

About the Cucuteni A Habitation Level from the Settlement of Dâmbul Morii (Cucuteni commune, Iasi County, Romania)

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Abstract. *The archaeological research carried out in the Cucuteni A-B phase settlement of Dâmbul Morii led to the discovery of 17 dwellings. The archaeological campaigns of 1962 and 1963 raised the issue of the existence of a Cucuteni A level in this settlement. The presence of bichrome and trichrome painted ceramic fragments of the Trușești type, considered more recently as belonging to the A₃ subphase, as well as others with deep incised or grooved decoration, chronologically and culturally included in the Cucuteni A₂ subphase, are clear evidence of the existence of this cultural level. We do not exclude the possibility that the materials decorated with incisions and grooves, present in both pits, to be attributed to the Precucuteni III phase, which is mostly contemporary with the Cucuteni A phase, as suggested by the existing calibrated radiocarbon dates. A similar situation, where Precucuteni III pottery appears in a Cucuteni A₃ medium, is also attested at Ruginoasa.*

Rezumat. *Cercetările arheologice în așezarea de fază A-B de la Dâmbul Morii au dus la identificarea a cel puțin 17 locuințe. Campaniile arheologice din 1962 și 1963 au ridicat problema existenței unui nivel Cucuteni A în această așezare. Prezența fragmentelor ceramice pictate bicrom și tricrom de tip Trușești, considerate mai nou ca aparținând subfazei A₃, precum și altele cu decor incizat adânc sau canelat, încadrate cronologic și cultural în subfaza Cucuteni A₂, sunt dovezi clare ale existenței acestui nivel cultural. Nu excludem ca materialele decorate cu incizii și caneluri, prezent în ambele gropi, să aparțină de fapt fazei Precucuteni III, care este contemporană în mare parte cu faza Cucuteni A, așa cum o sugerează și datele radiocarbon existente calibrate cu programe mai vechi sau mai noi. O situație similară, unde apare ceramică de factură Precucuteni III în mediu Cucuteni A₃, este atestată și la Ruginoasa.*

Keywords: *Dâmbul Morii, settlement, Cucuteni A phase, ceramics, pits.*

Introduction

First mentioned by H. Schmidt, under the name „Talsiedlung - the settlement in the Valley”, the researches at *Dambul Morii*² were carried out between the years 1961-1964, 1966, 1977-1978 and 1989. The eight excavation campaigns carried out identified about 17 dwellings attributed to the Cucuteni A-B phase³ (Fig. 2). Since the first campaigns, the person in charged

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² In some studies, the settlement is also known as Cucuteni-Baiceni - *Dambul Morii* or Baiceni - *Dambul Morii*.

³ In the archaeological literature, the author of the excavations mentions only 10 researched dwellings (DINU 2006; 2009)

of the excavations raised the issue of the existence of a Cucuteni A habitation level, especially based on the materials discovered in two pits, under two different dwellings.

The settlement from *Dâmbul Morii* is located northeast of Romania (Fig. 1/1), Iași County (Fig. 1/2), on the territory of Cucuteni commune, Băiceni village (Fig. 1/3), on a promontory positioned between the Recea stream to the west and the Morii stream to the east, with steeper slopes to the southeast and smoother on the other sides ⁴.

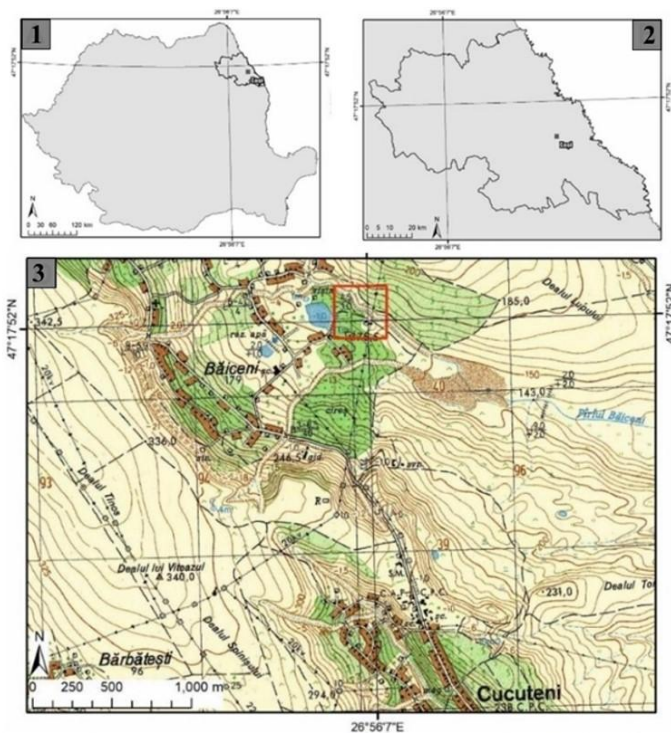


Figure. 1. Site location of Cucuteni - *Dâmbul Morii*. Iași County (1-2), and on the topographic map, Scale 1.25000(3) (after Asăndulesei 2020, Fig. 1,7).

The first discoveries associated with the existence of a Cucuteni A habitation level were made following the dismantling of the second platform of dwelling no. 2, by digging a control trench, about 10x0.5 m, in the direction of the axis of the dwelling (Fig. 3). In addition to the materials specific to phase A-B, a series of ceramic fragments with trichrome painting also appeared (Fig. 4). From this trench 49 ceramic fragments were collected, of which 25 from the category of fine ceramics, 13 from the category of semi-fine ceramics, and 11 coarse ones. To clarify this problem, three more control trenches with dimensions of about 10x1 m were dug⁵. The role of these control trenches was to establish the stratigraphy of the settlement,

⁴ DINU 2006, 31; 2009, 106; ASĂNDULESEI *et alii* 2020, 320; BALAUR 2020, 170.

⁵ Băiceni-*Dâmbul Morii*-Carnet nr. 1, Campaniile 1962, 1963.



Figure. 4. Ceramic materials discovered along the control trench on the axis of the dwelling

The same control trench on the axis of the dwelling led to the identification of pit no. 1, excavated in 1963, from which Cucuteni A ceramic materials were recovered. We do not have much information about this pit, only that it was at a depth of about 0.95 m from the surface of the first platform of the house. The markings on the identified ceramic fragments suggest a maximum depth of about 1.50 m. According to the excavation plan, it has a circular shape, with a diameter at the opening of about 1.6 m. Unfortunately we do not have a detailed profile of this pit, although there is a profile of the respective control trench.

The ceramic material associated with this pit is extremely diverse. Out of the total of 68 ceramic fragments, 36 were included in the category of fine ceramics, 17 in the category of semi-fine ceramics and 25 coarse one. Unfortunately, the extremely fragmentary state makes it difficult to categorize these vessels. From what we could observe, we can speak of support vessels (Fig. 5/1,2,4-5, Fig. 6/1-5), cups (Fig. 5/3, 9; Fig. 6/16- 18), globular vessels (Fig. 6/10), pyriform vessels (Fig. 6/14) or dishes (Fig. 6/11). Also the decoration seems diversified, both in the case of the one with incisions and the one with painting. The incised decoration was made of simple deep incised lines (Fig. 5/ 4-5, 8, 11-12) or lines of simple incised points (Fig. 5/9, 11) or slightly deeper incised points arranged obliquely (Fig. 5/3). A support fragment decorated with double incised lines, arranged obliquely or horizontally, filled with series of small oblique lines (Fig. 5/4) can be noted. Regarding the decorative motifs, in only one case we observe a spiral end (Fig. 5/5). There are also cases in which the two types of incisions mentioned are present together (Fig. 5/11), or a combination of dotted incisions and grooves (Fig. 5/9).



Figure 5. The ceramic material with incised and grooved decoration discovered in pit no. 1

In the case of the painted decoration, we noted the presence of bichrome painting, with white and brown (Fig. 6/6-9, 16, 18), as well as trichrome painting with white, brown and black (Fig. 6/1-5, 10-11, 17-18) or white, red and black (Fig. 6/12-15), with black playing the role of the outline color, for the wide white bands. The decorative motifs, from what can be seen, mostly consist of simple large bands arranged in angles, or arched. To a large extent, the pieces discovered inside the pit are largely similar to those from Trușești. We can assume that the role of this pit is most likely a household pit.

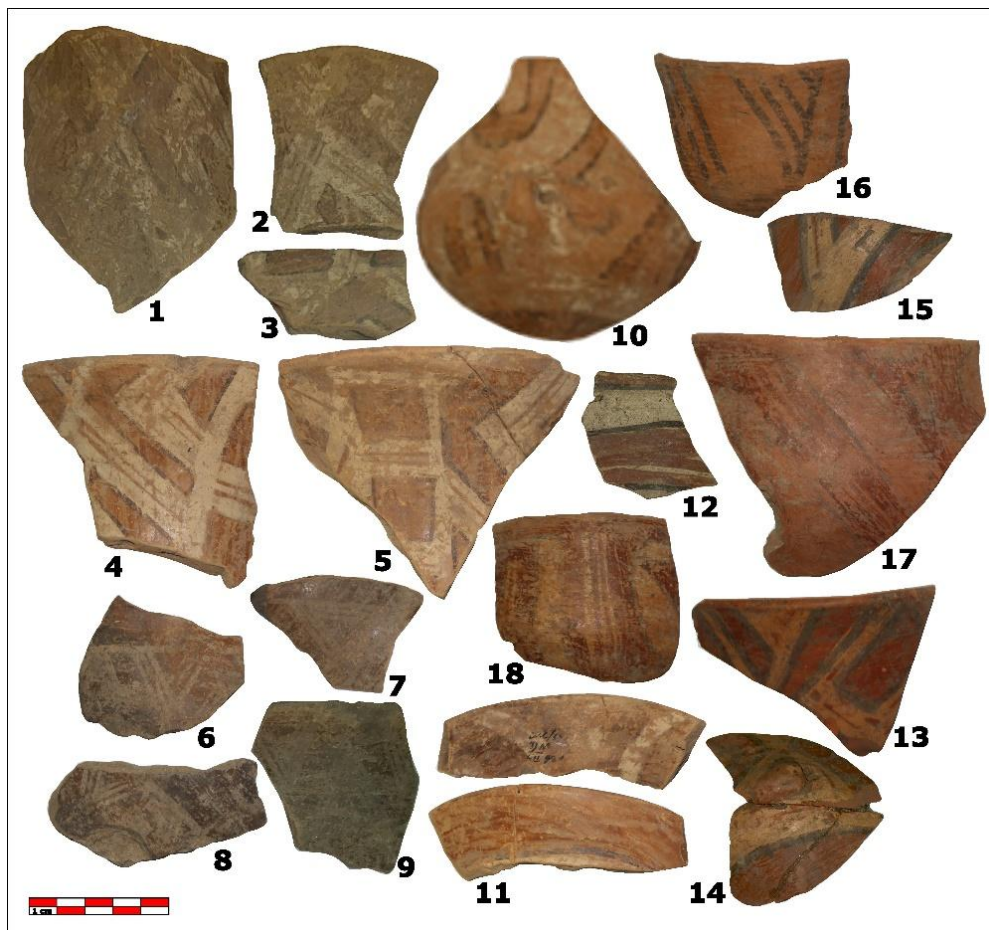


Figure. 6. The ceramic material painted decoration discovered in pit no. 1

The second complex with Cucuteni A materials, identified under dwelling no. 5, received the name of pit no. 2. The information regarding this pit was also taken from the excavation plans (Fig. 7). From what can be seen on the plan, the pit has an oval shape, with dimensions of 1.65 x 2.75, dug to a depth of -0.75 m from the surface of the dwelling platform or 0.95 m from the ground surface, according to the markings on the ceramic materials. Unlike the previous pit, for this one we have a profile documented (Fig. 7, lower right corner). The ceramic material from this pit is represented by about 56 fragments, of which 19 in the fine category, 26 semi-fine and 11 coarse one.

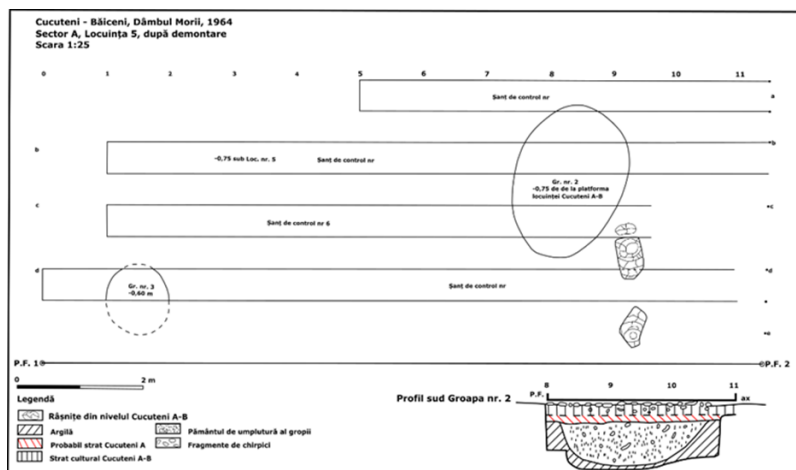


Figure. 7. Dwelling no. 5 after dismantling of the platform, with control trenches, pits 2 and 3 and south profile of pit no. 2



Figure. 8. The ceramic material discovered in pit no. 2.

In terms of shapes, the ceramic fragments are from support vessels (Fig. 8/1-2), cups (Fig. 8/4-8), from a dish (Fig. 8/9), a crater shaped vessel (Fig. 8/11) and two miniature vessels , probably a fruit vessel (Fig. 8/5) and the lower part of a fruit vessel with support (Fig. 8/10).

From a decorative point of view, we have vessels without decoration (Fig. 8/2-3,11), vessels decorated with incised lines and dots (Fig. 8/1) and vessels with trichrome painting, with white, brown and black (Fig. 8/4- 7, 9) or white red and black (Fig. 8/11), with black having the same role as contour color. The decorative motifs are marked by S type spirals (fig. 8/6, 10), made of wide strips framed by black lines, or spiral ends made in the same manner (Fig. 8/6). The empty spaces between the decorative motifs were filled with brown lines (Fig. 8/5-6). In the case of the dish, we notice that it had painted decoration, made in different ways, both inside and outside. Inside, the decoration was made of wide strips of wide color forming semicircles and ovals. On the outside, as far as I could see, the decorative register was divided in two by a white horizontal strip, unfortunately the erased painting did not allow us to make further more observations. A separation in different decorative registers can also be observed on the miniature support vessel. In the upper part, you can clearly see how this was done by a white horizontal band, doubled by black lines, probably the joining area with a possible fruit dish. On that support, the simple spiral motif, also done in white, framed by thin black bands, appears to be present. We also do not exclude the possibility that in the case of the fragment decorated with incisions, the area delimited by the two deep incisions to have had a crude red painting.

Discussions

Not only the material identified in the two pits attests the existence of a Cucuteni A level at *Dâmbul Morii*. The research of dwelling no 5 in the 1964 campaign led to the identification of a thin deposit, probably from the platform of a dwelling, made on a bed of thin timbers covered with daub⁶. Also the different orientation of some adobes that seem to be out of place is associated with this platform. Probably the residents of phase A-B habitation, at the time of building the new house, have arranged the land in a hurry without removing the bricks from the old house⁷.

Also, as I mentioned above, the presence of the bichrome and trichrome painted ceramic fragments of the *Truşeşti* type, considered more recently as belonging to the A₃ subphase, as well as others with deep decoration, chronologically and culturally included in the Cucuteni A₂⁸ subphase, are clear evidence of the existence this cultural level. Mostly the respective materials are from pit no. 1, discovered under the second platform of dwelling no. 2. Among the materials from this pit, a fragment of an anthropomorphic statuette with incised decoration, specific to the Cucuteni A phase, was discovered (Fig. 5/13). Starting from this discovery, we mention the fact that in the case of some feminine anthropomorphic representations identified at *Dâmbul Morii* we can observe a series of traits inherited from the Cucuteni A phase anthropomorphic plastic. Also, during the dismantling of dwelling no. 2, in

⁶ DINU 2006, 34.

⁷ DINU 2006, 34; BALAUR 2020, 173; Băiceni-Dâmbul Morii – Carnet de săpătură nr. 2, Campania 1964.

⁸ DINU 2006, 34; PETRESCU-DÎMBOVIȚA 1966, 32; PETRESCU-DÎMBOVIȚA *et alii* 1999, 266; MANTU 1998, 62.

the section drawn on the axis, at a depth of 0.80 m, a ceramic fragment with deep incised decoration and raw red painting was also discovered (Fig. 4, left lower corner). We do not exclude the possibility that the materials decorated with deep incisions and grooves, from both pits, to have actually belonged to the Precucuteni III phase, which is mostly contemporary with the Cucuteni A phase, as suggested by existing radiocarbon dates calibrated with older or newer programs⁹. A similar situation can be found in the Trușești-Țuguieța settlement, but also in other Cucuteni A sites, where Precucuteni III pottery appears in the Cucuteni A3 environment, such as at Ruginoasa¹⁰.

Based on the few analyzed materials, and on the analogies available from other settlements, we can certainly affirm that these pits from Dâmbul Morii would have belonged to a Cucuteni A level. Concretely, we can affirm that the ceramic material is similar to that associated with the Cucuteni A₃ level of Trușești. Based on the functionality of these pits, we can only make assumptions, most likely having a housekeeping role.

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⁹ MANTU 1998, fig. 32.

¹⁰ LAZAROVICI, LAZAROVICI 2010, 80-84, fig. 85.