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Căi de comunicare

The Image of Divinity in the Neolithic and Eneolithic.
Ways of Communication

Sibiu, 26-28 Octombrie 2017

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(Sibiu, the 26th-28th of October 2017)

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THE IMAGE OF MAN AND DIVINITY FROM THE PALEOLITHIC TO PRESENT. RELATED WITH THE ROCK ART

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Abstract: *We intend to present and analyze some of our recent scientific pursuits related with ethnoreligion, ethnoarchaeology and especially connected with the mountain and cultic occurences. Our contribution is thematically, not chronologically ordered. The engraved points / findings mentioned in this study have recently been published by us and our collaborators.*
Key words: *man, divinity, sacred mountains, hunting, Prehistory, Christianity*

Introduction

The paper aims to analyze and present some of our recent stories about ethnoreligion, ethnoarchaeology and cultic manifestations preserved in art. Art – said Marin Cârciumaru – appeared as an essential function of man and became, as early as prehistory, indispensable to him, as well as society (Cârciumaru 2006, 188). It was in this society that all kinds of myths, narratives, and customs and beliefs existed, that man felt the need to "write" on stone, bone, ivory, shells and so on, some of which were not preserved.

The mountain is related to hunting, sheep breeding, but also to another, scarcely investigated activity, namely picking (herbs, nourishing plants, protective plants, hallucinogenic plants, etc.). Also related to the mountain, we add the ancient exploitation of the natural resources necessary to man in all times (obsidian, flint, salt, copper, gold, iron, wood and many others), aspect also poorly studied due to the lack of preoccupation in mountain archeology at university and instructive level. Besides the mountain, the great rivers were a cradle of civilization. In our analyzes we refer directly to the ones we studied, but we mention the others as information.

A problem that we are concerned with is whether the symbols, showing an animal, are linked to totems or not, because there are certain taboos in our symbols. It is hard to answer, but later in the Neolithic we have such totems, as in the case of Parţa with the *block* houses that have a totem (see debates on these themes at Freud 2017, 6 and following, 21 and following), perhaps a protective image: the Bucranium, the Bull, the Moon, the Stag, the Hearth, and so on (Lazarovici Gh. 1998, cat. 11; Lazarovici Gh. *et al*. 2001, 158, fig. 161; Lazarovici C.-M., Lazarovici Gh. 2006, 252, 49/b st.; 354, fig. IIIb. 186 and others; comments about the totem Cârciumaru 2006, 191). We did not check whether this was a rule or a "fashion".

For the exogame marriages the totem was important. Another problem is related to a philosophy of nature, ***animism*** in our case: *"the world would be inhabited by a large number of spiritual beings, beneficial or evil, to the people who attribute to them*

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everything that happens in nature..." (Freud 2017, 72-73 and following; Cârciumaru 2006, 191; Cazacu-Davidescu 2013, 88ff). Hence the idea of white or black magic practices.

A brief history of cave art in our country

The engravings in cave art and on megaliths are less known at us, compared to France, Spain, northern Italy, where there are famous places. References to the cave art from the mountain at us appear in older studies, such as those of Kovács (Kovács 1914) or Bakó (Bakó 1962; 1968; Nica D. 2012; Petrescu 2007).

The most intense preoccupations in this domain were those of Paleolithic researchers, such as C.-S. Nicolăescu-Plopşor (Nicolăescu–Plopşor 1928; 1929), Vasile Boroneanţ (Boroneanţ 1977, fig. 7.18-19; 2000), Vasile Chirica and Codrin V. Chirica (Chirica V. 1993; 2011; Chirica C.-V. 1996; Chirica V., Chirica V.-C. 2016; 2017). But the most extensive researches and analyses were carried out by Marin Cârciumaru, alone or together with his collaborators (Cârciumaru 1988; 1988-1989; 2002; 2006, 165-208; 2010; Cârciumaru, Bitiri 1979; Cârciumaru, Brijan 1988; bibl. and many others. Cârciumaru 1996; Cârciumaru, Mărgărit 2002).

Newer studies are also due to other authors, such as C. Ghemiş, R. Pop and others (Rişcuţia C., Rişcuţia I. 1977; Roman 2008; Ghemiş *et al.* 2011; Pop, Ghemiş 2013; www.dacia.org_congres_vartic_vartic.html Wartic see WEB and xerox and bibl.) or photographers and lovers of the mountain and its beauties: I. Bortaş together with V. Mândricel (Mândricel, Bortaş 2008), D. L. Gavrilă (Gavrilă 2012; Lazarovici Gh., Gavrilă 2016; 2017), I. Musceleanu (Lazarovici Gh., Musceleanu 2017; Lazarovici Gh. *et al*. 2017).

Works of a high scientific profile and a model of treatment were done by the colleagues from Buzău coordinated by Valeriu Sârbu, Tudor Soroceanu with teams from Germany and Romania, who dealt with Nucu-*Fundu Peşterii* (***Nucu-Fundu Peşterii 2012 and bibl. of the area and issue), an altar for the initiation of fighters from the Bronze Age, we believe.

Lately, in collaboration with Radu Pop (Bejinariu, Pop 2013; Pop, Ghemiş 2013), artist, specialized photographer, and designer, and with Diana Gavrilă (Lazarovici Gh. *et al.* 2011; 2014; 2015), passionate about mountains and sacred places, and with other colleagues, we have surveyed areas of the Eastern Carpathians, checking out old places, discovering new situations and locations.

Many colleagues from other areas have offered us new information and data from other parts of the country (Lazarovici Gh., Gavrilă 2016; 2017; Lazarovici Gh. *et al*. 2017 and bibl.).

A synthesis we believe is necessary at this stage to emphasize what we know and what we do not know enough about megaliths and cave art. Cave art needs a lot of analyzes and debates. The difficulty comes from the fact that we do not have yet possibilities of dating and analysis. We are still in the registration, documentation and communication phase.

On the other hand, many objectives are at risk of natural degradation or as a result of human intervention, due to ignorance or disrespect for such monuments.

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The sacred mountains

Among the sacred mountains from us we must first mention the ***Orăştie Mountains***, where the Dacian civilization created first-rate works for those times in temperate Europe. There are monuments of architecture, art, archeo-astronomy that constantly reveal the secrets and values (Stănescu 1986; 1988; 1990) of the Dacian society.

Mount Teasc (fig. 1)

Located in the Eastern Carpathians, Mount Teasc was for prehistoric times what is today Mount Găina for the Romanians. From the beginning of the nineteenth century, it entered the archaeological literature through ***The Ditrău Megaliths***, which raised the interest in the Hungarian literature through the so-called ***"Hungarian, Szekler runes"*** (Kovács 1914; Lazarovici Gh., Lazarovici C.-M. 2011; Lazarovici Gh. *et al.* 2014; 2015), but whose age is hard to specify, just like for the cave art.

According to the rendering techniques, the representations here begin in the Upper Paleolithic, perhaps Mesolithic (compare technique 1B1c with fig. 26a-27 (Lazarovici Gh. *et al.* 2014; 2015)), after the last glaciation, favored by the existence on the ridges of mild mountains and in the valleys of streams of the rich opal deposits (Lazarovici Gh. et *al.* 2011).

The place is a sanctuary in nature, for initiation in the secrets of hunting and perhaps later related to sheep breeding. Of the numerous megalithic blocks analyzed, we have often mentioned the one called Tsc. Ob. 5. On the **Megalithic Block no. 5** (we have kept the numbering of I. Kovács for the first 11 blocks) the parts of the block were numbered (fig. 1B1a), and at the upper part there were two alveoli, probably for burning fats on certain occasions (fig. 1B1b), similar to the situation of the megalith on Muntele Mic - *La Blide* (fig. 11a.c, Petrescu 2007; Lazarovici Gh. *et al.* 2011, fig. 29).

As a result of our researches, we recorded 73 points with megaliths on which are writings, markings, symbols from all periods (Lazarovici Gh. *et al.* 2015). Based on the oldest, we believe that the block served as an altar, and the area with megaliths was a sanctuary in nature from the early stages of hunting (Van Berg, Web1; Web2), and then the shepherds populated this mountain, leaving traces from the old days to the present day.

We do not know what the sacred reason is and what has prompted people to leave their names and signs in those areas more intense than elsewhere: an imitation or the energy of the place?

The most interesting object is the altar of Teasc Ob. 34. The place is situated at the intersection of the ridge paths coming from Bordec, Jolotca, Ditrău, Gălăuţaş, at the border between them in the alpine glade where we have signaled over 72 blocks of stone with signs and symbols (Lazarovici Gh. and contributors 2017a, 258-273).

In front of the altar are the main megaliths on Teasc, but on every path that descends to the above-mentioned villages, where there are ridge paths, there are also megalithic blocks with signs. Initially, it was a wall or a small grotto arranged, and above the entrance was built, out of monumental stone blocks, a front that guarded the entrance.

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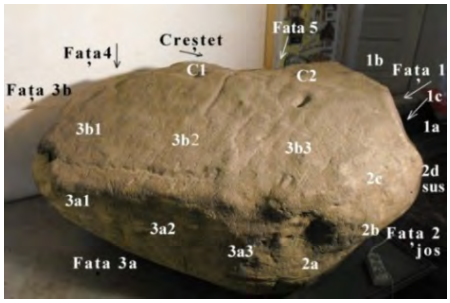
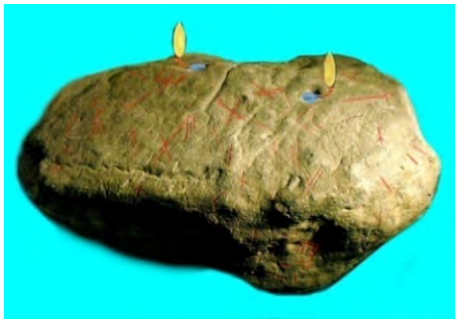
Fig. 1A. The location of 69 out of the 73 points marked.



1a



1b

Fig. 1B. Rock 5: 1a, the studied faces; 1b, pits for fire.

1c

1d

1e

Techniques of engraving: 1c, striking points, like at Kefra and Valcamonica, others incision and points.

Fig. 2. Teasc ob. 34. The place of the Altar on Teasc; ▼ details of the grotto and the front (partial reconstruction).

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The Buzău Mountains

Among the sacred mountains we must mention the Buzău Mountains, in the Colţi – Aluniş – Nucu – Ruginoasa area. The area is so vast and rich in monuments, that generations of specialists will be necessary to study them. We have studied mainly the megaliths and cave signs (Gavrilă 2012; Lazarovici Gh., Gavrilă 2016; 2017), the roads to them. Here too we are only at the registration, documentation and communication phase. There are many points that we analyze below from other points of view, most were related to early Christianity, and some we believe that they belong to other epochs.

SANCTUARIES AND ALTARS[1]

A separation of the two notions is difficult - but it is not necessary, because their attributions are often overlapped - being places for sacred rituals for some divinities.

PALAEOLITHIC – EPIPALAEOLITHIC - MESOLITHIC

The notion of sanctuary was imposed due to the complex character of the images, especially in the French-Cantabric palaeolithic art, which created universal monuments. No less famous and important for us are the discoveries from Cuciulat, valorized by Marin Cârciumaru (Cârciumaru, Bitiri 1979; Cârciumaru 2000, 233-234, fig. 132b), and those from Coliboaia, valorized by Călin Ghemiş (Ghemiş *et al*. 2011) in collaboration with other specialists.

Closer to our area of interest are the images from caves, cliffs or megaliths made by engraving.

The oldest seem to be from the Upper Paleolithic, being representations of mammoths or elephants, bulls-bisons, especially stags. Of course, their dating still raises questions, because they are the most faded, and other, later representations have overlapped them.

Rus – Altarul Cerbului Ob. 3.15-22 (fig. 3)

At Rus - *Haltă* we analyzed together with Radu Pop – the discoverer of the point and the first one who signaled them (Pop, Ghemiş 2013; Bejinariu, Pop 2013) – a group of signs, symbols and figures from which we marked 57, regardless of stage.

[1] **Dexonline**: any cultic place, destined to rituals for a divinity. ♦ Fig. Untouchable place. [Pr.: *sanctuar*] – From lat. **sanctuarium,** fr. **sanctuaire; 1.** see *altar*. **2.** narthex. *(~ in ancient temples.).* **3.** see *sfânta sfintelor.*

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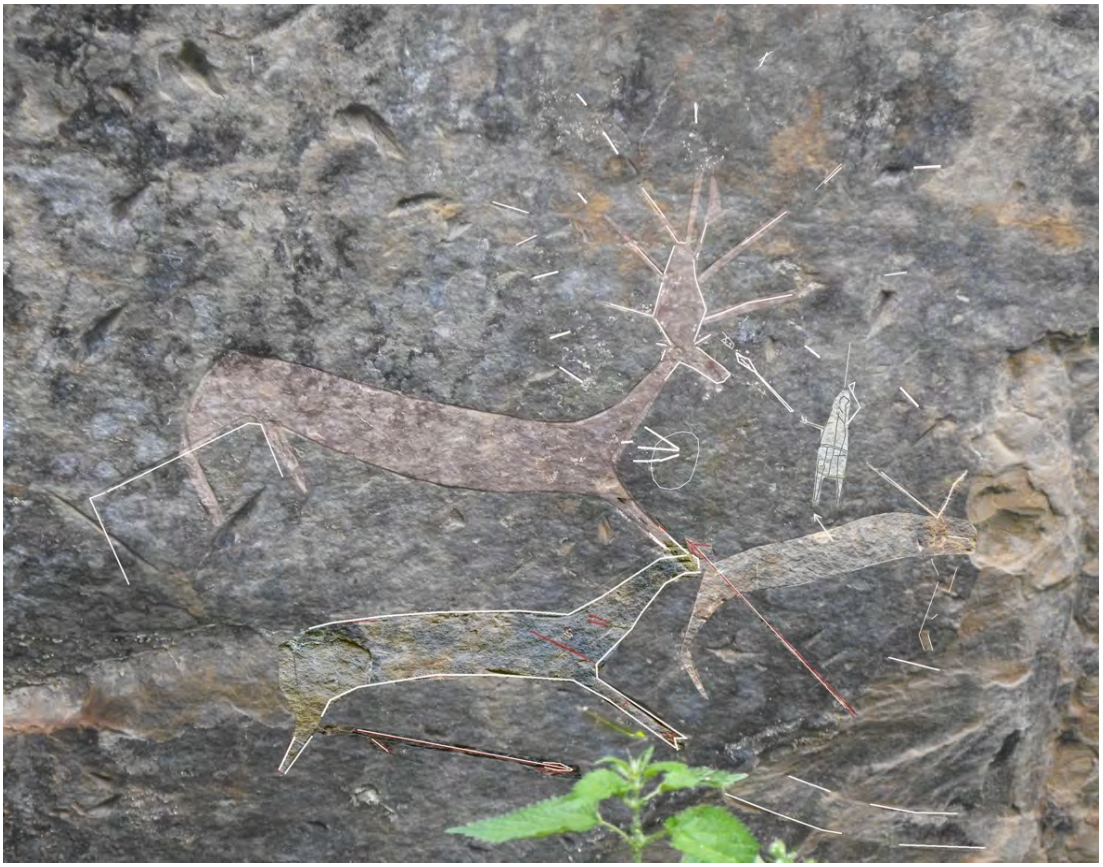

a

b

c

Fig. 3. Rus Ob. 3. The Great Stag Altar; c, details with the vital points.

The oldest central figure, in our opinion, is a stag. Several figures are grouped around him: the deer, his pair, other horned animals with V-shaped horns (fig. 3), which determined us to define this as an altar linked to initiations in the magic of hunting, especially since we also noticed the presence of a small figure we interpreted as “the spirit of hunting” (Lazarovici Gh., Pop 2016; 2016a). We notice at some of the animals some elements pointing to their vulnerable areas (fig. 3a: heart, legs, neck, ear), aimed by arrows, spears, lances, hence the idea of initiation in the secrets of hunting. All these prompted us to consider that it is an altar. There are other signs too, some of which seem to be later, related to weapons and symbols, some of them are analyzed below, and about others we have often written.

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Rus – La Holoame Ob. 7.2

Fig. 4. The Grotto with the location of the signs and symbols marked.

On both sides of the stream there are numerous grottos and shelters, and on some of them we have found signs, symbols, niches, altars, and others. We have not researched them in detail nor did we mark them all, many of them being covered with mosses and lichens, which require special treatment for their removal.

The Big Grotto. At this point is one of the most interesting situations. It is a cave where even today the domestic animals find a place of rumination in the spring (fig.4). The position is extremely interesting, because it controls the entrance to the valley; it can also be a shelter for the hunters overwatching the Someş valley.

There we found several types of representations. Among the oldest, most faded, there seem to be an elephant, a mammoth, a wild boar, and perhaps a human figure (the lichen and moss layer prevents the precise identification of other situations), (fig. 5 below). There are also a number of circles made with the compass, which seem later, a cross and other abstract signs that we have discussed on another occasion (Lazarovici Gh., Pop 2017; communication presented in 2016 at Târgovişte).

On the occasion of an expedition, we marked 17 points with our colleague Radu Pop, who, using grazing day and night light (fig. 5), obtained good pictures, but the incisions are poorly preserved. We analyze the most important figures below, among the themes related to hunting.

In our opinion, they are from the time of the last glaciation, but they need further controls and verification surveys. The details of the second mammoth suggest it is in a trap, a pit (fig. 5c m. 17), a situation encountered by us at another point too (Rus.Ob. 6, fig. 9c-d).

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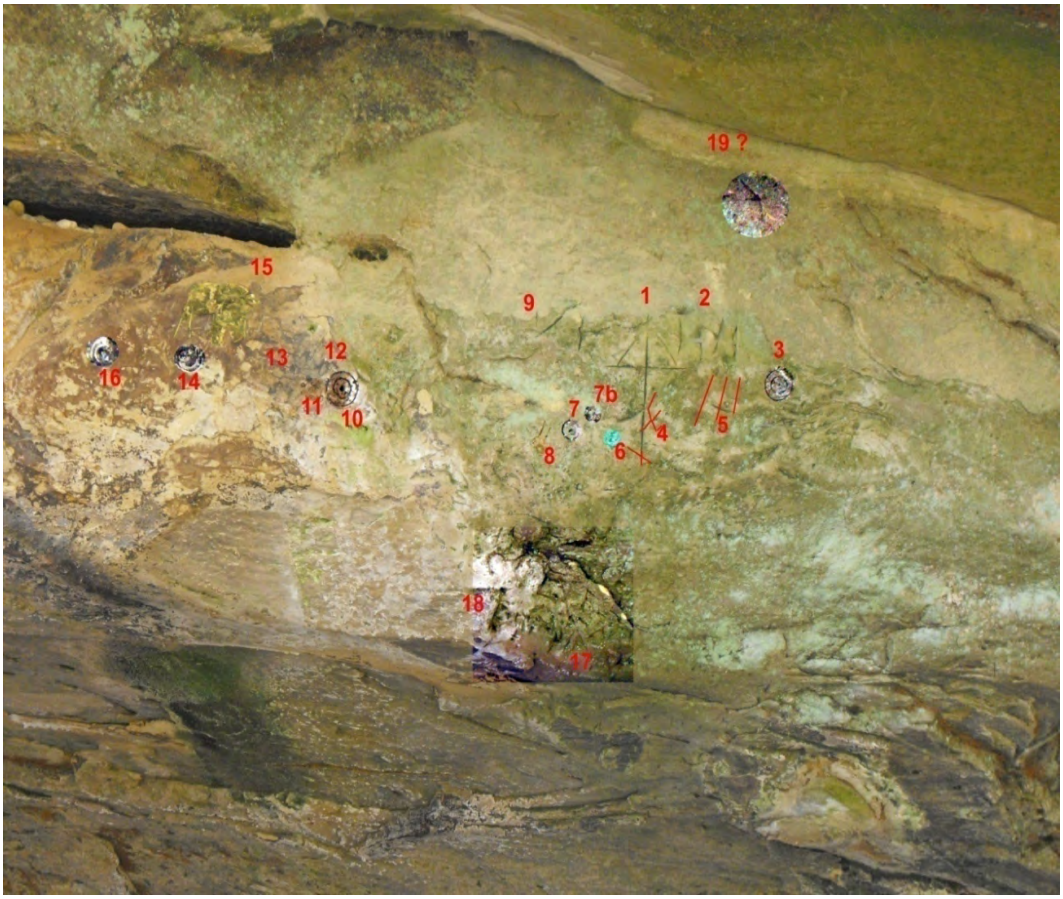
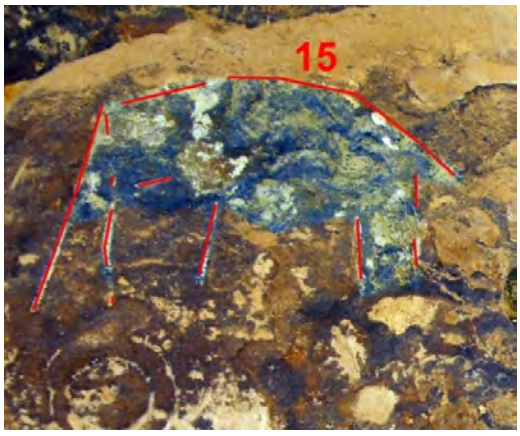


A



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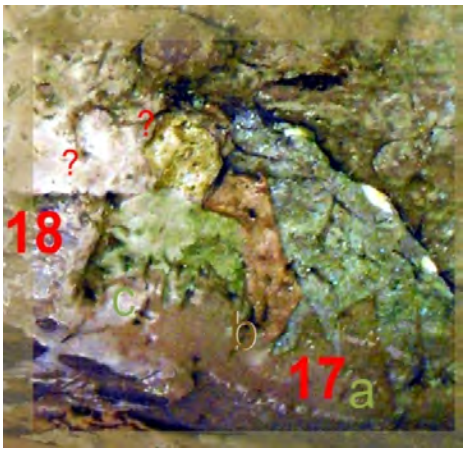

C

Fig. 5. Rus Ob. 7.2. The Big Grotto, the numbering and details with the mammoths (markings 15, 17) and the boar (mark 18).

Rus – the cliffs[2] **(Ob. 5-6), (fig. 6-7)**

We researched three cliffs on the right side of the valley and one on the left side, all at the exit from the hills. At these we are in the analysis and marking phase. Older is the representation of hunted animals.

[2] On the right side of the valley, at the mouth of the spring, there are two-three levels of the cliff with signs.

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The 3rd level (Ob. 5a)

On the right side of the valley, at the mouth of the *Holoame*, the winds carved some caves in the cliffs, about 150 m long and 1 to 7 m wide.

a

b

Fig. 6. Rus: a, general view of the objectives from Rus 5: a, c, the 3rd level; b, the long shelter; c, the man and the octagon from one line; d, rabbit or roebuck.

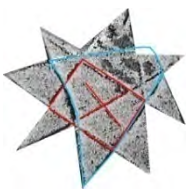
From there, the entire Someş Valley can be seen on several kilometres, ideal for hunters to supervise the movement of wild animals flocks to and from the mountain. The attention is drawn by a human figure, an octagon (fig. 6c) drawn from a single line, with two points of departure and arrival and some other abstract signs.

c

d

e ▼

Fig. 6. Rus: c - f (▼).



1a

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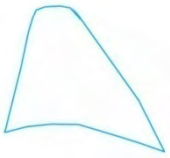

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The mentioned octagon overlaps an older human figure (fig. 6c).

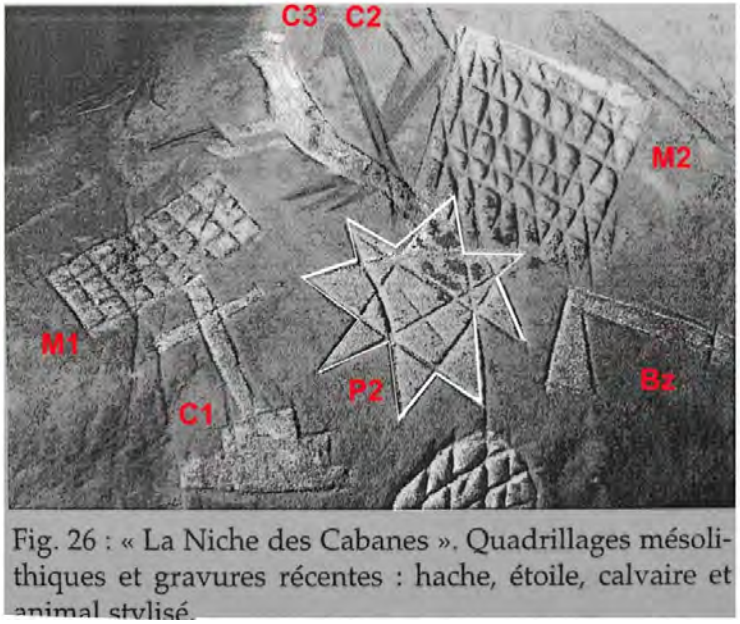

Fig. 7. La Nische des Cabanes, mesolithic and christian symbols.

Analogies for an 8-point star (octagon) are found in the discoveries of ***La Nische des Cabanes*** (*** RevArchPicardie, fig. 39)(fig. 7), alongside the cross and two birds: one in the cross technique (mark C3) and the other leaving the octagon (mark C2, see also Peştera Cizmei fig. 18); to these are added three enclosures, considered mesolithic by those who have published the pictures. These are geometric shapes in which different figures are combined, as in the case of the pentagram (fig. 6E2) on the hill Colţi - Ob. 80 *Piatra Scrisă* (Gavrilă 2012, 91-93; Lazarovici Gh., Gavrilă 2017, 308, fig. 26). Since the artifacts are associated in both cases with the cross, we consider them early Christian. Why early?: in the majority of 6th century Byzantine basilicas the octagon-shaped monumental baptismal font is accompanied by peacocks, birds and deer. Unlike the hexagon, sometimes with 6 corners considered the figure of death, the octagon has eight corners and symbolizes the resurrection (resurrection in the new faith after baptism). In the Christian faith, the octagon evokes the eternal life that the neophyte receives by immersing itself in the font (Chevalier, Gheebrant 1995, s.v. octagon).

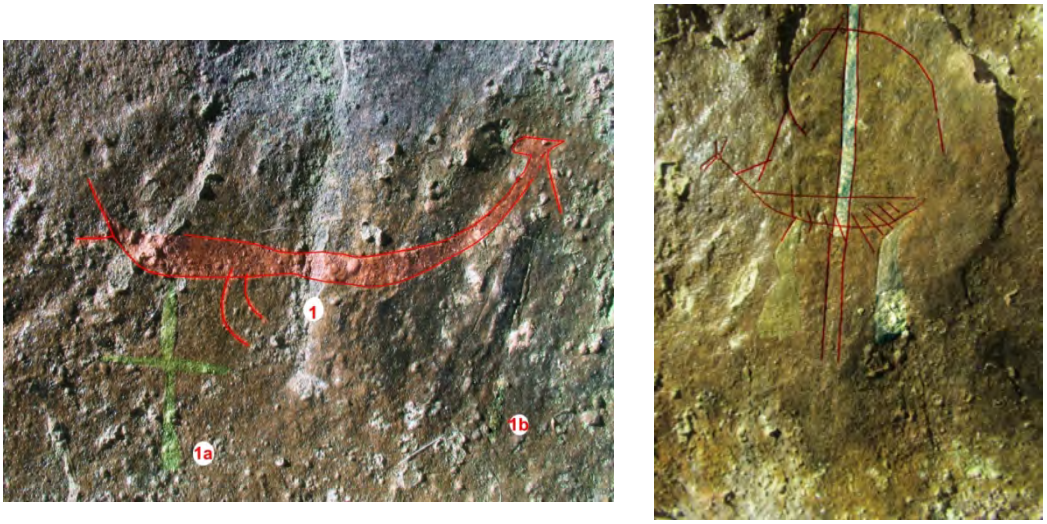

Fig. 8. Noah's Ark shipwrecked on the mountain.

The two birds suggest the Holy Spirit, linked to the cross and the octagon. At the center of the octagon is the Cross (fig. 6E1a). We have made these remarks to emphasize that the human figure is older, being overlapped by the image of the octagon.

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Rus – Ob. 4. The Big Grotto

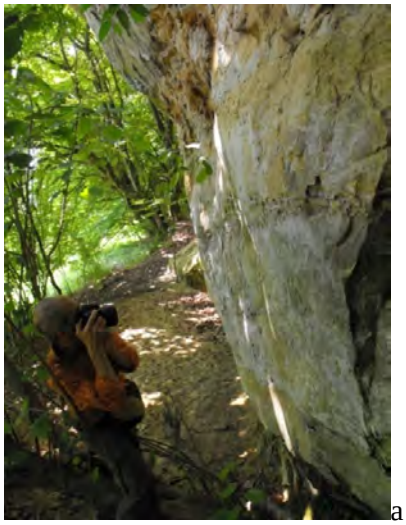
We also have a Christian beginning for the many crosses in the *Holoame* area engraved on the walls where there are niches or altars. For example, at Rus - Ob. 4, The Small Grotto is a former collapsed cave, in which dirt falls from the slope above and one can no longer enter; it seems to have two mouths, and in January 2017 one of the mouths seemed inhabited by an animal (badger?). All the symbols and characters are Christian (peacock, holy cross, other crosses, fish, fir, water bird, flying bird, and a boat), therefore we think it is a narrative about Noah's ark and the birth of Christianity, with naive, simple drawings. The best rendered are the peacock, the fir tree, the Holy Cross and "Noah's ark".

In the old days the place was ideal for a hermit, located in the vicinity of the deep waters of the Someș flowing below the cliffs of Rus-Haltă. The study on this objective is still under way[3].

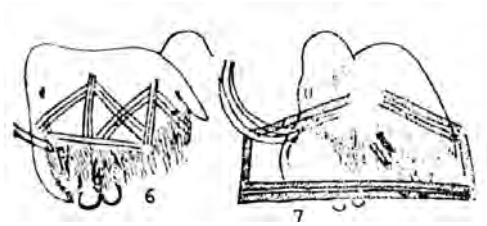
On the other hand, we also have some arguments for our enclosures from Ruginoasa – Policiori (Lazarovici Gh., Gavrilă 2016, 471, fig. 16b.2-3), the Hunters' Panel and others that are older. They are no later than Mesolithic.

The cliff near the road (Rus Ob. 6), (fig. 9)

It is a shelter in the cliff, over 50 m long; the southern side is slightly clogged by the spills from above the cliff, towards west the cliff rises, but there are no signs anymore.


a

b



c

Fig. 9 a-b. The cliffs West of Holoame; c, traps (*apud* Cârciumaru); d, mammoths in traps; e, mammoths in pits.

[3] On the occasion of several expeditions we had no good light, only in the spring of last year we took the first shots in grazing light and we started a first marking. At the end of January 2017 we resumed the shooting expedition that had some success. The wall was shining because of the lichen treatment.

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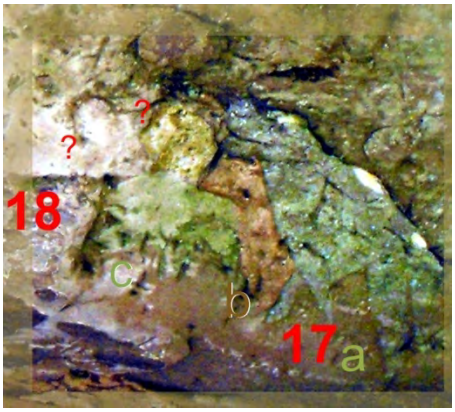
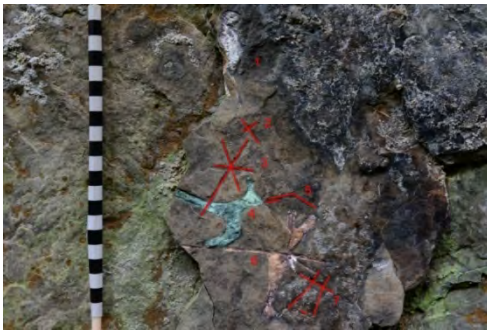
d



e

Here we recorded, together with Radu Pop, a total of 57 signs and symbols, including numerous recent markings. But we have not been able to identify, because of the light, one of the older images, found in 2015, when we photographed an elephant or mammoth in a trap (They often appear in the so-called tectiforms/roof-shapes: Cârciumaru 2006, fig. 105, 186-187). Concerning the knowledge of mammoth hunting, myths have persisted for hundreds of years..., perhaps..., but not for several millennia.

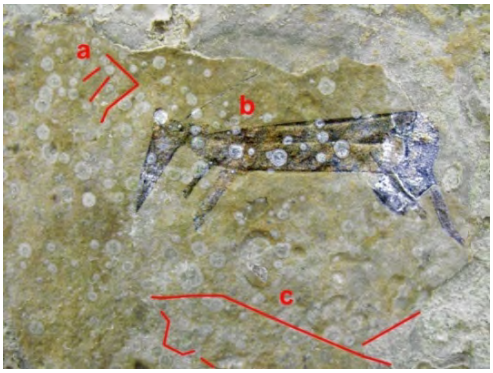


6.2a

Ob. 6.4

Fig. 10. Rus, images from objective 6...; below, codes from the Danube Script.

▲Ob. 6.34 ▼Ob. 6-57



▲Ob 6.55 ▼ Ob. 6.33

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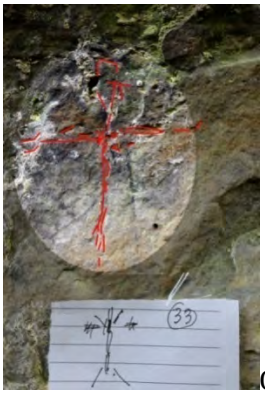
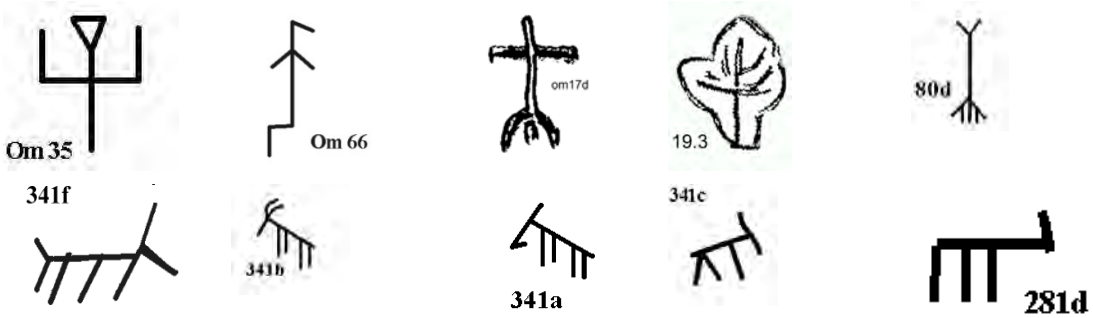
Ob.6.57b


Ob.6.33



Among the oldest – according to the realization technique and the represented motives - we mention only a few images we consider prehistoric. For them we have presented some analogies in our catalogues of signs and symbols related especially to the Danube Script, but not only to that. Abstract figures have many analogies and interpretations, but not knowing their dating, we should not analyse them in detail[4].

Among the other figures, we mention: 1. The bird-headed orant (Ob. 6.33, Ob. 6.4, fig. 10) suggesting the human-bird or bird-man to which some attributes have been given or is a bird-beaked mask, which appears on megalithic blocks (Lazarovici Gh. *et al.* 2017, 268-270 and analogies) and later in the Neolithic (The codes in our catalogs Gh. Lazarovici and C.-M. Lazarovici published in various studies: Lazarovici Gh. 2003; 2004, 2004-2009 and others; Lazarovici C.-M. 2003; 2006; 2008; Maxim *et al.* 2009; Merlini 2009, see also comments on different types of codes from others and the codes of Merlini), when it represents a certain female divinity; 2. Fish in nets (Ob. 6.34) seem to suggest fishing in large waters, and in the old times in the Someş there were such fish; 3. An animal with a pointy nose (Ob. 5.55); 4. The Goat (Ob. 6.57b), with many analogies in the Danube Script; 5. The man-tree figure (Ob. 6.33).

[4] A synthesis about the age of the signs is necessary. At each point we presented analogies of the signs.

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Altars from unprecised periods

a

b

Fig. 11. a, Muntele Mic-La Blide; b, Rennes les Chateau, France, *apud* Chintăuan 2009.

c

d

c, Cro da Lairi, Monte Pevo, Torino, photo A. Arcí.

d, Repedea (photo Iuliu Cristian Pop).

In various places there are some altars used as a place to deposit or to burn fats or oils, to sacrifice for hunting or for blood sacrifices, and so on (Eliade 1981, index of sacrifices: 228. 447 bibl. and others; Lazarovici C.-M., Lazarovici Gh. 2007, 57, 274-275, 278, 287, 292; and others).

DACIAN SANCTUARIES OR ALTARS

Rus – The Altar

At Rus – *Holoame*, on the right side of the valley, at the western end of the limestone cliff, on the second level, there is carved into the soft limestone rock a room of about 6 x 4 m, with very straight walls, carved and straightened with the side edge of an iron pick-axe. The construction was N-S oriented and had no roof, being level differences. On the E side of the wall, lower than the W side, there was a throne carved in the rock (natural or arranged (Such "thrones" are signaled in the Eastern Carpathians at Aluniș, Nucu – Agatonu Vechi. In the Precucuteni sanctuary of Sabatinovka there was a clay throne for the divinity or her representative on Earth – The Priestess: Gimbutas 1984, 25,

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74; 1991, 261, fig. 7-59-a-b; Makarević 1960, 282, 290, fig. 1; Makkay 1971, 138; Monah 1997, fig, 3; *apud* Eliade 1991, 33; 1965, 87; Preoteasa 2012, 91, fig. 22.1.).

Fig. 12. Rus, Ob. 5c. The protohistoric altar: a, N-S view; b, S-N view.

The slope of the ground floor climbs from N to S. At S, in the altar area, the floor was higher, probably for an altar. Now, on the place of the former altar there is a tree, maybe the same as in the old days. On the W wall there was a place for a rushlight or an incense burner. There are no ceramic fragments. The appearance was similar to the sanctuaries of the *auspicii* or priests of the Dacians. At Deceneu some disciples also appear (*Decineu* engl., apud *Iordanes*, *Getica* IX, 69), we believe, who were watching the stars, having a great deal of knowledge about astronomy, philosophy, plants[5].

Agatonul Vechi

The monument is considered to be a Christian construction, in literature being cited as being torn by earthquakes (Mîndricel, Bortaş 2008, 54; Gavrilă 2012, photo on p. 93). As elements of Christian symbols, there is a cross, a pentragram, two niches one on the façade (fig. 13) and another in the back, in the chasm and a pentagram (Gavrilă 2012, 91-93. Numerous megalithic monuments were signaled by N. Densuşianu 1913 re-edited in 2013, but this is viewed with reserves (maybe not without reason), we have just studied a brochure. Just as there are now megalomanias, so were in the past: let us think of the mega-fortifications of the Bronze Age in Banat – Corneşti and Crişana – Sântana); the cross does not seem very clear to us, so we need to recheck it.

[5] ... „by demonstrating theoretical knowledge he urged them to contemplate the courses of the twelve signs and of the planets passing through them, and the whole of astronomy. he told them how the disc of the moon gains increase or suffers loss, and showed them how much the fiery globe of the sun exceeds in size our earthly planet. He explained the names of the three hundred and forty six stars and told through what signs in the arching vault of the heavens they glide swiftly from their rising to their setting. think, i pray you, what the gothi [getic] history pleasure it was for these brave men, when for a little space they had leisure from warfare , to be instructed in the teachings of philosophy! you might have seen one scanning the position of the heavens and another investigating the nature of plants and bushes. here stood one who studied the waxing and waning of the moon, while still another regarded the labors of the sun and observed how those bodies which were hastening to go toward the east are whirled around and borne back to the west by the rotation of the heavens, when they had learned the reason, they were at rest..."

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Fig. 13. Conical megalithic blocks: a, transformed into a temple by carving a front with a niche for the altar; b, monumental stairs.

Indirectly Diana Gavrilă calculates through analogies and some elements (the Sphinx or the Dacian) that it would be an older building. The serpent is present in Christian mythology, but it appears since the Palaeolithic and lasts over time on different categories of objects with various attributes (Lazarovici Gh., Gavrilă 2017, 288-289, fig. 3-4 see there analogies in the cave art. For the snake see: Lazarovici C.-M., Lazarovici C.-M. 2015, p. 41-94 with images and bibliography). Apparently, it seems rather a megalithic construction, but unfortunately the Romanian researchers have only researched these problems sporadically (Chintăuan 2009; Gavrilă 2012, mentions two pyramids, 144, 184, but also a megalithic phallus: 81; Găvanele – The Divine Couple: Lazarovici Gh., Gavrilă 2017, 288-289, fig. 3-4; Densuşianu 1913).

We also notice here a monumental seven-step stair that leads above the abyss and a throne (fig. 13b-14c), like at Aluniş, where the throne is called the *"Throne of God"*, which is traditionally considered a pre-Christian altar (Gavrilă 2012, 44-45). At Agatoane, next to the monumental altar-table, there is also a megalithic block cut or natural, shaped like a temple with a central niche for a statue (fig. 13a).

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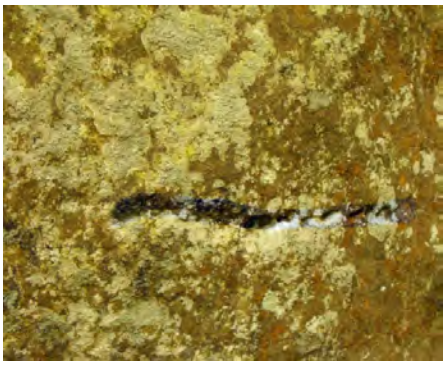
a



b

C

Fig. 14. Agatonul Vechi: a, the megaliths; b, the snake, pointed out by Diana Gavrilă; c, the throne.

A wavy line appears in the wall above another incised altar, which represents a snake in our opinion (fig. 14, near the hand of Diana). It is hard to say whether such altars are man-made; the weather eroded the details, so that it is hard to say, but not impossible, because in too many places such situations occur, and the Christian signs on them are modest, but not enough to categorize them as Christian monuments (Lazarovici Gh., Gavrilă 2017).

Altars in rocks

In various places there are rectangular niches carved in the rock (fig. 15). Some of them have a fixing hole, which makes us think about an icon or statue. Others are later marked with Christian signs or symbols, being in the vicinity of some Christian complexes (the case of Fundătura (Lazarovici Gh., Gavrilă 2017)). It is not necessary to insist now, because only some of them have been analysed in detail, others are covered with moss and must be cleaned[6].

Sometimes they are in high places, sometimes in grottoes, all are places of worship, but it is hard to say from what period. There are sacred places in the area and they may have caused the repetition, the reappearance of the sacred over time, according to unknown rules determined by the energies of the place.

[6] We refer to the one at Rus-*Holoame*.

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a

b

C

Fig. 15. Niches for statues, icons or altars: a, Rus - La Holoame (*apud* Pop, Lazarovici Gh.); b, d, Ghereta; c, e, Bucătăria (*apud* Gavrilă 2012).

d

Ghereta/ Booth on Culmea Spătarului

e

Bucătăria/ Kitchen – Over Ruginoasa

MAJOR THEMES IN THE ART CAVE STUDIED BY US

Actions related to the magic of hunting and fishing

Sanctuaries. The earliest mention in our discoveries, related to the magic of hunting is the deposition of flint tools, aurochs and reindeer bone tools from Buda (Bacău County) belonging to the Oriental Gravettian (Nicolaescu-Plopşor *et al*. 1961; EAIVR, 1994, 210 s.v. *Buda*; Lazarovici Gh. *et al.* 2001, I.1, 268, 282; Lazarovici C.-M., Lazarovici Gh. 2006, 13, 25, 30).

Above we saw the situation at Rus-Haltă - the Stag Altar, considered by us an altar of initiation in the secrets of hunting.

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Fig. 16. Lepenski Vir, nivel Ib (*apud* Babović 2006).

At Lepenski Vir, under the cliff, on the southern edge of the settlement, there is an altar made of a large stone plate, guarded by two monumental sculptures: *Adam* and the *Medicine Man* (fig. 16 LV Ib L23)(Sandars 1968/1985, p. 166, fig. 130, 133; Srejović 1969, fig. 24; Babović 2006, 211, fig. 414-4177; Lazarovici C.-M., Lazarovici Gh. 2006, 54, fig. I.68; Lazarovici Gh., Lazarovici C.-M. 2010, 152, fig. 10). The stone table suggests the performance of rituals that we cannot guess. In front of it, there is a rectangular hearth.

There are many buildings in Neolithic, often with monumental statues (Parţa, Gladnica, Zorlenţu Mare, Varbianska Čuka etc.), altars and other interior installations.

In Homer's Odyssey (Homer 2007, The Odyssey, translated by Ian Johnston, Richer Resources Publications, Arlington, Virginia) there are many situations when sacrifices to the gods are made on the altars: *"...prayed to lord Poseidon* (book 13, line 226)*; holy offerings/ to Poseidon, dark-haired Shaker of the Earth* (book 3, lines 6-7)*; Apollo's altar* (book 6, line 206)*; as he pours libations/ in his halls* (book 8, lines 543-544)*; laughter-loving Aphrodite left for Paphos,/ in Cyprus, where she has her sanctuary, her sacred altar* (book 8, lines 456-457)*; the altar of great Zeus* (book 22, line 417)*; to the powerless heads of the departed/ I offered many prayers* (book 11, lines 32-33)*; an altar had been dedicated to the nymphs,/ where all the people passing by made offerings* (book 17, lines 267-268). From there we also find out what sacrifices were made: *I'd sacrifice, once I returned to Ithaca,/ a barren heifer in my home, the best I had* (book 11, lines 34-35)*; burned/ many thigh cuts on the holy altars/ sacred to the gods and offered up/ all sorts of treasure,* (book 3, lines 372-375)*; make rich sacrifice/ to lord Poseidon with a ram, a bull,/ and a boar that breeds with sows* (book 23, lines 355-357)*; where Laertes and Odysseus/ had burned many thighs from sacrificial oxen* (book 22, lines 418-419)*; and promise/ all the gods you'll offer perfect sacrifices* (book 17, lines 64-65)*; if for your sake Odysseus ever burned/ pieces of thigh from lambs or from young goats,/ richly wrapped in fat* (book 17, lines 306-308)*; No mortal up to now/ has given Zeus, who hurls the thunderbolt,/ so many rich burned pieces of the thigh,/ or offered such well-chosen sacrifice/ as you've made to him* (book 19, lines 473-477)*; preparing black bulls as holy offerings* (book 3, line 6)..." They refer to worship, sacrifice, prayer, honor, protection, remembering the sacrifices brought.

We should not be surprised that, in the sanctuaries and altars in nature, sacrifices of thanksgiving, invocation, good travel, protection etc. were offered.

There are many examples, as well as divinities, but we also notice what is being sacrificed and how much. Of course, the sacrifice was associated with banquets and we have often stated that in the Zau culture, at Ţaga and Zau de Câmpie, there is archaeological evidence of the sacrifice of several animals (Since PPN at Hallan Çemi: Rosenberg 2007, 55, 58; in Early Neolithic: Grădinile, pit 1: Nica 1983, 32, fig. 2/1; in our excavations at Ţaga - Pit 28; Lazarovici Gh. 2009, fig. 25; Zau – Pit 4: Lazarovici C.-M., Lazarovici Gh. 2006, 438, fig. IIIe.37; foundation banquets: Vlassa *et al*. 1986, fig. 6-7; 1987, 6-7; Iclod – Pit 28: Lazarovici Gh. 2009, fig. 7; Lazarovici C.-M. 2009).

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SACRED CAVES

In spiritual life, the cave (grotto, ravine) played an important role. In the Greek initiatory traditions, the cave represents the world (the floor or smooth soil is the Earth, the vault is Heaven). In the glacial times it was the safest house of prehistoric man, and in the same period it became an underground temple. Unlike the cave, ravines are inhabited by monsters.

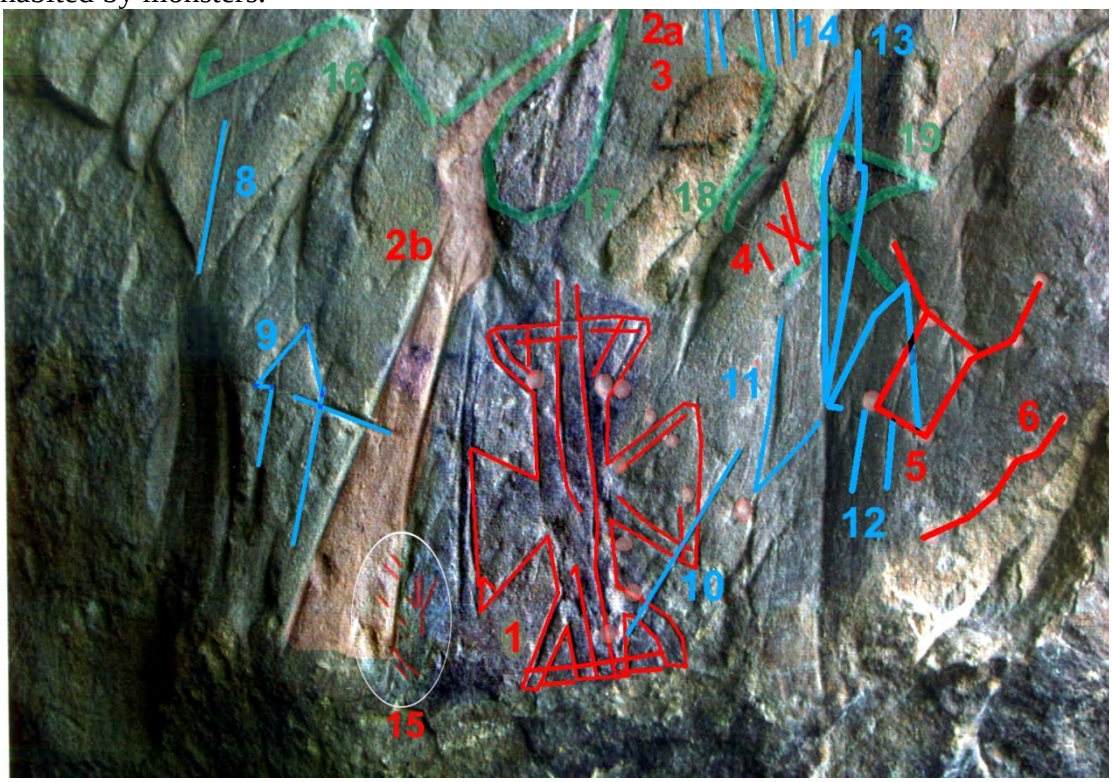
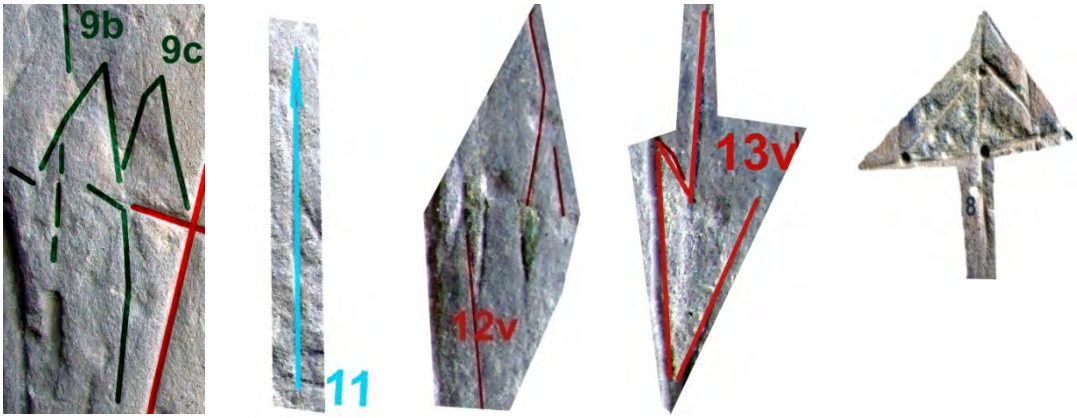


Fig. 17. Căsoaia cave (processing *apud* Mândricel, Bortaş 2008, 140); weapons▼.



The cave is considered to be the receptacle of telluric energy, with a role in magical operations and witchcraft practices. Entering into the cave is considered a return to origins and hence ascension to Heaven and many more (Chevalier, Gheerbrant 1995, s.v. Cave).

For example, at the mouth of Căsoaia Cave (Brăieşti village, Buzău county), there is a return to the origins, to the hunters' time, an initiation in astronomical elements of orientation (Ursa Major, fig. 17, Code 5). There are a series of signs and symbols related to Christian myths (the cross or the serpent), the invocation of the divine power IXI (Jesus

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Christ the Judean etc.)(a first marking *apud* Lazarovici Gh., Gavrilă 2017, 312, fig. 30; Lazarovici Gh. and contributors 2017b, see comments about the Christian signs in mountains and others), but also some related to weapons: those oriented upwards for those who throw, down for the speed they come with and hit, where the tip breaks and others. All are in mountain areas or on trails towards or from the mountain. They all guard, they watch over something, and weapons were essential at that time.

According to the work techniques at Căsoaia Cave, 4-5 periods of producing the signs can be observed, but their highlighting only after processing the images requires some reservations. We only selected the weapons above. About some signs and their interpretation, it has already been written (Gavrilă 2012, s.v. Căsoaia; Lazarovici Gh., Gavrilă 2017 and others).

On the territory of Romania too, the oldest paintings and cave signs are found in caves with Paleolithic dwellings (Cuciulat, Coliboaia, Peştera Muierii), then there are others, from the Bronze Age (Nucu – *Fundu Peşterii*), until the Christian times (Basarabi Cave, the Cave from Gaura Chindiei, the Cizmei Cave and many others).

The Paleolithician colleagues analysed these issues in detail and offered analogies and explanations, they described the characters. It is not appropriate to resume them. We will only refer to those recently studied by us.

Peştera Cizmei (Cizmei Cave)

The numerous circles found there, catalogued, described, placed on a map of the walls by Marin Cârciumaru with quality drawings and pictures, do not require any further analysis. We have also studied the less-seen areas in the shadow of the walls towards the vault. The incisions are very fine, often mixed with natural ones. The lights we had available were not enough, but we were able to analyse and interpret some images that allowed us to understand who lived and used the cave and especially the different types of signs from different periods.

According to our work system, we have succeeded in identifying, along the 14 signs marked and commented by Marin Cârciumaru (including the analogies), another 26 signs, forming another 6 groups, thus reaching 40 signs in our numbering. Of course, some are correlated, others are parts of some ideograms. We placed, with a small approximation, our groups of signs on the plans of M. Cârciumaru (fig. 18).

Our signs, like those of M. Cârciumaru, besides astronomical symbols, also include some Paleochristian symbols embedded in circles.

It is also necessary to remind an observation by Chevalier and Gheerbrant (cf. cave) quoting from St. John of the Cross: *"The stone caves are Divine Mysteries, which can only be achieved by mystical confluence"*.

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Fig. 39 - Emplacement des gravures sur la paroi droite de la grotte Cizmei (les numéros correspondent aux figures présentées par la suite)

Fig. 18. The placement of the signs, apud M. Cârciumaru, completed by us (marked with red X).

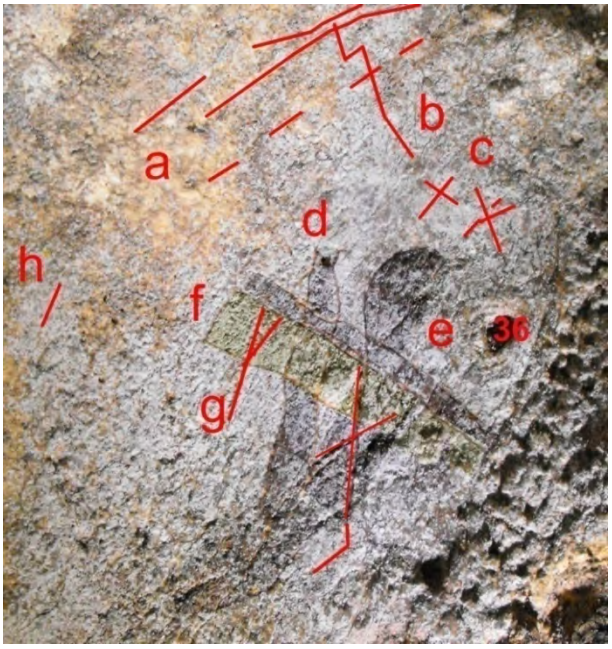

Fig. 19. PC Ob.36 Moise I primeşte învăţătura divină.

Perhaps it is in this sense that we have to understand the manifestations in the Cizmei Cave. The narratives we were talking about refer to the birth of the Christian teaching, seen and marked for himself, neophytes or initiated by the monk or hermit who lived and meditated here.

A biblical scene represents Moses (fig. 19, marks with letters: *e*; it seems to be the first representation) descending from heaven (*a*: inclined, flying), from where comes the teaching of faith (through the lightning *b* finished with a cross). He brings the holy cross and the symbol of Christ (*c*), holds the 10 commandments in two hands (*f*), he has a bird – the holy ghost on his right hand (*d*), and from the tablets a Y is separating (*g*) (Jehova/Yahweh – the divine teaching). The clothing on his chest seems to imitate those of the priests, with the cross of St. Andrew.

Another group of signs, PCOb. 28, is the scene in which Moses (*a1*) receives the teaching of the Lord (*a*, head with rays): on the chest he has the ten commandments on separate tablets, the right hand descends to the cross of baptism (*c*), and on the lower left (*d*) there is Y = Jehova the father and the Chrismon (Jesus Christ the King of the Jews) –

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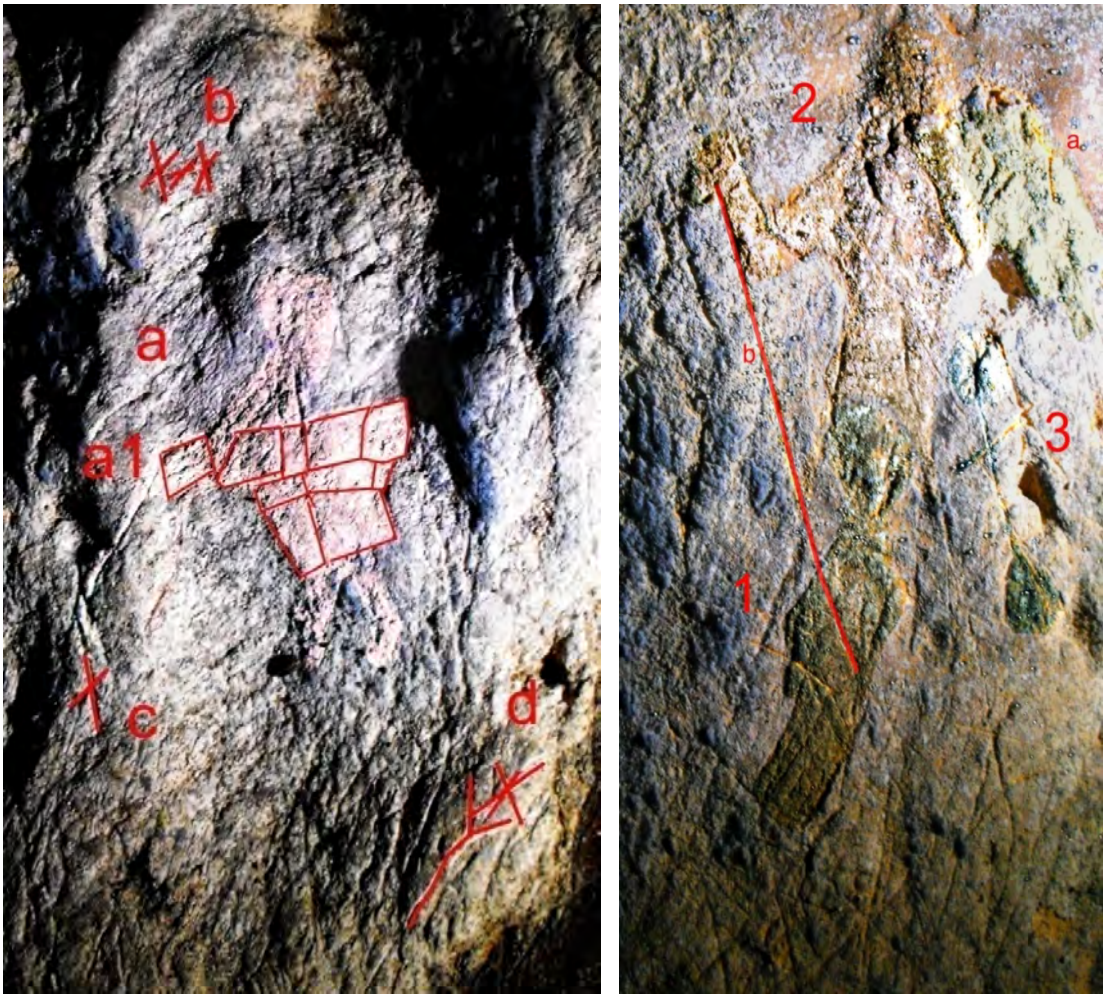
the son of the Lord. Some images suggest the passions of Jesus, namely the biblical scene in which the Roman Legionnaire thrusts Jesus with the spear in the ribs (PCOb. 27).



A B

Fig. 20. A. PCOb.33 Moses II with the 10 commandments: a, the Teacher; a1, Moses; b, the Divine teaching from heaven; c, the Faith; d, Invocations (Y = Jehova, Chrismon = Jesus Christ Jesus (1); B. PCOb. 27 Roman Legionnaire with a spear (2), the Holy Cross (3); b, invocation of Christ Jesus Christ.

The third representation refers to Moses again (*a*), receiving the teaching from Heaven (*d*), in the form of an arrow that descends, in the arms he has the 10 commandments (*b*), and in the left hand he has the shepherd's staff.

The representation of Moses is related to the birth of Christian teaching. Without enough biblical knowledge, we do not know how many times the Lord appeared to Moses, but the hermit has represented this myth three times for himself, with variants of meanings and symbols. We must note that if he was to pray, he had to lift his head to the vault of the cave under which the engravings were. The fact that the representations were made very fine and located in a dark area meant they were just for him.

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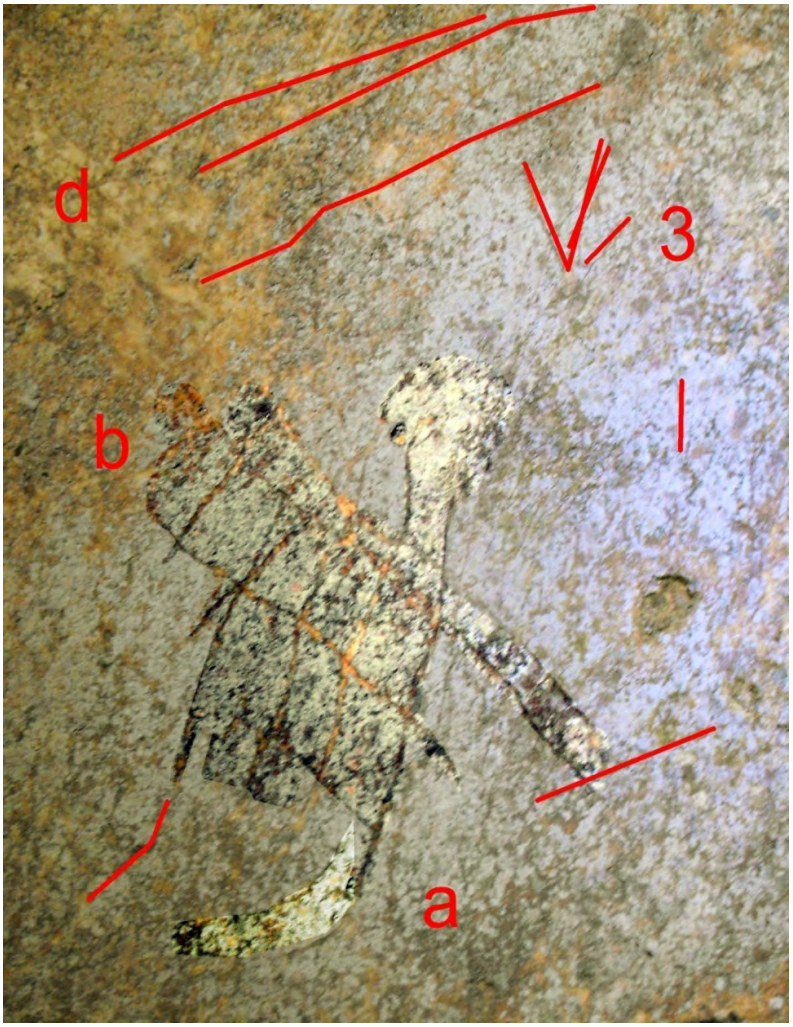
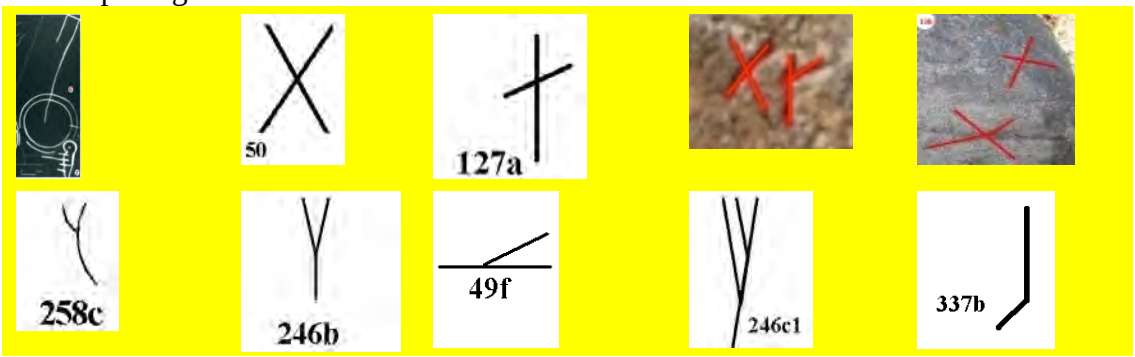


Fig. 21. Moise III.

The manner in which the circles are rendered suggests they are from a more evolved period, or the character was interested in the movements of the stars and the Sun. Perhaps the astronomers or astrologers will better decipher the meanings.

It is not the case now to make complex analyses of these issues, but the signs and symbols are common over long periods of time (yellow background DS analogies) with similar or special meanings, depending on the context. The ones in the Cizmei Cave (red background) have analogies with the Paleochristian ones, of which we chose only 10 Paleochristian signs of the several hundred published by N. Gudea (Gudea 2011).

At circle no. 6 in Cârciumaru's numbering one can see two circles crossed by a large bishop's staff, a staff with a hook on the end starting from the center of the first circle and rising up to the sky. The middle center would be the Earth, the second is perhaps Heaven, and the openings are the roads to heaven, one to climb with a human figure, the second opening is for those who are fallen from the faith.



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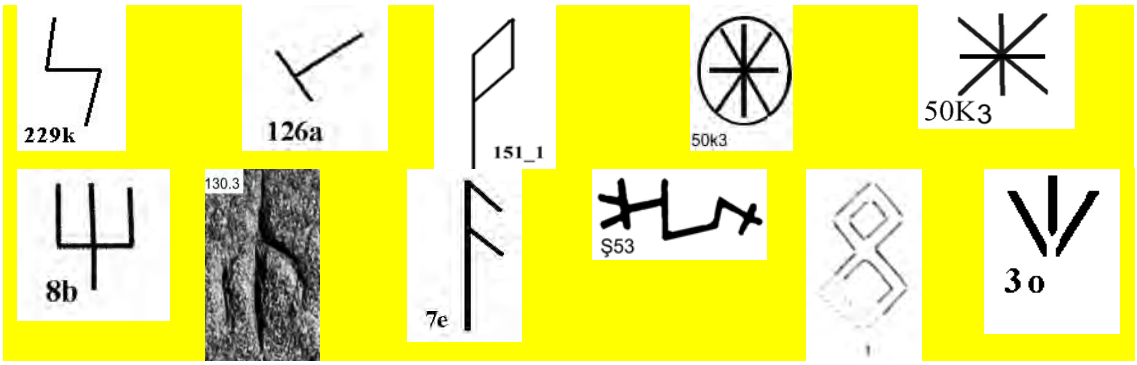
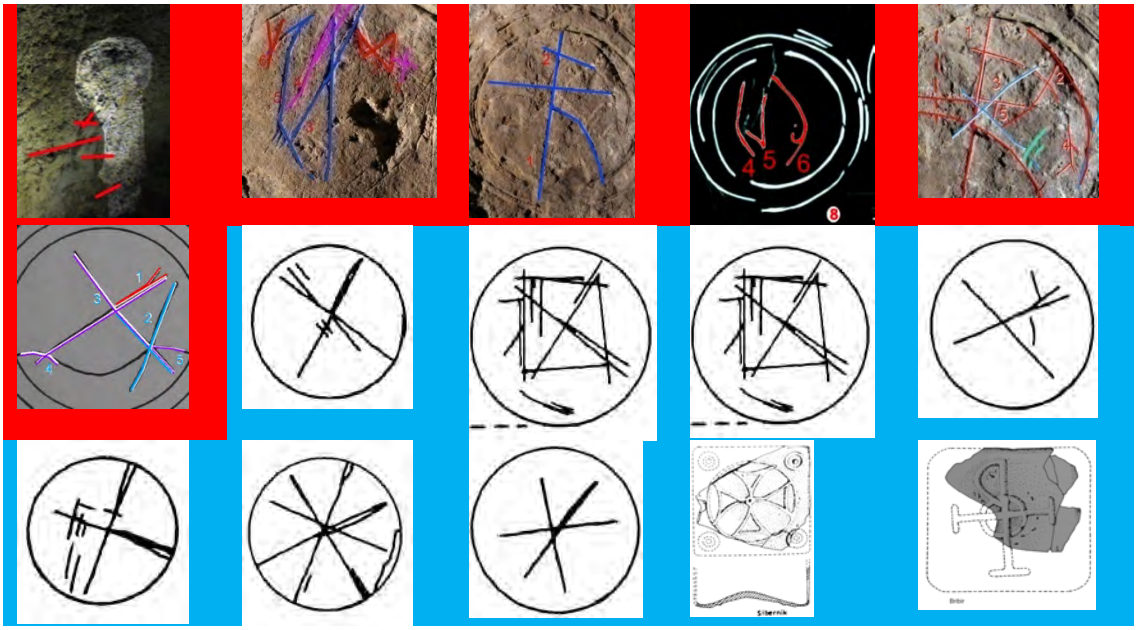


Fig. 22. Symbols and signs catalog DS ▲; red, Cizmei Cave; blue, early Christian (N. Gudea).



We cannot, however, ignore the paleochristian signs and symbols in each circle. Benefiting from the book and advice of our colleague, Nicolae Gudea, we consider that the events in the cave are linked to the paleo-Christian, and more precisely early Christian age. Moreover, some of our signs have correspondences in the Christian inscriptions of the 4th-5th centuries. We are not in a position to deepen these issues, but from the above we have a beginning of understanding of the signs and symbols from Peştera Cizmei. Of course there may be other interpretations.

We have presented similar situations related to the Chindia II Cave, about which other specialists have expressed some opinions. There are other signs and symbols in the cave that we have previously analyzed (Lazarovici Gh. *et al.* 2017).

PLACES RELATED TO CERTAIN RITUALS

In Western Europe there is a true cult related to constructions, roads, megalithic graves.

The Menhir – Megaliths

There is a rich literature about the megaliths in Romania that have been analyzed, and the different opinions fought (***DIVR, 1980, s.v. Sibioara and page 317; Motzoi-Chicideanu, ***EAIVR, 2000 s.v. menhir, 48 and bibl.; Iaroslavski, Lazarovici Gh. 1979,

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fig. 9.3; Chintăuan 2009; Gavrilă 2012, 117; Rotea 2009, 33; *** Polus 2008, 18, fig. 18; *** I cigni del sole 2004, 24, foto 9; Gimbutas 1991, 7-27.5 and others). We have presented some recently discovered (fig. 23A), but also some older ones (fig. 23B).

A B

Fig. 23. A. The menhir/megalith from Teasc; B. Menhirs from Romania *apud* Chintăuan 2009.

Very few megaliths have signs or symbols. We will only refer to the ones least commented or that have circulated. Very few of them are prehistoric. Many are related to mining, dating back to the Copper Age or the Bronze Age and other periods. But there are also many natural megaliths that, because of their shape, people have brought into their community (fig. 24, church, school, centre). Others remained in the mountain (fig. 24).

a *b*

Fig. 24. Menhirs: a, Iam; b, Ciceu – Corabia.

During research in several points of the Iam - Milcoveni (Banat) area, we have received information that a menhir was discovered on the border between Milcoveni and Iam (fig. 24a)(Iaroslavski, Lazarovici Gh. 1979; Menhir Iam, 461, fig. 9.3; place situated at 400 m NW from Iam on the terrace of the Vicinic spring, where we found Hallstatt and 4th century AD ceramics). It was taken to the church yard

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where we photographed it[7]. Another megalith, an item similar in shape, is probably related to the foundation of the church in Sicheviţa (on it one could see the letters *U M. Vaiuvoda*[8]).
There are numerous mentions about menhirs discovered in Romania and those in France in some works by Ioan Chintăuan, a geologist from Bistriţa, who reported numerous discoveries about salt and others (Chintăuan 2009).

Initiation – Learning

Initiation itself is a more complex process, it is the transition from one world to another: the child belongs to the family, after the first initiation he passes into the group of young people and society, and then other steps follow. Anthropologists consider initiation as initiatory death (overcoming the human condition), after which the subject comes back to the world with other knowledge[9] (Chevalier, Gheerbrant 1995, s.v. initiation; Eliade 1981, s.v. initiations 231, sq.; 97; 23, 115, 478).

Learning is a continuous process, from birth to death. It is done within the family, school, community and from personal experience. Narratives, myths are means of learning. Special places, such as those with paintings or engravings on the rocks (see fig. 17), altars (see the Great Stag Rus Ob. 3), those in the French-Cantabric art sanctuaries or others, all serve to learn. Between learning and initiation there are age stages that need to be fulfilled.
In our cases, the narratives on the rocks, painted or engraved, are just doing this, they speak especially about the spirits of the hunted animals and the relations with them. The narratives also include tips, paths to be followed, sacred sites, sacrificial and offering places, and many others that the initiator transmits, such as directions for training exercises: we mean throwing with stone axes on the panel, but they did not touch the stag.

The enclosures (circular, rectangular, square). From a later, Protohistoric and Celtic period, we find out about enclosures that they are sacred places, being the image of: Circle = Heaven; Square = Earth; Rectangle = the connection between Heaven and Earth, represents perfection, the golden number (Chevalier, Gheerbrant 1995, s.v. the mentioned notions).

Such enclosures with stone bases are mentioned in the Djezireh region (Syria) by Paul Louis van Berg. They are from the Mesolithic, when there were still forests in those regions, and by us the last glaciation, where we signaled hunting scenes in the cave art.

[7] We have made the drawing based upon a greyish photo.
[8] The rock is near the entry to the church.
[9] *dexonline* ***Initiation:*** s. **1.** Beginning **2.** v. *predicting.* **3.** guidance, introduction. *(~ someone in a profession.)* **4.** training, learning.

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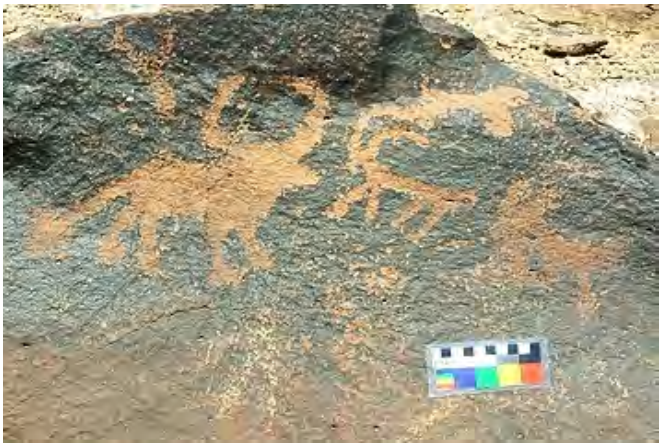
Fig. 25. ▲ Khi-kit ▼Ain al Abad; b. the Ibex goat (Negev Desert http://israelrockart.com/).

At the beginning of the 20th century, in the expeditions of the Ussuri Mountains (China), there are still mention of hunting by the construction of large pens with large entrances where the herds of deer and roebucks were chased, then closed and hunted (Arseniev 1987). Also, in Israel there are cave engravings of the same kind, style and technique of engraving (fig. 27).



a

b

Fig 26. Khi-kit ▼Ain al Abad, apud Van Berg.

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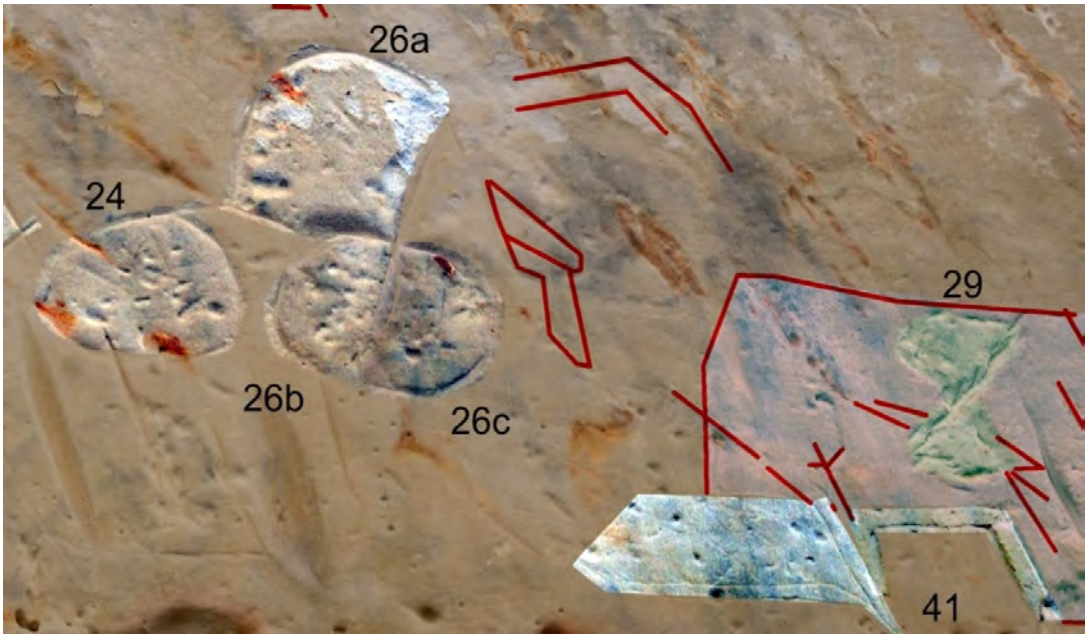
Fig. 27. Negev Desert, apud http://israelrockart.com/.



a

Fig. 28. a, Rus Ob.01.24, 26a-c, 29, 41.

At Rus, on the Hunters' Panel, there are such enclosures marked (fig. 28). We do not know if they all symbolized the same thing or different situations.

Such enclosures are also in Picardy, at Nische des Cabanes (*** RevArchPicardie, fig. 39 and other), associated with signs from the Mesolithic, but also from the Early Christian period.

Fig. 26 : « La Niche des Cabanes ». Quadrillages mésolithiques et gravures récentes : hache, étoile, calvaire et animal stylisé.

b

c

Fig. 28. b, La Niche des Cabanes; c, Policiori (*apud* Mândricel, Bortaş 2008, p. 45-51).

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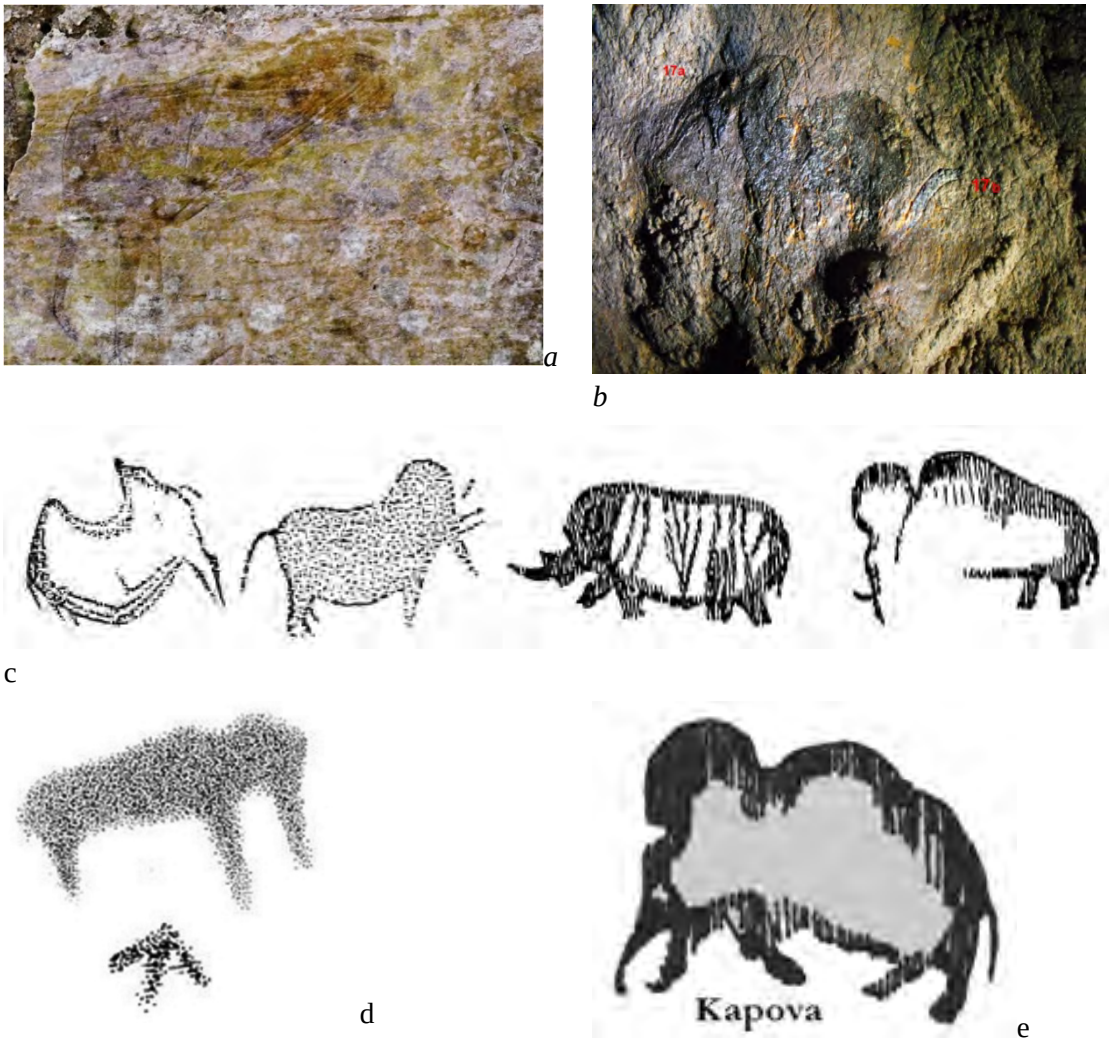
The Mammoth/Elephant (fig. 29-30)



a b c d e

Fig. 30. Mammoth representations: a, Rus Ob. 6 (Lazarovici Gh., Pop 2015); b, Peştera Cizmei (Lazarovici Gh. et al. 2017); c-e, various representations *apud* Otte 2015.

The most important clues as to when the altars or cave signs began to appear on cliffs, caves or megaliths are the animals that disappeared from our areas, but which were still known or the myths about them were still alive in collective memory. An important place is occupied by the mammoth, which is represented more frequently at Rus Ob. 6 (unmarked), the Peştera Cizmei (fig. 3), Karpova and others (Otte 2015, fig. 3-5).

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The Stag

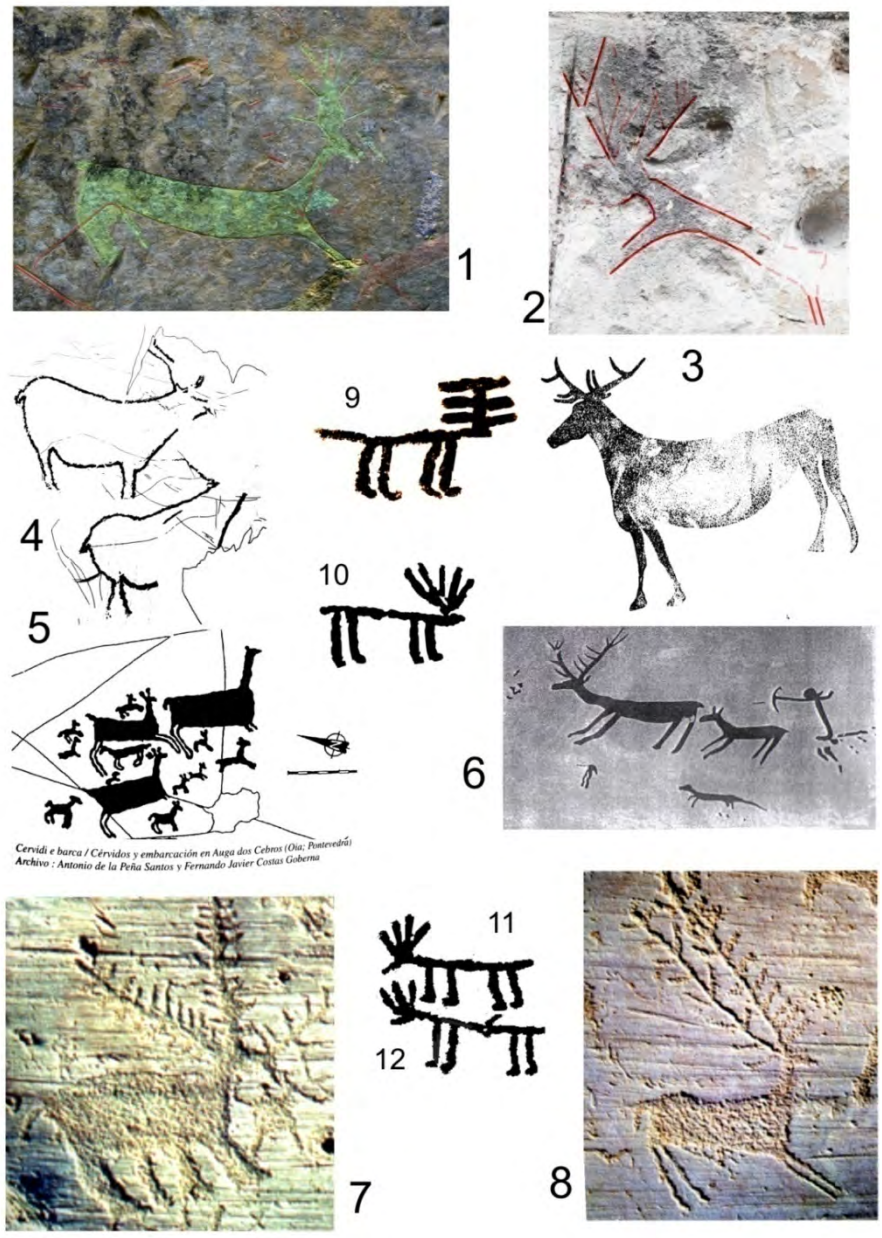

Fig. 31. Different representations of the stag: 1-6, Paleolithic-Mesolithic; 7-12, Metal Age.

The deer is the most interesting figure that appears more clearly in two situations, being better preserved at *Cerbul mare* and more damaged at Cliț – *La Împuşcături*. The stags are rendered with straighter antlers, close to normal, with the branches indicated by firm incisions. In the comparative image we have precised our associations with the realistic representations (fig. 31. 3-4, 6) which are earlier, Upper Paleolithic: 1-2, Rus, Cliț; 3, Martinez; 4, Zilhão (Martinez 1979; Zilhão 2017; Anati 1970; 1995). The stylized forms of the antlers are from the Metal Age (Italy, Sweden): Valcamonica - *Grande Pedra 18, 35* and others; Graziosi P. (1996) - *Porto Badisco* and others in the Nordic areas of Europe (Graziozi 1996; Ingravallo 2007).

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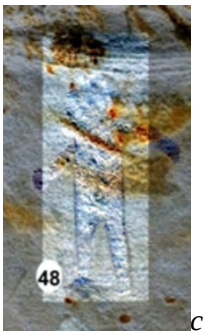
The Hero and the Hunter

In the Stone Age, the hunter was the hero of the community, as he provided food for the family or the group for a longer period.

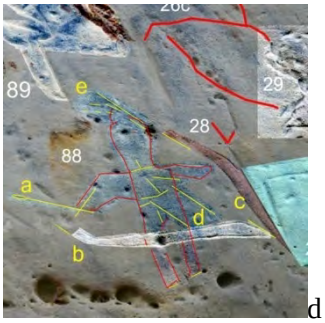
a

b



c

Fig. 32: a. Rus 3rd level mark 5.2; b-d, Rus Hunters' Panel; e, Rus - Area 3; f, *apud* Anati 1961, p. 51; g, Essonne, *apud* Cârciumaru 2010, p. 64, fig. 27; h, Valltorta Cueva Saltadora, Castellon, apud Kühn 1952, p. 62, fig 42; i, Cueva de la Sarga, *apud* Martinez 1979, fig. 1b.



d

e

f

g

h

i

In mythologies, the hero is presented as the son of a god/goddess and a human being (Theseus, Pollux, Hercules etc.). He appears as a fallen hero or divinized person. The hero symbolizes the fight against monsters of perverting, sometimes appears adorned with solar attributes. Jung identifies the hero with the power of the spirit, which often fights against himself (Chevalier, Gheerbrant 1995, s.v. hero).

In our situations, we only find him on the Hunters' Panel, where hunting narratives and different types of animals appear. In order to be identified he wears armor, he has the weapons strapped on, and sometimes his gender is rendered and more. He

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appears in various poses with his weapons (fig. 32): the bow, the arrow, the spear/lance, the lasso, the net, the bolas, the sling and others.

Hinds or antelopes

The representations from Rus 01. are difficult to interpret due to conservation conditions, because the peel on which they were engraved broke off and they are in danger of disappearing. By the elegant and beautiful jumps, the suppleness of the animals is reminiscent of felines, but they do not run in flocks.

Fig. 4. Area 1 – detail with antelopes

a

Fig. 26. Turme de antilope, reconstituire după părți din corp.

b

Fig. 33. a-b, Rus 01. Antelopes; c-d, hunting scenes from different geografic areas.

c

d

That is why we suppose it indicates some small flocks chased by predators or hunters (fig. 33); two silhouettes are obvious, but there are remnants of other legs too, which made us reconstruct the running flock in fig. 33b.

They are grouped in the *Hunters' Panel* at Rus (fig. 34a). We cannot ignore the connection between the elegance of the jumps and the myth of the hind with golden antlers and bronze legs chased by Hercules. Like the lamb, she symbolizes the soul-trait that opposes aggression, and the bronze legs embody the strength of the soul. She symbolizes the vigor lacking any sentimental weakness (reference to the bronze legs) if we think of the myth of Hercules who *chased her to the lands of the hyperboreans*. We also retain from this myth that *Hercules shot her with an arrow between the bone and the sinew... he managed to immobilize the two front legs and bring her to Micene*. From this

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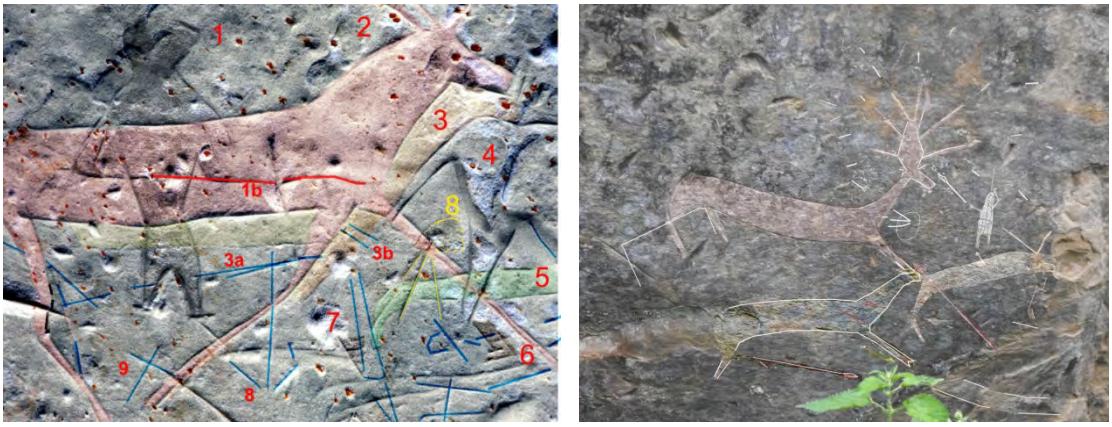
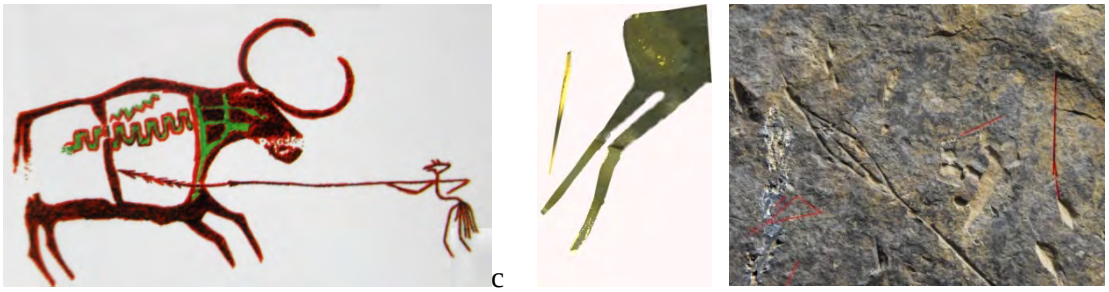
myth, we better understand the many initiation scenes, where the animals were shot at the front or back legs, vulnerable points that often appear in our pictures.



a b

Fig. 34. Vulnerable spots to shoot the animals.



c d e

They suggest rather the wisdom and skill of the hunters. At Hunter 1 we notice that he sends the lance in the heart, both front legs are pierced by arrows (fig. 34a, mark 8 blue, 8 yellow. 9b; fig. 34b all three animals are shot or speared at the back legs), on the Great Stag we see blood flowing, likewise at the tip of the big lance there are drops of blood, although there is no animal around (fig. 34e). All these details entitle us to consider the altar as a place of initiation in the mysteries of hunting.

The man and the divinity embodied in the altars or sanctuaries mentioned above are present in cave art in our parts, an integral part of European cave art. Of course, the beginnings of our research, sometimes naïve, may seem exaggerated, but we think it is just as dangerous to describe the situations without launching hypotheses and trying to prove them. The interpretations are absolutely necessary, making the difference between cultural history and the historical processes under investigation.

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ZUR TYPOLOGIE UND CHRONOLOGIE DER NEOLITHISCHEN ANTROPOMORPHEN PLASTIKAUF DEM BALKAN[10]

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Abstract: *The results of archaeological investigations at the Gălăbnik tell settlement and at other settlements in Southwestern Bulgaria allow us to broaden and modify the interpretation of cultural, genetic, chronological and territorial relations of Neolithic cultures in the Balkans. The Starčevo culture in the southern central Balkans (groups Kremikovci, Anzabegovo-Vršnik II-IV) has gradually emerged from the Protostarčevo culture comprised of the Gălăbnik, Slatina, Nevestino and Anzabegovo-Vršnik I groups, without any influence from northern regions. The Protostarčevo including the Donja Branjevina, Grivac and Gura Baciului groups as defined by Dragoslav Srejović is younger than the Protostarčevo culture in the southern central Balkans and represents already the early phase of the Starčevo culture.*
According to the stratigraphy in Gălăbnik, the Protostarčevo anthropomorphic figurines differs from the Starčevo figurines and is not to be found on sites in the area along the Danube. On the contrary, the main types of human figurines of the Protostarčevo culture groups give us an evidence of correspondence and relationships with figurines of the Protosesklo culture. Anthropomorphic figurines from the Starčevo settlement in Gălăbnik differs considerably from the typical Starčevo figurines found in the area along the Danube as well as from the figurines of the Körös group. Based on these facts it follows that each regional Starčevo group as well as other parallel cultures and culture groups had, apart from specific pottery, also their own unique types of anthropomorphic figurines.
Key words: *Early Neolithic, chronology, Protostarčevo, Starčevo culture, anthropomorphic figurines, Balkan, Thessaly.*

Die Ergebnisse der langjährigen Ausgrabung in der Tellsiedlung in Gălăbnik mit den 10 Bauhorizonte im Strumatal in SW Bulgarien sowie weitere Ausgrabungen bereichern die bisherigen Kenntnisse über das Neolithikum auf dem Balkan und in SO Europa und zusammen mit den wichtigen Resultaten weiterer Entdeckungen in diesen Regionen erlauben sie das Bild über das Neolithikum auf dem Balkan neu zu entwerfen. Einleitend möchten wir kurz die wichtigsten Erkenntnisse im Kontext mit dem Vortragsthema zusammenfassen.

[10] Der Beitrag entstand im Rahmen des VEGA-Projektes 2/0107/17 „Zivilisationsentwicklung und Siedlungsstruktur im Zeitraum der Linearbandkultur im unteren Žitava-Fluss-Gebiet“.

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Das früheste Neolithikum mit der regional differenzierten monochromen Keramik (Argissa Magula, Revenia, Hoca Çeşme IV/III, Krajnici) vorzeichnet die zukünftige klar unterschiedliche territoriale und kulturelle Entwicklung: Thessalien, Makedonien, Zentralbalkan, Thrakien (Karte 1).

Danach am südlichen Zentralbalkan in Struma- und Vardartal sowie in Sofioter Feld entstand Protostarčevo-Kultur mit Gruppen: Gălăbnik, Nevestino, Anzabegovo-Vršnik I und Slatina.

Die Verbreitung der Starčevo-Kultur auf dem südlichen Balkan, in Vardar- und Strumatal und auf dem Sofioter Feld, unter den Namen Kremikovci-Gruppe, Anzabegovo-Vršnik II-IV, Kremenik-Anzabegovo und Kultur mit bulgarischer bemalter Keramik bekannt, reichte bis Demirkapija-Enge in Vardar und Kresna-Enge in Struma. Sie entstand aus den vorangehenden Gruppen Anzabegovo-Vršnik I, Gălăbnik, Nevestino und Slatina mit der für jede spezifischen weiß bemalten Keramik.

Deswegen möchten wir diese vier Gruppen als Protostarčevo-Kultur betrachten, definieren und von der Starčevo-Kultur abtrennen. Kontinuierliche Besiedlung der mehrschichtigen Siedlungen und fassbare Transformation der keramischen Inventare zeigen, dass die Starčevo-Kultur am südlichen Balkan ohne oft hervorgehobene Einflussnahme aus nördlichem Territorium mit der namengebenden Fundstelle Starčevo-Grad sich herausgebildet hat.

Diese Lage hat grundsätzlich die Position und der Inhalt des Protostarčevos in der Definition von Dragoslav Srejović (1969; Srejović, 1971; Srejović, 1973) im Lichte der überraschenden Entdeckungen in Lepenski Vir verändert. Seine Protostarčevo I – Lepenski Vir IIIa-1 mit der monochromen Keramik kann nach neueren Untersuchungen (Perić, Nikolić, 2004) und aufgrund der monochromen Keramik aus Padina B (Jovanović, 1987; Jovanović, 2008) zusammen mit der monochromen Keramik aus Donja Branjevina III (Karmanski, 1979; Karmanski, 2005) für als die früheste neolithische Besiedlung im Gebiet zwischen Džerdap und der Wojwodina gehalten werden. Für Protostarčevo II – Lepenski Vir IIIa-2 nach D. Srejović ist neben den anderen Merkmalen der Keramik auch die weiß bemalte Keramik charakteristisch. Diesem Horizont ordnete er die Fundstellen mit der weiß bemalten Keramik zu (Gura Baciului, Donja Branjevina und Grivac), die für Protostarčevo gehalten und als Vorgänger der klassischen Starčevo-Kultur angesehen werden (Pavúk, 1993; Pavúk, Čochadžiev, 1984; Brukner, 1997; Schubert, 1999; Perić, 1998; Bogdanović, 2004). M. Garašanin (1979) definierte diese Funde als Gura Baciului-Gruppe und stellte sie neben die frühe Starčevo-Kultur. Rumänische Forscher halten die Periode dieser weiß bemalten Keramik für die Frühphase der Starčevo-Criş-Kultur (Lazarovici, 1993; Lazarovici, 2006; Luca, Suciu, 2007; Luca *et al.* 2010; Nica, 1977) oder für Präcriş (Paul 1995). Bei der Interpretation des Prozesses der Neolithisierung rechnen sie mit Migrationswellen aus dem Südosten und synchronisieren die genannten Gruppen mit der weiß bemalten Keramik mit Anzabegovo-Vršnik I-Gruppe in Makedonien und mit Proto-und Präsesklo-Kultur in Thessalien. Unsere Kenntnisse über die Stratigraphie und kulturgenetische Verhältnisse zeigen dagegen, dass die Kulturgruppen mit der weiß bemalten Keramik auf dem Territorium der Donau entlang (Donja Branjevina II, Grivac, Gura Baciului I-II, Cărcea-Hanuri, Gradešnica A, Măgura und Džuljunica I/II) die Frühstufe der Starčevo-Kultur und kein Protostarčevo darstellen (Karte 2).

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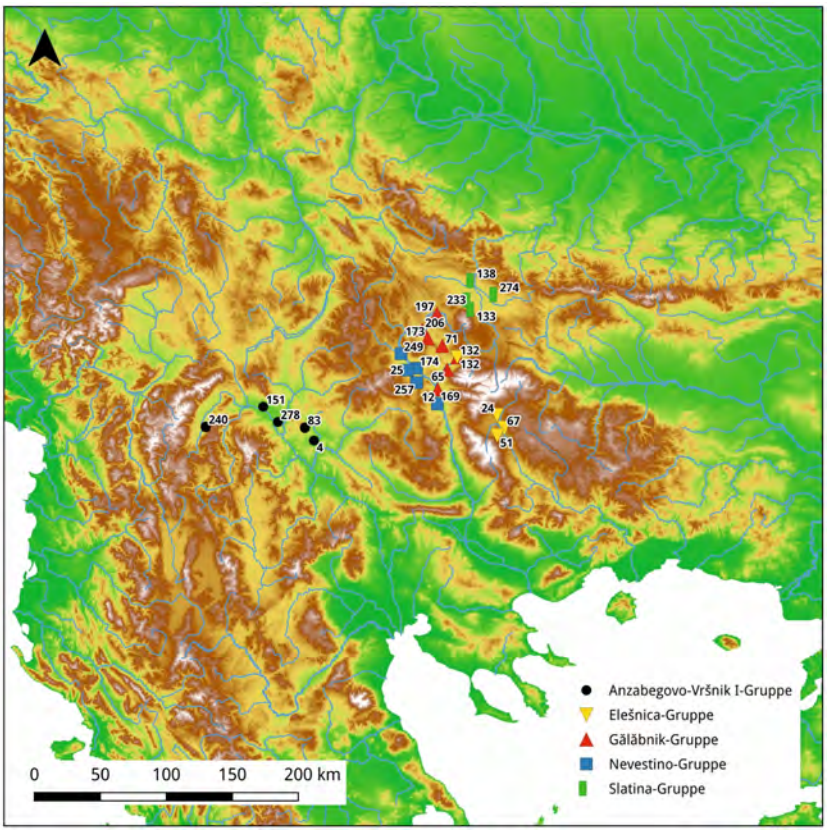
Karte 1. Die Fundstellen mit der frühneolithischen monochromen Keramik.



Karte 2. Die Fundstellen der Protostarčevo-Kultur.

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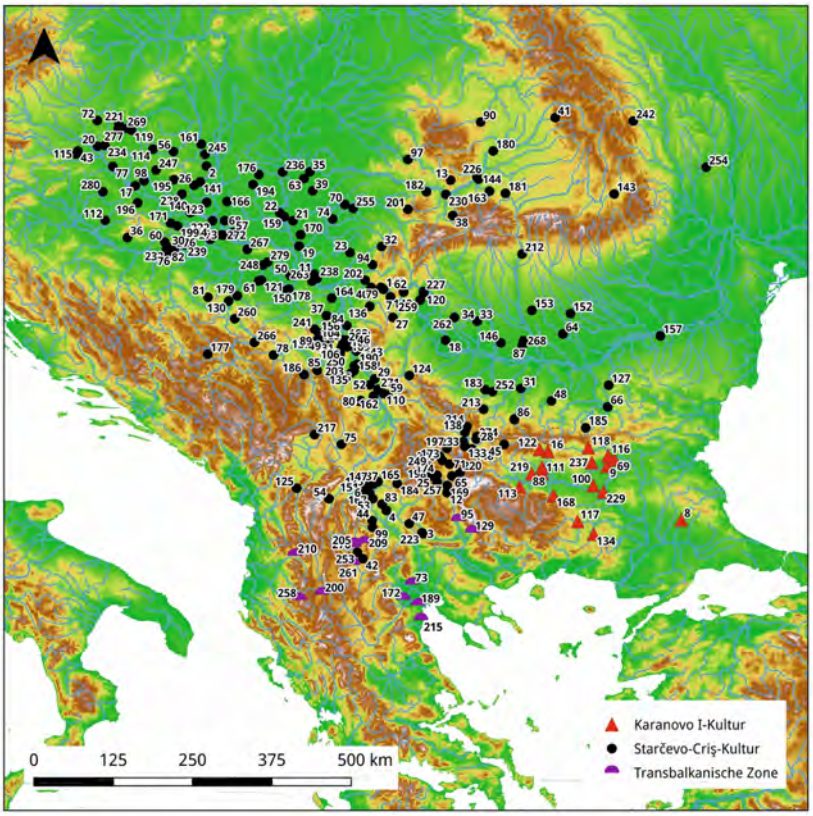

Karte 3. Die Verbreitung der Starčevo-Kultur, Karanovo I-Kultur und der Gruppen der südlichen transbalkanisch.en Kulturzone.

Der Entstehung der Starčevo-Kultur im Struma- und Vardartal ging die langfristige Entwicklung (6 Bauhorizonte in Gălăbnik) der Protostarčevo-Kultur (Anzabegovo-Vršnik I, Gălăbnik- und Nevestino-Gruppe) sowie die Periode der monochromen Keramik (Krajnici) voran. Die Formierung der Starčevo-Kultur als qualitativ neuer Erscheinung auf dem südlichen Balkan wird aus der Einführung der technologisch eigenartigen weinrot bemalten Keramik im Gebiet von Kolsh in Albanien bis Čavdar in Westbulgarien und Starčevo-Grad in Serbien, den Veränderungen der Gefäßformen und der Altärchen (Pavúk, Bakamska, 2014) sowie aus neuen Typen der menschlichen Tonfiguren sichtbar. In Pernik (Čochadžiev, 1983) Gălăbnik und in Sofia-Slatina I-II ist die weinrot bemalte Keramik mit einer neuen Art der weiß bemalten Keramik vergesellschaftet. Die identische weinrot oder rot bemalte Keramik findet sich zusammen mit der weiß bemalten Keramik in Grivac (Bogdanović, 2004), Starčevo (Fewkes *et al.*, 1933), Slavonski Brod (Minichreiter, 2007), Cărcea (Nica, 1976), Gradešnica A (Nikolov, 1974) und Gura Baciului (Lazarovici/Maxim 1995), was bei der Datierung und Synchronisierung dieser Fundstellen und Gruppen als maßgeblich berücksichtigt werden muss, was nur selten passiert (Bakamska, Pavúk, 1995; Nikolov, 1999, 61; Schubert, 1999). Danach beginnt die Starčevo-Kultur auf dem südlichen Zentralbalkan und auf den Gebieten in Donau- und Velika Morava-Gebiet zur gleichen Zeit, wobei die Formierung der Starčevo-Kultur im großen Territorium östlich und westlich vom Eisernen Tor nicht leicht zu erklären ist. Die wahrscheinliche genetische Verbindung mit dem Horizont Padina – Lepenski Vir – Donja Branjevina III könnte über Blagotin (Vukotić, 2004) hergestellt werden, wo das Ausklingen dieses Horizontes mit der monochromen Keramik knapp vor der Entstehung der Starčevo-Kultur mit der Einführung der weinrot bemalten Keramik zu vermuten ist. Nach Blagotin könnte die

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Siedlung der frühen Stufe Starčevo A mit der weiß bemalten und weinrot bemalten Keramik in Grivac (Bogdanović, 2004) gegründet werden. Nach Grivac sollte die mittlere Stufe Starčevo B mit der schwarz bemalten Keramik, welche in Grivac noch nicht vorhanden ist, anfangen. Die mittlere Stufe Starčevo B ist in den nördlichen Gebieten nur in Tečić, Donja Branjevina I und in Kroatien besser bekannt. Auf dieser kulturchronologischen Basis möchten wir die anthropomorphe Plastik aus Gălăbnik im breiteren balkanischen Kontext darstellen (Karte 3).

BC Jahre	West-anatolien	Thrakien		Nordägäis	Mittleres Strumatal	Makedonien Pelagonien	Thessalien	Oberes Strumatal		Vardartal	Sotiofer Feld	Central serbien	Nord serbien	Oltenien	Nordbulgarien
	Kumtepe Ia	AP 5	Karanovo III	H.Çeşme Ia Paradimi	Dolna Ribnica	Dalilo/Cakra n	Dimini-Tsangli		Vaksevo IV	Vinča A ?	Kurilo – Gr.	Vinča A	Vinča A	Dudeşti	Samovodene
5500/5400			Karanovo II	Hoca Çeşme Ic	Kovačevo I b-d	Nea Nikomedeia B Gianitsa B Velušina-Porodin	Sesklo	C	Gălăbnik X Balgarčevo I	Zelenikovo	Slatina W	Crnokalačka Bara	Spiraloid B	Cârcea- V. Gradešnica C.	Ovčarovo Gr
	Ulucak IV b-a	AP 6-7	Karanovo I					B	STARČEVO KULTUR						
5900/5500									Gălăbnik VIII-IX	Anzabegovo-Vršnik III		Tečić I			
								A	Pernik-Gălăbnik VII	Madžari (rot)	Slatina I-II	Grivac	D. Branjevina II Starčevo-Grad	Cârcea-H. Măgura	Džuljunica I-II
									PROTOSTARČEVO KULTUR						
6200/6000	Ulucak IV k-c		Karanovo I0 Kalojanovo	Hoca Çeşme II	Kovačevo I a ?	Nea Nikomedeia A Revenia II	FN II/III		Gălabnik-Gr. Nevestino Gr.	Anzabegovo-Vršnik I	Slatina Gr.	Blagotin ?	Padina Lepenski Vir D. Branjevina III		
	Ulucak V			Hoca Çeşme IV/III		Revenia I	FN I		Krajnici I						

Tabelle 1. Entwurf der Chronologie der neolithischen Kulturen auf dem Balkan.

Anthropomorphe Plastik aus Gălăbnik

Die beinahe fünf Meter hohe Tellsiedlung in Gălăbnik im oberen Strumatal in SW- Bulgarien wurde als große Flachsiedlung zur Zeit der Gălăbnik-Gruppe mit der eigenartigen weiß bemalten Keramik, Altärchen, menschlichen Figuren und weiteten spezifischen Inventaren gegründet. Der Siedlungshügel selbst war kleiner, um 50.000 m2 aber seine Maße sind unbekannt, weil er von sterilen alluvialen und kolluvialen Sedimenten bedeckt ist. Nach sechs Bauhorizonten kam es im VII. Bauhorizont zur kontinuierlichen Transformation der Gălăbnik-Gruppe der Protostarčevo-Kultur in die Starčevo-Kultur mit weiteren vier Bauhorizonten.

Auf der Tellsiedlung wurden über 120 anthropomorphe Figuren gefunden. Nur sehr wenige sind vollkommen erhalten, wie einige prismatische Figuren (Abb. 2: 9; 3: 6: 6-9), weitere Formen sind zur Gänze rekonstruier bar. (Abb. 1: 3; 2: 3). Die meisten können den einzelnen Wohnhorizonten zugewiesen werden, manche wurden auf den Schutzdämmen entlang des neuen Flusses aufgesammelt oder es handelt sich bei ihnen um Streufunde.

Menschliche Tonfiguren der Gălăbnik-Gruppe

Den Typ A stellen die modifizierten Varianten der birnenförmigen Figuren dar. Der beste Vertreter der Plastik der Gălăbnik -Gruppe ist eine kleine Frauenfigur mit einem massiven Gesäß und kurzen Beinen bis zu den Knien, als ob sie kniend dargestellt sein sollte. Am zylindrischen Kopf ist plastisch dargestellte Nase, während die Augen mit schrägen kurzen Rillen markiert sind. Die Oberarme sind als Stümpfe, die Brüste als winzige Knubben und Geschlechtsmerkmale mit Ritzlinien dargestellt. Mit den

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Einritzungen ist das Geschlecht gezeigt. H. 7,3 cm (Abb. 1: 3; 2: 3). Eine weitere Figur dieser Art wird auch durch die Birnenform geprägt. In dem massiven Unterteil werden wahrscheinlich auch kniende Beine dargestellt, was mit bogenartigem Gräbchen hervorgehoben wird. Enge Rillen bilden das Geschlechtsdreieck. Kurze Arme waren als Stümpfe modelliert. Der Vorderteil ist mit den senkrechten und linke Seite des Unterteiles mit den kurzen Rillen verziert. H. 7,1 cm, (Abb. 1: 5; 2: 5).

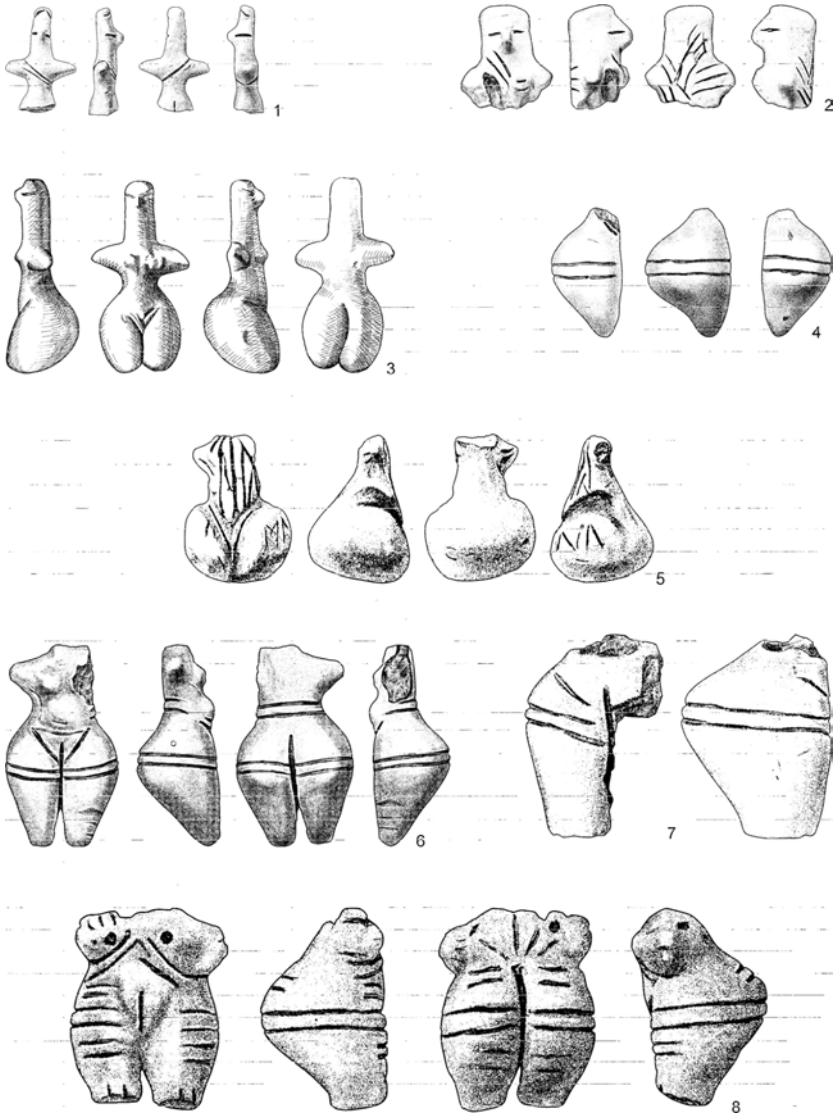

Abb. 1. Gălăbnik. Anthropomorphe Plastik der Gălăbnik-Gruppe. 1-2, 6-7 – Typ B1, 3-5 – Typ A, 8 – Typ B2.

Den Typ B1 stellen die Figuren mit dem abgerundeten steatopygen Gesäß und den kurzen stumpfartigen Beinen und Armen aus dem VI. Horizont dar (Abb. 1: 6-7; 2: 2). Die verjüngte Taille wird mit einer oder zwei flachen Rillen hervorgehoben. Die aus zwei Hälften symmetrisch modellierte Figur hat stumpfartige Arme und durch scharfe Ritzlinien dargestellten Schamdreieck und Vulva (Abb. 1: 6-7; 2: 2).

Den Typ B2 repräsentiert die größte, auf dem Damm aufgelesene Figur mit kurzen Beinen. Über den Schenken befinden sich beiderseits umlaufende und kurze Doppellinien, die Brüste sind mit Bogenlinien und die Vulva mit einer Rille dargestellt. Der dicke Unterteil mit den Beinen übergeht fliesend in den kurzen Rumpf mit den kleinen Brüsten und den kurzen stumpfigen Armen. In der Armhöhe befinden sich zwei

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horizontalen Durchlochungen. H. 8,8 cm (Abb. 1: 8). Diese Figur wirkt massiver und die horizontalen Rillen erinnern an die seltenen stehenden Figuren in Thessalien (Theocharis, 1973, Abb. 16).
Da keine der Figuren des Typs B einen erhaltenen Kopf hatte, weiß man nicht welche Oberteile und Köpfe zu diesen Figuren gehören. Aus den Ablagerungen der Gălăbnik - Gruppe stammt die obere Hälfte der Frauenfigur mit dem Haarfrisur und mit einer "Schärpe". H. 4,0 cm, (Abb. 1: 1; 2: 1). Die Bruchstelle lässt gut erkennen, wie der Oberteil mit der schlanken Taille mit dem Unterleib verbunden war. Gewisse Anbindung an die frühen Figuren stellt der Oberteil der weiblichen Figur mit den stumpfartigen Armen und flachem Kopf dar. Der Mund wird durch zwei parallelen Rillen angedeutet und auf dem Rücken kreuzen sich tiefe Rillen. H. 6,5 cm (Abb. 2: 4). Das gleiche gilt über das Fragment mit Kopf und Stumpfarmen (Abb. 1: 2). Diese Torsos mit dem Kopf könnten sehr wahrscheinlich zu den Plastiken des Typs B gehören.

Abb. 2. Gălăbnik. Anthropomorphe Plastik. 1-2, 4 – Typ B1 der Gălăbnik-Gruppe, 3, 5 – Typ A der Gălăbnik-Gruppe, 6-7 – Typ C der Starčevo-Kultur, 8 – Typ D der Starčevo-Kultur, 9 – Typ E2 der Starčevo-Kultur.

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Die Figuren des Typs B haben gute Vergleichstücke sowohl in Nea Nikomedeia (Hansen 2007, Abb. 70; Theocharis 1973, Abb. 18), als auch in Sofia-Geo Milev (Stančeva, Gavrilova, 1961, 73, Abb. 1-3; Hansen, 2007, Taf. 166), obwohl bei den, die zuletzt erwähnten ohne Begleitfunde zum Vorschein kamen unbekannt ist, ob sie der Protostarčevo- oder Starčevo-Kultur angehören.

Menschliche Tonfiguren der Starčevo-Kultur

Der Stratigraphie und Typologie der Plastiken in Gălăbnik ist zu entnehmen, dass mit der Veränderung der weiß bemalten Keramik und mit Vorkommen weinrot bemalter Keramik ab dem VII. Horizont der frühen Starčevo-Kultur auch neue Formen der anthropomorphen Plastik erscheinen.

Typ C. Diesem Typ gehören die Plastiken mit Hohlkörper. Alleinstehend ist größtes Torso einer steatopygen Frauenfigur (Abb. 3: 5). Ihr Hohlkörper wurde aus zwei separat modellierten symmetrischen Hälften zusammengefügt. Sie wurde bei der Modellierung als Gefäß behandelt und ist auf der ganzen Oberfläche mit Fischgrätmuster aus engen Ritzlinien bedeckt, ähnlich wie bei einer Art der verzierten monochromen Feinkeramik (Pavúk, Bakămska, 2000; Abb. 30: 6-8, 11-12; 32: 6-8), welche in der Tellsiedlung eine ähnliche stratigraphische Position im VII. Horizont einnimmt wie die beschriebene Figur. Die zwei auf der Hüfte umlaufenden horizontalen Linien schließen an die gleiche Behandlung der Figuren der Gălăbnik -Gruppe an verbinden somit und die Idolatrie der Gălăbnik -Gruppe der Protostarčevo-Periode mit den menschlichen Plastik der beginnenden Starčevo-Kultur. Diese Hohlfigur hat der Form nach eine vollkommene Analogie in der in gleicher Weise abgebrochenen Plastik aus Vršnik, die nur anders verziert ist und die für ein anthropomorphes Gefäß gehalten wird (Garašanin, 1979, 97, Taf. 14: 1a-b). Erst S. Hansen (2007, 147, Abb. 61-62) hat sie als menschliche Figur erkannt. Auch sie ist in die frühe Starčevo-Kultur zu datieren (Anzabegovo-Vršnik II nach M. Garašanin).

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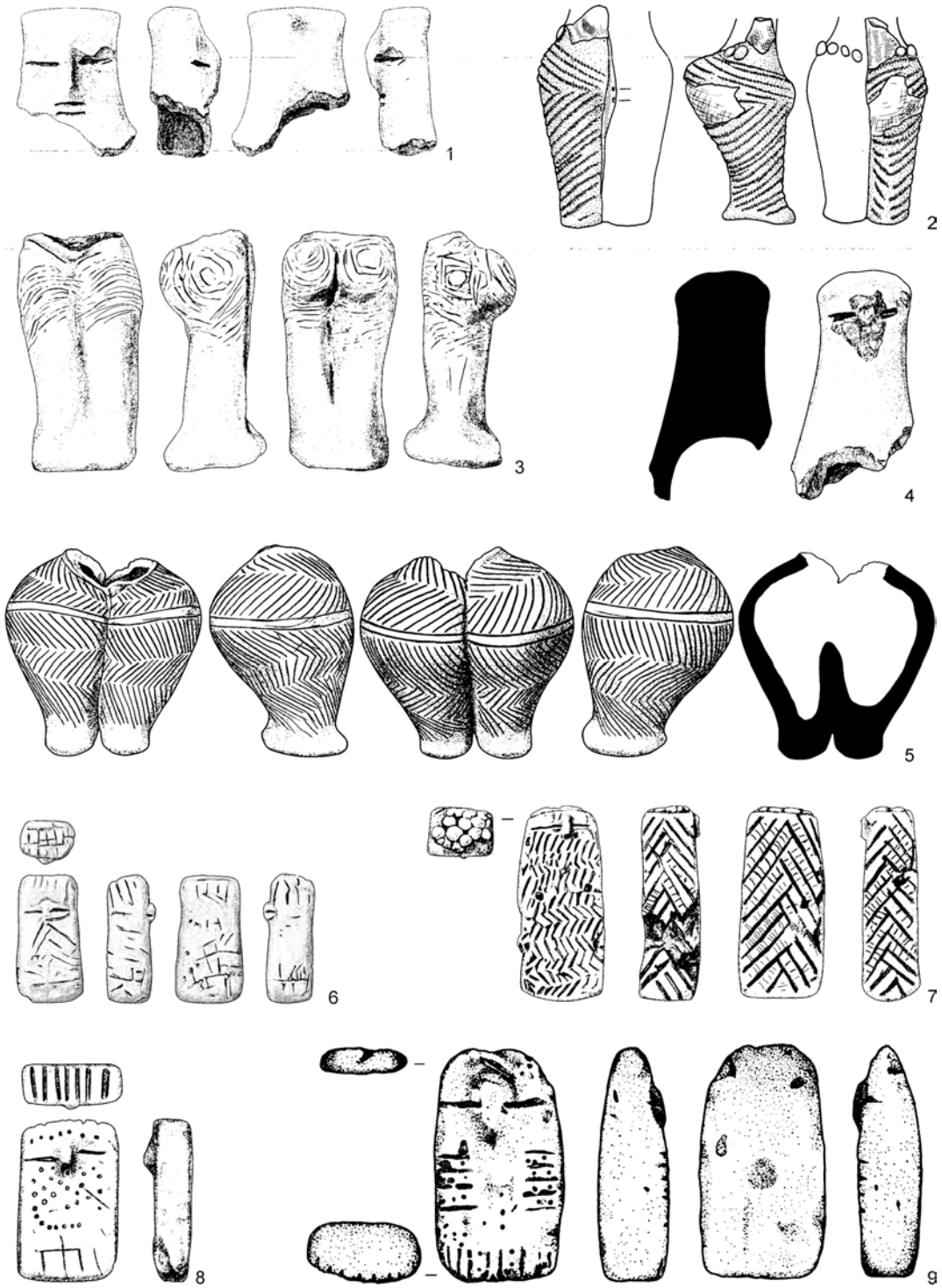

Abb. 3. Gălăbnik. Anthropomorphe Plastik der Starčevo-Kultur. 1, 4-5 – Typ C, 2-3 – Typ D, 6, 8-9 – Typ E1, 7 – Typ E2.

Zusammen mit der beschriebenen Plastik erscheinen in Gălăbnik zum ersten mal auch weitere Varianten der Tonfiguren mit Hohlkörper. Die obere Hälfte der Figur mit dem Hohlkörper ist einmalig (Abb. 2: 7). Der Oberteil der Figur wurde in einem Block mit von dem Rumpf nicht differenzierten Hals und Kopf modelliert. Der Kopf mit der dreieckig plastisch dargestellten Nase und eingeritzten Augen ohne den Hals übergeht in den Rumpf und Bauchteil. Zwei geritzte horizontale Wellen könnten den Mund darstellen. Darunter befinden sich geritzte Rhomben und auf im Nabelbereich gekreuzte Rillen. In Gălăbnik neu und eigenartig sind die reliefartig dargestellte Arme: der rechte

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Arm ist nach oben gerichtet und die Finger liegen auf dem Kopf, der linke liegt am Körper. Das nur schematisch angedeutete Gesäß indiziert die sonst seltene sitzende Menschengestalt, wahrscheinlich die eines Mannes. Zu den Plastiken mit dem Hohlkörper gehören die Kopffragmente mit dem hohlen Hals, wie es mindestens bei drei Köpfen zu belegen ist (Abb. 2: 6; 3: 1, 6).

Typ D. Die mit seichten Kanneluren oder Rillen verzierten Plastiken mit den zusammengefügten Beinen aus dem IX. Horizont stellen den weiteren Plastiktyp der Starčevo-Kultur dar (Abb. 2: 8; 3: 2-3). Sie sind aus zwei Teilen zusammengeklebt und haben eine gerade Fußsohle. Kleine warzenartigen Knubben auf der Taille stellen die Gürtel dar (Abb. 3: 2). Im Strumatal und in der breiteren Umgebung besitzen sie keine Gegenstücke. Sie setzen die Tradition der Plastik der Gălăbnik-Gruppe fort, aber der Verzierung nach könnten sie mit dem Beginn der Starčevo-Kultur zusammenhängen.
Die Figuren des Typ C und D aufgrund der Stratigraphie, Beinen und Kannelurverzierung stellen - verglichen mit den Figuren des Typs A und B der Gălăbnik -Gruppe - neue Art der Plastiken der Starčevo-Kultur am Siedlungshügel von Gălăbnik dar.

Typ E. Eine besondere Plastikgruppe in der Tellsiedlung von Gălăbnik sind die sehr schematisierten prismatischen Figuren. Für ihre chronologische und kulturelle Zuordnung ist wichtig, dass in Gălăbnik aus den Horizonten I-VI mit der weiß bemalten Keramik der Protostarčevo-Kultur keine prismatische Plastik dieser Art stammt; das bedeutet, dass alle derartige schematische menschliche Darstellungen in Gălăbnik sowie am oberen Strumatal der Starčevo-Kultur angehören.

Typ E1. Die schon lange bekannte grauschwarze Plastik ist plattenartig und rechteckig. Bei der Höhe 5,6 cm ist 1,4 cm dick (Abb. 3: 8). Dicht neben der Nase sind mit Ritzlinien dargestellte Augen. Am oberen Rand sind tiefe Querrillen. Der obere Rand wird durch eine Einstichreihe gesäumt. Weitere Einstiche im mittleren Teil bilden ein Dreieck mit den abgerundeten Ecken. Oberhalb der Basis feine horizontale Rille rahmt drei tiefe senkrechte Rillen. Vorerst unerklärbar ist das Vorkommen der identischen Plastik in der Méhtelek-Gruppe der Frühstufe der Kultur mit der Alföld-Linearkeramik im entfernten Nordostungarn (Kalicz 2011, 22-24, 27-31, Abb. 4: 1, 4; 6: 6).

Typ E2. Im Unterschied zum Subtyp E1 geht hier um die prismatische Plastik mit fast quaderartigem Profil. Die eine mit der plastischen Nase und geritzten Augen ist mit Ausnahme der Basis dicht verziert, auf der Vorderseite mit senkrechtem Fischgrätmuster und auf den anderen Seiten engen Rippchen und flachen Rillen. Auf dem Kopf deuten die Knubben in der Gestalt des Schwalbennestes Haarfrisur an. In der Mitte der Figur befinden sich zwei enge Löcher. H. 7,3 cm, Br. 3,2 cm, Dicke 2,1 cm (Abb. 3: 5).

Die stilisierten Marmorfiguren

Auf der ganz erhaltenen Frauenfigur des Violinertyps sind durch zwei seichte Grübchen Brüste angedeutete und durch eine flache Furche wird die Taille hervorgehoben. Auf der Rückseite des Kopfes ist herabgelassenes Haar zu erkennen (Pavúk, Čochadžiev, 1984, Abb. 17). Stilistisch korrespondiert sie mit den bekannten Plastiken aus Marmor in Sesklo (Tsountas 1908, Taf. 37: 3, 11).

Kulturchronologische und territoriale Zusammenhänge der anthropomorphen Plastik

Die Plastik aus Gălăbnik im balkanischen Kontext

Die anthropomorphe Plastik aus Gălăbnik, ähnlich wie die weiß bemalte Keramik und die Altärchen der Gălăbnik-Gruppe (Pavúk, 2016; Pavúk, Bakămska 19??; Pavúk, Bakămska, 2014, Abb. 1-6;19; 21) sowie die manchen Spezifika der Keramik der Starčevo-Kultur, ist im Vergleich mit den gleichzeitigen Kultureinheiten in den

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umliegenden Gebieten als kulturell spezifisch und räumlich gebunden zu bezeichnen. Als wichtig sind die fehlenden belegbaren Zusammenhänge zwischen chronologischen und typologischen Plastiktypen in Gălăbnik und zwischen den anthropomorphen Figuren der ganzen Starčevo-Kultur aus den anderen Gebieten der Starčevo-Kultur. Aus dem Vergleich der Plastik der Starčevo-Kultur im Strumatal wie auch am Vardartal und auf dem Sofioter Feld mit den menschlichen Figuren der Starčevo-Kultur in Mittelserbien und in den nördlichen Gebieten an der Donau und der Körös-Gruppe sind Unterschiede vorhanden (Abb. 4). Die birnenförmigen und knienden Figuren unseren Typs A der Gruppen Anzabegovo, Gălăbnik und Nevestino der primären Zone der Protostarčevo-Kultur (Abb. 1: 3, 5; 5: 1-4) in den Kulturgruppen an der Donau fehlen überhaupt, auch deswegen, weil die Gruppen der Protostarčevo-Kultur in südlichem Balkan älter als alle Siedlungen der frühen Starčevo-Kultur in den nördlichen Gebieten sind. Aus dem vorangehenden Horizont der monochromen Keramik Padina –Lepenski Vir – Donja Branjevina III ist anthropomorphe Plastik nicht bekannt.

Gute Bestätigung des Typenspektrums von Gălăbnik findet man in der Siedlung der Nevestino-Gruppe der Protostarčevo-Kultur in Vaksevo auf dem Kjustendiler Feld. Eine erhaltene kleine birnenförmige Figur mit den typischen horizontalen Rillen am Unterteil aus Vaksevo zeigt, dass solche Figuren auch außerhalb von Gălăbnik in den anderen Protostarčevo-Gruppen vorkommen (Abb. 5, 3; Čochadžiev, 2001,162, Abb. 93: 8, Taf. 33: 3). Durch die Ritzverzierung mit der Darstellung der Vulva und des Gesichtes steht diese Figur eher den thessalischen als jenen aus Gălăbnik näher. In Vaksevo, so wie in Gălăbnik (Abb. 1: 4; 1: 6-7), ist auch eine kleine Variante der Figur mit der horizontalen Rille auf dem steatopygen Gesäß des Typs B vorhanden (Čochadžiev, 2001, 161, Abb. 93: 3). Aus der Slatina-Gruppe der Protostarčevo-Kultur ist keine menschliche Plastik bekannt. Aus dem Vardartal wären die kleinen Frauenfiguren vom birnenförmigen Typ aus Anzabegovo (Abb. 5: 2; Gimbutas, 1974, 62, Abb. 39; Garašanin, 1979, Abb. 9: 10) und Vršnik (Garašanin, Garašanin, 1961, 21, Abb. 24) mit der frühesten Plastik in Strumatal zu verbinden. Der Stratigraphie in Gălăbnik nach sind die birnenförmigen oder knienden Figuren des Typus A sowie die stehenden Figuren des Typs B auf die Protostarčevo-Kultur beschränkt, während die Figuren mit dem Hohlkörper des Typs C (Abb. 2: 6-7) und die prismatische Plastik des Typs E (Abb. 3: 6-9) mit der Starčevo-Kultur und ihrer Zeit im Zusammenhang stehen.

Die Figuren mit dem Hohlkörper vom Typs C sind vorerst nur aus Gălăbnik und Vršnik bekannt. Die vollkommen ausgeführte Figur mit dem Hohlkörper wahrscheinlich von der Insel Euboia, oder aus Thessalien sowie weitere Fragmente aus Thessalien bezeugen aber ihre größere Verbreitung (Hansen, 2007, Taf. 95: 2; Gallis, Orphanidis, 1996, Nr. 753-756). Es konnte passieren, dass die Fragmente der Hohlfiguren als anthropomorphe Gefäße betrachtet und beschrieben wurden.

Flache prismatische Plastiken der abstrahierten menschlichen Gestalt vom Typ E1 aus Gălăbnik in SW Bulgarien und aus der Siedlung der Kultur mit der frühesten Alfölder Linearkeramik in Méhtelek in NO Ungarn belegen, dass sie in der identischen Form auch außerhalb des Territoriums der Starčevo-Kultur und der Körös-Gruppe vorkommen (Abb. 3: 6, 8-97; Kalicz, 2011, 22-24, Abb. 4-6). Die Absenz der prismatischen Plastik in Makedonien und Thessalien bestätigt kulturelle, zeitliche und räumliche Begrenzung der ausgeprägten Plastiktypen.

Es ist hervorzuheben, dass die Figuralplastik der Gruppen Anzabegovo, Gălăbnik und Nevestino der Protostarčevo-Kultur älter als alle Plastiken in den Kulturgruppen der frühen Starčevo-Kultur an der Donau ist. Die birnenförmigen oder knienden Figuren von unseren Typ A fehlen dort überhaupt. Nicht einmal die Plastik unseres Typs B (Abb. 1: 1-2, 6-8; 2: 1-2, 4) mit den stumpfartigen Beinen und Armen, die in balkanischem

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Neolithikum als universal wirken könnte, ist dort einwandfrei zu belegen, als ob er auch nur an das Gebiet der Protostarčevo-Kultur der primären Zone beschränkt war. Anderseits, die für Starčevo-Kultur und Körös-Gruppe charakteristische steatopyge Figurinen mit überproportionierten Oberschenkeln und Gesäß und mit dem Kopf und Gesicht am langen Hals (Abb. 4; Hansen, 2007, Taf. 115: 1-2; 117; 120; 123-125) sind auf dem südlichen Balkan weder in den genannten Gruppen der Protostarčevo-Kultur, noch in der Starčevo-Kultur am Vardar- und Strumatal sowie auf dem Sofioter Feld durch kein typisches ganz erhaltenes Exemplar belegt. Auf diese Unterschiede in der figuralen Plastik machte schon S. Hansen (2007,161, Fußnote 18) aufmerksam, wobei er aber aufgrund der unterschiedlichen anthropomorphen Figuren aus Gălăbnik die Zugehörigkeit der dortigen Besiedlung der Starčevo-Kultur zur Starčevo-Kultur (in Serbien und an der Donau) anzweifelte. V. Becker (2010) hingegen behandelte die frühneolithische anthropomorphe Plastik aus Südosteuropa ohne kulturelle und chronologische Differenzierung als zwei Grundtypen. Sofern die figurale Plastik in allen regionalen Gruppen nicht gleichmäßig quantitativ vertreten ist, lässt sich nicht sagen, ob in jeder Regionalgruppe eine nur für sie typische menschliche Figur, etwa wie die oft vorkommenden fast kanonisierte „Mutter Göttin“ von Typ Madžari für die Starčevo-Kultur (Anzabegovo-Vršnik II-IV) im Vardartal ist, bevorzugt wurde. Es ist anzunehmen, dass im Einklang mit der regional differenzierten bemalten Keramik und Grobkeramik auch unterschiedliche Plastik verwendet wurde, wobei die Integrität der Kultureinheit zwischen Demirkapija- am Vardar oder Kresnaenge an der Struma und am Platensee im westlichen Karpatenbecken oder in Siebenbürgen von Region zur Region durch kulturtragende Merkmale immer als Starčevo-Kultur bestätigt wird.

Die Plastik der Protostarčevo- und der Proto/Präsesklo-Kultur

Es ist auffällig, dass in Gălăbnik wie auch auf dem Balkan die für Thessalien und Anatolien typischen Frauenfiguren mit den Armen und Händen in mehreren Positionen im Brust-und Bauchbereich eigentlich vollkommen fehlen (Mellaart, 1970, Abb. 214-226; Orphanidis, Gallis, 2011, Nr. 687-690, 703; Orphanidis, Malakasioti, 2011, Nr. 17, 114; Hansen, 2007, Abb. 43, Taf. 96: 3). In Thessalien und Anatolien sind dagegen die für die Protostarčevo-Kultur typischen weiblichen Figuren mit den stumpfartigen Armen nichtvorhanden (Abb. 1: 1-2, 6-8; 2: 1-2, 4).

Beachtenswert sind die Ähnlichkeiten der knieenden oder sitzenden Frauenfiguren des Typs A von Gălăbnik sowie aus Vaksevo mit den birnenförmigen Figuren aus Mataranga (Abb. 5: 5) und Otzaki Magula (Abb. 5: 6; Milojčić-v. Zumbusch, 1971, 83-85, Taf. S-T; XVI: 58-59; XX: 13-15; Taf. 16: 4-10) und aus anderen Fundorten, worauf schon hingewiesen wurde (Hansen, 2007, 119). Insgesamt werden in den Katalogen als birnenförmige 34 Figuren klassifiziert (Orphanidis, Malakasioti, 2011, 113).

Die nicht ganz sichere Stratigraphie in Otzaki Magula andeutet, dass birnenförmige Figuren entweder die ältesten sind oder zu den ältesten zu zählen sind (Milojčić-v. Zumbusch, 1971, Taf. S: 3-5, T: 1-9; Taf. 16: 2-10; Hansen, 2007, Abb. 42) und A. Reingruber, 2008, 572, 590) folgert, dass “nur die schematischen, birnenförmigen Darstellungen dem FN zugewiesen werden können“, sie bemerkt aber, dass auf eine Trennung nach Perioden aufgrund der Aufnahme, dass zwischen dem frühen und mittleren Neolithikum keine Brüche zu verzeichnen sind, verzichtet wird. Im Bezug auf mangelnde Stratigraphie wird skeptisch die Lage auch von S. Hansen (2007; 115) skeptisch betrachtet insofern als ein Bruch der Stilentwicklung der Figuralplastik des Früh- und Mittelneolithikums nicht zu erkennen sei. In Gălăbnik wurde festgestellt, dass zwischen den menschlichen Figuren der Gălăbnik-Gruppe der Protostarčevo-Kultur und

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der darauf folgenden Starčevo-Kultur markante Unterschiede vorhanden sind, deswegen möchten wir auf die Unterschiede und Beziehungen in der anthropomorphen Plastik zwischen Proto/Präsesklo- und Sesklo-Kultur kurz eingehen.

Unter den 950 in den Katalogen publizierten Figuren Stücken aus Thessalien sind nur etwa 13-17 zu den birnenförmigen mit dem fließenden Übergang zum Kopf zu zählen (Gallis, Orphanidis, 1996, Nr. 237, 259, 265,303-304, 306, 311; Orphanidis, Gallis 2011, Nr. 745-746, 749; Orphanidis, Malakasioti, 2011, Nr. 168-164).

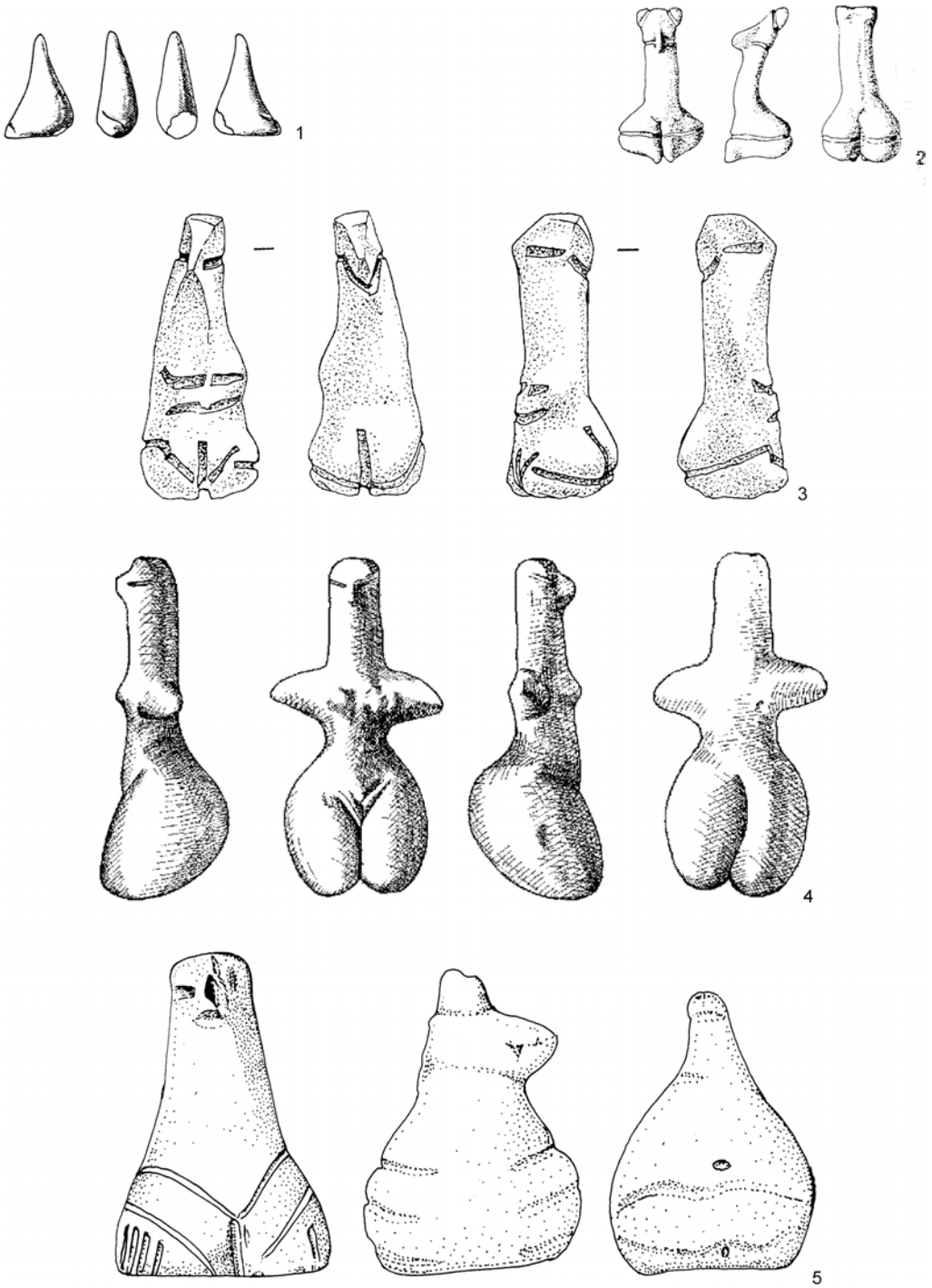

Abb. 5. Birnenförmige Figuren der Protostarčevo (1-4) und der Protoseskło-Kultur (5-6). 1-2 –Anzabegovo, 3 – Vaksevo, 4 – Gălăbnik, 5 – Mataranga, 6 -7 Otzaki Magula. Nach Gimbutas 1974, Čochadžiev 2001, Gallis/Orphanidis 1996, Milojčić-v. Zumbusch 1971.

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Eine besondere Kategorie stellen die Figuren mit der Basis wie echte birnenförmige, inklusive der breiten Rillen dar, die aber einen Rumpf mit den oberen Extremitäten und mit dem Kopf haben (Gallis, Orphanidis 1996, Nr. 220-221, 223-225,230, 235, 242-243; Milojčić-v. Zumbusch, 1971, Taf. 16: 5, 8-9).
Einen anderen möglichen typologischen Weg der Transformation der birnenförmigen Figuren zeigen die Fragmente der Figuren mit den gekreuzten, scharf angezogenen Beinen unter dem Körper (Gallis, Orphanidis, 1996, Nr. 197, 199; Orphanidis, Gallis, 2011, Nr. 590-593, 608; Orphanidis, Malakasioti, 2011, Nr. 116-117), was direkt zu den angewinkelten Beinen der Figuren der sitzenden oder liegenden Frauen der Sesklo-Kultur führen könnte (Orphanidis, Gallis, 2011, Nr. 567-568, 579-582). In diesem Falle ist die spezifische Basis der birnenförmigen Figuren verlorengegangen. Mag sein, dass die dicht gekreuzten Beine die quadratische Basis der birnenförmigen Plastik ersetzten.

Aus der Sicht der Typologie und der möglichen Transformation scheint die kleine stehende Figur mit den dicken Beinen aus Agios Georgios von Bedeutung zu sein, die auf den Hüften, dem Bauch und der Taille mit den breiten horizontalen Rillen wie bei den birnenförmigen Plastiken versehen ist und stumpfartige Arme hat (Gallis, Orphanidis, 1996, Nr. 150). Diese stehenden Figuren können kaum von den echten birnenförmigen abgeleitet werden, sie sind eher als ein authentischer Typ zu betrachten, wobei ihre chronologische Position nicht bekannt ist. Typologisch könnte zu ihnen eine weibliche Figur aus unbekannter Fundstelle gehören (Orphanidis, Malakasioti, 2011, Nr. 81), die aufgrund der roten Bemalung der Protoseskło-Kultur zugewiesen werden kann. Es konnte sich um die weitere thessalische Form - um einen Vorgänger der repräsentativen Plastik der Sesklo-Kultur wie die aus Platykambos (Orphanidis, Gallis, 2011, Nr. 499), in „Thessalien“ handeln (Hansen, 2007, Abb. 43). Es ist wahrscheinlich kein Zufall, dass eine Figur dieser Art aus Gălăbnik stammt (Abb. 1: 8). Es wäre mit zwei Wegen der kontinuierlichen Formierung der Hauptformen der Plastik der Sesklo-Kultur – mit einer Art stehender und mit mehreren Variante der sitzenden oder liegenden Figuren aus der Proto/Präsesklo-Kultur zu rechnen.

Es ist fraglich wie weit sich die oben genannten Figuren als Subtypen parallel zu den charakteristischen birnenförmigen Plastiken entwickelt haben. A. Reingruber (2009, 575) nannte als Beispiel der Stratigraphie die Siedlungen der mittelneolithischen Sesklo-Kultur (Tsangli, Tsani, Agios Petros, Chaironeia, Lerna), die vorher in Frühneolithikum (FN I-III) nicht besiedelt waren. Aus diesen Siedlungen der Sesklo-Kultur sind keine birnenförmigen Figuren bekannt. Es scheint, dass sie während der Sesklo-Kultur nicht mehr angefertigt wurden. Falls die thessalischen birnenförmigen Figuren in der Sesklo-Kultur nicht mehr im Gebrauch waren, könnte darin eine Synchronisation der Proto/Preseskło-Kultur und der Protostarčevo-Kultur des Balkans gesehen werden, weil die Sesklo-Kultur mit der Starčevo-Kultur, ohne anthropomorphe Plastik der thessalischen Art, gleichzeitig war. Es scheint, dass die für die Sesklo-Kultur typische Figuren der liegenden und sitzenden Frau zwar als Weiterentwicklung aus den birnenförmigen der Proto/Präsesklo-Kultur betrachtet werden könnten, aber in der typischen Form sollten sie nicht zusammen vorkommen.

Anthropomorphe Plastik aus Nea Nikomedeia als ein Medium der Synchronisation

Der Weg zur Komparation und Synchronisierung der Protostarčevo-Kultur auf dem Balkan aufgrund der anthropomorphen Plastik mit der Entwicklung der Proto/Präsesklo könnte durch die Siedlung in Nea Nikomedeia mit der zahlreichen, leider nur in einer engen Auswahl publizierten anthropomorphen Plastik führen (Rodden, 1962,

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Abb. 3A; 1964, Abb. 1, 8; Theocharis, 1973, Abb. 18; Hansen, 2007, 151-152, Abb. 70). Wegen der hohen Werte der älteren Radiokarbondaten wurde diese Siedlung neben den frühen Siedlungen in Thessalien gestellt. A. Reingruber (2008, 394-396) bemühte um die Korrektur Korrektion der absoluten Datierung dieser Fundstelle und datierte die Siedlung mit der rot auf cream bemalten Keramik um 6150/6100 calBC, also in die Nähe der Daten für die Protostarčevo-Kultur. Es ist hervorzuheben, dass in Nea Nikomedeia anstatt einer mit zwei Kultureinheiten zu rechnen ist: mit einer älteren mit der rot auf cream bemalten Keramik (Rodden, 1962, Abb. 9; 10: 19-30) und einer jüngeren mit der weiß bemalten Keramik (Ebd. Abb. 10: 31-37; Washburn, 1984, Abb. Seite 320-321, Taf. III.27). Die Siedlung mit der weiß bemalten Keramik war mit der Starčevo-Kultur gleichzeitig. Die aus Nea Nikomedeia stammende Tonstatuetten lassen nach S. Hansen (2007, 151-152) eine eigenständige Formensprache mit starkem Interesse an den Körpervolumina erkennen. Er meint, dass die Figuralplastik zu den nördlich anschließenden Siedelgruppen tendiert, wobei die Unterschiede zur Plastik in Thessalien gravierend seien. Leider weiß man nicht, wie die Plastik in Nea Nikomedeia auf diese zwei Kultureinheiten zu verteilen ist.

J. Nandris (1970, 389) zählte dort 113 Figuren, bildete aber keine ab. Drei später abgebildete Frauenfiguren andeuten, dass ein Teil der Plastik aus Nea Nikomedeia unserem Typ B mit den stumpfartigen Beinen und Armen nahe steht (Theocharis 1973, Abb. 18; Hansen 2007, Abb. 70), der aber in Thessalien zu fehlen scheint. J. Nandris (1970, 390) verglich Teil der Plastik mit den damals bekannten Funden aus Otzaki Magula. Seine Beschreibung entspricht den birnenförmigen Plastiken aus Otzaki Magula wie auch den Figuren der Protostarčevo-Kultur. In den anderen Figuren sah er Analogien in den damals bekannten Plastiken der Starčevo- und Karanovo-Kultur, also nicht in Thessalien. Wenn in Nea Nikomedeia zwei gleiche Typen (unsere Typen A und B) wie in der Protostarčevo-Kultur vorkämen, dann hätte es zu bedeuten, dass die ältere Siedlung mit der rot auf cream bemalten Keramik in Nea Nikomedeia aufgrund der Plastik mit der Gălăbnik-Gruppe und mit den weiteren drei Gruppen der Protostarčevo-Kultur gleichzeitig war. Andererseits, die birnenförmigen Figuren verbinden frühe Nea Nikomedeia mit der Protoseskło-Kultur in Thessalien und erlauben die Synchronisierung der Protostarčevo-Kultur mit der Proto/Präseskło-Kultur. In Thessalien sollten diese Figurenarten in der Proto/Präseskło-Kultur vorkommen und der naturalistischen Plastik der stehenden und sitzenden Frauen mit den Armen und Händen im Brustbereich oder entlang des Körpers (Theocharis, 1973, Abb. 36-38; Hansen, 2007, Taf. 86: 1; 90: 1-2, 4; 99: 1, 3, 6), die hauptsächlich an die Seskło-Kultur gebunden waren, vorangehen.

Es ist merkwürdig, dass in den drei Kultureinheiten in den drei Gebieten, wie die Protoseskło-Kultur in Thessalien, die durch Nea Nikomedeia vertretene Kultur in Westmakedonien und die Protostarčevo-Kultur auf dem südlichen Zentralbalkan (Struma- und Vardartal) eigenartige birnenförmige Figuren vorkommen, welche die knienden oder sitzenden Menschengestalt als Miniatur darstellen. Es scheint, dass die kleinen birnenförmigen Figuren in diesen drei Kulturen die älteste sind oder zu den frühesten gehören. Neben den birnenförmigen Figuren haben wahrscheinlich auch die einfachen stehenden Figuren wie die aus Prodromos, Nea Nikomedeia (Theocharis, 1973, Abb. 16, 18; Hansen, 2007, Abb. 70) und Gălăbnik (Abb.1: 1-2, 6-7; 2: 1-2, 4) gemeinsame Züge. Die auffällig hervorgehobene schlanke Taille und die reduzierte Gestaltung der Armen und Hände auf der wohl bekannten Statuette aus Nea Nikomedeia (Theocharis, 1973, Abb. 18) kann als gewisse Annäherung an die stumpfartigen Arme der Frauenfiguren der Gălăbnik-Gruppe gesehen werden (Abb. 1:6-7; 2: 5). Das gilt auch über weitere weibliche Figuren aus Nea Nikomedeia (Hansen, 2007, Abb. 70). So eine schlanke Taille wie auch die stumpfartige Arme in der so ausgeprägten Form findet man

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an den Plastiken in Thessalien kaum. Zur Plastik aus Nea Nikomedeia findet man die besten vergleichbaren Elemente auf den Figuren der Protostarčevo-Periode in Gălăbnik (Abb. 1: 1, 5-6; 2: 1-2). Wenn für die birnenförmige Plastik der thessalischen Art auf dem Balkan ganz treue Gegenstücke zu finden sind dann sind die für die Sesklo-Kultur in Thessalien typischen Figuren auf dem Balkan keine Analogien bekannt. In den anderen keramischen Erzeugnissen, besonders in den Gefäßen in den drei behandelten Territorien können dermaßen vergleichbare Formen und Elemente wie in den birnenförmigen Figuren nicht erkannt werden als ob in der Weltanschauung und in der rituellen Sitten anderes Niveau der interkulturellen Beziehungen geherrscht hat. Die erwähnte Ähnlichkeit bzw. Identität der anthropomorphen Figuren in den drei unterschiedlichen Kultureinheiten in Südosteuropa können als Indikator für ihre Synchronisation dienen und neben den anderen Erscheinungen gewisse Autonomie gegenüber Anatolien indizieren. Es ist beachtenswert, dass zwischen der frühneolithischen anthropomorphen Plastik in SO Europa und Westanatolien keine gemeinsamen morphologischen Merkmale und Übereinstimmungen zu finden sind. Das gilt aber für die Formen und die Verzierung der Keramik und über die auf dem Balkan zahlreichen Altärchen mehrerer Typen, die in Anatolien nie verwendet wurden. Dieses Problem hängt schon mit der Einführung der neolithischen Lebensweise und ihrer Verbreitung im südöstlichen Europa zusammen.

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SACRED COMMUNICATION IN CONTEXT THE EARLIEST NEOLITHIC IN THE BALKAN PENINSULA

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Abstract: *Beginning with the Neolithic transition, this paper investigates evidence of the use of iconic and abstract imagery within the earliest Neolithic Sesklo culture of the Balkan peninsula. Central to this interdisciplinary inquiry is evidence of ritual activities and an abiding spirituality at the core of this culture's longevity.*
Keywords: *sacredness, sustainability, figurines, Sesklo, Achilleion.*

Setting the stage ~ the Neolithic transition

Near the end of the last ice age, global atmospheric circulation and the latitudinal range of the jet stream changed, as did oceanic circulation and the monsoonal cycles. The Holocene rise of atmospheric carbon dioxide concentration stimulated productivity in C3 grasses . . . some of which became early domesticates in the Old World. This atmospheric factor may explain why domestication did not begin sooner in unglaciated areas at lower latitudes. Comparable changes probably happened during previous interglacial episodes as well but, this time, modern human beings were on the scene" (Dincauze 2000, 393).

The "Neolithic revolution," coined in 1923 by V. Gordon Childe, was not a rapid occurrence, like the flip of a switch, and attempts to explain this complex development in reductive terms have been vigorously critiqued (see, e.g., Zeder 2012; Lichter 2005). The domestication of plants and animals took place over thousands of years in various ecological regions of the world (Watkins 2015, 3; Bellwood 2005).

After the beginning of the Holocene, in southwest Asia's "Fertile Crescent," luxuriant stands of perennial grasses were gathered and processed by local hunter-gatherers. Their intensive interaction with these wild cereals, resulting in morphological changes from ancestral varieties, was accomplished by indigenous foragers whose knowledge of plants and their intrinsic properties had developed over millennia through persistent observation, experimentation, and intensive trial and error. Humans have co-evolved with the entire living world and plants were always essential to human lifeways, not only for food and raw materials, but for medicines, analgesics, hallucinogens, as well as poisons (Dincauze 2000, 393-397). The power of plants to ease pain, to heal, to nurture

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life as well as to sicken and to kill engendered peoples' necessary respect and sense of sacred reciprocity.

Alasdair Whittle comments that the way people conceive of themselves as related to nature and the land fundamentally affects the way they move within the landscape and use resources within a given area. He offers a model for hunter-gatherers as "dwelling in 'giving environments' in a 'cosmic economy of sharing'" (Whittle 2001, 447). The transition by indigenous foragers to various degrees of sedentism, with increases in population, their adoption of agro-pastoral economies, and developments in their material culture and symbolism resulted in what is typically known as the Neolithic way of life.

After the establishment of sedentary villages within the Neolithic formation zone, a "cosmic economy of sharing" continued as vast amounts of obsidian and other commodities were traded over hundreds of kilometers. According to Mehmet Özdoğan, the indigenous inhabitants of the core areas of domestication freely shared their knowledge, new technologies, and visual symbolic expressions, which quickly spread over extensive areas with no indication of rivalry or conflict. He writes, "a social system that enchanted sharing and distributing knowledge, sharing common values, thus attaining a high pace, seems to characterize the Neolithic cultures of the Near East." Nevertheless, it took nearly 4000 years before detectable components of the "Neolithic package" appeared in Western Anatolia, the Aegean, and the Balkans (Özdoğan 2005, 19; Özdoğan 2008 142, 158).

Svend Hansen comments that a significant formal change in figurine art took place when gathering of wild plants was replaced by the cultivation of wild cereals. Between the 10th–8th millennia BC, "female statuettes prevail in quantity" containing formal details relevant for the later development of the Neolithic in the Balkans (Hansen 2005, 200).

Hansen describes the creation of Neolithic figurines in the Near East during the 10th millennium BC as an "innovation"—part of the Neolithic package—along with the domestication of cereals and animals, the production of pottery and stone tools (Hansen 2005, 207-208). Jacques Cauvin discusses a "revolution of symbols" as one of the major driving forces of Neolithic evolution in south-west Asia (Cauvin 2000; Bellwood 2005, 55).

It is important to consider, however, that an exceedingly ancient perception of the living world as divinely spirited was not eclipsed by the sociocultural changes associated with the transition to Neolithic lifeways. The deep cultural memory of a sacred life-giving and life-sustaining force, personified in female forms, fused with innovations of the developing agrarian society (Haarmann, Marler 2008, 33-34).

Interestingly, according to Özdoğan, male images associated with the cult buildings of Nevali Çori and Göbekli Tepe, and those found in the early levels at Çatal Hüyük, disappeared during the Neolithic in Central Anatolia and in areas further to the west.

"The western movement of the Neolithic is devoid of this element; the way of life, with its new subsistence pattern and tool kit, moved. Together with this movement the female deity or goddess, which was more of a personal symbolic value, moved. Perhaps this is the moment when the conventional image of the 'Mother Goddess' made her actual appearance" (Özdoğan 2001, 316-317).

Özdoğan describes the Neolithic package, not simply as a collection of specific items, or "innovations," but as "a conspectus of cultural activities" (Özdoğan 2008, 158). In this way, the ongoing establishment, progressive development, and florescence of

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Neolithic cultures represent not simply the appearance of a "package" of specific elements, but the complex collaboration and cultural activities of generations of people co-creating viable societies.

The Earliest Neolithic in the Balkan peninsula

An adequate history of theoretical debates concerning the degree of demic expansion, cultural diffusion, and autochthonous development in the establishment of Neolithic lifeways in Europe is beyond the focus of this paper. Nevertheless, the western spread of the Neolithic package, in various configurations, was a very gradual process (Halstead 1996, 298). Well established maritime networks existed in the Aegean that may have transported small groups of people over time bringing domesticates, horticultural and technical knowledge from various regions, who merged their cultural resources to create new pioneering societies (Cunliffe 2008, 95, 98, 101). During the first half of the seventh millennium BC, the earliest Neolithic villages in continental Europe began to appear in the Balkan peninsula in carefully chosen areas of rich soil and access to water. The Balkan peninsula was unevenly settled during the seventh millennium BC due to variations in ecological conditions, but an exceptional concentration of Neolithic settlements developed in Thessaly. Mesolithic evidence, which is scanty there, is better represented in southern and western Greece and in the Aegean islands providing a better understanding of the Mesolithic-Neolithic transition (Guilaine 2015, 88). The deliberate use of imported domesticated plants and animals in a symbolically and economically coherent system led to the long-term success of these Early Neolithic societies (Perlès 2001, 171-172). Catherine Perlès describes the Early Neolithic in Greece as "a phase of long duration" typified by the spread of large sedentary villages with well-build houses, elaborate house equipment, the expansion of farming, long-distance circulation of goods, widespread use of pottery, and abundant evidence of symbolic expression (Perlès 2001, 98, 121). In eastern Thessaly, 117 villages are identified of up to 200-300 inhabitants—one large permanent settlement every ten square kilometers—implying robust social networks maintaining peaceful relations to allow for inter-village cooperation (Cunliffe 2008, 98). The intensive levels of horticulture needed to maintain such concentrated populations would have required ongoing communal labor and mutual collaboration between villages (Halstead 1996, 304-305).

Perlès comments, "Taken at face value, the presently available data suggest that the same basic principle was operating at all levels of society, from the household to the regional population: a principle of complementarity and balanced reciprocity" (Perlès 2001, 302).

Due to their achievements of cultural stability, peaceful co-existence, and the absence of developed hierarchies, Andrew Sherratt suggests that local hunter-gathers were rapidly integrated into early farming communities that were established on indigenous ancestral land. This may explain the complete disappearance of Mesolithic traditions, particularly in Thessaly, and the lack of evidence of conflicts between farmers and foragers (Sherratt 1982, 15; Perlès 2001, 302-303). If so, the animistic sensibilities of indigenous populations would have informed the early farming communities.

The Sesklo culture site of Achilleion

In 1973 and 1974 the habitation site of Achilleion in Thessaly was excavated by project director Marija Gimbutas from the University of California, Los Angeles, with an international team of thirty American, British, Dutch, and Hungarian students and scholars. This 200 x 260 m stratified tell in the region of Farsala provided excellent sequences of architectural, ceramic, and lithic traditions with evidence of persistent ritual

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activities throughout 800 years of continuous local development. Achilleion is radiocarbon and dendrochronologically dated to c. 6400-5600 BC, which serves as the chronological yardstick for the Early Neolithic Sesklo culture in Thessaly, southern Macedonia, and central Greece (Gimbutas et al. 1989).

Achilleion's stable economy was based on the cultivation of emmer, einkorn, and club wheat, barley, millet, lentils, vetch and peas, with domesticated sheep, goats, cattle and pigs (Gimbutas et al. 1989; Gimbutas 1991, 19; Perlès 2001, 166-170). The horticulture practiced by Sesklo culture farmers featured "landrace" wheat varieties representing the earliest stage of Near Eastern domestication that evolved through both natural and long-term human selection (Rogosa 2016, 23-24)[11].

The Achilleion excavation revealed evidence of careful land management and the maintenance of soil fertility through systematic crop rotation and the planting of pulses to fix nitrogen in the soil (Gimbutas et al. 1989; Perlès 2001, 164-165). As the cultural anthropologist Carole L. Crumley informs us, "ecological knowledge, systems of resource management, and worldviews are inseparable indicating creative indigenous solutions to environmental problems. Moreover, diverse cultural models of nature underpin every society's thinking about the environment" (Crumley 2007, 20). Local knowledge—obtained by empirical means—was widely shared, refined and reproduced, informing traditional practices.

Sesklo culture figurines and ritual evidence

The continual creation and use of figurines and evidence of domestic rituals are characteristic of numerous Neolithic societies, not only in the Near East and in Greece, but later throughout the Balkans. "Greek Neolithic figurines, with their different shapes, degree of elaboration, sexes and positions, probably covered a range of meanings and functions" (Perlès 2001, 255-257). As project director of the Achilleion excavation, Marija Gimbutas was keen to carefully gather as much data about sculptures, ritual equipment and their in situ contexts as possible, which had rarely been considered an important focus of serious archaeological inquiry previous by project directors. In the monograph of the Achilleion excavation, she writes: "The systematic saving and careful examination of promising lumps of earth and the faithful recording of archaeological contexts resulted in a collection of figurines without equal among Neolithic sites in Greece. For the first time, the technique of figurine manufacture has been reconstructed

Fig. 1. Seated clay figure, well burnished with a cream-colored slip. Sesklo culture from Nicea near Larisa, c. 5800-5600 cal BC. H. 5.7 cm. (Gimbutas 1991, 22).

[11] The broad gene pools and deep, extensive root systems of these heirloom plants, and the practice of planting several varieties together, allowed them to adapt to a wide range of different environments. It is no wonder that these increasingly rare, highly nutritious heirloom grains are cherished in old world contexts to this day (Rogosa 2016).

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in considerable detail" (Gimbutas et al., 1989, 171).

Gimbutas developed a system of classification based on morphology and style (articulate versus schematic), resulting in twenty categories of figurines, which she associated with seven deities, both goddesses and gods. The bodies of the "articulate" sculptures are finely modelled. (**Figure 1)**

Some wear headbands, turbans, or elaborate hairdos; pendants or medallions are depicted in relief, while necklaces are painted in red on a white background.

It is significant to see that most Sesklo sculptures wear masks, suggesting a ritual consciousness. Most were created with a cylindrical neck upon which each mask is fixed. Specific stylistic features may have functioned as visual codes carrying culturally recognized meanings. (**Figure 2)**

Many masks are depicted with a bird's beak, or snake-like head. Some cylindrical necks have removable masks that could be replaced by other ones, perhaps to generate different potencies, requiring intimate interaction with the ritual images. (**Figure 3)**

Fig. 2: Seated clay figure with a beak-like mask, Sesklo culture, Farsala, S. Thessaly, c. 5800-5600 cal BC. H. 7 cm. (photo: J. Marler, Archaeological Museum of Volos).

Fig. 3. Removable lozenge-shaped clay mask on a conical neck with white paste. Achilleion IIIb/IVa, c. 6000-5900 cal BC (Gimbutas *et al.*, 1989, 200, 359).

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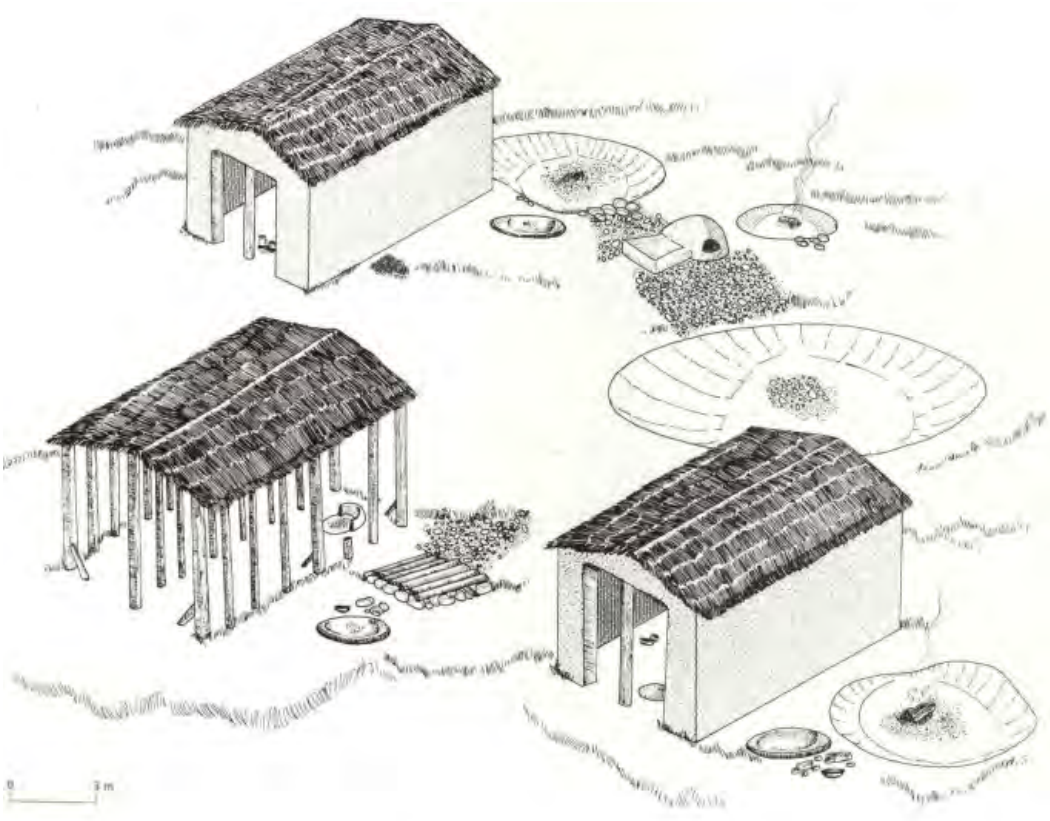

Fig. 4. Reconstruction of Achilleion courtyard with large paved hearths for food production, areas for grinding grain, a domed oven for baking bread and platforms for figurines and ritual items. Timber-post houses, as in this drawing, appeared c. 6200 cal BC (Gimbutas *et al.,* 1989, 42; Gimbutas 1991, 15).

At Achilleion, the remains of nearly two hundred sculptures of various types were found in association with specific contexts: inside and outside houses, near hearths, ovens or work areas, on built platforms or in pits. Spacious courtyards between houses on every habitation level were used for food production. (**Figure 4)**

These courtyard areas contained querns, grinding stones, pestles, pounders, storage pots, stone and bone tools, paved hearths for food production, with domed ovens for baking and evidence of ongoing rituals (Gimbutas *et al.,* 1989; Perlès 2001, 262-263).

During the Classical Sesklo period, c. 6000 BC, anthropomorphic vessels with upraised arms, fine bowls, vessels with S-shaped designs and elegant elliptical handles, with multiple Pregnant Goddesses were found on a paved area next to an oven. Gimbutas notes, "The most exquisite vases and figurines speak for very special cult activities" (Gimbutas *et al.,* 1989, 215).

Sculptures of the pregnant type, found in food production areas, were created to stand, or to sit on special platforms in specially constructed thrones. The Pregnant Goddess, found in all areas where grain was ground and baked into bread was most prevalently depicted deity (Gimbutas *et al.,* 171-201). (**Figure 5)**

A Pregnant Goddess from Achilleion, c. 5800 BC, stands in a typical posture with hands on her pregnant belly with a huge pubic triangle. Note the absence of breasts here. The symbolic focus is on gestation and the potency of her birth-giving potential **(Figure 6).**

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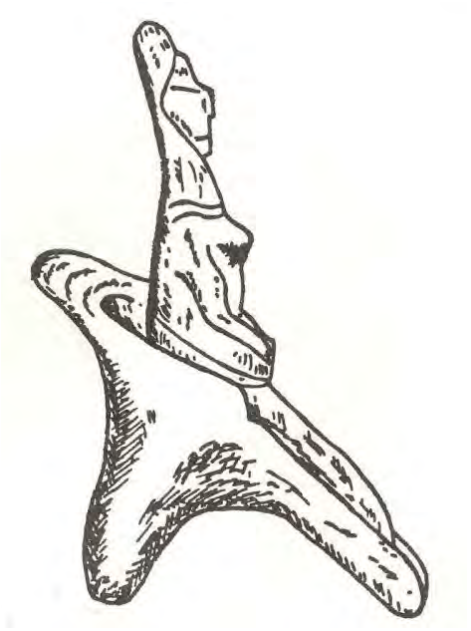

Fig. 5. Masked and enthroned Pregnant Goddess holding her extended belly. Achilleion II, c. 6200 cal BC (Gimbutas 1991, 253).

Fig. 6. Pregnant Goddess standing with hands on her belly. Sesklo culture, Thessaly, Achilleion IV, c. 5800 cal BC. H. 3.8 cm. (Gimbutas 1989, 142).

Schematic figurines are highly abstract versions of the articulate forms, made on a flat base to stand on an open platform or dias. These images exaggerate specific characteristics—such as a pregnant belly and huge pubic triangle—while other attributes are absent or greatly diminished. (**Figure 7)** Both articulate and schematic sculptures were found in all habitation levels at Achilleion.

Fig. 7. Schematic clay figure with pregnant belly and huge pubic triangle on a flat base. Achilleion II, c. 6200 cal BC (photo: J. Marler, Archaeological Museum of Volos).

As the Bread Giver or Grain Mother, the Pregnant Goddess presided over the grinding of the grain before its transformation into dough. One can imagine the flesh-like dough being kneaded and stretched, rolled and shaped before being placed in the oven for baking. Were some pieces of dough given to nearby children to shape into fanciful beings or animals that were also baked? What stories were told, what songs were sung, what prayers were offered to accompany these metamorphic activities?

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Was the domed bread oven considered analogous to a woman's pregnant belly? To this day in some areas, a pregnant woman is still said to have "a bun in the oven." In phase II of the site, c. 6200 cal BC, a sculpture in a birth-giving posture was found at a large circular hearth with her knees pulled up toward her pregnant belly, exposing her swollen vulva. She is associated with an offering table, the leg of a cult vessel, and fine painted pottery (Gimbutas *et al.* 1989, 214). (**Figure 8)**

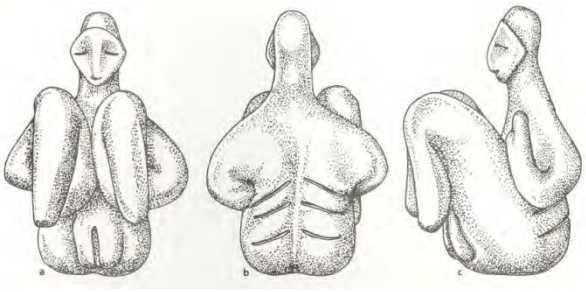

Fig. 8. Birth-Giving Goddess (front, back, side) with anthropomorphic mask. Achilleion II, Thessaly, c. 6200 cal BC. H. 6.4 cm. (Gimbutas 1989, 106).

Fig. 9: A black stone amulet representing a frog-shaped woman, or Frog Goddess, Achilleion II, Thessaly, c. 6300 cal BC. 3.2 cm. (Gimbutas 1989, 252).

Also from a food production area, a black stone anthropomorphic amulet representing a frog-shaped woman in an open-legged display posture was discovered in a pit surrounded by stones, c. 6300 cal BC. A quern, hand-grinder, axe, blade, and a fragment of a white stone vessel, was nearby. Wide-spread ethnographic material from later periods associates the frog with creation, birth, fertility, and regeneration (Gimbutas *et al.,* 1989, 213; Gimbutas 1989, 252; Perlès 2001, 267). (**Figure 9)**

The continued presence of these sculptures in food production areas, with consistent evidence of ritual activities in all habitation phases over 800 years, implies a seamless unity over time between practical work and spiritual communion. Kyriakidis points out that ritual and mundane actions in the same group of activities cannot easily be separated. Moreover, a constancy of ritual evidence suggests constancy of associated beliefs (Kyriakidis 2007, 15-17). Gimbutas' writings are in accord with this view. Moreover, she did not separate Neolithic people's socio-economic activities from their interconnection with the living world (Gimbutas 1989, 1991).

Gimbutas uses the term "Goddess" to express an anthropomorphized perception of the interconnected sacredness of the "unity of all life in Nature" (Gimbutas 1989, 321). In her view, the corpus of sculptures produced within the Sesklo culture—and later throughout Old Europe—served as personifying images, visual metaphors, of the dynamic forces animating the cyclic processes of life (Gimbutas 1989; Haarmann 2013, 170).

Hybrid images, such as Bird Goddesses (female images with bird masks) and Snake Goddesses (women depicted with snake-like arms and legs) were venerated on special platforms in house shrines, never in areas of food production. They were sometimes found with the remains of offering bowls, libation vessels, zoomorphic pots, clay spoons, bone tubes (presumed to be musical pipes) and other ritual objects. In Phase IVa at Achilleion, c. 5900-5800 BC, Bird and Snake Goddesses were found on a bench-like altar in a two-room temple, with implements for weaving and spinning found nearby (Gimbutas *et al.,* 1989, 215-216).

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Such hybrid images—combining a human woman wearing an animal mask or other attributes—seem to imply a shared consciousness between the human and animal realms.

The Sesklo Bird Goddess from Megali Vrisi (**Figure 10)** is the same stylistic type as a broken figure found at Achilleion. These bird women were probably well known in numerous depictions as mythological figures celebrated in mythic tales and songs. She has the long neck of a water bird, a tidy human hairdo over her distinctive bird mask; she holds her well-developed breasts (possibly implying nourishment and protection); chevrons are engraved on her forearm. Bird Goddesses continue to appear later, in various elaborations, especially in the Vinča culture.

Fig. 10: Sesklo Bird Goddess, Megali Vrisi, Tirnavos, Thessaly, c. 5800 cal BC (photo: J. Marler, Archaeological Museum of Volos).

An explanatory text near the permanent exhibition of Sesklo figurines in the Archaeological Museum of Volos states:

"Female figurines have been found in all the Neolithic settlements in Thessaly, both inside and outside the houses, in places for storage, food production and tool making, in ovens, with ornaments and with tools for milling and weaving. The fact that female figurines are associated with every aspect of household activity indicates the active role of women in running the house and their symbolism in important sectors of production. The emphasis on the female in the symbolic system of values of Neolithic folk reflects the acknowledgement of the power of women, who played a vital part in securing the survival of the community and in maintaining social cohesion. In Neolithic communities woman was the archetype, symbolically embodying many of the metaphysical powers which protected agriculture and ensured the prosperity of the Neolithic household and the community" (courtesy of the Archaeological Museum of Volos, Greece).

Figure 11. Seated male figure, Sesklo culture, Pyrasos, near Volos, Thessaly. c. 5900-5700 cal BC. H. 7 cm. (photo: J. Marler, Archaeological Museum of Volos).

According to Perlès, "the marked predominance of feminine figures might support the hypothesis of a special symbolic power attributed to women as life-givers and bearers of fertility. Yet the presence of male figures cannot be ignored." (Perlès 2001, 301-302). Gimbutas did not ignore the male figures, although they are comparably rare in numbers. She described the seated male as a calm Male God, while miniature pillars or "phallic stands" may have represented a youthful ithyphallic deity (Gimbutas *et al.*, 1989, 177-220; Gimbutas 1989, 175). **Figure 11.**

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A fascinating discovery from the Sesklo culture is the clay sculpture of a seated male with phallus and well-developed breasts. Is this intended as an expression of complementarity and sacred balance between male and female aspects? Or might this figure, and others of its type, signify gender fluidity or a third gender altogether? The fusing of male/female imagery continues later in the Starčevo and other Neolithic cultures of the Balkans. (**Figure 12)**

Fig. 12. Seated figure with developed breasts and phallus. Sesklo culture, Magula no. 94 near Larisa, Thessaly. c. 6000-5700 cal BC. H. 7 cm. (Gimbutas 1989, 183).

The life of the Sesklo culture communities revolved around the cycles of the agricultural year. The wheat and barley brought into the courtyard areas for processing were the result of many months—perhaps an entire year or more—of dedicated communal labor. In order to produce each year's harvest of precious seeds, the land had to be prepared for planting, seeds saved from the previous year were carefully scattered, covered with soil, watered, weeded, tended, and protected from wild herbivores and scavengers day after day, month after month. When the grain was finally ready to be harvested, villagers gathered into a large work force to cut the stocks of grain using sickles made of antlers and obsidian, jasper or flint.

Obsidian needed for the sickles was acquired from long-distance traders from its origin on the island of Melos requiring journeys of several hundred kilometers over land and sea. These trading networks were most likely managed by mobile foragers who maintained long-distant social relations by means of symbolic exchange of high-quality raw materials (Cunliffe 2008, 99; Perlès 2001, 207). In this way peaceful alliances for mutual benefit were fostered among people over long distances who met only on rare occasions (Watkins 2015, 154).

The stocks of grain were cut long, then tied standing up in the fields for drying. At just the right time the ears were threshed, and the chaff was tediously separated from the grain. After being cleaned, the precious grain had to be properly stored against moisture, insects and rodents until it was brought into the village courtyards to be ground into flour. It was imperative to save sufficient seed-stock for planting in the following year.

The early ecologist Edward Hyams wrote that when people retain close contact with the earth they seem to acquire a kind of knowledge, a feeling for the pattern of the whole organism which is life. These abilities enable them to work with the flow of life rather than against it. Moreover, people prosper when they move with life's pattern, collaborating with other members of the soil community to which they belong. (Hyams, 1976, 10-12). Crumley adds, "While they were not always the earnest ecologists some have imagined, our human forebears did at least see that the sun, the heavens, the earth, the waters, their fellow creatures, and they formed a single system, and held all sacred. While they too made management mistakes, they did not lose sight, as we have, of the integrated nature of the Universe" (Crumley 2007, 27).

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Concluding thoughts

It is remarkable to recognize that the pioneering farmers who established the very earliest Neolithic societies on continental Europe during the mid-seventh millennium BC successfully developed long-lived, vitally functioning culture systems. Most notable is the Sesklo culture in what is now central Greece, Thessaly, and southern Macedonia. Their remarkable sustainability would not have been possible without the multi-generational dedication of entire communities working in concert with the seasonal realities of the living world. Their success also relied upon the distillation and transmission of ancestral knowledge, aligned with core beliefs, values, a cohesive world view, and sustained collaboration with neighboring populations.

Prehistoric societies are oral societies that rely upon the capacities of human minds to preserve and transmit *foundational knowledge*.[12] In oral societies, what is known is what can be recalled, and the preservation of vital knowledge and cultural memory is tied to communication—through spoken language, as well as through non-verbal expressions, such as music, dance, and the creation of visual imagery. As Walter Ong informs us, "Thinking is done in mnemonic patterns, shaped for recall" (Ong 2002, 34).

Human culture has a varied fabric composed of both visible and invisible realms (Haarmann 2011, 43). Highly communicative expressions of spoken language, in the forms of mythical stories, proverbs, songs, recitations, as well as music and dance—are exceedingly important for the transmission of meaning and cultural cohesion. Nevertheless, these expressions are invisible in the archaeological record

Cultural myths are transmitted in oral societies by means of repeated thematic expressions. The creation of sculptural figures, rendered in recognizable forms, could have functioned as mnemonic images, carriers of mythical themes. Sculptures of the bird-woman, or Bird Goddess, for instance, may have evoked well-known stories expressing her primordial powers.

The Pregnant Goddess presided over the rhythmic grinding of the grain, its transformation into flour, into dough, then baked in a womb-like oven into bread to nourish the community. Her sacred images were tended by the women of Achilleion for 800 years; their focused activities of production would have been saturated with meaning.

The Early Neolithic Sesklo culture modeled a dynamic outpouring of creative manifestation and cultural sustainability that continued throughout the Neolithic cultures of Old Europe. Mikkel Tin describes the phenomenon of "making" as the practical dimension of culture that transforms matter and articulates meaning (Tin 2013).

The dedicated production of countless sculptural images and ongoing ritual activities were essential for the cultivation of mutual identities, cohesive networks between people, and cultural memory, especially in new environments. These activities continued to develop, and in some areas were considerably amplified, as Neolithic societies continued to spread into the Balkans. There they continued the ancestral dynamic, articulated in the beginning by Özdoğan, of Neolithic social systems that "enchanted sharing and distributing knowledge, sharing common values."

[12] *Foundational knowledge* refers to forms of cultural knowledge shared by all members of a group that is the basis of their shared world view (Haarmann 2013, 11).

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NEOLITHIC FEMALE FIGURES AND THEIR EVOLUTION INTO GROUPS OF FEROCIOUS AND BENEFICENT HISTORIC-AGE GODDESSES, FAIRIES AND WITCHES

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Abstract: *Thousands of female figurines have been excavated from Neolithic prehistoric archaeological sites. I believe that some—or many—of them represent powerful Goddesses of the life continuum: birth, death, and regeneration. These Goddesses often carried the iconography of bird and snake.*

It has been demonstrated that many Neolithic cultures – Çatalhöyük, for example—were both equalitarian and matrilocal. After the migrations of the Proto-Indo-Europeans into Europe, South Asia, Anatolia, and elsewhere, both the cultures and the religions of the indigenous peoples were changed. The cultures became more patriarchal and they merged their religions with those of the Indo-Europeans. "Great"-Goddesses of the life continuum which were worshipped by the indigenous peoples were assimilated into pantheons dominated by male deities. The female figures either lost some of their powers or they became spokespeople for the new cultures, as did the Greek Athena. Even so, the Goddesses retained their avian and serpentine iconography, although many Classical-age female figures—those who were associated with death—metamorphosed into witches and monsters: Medusa, Erinys (Furies), Harpies, Sirens, and many others.

I believe that when these "Great"-Goddesses diminished in power, the "group"-Goddesses, which would have had many powers and functions in "Old Europe, were demoted to fairies and often witches. Many of these historic figures had avian characteristics: they had wings and they could fly. Thus, they carried on some of the attributes of Neolithic female figures. These groups of female figures may have represented aspects of the divine just as did single goddesses who accreted multiple functions and powers.

These "group"-Goddesses include groups of fairies (sometimes characterized as witches): Romanian Zine, Latvian and Lithuanian Laumas (similar to Raganas), Indic Yogīṇīs and Yakṣīṇīs, Tyrolean Anguane, Celto-Germanic Three Mothers, and Slavic Vili and Rusalki.

These female figures are not unilaterally beneficent. If they liked you, they might do your laundry. If they did not like you, they might destroy your housework or worse. Likewise, the prehistoric "Great"-Goddesses of the life continuum—birth, death, and regeneration—were likely invoked for fecundity, health, and love, but they might also have wreaked havoc, as did the early historic Sumerian Inanna.

One quality which many of these collective divine and magical female figures embody is

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beauty. The Vili, Laumas with their long blond hair, and the Yakṣīṇīs were lovely, youthful female figures who could entice the men of their cultures. They could also affect the elements. Yet another quality which many of them shared is that they could bring benefits to all, or, just as easily, they could bring harm. This is a diminution of the broad spectrum of powers a prehistoric Goddess of the Life-Continuum would have exercised among her people, but hints of those powers remain among the groups of goddesses who live on in the folklore of the peoples of many Indo-European cultures.
Key Words: *birds, snakes, Zâne, Laumas, Raganas, Yogiṇīs, Yakṣiṇīs, Ḍākiṇīs, Vili, Rusalki.*

Thousands of female figurines have been excavated from Neolithic prehistoric archaeological sites. I believe that some—or many—of them represent powerful Goddesses of the life continuum: birth, death, and regeneration. These Goddesses often carried the iconography of bird and snake (Gimbutas 1974: 112-151; (Robbins) Dexter 1978; 1990; 1997; 2011; 2013).[14]

Attributes of birds and snakes

There are many possibilities for why birds and snakes may have been considered to be divine in prehistory. Female birds and snakes lay eggs, a powerful, visual symbol of birth. (In the historic era, birds such as the dove personified the breath of life, purity, and the soul.) Raptors—owls, hawks, eagles, vultures—must kill in order to eat; they have personified night, and by extension death, for millennia. Crows, as well as raptors, are associated with the battlefield in myths.

Snakes slough their skin—a powerful representation of regeneration—while birds molt, shedding their feathers. Both the skin of snakes and the feathers of birds rejuvenate. Poisonous snakes represent death, but their venom can also be used as antitoxin; they thus also represent health and regeneration.

Birds mediate heaven and earth, while snakes mediate earth and the underworld.

These attributes may have led to the concept that birds and snakes partake of the divine. That is, they represent birth, death, and regeneration.

Pre-patriarchal cultures

It has been demonstrated that many Neolithic cultures—the Anatolian Çatalhöyük, for example—were both equalitarian and matrilocal (Hodder 2004). After the migrations of the Proto-Indo-Europeans into Europe, South Asia, Anatolia, and elsewhere (Goldberg *et al.* 2017, Haak *et al.* 2015), both the cultures and the religions of the indigenous peoples were changed. The indigenous cultures became more patriarchal and their deities were assimilated to those of the Indo-Europeans. When "Great"-Goddesses of the life continuum—worshipped by the Neolithic peoples of Europe and the Near East—were assimilated into male-dominated pantheons ((Robbins) Dexter 1978; 1990), the female deities either lost some of their powers or they became spokespeople for the new cultures, as did the Greek city- and battlefield-Goddess, Athena. Early historic Europeans worshipped powerful Goddesses who supported their societies (for example, Athena, Demeter, Artemis, and Aphrodite), but many Classical-age female

[14] See also Iharka Szücs-Csillik, and Zoia Maxim, 2016 for the concordance between the serpent in constellations and the serpent in Romanian folk practice and prehistoric material culture. Further, Szücs-Csillik says that "Looking at the skychart, I realize that the "birds" constellations - Aquila and Cygnus are near to the Serpent constellation." (Szücs-Csillik, personal communication, November 2, 2017). Thus, birds and snakes are connected in the skies just as they are in folklore, myth, and iconography.

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figures—those who were mainly associated with death, including Medusa, Erinys (Furies), Harpies, and Sirens—metamorphosed into witches and monsters. Revered or not, many of these female figures retained their avian and serpentine iconography.

I believe that when the Neolithic Goddesses diminished in power, the "group"-Goddesses, multiples of Goddesses which would have had many powers and functions in Neolithic Europe, were demoted to fairies and often witches. Many of these historic female figures had avian characteristics: they had wings and they could fly. Thus, they continued some of the attributes of the Neolithic female figures. These groups of female figures may have represented aspects of the divine just as did single Goddesses who accreted multiple functions and powers.

These groups of female figures date to earlier than the Neolithic. Harald Haarmann and Joan Marler believe that female guardian spirits of nature predate agrarian cultures throughout Eurasia (Haarmann-Marler 2008, 47). I do not believe that we can state with certainty that these pan-Eurasian female figures were only helpers of Goddesses rather than Goddesses themselves, although in the historic Uralic cultures they did manifest as such (Haarmann-Marler 2008, 74-75; 110; 112-113).

Group-Goddesses

In Indo-European cultures, there are several sorts of group-Goddesses, among which are collective Goddesses and plural deities. In plural deity, the deity is repeated (usually tripled), to emphasize its power and attributes. These deities form a group but they have only one identity, character, and personality. Among powerful early historic Goddesses we may think of the Egyptian Seven Hathors (she was the goddess of love, music, poetry, war, and many other functions)(Dexter 1990) and the later Indic Seven Mothers (the Sapta-matrikas – Sapta-mātṛkās). Another sort of group-Goddesses, the collectives, each retain their own identities, including their first names. They have a group name, they work together, and they are worshipped together (Work-MaKinne 2016, 291). Even though they are worshipped as a group, they are not conflated into one being (Work-MaKinne 2016, 289). The Triple Goddesses—maiden, mother, and crone—form a group which is similar to a collective. They can often retain their own names, personalities, and attributes. "The Triple Goddess shapeshifts, crosses the boundaries between single deity and collective deity and remains unique." (Work-MaKinne 2016, 290-291. See also Work-MaKinne 2009).

The Three Mothers

One of the Indo-European groups of female figures is the Western European Three Mothers, often referred to as the *Matrones*, from their Latin appellative. There are many groups of triple female figurines among the Celto-Germanic and Italic peoples; the Romans celebrated a festival called the *Matralia* ("pertaining to the Mothers"):
"Now, Phrygian Tithonus, you are complaining that you have been abandoned by your wife (Aurora, "Dawn"), *and the watchful morning star goes forth from the eastern waters. Go, good mothers (the Matralia is your festival*), *and offer yellow cakes to the Theban Goddess …The scepter-bearing hands of Servius consecrated a sacred temple to Mother Matuta. She excludes female slaves from the threshold of her temple and calls for toasted cakes …let not a devoted mother pray to her on behalf of her own offspring: she herself was seen to have been a rather unfortunate parent. You should rather entrust to her the progeny of another."* (*Ovid, Works*, R. Merkel, ed. Leipzig: Teubner, 1907)[15]

[15] Ovid, *Fasti* VI. 473-568:
Iam, Phryx, a nupta quereris, Tithone, relinqui,
et vigil Eois Lucifer exit aquis:

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These "group"-Goddesses include groups of fairies (sometimes characterized as witches): Romanian Zâne, Latvian/Lithuanian Laumas, and the similar Raganas, Indic Yogiṇīs,Yakṣiṇīs, and Ḍākiṇīs, Tyrolean Anguane, and Slavic Vili (Vilas) and Rusalki.

Such female figures are not unilaterally beneficent. If they like you, they may do your laundry. If they do not like you, they may destroy your housework or worse. Likewise, the prehistoric "Great"-Goddess of the life continuum—birth, death, and regeneration—is invoked for fecundity, health, and love, but she may, like the early historic Sumerian Inanna, wreak havoc. Inanna was the

"*. . . preeminent one, of heaven and earth, Inanna…*"[16]

She was a Goddess of love and the Me, powerful attributes of culture. She represents many aspects of Nature; she is the thundering storm:

"*Like a dragon, you have thrown venom upon the land.*
When you roar upon the earth, like the Thunder,
in that place the Grain does not exist.
[*You are*] *a flood,*
descending from the mountain."[17]

With time, she also became a powerful martial Goddess who destroyed her enemies. She flies about the battlefield:

"*In the vanguard of the battle,*
everything is beset by you.
My Lady, [*flying about*] *on your own wings, you feed on* [*the carnage*]."[18]

Similar to Inanna was the Syrian Anat, also a Goddess of love and the battlefield (in Syrian cylinder seals she too was depicted as winged):

"*Anat. . .violently slays the sons of two cities; she hews the people of the sea-shore;*
she destroys the people of the rising sun; under her, heads [*fly*] *like vultures;*
over her, hands [*fly*] *like locusts…she attaches heads to her back; she attaches hands onto her girdle; she wades knee-deep in blood. . .Anat exults. Her liver is filled with laughter, her heart with rejoicing.*"[19]

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ite, bone matres (vestrum Matralia festum)
flavaque Thebanae reddite liba deae ...Matutae sacra parenti
sceptriferas Servi templa dedisse manus.
. . . famulas a limine temple arceat . . . libaque tosta petat .. .
non . . . hanc pro stirpe sua pia mater adoret:
ipsa parum felix visa fuisse parens
alterius prolem melius mandabitis illi ...
This substitution for the mother is also found in the Indic *Rigveda* (I.96.5), where Dawn and Night, Uṣas and Rātrī, nurse the same infant, the fire-God, Agni. See Dexter 1990, 38.

[16] Enheduanna, Exaltation of Inanna, Hallo and Van Dijk, eds. (1968), line 12: *sag-kal an-ki-a…*^{d}*inanna* ...

[17] Hallo and Van Dijk, eds. (1968) lines 9-11:
ušumgal-gim kur-ra
$uš_{x}$ ba-e-sì
^{d}iškur-gim ki-sig_{x}-gi_{4}-za
^{d}ezinu la-ba-ši-gál
a-ma-ru kur-bi-ta e_{11}-de.

[18] Hallo and Van Dijk, eds. (1968), lines 26-27:
igi-mè-ta
nì ma-ra-ta-si-ig
nin-mu á-ní-za
KA.KA ì-$durud_{x}$-e.

[19] See Dietrich, Ed., (1976), "Hymn to Anat," 39. *Die keilalphabetischen Texte aus Ugarit* (*KTU*) 1.3.ii.5-14; 24:

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Just as Nature itself, these Goddesses can be nurturing or destructive.

Bird and snake iconography were attached to many Greco-Roman Goddesses who fulfilled strong functions: for example Athena, Aphrodite, and Demeter. This iconography was also attached to Greco-Roman Goddesses whose main function was to bring death, but in this case the female figures became monsters; they were not revered but reviled. Such "monsters" included Medusa, Harpies, Sirens, Scylla, and many others.[20]

Later Historic-age fairies and witches

In the later historic age, groups of Goddesses such as the Latvian-Lithuanian Laumas, Romanian Zâne, Hindu and Buddhist Yogiṇīs,Yakṣiṇīs, and Ḍākiṇīs, Tyrolean Anguane, and Slavic Vili and Rusalki, were endowed with the avian and serpentine iconography, again, linking them to bird and snake figurines dating to the Neolithic.

Lithuanian and Latvian Laumas

Laumas were nocturnal beings, more terrestrial, more of the earthly plane, than were other Baltic deities (Gimbutas 1984, 44: *naktinės būtybės ...labiau žemiškos negu kitos dievės*). The Latvian Lauma was a "witch" or "fairy" (Turkina 1964, 143). The Lithuanian Laumė was often invoked as "earthly mother" (Gimbutas 1984, 44: *žemes moterys*). She was a "fairy" or "fay," (Peteraitis 1960, 205) who could be benevolent or malevolent. She possessed, in fact, many characteristics of the witch (Korsakas 1954, 340: *laumė ragana*, "Laumė, the witch". Sometimes she was presented as sexually attractive, large-breasted, with long, blond hair (Gimbutas 1984, 44)[21].

Lauma was often depicted as a plural deity; if the Laumas became angry with anyone, they had the power to change her or him into anything they wished, animate or inanimate (Basanavičius 1902, 195). In ancient times, Laumas frequently appeared to mortals:

"*. . . in thickets and on foot-bridges … whoever, passing them, spoke to them or greeted them, then* [*the Laumas*] *would thank them quite merrily."*(Basanavičius 1902, 195)[22].

'nt … /… b'mq . tḫtṣb . bn / qrytm tmḫṣ . lim . ḫp .
y[m] / tṣmt . adm . ṣat . špš / tḥth . kkdrt . ri[š] /
'lh . kirbym kp … / ….'tkt / rišt . lbmth . šnst . [ ]
kpt . bḥbšh . brkm . tǵl[l] / bdm … tḫtṣb . wtḥdy .
'nt / tǵdd . kbdh . bṣḥq . ymlu / lbh . / bšmḫt… /

[20] The Greek love-Goddess Aphrodite was depicted on a clay drinking cup riding a goose, and elsewhere she was depicted with her young son Eros, riding a swan or goose. The "crouching Aphrodite," sculpted by Diodalses of Bithynia about 250 BCE, represents the Goddess with a snake coiled around her arm (British Museum); in a Roman copy of the "crouching Aphrodite," a fragmentary goose lies beneath the figure of the Goddess; the snake is wound many times around her upper arm, and one can clearly see the snaky head. (John Paul Getty Museum, Malibu, California) Thus, in this one sculpture, Aphrodite is shown with both bird and snake. A statue of the city- and warrior- Goddess Athena, dating to ca. 520 BCE, from the pediment of the temple of the Peisistratidai, in the grouping from the Gigantomachy, stands in the Acropolis Museum; a snake winds through her cloak. She is also depicted on Greek coins, dating to the fifth century BCE, with her face on the obverse and the owl on the reverse. See Dexter 1997, 2011, 2013.

[21] Laumių kasos ilgos ...geltoni plaukai.
Krūtys labai didelės…

[22] senovėje laumės labai tankei rodydavos
irgi ant lieptų skalbdavo,
o jei joms kas, pro sali eidams,
ką pasakydavo, arba jas pasveikindavo,

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In a Lithuanian fairy-tale perhaps borrowed from the Slavs, "The Sun Princess and Her Deliverer,"[23] Laumė was a toothless old witch who repeatedly tried to foil the attempts of a young prince to rescue a beautiful Sun Princess.[24] Laumė promised the prince that he could have anything of hers he wished, if he were able to herd her mares for three days and bring them home safely every evening. If he were unsuccessful, however, he must pay with his life. Of course, there was a trick to this horse-herding: the mares were in reality the witch's daughters and granddaughters, and she commanded them to turn into different animals and to hide from the prince, so that he would be unable to find them and bring them home; he would then forfeit his life. Laumė commanded her daughters to turn into tiny fishes the first day, but the prince was enabled to outsmart them and to force them to return to their original shapes. Thus, the prince had the right to ask whatever he wished of the witch. He asked for her youngest filly, who happened to be her favorite granddaughter and as strong as twelve ordinary mares. The filly also had supernatural powers: she could talk with a human voice and fly: an avian attribute. The filly was able to help the prince complete the tasks necessary to rescue the Sun Princess, who was held prisoner by a wicked giant, and the prince and Sun Princess lived happily ever after.

When they wished, the Laumas could be beneficent. From time to time, they would do a woman's spinning for her (Balys 1936, 246 No. 3695. Compare Basanavičius 1902, 195) and they would give gifts—often of linen (Balys 1936, 246 No. 3694). However, if they were annoyed, they were ready to persecute their victims (Balys 1936, 246 No. 3693). For example, they helped the infants of industrious mothers but they ate the children of the lazy (Gimbutas 1984, 47). Thus, Laumas were neither "good" nor "bad" fairies, but, rather, they were powerful female figures who used those powers in many different ways.

Lauma presents many characteristics of the Goddess-turned-fairy/witch. She was a shape-changer, turning herself into various animals. Sometimes she appeared with human breasts, but with a hen's feet (Gimbutas 1984, 46)[25]; thus, Lauma embodied characteristics of the ancient *Bird-Goddess* whom we see in so many artifacts of female figures from Neolithic Southeast Europe. She was also the mother of daughters who could change their forms upon her command; she was a "Mistress of Animals" as well as a witch, similar to Homer's *Circe,* who transformed Odysseus' men into animals. The companion of the Baltic witch, Lauma, was a cat, similar to the cats found in the fairy-tales of witches in many cultures.

The witch's cat, one suspects, is the descendant of the ancient lions which flanked the "Great"-Goddess and accompanied prehistoric female figures in "Sacred Display," (Dexter-Mair 2010; 2013) just as the "wicked" witch is a descendant of the Goddess herself. Although she could perform magic and had the power of shape-changing, in the historic era, Lauma lost some of her potency. The very strong, the heroic, were able to prevail over her, and even to outsmart her.

Romanian *Zâne/Zîne*

Just as the Lithuanian, Romanian folklore too preserves very ancient mythology (Poruciuc 2008). Zână (in some texts written as Zînă) is a fairy. She, similarly to Lauma/Laumė, often appears as a plural: Zâne or Zîne, (sometimes with the definite

tai jos labai linksmai dėkavodavo.

[23] Translated by Irina Zheleznova, undated.

[24] Compare the Slavic folk-tale, "Marya Morevna" in Ralston (1872): 85 ff. (Afanas'ev (1865-69) viii, No. 8.) Here the part of Lauma is played by Baba Yaga, the Slavic witch.

[25] Pasirodo ... žmogiškame pavidale, bet su vištos kojomis.

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article as Zânele or Zînele). Her name may mean "the knowing one."[26] She is a fairy, but according to the Romanian scholar Andrei Bantaş, she sometimes appears as a Goddess (Bantaş 1995. 293). Others view her as a "semidivine woman" (Kernbach, 1989: 656)[27]. This is a good argument for her derivation from a prehistoric divine female figure or collectives of divine female figures.

Zâne are given the epithet "charitable" (Pamfile 2000 191)[28]. Along with figures such as pixies and Rusalii (also called Rusalki)—"fairies" who can raise storms and cause crippling injuries—the Zâne are also called "uncharitable, unpitying" (Pamfile 2000, 191, 193)[29] Zână has beneficent and ferocious aspects.

"The good Zîne...are beautiful virgins, slender, very youthful, enchanted women" (Kernbach 1989, 656)[30].

One Zână, described as "the most beautiful of [lit. "from among"] the Zîne," (Kernbach 1994, 332)[31] was Ileana Cosîzeana:

"Her eyes are from the sun, her body from the sea, and her clothing is of flowers" (Kernbach 1994, 332)[32].

The Zâne also figure in various terms for herbs and flowers (Rădulescu 1996). They dwell in rustic places, on house roofs, in weeds, and at crossroads (Rădulescu 1996, 336);[33] they have supernatural powers and sometimes they are winged (Rădulescu 1996, 336). Again, these Southeast European fairies are similar to many female figures whose origins go back to the Neolithic, and who share avian characteristics.

The Zâne are divine maidens who often perform a ritual round dance, and they usually marry young heroes (Poruciuc 2009, 57). They can help or harm people (Rădulescu 1996, 337); and they have been considered both "…good and evil" (Kernbach 1989: 656).[34]

One does not want to anger the Zână because she can then bestow curses. The negative form of Zână (Zînă) is Zînă Rele:

"Zîne Rele are sometimes old, ugly, dried out; other times [they are] youthful [and] alluring...." (Kernbach 1989: 656)[35].

How similar is this to the description of the Laumas! They too can be both "good" and "bad," both beautiful and ugly—and their beauty or lack thereof is not predicated by their "goodness." These powerful female collectives are shape-changers who can dazzle one minute and repulse the next, grant boons one minute and curses the next. In the early modern era they become fairies, but their pre-Christian precursors were in all likelihood divine females.

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[26] Rădulescu (1996) derives Zână from PIE *ĝen- (2), "recognize, know," with a magico-religious connotation; this quite acceptable etymology takes into account Albanian cognates as well as several pan-Indo-European cognates, indicating a magico-religious semantic group for Proto-Indo-European *ĝen-(2). In this case, the Zâne would have been the "knowing ones." To Zînă, Rădulescu (1996: 347-348) compares Lithuanian žynė, "prophetess, enchantress" and Latvian žiņauka, "female fortune teller." Compare also the Greek Medea, *Mēdeia*, the "wise woman," from another Proto-Indo-European root. See Dexter 2002.

[27] Semidivinităţi feminine…

[28] Milostive.

[29] Nemilostive.

[30] "*Zinele bune...sînt fecioare frumoase, zvelte, foarte tinere, năzdrăvane*." I thank Adrian Poruciuc for making this Romanian text available to me.

[31] "Cea mai frumoasă dintre Zîne."

[32] "*cu ochi din soae, cu trupul din mare şi cu hainele de flore*." A similar figure is Iana Sînziana, identified with the moon; she may be derived from Latin Diana Sancta. (Kernbach 1994: 333.)

[33] We may compare the Greek Goddess Hecate, who was worshipped at crossroads, and who in later literature was described as a witch.

[34] "bune şi rele."

[35] "Zinele rele sînt uneori bătrine, urîte, uscăţive, alteore tinere, ispititoare...."

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Indic Yogiṇīs, Ḍākiṇīs, and Yakṣiṇīs

There are several classes of group-Goddesses among the Indic Hindus and Buddhists. The Indic Yogiṇīs are worshipped by many different lineages of peoples from South Asia; they are presented as collectives of 42, 64, or 81 (Amazzone 2016, 1. Laura Amazzone also discusses the Nine Durgās and other multiples of powerful Goddesses of India and Nepal (Amazzone 2010 and personal communication, September, 2017). The "Great"-Goddess Durgā (also known by many other names, such as Devī, Kālī, Pārvatī, Umā Dexter 1990: 81-85)), has been referred to as the "Queen of the Yogiṇīs." (Amazzone 2016, 1). There are several categories of Yogiṇīs, representing different aspects of Devī, the Indic "Great"-Goddess. The Yogiṇīs are closely connected to nature, and to that end they are often represented with the tree and nature spirits, the Yakṣis (Yakshis) or Yakṣiṇīs (Yakshinis), "depicted as scantily-clad and seductively posed dryads" (Shaw 2009, 267). Many of the Yogiṇīs and Yakṣiṇīs have particular names: Padmoccā, Manojñā, Nairātmyā, Vajrayogiṇī. These collectives of spirits/Goddesses are beautiful and ferocious female figures who evoke "auspiciousness or life-enhancing energies that bring about fertility, growth, longevity, abundance, and material and spiritual well-being" (Shaw 2009, 268). Both Tantric and Purāṇic texts contain descriptions of the Yogiṇīs. They wear beautiful jewelry and they hold tools and weapons which symbolize what the practitioner needs on the spiritual path: knife, goad, bell, spear, bow and arrow. The Yakṣiṇīs give protection throughout the four directions, and images of Yakṣiṇīs are placed at the gates and peripheries of monuments, where they ward off negative forces (Shaw 2009, 268-269. Cf. Donaldson 1975, 77-78): that is, they are apotropaic, just as divine and magical female "Display" figures such as Sheela na gigs (Goode 2016; Dexter-Goode 2002; Dexter-Mair 2010). They can also affect the natural elements, causing flood, fire, whirlwind, and rains of stones and weapons (Shaw 2009, 273). Ḍākiṇīs (Dākinis) had fluid identities: they could be human or Goddess. By the ninth century CE, they seem to have replaced Yakṣiṇīs in Buddhist texts (Shaw 2009: 289 ff).

These Indic female figures are not represented as negative, as are many similar female figures in Western cultures, perhaps because in this culture death is viewed as part of a continuum rather than as the most fearful of possibilities.

Like witches—a rather generic group—these Indic female figures have the power of flight, particularly at night (Shaw 2009, 275), and they can shape-shift (Shaw 2009, 284). Thus, they too evoke the prehistoric Bird-Goddesses.

Slavic Vili/Vilas

The Southern Slavs believed that a *Vila* (plural *Vilas*, *Vili*) appeared in many forms to charm young men: a Vila could appear as a horse, a swan, or a falcon (Gimbutas 1967, 755), as well as a beautiful young girl, whose long hair fell over her back and breasts (Gimbutas 1967, 755). She would punish a man who happened upon her revels, by dancing him to death (Gimbutas 1967, 756). She could cause hail-storms or stop the heavenly waters. (Similarly, the Baltic Laumas were also responsible for the hail.) There were Vilas of the water, Vilas associated with the mountains, and others who dwelled among the clouds. One cloud-Vila turned into a "swan maiden" in the following tale:

A youth met a Vila who was about to "drink out his dark eyes" in return for a drink of water from the fountain which she was guarding. Before she could do so, the hero seized her, threw her across his horse, and took her to his earthly home. He tore off her right wing, placed it in a chest, and made her his wife (Ralston 1872: 181-182).

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Thus, the power of the Vila—who would have been the prehistoric Bird-Goddess—was such that she must be "grounded," deprived of her avian powers, before she could be rendered innocuous to humans (Dexter 1990, 62), and perhaps so that she could not escape from her husband.

Conclusions

There are many more collectives and group-Goddesses, including the Tyrolean Anguane (Moser 2016), Irish and British Sheela na gigs, and Slavic Rusalki. One quality which many of these divine and magical female figures embody is beauty. The Vili, Laumas with their long blond hair, and the Yogiṇīs and Yakṣiṇīs are lovely, youthful women who can entice the men of their cultures. Another quality which many of them share is that they can bring benefits to all, or, just as easily, they can bring harm. This is a diminution of the broad spectrum of powers a prehistoric Goddess of the Life-Continuum would have exercised among her people, but hints of those powers remain among the groups of Goddesses who live on in the folklore of the peoples of many modern cultures.

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A UNIQUE CLAY FIGURINE FRAGMENT FROM CAREI-KOZÁRD (SATU-MARE COUNTY, ROMANIA)

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Abstract: *In this article is being described some new, modern alalyzis about a unuique clay figurine from the Late Neolithic archaeological site Carei-Kozárd, North-west of Romania. Although the item has already been mentioned in several other studies we considered it important to give a detailed publication of this special fragment, also discussing any possible analogies in the Carpathian Basin and the fragments that have similar shapes, using modern research methods to find out the manufacturing technology of the object.*
Keywords: *Late Neolithic, clay figurine, Kozárd, Neutron tomography, Archeometry, Romania.*

Introduction

The interpretation and possible functions of anthropomorphic idols/clay figurines found in various prehistoric excavation sites raised a number of questions both in the early days of excavations, at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century and today. Most researchers ascribed cultic-religious attributes to it and considered it to represent the *'Great Mother Goddess*' (Ucko 1962, 38-54; Kalla 2016, 3-5). The disputes concerning its interpretation followed three main lines: 'the old encyclopeadias', excavation reports and their chronological classification (Ștefan, 2005-2006, 71-76). The functionality, the role and the 'rise and fall' of their divinity were last discussed by Gábor Kalla following numerous studies (Kalla, 2016, 3-10 and its notes).

The clay figurines in most excavation sites can be divided into three groups: anthropomorphic, zoomorphic and athropo-zoomorphic. When describing or analyzing anthropomorphic idols, one of the most difficult tasks is to correctly place them into the appropriate category: to categorize them as male, female or hermaphrodite (Domboróczki 2013, 493), which sometimes proves to be rather difficult for the lack of gender characteristics.

Another important factor to be taken into account in the analysis of the so called cultic finds (clay statuettes, altars, anthropomorphic pottery, stamps etc) is the place

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where they were found and their exact location and interpretation within the archaeological object (rubbish hole, depot, house, fire place, grave etc). In most cases these finds are excavated in waste pits and in a fewer number of cases in houses, graves or ritual deposits. Mostly they were found in secondary positions, therefore sometimes it is difficult to interpret them or to define their functionality. It is possible that the items found in such archaeological sites were not in the centre of worship (Kalla, 2016, 8). When they are found in borrow pit filled with household waste, they are almost always fragmentary. Most researchers agree that when a clay figurine is broken and thrown into a waste pit, it loses its cultic role and becomes profane (Monah 1997, 30). The idols found in houses or in certain sections there of played a defensive role, protecting the house, the family or the settlement, numerous allusions to it are known from the Near East[36]. The statuettes placed in graves embodied the deity and played an important role in the funerary rite, the protection of the deceased or afterlife (Comşa 1987, 147). According to Eszter Bánffy, the idols or idol shards found in houses seem to prove that those buildings had a so called '*ritual corner'* (Bánffy 1991, p. 209-217). As has been mentioned above, in most cases they are found in fragments (they are broken at the joints, their heads, arms or legs are missing). However, the missing parts usually are not to be recovered even in the most meticulous excavations. According to some experts, the missing parts were buried outside the settlement for the sake of good harvest or they were thrown into the nearby stream or river (Becker 2007, 122-123). Nevertheless, it must be noted that only a few items were found near settlements that can be considered to be the missing parts of statuettes found in some sections of the settlements. It is also very difficult to decide whether these items were broken deliberately or by accident.

Before going on to describe in detail the idol mentioned in the title, we should review where clay statuettes or fragments of them were found in the plain near Carei or in Nyírség from the various stages of the Neolithic Age.

We know of a relatively small number of statuette fragments from the area of Carei from that age, but in other parts of the county, several idol fragments have been excavated, mainly in the Early Neolithic site in Felsőmordód-Borzkert (Körös-Criş), by Tibor Bader (Bader 1968, 381-388). Clay stauettes dated to the same chronological age were found in Tăşnad/Tasnád-Sere (Lazarovici 1983, 17-60, Fig. 15/6, Németi 1986-87, 31, Fig. 1/4; Iercoşan 1986-87, 155, Fig. 9/5; Iercoşan 1994-1995, 9-23, Fig. 5/1, 7/8, 9/5), and other idol fragments were found in the excavations of 2012-2015 (Astaloş, Sommers, Virag, 2012, 1-5; Virag 2016b, 69-70; Virag 2016b). Similar idol fragments are known from most Early Neolithic sites, so only a few of them are cited here in North-Eastern Romania: Urziceni/Csanálos – Vada-rét (Hágó 2008, 5-12), Zăuan (Lakó 1977, 41-46, fig. 2/1-2; Lakó 1978, 11-15; Luca 2014, 25-27) and some were found in the Banat too (Lazarovici 1979, 15-70), but they were widespread in othersites in Romania in the Early Neolithic Age (Comşa 1995, 23-25).

These idols/clay figurines or fragments are identical to the well-known *steatopygous idols*, which have also been excavated in numerous sties in Hungary too: the Great Plain (Kutzián 1944; Kalicz, Makkay 1976, 13-25, T. 7-8; Raczky 1980, 27-33, Fig. 1-4, 7;Trogmayer, Koncz, Paluch, 2005, 17-18;Trogmayer 2003, 8-20; Kalicz 1983, Abb. 4/2, 5/3; Kalicz 2011, 24-27), the area along the River Körös, (Makkay 2007; Makkay, Starnini 2008, 439-459;), and the Transdanubian region (Ilon 2007, 8-10, 50,).

As can be seen above, a relatively great number of idol/ clay figurine fragments have been found dating from the Early Neolithic Age, which were found in designed excavations or during field research. The Pişcolt Group dating from the Middle Neolithic

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period is represented by nearly 50 sites in North-western Romania, most of them in the Carei plain, in Ier Valley and in Nyírség. These settlements were first researched in the late 1960s in field researches, and the regular excavations were started in the late 1970s at the site called Pişcolt-Lutărie (Németi 1999, 95) after which the whole group was named.

Unfortunately, this period is represented by only very few idol fragments, and all of them were found the aforementioned site and these figurines belong to the ALP culture, dating from the same time as Szatmár II (Németi 1999, 166), now called as Szatmár Gruop (Kalicz, Koós 2014, 9). One of the most exquisite finds is the shred of an idol with a triangle-shaped head decorated with scratches and black paint (Lazarovici, Németi 1983, 27, Fig. 15/6; Luca 2014, Fig. 7/6; Németi, Hágó 2015, Pl. II/1-2). Some smaller idol fragments were found in the same site (Lazarovici, Németi 1983, 27, Fig. 15/6; Băcueţ-Crişan, Virag 2006, 43-59; Németi, Hágó 2015, Pl. V/1,3), together with another special clay statuette (Németi, Hágó 2015, Pl. III/1-2) and some other items classified as cultic tools (Németi, Hágó 2015, 185-221).

Approximately 40 sites of the Herpály-Csőszhalom culture are known in the area around Carei (Németi 1999, 96). Among them, there is only one where the fragment of an idol was found, in Carei-Kozárd.

Short research history

The archaeological site in*Kozárd*is situated about 3.5 km east of Nagykároly/Careicounty level town (Szatmár County/jud. Satu-Mare, Romania) on the right side of the Satu-Mare – Oradea motorway (DN19), near the railtracks, on a lower terrace of the Mérges Stream (Pl.I/1-3). First the village is mentioned as *Kozár* in 1335, and later, in the mid-14th century it was mentioned as an abandoned place in the sources (Németi 1999, 67; Stanciu, Iercoşan 2003, 139). This section of the outskirts was given various names from the second half of the 19th century on: *Kis-Kozár, Nagy Kozár* (Mizsér 2001, 250).

The site can be found on the edge of what used to be the Ecsed Bog, and together with the small streams and their fertile terraces it created adequate conditions for life during the whole prehistoric age and the Middle Ages, and the archaeological finds dating to various ages are testimony to this (Németi 1981-82, 168-169; Németi 1986-87, 22, 24-26; Németi 1999, 10, 67).

The area was first excavated in the 1970s-1980s, when János Németi, a researcher of the Town Museum of Carei carried out field investigations in the surrounding area, and many archaeological finds were excavated during the sewage works in the 1980s (Hágó 2011, 5-22). The collected archaeological items were placed in the history store room of Primary School 1 in Carei and in the collection of the Carei Town Department of the Satu Mare County Museum. Several field investigations were carried out by the archaeologists of the Satu Mare County Museum (János Németi, Liviu Marta, Róber tGindele, Attila Nándor Hágó).

The first proper archaeological excavations were started by a colleague from the local museum, Neţa Iercoşan, back in 1991. In the period between 1991 and 1996, a part of the Neolithic settlement was excavated, where a number of archaeological objects (waste pit, a house, a grave) were found and they were dated to the Herpály-Csőszhalom culture by the researchers (Iercoşan 1997, 23-58; Astaloş, Virag 2008, 74; Băcueţ-Crişan 2004, 72; El Susi 1997, 59-62; Virag2008, 179-190; Hágó 2011, 5-10). Other archaeological objects were also found in this site and they can be dated to the copper age: belonging to the Bodrogkeresztúr Culture (Németi 1999, 67), the Tiszapolgár Culture (Németi 1999, 67; Iercoşan 1986-87, 142; Németi 1999, 67; Iercoşan 2002, 32-

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38; Luca 2014, 27) and the Baden Culture (Roman, Németi, 1978, 18), items from the Scytha Culture of the Great Plain and the La Téne (Celtic) settlements (Németi 1999, 67), graves with skeletons dating from the time of the Migration period (Stanciu1997, 167-209; Stanciu, Iercoşan 2003, 139-160; Luca 2014, 27) and the remains of the settlement called *Kozárd*, which existed in the 11th -13th centuries and the ruins of its church were also found (Németi 1999, 67) (Pl. II/1-2).

The Neolithic settlement covered approximately 300 m south of the railtracks (even with Milestone (or rather kilometerstone) 745/5) and 400 m to the west of the stream, where the highest elevation of the area can be found – the medieval village was also situated on this hill (Pl. II/1). Its central part covers an area of 90x80 m and the cultural layer of the one-layered horizontal settlement is approximately 0.50-0.70 m thick (Iercoşan 1997, 23).

The idol/figurine fragment discussed in this paper was found in 1991 in an archaeological excavation, in the middle of Section I, in Segment 9, at a depth of 0.90 m, in a cultural layer which was classified into the Herpály Culture by the excavating archaeologist, Neţa Iercoşan (Pl. III/1-6; Pl. IV/1-4). Although the item has already been mentioned in several other studies (Luca, Iercoşan, 1998, 159-160, Pl. IV/1; Băcueţ-Crişan, Virág 2006, 43-59; Luca 2014, 27, Fig. 9/1-2), we considered it important to give a detailed publication of this special fragment, also discussing any possible analogies in the Carpathian Basin (Pl. V/1) and the fragments that have similar shapes, using modern research methods to find out the manufacturing technology of the object.

The pottery and other artefacts

During the different kind of researches on this site on the last twenty years, we have a significant number of different kinds of pots (plates, deep bowls, storage vessels, piedestaled vessels, amphoras, *S profiled vessels*, cups, lids, colander, miniature vessels etc.). We can find all the three categories: coarse, fine, and semi-fine pottery.

These potsherds and the complete vessels have a good oxidant or inoxidant firing, brown, red, grey, yellow colours, with a good, sometimes polished surface.

They were decorated with incisions, cutting, springing, perforating, with slip, angobe, red or black painting.

Most of them were tempered with sand, gritty ware, pebbles or with organic materials (Iercoşan 1997, 23-59; Virag 2008, 179-190)

Other finds besides the different kinds of pottery from this site are: polished stone axes, obsidian and silex flints, ground stones, bone tools, clay objects with unidentified functions (Hágó 2011, 5-10).

The clay figurine

The feminine fragmentary statuette that is about to be described was discovered in section SI/1991, square 9, at a depth of 70 cm.

The piece has a yellowish-greyish colour, is made of a homogeneous, good quality paste, well burned. The face is oval, the nose is alto relief, the nostrils are marked by two impressions.

The eyes and mouth are marked by two round incisions, the breasts are marked by two prominences and the arms are next to the body and the forearms were broken long ago.

Probably the arms were put together on the womb. The representation in wearing a hood on his head and a basket with the handles on his back represented by two small prominences, laterally displayed, perforated. The legs are missing (Pl. III/1-6; Pl. IV/1-4).

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The clay figurine was published and described in several articles in the past (Luca, Iercoşan, 1998, 159-160, Pl. IV/1; Băcueţ-Crişan, Virág 2007, 47; Luca 2014, 27, Fig. 9/1-2).

Our aim was that by using the modern interdisciplinary technologies (X-RAY, Radiography, Neutron tomography, archeometry etc.) we can have answers for some questions about the provenience of the raw material and the techniques using to form this object (ceramic petrography, fired temperatures, tempering materials etc).

By utilizing multiple interdisciplinary methods, we want to have more information about the complex biography of the figurine.

The type of statuette described until this moment is a rare one, close analogies are in the eponym settlement of Salca-Herpály culture form Hungary from Berettyóújfalu-Herpály, (N. Kalicz, P. Raczky, 1987, p. 123, fig. 43; Hansel 2007, Taf. 237/2).

Radiography

Radiography is an imaging technique using X-rays to view the internal structure of an object. To create the image, a beam of X-rays, a form of electromagnetic radiation, is produced by an X-ray generator and is projected toward the object.

By this method we want to have some information as to how this clay figurine was made. Unfortunately, we cannot glean so much information by this method, only that this figurine is homogeneous (Pl. VI/1-4). The analysis was made in the Tudor Sala – Dentar diagnostics, Carei, Satu-Mare County, Romania.

Neutron tomography

"Computed tomography is a method to acquire three dimensional information about the structure inside a sample. The method applies to neutron as well as the better-known X-ray imaging. It uses radiographic projection images from many views to reconstruct the distribution of materials in the sample. Mostly, the projections are acquired with equiangular steps over either 180o or 360o to cover the whole sample.

In contrast to medical imaging, the samples are rotated instead of the beam. The projection images are acquired by using a combination of a scintillator to convert the neutrons to visible light and a CCD camera. The transformation of the projection data into a three dimensional image is a computationally intensive task handled by special reconstruction software. During the reconstruction process, slices perpendicular to the rotation axis are produced. When these slices are stacked in a sequence, they form a three-dimensional volume image of the sample.

The reconstructed volume data can be visualized using three-dimensional rendering graphics software. Using such tools, regions can be segmented based on their attenuation coefficients and geometry. This can be used to reveal details inside the sample in three dimensions"[37] (Pl. VII/1-3).

The analyses were made in the BNC Budapest on 29th of September 2017, by Zoltán Kis, Senior Research Scientist, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Centre for Energy Research, financed bythe IPERION project[38].

„So neutron radiography/tomography, which is based on the weakening of the neutron beam transmitting the sample, is a method applicable to create 3D/2D images of objects. Due to the different neutron weakening in the various parts of the sample, in the so called grey hued projection images the inner structure can be visualised with great accuracy. It makes the interesting parts visible and they can be marked for further research. For the creation of images it is important that the transmission of the sample

[37]https://www.psi.ch/niag/neutron-tomography.
[38]BNC Proposal Nr. BRR-509.

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should be between a minimal and a maximal limit so as not to screen the neutrons completely and to be able to give a detectable contrast. It is generally approved that the transmission should fall between 2 % and 98 %, from which the appropriate thicknesses can be calculated by various formulas" (Kis, Szentmiklósi, 2015, 3).

As a result of the examinations, more information has been gained about the manufacturing of the object. Examining the 3D image of the figurine we can arrive at the conclusion that the material is homogeneous, its surface is more or less smooth, compact with small inequalities. The dark spots indicate the thinning material (probably pebbles) in the clay. It can also be observed that the eyes and the mouth were created by a relatively blunt object (Pl. VII/1-2).

During the aforementioned examination method, the statuette was bombarded with cold neutrons for several hours and the image shown in the figure was drawn. The upper and lower parts of the object are not translucent, these are made of a much denser and thicker layer of clay. Therefore, it was much more difficult for the neutrons to transmit here. It means that these two sections of the object were much more elaborated on and they were made first and then the middle part may have undergone some transformation later. Since the middle part of the object is not so compact as the two ends, it was much easier for the cold neutrons to penetrate here and therefore we could draw an image of the inside structure of the object. The transmitted neutrons 'bumped into small obstacles', the big pebbles used for thinning (Pl. VII/3-4).

Apart from the aforementioned results the tests made it possible for us to gain other information on the object too. This unique statuette had a basket or hamper on its back with two horizontal piercings. The production of neutron tomographic images made it possible for us to conclude that the basket/hamper on the back of the clay figurine was not attached to it but it was created from the body and it explains why this middle part of the body became thinner (Pl IX/1). The two surfaces are completely homogeneous with the same elaboration, no joining points can be observed between them (Pl. IX/2).

Due to the modern research method described above, we managed to gain some information that could not have been accessible otherwise. During the examination of the images and when the data were processed by the computer along thin crack was discovered inside the item, near the basket, which runs almost completely across the object. In our opinion, it must have been created when the legs of the object were deliberately broken off, or it could have been the result of the inadequate drying of the clay before it was cremated and due to the heat the clay cracked (Pl. IX/1-2).

Comparative analyses of the pottery-idol

With this method we can compare the chemical composition of the pottery and the clay figurine from this archaeological site. The analysed vessel, is a miniature bowl. It is dark brown colour, good inoxidantfireing, tempered with sand, polished surface, without ornaments. Height: 4,2 cm, rim diameter: 7 cm, base diameter: 4 cm, max diameter: 6 cm. It was discoverd in 1991, in Section II, in Segment 1, at a depth of 0.40-0,60 m, inventory numer 8051 (Pl. XII/2).

For a better result, in the near future some analyses of the raw material (clay) from this site will be carried out.

These analayses were made in the Restauration Laboratory of the Satu-Mare County Museum, by Mrs. Georgina Olariu, Head of this department with the instruments.

After the analyses, we had the following results:

In the investigation of the two ceramic pieces, X-ray fluorescence (XRF) spectroscopy was used, a semi-quantitative elemental analysis method. Measurements were performed non-destructively with a portable XRF spectrometer, Bruker S1 TITAN

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SP model, with an Rh anode and SiPIN detector. The following working parameters were used: 45 kV and 4.5 μA; acquisition time 54 s, Ti filter.

The results of the analyzes indicate a ceramic with K and Y (characteristic of certain geographic areas), Ca, Ba, Ti are all elements in the soil and Rb and Zr are from sand (degreaser with the purpose of increasing the cohesion of clay particles).

The composition of the clay differs depending on the conditions of formation and preservation of the sediment and the geological environment where it is formed. Composite analysis performed on pots, correlated with clay source analyzes, could highlight important data on the technological flow, the steps taken since the raw material was harvested at the end of the product and possibly which pots were made of clay from the area and which had were imported. We summarized the information into a table (Pl. XII/3).

Petrographic description

Sample preparation:

For microscopic analysis we made a thin section with polishing surface. For description we used: Quinn's (2013) recommendation. The sampling was made by dr. Sándor Józsa – Research Scientist, Department of Petrology and Geochemistry, Eötvös Loránd University Budapest

Macroscopic description:
The ceramic has sandwich structure: it is black inside with thin ochre-yellowish red rim. Massive, with sporadically less than 1mm white, grey and rare black clasts.

Polarizing microscopic description:
The sample has bimodal fabric as regards the distribution of the non plastics. The non plastics are about 25 %

***Inclusions*:**

Coarse fraction (70%)
Dominant: Grog and /or ARF (argillaceous rock fragments). Angular to subrounded. The dominant size range is 500 to1500 μm
The reare three main types:
1. Black, almost black, opaque, compact, massive. Containing only few non plastic inclusions which are mainly fine and very fine grained quartz and occasionally very fine grained mica. Optically inactive. Probably of grog origin (Pl. XIII/1).
2. Brownish yellow, less compact. Containing a little bit more non plastic inclusions, mainly finegrained and very fine grained quartz and few mica. Fat matrix. Optically moderately tohigh lyactive. We suppose ARF of fat clay origin (XIII/2.).
3. Greyish brown, compact, massive. Containig frequently mica (muscovite) and common finegrained quartz (Pl.XIII/ 3).

Dominant: monocrystalline quartz; angular - subangular or very rarely, rounded. The dominant size range is between 100-500 μm. The quartz has undulose or straight (normal) extinction (Pl.XIII/ 4a and b).
Common: white mica (muscovite); angular. Dominantly 60-100 long sections. Thin flakes without any orientation.

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Rare: biotite; sub angular 60-100 μm. Usually weakly pleochroic reddish brown due to iron oxidation.
Rare: K-feldspar: angular to subangular. There is also microcline among them.
Veryrare: plagioclas; angular, zoned, broken clasts.
Veryrare: phyllite; subrounded. It consists of very fine grained quartz and mica with orientated arrangement.
Finefraction (30%):
Dominant: monocrystalline quartz
Common: opaques
Few: whitemica
Few: rutile
Veryfew: biotite
Veryrare:turmaline; its colourpale and olivegreen
Veryrare: zircon
Matrix: about 75%
Non calcareous fat clay origin. Yellowish-reddish brown, relatively homogenous. Optically highly active (Fig4a, and b).
Voids: 2%
2%; consisting sporadically meso-isometric.

Comments

The fabric is characterized by the large amount of ARF/grog and quartz inclusions in a non-clacareous fat clay. It looks like than different types and fired conditions of ARF and grog fragment was added to the fat, including fine grained quartz clasts bearing clay. The origin of coarser grained clasts composing dominantly quartz are questionable. Whether they were ad did deliberately or they were conist of originally the clay. Due to the very high quantity of quartz among the non plastics the origine from a maturesilc clastic sediment. On the basis of the hightly active matrix perhaps the firing temperature was low, possible nothing hert than 700°C.

A possible 3D reconstruction

Two analogies have been used for the complete reconstruction of the clay statuette (Pl. V/1-2). One was the aforementioned fragment with a basket on its back, the other that we used in forming the hands was also found in the site Berettyóújfalu-Herpály (Kalicz, Raczky 1987, 123, Fig. 43).

I shot more than sixty photos of this idol from different positions, and with a special program based on two analogies, one of them was used for the reconstruction of the legs, and another for the hands. Nándor Laczkó made this reconstruction possible (Pl. X/1-2; Pl XI/1-2).

Conclusions

Taking into consideration all the aforementioned information, it can be stated that the fragment of the clay statuette found in Carei/Nagykároly-Kozárd can be considered to be unique in many aspects among the clay figurines dating from the same age. According to the studies on this era, no such statuettes have been found either in the surrounding area or in the farther sites of this region.

By using the modern research methods we could gain information on the manufacturing technology of the object that was impossible to access by using the traditional methods. Neutron tomography and radiography revealed that the basket/hamper on the back of the object was created from the same piece of material and

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mostly pebbles were used for thinning. This method enabled us to see the crack inside the item too.

During the analysis of the chemical composition, the trace element content of the ceramics found in the site was compared to that of the statuette and it was revealed that the two objects were made of the same material, probably local clay.

All in all, it can be stated that due to the various interdisciplinary researches, a lot of useful information has been revealed concerning the archaeological finds.

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- dr. Sándor Józsa – Research Scientist, Department of Petrology and Geochemistry, Eötvös Loránd University Budapest
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Plate I.

1. Map of Romania.
2. Geograpfical situation of Carei in Satu-Mare county.
3. The localization of the archaeological site.

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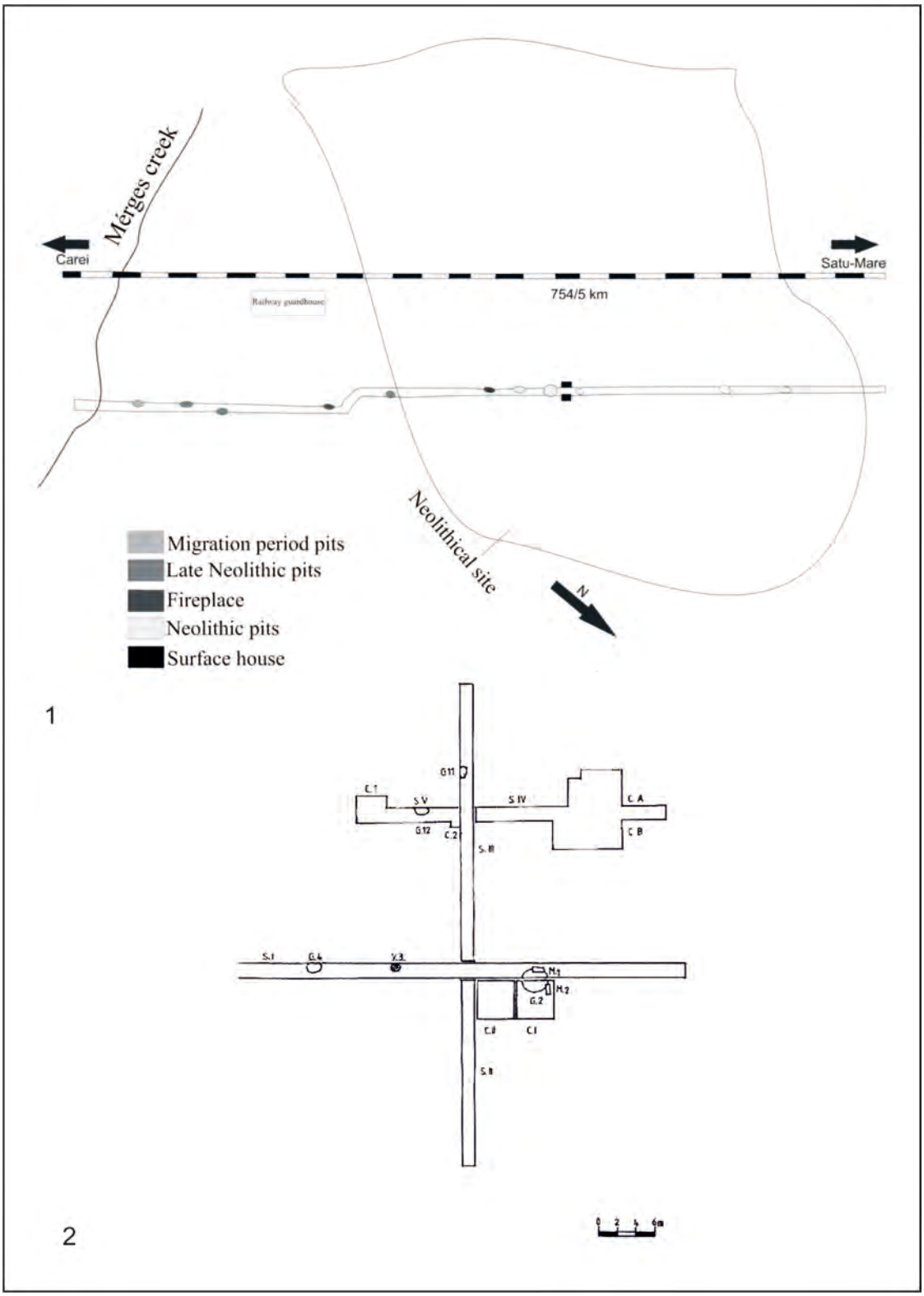

Plate II.

1. The plan of the site. Sistematical excavations 1986-88 (Németi 1986-88).
2. The plan of the site. Sistematical excavations 1991, 1994-1995 (Iercoşan 1997, Pl.1. p. 31).

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Plate III.
1-6. The clay figurine from Carei-Kozárd (photoby A. N. Hágó).

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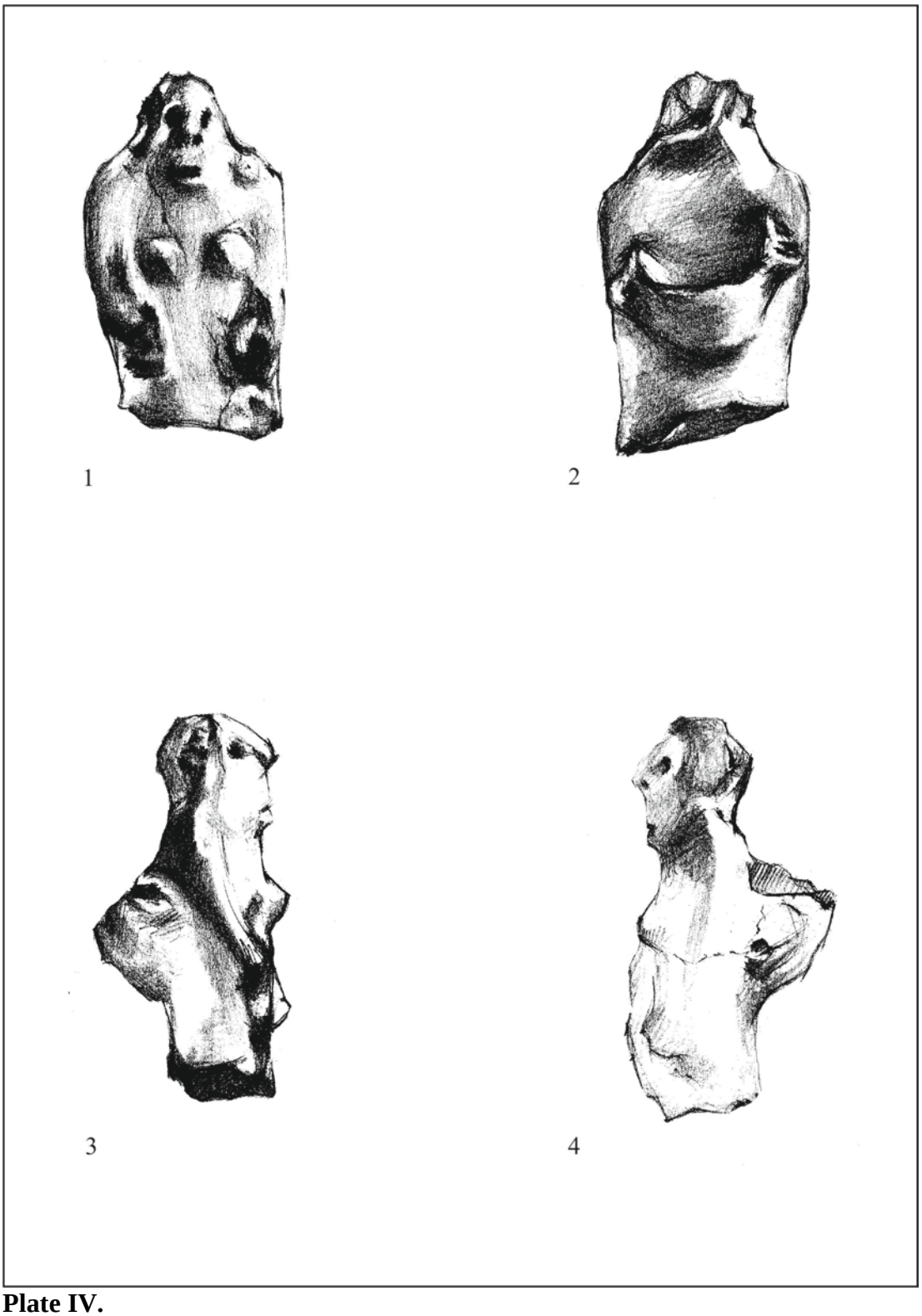

Plate IV.
1-4. The clay figurine from Carei-Kozárd (drawing by Anita Bába).

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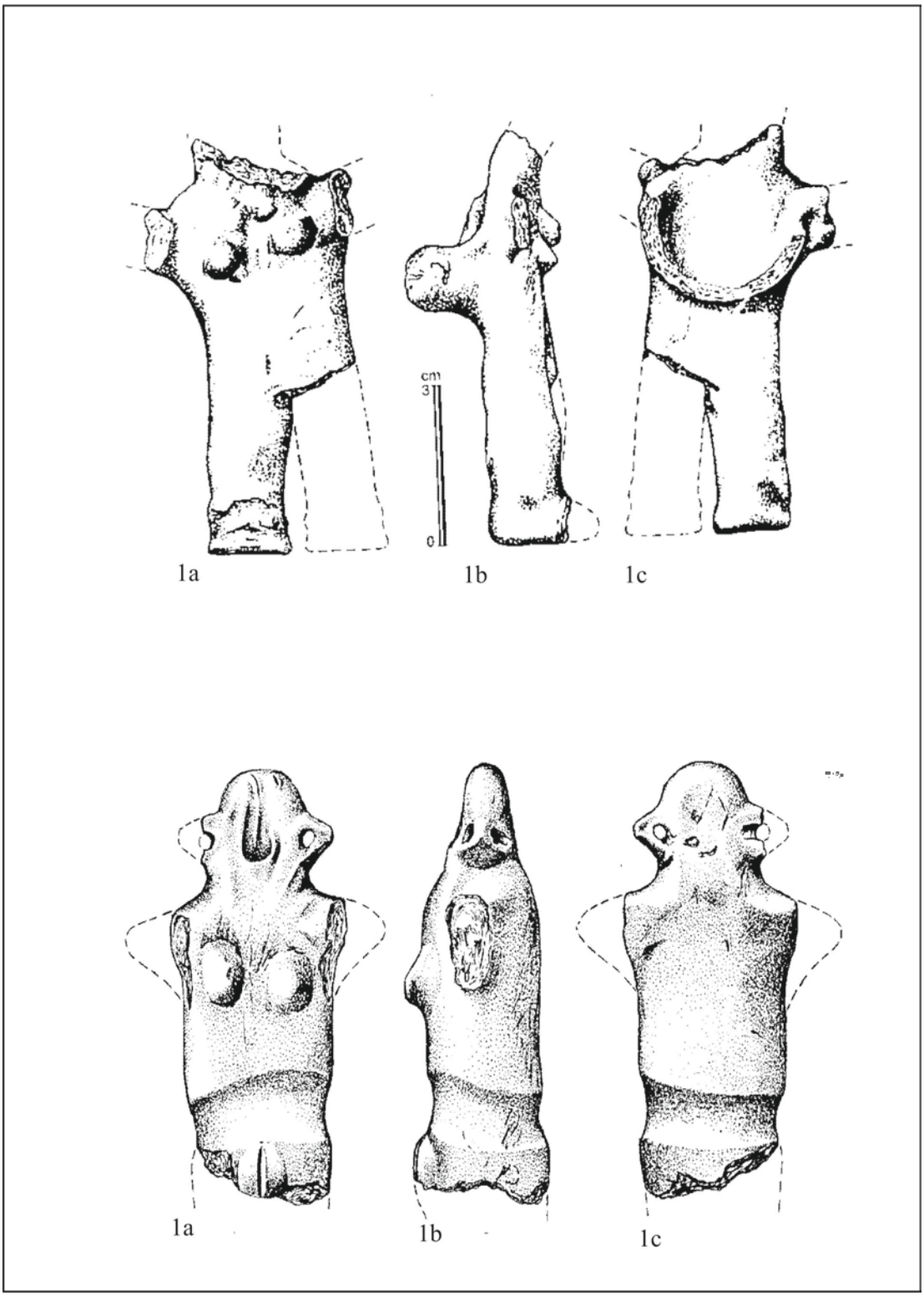

Plate V.

1. Analogie from Berettyóújfalu-Herpály (Kalicz, Raczky 1987, 123, Fig. 42).
2. Analogie from Berettyóújfalu-Herpály (Kalicz, Raczky 1987, 123, Fig. 43).

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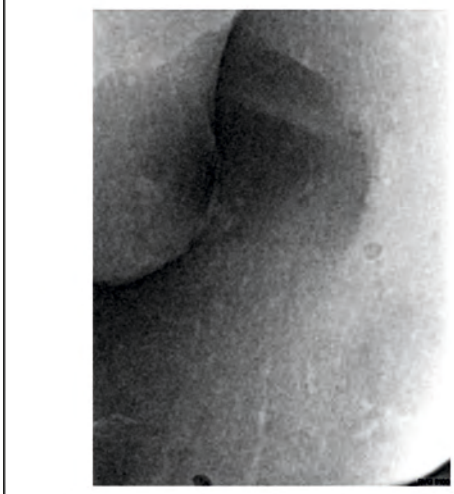

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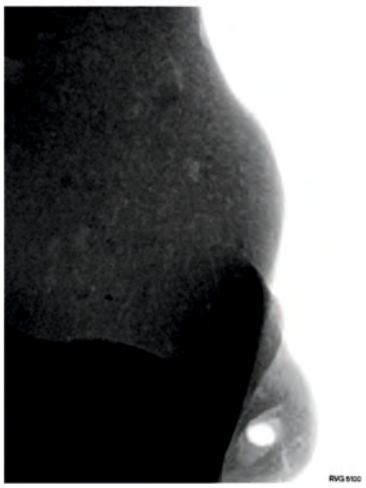

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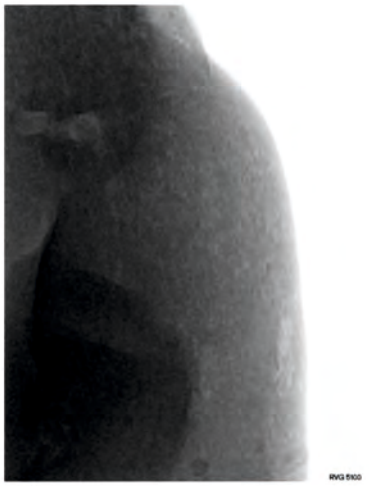

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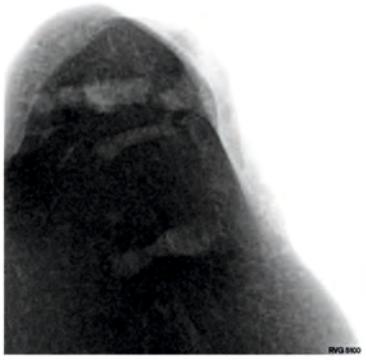

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Plate VI.

1-4. Radiography pictures (Tudor Sala Carei – Dentar diagnostics).

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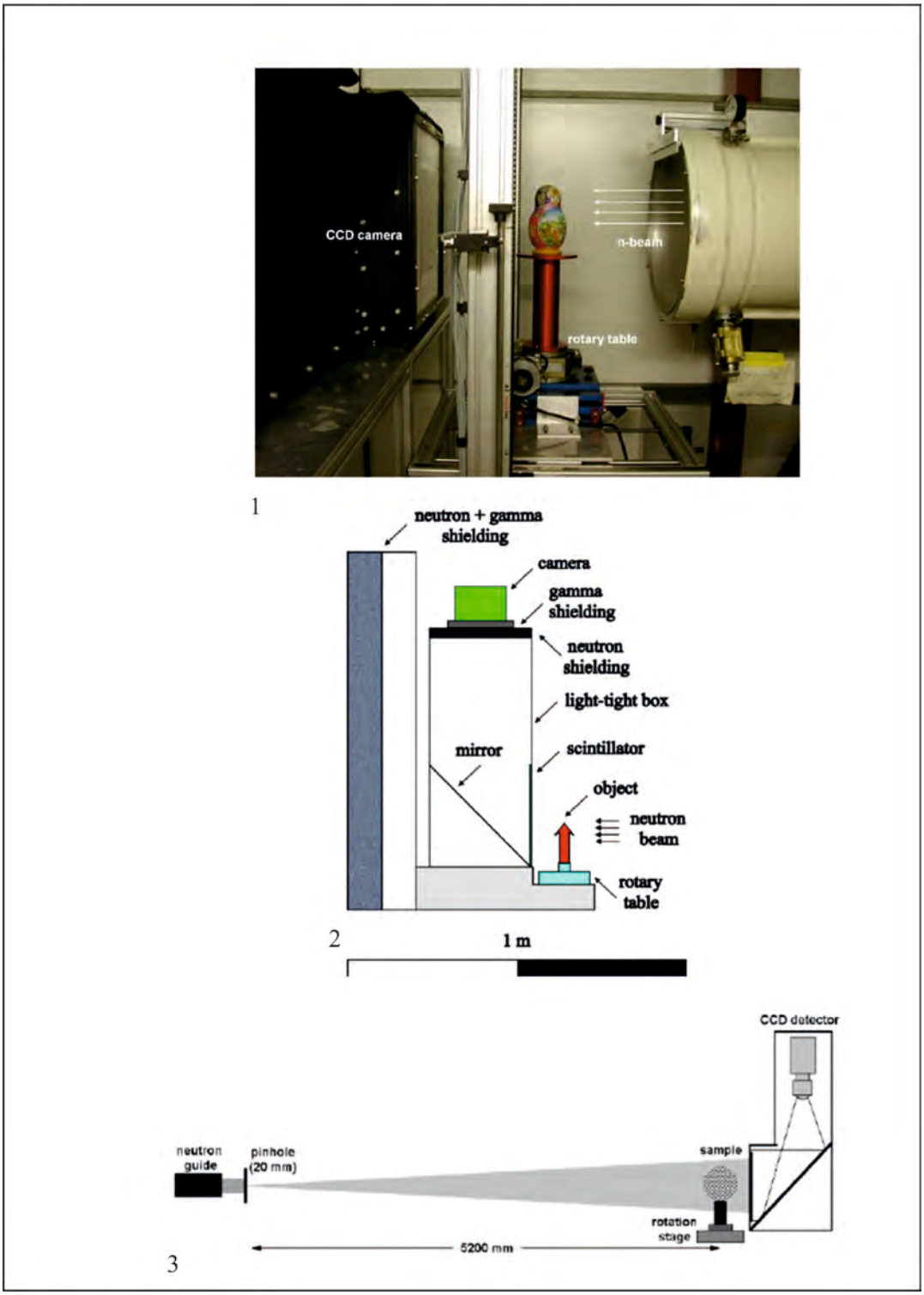

Plate VII.

1. Experimental setup for neutron tomographyat NEUTRA (https://www.psi.ch/niag/neutron-tomography).
2. Schematic diagram of the setup for neutron tomography (https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Schematic-diagram-of-the-setup-for-neutron-tomography_224959488).
3. Experimental setup for neutron tomography experimentat CONRAD, HMI (https://www.researchgate.net/figure/40830824_fig5_Figure-7-Experimental-setup-for-neutron-tomography-experiment-at-CONRAD-HMI).

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Plate VIII.
1-4. 3D pictures about the clay figurine.

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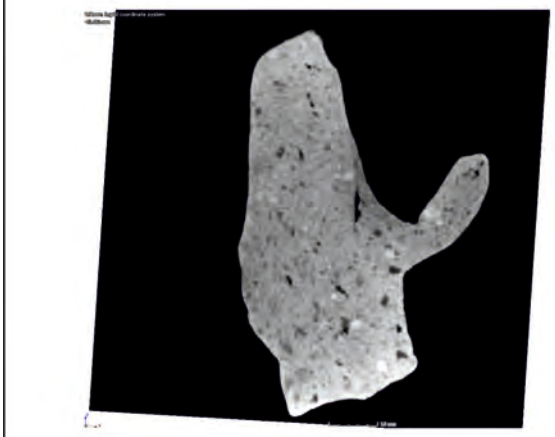

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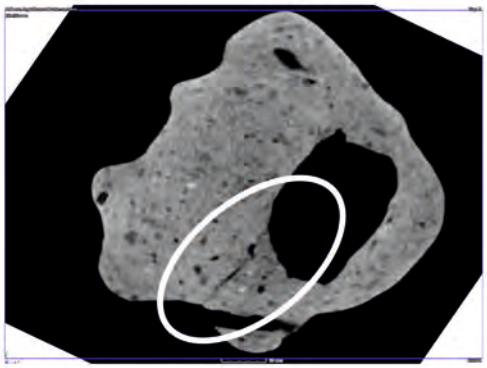

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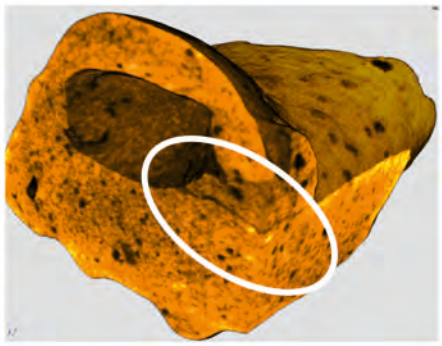

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Plate IX.
1-4. 2D pictures about the clay figurine.

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1

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Plate X.
1-2. The possibly reconstruction of the clay figurine.

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Plate XI.

1-2. The possibly reconstruction of the clay figurine.

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1

2

DateTime	Application	K%	Ca%	Ti%	Mn%	Fe%	Ni%
Clay figurine Test 1	Soil	1.08	0.7705	0.4495	0.0161	3.3535	0.0073
Clay figurine Test 1	Soil	1.2383	0.5569	0.4826	< LOD	3.1765	0.0047
Clay vessel Test 1	Soil	0.9329	0.6863	0.4985	0.0324	3.4809	0.0056
Clay vessel Test 1	Soil	0.5852	1.1176	0.4902	< LOD	3.47	< LOD

Zn%	Rb%	Sr%	Y%	Zr%	Ba%	Pb%
0.0127	0.0101	0.0199	0.0032	0.0303	0.1057	< LOD
0.014	0.0105	0.0172	0.0042	0.0342	0.1232	0.0012
0.0132	0.0058	0.0185	0.0046	0.0543	0.1167	0.0083
0.0061	0.0053	0.0293	0.0041	0.0567	0.1143	0.0119

3

Plate XII.

1. The clay figurine from Carei-Kozard.
2. Miniature vessel from Carei-Kozard.
3. Comparative tabel with the chemical composition of the figurine and a clay vessel from Carei-Kozárd archaeological site.

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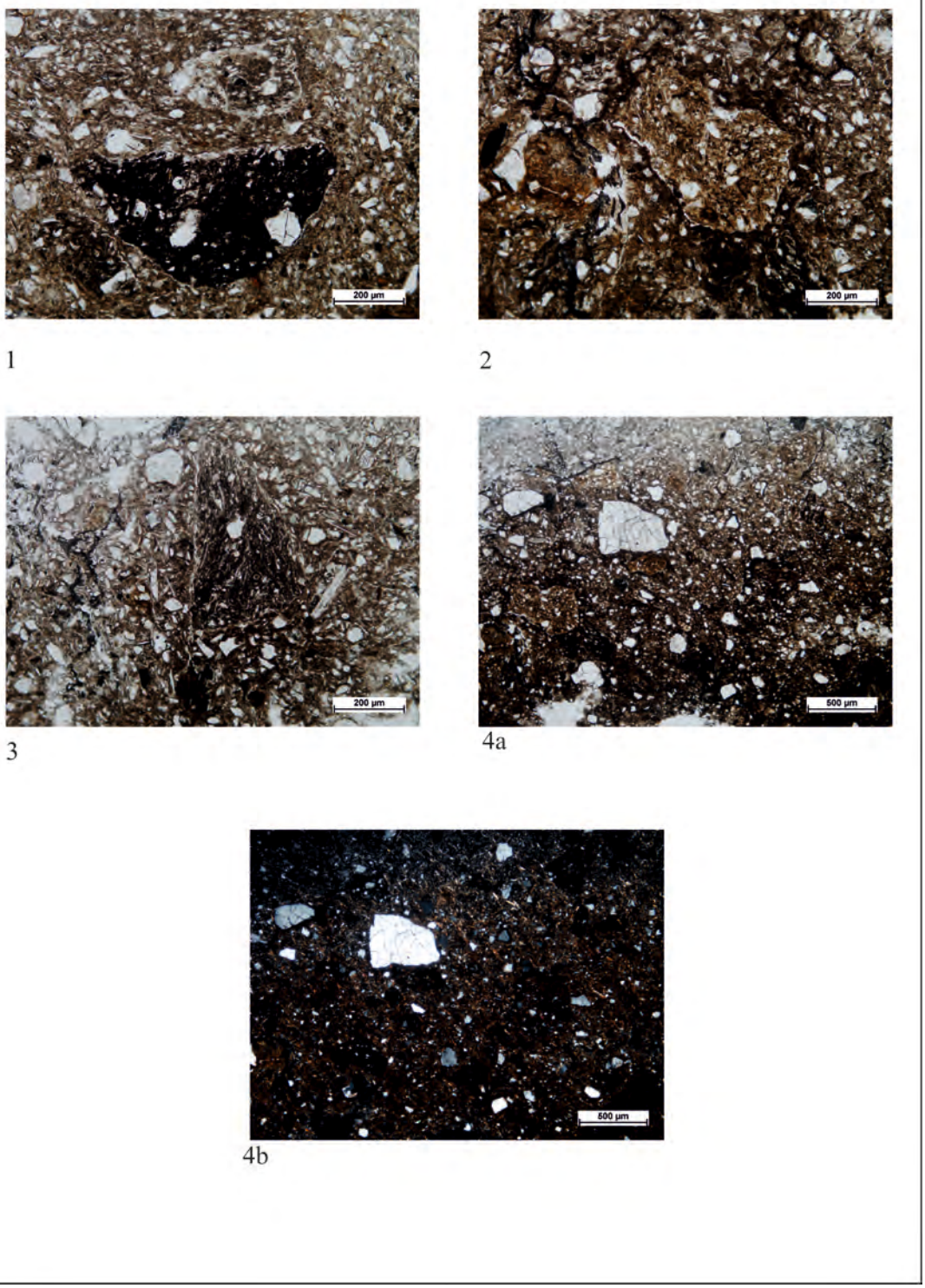

Plate XIII.

1. Black, strongly fired grog. PPL.
2. ARF of fatclayorigin. (PPL).
3. Mica rich compact grog or ARF (PPL).
4. **4a and b**. Typical overview of the ceramic with a lot of quartz inclusions and less ARF (a: PPL; b: XP).

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DOMESTIC AND SYMBOLIC ACTIVITIES ON A TELL-LIKE SETTLEMENT AT ÖCSÖD-KOVÁSHALOM IN THE TISZA REGION

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Abstract: *The Öcsöd-Kováshalom site represents a settlement with a remarkable spatial organisation. We identified a series of symbolic activities linked to the spatial segments of various domestic activities. These series of activities, involved the use of extraordinarily modelled and ornamented vessels as well as the symbolic manipulation of some sort of liquid as part of the ritual choreography. On the other hand, a rich diversity could be noted in the rituality of burials that was part of the domestic sphere. The above data furnish additional proof of the extent to which the community's symbolic and ritual activities permeated daily life.*
Keywords: *Great Hungarian Plain, Late Neolithic, tell-like settlement, ritual activities, fragmentation, mortuary practices.*

The settlement

Lying in the boundary zone between the Tisza and Körös landscapes, the Öcsöd-Kováshalom site (Figure 1) represents a settlement with a remarkable spatial organisation in the Late Neolithic settlement network of the Tisza region (Figure 2). The archaeological investigation of the site in the 1980s brought to light the remains of an aggregated settlement type of the cultural complex known as the Tisza culture in Hungarian archaeological scholarship (Raczky *et al.* 1985; Raczky 1986; Raczky 1987; Whittle 1996, 108–109. Fig. 4.14; Hertelendi *et al.* 1998; Raczky 2009; Kaczanowska, Kozłowski 2009; Kovács, Gál 2009; Siklósi 2013, 144–150; Raczky, Füzesi 2016).

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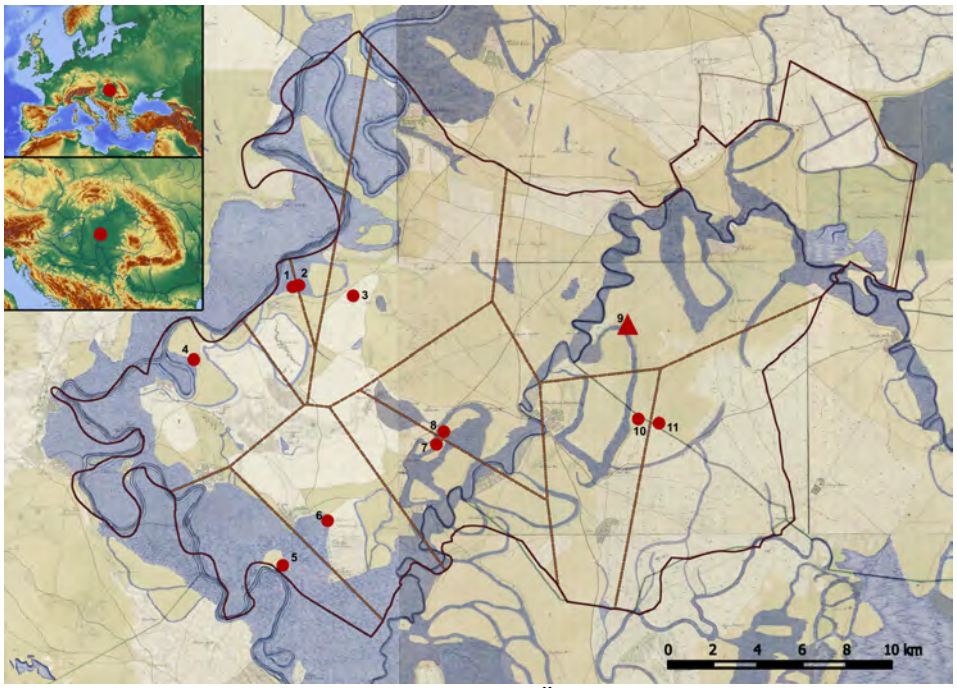

Fig. 1. The location of the tell-like settlement at Öcsöd-Kováshalom (Site 9) in the Late Neolithic settlement network of the Tiszazug region at the confluence of Tisza and Körös rivers on the Great Hungarian Plain (1: Tiszakürt-Buzássziget, 2: Tiszainoka-Buzás-sziget, 3: Tiszakürt-Téglás-lapos partja, 4:Tiszaug-Műút melléke, 5: Csépa-Compó, 6: Csépa-Csipsár-part, 7: Szelevény-Sárga-partoldal, 8: Szelevény-Telekpart, 9: Öcsöd-Kováshalom, 10: Kunszentmárton-Nagy-ér keleti partja, 11: Öcsöd-Határ-út. Modified after Raczky, Füzesi 2016).

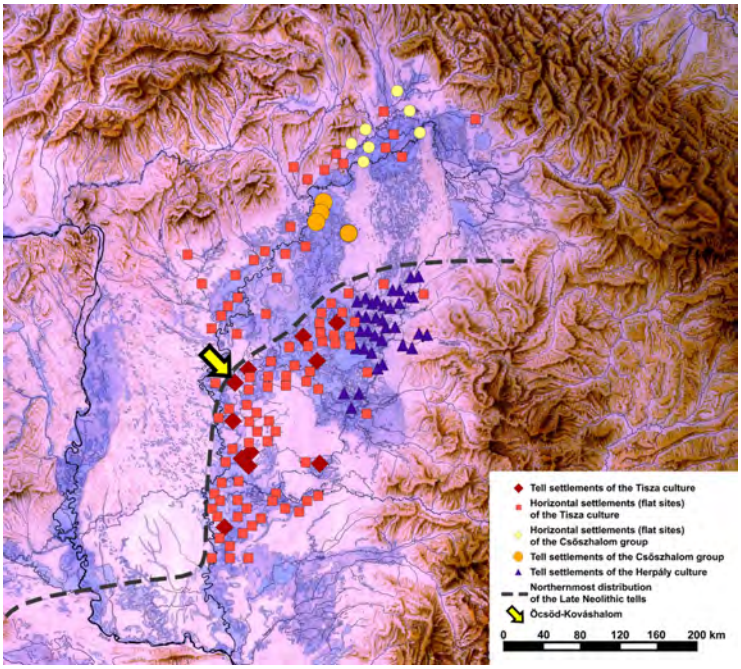

Fig. 2. Distribution of the Late Neolithic settlements of the Tisza-Herpály-Csőszhalom complex in the Tisza region, showing the northernmost tells in the Carpathian Basin during the earlier 5th millennium BCE and the location of Öcsöd-Kováshalom (modified after Raczky *et al.* 1994).

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Settlement layout

A tell-like mound enclosed by seven smaller clusters of houses rose in the centre of the settlement (Figure 3). The intensive topographic survey of the site in the 1980s revealed that the settlement reflecting a complex nucleation process extended over an area of roughly 21 hectares. The real size of the 8 settlement nuclei ranged between 3300 and 8700 m^2 (Raczky 2009, Fig. 2–3; Raczky, Füzesi 2016, Fig. 8).

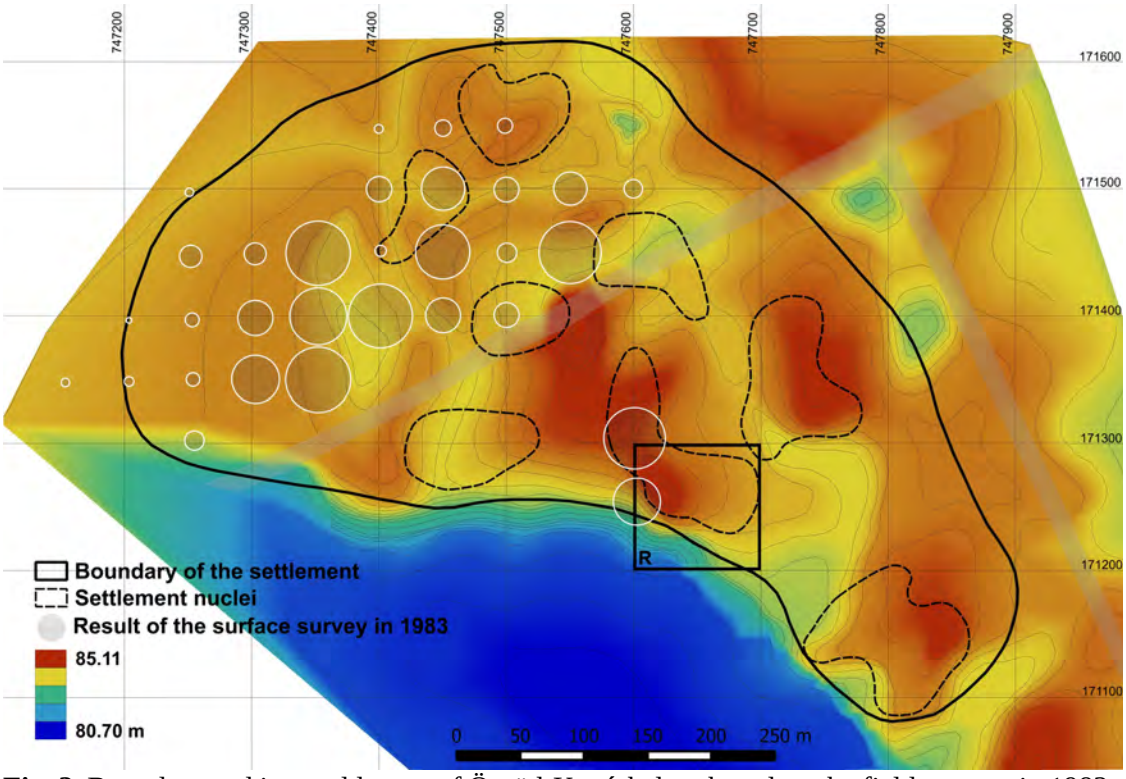

Fig. 3. Boundary and internal layout of Öcsöd-Kováshalom based on the field surveys in 1983 (modified after Raczky, Füzesi 2016).

The most recent magnetometer survey in 2018 yielded surprising results for it demonstrated the presence of an enclosure of three concentric ditches around the central tell-like mound.[39] The outermost ditch had a diameter of *ca.* 500 m, the middle one of 400 m, while the inner one of 250 m. Another unusual trait of these ditches was that they were interrupted by gaps and that there were small round structures along them, making them similar to the pseudo-ditch-type enclosures of Central Europe (Lefranc *et al.* 2017). These new findings call for a fresh look at the Late Neolithic settlement at Öcsöd and its one-time role in the micro-region. The presence of a large enclosure raises the question of whether the labour invested in the construction of the enclosure can be linked to a single community or whether it reflects the co-operative efforts of the population of a larger area. At the same time, the enclosure itself expresses extended materialised sets of social relations, as argued by Ch. Gosden (Gosden 2012).

It is thus feasible that the Öcsöd-Kováshalom site had functioned as a centre of congregation (Renfrew 2013) or a prominent central place with an assembly function

[39] The research project focusing on the complex investigation of the site was undertaken by the German team led by Dr. Knut Rassman with the generous support of Dr. Eszter Bánffy and the RGK (Frankfurt am Main) between February 25 and March 1, 2018.

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(Parzinger 1992). If this was indeed the case, the find assemblages from the site would not represent the typical cultural legacy of a single permanently sedentary community, as we earlier believed. A similar interpretation has been proposed by John Chapman in his minimalist model for the Cucuteni-Trypillia mega-sites (Chapman 2017).

The earlier radiocarbon dates for the site indicated that the main settlement mound that once overlooked a watercourse, whose two main superimposed occupation layers accumulated to a height of 130–160 cm (Figure 4), could be dated between *ca*. 5200 and 4980 BC (1 σ) (Raczky 2009; Raczky, Füzesi 2016). The lower occupation levels (nos 4–6) of the Öcsöd settlement yielded finds with Tisza I ceramic attributes, while the upper levels (nos 1–3) contained assemblages with Tisza II stylistic attributes. Despite the substantial differences noted in the material, principally in the ceramic inventory, the same syntactic principles of spatial organisation could be noted during the Tisza I and Tisza II period on the central settlement mound (Figure 5). In other words, while a continuity can be clearly seen in the spatial organisation of this settlement segment, a definite change occurred in the realm of material culture (Raczky 1987; Raczky 2009; Raczky, Füzesi 2016, Fig. 15, Fig. 19).

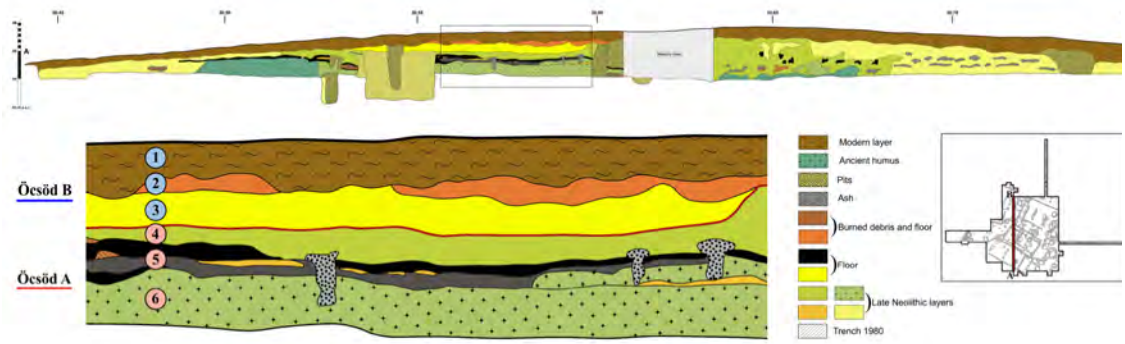

Fig. 4. Öcsöd-Kováshalom. North-south section of the excavated area on the tell-like settlement. Six levels and two settlement horizons (Öcsöd A and B) corresponding to the Tisza I and II phases could be identified in the section (modified after Raczky, Füzesi 2016).

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Fig. 5. Öcsöd-Kováshalom. Plan of the main excavated area with an indication of the features dug into the ground. Certain elements of the settlement structure (buildings and ditches) of the early phase (Öcsöd A) are highlighted in red, the features of the late phase (Öcsöd B) in blue. The changes in the settlement layout are clearly illustrated by the location of different houses (modified after Raczky, Füzesi 2016).

Activity zones

The excavated archaeological features on the tell-like mound clearly indicated an area divided into concentric activity zones (Figure 6). The pits around the houses and the burials form an integrated spatial segment, embodying internal spatial environments linked to each other. These zones outline the settings of the local interactions between quotidian and symbolic activity types, and thus represent a site-specific intermeshed taskscape configuration (Ingold 1993, 164; Edmonds 1997, 108–109; Ingold 2000, 194; Edgeworth 2012; Ingold 2016; Thomas 2017). This essentially involved a reorganisation of the earlier house-pit-yard-grave spatial integrative module of the Middle Neolithic

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Alföld Linearbandkeramik period (Domboróczki 2009; Domboróczki 2013), resulting in a new spatial configuration that reflected and embodied the changed population density, social relationships and the contexts of new activities. This internal spatial configuration recurs in the superimposed settlement levels, extending thereby the community's structuring of space into a third dimension (Raczky, Anders 2009; Raczky, Anders 2012). These patterns outline an essentially novel social, economic and ritual dynamism at the onset of the local Late Neolithic, whose general principles of spatial organisation can be rightly regarded as the expression of a new "paradigm" in the southern Hungarian Plain at the turn of the sixth and fifth millennia BC. During our investigation of the site, we were able to identify a series of symbolic activities linked to the spatial segments of various domestic activities at Öcsöd-Kováshalom that indicated special activity loci and activity trajectories that in a sense transcended the settings of quotidian activities.

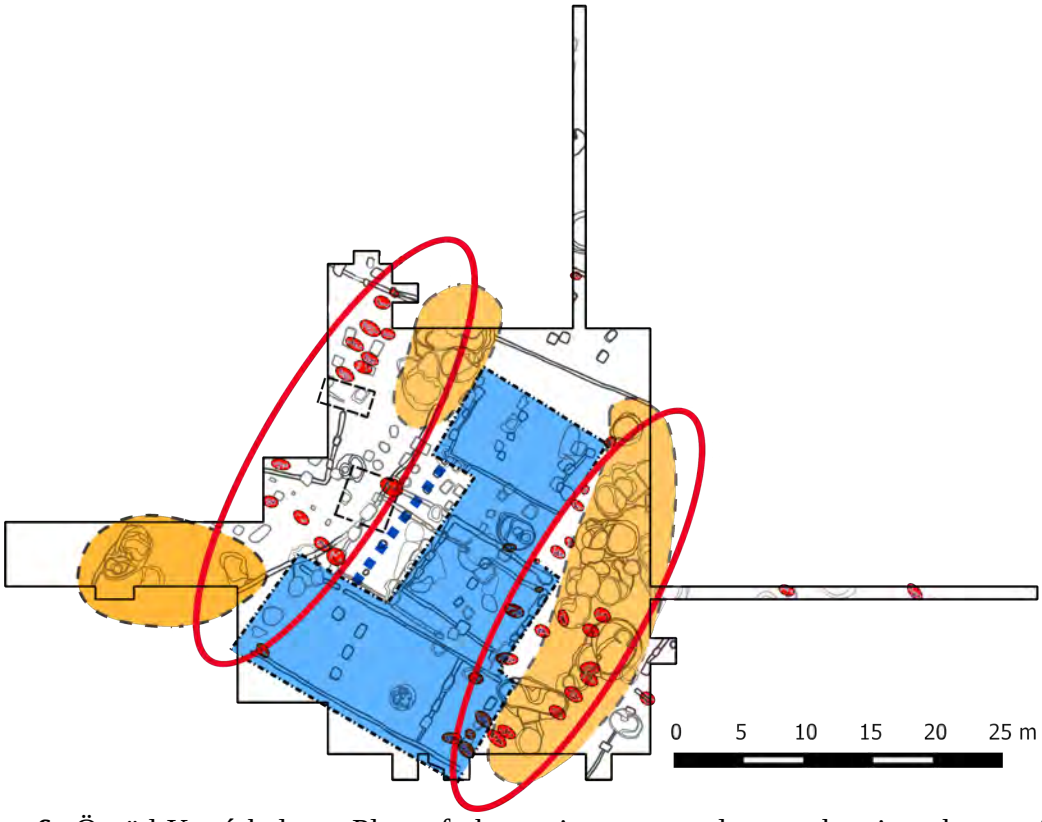

Fig. 6. Öcsöd-Kováshalom. Plan of the main excavated area showing the spatial segments of the house zone (blue), the pit zones (yellow) and the burial clusters (red).

The early settlement structure and its changes

The excavation of the central settlement mound brought to light the remains of four timber-framed houses with bedding trenches from the earlier occupation phase, of which three formed a closed unit during the Tisza I period (Figures 5-6). The area of the houses was bounded by a rectangular fence with one side open towards the watercourse. A curved fence bounded the north-western segment of the area enclosed by the fence. Curiously enough, these spatial constructions, the rectangular fence and formal house modules located within the recently identified circular ditched enclosure encapsulate a distinctive co-occurrence of two geometric archetypes at Öcsöd (Bradley 2012).

A roughly 4 m by 12 m large open area lay at the north-western end of House 5, a building made up of two rooms, one of the dominant architectural elements of the spatial configuration of the early Tisza phase. A most unusual ceramic assemblage was

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uncovered in the area bounded by Houses 4 and 10 and a fence of timber posts (Figure 7). It is particularly noteworthy that the 100 cm by 50 cm large location with the stratified and burnt vessel deposit remained undisturbed during the settlement's later occupation too, in the midst of the later daily activities, suggesting that this assemblage had a special significance and it had been preserved in its original form, even though other parts of the settlement underwent profound changes.

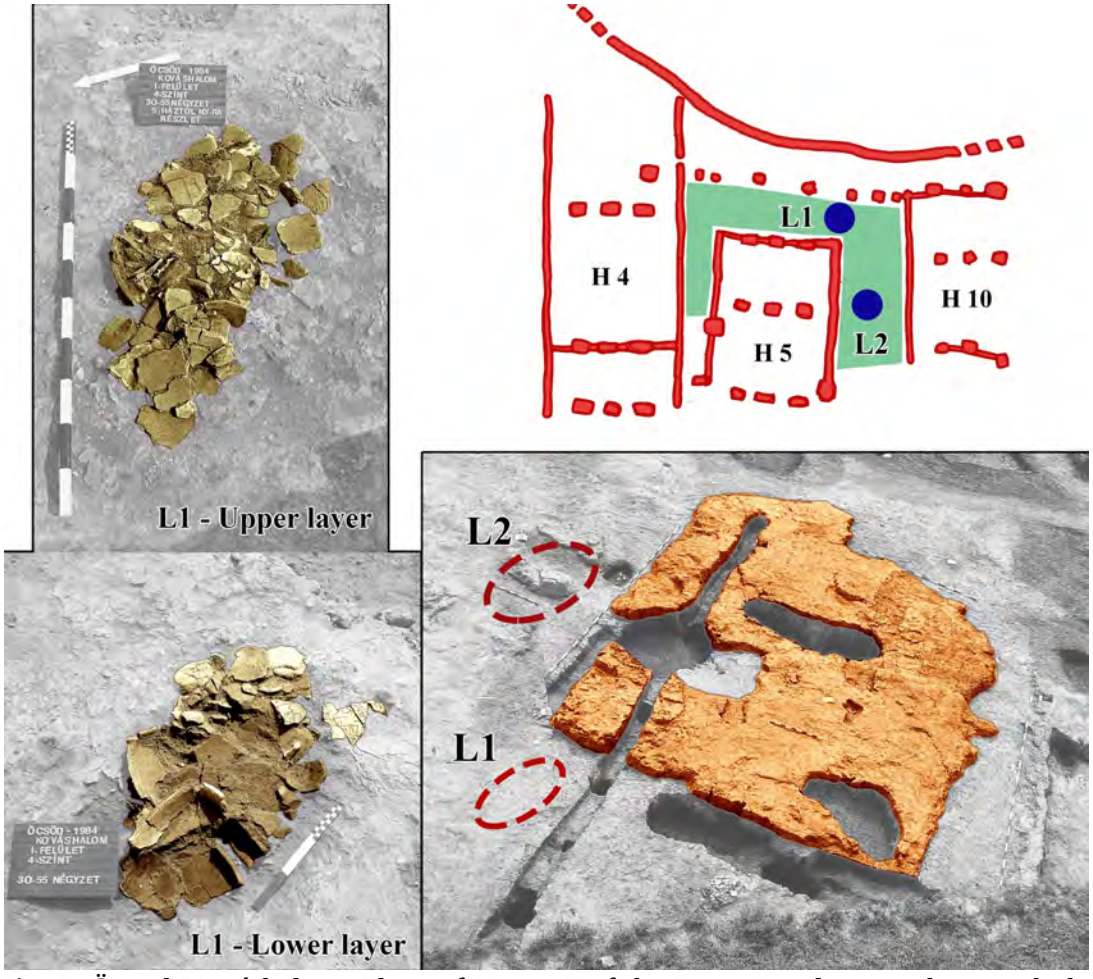

Fig. 7. Öcsöd-Kováshalom. Place of House 5 of the Tisza I settlement phase with the locations (L1 and L2) of two special ceramic deposits.

House 5 was rebuilt first and the area above the vessel deposit was carefully plastered, creating the foundation and floor of a new house. This new building (House 2) was thus enlarged with an additional room on the eastern side, under which the burnt vessels were carefully preserved. The house's occupants apparently took care to retain the material relics and milieu of an earlier action during the rebuilding involving various construction activities. A new building was erected between Houses 5 and 10 during the reorganisation of the settlement, which called for a shift of the long walls of the two houses towards the north and south to ensure that the new building (House 3) would fit in breadthwise between the earlier two houses. This reorganisation lead to the creation of the new unit of four houses (Nos 1–3 and 9) during the Tisza II period.

In this sense, the events associated with the vessel deposit directly preceded the large-scale spatial reorganisation of the internal area of the Kováshalom mound, involving the reconstruction of two buildings and the erection of a new one. It would appear that the assemblage of burnt vessels and the community events associated with its

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deposition probably meant the termination of the settlement's early period and, simultaneously, the creation of the foundations for a new architectural unit.

Vessels in action

A unique face pot from the vessel deposit

The most spectacular part of the deposit is made up of the fragments of a 72 cm high storage jar (Figure 8), which had broken into many pieces and bore traces of strong secondary burning. What makes this vessel with cylindrical neck and ovoid body particularly noteworthy is that it essentially represents a re-interpreted version with special ornamental motifs and elements of the face pots of the Middle Neolithic Szakálhát culture (Kalicz, Makkay 1977, 108–110, Taf. 152–153, Taf. 189; Goldman 1978, 13–58; Hegedűs 1981; Lazarovici 1983, 155–158, Abb. 15. 3, 7, 9; Hegedűs 1985; Raczky 2000; Goldman, Szénászky 2002; Raczky, Anders 2003, 167–171. Fig. 6–7; Horváth, Paluch 2005, 262–263; Hansen 2007, 190–191, Taf. 232, 2–3; Kovács 2008, Fig. 1–2; Sebők, Kovács 2009; Virág 2009, 7; Raczky 2016).

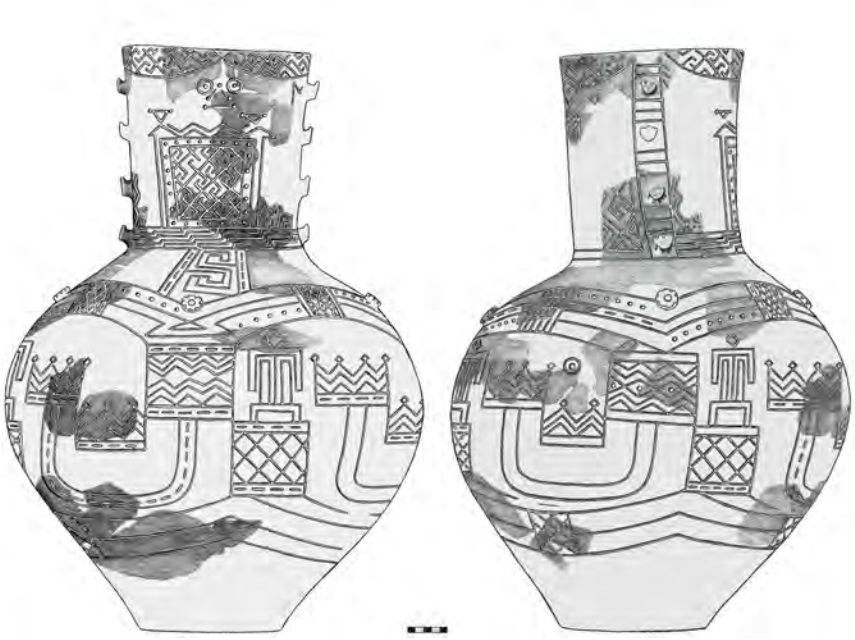

Fig. 8. Öcsöd-Kováshalom. Reconstruction of the face pot from the ceramic deposit in Location 1 (after Raczky 2000).

One of the most striking traits is the incised design combining figural and other ornamental motifs. The vessel surface (Figure 9) is divided into distinct segments by the four human figures in the imagery encircling the vessel's belly. The smaller vessel fragments that could not be refitted too confirm that the incised human figures were drawn differently and that this stylistic element probably had some significance (Figure 10). The stylistic traits on the face and body of the Öcsöd vessel represent an extraordinary "iconographic" canon. The creation of a separate visual field on the vessel body is particularly noteworthy because the body of the earlier Szakálhát face pots was covered with a simple continuous spiral ornament (e.g. Szentes-Komitatshaus, Kunszentmárton-Kettőshalom, Szentes-Ilonapart and Gyoma-Özed; Kalicz, Makkay 1977, 91–92, Taf. 189, 2, 5, 7; Goldman, Szénászky 2002, Abb. 2-4).

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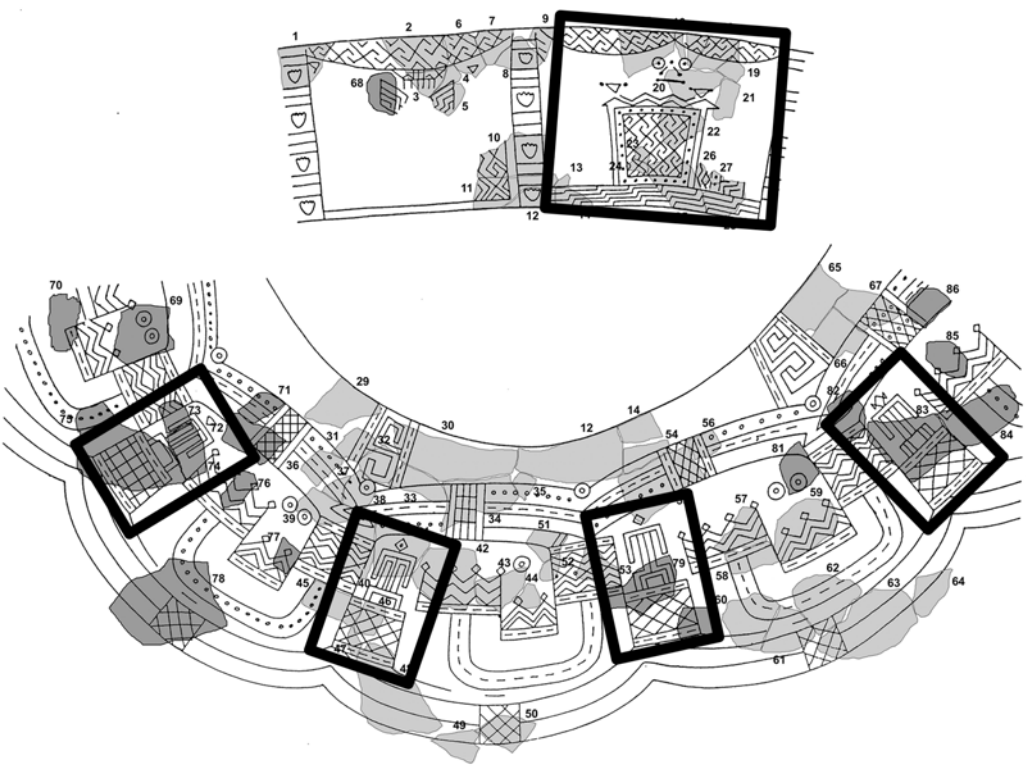

Fig. 9. Öcsöd-Kováshalom. Reconstruction of the ornamental design covering the body of the face pot with four different human representations from the ceramic deposit in Location 1.

Fig. 10. Öcsöd-Kováshalom. Details of the human head representations on the face pot from the ceramic deposit in Location 1.

A special rectangular vessel

Mixed up among the fragments of face pot that remained in the ceramic deposits lay the fragments of another unusual vessel (Figure 11), a shallow rectangular bowl with one side shorter than the other three. The non-quotidian function of this vessel is indicated by the four round perforations on the shorter side. Four stylised animal heads facing inward toward the vessel's centre were set on each of the four corners on the rim. The

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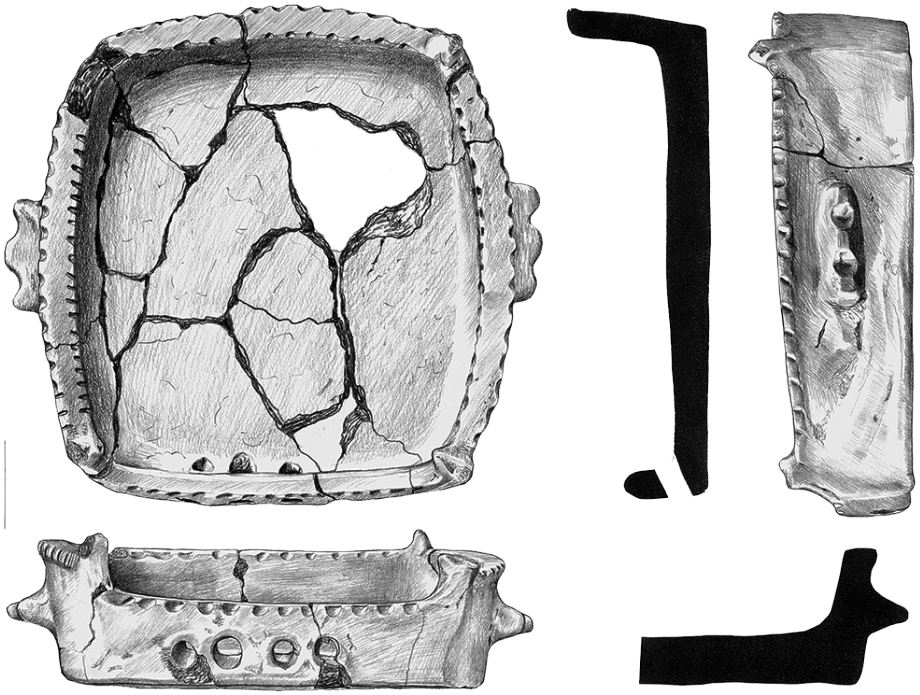

Fig. 11. Öcsöd-Kováshalom. A shallow quadrangular bowl with one side shorter than the other three from the ceramic deposit found in Location 1. There are four round perforations on the shorter side of the vessel and four inward-facing stylised animal heads were set on the rim in the four corners.

form of the bowl suggests that it had been used for holding liquid, which had perhaps been poured out through the perforations. The cultural ancestry of rectangular vessels with perforations for pouring can be traced to the similar pieces known from the Alföld Linear Pottery (Kalicz, Makkay 1977, Taf. 88–89; Kurucz 1989, Tab. IX. 1, Tab. XII; Hajdú, Nagy 2015, Fig. 30, 3)

The refitting of the vessels and their spatial contexts

The refitting and restoration of the Öcsöd face pot provided several new insights. As it turned out, of the eighty-six fragments that survived of the vessel, only twenty larger pieces came from the vessel deposit (Figure 12). The other sixty-six, mostly smaller fragments were dispersed over the 1430 m^2 large excavated area of the main settlement area. We attempted to map this dispersal using a grid of 5 m by 5 m squares and to document the density of the scatter as well as the distance of individual fragments from the deposit (Figures 12-13). We found that the scatter of the vessel's fragments showed a concentration towards the north and south, even though the north-east to south-west oriented houses had obviously obstructed any spontaneous dispersal in these directions, suggesting that the "movement" of the pottery sherds can only be conceptualised through human agency – in other words, the horizontal dispersal of the vessel fragments can be attributed to the local systemic context. It is in itself noteworthy that the large vessel broke into so many small fragments – it seems likely that this too reflects some intentional, pre-meditated act of the type labelled "deliberate fragmentation" by John Chapman (Chapman 2000).

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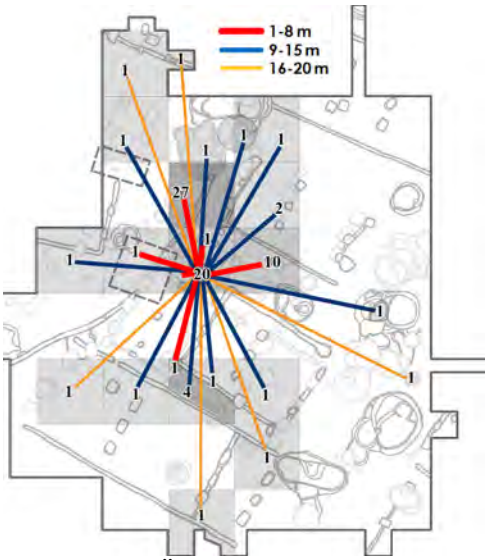

Fig. 12. Öcsöd-Kováshalom. Spatial distribution and number of the re-fitted fragments of the face pot found in the ceramic deposit in Location 1 on the tell-like settlement.

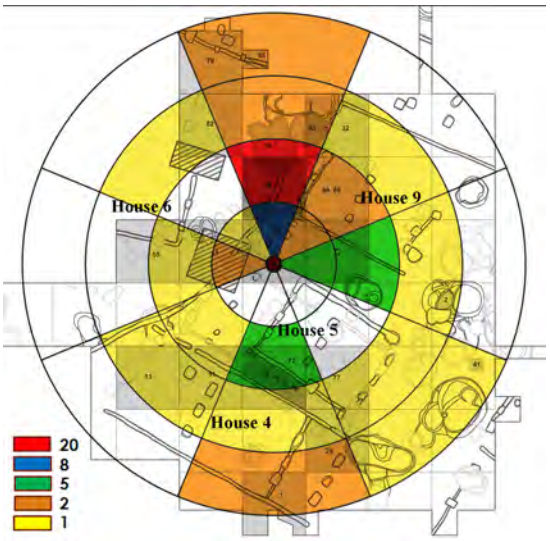

Fig. 13. Öcsöd-Kováshalom. Zonal intensity plot of the re-fitted fragments of the face pot found in the ceramic deposit in Location 1 on the tell-like settlement.

The quadrangular vessel of the ceramic deposit broke into fifteen pieces, of which thirteen lay in the deposit and only two base fragments are missing from the vessel. Just for the comparison: while 76% of the large vessel's fragments were found at some distance from the place of its primary deposition, this proportion was 13% in the case of the rectangular vessel. It is our belief that these details reflect two entirely different attitudes to the two vessels in the period following their primary use in the area beside House 5. In our narrative, the face pot and the rectangular vessel were both broken as the concluding act of an earlier action and the participants then took certain fragments of the large face pot to various parts of the settlement. With this symbolic act, the community's specific ritual act was extended from the smaller area to a wider zone of the Öcsöd settlement core. As A. Whittle succinctly noted, "Pots may have been deliberately broken after use in particular events, gatherings or feasts: another way of explaining the great quantities involved. It can be argued that sherds stood metonymically, as part for whole, for past social interaction, and carried something of their past history into the ground in chosen places, as people consciously selected and deposited them" (Whittle 1997, 139). Although the fragments of the smaller rectangular vessel were not included in this symbolic movement at a wider scale, its pieces and the retained fragments of the large face pot were intentionally deposited together (structured deposition: Garrow 2012) to create a mnemonic place for preserving the memory of the events beside the former western wall of House 5.

It seems likely that the fragments of another face pot discovered near the northern long wall of House 5, of which only twelve neck and shoulder fragments were found, can be linked to the same event. This location, as mentioned above, had been significantly altered during the subsequent rebuilding activity. This face pot can only be broadly reconstructed because its greater portion was not among the finds brought to light during the excavation (Figure 14). Nevertheless, its form and ornamentation was probably quite similar to the previous face pot. This close association is particularly apparent from the comb-like human figures portrayed on the vessel body. This is the other main reason that we believe that this face pot can also be linked to the ritual events performed in the area

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of House 5, even though we cannot reconstruct this in detail as in the case of the previous face pot because the micro-spatial observations did not make this possible in this location.

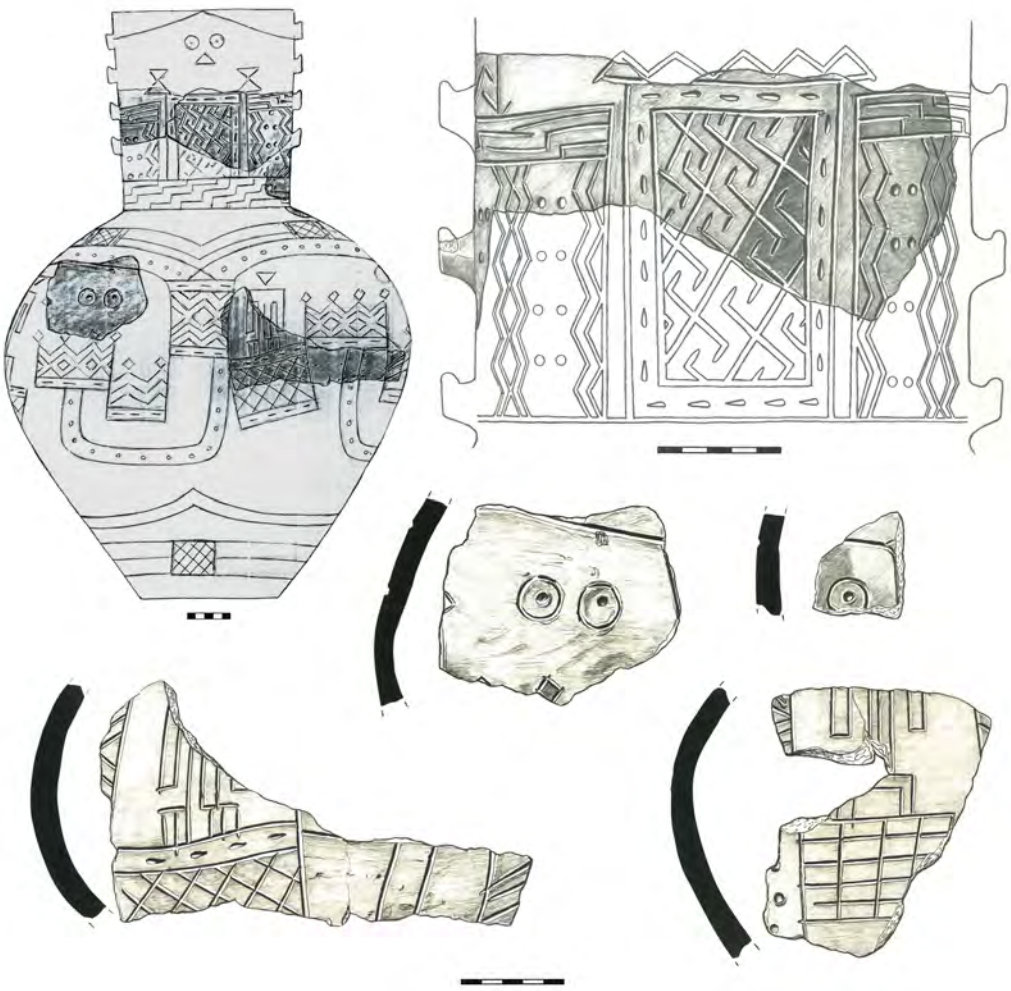

Fig. 14. Öcsöd-Kováshalom. Fragments of a second face pot found in Location 2 on the tell-like settlement and its reconstructed form.

Summary

Commemorative deposits resembling the one from Öcsöd are known from several Neolithic settlements in the Carpathian Basin; moreover, this particular symbolic act and its cognitive background have countless analogies in the social milieu of the South-East European Neolithic (Chapman, Gaydarska 2007, 13–14). Among others, a remarkable ceramic assemblage from the newest excavations on the Vinča tell settlement was published by N. Tasić. One remarkable piece in the assemblage identified as a "ritual pottery set" was a finely made small bowl with four pairs of inward-looking animal protomes (Tasić 2007, 204–205, Fig. 1). A comparable vessel, again with four pairs of animal protomes, was recovered from a special context of House I/2010, a burnt building, at the Crkvine-Stubline settlement dating from the Vinča-Pločnik period (Spasić, Crnobrnja 2014, Fig. 1, Pl. 1. 1). Spasić and Crnobrnja have persuasively demonstrated that bowls divided into four segments by the human or animal heads represented a standard formal canon during the 800-year-long sequence of the Vinča culture, reflecting the long persistence of cultural norms that were embodied by the canonised vessels across

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the culture's entire distribution (Spasić, Crnobrnja 2014, Fig. 3, Tab. 1). This would also suggest that the visual structure incorporating four distinct segments at Öcsöd and, in a broader sense, in the southern Hungarian Plain was a persistent element that pervaded the cultural cognitive sphere at the macro-regional level and had a profound impact on the imagery of the local microcosm (Bernbeck, McGuire 2011).

Moving backward in time, the next issue to be addressed is the type of human choreography in which the large face pot and the rectangular vessel used for manipulating liquids became structurally related as the material elements of a particular action before both were "preserved through destruction". It seems to us that the two vessels were used together for the regulated manipulation of some liquid substance, perhaps an alcoholic, fermented beverage that was transferred from the large jar to the rectangular bowl and then strained through the latter into smaller vessels for consumption. The fact that the liquid was poured through four openings may have had some significance of its own. This would suggest that what we have here are the remains of the community's ritual on a special occasion, of a ritual feasting, which also involved the consumption of special drinks (Dietler 2001; Dietler, Hayden 2001; Dietler 2006; Twiss 2008; Hayden, Villeneuve 2011; Insoll 2011). As static elements, the vessels were linked by their liquid contents and the human action performed according to certain set rules, becoming thereby embodiments of, and expressions of, a local symbolic action, of a ritual activity. Formally, this distinctively choreographed series of actions represented a liminal situation, the transition from one spatial organisation into another architectural configuration, in the frame of reference of a culture-specific mode of material expression (Verhoeven 2011).

The location of the deposit in the community space between the houses was a spatial segment closely allied to the social and economic milieu of daily life, reflecting the local entwinement of subsistence and ritual activities. The social framework of the group ritual conducted at Öcsöd involved the occupants of three houses, the members of three households, roughly some fifteen to eighteen individuals. This is an important aspect because we have also uncovered evidence for rituals performed inside the houses by the members of a particular household, indicating that symbolic, ritual activities were performed on several organisational levels by groups with distinct identities (Raczky 2009, 104, Fig. 11. 3).

When interpreting the ritual space identified in the area between the Neolithic houses at Öcsöd, we also examined the possible antecedents of the community activities regulated by formalised rules in the regional Tiszazug setting. Of the two vessels in the ceramic deposit at Öcsöd, the analogies to the rectangular vessel definitely indicate that the manipulation of some liquid substance had been a general and widespread practice on the Hungarian Plain already during the Alföld Linearbandkeramik period. The Tisza I context of the vessel at Öcsöd attests to the transmission of the cognitive background and the activity norms. In the case of the face pot, it is striking that four pairs of modelled upward-held hands were set on the vessel's neck, suggesting that the "face" and the "hands" were not the attributes of a single individual, and the same seems true in the case of the elaborate figural composition covering the vessel body. In contrast, the face pots of the preceding Szakálhát period had a single pair of upheld arms or a pair of handles on either side of the face, possibly a reference to the portrayal of a single individual. In this sense, the face and the body of the Öcsöd vessel represent the collective "corpus" of a broader social integration articulated in the context of group relations. The imagery on the vessel body is perhaps an illustration of the symbolic horizon of a microcosm with a fourfold division. It seems to us that the large face pot from Öcsöd modelled a human community and its "spatial world", and can thus be conceptualised as expressing a localised "world view" (Ashmore 2015).

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In the light of the above, we may assume that the remarkable assemblage recovered from a Tisza I context at Öcsöd-Kováshalom had been deposited as part of a community ceremony, as part of a ritual activity. The "life" of the two vessels and of the second face pot whose fragments were found around House 5 was brought to an end by their deliberate fragmentation and their spatiality became archaeologically visible in the wake of an activity performed according to certain community norms during a subsequent phase. While the cognitive antecedents of this activity lead us back to the cultural milieu of the local Middle Neolithic Alföld Linearbandkeramik and the Szakálhát group (Kalicz, Makkay 1977), the two vessels are material embodiments of a new, Late Neolithic set of symbolic norms.

Human remains in action

A rich diversity could be noted in the symbolic treatment of human remains that was entwined with the domestic sphere at Öcsöd-Kováshalom. This diversity was also apparent in the many forms of human remains, the burial rites and their location within the settlement.

A total of forty-nine burials were uncovered on the tell-like settlement. Of these, forty-seven were inhumation and two were cremation burials (Raczky *et al*. 1985; Raczky 1986; Raczky 1987; Raczky 2009; Siklósi 2013) (Figure 15). In addition to the articulated bones, several hundred other human bones were identified, mostly during the assessment of the archaeozoological material (Raczky 2009, 105; Fig. 16). During her examination of these human bones, Kitti Köhler was able to identify 310 bone fragments that represented 99–108 individuals. It is difficult to tell whether this phenomenon was restricted to this site because little attention has been accorded to human remains of this type and there is little in the way of comparative material from the other contemporaneous Hungarian sites.[40]

Fig. 15. Öcsöd-Kováshalom. Spatial distribution of the 49 graves found in the main excavation area of the tell-like settlement (modified after Raczky, Füzesi 2016).

[40] Over seventy human bone fragments came to light from one section of the ditch associated with the roughly contemporaneous settlement at Polgár-Bosnyákdomb. Their assessment is currently in progress (Raczky, Anders 2016, 116).

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Rite

The overwhelming majority of the inhumation burials was SE to NW oriented (72.5%), a smaller portion had an E–W orientation (20%), while three burials had a W–E or N–S orientation, respectively (Siklósi 2013, 147). Grave pits could be observed in a few instances only owing to the many disturbances in the stratification of the mound. The deceased were laid on their right or left side in roughly equal proportion (52.4% and 47.6%, respectively), and they were typically interred in a crouched position (Siklósi 2013, 146–147). There was no correlation between orientation and body placement and the sex or age of the deceased. About one-half of the burials contained no grave goods whatsoever and most of the remaining burials contained nothing more than a lump of ochre aside from a few vessels, a figurine, stone tools, Spondylus beads, V perforated buttons, a Glycimeris pendant, red deer canines and bone tools. One typical element of the burial rite practiced by the Öcsöd community was sprinkling red ochre on the head or the feet of the deceased (Raczky 1987, 80), a custom observed in 56% of the burials (Siklósi 2013, 148–150).

There were two scattered cremation burials: one was an independent burial, the other was deposited by the legs of a crouched female burial (Raczky 1987; Siklósi 2013, 146) (Figure 16), highlighting thereby the physical and social bonds between the two burials. The women's lower legs were painted red and the cremains of the child were mixed with red earth pigments.

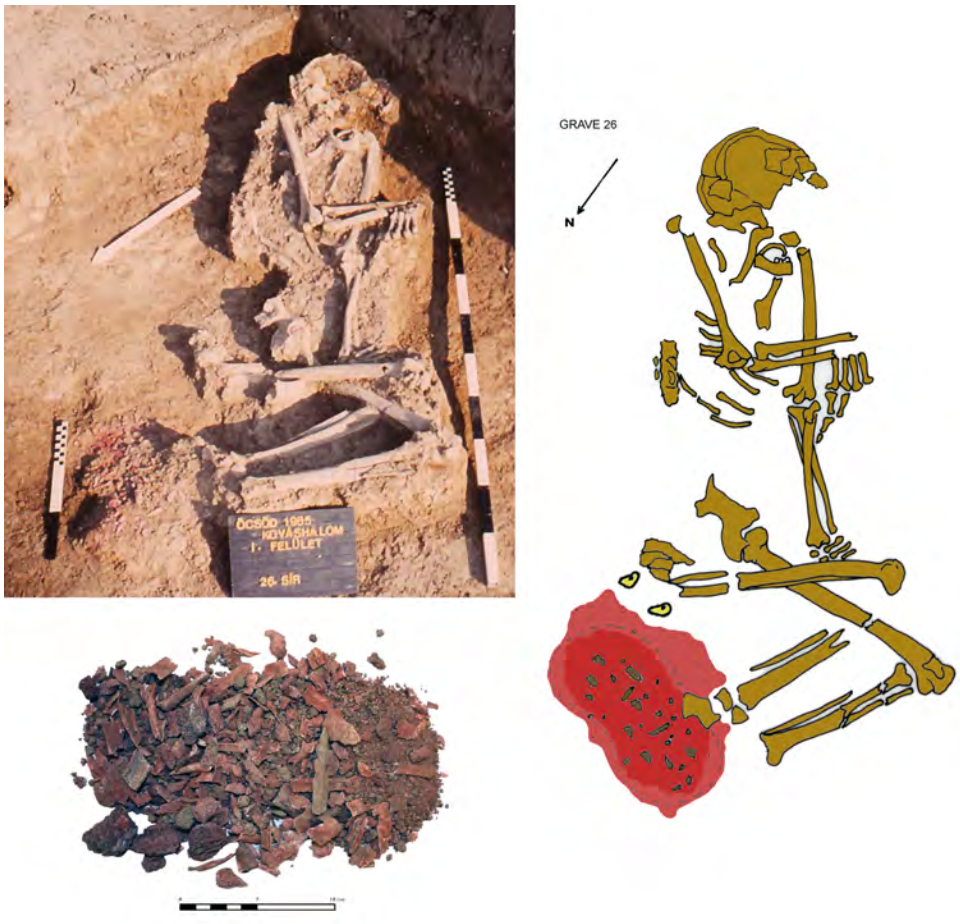

Fig. 16. Öcsöd-Kováshalom. Crouched burial (Grave 26) with mixture of human cremains and red ochre by its legs.

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It seems likely that a part of the fragmented human bones recovered from various features had originally probably been deposited in formal graves because Kitti Köhler identified the all the skeletal remains of one particular individual and because traces of red ochre were preserved on the skull of an Inf. I child, indicating that the child had been interred according to the "usual" burial rite. Yet, we cannot exclude the possibility that these bones come from individuals who had not been accorded the customary burial rites, whose corpses had been left exposed for excarnation.

Location

One unique trait of the settlement's spatiality was that most of the forty-nine burials uncovered at the site were not associated with the space of individual buildings, but rather with a larger complex of houses in the area's north-west and south-east (Figure 17). Smaller groups, perhaps with graves arranged in rows, could be noted in these two major clusters separated by the zone of the houses (Siklósi 2013, 146). There were certain differences between the two larger clusters: for example, placement on the left side was more common in the southern cluster, while placement on the right in the northern one (Siklósi 2013, 147, 150–151). A spatial difference could also be noted in the provisioning of the deceased with grave goods. For example, nine burials contained chipped stone tools, of which six lay close to each in the northern grave cluster. Cores were recovered from three burials, of which three similarly lay in the northern cluster. In contrast, shell ornaments were more frequently deposited in the western and southern area (Siklósi 2013, 147–150).

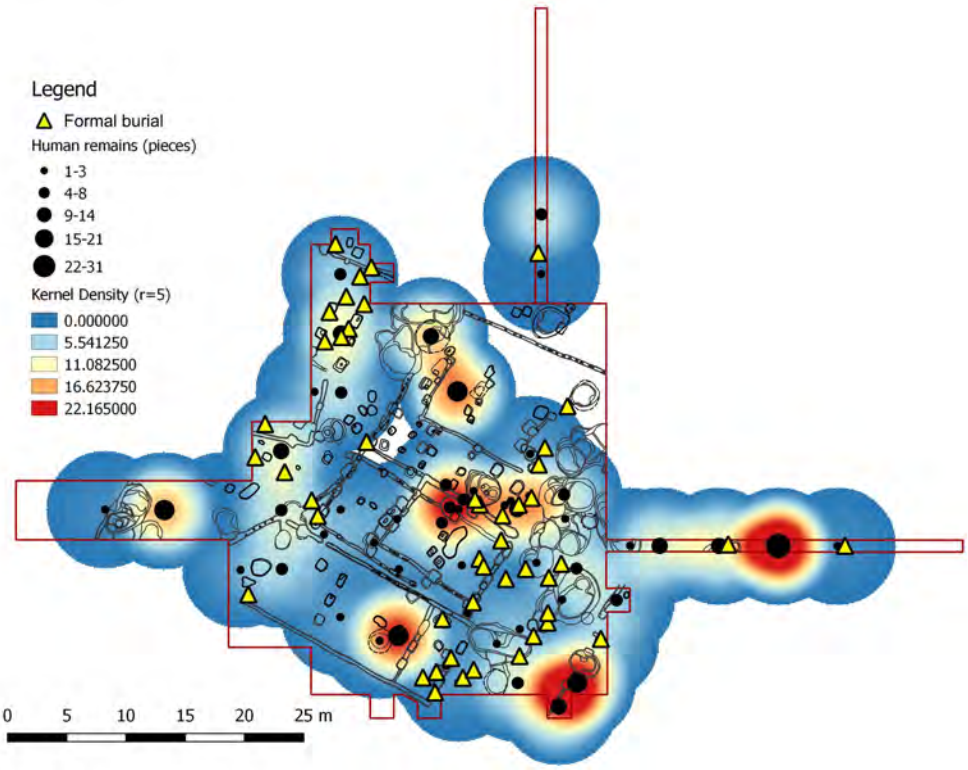

Fig. 17. Formal burials and human remains in a probably secondary position excavated in the main area of the Öcsöd-Kováshalom tell-like settlement. Spatial distribution of the human remains generated using QGIS, shown on a weighted heat map (radius: 5 m). The human remains were associated with settlement features and spatial units (black dots).

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The two cremation burials were found near each other in the southern cluster (Siklósi 2013, 149–151). The preliminary anthropological assessment suggests that in the case of one of these burials, not all the cremains from the cremation of an Inf. II aged child had been interred, only a part.

Human remains were distributed across the entire settlement, although a few major concentrations could be identified (Figure 17). Most of the human bones came to light from the settlement zone with pits dug into each other, while fewer from the area of the houses. One location usually yielded a single or but a handful of bone fragments. The human bones were found in several layers in the large pits excavated according to their superimposed layers. The spatial analysis of their distribution was performed using the QGIS software with a heatmap. We mapped the data according 5 m radius circles which outlined the activity zones with concentrations of human bones found in secondary positions or of human remains that had received a different type of treatment. As a result, the human remains lying close to each other were given greater weight than the isolated, scattered finds. At first glance, the find spots of the human bones seem to have an even distribution across the excavated area; however, a weighting according to the number of human bones outlines several concentrations. Here, we shall highlight three locations in the zone of the houses, particularly the location in broader area of Houses 2 and 5, because this area coincides with the one where the fragments of the second face pot discussed in the above came to light and provides an association between the manipulation of the vessels and the human remains.

Time

The chronological relations between the burials and the settlement features outline highly interesting spatio-temporal dynamics. Only in one instance was there a superposition between the burials: Grave 13 lay directly above Grave 14 (Siklósi 2013, 145). The chronological relation between the inhumation and cremation burial found beside each other remains unclear. They may have been deposited at the same time, but it is equally feasible that the inhumation burial was laid on the cremation burial or vice versa.

Based on the superpositions, two burials could be assigned to the settlement's early phase and ten to the late phase. In twelve other cases, there were superpositions between the burials and the settlement features, of which two can be tentatively assigned to the early occupation and ten to the late one.

Graves 23 and 24 lay above the construction pits of Houses 1 and 4, meaning that the deceased had been interred after the destruction of the houses. At the same time, Grave 28 had been disturbed by the post-holes of the same building, and Grave 26 was clearly in superposition with the grave pit of Grave 27. Thus, we can distinguish at least two (or possibly three) chronological phases in the southern grave cluster: Grave 28 predated Houses 1 and 4, Grave 27 predated the late burials, although its relation to the houses remains unclear, while Graves 23 and 26 were later than the buildings. The south-eastern grave cluster had five superpositions with Houses 2 and 5, while the north-western cluster had three graves of this type, which were in stratigraphic relation with House 11.

At present, we have a single date for the absolute chronology of the burials, namely for Grave 26, the southernmost burial excavated at the site: (6000±40) 4943–4838 (68.2 %) cal BC (sample Poz-97152).

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Summary

The one-time occupants of the Öcsöd-Kováshalom settlement had a distinctive relation to their dead – the community's burial rites do not appear to have been governed by strict rules, but were rather characterised by a diverse range of spatio-temporal practices. Choices were made as to who would be interred in the area of the houses and who would be buried farther from the settlement, or who would be laid to rest near the settlement, whose remains would be later exhumed and scattered over a larger part of the settlement. It is also clearly visible that the forty-nine excavated graves represent only a fraction of the dead left behind by the population that once occupied the area for an estimated time span of 200 years. Counting with four generations for each phase (Phase A and B), a total population of 180-252 people can be assumed on the tell-like settlement unit at Öcsöd-Kováshalom, while the excavated graves represent only 26–19% of this number (Raczky 2009, 105). The identical orientation of the houses and the burials, the alignment of the graves to the zone of the houses would suggest that houses played an important connecting role between the living and the dead, even though this was not expressed as clearly in the burial of certain members of the community. Further micro-studies are needed to determine whether there were chronological or other differences between the two major grave clusters, which, for example, possibly determined placement on the right or left side.

Another choice was whether the body should be preserved or whether it should be made unrecognisable, transformed into ashes through the power of fire. It is particularly noteworthy that the two rites appear simultaneously at Öcsöd-Kováshalom.

The differential *post mortem* treatment of the bodies involved choices on the location of the grave and on whether it could be disturbed at some later time: in some instances, the grave was left undisturbed, in some cases, there were superimposed burials over an earlier one, while the high number of human bones found on the settlement suggest that many graves had been destroyed and that the body's integrity was no longer a concern. At the same time, these scattered human bones provided a continuous link with the ancestors for the occupants of the tell-like settlement for they encountered them during their daily activities, for example while digging a pit or during house construction. This represents a "symbolic action" which linked the spatial zone of the burials with the refuse pits within the settlement. It is possible that the cremains had similarly been deposited in several locations, "distributing" thereby the remains of a once-living individual.

We do not know the norms that governed the provisioning of some individuals with adornments and utilitarian artefacts, whose number was extraordinarily high in the case of two interments. Grave 24 in the southern cluster contained a stone axe, a *Glycimeris* pendant and a chipped stone tool, while Grave 44 in the northern cluster was the richest among the burials with adornments (Siklósi 2013, 150). In other cases, the burials did not contain any grave goods of non-perishable material. Ochre played an important role in the funerary rite, both as a pigment for painting the body and as a grave good. Despite the differential *post mortem* treatment of the bodies, the use of red ochre, whose occurrence was ubiquitous in the burials at Öcsöd, symbolically accentuated the two individuals' membership in the community.

Although the funerary practices observed at Öcsöd-Kováshalom might appear unusual owing to their diversity, they are not unparalleled. It would appear that this diversity was the norm during various periods of the Neolithic, perhaps a reflection of the many self-identities of the individual and the emergent communities, which would explain the colourful variety of the funerary rites practiced by the Öcsöd community and the stylistic changes in the traditions of pottery ornamentation.

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Conclusion

The special ritual paraphernalia, the burials and symbolic activities identified at Öcsöd, of which a selection was presented here, were mediums for expressing collective identity and integration, which they simultaneously also moulded at the turn of the sixth and fifth millennia BC, at the time of the emergence of the Tisza cultural system. The Öcsöd case studies on the special ceramic deposits and the burials presented here reflect the colourful diversity of community actions and their complex patterns as well as the dynamics of their spatio-temporal changes. We witness the manipulation of the extraordinary face pot and its fragments similarly as in the case of human bodies and human remains. The special actions creating spatial references outline community actions governed by various rules. The special activity pathways reconstructed for the tell-like settlement at Öcsöd were entwined with the domestic activities of daily life, creating thereby the complex textures of the community's life (Ingold 2010). We may regard them as extraordinary manifestations of locational awareness and symbolic spatial behaviour at Öcsöd, to use T. Watkins' words (Watkins 2004). Or, to employ W. Ashmore's expression, the Öcsöd assemblages and phenomena were in their complexity the enmeshed local-scale expressions of "Lived Experience of Space, Time and Cosmovision" on the southern Hungarian Plain (Ashmore 2015).

Acknowledgements

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A PHENOMENOLOGY OF GODHOOD. AGENCIES OF HUMAN SKULLS AND COMPLETE ANIMAL SKELETONS DURING THE NEOLITHIC AND COPPER AGE OF THE EASTERN CARPATHIAN BASIN

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Abstract: *Ancient men's daily lives are unquestionably imbued with the presence of the divine and their relation to godhood permeates every aspect of their existence. Although, their perceptions undoubtedly change and vary from region to region and from one period to the other, nevertheless the same perceptions are the very birth places of gods, which influence the creation of ancient men's material culture. This is especially true for human and animal depositions on the doorstep between the living and the netherworld, which arguably are expressions of a non-verbal communication between humanity and the perceived divinity. In such a dialogue, buried individuals bear agencies of social actors who manipulate and dispose of the remains, while less common practices, as skull or complete animal burials, hint to specific and quite characteristic individualised, emic perceptions of the divine.*

Skull burials have always spiked interests among scholars, since they clearly indicate violence, quite possibly sacrifice as well. Their disposal within burial grounds underscores the funerary nature, but also expresses the need of the living to nuance through specific agencies their relations to divinity. The same can be said about complete animal burials, as a case can be made for the fact that some animals are more equal to humans than other humans. Their presence within burial grounds of humans, in individual grave-pits and sometimes with grave goods, which based on their quality and contextual positioning reminds us of human burials, support a strong argument in this sense. Moreover, further hint at the possibility of sacrifice.

During the Neolithic and Copper Age a gradual stabilisation and normalisation of funerary landscapes and habits is recognised in the Eastern Carpathian Basin, culminating with an unparalleled homogeneity during the Middle Copper Age with an almost instantaneous destabilisation of these aspects during the following period. The analysis against this stable, funerary, baseline data of more than three dozen burial grounds with either human skull or complete animal skeleton burials, by highlighting regional and temporal aspects of body treatment allow for a phenomenology of godhood.

Keywords: *phenomenology, agency, ritual, Neolithic, Copper Age, burial, funerary archaeology, social memory, godhood.*

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Introduction

One could research the question of prehistoric divinity from various angles, though the present paper proposes an approach, that of *godhood*, which see the divine born from the daily interactions and interpersonal negotiations of prehistoric individuals of their own identity. During acts of funerary disposal and remembrance the lifeless bodies, arguably, become agents in negotiating identities of the living through their perceived relation to the divine, precisely at this very point the social nature of godhood emerges. Moreover, if we approach the subject from the vantage point of phenomenology, as a lived experience of the perceived human-divine interaction, local nuances of godhood emerge, as regional and temporarily restricted appropriations of funerary practices. In what follows an introduction to phenomenology and aspects of agency with a special consideration to archaeology is sketched, while in the later part of the paper agencies of skull and animal burials of the Eastern Carpathian Basin (ECB) during the Neolithic (N) and Copper Age (CA) are explored.

Of phenomenology and agency

Phenomenology enters the stage of philosophy from psychology in the second part of 19th century especially through the activity of Franz Brentano (e.g. 1874; 1907). The father of this eidetic science, as he phrased it, Edmund Husserl laid the cornerstone of the discipline with his major work "Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie. Erstes Buch: Allgemeine Einführung in die reine Phänomenologie" (Husserl 1913). In archaeology phenomenology found its way quite a bit later on the doorstep of the new millennium through the work of Christopher Tilley (1994) and represents a new way of relating to the past, though the way it is employed in our field is different from the one in philosophy. This resulted in two different schools of phenomenological thought within our field, one focused solely on the sensory perception of the landscape, while the other employs a more eidetic view next to the previously mentioned lived experience of the environment (Daróczi 2015, 14-16). The phenomenological construct that I am proposing is one where: a. individuals relate to their spatial and temporal milieu by their sensory perceptions, which results in the noema, b. the internal, individual analysis of these results in the so called, noesis, c. which in turn gives birth to the altered noema, d. that ultimately creates an altered material culture (Daróczi 2011, 18-20, fig. 1). This new and modified material culture goes to have a life of its own within the social fabric of each group and even beyond these on some occasions, its use and meaning constantly and repeatedly reinforced, through daily usage and acts of social remembrance. More importantly, phenomenology applied in this manner focuses on interactions of individuals and objects, as well as their environment and through the active participation in social memory of both also in the social life of artefacts.

The phenomenological onset can be related to the Actor Network Theory (ANT), essentially the agencies of human and material culture, by differentiating between things and objects. Knappett summarises the debate around these two concepts as the former has a certain metaphysical, intangible aspect, exists in assemblages from which it is very difficult to extract, without losing meaning, while the latter is alienable, quantifiable and disembedded from social relations (Knappett 2008, 143-144). Things and objects are within the ANT what the altered noema and altered material culture is for the individual noetic change, respectively (Daróczi 2011, 18-20, fig. 1). Recent views on ANT approaches focus on the ways in which different people and things are co-mingled, thus challenging the previous opinions, where this would emerge from a sterile dialectic between material and social agencies (Yarrow 2008, 124-125, 135-136). In essence this

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expresses the placement of artefacts imbued with meaning in spatial and temporal context, which results in a dynamic motion best described, little over thirty years ago, as "the social life of things" (Appadurai 1986, 56-57). In an attempt to update the notion, Sutton summarises it as the "the cognitive life of things", a means of perception and material culture to interact and live, to reciprocate and perpetuate through social memory (Sutton 2002, 137-139; 2008, 40-41, 43-44). A good case for such an interaction and indeed life of things are the documented instances for the re-use of artefacts discovered in Roman burial contexts in Early Medieval times, of the Saxon period in Britain, where they take on new roles long after their original contexts and meanings of creation faded in the past (Eckardt, Williams 2003, 155-157). Similarly, a very good case for non-human agencies is made for various contexts in different times for trees, where this can be perceived in four ways: a. as a routine action, b. as a transformative action, c. as a purposive action, d. as a non-reflexive action (Jones, Cloke 2002, 54-64; 2008, 80-81). Lastly, another excellent example of how agencies of non-human actants and peoples' perception entangle is the case of soldier dogs buried in a distinct burial ground at Edinburgh, suggesting the use of their deceased bodies as agents in negotiating social standing, as they are considered fallen heroes, and possibly mitigating grief among the living by their deposition in a place of social remembrance (Stadler 2010, 34, fig. 11).

The daily interactions of individuals constantly re-remembering and renegotiating their social status are not sterile, but dynamic, laced with emotions and interactions with the environment and objects. Humans and artefacts alike become social actors in a complex web of connectivity, in the midst of which the presence of divine looms. In this sense godhood is a social construct, which arises from the daily interactions and especially present in moments and places of key re-remembrance, as a in the case of a funeral or a burial ground, respectively. In many ways godhood is the result of the above described agencies, but also in turn has a life of its own, which reciprocates on humans and objects alike. Time and region specific agencies of godhood can be highlighted by unique traits of the funerary record and their individual appropriations differentiate the social construct of the divine. In what follows two of the specific funerary aspects are analysed, their agencies argued for and the dynamic nature godhood is unveiled.

Skull burials

A total of 31 burials of complete or partial skulls are documented during the N and CA of the ECB. With the exception of woman's skull at **[2] Băile Herculane** – *Peştera Hoţilor*, all of the other skull burials are located within burial grounds, usually not larger than ten individuals, though especially in the ECA and MCA a few are documented in grave groups of several tens of burials (**[5] Botoš** – *Živanićeva Dolja*, **[26] Polgár** – *Basatanya*, **[27] Polgár** – *Basatanya*, **[31] Rákóczifalva** – *Bagi-föld*). Although most appear in the EN in the middle-Tisza basin, the appearance of a skull burial at **[6] Cluj-Napoca** – *Gura Baciului* comes as a no surprise (**fig. 1**) and announces the advent of a new way of relating to ancestors and divinities in the eastern ECB as well. During the following periods of the N, the means of negotiating identity and sustaining social memory by either severing skulls from the living body or collecting these remains from deceased individuals spreads in most corners of the ECB, while in the CA they are restricted to the northwestern parts of the ECB, in larger burial grounds.

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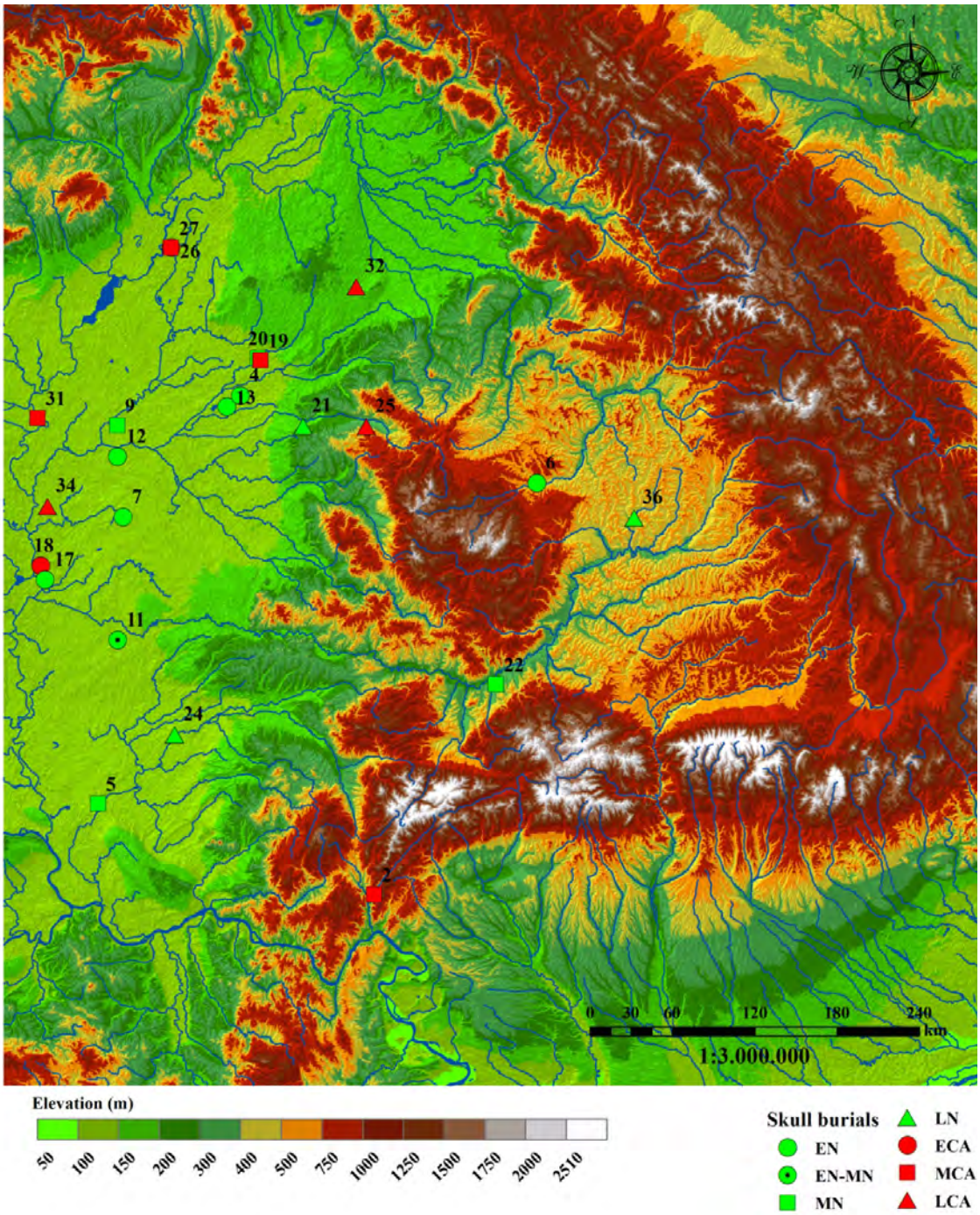

Fig. 1. N and CA skull burials of the ECB

Most skull burials are of adults, in any of the analysed periods, though a larger proportion of child skulls or their fragments are documented during the EN (**fig. 2**), which might suggest slightly different traits of negotiated identities as in the later periods, were children are only occasionally present. The funerary milieu and implications to the social memory surely influence the image of divinity, by which godhood bares slightly different connotations in this, earliest phase, than in the later ones. Grave inventories, when they occur in less than 1/3 of the documented instances, are more common during the CA than in the N. It must be noted, that grave inventories are actual items only during the N, as ochre at **[2] Băile Herculane** – *Peştera Hoţilor* or bones from meat offerings **[11] Dudeştii Vechi** – *Movila Mare/Humka Mare/Nagy Halom/Grosser Hügel/Movila lui*

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Deciov/Őstelep, but most commonly, especially in the CA, they appear within graves with other skeletons or with other skulls towards the doorstep of the BA e.g. **[32] Szentes** – *Nagyhegy-Kovácshalom*. About half of the burials where graves contain next to skulls other skeletons are of adult skulls, while the others are of children. It would seem that, in the case where they are found along other skeletons or with inventories, age does not play a role in the selections of individuals to be sacrificed or of the skulls that need to be collected from deceased. Moreover skulls as single occurrences in graves are documented mostly during the N and less commonly during the CA. During the Neolithic skull burials usually occur on first and second terraces of larger rivers, while in the CA mostly on knolls and towards the dusk of the age also in caves.

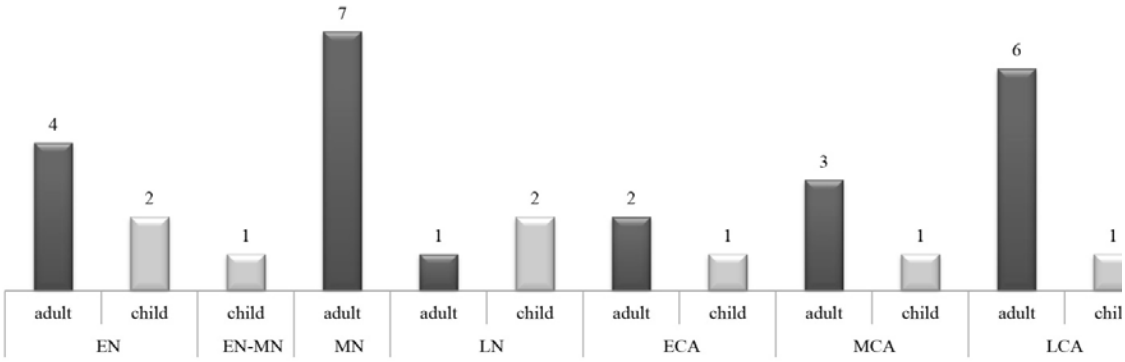

Fig. 2. Ages of individuals of skull burials during the N and CA of the ECB

Complete animal burials

During the N and CA 45 burials of complete animals are recorded in the ECB. Without exception are always located within burial grounds, though only seldomly are documented as single or multiple burials in the burial pit without human depositions. Both later instances are documented for the first time at the transition from the MN to the LN. At the site of **[1] Alba Iulia** – *Lumea Nouă* the single burial in a grave of a dog is recorded at the mentioned time with a Spondylus pendant in front of the neck (**pl. 2/1**), which makes even a stronger case for the agency of the buried individual, if not in his life, than at least, certainly, in his death. Moreover, during the same period of transition at **[3] Berettyóújfalu** – *Herpály-Földvár* eight dogs are recorded in the same pit, in a small, open space in the middle of the dwellings. Another instances of a single deposition of a dog in a pit is recorded at a slightly later, LN, date within the site of **[16] Hódmezővásárhely** – *Gorzsa-Cukor-major*. Although, the former two examples are the earliest instances of complete animal burials in the ECB deposited in a grave without human remains, they are more common during the CA. Dogs at the ECA sites of **[33] Srpski Krstur** – *Bajir* and **[35] Tiszaföldvár** – *Újtemető*, a sheep at MCA **[10] Doboşeni** – *Coada Dealului/Borvízoldala, Hegyfarka* (**pl. 2/5**) and cattle at the LCA burial grounds of **[14] Hódmezővásárhely** – *Bodzáspart-Balogtanya* (**pl. 3/1**) and **[15] Hódmezővásárhely** – *Bodzáspart-Bangatanya* (**pl. 3/2-4**). Due to the lack of anthropologic analysis, associations of gender or age of buried human individuals with the complete animal skeletons is difficult and often not possible. Nevertheless, in five instances some of these aspects are determinable. In the MN burial ground of **[29] Polgár** – *Folyás-Szilmeg* a child is associated with a complete fish skeleton and at the LN II site of **[28] Polgár** – *Csőszhalom dűlő* (**pl. 4/1**) a girl is buried together with a dog. In the first phase of the CA at the burial ground of **[26] Polgár** – *Basatanya* in grave 53 the remains of a dog are seen with the skeleton of a 25-30 years old man, while in the middle phase at **[30] Pusztataskony** – *Ledence I* a woman is seen in the midst of 17 animals of various

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species (**pl. 4/2**) and in grave 239 at **[31] Rákóczifalva** – *Bagi-föld* an adult man is documented along with a dog.

With the exception of two sites, **[1] Alba Iulia** – *Lumea Nouă* and **[10] Doboşeni** – *Coada Dealului/Borvízoldala, Hegyfarka* (**pl. 2/5**), all complete animal burials dated to the N and CA of the ECB are located in the middle-Tisza region, in the region between the confluences of the Maros and Bodrog with the previously mentioned river (**fig. 2**). It is important to note that the N habit of complete dog burials is encountered all throughout the study region, which might suggest certain homogeneity of perceptions and means of negotiating identity and the individuals' relation to the divine.

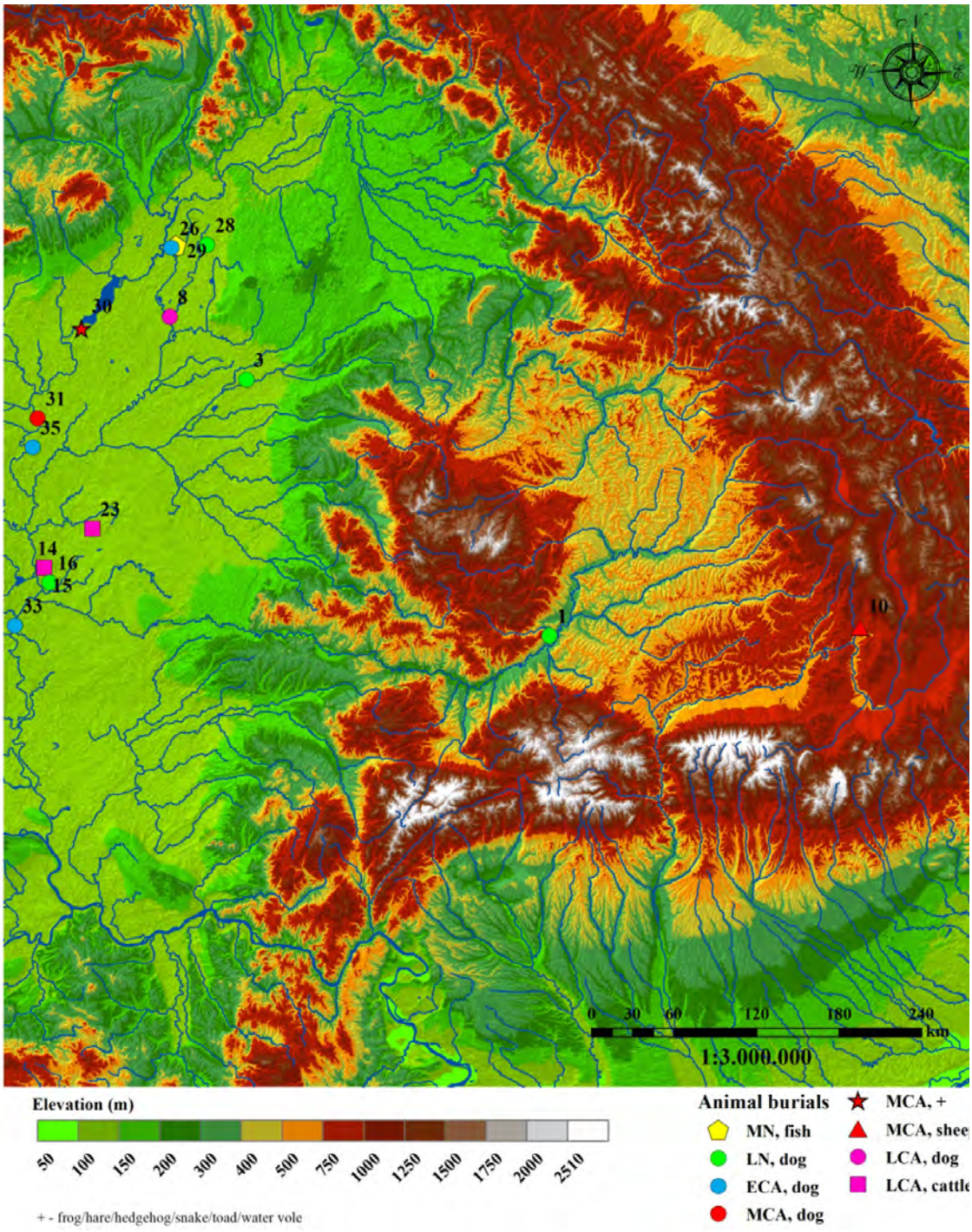

Fig. 3. N and CA complete animal burials of the ECB

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Not all complete animal burials are of the same species, they do vary and certain temporal preference for their use as agents to negotiate identity and relation to the divinity is recognised. Cattle are only recorded in the latest phase of the CA of the ECB in the area just north of the confluence of the Tisza and Maros rivers (**fig. 4**) and represent a new way of negotiating relations between individuals and the divine. Perceptions materialised as burials of complete cattle, sometimes as a result of sacrifice (see below), are considered influences from the western part of the Carpathian basin (Bondár 2002, 12, footnote 30). Burials of complete dogs are recorded from the LN to the LCA in all phases (**fig. 4**), though their presence as skulls as well is far more widespread in the Carpathian basin (Zalai-Gaál 1994) and beyond (Day 1984; Andrałojć 1993, 10-19; Gligor 2011, 54-58). These types of animal burials are encountered in most regions from the latest phase of the N, though during the CA they are only documented in the regions close to the Tisza river (**fig. 3**). It is important to note that the LCA examples at **[8] Debrecen** – *Mátai telekhalom* are recorded in a burial mound. Albeit fish might be regarded as a food deposition, due to the standards of documenting complete animal burials established previously for the prehistoric ECB (Daróczi 2015, 17-19), are documented as complete animal burials only in one instance in the MN (**fig. 4**). In the easternmost part of the ECB at the MCA site of **[10] Doboşeni** – *Coada Dealului/Borvízoldala, Hegyfarka* the complete burial of a sheep is discovered with its neck bend backward (**pl. 2/5**), which yet again suggests a human induced death that securely allows for the identification of sacrifice. An interesting burial at earlier MCA burial ground of **[30] Pusztataskony** – *Ledence I* contains at least a dozen snakes, a frog and a toad, a hare, a water vole and hedgehog, which are associated with a woman, is by excellence up until presently unique and clearly suggests a complex way of negotiating among the living individuals the relation to the divine through agents of the deceased and disposed fauna as well.

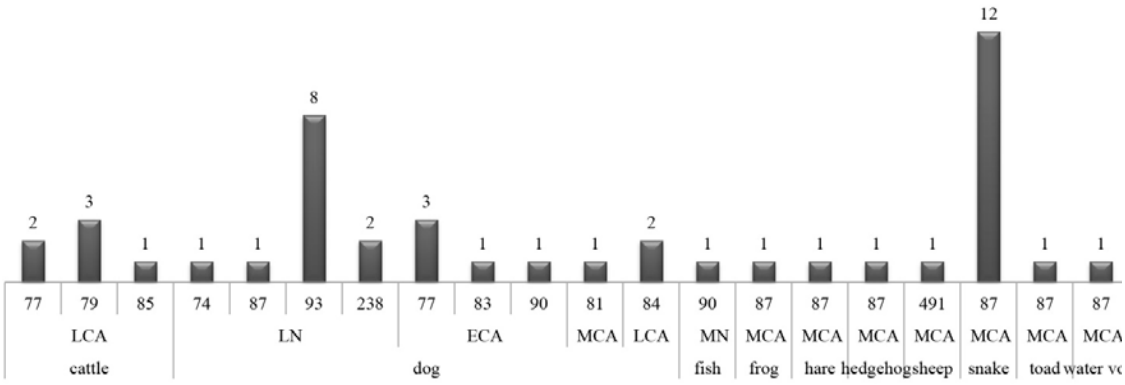

Fig. 4. Species, periods and above sea level (m) occurrence of complete animal burials in the N and CA of the ECB

A final aspect of complete animal burials needs to be addressed, that of their inventory, as in some instances grave goods are clearly associated with the deposited individuals. The previously mentioned case of the Spondylus pendant found in front of the neck of a dog at the early LN **[1] Alba Iulia** – *Lumea Nouă* (**pl. 2/1**) is noted among these, especially since this raw material is considered a luxury good in this period (Müller 1997, 97, 99; Schuster 2002, 52). Furthermore about in the same period among the eight dog burials at **[3] Berettyóújfalu** – *Herpály-Földvár* the feet of a terracotta figurine are reported. At the beginning of the CA from the burial ground at **[35] Tiszaföldvár** – *Újtemető* an obsidian blade is noted from next to a dog burial. Lastly, the interesting case of **[30] Pusztataskony** – *Ledence I* (**pl. 4/2**) has pottery associated with two of the

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animals: a flowerpot-like jar with the snake in the northern part of the pit and a double-handled bowl with the hare. The vessel clearly are not placed due to their intrinsic value in the grave, but of the liquids that they might have contained, which suggest the partaking in performative actions as social actors through which social standing is negotiated and the relation to the divine cemented after the burial.

Performative rituals, social memory, and appropriations of the divine

Mitchell argues "that ritual performance should be seen above all as transformative – capable of producing major long-term transformations within the persons, objects and spaces of ritual action" (Mitchell 2007, 336). Depositions of various individuals and species become social actors as part of the action carried out through the disposal of the dead. In some cases the social actions carried out at funeral can be inferred from the archaeological context, while others remain elusive. One of such practices is sacrifice, defined as "the symbolic or actual giving of an animal or human being, or parts thereof, to one or several supernatural entities, in such a manner that that animal or human being dies as a result" (Recht 2011, 71). Certainly the different ways through which death occurred or was induced relates to the specific agency that the complete animal burial discussed below bare and the nature of godhood that is negotiated through their species and this specific action.

Skull burials represent a stage in a long chain of events, and not necessarily the final one, where the communal activity of disposing of the body or chopping of the head, collecting the skull and again its deposition alone or next to other skulls or complete skeletons, indicates a complex means of negotiating social standing and certainly individualises the perception of godhood from neighbouring regions and periods that were before or followed. Since skull burials in the ECB appear usually in burial grounds during the N their appropriations is quite homogenously represented in the entire study region during all the phases, though children are better represented than in alter periods. Relations to the divine even though uniquely negotiated trough the burials of skulls, which may or may not have been the result of sacrifice, are closely related to the larger phenomena of disposing of the dead in consecrated ground, hence the argument of social memory and re-remembering becomes a strong characteristic of this early godhood of the region. During the CA they appear only in the regions next to the Tisza river, with a lower representation of children (**fig. 2**). Clearly, appropriations of skull burial practices individualise themselves between the presence and lack of them in the western and eastern ECB by this time, which would suggest at least two different ways that the divine in perceived, with clear signs of sacrifice towards the end of the period, at e.g. **[34] Szentes** – *Nagyhegy-Kovácshalom* (**pl. 5/5**).

Grave 2 at **[34] Szentes** – *Nagyhegy-Kovácshalom* (**pl. 5/5**) would seem to be an ideal candidate for interpretations of sacrifice, since four skulls are documented in the same feature. If these were not collected from deceased individuals their almost simultaneous death would seem unlikely and an induced one would sound more realistic. Similarly, the simultaneous burial of several, complete animals at **[3] Berettyóújfalu** – *Herpály-Földvár* and **[30] Pusztataskony** – *Ledence I* (**pl. 4/2**) would suggest the killing of the 17 individuals in a single instance, which also is securely identified as sacrifice. The same is true of the double dog burial at **[8] Debrecen** – *Mátai telekhalom*. The backward bent neck of the sheep at the MCA **[10] Doboşeni** – *Coada Dealului/Borvízoldala, Hegyfarka* (**pl. 2/5**) yet again securely allows for the identification of sacrifice. Such practices would redefine the performative rituals of the region and would certainly impact social memory and implicitly the ways identity is negotiated. Divinities are perceived in a different way as before as agents used to negotiate their social identities and especially their attributes drastically change if sacrifice enters the

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social milieu. With the exception of **[3] Berettyóújfalu** – *Herpály-Földvár*, all other instances are dated to either to the MCA or LCA, which does suggest if not a significant change in the perception of the divine, than at least a spreading of these views throughout the ECB.

Although appropriations of dog burials are present from the LN to the LCA in the ECB it would seem that is more individualised in the earlier periods where they do get grave goods of quite a significant value in the given period and are buried alone in the pit, though as part of the burial ground. This clearly suggest a dynamic way in which the divine changes over time, especially since its occurrence becomes restricted from the earliest documented phase to the beginning of the CA, by the time of when they are only documented in the western part of the study region. Without a doubt, these buried dogs are agents in negotiating status of individuals, who disposed of them and implicitly the way the divine is perceived, in a dynamic, ever-changing manner. Burials of sheep are quite rare, only documented in the MCA of the easternmost ECB, and do suggest a local appropriation of the practice of animal burials, specific to the more hilly and mountainous region, in which godhood is individualised and adapted in quite a specific region to the region. Small animals as rodents and those tied to the watery regions, are only seen in the MN and MCA, in the wetlands close to the Tisza river (**fig. 3**). The environment plays obviously a role in which the divine is perceived, not only by the selection of the buried animals but also the consecrated places where they are disposed of, in sharp contrast to the previously mentioned practices and ways of negotiating the identity of godhood in the eastern, higher elevations of the ECB. Lastly, the appearance of cattle burials in the western ECB clearly hails a new paradigm entering the stage in our study region, which sharply alters the mental image of the divine from both previous periods and regions, suggesting new performative rituals and ways of negotiating godhood through new agents.

In all the above detailed aspects agencies of skull and complete animal burials prevail through acts of re-remembrance, as burial grounds are locations in the landscape where social memory is the strongest and most active, as people periodically gather and carry out standardised actions. Actions which define their role in a group, but also how godhood emerges from their interactions with the disposed parts or complete bodies, through the actual manipulation of them or through re-remembering.

Towards a phenomenology of godhood

From the phenomenological onset the image of the divine emerges as a social construct that can be researched through the ANT, especially if the newest paradigms regarding the theory are kept in mind. In a region and period, where actual representation of the divine are rare and the few that are recognised as such are speechless, since most are ripped from their archaeological contest or lack the “explanation” of how these were employed in performative rituals, approaches, as the above argued one, can become quite useful. This is especially true, if we focus on the funerary record and its milieu, as it is such a meaningfully loaded social environment. Agents of negotiation are recognisable and especially the marks of social actors become evident. Divinity seen as a social construct of godhood, a socially negotiated identity through performative rituals and acts of re-remembering at key places in the environment, which employ social actors that are imbued with agency, takes a shape that levitates some of the fog which rests on these past, emic perceptions. More importantly, godhood is not a rigid identity through space and time, it individualises itself from one period to the other, from region to the other. As most identities and negotiated status is dynamic, it is ever changing, region and time specific, tied to the local environment. Godhood is the social actor that exists through the

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daily interactions of a dynamic society, its beating heart is social memory and bears agency, which ultimately influences individuals' decisions and the alteration of material culture.

Catalogue of N and CA human skull and complete animal burials from the Eastern Carpathian Basin:

[1] Alba Iulia – *Lumea Nouă*, (Gyulafehérvár, Karlsburg), jud. Alba, RO

Dating: MN IIb-LN I

Micro-location: 2nd terrace; **Archeco-zone:** B3

Grouping: burial ground; **Type:** plane; **Body treatment:** inhumation-complete animal (dog)

Description: The site is located on the territory of the modern town (western part), on the left-hand side, second, high terrace of the Mureş/Maros river. In several excavation campaigns inhumation burials were discovered. In the excavation campaign of 2006 two burials of dogs were discovered. One not far from a pithouse (Sp. IV/2006, SI). It lay on its right side and was east-west oriented. It had as grave inventory a shell (Spondylus) pendant. The other, a smaller individual in Sp. I/2006, G 1 pit had no inventories, only a few black-topped sherds.

Bibliography: Gligor 2009, 43, 46-47, 220, footnote 52, pls. 40/ 1a-c, 192/2, 195/2, 4 ; 2011, 53-54, figs. 1-5; Daróczi 2015, 70-71, no. 7

[2] Băile Herculane – *Peştera Hoţilor*, (Herkules-fürdő), jud. Caraş-Severin, RO

Dating: MCA III

Micro-location: cave; **Archeco-zone:** C2

Grouping: single burial; **Type:** plane; **Body treatment:** inhumation-partial (skull)

Description: The site is located north of the modern village on the western slopes of the Cerna valley, in a cave. A skull and a long bone that belonged to a woman were discovered in the campaigns of 1960 and 1961 in a stone-lined cist. Further finds are a fragment of a cattle femur and a sherd from a shallow, deep dish.

Bibliography: Roman 1971, 76, pl. 24/1; Daróczi 2015, 75, no. 34

[3] Berettyóújfalu – *Herpály-Földvár*, megy. Hajdú-Bihar, HU

Dating: MN IIb-LN IIa

Micro-location: knoll; **Archeco-zone:** F2

Grouping: burial ground; **Type:** plane; **Body treatment:** inhumation-complete animal (dog)

Description: The multi-layered site is located to the northeast of the modern village and on the left-hand side (in present) of the Berettyó/Barcău river. During the excavation campaigns between 1977 and 1982 40 burials were discovered, out of which 38 dating from before the third phase of the culture. They were either outside the habitation or within the settlement. All of the inhumations were in flex position and most of them were east-west or southeast-northwest oriented. Further, in a pit eight inhumations of dogs were wound, placed in a circle on their sides. Terracotta figurine feet are mentioned from this grave. The grave is located in a smaller open space among the dwellings.

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Bibliography: Kalicz, Raczky 1984, 98, 135; 1986, 78, 126; Zalai-Gaál 1994, 43-44; Daróczi 2015, 80, no. 68

[4] Berettyóújfalu – *Nagy-Bócs-dűlő,* megy. Hajdú-Bihar, HU

Dating: EN

Micro-location: 1st terrace; **Archeco-zone:** F2

Grouping: burial ground; **Type:** plane; **Body treatment:** inhumation-complete/partial (skull)

Description: The site is located south of the modern town on the first, right-hand side terrace of a small stream, within an area that previously comprised of wetlands. In the excavation campaigns of 2004-2005 eleven inhumation burials were discovered. Two pits had three-three burials each, while the rest of the human remains came from the EN settlement. Some of the skeletons were complete and were placed in contracted position into the ground, while others were only represented through fragments of especially their skulls and long bones, while in one case even a skull burial is documented (629/2311). The latter is that of adultus/matures of undeterminable gender.

Bibliography: K. Zoffman 2011, 25-26, no. 1; Daróczi 2015, 200, no. 786

[5] Botoš – *Živanićeva Dolja,* (Ботош), okr. Srednji Banat, SB

Dating: MN

Micro-location: 1st terrace; **Archeco-zone:** F3

Grouping: burial ground; **Type:** plane; **Body treatment:** inhumation-partial (skull)

Description: The site is located west of the modern village, on the left-hand side, first terrace Тамиш/Timiş river. At the beginning of the 20th century the area was used for clay quarrying, through these activities several inhumation burials were destroyed. Few of them were documented and only 13 were found during the rescue excavation of 1930. In all a number of 21 graves were estimated based on the scarce information and inventory and the possibility for a further five was stated. Clemens Lichter only mentions 17 contracted and one skull? burials (Lichter 2001b, 395, no. 36), while Milutin Garašanin clearly states 21 (18 contracted and 3 skull burials Grbić gr. nos. 1, 5 and 6) with an additional 5 presumed ones based on the finds from the area (Garašanin 1956, 207). They are usually oriented east-west or south-north, but single instances of northeast-southwest or west-east are documented as well. All of the inhumations were in flex position and the skeletons lay on either sides.

Bibliography: Grbić 1934, 41-42, 45-46; Garašanin 1956, 206-208; Lichter 2001, 395, no. 36; Daróczi 2015, 83, no. 87

[6] Cluj-Napoca – *Gura Baciului,* (Kolozsvár, Klausenbrug), jud. Cluj, RO

Dating: EN IIb

Micro-location: first terrace; **Archeco-zone:** B1

Grouping: burial ground; **Type:** plane; **Body treatment:** inhumation-partial (skull)

Description: The site is located west of the modern town on the first, left-hand side terrace of a small stream. Eleven burials were located within the EN and MN settlement during several campaigns conducted between 1960 and 1992. Seven of them were inhumations of skeletons in contracted position lying on their side with an

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orientation on the southwest-northeast axe and more commonly on the east-west. In grave 8 only a skull was placed in the grave. This, latter burial is attributed to the earliest levels at the site.
Bibliography: Lazarovici, Maxim 1995, 187-188, pl. 11/b; Lichter 2001, 405, no. 106; Daróczi 2015, 92, no. 139

[7] Csorvás – *Orosházi út*, megy. Békés, HU

Dating: EN

Micro-location: knoll; **Archeco-zone:** E2

Grouping: burial ground; **Type:** plane, **Body treatment:** inhumation-partial (skull)

Description: The site is located to the west of the modern town, on low sand dune. In 1978 during construction work of the water channel in the area an inhumation grave with two burials was discovered. The skeleton lay in flex position and it belonged to a 25-34 years old man. Besides this the fragmentary remains of a skull, which belonged to an adult women (matur-senilis), were found.
Bibliography: K. Zoffmann 1986, 40; Lichter 2001, 399, no. 60; Daróczi 2015, 95, no. 158

[8] Debrecen – *Mátai telekhalom*, megy. Hajdú-Bihar, HU

Dating: LCA II

Micro-location: knoll; **Archeco-zone:** E1

Grouping: burial ground; **Type:** tumular; **Body treatment:** inhumation-complete animal (dog)

Description: The tumulus is located west of the modern town on a sand dune, surrounded by wetlands. The mound was excavated in 1923. The inhumation burial was disturbed but ochre smearing on the skull was still recognisable. At the bottom of the mound the burials of two dogs were unearthed, though half of one was decayed.
Bibliography: Kalicz 1968, 20, no. 17; Ecsedy 1979, 17, no. 17; Motzoi-Chicideanu 2011, 92, no. 295; Daróczi 2015, 97-98, no. 174

[9] Dévaványa – *Sártó-Szarkadomb*, megy. Békés, HU

Dating: MN Ib-II

Micro-location: knoll; **Archeco-zone:** F2

Grouping: burial ground; **Type:** plane; **Body treatment:** inhumation-partial (skull)

Description: The site is located west of the modern village on a slightly raised knoll (flattened sand dune) that is surrounded on three sides by a small stream. During the rescue excavations of 1959 several inhumation burials were discovered. Only six of them were found in archaeological research, though through deep ploughing adjacent areas were strewn with human bones (four more burials). All of the burials were in flex position either on the left or right side, their orientation was east-west or west-east. Grave 4 was a skull burial.
Bibliography: Korek 1961, 21; Lichter 2001, 400, no. 72; Daróczi 2015, 102, no. 202

[10] Doboşeni – *Coada Dealului/Borvízoldala, Hegyfarka*, (Száldobos, Székelyszáldobos), jud. Covasna, RO

Dating: MCA III

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Micro-location: promontory; **Archeco-zone:** B3

Grouping: burial ground; **Type:** plane; **Body treatment:** inhumation-complete animal (sheep)

Description: This site is placed on a promontory with steep sides bordered on two sides by the valleys of two smaller streams. It is located about 1 km of Telişoara. During sand quarrying in 1955 three graves were discovered. Two burials were of human skeletons, placed into the ground in flex position. Slightly further from these two burials a third one of a sheep, placed on pebble floor within a pit, was found with its head in a disarticulated position. Charcoal, sherds and a single shell are also retrieved from the pit.

Bibliography: Ferenczi, Ferenczi 1964, 49-50, figs. 8c, 9; Lichter 2001, 401, no. 76; Daróczi 2015, 103, no. 209

[11] Dudeştii Vechi – *Movila Mare/Humka Mare/Nagy Halom/Grosser Hügel/Movila lui Deciov/Őstelep*, (Beşenova Veche, Óbessenyő), jud. Timiş, RO

Dating: EN II-MN I

Micro-location: 1st terrace; **Archeco-zone:** F3

Grouping: burial ground; **Type:** plane; **Body treatment:** inhumation-partial (skull)

Description: The tell site is located to the north of the modern village on the first, right-hand side (in present) terrace of one of the arms of the Aranca/Zlatica river. At the beginning of the last century three burials were identified within the Neolithic settlement. In grave 1 a skull of a child with lumps of ochre on it was found.

Bibliography: Kisléghi Nagy 1911, 162; Lichter 2001, 394, no. 27; Daróczi 2015, 104, no. 214

[12] Endrőd – *Páskum, Iványi-köz/Lelőhely 119*; megy. Békés, HU

Dating: EN

Micro-location: knoll; **Archeco-zone:** F2

Grouping: burial ground; **Type:** plane; **Body treatment:** inhumation-partial (skull)

Description: The site is located to the south of Endrőd on a low knoll. Within the Körös settlement four burials were discovered in 1986. Grave 4 consisted of an infant skull.

Bibliography: K. Zoffmann 1986, 42, no. 2; Makkay 1992, 132; Lichter 2001, 402, no. 85; Daróczi 2015, 106-107, no. 230

[13] Furta – *Csátó*, megy. Hajdú-Bihar, HU

Dating: EN

Micro-location: knoll; **Archeco-zone:** F2

Grouping: burial ground; **Type:** plane; **Body treatment:** inhumation-partial (skull)

Description: The site is located in the vicinity of the modern village, on a knoll. Four inhumation burials are reported. Grave 2 had only the skull of a 5-6 years old child.

Bibliography: Paluch 2004, 27, no. 22; Daróczi 2015, 108, no. 242

[14] Hódmezővásárhely – *Bodzáspart-Balogtanya*; megy. Csongrád, HU

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Dating: LCA

Micro-location: knoll; **Archeco-zone:** E2

Grouping: burial ground; **Type:** plane; **Body treatment:** inhumation-complete animal (cattle)

Description: The site is located west of the modern town on the left-hand side of the Tisza/Tisza river, on the low knoll next to the Tére stream. In 1937 a single excavation campaign was carried out at this site. Also within this site the complete skeletons of two animal burials were identified as well (cattle?). One was simply in a pit, while the other was found underneath a hearth mixed in with a lot of charred debris, but nevertheless not dismembered. The burials were found within the settlement.
Bibliography: Banner 1939, 13-14; 1956, 84, fig. 12, pl. 51/11; Sachße 2010b, 48-49, no. 68; Daróczi 2015, 114-115, no. 280

[15] Hódmezővásárhely – *Bodzáspart-Bangatanya*, megy. Csongrád, HU

Dating: LCA

Micro-location: knoll; **Archeco-zone:** E2

Grouping: burial ground; **Type:** plane; **Body treatment:** inhumation-complete animal (cattle)

Description: The site is located west of the modern town on the left-hand side of the Tisza/Tisza river, on the low knoll next to the Tére stream. In 1934, 1937 and 1938 excavation campaigns were carried out at this site any yielded two burials. Pits 4, 15 and another contained each the full skeleton of a cattle along with sherds. The burials were within the settlement and all necks were sharply pointed upwards, in an unnatural position.
Bibliography: Banner 1939, 13-14; 1956, 78-79, 80, esp. 81, fig. 11, pls. 49/34, 51/1, 12; Bognár-Kutzián 1972, 38; Sachße 2010b, 48-49, no. 68; Daróczi 2015, 115, no. 282

[16] Hódmezővásárhely – *Gorzsa-Cukor-major*, megy. Csongrád, HU

Dating: LN II

Micro-location: knoll; **Archeco-zone:** E2

Grouping: burial ground; **Type:** plane; **Body treatment:** inhumation-complete animal (dog)

Description: The site is located to the southwest of the modern town on a small elevation. The first grave was discovered and subsequently destroyed with the occasion of the construction of silos in the area in 1950. During a rescue excavation in 1956 further four graves were discovered on the southern part of the knoll. In 1963 a total number of ten graves are published with a further mention of several more from the southeastern part. In all 41 burials were mentioned. Some of the graves were dug either in the destroyed LN houses or into the so called *rubbish pits*. These skeletons were in contracted position oriented east-west or southeast-northwest. In grave 7 a dog burial was recognised oriented southeast-northwest with contracted legs.
Bibliography: Gazdapusztai 1963, 28; Zalai-Gaál 1994, 44; Lichter 2001, 406, no. 113; Daróczi 2015, 116, no. 286

[17] Hódmezővásárhely – *Kopáncs-Zsoldostanya*, megy. Csongrád, HU

Dating: EN

Micro-location: knoll; **Archeco-zone:** E2

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Grouping: burial ground; **Type:** plane; **Body treatment:** inhumation-partial (skull)

Description: The site is located southwest of the modern town on a slightly raised knoll of the area, on the left-hand side of the Tisza/Tisa river. During the excavations of the 1930s nine burials in eight graves were discovered. All of the skeletons were in flex position either on left or right sides. Most of the burials were in so called *rubbish pits* and within the Neolithic settlement. Grave 2 only had a skull in it.

Bibliography: Banner 1932, 4; Kutzián 1944, 93; Trogmayer 1969, 5; Lichter 2001, 406, no. 116; Paluch 2004, 28, no. 32; Daróczi 2015, 117, no. 293

[18] Hódmezővásárhely – *Kotacpart-Vatatanya*, megy. Csongrád, HU

Dating: ECA

Micro-location: knoll; **Archeco-zone:** E2

Grouping: burial ground; **Type:** plane; **Body treatment:** inhumation-partial (skull)

Description: The site is located west of the modern village on a slightly raised knoll of the area on the left-hand side of the Tisza/Tisa river. In the excavation campaigns between 1932 and 1934 17 inhumation burials were discovered. It was suggested, based on the stray finds, that further graves were destroyed. The skeletons were all in contracted position either on the right or left side with orientation either of east-west, northeast-southwest or, less often, west-east. In two instances the adult human remains only consisted of skulls (graves 3 and 14).

Bibliography: Banner 1934, 69; 1935, 101; Bognár-Kutzián 1972, 41, 42; Lichter 2001, 407, no. 119; Daróczi 2015, 118, no. 295

[19] Konyár – *Kálló ér*, megy. Hajdú-Bihar, HU

Dating: MCA I-II

Micro-location: knoll; **Archeco-zone:** E1

Grouping: burial ground; **Type:** plane, **Body treatment:** inhumation-partial (skull)

Description: The site is located to the east of the modern village on a knoll in a swampy area, close to a smaller lake and right on the bank of the Kálló creek. During construction work in 1930 several graves were discovered and subsequently rescue excavations were carried out in 1931 and 1932. From the systematic rescue excavation nine graves were unearthed, while from a local amateur a further seven. Most of the graves were either heavily disturbed or complete destroyed, probably more vanished without any trace. An interesting aspect is the missing skull in grave 14 and the appearance of a skull, behind the skeleton pelvis from grave 13. A connection between the skull from the latter and the former was refuted. Pottery is recorded from around the skull of the complete skeleton, two pots and a conical cup.

Bibliography: Kiss 1932, 274; Sőregi 1933, 84, esp. 96, fig. 14; Lichter 2001, 410, no. 142; Daróczi 2015, 124, no. 334

[20] Konyár – *Téglaverő*, megy. Hajdú-Bihar, HU

Dating: MN Ib-IIa

Micro-location: knoll; **Archeco-zone:** E1

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Grouping: burial ground; **Type:** plane; **Body treatment:** inhumation-partial (skull)

Description: The site is located just northwest of the modern village of in the area of the train station on an elongated mound. During an excavation four burials were discovered. All the burials were in contracted position. Grave 1 had the skeleton of a child with the skull of another child next to it, covered with sherds.
Bibliography: Kalicz, Makkay 1977, 74, 138, no. 191; Lichter 2001, 411, no. 143; Daróczi 2015, 124, no. 335

[21] Oradea – *Salca I/Guttman*, (Nagyvárad, Großwardein), jud. Bihor, RO
Dating: LN
Micro-location: 2nd terrace; **Archeco-zone:** F2
Grouping: burial ground; **Type:** plane; **Body treatment:** inhumation-partial (skull)
Description: The site is located on the territory of the modern town (southeastern part) on an elevated feature on the second terrace of the Crişul Repede/Sebes Körös river. During earthworks in the late 1990s the skull of a 2.5-3 years old child was found at the feet of another infant skeleton with a missing skull. The two do not belong together. An obsidian blade, a polished stone chisel and 22 beads of shell and limestone were found next to the skeleton, while on each of the ankles copper spiral anklets are noted.

Bibliography: Emődi 2000, 44-45, pl. III/1-2, fig. 9/1-3; Daróczi 2015, 143, no. 449

[22] Orăştie – *Dealul Pomilor-Punct X2/Platoul Rompoş*, (Százsváros, Broos, Brosz), jud. Hunedoara, RO

Dating: MN IIb

Micro-location: 2nd terrace; **Archeco-zone:** C2

Grouping: burial ground; **Type:** plane; **Body treatment:** inhumation-partial (skull)

Description: The site is located to the northeast of the modern day town, on the left-hand side of the Mureş/Maros river and on the right-hand side of the Canalul Morii stream, which is running through the town. The excavation conducted on the gently sloping terrace yielded three burials within a settlement. All of them were in flex position and eat-west oriented, two of them housing the remains of male (M1, M3) individuals while the other was that of a woman (M2). The top parts of two skulls were discovered not far from these graves. One was from the habitation layer the other from a pithouse (B_2/1994) and both of them are considered as evidence for human funerary practices as well.
Bibliography: Luca 1999, 13; 2000, 61-62; Daróczi 2015, 143, no. 451

[23] Orosháza – *Bónum*, megy. Békés, HU
Dating: LCA
Micro-location: knoll; **Archeco-zone:** E2
Grouping: burial ground; **Type:** plane; **Body treatment:** inhumation-complete animal (cattle)
Description: The site is located west of the modern village, on a sand dune. In 1960 construction work destroyed an inhumation burial that in turn prompted a rescue excavation, which yielded amongst other another inhumation burial. The destroyed grave contained the remains of a full cattle, vessels and human skeletal remains in contracted position.

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Bibliography: Olasz 1961a, 1961b; Vörös 1979, 24; Nevizánsky 1985, 267; Sachße 2010b, 81, no. 123; Daróczi 2015, 144, no. 457

[24] Parţa – *tell I*, (Parác, Paratz), jud. Timiş, RO

Dating: LN

Micro-location: 1st terrace; **Archeco-zone:** F3

Grouping: single burial; **Type:** plane; **Body treatment:** inhumation-partial (skull)

Description: The site is located to the west of the modern village, on the right-hand side of the Timiş/Timiš rivers first, high terrace. Based on their position all of the burials are considered as being in the area of the LN settlement. The excavation campaign of 1969 yielded from below the floor of a pithouse (feature 3) the upper part of a human skull and some ashes and marks of charring in the area, but not on the skull fragment.

Bibliography: Resch 1996, 261-262; Lazarovici *et al.* 2001, 17, 28-29; Lichter 2001, 418, no. 200; Daróczi 2015, 146, no. 469

[25] Peştere – *Peştera Igriţa/Igrici barlang*, jud. Bihor, RO
Dating: LCA
Micro-location: cave; **Archeco-zone:** C1
Grouping: burial ground; **Type:** plane; **Body treatment:** inhumation-partial (skull)
Description: The site is located just on the southern outskirt of the modern village in a cave. Several inhumation were disturbed as fragments of human, bones, especially of the skull (at least 50 individuals), were found adjacent to and in the Coloanei hall of the cave. Besides these two more burials were found. Grave A was placed in a *gour*,[41] contained the fragments of a 7 years old childs' skull along with a large number of sherds, polished-stone pendants, beads of shell and soft stone (necklace) sealed with yellowish clay. Other finds from the cave belong to the graves of the strewn child skeletons, finds and skeletal associations are impossible.
Bibliography: Emődi 1984, 406, fig. 4; Popa 2009a, 677-679, no. 11; 2009b, 327-328, no. 907; Motzoi-Chicideanu 2011, 113, no. 476a; Daróczi 2015, 149, no. 487

[26] Polgár – *Basatanya*, megy. Hajdú-Bihar, HU

Dating: ECA

Micro-location: knoll; **Archeco-zone:** E1

Grouping: burial ground; **Type:** plane; **Body treatment:** inhumation-partial (skull)/ complete animal (dog)

Description: The site is located to the south of the modern town on the left bank of the Selypes-ér and cut through by a channel. The sand dune is slightly raised above the surrounding wetland area. From the beginning of the last century several burials are presumed destroyed. In 1928 10-15 graves were found by chance (during the construction of a channel) and in the subsequent year a small scale excavation unearthed 15 more burials, out of which graves 3, 4, 8, 9 belonged to the MCA, and the rest to the ECA. In four excavation campaigns carried out between 1950 and 1954 the burial ground was fully researched and a number of 156 graves were published (three of the 1929 were renumbered and included). The burial ground shows a development from west to east through the horizontal stratigraphy; moreover, in some instances

[41] Natural, shallow and wide pit-like formations in karst caves.

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(Grave 56-59 and Grave 61-59) this is further confirmed by vertical stratigraphy. 60 burials were attributed to the ECA, to which an additional number varying between 11-25, from the transitional period, can be added. The skeletons were in the most cases in contracted position, oriented southeast-northwest or east-west/west-east, lying on their sides. Some unique rites are documented as well. Grave 57 had next to the skeleton of a mature woman the skull of a child (though the rest of the bones may have been decayed). In the southeastern corner of grave 53, in front of the right lower leg of the skeleton belonging to an 25-30 years old man a complete skeleton of a dog was found, lying on its left side.
Bibliography: Bognár-Kutzián 1963, 114, 122, figs. 53, 56a-b; Zalai-Gaál 1994, 54; Lichter 2001, 430, no. 291; Daróczi 2015, 154, no. 510

[27] Polgár – *Basatanya*, megy. Hajdú-Bihar, HU

Dating: MCA I-II

Micro-location: knoll; **Archeco-zone:** E1

Grouping: burial ground; **Type:** plane; **Body treatment:** inhumation-partial (skull)

Description: The site is located to the south of the modern town on the left bank of the Selypes-ér and cut through by a channel. The sand dune is slightly raised above the surrounding wetland area. From the beginning of the last century several burials are presumed destroyed. In 1928 10-15 graves were found by chance (during the construction of a channel) and in the subsequent year a small scale excavation unearthed 15 more burials, out of which graves 3, 4, 8, 9 (P. Patay 1961, 70) belonged to the MCA. In four excavation campaigns carried out between 1950 and 1954 the burial ground was fully researched and a number of 156 graves were published (three of the 1929 were renumbered and included). The burial ground shows a development from west to east through the horizontal stratigraphy; moreover, in some instances (Grave 56-59 and Grave 61-59) this is further confirmed by vertical stratigraphy. 87 burials were attributed to the MCA to which an additional number of graves are added from the transitional period. The skeletons were in the most cases in flex position, oriented east-west/west-east or southeast-northwest, lying on their sides. Some unique rites are documented as well. Grave 71 only had the skull of an adult man.
Bibliography: Bognár-Kutzián 1963, 145-146, figs. 69a-b; Lichter 2001, 430, no. 291; Daróczi 2015, 154-155, no. 511

[28] Polgár – *Csőszhalom dűlő*, megy. Hajdú-Bihar, HU

Dating: LN II

Micro-location: knoll; **Archeco-zone:** E1

Grouping: burial ground; **Type:** plane; **Body treatment:** inhumation-complete animal (dog)

Description: The site is located east of the modern town on an elevation. In the excavation campaign of 1957 seven inhumation burials were discovered and in addition to these in the 1990s 123 inhumation burials were unearthed in a large rescue excavation. The burials were placed close to the LN dwellings. Orientation was usually that of southeast-northwest, though east-west and west-east also occurred. Burial 3/location C is located to the west of the main settlement on a small knoll. The pit (Str. 264) contained the remains of a juvenile woman, stretched on her back, oriented southeast-northwest. Under her legs the skeleton of a 6-8 month old dog with an identical orientation as the human was discovered, laid on a paving of sherds. Grave

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goods contained a chalice, Spondylus beads and a bangle, both worn on the wrists and a dark coloured flint blade under her skull. All inventory are clearly associated with the girl.

Bibliogrpahy: Daróczi 2015, 155, no. 512; Raczky, Anders 2017, 69, 75, fig. 6.7

[29] Polgár – *Folyás-Szilmeg*, megy. Hajdú-Bihar, HU

Dating: MN II

Micro-location: knoll; **Archeco-zone:** E1

Grouping: burial ground; **Type:** plane; **Body treatment:** inhumation-complete animal (fish)

Description: The site is located south of the modern village, not far from the Tisza/Tisa river on a low knoll. In 1950 within the MN settlement five inhumation burials were discovered. They were southeast-northwest oriented, laid on their left side in contracted position. A complete fish skeleton is found in one of the graves.
Bibliography: Bognár-Kutzián 1963, 410; Kalicz, Makkay 1977, 150, no. 310; Lichter 2001, 420, no. 217; Füzesi 2009, 379, no. 2; Daróczi 2015, 155, no. 513

[30] Pusztataskony – *Ledence I*, megy. Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok, HU

Dating: MCA I

Micro-location: knoll; **Archeco-zone:** E1

Grouping: burial ground; **Type:** plane; Body treatment: inhumation-complete animal (frog, hare, hedgehog, snake, toad, water vole)

Description: The site is located to the west of the modern village on the left floodplain of the Tisza/Tisa river on a knoll. In 2009 during rescue excavations a single standing, large and deep pit (Feature 381) was identified, which contained the left contracted skeleton of a middle-aged woman, oriented east-west, along with several complete animal burials of various species. From above the human skull a toad and below the elbows a frog are reported. From the front of the same skull only the skull of a water vole is retrieved. At least eleven snakes are noted in front of the chest, which, according to the excavator, were placed in the pit first and were accompanied by fire, as charring marks are visible on the bones of this area. A further snake was recorded behind the torso, under the flower pot. A hare is also identified in front of the chest, slightly further away from the group of snakes, with the right hand of the woman found over this last animal skeleton. Below the legs of the female skeleton a hedgehog is also identified. Grave goods contained a flower-pot jar, a conical and a double handled bowl. The first pottery is associated with the single standing snake skeleton, while the last was clearly associated with the hare.

Bibliography: Raczky 2013

[31] Rákóczifalva – *Bagi-föld*, megy. Jász-Nagkun-Szolnok, HU
Dating: MCA I
Micro-location: 1st terrace; **Archeco-zone:** F2
Grouping: burial ground; **Type:** plane, **Body treatment:** inhumation-complete/partial (skull)/animal (dog)
Description: The site is located just to the south of the modern village, on the right-hand side first terrace of the Tisza/Tisa river. In between 2005 and 2007 79 inhumation burials were unearthed. All the burials were southeast-northwest oriented and were arranged into rows running northeast-southwest, with only a few graves off-set. The

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skeletons were lying on their sides, though in two instances two skeletons belonging to women were placed on the not gender specific side and also had grave goods specific for men. In grave 239 a complete dog burial was deposited next to the adult man, along with 7 chipped stone objects, while in grave 275 the skull of a child was discovered along the complete skeleton of an adult man with a copper bracelet of a child and meat bones.

Bibliography: Csányi *et al.* 2008, fig. II, tab. IV; Daróczi 2015, 202, no. 802

[32] Sanislău – *Grajduri*, (Szanislóz), jud. Satu Mare, RO

Dating: LCA Ib

Micro-location: knoll; **Archeco-zone:** E1

Grouping: burial ground; **Type:** plane, **Body treatment:** inhumation-partial (skull)

Description: The site is located southwest of the village on a drift sand dune. In 1968 with the occasion of the construction of a water tower several inhumation graves were destroyed. In a single instance a skull was found at the bottom of a pit (Gr. nr. 2) in 1980 during levelling activities of the dune.
Bibliography: Roman, Németi 1978, 15; Iercoşan 1991, 44; Daróczi 2015, 163, no. 559

[33] Srpski Krstur – *Bajir*, (Српски Крстур, Ó-keresztúr, Szerbkeresztúr), okr. Severni Banat, SB

Dating: ECA I

Micro-location: 1st terrace; **Archeco-zone:** F3

Grouping: burial ground; **Type:** plane, **Body treatment:** inhumation-complete animal (dog)

Description: The site is located west of the modern village, on the left-hand side first terrace of the Tisa/Tisza river. In the excavation campaigns between 1929 and 1932 four inhumation burials were unearthed within the ECA settlement. All of them were in contracted position on their sides and had a north-south, northeast-southwest and an east-west orientation. Furthermore, three complete dog skeletons are reported.
Bibliography: Bognár-Kutzián 1972, 117; Lichter 2001, 424, no. 245; Daróczi 2015, 170-171, no. 608

[34] Szentes – *Nagyhegy-Kovácshalom*, megy. Csongrád, HU

Dating: LCA II

Micro-location: knoll; **Archeco-zone:** E2

Grouping: burial ground; **Type:** plane; **Body treatment:** inhumation-partial (skull)

Description: In 1950 during construction work due to chance finds at a sand quarry (Kovácshalom) an excavation was carried out. The result of which was the discovery of nine graves with 14 burials. All of them were either inhumation (grave 1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9) or skull burials (grave 2 and 3). The skeletons lay in flex position on their sides, only in one instance a stretched one (lying on its back – Grab 4D) is documented. Grave 2 was a rectangular pit with a skull in each of its corners, while grave 3 contained only one skull.
Bibliography: Banner 1956, 90, fig. 18; Sachße 2010a, 173; 2010b, 100, no. 162; Daróczi 2015, 177, no. 647

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[35] Tiszaföldvár – *Újtemető*, megy. Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok, HU

Dating: ECA

Micro-location: 1st terrace; **Archeco-zone:** F2

Grouping: burial ground; **Type:** plane; **Body treatment:** inhumation-complete animal (dog)

Description: The site is located to the southwest of the modern village on the high terrace of a dead branch of Tisza/Tisa river. During a rescue excavation carried out in 1979 within the ECA settlement two inhumation burials were discovered. Under the floor of House 1 the full skeleton of a dog was discovered, oriented east-west. An obsidian blade was found and it is the only grave good discovered.

Bibliography: Siklódi 1983, 13; Lichter 2001, 429, no. 287; Daróczi 2015, 184, no. 687

[36] Zau de Câmpie – *La grădiniţă*, jud. Mureş, RO

Dating: LN

Micro-location: 1st terrace; **Archeco-zone:** B2

Grouping: burial ground; **Type:** plane; **Body treatment:** inhumation-partial (skull)

Description: The site is located in the modern day village, on the first, low terrace of the Câmpie stream. In the excavation campaign of 1996 seven partial inhumation burials belonging to children between the years 1-3.5 were discovered. These were found within the LN settlement, below the floor of the houses. Grave 3 was found under house(?) number 10 and it consisted just of a skull fragment.

Bibliography: Bodea 1997, 737; Daróczi 2015, 203, no. 805

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List of abbreviations:

AB S.N.	Analele Banatului. Seria Nouă, Timişoara
ActaArchHung	Acta Archaeologica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae, Budapest
ActaMN	Acta Musei Napocensis, Cluj-Napoca
ActaMP	Acta Musei Porolissensis, Zalău
AJA	American Journal of Archaeology. The Journal of the rchaeological Institute of America, Boston
ArchÉrt	Archaeologiai Értesítő, Budapest
Banatica	Banatica, Reşiţa
BMÉ	A Bihari Múzeum Évkönyve, Berettyóújfalu
Dacia N.S.	Dacia. Revue d'archéologie et d'historie ancienne. Nouvelle Série, Bucureşti
DDMÉ	A Debreceni Déri Múzeum Évkönyve. Annales Musei Debreceniensis de Friderico Déri nominati, Debrecen
DolgSzeged	Dolgozatok a Magyar Királyi Ferencz József-Tudományegyetem Archeologiai Intézetéből (1925-1936)/Dolgozatok a Magyar Királyi Ferencz József Tudományegyetem Régiségtudományi Intézetéből (1937-1940)/Dolgozatok a Magyar Királyi Horthy Miklós Tudományegyetem Régiségtudományi Intézetéből (1941-1943), Szeged
DRK	Dunai Régészeti Közlemények, Budapest
FolArch	Folia Archaeologica, Budapest

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GlasZem	Glasnik Zemaljskog Muzeja u Sarajevu, Sarajevo
JelDebr	Jelentés Debrecen Szabad Királyi Város Déri-Múzeumának XXXX. Évi Működéséről és Állapotáról, Debrecen
MFMÉ	A Móra Ferenc Múzeum Évkönyvei, Szeged
MFMÉ: StudArch	A Móra Ferenc Múzeum Évkönyvei: Studia Archaeologica, Szeged
NyJAMÉ	A Nyíregyházi Jósa András Múzeum Évkönyve, Nyíregyháza
RégFüz	Régészeti Füzetek, Budapest
SlovArch	Slovenská Archeológia, Nitra
Старинар	Старинар. Орган Српског Археолошког Друштва, Beograd
StudComSM	Studii şi Comunicări Satu Mare, Satu Mare
SzMMÉ	A Szolnok Megyei Múzeumi Évkönyv (1973-1990), Szolnok
ThrDac	Thraco-Dacica, Bucureşti
Tisicum	Tisicum. A Jász-Nagykun- Szolnok Megyei Múzeumok Évkönyvei (1993-), Szolnok

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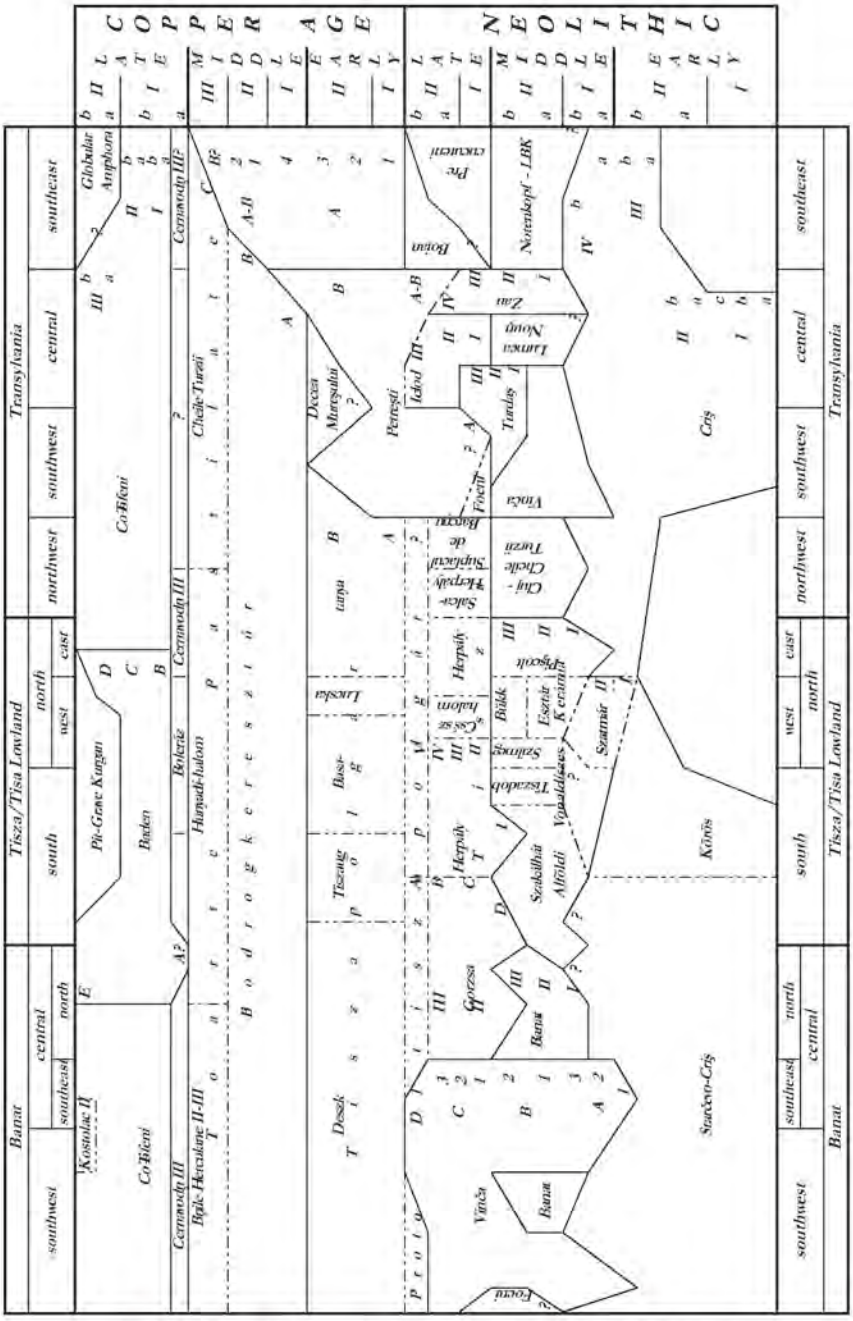

Plate 1 - Neolithic and Copper Age relative chronology of the ECB

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Plate 2

1. **Alba Iulia** – *Lumea Nouă* Sp. IV/2006, SI, A3b (*after* Gligor); 2.-3. **Botoš** – *Živanićeva Dolja* gr. nos. 1, 5 and 6 (*after* Grbić); 4. **Cluj-Napoca** – *Gura Baciului* gr. 8 (*after* Lazarovici); 5. **Doboşeni** – *Coada Dealului/Borvizoldala, Hegyfarka* pit 3 (*after* Székely).

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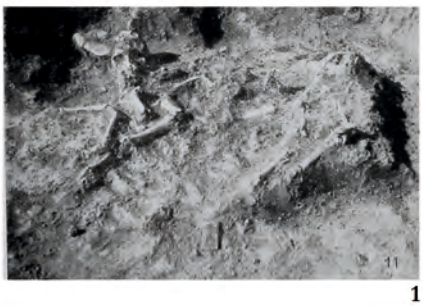
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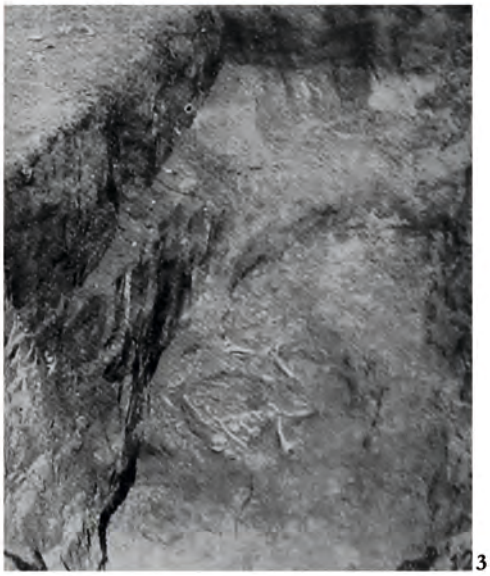
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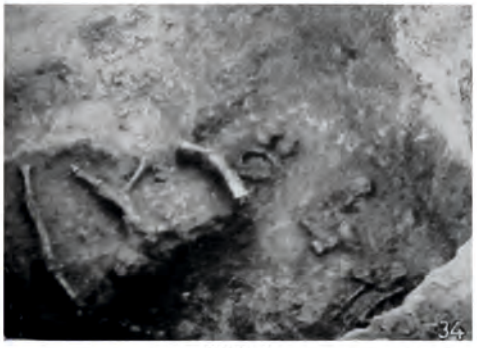
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Plate 3

1. **Hódmezővásárhely** – *Bodzáspart-Balogtanya* (*after* Banner);
2.-4. **Hódmezővásárhely** – *Bodzáspart-Bangatanya* (*after* Banner).

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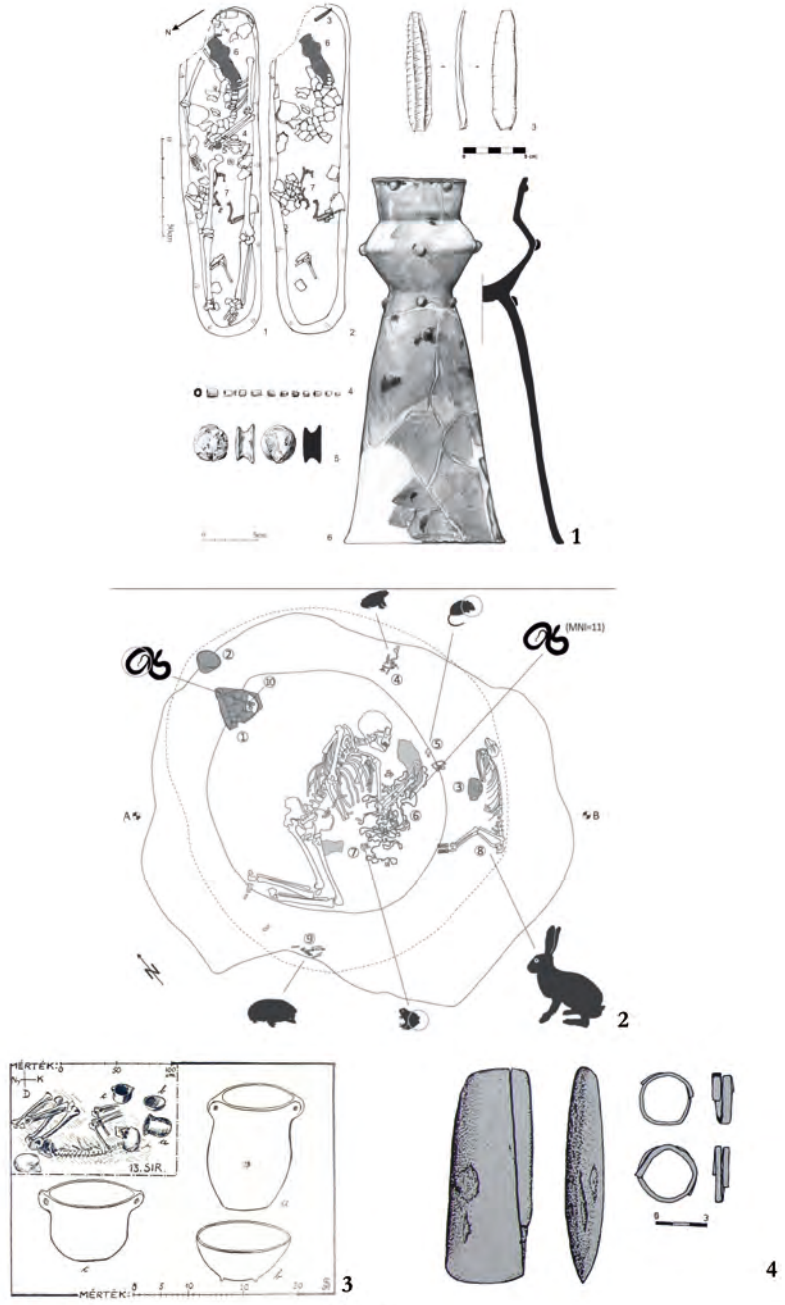

Plate 4

1. **Polgár** – *Csőszhalom dűlő* (*after* Raczky); 2. **Pusztataskony – Ledence I** (*after* Raczky); 3. **Konyár** – *Kálló ér* (*after* Sőregi); 4. **Oradea** – *Salca I/Guttman* (*after* Emődi).

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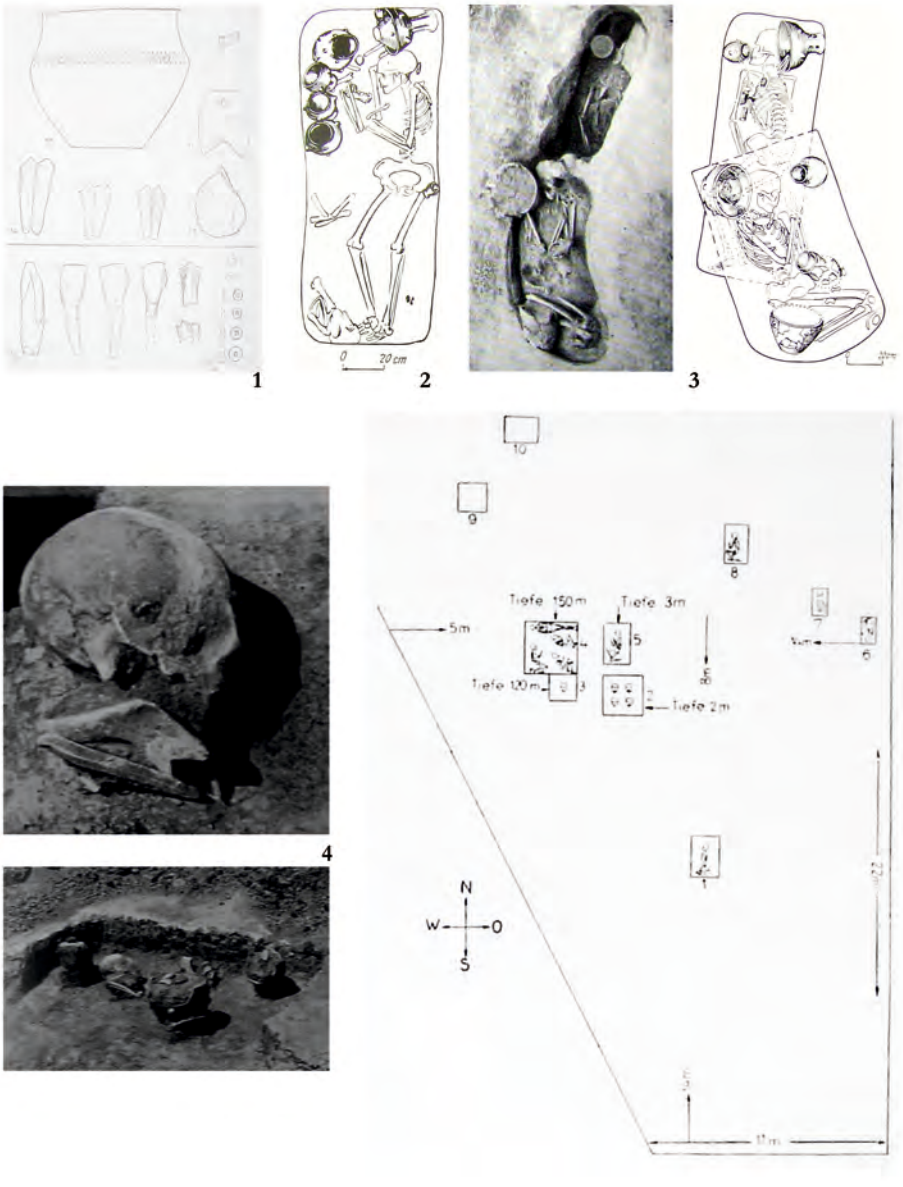

Plate 5

1. **Peştere** – *Peştera Igriţa/Igrici barlang* (*after* Emődi); 2.-3. **Polgár** – *Basatanya* graves 53 and 57 (*after* Bognár-Kutzián); 4. **Polgár** – *Basatanya* grave 71 (*after* Bognár-Kutzián); 5. **Szentes** – *Nagyhegy-Kovácshalom* (*after* Banner).

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DATA ABOUT TWO BUTTONS AND A BEAD, MADE OF SPONDYLUS GAEDEROPUS LINNAEUS, 1758. DISCOVERIES FROM TĂRTĂRIA-*GURA LUNCII* – 2014 CAMPAIGN

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Abstract. *Discovered in 2014, the pieces published in this study were made of Spondylus gaederopus Linnaeus, 1758 (right valve, inferior). The analysis shows that the pieces made of this raw material are very important for the Vinča communities, as sacred wearing pieces, rare and valuable accessories that were worn at special occasions.*
Keywords: *Neolithic, Tărtăria-Gura Luncii, Vinča culture, Transylvania, Romania.*

The archaeological situation

Recently, we were referring to another extremely important piece, also made of *Spondylus gaederopus* Linnaeus, 1758, a belt discovered in 2010 (Luca *et al.* 2017; Luca *et al.* 2017a).

In 2014 an important preventive research (salvation archaeological research) was made, on the lane of the railway that cuts the site for over 100 years. This research also continued in 2015 a volume on this subject was published (Luca 2016).

On this occasion a surface dwelling, with a special inventory was discovered: dwelling L.XIV (Luca 2016, 47-55; plan 3; photo 31-43; fig. 24-29).

On its courtyard, in secondary position – as it seems like – two buttons made of *Spondylus gaederopus* Linnaeus, 1758 shell were discovered (Luca 2016, 53 – here, at the description of pieces in Romanian, there was specified that is the case of *Spondylus* shell; fig. 28 – out of an error, here was specified that is the case of stone (rock) buttons).

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The other piece – the bead made of *Spondylus* (Luca 2016, 76, fig. 47/4) – was discovered in dwelling L.IV (Luca 2016, 73-77; plan 4; photo 66-68; fig. 45-49).

In feature C.VI was also discovered a fragmented bracelet made also of *Spondylus* (Luca 2016, 86-91; fig. 62/3 – the Romanian variant of the translation is the correct one). This fragment of bracelet indicates the fact that it had the ends perforated for the porpoise to be fixed on the wrist. This is because it had the diameter of aproximately 6-7 cm which may have contributed to losing it. We can also consider the fact that it was worn by a woman or a child, which needed – due to the smaller diameter of the wrist – an additional fixing, in order to avoid the lost or accidental destruction.

In the same paper, at the study case dedicated to the ornaments made of *Spondylus* shell, we made only a few references for these pieces, at their place and role for the Neolithic communities from Mureș Valley – especially (Luca 2016, p. 91-92).

All these pieces are being connected with the discoveries from the end of A phase of Vinča culture.

The raw materials

The objects analyzed in the present paper (fig. 1-3) were made of the right/inferior valve of *Spondylus gaederopus* Linnaeus, 1758 shell (Order: *Pectinoida*; Family: *Spondylidae*, popular, spiny mussels) collected alive. This conclusion has been reached after the micro-chemical tests made in the laboratory, which emphasized the microstructure of the valve of this species, comparative with the specialized literature where similar objects have been analyzed (Gardelková-Vrtelováii-Golej 2013, 266-267; Chateigner *et al.* 2000, 1723-1735).

The shell of *S. gaederopus* L., 1758 species is made of two minerals – aragonite and calcite. The periostracum (exterior layer), the spines and the margins of the valves, are made of calcite and in the median and central part – including the hinge, is being formed of aragonite. The analysis of the microstructure emphasized the needles/crystals of aragonite displayed in layers, both in the case of the bead and the buttons.

The morphometry of the artefacts confirms as a source of the right valve of the shell, because the natural thickness, unprocessed, of the right valve of the species can reach 5.5 cm, while the left or superior valve has aproximately 2 cm. The thickness of right valve allows the processing of the beads and buttons of this type (Tsuneki 1989, 13; Pappa-Veropoulidou 2011, 112).

The usage of the valves of the fossil species of *Spondylus* type, in producing ornaments of any shape, was denied by numerous archeological studies and also archaeo-malacology ones (Schacketon-Elderfield 1990, 312-315; Séfériadès, 2009, 180; Kalicz *et alii* 2012, 317, 324; Bajnóczi *et alii* 2013, 881). Also, the actual literature in the field of paleontology regarding the distribution of the fossils for this species is reduced (Maier-Titschack 2010, 229).

Tsuneki (Tsuneki 1989, 10-13) described in detail the process of obtaining the beads and buttons from the right valve of *S. gaederopus* L., 1758 shell, after an analysis of the artefacts discovered at Dimini. According to the specialized literature, from the left valve were made especially rings, pendants, belts and from the right valve there were made beads and buttons. In many European Neolithic sites, the right valve of the red spiny mussel was preferred in production and manufacturing of the beads.

The studies of experimental archaeology proved that there is a preference in collecting the exemplars of S. *gaederopus* L., 1758, entire and alive, even though there are difficult to find them in their natural environment and to detach from the marine sublayer (Tsuneki 1989, 14; Séfériadès 2009, 180). The European red spiny mussel it is covered in the natural environment by a species of sea sponge *Crambe crambe* (Schmidt,

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1862), orange-red coloured, popularly known as the mussel sponge and which contributes to their camouflage (Maier-Titschack 2010, 229). Hrs-Brenko and Legac (Hrs-Brenko-Legac 2006, 225) consider that in fact the colour of the sea sponge that covers the shell helps finding it. The left valves, which reach the beaches after the death of the organism are fragile, decoloured, comparted to the alive ones, due to the exposure to the environmental factors and they can get fragmented during the processing.

After the laboratory microscopic analysis, in the aragonite layers that compose the bead and button 1, there were identified invertebrate. In the bead, there is a possible lepto jelly fish and a possible amphipod (fig. 4/1-2), and the bead has a possible larva of chironomides (fig. 5). The invertebrates were included in the valve after a process called *bioimmuration*. Through *bioimmuration* the sessile organisms are totally incorporated in the external skeleton (valve) of another sessile organism, or one of them (the soft one) leaves an impression on the other one skeleton. This process happens in the aquatic ecosystems, in the competition for the sublayer, between the organism that are part of the aquatic epifauna.

The superfamily *Ostreoidea* Rafinesque, 1815, from which spiny mussels are being part of, either in fossil form or recent, due to the fact they are being fixated to the substratum through *bioimmuration*, valuable information regarding the sublayer of the habitat (biotic or abiotic, perishable or inert). Their spines were developed as a response to the sessile life, for protecting themselves of the predators. The shape of the valve through which they are fixing to the sublayer is a variable one (contours or ornamentations appear)(Jact *et al.* 2007, 121-122).

In the case of *S. gaederopus* L., 1758 species we are referring to *bioimmuration* through the enlargement of the right valve of the shell (Todd 1993, 424-426), process also called *epibiont bioimmration* (Taylor 1990, 2). There can be trapped in the shell marine organisms as: oysters, briosorrheas, polythetes, hydrophores, brachyopods, gastropods and even algae or marine angiosperms (Taylor 1990, 8-13).

The invertebrates discovered inside the bead and button 1 were rapidly embedded, before it decomposed, because the rate of increase of the actual mussel's valves is of 0.5 mm in one day (Taylor-Todd 1990, 152).

The result of the *bioimmuration* process is called in paleontology *sandwich fossils* (Taylor-Todd 1990, 151) because once trapped they are being preserved in perfect condition for a long time. In this process, some organisms can be palletized or distorted, making so more difficult their identification as a species, without destroying the valve or the object, as it is in our case.

The presence of the invertebrates confirms once again, the fact that is the case of the right valve of the *S. gaederopus* L., 1758, shell, being the one with which the animal fixes itself to the sublayer. The right layer, even at the death of the organism, remains fixed, the left valve detaches and it is being carried by the waves, being collected, afterwards from the seaside.

Tsuneki (Tsuneki 1989, 14) also encountered object which had inside identified polychaeta, concluding that they were made from the right valves of the *Spondylus* shells, collected alive, and not from fossils. Few studied in the domain of zoo-archeology signalized the presence, inside artefacts or valves of *Spondylus* some organisms. This fact is a clear indicator of the fact that a deep microscopic analysis, of the artifacts with animal origins, identified in the archaeological sites, is necessary for signaling eventual organisms that were captured in the valves of the shells used in manufacturing the objects.

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The morphology of the pieces. Morphometry

The bead, cylindrically shaped belongs to the typological III D group of the beads, type III D4, respectively beads on a fragment of shell. This type of ornament is being attested in Romania for Starčevo-Criș culture (Beldiman 2012, 137), and at an European chronological level, later.

The buttons made of *S. gaederopus* L., 1758 are being part of the typological category III I of the buttons, but there isn't for the classification made by Beldiman (Beldiman 2012, 146) a type defined of the buttons made of *Spondylus,* for Romania.

The morphology of the bead corresponds to the artefact analyzed until this moment dated in the Neolithic. The total length is of 25 millimeters. The biggest and most complete bead of this type, discovered in Romania, is the one from Bordu Mare Cave (Hunedoara County), having a total length of 35 mm (Sztancs-Beldiman 2004, 11).

The buttons of *S. gaederopus* L., 1748 analyzed in this paper are the first from this type discovered in Romania. They have a discoid shape in plan, convex in axial section, with the perforation placed centrally, on the entire length of the button. The total length is of 30 m (button 1) and 31 mm (button 2). The buttons of *Spondylus* are relatively large comparing to the buttons of bovine bone dated in Starčevo-Criș culture and described by Beldiman (Beldiman 2012, 146, tabel 157), which measure between 5 and 15 mm. Buttons obtained of *Spondylus*, similar as an aspect to the ones analyzed in this paper were discovered in Dimin (Grecee)(Tsuneki 1989, 7).

The bead and buttons present fissures on the surface and axials due to dehydration, usage and environmental conditions (fig. 6/1-2) with specific alteration of the surface provoked by taphonomic agents (fig. 7/1-2). The concave margins of the bead are being blunted and rounded, probably because of the fact that the ornament was worn at the neck or at the hand, either as a unique ornament, or in a row like a neckless or a bracelet. On the entire surface of the bead and buttons there can be notice a multi-layered structure of the *Spondylus* valve and in the case of the bead the growing lines are being obvious (fig. 8).

Interesting is the general grey colour, with irregular white lines, of the bead (fig. 1). Generally, the artefact of this type, made of *Spondylus sp*. are white coloured. In order to explain the colour, we shall refer to the results of the experiment made by Koppel and his collaborators (Koppel *et al.* 2013, 3-4). The team of researchers wanted to recreate the way were coloured in the past the beads from the gender *Chama sp*. and *Spondylus sp*. through chemical treatment. Through heat the colour of preiostracum becomes more intense, so in the case of *S. gaederopus* Linnaeus, 1758 species the result was dark red/violet. This procedure was documented in the south of Solomon Islands. During the experiment, the superior and inferior valves of *Spondylus sp*. were broken in fragments and covered with sand, on the beach. Along with the fragments it was also placed a thermometer, for measuring the temperature at different intervals. Directly over the place where the shells were buried it was lighten the fire and let to extinguish by itself. After the complete extinguish of the fire, the fragments remained covered until the second day. The results of the experiment weren't the ones expected by the research team, but it explains the colour of the bead analyzed in this paper. The fragments of *Spondylus sp*. that were thermal stressed became grey coloured. also, the authors mention that the structure of the valve became fragile, which explains also the aspect of the analyzed bead. The contact with excessive heat was of long period and the high temperature determined the grey colour of the valve. In conclusion, the analyzed bead was putted, after manufacturing, to a high thermic stress, for a long time.

According to Siklósi (Siklósi 2004, 19) in the European area, in Aeneolitic period, were described to tipes of buttons – convex and hemispheric – and flattened. Both shapes

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are the result of specialized artisans. The analyzed buttons are being framed in the first category.

To emphasize is the mention that for Aeneolithic there is a new type of bead: *button – shaped beads with V shaped perforation*, meaning buttons type beads with the perforation shaped in the form of ”V” letter (Siklósi 2004, 22).

Among the prestige objects belonging to Cucuteni culture, from Moldavian Republic, were identified, in two archaeological sites, ornaments made of *Spondylus gaederopus* Linnaeus, 1758 belonging to the typologies: *Spondylus* beads, subtype long *Spondylus* beads (″barrel″), similar to the one presented above, but also a ″button″ made of *Spondylus*, Cărbuna site, Cainari district (Beldiman-Sztancs 2006, 5, 11, tabel 2, tabel 5).

Complete bracelets made of *Spondylus* are very rare for Aeneolithic, the bead worn singular or with other elements (teeth, lithic beads, metallic bead, the fruits of nucleus of *Lithospermum purpurocaeruleum* L.) being more frequent (Beldiman-Sztancs, 2006, 16).

Technical study

The processing of a bead or a button from the right valve of *S. gaederopus* L., 1758 shell (fig. 9) was described in detail by Tsuneki (Tsuneki 1989, 10-12).

In the specialized Romanian literature, Sztancs and Beldiman (Beldiman-Sztancs 2004, 10-11) presented the way the *Spondylus* beads were manufactured, after analyzing such an object from Bordu Mare Cave (Ohaba-Ponor, Hunedoara County).

The procurement of the right valve of *S. gaederopus* L., 1758 alive supposed the immersion of the collector in depth over 30 meters. The detaching of the right valve from the sublayer is difficult. In some cases, the right valve was recovered alive or it could have been brought only pieces from it (it broke during detaching). Once the valve is obtained, the artisan started to cut (probably with a lithic blade) or to break (helped, probably by a stone hammer) pieces from the valve, this being the stage of debitage. The obtained fragments are called, in the specialized literature nucleus (Tsuneki 1989, 10) or forgings (Beldiman *et alii* 2008, 62). The nucleus are afterwards wroughted, in order to eliminate the exterior stratum of the valve, in order to obtain the desired shape (circular for buttons or cylindrical for beads). It follows the process of perforation of the ornament. In the case of the beads, the perforation is bilateral, and for the buttons unilateral. Sztancs and Beldiman (Sztancs-Beldiman 2004, 10) consider that the beads were perforated with the drill with thin lithic needle, probably with continuous rotation.

Considering the aspect of the bead′s perforation (fig. 10/1-2) and the holes of the analyzed buttons (fig. 11/1-2) we can subscribe the above described process. The last stage of the process is the finishing one, being eliminated the abrasions remained during the precedent stages. Sztancs and Beldiman (Sztancs-Beldiman 2004, 10) present the process of finishing before the one of perforation, but by taking into account the aspect of the artefacts analyzed in this study we consider that the last stage is the one of polishing or finishing the object.

The origins of the artefacts

Spondylus gaederopus Linnaeus, 1758 it is popularly called the red spiny mussel of Europe. It is a filterable organism, nowadays spread in the Mediterranean Sea, along with other five species belonging to the *Spondylus* gender (Lamprell *et al.* 2001, 612; Schiaparelli 2008, 303; Galli 2015, 12-13; Ranazzotti *et alii* 2016, 59, 208-209), eastern Spain, the western coast of the Mediterranean Sea (*Banco de Datos de la Biodiversidad de la Comunitat Valenciana*; Kersting *et alii* 2006, poster session), north-western Africa

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(Lamprell *et al.* 2001, 612), Aegean Sea, Adriatic Sea (Hrs- Brenko-Legac 2006, 204), Marmara Sea (Akbayrak *et alii* 2004, 16; Öztürk *et alii* 2014, 24), southern Portugal (Carpenter-De Angelis 2016, 745), respectively the eastern side of the Atlantic Ocean.

The species is native in the Mediterranean basin, being considered by the specialist a climatic *archive* of the zone, recording in the geochemical microstructure of the valve data regarding the change of weather (Maier-Titschack 2010, 237).

Starting with 2005 it was signalized in the western and north-western part of the Mediterranean Sea an alarming increase of mortality of the species of *S. gaederopus* L., 1758, the cause being unknown, the researchers consider that it was an epidemics (bacterial, mycotic or viral)(Kersting *et alii* 2006, poster session). Such epidemics could have taken place also in the past, affecting the populations of *S. gaederopus* L., 1758 and their distribution.

The red spiny mussel of Europe is a sessile species which is part from the epi-fauna. In the larva stage the species is pelagic. It fixes itself to the marine sublayer with the right valve at depths between 2 and 30 meters, the maximal depth recorded is of 50 meters. The species attaches itself to rocks, littoral cliffs, to the stones from the marine plains with *Posidonia oceanica* L., under sponges or seaweeds or it can attach itself to other sessile bentonic bivalves as *Pinna nobilis* Linnaeus, 1758. In the Adriatic Sea, the empty valves of the red spiny mussel are being carried by the flux at the death of the animal and consolidated by organogenic sediments on coral structures (Hrs-Brenko-Legac 2006, 210, 213, 220). Kersting and collaborators (Kersting *et alii* 2006, poster session) points out the fact that in the zone of the Mediterranean Sea the species prefers to fix itself to the vertical walls of costal cliffs.

S. gaederopus L., 1758 presents a great intraspecific variability which is being manifested at morphological level (Lamprell *et al.* 2001, 612), so Galli (Galli 2015, 12-13) considers that in the basin of the Mediteranean Sea there are 6 varieties of the spiny shell of Europe: *Spondylus gaederopus* L. 1758, *Spondylus gaederopus albinus* T.A. de M. Monterosato, 1875, *Spondylus gaederopus foliosus* T.A. de M. Monterosato, 1875, *Spondylus gaederopus inermis* T.A. de M. Monterosato, 1875, *Spondylus gaederopus mixtus* F.C.L. Koch, & P.M. Pallary in P.M. Pallary, 1900, *Spondylus gaederopus spinosa* P.M. Pallary, 1904. This variability of colour and aspect is being unanimously accepted by malacologs, but the above-mentioned subspecies are being called in synonyms, being all classified as *S. gaederopus* L., 1758.

The morphologic variability doesn′t cumber the correct identification of the material of which are made the artefacts from the archaeological sites, especially in the case of the ones made of *S. gaederopus* L. 1758 if there are made detailed analysis of their microstructure and crystallography (Chateigner *et al.* 2000, 1724, 1727-1730).

The presence of the sell in Aegean Sea, Adriatic Sea and Marmara Sea are the probable sources for the specimen from which were made the objects presented in this paper. In the area of the Aegean Sea *S. gaederopus* L. 1758 is actually considered a species of community interest (Salomidi *et al.* 2016, 727). It was student also from the perspective of the fishing potential, along with other bivalves from which are making part from the population of Aegean Sea. These have a reduced frequency which frames them to the category of restrained fishing (Voultsiadou *et alii* 2011, 76). The density of the species is being reduced nowadays in the Adriatic Sea, along Radhima coast, Vlora Golf, one of the most important fishing zones of Albania (Kasemi *et al.* 2013, 776, 779).

Considering the archaeological discoveries from Europa, areas can be delimitated, by the type of *Spondylus* artefacts, dated in the Neolithic and Aeneolithic:

- the Balkan Group (wide and large bracelets);
- the Carpathian Basin Group (large perforated pendants);

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- Central European Group (V shaped belts or ”V-Klappen”).

All have in common beads and pendants with two perforations made of *Spondylus* (Siklósi 2004, 11).

The Carpathian Basin Group it is a transition zone because here were found both raw source materials for processing *Spondylus* ornaments, remains resulted during the process, including unprocessed nucleus, but also finished objects. The finished objects are preponderant.

In the Balkan Group the raw material is preponderant, then follows as number the remains and more rarely the finished objects. The Neolithic workshops for *Spondylus* shell processing known in the Adriatic Sea area are Grabčeva Cave, Ražnac, Smilčic, Danilo, Nin, Ajdovsa Cave, Dikili and in the Aegean Sea area we mention the workshops from Tesalia, Hagia Sofia, Magoula, Dimini, Dikili Tash or Dikili Taș, Sitagori, Tszngli, Pefkakia, Sérvia.

The Central European Group is being characterized by finished ornaments objects made of *Spondylus sp*., without remains or unprocessed material, so we can′t talk about proper workshops (Siklósi 2004, 13-14).

The *Spondylus* artefacts, in Greece, Bulgaria and Romania, can be framed into an independent group from the ones from the rest of Europe and can′t be dated before 5.200 BC. (Siklósi 2004, 11).

Séfèriadès (Séfèriadès 2009, 181-183) considers that for the European zone it can be followed the line of exchanges and circulation of ornaments from *S. gaederopus* Linnaeus, 1758, starting from Greece (7.500-6.500 BC). Also, in the adjacent regions of Aegean Sea and Adriatic Sea (the aquatic ecosystem in which the species is native), respectively Greece, Albania, Montenegro and Croatia were identified real centers of collection and processing for these ornaments.

In the zone of Mediterranean Sea, the most Southern point where *Spondylus* artefacts where discovered was Sicilia and Malta.

The ornaments and jewels made of *S. gaederopus* L., 1758 are known in Italy starting with Early Neolithic and Aeneolithc (a reduce number, both graves and settlements) the height of their usage was reached during Cupper Age and the start of Bronze Age (especially cylindrical beads). In Arene Candide Cave (Finale Ligure archaeological site, at the border with France) there were found aproximately one hundred of left valve belonging to the species, gnawed by the sea and some incomplete fragments of *Spondylus* bracelets. The large number of this type of artefacts led to the framing of the site as a center or workshop for processing the shell. The authors of the study consider that the complete valves were collected from the beach because it had almost equal dimensions, so they were chosen according to a standard (infirming other opinions about collecting them alive). They were used in manufacturing spoons or fishing hooks.

Spondylus weren’t identified in the zone of Italy, dated in the Neolithic-Aeneolithic, while, in the Central and Eastern part of Europe, these pieces are frequent for this period. The large number of unprocessed valves, compared to the processed ones and the low incidence of them for Neolithic and Aeneolithic, in graves or settlements from the Italy zone, led numerous researchers to the conclusion that in this sites object for export were prepared (Borrello-Micheli 2011, 25-33).

Séfèriadès (Séfèriadès 2009, 183) points that in Romania were discovered numerous ornaments of *Spondylus*, both in Carpathian Basin (Transylvania and Banat) and in the southern part of the country (Starčevo-Criș, Dudești, Hamangia, Boian, Gumelnița, Cernavodă I, Cernavodă II cultures). In the north-eastern part of the country there aren’t present this type of artefacts.

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The zone of the Carpathian Basin or the Group of the Carpathian Basin (as we have already mentioned above) can be divided in two horizons considering the *Spondylus* artefacts: the Early Neolithic and the Aeneolithic, characterized by rare *Spondylus* artefacts, compared with the Balkan Group.

The examples of workshops/centers of processing the shell for Romania, there are at Gura Baciului (Cluj County) for Early Neolithic and Hârșova (Constanța County), Ariușd (Covasna County) for Aeneolithic. Due to the large number of raw materials and remains of *Spondylus* from Hârșova, Siklósi (Siklósi 2004, 14) generically names *Spondylus cohort* from Hârșova, that can be the connection point between the Balkan Group and the Carpathian Basin Group. The author mentions also the group of *Spondylus* artisans from Alba Iulia (Siklósi 2004, 44).

In Aeneolithic the number or artefacts is growing. Among this there are also the large, cylindrical beads (2-6 cm) being the most important ornaments of *Spondylus*, besides the large pendants, from Europe graves (Siklósi 2004, 19).

The Late Neolithic horizon delimitated through the numerous artefacts from *Spondylus* discovered in the region, but also of small size and present in the graves of woman especially, covering the entire body, in some cases. The large number of artefacts indicates the fact that that their value was decreasing. In this period, we can also talk about large size beads, cylindrical of *Spondylus*, but the majority were small rounded ones accompanied by lithic beads or mammal teeth perforated (Siklósi 2004, 13-14, 21).

On the territory of Romania, there are other proofs which demonstrates that here existed centers of processing the ornaments of *S. gaederopus* L., 1758, as is the site from Vădastra (Olt County). The variety of shapes encountered here, comparative to the ones discovered in other zones of Europe, denotes the fact that the objects were modified locally, adopting the particularities of that culture (Séfèriadès 2009, 183).

Istria, being located in the north of Adriatic Sea, was one of the highest centers of collecting and fabrication of ornaments from *S. gaederopus* L., 1758 from Europe zone (Komšo *et al.* 2017, 1). The archaeological sites from Kargadur and Pradišelski Cape are considered to be the points of departure of this *luxury* or ritual in their long travel inside the European continent, at considerable distances (even 3000 kilometers). In these sites, numerous ornaments of *S. gaederopus* L., 1758 were discovered, but also remains after the processing or even entire valves, respectively the raw materials. Along with *S. gaederopus* L., 1758 there were also used the valves of *Cerastoderma glaucum* (Bruguière, 1789) and *Cerastoderma edule* (Linnaeus, 1758). The manufacturing of the shell ornaments was the main activity in the area (Komšo *et al.* 2017, 12).

From Istiria until Gudnje (Pelješac Island, Croatia) in the Neolithic archaeological sites (as example the graves from Smilčic and the settlements from Ražanac) were discovered valves belonging to the species *S. gaederopus* L., 1758 unprocessed. In a large number in the area of Benkovac town, Barice (Vujević-Horvat 2012, 40). It can't be established if they were the result of diet or they were for export as material for ornaments. The typology of processed artefacts found in the zone corresponds to the one described in Greece, Bulgaria and Romania, the authors of the study propose the following geographic delimitation, generically called *The Adriatic Central European Spondylus Circle*, the exchange direction being the Adriatic Sea – north-western of the Balkan Peninsula – Central Europe – Aegean Sea Area (Kukoč 2012, 179, 182-184, 201-202).

Siklósi (Siklósi 2004, 10-11) consider, as other researchers do, as a source for *S. gaederopus* L., 1758 under natural form to be Aegean Sea and Adriatic See, taking into consideration five possible routes of transport, according to the studies, all on water:

1. Aegean Sea – the Dardanele Strait – the Bosfor Strait – Black Sea – Bulgaria and Romania – Danube – Europe starting from the Danube's tributary rivers;

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2. Aegean Sea – Greece – Marița – Iskăr – Danube – Europe starting from the Danube's tributary rivers;

3. Aegean Sea – Vardar – Morava – Daube (at Belgrade) – Europe starting from the Danube's tributary rivers;

4. Adriatic Sea – Neretva (Croatia) – Bosnia (Bosnia and Herzegovina) – Daube (at Belgrade) – Europe starting from the Danube's tributary rivers;

5. Adriatic Sea – Neretva (Croatia) – Sava – Drava – Danube – Europe starting from the Danube's tributary rivers;

The common denominator for the transport routs for the artefacts of the raw materials of *Spondylus* is the Danube river.

The manufacturing of the ornaments and objects of *Spondylus* from the Basin of Carpathian Mountains was documented in the specialized literature in the Neolithic sites from Stârcu (a village in Ceanu Mare commune, Cluj County, Romania) and Battonya (Békés County, Hungary), where secondary materials or remains of *Spondylus* were discovered, possibly as a result of the processing (Siklósi-Csengeri 2011, 54-55).

Siklósi and Csengeri (Siklósi-Csengeri 2011, 47-62) studied the differences between 5.704 pieces made of *Spondylus* shell (dimension and shape) discovered in 35 archeological sites situate in the Basin of the Carpathian Mountains, dated in Aeneolithic and Late Neolithic (Early Aeneolothic), with the porpoise to determine I there is a separation between the usage and abundance in these two periods. The conclusion of the study is that there is a clear difference between the *Spondylus* ornaments in Aeneolithic (pendants and massive belts, wide bracelets, large cylindrical beads) identified in a reduced number, while the pieces of Early Aeneolithic (small sized beads, small bracelets, small circular bracelets) are encountered in large number, due also to the growing of the graves number where such objects were placed. The change of shape, utilization and frequency of the *Spondylus* ornaments it is being putted on the social transformations between the two historical periods, appearing in the Late Neolithic (Early Aeneolithic), according to the authors, a social ranking.

Windler (Windler 2013, 98-101) studied, using the existence bibliography until that moment, the chronological distribution of *S. gaederopus* L. 1758 ornaments in Europe, from Paleolithic until Iron Age, considering the type of archaeological site where it was discovered (settlement or dwelling, grave, thesaurus, unique case, cave, mine, ambiguous) but also the subtype of the artefacts and its utilization (fig. 12). Most of the artefacts of *S. gaederopus* L. 1758 discovered in the European archaeological sited was dated in Neolithic, a period when the exchange/transport/possible trade with such objects reached apogee. If we take into consideration the results of Windler's study, in the area of Transylvania, respectively at Tărtăria-*Gura Luncii*, the artefacts obtained from the shell are dated 6.000-5.500 BC, with origins the Adriatic Sea or Aegean Sea were found preponderant in settlements or dwellings. Both the bead and buttons analyzed in this paper were discovered in a dwelling dated in Aeneolithic.

Sztancs and Beldiman (Sztancs-Beldiman 2004, 11) consider that *Spondylus* beads are the specialized product of a south-Danube workshop, reaching the territory of Romania through exchanges or it was brought by the owner itself, but they do not exclude its processing locally, because in the settlements of Starčevo-Criș culture from Romania there were signalized, in the literature, ornaments of bead type.

The functionality of the pieces

An archaeo-malacology artefact can be framed, at least, in three valuable spheres: practical or consumption objects, economical or valuable object, religious or symbolic objects. The value sphere in which one can frame an object depends on the society. The

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manufactured objects of *Spondylus* shell valves can be attributed to all three-valuable sphere above mentioned, being called *prestige goods*. So, the determination of their functionality is made considering the anthropologic and social culture of the zone and period (Siklósi 2004, 1-2).

In Neolithic, in the zone of the Carpathian Basin were transported at long distances, for exchange, pieces made of raw materials preferred by the representants of the culture: *Spondylus*, copper, radiolarian, obsidian (flint). Siklósi (Siklósi 2004, 39) considers that copper, radiolarian or obsidian were exchanged for *Spondylus*, which had a similar value.

The first usage of the *Spondylus* valves as symbolic objects or ornaments in Europe, it is being mentioned for the Superior Paleolithic, Aurignacian Culture, in Spain area. In Lezetxiki Cave (The Basque Country) were found, between other malacology remains, a fragment from the right valve (25 mm length, 6 mm thick) belonging to *Spondylus* type. The fragment is being gnawed and presents tracks of the sea sponges. Besides the bromatologic value of the mollusk, for the Neanderthal man, it probably had a symbolic and ornamental value, representing curiosities from the environment. The authors of the discoveries are wondering how the valve of *Spondylus*, but also other species as *Homalopoma sanguineum* (Linnaeus, 1758) were in the cave, their habitat being at hundreds of kilometers distance. They were also wandering if even since the Superior Paleolithic we can talk of an exchange network or contact between the groups of hunters/gatherers (Arrizabalaga *et al.* 2011, 13-14).

Séfèriadès (Séfèriadès 2009, 187-188) doesn't contest that the ornaments of *Spondylus* had a prestige role or calibration of the social raking but subscribes and emphasizes the usage and ritual/shamanic value of them, with examples also from Romania (Popina II, Însurăței, Brăila County; Sultana, Călărași County; Malu Roșu, Ialomița County).

In 2006, in a funeral feature (25 graves) belonging to Gumelnița culture form Sultana-*Malu Roșu* zone (Mânăstirea commune, Călărași County), inside a grave, was discovered an adult man skeleton (40-45 years) which had around his superior members phalanx, forearm and neck beads made of *S. gaederopus* L., 1758. malachite and marble. From the total of 131 beads (of variable dimensions, the smaller ones being of aproximately 1-39 mm) most of them made from the valve of the shell (79 pieces), which indicated their importance. The researchers consider that the beads were worn during the life time of the deceased, and afterwards he was buried with them (Beldiman *et alii* 2008, 60-61). The form and dimension of the beads discovered in the grace do not correspond to the ones of the artefact analyzed in this paper, but the religious/ritual signification can be attributed to this type or ornament.

Kukoč (Kukoč 2012, 201-202) subscribes the religious role of this type of ornaments.

If during Neolithic and Aeneolithic, the *Spondylus* ornaments were worn both by men and women, in Developed Neolithic were worn especially by women, and their structure and shape denoted a specialization of the manufacturing process (the first specialized workshops are the ones from Greece). The anthropomorphic figurine dated in Late Neolithic (as an example the Aeneolithic horizons form Vinča-*Belo Brdo*) are, generally, women wearing this type of bracelet of pendant, obtained probably from *Spondylus* shell (Siklósi 2004, 39, 41-42). The presence of the pieces made of *Spondylus* even on the anthropomorphic figurines, of the supposed Neolithic gods, confirm the religious/sacred/symbolic affiliation of this objects.

Analyzing the presence of *Spondylus* ornaments from Europe, but also of the anthropomorphic associated figurines, Siklósi (Siklósi 2004, 43) reached the general

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conclusion that the social group which had the right to wear this object assured the social position through sacred, the *Spondylus* object being preponderant symbolic and ritual elements.

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Figures:

Fig. 1. Bead made of *Spondylus gaederopus* Linnaeus, 1758.

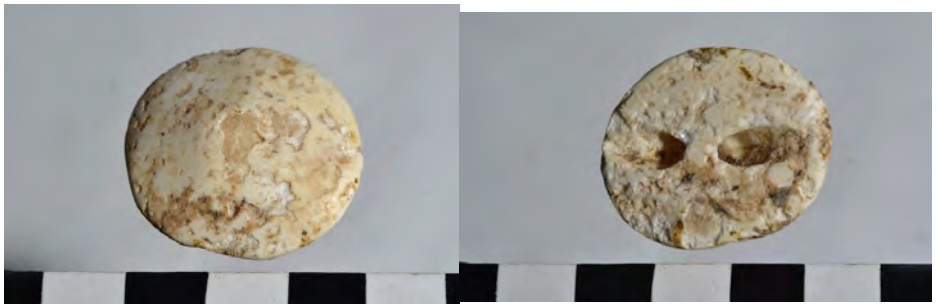

Fig. 2. Button 1 made of *Spondylus gaederopus* Linnaeus, 1758.

Fig. 3. Button 2 made of *Spondylus gaederopus* Linnaeus, 1758.

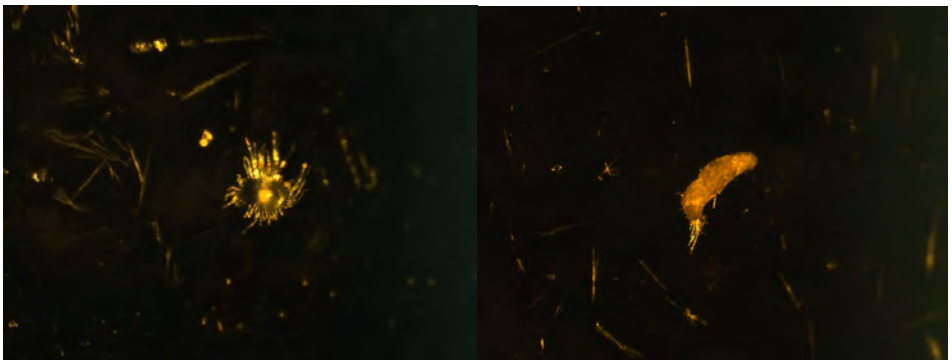

Fig. 4.1. Leptomeduse. **Fig. 4.2.** Amphipods.
Fig.4. Invertebrates microscopically identified in the bead (160x).

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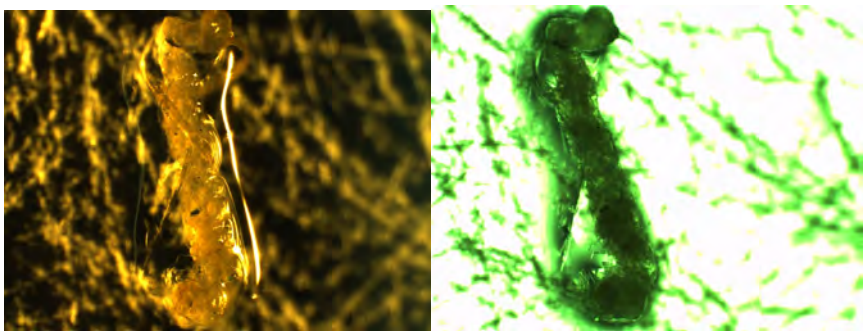

Fig. 5. Possible chironomid larva identified in button 1 (160x, cu UV).

Fig. 6.1 (20x)

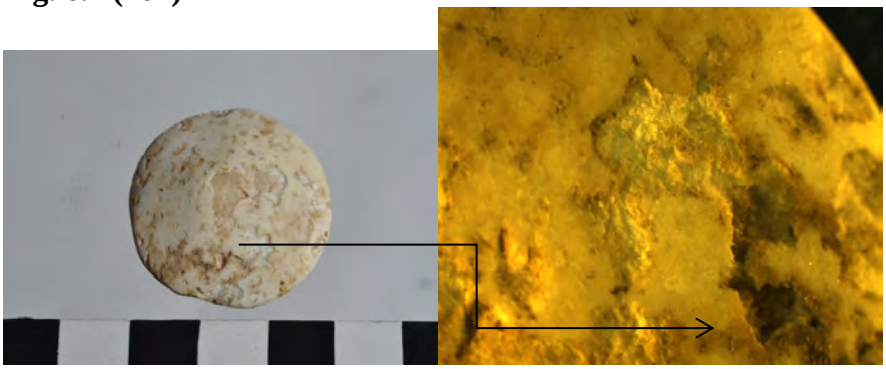

Fig. 6.2 (20x)

Fig. 6 (1 – 2). Surface and axial fissures due to dehydration, usage and environmental conditions.

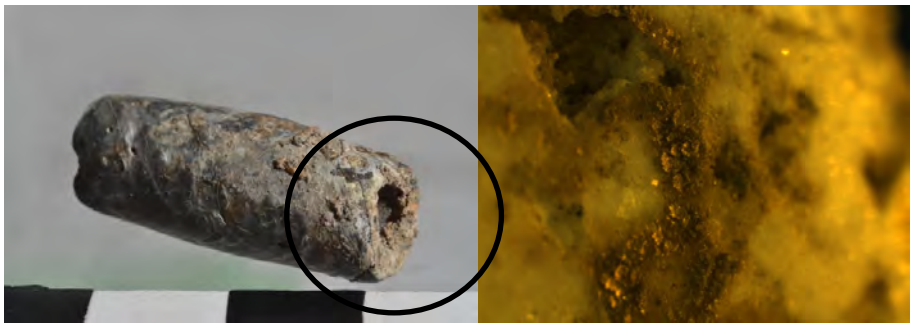

Fig. 7.1 **Fig. 7.2** (60x)

Fig. 7 (1 – 2). Specific alterations of the surface provoked by taphonomic agents – 1. *Spondylus sp*. bead; 2. *Spondylus sp* button.

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Fig. 8. Growing lines of the de *Spondylus gaederopus* Linnaeus, 1758 valve.

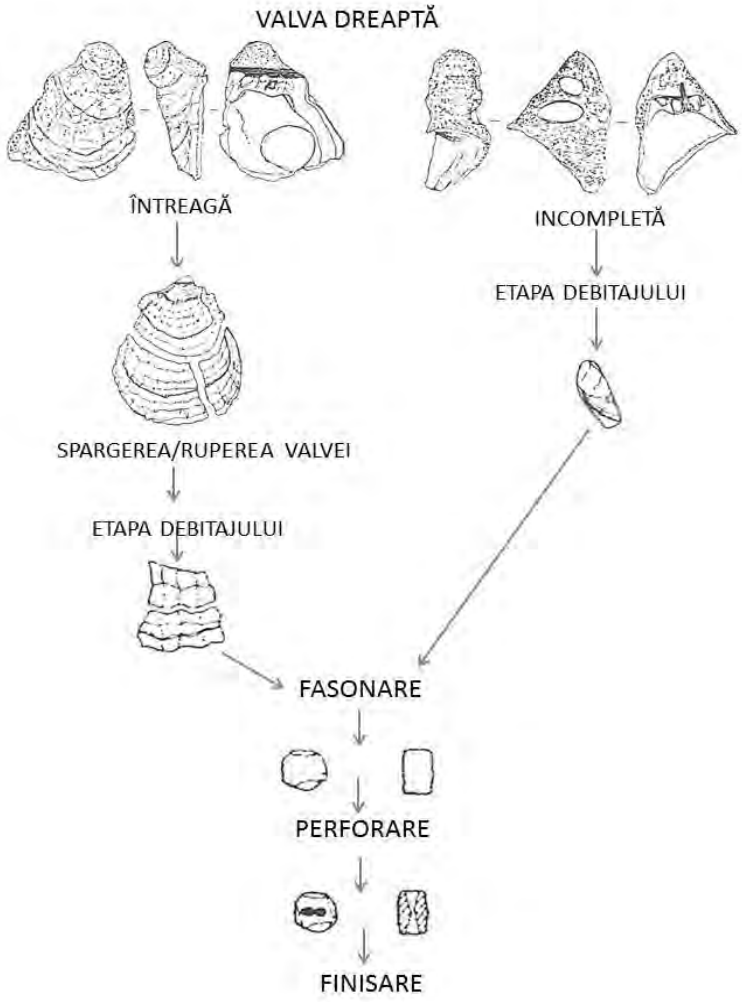

Fig. 9. The processing of beads and buttons from the right valve of *Spondylus gaederopus* Linnaeus, 1758 species (apud Tsuneki 1989, 10-12; Sztancs-Beldiman 2004, 10-11).

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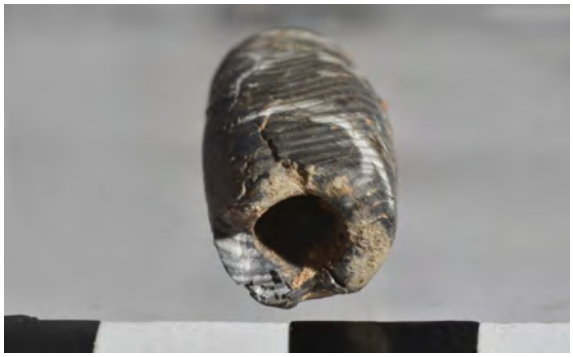

Fig. 10.1.

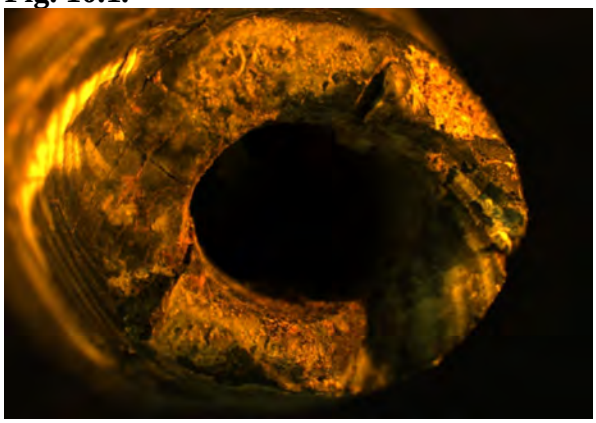

Fig. 10.2. (UV, 20x)
Fig. 10 (1 – 2). The perforation of *Spondylus gaederopus* Linnaeus, 1758 bead.

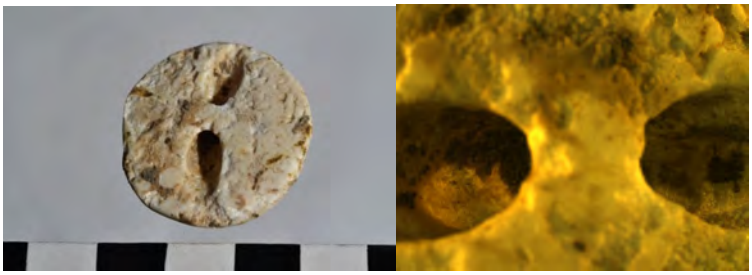

Fig. 11.1. Button 1 (UV, 20x)

Fig. 11.2. Button 2.
Fig. 11 (1 – 2). The orifices of the buttons made of *Spondylus gaederopus* Linnaeus, 1758.

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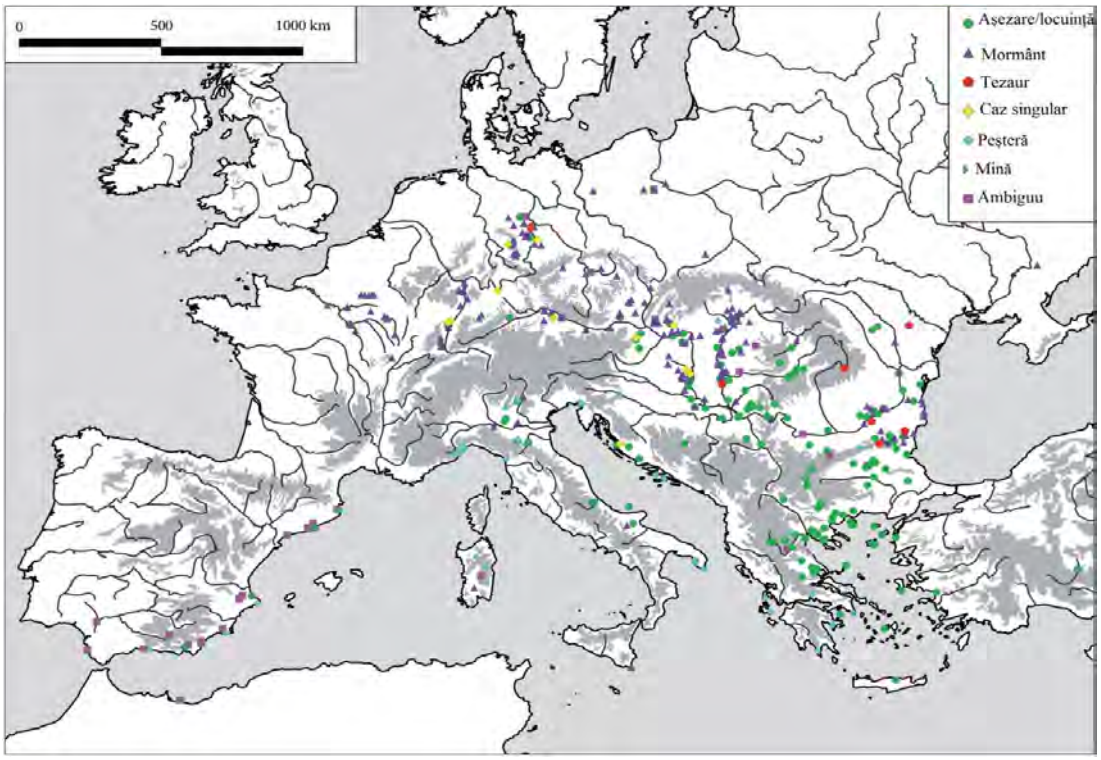

Fig. 12. The European distribution of the artifacts made of *Spondylus gaederopus* Linnaeus, 1758 from Paleolithic until Iron Age (*apud* Windler 2013, 97).

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CUCUTENI POTS WITH HUMAN FACE. SHAPE, DECORATION AND MEANINGS

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Abstract: *Cucuteni pots are well known today through their symbolism. Human figures are painted on pottery starting with middle phase, Cucuteni A-B, continues to the end of phase B, and occur sporadically even in Horodiştea-Erbiceni culture. But in parallel with this sort of representations, along all Cucuteni phases, there are more symbolic vessels depicting human face or its elements. These representations are interesting because neither vessels with painted human figures or idols render any facial features (only rarely for the last; the first contains clothing items, as well as hairstyle or mask elements). In this study we make an analysis of these vessels, symbols that are associated with and try to make a few assumptions about their meaning. The study will include references to similar vessels from Tripolye/Trypillia area, as well as other contemporary civilizations from Europe or other zones.*
Key words*: Cucuteni culture, human face, pots, symbols, sign, meanings.*

The Cucuteni culture, like other civilizations, contemporary or not, contains a great variety of ceramic forms, demonstrating the skill of the potters. To this is added the craftsmanship in decoration, often related to the application of a complex geometry. We must not forget the use of different symbols and signs that introduce us to a partially exploited universe, connected to the spiritual life of these communities.

In this paper we intend to analyze some of the vessels of this culture on which human figures are rendered. But before that, some observations are needed regarding the anthropomorphic ceramics. The synthesis works on Precucuteni-Cucuteni-Trypillia (Pogoševa 1985; Monah 2012; Ursu 2014) revealed that, in most situations, anthropomorphic idols (mostly female characters) have a very schematic head (only the nose is shaped, pressing the clay with the fingers), and facial features are only shown in few cases, compared to the large number of idols found. Another curiosity is the fact that only in Precucuteni (fig. 1-2) and in the final stages of Cucuteni-Trypillia appear idols with rendering of the human face (fig. 3-8).

To these idols one must add three spoon handles with anthropomorphic heads (fig. 9-11), only one iteme showing more detailed facial features (fig. 10), but in a shape reminiscent of a mask.

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Fig. 1. Precucuteni culture, lid of a pot, Reuţel, Bessarabia, after *Entiklopedia Tripolskoi civilizatii 2004*, vol. I, p. 442.

Fig. 2. Precucuteni culture, Traian-Dealul Viei.

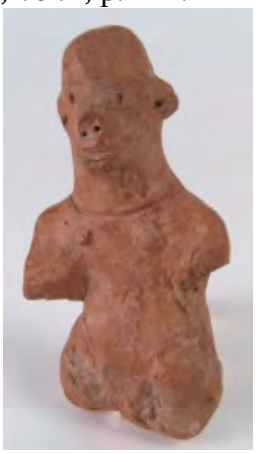

Fig. 3. Cucuteni B, Cucuteni-Cetăţuia, after *Cucuteni culture 2009*, no. 247.

Fig. 4. Cucuteni B, Ruseni-Edineţ, Bessarabia, after *Cucuteni-Trypillia 2008*.

Fig. 5. Cucuteni B, Caracuşani, Bessarabia.

Fig. 6. Horodiştea-Erbiceni culture, Brânzeni 3, Bessarabia.

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Fig. 7. Trypillia area, Volodîmirivka, after *Entiklopedia Tripolskoi civilizatii 2004*, vol. I, p. 443.

Fig. 8. Trypillia area, Verem'e, after *Entiklopedia Tripolskoi civilizatii 2004*, vol. I, p. 360.

Fig. 9. Cucuteni B, Parincea-*Gâtul Grecului*, after Lazarovici C.-M. *et al.* 2009.

Fig. 10. Cucuteni A2, Bodeşti-*Cetăţuia-Fumuşica*, after Lazarovici C.-M. *et al.* 2009.

Fig. 11. Cucuteni A3, Scânteia.

Returning to the pots, we notice several categories related to our subject.

First of all, there are the actual anthropomorphic pots. The majority of containers in this category render the human body, not including the head. But there are some exceptions.

There are two pots belonging to the Cucuteni A phase, discovered at Truşeşti-*Ţuguieta* (fig. 12) and at Hoiseşti - *La Pod* (fig. 13). In the first case, the cylindrical pot is fragmentary (fig. 12). The character, missing the upper part of the head, has rendered the chin, ears, eyebrows in relief and the eyes (applied pills). The nose is just suggested. The top of the head is missing, so it's hard to tell if it had a hat or another cup on the head.

The second pot (fig. 13), from which only the upper part remains, has its eyebrows and nose marked by a slightly raised band. This band ends at the bottom in the form of arches, thus suggesting the horns, which can be related to the animal kingdom (bull, ram). The mouth, slightly in relief, has a horizontal cut. Unfortunately, the painting was not well preserved, but the vertical bands on the back indicate the hair. Two braces on the

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lower jaw could indicate the gap between the neck and the face, but also a doubling of the band marking the eyebrows.

Fig. 12. Cucuteni A, Truşeşti-*Ţuguieta*, after Lazarovici C.-M. *et al*. 2009, cat. No. 126.

Fig. 13a. Cucuteni A, Hoiseşti-*La Pod*, after Boghian 1997.

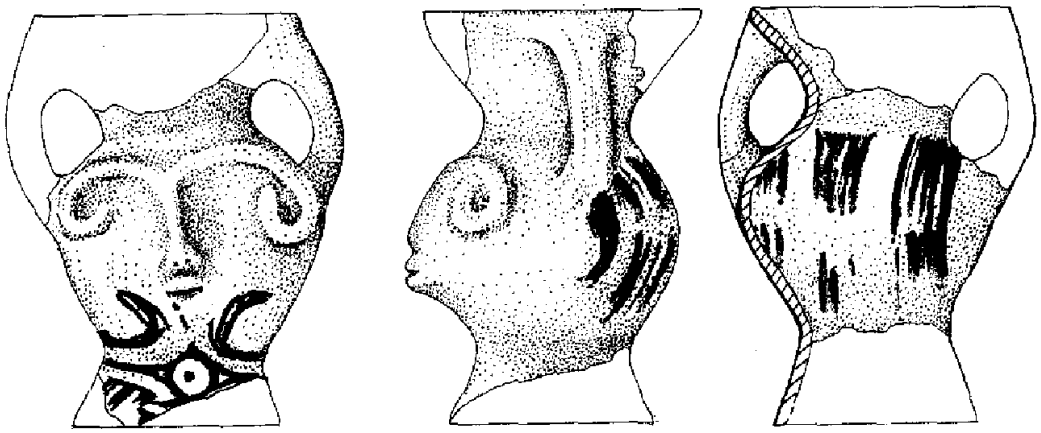

Fig. 13b. Cucuteni A, Hoiseşti-*La Pod*, reconstruction of the painted decoration, after Boghian 1997.

D. Boghian, who published the accidentally discovered vessel (Boghian 1997), indicated some Gumelniţa influences in the manner of rendering of this decoration, in which civilization several vessels made in this manner were encountered. As a matter of fact, fragments of pots with human faces combined with zoomorphic elements were discovered in other Cucuteni A settlements at Ruginoasa (Dumitrescu H. 1933, fig. 25/1-2; Chirica, Văleanu 2008, fig. 66-68; synthesis of the discoveries, Lazarovici C.-M., Lazarovici Gh. 2012, 335, fig. VIII.82-85), Poieneşti (Lazarovici C.-M., Babeş 2015,177, fig. II.169), Scânteia, Cuconeştii Vechi I- *Stânca lui Hărăscu* (Cucuteni-Trypillia 2008, 150, 254, M 32), but also in settlements of different Trypillia phases (Voronovica: Zbenovič 1996, tafel 22/2; Monah 2012, fig. 234/4; Verem'e: Monah 2012, fig. 232/2-3, 7-8).

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Fig. 14. Cucuteni B, Poduri-*Dealul Ghindaru*, a bowl fragment, after Dumitroaia *et al.* 2009, p. 27, no. 79.

Another fragment from Poduri-*Dealul Ghindaru*, from a bowl made of coarse paste (fig. 14), shows an expressive human face with the mouth marked by an incised line, the finely shaped nose having on the sides two alveoli marking the eyeballs. The narrow forehead is located exactly on the lip of the bowl. The vessel was covered with red engobe, which is preserved on certain portions. The container could be classified as a vessel with anthropomorphic applications. A fragment of a low bowl, made of a paste similar to the one above, from the settlement of Scânteia, also shows a triangular, schematic face, smaller than that of Poduri, with references to the representations from the Vinča area.

A second category of pots does not have decorative elements in relief, but the painted décor suggests human faces or certain parts of it. Such pots appear throughout the Cucuteni culture, and some of them are undoubtedly true masterpieces. The first pot of this type we refer to comes from Scânteia (fig. 15). The small amphora, divided into several decorative registers, shows a schematic face, from which we recognize the eyes, the nose, and the handle painted in red suggests zoomorphic elements.

Fig. 15. Cucuteni A3, Scânteia, after Lazarovici C.-M. *et al.* 2009, cover.

Fig. 16. Cucuteni A-B, Rădulenii Vechi 2, after Lazarovici C.-M. *et al.* 2009, cat. No. 300.

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Another amphora from Rădulenii Vechi 2, with several decorative registers (also marked by modeling) and with a lid, shows, beside the breasts, pendants, and a very schematic face, with ears in relief (handles), but also with painted elements indicating the eyeballs, the eyebrows, and the forehead. We notice in this case too that the expression of the face suggests rather ornithomorphic elements (owl?). The spiral decoration (continuous spirals), located on the second last decorative register, suggests both the passing of time and vegetal elements that indicate the continuity and regeneration of nature under the protection of the Great Mother.

Fig. 17. Cucuteni B, Cucuteni-*Cetăţuia*, after Lazarovici C.-M. *et al.* 2009.

Fig. 18. Cucuteni B, Vărvăreuca 8, after Lazarovici C.-M. *et al.* 2009, cat. No. 400.

In the same category, there are other pots with painted decoration, suggesting especially the eyes, but also the eyebrows, other elements such as the nose, the mouth being indicated by the handles of the pots, which have not only a practical but also a symbolic role (fig. 17-18). Sometimes the eyes are associated with the rendering of other symbols, such as the bucranium (fig. 19) or the net-type decoration (fig. 20). On some bitronconical amphorae from Petreni (fig. 21a), Buda Veche (Bessarabia, fig. 21b), Shushkova (Ukraine, fig. 21c), the human face is rendered by marking the nose and the eyes, and the metope on which are placed the organs of the face suggests the neck and a part of the bust of the deity. In this latter case, each of the mentioned pots has two faces symmetrically arranged. The decoration involving anthropomorphic and ornitomorphic elements, as well as the lid of the pot from Rădulenii Vechi (fig. 16), suggest at the same time the bird goddess mentioned by M. Gimbutas (Gimbutas 2001; Gimbutas, Campbell 2001), (initially connected to the Vinča area), which connects the terrestrial world with heaven, the universe.

One of the most suggestive pots was discovered at the site of Sofia VIII- *La Moină* (Bessarabia: Bicbaev 1996). The amphora in question has a very expressive decoration, which can also be interpreted as a true saga. The author of the discovery, V. Bicbaev, who made the first interpretation of the decoration of the vessel, frames it to the type of *facial amphorae*; such containers with facial representations were also studied by B. A. Rybakov (Bicbaev 1996; Rybakov 1965). On the two sides the decoration shows a human

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figure of triangular form, of which we recognize the eyes (2 black dots), and the head and body of the silhouette painted in black suggest the nose and mouth. On one side of the pot the human figure is framed by solar elements (the discs with inner strips and crosses), but also by two dogs, companions of the goddess, guardian of the animals, *Ptonia theron*.

Fig. 19. Cucuteni B, Glăvan 1, after *Cucuteni-Trypillia 2008*.

Fig. 20. Cucuteni B1, Poduri, after Dumitroaia *et al.* 2009, p. 76, nr. 74.

a

b

c

Fig. 21. Cucuteni B- Trypillia CI, pots with human face, with ornitomorphic elements (bird/owl): a, Petreni; b, Buda Veche (Bessarabia); c, Şuşkova (Ukraine).

The Goddess of Cucuteni-Trypillia is the Great Mother, guardian of life, who also watches over death, and this feature is also provided by association with animals (wild, domestic) but also with discs or vegetal elements in other cases. The representation of the Face of the Great Mother on both sides of the pot aims to emphasize its role and importance. Another pot, also belonging to the Cucuteni B phase, discovered at Feteşti-*La Schit*, also has four anthropomorphic representations, similar in rendering, associated

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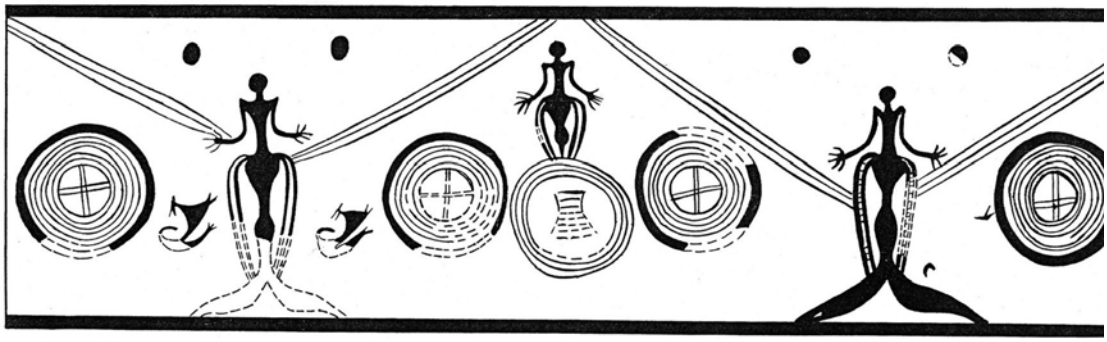
with solar elements (circles), but without rendering the face of the Great Mother and the dogs (Boghian, Ignătescu 2007). The amphora from Sofia-*La Moină* belongs to the category of pots rendering cosmogonic myths (Lazarovici C.-M. 2006). This hypothesis has been sustained over time both by V. Bicbaev (Bicbaev 1996; 2008) and later by D. Monah (Monah 2012, p. 237). The latter considers that the four deities represented created or divided the world, the universe, the earth (Monah 2012, p. 237).

a



b

Fig. 22a-b. Cucuteni B, Sofia VIII-*La Moină*: a, after Lazarovici C.-M. *et al.* 2009, cat. no..398; drawing after Bicbaev 1996.

The sacred numbers can also be linked to the four anthropomorphic representations, like the discs, 6, the lines that decorate them 7, 6, 4, 6, 7, 4 or the 7 semi-circles on the inner lip of the amphora. These semi-circles placed on the lip of the amphora can also suggest clouds, making the connection of the Great Goddess Mother with the sky and the universe. References to sacred numerology (Ursulescu 2001; 2004) have also been made regarding the interpretation of the discoveries related to the cult complexes of the Cucuteni culture area (Buznea: Boghian, Mihai 1987; Ghelăieşti: Cucoş 1973; 1993 and others), where pots, idols can be found, suggesting connections with numbers 4, 6, 7.

From the short presentation we can see that the representation of the human face within the Cucuteni and Trypillia cultures was not ignored by the potters making either idols or ceramics, even though in most cases the plastic artists used only schematic manners of realization, sometimes associated with symbols. As Monah notes, the artifacts

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discovered in the western area (Cucuteni) are more schematic than those in the eastern area, Trypillia (Monah 2012, 206). Also, the representation of the face in triangular or pentagonal shape can also be associated with links to other cultures, especially Vinča, which has influenced many other civilizations in the area.

The Cucuteni representations are dominated by the Great Goddess archetype, with Great Mother characteristics, thus integrating into the Neo-Eneolithic religion complex of SE Europe and the Near East.

Some of the analyzed representations suggest masks, a topic that we referred to on other occasions too (Lazarovici C.-M. 2006; Lazarovici Gh., Lazarovici C.-M. 2016). The masks on the faces of the characters in the Cucuteni area, according to O. Höckmann (Höckmann 1968, 141), indicate the existence of supernatural beings, perhaps ritual ceremonies, where some members representing deities or mythical heroes were masked. In the Romanian space such rituals have survived to this day.

Such representations, of the human face and, implicitly, of some divinities appear early, during the Neolithic, and we find them in many cultural circles in Europe or in other geographic areas. In these areas too we find realistic representations, as well as some very stylized/schematic and symbolic ones. The shape of the pots on which such representations appear is diverse, as is their manner of realization. It can be related to the craftsmanship of the artists, but also to the rendering of the masked characters participating in ritual ceremonies. Often these representations are associated with different signs and symbols that unequivocally link them to the practices of worship and the religious life of those communities.

Fig. 23. Anthropomorphic pot, Gradešnica, after Todorova, Vaisov 1993, fig. 44a.

Fig. 24. Early Neolithic, Greece, human face, after https://fineartamerica.com/featured/face-on-sherd-andonis-katanos.html.

Pots with representations of the human face, appear since the Early Neolithic in several areas, such as Anatolia (Vor 12,000 Jahren in Anatolia, p. 358, kat. 360; Hansen 2007, Tafel 40/1, Samarra culture; Greece, Hansen 2007, Taf. 95/1), Greece (Orphanidis 1998), the Near East and their presence is recorded until late. Even in the Romanian space, recently was discovered a fragment of one such pot in the Starčevo-Criş phase I level

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from Cristian I (Luca 2015), with numerous other pots/fragments with human faces in different prehistoric cultures in Romania (Vinča, Banat culture: Lazarovici Gh., Lazarovici C.-M 2014; 2016), to mention Neolithic cultures alone.

The closest analogies to the analyzed pots in the Cucuteni-Trypillia area are in the adjacent spaces. We refer first of all to the Gumelniţa culture, where many anthropomorphic pots have facial features rendered (Andreescu 2002), as well as some of the similar pots from the Karanovo area, from different phases, from Karanovo I (Todorova, Vaisov 1993, fig. 29, Čavdar; fig. 44b, Gradešnica; fig 73, Kazanlîk) to Karanovo VI (Fol, *et al.* 1988, 235-236, Abb. 173, kat 84, Abb 174, kat 85, p. 253, Abb. 198, kat 172).

Similar representations are found in Hungary's prehistory, both in the LBK pottery (Zselíz group: Kalicz 1998, 49, Abb.13; Alföld: Raczky, Anders 2003, fig. 6), during the early Lengyel period (Svodin: Kalicz 1998, 130, Abb. 58/6), in the Tisza culture, on the Venus pots (Venus III, Kökénydomb: Kalicz, Raczky 1990, 15, kat. 4), on cups or on throne-type antropomorphic vessels (Öcsöd: Raczky 1990, 78, Abb. 92, kat. 49; 88, Abb. 116, kat. 200) or in Prototiszapolgár (Kalicz, Raczky 1990, 17, kat. 8).

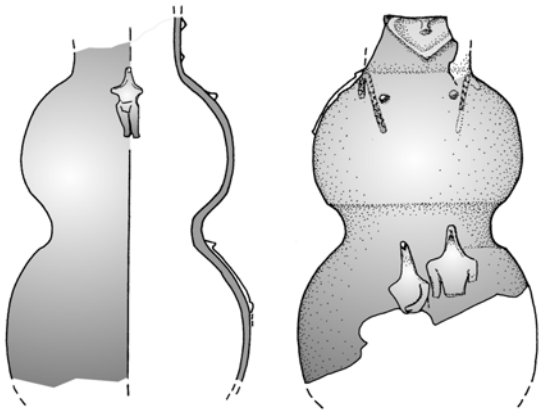

Fig. 25. Cultic pot, rendering the Great Goddess, Aşagi Pinar II, after Parzinger, Schwarzberg 2005, 108 fig. 2.

Fig. 26. Hassuna culture (6500-5500 BC), after Hansen 2007, Teil II, Tafel 40/1.

But we must not forget the representations of human faces in other geographic areas. For example, a triangular representation of the Great Goddess' face also on a worship pot comes from Aşagi Pinar (Parzinger, Schwarzberg 2005, in Karanovo III-IV level), where we find three other, unfortunately fragmentary silhouettes (fig. 25); the two human silhouettes placed on the womb could also suggest the divine couple. Other faces of expressive feminine deities are found in the Iraqi area, in the Hassuna culture (Hansen 2007, Teil II, Tafel 40/1), fig. 26. Several elements of the face are more accurately rendered on this pot fragment: the eyebrows, the eyes, the nose, the mouth, but also symbolic elements related to the character's hairstyle, vertical angular lines that may suggest invoking the rain. Similar anthropomorphic representations also appear in remote civilizations in Asia, and we refer mainly to China, where in the Yangshao (5000-3000 BC) and Majiayao (3200-2000 BC) cultures there are schematically or realistically depicted different human faces (painted or in relief). In the Bampo settlement there are several pots of different shapes where the painted human face is associated with fish (fig. 27b; Müller-Karpe 1982, 6-7, Abb. 2/1-6, 8; Abb. 3/1-3, 20). As it can also be seen in fig. 27-28, 30, mainly male figures are represented. In the schematic representations we

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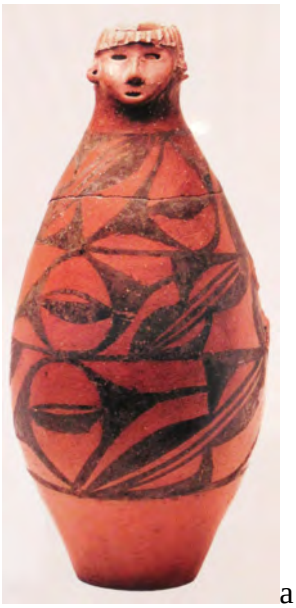
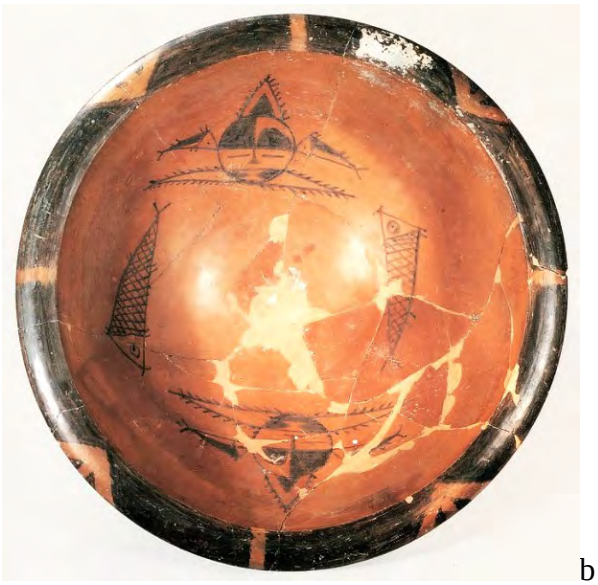
observe both the association with geometric elements and with vegetal ones. To these are added zoomorphic elements (fish, turtles, frogs, birds), stylized human silhouettes, and a series of repeating symbols (so far 22 identified: Custer 2017).



a



b

Fig. 27. Pots with human face from Yangshao culture: a, Gansu Provincial Museum, after http://chinaheritagequarterly.org/articles.php?searchterm=010_genetalia.inc&issue=01; b, Banpo, pot with 2 human faces associated with fishes, after http://www.chinauniquetour.com/html/all/2011117/arts-6575.html.

a

b

Fig. 28. Pots with schematic human faces, Yangshao culture: a, passim; b, after tresure.chinesecio.com.

But, besides the realistic (fig. 27a) or painted (fig. 27b) plastic representations, we observe pots with very schematic representations (Müller-Karpe 1982, Abb. 3/3, 15, 20) , associated with signs and symbols (fig. 28). The rendering of the human face in the form of a triangle (fig. 28a) can also indicate the sign of femininity, as it is known from the signs used in the *Danube script* (Lazarovici Gh. 2003; 2009; Merlini 2004; 2005; 2007; 2009; 2013; Haarmann 1996; 2011; 2011a; Haarmann, Marler 2008 and others).

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The vessel of fig. 29, attributed to the Yangshao-Machiang culture, seems to represent a female deity linked to fertility and fecundity, which is why the genital area, the site of the procreation of the future life, has been expressively rendered.

Fig. 29. Yangshao-Machiang, pot with female character, the Great Goddess (?), after Klyosov, Mironova 2013, fig. 4a.

Fig. 30. Anthropomorphic pots with men heads, Majiayao culture (*passim*).

There are many other representations in the Majiayao culture, which can be compared to those in the Cucuteni-Trypillia area, which combines the realistic rendering of the human face with symbolic elements. Moreover, often the shapes of the pots, but also the manner in which the decoration is made, have many similarities with the North-Danube area. Regarding the interpretation of these Chinese pots, we note that some authors believe that the realistic or schematic anthropomorphic representations, combined with zoomorphic representations and other symbolic elements, including the discovery of pots with dance scenes, are related to shamans, which also ensured the connection between heaven (round) and earth (square) (Chang, no year, *China 2007*, 120-121). On the other hand, other authors believe that, starting from the discovered necropolises, the offerings in the tombs and other elements (the orientation of the graves, etc.), it can be considered that the bearers of these civilizations had an animistic religion, where people worshiped personifications of the nature, the feminine deities were benevolent, and the masculine ones malicious (or inspiring fear) (Mark 2016). The presence of the exuberant decoration, with numerous signs and symbols, indicates, in our opinion, a sacred script like the *Danube Script.*

In conclusion, we can assume that the representations of the human figures on the Cucuteni-Trypillia ceramics belong to a wider current, that can be identified in different civilizations, sometimes at remarkable distances. We cannot exclude the hypothesis that all these representations, related to the presence of painted ceramics, belong to a vast cultural complex that has developed over a wide space for a long time, from which the concepts have gradually irradiated due to the connections between the communities

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(Munsterberg 1949, 7; Sullivan 1973, 16). It should also be noted that the mentioned containers from different cultures can be attributed to worship practices, although they could not always be reconstituted.

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THE ANTHROPOMORHPOUS VESSELS FROM BOTOŞANI COUNTY MUSEUM AND THE METAPHORE OF THE FEMININE BODY

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Abstract: *Pots associated with the human body represent a deep connection between anthropomorphic vessels and statuettes, especially in terms of general appearance. The anthropomorphic vessel is like a link between the clay container and the sculptural representation of the human body. There are some very interesting ritual contexts from which anthropomorphic vessels are coming. Besides figurines, there are many pots representing the female body, by some individualized elements. Usually the feminine features on pots prevail. Many variations on the pot modeling, like faces applied on the pots, body representation, by buttocks or/and breasts could be identified. Sometimes the pubic area is very well represented. Anthropomorphic pots are respecting usually the human body line. Most of them are emphasizing the lower half of the body, expressing the feminine features, and their symbolism is related with the life-giving women. During the Cucuteni–Ariuşd–Tripolye culture, the variety is large, but most of the researchers, dealing with this particular culture, published this special type. Anthropomorphic vessels are not very numerous, but there are a few types that reoccur in several sites, but also some unique forms. At Botoşani County Museum there are some anthropomorhous vessels, some of them representing the lower part of the feminine body and some representing the breasts and feminine chest. Our presentation is focusing on this special type of pottery within the Cucuteni–Ariuşd–Tripolye culture and their relations with the European Neolithic.*
Keywords: *Cucuteni Culture, anthropomorphous vessels, plastic representations, Botoşani County Museum.*

The archaeological collections of Botoşani County Museum include a series of discoveries of anthropomorphic vessels, some of them published in the specialized literature, or in various exhibition catalogues, others unpublished, located in the institution's deposits. In this study we aim to present vessels belonging to this particular cathegory, discussing also the types of anthropomorphic vessels from Cucuteni culture, which are in the museum's collection. Mostly the anthropomorphic vessels are analyzed as a separate category of special representations, having their own typology and particular representation modes. Cucuteni Culture objects were seen and researchers dealing with this culture payed a lot of attention, the accents being placed on both the modes of representation, as well as on technology (Dumitrescu H., 1933, 73-74; Niţu, 1967, 549; Niţu, 1970, 75-77; Nițu, Chirica 1987, 287-290; László, 1970, 39-41; Dumitrescu Vl., 1974, 220-222; Marinescu-Bîlcu, 1974, 170-173; Dumitrescu Vl., 1979, 83-85; Marinescu-Bilcu, 1981, 68; Marinescu Bîlcu, 1989, 228-230; Chirica, 1983, 71-74; Dragomir I. T., 1983-1984, 85-87; Nițu, Chirica, 1987, 17-20; Mantu, 1991, 328-330; Mantu 1993, 129-131; Monah, 1997, 145-166; Monah, 2012, 167-188).

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Generally, researchers who approached this topic agree that anthropomorphic vessels are the link between clay vessels and sculptural representations of the human body, noting the strong connection between them, especially in terms of the general aspect (Dumitrescu Vl., 1974, 173). We see that generally, for the European Neolithic, the feminine features are superior, both in numbers and shape, to those with male features, of which very few have been discovered so far (Makkay, 2005, 88).

Regarding the use of these vessels, D. Monah considers that they had a reduced role, being used "especially in magic-religious ceremonies" (Monah, 2012, 189).

Until now, we have no knowledge on the contents of such vessels, since no analysis was made, so it is very difficult to discuss how they were used in rituals, or what kind of matter or substance they would have contained. Of course, for a strictly functional purpose, there is no need for a laborious representation of the human body by transfering the container into a woman, and the woman being metamorphosed in a vessel. D. Monah included in the cathegory of anthropomorphous vessels a series of objects made using several techniques, like ronde-bosse, high-relief, low-relief and incision. Besides these, he mentioned the painted anthropomorphic images (Monah, 2012, 189), but in this study we will not refer to these, being a separate cathegory, with its own typology, already analised by other colleagues (Ţerna, 2007, 33-42).

CATALOGUE OF OBJECTS FROM BOTOŞANI COUNTY MUSEUM[42]

Fig. 1. Anthropomorphous vessel discovered at Mitoc, Valea lui Stan during the 1978-1979 researches. (Inv. No. MJB 18646).

1. Anthropomorphous vessel discovered at Mitoc, Valea lui Stan in the 1978-1979 researches[43]. According to the marking on the object, it comes from square 9, Pit 1, depth 1.25-1.50 m. From Cucuteni culture, phase A (Fig. 1). (Monah, 2012, 504, fig. 230/5).

Anthropomorphous vessel from which the soles and a part of legs, empty on the inside, were preserved. The vessel has two separate small pots, finished with soles at the bottom. The legs continue at the top with the knees, modeled as slightly flexed forward. The two containers are approximately united in the knee area, being an unrealistic representation, slightly deformed. The left container is a little larger than the right one. The vessel was painted on the exterior with red, from which only traces were preserved, without the possibility of reconstituing the model. Fine paste, oxidized burning, brick color. Dimensions: maximum height: 68 mm;

[42] Illustration realized by Sebastian Ciupu, graphic artist at Botoşani County Museum.

[43] The researches have been coordinated by the researchers Dr. Cornelia-Magda Lazarovici and Dan Monah. A preliminary presentation of the results has been held at the Hierasus symposium, held on February 23rd 1980, at the Botoşani County Museum, with the title *Muzeograf Dan Monah, Magda Istrati (actual Lazarovici), Utilajul litic cucutenian din aşezarea de la Mitoc - Valea lui Stan.*

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diameter of the right leg: 68 mm; diameter of the left leg: 63 mm; Lenght of right sole: H: 57 mm; Lenght of left sole: 58 mm. Unrestored.

2. Anthropomorphic vessel discovered at Truşeşti in 1952. The marking on the item mentions the context of discovery as Pit 5[44]. Included in Cucuteni culture, phase A3 (Fig. 2). Inv. no. 809 (Petrescu-Dîmboviţa *et al.*, 1999, 398, fig. 284/2).

Fragmented vessel from which only the lower part and the base were preserved. It represents the lower part of a female body, perhaps the middle area of the body, the torso, the thighs and the legs united. The vessel has a relatively piriform shape, with its upper part fragmented in the old periods. The hips are highlighted through groove and modelling. The hips are amplified and decorated with painted "S"-shapes lying on the sides, so only the ends of the loops are seen in the front. The base is painted with half-egg-shapes opened downwards. On both sides of the vessel is represented the sexual triangle through Y-shaped small grooves, also marked by a white band framed by black lines. On one side a part of the triangle was preserved, painted like the background of the vessel, with reddish-brown color. The decoration consists of grooves delimiting the legs and the sex, as well as white-black-reddish-brown trichrome painting, which is arranged in white strips with black edges on a reddish-brown background. The sole has a concave shape, slightly deeper than the edges of the base. The interior of the vessel is not decorated. Semifine paste, oxidized burning. Dimensions: H: 94 mm; DM: 98 mm; DB: 67 mm. Unrestored.

Fig. 2. Anthropomorphic vessel discovered at Truşeşti in Pit 5/1952 (Inv. No. 809).

3. Anthropomorphic vessel discovered at Drăguşeni-Ostrov in 1964[45]. Unspecified discovery conditions. Included in Cucuteni culture, phase A4 (Fig. 3). Inv. no. 17324 (Crîşmaru, 1977, fig. 38/3; Monah, 2012, 499, fig. 225/3).

The vessel is the lower half of the female body. The mouth of the pot comprises a decorative register made of egg-shapes filled with circles, limited by a horizontal strip. On the horizontal line two small handles were made, horizontally pierced, located in the

[44] The monography of the settlement does not mention the discovery context, only passim. However, this feature is not described in the monography dedicated to the settlement (Petrescu-Dîmboviţa M., Florescu M., Florescu A. C., *Truşeşti, monografie arheologică*, Edit. Academiei Române, Bucureşti- Iaşi 1999).

[45] The researches were coordinated by Aristotel Crâşmaru, director of the school of Drăguşeni, Botoşani county.

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frontal area of the belt. The hips were amplified by modeling. The median area comprises the representation of a belt formed by two spirals with the spires upwards and a circle in the buttocks' joining area. The vessel was decorated with tri-color painting. The ornamental motifs are made with a narrow white band, contoured with black, with a red middle line. On the hips there are spiral motifs with triple twisted curls. The vessel is slightly asymmetrical. Fine paste, oxidized burning. Dimensions: H: 210 mm, DG: 150 mm. Restored.

Fig. 3. Anthropomorphic vessel discovered at Drăguşeni-Ostrov in 1964 (Inv. no. 17324).

4. Anthropomorphic vessel discovered at Drăguşeni-Lutărie[46]. Unspecified discovery conditions. Included in Cucuteni culture, phase A4 (Fig. 4). Inv. no. 753 (Crâşmaru, fig. 38/2; Monah, 2012, 499, fig. 225/1; Lazarovici C. M. *et al.*, 2009, 192, cat. 230).

The vessel renders the shape of the female body, the middle area of the body, torso and thighs. The vessel has a wide open mouth, a flared lip, delimited by two parallel lines. Two small handles are placed under the lip, horizontally pierced, located on the side of the hips. The pubic area and the legs are marked by grooves and modeling. The decor is made with the help of grooves and white-red bi-chrome painting. The amplified hips are decorated with spiral motifs. On both sides of the vessel is a belt, ornamented with a circular loop and grooved points. Inside it is painted with a system of lines and dots. Semifine paste, oxidized burning, thin walls. Dimensions: H: 195 mm; DM: 170 mm; DG: 150 mm; DB: 85 mm. Restored.

Fig. 4. Anthropomorphic vessel discovered at Drăguşeni-Lutărie (Inv. no. 753).

[46] The researches were coordinated by Aristotel Crâşmaru, director of the school of Drăguşeni, Botoşani county.

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5. Anthropomorphic vessel discovered at Drăguşeni-Lutărie[47]. Discovered in Pit 10/1964, without mentioning the depth. Included in Cucuteni culture, phase A4 (Fig. 5). Uninventoried. Unpublished.

Fig. 5. Anthropomorphic vessel discovered at Drăguşeni-Lutărie in Pit 10/1964 (Inv. No. MJB 18648).

The vessel has the shape of the female body, the middle area of the body, the torso and the thighs. The vessel has an open mouth, a flared lip, painted with a red line, decorated with short notches. It is delimited from the body through two parallel lines. The belt and the buttocks are marked by grooves and modeling. The decor consists of grooves and the white-red bi-color painting. The buttocks are delimited by a deep Y groove, decorated with a deployed double spiral, with the adjacent space filled with short lines. On the preserved face of the vessel is represented a belt ornamented with a simple spiral loop and grooved short lines. The lower part is delimited by two horizontal parallel grooved lines, and below are a series of vertically disposed short lines. Inside it is painted with a system of lines and dots. Semifine paste, oxidized burning. It may have had handles on the sides of their hips, but they have not yet been reconstructed. Dimensions: H: 235 mm; DM: 173 mm; DG: 158 mm; DB: 115 mm. Unrestored.

6. Anthropomorphic vessel discovered at Drăguşeni-Ostrov in 1969. Unspecified discovery conditions. Included in Cucuteni culture, phase A4 (Fig. 6). Inv. no. 810 (Crâşmaru, 1977, fig. 38/5; Monah, 2012, 498, fig. 224/4).

The vessel has the shape of the female body, the middle area of the body, torso and thighs. The vessel is approximately cylindrical in shape, with a slightly widened mouth, delimited by two parallel lines. Two horizontally pierced handles are placed under the lip, on the side of the hips. The hips are highlighted through grooves and modeling. The hips are very slightly amplified and decorated with grooved double spirals. The spaces between the spirals were filled with short lines. On both sides of the vessel is represented a belt, ornamented with a double unfolded spiral. The two spirals are connected through S's turned sideways, located on the sides of the hips. The lower part of the vessel ends with a grooved line, horizontally disposed on the vessel, parallel to the base. The decor consists of grooves and the white-red bicolor painting, partially preserved. The interior of the vessel is not decorated. Semifine paste, oxidized burning. On one side, there are traces of secondary burning. Dimensions: H: 148 mm; DG: 95 mm; DB: 50 mm. Restored with minimum interventions at the top.

[47] The vessel has been identified by Dr. Aurel Melniciuc among the materials discovered in 1964.

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Fig. 6. Anthropomorphic vessel discovered at Drăguşeni-Ostrov in 1969 (Inv. no. 810).

7. Miniature anthropomorphic vessel discovered at Drăguşeni-Ostrov. No information on the context of origin. Included in Cucuteni culture, phase A4 (Fig. 7). Inv. no. 324-Săveni Archaeological Museum (Crâşmaru, 1977, fig. 38/4; Monah, 2012, 498, fig. 224/12).

The vessel is a miniature, with a cylindrical neck, narrow, almost hemispherical bottom, slightly contoured. The modeling of the vessel seems to be slightly negligent, also determined by the fact that the delimiting lines of the buttocks are traced slightly uncertain. On one side of the vessel, the groove is oblique and slightly wavy, and the front triangle is very poorly visible. The prominences are located on the hips, in the maximum diameter part (on the shoulders of the vessel). It was painted in two colors, with red-brown stripes on a white background, with spiraling motifs, unfortunately largely erased. This artifact leaves the impression of a modeling attempt and not necessarily a finished copy of the pot, perhaps a play or an item made for learning. Dimensions: H: 84 mm; DG: 63 mm; DB: 32 mm. Restored with minimum interventions at the top.

Fig. 7. Miniature anthropomorphic vessel discovered at Drăguşeni-Ostrov (Inv. no. 324-Săveni Archaeological Museum)

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8. Foot-vessel/boot-vessel discovered at Drăguşeni-Ostrov. No information on the context of origin. Included in Cucuteni culture, phase A4 (Fig. 8). Inv. no. 833 (Crâşmaru, 1977, fig. 39/3, 3a; Monah, 2012, 504, fig. 230/3; Lazarovici C. M. *et al.*, 2009, 195, cat. no. 262).

Vessel fragmented at the top, holllow inside, shaped like a short boot. The tip is slightly pointy, the heel rounded at the back, the upper edge damaged in the old times. Given its shape and inclination, it can be considered to be the right foot. Prior to applying the red painting, the pot was covered with a white angobe. The decoration is made with red lines on a white background, possibly suggesting bindings, in the form of a string, or stitching, which would bind in the front. The discoverer points out that the sole has unintentional vegetal traces, but at a closer look it seems to be the imprint of a mat, given the regular pattern, especially on the edges. There are no red lines on the left side, probably due to the second container connected to it, which did not allow the access of the brush. Semifine paste, oxidized burning, thick walls. Dimensions: H: 80 mm: DM: 107 mm. Restored in the upper part.

Fig. 8. Foot-vessel/boot-vessel discovered at Drăguşeni-Ostrov (Inv. no. 833)

9. Anthropomorphic vessel discovered at Mitoc-Pârâul lui Istrate in 1974, Dwelling 1[48]. Included in Cucuteni culture, phase A4 (Fig. 9). Inv. no. 6628 (Monah, 2012, 511, fig. 237).

The vessel was classified as a round-dance type vessel, because it has a support with ten slots cut into the cylindrical body of the support. The vessel is globular in shape, with a flat bottom, slightly cracked in the center, from ancient times. It is located above the support and has, in the area of the maximum diameter, four breast-shaped protuberances that are more visible when the vessel is viewed from the top. The vessel has two handles, symmetrically placed, and vertically perforated. On the outside, it is decorated with excision and wide incisions, which form spiraling stripes, respectively

[48] The archaeological researches have been performed by D. Monah.

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four, highlighting in fact the representations of the breasts. The space between them is decorated with complementary elements, such as half-egg shapes and curved lines, dots and short lines. This vessel is more likely to belong to the category of anthropomorphised supports, as defined by D. Monah (Monah, 1997, 147). Semifine paste, oxidized burning, yellowish color. Dimensions: H: 168 mm; DM: 108 mm; DG: 75 mm. Restored, completed with 10% white gypsum in the support area.

Fig. 9. Anthropomorphic vessel discovered at Mitoc-Pârâul lui Istrate in 1974, Dwelling 1 (Inv. No. 6628).

10. Anthropomorphic vessel discovered at Roma-Balta lui Ciobanu in 1986 (Popovici *et al.*, 1992, 12-24). No data about the stratigraphic conditions. Included in Cucuteni culture, phase B1 (Fig. 10). Uninventoried. Unpublished.

Vessel preserved fragmentary, that is, the upper part, which renders the shape of the female body in the torso area. The vessel has a bitronconic look. On the maximum diameter area one can see breasts rendered by modeling. A breast has been preserved complete; one has the outer surface recently destroyed, probably as a result of the discovery, and a half-preserved protuberance, the vessel being longitudinally fragmented exactly in that area. From the arrangement of the protuberances, we note that they were grouped in pairs, not symmetrically located on the surface of the vessel. The vessel has no decoration. On the outside surface there are marks of polishing. It was modeled from semifine paste, oxidized burning. It is fragmented from ancient times. Dimensions: H: 84 mm; DG: 52 mm. Unrestored.

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Fig. 10. Anthropomorphic vessel discovered at Roma-Balta lui Ciobanu in 1986 (Uninventoried)

11. Miniature anthropomorphic vessel discovered at Ştefăneşti-La Bulboana lui Stârcea (Niţu, Şadurschi, 2004, 296-312). Discovered in 1978, in Dwelling 2, depth: -0,46 m. Included in Cucuteni culture, phase B1 (Fig. 11). Uninventoried. Unpublished.

Vessel fragmented at the top, hollow inside, representing the lower part of a leg. According to the inclination and position it seems to be the right foot. The lower part is circular, with slightly concave sole and no anthropomorphic features. The ankle is cylindrical and slightly narrower than the sole. Slightly above is modelled the calf or a thigh, by modeling the material outward, with the curvature being accentuated. In the lower area, on the inside, the vessel has a circular cavity, probably made with a cylindrical tool, in the soft paste. No decoration. The vessel was modeled from semifine paste, oxidized burning, brick color. Dimensions: H: 78 mm; DB: 36 mm; DM: 53 mm. Unrestored.

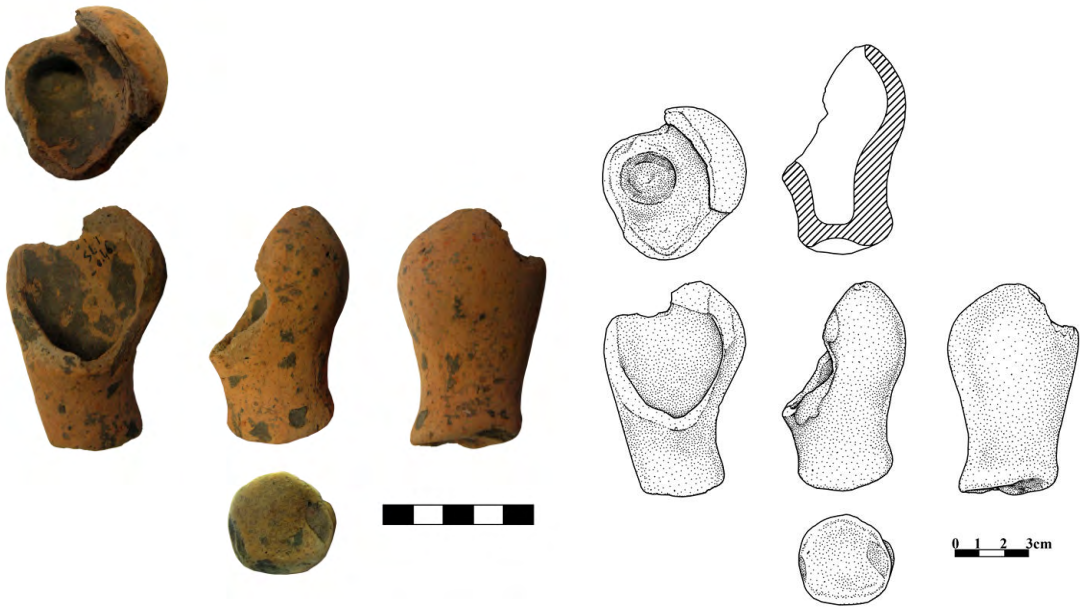

Fig. 11. Miniature anthropomorphic vessel discovered at Ştefăneşti-La Bulboana lui Stârcea, discovered in 1978, in Dwelling 2, depth: -0,46 m (Uninventoried).

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12. Anthropomorphic vessel discovered at Cerviceşti Deal, Cucorăni - La Morişcă, in 1962, following a survey. The researches have shown there are two levels of inhabitation, one from Cucuteni phase A, the other from Cucuteni phase B. The vessel is specific to phase Cucuteni B, through paste and decoration, and it is almost completely preserved (Fig. 12). Inv. no. 6936. Unpublished.

The vessel has a bitronconical shape, with two horizontal handles, vertically perforated, and slightly asymmetrically placed. Four circular protuberances, determined through the modeling, were provided at the top. These were highlighted by painting, surrounded by two concentric circles. The top view of the decor includes a network of bands forming a flower with four sharp petals that interleaves the protuberances. These could be breasts, symmetrically placed, diametrically opposed. Dimensions: H: 140 mm; DG: 95 mm; DB: 55 mm. Discovered complete, but with small cracks. Restored.

Fig. 12. Anthropomorphic vessel discovered at Cerviceşti Deal, Cucorăni - La Morişcă, in 1962 (Inv. no. 6936).

Some considerations on the antropomorphic vessels from the Botoşani County Museum collection

There are large variations in the typology of neolithic anthropomorphic vessels. They appear from the earliest Neolithic civilizations and include various categories. Several researchers have made a classification of them. Differences can be identified in vessel modeling, such as faces applied to the vessels, body representations through buttocks and/or breasts. Sometimes the pubic area is very well represented (Naumov, 2007, 255-265; Naumov, 2008, 93-101). Another type of cultic vessels is the one with

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relief decoration, sometimes with real compositions in low-relief or alto-relief. Both anthropomorphic and zoomorphic vessels are associated with religious functions starting from early Neolithic cultures in ways that are not currently known (Makkay, 2005, 86) and which are still difficult to decipher.

Anthropomorphic vessels generally follow the line of the human body, emphasizing different areas, rarely the whole body. The most numerous accentuate the lower part of the body, along with the female features and implicitly the interpretation of their symbolism was related to the woman as a life-giver (Bánffy, Goldman, 2003, 112-117).

A classification of the anthropomorphic representations was made by the researcher R. R. Andreescu in the discussion about the anthropomorphic representations in the Gumelniţa culture (Andreescu, 2002, 72). He established several categories: I. vessels shaped like a human body; II. face-shaped lids; III. vessels with anthropomorphic features, with three subcategories: III.A. vessels with a human face modeled below the lip of the bowl; III.B. vessels with tube-arms; III C. lids with an anthropomorphic handle. IV. vessels with anthropomorphic decoration; V. anthropo-zoomorphic vessels.

Although the typology has been done for Gumelniţa Culture, it can be easily applied to other cultures. There is also another, simplified classification that can generally be applied to any culture and age: 1. vessels that represent the human body in its entirety; 2. vessels that suggest the human body with only a few features; 3. vessels on which some anthropomorphic features are present, and the human body is compleat (Sobaru, Andrei, 2004,14).

D. Monah, in his work dedicated to the anthropomorphic representations of Cucuteni, mentioned a series of characteristics of the anthropomorphic vessels, as well as their typology, distinguishing between the actual anthropomorphic vessels and the anthropomorphic supports, each with its own subtypes and variants (Monah, 1997, 145-147).

The actual anthropomorphic vessels include the artifacts that, by modeling or decoration, preserve the function of a vessel, but have obvious anthropomorphic features. Here are distinguished: I. vessels in the form of the human body; II. vessels with anthropomorphic attributes (Figuralgefässe) (Monah, 1997, 153). B. The anthropomorphic supports comprise the cylindrical supports, with or without a vessel in the upper part, with a wide spread in the early phases of the Cucuteni Culture (Monah, 1997, 160). These anthropomorphic supports comprise four subcategories (Monah, 1997, 161).

We note that most of the anthropomorphic vessels discovered at Drăguşeni, both in the *Ostrov* and *În deal la Lutărie* sites, are distinguished primarily by the fact that they represent the lower half of the female body (Fig. 3, 4, 5, 6). The modeling paste is fine, oxidizing burning, and the vessels were modeled with thin walls, with an elegance of the shape that is hard to match. As a general observation, the discoverer A. Crâşmaru notes that the vessels have different sizes, the body flattened, imitating the hips. The thighs are separated by a wide, vertical groove, corresponding on both sides of the vessel, marking the dividing median line. The vessels that reproduce the lower part of the female body are most often decorated with grooves associated with dichrome or trichrome painting. The lip is painted in red, underlined with two horizontal grooves, one of which passes through the handles' hole. The hips were decorated with spiral motifs with twisted loops and interconnecting strips, placed relatively symmetrically, identically placed on the two sides. The neck of the vessels corresponds imagistically to the waist line, which has two horizontally perforated handles, either located above the wide area of the hips (Fig. 4) or above the belt, in the center (Fig. 3). The decorative motifs are adapted precisely to the

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idea represented through modeling and to the actual representation, making the anthropomorphic features even more prominent. The closest analogy to the anthropomorphic vessels from Drăguşeni is found at Duruitoarea Veche, Râşcani district, belonging to the same cultural stage (Lazarovici C. M. *et al.*, 2009, 192, cat. no. 229).

The same aspect, demarcation through modeling associated with painting, is seen in the case of the anthropomorphic vessels from Truşeşti-Ţuguieta (Lazarovici C. M. *et al.*, 2009, 180, cat. No. 101; Petrescu-Dâmboviţa *et al.*, 1999, 398/fig. 284; 400/fig. 286; 401/fig. 287, 288; Anthony, Chi, 2010, 228, cat. no. 1), as well as some artifacts from Scânteia (Lazarovici C. M. *et al.*, 2009, 185, cat no. 153). A series of items have clearly delimited legs, but there are also items that have the waist suggested by modeling and actually have a unique decoration, like one of the Truşeşti-Ţuguieta (Lazarovici C. M., *et al.*, 2009, 179, cat. no. 100; Niţu, Chirica, 1988, 20, fig. 3, 4; Petrescu-Dâmboviţa *et al.*, 1999, 395, fig. 284/3) vessels. An item from Scânteia-Dealul Bodeşti, belonging to the Cucuteni A3 phase, has in the waist area a diamond that might suggest a pendant (Fig. 13) rather than the features of a belt, as is the case with most of the anthropomorphic vessels in this category (Lazarovici C. M., *et al.*, 2009, 185, cat no. 153; Mantu C. M., Ţurcanu, 1999, 104, cat. no. 181). The same rhomboid form is found in the case of several statuettes, a visible example being "Venus of Drăguşeni" (Monah, 1997, 313, fig. 61/3-4), often interpreted as the stylized representation of the so-called "en violon" pendants (Monah, 1997, 139) (Fig. 14). Of course, their presence in the Cucutenian treasures, sometimes made of precious materials, such as the hoard of Brad (Ursachi, 1992, 51 – 103), gives the true image of the importance of this decorative object.

The same type of belt present on the anthropomorphic vessels is also noted on other vessels that do not have obvious anthropomorphic features, given by modeling. It is the case of a crater type vessel discovered at Drăguşeni-Ostrov (Lazarovici C. M. *et al.*, 2009, 194, cat. no. 244) (Fig. 15), which in the upper part presents the same type of representation of the belt present in the anthropomorphic vessels, but also on the famous statue "Venus of Drăguşeni" (Monah, 1997, 313, fig. 61/3-4) (Fig.16).

Fig. 13. Anthropomorphic vessel from Scânteia-Dealul Bodeşti (after Lazarovici C. M. et alii 2009, 185, cat no. 153)

Fig. 14. The medallion represented on „Venus from Drăguşeni" (photo Sebastian Ciupu)

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Regarding the origins of anthropomorphic vessels, most researchers agreed to establish the origin of this type of vessel in the Near East. One of the earliest examples comes from the Hassuna culture and shows a feminine face, as well as possible jewels around the neck, marked by triangles (Müller-Karpe, 1974, taf. 60, fig. 13). The discovery made at Çatalhöyük in 2006 shows a feminine face that presents a possible ornament in the temporal area of the head, rendered through a deep incision (Yalman, 2006, 198, fig. 141). During the recent research, several fragments with anthropomorphic features were discovered, and we mention the fragment with a human face in relief found in the filling of Building 94 (Erdoğu, 2006, 49, Fig. 46). In the European area, some of the earliest anthropomorphic vessels are found at Nea Nikomedeia or in the sanctuaries of Rakitovo (Perlès, 2004; Matsanova, 2003, 68; Todorova, Vajsov, 1993, 104, fig. 92). The number of such vessels increases considerably during the Middle and Late Neolithic cultures. However, compared to other types of vessels, we note that these are not very common, but there is considerable variation in shape and ornamentation (Gimbutas, 1989, 19).

In the area of the Ariuşd-Cucuteni-Tripolye cultural complex, although we notice a great typological variety, the anthropomorphic vessels are not very numerous. Several types are repeated, being present in several sites, but others have unique shapes. There are also vessels with special shapes, specific to the Preucutenian or Cucutenian settlements, such as the vessels with crown, the binocular-vessels, the various types of support-vessels and the column vessels, the "round-dance" vessels (Lazarovici C.-M. *et al.*, 2009, 75, fig. 8). D. Boghian states that in the modeling of anthropomorphic and zoomorphic pots, the potter "took into account both the requirements of fine ceramics and the need to model special purpose containers" (Boghian, 2004, 139).

The anthropomorphic vessel discovered at Mitoc, Valea lui Stan (Fig. 1) was interpreted by D. Monah as representing the inferior part of an obese woman, having massive thighs, compared to the soles. He noticed that the legs were modeled separately, and the knees were marked by pressing the clay from the inside out. Although corroded, the traces of painting suggest horizontal stripes painted with red. The modeling of the vessel could be linked to some pre-Cucutenian statuettes or to those of the early Cucuteni culture (Monah, 2012, 169).

The vessels with breasts appear since the earliest phases of the culture and we mention an item found at Ariuşd, with four breasts on the shoulder of the vessel, which are modeled in realistic shape, with embossed nipples (Sztáncsuj, 2015, 238; 579-pl. CCXXII/1). Two symmetrical handles are at the top of the vessel. The breasts appear represented by modeling in the case of the vessel from Mitoc-Pârâul lui Istrate (with a "round-dance" type support-Fig. 9), in the shape of a nipple on the vessel from Cerviceşti (Fig. 12), but also for the fragmentary vessel from Roma-Balta lui Ciobanu (Fig. 10), a site belonging to the last phase of evolution of the Cucuteni culture. Vessels with breast-shaped protomes are also mentioned at Hăbăşeşti (Dumitrescu Vl., *et al.*, 1954, 385). Some vessels correspond to the typology of Drăguşeni, with the median and lower part representing the hips and buttocks in a realistic manner (Dumitrescu Vl., *et al.*, 1954, pl. CIX). We also mention the presence of an artifact that has the shape of the lower part of the body, without the head, but at the neck there are two pills that could be breasts (Dumitrescu Vl., *et al.*, 1954, 385; pl. CIX/8). A general observation, made by those who have approached the present subject, is that vessels of this type have flagrant resemblances to statuettes in terms of representation and general appearance. We do not consider accidental their presence in sanctuaries or at the entrances of temples or sanctuaries, in a series of cultic features or spaces dedicated to religious activities (Kovács, 2014, 196-227). They were placed there for a clear purpose, possibly for

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protection or storage of some substances. Most researchers agree that this type of vessel is used as a special inventory in worship activities, possibly for boosting fertility or for libations (Monah, 1997, 149-155).

The clothing accessories are one of the most interesting and diverse categories of items, comprising in prehistory a wide variety of typology, use, and raw material used. In the category of clothing accessories and jewelery there are bracelets, beads, different types of collars and belts. The belts on the statuettes are diverse and well-known because of the fact that most of the times the anthropomorphic statuettes and vessels are published more frequently, being part of the so-called special category. A number of researchers have remarked over time that numerically female figurines are much more frequently than male ones, which are also less decorated (Ţurcanu, 2011, 20).

Fig. 15. Vessel discovered at Drăguşeni-Ostrov (photo Sebastian Ciupu)

Fig. 16. The belt represented on the statuette „Venus from Drăguşeni" (photo Sebastian Ciupu)

Even though the belts are represented on the male statuettes, these are not the preferred ones to be represented on anthropomorphic vessels, but only those that are incised or painted on the female ones, and the general appearance for those in the Cucuteni culture is that of the female body. As a consequence, the jewelery specific to female clothing is also represented.

Given that rituals require a dedicated inventory, their rarity, and no less important their context of discovery, we can assume that the vessels are related to the rite and ritual, to the cult practiced and the religious behavior.

The ornamentation of the feminine body is universal, being encountered at any time in any part of the world. The attention paid to the body by adornment, sometimes excessive, made not only by decorative pieces, but even by body markings, is often found in the aboriginal tribes, but also in the case of several civilizations, historically or just archaeologically certified. In the case of the Hittite population, the goddesses are represented with cylindrical hats, and the bodies had countless adornments, among which attention is drawn to the belts on the waist (Bryce, 2002, 160).

The manner of interpretation of the clothing accessories followed several lines. One of the interpretations considers them to be designed to show a social distinction (Lazarovici Gh., Lazarovici C.-M., 2014, 265), related to various ceremonies, such as initiations (Pogoševa, 1988, 120-125; Lazarovici Gh., Lazarovici C.-M., 2010, 89-114). On the other hand, some of the accessories may have had a practical function, as support for weapons, personal items or tools. Regarding female accessorization, particular attention is paid to the waist area. The statuettes retain one of the most impressive image

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registers of the Neolithic period, and belts or different strips of material appear often (Ţurcanu, 2013, 65-67).

We also make a brief reference to historical information about the manifestations of worship in ancient times. All rituals in ancient Greece involve liquids of different types, served in dedicated cups and dishes. For example, special vessels filled with spring water were placed at the entrance to a sanctuary to mark the transition from the open, public space to the sacred space. The believers had to sprinkle themselves with water to purify their body and mind (Cole, 2007, 282). Purification was necessary to take part in community rituals.

For the later periods, we find interesting Hippolyte, the mythological queen of the Amazons of Ancient Greece. She had a belt in which all her power was concentrated, and the abduction of the belt equaled the loss of power and authority (Lăzărescu, 1992, 64). In the Minoan civilization we notice a series of statuettes that have belts in the waist area. The Snake Goddess shows a priestess who has the dress ready for a religious ceremony. The belt highlights her narrow waist, and below it is an oval, embroidered apron. Below she has a skirt with many folds. The belt and the apron, in this case, seem to be the sacred attribute of the priestesses (Castleden, 1990, 13).

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RELIGION AND MAGIC IN THE IRON AGE FORTRESS OF STÂNCEȘTI, BOTOȘANI COUNTY (6TH – 3RD CENTURIES BC)

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Abstract: *The present study aims to address a series of issues related to the religious and magical beliefs and practices of communities that have lived in the forts of Stânceşti, mainly from the data published in the dedicated archaeological monograph. Of special interest is a pit belonging to the first stage of habitation. Four human skulls were discovered there, alongside two skeletons of headless animals, hearth debris, pots, and a stone grindstone. It could represent the material remains of ritual involving human sacrifices. Also in connection with some magical practices can be the anthropomorphic figurines. In the two fortresses of Stânceşti eight such pieces were discovered, in all three stages of dwelling. Glass eye beads may also be related to certain superstitions, as in the Mediterranean world such pieces were used as amulets against the evil eye.*
Keywords: *Stânceşti, Iron Age, Getae, Human Sacrifice, Anthropomorphic figurines, Eye Beads, Pintaderae.*

1. Introduction

Between the 1960s and 1970s, a team led by the late archaeologist Adrian C. Florescu carried out excavations in the two large fortresses in Stânceşti. The results of these investigations brought to light a significant number of aspects related to the material culture of the Getae tribes that inhabited the northern area of the Moldavian Plateau at the turn of the Early and the Late Iron Age.

Situated on the outskirts of Mihai Eminescu commune (see **Pl 1/1** and **2**), occupying a slightly elevated plateau above the surrounding areas, the two fortresses were defended with ramparts and ditches that even today reach large dimensions, being a testimony of large collective efforts (Florescu, Florescu, 2012; RAJ Botoșani 2016, 290 with the bibliography).

The chronology of the forts as of yet is not without its problems, mostly due to the sometimes confusing information in the monograph (see for a short discussion Măndescu 2010, 73-74). However, until future researches will bring the necessary clarifications, we shall use the conclusions put forward by the authors of the excavation. According to them, the evolution of the forts can be divided into three distinct stages. Thus, in a first stage, dated between 6th and 5th centuries BC, Fort I was raised. Later, during the 4th century BC, probably due to a demographic and economic increase, Fort II is being built, adjacent to the first. It is the period of maximum development reached by the community. In the third stage, dated in the 3rd century BC, the community undergoes a decline, leading to the abandonment of Fort II. The complete abandonment seems to happen sometime at the end of the 3rd century BC, and is probably connected

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with the advance of the Poienești - Lukasevka culture in the area of Moldavian Plateau, whose bearers had been identified with the historically warrior-tribes of the Bastarnae.

The present study aims to address a series of issues related to the religious and magical beliefs and practices of communities that have lived in the forts of Stânceşti. We shall not discuss the symbolism of some artifacts belonging to the famous hoard, as these were produced in the Scythian environment and we do not know if the local inhabitants of Stânceşti fort attributed them any symbolical value (Berzovan 2016b).

2. The pit with human and animal remains

Of particular interest in the problem we are discussing is a sunken complex reported in the Fort 1 of Stânceşti, situated in a relatively central position compared to the other traces of habitation (Florescu, Florescu 2012, 115). Unfortunately, the incomplete documentation, the absence of material analyzes on the bones, as well as the sometimes confusing descriptions given by the authors of the excavation –a common problem in the entire monograph as it has been pointed out (Бруяко 2014, 41) - do not permit a very accurate reconstruction.

The complex (**Pl. 2**) appeared at a depth of 1.90 m from the surface of the soil, presenting itself as a pyriform pit with dimensions between 3.10 x 2.65 m and 1.70 x 0.95, respectively. From a stratigraphic point of view, it belongs to the first stage of habitation. The shape of the pit is approximately oval, with a maximum depth of 2.60 m from the surface. The filling of the complex was slow. In the eastern part of the pit we can observe the presence of a spared threshold, at a depth of 2.60 m, on which the skeleton of a headless animal was laid (**Pl. 2/1**).

In the deepest part of the pit, in the area of the northern wall, there is yet another headless animal skeleton (**Pl. 2/2**). At approx. 0.5 m south of it, a human skull was found; face up, devoid of the lower and upper jaw (**Pl. 2/3**). At a distance of 0.5 m south of it, three other distinct human skull caps were identified from three distinct individuals, located at a small distance from each other and apparently face down (**Pl. 2/4-6**).

In the central area of the pits, on a surface of 1.70 x 1.20 m, fragments of burned hearth with numerous traces of ash, charcoal and small animal bones were signaled. To the north of the hearth was found an oval grindstone (**Pl. 2/7**), with a diameter of 0.45 x 0.30 m, and near it a jar and a bowl, partially resealable, both of them hand-made (**Pl. 2/8, 9**).

Unfortunately, the lack of analyzes on the osteological material, currently lost (Florescu, Florescu 2012, 116), does not allow us to enter too much detail. The only study dedicated to the osteologicall analysis of the animal bones found in Stânceşti does not mention at all this complex (Haimovici 1974, 55-62). For example, it would have been interesting to see whether or not the four skulls show signs of violence or burning. All we know is that, according to the authors of the discovery, one of the skulls likely belonged to a teenager.

The problem of the presence of human skulls and generally of human remains in non-funerary contexts has been extensively discussed in the specialized literature (Sîrbu 1993, 33, most recently Przybyla *et al.*, 37-45, with examples from the Early Iron Age to Migration Period). For example, for the Early Iron Age, at the level of the East Carpathian Space, there are several discoveries of human skulls deposited in complexes located within settlements (see Niculiţă *et al.*, 2016, 131-132). In the Late Iron Age, in the 5th-3rd centuries BC, situations similar to those in Stânceşti are known in the East-Carpathian area at Saharna Mică or Trebujeni-Potârca (Niculiţă *et al*., 2014, 272-273), Cândeşti (Florescu, Florescu 2012, etc.). The number of such discoveries increases for the classical

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period of Ancient Dacia, in the 2nd century BC - 1st century AD period (Sîrbu 2004, 91; Sîrbu 2008, 85; Przybyla *et al.* 2010, 38; see also Sîrbu, Davîncă 2014).

Discoveries of this type, dated to the end of the Early Iron Age, are also known in the North-Pontic steppe and forest-steppe. For example, a jaw of a woman was discovered in a probably cultic complex located in the "Scythian" fort of Severynivka, Vinnytska District, Ukraine, situated less than 200 km east of Stânceşti. Besides, a significant number of archaeological finds of human heads are known in the "Scythian" forest-steppe (see discussion at Shelekhan *et al.* 2016, 197-199).

As for the interpretation of skull depositions, they have been linked either to some peculiar funerary practices, human sacrifices (see Sîrbu 1993, 33-34), possibly an ancestral worship or a cult of the skull (Sîrbu 1993, 35) the latter supposed by some authors to have existed in the culture of the northern Thracian tribes (Sanie 1999, 118) and neighboring populations.

Returning to the discussed case from Stânceşti, in the absence of anthropological and archaeozoological data, the interpretation of the complex seems to be difficult. But there are some clues that could help us to formulate a few hypotheses. It is worth noticing the central position, within the enclosure, which might suggest that we could be dealing with the outcome of a communal, public ritual, eventually related to the time when the fortress and the settlement were founded. We also believe that in the present case it is less likely that the four skulls belong to war prisoners, enemies or individuals who have in some way violated the rules of social conduct – if such, they would have been placed either at the entrance to the city, to serve as an example or to frighten enemies, or somewhere outside. And if it were the ancestors' remains - as the authors of the discovery (Florescu, Florescu 2012, 115) assumed at some point - it would have been more natural for them to be placed in a more complex structure. Perhaps an eventual cult of the ancestors at Stânceşti might be documented by the two mounds embedded within the second fortress, if future investigations would prove that they are indeed funerary mounds and are contemporary - at least partially - with the forts.

The inventory of the pit, viewed through its symbolism, could lead us to the idea of an agrarian rite. The grinding stone is used to grind grains, to produce food. The jar is a vessel commonly used for storing and eating food, and the bowl is a dish used to consume it. Ash, animal bones, may indicate food offerings, maybe even a feast. Thus, the ritual could have served to ensure the prosperity of the community, the ceremony being strengthened, according to the custom of the times, by the sacrifice of four individuals. However, we also need to take into account other possibilities regarding a longer use of the complex, taking into account the observation of the authors of the excavation regarding its slow filling.

3. Antropomorphic figurines

Often related to magical and religious practices are the anthropomorphic figurines, quite widespread in the Getae fortresses at the level of the 5th-3rd centuries BC (Zanoci 1998, 78), as well as in unfortified settlements (see Berzovan *et al*. 2017, 175). In the two fortresses of Stânceşti eight such pieces were discovered (**Pl. 3**). From the point of view of their distribution, two were found in complexes belonging to the first phase, three in the second phase, the third phase belonging to three copies (Florescu, Florescu 2012, 117). Three of the pieces were found in dwellings.

From a morphological point of view, the pieces were made in a simplistic manner, apparently from a single clay baton. Typically, seven of the eight can be classified into the 5th category according to Valeriu Sîrbu, of the figurines formed basically only from the head and legs, without hands, but with the sometimes expressive rendering of the

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facial details (Serbu 1993, 60). Of these, one of them seems to render a female character (**Pl. 3/1**). A particular type is represented by piece nr. 8 (**Pl. 3/8**). It is crossed by a longitudinal channel, probably for fixing on a wooden stick. The upper part appears to have at least three distinct pairs of "eyes".

As for anthropomorphic figurines, it is believed that they could have been used in various magical practices that aimed at harming, healing, or obtaining benefits in respect of the person whose body was "replicated" in clay (see Sîrbu 1993, 58 -61; Sanie 1999, 64). For the Mediterranean world, there is a significant number of written sources that refer to the use of clay, wax or bronze figurines in magical practices (Faraone 1989, 294-300; Faraone 1991). For the Ancient Middle East there are numerous recipes of spells with an apotropaic role involving the use of various categories of figurines (see Darby 2014, 75-81 especially 81-91).

Also, we cannot rule other interpretations, that in some cases some of the figurines might in fact render minor, protective spirits of the house and animals similar to the Lares of the Roman world (Crişan 1986, 399-400).

4. Between aesthetics and superstition. The glass eye-beads.

Certain information about the minor superstitions of those who have lived in the forts of Stânceşti can be offered to us by another category of artifacts: the so-called „eye beads" found in all stages of habitation, especially in the second and third (**Pl. 4/2-7**).

The glass eye beads are widely in the Eastern Carpathian space at the level of the 4th-3rd century BC (Zanoci 1998, 88, Arnăut 2003, 136), for example at Poiana (Teodor *et al*.1997, 29-30), Buneşti – *Dealul Bobului* (Bazarciuc 1979, 34, Bazarciuc 1983, Poiana Mănăstirii - *Între Șanțuri* (Berzovan 2016a, 220), etc., being also very popular artifacts during the entire Antiquity (see for example Eisen 1916, Tempelmann-Maczynska 1985, 48-52, etc.).

Besides their unquestionable aesthetic aspects, these pieces could also have been also cherished for their apotropaic role; such functions are demonstrated for the eye beads found in the Pontic Greek environment (Столба 2009, 109-128; Dzneladze, Symonenko 2010, 204), but also in other areas (for ex. Perego 2010, 75). Even in the present day, in Greece and the Levant, very similar pieces are used as protection against the „evil eye" (see Dundes 1992; Yoleri *et al.*2006, 104-113).

5. The clay pintadera.

Possibly related to certain magic and religious practices might be a pintadera made of burnt clay (**Pl. 4/1**). Unfortunately, the authors of the monograph do not give us enough information about the discovery context of this artifact. Furthermore, the fragmentary character of the piece does not allow us to reconstruct the decorative motifs.

Artifacts similar as the one we discuss are well known at the turn between the Early and the Late Iron Age (see an extensive discussion at Бруяко 2014, 39-49). The functionality of such pieces is difficult to establish. In the literature there are various opinions. Pintaderas could have been used to obtain decorated dough's, or more likely, in making temporary markings and paintings. In this latter case, the absence of visible traces of pigments may be explained in some cases by the abrasive washing to which the archaeological artifacts are often subjected once taken from the ground, but further analyses are needed.

The practice of tattoo and body painting is well attested by ancient sources for the northern Thracian tribes, including the Getae (Crișan 1986, 91-94), and as parallels from ethno archaeology show, this practice might have had not just aesthetic purposes but also

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social and even religious ones. The pintadera could be used to make temporary markings, thus being used in various rites.

6. Final considerations

Although not very numerous, the elements presented here give us valuable information about some of the beliefs and practices of the inhabitants of the two forts of Stânceşti. On the whole, they are no major different from those observed in other contemporary Getic communities, fitting into the cultural landscape of the era. It remains for new findings to complement this preliminary picture.

It is interesting to note - so far - the absence of large public cult places, of a necropolis – for commoners and royalty, as one would expect for such a large political and administrative center that was built and maintained through a large effort, while functioning seemingly uninterrupted for almost three centuries. However, we must keep in account the fact that only a small fraction of the forts was excavated. For better or worse, the forts of Stânceşti still have much to offer for future researchers.

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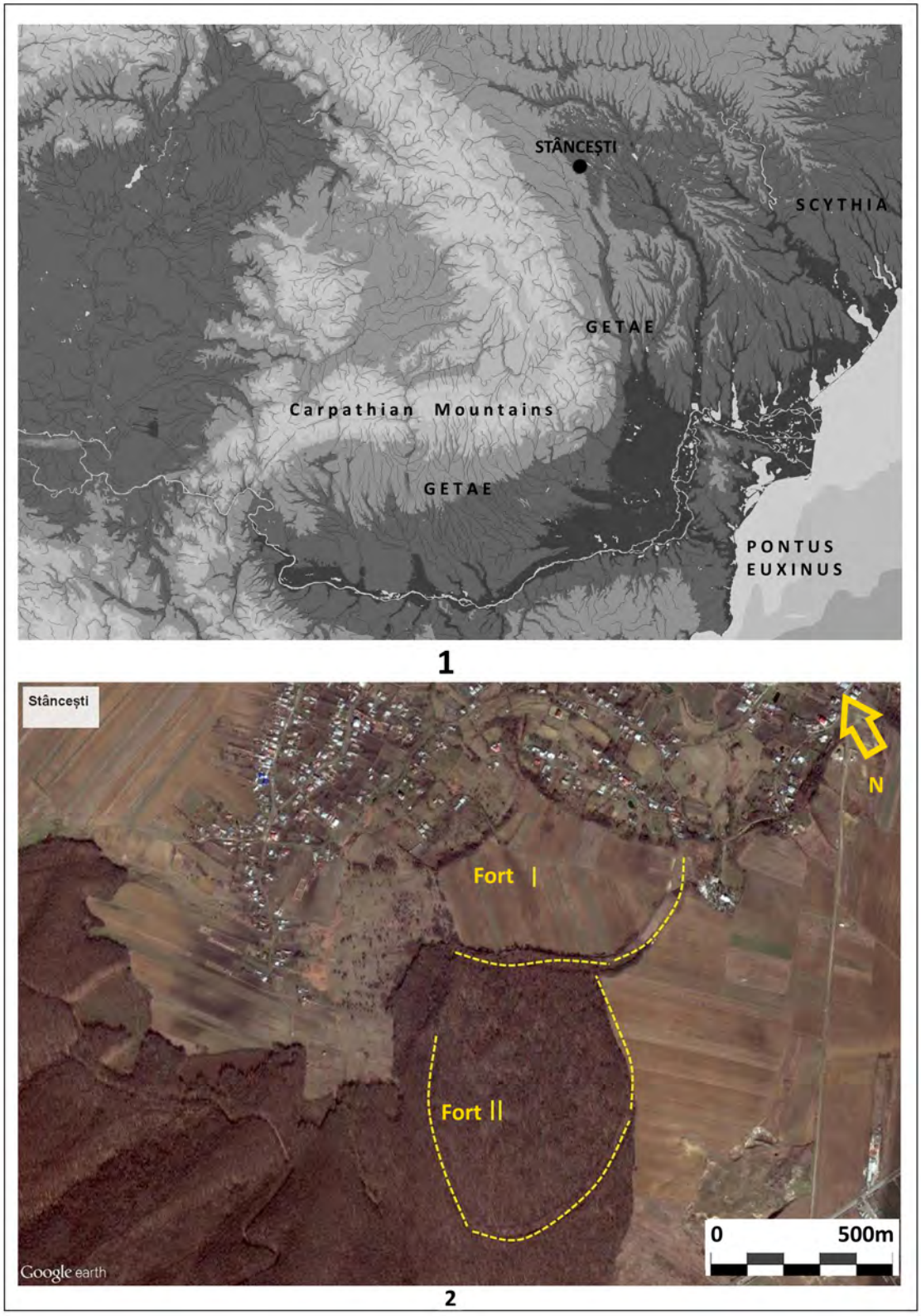

Plate 1. 1. The Carpatho-Danubian area and the location of Stânceşti fort. **2.** The two forts of Stânceşti (processed Google Earth image).

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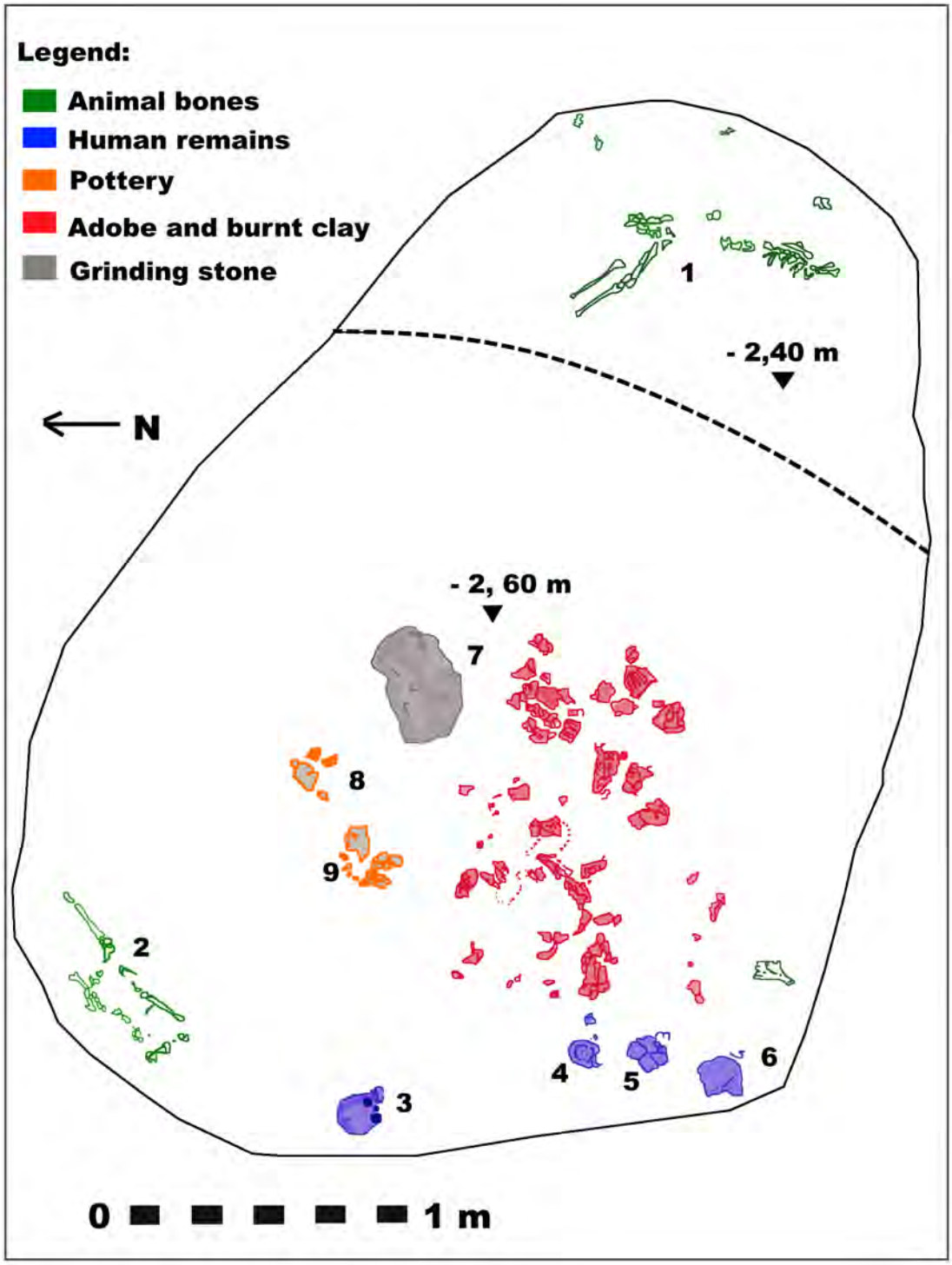

Plate 2. 1. The pit with human and animal remains: **1-2.** Animal remains; **3-6.** Remains of human skulls; **7.** Grinding stone; **8-9.** Clay vessels.

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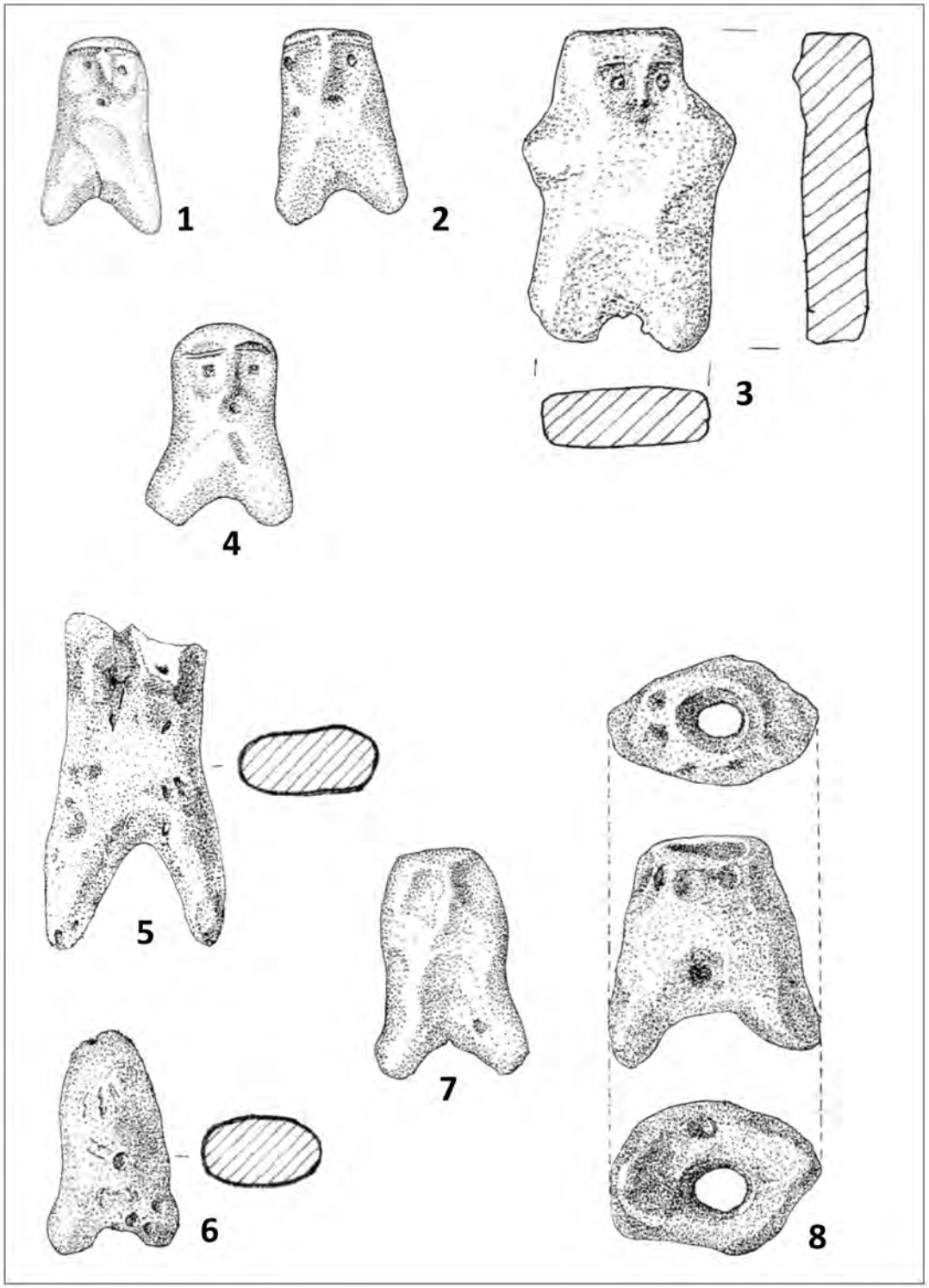

Plate 3. Various clay anthropomorphic figurines, no scale (after Florescu, Florescu 2012).

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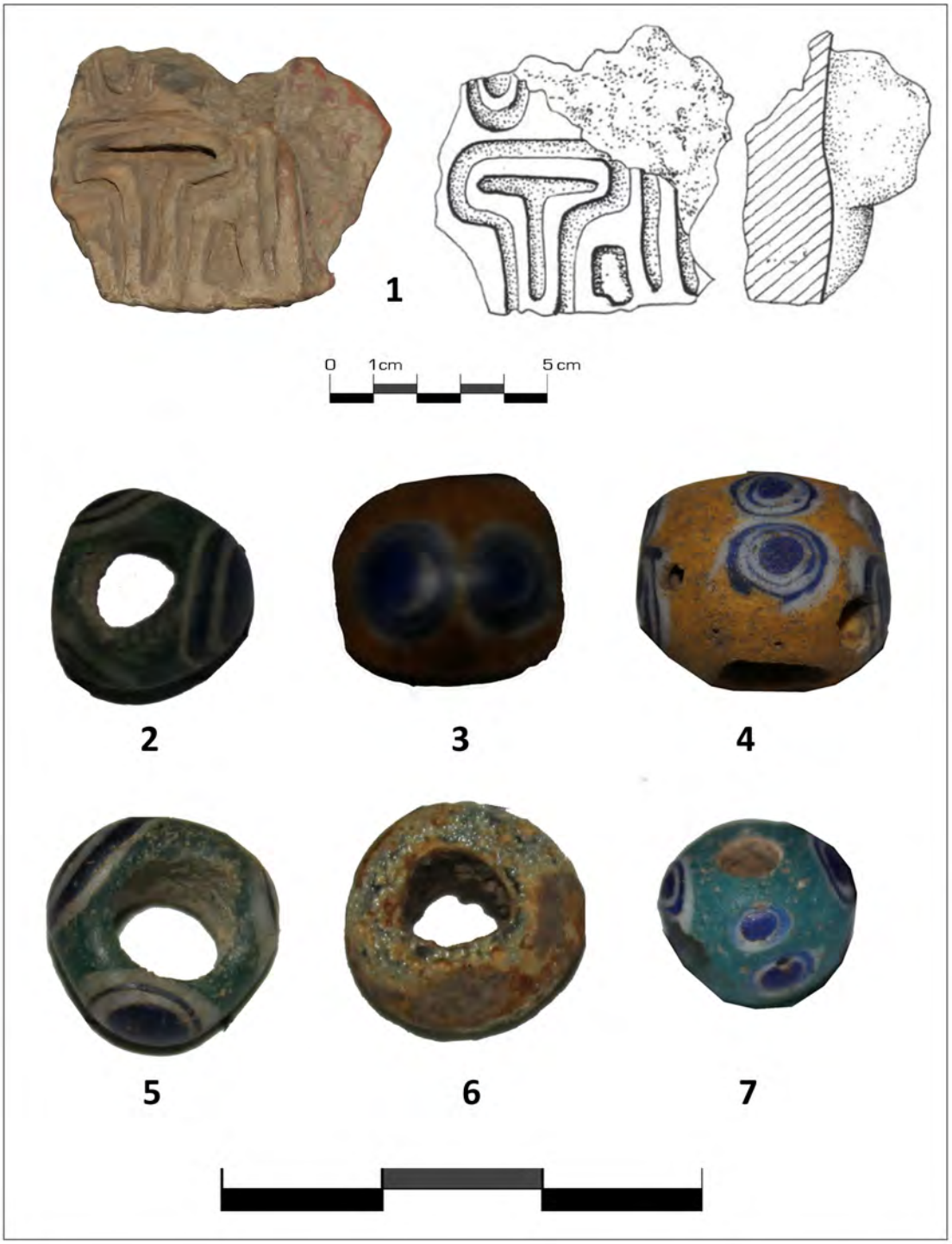

Plate 4. 1. Pintadera (photo and drawing); **2-7.** Glass eye beads (photo by Daniel Ciucălău, Botoșani County Museum).

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"CROWN" CONSTELLATION: SYMBOL AND SIGN

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***Abstract**: The "crown" sign and symbol has been investigated on Earth and sky. On Earth, the crown has a complex symbolism, because it was worn on head; it has circular shape; and was made by a significant material. On sky, the crown is represented by a small constellation, the Corona Borealis. It is one of the 48 constellations listed by the 2nd-century astronomer Ptolemy. The crown signifies "the participation in a celestial world" and indicates "the superhuman, divine nature of the bearer" in ritual scenarios.*
***Key words**: archaeoastronomy, ethnoarchaelogy, fairies, sign, symbol.*

Mireasă, de bună seamă,
Dai cununa pe-o năframă.
Dar năframa-i tare grea,
Toate grijile-s în ea."
(Titiana Mihali – *Cântec popular din Maramureș*)
„Bride, no doubt,
Give the crown for a cloth.
But the cloth is very heavy,
All the worries are in it."
(Titiana Mihali[49] – *Popular song from Maramureș*)

The adornments, in our case, the crowns, "regarded as condensations of forces and cosmic elements" (Evseev, 1994, 23) are a female sexual symbol with strong apotropaic and divinatory attributes marking certain stages of life. According to the illustrious researcher Professor Ivan Evseev, "the symbol (...) in the system of culture is manifested mainly by a plastic representation" (Evseev, 1999, 8).

Based on these considerations we analyzed the anthropomorphic plastic of the Copper Age and the Neolithic of the carpathian-danubian-pontic space. From the multitude of statues and idols, only a few were noted, what "wore" crown, always being feminine representations. In the following, we will try to penetrate in the mysteries of these signs and to understand the symbolic-magical "gestures" they suggest.

We must not forget the intrinsic unity between the universal macrocosm and the terrestrial microcosm, and thus the connection between Heaven and Earth. All of the tellurian elements have a correspondent on the celestial vault, and heavenly events are reflected on Earth "causing" attitudes and behavioral gestures with strong divine connotations.

[49] See Moață, 2003, 4.

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In this context, the appearance of stars or constellations has not gone unnoticed, as in the case of the Corona Borealis Constellation, also known as „Hora" (Maxim, Szücs-Csillik 2014, 274; Mureșan 2011, 148; Otescu 2002, 75; Pamfile 2001a, 132; Pamfile 2001b, 45; Turcu *et al.* 2004), which marks the beginning of the summer, the season so important for sedentary farmers' communities.

The observation of the sky and the movement of the stars was an important concern; the composition of the agro-pastoral calendar depended on these observations, indicating the optimal time for different familiar or socio-economic activities and the regulation of "holidays" marking the evolutionary stages of the ecosystem (flora, fauna, climate, etc.), where the community lives.

At such events the crown is worn. We will try to answer the questions: Who is crowned? When? With what? Why?

Constellation "Crown" (Corona Borealis- CrB) is a small constellation[50] in the northern sky, visible in early summer, whose stars form a semicircular arc, also called „Hora" in Romanian folk astronomy. The seven stars observable with the naked eye (Alphecca (alpha CrB) and the other denominated from beta CrB to iota CrB) describe a semicircle. The name Alphecca means "separate" (in Arabic) imagining the constellation as a broken chain (Evans, 1998, 125; Szücs-Csillik *et al.*, 2013, 238).

The crown (crown, corona) is a symbol of the bearer's belonging to the celestial, supernatural, divine world, being worn in the rituals marking the Great Passage (wedding, initiations) during magical acts (Sânziene (yellow bedstraw), prenuptial: flower crown in flowing water or on the tree), gratitude of heroes, victors, geniuses and sages (crown of laurels), martyrdom (crown of thorns), or the coronation of kings (domination), being a sign of immortality, honor, victory, greatness and joy (Stoica *et al.*, 1985, 102).

The crown of peaks imitating light rays is a solar symbol (the crown of rays of different cultures, the crown of spices), but it is also a manifestation of the female principle, especially during the premarital or bridal period.

The crown has a strong protective, even prophylactic function, suggested by its circular shape (symbol of the sky) and by the material it is made of (sacred plants – yellow bedstraw; wheat; gold - since the Copper Age).

Firstly, the crown has a complex symbolism, because it was worn on head, which gives it the character of the divine vibration of illumination, power and fulfillment.

Secondly, the circular shape means the perfection and closeness of belonging to the heaven and divine, linking the lower world to the upper world, but also separating the sky from earth, in other words the divine man - the bearer of the crown becomes the exponent of an "immortal" life, because he was "between" the two worlds.

Thirdly, the material of the crown is important, because it represents the nature of the magic act for which the crown was made, the purpose being to capture the attention and to join higher divine forces, the rituals of "braiding", wearing and preserving, accompanied by community ceremonies (Chevalier, Gheerbrant, 1994, 371).

The crown made from willow is worn by "Flowers' Flower" (Flowers' Goghia or Goghia) as a sign of the ritual assigning the most beautiful and worthy virgin with social and ritual attributions in the planning and organization of various youth activities (Ghinoiu 2001, 163; Bocșe 2006, 289).

On the second day of Pentecost, the whole community comes to the field with church flags, the holy water is made with it the fields and boundaries are sprinkled, and the girls plait the wreaths of spices that they put on the church flags to take them to the

[50] http://www.iau.org/public/constellations.

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church. In some areas, these crowns were used for weddings over the year (Cojocaru, 2008, 508).

At Pentecost or Sânziene (sometimes between these feasts), it is an ancient agro-pastoral custom with a showy ritual consecrated to the Bull God, called: Flowery Ox, Feathery Ox, Ox with Bedstraw, Emperor Ox. For the ceremony, the Bunch of Lads chooses an ox (the Bull God, Sacred Taurus - fecundating solar symbol) for the "bridal" ritual that takes place in several stages and adorns it, among other things, with a crown of field flowers (Ghinoiu 2001, 24; Ghinoiu 2004, 319; Olteanu 2001, 288; Bocșe 2006, 385; Cojocaru 2008, 488).

The custom has a strong fertilizer symbolism, fulfillment of the harvest and the Sun's Wedding, having beneficial connotations for people (health, prosperity, luck) and the Goddess of Earth (fertility, abundance), being especially certified in Transylvania and Oltenia.

In the traditional Romanian beliefs and customs is preserved from agrarian Neolithic a mythical character, Sânziana or Drăgaica, as the hypostasis of the Great Young Goddess (bearing also the names of Dârdaică, the Bridegroom, the Master of the Sisters, the Queen of the Lands, the Empress); she is "the reprezentation of the fitomorf Agrarian Goddess"[51] (Vulcănescu 1987, 489; Ghinoiu 1997, 56; Ghinoiu 2008, 268; Ghinoiu 2004, 316; Olteanu 2001, 287) on the day of the summer solstice when, together with the bridal party (fairies, virgins), they sing and dance over huts and forests, floating all over the atmosphere.

If the Day of Sânziene is "forgotten", the Goddess (Virgin Fairy) unleashes hailstorms, affecting people, animals and plants (Bălteanu, 2000, 132). The corona or the Crown of Sânziene is an emblem of the apotropaic divinity, and by putting on the head, it symbolizes the connection between the earthly and the heavenly, because it marks the transcendental moment of fulfillment (wheat, virgin, plants, etc.). Drăgaica (southern Muntenia, Dobrogea, southern and center Moldova), Sânziana (Transylvania, Banat, Bucovina, Maramureș and Oltenia), (Ghinoiu 2001, 60, 67, 171; Ghinoiu 2004, 313), is dressed as a bride (the bride of the wheat), wearing a crown of yellow bedstraw (and spice) as symbol of marriage ("the marriage of wheat").

During the ceremony, it is believed that the Goddess "puts the grain in the wheat spice and the smell in the cure plants" (Ghinoiu, 2008, 107), protects crops from hail, storms and strong winds, heals the sick, escapes the people from sufferings, prepares the marriage of girls (markets, gathering, get-together, social gathering), etc.

The Dance of the Drăgaica in the middle of the day (summer solstice) marks the balance of the year and the return of nature to winter - the wheat root is dried, wheat is baking, and on the night sky rises the group of stars from Pleiades (popular: Fowl, Hen with chickens, Necklace, Beads).

The habits from Sânziene are closely related to the Cult of Fecundity and Fertility, both the fields and the virgins are on the threshold of maturity and fertility (Ghinoiu, 1997, 59), being certified in all Romanian regions. In the Oaș Country, the crown of Sânziene (yellow bedstraw) are placed in the garden, on the house, on the crosses.

In the country of Maramureș, at "Iana Sânziana", the girls were making crows, putting them on their heads, in the hand with rod of peas (beans) in a miraculous procession heading to the river, passing near the crosses (big wooden cross, crossroads, cemetery),

[51] Note that they are holly fairies, nocturnal and lunar (Ghinoiu, 2008, 108); Ghinoiu remembers the „markets" dedicated to Great Agrarian Goddess, among which we mention the Girl Market from Găina Mountain (Apuseni). Let us not forget that now is rising the Pleiades, Romanian traditional name „Găinușa".

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performing a ritual of purification, singing and dancing, they are getting wet, to be clean and beautiful[52] (Bilțiu, Bilțiu 2001, 235; Bocșe 2006, 413).

The Sânziene Crown also has magical functions of indicating luck, destiny and fate (Ghinoiu 1994, 303; Ghinoiu 2008, 96; Olinescu 2001, 294; Bocșe 2006, 412). Note that the second day are the examinations of the crows set in the garden to see what animals will be lucky, according to the hairbreadths caught in the crown.

The blooming of the yellow bedstraw marks the mowing period of the hay, and the beginning of the harvesting of the first grains, identified in the agro-pastoral calendar as a period full of rituals around the summer solstice with elements from the ancient Cult of the Sun, and the Cult of the Moon: Young people with torches; high fireplaces at the foot of the forest; jumping youngsters over the fire for magical purification (also practiced in Greece); the girls offer their crown of bedstraw to the lads, they form pairs that return to the village, singing songs of glory to the Sun and the Moon, a reminiscence of the Solar Cult (Ghinoiu 2001, 72; Ghinoiu 2004, 315; Bocșe 2006, 415; Gorovei 1915; Gorovei 2002).

The ruler of Moldova, Dimitrie Cantemir (1973) reports a habit that is found in other parts of the country too (questionnaire Densușeanu): here the girls choose Drăgaica (in common with Sânzâiana), dresses her up with nuptials clothes, on her heads put them a crown from bedstraw, and on the arms the key of barns (granaries); congregation is form having flag (2-3 m, with kerchief, multicolored children's clothes with apotropaic and prophylactic role), who dance through the fields for "binding the wheat", then carols the villages on their way home, dancing and singing (Cantemir 1973, 341; Fochi 1976: 116-119; Ghinoiu 2004: 317-319: Cojocaru 2008: 503-504) gestures and chanting with the intention of influencing the fruitfulness of the grain, the abundance and stability of the forefathers hearth, fertility and fecundity (agrarian and human).

Ethnologist Ion Ghinoiu identifies Sânzâiana and Drăgaica as a virgin hypostasis of the Great Mother Goddess during the sacred ritual ceremonies around the summer solstice, a sacramental time in the Agrarian Calendar (Ghinoiu 2004, 316; Bocșe 2006, 416).

The harvest period is marked by the visibility of the Corona Borealis constellation, which watches and protects the harvest. At the end of the harvest take place magical-ritual ceremonies devoted to the sacred power of wheat (the spirit of wheat), gratitude to the divinity, people's and the fruit of their work's protection to ensure future fecundity and fertility (cereal grains are mixed with seed wheat or crown is deposited under the furrow), implicit magical fertilization of the earth.

According to the Romanian beliefs, the "wheat spirit"[53] is hiding in the last spice during the harvest, which is why these spices are protected, being used for the ritual making of the Spice Crown, the Reaping Crown, the Crown of the Wheat[54] (Bot 1989, 7; Ionică 1996; Ghinoiu 2001, 60; Ghinoiu 1997, 57; Vedinaș 2000; Cojocaru 2008, 511; Nicolau, Huluță, 2000, 69), which is preserved as a sacred object (in church or at home). The ceremony of the "crown" and the well-coded songs are specific to Transylvania (Cârţa, Leşu), identified on the ground and described by anthropologists, ethnologists and folklorists - the ritual crown (braided by young girls); Ensemble of ritual acts: the troop

[52] Remember the customs from Valea Vișeului, where the Summer Beauty has Fairy name (Ghinoiu 2004, 323).

[53] See webpage: folclornepieritor.blogspot.ro.

[54] "The wheat crown" exhibition was varnished at the Agricultural Museum in Slobozia (September 25, 2013) illustrating "agrarian spirituality" (rites, customs, agrarian ceremonies, as a spiritual effort of the plowman in his endless labor for food) and traditional conservation of the grain (as a material expression of his soil) from Muntenia, Oltenia, Crișana, Maramureș, Țăranul Pădurenilor, Mărginimea Sibiului, Bucovina etc. (See www.muzeulagriculturii.ro).

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of the reapers, the wearing of the crown (on the head of a virgin, chosen from the “bunch of girls”), the wetting of the wedding, the ritual song; the game of the wedding (hora of the wedding); ritual table.

Such habits are also found in northern Europe, embodying different forms of manifestation being a combination of prehistoric customs that have been taken over and converted syncretic by Christianity (Frazer, 1980, III: 245).

The sacredness of the Spice Crown at the Romanians is emphasized by cultic use in the magic acts for the fertilization of man, animals and holdings; placed on the Christmas bread, and at the wedding decorates the Wedding Flag, and it is put on the heads of the wedded pair (Ghinoiu 1997, 58; Ghinoiu 2008, 95).

Fig. 1a. Turdaş: Late Neolithic (photo Lazarovici; Maxim *et al.* 2000, 135).

Fig. 1b. Căzăneşti: 2006 (See exibition at Agricultural Museum in Slobozia).

The night before the harvest is making under the aegis of the "Holy Moon", the night harvest, when the owner gathers spice and wheat grains for "other uses" with magical-mythical character (enchantments, charms, bindings and delusions, spells), which performed by an old woman from the family or village (Vulcănescu 1987, 555).

This habit is included in agrarian rites "on a full moon" (the beginning of the sowing night carried by a virgin, the bedstraw crown wearing by a virgin, with a bedstraw girdle having in the hands of wheat spice, the crown of spices adorns sacramental the head of a virgin), finding a "syncretism between the agrarian rites of the Cereal Goddess and the Moon Goddess" (Vulcănescu 1987, 489).

In this context, we must remember the Neolithic statue of Turdaş (Figure 1a) considered the Goddess of the Moon (Maxim, Szücs-Csillik 2009, 296; Maxim, Szücs-Csillik 2010, 50; Szücs-Csillik, Maxim 2015, 242; Maxim *et al.* 2000, 133; Lazarovici *et al.* 2009). This statuette is the proof of this syncretism, representing the join of two goddesses, the Moon and the Wheat, being at the same time the hypostasis of the Great Mother Goddess – the Earth.

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Interesting is the survival of the ritual customs related to the Wreath Crown until nowadays, illustrated on the occasion of the exhibition "The Wreath of the Wheat" at the Museum of Agriculture in Slobozia (2013)[55] and bunch of girls (Figure 1b) from Căzăneşti[56].

The ritual manifestations accompanying harvest and especially the crown of spice have mythical implications with origins in the Neolithic agrarian customs related to the Fertility Cult: the crown representing the "sign" of the symbolic marriage of the spirit of the grain, the essential gesture of fulfillment (maturity), the transmission of vitality and the prepare for the future harvest (Cojocaru 2008, 513).

Among the prenuptial customs are the wearing of the Crown of Flowers by the engaged girls as a sign of the period preceding the Great Maturity Transition: the marriage (Cojocaru 2008, 529).

The bride's crown is a ritual adornment during the transition ceremony (wedding), it is a supreme symbol of the young girl ready to procreate and pass among women[57] (Gorovei 2002, 88; Ghinoiu 2001, 61; Ghinoiu 2008, 95).

"Plaiting of the crown" is done at the bride's home on the evening of the eve of marriage with the participation of bridesmaids and girls (Budeşti, Maramureş, Ţara Oaşului, Bucovina). In the bride's crown are intertwined field flowers (symbol of purity and naturalness), wheat spice (symbol of fertility and prosperity) and other decorative elements. The girl's parents solemnly make crowning the bride as they blesses her[58].

In some areas (Transylvania, Banat), it is customary that the wedding priest to put on the heads of the couple the crowns of the spice, kept in the church as the spirit, the strength and the fruit of the wheat to be transmitted to the young couple[59].

In the Romanian Neo-Eneolithic are some female statuettes that have on their head the "crown" (Chirică, Boghian, 2003, 65). Some may be "brides"! Certainly, the feminine idol from Truşeşti (Figure 2a) and the one from Pianu de Jos (Paul 1969, 73; Ciugudean 2000, 117/1, Figure 2c) are representations of the young virgin prepared for the Great Pass from the girl hypostasis to that of the woman, prepared to fulfill the attributions of the new posture.

The two statuettes have the bride's decorations: crown, wave (made up of three skirts that reach the waist) and beads in several strings that cover almost the entire chest[60]. Perhaps, from this category is the fragmentary statuette from Lopadea Veche (Paul 1969, 73, 76, pl. XV/2a-b; Ciugudean 2000, 243, pl. 117/5).

Ethnographers record such sacrificial ornaments, many unfortunately unpublished, which are in the archives of various museums, such as the photograph of the bride of Morlaca (see Figure 2b).

[55] O expoziţie „Cununa Grâului" a fost vernisată la Muzeul Agriculturii din Slobozia (25 septembrie 2013) ilustrând: „spiritualitatea agrară" (rituri, obiceiuri, ceremonialuri agrare, ca demers spiritual al plugarului în truda sa necontenită pentru hrana cea spre fiinţă) şi mijloacele tradiţionale de păstrare a grânelor (ca expresie materială a trudei sale)" din Muntenia, Oltenia, Crişana, Maramureş, Ţinutul Pădurenilor, Mărginimea Sibiului, Bucovina etc. (www.muzeulagriculturii.ro).

[56] www. traditieialomita.ro.

[57] www.obiceiuri-populare.ro.

[58] www.obiceiuri-populare.ro/ob_de_nunta.

[59] www.traditiiclujene.ro; Buzduganul de seceriş, la Cârţa (www.traditiisibiene.ro/revista)

[60] www.romania.ici.ro; L'art néolithique en Roumanie, catalogul expoziţiei din Olten, Elveţia, Ed. Arte'm srl, Italia.

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Fig. 2a. Truşeşti (Monah 1997, 83, 314, 62/1; Bădocan 2007, 302).

Fig. 2b. Morlaca (Arhiva Muzeul Etnografic al Transilvaniei).

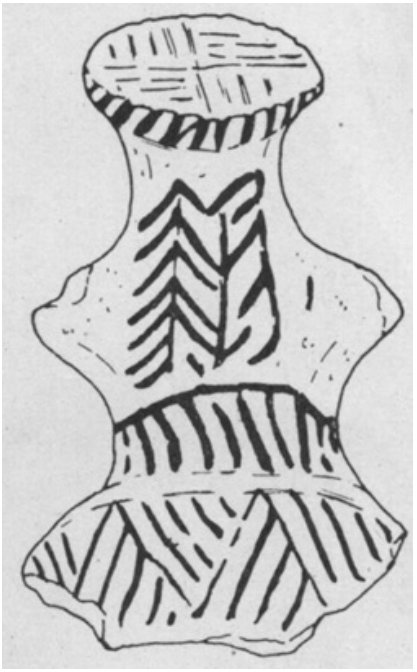

Fig. 2c. Pianu de Jos (www.romania.ici.ro).

Due to its circular shape the crown is considered as a symbol of time - the church year has the name "the crown of the year" where ritual feasts and apotropaic manifestations are intertwined (Evseev, 1997, 47).

A reminiscence of the Cult of the Dead (The Cult of the Forefathers and Ancestors) is the custom during the Palm Sunday to make willow-crown, consecrated, which are placed on the Church on the cross cenotaph, dedicated to heroes without a grave, then to the troops at the intersections, or at the border of the village for the peace of the dead and the living, as well as the reconciliation between people (Ghinoiu 2001, 163; Bocșe 2006, 288).

The crown signifies “the participation in a celestial world” and indicates “the superhuman, divine nature of the bearer in ritual scenarios”. "The presence of the marriage in the Romanian ritual (...) reveals especially its association with the protecting circle, the Sun and the fecundity" (Evseev, 1999, 128).

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THE PAGAN ARTEMIS-DIANA ATTENDING THE CHRISTIAN ANNUNCIATION IN A POST-BYZANTINE ATHONITE FRESCO

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Abstract: *The preeminent monastery of Mount Athos, the Great Lavra, holds a very unusual Annunciation. Not a Christian saint or martyr but a pagan Goddess, Artemis-Diana attends the fateful encounter between the archangel Gabriel and the Annunciate. The Greek-Roman divinity is tranquilly spinning and, after a dialogue with Virgin Mary, is leaving the stage. Her name, an invocation to her and her giant right ear are positioned to oversee the scene of the Christian Incarnation. The fresco was painted in 1535 by the famous Athonite monk Theophanes the Cretan, one of the most acclaimed Post-Byzantine masters, at the peak of his career.*

After having documented how Theophanes creatively developed the rare and apocryphal iconographic motif of the attendance of a chief witness to the Annunciation (in general a Virgin Mary's servant or companion) into the character of Artemis-Diana and established the relevant archaeological presence of the Greek-Roman Goddess at the site of the Great Lavra, the author concludes that the painting puts on play three characters to illustrate and combine two myths. The first myth is the mystery of the Annunciation-Incarnation and the transforming presence of the divine Conception between transcendence and immanence. The second myth is the most important foundation tradition of Mount Athos, in which the protagonist is the Mother of God on a missionary journey to the peninsula and her dramatic but not violent replacing Artemis-Diana as the ruler and protector of it and its consecrated inhabitants. The fiercest enemy of the "true religion" is recruited as the stronger testimonial of its undisputed credibility, after her bending to acknowledge it. Consistently, the fresco recognizes the Virgin Mary as the Abbess of the Athonite brotherhood.

Keywords: *Mount Athos, Artemis, Annunciation, Post-Byzantine art, Theophanes the Cretan, Great Lavra monastery.*

Introduction

Mount Athos (*Agion Oros*, Holy Mountain) is the most renowned hub of Byzantine monasticism. A Post-Byzantine fresco painted by the famous Theophanes the Cretan (and sons)[61] in its leading monastery, the Great Lavra, depicts a very unusual

[61] Theophanes the Cretan (Theophanes Strelitzas, also surnamed Bathas) was born in Crete at Herakleion/Iraklion (former Candia). Under the Venetian control and after the second fall of Constantinople, the isle was the most important center of its time for Post-Byzantine art. Icons were produced by 200-300 workshops. Some contracts give instructions for icons to be finished 'in the Latin fashion' and several artists developed styles that absorbed components of western art (Rodley, 2013, 34).

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Annunciation. Not a Christian saint or martyr but a pagan Goddess, Artemis (whom the Romans assimilated to Diana, formerly a minor woodland spirit), attends the fateful encounter between the archangel Gabriel and the Virgin Mary. The Greek-Roman divinity is spinning. Her name and giant right ear oversee the scene of the Incarnation[62]. The fresco was painted between 1535 and 1541 (Chatzidakis M., 1963; Chatzidakis M., 1982; Chatzidakis M., 1986, 39).

Theophanes was from a family of Peloponnesian origin that migrated to escape the Ottoman Turks. He lived between the last decade of the XV century and his death in 1559 (Chatzidakis M., Drakopoulou, 1997, 381–397). He was a highly productive artist and in great demand, traveling and working nonstop throughout his life. Theophanes was the central interpreter of the Cretan School and his works contributed to set the standard for coeval and subsequent icon painting in the eastern Mediterranean until the early XIX century (D'Antiga, 2007, 103; Constas M. Monk, 2012, 40).

An exhaustive catalogue of Theophanes' works does not exist yet. As we know, he performed extensive artistic activity in 1527 at Meteora, in St. Nicolas Anapausas church (Chatzidakis M., Sofianos, 1990). Then he went to Mount Athos with his two sons (Symeon and Neophytos) and co-workers (notably Tzortzis), possibly after the death of his wife. At the Holy Mountain, in 1536, he became monk of the Great Lavra monastery. The family-workshop, under his skillful direction, frescoed the nave of the main church and the refectory of its monastery from 1535 to 1541. The monk-painter family also painted a series of festal icons, being trained and talented in both media. The master was probably between 40 and 50. He developed a complete set of themes and procedures for the monumental mural paintings in the churches, adapting the technique of portable icons. Subsequently, Theophanes, Symeon, Neophytos and Cretan apprentices decorated the refectory, one of the chapels and the main church of the Stavronikita monastery, along with an ensemble of festal and other icons for the renovated iconostasis (1545-1546). They frescoed also the nave in Koutloumousiou monastery (1540), the refectory in Filotheou monastery (1540), the nave in Dionysiou monastery (1547), the naves in Dochiariou (1568), Pantokrator and Iviron monasteries. The wall paintings in the Chapel of St. John the Baptist in Stavronikita monastery are also attributed to them. They also painted a number of portable icons in the churches on the Holy Mountain.

Chronologically, the millenarian history of the Athonite portable icons can be divided into three periods. The second period (1535–1711) starts with the arrival of Theophanes on the Holy Mountain and ends with the emergence of Dionysios from Fourna, who promoted the return to the techniques of the Macedonian School. Outstanding panel icons for iconostases and small portable works painted by Theophanes at Mount Athos survive on the altar screens of Great Lavra, Iviron, Stavronikita, Pantokrator, Gregoriou, and Koutloumousiou (Tsigaridas, 2016). Almost all the Athonite monasteries possess icons of the renowned Cretan School.

Despite the success in *Agion Oros*, the masterly hagiographer returned home to Crete before his death on 24 February 1559, the day he prepared his testament (Chatzidakis M., 1982; Chatzidakis M., 1986).

[62] The Annunciation under inquiry is typical of Theophanes' fresco style. It is a traditional, ascetic, austere, restrained, and linear but serene Byzantine composition. However, it is less stylistically conservative than in the locus of ritual. It is described by a consistent organization of the representation that exalts an anthropocentric approach (Chatzidakis M., 1986, 108). Faces outlined in dark are illuminated by direct light. Drapery is depicted stiffly folded, but with some bright lines in rich colors (Chatzidakis M., 1969-1970, 309–352). Figures are portrayed with elegant posture, great gravity, noble bearing, controlled manifestations of emotions, calm and mild gesture (Millet, 1916). Any lyric element is removed. Exaggerated dramatics and prosaicness would be indecorous and un-religious.

As one can see in the Annunciation under investigation, Theophanes' work is more conscious of visual perspective than previous Byzantine artists. However, he did not use schemes and effects of geometrical viewpoint that had become standard in the West. Italian influences are implied by the sidelong glances towards the spectator. The works basically the engravings of Mannerist artists such as Marcantonio Raimondi (ca. 1475-1534) and Giovanni Bellini (ca. 1430-1516) were his main sources. At Mount Athos, Theophanes produced a constant effort to incorporate and adapt a number of new iconographical achievements that arrived from Western art in the urban areas of Crete and especially in Candia to the aesthetic principles of the Orthodox inheritance (Chatzidakis M., 1963; Valentini, 1964, 203; Gouma-Peterson, 1983; Gouma-Peterson, 1991, 156; Chatzidakis N., 1993, 15f.; Yandim, 2008, 274, note 16). Emblematic is his introduction of iconography influenced by Western prototypes in his Massacre of the Innocents at the Great Lavra on the basis of a print by Raimondi after Raphael (Lymberopoulou, 2010, 359).

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Fig. 1. The facade of the refectory of the Great Lavra monastery with the fresco depicting the Christian Annunciation witnessed by Artemis. It was painted by the renowned Theophanes the Cretan from 1535 to 1541. Photo © Marco Merlini.

In the XVI century, Greek-Orthodox monasteries undertook significant renovation and restoration programs (Gouma-Peterson, 1991, 156). At the peak of his career in the mid-XVI century, Theophanes was one of the most acclaimed Post-Byzantine Cretan masters and the formally called Cretan school was imposed by the top echelons of the Orthodox Church as the official form of art in Greek monasteries replacing the Macedonian school[63]. It is through the Cretan teams that, during the second and third quarters of the XVI century, mural painting had its second prosperous period on Mount Athos[64]. The *maniera greca* spread out in the Balkans and even in Georgia, where it merged with local traditions. It represented the last of the centralized artistic movements in the Byzantine and/or Greek-Orthodox painting.

[63] The great rival painter who represented the Macedonian school in the XIV century was Manuel Panselinos of Thessaloniki. At Mount Athos, see his masterpieces Dormition in the Protaton, c. 1310 and the Leading to the cross in the Vatopedi monastery, 1312. Panselinos has been called the Giotto and the Raphael of Byzantine painting.

[64] Another Cretan painter, *Kyr* Tzortzis, remarkably illustrated the church and the refectory of Dionysiou monastery in 1546/7 (but it is a recently contended assumption), and the *katholikon* of Dochiariou monastery in 1567/1568. He was a distinguished assistant of Theophanes, imitated his style but produced more rigid and schematic figures animated by greater pathos. Frangos Katelanos from Thebes frescoed the walls of St. Nicholas chapel at the *katholikon* of the Great Lavra (1560). Monk Makarios, also connected to Theophanes, is mentioned in two inscriptions as the painter of the *katholikon* of the Koutloumousiou monastery (1539-1540) and the small church belonging to a Hilandar cell, The Dormition of the Virgin Mary, at Karies (1541). Other representatives of the Cretan School in the XVI century decorated the churches of Iviron monastery, the refectory of Philotheou monastery (1561-1574), and the Molyvokklissia in Karyes. (Zachariadou, 2006, 166. Moutafov, 2017, 6).

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Being recognized as a leading exponent of the Cretan School and one of the most important figures in Greek wall painting of the period, Theophanes is named as "Sir (*Kyr, Kyrios*) Theophanes the monk" in the foundation inscription of the Great Lavra written by the patron (Merlini, 2012, 109). In the same century, the title was recognized only by Domenikos Theotocopoulos (El Greco)[65] and very few other painters. In the entries concerning him in the Codex 18 of the Great Lavra, he is recorded as *sic et simpliciter* as "the master (*didaskalos*) Theophanes" (Chatzidakis M., 1986, 38).

However, Theophanes was at first a severe and ascetic monk-painter. He was a sincere and intense agent of the Orthodox religion and the primacy of Mount Athos within it. This is evidenced by his decision, in mature age, to become a monk[66], settle in the remote monastic enclave of the Holy Mountain and to impose the same spiritual way of life on his two sons Symeon and Neophytos (Chatzidakis M., 1986, 41). He lived at the Great Lavra until 1543. At that time, the *Mons Sanctus* was under Ottoman rule. Theophanes worked during the reign of Suleiman the Magnificent (1522-1560).

The insertion of the goddess Artemis-Diana by the Athonite monk-painter was not merely decorative but significant, because in the Orthodox Church images receive true worship, and a fresco, painted in a sacred context, is accorded relative veneration. The material of the painting under our investigation is inhabited by the divine image of the Madonna at the moment that preceded God's embodied in a physical form and its transformation into a *carnal logos* (Pentcheva Bissera, 2006, 153). Moreover, according to the lofty ideal of the Cretan painter, the encounter between the archangel and the Virgin was emotive and intimate. The trascendentalism of the event should not be sullied by trivial or marginal elements (Chatzidakis M., 1986, 109). The sense of moderation and elevation was not to be transgressed even in the number of characters, their identity, and pictorial elements put on display.

This article contributes to the interpretation of the enigma: why a pagan goddess, virtually a demon, is incorporated in a key Christian event? Its aim is also to detect the allegorical program subtended under this composition, and to investigate the iconographical and artistic essentials of the painter's theological inspiration.

In order to investigate the very special rendezvous between the archangel Gabriel and Virgin Mary frescoed at the Great Lavra, the present article is subdivided in four sections. In section 1, it is documented how Theophanes the Cretan creatively developed the rare and apocryphal iconographic motif of the attendance of a chief witness to the Annunciation (in general a Virgin Mary's servant or companion) into the character of Artemis-Diana. In section 2, it is established the relevant archaeological presence of the Greek-Roman Goddess at the site of the Great Lavra. In section 3, it is investigated the occurrence of accessory figures in Annunciation scenes from the Byzantine milieu and western representations influenced by the Byzantine iconography, to extract clues to understand the role of Artemis-Diana as first-hand testimony to the Incarnation of the Son of the Christian God. In section 4, it is recognized the reasons why the Athonite monk-painter Theophanes chose the pagan Goddess of hunt and moon to witnesses Jesus' miraculous conception.

Section 1
A very uncommon Annunciation at the Great Lavra monastery

[65] According to some scholars as Timothy E. Gregory, El Greco was a student of Theophanes (Gregory, 2011, 416).

[66] In a dedicatory inscription of 1527 at Saint Nicholas Anapafsas, he is mentioned as a monk.

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Why the Gabriel-Mary encounter is located over the entry door of the refectory

Why does the Annunciation to the Virgin Mary tower over the entry wall of the refectory of the Great Lavra monastery? The announcement by the archangel Gabriel is one of the founding events of the Christian Church, even if Luke's narrative is the unique scriptural source for Mary's crucial experience with the Word. It is also one of the major feasts in the Byzantine liturgy where it is known as the *Evangelismos* or *Salutation*[67] of the *Theotókos* (The Mother of God). It is celebrated on March 25, exactly nine months before Christmas and coinciding with the fifth day after the coming of spring, the Vernal equinox on the Roman calendar[68]. It was the cosmic day when, according to the Bible as interpreted by the Alexandrian monk Annianos, God created the Earth and populated it with waters and skies. According to the *Golden Legend (Legenda Aurea)*, compiled by Jacobus de Voragine in 1275, the Fall of Adam, the murder of Abel, Melchisedech's offering of bread and wine, Abraham's near sacrifice of Isaac, the decapitation of John the Baptist, the killing James (the brother of Jesus) and Peter's escape all occurred on March 25. In ancient peasant calendars, it was Mother Earth "nameday." Mother Earth was pregnant and thus she had to be protected, thus avoiding to strike the soil, or to spit, dig holes, or plough (Moszyński, 1934, vol. 2, 510; Gimbutas, 1987, 24).

This Feast originally commemorated the Incarnation of Christ. Athonite monks notice that the intimate connection between his coming into the human world and his Passion is further supported by the tradition that the Savior was crucified on the same day of the year he was incarnated (March 25)[69]. It is stimulating to note that, in ancient Greek-Roman civilization, the Resurrection of Attis, said to be the son of the virgin Nan, was staged by his worshippers on March 25 (Macrobius, Saturnalia 1852, 1.21.10; Forsythe, 2012, 88). Sufferings, Death, and Resurrection of Osiris, a virgin-born god of ancient Egypt, were celebrated by an annual mystery-play at Abydos on about March 25, an approximation of the Vernal Equinox (Jackson, 1941).

With the increasing awareness of the role played by the Mother of Jesus in the Divine Economy, the celebration of the Incarnation during the Annunciation took a distinctly Marian nature (Charalampidis, 2007, 26).[70] We have evidence of it in Constantinople since the middle of the V century[71]. The next day, March 26, her counterpart, the archangel Gabriel, is commemorated.

In Orthodox churches, the scene of the Annunciation often occupies the two central door leaves of the iconostasis, which isolate the *sancta sanctorum* from the main

[67] "Salutation" takes name from "Hail," the greeting of the archangel Gabriel to Virgin Mary at the beginning of their encounter.

[68] Greece celebrates the Independence Day from the Ottoman Empire on the same day. On March 1821, it gained independence.

[69] The idea that Jesus was born (or conceived) and crucified on the same calendar day, and thus lived a perfect number of years, is first attested in the Easter table established by Hippolytus of Rome (170–236). Later, it became quite common to synchronize the Passion or Resurrection with the conception of Jesus. The identification of March 25 as the date of the Incarnation of Christ became only possible once December 25, the winter solstice of the Julian calendar and the date of the pagan festival of the Unconquerable Sun, had been adopted as the birth day of Jesus. This happened in the course of the IV century. The tradition was firmly set up by the calendar work of Dionysius Exiguus, a Romanized Scythian monk who was asked by Pope John I to set out tables for calculating the dates for Easter from the years 527 to 626. Dionysius accepted Hippolytus' suggestion that the date of Jesus' birth was December 25. Then he calculated that Jesus must have been conceived on March 25. Finally, he decided that, as a perfect being, Jesus could not have lived an incomplete life so he must have died on March 25 as well (Dionysius Exiguus, 1863, 483-568; Veitch, 1999). See also Constas M. Monk, 2012, 47

[70] It is one of the numerous instances in which the liturgical tradition preceded the literary setting.

[71] The homilies written by Patriarch Proclus of Constantinople and Peter Chrysologos are the earliest records of this celebration. See remarks in Essey, 1973, 40.

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section of the building for public worship. The strategic position has a twofold symbolic meaning. On the one hand, it marks the passage into the inner sanctuary as the Son of God embodied into human flesh, i.e. it indicates his entry in humanity and that of humanity into a new life. On the other hand, the mariological scene with the encounter with the archangel is the starting point and the basis of a series of images / events rising in column on the iconostasis to the top of it, where the glory of Christ Pantocrator is portrayed (Merlini, 2012, 110).

The Annunciation composed by the experienced monk-painter Theophanes at the Great Lavra refectory has visual, artistic, and aesthetic qualities. It is a masterpiece of high innovativeness for not less than two reasons, triggering particular ideological and iconographic interest. From the first point of view, it employs two pagan art-religious agents from classical Greek (Artemis in person and Artemis' giant right ear plus inscription) as key elements of the narration of a founding event in Christian theology. Secondly, the fresco is a patchwork that exploits a tri-dimensional plastic component (a votive plaque with a representation in high relief) to underline a key passage of the mariological scene depicted in the fresco, giving material manifestation to the mystic mystery of a being who incarnated but whose original nature is immaterial.

A pagan goddess as witness to the Christian Annunciation

The Annunciation frescoed on the façade of the Great Lavra refectory is divided into two scenes.

Fig. 2. The Annunciation above the main entrance to the refectory of the Great Lavra monastery. Photo © F. Battaglia.

On the left, the Archangel Gabriel stretches out the right hand towards the Virgin, while it holds a long stick with a cruciform end with its left hand. A very young Mary is gazing him with surprise. On the right side of the composition, an equally young woman is caught in the act of leaving the scene. She is the Greek-Roman Goddess Artemis-Diana who is retreating, while the future Mother of God assumes the center stage, according to the Athonite pious tradition (Lavraeotis (Kambanaos) Monk, 1930, 19-20; Simonopetritis (Theophilopoulos) Monk, 1973, 33-34).

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The heavenly messenger has suddenly arrived at the end of a dialogue between the two women. What did they converse about? The interesting fact is that we know it, as we will discover.

The three actors of the representation (Gabriel, Mary, and Artemis) express an impressive narrative, because they are actual protagonists: dynamically conceived, strongly characterized, and perfectly expressive in postures, traits, and gestures. Theophanes painted monumental characters with huge size. Their bodies are elegantly elongated and outlined with clear and precise lines that have a natural, organic quality (Vasileios Archimandrite of Stavronikita, 1989). The terzetto totally ignores the viewer, being engaged in an intense bi-interrelation: Gabriel–Mary and Mary–Artemis. The Mother of God is *the* link between two different stories. Two key elements should be added to the scene: Artemis' huge right ear made of marble plus the related ancient Greek inscription, and the fecundating dark ray of light bearing a dove (Merlini, 2016; Ibid., 2017a, 21).

The iconographical equilibrium in the position and posture of the three divine characters determines part of the artistic success of the Annunciation we are investigating, even if Gabriel and the *Theotókos* are standing far away. Technically the artist could not place them closer due to the central position of the window where he made the plaque with Artemis' ear walled up (Merlini, 2012, 131).

Archangel and Virgin stand facing each other according to the Hellenistic-Byzantine iconographical tradition, as noticed by Gabriel Millet (Millet, 1916, 68). They have identical size, descriptive of the same celestial origin. However, the future Mother of God is placed by Theophanes on a footstool that elevates her to a higher position than the herald to symbolize an inner essence that overtops the angelic one. The pedestal on which she stands illustrates Luke's passage: as one "of low degree exalted" (1: 52). It also plays a relevant role in the construction of the setting. By opening the scene toward the viewer and, at the same time, being painted axonometrically, the footstool underlines the forward movement of the Virgin towards the messenger.

With regard to the differences of status, it should also be annotated that Mary is wearing footwear like the Goddess Artemis-Diana. Contrariwise, the ambassador is bare feet. The prospect of importance is applied to the pagan Goddess, too. She is depicted with smaller dimensions. It is not only because she is moving away from the scene, but above all due to the minor role she is starting to play on the stage of the world.

All the three characters wear dark and sober clothes with rigid, detailed draping that do not differentiate them chromatically from the surrounding environment. Their garments are more appropriate to agents of the Earth and humanity than to sacred, intangible and faraway representatives of the Christian heaven or pagan Olympus. Virgin Mary and Gabriel are not suffused with oriental spirituality as most of the Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Annunciations. Their celestial nature is revealed only by their halos. Theophanes intended to outline the anthropocentric message of Salvation (Merlini, 2012, 131).

Illustrating the mystery of the Incarnation of a being whose original nature is immaterial

Focusing on the fateful relationship between the herald sent from high above and the Virgin, the former approaches the latter from left as usually in iconography. Similarly to other Post-Byzantine annunciations, the heavenly messenger has just supervened: its wings are still inflated and drapery is still ruffled and billowing due to the wind of the long flight. We can compare these features with the Annunciation represented by Simone

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Martini and Lippo Memmi for the altar of Sant'Ansano in the Cathedral of Siena[72] and in the letter R in the manuscript of the monastery of Sankt Katharinenthal. The landing should has been a little hastily and with some coordination problems: wings are asymmetric (the right one is lower and extended)[73], legs are still one behind the other and a little bent, feet are resting precariously on the tips. Legs rendering is very expressive of the unbalanced position and anxiety concerning the right reception of its unbelievable message: its left leg is bent forward sharply at the knee; its right one is thrust dramatically backwards. It did not have time to plant the long stick in the ground yet, but keeps it temporarily in its left hand supporting it with the right shoulder (Merlini, 2012, 131). However, the swollen wings give a resolute posture to Gabriel. The archangel painted by Theophanes in the main church of the same monastery has a much more discreet pose, composed wings and less emphasized movements, but proffers his right arm-hand in a more emphatic oratorical gesture.

Fig. 3. The archangel Gabriel painted by Theophanes in the main church of the Great Lavra monastery. http://www.eleousa.net/immagini/2010_10_27_23_15_08.jpg.

The Christian notion illustrated by Theophanes recognizes the archangel as the intermediary intended to express and convey the seminal words of God, trying also to convince the Virgin on their credibility. In the Ancient and New Testament, Gabriel is an unnatural creature, with little substance and delicate personality. It shows off multi-colored diaphanous wings, heavenly beauty, celestial magnificence, and above all a captivating and fecundating voice.[74] Nothing to do with the archangel Michael, the determinate and sexy commander of the celestial army[75]. Nevertheless, Theophanes made

[72] Nowadays the masterpiece is held by the Uffizi Museum in Florence.
[73] This detail has been developed throughout the centuries also to fill the pictorial available space.
[74] This attribute does not necessary mean that the archangel impregnates Mary with *logoi* whispered into her ear. For a discussion, see Byrne, McNary-Zak, 2009, 158; González, 2015, 193-223. However, it is the case of the fresco under inquiry (Merlini, 2012).
[75] Michael means "Who is like God".

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a great effort to portray the archangelic messenger as a realistic personage full of vitality. It plays as an authentic counterpart of Mary who is solid and self-contained despite the unbelievable situation. Symbolically, Gabriel wears attire that suits a traveler-pilgrim. It is covered by a long green-brown cloak, allegory of long travelling to annunciate renewing life and hope. Under the mantle, it is dressed in a white tunic (*chiton)* which expresses its transcendence, since it is a divine creature, and announces the prodigious birth of the Son of God as well as new life for humanity. Its long stick is neither a scepter, sign of divine authority, nor a thin staff, emblem of dignity for imperial emissaries. It is the typical rod of travelers, messengers, and people with household or village authority. And it is a symbol of pilgrims, too (Merlini, 2012, 131).[76] Gabriel's feature is joyful, pleased to convey the good news, and focused in convincing Mary about the plausibility of it. Slight twist of the body and gesture indicate that it is starting to talk (Merlini, 2012, 130).

Fig. 4. The Archangel Gabriel on the left side of the Annunciation. Photo © Marco Merlini.

Gabriel depiction is in contrast with most of the other Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Annunciations where its sumptuous purple / gold robes and insignia emphasize its divine origin, celestial power, and role of professional messenger of God's to humans. See in comparison as it is portrayed by Theophanes in 1546 on the sanctuary low doors of the main church in the Athonite monastery of Stravronikita.

The Virgin's head is covered by the mantle and surrounded by a firmly painted halo. Well-arranged black curls are glimpsable under her cloak (Merlini, 2012, 156). The color of her clothing does not stand out from the surroundings either. The brownish fully-draped long garment with sleeves indicates that she is like a plowed soil ready to receive

[76] In later traditions, the *baculus viatorius* will be replaced by symbolic homages to the young maiden: a stem of lilies or an olive branch, a leaf of palm or a red rose.

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the seed to bear fruit. The brick-red color of her coat corresponds to the roofs of the buildings right behind the scene, contributing not only to integrate foreground to background, but much more relevantly to connect the Virgin to those edifices, according to a specific meaning we explore below (Merlini, 2012, 131).

Fig. 5. The Virgin Mary on the right side of the Annunciation. Photo © Marco Merlini.

A rendezvous happening in terrestrial sphere, in a very special place

This series of clues leads us to perceive that the momentous rendezvous does not take place in some heavenly sphere as in many other Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Annunciations. It happens within an environment that is neither the extra-terrestrial kingdom of God, nor the earthly sphere transfigured by the divine light. Neither herald nor young female meet in a bipartite scene which opposes Heaven and Earth as in the iconographical mainstream from the early Christian period to the Post-Byzantine phase (Merlini, 2012, 131). In these instances, the Virgin is positioned on the right of the scene, in terrestrial sphere. She is usually within an enclosed setting such as inside her house, a room, a palace, a church, in a garden, or under a porch (Charalampidis, 2007, 27). The archangel is habitually painted on the left, outside of the anthropic set, because it is arriving from the rarefied celestial regions.

The Athonite monk-painter decided instead to represent the mystery of the divine embodiment within the frame of human world in a deserted open space in front of buildings. The prodigious entry of the divine into physical time and space cannot be circumscribed by walls, enclosed within a house, or restricted by ceilings. The

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architectural background gives historical substance and narrative depth to Theophanes' Annunciation. The structures in the background are painted with a palette of colors that fits the set of warm tones combining yellow, cream, brick red, coffee color, shades of orange, and black. The Cretan master underlined that the Incarnation happened in a very special place on Earth, as we will discover (Merlini, 2012, 131).

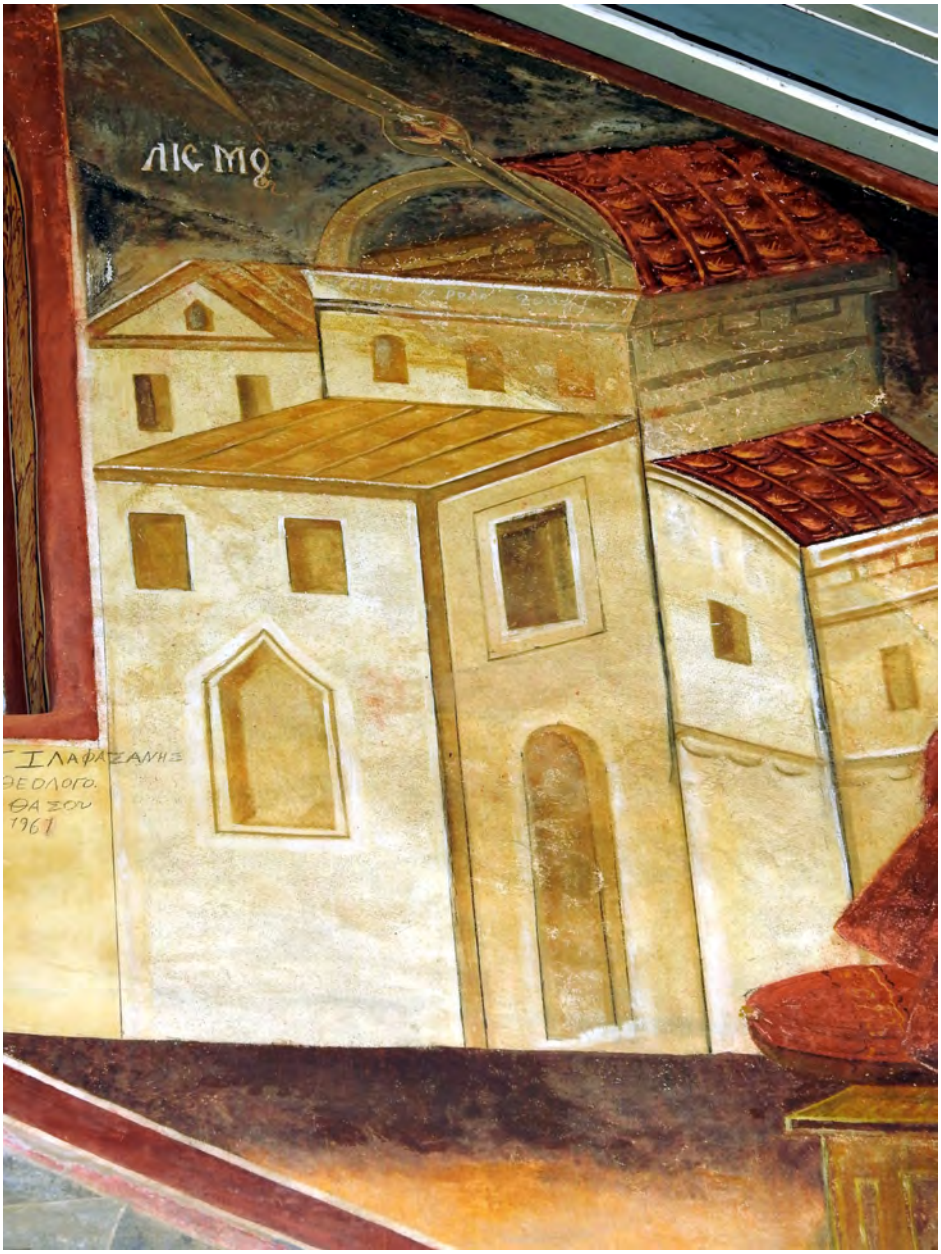

Fig. 6. The Great Lavra monastery as a fortified medieval architectural complex ruled by Virgin Mary, its Abbess.

Above all, Sun and Moon are characterized as subsidiary ingredients. They represent the entire universe and are rhythms of time, day and night, but also of periodic cycles.

Gabriel catches Mary unexpectedly, while she is busy talking with Artemis-Diana and the pagan goddess is preparing to bow out. Apparently, the conversation between the two goddesses happened with Virgin Mary sat and the Virgin of Moon and Hunt standing in front of her. However, the former was not enthroned, but sat on a bench. The painter

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fixes her full of wonder in a transitional moment. She is just arisen from the seat. Her body and hands are still directed towards the pagan Goddess to whom she was saying goodbye, but she impulsively turns her head and torso towards the words of greeting uttered by the stranger. It is exactly the moment when the heavenly messenger is pronouncing the initial expression of goodwill, as underlined by its open hand according to a well-known gesture that indicates both the blessing from its spiritual power and the transfer of the divine message: "Hail, O favored One! The Lord is with you…" (Luke 1: 28). Theophanes decided to render the initial phase of the Salutation in the long event of the Annunciation (Merlini, 2012, 130).

The swirl of the Archangel dissolves into the composed pose of the Virgin, despite her surprise. The delicate preliminary moment of the portentous meeting is emphasized by Mary's perplexed attitude. The sudden appearance of the foreigner has petrified her in an expression that is more of surprise and attention than of alarm and shyness. She neither clasps her hands on her chest in a defensive posture that portends the cross of the Crucifixion — as in the painting by Lorenzetti[77] — nor does she attempt to hide her face from the newcomer, as depicted by Simone Martini and Lippo Memmi. Neither she raises her hands in prayer, humbly receiving the inevitable, as on the abovementioned icon painted by Theophanes for the low doors of the iconostasis in the main church of Stravronikita monastery. Accordingly, Virgin's head is not bent in front of the heavenly messenger to underline her full acceptance. Rather, she focuses on the friendly hand gesture that accompanies the angelic incipit of the Salutation. Among the various encoded steps in the relationship emissary/receiver throughout the Annunciation, the fresco shows the *cogitatio* of the girl: "And she wondered what kind of sense had a greeting like this" (Luke 1: 29). Theophanes fixes the moment, settled in the Orthodox liturgy,[78] when Mary "Stood aloof, and looking at the speaker through the corner of her eye" (Chrysostom, 1986; Merlini, 2012, 133). The viewer perceives that a dialogue has begun between the celestial messenger and the young woman not by the movements of their lips or by fluctuating gilt words bridging them, but through expressive gestures. This effect is masterfully produced by the dynamism of the scene and the actions involving the characters. In contrast with the flat and front-viewed figures depicted by various contemporary post-Byzantine painters, Theophanes portrays the archangel in profile and the Virgin while turning from Artemis-Diana towards it. Gabriel also shows realistic twisting movements that highlight pictorial depth of field, the motion of the actors, and their transitive situation. We fully understand why the Byzantine Church calls the Annunciation also "the greeting of the angel."

Since the painting sets the initial instants of the encounter, there are no traces of insemination through the words of the Archangel. The nature of its declaration is verbal, but not yet seminal. As in similar masterpieces, the voice of the herald is expressed by a gesture of its right hand with a triple symbolism. Firstly, it is outstretched in an act of greeting, as we have already noticed. Secondly, it is blessing: two bent fingers (thumb and ring finger) to form the Greek letters IC XC, an acronym of the name "Jesus Christ". They also specify the two natures of Christ, the other three extended to represent the mystery of the Holy Trinity. Finally, the index finger of the right hand indicates the divine command and that it is inescapable. It is vehicled by the beam of light that spurs vertically from the angelic fingertip to descend towards the right ear of Virgin Mary after passing through the roomy ear of her forerunner, Artemis-Diana. The Christian Incarnation by ear is mediated and indicated by the organ of the pagan Goddess, and it is not incidental

[77] The masterpiece is held by the Pinacoteca Nazionale, Siena.

[78] It is described in a homily attributed (incorrectly) to Chrysostom in honor of the Feast of the Annunciation.

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that the cavity in the center of the pavilion has a vulva shape. The Cretan painter did not limit the representation of the *conceptio per aurem* disclosing the triad beam-dove-Mary's ear, as usually depicted in other aural *Evangelismos*. He also did not put the message or the means at the center of the attention. He focused, instead, on the recipient: the involved organ rendered during the insemination process (Merlini, 2012, 134). The Annunciation — the Earthly passage of the "Word of God" — is literally staged as a divine impregnation (Byrne, McNary-Zak, 2009, 158).

The iconographic mechanism exploited by Theophanes is similar to that one in the act of divine announcing painted in the Church of Santa Maria Antiqua (Rome). Here the light of divine inseminating power is reflected by the theurgic-like mirror[79] held by Gabriel[80] and is going to "overshadow" the Virgin, according to Luke's Gospel. The fresco dates from the last quarter of the VI century to the first half of the VII century (c. 630)[81]. In later mainstream representations, such rays of light descend upon the Virgin directly from heaven: the best "Mirror of Divine Wisdom" is the Madonna herself, as suggested by Jakob Böhme, German mystic of the Renaissance (Böhme, 1989; Ibid., 1998).

Fig. 7. The light of divine inseminating power is reflected by the theurgic-like mirror held by Gabriel in the Church of Santa Maria Antiqua (Rome). From https://upload.wikimedia.org/.

[79] The mirror is held on its right hand. It is very similar to that one bore on the left hand by Gabriel on a post-iconoclastic mosaic in the Basilica of Hagia Sophia (Instanbul).
[80] It is known in literature as the 'Fair Angel' or the 'Pompeian Angel'.
[81] See the controversy among Kitzinger Nordhagen, Krautheimer, and Matthiae in Kitzinger, 1976, 234-236.

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Theophanes' fresco is based on actions expressed by the triple significance of the gesture made by the archangel's right hand: greeting / tranquillizing; blessing / expressing the divine authority; and consecrating / impregnating. In the first action, Virgin Mary is distracted from the farewell with Artemis by the unexpected arrival and salutation of the celestial stranger. In the second, she has to recognize the divine authority and will. In the third, she is bombarded by fertilizing rays and impregnated through the organ of reference: the ear. This is the very moment of Insemination through the Word. The angel's voice, as well as the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove riding on a directional beam, can only reach the natural place for a *virgo* who must remain *intacta* (Merlini, 2012, 134). As the Delphic Pythia, her virginity ensured her openness to the God, and (like a perfect bride) to him alone. The body of both was open to the word of the God. As annotated by Angeline Lafauchais, this type of insemination gives the status, not of an actual virgin, but of a half-virgin (or anti-virgin): deflowered ear, but spared as sexually intact. Mary's virginity *per aurem* is an antiphrasis from which her infertility emerges. She is not the pro-creator of the child. She is the container out of which the divinity is produced (Lafauchais, 2007).

Fig. 8. Theophanes utilizes a typical depiction of the *conceptio per aurem* hinged on the triad beam-dove-Mary's ear. Photo © Fabrizio Battaglia.

A pagan divinity with the title of Queen

The third character in the Theophane's Annunciation is a young lady with reddish hair: Artemis-Diana. She wears garments with the color of the green earth and retreats focusing on Mary. She leaves the stage in good order, taking the distaff under her arm and exploiting the automatic expertise to pull out a well-carded fiber. Thumb and forefinger are bringing out a regular thread picking it up on the spool.

The pagan Goddess has tawny hair, which set is free even if well composed. If investigation through ancient literature reveals no certain reference to Artemis' hair color,

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the ancient Greek popular mythology sometimes describes her with long hair flowing like silk in golden curls down the side of her head, as her twin Apollo[82].

Fig. 9. Artemis-Diana is depicted as a redhead pagan female demon forerunner of the impure and dangerous witch. Photo © Fabrizio Battaglia.

The related Roman Diana, instead, is often portrayed with curly light golden hair sometimes with tones of red. Theophanes did not have the image of Greek Artemis in mind, but that of Roman Diana although the divine Virgin of Moon and Hunt portrayed by him is conventionally cited in literature and in monk's oral memory as Artemis *Agrotera* (Lavraeotis Kambanaos Monk, 1930; Lewandowski, 2006) due to the perceived continuity with Classical Greece, ignoring totally the crucial Roman influence.

There are five main reasons to identify the young female figure with the pagan Goddess Artemis-Diana. First of all, Theophanes did not portray the Huntress Artemis *Agrotera*, but the less known Artemis-Diana *Eulinos/Eulinon*, e.g. 'She the clever spinner' or 'She who spins well' (Merlini, 2012, 156). A manuscript from Clermont-Ferrand indicates the Medieval perception about this spinning goddess (BM - ms. 0084 f.027).

A key convergence between the two Goddesses has to be noticed in Theophanes ideological program. Artemis, identified with Hunting and the Moon, is commonly recognizable by her youth, beauty, and the bow and arrow in her hand. Theophanes instead places in her hands the distaff around which a thread of linen or wool is twisted while spinning. His intention was to emphasize a common mark of identity with the Virgin Mary and symbolize the handover of the consecrated territory between the two divinities. Like the apocryphal gospels that illustrate Mary conceiving the Holy One while spinning, so Theophanes associates this activity with Artemis (Merlini, 2017a, 21. Ibid., 2016). The Cretan monk-painter surely knew that spinning was a sacred and powerful commitment (such as weaving), traditionally the domain of women who, regardless of

[82] Artemis has tightly drawn back, straight hair (Haas et al., 2005).

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their social status as queens or slaves, contributed to the self-sufficiency of their own households (Pantelia, 1993). Virgin Mary responds definitely to this model.

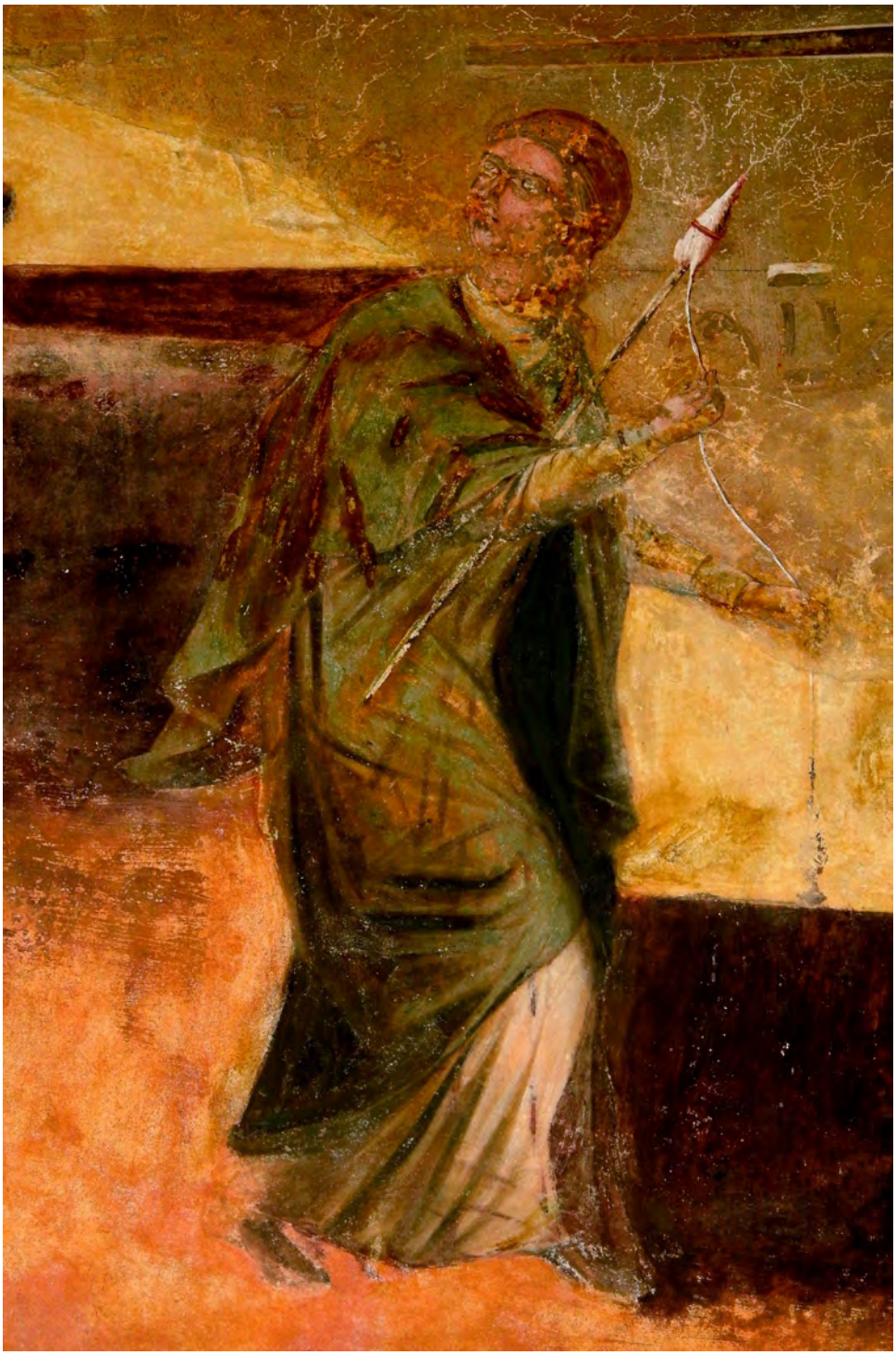

Fig. 10. Artemis-Diana is leaving the scene, while Mary is assuming the center stage. The pagan Goddess's unceasing spinning communicates rebellion, whereas her moving away legs indicates her acceptance of the inevitable firing. Her eyes turn towards her reign she is leaving and to the new queen of it. Photo © Marco Merlini.

Secondly, an invocation to Artemis *Agrotera's* name is positioned over the votive marble huge ear walled by Theophanes at the center of the cornice upon the proclamation of Jesus' virginal conception.

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Thirdly, it is significant to notice that alongside the Annunciation depicting Artemis-Diana, Theophanes the Cretan and his family portrayed ancient Greek philosophers and sibyls on the internal walls of the same refectory. They are represented in his classical monumental style and positioned below the Tree of Jesse listing the ancestors of Christ. Any of them is depicted holding quotes from his/her writings that seem to point to Christ's incarnation and life. The wise men are wearing uniforms of high court officials and crowns (Mylona, Papaggelos, 2006, 253). They are prophesizing the Incarnation of Christ on the internal wall of the refectory; a mystical event that is happening on the external wall of the same building.

Fig. 11. Sibyl and Plato are portrayed in classical monumental style on the internal walls of the refectory of the Great Lavra monastery. https://it.pinterest.com/pin/387450374168545054/.

The wise men and women at Great Lavra are not the only such representation painted by Theophanes on Mount Athos. In 1699, Ioannes Comnenos described exquisite and unequaled wall paintings at the refectory of Stavronikita made in 1546. Also here the ancient Greek philosophers and sibyls were portrayed within the framework of the Tree of Jesse.

Theophanes was the first to depict the portraits of ancient philosophers and sibyls in Athonite wall-painting. His innovation was followed by a number of post-Byzantine artists: in the Vatopedi monastery (1643, with four sibyls destroyed shortly before 1848); on the walls of the Panagia Portaitissa Chapel in Iviron monastery (1683); and at the entrance pavilion of Vatopedi monastery in 1858 (Mylona, Papaggelos, 2006, 251).

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Theophanes triggered an iconographical tradition on Mount Athos according to which Artemis-Diana as well as Plato, Aristotle, Solon, the other philosophers and the sibyls are significant instances of the submerged continuity between the pagan Greek civilization and Christianity[83]. The features of these portraits and their symbolism have direct origin from apocryphal texts.

Fourthly, even at Theophanes time the Athonite monks knew that Mount Athos was called *Akte* by Herodotus and ancient authors (Herodotus, Vol. 3, 1828, 106; Ibid., 1855; Smyrnakis, 1903, 8). They were also aware that for a long time it was renowned for deep forests consecrated to Artemis, divinity of wildlife, untouched nature, and hunting. Besides, ancient Greeks were persuaded that the crests of the mountainous peninsula are the first to shine from the virginal rays of sunrise (All the Representatives and Abbots of the Twenty Holy Monasteries on Mount Athos in the Joint Assembly, 2006, 17). Therefore, Mount Athos "was recognized by ancient Greeks as a place of chastity and prayer" (Agioreitis Monk, 2006, 266).

The *Agion Oros* case study corroborates how long the generative aspect of Artemis, divinity with pre-Indo-European roots, was alive (Haarmann, 1998, 21)[84]. The cult of the mighty Ephesian Artemis flourished during the Hellenistic period. She inherited Cybele's proprieties and attributes (Haarmann, Marler, 2008, 50). As Cybele's successor in western Asia, she is considered to be the daughter of the Great Goddess (Haarmann, 1996, 116 ff.; Haarmann, Marler, 2008, 141). In the oldest layer of her sanctuary, the object of worship was not a statue but a sacralized tree (Haarmann, Marler, 2008, 41). There were no temples, but the rituals were performed in the open natural environment (Haarmann, 2014, 147). As inheritor of the prehistoric youthful Birth and Life–Giving Goddess, Artemis never acquired features of an Indo-European divinity, nor was she married to a god. She assumed, instead, the title of *Queen*, as maintained by Herodotus (Gimbutas, 1989, 87, 318).

Finally, Artemis-Diana's abode is located under the Great Lavra. Its main church was built on a pagan temple, the refectory is just in front of it and the nearby archaeological site of Melana provided material for the vast monastic architectural complex. In his exhaustive textual and field research on *Agion Oros*, Gerasimos Smyrnakis specifies that probably "a temple dedicated to Artemis stood" near the refectory of the monastery (Smyrnakis, 1903, 391). The historian monk Spyridon Lavraeotis (Kambanaos) of the Great Lavra translates the assumption into certainty, citing the presence of a shrine consecrated to a "rural Diana" (Lavraeotis Kambanaos Monk, 1930, 19-20).

The Athonite fathers placed pell-mell a number of sarcophagi, capitals, altars, tiles, and fragments of columns under the porch of the refectory and near it, as if it was the outside warehouse of an archaeological museum. Architectonical elements are messily and negligently scattered in the court. The monks also positioned the capitals turned upside down and at the bottom of the columns due to disinterest and ignorance for classical antiquity that preceded them.

To summarize, the unusual fresco of the Annunciation located above the main entrance of the refectory documents that the place where the Great Lavra was erected was

[83] The earliest known portraits of philosophers in a Christian monument are the mosaics in the Basilica of the Nativity in Bethlehem (1169). The first Sibyl, the Ethiopian prophetess, was portrayed in the church of Santa Maria Maggiore, Rome.

[84] According to Haarmann, Artemis was among the goddesses with ancient pre-Indo-European roots worshiped within the Greek pantheon such as Hera, Hestia, Demeter, Athena, Aphrodite, and Hera. The closest female divinity to nature, the realm which was of prominent importance in the Old European-ancient Aegean religious context, was Artemis (Haarmann, 1996, 63).

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once blessed by Artemis and that there is a connection between her and the Athonite monasticism. We will discover which one.

Section 2
Artemis had home at Mount Athos and under its main monastery

A temple-town-school: the complex structure and organizational model implemented for Artemis Agrotera

According to monks' viewpoint, the Athonite Peninsula was a place destined to chaste virgins by Divine Providence since archaic times. Monastic collective and selective memory still preserves remembrance of a city-temple-school inhabited by virgins only. They worshipped Artemis *Agrotera* and kept a perpetual burning flame, like the Roman Vestals, in a special cave-sanctuary (Merlini, 2017a, 21; Ibid., 2017b). Monk Andreas Simonopetritis and other brothers specify that the consecrated girls were trained on the sacred feminine being destined to become high priestesses to serve and rule "idolatrous" temples throughout ancient Greece (Simonopetritis Theophilopoulos Monk, 1973)[85].

Monk Andreas Simonopetritis adds that the remote town where these young virgins lived was called Akrathos (Akrothool)[86]. This suggestion is shared by the majority of historians (Homer, *The Iliad*, 1958, 21.471; Xenophon, *Cynegeticus* 6.13 in Paap, 1970; Bacchylides, 1961, 11.37-42). The settlement was denominated Ouranopolis (Ouranoupolis) according to other authors and monks such as Spyridon Lavraeotis (Kambanaos) and Moisis Agioreitis (Lavraeotis Kambanaos Monk, 1930, 19-20; Agioreitis Monk, 2006, 266).

The temple-town-school dedicated to Artemis had "its own regime and government…It had its strict rules and its own coinage" (Simonopetritis Theophilopoulos Monk, 1973, 26). Activities related to the management and administration of the sacred complex were entitled to the female priestly cast whose leading members were frequently the offspring of rich and powerful lineages. They were assisted by wealthy and politically important families that collected donations, increased the assets of the sanctuary and promoted its prestige and reputation at the Pan-Hellenic level.

The temple organization mentioned by monks is usual only for high rank structures. The Artemision in Ephesus was administrated by high priests, described as '*drones*,' who would be chaste for a year, and by priestesses called bees, *melissai* (Pausanias, 1979, 8, 13, 1; Baugh, 1999, 167)[87]. The whole organization of the sanctuary in classical times seems to have rested on the symbolic analogy of a beehive (Barnett, 1956, 218; Gimbutas, 1974, 183; Ibid., 1999, 157).

The organizational model prefigured by monks for the temple of Artemis at Akte was similarly applied to her prominent sanctuary at Brauron (an Attic village near Marathon), where initiation rites were held for bear-girls between the ages of five and ten (Larson, 2007, 108). A significant parallel can be traced to the temple-town-school consecrated to Artemis at Akte, because at Brauron the lassies were placed in service for extended periods (Harrison R. P., 1993, 21).

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[85]. See also interesting remarks in Holy Apostles Convent, 1989.

[86] In nowadays topography, Akrathos is the name of the cape that marks the end of the peninsula: Longitude: 24o 23' 54.4" E; Latitude: 40o 08' 29.94" N. See also information in Strabo of Amaseia VII, 1877 - 1898, 330, 32. The last hermitage on the cliff is inhabited by father Iosif, who collects pre-Christian artifacts such as amphorae, ostrakons, inscribed stones, and potshards. The *finis terrae* is marked by two flags: Greece and Republic of the Athonite Monks. It takes about one hour by feet from here to the Great Lavra.

[87] In Greek mythology, the *Melissae* or *Melissai* were originally the nymphs of honey bees. "The bee is an important regenerative symbol inherited from Neolithic and then Minoan times" (Gimbutas, 1999, 157).

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A concern about the temple structure of Artemis as identified by monks at Akte stems from the absence of textual traces of a religious training at the Pan-Hellenic level. It would be an impressive and unique initiative in ancient Greece that did not leave any trace. The suspicion is that monks residing in a place considered excellent for training in the Oriental Church, forced a tempting symmetry between antique instruction of consecrated females and today's educational glories of consecrated males.

A prohibition of men to enter the temple-city-school was quite uncommon. However, Artemis' initiatory rites were prohibited to men at Brauron and other sanctuaries (Anagnostou-Laoutides, 2005, 20). Some liturgies were merely not open to the public and such access restrictions were applied in all shrines. It has to be evaluated if the monks' storytelling is meant to justify the symmetry (although reversed) with the present circumstance that interdicts the monastic *Agio Oros* to women.

The perpetual fire held in a cave-sanctuary by consecrated virgins

The monks' tradition also claims the presence of the eternal fire in a cave-sanctuary held by the virgin priestesses consecrated to Artemis, which was located along the southern slope of the mountain. This ritual possibly belongs to a cult centered on the symbolism of the torch sacred to Artemis. Indicating the Goddess oversees the continuity of life and its thread. Isidor of Charax mentions a temple of the Persian Anahita (Anaïtis) at Echatana, a goddess of fertility identified with Artemis of Ephesus[88] by the Lydians, where fire was continuously burning (Leibovici, 1993, 67).

At Echatana as well as at Akte, the fire was tended by female not only for the obvious reason that most women took care of their household hearth mirroring the functions performed in heaven by divinities such as Hestia, the keeper of the pure fire. It was also because the concern related to the permanence of fire is a metaphor of the provision of life's perpetuity (*zoe*). If the sacred immortal fire symbolized hearth to the Greeks, then it was not just the household fireplace. A perpetual flame burned on the inner temple's altar only at Delos and Delphi. Greeks resorted to it as the "pure igneous source" for the New Fire, similar to that of the Christian Holy Saturday midnight at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. In any other Greek temple, the altar with fire was outside, where sacrifices and offerings were performed. If the fireplaces of a city and hearths of houses were extinguished due to special rituals or external contingencies (e.g., war), then people had to replenish it with active cinders from a long distance away. Every year the *pyrphorousa* ship departed from Lemnos to Delos to ignite the embers. The Argives went on mount Krathis in Arcadia to seek the fire on the occasion of the Lerneans. After all fires were extinguished due to the Persian invasion (V century BCE), the Pythia indicated - as a source of renewal and cleansing - that new fires must be rekindled from the sacred flame located inside the oracle temple of Delphi, considered to be the common hearth of all the Greeks. The Athenian Pitiades carried tributes to Delphi and returned with the sacred fire and a tripod. In ancient Greece, as in Rome, the sacred fire had exceptional virtue and the flame was placed under the supervision and protection of a specific deity, Hestia. However, the religious and ritual tradition was much older, and Hestia was only a later version of a much more ancient Goddess of the hearth and its holy flames. Within this framework, what was the significance of a perpetual fireplace in a cave of Akte? Did it serve as a pure igneous source for the sanctuary? Or was it connected to other symbolism? These questions are without answers, because there is no textual information on the rite, and archaeological excavation is not permitted by monks.

[88] Consistently, Lydians called her "Mother Anahita"," Artemis Anahita", or simply the "Persian Artemis".

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The presence of a sanctuary in a cave is an important naturalistic clue linking Artemis at Akte and the Minoan and Mycenaean religions where a female chthonian cult was developed. In the Cretan cave at Amnisos consecrated to Eileithyia-Artemis, the cult focused on the primordial fertility of animated nature incarnated by the female divinity, biological reproduction, and the sexual act as experienced by women (Gimbutas, 1991, 226).

On the track of Artemis Agrotera in the untamed wild along the southern slope of Akte

The location of the city-temple-school at Akte is completely uncertain. However, it possibly did not deviate from the custom to edify sanctuaries dedicated to Artemis not in the deep of wild mountain forests, but near urban centers as sub-urban cults. They might be located in delimiting territories sanctified to Artemis *Agrotera* as Goddess of the Untamed World, or further away in locations offering specific features, such as springs, swamps or marshy land (consecrated to Artemis *Limnatis*) (Fischer-Hansen, Poulsen, 2009, 245). Often the shrines dedicated to Artemis *Agrotera* were within enclosed gardens recognized as holy magical places (Harrison J. E., 1928, 33).

It is significant that the epithet *Agrotera* is synonymous with *Agraea* ("She the huntswoman")[89]. However, Eustathius derives it from the town of Agrae ("The hunting ground"), on the south bank of Ilissus River (Eustathius, 1979, 361). Nowadays, it is a borough of Athens. It is there that Artemis the Huntress (*Agrotera*) had an Ionic shrine with a statue revered in her usual form of a young female figure bearing a bow. It was believed she had first hunted there when she arrived from Delos (Pausanias, 1979, 1.19.7 describing Attica. Kerényi, 1991, 49). The small elegant sanctuary was built in 448 BCE by Kallikrates, the architect of the temple, dedicated to Apteros Nike on the Acropolis of Athens. The sacred precinct of Agrai indicated the hunting preserve of Artemis *Agrotera*. Since the VII century BCE, it was the place of initiation for the Agrai Mysteries dedicated to Persephone, the minor Eleusinian Mysteries. The Lesser Mysteries at Agrai occurred by the banks of the river in late February and were regarded as a preliminary stage leading to the Greater Mysteries held at the Eleusinian Telesterion in September. The small sanctuary consecrated to Artemis was perhaps one of the (many) ritual boundary-sites of Athens. A cult of the Divine Huntress, presiding over a boundary between culture and nature, and by association also over the boundary between this world and the underworld, came to be perceived, due to the growing influence of Eleusis, as having affinities with the Mysteries (Humphreys, 2004, 186). For example the transcendent torch is equally suitable either to Artemis or to Kore.

The choice to consecrate sacred reserves to Artemis is consistent with her surname as the Lady of transitions, margins, and borders. She guarded liminal regions and frontiers (such as gates of cities and domestic doorways), governed activities at the margins (such as hunting in which youths went to the extreme limits of civilization and entered into risky affairs with the wild), regulated liminal stages of life (rites of initiations to adulthood), and protected the weak creatures, such as young animals, children, and communities in distress. From her bordering and transitional position, the Goddess supervised the proper completion of things[90]. Spinning was her typical activity as a supernatural being dwelling "in between" — precisely due to her liminal position between the pre-natal and natal periods, the divine and human realms, and the otherworld and human reality (Merlini, 2012, 145).

[89] Alcathous erected to Apollo *Agraeus* (the hunter) a temple at Megara after the god had killed the lion of Cithaeron (Pausanias, 1979, 1**.** 41, 4**.** Eustathius, 1979, 361).

[90] For a discussion on Artemis as divinity of margin, see Vernant, 1984, 11-27.

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Unfortunately, there is no information concerning location, endurance, administration, or radius of influence of the temple-town-school consecrated to Artemis at Akte. However, it should be in the wild or in a half-domesticated wild not very far from an urban center. We have to go in search of Artemis *Agrotera* and her temple complex at the borders, both conceptually and physically, between wilderness and civilized life, typical of remote and isolated Athonite monasteries.

In the seventh book by Strabo of Amaseia, the town sacred to Artemis *Agrotera* is placed near the peak of the Athonite sacred mountain that is on the southern edge of the peninsula (Strabo of Amaseia vol. 2 (Lib. 7-12), 1877 – 1898, 7a.131.1–7a.131.9; 7a.1.32.1–7a.1.32.14). Father Andreas from Simonopetra, formerly secretary of the Athos Holy Community, maintains to have discovered there a coin with Artemis seated on a globe, ready to shoot an arrow (Simonopetritis Theophilopoulos Monk, 1973, 26). The area was known from immemorial time for the deep and untamed forests where ferocious and sturdy wild boars lived, as stated in *On Animals* by Aristotle (Louis, 1968, 607a.9, 607.a13). Both virgin nature and wild boars are the traditional realm and favorite animals of the young and strong She-of-the-Wild, the Huntress. The dedication of the wild area at the southern edge of Akte to Artemis was not alien to the above-mentioned ancient Greeks' belief that the crests of this mountain are the first to shine in the virginal sunlight of dawn.

In search of the temple consecrated to Artemis *Agrotera* in the southern area of *Agion Oros,* the possible locations can be only three.

Some scholars locate the ancient settlement of Korassia, with its temple-school for vestal virgins, at the site of present day Kerassia (next to the ancient Palaiokastro). The place is along the slope of the mountain at the southern edge of the peninsula. Nowadays the area is under the jurisdiction of the Great Lavra monastery[91]. According to Makarios Trigonis, Kerassia is a corrupted form of the Greek *korassia,* literally meaning "young maidens" (Trigonis, 1772, 40)[92]. Copper coins found on this location bear the inscription '*Ourania Poleos'*, i.e. "The city of the skies" (Agioreitis Monk, 2006, 266).

The oral monastic tradition assures that the virgin priestesses consecrated to Artemis kept there a perpetual burning flame, like the Roman Vestals, in a special cave-sanctuary (Simonopetritis Theophilopoulos Monk, 1973, 26). Monk Moisis Agioretis even maintains that the foundations of ancient altars from this cave-sanctuary for vestal virgins have been preserved to these days (Agioreitis Monk, 2006, 266).

Nevertheless, even a superficial inspection of the site indicates that it is not suitable for a large structure and settlement, because the land is very limited and the soil is harsh. The area is full of caves. It is very possible that, consistently to the monks' oral tradition, one was utilized for chthonian rituals of fire blessed by Artemis *Agrotera*. In July 2011, a team of speleologists identified, mapped and studied thirty-six caves on Mount Athos, most in the southern area of the peninsula. Photos from their study based on preliminary data were compiled in a video. Unfortunately, the survey did not reveal any sign of Artemis *Agrotera*. Nonetheless, there are hundreds of suitable remote mountain caverns there that have not been systematically investigated by cave explorers and speleologists (Zhalov et al., 2011). There are no publications (maps, descriptions etc.) about them except for some used by hermits for religious purposes. These caves are not declared either as natural habitats, or as archeological heritage. In search of the location of the temple-settlement-school, one has to look elsewhere.

[91] Smyrnakis (1903, 405-6) identifies the place as Siderokastron. The collection of the Hellenistic archaeological finds from Palaiokastro–Siderokastron is recorded by Tsouknidas, 2006, 80.

[92] However, the homophone *keras* means, among other things, a beast's horn, the hunting-bow, the peak of a mountain, and the cherry trees (Lewandowski, 2006, 235).

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The *Decree of the Akrothoans*, found in the area of the Agia Anna Skete in 1845 (Smyrnakis, 1903, 12; Uspenskij, vol. I, 1877, 42 ff; Hatzopoulos, 1996, Epigraphic Appendix, 62, n. 43; Paliompeis, 2006, 104, note 10), gives historical substance to the memory of the city ruled by a virgin priestess. It registered the tribute of this town in the Akte peninsula to the coffers of the Attic–Delian Alliance (Meritt et al., 1939, 225, 264 ff., 286 ff., 314, 360 ff., 464). Unfortunately, the inscription is lost, having been transferred as early as 1877 to Crimea by Bishop Porphiry Uspenskij (Uspenskij, vol. III, 1884, 42 ff.; Papaggelos, Paliompeis, 2006, 58). It happened under the indifference of monks for a pre-Christian vestige. Although any visitor can admire it in the Odessa Archaeological Museum, for the Athonite monks it is officially "purloined by unknown persons" (Smyrnakis, 1903, 12).

Concerning the location of the ancient settlement blessed by Artemis *Agrotera*, I am in agreement with Ioakeim Papaggelos and Stefanos Paliompeis who pointed out that it would be difficult for a city to survive in the rough terrain in the neighborhood of the Agia Anna Skete.

Conspicuous remains at the archaeological site of Melana

The only position suitable for anchorage and with enough arable land that accomplishes the coordinates of a fortified settlement at the southern tip of Akte is around the Great Lavra, the oldest and most important monastery, or under its foundations (Papaggelos, Paliompeis, 2006, 58; Merlini, 2012, 144). Here we have to deal with the problem of a vast architectural complex that employed the ready available construction material of a Greek-Roman city.

According to Monk Moisis Agioreitis, near Megisti Lavra there was a city called Ouranoupolis, which was flanked by the fortresses of Palaiopyrgos and Siderocastron. It was there that Artemis was worshipped and vestal virgins lived, dedicated themselves to Artemis and were trained to become high priestesses at the service and government of temples all over Greece. The city was forbidden to all males and trespassing it carried a death sentence. It was there that the ever-burning fire was kept (Agioreitis Monk, 2006, 266).

The archaeological site in the locality of Melana (Melanea), at 160 m altitude, is just a few dozen meters above the monastery. A stone altar for bull sacrifice perhaps in honor of Poseidon (visited by Alain Daniélou and Jacques Cloarec with the guidance of a monk) is identifiable (Daniélou, 1992, 290)[93]. A wine-stomping press carved out of the rock is recognizable. Grapes were pressed in a

Fig. 11. Melana, a Greek-Roman archaeological site in the neighborhood of the Great Lavra monastery, in the south-eastern side of the Athos peninsula. Photo © Marco Merlini.

[93] The mythologist is keen to specify that the visit took place in great secrecy.

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rectangular cavity; the must descended into a circular tank by means of a stone spout. Winemaking tradition has deep roots on Mount Athos. On a nearby rock, a square grid of 3x3 boxes is engraved, to play a round *Tris* using pawns. The game is also known in the Anglo-Saxon world as *Tic Tac Toe,* or *Noughts and Crosses*[94]. In Roman times, this pastime was called *Terni Lapilli*. It used three pieces and followed more complex rules than the current *Tris* (Powell B., 2000, 50). A sundial with a central hole for inserting the shaft can be identified too. Hourly engravings are no longer visible except for a V, to mark the five o'clock in Roman times. The features of the findings make me think of the presence of a Roman settlement superimposed on a Greek one (Merlini, 2012, 144).

Fig. 13. A Roman sundial with a central hole for inserting the shaft in the Melana archaeological site.

In the same archaeological site, evidence of pre-Christians and early Christian petroglyphs can also be recognized. It is said that God guided Athanasius the Athonite to Melana, where he lived in solitude as a hesychast for a year (during 960) before founding his *lavra* (Noret, 1982, chapters 14, 19, 21, 23). The place was on the remote mountainous area of the peninsula, extremely difficult to be accessed, tremendously desolate, waterless, and long away from the abodes of the other ascetics. Right in the middle of this location, he lived in a cave or built a hut as a virtuous workshop (traditions are divergent), and roused himself to even greater labors and ascetic struggles (Greenfield, Talbot, 2016, 183). But a devil, "who is truly black and never sleeps", resided in this pagan area[95]. He attacked the saint by insufflating *akedia* (spiritual aridity and torpor) into his soul, to develop an antipathy to the spot, thus forcing him to abandon it. Nevertheless, the monk was victorious. After exactly a year of his solitary and tormented ordeal, as he prayed,

[94] As we know, the alignment game was invented in ancient Egypt (it was incised around 1400 BCE on a slab of the ceiling in the temple of Kurna). It fascinated the inhabitants of Troy (first excavation level), the Greeks, and the Romans.

[95] Greenfield and Talbot noticed the wordplay between "black" (*melanos*) and the denomination of the site (Melana) (Greenfield, Talbot, 2016, 677).

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Athanasius experienced a type of transfiguration "a heavenly light was shed upon him and flashed all around and made him luminous" (Noret, 1982, chapter 21.43-44; Gothóni, Speake, 2008, 51). The ecstatic experience made the hermit fall in love with the site of Melana as much as he had previously hated it. He erected a church consecrated to the Virgin Mary, a monastery and the necessary associated buildings on the very site "where he had received the gift of the divine grace" (Noret, 1982, chapter 23.27-30). The imperial lavra (the present Great Lavra) called *Ta Melana* was therefore established "by God's permission" and the reverend monk became the superior of it (Noret, 1982, chapter 21; Lemerle, 1963). His *Life* inform that in his monastery he gave the most prominent — central — location to the main church which acted as the sleepless eye of the entirety (Noret, 1982, chapter 25). And the katholikon was possibly erected on Artemis' temple. Many ancient artefacts in the Great Lavra collection come from the archaeological site of Melana. Nowadays, the site belongs to a monk who fenced it as his private property and made a stone cottage. He is also systematically destroying the ancient vestiges to create a garden and an olive tree grove.

Up to now, we have accumulated a number of input to investigate the very special rendezvous between the Archangel Gabriel and Virgin Mary located at the Great Lavra refectory. In section 1, we have documented how the monk-painter Theophanes the Cretan creatively developed the motif of the privileged witness to the Annunciation into the character of Artemis-Diana. In section 2, we have established the preeminent presence of the Greek-Roman goddess on Mount Athos and in particular at the site of the Great Lavra. In order to settle the role of the pagan virgin Goddess in the representation of Christ's Incarnation, in section 3 we will investigate Byzantine and western Annunciation iconography with the presence of accessory figures which have no basis in the canonical Gospels.

Section 3
Mary's servants and companions in the Incarnation of Christ

The iconographic model exploited by Theophanes is reminiscent of the unusual Annunciation representations where a servant is standing behind the Virgin[96]. She is the inside witness who will refer to Joseph that no man ever approached Mary during his absence. In the Great Lavra instance, the privileged observer is not a midwife but a pagan Goddess. She will not speak to Joseph but has just spoken with the Madonna, and her presence has relevant theological implications.

In Biblical iconography, the eyewitness maid/s originated by Eastern Christianity. Western imagination owed its inspiration to it. The motif is present into certain Byzantine scenes of the infancy of the Virgin (the Annunciation to Anna and the Meeting at the Golden Gate), the Annunciation, the Visitation, and the Nativity. In the depictions of the Old Testament, based primarily upon the Hebrew Bible, significant is the occurrence of Sarah in the scene of Abraham serving the angels. Perhaps the best known motif is the attendant(s) drawing back a curtain at the Annunciation or the visit of Mary with her cousin Elizabeth (Eberlein, 1982, 44 ff., 146 ff.; Deshman, 1989, 50).

The addition of a witness, even if a handmaid, reinforces the correlation and consequentiality between two or more events of Virgin Mary's or Jesus' life that are put networking within an imaginative system aimed to make consistent the reveled truth. For example, Anna's miraculous pregnancy presaged Elizabeth's miraculous pregnancy, that prefigured Mary's miraculous pregnancy (Kaster, 1974, 98-99). The growing devotion to

[96] See, e.g., the Annunciation painted on a fresco from the first half of the IX century in the church of Santa Maria of Foris Portas at Castelseprio (Varese).

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the mother of the Virgin, her unexpected marvelous gravidity, Elizabeth's conception through divine intervention, and holiness of the whole Virgin Mary's large family lacked of interest in the earliest centuries of Christianity. They were boosted to counterattack the wide incredulity over Madonna's immaculate conception. The justificatory mechanism hinged on the presence of someone who had first-hand knowledge about Mary's miraculous conception was replayed straight for the old and sterile Elizabeth.

Ancillae *drawing the curtain of the doorway to watch the prodigy of the Archangel-Virgin encounter*

Auxiliary female personae in the Annunciation scenes can be domestic attendants, maiden friends, angels, saints, donors, or even more infrequently allegorical figures impersonated by some Greek-Roman goddesses. According to Deshman, servant maidens are rare in Byzantine images of the Annunciation. However, this topic endured in the Byzantine tradition even into the late medieval period and beyond. The most frequent typology is based on one or two midwives to Mary who watch the wondrous meeting while drawing or keeping open the curtain of the doorway. The portrayed character was inspired by Elizabeth's handmaid in the Byzantine iconography of the Visitation (Deshman, 1989, 53). The subject did not emerge in Western European art before the late VIII century to become recurrent in the Carolingian art (from about 780 to 900).
In the Carolingian Renaissance, handmaids are always shown standing behind the Virgin (Deshman, 1989, 50-52). Sometimes, they draw aside the curtain, as in the late VIII or early IX century Genoels-Elderen diptych from St. Martin's church at Genoels-Elderen, Brussels[97] and in a mid IX century book cover from Metz, Northeastern France[98]. The elaborate carving of the Genoels-Elderen ivory diptych was probably commissioned to cover a book. It is comprised of two parts, depicting the Visitation in the lower half and the Annunciation on the top. A young maiden appears to witness both the scenes.

Fig. 14. An *ancilla* is drawing the curtain of the doorway to watch the prodigy of the Archangel-Virgin encounter in the Genoels-Elderen diptych https://upload.wikimedia.org/.

[97] It is held by the Musees Royaux d'Art et d'Histoire in Brussels, Belgium.
[98] Cod. lat. 9393. Biblioteque National, Paris. See references in Goldschmidt, 1, 1914, n. 72, pl. 29.

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In the Annunciation representation, Mary is sitting in the middle of the composition next to the standing archangel, which right hand is reaching out for her. The space of their encounter is defined and limited by some archways. The Virgin wears a garment which covers her head. It hangs down the front of her body like a chasuble according to the Late Antique and Byzantine model and not to the Anglo-Saxon fashion, contradicting the scholars who have argued that the panel was stylistically influenced by Northumbrian models (Owen-Crocker, 2010, 150)[99]. The Annunciate is holding spindle and distaff with her left hand. The inscription recites: *UBI GABRIHEL VENIT AD MARIAM* (Where Gabriel comes to Mary).

The servant girl stands on the right edge of the panel, beside the two protagonists. She is pulling back a curtain, which is hanging directly from the frame of the image to the right of the scene. The action suggests that her main purpose is to unfold this sacred event to the spectator. Moreover, she gives testimony to it and spurs the viewer to do the same (Ilko, 2016). The standing maid-servant has to be correlated with the portrait of Mary sitting on a chair-throne, serving to emphasize her nobility on the Carolingian version. It is stimulating to compare the dress of the midwife in the Annunciation with the garment of Mary's cousin in the Visitation below. She wears a similar girdled garment with folds at the front and a smooth back, but lacks the decorative panels (Owen-Crocker, 2010, 151).

Several later examples to be compared with Theophanes' Annunciation at the Great Lavra, are very close to this early model. The typology of the *ancilla* pulling back the curtain to attend the Annunciation was operated in Medieval monumental painting in Rome. The fresco was made in a year between 1011 and 1099 at Sant'Urbano alla Caffarella church, an adaptation of the former temple consecrated to Cerere and Faustina[100]. The washed out Annunciation is the starting scene of a version of the evangelical cycle inspired by the apocryphal *Protoevangelium of James*. Mary sits regally on an imperial throne. She is portrayed in a dynamic posture with her body slightly curved to the right. Her figure and the gesture of her right hand reveal shyness. The index of her left hand points to her belly, replicating one of the typical symbols of the Incarnation since the VI century. The Virgin's handmaid appears behind her, on the doorway of her house framed by two Ionic columns. Her left hand is positioned on her belly too, highlighting the core of the event she is witnessing. It is the oldest representation of this character in Rome. It will only emerge in the XII century, in the Annunciation and the Visitation within the cycle of frescoes at the church of Saint John in Porta Latina. In the Annunciation, the *ancilla* appeared on the left of Mary. Nowadays, the figure has completely disappeared, but it is attested by a Wilpert's water colored photography.

[99] Concerning the Northumbrian influences, see Webster, 2012, 167-168.

[100] The traditional chronology suggested the incorrect date of 1011 for the cycle of frescoes, on the grounds of a disputable inscription in the Crucifixion. See Busuioceanu, 1924, 8; Matthiae, vol. II, 1965-1966, 12-19. Recent literature has placed the occasion for painting the cycle in the time of the French Pope Urban II (1088-1099), individuating him as the direct patron of the church. Therefore, they insert the frescoes within the production of the so-called Gregorian Reform and the years following it. See remarks in Anthony, 1951, 71-72; Williamson, 1984; Ibid., 1987, 224-228; Garrison, vol. II, 1960, 79, n. 1; Noreen, 1998, 23-25; Ilko, 2016. Serena Romano instead challenged any clue of a possible link between the cycle of frescoes with Pope Urban II. She compared it with the earlier paintings like those in the tower of Farfa or the Oratory of St. Andrew in St. Gregorio al Celio. She concluded proposing a hypothetical dating to the half of the XI century (Romano, 2012, 77-94).

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Fig. 15. The typology of the *ancilla* pulling back the curtain to attend the Annunciation was operated in Medieval monumental painting in Rome. Here it is depicted in Sant'Urbano alla Caffarella church. https://1.bp.blogspot.com/-pM9lvdQF85c/WEPJAKkaZaI/AAAAAAABqEM/nEVUSwLD-0MmHJRihnpi246yEqRc8ujNQCLcB/s1600/annunciazione.png.

Two servant maidens observe the announcement by the Archangel Gabriel to the Virgin Mary on each side of the scene on the Romanesque baptismal font in the church of San Giovanni in Fonte in Verona, the baptistery of the cathedral. The attendant on the left of the viewer is holding the curtain open in a gesture that reply the Visitation scene carved on the ivory diptych from S. Martin at Genoels-Elderen. The attendant on the right is drawing the curtain aside with her left hand. Her right hand is assuming the Christian "mudra" to indicate Christ's double nature with the two bent fingers, the other three extended to represent the mystery of the Holy Trinity. This arrangement of the hand has not to be confused with the ritual hand movement performed by Gabriel in the Annunciation painted by Theophanes at the Great Lavra. They express the same symbolism, but in the Athonite instance the archangel is also blessing.

Fig. 16. Two servant maidens observe the announcement by the Archangel Gabriel to the Virgin Mary on each side of the scene on a panel of the Romanesque baptismal font in the church of San Giovanni in Fonte in Verona. Photo © Andrea Castagnone.

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The baptistery was rebuilt in Romanesque style around 1123, the older building having been devastated by an earthquake in 1116. The baptismal font is a monolithic octagon in red marble of Verona. It is an exceptional example of XII-XII century Romanesque sculpture. Each of its eight panels depicts an episode from Jesus' youth as described in the apocryphal gospels of infancy. During the salutation of the archangel, the Virgin is spinning. The Byzantine influence is apparent both in artistic inspiration and doctrinal guidance.

A companion of an amazing and elegant Blessed Virgin is portrayed in the wall painting of the Saint Peter church in the Catalonian town of Sorpe (Lleida)[101]. It was frescoed in a time between 1123 and 1130 by the Maestro de Orcau / Maestro de Sorpe (Avril, 1983; Toubert, 1969, 167-189; Olivar, 1968, 27; Mancho, 1994, 59-66; Arad, 2006; Mancho, 2015). Mary is spinning out of threads with the spindle, following the Byzantine iconographic prototype (Rodríguez Peinado, 2014, 6). A white dove (the Holy Spirit) places its beak in the Virgin's ear, materializing the gospel interpretation about the *conceptio per aurem.* The maid is keeping the curtain open with one hand and indicating the Annunciate's womb with the other. The figures are stylized; the chromatism is bright and delicate[102].

Fig. 17. A companion of an amazing and elegant Blessed Virgin is portrayed in a wall painting of Saint Peter church in the Catalonian town of Sorpe (Lleida). https://upload.wikimedia.org/.

[101] The fresco was transferred to canvas and posotioned in the Museo de Arte de Cataluña, Barcelona. Inventory number: 113144-001.
[102] de la Peña González, 2012, 179.

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Virgin Mary's stepson attending the insemination of his stepmother

In 1130 – 1139, monk Iakovos of the Kokkinobaphou monastery (an unidentified place) wrote six homilies[103] based on sequential episodes in the life of the Mother of God, from her Conception to the Visitation. The narrative is for the most part based on the Virgin's apocryphal life. The *Homilies of James* (*or Jacob) Kokkinobaphos* have been illustrated in two editions: Vatican gr. 1162 and Paris gr. 1208[104]. In the illuminated manuscripts, Gabriel's arrival is depicted through the apocryphal scene that portrays him flying and entering through a window into Virgin's abode. Beneath it, a little boy is drawing the curtain of the doorway to watch the prodigy. He is portrayed with short hair and a red or blue tunic.

Fig. 18. Virgin Mary's stepson is attending the insemination of his stepmother on the illuminated manuscript *Homilies of James* (*or Jacob) Kokkinobaphos* (Paris gr. 1208). Porcher, Concasty, cat. 36, p. 21 ff.; pls. XVI-XVII, Paris, (1958).

[103] The term "Homily" indicates the sermon during a mass, in which the recited biblical readings are interpreted.

[104] The Marian homilies are preserved in two manuscripts, *Vaticanus graecus* 1162, and *Parisinus graecus* 1208, both copiously illustrated. The *Vaticanus graecus* is located in the Vatican Library (Rome), MS gr. 1162, folio 115v. See for references Stornajolo, 1910, pl. 49. A similar miniature was reproduced in Paris by Henri Omont. It is the *Parisinus graecus*, Bibliothèque Nationale (Paris), MS gr. 1208, folio 157r. See for references Omont, 1927, pl. 19, 2; Porcher, Concasty, 1958, 21 ff., pls. XVI-XVII; Aghion, cat. 272, 1992, 361-362, figs. at p. 362. The chronology of the two manuscripts with the homilies and their attribution to artists and scribes is still under debate. They are almost identical and have source in the same Constantinopolitan scriptorium, which original version is now lost. The Vatican copy is larger, more luxurious with 82 full page miniatures on shimmering gold backgrounds and was executed in the 1140s. The Paris redaction was commissioned in the early 1150s, most probably for Iakovos's own personal use (Linardou, 2004, 192-194, 234, 244, 247; Ibid., 2011). Hutter and Canart suggested that both the manuscripts were copied from a now lost edition; the Vatican copy was made in the second quarter of the XII century; the Paris copy was redacted in the second half of the same century (Hutter, Canart, 1991, 17). Contrariwise, Jeffrey Anderson argued that the Paris manuscript was illuminated sometime during the 1120s or 1130s; the Vatican Sermons has a date placed in the 1140s or 1150s (Anderson, 1991, 83-5). For a reconstruction of the intriguing unresolved story, see Linardou, 2011, 35-48.

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The child is a sort of Mary's helper not just in the Annunciation but in many other scenes of the cycle. Under the seeming position of servitude, he takes on a surprisingly central role as the Virgin's companion, witness and defender throughout the entire narrative, occurring in 19 separate scenes (Hennessy, 2013). Although he is never named or referred to in the text, he is possibly the youngest son of Joseph (Deshman, 1989, 52; Hennessy, 2013). Neither the *Protevangelium* (or *Infancy Gospel of James*[105]) nor the *Homilies of James* (*or Jacob*) *Kokkinobaphos* call for James the Less' attendance to the Annunciation and the other events (Deshman, 1989, 68, no. 67). A further apocryphal text, the *Story of Joseph the Carpenter,*[106] is dependent on the *Infancy Gospel* but gives a special role to James the Less as an orphan of Joseph who was found by Mary in his father's house and was adopted by her as stepmother. In this way, Mary can retain her perpetual virginity even if she is indicated as the mother of James (*Story of Joseph the Carpenter,* chapter 4). Iakovos' miniatures also show that the kid has three older brothers who live in Joseph's house, who are not mentioned in the homilies, but in both the *Gospels* by Mark and Matheus (Mark, 6, 3; 15, 40; Matthew, 13:55[107]).

The reason why the small James is featured in so many scenes as companion of Mary in absence of Joseph in the Kokkinobaphos manuscripts is not easy to be explained. The subject is unique in Byzantine iconography. His presence around Mary guarantees her purity and safety during Joseph's absence. Consistently, James is depicted leading the jubilant procession celebrating Mary's innocence after her poison trial. The outstanding role in the illustrated books is possibly connected to the fact that James the Less is mentioned first, before any other brother, in the *Gospels*. Besides, Byzantine theologians ascribed the redaction of the *Protevangelium* to him (Hennessy, 2013).

The remarkably prominent role for a secondary figure might also be explained by the name that the author of the sermon, James the monk, shares with James the Less. Several scholars, such as Cecily Hennessy, maintain that the boy might represent an individual believer, monk James (or Jacob) Kokkinobaphos himself. The illustrated text might put the author forward as a protagonist in the shape of the youngest son of Joseph, with his avatar testifying his attendance to main events of the Virgin's early life (Hennessy, 2013, 94).

In search for the identity of the little Mary's helper, a number of scholars shift the focus from the author to the possible patron of the illuminated manuscript and his/her wish to be shown within the holy events. Many of them indicate him as the emperor Manuel I Comnenus (1118 –1180), son of John II Comnenus, who identified himself with the little witness. Interesting is also the possibility that the patroness was his mother, the empress Irene (Saint Irene of Hungary, born Piroska), John II Comnenus' fourth wife (1088 – 1134), who was parallelized by monk James (or Jacob) Kokkinobaphos to Virgin Mary[108]. Clearly a devoted mother, Irene's main interest in life appears to be the salvation of her soul and the protection of her children. It would not be extraordinary to include an allusion to a cherished child in the manuscript even if in a veiled connection to the Mother of God and her small escort. If Irene was the patroness, the iconography might have been chosen to accentuate the elevated role of the fourth son, Manuel, the future emperor[109].

[105] This primary text on the early life of the Virgin and of Christ's birth originated in the late II century and widespread in the VI century.

[106] It originated in Egypt, perhaps in the V century.

[107] Matthew is explicit: "Isn't this the carpenter's son? Isn't his mother's name Mary, and aren't his brothers James, Joseph, Simon and Judas?"

[108] Concerning Irene's approach to power see Jeffreys E. M., Jeffreys M. J., 1994: 40-68.

[109] Manuel was five years younger than Isaac. Unexpectedly, he assumed the throne in 1143 aged 25 (Hennessy, 2013, 96).

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The motif of the servant who is watching the Annunciation while holding back a curtain is replicated on an elephant ivory plaque held by the Victoria and Albert Museum[110]. The naïve carvings depict the Annunciation, the Nativity, and the Adoration of the Magi. They would have originally been from the side of a casket. The artifact was made around 1200-1230 in Central Italy (Williamson, 2010, 354-355). In the Annunciation representation, the Virgin is shown seated in the center of the scene, under an architectural canopy. She is gazing left towards the approaching Gabriel. Behind the Annunciate, a maidservant witnesses the event by drawing a curtain open.

Fig. 19. The motif of the servant who is watching the Annunciation while holding back a curtain is carved on an elephant ivory plaque held by the Victoria and Albert Museum. https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O89092/the-annunciation-the-nativity-and-plaque-unknown/.

In the Annunciation among the Romanesque wall paintings of a small rural church in Kostoľany pod Tribečom (Slovakia), a female servant-maiden occurs beside the Virgin Mary and the archangel. She is pulling open hanging curtains from a separated little lodge in the background (Maříková-Kubková et al., 2015, 227). As in the Genoels-Elderen diptych, she unfolds this sacred scene to the spectator and at the same time testifies to it. The fresco of rustic quality was painted in the early XI century (Maříková-Kubková, Berger, 2009, 148-151[111] - early XII century (Ilko, 2016). Therefore the explanation of several scholars that this motif arrived to central Europe from late Byzantine painting in the XIII–XIV century (Dvořáková et al., 1978, 92. Faludy, 1978, 83. Glocková, 2002, 13) is inconsistent due its dating.

Annunciation scenes with accessory figures which have no basis in the canonical Gospels

The typology of the servant witness pulling back a curtain is dominant, but it is not the only one. A female figure kneels to the left of the enthroned Annunciate in the

[110] Victoria and Albert Museum, London, Inv. Number A.8-1933.
[111] Information about the discovery of a denarius of Ulrich I (1012–1033, 1034), struck after 1012, in Hunka, 2009, 67. Information about a half-denarius from 1025-1038 of Stephen I of Hungary in Ibid., 2009, 68.

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upper register of a Byzantine VI century gold medallion now held by the Archaeological Museum in Istanbul (Talbot Rice, 1959, 302, pl. 66 above).

Fig. 20. A female figure kneels to the left of the enthroned Annunciate in the upper register of a Byzantine VI century gold medallion now held by the Archaeological Museum in Istanbul. Talbot Rice, 1959, 302, pl. 66 above.

The most notable feature in the Annunciation on a rectangular silver casket-reliquary commissioned by Pope Paschal I is the standing servant. The maid is bareheaded, with long hair and dressed in a tunic. She replicates the Virgin's gesture with her right hand, and with her left one holds what appears to be a distaff (Deshman, 1989, 55) or the Mary's *mappula* (handkerchief) (Thunø, 2002, 70). In the latter circumstance, her main role is emphasizing the status of the Annunciate as a noble *matron*/princess. No other example of the servant holding the *mappula*, as on the casket, is known (Thunø, 2002, 71).

On the mid-late IX century book cover from Metz, now in Paris[112], the handmaid holds an object like a spindle or a distaff as Artemis-Diana on the Annunciation at the Great Lavra (Goldschmidt, 1, 1914, 95, pl. 41). She echoes and underlines the spinning out of threads as a typical spiritual symbol of the Annunciate. This attribute identifies the female character as one of the virgins who, according to the *Protevangelium*, assisted

[112] It is visible in the Musée du Louvre, Paris.

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Mary in the weaving of the temple veil. I will explore in depth this figure when I will compare Virgin Mary and Artemis on the Theophane's fresco at Mount Athos.

In another mid IX century ivory book cover from Metz, now in Frankfurt am Main [113], the midwife raises her hands as on a Carolingian book cover from Oxford[114].

In the Annunciation depicted on the walls of the church of Santa Maria foris portas (Castelseprio, Varese) a servant stands behind the Virgin. Her posture and her gesture with left raised hand reveals a complex symbolical gesticulation to express a series of subsequent moods that flow parallel to the ones of the Virgin. She is very surprised for the arrival of the archangel and is quite scary for the unbelievable vision. Then she is greeting Gabriel after understanding its nature and purpose. Finally, she is accepting her role as a chief witness. Indeed, she is the same person who will refer to Joseph that no man ever approached his wife during his absence. Castelseprio's extraordinary mariological program uses pictorial formulae which belonged to the stock of imagination and style of Byzantine practitioners (Mitchell, Leal, 2013, 311-344). It originated by the Neo-Hellenistic art movement and is datable around mid-X century according to c14 determinations (De Marchi (ed.), 2013; Brogiolo et al., 2014, 728-731).

Fig. 21. In the Annunciation represented on the walls of the church of Santa Maria foris portas (Castelseprio, Varese) a servant stands behind the Virgin. She is the same person who will refer to Joseph that no man ever approached his wife during his absence.

The typology with the Archangel Gabriel arriving from the left of the stage, the Virgin enthroned at the center of it and the maid, dressed in white, standing on the right side characterizes the Annunciation representation in the Grotta di San Michele at Monte Monaco di Gioia (Benevento County, Italy) (Festa, 1973; Piazza, 2006, 235, tav. 81 a, fig. 16).

[113] Location: Stadtbibliothek, Frankfurt am Main. In the Nativity scene, a female servant is busily fastening a curtain over the recumbent Virgin

[114] Location: Bodleian Library (Goldschmidt, 1, 1914: 5, 75, pls. 3, 31; Thunø, 2002, 71).

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Fig. 22. The typology with the Archangel arriving from the left of the stage, the Virgin enthroned at the center of it and the maid standing on the right side characterizes the Annunciation representation in the Grotta di San Michele at Monte Monaco di Gioia (Benevento County, Italy). http://books.openedition.org/efr/docannexe/image/1668/img-241-small700.jpg.

The dating of the fresco is end XI century, early XII century. At that time, the cave-sanctuary was in possession of the Benedictine Montecassino abbey. The background does not show trees, plants, or architectural landscape as usually. The rock was left in a rough natural condition to create a special environment setting. The irregular relief of the rock has been exploited to give the scene an effect of depth and realism. On the opposite side of the niche with the Annunciation, the natural surface of the cave generates a series of ruffles and ripples along which a spring water slides. A well is still operating at the base of the entrance arc of the sanctuary. The keeping of the original and irregular shapes of the rock cavity that frames the Annunciation was a voluntary act to exalt the natural authenticity and sacral value of the place. The cavern was recognized not as made by human hands, but as a divine work (Pace, 1994, 20, 34-37, 194, 200). It is also significant that the medieval pictorial cycle illustrates a natural corridor that goes to the inside of the cave without letting see its end (Sauro, 1979).

Noteworthy is the Romanesque Annunciation within Grotta di San Vivenzio, a cave-church located in the heart of the monumental Etruscan necropolis of Norchia (Viterbo, Italy), along the Clodia route (Battisti, 1952: 36-42; Marcato, 1997, 227-231). It was painted in the first quarter of the XII century (Piazza, 2006). The Annunciation representation is framed, on the left, by a grooved column with acanthus capitals and, on the right, by a tortile column on which a mascaron was painted to imitate an ancient Roman decoration. The Virgin is portrayed centrally to the scene, between the arriving archangel and the handmaid. She sits on a throne. The gesture of her left hand, suddenly raised up to the chin, shows her surprise to the appearance of Gabriel. Her right hand holds the distaff, positioning it allusively on the womb. Behind her, a landscape of buildings is glimpsable. The dove of the Holy Spirit is descending to the Virgin from the tallest edifice. Mary's attendant is represented on the left of the scene. She is participating to the event as a witness and has the palm of her right hand open in the direction of the

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Virgin to drive the spectator's eye towards the protagonist of the event. The character is wearing an unusual sumptuous dress (Toubert, 1969, 169, n. 12). It is possible that she is not a female servant, but one of the virgin companions to Mary. Fulvio Ricci interpreted certain roundness of the belly of the two women as belonging to two pregnant figures (Ricci, 1992, 77). Up to now, an entire rural community - the population of the surrounding villages - go in procession, twice a year, through a twenty kilometers countryside trails to this sacred place consecrated to the *Virgo Paritura*. The rituals at the cave-church celebrate the fertility of human beings and Earth (Giacalone, 1992, 93-95; Santella, 1992: 97-112).

A similar *ancilla* is described at the fateful encounter between Gabriel and Virgin Mary in the church of Santa Maria delle Grazie Monte Dominici at Marcellina (Latium, Italy). The fresco is dated 1200 – 1249 (Matthiae, 1951. Ibid., vol. II, 1965-1966, 116-119).

The servant maid portrayed in the Annunciation scene on the wooden ceiling panel of St. Martin church in Zillis (in the Swiss canton of Graubünd) plays a different function. She was doing housework when the archangel appeared, highlighting the rank of Mary as a dignified *matron* (Ilko, 2016, 285).

Fig. 23. The servant maid portrayed in the Annunciation scene on the wooden ceiling panel of St. Martin church in Zillis (Switzerland) is doing housework when the archangel appeared, highlighting the rank of Mary as a dignified *matron*. https://www.flickr.com/photos/renzodionigi/3354121074/in/photostream/.

The painted wooden ceiling is divided into one hundred and fifty-three panels which are organized as a medieval map of the world: the border is representing the

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Continent surrounded by the Ocean, then the Life of Christ is illustrated, and finally the legend of Saint Martin is depicted. The story of Christ's Life begins with the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin witnessed by her female domestic, followed by Joseph's Dream, the Visitation and four panels centered on the Nativity. The ceiling was painted with distinctive style in the earliest decades of the XII century. Its illustrations serve to exemplify the *Gospel*, Sunday for Sunday, from spring to autumn. In winter, the parishioners hold their services in the parish hall thus avoiding to affect the paintings with the heating in the church (Thies, 2007, 305).

Maid's prying ears

Lippo Memmi and his workshop frescoed an astonishing Annunciation to the Virgin in San Gimignano's main church, the Collegiata Santa Maria Assunta (c. 1340). It is located in the lunette of the first bay in the north aisle. The angel kneels devoutly in front of the seated Virgin, exhibiting bowed head and hands clasped at its chest. Mary pulls back in surprise. Her privacy was infringed. Behind her, a drawn curtain reveals her sleeping chamber. An adjoining room in which a maid sits spinning is displayed on the right side of the fresco. This motif definitely originated from Giotto's depiction of the Annunciation to Saint Anne in Padua. However, here the servant works with spindle and distaff while tactless hanging her ear to hear the divine confidential conversation. Even Artemis-Diana on the Annunciation at the Great Lavra is spinning with the distaff, but her solemn attestation is requested.

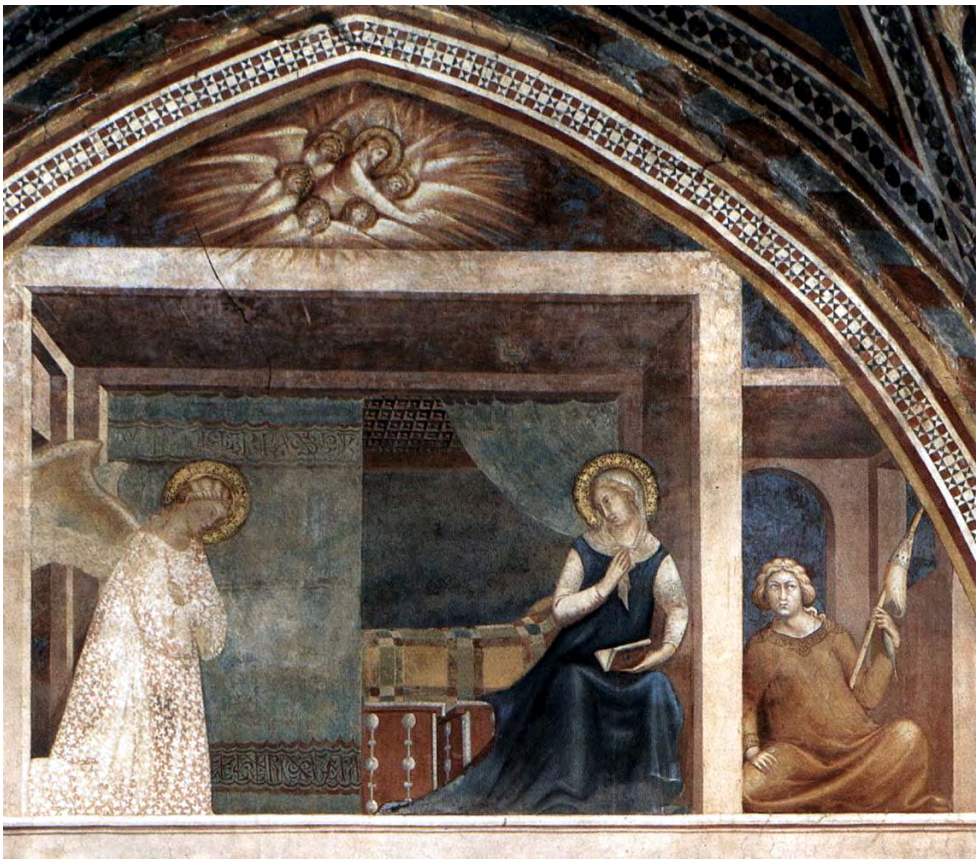

Fig. 24. The maid's prying ears during the Annunciation are depicted by Lippo Memmi in San Gimignano's main church, the Collegiata Santa Maria Assunta (c. 1340). https://www.wga.hu/support/viewer_m/z.html.

Through his expedient, Lippo Memmi replicated the testifying mechanism invented by Giotto. The words of the angel are heard not only by Virgin Mary, but also

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by the domestic worker. However, she is capable to attend the sacred event only poorly (as she merely hears eavesdropping). Conversely, the privileged viewer of the fresco experiences the wonder it in its fullness, through the vision headed by the reading and recitation of the sacred passages. Midwife's peering is aural; that of the viewer is ocular and textual.

Nicolás Francés found an innovative way to represent the Annunciation of the archangel participated by a witness, exploiting notable complexity in composition and symbolic content[115]. It is an element of the altarpiece with the Lifestory of the Virgin and St. Francis (or Altarpiece of La Baneza), erected in 1445 - 1460 for the Chapel of La Esteva de Las Delicias in La Bañeza, Leon. [116] Francés dramatizes the Annunciation as an indoor scene. It is correctly drawn according to the norms of the perspective, although a building on the exterior to the left has no proportional relations with the interior of the room. A young blond lady is on a balcony of the edifice with a rectangular flowerpot next to it. She is drawing water from a well with a bucket and a long cord. It is the moment of Jesus's conception. Gabriel, entered the house by the open door, offers Mary a phylactery with the inscribed divine salutation. The bearded head of God, adorned with the triple papal crown, appears above the rooftops. He has just emitted several luminous fecundating rays from the mouth, as if they were a breath[117]. They carry the Holy Spirit in form of a white dove that is entering the Virgin's ear. And she conceives Jesus.

Fig. 25. In 1445 – 1460, Nicolás Francés found an innovative way to represent the privileged witness to the Annunciation: a young blond lady on a balcony who is drawing water from a well with a bucket and a long cord. http://www.davidboeno.org/GROEUVRE/annon/frances.html.

The sinuous scriptural texts that connects the two interlocutors is situated above seven lilies in a vase, to convey the idea that the dignified praise of the angel ("*Ave gratia*

[115] The panel is now at the Museo del Prado, Madrid. Inventory number: P02545.
[116] The main scene depicts the Virgin with the Christ child surrounded by angel musicians.
[117] The unusual emission of a luminous fecundating breath recalls the act by which the Creator breathed life into Adam.

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plena") is the culmination and, at the same time, the reward for Mary's theological attributes symbolized by the bouquet of lilies: agent of the virginal divine motherhood and container for the supernatural human Incarnation of Christ (González, 2013, 199). This painting symbolizes the divine generation of God the Son as the Word (the seminal breath comes out from the mouth of God the Father as a uttered Word) and, at the same time, his generation / incarnation as a human being in the womb of the Virgin (because the rays penetrate through her ear). Stylistically, the panel corresponds to the so-called International Gothic, which combines the Italian taste for narrative clarity with the northern attraction to naturalist details (Sánchez, Javier, 1925, 41. Museo Nacional del Prado, 1985, 465. Museo Nacional del Prado, 1996, n. 1643. Portús, 2003, 27. Franco Mata, 2010, 305. Rodríguez Peinado, 2014, 1-16).

According to several scholars, in the Byzantine koine the occurrence of a female domestic servant during the Annunciation is treated with particular reference in Bulgarian and Serbian miniatures (Spatharakis, 2005, 82). They are the Bulgarian *Tomič Psalter* (Stanza 1, Stanza 2)[118], illustrated around 1360, and the *Codex Monacensis slavicus* 4 (Stanza 1, Stanza 2), ascribed to c. 1370[119]. Nonetheless, in the mentioned instances the Virgin Mary and the maiden are chatting and spinning in the garden with expressive gestures as old friends and not as lady of the house and domestic attendant. When the herald is uttering the solemn message, the witness is located between it and the Virgin Mary. She turns her head towards the archangel to pick up the confidential communication. Subsequently, during the Incarnation, when the divine Child is portrayed totally formed in a clypeus on Madonna's chest, the female witness is depicted as the first person who recognizes the Incarnation. She is spinning the thread of life in front of the divine newborn as the Moirae did in ancient Greece. Perturbed, she turns her head away because she had become aware of his tragic destiny. The accessory figure is possibly one of the companion virgins of Mary, who helps her to spin material for the veil of the temple in Jerusalem and accompanies her to Elizabeth in some versions of the Visitation. They are described in chapter X of the apocryphal *Infancy Gospel of James*[120] and in chapter VIII, X, XVIII of the *Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew* (*The Gospel of Pseudo Matthew*, 2010). The second text informs us that Saint Joseph, on the occasion of his espousal to Mary, insisted that five virgins should be assigned to guarantee her continued chastity. These controllers resided at Joseph's house with Mary. After the Virgin's conception and when the skeptical Joseph returned home and found her pregnant, they bore witness to her purity having seen no man. The attendance of companion virgins to the Annunciation is meant as a sign of Mary's purity and upright behavior, like her spinning. They provided objective, external witness to the sacred mysteries of Christ's Incarnation, guaranteeing its authenticity to any beholder who might share Joseph's incredulity (Deshman, 1989, 54).

Sometimes witnesses fail in their testimonial mission. A sleeping servant maid is sitting on the ground and is holding up her heavy head with her left hand during the Incarnation event. The unconscious witness is portrayed in a XIV century fresco of Dravce (Slovakia) and an early XV century wall painting of St Nicholas church at Poruba in central Slovakia (Ilko, 2016, 287). Here the Annunciate is accepting the inescapable destiny throwing away her book of prayers. The Almighty is launching a fetus with the size of a five year child from heaven directly towards her head.

[118] Codex 2752, in the collection of the State History Museum, Moscow. References in Dzurova, 1990; Ibid. 1991: 148-159.
[119] The codex is in the Bayerischen Staatsbibliothek (Bavarian State Library) München. References in Babić, 1975, 180.
[120] Viz the version in Hock (ed.), 1995.

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The motif of the handmaid or companion in the Annunciation scene flourished in late Byzantine art. Some of the most emblematic cases occur in Russian painting. In almost all the examples, the maiden is spinning. She is bareheaded and sits at the foot of Virgin Mary, on a low stool or on the ground. She turns her head towards the archangel being fascinated by its actions.

A very early instance takes place on the Royal Doors from the Trinity Cathedral of the Sergius Lavra, constructed above the tomb of Venerable Sergius. The fateful encounter is located above the Evangelists. The painting was made by the Andrei Rublev's workshop circa 1425–1427. The composition is simple, but well-structured; lines are soft and delicate, but composing animated silhouettes; colors are gentle, but expressive[121].

Several remarkable examples have been painted around mid XVI century, i.e. coeval with Theophane's work at Mount Athos. An Annunciation surrounded by 24 miniatures inspired by the *Akathistos Hymn* was painted by the Yaroslavl School in the first half of the XVI century. The *Akathistos Hymn* was composed for the feast of the Annunciation, which is the first chanted event of the Gospel narration[122]. A mid XVI century icon of the Annunciation is located in the Art Museum of Yaroslavl[123]. Another mid XVI century icon on the same topic was originally created in Novgorod for the Transfiguration Cathedral, Solovetsky Monastery[124]. A delicately portrayed Annunciation dated mid XVI century is located in the Andrei Rublev Museum of Early Russian Art (Moscow)[125]. Finally, I present the Annunciation painted in the second half of the XVI century for the Church Feasts Range and now held in the Art Museum (Yaroslavl)[126].

In the investigated instances, the non-realistic, vaguely "cubist" architecture reminds the supernatural meaning of the event. The background includes Mary's abode with its doorways and entrances. The artists made the effort to identify it – through shapes and colors - as a house of spiritual architecture. The Annunciate sits regally enthroned or stands in front of the throne. Her feet do not touch the ground but rest on a footstool. She often hold spindle and/or distaff with red-purpura thread (see for example the mid XVI century icon in the Art Museum, Yaroslavl, and the mid XVI century icon in the Andrei Rublev Museum of Early Russian Art, Moscow). Three distinct gestures identify Mary's reaction to the incredible news. First, her perturbation: she turns shyly her head towards the archangel and raises her hand as to ward him off. It is the most represented pose. Second, her perplexity and prudence: she turns towards Gabriel, but does not accept her destiny yet. Third, her obedient consent: she presses her palm to her breast in a gesture of acceptance while her head bows in assent; her acquiescence to the divine order is also expressed by her symbolic spinning the purpura thread of the Temple, i.e. the thread of her son life.

[121] At present, the doors are in the Sergiev-Posad Museum. Cat. n. 2772. References in Baranov, 2014, 173–184.

[122] The icon is nowadays held in the Museum of History and Architecture (Yaroslavl). Inventory number 40946; ИК 142 (Antonova, Cat. n. 118, 1967, 116-117, fig. 71; Nersesian, Blazhevskaia, 2009).

[123] Inventory number И-1144; КП-53403/1025 (Yaroslavl Art Museum, vol. I, Cat. n. 29, 2002, 96-97; Nersesian, Blazhevskaia, vol. I, Cat. n. 50, 2009, 306-311).

[124] Iconostasis, tempera on wood. In the collection of the Kremlin, Moscow. Inventory number Ж-800 (Ilko, 2016, 287).

[125] Inventory number КП 2551 (Saltykov, 1981, 247, fig. 83).

[126] Inventory number И-267; КП-53403/246 (Yaroslavl Art Museum, vol. I, Cat. n. 31, 2002, 100-101; Nersesian, Blazhevskaia, vol. I, Cat. n. 39, 2009, 264, 267, fig. 265, 266).

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When the viewer of the painting becomes the privileged witness

The depiction of the Virgin enthroned flanked by a standing attendant has also to be understood as a reward for her service in the Incarnation (Thunø, 2002, 71). The concrete and vivid devotion expressed by the servant towards the future Mother of God is considered by the Church an exemplary attitude to be followed by the believer who is watching and meditating on Christ's incarnation. And the assurance that the maid will be prized for her service is a stimulus to emulate her.

The cult of service to the Mother of God contributed to the popularity of servants in Annunciation scenes. The humility that Mary had displayed at the encounter with God's will was her chief virtue and fundamental cause of her later elevation to the rank of heavenly queen. In a sacralized play of mirrors that reflect the virtue to imitate humility, the believer was constantly urged to follow the humbly obedience of Mary's handmaid who emulated the humbly obedience of the *ancilla Dei*, so that he/she might accomplish her intercession and follow the crowned Madonna to Heaven. The symmetrical compositional relationship between the Virgin and her attendant emphasizes the role of the latter as a wannabe of the Virgin.

The benchmark of the handmaid's devotional purpose was well expressed by the papal tradition of "good service" to the Mother of God. Her momentous function is well conveyed by the repetition of her figure on the above-mentioned rectangular casket commissioned by Pope Paschal I, where she is portrayed not only in the Annunciation but also in the Visitation, Adoration, and Nativity. The attendant refers to this pope's desire to serve the Virgin, mainly through the patronage of sacred art[127]. The servant figure thus acts as a device linking the IX century pope's service to the Virgin through his patronage of the artistic object. According to Paschal's mentality, object and images on it merge his service with that of the Virgin's. Thus his silver casket becomes the artistic parallel of the Virgin's service in the Incarnation. Jewel and illustrations both depend on the Incarnation and on the Virgin's status as the Mother of God (Thunø, 2002, 77).
In short, the maids occurring at Annunciation representations symbolize the believers themselves who venerated and imitated the Virgin by serving her and hoped to win her heavenly intercession through their zealous emulation of her humility (Deshman, 1989, 59).

This devotional and rewarding mechanism is very clear when the viewer of the painting becomes the chief witness. In 1486, the Venetian painter Carlo Crivelli illustrated a paradigmatic Annunciation with Saint Emidius, the city's patron saint[128], for the Annunciation Church at Ascoli Piceno[129]. Here the front is open to the beholder, who looks into Mary's private room. She is therefore more accessible to the viewer of the picture than to the Holy Spirit, which forced its enter into her private space (erroneously believed secured by a thick stone wall and the barred window) through a hole in the wall.

[127] The pope asked the Virgin to accept the prayers of her 'servant' Paschal on another of his donations, an altar in Santa Maria Maggiore, Rome.
[128] He was martyred in 303 by pagans who did not appreciate him smashing their idols.
[129] The oil on wood was transferred to canvas. Nowadays it is in the National Gallery, London.

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Fig. 26. In 1486, the Venetian painter Carlo Crivelli stages the drama of the attending people to the Annunciation who however are unconscious of its meaning and importance. https://www.wga.hu/art/c/crivelli/carlo/annunci.jpg.

The metaphorical removal of any barrier between the worshipper (who becomes very close to Mary through prayers associated to the topic of the painting) and the Virgin is further enhanced by the extraordinary trompe l'oeil effects at the front of the pictorial space. The gourd and apple placed on the floor over the inscription *LIBERTAS ECCLESIASTICA* blur divisions between the sacred scene envisioned in the painting and the temporal space inhabited by the viewer.

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The event happens within the busy and idealized urban setting of coeval Ascoli. Numerous elegant figures populate the background and foreground of the street with Virgin Mary's domicile. Some are discussing business atop the triumphal arch. Others are gathering in the pristine square-garden that fills the background of the scene. Just across the street from the Virgin's house, a group of people stand at the top of a narrow exterior staircase. A man is reading a message which has just been delivered by a carrier pigeon. And here is the key to understand such an unusual Annunciation: all of the characters in the painting live in a celebratory atmosphere of joyful anticipation. However, it is not due to the momentous seminal event that is taking place within Virgin's room. The interveners seem to be unconscious of it. They participate to the happiness for some liberty rights granted to Ascoli by the pope in 1482. The good news of a degree of self-government reached the city on March 25. Therefore, the feast of the Annunciation became a special day when Ascoli celebrated its (half) liberty.

The only exception to the general unconsciousness and disinterest for the Conception of Christ is a young girl who tightly grips the balustrade in order to lean round and examine the interior of Mary's dwelling. Only she and the viewer of the paintings are permitted to behold the mystery of the Annunciation (Davies, 1947; Zanobini Leoni, 1984, 93-96; Zampetti, 1986, 285; Dunkerton et al., 1991, 344–5; Lightbown, 2004, 323–44). The message is similar to that one in Dravce and Poruba churches: it is not enough to be present to the prodigy to witness and attend it. It is required to becoming aware of it.

The Medieval and Renaissance believers were exhorted to represent themselves in scenes from Christ's life. Exemplar is Folio 26r in the *Beaufort / Beauchamp Book of Hours*[130]. It features an extraordinary portrayal of an aristocratic woman with an angel similar to Gabriel above her. The scene is accompanied by an extended version of the *Angele Dei* (also known as *the Prayer to One's Guardian Angel*) [131]. The blue-blooded woman kneels on a large, sumptuous pillow. Her robes are edged in gold. However, it is not a portrait of the royal owner of the prayerbook. She is a generic faithful, thus allowing any reader to imagine herself in the woman's place. The figure directly refers at her guardian angel and asks its protection in her speech scroll. The angel responds affirmatively with another scroll.

The miniature instructs at several levels. Firstly, it shows how prayer should be performed (in this case, kneeling, looking up), grants the proper prayer text to be read aloud or silently in the speech scroll of the aristocratic avatar, and illustrates the unseen to provide the praying person appropriate means to visualize an invisible angel. The image also demonstrates the efficacy of both the prayer and the elite woman praying. If the reader will follow the sponsored practice and text, the guardian angel will respond. Lainie Pomerleau observed that the pedagogical image also presumes a noble woman reader capable, through the book's instruction, of exerting the spiritual authority needed to converse with an angel (Pomerleau, 2016).

St. Peter of Verona (1206–1252), the first canonized martyr of the Dominican Order, is represented as witnessing an astonishing divine Conception depicted in 1440-1442 by the Dominican Fra Beato Angelico on the wall of Cell 3 in the Convento di San Marco in Florence. Gabriel has just uttered his message to an ethereal Virgin Mary, who kneels and poses arms crossed over her breasts in a gesture of humility and consent. It is

[130] Beaufort Beauchamp Book of Hours. British Library, Royal MS 2 A XVIII, folio 26.r.

[131] This prayer of Roman Catholic tradition for the intercession of the guardian angel carries a partial indulgence. It was in the past attributed to St. Anselm (c. 1033 - 1109), Benedictine monk and scholar, because it occurs in medieval collections of his works. However, it was added to Anselm's works sometime after his death.

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sunrise, but she is pervaded by the archangel's light. St. Peter of Verona stands just outside the stage watching the event with hands pressed together in prayer, apparently beholding the annunciation in meditation (Schneider, 2016).

Fig. 27. The first canonized martyr of the Dominican Order, St. Peter of Verona (1206–1252), is represented as witnessing the divine Conception in the fresco painted in 1440-1442 by the Dominican Fra Beato Angelico in the Convento di San Marco in Florence. https://www.wga.hu/art/a/angelico/09/cells/03_annun.jpg.

The depicted scene shows how the friars who lived in this cell imagined it or should image it. The fresco isn't just an illustration of an extraordinary event, but the visualization of a religious transcendent experience. It is an invitation to the postulant who inhabited the cell and any person who entered it to contemplate, along with St. Peter the Martyr, the immanent, invisible, and eternal theological truth of the Incarnation.

The monks are reminded to reflect about the mystery of Christ's Incarnation and consequently the salvation of mankind, following the spiritual example of one of their first martyrs, Peter of Verona. Consistently, every descriptive detail, every ornament that could distract the viewer from reflecting on the 'mystery' has been eliminated by the talented artist. The palette is limited to five colors as to increase the concentrated effect of the image (Scudieri, 2004, 52).

As the saint stands outside the represented scene and looks in, so the spectator stands outside of the image and looks in. Though St. Peter the Martyr appears to fix his gaze steadfastly on the figures in front of him who are not aware of his presence, his position in relation to them is illogical; if the set was mapped out in plan, he would be staring at the back of Gabriel. However, compositionally, his un-prospective position serves to place him at the beginning of a chain of devotional actions. "His fixed gaze leads one horizontally to Gabriel, whose gaze leads diagonally to the lower right to the Virgin. The Virgin's reciprocated gaze then reverses this diagonal thrust to Gabriel, and finally to Peter Martyr once again". In conclusion, the Dominican saint becomes the locus for the real viewer to enter the scene and to witness the events, "just as the Dominican's meditation exercises encouraged the friars to do" (Hendrix, Carman, 2016; Hood, 1986, 195-206).

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The composition formula of the standing servant or companion virgin

To summarize, the composition formula of the standing (rarely sitting) servant (servants) or companion virgin occurring in the Annunciation representations has no basis in the canonical Gospels. She has the main responsibility to give testimony to an event which is out of any human comprehension. She provides objective, external witness to the sacred mysteries of Christ's Incarnation, guaranteeing its authenticity to any beholder who might share Joseph's incredulity. Besides, she/they plays/play other functions.

Firstly, the witnessing attendant emphasizes the high status of the Annunciate as a noble matron/princess (e.g. Santa Maria Maggiore, the scenes on the silver casket-reliquary commissioned by Pope Paschal I, St. Martin church in Zillis). According to apocryphal convention, the Virgin was born into a well-to-do family in Jerusalem and the Annunciation of the archangel often happens within a luxurious, aristocratic context. Therefore, the occurrence of domestic attendants is not out of frame. The action of drawing back a curtain is a servant's deed of labor for her landlady. The relationship matron-midwife is evident when the latter is concentrated exclusively on her domestic task (St. Martin church in Zillis).

Secondly, the maid/s unfolds/unfold the divine Incarnation to the spectator, by drawing aside the hanging curtain, making her a direct witness of the miracle (e.g. Genoels-Elderen ivory diptych, a mid IX century book cover from Metz, St. George church in Kostoľany pod Tribečom, an ivory plate of the Victoria and Albert Museum). This act has to be interpreted not just as disclosing the scene of a liturgical drama (e.g., the St. Albans Psalter) or the silent presence of an hidden witness, but as an iconographic convention to express the revelational unveiling of a sacred mystic event.

Thirdly, the witnessing handmaid guarantees Mary’s perpetual virginity and assures the doubtful Joseph – as well as us - that no man ever approached his wife during his absence (e.g. the church of Santa Maria foris portas at Castelseprio, Lippo Memmi fresco at San Gimignano).

Fourthly, the presence of a third personage within the scene underlines the holiness of Mary as the chosen person by God to be treated as an indubitable experiential fact (e.g. St. Peter church at Sorpe, Tomič Psalter, Codex Monacensis slavicus 4).
Fifthly, the depiction of the Virgin enthroned flanked by a standing servant has to be understood as a reward for her service in the Incarnation and prefiguration of her future role as Queen of Heaven (Thunø, 2002, 71).

Section 4
Artemis-Diana was chosen as testimonial because she was considered the legitimate precursor of the Madonna

The authenticity of the Incarnation recognized even by a pagan goddess, virtually a demon

In none of the Post-Byzantine representations of the Annunciation there are so clear traces of a pagan testimonial as on the facade of the Great Lavra refectory. How can we explain the attendance of goddess Artemis-Diana as the privileged witness to the divine announcement? Which are the exploitable clues from our investigations on the presence of peripheral figures (servants and companions of the Mother of God) in iconographic representations of the Annunciation? What might they indicate in relation to both Athonite monastic narration and patronage?

The motif at the Great Lavra is unique because it is depicting the pagan Goddess while leaving the stage (Merlini, 2012, 81, 82, fig. 13). The key historical passage that the painter wanted to be represented is the Christianization of the peninsula and the

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beginning of Mount Athos (and the Great Lavra as its main monastery) as the mirror of Christian Heaven on Earth. It is emblematized by the dramatic but not violent moment (according to the monastic auto-mythology) when Mary took the place of Artemis-Diana in the government of *Agion Oros*; thus Christianity displaced paganism. The understanding of the role played by the ancient pre-Christian Goddess in Gabriel's announcement to Virgin Mary requires an additional effort to comprehend the thought process and beliefs of Christian Byzantine and oriental artist-monks who were active in religious painting in the mid–XVI century. It concerns recognizing the deep features shared by Artemis and the Mother of God and inquiring into why the former was considered the legitimate precursor of the second (Lewandowski, 2006, 236).

In the Annunciation scene, Artemis-Diana has the main responsibility to provide objective, external testimony to an event which is out of any human comprehension such as the sacred mystery of Christ's Incarnation. The authenticating mechanism is clear: if even a pagan goddess, virtually a demon, accepts to recognize the authenticity of the miracle of the passage on Earthly of the "Word of God", any baptized person has to put aside any trace of incredulity. The fiercest enemy of the "true religion" becomes the stronger guarantor of its undisputed credibility if he/she bends to acknowledge it. Martin Scorsese well exploited this mechanism in the movie "*Silence*". Portuguese Jesuit missionaries in XVII century Japan renounced their faith under torture. Their apostasy really demoralized the other Christians that were instead emboldened by the example of martyrs dying for their faith. It is not their death, but their defection the Japanese demanded to the Jesuit ministries.

Virgin Mary as the Abbess of the Athonite brotherhood; Artemis as patroness of the priestesses in the sacred Akte

The attendant-witness occurring in the Annunciation scenes we have investigated has also the function to emphasize the noble and rich status of Virgin Mary. Consistently, the encounter with the archangel Gabriel often happens within a palatial, aristocratic context. Artemis-Diana plays a similar role, but to give testimony to another attribute to the Mother of God, as we will document below.

We have already noticed that Theophanes induces us to realize that the fateful rendezvous takes place in the earthly outdoors. The characters are acting on barren land devoid of trees and flowers. It is the rocky and impervious southern area of the Athonite peninsula. This is called the "Athonite desert" by the monks, who force imagination on their habitat to evidence roots in the tradition of the anchorites who spent their lives praying in the arid Middle-Eastern deserts.

A fortified medieval complex of buildings is depicted behind the personages of the Annunciation. It possibly describes the monastery of Great Lavra equalized to the temple of Jerusalem that appears as a backdrop in several Byzantine Annunciations (Merlini, 2012, 138)[132]. The fresco on the facade of the refectory of the Great Lavra probably refers to a legend concerning the foundation of this monastery as the first and most important one established on Mount Athos. This pious story is related to the institution of the entire monastic peninsula as the exclusive "Garden of the *Panagia*", as the Holy Mountain is traditionally called (Mendieta, 1972; Johnston, 2000, 889; Talbot, 2002, 66; Papayannis, Mallarach, 2009; Della Dora, 2016).

The identity between the color of the coat of Virgin Mary and the roofs protecting the religious settlement indicates that the monks identify her more as their abbess than as the Mother of God enthroned in the glory of heaven. Virgin Mary is not depicted as full

[132] In the Annunciation painted by Theophanes on a tempera on wood for Stavronikita, two towering buildings provide the spatial setting for the scene.

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of Hellenic beauty and spiritual grace expressing the transcendental meaning of Christ's incarnation as both her son and the Son of God. Unlike most of the Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Annunciations, she is not expressing oriental spirituality and regal perfection by wearing clothes with brilliant and golden colors which signify deification and sovereignty. In addition, she has no stars on her head or shoulders as a symbol of her inviolable and eternal purity. These features have nothing to do with the Annunciation painted by Theophanes in 1546 for a pair of low doors originally part of the iconostasis in the main church of Stavronikita monastery[133]. Each door bears the standing portrait of one of the two protagonists in the Annunciation, who is situated against a plain gold ground with no indication of any spatial setting. Virgin Mary wears an elegant deep blue-green gown draped by a queenly deep red mantel that is trimmed with gold fringe. Her head is inclined towards the archangel, although her gaze is focused directly on the viewer, who is thereby drawn into the intimacy of the fecund transaction (Constas M.

Monk, 2012, 45). The Annunciate's pose and serene faces indicate her humble obedience to the will of God and compliance to the mystery of the divine Incarnation. Distaff and spindle with red thread wound around it are held by her left hand. They are positioned as a cross, which presents the icon's core message in vivid, concentrated form. The crucifix indicates that the Son of God, who has entered her womb, will be woven together with mortal flesh and surrender his life on the cross. Looking directly into the eyes of the viewer, Virgin Mary is asking him/her to share the mystery expressed by the small distaff/spindle cross: conception and crucifixion collapse into a single event.

Fig. 28. An icon of the Annunciation painted by Theophanes in 1546 for the Athonite monastery of Stavronikita. It develops the symbolism of Virgin Mary spinning strands of purple wool that intimately interrelate the Incarnation of Christ with his Passion. Constas Marco Monk, 2012. Graphic elaboration Marco Merlini.

Theophanes' Annunciate at the Great Lavra, full of gentle human beauty and comfortable with her femininity, has nothing to do also with the Annunciation painted by him in 1546 on a tempera on board for the iconostasis in the main church of Stavronikita monastery. Here a serene Virgin Mary is clothed in bright regal red garment. She sits on a golden, backless throne strew with two luxurious pillows. Her hands are positioned as at the Great Lavra, but here she

[133] These bema doors are part of an ensemble of twenty-three icons made by Theophanes and his son Symeon to decorate the iconostasis in the katholikon of Stavronikita monastery.

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holds distaff and red thread because she is spinning (Chatzidakis M., 1969-1970, fig. 68; Tsigaridas, 1997, 129-130; Constas M. Monk, 2012, 42)[134]. On the wall of the refectory of the chief monastery, she is showing the sign of her authority, as we will discuss below.

Fig. 29. The Annunciation painted by Theophanes in 1546 on a tempera on board for the iconostasis in the main church of Stavronikita monastery. Constas M. Monk, 2012. Graphic elaboration Marco Merlini.

[134] The portable icon is a genuine Byzantine composition characterized by its allegiance to the Comnenian and Palaeologan canons on the subject, including the details of the architectural structure in the background (Charalampidis, 2007, 33). Postures and some features of the characters are similar to the ones in the fresco under our investigation, such as facial traits and expressions, the welcoming and benediction gestures of Gabriel, and surprise in the Virgin. However, in the icon personages are not dynamically represented, denote "official" appearance, and show superficial spiritual readiness. This aspect is particularly expressed by the archangel, depicted according to an artistic style that is more focused on decorative forms than on the organic shape of the body. The celestial herald is more rigidly upright than gently stretched towards Mary. It has footwear, its cloak is brilliant purple and unruffled, its wings are vermilion, static, and symmetrically composed. At a more careful sight, Gabriel is more blessing than greeting. It is exercising some sort of authority on the *Theotókos* (Merlini, 2012, 169).

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Even more critical is the comparison of the Virgin Mary on the architectural backdrop frescoed by Theophanes on the panel icon in the main church of the Great Lavra. He utilized the same type of standing Annunciate as at the refectory. However, here she holds in her left hand the purple veil she was weaving for the temple of Jerusalem. Gabriel and Mary are alone. They are inserted within luxurious and towering architectural elements that do not describe a severe monastery as on the fresco at the refectory. A large hanging purple curtain unites the tops of the buildings to indicate that Gabriel's announcement to Mary happens in a wealthy compound. The *Theotókos* gets up from an artistically decorated throne at the arrival of the stranger (Merlini, 2012, 169). Theophane followed the inspiration of Nicolas Ritzos' icons that were seminal in Cretan painting of the time (Chatzidakis M., 1986, 66).

The Annunciate portrayed by Theophanes on the wall of the refectory at the Great Lavra expresses more womanly grace than spiritual inspiration, as though she does not know her role in the history of human salvation yet. She, who has renounced the world, is the powerful Abbess of the Great Lavra monastery and of the entire *Agion Oros* (Merlini, 2012, 140).

Mary is holding her right hand over her chest, not to humbly receive and willingly accept the angelical message concerning her new role as Virgin-Mother, as on the Episcopal throne of Archbishop Maximianus in Ravenna (Charalampidis, 2007, 27). She is slightly raising her right hand to express surprise and to keep Gabriel at distance, but also to show him and to the external observer a magnificent ring with a magnificent red gem that actually is a seal of authority. The blood-red ruby ring - with its strong symbolism as will power, courageous life, directive energy, and dynamic vitality[135] - is correctly worn on her left hand. An attitude of passive obedience in front of a celestial ambassador would not suit the abbess of the main monastery of Mount Athos and the entire Athonite brotherhood (Merlini, 2012, 140).

The Virgin Mary is a ubiquitous and overactive monarch of *Agion Oros*, up to the point that several monasteries recognize her icons as representing their abbess. This is the instance of the Virgin *Tricherousa* (one with "the three hands") of Chilandari. This icon was transported by the Serbian St. Sava while returning from a pilgrimage to Palestine in 1233. The monks placed it on the iconostasis of the main church. On three subsequent mornings, however, it was found enthroned on the seat of the *igumen*, the superior of the monastery. Since then, the *Panagia Tricherousa* is the head of Chilandari, which consistently does not elect an abbot but a deputy one. The Mother of God became the treasurer (the *Ekonomissa*) of the Great Lavra after its founder experienced a miraculous apparition. He was in trouble because the harvest failed and famine befell his monastery that had to be abandoned. But she blamed him doubtfulness on Providence, explaining him that all of the containers in the storerooms were filled with everything the brotherhood needed.

Some holy monks, after having reached Mount Athos, are said to have received a blessing to stay right from the Abbess of Mount Athos – the most holy *Theotókos*[136]. When their God-glorifying efforts are noticed by the Theotokos as the Abbess of Mount Athos, in her care and concern she appears to them in reassurance of her protection over them and all the Athonite monks[137].

[135] In the Orthodox Church, the Eastern ruby-red eggs symbolize the blood of Christ and the related renewal of life.
[136] It is for example the instance, in 1963, of the Bishop Gavril Velichki.
[137] See the *Akathist Hymn* to Saint Kosmas of Zographou in Garland N. J., 2014.

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Two sacred images portray the Virgin Mary as mother superior of the theocratic republic of monks. In both instances, she is depicted standing and without the child, to focus on her autonomous responsibility instead of her maternity (Merlini, 2012, 141). In the Athonite milieu, she is not just an intercession agent, but a deity in power. Her authority and command have roots in the Trinity, but she autonomously manage them. The *Akathist Hymn* to Saint Kosmas of Zographou specifies that "the Abbess of Mount Athos works in full cooperation with her Son, Jesus Christ". And that "the Abbess of Mount Athos abundantly compensates those who turn to her with love for her Son" (Garland N. J., 2014).

According to the Byzantine tradition, such full length depictions of the Virgin Mary without the child usually occupy a place of honor and are positioned in the upper part of the altar. Some examples of this type of icon are: The Virgin showing her Protecting Veil[138], The Virgin Orans without the Child[139], The Lunar Madonna of "Ostra Brama" (Ostrabramskaya) [140], The Mother of Hard Hearts[141], and The Madonna Advocata (Panayia Agiosoritissa, "Intercessor"), sometimes holding a scroll [142].

The Athonite icons are the *Theotókos, the Abbess of the Holy Mountain* and the *Theotókos, the Abbess Protector of Mount Athos*. In the first icon, the Blessed Virgin wears monastic robes and is in heaven supported by a cloud that surrounds the top of her mount-garden. The four evangelists are depicted on her mantle, which is the source of the truth of their narrations. The star on her forehead and the two on her shoulders indicate her virginity before, during, and after the earthly passage of Jesus. Her arrival to *Agion Oros* due to a storm is illustrated on the right corner at the bottom of the icon.

Fig. 30. The Theotókos as the Abbess of the Holy Mountain, depicted also reaching Athos by boat with St. John and others. http://2.bp.blogspot.com/_UOJjUH2o_wM/TGCC0_ekXEI/AAAAAAAADzU/UG_BlLZSBR4/s1600/pb175.jpg.

[138] The early X century icon (also called *Maphorion* and *Agia Skepi*) marks the apparition of the *Theotókos* in the church of Blachernae of Constantinople holding a veil.

[139] This icon is possibly connected with the composition known as Deisis, i.e. the Virgin and St. John the Baptist praying Christ. One of the earliest effigy of this typology is the mid VII century mosaic in the oratory of San Venanzio in the Lateran, Rome. The work was commissioned by two popes of Greek koine (John IV and Theodorus) to Greek artists. A similar figure of the Virgin was positioned over the altar of the archiepiscopal chapel in Ravenna. Emblematic is the miraculous icon with the Madonna praying alone, without the Child, with outstretched hand that is held in the Machairas Monastery (Cyprus), founded in the in XII century. According to tradition, it was painted by the Apostle Luke.

[140] The icon is held in its chapel at the Ostra Brama gate (Vilnius). It was exported from Crimea to Lithuania in the XIV century.

[141] This iconographic type represents Mary's meditation on the Passion of her Son and has its origins in the Western representations of the Mother of Seven Sorrows (the Mater Dolorosa).

[142] According to tradition, the Madonna Advocata venerated in the basilica of Santa Maria in Aracoeli in Rome is a true portrait of the Blessed Virgin having been painted by St. Luke the Evangelist.

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Fig. 31. The Theotókos, the Abbess Protector of Mount Athos. http://www.omhksea.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/08/theotokos2.jpg.

The second icon of Mary as the superior of Mount Athos is kept in the small dependency of St. Nicholas. Wrapped in a red cloak, she towers over her mountain-garden. The sky is free of clouds and has a golden metallic divine color. On its left and right, there are groups of elders, monks and fathers of the monastic communities.

The Blessed Virgin in the role of prioress is not only depicted in the icons by the inspired subjectivity of painters. The monks are sure that she was even photographed. It happened on 21 August 1903, while the poor monks received alms at the gate of Saint Panteleimon monastery, which numbered more than 1400 practitioners at that time. When the photograph taken by Father Gabriel was developed, the Mother of God miraculously appeared on the left side of the image. She is dressed as an abbess, but her body is stooped as a humble beggar to receive a piece of blessed bread. A few days earlier, some brothers glimpsed she was wandering among the monks at the gate (Merlini, 2012, 141).

Чудо явления Божией Матери 21.08.1903. *Фотография*

Fig. 32. According to the photo shut by Father Gabriel, the Athonite monks claim that the Most Holy Theotokos miraculously appeared on August 21,1903 in the Russian St. Panteleimon monastery. The phenomenon of the Light-Painted image of the Mother of God is venerated on every September 3 by the brethren of this monastery.

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The Mother of God guides monks in their ascetic struggle; Artemis* Agrotera *supports hunters,* ephebes*, and warriors

Theophanes' vision of the Virgin Mary as the Abbess of Mount Athos provides the opportunity to an elderly iconographer monk I have interviewed to establish another significant parallel between Mary and Artemis-Diana. The Mother of God rules and supports monks in their ascetic struggle from materiality to the divine according to heavenly guidelines. In the same way, the Greek-Roman Goddess who personifies the wildness of nature governs over the most primitive forces that are beyond the control of human beings and those laws can be violated without knowing them. In particular, she regulates the supply of game and the military values in war (Larson, 2007, 102).
Both the Christian patroness and the pagan ruler Goddess require dedication and sacrifices from their faithful.

There are plenty of stories in the Athonite collective memory concerning the rigid discipline asked by the Mother of God to the monks and her terrible (corporal and moral) punishments because of their failures even in daily life activities. I give some example, because they are paradigmatic but not very well known out of the Holy Mountain.

Panagia Gorgoepikoos (which means "quick to hear) is the name of an icon located in the Docheiariou monastery, to the right of the entrance. In 1664, the wall on which it hangs was a chapel open on both sides. Neilos, the responsible for the refectory (the *trapezares*), used to regularly pass in front of the icon as a night-time shortcut from the kitchen to the refectory. He held in his hand a torch to light his way, which of course smoked as it burned. One day, he heard a voice ordering him: "Do not pass by here anymore with your lighted torch! You are smoking up my image!". Neilos did not pay attention to the command and, day by day, continued his nasty habit. After a few days, as he passed with his torch, he heard the voice again: ""Un-monastic monk, how long will you irreverently and shamelessly blacken my image?" Upon hearing this, he was struck blind. The brotherhood understood that Neilos was correctly disciplined because of his disobedience by the supreme abbess of all the monks on the Holy Mountain. Then they began to show great reverence in passing in front of the icon, illuminated it with a perpetual lamp, and ordered the new *trapezares* to venerate it burning incense every day. The blind Neilos spent all his life kneeling in a stall in front of the icon offering candles and incense along with desperate prayers. He implored the *Theotókos* to forgive him and beg the return of his sight. His prayers were granted when he heard the voice from the icon for the third time. It told him that his supplications had been finally heard, he was forgiven and healed. The icon added: "I am the mistress of this monastery. I am *the Theotókos Gorgoepikoos* because any monk who calls upon me would be quickly heard and has his prayers mercifully answered".

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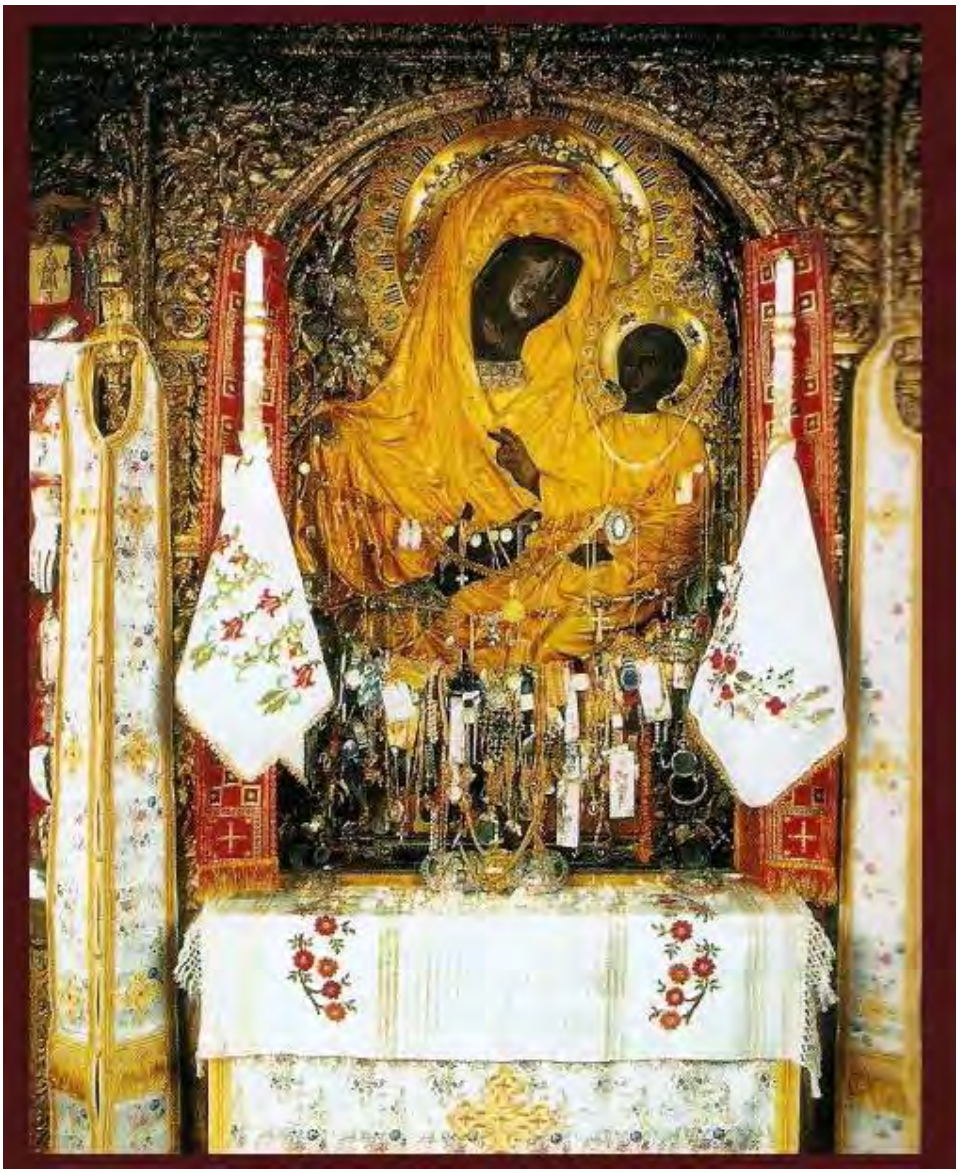

Fig. 33. The miracle-working icon *Theotokos Gorgoypekoos* at Docheiariou monastery. https://christianicon.files.wordpress.com/2012/08/tumblr_lv286biuol1qkm0g3o1_1280.jpg.

Another icon of the Abbess of Mount Athos is Our Lady Esphagmeni. It is a fresco of the XIV century located in the narthex of the chapel consecrated to St. Demetrius in the monastery of Vatopedi. Tradition informs that every day the verger of the katholikon used to arrive late at the meal in the refectory, because of his duties. One day he ended up hungry because the brother in charge to serve the food refused it to him. The sacristan returned to the church, full of hunger and indignation, and turned towards the icon about the injustice: "Why have I to go on serving you, while you do not care even that I should eat?". He took a knife and struck Virgin's face with it. Blood began to pour from the holy cheek, while he himself was struck blind and collapsed unconscious for a while. The monk occupied a stall opposite the icon for three years, weeping and begging for forgiveness. Finally the Virgin forgave him and healed him, but she allotted a punishment to the reckless hand that had committed the desecration. Thus, after the monk had died and at his exhumation, although the rest of his body had decomposed, the right hand remained uncorrupted and completely black, waiting for the final condemn at the Second

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Coming of Christ. This sacrilegious hand is still preserved in the katholikon of the monastery, but in such a dilapidated state that Russian pilgrims took fragments of it, believing it was a sacred relic.

Another shocking story about this icon narrates that an Orthodox priest, visiting the monastery, questioned the truth of the miracle reported above. As punishment, when he put his finger into the point where the icon had been damaged, a flow of blood started immediately to run out. The priest was thunderstruck and felt down dead.

Fig. 34. Detail of the wound face of *Our Lady Esphagmeni* in Vatopedi monastery. http://diakonima.wpengine.netdna-cdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/121-82.jpg.

We move now from the *Theotokos* as the governor of the Athonite brotherhood to Artemis as protector of hunters, *ephebes* (adolescent conscripts for the first time), and warriors. A number of Athonite monks I discussed with underline that Artemis *Agrotera* was not just connected with girls, parturients and newborns but also with young men. She was not only a deity of wilderness and untamed nature but also of hunting and warfare, being a protector of hunters and warriors (Marinatos, 2000, 99). The ancient Greek goddess insisted on strict discipline among youths trained in hunting and among *ephebes* against undue savagery in warfare (Vernant, 1987; Davidson, Chaudhri, 1993, 154).

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Even if Artemis' epithet *Agrotera* implies the traits of a Mistress of the Wild, many of her cult practices that are relevant for our investigation have nothing to do with hunting, but as a patroness of the *ephebes* and war. In Athens, young men who had just reached manhood marched in armor in the procession to celebrate Artemis *Agrotera* to her shrine at Agorai. Here the Goddess received the opulent sacrifice of five hundred goats. This festival with military stamp was designed to imprint military values in the young hoplites-to-be (Jung, 2006). The occasion was a thanksgiving to the Goddess for her aid at Marathon against the huge army of the Persians in 490 BCE (Xenophon, *Anabasis* 3.2,11-12 in Paap, 1970; Harrison E. B., 1972, 390-402; Parker, 1996, 153; Fischer-Hansen, Poulsen, 2009, 64), although there is no reference to Artemis *Agrotera's* intervention in surviving accounts[143]. This annual celebration replicated, in part, the invocation dedicated to her by the Athenians before the battle (Xenophon, *Anabasis* 3.2.12 in Paap, 1970; Barringer, 1960, 12). Considering the number of sacrificed animals, it was one of the major festivals of the city.

The Spartans systematically sacrificed to Artemis *Agrotera* in front of the troops when the enemy was in sight (Xenophon, 2006, 4.2.20, 6.S.IX; Ibid., 2007, 13.8; Fischer-Hansen, Poulsen, 2009, 64; Thucydides, 2009, 6.69.2). One can explain it by the liminarity and rustic wildness of the frontier areas between the opposing armies that were the theaters of combat, and therefore devoted to her (Richer, 2007, 242). Sacrifices before fighting also signaled a "liminal period" in which warriors, at the inception of hand-to-hand cruel combat, exploited atypical ritual remedies in an effort to handle extraordinary psychological strain and threat to their lives. Consistently, the elements of the Spartan rite to Artemis *Agrotera* were unusual: the ceremony was performed not at a shrine but in the fields; the offering was not made to any other god then Artemis *Agrotera;* a *mantis* (a soothsayer) rather than a *hiereus* (a priest) presided over the liturgy; and the sacrificial animal was a goat, a creature neither wild, nor fully domesticated (Vernant, 1988, 231). Its meat was not shared and consumed among the worshippers, and the caprine blood played a key role in the ritual (Powell A., 1997, 437).

In the V and IV centuries BCE, Artemis in her *Kourotrophic* aspect aspect (as child nurturer) fulfilled the role of "initiator par excellence" in ephebic cults (e.g., at the ports of Piraeus and Kos) (Petropoulos, 2011, 118, note 29), even if documentary evidence is still not exhaustive (Barringer, 1960, 51).

In Sparta, Artemis *Korythalia* was the custodian of boy children (Harrison J. E., 1912, 503 ff.; Chirassi, 1964). In her sanctuary in the fields near Kleta, the population celebrated the *Tithenidia* (the feast of wet-nurses) with *kopides* (ritual meals). The male children were conducted there by their nurses (Mühll, 1951, 212; Richer, 2007). In the same Peloponnesian city, the *ephebes* were flogged at the altar of Artemis *Orthia* in order to toughen them up (Lloyd-Jones, 1983).

To summarize, the monks' tradition emphasizes Artemis *Agrotera* initiatory and training role for both young females and males. She was the point of reference in the re-

[143] The goddess' contribution may have been connected with the fact that the battle was fought at a time of the year when her protective aura was incisively felt. According to Parker, in Athens the festival of Artemis *Agrotera* became a commemorative historical anniversary of the battle of Marathon because it had taken place on her festival's day (Parker, 1996, 153). Her assistance may have depended in some way upon the presence of the moon, with which Artemis was closely identified (Garland R., 1990, 55). The Persian cavalry played no part in the battle at Marathon for some unknown reason. Hammond attractively suggests that Artemis *Agrotera* may have been credited with immobilizing it (Hammond, 1968, 39 ff.). Each night the cavalry were taken to a watering-place and brought back to the camp around the setting of the moon below the horizon. According to Hammond's supposition, the lateness of moonset on the morning of the engagement may have prevented them from returning to the battle in time due to a miscalculation on the part of their grooms.

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birth ritual process that contributed to the formation of female communities (in general, turning the girls into wives and mothers and, at Akte, overseeing the transition of untamed novice girls to priesthood status). She was also the initiatory authority of the young male populace (developing the boys into citizen-soldiers) (Strabo of Amaseia, 2016, 14.1.20; Vernant, 1986, 19, 22; Strelan, 1996, 53; Cole, 2000).

A 3-D signpost to indicate a parallelism hinged on the non-opposition between virginity and motherhood

In the Annunciations we have investigated in section 3, the witnessing handmaid or companion guarantees Mary's perpetual virginity to the doubtful Joseph as well as us. This function corroborates the parallels between Artemis and the *Theotókos* and illustrates why Theophanes the Cretan chose this pagan Goddess as the chief witness to the proclamation of Jesus' virginal conception.

With a 3-D effect, the painter positioned an ancient Greek marble plaque with a pagan votive inscription and a huge human ear in high relief at the center of the Christian Incarnation. They have been embedded above the window under the gables formed by the roof. The votive offering can be dated to the classical period, around the V-IV century BCE. The connected inscription recites, "Neuris offered this to Artemis *Agrotera*" (Lavraeotis Kambanaos Monk, 1930, 19; Merlini, 2012, 108). The invocation became effective by both reading the text and eyeing the divine ear. The communication between devotee and deity thus got physically real.

Fig. 35. The monk-painter Theophanes positioned an ancient Greek marble plaque with a pagan votive inscription and a monumental human ear in high relief in the center of the proclamation of Jesus' virginal conception. Photo © Marco Merlini.

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Above all, Sun and Moon are represented turned towards the huge ear and with their rays focused on it. They indicate the presence of the entire universe (space, time, day and night, but also periodic cycles) to the event, to glorify the becoming of God in flesh[144]. The conception of Jesus was a cosmic event. A dark gray nimbus made of concentric spheres is positioned above Sun, Moon and huge ear. It is an abstract representation of the creative potency of God the Father who traditionally is portrayed in form of the Almightily bearded head that emits luminous fecundating rays from the mouth or the right hand. The dark gray nimbus anticipates that the Holy Spirit will overshadow Mary at the acme of the insemination.

The priestess Neuris dedicated the sculpture of a giant right ear to Artemis, symbolizing her divine propensity to listen. However, this was certainly not the intention of the Christian painter when he recycled it as an element of the Annunciation to the Virgin Mary. Moreover, the pagan Goddess is portrayed not in power, but leaving the scene. What was Theophanes' intention? The marble plaque with a votive inscription to Artemis surmounted by the relief of a human ear is located in the central position and is not a mere ornamental element, despite its high decorative quality. Its meaning should be an integral constituent of the Christian divine event. The understanding of the role played by the sense organ for hearing (but also of equilibrium) and the name of the ancient pre-Christian Goddess in Gabriel's announcement to Virgin Mary requires an additional effort to comprehend why Artemis was considered the legitimate precursor of the Mother of God (Lewandowski, 2006, 236).

A parallelism hinged on the non-opposition between virginity and motherhood was immediately evidenced by monks I have interviewed at Mount Athos on the deep meaning of the fresco. In ancient Greece, Artemis was the Virgin Goddess par excellence. As the patroness of woodlands, she sets herself implacably chaste, indifferent to carnal love and against wedlock. Nonetheless, her help was invoked by parturients, because she did not cause any pain to her mother Leto at the time of delivery and, still in infancy, she helped her in the long and painful labor to give birth to the twin Apollo (Callimachus, *Hymn 3 to Artemis* 1921, 1 ff.)[145]. This corresponds with her functions as a goddess of birth and as *kourotroph*. Artemis was imagined as adult and fully formed at her birth or almost immediately after it. This phenomenon was not unusual for divine offspring, especially for female goddesses. Athena and Aphrodite are other cases of adult form immediately or soon after birth (Beaumont, vol. I, 1993, 98). We have already mentioned Artemis in the archaic form of the Minoan Eileithyia as divinity in charge to help women with birth giving and those with gynecological problems (Gimbutas, 1989, 109). In the III century CE, Artemis Eileithyia is still invocated in sacred manumissions[146].

In a society where motherhood was strictly connected to fertility but not necessarily to love and sexual desire, Artemis' role in relation to female biology and reproduction was not restricted to giving birth. At the heart of mystic rituals centered on the divine feminine, this goddess also regulated points of passage such as menarche, sexual initiation, defloration, first childbirth (Burkert, 1985, 151), and behavior of women (Lewandowski, 2006, 236). Greek women acquired status and honor with marriage and motherhood. Therefore Artemis' task in preparing maidens for this role was of great

[144] "Sun and moon, bless (*eulogeite*) the Lord (*ton kyrion*), praise him and highly exalt him forever" (Daniel, 3, 62-63). The verse is from the invocation in the *Canticle 12. A Song of Creation.* It is recited during the Morning Prayer for the Solemnity of the Annunciation.

[145] Leto clutching the palm tree on Delos is a singular representation in the extant corpus of Attic red-figure vases of her laboring to give birth to Apollo. It occurs on a late Attic red-figure polychrome tripod pyxis held in the National Museum of Athens (inv. 1635). Artemis may well be one of the female attendants who stands behind her. The tripod pyxis is from Eretria, 340-330 BCE (Philippaki, 1970, 134, fig 61).

[146] *50 in Gounaropoulou, Hatzopoulos, 1998.

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social value (Strelan, 1996, 120). This divinity of untouched nature is a virgin in most versions, but the legendary Lycian poet Olen and the Achaeans celebrate her aspect of Eileithyia as mother of Eros, the divine quintessence of love (Pausanias, 1979, 8.21.3 on Arcadia; Larson, 2007). Strabo describes her as "Great Mother" despite confirming her virginity (Golan, 2003, 430).

Artemis ripe for motherhood is attested as a fertility goddess from Asia Minor, with her main cult center at the city of Ephesus. She is commonly associated with maidenhood, and her later Ephesian cult image portrays her with many globe-like appendages as breasts (Koester, 1995, 95). Alternative identifications for this pectoral have been advanced[147]. However, the cult statue was called *polymaston* (Diana *multimammia*) by III and IV century Christian writers, which reflects Artemis' ability to nurture (Li Donnici, 1992, 392; Merlini, 2012, 112). The Goddess was said to be, among other attributes, the mother and ruler of everything (Evans, Porter, 2000, 318). Through her "nutrient breasts that overflow with sustaining milk" (Li Donnici, 1992, 408, 411) she was revered as the legitimate wife of the city, sustainer of its inhabitants, preserver of family, protector of political agencies, and guarantor of the universe stability (Li Donnici, 1992, 394). This is why the goddess was worshipped by virgins, celibate priestesses and married women without any paradox. Her veneration was practiced before the arrival of Greek colonists (Pausania, 7.2.6) around 1000 BCE (Larson, 2007, 109), who assimilated a local Earth Goddess with their own Hellenic Artemis (Leibovici, 1993). The name Ephesus itself appeared as an etymological descendant of the Hittite town Apasa, which occupied the site in the Bronze Age (Larson, 2007, 109). Local mythology went even deeper in time associating the Ephesian Artemis to a divine fertile woman born about 7000 BCE (Evans, Porter, 2000, 318).

Ardent devotes of the Ephesian Artemis were the Amazons who are said to have kept only their female children, who were brought up to emulate Artemis *Agrotera* in hunting and in pursuing warfare like their mothers (Pausania, 7.2.4; Witt, 1997, 141). In his Hymn to Artemis, Callimachus informs that, in Ephesus, Amazons set a statue to Artemis on the shore, under a large oak (Callimachus, *Hymn* 3 to Artemis 237–47 in Callimachus, 1921). The double cultural contradictions motherhood-love and fertility-eros were made manifest through the antithesis of virginity-maternity embodied by Artemis, who was worshipped at the same time as a virgin and generator without any paradox (Merlini, 2012, 112). Mircea Eliade notes that the coexistence of these conflicting elements has been a key mystery of the identity of this Goddess (Eliade, 1978, 196). According to Rafal Lewandowski, the multitude of frequently contradictory features of Artemis reflects a multitude of female archaic deities as refined by the Greek religious mind (Lewandowski, 2006, 236).

In frescoing his Annunciation, the Athonite monk-painter Theophanes recognized the similarity between Artemis as the personification of the contrast between virginity-motherhood fused into the concept of a single Goddess (Gimbutas, 1974, 198), and Mary both virgin and mother of the Son of God. This bio-mystical opposition within Artemis

[147] In 1979, Gerard Seiterle challenged the theory of the many-breasted goddess. He pointed out that none of her appendages had nipples, the steer and its testes were symbolic of fruitfulness, and there was an altar at Ephesus large enough to sacrifice a steer (but there is lack of evidence for such sacrifices) (Seiterle, 1979, 3–16). The subsequent discussion also noticed that similar "breasts" appear on a statue depicting Zeus *Labraundos* from Anatolia. There is quite consensus that Artemis' appendages might represent fertility symbols. They have been interpreted from time to time as sacrificial bull testicles/scrota, eggs, ostrich eggs, grapes, nuts, acorns, leather pouches, and gourds. For a discussion concerning the understanding of these protuberances in Artemis portrays, see Fleischer, 1973, 74–88; Hill, 1992; Li Donnici, 1992, 389–415; Thomas, 1995, 86-7; Larson, 2007, 110; Aurenhammer, 2007, 177; Bremmer, 2008; Greaves, 2010, 15; Frayer-Griggs, 2013, 467.

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is a prefiguration of the virginal birth of the Son of God by the *Theotókos* (Merlini, 2012, 112; Ibid., 2017a, 22). The convergence between these two paradoxical goddesses is significant because the Christian Orthodox Church is asserting that Mary "conceived as a virgin, brought forth as a virgin, and after giving birth still remained a virgin" (Article 3 of the *Catechism of the Eastern Orthodox Church*, in Constas D., 1929), as prophesized by Isaiah (7, 14)[148]. The perpetual virginity of Mary is still not conclusively settled in the related theology due to an inconsistency between doctrinal denotation and liturgical practice. However, it is strongly and insistently attested by the Athonite monks[149].

In the ideological program of the Cretan painter and his monastic customers, the Annunciation plays a special role in *Agion Oros* because the doctrine of the permanent virginity of Mary is a necessary requirement for the sinlessness of Jesus, which establish an appropriate role model for the Athonite asceticism. The monks are aware that the Church has taken the notion of the virginal conception and nativity of a god from ancient myths (Eliade, 1987, 273) that were part of the surrounding pagan religions when Christianity appeared (Rhys, (1922) 2003, 114). At that time, several gods from virgin-mothers were worshipped in various regions of the Roman Empire. Venus, Ishtar, Astarte, and Anat were all considered virgins despite their lovers, who die and rise again each year. They spurned men because they were preeminent, independent, and alone, which is why the title 'virgin' was used to indicate goddesses who entertained lovers (Warner, 2013, 49).

Denouncing the pagan mythical roots of the virginal conception, Jewish rabbis were critical of the early Christian movement, rejecting Mary's maidenhood as a case of illegitimacy. In *The Gospel According to Judas* by Jeffrey Archer and Francis Maloney, the First century record by the apostle who betrayed Jesus to his enemies discharges the virginal conception of Jesus as the umpteenth example of Greek myths narrating heavenly gods who produce offspring copulating with pure and chaste women on Earth (Archer, Maloney, 2007).

Virginal birth implying lovemaking with a divinity, attested in ancient mythology, gave a halo of sanctity to the explanation of the arrival of a god's son upon Earth in human guise. In this context, the miraculous virginity of Jesus' mother is not exceptional (Golan, 2003, 406; Merlini, 2012, 114). The "fathers of the Church," such as Justin Martyr (103–165) in the *Dialogue with Trypho*, stigmatized the numerous pre-Christian virgin birth stories as inventions of the devil who, knowing that Christ would subsequently be born from a virgin, counterfeited the miracle before it really took place (Marcovich, 1997; Bullock, 1998)[150]. However, myths of virgin births may have originated from ancient

[148] It is according to the Lateran Synod in 649 (the first to stress the threefold character of Mary's virginity) and the Council of Constantinople in 681 (that declared Mary's perpetual virginity). None of the creeds of the ancient church affirmed the perpetual virginity of Mary. The statement is based on the misunderstanding of the term *almàh* in the Isaiah passage of the Hebraic Bible. It literally means 'virgin' in the sense of a youthful woman. The term was translated *d'emblée* by Saint Jerome (c. 340-419) in Latin as 'physically virgin'. It is evident that Jerome's rendering aimed to suggest the virginal birth of Jesus. The translation was incorrect and nonetheless it has had a profound influence on all of Western culture (Augias, Pesce, 2006, 89).

[149] The Protopresbyter John Meyendorff, Dean of St. Vladimir's Seminary, maintains that "the only doctrinal definition on Mary to which the Byzantine Church was formally committed in the decree of the Council of Ephesus which called her the *Theotókos*" (Meyendorff 1979, 165). However, Kallistos Ware, bishop within the Greek Orthodox Ecumenical Patriarchate and well known Eastern Orthodox academic, asserts that the title Ever-Virgin has a dogmatic standing due to Liturgical practice: "In Orthodox services Mary… is usually given her full title, 'Our All-Holy, immaculate, most blessed and glorified Lady, Mother of God and Ever-Virgin Mary'" (Ware, 1963, 257).

[150]. The *Dialogue with Trypho* is also an online text translated in English by Roberts-Donaldson at http://www.earlychristianwritings. com/text/justinmartyr-dialoguetrypho.html.

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belief that the world was created by a single female primordial being. If it was on its own, no sexual act could have preceded birth; the conception was parthenogenetic (Golan, 2003, 406).

In short, metabolizing about what may lie between transcendence and immanence, Theophanes located a 3-D giant ear in the center of the Christian conception as a signpost to indicate a parallelism hinged on the non-opposition between virginity and motherhood in both Virgin Mary and Artemis-Diana.

Two Goddesses who are ready to listen carefully and protectively

Dealing with the challenge of representing visible the invisible transforming presence of the Christian Incarnation, the Athonite monk-painter Theophanes did not dismiss the ancient Greek myth on Artemis-Diana as protector and ruler. He decided to creatively exploit the dedication to Artemis *Agrotera* by her priestess Neuris, the presence of the pagan Goddess' abode under the church and the refectory of the Great Lavra monastery and the consecration of the sacred *Akte* peninsula to her in a way that recognizes Artemis-Diana as the forerunner of the *Theotókos* by the means of her monumental ear.

At *Akte*, Neuris offered marble ear and inscription not in return for the cure of a disease nor to guarantee healthiness of the sense organ for hearing. A different intention prompted her dedication, because the enormous ear is trans-human and Neuris was possibly a reverent priestess consecrated to Artemis (Lavraeotis Kambanaos, 1930, 19; Merlini, 2012, 114). Considering both the texts and the objects on which the dedications were inscribed, the classic study of Otto Weinreich distinguished between anatomical votive offerings[151] (such as replicas of human "hearing ears" with a votive function such as the injured or healed ear of the dedicator, or a personal amulet in the shape of a ear to protect hearing[152]) and those with representations of the listening ears of deities (Weinreich, 1909, 46-68), Artemis' ear, for example[153]. Thus, he realized that the commitments did not refer exclusively to the healing properties of gods. Similar tributes / homage to divinities by using the rhetorical figure of the part for the whole (an anatomical element for the entire body/personality) (Forsén, 1996, 9-27), are not infrequent in antiquity[154]. Such is the dedication under investigation.

[151] The dedication of representations of parts of the body is frequently attested in the Greek world from the IV century BCE to the Imperial period (Hermary, Mertens, 2014, 284). These ex-votos appeal to very diverse divinities, male and female The most common offerings were hands, feet, legs, genitalia, breasts, chests, arms, ears, eyes, fingers, internal organs, and back.

[152] Models of feet, hands, eyes and ears are known from Artemis's sanctuary at Ephesus (Hogarth, 1908, 107; Rouse, 1902, 215). A significant example of the offering of an ear by an injured devotee is held in the Cesnola Collection of ancient Cypriot art in The Metropolitan Museum of Art. It is a late Classical or early Hellenistic votive right ear in limestone with a syllabic inscription (that indicates a very early date). It was found in the sanctuary of Golgoi – Agios Photos (Cyprus). The canal is displayed by a circular hole. The inscription recites: "I belong to a deaf person" (Cat. 396). It clearly shows that the offering indicates a pathology of the believer to be healed and not the occurred listening to the request by the god (Hermary, Mertens, 2014, 284). A number of similar Cypriot small plaques with an ear schematically rendered in relief occur in the Cesnola Collection. Contrariwise, an inscribed plaque from the Epidauros Asklepieion has two ears in relief to indicate the offeror's ears having been healed (Archaeological National Museum of Athens, inv. n. 1428). Similarly, at Pergamon an ear was consecrated (*I. Pergamon*, 3, 91). It was because of a cure thanks to the input of a dream (Renberg, 2017, 353). Ears as anatomical votives have been well studied in pre-Roman Italy. See MacIntosh Turfa, 2004, and Biedermann, 2007/2008, 214-216 for information on the on-going discussion about establishing defining criteria and bibliographical references.

[153] However, a third category of anatomical artifacts has to be added: terracotta figural vases depicting body parts which are therapeutic hot-water bottles.

[154] The Serapeion of Thessaloniki yielded a votive plaque from the I century CE with footprints dedicated to Isis and Sarapis, representative of their divine apparition and permanent presence to the worshippers

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Concerning the identity of the dedicator, *Neuris* in ancient Greek is the deerskin, such as the deer pelt that clothed the statue of Artemis at her temple of Despoina in Arcadia (Pausanias, 1979, 8.37.4 on Arcadia; Otto, 1955, 85; Gimbutas, 1974,198; Ibid., 1999, 156),[155] or the sinew, the bow-string of this hunting Goddess (from *νεῦρον* / neuron)[156]. Therefore, it is inferable that Neuris was a priestess of Artemis (Merlini, 2012, 114). Regarding the inscription, the interpretative grid elaborated by Margherita Guarducci indicates that it is a typical votive tablet with dedication composed of the name of the petitioner, the verb denoting the action of dedication, and the offering plus the name of the goddess in the dative case (Guarducci, 1974, 8). Most of these epigraphical occurrences follow a ritualized, succinct and simple single-phrase ("To the deity Y *epekoos*[157] the dedicant X") (Stavrianopoulou, 2016, 79). In these instances, the presence of an ear visually illustrates that the god to which the plaque is offered to has the quality of *Epekoos* ('one who listens carefully and protectively') (Guarducci, 1974, 67). The title *Epekoos* has been well attested in connection to hearing prayer in literary sources since Homer (Weinreich, 1909; Versnel, 1981, 26-37; Pulleyn, 1997, 134-144; Jakov, Voutiras, 2005, 104-141). It enjoyed an enormous popularity, had wide geographical distribution from the Hellenistic period up to the end of the Roman Empire, and involved a large range of functions performed by *epekooi* deities. It also revealed the pervasive influence of Egyptian cult practices (Weinreich, 1909, 46-51).

In Greek-Roman religious settings, the attribute of *Epekoos* was sometimes expressed not through wording, but directly with the representation of the divine ear/ears. Incised or painted on walls, altars, and votive plaques in pagan temples and sanctuaries, ears indicated prayers that had to be heard or that had been answered by the related divinity (Forstner, 1977, 350). The representation of ears consecrated to a divinity expressed a devotee's intimate relationship with the respective deity, his/her plea to place his/her request or praise before the addressed deity, demanding attentive listening. Concerning the divinities whose ears were addressed to, this is signaled on the dedication[158].

(Despinis et al., 1997). In the Lapidarium of the Musei Capitolini (Rome), a dedication to the Goddess Caelestis specifies the fulfillment of a vow concerning the request for a safe voyage: going (*itus*), and returning (*reditus*). To avoid any misunderstanding with the divinity, the thanksgiving to "triumphal Caelestis" (*Caelestis Triunfali*) is illustrated by two going bare feet and to returning bare feet. Representation of a sacrificed dove occurs at the center of the panel. The ex-voto was offered by Iovinus in the III century CE.

[155] In Alciphron's *Letters* (Books 1,3), written in Attic style and ascribed to characters from the famous Greek *hetairai*, Neuris is "the maiden who carried the basket, with her beautiful arms and fingers, her eyes flashing glances like lightning, her charming figure and complexion, and her glistening cheeks" (Alciphron, 1896, § 3.67, Letter from Dipsophapausilypus to Placyntomion). The National Archaeological Museum in Athens holds a Middle Corinthian cup or dish with busts of two women. It is inscribed "Neuris" and "Glyka" in Corinthian script. The find is from the first half of the VI century BCE.

[156] Hippocrates, as annotated by the anatomist Jacopo Berengario da Carpi (ca.1460 - ca.1530), who was famous to have dissected several hundred bodies (Berengario da Carpi, 1522; Park, 1994).

[157] On the epithet, see Weinreich, 1912.

[158] The symbolism of the ears to represent the divinity in his quality of one who listen is well attested in Egyptian, Semitic, Greek, and Roman-Italic koine (Lambrechts-Vanden Berghe, 1955, 197, Cenerini, 1986, 102-110). Among *theoi epekooi* belong many Oriental gods, Egyptian among them. The cult of these deities and their invocation as *epekooi* spread in Greco-Roman regions during Hellenistic times and continued until the imperial period (Haken, 1955, 14).

Some selected examples make the typology and its development clear. The Greek-Roman *oecumene* borrowed the "hearing ears" from the Egyptian cult practices: votive sacred gifts in form of an ear presented in honor of a deity or as a personalized message (Pinch, 1993; Andrews, 1994, 69; Teeter, 2011, 89). Some structures were devoted specifically to enabling people to appeal to the god(s). They were proper places of divine hearing often called "chapels of the hearing ear," referring to the ear of a god who hearkens to prayer. People came and asked for divine assistance in an alabaster (calcite) "shrine of the hearing ear" at Karnak

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(Dynasty 18). In the last stages of its life, petitions were heard by the deified king Ptolemy VII. The Shrine consecrated to "Amun Who Hears Petitions" was located at East Karnak (Dynasty 19). It was also known as "the place where Ramesses hears pleas." A large image of the king presenting Maat, the divine personification of truth, to Ptah is located in a chapel at the Eastern High Gate at Medinet Habu in western Thebes. The hieroglyphic texts assure that Ptah is a god who "hears petitions". Reflecting the Egyptians' predilection for concrete images rather than abstract concepts, monumental ears were carved on either side of the central niche in a Roman-era shrine at the Temple of Kom Ombo. A large figure of Maat was depicted above the giant ears (Teeter, 2011). These popular places of supplication were positioned outside the temples, so that anyone might approach them easily and in privacy.

A number of rectangular marble votive plaques with representations of altars between ears, two of them with dedications, were found in a Nymphaeum near Ognjanova (Bulgaria) (*SEG*, 41, 608). They belong to the Hellenistic period (Weinreich, 1909, 54-56). In the Hellenistic period, the dedicatory reliefs with representations of pairs of ears to allude to the attribute of *Epekoos* associated with the goddess Isis, considered akin to Artemis by popular religiosity, became popular under Egyptian influence. In the *Metamorphoses* of Apuleius, the exhausted Lucius expresses an invocation of praise to the "*Regina caeli*" (11.2), identified as Isis, and the Goddess hears his supplication (Finkelpearl, 1998. Ibid., 2003). Isis listens attentively also the prayer of her priestess in the *Life of Aesop* "for a report of piety swiftly reaches the ears of the gods" (VA 5 in Paschalis, 2007, 43). Ex-votos with Isis' ear, pair of ears (at times also eyes) in relief decorated altars, plaques, and stelae such as the so-called ear-stelae, representing *pars pro toto* the divine figure adored. Sometimes the ear-stelae simply describe ears and eyes. They are generally interpreted as an iconographic translation of the well-attested divine epithet "he/she who hears prayers" (Stavrianopoulou, 2016, 83). On Egyptian ear-stelae see also Pinch, 1993, 246-253 and Teeter, 2011.

A bronze plaque with two ears in relief bears an inscription on a *tabula ansata o*f unknown provenance. The dedication to Zeus *Olybris* associates them to the god's quality of *Epekoos* (Isaac, 1997). A marble stele of the II century BCE with a carved representation of two human ears with a double-axe in the middle was recovered at Güzelpinar, near the ancient Greek-Roman city of Hierapolis (southwestern Turkey). It was dedicated to Apollon *Kareios* in fulfillment of a vow (Ceylan, Ritti, 1997).

In the Greek-Roman milieu, models of ears are known from Artemis's sanctuary at Ephesus (Hogarth, 1908, 107; Rouse, 1902, 215). Imagery of these ears not always involves a biological problem with these sensory organs but rather a request that the god or goddess hears the supplicant's plea (e.g. IG X, 2.1, 100). See appropriate considerations in Michaela Senkova (Senkova, 2017, 30–39). At Delos, the divinities who received votive ears having the epithet of *Epekoos* were mostly from Eastern regions (Hamilton, 2000).

Dedications have been addressed to Dionysos *Theos Epekoos* in the I/II century CE by slaves, freedmen, and peasants of a certain M. Calpurnius Longus who owned a land at Alasson (Chaniotis, Mylonopoulos, 2001, 175).

A Delian dedication on a *tabula ansata* associates two bronze ears with the inscription: "Diogenes, son of Diogenes, from Antioch, to Isis the listening one as (redemption of his) vow" (*I. Delos*, 2173). Three votive plaques (ns. 49, 50, and 51) consecrated to this Goddess bear representations of ears as probable attestation for her divine manifestation. The first is dedicated to Isis *Epekoos*. The second has no inscription. The third is offered to Isis "after the Goddess' hearing of the prayer" (Despinis et al., 1997). The plaques are from the I century CE. They were found in the Serapeion of Thessaloniki, and at present are held in Thessaloniki Archaeology Museum. Several other dedications from Thessaloniki are addressed to Isis *Epekoos.* One is significantly associated with the presentation of an ear (Despinis et al., 2003). Two inscribed reliefs of this typology were recovered in the sanctuary of Sarapis and Osiris at Kanopos, where Isis was also worshipped. They are ascribed to the II century CE. The first relief was consecrated to Isis by a freedman; the other by a person called Arrian, probably to Osiris (Kayser, 1992). The Athenian Epaphroditus dedicated ears to Isis (Witt, 1971, 303-4). In the Isis-temple at Pompeii, two ears coming out from the walls were consecrated to Bacchus-Dionysus in the I century CE (Malaise, 1972, 276). However, as in ancient Egypt some plaques featured ears only to amplify petitions to any deity (Lloyd, 2010, 517).

Dedications of *auribus* to Bona Dea are attested on I and III CE altars in Arles (Brouwer, 1989, 131-134, nr. 130), Glanum (Rolland, 1944, 176, n. 18; Brouwer, 1989, 135 f., n. 133; Picard, 1963, 188 ff. with fig. 7), and Aquileia (Lambrechts, Vanden Berghe, 1955, 178-179; Brouwer, 1989, 113 f., nr. 110). Apulum (Dacia) provides evidence of altars with dedication to Nemesis *exaudientissima* (*CIL* III, 1126). In Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa, a fragmentary votive plaque is connected with the cult of Theos Hypsistos. The name of the dedicant (partially visible) and two ears were chiseled on it, including this god among the *theoi epekooi* (Onofrei, 2014, 222). A pair of ears are engraved on the city walls of Iasos (Caria island) from the Roman imperial period. Surveys on such ex-votos occur in Weinreich, 1909; Straten van, 1981, 106-144; and Forsén, 1996, 31-104.

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Priestess Neuris' offering of a votive inscription connected to an ear representing Artemis divine epithet of *Epekoos* is indicative, because it recognizes the Goddess—patroness of childbirth and life, and therefore ruler of reproductive human fate—within the group of divinities disposed to listen to supplications. In return, the priestess expected that the deity was willing to fulfill her expectations. Thus, the chance of success of Neuris' invocation was inextricably linked to an adequate recipient (proper inscription and giant right ear) (Guarducci, 1974, 68)[159].

The Ephesian Artemis was venerated as a personal rescuer and helper who heard prayers (Strelan, 1996, 51). She has three dedications associated with her qualification as *Epekoos*[160]. The zodiacal symbols were displayed around the neck of her cult statue to signify that she assisted her followers by giving advice to them about future. Her authority was considered superior even to the astral powers that were believed to control the fate of people (Clinton, 1989, 28). Known as early as the IV century BCE, the *Ephesia Grammata* were six magical nonsense words *(ἄσκι, κατάσκι, λίξ/αἶξ, τετράξ, δαμναμενεύς, αἴσιον/αἴσια*) incised around feet, girdle and crown of her worship statue and applied as powerful spells. According to Clemens and Hesychius, these *Ephesia Grammata,* written onto the Goddess image, were empowered by her (Latte et al. (eds.), 1953–2009). The spells, formerly meaningful words evolved into nonsense *voces magicae*. At the end of

[159] The qualification of *Epekoos* was shared by a number of divinities. We list some cases from the most emblematic instances. In a cave sanctuary of Aphrodite at Wasta (Sidon, Lebanon) vulvae are incised on the wall. One of them mentions Aphrodite *Epekoos* (Ohnefalsch-Richter, 1893, 150 sq., figs. 145-148; Bonnet, 2004). Herakles *Epekoos* had an altar in Athens (Weinreich, 1969, 157). Apollon *Epekoos* is invoked on an Hellenistic stele of the mid I century BCE that is held in the Archaeological Museum at Gaziantep (Turkey). The monument was found at Sofraz Köy (Wagner, 2000, 16-18 Fig. 21.22; Wagner, Petzl, 1976, 201–223). Artemidoros mentions an altar where Zeus *Bomos Epekoos* was worshipped (Weinreich, 1969, 161). Zeus Olybris/Olybreus has this epithet on an inscription from Coman, in Cappadocia (Robert J., Robert L., 1950, 67–69; Harper, 1969, 27). Two ears separated by a two-sided axe are carved, within a *tabella ansata*, on a wall of the cell of the temple of Zeus at Euromos. They belong to the Hadrian period (Pülz, 1989, 453). A votive inscription on a limestone block (Nr. 2) from Antalya, nowadays in the Antalya Museum, verifies the Epekooi epithet of the Dioscuroi. Interestingly, they are not named, but called the 'listening gods' (*theoi epekooi*) (Gökalp, Akdoğu Arca, 2009). In 122 BCE, Seleukos son of Socrates offered prayers to Isis *Chreste Epekoos* at the presence of the priest Diokles at Delos (*I. Delos*, 2149). *Chrestus* means Good. The inscription is on a stele with a relief representing a funerary banquet. It is in the collection of the Medici Riccardi Palace at Florence (Gunnella, 1998). At Delos, the epithet *epekooi* was also given to Apollo, the gods Ascalon, and the Egyptian gods (Bruneau, 1970, 167). Pan *Epekoos* was venerated in Panopolis (Weinreich, 1969, 169). An inscription from the mid III century BCE, probably from Fayoum, states that a certain Petesouchos dedicated an altar to three *epekooi* Egyptian deities (*I. Fayoum*, 196). Although they go unidentified, they are possibly local crocodile-deities (Koerner, 1966, 47-56; Stavrianopoulou, 2016, 82).
In the Hauran inscriptions of Roman era, the epithet *epekoos* belonged exclusively to Baal Shamin (Sourdel, 1952, 26, 98; Teixidor, 2015, 9). In Hellenistic Ptolemais, in Palestine, Hadad and Atargatis were invoked as *theoi epekooi*" (Avi-Yonah, 1959). This is also the attribute of the so-called "anonymous" god of Palmyra, in Palmyrene inscriptions given in Greek (Avi-Yonah, 1959). In 2014, Christie's sold a II-III century AD Roman marble statue of Hera Epekoos for USD 11,875. A Greek inscription on the integral plinth, recites: "Diodoros and Sabinos, sons of Mukianos (dedicate) a thank offering to the goddess Hera Epekoos". A II century AD votive relief addressed to '*Iunoni Sospiti Matri Ma[gnae] Isidi'* was unearthed from Pozzuoli (Rione Terra). The worshipper is a certain Acilius Celadus. He dedicated the relief in connection with a request for or the fulfilment of an '*oraculum*'. Besides the inscription, the relief depicts two ears to symbolize the capacity to listen of the invoked goddesses (Nuzzo, 2006, 82; Caldelli, 2008, 66). This dedication illustrates the association of Juno, Magna Mater and Isis. It also testifies to a popular devotion to Isis and her fellow deities, worshipped for their oracular virtues (Clausen, 2015, 103). The piece is held in the Museo Archeologico dei Campi Flegrei, inv. 32054.
[160] A dedication to [Artemis *Epekoos*] was made by [Capetoleinus] Diodorou of Ephesos. It was engraved on a 114/115 CE statue of Neike that was found at Ephesos. The text of the other two inscriptions is identical (Weinreich, 1969, 161).

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such a process, only six words were chosen, because they were keywords of the original spells and/or they were phonetically charming for magic purposes[161]. After studying the magical formula, Clinton Arnold concludes that in many instances there is slight or no difference between calling on Artemis to accomplish a certain task or utilizing a spoken or written charm (Arnold, 1989, 15). The *Ephesia Grammata* served as protection against harm (Edmonds, 2014, 97-106).

Other commitments to Artemis *Epekoos* are known from classical time[162]. "Artemis… give ear to my prayers and ward off the evil Keres![163] For you, Goddess, this is a small thing, but for me it is critical," Theognis implores through a Greek elegy of c. VI BCE (Theognis, Fragment 1.11 in Gerber, 1999). An inscription from the III century BCE unearthed at Chythroi mentions Artemis as *Epekoos* (Fischer-Hansen, Poulsen, 2009, 203).

To summarize, the classical Greek ear sculptured in marble that was eradicated from a pagan sanctuary to be positioned nearly two millennia later on the facade of the refectory of the Great Lavra is not human, but is the giant right ear of Artemis as the Goddess with open ears. The reproduction of this anatomical part in monumental size designates both the request to the Goddess to listen with attention, empathy and discernment and that she has favorably responded to prayers (Lavraeotis Kambanaos, 1930, 19-20; Simonopetritis Theophilopoulos, 1973, 33-34).

For settling the interpretation of Theophanes' Annunciation, it is significant to note not only the belonging of the monumental votive ear to Artemis, but also that the Cretan painter was aware of her ancient attribution of *Epekoos* and recycled it according to this conviction.

On *Agion Oros*, the counterpart of Artemis *Epekoos* is *Panagia Gorgoepikoos*, the already mentioned wonder-working icon venerated in Dochiariou monastery representing the Athonite abbess quick to hear and ready to answer mercifully to monks prayers. They should appeal to her for all their needs and she would hear them speedily, for her name is *Gorgoepikoos*. The miracle and the Marian promise to hear supplicants rapidly became known to the entire Holy Mountain. The icon is attracting, still nowadays, many sick pilgrims praying for a cure. At Mount Athos, the Virgin Mary *Epekoos* has replaced Artemis as the female divinity who hears the supplications of monks and pilgrims.

We understood here another important reason why the Cretan monk-painter recycled a monumental pagan votive ear invoking the favor of Artemis: he translated the symbolism of protective listening of the pagan Goddess to the *Panagia* as the Abbess responsible for the Great Lavra and the entire Mount Athos. Theophanes expressed in painting a general feeling of the Athonite monks. According to their observance, the Blessed Virgin is not the closer advocate of humanity to the ear of God, but a miracle-working figure in whose ear they ask for mercy, and to be saved. They feel sheltered by the Mother of God.

Conclusions. What Mary and Artemis had confabulated just before to be portrayed on the fresco?

What had the two goddesses discussed just before to be depicted on the wall of the refectory at the Great Lavra? The painter represents the dramatic but not violent moment (according to the Athonite auto-mythology) when Mary replaces Artemis in the government of *Agion Oros* (Merlini, 2012, 134). The painting, based on the dynamics

[161] Some data allow relating the Ephesia grammata to Orphic milieu and to Parmenides (Bernabé, 2014).
[162] Concerning Artemis *Epekoos*, see Preller, 1894, 320.
[163] The Keres were female spirits (*daimones*) of violent or cruel death.

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among three players, combines two myths: on the one side, the mystery of the Annunciation-Incarnation; on the other side, the most important foundation tradition of Mount Athos, in which the protagonist is the Mother of God on a missionary journey to the peninsula.

Theophanes's ideological program portrays Artemis tranquilly spinning and conversing with the future *Panagia* (All Holy Mother of God) to illustrate the supposition, described in a manuscript from Dochiariou monastery, that the pagan inhabitants of *Akte* not only accepted the new faith and "received their first bishops from the hands of Virgin Mary, "but they also converted "following the urgings of their idols," which admitted their own falseness and broke themselves to bit[164]. It is believed that the *Theotókos* was venerated and respected not only by saints, holy men and nature, but also by pagans. The monks assure that even demons, as they perceive Greek-Roman divinities, ordered their believers to welcome her. Agapios the Cretan writes that when the Virgin Mary disembarked on the shores of Athos Mountain, "all the demons inhabiting the idols, forced against their will, could not resist the power of God and they proclaimed the truth" (Holy Apostles Convent, 1989). Artemis, as the former protector and ruler of the peninsula, had to recognize the new religious power and then to leave.

The Cretan painter-monk realized his fresco during the mid–XVI century when the polarized narratives were established. It was a tragic period in which Mount Athos started to rewrite its own history in response to the decline induced by the Ottoman occupation. The reign of Suleiman the Magnificent (1522-1560) opened a window of favorable conditions for cultural and economic growth of the subjected Mount Athos monasteries. Donors were both Danubian rulers of the Principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia and local clergymen. From the third decade of the XVI century, across the Holy Mountain monasteries went through renovations and churches, chapels and refectories were repainted with frescoes by the renowned artistic teams of the Cretan masters Theophanes Strelitzas and Tzortzis. Programs of restoration and decoration came to an abrupt end in 1568–1569, when Sultan Selim II confiscated the properties of all the monasteries (Zachariadou, 2006, 166).

The revised autobiography of Mount Athos exhibited a long and illustrious lineage projected back even to the first apostolic period. It also boasted emperors and famous miracle-working saints as founders of monasteries and multiplied the wonder-working icons of the *Panagia*. Historical inaccuracies, logical inconsistencies, and chronological contradictions were secondary to the urgent need to reaffirm a past glory and regain the lost prestige in Oriental Christianity. Theophanes' wall paintings at the Great Lavra (the Annunciation we are inquiring as well as the coeval portraits in monumental style of the Greek philosophers and sibyls) played a significant role in the new ideological Post-Byzantine framework. Having mere short passages in manuscripts as competitors and benefitting the anti-intellectual attitude of the Athonite monasticism (Nagy, 2001, 86; Merlini, 2012, 137), Theophanes' large fresco cycle at the prominent monastery acquired a leading ideological role exploiting iconography to promote *Agion Oros* as a cultural engine of the Orthodox Church fueled by ancient Greek legacy. It manifests the continuous presence of the seminal Greek milieu throughout the monastic centuries to create the Orthodox civilization based on a blending of (preeminent) Christianity and (secondary) ancient Hellenistic culture.

The fresco cycle also assures that the theocratic enclave gained the legacy of Greek (and Roman) antiquity without traumatic discontinuities. The substitution of the ancient native population with religious practitioners who immigrated from abroad, the

[164] MS Codex 198 held by the Dochiariou monastery.

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passage from paganism to Christianity, the absorption by Mary of the attributes of the local Artemis, and the replacement of pagan sanctuaries with monasteries were not considered *manu militari* events, but necessary steps toward a civilization blessed by the 'true God'. Theophanes utilized the theme of the Annunciation as the architrave of his ideological construction on the foundation of the Athonite monastic enclave knowing that, according to the ancient manuscripts held by monks: "The natives converted by Virgin Mary diligently posed questions concerning the mystery of providence in the divine incarnation" (Holy Apostles Convent, 1989, 436). The Virginal Divine Conception is her *atout*, as the Resurrection is for her son.

Finally, Theophanes' frescoes put the Great Lavra under the shelter of the Madonna after she replaced Artemis. The Virgin has occupied a special place at *Agion Oros* since the debut of the monastic life there. She appeared around 840 in a dream to Peter, the first documented hermit, to prophesy the bright future of the Holy Mountain. The event is recorded in his biography written two centuries later (Merlini, 2017a, 24; Ibid., 2017b). She came miraculously into sight several times during the subsequent centuries, according to monks' tradition. However, chronicles document she was fully enrolled as a protector, guardian and owner of the Hellenic religious spiritual peninsula as a consequence of the complexity and difficulties of the ungrateful XVI century.

The monks are even sure of what the pagan Goddess was uttering when she "symbolically abandoned her crown for the Madonna": "As a precursor of God's Mother, I no longer hold any place here, since the Lady and patron of Mount Athos has come" (Lavraeotis Kambanaos Monk,1930, 20).

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