

Cucuteni C type pottery from the Chalcolithic settlement Băiceni-Dâmbul Morii (Iasi County, Romania)

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Abstract. *The archaeological research carried out in the Dâmbul Morii settlement led to the identification of 362 fragments of Cucuteni C type ceramic, either in the inventory of the dwellings or outside them. In the present study, we will discuss, based on these fragments, the manufacturing technology, the shapes and the decoration. Technologically, Cucuteni C type pottery was made from an inhomogeneous, coarse paste, which used crushed shells or crushed snails in the paste, mixed with large-grained sand, and less often crushed shards, pebbles or plant remains. In the Cucuteni A-B phase, there are also documented cases in which the pottery was made of a finer paste, without the crushed shell, of a reddish-brick color, with a mixture of sand, documented by the discoveries from Traian - Dealul Fântanilor.*

Rezumat. *Cercetările arheologice desfășurate la Dâmbul Morii au dus la identificarea unui număr de 362 fragmente de tip Cucuteni C, fie în inventarul locuințelor, fie în afara lor. În studiul de față vom discuta, pe baza acestor fragmente, tehnologia de confecționare, formele și decorul specific ceramicii de tip Cucuteni C. Din punct de vedere tehnologic, ceramica de tip Cucuteni C, era realizată dintr-o pastă neomogenă, zgrunțuroasă, ce folosea în pastă scoici sau melci pisați sau sfărâmați, în amestec cu nisip de granulație mare, și mai rar cioburi pisate, pietricele sau resturi vegetale. În faza Cucuteni A-B sunt documentate și cazuri în care ceramica era confecționată dintr-o pastă mai fină, lipsită de scoica pisată, de culoare cărămiziu-roșcată, cu amestec de nisip, documentată de descoperirile de la Traian - Dealul Fântanilor.*

Keywords: Cucuteni culture, phase A-B, Dâmbul Morii, type C ceramic.

Introduction

Researchers have been interested in the type C ceramic category since the first discoveries. Also known as "kitchenware", a series of studies have made important contributions regarding its origin and evolution in the environment of the Cucuteni civilization. It is characterized by a lower quality clay, less carefully prepared, with crushed shells and coarsely granulated sand, or vegetable remains in the ceramic paste, fired at low temperatures of 500°C. It also seems that in the Cucuteni A-B phase, the Cucuteni C-type pottery undergoes a series of transformations

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as a result of the interaction and mutual influences of two different environments, the Cucuteni one and that of the carriers of pottery with shells².

In the archaeological literature, the Cucuteni C type ceramics raised the question of its origin and evolution. The intrusive character of this ceramic type, with which most specialists agree, was mentioned for the first time by H. Schmidt, in the monograph dedicated to the eponymous site, in which he speaks of a so-called "culture with type C ceramic". In his opinion, this ceramic category is considered a cultural mixture of Nordic origin, with Arctic-Baltic influences from the east and North German and Scandinavian from the west³.

Disagreeing with the above opinion, of the northern origin, is the theory regarding the eastern origin of the Cucuteni C type ceramics, attributed to the migration of eastern steppe populations (or kurgans) in the Cucuteni-Tripolie area⁴. Thus, I. Nestor claims that this ceramic category appeared and developed between the lower courses of the Volga, Don and Dnieper rivers⁵. Adherent to the same theory, M. Gimbutas considers Srednyi Stog II communities to be responsible for the penetration of pottery with shells crushed into paste in the Cucuteni environment as early as the Cucuteni A₃₋₄ and A-B₁ phases⁶.

Although he accepts the influence of kurganic elements, Vl. Dumitrescu supports a new theory, of the cohabitation of steppe elements with the Cucutenian population. In his opinion, the presence of crushed shell ceramics is not the result of imports, but rather is attributed to the work of individuals of North Pontic origin established in Cucutenian settlements⁷.

Similar to Vladimir Dumitrescu's opinion is the point of view offered by Ann Dodd Oprețescu, who confutes the steppe origin of this ceramic category and denies its links with the Srednyi Stog culture, bringing as arguments the lack of straight-bottomed vessels as well as the lack of motivistic kinship with type C ceramics. In her opinion, starting from the analysis of the type C ceramic shapes and decoration, one can speak of a local evolution, specific to this ceramic category, due to the communities on the edge of the northern area of the Cucuteni-Tripolie civilization, pushed inwards by the wave of migratory populations⁸.

Ștefan Cucuș, based on the analysis of the type C ceramic materials available at that time, for the Cucuteni A, A-B and B phases, makes a description of this ceramic category, and considers its foreign character, but with a complex evolution of its own⁹.

In the analysis of this ceramic category, a subject of interest is related to the penetration of foreign elements into the Cucuteni culture. In the Romanian area, the first Cucuteni C type

² MELNICIUC 2011, 233-234; BOGHIAN 2004, 106; GÂȚA 2000, 126-127.

³ SCHMIDT 1932, 42-45, 80, 105; pl. 11/6 și 12/3; ALAIBA 2004, 230.

⁴ MELNICIUC 2011, 238.

⁵ NESTOR 1959, 252.

⁶ GIMBUTAS 1989, 201-210.

⁷ DUMITRESCU 1980, 27.

⁸ DODD-OPREȚESCU 1980, 552-554; MELNICIUC 2010, 26.

⁹ CUCUȘ 1985, 71; MELNICIUC 2011, 236.

pottery seems to appeared at the Cucuteni A₃ (or A₄) phase¹⁰, hypothesis supported by the materials analyzed from the settlements of Fedeleşeni¹¹, Corlăteni¹², Drăgușeni¹³, Berești-Dealul Bulgarului¹⁴, and Chetrești¹⁵, and the beginning of the Cucuteni A-B phase, attested by the discoveries from Traian-Dealul Fântânilor¹⁶ and Calu - Piatra Șoimului¹⁷. A initial stage of intrusion of type C elements was proposed, followed by another stage of mixing them with Cernavodă I elements.¹⁸ The manner in which these foreign elements were introduced is considered to have been simultaneous, radial and interfering, in small groups,¹⁹ and was done gradually and continuously²⁰, sporadically and periodically²¹ or by successive migrations²².

During the research at *Dâmbul Morii*, Cucuteni C type ceramic fragments were discovered in the inventories of the houses or outside them. In the present article we will analyze a batch of 356 such fragments (Table 1) kept in the scientific fund of the Archeology Seminar from the Faculty of History, within „Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University of Iași.

Geographical and archaeological background

The settlement from *Dâmbul Morii* is located north-east of Romania (Fig. 1/A), Iasi County (Fig. 1/B), on the territory of Cucuteni commune, Băiceni village (Fig. 1/C). It was on a promontory positioned between the Recea stream to the west and the Morii stream to the east, with steeper slopes to the south-east and smoother on the other sides ²³.

¹⁰ BOGHIAN 2006, 166.

¹¹ BOGHIAN 2004, fig.129/14; CUCOȘ 1985, 63; NESTOR, ZAHARIA 1968, 18.

¹² NESTOR *et alii* 1951, 72; NESTOR 1959; NESTOR, ZAHARIA 1968, 21.

¹³ CUCOȘ 1985, 63; DUMITRESCU 1974, 33; CRÎȘMARU 1977, 271 fig. 5/2; MARINESCU-BÎLCU 2000, 108-110.

¹⁴ CUCOȘ 1985, 63; DRAGOMIR 1985, 101-102, fig. 20-21.

¹⁵ CUCOȘ 1985, 63; NIȚU 1977, 154.

¹⁶ CUCOȘ 1985, 63; DUMITRESCU 1945, 38.

¹⁷ CUCOȘ 1985, 63; VULPE 1941, 41.

¹⁸ CUCOȘ 1985, 74-75; BOGHIAN 2004, 135.

¹⁹ CUCOȘ 1985, 74; MELNICIUC 2010, 30.

²⁰ NESTOR 1959, 255; MELNICIUC 2010, 30.

²¹ NIȚU 1977, 147; MELNICIUC 2010, 30.

²² GIMBUTAS 1989, 197-221; MELNICIUC 2010, 30.

²³ DINU 2006, 31; 2009, 106; ASĂNDULESEI *et alii.* 2020, 320; BALAUR 2020, 170.

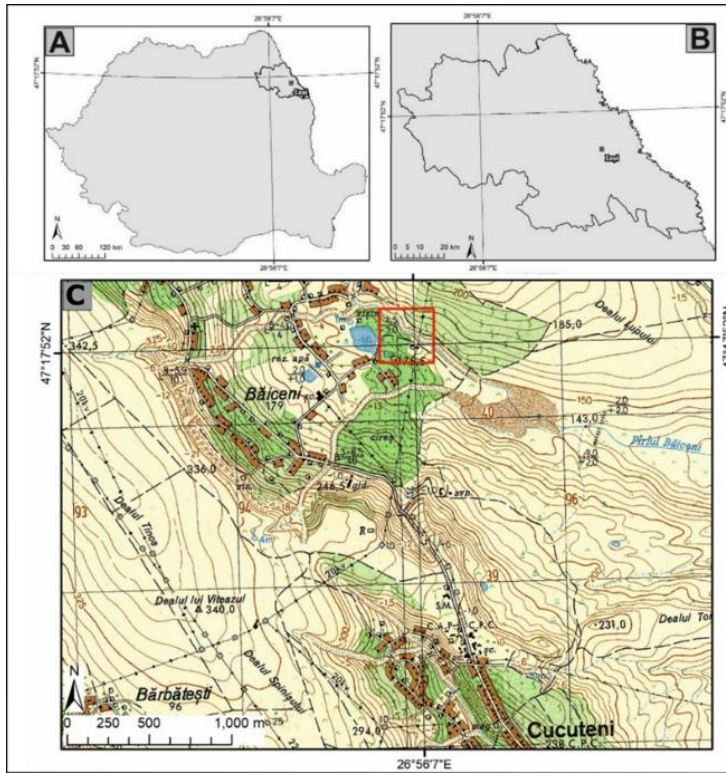


Figure 1. Location of the Dâmbul Morii settlement: A. Romania; B. Iasi county; C. on the topographic map 1:25000 according to Asăndulesei et alii, 2020, p. 321).

The first excavations at *Morii Dâmbul* were carried out by the German scientist Hubert Schmidt, in 1909 or 1910, by drawing a control ditch of 31x2 m in the western-north-western sector of the settlement, called by him “the settlement in the valley – *Talsiedlung*”, which led to the identification of some dwellings remains and ceramic fragments. It appears that he also dug two sections about 3x6 m in size, without making any significant discoveries²⁴.

The investigations were resumed later, in 1961, when, simultaneously with the excavations on the site of Cetăuia from Cucuteni, coordinated by Prof. Mircea Petrescu-Dîmbovița, excavations were carried out at *Dâmbul Morii*, under the direction of M. Dinu over eight campaigns: 1961-1966, 1977-1978 and 1989²⁵.

The excavations were carried out in three sectors (Fig. 2) as follows: sector A, the south-southeast part of the promontory, inside the defensive system; sector B, about 150 m north-

²⁴ SCHMIDT 1932, 12-13; PETRESCU-DÎMBOVIȚA 1966, 32; BALAUR 2020, 170.

²⁵ DINU 2006, 33.

west of the south-eastern edge of the promontory; and sector C, in the NNW area of the promontory, outside the defense ditch, probably an extension of the settlement²⁶.

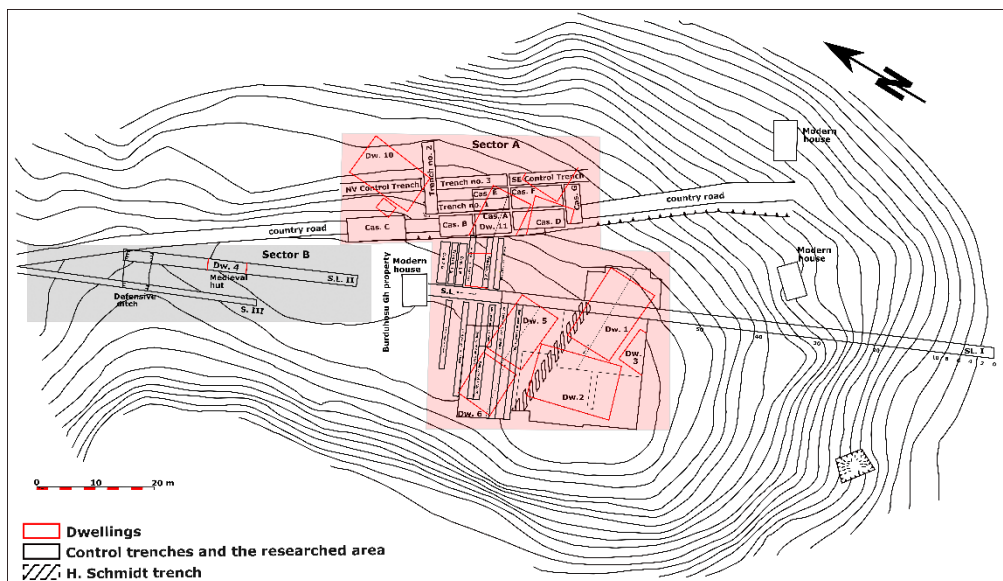


Fig. 2. Cucuteni – Băiceni – Dâmbul Morii. Excavations plan. Archaeological excavations from the years 1961-1966, 1977-1978 and 1989, sectors A and B (adapted after Dinu 2006, p. 43, with additions).

The settlement was inhabited in at least three stages. The oldest level belongs to the Cucuteni A₂ phase, attested by the presence of remains of houses and ceramic materials²⁷.

The next habitation stage was attributed to the Cucuteni A-B₁ subphase, also in sector A, where at least seven surface dwellings (1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 10 and 11) were investigated, of medium and large sizes (Fig. 2).

The last habitation stage was assigned to the Cucuteni A-B₂ subphase, in sector C, beyond the defensive system, where three dwellings (7, 8 and 9) were identified and investigated²⁸.

General features

The studies carried out so far on small batches of Cucuteni C type ceramics allowed to obtain some information regarding the manufacturing technique, the decorative manner and the functionality of this ceramic category. Discovered as early as the Cucuteni phases A₃-A₄ and A-B₁, the decorative motifs are made by printing, stamping with a toothed tool (comb), on the

²⁶ DINU 2006, 33-35, 43 (fig. 3); BALAUR 2020, 172.

²⁷ DINU 2006, 34; DINU 2009, 107.

²⁸ DINU 2006, 34; DINU 2009, 107.

neck or shoulder of the vessels. Later, the appearance of cord type decoration is attributed to the early penetration of the Cernavoda Ia-Ib communities into the Cucuteni area²⁹.

Technological process

In order to better understand the distinctive features of Cucuteni C-type pottery, it is necessary to know the manufacturing techniques, from the paste to the decorative motifs used. Starting from the establishment of these distinct features, based on the C-type ceramic material discovered at *Dâmbul Morii*, we wish to complete the information available to date.

In the Cucuteni A-B stage, type C pottery undergoes a series of changes regarding decoration. Some researchers support the periodization of the Cucuteni A-B phase into two subphases based on the decorative elements of the Cucuteni C-type ceramics. In the Cucuteni A-B₁ phase the decoration was composed of small notches, especially on the lip of the vessel, bands of incised lines (vertical, horizontal or oblique), punctures, horizontal, vertical or wavy striations drawn with a comb-type tool or with a jagged tool, or with a small broom type instrument, and plastic motifs in the form of knobs or protuberances. In the Cucuteni A-B₂ stage, under the influence of the Cernavodă Ic communities, the cord decoration makes his appearance, with angular zig-zag motifs, the string motif known as the caterpillar motif, and plastic motifs represented by buttons and protuberances, etc.³⁰.

From a technological point of view, Cucuteni C-type pottery, made from an inhomogeneous, coarse paste differs from the classic one by the use of crushed shells or snails in the paste, mixed with large-grained sand, and less often crushed shards, pebbles or plant debris. In the Cucuteni A-B phase, there are also documented cases in which the pottery was made of a finer paste, without the crushed shell, of a reddish-brick color, with a mixture of sand, documented by the discoveries from Traian - *Dealul Fântanilor*³¹.

The firing, carried out at lower temperatures, between 380 and 500° C, most likely in pits not in kilns, in a reducing, semi-oxidizing, rarely oxidizing manner, gives the paste a reddish, reddish-brown or brown color, rarely blackish. The non-carbonized organic materials gives the ceramic, on the inside part, a black color. The low firing temperature gives high porosity and friability, and depending on the heat penetration, the core area of the fragments is darker, black, dark brown or gray³².

Techniques and decorative motifs

Like the paste, the execution technique, shapes, decoration and ornaments are specific to this category. Based on the ceramic analyzed, three decoration techniques were identified. Mostly the fragments are decorated by the technique of incisions and the technique of

²⁹BOGHIAN 2004, 135; 2006, 166-167; MELNICIUC 2011, 235; MORINTZ, S., ROMAN 1968, 47.

³⁰BOGHIAN 2004, 135; 2006, 167; NIȚU 1977, 154.

³¹MARINESCU-BÎLCU 2000, 104; ALAIBA 2004, 231; MELNICIUC 2011, 244; CUCUȘ 1985, 66; BEM 2007, 58; DIACONESCU 2017, 37.

³²MARINESCU-BÎLCU 2000, 105; ALAIBA 2004, 232; GÂȚA 2000, 126-127; MELNICIUC 2011, 243.

impressions, made with the help of comb-type tool, with shell, bone or other tools. Among the documented decorative motifs we have the pectinate motif, rows of impressions or parallel horizontal and vertical bands, round etc. Specific to the A-B phase are the fir-type or rafter-type ornaments. In the Cucuteni A-B₂ phase, the decoration with short string impressions (the caterpillar motif) is encountered, made with the help of a wrapped or twisted cord. Mostly this decoration is done on the lip of the vessel or below, and in some cases above the shoulder. There are also cases where the lip of the vessels shows notches or impressions with the help of a tool³³.

Less used is the technique of plastic or relief decoration. It is manifested by the use of round, flattened protrusions or buttons, perforated or just mimicked handles, conical protrusions or au repoussé knobs, placed on the edge of the vessel's lip. Such decorative motifs were discovered on pieces from the settlements of Corlăteni, Traian - Dealul Fântânilor, Vorniceni, Calu-Piatra Șoimului³⁴.

In short, it seems that at the beginning of the Cucuteni A-B phase, in settlements such as those at Scutari-Mileanca, Vorniceni, Băiceni - *Dâmbul Morii* or Huși, the Cucuteni C-type pottery adopts decorative elements of the Cucuteni A₄ phase (rows on the shoulder of the vessel, suspended garlands doubled by horizontal, vertical oblique striations, made with a toothed or comb-type object, or triangles), similar to those discovered at Drăgușeni. Cucuteni A-B₂ phase appears to be characterized by the presence of cord decoration, either wrapped or twisted³⁵.

Typology of ceramics

Regarding the specific shapes of the Cucuteni C type ceramics, the high degree of fragmentation and friability made it difficult to create a typology. Since the first excavations at Cetățuia of Cucuteni, H. Schmidt identifies about eight to ten forms of vessels, supplemented by forms identified in subsequent research³⁶. In a larger study, R. Alaiba divides C-type ceramics into two distinct groups: vessels specific to Cucuteni C-type ceramics and vessels that took forms from Cucuteni ceramics³⁷.

The first category includes kraters, with wide mouth, and tronconic body³⁸, extremely rare short-necked vessels and globular body (tumblers or cups)³⁹, or wide-flared-edge vessels,

³³ ALAIBA 2006, 193; BEM 2007, 59; MELNICIUC 2010, 33; CUCOȘ 1985, 65; MARINESCU-BÎLCU 2000, 105; DIACONESCU 2017, 39.

³⁴ CUCOȘ 1985, 70; BEM 2007, 58; DIACONESCU 2017, 39.

³⁵ BOGHIAN 2006, 167.

³⁶ SCHMIDT 1932, 43-44.

³⁷ ALAIBA 2004, 232.

³⁸ SCHMIDT 1932, 43; DIACONESCU 2017, 38.

³⁹ ALAIBA 2006, 191; DIACONESCU 2017, 38; SCHMIDT 1932, 44.

similar to dishes⁴⁰, and rarely encountered rounded bowls and four-foot pots⁴¹. In the second group are placed vessels similar to the Cucuteni dishes, bowls and tumblers, complemented by high-neck and bulging vessels, pots, lids and miniature vessels⁴².

Discussions

The amount of Cucuteni C type ceramics in the settlement at *Dâmbul Morii* is relatively small compared to Cucuteni ceramics. A number of 362 ceramic fragments were found, of which 157 with different types of decoration and 205 with erased or unidentified decor (**Table 1**). The fragments discussed were found in dwellings, control ditches (S.C.2V, S.C.3 E) or even in the longitudinal ditch (S.L. II).

	Context/year/sector	No. of fragments	Decorated	Undecorated / uncertain
1.	S.L. II, 1962, sector A, m. 20-24	22	7	15
	S.L. II, 1964, Sector B	14	2	12
2.	Dw. 2, 1962, sector A	106	40	66
3.	Dw. 2, 1963, sector A	109	49	60
4.	Dw. 3, 1964, Sector C	11	8	3
5.	Dw. V, 1964, Sector A	60	28	32
6.	Dw. VI, 1966, Sector A	30	21	9
7	S.C. 2 V, 1989, setor A	2	0	2
	S.C. 3 E, 1989, setor A	8	2	6
	Total	362	157	205

The ceramic fragments from the lot discovered at *Dâmbul Morii* were shaped, in most cases, from a paste with crushed shells and vegetable scraps as degreasers, in few cases only vegetable scraps or crushed shells, and in some cases only sand. Even the color of the vessels differs, depending on the degree and type of firing, from brown-gray on both sides, brown on the outside and black on the inside, or black-gray on both sides, sometimes with the black core. There are also cases where they have a brick color, reminiscent of Cucuteni ceramics.

The material in this settlement, although largely fragmentary, offers a diverse decorative range. Among the identified fragments, much of it comes from the upper part of the vessels

⁴⁰ BEM 2007, 59; DIACONESCU 2017, 38.

⁴¹ SCHMIDT 1932, 43; ALAIBA 2004, 232; DIACONESCU 2007, 38.

⁴² ALAIBA 2004, 232; 2006, 191; MELNICIUC 2011, 246-247; CUCOȘ 1985, 67, fig. 4/7; SCHMIDT 1932, 44; DIACONESCU 2017, 38.

(lip or shoulder). The decorative motifs identified were made, in an approximately equal manner, by incision technique, on a number of 56 fragments (Fig. 3/1, 4-5, 8, 10, 19-20) and the technique of impressions or punching on 58 fragments (Fig. 3/1, 4, 5, 7-8, 10-11, 13-15, 17-18, 20-22), and in a lower number by the technique of plastic or embossed decoration (Fig. 3/8, 12, 15-16, 21). The incisions are presented in the form of horizontal or wavy strips, in some cases made with a serrated instrument, or short and deep incisions arranged horizontally, vertically or oblique. Impressions or punches are made using sharp-pointed objects (Fig.3/1, 4-5, 13, 20-22) or even a comb-type object (Fig. 3/2-3, 6-8, 17-18), a nail or a shell (Fig. 3/10,20), also arranged in horizontal rows. With the help of the "comb" type tool, by printing or stamping, decorative motifs in the form of rows of points or holes are made (Fig. 3/, 6-8, 17-18). There are also cases where the impressions are made deeper with the help of a spatula, creating the impression of an embossed decor (Fig. 3/14). On some fragments, coming from the neck of the vessels, there is also a decoration on the inside, made with a brush-type instrument, most often arranged horizontally (Fig. 3/19).



Fig. 3. Cucuteni C type ceramic from Băiceni - Dâmbul Morii: 1-7, Dwelling II, campaign 1962; 8-12, Dwelling II, 1963 campaign; 13-14, Dwelling V; 15-16, Dwelling VI; 17-19, materials from the longitudinal trench II; 20-22, Dwelling III, from sector C.

The plastic or embossed decor is present on 15 ceramic fragments, represented by rows of conical pills (Fig. 3/16) or buttons (Fig 3/8, 12), arranged on the shoulder of the vessels. In one case, we can speak of a protrusion made by pushing from the inside (Fig. 3/21), also a horizontally perforated handle (Fig. 3/11), and a wrapped belt applied to the vessel (Fig. 3/15).

Equally, diversified is the decor found on the lip of the vessels, identified on a number of 47 ceramic fragments. It ranges from incisions and notches (Fig. 4/1-5) arranged straight or

oblique, to punches of various shapes (Fig. 4/6) or punches made with a serrated instrument (Fig. 4/7-8). In one case, the decor found on the body of the vessel is similar to the one on the lip, made of short punches with a comb type object arranged zig zag (Fig. 3/17, 4/8).



Fig. 4. Cucuteni C type ceramic from Băiceni – *Dâmbul Morii*.
The decoration of the vessel lip - details.

Among the types of vessels identified at *Dâmbul Morii* are kraters (Fig. 3/1, 6, 17, 20), wide-mouth vessels, tronconical vessels, short-necked vessels with globular bodies (Fig. 3/13), extremely rare tumblers or cups (Fig. 3/16, 21), or vessels with a wide flared edge, similar to dishes. We do not exclude the possibility that the typology of vessels would have been more diversified, unfortunately the material available was very fragmentary, and could not be classified in a specific category.

Conclusions

The present study complements the known information on Cucuteni C Ceramics in Cucuteni area. Unfortunately, the extremely fragmented state has not allowed more concrete information to be made.

The Cucuteni C type pottery from the settlement of *Dâmbul Morii*, mostly fragmentary, is characterized by a rough, porous paste, mixed with crushed shells and with an incomplete burning, which gave the fragments a gray or brown color. There are also a number of ceramic fragments of brown-yellowish paste, with a mixture of crushed shells. If we take into account the burning and capacity of these vessels, we can say that they were mostly used as cooking pots. The characteristic decoration is represented by incisions and punches, and less used, the plastic decoration.

Regarding the chronological value of type C ceramics, we cannot say much due to the fragmentary state of the material. Its evolution extended over a period of about 800 years, starting with the Cucuteni A₃ phase to Cucuteni B₂ (4300-3500 cal BC). The Cucuteni A-B₁ phase is characterized by a decor made of notches, especially on the lip, bands of incised lines (vertical, horizontal or oblique), horizontal or wave beams, punches, horizontal, vertical or wavy stripes drawn with a comb-type instrument or a serrated instrument, plastic motifs in the form of buttons or protrusions, while the Cucuteni A-B₂ phase is characterized by a string decor, angular motifs made in zigzag, the lanyard motif known as the caterpillar motif,

protrusions, buttons, etc.⁴³. Unfortunately, the ceramic material found in the sector assigned to the A-B₂ phase is very diminished and very fragmentary, and has not allowed us to obtain conclusive information on this issue.

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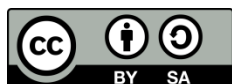
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⁴³ BOGHIAN 2004, 135; 2006, 167; CUCOȘ 1985, 63–92; PETRESCU-DÎMBOVIȚA 1966, 28,34; SCHMIDT 1932, 77.

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