

Clarifying the past: A synthesis of the research history of the Suci de Sus culture according to sites and finds from the eponymous village

Objasnění minulosti: syntéza historie výzkumu kultury Suci de Sus na základě lokalit a nálezů z eponymní obce

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KEYWORDS

Village of Suci de Sus – Suci de Sus culture – Lăpuș group – history of research – geophysical survey – pottery – bronze artefacts

ABSTRACT

The article focuses on a reconstruction of the history of archaeological research into the Suci de Sus culture, particularly in the eponymous village of Suci de Sus in northern Transylvania. The aim is to synthesise fragmented information on research conducted in this area from the late 19th century to the present. The author focuses on clarifying the origin of artefacts, especially those associated with this culture, and addressing controversies regarding their original find sites. In addition to historical overviews of the research, recent discoveries, including results from geophysical surveys conducted in 2024, are discussed, suggesting the presence of archaeological structures that may contribute to a better understanding of the function and organisation of sites in this area. The article also explores cultural connections in the Bronze Age, particularly those related to the Lăpuș group, and clarifies the relationship between the finds at Suci de Sus and other sites in Transylvania. The study provides a more comprehensive view of the significance of the Suci de Sus culture and its place within the broader context of the Bronze Age in Transylvania.

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1. Introduction

The village of Suci de Sus, whose medieval development dates to the 14th century, is located in northern Transylvania, in the eastern part of the Lăpuș Depression, in Suci Valley, by the southern and south-western foothills of the Țibleș Mountains and those north-east of Breaza Peak (Fig. 1). This archaeologically significant settlement is particularly renowned for the important Bronze Age remains unearthed at several sites within its boundaries, complemented by a few random finds of bronze artefacts.

Over the course of the late 19th and early 20th century, pioneering archaeological investigations were conducted in the area by figures such as János Szendrei, Domokos Teleki, and Márton Roska. Their research focused on key sites like the flat cremation cemetery at Poduri pe Coastă (Fig. 2) and the barrow cemetery at Troian (Fig. 3). The mentioned cemeteries lie on the fourth step of the main tributary of Lăpuș River terraces and extend in a length of several kilometres, Poduri pe Coastă up to almost Suci de Jos, Troian up to Groșii Țibleșului, also with considerable widths (Posea 1962, 133–140). However, the documentation of these early investigations is highly deficient, and a significant share of the discovered materials has regrettably been lost or



Fig. 1. Map of Suci de Sus and neighbouring villages. Base map: mapy.cz; author M. Filip.

Obr. 1. Mapa Suci de Sus a okolních vesnic. Podkladová mapa: mapy.cz; autor M. Filip.



Fig. 2. Suciul de Sus. Poduri pe Coastă terrace. Photo by C. Kacsó.
Obr. 2. Suciul de Sus. Terasa Poduri pe Coastă. Foto C. Kacsó.



Fig. 3. Suciul de Sus. Troian terrace. Photo by C. Kacsó.
Obr. 3. Suciul de Sus. Terasa Troian. Foto C. Kacsó.

mixed with artefacts from other sites. This historical fragmentation has led to sometimes contradictory accounts and ongoing debates, particularly concerning the precise origin and cultural affiliation of many finds.

This article aims to synthesise this dispersed history of archaeological research at Suciul de Sus by critically examining available records and materials. To achieve this, the study first provides a comprehensive reconstruction of the research history from the late 19th century to the present day, drawing upon historical accounts, excavation reports and museum collections. Building on this historical foundation, the article seeks to clarify the oft-debated provenance of key artefacts, especially those controversially attributed to both Suciul de Sus and Gornești, by analysing the available evidence to determine their most likely origins. Furthermore, the study integrates recent findings, including the results of geophysical surveys conducted in 2024, to highlight potential archaeological structures and discuss their implications for understanding the site's layout and function. Finally, by examining the discovered bronze artefacts and pottery fragments, the article contextualises these Bronze Age discoveries, contributing to a broader understanding of the Lăpuș group and its cultural connections within the Transylvanian region. By addressing these goals, this article seeks to provide a more coherent and nuanced understanding of the archaeological significance of the Suciul de Sus site and its place within the broader context of Bronze Age Transylvania.

2. Research history of the Suciul de Sus

Suciul de Sus appears for the first time in the archaeological literature in 1887, in the annual report of the National Society of Archaeology and Anthropology, albeit without further details, with excavations conducted in three different places under its supervision (Szendrei 1889, 42–44). In the same year, Szendrei issues a brief report on the research of Suciul de Sus, specifying that burial mounds unearthed on the *Troian* plateau contained Bronze Age urns with specific decorations similar to those on the pottery found at 'St. László' in Bihar (in fact, Biharszentjános [Sântion]) (Szendrei 1887, 378). The same author also references the Suciul de Sus excavations in the report published in 1888 (Szendrei 1888, 87) and resumes their discussion in the note published two years later, addressing mainly the finds from the Lăpuș barrow cemetery, maintaining that on the land on the *Troian* plateau, which belonged to Baroness Györgyné Bánffy, ten to fifteen burial mounds were scattered, the contents of which were identical with those of the Lăpuș barrows. The author also speaks of the 'padur' site, the 25-metre-high terrace slope of 'Tökés' valley ('Groși') at Suciul de Sus, where he found burial urns placed directly in the ground (Szendrei 1890, 377). Szendrei's research is briefly commented on by József Hampel, who appreciates that the pottery discovered at Suciul de Sus and entered in the collection of the Magyar Nemzeti Múzeum (Hungarian National Museum) in Budapest (hereinafter MNMB) pertains, most likely, to the Late Bronze Age (Hampel 1888, 175–176; Hampel 1892, 41).

Information slightly different from the above is included in the monograph of Szolnok-Doboka County, published in seven volumes in the early 20th century. The first volume mentions that Szendrei discovered in the prehistoric settlement of Suciú de Sus poorly-fired urn fragments, highly ornate, which were brought to MNMB (Tagányi et al. 1901, 116), while in volume six references are made to the finds at the *Troian* site, with the mention that Count László Teleki discovered pottery fragments there as well as at *Mocsika*, which he assembled and included in the beautiful collection he owned in Budapest consisting of objects originating from said site (Kádár 1903, 501, nota 4).¹ Volume seven of the same monograph publishes a picture of an assemblage of vessels, specifying that these were dated to the prehistoric period and that their place of origin was Suciú de Sus (Kádár 1905, illustration on p. 171). Unfortunately, the illustration is of poor quality, and thus it is practically impossible to establish the features of pottery documented in this manner.

In the report published in 1900, Endre Orosz still speaks of the prehistoric settlement of Suciú de Sus, from which come fragments of decorated urns found in subsequent excavations conducted at the site by Szendrei; these artefacts attributed to the Late Bronze Age (Orosz 1900, 26, No. 37) were sent to the museum in Budapest.

As indicated in a later report, Orosz had visited the village of Suciú de Sus in the summer of 1898 in order to see, according to his statements, the place where the famous cemetery with prehistoric urns was situated. The report mentions the cemetery excavators: Károly Torma,² János Szendrei and Domokos Teleki, the latter being appreciated for having made the greatest contribution to knowledge of the Suciú de Sus remains and for establishing an important collection housed in his Gornești Castle (Orosz 1915). The graphic support of this work includes two vessels published in 1900 originating from the Gornești region (Hampel ed. 1900, 208, 213; Fig. 4), with the author specifying that these were in fact discovered at Suciú de Sus.

Interestingly, Orosz mentions the *Troian* terrace ('*Troján*') as the location of the flat cemetery, as he himself had discovered numerous small potshards in the yellow clayey-sandy soil. There is obvious confusion concerning the location of the two Bronze Age-dated cemeteries of Suciú de Sus, which further suggests that by the late 19th century, mound traces on *Troian* were no longer visible.



Fig. 4. Suciú de Sus. Pottery. After Hampel ed. 1900.

Obr. 4. Suciú de Sus. Keramika. Podle Hampel ed. 1900.

Novel data on the finds at Suciú de Sus were published in 1914. In a brief report, Roska mentions the research he conducted there during the previous year, with the main goal of identifying Teleki's excavations (Roska 1914, 143–144). The author argued that Teleki carried out several excavation campaigns at Suciú de Sus. According to information obtained from a native inhabitant involved in the excavations, these occurred at two sites, at *Troian* ('*Troján*') and at *Poduri pe Coastă* ('*Poduri pé kaszta*'), the first investigating, Roska argues, a settlement, the second, a cemetery. The 1913 excavations were conducted on the *Poduri pe Coastă* terrace, on a 19.50-metre-long and 5.25-metre-wide area located on the land of Ioan Bizo. Thirteen features were identified: eleven cremations and two cremation pyres. Although all the graves were disturbed, Roska makes a few observations:

1. The newly discovered graves date to the same period as those identified in Teleki's 'non-systematic excavations'.³
2. The cremated human bones and offering vessels were set in the east-west direction.⁴
3. The cremation pyres were set between the graves.

The Suciú de Sus finds are also mentioned in the reports drafted by Iulian Marțian documenting urn mounds at *Tabăra*⁵ and menhir remains on the *Troian* plateau (Martian 1909, 329, No. 193; Marțian 1920, 87, No. 644).

In the study published in 1940 on the excised decorated pottery of Transylvania, Roska mentions his own investigation at Suciú de Sus only by quoting the journal that published brief information on the 1913 excavations, though discussing in somewhat greater detail Teleki's and Szendrei's finds and mentioning several works that present or discuss the Suciú de Sus pottery, noting that some authors indicate Gornești as the place of origin for this pottery (Roska 1940, 6–7, No. 9). Roska also briefly examined the chronological framing of the pottery he termed the 'Suciú de Sus type', maintaining that most of the pottery dates to the Bronze Age, with a part also extending into the Early Iron Age as well, as evidenced by the wares (urns and cups) discovered in barrow IV at *Troian* (Roska 1940, 22).

Partially different data on the finds of Suciú de Sus are provided by Roska in the archaeological report he published in 1942 (Roska 1942, 90, No. 78). It is claimed that Teleki excavated at *Podini pe coaste*⁶ a Copper Age cremation cemetery⁷ with graves in a trough shape, located roughly a palm's length beneath the ground, set at a distance of 2–3 m from one another. Each of the graves contained an urn with cremated human bones, covered by a cup set upside-down. The urns were topped each by a deep bowl. In a few cases, the urns were surrounded by slate slabs, and near one of the urns lay a copper chisel. The excavation conducted in the autumn of 1913 is also mentioned, though this time it is argued that twelve features were unearthed, graves (or rectangular cremation pyres) made of cobbles. No details are provided for Szendrei's finds, only a mention that twenty-six pottery fragments and three charred bone fragments reached the MNMB (Fig. 5). The barrows with urns discovered at *Tabăra* are mentioned based on Marțian's notes, together with the menhirs from *Troian*. The drawings document four vessels originating from the flat cemetery (Fig. 6; Roska 1942, Fig. 110–113). Given that Fig. 112 in Roska's repertory reproduces the vessel already published in *Archaeologiai Értesítő* (Hampel ed. 1900, 213), it seems rather likely that the remaining vessels, illustrated then for the first time, were part of Teleki's Gornești collection.⁸

Although Orosz, then Roska on several occasions and also Pál Patay (1942, 113, note 29) noted that the two vessels published in the *Archaeologiai Értesítő* journal were not discovered at Gornești or nearby, but in fact at Suciú de Sus, the site from central Transylvania still appears, especially in older works (Wosinsky 1904, 66, pl. XI, XII; Hoernes 1911, 12, Fig. 15; Kossina 1912, 178–179, Fig. 7;



Fig. 5. Suciú de Sus. MNMB collection. Pottery. Photo by A. Dabasi.

Obr. 5. Suciú de Sus. Sbíрка MNMB. Keramika. Foto A. Dabasi.

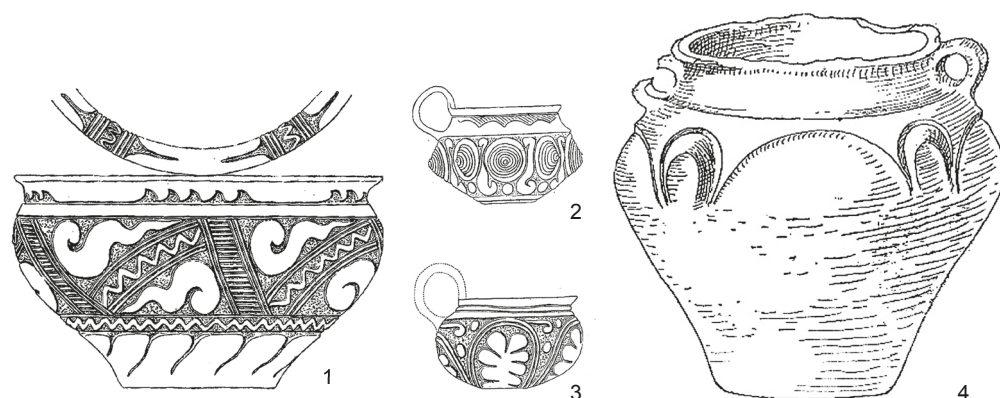


Fig. 6. Suciú de Sus. Domokos Teleki former collection. Pottery. After Roska 1942.

Obr. 6. Suciú de Sus. Bývalá sbírka Domokose Telekiho. Keramika. Podle Roska 1942.

Hoernes, Menghin 1925, 414–416; Pârvan 1926, 420–421, 427–428, Fig. 277, 278; Childe 1929, 380, Fig. 215; Reinecke 1942, 102–103) as the place of origin of these vessels.

Controversies on the place of origin, either Gornești or Suciú de Sus, also existed in connection with other pottery finds. Thus, the Cluj Museum collection comprises fourteen vessels recorded as having been originally discovered at Gornești (Gooss 1876, 222–223; Téglás 1887, 86, No. 132), yet which were identified, according to Popescu, at Suciú de Sus (Popescu 1944, 136–137).⁹

Still, in the old collection, the Cluj Museum holds even today a shallow bowl, a cup, and numerous fragments, all highly ornate with motifs typical for Suciú de Sus (Fig. 7).

Mór Wosinsky's monograph on white encrusted pottery publishes the discussed vessels for the first time (Wosinsky 1904, 66, pl. VII, 2, 3 and pl. X, 2, 3), noting that these originate from an unknown place in Transylvania and that they are held at the Cluj Museum.

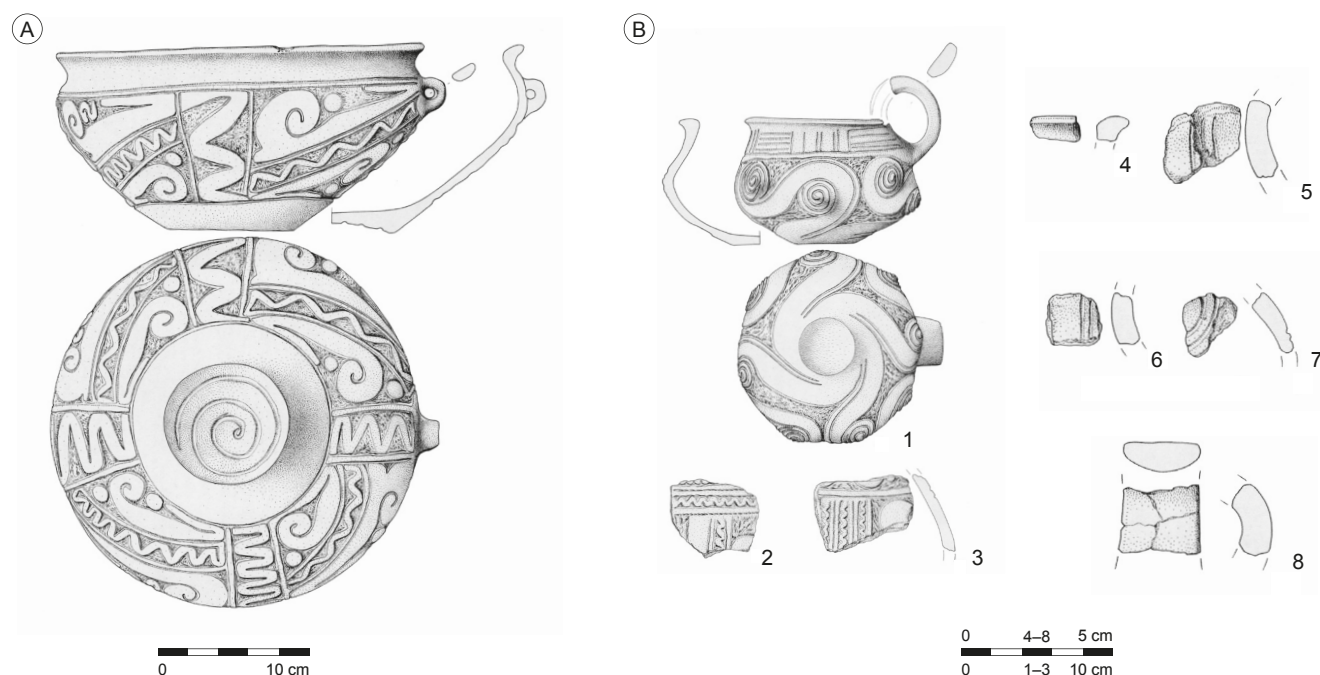


Fig. 7. Suci de Sus. MNIT collection. Shallow bowl, cup, potshards. After Kacsó 2008.
Obr. 7. Suci de Sus. Sbírnka MNIT. Miska, pohár, zlomky keramiky. Podle Kacsó 2008.

The vessels are also reported in the study published by Roska in 1940 as well as in his archaeological repertoire of 1942 (Roska 1940, 6, No. 9; 1942, 91, No. 78). In both works, it is argued that these were more than likely discovered at Suci de Sus according to their shape, decoration and colour.

The bowl and cup are photographically reproduced in the 1967 guide of the Cluj Museum exhibition with the specification, in the figure legend, that these originate from Suci de Sus ('Suciul de Sus') (Daicoviciu 1967, Fig. 7). The same provenance is attributed to the cup by Constantin Daicoviciu and Emil Condurachi (Daicoviciu, Condurachi 1972, Fig. 50). These vessels in the Cluj-based Museum collection are probably the ones mentioned, albeit not very accurately, by Tiberiu Bader when discussing the older Suci de Sus finds (Bader 1976, 39). The author states that the materials came from Teleki's excavations very likely performed in the cremation cemetery of *Poduri*, without yet indicating the source of his assertions. Still, Bader claimed in a later work presenting the assemblage of finds from Transylvania that the vessels published by Wosinsky possibly came from Suci de Sus (Bader 1979, 28, No. 58).

The chapter addressing the Suci de Sus culture within a volume issued in 1980 again reproduces the bowl and cup, the figure's legend mentioning Gornești as the place of origin (Miclea, Florescu 1980, Fig. 401, 402).¹⁰ The same find place of the discussed vessels is indicated in the archaeological report of Mureș County compiled by Valeriu Lazăr (1995, 137). The intact vessels were more recently published in a new guide to the Cluj Museum exhibits (Vasiliev et al. eds. 1998, Fig. 7) and a work for public dissemination (Rotea 2009, Fig. 14, 15), though without any information provided on their provenance.

There is no information of any sort on the find location of this pottery in the Cluj-based museum collection. The presence of two restorable vessels makes rather plausible the hypothesis according to which these were grave goods. Given that the largest Suci de Sus cemetery known in Transylvania is precisely that of Suci de Sus-*Poduri pe Coastă*, it seems very likely that the pottery discussed here was in fact discovered in this cemetery (Kacsó 2008).

Gornești as the place of origin of Suci de Sus-type artefacts re-emerges in the literature from the mid-1960s. Thus, in 1965 Nicolae Vlăsa publishes several pottery fragments discovered at *Cserépcsűr* (*Șura hârburilor*) in Gornești, including several that are safely of the Suci de Sus type (Vlăsa 1965, 20, Fig. 2). Mentioning these materials without any comment, Bader includes Gornești among the places from Transylvania that yielded Suci de Sus finds (Bader 1972, 513, No. 16; 1979, 27, No. 24), while Valeriu Lazăr speaks of a spread settlement, attributed 'either to the Gornești culture (as termed by some authors owing to the eponymous settlement), or the Suci de Sus culture (by analogy with the pottery there and that of Lăpuș)' (Lazăr 1995, 138). In another work, the same author mentions the pottery of Gornești-*Șura hârburilor*, without yet providing a source for the information, that it was 'highly ornate with excised spiral motifs, grooves, straight, wavy and discontinued lines, grids in a rhombus shape as well as with plant motifs. It has many parallels in Lăpuș pottery' (Lazăr 1999, 51).¹¹

In a relatively recent discussion on Bronze Age-dated finds of Gornești published by Vlăsa as well as subsequent research conducted at the site already included by Roska in his report (Roska 1942, 97, No. 29), we argued that the *Cserépcsűr* (*Șura hârburilor*) settlement very likely belongs to the bearers of the Wietenberg culture, while the Suci fragments found there, similar to others discovered in central and south-eastern Transylvania, are 'imports' in the Wietenberg milieu (Kacsó 2007, 54–55).

The archaeological excavations conducted in 1996 at Gornești-*Cserépcsűr* by Mihai Petică and Andrei Zrinyi, possibly also owing to their small sizes, failed to clarify the issue of the cultural affiliation of the settlement there, although the authors speak of finds dated to the 'Late Bronze Age – Early Hallstatt', yet also to a 'fully Hallstatt' chronological framing, or pottery of 'Late Bronze Age dating – delayed Wietenberg' (Petică, Zrinyi 2000, 333–334).

A possible explanation of the large number of Suci de Sus pottery fragments present within the mentioned confines at Gornești, different than what was already proposed, has been

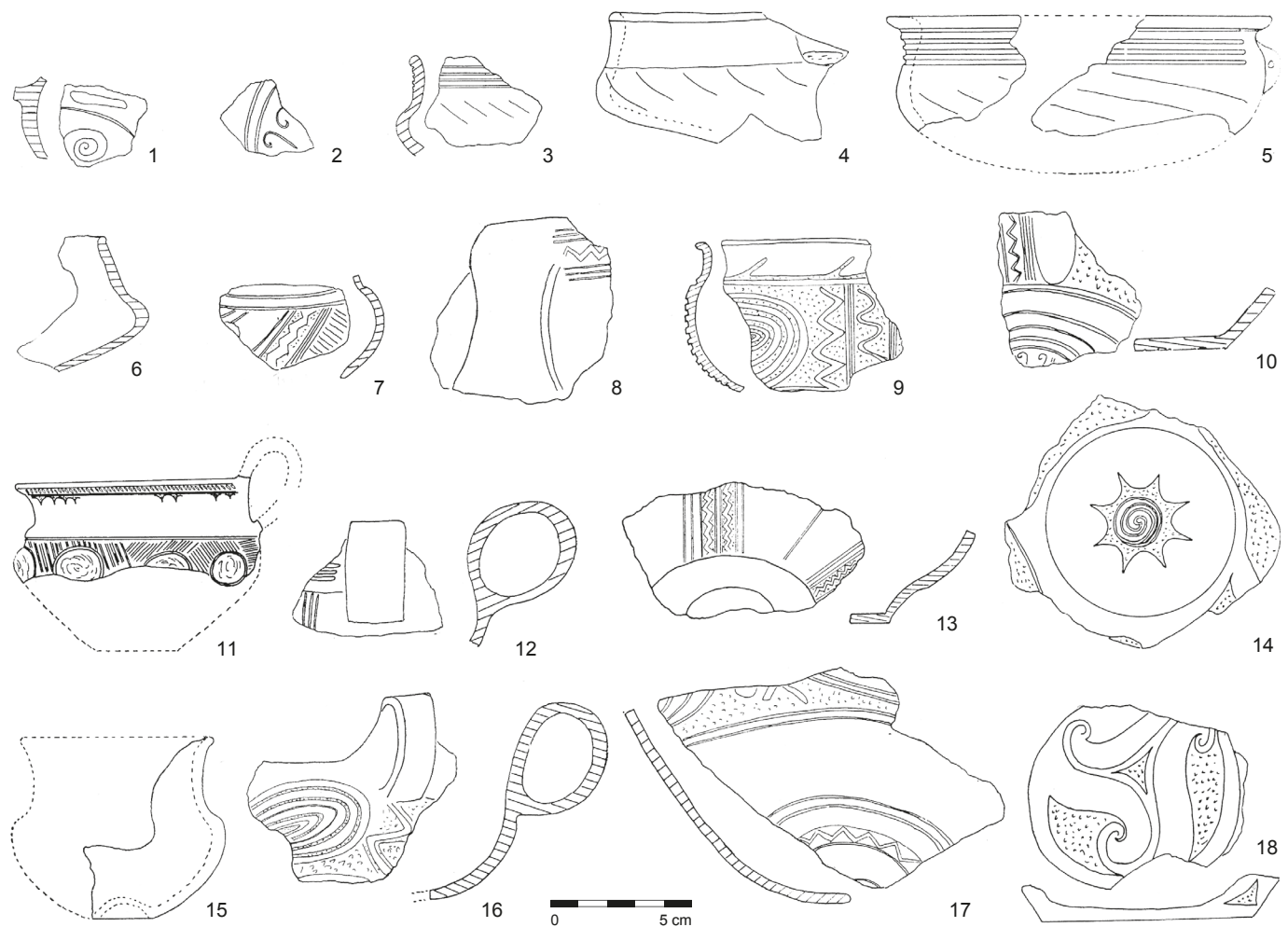


Fig. 8. Suci de Sus. Domokos Teleki former collection. Pottery. After Bader 1976.

Obr. 8. Suci de Sus. Bývalá sbírka Domokose Telekiho. Keramika. Podle Bader 1976.

suggested precisely by Vlassa in an informal discussion, namely that they in fact come from the Teleki museum collection, dispersed in a place located at a relatively small distance from Teleki Castle, purposefully or not in the location where such fragments had already surfaced, at a time when, by the end of WWII, the collection was to a large extent destroyed.¹²

The Teleki collection of Gornești also included other pottery items discovered at Suci de Sus-*Poduri pe Coastă*, as well as in the barrow cemeteries on *Troian* terrace, or *Podanc* terrace at Lăpuș. Unfortunately, the intact vessels, like those published by Roska, did not survive. Only a relatively large quantity of pottery fragments was rescued (Fig. 8–10), of which a significant part reached the collections of the Mureș County Museum in Târgu Mureș (hereinafter MJM; Bader 1976).

The archaeological excavations at Suci de Sus were continued during the second half of the 20th century. Thus, since 1961, during a field walk performed by Mircea Rusu on *Poduri pe Coastă* terrace, a partially destroyed cremation was discovered (Rusu 1969, 1400).¹³ On the same terrace, approximately 250 m north of City Hall, we discovered pottery fragments during our repeated field walks, most decorated with striations. These could come from a settlement contemporary with the cemetery located nearby (Kacsó 1987, 59, No. 24a). Another Bronze Age settlement was identified in 1989, also during a field survey, at the *Pe Rât* site, near the house of Gavrilă Demian (Bătică),

where, among other artefacts, a vessel fragment with a striated decoration was found (Kacsó 2003, 119, No. 32). On the high terrace to the right of the Suci Valley, near the edge towards Suci de Jos, in the vicinity of the former Jewish cemetery, at the *Poduri* site, we discovered several pottery fragments in a 2003 field survey, of which a few are decorated with striations, which suggest the likely presence there of a Suci de Sus or Lăpuș settlement (Kacsó 2015, 539).

Important archaeological evidence surfaced at the site of *La Șes* (*Șesu*) located approximately 500 m from the north-eastern end of the village, on the flatland terrace to the left of Suci Valley, on either side of the Suci de Sus–Groșii Țibleșului road, where a Late Bronze Age settlement is located, which we excavated in 1969 and 1989 (Kacsó 1993). The settlement is mostly destroyed owing to the river's displacement and floods caused by its tributaries. No settlement features were identified, only a few waste pits, which nevertheless supplied a relatively large quantity of pottery and a few fired clay objects (Fig. 11–15). Although the discovered pottery is entirely fragmentary, some of the vessel forms present in the settlement could be identified: deep bowls; shallow bowls; cups; small vessels; biconical vessels with a short neck and a slightly curving body; vessels with a short neck and bulging body; vessels with a wide border, a vertical neck and a protruding body, of which some are black on the exterior, red on the interior; storage vessels, etc. Most vessels

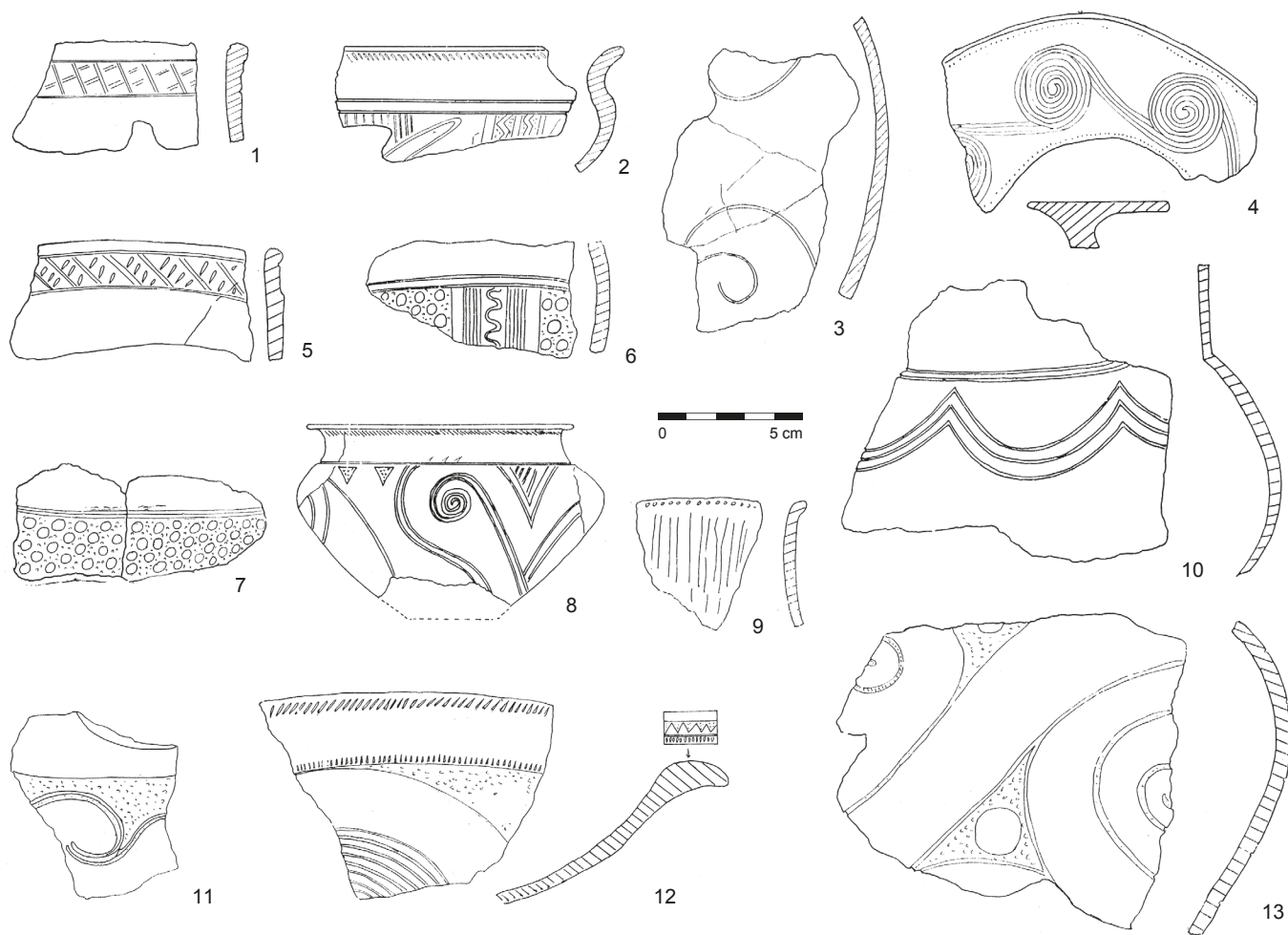


Fig. 9. Suci de Sus. Domokos Teleki former collection. Pottery. After Bader 1976.

Obr. 9. Suci de Sus. Bývalá sbírka Domokose Telekiho. Keramika. Podle Bader 1976.

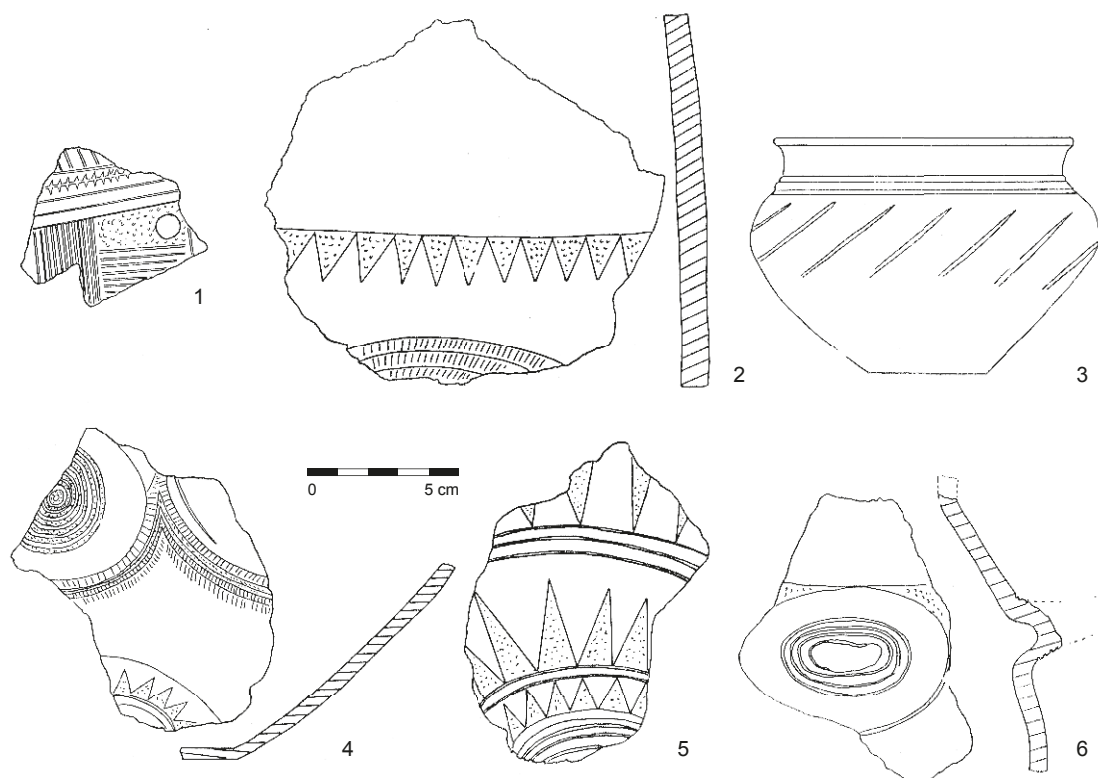


Fig. 10. Findings from surrounding sites: 1-5 - Lăpuș; 6 - Gornești. Domokos Teleki former collection. Pottery. After Bader 1976.

Obr. 10. Nálezy z okolních lokalit: 1-5 - Lăpuș; 6 - Gornești. Bývalá sbírka Domokose Telekiho. Keramika. Podle Bader 1976.

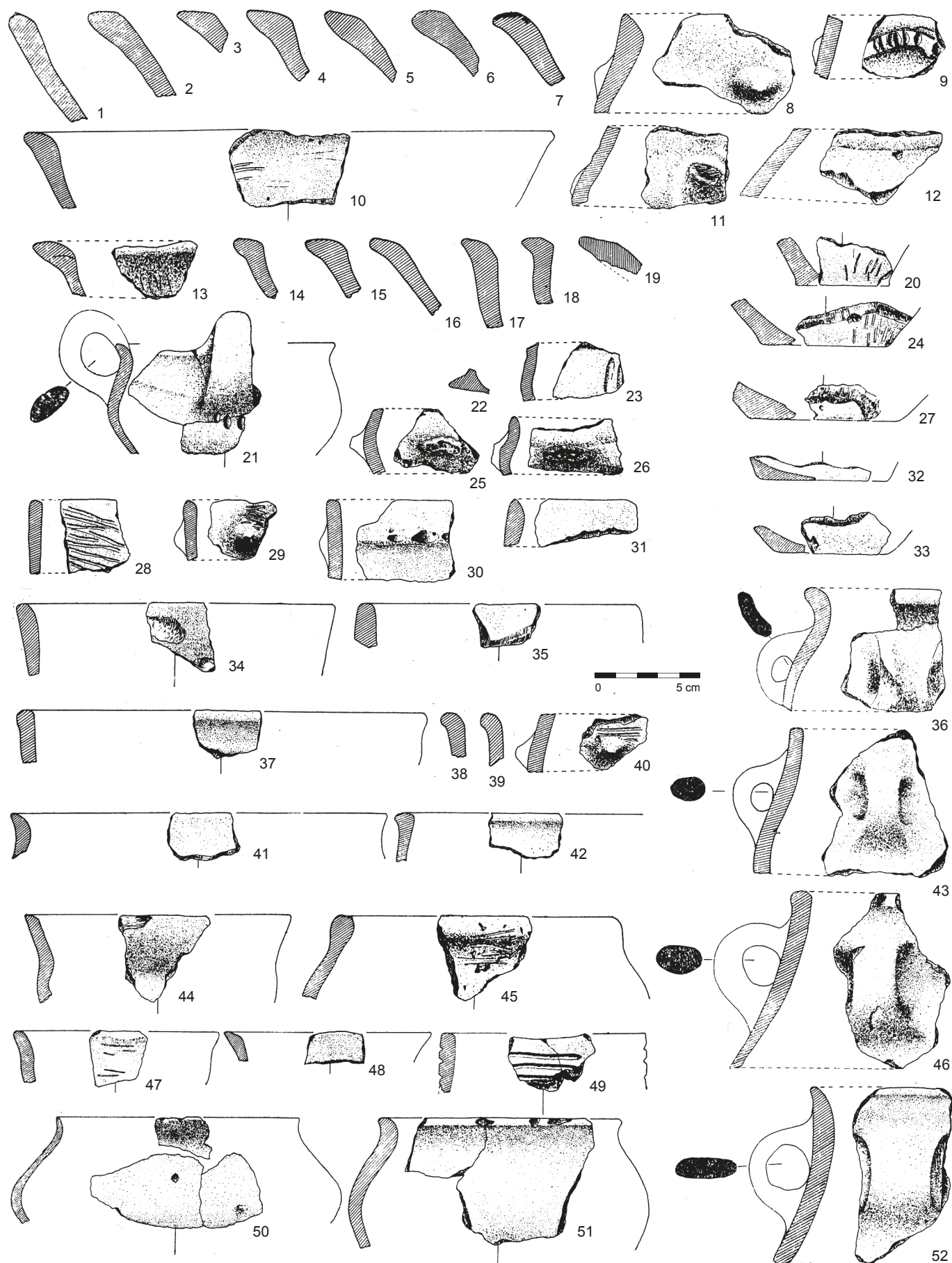


Fig. 11. Suciú de Sus. MJIA collection. Pottery. After Kacsó 1993.

Obr. 11. Suciú de Sus. Sbíрка MJIA. Keramika. Podle Kacsó 1993.



Fig. 12. Suciú de Sus. MJIA collection. Pottery. After Kacsó 1993.

Obr. 12. Suciú de Sus. Sbírka MJIA. Keramika. Podle Kacsó 1993.

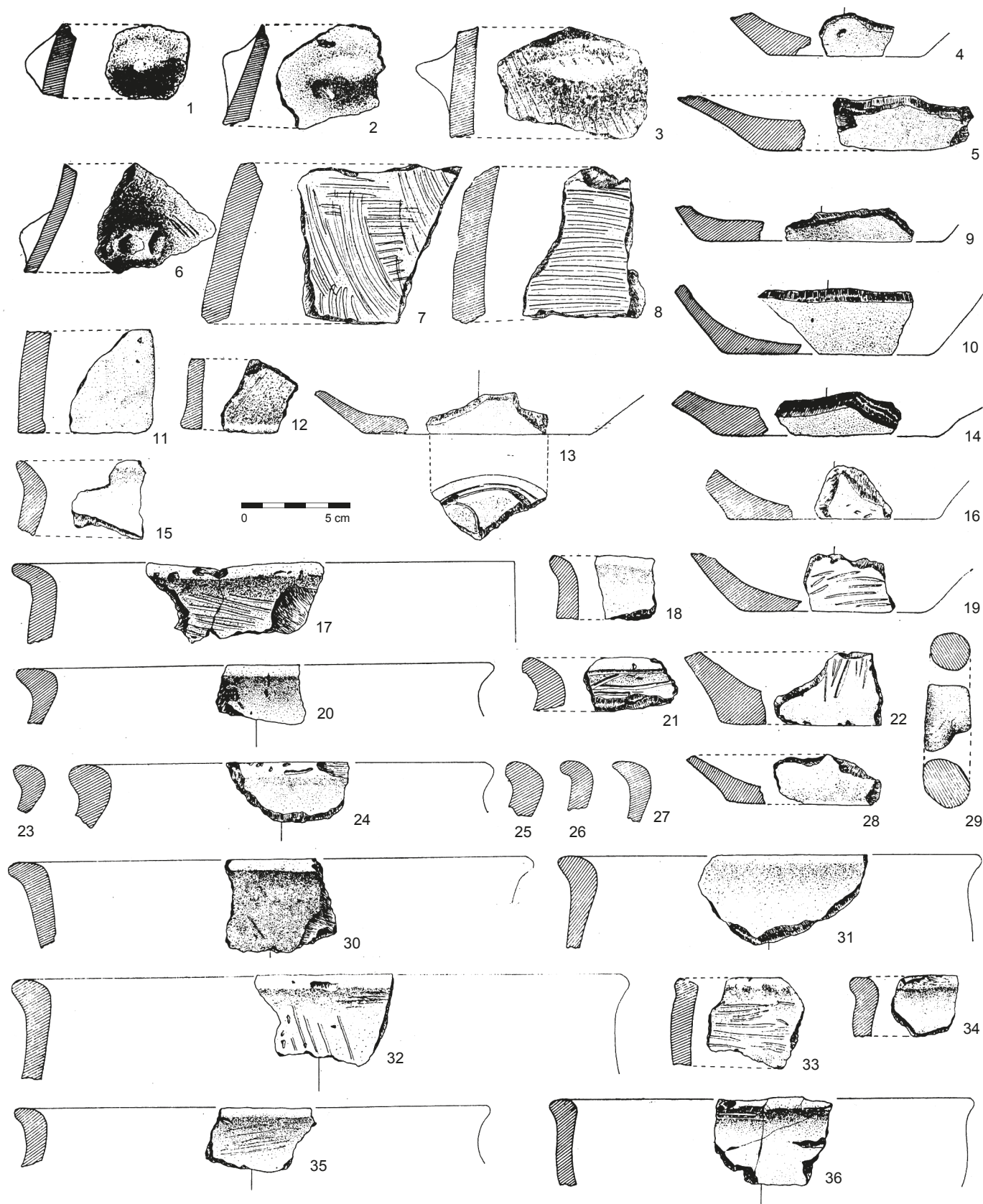


Fig. 13. Suciú de Sus. MJIA collection. Pottery. After Kacsó 1993.

Obr. 13. Suciú de Sus. Sbírka MJIA. Keramika. Podle Kacsó 1993.



Fig. 14. Suciú de Sus. MJIA collection. 1-29 – Pottery; 30 – fired clay weight. After Kacsó 1993.

Obr. 14. Suciú de Sus. Sběrka MJIA. 1-29 – Keramika; 30 – závaží z pálené hlíny. Podle Kacsó 1993.

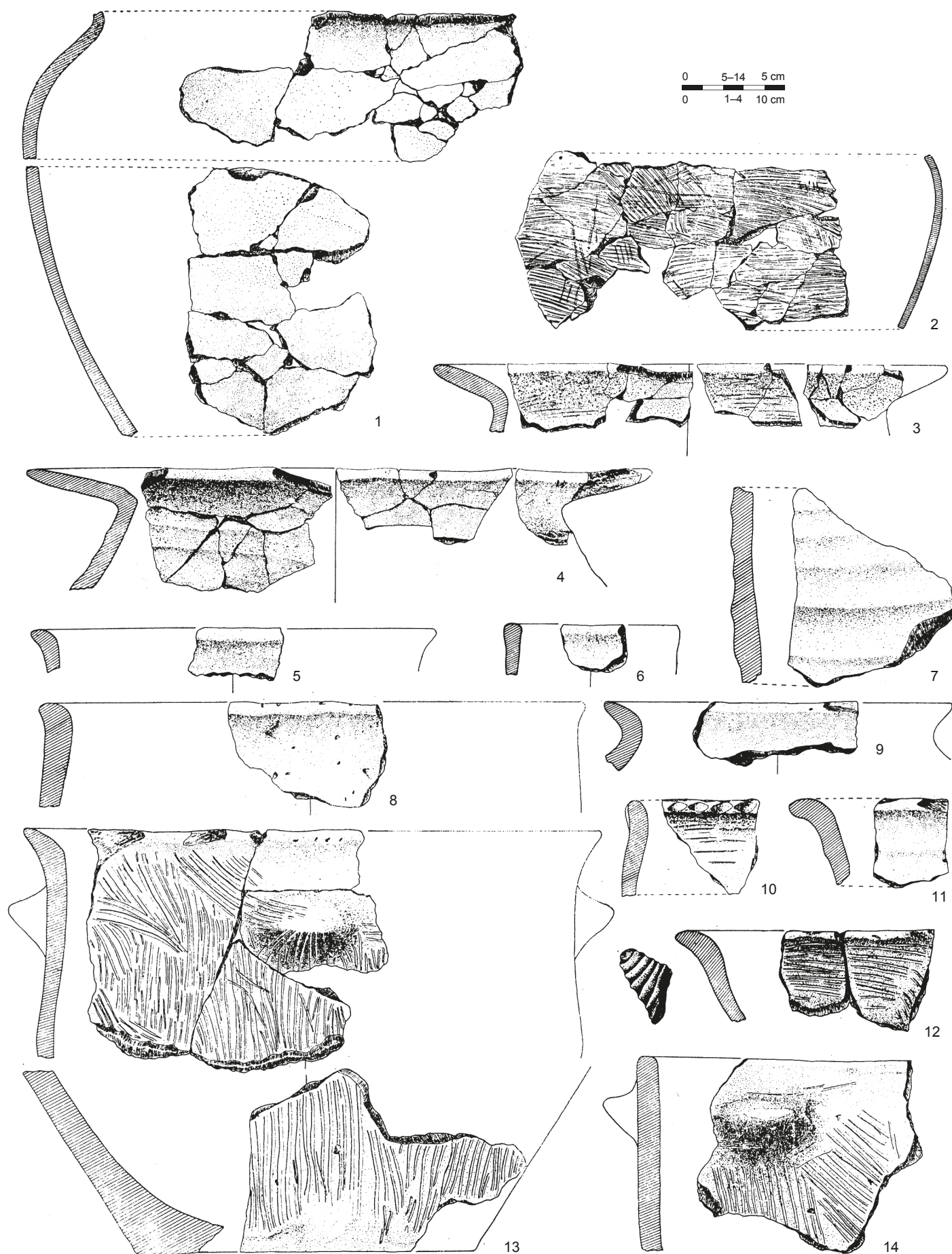


Fig. 15. Suciú de Sus. MJIA collection. Pottery. After Kacsó 1993.

Obr. 15. Suciú de Sus. Sběrka MJIA. Keramika. Podle Kacsó 1993.

are decorated with striations, frequently accompanied by motifs in relief or with grooves. A single fragment bears a decoration made using the excision-incision technique. The settlement belongs to the Lăpuș group and is directly connected to the barrow cemetery established in the vicinity, on *Troian* terrace. All of the material discovered at the settlement is held at the Baia Mare County Museum of History and Archaeology (hereinafter MJIA).

3. Bronze artefacts

While the archaeological record from Suciul de Sus is dominated by substantial ceramic assemblages, discussed in the preceding sections, the presence of bronze artefacts adds another crucial dimension to our understanding of the material culture and broader activities associated with the Bronze Age occupation of this territory. Although significantly less numerous than the pottery finds, several bronze objects are documented as originating from the Suciul de Sus village area. For most of these, however, the precise find spot is unfortunately not specified in the historical records, suggesting they likely represent isolated discoveries rather than finds from controlled archaeological excavations. These scattered finds nonetheless illustrate aspects of metallurgy, technology, and potentially exchange networks or deposition practices prevalent in the region during the Bronze Age, complementing the picture primarily derived from the ceramic evidence.

To date, three distinct bronze objects are reported from the territory of the village of Suciul de Sus:

1. A disc-butted axe of type B4, specifically noted as the Rohod variation. This artefact was reportedly discovered sometime in the 19th century but has since been lost. Its documentation is found in early publications (Temesváry 1897, 106, Fig. 58 on p. 105; Vulpe 1970, 93, No. 531, pl. 38, 531).
2. A chisel, documented as having been discovered at the site known as 'Prihadistea' in the Suciul de Sus area. This tool was included in the collection of a museum in Budapest (likely the Magyar Nemzeti Múzeum) according to Kádár's account from 1903 (Kádár 1903, 501, note 7).
3. A sickle with a distinctive knob and rib on the blade, broken at the tip. This agricultural tool was discovered in an unspecified location within the village territory sometime after 1965 and is currently preserved in the collection of the Țării Crișurilor Museum of Oradea (Kacsó 1977, 32, Fig. 4).

4. Geophysical prospection

Non-destructive archaeological excavations were also conducted at Suciul de Sus in the spring of 2024, namely magnetometer surveys (Fig. 16). These were carried out by a team from MNIT led by Dr. George Cupcea in cooperation with Ciprian Ciobanu and Maria Cristina Marton (Cupcea et al. 2024).

Two areas were surveyed on Troian terrace, to the south (Troian Sud), or north (Troian Nord) of the commune road running to the village of Strâmtura.

A 6,500 m² area was surveyed on Troian Sud (Fig. 17:A). The noticed anomalies are very likely indicative of fills composed of modern waste. An area of 7,500 m² (Fig. 17:B) was surveyed on Troian Nord. There no longer elevated modern fills, with two surfaces existing towards the centre and north of the investigated area that could reveal archaeological structures in nature. The central anomaly is very strongly outlined, which is specific to extensively fired structures or metal deposits (an area of approximately 50 m²). Other archaeological features were suggested as well, whose nature can only be established by further archaeological excavations.

The third magnetometrically investigated site is called Valea Malului. It lies on a slight hill slope, to the right of Suciul Valley, by the exit from the village towards Groșii Țibleșului. According to reports by locals, large quantities of ancient pottery were discovered there. The total surveyed area is of 2,800 m² (Fig. 17:C). The research allowed the identification of a strongly burnt structure, originating from a modern brick firing kiln. Anomalies similarly intensive to those specific to archaeological features, pits or trenches emerged north of this structure.

5. Conclusion

This study highlights the pivotal archaeological significance of Suciul de Sus in northern Transylvania, a site characterised by critical Bronze Age burial complexes – the flat cremation cemetery at Poduri pe Coastă and the barrow cemetery at Troian. The historical trajectory of archaeological investigation at Suciul de Sus, dating back to the late 19th century with contributions from pioneering figures such as János Szendrei, Domokos Teleki, and Márton Roska, has been meticulously examined. This analysis reveals that despite their foundational importance, these early efforts suffered from significant limitations, including deficient documentation and the subsequent loss or mixing of crucial finds, problems explicitly highlighted and discussed in this article.



Fig. 16. Suciul de Sus. Magnetometer survey. A – Troian terrace; B – Valea Malului. Photo by C. Kacsó.

Obr. 16. Suciul de Sus. Magnetometrický průzkum. A – terasa Troian; B – Valea Malului. Foto C. Kacsó.



Fig. 17. Suciú de Sus. Magnetometer survey. A – map of the Troian-South area; B – map of Troian-North area; C – map of Malul Valley. After Cupcea et al. 2024.
Obr. 17. Suciú de Sus. Magnetometrický průzkum. A – mapa oblasti Troian-jih; B – mapa oblasti Troian-sever; C – mapa údolí Malul. Podle Cupcea et al. 2024.

A central accomplishment of this research lies in the systematic reconstruction and synthesis of this complex and fragmented history of archaeological investigation. By drawing together dispersed historical records, often published in various languages and formats, this study provides, in a consolidated manner, a clearer and more reliable account of past activities and discoveries at Suciú de Sus. This critical historical synthesis is not merely a chronological listing; it forms an essential backdrop for interpreting existing materials and planning future research.

Crucially, this article has directly confronted and, based on the available evidence, resolved the long-standing controversy regarding the provenance of numerous key artifacts, particularly those frequently and confusingly attributed to both Suciú de Sus and Gornești. Through a detailed re-evaluation of early publications, museum records, and the fate of collections like that of Domokos Teleki, this study provides compelling evidence supporting the argument that a substantial portion of the significant Bronze Age pottery and potentially other finds often labelled as originating from Gornești were in fact discovered at Suciú de Sus, most likely from the extensively documented flat cemetery at Poduri pe Coastă. This clarification is of paramount importance, as it corrects previous misattributions that have distorted the spatial understanding of the Suciú de Sus culture's material distribution and its relationship with other entities like the Wietenberg culture, as discussed in the context of the Gornești-Cserépcsűr finds. Accurate provenance is fundamental for correct cultural mapping and interpreting interaction spheres.

Furthermore, the integration of the very recent results from the 2024 geophysical surveys introduces a vital new dimension to the research potential at Suciú de Sus. The identification of distinct magnetic anomalies on the Troian Nord and Valea Malului terraces provides concrete, non-intrusive evidence suggesting the presence of previously unconfirmed archaeological structures, potentially representing settlement features, activity areas, or other elements of the site complex beyond the known burial mounds and surface scatters. While the precise nature

of these anomalies requires targeted archaeological excavation for confirmation, they represent promising new targets that can significantly enhance our understanding of the site's layout, internal organisation, and functional diversity.

Notes

- 1 Kádár is the only author who speaks of a private Suciú de Sus pottery collection in Budapest.
- 2 Among the authors of the first half of the 20th century, only Orosz mentions Torma as a researcher of the Suciú de Sus archaeological sites.
- 3 As appreciated by Roska.
- 4 No urns are mentioned.
- 5 We could not identify this place in the field. It is unknown to the locals that we asked.
- 6 Slightly distorted transcription of the real name of the flat cemetery's location, Poduri pe Coastă.
- 7 The author changes, without explanation, the cemetery's chronological framing, possibly determined by the find there of a copper chisel. Evidently, the presence of such an artefact is not decisive for the establishment of the site's dating, as it is known that copper items are diffused throughout the Bronze Age as well; see Vulpe 1975, *passim*.
- 8 The illustration presented in Roska's report is also adopted by Dorin Popescu (1944, Fig. 59).
- 9 There are no data on the find conditions and current storage of these vessels. Their original description, which we owe to Carl Gooss, does not allow the reconstruction of their shape and decoration; however, it may be assumed, based on certain decorative elements specified by the Sighișoara scholar, e.g. the instance of parallel incised lines and hatched triangles, that they belonged to a Bronze Age site.
- 10 In the territorial extension maps of the various Bronze Age cultures published in the same work (on p. 38–39), the place of Gornești appears only as Wietenberg-type findspot, the Suciú de Sus culture being ascribed finds from Suciú de Sus, Lăpuș, Medieșu Aurit and Culciu.

- 11 It seems rather obvious that the author references the pottery in the Teleki collection and not that discovered within the territory of the village of Gornești.
- 12 See data on the fate of the Teleki Museum in Gornești in Serdült Benke 2008, 4–5; Berekméri 2014, 46.
- 13 During a field survey of 1968 at Suciul de Sus, the Cluj-based archaeologist showed me the place he had found the grave, namely the terrace head, towards the north-eastern edge of the village. We have unsuccessfully attempted to find the discovered material in the Cluj Museum collection. The artefacts emerging in Roska's excavations at Suciul de Sus in 1913, which very likely had reached the Cluj Museum, could also not be identified.

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Resumé

Článek představuje komplexní syntézu a kritické zhodnocení historie archeologického výzkumu kultury Suciú de Sus (jedné z významných kultur doby bronzové v Transylvánii), s primárním zaměřením na eponymní obec Suciú de Sus (obr. 1). Tato lokalita, proslulá svými významnými archeologickými pozůstatky z doby bronzové, zahrnuje především ploché žárové pohřebiště na terase Troian (obr. 2) a mohylové pohřebiště na terase Troian (obr. 3). Průkopnické archeologické výzkumy zde probíhaly již od konce 19. a počátku 20. století zásluhou badatelů, jako byli János Szendrei, Domokos Teleki a Márton Roska. Tyto rané práce odkryly bohatý materiál, zejména charakteristickou keramiku a méně početné, avšak důležité bronzové artefakty.

Historický výzkum v Suciú de Sus je však poznamenán zásadními problémy, které autor článku systematicky rozebírá. Dokumentace z prvních výzkumů je často nedostatečná a roztržitá, což vedlo ke ztrátě nebo smíchání značné části objevených artefaktů. Důsledkem této historické fragmentace jsou přetrvávající nejasnosti a někdy i protichůdné interpretace, především pokud jde o přesnou provenienci a kulturní zařazení mnoha nálezů. Klíčovou a dlouhodobě diskutovanou kontroverzí je otázka původu artefaktů, které byly střídavě připisovány lokalitám Suciú de Sus a Gornești.

Hlavním cílem a přínosem článku je právě objasnění této složité situace. Studie provádí systematickou syntézu rozptýlených historických pramenů, včetně raných publikací, zpráv o výzkumech a muzejních záznamů. Na základě této důkladné rešerše autor přehodnocuje provenienci klíčových artefaktů, a to jak početné keramiky (obr. 4–15), tak i zmíněných bronzových předmětů. Analýza dostupných důkazů vede k závěru, že značná část významných nálezů z doby bronzové, které byly v literatuře často uváděny s proveniencí Gornești, ve skutečnosti pochází ze Suciú de Sus, s nejvyšší pravděpodobností z rozsáhlého plochého pohřebiště v Poduri pe Coastă. Tato dezinterpretace, jak článek naznačuje s odkazem na neformální diskuse s dalšími badateli, mohla souviset s osudem sbírky Domokose Telekiho, která byla uložena na zámku v Gornești a v důsledku událostí konce druhé světové války částečně rozptýlena v okolí. Upřesnění proveniencí je zásadní pro správné prostorové mapování distribuce materiální kultury Suciú de Sus a pro interpretaci jejích vztahů s jinými soudobými kulturami, jako je například kultura Wietenberg.

Kromě práce s historickými prameny článek integruje i nejnovější poznatky z terénu. Prezentovány jsou výsledky ne-destruktivního geofyzikálního průzkumu (obr. 16, 17), který byl na lokalitě Suciú de Sus proveden na jaře roku 2024. Tento průzkum se zaměřil na části teras Troian (oblasti Troian Sud a Troian Nord) a lokalitu Valea Malului. Zatímco na Troian Sud byly detekovány především anomálie odpovídající modernímu odpadu, na Troian Nord a Valea Malului byly identifikovány magnetické anomálie, které s vysokou pravděpodobností indikují přítomnost dosud neznámých nebo málo prozkoumaných archeologických struktur. Tyto anomálie mohou představovat pozůstatky sídelních či jiných typů objektů. Ačkoliv přesná povaha těchto struktur vyžaduje potvrzení cíleným archeologickým výzkumem, geofyzika jednoznačně naznačila perspektivu směru budoucího výzkumu.

Článek svým způsobem překračuje rámec pouhého chronologického přehledu historie výzkumu. Poskytuje nezbytnou kritickou analýzu a syntézu roztržitých dat, která objasňuje klíčové nejasnosti ohledně původu významných nálezů, a vytváří tak pevnější základ pro další bádání a zároveň i poskytuje komplexnější pohled na význam kultury Suciú de Sus a její místo v širším kontextu doby bronzové v Transylvánii.

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