

MUZEUL ȚĂRII CRIȘURILOR

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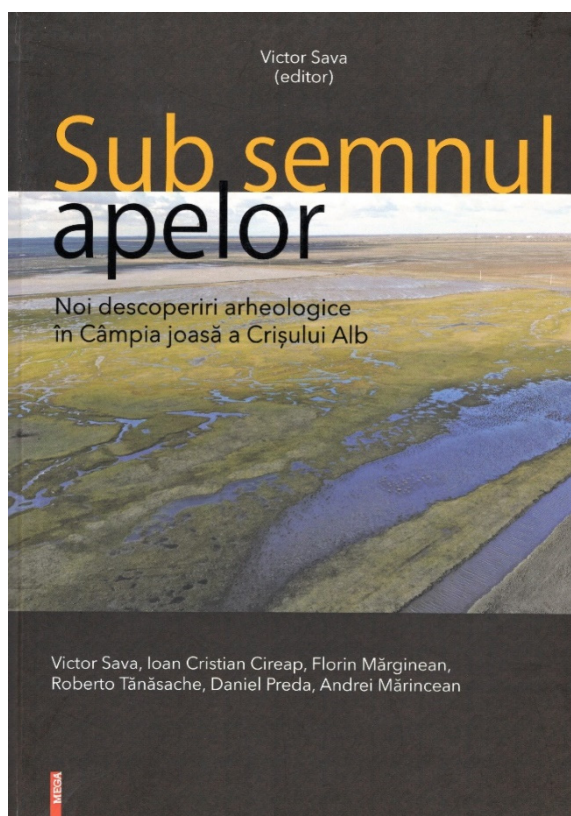
Victor Sava (ed.), *Sub semnul apelor. Noi descoperiri arheologice în Câmpia joasă a Crișului Alb*, Editura Mega, Cluj-Napoca, 2024, 600 p.

Gruia FAZECAȘ

First of all it gives me great pleasure to present the volume edited by V. Sava who together with C. Cireap, Fl. Mărginean, R. Tănăsache, D. Preda, A. Mărincean provides a comprehensive update to the the repertory of archaeological river discoveries in the low plain of Crișul Alb river (northwestern Arad County). bring up to date archaeological discoveries made in the low plain of Crișului Alb (north-western Arad County).

In the **Introduction** to the volume (pp. 17–18), the editor provides an overview of the main features and context in which this volume was created. The research conducted by colleagues from the Arad Museum Complex in this micro-region was initiated in response to the requirements of infrastructure development and the updates to the General Urban Plans of the four municipalities in question. It essentially represents an update of the archaeological find repertory in Arad County to the year 2023. It thus emerges that the fieldwork was conducted during the period spanning 2005, 2008, 2019–2023. This volume presents a systematic and accessible overview of the archaeological sites discovered in four administrative-territorial units: Chișineu-Criș, Grăniceri, Macea and Pilu, which collectively encompass an area of 623 km², representing approximately 8% of the total surface area of Arad County.

The following introductory chapter, which addresses **Methodological issues** (pp. 19-20), written by V. Sava, it delineates the methodology employed in the preparation of this volume. The process commenced with an examination of the county archaeological repertory¹, complemented by the consultation of other specialized works on specific types of finds or individual sites. Additionally, the three Austrian historical maps (1764-1887) were utilized as a source of reference. The available sources of the Ministry of Culture were also consulted, such as the List of Historical Monuments (LMI) and the National Archaeological Repertory (RAN). At



¹ M. Barbu, P. Hügel, G. P. Hurezan, E. D. Pădureanu (eds.), *Repertoriul arheologic al Mureșului Inferior. Județul Arad, Timișoara*, 1999.

the same time, the database of the Archaeological Heritage Research and Development Service of the Arad Museum Complex, which was compiled on various occasions, was consulted and utilized extensively.

The most crucial resource at hand was the LiDAR mapping of Arad County. Subsequent to the establishment of a comprehensive database integrating all aforementioned sources, surface surveys commenced. Over the course of several years (2005, 2008, 2019-2023), existing sites were re-examined, while new ones were identified.

From a methodological standpoint, the most intriguing aspect for me was the manner in which the sites were identified. It proved considerably more useful to mark each site with a code. The code was composed of three letters that indicated the code for each administrative-territorial unit (CHC = Chişineu-Criş, GRA = Grăniceri, PIL = Pîlu, MAC = Macea), followed by the identification number of the site (1 – ∞) and three additional letters that provided insight into the nature of the site (ASZ = settlement, MVL = mound, NEC = necropolis, TEZ = treasure, etc.).

The final introductory chapter, authored by V. Sava and entitled **Archaeological Data from the Scientific Literature** (pp. 21-23), serves as a comprehensive historical account of the archaeological research carried out in the four municipalities under consideration in this volume.

The most substantial part of the volume is the four chapters corresponding to the administrative-territorial unit studied. Each chapter follows the same pattern, a brief analysis of the archaeological discoveries in the municipality in question, followed by the archaeological site sheets. The site sheets contain seven references, as follows: 1 - site type, 2 - site location (WGS 1984), 3 - nature of the archaeological research (field walk, preventive or systematic research), 4 - description of the research and finds (research history), 5 - chronology of the site, 6 - observations about the site and 7 - archaeological literature. The site sheets are accompanied by a digital elevation model of the site, which is based on LiDAR measurements at different scales. In addition, the site sheets include satellite photographs of the site (Google Earth images taken in different years), aerial photographs of the sites taken by drone, as well as cross-sections through the sites. In the case of previously known sites that have benefited from archaeological research, the site file is supplemented with excavation plans, archival photographs, drawings, and photographs of the resulting archaeological material.

In the chapter dedicated to the municipality of **Chişineu-Criş**, a total of 12 archaeological sites and a hoard with an unknown place of discovery in the area of Chişineu-Criş are recorded (pp. 24-60). Another 107 sites are documented within the territorial-administrative unit **Grăniceri** (pp. 61-235). The great majority of these sites, 114 in total, have been identified and files have been filed within the municipality of **Macea** (pp. 236-473). Additionally, 42 archaeological sites were discovered in the municipality of **Pîlu** (pp. 474-576).

The **Conclusions** of the volume include a synthesis of quantitative and qualitative considerations regarding the sites discussed in this volume (pp. 577-595). The total number of archaeological sites (including settlements, necropolises, burial mounds, anthropic mounds, etc.) presented in this book is 239 (see Figures 1-4 and Table 1). It is regrettable that the vast majority of these sites have only been investigated through surface surveys. This lack of archaeological investigation is particularly noticeable when compared to the consistent number of sites (see Figure 3).

The distribution of archaeological monuments according to the type of finds and the main chronological stages reveals that the majority of these monuments are anthropogenic mounds.

Eight settlements are attributed to the Neo-Neolithic period, 18 sites are attributed to the Bronze Age, and three sites are dated to the Iron Age. A total of 24 archaeological sites are attributed to the 2nd-5th centuries, 13 to the 10th-13th centuries, and 10 to the 14th-17th century. To the modern and contemporary period, 8 sites are attributed. For 188 sites, the overwhelming majority of which are anthropic mounds, the period to which they belong cannot be specified (pp. 577-578 and Fig. 1, and Tab. 1). The volume concludes with a **Bibliographical list** of sources consulted (pp. 596-598) and a brief **Summary** of the conclusions in english (pp. 599-600).

I would like to turn to an aspect that is also the subject of my research in an adjacent area of Arad County. A noteworthy phenomenon is illustrated by the high number of identified anthropogenic mounds (p. 589, Fig. 14). In the municipality of Grăniceri, 53 of the 107 identified archaeological sites are anthropogenic mounds. In the commune of Macea, 102 of the 114 identified archaeological sites are anthropogenic mounds (p. 237). In the municipality of Pîlu, 26 of the 42 identified sites are anthropogenic mounds (p. 475). Given the archaeological evidence, the existence of a considerable number of mounds in this region is not unexpected. The mapping of archaeological monuments in the western part of Arad and Bihor counties, particularly in the low-lying plain areas, has uncovered a significant number of anthropogenic mounds. A similar phenomenon is found in Békés county in Hungary².

They typically exhibit a circular configuration, are constructed using soil as the primary material, and are predominantly situated along ancient waterways. With few exceptions, the vast majority of these are located on agricultural land, consequently subject to annual plowing, and are also the most severely affected. Some have been totally destroyed by agricultural work, with only residual yellow patches remaining where the mound once stood. In the case of a group of mounds located in the northeastern corner of the municipality of Grăniceri, an unusual situation was encountered. On the 1952 map, approximately 37 mounds were marked; however, it appears that the mounds in question (GRA068MVL - GRA104MVL) were entirely leveled during land improvement works (p. 209-210).

It is postulated by colleagues at the museum in Arad that at least some of the mounds were erected as burial mounds (tumuli) during the Early Bronze Age, which would indicate the arrival of the Yamnaya population in the area. In the absence of consistent settlements, especially during the EBA I period, these mounds may be indicative of human habitation in the region during this chronological stage. However, the absence of excavations may limit the precision of their chronological framing. It is also possible that these tumuli may date to the Late Copper Age or Late Bronze Age.

In conclusion, it is crucial to underscore the significance of LiDAR technology in the identification of archaeological sites. However, its application is contingent upon the integration of field walking and systematic surveys within a unified methodological and spatial framework. A comparative analysis of the level of information for the four municipalities at the 1999 and 2023 stages, respectively, unequivocally demonstrates the pivotal role of the new methods and techniques employed.

² Á. Bede, *Kurgánok a Körös-Maros vidékén... Kunhalmok tájrégészeti és tájökológiai vizsgálata a Tiszántúl középső részén* [Kurgans in the Land of the Körös and Maros Rivers... Landscape archaeological and landscape ecological investigations on mounds in the central part of the Tiszántúl region, Hungary], Budapest, 2016; Á. Bede, *Cadastral Field Works on Prehistoric Mounds in the Central Part of the Tiszántúl Region*, in *Acta Archaeologica Academiae Scientiarum Hungarica* 70, 2019, 283-300.

From a methodological standpoint, the approach taken by colleagues at the museum in Arad is without precedent in Romanian archaeological literature. It bears comparison with the programme of the Hungarian Institute of Archaeology, as evidenced by the 12 volumes of Magyarország Régészeti Topográfiája [= The archaeological topography of Hungary] (1966-2022). Furthermore, it is noteworthy that this volume is just one of two that colleague V. Sava has edited this year³, and I congratulate him for his hard work and wish him many more years of similarly distinguished scientific achievements.

³ V. Sava, Fl. Gogâltan (eds.), *Epoca Bronzului de-o parte și de alta a Carpaților. Studii în onoarea lui Tudor Soroceanu / The Bronze Age on both sides of the Carpathians. Studies in Honor of Tudor Soroceanu at 80 Years*, Ed. Mega, Cluj-Napoca, 2024.