

## THE TUMULAR NECROPOLIS FROM VÂRTOPU-CIUPERCENI, GORJ COUNTY

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**Abstract.** *The necropolis from Vârtopu-Ciuperceni was discovered in the 'Vârtoapele' point and was studied between 2000 – 2006 by the Gorj County Museum. This necropolis is formed by 14 tumuli.*

*The funerary rite used in the necropolis above is the cremation (incineration). The rite consists in the placement of the burnt bones, coals and the vessels on the antic ground or on a base of river boulders. In some cases, the big boulders represented the original grave, in others the ceramics fragments were encircled by a stone ring. The burning took place outside the necropolis.*

*The tumular necropolis from Vârtopu Ciuperceni (Gorj County) belongs to the Early Bronze Age - Final Glina - Verbita - Ostrovul Corbului (Glina IV), Bela Crkva-Priboi.*

**Keywords:** *Early Bronze Age, necropolis, Glina culture, ceramic, rit and ritual funerary.*

The tumular necropolis from Vârtopu-Ciuperceni lies on plateau placed between hills called „Vârtoapele” and this plateau is surrounded at the south western part by the village Vârtopu, on the western part by the village Glogova and on the north-east by the Peșteana Vulcan village (fig. 1-2).

The necropolis was signaled to us by Ion and Vasile Răuț from Vârtopu-Ciuperceni in 1996 during a field research.

The first tumulus (fig. 3) has the following dimensions: 8,7x10 m and the depth of -0,65 m. At 1,5 m south-west from the centre of the cairn and 0,5 m deep, 4 vessels of a thronconic shape were found. The vessels has its mouth upward, and the ones from the edge had an oblique position, being tilted over the other vessels. At 0,1 m from these vessels, on a 0,23x 0,1 m area we found a layer of coals, ash and burnt bones and this area had a 0,06-0,08 m width. The tumuli has the following inventory:

a) Bithronconic vessel (fig. 4) made of a paste that was mixed with sand and gravel. Its bottom is plat, the mouth i son the outside and from it a wide handle is placed. The vessel shows traces of a secondary burning and has the following dimensions: height-17,3 cm; base diameter - 8,2 cm; mouth diameter - 4,8 cm.

b) Bithronconic vessel (fig. 5) of chestnut colour made of a paste that had sand in it. The bottom is flat and on its body, on the upper part 2 protuberances can be seen. The rim is a little on the outside and the edge is straight. The vessel interior has some traces of polish.

c) Bithronconic vessel made of a sand paste. The bottom is flat, the body is rounded in the middle and the rim is on the outside. It is made of a grey paste and its highest diameter has an

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upright handle. Its dimensions are: height-17,8 cm; base diameter-9,5 cm; mouth diameter -16,5 cm.

d) Bithronconic vessel - fig. 6 - (a fragment of it) made of a paste with a little sand in it. The rim is straight, on the outside and on its biggest diameter it has a handle in the shape of a saddle. This fragment shows traces of secondary burning.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> tumulus (fig. 7) has the dimensions of: 6,5x7 m; and the height of 0,7 m. At the central position, at 0,68 m deep a bithronconic vessel with a flat bottom and an outside rim was found. Near this vessel fragments of a handle mug were found. This mug had traces of a secondary burning. Close to these vessels, on a 0,4x0,5 area were found burnt bones, coals, ash from the funerary pile. Near these remainings were discovered fragments from a bithronconic mug and a glass (a circular container). The inventory of this tumulus is the following:

a) Bithronconic vessel (fig. 8) made of height quality paste. Its bottom is flat, the body is rounded and the rim is on the outside. Under the rim starts a handle until the vessel shoulder. The vessel dimensions are: height-14,3 cm; base diameter-8 cm and mouth diameter-14,8 cm.

b) Bithronconic mug (fig. 9) made of a smooth paste. The bottom is flat, the body is strongly rounded on its upper part, neck is thronconic and the rim on the outside. A wide handle goes from under the rim to the vessel shoulder. Its dimensions are: height-14,6 cm; base diameter-4,2 cm; mouth diameter-8, cm.

c) Bithronconic mug (fig. 10) made of a sand paste. The bottom is rounded, the body slightly rounded and the rim on the outside. Dimensions are: height-10,8 cm; base diameter-4,2 cm; mouth diameter-8,3 cm.

d) Glass (circular recipient) made of a high quality paste. The bottom is flat and the walls are vertically. Dimensions are: height-3,5 cm; base diameter-8,3 cm.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> tumulus (fig. 11) has the following dimensions: 7,5x 7,25 m and the height of 0,45 m. The earth from the inside of the tumulus was yellow. On the south western part, at 3,5 m from the centre and at -0,38 depth a bithronconic vessel with a flat bottom and an outside rim was found. The vessel has a handle that goes its rim. At 0,1 m north of this vessel we found ceramic fragments from a red vessel with a flat bottom. Near these vessels, on a 0,25x0,3 m small pieces of coal and burnt hones were found. At 1,8 m S-W of this complex, at 0,36 depth were discovered ceramic fragments from two vessels, put one inside the other. The tumulus inventory is:

a) Bithronconic mug (fig. 12) made of a sand paste with a flat bottom and a thronconic neck. From the neck a handle goes until the base of the neck. The vessel is chestnut brown. Dimensions are: height-18,2 cm; base diameter-6,2 cm; mouth diameter-11,2 cm.

b) Bithronconic vessel fragmentary made of sand paste with flat bottom and rounded walls. It is grey.

c) Circular handle of a reddish colour

d) Circular handle of a brownish colour

e) Fragmentary vessel - only the flat bottom and wall fragments were found.

The 4<sup>th</sup> tumulus (fig. 13) has the following dimensions: 6,2x6,10 m. at 0,52 m and 0,35 m deep, central position, north-west from the north-south line two vessel discovered .

They were found with their mouth upward (fig 14). Close to these vessels, at 0,45 m in depth, on a 0,1x0,15 m area same fragments from burnet bones, coals, ash from the funerary pile were found. The tumulus inventory had two vessels:

a) Bithronconic vessel made of sand paste with a concave bottom, strongly rounded body and an outside rim. It is grey and its dimensions are: height-15,8 cm; base diameter-9,4 cm; mouth diameter-18,3 cm.

b) Bithronconic vessel made of sand paste - only the flat bottom and a part of walls are preserved. It has a brick colour shade.

The 5<sup>th</sup> tumulus (fig. 15) has the dimensions of 7,4x7,2 m in the earth mantle, in the N-W quarter were discovered many river boulders disposed irregularly a boulder trestle in a rectangle shape with the following dimensions, 1,9x0,5 m (fig. 16). This boulder tresle was made from a single layer of river boulders (a layer consisted in a 12-15 river boulders).

At south-west end of the tresle two vessels fragments were disposed. In the largest vessel a smaller one was put. Close to these vessels, on the river boulder tresle on a area of 0,15x0,20 m were disposed some burnt bones coals and ash. At 1,25 m south-west from these offering vessels were also discovered some vessel fragments and some coals near them. It is important to underline that in the north-west part of the tumulus some big river boulders (0,25x0,35 m) were found. This tumulus has the following funerary inventory:

a) Bithronconic vessel made of sand paste - the plat bottom, a part of the walls is preserved. On the walls we notice a tubular handle.

b) Bithronconic vessel - the flat bottom and a part of its body is preserved.

The 6<sup>th</sup> tumulus is categorized as a small tumulus (3,8x22,2 m and a height of 0,4). In the earth mantle appear river boulders, mostly on the north eastern part of the cairn. The river boulders are placed one over the other without being on a proper way of disposal. At 1,10 m north-west from the centre and at 0,26 m in depth a fragmentary vessel is disposed sidelong (fig. 16). Close to these fragments were put small pieces of coal. In the eastern part, at 0,45 m deep, under same river boulders was discovered a small reddish vessel. The tumulus inventory is:

a) Bithronconic vessel with flat bottom and of a chestnut brown colour. It is fragmentary.

b) Bithronconic reddish vessel with a tresle like bottom and with 4,5 cm-height and base diameter-3,5 cm.

The 7<sup>th</sup> tumulus (fig. 17) has bigger dimensions: 9,2x9,5 m and 0,7 in height. It is categorized as a big tumulus. In its centre, at 0,77 m deep two fragmentary vessels were found. The biggest vessel was placed upside down and at 0,2 m south-west of it at 0,72 m deep another vessel was put. The second vessel was smaller and of a thronconic shape. At 0,15 m north from these vessels, on a 0,2x0,35 m, some small pieces of coal from the funerary pile outside the necropolis were found. Among these coal pieces some burnt bones fragments were discovered. These incinerated fragments were disposed as white dots. The inventory is the following:

a) Bithronconic vessel of high quality paste. It has an ash like colour, flat bottom, outside rim and on its biggest diameter is placed horizontally a cylindrical handle.

b) Bithronconic vessel of small dimensions made of a sand paste. It has an ash like colour and is fragmentary only the flat bottom and a part of its body are preserved.

The 8<sup>th</sup> tumulus (fig. 18) has the following dimensions: 10,2x9,6 m and a height of 0,35 m. In its centre, at 0,42 deep, on a 0,6x 0,7 m area, and on a 0,05 m thickness coal pieces and ash were found. These coal pieces and the ash were disposed around two vessels put one inside the other.

In the north western part, at the centre, at 0,45 deep were discovered two vessels: a bigger vessel of bithronconic shape and a little cup (fig. 19). At 0,9 m south-west of these vessels, on a 0,7x0,8 m area were found small pieces of coals. At 2,1 m south-east of the centre and at 0,48 m deep some vessel fragments were seen. The highest vessel had coal pieces in it. The tumulus inventory is the following:

a) Bithronconic grey vessel with flat bottom, rounded body and outside rim. On its largest flat bottom, rounded body and outside rim. On its largest diameter it has a tubular handle horizontally disposed. The dimensions are: height-16,5 cm; mouth diameter-12,3 cm; base diameter-12,5 cm.

b) Bithronconic brown fragmentary vessel. Its upper part is missing. It is made of high quality paste. On its biggest diameter a upper part, an ornament in a horseshoe form is present. Base diameter-21,5 cm; mouth diameter- 22,5 cm.

c) Fragmentary brown vessel - the flat base and the lower part of it is preserved. Base diameter-10,5 cm.

d) Bithronconic mug made of high quality paste (fig. 20). The bottom is flat, the body has a sphere shape and the neck is thronconic. A handle goes down from under the rim to the shoulder of the vessel. On its biggest diameter the vessel presents three protuberances. Its dimensions are: height-15,2 cm; mouth diameter-8,5 cm and base diameter-5,7 cm.

e) Small cup, only the flat bottom is preserved. Its diameter is of 5,2 cm.

Tumulus IX (fig. 21) is one of the biggest with the following dimensions: 12x10 m and a height of -0,9 m. The cairn has a mantle of earth and underneath it were disposed many vessels of different shapes and dimensions. In the southern part of the tumulus, a mug and a fragmentary vessel were found. At 2,1 m west of the central “martor” and at 0,52 m deep a big vessel with a tubular handle and an outside rim was discovered. This vessel contained burnt bones and coal pieces. In the central part of the cairn at 0,67 m deep, was found a big vessel with bones and that had inside it a brown mug with the rim oriented to the south. Still in the central “martor”, to the north were also found two fragmentary bithronconic vessels.

In the eastern half, at 0,6 m from the central part were discovered two small vessels, bones and a fragmentary mug were present. At 0,9 m east from vessels was another bithronconic vessel that was surrounded by burnt bones and coals.

The tumulus inventory is:

a) Bithronconic vessel made of thick paste a flat bottom and a slightly outside rim. On the body, the vessel has a tubular handle. Its height is 37 cm (the vessel height).

b) Bowl made of fine paste. On the inner edge, under the rim, the vessel has circular punches disposed horizontally. Its colour is grey and it shows traces of secondary burning in the interior.

c) Mug made of high quality paste. The bottom is flat and under the rim two small protuberances. The vessel is chestnut brown and has a diameter of 5,5 cm.

d) Bithronconic vessel with a flat bottom, rounded body and 12,5 m height. Under the neck the vessel has some small punches disposed in a circle.

e) Bithronconic fragmentary vessel with a flat bottom that had inside it burnt bones. This vessel has traces of secondary burning.

f) Bowl made of fine paste with two handles that start under the rim. It has a brick like colour.

g) Thronconic vessel that is made of a fine paste. It is fragmentary. The vessel is of a brick colour and has a handle that starts under the rim.

h) Fragmentary mug with a slightly heightened handle.

Tumulus X (fig. 22) has the dimensions of 7,4x8 m and the height of 0,42 m. the first earth layer is until 0,2 m deep, has a grey colour and underneath it, until 0,42 cm deep, is a yellowish clay layer with archaeological remainings.

In the earth mantle of the cairn, in the south western quarter, some big stones were found. These stones weren't disposed following a certain rule (fig. 23).

In the central part, east-west, at 0,17 deep were discovered two vessels (fig. 24): a mug with a flat handle that has on its biggest diameter 3 groups of 3 protuberances. The mug (fig. 25) is made of a high quality paste, has a flat bottom, a sphere like body and a thronconic neck. The flat handle starts under the rim. The mug looks a lot like the one found in tumulus no. 8 but is bigger. The mug has the following dimensions: height - 18,5 cm and the mouth diameter is 8,5 cm.

At 0,1 m south of this mug a vessel with an outside rim was found. It is made of sand paste with a height of 18,2 cm and 16,5 cm in diameter.

Near these offering vessels were also found some coals and white marks from burnt bones (fig. 19). The burning took place on a funerary pile outside the necropolis.

At 2 m west from tumulus X is tumulus XI (fig. 26) which is of average in dimensions (6,6x6 m and 0,42 m in height).

At 0,23 m W. from the central north-south "martor" at 0,24 m deep were discovered 2 vessels: a mug with 3 groups of 3 protuberances on its biggest diameter and a thronconic fragmentary vessels with punched handles on its womb. The 2 fragmentary vessels were broken during the agriculture works lead in the last decades. Near these 2 big vessels were found 3 big stones (of 0,2-0,25 m) which marked the grave.

At 2,5 m on the north-south axe, to the north, at 0,5 m west at 0,19 m deep was discovered another fragmentary vessel with punched handles, outside rim and flat bottom. Burnt bones were found near this vessel.

The 2 tumuli have earth mantles, but tumulus no. 10 has some river stones disposed in its mantle, mostly in the south-west quarter of the cairn. Tumulus 11 had 3 river boulders that marked the grave.

Tumulus XIII (fig. 27) is small and has the following dimensions 5,40x5 m and height 0,39 m. in its middle river boulders were found. In the central zone of the tumulus was a river boulder ring with the north-south diameter of 1,6 m and the east-west one of 1,9 m. This ring had 2 ceramic fragments in it and 0,8 m south of this fragments, outside the ring, another ceramic fragment was found.

Tumulus XIV (fig. 28) was found in the centre of the necropolis and its dimensions are 5,8x5,35 m and 0,68 m in height. At 0,6 m deep, in the central zone 2 fragmentary vessels were found: a thronconic one and a fragmentary mug. At 0,6 m from these vessels were found coals and small fragments from burnt bones. The thronconic vessel (fig. 29) is made of a brown semifine paste. On its biggest diameter it has 2 small handles (fig. 30). The vessel is 10,2 cm high, the mouth diameter is 18,2 cm and the base diameter is 6,8 cm. the mug has a flat bottom and is made of brick coloured paste with a grey polish. Only the lower part of it is preserved.

In all this tumuli we can notice that the vessels have traces of secondary burning, and this shows as that they burnt at the funerary pile, along with the human bones outside the necropolis.

In the Glina area, the bithronconic vessels - amphora type like the ones found at Vârtoapele can also be found at Brăneț<sup>1</sup>, Padeș-Călugăreni<sup>2</sup>, Govora-Runcuri<sup>3</sup> village, Drăgănești-Olt<sup>4</sup>.

In the Vârtopu-Ciuperceni necropolis were discovered mugs with a rounded body, cylindrical neck, straight rim slightly opened on the outside, flat handle that starts near the vessel mouth or even under the rim. Resemblances with these vessels can be found at București-Glina<sup>5</sup>, Crivăț<sup>6</sup>, Greci<sup>7</sup>, Căscioarele-Cătălu<sup>8</sup>, Odaia Turcului<sup>9</sup>, Zlatna<sup>10</sup>.

On the bithronconic vessels of a bag type, amphorae or mugs were found small protuberances placed on the vessel's womb. Analogies are found at Govora-Runcuri<sup>11</sup> village and Morărești<sup>12</sup>. On a number of these vessels were found 2 small protuberances – analogies Văcărești<sup>13</sup>, Odaia Turcului<sup>14</sup>, Varlaam<sup>15</sup>.

The ceramic inventory found in the Vârtopu-Ciuperceni necropolis has resemblances with the ceramic and the ornaments (2 buttons flat or tubular handles) from Govora-Runcuri<sup>16</sup> village, Cetățuia, Rm. Vâlcea<sup>17</sup> (a vessel with 2 buttons) or vessels with horseshoe ornaments (tumulus VIII) on the womb found at Crivăț<sup>18</sup>, Odaia Turcului<sup>19</sup> and Greci<sup>20</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> A. Ulanici, *Săpăturile arheologice de la Brăneț, jud. Olt*, CA, I, 1975, p. 45.

<sup>2</sup> I. Chicideanu, P. Gherghe, *Săpăturile arheologice de la Călugăreni (Gorj)*, a XV-a sesiune anuală de rapoarte (Brașov), MCA 1981, p. 103-107, fig. 2/10.

<sup>3</sup> Gh. Petre-Govora, *O preistorie a nord-estului Olteniei*, Rm. Vâlcea, 1995, p. 23.

<sup>4</sup> M. Nica, C. Schuster, T. Zorzolui, *Cercetările arheologice în tell-ul gumelnițeano-sălcuțen de la Drăgănești-Olt, punctul Corboaica-campaniile din anii 1993-1994*, CAANT, I, 1995, p. 9-45, fig. 20/3; 4/1.

<sup>5</sup> P. Roman, *Die Glina III-Kultur*, PZ, 51/1, 1976, p. 26-42; I. Nestor, *Fouilles de Glina*, Dacia NS, 1933, III-IV, p. 226-252, fig. 8/6.

<sup>6</sup> D. Berciu, *Rezultatele primelor săpături de la Crivăț, (r. Oltenița)*, SCIV, 17, III, 1966, p. 529-535, fig. 3/1.

<sup>7</sup> A. Ulanici, G. Trohani, *Săpăturile de la Greci, com. Grădiște, jud. Ilfov*, CA, I, 1975, p. 77-100, fig. 5.

<sup>8</sup> D. B. Nanu, *Cercetările arheologice de la Căscioarele, Cătălu, jud. Călărași*, în CCDJ, V-VII, 1989, p. 37-54, fig. 7/1.

<sup>9</sup> E. Tudor, *Săpăturile arheologice de la Odaia Turcului (jud. Dâmbovița)*, MCA, Brașov, 1983, p. 108-111; Idem, *Neue Angaben zur fruhen Bronzezeit in Sudrūmenien*, Dacia, NS, XXVI, 1-2, 1982, p. 59-75, fig. 4/7.

<sup>10</sup> H. Ciugudean, *Epoca timpurie a bronzului în centrul și sud-vestul Transilvaniei*, Bibliotheca Thracologica, 13, București, 1996, p. 104, fig. 64/1, 2.

<sup>11</sup> P. Roman, *Perioada timpurie a epocii bronzului "tracic" în Oltenia*, Thraco-Dacica, 1985, p. 279-297, fig. 6/12.

<sup>12</sup> C. Schuster, M. Nica, *Săpăturile de salvare de la Morărești, jud. Dolj 1993, Cercetări arheologice în aria nord-tracică*, CAANT, I, 1995, p. 114-122.

<sup>13</sup> E. Tudor, *Săpătura de salvare din comuna Văcărești, jud. Dâmbovița*, Valachica, IV, Târgoviște, 1971, p. 93-107, fig. 1/4.

<sup>14</sup> P. Roman, *Cercetări la Govora Sat-Runcuri în 1977*, SCIVA, 36/4, 1985, p. 116-122, fig. 1/2.

<sup>15</sup> C. Schuster, *Cercetările arheologice în așezarea culturii Glina de la Varlaam, jud. Giurgiu*, CCDJ, XIII-XV, 1995, p. 53-63.

<sup>16</sup> E. Tudor, *art. cit.*, MCA, p. 108-109.

<sup>17</sup> P. Roman, *art. cit.*, PZ, 51/1 p. 26; Idem, *art. cit.*, SCIVA, 36/4, 1985, fig. 6/12, p. 116.

<sup>18</sup> D. Berciu, *art. cit.*, SCIV, 17, III, p. 529.

<sup>19</sup> E. Tudor, *art. cit.*, MCA, p. 108-111.

<sup>20</sup> A. Ulanici, G. Trohani, *art. cit.*, CA, I, p. 77-100.

The outside rim and cambered womb vessel type found at Vârtopu-Ciuperceni has analogies with the vessels from Glina<sup>21</sup>, Odaia Turcului<sup>22</sup>, Brăneț<sup>23</sup>.

The ceramic inventory has analogies with the discoveries from Verbița-Dolj and the graves from Cetățenii din Dela, Văleni, Nucet, Albești.

The archaeological research from Vârtopu-Ciuperceni are dated to the early Bronze Age period, Glina final-Verbița-Ostrovul Corbului (Glina IV<sup>th</sup>)-Bela-Crkva-Priboi.

### ***The natural frame***

The tumulus from Vârtopu-Ciuperceni are placed on a hilly plateau at 3 km N-W from Bujorăscu hill<sup>24</sup>.

The identification of the 14 tumuli in this area shows us the geographic importance of the territory they were found in. So, we can state that the people back then preferred hilly zones to build the tumuli.

### ***The tumuli dimensions***

The Ciuperceni tumuli had a height between 0,35 and 0,92 m, a width of 3,8-10,2 m and a length of 2,2-10 m<sup>25</sup>.

So, the tumuli from the early Bronze Age found in the northern part of Oltenia, are medium/small sized, strongly flattened and most part of them look the same.

The fact that some tumuli have bigger heights than the others shows us that some members of the community were buried by their social position.

In the Early Bronze Age, the most frequent pieces are the ceramic vessels, the jewels, then the weapons and the tools.

In this necropolis that we're describing the inventory is represented by ceramic vessels, whole or fragmentary.

### ***Types of vessels***

We consider that the designation name of the ceramic vessels from Vârtopu-Ciuperceni can be made by their shape, taking into account their size.

By their geometric shape we have the following type of vessels: vessels with the same shape, different shapes and they consist in: mugs, cups, bowls, glasses etc.

<sup>21</sup> C. Schuster, *Așezări Glina pe cursul inferior al Argeșului și Valea Călniștei (I)*, Mihăilești-Tufa, Thraco-Dacica, XIII, 1992, p. 35-41, fig. 36, pl. 3/s, t; Idem, *Perioada timpurie a epocii bronzului în bazinele Argeșului și Ialomiței Superioare*, Bibliotheca Thracologica, 20, București, 1997, p. 354, fig. 72.

<sup>22</sup> E. Tudor, *art. cit.*, MCA, p. 108-109.

<sup>23</sup> A. Ulanici, G. Trohani, *art. cit.*, CA, I, p. 45 și urm.

<sup>24</sup> Gh. Calotoiu, *Cercetări arheologice din epoca bronzului timpuriu în necropola tumulară de la Vârtopu-Ciuperceni, județul Gorj*, Litua, IX, Târgu Jiu, 2003, p. 5.

<sup>25</sup> Idem, *Necropole tumulare din Gorj, Vârtopu-Ciuperceni, Telești-Drăgoiești*, Editura Universtaria, Craiova, 2007, p. 9 și urm.



In the Ciuperceni necropolis we have the following vessels:

### *Funerary mugs and cups*

This category is very present in the Ciuperceni necropolis (by the number and by the number of tumuli it is found in).

In the centre of the second tumuli, at -0,68 m we found 2 bithronconic vessels of the same type. The first one is a mug made of fine paste. The bottom is flat, the body is strongly cambered, the neck is thronconic and the rim is on the outside. This mug has the following dimensions: height-14,6 cm; base diameter-6,8 cm and mouth diameter-11,8 cm<sup>26</sup>.

The second mug, made of a sand paste has flat bottom, a rounded body and an outside rim. It is smaller than the first. Height-108 mm; base diameter-42 mm; mouth diameter-83 mm<sup>27</sup>.

In tumulus IX were found 2 mugs. One had 2 small protuberances on the womb, 55 mm in diameter and the other one has a flat handle that is slightly heightened<sup>28</sup>.

The mug from tumulus 8 made of high quality paste has a flat bottom, sphere like body, thronconic neck, a flat handle that starts under the rim and goes until its shoulder. On its largest diameter the mug has 3 grouped protuberances, like the one from tumuli X<sup>29</sup>.

Still in tumulus VIII was found a flat bottom of apparently a small cup (base diameter-5,2 cm)<sup>30</sup>.

In tumulus XIV was found a mug that had only the lower part.

### *Bowls*

This category is represented by only one piece found in tumulus IX. It is a bowl made of fine paste with 2 handles that start under the rim<sup>31</sup>.

### *Bithronconic vessels with handles*

This type includes pot or jar like vessels.

We must say that the big pots, known as bithronconic urns were never found at Vârtopu-Ciuperceni. The bithronconic shape is represented by some vessels with one or two handles.

All the 4 vessels found in tumulus I belong to this category.

The first bithronconic vessel made of a sand and gravel paste has an outside rim and a flat handle: height-17,3 cm, base diameter-8,2 cm; mouth-4,8 cm<sup>32</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Gh. Calotoiu, *art. cit.*, în *loc. cit.*, p. 29.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 7.

<sup>28</sup> Gh. Calotoiu, *Cercetări arheologice din necropola de la Vârtopu-Ciuperceni din perioada bronzului timpuriu*, Litua, XI, 2006, p. 7.

<sup>29</sup> *Idem*, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

<sup>30</sup> *Idem*, *Cercetări arheologice din epoca bronzului timpuriu în necropola tumulară de la Vârtopu-Ciuperceni*, județul Gorj, Litua, X, 2004, p. 6.

<sup>31</sup> Gh. Calotoiu, *art. cit.*, Litua, IX, p. 32.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 6.

Another bithronconic vessel with a cambered body outside rim and a vertical handle is present: height-17,8 cm; base diameter-9,5 cm; mouth diameter-16,5 cm<sup>33</sup>.

Another vessel that is fragmentary has on its largest diameter a saddle like handle.

The bithronconic vessel discovered in the second tumulus has a flat bottom, a rounded body in its biggest diameter area and the rim on the outside. On the vessel's shoulder starts a wide handle. The vessel has the following dimensions: height-14,3 cm; base diameter-8,5 cm; mouth-14,8 cm<sup>34</sup>.

A vessel of bithronconic shape, but of bigger dimensions (height-16,5 cm; base diameter-12,5 cm; mouth diameter-12,3 cm) was discovered in tumulus VIII a deepness of 45 m. On its biggest diameter the vessel has a tubular handle horizontally disposed<sup>35</sup>.

The tubular handle appears also on the vessels found in the tumulus IX<sup>36</sup>.

Fragmentary bithronconic vessels can be found also in tumuli III, IV, V, VI, VII<sup>37</sup>.

In tumulus XIV was found a thronconic vessel that has on its biggest diameter two small punches handles<sup>38</sup>.

#### *Glasses*

They are represented by the glass found in the second tumulus. It is a circular container that was fragmentary<sup>39</sup>.

#### *Bowls*

At a depth of 0,79 m, in tumulus IX were discovered 2 bowls with 2 tubular handles. One of them has circular punches horizontally disposed<sup>40</sup>.

### ***The characteristics of the ceramic from the necropolis***

#### *The used material*

By the paste quality, the ceramic from Vârtopu-Ciuperceni can be divided into 3 categories: coarse, semi-fine and fine.

The vessels that were made with semi-thick paste have in their composition an important quantity of impurities, but of small dimensions like the first vessel discovered in the first tumulus, that contains in its paste sand and small gravel.

The thick vessels contain a big quantity of impurities: sand and big gravel (the vessel from tumulus VII).

<sup>33</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 10.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 6.

<sup>35</sup> *Idem, op. cit.*, p. 15.

<sup>36</sup> *Idem*, *art. cit.*, Litua, X, p. 7.

<sup>37</sup> *Idem, op. cit.*, p. 12-17.

<sup>38</sup> *Idem, art. cit.*, Litua, XI, p. 14.

<sup>39</sup> *Idem, art. cit.*, Litua, IX, p. 7.

<sup>40</sup> *Idem*, *art. cit.*, Litua, X, p. 7.

The vessels made of fine paste belong to fine ceramics and are made of high quality clay and are made carefully, without any impurities.

### *The burning of the ceramic vessels*

The primary burning: the vessels made of thick paste or of semi-thick paste are mostly fragmentary kept.

The secondary burning: on most of the vessels found in the Vârtopu-Ciuperceni necropolis were found traces of secondary burning, which make us believe that were burnt, along with human bones on a funerary pile outside the necropolis<sup>41</sup>.

### *The colour*

The colours or the shape of the colours come from the power of the burning, whether oxidized or unoxidized but, in some cases, the colour is given by the clay type or ingredients.

The thick and semi-fine ceramic discovered in the Vârtopu-Ciuperceni tumuli is mostly brown, grey and of a brick-like shade. The vessels of high quality paste are mostly orange-yellowish but also grey.

### *The ceramic ornament*

The ornament elements are very few. They refer mostly on those small punches found on the vessels womb.

From the ceramic ornament point of view, on the Vârtopu-Ciuperceni necropolis can be found resemblances with different areas. The funerary inventory of the Vârtopu-Ciuperceni has vessels with rounded body and 2 handles neck. We meet resemblances with the ceramic found at other sites: București-Roșu<sup>42</sup>, Greci<sup>43</sup>, Văcărești<sup>44</sup>, Odaia Turcului<sup>45</sup>.

### *The funerary rite*

The funerary ideology of a community is reflected in its rites, meaning the way the deceased were “buried”, taking into account their social category, sex age or their way of dying<sup>46</sup>.

In the Vârtopu-Ciuperceni the funerary rite is the incineration. This was shown to us by the research led in all the 14 tumuli.

<sup>41</sup> Idem, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

<sup>42</sup> N. Constantiniu, P. I. Panait, *O așezare din epoca bronzului la Roșu*, CAB, I, 1971, p. 301, fig. 4.

<sup>43</sup> A. Ulanici, G. Trohani, *art. cit.*, CA, I, p. 77, fig. 5/3; pl. 1/3; A. Ulanici, *Noi cercetări arheologice la Greci, Jud. Ilfov*, CA, III, 1979, p. 9-26, fig. 5/5, 58/9.

<sup>44</sup> E. Tudor, *art. cit.*, Valachica, IV, p. 93-107, fig. 6/1-3, 7, 10.

<sup>45</sup> Idem, *art. cit.*, MCA, p. 108-111.

<sup>46</sup> V. Sirbu, *Arheologia funerară și sacrificiile: o terminologie unitară/Funerary Archaeology and Sacrifices: An Unifying Terminology*, în *Sinteze arheologice*, V, Editura Istros, Brăila, 2003, p. 17.

The using of the interment at Verbița tumuli, the incineration in the necropola from Vârtopu-Ciuperceni, show the variation of the funerary rites at the beginning of the Bronze Age in this area.

The funerary rite consists in the placement of the burnt bones, the coals and the offering vessels on the antic ground or on a river boulder tresle.

In the 1<sup>st</sup> tumulus we encounter the following situation: many bithronconic vessels put down with their mouth up, and the ones from the edge were horizontally disposed. Near these vessels, on a 0,23x0,1 m area were found burnt bones, ash and coals. Over them it was an earth mantle<sup>47</sup>.

In the 5<sup>th</sup> tumulus we encounter a different situation. At 0,44 m depth, was found like a ritual form the placement of the burnt material<sup>48</sup> and the funerary inventory on a river boulder tresle in the shape of a rectangle (1,95x0,58)<sup>49</sup>.

This tresle was formed by a single line of big stones disposed N-South. At the S-W edge of the rectangle were found another small one. Near these fragmentary vessels, on the boulder “bed”, on a 0,15x0,2 m area were found burnt bones, coals and ash from the funerary pile<sup>50</sup>.

In tumulus IX there is a more complex situation because this tumulus is one of the biggest from the necropola. Under the earth cairn were placed many vessels of different shapes and dimensions. In a big vessel was placed a mug, along with calcinated bones and coals. The same type of ritual can be found at the tumulus VIII<sup>51</sup>.

Tumuli X and XI had the earth mantles with river boulders, which marked the tomb. In tumulus X were found 2 vessels: a mug with a wide handle that has on its biggest diameter three punches and a thronconic fragmentary vessel with an outside rim found at 10 cm from the first one. Near these offering vessels were found some coals and burnt bones from the funerary pile (ustrinium)<sup>52</sup>.

In tumulus XI we found tombs with big river boulders which were placed near the bones, the coals and the vessels. These river boulders marked the tomb<sup>53</sup>.

In conclusion we can say that there are 2 types of incineration: incineration in the urn or straight on the antic ground and in stone ring (tumulus IX).

In all the 14 tumuli we see that most of the ceramic has traces of secondary burning due the burning in the funerary pile along with the human bones, outside the necropolis.

<sup>47</sup> Gh. Calotoiu, *art. cit.*, Litua, IX, p. 6-7.

<sup>48</sup> M. Nica, C. Schuster, T. Zorzolui, *art. cit.*, în *loc. cit.*, p. 76.

<sup>49</sup> Gh. Calotoiu, *art. cit.*, Litua, XI, p. 9.

<sup>50</sup> *Idem*, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 20.

<sup>52</sup> Gh. Calotoiu, *art. cit.*, Litua, XI, p. 7-8.

<sup>53</sup> *Idem*, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

As we said earlier, the tumular necropolis from Vârtopu-Ciupereci is dated in the Early Bronze Age, Glina final -Verbița-Ostrovul Corbului (Glina 4<sup>th</sup>)-Bela-Crkva-Priboi.

Translated by Alina Tița

### Abbreviations

**Bibliotheca Thracologica:** *Bibliotheca Thracologica*, Institutul Național Român de Thracologie, București.

**CA:** *Cercetări Arheologice*, Muzeul Național de Istorie a României, București.

**CAB:** *Cercetări Arheologice în București*, Muzeul de Istorie și Artă al municipiului București, București.

**CAANT:** *Cercetări Arheologice în Aria Nord-Tracă*, Institutul Național Român de Thracologie, București.

**CCDJ:** *Cultură și Civilizație la Dunărea de Jos*, Muzeul Dunării de Jos, Călărași.

**Dacia. N.S.:** *Dacia. Revue d'archeologie et d'histoire ancienne, Nouvelles Series*, București.

**Litua:** *Litua, Studii și cercetări*, Muzeul Județean Gorj, Târgu-Jiu.

**MCA:** *Materiale și cercetări arheologice*, București.

**PZ:** *Prähistorische Zeitschrift*, Berlin.

**SCIV (A):** *Studii și cercetări de istorie veche (și arheologie)*, Institutul de Arheologie „Vasile Pârvan”, București.

**Thraco-Dacica:** *Thraco-Dacica*, Institutul Național Român de Thracologie București, București.

**Valachica (Cronica Valachica):** *Valachica (Cronica Valachica)*, Muzeul Județean Dâmbovița, Târgoviște.

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Idem, *Cercetări arheologice din epoca bronzului timpuriu în necropola tumulară de la Vârtopu-Ciuperceni, județul Gorj*, Litua, X, Târgu Jiu, 2004.

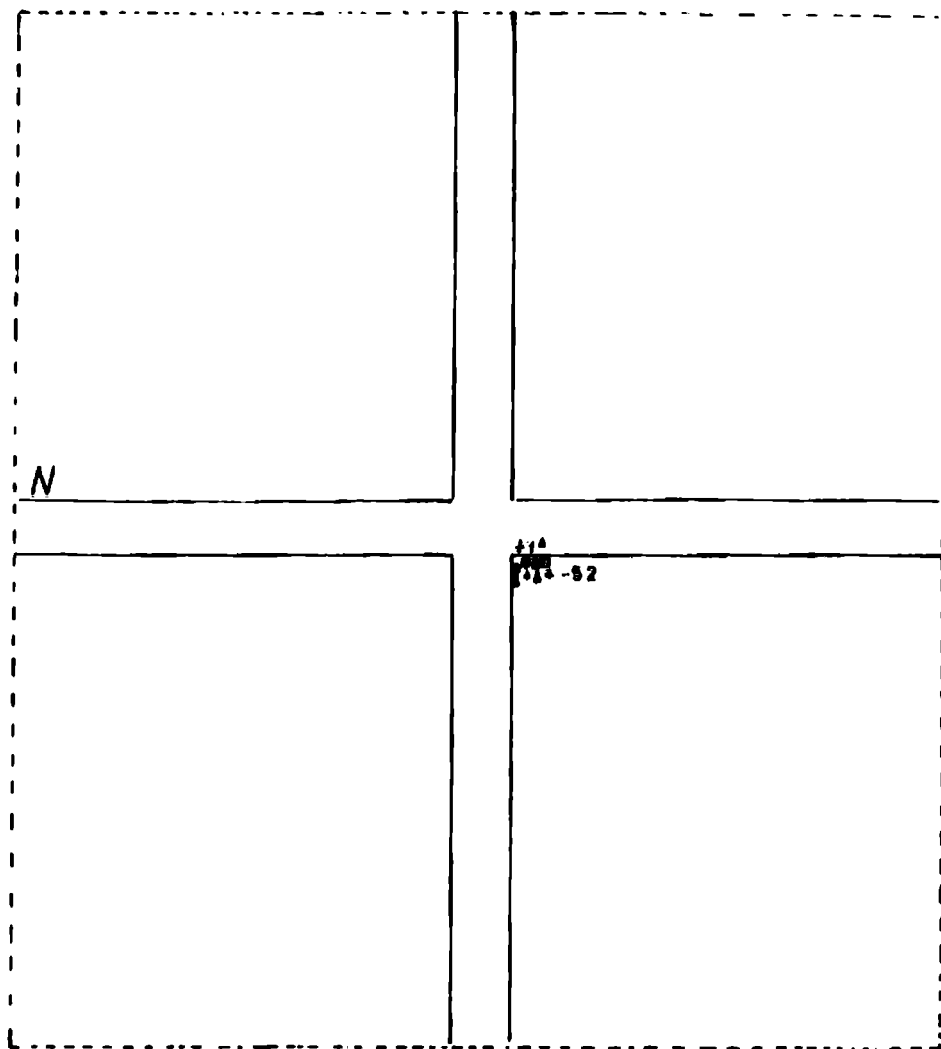
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- Idem, *Săpăturile arheologice de la Odaia Turcului (jud. Dâmboviţa)*, MCA, Braşov, 1983.
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- Idem, *Noi cercetări arheologice la Greci, Jud. Ilfov*, CA, III, 1979.
- Ulanici, A., Trohani, G., *Săpăturile de la Greci, com. Grădiştea, jud. Ilfov*, CA, I, 1975.



TUMUL Nr. 1  
PLAN ȘI PROFIL



LEGENDĂ :



VASE



OASE



CĂRBUNE



STRAT VEGETAL



STRAT CU PĂMÂNT GALBEN



STERIL

Fig. 3. Tumulus I.



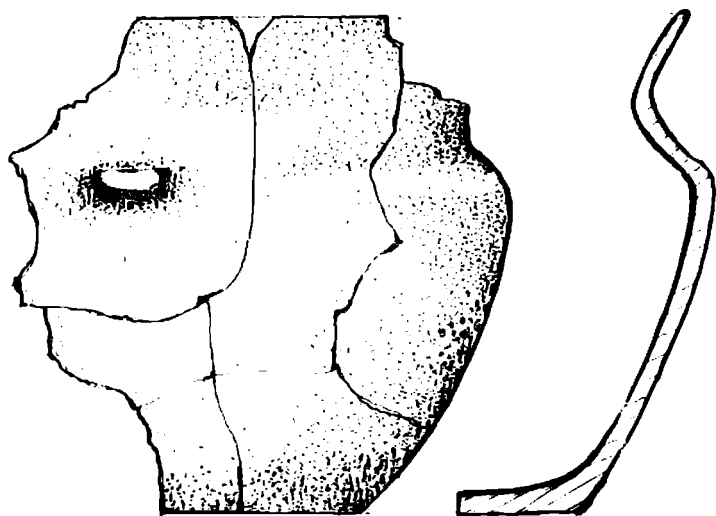


Fig. 4

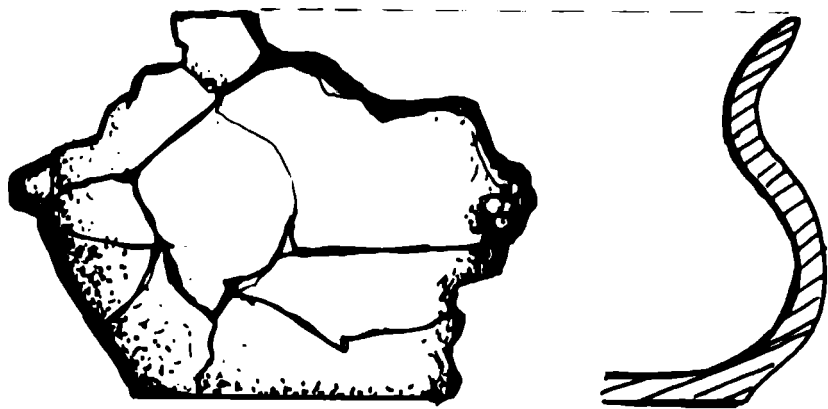


Fig. 5

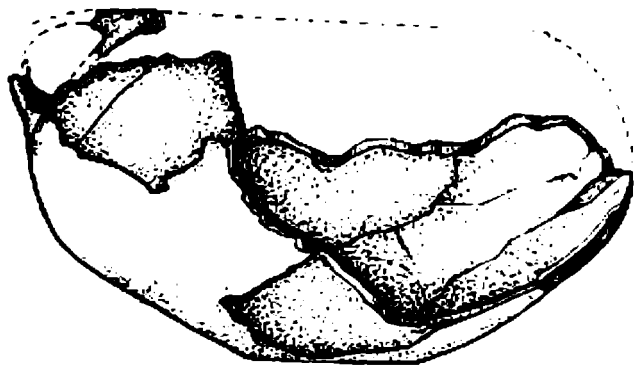
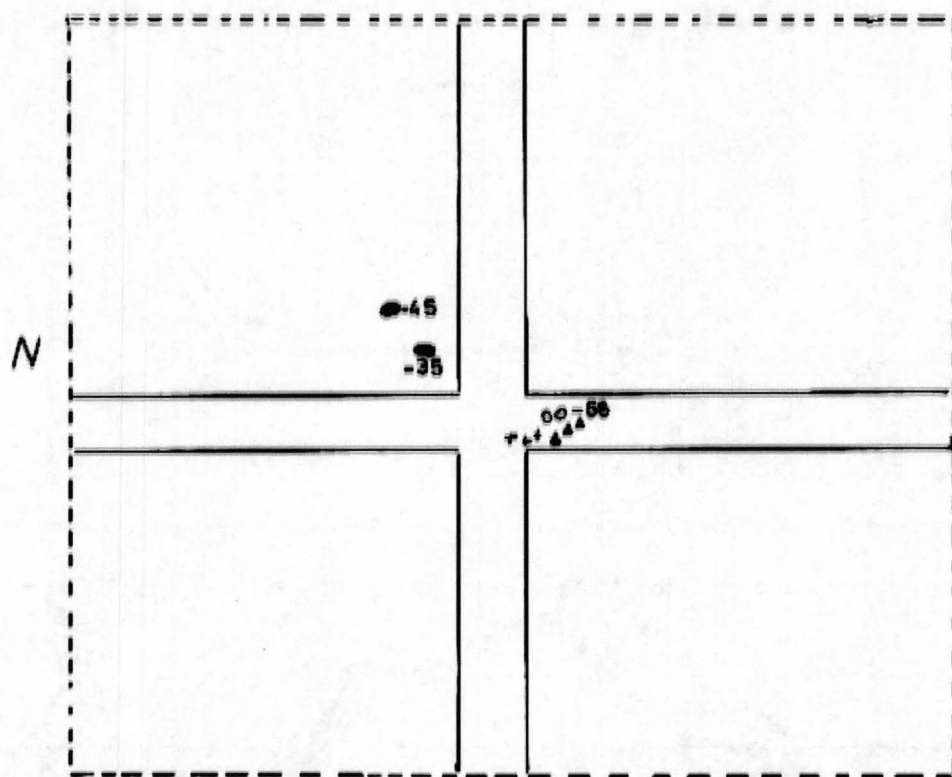


Fig. 6

# TUMUL Nr. 2 PLAN ȘI PROFIL



## LEGENDĂ








-  - VASE
-  - OASE
-  - CĂRBUNE
-  - STRAT VEGETAL
-  - STRAT CU PAM
-  - STERIL
-  - FRAGMENTE VASE

Fig. 7. Tumulus II.

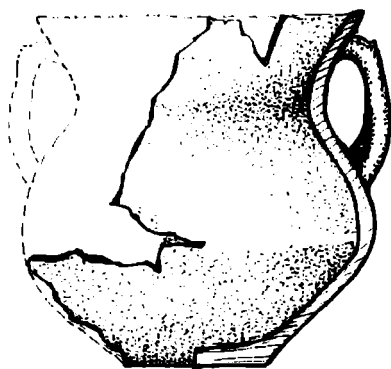


Fig. 8

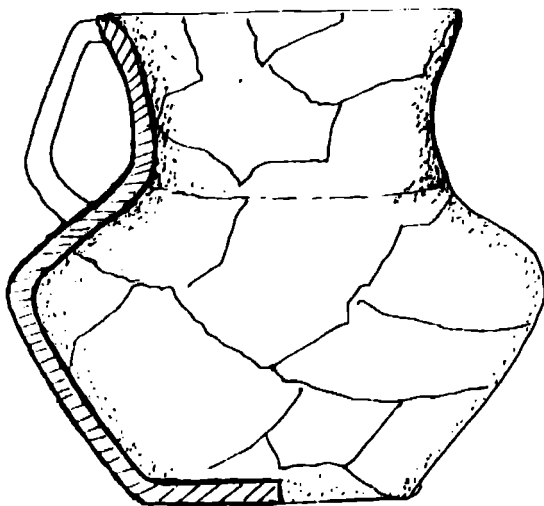


Fig. 9

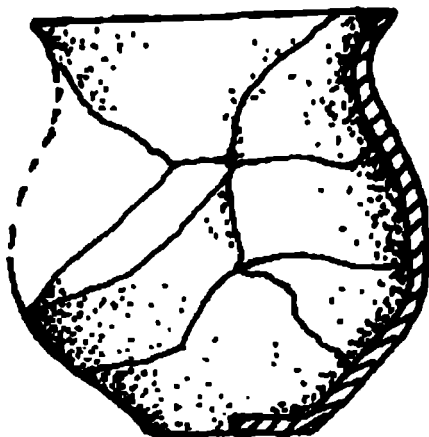
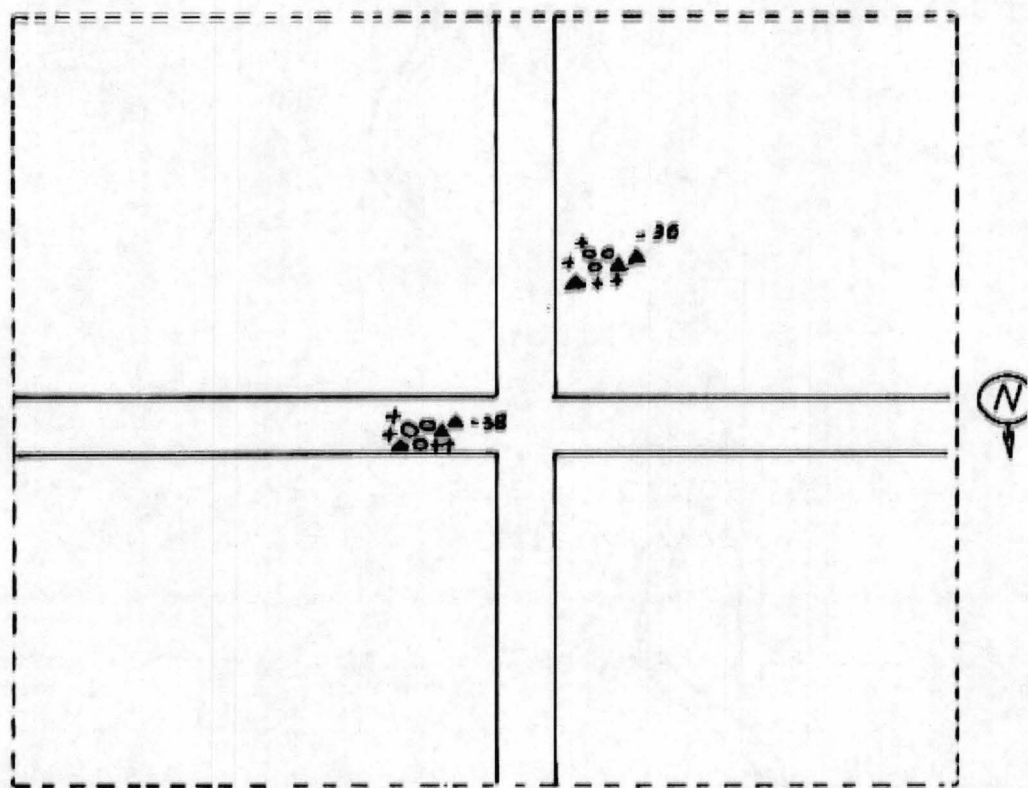


Fig. 10

# TUMUL Nr 3 PLAN SI PROFIL



## LEGENDA

- VASE
- OASE
- CĂRBUNE
- STRAT VEGETAL
- STRAT CU PAMÂNT GALBEN
- STERIL

Fig. 11. Tumulus III.

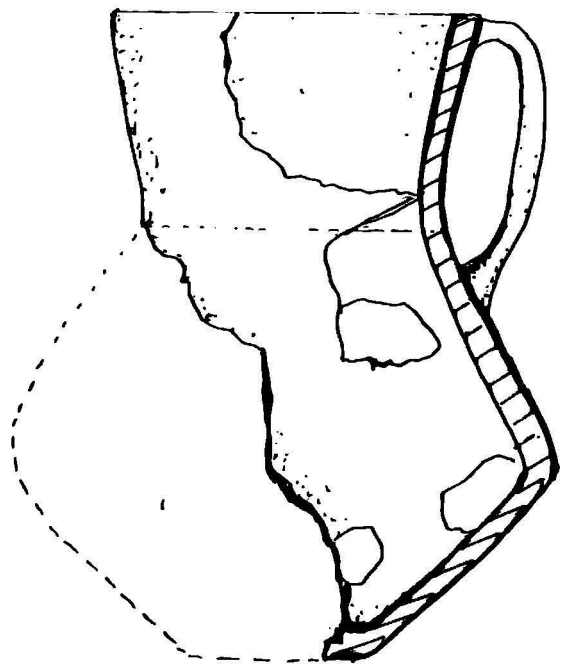
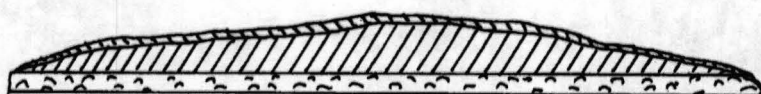
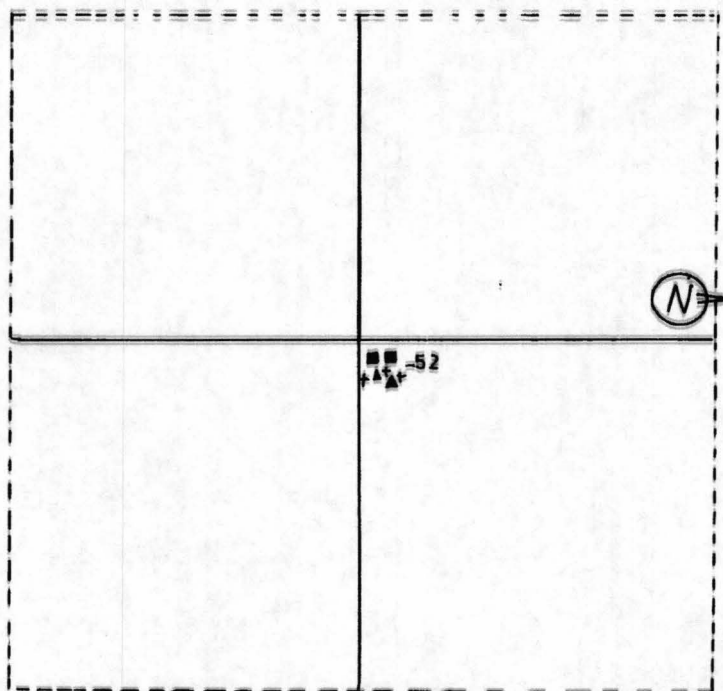


Fig. 12



Fig. 14. Aspect of excavation.

# TUMULUL 4 PLAN ȘI PROFIL



## LEGENDĂ

■ ■ - VASE

+ + - OASE

▲ ▲ - CARBUNE

▨ - STRAT VEGETAL

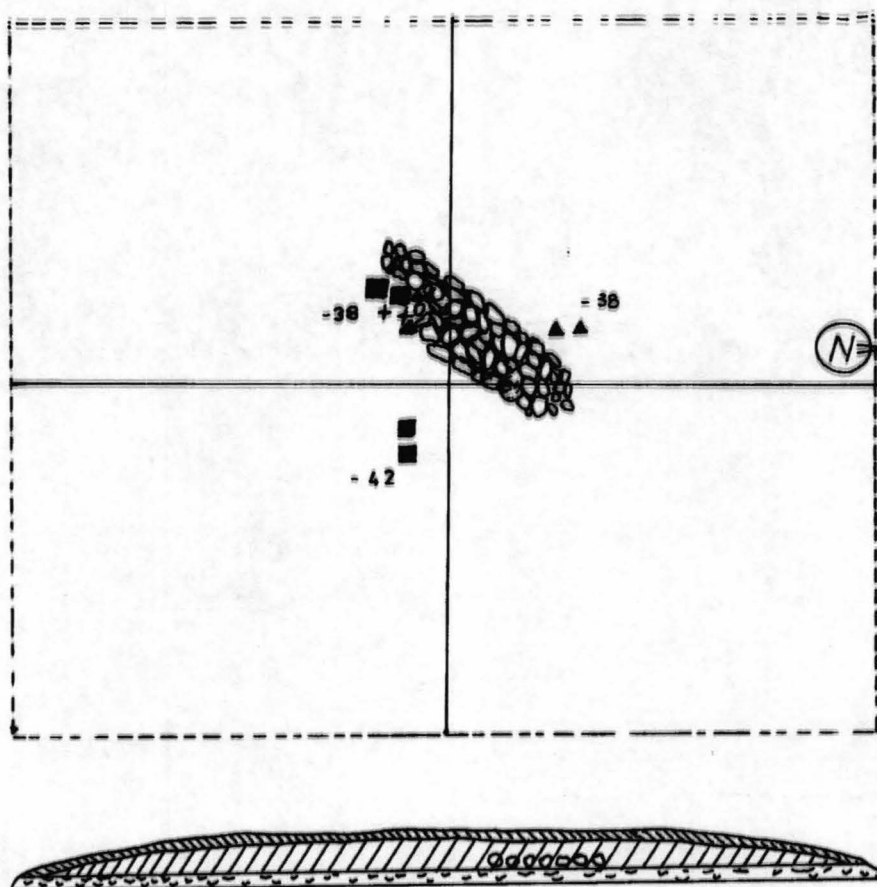
▨ - STRAT CU PĂMÂNT GALBEN

▨ - STRAT STERIL

Fig. 13. Tumulus IV.



# TUMULUL 5 PLAN ȘI PROFIL



## LEGENDĂ

■ ■ -VASE

+ + -OASE

▲ ▲ -CĂRBUNE

○ ○ - BOLOVANI DE RÂU

▨ -STRAT VEGETAL

▨ -STRAT CU PAMÂNT GALBEN

▨ -STRAT STERIL

Fig. 15. Tumulus V.

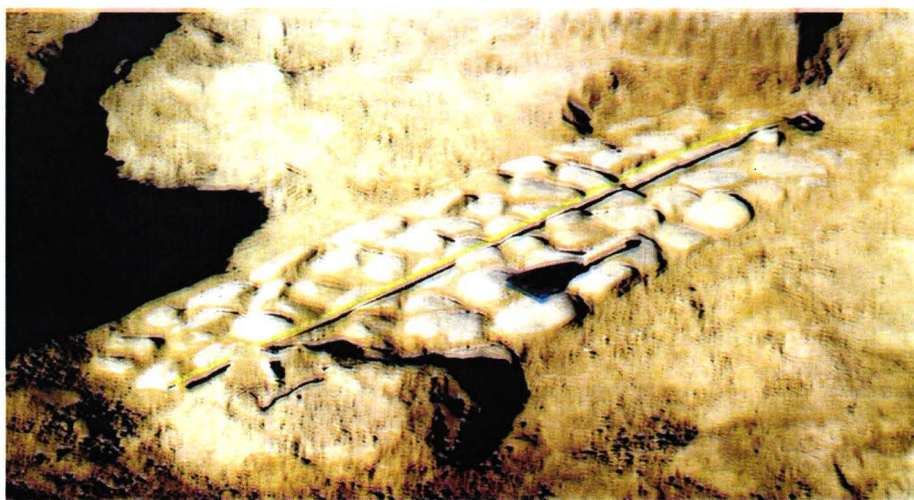


Fig. 16

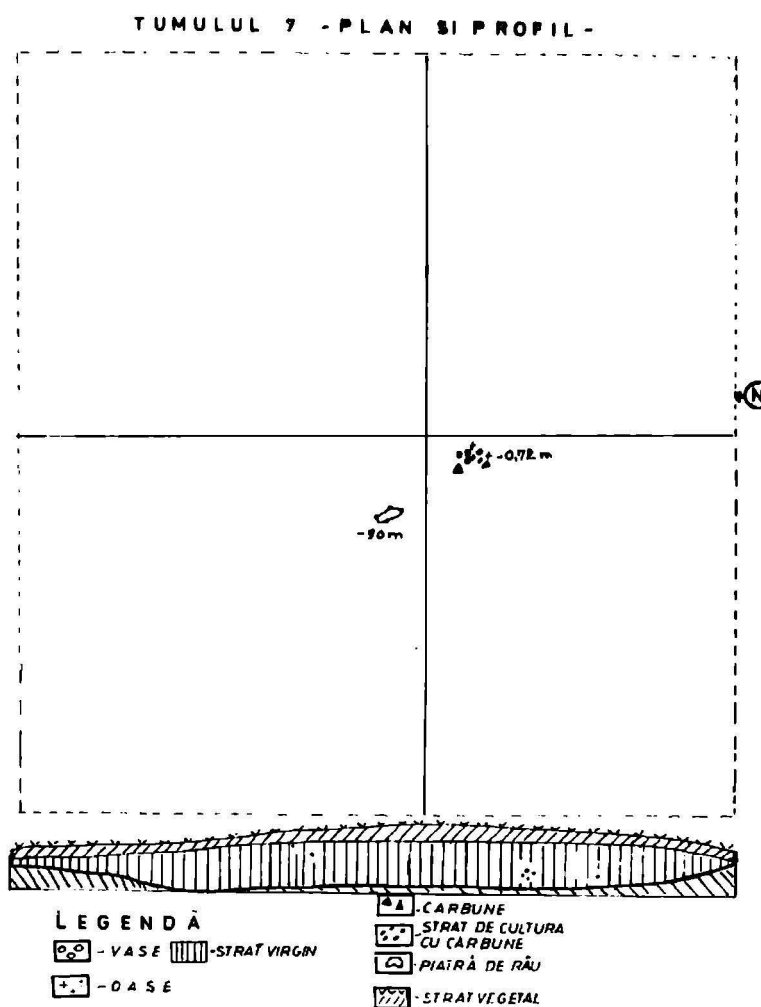
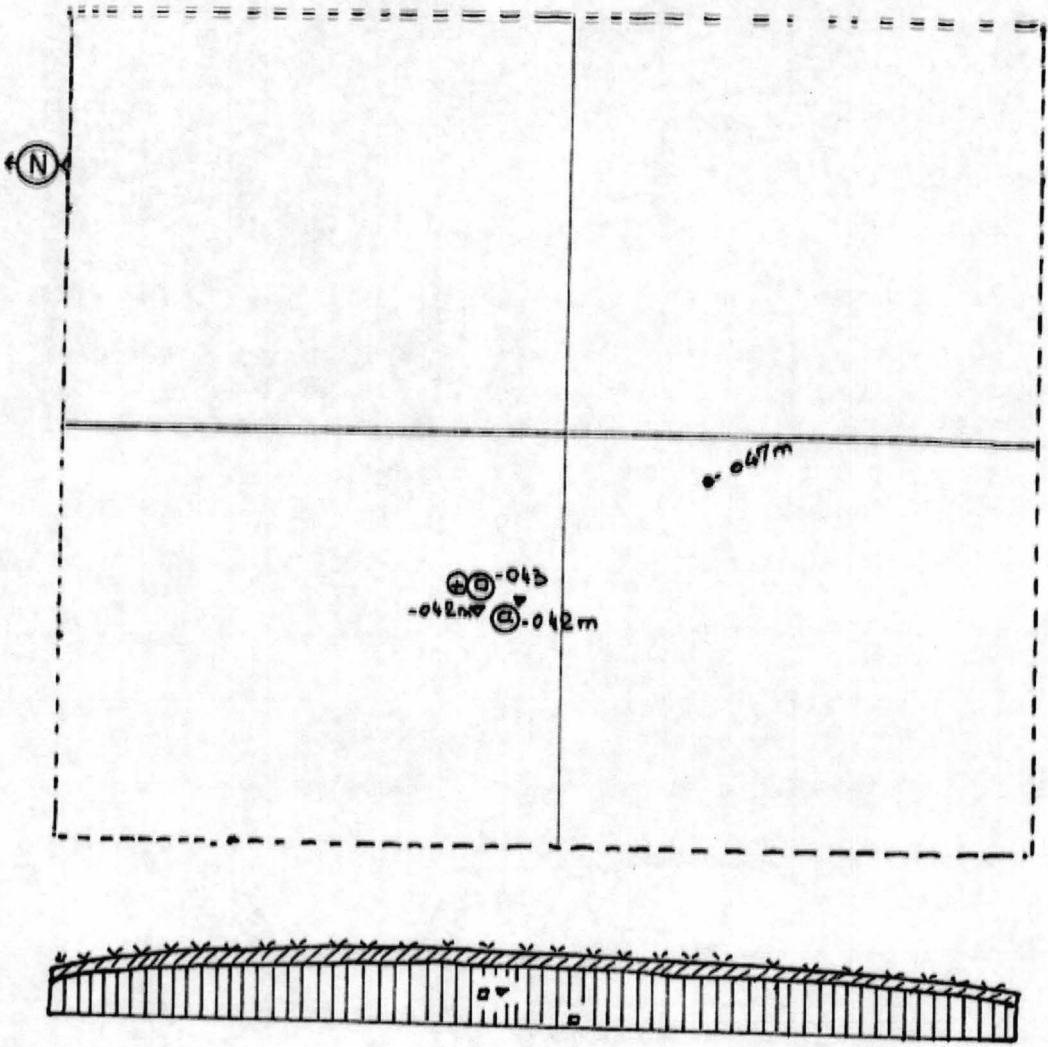


Fig. 17. Tumulus VII.



TUMULUL 8 PLAN SI PROFIL



LEGENDĂ

⊕ ⊕ - OASE

▲ ▲ - CĂRBUNI

○ ○ - VASE

▽ ▽ - SOL VIU

▨ - STRAT VEGETAL

▤ - SOL GALBEN

Fig. 18. Tumulus VIII.

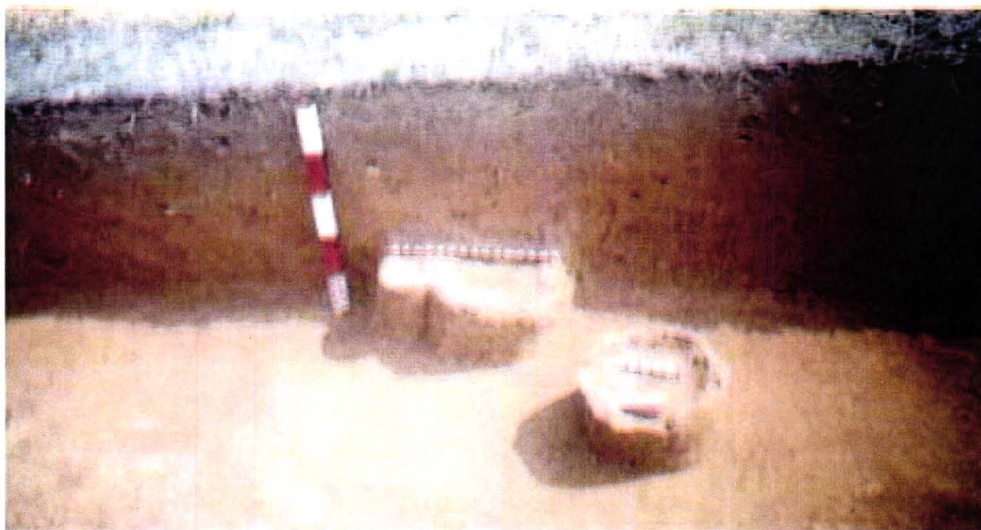


Fig. 19

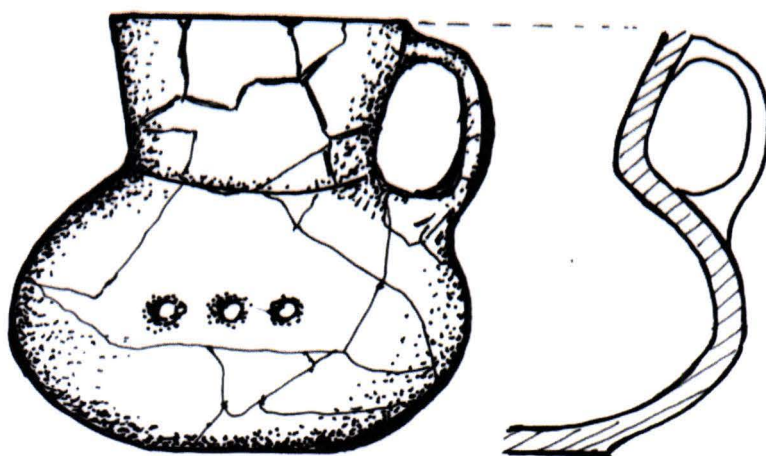


Fig. 20

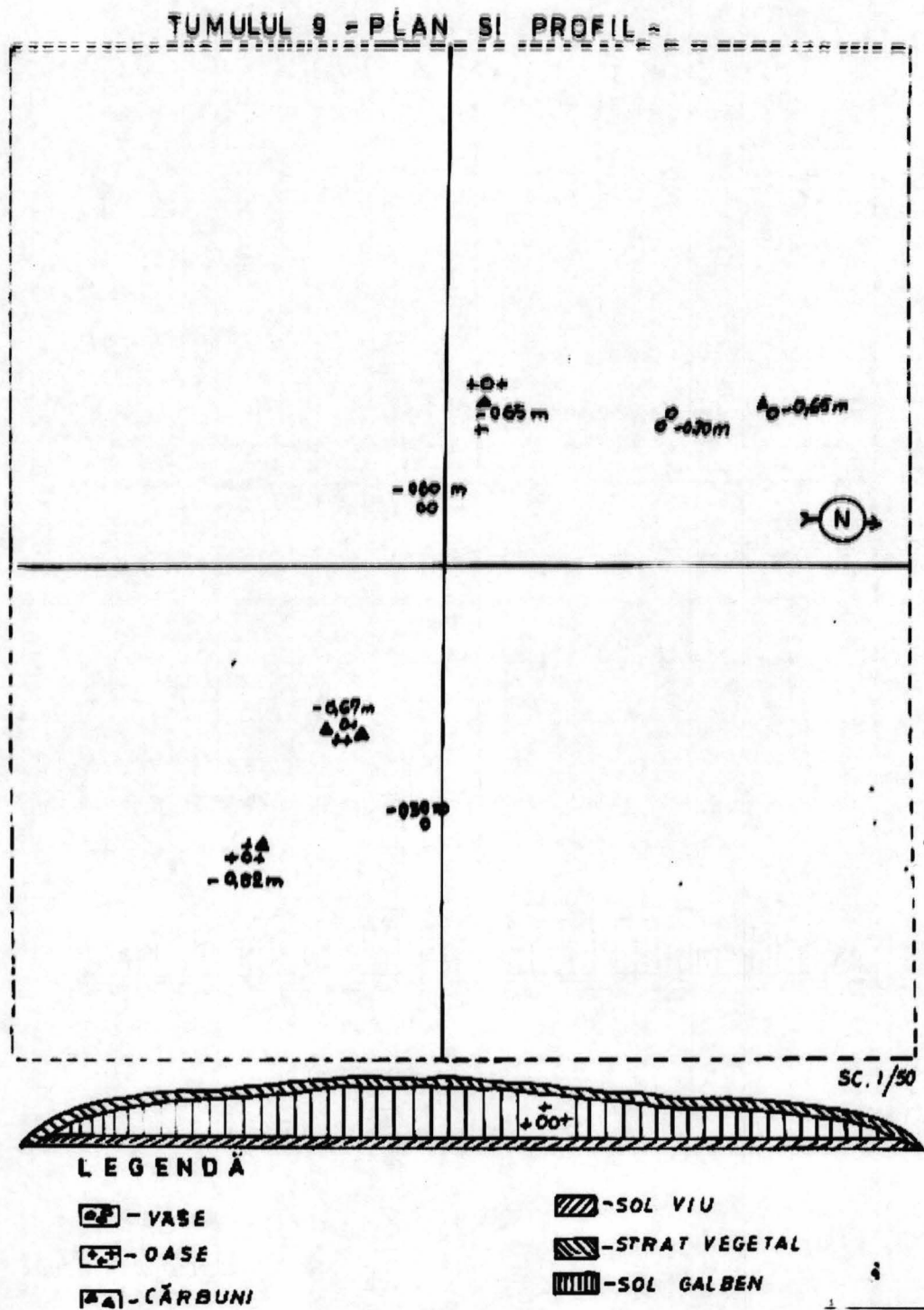
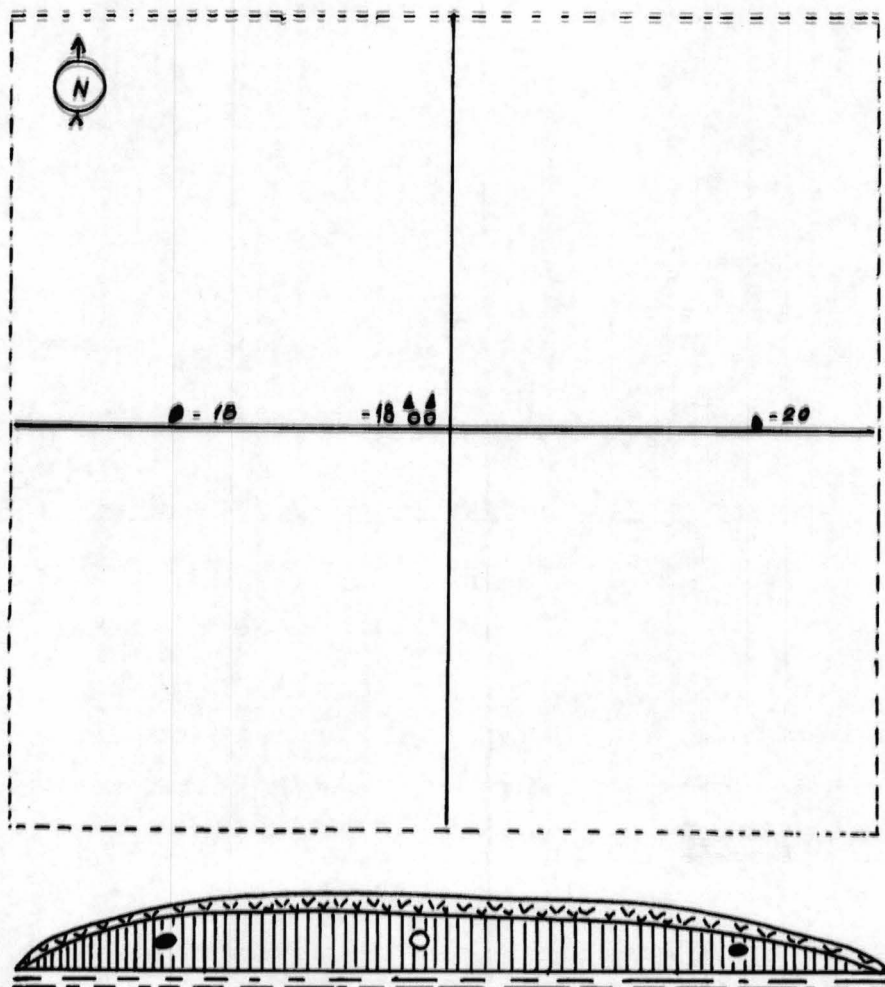


Fig. 21. Tumulus IX.

## TUMULUL 10 - PLAN ȘI PROFIL -



## LEGENDĂ

○● - VASE

▲▲ - CÂRBUNI

●● - PIETRE

vv - STRAT VEGETAL

|||| - STRAT GALBEN DE CULTURĂ  
ARHEOLOGICĂ

== - STRAT VIU

Fig. 22. Tumulus X.





Fig. 23



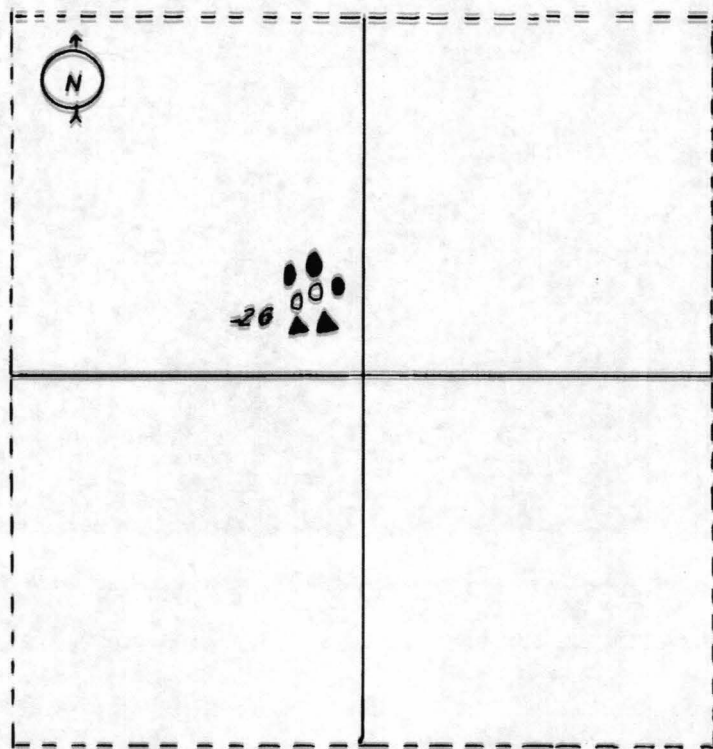
Fig. 24





Fig. 25

**TUMULUL = 11 - PLAN ȘI PROFIL =**



**PROFIL N-S**



**LEGENDĂ**

- VASE

- PIETRE

- CĂRBUNI

- STRAT VEGETAL

- STRAT GALBEN DE CULTURĂ ARHEOLOGICĂ

- STRAT VIU

Fig. 26. Tumulus 11.





Fig. 27. Tumulus XIII. Aspect of excavation.

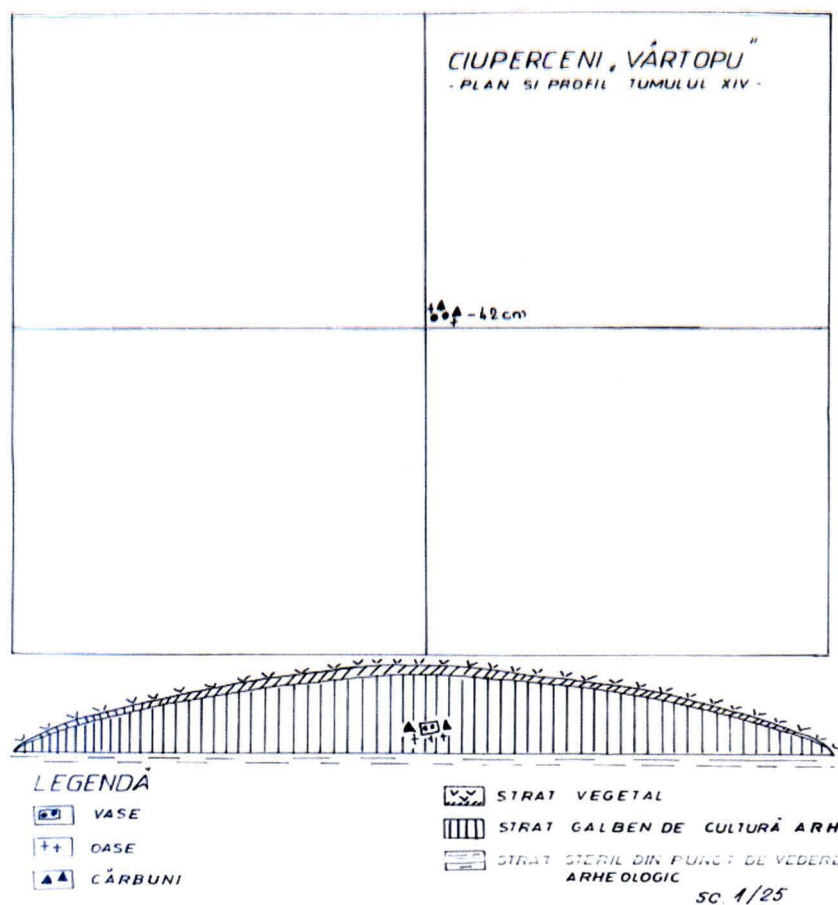


Fig. 28. Tumulus XIV.



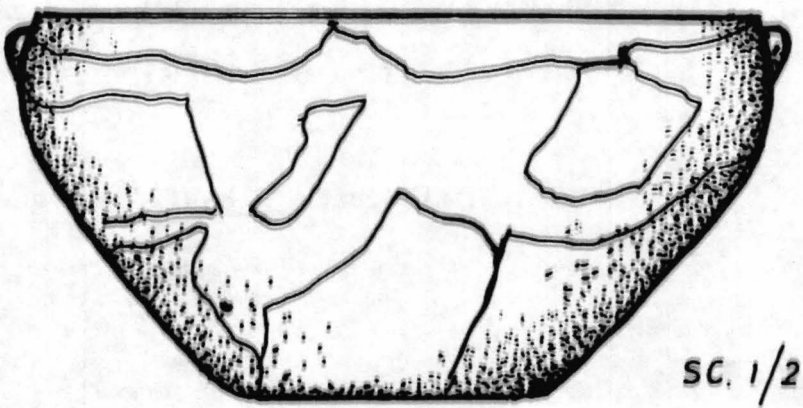


Fig. 29

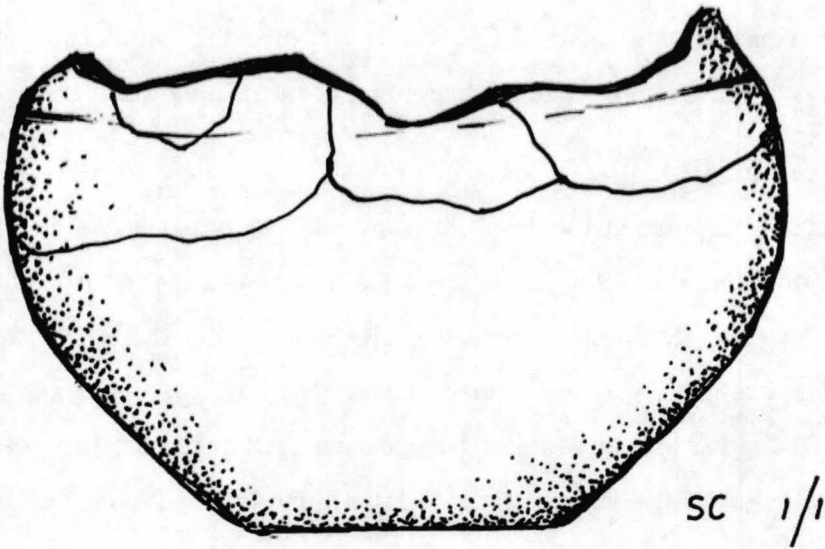


Fig. 30