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PARTICULARITĂȚI ALE NEOLITICULUI TIMPURIU DIN BANATUL DE CÂMPIE

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SPECIFIC FEATURES OF THE EARLY NEOLITHIC

IN THE LOWLANDS OF BANAT

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ABSTRACT

Key-words: Early Neolithic, Starčevo-Criş culture, lowlands of Banat, Early Neolithic architecture, archeological inventory, chronology, Balkan connections, North Danube connections.

More than four decades have passed since the publication of the synthesis book dedicated to the Neolithic in Banat by Prof. Gh. Lazarovici. Several new archaeological projects have been organised during this time, some of them dedicated to archaeological sites with an Early Neolithic context. We participated in excavations in the lowland region of Banat and excavated the Starčevo-Criş culture levels of most of these sites. A number of materials have accumulated as a result of these works, which can clarify the arrival and evolution of this culture in the lowland region of Banat. With the support of Prof. Gheorghe

Lazarovici, we have embarked on this path of systematizing and putting into the scientific circuit the Early Neolithic finds from the lowland Banat. The opportunity offered by Prof. Dr. Cornelia-Magda Lazarovici to coordinate this doctoral thesis honoured me and proved to be the successful completion of a long-delayed endeavour.

The paper on the characteristics of the Early Neolithic in the Lowland Banat is a synthesis of the habitat elements and the inventory of the archaeological sites belonging to the Starčevo-Criş culture that have been documented from the research carried out since the beginning of the 20th Century in the lowland area of the Banat. Some of the settlements in the north-western part of the county were initially investigated by the amateur archaeologist Kisléghi Nagy Gyula without keeping a detailed documentation of the excavation. We have included them in the analysis of the settlements, however, because he has made a system of coordinates at these sites and has maintained the integrity of his collection throughout his life. Subsequently, at the turn of the new millennium, we started archaeological research projects at the sites he discovered.

We have also integrated archaeological sites that were investigated many years ago, such as Foeni-Sălaş, which was an international archaeological project coordinated by Dr. Fl. Draşovean and Dr. H.J. Greenfield, in which I participated as a student, but which have not yet been published monographically. Other projects in which I have participated, such as Parţa-Tell II, also conducted by Dr. Fl. Draşovean, have allowed me to investigate the Early Neolithic strata and on the occasion of this thesis I have the opportunity to present those findings. The same is true of the archaeological site and inventory at the Foeni-Gaz site, which are systematically presented within this paper. A significant part is represented by the research at Sânicolau Mare-Pusta Bucova IV, which I carried out together with Dr. Raiko Krauss of the University of Tübingen and colleagues from the MNBT for five years and which just this year is published in an extensive monograph.

The most important site introduced in the analysis is the multi-layered site of Dudeștii Vechi-*Movila lui Deciov*, originally known as Óbessenyői Őstelep. Numerous investigations have been carried out at this site, starting from those carried out in 1906-1907, when 1336 square meters were excavated, continued by us in 2000-2005, then resumed together with the University of Tübingen from 2018 to present day. The co-operation in international annual archaeological campaigns for sixteen years proved to be a solid scientific framework that allowed intensive research with state-of-the-art methods on sites that were well known in the literature but had not been systematically documented.

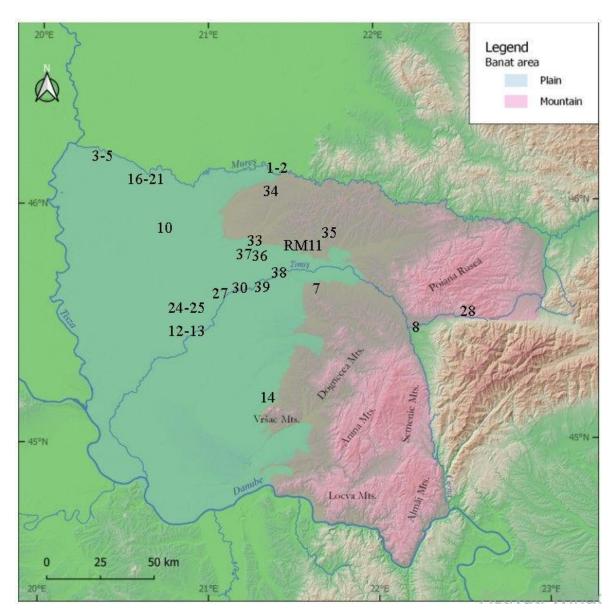


Fig. 1. The distribution of documented Early Neolithic sites in Lowlands of Banat.

The laboratory analyses carried out through these collaborations have brought technological and chronological clarifications that have imposed these sites among the most representative ones in the Eastern and Central European region.

Many of the sites discussed in the paper have only been partially excavated, such as Dudeștii Vechi-*Cociohatu Mic Farm 3*, others have only been inspected by survey.

Chapter two contains a brief overview of the history of archaeological research dedicated to the Early Neolithic in the whole Romanian Banat. We have also integrated the new excavations that we have carried out in the last three decades in the area of lowland Banat.

The history of research starts with the work of Felix Milleker in the field of the prehistoric archaeological heritage, completed by the identification and prospecting of archaeological sites in northern Banat performed by the passionate amateur archaeologist Kisléghi Nagy Gyula. In his articles, archaeological inventory of the Early Neolithic period is mentioned from the settlements of Dudeștii Vechi and Pusta Bucova - a group of levees, tells and tumuli situated at the border between Cenad, Sânnicolau Mare and Dudeștii Vechi.

In 1907 Kisléghi publishes the report on the archaeological excavations at Sânicolau Mare-*Humka Mare* and -*Pusta Bucova IV*, where he uncovers 484 square meters. Excavations at the Pusta Bucova IV site were resumed through an international project in 2010 and were completed in 2015. Between April 1906 and August 1907, he also excavated an area of 1336 square metres of the settlement located 500 metres north of the village of Dudeștii Vechi (called in ancient literature Óbessenyői -Östelep, and nowadays Dudeștii Vechi-*Movila lui Deciov*).

The research of this important site as concernes the relations between the Early Neolithic South Danube and the Pannonian area was resumed by us in 2000-2005, then in collaboration with German partners from the University of Tübingen from 2018 onwards.

Early Neolithic research activity was disrupted by the integration of parts of the geographical Banat into the reorganised states after the First World War. Relations between specialists and their work are influenced by political factors and the realities in the field are adapted according to national schools. The integration of discoveries from north-western Banat into the publications of Ida Kutzián brings these materials back into circulation. In the post-war period, the work of the enlarged staff of the Timisoara Museum resumes excavations dedicated to the Early Neolithic.

A remarkable activity is carried out by the Danube valley research project team related to the construction of the Iron Gates I reservoir system, since 1961. A number of archaeological investigations also covered the Early Neolithic context of the Danube Iron Gorges.

An important chapter in the identification and research of the Starčevo-Criş cultural heritage is the research performed by the archaeologist Gheorghe Lazarovici, starting with the projects of the Danube Gorges and continuing with the publication of key studies on the Neolithic of Banat area.

A series of new archaeological researches dedicated to the Starčevo-Criş settlements in the lowland Banat have been carried out in the last three decades, mainly through international projects. We have participated in these researches and have introduced their results in the present work.

Chapter three includes a *sub-chapter 3.1* with a description of the geographical environment. The first paragraph analyses the morphological characteristics that define the geographic space of the lowlands of Banat. A second paragraph presents the geological and pedological structure of the lowland units that are included in this region. The third paragraph deals with the hydrographic system draining the Banat plains. These watercourses and the basins they form are very important for defining how the Starčevo-Criş culture-bearing communities enter the area, as well as the mode of subsistence these communities adopt, as they are often located close to the watercourses.

Sub-chapter 3.2 is dedicated to the repertory of settlements, with an updated description and images of the most important finds. The settlements are arranged in alphabetical order according to the administrative-territorial units to which they belong and are given an identification number. We have presented the sites according to the corresponding bibliography.

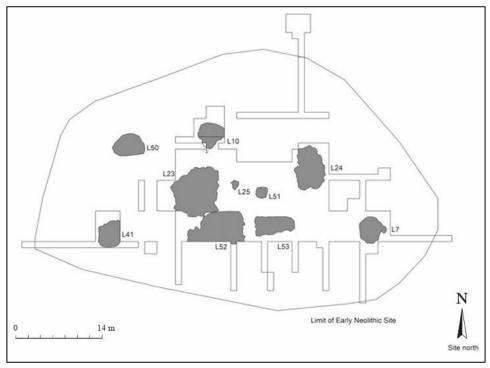


Fig. 2. The main ground plan of the Starčevo-Criş structures of Foeni- Sălaş site. Apud Greenfield, H. J.; Kapuran, Al., 2021, p. 39, fig. 17.

In *subchapter 3.3* we present the typology of settlements, which gives a general view of the types of site found in the lowland Banat and their organisation. We have focused on the

settlements shifting on the natural levees near slow waters, settlements on higher terraces, settlements on natural levees and meanders. The sites are specific to the Starčevo-Criş culture, most of them being small settlements, with a limited duration of operation in time, few seasons or few years.

We introduced the case study of the unique Early Neolithic tell settlement in the lowland Banat at Dudeștii Vechi-*Movila lui Deciov*, which has remarkable architectural and urban planning features for the Neolithic migration north of the Danube.

Subchapter 3.4 deals with the defensive constructions, as is the case study of the perimeter ditch at Dudeștii Vechi-*Movila lui Deciov*, which is so far singular in the Early Neolithic landscape of the Banat. This ditch investigated by us on three sides is a unique characteristic of the Banat Neolithic. Four stages of electromagnetic resonance measurements have been carried out for this site since 2002. The archaeological research at this very important site is in progress with an international team.

The architectural dwellings of Neolithic communities in the lowland Banat have been extensively presented in *subchapter 3.5*. The first group of structures belong to the structures buried in the ground, starting with the ones from the Foeni-*Sălaş* site, which has been excavated in its entirety. Is is a small site consisting of a cluster of semi-buried structures arranged around a larger pit-house.

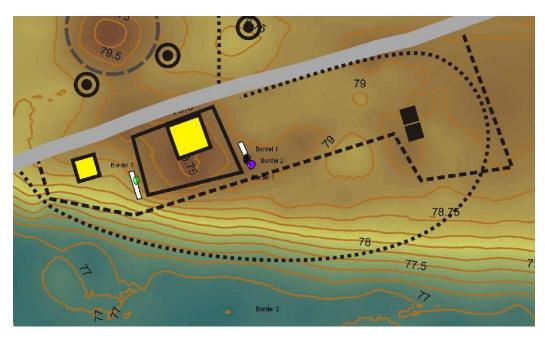


Fig. 3. Foeni-Gaz. The location of pit-houses.. Drawing: UVTimişoara

We presented also the three pit-houses of Foeni-Gaz, which is displayed relatively similar to the previous site, scattered on the beach of a prehistoric pond. The site consists of sporadically distributed structures on the terrace near the pond, containing a significant amount of snails and shells. Between these semisubterranean dwellings the surface is relatively void of artefacts, which however abound in the documented pits. Surveys and magnetometer measurements confirm the lack of artefacts and structures on the higher terrace away from the water.

The Starčevo-Criş settlement at Parţa-*Tell II* is separated from the Late Neolithic levels by a hiatus level and is represented by two pit-houses and five pits. One of the pits has a special feature, being a very deep pit surrounded by a set of concentric spirally arranged steps, allowing descent to the base of the complex, which is the deepest in the settlement.

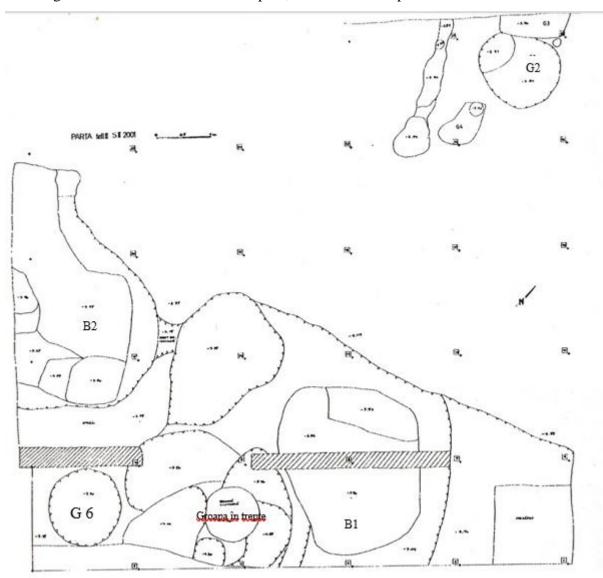


Fig. 4. Parța – Tell II, Trench II, the Early neolihtic level. Drawing: Ciobotaru D.

The Sânicolau Mare-*Pusta Bucova IV* site, with the largest excavated area, consists of twenty surfaces of 5x5 meters. On this site there were investigated a series of architectural structures, even surface platforms, but most of them appear to be built for technological purposes, including a kidney-shaped pit and a pit with a group of small ovens. Within the technological sector a vaulted smoking kiln and a distinctive kiln with a smoke stack were also located.

The site is large in extent and is bordered by water streams that are now clogged and can only be seen on geomagnetic resonance images. A depression that appears to have already been fossilized in the Neolithic period runs through the Early Neolithic site. The settlement lasts at most half a century.

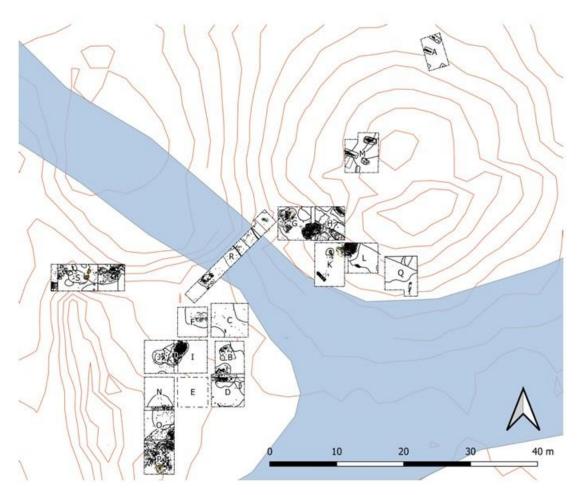


Fig. 5. Sânicolau Mare-Pusta Bucova IV. The excavations of 2010-2015.

We have underlined the presence in the settlement of Dudeștii Vechi-*Movila lui Deciov* of rectangular surface dwellings, which are unique for the Early Neolithic in the lowland Banat, with analogies in the Neolithic of the south-eastern Balkans and Aegean. They are also notable for their extremely deep foundation ditches, up to 90 centimetres deep, with postholes

on the bottom of the ditch. The houses are five metres wide and divided into two rooms by width, and more by length, and the floor is made by levelled earth. The houses are arranged in parallel rows, separated by narrow alleys. They have interior kilns and rich inventory. From a house foundation ditch we recovered a Spondylus shell bead and fragments of a dish with rectangular lip and rectangular base. This type of pot is known in Bačka, Iron Gorges and Transylvania. These structures are dated around 5850 cal BC.

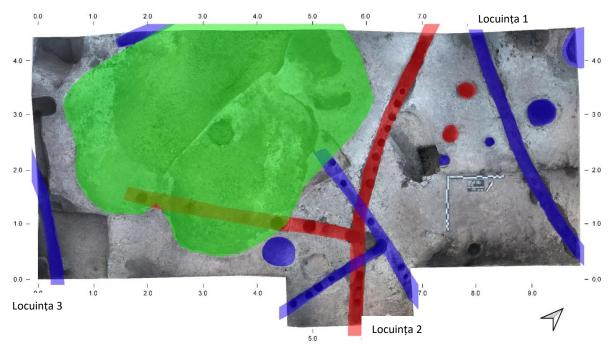


Fig. 6. Dudeștii Vechi – Movila lui Deciov, trench A-C. Surface houses with foundation ditches. In red, the initial structure; in blue, houses of the first phase; in green, pits from the second phase. Ciobotaru, D. L.; Krauss, R., 2023, fig. 13.

Chapter four deals with the analysis of the archaeological inventory discovered in the sites of the lowland Banat.

The first *paragraph 4.1.1* is dedicated to the chipped lithic inventory. We have presented the state of the art of the analysis of flint sources, including Balkan flint and obsidian on a wider Balkan and Transylvanian area. So far the chipped stone industry has been partially published, without laboratory analyses, for the first campaign at Foeni-*Sălaş*. Apart from two obsidian fragments, the rest of the material has not been analysed. We have presented the finds of chipped lithic industry from the Foeni-*Gaz* and Parta-*Tell II* sites. The results of the lithic analyses for the Sânicolau Mare-*Pusta Bucova IV* site, which have already been carried out, have been presented in this chapter. The low number of chipped lithics found at this site is noticeable, although this was the most extensive area investigated in

lowlands of Banat. Chipped lithic tools discovered at the site of Dudeștii Vechi-*Movila lui Deciov* from the old collection, as well as from those discovered in the 2000-2005 campaigns, have been included in the analysis. The results of the ongoing researches that are still in progress will be integrated after their completion. The most rich assamblage of lithic tools of the lowland Banat comes from this site.

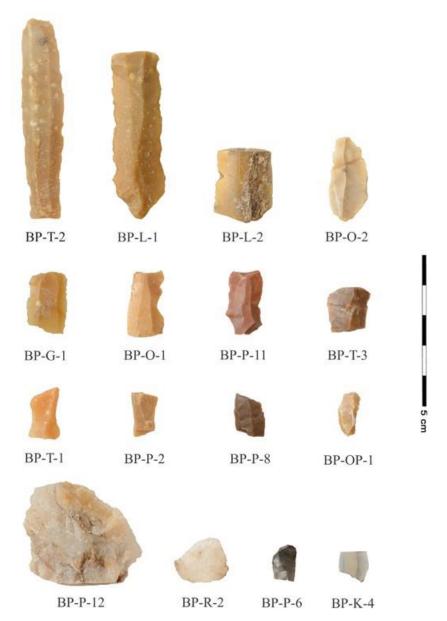


Fig. 7. Sânicolau Mare-Pusta Bucova IV. Chipped stone tools recovered from Early Neolithic structures. Milić, B.; Brandl, M., 2024, pl. 3.

Paragraph 4.1.2 introduces the polished stone tools recovered from the Early Neolithic archaeological sites. The description of the inventory is accompanied by drawings and pictures of the assamblages discovered at the sites. Several fragments come from the site Foeni-Sălaş and only two of them coming for the first campaign have been published.

More fragments have been uncovered at Parţa-Tell II and Sânicolau Mare-Pusta Bucova IV. The analysis of the latter has already been submitted for publication by Fl. Klimscha and is printed in the monograph dedicated to the site. From the Dudeştii Vechi-Movila lui Deciov site we have presented fragments collected at the beginning of the 20th Century, as well as the lithic inventory of the 2000-2005 campaigns. A full analysis will be made at the end of the research of the site. As a regional specificity, due to the lack of rock deposits in the region, is the intense usage of the tools. They used them until fracturing or advanced wear of the pieces, followed by reuse of the worn fragments as scrapers or stone hammers.



Fig. 8. Sânicolau Mare – Pusta Bucova IV. 1: blank for a polished axe; 2: stone pestil. Klimscha, Fl., 2024, fig. 2.

The osteological inventory in *paragraph 4.1.3* has been introduced according to the analyses carried out for the Banat sites. At Foeni-*Sălaş* the dominance of domestic animals, a low percentage of pigs and the use of dogs probably only as human companions is evident. A particularly high presence of snails is found at Foeni-*Sălaş* and Sânicolau Mare-*Pusta Bucova IV*. In the lowland of Banat, the dominance of aquatic resources is noteworthy, consisting of

river shells, orchard snails, and a significant number of turtle fragments which were recovered from the Dudeștii Vechi-*Movila lui Deciov* site. Hunting is not dominant, having a limited percentage, except for the Dudeștii Vechi-*Movila lui Deciov* site, where it reaches around 50%. But this is one of the site's specificities, along with the architectural ones. Fish are well represented, especially in the Aranca-Mureș basin sites, where we sieved and floated all the collected soil, and numerous fragments of scales and tiny bones were collected. These are small and medium-sized fish, easy to catch with nets and traps in medium and shallow waters, such as river arms and ponds located in the surroundings of the site. Studies carried out by European laboratories on fish and molluscs from these sites are very important for defining the diet of these communities.

Paragraph 4.1.4 deals with the analysis of tools made of animal osseous matter. Their presentation is accompanied by appropriate graphic support. Many pieces were found at the Parta-*Tell II* site. These include a horn axe that may originally have been a frame for a stone tool and a bone spatula.

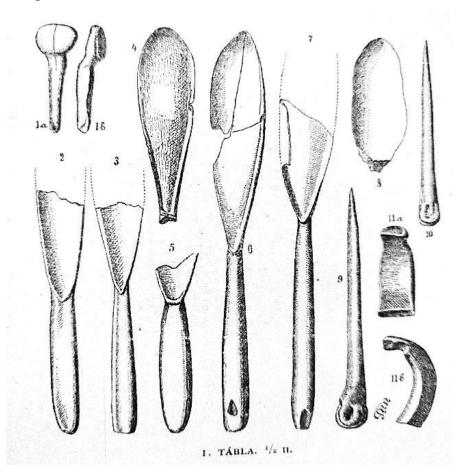


Fig. 9. Dudeștii Vechi-Movila lui Deciov. Bone tools. Kisléghi Nagy, G., 1911, pl. 1.

From the site of Sânicolau Mare-*Pusta Bucova IV* come a bone striker and numerous bone awls, as well as cylindrical bones cut on the epiphysis area. The small number of bone chips suggests that the tools may have been produced elsewhere and imported into the site, or that the tools were made in a workshop outside the area investigated by us.

The Early Neolithic site of Dudeștii Vechi-*Movila lui Deciov* has an appreciable number of bone spatulas or spoons. A substantial set comes from early excavations of Kisléghi Nagy which are kept in the collection and are kept in the Timișoara museum. These pieces have been studied and published by C. Beldiman. A set of bone tools of the spoon type also come from the new excavations we have organised. Most probably these spoons were used for serving food or for collecting flour out of the grinding stones.

Many of the bone tools discovered by Kisléghi Nagy can no longer be identified in the collections of the Timisoara museum, but photographs of the plates to which they were attached have been preserved. We have presented plates of the pieces we could identify. We also documented the lithic pieces discovered in the 2000-2005 fieldwork at Dudeștii Vechi-*Movila lui Deciov*. The discovery of some pieces of bone chips indicates the presence of a workshop for processing bone tools at the *Movila lui Deciov* site.

Subchapter 4.2 deals with the clay objects. Given the lack of rock sources on the plain, large quantities of clay weights were made by early Neolithic communities and later recovered by excavations. We conducted a case study of clay weights from Parta-*Tell II*, which appear to be randomly scattered within the deposits of waste located in the structures after the abandonment of the site sector. We have presented graphs with the distribution of clay weights by shape, perforation and ornamentation.

To the site of Sânicolau Mare-*Pusta Bucova IV* belong numerous fragments that have been submitted for publication, which we have included here in the form of drawings. A variety of weights are documented, including a trilobed piece, without perforation, which could have been used as a bolas. The weights of a large fishing net were discovered by our team in pit S24 at the site of Sânicolau Mare-*Pusta Bucova IV*.

However, the greatest variety of shapes and ornaments of the clay weights comes from the site of Dudeștii Vechi-*Movila of Deciov*.

Another category of weights are the so-called pendant or hanging weights, with a perforation usually arranged at the top half. These weights were intended for use in vertical looms, but could also be used for other devices.



Fig. 10. Pusta Bucova. Clay weights in situ. Krauss, R., 2024, fig. 45.

The spindle whorls and discs made of vessel wall are very well represented in the Banat sites. Their use is uncertain, because at Dudeștii Vechi-Movila lui Deciov in the last campaigns some unperforated pieces have been discovered, so they cannot be used as spindles. Sometimes even the perforation is very small and it is difficult to be crossed by a wooden rod. Bone rings as well as stone rings have been recovered from the sites. At Pusta Bucova IV such a ring made of mineralized, dark-coloured and polished wood was identified. Tools and vessels made of mineralised wood are attested in the Early Neolithic in southern Romania.

Clay stamps or pintadera, although very rare, were found at the site of Movila lui Deciov. In addition to the one discovered by Kisléghi and published by him and later by I. Kutzián, a second pintadera was accidentally recovered from the same site in recent years.

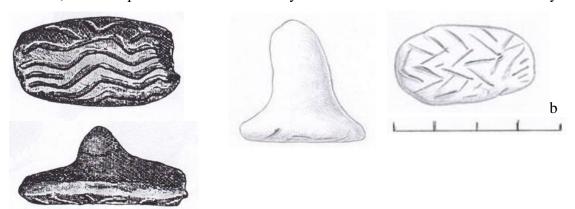


Fig. 11. Dudeștii Vechi-Movila lui Deciov. Pintaderas. a: Kisléghi collection; b: accidental discovery.

Sub-chapter 4.3 dealing with ceramic inventory occupies a significant part of the paper.

In *paragraph 4.3.1* we presented the working method for the analysis of ceramics, by creating a database for ceramics based on criteria common to the advanced research on this field generated by Prof. Gh. Lazarovici for sites in Transylvania and Moldova.

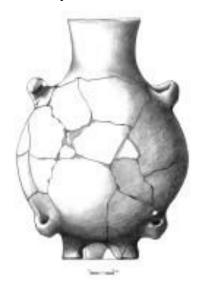


Fig. 12. Pot with asimetrical body. Dudeștii Vechi-Movila lui Deciov. Trench A-B, second occupation layer. Ciobotaru Dan & Raiko Krauss.

Paragraph 4.3.2 introduces the presentation of the databases produced by our teams on multiple criteria of facture, form and ornament. The analysis totals 3251 ceramic fragments analysed for the Foeni-Sălaş site, 2480 ceramic fragments from the Foeni-Gaz site, and 1130 ceramic fragments from the Parța-Tell II site. The analysis of pottery from the Sânicolau Mare-Pusta Bucova IV site by R. Krauss using his own methodology totalled 24955 pottery fragments with a total weight of 548 kg. The partial statistical analysis of the pottery from the Dudeștii Vechi-Movila lui Deciov site was carried out for the PhD thesis of colleague A. Jozsa and includes part of the material recovered from the 2000-2005 campaigns.

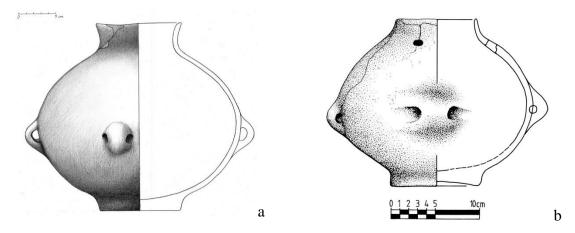


Fig. 13. Vase pentru apă. a:Uliuc-Fântâna neolitică timpurie; b: Dudeștii Vechi-Movila lui Deciov, S2/2000, nivelul superior.

In *paragraph 4.3.3*, the presentation of ceramics from the much smaller sites investigated by preventive research or by surveys completes the ceramics sub-chapter.

A case study is the ceramic inventory of the Early Neolithic well pit we investigated at Uliuc, from which eight restored vessels and scattered fragments of several other vessels were recovered. These are the vessels made for taking water from the well. They are very similar in shape, differing only in the smaller volume of some of them. They all have four handles and were hanging on some strings.

Paragraph 4.3.4 deals with the painted pottery fragments found at sites in the lowland Banat. Of particular note are the two painted fragments with white dots on a reddish background from Foeni-Sălaş, with good analogies in the southern Danube, in Bačka, but also in Gura Baciului or on the Iron Gorges. These are the earliest pieces of Early Neolithic painting in the Banat.



Fig. 14. Foeni-Sălaș. Painted ceramics. White dots on reddish surface. Greenfield, H. J.; Kapuran, Al., 2021, p. 44, fig. 19/1-2.

Then follow fragments with a reddish-pastel painting at Foeni-Gaz and numerous painted fragments discovered at Parța-Tell II, from a not much later stage, advanced Starčevo-Cris IIB phase. At this site the painting with dark colours, arranged in parallel lines, vegetal motifs (lanceolate leaf) and geometric meandering remarkable. Painting is also practised on both sides of the sherd, with parallel

lines, but also with a register of crossed lines under the lip, prefiguring the pattern of garlands under the lip used later at Giulvăz.

Several painted fragments were recovered from the site Dudeștii Vechi-Movila lui Deciov. During the 2000-2005 campaigns only one fragment of painted shard was documented. It was brick-red angoba with dark parallel lines combined with a register of crossed lines. Among the fragments discovered in recent years, a tiny white painted sherd with a dot on the inside and parallel lines on the outside stands out. Other fragments are painted with parallel lines in dark colours, and a zigzag gill under the lip on the inside. The lanciolate leaf motif is also present. For the later phases we analysed the painted fragments

with garlands and parallel lines from Giulvăz and the fragment painted with polychromy from Unip-*La vişini*.



Fig. 15. Dudeștii Vechi-Movila lui Deciov. Dark gray painting on reddish surface. Dan Ciobotaru.

The economy of Early Neolithic communities, subsistence methods resulting from osteological and palaeobotanical analyses have been reviewed in **chapter five**. We have outlined ideas related to the way the site was organised and the relationships between animal husbandry, fishing and hunting, plant cultivation and the gathering of spontaneous vegetation.

Chapter six is dedicated to expressions of spiritual life.

In **subchapter 6.1** we analysed the presence of zoomorphic statues, which are mostly fragments of bulls at Foeni-*Sălaş* and a particular zoomorphic vessel, as well as the relief of a goat at Sânicolau Mare-*Pusta Bucova VI*.

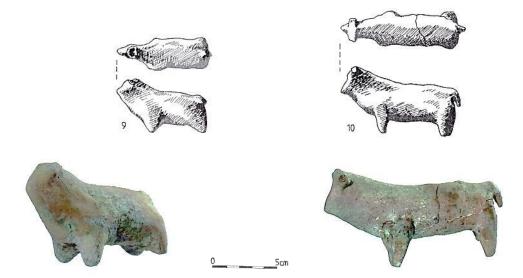


Fig. 16. Bull statuettes, Foeni-Sălaș. Ciobotaru, D., 1998, pl. I/9 și pl. I/10. Photo: Drașovean Fl., 2009, p. 280, fig. 2/5-6.

Subchapter 6.2 phocuses on bucrania/labrets, for which we have given an opinion on the existence at the sites of magic packages consisting of three different models. These are representative in the lowland Banat for the Timiş-Bega interfluve and belong to the earliest stages in the lowland Banat.

The anthropomorphic statuettes were presented chronologically in **subchapter 6.3**.



Fig.17. Movila lui Deciov. Prismatic idol. Krauss R.& Ciobotaru D.L.

Here the prismatic idols from Dudeștii Vechi-*Movila lui Deciov*, with the representation of hair and face, belonging to the second stage of Starčevo-Cris settlement, are noteworthy.

Typical are also the anthropomorphic column statues. The anthropomorphic reliefs on the pots are typical of the second stage of settlement of the site of Dudeștii Vechi-*Movila lui Deciov*, with the extension of the Early Neolithic phenomenon north of the former Mureș riverbed.

Subchapter 6.4 introduces the relief depictions of anthropomorfic figures on large storage pots. The ornamentation of large pots

with such animal or anthropomorphic reliefs is common on the panonnian variant of the Starčevo-Criş culture.

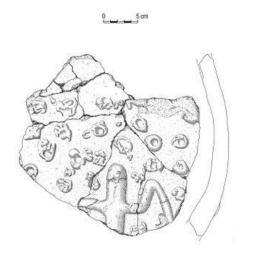


Fig. 18. Relief antropomorf pe vas. Pusta Bucova IV. Krauss, R.& Ciobotaru, D.L.

Subchapter 6.5 deals with the clay altars, which are very common at sites in the lowland Banat. The earliest, from Foeni-Sălaş, is modelled with an inner box and excised triangles, but there are also those with a vessel superimposed on the table. A large variety also comes from the Parța-Tell II and Sînicolau Mare-Pusta Bucova IV sites. But the most numerous come from the site of Dudeștii Vechi-Movila lui Deciov. From this last site we have presented the old collection

of clay altar fragments of Kisléghi Nagy, as well as pieces discovered by us during the 2000-2005 campaigns.

A clay stand belongs to **subchapter 6.6** and two fragments of conical mnemonic objects or *tokens* were mentioned as special pieces in **paragraph 6.7**, with analogies in the south-eastern Balkans, but also in the Near East.

Subchapter 6.8 documents a type of non-perforated loaf-like weights of unclear function found at sites in the Aranca Basin.

Representations of stylized horned statuets found at sites in the Banat, but also in the Pannonian Plain, with analogies over wider areas and a marked spiritual role have been presented in **subchapter 6.9**.

Chapter seven examines the relationships and chronological placement of materials from the lowland Banat. A first **subchapter 7.1** gives an overview of the main chronological systems developed as a result of the research carried out for the Early Neolithic in the central and eastern European region.



Fig. 19. Sânicolau Mare-Pusta Bucova IV. Early Neolithic crouched skeleton. Krauss, R., et alii, 2024a, p. 131, fig. 4.

The relations of the Starčevo-Criş communities in the lowland Banat with those in the southern Danube areas and with the penetration of Neolithisation into the Danube Plain have been dealt with in **subchapter 7.2**.

Relations with Transylvania are considered in **subchapter 7.3**. The oldest sites in Transsylvania are presented, as well as the penetration of Early Neolithic communities into the area of the consistent salt sources in the Transsylvanian basin. As a derived phenomenon is the late penetration of Starčevo-Criş communities into Moldova, where their evolution is of

long duration. A presentation of the main absolute chronological data is considered in this paragraph.

Of great importance are the relationships that can be established with sites in the Pannonian area, starting in particular from the sites in the north-west of Banat, situated beyond the former bed of the Mures river in the Neolithic period.

In **subchapter 7.4** we have tried to observe the directions from which the migration of these communities in the Banat may have originated. We have also analysed how the communities of the Starčevo-Criş culture are influenced by the penetration of early Vinča communities.

Much of the material included in this work is unpublished. They come from archaeological research carried out over the last three decades and are presented in an integrated regional context. I have tried to clarify issues related to the area under study, focusing on the results of the archaeological excavations I took part in, covering the lowland area of Banat.



Fig. 20. Situri confirmate din prima fază de migrație Starčevo-Criș în Banatul de câmpie, pe prima hartă militară habsburgică, secolul al XVIII-lea. 1 Foeni-Gaz; 2 Foeni-Sălaș; 3 Uliuc (Pod CFR, Fântâna, vărsare Pogăniș); 4 Remetea Mare-Obiectiv 10; 5 Timișoara-Fratelia. Dan Ciobotaru.

I have noticed that certain characteristics are common to several archaeological sites belonging to the Early Neolithic in the region and I considered that highlighting them is of importance for the current stage of research. Long-distance connections can be issued from such regional archaeological excavation projects that lay the foundations for the general view of the Neolithisation phenomenon.

I am convinced that the monographic publication of the sites investigated by our collective, such as Sânicolau Mare-*Pusta Bucova IV*, already in print, and Dudeștii Vechi-*Movila lui Deciov* in the next few years, will provide a substantial regional picture, which will allow the clarification of hypotheses concerning the penetration of Starčevo-Criş culture communities in the northern Danube region and the way in which the Neolithisation phenomenon is generalizing.

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