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LATE BRONZE AGE BURIALS FROM THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE OF ODORHEIU SECUIESC–KADICSFALVI RÉT/ ALSÓLOK, HARGHITA COUNTY, ROMANIA

ZOLTÁN-JÓZSEF BOTHA*

The paper presents the Late Bronze Age archaeological discoveries of Odorheiu Secuiesc–Kadicsfalvi rét/ Alsólok. The burials and connected features are characteristic to the Late Bronze Age Noua culture, however several elements of the Middle Bronze Age Wietenberg culture can also be observed. In this respect the paper analyses the chronological aspects and the character of the transition between the two cultures.

Keywords: Wietenberg culture, Noua culture, Late Bronze Age burials, transition from Middle Bronze Age to Late Bronze Age, chronology, material culture

Cuvinte-cheie: cultura Wietenberg, cultura Noua, morminte din epoca bronzului târziu, tranziție de la epoca bronzului mijlociu la epoca bronzului târziu, cronologie, cultura materială

The town of Odorheiu Secuiesc (Hung. Székellyudvarhely) is located on the eastern-south-eastern edge of the Transylvanian Basin, on the eastern border of the Târnava hillside, along the upper course of the Târnava Mare River in the Odorhei Basin, in the southwestern part of Harghita County (Pl. I/1). The archaeological site is located on the northern-northeastern edge of the town, in a former agricultural area. Archaeological excavations (Pl. I/2)¹ prior to the construction of the planned industrial zone revealed the settlement features of a 3rd–4th century Gothic village, and contexts belonging to

the Middle Bronze Age Wietenberg culture,² as well as burials of the Noua culture and surrounding objects appearing as stone platforms and culture layers on the northwestern edge of the site.³ During the past decades, in the upper course of the Târnava Mare River, archaeological sites with Wietenberg III and Noua I cultural elements have been identified: Șimonești–Som-áj,⁴ Eliseni–Lód temető,⁵ Cris-turu Secuiesc–Timaľfalva (Csorgó).⁶ Noua fragments have been found in Șimonești–Csere alja⁷ and at a topographically unidentified site in Mărtiniș.⁸ Noua graves and cemeteries were not

¹ The excavations were led by András Sőfalvi. They began in 2008 and, with a few interruptions, continued until 2020.. KÖRÖSFŐI ET AL. 2010.

² The major part of the context belonging to the Wietenberg culture was found at the edge of the floodplain of the Târnava River dug into the gravel subsoil, while the contexts of the Noua culture appeared in the contemporary brownish humus and yellowish clayish subsoil.

³ This study discusses the relationship and chronological classification of the Noua burials and the related archaeological features found in their surroundings. In the absence of radiocarbon data, the absolute chronology of other sites was used and compared with the results of this excavation in order to establish a more accurate chronology.

⁴ BENKŐ 1992, 144–145.

⁵ BENKŐ 1992, 202–203.

⁶ BENKŐ 1992, 180–181.

⁷ BENKŐ 1992, 146.

⁸ REP. ARH. HARG. 2000, 134.

previously known from this region. The Middle Bronze Age Wietenberg III period is better represented in the region, showing a dense

habitation and population of the upper course of the Târnava Mare River.

STRATIGRAPHY, RELATIONSHIP OF FEATURES AND CIRCUMSTANCES OF FINDS

During the excavations, large areas were opened. After mechanical humus removal and manual pruning, we carried out the surface documentation of the uncovered features (photography, surface drawing). Manual disassembly, drawing and photo documentation followed in the next stage. The overturned soil, 1.5 meters thick, as well as the contemporary humus layer and, in some places, the undisturbed subsoil under the eroded soil, accumulated on the Bronze Age surface of the nearby smaller hill over the following millennia, into which the Noua objects and the objects related to the Wietenberg culture found nearby were dug. These are located on the northwestern/western edge of the site (Pl. II).

Stone platforms, graves and cultural layers belonging to the Noua culture were found in surfaces 6 and 9. Context nr. 352 (Pl. III/1–2), uncovered in surface 6, is a larger-sized surface formed of quarry stones with an amorphous shape measuring 9×6 m. In their excavated state, the stones clustered to form surfaces in three parts. A large number of in situ crushed pot shards and hand-made pottery fragments were found among the stones. (It turned out during the processing of the material from the surface that this was a cultural layer, created during the preparation of stone-packed graves and was related to Context 619, the cultural layer, as well as to Contexts 397, 398 and 616).

Context nr. 353 (Pl. III/3–4) was also found in surface 6. It was a shallow grave (15–20 cm deep) with a southwest-northeast orientation and a rectangular burial pit with rounded corners. The poorly preserved skeleton was lying on its right side, in crouched position, with the legs pulled up to the pelvis, the arms bent over the right shoulder, the skull slightly crushed and turned to the southeast. Three hand-made vessels were placed near the skeleton on the southeast side of the burial pit. The burial was not dug down to the clay layer.

Context 397 (Pl. IV/1–3) was uncovered at the northwestern corner of context 352 and turned out to be a separate burial. A mound of river pebbles was built over the grave, containing the southwest-northeast facing skeleton of an adult female(?) lying on her left side in a crouched position. The skull was turned to the left and faced northwest. The left arm was extended along the body, the right arm placed across the abdominal area, sinking between the ribs and vertebrae, and the legs were slightly pulled up under the pelvis. A small vessel with a knobbed lid was placed next to the right shoulder, a conical vessel with a knobbed handle and a food accompaniment consisting of animal bones was placed under the legs. Both the skeletal remains and the vessels were partially absorbed. The vessels were slightly crushed under the weight of the overlying soil.

Context 398 (Pl. V/1–2), south of cultural layer 352, appeared to be a stone-covered burial similar to 397. However, no evidence of a burial was found during the excavation, suggesting that it was a cenotaph.

Context 615 (Pl. V/3–4) was a single-layered surface of spherical stones. No traces of excavation were detected during uncovering; Bronze Age pots were found among the stones.

Context 616 (Pl. V/5–6), a surface consisting of irregularly shaped river pebbles was found at the prehistoric walking level. Among the stones and their surroundings, a large amount of pottery and decayed bone traces were observed. After removal, we saw no sign of digging underneath.

Context 619, a cultural layer, was located in an irregular spot 10–20 cm deep among the stone surfaces and to their east. After removal, it turned into a dark brown clean subhumus, from which a significant amount of prehistoric pottery, flint and a poorly preserved bronze knife were uncovered. The layer was presumably

formed during the digging of the stone surfaces and burial pits, probably from the material of

the Wietenberg settlement during the time of the Wietenberg culture.

DESCRIPTION OF FINDS

Artefacts associated with the Noua burials

Burial no. 353

1. Small-sized, almost entirely preserved cup of grayish-brown color, fine, well-smoothed surface, partially weathered outer surface, made from clay tempered with sand and gravel, with reduction firing, rounded rim, equipped with two high swinging spherical handles, rounded bottom. Dimensions: height: 6 cm, rim diameter: 7 cm, wall thickness: 0.6 cm (Pl. VI/2). It corresponds to the Sava IB5 type, yet it is also related to the IC1 and possibly to the IB1 types.⁹

2. Remains of a medium-sized bag-like pot, types VIIIB or VA in Sava's typology,¹⁰ placed upside down in the grave, the bottom of the vessel was destroyed during mechanical scraping. It is of a reddish-grey color, oxidizing firing, tempered with gravel, rough surfaced, rounded rim, slightly globular body, decorated with four symmetrically placed finger-tip impressed ribs under the rim. Dimensions: largest remaining height: 14,5 cm, rim diameter: 16 cm, wall thickness: 1 cm (Pl. VI/3).

3. Remains of a biconical bowl. The rim and upper part of the vessel have been destroyed during mechanical uncovering. Its color is grey, it was made by reduction firing, tempered with sand and small pebbles, well-smoothed surface, the beginning of a slightly everted neck can be observed on the upper part, which may indicate an everted rim, there are bundles of narrow diagonal cannelures evenly distributed on the shoulder of the vessel. Dimensions: remaining height 11 cm, diameter of the upper part 16 cm, bottom diameter 9 cm, wall thickness: 0.6 cm (Pl. VI/1). In Sava's typology, the shape corresponds to the ID2 type, while the decoration is pattern KLVA 3.¹¹

Burial no. 397

4. A biconical kantharos type vessel, Sava's IA3 type.¹² It is reddish grey, made from clay tempered with sand by reduced firing, well smoothed surface, its bottom is flat, it has an outwardly curved rounded rim and high swinging handles with knobs. The dimensions of the vessel: height: 12.5 cm, rim diameter: 12.5 cm, bottom diameter: 8 cm (Pl. V/2).

5. Small-sized pot with a globular body and a narrowed mouth, probably Sava's XA type.¹³ It is a grayish-brown vessel with a rounded rim, and a flat bottom, well-smoothed surface, two pierced horizontal knob handles on the shoulder and a flat pierced lid, made by reduction firing, tempered with small pebbles and sand. The dimensions of the vessel: height: 10 cm, rim diameter: 8 cm, bottom diameter: 7 cm. The dimensions of the lid: 12.5×9.5 cm (Pl. V/1).

The finds from the stony surfaces and cultural layers around the Noua burials

Context 352 is directly related to the Noua burials, it is located in their immediate vicinity. A large number of crushed vessel remains were uncovered from the surface.

The most important finds from the context:

1. Fragments of a cup with high pointed handle, tempered with fine sand. Its color is reddish-grey, it was made by reduction firing, it has a well-smoothed surface, globular body, slightly inverted cylindrical neck, rounded rim, slightly rounded bottom. The dimensions of the vessel: rim diameter: 7 cm, base diameter: 4 cm, width: 0,3 cm.

2. Wall fragment of a vessel made from clay, tempered with fine sand, the surface was light

⁹ SAVA 2002, 80.

¹⁰ SAVA 2002, 83.

¹¹ SAVA 2002, 74.

¹² SAVA 2002, 79.

¹³ SAVA 2002, 49.

brown, reduction firing, middle surface technique, decorated with comb impressed and incised line decoration, width of the fragment: 0,8 cm.

The majority of the ceramic material found in the context consists of rough small, medium, and large pieces, tempered with pebble, medium and rough surfaced, as well as a few well-smoothed, red, greyish-brown or grey fragments from storage pots and bag-like pots. Some fragments were decorated with diagonal incisions, cordons decorated with finger-tip impressions, cordons decorated with straight incisions and knobs on the bag-like vessel. The smaller part of the ceramic fragments consists of medium and good quality, well-smoothed and rough surfaced vessels, decorated with bands filled with cross incisions, diagonal incisions and cross incisions on the rim, bowls decorated with diagonal cannelures, bowls decorated with triangles filled with diagonal incisions, S-profiled bowls and cups, cups with high swinging handles, pots with globular body, lobed bowls. Other decorations to mention include vertical triangle bands filled with crossed incisions, rows of punched impression, geometric shapes and bands filled with crossed incisions, spiral hooks filled with crossed incisions, cordons decorated with finger-tip impressions, diagonal cannelures.

An outstanding pottery fragment was also found in the above-mentioned context: the remains of a portable stove of reddish-brown color, rough, smoothed, tempered with pebble, oxidation firing, decorated with continuous spirals formed by a row of serrated points. The representation of a portable stove is also depicted

on it. Other finds include stick-heads, wagon model wheels, spoon.

From the surroundings of context 398 and 352, rough and medium tempered, large and medium-sized bag-like pots, bowls decorated with bands filled with cross incisions, S-profile pots decorated on the rim with incisions, diagonal cannelures, cordons decorated with finger-tip impressions, undecorated lobed bowl fragments, bands of geometric shapes filled with cross incisions were found.

In context 615, mostly medium and rough bag-like pot fragments, smaller amounts of fine small and medium-sized vessel fragments were found. The main forms of decoration are cordons decorated with finger-tip impressions, rhombuses filled with incisions, stamped decoration, bands of cross incisions.

Context 616 yielded a few rough bag-like pots and storage vessels with finger-impressed, pinched, and vertically incised cordons, reddish grey medium and fine ceramics tempered with pebble and sand, with oxidized firing, geometric shapes filled with cross incisions, diagonal cannelures and stamped triangles. The main types of vessels are the S-profiled bowls, cups and undecorated lobed bowls.

Context 619. Bag-like pots, bowls and cups rough, medium to fine, tempered with pebble, fine pebble and sand, grey, red and brown in color, made by reduction and oxidation firing. Cordons decorated with finger-tip impressions, bands filled with cross incisions, diagonal cannelures, stamped geometric shapes, lobed bowls, stab and drag technique.

CHRONOLOGICAL CLASSIFICATION AND CONCLUSIONS

The Noua culture can be divided into two phases. In the first (formative) phase, it was influenced by the Monteoru, Wietenberg and Komarówa elements, while in the second phase the influence of eastern features increased.¹⁴

Researchers have come to the conclusion that the Noua culture reached the eastern edge

of Transylvania, the western area of the Eastern Carpathians during its first phase, and exerted its influence on the late phase of the Wietenberg culture found here. They have also established that it was formed earlier in the northeastern region than in the Carpathians, and that it was the developed form of the Noua culture that

¹⁴ SAVA 2002, 213

arrived in Transylvania, and existed in parallel with the late Wietenberg and early Hallstatt cultures. N. Boroffka also confirms the synchronization of the Noua culture and the late Wietenberg culture.¹⁵

Due to several characteristics unique to Transylvania, a local group of the Noua culture can be assumed, west of the Eastern Carpathians, which can be described as a variant of the Noua–Sabatinovka cultural group. This means that the formation of local groups may also be related to regional chronological differences. The migration of the Noua culture to Transylvania can be linked to phase Br.D, the late Wietenberg coexisting with the Noua subgroup in Transylvania.¹⁶ F. Gogâltan brought into discussion the relationship between the Wietenberg III/C and Noua elements found simultaneously at several archaeological sites in inner Transylvania¹⁷.

From the perspective of Central European chronology, in P. Reinecke's system, the Noua culture can be placed between Br.C and HaA, or between MDII and SDII in Hänsel's classification.¹⁸

D. Popa and N. Boroffka considered that the first Noua elements from Transylvania and the

Wietenberg III/C elements were contemporaneous. This chronological relationship is confirmed by radiocarbon data from the Sighișoara–Dealul Viilor site, with ¹⁴C dates between 1685 and 1524 BC,¹⁹; 1742–1501 BC (Cx. Nr. 250),²⁰ and 1740–1490 BC (Cx. 312)²¹, or the data from the settlement in Țichindeal where the appearance of the Noua culture was dated to the 16th century BC.²² Based on the stratigraphic analysis from Rotbav, L. Dietrich also came to the conclusion that in southern Transylvania the Wietenberg III/C and the Noua culture were related.²³

In conclusion, it can be said that at Odorheiu Secuiesc–Kadicsfalvi rét/Alsólok the Noua culture site was established during its development phase, the Noua I phase, and coexisted with the site of the late Wietenberg III/C communities. In absolute chronological terms, the funerary site dates probably from the 16th century BC. One characteristic of this coexistence, observed at several contemporaneous sites, is the appearance of the characteristic Noua-type burials near Wietenberg-type settlements, a feature connected to the early cohabitation of the two communities.

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¹⁵ SAVA 2002, 218.

¹⁶ SAVA 2002, 218–219.

¹⁷ GOGÂLTAN 2009, 110–116.

¹⁸ REINECKE 1965; HÄNSEL 1968.

¹⁹ POPA–BOROFFKA 1996, 56.

²⁰ CIUGUDEAN–QUINN 2014, 149.

²¹ HARHOIU ET AL. 2020, 56.

²² POPA–BOROFFKA 1996, 60; GOGÂLTAN 2009, 119.

²³ DIETRICH 2014, 63.

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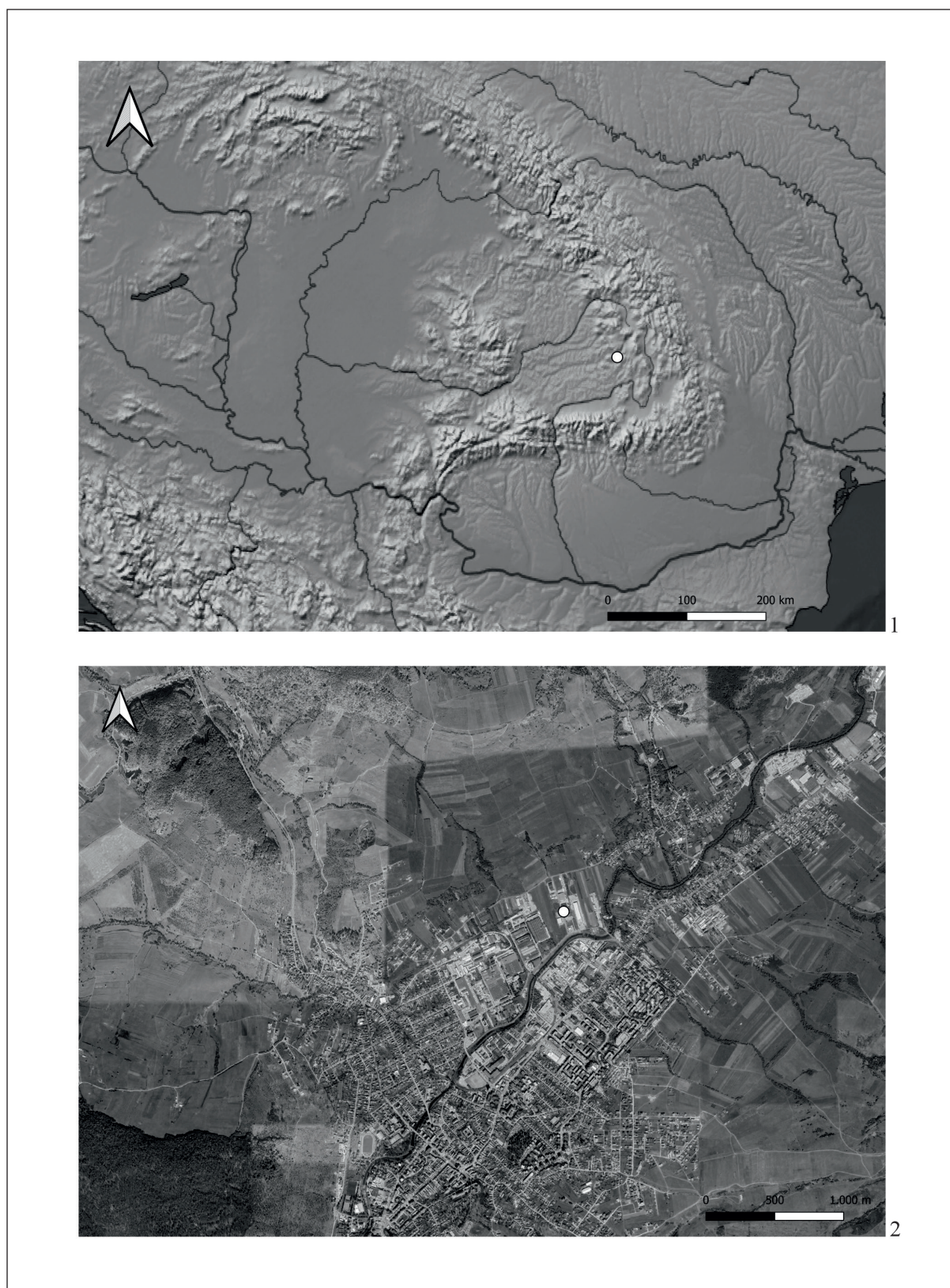


Plate I. Location of the archaeological site Odorheiu–Kadicsfalvi-rét/Alsólok.



Plate II. The location of the Late Bronze Age Noua graves at Odorhei–Kadicsfalvi-rét/Alsólok.

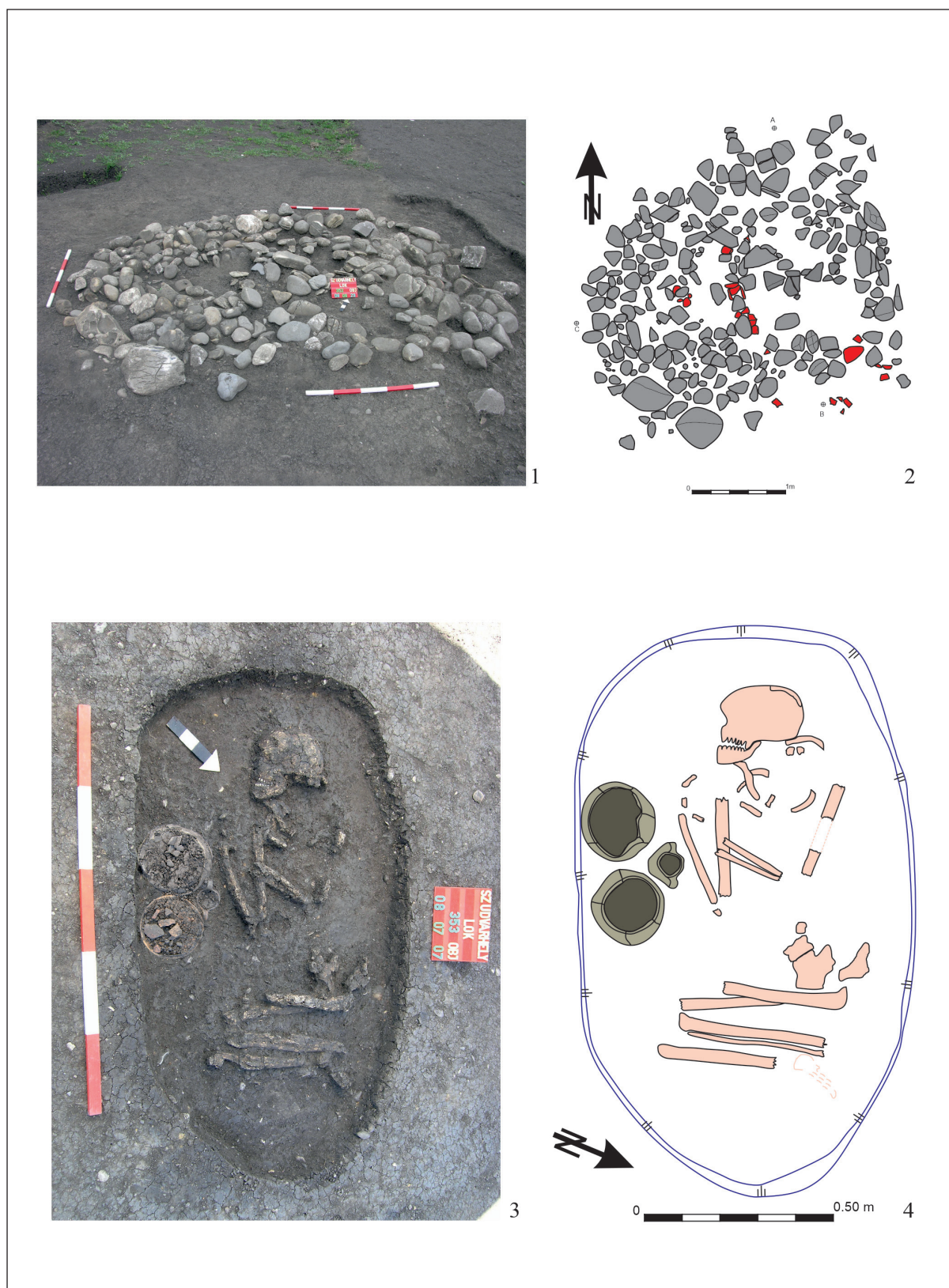


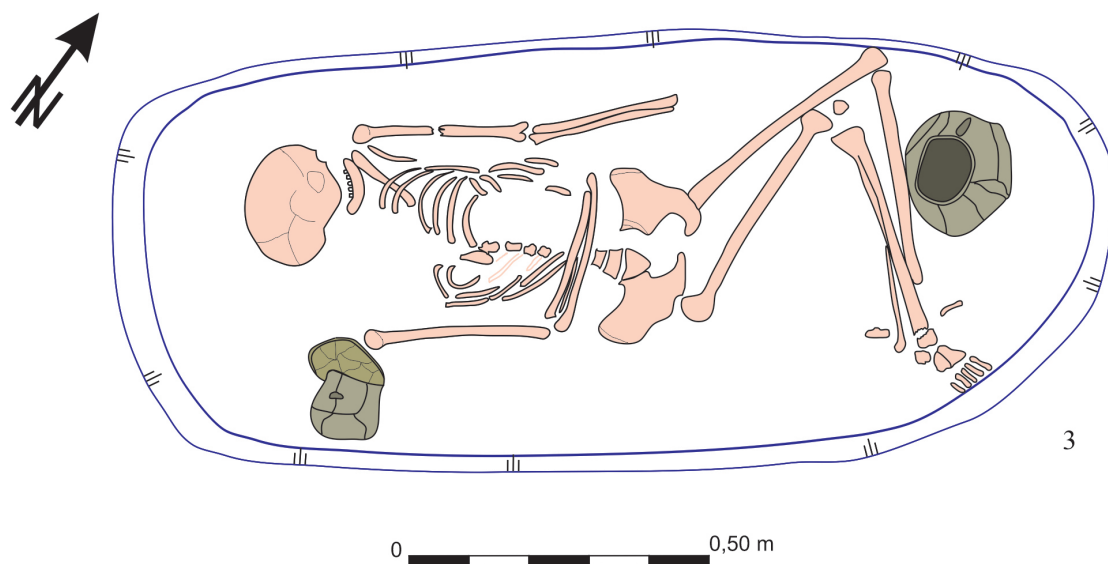
Plate III. Odorhei–Kadicsfalvi-rét/Alsólok. 1–2. Cx.352; 3–4. Cx.353 (photography: Zs. Nyárádi, drawings: I. Asztalos, Zs. Nyárádi, A. Sófalvi).



1



2



3

0 0,50 m

Plate IV. Odorhei–Kadicsfalvi-rét/Alsólok. 1–3. Cx.397 (photography: Zs. Nyárádi and A. Sófálvi, drawing: A. Sófálvi).

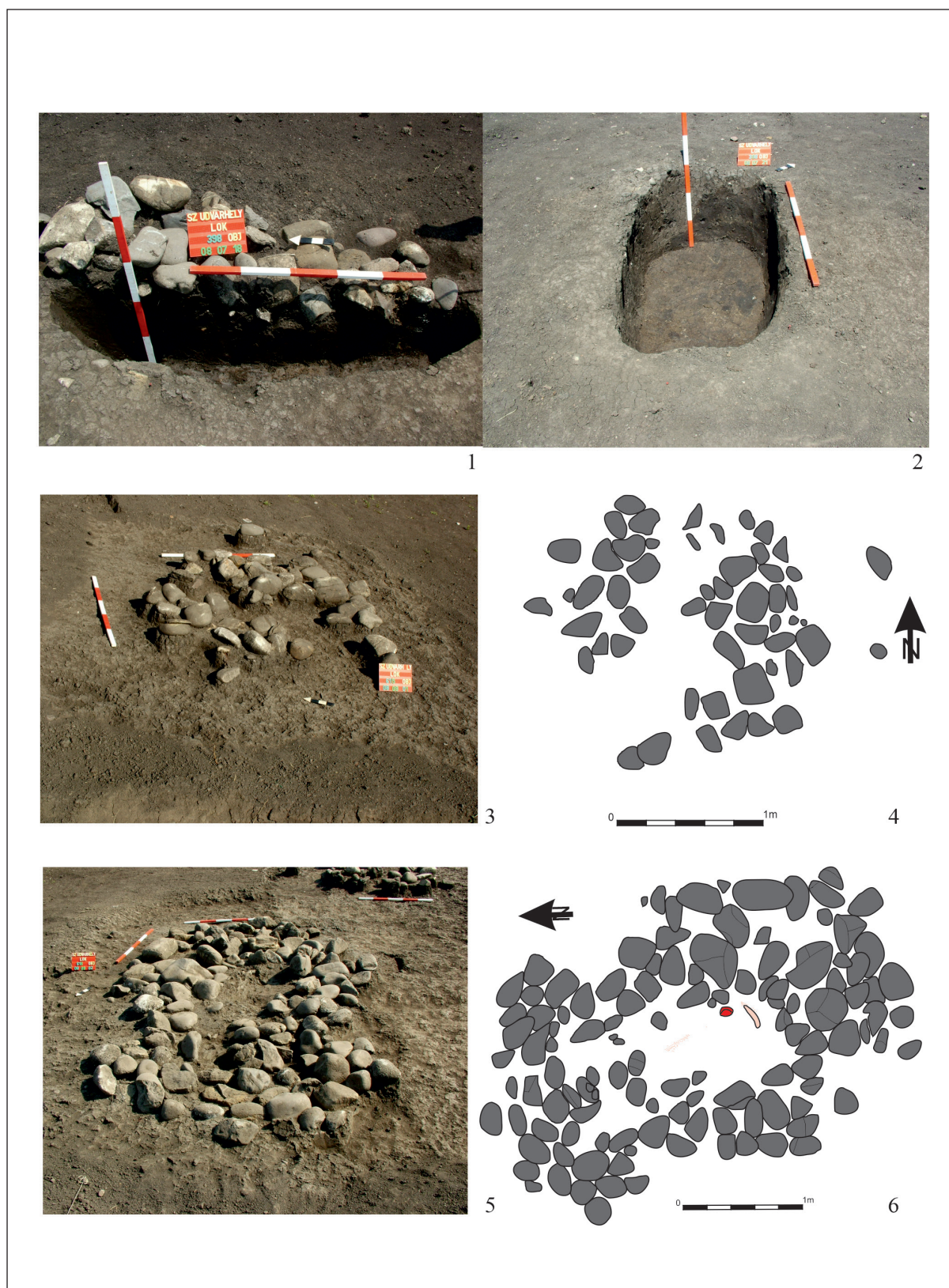


Plate V. Odorhei–Kadicsfalvi-rét/Alsólok. 1–2. Cx.398; 3–4. Cx.615; 5–6. Cx.616 (photography: Zs. Nyárádi and A. Sófalvi, drawings: Z. Botha and Zs. Nyárádi).

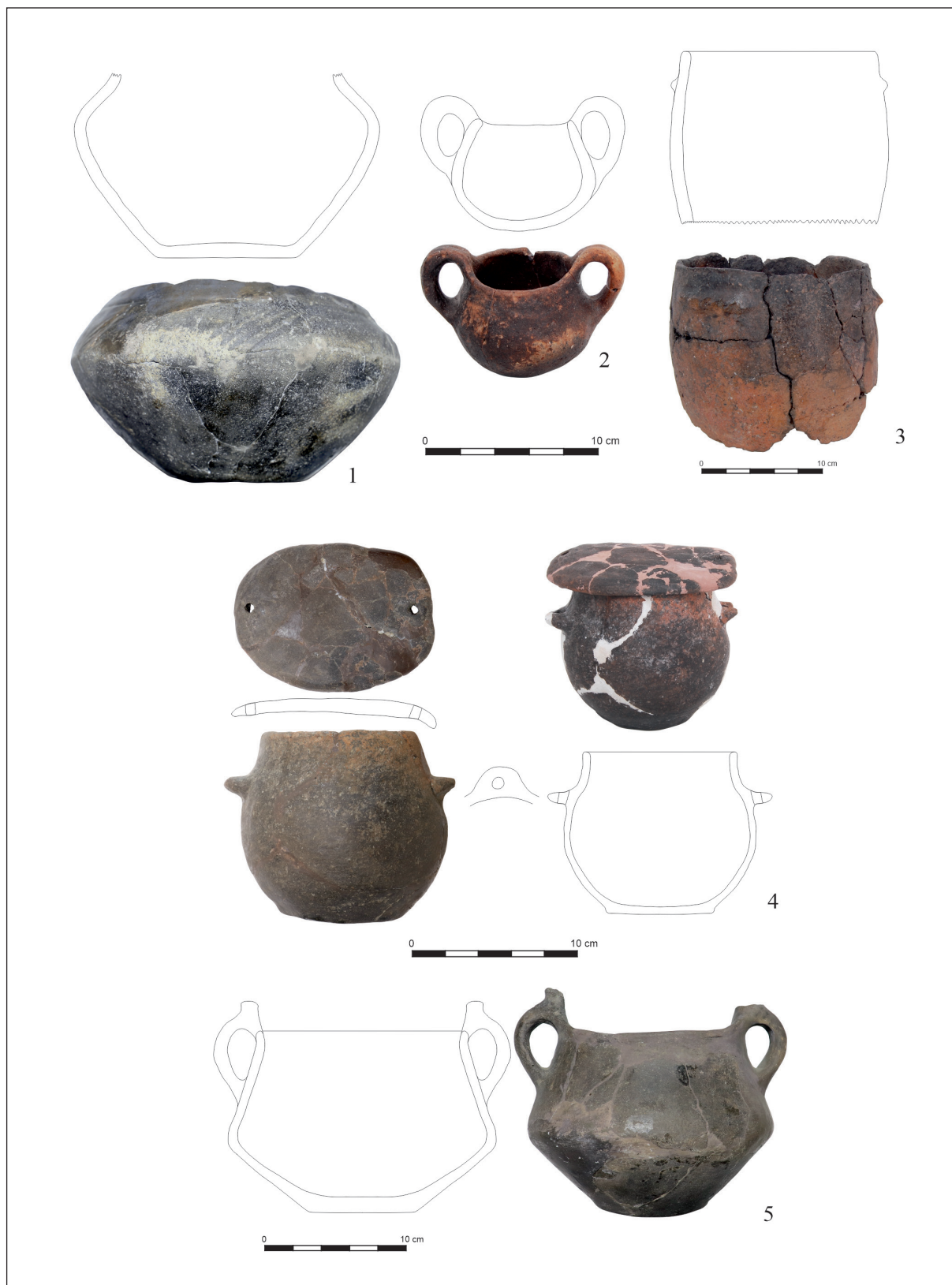


Plate VI. Odorhei–Kadicsfalvi-rét/Alsólok. Pottery from Cx.353 and Cx.397.

ABBREVIATIONS

<i>ActaArchHung</i>	Acta Archaeologica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae
<i>ActaMN</i>	Acta Musei Napocensis
<i>Acta MP</i>	Acta Musei Porolissensis
<i>ActaTS</i>	Acta Terrae Septemcastrensis
<i>AIIA</i>	Anuarul Institutului de Istorie și Arheologie “A. D. Xenopol”. Iași
<i>AJA</i>	American Journal of Archaeology
<i>Angustia</i>	Angustia. Muzeul Carpaților Răsăriteni
<i>Apulum</i>	Apulum. Acta Musei Apulensis
<i>ArchÉrt</i>	Archaeologiai Értesítő
<i>ArchKorr</i>	Archäologisches Korrespondenzblatt
<i>ArhMold</i>	Arheologia Moldovei
<i>Banatica</i>	Banatica, Muzeul Banatului Montan
<i>BAR (IS)</i>	British Archaeological Reports (–International Series)
<i>BHAUT</i>	Bibliotheca Historica et Archaeologica Universitatis Timisiensis
<i>BJ</i>	Bonner Jahrbücher
<i>BAI</i>	Bibliotheca Archaeologica Iassiensis
<i>BAM</i>	Bibliotheca Memoriae Antiquitatis
<i>BMA</i>	Bibliotheca Musei Apulensis
<i>BMM</i>	Bibliotheca Musei Marisiensis
<i>BMN</i>	Bibliotheca Musei Napocensis
<i>BMP</i>	Bibliotheca Musei Porolissensis
<i>BudRég</i>	Budapest Régiségei
<i>CA</i>	Cercetări Arheologice
<i>CCAR</i>	Cronica Cercetărilor Arheologice din România
<i>Dacia (N. S.)</i>	Dacia. Recherches et découvertes archéologiques en Roumanie, I–XII (1924–1948), Nouvelle série (N. S.): Dacia. Revue d’archéologie et d’histoire ancienne
<i>DolgKoložsvár (Ú.S.)</i>	Dolgozatok az Erdélyi Nemzeti Múzeum Érem- és Régiségtárából, (Új sorozat 2006–)
<i>EMúz</i>	Erdélyi Múzeum
<i>EphemNap</i>	Ephemeris Napocensis
<i>FolArch</i>	Folia Archaeologica
<i>JAHA</i>	Journal of Ancient History and Archaeology
<i>JbRGZM</i>	Jahrbuch des Römisch-Germanischen Zentralmuseums
<i>JRA</i>	Journal of Roman Archaeology
<i>KuBA</i>	Kölner und Bonner Archaeologica
<i>Lymbus</i>	Lymbus. Magyarságtudományi Forrásközlemények
<i>Marisia</i>	Marisia (V–XXXV): Studii și Materiale
<i>Marisia-AHP</i>	Marisia: Archaeologia, Historia, Patrimonium
<i>MCA</i>	Materiale și Cercetări Arheologice
<i>MFME (–StudArch)</i>	A Móra Ferenc Múzeum Évkönyve, (Studia Archaeologica 1995–)
<i>ReiCretActa</i>	Rei Cretariae Romanae Fautorum Acta

<i>RevBis</i>	Revista Bistriței. Complexul Județean Muzeal Bistrița-Năsăud
<i>Sargetia</i> (S.N.)	Sargetia. Acta Musei Devensis
<i>SCIV</i> (A)	Studii și Cercetări de Istorie Veche (și Arheologie 1974–)
<i>StComSfGheorghe</i>	Studii și comunicări. Sfântu Gheorghe
<i>StudiaAA</i>	Studia Antiqua et Archaeologica. Iași

MARISIA. ARCHAEOLOGIA, HISTORIA, PATRIMONIUM

With a publishing tradition since 1965, in 2019 the annual of the Mureș County Museum initiated a new series entitled: *Marisia. Archaeologia, Historia, Patrimonium*. The publication provides a panel for new research results in archeology, architecture and material heritage of the history of arts and culture. The studies mainly focus on the inner Transylvanian region that encompasses also Mureș County. Beyond local valuable contributions, the annual aims at a regional and global concern that is relevant for the whole of Transylvania. Among the annual's missions is to provide mutual interpretation of the research results produced by the Romanian and Hungarian scientific workshops. Therefore, the annual articles are mainly in English but based on the field of research and the approached topic studies in German, Romanian or Hungarian are also accepted.

Cu o tradiție din anul 1965, anuarul Muzeului Județean Mureș s-a relansat în 2019 sub titlul *Marisia. Archaeologia, Historia, Patrimonium*. Această publicație se descrie ca o platformă științifică care cuprinde rezultatele cercetărilor în domenii precum: arheologia, arhitectura și patrimoniul material din zona istoriei artelor și a culturii, studii localizate în regiunea centrală a Transilvaniei, din care face parte județul Mureș. **In extenso**, anuarul își propune să ofere un spațiu unitar contribuțiilor științifice valoroase, relevante din perspectiva geografică a ceea ce înseamnă întreaga regiune a Transilvaniei. Una dintre misiunile publicației este aceea de a oferi tuturor celor interesați spațiul de schimb pentru cele mai noi rezultate din atelierele științifice românești și maghiare. Articolele anuarului sunt scrise în general în limba engleză, existând totodată articole scrise în germană, română și maghiară, în funcție de specificul domeniului și a temei abordate.

A Maros Megyei Múzeum 1965 óta megjelenő évkönyvének 2019-ben útjára bocsátott új sorozata, a *Marisia. Archaeologia, Historia, Patrimonium* elsősorban a mai Maros megyét is magába foglaló belső-erdélyi régió régészeti, épített és tárgyi örökségére, nemkülönben az ezekhez kapcsolódó művészettörténeti, művelődéstörténeti kérdésekre vonatkozó újabb kutatások tudományos fóruma. A lokális perspektíván túl igyekszik kitekinteni a regionális és univerzális összefüggésekre, így a tágran értelmezett Erdély területére nézve is közöl kiemelkedő értékkel bíró tanulmányokat. Küldetésének tekinti a hazai román és magyar tudományos műhelyekben született eredmények kölcsönös tolmácsolását. A dolgozatok nyelve főként az angol, de szakterülettől és témától függően német, román vagy magyar nyelven is közöl írásokat.