

## Extra-Carpathian Funeral Discoveries in the Early Bronze Age in the South-East of Transylvania\*

by Zsolt Székely

The entire historical development of the depression area from south-east of Transylvania is much more links with the neighbouring region of Vallachia and Moldavia than with the central and western parts of Transylvania.

Beyond the Carpathians to East and South – along the late Eneolithic period, the Transition period and Early Bronze Age we record a similar material culture or intense penetrations from one direction to another of a culture which center of development was in South, or East from the Carpathian Mountains<sup>1</sup>. In the South – East of Transylvania we point to a very strong eneolithic substance of regional essential features represented by the late phases of the Ariuşd (B) culture, the penetration of the Tisa Culture in the Tiszapolgár and Bodrogkeresztúr phases<sup>2</sup>, the presence of ceramics Cucuteni – Ariuşd A – B and B, in the Bodrogkeresztúr type settlements<sup>3</sup>. These communities remained in spite of North-Pontic influences. The Transition period is represented by the Early Coţofenian communities.

The Early Bronze Age in the South – East of Transylvania includes an interval between the end of the Transition period, represented by the first phase of the Coţofeni Culture and Ciomortan Culture, which is considered to be the first cultural manifestation of the Middle Bronze Age with a pre-Wietenberg aspect.

The discoveries of the inhumation graves in stone-box from Sânzieni<sup>4</sup>, and Turia<sup>5</sup>, in Covasna County, with two *askos*-type potteries of Zimnicea – Mlăjet type prove that the natural evolution of the communities during the Transition period, represented by the first phase of the Coţofeni culture is interrupted by an impact provoked by a penetration from South of Zimnicea type<sup>6</sup>.

As a consequence, the Early Bronze Age marked by the ceasing of the evolution of Late Coţofeni I Culture, begins much more earlier than in the central and western parts of Transylvania, where the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> phase of this Culture are mentioned. The penetration of the groups of shepherds of Zimnicea-Mlăjet-Sânzieni-Turia type has an economic reason and it can be put in contact with the importance of the metal bearing zone of the South-East of Transylvania.

In the summer of 1998, on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of July, at Sânmartin-Ciuc (Csíkszentmárton), in the yard of Magdolna Tankó, at 51, Principală Str., during the digging of a decantation, well, an inhumation grave in a stone-box was found<sup>7</sup> (fig. 1, 2).

In the grave there were two appliquéés of bones in the part of the false pelvis (fig. 3/1). The inhumed was put in a rectangular stone- plate, very well-cared, formed with the dimensions of 137 × 126 cm, on which there were put the lateral parts of the box. The shorter parts closed the box. The plate used for lid, is the most negligent worked and passes through the dimensions of the box.

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<sup>1</sup> Székely 1997, 20.

<sup>2</sup> Nestor 1933, 76; Székely 1964, 125,

<sup>3</sup> Roman 1986, 34,

<sup>4</sup> Székely 1980, 39 - 46.

<sup>5</sup> Székely 1983, 61 - 67; 1997, 40a - 40b.

<sup>6</sup> Roman 1986, 38.

<sup>7</sup> Szabó 1999, 129 - 132.

The plates used for this construction were manufactured from grit stone of cretaceous system of fine micaceous feldspar, spread in decimetrian sand banks, fine material found in the edge of the village.

The interior dimensions of the stone-box are 93 × 50.3 cm, with a diagonal length of 110 × 105 cm, with a 31 cm height on the west side and 41 cm on the south.

The orientation of the grave is to East-West, with the long axis, with a deviation of 15° to South. The head of the buried pointed to East and settled on the left side.

According to the fact that the grave is to 1.20 m. of the limit of the yard, near the road leading to Bancu (Csikbáncfalva), after several diggings in a height level of stopgap stratigraphical observations couldn't be made. The stratum of stopgap is covered by a black fertile soil.

The bone appliqués are two oval plates, perforated and glazed, ornamented in one side with longitudinal lines toothed in zigzag, too (fig. 4/a, b).

Similar appliqués were found in the grave no 2 from Dolhești Mari, which belongs to the spherical amphora's culture.<sup>8</sup>

According to our knowledge, until the present this funeral discovery represents the first and the only evidence of the penetration of the communities of spherical amphora's culture in the Ciuc's Basin.

As known, these Volino-Podolics communities from north-west cross Moldavia's territory after the Cucuteni (B<sub>2</sub>) Culture and together with the south-eastern Usatoviane communities form the Horodiștea - Erbiceni Culture<sup>9</sup>.

The tribes of the Spherical Amphora's Culture spread from the Elba to the middle Nipper in Romania's territory, taking part from the Podolian groups, penetrated in a later phase of their evolution and invaded the north-west of Moldavia, among the Carpathian Mountains and Siret and upper Tazlău, in the Central Moldavian

plateau to Piatra Neamț and Galați, towards south in the Foltești settlement<sup>10</sup>. These communities like those of south origin of Zimnicea-Mlăjeț-Sânzieni-Turia type integrate in the process of transition and it is possible that they contributed to the much later formation of Schneckenberg Culture from the South-East of Transylvania and of the Schneckenberg B-Jigodin culture from Ciuc's Basin.

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<sup>8</sup> Dinu 1961, fig. 5/6.

<sup>9</sup> Dinu 1968, 129 - 138; Berciu 1960, 77 - 79.

<sup>10</sup> Roman 1981, 38.



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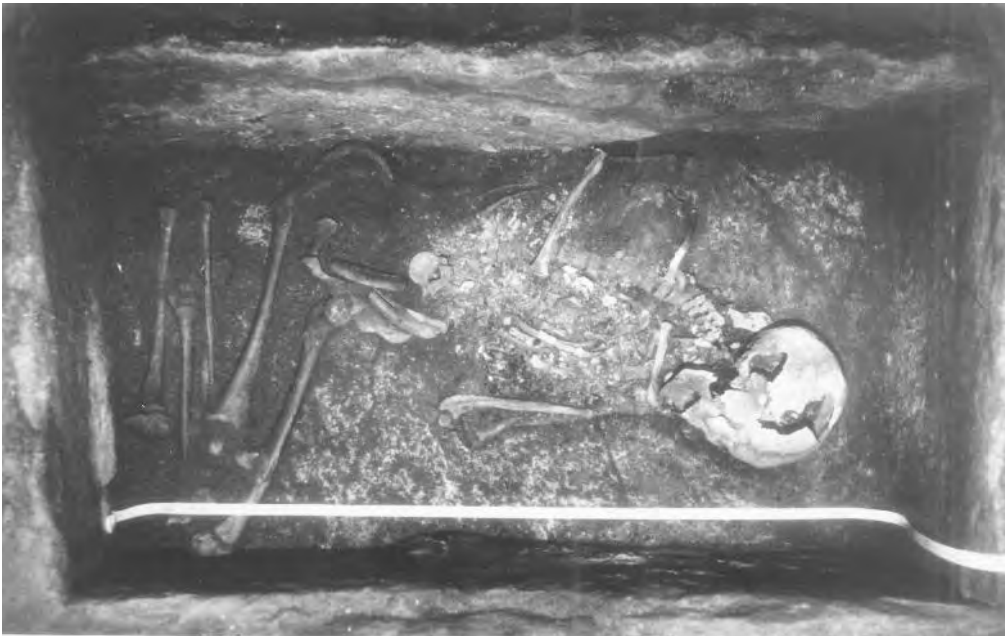


2

Fig. 1. Sânmartin-Ciuc. Inhumations in stone-box graves.



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2

Fig. 2. Sânmartin-Ciuc. Inhumations in stone-box graves.



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Fig. 3. Sânmartin-Ciuc. Inhumations in stone-box graves.

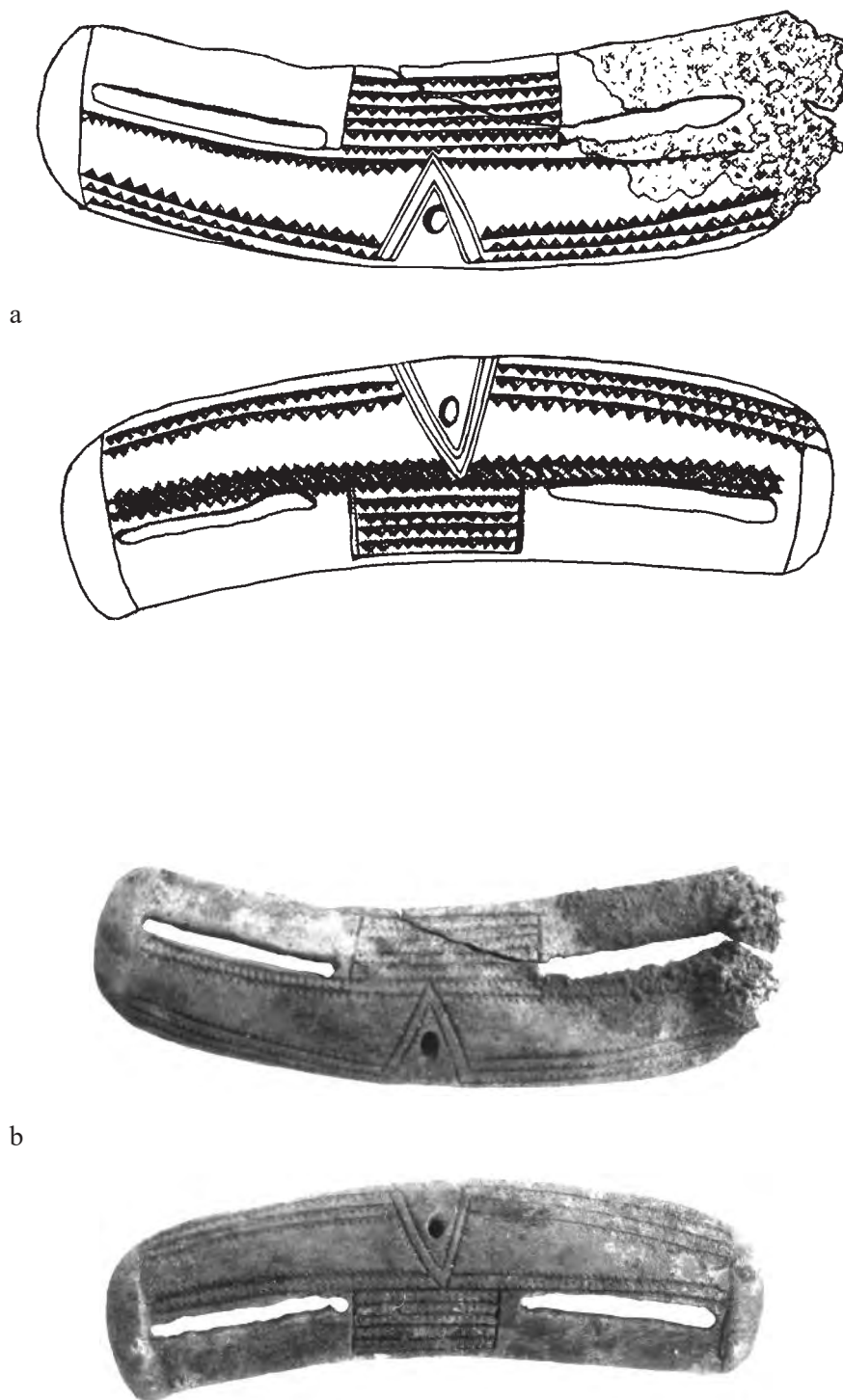


Fig. 4. Sânmartin-Ciuc. Appliques of bones from the grave: a, profiles; b, photos.