

Victor Sava, *Neolithic and Eneolithic in the Lower Mureş Basin*,
Mega Publishing House, Cluj-Napoca, 2015,
ISBN 978-606-543-661-9, 596 pages, 162 figures, 246 plates

For the Neolithic and Eneolithic in the Lower Mureş Basin there are several contributions¹ with general and particular character. The present book combines already existing information in published literature with new archaeological data, the result providing a new research model for the investigation of a geographical and chronological area.

The book begins with a page of *Acknowledgments*, followed by a short *Introduction* in which the author makes some methodological explanations related to the terminology used during the work. For example, the terms “culture”, “cultural group”, “cultural aspect” are substituted with the term “pottery style”. Also, syntagmas such as “discoveries associated to the Tisa pottery, Coţofeni pottery” etc. are used, and the concept of “archaeological culture” is avoided, all these because the author intends to reduce the idea that an “archaeological culture” is to be identified with an ethnic group.

Chapter 1 (pp. 12–15) presents the geographic framework of the study area. The author starts by presenting the boundaries of the researched area which is not restricted to a single geographic unit. The limits are conventional and the cultural realities of the region are taken into consideration, thus are analysed the discoveries made between the current settlements of Deva and Szeged. The northern limit is the valley of Crişul Alb and the southern one is the Vinga–Beba Veche sector. The studied geographic context includes the entire Arad County, parts of the Hunedoara and Timiş counties (Romania), the counties of Csongrád and Békés (Hungary) and a small portion of the province Vojvodina (Serbia). There are also presented the relief, hydrography and soils and concludes with data on the geographic area considered.

In the second chapter (pp. 16–63) are presented the archaeological researches that have been made in the area of interest, these being divided into four chronological stages. Each of these stages corresponds to a subchapter: *Nineteenth century – 1978, 1919–1946, 1947–1989 and 1990–2015*.

In chapter 3 (pp. 64–69) is described the evolution of terminology in the Romanian historiography for the period under consideration. The different views that have been expressed over time regarding the *Eneolithic/Copper Age/Transition period* terms are presented in graphs and tables. In the end the author shows his preference for using the term Eneolithic based on Wolfram Schier opinion, which in his absolute chronology studies demonstrate that

¹ Gheorghe Lazarovici, *Neolitical Banatului*. Cluj-Napoca, 1979; Florin Draşovean, *Studii privind aşezările preistorice în arealul Tisa-Mureşul Inferior. Cultura Petreşti în Banat*. Timişoara, 1999.

Copper Age as a different historical era cannot be supported and the terms Eneolithic and Chalcolithic are more appropriate as a terminological convention.

Chapter 4 (pp. 70–79) begins with the presentation of the proposed relative chronology systems from Antiquity to the 20th century, followed by the proposals concerning the Neolithic and Eneolithic on the territory of Romania.

The fifth chapter (pp. 80–273) is divided in two subchapters called *Neolithic* and *Eneolithic*, which are divided in three subchapters: early, middle and late. For the analysis of these subdivisions, the author develops a model that follows the next aspects: discoveries associated with a particular culture, the repertoire of discoveries, their settlements and features, funerary discoveries, artefacts, and the chronology of the culture in question. For the Early Neolithic, the Starčevo-Criş-Körös pottery is highlighted, Middle Neolithic refers to "Banatului Culture", Vinča A, Szakálhát and the discoveries without a stylistic determination, and for the Late Neolithic Tisa, Vinča C, Turdaş and Foeni pottery. Early Eneolithic is associated with Tiszapolgár pottery, Middle Eneolithic with Bodrogkeresztúr and *Toarte pastilate*–Hunyadihalom, and the Late Eneolithic is represented by Cernavodă III-Boleráz, Baden, Coţofeni. These subchapters end with a repertoire of Neolithic and Eneolithic discoveries that do not have a precise timeline. The subchapters contain excavation plans, drawings of archaeological contexts and references to plates, all of this supporting the statements made in the text.

Also, for the Coţofeni pottery, the author does a ceramic analysis based on eleven fields: vessel part, preservation, shape, type of decor, decorative pattern, fabric, tamper material, surface treatment, type of firing, firing quality and colour. The results obtained are presented in graphs, each one with explanations.

Chapter 6 (pp. 274–289) is divided in three subchapters, the first one presents the development of copper metallurgy, the second consists of a repertoire of the discoveries of copper pieces in the area of interest, and in the last subchapter the author proposes a discussion on these artefacts based on graphs. Also, this chapter discusses the beginning of copper metallurgy, and in this direction the radiocarbon data is presented.

In the *Conclusions* chapter, the author resumes the research history before and after the Second World War presenting the most important archaeological excavations, but also the way in which the working methods and techniques evolved and helped to improve the quality of the obtained results. Also, are presented tables which show where the settlements were discovered, their type and cultural framing. There are explained the results obtained from the research of the spatial arrangement of the Neolithic and Eneolithic settlements in the Lower Mureş Basin and how they complete the information already existing in the literature. At the end of the conclusions, the author come into notice about the deficiency of chronology, the small number of multi-disciplinary analyses, but also the fact that many of

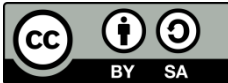
the monographs for the sites in the researched area have not been published which makes such a study to be difficult to achieve and to have some gaps.

The work contains a list of *Abbreviations*, one of *Ancient and Medieval Written Sources* and a consistent and well-organized *Bibliography*.

The book represents a unitary approach of the Neolithic and Eneolithic discoveries in the Lower Mureş Basin, systematizing the information existing in the specialized literature. Also, it has a clear structure, tables, charts, plates and maps that facilitate the understanding of the whole study.

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