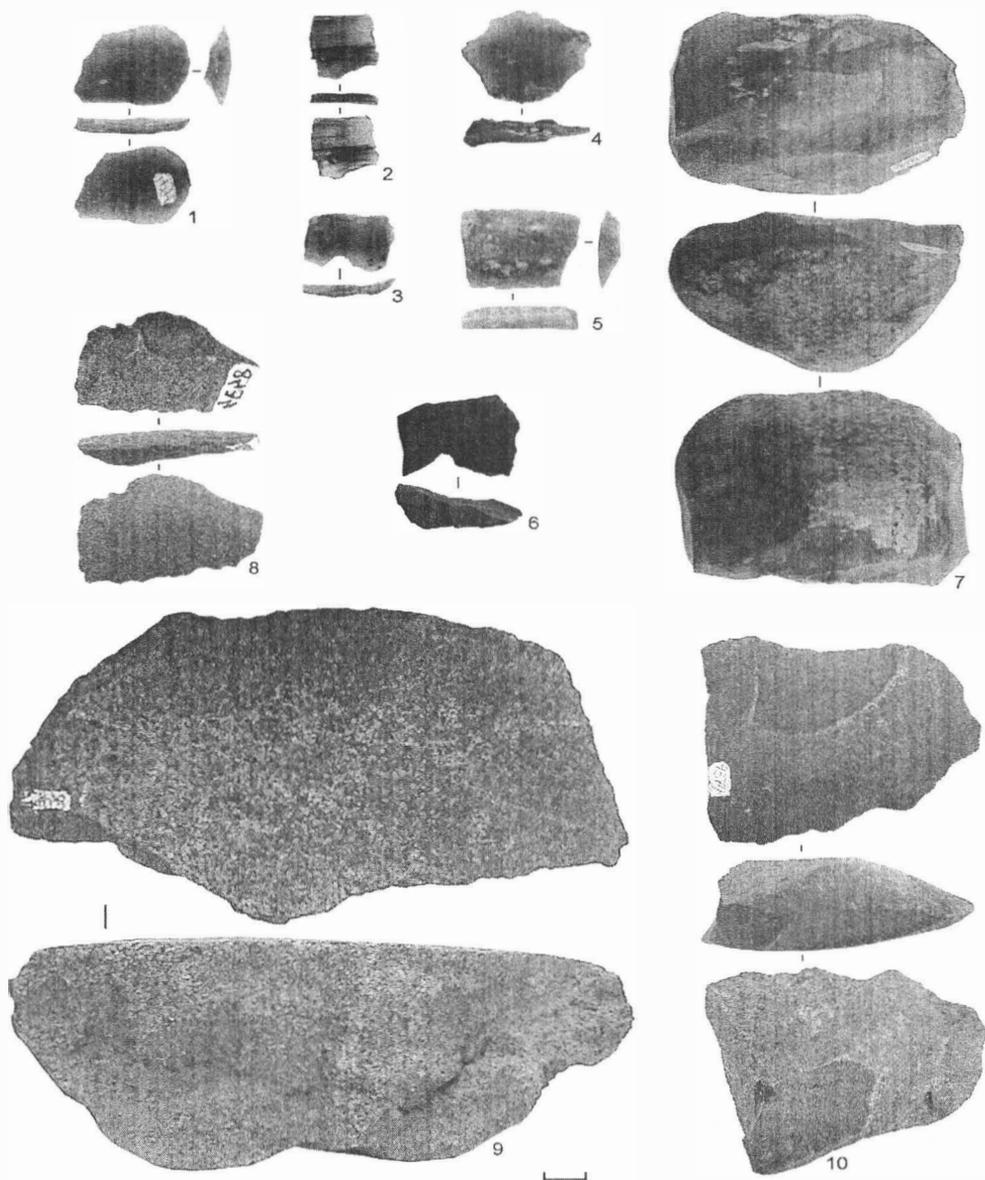


Plate VI. Archaeological material discovered in the Homoroad Valley
North Jimbor, 1-10 stone tools: 1 – scraper; 2 – blade made of obsidian; 3 – 5 silex
blades; 6 – silex chip; 7 – raw silex; 8, 10 – cornean blades; 9 – andesite grinder

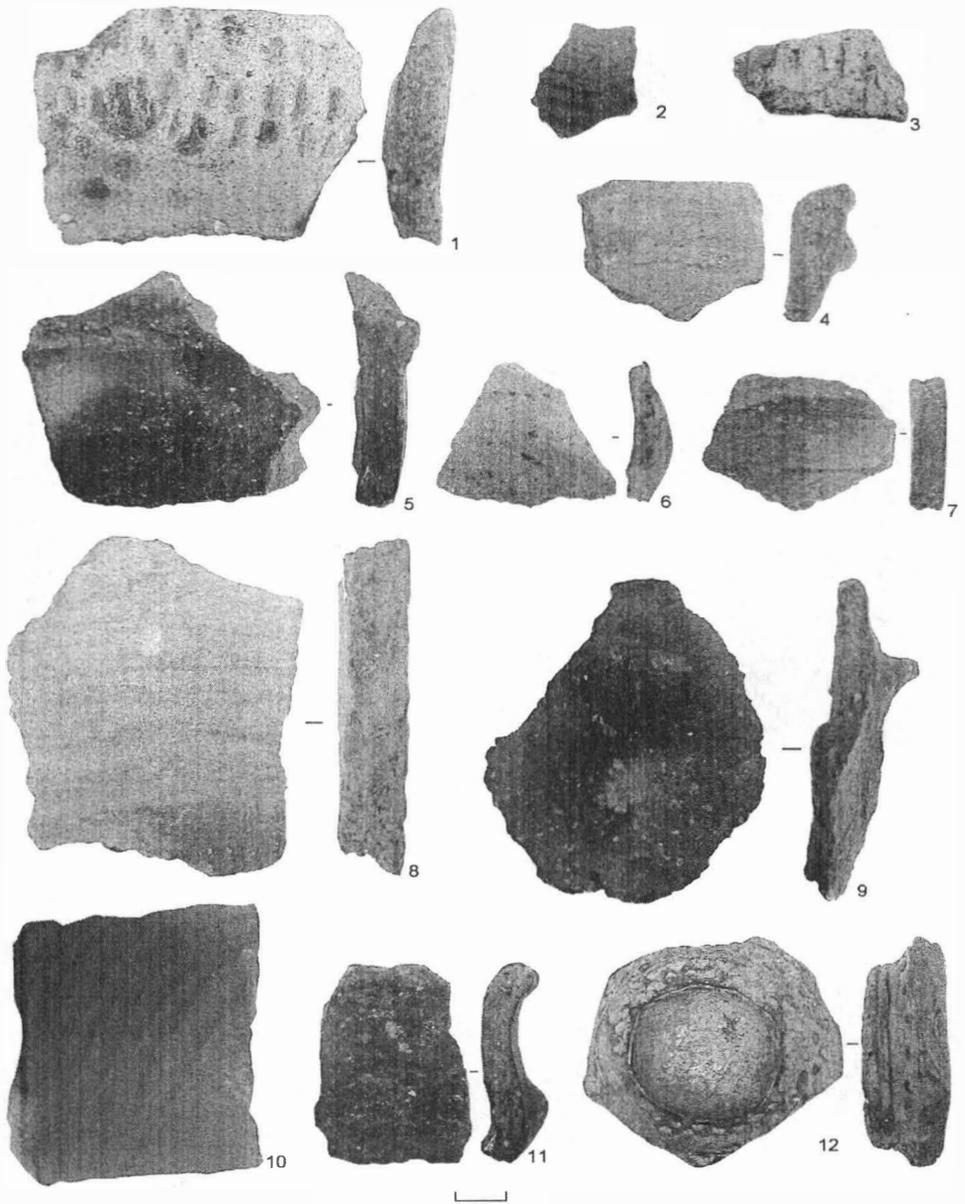


Plate VII. Archaeological material discovered in the Homoroade Valley
1-3, Coțofeni Culture; 4-7, 9, 12 – Wietenberg Culture, 8, 10, 11 – First Iron
Age: Pottery: 1 – 8 North Jimbor. 9 – 12 South Jimbor