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VESSELS WITH ZOOMORPHIC PAINTED DECORATION IN THE COLLECTIONS OF THE BOTOȘANI COUNTY MUSEUM

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Keywords: Cucuteni-Trypillia culture, zoomorphic, painted representations, symbolic meaning

Abstract: The aim of this study is to review and discuss key discoveries from the Botoșani County Museum collection, focusing specially on zoomorphic (animal) depictions. The study explores the origins of these unique vessels, with particular attention to their context within previously known finds. The zoomorphic vessels raise questions about recurring themes and potential symbolic associations. These artefacts, which are recent discoveries from old collections, are introduced to the literature, offering new insights and images.

The vessels were found in different locations in Botoșani County, Romania: Ștefănești – Stânca Doamnei (B1 phase of the Cucuteni Culture) and Ștefănești – Stârcea (B2 phase of the same culture), both excavated in 1974 by Anton Nițu and Paul Șadurschi. While some of these discoveries have been published, key details remain missing from the reports. One vessel was discovered at Trușești – Țuguieța, in a Cucuteni B house (Dwelling XXXIX), two others come from Hănești – La Iaz and one big vessel has unknown origin, but it can be assigned to the Cucuteni B2 phase.

The study discusses interpretations of the zoomorphic decorations on ceramics from the Cucuteni-Trypillia culture, suggesting that these images may depict mythical beings or narratives, possibly arranged in sequential scenes. It is believed that the representations of carnivores or snakes may have had an apotropaic (protective) function, while birds, often associated with other animals, could symbolise events or moments of a mythical past.

Cuvinte-cheie: cultura Cucuteni-Tripolie, zoomorf, reprezentări pictate, sens simbolic

Rezumat: Scopul acestui studiu este de a trece în revistă și de a discuta unele descoperiri-cheie aflate în colecțiile Muzeului Județean Botoșani, concentrându-ne, în special, pe cele cu reprezentări zoomorfe pictate. Studiul explorează originile acestor vase unice, acordând o atenție deosebită contextului lor în cadrul descoperirilor cunoscute anterior. Vasele zoomorfe ridică întrebări despre temele recurente și potențialele asocieri simbolice ale decorurilor respective. Aceste artefacte, recent identificate în colecții vechi, sunt introduse în literatură, oferind noi imagini și perspective.

Vasele au fost descoperite în diverse locații din județul Botoșani, România: Ștefănești – Stânca Doamnei (faza B1 a culturii Cucuteni) și Ștefănești – Stârcea (faza B2 a aceleiași culturi), ambele cercetate în anul 1974 de către Anton Nițu și Paul Șadurschi. Deși unele dintre aceste descoperiri au fost publicate, unele detalii-cheie lipsesc din rapoarte. Un vas a fost descoperit la Trușești – Țuguieța, într-o locuință Cucuteni B (locuința XXXIX), altele două la Hănești – La Iaz, iar un vas mare are originea necunoscută, dar poate fi încadrat în faza Cucuteni B2.

Studiul discută despre interpretările date decorurilor zoomorfe prezente pe ceramica culturii Cucuteni-Tripolie, sugerând că aceste imagini pot înfățișa ființe sau narațiuni mitice, eventual aranjate ca scene secvențiale. Se crede că reprezentările carnivore sau șerpilor ar fi avut o funcție apotropaică (de protecție), în timp ce păsările, adesea asociate cu alte animale, ar putea simboliza evenimente sau momente dintr-un trecut mitic.

The purpose of this study¹ is to analyse and discuss several ceramic vessels and fragments, located in the collection of the Botoșani County Museum, focusing mainly on the vessels with painted zoomorphic representations. The vessels with zoomorphic decoration raise questions regarding the themes represented, the animals preferred by the Cucuteni potters, as well as their possible symbolic associations and meanings. These artifacts, discovered five decades ago, some of which were already known, are introduced in the literature, offering new perspectives and images updated according to current standards. Our study also aims to explore the position of the animals on these unique vessels, paying special attention to the context of the discoveries.

Most of the vessels discussed here were discovered at two sites in Botoșani County: Ștefănești – Stânca Doamnei (phase B1 of the Cucuteni culture) and Ștefănești – Stârcea (phase B2 of the same culture), both investigated in 1974 by archaeologists Anton Nițu (Institute of Archaeology in Iași) and Paul Șadurschi (Botoșani County Museum). Although some of these discoveries have been published, some important details about them are missing from the reports. Also, in general, the authors of the excavations avoided discussing and interpreting the zoomorphic representations on the Cucuteni ceramics.

Another case is, in fact, a re-evaluation of the decoration on a vessel discovered in the 1950s at Trușești – Țuguieța, Botoșani County. We also discuss two vessels found in 1960 at the Hănești – La Iaz site (the official name of the site is Slobozia Hănești – La Grajduri) and an unpublished vessel with zoomorphic decoration, part of the old collections of the Săveni Archaeological Museum.

¹ A less detailed version of this paper has been published in Romanian in: S.-C. Enea, F.-A. Tencariu, A. Asăndulesei, C.-C. Lazanu (eds.), *O inimă dedicată timpurilor străvechi. Profesorul Dumitru Boghian la 70 de ani*, 2025.

We believe that the painted zoomorphic decorations on the pottery of the Cucuteni-Trypillia culture can be interpreted as representing mythical animals or some narratives, arranged into scenes, which could compose a mythology that is difficult to decipher today. It is considered that the representations of carnivores or snakes could also have had an apotropaic (protective) function, while the birds, often associated with other animals, could symbolise events or moments from a mythical past.

CONSIDERATIONS REGARDING THE CONDITIONS OF DISCOVERY OF THE VESSELS WITH ZOOMORPHIC DECORATION

Since 2016, we have begun an extensive process of re-evaluation of the archaeological materials discovered at Ștefănești, Stâncă – Stâncă Doamnei, and at Stârcea, Botoșani County, located in the deposits of Botoșani Museum, having knowledge of the content of the reports previously published by archaeologists². This resulted in a series of studies that resumed the history of the research undertaken in the two sites at Ștefănești, capitalizing on a series of interesting aspects regarding the layout of the inhabited space, the conditions of discovery of the ceramic materials identified in the deposits, as well as the anthropomorphic representations from these investigations³.

The research at Ștefănești, Stâncă – Stâncă Doamnei, Botoșani County (RAN code 39202.11) had a rescue character (Fig. 1/1). The excavations at this site were prompted by construction works, such as the building of a parking lot for transport vehicles and a connecting road to the construction site, at the Stâncă – Costești dam (Fig. 3). The archaeological research report was published in 1994 in *Hierasus* 9 and clarified certain aspects of the discovered features⁴. Thus, there were eleven trenches oriented along the NE–SW direction, located on the terrace (Fig. 7), and five dwellings (L1 to L5) and six household pits were uncovered (Fig. 7). The platform of L5 was very poorly preserved and had been probably partially destroyed. L3 had been affected by previous modern municipal works (Fig. 4). Two ceramic fragments from L2 were ornamented with avimorphic representations and were subsequently published⁵. When re-evaluating the archaeological heritage items in the collections of the Botoșani County Museum, the ceramic materials from L2 were re-examined. Thus, we were able to identify those two ceramic fragments (Fig. 12/1–2), and three others, ornamented also with painted avimorphic decoration (Fig. 12/3–5)⁶.

One of the most important discoveries from this site is a cross-shaped hearth uncovered in L3⁷. The hearth was restored and exhibited for a long time in the permanent exhibition of the Botoșani History Museum (Fig. 5). At present, this installation is in storage, as the History Museum building is currently undergoing rehabilitation.

The research at Ștefănești – Stârcea/La Bulboană/La Bulboana lui Stârcea, Botoșani County, was presented on March 25, 1978, at the Scientific Communications Session organized by the Botoșani County Museum. The only report published to date appeared in 2004 (Nițu, Șadurschi, 2004). The article states that the manuscript was submitted for publication to the journal *Arheologia Moldovei*, for issue IX of 1980, but due to a lack of space, the material was not included in that issue.

This archaeological site is known under several names, namely “*Bulboana lui Stârcea*”, “*La Bulboană*”, “*La Stârcea*”, “*La curte*” (RAN code 39177.01) and was discovered in 1956 through surface research carried out by Nicolae Zaharia, Mircea Petrescu-Dîmbovița and Eugenia Zaharia⁸ (Fig. 2/2). New surface research was carried out in 1973 by a team consisting of Alexandru Păunescu, Paul Șadurschi and Vasile Chirica, while collecting information for the first archaeological repertoire of Botoșani county⁹.

This Cucuteni settlement is located at the southeastern edge of Ștefănești, on a terrace on the right side of the Bașeu River, in the neighborhood known today as Bădiuți (Fig. 1/1; 2/2). The terrace is flat, being cut into an old major bed of the Prut. The SE side of the terrace is slightly sloped, the NNW edge is steep, being eroded and collapsed by the waters of the Prut and Bașeu. The area of the settlement was estimated at approx. 3 ha, with only 180 m² archaeologically investigated. Three dwellings and four waste pits were uncovered (Fig. 6).

According to the archaeological description, the stratigraphy of the site was as follows:

- topsoil layer (approx. 20 cm thick);
- ancient gray soil (30–50 cm thick);
- brown soil containing archaeological material (approx. 40 cm thick);
- clayey soil, with black-brown pigments;
- archaeologically sterile soil.

The survey conducted in 1974–1975 was prompted by the floods of 1974, when the waters partially collapsed a large pit (Pit/Groapa 1). After the waters receded, the students from Ștefănești High School collected the fragments of “a large vessel with a prominent shoulder” (document from the MJB Archive) and transported them to the school. The vessel was entered in the Museum’s Inventory Register under inventory number 794 and is described below (cat. no. B2) (Fig. 13).

Sporadic occupation remains dating to the Iron Age (late Hallstatt – early La Tène) were also mentioned, comprising both sherds and a double-edged bronze arrow.

² Nițu, Șadurschi 1994; 2004.

³ Kovács 2016a; 2016b; 2017a; 2017b; 2018a; 2018b; Kovács, Nechifor 2020; Kovács 2020.

⁴ Nițu, Șadurschi 1994, p. 181.

⁵ Nițu 1975a, p. 48, fig. 2.

⁶ Țurcanu et alii 2020.

⁷ Nițu, Șadurschi 1994, p. 188, fig. 4; Kovács 2017a; 2020.

⁸ Zaharia et alii 1970, p. 281–282.

⁹ Păunescu et alii 1976, p. 255–259.



Figure 1. Geographic location of Cucuteni archaeological sites in Botoșani County, where vessels decorated with painted zoomorphic representations were discovered. 1. Ștefănești – Stâncă Doamnei and Ștefănești – Stârcea; 2. Trușești – Țuguieța.

Three cremation urns belonging to the 3rd–1st century BC, as well as a series of medieval pottery fragments (15th–16th c.) overlay the Cucuteni layer. These materials were later analysed and published together with the data existing in the Botoșani County Museum, by Ion Ioniță (Institute of

Archaeology in Iași) and Botoșani archaeologist Octavian Liviu Șovan, in 2013¹⁰.

All the material resulting from the research of the two sites at Ștefănești was ink marked with the site of origin and

¹⁰ Ioniță, Șovan 2013.



Figure 2. Geographic location of sites at: 1. Hănești – La Iaz; 2. Ștefănești – Stânca Doamnei.

the place of discovery, which eased the work of identifying the objects in the storage area. The ceramic material, restored or fragments in the deposits of the Botoșani County Museum, will make the subject of a future study.

The scientific archive of the Botoșani History Museum preserves the original plans, as well as a series of photos

from the works in 1974–1975, when the two archaeologists carried out rescue excavations at *Stânca Doamnei*. We have not been able to identify, so far, the photos taken during the excavations at the Ștefănești – *Stârcea*. There is also a file containing the analytical evidence sheets drawn up by the Botoșani archaeologist Paul Șadurschi, dated (only a



Figure 3. The site at Ștefănești – Stâncă Doamnei: 1–2. Photos taken in June 2021.

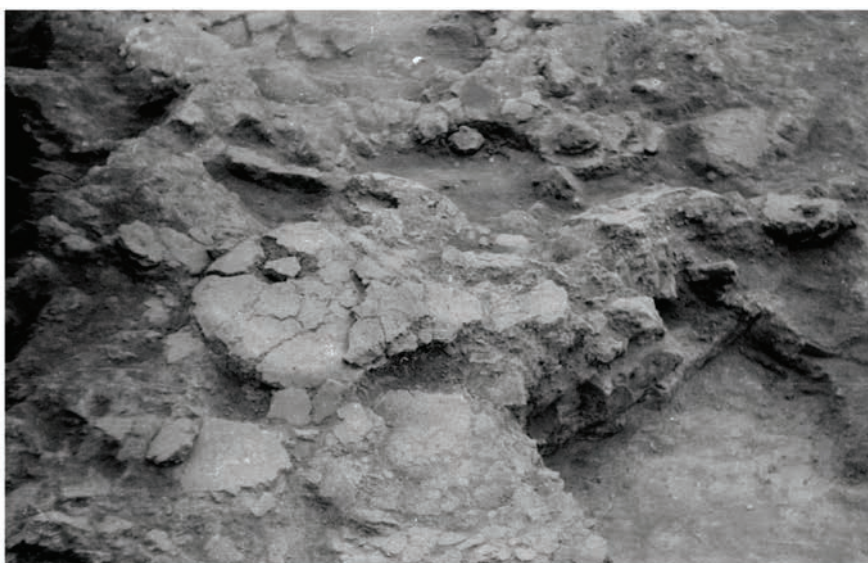
few of them) to April 6, 1987. The evidence sheets include black-and-white photos and colour drawings, some of them marked as being sent to print for the next issue of *Hierasus*.

In the file with the sheets and illustrations there is also a typed manuscript that includes the description of the research at Ștefănești, from both sites investigated in

1974–1975, namely *Stâncă Doamnei* and *Stârcea*. There are several notes and corrections made in pencil on the manuscript. Unfortunately, the field notes of the research team were not found, so these are the only sources we refer to when discussing the materials from these archaeological sites.



1



2



3

Figure 4. 1–3. Photo archive of the Botoșani History Museum. Images from the excavations carried out in 1974 at the Ștefănești – Stânca Doamnei.

Regarding the published report on Ștefănești – Stârcea, when compared to the report in the MJB archive and to the marked ceramic material, there are some inaccuracies. On the published plan, only one dwelling is marked (labelled L1)¹¹. In the archived plan, three different

dwelling and the same four pits that are also marked on the published plan are drawn. The dwellings are described as lacking platforms or daub floors. Two of them, namely L2 and L3, were sectioned by a military trench that passed exactly through their middle. Thus, we preferred to refer to the plan in the MJB archive and to process it for a better

¹¹ Nițu, Șadurschi 2004, p. 298, fig. 1.



Figure 5. Cross-shaped hearth from House 3 at Ștefănești – Stâncă Doamnei: 1. Cross-shaped hearth after restoration, displayed in the old permanent exhibition of the museum, closed in 2022; 2. Cross-shaped hearth in situ (archive photo); 3. Cross-shaped hearth during restoration operations in the museum laboratory in Botoșani (archive photo).

understanding of the archaeological situations discovered in this site (Fig. 6).

Trușești – *Țuguieța* (RAN code 39337.02) is the largest Cucuteni site investigated in Romania, between 1951 and 1961 and subsequently benefited from a dedicated monograph¹². The history of the research at Trușești – *Țuguieța* is very well-known¹³. The research began in 1923, and was continued between 1951 and 1961, in a systematic form, by teams of archaeologists coordinated by Mircea Petrescu-Dîmbovița (Fig. 1/2).

The artifact we included in this study was discovered, according to both the inventory register and the bibliographic data, in Dwelling XXXIX¹⁴. Based on the inventory, dwelling XXXIX was dated to phase B of the Cucuteni culture. The construction was located on a gentle slope, oriented in the N–S direction, on the lighter brown soil of the Cucuteni A layer. The building measured 11 × 4 m and was outlined by uneven agglomerations of adobe, with higher portions formed by the overlapping remains of the slag-coated walls and with gaps (Fig. 8). The building did not have a platform on a wooden structure. As interior features, the building featured 3 cm thick slabs, “with the appearance of bricks”, as well as a hearth built directly on the soil. Remains of an oven plate were also found. The authors of the monograph highlight the discovery of a large and

thick piece of daub, with a smooth surface and chaff in its composition, about 15 cm high. This might have originated from the edge of a porch, which had been built from 5 cm thick pieces of plaster, without chaff in the paste. The walls, partially vitrified, had been plastered with clay, showed post imprints on one side and wattle imprints on the other. Some plaster fragments had a concave inner surface indicative of the use of split wood, while others suggested the use of timber plastered on the outer convex side, in the shape of a semi-column¹⁵.

As for the inventory of the dwelling, tools, ceramics, fired clay objects and zoomorphic representations are listed. Among the tools presented (and only partly illustrated) were a flint core with cortex, two hammerstones, several flint cores and blades and “six more or less fragmentary stone grinders”¹⁶. The dozens of complete and fragmentary vessels, made of good quality paste, both painted and unpainted, included six cups, ten bitronconical vessels with a wide open or narrower mouth, nine amphorae, ten bowls, two miniature vessels, a thick-walled vessel, two handles, sherds of coarse-paste vessels and one of the Cucuteni C type (Fig. 9). Objects made of burnt clay came from a feature in the southeastern corner of the dwelling: 14 clay weights of circular, oval-pointy and pyramidal shape, found over the fragments of a large storage vessel made of coarse paste, with imprints on the base. They were

¹² Petrescu-Dîmbovița *et alii* 1999.

¹³ Păunescu *et alii* 1976, p. 272; Monah, Popovici 1985, p. 156; Petrescu-Dîmbovița *et alii* 1999; Popovici 2000, p. 78–79; Mantu-Lazarovici 2004, p. 53.

¹⁴ Petrescu-Dîmbovița *et alii* 1999, p. 460, fig. 341.

¹⁵ Petrescu-Dîmbovița *et alii* 1999, p. 88.

¹⁶ Petrescu-Dîmbovița *et alii* 1999, p. 88.

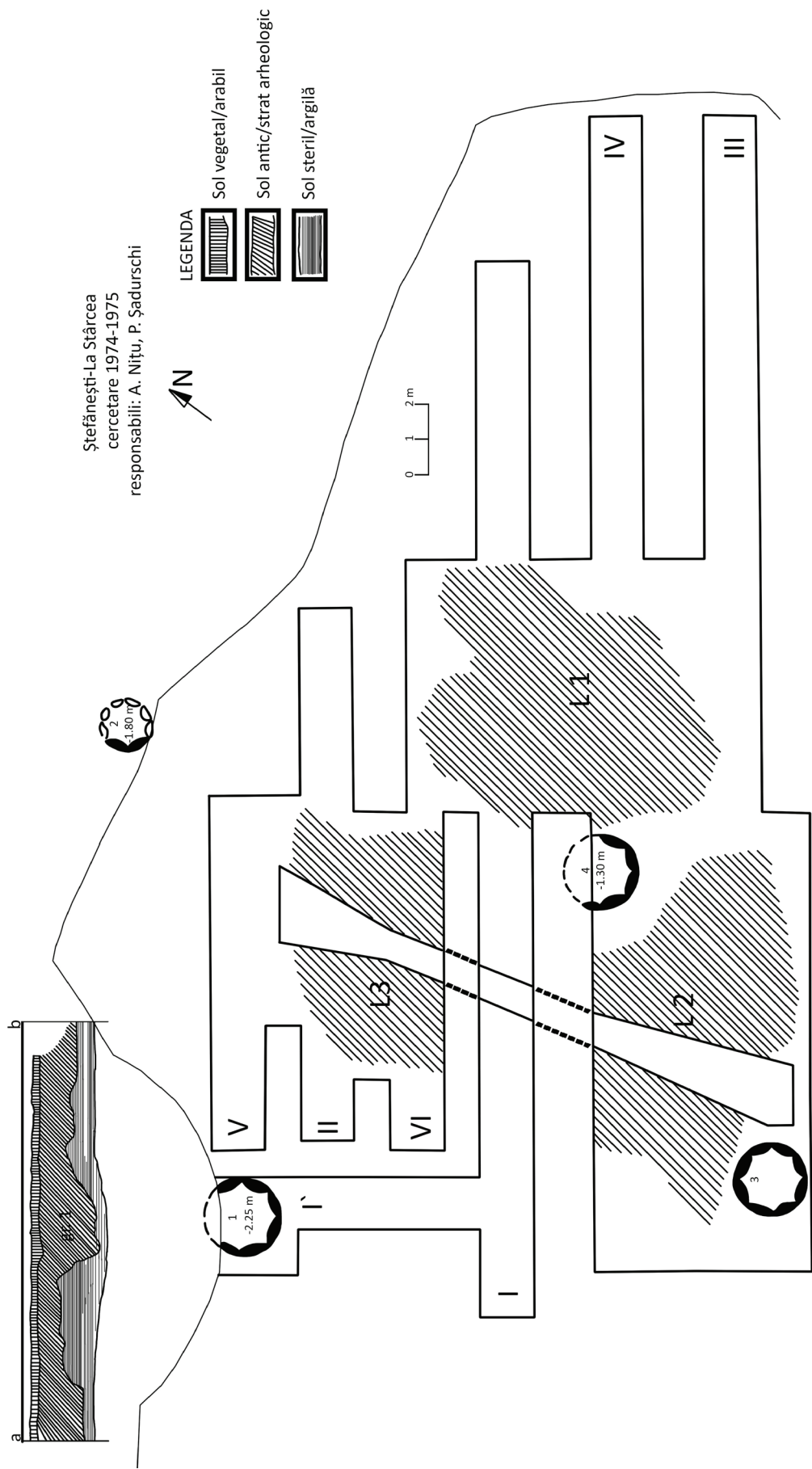


Figure 6. Plan of the archaeological research in 1974 at Ștefănești – La Stârcea (redrawn according to the plan in the archive of the Botoșani County Museum, compared to the one published by Nițu, Șadurschi, 2004, p. 298).

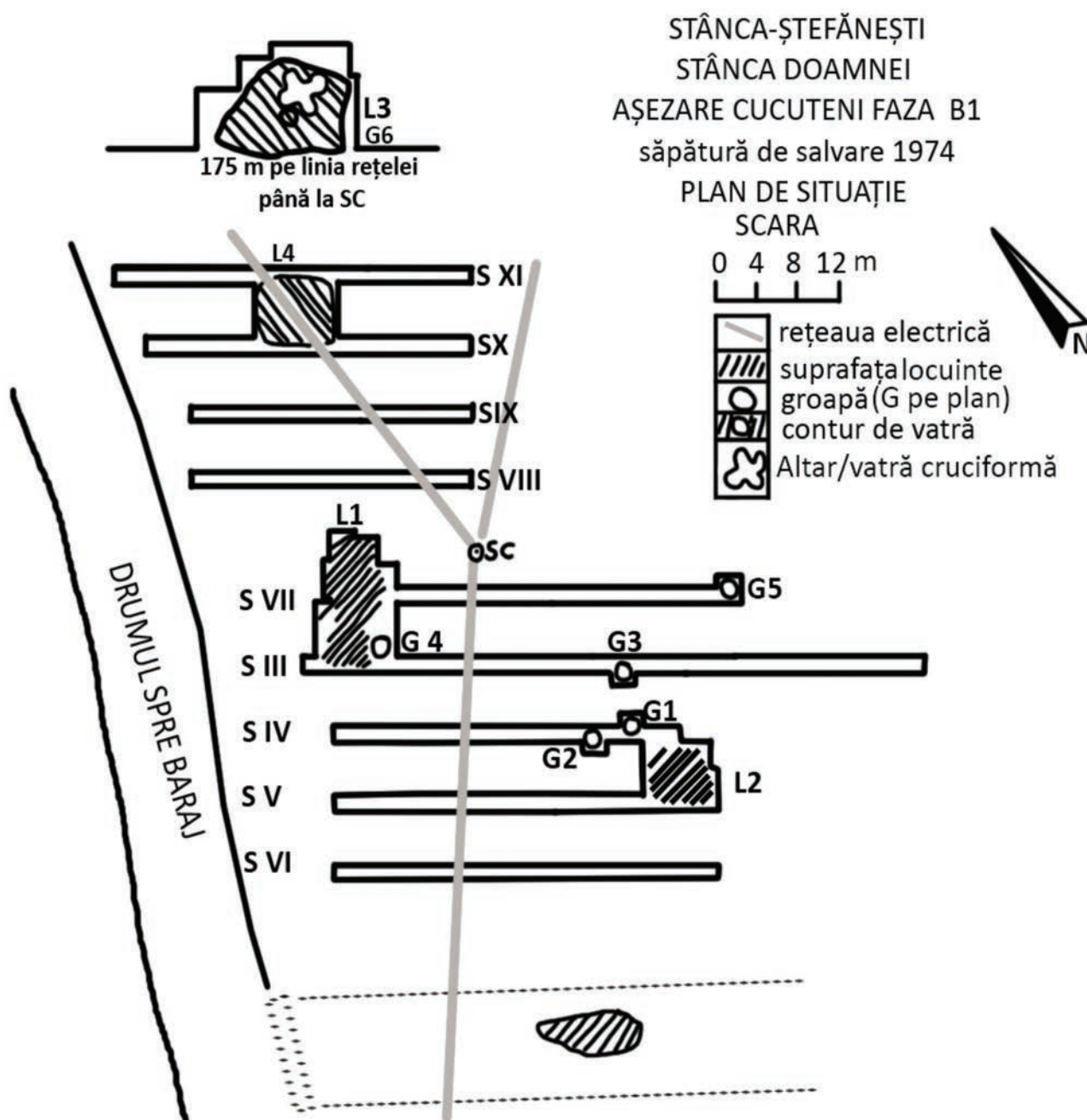


Figure 7. Plan of the 1974 archaeological excavations at Ștefănești – Stâncă Doamnei (redrawn according to the plan in the archive of the Botoșani County Museum, compared to the one published by Nițu, Șadurschi, 1994).

interpreted as remains of a fishing net. A table leg and only one zoomorphic idol were also discovered¹⁷.

Two other vessels that we are publishing on this occasion come from the collection of the Archaeology Museum in Săveni. According to the inventory registers and the marks on the vessels, they were discovered in 1966 in the site called Hănești – *La Iaz/Malul Iazului/La Grajduri* (RAN code 37663.12 – The archaeological site of

Slobozia Hănești – *La Grajduri*). In the past, the territory of the commune of Hănești was subjected to an extensive process of land improvement, interventions that aimed to develop a dam and the reservoir lake, today covering over 400 ha (Diaconu 2010, p. 16). The archaeological survey of this site was carried out in 1971 by Silvia Marinescu-Bîlcu from the Institute of Archaeology in Bucharest and Filaret Aprotosoiaie from the Archaeology Museum in Săveni. According to the subsequent report signed by Sebastian Morintz, two partially destroyed Cucuteni B dwellings were

¹⁷ Petrescu-Dîmbovița et alii 1999, p. 88; 90–91, fig. 66.

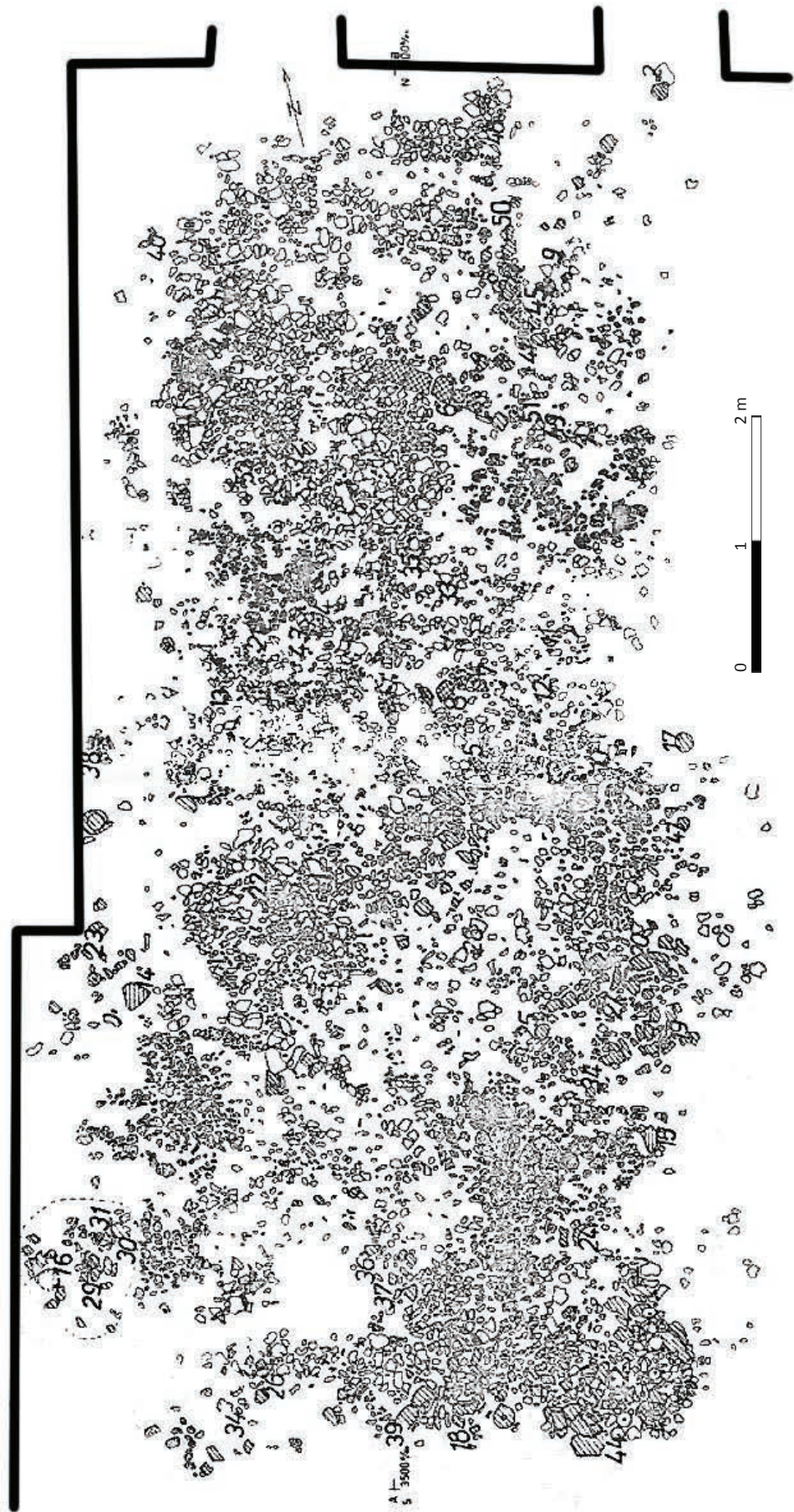


Figure 8. Plan of dwelling XXXIX at Trușești – Țuguieți (after Petrescu-Dîmbovița et alii 1999, p. 90–91, fig. 66).

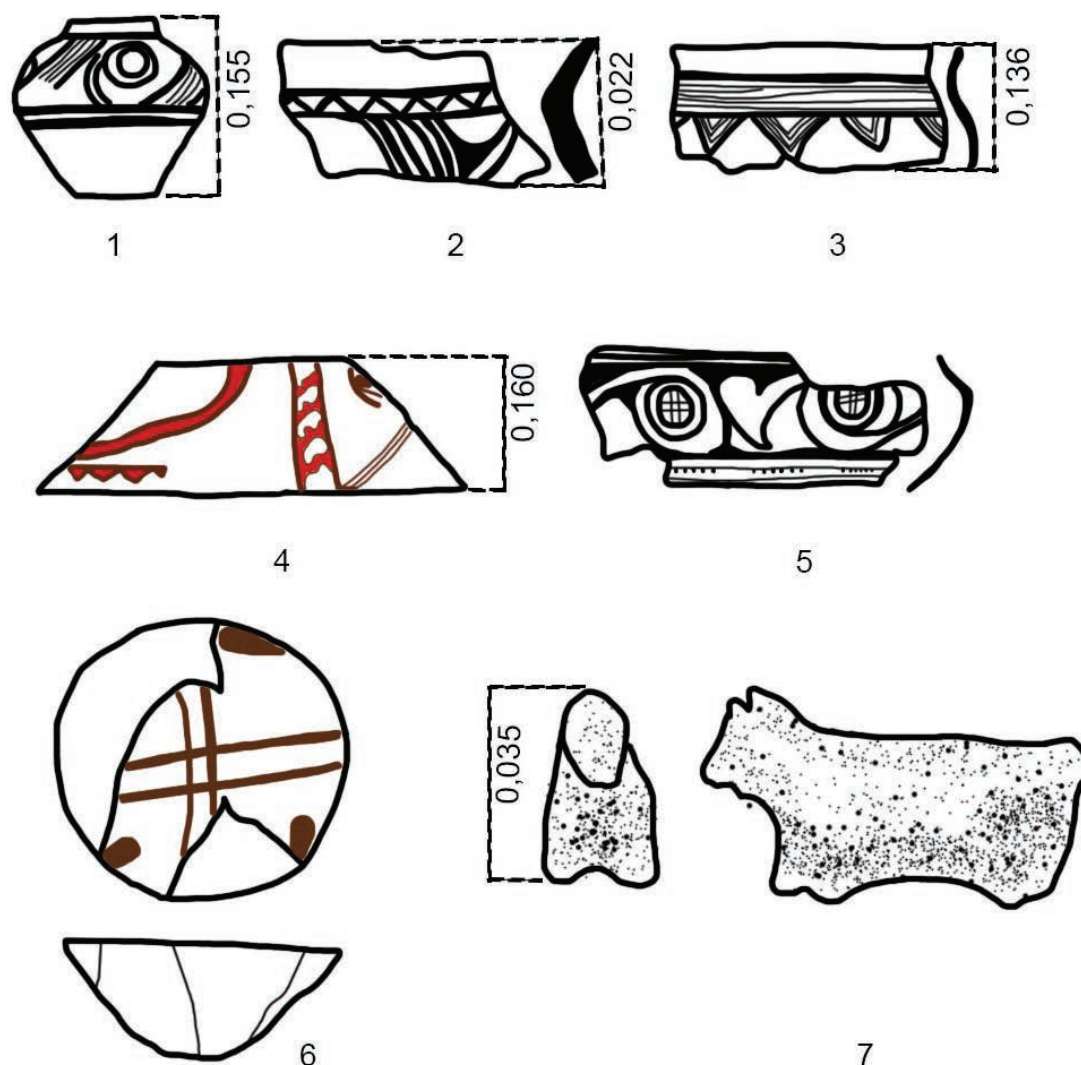


Figure 9. Archaeological materials coming from dwelling XXXIX at Trușești – Țuguieța. 1–6. Ceramic fragments and vessels with decoration specific to phase B of the Cucuteni culture (after Petrescu-Dâmbovița et alii 1999, p. 457, fig. 339/1, 4, 7; p. 458, fig. 340/1, 3; p. 461, fig. 342/2a–b); 7. Zoomorphic statuette (after Petrescu-Dâmbovița et alii 1999, p. 563, fig. 375/6a–b).

investigated. Their inventory comprised ceramic fragments and complete vessels, a zoomorphic statuette, a bovine horn and a brass dagger with a central longitudinal rib, attached with three rivets to a wooden handle. Ceramic fragments of the Cucuteni C type were also collected. Several artifacts specific to the Horodiștea culture also came from this settlement¹⁸.

The last artifact in our catalogue is the upper half of a vessel with a zoomorphic wavy ribbon decoration. So far, we have not been able to find any references regarding its place of origin. However, the vessel has attracted the attention of the museum's specialized staff, as it has benefited from well-executed restoration interventions, completed by chromatic integration and the recreation of the decoration on the surface of the plaster fillings.

THE ARTIFACTS IN THE COLLECTIONS OF THE BOTOȘANI COUNTY MUSEUM

A. FINDS FROM ȘTEFĂNEȘTI – STÂNCA DOAMNEI

A1 (Fig. 10–11). Truncated conical bowl with a wide mouth, decorated on both sides. The inner one is decorated with two fascicles consisting of five lines each, arranged in a swirl shape. On the edge are six or seven, elongated leaves. Between the two fascicles are four arches/crescents/stylized snakes (?). On the outer side are five pairs of hanging arches, which seem to represent opposing snakes. The colour of the decorative elements is coffee-brown, applied onto a brick-coloured background of the vessel.

¹⁸ Morintz 1972, p. 339; Diaconu 2010, p. 23–24.

Simbol 20-02-55 Tipuri A4

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FIȘA ANALITICĂ DE EVIDENȚĂ Nr. 46

D.P.C.N. nr. _____

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12. C. M. nr. _____

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14. C. M. nr. _____

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1. Denumire STRACHEINĂ	2. CULTURA, EPOCA Em. 52	3. DATA	4. FISA DE IDENTIFICARE Nr.	5. FISA DE MONUMENT Nr.
16. FOTO, DESEN				
Desen ilustrativ pt. Strachina la (1974) (desen, desen interior și exterior)				

6. DESCRIERE	7. DIMENSIUNI	8. DATA	9. DATA	10. DATA
Formă trapezoidală, pictată la interior și exterior	Lățime 112	Grosime 6: 306	Diametru 5: 92	Greutate

11. DESCRIERE	12. DATA	13. DATA	14. DATA	15. DATA
Formă trapezoidală, pictată la interior și exterior	1974	1974	1974	1974

16. DESCRIERE	17. DATA	18. DATA	19. DATA	20. DATA
Formă trapezoidală, pictată la interior și exterior	1974	1974	1974	1974

11. DESCRIERE

Formă trapezoidală, pictată la interior și exterior

12. DATA

1974

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16. DESCRIERE

Formă trapezoidală, pictată la interior și exterior

17. DATA

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Figure 10. Analytical record sheet and drawing made for the vessel MJB 775, from the museum archive (cat. no. A1).

The vessel was modelled from a fine paste and fired in oxidizing conditions, acquiring a reddish colour. It has been restored without chromatic integration.

Discovered at Ștefănești – *Stânca Doamnei*, no feature number. Inv. no. MJB 775.

Dimensions: height – 112 mm; mouth diameter – 306 mm; base diameter – 92 mm.

References: Nițu, Șadurschi 1994, p. 191, fig. 7/6; Dumitrescu, 1979, p. 59, fig. 49.

A2 (Fig. 12/1, Fig. 12/2). Ceramic fragments possibly from the same vessel – a bitronconical amphora with a funnel-shaped mouth. The geometric decoration was painted with black and intermittent red lines on the well-smoothed surface of the vessel. The preserved decoration is organized in two horizontal registers, separated by a thick, black line. Above this line, a horizontal row of waterfowl, possibly ducks, was painted. The birds are represented schematically, with their legs interspersed by a red line, located above the black band. The right leg is longer than the left, expressing, in this case, movement. The heads are turned to the right and were suggested using oblique lines. The body is crescent-shaped, and the tail is rendered slightly puffed (Fig. 12/1–2).

The ceramic fragments were modelled from a fine paste, burned in an oxidizing atmosphere, and both sides were carefully polished.

Discovered at Ștefănești – *Stânca Doamnei*, Dwelling 2, Inv. no. MJB 18639 and MJB 19454.

Dimensions: height of the birds 16 mm, maximum length of the body 24 mm.

References: Nițu, 1975a, 48, fig. 2; Țurcanu *et alii* 2020, p. 405, fig. 4/1–2; 66, fig. 55.

A3 (Fig. 12/3). Ceramic fragment from the flared mouth of an open vessel, with a single ornithomorphic representation. Given the flared mouth and its modelling, it is possible that the fragment comes from a bitronconical amphora. The decoration was made with black paint on the yellowish background. The bird faces right, its beak and tail pointed. The body is semicircular/crescent-shaped, with the middle part slightly thickened. The legs are represented by two thin, slightly oblique lines. The claws or the terminal area of the legs were broken in prehistoric times. Above the bird, on the neck area of the vessel immediately below the rim, a black, horizontal, slightly erased line is visible (Fig. 12/3). The fragments were modelled from a fine paste, oxidizing firing, and carefully polished.

Discovered at Ștefănești-*Stânca Doamnei*, L2, Inv. no. MJB 19456.

Dimensions: the bird has a total length of 34 mm and a preserved height of 30 mm.

References: Țurcanu *et alii* 2020, p. 405, fig. 4/3.

A4 (Fig. 12/4). Bitronconical amphora, refitted from several pieces, broken in prehistoric times. In the laboratory, a part of the maximum diameter area of the vessel was

completed (Fig. 12/4). The decoration consists of two bands, an upper, arched one and a lower, horizontal one, both delimited by thick black lines. The upper band is filled with a group of red lines, probably drawn with the intention of being parallel, but sometimes they bifurcate or are interrupted. In the lower band, a median, interrupted line is drawn in black. There are also two semi-oval motifs, spared from the background of the vessel, which seem carelessly pencilled in. Below these bands, an ornithomorphic representation was made, rendered in black, partially preserved. From what has been preserved, the head facing to the right can be seen, made of a single line that intersects with the line of the body. The beak is pointy. The median part of the body is missing, broken in prehistoric times. The tail is pointed, and there are a few dots next to it. These could be accidental, or they could represent ruffled feathers. The bird's legs are represented by two thin, horizontal, relatively parallel lines pointing backwards.

The vessel was modelled from a semi-fine paste, and the entire surface of the vessel was covered with yellow engobe and polished.

Discovered at Ștefănești – *Stânca Doamnei*, L2, Inv. no. MJB 19457.

Dimensions: length of bird – 72 mm.

References: Țurcanu *et alii* 2020, p. 405, fig. 4/4.

A5 (Fig. 12/5). Small ceramic fragment, from a medium-sized vessel. Only the front half of the bird, rendered in blackish brown, has been preserved. The head faces right; the tip of the beak is broken. The head has a crest-like feature on the upper part, made in such a way that it is reminiscent of the crowned crane. On the neck it has a small swelling that could represent a throat pouch, an anatomical characteristic specific to these birds. The body is semicircular, with an elongated neck, corresponding to the representation of cranes. The legs are thin, rendered by two parallel, oblique lines. The tail and the lower part of the legs have not been preserved. Above the ornithomorphic representation there is a band composed of black lines framing a broken line. The fragment is yellowish in colour (Fig. 12/5). The vessel was modelled from a semi-fine paste, and the entire surface of the vessel was covered with yellow engobe and polished.

Discovered at Ștefănești-*Stânca Doamnei*, Dwelling 2, Inv. no. MJB 19455.

Dimensions: preserved length – 50 mm.

References: Țurcanu *et alii* 2020, p. 405, fig. 4/5.

B. FINDS FROM ȘTEFĂNEȘTI – STÂRCEA

B1 (Fig. 13). Large vessel preserving the upper half. The mouth is narrow compared to the area of maximum diameter. The rim is strongly flared, the neck short and the shoulder very prominent. On the inner area of the rim, turned outwards, the vessel is painted with identical leaf motifs, connected between them, which form the image of opening petals. On the neck, the vessel is decorated with red and brown bands, which, combined, form leaves



Figure 11. Photographs and drawings made for vessel MJB 775 (cat. no. A1).

with either rounded or pointed tips. The belly of the vessel, starting from the shoulder, has a continuous type of decoration, consisting of four circular registers, which are repeated in an almost identical manner. Each register comprises two long, slightly oblique, parallel snakes and two smaller snakes, located one above the other. The register is completed by a double circle, having a double cross-shaped motif inside. In the upper part of the vessel, in the space left between the four circular registers, there are foliate motifs, obtained by double or triple geometric representations. The median area of the leaves is marked by three median brown lines. The painted decoration is chocolate-brown, with the reddish wall of the vessel as a background. The snakes were drawn using a brown outline, and the interior space is filled with red.

The vessel was modelled from a semi-fine paste, burned oxidized to a reddish colour.

Recovered by Ștefănești school pupils, probably from Pit 1, Inv. no. MJB 794.

Dimensions: preserved height – 485 mm; mouth diameter – 280 mm; maximum diameter – 570 mm.

References: Nițu, Șadurschi 2004, p. 299, fig. 3.

B2 (Fig. 14). Small amphora with flared rim, high neck, prominent shoulder, bitronconical body and straight bottom. On the outside, the decoration is organized in two registers: one on the neck and one on the body. Below the rim is a red serpentine representation, outlined in black. The snake is interrupted by a vertical band/column-like element, filled with three registers,



Figure 12. Ceramic fragments decorated with birds, discovered at Ștefănești – Stâncă Doamnei (cat. no. A2–A5): 1. inv. no. 18639; 2. inv. no. 19454; 3. inv. no. 19456; 4. inv. no. 19457; 5. inv. no. 19455.

each formed by three horizontal lines. The serpentine decoration is represented in association with groups of three black dashes, placed obliquely. On the belly, the vessel is decorated with vegetal motifs, probably representing leaves, formed of double or triple bands. Inside the resulting ovals, small groups consisting of three oblique dashes are placed.

The vessel was modelled from a fine paste, fired oxidized to a reddish colour, with traces of secondary firing.

Discovered at Ștefănești – Stârcea, Dwelling 2. Classified as Heritage, according to Order no. 2549/09.09.2008; Position 18.

Dimensions: height – 157 mm; mouth diameter – 105 mm; base diameter – 55 mm, inv. no. MJB 795.

References: Lazarovici *et alii* 2009, p. 211, cat. no. 421.

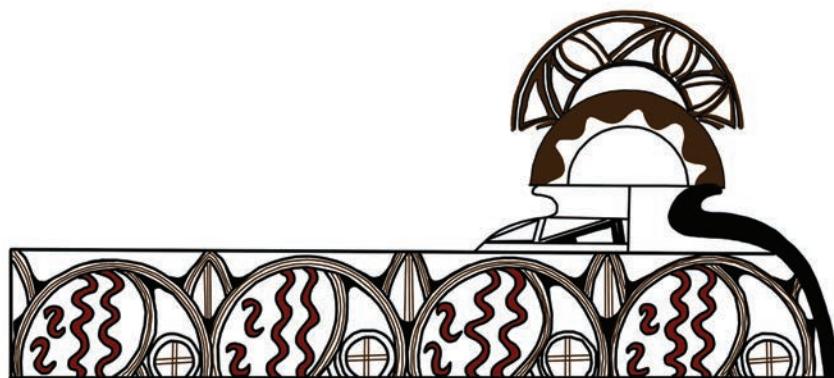


Figure 13. Photographs and drawings for the vessel with inv. no. MJB 794 (cat. no. B1).



Figure 14. Photographs and drawings made for the vessel with inv. no. MJB 795 (cat. no. B2).



Figure 15. Photographs and drawings made for the vessel with inv. no. MJB 798 (cat. no. B3).

B3 (Fig. 15). Semi-spherical bowl, with a flat, very small base, and a very short, flared rim, painted black on the inside. The vessel is ornamented both on the inside and outside. On the inside, four large snakes are represented, grouped in pairs, attached, rendered by sinuous lines, which are connected to some horizontal bands, which delimit the registers, and 12 small snakes, rendered in black, meandering lines. On the outside, geometric motifs are drawn (two triangles and two circumscribed circles), which, viewed from above when the vessel is placed upside down, form a double border. On the outside, the bottom is highlighted by a double brown line. All the ornamental motifs are represented by brown lines, which border wide, red bands. The vessel was modelled from a fine, well-smoothed paste and has strong lustre. The oxidizing firing to which it was subjected gave it a reddish-brown colour.

Discovered at Ștefănești – Stârcea, Dwelling 2, classed as Heritage, according to Order no. 2272/19.04.2008; Position 31.

Dimensions: height – 20 mm; mouth diameter – 145 mm; base diameter – 48 mm. Inv. no. MJB 798.

References: Nițu, Șadurschi 2004, 310, fig. 26; Lazarovici *et alii* 2009, 211, cat. no. 425.

B4 (Fig. 16). The upper part of a large vessel, of which only some fragments of the neck and rim area have been preserved. The rim is flared and the neck cylindrical. A horizontal row of black triangles was drawn below the rim, surrounding the mouth of the vessel. On the neck, the decoration consists of two scenes, separated by a vertical column-like element, consisting of two wide, black bands, and the interior space is filled with red rhombuses, bordered with brown lines. The main scenes are composed of two carnivores facing each other, represented with bristly hair and arched tails. Above the two carnivores, a snake is represented, painted in red and delimited with brown lines.

The vessel was modelled from a fine paste, burned oxidizing and has a reddish-brown colour, showing traces of secondary firing.

Discovered at Ștefănești – Stârcea, Dwelling 2.

Dimensions: preserved height – 85 mm; mouth diameter – 98 mm; base diameter – 104 mm. Inv. no. MJB 836.

References: Nițu, Șadurschi 2004, p. 301, fig. 6; p. 303, fig. 10.



Figure 16. Photographs and drawings made for the vessel with inv. no. MJB 836 (cat. no. B4).

B5 (Fig. 17–18). Small amphora-type vessel of which the upper half has been preserved. It has a flared rim, a narrow mouth, a cylindrical neck and a bulging body. Approximately one third of the lower body is missing. In the upper part, immediately below the neck, the vessel is painted with foliate motifs, which combine to create the image of a flower with open petals. On the belly, foliate and triangular motifs are drawn, consisting of bands of thin compound lines, which form the frame for the serpentine motifs, painted in red and framed by brown lines. The metopes are separated by circles with inscribed cross-shaped bands. Because the vessel was secondarily fired, the decoration is very difficult to see.

The vessel was modelled from a fine paste, fired oxidizing and has a reddish-brown colour, showing traces of secondary firing.

Discovered at Ștefănești – Stârcea, no context of origin.

Dimensions: preserved height – 228 mm; mouth diameter – 127 mm; base diameter – 310 mm. Inv. no. MJB 6609.

References: Nițu, Șadurschi 2004, p. 305, fig. 16.

B6 (Fig. 19). Small amphora-type vessel with more than half body preserved and restored without chromatic reconstruction. It has a flared rim, a narrow mouth, a short, cylindrical neck and a bulging body. The decoration is delimited by bands formed of thicker and thinner parallel lines, more numerous on the shoulder of the vessel. On the belly, foliate and triangular motifs consisting of bands of thin composite lines have been drawn, which form the frame for the serpentine motifs, painted in a simple, schematic manner with brown lines. The metopes are separated by four double circles, of which only one has the decoration with inscribed cross-shaped bands. Because

the vessel was secondarily fired, the decoration is very difficult to see.

The vessel was modelled from a fine paste, fired oxidizing, and has a reddish-brown colour, showing traces of secondary firing.

Discovered at Ștefănești – Stârcea, Dwelling 1.

Dimensions: preserved height – 345 mm; mouth diameter – 142 mm; base diameter – 127 mm. Inv. no. MJB 6610 (Fig. 19).

References: Nițu, Șadurschi 2004, p. 305, fig. 15.

B7 (Fig. 20). Large bowl, with a wide mouth, flared edge, small base and truncated body. The painting is applied only to the inner side of the bowl, occupying the entire field, except for the base. On the rim, the bowl comprises eight segments, divided by double, vertical lines. Four of them have a simple red background, alternating with four others that include chained semicircular motifs, probably representing waves. The edge of the rim is demarcated from the body of the bowl by two horizontal, thickened lines. The bottom of the bowl, on the inside, is marked by a simple, circular brown line. From this circle start two facing bands, formed by several curved lines, which form petals and delimit two main areas, occupied by two horizontal red snakes, which follow the line of the bowl, delimited by the brown outline. Inside the petals there is a red snake, marked in brown, with the upper part thicker. These two snakes inside the plant are represented in a vertical, ascending position. The main petals are filled with an intermittent band, represented by brown filled triangles, successive and joined.

The vessel was modelled from a fine paste, fired oxidizing and has a reddish-brown colour. It was restored and chromatically reconstructed, but without the decoration being reproduced.

[illegible]

Figure 17. Analytical record sheet and drawings made for the vessel with inv. no. MJB 6609, located in the museum archive (cat. no. B5).



Figure 18. Photographs and drawings made for the vessel with inv. no. MJB 6609 (cat. no. B5).



Figure 19. Photographs and drawings made for the vessel with inv. no. MJB 6610 (cat. no. B6).

Discovered at Ștefănești – Stârcea, no context of origin.

Dimensions: preserved height – 228 mm; mouth diameter – 127 mm; base diameter – 310 mm. Inv. no. MJB 16882.

References: Previously unpublished.

B8 (Fig. 21). Large bowl, with a wide flared mouth, a small base and a truncated body. The ornamentation was applied to both surfaces of the bowl, occupying the entire field, except for the base. On the rim, the bowl has a decoration formed by two rows of facing triangles,

one continuous, the other formed by four groups of three triangles. The latter, together with the corresponding ones in the continuous row, are filled with red. The rim is demarcated from the body of the bowl by means of a horizontal band, formed by two black lines and one red line, interspersed between them. The bottom of the bowl, on the inside, is marked by an identical, circular band, smaller than the diameter of the base. From this circle start two affronted bands, formed by several curved lines, which form petals and delimit two complex flowers, and the space between them is occupied by three large, horizontal red snakes, outlined in brown. Each snake is



Figure 20. Photographs and drawings made for the vessel with inv. no. MJB 16882 (cat. no. B7).

contained by an oval. The main petals are filled in the upper part with an intermittent band represented by successive, joined, filled triangles. Here and there, the ovals contain small zigzag marks, which could suggest small birds or insects/snakes (?). On the outside, the vessel is decorated with brown, double, asymmetrical curved lines, which form ovals that are joined at the side towards the mouth at sharp angles. The outer decoration represents leaves with a sharp tip, when the vessel is viewed with the base upwards.

The vessel was modelled from a fine paste, fired oxidizing and has a reddish-brown colour, showing traces

of secondary firing. The artifact has been restored, with the material gaps filled in, chromatically integrated and the decoration reconstructed.

Discovered at Ștefănești – Stârcea, Dwelling 1. Vessel classified as treasure according to order no. 2549/09.09.2008, position 1.

Dimensions: height – 140 mm; diameter of the mouth – 390 mm; diameter of the base – 100 mm. Inv. no. MJB 17375.

References: Lazarovici *et alii* 2009, p. 211, cat. no. 419.



Figure 21. Photographs and drawings made for the vessel with inv. no. MJB 17375 (cat. no. B8).

B9 (Fig. 22). Large pyriform amphora, with a very flared rim, short neck and bulging shoulder. The vessel was initially restored without chromatic integration and restored again in 2021. The vessel was discovered without a base, and this was not reconstructed. The rim of the vessel was not decorated. A decoration composed of bands of red and brown lines was drawn on the neck, which, combined, form leaves with rounded or pointed tips. The body of the vessel, from the shoulder down, has continuous decoration, consisting of four oblique registers, which repeat almost identically. Each register comprises two or three long oblique snakes, represented either in

parallel or as a continuation of one another. The register is completed by a double circle, filled with zigzag linear motifs, representing perhaps small snakes. On the upper part of the vessel, in the space remaining between the four registers, foliate motifs were drawn, obtained through doubled or tripled geometric representations. The upper area of the leaves is filled with three oblique zigzag lines, suggesting water, insects, or snakes. The decoration is painted in chocolate brown on the reddish background of the vessel. The large snakes are painted in red and outlined in black-brown.

Discovered at Ștefănești – Stârcea, Dwelling 2.



Figure 22. Photographs and drawings made for the vessel with inv. no. MJB 18831 (cat. no. B9).

Dimensions: preserved height – 455 mm; mouth diameter – 125 mm; maximum diameter – 570 mm. Inv. no. MJB 18831

References: Previously unpublished.

C. ZOOMORPHIC VESSEL FROM TRUȘEȘTI – ȚUGUIETA

C1 (Fig. 23). Bitronconical amphora, strongly deformed by secondary firing. The rim of the vessel is flared, the shoulder is vaulted, and the base is narrow and flat. The body of the vessel was decorated with zoomorphic and geometric elements, which are repeated within four

horizontal registers, all of identical composition, and bordered at the bottom by a band formed by two wide black lines, and at the top by a band also formed by two wide black lines, with a red line interspersed. Each scene contains a carnivorous animal (a dog or a wolf) represented in motion, and an element of concave, arched shape, located above. The latter could symbolise the moon or small snakes. In front of the animals is a circle, with a fascicle formed by four thin, oblique lines inside. The animals were made by painting red on the yellowish-red background of the vessel and were reserved with black or chocolate-brown lines.

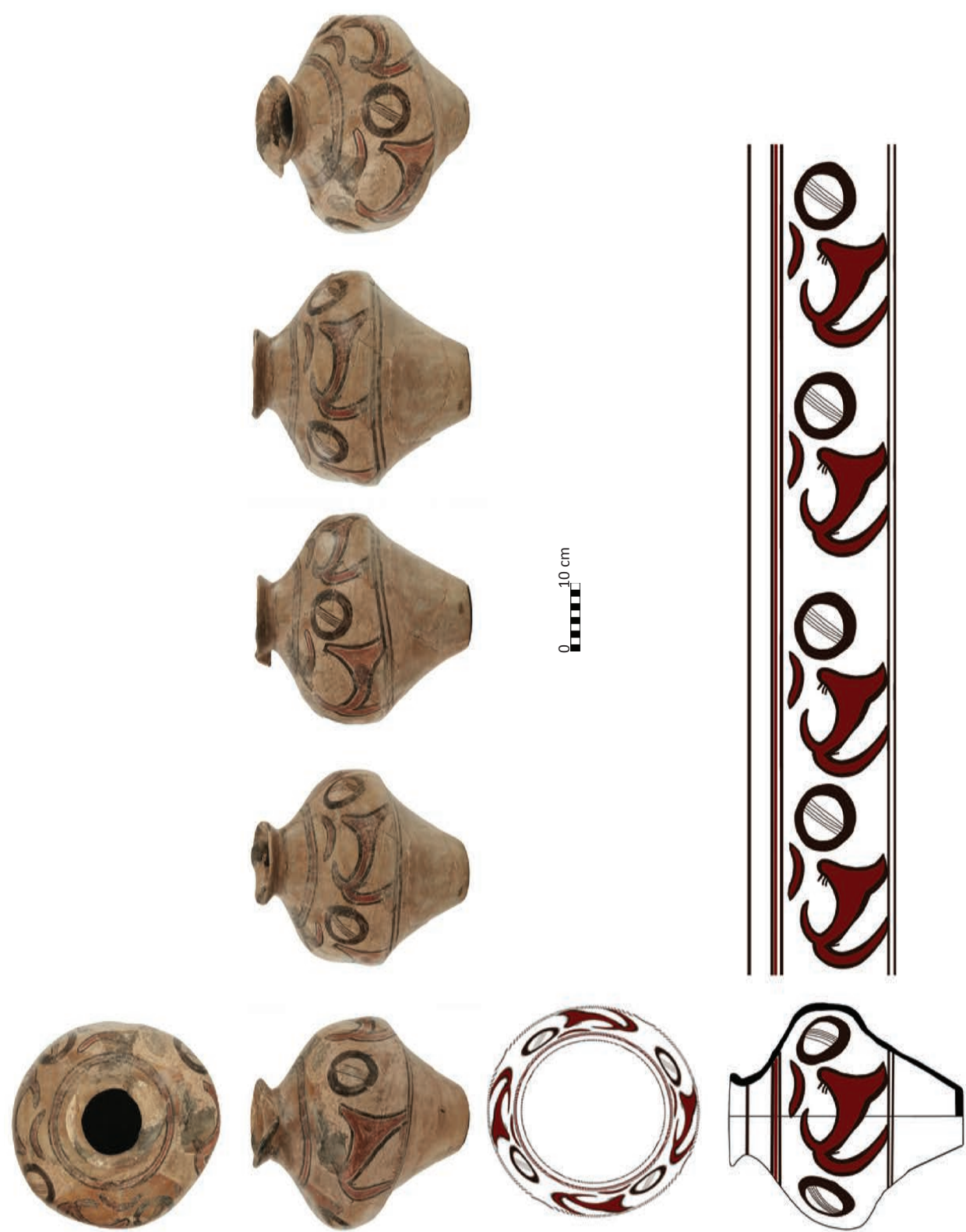


Figure 23. Photographs and drawings made for the vessel with inv. no. MJB 16889 (cat. no. C1).



Figure 24. Photographs and drawings made for the vessel with inv. no. SAV 559 (cat. no. D1).

Discovered at: Trușești – *Țuguieța*, Botoșani County, Dwelling XXXIX, research by M. Petrescu-Dîmbovița, 1953.

Dimensions: height – 355 mm; mouth diameter – 147 mm; base diameter – 108 mm. Inv. no. MJB 16889.

References: Petrescu-Dîmbovița *et alii* 1999, p. 460, fig. 341; Nițu 1972, fig. 3/1; Nițu 1975b, p. 99, fig. 99/1.

D. ZOOMORPHIC VESSELS FROM HĂNEȘTI

D1 (Fig. 24). Bitronconical amphora-type vessel, partially preserved and restored, without the chromatic integration of the plaster fillings. The vessel has a slightly flared mouth, with a diameter smaller than the maximum diameter. The vessel was discovered without a base, which has not been reconstructed. Two thick brown bands, interspersed with a thin line, were drawn under the rim. On the body of the vessel, the decoration consists of two scenes, separated by a vertical column-type element. This element consists of two wide, brown bands, and the interior space is filled with six fine, very thin lines. The main scenes are composed of two snakes outlined in brown and, unlike other cases, not filled with red but simply rendered using a thin line. The snakes are oblique, suggestive of

an upward movement. The lower part of the decoration is delimited by two horizontal, parallel, thick bands. The vessel was modelled from fine paste, fired oxidizing and has a yellowish colour, showing traces of secondary firing.

Discovered at Hănești – *La Iaz*, no context of origin.

Dimensions: preserved height – 188 mm; mouth diameter – 175 mm; maximum diameter – 188 mm. Inv. no. SAV 559.

References: Previously unpublished.

D2 (Fig. 25). Large bowl, with a wide mouth, small base and truncated body. The painted decoration was applied only on the inner side of it, occupying the entire field, except for the base. On the rim, there are three registers, divided by black bands and filled with black dots. The edge of the rim is separated from the body by a thick horizontal line. The bottom of the vessel, on the inside, is marked by a double circular brown line. From this circle start two facing bands, formed by several curved lines, which form petals and delimit two main areas, occupied by two vertical black snakes, delimited by means of a brown outline. Inside the petals, the space is left free. The snakes inside the plant are represented in a vertical, ascending position. The bowl



Figure 25. Photographs and drawings made for the vessel with inv. no. SAV 576 (cat. no. D2).

was modelled from a fine paste, fired oxidizing, and has a reddish-brown colour. It was restored without chromatic reintegration or decorative reconstruction.

Discovered at Hănești-*La Iaz*, without specified context of provenance.

Dimensions: preserved height – 132 mm; mouth diameter – 362 mm; base diameter – 220 mm. Inv. no. SAV 576.

References: Previously unpublished.

E. VESSEL WITH ZOOMORPHIC DECORATION OF UNKNOWN PROVENANCE

E1 (Fig. 26). The upper half of a large pear-shaped amphora, with a slightly flared rim, a short neck and a convex shoulder. The vessel has been restored, including the chromatic integration of the plaster fillings. The vessel was discovered fragmented, and the lower part has not

been reconstructed. A wide band has been reserved under the neck of the artifact, with the help of horizontal, wide and narrow lines. Inside the band, three horizontal red snakes, outlined in brown, have been represented. The body of the vessel presents a continuous spiral-type decoration, consisting of four oblique registers, which are repeated almost identically. Each register comprises two small, red snakes, outlined in brown, represented as convex semicircles. The register is completed by a circle, outlined with a thick double band, filled with a fine red line. The interior of the circle has been filled with red. The decoration is painted chocolate-brown on the yellowish background of the vessel.

Vessel of unknown provenance.

Dimensions: preserved height – 340 mm; mouth diameter – 258 mm; maximum diameter – 442 mm. Inv. no. SAV 1150 (Fig. 26).

References: Previously unpublished.



Figure 26. Photographs and drawings made for the vessel with inv. no. SAV 1150 (cat. no. E1).

THE PLACE AND ROLE OF THE VESSELS DECORATED WITH PAINTED ZOOMORPHIC REPRESENTATIONS, FROM COLLECTIONS OF THE BOTOȘANI COUNTY MUSEUM

Pottery studies are a traditional subject for archaeologists, with pottery as one of the main indicators of complex historical transformations that took place over time within prehistoric human communities. Ceramics have also become an object of study for historians and art critics, given the fact that certain items are true masterpieces of the past. The Cucuteni-Trypillia culture is one of the civilizations of the Copper Age where pottery painting reached artistic heights that amaze even today, while the decorations used, as well as the ceramic shapes, are spectacular¹⁹.

In the Cucuteni ceramic repertoire, a special category of artifacts is represented by vessels with zoomorphic decoration, often associated with geometric decoration. Compared to the previous phases, the decorative registers, as well as the usual motifs from the Cucuteni B phase, are characterized by a series of essential features, which define and individualize them. Spirals and meanders, used extremely frequently in the previous phases, are replaced by new decorations, such as cross-shaped motifs, concentric circles or the association of the circle and the inscribed cross-shaped motif. Also, decorations appear that present zoomorphic motifs and stairs, symbols that had not previously been used²⁰.

Up to this point, in the collections of the Botoșani County Museum, we have identified a series of Cucuteni vessels with decorations containing representations of carnivores, meander motifs and a few ceramic fragments decorated with birds. From the register of Cucuteni representations, in the deposits of the Botoșani museum, fragments showing cattle and deer are absent currently, although there are such finds in contemporary sites in other counties²¹. Here, we aimed to explore the symbolic universe of these decorations, also making a necessary bibliographical overview of the theme. The opinions of specialists in general converge towards the hypothesis according to which the images of animals painted on ceramic vessels not only fulfilled an aesthetic role, but also assumed a deeper, religious or ritual significance. The iconography published to date could reflect a possible relationship between the Cucuteni man and the animal world, or the natural world in general, the painted images playing a symbolic role²². Zoomorphic decorations also include symbols such as horns representing virility, and often designate animals, such as cattle. Hunting animals, dogs, wolves, cats and snakes, sometimes fulfil apotropaic roles. The representations are both stylized and realistic, capturing even today the individual features of the animals in motion. Zoomorphic decoration is a significant aspect of

the Cucuteni B pottery, reflecting both the artistic creativity and the cultural symbolism of prehistoric communities²³.

In Botoșani County, until now, vessels with zoomorphic decoration have been discovered at Ștefănești – *Stânca Doamnei* (Cucuteni B1), Ștefănești – *Stârcea* (Cucuteni B2) and in the Cucuteni B2 level from Trușești – *Țuguieța*. Hănești – *La Iaz*, located in the immediate vicinity of a large artificial lake, only yielded materials falling into the B2 phase. The ceramic materials presented in this study are part of the old collections of the museum and were discovered in 1960. The last of the vessels valorised in this study has an unknown origin and it is regrettable that the old collections also host vessels whose place of discovery has been lost. However, the decoration and the placement of the motifs on the vessel in question lead to the same conclusion that the artifact was discovered in a site datable to the Cucuteni B2 level.

Over time, many archaeologists have noted the association of animal representations with large-scale sites, the so-called proto-cities or mega-sites²⁴. This aspect suggests that craftsmen in large settlements were familiar with the imagistic patterns. Today, we find that decorative motifs became repetitive, with very few variations in the ornamental compositions on Cucuteni vessels, produced in the final stage of civilization.

Also, by studying the zoomorphic images, specialists have tried to offer the most plausible hypotheses regarding what the animals and the decorations associated with them could represent²⁵.

In our country, the general characteristics of painting with zoomorphic motifs were described and defined in 1975 by Anton Nițu, a researcher whose name is associated with a series of research themes regarding zoomorphic decoration as well as zoomorphic and anthropomorphic plastic elements²⁶. He addressed painted zoomorphic representations in several studies²⁷, and his articles also represent a starting point for our analysis. During his research, he noted that some vessels featured antagonistic species, such as carnivores and horned animals. He was also the one who meticulously described the discoveries from Valea Lupului, interpreting the representations as bovines and carnivores²⁸. In his study, related to the avimorphic representations, the author illustrates two of the vessel fragments discovered at *Stânca Doamnei* (Fig. 12/1–2)²⁹. According to his analysis, the zoomorphic decoration on the vessels would have two styles: the free style, with animals represented in an uninterrupted row around the vessel, or metopic, with animals and geometric motifs alternating in frames.

²³ Olaru 2015, p. 206.

²⁴ Videiko 2002; 2005; 2007.

²⁵ Burdo 2022; Melnyk, Tkachuk 2021; Lazarovici 2007; Bodi *et alii* 2018; 2019.

²⁶ Lazarovici *et alii* 2009, p. 78.

²⁷ Nițu 1972; 1972–1973; 1975a; 1975b; 1976.

²⁸ Nițu 1972, fig. 1/1; fig. 2; Dinu 1957.

²⁹ Nițu 1975a.

¹⁹ Lazarovici *et alii* 2009.

²⁰ Lazarovici 2010, p. 152.

²¹ Nițu 1975b; Schmidt 1932, tab. 37.

²² Lazarovici 2010, p. 152.

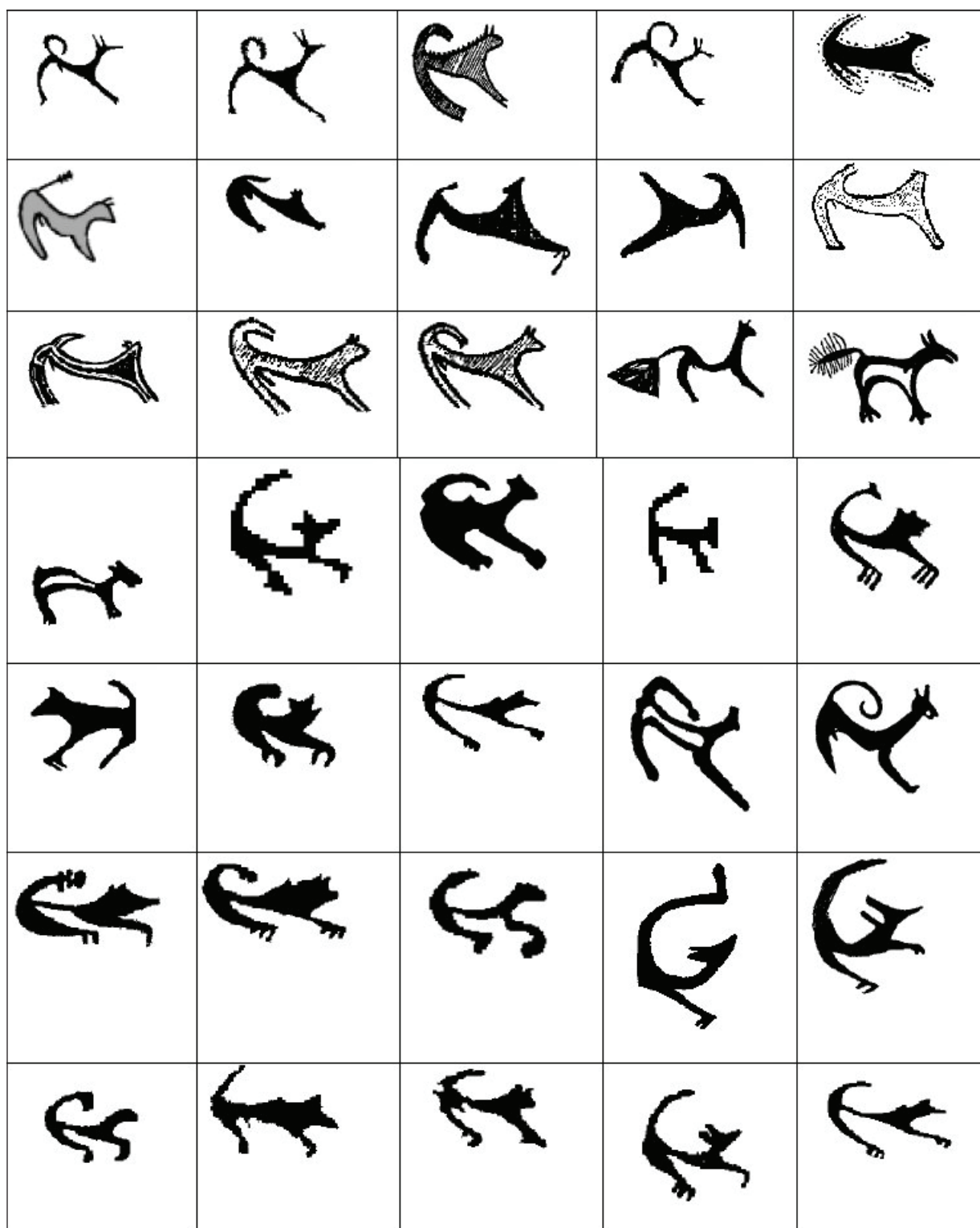


Figure 27. Representation of carnivores on ceramic vessels belonging to the Cucuteni culture (after Lazarovici 2007, p. 18, fig. 17).

Within the assemblage of vessels we analysed, only metopic, repetitive decorations, framed by floral or abstract elements were noted. The bichrome compositions show the animals painted chocolate-black on a yellowish background or on a white engobe, while in the trichrome

compositions, the body is rendered in red, bordered with chocolate-black, with details such as claws and horns painted black. Often, the background of the scenes on the bowls is reddish. Also, the zoomorphic motifs were integrated into the geometric-abstract background, not

left as singular elements, and organized repetitively, in true decorative friezes³⁰.

We also noticed that animals are represented in a dynamic way, the position of their legs or bodies gives the impression of movement, within large friezes or metopes. Looking at the circular decoration, from the mouth of the vessel or the base, one can observe the association of zoomorphic images with vegetal elements, leaves or flowers, made by associating red lines with brown ones of different sizes and thicknesses, so that they form coherent bands and give a vegetal visual meaning. The association of animals with vegetal elements may be linked to some myths, in direct connection with the "Tree of Life", represented both schematically and in a realistic manner³¹.

Anton Nițu refers to the amphora with zoomorphic decoration from Trușești, which he also illustrated, a drawing later presented in other studies³². He described the vessel as having silhouettes of carnivores with crescents, alternating with circles outlined with a black band, representing eyes for the hanging spirals. He considered the crescent motifs to be forms derived from the meander motifs on the body of the spirals³³. The amphorae with animals facing each other were interpreted by Vladimir Dumitrescu as being represented in a frieze, but the decoration is much more complex, continuing with the representation of snakes on the bulging shoulder of the amphora³⁴.

The connecting elements between the snakes or carnivores depicted on the amphorae are the circles, united by various vegetal motifs. In his works, Boris Rybakov interpreted the circles or the circle with a cross inside as solar symbols. He considered that some dynamic ornamental compositions, with animals and circular elements, could be a representation of the sun and its movement on the celestial vault (Rybakov 1965, 13-33). Another researcher, Valentin Danylenko, interpreted the spiral ornament as a symbol of a winged dragon, a fantastic snake, which, in fact, would be an attribute of the sky (Danylenko 1997, p. 10-23). Taras Tkachuk has a different approach, proposing a lunar coding of the ornamental compositions on the Cucutenian and Trypillian ceramics³⁵. His analysis starts from the study of Cucuteni ornaments carried out by Bobrinskiy in 1902³⁶, who, in a synthetic work, approaches the symbols from Europe and Asia. Even if it does not refer directly to the Cucuteni-Trypillia culture, this work is relevant for the study of prehistoric ornamentation. Bobrinsky proposed the study of ornaments according to the methods of linguistics, analysing each sign and searching for its etymology. He concluded that the ornaments of prehistoric tribes and

peoples have certain similar designs, which form the basis of ornamentation worldwide. He also considered that the shapes existing in ornamentation represent only the development of typological categories, and each of these has its own meaning. He managed to identify two specific types of signs: those in the form of snakes and those in the form of birds³⁷. Another author cited in the specialized literature is B. Bogaevsky. He considered that the images of animals on the vessels were closely related to their content, in particular, to the cereals stored in them, thus having the role of warding off evil. Thus, the dogs represented on the bowls were interpreted as apotropaic animals, which guarded the products stored in them. The tails of the animals drawn in the form of plants or branches would suggest the symbiosis between animal and plant life. The images of dogs are divided, by the same author, into two groups: one consisting of "band" type dogs and another consisting of realistic drawings³⁸. Another author who interprets the animal representations as symbols, and not a simple decoration, is A. A. Holmsten. According to him, the ornamentation of ceramic vessels reflects a vision of the world, based on magical principles, and the images of animals are interpreted as representing the elements of a cult. Also, the similarities of signs observed in various settlements are attributed to the ideological and thinking unity at the level of human communities³⁹.

In his works, T. Tkachuk also cites the ideas published by Krychevsky, in whose view the wavy line symbolizes water and is associated with the image of the snake. The researcher connects these symbols with the cult of the sun and the sky, relying on ethnographic materials. Krychevsky believes that the wavy ornamental forms, zigzags and concentric circles come from images of the human face and women's breasts, by referring to the ornamentation of ancient European tools. He also wondered whether the decorations on ceramics could be a common model for tattooing and painting the human body, with an emphasis on the eyes, face and chest. Krychevsky highlights the importance of each cosmic symbol and its connection with the cosmic pattern of ornamentation, as well as the attention paid to anthropomorphism. The researcher identifies the main ornamental motifs, such as the spiral, meander and zigzag, which form the basis of rotating ornamental styles. He believes that these motifs represent a continuous movement, symbolising the rhythmic succession of natural events and phenomena. We believe that his observations remain relevant today⁴⁰.

In the monograph dedicated to the research at Luka-Vrublevetska, published in 1953, S. N. Bibikov explored various possibilities for interpreting the rituals of agricultural communities, in general, and of the Cucuteni people, in particular. He referred to several sensitive topics in historiography, such as the burial of children, the use

³⁰ Olaru 2015, p. 206.

³¹ Lazarovici 2010, p. 152.

³² Dumitrescu 1979, p. 59, fig. 49.

³³ Nițu 1972, p. 85.

³⁴ Dumitrescu 1979, fig. 153.

³⁵ Tkachuk 2005, p. 113-114.

³⁶ Bobrinskiy 1902.

³⁷ Bobrinskiy 1902, p. 4-5.

³⁸ Bogaevsky 1937, p. 224; Melnyk, Tkachuk 2021, p. 10.

³⁹ Holmsten 1941, p. 7; Melnyk, Tkachuk 2021, p. 11.

⁴⁰ Melnyk, Tkachuk 2021, p. 12.

of jewellery and amulets, the purpose of house/sanctuary models, and statuettes. Applying comparative-historical analysis and ethnographic parallels, the author concluded that certain beliefs were formed in early agricultural societies, all related to the cyclical nature of the seasons, birth, death, and intercommunity relations. At the center of religious beliefs and rites, associated with fertility, would be the image of the woman⁴¹.

T. Tkachuk also studied the systems of symbols of the Trypillian painted decoration and concluded that the circular signs which are most often interpreted as solar, are in fact symbols of the full moon, and the semicircles and segments of circles are images of the different phases of the moon. The theme of lunar symbolism and the lunar decoding of the painted ornamentation on the ceramics of the Cucuteni-Trypillia cultural complex was also proposed by N. Burdo, who substantiates very well her ideas related to the phases of the moon and their representation on Cucuteni vessels⁴².

V. I. Markevich considered that the images of carnivores could represent dogs that had some magical role, being associated with a cult of fertility of plants and domestic animals. Analysing the images on the Petreni vessels, he interpreted certain drawings depicting fantastic animals with heads and claws as actually being the syncretic image of a lunar deity. Markevich, in contrast to Rybakov, makes a connection between the symbol of the bull and the Moon with its phases. He considers that the **M** and **W**-shaped signs inside the oval represent fertility, and the tree symbol represents pregnancy. He also interprets the compositions based on multiple figures, in the same way as other researchers, considering that they represent magical dances performed by women with the role of priestesses to attract rain, animal reproduction and success in hunting. The dance was an integral part of the rituals and prayers for rain and health of the animals⁴³. T. Tkachuk believes that one of the important achievements of the symbolic awareness and semantic significance of Cucuteni-Trypillia ornamentation is the correct definition of symbols, in their relationship to creatures, objects and natural phenomena⁴⁴.

Some of the carnivores seem to be represented in a lurking position, with their bodies tense, ready to launch an attack on a prey (Fig. 23). The birds have their legs outstretched, appearing to be represented in motion, with their heads turned to the side (Fig. 12). Sometimes, they are associated with various bands, which, viewed from a distance, could represent waves or the surface of water⁴⁵.

As for the serpentine symbols, a complex composition could be observed in the case of the vessel of unknown origin (Inv. no. SAV 1150) (Fig. 26), which we introduce into the scientific circuit on this occasion. On this vessel, the snakes are of two categories: the large ones,

represented in the form of elongated ribbons, and the small ones, represented as small convex crescents. They are associated with large circles and floral motifs, four each, separating the four scenes on the vessel. According to the hypotheses put forward by some researchers, the large circles, filled with red, could suggest in this case the full moon⁴⁶. The association between the snake and the full moon is considered by the author to reflect the mythology of the character of the Moon Serpent⁴⁷. On the contrary, T. Tkachuk believes that the association of red lines, with cross-shaped, oblique or straight motifs, and with the snake represented in ovals, would symbolise the water snake⁴⁸.

As for the scenes with animals painted on Cucuteni pottery, we can observe very close modes of representation to those in the eastern area. Today we know that at the same time as the animal decorations on stone vessels, the statuettes in *ronde-bosse* also appear at Pre-Pottery Neolithic settlements⁴⁹. Zoomorphic representations carved on stone containers appear since the dawn of the Neolithic, at settlements dated extremely early, such as Hallan Çemi (Fig. 28/2)⁵⁰. A real hunting scene was depicted on the chlorite vessel discovered in a kiln at Tell 'Abr 3 in Syria (Fig. 28/1). Within this scene, one can clearly distinguish drawings such as the gazelle, a headless human figure holding a spear aimed at the gazelle, and another four-legged animal (gazelle or horse), all the figures being united by registers of lines⁵¹.

In the Copper Age in Anatolia, zoomorphic representations of horned animals in relief, interpreted as being used in religious rituals, appear on vessels discovered at Kösk Höyük (Fig. 29/1)⁵². The intricate carvings and the monumental architecture at Göbekli Tepe are linked to ritual practices and ontological frameworks that are difficult to understand. The images embody the complex relationships between humans and animals, suggesting a common existence and, possibly, a spiritual connection of humans with the natural world⁵³.

A Neolithic site where sophisticated paintings of horned animals, birds, carnivores, and insects, associated with geometric bands, have been discovered is Tall-e Bakun, a site in the Marv Dasht plain of Fars Province, located near Persepolis, Iran. The plateau is occupied by two sites, distinguished as Bakun A and Bakun B, the latter being the earlier. Tall-e Bakun B (approx. 5000–4200 BC) was first investigated by Alexander Langsdorff and Donald McCown in 1932, and later, in 1937, by the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago. Abbas Alizadeh resumed the results of the 1932 excavations and published them in 2006.

⁴⁶ Burdo 2022, p. 58.

⁴⁷ Burdo 2022, p. 60.

⁴⁸ Melnyk, Tkachuk 2021, p. 58.

⁴⁹ Rosenberg, Redding 2002, p. 49–52; Rollefson 2008.

⁵⁰ Rosenberg, Redding 2002, p. 51, fig. 5; Yakar 1991, fig. 175; Rosenberg 1999.

⁵¹ Yartah 2013, II, 189, fig. 173.

⁵² Yakar 1991, fig. 153; fig. 194.

⁵³ Dietrich, Schmidt 2010; Dietrich *et alii* 2012; Dietrich 2014; 2014a; Köksal-Schmidt, Schmidt 2010.

⁴¹ Melnyk, Tkachuk 2021, p. 12.

⁴² Burdo 2022.

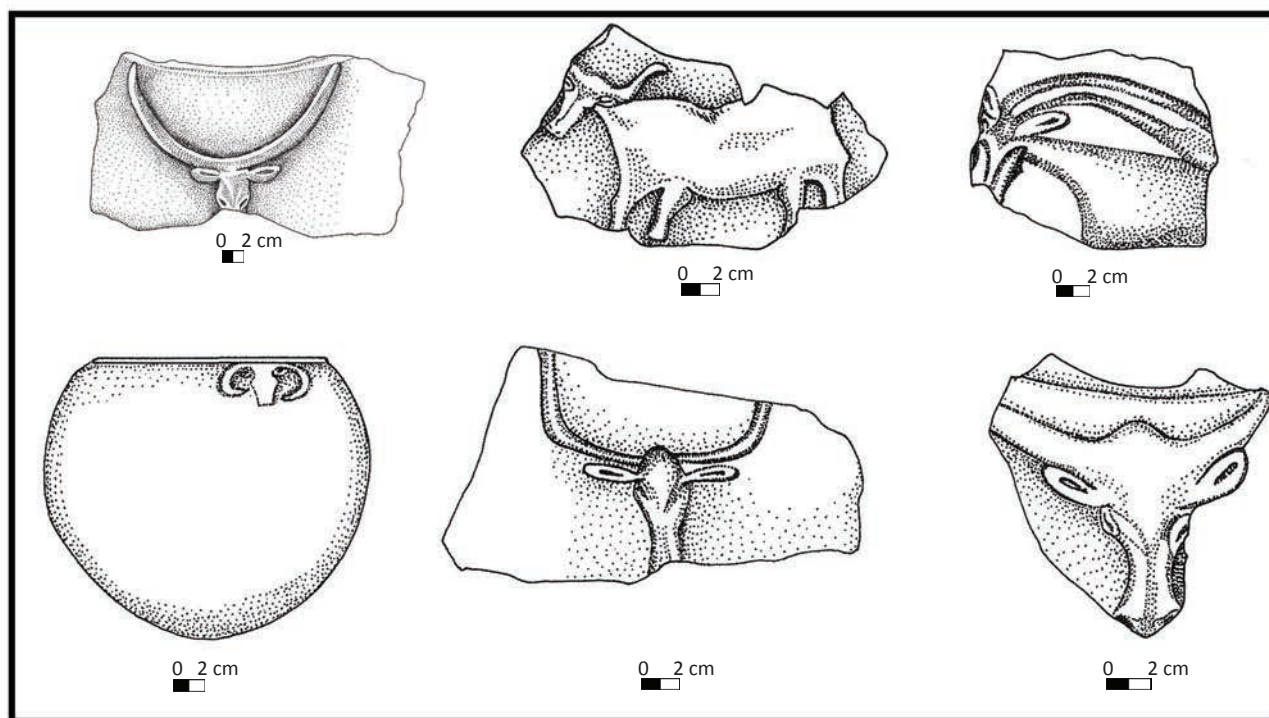
⁴³ Melnyk, Tkachuk 2021, p. 18.

⁴⁴ Melnyk, Tkachuk 2021, p. 50.

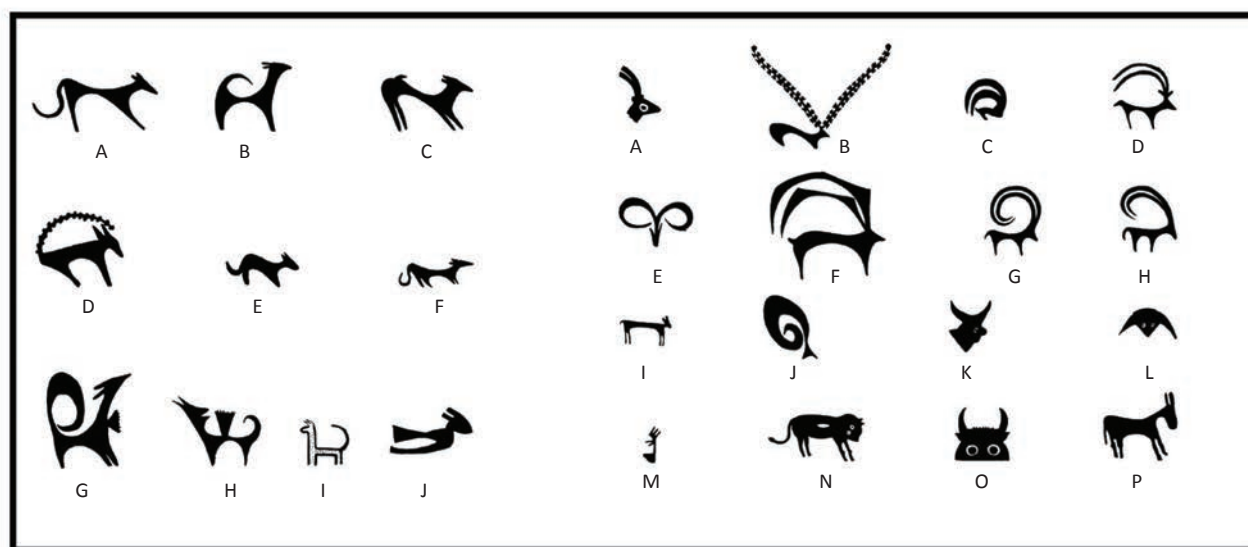
⁴⁵ Nițu 1976, p. 55.



Figure 28. Stone vessels with zoomorphic representations: 1. hunting scene from Tell 'Abr 3 in Syria (after Yartah 2013, vol. II, 189, fig. 173); 2. The vessel with carnivores from Hallan Çemi Tepesi (after Yakar 1991, fig. 175).



1



2

Figure 29. Eneolithic vessels with zoomorphic decoration and zoomorphic motifs: 1. vessels discovered at Köşk Höyük (after Yakar 1991, fig. 194); 2. zoomorphic painting motifs from Tall-e Bakun, Iran (after Alizadeh 2006, p. 210, fig. 48; p. 211, fig. 29).

There are vessels with zoomorphic decoration, both on the outside and inside (Fig. 29/2). The way of rendering snakes or birds is very similar to that used by the Cucutenian potters⁵⁴. Of course, the oriental repertoire is more varied, being inspired also by marine life, aspects that have not been found on Cucutenian pottery until now (Fig. 29/2).

⁵⁴ Alizadeh 2006, p. 209, fig. 47; p. 210, fig. 48; p. 211, fig. 49; p. 213, fig. 50.

The painted representation of animals raises several questions about the role and function that the vessels on which such scenes are located could have had. Unlike the *ronde-bosse* sculpture, which could have had multiple uses, the vessels exclude the community's recreational area. It is certainly a complement to the repertoire of statuettes, noting that up to this point no statuettes of snakes have been identified; however, cattle and carnivores have been

discovered in large numbers⁵⁵. Animals are a companion of man, in all historical times, having an important place, especially in traditional cultures. Thus, the herd of animals was a good economic and social indicator, denoting both property, wealth, but also social prestige, the power of individuals or human communities⁵⁶.

Having reached this point in our exposition, we naturally ask ourselves the question whether these vessels with special decoration were used in rituals as paraphernalia and in what way? Some vessels are, by their shape and dimensions, made for storing products, food. Even when empty, they are heavy and difficult to manipulate (Fig. 13, 22, 23, 30). Only the bowls, being smaller and lighter, could have been used for presenting products or direct use by people. Also, an interesting topic of debate is related to the types of products consumed or stored in bowls, especially since some have the decoration on the inside of the container (Fig. 15, 20, 21, 25). Snakes appear more often on the inside of bowls in the batch of ceramic vessels we studied. The exterior is sometimes decorated with vegetal motifs (Fig. 21) or is left without any decoration (Fig. 20, 25), which suggests that the interior of the container was more important than its exterior.

What led the Cucuteni potters to depict animals on the body of their vessels is, however, difficult to explain today. Taking a brief look at the preferred shapes of vessels, we can observe that serpentine representations appear mainly on small amphora-type vessels or on large vessels, although there is a predilection for bowls. As for the serpentine and carnivorous representations in the collection of the Botoșani County Museum, the closest analogies are found at Valea Lupului, Iași County, or Vărăvăreuca in the Republic of Moldova, where several similar vessels were identified (Fig. 30).

It is certain that there is a change in mentality, values and myths that manifests itself in several areas of prehistoric life, and these transformations are also reflected in the activity of some craftsmen and artisans of that time, the drawing being much simplified compositionally⁵⁷. The image of snakes on bowls, painted in certain decorative compositions, emphasizes the cultic meanings of the motifs, also determining the cultic or symbolic purpose of the vessels. According to V. I. Markevich, such vessels were used to decorate sacred places, with examples in the dwellings from Sabatynovka II and Grenivka⁵⁸. Movsha considered that there was a cult of the bull and one of the snake, which, together with that of the Great Mother, were the oldest cults in the Trypillian religion⁵⁹.

Trying to interpret these drawings, C. M. Lazarovici considered them to be related to fertility and fecundity, cyclical renewal, regeneration and protection of crops, but also of households. The painted scenes with bulls,

dogs or stags were interpreted as expressing episodes of battle, especially as, sometimes, several specimens are represented on a single vessel⁶⁰. An interesting association is on the vessel from the sanctuary at Poduri-Dealul Ghindaru, part of the same final stage B2 of the Cucuteni Culture. The analysis of the decoration highlights motifs associated according to the decorative metopes, interpreted by the discoverers as stylized sacred motifs. Cattle appear, associated with drawings of carnivorous or feline species, a tree, with an elongated, straight trunk, thicker at the base and thinner towards the top. The vessel was interpreted as a hunting scene, with four wild animals, which would symbolise power⁶¹.

The snake is often associated with the moon in the Cucuteni-Trypillia cultural complex through symbolic imagery. The lunar disk, combined with the symbolism of the snake, creates a fantastic, sacred character known as the moon serpent. This combination is evident in the various ornamental compositions, in which the snake's head is represented by circles or ovals, symbolising the full moon. Spiral images of the moon serpent occupy central positions in the ornamentation of vessels, indicating the integration of the snake and lunar symbols in their sacred and mythological representations⁶². A cult of the snake may have existed in prehistory, given the development of animism in certain traditional societies⁶³. The association between birds/wings and the snake is of considerable antiquity, later developing into the feathered serpent or the complex image of the dragon.

We believe that the serpentine lines depicted on Cucuteni vessels can be related, among other things, to sacred, ritual dances. The composition of the serpentine decoration and the way it is combined is reminiscent of the manners of organizing dancers in the Balkan area. Today, there are many studies related to this subject. For example, *Bouenek* is a special type of dance, performed throughout eastern Bulgaria, in which dancers hold hands and form a meandering line. These types of dances have the same musical pulsation, a rhythm frequently marked by the iambic pentameter. The way the dancers are chained together, as well as the movement of the group, is very close to the symbol of the snake, which is a basic element in spring rituals. The rows of dancers hold hands and have a rhythm, breathing, and alternation that progresses either faster or slower, in waves that alternate the winding and unwinding of a spiral, creating the visual impression of a single enormous body⁶⁴.

The birds painted on the vessels from Ștefănești – *Stânca Doamnei* were published synthetically in a relatively recent study, and we do not wish to repeat what we have already concluded in this extensive article on the painted

⁵⁵ Furnică 2014.

⁵⁶ Enea *et alii* 2016, p. 554.

⁵⁷ Lazarovici *et alii* 2009, p. 18.

⁵⁸ Markevici 1981, p. 301.

⁵⁹ Melnyk, Tkachuk 2021, p. 13.

⁶⁰ Lazarovici 2010, p. 152.

⁶¹ Dumitroaia *et alii* 2016, p. 810.

⁶² Burdo 2022, p. 58.

⁶³ Yakar 2012.

⁶⁴ Ilieva, Shtarbanova 2005, p. 5–6.



Figure 30. Vessels with painted zoomorphic decoration: 1. Vessel with zoomorphic representations from Vărvăreuca XV-Republic of Moldova (3D model taken from <https://tinyurl.com/ykhduhdk>, author Denis Topal); 2. Amphora discovered in the Valea Lupului – Fabrica Chimică archaeological site, exhibited at the Museum of the “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University in Iași (3D model taken from <https://tinyurl.com/mr2c4ra5>, author Radu Alexandru Brunchi); 3. Amphora discovered at Vărvăreuca VIII-Republic of Moldova (after <https://www.moldovenii.md/en/section/96>); 4. Amphora discovered at Vărvăreuca VIII-Republic of Moldova (after www.secbcm.gov.md – Service for Evidence and Circulation of Movable Cultural Goods of the Republic of Moldova).

birds from the Cucuteni milieu⁶⁵. We believe, however, that a few new observations are necessary. All five artifacts described in the catalogue were painted only on the outer side of the vessels. All the ceramic fragments from Stâncă Doamnei are made of fine paste, well-fired, with a carefully polished outer surface. The two previously published fragments (Fig. 12/1–2) were considered by A. Nițu to be part of the same bitronconical amphora, with a funnel-shaped mouth⁶⁶. The same fragments were also discussed in other, more recent studies, probably also because they were, until now, unique in the northern area of Moldova⁶⁷. Comparing them with other amphorae that have this type of decoration, A. Nițu assumed that the amphora from Stâncă Doamnei could have had spiral decoration in the shoulder area. He noted that the different shades of the decoration, in some places, could have been due to the secondary firing of the vessel. The lines under the birds could suggest the surface of the water, as has already been demonstrated for other vessels from the same period⁶⁸. In fact, A. Nițu considered that the entire ceramic complex from Ștefănești – *Stâncă Doamnei* is defined by the exclusivity of vessels belonging to the end of the Cucuteni B1 phase, with specific settlements at Șipeniți – *Shypyntsi* (Chernivtsi Oblast, Ukraine) and Petreni (Drochia District, Republic of Moldova)⁶⁹. All fragments of this type were discovered only in Dwelling 2, although we do not exclude the possibility that a more careful study of ceramic materials from other features of the same site will bring additional data. For the moment, we do not have a plausible explanation for the grouping of these fragments in a single feature from the Stâncă Doamnei site. Unfortunately, the data known so far cannot be supplemented with others obtained, possibly, from new field investigations, because the settlement was almost completely destroyed under the action of natural and anthropogenic factors, so that a very small part could still be researched in 1974 (Fig. 3, 4, 5, 7).

The snake is rarely represented on ceramics belonging to phase A of the Cucuteni culture, but it is often used on vessels belonging to the final phase. Sometimes, it is represented alone, sometimes in association with other symbols. The most frequent images associated with serpents are ovals, or concentric circles, either empty, filled, or with cross-shaped motifs inscribed inside. As analogies, snakes associated with ovoid motifs frequently appear on vessels from Badragii Vechi, Petreni, Vărvăreuca XV (Fig. 30), Brânzești IV, Vîhvatînți/ Ofatinți (Rîbnița District, Republic of Moldova) and Bilcze Złote (ukr. Більче-Золоте)⁷⁰.

C. M. Lazarovici believes that for some populations, mythical birds embody the solar principle and the rebirth of life, citing, among other things, the opinions expressed by

Marija Gimbutas, who associates the image of the Neolithic bird with the emergence of life, regeneration, as well as with the defeat of death, the snake being an epiphany of the Great Goddess⁷¹. Birds are also associated with eggs and the regeneration of the world. Eggs painted on various vessels suggest the primordial egg, which is associated with the snake and concentric circles⁷².

The fact that painted ceramics with zoomorphic, phytomorphic or human figures appear with a rare frequency in the Cucuteni environment has led to the hypothesis that these vessels were used in rituals and would have had a limited direct functional purpose. These vessels often present a mixture of geometric and zoomorphic representations (Fig. 30). The images primarily depict animal silhouettes, which can sometimes be identified as species, but not as breed. The animals are usually rendered in profile, with individualized front and hind legs and often have detailed features, such as ears, horns, fluffy tails, claws and fur. Intentionally, in some cases sexual characteristics are also represented, as in the case of the Trușești vessel (Fig. 23). Some animals are associated with discs, perhaps representing the solar disc or with crescent or ovoid motifs (Fig. 13, 18, 19, 22, 26). It is believed that these representations have a ritual significance related to fertility, fecundity and mythological themes⁷³. Most prehistoric religions have “zoomorphic” or partially zoomorphic idols, gods in the form of animals or anthropomorphic hybrids, having the head of an animal. Sometimes, the gods take the form of animals for various purposes, as suggested by mythological stories that raise the question of the coupling between humans and gods disguised in animal forms. We know the myths about Zeus, who appears as an eagle or an ant, a snake, a bull or a swan. Chronos or Poseidon embody horses, and Apollo has the ability to transform into a dog⁷⁴.

The complexity of the decoration, as well as the images used, shows that the Cucuteni vessels were much more than simple containers for storing, preparing and consuming food. The analysis of ceramic material coming from several contemporary sites or showing the same pictorial style can complete the information we have on the technology of making ceramics, on the similarities and differences between the different sites or complexes, as well as on the imaginary of the Cucuteni population.

Finally, we wonder how segregated the telluric and divine worlds were, given the symbolic messages encrypted in the Cucuteni drawings, full of colour and vividness, through the movement of animal characters. The vessel is a symbol of abundance and a source of well-being, being a universal container for humanity. This is important for the study of all agricultural civilizations in general. Animal images are not just simple decorations;

⁶⁵ Turcanu *et alii* 2020.

⁶⁶ Nițu 1975a, p. 48, fig. 2; Dumitrescu 1979, p. 66, fig. 55.

⁶⁷ Burdo 2022, p. 67, fig. 6/8.

⁶⁸ Nițu 1975a, p. 47.

⁶⁹ Nițu 1975a, p. 50.

⁷⁰ Nițu 1975a, fig. 26/2–3a; Lazarovici 2007, p. 16.

⁷¹ Gimbutas 1989, p. 121–137.

⁷² Lazarovici 2007, p. 21; Gimbutas 1987, p. 26.

⁷³ Lazarovici 2007, p. 11.

⁷⁴ Lang 2001, p. 23.

they embody complex meanings that refer to spiritual beliefs and the social organization of the community. Looking at the types of animals depicted, it becomes obvious how they can reflect societal values, such as power, fertility or the connection of man with nature. In addition, the preeminence of certain animals within the scenes painted on Cucuteni vessels could also indicate their real significance, in everyday life or within ritual practices, suggesting that they could have been viewed as totems or apotropaic elements.

Animal images on Cucuteni-Trypillia pottery provide a means by which to analyse the social values and cosmological beliefs of prehistoric communities. Specific representations, such as birds, domestic and wild animals, played multiple roles, which certainly went beyond purely decorative purposes. As an interpretation, the use of this particular type of vessel could have played a role in rituals designed to ensure social cohesion or spiritual identity of human communities⁷⁵.

The purpose of such a complex painting, which stylistically corresponds to contemporary sites, is difficult to decipher, but it seems that these animal representations depict mythological narratives, or episodes from sacred stories. In this way, the pottery loses its direct functional role and becomes a superior object, being a medium for transferring iconographic information and not just a container for storing, preparing or serving food. It is possible that the representation of animals was linked to fertility and the abundance of agricultural crops, reflecting the community's dependence on both animal husbandry and plant cultivation for survival. Furthermore, these images could have conveyed deeper mythological meanings, in fact showing the connections between the physical and spiritual worlds. The selection of a narrow register of representations, as well as the intentional stylization of these images, could indicate their ritual importance, aligning with the broader cosmological ideas that governed Cucuteni-Trypillia communities⁷⁶. Thus, the study of animal images not only enriches the understanding of their art but also sheds small rays of light on the complex relationship between society, culture, mythology and everyday life.

By looking at the vessels described in this study and observing how the animals are associated with plant representations, we conclude that the images of animals, painted on Cucuteni ceramic vessels, are part of a visually illustrated mythology, the narrative of which has been lost; thus, explaining the images is nowadays a difficult task. However, exploring the different possibilities of their interpretation could lead, sooner or later, to deciphering some myths and, thus, to finding much deeper meanings regarding how the Cucuteni human communities viewed the surrounding world.

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⁷⁵ Nebbia 2017.

⁷⁶ Burdo 2022.

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ABREVIERI / ABRÉVIATIONS / ABBREVIATIONS

AAC – Acta Archaeologica Carpatica, Kraków
ACMI – Anuarul Comisiunii Monumentelor Istorice, București
ACMIT – Anuarul Comisiunii Monumentelor Istorice, Secțiunea pentru Transilvania, Cluj
ActaArchHung – Acta Archaeologica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae, Budapest
ActaMM – Acta Moldaviae Meridionalis, Vaslui
ActaMN – Acta Musei Napocensis, Cluj
ActaMP – Acta Musei Porolissensis, Zalău
ActaMT – Acta Musei Tutovens, Bârlad
AIGR – Anuarul Institutului Geologic al României, București
AJPA – American Journal of Physical Anthropology
Alt-Thüringen – Alt-Thüringen : Jahresschrift des Museums für Ur- und Frühgeschichte Thüringens
Aluta – Aluta. Revista Muzeului Național Secuiesc Sfântu Gheorghe
Anatolia Antiqua – Anatolia Antiqua. Revue internationale d'archéologie anatolienne. Institut Français d'Etudes anatoliennes d'Istanbul
Anatolica – Anatolica. The Netherlands Institute for the Near East in Leiden
AnB – Analele Banatului, Muzeul Banatului, Timișoara
AncNearEastSt – Ancient Near Eastern Studies, Leuven, Belgia
Angustia – Angustia. Arheologie, Etnografie, Sfântu Gheorghe
Anmed – Anmed. Anadolu Akdenizi Arkeoloji Haberleri, Antalya, Turcia
Antiquity – Antiquity. A Quarterly Review of Archaeology, University of York
AnUCraiova – Analele Universității din Craiova, Craiova (seria Istorie)
AO – Arhivele Olteniei
Apulum – Acta Musei Apulensis. Muzeul Național al Unirii, Alba Iulia
Archaeol Anthropol Sci – Archaeological and Anthropological Sciences
ArchBulg – Archaeologia Bulgarica, Sofia
ArchÉrt – Archaeológiai Értesítő, Budapest
ArchHung – Archaeologia Hungarica, Acta Archaeologica Musei Nationalis Hungarici, Budapest
Area – Area. Royal Geographical Society, London
Argesis – Argesis. Muzeul Județean Argeș. Pitești
ArhDIUkrajn – Arheologija i Danija Istorija Ukraini, Institut Arheologij NAN Ukrainj, Kijv
ArheologijaKiiv – Arheologija. Nacional'na akademija nauk Ukraini. Institut arheologii, Kiev
ArheologijaSSSR – Arheologija SSSR. Svod Archeologičeskih Istočnikov, Moscova
ArhMold – Arheologia Moldovei, Iași
ArhPrevMoldova – Arheologia Preventivă în Republica Moldova
BA – Biblioteca de Arheologie, București
BARIntSer – British Archaeological Reports. International Series, Oxford
BCH – Bulletin de Correspondance Hellénique, Athènes-Paris
BCMI – Buletinul Comisiunii Monumentelor Istorice
BerRGK – Bericht der Römisch-Germanischen Kommission des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts, Frankfurt am Main
BibIstroPontica-A – Biblioteca Istro-Pontica. Seria Arheologie, Tulcea
BibIMemAnt – Bibliotheca Memoriae Antiquitatis, Piatra-Neamț
BibIThrac – Bibliotheca Thracologica, București
BMC – *Coins of the Roman Empire in the British Museum*, Londra; II, *Vespasian to Domitian*, 1930; IV, *Antoninus Pius to Commodus*, 1968; V, *Pertinax to Elagabalus*, 1950 (H. Mattingly)
BMI – Buletinul Monumentelor Istorice
BMJT – Buletinul Muzeului Județean Teleorman, Alexandria
BOR – Biserica Ortodoxă Română
BSA – British School at Athens, Athens
BSNR – Buletinul Societății Numismatice Române, București
BSPF – Bulletin de la Société Préhistorique Française, Paris
BSSC – Buletinul Societății de Științe din Cluj
CA – Cercetări Arheologice. Muzeul Național de Istorie a României, București
Carpica – Carpica. Complexul Muzeal „Iulian Antonescu” Bacău, Bacău

- CCA – Cronica Cercetărilor Arheologice din România, București
- CCDJ – Cultură și Civilizație la Dunărea de Jos, Călărași
- Cerclst – Cercetări Istorice, Muzeul de Istorie a Moldovei, Iași
- Cumidava – Cumidava. Culegere de studii și cercetări. Muzeul de Istorie Brașov
- Current Anthropology – Current Anthropology. University of California, Merced
- Dacia – Dacia (Nouvelle Série). Revue d'archéologie et d'histoire ancienne. Académie Roumaine. Institut d'archéologie « V. Pârvan », Bucarest
- Danubius – Danubius, Revista Muzeului de Istorie Galați
- DHA – Dialogues d'histoire ancienne, Institut des Sciences et Techniques de l'Antiquité
- DissArch – Dissertationes Archaeologicae. Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest
- Documenta Praehistorica – Documenta Praehistorica, University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Arts, Department of Archaeology, Ljubljana
- EphemNap – Ephemeris Napocensis. Academia Română, Institutul de Arheologie și Istoria Artei, Cluj-Napoca
- FolArchPoznan – Folia Praehistorica Posnaniensia, Instytut Archeologii, Poznań
- Germania – Germania. Anzeiger der Römisch-Germanischen Kommission des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts, Frankfurt
- Hill¹ – P.V. Hill, *The dating and the arrangement of the undated coins of Rome, A.D. 98–148*, Londra, 1970
- Hill² – P.V. Hill, *The coinage of Septimius Severus and his family of the mint of Rome, A.D. 193–217*, Londra, 1964
- HOMO – HOMO. Journal of Comparative Human Biology, Stuttgart
- Howgego – C. J. Howgego, *Greek Imperial Countermarks. Studies in the provincial coinage of the Roman empire*, Londra, 1985
- Human Evolution – Human Evolution, International Institute for Humankind Studies and University of Florence
- IJO – International Journal of Osteoarchaeology
- Istros – Istros, Muzeul Brăilei, Brăila
- JAMÉ – A nyíregyházi Jós András Múzeum Évkönyve
- JAnat – Journal of Anatomy
- JAS – Journal of Archaeological Science
- JDAI – Jahrbuch des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts, Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Berlin
- JFS – Journal of Forensic Sciences
- JHE – Journal of Human Evolution
- JRA – Journal of Roman Archaeology
- JRGZM – Jahrbuch des Römisch-Germanischen Zentralmuseums Mainz, Mainz
- JRS – The Journal of Roman Studies
- Klio – Klio. Beiträge zur Alten Geschichte, Berlin
- KST – T. C. Kültür Bakanlığı, Eski Eserler ve Müzeler Genel Müdürlüğü, I. Kazı Sonuçları Toplantısı, Ankara, Mayıs 1979 [Republic of Turkey, General Directorate of Ancient Monuments and Museums, first Turkish annual meeting for the results of excavations, Ankara, May 1979] (1979–2020).
- LRBC, I – *Late Roman Bronze Coinage A.D. 394–498*, Londra, 1965; I, *The Bronze Coinage of the House of Constantine A.D. 324–346* (P.V. Hill, J.P.C. Kent)
- LRCW – Late Roman Coarse Wares, Cooking Wares and Amphorae in the Mediterranean. Archaeology and Archaeometry
- MAIASP – Materialy po Arheologii i Istorii Antičnogo i Srednevekovogo Pričernomor'ja (Материалы по Археологии и Истории Античного и Средневекового Причерноморья), Nižnevarovsk.
- Marisia – Marisia. Studii și materiale. Arheologie – Istorie – Etnografie, Târgu Mureș
- MCA – Materiale și Cercetări Arheologice, București
- MemAnt – Memoria Antiquitatis, Piatra Neamț
- MHÁS – Magyarország honfoglalás kori és kora Árpád-kori sírleletei, Miskolc–Budapest–Szeged–Szombathely
- Mousaios – Mousaios. Buletinul Științific al Muzeului Județean Buzău
- MPR – I. Barnea, Les monuments paléochrétiens de Roumanie, Sussidi allo studio delle antichità cristiane pubblicati per cura del Pontificio Istituto di archeologia Cristiana 6, Città del Vaticano, 1977
- Musaica – Musaica Archaeologica, Univerzita Komenského v Bratislave, Bratislava
- Olba – Mersin University Publications of the Research Center of Cilician Archaeology, Mersin, Turkey
- Oltenia – Oltenia. Studii și Comunicări, Craiova
- Pallas – Pallas. Revue d'Etudes Antiques, Toulouse
- PATABS – *Production and Trade of Amphorae in the Black Sea*
- PBF – Prähistorische Bronzefunde, Münster
- Peuce – Peuce. Studii și cercetări de istorie și arheologie, Institutul de Cercetări Eco-Muzeale, Tulcea
- Pontica – Pontica. Studii și materiale de istorie, arheologie și muzeografie, Muzeul de Istorie Națională și Arheologie Constanța

- PZ – Prähistorische Zeitschrift, Berlin-Mainz
- Quaternary International – Quaternary International. The Journal of the International Union for Quaternary Research
- RAASI – Revista de Arheologie, Antropologie și Studii Interdisciplinare, Institutul de Cercetări Bioarheologice și Etnoculturale, Republica Moldova
- Radiocarbon – An International Journal of Cosmogenic Isotope Research, Cambridge
- RAN – Revue archéologique de Narbonnaise, Montpellier
- RCRF – Rei Cretariae Romanae Fautorum
- Recueil – W.H. Waddington, E. Babelon, Th. Reinach, *Recueil général des monnaies grecques d'Asie Mineure*, I-IV, Paris, 1904–1912
- RevArh – Revista Arheologică, Academia de Științe a Moldovei, Chișinău
- RevMuz – Revista Muzeelor, București
- RGZM – Römisch-Germanisches Zentralmuseums Mainz, Mainz
- RIC – *The Roman Imperial Coinage*, Londra. II, *Vespasian to Hadrian*, 1926; III, *Antoninus Pius to Commodus*, 1930; IV.1, *Pertinax to Geta*, 1968 (H. Mattingly, E.A. Sydenham); IV.2, *Macrinus to Pupienus*, 1938; IV.3, *Gordian III – Uranius Antoninus*, 1949 (H. Mattingly, E.A. Sydenham, C.H.V. Sutherland); VII, *Constantine and Licinius A.D. 313–337*, 1966 (P.M. Bruun)
- RIC, II².1 – I.A. Carradice, T.V. Buttrey, *The Roman Imperial Coinage*, II.1, *Vespasian to Domitian*, Londra, 2007 (ediția a II-a, revizuită)
- RossArch – Rossijskaya Arheologiya. Institut arheologii Rossijskoj akademii nauk, Moskva
- RPC III – M. Amandry, A. Burnett, J. Mairat, *Roman Provincial Coinage*, III, *From Nerva to Hadrian (AD 96–138)*, Londra / Paris, 2015; versiune online https://rpc.ashmus.ox.ac.uk/search/browse?volume_id=3
- RPC IV.1 – V. Heuchert, *Roman Provincial Coinage*, IV.1, *From Antoninus Pius to Commodus (AD 138–192): Cyrenaica to Bithynia-Pontus*, online (2005); https://rpc.ashmus.ox.ac.uk/search/browse?volume_id=4
- RPC V.3 – A. Burnett et alii, *Roman Provincial Coinage*, V.3, *From Pertinax to Macrinus (AD 193–218): Lycia-Pamphylia to Egypt*, online (2024); https://rpc.ashmus.ox.ac.uk/search/browse?volume_id=10
- RPC VI – D. Calomino, A. Burnett, *Roman Provincial Coinage*, VI, *From Elagabalus to Maximinus Thrax (AD 218–238)*, online (2017, 2022); https://rpc.ashmus.ox.ac.uk/search/browse?volume_id=11
- RPC VII.2 – J. Mairat, M.S. Butcher et alii, *Roman Provincial Coinage*, VII.2, *From Gordian I to Gordian III (AD 238–244): all provinces except Asia*, Londra / Paris, 2022; versiune online https://rpc.ashmus.ox.ac.uk/search/browse?volume_id=14
- RPC VIII – J. Mairat et alii, *Roman Provincial Coinage*, VIII, *Philip I (AD 244–249)*, online (2020); https://rpc.ashmus.ox.ac.uk/search/browse?volume_id=15
- SA – Sovetskaja Arheologija, Akademija Nauk SSSR, Institut Arheologii, Moskva
- SAA – Studia Antiqua et Archaeologica, Iași
- SCIV(A) – Studii și Cercetări de Istorie Veche (și Arheologie), București
- SCN – Studii și Cercetări de Numismatică, București
- SEAT – Studien zur Eisenzeitlichen Archäologie Thrakiens, Rahden/Westphalia
- Simpozion Chișinău 2004 – *Simpozion de numismatică organizat cu ocazia comemorării Sfântului Ștefan cel Mare, Domn al Moldovei (1504–2004)*, Chișinău, 29 septembrie – 2 octombrie 2004. *Comunicări, studii și note*, București, 2007.
- ŚląskieSprawArch – Śląskie Sprawozdania Archeologiczne, Wrocław, Polonia
- SMMIM – Studii și Materiale de Muzeografie și Istorie Militară, București
- SNG-ANS, *Macedonia I – Sylloge Nummorum Graecorum. The Collection of the American Numismatic Society, Part 7, Macedonia I: Cities, Thracio-Macedonian tribes, Paeonian kings*, New York, 1987
- SNGCop 5 – *Sylloge Nummorum Graecorum. The Royal Collection of Coins and Medals, Danish Royal National Museum*, Copenhaga, 1942–1969 (serie reeditată); V, *Ionia, Caria and Lydia*, West Milford, 1982
- SP – Studii de Preistorie, București
- SprawArch – Sprawozdania Archeologiczne, Warsaw
- StArchBrno – Studia Archaeologica Brunensia, Masaryk University, Brno
- Starinar – Starinar. Arheološki institut Beograd
- StComPitești – Studii și Comunicări, Seria Istorie, Muzeul Județean Argeș, Pitești
- StMatTârguMureș – Studii și Materiale, Târgu Mureș
- StratumPlus – Stratum Plus, Școala Superioară de Antropologie, Chișinău, St Petersburg, București
- Studia Hercynia – Studia Hercynia. Journal of the Institut of Classical Archaeology, Univerzita Karlova, Cehia
- Studia Praehistorica – National Archaeological Institute with Museum of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences
- Syria – Syria. Archéologie, art et histoire. Institut Français du Proche-Orient
- Terra Sebus – Terra Sebus. Acta Musei Sabesiensis, Anuarul Muzeului Municipal „Ioan Raica”, Sebeș
- Th-D – Thraco-Dacica, București

Transylvanian Review – Transylvanian Review. Centrul de Studii Transilvane, Cluj-Napoca

Tyrageia – Tyrageia. Anuarul Muzeului Național de Istorie a Moldovei, Chișinău

UPA – Universitätsforschungen zur Prähistorischen Archäologie, Bonn

VAH – Varia Archaeologica Hungarica V. Redigit Csanád Bálint. Publicationes Instituti Archaeologici Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae, Budapest

Valachica – Valachica. Studii și cercetări de istorie și istoria culturii, Complexul Muzeal Național Curtea Domnească Târgoviște

Varia Anatolica – Varia Anatolica. L'Institut Français d'Études Anatoliennes, Istanbul

Vărbănov I – I. Vărbănov, *Greek imperial coins and their values (the local coinage of the Roman Empire), I, Dacia, Moesia Superior, Moesia Inferior*, Burgas, 2005

Vărbănov II – I. Vărbănov, *Greek imperial coins, II, Thrace (from Abdera to Pautalia)*, Burgas, 2005

WorldA – World Archaeology

ZAM – Zeitschrift für Archäologie des Mittelalters, Bonn

Ziridava – Ziridava. Studia Archaeologica, Arad