

A Bronze Age ritual structure on the edge of the Carpathian Basin.

Carola Metzner-Nebelsick – Carol Kacsó – Louis D. Nebelsick

This article is a revised version of a talk which was given at the Satu Mare conference in 2008 and includes the latest results from our excavation campaigns in the summers of 2008 and 2009 on the site in Lăpuș-Podanc, tumulus 26.

The Lăpuș barrow necropolis is one of the best known Bronze Age sites in the entire Carpathian basin and adjacent areas. It lies in the isolated Lăpuș river basin embedded in the western foothills of the ore bearing Carpathian Mountains in the district of Maramureș, north western Romania. This cemetery is the largest surviving Late Bronze Age barrow necropolis in the eastern Carpathian region discovered to date, which – as the excavations in the course of our project revealed – also comprises a new type of monument, which will be introduced in this article.

Due to a long history of traditional non-erosive patterns of land use, which involve small plots used as pasture, hay meadows or gardens, but also the sheer size of many of the barrows, this important Bronze Age cemetery remained essentially preserved up until the middle of the 20th century. Thankfully, the ongoing degradation of the site, that has resulted from the introduction of mechanized agricultural technology since the end of second world war, has been accompanied by extensive surveys and rescue excavations, so that although many of the monuments have been levelled or destroyed, it is possible to reconstruct the original structure of the cemetery with a large degree of confidence.

János Szendrei from the Hungarian National Museum in Budapest who first mentioned the site in 1890¹ investigated 13 barrows which he claims had already been destroyed to a large extent, in a sector of the north western part of the Lăpuș necropolis called Podul hortarului. The first survey in 1967² revealed 70 barrows clustered into various groups covering a 1,5 square kilometre segment of tiered river terraces on the southern edge of the upper Lăpuș-Basin. A recently discovered isolated barrow group on the southern edge of the cemetery lies on the summit of a prominent hilltop hill (Mlaca) overlooking the necropolis (fig. 1). The arrangement of these massive up to 10 meter high barrows, which were heaped up with whitish loam or coated with a mantle of bleached river pebbles on prominent points of the articulated slope of the valley, must have been intended to make, and no doubt succeeded in making, a tremendous impression on contemporary visitors.

Sadly, almost no information was published from earliest excavations of the necropolis which were carried out by interested antiquarians like Szendrei during the late 19th century, and most of the finds which were made then are now lost³. Modern excavations were initiated in 1961 by Mirca Rusu, later under supervision of Ivan Ordentlich and have since 1967 been carried out under the leadership of Carol Kacsó from the County Museum of Maramureș for History and Archaeology (Muzeul Județean de Istorie și Arheologie Maramureș) in Baia Mare leading to the investigation of 25 tumuli up to this day. The 26th barrow is currently being excavated in a joint project with the Institut für Vor- und frühgeschichtliche Archäologie und Provinzialrömische Archäologie der Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität Munich and various other scientific partners⁴.

One of the surprising results of these investigations was the astonishing degree of diversity of both the constructions and inventories encountered in these tumuli. Some were covered by sizable stone or loam mantles and others showed a highly complex sequence of interior features and structures including stone constructions, large pottery packings and

¹ Szendrei 1890, 376 ff.; Roska 1942, 209, no. 23.– For further information see Kacsó 1975, 48 ff.; Kacsó 2001, 231 ff.

² Kacsó 2001, 253, fig. 3

³ Unfortunately only a single sherd of channelled black-and-red-ware from these excavations survives in the MNM Budapest (inv. no. 102. 1890. 7).

⁴ Preliminary reports: Kacsó/Metzner-Nebelsick with contribution by L.D. Nebelsick 2009; Metzner-Nebelsick-Kacsó-Nebelsick 2010 and in print.

systematically distributed pit complexes. Moreover, in many cases no human remains could be recovered from the presumed burial mounds which instead contained among other finds large amounts of fragmented pottery, burnt daub from wall constructions and cremated animal bones. In those cases where remains of human cremations were recovered, both urned and unurned strewn cremations were observed, which at times were found under the barrows together with remains of the pyre⁵. Of course this surprising diversity can in part be linked to the long use of this cemetery, which is suggested by the presence of two pottery styles in the inventories of the mounds⁶.

Inceptive vessel sets are shaped and decorated in the manner of the region's Middle Bronze Age Suciul de Sus tradition⁷. Their rich decor includes bowls which are chip carved ("Kerbschnitt") with sophisticated spiral designs as well as large biconical vessels with elaborate incised decor including solar and zoomorphic motifs but also animal head appliqués. In the succeeding phase plainer channelled pottery prevails – often with a lustrous black surface on the outside and reddish colour in the inside –, which in contrast to the regionally delimited middle Bronze Age style pottery, is common to communities over large parts of the eastern Carpathian basin during the early Urnfield Period. While the forms and décor of this pottery in Lăpuș largely reflects the supra-regional pottery fashion, which scholarship refers to as the Gáva style⁸, the huge pottery assemblages which are deposited in and under the Lăpuș tumuli also include unique forms such as great conical necked vessels with exuberant spiral channelling. These are just one component of a remarkably differentiated pottery assemblage which also includes delicate richly decorated fine ware cups and bowls, as well as coarse ware including large pots as well as portable pottery braziers (pyraunoi). It is highly probable that these pottery assemblages which involve many thousands of sherds are rather the remains of ritual feasting than classical grave goods. Metal finds from the barrows include weapons such as bronze shaft hole axes, daggers and rarely sickles but also bronze toggles, with comparisons in HaA1-hoard finds of the area like Ungureni II⁹, which can be connected with horse gear. Costume accessories include pins and a fibula¹⁰ but also other bronze as well as golden jewellery types. Conspicuous members of these tumulus assemblages include artefacts that are very rare in late Bronze Age graves such as clay wheel models and stone casting moulds. One of the most important finds from the necropolis is an iron socketed axe (fig. 2). Since conventional cross dating places the use of this cemetery in the 13th-12th century BC, this axe ranks as one of the earliest iron artefacts in Europe.

Since 2007 research in this cemetery has been carried out in the framework of an international project lead by the Muzeul Județean de Istorie și Arheologie Baia Mare and the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität in Munich as well as other institutions such as the Uniwersytet Kardynała Stefana Wyszyńskiego in Warsaw. Partners for the various scientific analyses in addition to the excavation itself come from the Uniwersytet im. Adama Mickiewicza in Poznań, Poland, the Universitatea Babeș-Bolyai in Cluj-Napoca, Romania, the

⁵ Kacsó 2001, 236 f.

⁶ The most thorough analysis of the pottery is still Kacsó 1975.

⁷ Bader 1976; Bader 1978; Bader 1979; Kacsó 1987; Kacsó 2004; Marta 2009, 35 ff.

⁸ Gáva-type pottery was first defined by Amalia Moszolics (1957, 121) and the term was later applied and modified by various scholars. For further reading see Pankau 2004, 28 ff. This pottery "koine", as Claudia Pankau calls it, is part of the "channeled ware" complex which following Bernhard Hänsel (1976, 88 ff.), consists of different regional styles and covers a longer chronological development. "Gáva" is also widely used as a cultural term. The nomenclature varies from "Gáva Culture" or Gáva-Holihrad culture (i.e. Kemenczei 1984, 58 ff.; László 1973; 1994, 48 ff.; Szabó 1996; Smirnova 1974; 1998; Furmánek/Veliačik/Vladár 1999, 103 ff.). In Romania Mircea Rusu introduced the terms Sântana-Pecica-Lăpuș or Sântana-Lăpuș-Gáva Culture (Rusu 1963, 181) to describe this phenomenon. Other Romanian scholars such as Marian Guma (1993, 181 ff.) and Attila László refer to the Gáva Type or use the term Gáva-Holihrad cultural complex. The channelled ware of the Lăpuș site – phase Lăpuș II – belongs to an older sequence of the Gáva-cultural complex (see recently Marta 2009).

⁹ Tumulus 6 and 21 (Kacsó 2001, 277 fig. 27; 278 fig. 28), for Ungureni II: Petrescu-Dîmbovița 1977, Taf. 273, 10; with better drawings and thorough analysis: Kacsó 2003; Biba Teržan (2005) addresses the toggles as parts of personal dress accessories; for their connection with horse gear also see: Metzner-Nebelsick 2005, 342 fig. 6; 328 ff.

¹⁰ Kacsó 2001, 276–278 fig. 26–28; fibula from tumulus 21 (ibid. 278 fig. 24).

Bayerisches Landesamt für Denkmalpflege and the Ruprecht-Karls-Universität Heidelberg, Germany¹¹. The goal of this project is to summarize and publish the excavations and surveys carried out to date which have so far only been made available in the form of preliminary reports as well as to make a comprehensive map of the necropolis combining a modern geo-referenced plan of the surviving barrows, geophysical prospection with information from past surveys. Moreover a modern reference excavation was planned in order to help interpret information from older excavations but above all in order to obtain stratified material for radiometric dating.

In the summer of 2007 tumulus 26 was chosen for excavation not only because it lies in the centre of the cemetery but also because of an ongoing threat to the site posed by ploughing, agrarian road building and drainage works. The mound had a stretched oval 30 x 40 m diameter. It is however only 60cm high due to massive agrarian erosion which has removed much of the upper fill of the mound. The results of first year's test trenches in the centre of the mound made it clear that this barrow was not primarily a funeral monument but rather a complex structure involving phases of monumental constructions, mass deposition of pottery burning and mound building. Further excavation, but also the results of geomagnetic prospection by Łukasz Pospieszny und Mateusz Jaeger (Uniwersytet im. Adama Mickiewicza in Poznań) revealed a long rectangular inner feature as well as an extensive complex of features outside of the barrow.

Our decision to open larger significantly larger areas in the summer of 2009 enabled us to understand the structure and stratigraphy of the mound much more clearly. Our present state of knowledge allows us to reconstruct at least three major phases of construction of which at least the first two are characterized by monumental buildings erected one on top of the other and sharing the same orientation and lay out.

The first phase of activity on the site is still not fully understood as its remains at the base of the mound are still largely unexcavated. Yet the general course of the development of this monument can be summarized here. It seems that both vegetation and humus were removed or perhaps better cleansed, before the building of the monument was begun on a flat spur overlooking the Lăpuș valley. First an oval mound made of whitish loam, the natural subsoil, was erected. This served as a platform on which a rectangular building was built. In 2007 a section of this wooden construction could be unearthed (fig. 3), it seems to have been part of a parallel sided building with exterior walls resting on sill beams with lateral entrances. This building was burnt, and judging from the lack of debris inside one may assume that this was done deliberately. It had a central hearth and as in the case of its successor it was accompanied by large flanking pottery packings outside the building made of masses of broken pottery which had accumulated before and perhaps during the destruction process.

After it was burnt this structure was covered with a thick multilayered packet of natural sub-soil, forming a second and larger oval mound, on which a new building was erected. This second major phase of construction is the best understood (fig. 4). A long rectangular 22 x 11 meter building occupies the largest part of the centre of the oval platform and is at least 22 m long. The outer walls of the structure rested on sill beams and were supported by additional posts. A line of deep posthole pits in the middle of the building can be interpreted as the support for the ridge beam of the building's pitched roof. Two extensions of the outer walls

¹¹ We further wish to thank the Deutschen Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG) for their funding and support of the project; the county government of the Jud. of Maramureș for additional support; photography: Oliver Thiel (Free University Berlin) and Susanne Spindler (Free University Berlin); surveys and geophysics: Mateusz Jaeger (Adam-Mickiewicz University Poznań), Michael Kralisch (Humboldt University Berlin), Ken Massy (LMU Munich), Łukasz Pospieszny (Adam-Mickiewicz University Poznań), Simone Reuß (LMU Munich), Ulrich Schultz (now University of Bamberg); scientific analyses: Tomasz Goslar (¹⁴C-Laboratory Poznań), Franz Herzig (wood analysis, Dendro-laboratory Thierhaupten, Bavarian Office for Monument Protection), William Shotyk (Isotope analysis of pollen, University of Heidelberg); we also wish to thank the trench supervisors: Roman Brejcha, Veronika Jell, Stefan Kaminski, Aleksandra Knapik, Grzegorz Łyszkowicz, Tobias Mörtz and Aleksandra Osińska as well as the Landesamt für Archäologie Sachsen for additional support in the starting phase of the project and all students and other contributors and last but not least the people of Lăpuș who excavated with us and supported our activities.

define a porch attached to the buildings front façade. In the centre of the building stood a hearth which shows signs of repeated refurbishing and a neighbouring shaft like pit which was re-cut at least once and filled with carbonized wood, burnt soil and large fragments of pottery vessels some with definite traces of re-firing. From the north-western edge of this pit complex a series of radio carbon dates was sampled which will be discussed below (fig. 5; 7).

This great hall was also destroyed by a fiery conflagration attested by carbonized beams and masses of daub, mainly deposited in pits, as well as burnt flooring. Sleeper beams which were preserved thanks to carbonisation show that it was built of oak. The fact that hardly any pottery or other artefacts were buried under the rubble, make it likely that this building, like its predecessor was emptied beforehand and that the site was later cleaned. Larger spots of reddish burnt loam inside the building area may indicate the places where the destructive fire was set.

After the destruction of the hall, mound building and construction activity resumed. This phase however is largely destroyed by modern ploughing (see also below).

Two stretches of multiphase thick packings of fragmented and partially burnt pottery and daub were deposited parallel to both sides of the central structure. In a project enhancing our excavations, this pottery is being analysed from an archaeometrical and ceramological standpoint by Corina Ionescu and Volker Höck (Babeş-Bolyai University Cluj-Napoca; Universität Salzburg). We hope not only to increase our knowledge about the primary manufacture of the pottery from barrow 26 but also learn about the re-firing processes which not only affected the pottery but may also be linked to fires which burned in the building's heart. Of course the question of the geographic origin of both clay and temper will be investigated as well as the possibility, suggested by an initial autopsy of the sherds, that stratigraphically older and younger pottery may have been made using a different mix of raw materials.

The further history of the mound comprises of at least one additional building phase which may include extensive stone cobbled structures encountered on the periphery of mound 26. The exact stratigraphic relationship of this large structure and the buildings in the centre of the mound are still not fully understood. While it could belong to the large hall in phase 2 it is more likely to have been built after its destruction, since no entrance situation could be discovered in the building so far. Furthermore the presence of stones packings in the badly eroded upper fills of the mound makes it likely that the impressive stone structures can be related to the last surviving construction phase of the mound.

These structures are made up of pebbles and boulders which must have been transported at least a kilometre from the stony bed of the Lăpuş River to the site of the barrow. The most substantial feature discovered so far is a cobbled linear structure approaching the mound from the east (fig. 6). It lay directly below the modern plough soil. A 13,5m long segment of this feature has been uncovered so far and it seems best described as a procession way or a specially denoted entrance feature. This path is accompanied on both sides by substantial stone packings which may be the foundations for formerly upstanding wooden structures which have not been preserved. Traces of an identical structure were found on the opposite, western, periphery of our excavations and in the drainage ditch on the western edge of the field road. They show that a linear cobbled feature extended further westwards. The two approaches leading towards the central part of the thus would have formed a symmetrical structure.

Among the main objectives of the project was the attempt to obtain material for ¹⁴C-dates. Meanwhile a couple of dates from different contexts within the mound are available. Some will be published here for the first time. Their context unearthed in the first year of our excavation is a multiphase pit complex in the centre of the mound. Today we are able to evaluate the stratigraphical position of the samples. Originally our intention was to take a couple of samples in different stratigraphical positions in order to possibly date the sequence of various building phases more accurately. Unfortunately there is no bone material preserved

which could be subject to AMS dating, avoiding old-wood-effects of charcoal samplings. Since this methodological problem could not be eliminated, we had to take charcoal samples of burnt wood.

As shown in fig. 5 the multiphase pit complex cuts the red burnt layer marking the destruction of the megaron-like hall of building phase 2. The southern part of the pit complex may originally have belonged to a posthole pit for the roof supporting construction of the large hall, but was clearly enlarged or re-cut after its burning. It is also evident that this two-fold pit is covered by another layer containing – in this part – two posthole pits in which traces of burnt wood have been found.

The result of the dates can be interpreted in the following way. The samples P 38, P 36 come from the base of a substantial posthole pit for the construction of the large hall. P30 and P 31 come from its fill. The charcoal must therefore have gotten into the pit during the building of the hall or predate its erection. The sample P 23 clearly belongs to a construction phase of the mound post dating the large building's destruction, since it comes from a feature which cut the red burnt destruction layer. Sample P 14 was recovered from a feature related to the layer which covers this pit complex and is stratigraphically the youngest. These stratigraphic relationships are roughly reflected by the radiocarbon sequence despite the large intervals in the 2 sigma standard variation (95,4% probability) due to a flat calibration curve in this period (fig. 7).

Sample	Context	95,4% probability	55-68% probability
P14 (Poz-22788):	carbonised wood from the upper most cultural layer:	1380–1120 cal BC	P 14: 1310–1190 cal. BC (68,2%)
P23 (Poz-22795):	carbonised wood from a pit complex which cuts the destruction layer of the large hall building	1380–1120 cal BC	P 23: 1320–1200 cal BC (68,2%)
P30 (Poz-22794):	carbonised wood from the fill of the post hole pit	1630–1450 cal BC	P 30: 1610–1490 cal BC (68,2%)
P 31 (Poz-22786):	carbonised wood from the fill of the post hole pit	1540–1410 cal BC	P 31: 1515–1440 cal BC (68,2%)
P 36 (Poz-22800):	carbonised wood from the base of the post hole pit	1460–1290 cal BC	P 36: 1440–1370 cal BC (55,8%)
P 38 (Poz-22792):	carbonised wood from the base of the post hole pit	1420–1250 cal. BC	P 38: 1390–1290 cal. BC (67,1 %)

Summing up this shows a range between 3265 ± 35 BP and 3005 ± 30 BP¹²

Regarding the quality of the samples, clearly the danger of old-wood-effects can not be excluded which seems to be particularly the case for sample 30 and 31.

Surprisingly the dates are very high for an archaeological context which can be connected with channelled ware pottery. So far, except for a handful of chip decorated sherds, the majority of the thousands of pottery sherds from mound 26 belong to the channelled Lăpuș II-types (fig. 8). Furthermore the southern part of the pit complex was filled with a dense packing of vessel parts of Lăpuș II-type, among them sherds with a red inner and black outer surface. Traditionally channelled pottery/“kannelierte Keramik” also referred to as Gáva or Gáva-Lăpuș II-Typus has been parallelised with the HaA1 period and therefore has been dated within the 12th c. BC.¹³ Although old-wood-effects can not be excluded, the intervals of the dates indicate the existence of channeled ware pottery in Lăpuș in the 13th c. BC if not earlier.

As a number of other recently published dates from the settlement of Grănișești in Transcarpathian Romania (see the contribution by Attila László in this volume) or different

¹² The samples were dated in the Poznań Radiocarbon Laboratory by Tomasz Goslar using OxCal v3.10.

¹³ i. e. Hänsel 1976, 88 f. chronological chart “Beilage”; Kacsó 1987, 75; Gumă 1993, 181 ff. chronological chart; Pare 1998, 422 Tab. with regard to the local literature.

sites in Hungary indicate¹⁴, this reflects a general trend. If these dates can be obtained for short lived organic materials (single year plant remains, animal bones, etc.) as well, the chronological frame work of the Late Bronze Age in the Carpathian basin must be rearranged.

Interpretation

The origin of the huge amount of intentionally destroyed pottery, which ended up heaped on both edges of the mound in the first two construction phases or which was deposited in a deep pit in its centre, is probably best seen as the result of ostentatious feasting. Considering the location of mound 26 in the midst of a cemetery it is highly likely that such feasting may have taken place in the framework of funerals, memorial ceremonies and/or ancestor worship¹⁵.

Of course it is difficult to be specific about the nature of these festivities before a comprehensive analysis of the pottery has taken place and the monument has been excavated fully, but the presence of large coarse ware storage vessels and portable hearths make it likely that the festivities included the preparation of food and beverages. Furthermore the presence of a highly differentiated set of decorated fine wares point to sophisticated ceremonies of their distribution and consumption. The destruction of the vessels and their selected deposition seems to have been an integral part of these ceremonies preventing their re-use in profane contexts.

In some cases the pottery shows evidence of sometimes severe re-firing and some calcinated animal bones¹⁶ indicate meat being subjected to temperatures that make sacrificial fire a more likely agent than cooking. The complexity and religious nature of the rituals which were carried out in and around this monumental building is highlighted by the find of a small bronze hoard, made up of fire scathed jewellery and what may be a horse gear disk which lay together with different sorts of grain and a grape pip on the edge of a pottery packing.

The combination of the attributes of the central structure of phase 2: rectangular layout, porch façade and central hearth, is also found in the contemporary megaron structures which are the main halls and architectural foci of the Mycenaean palaces¹⁷. However although it is attractive to see the conception of this funerary monument as a reflection of the representative architecture of Mycenaean civilisation there are important differences. The Lăpuş hall, for instance, was a pitched roofed wooden building, built by using local technology while Mycenaean megara have stone foundations and mud brick walls and in contrast to the Lăpuş structure clearly defined frontal entrances.

The functional context is also a major difference. Megara are an integral part of the iconography of power in the context of palatial governance¹⁸. The fact that the Lăpuş structure lies embedded in a contemporary necropolis as well as the condition and find circumstances of the artefacts deposited in and around it, make a ritual function for his structure highly likely¹⁹. However the social organisation of the community which erected the buildings and mounds remains still largely obscure so that we can only assume that the hall may have functioned as the focal point of a highly structured society.

¹⁴ Ilon 2005 for a BzD/HaA1 settlement site of Némethánya in western Hungary with dates between roughly between 3050–2990 cal BP or 1423–1024 cal BC (2σ confidence); although there seems to be a larger variation of the dates from Némethánya, similar intervals as in Lăpuş could be observed. Recent excavations in the salt mine of Figa near Dej in Transilvania and in the fortified settlement Corneşti have produced comparable dates between 3100 and 3000 cal BP (we thank Anthony Harding for the information).

¹⁵ The structure in tumulus 26 represents a new type of monument to which tumulus 17 excavated by Kacsó, and discussed in his doctoral dissertation (Kacsó 1981) can be added. Motzoi-Chicideanu (1999–2001, 228 Abb. 21) with reference to Kacsó's information, counted Lăpuş tumulus 17 among his selection of Bronze Age cult places.

¹⁶ We thank Joris Peters, LMU München for the information.

¹⁷ For a comprehensive account see Alexander Mazarakis Ainian 2008, 129 ff. fig. p. 131.

¹⁸ For megara see Kjell Werner 1993; concerning contacts with the Mycenaean world and the eastern Carpathian Basin and adjacent areas see Reinhard Jung 2005 with additional references.

¹⁹ That the building did not serve a domestic function is supported by evidence from the contemporary settlement of Petea-Csengersima, recently published by Liviu Marta (2009, fig 2), in which a dense cluster of pits shows a totally different lay out.

As it was discussed above the ^{14}C samples from contexts assigned to the later construction phases of the mound are concentrated in the 13th century BC. This is not only significant for understanding the absolute chronological development of this mound but also has consequences for the wider understanding of the chronological sequence of pottery styles in the Carpathian Basin, as channelled pottery which is characteristic for this phase is traditionally dated to the 12th century (see above).

Clearly similar rituals were being celebrated in the earlier phase of the mound as during the later. Based on our results so far we think it is likely that we have recovered an at least threefold cyclical sequence of monumental construction, ritual use, and destruction probably involving possessions, feasting, incineration and mound building within the context of funerary and/or memorial practices.

Whether the details of this model will stand the test of new results or not, it is clear that the results of the excavations carried out so far will have an impact on our understanding of ritual behaviour and status display in the later prehistory of south east Europe. This is the first time that monumental architecture has been discovered in a context which clearly transcends settlement or domestic usage outside the Mycenaean world²⁰.

Moreover it seems likely that despite their differing settings, Mycenaean megara lie in the heart of palaces, our example from Maramureş was built within a necropolis, there may have been a connection between these similar architectural forms. One could imagine that elites in Lăpuş were attempting to imitate the architecture of power and prestige from the civilized south and adapt it to their own ritual needs within the context of funerary ritual, ancestor or hero cults.

A further possible link to the Mediterranean world can be seen through obvious similarities between the Lăpuş structure and a monumental building which was erected ca. 300 years later in the first half of the 10th century BC, the early Iron Age, in Lefkandi on the Greek island Euboea. It may originally have functioned as a royal hall; however the burial of a cremated male and an inhumation of a richly equipped woman in its centre clearly lead to a transformation of this function to that of a “Heroon”, a place of hero or ancestor worship in whose vicinity a cemetery was installed between 950 until 825 B.C.²¹. As in the case of Lăpuş the structure in Lefkandi was intentionally destroyed by fire and a mound was heaped on to it thereafter. This impressive building is 45 m by 10 meters in size and thus larger than the hall in tumulus 26. It has a rounded end in the west and like Lăpuş has a porch with two antae in front. In contrast to the Mycenaean megara the Lefkandi “Heroon” had a pitched roof supported by a row of wooden posts, very much like Lăpuş. However in the case of Lefkandi Mycenaean traditions are shown by the use of mud brick on stone foundations. While the similarities between this Iron Age building and the much earlier Lăpuş structure are clear, the presence of burials in the confines of the Lefkandi building show that it had a more immediate relationship to the sphere of the dead as was the case in Lăpuş.

Future plans:

The goal of the future excavations in Lăpuş barrow 26 is to clarify the nature of all of the structures which are visible on a magnetic plan and to recover the lay out plan of the first phase of the central rectangular building. This will enable us to reconstruct what is so far a unique representative building of the late Bronze Age in central Europe. The excavation is being accompanied by extensive scientific analyses in the nearer and further surroundings of the Lăpuş-valley. One of the goals is a reconstruction of the vegetation history of the region by

²⁰ The only comparison in the south east European Bronze Age we know of is a building in the Otomani-settlement of Sălăcea in the region of Crişana (Jud. Bihor) which Nicolae Chidoşian and Ivan Ordentlich (1975) considered to be a megaron. The authors quite rightly state that the building can not be regarded as a normal house but is more likely to be an edifice made for a special purpose. This is not the place to attempt a detailed comparison between the Sălăcea edifice and the buildings which lie under mound 26 of Lăpuş however it is worth noting that the Sălăcea structure is much smaller

²¹ Popham/Sackett/Themelis 1979; 1980; Lemos 2002; Mazarakis Ainian 2008a, 140 ff.

palynological analyses and in particular to answer the question why this isolated agriculturally unfavourable valley was chosen as the site of this extensive and important necropolis. Preliminary results of Michael Peter's (Working group for palaeobotany/vegetation history LMU Munich) investigations in peat bogs on the periphery of the Lăpuș basin suggest that the earliest significant settlement of the valley begins in the early Bronze Age, a period which so far lacks any archaeological traces. This result obviously raises the question whether, as is highly likely, both the valley's settlements and the foundation of this outstanding necropolis can be linked to the exploitation of the varied and bounteous mineral resources, including copper and gold, in the surrounding mountains. In order to answer this important question, which will affect our understanding of the dynamics of the Bronze Age in the Carpathian Basin as a whole, will be the subject of further geological, archaeometrical investigations and particularly the analyses of heavy metal contents in datable peat deposits as well as charcoal recovered from the site²².

In conclusion we hope that our research in the Lăpuș necropolis will make a substantial contribution not only to the development of ritual and funerary ostentation at the beginning of the late Bronze Age but also will provide insights into the wider cultural and economic development of ancient Europe in the second half of the second millennium B.C.

Bibliography:

- Bader 1976: T. Bader, *O veche colecție de ceramică aparținând culturii Suci de Sus în Muzeul județean Mureș – eine alte Keramiksammlung aus der Suci de Sus-Kultur im Kreismuseum Mureș*, Marisia 6, 1976, 37–47.
- Bader 1978: T. Bader, *Epoca Bronzului în nord-vestul Transilvaniei. Cultura pretracică și tracică*, București 1978.
- Bader 1979: T. Bader, *Die Suci de Sus-Kultur in Nordwestrumänien*. PZ 54, 1979, 3–31.
- Chidioșan–Ordentlich 1975: N. Chidioșan–I. Ordentlich, *Un templu-megaron din epoca bronzului descoperit la Sălacea*. Crisia 1975, 15–26.
- Furmánek–Veliačik–Vladár 1999: W. Furmánek–L. Veliačik–J. Vladár, *Die Bronzezeit im slowakischen Raum*. PAS. 15, Rahden/Westfalen 1999.
- Gumă 1993: M. Gumă, *Civilizația primei epoci a fierului în sud-vestul României*. BiblThrac. 4, București 1993.
- Hänsel 1976: B. Hänsel, *Beiträge zur regionalen und chronologischen Gliederung der älteren Hallstattzeit an der unteren Donau*. BUFAMK. 16/17, Bonn 1976.
- Horedt 1967: K. Horedt, *Probleme der jüngerbronzezeitlichen Keramik in Transsilvanien*. ActaArchCar. 9, 1967, 5–25.
- Ilon 2005: G. Ilon, *Houses of the Late Tumulus/Early Urnfield culture. Based on the excavation at Némethánya. A késő halomsíros-korai urnamező kultúra házai – egy németbányai ház rekonstrukciója*. Ősrégészeti Levelek 7, 2005, 135–145.
- Jung 2005: R. Jung, *Aspekte des mykenischen Handels und Produktentauschs*. In: B. Horejs et al. (Hrsg.) *Interpretationsraum Bronzezeit Bernhard Hänsel von seinen Schülern gewidmet*. UPA. 121 (Bonn 2005) 45–70.
- Kacsó 1975: C. Kacsó, *Contributions à la connaissance de la culture de Suci de Sus à la lumière des recherches faites à Lăpuș*. Dacia N.S. 19, 1975, 45–68.
- Kacsó 1981: C. Kacsó, *Necropola tumulară de la Lăpuș* (ungedruckte Dissertation), Cluj 1981.
- Kacsó 1987: C. Kacsó, *Beiträge zur Kenntnis des Verbreitungsgebietes und der Chronologie der Suci de Sus-Kultur*. Dacia N.S. 31, 1987, 51–75.
- Kacsó 2000/2001: C. Kacsó, *Die späte Bronzezeit im Karpaten-Donau-Raum (14.–9. Jahrhundert v. Chr.)*, in *Thraker und Kelten beidseits der Karpaten (Ausstellungskatalog)*, Eberdingen, 2000/2001, 31–41.
- Kacsó 2001: C. Kacsó, *Zur chronologischen und kulturellen Stellung des Hügelgräberfeldes von Lăpuș*. In: C. Kacsó (ed.), *Der Nordkarpatische Raum in der Bronzezeit. Symp. Baia*

²² This project part is currently undertaken by William Shotyk and his team from the Institute of geological sciences, University of Heidelberg.

- Mare, 7.–10. Okt. 1998. Muzeul Județean Maramureș BiblMarmatia I, Baia Mare 2001, 231–278.
- Kacsó 2003: C. Kacsó, *Der zweite Depotfund von Ungureni*. In: C. Kacsó (ed.), *Bronzezeitliche Kulturererscheinungen im karpatischen Raum. Die Beziehungen zu den benachbarten Gebieten. Ehrensymposium für Alexandru Vulpe zum 70. Geburtstag. Baia Mare 10.-13. Oktober 2001*, BiblMarmatia 2, Baia Mare, 2003, 267–300.
- Kacsó 2004: C. Kacsó, *Mărturii arheologice*. Muzeul Județean Maramureș Ser. „Colecții Muzeale” I, Baia Mare 2004.
- Kacsó–Metzner-Nebelsick 2008: C. Kacsó–C. Metzner-Nebelsick et al., *Lăpuș, com. Lăpuș, jud. Maramureș, Punct: Podanc, CCAR*. Campania 2007, București, 2008, 177–181.
- Kacsó–Metzner-Nebelsick in print: C. Kacsó–C. Metzner-Nebelsick, *Kontinuität und Diskontinuität im Bestattungsverhalten der spätbronzezeitlichen Eliten in Nordwestsiebenbürgen am Beispiel der Hügelnekropole von Lăpuș*. In: *Gräberlandschaften der Bronzezeit/ Paysages funéraires de l'Age du Bronze. International Conference Westfälisches Landesmuseum Herne Oktober 2008* (in print).
- Kacsó–Metzner-Nebelsick–Nebelsick in print: C. Kacsó–C. Metzner-Nebelsick–L. D. Nebelsick, *The late Bronze Age barrow necropolis of Lăpuș, reg. Maramureș, Romania. New Research*. In: E. Borgna/S. Muller (eds.), *Ancestral Landscapes. Burial Mounds in the Copper and Bronze Ages. International Symposium Udine, Italy 2008* (in print).
- Kemenczei 1984: T. Kemeczei, *Die Spätbronzezeit Nordostungarns*. ArchHung. 51, Budapest 1984.
- László 1973: A. László, *Considerații asupra ceramicii de tip Gáva din Hallstattul timpuriu*. SCIV 24/4, 1973, 575–609.
- László 1994: A. László, *Începuturile epocii fierului la est de Carpați*. BiblThrac. 6, București 1994.
- Lemos 2002: I. S. Lemos, *The Protogeometric Aegean. The Archaeology of the Late Eleventh and Tenth Centuries B.C.* Oxford 2002.
- Marta 2009: L. Marta, *The Late Bronze Age Settlement of Petea-Csengersima*, Satu Mare 2009.
- Mazarakis-Ainian 2008: A. Mazarakis-Ainian, *Das Heim der Helden*. Architektur und Gesellschaft der Frühzeit. In: Badisches Landesmuseum Karlsruhe (ed.), *Zeit der Helden. Die „dunklen Jahrhunderte“ Griechenlands 1200–700 v. Chr. Katalog zur Ausstellung im Badischen Landesmuseum Schloss Karlsruhe 25.10.2008–15.2.2009*, Darmstadt 2008, 129–133.
- Mazarakis-Ainian 2008a: A. Mazarakis-Ainian, *Vom Heim der Helden zum Haus der Götter*. In: Badisches Landesmuseum Karlsruhe (ed.), *Zeit der Helden. Die „dunklen Jahrhunderte“ Griechenlands 1200–700 v. Chr. Katalog zur Ausstellung im Badischen Landesmuseum Schloss Karlsruhe 25.10.2008–15.2.2009*, Darmstadt 2008, 140–145.
- Metzner-Nebelsick 2005: C. Metzner-Nebelsick, *Despre importanța cronologică și cultural-istorică a depozitelor din România în epoca târzie a bronzului și în epoca timpurie a fierului*. In: T. Soroceanu (ed.), *Bronzefunde aus Rumänien (II). Beiträge zur Kenntnis der vorskythenzeitlichen Metallurgie beiderseits der Karpaten – Depozite de bronzuri din România (II). Contribuții la cunoașterea metalurgiei preșcrite de ambele părți ale Carpaților*, Bistrița/Cluj-Napoca 2005, 317–342.
- Metzner-Nebelsick–Kacsó–Nebelsick 2009: C. Metzner-Nebelsick–C. Kacsó unter Mitwirkung von L. D. Nebelsick, *Rapoarte preliminare asupra cercetărilor în necropola tumulară de la Lăpuș 2007-2008. Vorbericht über die Forschungen in der Hügelnekropole von Lăpuș 2007–2008*, Baia Mare 2009.
- Metzner-Nebelsick–Kacsó–Nebelsick 2010: C. Metzner-Nebelsick, C. Kacsó, L. D. Nebelsick, *Bronzezeitlicher Kultbau im Karpatenbecken*. Archäologie in Deutschland 3, 2010, 54–57.
- Motzoi-Chicideanu 1999–2001: I. Motzoi-Chicideanu, *Ein neuer Fund vom Beginn der Hallstattzeit aus der Kleinen Walachei*. Dacia N.S. 43–45, 1999–2001, 197–229.
- Mozsolics 1957: A. Mozsolics, *Archäologische Beiträge zur Geschichte der großen Wanderung*. ActaArchHung. 8, 1957, 119–156.
- Pankau 2004: C. Pankau, *Die älterhallstattzeitliche Keramik aus Mediaș/Siebenbürgen*. UPA. 109, Bonn 2004.

- Pare 1998: Ch. Pare, *Zum Übergang von der Bronze- zur Eisenzeit in Mitteleuropa*, Teil I. *Jahrbuch RGZM.* 45, 1998, 293–433.
- Petrescu-Dîmbovița 1953: M. Petrescu-Dîmbovița, *Depozitele de bronzuri din România*, București 1977.
- Popham–Sackett–Themelis 1979: M. R. Popham–L. H. Sackett–P. G. Themelis: Lefkandi I. *The Iron Age The Text and Plates*, Athens 1979; 1980.
- Roska 1942: M. Roska, *Thesaurus Antiquitatum Transsilvanicarum I Praehistorica Erdély régészeti repertoriuma I. Őskor*, Kolozsvár 1942.
- Rusu 1963: M. Rusu, *Die Verbreitung der Bronzefortfunde in Transsilvanien vom Ende der Bronzezeit bis in die mittlere Hallstattzeit*. *Dacia N.S.* 7, 1963, 177–210.
- Smirnova 1974: G. I. Smirnova, *Complexe de Tip Gáva-Holihrad, o comunitate cultural istorică*. *SCIVA* 25/3, 1974, 259–380.
- Smirnova 1998: G. I. Smirnova, *Die Ostkarpatenregion zur Vorskythen- und Skythenzeit und die osteuropäischen Steppen: Kontakte und Migrationen*. In: B. Hänsel/J. Machnik (eds.), *Das Karpatenbecken und die osteuropäische Steppe. Nomadenbewegungen und Kulturaustausch in den vorchristlichen Metallzeiten (4000–500 v. Chr.) Symposium Mogilany 1995*, München/Rahden Westf. 1998, 453–465.
- Szabó 1996: G. V. Szabó, *A Csorva-csoport és a Gáva-kultúra kutatásának problémái néhány Csongrád megyei leletgyűttes alapján*. *MFME-StudArch.* 2, 1996, 9–109.
- Szendrei 1890: J. Szendrei, *Az országos régészeti és embertani. társulat. AÉ.* 10, 1890, 375–378.
- Teržan 2005: B. Teržan, *Metamorphose – eine Vegetationsgottheit in der Spätbronzezeit*. In: B. Horejs et al. (Hrsg.) *Interpretationsraum Bronzezeit Bernhard Hänsel von seinen Schülern gewidmet*. *UPA* 121, Bonn 2005, 241–261.
- Werner 1993: K. Werner, *The megaron during the Aegean and Anatolian Bronze Age. A study of occurrence, shape, architectural adaptation, and function*. *Studies in Mediterranean Archaeology* 198, Jonsered, Åström 1993.

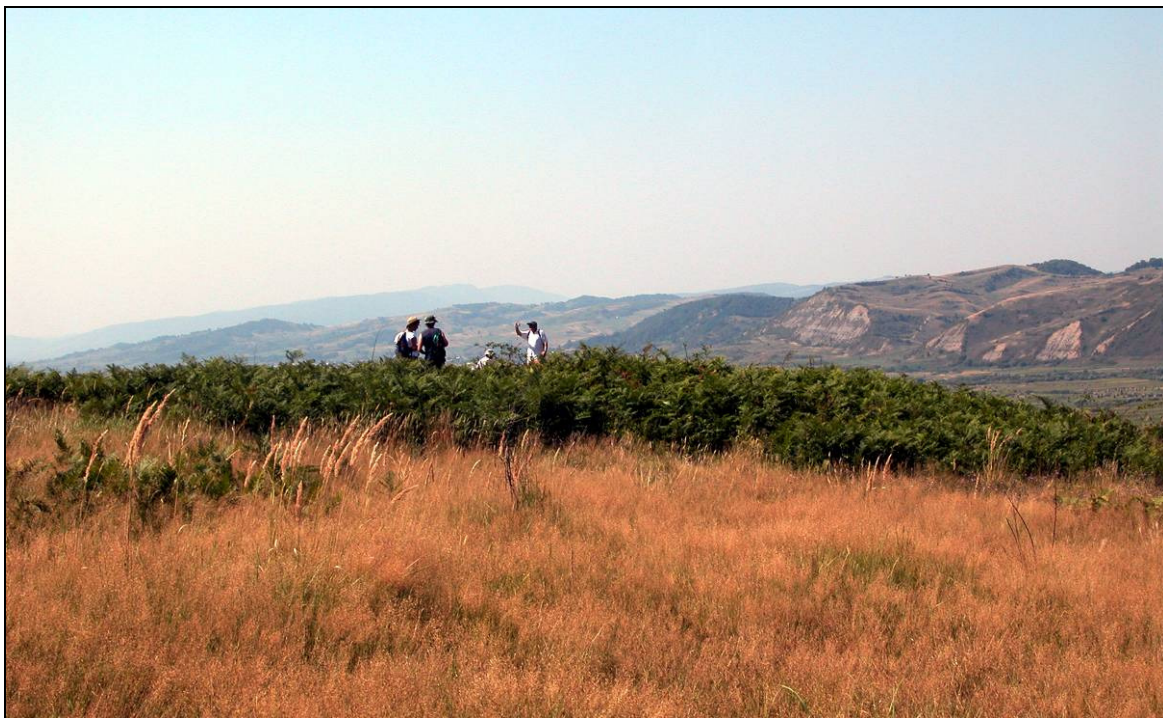


Fig. 1. Burial mound of the „Mlaca“ hilltop above the Lăpuș valley (photo Metzner-Nebelsick).

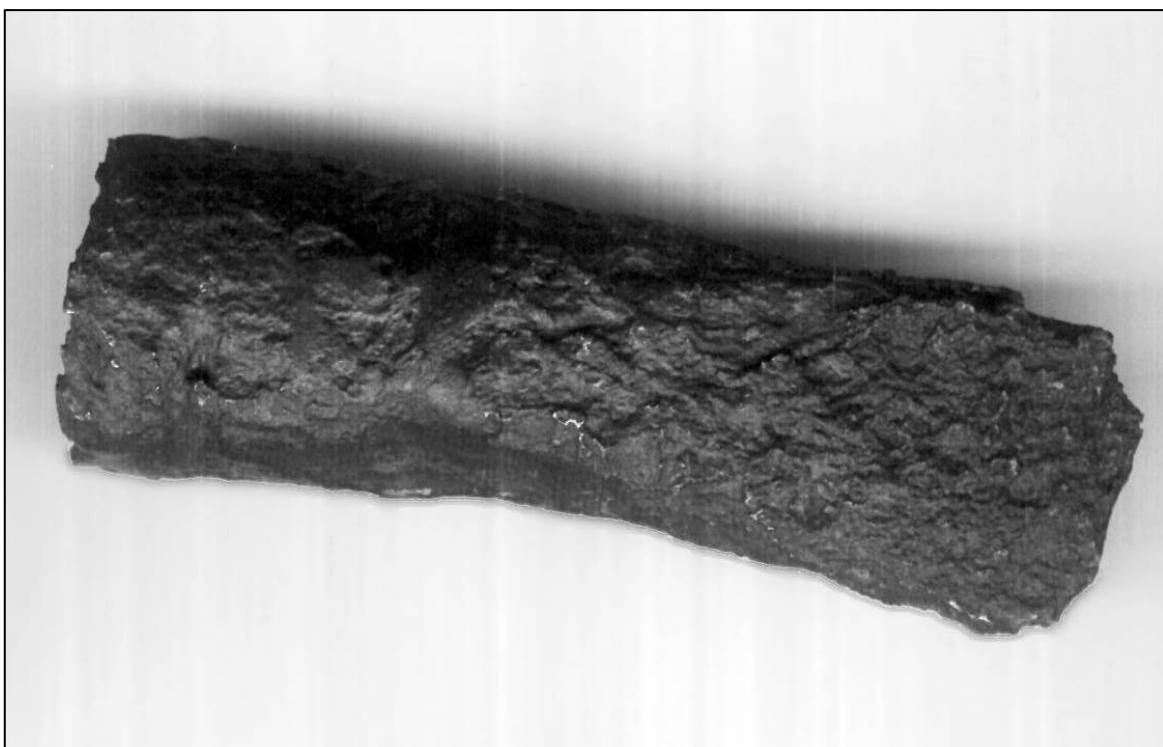


Fig. 2. Iron socketed axe from Lăpuș, barrow 1 (photo Muzeul de Istorie a României)

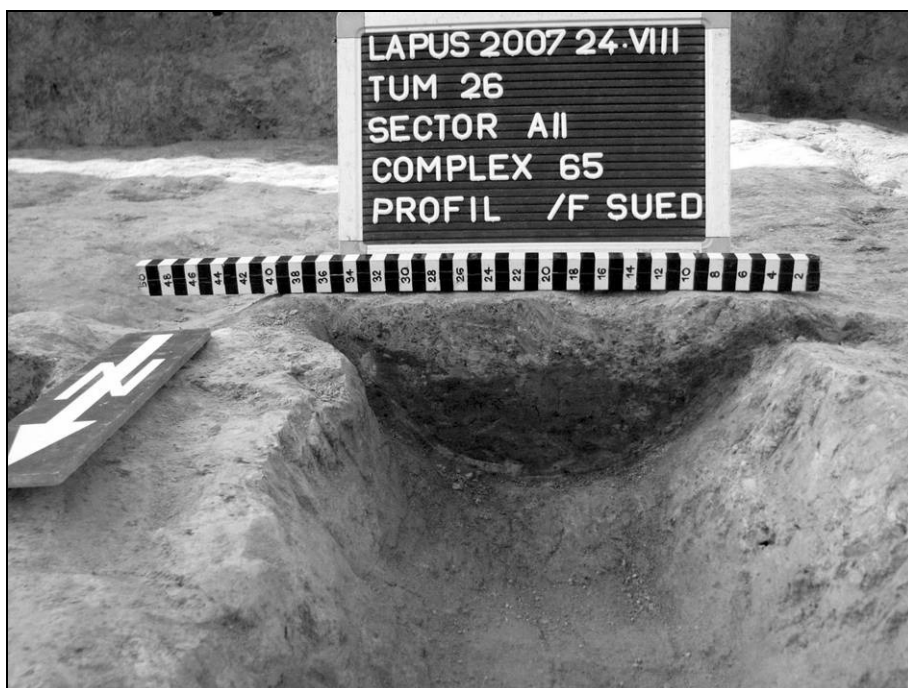


Fig. 3. Part of the wooden construction of the building in phase 1 (photo Spindler)

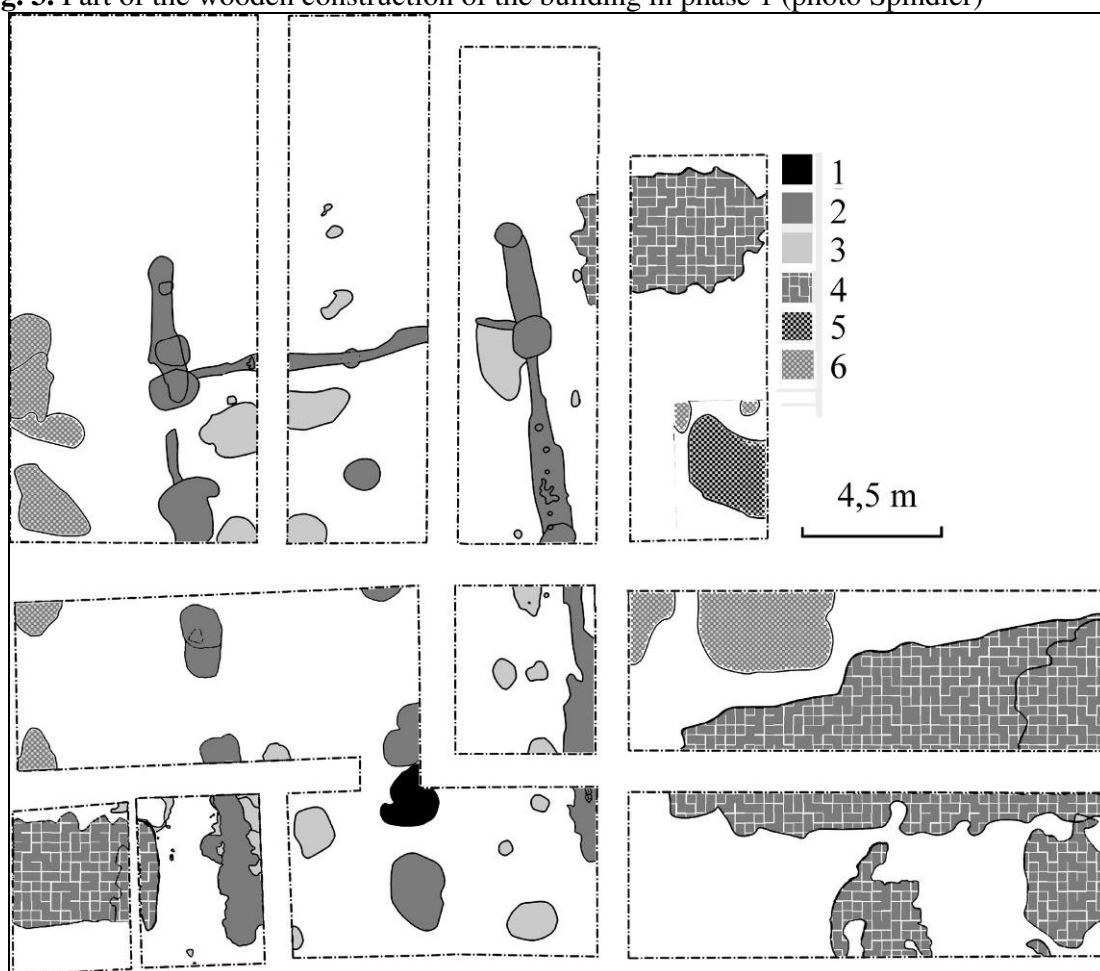


Fig. 4. Total Station contour plan campaign 2009 with selection a of features of the younger phases of tumulus 26: 1. hearth of the large hall; 2. foundations and postholes of the large hall; 3. other contemporary and later features; 4. stone and cobbled features; 5. thick pottery pavement; 6. depositions of pottery and other burnt remains (drawing Metzner-Nebelsick, Massy and Reuß).

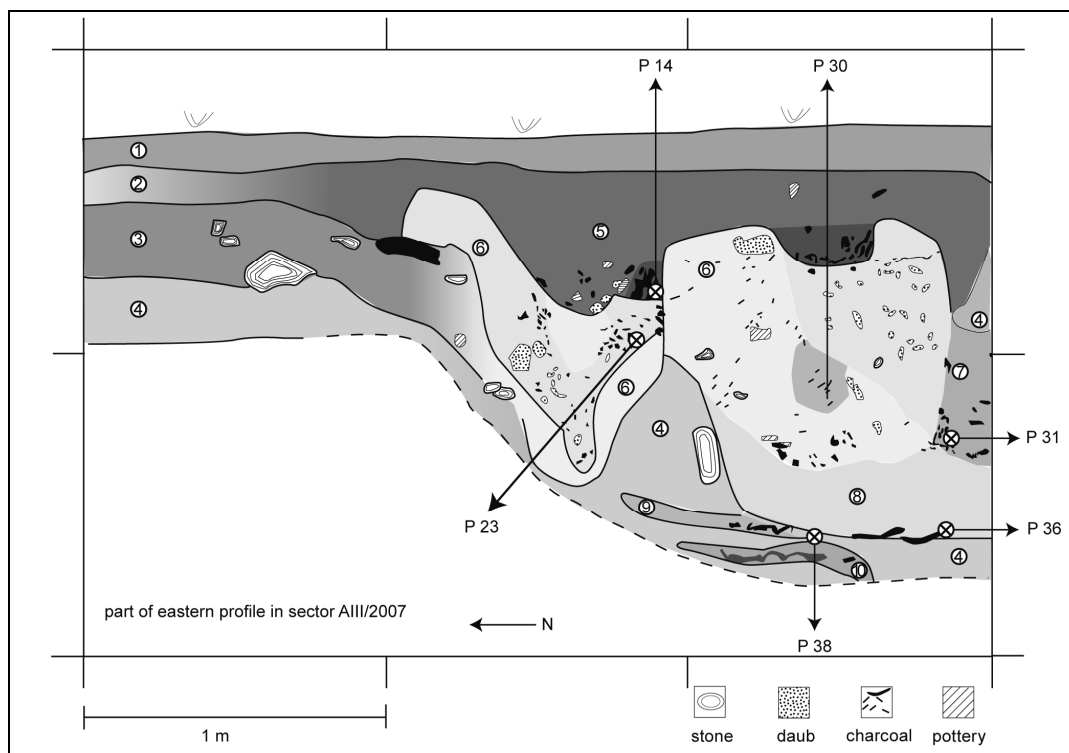


Fig. 5. Section of the eastern profile of sector A III in 2007; the numbers with a cross and a “P” mark the position of the radiocarbon samples, other numbers indicate different layers and fills (drawing Peisker after Osińska and Metzner-Nebelsick).

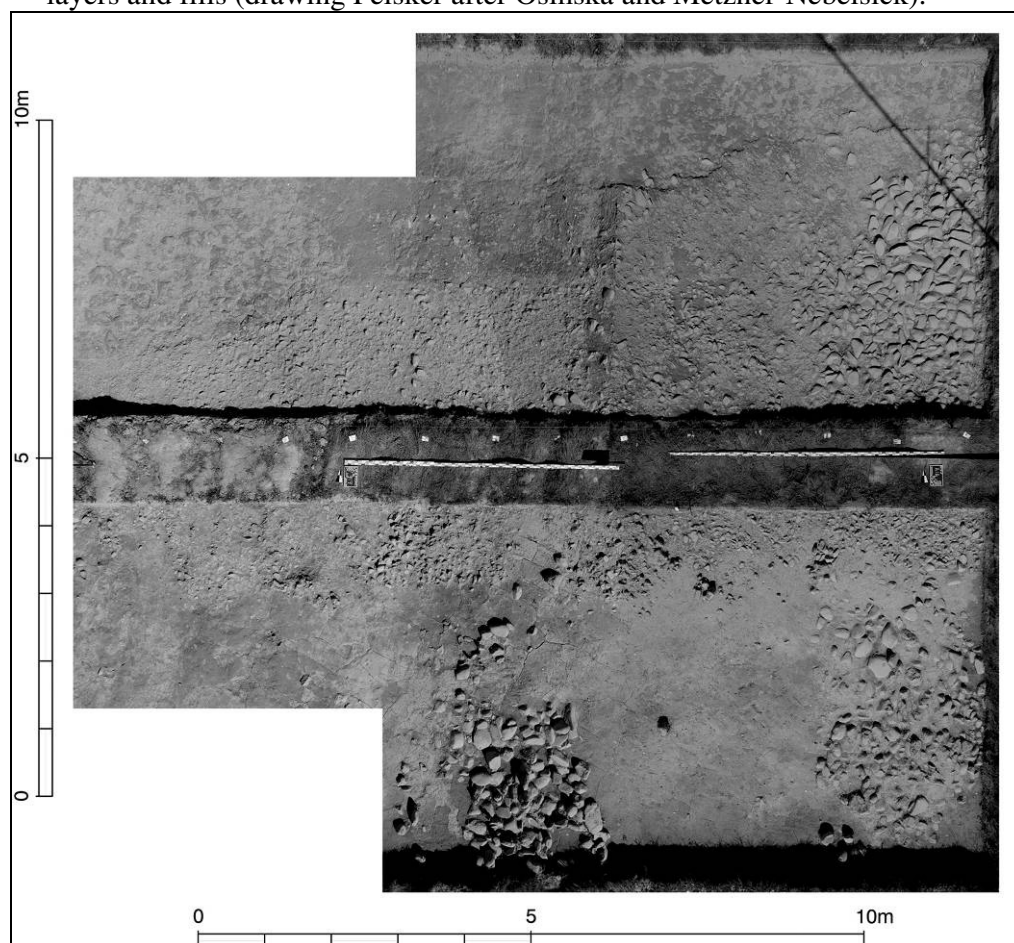


Fig. 6. Cobbled way leading to the centre of the mound in 2009 (fotos Thiel; photogrammetry Massy).

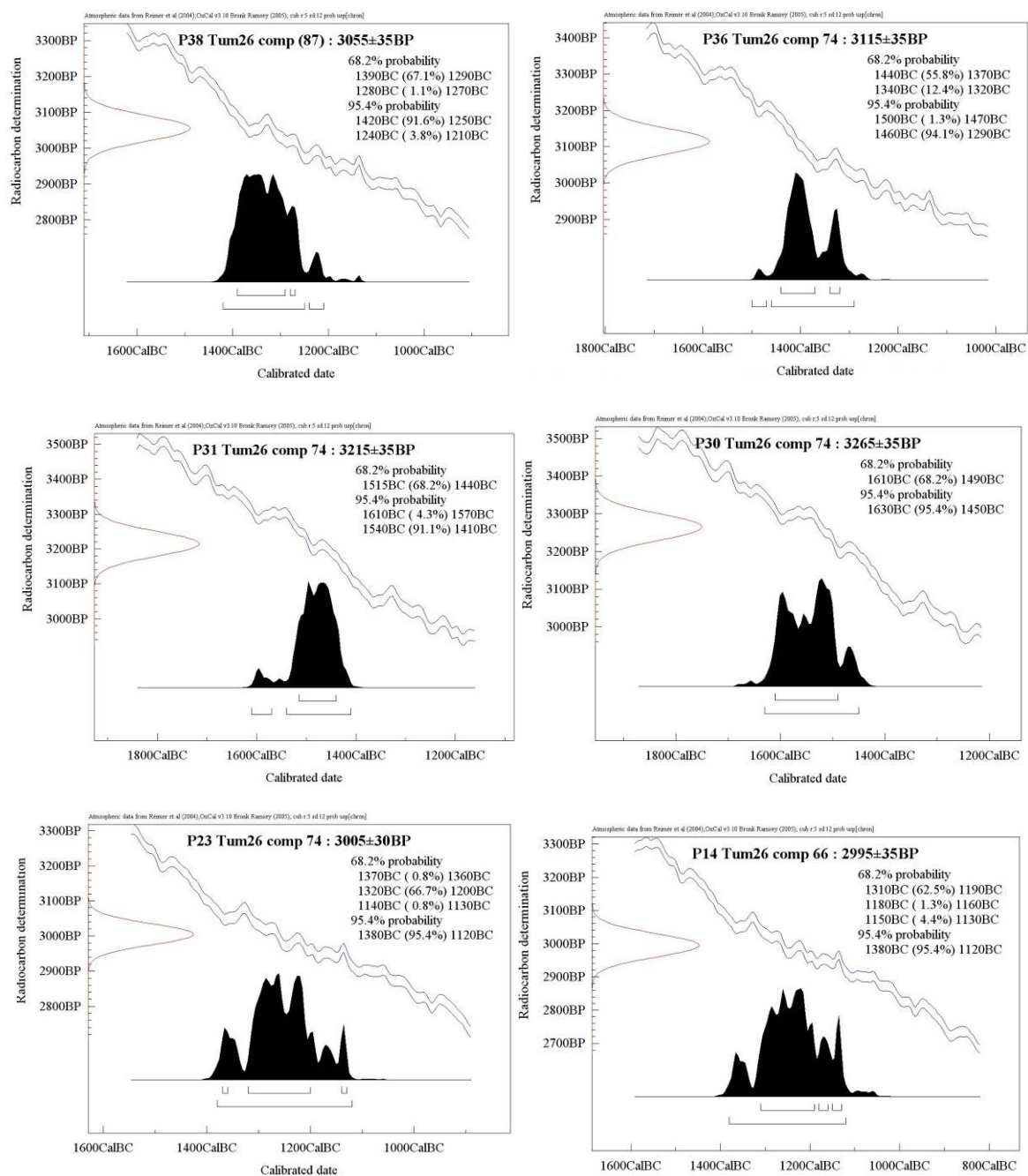


Fig. 7. ^{14}C -charts of samples from the pit complex in sector A III (fig. 5); dated by the Radiocarbon Laboratory Poznań.

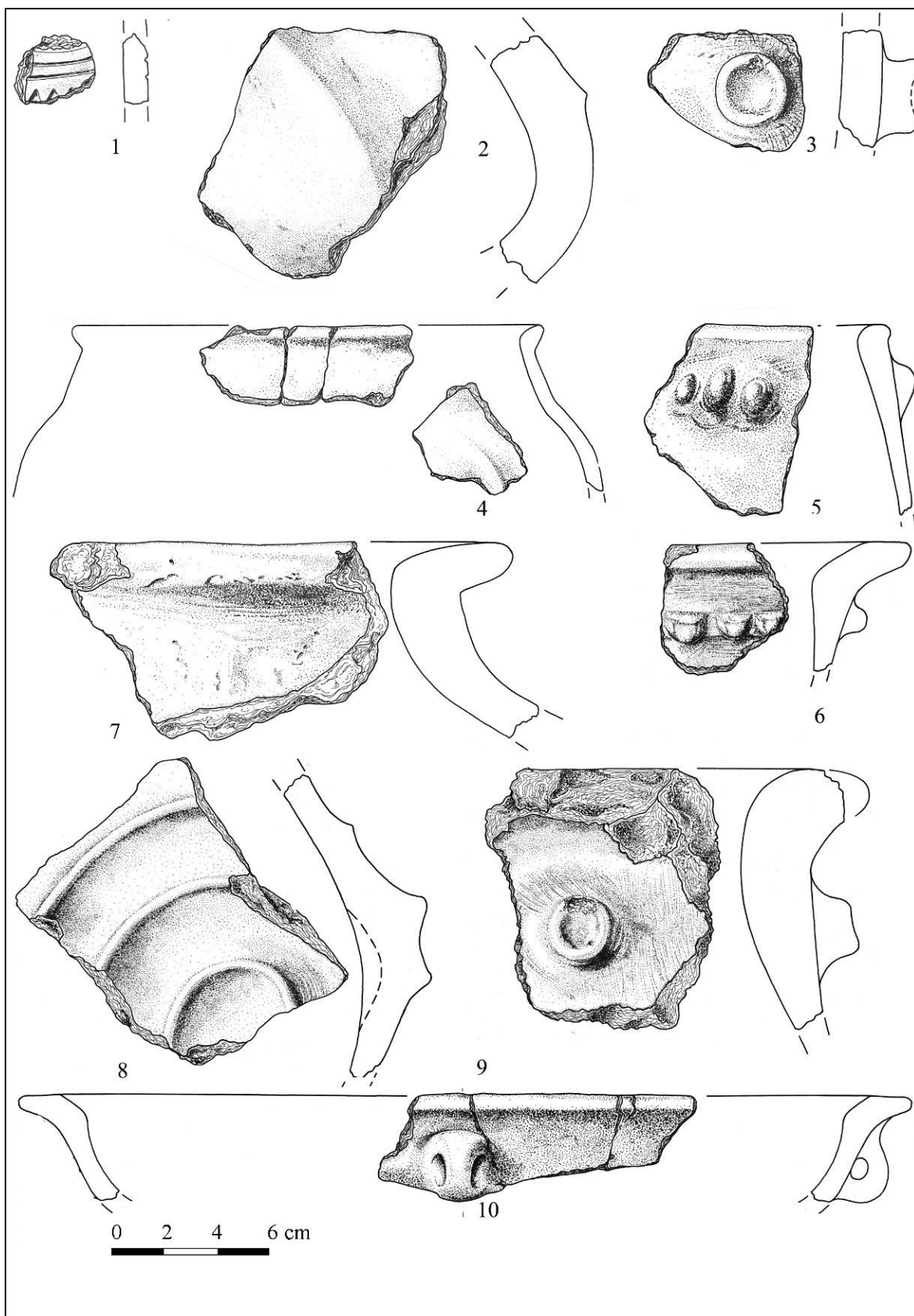


Fig. 8. Pottery from tumulus 26. Lăpuș Phase 1 pottery = 1: A1/compl. 1.2. Lăpuș Phase 2 pottery = 2: A1/compl. 3.3; 3: A1/compl. 14; 4: A1/compl. 33.5-6; 5: A1/compl. 34.10; 6: A1/compl. 56 (drawings Șomcutean; Köhler).