

ISOLATED HUMAN BONES FOUND IN BRONZE AGE MONTEORU CULTURE SITES

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Abstract: One of the characteristics of Bronze Age Monteoru culture is the strict distinction between the inhabited and funerary areas. The necropolises, usually large and used over long periods of time, are situated in the vicinity of the settlements. In this paper, we present novel scattered human bones from 11 individuals found in the settlements at Năeni-Zănoaga (Cetatea 1 and 2) and Cârlo-mănești-Cetățuia. Together with the osteological fragments from other 6 individuals, previously published, found at Costișa Cetățuia and Sărata Monteoru, our analysis contributes with information on the manipulation of human remains in the Bronze Age, in general, and in Monteoru culture settlements, in particular. It should be mentioned that such remains are mostly found nearby construction areas at Năeni-Zănoaga Cetatea 2, while at Cetatea 1 and Costișa the human remains are scattered among the pile of rocks of a special anthropic construction. In Monteoru culture areal, the preference for deposition of certain skeleton segments (cranium, upper limbs and, more seldom, lower limbs), highly fragmented (generally post-mortem), is rather evident. The ages of the individuals range from 14 to 40. At least three of them exhibit signs of possible peri- or post-mortem anthropic intervention that led to fragmentation and burning of the bones. Though the lot of materials is rather small, it should be mentioned the evident deliberate intent behind the intervention on the scattered human bones, as well as the selection and deposition inside a settlement. The presence of scattered human bones in several Bronze Age settlements of similar chronological dating indicates that this is not an accident in a cultural areal, but rather a phenomenon highlighted by new finds and publication of older finds.

Rezumat: Cultura Monteoru din Epoca Bronzului a fost caracterizată printre altele și prin distincția strictă dintre zona locuită și cea funerară, cimitirele, de obicei de mari dimensiuni și cu o durată lungă în timp, fiind dispuse în apropierea așezărilor. Articolul de față prezintă fragmente osteologice umane dispartate, inedite, provenind de la 11 indivizi, din așezările de la Năeni Zănoaga punctele Cetatea 1 și 2 și Cârlo-mănești Cetățuia. Acestea, alături de resturi osteologice de la 6 indivizi, menționate în literatură, provenind de la Costișa Cetățuia și Sărata Monteoru, aduc un important spor de documentare în privința manipulării osemintelor umane în așezările culturii Monteoru în special și a epocii bronzului în general. Interesantă este prezența lor majoritară în imediata apropiere a zonelor de construcție la Năeni Zănoaga Cetatea 2, în timp ce în punctul Cetatea 1 și la Costișa apar printre masa de pietre a unei amenajări antropice deosebite. În cadrul întregului lot din aria culturii Monteoru, se distinge preferința pentru depunerea unor anumite segmente scheletice (craniu, membre superioare și mai rar membre inferioare), cu un grad mare de fragmentare (în general produsă post-mortem). Vârstele biologice ale indivizilor descoperiți variază în intervalul 14-40 de ani, iar cel puțin trei dintre indivizi prezintă urme, posibil ale unor intervenții antropice peri- sau post-mortem, care au dus la fragmentarea și arderea oaselor. În ciuda lotului redus de materiale este interesantă intenționalitatea intervenției asupra oaselor umane dispartate, selecției și depunerii într-un context de habitat. De asemenea, prezența oaselor umane dispartate în mai multe așezări de Epoca Bronzului, apropiate temporal, arată că nu este un fenomen întâmplător, circumscris unei „arii culturale”, ci mai degrabă un fenomen pe care descoperirile noi sau publicarea celor mai vechi să-l pună în lumină.

Keywords: scattered human bones, settlement, manipulation of human remains, Bronze Age, Monteoru.

Cuvinte cheie: oase umane dispartate, așezare, manipulare oseminte umane, Epoca Bronzului, Monteoru.

INTRODUCTION

Funerary practices in Monteoru culture area were subject to an overall study¹ on burials², both in necropolises and in settlements. A suggested general characteristic of Monteoru culture is the strict distinction between the inhabited and the funerary areas. Necropolises are usually large and used over a long period of time, placed near the settlements, on the surrounding terraces or plateaus. However, several finds, such as the grave from Cărlomănești–Cetățuia³ settlement, the triple grave in the vicinity of Năeni–Zănoaga Cetatea 2⁴, the complex at Poiana Scorșului⁵, as well as the graves found in the proximity of settlements Căndești⁶, Sărata Monteoru Cemetery 4⁷ and possibly Poiana⁸ raised the question of the existence of graves⁹ whose location and significance are different from the usual burials. Therefore, one could take into consideration that the strict distinction between the funerary and inhabited areas could merely be the reflection of the stage of research and publication of specific finds.

The presence of scattered human bones in prehistoric settlements on the territory of Romania and in Europe in general¹⁰ has become, in recent years, a topic of interest for the study of the Neolithic and Iron Age, both due to new finds and to publication of older finds accompanied by anthropological analyses of human bones¹¹. Nevertheless, in the Bronze Age, and, implicitly, in Monteoru culture, the presence of scattered bones in settlements has not been approached in archaeological papers beyond their simple mention.

In this article, we set out to present the novel human osteological fragments found in the settlements from Năeni–Zănoaga points Cetatea 1 and 2, and Cărlomănești–Cetățuia. Together with the already published fragments from Costișa–Cetățuia and Sărata Monteoru, our endeavour will add to the documentation on manipulation of human bones in the settlements of Monteoru culture, in particular, and in the Bronze Age, in general.

OSTEOLOGICAL MATERIAL

Monteoru culture is one of the archaeological phenomena of the Bronze Age in the Carpathian area and was defined early on based on systematic research. Dated approximatively to 2300-1500 B.C.¹², Monteoru culture spread exclusively throughout the

¹ Motzoi Chicideanu 2011.

² Motzoi Chicideanu 2000, 108.

³ Oancea et al. 1976.

⁴ Motzoi Chicideanu, Șandor Chicideanu 1997.

⁵ Zaharia, Bârză 1999; Motzoi Chicideanu 2003; Zaharia 2007.

⁶ Florescu 1978; 1979; 1980.

⁷ Bârză 1989, 40.

⁸ Vulpe 1950, 50-51.

⁹ In this discussion, we have not included the finds at Tinosu, which, due to their geographical location, cannot be linked to Monteoru culture, as originally suggested. Their definition as incineration graves has not received the anthropological confirmation, as their poor documentation limited interpretation to regular pits with archaeological material (Vulpe, Dunăreanu Vulpe 1924, 185-187, fig. 18-20).

¹⁰ Baray, Boulestin 2010; Green 2002; Müller-Scheeßel 2013.

¹¹ See Ailincăi 2008a-b; Ailincăi 2015; Ailincăi, Constantinescu 2008; Ailincăi, Constantinescu 2015; Ailincăi et al. 2005-2006; Ailincăi et al. 2014; Ailincăi et al. 2015; Gligor 2014; Ion 2008; Ion et al. 2009; Lazăr, Soficaru 2005; Lazăr et al. 2013; Lundberg, Gligor 2015.

¹² Constantinescu 2010, 202-223.

Sub-Carpathian hills of the Southern and Eastern Curvature Carpathians and was defined archaeologically especially based on the specific pottery found in numerous multi-layered settlements and in necropolises.

The economy of these communities relied on the exploitation of the resources specific to the Sub-Carpathian hills, which are directly linked to the hydrographic basin of Siret River, collecting almost all the rivers crossing the spread area of Monteoru culture. Sheep and big cattle husbandry, exploitation of their by-products and of the numerous salt deposits, together with the processing of bronze ore traded from neighbouring areas appear to be some of the main activities of Monteoru culture population, as depicted in the current stage of the research.

The settlements at Năeni-Zănoaga and Cârlomanești-Cetățuia are two of the typical sites for Monteoru culture, having been inhabited almost throughout the entire span of the culture, and comprising structures on terraces, on hills slopes or on the top of dominant plateaus.

During the field research at Năeni-Zănoaga and, especially, during the processing of the archaeological material, ten human osteological fragments were identified.

At Cetatea 2¹³, a series of human bone fragments were found together with pottery sherds or animal bones (Individuals 1-4). Two fragments were mentioned in the site log (Individuals 5, 7), but misplaced after successive moves of the material. Another fragment was identified during the analysis of a small batch of animal bones, initially intended for radiocarbon dating (Individual 6)¹⁴. At Cetatea 1¹⁵ from Năeni-Zănoaga, three bone fragments were identified after inspecting, at the request of T. Vasilescu, several batches of animal bones from the archaeological campaigns after 2000 (Individual 8-10). The mandible from Cârlomanești-Cetățuia (Individual 11) was found in the lot of archaeological material during the processing of potsherds¹⁶.

On a different occasion, while studying some small batches of animal bones from Sărata Monteoru, some human osteological bones were identified (Individual 12-14¹⁷ and Individual 15¹⁸).

The bones from Costișa surfaced during the 2005 campaign in S II, in the Monteoru pottery layer, among rocks and twig-pressed adobe, in the southwest part of Cetățuia (Individual 16-17), and are the only ones submitted to anthropological analysis so far¹⁹ (Table 1).

CONTEXT OF THE FINDS

Similarly, to other archaeological materials from Monteoru pottery sites, the field research campaigns and discovered bone fragments have not been completely published. This renders difficult a discussion about human bones in settlements. Very few scattered human bones were noticed during the archaeological surveys and most of them were recovered

¹³ For detailed description of the research at Cetatea 2, see Constantinescu 2010.

¹⁴ Becker 2000, 85, table 1.

¹⁵ For detailed description of the research at Cetatea 1, see Vasilescu 2014.

¹⁶ We express our gratitude to Mrs. Despina Măgureanu, for providing us with the opportunity to study this mandible.

¹⁷ Becker 1999, 97, tab. 3; 2000, 85, table 1.

¹⁸ Haimovici 1994.

¹⁹ Popescu, Băjenaru 2008b, 34; Soficar 2008, 40.

afterwards, during the study of smaller batches of animal bones or during the processing of the pottery. Therefore, it is not possible to accurately map them within the sites and associate them with other objects or contexts.

Table 1. Human osteological fragments found in Monteoru pottery sites.

No.	Context	Anatomical part	State	Side	Preserved part	Age	Sex
Ind. 1	NZ, Cet. 2, S II, c. 21, -1,55 m (Zn. Ia)	Cranium	fragment	left	-frontal -parietal	13-16	-
Ind. 2	NZ, Cet. 2, S IV I (Zn. I)	Humerus	fragment	right	Diaphysis	adultus	F
Ind. 3	NZ, Cet. 2, S II, c. 10 (Zn. I)	Cranium		left	Mandibular incisor II	18-22	-
Ind. 4	NZ, Cet. 2, S II c. 14, -0,78 m (Zn. IIa)	Cranium	fragment	left	Parietal	adultus	-
Ind. 5	NZ, Cet. 2, S II, c. 10, -1,40 m, (Zn. I)	Cranium	?	-	Mandible	infans-juvenis	?
Ind. 6	NZ, Cet. 2, passim (1993 campaign)	Cubitus	fragment	?	Diaphysis	adultus?	-
Ind. 7	NZ, Cet. 2, S IV K, Zn. IIb (2001 campaign)	Cranium	?	?	Molar	?	?
Ind. 8	NZ, Cet. 1, S I M, c. 8	Humerus	fragment	left	1/4 proximal	15±1-2	-
Ind. 9	NZ, Cet. 1, S III, c. 9, pigmented brownish layer, - 0.76 m/-0.50 m	Hand	complete	left	Metacarpal II	adultus	F?
Ind. 10	NZ, Cet. 1, S III, c. 12C, brownish layer, -1.10 m	Cranium	fragment	left	Parietal	7-14	-
Ind. 11	Crl-Cețuia, E1dN, -1,45 m, Monteoru Ic4	Cranium	fragment	-	Mandible	35-45	M?
Ind. 12	Sărata Monteoru, passim	Cranium	fragment	?	-	adultus	?
Ind. 13	Sărata Monteoru, passim	Femur	fragment	?	Diaphysis	adultus?	?
Ind. 14	Sărata Monteoru, passim	Radius	fragment	?	Diaphysis	adultus?	?
Ind. 15	Sărata Monteoru, passim	Radius	fragment	?	2/3 proximal	?	F
Ind. 16	Costișa-Cețuia Sect. A, S II, c. 7g Monteoru Ic3-Ic2	Cranium	fragment	-	Mandible	adultus	F
Ind. 17	Costișa-Cețuia Sect. A, S II, c. 11f Monteoru Ic3-Ic2	Femur	fragment	right	Femoral head	adultus	?

The context of the bones from Năeni-Zănoaga Cetatea 2, found during the archaeozoological analysis, is unknown. The bones identified in the course of pottery processing were mapped out depending on the section they were found in. The mapping (Fig. 1) indicates that at least part of the human bones at Cetatea 2 are constantly present either in the construction areas²⁰ or in their immediate vicinity (Table 2). In general, in this area, the bone fragments are associated with adobe, rocks, potsherds, as well as with bone, antler, stone and silex artefacts²¹. It should also be mentioned the apparently numerous presence of these finds in the lower layers of Cetatea 2, of *Cețuia* from Cărlomănești and, possibly, at Costișa (Table 1).

²⁰ This term designates the three areas where most dwellings of the settlement were constructed, Constantinescu 2010, 47-56.

²¹ Constantinescu 2010, 87-201, pl. 198.

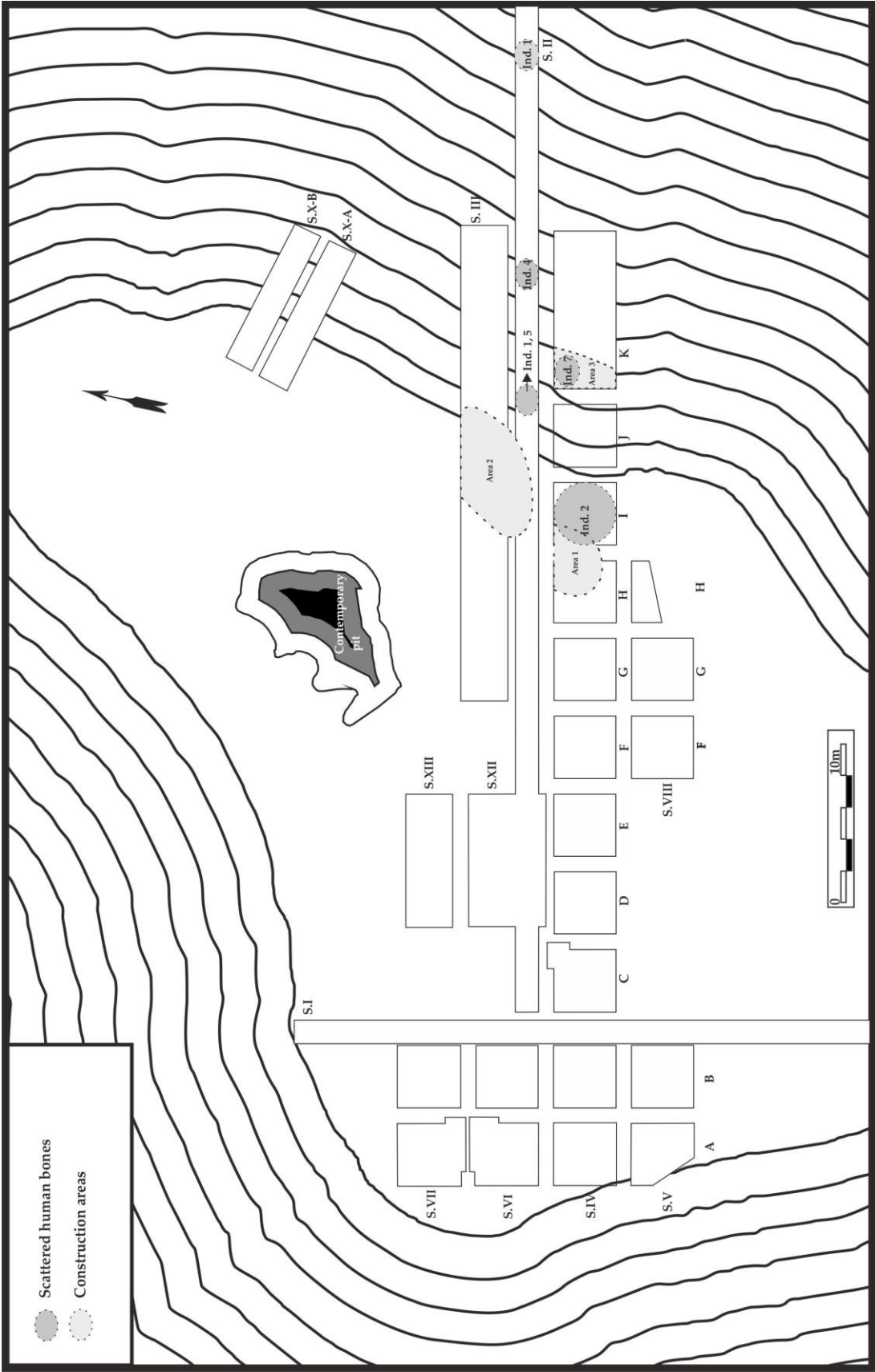


Fig. 1. Năeni-Zănoaga. The general plan of the excavations from Cetatea 2 and the areas where the human bones were found.

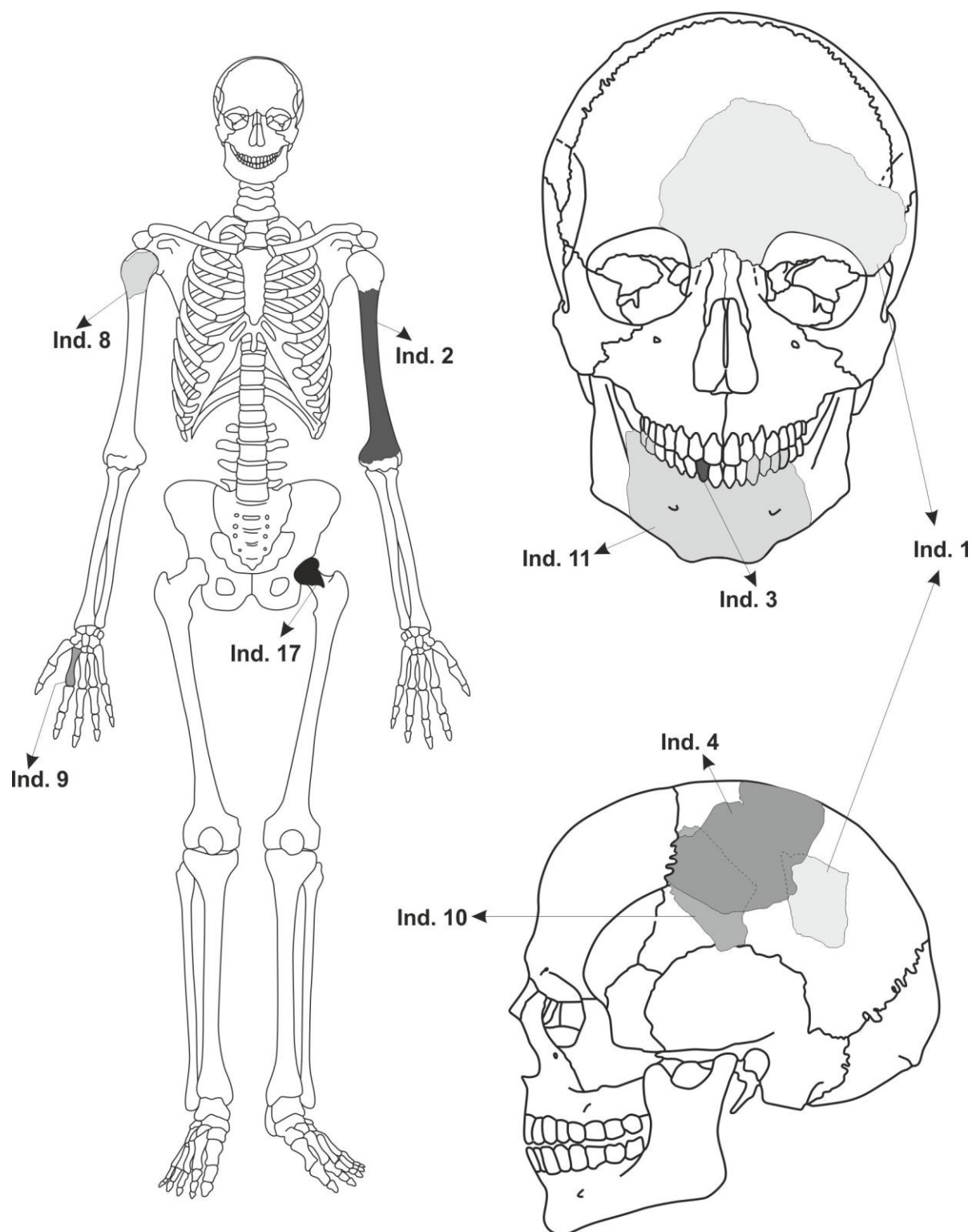


Fig. 2. Parts of the human skeleton representing the analysed finds.

At Costișa, the human bones ascribed to the Monteoru pottery layer were found in a massive, approximatively circular structure that contained large quantities of rocks, potsherds, adobe, animal bones, etc.²². The purpose of this structure was probably ceremonial, perhaps even funerary, and incorporated a Costișa pottery structure²³. We could not find any data about the context and association of materials regarding the bones found at Năeni-Zănoaga Cetatea 1, Cârlo-mănești-Cețățuia and Sărata Monteoru (Tables 1-2).

Table 2. Context of scattered human bones finds from Monteoru pottery sites.

No.	Context	Relation with the construction areas	No.	Context	Relation with the construction areas
Ind. 1	layer	deposition outside constructions	Ind. 10	-	?
Ind. 2	layer?	on/nearby constructions	Ind. 11	-	?
Ind. 3	layer?	deposition outside constructions	Ind. 12	-	?
Ind. 4	layer	deposition outside constructions	Ind. 13	-	?
Ind. 5	layer	deposition outside constructions	Ind. 14	-	?
Ind. 6	-	?	Ind. 15	-	?
Ind. 7	layer	close to a special stone structure	Ind. 16	layer	inside a special stone structure
Ind. 8	-	close to a special stone structure	Ind. 17	layer	inside a special stone structure
Ind. 9	-	close to a special stone structure			

Therefore, we do not have any archaeological (association with other archaeological materials, with various constructions, structures, etc.) or very detailed anthropological data.

OSTEOLOGICAL MATERIAL

58.82% of the scattered human bones were available for an anthropological analysis²⁴. Based on the texture and estimated age of death, we determined that the 12 scattered bones available for analysis (Table 1, Individuals 1-4; 8-11; 16-17) belonged to 10 individuals. Given their state of fragmentation and absence of field data, it is not credible (except in the case of Individual 1, Fig. 3/1a-d) to assign several fragments to a single individual.

The frontal bone fragment designated Individual 1, restored during analysis (Fig. 3/1a), and the parietal fragment (Fig. 3/1.c-d) belong to the same individual. The missing part of the parietal bone could not be identified in the corresponding batch of materials.

The parietal bone fragment designated Individual 4 is exfoliated around the parietal eminence on the exocranial surface (Fig. 4).

Some fragments were torn or broken during the archaeological excavations, but fragments torn in ancient times, like in the case of Individuals 1, 4 and 10 (Fig. 3/1; 4), could be restored, indicating that osteological materials may have been larger, but fragmented *post-mortem*.

The analysed bones are in a good state of preservation, without major taphonomic alterations. The bones were affected by vegetation roots and lime deposits in the tears, as most of the breakage occurred *post-mortem*.

²² Popescu, Băjenaru 2008b, 34.

²³ Popescu, Băjenaru 2008a, 5-6, 10-11.

²⁴ Epiphyseal synostosis was used to estimate the age of the sub-adult bones (Byers 2005; Baker et al. 2005), together with the general appearance of the preserved fragments; we compared the cranial fragments with the craniums of determined age from the osteological collection of "Fr. I. Rainer" Institute, Bucharest. The age of adult bones was established based on dental attrition and on obliteration of cranial sutures (Brothwell 1981, Byers 2005), while sex was determined based on the cranial morphology and on the general appearance of the postcranial skeleton (White 1991). To determine the sex of Ind. 9, we used Troy Case, Ross (2007, tab. 1 A-B), and for Ind. 11 (Buikstra, Uberlaker 1994, 20, fig. 4). Pathology was determined using Ortner's method (2003).

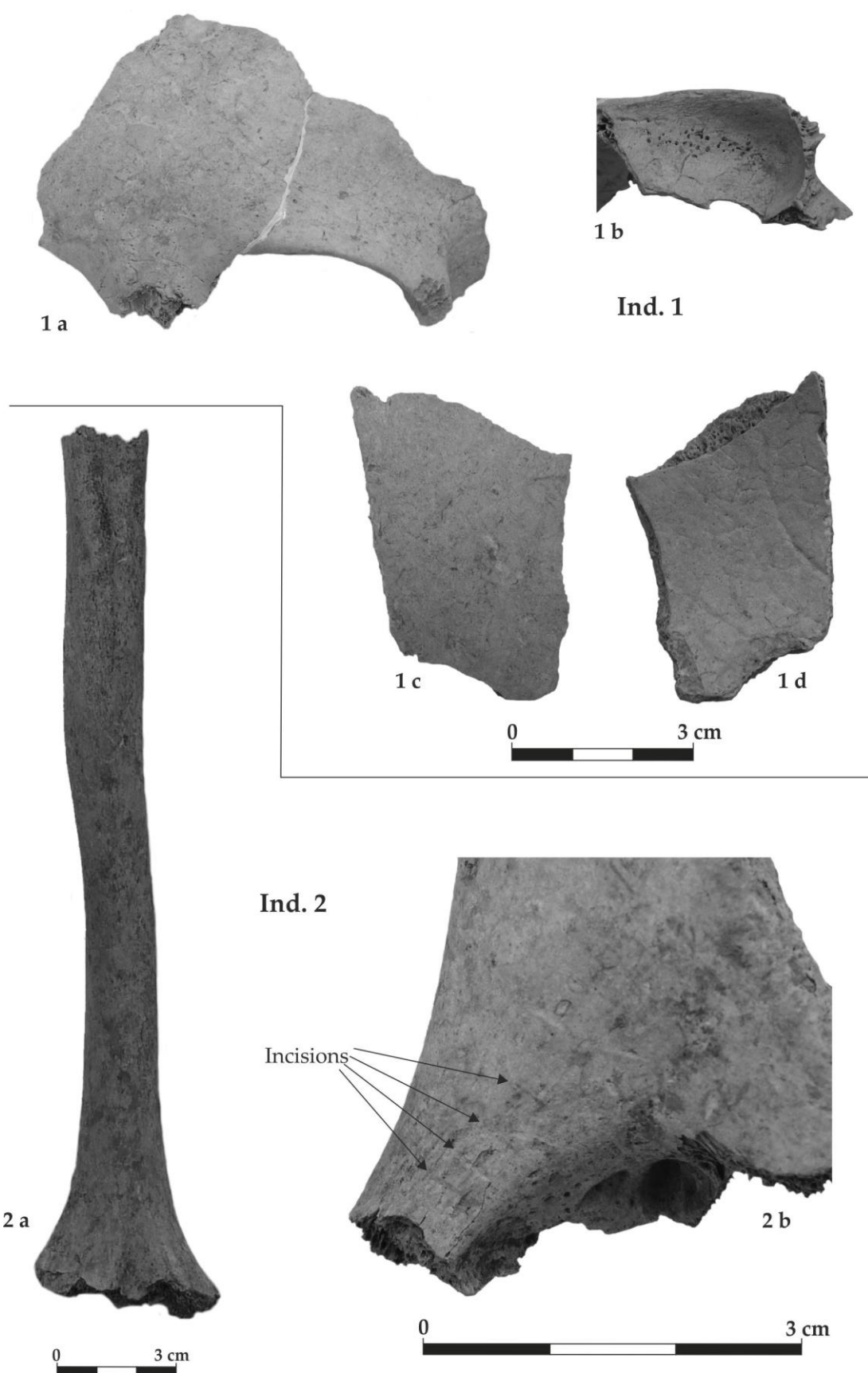


Fig. 3. 1. a-d. Individual 1, Năeni-Zănoaga Cetatea 2; 2. A-b. Individual 2, Năeni-Zănoaga Cetatea 2.

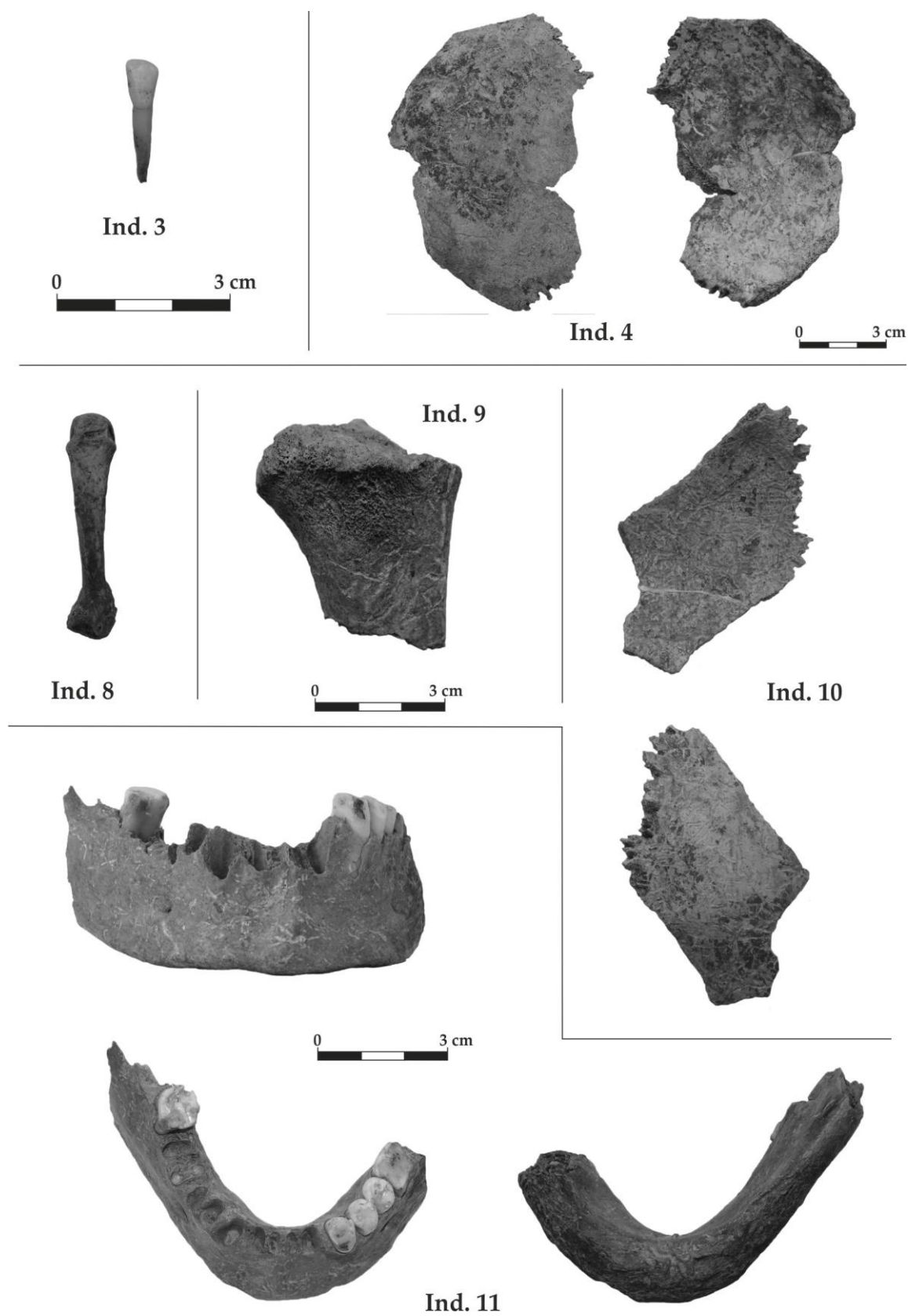


Fig. 4. Individuals 3-4, Năeni-Zănoaga Cetatea 2; Individuals 8-10, Năeni-Zănoaga Cetatea 1; Individual 11, Cărlomănești-Cetățuia.

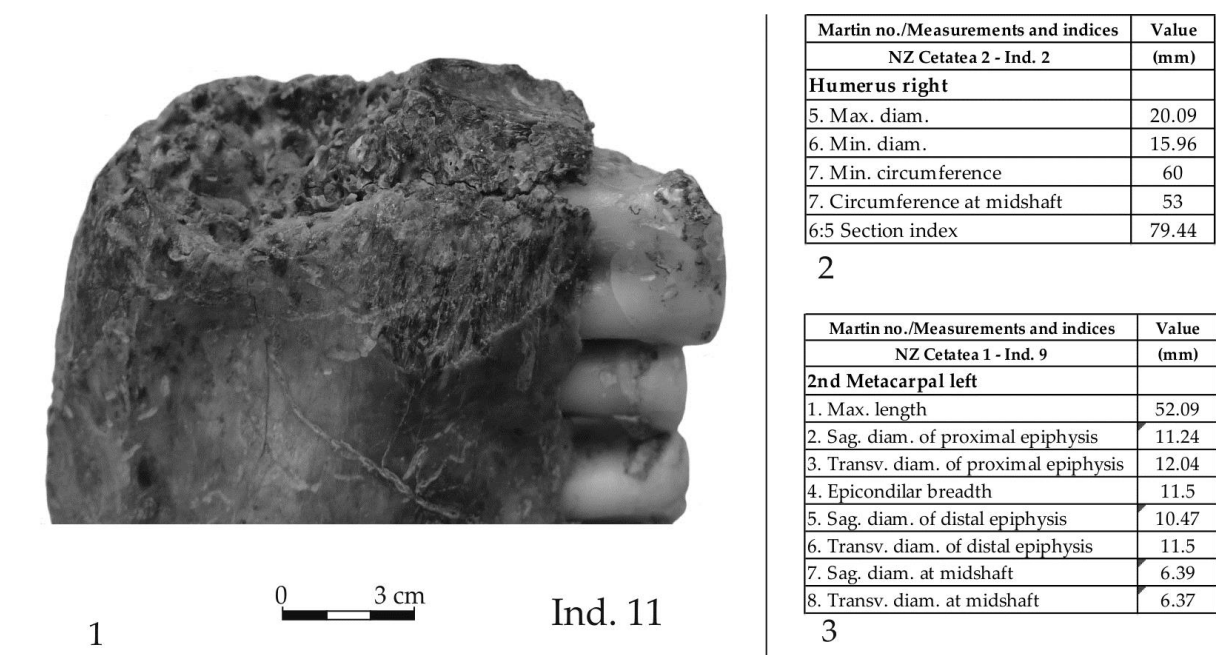


Fig. 5. 1. Individual 1, Cărlomănești-Cetățuia; 2. Measurements Individual 2, Năeni-Zănoaga Cetatea 2; 3. Measurements Individ 9, Năeni-Zănoaga Cetatea 1.

Sex and age

On the whole, the individuals subject to the anthropological analysis appear to be predominantly female and indicate a possible selection for deposition, by biological age (Table 3). The observations of archaeologists/archaeozoologists²⁵ on the other identified fragments (most of them adults, one of them – Individual 15 – possibly female) support this theory (Table 1).

Table 3. Demographic data of the analyzed individuals.

Age at Death	Males	Females	Undeterminable	Total	%
<i>Sub-adults</i>	0	0	3	3	30.00
<i>Adultus</i>	1	3	3	7	70.00
TOTAL	1	3	6	10	100%

The absence of *infans I* and mature/senile individuals, as well as the predominance of skeleton fragments of teenagers and adults (up to 40 years old) may be clues to the existence of a selection pattern, even if restricted only to the sites at Năeni-Zănoaga, Cărlomănești and Costișa (the only sites where materials were also submitted to anthropological analysis). However, we need to take into consideration the small size of the studied sample. The boxes with osteologic material were only partially examined by anthropologists, and the bones were the result of a double selection: on site and in the storage process. In general, during the archaeological survey, large bones were selected (which could provide an explanation for the absence of *infans* individuals), while older stored osteological material in museums was removed over time to make room for more recent research material.

²⁵ Although these observations are not based on a methodology for identification or description of the material; the human bones were not even illustrated.

Represented anatomical parts

Among the represented anatomical parts, cranial and upper limb fragments make up the majority. The absence of fragments from the axial skeleton (ribs, vertebrae, hip bones) might be the result of both pronounced degradation due to natural agents of such fragile anatomical parts and the above-mentioned selection method. However, we also found a small number of lower limb fragments (the longest and strongest bones in the body). It is also interesting to mention the predominance of bone segments from the left side of the skeleton (Table 1). Even if we take into consideration the subjectivity of the archaeological selection, the constant recurrence of fragmented anatomical parts from a certain side of the skeleton may still point to the existence of practical criteria, with possible symbolic implications, of the osteological material selected for deposition/disposal.

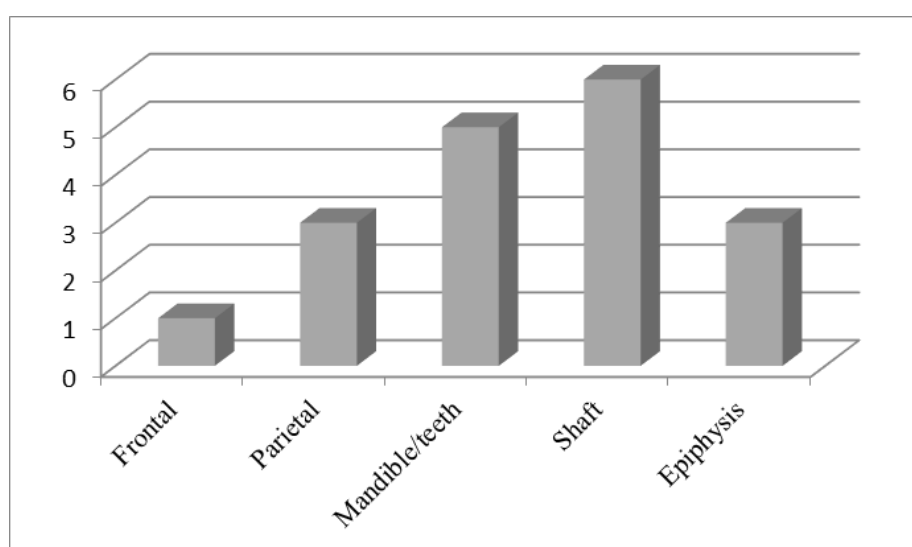


Table 4. Anatomical segments of the recovered bones.

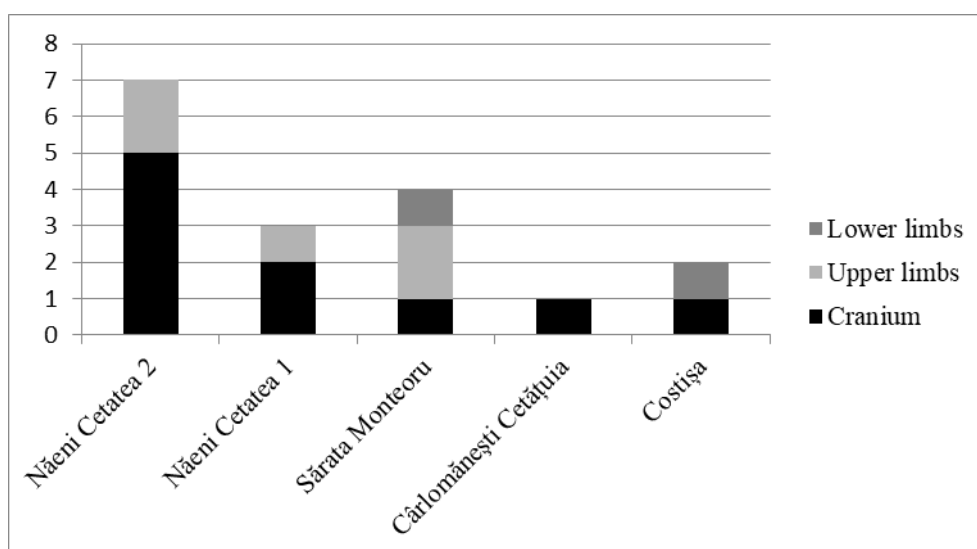


Table 5. Distribution of identified anatomical parts by site.

The distribution chart of the represented anatomical parts by site (Table 5) visibly shows the predominance of cranial and upper limbs. The same type of bones was found in both sectors of Năeni-Zănoaga site, even though the type of archaeological deposition and chronological dating are different in each of the sectors²⁶.

All 18 mentioned or analyzed osteological fragments from 17 individuals are more or less fragmented. Except for the teeth and metacarpal II (Individual 9, Fig. 4), all bones found had been fragmented anciently. The cranium is represented by the frontal and parietal bones, three mandible fragments and two teeth. The long bones are represented only by fragments of diaphysis, the metaphysis of a humerus (Individual 8) and the proximal epiphysis of a radius (Individual 15) (Table 1).

Changes of bone surface

The humerus of Individual 2 (Fig. 5/2) exhibits at least 4 transversal lines (incisions?) on the diaphysis, 2.5-4 mm apart from each other, occurred *peri-* or *post-mortem*. Since there are no signs of animal gnawing²⁷, it is possible they were made by cutting with/applying pressure on with a sharp object (Fig. 3/2b).

A series of *post-mortem* changes are visible to the mandible (Individual 11), on the left side, between the mental foramen and the oblique line, and at the level of the oblique line on the right side. The mandible probably belongs to a male, age 33-45, considering the dental attrition²⁸. On its entire lower side, the mandible is strongly pigmented black and dark brown, due to exposure to fire, at low temperatures (approx. 200-300° C)²⁹. The inferior side of the bone is also exfoliated, and the mental protuberance of the left side is smooth and polished (Fig. 4). The first molars also suffered *peri-* or *post-mortem* tears due to strong collision of teeth or to perpendicular blows on it. The visible striations on the posterior side of the mandible of Individual 11, at the level of the left side breakage seem to indicate that the bone still preserved some organic substances at the time of fragmentation (Fig. 5/1). The femoral head from Costișa (Ind. 17, Fig. 2) also presented some burning marks, but no details are given regarding the extension of the burn or the time of occurrence (*anti-*, *peri-* or *post-mortem*)³⁰.

Pathology

The cranium of Individual 1 exhibits slight signs of *cribra orbitalia* (Fig. 3/1b), while Individual 11 has slight deposits of calculus on the lingual surface of the teeth.

DISCUSSIONS

We have more detailed data only for part of the bones found at Năeni-Zănoaga. Most of the bones were excavated in the immediate vicinity of the construction areas at Cetatea 2, while at Cetatea 1 the bones were identified among the rocks of a special anthropic structure³¹. It should be mentioned the preference, in the whole sample, for depositing certain skeleton segments (cranium, upper limbs and, less frequently, lower limbs), highly fragmented (in

²⁶ Constantinescu 2010; Vasilescu 2014.

²⁷ White, Folkens 2005, 55-57.

²⁸ Brothwell 1981, 72, fig. 3.9.

²⁹ Wahl 2008, 150, table 9.1.

³⁰ Soficaru 2008, 56.

³¹ Vasilescu 2014, 55-94.

general, *post-mortem*), parts of the frontal, mandible, parietal and diaphysis (less frequently epiphyses) of limbs. The biological ages of these individuals range from 14 to 40, the majority aged 14 to 30. At least three of the individuals exhibit signs of possible *peri-* or *post-mortem* anthropic intervention that fragmented and burned the bones³².

A “practical” interpretation of these finds is that the fragments came from disturbed graves from inside the settlement or in its proximity³³. Nevertheless, the excavations on Cetatea 1 and 2 plateaus and the surveys on the surrounding hills did not lead to the find of other funerary complexes. The selection of deposited bones, their main presence in early layers (Zn. Ia-b), near construction areas (Cetatea 2) and among rocks (Cetatea 1), all suggest deliberate rather than accidental deposition. A similar situation can be argued for the finds in the Monteoru pottery layer at Costișa, even though the earlier burials uncovered in the settlement may have been disturbed by structures with Monteoru pottery³⁴.

The osteological material finds do not provide clear indications on how these bone fragments ended up in the above-mentioned archaeological contexts. We can assume only for Individual 11 that the fragmentation and firing of the mandible and the polishing of its lower side occurred shortly after the individual’s death. We can thus speculate that this was part of the preparation process of this specific anatomical segment. We could further speculate that the incisions on the humerus (Individual 2), in the cartilage area, are the signs of an intervention consisting of cutting the joints and removing the muscle tissue in order to pull out the forearm, immediately after death. Nevertheless, the large majority of these osteological fragments appear to have been selected after the decomposition of the body – either outdoors or through interventions in the graves³⁵. Signs of practice of manipulation of buried skeletons were also found in other Monteoru cemeteries. At Căndești, stone rings or graves with steps along the sides of the pit are mentioned, with craniums deposited beside some of the skeletons. However, the selective publication and the absence of anthropological analysis render difficult the proper understanding of such depositions³⁶. At Pietroasa Mică, in the Late Monteoru necropolis, a human molar is mentioned in grave 50, which could also be the result of *post-mortem* manipulation of the skeleton³⁷. However, the current data is incomplete and insufficient to firmly support any anthropophagy-related theories.

An apparently special case is the complex of *Poiana Scorușului* from Sărata Monteoru, largely described in a series of studies³⁸. The complex is a massive, burnt stone construction, with remains of fireplaces, adobe, animal bones, pottery, as well as bone, antler and stone artefacts. There is also the mention of “human bones, sometimes parts of the body in anatomical

³² We maintain the observation that most osteological fragments were found by accident after the completion of archaeological surveys. Therefore, it is possible that this is only the result of the archaeologists’ selection rather than an archaeological reality.

³³ See, for instance, M1/93 triple grave at Năeni *Zănoaga* Cetatea 2 (Motzoi Chicideanu, Șandor Chicideanu 1997) and the sub-adult grave at Cărlomănești *Cetățuia* (Oancea et al. 1976).

³⁴ Popescu, Băjenaru 2008b.

³⁵ Research at Cărlomănești *La Arman* necropolis revealed the existence of graves with Early Monteoru pottery, where interventions occurred subsequent to primary burials, consisting of moving the individuals together with the inventory. This could also be the cause behind the disappearance of certain anatomical parts (Motzoi Chicideanu et al. 2012, 48-49).

³⁶ Florescu 1978, 97-136; 1980, 73-88; Florescu, Florescu 1983, 112-123.

³⁷ Oancea 1981, 190.

³⁸ Zaharia, Bârză 1999, 41-58; Motzoi Chicideanu 2003, 361-378; Zaharia 2007, 75-93.

position, together with broken pottery. We could distinguish two special graves, where bones appear to form a skeleton, with two broken pottery vessels". This entire complex was considered to be related to the "burials from this period"³⁹. The successive paving of this structure "consolidated the land to elevate it, or served as a place for cremation of bodies"⁴⁰. It was also considered that some of the skeleton parts had "remained there from previous incinerations"⁴¹ and that the "pyre was used both as a place for incineration and burial"⁴². Another interpretation was that it was a "special layout, probably funerary in nature", situated outside the funerary and inhabited areas, "a Totenhaus/funerary house, in which it was not, however, the corpse of the main character of the ceremony that was deposited, but rather some adjacent burials and potential sacrifices"⁴³.

In the context of the scattered human bones mentioned in this paper, the presence of skeleton segments or scattered bones at *Poiana Scoruşului* no longer appears an exceptional instance either for Monteoru culture or for Bronze Age north of the Danube⁴⁴. Leaving aside the size and massiveness of the structure, from the strict perspective of the context of deposition (stone structures with remains of adobe, fireplaces, pottery, animal bones, etc.), the structure at *Poiana Scoruşului* seems similar to the structures at Năeni-Zănoaga Cetatea 1 and Costişa⁴⁵, where human bone fragments were excavated inside or in the vicinity of the settlements.

Though fewer than the burials inside settlements, there are also some instances of scattered human bones in Bronze Age settlements, close in time and space to the described findings. At Siliştea, Neamţ County, in a settlement with Costişa and Monteoru pottery, in S I, cassette 10, complex 2, a human bone is mentioned, under a large structure made of sandstone slabs. In a pottery vessel from this complex, small potsherds were found together with firing pigments, soil and "small-size human bone fragments, with traces of firing"⁴⁶. At Costişa, Neamţ County, several scattered human bone fragments (parietal, scapula and left coxal bone) were identified in a Costişa pottery pit on plateau B⁴⁷. At Păuleni-Dâmbu Cetăţii, besides a series of skeletons in anatomical position beneath dwelling 7, near which a newborn's grave was excavated, in the complex L.7a, a mandible and a cranium fragment were found together with animal bones and Ciomortan pottery⁴⁸. In 2001-2002, in complex 14, two human crania were found in an oval-shaped pit; in the same pit, under a whole pottery vessel, a human skeleton was unearthed⁴⁹.

It should also be mentioned the presence of scattered human bones in pits with Late Monteoru pottery in the necropolis from Cărlomăneşti *La Arman*. The pits could be part of a

³⁹ Nestor 1953, 79-81.

⁴⁰ Nestor, Zaharia 1955, 507.

⁴¹ Nestor, Zaharia 1955, 507.

⁴² Zaharia, Bârză 1999, 55.

⁴³ Motzoi Chicideanu 2003, 374.

⁴⁴ Motzoi Chicideanu 2003, 374.

⁴⁵ The stone and Monteoru pottery structure at Costişa was also attributed a possible funerary role, Popescu, Băjenaru 2008b, 34.

⁴⁶ Bolohan, Munteanu 2001, 46; Bolohan et al. 2001, 229, nr. 189, pl. 61.

⁴⁷ These remains belonged to two adults (one female, one male) and one *infans*, Popescu, Băjenaru 2008b, 31-34; Soficaru 2008, 56-69, fig. 13.

⁴⁸ Comşa 2000, 173; Căvruc, Rotea 2000, 156; V. Căvruc 2005, 87.

⁴⁹ Căvruc, Buzea 2002, 43.

Monteoru pottery settlement, subsequent to the burials. In this case, however, it is very likely that the human osteological fragments came from graves disturbed by these structures⁵⁰.

At Derșida, in grave 2, layer 1, a cranium in a pit is mentioned, without any inventory⁵¹. In the Tei pottery layer from Popești, three human bone fragments are mentioned: one from a mature individual and the other two from a child under 10 years of age⁵². At Șimleul Silvaniei *Observator*, in a Late Bronze pit, one calvaria fragment is mentioned⁵³. At Tîream *Kendereshalom*, grave 1, 1.10 m deep, contained one cranium, without any other inventory, ascribed to Otomani culture based on the comparison with the rest of the graves in the settlement⁵⁴.

We should also mention the five craniums and human osteological fragments deposited in a niche in the wall of the cave at Izbucu Topliței, along with several human skeletons in anatomical position, dated to the Early Bronze Age⁵⁵.

Another special case, possibly related to the manipulation of human bones, is the cranium of an 8-8.6 months subadult, found in an urn with a lid, coal pigments, adobe and pebbles. The find at Site A1_1 – at km 19+900-20+620 on the motorway, Șagu, Arad County, appears to be a secondary deposition in a settlement dated to the Late Bronze Age⁵⁶.

Similar practices, though poorly documented, are mentioned at Carei-*Bobalt*, Satu Mare County, where, in the course of systematic surveys during 1995 campaign, in the upper layer with Otomani pottery of the settlement, “*part of a human skeleton*” was found⁵⁷.

CONCLUSIONS

Though rather small, very fragmented and subject to an involuntary selection in the course of and after the field research, the importance of the osteological lot described here resides, at the current stage of research, in its mere existence. The finds of graves inside Monteoru culture settlements have been a marginal discussion topic due to their exceptional character and absence of terms of comparison, and the possibility of finding scattered human bones in a domestic context did not represent one of the priorities of archaeological research. The presence of these bones indicates that, at least in the case of the mentioned settlements, the strict distinction between funerary and inhabited areas in Monteoru culture settlements and necropolises should be more nuanced.

The symbolic relation of the family-group-community with the deceased, conveyed through the funerary ritual and the deposition of the deceased in a specially selected area outside the community, may take new meanings with the presence of human remains among the inhabited structures.

The discovery of scattered human bones and graves inside settlements (not necessarily Bronze Age settlements) gave rise to various interpretations, more or less related to the context of their find and to the analysis of the bones. In general, such bones were assigned a

⁵⁰ Motzoi Chicideanu et al. 2004, 15-38.

⁵¹ Chidioșan 1980, 23-26.

⁵² Haimovici 1963, 154.

⁵³ Pop et al. 2010, nr. 74, 178-179.

⁵⁴ Nemeti 1969, 64.

⁵⁵ Halasi, Emodi, 1985, 232-234.

⁵⁶ Pascu Hurezan et al. 2011, 236-237; Andreica 2012, 3-8.

⁵⁷ Nemeti 1996, 23.

ritualistic role⁵⁸; anthropophagy-related practices⁵⁹; trophy display⁶⁰; foundation sacrifices⁶¹; punitive sacrifices⁶²; funerary finds⁶³; funerary ritual engaging the archaeological complex (especially dwellings) where the bones were found⁶⁴; a symbolic representation of the entire body, reintegrated in the social space of the community⁶⁵.

The variety of interpretation is directly related to the particularities of the deposition, the anatomical segments and the treatment they were subject to. Considering the incompleteness of archaeological and anthropological data available to us, any of these interpretations might apply to the finds presented in this paper. Without favouring any of them, we think that the main element that should be highlighted is the intentionality of the intervention on the scattered human bones, the selection and deposition in a domestic context, regardless them being remains of ancestors, trophies, sacrifices or food waste. The presence of scattered human bones in several Bronze Age settlements, closely related chronologically, indicates that this is not an accidental phenomenon, circumscribed to a "cultural area", but rather a phenomenon highlighted by the new finds or the publication of older finds. New such examples can further our understanding of the method, motives, bone and individual selection criteria for burial, the contexts and their significance, the social context of exposure and deposition of these individuals.

⁵⁸ Nica, Nicolăescu-Plopșor 1975, 17.

⁵⁹ Necrasov 1965, 32-33; Nicolăescu-Plopșor, Wolski 1974, 5-7; Bolomey 1983, 169; Lazăr, Soficaru 2005, 309-311.

⁶⁰ Nicolăescu-Plopșor, Wolski 1974, 7.

⁶¹ Dumitrescu 1965, 224.

⁶² Nicolăescu-Plopșor, Wolski 1975, 135.

⁶³ Ion 2008, 123-124.

⁶⁴ Dragoman, Oanță 2007, 115-118.

⁶⁵ Chapman 2000, 132-146.

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