

SACRED DACIAN LANDSCAPES (2nd CENTURY BC – 1st CENTURY AD). SEARCHING FOR A THEORETICAL MODEL

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Abstract: The authors propose and analyze, in a complementary manner, a model of ancient perception of the sacred landscape during classical Dacian period, by classical archaeological means and through spatial analyses. A site is understood as an assemblage between the archaeological remains and their host environment.

The present study explores a possible cultural model of use and organization of the public sacred space in the late Dacian period (2nd century BC – 1st century AD). The basis for these hypotheses will be represented by complex analyses of the relationships established between possibly sacred Dacian sites and their environment. We will aim at the identification and remodeling of human past experiences of perceiving sacred spaces and sacred landscape, as aspects that may enrich the archaeological information obtained through classical methodology.

Since we will investigate only a few particular aspects of sacred sites from the classical Dacian period, we will refer here neither to their analysis and classification nor to the general problems connected to the choice of a sacred place in other cultural areas. For the issue of sacred places selection and classification in other cultures, we name contributions of authors like L. Levy-Bruhl (1935), M. Eliade (1992) or the studies published as result to thematic colloquia (*Gifts to the Gods* 1987). Also for the subject regarding the issue of cult places and Dacian temples we mention H. Daicoviciu (1972, p. 204-220), D. Antonescu (1984), Al. Vulpe (1986, p. 101-111), N. Conovici and G. Trohani (1988, p. 205-217), I. H. Crişan (1993, p. 78-122), S. Sanie (1995) and V. Sîrbu (1993; 1995, p. 314-329; 2006, p. 21-86).

We are putting forward a proposal for an alternative investigation of the past, intended to enrich the classical archaeology perception through the exploration of a new set of questions and answers. We state that the archaeological excavation is not the only method for examining and reconstructing the past as new technologies and methods may add distinct value to the knowledge in this field. In fact, in terms of methodology, we will compare a set of conclusions obtained through archaeological means with interpretations suggested by spatial analyses, underlying the similarities and the differences.

For this study we will consider four of the most important Dacian sites, situated in high locations, in different areas with particular landscape: **Pietroasa Mică-Gruia Dării**, Buzău County (Dupoi, Sîrbu 2001; Sîrbu 2004, p. 183-214; Sîrbu, Matei, Dupoi 2005), **Ocnita**, Vâlcea County (Berciu 1981; Berciu, Iosifaru, Diaconescu 1993, p. 149-156), **Moigrad-Măgura Moigradului**, Sălaj County (Macrea, Russu, Mitrofan 1962, p. 485-502; Matei, Pop 2001, p. 253-277) and **Augustin-Tipia Ormenişului**, Braşov County (Costea 2006, p. 175-208), all of the monuments dated between 150 BC - 106 AD.

We will analyze if and in what way the four sites follow a pattern and establish, at the same time, their distinctiveness as complex landscapes used by humans and as sources for ritual behaviors. The integration of monuments, artifacts and rituals into a greater geographical scale may illustrate a larger context in which the relations between communities become visible.

The Dacian communities generally preferred as cult sites locations with particular features: high impressive hilly or mountain massifs, considerably higher than the surrounding relief, difficult to climb, generating a great visual impact, sometimes located nearby natural strategic resources (salt, iron).

The monument assemblage from *Augustin-Tipia Ormenișului* was regarded as a sacred Dacian center; similar to the political and religious capital of Sarmizegetusa Regia (Glodariu *et al.* 1996, p. 109-130), but the other three mentioned sites (*Moigrad-Măgura Moigradului*, *Ocnița* and *Pietroasa Mică-Gruia Dării*) were initially considered settlements, fortresses or necropolises. Later investigations or reconsiderations of older excavations illustrated a variety of cultic manifestations, either as cult structures or as inventory, therefore claiming that in these places humans performed depositional activities with certain intentionality (Sîrbu 1995, p. 314-329; 2004, p. 183-214; 2006, p. 21-86). The lack of dwelling complexes or other typical annexes for a dwelling may indicate the different functionality of these sites.

The development of our reasoning, presented in this study and the resulted final considerations had as main grounds the following decisions of interpreting the archaeological discoveries from the sites in question.

1. The large edifices with a circular plan or rectangular plan with an apsidal room or rectangular plan with alignments of basis for columns were interpreted as public cult edifices or temples. A similar interpretation for this type of edifices comes from H. Daicoviciu (1972, p. 204-220), D. Antonescu (1984), Al. Vulpe (1986, p. 101-111), N. Conovici and G. Trohani (1988, p. 205-217), I. H. Crișan (1993, p. 78-122), S. Sanic (1995), V. Sîrbu (1993; 1995, p. 314-329; 2006₂, p. 21-86) and Fl. Costea (2006).

2. The assemblages of items deposited in closed contexts (pits, mounds, underground chambers) illustrating a positive selection of the inventories, following a certain pattern in inventory selection, aspect and space distribution, usually associated in groups of complexes of the same type, which cannot be considered dwellings, regular graves or isolated hoards, were interpreted by us as intentional deposits for various possible purposes, most likely with votive intentions, in our opinion (Dupoi, Sîrbu 2001; Sîrbu 2004; Sîrbu, Matei, Dupoi 2005; Sîrbu 2006₁; Sîrbu 2006₂)

3. The archaeological sites, which consisted, mainly, either of groups of intentionally made deposits (pits, mounds, underground chambers) or of assemblages of several cult edifices, were interpreted as sacred places (Sîrbu 2006₁; Sîrbu 2006₂, p. 48-62).

During particular spatial analyses performed in time over these sites (Sîrbu, Ștefan 2004; Ștefan, Duțescu 2005; 2006), certain similarities regarding the environment characteristic to sacred places and relations with the contemporaneous sites located in the surroundings, became understandable for a reasonably large area.

Therefore, we had the premises to start an investigation for the purpose of validating or rejecting the existence of a cultural model regarding the sacred natural space, which might generate a common cultural behavior.

Historical premises

Some written sources suggest the existence of an important Dacian centre at Sarmizegetusa Regia (Ptolemaios III, 8, 4). Archaeologically, this centre was identified with Grădiștea de Munte, in the Orăștici Mountains, where the first sanctuaries can be dated back to

the 1st century BC. The site was considered the capital of the Dacian state, connected with cultic, social, and political elite, which initiated a process of centralization of the Dacian communities (Daicoviciu 1972, p. 138-139, 207-210; Crișan 1993-II, p. 81-97; Glodariu *et al.* 1996, p. 83-140; Sîrbu 2006₁, p. 25-27; 2006₂, p. 33-35).

Important changes in various fields of the spiritual life became noticeable starting with the middle of the second century BC, with a relative homogeneous character. They appear in the entire space inhabited by the Dacian communities: the disappearance of regular graves, the building of large temples (apsidal edifices or with alignments of columns), the increased number of deposits of silver coins and other silver items, the intensification of human sacrifices and use of figurative representations on metals or ceramic (Sîrbu 1993, p. 127-128; 2006₂, p. 163-165).

One may consider such a large-scale process characterized by the appearance of similar types of temples and official patterns of cultic manifestations in an extended space, as linked to a certain religious authority associated with the political power.

In this context, we notice that several sites belonging to the same period, obviously exemplify a different form of cultic manifestation, different in comparison with the official model represented by the pan Dacian centers from Sarmizegetusa Regia (Glodariu *et al.* 1996, p.109-130) and Augustin-Tîpia Ormenișului (Costea 2006, p. 175-208). This reality may raise questions about political and social differences, about conflict and competition inside the Dacian communities, or even about certain regional authority. Among these distinct centers (regional), we will analyze Moigrad-Măgura Moigradului, Ocnița and Pietroasa Mică-Gruia Dării.

Landscape Archaeology

We consider the environment to be an essential and integrating element which contains (possibly determines) the material aspects of human activities and beliefs which is why it is mandatory that one take it into consideration in a complete definition of a site (regardless of its type). Usually defined as *landscape* (Silva, Pizziolo, 2005; Lock 2003, p. 164, Bender 1993) this kind of space, associates to natural elements a cognitive value resulted from perceptions and identity structures, always various and dynamic, generating a multitude of circumstances. Therefore, through permanent transformation of nature by humans into landscape and its valorization in a cultural way, the space becomes the object of study not only for geographers but also for archaeologists and anthropologists.

The relatively recent phenomenon of giving a spatial dimension to the archaeological thought, combined with primary classical investigation methods used in archaeology may offer alternative solutions to common questions such as: *Which were the reasons that led a certain community to choose a distinct place when raising a settlement, fortress or sacred place? Which was the visually observed area from a certain point in the land? In what way are these aspects significant in the definition of relations, which govern communities or groups of communities? In what way particular communities integrate the landscape in the assembly of a sacred place? May one state a model of choosing, use and organizing the environment in relation to the character of the structures and archaeological contexts identified inside?*

Using the already traditional instruments and methods of landscape archaeology, we will try to explore the cultural dimension of the environment and propose land use models regarding specific elements. A proper refining of the conclusions will be possible only through the integration and evaluation of the archaeological analyses, offering a larger comparative perspective. The main critique made against the spatial analytical tools is in regard to the difficulty experienced in working with non-quantitative data and the failure of representing individual perspectives thorough simple maps (Peterson 1998; Tilley 1994). We acknowledge

the diachronic state of the process of regaining the spatial perception. We recognize that the data used for interrogations is selected and defined by researchers and may be subjective.

Spatial analyses and methods¹

The relief models, in which one analyzes possible access routes between different points located in the land, make use of a particular type of analysis called *Slope Analysis* (Fig.4.1.; 5.2.; 8.4.; 14.3). The relief areas with a mild slope are represented with light color and the steep slopes with a dark color. The important access roads follow, in the idea of effort diminution, routes with soft relief transitions. This way, routes that are longer, but less bumpy, might be preferred, allowing the circulation, for example, of chariots with merchandise and supplies.

The *Visual Analysis* (Fig.4.2.; 14.1.) is one of the spatial investigations, which most implies the idea of a personal perception of space (Gaffney, Stancic 1991; Madry, Rakos 1996; van Leusen 2004) Elevation calculus takes away from the visually observed area the regions obstructed by higher relief located in sight. The result is a map, which represents the surrounding territory of a site visually observable and easy to control. Why is this fact valuable? The visible spatial elements, natural or human made, furnish a human universe with significance and internal logic, possible interconnected. On one side, we investigate the visual impact of the sites in the surrounding territory and on the other side, the areas located in its direct controlled perimeter.

In the dynamic relation established between man and environment, altitude changes, the presence of natural obstacles, watercourses, permanently condition the human communities to adjust. Even the circulation between two points located inside a real geographical space, will be influenced by this. That is why the quantification of the effort consumed for a movement in space becomes important in order to reconstruct ancient circulation routes and to establish which of the natural resources located closer or more far away could be actually used and in what way people in the past could exchange gifts and merchandise (Kvamme 1999; Gaffney, Stancic, Watson 1995; Madry, Rakos 1996; Bintliff 1984). *Least Cost Surface Analysis* proposed us, according to effort and time consumed when crossing the relief, different spatial matrixes around the site as territories with possible different usage for the community traveling from or to the site.

Augustin-Tipia Ormenișului, Brașov County. This site is remarkable, located on top of a quite inaccessible mountain, enjoying a dominant position in the river Olt Pass (Fig.2.1.), elevated with more than 200m above the surrounding lands (absolute elevation 755.9m); the surrounding area was intensely inhabited, as the site was included in an assemblage of civil settlements and fortresses (Fig.4).

Tipia Ormenișului is a massif composed of volcanic and sedimentary rocks with steep slopes, sometimes almost vertical; the access was possible only on the Southern side. It consists from an upper plateau, with an oval elongated shape, and a total surface of 3500m² and six main terraces (Fig.3.1.) all located on the Southern side (Glodariu, Costea 1991, p. 21-40; Costea 2002, p. 26-41; Costea 2006).

On the terraces, it was only until the middle of the first century BC that the site functioned as a settlement with numerous dwellings (Costea 2006, p.169-172). At some point, after the middle of the 1st century BC, large-scale activities of reorganizing the space took place here: a leveling with rock pavement of the previous structures, the erection on the plateau of a surrounding stonewall on the Eastern, Southern and Western side (the Northern slope is a

¹ For a more detailed presentation of spatial archaeology methods used and adapted by us and presentation of associated objectives, as well as a more complete bibliography see Ștefan, Duțescu 2005; 2006

vertical abyss), the construction of several terraces strengthened with supporting walls, the disappearance of dwellings, the erection of several large cult edifices, sometimes (in the Northwestern part of the plateau) multiply overlapped (a succession of three edifices) .

The cult edifices erected on *Tipia Ormenișului* were dated after the stratigraphic sequence and types of ceramic as beginning in the second half of the second century BC until the Roman conquest (Costea 2006, p.296).

Because the cult edifices from *Tipia Ormenișului* were recently published (Costea 2006) and a series of data are also present in this volume, in a study signed by Fl. Costea, A. Bălos, L. Savu, we will not detail them, but only mention several essential aspects, as necessary in our investigation.

On the Eastern side of the plateau, the archaeologists discovered a large rectangular building surrounded by an apsidal structure and a tower and, on the Central-Western side, occupying two thirds of the plateau, several cult edifices, circular and rectangular, with alignments of columns (**Fig.3.1.**).

Eight cult edifices (**Fig.2.2.; 3.1.**) were discovered on *Tipia Ormenișului*, four of which were rectangular with columns alignments, two were made out of limestone and two of volcanic rock, three were circular (two of which had a complex plan). Seven of these temples were discovered inside the plateau walls, *intra muros*, and one of them on the third terrace. One may notice in the Northwestern side of the plateau the succession of three cult edifices.

We mention a rectangular building with alignments of foundations for columns made out of limestone, orientated North-South and another one with alignments of foundations for columns made out of volcanic rock, orientated Northwest-Southeast, both located on the plateau and having two phases of construction and utilization. The inventory found inside consists of few fragments of ceramic vessels and few iron items.

On the third terrace there was a structure made (**Fig.3.1.**) out of: a) an exterior circular ring (diameter 19.20-19.30m, constructed from limestone and volcanic rock slabs, poorly polished; b) an intermediary ring (diameter 16.50-16.60m) located approximately 1m towards the interior, polygon-shaped, with 36 sides of approximately 3.50m each, made out of white polished limestone blocks; powerful traces of burnt wood and coal found nearby suggest the former existence of a wooden elevation; c) a rectangular structure with the apse orientated NNW, located in the middle of the rings, but not quite in the centre, with two rooms and two entrances. A burnt wooden beam was discovered lying near the intermediate wall. Eighteen large iron nails shaped like a swan head were stuck in it; they served perhaps for hanging the offerings. The post halls, the compact areas with burnt clay walls, the burnt wood beams attest the existence of a building with wood and clay walls. The inventory consisted in fragments of ceramic vessels, which could not be put together, among which we name the large vessels without a bottom, then the nails, a door articulation and a broche.

All of the rectangular buildings and all the terraces are orientated NNW-SSE (**Fig.3.1.**), which could indicate a large-scale plan for reshaping the mountain, according to particular behavioral patterns. Monumental stone stairs and paved platforms completed the site's impressive architecture.

In the case of this site, we observed how the same space received completely different significations, in relation with the identity of the group that used it and related to it. This space is successively associated with practical features, and then included in the sacred sphere. Its features, valued initially for living, were later reshaped for religious purposes.

The relief formation on top of which the monument assembly was found is dominant in the surrounding landscape, a real visual marker for the communities living in the area of the Olt

valley. This perception induces powerful feelings. The access is special constructed, following the relief. There are no water sources inside the walls.

The location offers large visibility and control over the Olt valley (**Fig.4.2.**), towards Racoș, the Valley of Raci and the Baraolt valley. The site was integrated in a network of contemporaneous sites and communication routes, all visually interconnected (**Fig.4**). The relief is strongly human shaped – terraces sustained by supporting walls, access stairs. We note the idea of delimitation, spatial partitioning as the massif is delimited naturally by waters, and the plateau is surrounded on three sides by a wall.

Observers located on the plateau could see the Depression of Baraolt, the Olt valley, the valley of Raci, the ridge route towards the *Black Hill*, the *Cornu Hill* and *Tipia Racoșului*. The only slope of the massif an observer on the plateau could not visually control, namely the Western slope, may be nevertheless completely visually controlled from the fortress of *Piatra Detunată*. The visibility area of the *Piatra Detunată* fortress concentrates along the defile (**Fig.4.1.**). It also controls a part of the height route towards the *Black Hill*. We underline the shared visibility between the main sites in the region *Tipia Ormenișului*, *Piatra Detunată*, *Cornu Hill*.

In these analyses, we did not regard the potential obstacles represented by past forest vegetation; in addition, the height calculated for the virtual observers did not consider their possible location on top of high buildings or walls elevated above the ground level.

The slope analyses performed for the site of *Tipia Ormenișului* and for the relief on the left side of the river Olt, suggest that the most probable routes for accessing the site used the ridges from the direction of the *Black Hill* and Augustin Valley (**Fig.4.1.**). These suggestions are backed by the results of the visibility analysis, in which these particular heights are observable for someone inside the site. We may speculate on the existence of another fortress visible from *Tipia Ormenișului*, located somewhere towards the Augustin Valley, meant to supervise the second part of these ridge routes which descent into the larger Olt Valley.

If we regard the large number of cult structures (**Fig.2.1., 3.1.**), the typological variety and the monumentality of the edifices, we may consider *Tipia Ormenișului* one of the Sacred Mountain of the Dacians (Sîrbu 2006₁, p. 33-80; 2006₂, p. 27-29).

Moigrad-Măgura Moigradului (Sălaj County). The enclosure is located on top of a plateau, oval in shape, with a seven hectares surface and elevated more than 200 meters above the surrounding valleys. The imposing massive is probably the result of a volcanic activity (**Fig.5.1.**).

The excavations represent less than six percent of the total surface (3700 m²) (**Fig.7.2.**). Nevertheless, the interpretations of the archaeological remains dating back to the 2nd century BC – 1st century AD is still a matter of scientific debate (Macrea, Rusu, Mitrofan 1962, p. 485-502; Matei, Pop 2001, p. 253-277; Sîrbu 1994, p. 39-59).

In the beginning, the archaeological features discovered here were described as incineration graves in cylindrical pits, but anthropological analyses showed that this was not a statement that could be backed up.

Lately, the discovery of a few dwellings and fortification structures was used for supporting the idea that the site functioned initially, in the 1st century, BC as a sacred enclosure and then, in the 1st century AD, as a fortification.

In our opinion, the topographic situation and the assembly of discoveries indicate that a sacred enclosure functioned at Moigrad, given the plateau with steep slopes (**Fig. 7.1**) and the fact that the lack of water sources did not secure proper living conditions.

The 200 pits (**Fig.9.1; 9.3.**) discovered until now may support our statement – they show obvious ritual features (deposits of items - **Fig.9.2**, traces of fire, animal bones, and rarely human bones). In addition, we should consider the discovery of many isolated fireplaces (almost 30) and agglomerations of materials deposited on soil. Sometimes all the three types of complexes were overlapped. The several dwellings are rather small and located on the edge of the plateau. They date back to the 1st century AD. This fact cannot change the sacred character of the site as the cult practitioners must have lived somewhere.

The fortification is rather small and could be a delimitation of the plateau as this type of structure (ditch with *vallum*) (**Fig. 8.2.; 8.3.**) was not in use at that date – 1st century AD in the Dacian fortresses – surrounded with stonewalls and with smaller surfaces (Glodariu 1983, p. 75-121).

The topographical representation of the site illustrates its dominant position in the region (**Fig.8.1; 8.4.**), the hard access on top and the steepness of its slopes. The site induces an overwhelming visual impact, given it stands 200m above the surroundings valleys and is isolated from the surroundings. The upper plateau is orientated NNE-SSW (**Fig.7.2.**) and is, in fact, not flat, which could indicate ancient terracing works. The visual analysis calculated for a 15 kilometers range indicates a rather regional statute for the site, as the main circulation route in the area is not visible from Moigrad, but another one is, a secondary circuit that links it with the main one.

Ocnița (Ocnele Mari - Vâlcea County). The prosperity of the local communities (rich inventory, roman imports) was based on very rich salt resources located all along the area (Berciu 1981).

Two fortresses built on a hill shaped as half a circle (**Fig.6.1; 6.2.; 10**), were probably meant to protect these very important salt resources and control the local trade. The same massif is also the location for an area with votive deposits and a large settlement at the bottom. All the sites are from the period between the 2nd century BC - the end of the 1st century AD.

The site included a superior plateau (**Fig.11**) and seven terraces, arranged as stairs, and oriented West North-West-East-South-East (**Fig.10.1.**). Underground chambers and perhaps hundreds of pits were discovered here. To these we may add seven little dwellings. The acropolis and the first three terraces were fortified, but the general fortification system is now rather difficult to decipher as there is no plan of the excavations and the earth collapsed in those areas.

Located on the superior plateau, inside a rectangular area 17x15m, delimited with a ditch, there were three underground chambers (**Fig.11**) (all containing a very special inventory resulted from intentionally made ritual activities) and traces of edifices destroyed by powerful fires suggesting a previous existence of temples.

Underground chamber number two is oval in shape (depth=2.40m, diameter=4.00x3.40m). It was dug into the stone there. It contained an extremely rich inventory: dozens of whole ceramic vessels, among which we may mention the painted vessels and the rush light cups, and dozens of fragments of pottery, seven anthropomorphic clay figurines, a roman sword (*gladius*) with scabbard, an arrowhead, a spearhead, a curved dagger (*sica*), knives, different other iron items, five bronze fibulae, two roman denari from Augustus, fragments from vessels with Greek inscriptions mentioning a pottery workshop belonging to a local *basileus*.

From underground chamber number three, among numerous vessels and metal items, we would like to draw attention to the presence of a bronze human mask, carefully laid down near the wall.

On the fifth terrace (**Fig.12.2; 12.3**), the archaeologists found, disposed on the both sides of an alley, 126 pits, which contained various inventory items, large pieces of burnt clay walls, animal bones, ceramic vessels and fragments of ceramic vessels. In pit 105 (**Fig.12.1.**), dated to 1st century BC, one found, among other materials, 25 entire ceramic vessels, a whetstone, an iron fibula, an iron shield *umbo*, half of a dagger scabbard made out of iron and an iron plate (Berciu, Iosifaru, Diaconescu 1993, p. 149-156). The ceramic vessels were carefully laid down in particular positions; the set included 12 rush light cups, 12 jars and a porringer, all hand made. If we think about the deposit as being carefully arranged and about the positioning of the pit in a filed of pits, we can state that this was a ritual deposit.

In Ocnița, one found relatively numerous figurative representations, including the aforementioned bronze mask, two medallions and a semicircular item, all made out of bronze, and clay anthropomorphic figurines; one aspect worth noticing is the significant number and variety of ceramic vessels, weapons, tools, coins and adornments deposited as offerings (Berciu 1981).

Pietroasa Mică-Gruiu Dării (Buzău County). The site from Pietroasa Mică-Gruiu Dării is located in the micro region of the Istrița Hill – part of the hilly massifs that borders the Curve Carpathians in the South, ensuring the transition towards the lower levels of the Buzău Valley. Therefore, a distinct feature of this region remains the abrupt and clear elevation difference (30-60m) between the last sub-Carpathian hills and the plain below. This provides the sites located in this region with very good strategic locations in relation with the plain. The Istrița massif is delimited by the Valley of Nișcov to the North, the Valley of Sărata to the East and the Valley of Buzău to the South. The total surface is approximately 200km² and maxim elevation 749m. There are salt resources nearby.

The site from *GuIU Dării* is part of an impressive landscape (**Fig.5.2.**), with a powerful impact on the observer. The site stands on top of a rocky plateau, elevated at 534m above the plain, surrounded by higher hills, like in an amphitheatre. The site enjoys a spectacular view towards the plain below (**Fig.14.1.**). This visibility is obviously a shared perception, as the site is observable from the plane, as a genuine landscape marker.

All the performed spatial analyses emphasized the importance of this relation between the site and the plain. The shortest road used to access the site was coming from the plain on the Valley of Dara (**Fig.14.2**). The most accessible territories around the site, which implied minimal effort in passing through the relief, were the southern terraces, which descended into the plain and the fields located at the foothill of the site (as the CSA illustrates). The site is at the confluence of three main passing corridors (**Fig.14.3**), located mainly on peaks and ridges, which interconnect the large valleys that surround the Istrița massif, also important communication routes in the region.

The plateau was enclosed with a stone wall (**Fig. 13.1.; 15.1**). Parts of walls are nowadays visible only in the Western and Northern parts of the enclosure, from which only a surface of 2500m² still stands today, as the Eastern and Southern edges were destroyed by a modern limestone quarry (**Fig.13.1**). The surrounding wall, 2.00-2.20m wide, consists of two faces of polished limestone tiles (*parament*) and of *emplecton* (Dupoi, Sîrbu 2001; Sîrbu 2004₃, p. 183-213; Sîrbu, Matei, Dupoi 2005). Considering the preserved remains, mainly the foundation, this wall did not seem to possess the necessary features of a fortification, its function being, perhaps, that of delimiting the sacred space and of impressing the participants to the ceremonies.

In the almost 1200 m² excavated until now in different areas of the enclosure, only three types of complexes were registered (**Fig.13.2.**) for the period between 1st century BC –

1st century AD: a) mound-like deposits (**Fig.15.2; 15.3.**), the majority with a stone ring at the bottom and fireplaces discovered *in situ* or deposited in secondary positions; b) isolated fireplaces and c) pits. Between 2001-2007 alone, in over 300 excavated square meters inside the enclosure and on the First Terrace, the archaeologists found 111 complexes: 70 mound-like deposits, 14 isolated fireplaces and 15 pits. To these, one may add 12 complexes with unknown functionality. The excavations carried out on the *First Terrace* (2006-2007) demonstrated that these types of votive deposits existed not only inside the enclosure, but also outside the walls; one must also verify the archaeological situation on the other existing terraces that border the upper plateau to the South and West, descending as stairs towards the plain.

Among the discovered complexes, neither *in situ* dwellings, neither workshops nor house annexes were found. The majority of complexes are represented by mound-like deposits with stone rings at the bottom (**Fig.15.2.**), oval or circular in shape, sometimes with fireplaces *in situ* found inside, or just secondary deposited, containing burnt pieces of clay walls, animal bones and other items composing rich inventories. The rings had various diameters (0.40-1.80m) and a preserved height of 0.20-0.50m.

Along the 1st century BC-1st century AD period, three or four archaeological layers with this type of assemblages were excavated. Some deposits, as for example C16 and C19 had the aspect of altars, as they were massive stone constructions considerably elevated above the soil; the burnt fireplaces on top of them could have been connected with some rituals.

The discovered inventory includes a large variety of items; some deposited entire, other were just fragments (**Fig.16**): ceramic vessels (almost the entire set of Dacian recipients), tools and utensils, weapons and harness items, adornments and dress accessories, coins, zoomorphic and anthropomorphic figurines. We must notice the extremely rare presence of agrarian tools or of tools for wood and stone works, the impressive number of knives, items connected with weaving (spindle whorls and clay weights), adornments and dress accessories. Entire or fragmentary Hellenistic-Roman type grinders were found inside the deposits or as components of the stone rings.

The absence of dwellings may indicate that this site was not a fortified settlement. The distribution of the discoveries, which occupied the entire surface, did not offer in fact, any free space for other types of complexes. Of course, the discovery of some dwellings remains a probability as the practitioners and guardians of the enclosures must have lived somewhere. The existence of cult edifices also remains a possibility.

The analysis of the elements found inside the mound like deposits suggested the fact that they contained burnt parts of dwellings and their inventory, preceded by a certain selection, as some categories of items were totally absent and others appeared frequently.

We must also underline the important role played by the fire in the ritual activities undertaken here, fact suggested by the discovery of numerous fireplaces.

The deposits with rich and various inventories, usually composed from already used artifacts, often, valuable items (**Fig.16**), express the strong cultic motivation that pressured the people to give them away. Nevertheless, we should assert that here, one found neither hoards of silver items and coins nor hoards of other items. Only the entire assembly of items deposited in this site may be regarded as a "hoard". We consider the site as a sacred enclosure (*temenos*).

Final considerations

As various history of religion studies demonstrated, the choice of a sacred place regarded certain objective considerations and others, more subjective. Conclusively, Mircea Eliade, one of the most known researchers in the field, stated: *Any sacred space implies a hierophany, an explosion of sacrum which leads to the isolation of a territory from the cosmic environment,*

making it qualitative different (1992, p. 26). Sometimes animals reveal the sacred nature of a place or this sacred nature imposes itself as result of other mysterious signs.

Unfortunately, there are no written sources or iconographical representations of the Dacian mentality to clear out the reasons for which they chose certain spaces as sacred sites. That is why we are obliged to identify and analyze the field raw data.

Apart from the pan-Dacian center from Racoș - expression of the official religion, we analyzed three regional, contemporaneous sites, belonging to the same spiritual culture, obviously distinct in comparison with the official model. As for *Tipia Ormenișului* we may suppose the adoration of deities in large stone and wood temples and the functioning of large public ceremonies (**Fig.2.2.; 3.1.**), in the case of *Ocnița-Colina Sacră*, *Moigrad-Măgura Moigradului* (**Fig.8; 9**) and *Pietroasa Mică-Gruiu Dării* (**Fig. 15; 16**) we do not have such impressive structures, but deposits of items, in underground chambers, pits or piles, associated with fireplaces. Of course, the presence of edifices remains as well probable for the regional centers, but these sites did not have the monumentality of the official centers.

Nevertheless, the large-scale phenomenon of votive deposits from these spaces and the richness of their inventory sustain that they were public sacred places, probably with a regional character, opened for communities living in a larger area. We tried to observe if the obvious differences between cultic behaviors was maintained in the case of structuring and integrating the sacred landscape.

We can truly speak about a sacred Dacian landscape, as the relief was not selected just for similar features. In other words, it felt in the same way, but also modeled, arranged and structured by humans.

All the sites were situated on top of high plateaus (**Fig. 2; 5; 6; 7; 8; 9**), considerably elevated above the surrounding relief, generating a strong visual impact, inaccessible and unsuitable for an everyday living. The relief was large-scale modified through terracing and leveling activities.

These cult areas were not isolated, but integrated in an assemblage of contemporaneous sites. The sacred areas were delimited by steep slopes or waters and by ditches and walls. The votive deposits and the cult structures were in many cases overlapped in multiple levels.

These similarities may indicate the existence of communities with similar cultural features. It will remain a task of the future studies to argue if, in the context of a supposed connection between the central religious authority and the political authority, these differences can be explained as a multitude of political structures (idea that refines the generally accepted theory of a Dacian centralism in the 1st century BC – 1st century AD).

There is no doubt that we can also accept another interpretation for the sacred centers from *Pietroasa Mică-Gruiu Dării*, *Moigrad-Măgura Moigradului* and *Ocnița-Colina Sacră*. Namely, they could be regional cult centers, which did not compete with the official cult but, instead, represented complementary beliefs and practices, having old traditions rooted in the mentality of the Dacian communities.

The archaeological discoveries point to an ever-increasing diversity of cult sites and figurative representations in the area inhabited by Geto-Dacians, which suggests that notable differences, in terms of both religion and collective imagery, were present (Sirbu 2006, p. 21-86; 99-102). Based on the monumental character of such cult centers (ex., *Ocnița*, *Pietroasa Mică-Gruiu Dării*), it is obvious that they are the expression of a regional political and religious elite, which had at its disposal significant economic and human resources for establishing such cult sites. This could indicate the intention of the regional political structures to stand out in terms of religion as well.

Perhaps the time has come to stop talking of just “a Geto-Dacian religion” and start accepting the existence of an increasingly visible religious diversity. It remains to be seen what was the relationship between the religious cult centers with certain types of temples, as an expression of an “official” religion, one considered “pan-Dacian” (Sîrbu 2006¹, p. 71-86; 2006², p. 59-62), and these regional cult centers, as a spiritual manifestation of local structures.

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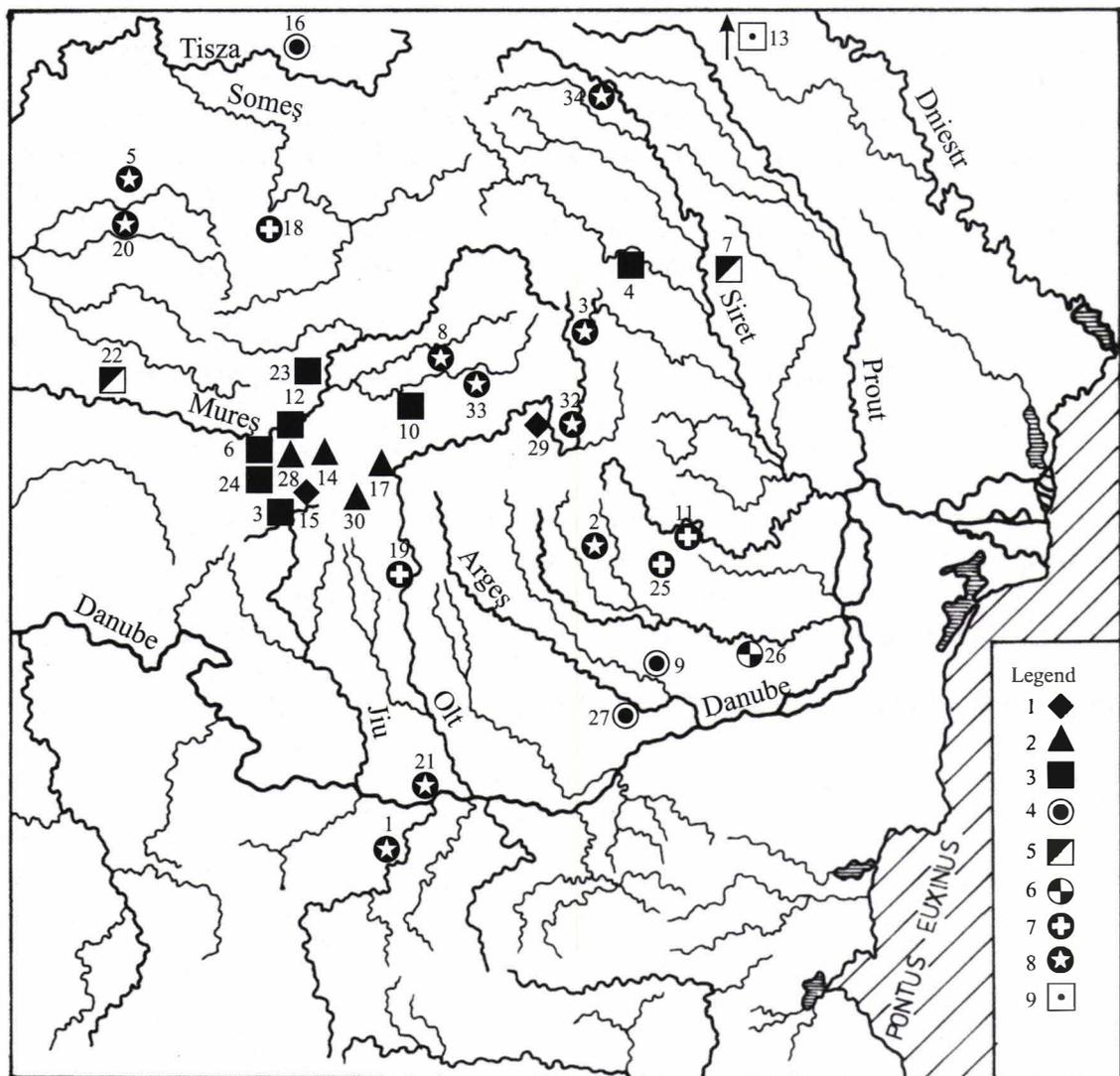


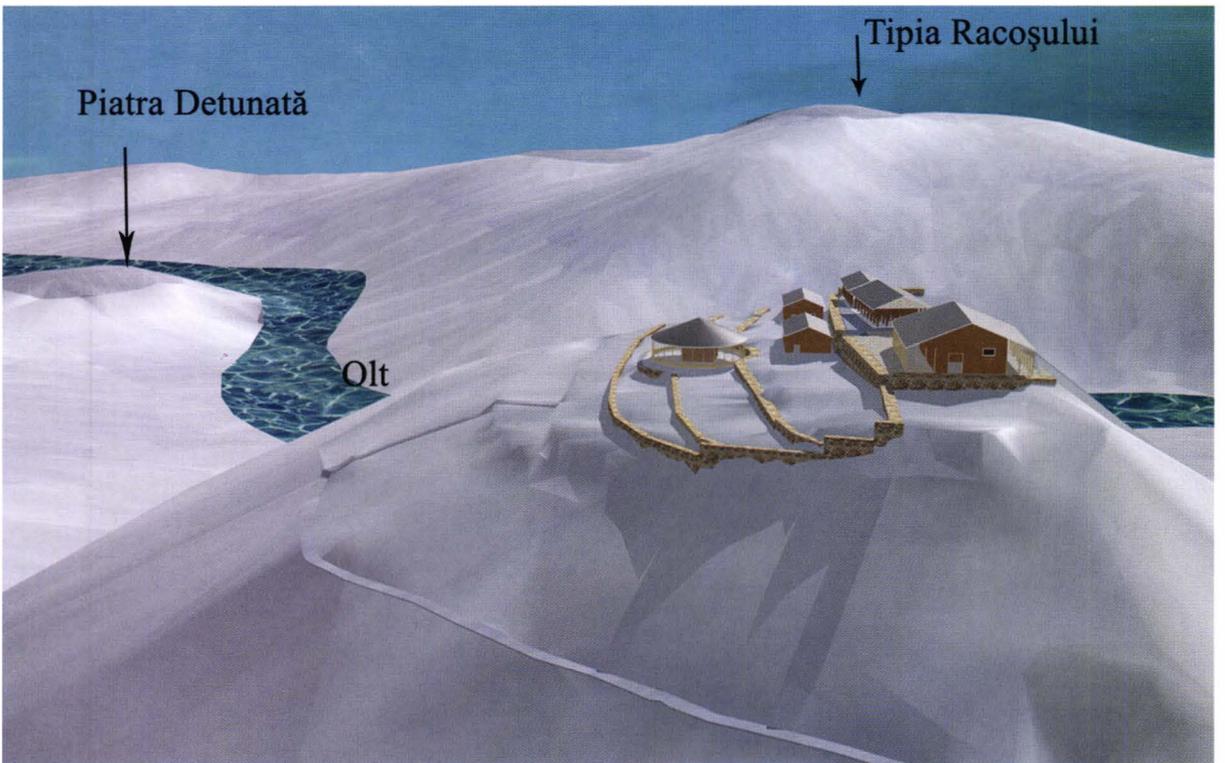
Fig. 1. Temples and sacred enclosures at the Geto-Dacians (± 100 BC-106 AD)

Legend: 1. Rectangular temples with columns and circular temples with apse buildings, 2. circular temples, simple or with apse buildings, 3. rectangular temples with columns alignment in/or near the fortresses, 4. apsed temples in settlements, 5. apsed temples and simple circular temples in settlements, 6. rectangular temples in settlements, 7. regional religious centers with/without temples and rich offerings, 8. "pit fields", 9. isolated circular temples.

Localities list: 1 Bagačina, 2 Bănești, 3 Bănița, 4 Bâtca Doamnei, 5 Biharea, 6 Blidaru, 7 Brad, 8 Bratei, 9 București-Tei, 10 Căpâlna, 11 Cârломănești, 12 Costești, 13 Dolinean, 14 Fețele Albe, 15 Sarmizegetusa Regia, 16 Malaja Kopanja, 17 Meleia, 18 Moigrad, 19 Ocița, 20 Oradea-Salca, 21 Orlea, 22 Pecica, 23 Piatra Craivii, 24 Piatra Roșie, 25 Pietroasa Mică, 26 Piscu Crăsani, 27 Popești, 28 Pustâiosu, 29 Augustin, 30 Rudele, 31 Sântimbru-Miercurea Ciuc, 32 Sf. Gheorghe-Bedehaza, 33 Sighișoara-Wietenberg, 34 Zvoriștea.



2.1.



2.2.

Fig. 2. Racoș - *Tipia Ormenișului*. 1. General view from North; 2. Virtual reconstruction of the plateau - view from East.

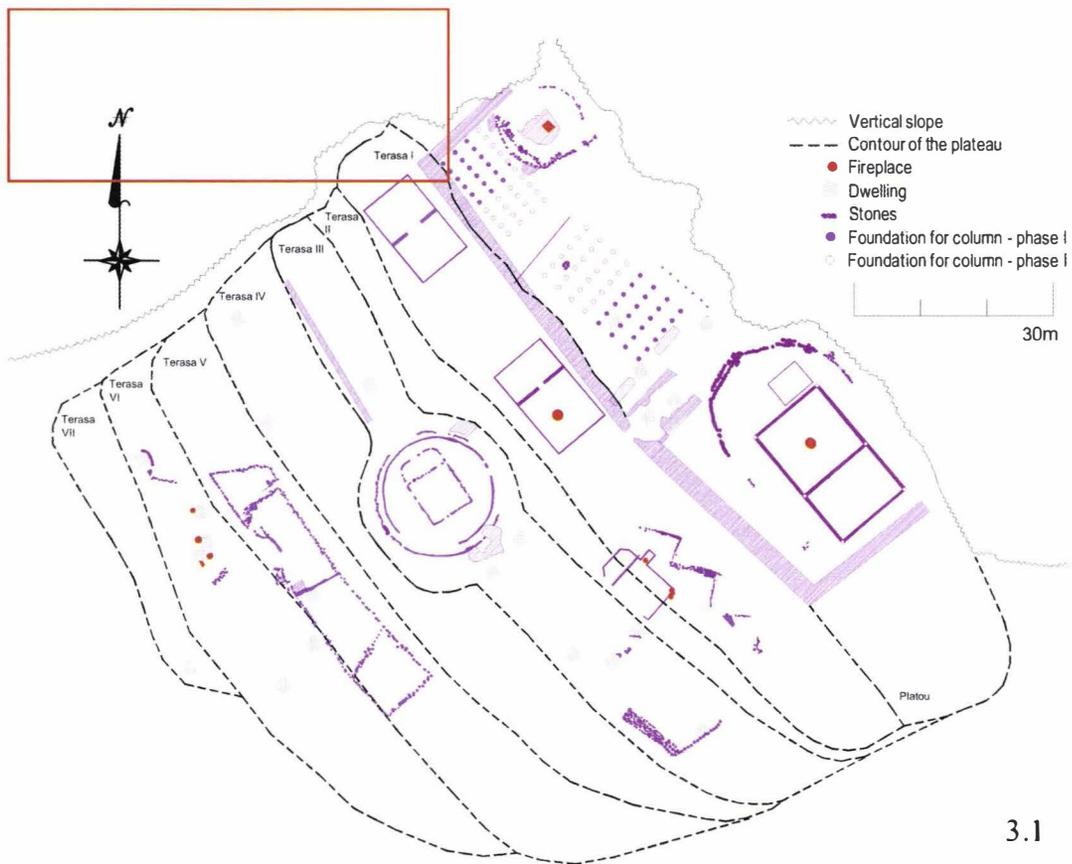
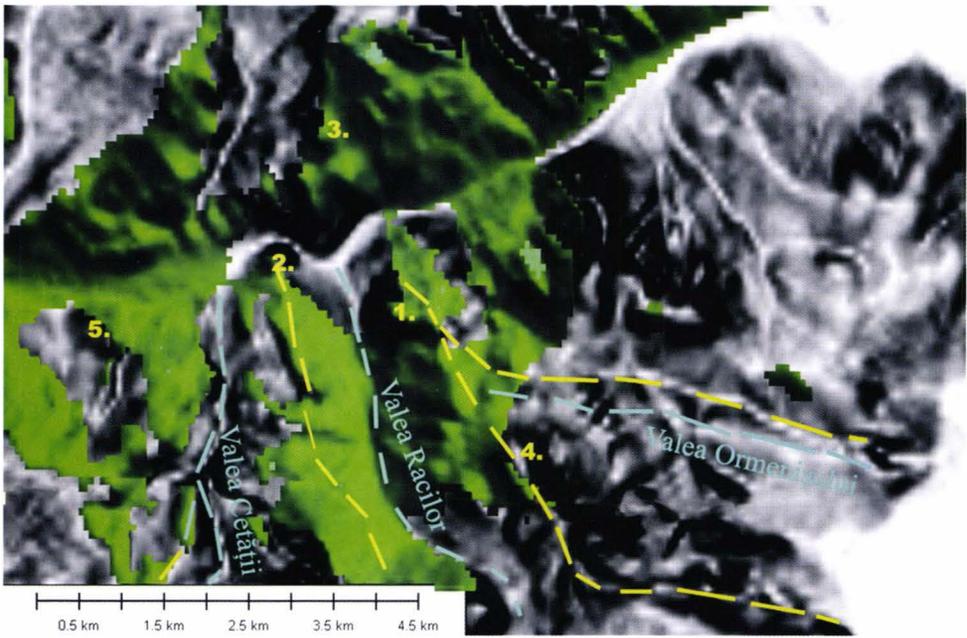


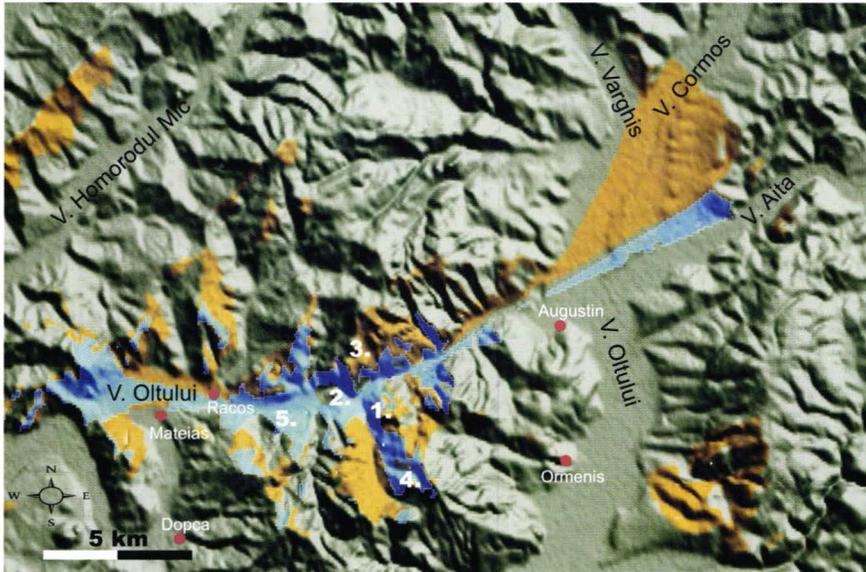
Fig. 3. Racos - *Tipia Ormenișului*. 1. General plan; 2. Three-dimensional reconstruction of the edifices located on the plateau (cazarma in the background and the edifice with alignments of basis for columns made out of limestone) after the architectural proposals of Antonescu 1984, p.58-66, fig. 39-40.



4.1.

--- Possible ridge route
 --- Possible valley route

■ Visually controlled area from the plateau of Tipia Ormenișului



4.2.

■ Visibility area of 15 km calculated for the plateau of Tipia Ormenișului

■ Visibility area of 15 km calculated for the site Piatra Detunată

Fig. 4. Racos - *Tipia Ormenișului*. 1. Slope Analysis; 2. Viewshed Analysis: 1. Tipia Ormenișului 2. Piatra Detunată; 3. Tipia Racosuului; 4. Dealul Negru; 5. Dealul Cornu.



5.1.

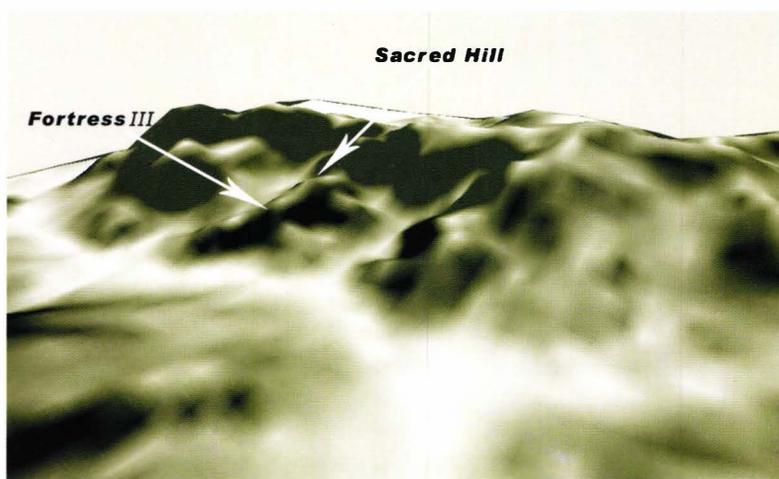


5.2.

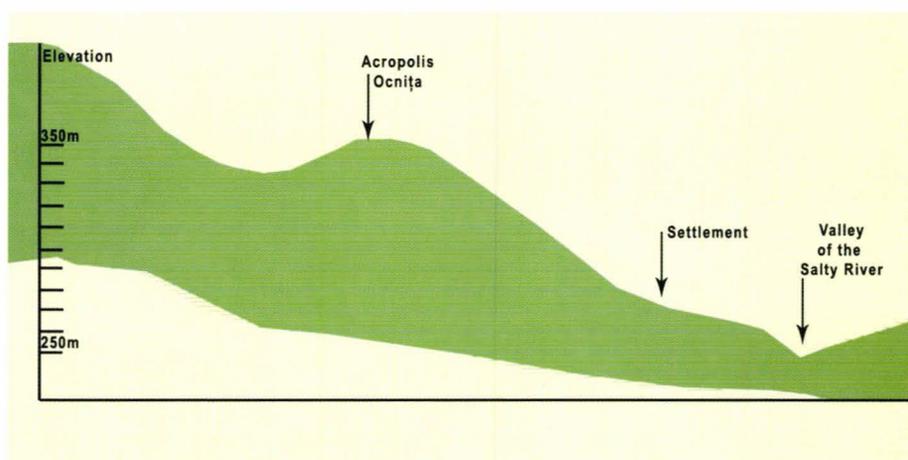
Fig. 5. General views. 1. Măgura Moigradului; 2. Pietroasa mică - *Gruia Dării*



6.1.

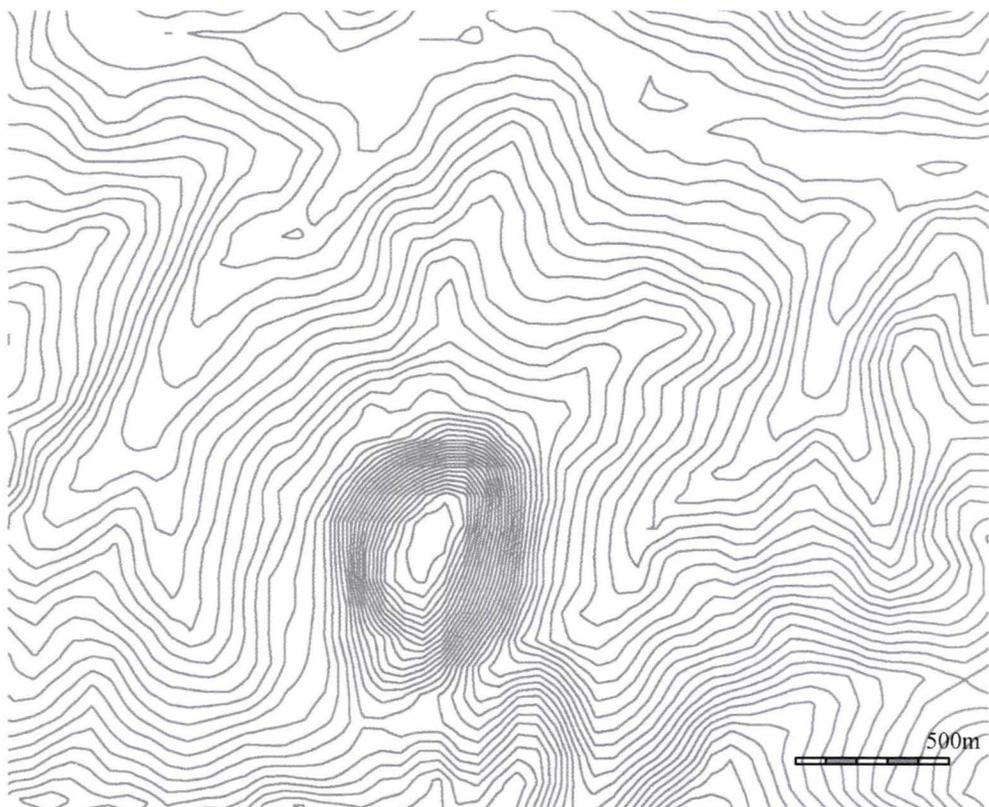


6.2.



6.3.

Fig. 6. Ocnita. 1. General view from Northwest; 2. Three-dimensional reconstruction of the relief in a Slope Analysis - view from Northwest; 3. The altimetric profile of the site (South North).

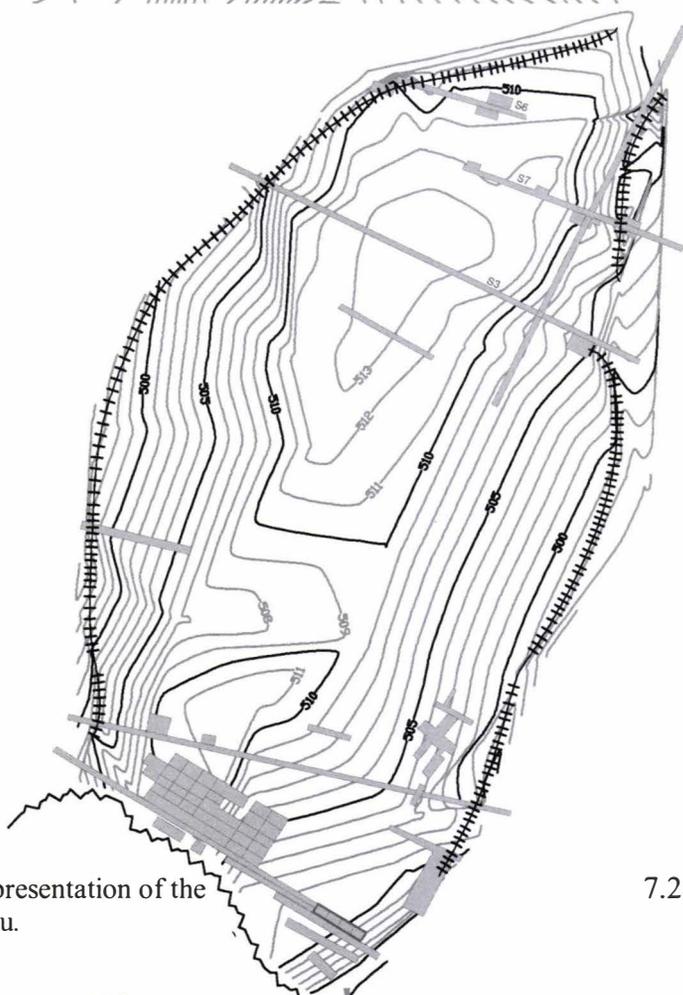


7.1.



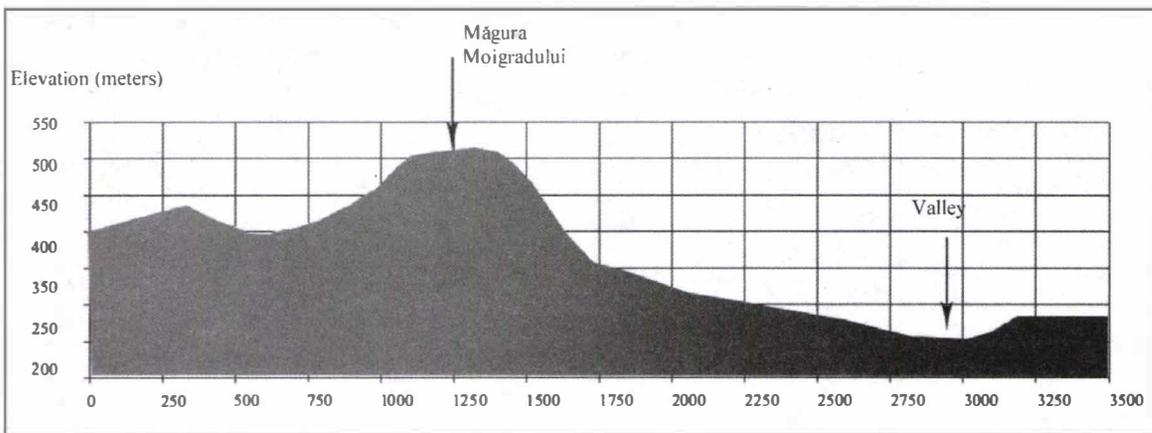
100m

-  Excavated surfaces
-  Modern quarry
-  Fortification

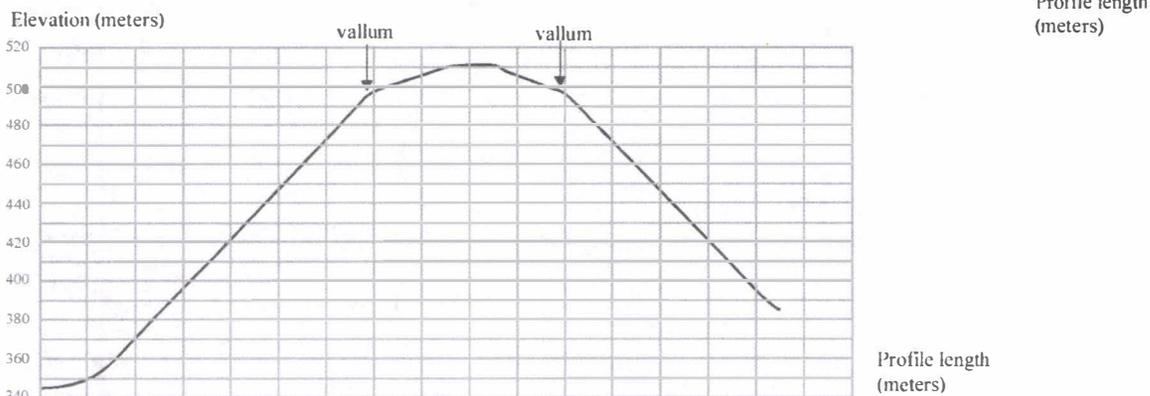


7.2.

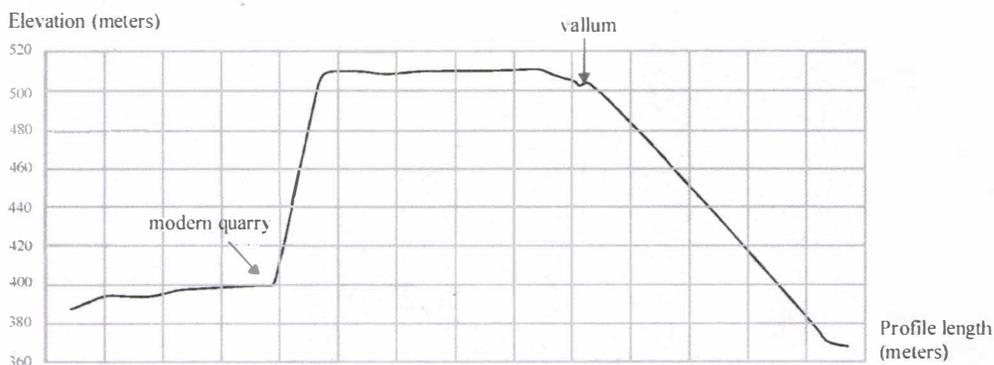
Fig. 7. Măgura Moigradului . 1. Relief representation of the microregion; 2. General plan of the plateau.



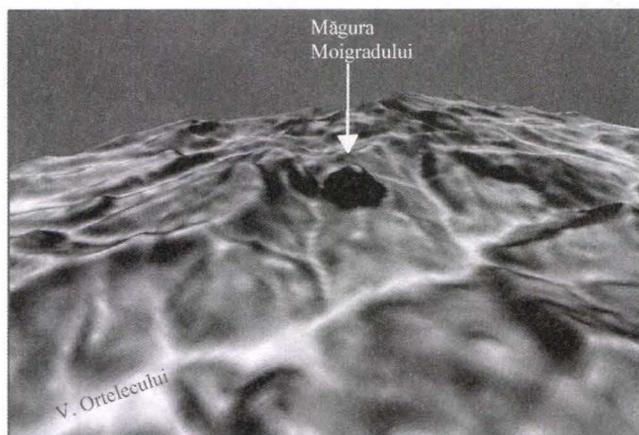
8.1.



8.2

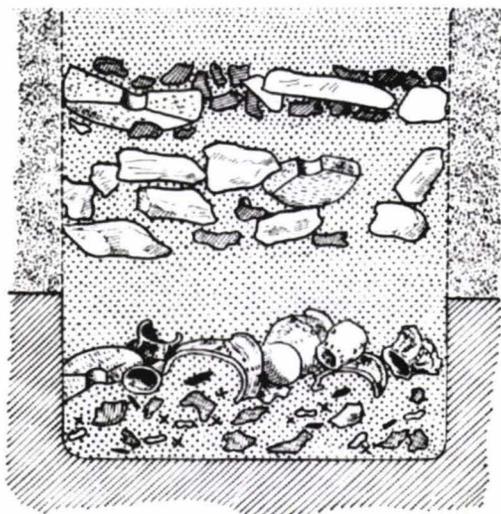


8.3.

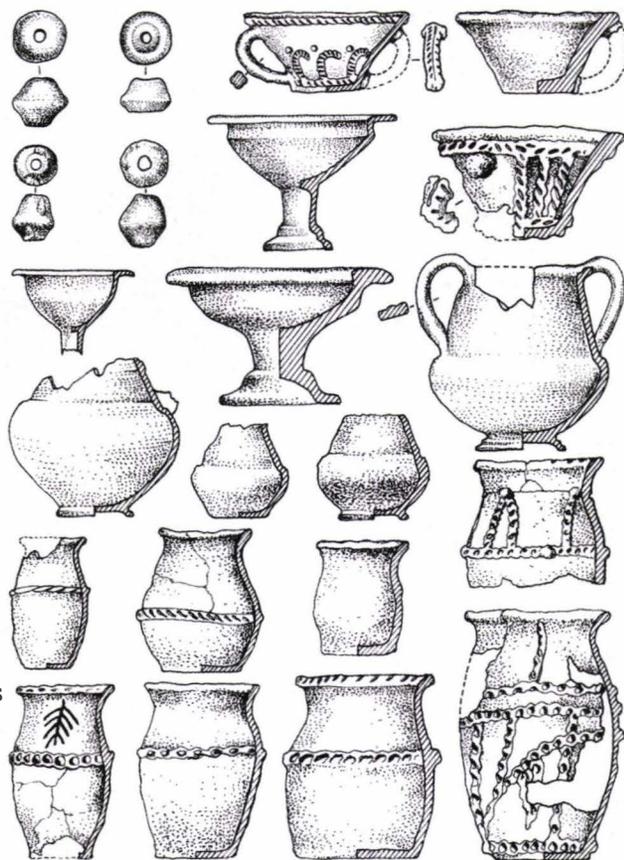


8.4.

Fig. 8. Magura Moigradului. 1. Altimetric profile of the microregion (Southeast-Northwest); 2. Altimetric profile of the hill (West-East); 3. Altimetric profile of the hill (South-North); 4. Three -dimensional reconstruction of the relief in a Slope analysis - view from West.



- soft yellow rock
 - filling soil
 - stone
 - grinder
 - animal bone
 - black soil
 - pottery
 - * human cremated bones
 - cole
- 0 60cm



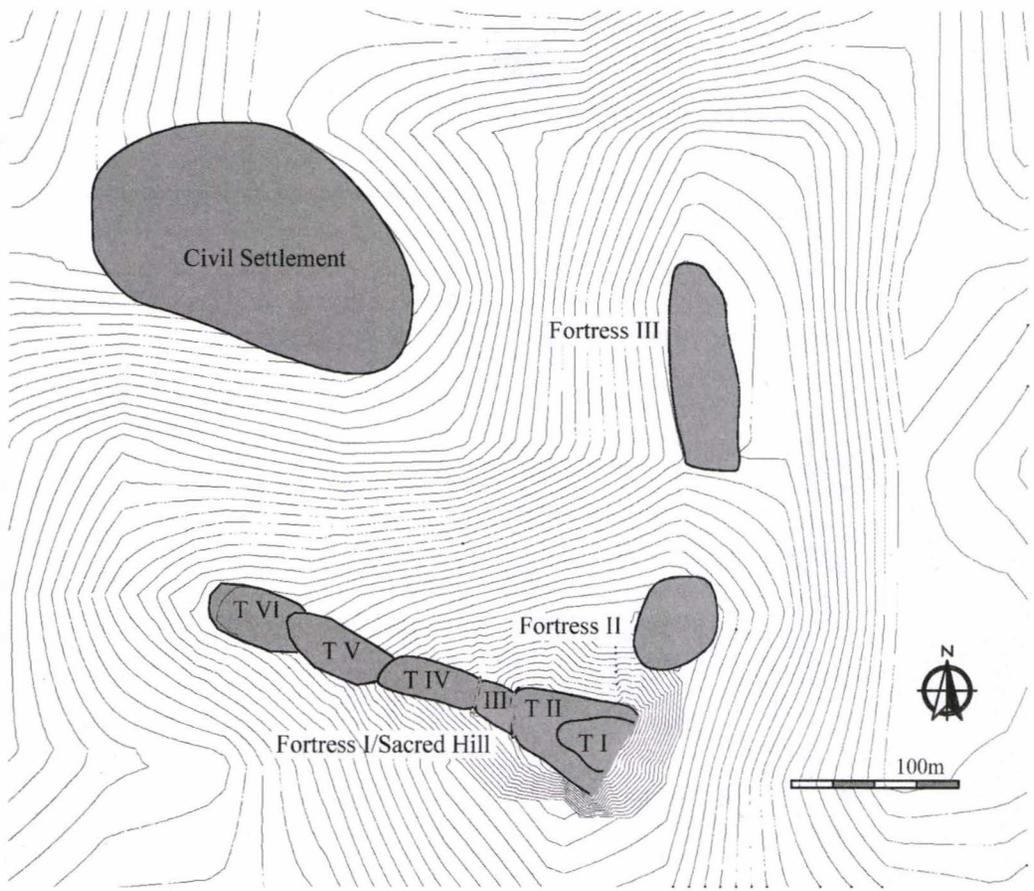
9.1.

9.2.

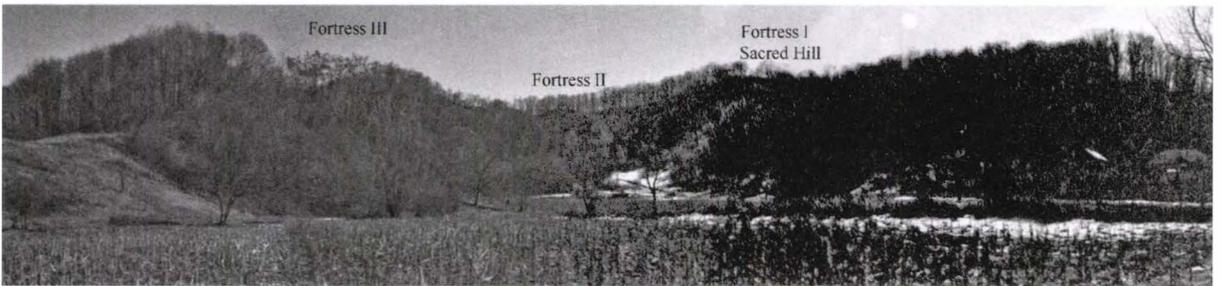


9.3.

Fig. 9. Măgura Moigradului. 1. Pit 55 - vertical drawing; 2. Inventory of pit 55; 3. Pit 55; (9.1., 9.2., after Macrea, Russu, Mitrofan 1962)



10.1.



10.2.

Fig. 10. Ocnița. 1.General plan of the archacological assemblage; 2. Panoramic view of the site from Northwest.

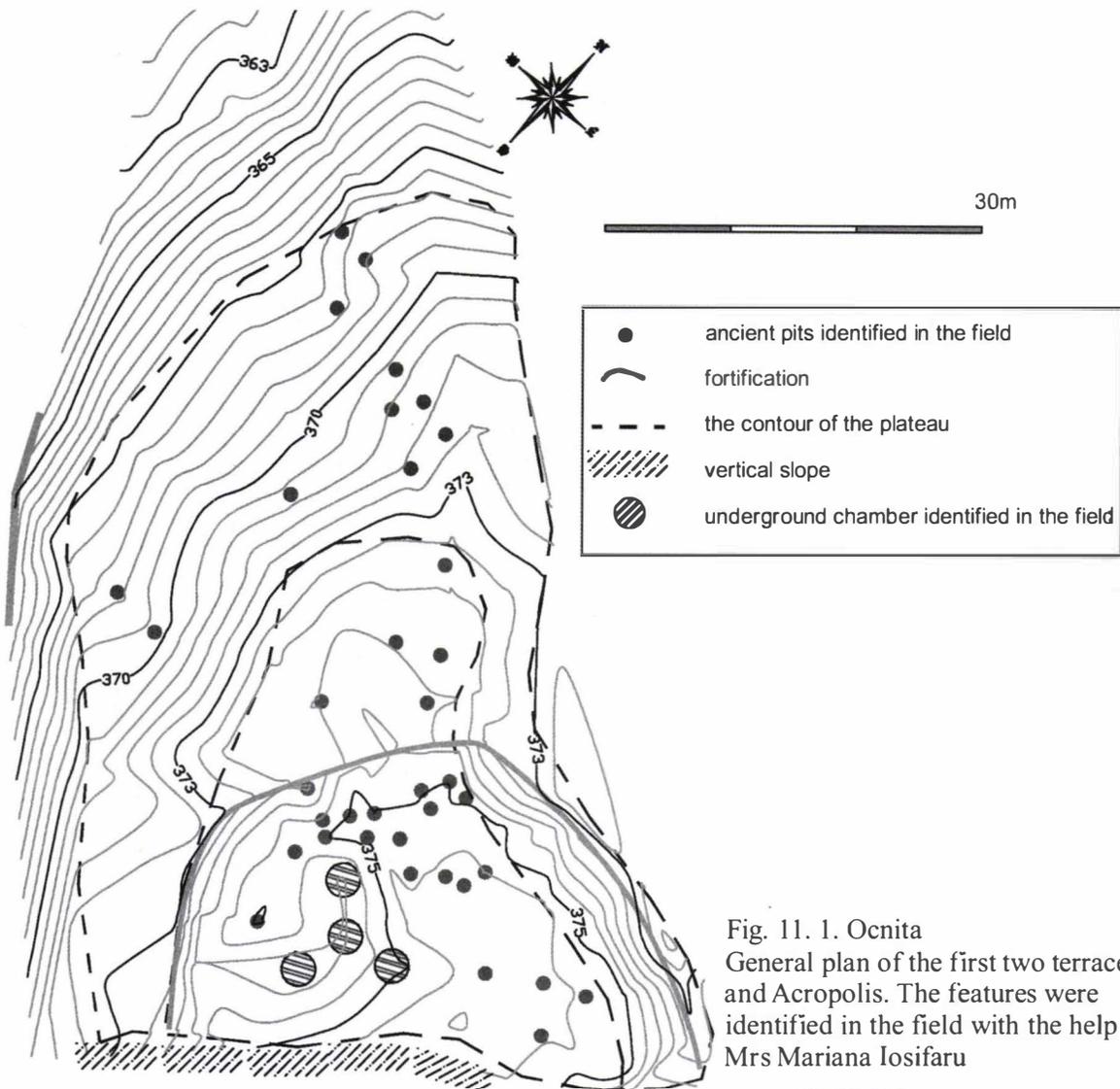


Fig. 11. 1. Ocnita
 General plan of the first two terraces
 and Acropolis. The features were
 identified in the field with the help of
 Mrs Mariana Iosifaru

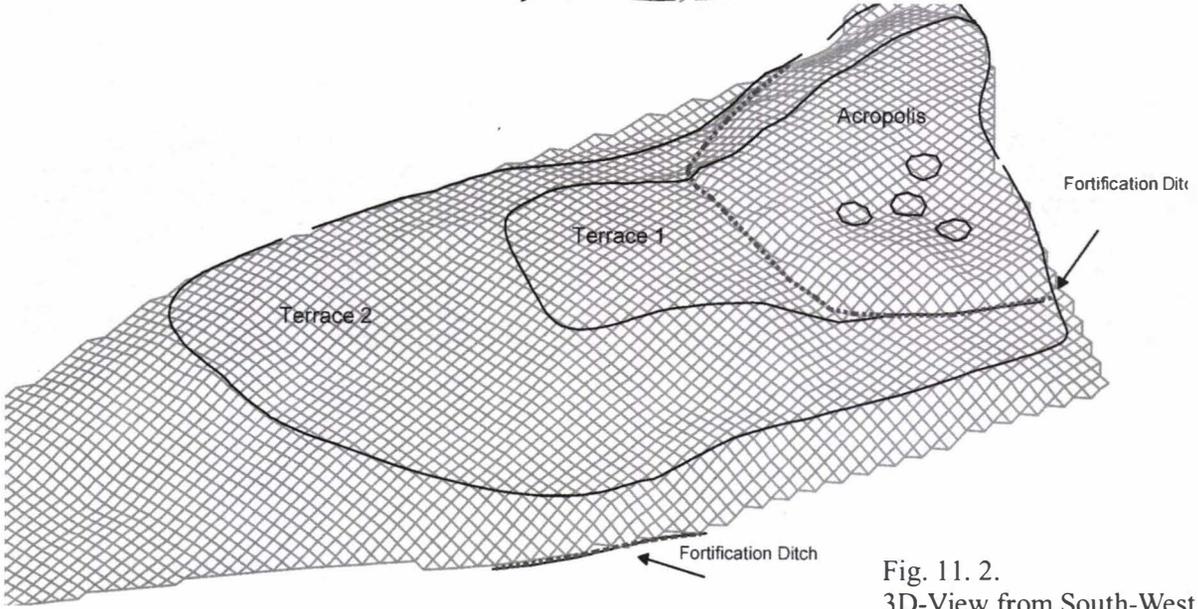
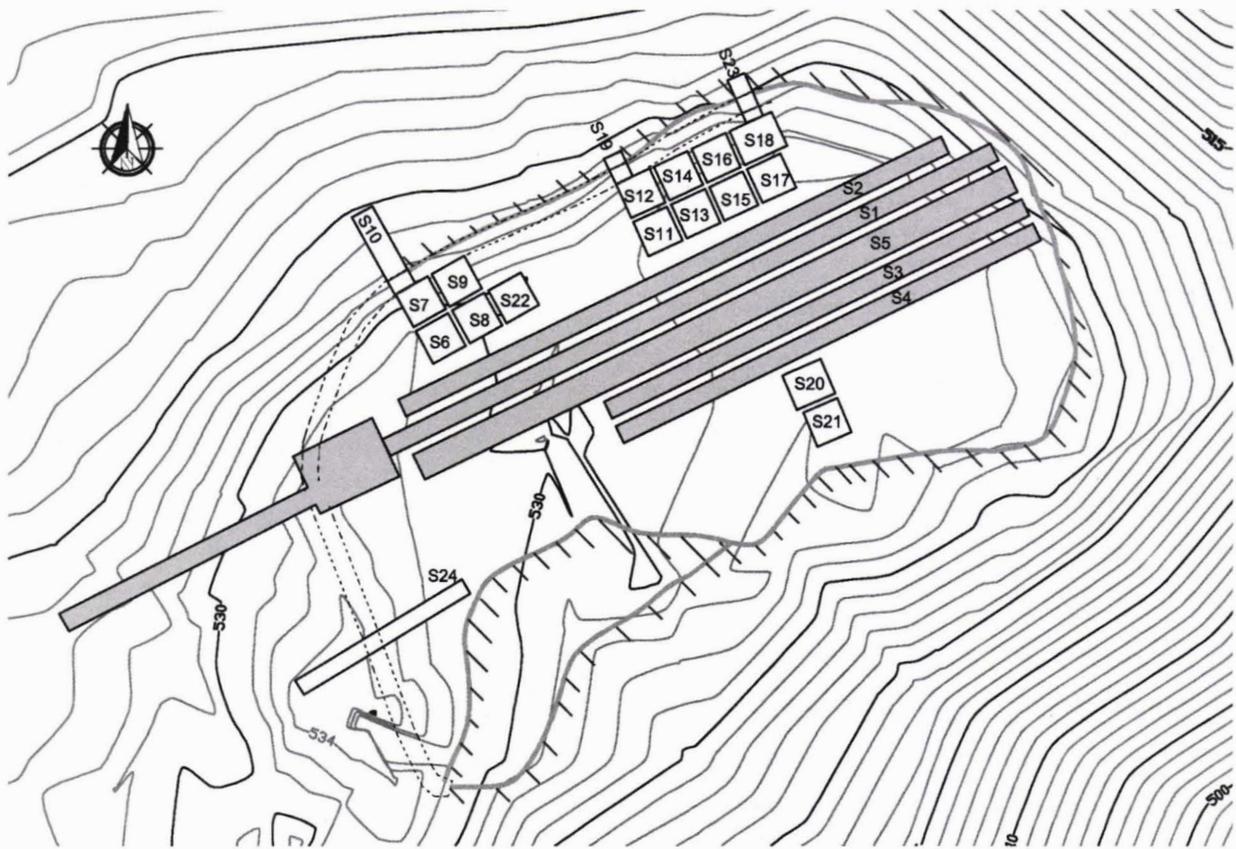
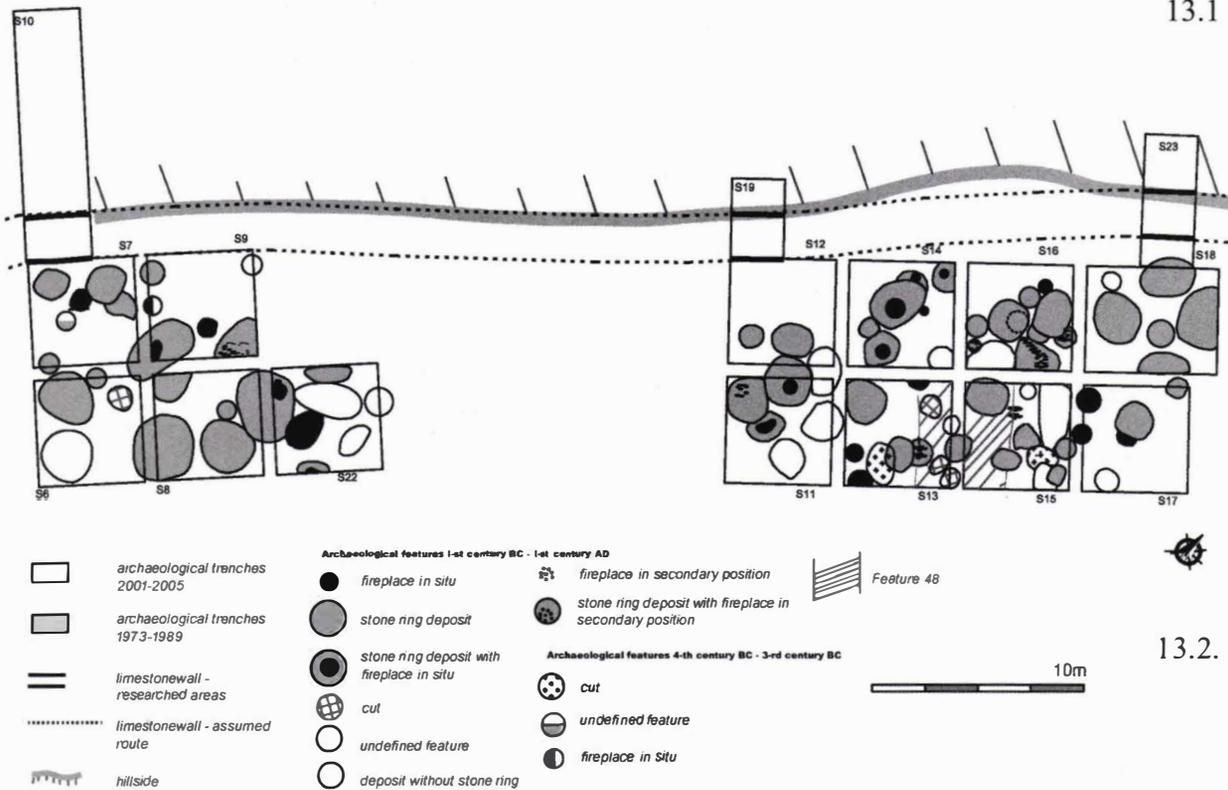


Fig. 11. 2.
 3D-View from South-West

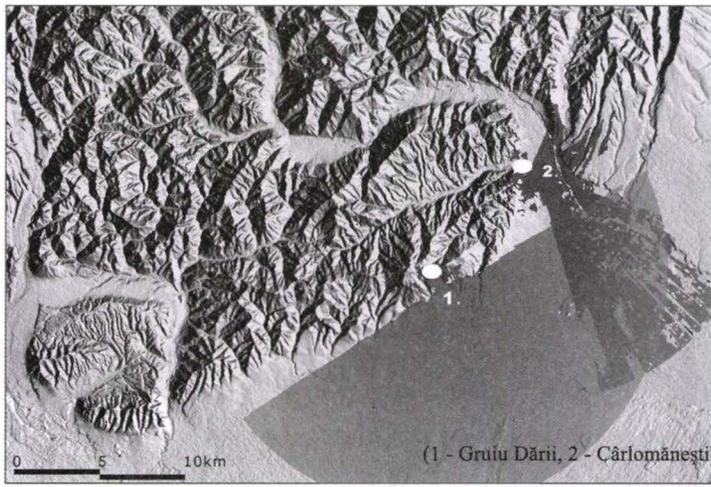


13.1

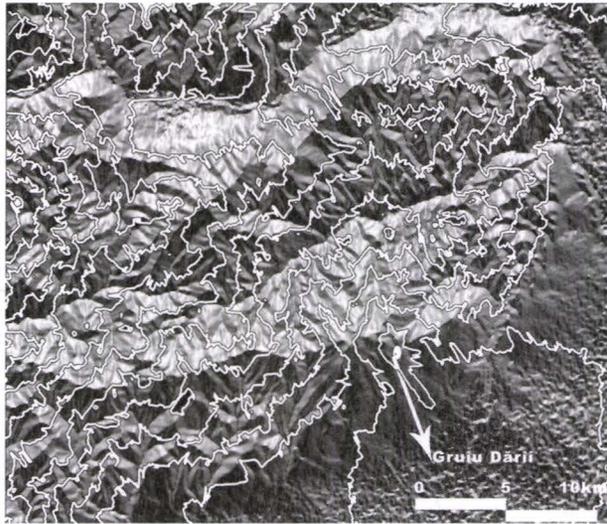


13.2.

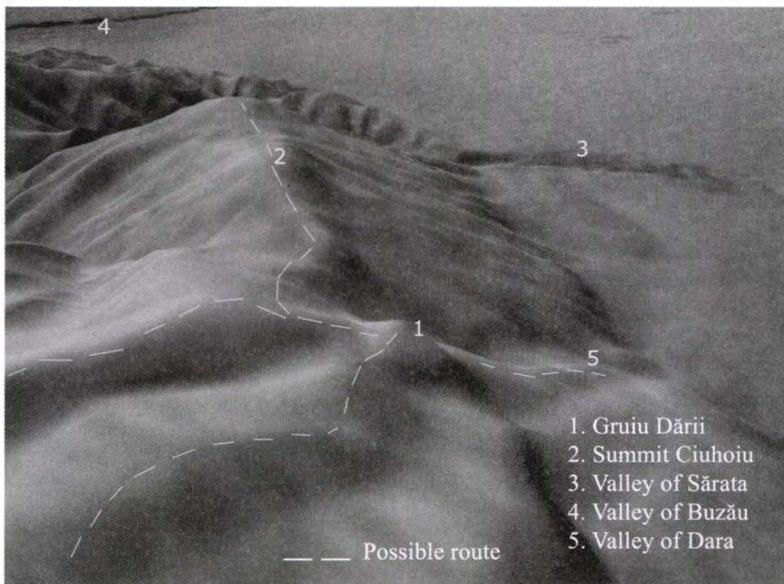
Fig 13. Pietroasa Mică - Gruiu Darii. 1. General plan; 2. Detail plan.



14.1.

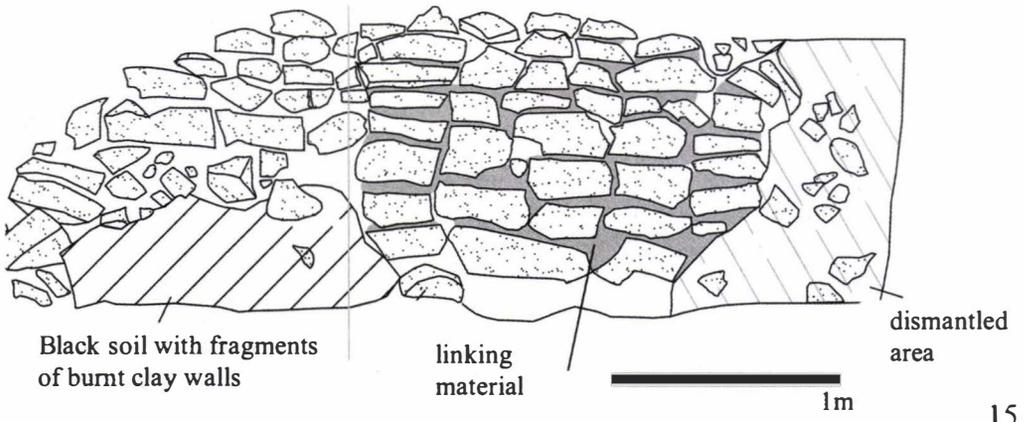


14.2.



14.3.

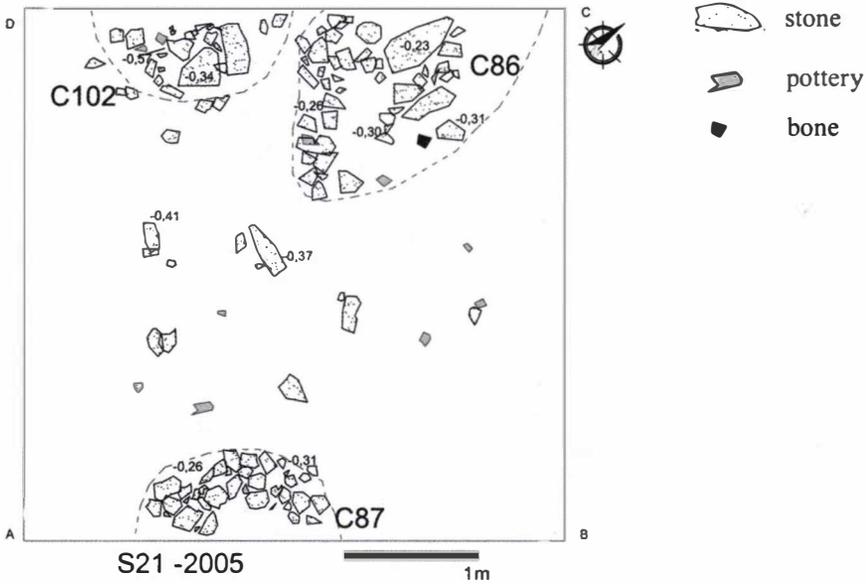
Fig. 14. Pietroasa Mică - *Gruiu Dării*. 1. Viewshed Analysis; 2. Least Cost Surface Analysis; 3. Three dimensional reconstruction of the relief in a Slope Analysis - view from Northwest.



15.1.



15.2.



15.3.

Fig. 15. Pietroasa Mică - *Gruiu Dării*; 1. Vertical drawing of the wall; 2. Feature number 75; 3. Excavation surface 21 - plan drawing.

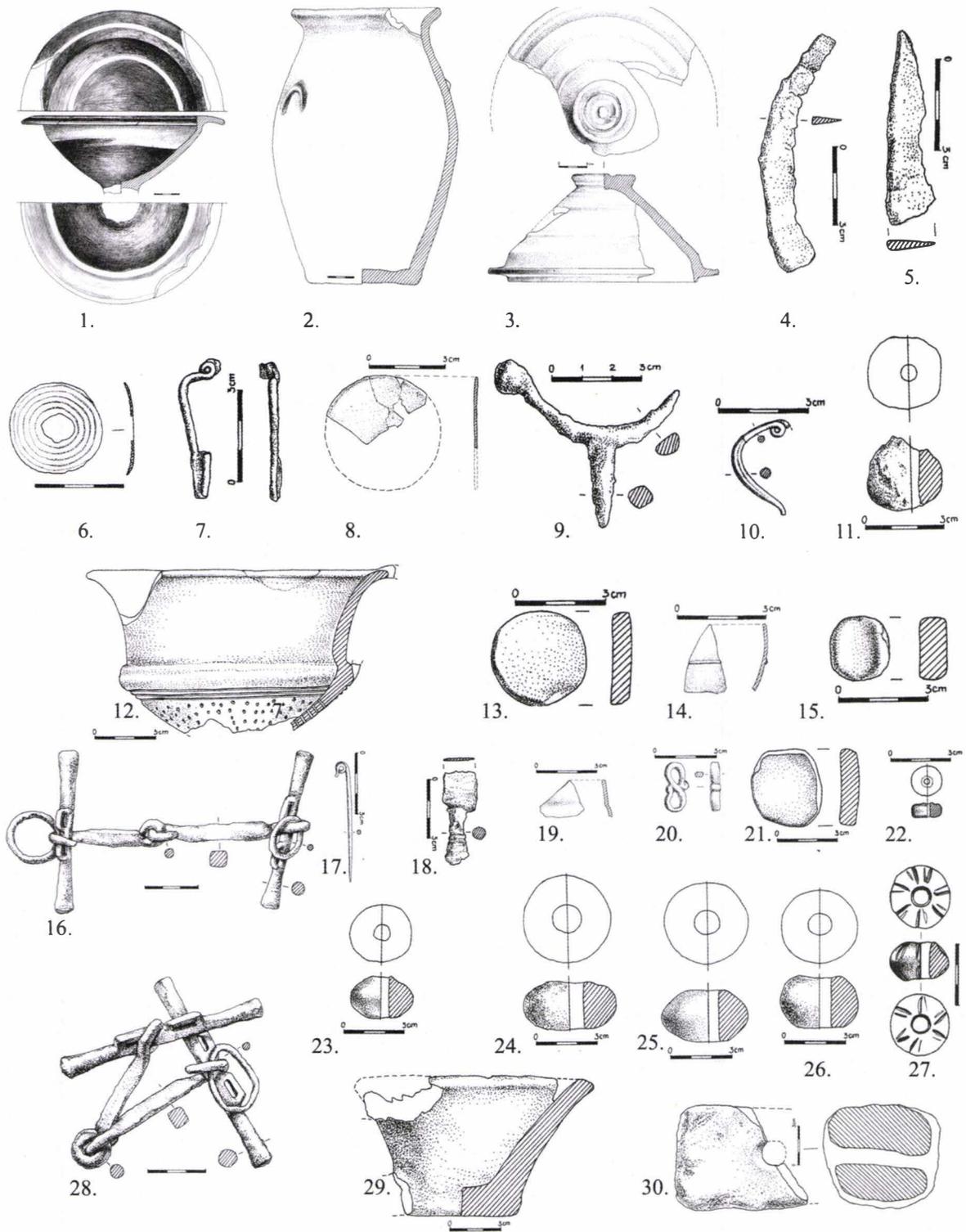


Fig. 15. Pietroasa Mică - Gruiu Dării - The inventory of features 18 (Positions in drawing 1, 2, 6, 7, 8, 12) 38 (16, 28), 41 (20, 21, 22, 25, 26, 27, 30), 44 (17, 18, 19, 23, 24), 46 (3, 4, 5, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15).