

## SELECTION AND MANIPULATION OF HUMAN REMAINS DURING THE BRONZE AGE: THE EVIDENCE FROM COSTIȘA (EASTERN ROMANIA)

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**Abstract:** Based on the depositional manner of the human bodies and their state of completeness, two patterns of deposition were identified at Costișa: burials containing anatomically articulated skeletons, and disarticulated human remains scattered through the archaeological layer.

The inhumation burials found on the Cetățuia's higher plateau were dated to the Early Bronze Age and the medieval period. But the Cetățuia hill was not inhabited during the Early Bronze Age, when it was only used as a funerary area. The medieval archaeological features uncovered on both plateaus of the hill (at least one of substantial size) indicate that the area was inhabited during the Middle Ages, serving also as a burial place for some of the community members. Nine disarticulated human bones were found on the higher plateau of the Cetățuia, and other seven on the lower plateau. Eleven of them were associated to Middle Bronze Age contexts.

The present paper will briefly present the human osteological remains so far identified at Costișa–Cetățuia, with a special focus on the disarticulated bones attributed to the Bronze Age. The presentation includes information on the archaeological context, the anthropological analyses, and the possible post-mortem modifications of the respective bones. The selection and manipulation of the human remains are well-represented practices in various cultures in all ages. A few hypotheses linked to the particular situation at Costișa are proposed and discussed.

**Rezumat:** La Costișa, în funcție de modul de depunere a corpurilor umane și din punct de vedere al integralității acestora se pot distinge două categorii de descoperiri: morminte care conțin schelete în conexiune anatomică și oase umane dispartate, răspândite în straturile arheologice.

Mormintele de înhumare găsite pe platoul înalt al Cetățuiei au fost încadrate în perioada timpurie a epocii bronzului și în perioada medievală. Dealul Cetățuia nu a fost locuit în perioada timpurie a epocii bronzului, ci folosit doar ca spațiu funerar. Identificarea unor amenajări medievale pe ambele platouri ale dealului, cel puțin una dintre ele de dimensiuni mari, ar putea fi indicii că spațiul acesta a fost locuit în perioada medievală, dar, în același timp, a servit și ca loc de înmormântare pentru unii membri ai comunității. Nouă oase umane dispartate au fost găsite pe platoul înalt al Cetățuiei, iar alte șapte pe platoul mai scund, cele mai multe dintre ele (11 oase) fiind din contexte aparținând perioadei mijlocii a epocii bronzului.

În articolul de față vom prezenta resturile osteologice umane identificate până acum pe dealul Cetățuia de la Costișa, în special pe cele dispartate din epoca bronzului, prezentare în care vom include informații despre contextul arheologic, analizele antropologice, posibila existență a unor intervenții post-mortem care să fi afectat aspectul

respectivelor oase. Selectarea și manipularea osemintelor umane sunt practici frecvente în cadrul diferitelor culturi din toate timpurile. Câteva ipoteze legate de situația aparte de la Costișa vor fi discutate cu acest prilej.

**Keywords:** Costișa, Romania, inhumation graves, disarticulated human remains, modified human bones, Eneolithic, Bronze Age, medieval period.

**Cuvinte cheie:** Costișa, România, morminte de inhumație, oase umane dezarticulate, oase umane prelucrate, eneolitic, epoca bronzului, perioada medievală.

## INTRODUCTION

The research on the human and animal remains uncovered in the Eneolithic and Bronze Age layers/features at Costișa is an ongoing activity. Some of the results have already been published, *e.g.* the study of the faunal remains associated to the Eneolithic and Costișa depositions<sup>1</sup>; the papers focusing on the burials attributed to the Early Bronze Age and the medieval period (the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century) located on Plateau A of the *Cetățuia* hill<sup>2</sup>.

The *Cetățuia* hill at Costișa is situated on the left terrace of the Bistrița River, at approximately mid-distance between the towns of Bacău and Piatra Neamț. There are two plateaus on that hill, a higher one, oval in shape, well defined and visible from all directions (Plateau A) and plateau B, at a lower altitude and less exposed (Fig. 1). On both plateaus the Eneolithic deposition was overlapped by Middle Bronze Age depositions, containing Costișa and Monteoru Ic2-Ic1 archaeological materials<sup>3</sup>. With the exception of a few pottery fragments and of the already mentioned burials, there were no other features or archaeological layers that could have been attributed to the Early Bronze Age. In other words, the *Cetățuia* hill was used solely as funerary area during the Early Bronze Age, but was not inhabited. On both plateaus, the medieval features had disturbed the prehistoric layers<sup>4</sup>.

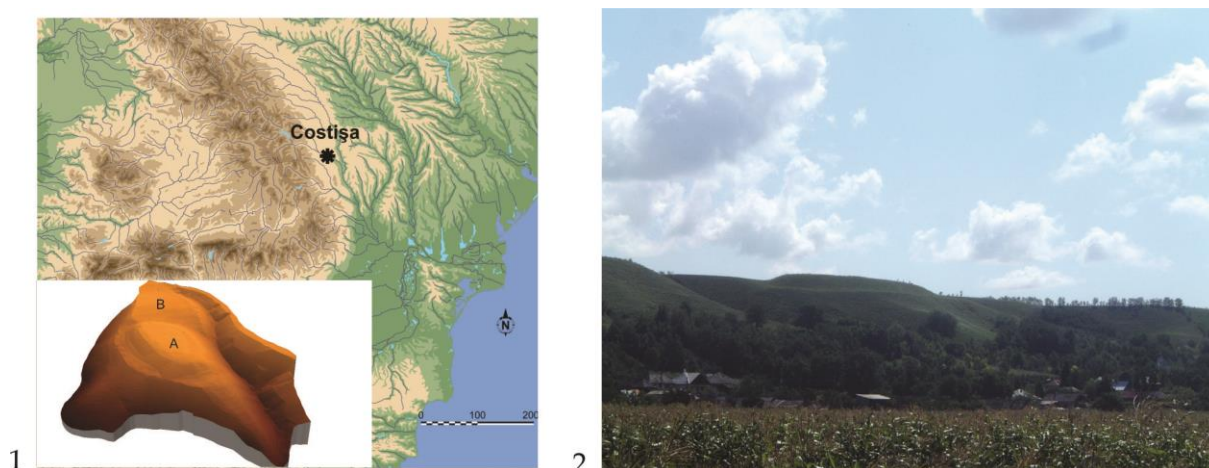


Fig. 1. Location of the Costișa site, three-dimensional model and view over the *Cetățuia* hill.

<sup>1</sup> El Susi 2009; El Susi 2014-2015.

<sup>2</sup> Popescu, Băjenaru 2008a; Popescu, Băjenaru 2007-2008; Soficaru 2008.

<sup>3</sup> Vulpe, Zamoșteanu 1962; Popescu, Băjenaru 2004; Popescu, Băjenaru 2008b.

<sup>4</sup> Vulpe, Zamoșteanu 1962, 309; Popescu, Băjenaru 2004, 281.

## THE HUMAN REMAINS AND THEIR CONTEXTS

Such a feature as mentioned above (with an inferred size of ca. 4 × 4 m) was identified in trench D excavated in 2001, located on the north-eastern part of Plateau A (Fig. 2). The prehistoric depositions in the southern half of the trench had been affected by a partially excavated feature, relatively semi-circular shaped on its northern limit (Fig. 3/1–2). The same feature had also disturbed the prehistoric layers on the south-eastern part of trench C, located 1 m west from trench D. The feature (excavated over a surface of ca. 8 sqm) continued further south, beyond the limits of trenches C and D. The black soil of the medieval feature also contained red pigments, ashes, small charcoal fragments and Eneolithic, Bronze Age and medieval pottery sherds. In trench D the depth of the feature reached 0.97 m. An adult human thoracic vertebra (one of the T1-T4) was found on the south-western part of trench D, at a depth of 0.90 m (Fig. 3/5). In the absence of a single-entity <sup>14</sup>C date, it can not be assigned to a certain cultural period. Still, it may be medieval, given the presence of other medieval human remains on the *Cetățuia* hill: on the north-western part of Plateau A was documented the presence of an infant male individual (Grave 4)<sup>5</sup> (Fig. 3/3–4).

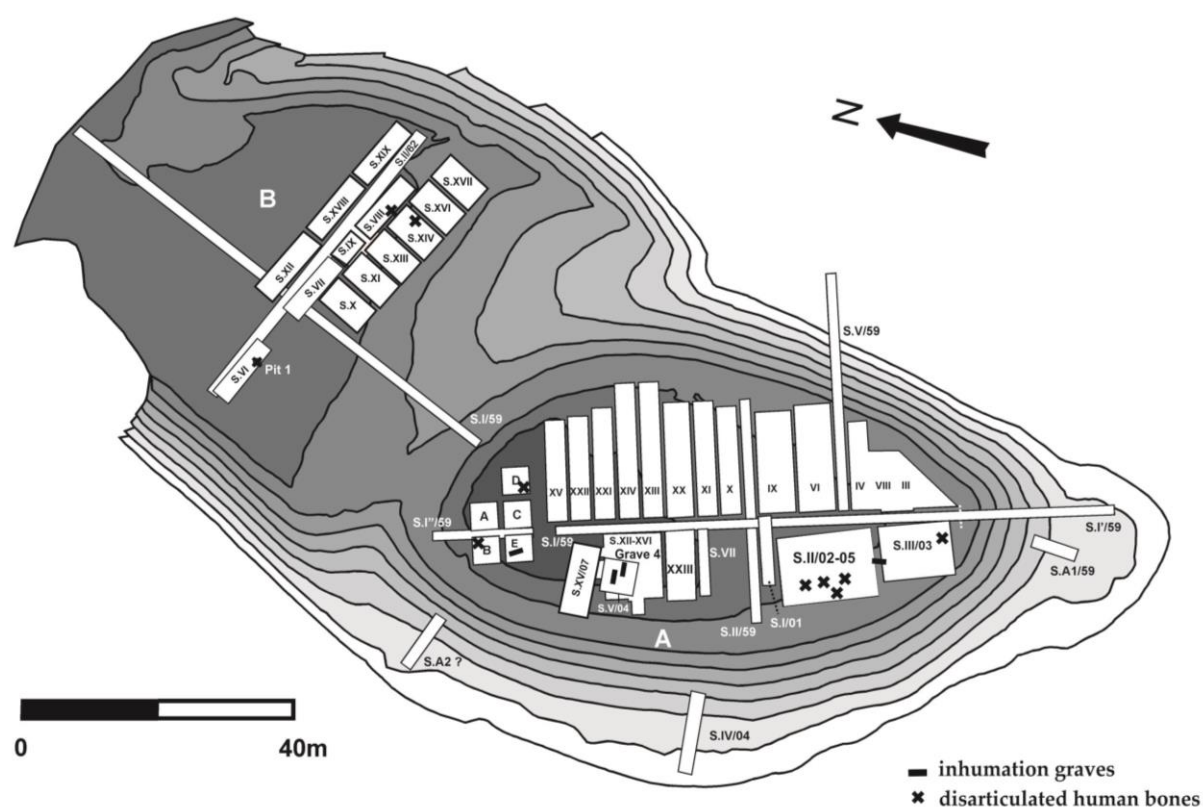


Fig. 2. Costișa–Cetățuia. Plan of the archaeological excavations for the years 1959-1960, 1962, 2001-2008, with the location of the inhumation graves and the disarticulated human bones.

<sup>5</sup> Popescu, Băjenaru 2008a, 30; Soficaru 2008, 55-56.

The skeleton (showing no signs of any pathological conditions) was in supine position, hands on the chest and the skull pointing towards the west-south-west. When lifting the bones, in the finger area of the right hand a fragmentary coin was found. It was a low silver content *dreipölder* issued in 1624 by Sigismund III Vasa<sup>6</sup>. The identification of another medieval burial (possibly also an infant) in the same north-western area of Plateau A was mentioned in the fieldnotes of Mihai Zamoşteanu and in the unpublished field report of the 1960 excavations. The infill of the grave yielded a silver *solidus* issued by Gustav II Adolf. Obviously, the adult vertebra can not have originated from these two skeletons.

Other than the above-mentioned feature in trenches C and D, several other well defined ones (with a distinct black infill) containing medieval pottery were found on both plateaus of the *Cetăţuia*. Alexandru Vulpe's fieldnotes mention such a feature on Plateau B, in the squares 26-27 of trench I/1959. Observed close to the surface at a depth of only 0.08-0.17 m, the feature had been obviously disturbed by agricultural works. Its infill contained daub fragments, charcoal and ashes, pointing towards its identification as a medieval kiln.

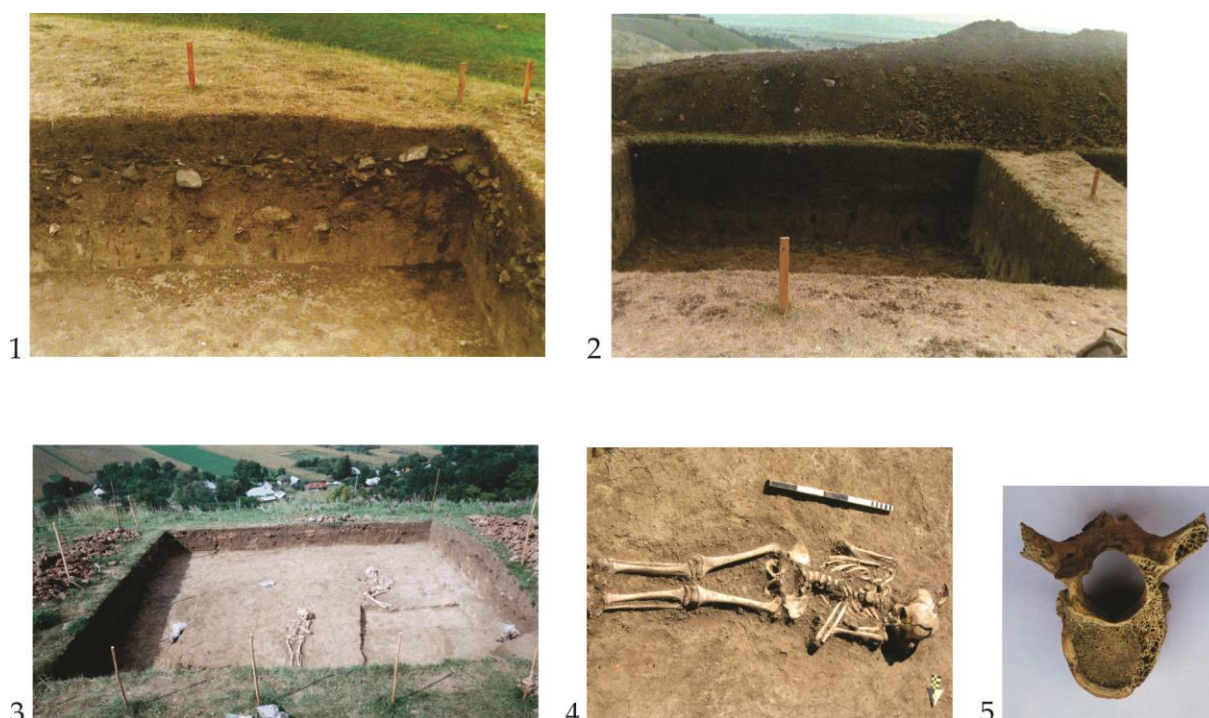


Fig. 3. Costişa-Cetăţuia. 1 The northern and eastern sections of trench D/2001, illustrating the succession of prehistoric layers; 2 The southern and western sections of trench D/2001, showing a part of the medieval feature filled with dark soil; 3 Trench V/2004, with graves 3 (Early Bronze Age) and 4 (medieval period); 4 Detail of inhumation grave no. 4; 5 Human vertebra.

It is worth mentioning that on neither of the plateaus an archaeological layer that would have corresponded to the identified medieval features existed. Nevertheless, it is quite probable that the hill was inhabited over a certain period at the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, which would explain both the existence of the several features on the plateaus, and the

<sup>6</sup> We would like to thank Aurel Vilcu from the Numismatics Department of the "Vasile Pârvan" Institute of Archaeology for the determination of this coin.



burials on the western and most visible side of the higher plateau, burials that belonged to certain members of the local community (perhaps the children only?). Future research of the medieval features and their contents will focus on more varied and detailed analyses.

As mentioned above, the Precucuteni remains were found on both plateaus, on Plateau B on its higher central part only. Plateau B contained no hearths, burials or other Eneolithic features that could have been associated to habitation areas. All the recovered artefacts - the Precucuteni III pottery, the stone, clay and bone items, and the faunal remains occurred within the Eneolithic cultural layer. It is also the case of the femoral head (diameter 4.7 cm) found on Plateau B (trench VIII/2006, square 5c, -0.59 m) (Fig. 5/1). This bone belonged to a (male?) adult and showed traces of arthrosis<sup>7</sup>. Also from the Eneolithic layer on Plateau B (trench XIV/2007, square 3c, -0.34 m) came an adult (right) femoral head with a diameter of 4 cm (Fig. 5/2). The two femoral heads were the only ones identified so far in the Eneolithic layer. With such a small number of finds, one cannot suggest a preference for selecting certain body parts. Disarticulated human remains also occurred on various Precucuteni III sites (e.g. Târgu Frumos<sup>8</sup> and Poduri)<sup>9</sup>.

Several disarticulated human bones were found in the Middle Bronze Age layer on the *Cetățuia* hill<sup>10</sup>. A brief review of the stratigraphy is necessary here for a better understanding of the Bronze Age feature positioning: the top (vegetal) soil was overlapping a 0.30 m gray depositional layer, containing at its base features with Costișa type pottery (hearths, daub agglomerations, complete or fragmentary pots, stone, clay and bone artefacts, and faunal remains). These were overlapped by Monteoru hearths, vessels (refittable or fragments, the Ic2-Ic1 styles), small items manufactured from various types of materials (bone, clay, stone, metal) and faunal remains (Fig. 4). The Monteoru archaeological finds were scattered among river boulders of various sizes that formed a compact layer (mainly on the higher plateau)<sup>11</sup>.



Fig. 4. Costișa–Cetățuia. 1 Trench II/2002-2005, view of the Monteoru deposition; 2 Two Costișa bowls found underneath the Monteoru deposition.

<sup>7</sup> See also Soficaru 2008, 69.

<sup>8</sup> Ursulescu et al. 2001, 253.

<sup>9</sup> Bolomey 2000, 157.

<sup>10</sup> Popescu, Băjenaru 2008a, 31-31, 34; Soficaru 2008, 56, 69.

<sup>11</sup> Popescu, Băjenaru 2008b.

Most of the identified human bones came from trench II/2002-2005 on Plateau A. A right humeral diaphysis (damaged in prehistoric times) was found in square 4g of trench II (during the 2004 archaeological excavations), towards the base of the boulder deposition (Fig. 5/5). It belonged to an adult of indeterminate sex (but possibly a female, considering the size of the bone and the muscle insertions).

Two conjoining fragments of the right side of a mandible were found in square 6g of trench II/2002-2005 (Fig. 5/10). They were located in the proximity of several large daub fragments scattered among and underneath the stones of the Monteoru layer, and also nearby the hearths V.14 and V.15 (closer to the latter, 0.15 m towards the north-east) (Fig. 5/9). The mandible probably belonged to an adult female<sup>12</sup>. On one of the sides, the compact surface was eliminated by cutting (the stigmata are still visible) (Fig. 5/11). The resulted surface appears to have been used as an active surface, considering the fact that near the periphery has been heavily thinned, acquiring a high macroscopic lustre (Fig. 5/12). It is possible that the artefact was used in a rubbing/polishing activity.

A human rib was recovered from the Costișa depositional layer in square 8i, trench II (during the 2005 archaeological excavations). It belonged to a subadult individual, probably from the right side of the body and displayed traces of infection on its inner side (Fig. 5/7).

From square 10g of trench II/2002-2005 came a femoral head (diameter  $3.6 \times 3.7$  cm, weight 10.4 g) with evident traces of human intervention (Fig. 6/1). It was found underneath the deposition containing the river boulders and the Monteoru features, on the upper part of an agglomeration of daub fragments and Costișa pottery sherds. The bone was not completely fused and it probably belonged to a subadult individual. It had been perforated right through the *fovea capitis* (the rotational striations are still visible – Fig. 6/1c). A small area at the periphery of the perforation shows usewear traces while the upper part of the bone was abraded in an attempt to make it more regular (Fig. 6/1d–e). The bone fragment is heavily burnt on its interior surface and partly on the exterior, and only towards the edge, indicating that the upper central area had been protected by a circular object during the firing. Given all these modifications, it is difficult to 100 % acknowledge the bone as being human. Still, the microscopic analysis and the comparison with similar bones of various animal species (bear included) indicate a high probability of being human<sup>13</sup>.

Other two human bones no longer have clear archaeological contexts. The first (discovered in trench II during the 2004 archaeological excavations) slipped out of its package while transported from one storage area to the other, and although recovered, its context was lost<sup>14</sup>. It is no longer possible to attribute it to either the Eneolithic or the Bronze Age. The bone is a femoral head (diameter 4.2 cm) belonging to an adult individual of indeterminate sex<sup>15</sup> (Fig. 6/2). It is not a finished piece. The separation from the rest of the bone was done by percussion and later, the debitage surface was regularized by abrasion. A small area was

<sup>12</sup> Soficaru 2008, 56.

<sup>13</sup> We would like to thank Marius Robu (The Institute of Speleology), Valentin Dumitrașcu, Gabriel Vasile (“Vasile Pârvan” Institute of Archaeology) and Adrian Bălășescu (The National History Museum of Romania) for their help and meaningful comments on those bones.

<sup>14</sup> Regrettably, in Popescu, Băjenaru 2008a, 34, the human femoral head was erroneously presented as having been found in square 11g of trench II. A femoral head had been indeed found in this square but it belonged to an animal.

<sup>15</sup> Soficaru 2008, 56.

exposed to fire. The second bone without a clear context is a 2006 chance find from Plateau A, recovered by a few locals while cutting the hay in the area of trench II. It is also a (right) femoral head with a 4.5 cm diameter, belonging to an adult (probably) male individual<sup>16</sup> (Fig. 5/3). No post-mortem human modifications of the bone were noted.

Also from Plateau A (but from trench III/2003, square 9c, -0.11 m), came a fragment of the right parietal bone (preserving the sagittal and coronal sutures), probably of an adult individual (Fig. 5/6). It was found in 2003, at a very shallow depth from the present-day surface, underneath the vegetal layer, overlapping the Monteoru stone deposition. Although its stratigraphic position is inconclusive for a precise cultural determination, there is a high probability it was part of the Monteoru deposition.

A subadult left radius, preserving the proximal epiphysis was found in trench B/2001 (square I) located at the northern end of Plateau A, at a depth of 0.33 m, right beneath the Monteoru stone layer (Fig. 5/8). The item was found in association with Costișă sherds.

During the 2005 archaeological excavations on the western part of Plateau B, squares 4-5, trench VI (close to its southern limit), at the depth of 0.26-0.30 m, was observed a rather circular feature (pit 1/05) with a diameter of 1.30 m that was standing out as a grey coloured patch of soil on the general yellowish-reddish background<sup>17</sup> (Fig. 7/1-2). The difference in the soil colour disappeared gradually with the depth, so, while digging, the shape of the pit was inferred based on the presence/position of the archaeological material. The pit continued for a maximum of 0.25 m from its level of observation. Small and medium sized river stones were found at the depth of 0.41-0.48 m, possibly laid at the base of the pit, as no other archaeological material was found below them. The infill of the feature contained pottery sherds (the typical ones being of the Costișă type) (Fig. 7/3-4), daub fragments, thick hearth fragments, faunal remains from at least two individuals (one domestic, one wild)<sup>18</sup>, a bear radius worked at one end<sup>19</sup> and several human remains<sup>20</sup>: a left coxal bone of an adult female, a fragment of the left shoulder blade (scapula) of an adult female (perhaps the same individual?), two small bone fragments difficult to determine and a fragment of the left parietal bone of a child (Fig. 7/5-7). It thus appears that all the (determined) human bones were selected from the left side of the body. Pit 1/05 was located outside the habitation area, and no other prehistoric or medieval depositions were identified. It was located ca. 15 m to the west from a Costișă agglomeration of large daub and pottery fragments uncovered in trench VII during the 2005 excavations (Fig. 2).

An adult femoral condyle (possibly human, but too small to be securely determined) was recovered also from Plateau B, trench XIV/2007 (square 1c, -0.24 m), from an area with many daub and Costișă pottery fragments (Fig. 5/4).

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<sup>16</sup> Soficaru 2008, 69.

<sup>17</sup> Popescu, Băjenaru 2008a, 31-32.

<sup>18</sup> Georgeta El Susi ("Vasile Pârvan" Institute of Archaeology) determined that the pit comprised the bones of 3.5-4 years old sheep and a mature deer; an undetermined animal bone fragment and a spine bone from a large mammal.

<sup>19</sup> We would like to thank Georgeta El Susi and Marius Robu for the archaeozoological determinations.

<sup>20</sup> Soficaru 2008, 69.



Fig. 5. Costișa-Cetățuia. 1-2. Human femoral heads found in the Eneolithic layer; 3. Human femoral head found on Plateau A, lacking the archaeological context; 4. Human (?) femoral condyle; 5. Humeral diaphysis; 6. Parietal bone; 7. Human rib; 8. Human radius; 9. Location of the human mandible on the ground plan; 10. Human mandible; 11. Cut-mark on the mandible (50×); 12. Macroscopic lustre on the edge of the mandible (150×).



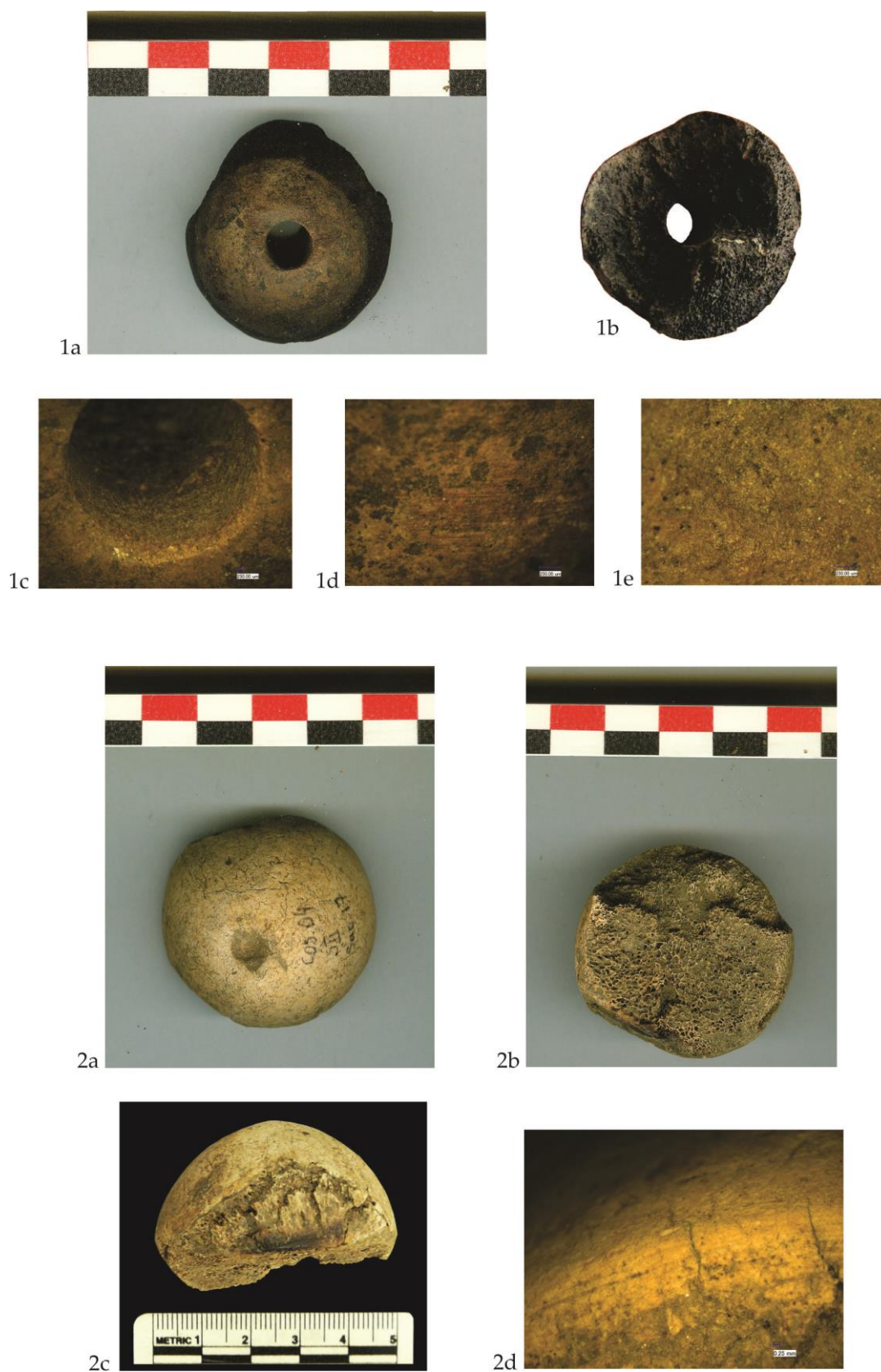


Fig. 6. Costișa-Cetățuia. 1-2. Femoral heads with traces of human intervention (perforation, burning, abrasion; 1.c. – 30×; 1.d. – 50×; 1.e. – 100×; 2.d. – 25×).

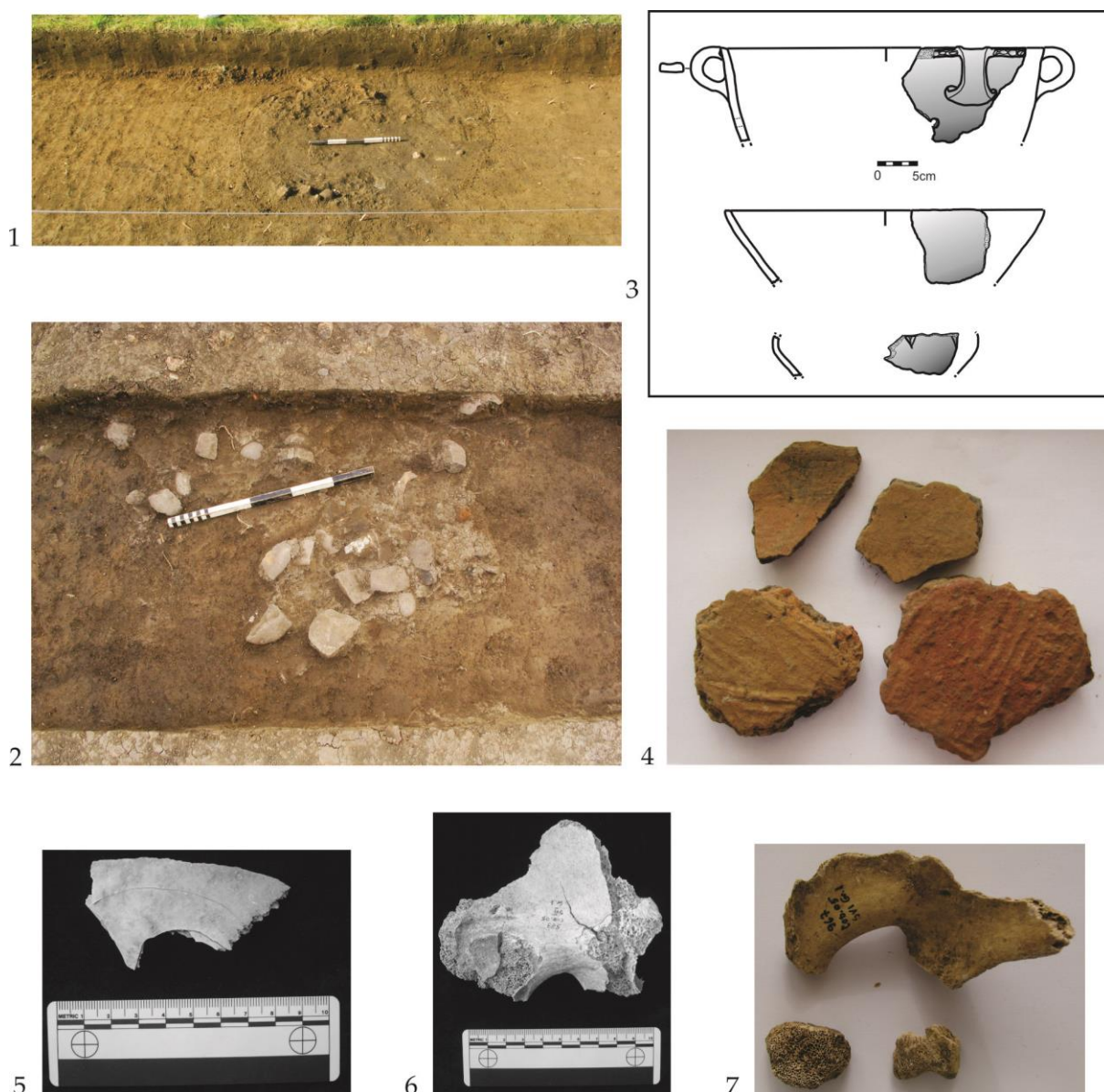


Fig. 7. Costișa-Cetățuia. 1-2 Pit 1/2005; 3-4 Pottery sherds from pit 1; 5 Left parietal bone; 6 Left coxal bone; 7 Left scapula and the two small indeterminable bones.

## WORKED HUMAN BONES

Three of the human bones (the mandible fragment and two of the femoral heads) showed post-mortem modifications on their surfaces. The mandible displayed an exfoliated area, thinned towards the edge, where it displays also traces of polish. Although lacking a clear archaeological context, one of the femoral heads seems to have gone through a transformational process similar to that of the perforated femoral head in square 10g (e.g. detachment from the rest of the bone and scraping). The post-mortem modifications of the bone and the technique employed suggest the attribution of this particular human bone to the Bronze Age. The perforated femoral head is so far unique at Costișa, all other discoid items of similar size and centrally perforated being made of clay. In what the function of

such an item might have been, two hypotheses come into mind: its 10.4 g weight may suggest the use as a spindle whorl<sup>21</sup>, while existence of the small usewear area near the perforation (resulted following the friction to a thread) might indicate its use as an adornment. Thus, it is possible that for a while, the perforated bone was worn as a pendant or sewn to a piece of fabric, perhaps part of clothing. Similar bone items – interpreted as spindle whorls – were found in Monteoru<sup>22</sup>, Wietenberg<sup>23</sup> and Noua<sup>24</sup> contexts, and their general number is probably bigger. None of the studied items benefited of a faunal species identification thus the possibility they might be human exists.

Modifying human bones is not an unusual activity for the prehistory of the area. Modified human bones were observed at the Eneolithic tell of Pietrele in southern Romania, the most significant being a chisel made of radius bone<sup>25</sup>. A perforated human canine fragment (from an adult individual), used probably as a pendant, was found in the tomb of a teenager in the Wietenberg cemetery (phases II-III) at Luduș, Mureș county<sup>26</sup>.

Intentionally modified human bones exist also in the neighbouring areas. Five perforated discs made of fragments of human skulls appeared in two features at the Eneolithic site at Kozareva Mogila, eastern Bulgaria, associated with large amounts of pottery<sup>27</sup>. The area where the discs occurred was considered by the authors of the research as the remains of a potter's workshop. Fragments of a woman's skull in burial #14 from the cemetery associated to the above-mentioned settlement were modified in a similar manner with the discs, having also a perforation. They were then re-buried 0.40 m away from the burial, at the same depth as the skeleton. From an earlier layer, also Eneolithic, came a large fragment of a cranium, allegedly used as a drinking bowl. Another disc made of a human skull fragment (the right parietal bone) was discovered at Rakla, nearby Varna, in the eastern part of Bulgaria<sup>28</sup>. The archaeological context is unknown, but it is not impossible to be Eneolithic. Among the adornments found in the Eneolithic deposit from Cărbuna, Republic of Moldova, was a perforated human tooth<sup>29</sup>.

Several other items made of human bone were found at the Lower Danube, in Bronze and Early Iron Age contexts. Thus, the male burial 88 at Branč (a Bronze Age cemetery, the Nitra culture) contained a fragment of a human skull, interpreted as amulet<sup>30</sup>. Also from a funerary context – the Mokrin cemetery (the Early Bronze Age, the Periam-Pecica culture) –

<sup>21</sup> The weight of the item is not uniformly distributed though; the femoral head was not completely fused and thus part of the osseous mass inside was lacking. For documented comments regarding the relationship between the weight of the spindle whorls and the thickness of the textile thread see Andersson Strand 2012.

<sup>22</sup> Zaharia 1990, 43, fig. 28/12-12a, 13-13a.

<sup>23</sup> Boroffka 1994, 224, pl. 76/14.

<sup>24</sup> Florescu M., Florescu A. 1990, 61, 97, fig. 30/6, 8; Florescu 1991, 317, fig. 145/1-3; Rotaru 2009, 131, 140, 147, 149-152, fig. 5/4, 13; 12/7; 14/2; 15/4; 16/1; 17/5.

<sup>25</sup> Hansen et al. 2009.

<sup>26</sup> Beldiman, Sztancs, Berecki 2016.

<sup>27</sup> Georgieva, Russeva 2016.

<sup>28</sup> Georgieva, Russeva 2016, 16.

<sup>29</sup> Dergačev 2002, 15, no. 450, pl. 5/450.

<sup>30</sup> Vladár 1973, 34-35, 240, pl. X/15.

came a pendant made of a human rib<sup>31</sup>. An equally interesting find came from the Nitra cemetery at Gáň, Slovakia: a perforated femoral head decorated with geometrical patterns<sup>32</sup>. The analyses could not certify its human provenance but the probability is rather high. Moreover, items made of perforated human femoral heads exist in the Věteřov culture in the Czech Republic<sup>33</sup>. Other two perforated artefacts made of human femurs were found at Brankovice and Ivanovice na Hané, both sites dating to the Late Bronze Age–Hallstatt A period<sup>34</sup>. Similar items made from animal long bones were interpreted as skates<sup>35</sup>.

Transforming parts of the human body into adornments, amulets, musical instruments, drinking vessels, tools and weapons is well documented ethnographically<sup>36</sup>, but less so archaeologically, if we think of the scarcity of the modified human bones from prehistoric sites in Europe and the Near East<sup>37</sup>. Frequently, ethnographic and historical sources offer information on the reasons and the conditions specific human bones were collected, modified and used.

For example, for the Sepik communities in Papua New Guinea the bone is a metaphor for strength. *“Human bones (skulls, of course, but also others) were preserved as mementos of the dead, beloved or otherwise, ancestral relics of great significance. All the creatures that served as sources of bone figured in mythology; thus bone was not only useful, versatile, and figuratively ‘strong’ but its ‘strength’ derived from the powers of the supernatural world”*<sup>38</sup>. A man inherited the femurs of his father when the latter’s body turns into a skeleton, but he can also take those of an enemy. Femurs were used to make daggers, very often decorated. The explanation of such practice resides in the fact that *“In a cosmology in which the ancestors were models of behavior, of rights and duties, the simple fact of their existence in the past validated the present. The ownership and display of ancestral bones thereby established the reality of the past, and proved the justice of the descendants’ claims to the rights and powers that the ancestors held”*<sup>39</sup>. The Andamanese (inhabitants of the Andaman Islands in the gulf of Bengal) make various objects from the bones that belonged to family and friends and wear them either to honour their memory or as amulets protecting them against pain, disease, etc.<sup>40</sup>. Certain Mesoamerican communities used notched human bones as musical instruments (*omichicahuaztli* in the Nahuatl language) employed during the funerary ceremonies dedicated to the dead warriors<sup>41</sup>. And there are a lot more examples.

<sup>31</sup> Georgieva, Russeva 2016, 20. Unfortunately, we had no access to Sofija Stefanović 2006, where the pendant was said to have been made of a human bone.

<sup>32</sup> Šefčáková et al. 2010.

<sup>33</sup> Šefčáková et al. 2010, 205.

<sup>34</sup> Parma et al. 2011.

<sup>35</sup> Choyke, Bartosiewicz 2005.

<sup>36</sup> For example, Thomson 1882; Balfour 1897; Laufer 1923; Cranstone 1971; Newton 1989; McNeill 2002; Lohmann 2005; Owsley et al. 2007; Storey 2008.

<sup>37</sup> For the earlier or more recent history see von Winning 1959; Baby 1961; Hester 1969; Pereira 2005; Armit, Ginn 2007, 125. Here are a few selected works for prehistory: Toussaint 2005; Bello et al. 2011; Alday et al. 2015; Sołtysiak, Gręzak 2015; Wallduck, Bello 2016.

<sup>38</sup> Newton 1989, 306-307.

<sup>39</sup> Newton 1989, 309.

<sup>40</sup> Thomson 1882, 296.

<sup>41</sup> Pereira 2005; McVicker 2005.



Obviously, in the case of the prehistoric artefacts, the role played by the human bones can only be inferred; so far, it has been impossible to distinguish between the drinking vessels (if they really served for drinking...) made from the skulls of the enemies and those of the ancestors, or between the weapons made from the bones of the friends or those of individuals outside the community. Archaeology can provide hypotheses for the motivations leading to the fragmentation of the human bodies, their modifications and eventual depositions. Hopefully, future ZooMS, DNA, radiocarbon and stable isotope studies will help complete the fragmented image we have on the human communities from the remote past.

## CONCLUSIONS

Returning to the Costișa situation, there are a few ideas that suggest themselves, following this brief presentation on the situation of the human bones presence in Bronze Age contexts.

Firstly, no Middle Bronze Age burials were located on the site area. The identified human bones do not come from damaged tombs. The only burials identified at *Cetățuia* were dated either to the Early Bronze Age or the medieval period. Moreover, there is no evidence that the Early Bronze Age burials had been disturbed in order to collect certain parts of the skeleton.

Secondly, the provenance of these disarticulated bones is unknown. But it is obvious that they were selected, fragmented and deposited intentionally. The number of such remains at Costișa, with a clear context, is too small to postulate over certain selection criteria, such as age, biological sex or the more frequent occurrence of certain bones. It is important though that in the case of pit 1 were preferred the bones from the left side of the body, while four of the six Middle Bronze Age human bones from Plateau A came from the right side of the body (Table 1). Given the fact that no incisions/cut marks were noted on the bones as a consequence of a possible the post-mortem defleshing, we can argue that collection of the bones happened after the decomposition of the bodies.

Thirdly, from Plateau A there are six Middle Bronze Age disarticulated bones with a clear context – three belonging to adult individuals, three to subadults. Various body parts were represented. Five of them were recovered from the base of the boulder layer or from below it, from areas with agglomerations of daub and hearth fragments, pottery sherds and faunal remains. Given the small number of such occurrences, one might be tempted to regard them as mere coincidences. But, it is equally possible that some of the human remains originated in the areas of earlier contexts, more precisely of those containing the Costișa pottery, destroyed and scattered when building the new structures with stones and hearths, where the Monteoru pottery predominated. If this was the case, the role of these human bones/artefacts made of them, prior to their integration into the Monteoru structure, is difficult to determine. We can just assume that the mandible and the perforated femoral head, given their usewear traces, might have been used prior to their depositions in the contexts where they became visible archaeologically. It is not impossible that the other bones also had a ritual or a social life before being deposited in certain places.



the Costișa community); all that it meant – houses, people, animals – had been crushed. But by incorporating them into the new structure, certain pieces of that past world became part of a life transformation and regeneration process, in an attempt to establish and legitimize a new social order. Equally interesting is the fact that in the inventory of pit 1 on Plateau B, human remains were deposited together with stones, daub and hearth fragments, pottery sherds, fragments of wild and domestic animals, and stone and bone artefacts, similar to those found in the archaeological layer on Plateau A. The presence in the pit of the child and female bones comes to complete the proposed interpretation.

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