

CHILDREN BURIALS IN THE BRONZE AGE SETTLEMENT FROM ȘOIMUȘ-TELEGHI (HUNEDOARA COUNTY)

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Abstract: *The site Șoimuș-Teleghi was partially excavated during the archaeological project "Highway 2011" and it revealed the presence of an important settlement with successive occupancies, from the early Neolithic to the post-Roman age.*

The most important habitation was in the Middle Bronze Age and towards the end of the Late Bronze Age, marking the existence of communities belonging to the Wietenberg culture and some cultural groups that followed it in this region during the Late Bronze Age. Because only the southern margin, towards the Mureș River, of the settlement was researched, the majority of the features were pits, some having a funerary role or containing ritual depositions.

In this article, we will present two of the documented features, which provided eloquent information on the mortuary practices of the Late Bronze Age community from here. They are two children burials which highlighted some common aspects of the funerary ritual, but also particular elements, illustrated by the architecture of the pits and their inventory.

The pottery's characteristics and the layout of the deceased inside the two graves raised an important problem, linked on the one hand to placing the finds in the relative chronology of this period, for the south-western extremity of Transylvania, and on the other hand to a certain cultural identity, which inherited the funerary rite and ritual from the local or foreign background.

The publication of the two burials aims to become another contribution for reconstructing several aspects of the funerary behaviours in the aforementioned time span and area, but also to generate new discussions on the cultural evolutions in the respective chronological frame.

Rezumat: *Cercetat parțial în cadrul proiectului arheologic „Autostrada 2011”, situl arheologic de la Șoimuș-Teleghi a relevat prezența aici a unei importante așezări, cu locuiri succesive începute în neoliticul timpuriu și până în perioada post-romană.*

Locuirea cea mai importantă a durat din perioada mijlocie, până spre finalul perioadei târzii a epocii bronzului și a evidențiat prezența unor comunități ale culturii Wietenberg și ale unor grupuri culturale ce au urmat acesteia, în această zonă geografică, în perioada bronzului târziu. Deoarece a fost cercetată doar marginea sudică, dinspre Râul Mureș, a așezării, cea mai mare parte a complexelor descoperite au fost gropile, între care s-au aflat și unele cu depuneri rituale și cu rol funerar.

În articolul de față vom prezenta două dintre complexele funerare cercetate, care au oferit informații elocvente asupra unor practici mortuare ale comunității din etapa finală a epocii bronzului, de aici. Este vorba despre două înmormântări de copii, care au evidențiat unele aspecte comune ale ritualului funerar, dar și aspecte care le particularizează, lucruri ilustrate atât de amenajarea gropilor, cât și de inventarul fiecăreia.

O problemă importantă, ridicată de cele două complexe, prin caracteristicile ceramicii și așezarea defuncților în mormânt este legată, pe de o parte, de încadrarea în cronologia relativă a perioadei, în extremitatea sud-vestică a Transilvaniei și, pe de altă parte, de o anumită identitate culturală care a moștenit din fondul local sau din unul alogen, ritul și ritualul funerar.

Publicarea celor două morminte, se dorește a fi încă o contribuție la reconstituirea unor aspecte ale comportamentelor funerare în perioada avută în discuție, în această zonă, dar să și genereze noi discuții asupra evoluțiilor culturale în intervalul cronologic avut în vedere.

Keywords: settlement, children burials, crouched position, funerary inventory, Late Bronze Age.

Cuvinte cheie: așezare, înmormântări de copii, poziție chirchită, inventar funerar, epoca târzie a bronzului.

INTRODUCTION

The site from Șoimuș–Teleghi, partially researched during the archaeological project “Highway 2011”, lies on the Mureș’s high terrace, north of the river, between the Șoimuș and Bălata localities. The researched area, delimited during the archaeological diagnose¹, revealed the southern part of a large settlement, inhabited in the Neolithic, Bronze Age, La Tène and post-Roman period².

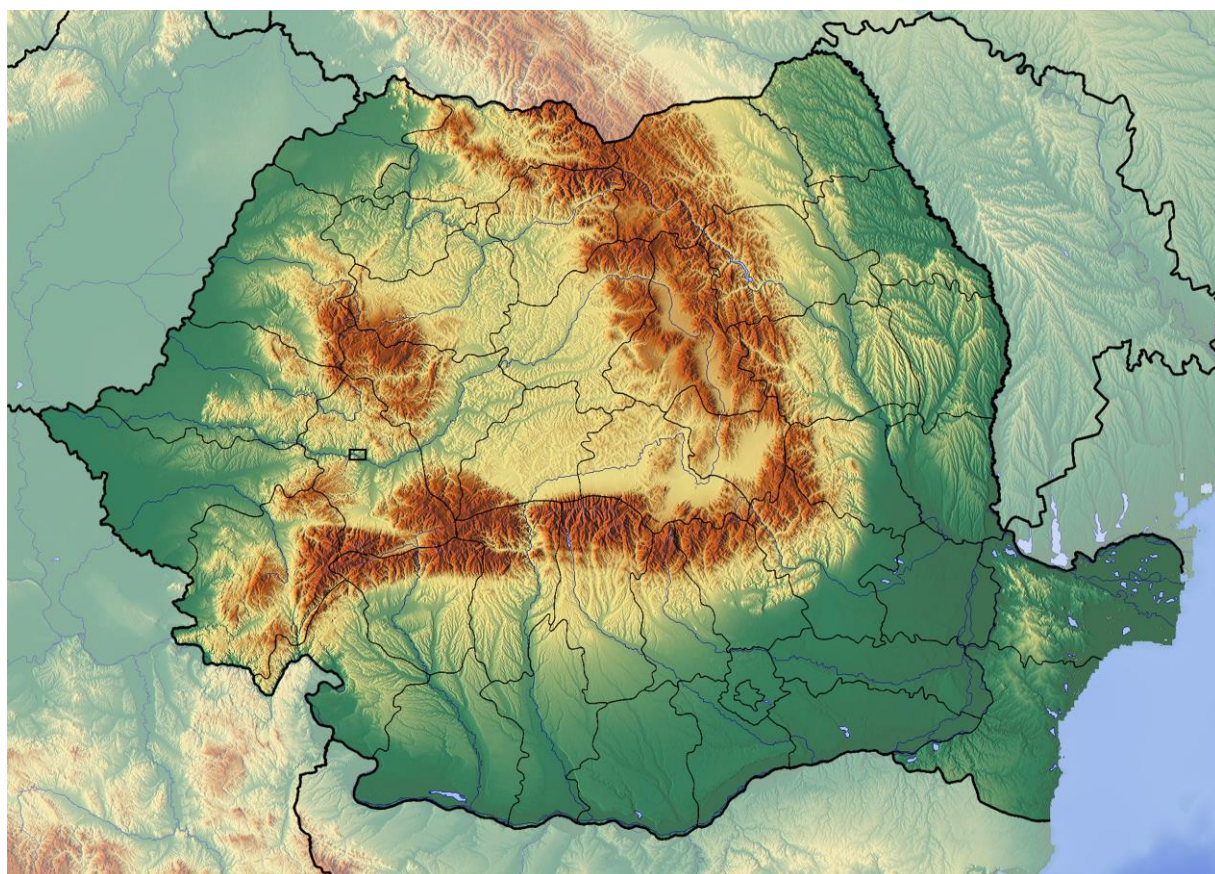
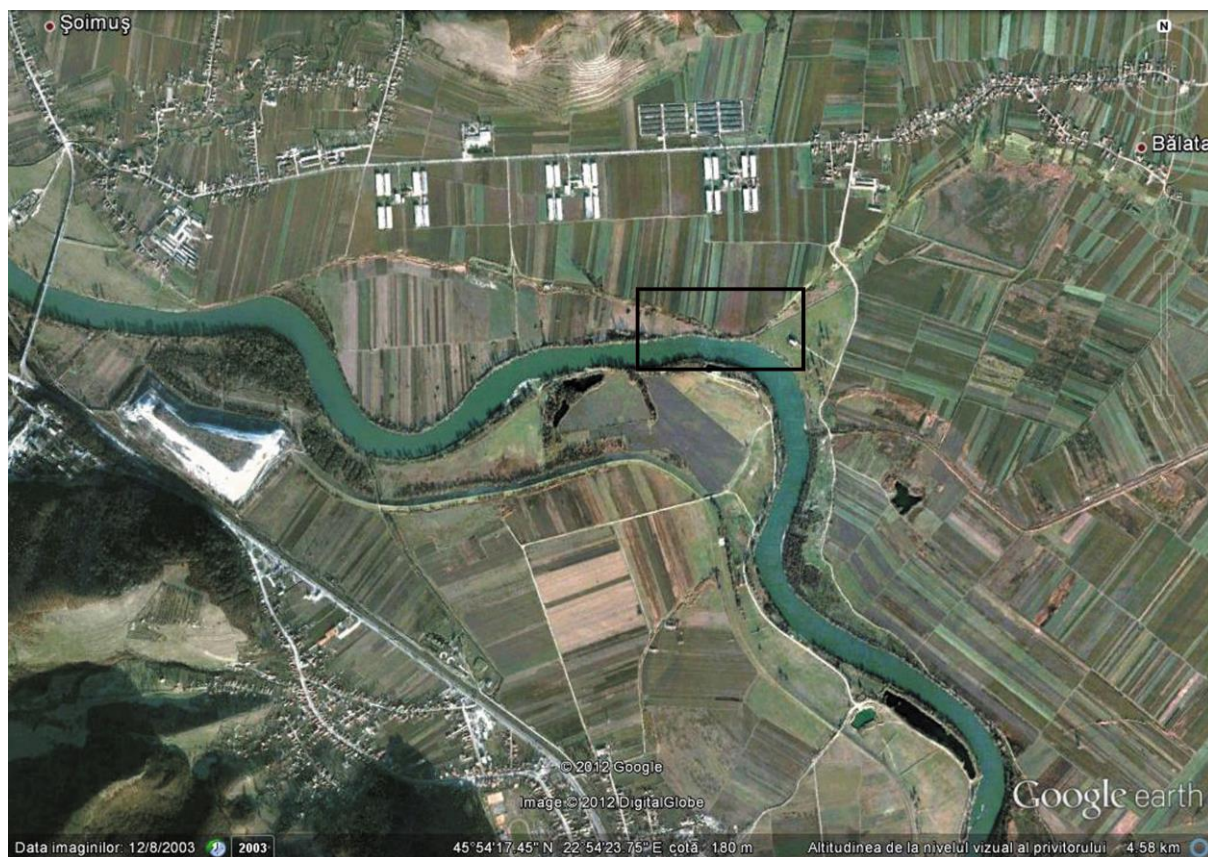


Fig. 1. The area of the investigated site, in black frame, on the map of Romania and of the Eastern Carpathian Basin.

¹ Damian et al. 2012.

² Schuster et al. 2012; Rișcuța, Marc 2015.



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Fig. 2. Satellite image (after Google Earth) with the placement of the site (1) and detail with the limits of the investigated sectors, with Sector B on the left (2).

The habitation, illustrated by the majority of the investigated features, developed in the Middle Bronze Age and at the beginning of the Late Bronze Age. Most of the complexes were pits of different destinations, some of them highlighting special aspects – ritual depositions and burials.

This paper will present two from the six Bronze Age burial features. Their context and content offered eloquent information on the funerary practices of the local communities at the beginning of the Late Bronze Age. A child skeleton was found in each of those two pits – C 274 and C 353 (Fig. 3). The burials differ in terms of arrangement, funerary inventory and its distribution inside the pit, but are similar regarding rite and ritual.

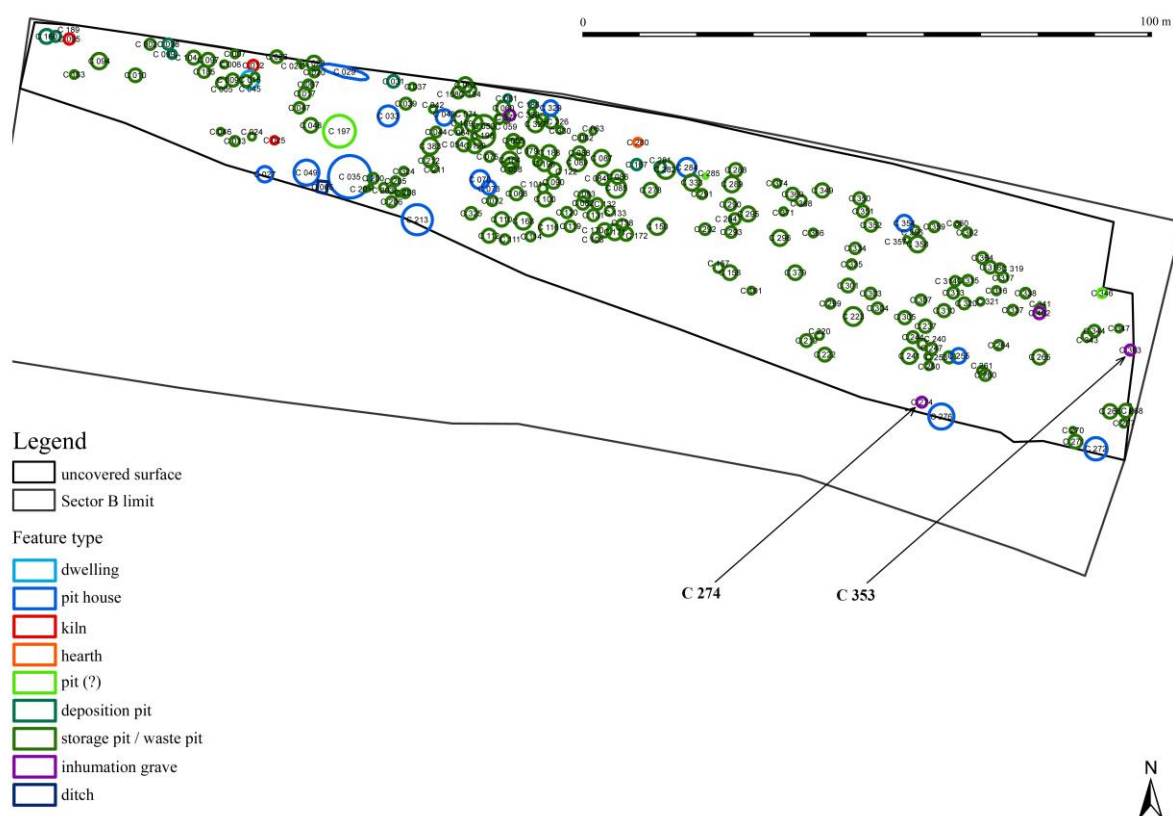


Fig. 3. Plan with the Bronze Age features inside the limits of the researched surface and of Sector B.

DESCRIPTION OF THE FUNERARY FEATURES

Complex C 274 was observed like a grey circular surface, 1.50 m in diameter, at -0.40 m-0.50 m below ground level (Pl. 1/1), deepen up to 0.50 m in the clay yellowish layer. The pit was initially dug cylindrically, with a slight opening towards the exterior, than it was accentually cambered, resulting a truncate conical shape, like a bell with very inclined walls (Pl. 2/1).

The body of the deceased – a 4-5 years old child, whose sex could not be determined³, was laid on the bottom of the pit, crouched on the left side, the face looking east and slightly downwards. The skeleton was strongly affected by the physical-chemical processes in the

³ The anthropological data were kindly provided by Alexandra Comșa PhD, from the Thracology Centre of the "Vasile Pârvan" Institute of Archaeology, București, to whom we thank on this occasion.

soil, thus many of the small bones were lost. Even the skull, thorax and large member bones got deteriorated. The torso was covered with a part of a large sack type vessel (Fig. 4), other fragments of which were set around the body and in the lower filling of the pit. In the head area, also on the bottom of the pit, two fragments from the superior side of a big pot were laid, while towards the edge of the pit, in this area and in the back of the body, the rim of a bitronconic pot and parts of its walls were placed, separately (Pl. II/2). In the front of the deceased, a sandstone slab and a little quern (towards the margin) were also found.



Fig. 4. Detail from the feature C 274, with the skeleton partially covered by the fragmented sack type vessel.

The filling of the pit showed two layers (Pl. 1/2). In the inferior part, it was relatively uniform and contained potshards, fragments of animal bones, crushed burned daub and carbonized wood, more concentrated at the base and gradually pigmenting the layer above the skeleton. The upper filling consisted in a 15-20 cm compact clay layer, which sealed the pit, a little darker than the excavated sterile soil.

Feature C 353 was initially less visible, being outlined at - 0.15 m off the surface, just under the vegetal soil, like a circular elongated area of 1.50 m in diameter. For a better delimitation of the complex, other 0.30 m were dug out. It was established that the pit of the tomb had the diameter of 1.40-1.50 m (Pl. 3), deepened 0.15 m into the yellowish clay soil, with vertical walls and irregular margins. In conclusion, the feature measured a deposit of 0.45 m thick from the contour level.

The body of the deceased – a child with the age between 2 years and 3 months-2 years and 8 months, of female sex, was laid crouched on the left side on the clay bed at the bottom of the pit, facing west (Fig. 5). Her skeleton was affected by the soil processes as well, hence – just like in the previous case, many bones were deteriorated, while others were lost.



Fig. 5. Detail from the feature C 353, with the skeleton and some of the fragmentary vessels of the funerary inventory.

Regarding the funerary inventory, half of a cup was placed off the face, with the mouth oriented to the head of the deceased, with the missing part upwards (Pl. 4). Also in the front of the corpse, but in the legs' area and facing them, half of a jar was found, with the missing part upwards as well. A stone quern was placed over the legs, with the convex side downwards. A quarter from the body of a cup was discovered under the nape, facing down, and at the back of the deceased, off the thorax, fragments from another cup were found, arranged horizontally. Further back were laid shards from a quarter of a large arched vessel, with the interior upwards. In the same zone and on the same level, the mandible of a pig was placed. Half of a pot with the upper side missing, laid on the side, was arranged on top of the large vessel, in the superior part of the grave, the rim opposing the skull.

FUNERARY INVENTORY

The inventory of feature C 274 was mainly composed of ceramic items, alongside three stone small objects and different fragmentary animal bones. The ceramic recipients represent a

short series of types, the majority of them (60) being present only in fragments. A single vessel could be completed from the aforementioned shards – a bitronconic pot. Only half of the sack-type vessel was reconstructed. Other fragments used for reshaping a quarter from the profile of a deep bowl, while only a part from the rest of the shards served to identifying certain ceramic shapes.

The almost complete pot (Pl. 5) is of medium size, with flat base, bitronconic body, the upper wall slightly convex, vertical neck and horizontal flaring rim. Two little handles, broken since ancient times, were placed between the neck and the body. Four protuberances were made by pushing the wall towards the exterior, so that, seen horizontally, the body has a rectangular appearance, with rounded corners and arched sides. The vessel was made from a semi-fine paste, with burnished exterior surface, while the colour ranges from light brown to black. Traces of secondary firings are still visible.

The recipient was decorated on the body, neck and rim with impressed motifs – narrow grooves, laid on several registers. Each protuberance was surrounded by four spirals, each rendered using three parallel lines. Above them, four arches meeting at their extremities were placed in the upper part of the body. Between those arches there are four rosettes, each composed of a circular impression, surrounded by dots impressed with a tubular instrument. A group of four horizontal parallel narrow grooves is present on the neck and, just under the neck, there are other three parallel grooves, framing it. In the superior side of the rim, on the interior, the ornamentation consists of two bands, delimited each by a row of small elongated impressions. The interior band contained eight radial groups of three parallel lines, while the exterior one displayed a chained angular pattern, formed by two parallel lines.

The superior half of a vessel belonging to the same type, but of larger size, was also unearthed – only the neck and the flaring rim were preserved (Pl. 6/1). This pot also featured small handles between the neck and the body, and was decorated with linear motifs as well, in the form of narrow grooves. A group of three horizontal parallel lines is present on the middle of the neck, and another group just underneath it. Below the latter there is zigzag pattern, similar with the one on the above-mentioned pot. One small circular alveolus is present under the preserved little handle, framed by two groups of angular displayed lines.

Other three fragments belong to three separate containers similar in shape and ornamentation to the ones described above (Pl. 7/1-2), such as other two shards from the superior part of the wall (Pl. 7/5-6).

The aforementioned half sack-type vessel has the profile of a truncate conical recipient, with the lower base down and arched walls, standing on a flat bottom with a smaller diameter than the mouth (Pl. 6/2). The rim diameter coincides with the maximum diameter of the container. Just below the rim, there is a horizontal in relief alveolar belt, surrounding the vessel, while in the same place, but on the interior, two or maybe four buttons were placed symmetrically, from which only one survived until present times. The pot was made from a course paste and fired in an oxidizing atmosphere. It presents traces of secondary firing, as well.

The deep bowl, preserved up to one quarter of its complete size, was made from a semi-fine paste, fired in an oxidizing atmosphere, here and there presenting traces of secondary firing. The vessel has straight walls and the superior part slightly arched inwards, with an almost straight mouth; the rim is semi-rounded at the interior (Pl. 8/1). The bottom is

not preserved, but it must have been more reduced in diameter compared with the mouth. Under the rim, two horizontals in relief belts encircle the recipient on its maximum diameter. The belts were united by two wide handles, symmetrically placed, but only one was preserved. Alongside the rim and the margins of the handles, the belts were decorated with oblique notches.

Additional potshards document other vessel types, like a lobbed undecorated deep bowl (Pl. 8/3), six open-profile bowls with flaring rim (Pl. 7/9-14), with several incised ornaments (such as the elongated "S" with broken heads, a row of triangular impressions at the base of a wall and the cruciform pattern on the base, with the arms extended in bevelled spirals) (Pl. 7/12, 14), a small pot with two handles pulled from the rim (Pl. 7/7), a small vessel with bulging body – possibly a cup (Pl. 7/8), a bitronconic mug, decorated with impressed rosettes (Pl. 7/4), four jars or, perhaps, sack-type containers, decorated with alveolar belts (Pl. 8/2, 4-6) and a *pyraunos*, the shards coming from its support (Pl. 8/7). Last but not least, a small handle might belong to a jug (Pl. 7/3).

The stone small finds are represented by: a sharp instrument obtained from a quartzite boulder, which preserves the cortex on the opposite side of the head, a flint blade resulted from the detachment of a sharp-edged flake, from the surface of the boulder, which bears on one side the cortex and a small argillite, like the ones used for pottery burnishing. Only the blade shows traces of utilization (Pl. 8/8-10).

The inventory of feature C 353 comprised the same category of materials. The difference consists in the quantity of the objects and their type, as well as in their placement in the funerary setup. The fragmentation degree of the potshards is more accentuated than in the case of C 274, hence no vessel could be rebuilt. Seven recipients were partially completed, from a variable number of fragments: the pot from the upper part, three cups, a jar, a bellied body container and a large sack-type vessel. To these we must add approximately 20 fragments from different recipients, little parts of burned daub and a small stone polished axe, with the back side broken since ancient times.

The pot has an "S" shaped profile, arched shoulder, flat base, cylindrical neck and rounded flaring rim (Pl. 10/1). It was made from a semi-fine paste, fired in a reductive atmosphere, of dark grey colour. The vessel was covered with a burnished slip, preserved in small proportion. The incised decoration comprised of three pairs of parallel horizontal lines, placed midway of the neck, and an ornamental register in the area of the maximum diameter which contained a chaining of reclining bevelled "S" patterns, arranged in two rows; it was delimited in the superior part by a pair of parallel horizontal lines. Between these and the first "S" row, several "V" shaped motifs are present, at different distances from one another, formed by doubled lines. One fragment of a strongly arched small handle very probably belonged to this pot, having an identical paste composition and colour, while the decoration was executed in the same manner – a column of double armed "X" marks, framed by two pairs of parallel vertical lines. The small handle was placed at the base of the neck, just like for the pots from C 274.

The cups sensibly differ in shape and ornamentation. The one preserved in half (Pl. 9/2) has a cylindrical neck, globular body and profiled foot ring bottom. It was decorated around the body with vertical narrow grooves. The second cup (Pl. 9/3) has a bitronconic body, strongly rounded and flattened inferior part, while the bottom is missing. The ornamentation consists in groups of three vertical wider grooves, above which three small alveoli are present, forming a triangle. The third cup (Pl. 9/4) has a globular body and short flaring rim, decorated

with oblique double narrow grooves, completed with two parallel rows of small alveoli, which start at the level of their heads. The first two cups were reduction fired, while the third in oxidizing atmosphere; it was made from a semi-fine paste containing small pebbles.

The jar (Pl. 9/1) has slightly arched walls, short neck and outwards pulled rounded rim and flat bottom. It was produced using a semi-fine paste and oxidized fired, gaining a light yellowish-red colour; traces of secondary firing may be observed. Below the rim a horizontal relief belt was placed all around the container, broken by four elongated grabbing knobs, displayed symmetrically. The belt and the knobs, as well as the exterior of the rim were impressed with double oblique lines, each knob also showing a deep alveolus in the middle.

Several potshards helped restoring a quarter of a vessel with bellied body – probably a pot or a jug (Pl. 10/2), made from a coarse paste and fired in a reduction atmosphere. It has a dark-grey colour and shows traces of secondary firing. The surface was neatly smoothed, but had no lustre.

The large sack-type vessel was also approximately 1/4 preserved, with both rim and bottom missing (Pl. 10/5). The paste is coarse as well, but with oxidizing firing. Traces of secondary firing may be observed, too. In the superior part, probably not far below the rim, a small band handle was placed, its upper head intersecting a horizontal relief belt with oblique impressions.

Other types of recipients, each identified, like in the case of C 274, only based on a single shard, are a pot (Pl. 10/3) and a jar, or perhaps a sack-type vessel (Pl. 10/4), and many fragments from a *pyraunos*, belonging to its stand (Pl. 10/6).

The stone fragment seems to come from an adze or an axe, made through polishing from a bluish-grey schist rock, with whitish insertions (Pl. 10/7). The conserved part is the cutting edge. The lateral profile of the item is trapezoidal, with the big side at the cutting edge. One of the sides is a bit convex, while the other one is more convex and asymmetric. The latter presents exfoliations, just like the thicker edge. The whole fragment is covered with a very thin patina. Some very small indents present on the blade could be a proof that the tool was used before reaching the context in which it was discovered. We are not certain of the dimensions and of the shape of the object, but we presume that the preserved part represents at least half of it, the form being one of the simplest ones for this kind of utensils, appearing since the Neolithic. For that matter, it is possible that the item belonged to this period, being driven in the grave, at the time at its filling, from the cultural layer of the Neolithic habitation superposed, in this area, by the Bronze Age settlement. We do not exclude however that the tool was contemporary with the burial, such artefacts being produced and used in the Bronze Age as well.

TYPOLOGICAL-STYLISTIC ANALYSIS OF THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL MATERIAL

The majority of the uncovered material consists of pottery. Besides ceramics, the inventory of the two features is completed by the small “last”-type axe discovered in C 353, the blade from C 274 and some other stone pieces, undefined typologically and without any traces of use. No metal artefacts were found.

A brief analysis of the ceramic finds certainly points to the fact that these discoveries belong to the Bronze Age, more precisely to a cultural-chronological horizon which can be placed at the end of the Middle Bronze Age and at the beginning of the Late Bronze Age.

We must notice the presence in both tombs of just a few complete or restorable vessels, representing depositions that illustrate the funerary inventory. The other potshards, singular and isolate items, probably belonged to the cultural layer and were driven in the filling of the pits.

Typologically, one may observe the variety of the pottery forms: *pyraunos* type vessels, sack-vessels, pots, jars, deep bowls, bowls, and cups. Unfortunately, the common ceramic shapes, the high degree of fragmentation and the lack of specific decorative motifs make difficult a thorough typological-stylistic analysis for all cases. Nevertheless, there are numerous analogies for a fair part of the pottery and its ornamentation, encountered on wide spaces, so that we will mention only the ones that are the closest geographically and the most significant from a cultural and chronological point of view.

Pyraunos vessels are multitudinous finds in the ceramic inventory of Șoimuș–Teleghi. This type is present in diverse models and in variable sizes. Most of these installations had a domestic utility, combining a recipient for heating liquids with a combustion chamber. Some pieces suggest however a magical-religious function⁴. The appearance of these installations in the ceramic repertoire is considered a characteristic of this cultural-chronological horizon⁵. The fragments unearthed in the two features seem more likely to have entered the filling of the pits by accident, rather than being funerary depositions themselves.

The large sack-vessel found in C 274 is a common form in many prehistoric cultures, the alveolar belt placed under the rim of the recipient being a usual presence as well. An interesting feature is the button placed on the interior of the container, just below the rim. It apparently had the role of sustaining a lid, probably made from wood. It is also worth mentioning the fact that, taking into account the proportion between the height and the diameter, as well as the reduced area of the bottom, this vessel was unstable. It could have been used only if leant onto something or buried in the ground. A series of analogies for the kind of recipient come exactly from Late Bronze Age archaeological features excavated at Șoimuș–Teleghi⁶.

Fragments of a sack-vessel have also been found in C 353. A flat band handle was recovered from the superior zone, but other observations are difficult to formulate since the margin and the bottom are missing.

The jar-vessel of medium size, found in C 353, is another common shape. From Vinerea (Alba County), south-western Transylvania, comes a good analogy attributed to the Noua culture⁷.

Extremely interesting is the bitronconic pot with four protuberances, cylindrical neck and strongly flaring rim. Bitronconic pots are well known among the Middle and Late Bronze products, but the rectangular aspect in horizontal plan, obtained by pushing the wall of the vessel from the interior, is rarely encountered. There is a very good analogy in the same Șoimuș site, where an almost identical recipient, in shape and size, was discovered⁸. One potshard found in a tomb from Micești–Cigaș (Alba County) could belong to the same type⁹.

⁴ Rișcuța, Marc 2015, 140-143, Pl. III/a; VI/a-b.

⁵ Rotea 1994, 54.

⁶ Rișcuța, Marc 2015, 140, Pl. II/a-c.

⁷ Andrițoiu 1992, 65, Pl. 54/1.

⁸ Rișcuța, Marc 2015, 142, 146, Pl. VI/c.

⁹ Bălan 2014, Pl. 9/12.

From a geographical point of view, the closest analogies for this production technique are the artefacts from Deva–Cimitirul ceangăilor and Folt (Hunedoara County), initially attributed to the Otomani culture¹⁰. The making of protuberances by pushing the walls from the interior is a technique widely spread in the area of the Otomani culture¹¹, but it is also attested in last phase contexts of the Wietenberg culture¹² and in the Suciu de Sus culture¹³. This modelling manner which gives the vessels a rectangular or hexagonal aspect can also be encountered in the wares specific to other manifestations of the Middle and Late Bronze Age in the Lower Danube region, such as the final phases of the Balta Sărată culture¹⁴ or in the Gârla Mare culture¹⁵.

The decoration consisting in arches, spirals, rosettes, made by incising, impressing and grooving recalls the ornamental style specific to the Otomani culture¹⁶. The rosettes, formed by an alveolus surrounded by impressed dots, cannot be considered a cultural marker, being present at this chronological sequence in diverse manifestations¹⁷. The pattern on the rim of the vessel, consisting of double zigzag incised lines, is frequent on the ceramics of the Otomani culture¹⁸, but is also found among the discoveries from Păuliș–Dealul Bătrân (Arad County)¹⁹, while the symmetrically placed groups of three vertical lines appear on the same hexagonal vessel from Folt²⁰.

As a decorative element, the groove is widely spread among the Middle and Late Bronze Age cultures from the Carpathian Basin, thus we will not insist on this matter. We should however note the broad use of groups of narrow horizontal grooves, placed under the rim, on the neck or in the juncture point with the body of the recipients. In some cases, the grooves are replaced by simple or burnished incisions. This ornamental style is frequently found on ceramic shapes, such as pots, jugs and cups. Narrow grooves and horizontal incisions grouped on the neck of the vessels are found in the ceramic repertoire of both the Otomani culture²¹ and the Cehăluț group²². They are documented as well in phase IV/D settlements of the Wietenberg culture²³ (or Bădeni III – Deva, after M. Rotea)²⁴,

¹⁰ Andrițoiu 1978, 65, Pl. I/4; 1983, 45, Fig. 2/1a, b; 1992, Pl. 46/10, 48/1-4. For the shape of the vessel from Folt, illustrated at Andrițoiu 1992, Pl. 48/2, see some analogies cited at Popa, Totoianu 2010, 225, note 1358.

¹¹ Bader 1978, Pl. XVIII/22-23; XIX/8, 21; XX/3, 5, 21-22; XXI/14, 16-17; XXII/6, 12; XXV/12-14; XXVI/6-9, 11; XVII/3-5.

¹² Ciugudean 1997, Fig. 3/4; 9/3; Bălan 2014, 97, Pl. 10/14; we mention the almost identical shape of the cup from Micești compared with the vessel discovered at Folt, cf. Andrițoiu 1992, Pl. 48/1.

¹³ Kacsó 2008, Fig. 2/1; 4/1.

¹⁴ Gumă 1997, Pl. LXIII/6; LXVI/2.

¹⁵ Șandor-Chicideanu 2003, II, Pl. 139/1a-d.

¹⁶ Bader 1978, 42-57, Pl. XVII-XXVII.

¹⁷ Andrițoiu 1992, 60; Boroffka 1994b, 7-8, Abb. 2.

¹⁸ Bader 1978, Pl. XIX/4-5; XXI/1; XXIII/16; XXIV/13, 15; XXV/16.

¹⁹ Pădureanu 1990, Pl. 6/1.

²⁰ Andrițoiu 1992, Pl. 48/2.

²¹ Bader 1978, Pl. XXII/3-11; see also Bălan 2014, 98.

²² Némethi 2009, Pl. I/Pots/1, 4; II/Jugs/1, 3, 5, 7.

²³ Concerning the definition of the final phase of the Wietenberg culture, see Ciugudean 2010, 157. The most recent and, also, comprising monograph dedicated to the Wietenberg culture, published so far, belongs to the researcher N. G. O. Boroffka, who renamed the phases of the culture (A – D),

at Deuș-Lunga²⁵ and Bădeni-Movilă (Cluj County)²⁶, Micești-Cigaș²⁷, Măhăceni and Geoagiu de Sus (Alba County)²⁸. In south-western Transylvania, the same decorative manner is met at Ardeu (Hunedoara County), Deva-Cimitirul ceangăilor and Hunedoara-Grădina Castelului²⁹.

From the same archaeological feature come the fragments of the cylindrical neck and a small part from the superior half of a pot, probably similar with the one described earlier, but bigger in size. A close variant of this type seems to be a vessel with band handle, which unite the neck with the body of the vessel, discovered in the pit from Geoagiu de Sus³⁰. The decoration resembles the one on the vessel from Bădeni-Movilă³¹.

Another appealing pot, due to its ornamental motifs, was found in C 353. Even if there are some variations regarding the shape of the body, the pot with cylindrical neck and flaring rim, arched shoulder and flat bottom is a common ceramic type in the Wietenberg culture³², but is also attested in the Otomani milieu³³. For the reclining bevelled "S" pattern on the body of the vessel we have not encountered any analogies, but the manner in which it was executed points straight to the Wietenberg culture's ornamental tradition. In addition, no precise analogies are known for the chained "X" motif delimited by lateral lines, incised on the small handle of the recipient, but it appears rendered horizontally on the interior of the rim belonging to a vessel from Deuș-Lunga³⁴ and, without the margins' delimitation, at Păuliș-Dealul Bătrân³⁵.

The deep bowl, discovered fragmentarily in the same feature, is a common ceramic type, judging by the decoration and shape, the latter being present both in the Wietenberg³⁶ and Otomani³⁷ cultures. Similar vessels are also attested in the Late Bronze Age, such as the one from the archaeological feature discovered by chance at Geoagiu de Sus, attributed to the final phase of the Wietenberg culture³⁸.

Another deep bowl fragment, found in C 274, seems to have belonged, as the line of the rim suggests, to a lobbed vessel, a form widely spread in the Wietenberg milieu³⁹.

One fragment from the bottom of a bowl is decorated with simplified bevelled spirals ("S"), while on the wall of the vessel a row of triangular impressions was performed. The

cf. Boroffka 1994a, a system which we will employ as well, in parallel with the old evolutive division (Wietenberg I – IV).

²⁴ Rotea 1994.

²⁵ Lazarovici 1971, Fig. 2/13; 4/12, 15.

²⁶ Lazarovici, Milea 1976, Pl. VI/1; XV/3; XVI/4.

²⁷ Bălan 2014, Pl. 9/12; 10/14-15.

²⁸ Ciugudean 1997, 71, Fig. 1/2; 7/1.6/1.

²⁹ Andrițoiu 1992, Pl. 44/8; 46/7, 10, 12; 47/1.

³⁰ Ciugudean 1997, 71, Fig. 6/1.

³¹ Lazarovici, Milea 1976, Pl. XIV/3.

³² Andrițoiu 1992, Pl. 37/13; 38/9.

³³ Bader 1978, Pl. XXVI/2, 4.

³⁴ Lazarovici 1971, Fig. 2/4.

³⁵ Pădureanu 1990, Pl. 12/2.

³⁶ Andrițoiu 1992, 36, Pl. 30/7, 10.

³⁷ Bader 1978, 47, Pl. XXIV/13-15.

³⁸ Ciugudean 1997, 72, Fig. 7/3.

³⁹ Andrițoiu 1992, 37, Pl. 33/5-11; 34/1, 3, 5-8.

bevelled spirals ornament is frequently found on late Wietenberg, the motif being made using either incisions or wide stitches technique (*breite Absatzstich*). The closest analogy comes from feature C 42 from Șoimuș⁴⁰. Similar representations on the bottoms of the bowls, made in the two mentioned techniques, are known at Deva–Cimitirul *ceangăilor*⁴¹, Măhăceni⁴² or Deuș–Lunga⁴³, but also at Păuliș–Dealul Bătrân⁴⁴, in a cultural context insufficiently defined up to this moment. The rows of triangular impressions on the wall of the vessel are characteristic to the Wietenberg culture⁴⁵.

Some graphically completed small cups from the inventory of the grave C 353 draw a particular attention. The foot ring cup, ornamented with narrow vertical grooves, is not a singular presence. A similar recipient was discovered in feature C 31 from the same site Șoimuș⁴⁶. We have knowledge of a close in shape recipient from Țelna–Pe coastă (Alba County), but with a bulgier body⁴⁷. Cups with more or less bulging body, cylindrical neck, visibly separated from the body, and slightly flaring rim, usually with flat or concave bottom, represent a recurrent appearance among the Otomani finds, especially from phase III⁴⁸, but are encountered also in the Suciu de Sus culture⁴⁹. A recipient which could be of the same type, with foot ring (with the upper part unfortunately missing) was found at Deva–Cimitirul *ceangăilor*⁵⁰. The form is attested among the materials from Măhăceni, attributed to a late Wietenberg horizon⁵¹, but also at Deuș–Lunga⁵². Similar vessel profiles, of different sizes, some with foot ring and decorated with vertical grooves, are attested as well in Banat, at Valea Timișului–Rovină (Caraș-Severin County), site attributed to the phase III of the Balta Sărată culture⁵³. Foot ring recipients are well documented at Deva–Cimitirul *ceangăilor* and at Folt⁵⁴.

Vertically displayed narrow grooves seem to be one of the specific elements for the cultural-chronological level represented also by the Șoimuș discoveries. Narrow or slightly wider vertical grooves decoration appears frequently in the settlements of the Otomani culture⁵⁵. A related ornamental manner is present on some vessels from Bădeni–Movilă⁵⁶, but also at Straja–Fântâna Barnei (Alba County), inclusively on a foot ring recipient⁵⁷, in contexts asserted to the late phase of the Wietenberg culture or the Bădeni III-Deva horizon. Narrow

⁴⁰ Rișcuța, Marc 2015, 141, Pl. IV/a.

⁴¹ Andrițoiu 1983, 46, Fig. 3/5a, b.

⁴² Ciugudean 1997, Fig. 3/10.

⁴³ Lazarovici 1971, 77, Fig. 4/4, 6-7.

⁴⁴ Pădureanu 1990, Pl. 14/4-5.

⁴⁵ Andrițoiu 1992, 42, Pl. 27/10; 30/6; 35/2.

⁴⁶ Rișcuța, Marc 2015, 140, Pl. III/c.

⁴⁷ Andrițoiu 1992, Pl. 28/1.

⁴⁸ Bader 1978, 52, Pl. XX/10-20.

⁴⁹ Bader 1978, Pl. XLIV/1.

⁵⁰ Andrițoiu 1992, Pl. 46/8.

⁵¹ Ciugudean 1997, 69, Fig. 3/7.

⁵² Lazarovici 1971, Fig. 2/13.

⁵³ Gumă 1997, Pl. LXII/7, 10; LXIII/2; LXIV/2.

⁵⁴ Andrițoiu 1992, Pl. 46/4, 8, 12; 48/1-2, 4.

⁵⁵ Bader 1978, Pl. XVIII/20; XIX/16-17; XX/6, 8-9; XXI/18; XXII/7; XXIV/12.

⁵⁶ Lazarovici, Milea 1976, Pl. IX/6, XII/3, XIII/6

⁵⁷ Ciugudean 1997, 74, Fig. 13/11, 15/9.

vertical grooves decoration is visible also on the urn from the Late Bronze Age tomb from Ocna Sibiului–Zmițe⁵⁸.

The second cup with bitronconic body is similar with a recipient from Deuș–Lunga⁵⁹. The ornamentation consisting in groups of three vertical grooves is found on the Noua type pottery, if it was to recall only a relatively close discovery in a grave from Vinerea⁶⁰. The motif exists also in the late Wietenberg milieu (or Bădeni III – Deva), on a recipient from Bădeni–Movilă⁶¹, on a two-handled cup from Straja–Fântâna Barnei⁶², and on a foot ring vessel, discovered in a funerary context as well, at Micești–Cigaș⁶³. The pattern formed by groups of three or more narrow vertical grooves is attested on the ceramics of the Balta Sărată culture too, at Valea Timișului–Rovină⁶⁴.

The last of the recipients from this category is a well-known shape in the ceramic repertoire of the Wietenberg culture, especially its final phases⁶⁵. The vessel from Șoimuș is typologically identical with a cup discovered in the Măhăceni pit⁶⁶, but the decoration seems to be made in the same manner as on a deep bowl from Deva–Cimitirul ceangăilor⁶⁷.

We need to highlight a final element, the angular band handle fragment. This production technique may be linked with the same Otomani type tradition, being documented in the Transylvanian space only for the cups of this cultural-chronological horizon⁶⁸. There is a good analogy in south-western Transylvania at Hunedoara–Grădina castelului⁶⁹.

Regarding the stone item found in feature C 353, we mention as analogy the complete “last”-type axe discovered in the Wietenberg settlement from Derșida–Dealul lui Balotă⁷⁰. Similar trapezoidal pieces are known from the area of the Otomani culture, at Otomani–Cetățuia de pământ and Sălacea–Dealul Vida⁷¹.

OBSERVATIONS ON THE FUNERARY RITE AND RITUAL

The two burials from Șoimuș reveal a series of special aspects regarding the funerary rite and ritual.

From the beginning, we have to specify that the necropolis was not found during the archaeological excavations, thus we cannot determine for certain the funerary standard of the Bronze Age communities from Șoimuș. Taking into consideration the fact that the terrain was uncovered towards south up to the margin of the terrace, that the researches towards east led to the discovery of a major Neolithic settlement, with little traces from the Bronze

⁵⁸ Soroceanu 1981, 361, Abb. 4/1; although it is a cremation grave, we consider that it could belong to the same cultural-chronological level.

⁵⁹ Lazarovici 1971, Fig. 2/8.

⁶⁰ Andrițoiu 1992, Pl. 54/2.

⁶¹ Lazarovici, Milea 1976, Pl. VII/2.

⁶² The vessel is considered a Noua type influence in the late Wietenberg milieu, cf. Ciugudean 1997, 74, 79, Fig. 13/1.

⁶³ Bălan 2014, 99, Pl. 10/15.

⁶⁴ Gumă 1997, Pl. LXII/1, 12; LXVI/2, 4.

⁶⁵ Andrițoiu 1992, 38 (Xb2 type), Pl. 35/31.

⁶⁶ Ciugudean 1997, 69, Fig. 3/8.

⁶⁷ Andrițoiu 1992, Pl. 34/4.

⁶⁸ Bader 1978, Pl. XXI/3, 5, 7, 9.

⁶⁹ Andrițoiu 1992, Pl. 46/7.

⁷⁰ Chidioșan 1980, 61, Pl. 38/16.

⁷¹ Bader 1978, 58, Pl. XXXV/8.

Age, while towards west the site is delimited by a dell, possibly an old water course, we can presume that the necropolis is placed north of the settlement.

After a brief analysis with respect to the topography of the site and the distribution of the archaeological features, one can observe that C 274 and C 353 lie at the periphery of the settlement, at big distance from the supposed habitation centre, left outside the research area. Although situated far from one another and made in totally different ways, the two burial features belong to the same cultural-chronological horizon, as proved by their stratigraphic position, the characteristics of the ceramic inventory and the funerary rite and ritual.

Some observations should be made concerning the funerary constructions and the ritual elements illustrated by the two children burials. Consequently, in the case of feature C 274, the bell-shaped pit in which the deceased was laid does not differentiate from the pits filled with domestic refuse discovered throughout the settlement. Garbage disposal pits represent the largest category of archaeological features from Șoimuș, many of them being bell-shaped. The C 274 raises some questions regarding the employment of very precise rules during the burial ceremony, signalling that, in some instances, one of the main components of the funerary ritual, the digging of the sepulchral pit, could have been substituted by the opportunity of using a cavity already excavated for a different purpose.

We may record a special situation for the burial in C 353 as well. The pit of the grave was noticed at a shallow depth (0.45 m), on the ancient walking level. Its deepness was much reduced (0.15 m). As the body and the funerary inventory were not deposited on the bottom of the hole, we may assume that this pit, with dimensions larger than necessary for laying down the corpse and the offerings, was made for a different use, before serving a sepulchral function, a fact suggested by its partial filling at the time of the inhumation. The grave appears to have been “sealed” with a quern fragment, placed just over the deceased. A part of the ceramic inventory associated with the tomb was found on top of the pit, high above its digging level, under the vegetal soil.

The recorded stratigraphic situation leads to the belief that the deceased was laid, alongside a part of the funerary inventory, in a small hollow resulted from the partial filling of a pit dug before and for a different reason. Afterwards, the quern fragment was placed over the body and a small earth mound was raised. A pot, partially conserved, was put on top of the mound, at the same time or later. Found under recent soil accumulations, this funerary construction has probably been ravaged during agricultural works, for that reason a significant part of the offerings could have been dislocated.

Starting with the concrete case of the grave in C 274, some remarks should be made regarding the content of the burial features from settlements, in general. These archaeological complexes raise a good number of problems in the interpretation of the comprised ceramic material. Evidently, we are not questioning those recipients that are certainly documented as funerary offerings, as proved by their position and destination in the funerary setup. We have discerned three different situations for this context:

1. The complete vessels found in the filling of the sepulchral pits represent funerary offerings (of course, we exclude the urns and the lids in the case of the cremation graves, as well as the *pythoi* used for inhumations);
2. Large size potshards or many fragments from the same recipient are parts of the funerary inventory used during the mortuary ceremonial, ritually broken and deposited near the deceased, by the *pars pro toto* principle;

3. Singular and isolated potshards which could belong to the previous category but represent, in most cases, artefacts from the settlement's cultural layer that were accidentally driven in the filling of the pits.

The last category could sometimes create interpretation issues. These potshards belong to a diverse ceramic typology and – in the case of pluri-stratified habitations – they could come from cultural-chronological horizons anterior to the burial moment. The situation is identical for other items, not only pottery. A clinching example is the “last”-type axe discovered in C 353, which although is found sporadically in the repertoire of the Bronze Age cultures, might belong to the massive material deposit of the nearby Neolithic settlement.

In necropolises, usually placed at a certain distance from the settlements, on “clear” fields that were not previously inhabited, the cases in which objects that are not part of the funerary inventory intrude the sepulchral pits are much rarer.

Having an eye for the fact the majority of the ceramic material found in the two burial features has analogies in the Wietenberg and Otomani cultures, we focused on the mortuary practices characteristic for these communities.

The general mortuary habit in the Wietenberg milieu was burning the deceased and burying the cremated rests inside urns, in flat graves grouped in cemeteries located at a certain distance from the settlement⁷². Inhumation represented a secondary funerary rite in the Wietenberg culture, such graves numbering less than 10% from the mortuary monuments of this cultural manifestation⁷³. Usually, the deceased (both children and adults) who were not cremated, were buried in the perimeter or at the margin of the settlements. The dead were placed in the sepulchral pit in crouching position, on the side, with a poor or no funerary inventory.

The funerary monuments of the Wietenberg culture in south-western Transylvania are not numerous, but recent finds add to the old ones. The most important discovery is the necropolis researched at Deva–*Strada Depozitelor*⁷⁴. The necropolis numbered 17 cremation graves. The ceramic inventory points to a “classical” phase of the culture, without any analogies among the materials discovered by us at Șoimuș–*Teleghi*. Furthermore, the chronological position and the funerary rite are totally different, so we will not insist on this discovery.

Also at Deva, in the Micro 15 quarter, two inhumation tombs were discovered during some utilitarian works. The burials were made in oval-elongated pits, with the head of the deceased facing south-east, “a Wietenberg bowl” being mentioned as funerary inventory. Other information is missing and the archaeological material was never published⁷⁵, which prevents us to make any parallels to the mortuary features from Șoimuș–*Teleghi*.

The archaeological research undertaken in 2011 on the route of the Deva–Orăștie highway led to the discovery of other Wietenberg inhumation graves in the vicinity of the habitation from Șoimuș–*Teleghi*, in the Șoimuș–*Lângă sat* and Uroi–*Sigheti* sites. The tomb in the perimeter of the Uroi–*Sigheti* settlement⁷⁶ appeared like an almost circular shallow pit, with straight walls. The corpse was laid on the bottom of the feature, near the margin, in a

⁷² Motzoi-Chicideanu 2011, 546; Marc 2016, 65-66, with the bibliography.

⁷³ Motzoi-Chicideanu 2011, 544. The most recent statistics at Bălan 2014, 101, note 63 and Marc 2016, 68 (Appendix) where some inhumation tombs were added, discovered earlier (Deva – *Micro 15*) or recently (Șoimuș–*Lângă sat* and Uroi–*Sigheti*, Hunedoara County).

⁷⁴ Andrițoiu 1992, 32-34, 121 (cat. no. 40); 1992a, 147, 153 (cat. no. 12).

⁷⁵ Andrițoiu 1992, 150, 153 (cat. no. 12).

⁷⁶ Bodó et al. 2012.

strongly crouched position, with the head oriented south and the face towards east⁷⁷. The inventory consisted in just one fragmentary ceramic vessel and many potshards from different recipients. At Șoimuș-*Lângă sat*⁷⁸, a collective inhumation grave was excavated, inside which the remains of four individuals were found in different positions. This situation is somehow similar with the collective tomb from Voivodeni⁷⁹, being singular in the Wietenberg milieu. The discoveries from Șoimuș-*Lângă sat* and Uroi-*Sighet* are attributed to the “classical” phases (II-III/B-C) of the Wietenberg culture.

The best analogy for the C 274 burial comes from the Micești-*Cigaș* occupancy, from a feature (C7/2009) attributed to the final phase (IV/D) of the Wietenberg culture⁸⁰. Even if the tomb from Micești belongs to an adult, we have to observe the resemblances of the two burials: inhumations inside the settlements, deposition of the deceased in crouched position and, especially, the bell-shape pits. There are also similarities between the second feature from Șoimuș (C 353) and feature C 11/2012 from Micești⁸¹. The deceased were placed in shallow pits with straight walls. The decoration formed by groups of three vertical grooves present on one of the cups from C 353 (Pl. 9/3) is found also on one of the cups from the Micești tomb. For that matter, the ceramic forms, the decoration and the ornamental manner of the pottery from Șoimuș and Micești indicate a very close, if not common, cultural-chronological horizon.

It is worth mentioning some other funerary discoveries in the Wietenberg area, with rite and ritual elements similar to the Șoimuș burials. In this regard, we recall the child grave with a dismembered skeleton found in the settlement from Bernadea-*Dâmbău* (Mureș County)⁸². Also, a child burial, laid in a crouched position inside the pit, was discovered in the Wietenberg settlement from Păuleni-Ciuc (Harghita County)⁸³. Other cases of burials inside the settlements are known at Derșida-*Dealul lui Balotă*⁸⁴ and Obreja⁸⁵. So far, the only exception of an inhumation grave inside a necropolis comes from Vințu de Jos-*Deasupra satului*⁸⁶. Both tombs, belonging to a child and an adult, were placed at the margins of the necropolis, at a fair distance from each other. The child remains were superposed by an urn cremation grave. The adult was laid on one side, not crouched, but the legs were strongly flexed, following the torso. The fragments of three restorable vessels were put above the corpse, while an obsidian blade was found under the legs.

Some considerations should also be made on the funerary rite and ritual practiced by the Otomani-Füzesabony communities, as the ceramic inventory discovered at Șoimuș has good analogies in the wares of the respective culture. Although inhumation graves are numerous in the Otomani milieu⁸⁷, burials inside settlements are fewer than in the Wietenberg culture⁸⁸. Such

⁷⁷ Marc 2016, 64, Fig. 5.

⁷⁸ Marc et al. in the present volume.

⁷⁹ Németh 2015.

⁸⁰ Bălan 2014, 96, Pl. 3/2; 4/1-3.

⁸¹ Bălan 2014, 97, Pl. 3/1; 6/1-3.

⁸² Motzoi-Chicideanu 2011, 542.

⁸³ Căvruc, Rotea 2000, 156; Motzoi-Chicideanu 2011, 543.

⁸⁴ Chidioșan 1980, 23.

⁸⁵ Soroceanu 1973, 495-496.

⁸⁶ Paul 1995, 165, 175, Abb. 2-3; Motzoi-Chicideanu 2011, 535.

⁸⁷ Motzoi-Chicideanu 2011, 451-496.

⁸⁸ Motzoi-Chicideanu 2011, 490, Pl. 273.

situations are recorded for the sites at Otomani–*Cetățuia de pământ* (Bihor County), Sălacea–*Dealul Vida*, Tiream–*Movila cânepii* (Satu Mare County)⁸⁹. The case from Sălacea is significant, where a crouched child tomb was found in the vicinity of the megaron-temple. Other children burials are documented in necropolises, like Diosig (Bihor County) or Pir (Satu Mare County)⁹⁰. In the latter case, the child was put in a sack-type vessel, resembling the fragmentary recipient from C 274 at Șoimuș (Pl. 6/2). Similar graves with the depositions of children in sack-type vessels (*pythoi*) are known from the cemetery at Tiszafüred–*Majaroshalom*⁹¹.

The sectioning of a tumulus from Ardud revealed an inhumation tomb⁹², a particular situation which is unusual in the Otomani culture, but which could be considered a benchmark for the C 353 feature from Șoimuș, possibly covered by such a mound.

Children burials in the Bronze Age settlement from Șoimuș can be considered deviant in relation to the funerary standard of the Wietenberg culture, insomuch as these diverge from the general customs, illustrated by the majority of the discoveries, respectively cremation or inhumation inside necropolises⁹³. Significantly, while the inhumations represent less than 10% of the burials' total number, they reach 50% of the burials in settlements, a situation which could be itself a funerary standard for the Wietenberg communities⁹⁴.

We should not neglect the fact that the two archaeological features contain children burials, which could imply also a special treatment for them in comparison to the other members of the community⁹⁵. It is impossible to compare the two funerary finds with the burials from the necropolis associated with the Șoimuș settlement, thus we are not able to formulate other remarks on this particular case.

CULTURAL AND CHRONOLOGICAL FRAMING

The cultural and chronological framing of the two mortuary complexes is a difficult one, as the possibilities to relating to similar discoveries from the south-western Transylvanian space are limited. The stratigraphic position of the two features, the analysis of the funerary rite and ritual and of the archaeological inventory point to chronological horizon which marks the beginning of the Late Bronze Age in this region.

In south-western Transylvania, the aforementioned chronological phase is far from being fairly defined from a cultural point of view. The situation may be explained by the fact that, starting with the end of the Middle Bronze Age (Reinecke Br C) and until the beginning of the Iron Age (Ha B1), the south-western extremity of Transylvania evolves in its own

⁸⁹ Motzoi-Chicideanu 2011, 457-459, 490; see also Bader 1978, 40, 129 (nr. 92); Ordentlich et al. 2014, 210.

⁹⁰ Bader 1978, 39-40, 124 (nr. 35); Motzoi-Chicideanu 2011, 455-456.

⁹¹ Motzoi-Chicideanu 2011, 463.

⁹² Bader 1978, 120 (nr. 6); Motzoi-Chicideanu 2011, 456.

⁹³ Some observations on the deviant character of the burials inside settlements from the Wietenberg culture at Bălan 2014, 107.

⁹⁴ Motzoi-Chicideanu 2011, 544. A recent overview of the burials inside settlements of at the Bronze Age cultures at Bălan 2014, 104-105.

⁹⁵ We must not forget that in the case of the inhumations in vessels (*pythoi*), the deceased are almost always children.

rhythm, free from the cultural realities from the centre and the west of this historical region, rather connected to the west and south evolutions, from the areas of Crișana and Banat.

In the last four decades, several opinions were formulated regarding the component of the material culture that “triggers” this space at the end of the Bronze Age. The discussion is of course much too complex for the limits of this article; thus, we will only generally mention the most important theoretical contributions on this subject.

The cultural-chronological picture of the Bronze Age in south-western Transylvania was structured by I. Andrițoiu. According to the system elaborated by the Deva scholar, the Middle Bronze Age is characterized by the parallel evolution of the Wietenberg (phases II-III/B-C) and Otomani (phases II-III) cultures. The former continues its evolution in the Late Bronze Age (phase IV/D), followed by the so-called Igrița type manifestations, alongside Noua type infusions⁹⁶.

Shortly after, it became evident that this system does not fully correspond to the historical evolution of the region, substantial corrections being formulated. Thus, the analysis of the finds considered of Otomani type shows that, in this area, there are no “clean” settlements attributed to this culture. M. Rotea noted that where Otomani type elements are encountered, they were associated with the local Wietenberg ones, proposing for these discoveries, which he considers a synthesis of the two cultures, the denomination of Bădeni III – Deva cultural group. In his opinion, this cultural group appears at the end of the Middle Bronze Age (Reinecke Br C), with evolution possibilities until the next stage, covering a good part of west-central Transylvania⁹⁷.

The new cultural entity was contested by some specialists, the most important challenges being signed by H. Ciugudean⁹⁸. We shall not discuss here the arguments, mainly pertinent, expressed by M. Rotea in the favour of his construction, but we consider that the existence of such a cultural entity may be discussed at least for the extremity of the south-western Transylvanian space, for the chronological level stretching from the end of the Middle Bronze Age to the beginning of the Late Bronze Age.

As for the evolution of some Noua communities in the same space, it cannot be accepted in the actual stage of research, because the advance of this culture seems to have stopped in the area of the Cugir valley⁹⁹. The few Noua elements discovered within some sites from the south-western extremity of Transylvania¹⁰⁰ may be considered as imports in contemporary cultural milieus.

The evolution of the Late Bronze Age in the Transylvanian space was the subject of a vast study elaborated by C. I. Popa and R. Totoianu. According to these scholars, in Late Bronze I (stage which exceeds by little the phase Reinecke Br C), communities of the Wietenberg and Balta Sărată cultures evolve in south-western Transylvania¹⁰¹. In Late Bronze II (stage corresponding to the phase Reinecke Br D and part of Ha A1), in the south-western

⁹⁶ Andrițoiu 1992, Pl. 76.

⁹⁷ Rotea 1994. It is not clear if Rotea totally rejects the existence of an independent Wietenberg IV/D phase or if the collocation Bădeni III – Deva incorporates all the post-Wietenberg III/C discoveries, even if some of them preserve certain and numerous native elements.

⁹⁸ See the evolution of the discourse generated by the definition of the Bădeni III – Deva group at Ciugudean 2010, 157; Ciugudean, Quinn 2015, 148.

⁹⁹ Ciugudean 2010, Fig. 1; Popa, Totoianu 2010, 195.

¹⁰⁰ Popa, Totoianu 2010, 190, 192, 195.

¹⁰¹ Popa, Totoianu 2010, 223-224, 248 (Tabel 1).

extremity of Transylvania, a cultural synthesis is born and evolves, as a result of “the interactions between the groups Balta Sărată, Igrița, Cruceni-Belegiș and the tumulus graves culture”, designated with the term Deva-Românești type discoveries¹⁰².

One of the researchers that frequently studied the evolution of the Late Bronze Age in the Transylvanian space is H. Ciugudean. In one of his recent studies on this matter, Ciugudean does not differentiate a particular evolution for the south-western extremity of Transylvania at the beginning of the Late Bronze Age (Late Bronze I = Reinecke Br C), compared to the west-central area. In his view, this stage is marked by the evolution of the late phase of the Wietenberg culture (IV/D). In the Hațeg area, the Wietenberg communities make contact with the Balta Sărată type ones¹⁰³. In the next stage (Late Bronze II = Reinecke Br D), Ciugudean credits for the Hațeg area and the Deva-Hunedoara region with the evolution of late Balta Sărată and Igrița type communities¹⁰⁴.

The last opinion expressed on this subject reveals a substantial change of the proposed chronological system, not just by resetting the cultures and cultural groups, but also by a new regional division of the Transylvanian space, in which the south-western area gains more individuality, in concordance with its different cultural evolution. In the Middle Bronze Age, in the west-central and south-western regions of Transylvania, the Wietenberg (phases II-IV/B-D) and Balta Sărată (probably in the Hațeg area) cultures evolve¹⁰⁵. New radiocarbon data, showing a long evolution of the late Wietenberg or of Wietenberg tradition elements, determines H. Ciugudean to adopt a much-nuanced position for the chronological level at the end of the Middle Bronze Age and the beginning of the Late Bronze Age, proposing either the extension of the culture with new evolutionary stages, either accepting the existence of cultural groups which incorporate elements of Wietenberg tradition¹⁰⁶. An evolution in this regard seems to have been destined for the south-western Transylvanian space at the beginning of the Late Bronze Age (Late Bronze I – II), this region being “populated” only partially, at the periphery, with Noua and Balta Sărată type elements¹⁰⁷.

Finally, in order to complete the cultural chronological picture, we have to mention a discovery to the west of the aforementioned zone, from the Arad area¹⁰⁸, named the Păuliș group¹⁰⁹ (?) or of Păuliș type¹¹⁰. The pottery found at Păuliș, especially through its late Wietenberg component, could indicate a link with the discoveries from south-western Transylvania. We find significant the fact that the site is situated outside of the distribution area of the Wietenberg culture, in its “classic” phases, which suggests that other ethno-cultural groups could have been responsible for spreading these elements westwards, rather than late Wietenberg elements.

Coming back to the Șoimuș–Teleghi discoveries, as previously seen, concerning material culture, the pottery unearthed in the two funerary features has analogies in a series

¹⁰² Popa, Totoianu 2010, 226, 248 (Tabel 1).

¹⁰³ Ciugudean 2010, 162, 172, Fig. 4.

¹⁰⁴ Ciugudean 2010, 172, Fig. 4.

¹⁰⁵ Ciugudean, Quinn 2015, Fig. 9.

¹⁰⁶ Ciugudean, Quinn 2015, 155-156, Fig. 9.

¹⁰⁷ Ciugudean, Quinn 2015, Fig. 9.

¹⁰⁸ Pădureanu 1990.

¹⁰⁹ Ciugudean 2010, 163, note 102.

¹¹⁰ Popa, Totoianu 2010, 227.

of discoveries from western and south-western Transylvania, such as Deva – *Cimitirul ceangăilor*, Hunedoara–*Grădina Castelului*, Micești–*Cigaș*¹¹¹, Măhăcești, Geoagiu de Sus, Straja–*Fântâna Barnei*, Piatra Craivii, Bădeni–*Movilă*, Becăș, Deuș–*Lunga* etc.

The cultural attribution and the chronological position of these finds are still controversial among specialists. The enumerated sites have been assigned either to a mixture horizon called Bădeni III–Deva¹¹², or to a late phase of the Wietenberg culture (phase IV or D)¹¹³. At a close analysis, it becomes evident the fact, noted by the same researchers, that, beyond the similarities, there are important quantitative and qualitative differences among these discoveries¹¹⁴, which suggests variable cultural inputs, in intensity or in origin. We should not rule out the possibility of chronological discrepancies between those sites¹¹⁵. All these elements could have contributed, in variable proportions, to the cultural mixture aspect suggested by these finds.

Therefore, the Wietenberg fingerprint is eloquent in some sites, result of a natural evolution from the previous period, while in other locations this substrate is more obscured by the presence of foreign elements, especially of Otomani origin. More than that, a series of ceramic forms and decorative elements, components of the material culture of different (although probably related) ethno-cultural groups, keep their individuality, therefore situations appeared in which the same discovery was attributed by different researchers to different cultural manifestations, or materials found in the same context were separated on typological criteria and assigned to their native cultural background¹¹⁶.

From a phenomenological point of view, the matter also remained unsolved. Nowadays, it is not clear if we assist at an ethno-cultural unification process on wide areas or at the beginning of an instability and cultural fragmentation period, generated by population movements. It is evident however that, concerning the material culture, we are dealing with the start of cultural synthesis process, which does not seem to have evolved in a new entity.

Resuming the discussion on the finds from Șoimuș–*Teleghi*, we consider that some significant observations should be made on the material component of the two burial features. Thus, the pottery discovered in the archaeological complexes C 274 and C 353 lacks the stippling technique decoration (*Zahnstempelung*), one of the most characteristic elements from phase III of the Wietenberg culture, found rarely on the ceramics from the final phase of this culture¹¹⁷. Moreover, the wide stitches technique decoration (*breite Absatzstich*) is also missing, a key element for the final stage of the respective culture¹¹⁸.

As a matter of fact, the two ornamental techniques are not found in the sites from south-western Transylvania. They are missing at Deva–*Cimitirul ceangăilor*¹¹⁹ or Hunedoara–

¹¹¹ We also include here the discoveries published under the denomination Alba Iulia–*Ijac*, because the two names actually represent the same site cf. Ciugudean 2010, 159, note 41; Ciugudean, Quinn 2015, 155.

¹¹² Rotea 1994, 43.

¹¹³ Ciugudean 1997, 78; 2010, 159-160.

¹¹⁴ Rotea 1994, 42; Ciugudean 1997, 78; 2010, 162-163.

¹¹⁵ See also Rotea 1994, 55.

¹¹⁶ See, for example, the case of the materials from Deva–*Cimitirul ceangăilor*, typologically differentiated by I. Andrițoiu and attributed to the Wietenberg and Otomani cultures, cf. Rotea 1994, 41, 45, note 24.

¹¹⁷ Ciugudean 1997, 77-78; 2010, 162.

¹¹⁸ Gogâltan et al. 1992, 10-13; Boroffka 1994a, 251; Ciugudean 1997, 77-80; 2010, 157.

¹¹⁹ The site must be erased from the list of sites where the wide stitches decoration is present (*breite Absatzstich*), cf. Gogâltan et al. 1992, 13 (Anexă, no. 13), Boroffka 1994a, 251, Karte 58. The ornaments on the pottery from Deva consist in bands of lines filled with rare ovoid superficial impressions.

Grădina Castelului. Although the successive jabs decoration appears on one of the vessels from Folt, the jabs are made in narrow channel, not in wide channel¹²⁰.

Taking into consideration all the aforementioned elements regarding the burial complexes from Șoimuș–Teleghi, we conclude that they belong to a post-Wietenberg III cultural-chronological horizon. It is hard to define, until the full processing of the rich archaeological material unearthed during the excavations at Șoimuș, if this horizon can be designated through the notions Wietenberg IV or Bădeni III–Deva. The Șoimuș type discoveries mark, in south-western Transylvania, the transition from the Middle to the Late Bronze Age and can be placed in the Reinecke chronological system in the Br C (final) – Br D (incipient) stage.

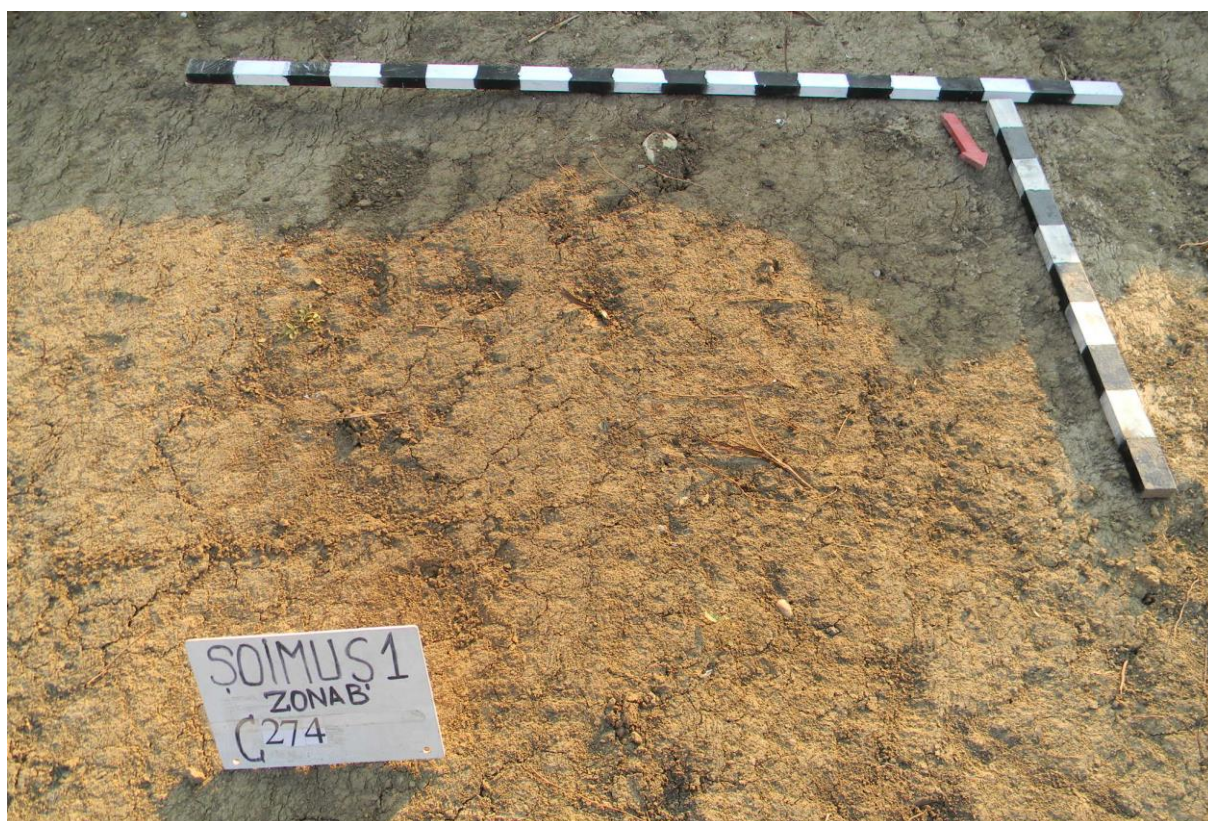
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¹²⁰ We do not rule out the possibility that the chronological position of the Folt discoveries is a little bit later than the aforementioned horizon, nor the one according to which the material component responsible for the stitches decoration is in fact of late Balta Sărată type. In this respect, see also Popa, Totoianu 2010, 225, note 1358.

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1



2

Pl. 1. The feature C 274 outlined after the mechanized uncovering operation (1) and the vertical section of the pit, with the skeleton partially uncovered (2).



1



2

Pl. 2. Different views of the feature C 274 after the displaying of the skeleton and of the funerary inventory from the bottom of the pit.



1



2

Pl. 3. Different views of the feature C 353, with the sepulchral pit outlined after the mechanized uncovering operation, and the stone quern and the fragmentary pot from the upper part of the grave.



1

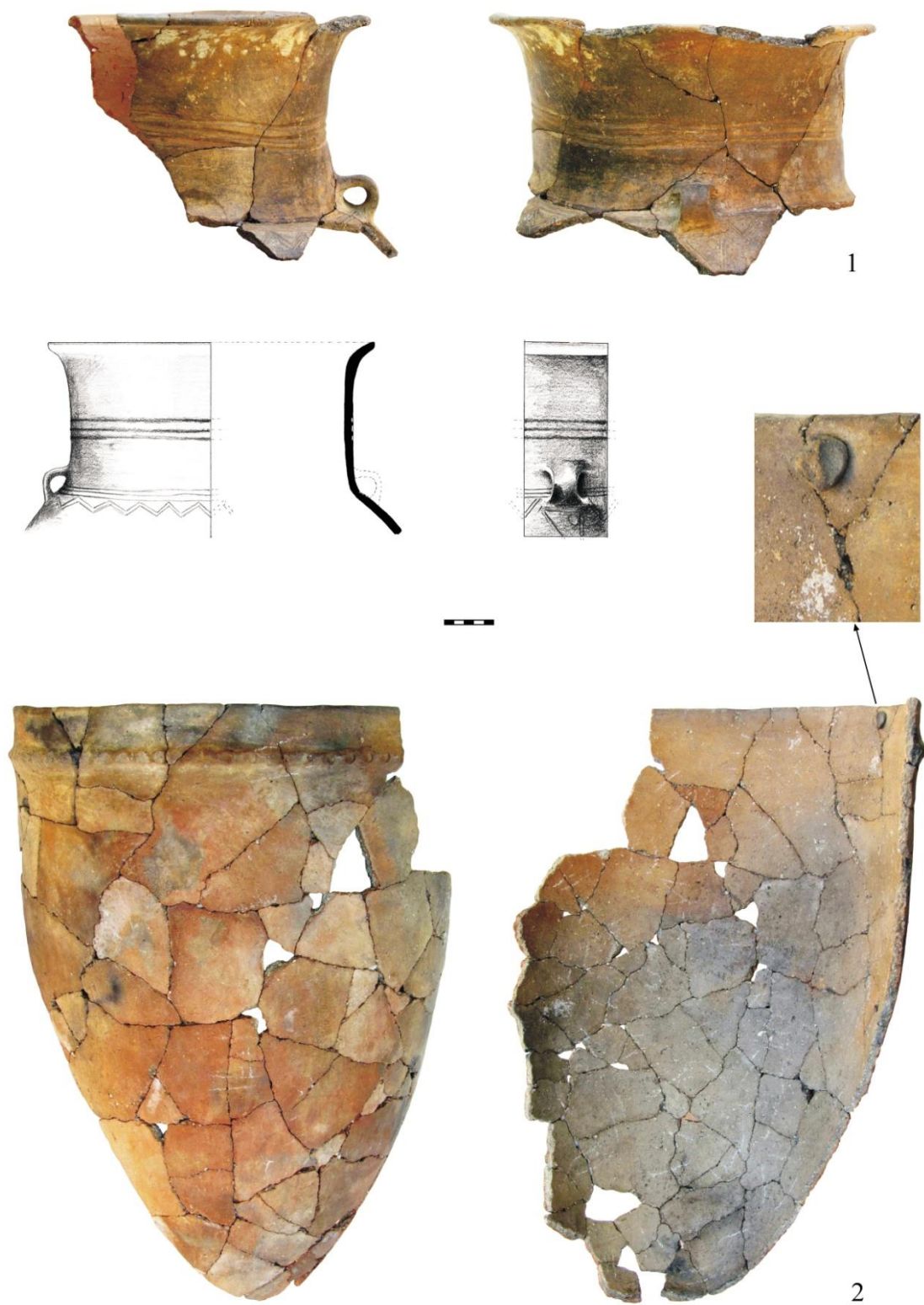


2

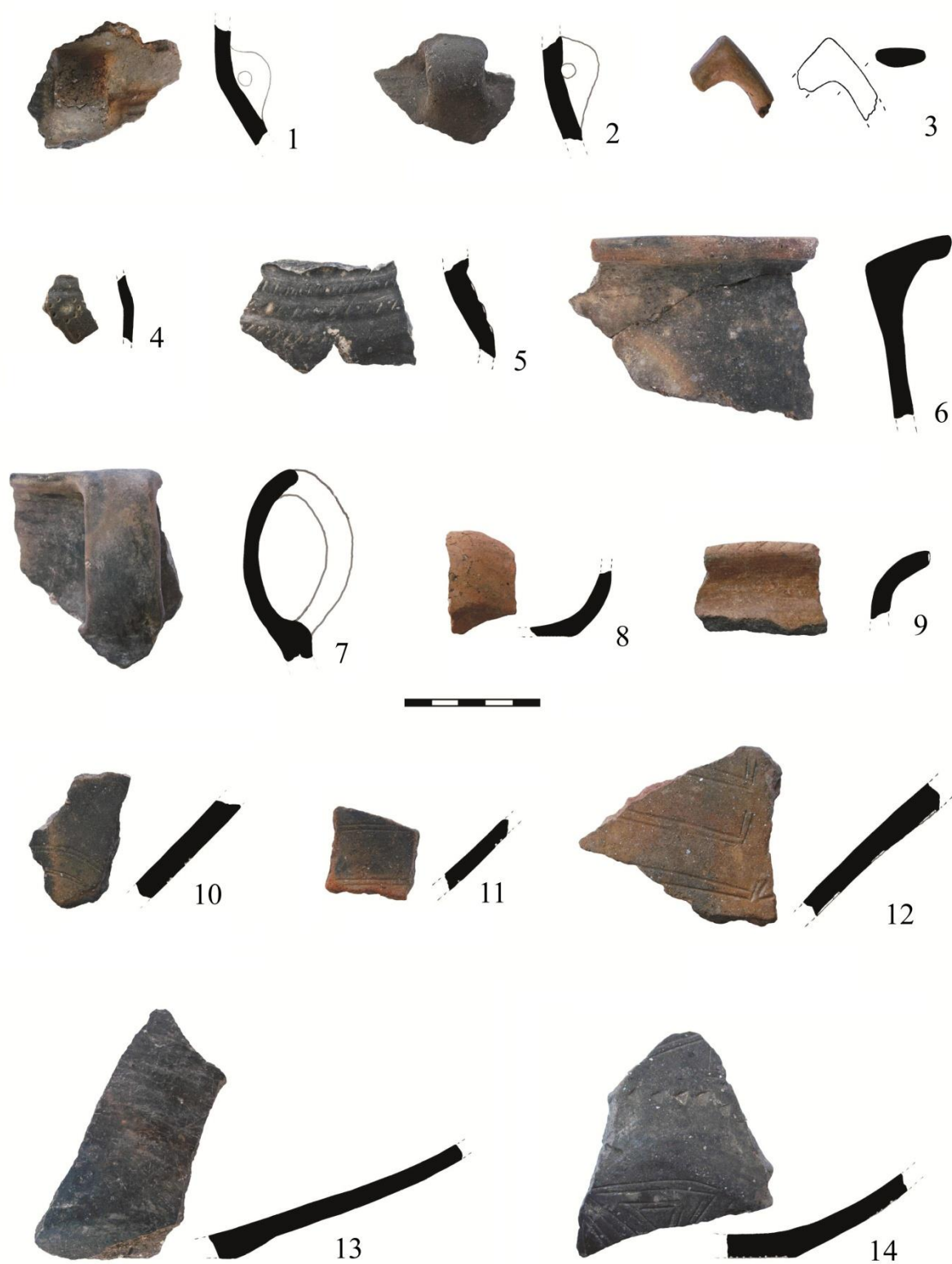
Pl. 4. Different views of the feature C 353 after the displaying of the skeleton and of the funerary inventory around it.



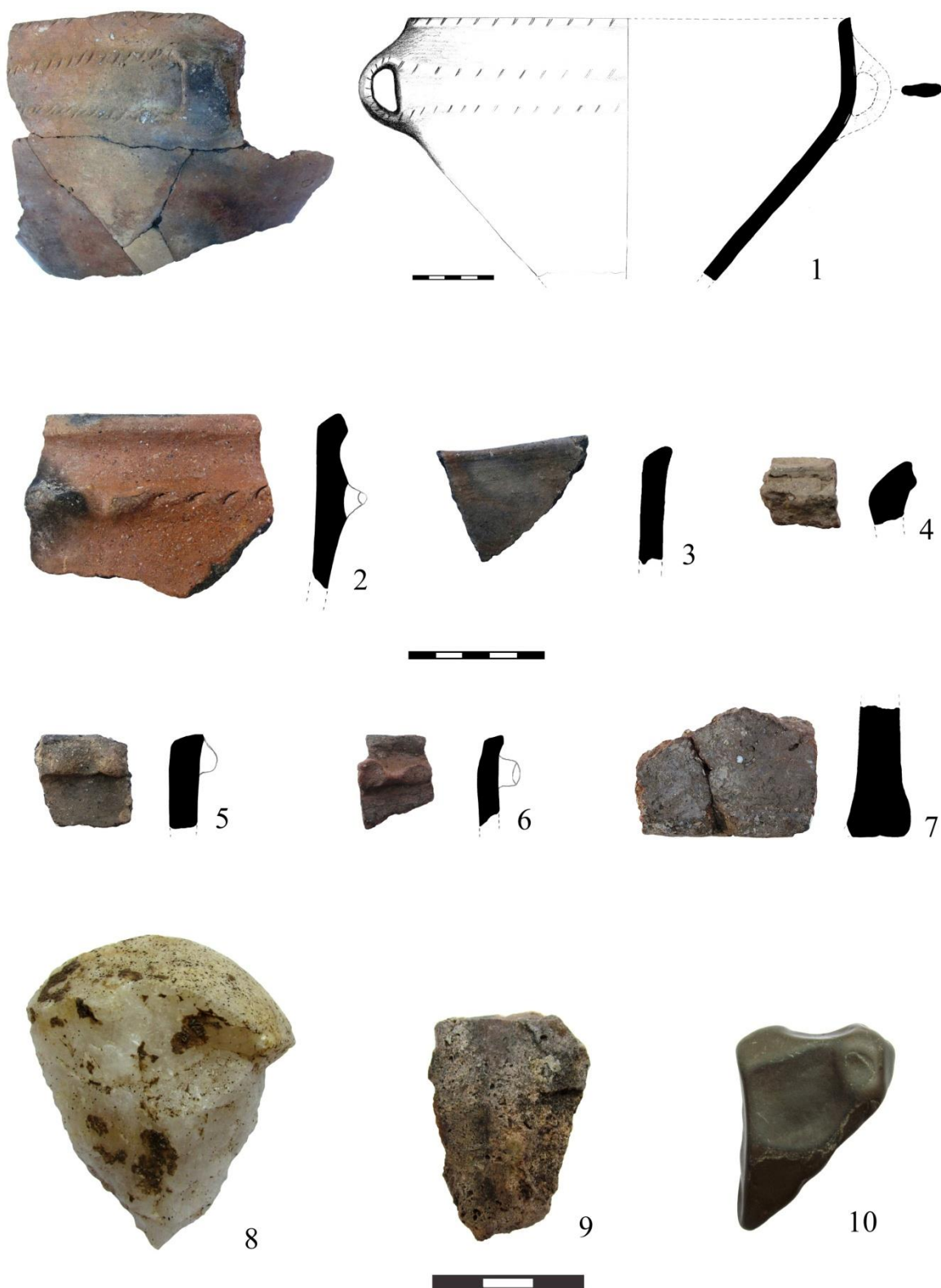
Pl. 5. The reconstructed pot from the funerary inventory of the feature C 274.



Pl. 6. Funerary inventory of the feature C 274: the fragmentary upper part of the big pot (1) and the reconstructed half side of the sack type vessel (2).



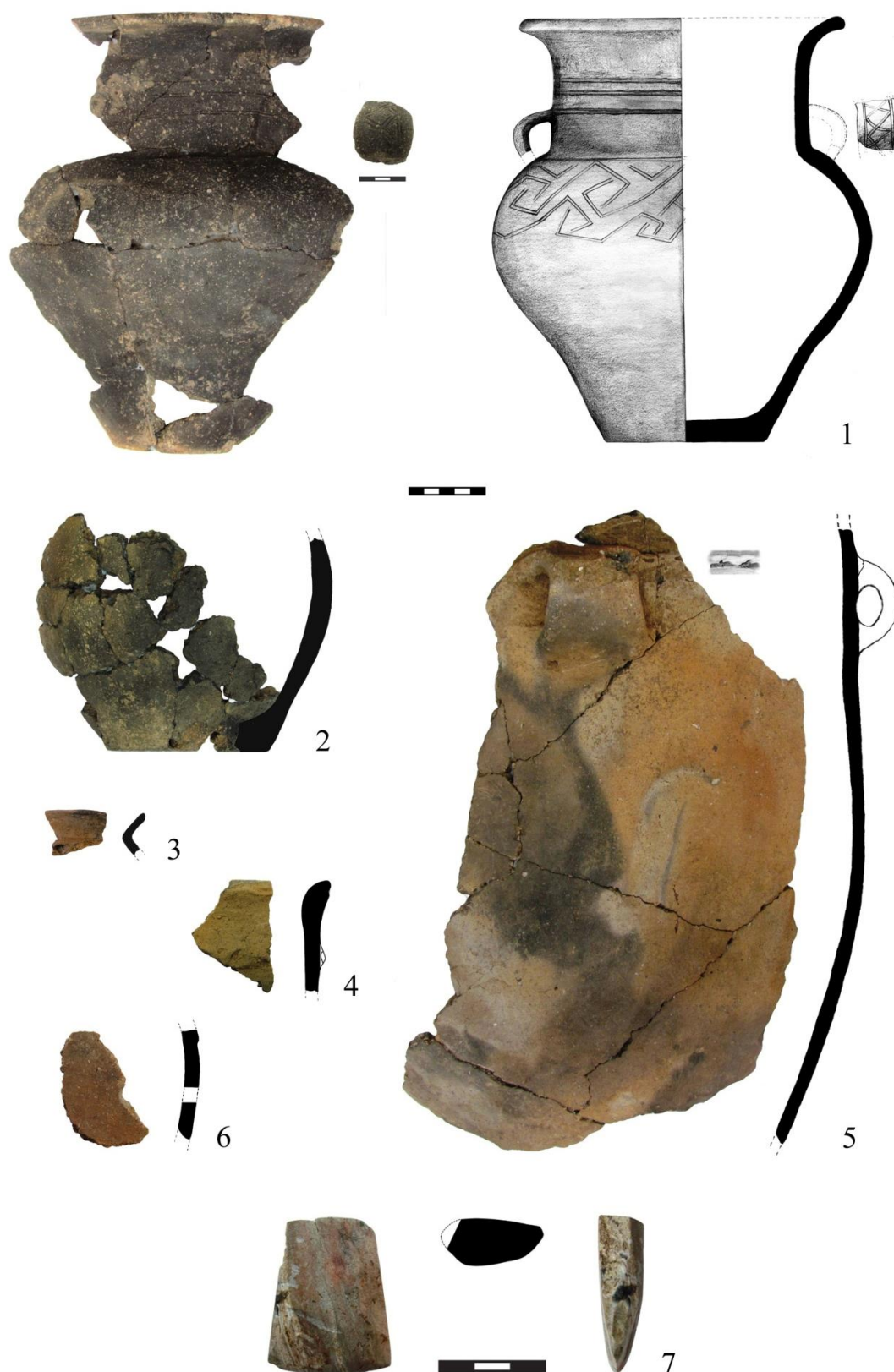
Pl. 7. Different pottery fragments from the feature C 274.



Pl. 8. The fragmentary deep bowl, different pottery fragments and the lithic objects from the feature C 274.



Pl. 9. Funerary inventory of the feature C 353: the fragmentary jar (1) and the three fragmentary cups (2-4).



Pl. 10. Funerary inventory of the feature C 353: the fragmentary pot from upper part of the grave (1), the fragmentary vessel (2) and sack type vessel (5) from the skeleton level of the filling of the pit, different pottery fragments (3, 4, 6) and the stone axe fragment (7).