



Were there any tells in the Coțofeni culture area?

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ABSTRACT

The approach to the topic of tells in the North-Danube area, between 3500 and 2800 BC, corresponding to the Coțofeni culture (in Bulgaria, Magura–Coțofeni, Tărnava culture) has been inconsistent. This study aims to clarify a series of archaeological and terminological aspects in direct relation to those Coțofeni sites that may or may not be included in the category of tell settlements. The so-called tell settlements are also discussed and the term pseudo-tell is proposed. Sites at very high altitudes (over 1000 m) or others related to salt exploitation have generated complex stratigraphies, consisting of successive Coțofeni levels, but completely different from the types of sediments that led to the formation of “classic” tells from the lowlands. The lack of fortifications is another feature of these settlements, which takes them away from the classic definition of a tell.

Following this analysis, it can be summarized that the terminological problems or the established conventions are not sufficient to define certain Coțofeni sites, such as those from Ostrovu Corbului, Basarabi or Moldova Veche. However, there are arguments to speak of tell or pseudo-tell settlements in the Coțofeni area. Compared to the impressive number of known sites in the area (over 1500), their percentage is only around 1%.

KEYWORDS

Coțofeni culture, genuine tells, tell-type settlements, pseudo-tells, Late Eneolithic, Early Bronze Age

Introduction

One of the challenges faced by the archaeology of the first half of the 3rd millennium BC is the existence of tells or tell-type settlements in the Carpathian Basin at the end of the Eneolithic. In the timespan between the two horizons of tell settlements in Europe, i.e., between 4500 and approximately 2400/2300 cal BC, this type of occupation was modified and tells completely disappeared from many geographic areas (Kienlin 2020, 4, 9). This necessitates a discussion that focuses, in particular, on certain terminological aspects and tries to define the multi-layered settlements from the area of the most representative Danube–Carpathian culture: the Coțofeni culture.

Starting with Florin Gogâltan’s definition of a tell from the Carpathian Basin, seen as “a multi-layered settlement, characteristic to a certain archaeological culture, that was formed by successively accumulating the debris of some surface buildings made of clay and having wooden structures” (Gogâltan 2003b, 5), we shall also approach the issue of this type of settlement from the Coțofeni culture area. When discussing the issue of tells from the Carpathian Basin, the same author proposed their division into two main categories: genuine tells and tell-type settlements. Those of the former have a stratigraphy of over 1 m and at least three archaeological levels, while the latter have at least two archaeological levels and a stratigraphy of up to 1 m (Gogâltan 2003a, 62; 2003b, 5; 2005, 80; 2014, 14; 2017, 30).

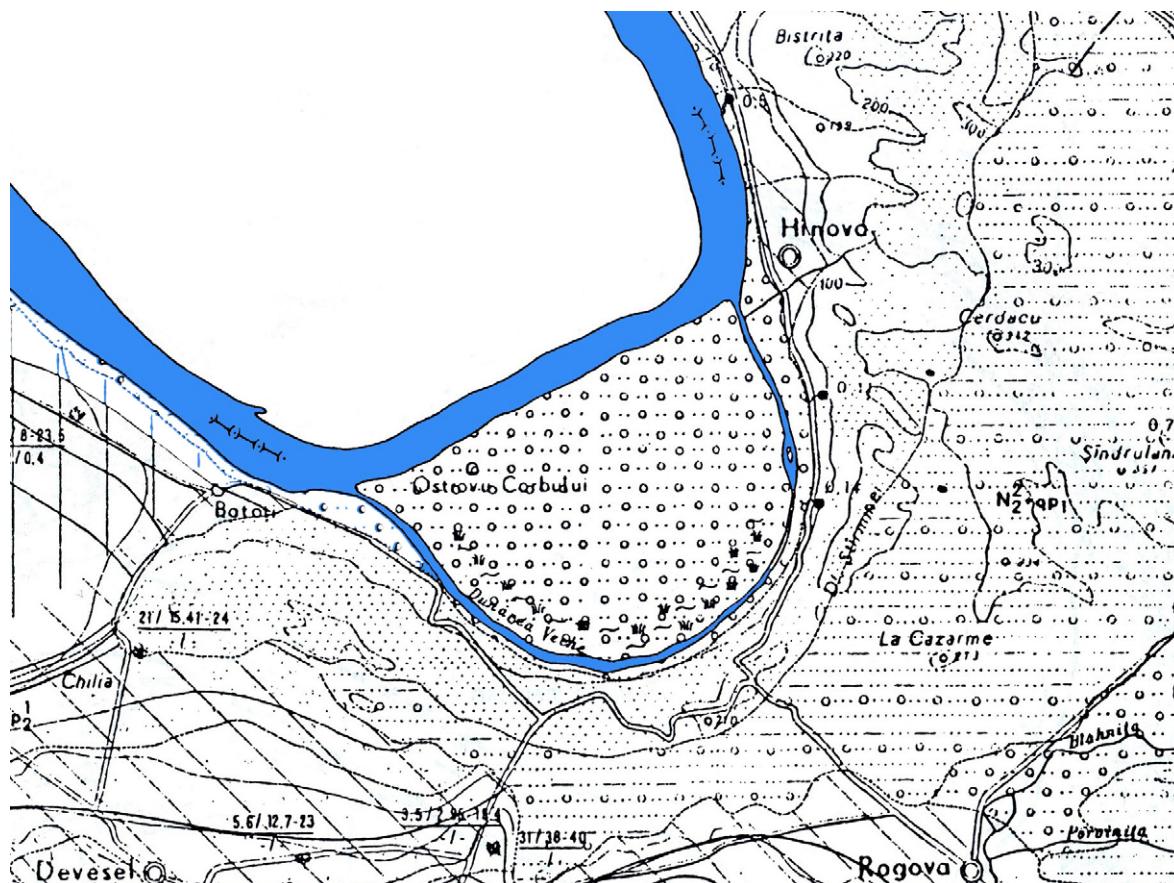


Fig. 1. The site at Ostrovu Corbului (after Roman 1996, 69, fig. 3)
 Обр. 1. Обектът при Острову Корбулуй (по Roman 1996, 69, fig. 3)

The information presently at hand allows us to open a discussion about the tells and the tell-type settlements from the Coțofeni culture area, which had already begun by incorporating three tells belonging to this culture – Basarabi, Ostrovu Corbului and Șeușa-Gorgan (Gogâltan 2005, 89–90) – as well as other sites to the list of possible tells.

Coțofeni tells?

Referring to the proposed definition – a stratigraphy of over 1 m and at least three levels of habitation – we must note that there are several Coțofeni sites that meet these criteria. We shall list these settlements first, followed by their critical analysis.

1. Ostrovu Corbului–Botu Cliuciului/Cliuci (Mehedinți County).

One tell belonging to the Coțofeni culture was excavated on the island of Ostrovu Corbului, at 911 fluvial km, in Sector A (fig. 1). At this point located at the confluence of the Little Danube (the arm that surrounds the island) and the (Great) Danube, called Botu Cliuciului/Cliuci, the terrain is at the highest level and it is the only part that is non-floodable, having the appearance of a grid, compared to the rest of the islet (fig. 2.2; 4.2). Here, on a surface of approximately 1 hectare, the largest habitation concentration was identified. The exact landmarks provided by P. Roman are: “the eastern end of S. XII 1, the milestone that indicates the 911th fluvial km and square 10 of section XVI” (Roman 2010, 159). In the context of the successive habitations on the island, the Coțofeni settlement occupies the largest surface, estimated to around 650 m², from the Botu Cliuciului and the old “canal” (a Danube arm formed in a period that was contemporary with the Bodrogkeresztúr culture), to the

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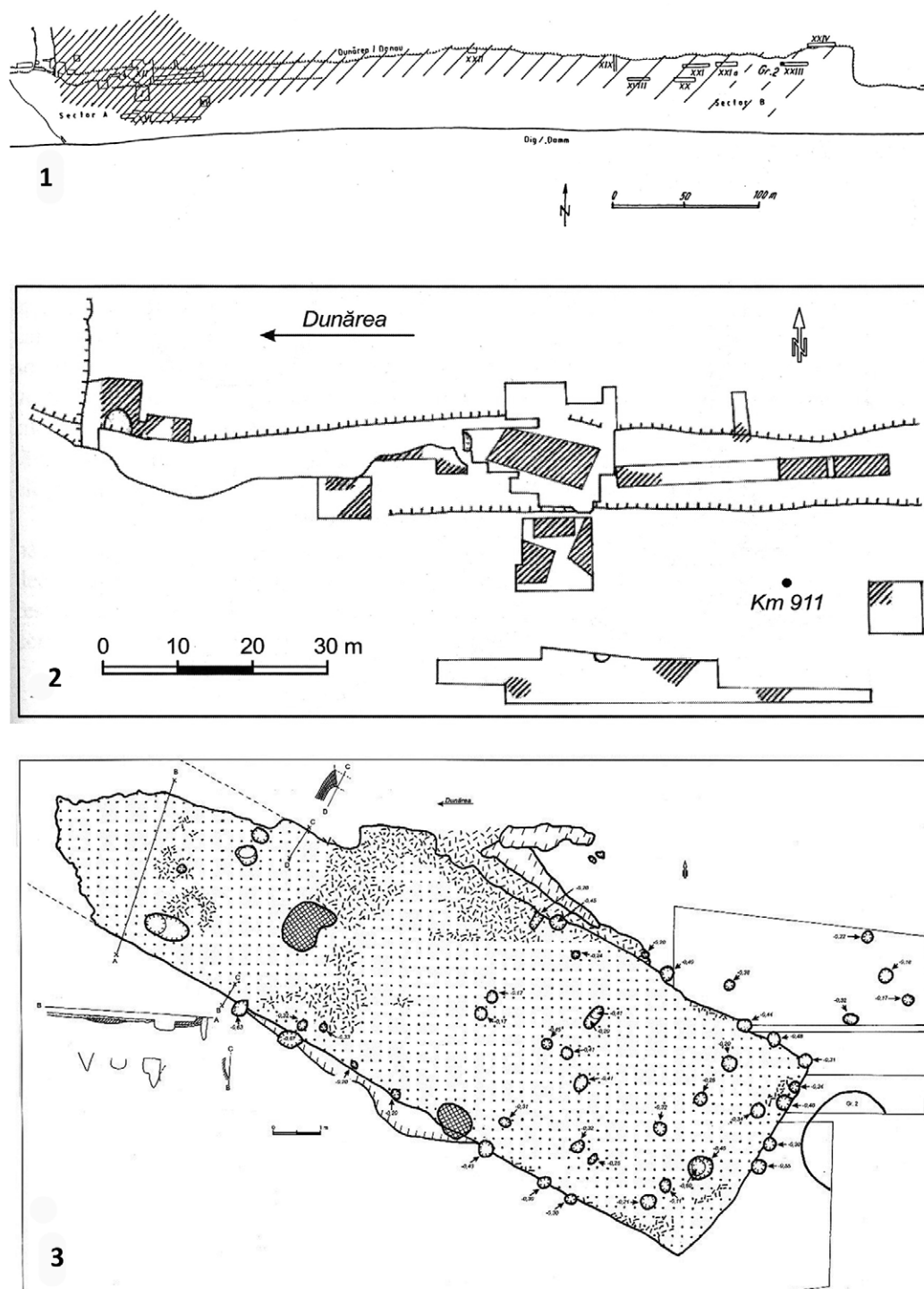


Fig. 2. Ostrovu Corbului. 1. The Coțofeni culture settlement (dense hachure – area with a habitation concentration; thin hachure – area with isolated discoveries) (after Roman 1996, p. 93, fig. 28); 2. Ostrovu Corbului–Cliuci, layout marking the Coțofeni buildings from sector A (after Roman 2008, p. 125, fig. 1) 3. Ostrovu Corbului, layout of the Coțofeni (S XII) Dwelling 1 (could be a public forum?) (after Roman 2008, fig. 14A)

Обр. 2. Острову Корбулуй. 1. Селище на културата Коцофени (гъста щриховка – територия с концентрация на обитаване; тънка щриховка – места с изолирани находки) (по Roman 1996, p. 93, fig. 28); 2. Острову Корбулуй–Ключ, схема, маркираща коцофенски сгради в сектор А (по Roman 2008, p. 125, fig. 1) 3. Острову Корбулуй, план на коцофенско (S XII) жилище 1 (възможно обществен форум?) (по Roman 2008, fig. 14A)

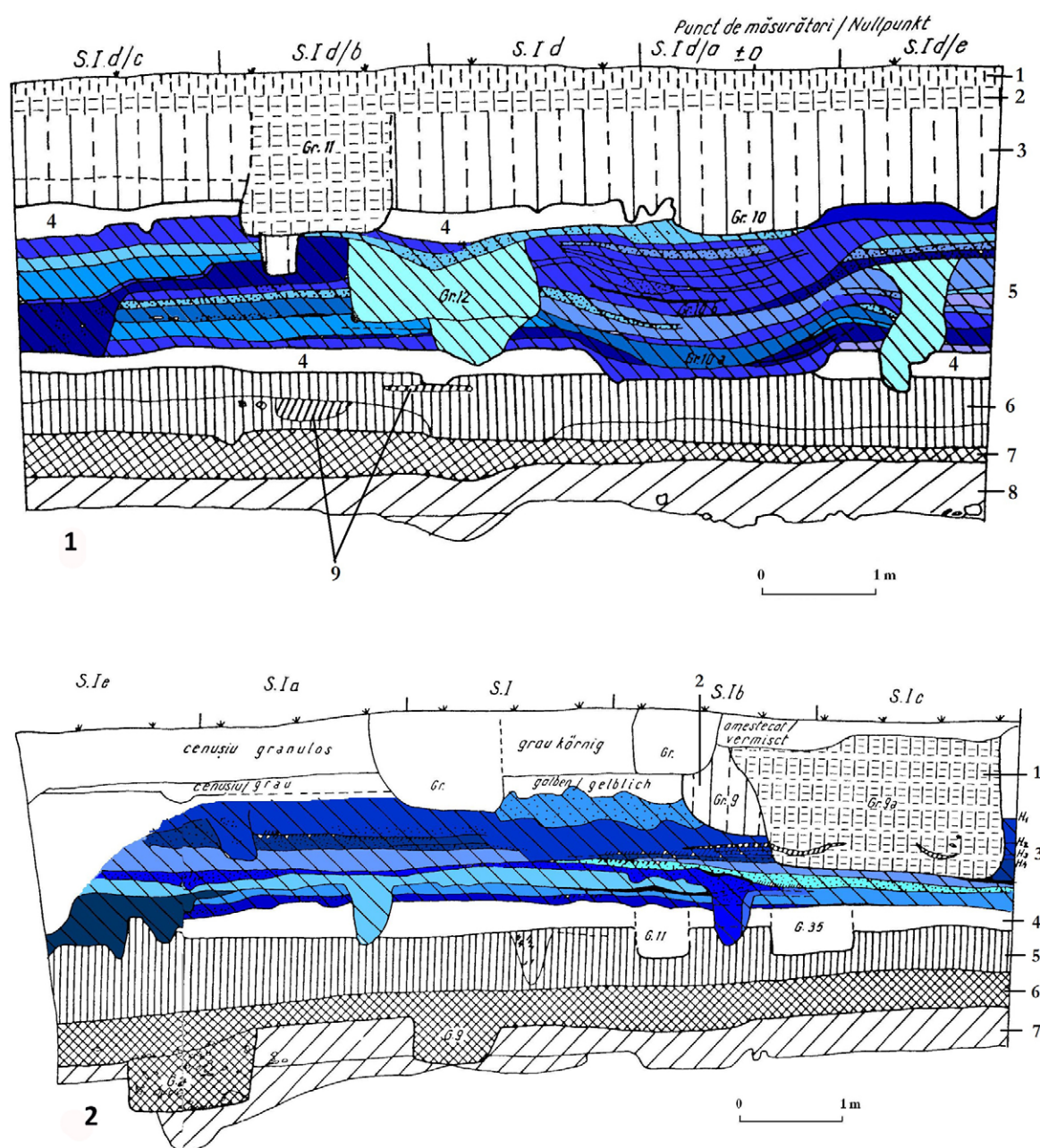


Fig. 3. The Coțofeni tell at Ostrovu Corbului–Botu Cliuciului. 1. SI – southern profile: arable layer (1), Daco–Roman layer (2), Bronze Age layer (3), no finds (4), Coțofeni culture layer (marked in blue) (5), Sălcuța culture layer (6), Starčevo–Criș culture (7), Schela Cladovei culture layer (8), ash (9) (after Roman 1996, p. 76, fig. 11); 2. SI – northern profile: Daco–Roman layer (1), Bronze Age layer (2), Coțofeni culture layer (marked in blue) (3), no finds (4), Sălcuța culture layer (5), Starčevo–Criș culture (6), Schela Cladovei culture layer (7) (after Roman 1996, 77, fig. 12)

Обр. 3. Коцофенска селищна могила при Острову Корбулуй—Боту Ключулуй. 1. SI – южен профил: обработваем слой (1), дако-римски пласт (2), пласт от бронзовата епоха (3), пласт без находки (4), пласт от култура Коцофени (маркиран в синьо) (5), пласт от култура Сълкуца (6), пласт от култура Старчево–Криш (7), пласт от култура Скела Кладовей (8), пепел (9) (по Roman 1996, p. 76, fig. 11); 2. SI – северен профил: дако-римски пласт (1), пласт от бронзовата епоха (2), пласт от култура Коцофени (маркиран в синьо) (3), пласт без находки (4), пласт от култура Сълкуца (5), пласт от култура Старчево–Криш (6), пласт от култура Скела Кладовей (7) (след Roman 1996, 77, fig. 12)

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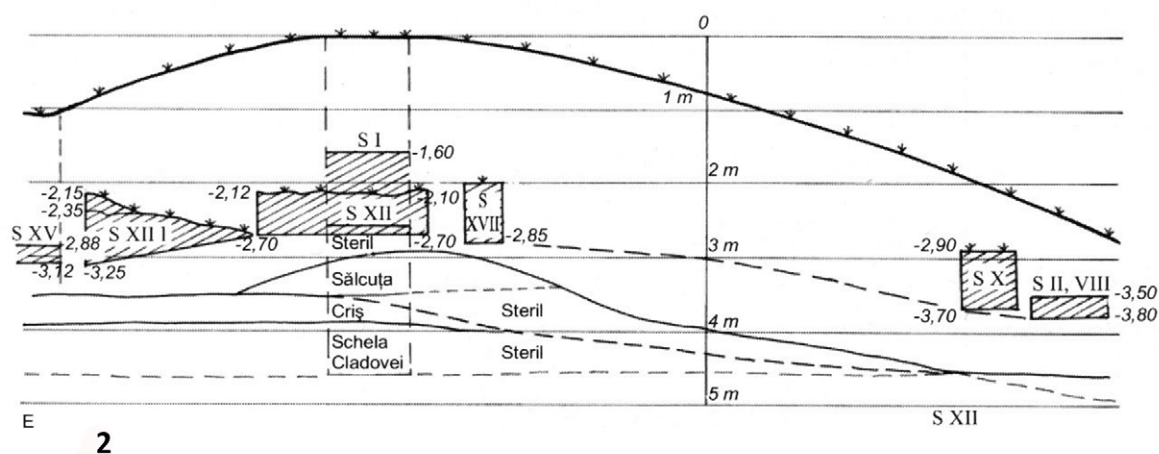
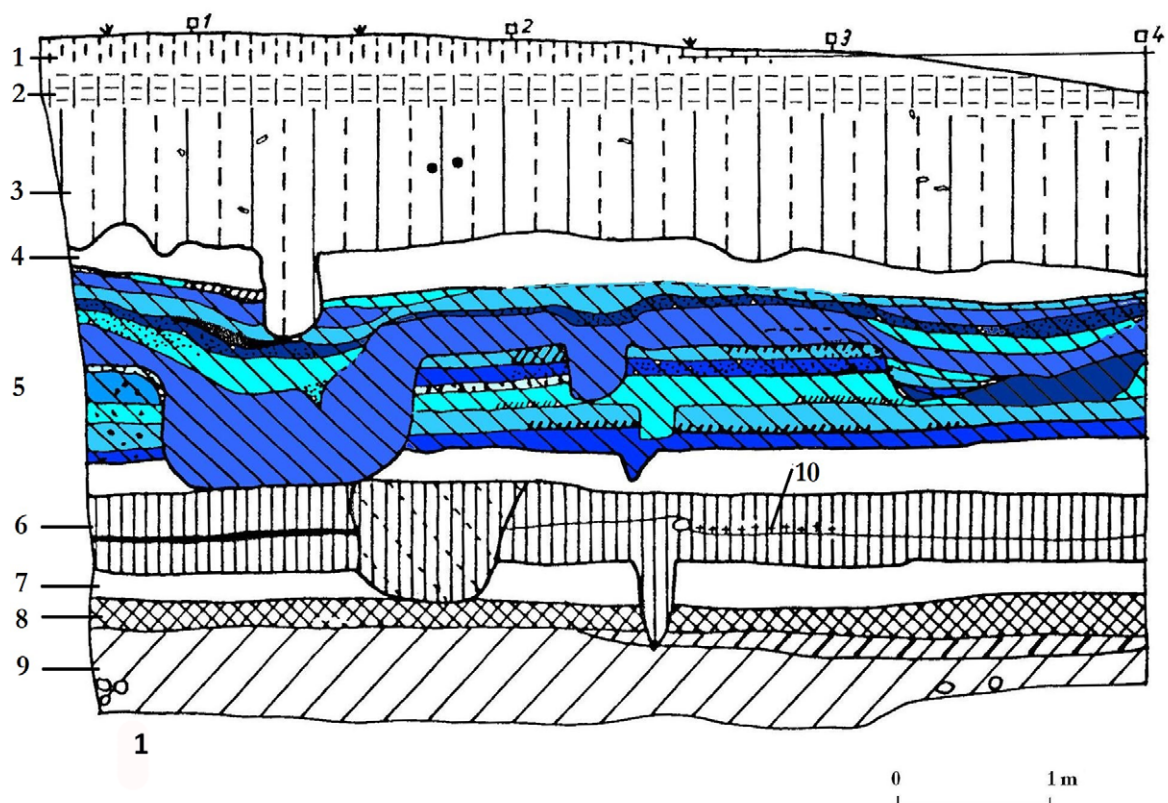


Fig. 4. 1. The Coțofeni tell at Ostrovu Corbului-Botu Cliuciului. S I – western profile: arable layer (1), Daco-Roman layer (2), Bronze Age layer (3), no finds (4), Coțofeni culture layer (marked in blue) (5), Sălcuța culture layer (6), Starčevo-Criș culture (7), Schela Cladovei culture layer (8), shells (9) (after Roman 1996, p. 75, fig. 10); 2. East-west section through the tell from Ostrovu Corbului-Botu Cliuciului with the locations of sections XII-1, XII, I, XVII, X, II (after Roman 2008, 164, fig. 38)

Обр. 4. Коцофенска селищна могила при Острову Корбулуй-Боту Клиучиului. S I – западен профил: обработваем слой (1), дако-римски пласт (2), пласт от бронзовата епоха (3), пласт без находки (4), пласт от култура Коцофени (маркиран в синьо) (5), пласт от култура Сълкуца (6), пласт от култура Старчево-Криш (7), пласт от култура Скела Кладовей (8), черупки (9) (по Roman 1996, p. 75, fig. 10); 2. Профил изток-запад, минаващ през селищната могила при Острову Корбулуй-Боту Ключулуй с отбелязано местоположение на участъци XII-1, XII, I, XVII, X, II (по Roman 2008, 164, fig. 38)

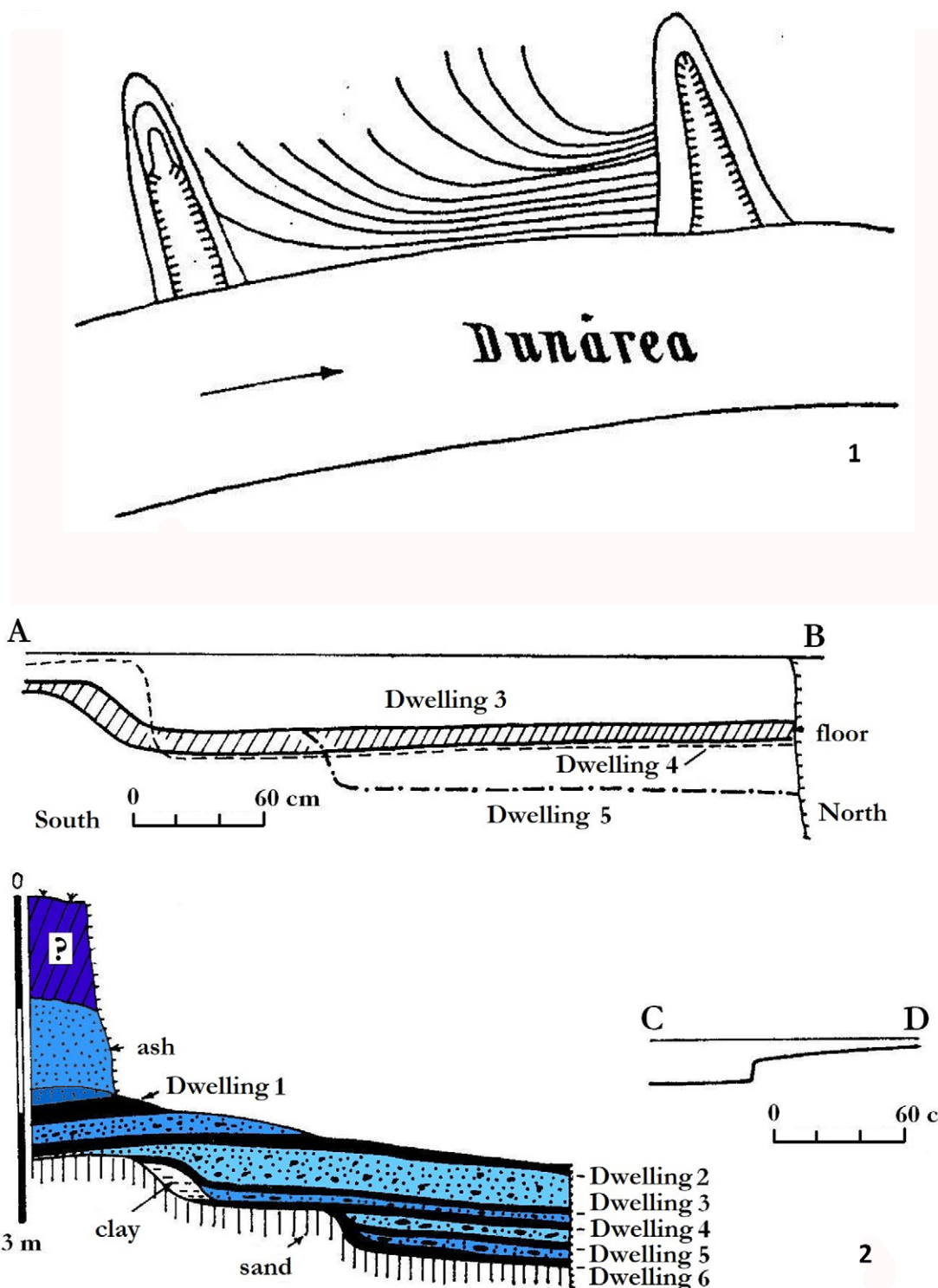


Fig. 5. 1. Layout-sketch of the Coțofeni settlement at Basarabi–Cetate (after Roman 1976, p. 109, pl. 4.4); 2. Basarabi–Cetate. Western profile of S D2/1968 of the Coțofeni tell settlement (blue), and the debris of several superposed dwellings (processed after Roman 1976, 110, pl. 5)

Обр. 5. 1. Скица на Коцофенското селище при Басараби–Четате (по Roman 1976, 109, pl. 4.4); 2. Басараби–Четате. Западен профил на S D2/1968 на Коцофенската селищна могила (синьо) и разрушки от няколко припокриващи се жилища (обработени по after Roman 1976, 110, pl. 5)

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current village centre, on the opposite end of the island, in Botu Piscului (fig. 1; 2.2). The settlement on Ostrovu Corbului is the best known from the entire area of the Coțofeni culture to this day and it is certainly one of the best documented ones, too (Roman 2010, 159).

Petre Roman spoke of the existence of a tell in formation even from the time of the Sălcuța habitation (Roman 2008, 125), and he later stated that the entire settlement at Cliuci “was in the shape of a tell” (Roman 2010, 131). The number of Coțofeni levels differ from one area to the other, but for the central area (sector A) that is a genuine tell, we must note the great number of solid surface buildings with floors, which are superposed by following a certain rule (fig. 2.2) and apparently benefitting from a “public forum” building (fig. 2.3). The settlement in its entirety belongs to the Coțofeni III phase. The most recent levels are dated by Vučedol imports, but they also contain numerous southern elements that gave this settlement a particular dynamic (Roman et al. 1992, 101, 104, 107; Roman 1996, 19–21, 23, 31, fig. 6; 9a, pl. I.1–2, 4, III.1; 1998, 17; 2008; 2010, 150–151, 159–160). The best stratigraphy spanning over eight habitation levels was identified in S I in the highest area of the settlement, where the depth of the Coțofeni deposits reached its maximum level between 1.20 m and 1.25 m. The numbers of occupation levels and the thickness of the Coțofeni deposits varied depending on the development of investigations and the excavated sectors. Initially, “approximately seven levels of constructions marked by the surface dwelling” were proposed, levels that would not have exceeded 1 m (Roman 1977b, 423, note 30; 1980, 223, note 31; 1996, 31, fig. 11; Păunescu 1996, 129; Roman 2008, 149–159, fig. 33; 2010, 132; Tuțulescu 2012, 19; 2016, 104) (fig. 3.1–2; 4.1).

2. BASARABI–Cetate (Dolj County).

The Coțofeni settlement at Basarabi developed on the left bank of the Danube (fig. 5.1) and the habitation space was expanded by creating anthropogenic terraces. The excavations that have not been fully published reveal the existence of a Coțofeni tell, as shown by the profile published by Petre Roman, with the debris of six surface dwellings with clay floors. Some of the dwellings were large (ca 7–8 x 3–4 m), superposed and with thickness that exceeds 1 m. A layer of ash can be seen over the dwellings, which increases the total thickness of the Coțofeni layer to around 2 m. Moreover, Roman mentioned at least seven Coțofeni layers that fully belong to the Coțofeni III phase (Roman 1976, 16, 44, pl. 5; 1977a, 190; Gogâltan 2005, 89–90) (fig. 5.2).

3. MOLDOVA VECHE–Humca (Caraș–Severin County).

One important Danubian settlement of the Coțofeni culture from its late stage of development is Moldova Veche–Humca. The deposits were formed in the high area of the Great Islet (or “Decebal”) (Roman 1976, 16–17, 54–55, 62, pl. 8.1–2, 3–4, 7, 14, 20, 30). The cultural layer, containing late Coțofeni culture materials, sealed by the Kostolac and Vučedol allogene elements, differs in the studied sectors. The excavations from 1967–1968 and 1970 revealed a layer thickness of ca 0.80 m (Roman 1977b, 423, note 32; 1980, 224, note 33). The excavations conducted between 1986 and 1987 revealed a stratigraphy of the respective deposits with a thickness between 1.30 and 1.50 m (Oprinescu 1989, 243). The layer with these deposits was perforated by several Vatina complexes and was superposed by a layer of sand, over which there was a dwelling from the First Iron Age (El Susi 1996, 58; Oprinescu, Bozu 1996, 76). There were also surface dwellings that showed signs of multiple restorations, the development through the sublevels being marked by hearths and stake pits (Oprinescu, Bozu 1996, 76). Three major constructive stages have been identified. The first two occupation levels contained surface dwellings with rich inventories belonging to the late Coțofeni, Kostolac and preponderantly Vučedol, while the upper level was rich in excised ceramics and the complexes were with modest amount of materials (Roman 1977b, 423 and note 32; 1980, 224 and note 33), belonging only to the Vučedol culture (Roman 1977b, 428, note 48; 1980, 224, note 35;



1

2



Fig 6. The Coțofeni settlement at Cornereva–Piatra Ilișovii (1 – photo V. Jujea; 2 – ortophotoplan – source Google Earth)

Обр. 6. Коцофенското селище при Корнерева–Пиафра Илишовии (1 – снимка В. Жужя; 2 – ортофотоплан – източник Google Earth)

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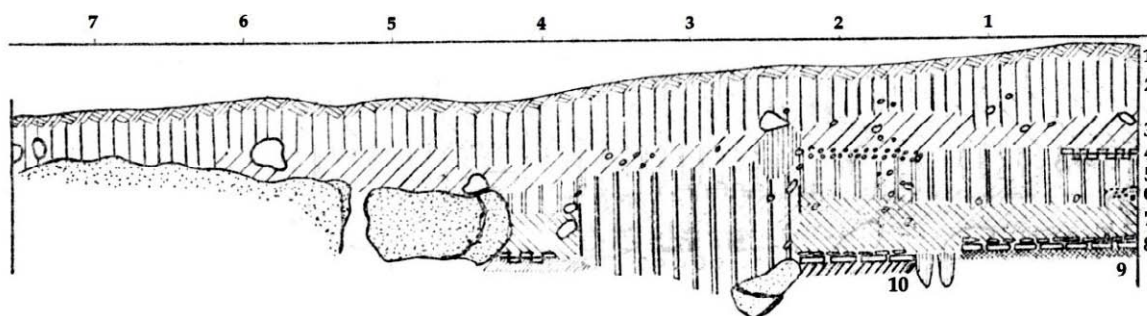


Fig. 7. Cornereva–Piatra Ilișovii. The western profile of S1 from the Coțofeni settlement (after Maxim 1993, 72, fig. 4.A)

Обр. 7. Корнерева–Пиатра Илишови. Западният профил на S1 от коцофенското селище (no Maxim 1993, 72, fig. 4.A)

Oprinescu 1989, 243; Tasić 1995, 79; Nikolić 2000, 96). Within the settlement, the remains of metallurgical activity were also discovered, consisting of pieces of slag and cuprite boulders which, together with a finished object (a chisel) and other metal items found in different contexts, attest to the existence of copper metallurgy among the members of this community (Roman 1976, 16; Oprinescu 1987, 192; Ciugudean 2000, 33).

4. CORNEREVA–Piatra Ilișovii (Caraș–Severin County)¹

The Coțofeni occupation was on a slope of a plateau, at the foot of a cliff called Piatra Ilișovii (fig. 6.1) and on the edge of a tall ridge (fig. 6.2) between the villages of Cornea and Cornereva. The site is at the highest altitude ever inhabited by Coțofeni communities (1,156 m) and benefited from excavations that revealed a maximum stratigraphy reaching 1.05 m (Maxim-Kalmar 1992, 78; Maxim 1993, 65, fig. 3.A; 4.A). Eight Coțofeni levels were identified, dated to the II–III phases (three Coțofeni II levels, one considered to be Coțofeni II/III, and five Coțofeni III levels) (Maxim-Kalmar 1992, 78; Kalmar-Maxim 1993, 11). The succession was marked through surface dwellings with floors, both on the lower and upper levels (Maxim-Kalmar 1992, 78; Maxim 1993, 65, fig. 4.D; Kalmar-Maxim 1993, 11) (fig. 7).

5. OCNELE MARI–Zdup (Vâlcea County).

The site is located at ca 300 m from the local swimming pool on a small conical-shaped hillock and on the bank of a small saltwater river. The archaeological surveys from 1973–1975 revealed one Coțofeni settlement and one belonging to the Early Bronze Age, only partially superposed, and stratigraphy estimated, at that time, to be over 2 m thick (Petre 1976, 16 – in which the author states that the settlements did not superpose; Petre-Govora 1982, 9–10, fig. 1–6; 8.9–10; 10; 11.1–15).

Unfortunately, we do not know the exact number of occupation levels. From the little information published after this first report, a reconstruction of the complex stratigraphy of the site shows at least four thick levels of habitation, corresponding to the three phases of the Coțofeni culture and one most likely belonging to the beginning of the Bronze Age. The first and oldest occupation level

¹ We must note that, after consulting several topographical maps, we opted for the localization of the site in Cornereva and for the toponym Piatra Ilișovii, although the locals often use the name Piatra Elișovei. The settlement is known in the archaeological literature to be located, generally, within the bounds of the Cuptoare village, but its centre and the location under consideration here are 7 km apart and they are on different slopes. In other works, the remains appear in the vicinity of the Domașnea village (Petrovsky, Cădariu 1979, 68; Oprinescu 1992, 18, no. 16; Luca 2006, 93, no. 208/b). H. Ciugudean amplified the error by combining the finds of two different Coțofeni sites, one in Cuptoare-Piatra Ilișovei (Ciugudean 2000, 69, no. 196) and another in Domașnea-Piatra Erișorii (ibid., 70, no. 247).

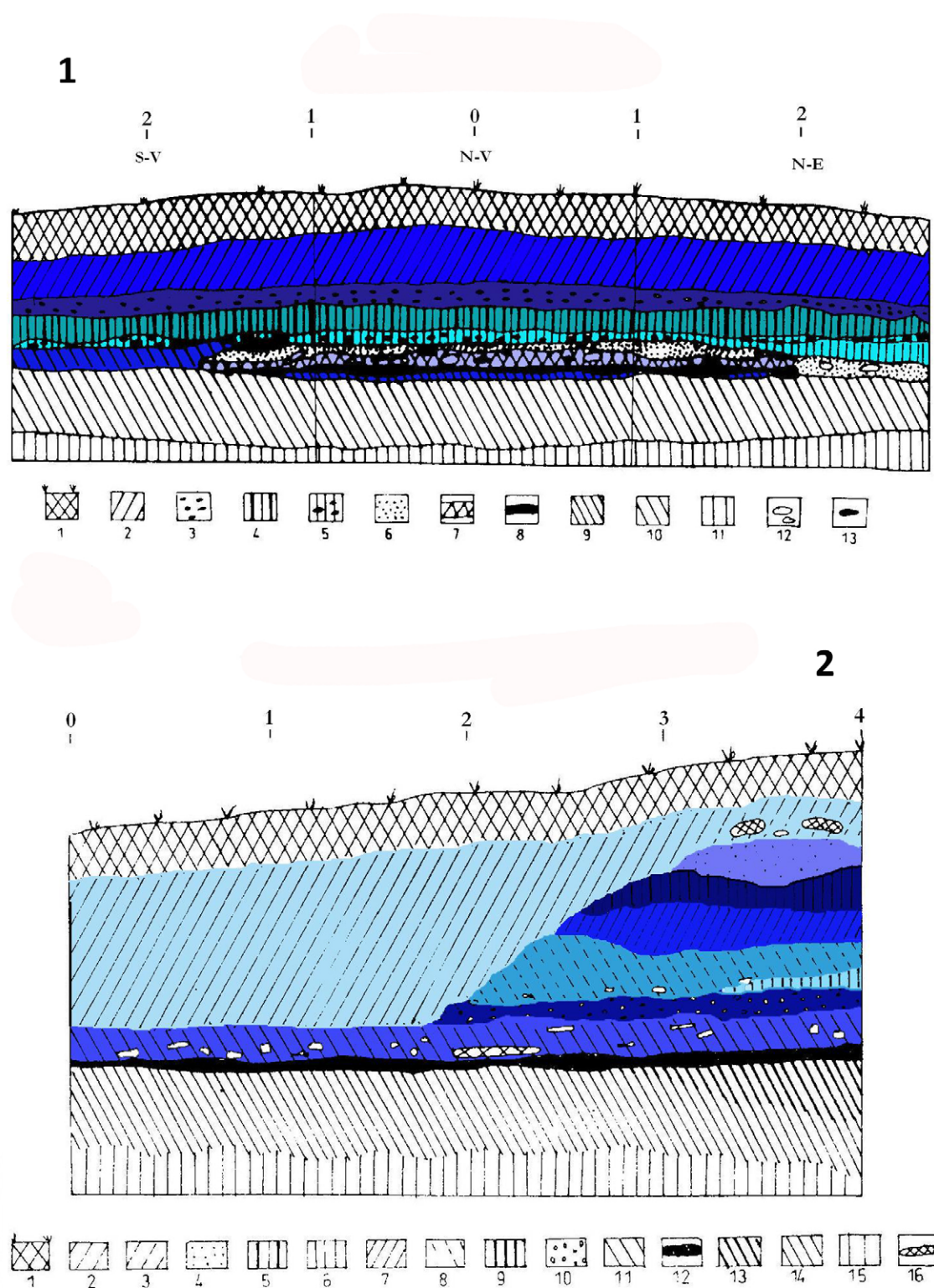


Fig. 8. The tell habitation at Şeuşa-Gorgan. 1. The northern profile of SI/2000; 2. The south-western stratigraphic profile of SII/2001 (the Coţofeni levels are marked in blue) (after Ciută, Gligor 2003, 6, fig. 6.1; 10, fig. 10. 2)

Обр. 8. Селищната могила при Шеуша-Горган. 1. Северен профил на SI/2000; 2. Югозападен стратиграфски профил на SII/2001 (коцофенските нива са маркирани в синьо) (по Ciută, Gligor 2003, 6, fig. 6. 1; 10, fig. 10. 2)

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belongs to the Coțofeni I phase and it is between 3.60 and 2.80 m. The next level, mostly containing Coțofeni II materials, as well as materials from the following phase was approximately between 2.80 and 2 m. The stratigraphy of the site continues with a very consistent layer, between 2 and 0.40 m, rich in Coțofeni III materials, some of which were influenced by Kostolac and Vučedol corded ware, as well as Glina III ceramic fragments almost certainly coming from the upper level. The final level of deposits is between 0.40 m and the current surface and contains Coțofeni III ceramics with rare Glina III sherds (ibid., 9–10; 1988, 137; 1995, 18–19). Other more recent information has not been published. The site is also discussed by Tuțulescu (2012, 10–11, 19). Another work states that the site at Zdup, together with Ocnele Mari–Cosota, “had the longest existence in the area (all the evolutionary phases of civilization subject to our study are attested)” (Schuster et al. 2010, 263, pl. II.1). Belonging to the occupation peak in Cosota, mentioned as being quite consistent, Dumitru Berciu attributed “hundreds of tronconic ‘cup’ sherds used in the exploitation of brine” (Berciu 1981, 13, pl. 3.8), which is obviously linked to the exploitation of salt in the area.

Located in a saliferous area, the Coțofeni settlement at Zdup was strongly dependent on the exploitation of salt on the spot (proof being the vessels specially modelled for briquettes) (Petre-Govora 1982, 23–24; 1995, 18–19; Schuster et al. 2010, 262–263, pl. 1) – intense activities that certainly generated the impressive stratigraphy, which totals over 3–3.50 m. Salt production structures are missing, but strong burn marks and layers of ash are identified as a result of these activities (Petre-Govora 1982, 23–24). Even if the last stratigraphic level at Ocnele Mari belongs to the Early Bronze Age, the thickness of the Coțofeni deposits still remains remarkable.

6. ȘEUȘA–Gorgan (Alba County).

The systematic excavations conducted on *Gorgan* in Șeușa have revealed the stratigraphy of the site across its entire area. The richest habitation was recorded in the high levels of the settlement, that is in the form of a mound (at an altitude of 463 m), and is situated on the western part of the Secașului Plateau. The excavators suggested the existence of two occupation levels, called inferior and superior, belonging to the Coțofeni III phase. The maximum thickness of the Coțofeni deposits reached up to 1.80 m (Ciută, Gligor 2003, 22) and the settlement was only a tell-type, according to the classification proposed by Fl. Gogâltan, an author who emphasized the exceptional stratigraphic situation, but without including it in one category or another (Gogâltan 2005, 90). However, the descriptions of the stratigraphic successions and the published profiles (see the profiles of sections VII/2003–2004 – Ciută 2008, fig. 14, and S IX/2003) clearly show that the Coțofeni habitation had many more than merely two levels (Ciută 2010, 47). In this sense, the stratigraphic situation captured in the campaign from 2005 is suggestive – it states that only the so-called upper Coțofeni level had been investigated, the level on which a surface dwelling (L 11) superposed a hut (L 13) which, in its turn, penetrated an older Coțofeni pit (G 18) (Ciută et al. 2006a, 174; Ciută et al. 2006b, 353). The northern profile of S I/2000 fairly clearly indicates at least 8 habitation levels of Coțofeni constructions (fig. 8.1–2; 9.1–2). The existence of several Coțofeni occupation horizons is also indicated by the presence, subsequent to the level of the large surface dwellings, of certain “later levels of habitation that were successive and seasonal” (Ciută, Gligor 2003, 22; Ciută, Gligor 2006, 272).

Therefore, in Șeușa–Gorgan we are faced with a Coțofeni tell with at least four levels of habitation and constructive arrangements, and a first horizon of large surface dwellings superimposed by different constructions (hut, shanty). It would appear that these constructions were concentrated in a well-outlined space, since at ca 25 m from the maximum stratigraphic level of 1.80 m, the Coțofeni deposits disappeared completely (Ciută, Gligor 2003, 22; Ciută 2004, 131, 133, fig. 2; Ciută et al. 2005, 369; Ciută et al. 2006a, 175; Ciută et al. 2006b, 353; Ciută, Gligor 2006, 272, fig. 9, 11–13). As

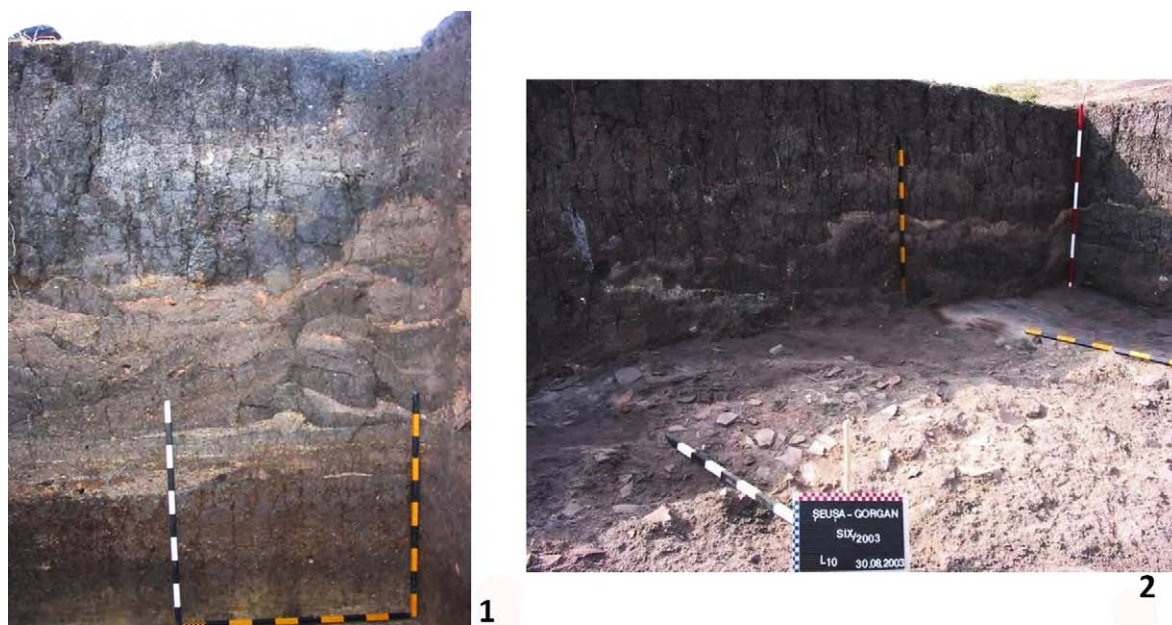


Fig. 9. Stratigraphic profiles through the tell from Şeuşa-Gorgan (after M. Ciută 2008, 233, fig. 14 – 1; Ciută 2010, 61, fig. 3.a.2)
 Обр. 9. Стратиграфски профили на селищната могила при Шеуша-Горган (по M. Ciută 2008, 233, fig. 14 – 1; Ciută 2010, 61, fig. 3.a.2)

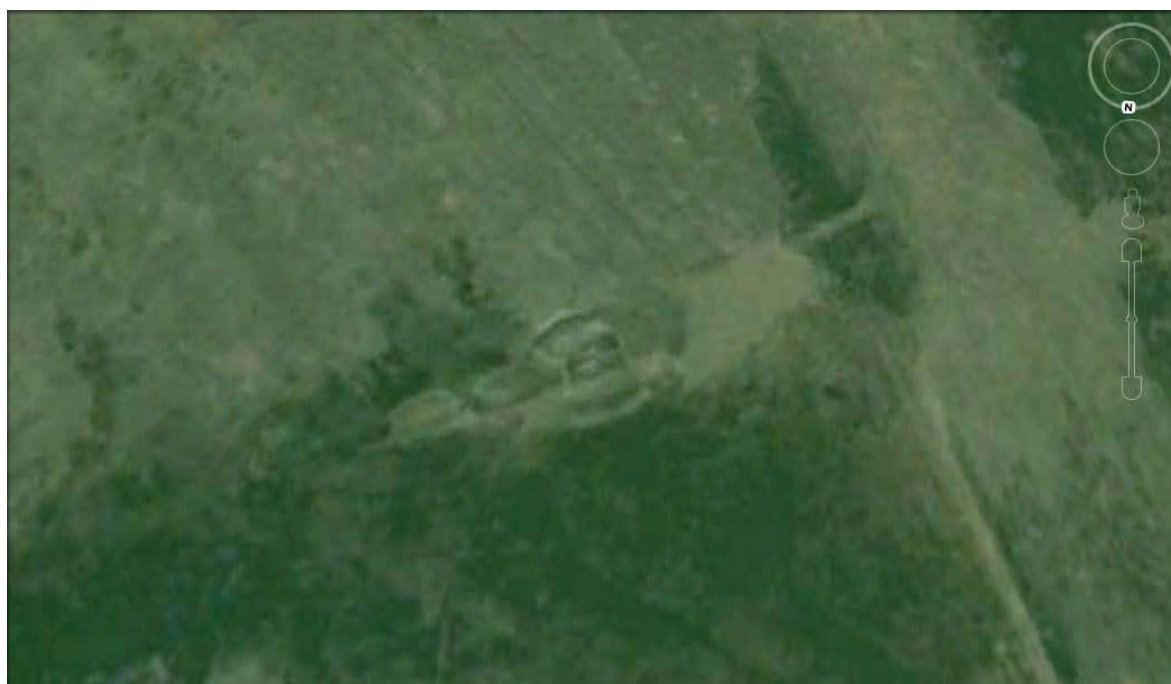


Fig. 10. The tell settlement at Şeuşa-Gorgan (source Google Earth)
 Обр. 10. Селищната могила при Шеуша-Горган. (източник Google Earth)

suggested by certain aerial images, it is possible that the settlement was, in fact, surrounded by a defensive structure (fig. 10). In the absence of an explanation for the legends of the published profiles, it is difficult to establish the category/dating of certain site levels. Thus, we cannot correctly evaluate

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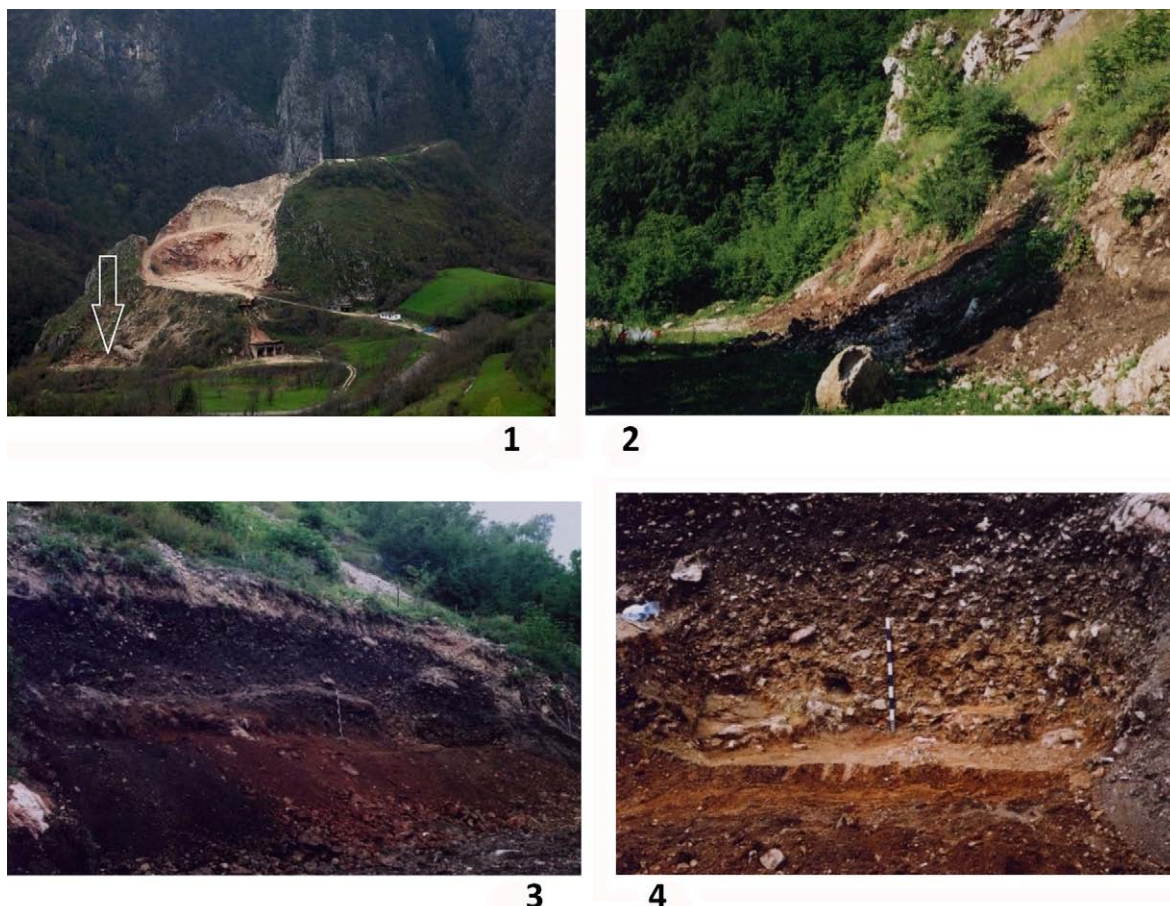


Fig. 11. Ardeu–Cetățuie: 1. Overview of the higher area (the arrow marks the place of the slope from 2001; 2. The terraced area; 3. Trench III/2001; 4. The sequence of Coțofeni deposits from the same place (photo I. Ferencz)

Обр. 11. Ардеу–Четацуїе: 1. Поглед към по-високата зона (стрелката обозначава мястото на склона от 2001 г.; 2. Терасирана площ; 3. Сондаж III/2001; 4. Секвенция на коцофенските пластове в сондажа (снимка Й. Ференц)

whether on the eastern profile of S II/2000, the cut that starts from the final level and penetrates the previous deposits to a considerable depth and length (Ciută, Gligor 2003, fig. 10) is a ditch or merely a large complex.

“Tell-type” (pseudo-tells) Coțofeni settlements

According to the typology we already used in the present paper, the tell-type settlements should have at least two archaeological levels and an up to 1 m thick stratigraphy (Gogâltan 2003a, 62; 2003b, 5; 2005, 80). For now, we can include with certainty three settlements in this category.

1. ARDEU–Cetățuie (Hunedoara County)

Cetățuia/Cetățeaua is a peak formed of Jurassic limestone and located on the left bank of the Ardeu Valley that has been intensely inhabited over the ages. Prehistoric settlements are found not only in the uplands and on the plateau called Dealu Judelui, but also in the lower areas, particularly downstream. Intensive occupation is found on the south-western side, over an area that descends into the Gura Cheilor waterbed. In 2001, a slope (T III) on the bank of a road to the limestone quarry located at the foot of the cliff allowed the establishment of an impressive stratigraphic sequence of



1

2



Fig. 12. The Coşofeni site at Orlat–Cetatea Scurtă (1 – photo C. Popa; 2 – orthophotoplan 2005)
Обр. 12. Коцофенски обект при Орлат–Четатя Скурта (1 – снимка К. Попа; 2 – ортофотоплан 2005 г.)

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over 4 m from the Coțofeni culture period to the Dacian period (Ferencz 2006, 70, pl. III) (fig. 11). The Coțofeni deposits belonged to phase III and were ca 1.5 m thick, formed of two levels where two hearths were found. The Coțofeni occupation was probably on an artificial or natural terrace (?) and was more intensive towards the rocky slope. It is less intensive downstream towards the valley, where the excavations in 2003 in the Gura Cheilor point revealed the existence of a single Coțofeni level that was only 0.40 m thick, but in which there are two stages of arrangements in the Coțofeni III phase (one surface dwelling that superposed a pit) (Ferencz et al. 2004, 44).

2. ORLAT–Cetatea Scurtă (Sibiu County)

At approximately 1 km upstream from the confluence with the Cibin river, on the left bank of the Săcel River, rises Cetatea Scurtă, a hill with very steep slopes connected with the Cetatea Lungă Hill only through a saddle (fig. 12). During the archaeological excavations, which targeted the medieval fortification, a consistent Coțofeni habitation from the third phase was also found, which occupied the upper part of the hill. The thickness of the Coțofeni deposits varied, the most consistent accumulations being in S IV/1969, traced on the northern cornice of the hill. Although we do not have enough data regarding the stratigraphy, we do know that it certainly exceeds 1 m for the Coțofeni dwelling. Here is the description offered by the excavator: “the medieval deposits are located at a depth of 0.40 m, and then, under a thick layer of soil, numerous ceramic materials belonging to the Coțofeni culture emerged, at a depth of up to 2 m. Here, on the northern cornice, the ceramics and the adobe that came from the huts form a thick, uninterrupted layer of at least 1 m” (Nägler 1977, 29). In another section (S VII), two levels of Coțofeni habitation are mentioned, with no information about their thickness. The first level was located directly over the native rock and covered the entire length of the section. On a length of over 5 m, this level superposed another, with a different colour and consistency (ibid., 32). Unfortunately, the two profiles that were of direct interest to us have not been published. Both excavated units approached the southern area of the plateau, probably artificially terraced by the Coțofeni community (Lazăr 1976, 28; 1979, 35–36, pl. I.8; V/1; 1980, 11–12, 15–17, 19, 26) such that the two stratigraphic situations must be correlated. The occupation type is mentioned in a few places, but somewhat ambiguously: “the adobe that came from the huts”, “«hearth» of uninterrupted adobe” (Nägler 1977, 29, 34). The dating of the fortification made of ditches, waves and a palisade at the time of the Coțofeni culture, as was suggested as some point (Lazăr 1976, 28–29; 1979, 35–36; 1980, 11; Vulpe 2001, 229), cannot be supported now, since Thomas Nägler brought sufficient arguments based on stratigraphic observations that date the fortification to the Middle Ages (Nägler 1977, 29–35, pl. III–V).

A Coțofeni habitation was revealed on a neighbouring peak in Orlat as well, called La Zid. The surveys, which targeted another medieval fortress, led to the unveiling of a consistent Coțofeni layer in the upper area of the hill. The greatest thickness was observed on the ridge in S I, “at the western end, reaching up to 1.20 m”. The excavator goes on to state that: “the Coțofeni culture layer continues with a considerable thickness on the outside of the enclosure wall, thinning downhill until it disappears”, where the remains of several dwellings are also mentioned (ibid., 40–41). However, we do not have any precise data regarding the stratigraphy of the prehistoric occupation, regarding other possible complexes or the dating of the settlement. We must note the presence of two occupations nearby, probably with a similar dynamic, and by publishing them, we shall clarify a series of aspects regarding the habitation type, the dwelling structures and their chronology.

3. ȘINCAI–Cetatea Păgânilor (Mureș County)

On the Cetatea Păgânilor hill (fig. 13.2), Valeriu Lazăr surveyed one of the most important and well-known settlements from the Coțofeni culture area. Though during the first excavation cam-

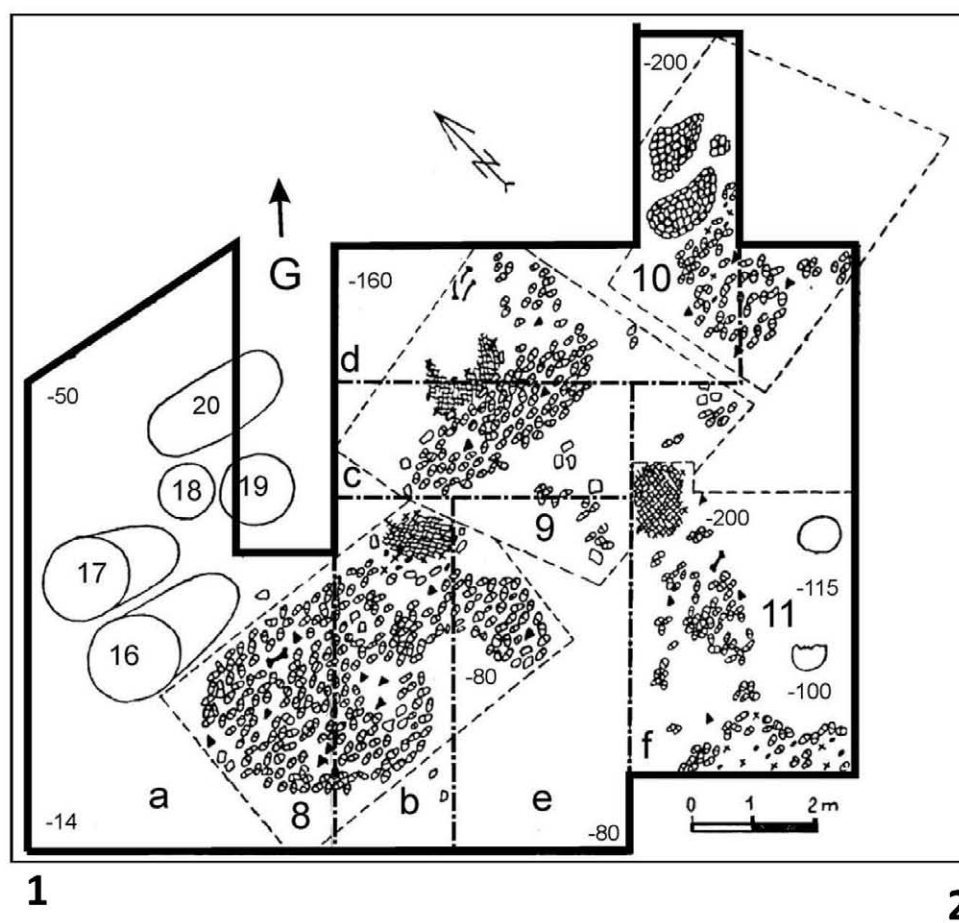


Fig. 13. Șincai–Cetatea Păgânilor. 1. The layout of dwellings L 8–11 and pits G 16–20; 2. An aerial image of the Coțofeni settlement (after Balász 2010, 9, fig. 2.1; 16, pl. 1–2)

Обр. 13. Шинкай–Четатя Пагънилор. План на жилища L 8–11 и ями G 16–20; 2. Въздушна снимка на иоцофенското селище (по Balász 2010, 9, fig. 2.1; 16, pl. 1–2)

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paigns only a single Coțofeni layer was mentioned on the lower terrace in the north-western sector of the site (sections D, E, G₃) with a thickness between 0.30 and 1.00 m, two Coțofeni levels were outlined later (Lazăr 1978, 1; 1980, 16; 1995, 252; Vulpe 2001, 229). They were both described in one of V. Lazăr's studies, who mentioned that they had a total thickness of approx. 1 m (Lazăr 1980, 16; 1995, 252; 1997, 11). However, there are still areas of the settlement where the stratigraphy showed an intense Coțofeni habitation leading the excavator to state that "in some sections, the Coțofeni deposits reach a thickness of 2 m" (Lazăr 1976, 29, note 15). In his doctoral thesis, the excavator continues with "the vestiges of the two levels cannot be separated stratigraphically" and provisionally attributed the hut-type dwellings to the first level, dated to Coțofeni II, while the surface dwellings were assigned to the upper level (Coțofeni III) (Lazăr 1978, 15) (fig. 13.1). Although the information regarding the stratigraphy of the site is contradictory, it facilitates the inclusion of this site in the category of tell-type settlements.

Discussion

We have identified several issues (e.g. some settlements have stratigraphies of over 1 m and at least three levels of habitation) that require either an adjustment or a reformulation of the convention established by Fl. Gogâltan, or the exclusion of the Coțofeni sites from the tell category.

The formation of the deposits

First, we shall discuss the formation of the occupation levels on a tell. One of the defined rules is the formation of the deposits by superimposing certain surface buildings at the same place, the levels being marked by the clay floors or by another material. Currently, the Coțofeni settlements of Basarabi, Ostrovu Corbului, Moldova Veche, Cornereva and partially Șeușa fall in the same category. It is noteworthy that from an architectural point of view, these buildings (usually houses, but other types of buildings as well) are usually examples of the "peak" reached in the technology of constructing surface buildings in their region (in this case, the area north of the Danube). The absence of other materials for walls (sunburnt bricks, stones) is the main difference between the ways in which the Anatolian tells and the tells from the Carpathian Basin were formed (Gogâltan 2003a, 48). Without a doubt, as we have already emphasized, the first habitation stages were not genuine tells (Kienlin 2020, 57). Therefore, the definition of a tell can only be valid for the final occupation of the Coțofeni settlements when the thickness of the deposits and possibly the structure of the settlements corresponded to the convention.

The second issue regards the appearance (the shape) of the settlement within its natural environment. Even if some of the Coțofeni settlements presented above have a consistent vertical stratigraphy, on multiple levels (some up to eight), formed by the successive surface dwellings with clay floors, they did not generate a mound (emphasis mine). This is the case with the Basarabi and Cornereva–Piatra Ilișovii sites.

A particular issue is the vertical stratigraphy that formed through the accumulation of various deposits and not as a result from the superposing of dwellings. Here, we draw attention to the situation revealed by the cross-section of the Ocnele Mari–Zdup site, where the rich sediments are due to activities other than living and are connected to the exploitation of salt deposits from the nearby source. To some extent the situation is the same in Șeușa where the base levels (?) are with surface dwellings, but the consistency of the Coțofeni layer is in the upper part, with its numerous ash layers indicating light dwellings, although the sedimentation of these late sequences would probably require a reinterpretation. A similar situation was observed in the upper levels of the tell at Celei (Nica 1982, 18, fig. 1).

SETTLEMENT	Thickness of the culture layer	Levels of Coțofeni habitation	Relief form/appearance	Restorations/superposing of surface dwellings	Levels resulting from other activities
Basarabi-Cetate	approx. 2 m	< 7	terrace	X	–
Cornereva-Piatra Ilișovii/Elișovei	1.05 m	8	high plateau	X	–
Ocnele Mari-Zdup	< 2 m	> 3	mound	–	X
Ostrovu Corbului-Botu Cliuciului	1.20–1.25 m	8	islet/mound	X	–
Moldova Veche-Humca	1.30–1.30 m	< 3	islet/mound	X	–
Șeușa-Gorgan	1.80 m	> 7	mound	?	–

Table 1. Summary data for the Coțofeni tell settlements.
Таблица 1. Обобщени данни за коцофенските селищни могили

The Danubian tells

Therefore, this analysis (Table 1) suggests that only the settlement on Ostrovu Corbului meets the criteria of a genuine tell. The absence of defensive elements, which are characteristic for the tells in the plains, is justified by the natural defences of the site located on an islet. A good analogy, in many respects, is the settlement Moldova Veche–Humca, but on the levels that also contain Coțofeni ceramics, the Vučedol and Kostolac materials are predominant.

It would appear that the Coțofeni settlement on Ostrovu Corbului–Cliuci also had a minimal formalization by arranging dwellings to a certain rule – with east–west direction and parallel to the Danube (Roman 2008, 162). The thickness of the Coțofeni culture layer, consisting of several levels marked by surface constructions with floors, some with visible traces of repairs (Roman 2010, 150–151), offers all the characteristics for including this settlement among the tells. The existence of a certain settlement organization is suggested also by the presence of a large L-shaped building (15 x 5 m), excavated in S XII, which could have had a communal function. This building (fig. 2.3), whose north-eastern end had a porch or outbuildings (suggested by the stake pits) with an area of 2 x 2 m (Roman 2008, 136–138, fig. 14A; 2010, 132, 159), points to a construction with special purposes. Petre Roman wondered whether it was a public house or a place of worship (Roman 1977b, 423, note 30; 1980, 223, note 31). The building could have played a similar role as the apse building of Vučedol (Gogâltan 2005, 90, fig. 8). Naturally, the identification of a “megaron” type layout of this building would be an exaggeration. There have been attempts in the past by Fr. Roth to interpret certain dwellings he discovered in Călnic as having the same layout, with a porch, which he connected to the “northern” world (Roth 1942a, 22; 1942b, 210–211, 214, Abb. 1, 4; 1943, 448–452, 459, Abb. 2). We maintain our reservations regarding the true compartmentalization with a porch in the case of these buildings. Only P. Roman has expressed doubts in this sense, namely about the existence of a porch on the Coțofeni dwellings of Călnic (Roman 1976, 15), but generally the data published by Roth was not critically assessed, even by more recently published works (Lazăr 1980, 17–18; Comșa 1991, 21, fig. 1; Ciugudean 2000, 18; Vulpe 2001, 229). The issue remains open. Roth’s reconstructions are perfectly analogous with the megaron types (Müller 1944, 342–348, fig. 1) from Troy II (Müller 1944, 344, fig. 1.8) that are contemporary with the Coțofeni phenomenon. Much closer, on the opposite bank of the Danube, on the Kostolac level at Vučedol, a building of quadrilateral shape or a megaron similar in length to the one on Ostrovu Corbului (15.40 x 9.50 m) was excavated and interpreted as a construction with sacred function, perhaps related to the processing of copper (Tasić 1995, 52, 77, 170–171). Other similar later buildings are known from the same site at the time of the Vučedol culture (Gogâltan 2005,

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90). Megaron-type dwellings are also present in the IV horizon of the Sarvaš settlement, recently attributed to the Kostolac culture (Tasić 1995, 169). This evidence deserves further attention, that is connected on the one hand to the birth of tells in the Coțofeni–Kostolac–Vučedol horizon, and on the other hand to the appearance of monumental architecture with particular layout and special purpose. Together with the apse buildings encountered in the area of the Kostolac culture, they illustrate the links with the southern cultural circles, from the Balkans to Anatolia (Nikolić 1996, 373–381, fig. 2–3).

The Coțofeni habitation at Basarabi can also be considered a tell. What distinguishes it, however, is the relief form on which the site was founded – the Danube terrace, and its appearance, since it is not a mound. However, it has already been pointed out that the “classic” tells of the Carpathian Basin formed on the high terraces of certain rivers and without the appearance of mounds were considered as tells (Gogâltan 2003a, 49). Therefore, the Coțofeni site at Basarabi must be considered a tell.

A complex occupation, somewhat similar to the Coțofeni settlement at Basarabi, is located south of the Danube, in the Kostolac settlement at Gomolava (level III b), where three construction horizons are mentioned with two superposed houses (Dwellings VI a and b). Two chronological horizons were distinguished containing the mentioned dwellings. The first horizon is characterized by the complete lack of décor in the Furchenstich technique, and the second by its dominance (Tasić 1995, 64). A similar case of rebuilding and superposition of two Kostolac houses is Pivnica, where the characteristics of the former phase had been kept (*ibid.*, 154). These situations allow certain comparisons between the two neighbouring and contemporary cultures, as well as the hypothesis of a possible Kostolac–Coțofeni influence, with respect to the building of dwellings. Moreover, we must mention that few settlements of the Vučedol culture show several phases of reconstruction (*ibid.*, 78). However, there are no tells in the Coțofeni–Kostolac environment in Serbia (Kapurán et al. 2018, 84–87).

Tells or pseudo-tells on the tops of hills and mountains?

Starting from the rule given by a certain convention, strictly from the perspective of the stratigraphic deposits, the natural question is whether the Coțofeni dwellings of Cornereva–Piatra Ilișovii can be considered to be a tell, given that the tell with the highest altitude recorded so far in the east of the Carpathian Basin, the Wietenberg one at Derșida–Dealul lui Balotă, is only at 342 m! (Gogâltan 2014, 17). Its features are close to those of Basarabi, but the relief differs fundamentally. As mentioned, it is located at the highest altitude in the entire known area inhabited by Coțofeni communities (over 1100 m). The dwelling could have a double function, secular and magical-religious, possibly directly linked with the processing of copper (Maxim 1993, 67). A fragment of flat axe, a needle, a piercer and several grains of molten copper were found on a Coțofeni hearth, a situation that suggests metallurgical activity of the hot metal beating (Kalmar et al. 1987, 68; Maxim 1991, 16; Maxim-Kalmar 1992, 78; Kalmar-Maxim 1993, 13). Gheorghe Lazarovici interprets the evidence from Piatra Ilișovii/Elișovei as metalworking “workshop” and thinks that one of the rock depressions could even be a well-made in search of cupriferous sources. It is unclear why all these discoveries (including the level with the “workshop” and the metal pieces found in certain Coțofeni contexts) are associated, obviously erroneously, with the Sălcuța culture (Lazarovici et al. 2010, 37–38, fig. 7–8). Thus, the situation at Cornereva–Piatra Ilișovii must have been somewhat similar to the examples known from the late Baden area, where the only known tells of this culture, Salgótarján–Pécskő, Vinkovci (Hungary) and Vučedol–Gradac (Croatia), have evidence of certain local metallurgical activities (Gogâltan 2005, 89).

Before ending the discussion on Piatra Ilișovii, noteworthy is the similarity of this settlement to others that cannot be included in the tell-type category due to the thickness of their deposits. This

is, for instance, the case with Ampoița–La Pietri (Alba County), that has a similar habitation type (settlement developed behind a cliff) and where a Coțofeni culture layer was found in 2001, with a thickness of ca 0.90 m, merely 10 cm below the conventional limit. The layer consisted of five Coțofeni occupations, two from the second phase, followed by three levels from phase III, each documented by house complexes: level I Coțofeni (Coțofeni II) – 0.30 m thick; level II Coțofeni (Coțofeni II) – 0.20 m; level III Coțofeni (Coțofeni III) – 0.20 m; level IV Coțofeni (Coțofeni III) – 0.20 m (Ciugudean, Gligor 2002, 40; Ciugudean, Gligor 2003, 40; Ciugudean et al. 2005, 12). Moreover, both settlements began their development in the second phase and continued intensely in the following phase. Even if the evidence no longer needs to be demonstrated, it emphasizes the limits of a convention, no matter what “mathematical” data we use.

However, at the sites of Șeușa and Ocnele Mari with their impressive stratigraphies, standing out in the landscape with the appearance of a mound (in the case of Șeușa, with the eloquent toponym of Gorgan), their formation is due either only partially to overlaps of some surface dwellings, or to other occupational activities. Ocnele Mari is a typical case of the habitation of communities whose activity was closely linked with the exploitation of salt present in the area (Petre–Govora 1995, 18–19). The impressive stratigraphy accumulated on that place (without having dwelling structures!) illustrates a special dynamic and occupational intensity. Special vessels intended for briquetting, ash lenses and the absence of dwellings could be interpreted as evidence for the specific activities of a prehistoric salt mine, not of proper settlement. Such activities carried out in similar saliferous areas led in other periods to the establishment of dwellings with long development and an impressive stratigraphy (see Lunca, Sărata Monteoru, etc.) (Cavruc, Dumitroaia 2006, 37–40; Cavruc et al. 2006, 41–43).

The dwelling at Șeușa–Gorgan is located on a peak on the western edge of the Secașelor Plateau in a low hilly area. Taking into account the existence of religious structures in both the Eneolithic Decea Mureșului type (an altar with grains) and the Coțofeni dwelling (bothroi – well with the remains of bucranium type altar) (Ciută, Gligor 2003; Ciută, Gligor 2006; Ciută 2008), we can conclude that the site was related, even if not all the time, to some worship activities and practices. In both horizons, rich reserves of carbonized cereals were discovered, which must be interpreted along the same lines. Probably the area was consecrated from the first stage of Decea Mureșului habitation, and this status was acquired also during the Coțofeni habitation.

Apart from the sites mentioned above, less than ten are known to have two or more levels of habitation in the area of the Coțofeni culture. They are as follows:

1. Ampoița–Pietri (Alba County). The Coțofeni occupation formed a layer of five levels with a total thickness of 0.90 m: two from phase II and three from phase III. Each level was documented through complexes of dwellings: level I Coțofeni (Coțofeni II) – 0.30 m thick; level II Coțofeni (Coțofeni II) – 0.20 m; level III Coțofeni (Coțofeni III) – 0.20 m; level IV Coțofeni (Coțofeni III) – 0.20 m (Ciugudean, Gligor 2002, 40; Ciugudean, Gligor 2003, 40; Ciugudean et al. 2005, 12).

2. Branet–Piscu Rusului (Olt County). The site includes two Coțofeni II–III levels, comprising archaeological complexes (pits, dwellings) (Ulanici 1975a, 45–46, 57; 1975b, 245, 255; 1976, 33, 48).

3. Bretea Mureșeană–Măgura Sârbilor (Hunedoara County). There are two Coțofeni levels, dated to the Coțofeni IIIc substage (Rotea 1993, 66; Vulpe 2001, 229).

4. Meteș–La Peșteră (Alba County). The layer of Coțofeni culture from this settlement is 0.35–0.40 m thick. In the surveyed area of the southern part of the site, two (Ciugudean 1997, 36) and three successive occupation levels of the Coțofeni culture have been identified. In the upper part of the culture layer, there were materials specific to the Early Bronze Age (Moga, Ciugudean 1995, 126; Ciugudean 1996a, 55, fig. 44.1–2; 1996b, 77; 1998, 43; 2001, 77).

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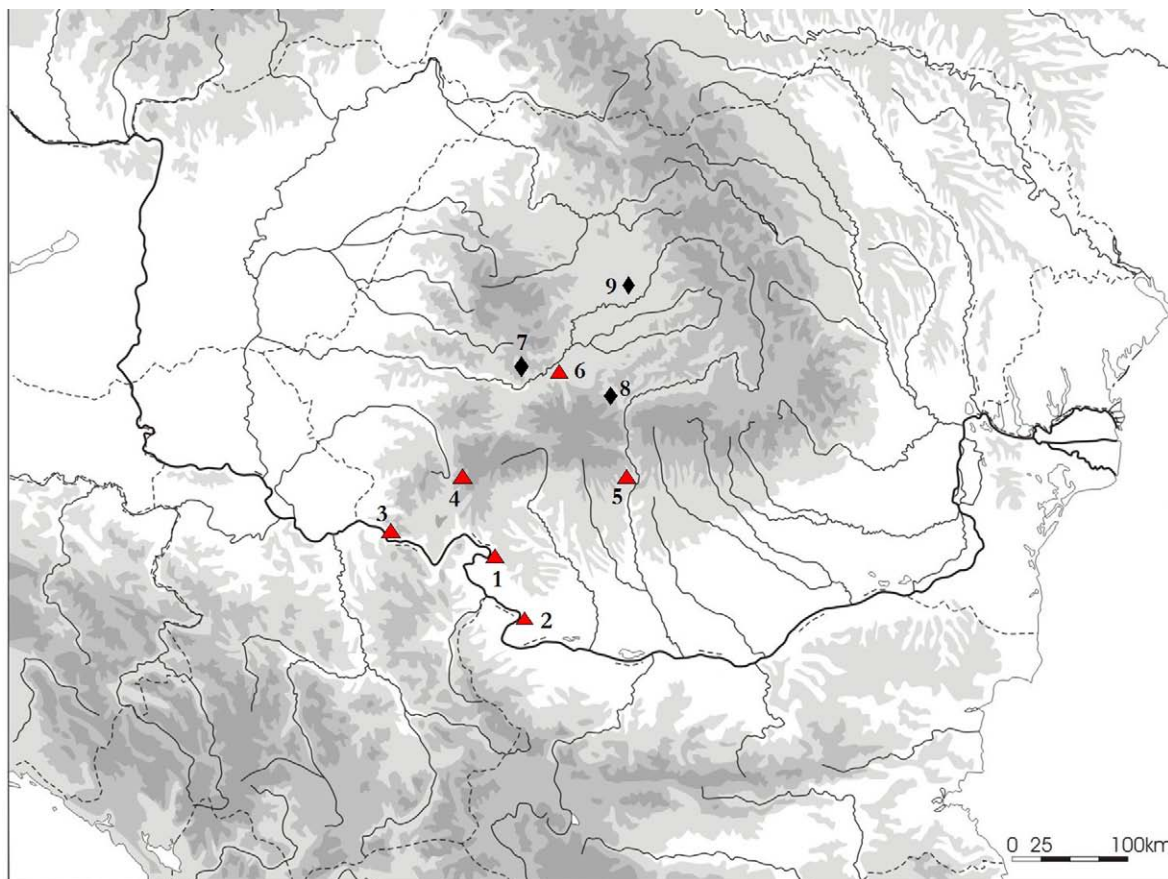


Fig. 14. Map with the discussed Coțofeni settlements: tell (1–6) and pseudo-tell (7–9): 1. Ostrovu Corbului; 2. Basarabi; 3. Moldova Veche; 4. Cornereva; 5. Ocnele Mari; 6. Șeușa; 7. Ardeu; 8. Orlat; 9. Șincai (figure by C. Popa)

Обр. 14. Карта с обсъжданите коцофенски селищни могили (1–6) и псевдоселищни могили (7–9): 1. Острову Корбулуй; 2. Басараби; 3. Молдова Веке; 4. Корнерева; 5. Окнеле Мар; 6. Шеуша; 7. Ардеу; 8. Орлат; 9. Шинкай (изготвил К. Попа)

5. Poiana Ampoiului–Piatra Corbului (Alba County). Three Coțofeni III levels were identified in the settlement here on terrace I (Ciugudean 1996a, 63, fig. 56). In the campaigns of 1992–1993, only two Coțofeni levels were identified (Ciugudean, Boroffka 1994, 50; Ciugudean, Boroffka 1995, 18; Ciugudean 2001, 77).

6. Săvârșin–Cetățuie (Arad County). On an anthropic terrace on the northern side of the upper plateau, a 1 m thick Coțofeni dwelling was found, between the depths of 1.60 and 2.60 m (Hügel et al. 2009, 192; Sava 2015a, 165–166, pl. 7.4; 2015b, 47–48, fig. 14.5; 45/2; 2015c, 50–51, fig. 29.5). During the 2009 campaign, four Coțofeni III levels were outlined, in which the contacts with the Baden and Kostolac cultures were obvious (Hügel et al. 2010, 170).

7. Sebeș–Papuc (Alba County). The settlement contains two Coțofeni III levels, with a total thickness between 0.50 and 0.75 m (Aldea 1968, 92, 95, 98, 100–101, fig. 3).

8. Sebeș–Râpa Roșie (Alba County). There is a settlement with a stratigraphy that is similar and contemporary with Papuc (unpublished excavations Cristian I. Popa, 2001).

9. Zlatna–Colțul lui Blaj (Alba County). On the terrace numbered by Ion T. Lipovan Terrace II, there was a stratigraphic sequence of three levels of habitation, the last subdivided into three sub-levels. The first two levels belong to the Coțofeni culture. According to the observations made by the excavator, the first sublevel (IIIa) of level three contains Coțofeni materials, the following (IIIb)

contains Coțofeni materials mixed in the upper part with materials from the Early Bronze Age, while the third and last sublevel (IIIc) contained only deposits from the Early Bronze Age. We must note the large number of Coțofeni levels, as well as their average thickness: level I – 0.35 m, level II – 0.22 m, sublevel IIIa – 0.15 m, while level IIIb (mixed with the Early Bronze Age) – 0.30 m under the first level, as well as under the three levels of habitation, levels of facilitation are improved (Lipovan 1983, 30–32, 40, fig. 2.2).

Conclusions

A few points are noteworthy in the end regarding the spatial distribution and the possible factors that determined the formation of the multi-layered Coțofeni settlements (fig. 14). First of all, we must note their location on the left bank of the Danube (Basarabi) or on a Danube island (Ostrovu Corbului). Cornereva–Piatra Ilișovii is located in the mountain area, in open through valleys leading to the Danube. Naturally, in comparison to the number of over 1500 Coțofeni sites, these few settlements are completely isolated examples. However, we cannot overlook the fact that Coțofeni sites also participate, albeit modestly, in what can be called the “revival” of the stable tell-type occupation along the Danube. Stemming from the convention embraced in this study, it is difficult to establish a satellite system of occupations (Gogâltan 2017, 30) that would gravitate around these tells. Moreover, it is possible that what we call Coțofeni tells could, in some cases, merely represent settlements with a particular stratigraphy with none of the economic, spiritual and social characteristics which the “classic” Neolithic, Eneolithic or Bronze Age tells hold. They can be suspected to be proto-urban settlements even less so. The absence of fortifications for these Coțofeni settlements, an indispensable element in the definition of a tell, which determines its formation in a limited space (Gogâltan 2014, 13; 2016, 102), represents another impediment for a complete definition of a tell. In the absence of other data, the circular fortifications identified in Plenița or Căstrele Traiane (Roman 1976, 14, 84), north of the Danube, represent isolated and uncertain examples. Despite these observations, the Coțofeni sites under consideration are among the most important and the information provided by the investigations confirm their particular status.

Overall, the Coțofeni tells and the pseudo-tell settlements represent a phenomenon that is characteristic of the Coțofeni III phase, although as indicated by the situation (whether accepted or not) of Piatra Ilișovii, its beginnings can be traced to phase II, contemporary with the formation of the Baden culture tells. The reason for their appearance must obviously be linked to certain activities and practices that go beyond the sphere of daily life, but in all the examples it denotes the existence of long-term dwellings.

In fact, during the period of contemporary development of the Coțofeni culture in the Carpathian Basin and the Lower Danube area the tells are no longer a common settlement type; on the contrary, we are witnessing only isolated examples. The climate change at the beginning of the fourth millennium BC, prior to the Coțofeni culture, had drastic consequences for the cultural development in the Balkans and south-eastern and southern Europe, which is especially visible in the abandonment of the Eneolithic tells (Raczky 1995, 54). Fl. Gogâltan considers that the possible internal causes that affected huge areas were due to the disappearance of tells in the Carpathian Basin (Gogâltan 2005, 86–87). These sites and the tell-type settlements begin to disappear almost simultaneously with the cessation of the painted ceramics, both to the north and south of the Danube (*ibid.*, 85–88, for examples and discussion). However, there is a tradition of tells or tell-like settlements related to communities of northern Pontic origin arriving to the Lower Danube, the latter reoccupying old tells. The site of Cernavoda–Dealul Sofia is relevant in this sense – the Cernavoda I communities contributed to the birth of a tell (Hașotti 1997, 125–126). Then, another occupation contributed to the

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“growth” of the tell in the northern and middle part of the site, belonging to the Cernavodă III culture. The consistent deposits with an average thickness of up to 2 m consisted of some superposed houses with clay floors (Morintz, Roman 1968, 566; Roman 1989, 50–51; 2001, 15, Abb. 5). Another case, contemporary this time with the beginnings of the Coțofeni culture is Celei located on the Danube line – the area of future Coțofeni sites distribution. The excavations of the Roman-Byzantine fortress captured what was left of the settlement, a tell with a maximum length of 25 m and width of 6 m, located on the bank of the Danube. The stratigraphy is impressive, the 2.50–2.80 m of deposits containing 11 levels of dwellings belonging to the Celei type communities. They are very well outlined “by the succession of floors with hearths, in some cases preserving the traces of vertical poles, upon which the rubble of the walls with burnt wicker splices” belonging to dwellings with lengths of over 8 m (Tudor et al. 1961, 480–481; Bujor 1967, 211, 213–216; Nica 1982, 15–16, fig. 1-4; Morintz 2007, 88). Thus, we have a settlement that has all the characteristics of a tell, developed by a cultural group with an important southern component.

Therefore, in the mid-4th millennium, populations of different origins re-establish a tradition in a specific type of habitat that had been somewhat lost even in the Lower Danube. However, at the turn of the 4th–3rd millennia BC, the tells no longer exist. Perhaps the social structures and economic needs capable of coalescing such centres had not yet appeared. Even if for another half a millennium in different areas of the Carpathian Basin settlements with similar features to tells appear, their presence must be regarded only as an accidental one. This is also the case with the discussed Coțofeni settlements. The Iron Gates area contained the mounds of the old tells and this is where they reappeared before the Bronze Age. Therefore, the habitat type and the final evolution of the Coțofeni culture suggest the existence of gradual changes towards forms specific to the future epoch.

As a conclusion, only the Ostrovu Corbului site can fully be understood as a tell, to which we could add the Basarabi site, if we were to ignore the detail regarding the relief form on which it appears.

As for the tell-type settlements, the examples included here in the Coțofeni culture area, namely Șincai–Cetatea Păgânilor, Ardeu–Cetățuie and Orlat–Cetatea Scurtă, can be criticized or not. The classifications for which we have opted through the presented arguments must necessarily reflect the sedimentation differences in certain Coțofeni sites, the dynamics of the habitation and, in the end, a certain position occupied by the settlement within the space and territory controlled by the respective communities. Through the definition given to the tell-type settlements, if we were to consider certain elements, such as the occupied relief form, the appearance of the site, the nature of the deposits etc., both discussed examples move further away from the genuine tell settlement. Only the stratigraphy and the number of levels that apply for the Coțofeni sequence allow to affiliate such sites to the tell-type. Their existence is, however, justified for another more or less conventional reason. They quite obviously differ from the tell settlements and from the single layer settlements. Moreover, they do not form mounds and the debris from which the culture levels are formed are merely partially formed from the surface dwellings (Șincai, Orlat) or from other habitat structures (Ardeu); in the latter case, we must mention that there is no proper research. Considering this information, the settlements under discussion do not essentially differ from the habitations with two culture layers, other than through the thickness of the stratigraphy. However, settlements like Săvârșin–Cetățuie or Ampoița–Pietri, which have stratigraphy very close to the required thickness (1 m) but not exceeding it, once again reveal the limits of conventions.

Based on the close relationship between economy and habitat, the Coțofeni II phase is characterized by settling at all relief forms and the frequent seasonal occupation of the heights, some reaching as far as 2000 m, like the Cuptoare–Piatra Ilișovii site. The caves are highly sought after, their habitation or their pursuit for cultic deposits being attested in the areas of Banat, Transylvania and

northern Oltenia. The settlements are long-lasting, proven by the stratigraphy of the sites in Oltenia, Banat and Transylvania. Some of the tells were formed at that time.

The settlements that are considered to be regional centres and containing several Coțofeni layers, are known to the south of the Danube and in north-western Bulgaria (Alexandrov 1990, 3).

In conclusion, we can state that the Coțofeni III phase represents the moment a stable habitat was consolidated, reflected by the persistence of multi-layered habitations, as well as the appearance of certain settlements that can be considered tell-types or tells. Viewed as part of the cultural development of the Coțofeni I phase, there are no two-layered or multi-layered settlements. They are, however, attested to at a later time on the entire north-Danubian area of the culture beginning with the end of the Coțofeni II phase, but the most consistent stratification period occurred in the Coțofeni IIIa and IIIb phases, since tells appeared along the Danube line until the final moments of the existence of the culture.

Regarding the Coțofeni settlement t at Gligorești–Holoame in Transylvania, (Popa, Gogâltan 2014), the term “tell” was used even before conducting any excavations (Vlassa 1965, 31–32; Crișan et al. 1992, 228). It is obvious from all of the above that the term is improper in this case. Here we must point out another important aspect of the issue of multi-layered settlements. How do we use the term tell? Could we use it for a layered settlement accumulated over several epochs and having specific features, but in which, for certain sequences of habitation, there is a single level of a particular culture? Naturally, no. In such situations, its use will be correct only to the extent that it applies to chronological-cultural sequences whose stratigraphy and successive habitations on the same place lead to the appearance of a mound. Therefore, a settlement as a whole may be a tell, but certain sequences of its habitation are not.

Another conclusion that can be drawn is that not every multi-layered settlement can be called a tell or tell-type. Certain conditions must be met, conditions expressed in certain definitions and conventions (!) (for Romania, they were elaborated by Florin Gogâltan); otherwise, this type of habitat would be obsolete and it would be difficult to distinguish from others, be they related or not. In the given situation, it would be more appropriate that we give up the phrase tell-type settlements, in favour of pseudo-tells. Thus, the possible confusions between tells and tell-types can be eliminated and an archaeological reality would be more correctly expressed – which is often merely visual [pseudo = “false”, “(apparently) similar”, “outer similarity”] (Marcu, Maneca 1986). Moreover, the scholarly literature uses the term “pseudo-tell” type settlement.

For the Mureș Valley, Horia Ciugudean uses it, in 1996, for the sites of Gligorești–Holoame and Aiud–Cetățuie (Ciugudean 1996a, 47, 30; Ciută, Gligor 1999, 66, note 64), and we used it for the Bronze Age settlement of Deva–Dâmbul Popii (Popa 1998, 52). In his synthesis on the Coțofeni culture, Ciugudean includes the only two settlements identified in Transylvania in the category of those placed on beams, while also pointing out that they “had sometimes been improperly regarded in the scholarly literature as tells, due to the appearance of artificial mounds” (Ciugudean 2000, 16). Moreover, after the publication of the first salvage excavations at Aiud, the aforementioned author firmly manifested his opinion that the Cetățuia, despite its appearance, cannot be viewed as a tell (Ciugudeanu 1978, 49), an opinion with which we obviously agree.

Obviously, it is wrong to admit the existence of a single tell phenomenon. However, in all cases, a unilateral view, summarized only by the development of stratigraphic deposits, would be incorrect. This is especially true that the definition of tells must include entire systems of settlements, societies, population growth, techniques, materials and specific architectural forms (Hofmann 2012, 18; Bailey 2013, 94-95). Therefore, our review highlights the elements of a controversial discussion from which the cultural phenomenon Coțofeni was discreetly omitted, in some cases perhaps unjustly.

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Има ли селищни могили в ареала на културата Коцофени?

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(резюме)

В периода между 4500 г. и приблизително 2400/2300 г. пр. н. е. селищните могили изчезват северно от Дунав. Обновеният критичен анализ на археологическите данни, терминологията и конвенциите, наложени за този район от Флорин Гогълтан, ни позволява да идентифицираме поредица от селища, които отговарят на определението за селищна могила. При обсъждането на въпроса за селищните могили от Карпатския басейн същият автор предлага тяхното разделяне на две основни категории: истински/същински селищни могили и селища – тип селищна могила. Първите имат стратиграфия над 1 m и поне три археологически пласта.

За да разберем настъпилите промени и дали ситуацията е реална, ние използваме за пример местообитанието на културата Коцофени (в България, Магура–Коцофени, Търнава), най-значимото културно явление в интервала между 3500–2800 г. пр.Хр. Известните данни показват очевидна липса на информация. Доказателство е и фактът, че във важни монографии за културата липсва терминът селищна могила. Преосмислянето на стратиграфията на някои селища и на видовете отлагания, формирали стратиграфската секвенция, позволява да се идентифицират обекти, които хармонират с конвенцията, установена от Флорин Гогалтан. Дискусията засяга проучените Коцофенски селища в Острову Корбулуй–Боту Ключулуй, към които се добавят тези от Басараби, Молдова Веке–Хумка, Окнеле Мар–Здуп, Шеуша–Горган и Корнерева–Пиатра Илишовии.

Were There Any Tells in the Coțofeni Culture Area?

Очевидно е, че тези селища са образувани върху напълно различни ландшафти – от Дунавските острови (Острову Корбулуй, Молдова Веке) до над 1000 m в планинските райони (Пиатра Илишовии). Така че формалното съответствие на критерия (поне 3 нива/ пласта, с дебелина над 1 m) не предлага дългоочаквания отговор. Сложността на проблема става ясна при анализа на селището в Окнеле Мар с впечатляваща стратиграфия от над 3 m. Липсата на жилища на обекта показва, че богатата стратиграфия е формирана само от натрупването на седименти, свързани с добива на сол, който е добре документиран в района. Отчасти подобен е проблемът на обекта Шеуша–Горган, където отсъстват жилища, а стратиграфията на Коцофени се състои от множество седиментни фракции.

Ф. Гогалтан използва термина ‘тип селищна могила’ за обекти с най-малко две археологически нива и стратиграфия до 1 m. Според тази класификация бихме могли да разгледаме няколко Коцофенски обекта: Ардеу–Четъцуей, Орлат–Четатя Скурта и Шинкай–Четатя Пагънилор. Всички тези селища са разположени в доминиращи терена райони, които се срещат предимно в Трансилвания. За тези обекти предлагаме термина псевдо селищна могила. Известни са и редица други селища, които имат подобна стратиграфия, но не отговарят на конвенцията (вижте списъка на изброените 9 обекта).

След този анализ може да се обобщи, че терминологичните проблеми и установените конвенции не са достатъчни да дефинират Коцофенски обекти, като тези при Острову Корбулуй, Басараби или Молдова Веке. Въпреки това, осланияйки се на някои конвенции между археолозите, може да се говори за селища от ‘тип селищна могила’ или псевдо селищна могила в района на разпространението на куртура Коцофени. В сравнение с впечатляващия брой известни обекти в цялата област (над 1500), тези обекти представляват само около 1%.

Имаме малко информация за други критерии, които са специфични за някои селищни могили: укрепления, сателитни селища, икономическа, социална, политическа и военна роля, зона на влияние и т. н. Липсата на изцяло публикувани систематични изследвания, обаче, не предоставя пълна картина за тези явления.

В контекста на промените в местообитанията по Среден и Долен Дунав, можем да видим, че появата на Коцофенски селищни могили и псевдо селищни могили е феномен, който започва около 3000 г. пр.Хр. и постепенно води до повторната поява на селищни могили след средата на II хилядолетие пр.Хр.