

## A PIT WITH CHILD BONE REMAINS FROM THE BRONZE AGE SETTLEMENT AT AIUD-GROAPA DE GUNOI (ALBA COUNTY, ROMANIA)

---

Raluca BURLACU-TIMOFTE

Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania

e-mail: raluburlacu@gmail.com

Gabriel BĂLAN

National Museum of Union, Alba Iulia, Romania

e-mail: liviugabrielbalan@yahoo.com

**Abstract:** This article refers to a situation encountered in one of the pits belonging to a Wietenberg settlement: the discovery of scattered child bone remains. The excavation of this site was possible due to the construction of the highway ramp to link the Sebeş–Turda segment with the E81 road. Rescue archaeological excavations of the Bronze Age (Wietenberg culture) settlement were carried out in 2015 in the Northern part of Aiud city, near the former landfill site. In the settlement, 31 features (surface dwellings, hearths and pits) were researched. Along with these structures, artifacts such as ceramic vessels, miniature clay chariots and wheels, loom weights, stick-heads, stone hammers, axes and grinders and bronze objects were found. The few human bones were found in a pit (Cx. 1) dug near one of the dwellings (Cx. 5). They were dismembered and scattered through the potsherds belonging to different vessels. The osteological analysis concluded that the bone remains belong to a perinatal child. This discovery brings into discussion some subjects which lately have gained importance in the field of archaeology, such as the deposition of human bones in pits inside the settlements, disarticulated human bone remains and the funerary treatment of children. At the same time, the archaeology of children started to grow in importance since scholars became more interested in social roles of people at different ages. Based on osteological discoveries, one can analyze the social implication of child remains deposition in such a feature, as long as a difference is made between the body of a child and that of an adult in terms of which funerary treatment the society used to apply.

**Rezumat:** Acest articol are ca scop prezentarea unei situații întâlnite în aşezarea Wietenberg de la Aiud, şi anume descoperirea unor oase umane aparţinând unui copil, care nu sunt în poziţie anatomică, împrăştiate într-o groapă. Aşezarea din epoca bronzului de la Aiud a fost cercetată în anul 2015 ca urmare a diagnosticului făcut de arheologi de la Muzeul Naţional al Unirii din Alba Iulia în vederea construirii tronsonului de autostradă Sebeş-Turda. Situl a fost identificat în zona în care urmează să fie construită breteaua de legătură între drumul E81 şi autostradă, în partea de Nord a oraşului Aiud, în apropierea fostei gropi de gunoi. Aici au fost identificate şi cercetate un număr de 31 de complexe care aparţin culturii Wietenberg: locuinţe de suprafaţă, vetre şi gropi. În aceste complexe au fost descoperite diferite artefacte, cum ar fi: vase ceramice, care şi roţi miniaturale din ceramică, căţei de vatră, capete de băţ, ciocane, topoare şi râşniţe din piatră, precum şi câteva obiecte din bronz. Cele câteva oase umane au fost identificate în una dintre gropi, numerotată Cx. 1, fiind amplasată în apropierea locuinţei Cx. 5. Oasele nu se aflau în poziţie anatomică, acestea fiind împrăştiate în groapă, printre cioburile care aparţin mai multor vase ceramice care au diferite forme şi decoruri. Prin intermediul analizelor osteologice s-a stabilit că ele aparţin unui copil de vârstă peri natală, această situaţie arătându-ne atitudinea comunităţii faţă de nou născuţi. Această descoperire naşte în acelaşi timp alte discuţii care au început să ia amploare în ultimul timp în domeniul arheologiei: diferenţierea socială a copilului şi a nou-născutului în cadrul comunităţii din care făcea parte prin prisma tratamentului funerar. Totodată, odată cu dezvoltarea ramurii arheologiei copilului, bazată pe descoperirile funerare, se poate face o diferenţiere între tratamentul funerar aplicat copiilor dintr-o anumită comunitate şi adulţilor, ca mijloc de diferenţiere între categoriile sociale.

**Keywords:** Bronze Age, Wietenberg culture, settlement, pit, child bone remains.

**Cuvinte cheie:** epoca bronzului, cultura Wietenberg, aşezare, groapă, oase de copil.

## INTRODUCTION

The Bronze Age settlement was discovered in 2014 as the result of archaeological diagnosis conducted by a team from the National Museum of Union Alba Iulia, due to the construction of the highway ramp to link the Sebeş–Turda segment to the E81 road. Geographically, the site is placed in the flood plain of River Mureş from Turda-Alba Depression, which is located between the Apuseni Mountains and the Transylvanian Plateau (Pl. 1/1–2). The rescue excavations were carried out in 2015 near the former landfill site from the Northern part of Aiud (Pl. 1/3).

Researches highlighted the presence of a Middle Bronze Age settlement, with artefacts representative for the Wietenberg culture. The Eastern and Northern limits of the site were identified in the perimeter of the road ramp, while in South and Southwest the settlement continues outside the construction project. The orientation of the surface dwellings suggests that they were built along a watercourse tributary to Mureş, which in prehistory most likely flowed in their proximity. This small river was spotted in some trenches from the Western part of the researched area. The archaeological deposit consists of a black, loamy soil of 0.20 m up to 0.75 m thickness. The Bronze Age level was identified between 0.55 and 0.90 m depth from the nowadays stepping level. The thickness differences which occurred in the Bronze Age dwellings are a consequence of the swampy-loamy soil on which the wooden and daub dwellings were built. Towards the central area it gets thicker, up to 0.75 m, probably due to the weight of the walls and roofs of the houses.

In the settlement 31 features were identified: surface dwellings of big dimensions (some of them of 16 m length), hearths (usually placed near a corner or a wall of the building) and pits. Eight of the rectangular dwellings are built close to each other, oriented ENE–WSW (Cx. 19, Cx. 18, Cx. 17, Cx. 9, Cx. 5, Cx. 14, Cx. 15 and Cx. 16). Another dwelling (Cx. 7) was built in the Northern part of the site, outside the group we mentioned. In this feature, numerous daub fragments with prints from the logs and rods that formed the wooden structure were preserved, as well as the remains of a small, oval hearth, at 0.60 m depth. Beneath this dwelling, 7 storage pits were identified (Pl. 2/3).

## DESCRIPTION OF THE PIT WITH HUMAN REMAINS (Cx.1)

The pit has an oval shape in planum, with straight walls and flat base in section. It was dug into the sterile, gray, loamy soil, in the proximity of the dwellings Cx. 5, Cx. 9 and Cx. 7. In the filling of the pit there were numerous potsherds belonging to several vessels of different dimensions and shapes, animal bones, shells and human bones. The few human bones were disarticulated, being scattered through the other materials. Dimensions: 1.03 m/1.21 m diameter; 0.42 m depth (Pl. 3).

## OSTEOLOGICAL OBSERVATIONS

In the pit Cx.1 there were discovered several bone fragments both of animal and human origin. Among them, there were identified two diaphysis fragments that cannot be attributed to a human with certainty. The ones which are certain to be human are a left femur and a right ilium belonging to a child. The age was determined

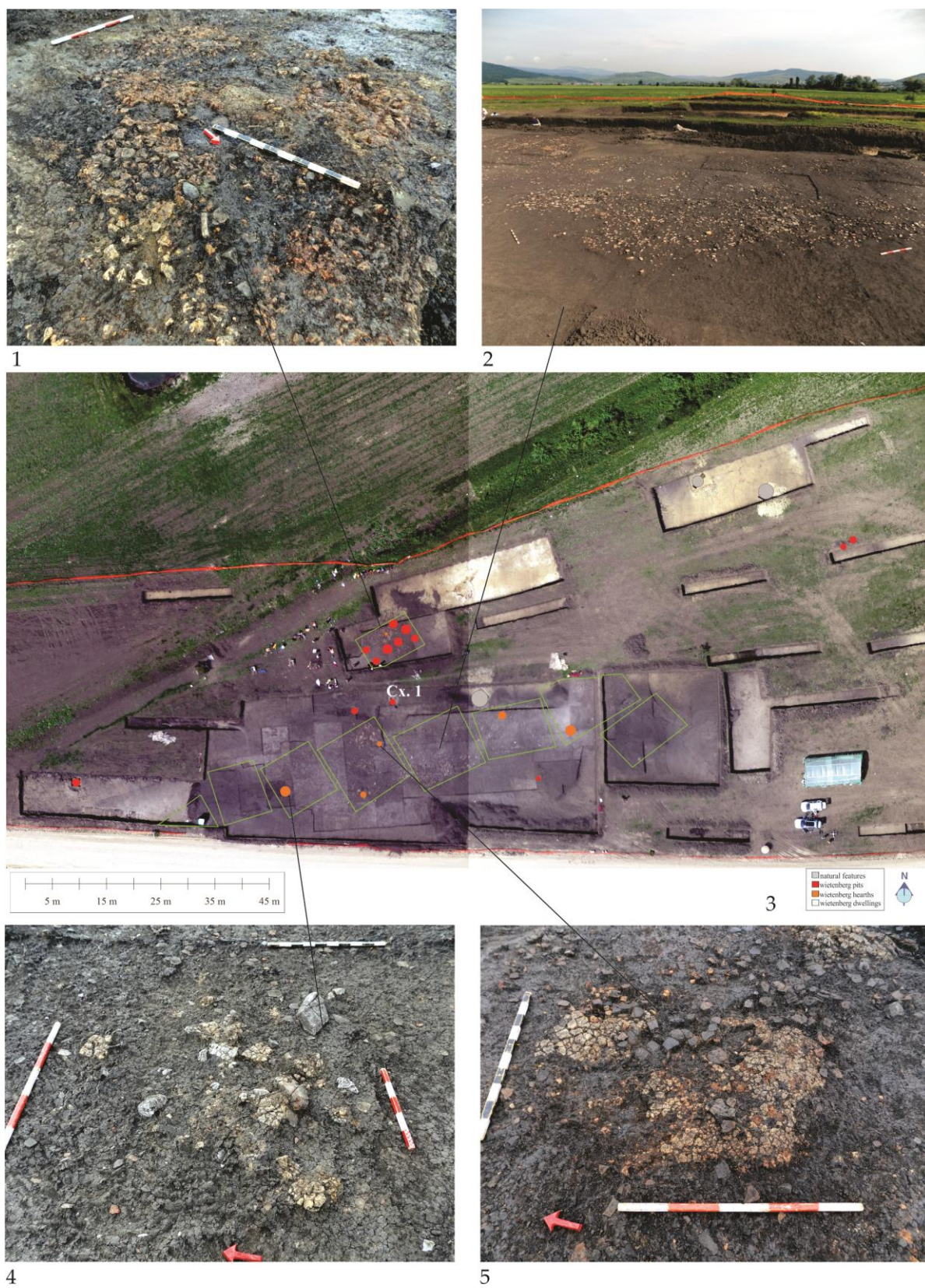
on the basis of the femur length (79.77 mm), which means that it had a perinatal age. The surface of the two osteological elements did not reveal any pathology<sup>1</sup> (Pl. 3/6).



Pl. 1. 1. Location of the site in the Carpathian Basin (Google Earth image); 2. Location of the site in Alba Iulia-Turda Depression (Google Earth image); 3. Location of the site in the flooding area of River Mureș and the nearby villages (Google Earth image).

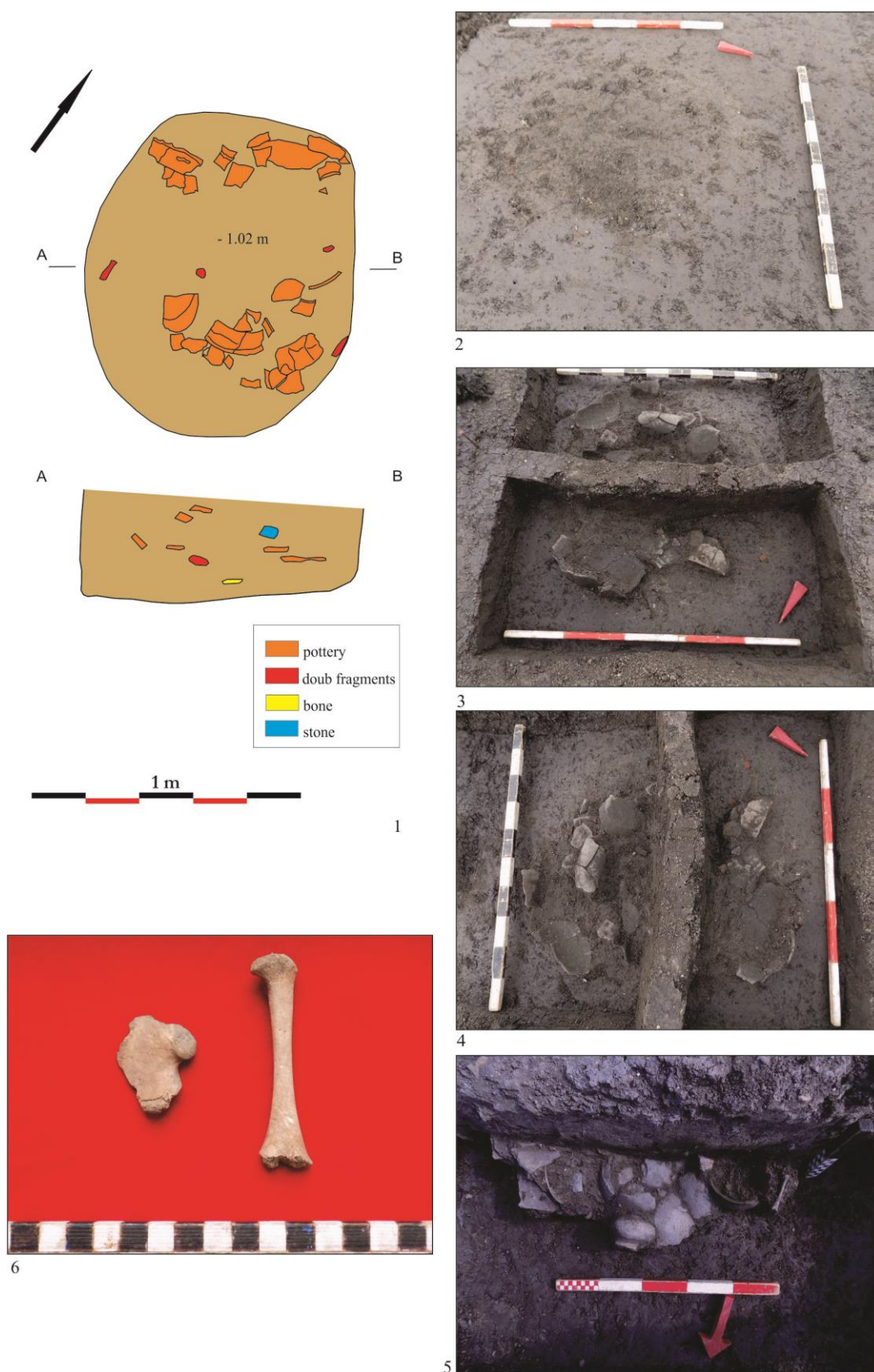
<sup>1</sup> Osteological observations made by Claudia Radu, Molecular Biology Center, Interdisciplinary Research Institute in Bio-Nano Sciences, "Babeș-Bolyai" University, Cluj-Napoca.





Pl. 2. General view of the settlement with the features near Cx.1: 1. Surface dwelling Cx. 7; 2. Surface dwelling Cx. 9; 3. Plan of the settlement; 4. Feature Cx.14b; 5. Feature Cx. 5b.





Pl. 3. Feature Cx. 1: 1. Plan and section of the pit Cx. 1 (scale: 1:20); 2-5. Photographs of feature Cx.1; 6. Photography of human bones.

# CERAMIC INVENTORY OF THE PIT

1. Pot. Shape: slender body; inverted rim and rounded lip; immediately beneath the rim there are two small handles diametrically opposing each other, pinched from the neck; flat base. Decoration: below the rim, it has a band decorated with alveoli; at equal distance from the handles, also diametrically opposed, there are two flattened buttons. Fabric: semi-fine paste, gray color; polished. Burning: reducing firing. Dimensions: rd. - 14 cm, md. - 21 cm, h. - 22 cm<sup>2</sup> (Pl. 4/1).
2. Bowl. S.: reverted rim, short neck, semi spherical body and flat base. F.: semi-fine paste, gray color and smooth both on the interior and exterior. B.: reducing firing. Dn.: rd. - 13 cm, md. - 14 cm, h. - 6 cm (Pl. 4/3).
3. Bowl. S.: fragment from a slightly reverted rim. F.: fine paste, gray and orange color. B.: uneven firing (Pl. 4/5). Dn: rd. - 26 cm.
4. Bowl. S.: semi spherical body, reverted rim, short neck and flat base. D.: incised diagonal stitches on the rim; the shoulder is decorated with three incised horizontal rows; on the body there is a spiral wave ornamentation made by five incised lines; few white paste inlay traces can be observed on the incised lines. F.: semi-fine paste, gray, black and orange color; the exterior is polished, while the interior is smooth. B.: uneven firing. Dn.: rd. - 11.6 cm; bd. - 3.5 cm; md. - 12 cm; h. 6.2 cm (Pl. 4/2).
5. Bowl. S.: semi spherical body, reverted rim and short neck. D.: the shoulder is ornamented with a band made from two horizontal incisions between which there is a row of diagonal stitches; on the upper part of the body there is a spiral motif made from incisions in narrow band. F.: semi-fine, gray and orange color. B.: uneven firing. Dn: rd. - 20.2 cm (Pl. 4/8).
6. Pot. S.: inverted rim, rounded lip, short neck, slender body and flat base; two handles pinched from its neck and shoulder. F.: semi-fine paste, gray and black color; the interior is smooth and the exterior is polished. B.: reducing firing. Dn: rd. - 13 cm, md. - 26 cm, h. - 27 cm (Pl. 4/4).
7. Pot. S.: slender body, straight rim, rounded lip and flat base. D.: under the rim it has a band made of alveoli and below two buttons pinched from the neck. F.: coarse paste, orange color; is rough both to the interior and exterior. B.: oxidation firing. Dn: rd. - 22 cm, h. - 20 cm (Pl. 5/2).
8. Pot. S.: fragments of the neck and body. D.: the shoulder is decorated with a horizontal incised line, under which there is another horizontal row of alveoli; on the band there is also a slightly flattened button. F.: semi-fine paste; gray and black color; both the exterior and the interior are burnished. B.: reducing firing (Pl. 5/1).
9. Vessel. S.: the rim is slightly oriented towards the exterior. D.: the rim has a row of alveoli. F.: semi-fine paste and gray color. B.: reducing firing (Pl. 4/6).

---

<sup>2</sup> The abbreviations used in the description of the ceramic material from pit Cx. 1 are: S. - shape, D. - decoration; F. - fabric, B. - burning, rm. - rim diameter, md. - maximum diameter, bd. - base diameter, h. - height; Dn. - dimensions.



Pl. 4. Pottery discovered in the pit Cx. 1.

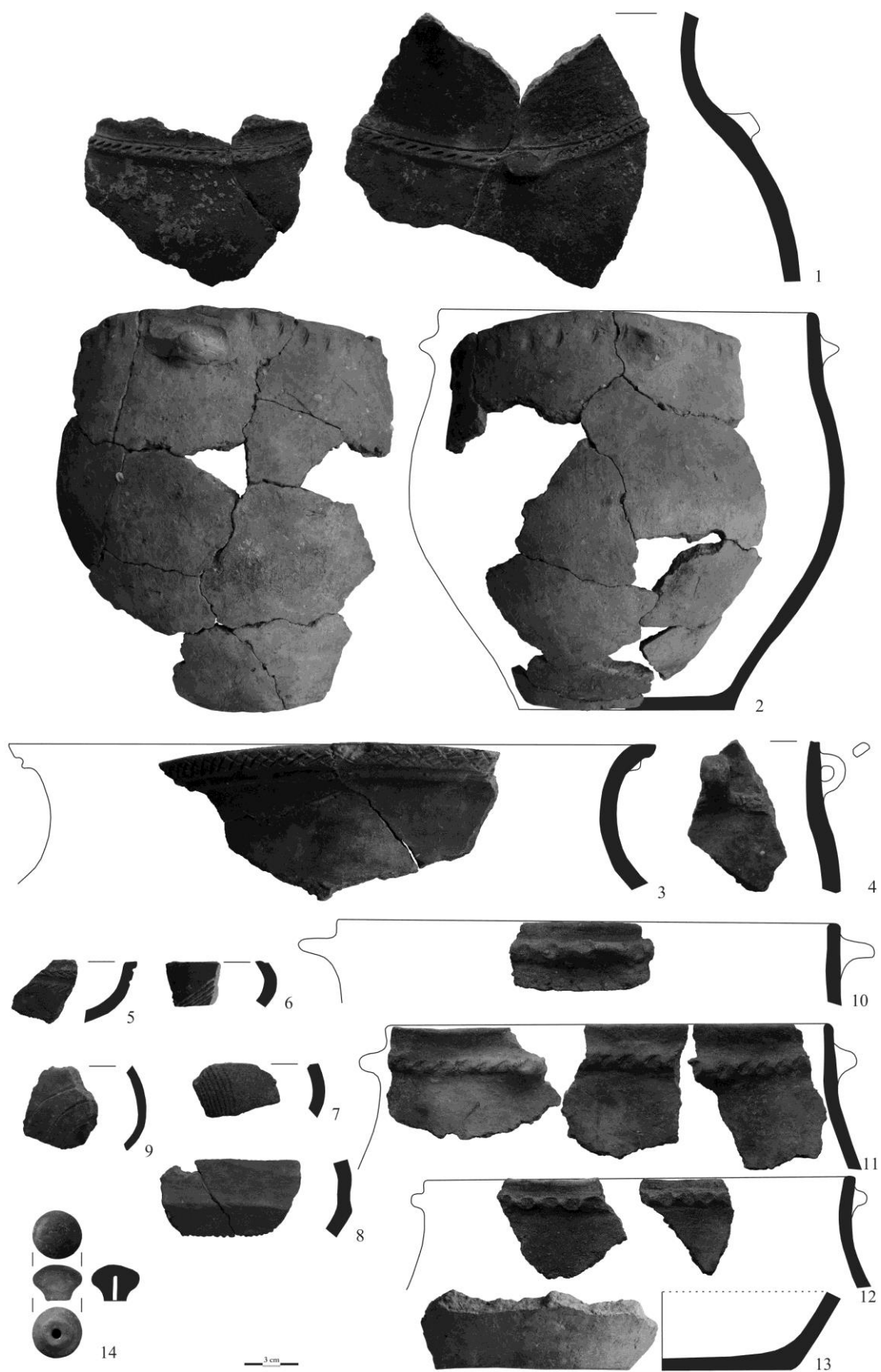


Plate 5. Pottery discovered in the pit Cx.1.



10. Vessel. S.: the rim is slightly oriented towards the exterior. F.: semi-fine paste, gray color, polished. B.: reducing firing (Pl. 4/7).
11. Pot. S.: the rim is slightly oriented towards the exterior; the neck is short but it distinguishes well from the body. D.: a horizontal channel on the rim. F.: semi-fine paste, gray color. B.: reducing firing. Dn: rd. – 24.2 cm (Pl. 4/9).
12. Vessel. S.: fragment of body. D.: spiral motif made with the technique of incision. F.: fine paste, brown (exterior) and gray (interior) color; the exterior is smooth, while the interior is rough. B.: reducing firing (Pl. 5/9).
13. Pot. S.: fragments of the neck and body; it has a small handle pinched from shoulder and stitched on the neck. D.: under the handle it has a horizontal band decorated with small diagonal incisions. F.: semi-fine paste; orange and brown color; the interior is burnished and the exterior is rough. B.: oxidation firing (Pl. 5/4).
14. Bowl. S.: flat rim. D.: on the exterior of the rim there is a row of diagonal stitches; below there is another horizontal row of cross hatched motif made from incisions; under them there is a row of diagonal stitches. F.: semi-fine paste and gray color, burnished. B.: reducing firing (Pl. 5/5).
15. Vessel. S.: body fragment. D.: five incised lines. F.: semi fine paste, black (interior) and gray (exterior) color; the interior is polished and the exterior is smooth. B.: reducing firing. (Pl. 5/6).
16. Vessel. S.: body fragment. D.: spiral motif (?) made by successive stitches. F.: semi fine paste, brown (exterior) and gray (interior) color. B.: reducing firing (Pl. 5/7).
17. Vessel. S.: body fragment. D.: diagonal grooves; in the inferior part is a horizontal row of stitches. F.: semi-fine paste, brown (exterior) and gray (interior) color; the exterior is polished, while the interior is smooth. B.: uneven firing. (Pl. 5/8).
18. Pot. S.: the reverted rim is flattened. D.: the exterior of the rim has a horizontal row of cross hatching motif realized by incisions and separated from the neck by a horizontal band. F.: semi-fine paste and gray color (with light-orange nuances); the interior is burnished while the exterior is smooth. B.: reducing firing. Dn.: rd. - 36 cm (Pl. 5/3).
19. Pot. S.: straight rim and rounded lip. D.: immediately below the rim there is a band decorated with alveoli and a button. F.: coarse paste, orange and gray color. B.: uneven firing. Dn.: rd. - 28 cm (Pl. 5/10).
20. Pot. S.: straight rim and rounded lip. D.: immediately below the rim there is a band decorated with alveoli and two buttons. F.: coarse paste, gray and orange color. B.: uneven firing. Dn.: rd. - 25 cm (Pl. 5/11).
21. Pot. S.: slightly flaring rim and rounded lip. D.: immediately below the rim there is a band decorated with alveoli. F.: coarse paste, gray, brown and orange color. B.: uneven firing. Dn.: rd. – 24.1 cm (Pl. 5/12).
22. Pot. S.: flat base; F.: coarse paste, gray and orange color. B.: uneven firing. Dn.: bd. – 14 cm (Pl. 5/13).
23. Stick-head. S.: spherical body and circular hole. F.: fine paste and dark-gray and black color. Dn: rd. – 1.57 cm; head d. – 3.2 cm; h. – 2.22 cm (Pl. 5/14).

## THE DATING OF THE PIT CX. 1 AND SETTLEMENT

The ceramic artifacts discovered at Aiud bear close analogies among the sites belonging to Wietenberg III phase<sup>3</sup>. The bronze and bone objects discovered in the settlement are specific for the Middle Bronze Age<sup>4</sup>. According to the radiocarbon data from similar sites, the Wietenberg III phase can be placed in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and the 17<sup>th</sup> century BC<sup>5</sup>.

## PERINATES IN ARCHAEOLOGY

The child bones discovered in the pit Cx. 1 at Aiud bring to our attention two aspects that can be identified in the behavior of different Bronze Age communities: on the one hand, children disposal, and on the other hand, scattered human bone remains.

Fully articulated burials are only one of many possibilities. Bodies can be interred in one place and then moved later creating a secondary burial location. They can be manually altered with extensive cultural modification such as excarnation and dismembering. Remains may be concentrated or scattered across an area. Individuals can be placed in shallow pits within habitation zones, such as garbage areas, or they may be placed in elaborately excavated pits that are lined with stone and other materials. Burials may occur within living areas (intramural) or outside of the habitation spaces (extramural)<sup>6</sup>.

The situation of secondary burials is a practice that can be discovered under different forms: piles of bones in pits or scattered<sup>7</sup>. The notion of *secondary inhumation* is used for human remains that are disarticulated and do not show any features of being a primary burial<sup>8</sup>. It refers to human remains that, after a certain period, have been moved and re-interred in the same or in a different location, but because not all the bones get to be re-inhumed, the term of secondary treatment is preferred<sup>9</sup>. The main characteristics are: selection, disarticulation and reiteration of individuals or bones in another context<sup>10</sup>.

The term *scattered bones* describes a high state of dismembering of the skeletal assemblage of which we do not know for sure whether is intentional or not, both because of the fragmented state of preservation and the fact that they do not belong to a funerary deposition.

The discovery of scattered human bones in different features from settlements raised several discussions and interpretations among scholars. They have been given a series of various meanings along time: cannibalism, ritual deposition, post-deposition funerary treatment<sup>11</sup> or accidental. In what concerns the discovery at Aiud, it can be the result of different actions that cannot be archaeologically observed: they got in the pit accidentally (brought by animals or a new pit was dug in the same place where the skeletal remains

---

<sup>3</sup> Bălan et al. 2016, 49-50.

<sup>4</sup> Bălan et al. 2016, 50-51.

<sup>5</sup> Ciugudean, Quinn 2015, 149-151, fig. 9; Németh 2015, 186-187.

<sup>6</sup> Martin et al. 2013, 123.

<sup>7</sup> Jones 2014, 8.

<sup>8</sup> Martin et al. 2013, 125.

<sup>9</sup> Jones 2014, 8-9.

<sup>10</sup> Jones 2014, 8.

<sup>11</sup> We consider accurate the theory concerning post-deposition funerary treatment, not the one about post-mortem funerary treatment, because even if this deposition is part of a ritual, it takes place after a longer time after death.

were placed, disturbing them); the perinate was thrown there as debris and as the pit was opened, the bones were scattered by animals after the decomposition of the body; they are the remains of secondary burial/treatment<sup>12</sup>.

In Wietenberg culture there were discovered some cases of disarticulated human bones, such as the skulls at Derșida<sup>13</sup>, Păuleni<sup>14</sup>, Sibișeni<sup>15</sup>, Poiana Aiudului<sup>16</sup>, the lower limbs at Oarța de Sus<sup>17</sup>, a skeleton at Bernadea without skull and the lower limbs broken and placed on the pelvis<sup>18</sup>, a disarticulated skeleton at Ampoița<sup>19</sup>. Scattered human bones belonging to individuals of all ages were discovered in other settlements of the Middle Bronze Age at Andrid<sup>20</sup>, Klárafalva<sup>21</sup>, Kiszombor<sup>22</sup> and Năeni-Zănoaga<sup>23</sup>.

Perinatal children are mentioned in the cemetery at Luduș, where, in Grave 3, there were discovered the cinerary remains of a woman and a newborn child<sup>24</sup>, the same as in Grave 36 from the cemetery at Bistrița<sup>25</sup>, while in settlements belonging to the Wietenberg culture there were not attested such finds. The understanding of perinate in comparison with foetuses and children can be approached according to certain scholars from a tripartite point of view: biological, chronological and social. The biological age is related to the physical aging of the body and is identified through the sequence of physical changes associated with human growth, maturity and senescence. The chronological age can be measured in years or months, while the social age represents the culturally constructed understanding of what constitutes age-appropriate attitudes and behavior<sup>26</sup>. S. E. Halcrow and N. Tayles present in a table the terminology used for biologic ages that can be found in literature and, according to it, the term *perinate* is generally accepted for the category we are talking about, while in earlier ones, the term *infans* was used to define the period from birth to 2 years old<sup>27</sup>. From the biological point of view, an infant is an individual aged from birth to 1 year old and includes the perinates (up

<sup>12</sup> Jones 2014, 8-9: "Secondary burial is a practice that is interpreted and carried out differently in many cultures, often creating a diverse range of deposits. What I understand to be a true secondary burial is a case in which an individual is buried, a certain amount of time elapses, bones are exhumed, and the human remains are reinterred in the same or different place. However, this definition fails to include the variety of deposits where the term secondary burial is applied, such as the scattered and piled bones that are not buried but secondarily manipulated. This secondary manipulation of human remains does not always result in reburial. Therefore, a term such as secondary treatment is preferable since it describes that bones underwent some form of treatment after their primary deposition."

<sup>13</sup> Chidioșan 1980, 23.

<sup>14</sup> Motzoi-Chicideanu 2011, 543.

<sup>15</sup> Motzoi-Chicideanu 2011, 535.

<sup>16</sup> Motzoi-Chicideanu 2011, 529.

<sup>17</sup> Motzoi-Chicideanu 2011, 529.

<sup>18</sup> Motzoi-Chicideanu 2011, 542.

<sup>19</sup> Motzoi-Chicideanu 2011, 70.

<sup>20</sup> Bader 1978, 40; Némethi 1996, 28.

<sup>21</sup> O'Shea 1996, 80.

<sup>22</sup> O'Shea 1996, 80.

<sup>23</sup> There were discovered a mandible and a molar among the habitation remains: Motzoi-Chicideanu 2011, 416.

<sup>24</sup> Berecki, 2016, 53.

<sup>25</sup> Crișan, 1970, 153.

<sup>26</sup> Ginn, Arber 1995; Gowland 2006; Sofaer 2006 b, Lewis 2007.

<sup>27</sup> Halcrow, Tayles 2008, 193-195.



to 7 days), neonates (from 7 to 28 days) and post-neonates (from 28 to 346 days) whereas the foetal category includes perinatal individuals who are older than 8 weeks in utero to birth<sup>28</sup>. Physiological age markers are not equivalent to chronological age but are merely an estimate of the physiological status of an individual<sup>29</sup>. In terms of social age, we can discuss about identity which is a cultural construct that develops starting from birth to death, but in the cases of the fetuses and perinatal children, there can be considered only the biologic identity<sup>30</sup>. While interpreting the data in terms of identity, an important aspect is the connection between the social and chronological ages<sup>31</sup>. The latest tendency of post-processual approach<sup>32</sup> by means of bioarcheology<sup>33</sup>, is to interpret and identify social aspects, attitudes and behavior on the basis of children skeletal remains from past societies. Bioarchaeology, by the interpretation of skeletal trauma on children and other traces that can be observed on the bone remains<sup>34</sup>, as well as the ethnological studies of different tribes, made 'visible' in the archaeological record this category of humans that cannot be identified through the material culture due to their economic inactivity<sup>35</sup>. This new development in the interpretation of skeletal data aims to acknowledge the role of children in past communities as a social category, to detach them from the concept of motherhood, which was for a long time the only way in which this subject was rendered, and to detect the cultural behavior towards them<sup>36</sup>. Therefore, concepts of child and childhood started to be used in close connection with the notions of age and identity with the help of the bioarchaeological studies which discuss the problems of health that give us an insight upon aspects regarding the social environment<sup>37</sup>.

There is a series of studies regarding children, but they talk very little about newborns and their role in society<sup>38</sup>. As presented above, we have different approaches in what concerns children according to different domains or perceptions, but the newborns have quite a linear approach in all the domains, being regarded as a separate category. Unlike the foetus, the newborn is subject to environmental imbalances and therefore to warmth and nutrition deprivation<sup>39</sup>. Even full-term newborns are biologically immature,

---

<sup>28</sup> Lewis 2007, 2.

<sup>29</sup> Kemkes-Grottenthaler 2002.

<sup>30</sup> Sofaer 2011, 292-293.

<sup>31</sup> Meskell 1994, 2002; Sofaer Derevenski 2000; Welinder 1998, 2001.

<sup>32</sup> Some examples of studies that deal with children from the past societies: Moore, Scott 1997; Panter-Brick 1998; Scott 1999; Sofaer Derevenski 2000; Schwartzman 2001; Baxter 2005; Stearns 2006; Lewis 2007; Baxter 2008; Crawford, Lewis 2008; Baxter 2012; Romanowicz 2013; Thompson et al. 2014; Van Rossenberg 2014.

<sup>33</sup> A multidisciplinary study of human skeletal remains from archaeological contexts, according to Buikstra, Beck 2006, xvii.

<sup>34</sup> Examples of writings that deal with children bone trauma or diseases: Fibiger 2014; Brickley, Ives 2008; Lewis 2007; Goodman, Armelagos 1989; Scott 1999; Lewis 2014.

<sup>35</sup> As the observations of R. Hertz on the Borneo community: Hertz 1960.

<sup>36</sup> Sofaer Derevenski 1997, 192.

<sup>37</sup> Gowland 2006; Sofaer 2004; Sofaer 2006a; Sofaer 2006b.

<sup>38</sup> Lovejoy et al. 1990; Mays 1995; Mays 1999; Buckley 2000; Humphrey 2000; Saunders 2000; Lewis 2004; Lewis 2007; Halcrow et al. 2008.

<sup>39</sup> Bornstein, Lamb 1992, 125.

including their immune system, so are less able to respond to stresses, which explains the high mortality rate around this age and its decrease together with the development<sup>40</sup>.

An appropriate description of newborn identity nowadays is given by linguistics. Various languages have terms to define the newborn. In English, the term *baby* refers to the newborn, up to 1 year old, when it starts to learn walking and turns into a *toddler* until the age of 3. In the German language the term *Saugling* is used – corresponding to the Romanian *sugar*, both describing the newborn up to the age when its feeding does not imply the maternal milk. All these common words refer to the dependency of the newborn on older members of the community. In what concerns other domains, such as the physical anthropology or psychology, the term infant defines a subcategory of childhood, up to a certain stage of development. More than that, in medicine, paediatrics deals only with treating children, while the branch of neonatology specializes in newborns. Up to a certain point, infancy corresponds to babyhood, but the variable, which differs from a society to another, is when the babyhood ends and the childhood starts<sup>41</sup>. If we are to consider the newborn or the perinate around birth from 24 weeks of gestation to 7 postnatal days<sup>42</sup> a special category because they are totally depending on elders, not being able to acknowledge their gender, sexuality or their economic role, we can say that this is the only category in the archaeological record that we can identify and refer to exactly the same way they are regarded nowadays.

As a result of various possibilities of interpretation of the perinatal death and burial or disposal of the body, there are few studies about them in prehistory. The reasons for this are various: the skeleton does not remain preserved in the soil; the body did not received the same treatment as the rest of the population. The main problem encountered when attempting an interpretation, is the fact that it is hard to establish whether the perinate died as a foetus or as a newborn. Perinatal burials may be stillbirths or natural deaths in the immediate postnatal period of death<sup>43</sup>.

The archaeological discoveries of human skeletal remains both from cemeteries and settlements reveal that the body of a deceased child is treated differently than the rest of the community, being the subject of special burial rites<sup>44</sup>. L. Pauli<sup>45</sup> observes two types of groups that received a different treatment after death: children, whom he names *mors immature*, and 'dangerous dead', people who lived different than the others or they had an unusual death. The first category is referred to as *non-persona* because they have not passed any separation or socialization rite, being socially inferior in comparison with the rest of the community. There is this perception according to which certain rites have to be passed in order to make the transition to adulthood, and this makes the newborn not to be buried with the rest, but to be sent back<sup>46</sup>. Archaeologically, these differentiations can be spotted sometimes at a spatial level (children being placed in a special area of the cemetery or missing from it) or through the deposition of different grave goods. One

---

<sup>40</sup> McDade 2003.

<sup>41</sup> Scott 1999, 2-5.

<sup>42</sup> Halcrow, Tayles 2011, 340.

<sup>43</sup> Mays 2010, 82.

<sup>44</sup> Schwidetzky 1965, 233.

<sup>45</sup> Pauli 1975, 207-13.

<sup>46</sup> Van Gennep 1960, 41-49.

explanation that can be taken into account is A. Saxe's theory<sup>47</sup>, developed later by L. Binford<sup>48</sup>, regarding mortuary practices and *social personae*, according to which the burial of a person reflects the social identities that were attributed to it during lifetime as a result of the role it had in the community. Time passing, each person develops more identities because its growth is linked with the responsibilities acquired among the community and the interaction with other people (the psychological development is linked with the physical one). So, if an old man has more identities, as the different people he interacts with see him from various perspectives, a newborn can be considered as not having any, as it has no role in the active society, it cannot be given any qualities and everybody looks at him in the same way<sup>49</sup>.

In terms of children burials, there are cases in which they are interred both in cemeteries and settlements, as in the Early Bronze Age Bulgaria, where there were found both pit and jar burials of infants and children under 18 months<sup>50</sup>. P. J. P. Mc George<sup>51</sup> talks about the *intra muros* child burials from Bronze Age Greece, where there were discovered depositions of children in pits, cists or pithoi. In this case there is also an age difference between them: foetal and infant toddler<sup>52</sup>. The study of S. Houby-Nielsen<sup>53</sup> refers to the burials of almost 2000 small children and newborns found in Athens, Greece between 1100 BC and 1 BC. One of the observations that she makes is that although the literary sources of these times do not provide much information upon childhood, in the mortuary practices there can be observed a continuity that is characterized by a care under which the small children are buried, distinguishing three categories: 0-1 year old; 1-4 years old and 4-7 years old. This differentiation based on age proves the presence of new-borns in cemeteries as a category of children, explained by a different funeral treatment<sup>54</sup>.

The term 'children' was best defined in archaeology as a cultural notion of western culture, which describes individuals at a variety of stages of development with widely differing levels of dependence and independence, which marginalizes their activities. By universal extension 'children' are, therefore, rendered invisible in the archaeological record<sup>55</sup>.

As observed by several scholars, the social view seems to predominate in the study of childhood in the past over the biological one<sup>56</sup>. In bioarchaeological studies both constructs are used, as they integrate social age categories into the analysis of skeletal populations<sup>57</sup>. Based on such studies, researchers like J. Sofaer made certain remarks upon childhood<sup>58</sup>, considering that a person is a child up to the age when it has an economic role in the society and is able to make

---

<sup>47</sup> Saxe 1970.

<sup>48</sup> Binford 1973.

<sup>49</sup> Saxe 1970, 6.

<sup>50</sup> Mishina 2008, 145.

<sup>51</sup> Mc George 2011, 1.

<sup>52</sup> Mc George 2011, 2.

<sup>53</sup> Houby-Nielsen 2000.

<sup>54</sup> Saxe 1970; Binford 1972, 13-15; Renfrew 1973.

<sup>55</sup> Sofaer Derevenski 1997, 193.

<sup>56</sup> Prout 2005; Insoll 2007; Lally, Ardren 2008.

<sup>57</sup> Perry 2005; Gowland 2006; Halcrow, Tayles 2011.

<sup>58</sup> Sofaer 1994.



things by themselves and create objects that can be found in an excavation. They can be perceived as a separate social category because they are not able to produce things or to work in a productive way for the community and more than that, they are dependent on the resources produced by the other members. G. Lillehammer uses the notion of 'child's world', through which the child is seen as a central entity inside society, this being the period in which it acquires the rules of the community<sup>59</sup>. This can also be one of the reasons for which children are often treated differently from adults in terms of burial, position and grave goods<sup>60</sup>. A. Tsaliki refers to the deaths of children as 'special death' and talks about the terminology and the situations in Greece and Rome<sup>61</sup>. Remains found within domestic spaces were interpreted as cases of marginal burial resulting from infanticide, the symbols of domestic or gendered space, a consequence of lacking social ranking, a result of economic necessity or sacrificial burials<sup>62</sup>. Infanticide refers to the killing of unwanted babies. This usually happens immediately after birth and it used to be practiced in the whole world in all types of societies, no matter their complexity<sup>63</sup>. Identifying infanticide in archaeology is mainly based on the way in which the child is buried, for example, the ones who were found outside the cemeteries are considered to be victims of infanticide, but at the same time, there should be considered that infants are buried differently from the rest the community members<sup>64</sup>.

## CONCLUSIONS

The presence of the child bone remains in pit Cx.1 at Aiud can be the result of any of the above situations that apply to scattered human bone remains discovered in pit structures that were not constructed with funerary or ritually purposes, as it is our case. What is certain though, is the situation of the newborns. As long as they are unable to take care of themselves or to provide anything for the society it is clear that, regardless the society they live in, they have a special status and its members were aware of this fact.

We can conclude that no special interest was taken into the burial of this newborn. The remains from Cx. 1 do not show any traces of special deposition even if they got there accidentally, as debris, or as a result of secondary treatment. Also, the ceramic material discovered together with the remains do not show any trace of intentional deposition, looking as debris.

---

<sup>59</sup> Lillehammer 1989.

<sup>60</sup> Jamieson 1995; Kamp 1998; Boric, Stefanovic 2004, Murail et al. 2004.

<sup>61</sup> Tsaliki 2008, 4.

<sup>62</sup> Scott 1999.

<sup>63</sup> Williamson 1978.

<sup>64</sup> Ucko, 1969.

## REFERENCES

- Bader 1978 T. Bader, *Epoca bronzului în nord-vestul Transilvaniei. Cultura pretracică și tracică*. București, 1978.
- Baxter 2005 J. E. Baxter, *The Archaeology of Childhood: Children, Gender and Material Culture*. Walnut Creek, 2005.
- Baxter 2008 J. E. Baxter, *The Archaeology of Childhood*. *AnRevAnthr* 37, 2008, 159-175.
- Baxter 2012 J. E. Baxter, *Children in Action: Perspectives on the Archaeology of Childhoods*. New York, 2012.
- Bălan et al. 2016 G. Bălan, R. Burlacu-Timofte, T. Muntean, *Așezarea din epoca bronzului de la Aiud-Groapa de gunoi. Considerații preliminare*. *Apulum* 53, 2016, 45-82.
- Berecki 2016 S. Berecki, *The Bronze Age site from Luduș*, Cluj-Napoca, 2016.
- Binford 1972 L. R. Binford, *Mortuary Practices: Their study and their potential*. In: L. R. Binford, *An Archaeological Perspective*. New York, 1972, 208-243.
- Borić, Stefanović 2004 D. Borić, S. Stefanović, *Birth and Death: Infant Burials from Vlasac and Lepenski Vir*. *Antiquity* 78, 2004, 526-546.
- Bornstein, Lamb 1992 M. H. Bornstein, M.E. Lamb, *Development in Infancy: An Introduction*. New York, 1992.
- Brickley, Ives 2008 M. Brickley, R. Ives, *The Bioarchaeology of Metabolic Bone Disease*. Amsterdam, 2008.
- Buikstra, Beck 2006 J. E. Buikstra, L. A. Beck (eds.), *Bioarchaeology: The Contextual Analysis of Human Remains*. Burlington, 2006.
- Buckley 2000 H. R. Buckley, *Subadult Health and Disease in Prehistoric Tonga, Polynesia*. *AmJPhAnthr* 113, 4, 2000, 481-505.
- Chidioșan 1980 N. Chidioșan, *Contribuții la istoria tracilor din Nord-Vestul României Așezarea Wietenberg de la Derșida, Oradea*, 1980.
- Ciugudean, Quinn 2015 H. Ciugudean, C. Quinn, *The End of the Wietenberg Culture in the Light of New <sup>14</sup>C Dates and its Chronological Relations to the Noua Culture*. In: R. M. Németh, B. Rezi (eds.), *Bronze Age Chronology in the Carpathian Basin. Proceedings of the International Colloquium from Târgu Mureș, 2-4 October 2014*, *BMusMar-SA* 8, Târgu Mureș, 2015, 147-178.
- Crawford, Lewis 2008 S. Crawford, C. Lewis, *Childhood Studies and the Society for the Study of Childhood in the Past*. In: *Children in the Past* 1, 2008, 5-16.
- Crișan 1970 I. H. Crișan, *Necropola de incinerare, aparținând culturii Wietenberg-Sighișoara, de la Bistrița*, *MatCercA* 9, 137-160.
- Fibiger 2014 L. Fibiger, *Misplaced Childhood? Interpersonal violence and children in Neolithic Europe*. In: C. Knüsel, M. Smith (eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of the Bioarchaeology of Human Conflict*. London/New York, 2014, 127-145.
- Furmánek, Jakab 1997 V. Furmánek, J. Jakab, *Menschliche Skelettreste aus bronzezeitlichen Siedlung aus Slowakei*. In: K. F. Rittershoffer (ed.), *Sonderbestatungen in der Bronzezeit im östlichen Mitteleuropa*. *IArch* 37. Espelkamp, 1997, 14-23.

- Ginn, Arber 1995 J. Ginn, S. Arber, *Only connect: gender relations and ageing*. In Arber, S., Ginn, J. (eds.), *Connecting gender and ageing: a sociological approach*. Buckingham, 1995, 1-14.
- Goodman, Armelagos 1989 A. H. Goodman, G. J. Armelagos, *Infant and Childhood Morbidity Risks in Archaeological Populations*. *The Archaeology of Public Health*, WorldA 21, 2, 1989, 225-243.
- Gowland 2006 R. Gowland, *Ageing the past: examining age identity from funerary evidence*. In: Gowland, R., Knüsel, C. (eds.), *Social Bioarchaeology of Funerary Remains*. Oxford, 2006, 143-154.
- Halcrow, Tayles 2008 S. E. Halcrow, N. Tayles, *The bioarchaeological investigation of childhood and social age: problems and prospects*. *JAMT* 15, 2008, 190-210.
- Halcrow, Tayles 2011 S. E. Halcrow, N. Tayles, *The bioarchaeological investigation of Children and Childhood*. In: S. C. Agarwal, B. A. Glencross, (eds.), *Social Bioarchaeology*. Chinchester, 2011, 333-360.
- Halcrow et al. 2008 S. E. Halcrow, N. Tayles, V. Livingstone, *Infant Death in Prehistoric Mainland Southeast Asia*. *APersp* 47, 2008, 371-404.
- Hart et al. 1998 B. Hart, P. Sainsbury, S. Stephanie, *Whose Dying? A sociological critique of the 'good death'*. *Mortality* 3, 1998, 65-77.
- Hertz 1960 R. Hertz, *Death and the Right Hand*. London, 1960, 27-86.
- Houby-Nielsen 2000 S. Houby-Nielsen, *Child burials in ancient Athens*. In: J. Sofaer-Derevenski (ed.), *Children and Material culture*. London, 55-166.
- Humphrey 2000 L. T. Humphrey, *Growth Studies of Past Populations: An Overview and an Example*. In: M. Cox, S. Mays (eds.), *Human Osteology in Archaeology and Forensic Science*. London, 2000, 23-38.
- Insoll 2007 T. Insoll, *Introduction: Configuring Identities in Archaeology*. In: T. Insoll (eds.), *The Archaeology of Identities*. London, 2007, 1-19.
- Jamieson 1995 R. W. Jamieson, *Material Culture and Social Death: African - American Burial Practices*. *HistA* 29, 1995, 39-58.
- Jones 2014 O. A. Jones, *The study of secondary burial in Mycenaean mortuary traditions: a new approach to the evidence*. *TMA* 51, 2014, 8-13.
- Kamp 1998 K. A. Kamp, *Social Hierarchy and Burial Treatments: A Comparative Assessment*. *CCRes* 32, 1998, 79-115.
- Kemkes-Grottenthaler 2002 A. Kemkes-Grottenthaler, *Aging through the ages: historical perspectives on age indicator methods*. In: R. D. Hoppa, J. W. Vaupel (eds.), *Paleodemography: age distributions from skeletal samples*. Cambridge, 2002, 48-72.
- Lally, Ardren 2008 M. Lally, T. Ardren, *Little Artefacts: Rethinking the Constitution of the Archaeological Infant*. In: *Children in the Past* 1, 62-77.
- Lewis 2004 M. E. Lewis *Endocranial lesions in non-adult skeletons: understanding their aetiology*. *IntJO* 14, 2, 2004, 82-97.
- Lewis 2007 M. Lewis, *The Bioarchaeology of Children. Perspectives from Biological and Forensic Anthropology*. Cambridge, 2007.
- Lewis, Gowland 2007 M. Lewis, R. Gowland, *Brief and precarious lives: Infant mortality in contrasting sites from medieval and post-medieval England (AD 850-1859)*. *AmJPhAnthr* 134 (1), 2007, 117-129.



- Lillehammer 1989 G. Lillehammer, *The world of children. A child is born. The child's world in an archaeological perspective*. NAR 22, 2, 1989, 89-105.
- Lovejoy et al. 1990 C. O. Lovejoy, K. F. Russell, M. L. Harrison, *Long Bone Growth Velocity in the Libben Population*. AmJHumBio 2, 5, 1990, 533-541.
- Martin et al. 2013 D. L. Martin, R. P. Harrod, V. R. Pérez, *Bioarchaeology. An Integrated Approach to Working with Human Remains*. New York, 2013.
- Mays 1995 S. A. Mays, *The Relationship Between Harris Lines and Other Aspects of Skeletal Development in Adults and Juveniles*. JASc 22, 1995, 511-520.
- Mays 1999 S. A. Mays, *Linear and appositional long bone growth in earlier human populations: a case study from Mediaeval England*. In: R. D. Hoppa, C. M. FitzGerald (eds.), *Human Growth in the Past. Studies from Bones and Teeth*. Cambridge, 1999, 290-312.
- Mays 2010 S. A. Mays, *The archaeology of human bones*. London/New York, 2010.
- McDade 2003 T. W. McDade, *Life History Theory and the Immune System: Steps Toward a Human Ecological Immunology*. YPhAnthr 46, 2003, 100-125.
- Mc George 2011 P. J. P. Mc George, *Intramural infant burials in the Aegean Bronze age: Reactions on symbolism and eschatology with particular reference to Crete*. In: O. Henry (ed.), *Le Mort dans la ville Pratiques, contextes et impacts des inhumations intra-muros en Anatolie, du début de l'Âge du Bronze à l'époque romaine*. 2<sup>èmes</sup> Rencontres d'Archeologie de l'IFÉA, Istanbul 14-15 novembre 2011. Istanbul, 2013, 1-19.
- Meskell 1994 L. Meskell, *Dying Young: the experience of death at Deir el Medina*. ARevCamb 13, 2, 1994, 35-45.
- Meskell 2002 L. Meskell, *Private Life in New Kingdom Egypt*. Princeton, 2002.
- Mishina 2008 T. Mishina, *A Social Aspect of Intramural Infant Burials` Analysis: A case of EBA Tell Yunatsite, Bulgaria*. In: K. Bačvarov (ed.), *Babies Reborn: Infant/Child Burials in Pre- and Protohistory*. BARIntSer 1832. Oxford, 2008, 137-146.
- Moore, Scott 1997 J. Moore, E. C. Scott (eds.), *Invisible People and Processes: Writing Gender and Childhood into European Archaeology*. London, 1997.
- Motzoi-Chicideanu 2011 I. Motzoi-Chicideanu, *Obiceiuri funerare în epoca bronzului la Dunărea Mijlocie și Inferioară*. București, 2011.
- Murail et al. 2004 P. Murail, B. Maureille, D. Peresinotto, *An infant cemetery of the Classic Kerma period (1750- 1500 BC, Island of Sai, Sudan)*. Antiquity 78, 2004, 267-277.
- Németh 2015 R. Németh, *The Middle Bronze Age "Mass Grave" from Voivodeni – La Școală. A Chronological Approach*. In: R. M. Németh, B. Rezi, (eds.), *Bronze Age Chronology in the Carpathian Basin. Proceedings of the International Colloquium from Târgu Mureș, 2-4 October 2014*. BMusMar-SA 8, Târgu Mureș, 2015, 179-199.
- Németi 1996 I. Németi, *Câteva considerații privind descoperirile funerare din epoca bronzului din nord-vestul României*. StComSM 13, 1996, 27-56.

- Németi, Molnár 2012 J. Németi, Z. Molnár, *Bronzkori hatalmi központok északnyugat-erdélyben: a Nagykároly-Bobáld tell.* Szeged, 2012.
- O'Shea 1996 J. O'Shea, *Villagers of the Maros. A Portrait of an Early Bronze Age Society.* New York, 1996.
- Panter-Brick 1998 C. Panter-Brick, *Biosocial Perspectives on Children.* Cambridge, 1998.
- Pauli 1975 L. Pauli, *Keltischer Volksglaube: Amulette und Sonderbestattungen an Dürrenberg bei Hallein und im Eisenzeitlichen Mitteleuropa.* MünchBeitrVFG 28. München, 1975.
- Perry 2005 M. A. Perry, *Redefining Childhood Through Bioarchaeology: Towards an Archaeological and Biological Understanding Of Children in Antiquity.* In: J. E. Baxter (ed.), *Children in Action: Perspectives on the Archaeology Of Childhood.* Wiley-Blackwell, 2005, 89-111.
- Prout 2005 A. Prout, *The Future of Childhood: Towards the Interdisciplinary Study of Children.* London, 2005.
- Renfrew 1973 C. Renfrew, *Before Civilization: The Radiocarbon Revolution and Prehistoric Europe,* London, 1973.
- Rittershofer 1997 K. F. Rittershofer (ed.), *Sonderbestattungen in der Bronzezeit im Östlichen Mitteleuropa.* IArch 37. Espelkamp, 1997.
- Romanowicz 2013 P. Romanowicz (ed.), *Child and Childhood in the Light of Archaeology.* Wrocław, 2013.
- Saunders 2000 S. R. Saunders, *Subadult Skeletons and Growth - Related Studies.* In: M. A. Katzenberg, S. R. Saunders (eds.), *Biological Anthropology of the Human Skeleton.* New York, 2000, 135-162.
- Saxe 1970 A. A. Saxe, *Social Dimensions of Mortuary Practices.* Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Michigan. Michigan, 1970.
- Schwartzman 2001 H. B. Schwartzman (ed.), *Children and Anthropology: Perspectives for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.* Westport, 2001.
- Schwidetzky 1965 I. Schwidetzky, *Sonderbestattungen und ihre paläodemographische Bedeutung.* Homo 16, 1965, 230-47.
- Scott 1999 E. Scott, *The Archaeology of Infancy and Infant Death.* BARIntSer 819. Oxford, 1999.
- Sofaer 2004 J. Sofaer, *The Materiality of Age: Osteoarchaeology, Objects, and the Contingency of Human Development.* EAZ 2-3, 2004, 165-180.
- Sofaer 2006a J. Sofaer, *The Body as Material Culture. A Theoretical Osteoarchaeology.* Cambridge, 2006.
- Sofaer 2006b J. Sofaer, *Gender, bioarchaeology and human ontogeny.* In: R. Gowland, C. Knusel (eds.), *Social Bioarchaeology of Funerary Remains.* Oxford, 2006, 155-167.
- Sofaer 2011 J. Sofaer, *Towards a social bioarchaeology of age.* In: Agarwal, S. C. Glencross, B. A. (eds.), *Social Bioarchaeology.* Chichester, 2011, 285-311.
- Sofaer Derevenski 1994 J. Sofaer Derevenski, *Where are the children? Assessing children in the past.* ARevCamb 13, 1994, 7-20.

- Sofaer Derevenski 1997 J. Sofaer Derevenski, *Engendering children, engendering archaeology*. In: J. Moore, E. Scott, (eds.), *Invisible People and Processes: Writing Gender and Childhood into European Archaeology*. London, 1997, 192-202.
- Sofaer Derevenski 2000 J. Sofaer Derevenski, *Rings of Life: The role of early metalwork in mediating the gendered life course*. *WorldA* 31, 3, 2000, 389-406.
- Stearns 2006 P. N. Stearns, *Childhood in World History*. New York, 2006.
- Tainter 1978 J. A. Tainter, *Mortuary Practices and the Study of Prehistoric Social Systems*. *AMethTh* 1, 1978, 105-41.
- Thompson et al. 2014 J. L. Thompson, M. P. Alfonso-Durruty, J. J. Candrall, *Tracing Childhood: Bioarchaeological Investigations of Early Lives in Antiquity*, Gainesville, 2014.
- Točík 1981 A. Točík, *Nitriansky Hrádok-Zámeček: Bronzezeitliche befestigte Ansiedlung der Mad'arovec Kultur*. *MatArchSlov* 3, Nitra, 1981.
- Tsaliki 2008 A. Tsaliki, *Unusual Burials and Necrophobia: An Insight into the Burial Archaeology of Fear*. In: E. M. Murphy (ed.), *Deviant burial in the archaeological record*. Exeter, 2008.
- Ucko 1969 P. J. Ucko, *Ethnography and archaeological interpretation of funerary remains*. *WorldA* 1, 2, 1969, 262-280.
- Van Gennep 1960 Van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*. Chicago, 1960.
- Van Rossenberg 2008 Van Rossenberg, *Infant/child burials and social reproduction in the Bronze Age and Early Iron Age (C. 2100-800 BC) of Central Italy*. In: K. Bačvarov (ed.), *Babies Reborn: Infant/Child Burials in Pre- and Protohistory*, *BARIntSer* 1832, Oxford, 2008, 161-173.
- Watts 1989 D. J. Watts, *Infant burials and Romano-British Christianity*. *ArchJ* 146, 1989, 372-383.
- Welinder 1998 S. Welinder, *The cultural construction of childhood in Scandinavia, 3500 BC-1350 AD*. *CSA* 8, 1998, 185-205.
- Welinder 2001 S. Welinder, *The archaeology of old age*. *CurrSwedArch* 9, 2001, 163-178.
- Williamson 1978 J. Williamson, *Infanticide and anthropological analysis*. In: M. Kohl (ed.) *Infanticide and the Value of Life*. Buffalo, 61-75.