

MORTUARY PRACTICES AT COSTIȘA (NEAMȚ COUNTY)*

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Keywords: Costișa, Neolithic, Bronze Age, Middle Ages, skeleton graves, disarticulated human bones, mortuary variability, ritual.

Abstract: The present article puts forth new information regarding the mortuary practices in the sub-Carpathian part of Moldavia, dating back from the Early and Middle Bronze Age. The tombs discovered at Costișa–“Cetățuia”, during the archaeological excavations performed in the years 1960, 1962, 2001 and 2004 are presented; furthermore the collective tomb dating back from the Early Bronze Age is granted increased attention. It has been noticed that the high plateau of “Cetățuia” was used only as a mortuary space during the Early Bronze Age. The peculiar layout of the “Cetățuia” hill which is due mainly to human activity is also brought into discussion – it looks like a mound irrespective of the angle one considers it from; the issue whether the layout of the hill is directly linked to the burials from the Early Bronze Age or whether it should be related to the Monteoru stone construction from the Middle Bronze Age is still open. The last section of the article focuses on the existence of some human disparate bones belonging to the Neolithic and Middle Bronze Age at Costișa; similar cases to this one found in the intra- and extra-Carpathian space are brought into discussion.

Cuvinte-cheie: Costișa, neolitic, epoca bronzului, epoca medievală, morminte de înhumăție, oase umane dezarticulate, variabilitatea practicilor funerare, ritual.

Rezumat: Articolul aduce un plus de informație despre practicile funerare din perioada timpurie și mijlocie a epocii bronzului din zona subcarpatică a Moldovei. Sunt prezentate mormintele descoperite pe „Cetățuia” de la Costișa în timpul săpăturilor arheologice efectuate în anii 1960, 1962, 2001 și 2004, o atenție sporită fiind acordată mormântului colectiv datat în perioada timpurie a Bronzului. S-a observat că platoul înalt al „Cetățuiei” a fost folosit în Bronzul timpuriu doar ca spațiu funerar. Este discutat și aspectul deosebit al dealului „Cetățuia”, aspect datorat în bună parte activității umane, el oferind imaginea unui tumul din orice direcție ar fi privit; rămâne deschisă problema dacă modelarea dealului este în relație cu înmormântările din Bronzul timpuriu sau ar trebui legată de construcția Monteoru cu pietre din perioada mijlocie a epocii bronzului. Ultima parte a articolului se concentrează asupra prezenței la Costișa a unor oase umane disparate în contexte aparținând neoliticului și Bronzului mijlociu, fiind aduse în discuție cazuri similare din spațiul intra- și extracarpatic.

As a result of the archeological research performed at Costișa–“Cetățuia”, beside the observations regarding the Neolithic deposits, some other information regarding the mortuary rituals practiced in this area during several ages has obtained- the most significant out of these being those concerning the Bronze Age. Their importance is obvious as our knowledge regarding funerals during the Early Bronze Age is scarce for the time being, the few discoveries known in the literature cannot add up to a coherent image in this respect¹.

The first proofs attesting the existence of some burials at Costișa appeared during the years 1960 and 1962, when a group of tombs were discovered in the north-western section of the high plateau of “Cetățuia” (plateau A). Unfortunately, the archaeological documentation about these burials is scarce and our possibilities of dating them are also limited. However we know for sure, due to the position in which

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¹ We would like to mention the tombs at Bogdănești, Răcăciuni, Târpești, Cârliști-Aldești which belong to the Early Bronze Age as well as the grave at Poduri dating back from the beginning of the Middle Bronze Age.

one of the deceased lay as well as due to another body's stratigraphic position, that at least two of the eight funeral complexes which were discovered during the older excavations were prehistoric. Recent diggings undertaken at Costișa–“Cetățuia”, resulted in the discovery of four graves (Fig. 1), among these one surely belongs to the Early Bronze Age (according to the grave-good) – the collective grave 2/2004, another one is very probable to belong to the same period on the basis of the disposal of the dead (grave 3/2004), the third surely belong to the prehistoric period (grave 1/2001), whereas the fourth is said to pertain to the medieval period – this dating being mainly contributed to by a coin the deceased still held in his right hand (grave 4/2004). All information held with respect to the burials discovered during older and recent research at Costișa will be presented in the pages below. The last part of this article consists of short references to a ritual practice, well documented especially through ethnographic studies – the manipulation of human bones; the starting point of our discussion is the discovery within the archeological site at Costișa of some disparate human bones dating back to the Bronze Age and to the Neolithic period.

In the years 2002 and 2003 surfaces S.II and S.III of the south-western sector of plateau A of “Cetățuia” were opened. The field investigations was carried on the following year and in the one metre baulk between the two surfaces, at a depth of -0.38-0.47 m with respect to the present soil, a collective tomb was discovered (Grave 2/2004). Initially, in S.III, square 1d, at -0.38 m deep, the skull of an infant appeared and then the whole skeleton which was lying crouching on its right side was discovered (Figs. 2-3). Just beside the skeleton of the infant we found the other human bones extending into the northern baulk of the section S.III. As a first stage, the segment from the northern profile which covered the human bones was undone on a width of 0.40 metres but this was not enough for one to uncover the entire set of remains which spread further to the north. Consequently an entire segment of baulk of approximately 2 metres length was singled out. Stratigraphically, it has been noticed that underneath the vegetal soil which grew thinner towards west, the area is slightly tilting, at -0.20-0.30 m deep, within a grey-coloured soil, the layer of stones belonging to the Monteoru deposit was to be found. Approximately 8-10 cm below the stones level, within the brown-yellowish colored Neolithic soil, the human bones were lying; however one could see the inferior limit of the gray layer (from the Middle Bronze Age) just 2-3 cm above the skeletons. The exact outline of the grave-pit could not be noticed, but it is certain that this pit cut through some Neolithic adobes from the square 1e, south from the child's skeleton. The total length of the bone deposit is about 1.40 m, having an orientation from north to south, whereas the width is of 0.60 m. The layer of bones was at 0.60 m deep with regard to the present-day surface. At this depth, four human skeletons anatomically connected were found (Figs. 4-5).

The southern end of this deposit enclosed the partially preserved skeleton of the child (individual 4, unknown sex) who was crouching on the right side as we have already mentioned. The skull (without the facial bones), the incomplete set of ribs, the longer bones of one's arms, a thighbone and several vertebrae were found. The position of the skull was NNE 650%. From among the other three individuals, the last to be laid was individual no. 3 (female) positioned at the west side of the bone deposit². It was lying on its left side in a crouched position, its legs and arms bent, the former reaching to the front, the position of the skull being SSW 3700%. The skeleton lacks the upper jaw and most of its ribs, vertebrae, fingers and toes. Its two heel bones overlapped on the left femur of the skeleton positioned in the eastern part of the tomb (individual no.1, female). Of its upper body only fragments of the skull, the arm bones, several ribs and an important part of the spine were preserved, whereas the longer bones of its legs were fully preserved. Individual no.1, the second body to be laid within the tomb from among the total of three, had been seemingly laid on his back, a little tilted towards the right, approximately oriented to SSE 3050%, its legs flexed and resting on the right side and its right arm bone bent and laid over the abdomen. At about 1 m further south-east its right partially preserved fore-arm bone was found. In the back of

² We thank our colleague Andrei Soficaru (“Francisc Rainer” Institute of Anthropology, Bucharest) whose information assisted us into a correct comprehension of the position and order in which the three human skeletons had been laid. Because of the fact that the three bodies had been laid one on top of the other, part of their bones mingled in such a way that our measurements done on the field regarding the number of the individuals, their position and the order in which they had been buried were but tentative. For a final and detailed laboratory examination we have numbered and recorded the bones both as such and on plan.

individual 1, partially thrusting its legs underneath the former individual's pelvis, the skeleton of individual 2 (female) was found; this skeleton had been laid into the ground before the other two and was a little tilted to the left, its ribs falling on both sides of its stern, its legs bent from the knees and lying on their left side. The body was oriented with the head to the SSW 3450‰. The pelvis of individual 2 seems to have been propped against the shoulder of individual 1. Its right arm, bent from the elbow, was resting on the abdomen whereas its left arm, fully extended, was partially covered by the skull of individual no. 3. The skeleton was well preserved; it only lacked the fingers and toes. The skull was not connected to the rest of the skeleton. Only the frontal bone of the skull was found, which was placed with its outer side downwards over its left hip (individual 2's hip). The fragment of mandible found at about 0.10 m underneath the skeletons (S.II-S.III, square d, at -0,71 m) might also belong to this individual. Individual 2 was almost completely covered by individual 3.

South from the bone deposit, in between the larger fragment of individual's 1 skull and individual's 2 right arms, a fragmentary pot was discovered with a rib coming from a big animal on top. The animal rib stretched from the parietal bone of individual 3 to individual 1's left shoulder, and partially covered the upper part of individual 2's body. We would also like to mention the discovery of a group of six small stones situated beside the right knee of individual 1, and that of a stone showing signs of processing, situated on the left hip of the afore mentioned individual. It is possible for the last stone to have no connection with the tomb itself but to have been found there by coincidence. The shape, the clay used, and the decorations of the vessel from Grave 2 place it in the Early Bronze Age (Fig. 5/2). The dating of the tomb is also confirmed by its stratigraphic position: as we have already mentioned, the human bones were situated within the Neolithic soil with the deposit dating back from the Middle Bronze Age overlapping them (including the layer of stones). No signs of subsequent interference with the bones was noticed although this variant should not be disregarded if one is to take into account the shallow depth where the bones were found with respect to the stones, the fact that the deposit dating from the Middle Bronze Age was directly superposed on them, and the lack of some bones belonging to the adult skeletons as well as the position of the front bone of individual 2's skull. On the other hand, if we presume that the displacement and the lack of several bones are due to some subsequent, unintentional interference, then one must notice the special "care" one had when ruffling the tomb: only the skulls of the two adults (individuals 1 and 2) which had been laid in a somewhat complementary position were disturbed. One showed a lot of carefulness when displacing individual 2's skull from its position without affecting the animal rib nearby, as for the frontal bone, it was unleashed from its sutures and placed on the pelvis belonging to the same individual³. We would like to specify the fact that between the left hip and the frontal bone there was no earth, the frontal bone was perfectly superposed, molding itself on the direction of the hip, maybe due to the pressure of the soil as well. Unfortunately the situation we found on the field does not help us clarify this aspect: the outline of the burial pit was not observed because of the way in which the soil is structured neither were any signs of subsequent intervention spotted⁴. One should also consider the possibility for the tomb to have been re-opened a certain period after the burial by the members of the same community, maybe for one last burial. On this occasion they might have moved individual 2's skull and placed the child's body instead.

We mentioned that the four skeletons were anatomically connected. If individual 2 were placed into the ground intact, then its head was superposed on the child's body situated at the south edge of the tomb; this would mean that the first to have been laid into the ground was the child (individual 4). Individual 2 was the one that followed, having its inferior limbs partially underneath individual 1's pelvis; the last to have been placed into the tomb was individual 3. It is highly probable for at least three out of these funerals to have taken place simultaneously. The arguments which support this hypothesis are way in which the bodies were laid into the ground, which seems to abide by some specific rule, the presence of 'the meat offering' found on top of the human bones and the fact that the skeleton of individual 2, placed at the bottom was the best preserved of all, being anatomically connected with the exception of the skull bones we have already brought into discussion.

³ No marks of having been cut were found on the human bones at Costișa (information from A. Soficaru).

⁴ In many cases one could not even clearly see the traces of the trenches left by the 1959-1960, 1962 campaigns, in spite of all our repeated gratings.

Underneath the human skeletons (square 1e), from -0.70 to -0.90 m fragments from the skeleton of a male individual were found. The fragments belong to the skull, arms and inferior limbs and were not anatomically inter-connected⁵. Because the grave-pit was not considered we cannot be certain whether this individual belongs to Grave 2 or not. His belonging to the Neolithic period cannot be excluded. There exist a lot of situations when disparate human bones were discovered within the inhabited area of some Precucuteni or Cucuteni A settlements⁶. As a matter of fact, even in the Precucuteni deposit on the plateau B of Costișa–“Cetățuia” (S.VIII/2006, -0.59 m) one femoral head and a phalanx were discovered. On the other hand, the discovery of several bones belonging to the same individual, precisely in the area where the collective tomb from the Bronze Age was found, underneath the complete skeletons may not be just a coincidence if we are to take into account the fact that no fragments of human bones have been identified in the Neolithic deposit in the other parts of plateau A. Under such circumstances it would be advisable to consider that the disparate bones of the male individual might be related to the fourfold burial.

Due to the vessel we found in Grave 2/2004 (a carinated bowl with a flaring neck, decorated with a row of short incisions, and made out of brittle clay of poor quality, brown in colour) we can be certain about attributing the burial in question to the Early Bronze Age. Other fragments of vessels belonging to the Early Bronze Age have been found on “Cetățuia” hill (Fig. 6), generally at the lower limit of the greyish layer, with no connection to any specific context. The partial graphical reconstruction we could perform on the vessels proved two of the fragments to have belonged to some bowls with flaring necks, similar to the bowl from Grave 2 (Fig. 6/1-2). At the base of the neck one can perceive rectangular incisions; one of the fragments still carried a small vertical protruding bit of material. One could not specify the exact form of the third vessel whose fragment we found; it is decorated with notched lines in relief (Fig. 6/3).

The best analogies for the bowl from Grave 2 can be found in the grave-goods from Cârliști-Aldești (Co. Bacău)⁷. Grave 1 here contained two bowls similar in shape with the one at Costișa (one of them was decorated with several incision in the form of an “X”, arranged into horizontal layers) and a jar whose profile was in the form of an “S” and which was decorated at the base of its neck with a line of incisions interrupted from place to place by four symmetrical knobs. The last vessel is very much alike some already published vessels from Șincai–“Cetatea Păgânilor” (Co. Mureș), belonging to Coțofeni III⁸ and Zimnicea cemetery (Co. Teleorman)⁹. Other analogies for the bowl at Costișa can be found at Bogdănești (Co. Bacău)¹⁰, Foltești (Co. Galați)¹¹, Zăbala (Co. Covasna)¹², Vânători (Co. Galați, grave 11)¹³, Kazaclia (in the south of Basarabia, barrow 8, grave 5)¹⁴. The bowls from Vânători and Kazaclia are found in tombs built with beams of type Jamnaja thus playing an important part in establishing relations with the cultural environments from the north-Pontic steppes. Also based on this type of vessel, one can establish

⁵ See Soficaru, this volume (individual 5).

⁶ A. Bolomey, *Noi descoperiri de oase umane într-o așezare cucuteniană*, Cercetări arheologice 6, 1983, p. 159-173; C.M. Mantu, D. Botezatu, B. Kromer, *Un mormânt dublu de înhumăție din așezarea cucuteniană de la Scânteia (jud. Iași)*, ActaMN 31, 1994, p. 87-103; S. Marinescu-Bîlcu, A. Bolomey, *Drăgușeni. A Cucutenian Community*, București-Tübingen, 2000, p. 153-158.

⁷ P. Roman, *Perioada timpurie a epocii bronzului pe teritoriul României*, SCIVA 37, 1986, 1, p.49, fig. 4/4-7; F. Burtănescu, *Epoca timpurie a Bronzului între Carpați și Prut, cu unele contribuții la problemele perioadei premergătoare epocii bronzului în Moldova*, Bibliotheca Thracologica 37, 2002, p. 143, pl. 24/1-2, 4-6.

⁸ H. Ciugudean, *Eneoliticul final în Transilvania și Banat: Cultura Coțofeni*, Timișoara, 2000, pl. 89/15-16.

⁹ A.D. Alexandrescu, *La nécropole du Bronze Ancien de Zimnicea (dép. de Teleorman)*, Dacia N.S., 18, 1974, p. 86, pl. 5/8-9.

¹⁰ Burtănescu, *op. cit.*, p. 535, pl. 29/1.

¹¹ M. Petrescu-Dîmbovița, M. Dinu, *Nouvelles fouilles archéologiques à Foltești (dép. de Galați)*, Dacia N.S., 18, 1974, p. 19-72.

¹² Zs. Székely, *Perioada timpurie și începutul celei mijlocii a epocii bronzului în sud-estul Transilvaniei*, Bibliotheca Thracologica 21, 1997, p. 25-35, 141, pl. 20/1.

¹³ M. Brudiu, *Informații noi privind epoca bronzului în sud-estul Moldovei*, SCIVA 36, 1985, 3, p. 237-238, fig. 3/3.

¹⁴ S. Agulnikov, *Importuri de pe cursul inferior al Dunării în complexele arheologice ale bronzului timpuriu din stepa Bugeacului*, Cercetări arheologice în aria nord-tracă, 1, București 1995, p. 81-85.

relations with Livezile group, situated in the east and south-east of Apuseni Mountains¹⁵. For most of the tombs from Livezile one observed that the skeletons were not anatomically connected, not to mention that there were cases when only disparate parts of the human body were found. For “packed” burials from within this group one could notice an intentional arrangement of the bones, “*the base being formed by the longer bones of one’s inferior limbs with the skull on top*”¹⁶. An incomplete skeleton was also found in the tomb investigated at Răcăciuni (Co. Bacău) in 1969; concerning this tomb, Ersilia Tudor mentioned the possibility that only certain parts of the human body should have been buried, in this case, only fragments of the skull and legs¹⁷. The tomb inventory from Răcăciuni consisted of a vessel with a handle, decorated with a line of incisions at the base of the neck and a copper pendant. The two artefacts are closely linked to other discoveries dating from the Early Bronze Age: the vessel can find good analogies in the inventory of some graves at Brăilița (Co. Brăila)¹⁸, whereas a pendant very similar to the one at Răcăciuni was found in grave 11 from Zimnicea¹⁹.

In what the funerals dating from the Early Bronze Age are concerned, we do not have at our disposal absolute datings obtained through method ¹⁴C or dendrocronology. However, the time interval such discoveries are to be attributed can be determined by relating oneself to the cultural environments we have already mentioned above and which enclose similar items with an absolute dating. From Poiana Ampoiului settlement, we retain five C-14 data concerning the inhabiting of Coțofeni III²⁰; they provide us with the interval 3000-2650 BC for the evolution of Coțofeni III stage in this site. Another radiocarbon data comes from Livezile-Baia, part of the Livezile group, a settlement bowls similar to the ones found at Costișa and Cârliști-Aldești were found. Through calibrating the sample from Livezile, Bln-4624: 4109±44 BP, one obtains the interval 2880-2560 BC (93,7% in the domain of 2σ, calibrated with the program OxCal v3.10)²¹. Thus, it results from the above that the most probable time interval for the collective grave at Costișa (Grave 2) would be 2800-2500 BC²².

A human skeleton whose chronological dating is difficult due to both the circumstances on the field and to the lack of mortuary inventory, was discovered during the archaeological excavation in 2001 at the northern end of the plateau, surface E, at a depth of 0.50-0.60 (notated with grave 1/2001)²³. It was found in the north-western part of the surface E, at 1.30 m from the northern profile and at 1.50 m from the western one (Fig. 7/1). The outline of the burial pit could not be observed. As a matter of fact, surface E cut through older sections so that it was only in its north-western sector that the archeological deposits

¹⁵ H. Ciugudean, *Epoca timpurie a bronzului în centrul și sud-vestul Transilvaniei*, Bibliotheca Thracologica 13, 1996, p. 78-96. See for instance, fig. 4/2, 8/8, 21/11, where bowls discovered at Livezile-Baia, or Livezile-Dealul Sârbului, out of the mounds dug by K. Herepey are presented.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 133

¹⁷ E. Tudor, *Un mormânt de la începutul epocii bronzului descoperit la Răcăciuni (jud. Bacău)*, SCIVA 24, 1973, 2, p. 283-289.

¹⁸ N. Harțușche, *Probleme privind bronzul timpuriu și mijlocii în nord-estul Munteniei, sud-estul Moldovei și Dobrogea*, Danubius 8-9, 1979, p. 67-92, fig. 5/3; idem, *Complexul arheologic Brăilița*, Bibliotheca Thracologica 35, 2002, p. 282, 287, fig. 89/4, 94/6.

¹⁹ Alexandrescu, *op. cit.*, pl. 9/3; 11/3.

²⁰ Ciugudean, *op. cit.*, p. 145-146.

²¹ For a more extensive discussion concerning the relations of the Livezile group with other cultural environments, very useful for fixing the absolute chronology of the group, see Ciugudean, *op. cit.*, p. 143-147; M. Primas, *Velika Gruda I. Hügelgräber des frühen 3. Jahrtausends v. Chr. im Adriagebiet – Velika Gruda, Mala Gruda und ihr Kontext*, UPA 32, 1996, p. 49-52, 75-88; A. Vulpe, *Considerații privind începutul și definirea perioadei timpurii a epocii bronzului în România*, in V. Nistor, Daniela Zaharia (eds), *Timpul istoriei I. Memorie și patrimoniu*, In honorem emeritae Ligiae Bârzu, București [1997], p. 45.

²² We did not mention the radiometrical data existant for the burials considered as Jamnaja. Their number is great, but the time interval of such phenomenon offers is far too extensive, ca. 3300-2200 BC, and this is not very helpful to the present discussion. Still for more information see S. Forenbaier, *Radiocarbon Dates and Absolute Chronology of the Central European Early Bronze Age*, *Antiquity* 67, 1993, p. 241, 247-248; A. Koško (ed.), *The foundations of radiocarbon chronology of cultures between the Vistula and Dniepr: 3150-1850 BC*, *Baltic-Pontic Studies* 7, 1999, p. 72-128; I. Motzoi-Chicideanu, Gh. Olteanu, *Un mormânt în cistă din piatră descoperit la Văleni-Dâmbovița*, SCIVA 51, 2000, 1-2, p. 3-70.

²³ A. Popescu, R. Băjenaru, *MemAntiq* 23, 2004, p. 293, fig. 12.

seemed undisturbed. The skeleton was placed within the brown-yellowish soil containing Neolithic material, just at the edge of the stone deposit from the Middle Bronze Age, but deeper than its base. It is an adult (female), anatomically connected, crouched on the left side, its heels lifted to the pelvis and its arms brought to the front (Fig. 7/2). Its spine is oriented to ESE 2260 ‰, the head to SSW 3500 ‰; the stern, the ribs and part of the vertebrae and fingers were missing. As we already mentioned, the grave had no inventory although there appeared some very atypical pottery sherds in the area which may be attributed to the Bronze Age if we are to judge upon the type of clay. Their presence along with the absence of the bones mentioned above can be caused by non-human agencies, such as rodent burrowing.

Under such circumstances i.e., the limitations of the grave-pit could not be established and we lacked a funeral inventory, the exact chronological placement poses problems. The fact that the skeleton was placed towards the upper part of the Precucuteni deposit, very close to the base of the Cucuteni deposit excludes its belonging to the Neolithic levels. The stone layer composed of Monteoru material which reached the area underneath which the human skeleton was found, indicates the fact that the burial could not have taken place later than the Bronze Age, otherwise the grave-pit should have bored through the stone layer to a larger extent. Under these conditions, the burial seems to have taken place during the Bronze Age, before or in the same time with the Monteoru deposit. The disposal of the dead – deeply crouched on its left side shows that indeed one can talk about a prehistoric burial which we cannot exactly place either in the Early or the Middle Bronze Age.

As we have mentioned above, we are fully aware of the fact that during the older research in the years 1960-1962, in the sections S.XII and S.XVI from the north-western sector of the plateau A, eight graves were discovered. The information we detain about these burials is scarce, not very helpful for the chronological positioning of the features in question as it shall be seen later. We will however present them in the following lines, as a appendix to the discussion above.

One can find some sketchy descriptions of some of these burials in the site notebooks of the older archaeological excavations. On two plans drawn in 1960, the tombs are shaped as axes and numbered with M.1, M.2...M.7²⁴ (Fig. 8; 9/1). According to the documentation we keep, the situation in the north-western part of the plateau is the following: in sections S.XII-S.XVI which were uncovered in the area at a depth of 0.25-0.30 m massive lumps of burnt adobes with traces of logs within were discovered scattered over an area of about 10 x 6 m. The adobes were concentrated in section S.I/1959, in squares 6-7 at a depth of 0.30-0.40 m and was well noticeable from the western profile of the section. Two hearths partially covered with adobes were also discovered; both of them had the crust and the depth of the burning of approximately 4.5-6 cm. From among the adobes and from the area immediately underneath them, fragments of Neolithic pottery were picked up, some of these still bore the traces of red paint. The adobe conglomerate, the hearths and the vessels were considered by authors' excavations as the remains of a Neolithic building which had been constructed on the ground (possibly used for dwelling). According to the descriptions found in the notebooks, the pottery could be attributed to the early stage of the Cucuteni culture (Cucuteni A1/Izvoare II2)²⁵. The site notebooks also inform us about the fact that this building made of adobes was partially disturbed by three features belonging to the Bronze Age. We marked the three features with the labels Cpl. 1 (Feature 1), Cpl. 2 (Feature 2) and Cpl. 3 (Feature 3) on the plan (Fig. 8). Feature 1 was placed within square 4 and was made up of conglomerates of river stones which stretched over a surface of approximately 1.40 × 1.20 m; among and near these stones, several fragments of Costișa vessels along with some Monteoru sherds were found. Feature 2 was

²⁴ For the systematic research undertaken in the years 1959-1960, 1962 we had at our disposal A. Vulpe and M. Zamoșteanu's site notebooks, the general layouts of the sections opened up in 1959, the detailed plans of some features, the profiles of some sections, photos taken during the three archaeological campaigns. Unfortunately, the plans of the sections which were dug in the years 1960, 1962 are missing; they contained information about the aspect and the structure of the deposits from the Bronze Age (for instance, the aspect and the disposition of the stone layer, of Costișa features etc.). According to the information we have received from A. Vulpe, the plans from the 1960 campaign were to be found in the archives of the History Museum in Piatra-Neamț in 1981, when general revision of the documentation was undertaken; they have not been found, at least until now. The ones from the 1962 campaign were taken over by the Museum of History in Bacău which had financed the digging that year at Costișa and they are probably lost for ever.

²⁵ A. Vulpe, M. Zamoșteanu, *Materiale* 8, 1962, p. 309.

found in square 4 and in the first half of square 5 at 0.25 m deep and consisted of a Monteoru cup with saddle and threshold handles, another cup decorated with three incised lines and several fragments of pottery, most of them of Monteoru type and few of them of Costișă type. The two features cut through the adobe platform but were situated at the same depth as the latter. Feature 3 was placed within square 2 (metre 4) and consisted of a conglomerate of pebbles which was presupposed to have constituted the bed of a hearth from the Bronze Age.

The three features were not the only ones to have disturbed the adobe platform. The notebooks also briefly describe four graves which cut the Neolithic house; beside them there are other four complexes of the same type which are illustrated on the plan but which are not recorded by any documents. Grave 1/1960 was found just opposite pillar 4 (metre 8), approximately 0.50 m deep and contained a child skeleton whose bones had been poorly preserved. A silver coin from the XVII century A.D. was also found in the pit. 0.40 metres to the north, at a depth of 0.55 m, the skeleton of another child was discovered (grave 2/1960). The documents mention the fact that the earth inside the burial pit was black and rough. 0.50 m further to the east a third skeleton was found, at 0.60 m deep (grave 3/1960). According to Zamoșteanu, this skeleton belonged to an adult who had been laid on the back²⁶. The three tombs lacked any inventory. Within square 2, beside the northern profile of section S.XVI other human bones were found²⁷. A skull fragment which showed marks of having been burnt and a long bone (humerus?) were found at a depth of -0.60 m and another fragment from the skull together with some ribs and long bones were spotted at -0.45 m deep, on top of a piece of adobe which probably belonged to the Neolithic platform and which had been disturbed by the tomb. In 1962 a new section was excavated just beside this area presenting human bones; from this section the rest of the skeleton (marked subsequently grave 8/1962) could be recovered (Fig. 9/2). On this occasion, it was noticed that the dead had been laid in a crouching position, on its left side with the head oriented towards the south (more exactly, according to the drawing on the plan, it was oriented towards WSW). Very close to the fragments of skull, a vessel which constitutes the inventory of the tomb was found. Unfortunately there is no record regarding the type or the cultural affiliation of the vessel.

Besides the four tombs, the plan also points to the existence of four other features labeled as M. 4, M. 5, M. 6, M. 7²⁸. Due to these labels one may suppose that the features were also tombs, but as we have already specified, nothing is mentioned about them in the site notebooks. According to the plan, they

²⁶ In the site notebook of the year 1960 belonging to M. Zamoșteanu, the following is mentioned about Grave 3: *“well preserved adult, lying on the back at -0.60 m deep, probably a female, its forehead is slightly curved over the eye sockets, arms are folded on the chest, no trace of coffin or any other inventory. No coffins were found in the children’s tombs as well.”*

²⁷ Zamoșteanu noted in 1960: *“the vessel found at -0.70 m, inside the dwelling underneath the level of the adobe, comes from a tomb whose hole could be noticed in the baulk of the section. At -0.60 m after removing the earth some fragments of human bones, probably the skull appeared in the surface (it bore signs of a probable burnt or it may have been turned black by the soil). A fragment of a long bone was also found (humerus?). According to these bones, the skeleton had the head to the north and the legs to the south, the vessel was found close to the legs and resting on one side with the mouth facing the legs. The adobe in this area had been sectioned by the hole which cut obliquely through the trench. Other human remains were found on the adobe – fragments from the skull, some ribs and some long bones. All of them seem to point to a child or an adolescent whereas the first seems to indicate an adult. The last, i.e., the bones which seem to indicate the remains of a child is lying on the Protocucuteni platform, its head towards the south and the legs to the north. No inventory was found for this one. According to the aspect of the bones, the skeletons belong to the same age which will be specified with the aid of the vessel we have found in the grave.”* Unfortunately, we have no data about the section excavated in 1962, north from Section XVI, we only have a drawing of the rest of the human skeleton uncovered on that occasion and some notes from Zamoșteanu: *“the tomb discovered in the Protocucuteni level is lying on the adobe of the dwelling. The bones are macerated and only big bones are kept – those from the legs which are poorly preserved, some pieces of the spine and a bone from the arm. The bones discovered in 1960 were probably fragments of the skull and the vessel was probably placed close to the head (...) Underneath the tomb and under the joints of the dwelling, the fragment of a typically Protocucuteni vessel shaped as a bowl and made of fine clay and decorated with spigots and incisions, was found.”*

²⁸ Within the archaeological literature in Romanian, *M.* is the abbreviated form for *mormânt*, which translates as *grave* in English.

seem to have cut through the Neolithic adobes, just like the others. Function of the little data we have about these features, one may claim that they are subsequent to the Neolithic deposits on “Cetățuia”. But what is their stratigraphical and chronological relation with deposits of type Costișa and Monteoru? Along these lines, the position of grave 6/1960 (M.6) in relation to Feature 1 from the Bronze Age is interesting. Grave 6 is presented on the plan as having been covered by the conglomerate of stones and Costișa and Monteoru sherds which constitute Feature 1 so that at least grave 6 appears as having been anterior to them. However we need to mention the fact that we have got no piece of information concerning the existence of the stone layer which is specific for the Monteoru deposit from the Bronze Age in this area of “Cetățuia”. Grave 8 (M.8/1962) could also be considered as prehistoric due to the position of the skeleton (crouched on the left side, no other details); it was completely uncovered in 1962 and it was the one which had cut through the Neolithic “house”. The discovery of the medieval coin inside the hole of grave 1/1960 does not count as irrefutable argument to consider the grave as belonging to the medieval period. One does not know anything about how deep in the ground the coin lay; its presence in the pit could be attributed to the numerous rodent tunnels which perforate the “Cetățuia” hill. Still one shouldn’t disregard the possibility of a later placement in time for this tomb, especially if we consider the discovery, within the same sector of the plateau, of grave 4/2004 which certainly belongs to the medieval period.

During the digging campaign in 2004 we checked the information according to which the approximately 8 human skeletons discovered in the 60s in the NW sector of “Cetățuia” were left standing without being removed. We sketched section S.V of 5 × 5 m, which was superposed on sections S.XII and S.XVI from 1960. Immediately underneath the vegetation layer massive pieces of adobe showing traces of logs and signs of displacement appeared; they were probably some remains of the Neolithic “house” dug out in 1960 and it was obvious that the entire section S.V corresponded to the previous diggings in the 60s. In the central part of the uncovered area, at a depth of -0.63 m, two human skeletons assigned the labels grave 3/2004 and grave 4/2004 were discovered (Fig. 10). One could clearly see that they had been tampered with during the previous campaigns so that no observations concerning their stratigraphic positioning could be done.

Grave 3/2004 was placed in square 2c (Fig. 10/1, 3). The skeleton (a female adult) was relatively well preserved, having most of the bones anatomically connected and the skull oriented towards WSW. The body was laid on its back with the legs moderately crouching towards the right. The head had been propped against the right shoulder, the arms were bent from the elbow and the hands were resting on the pelvis. A fragment of the mandible was found close to the pelvis. No grave-good was found and consequently there is a high degree of uncertainty in what its chronological placement is concerned. One may still assert, though, the position the dead body was laid into was characteristic to the prehistoric periods very often met during the Early Bronze Age and especially with burials considered of Jamnaja type.

Grave 4/2004 was placed in square 3b (Fig. 10/1-2). It was the skeleton of a child, very well preserved which was lying on the back, its arms folded on the chest and the skull pointing towards WSW. When the bones were displaced, a manufactured silver coin, partially preserved was found close to the skeletons fingers. The coin dates back from the first half of the XVII century AD²⁹. This medieval tomb can be related to the medieval feature found in 2001 within surfaces C and D (the feature had cut through the Neolithic deposits as well as through those from the Bronze Age and consisted of ash lenses, small portions of burnt earth and pottery sherds).

According to the plans sketched in 1960, presenting the neolithic dwelling and the axes of the tombs it might be possible for section S.V to have enclosed the tombs labeled in the older plans as M.3 and M.6³⁰. This supposition would be supported by the fact that the orientation of the axes which represent

²⁹ It is a Polish coin from 1624, during the time of Sigismund the Third (*dreipölker*). The identification of the coin was done by our colleague Aurel Vilcu from the Numismatics Department of the Institute of Archaeology “Vasile Pârvan”, whom we would like to thank once more.

³⁰ However, according to the measurements undertaken during the digging campaigns in 2004-2005, section S.V/2004 does not seem to have been opened above the two tombs, grave 3/1960 and grave 6/1960, but a little to the north. Still one has to keep in mind the fact that the lacking a general plan of the diggings from 1960 and 1962 (we only have a sketch regarding the placemnet of the sections at our disposal) and only by using some scarce information regarding the positioning, the dimensions and the content of sections XII and XVI, the positioning of section V with respect to these sections could be erroneous.

M.3 (grave 3/1960) and *M.6* (grave 6/1960) would come very close to the orientation of the skeletons we found in 2004. Moreover, Zamoșteanu's description of the skeleton in grave 3/1960 corresponds to the disposal and the aspect of the skeleton we labeled as grave 4/2004 (the medieval tomb). In this case, the skeleton in grave 3/2004 would actually be the one labeled in the old plan as grave 6/1960 (situated underneath the complex of Monteoru and Costișa pottery). But as already said, this is just a supposition with a high degree of uncertainty.

In conclusion, on the basis of the facts presented one can claim that on plateau A of "Cetățuia" hill from Costișa existence of a group of burials dating back to the Early Bronze Age seems to take shape. Grave 2/2004 surely belongs to this period; grave 1/2001, grave 3/2004 as well as several other tombs dug out in the 60s – due to both the disposal of the skeletons and the stratigraphic position – can be also attributed to this time interval. The presence of these burials which roughly date back to the first half of the IIIrd millennium BC, could account for the present day shape of "Cetățuia" hill, shape which is obviously the result of some anthropic interference. At a certain moment in time which cannot be exactly established, the western and the southern sides of the hill were dug out so that a sort of terrace-platform was obtained at about 6-9 m below the top of the hill (Fig. 11). Although the platform is partially clogged at present, it still has a maximum width of about 10-12 m. It must be pointed out the fact that the entire effort meant the digging out of about 4000 m³ of land. The few tests performed on this artificially made terrace showed that it was not done as a result of building houses – besides some fragments of pottery there are no substantial signs of it having been dwelled upon. Thus, the top of the hill, as it is seen from west (from Bistrița river), north and south has the shape of mound clearly detached from the rest of the hill (Fig. 12). The same image can be seen from the east, wherefrom the hill is isolated from the rest of the terrace by a ravine and thus a little higher (by 2 m). Actually by excavating its western and southern slopes the hill looks as a mound irrespective of the angle one considers it from; thus it is not entirely out of the question for this to have been the intention of the community whose dead were buried here at a time when the mound was a mortuary monument highly spread in the low-lands towards the east. We believe it extremely important that all burials discovered until now should be concentrated on the western part of the plateau.

It is but obvious that, considering the current stage of the research the claim above should be remain for the time being within the realm of probable hypotheses. One cannot exclude on the other hand the variant according to which the shaping of the hill was done through the corroborated effort of the Monteoru community and that it was further a part of a more complex activity, followed by the process of endowing the construction with stones and hearths on the plateau. One thing is certain, namely the fact that during the Monteoru Ic2-Ic1 deposit, the hill already had the present-day shape, the stone stratum, the hearths and the Monteoru pottery being confined within the limits of the plateau without actually reaching its margins.

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Another complex of human bones was discovered during the digging campaign in the year 2005 on the lower plateau (Plateau B) of "Cetățuia" hill from Costișa. In section VI, at 0.26-0.23 m deep, a grey roundish spot with a diameter of 1.30 m and which reached into the south profile of the section was noticed (bearing the label Pit 1/2005) (Fig. 13). The feature was sectioned into two on the axis ESE-WNW. The difference in colour between the soil in the pit and the soil of the rest of the section grew dimmer as we went deeper and the contour of the pit was presupposed function of the presence of the material. At a depth of 0.41-0.48 m small and medium sized river stones were found. The rocks may have been placed on the bottom of the pit as there is no other archeological material underneath them. Within the filling of this shallow pit Costișa pottery were found, along with small pieces of adobe, some of them had been burnt thus acquiring a black hue, as well as thick fragments of hearth, 8 animal remains belonging to at least two animals³¹, and human remains coming from three individuals – a child and two adults (a fragment of a child's skull, another from the left shoulder blade of a female adult, a fragment of

³¹ The measurements undertaken by Dr. Georgeta El Susi, whom we gratefully thank on this occasion too, have shown that there were four bones in the pit, all of which belonged to a sacrificed sheep of about 3.5-4 years old, three more bones belonging to a stag and a splinter whose origin could not be identified. The detailed analysis of the animal remains at Costișa will be published by Dr. El Susi.

the left hip belonging to an adult, probably a female)³². We also need to mention that one of the stones had been intensely burnt – as a result one may notice fine cracks on its surface.

The pottery found in the feature is fragmentary – for most of the sherds, one cannot determine the shape of the vessels they belonged to. Two fragments come from two bowls (Fig. 14/1-2). Another fragment made of a good quality clay belongs to a big-bellied pot, possibly an amphora; it comes from the section with the widest diameter and is decorated with triangles drawn with the base pointing upwards (Fig. 14/3). In what the other fragments of pottery are concerned, one can assert, also taking into account the material they were made of, that they come from bowls or from jars. For some of them the outer surface is striated, which confirms their belonging to one of the categories already mentioned; yet we cannot provide a detailed specification for each fragment, whether they belong to some form or another. Even if the material is so scarce, the ceramics in Pit 1/2005 belongs undoubtedly to the Costișa style.

A similar type of ceramics was discovered in a small number of settlements spread over a relatively small area, covering the superior basin of the Bistrița river and that of Olt river, thus including the Ciomortan discoveries out of which Păuleni (Co. Harghita)³³ is the only certain one. Costișa graves were discovered only at Păuleni and Poduri (Co. Bacău). The other mortuary discoveries which were included in the Costișa group situated mainly in the northern part of Moldavia rather belong to the Komarov culture, if one is to judge by the type of ceramics, the structure of the mortuary constructs and the way in which the dead were treated³⁴.

A feature with human bones (a lower jaw belonging to an adult, seemingly a female, and a fragment of a skull) was discovered at Păuleni³⁵. Unfortunately, the way in which it is described and illustrated does not provide one with a clear image about itself. The pit seems to be rather shallow (-0.30 m) but spread over an extended area³⁶, which also enclosed beside the two human bones, some fragments of Ciomortan ceramics, pieces of adobe and parts from some animal bodies (some of the animal bones were anatomically connected). The feature was looked upon as a dwelling by the researchers who attributed it with 14 postholes containing Ciomortan sherds which had been randomly arranged (!). Leaving all unclear facts- due to their flawed presentation- aside, the existence of some human bones along with animal ones as well as adobes is worth retaining. One can infer from the publications that a tomb was to be found just beside this feature; the tomb contained three human skeletons along with fragments of Ciomortan vessels³⁷. The tomb has a far more complicated structure and thus the description provided by the researchers does not contribute too much to one's understanding the exact situation from the field. At the bottom of the tomb, at -1.60-1.70 m deep, three human skeletons, an adult and two children, partially burnt were found- they had been probably laid in the ground within some wooden constructs. The three skeletons were crouched on the side, their heads pointing towards the north. The building was set fire to so that both the dead and the ceramics were affected by fire when the remains of the burning building fell on top of them. On top of the mortuary feature and above the filling of the pit, plates of stone seem to have been placed. Both features, the pit one enclosing the two human bones and the threefold tomb were overlapped by a layer belonging to the Wietenberg culture.

³² For the anthropological analyses see A. Soficaru this volume.

³³ 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; V. Cavruc, Gh. Dumitroaia, *Angustia* 5, 2000, p. 131-154; V. Cavruc, D. Buzea, *Angustia* 7, 2002, p. 41-88.

³⁴ For instance, Adâncata, Co. Suceava (I. Mareș *et al.*, in *Cronica cercetărilor arheologice din România. Campania 2001*, București, 2002, p. 23-27; *idem*, în *Cronica cercetărilor arheologice din România. Campania 2002*, București, 2003, p. 27-30), Brăești, Co. Botoșani (L. Dascălu, *Hierasus* 9, 1994, p. 139-142), Prăjeni, Co. Botoșani (N. Ursulescu, P. Șadurschi, SCIVA 39, 1988, 1, p. 45-52).

³⁵ V. Cavruc, *Angustia* 5, 2000, p. 96; *idem*, *Marmatia* 8/1, 2005, p. 87-88; Cavruc, Dumitroaia, *op. cit.*, p. 132; Cavruc, Buzea, *op. cit.*, p. 43; A. Comșa, *Angustia* 5, 2000, p. 173.

³⁶ In each report about the digging the feature is assigned various dimensions, ca. 1.8 × 4 m (*Angustia* 5, 2000, p. 132), 3.5 × 2 m (*Angustia* 7, 2002, p. 43), 1.9 × 5 m (*Marmatia* 8/1, 2005, p. 87).

³⁷ Cavruc, Dumitroaia, *Angustia* 5, 2000, p. 131-132; Cavruc, Buzea, *Angustia* 7, 2002, p. 43-45; Cavruc, *Marmatia* 8/1, 2005, p. 85-87.

A cremation tomb where the ashes had been deposited in a Costișa vessel, was discovered in the Bronze Age settlement at Poduri-Dealul Ghindaru³⁸. The calcinated bones belonged to a child aged 1-3³⁹ and had been laid in a Costișa amphora whose neck and handles were missing. The vessel was found at a depth of 0.65 m, among the stones of a structure which had been partially uncovered and which is believed to have a round shape and which was claimed to be the casing of the Costișa tomb. A later report specifies the fact that “the urn-grave discovered in 1979 represents a secondary burial which was posterior to the ring’s construction”⁴⁰. The diggings undertaken in 1980-1982 seem unproductive in what the edifying data for the purpose of the construction are concerned. One thing is certain, though, namely that among these stones, Costișa sherds were found, a fact which casts doubt on the posteriority of the Costișa tomb with respect to this structure. The situation has not been yet clarified as the subsequent diggings at Poduri were mainly focused on the rich Neolithic deposits in the area. During the research campaign in 2005, underneath a surface of 16 x 20 m (surface C) which had been dug out just beside the edge of the terrace, probably close to the place where the stone “ring” had been identified in 1979, a conglomerate consisting of river stones (labeled as Feature 1/2005) with a varied width between 2.10 and 5 m was uncovered and sherds dating from the Bronze Age of type Jigodin, Monteoru Ic3, Costișa were found⁴¹. The similarities between the structure of the Feature 1/2005 and that of the “ring” studied in 1979-1982 have been noticed, but it is not yet clear whether one can speak of the same construct in their case.

We should also mention that in what these Costișa features are concerned, various mortuary practices of differentiated handling and manipulation of the human bones existed even within the same site. Another element, besides the ceramics, which connects these mortuary discoveries, is their having been positioned very close to some structures which could have served as houses. For instance, Pit 1 from the lower plateau of „Cetățuia” hill (plateau B) at Costișa was at about 15 m westwards from the conglomerate of adobes with marks from the branches and twigs and broken Costișa vessels found *in situ*⁴².

It is very rarely that one finds records of pits dating from the Bronze Age which are situated outside the cemetery and which contain parts of human skeletons⁴³. As a matter of fact, the research of cemeteries belonging to the same period showed that this circumstance is by no means frequent. We can mention here, the special settlement at Oarța de Sus-Ghiile Botii (Co. Maramureș), made up of a round ditch which comprises pits filled with fragments of human and animal bones, intact Wietenberg vessels and Wietenberg sherds, other clay or stone items of which had been passed through fire, metal items, some golden and silver items, pieces of adobe etc⁴⁴. It is obvious that the structure of these features and their exceptional inventory distinguishes them from the state of affairs at Costișa or Păuleni, but laying parts of human bodies in the ground along with fragments of burnt pottery, and with pieces of stones or adobes (occasionally burnt), as well as animal bones seem to have been common practice. Another example is prompted by the site at Cârломănești (Co. Buzău), where, on the plateau *La arman* the remains of a dwelling from the final stage of the Monteoru culture were discovered – it superposed some tombs from

³⁸ D. Monah, S. Antonescu, A. Bujor, *Materiale* 14, 1980, p. 86-87, fig. 8/2-3; D. Monah, Șt. Cucuș, D. Popovici, S. Antonescu, *Cercetări arheologice MNIR* 5, 1982, p. 9-10; Gh. Dumitroaia, *Comunități preistorice din nord-estul României. De la cultura Cucuteni până în bronzul mijlociu*, Piatra-Neamț, 2000, p. 136, 150; D. Monah *et al.*, *Poduri-Dealul Ghindaru. O Troie în Subcarpații Moldovei*, Piatra-Neamț, 2003, p. 51-54.

³⁹ The name of the person who had anthropologically identified the calcinated bones is not given.

⁴⁰ Monah, Cucuș, Popovici, Antonescu, *op. cit.*, p. 9-10.

⁴¹ Gh. Dumitroaia *et al.*, *Cronica cercetărilor arheologice din România-campania 2005*, București, 2006, p. 276-277; E.R. Munteanu, communication presented at the XLth National Session of Archeological Reports, Constanța, May – June 2006.

⁴² A. Vulpe, A. Popescu, R. Băjenaru, *Cronica cercetărilor arheologice din România-campania 2005*, București, 2006, p. 141.

⁴³ The literature briefly mentions some circumstances when the human bones were discovered within the inhabited area of some settlements which dated from the Bronze Age; see the sites at Năeni-Zănoaga, Sărata Monteoru, Popești, cf. C. Becker, *PZ* 75/1, 2000, p. 85-86; S. Haimovici, *Analele Științifice ale Universității “Al. I. Cuza” - Iași*, IX/1, 1963, p. 154.

⁴⁴ C. Kacsó, *Thraco-Dacia* 11, 1990, p. 97. Pit I which belonged to this special feature was published with more details, cf. Kacsó, *Marmatia* 8/1, 2005, p. 127-128.

the early Monteoru, stages Ic1-Ib⁴⁵. Closely connected to the Monteoru dwelling, some pits enclosing pottery, huge lumps of adobes (some of which had been burnt to the point of vitrification) and sometimes stones were found; four of these (Pit 10a-b, Pit 26, Pit 27, Feature 24) contained fragmented long bones or human teeth. The authors of this research do not disregard the possibility that these late Monteoru features to have disturbed the previous tombs; by so doing, human bones got mingled within the filling of those pits. However, it is mentioned that “one cannot overlook the peculiar character of these features as the lumps of adobe, sometimes burnt to vitrification and the animal bones prove it etc.(...) Under this circumstance, the existence of some human bones, especially the 10 human teeth found in Pit 26 would strengthen this interpretation, the problem raised however is to what extent one can talk about a specific behavior related to an older mortuary space”.⁴⁶ An argument in favour of this last interpretation would be the position of Pit 26 itself which seems to not have deranged any prior feature. One can also bring into discussion the grave 50 from Pietroasa Mică cemetery (Co. Buzău) which also belongs to the late Monteoru stage and where fragments of a cup, phalanx from a pig, a tool made of sheep bone and the inferior molar of a human being were found in a small shallow hole covered with stones⁴⁷. It is obvious that the motivations which led to the burial of disparate parts of the body may have been various. One needs to take into account, though, the possibility that these individuals may have received special treatment after their death, parts of their bones being removed for several reasons.

The existence of a human mandible and a femoral head in the Monteoru deposit from Costișa may have also been a consequence of the post-mortem handling of the bones. The mandible, which belonged to an adult, possibly a female⁴⁸, was 0.20 m north from the hearth 15 (Section II/2002, square 7g, 0.31 m deep), among the stones of the Monteroru layer, and above some pieces of adobe which showed traces of rods. The piece of femur belongs to an adult and one can well see a small back stain on one of the sides, which was probably due to its having touched a burning object. It was found within square 11f of the same section, at the base of the stone layer, close to the scattered adobes. These adobes may well belong to some Costișa constructs which may have been destroyed by the Monteoru ones, and which became visible after the removal of the rocks on top. On another occasion, it was mentioned that the Monteoru deposit at Costișa which consists of river stones of various sizes which were concentrated especially towards the edge of the plateau; among the stones, hearths, pieces of adobes presenting traces of twigs (some of which were big and vitrified), ceramics, stone artefacts, animal bones etc could not have been the result of some inhabiting. Hundreds of tones of rock were used for such a construction, which point to the special effort of that entire community. The discovery of some human bones within the structure of this construct represents a further argument which strengthens its special character⁴⁹. As a matter of fact, the outer appearance of the Monteoru construct and the layout of the surface of the plateau, like a ring, looks more like the exterior structure of a mortuary feature. One might connect it to the feature at Sărata Monteoru-Poiana Scoruşului (Co. Buzău), if one considers the common elements i.e., the enormous quantity of rocks used for building, the presence of some hearths and vitrified adobes, of pieces of pottery and animal bones⁵⁰. The upper side of the feature at Sărata Monteoru hosted the burnt remains of a collapsed building and which enclosed human skeletons and disarticulated human bones which had been partially burned and which are referred to by Ion Motzoi-Chicideanu as “some adjacent burials and potential sacrifices”⁵¹.

⁴⁵ I. Motzoi-Chicideanu, D. Sârbu, M. Constantinescu, N. Sultana, Mousaios 9, 2004, p. 15-38; idem, *Cimitirul din epoca bronzului de la Cârloamănești-“La Arman”*. Câteva date noi privind standardul funerar în cadrul culturii Monteoru, European Archaeology- online, March 2007 (<http://www.archaeology.ro>).

⁴⁶ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁷ A. Oancea, Dacia N.S. 35, 1981, p. 190.

⁴⁸ Determined by A. Soficaru this volume.

⁴⁹ It is possible for the number of human bones at Costișa to be greater; for the moment the osteologic bones have been verified in a proportion of 70%.

⁵⁰ 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), I, 1999, p. 41-58. An exhaustive presentation of the feature at I. Motzoi-Chicideanu, *Observations concerning the bronze age cult-object from Sărata Monteoru-„Poiana Scoruşului”*, 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. 361-378.

⁵¹ Motzoi-Chicideanu, *op. cit.*, p. 374.

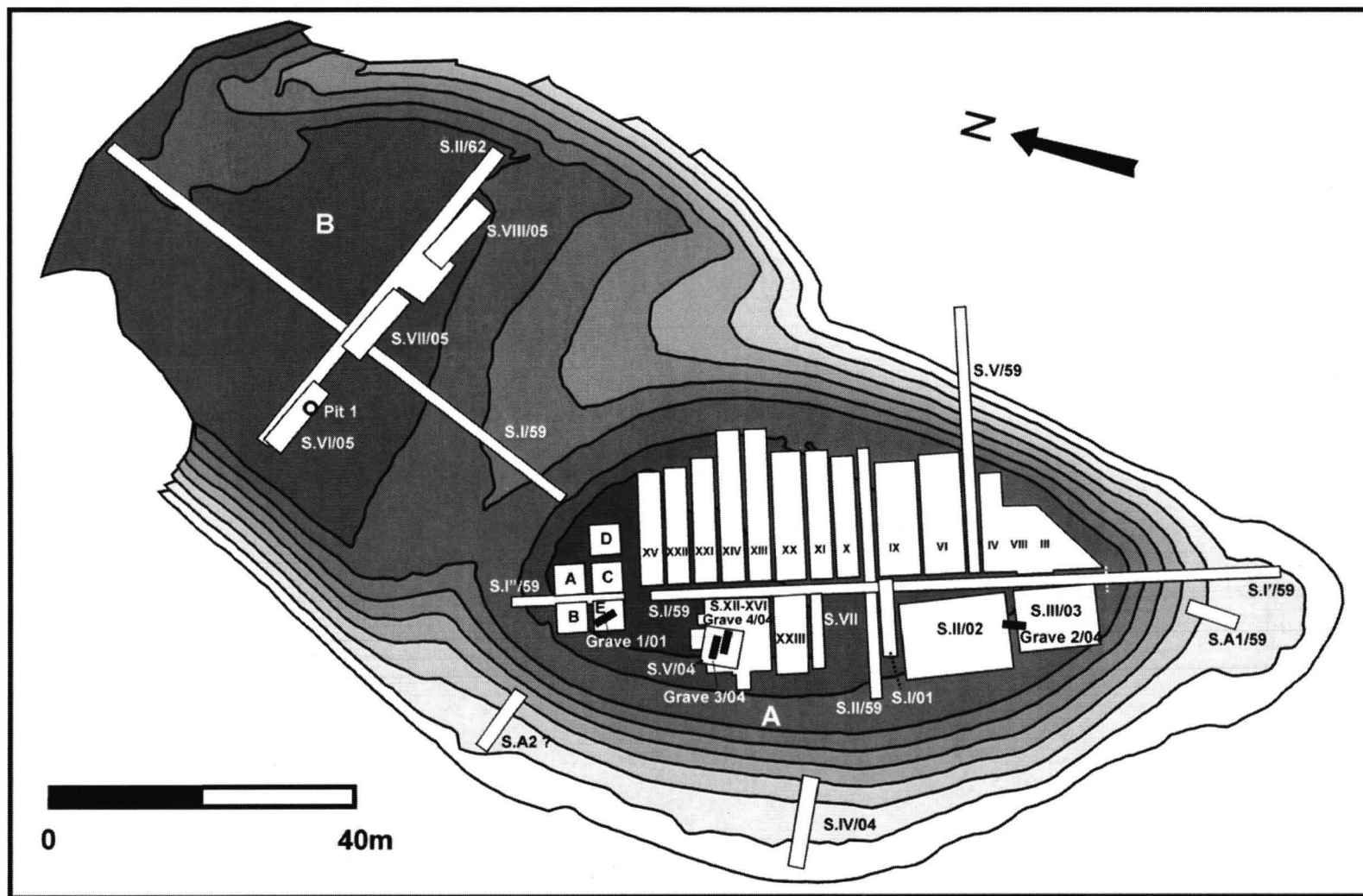


Fig. 1. Costișa-‘Cetățuia’. The general plan of the diggings during the years 1959-1960, 1962, 2001-2005, showing the location of the tombs.

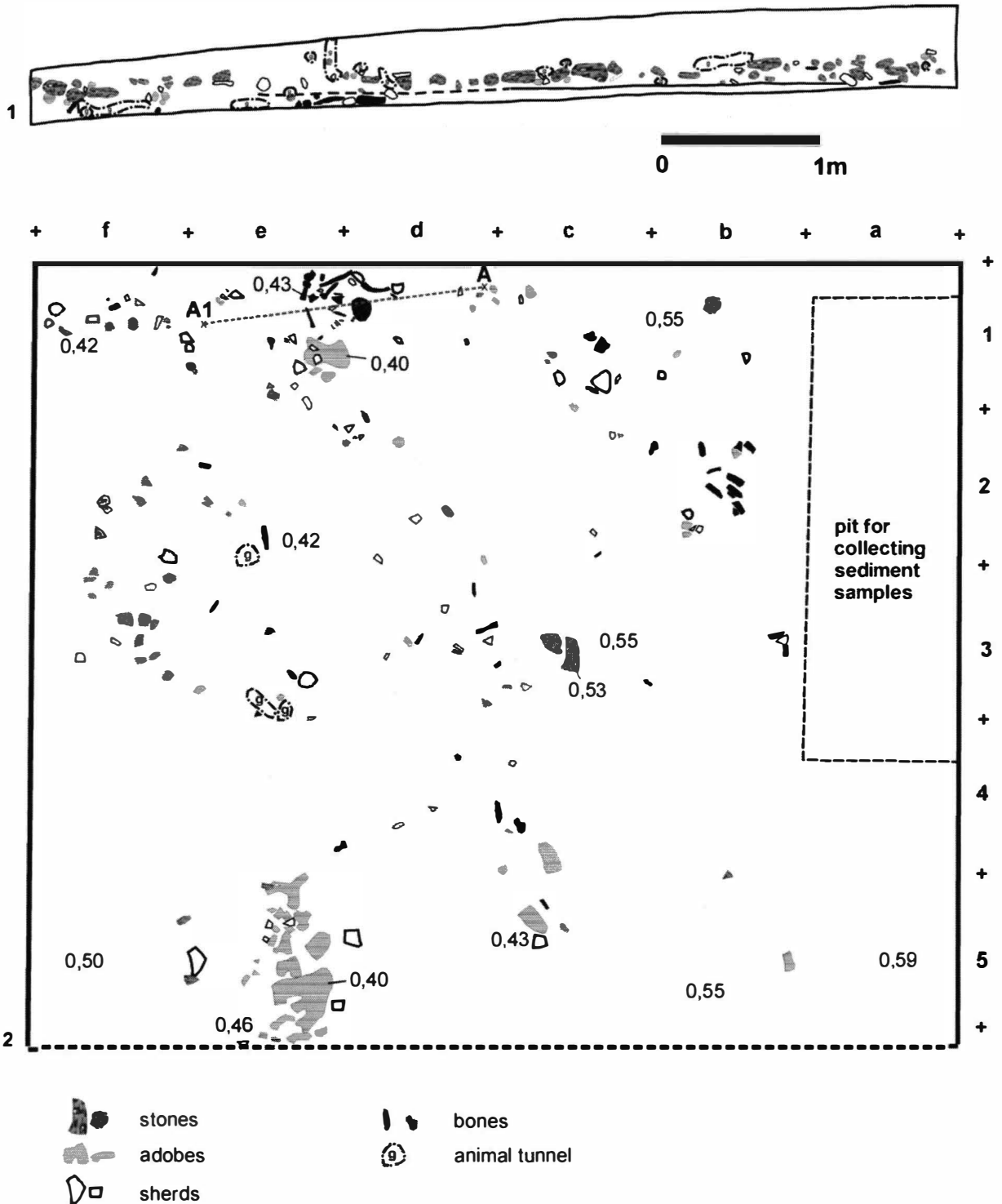


Fig. 2. 1: Costișa–“Cetățuia”, The northern profile of surface S.III/2003;
2: The Neolithic deposit of S.III and the collective grave 2.

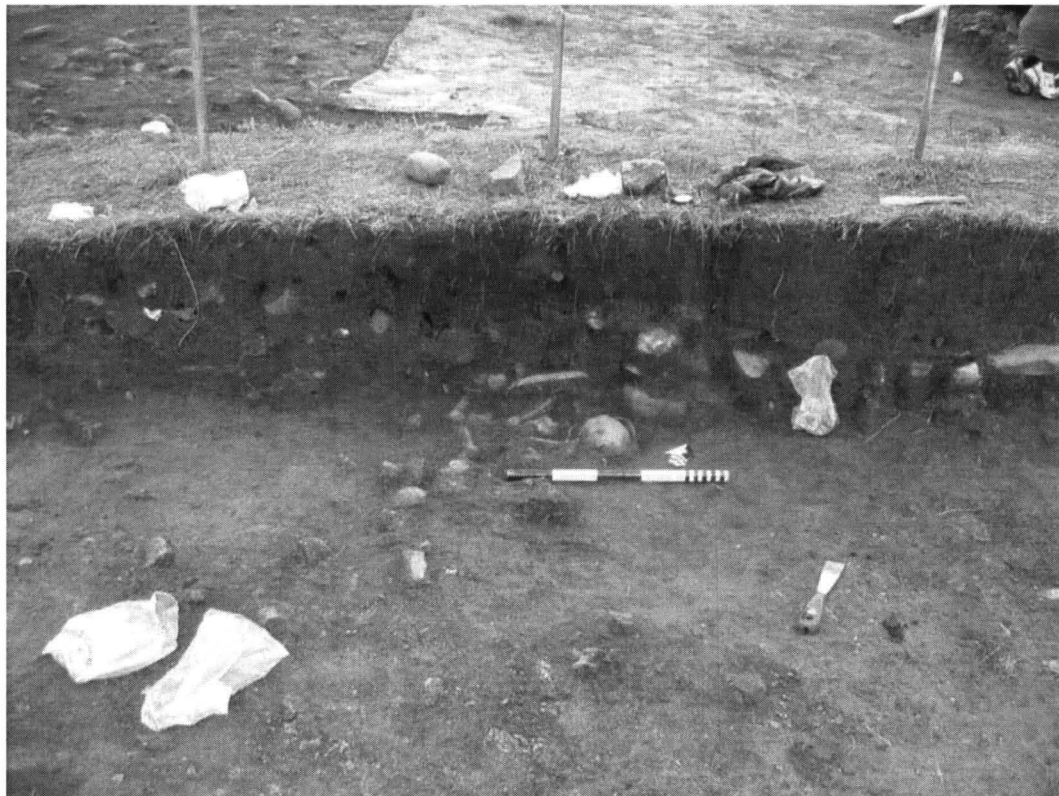


Fig. 3. Costișa–“Cetățuia”, collective grave 2, before the dismemberment of the northern profile.



Fig. 4. Costișa–“Cetățuia”, collective grave 2, the complete uncovering of the osteologic remains.

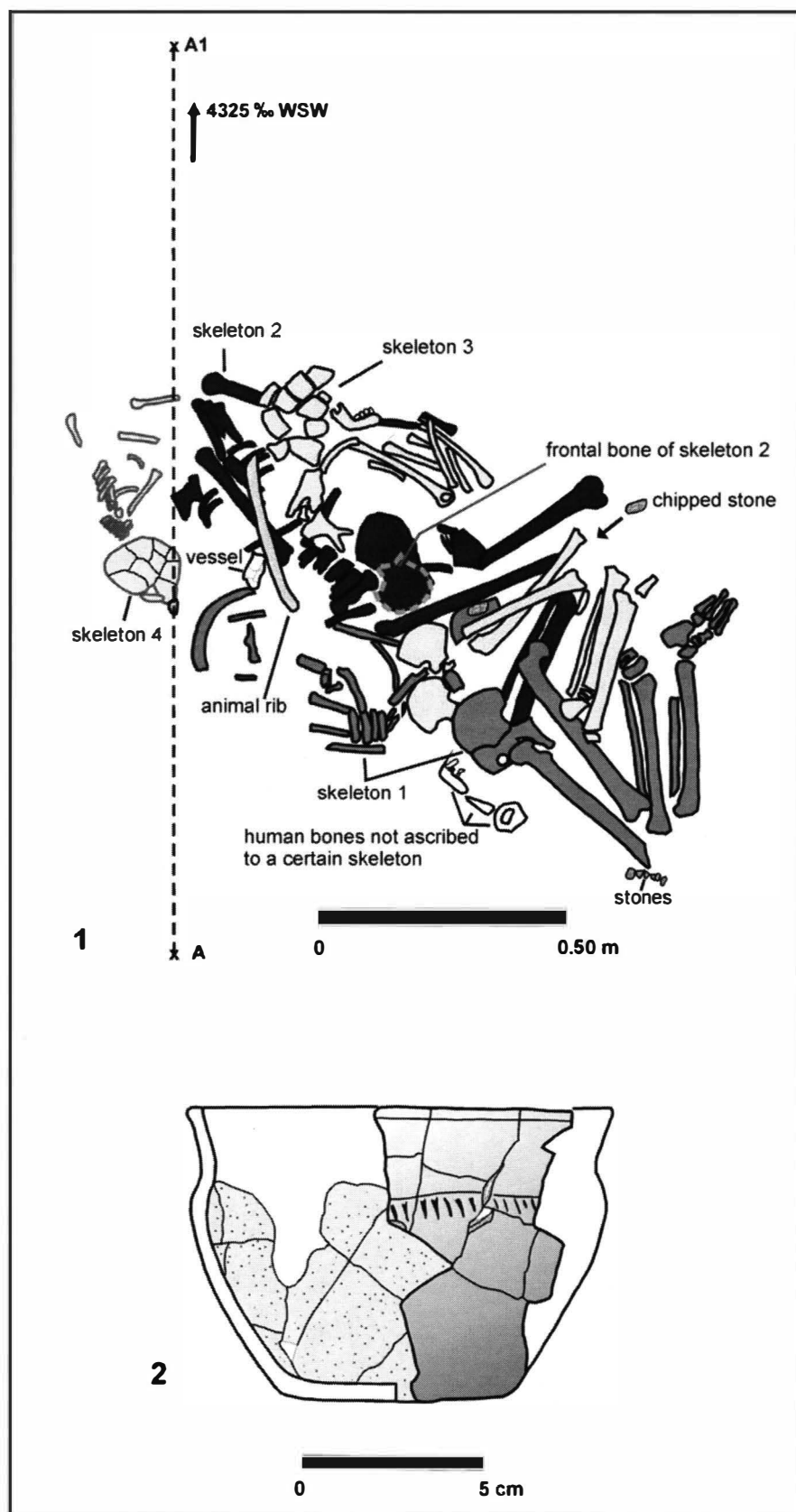


Fig. 5. 1: Collective grave 2, a plan; 2: The vessel found in grave 2.

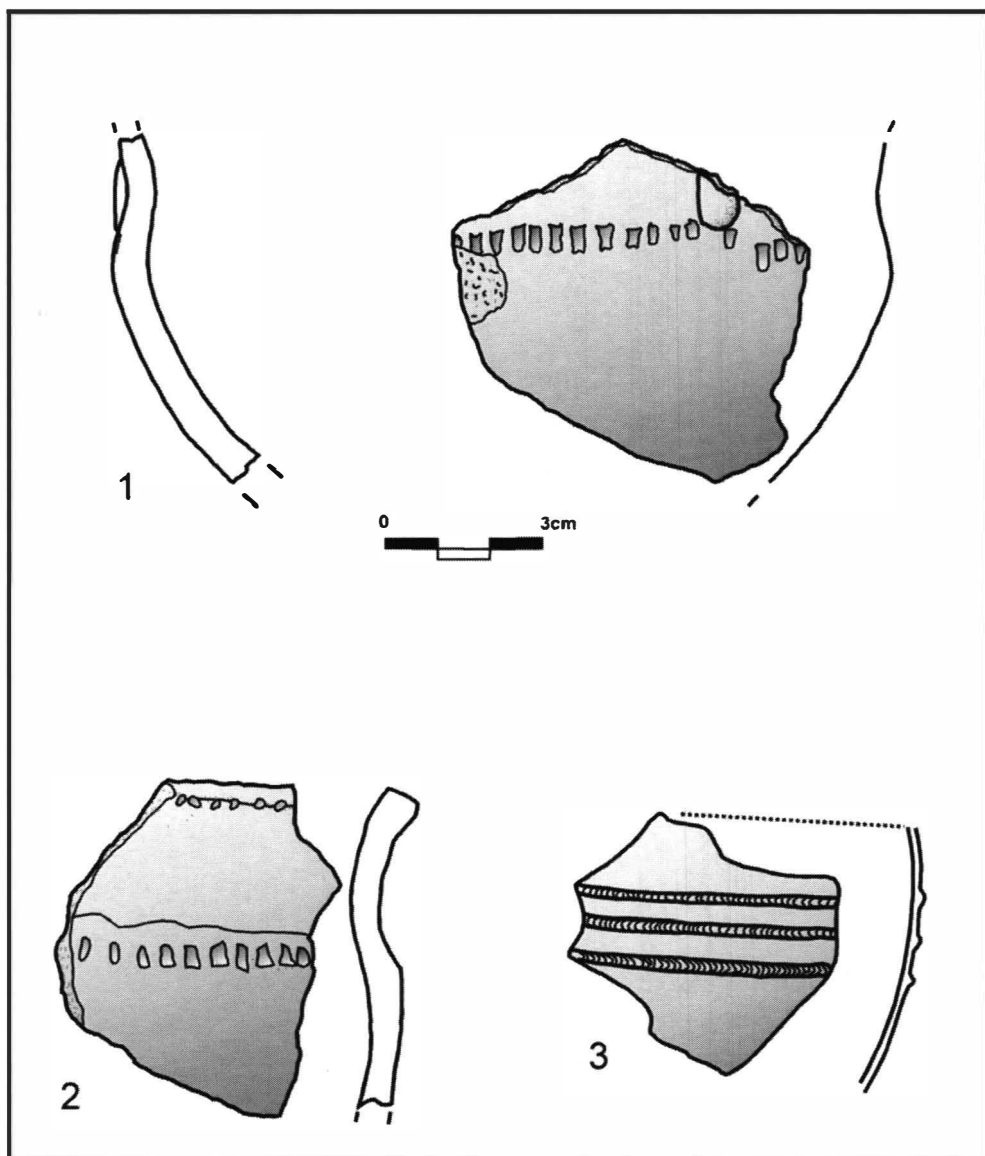
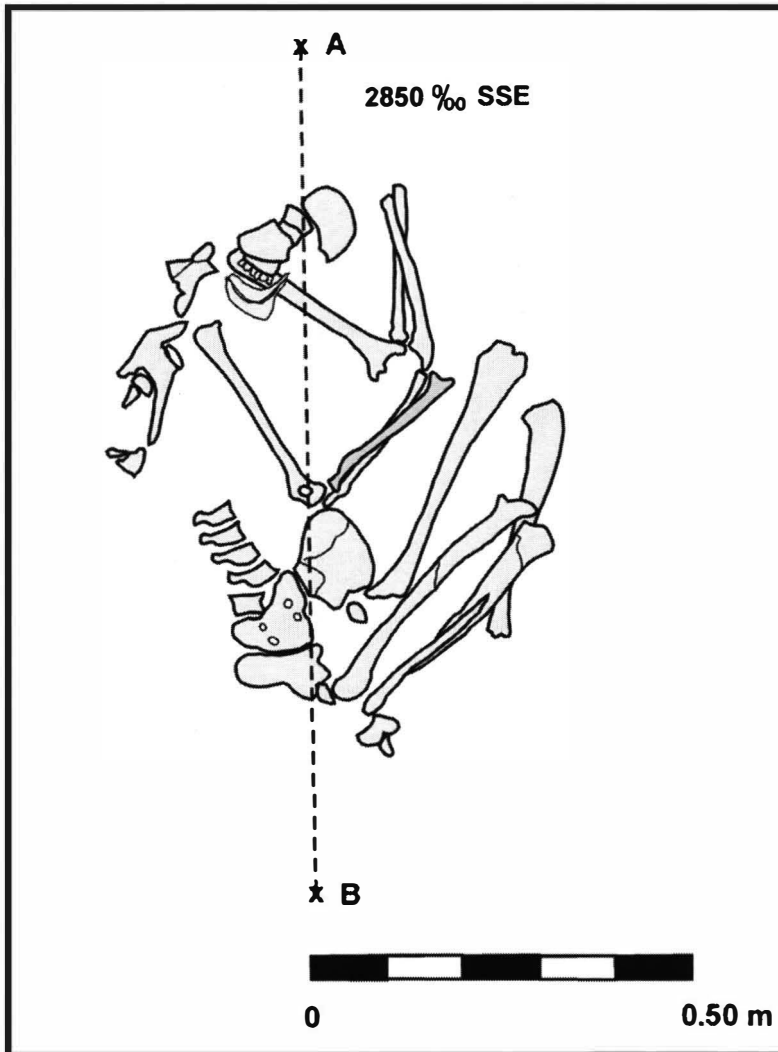


Fig. 6. Early Bronze Age pottery sherds found at the base of the greyish layer (2-3: sketches from the old site notebooks; scale ca. $\frac{1}{2}$).

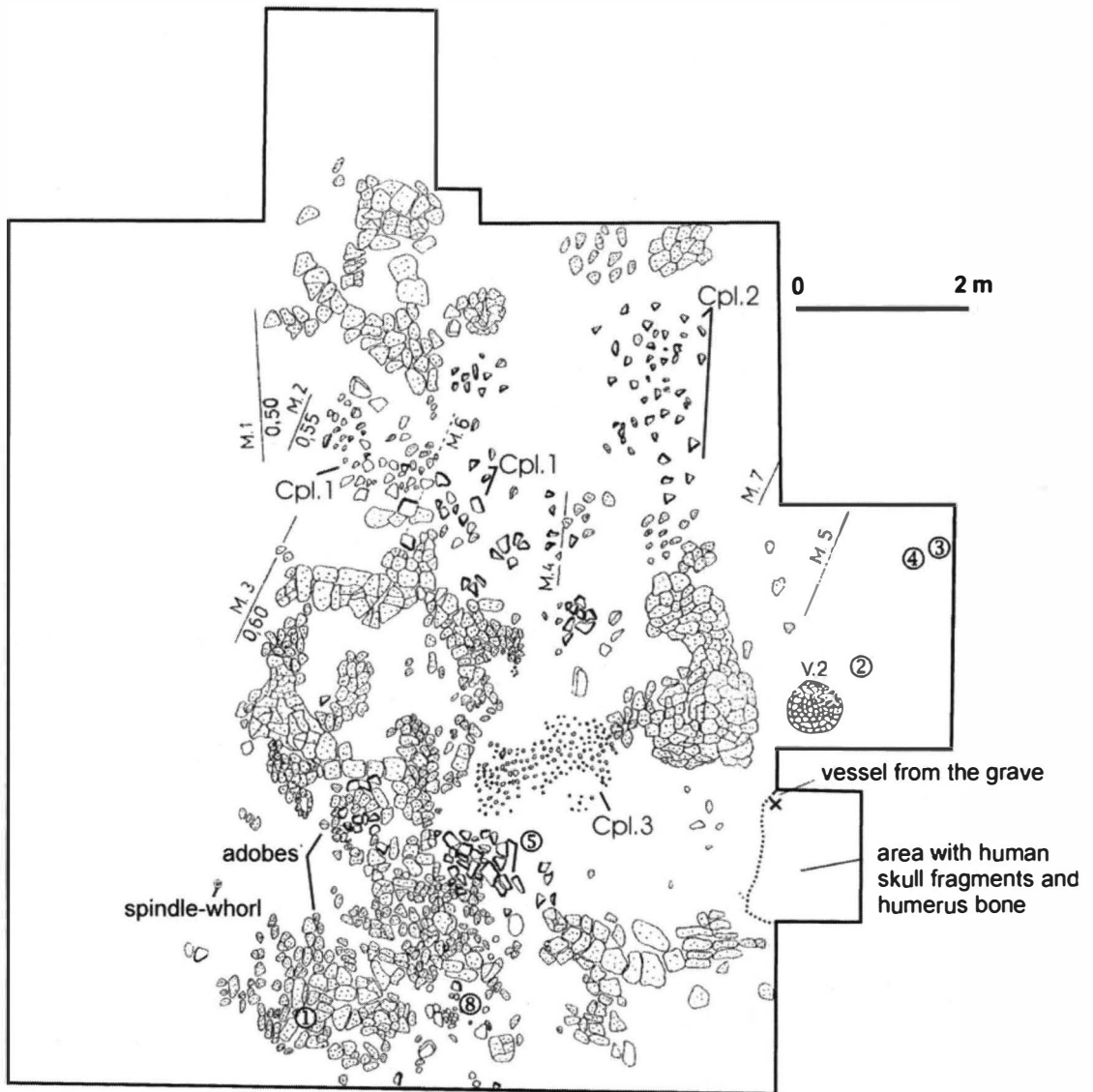


1



2

Fig. 7. 1: Surface E/2001 with grave I; 2: Grave 1/2001 (drawing by Meda Toderaş).



①, ②, ③ = Neolithic vessels

M.1, M.2, ..., M.7 = graves

V.2 = Neolithic hearth

Cpl.1, Cpl.2, Cpl.3 = Bronze Age features

Fig. 8. Plan of surfaces S.XII-S.XVI/1960 showing Neolithic and Bronze Age features and tombs.

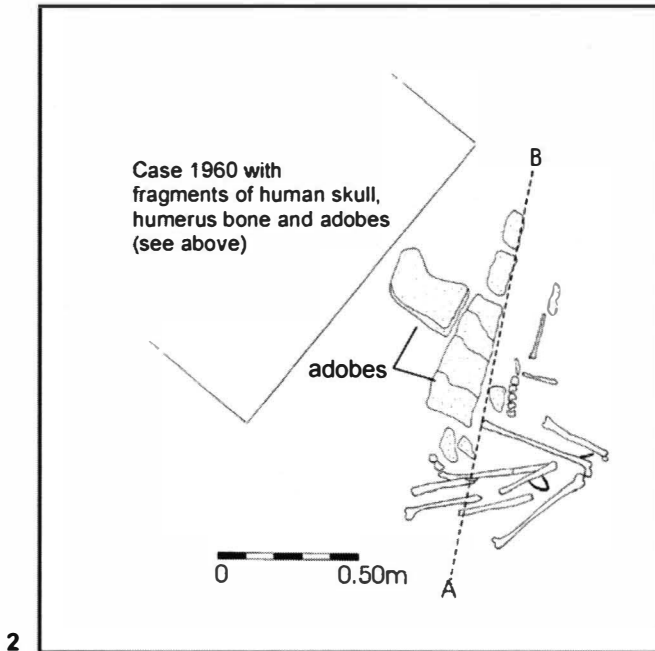
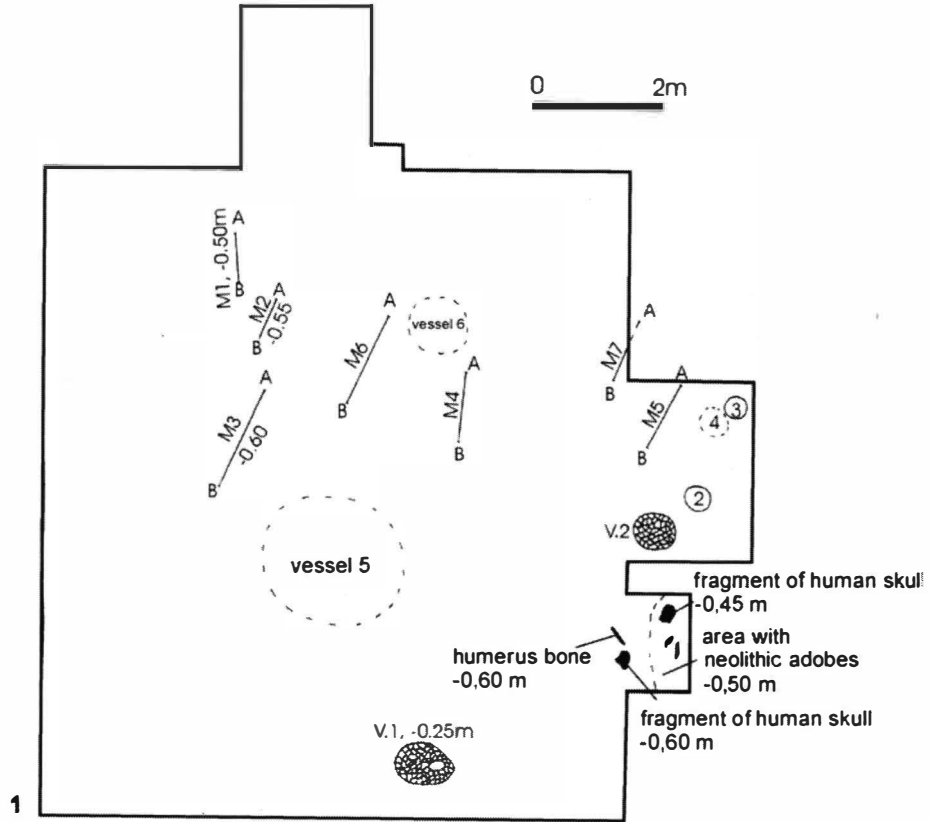


Fig. 9. 1: Surfaces S.XII-S.XVI/1960 with the axes of the graves; 2: Grave 8/1962.

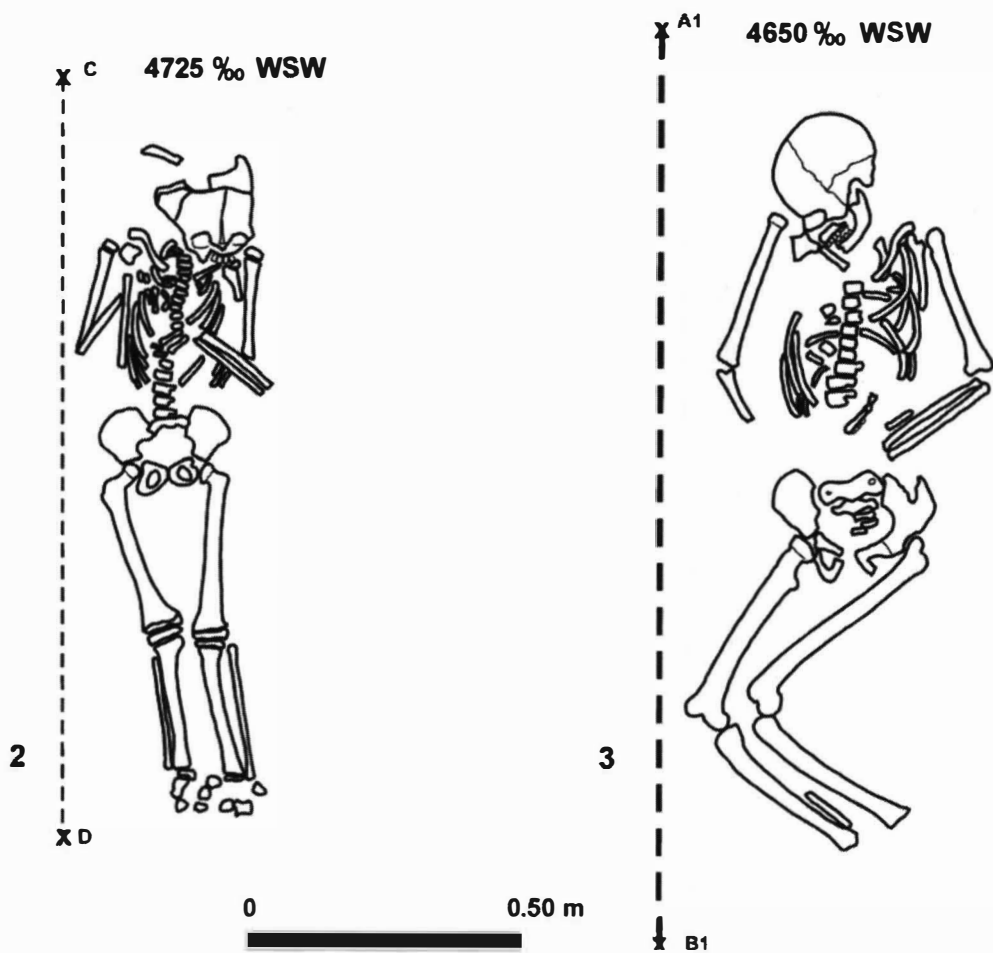


Fig. 10. 1: Surface S.V/2004, with graves 3 and 4; 2: Grave 4/2004; 3: Grave 3/2004.

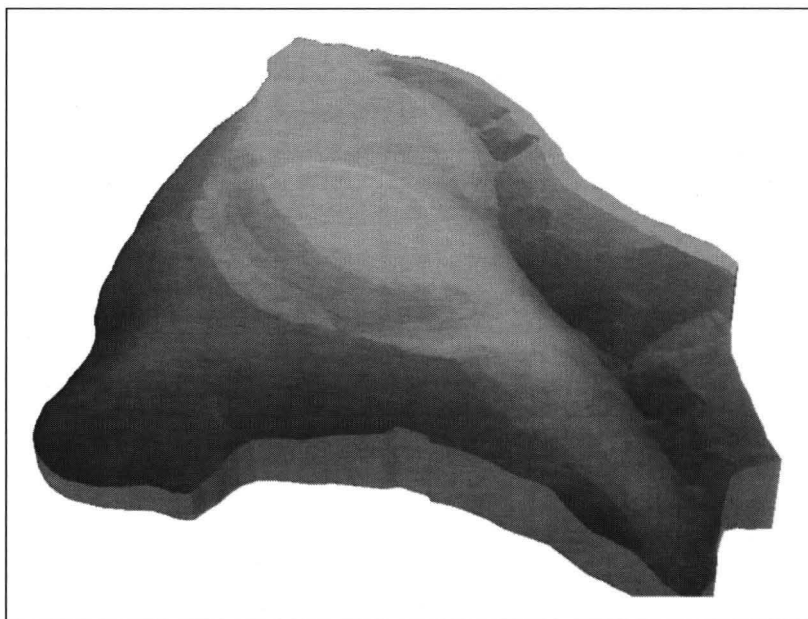


Fig. 11. Three-dimensional model of “Cetățuia” hill (prepared by M. Breazu, T. Borșan, I. Maican).



Fig. 12. “Cetățuia” hill, viewed from the west.

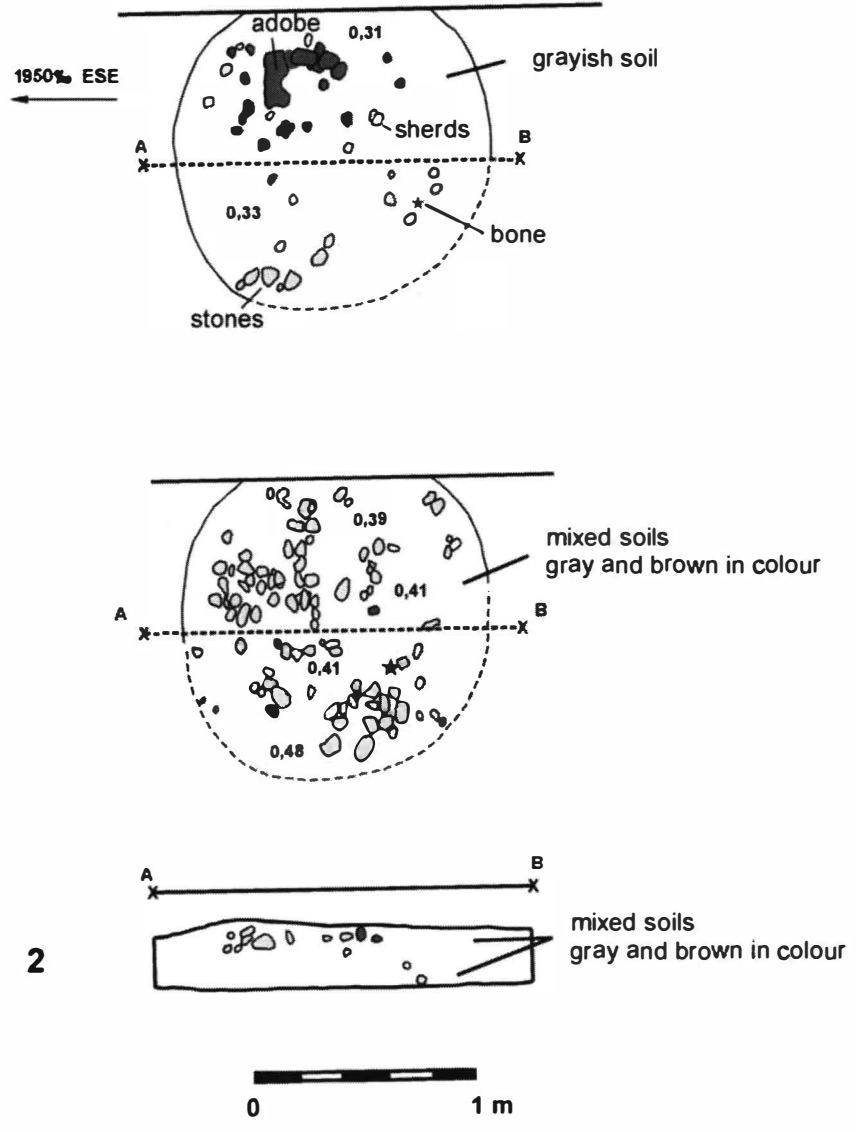
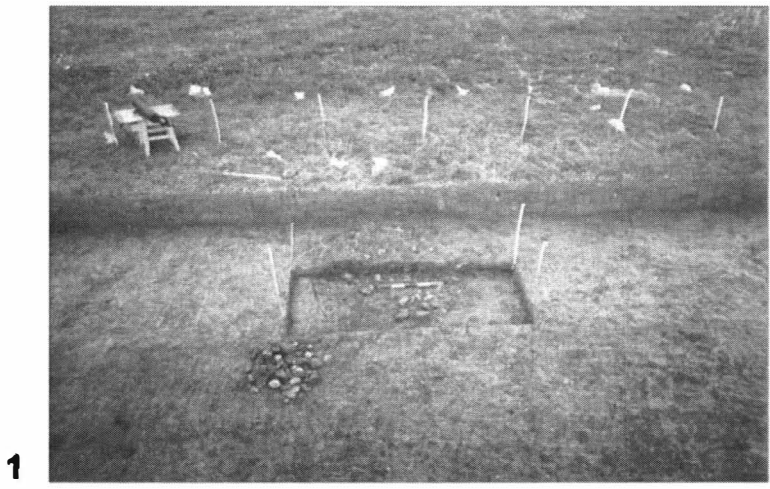


Fig. 13. 1: Section S.VI/2005, with pit 1; 2: Plan and profile of the pit 1/2005.

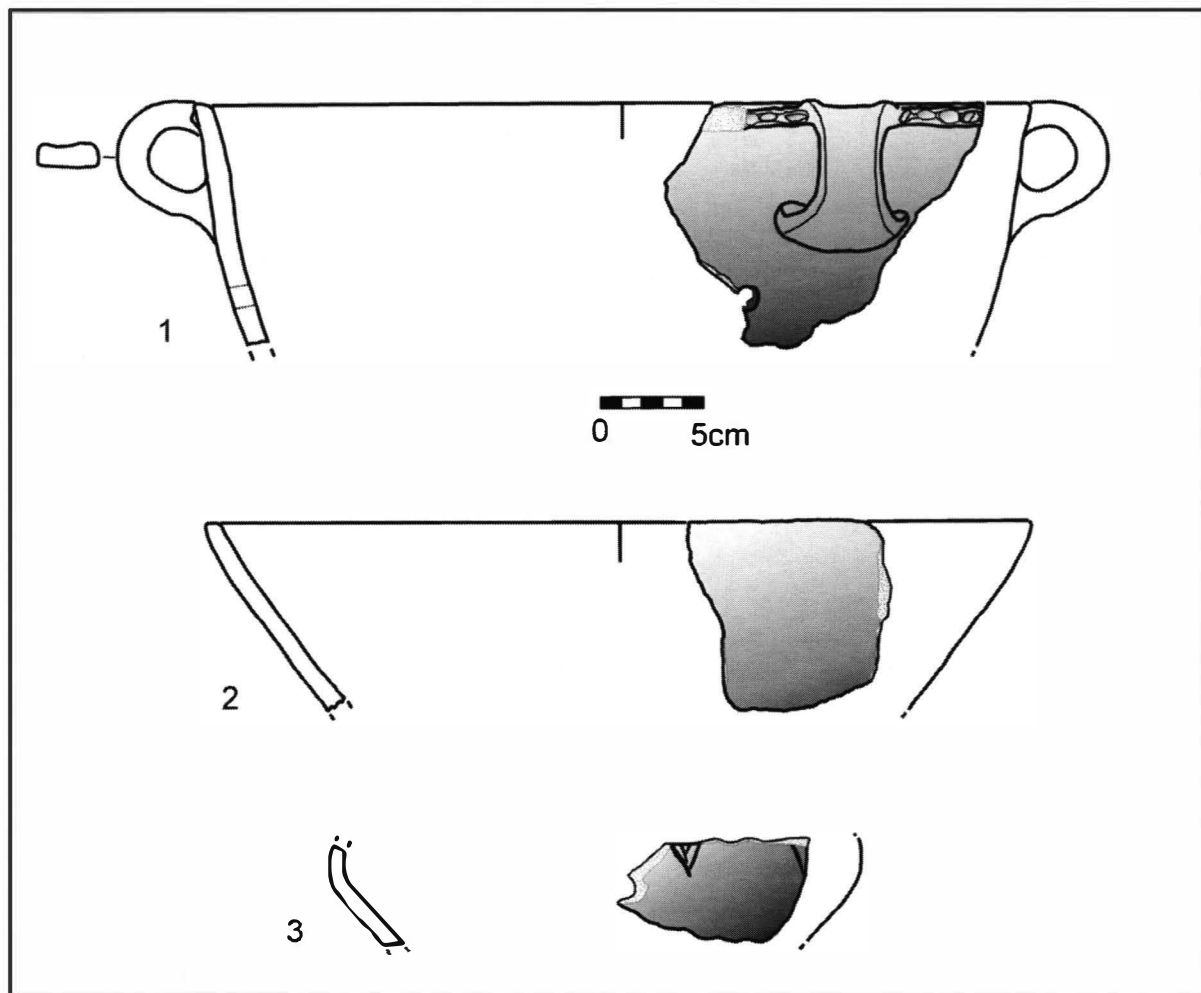


Fig. 14. Costișa pottery from pit 1/2005.

The handling practice of bones was also noticed within the Monteoru (Ic3-IIb) cemetery which enclosed about 800 tombs at Cârdești (Co. Vrancea)⁵². Unfortunately this archeological objective is still new, the published data containing only general information regarding the structure of the outer and inner constructs, the handling of bodies and objects found in the graves. Although they lack the necessary details, the examples published at Cârdești are eloquent⁵³. Thus, in what “Ring 2” is concerned, an adult skull was found inside the pit, close to the shoulder of the buried person. In another tomb, four adult skulls had been arranged in a semicircle behind the dead individual, three cups place upside down were also found among these. Concerning tomb 1, dated as Monteoru Ic3, we find out that, before its rock crate was built and placed on the bottom of the hole, three adult skulls were placed opposite the northern side in a semicircle; four individuals (two adults and two children) were then laid in the ground. Graves with stepped pit were also found – several adult, teenager and child skulls were found on the step, facing either the ground or the buried individual. Due to the lack of anthropological analyses of the human bones and to the lack of any detailed publication about these spectacular discoveries at Cârdești, it is very difficult to estimate whether the skull deposits in question are the sign of some mortuary rituals which included human sacrifices or whether they are simply re-burials of some community members.

⁵² M. Florescu, *Carpica* 10, 1978, p. 97-137; idem, *Quelques observations concernant le rite et les rituels des communautés Monteoru à la lumière des fouilles de Cârdești (dép. de Vrancea)*, in *Actes du II^e Congrès International de Thracologie (Bucarest, 4-10 septembre 1976)*, București, 1980, p. 73-88; M. Florescu, A. Florescu, *Materiale* 15, 1983, p. 112-123.

⁵³ Florescu, *Carpica* 10, 1978, p. 116-117.

The manipulation of the dead is a well represented phenomenon in many cultures of all times, a fact which accounts for the existence of a sound ethnographic documentation⁵⁴. Some communities consider that the mortuary ritual is not complete until a second ceremony during which the body of the deceased undergoes several processes, is held; among these practices we mention the re-inhumation of the whole body or of some parts of it, usually the skull and the long bones. Other communities restrict this treatment to individuals having a special status or prestige. It is very probable for parts of these bones to have been sanctified and then used for various rituals, where the forerunners' participation, and consequently the legitimacy of various deeds was also invoked. The dismemberment and fragmenting of the human bodies is also frequent with those communities which practiced human sacrifices. One is well acquainted with the fact that these events implied ceremonies attended by many individuals. The ceremony was practically an occasion for the community which organized it to manifest its cohesion, the financial power to hold such an event and to check their alliances. In the same time, it was a good moment for the members of that community to reclaim and renegotiate their role in society. For instance, those who had the right to hold the service and to manipulate the bones could assert their authority and legitimacy once more, their higher status with respect to the others, so to say.

Consequently, beyond the faith aspects, the motivation for such practices is related to the way in which social relationships are maintained within human communities. But one reaches this conclusion through one's studying the ethnographic and historical sources rather than by using the archaeological evidence. Archaeological research cannot always provide one with certain explanations regarding the reasons which had led to the dismemberment of the human bodies and to their burial within diverse contexts, even if the field records are rigorous and minutely studied by the anthropologists. Human behavior is varied and each community owns different ways to express social hierarchies and relationships. Obviously, there are circumstances when a parallel with ethnographic data can be useful, but this happens only provided that *'the careful use of ethnographic data has served to do one major thing – to present the possibility of varied and heterogeneous reasons or causes for a practice'*⁵⁵.

⁵⁴ Of the numerous items in the literature on this topic we will only quote: J. Brück, *A place for the dead: the role of human remains in Late Bronze Age Britain*, Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society 61, 1995, p. 245-277; M.S. Chesson, *Libraries of the Dead: Early Bronze Age Charnel Houses and Social Identity at Urban Bab edh-Dhra'*, Jordan, Journal of Anthropological Archaeology 18, 1999, p. 137-164; S.D. Gillepsie, *Personhood, Agency, and Mortuary Ritual: A Case Study from the Ancient Maya*, Journal of Anthropological Archaeology 20, 2001, p. 73-112; R. Gowland, C. Knüsel (eds), *Social Archaeology of Funerary Remains*, Oxford, 2006; E. Hill, *Sacrificing: Moche Bodies*, Journal of Material Culture 8/3, 2003, p. 285-299; I. Kuijt, *Negotiating Equality through Ritual: A Consideration of Late Natufian and Prepottery Neolithic A Period Mortuary Practices*, Journal of Anthropological Archaeology 15, 1996, p. 313-336; Å.M. Larsson, *Secondary Burial Practices in the Middle Neolithic*, Current Swedish Archaeology 11, 2003, p. 153-170; T. Oestigaard, *Sacrifices of Raw, Cooked and Burnt Humans*, Norwegian Archaeological Review 33/1, 2000, p. 41-58; T. Oestigaard, J. Goldhahn, *From the Dead to the Living: Death as Transactions and Re-negotiations*, Norwegian Archaeological Review 39/1, 2006, p. 27-48; S. Reilly, *Processing the Dead in Neolithic Orkney*, OJA 22/2, 2003, p. 133-154; H. Williams, *Death Warmed up: The Agency of Bodies and Bones in Early Anglo-Saxon Cremation Rites*, Journal of Material Culture 9/3, 2004, p. 263-291.

⁵⁵ P.J. Ucko, *Ethnography and archaeological interpretation of funerary remains*, World Archaeology 1/2, 1969, p. 262.