

# RIVALRIES AND CONFLICTS IN THE BRONZE AGE: TWO CONTEMPORARY COMMUNITIES IN THE SAME SPACE\*

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**Key words:** Costișa, Middle Bronze Age, domestic space, mortuary structure, power and prestige.

**Abstract:** The present article examines the structure of the deposits dating from the Middle Bronze Age and discovered on the high plateau of “Cetățuia” hill at Costișa during the archaeological digging campaigns in the years 1959-1960, 1962, 2001-2005. The two Bronze Age deposits (Costișa and Monteoru) have been looked upon as the result of the existence of two contemporary human groups who alternately occupied “Cetățuia” hill. It is possible for the first Costișa human group to have inhabited “Cetățuia” itself, a supposition supported by the following indices: adobe conglomerates bearing the imprints of pillars and formerly belonging to dwellings with wooden structures which were situated above the ground, the 13 hearths *in situ*, a large amount of whole and fragmentary vessels, the animal bones. The Monteoru deposit covers the Costișa features and has a completely different structure. It is made up of a dense layer of stones, 15 cm thick; in between the stones there are 33 hearths *in situ*, remains of disturbed hearths, vitrified adobes, fragmentary Monteoru Ic2-Ic1 vessels, various small objects made of metal, stone, clay or animal bones situated close to the *in situ* hearths. The Monteoru construction is the result of a huge effort which, in our opinion, counts as a strong argument in favor of its special character. The motivation for such an effort is discussed in the last part of the article.

**Cuvinte-cheie:** Costișa, epoca bronzului, spațiu domestic, structură funerară, putere și prestigiu.

**Rezumat:** În articol este examinată structura depunerilor din perioada mijlocie a epocii bronzului descoperite pe platoul înalt al „Cetățuii” de la Costișa în cursul campaniilor de săpături arheologice din anii 1959-1960, 1962, 2001-2005. Cele două depuneri din epoca bronzului (Costișa și Monteoru) au fost considerate rezultatul existenței a două grupuri umane contemporane care au ocupat pe rând „Cetățuia”. Este posibil ca primul grup uman, Costișa, să fi locuit pe „Cetățuia”, indicii în acest sens fiind aglomerările de chirpici cu amprente de pari care provin din construcții de suprafață cu schelet lemnos, cele 13 vetre *in situ*, vasele întregi sau fragmentare, oasele de animale. Depunerea Monteoru acoperă complexele Costișa și are o structură complet diferită. Este alcătuită dintr-un strat consistent de pietre, cu o grosime medie de cca 15 cm, iar între pietre se află 33 vetre *in situ*, bucăți de vetre, chirpici vitrificați, vase fragmentare Monteoru Ic2-Ic1, diverse obiecte mărunte din metal, piatră, lut, os, oase de animale, situate în apropierea vetrelor. Amenajarea monteoreană este rezultatul unui efort uriaș, ceea ce reprezintă în opinia noastră un argument puternic pentru a presupune caracterul ei deosebit. Motivația unui asemenea efort este discutată în ultima parte a articolului.

At the beginning of the second millennium BC, “Cetățuia” hill from Costișa was occupied in turns by two human groups as the products of their pottery prove it by their different aspect (the Costișa and Monteoru Ic2-Ic1 pottery styles) and the remains of the constructions found inside the two successive archaeological deposits belonging to the Middle Bronze Age. The two human communities (Costișa and Monteoru) were partially contemporary and it is possible that at a certain time for them to have competed one with the other due to various reasons: their territorial closeness, the effort of one of the groups or of both of them for that matter to control the area or the access to resources at the expense of the other, the closing of alliances with other communities with the sole purpose of enhancing one’s power and prestige

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etc. The archaeological researches which were undertaken on “Cetățuia” from Costișa do not contribute any evidence regarding the unfolding of an unmediated conflict, or a battle between the two communities. However, it has been noticed that the Costișa settlement showed traces of having been destroyed, that Costișa remains (adobes, pottery, various small objects) were intentionally incorporated into the Monteoru structure by using stones and hearths, a structure which covered almost the entire high plateau of “Cetățuia” hill. The aspect of the Monteoru deposit at Costișa is specially reported to the situations concerning other Monteoru sites, which have been known to us until the present day. This paper represents our trial to explain, on the basis of the evidence we have obtained by means of field research, the relationships holding between these two human groups of the Middle Bronze Age at some moment in time, and the motivations underlying the building of the impressive Monteoru structure by using stones<sup>1</sup>.

The archaeological site is situated at the eastern edge of Costișa village (Neamț county), on “Cetățuia” hill, formerly part of the left terrace of Bistrița river (Fig. 1). “Cetățuia” consists of two compartments labeled with A and B: plateau A is higher (the “Cetățuia” itself), with an oval shape (approx. 70 × 36 m), perceivable from all directions from a distance of about 3-4 km; the second compartment (plateau B), shorter and measuring 56 × 52 m, makes the connection with the Bistrița terrace. The western and the southern edges of high “Cetățuia” (compartment A) were cut off and molded during prehistory at a time which cannot be identified precisely, so that 5-7 m below the high plateau, a platform terrace was obtained, 6-9 m wide on the western side and 10-12 m on the southern one, which confers a special shape to the hill. Within the uncovered sections on this platform, a ditch was spotted just at the foot of the slope. No precise indication as to the moment the ditch was dug can be foregrounded, but it seems to have been uncovered during the Monteoru period<sup>2</sup>.

The first systematic research have been undertaken in the years 1959-1960, 1962 by Alexandru Vulpe and Mihai Zamoșteanu<sup>3</sup>. Plateau A of “Cetățuia” was divided by two perpendicular sections into four sectors, among which three were studied by parallel sections. Two other sections were also opened on the terrace fitted out on the western and southern sides of “Cetățuia” with the intent of collecting information about the aspect, the structure and the building period of the ditch that demarcates the site boundary in this area. Plateau B was studied only by means of two long perpendicular tranches which crossed the plateau in length and width. The cultural affiliation as well as the succession of the deposits on the two plateaus of “Cetățuia” were established function of the superposing of some archeological features, chromatic differences as well as differences in the consistence of the soil and in the material culture. Simultaneously, the previous research put forward a new style of pottery – *Costișa*, defined on the basis of the pottery shapes and decorative motives (mainly hatched triangles pointing downwards) found within the inferior side of the layer dating from the Bronze Age<sup>4</sup>. The diggings were resumed in the year 2001, among the objectives being the minute study of the structure of the Bronze Age deposits<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Our deepest gratitude goes to Professor Alexandru Vulpe for his constant support over the years and encouragement to publish this article.

<sup>2</sup> In section S.I’/1959, at the bottom of the ditch, stones, Monteoru pottery fragments and another fragment of pottery of Wietenberg type were found. However, the information we have regarding the aspect of the constructions which border the plateaus of “Cetățuia” as well as the time of their building, is insufficient. More detailed information concerning these ditches would presuppose more extensive diggings and a special financial support.

<sup>3</sup> A. Vulpe, M. Zamoșteanu, *Săpăturile de la Costișa (r. Buhuși, reg. Bacău)*, Materiale 8, 1962, p. 309-316; A. Vulpe, *K voprosu o periodizacii bronzovogo veka v Moldave*, Dacia N.S. 5, 1961, p. 105-122; idem, voice *Costișa*, in *Enciclopedia arheologiei și istoriei vechi a României I (A-C)*, București, 1994, p. 361-362; idem, *Cultura Costișa*, in *Comori ale epocii bronzului din România*, București 1995, p. 163-164; idem, *Epoca metalelor*, in M. Petrescu-Dîmbovița, A. Vulpe (coord.), *Istoria Românilor, I, Moștenirea timpurilor îndepărtate*, București, 2001, p. 254-255.

<sup>4</sup> Vulpe, Zamoșteanu, *op. cit.*, p. 312-313; Vulpe, Dacia N.S. 5, 1961, p. 113-115; A. Popescu, *Beiträge zur Keramik vom Typ Costișa*, in C. Kacsó (ed.), *Bronzezeitliche Kulturerscheinungen im Karpatischen Raum. Die Beziehungen zu den Benachbarten Gebieten*, Ehrensymposium für Alexandru Vulpe zum 70. Geburtstag, Baia Mare, 2003, p. 379-401.

<sup>5</sup> A. Popescu, R. Băjenaru, *Cercetările arheologice de la Costișa, jud. Neamț, din anii 2001-2002*, MemAntiq 23, 2004, p. 277-294.

The present discussion will focus on the features and the materials dating from the Middle Bronze Age which were discovered on the high plateau of „Cetățuia” (plateau A), an extensively studied plateau. The recent diggings confirm the stratigraphic succession noticed in 1959. Underneath the vegetal soil slightly differentiated from it, there is a grayish pea-like soil, 0.30 m thick which grows thinner towards the edge of the plateau which in its turn, is slightly tilted. Towards its inferior side, this layer contains a mass of river stones around 0.15 m thick; the lower limit of the grayish soil stretches 4-6 cm underneath the basis of the stones (Fig. 2). The layer was noticed in all sections and contains archeological features dating from the Bronze Age. Underneath this deposit there is a brownish layer, compact in its aspect, 0.10-0.15 m, which contains features from the Neolithic period (early Cucuteni). Underneath, there is a brown-yellowish deposit, 0.30 m thick which contains Neolithic material belonging to the final stage of Precucuteni culture. In what their chromatic aspect is concerned, it is very hard to differentiate between the Neolithic deposits. While the layer containing Precucuteni material stretches over the whole plateau, the Cucuteni deposit is not present in all studied sections. At the bottom of the archeological deposits there is a yellow soil which is archeologically sterile. Regarding the order of the fittings dating from the Bronze Age, it has been noticed that the stone layer comprises features containing Monteoru pottery (styles Ic2-Ic1) and that it superposes features of Costișa type.

Costișa features, consisting in hearths, adobe conglomerates mixed with pottery or simply pottery conglomerates (whole vessels which had been broken *in situ* or disparate fragments of Costișa vessels) were spotted in almost all sections which had been uncovered on plateau A, marking the base of the gray layer from the Bronze Age. On this plateau 13 hearths were found; they were considered to be of Costișa type, this affiliation being prompted by the Costișa pottery found nearby as well as by their stratigraphic position, as they were covered by Monteoru features (the stone layer, hearths and Monteoru pottery). As to their location, the Costișa hearths are distributed on the southern and eastern sides of the plateau (Fig. 3). Their crust was noticed to have been placed directly on the ground, presenting in most cases a fairly extensive burn of about 4-6 cm. They have a round shape with a diameter of 0.40-0.60 m, but hearths whose diameter reached 1 m were also found<sup>6</sup>. Supposedly, the hearths might have been part of more complex structures on the surface, possibly even dwellings, if one is to judge after the adobe conglomerates found *in situ* close to some of them. The remains of such structures were better preserved in the south-eastern sector of the plateau A, as they were uncovered during the 1959 campaign. In the sections delimited in 1959 (S.I, S.III, S.VIII), on a surface of about 6.60 × 4 m three hearths *in situ* were found, along with adobe conglomerates showing traces of rods which were situated in some of the cases on top of burnt sections of land with an uneven aspect (Fig. 4). Beside the hearths, in between the adobes or partially underneath them there were complete or substantially preserved Costișa vessels, which had been broken *in situ*, as well as Costișa sherds (amphorae, miniature amphorae, cups, bowls and jars). The entire area was covered by the stone layer belonging to the Monteoru deposit as in between the stones there were four hearths, Monteoru pottery with protruding and cut-in motives (styles Ic2-Ic1), animal bones, objects made of stone and bones. During 2002-2005 we searched the plateau area situated further from sections S.III-S.VIII/1959, towards west (an area wherein surfaces S.II/2002<sup>7</sup> and S.III/2003 were uncovered). In this sector, underneath the stone layer containing Monteoru pottery, adobe conglomerates, vessels and fragments of Costișa type, as well as animal bones were found. Many of the Costișa features were probably disturbed when the stone layer and the Monteoru hearths were made. For instance, one could clearly see on the field how the Monteoru hearth 4/2003 (from S.III/2003) had affected several adobes belonging to the Costișa deposit, as some of these adobes were caught under the stone bad of the

<sup>6</sup> For instance, hearth 43 from S.XV, square 6, whose crust was preserved on a surface of 1 × 0.80 m. A big sized hearth (1.60 m in diameter) which had been built on a pebble bed, was discovered on plateau B in S.VII/2005. Over the hearth there was a large piece of burnt daub and nearby broken Costișa vessels were found. The research on plateau B will, however, be published on different occasions as they are in an incipient stage at the moment.

<sup>7</sup> In the year 2002, in the south-western sector of the plateau, we initially uncovered three surfaces, labelled F, G, H, and measuring 4 × 4 m, in between them we left a space of 1 m. During the same digging campaign, we did away with the 1 m wide space in between the three surfaces, and obtained a section with the dimensions 14 × 4 m, oriented 5900 ‰ NNW, which received the label S.II/02. In the year 2004, S.II was widened towards west and east and the new section measured 14 × 10 m.

hearth while others were found near the crust or spread among the stones of the Monteoru deposit which was situated close to the hearth in question. Two hearths which had been associated with the Costișa pottery and which had been discovered in S.II/2004 were laid with their crust downwards; their closing down as well as their settling in this way had been intentional as the two structures had a regular shape (Fig. 5).

The Costișa pottery is very standardized, comprising a reduced number of shapes and decorative elements. As for the shapes, one can distinguish the cups with two symmetrical handles, the amphorae and the miniature amphorae, the bowls and the jars. The vessels which were made of good quality clay, were decorated with incised motives consisting in hatched triangles which pointed downwards; above them, there was a horizontal strip filled with round or long pricks. The decorations occupied the most visible part of the vessel, the most exposed one, in between the base of the neck and the maximum diameter – few were the cases where they headed towards the bottom or where they decorated the handles. The bowls and the jars especially were made of intermediary or rough clay and more often than not, their exterior surface was covered with stripes. The color of the Costișa pottery is coffee- or brick-colored, thus distinguishing itself from the Monteoru one whose color is gray or black for most of the cases. Some Costișa vessels were whole when found underneath the stones (especially the cups or the little amphorae as they were small), some others were found broken *in situ* as for instance the amphorae and the bowls. However, in most cases the vessels were fragmentary, spreading on large surfaces, including among the stones of the Monteoru layer.

Within the Costișa deposit, few stone artefacts were found- three curved knives, two fragments of maceheads, two of axes, and a quernstone. From among the objects made of bone, we would like to mention the discovery of a cylinder decorated with spiral motives and of another cylinder in the making. Similar objects were found in the area of the Mid-Danube basin, in deposits with ceramics of type Periam-Pecica, Otomani-Füzesabony, Mad'arovce, Veterov, Vatina which were dated on the basis of the radiocarbon analyses, as belonging to the first half of the second millennium BC. On plateau A, underneath the Monteoru deposit, three grip-tongue daggers made of copper or bronze were found, one of them with a bent blade<sup>8</sup>. A grip-tongue dagger was found on a hearth from section S.II/1962 from plateau B, beside the hearth, there were small pieces of adobes and ceramics of Costișa type. The place of origin of such daggers is the North-Pontic space, where they are very frequent inside hoards, and especially in the inventory of tombs such as Jamnaja and Katakombnaja<sup>9</sup>. We also mention the discovery, on the same plateau B, underneath a conglomerate consisting in adobes and broken vessels, of a curl ring made of double wire (*Noppenring*); numerous similar pieces were found in the inventory of women graves belonging to the cultural groups Periam-Pecica/Mureș, Nitra, Aunjetitz from Mid-Danube (ca. 2100-1850 BC).

The deposit consisting in Monteoru features has a completely different structure than the Costișa one (Figs. 7-9). It is made of a thick layer of stones with a medium weight of 100 kg/sq.m. The stones have various sizes and can sometimes reach 50 cm in length. Most probably, they were collected from the Bistrița river bed and brought to "Cetățuia" afterwards. Their position on the plan offers no indication whatsoever regarding the existence of some buildings where from it could originate. Yet, the stones were not randomly scattered on the plateau, but placed on an extensive surface of this plateau- the layer growing thicker towards the edges and thinner, with missing links, towards the centre. One argument in favour of an ordered positioning of the elements within this structure would be the fact that underneath bigger stones which initially showed up when the surfaces were uncovered, there were smaller ones more compactly set. Likewise, we also noticed that there was no intention to obtain a denser layer of stones, similar to a pavement whereupon one could easily tread, on the contrary, many stones, especially bigger ones, were placed with their even part on the ground and with their protuberances upwards. It is possible that when building this arrangement they might have taken into account the type of rock, the presence of chunks of conglomerate, of yellow or orange gritstones being by no means fortuitous<sup>10</sup>. Among the

<sup>8</sup> No analysis has been yet undertaken on the metal which served for the manufacturing of these daggers.

<sup>9</sup> S.N. Korenevskij, *SovArch* 2, 1978, p. 33-47.

<sup>10</sup> Concerning the choice of rocks varying in colors in order to build some megalithic structures, see, A. Jones, *Local colour: megalithic architecture and colour symbolism in Neolithic Arran*, *OJA* 18/4, 1999, p. 339-350, with an older bibliography inaccessible to us; T. Darvill, *White on Blonde: Quartz Pebbles and the Use of Quartz at*

stones, groups of pebbles, most of which circular in shape, similar to the gravel beds within the structure of the hearths, with various sizes from a diameter of 0.20 m up to  $1.60 \times 1$  m. A layer of pebbles, approx. 2-3 cm thick stretched over a surface of  $1.60 \times 0.60$  m within surface S.II/2002, and linking two Monteoru hearths (hearth 1/2002 and hearth 2/2002).

The stone layer always appears in association with Monteoru Ic2-Ic1 ceramics (decorated with lines in relief or incised motives). Most Monteoru whole vessels and pottery fragments were found among small stones which in their turn were covered by bigger ones. Likewise, the base of the Monteoru hearths was situated at the level of the small stones. Very often, the crust of these hearths was fully or partially covered by stones, some of which of bigger dimensions and intentionally placed in such a way as to form compact conglomerates on top of them (e.g., hearth 15/1959 or hearth 1/2002). Among the stones, 33 hearths were found, stretching closely one to the other along the edge of the plateau (Fig. 3). The hearths belonging to the Monteoru deposit had a round shape, of 0.50-0.80 m in diameter<sup>11</sup>. In most cases, a gravel bed was used for their construction, sometimes associated with Monteoru or Costișa pottery sherds or even with big and flat stones; sometimes the bed was made of big flat stones. Upon the structure in question, a layer of earth was laid, of approx. 2-4 cm thick. Neither the stones nor the pottery fragments showed any sign of having been burnt and the ground underneath the crust was reddened 1-3 cm, thus possibly indicative of the fact that the hearths had not been used for a long time. There are also some examples of superposed Monteoru hearths (or maybe remade) with a crust just as frail as the others Monteoru hearths from Costișa site.

On many occasions, towards the inferior side of the layer of stones, pieces of adobes bearing imprints of twigs and branches were found; they belonged to the constructions on the ground dating from the previous deposit, with Costișa pottery. Among the stones, pieces of adobes were also found, some of which were big and had been intensely burnt up to the point of vitrification (Fig. 8). The remains of vitrified structures were not found under the stones in the Costișa deposit and consequently one may exclude the variant that the vitrified adobes appeared in the Monteoru layer through the ruffling of some older features. These adobes were burnt in a different location and then brought and placed among the stones. Some pieces of hearths were also found among the stones, but these were different from the Monteoru hearths; the pieces of hearths were much thicker and which had a more compact structure of the earth underneath the crust which had been burnt. Similar hearths of this type, with a more solid structure and the result of intense and longer burnings were found under the stones together with Costișa pottery. It is possible for these fragments of hearths dating from the previous deposit to have been dislocated and intentionally placed in between the stones. A thick piece from the crust and the burn of such a hearth was found in an almost complete Monteoru cup (it only lacked the two handles) which was situated among the stones at approximately 1.50 m SE from hearth 1/2002 and 0.32 m deep. The cup was situated near a group of small long stones, similar to those from construction of hearth 1/2002 and which stretched over an area of  $0.25 \times 0.20$  m. The fragments of a big Monteoru *askos* which had been probably intentionally broken, were gathered from beside the Monteoru cup and the group of small stones. Two somewhat similar cases were noticed within the same section- S.II/2002. We mean a Monteoru Ic2 partially preserved cup, which had thick pieces of crust inside; beside it a fragment of a curved stone knife was found (*Krummesser*); the cup was found among the stones of the Monteoru deposit at approximately

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*Neolithic Monuments in the Isle of Man and Beyond*, in A. Jones, G. MacGregor (eds), *Colouring the Past. The Significance of Colour in Archaeological Research*, Oxford-New York, 2002, p. 73-91; G. Cooney, *So Many Shades of Rock: Colour Symbolism and Irish Stone Axeheads*, in Jones, MacGregor (eds), *op. cit.*, p. 93-107; G. MacGregor, *Making Monuments Out of Mountains: The Role of Colour and Texture in the Constitution of Meaning and Identity at Recumbent Stone Circles*, in Jones, MacGregor (eds), *op. cit.*, p. 141-158; D. Bukach, *Exploring identity and place: An analysis of the provenance of passage grave stones on Guernsey and Jersey in the Middle Neolithic*, OJA 22/1, 2003, p. 23-33. From the Romanian literature we quote Horia Ciugudean's observation regarding the preferential use of limestone when building the barrows belonging to the Livezile group from Early Bronze Age, which was brought from considerable distances although other types of rocks were available in the area (e.g., the gritstones). This fact is explained by the author through "a certain magical-ritual significance that the white color of the limestone has, which is difficult to identify with the present-day documentation", see H. Ciugudean, *Epoca timpurie a bronzului în centrul și sud-vestul Transilvaniei*, Bibliotheca Thracologica 13, București, 1996, p. 129.

<sup>11</sup> There are also big hearths e.g., hearth 4/2003 ( $1.60 \times 1.20$  m).

1.20 m NE from hearth 8/04 . An almost complete Costișa cup was found in between the stones, at about 1 m SE from hearth 7/04; the vessel contained pieces of adobes.

The Monteoru pottery is typologically varied, consisting of cups with two over-stretching handles, vessels with layered bodies and pointed bottom (the so called “vessels for offerings” – *Spendegefäße*), *askos* vessels, big bellied vessels with funnel neck, bowls and plates of various shapes. Within this ensemble of ceramics, “open” shapes dominate *i.e.*, wide-opened vessels which could be used for serving. The decorative motives are pretty simple and usually consist in combinations of relief lines and, seldom, incised lines (styles Ic2 and Ic1). The most richly decorated are the offering vessels, the *askos* vessels and the plates; the first two types are presupposed by the literature to have served in ceremonial/cultic activities. Although whole vessels were also found, especially cups, the greatest part of the pottery found is fragmentary. Few Monteoru vessels were found broken *in situ* (usually these are cups which lack their handles); on the other hand, there were numerous situations when fragments from the same pot (when working with the material, the fragments glued together) were scattered on an extended surface ranging over several sq.m.

Among the stones of the Monteoru layer there were other small clay artefacts (spindle-whorls, loom-weights), stone artefacts (axes, curved knives – *Krummesser*, flat perforated stones, spherical handstones, querns), a piece made of metal (the cutting edge of an axe), animal bones some of which showing traces of manufacturing. The stone knives are quite numerous – 29 items, the majority of which complete. It is to be retained the fact that they were found close to the hearths; they were especially concentrated on the southern end of the plateau (24 items) where a great amount of Monteoru hearths are situated. Regarding the stone axes (15 pieces out of which 8 were placed in the southern sector of the plateau), it is worth mentioning the fact that they were discovered in a fragmentary state and that only one item could be rendered complete; as for the rest, we have 11 fragments of cutting edges and four fragments of butts. Four querns were also found among the stones on the southern side of the plateau; three of them facing the ground. Another quernstone facing the ground was found on the bottom of a pit – 0.60 m deep (S.VI, squares 4-5, near the southern profile) – the filling of the pit contained Costișa pottery sherds and some rocks. The Monteoru layer of stones was interrupted, just above the pit, by a circular area with a diameter of 1.70 m. Even if Costișa pottery was found inside the pit, it is possible for this feature to have been related to the Monteoru deposit. A similar situation was discovered in S.II/02, area F, where a pit containing fine Costișa pottery was found, especially fragments of amphorae and cups; over the pit, on a circular surface the layer of stones was missing – however, roughly in the middle of this circular area, there was another group of stones placed at about the same level with the Monteoru layer. The end result of this is that the pit is not subsequent to the Monteoru layer, but probably dug by the Monteoru people themselves; out of certain reasons they have intentionally left the area partially uncovered by laying only a few stones exactly over the spot where a large amount of Costișa pottery fragments was found.

From what we presented so far, one can remark sufficient indices to support the fact that for the construction of this extensive Monteoru structure, one had in mind an ordering of the elements which compose it. Firstly, hearths were built and small stones were placed on the plateau, vessels were then broken, their fragments spreading over and in between the small stones. Then other stones were brought, some of which very big, and placed on top of the small stones, the whole or fragmented vessels, on the hearths, either completely or partially covering them. Among the stones, vitrified pieces of adobes were placed together with pieces of hearths which differed in terms of their consistence from the Monteoru ones, various objects made of stone, bones or clay. Although this construction was raised in stages, it is unitary, being datable by the Monteoru Ic2-Ic1 pottery (the Monteoru Ic2-Ic1 pottery are not stratigraphically ordered but appear together). On top of the layer of rocks, there is a layer of grayish pealike soil which stretches to the present-day surface, approx. 0.20-0.30m, and which encloses a small number of pottery sherds dating from the Neolithic, the Bronze Age, the Medieval period and recent objects, which could not be obviously considered as the remains of some archeological deposits.

In our view, the covering of the hearths as well as of other Monteoru features, with stones belonging to the same structure, which in turn is covered by a layer of soil which does not represent an archeological deposit, would mean a sort of **closing** of the structure, its **sealing**. Taking into account all the data, we believe to detain sound arguments in favor of considering the Monteoru deposit as special in its character,

more likely the result of the unfolding of some activities related rather to some ceremony than to some domestic activity. The great number of rocks – probably hundreds of tons of stones brought from far away – show the effort made by the community in question to build such a construction. The great number of hearths, near-complete vessels, pottery sherds and animal bones, represent proofs for such a ceremony. Placing some massive vitrified pieces of adobes belonging to burnt down constructions along with remnants of hearths in between the stones, is an intentional action which had its own significance within some activities/practices, especially connected to the mortuary ceremonies<sup>12</sup>. The stones were arranged in a dense layer along the edge of the plateau and seemingly form a ring, just like the hearths along the margin of the plateau. The aspect of the Monteoru deposit, the way in which it was put together, the presence of an impressive quantity of stones and the way in which they were laid on the surface of the plateau forming a ring, remind one of the exterior structure of some mortuary features. As a matter of fact, during the Bronze Age in the intra- and extra-carpathian space, the river stones were mostly used for the arrangement of mortuary space or of some special features<sup>13</sup>. All these are reasons for us to presuppose that the Monteoru deposit on the high plateau of “Cetățuia” from Costișa represents a unitary ensemble with a special significance due to both its structure and location, whose character is rather **mortuary** in nature.

If this massive Monteoru ensemble which occupies the high plateau of “Cetățuia” has indeed a mortuary character, the natural question that comes to one’s mind and which is still in need of an answer is “Who was it built for?” Can the Monteoru construction be linked to the tombs discovered in the north-western and south-western sectors of the same plateau? Unfortunately, not all burials at Costișa can be dated with precision<sup>14</sup>. Out of a total of 10-12 graves we can assert that only one surely belongs to the Early Bronze Age (the collective grave 2/2004), one probably belongs to the same period (grave 3/2004), two of them are surely prehistoric and probably belong to the Bronze Age, but we do not have arguments which allow us to exactly set them in time (grave 1/2001 and grave 8/1962), and one belongs to the medieval period for sure (grave 4/2004). “A certain behavior related to the presence of an older mortuary space”<sup>15</sup> could be the reason which might have prompted the Monteoru community to undertake such a construction. The base of the Monteoru deposit is a little higher than the human skeletons in grave 2 (approx. 8-10 cm), and it might be possible for older burials to have been uncovered. They might have built this impressive structure in order to highlight the special character of the place possibly considered by them as a sacred area<sup>16</sup>. However, in our view, this would be the least credible hypothesis. In order to

<sup>12</sup> A more detailed discussion on this topic, but which refers to the discoveries at Sărata Monteoru and Năeni-„Zănoaga”, at I. Motzoi-Chicideanu, *Observations concerning the bronze age cult-object from Sărata Monteoru-„Poiana Scorușului”* in Kacsó (ed.), *Bronzezeitliche Kulturerscheinungen im Karpatischen Raum...*, p. 370-371; I. Motzoi-Chicideanu, M. Șandor-Chicideanu, *Ein bronzezeitliches Grab aus Năeni-Zănoaga*, Dacia N.S. 38-39, 1994-1995, p. 19, 22, 32-33.

<sup>13</sup> An exception could be Mănăstioara-Fitionești (Vrancea county), a Monteoru settlement where walls, terraces and stairs plated with stones were used. Unfortunately, the information we have is scarce, see M. Florescu, *Câteva date referitoare la cunoașterea sistemului de fortificație a așezărilor Monteoru din Moldova*, ArhMold 10, 1985, p. 7-29, the research remain mostly unpublished. For the interior and exterior structures of the Monteoru tombs at Căndești and Cărlomănești, see M. Florescu, *Carpica* 10, 1978, p. 97-136; I. Motzoi-Chicideanu, D. Sârbu, M. Constantinescu, N. Sultana, *Cimitirul din epoca bronzului de la Cărlomănești-“La Arman”*. *Câteva date noi privind standardul funerar în cadrul culturii Monteoru*, European Archaeology – on line, March 2007 (<http://www.archaeology.ro>).

<sup>14</sup> See the discussion about the burials at Costișa at A. Popescu and R. Băjenaru in this volume.

<sup>15</sup> Motzoi-Chicideanu *et al.*, (<http://www.archaeology.ro>), but regarding the discoveries at Cărlomănești-*La Arman*.

<sup>16</sup> A Monteoru construction Ic2-Ic1 with stones, possibly similar to the one at Costișa, was discovered at Siliștea (Co. Neamț); here features with Costișa pottery were also found. At Siliștea no features older than the ones from the Middle Bronze Age were found, neither were any tombs found. See, N. Bolohan, E.R. Munteanu, *Sat Siliștea, com. Români, jud. Neamț*, in V. Căvruc, Gh. Dumitroaia (eds), *Cultura Costișa în contextul epocii bronzului din România/The Costișa culture within the Romanian Bronze Age cultural context*, Piatra-Neamț, 2001, p. 44-49; N. Bolohan, C. Crețu, *Recent discoveries belonging to Early/Middle Bronze Age in Central Moldova*, in *Thracians and Circumpontic World, I. Proceedings of the Ninth International Congress of Thracology*, Chișinău, 2004, p. 55-76; N. Bolohan, *Recent discoveries belonging to Early/Middle Bronze Age in Central Moldavia*, ArhMold 26, 2003 (2005), p. 195-206.

build such a construction, a considerable quantity of matter was used (river stones, vitrified adobes, ceramics, hearths were built), which points to the huge effort made by a community, not very extensive, belonging to the Bronze Age, in order to mark a mortuary place, whose history is not directly related to theirs. Was such an undertaking, which constituted a real effort for the Monteoru community, and which was placed far away from their dwelling place necessary? Such a scenario is unlikely and for the moment there are no arguments in its favor; moreover, this would be a unique case in the entire Bronze Age on the Lower Danube when a construction of such dimensions is built by some community in the memory of some people who had no apparent relationship with the community itself and who had lived at least 500 years before.

The second hypothesis would be for the stone layer along with the hearths, the pottery and various objects, to constitute the exterior arrangement of some Monteoru tombs which are situated on the plateau. It is possible that some tombs which had no inventory and which we considered to be prehistoric due to the crouched position of the bodies (grave 1/2001 or grave 8/1962) to be actually Monteoru burials. Still the lack of any inventory for this tomb cannot allow a direct relationship between them and the Monteoru construction above. The eventual discovery on the plateau of a tomb whose inventory would contain Monteoru pottery, would be a strong argument supporting such a hypothesis. But under current circumstances, the second variant of interpretation, just like the first one, cannot be convincingly defended.

The third scenario can be build around the relations among the two communities belonging to the Middle Bronze Age Costișa and Monteoru communities. How can one interpret their successive ordering on "Cetățuia" taking into account that the two ceramic styles, Costișa and Monteoru Ic2-Ic1, were used over an extensive area during the same period of time? Are they, in fact, the products of two human communities which occupied "Cetățuia" one after the other? It has been observed that from the spatial point of view, the ceramics of Costișa type as well as the one of Monteoru Ic2-Ic1 type occupy two distinct areas; the first is mainly situated inside the Lower Bistrița area, whereas the second follows the line of the Subcarpathians and is enclosed in between the Bistrița and Prahova rivers. For now, only two sites are certain to have enclosed both styles of ceramics: Costișa and Siliștea (Neamț county), both of them are situated at the border between the areas occupied by each style; besides these two locations, the two pottery styles occur independently one of the other. Taking this situation into account, one might presuppose that using different types of pottery in distinct areas, is the consequence of the existence of some distinct human groups. These groups may have used certain artifacts which symbolized their group identity; in this case, pottery can serve as an element of identification. The pottery shapes and particularly the motives may have, besides their purely functional character (as serving in the households), a certain role in one's communication with "others" that is, the role of sending messages regarding the identity of the group using them<sup>17</sup>. Ethnographical studies have shown that the existence of competition within human groups concerning for instance one's control over resources may result in a clear differentiation in terms of the material culture. If this be the case, the area occupied by each group may be clearly delineated, certain types of objects (types of jewelry, clothes, pottery shapes which are associated with a certain decoration) signifying unity and in the same time, the identity of the group in question. However, coming back to the situation at Costișa, we are tempted to interpret the differences in the material culture (and we refer to pottery in the first place) as the result of the existence of two human groups, two contemporary communities which had hold of the area in turns.

<sup>17</sup> See along these lines B. J. Bowser, *From pottery to politics: an ethnoarchaeological study of political factionalism, ethnicity, and domestic pottery style in the ecuatorial Amazon*, Journal of Archaeological Method and Theory 7/3, 2000, p. 219-248; O.P. Gosselain, *Materializing Identities: An African Perspective*, Journal of Archaeological Method and Theory 7/3, 2000, p. 187-217; M. Hardin Friedrich, *Design Structure and Social Interaction: Archaeological Implications of an Ethnographic Analysis*, American Antiquity 35/3, 1970, p. 332-343; M. Hegmon, *Archaeological Research on Style*, Annual Review of Anthropology 21, 1992, p. 517-536; idem, *Advances in Ceramic Ethnoarchaeology*, Journal of Archaeological Method and Theory 7/4, 2000, p. 129-137; I. Hodder, *Economic and Social Stress and Material Culture Patterning*, American Antiquity 44/3, 1979, p. 446-454; idem, *Symbols in action. Ethnoarchaeological studies of material cultures*, Cambridge, 1982; M.T. Stark, R.L. Bishop, E. Miksa, *Ceramic Technology and Social Boundaries: Cultural Practices in Kalinga Clay Selection and Use*, Journal of Archaeological Method and Theory 7/4, 2000, p. 295-331.



If there existed two human groups, could the arrival of the second community urge the departure of the first one? Was this replacement the result of a conflict? Although there is no clear proof regarding an unmediated confrontation between the two human communities, one may suppose the existence of a tensed state of affairs, if one takes into account the way in which the archaeological features of the Costișa deposit were destroyed and scattered<sup>18</sup>. The destruction was intentional and this can be clearly inferred from several situations. Firstly, we remind the reader the fact that the Costișa deposit on the plateau A is no thicker than 5-6 cm. The remains of some structures made of adobes set on a wooden structure which belonged to the Costișa deposit had been scattered, some adobes were then incorporated in the Monteoru stone arrangement. Along the surfaces S.III-S.VIII/1959, the remains of adobes, complete or near-complete Costișa vessels and Costișa sherds which had been found underneath stones, showed traces of a secondary intense burning. Also in this area, irregular portions of burned land were found, such a burning had a concentration of daub and Costișa pottery sherds on top, which had been burned as well. All these burned remnants may come from a Costișa structure which possibly served as dwelling and which was set on fire. Several Costișa hearths were destroyed and pieces coming from these hearths could be found among the stones of the Monteoru construction. A peculiar situation was noticed in the case of the Monteoru hearth I from surface S.II/2002: in the center of the hearth, a piece of crust which had a thick and consistent burn had been introduced; the piece is obviously different in its structure from the rest of the hearth. We also remind the reader about the cases noticed within the same section when inside Monteoru cups thick pieces of burned crust had been placed, or the case of the two hearths from the Costișa deposit which lay upside down; two Monteoru hearths were partially superposed on one of them. We also draw attention to the fact that, on a regular basis, over the Costișa hearths which had not been destroyed, the Monteoru group build their own hearths, and in most of the cases Monteoru hearths which were remade or superposed, are situated there where a Costișa hearth previously existed. To this, it should be added the observation according to which Costișa pottery sherds were used when building the beds of some Monteoru hearths. The discovery of some Costișa vessels turned upside down among the stones of the Monteoru layer, proves that one does not deal with an unintentional action by means of which the vessels in question came to be found among the stones out of a mere accident, on the contrary, one deals with an aware behaviour of the Monteoru group which had the conspicuous intention to set the vessels in this way (Fig. 6). For instance, a little Costișa amphora which had been placed upside down, was found among the stones in S.VI/1959 (the north sector of square 4), 11 other cups and amphorae of Costișa type also lying upside down or recumbently among the stones were found in the middle of section XIV/1960 (square 7), a Costișa cup which was likewise lying upside down was recuperated from the western profile of the surface E/2001, at 0.22 m deep from among the stones. Such a deliberate ordering of the Costișa vessels among the stones most surely represents a symbolic act. Similar cases within the sites attributed to the Monteoru culture, that is deposits of vessels turned upside down, were also signalled at Căndești (Co. Vrancea), within funeral contexts or at least contexts which were considered 'cult related'. Inside the grave of the Monteoru cemetery, behind the dead, there laid in a semicircle four adult skulls alternating with three cups turn upside down<sup>19</sup>. Likewise, in the case of some Monteoru Ic3-Ic2 cremation graves, it was noticed that the burnt human bones had been covered by a cup turned upside down<sup>20</sup>. Also at Căndești, very close to the Monteoru cemetery, a feature was found – it consisted of a pit whose diameter measured 1.80, which was 0.60 m deep, and whose bottom hosted a round hearth<sup>21</sup>. Around the hearth, there lay four vessels (Monteoru IIa-IIb styles), two bellied mugs with a cylinder-like neck and a tilted mouth, and other two vessels with a layered body and a pointed bottom, the so-called

<sup>18</sup> Years ago Alexandru Vulpe suggested the possibility that the Costișa site be occupied by means of violence by the Monteoru community which was expanding northwards. See A. Vulpe, voce *Costișa*, in C. Preda (coord.), *Enciclopedia arheologiei și istoriei vechi a României I (A-C)*, București, 1994, p. 362; idem, *Cultura Costișa*, in *Comori ale epocii bronzului din România*, București, 1995, p. 164; idem, *Epoca metalelor*, in M. Petrescu-Dîmbovița, A. Vulpe (coord.), *Istoria Românilor I, Moștenirea timpurilor îndepărtate*, București, 2001, p. 255.

<sup>19</sup> M. Florescu, *Câteva observații referitoare la rîitul și ritualurile practicate de purtătorii culturii Monteoru în lumina săpăturilor de la Căndești (jud. Vrancea)*, *Carpica* 10, 1978, p. 116.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 117.

<sup>21</sup> Idem, *Contribuții la cunoașterea concepțiilor despre lume și viață a comunităților tribale monteorene*, *Carpica* 11, 1979, p. 70, 72-73.

vessels of offerings – *Spendegefäße*; the mugs lay upside down whereas the layered vessels, facing upwards, were held by stones in order to maintain their vertical position. Because of the location of the feature which was situated very close to the mortuary space, it is very probable for it to have been constructed within one of the ceremonial episodes which accompanied the funerals dated as Monteoru Ila-IIb.

Coming back to Costișa, we should maybe remind our readers, also within this context, of a symbolic behavior of the Monteoru group concerning the objects belonging to the Costișa community, as well as the discovery of a grip-tongue dagger underneath the stones, close to a Costișa hearth (hearth 22 of S.X/1960) whose blade was strongly bent<sup>22</sup>. The bending of the dagger practically represents its being impossible to use, its destruction, and although we do not have any proof that the bending of the piece in question was a symbolic act of the Monteoru group, the hypothesis is worth being retained if one takes into account the overall situation within this site.

Which were the reasons that might have determined such a behavior of the Monteoru group? Because out of the examples mentioned above one can remark a conscious action which focused on the constructions and objects of the Costișa group: Costișa hearths, scattered or lying upside down, their crust downwards, building over the Costișa hearths remained *in situ* of their own hearths, placing some Costișa vessels upside down among the stone of the Monteoru structure, and we only enumerated the cases which conspicuously present this fact. We might find a solution to the problem if we knew what exactly the Costișa site represented at that time *i.e.*, what was its function and, not lastly, what was the status of the Costișa community on “Cetățuia” hill reported to the neighboring contemporary communities.

There had been contacts between the Costișa group and the Monteoru one before the overtake of Costișa by the latter; this was highlighted by the presence of some Monteoru vessels, either whole or in fragments, among Costișa deposits and the other way around<sup>23</sup>. It is possible for the two communities to have collaborated with one another, yet it may be possible as well for them to have been in competition due to the closeness of the areas which they controlled. As we already mentioned above, four grip-tongue daggers and a ring with a loop made of double wire were found at Costișa (*Noppenringe*), which could have reached this area through trade. Rings of the same type (five pieces) were also found in the neighbouring site at Siliștea (Neamț county), approx. 7 km away from Costișa village where Costișa and Monteoru Ic2-Ic1 deposits were also identified<sup>24</sup>. A similar piece was also found at Calu-Piatra Șoimului (Neamț county), without an archaeological context, but within the spreading area of Costișa pottery<sup>25</sup>. These pieces provide us with a clue regarding the possible trade relationships which the human groups that used the ceramics of Costișa type might have had with the Bronze Age communities on the Middle Danube Basin (Nitra, Aunjetitz), where such ornaments are frequent. The Costișa group might have tried to strengthen their position as well as their prestige in the area, including through establishing some contacts with human groups from far away and bringing some foreign “goods”, a fact which might have

<sup>22</sup> Cavruc, Dumitroaia (eds), *op. cit.*, pl. 31/2.

<sup>23</sup> For instance, at Costișa, on the bottom of a pit which had been dug at the level of Costișa a pixide with lid was found, which had been decorated in Monteoru Ic4,3-Ic3 style and which had been placed inside a vessel with a tronconical shape which was not decorated and which had been made of a coarse clay. The Costișa amphorae with two symmetrical handles that started from the rim of the vessel and rested on the shoulder, with cylinder-like neck and a bulging body find good analogies within the Monteoru Ic4,3-Ic3 pottery. Some of the Costișa cups had handles with saddle and threshold, which was a characteristic element of the Monteoru cups, which were especially frequent with the Monteoru Ic2-Ic1 styles. Some ornamental compositions met on Costișa cups – horizontal lines incised at the base of the neck underneath which there are groups of three parallel incised lines –, can also be found on Monteoru Ic2 cups, the only thing which differs is their protruding motives. The ornaments of type “fir-tree branch” is to be found both on the Costișa pottery and on the Monteoru Ic1 one. Costișa sherds were found in Monteoru Ic2 deposits at Năstăseni and Bogdănești (Bacău county); for the two mentioned sites see the literature: M. Florescu, V. Căpitanu, *ArhMold* 6, 1969, p. 232; idem, *ArhMold* 7, 1972, p. 188-189.

<sup>24</sup> Bolohan, Munteanu, *op. cit.*, in Cavruc, Dumitroaia (eds), *op. cit.*, p. 44-49, pl. 40/1-3; Bolohan, Crețu, *op. cit.*, pl. 13/a-e.

<sup>25</sup> Nearby, at Iapa-Deleni (today Luminiș, Neamț county) was investigated in the year 1964 by A. Vulpe a site with Costișa pottery. For the ring with the loop at Calu, see M. Petrescu Dimbovița, *Der Arm- und Beinschmuck in Rumänien*, PBF X/4, 1998, p. 189, pl. 163.

attracted the forceful reaction of the Monteoru group. This demonstration of force coming from the Monteoru community might have ended in the overtake and the destruction of the sites at Costișa and Silișteea. Alexandru Vulpe considers that the two sites could have represented centers of social power of the human groups that used the Costișa pottery<sup>26</sup>. This is a working hypothesis which is worth considering, especially if we take into account that they contained more consistent deposits as well as materials, considerable in their quantity and more varied in comparison with other Costișa sites found close by (Borlești, Deleni-Iapa, Văleni-Roman)<sup>27</sup>.

Within this context it is also worth mentioning the situation noticed at Păuleni (Harghita county), a site which is situated on the other side of the Eastern Carpathians, which contained features consisting of a pottery very similar to the one at Costișa (the so-called *facies Ciomortan*)<sup>28</sup>. The Costișa deposit here is covered by features containing Wietenberg pottery (probably phase A2, along the classification provided by N. Boroffka<sup>29</sup>). The Costișa site at Păuleni may have ceased to exist at about the same time with the Costișa sites at Costișa and Silișteea; the arguments supporting such a view are the discovery of some Monteoru Ic1 cups in the Wietenberg features from Păuleni and of some Wietenberg pottery sherds among the stones of the Monteoru Ic2-Ic1 deposit at Costișa. Thus we would have three Costișa sites which might have ceased to exist at about the same time and, considering the clues we have, this situation does not seem to have been accidental. It is probably a consequence of the relationships holding between the human communities in the respective area, which tried to maintain their control on the local resources, the means of communication, on the monopoly of distant trade; more specifically, it might all come down to the competition for winning over and keeping of the social position of the community in question and of their leaders in the same time.

We cannot provide a definite answer as to the way in which the high plateau of "Cetățuia" hill was used by the Costișa community. The hearths and the remnants of adobes presenting traces of logs could count as a clue for us to presuppose their using for dwelling. On the other hand, these constructions might not have had a domestic role, but to have only served for rituals, all the same, one cannot exclude the hypothesis of using the plateau for both purposes: for dwelling and ceremonial practices. Both the pottery and the little artefacts discovered among the remains of the Costișa features do not contribute with a lot of additional information in this sense. It is true that the Costișa vessels do not show signs of a secondary burn which would prove their being used above the fire for cooking. However, this thing does not prove that the site did not have a domestic character; there are other methods for cooking which do not require the usage of clay recipients<sup>30</sup>. The number of small objects made of stone or clay which were discovered at Costișa (axes, knives, spindles, weights, etc.) is pretty small. It is however possible, for the most part of the small objects which might have belonged to the Costișa community, to have been intentionally included within the Monteoru structure. One should also mention here the fact that the stone artefacts found in the Costișa or Monteoru deposits do not show any signs of their having been used (axes, knives, quernstones). We do not actually have any clear argument for setting up a distinction between ritual acts and other types of human activities in the case of Costișa site<sup>31</sup>. Unlike the Costișa site we can assert that

<sup>26</sup> A. Vulpe, *Perioada mijlocie a epocii bronzului la est și vest de Carpații Răsăriteni*, in Cavruc, Dumitroaia (eds), *op. cit.*, p. 11.

<sup>27</sup> M. Florescu, *Problèmes de la civilisation de Costișa à la lumière du sondage de Borlești*, Dacia N.S., 14, 1970, p. 51-81. It is worth retaining, however, that the three settlements were not fully excavated, thus it is possible for us to have an incomplete image on them.

<sup>28</sup> Z. Székely, SCIV 19, 1968, 3, p. 423-428; idem, Aluta 2, p. 71-88; idem, SCIV 22, 1971, 3, p. 387-400; Zs. Székely, *Perioada timpurie și începutul celei mijlocii a epocii bronzului în sud-estul Transilvaniei*, Bibliotheca Thracologica 21, București, 1997, p. 53-60; V. Cavruc, Angustia 5, 2000, p. 93-102; idem, Angustia 7, 2002, p. 89-93; idem, Marmatia 8/1, 2005, p. 81-123; V. Cavruc, Gh. Dumitroaia, Angustia 5, 2000, p. 131-154; V. Cavruc, D. Buzea, Angustia 7, 2002, p. 41-88.

<sup>29</sup> N.G.O. Boroffka, *Die Wietenberg-Kultur. Ein Beitrag zur Erforschung der Bronzezeit in Südosteuropa*, UPA 19, 1994, vol 1, p. 249. Besides, the synchronism between Monteoru Ic2-Ic1 and the first stages of Wietenberg culture have already been rendered conspicuous years ago, see M. Florescu, *Elemente Wietenberg descoperite în complexe de locuire aparținând fazelor timpurii ale culturii Monteoru din Moldova*, Danubius 5, 1971, p. 37-73.

<sup>30</sup> J. Wood, *Food and Drink in European Prehistory*, European Journal of Archaeology 3/1, 2000, p. 89-111.

<sup>31</sup> A useful discussion about using the "ritual" concept in archaeology and anthropology at J. Brück, *Ritual and Rationality: Some Problems of Interpretation in European Archaeology*, European Journal of Archaeology 2/3, 1999, p. 313-344.

the Monteoru deposit does not have a domestic character. The unusual aspect for a dwelling is firstly provided by the existence of river stones, rocks from conglomerates, vitrified adobes and by the way in which these elements were arranged. As already seen from the arguments provided above, the Monteoru structure has many similar characteristics with funeral constructions and this was probably its significance. Unlike most mortuary features of Monteoru culture, this one is big and has a more complex structure. One might compare it to the feature at Sărata Monteoru-Poiana Scoruşului, for which an impressive quantity of materials was used— river stones, vitrified adobes, pottery (Monteoru Ic3 style), and hearths were built<sup>32</sup>. Yet, at the superior side of this ensemble, there was a collapsed wattle and daub structure which had been burned over some human bodies. The initial interpretation of this feature as a “pyre” can no longer be currently maintained, all clues indicating that “*with the Sărata Monteoru-Poiana Scoruşului object we are rather in the presence of a special layout, probably funerary in nature, and exceptional both through its location outside the known funerary zones (...) as well as outside the actual dwelling area proper, and through its structure. (...) We would consequently have here the case of an exceptional grave, not only for the entire Monteoru area but also for the entire Bronze Age north of the Danube*”<sup>33</sup>.

Of course, the comparison in question has its limits. Within the structure of the feature at Sărata Monteoru human skeletons, both whole and fragmented, have been discovered, a fact which renders its mortuary character more obvious. At Costișa, the situation seems a bit more complicated especially because of the lack of an unmediated relationship between the tombs which were discovered on the plateau and the Monteoru structure made of stones. What if in the case of Costișa, our difficulty in interpreting the feature is more likely determined by a misconception of what we expect to have been buried there? It is very probable that, under the current situation, the *object of the Monteoru burial might not have been represented by a human being but by the Costișa settlement itself*. There are a lot of references to the ethnographical literature according to which in some societies, not only is there a close relationship between the settlement and its dwellers, but each of them is the metaphorical representation of the other<sup>34</sup>. The house is often considered as an animate object which contains its own strength, its own spirit. When a house is built, some rituals are held in order to “bring it back to life”<sup>35</sup>. Houses come to life and then die just like human beings; a house usually dies at the same time with its dwellers<sup>36</sup>. It is not our intention to adapt models of ethnography in the situation at Costișa, however, we do not consider it an exaggeration when considering such a possibility. The dismemberment of constructions and of Costișa objects, their burning, might signify the symbolical death of the site in question with everything that it represents for the Costișa community or for the neighboring communities. Within a ceremonial framework, the remains of Costișa site were covered then with river stones brought from a distance, hearths were built on the sides of the plateau, one or more constructions made of adobe and wood were burnt to the point of vitrification and parts of these constructions were laid among the stones. A special significance was probably held by the placement, among the stones, just beside the hearths, of the cutting edge of some stone axes, of the cutting edge of a metal axe, of a quernstone which lay with “the active part” downwards, of some stone knives, either whole or in fragments, of various small clay objects.

<sup>32</sup> I. Nestor *et al.*, SCIV 4, 1953, 1-2, p. 79-81; I. Nestor, E. Zaharia, SCIV 6, 1955, 3-4, p. 506-509; E. Zaharia, L. Bârzu, Materiale (S.N.), 1, 1999, p. 41-58; E. Zaharia, *Săpăturile de la Sărata Monteoru, com. Merei, jud. Buzău. Raport preliminar (1996-2005)*, Materiale (S.N.), 2, 2000-2006 (2007), p. 75-93; I. Motzoi-Chicideanu, *Observations concerning the bronze age cult-object from Sărata Monteoru-„Poiana Scoruşului”*, in Kacsó (ed.), *Bronzezeitliche Kulturerscheinungen im Karpatischen Raum. Die Beziehungen zu den Benachbarten Gebieten*, Ehrensymposium für Alexandru Vulpe zum 70. Geburtstag, Baia Mare, 2003, p. 361-378, with a extensive presentation of the feature.

<sup>33</sup> Motzoi-Chicideanu, *op. cit.*, p. 374.

<sup>34</sup> J. Brück, *Houses, Lifecycles and Deposition on Middle Bronze Age Settlements in Southern England*, Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society 65, 1999, p. 153, 159; idem, *Fragmentation, Personhood and the Social Construction of Technology in Middle and Late Bronze Age Britain*, Cambridge Archaeological Journal 16/3, 2006, p. 299.

<sup>35</sup> Idem, Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society 65, 1999, p. 153.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 153.



Fig. 1. Costișa – "Cetățuia" hill, viewed from the northwest.



Fig. 2. The northern and eastern profiles of surface D/2001.

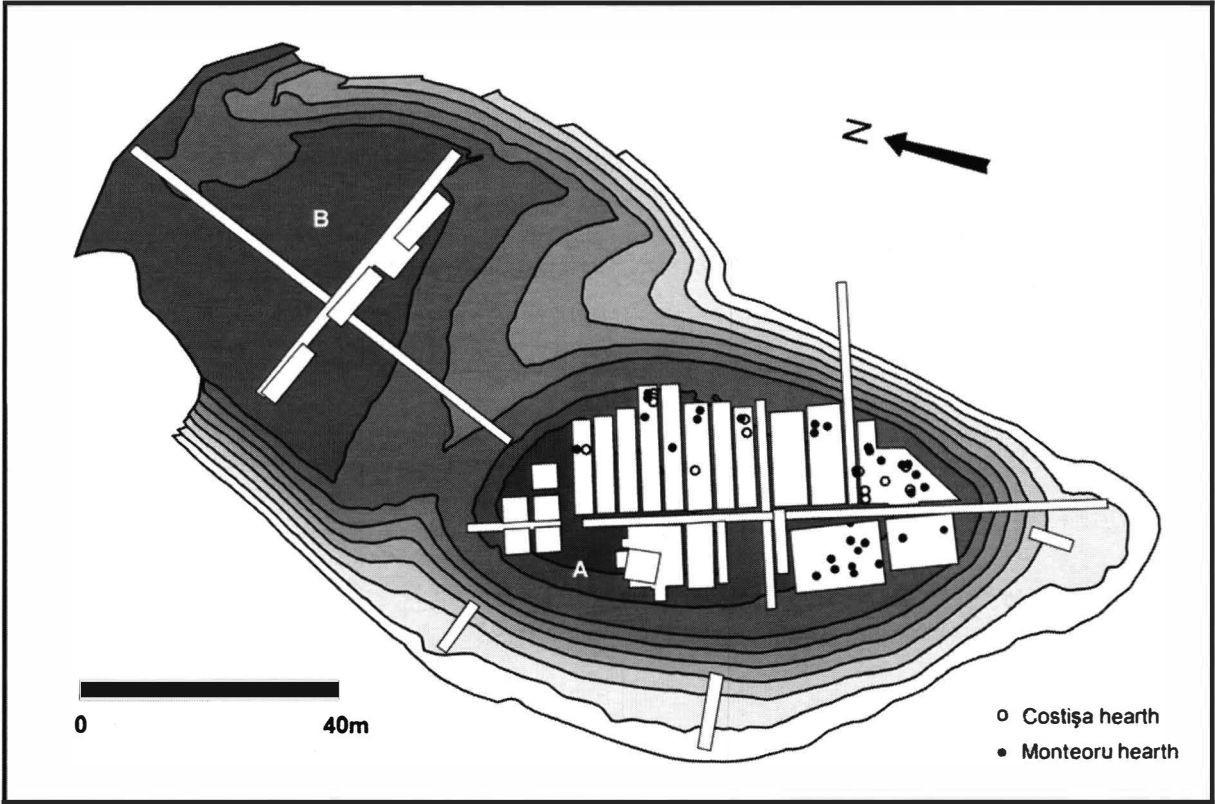


Fig. 3. Distribution of the Bronze Age hearths on plateau A.

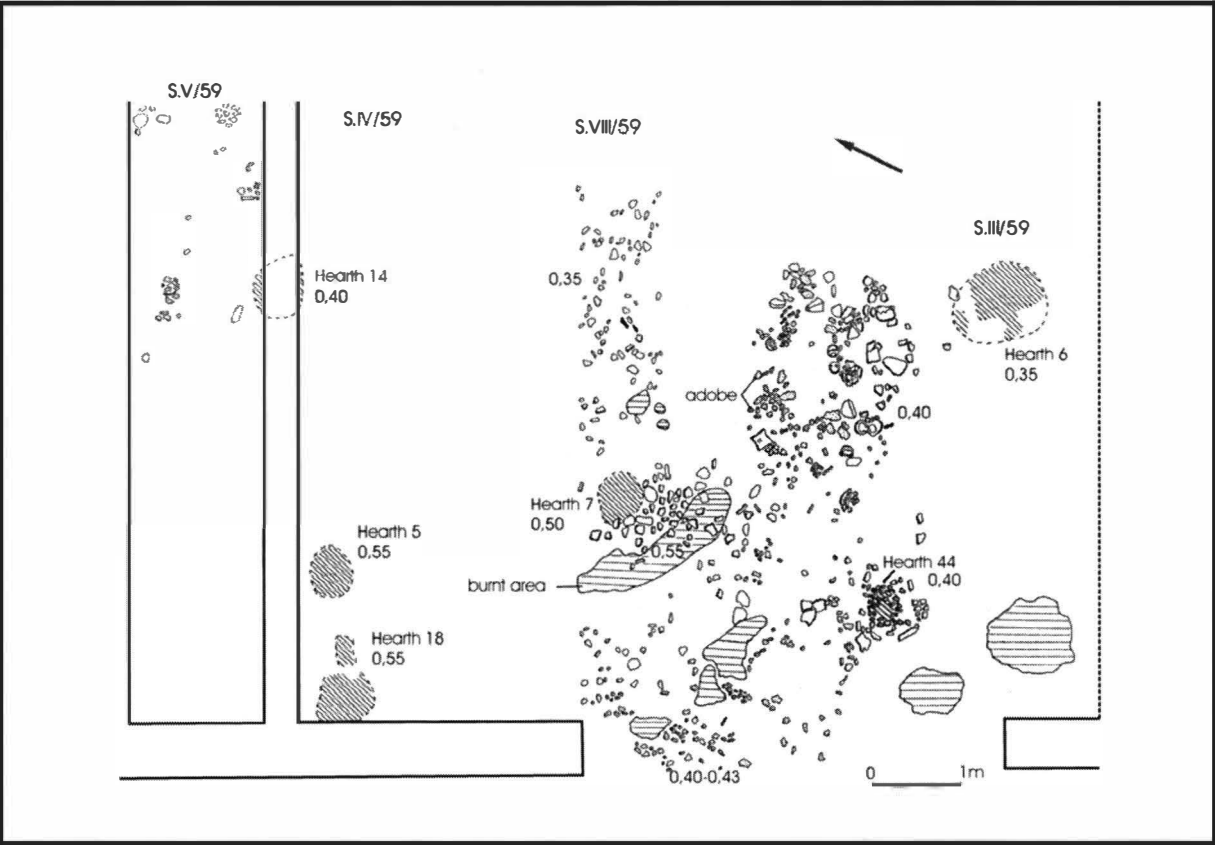


Fig. 4. Costișa features from the south-eastern area of plateau A (See Vulpe, Zamoșteanu, 1962).





Fig. 5. Inverted Costișa hearth from the section S.II/2002 (the Monteoru hearth no. 7 in the background).



Fig. 6. Section S.XIV/1960, Costișa vessels lying upside down among the stones of the Monteoru deposit.



Fig. 7. Section S.III/2003, the aspect of the Monteoru deposit.



Fig. 8. Section S.III/2003, vitrified adobes among stones.



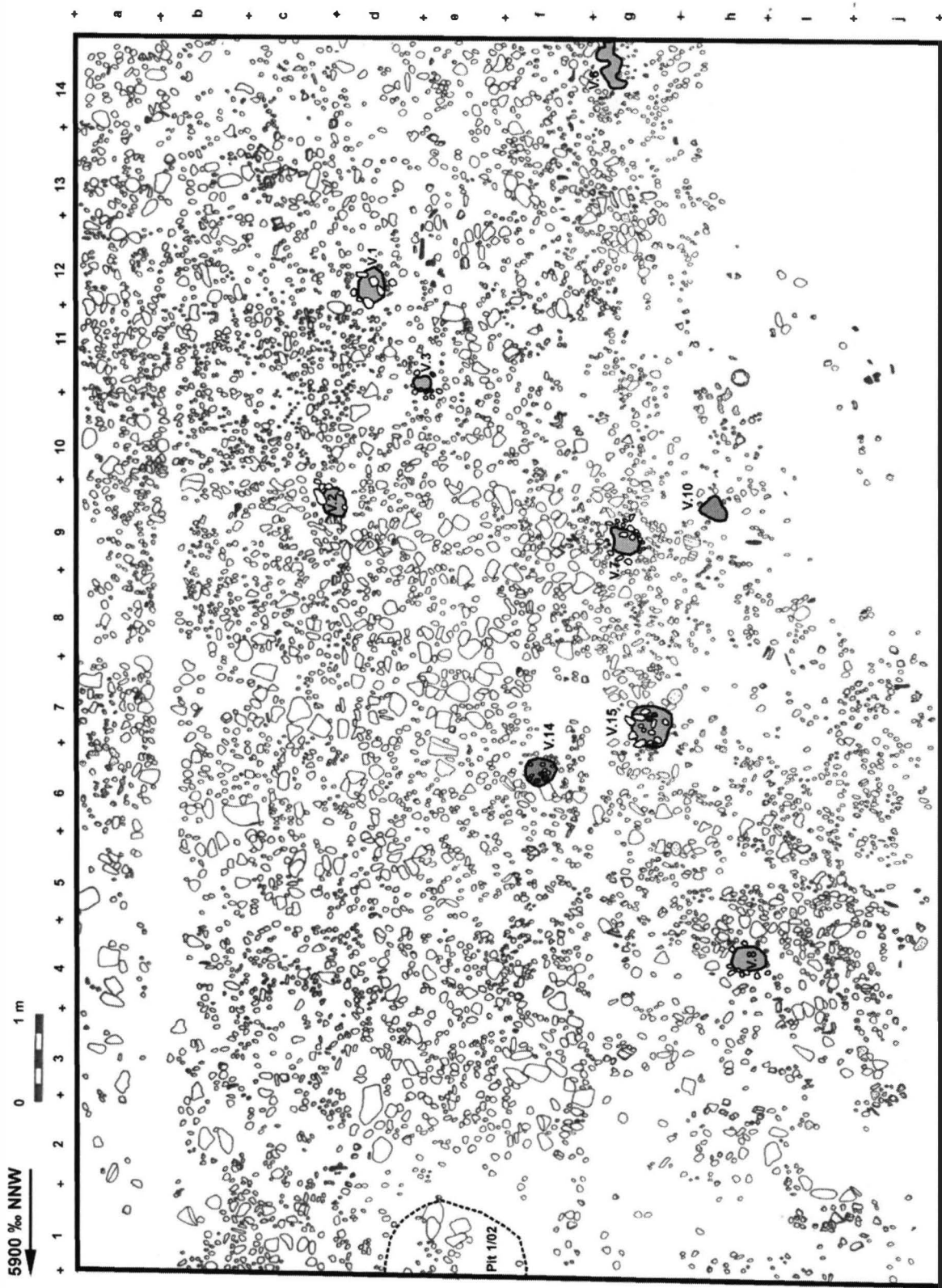


Fig. 9. The aspect of the Monteoru deposit from section S.II/2002 (V.1, V.2... = hearths).

The waste of energy from the part of Monteoru community in order to bury the Costișa site does not necessarily represent a sign of consideration, it is rather an occasion for them to demonstrate their power and prestige. A considerable number of people probably attended this ceremony, if we are to take into account the impressive number of Monteoru vessels, many among them are “opened” vessels, especially plates and bowls with their inner rim diameter between 40 and 60 cm. This was an opportunity for all participants to manifest their solidarity, their cohesion and to check and reaffirm their social status. More than 30 hearths which were spread along the edges of the plateau and which probably functioned simultaneously, surely contributed to creating a special visual spectacle whose main purpose was to redefine the role and the position of the Monteoru community among the other communities of the time.