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Correspondence, manuscripts and books should be sent to: Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu, Doctoral School in History, Bdul Victoriei nr. 5-7 550024 Sibiu, Romania.

e-mail: ioan-marian.tiplic@ulbsibiu.ro,

anamaria.tudorie@ulbsibiu.ro



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Turdaş-Luncă. 2011 preventive campaign, Sector B. Feature 341-2. A ritual pit? Turdaş culture, phase III.

Sabin Adrian Luca
Florentin Perianu

Keywords: *clay figurine, the birth scene, Turdaş culture III.*

Abstract: *During the 2011 preventive research campaign, a clay statuette representing a woman giving birth was discovered – in a pit of the chronological and cultural horizon of Turdaş III. Its complex analysis is done in the rows below.*



Photo 1. Turdaş-Luncă. 2011 campaign. Sector B. In the central area – at the bottom of the photograph is the area of Petreşti I dwelling (feature 341) and the pits on the horizon of Turdaş III (features 341-1 and 2; 1838).

The 2011 preventive researches were published – in the form of a report – in 2012 (Luca *et al* 2012). Before to these researches, we carried out other, systematic ones, between 1992-1998. They also saw the light of the pattern (Luca 2001; Luca 2018).

As can be seen in photo 1 and plans 1-3 we are in zone B, towards Kilometer 11+470 of the archaeologically investigated area. The Petreşti I dwelling was shaped at about -0,30 m depth. All the green (grassy) stains are

remains of Petrești surface dwellings (plan 1-2 – central area and 3). They are artificially raised against the level of ironing of the time by bringing around the remains of the Turdaș layer. This is precisely why it – the Turdaș layer – presents "veils" (Turdaș III layer). Often, the debris of the surface dwellings, with floor (Lazarovici *et alii* 2014), of his, are affected, not keeping the remains of the floor, when it burned and resulted in the adobe.



Plan 1. Turdaș-Luncă. 2011 campaign. Sector B. In the central area of the plan, surrounded by dwellings with floor, Turdaș III (preserved parts of them) and Petrești surface dwellings (in this case feature 341) is feature 341-2 (Turdaș III).

At the entrance of the Petrești I's house, with feature number 341, also kept the adobe head of an herbivorous animal (photo 5 – bos, dog or wolf?) that watched over the door. Remains of such animals – especially bull heads made of adobes or even stone – were also found in the site, at the large entrance from E (used in phases II/III and III) (Luca *et al* 2012, p. 37, reconstruction 3-5) and in area A on the shore of Mureș, systematically researched in the 9th decade of the XX century (Luca 2001, p. 89-90, fig. 6; Lazarovici *et alii* 1985; Lazarovici *et alii* 2001, p. 207, fig. 168; p. 208, fig. 168b; p. 226-230, fig. 184-186; p. 236, fig. 190; p. 237, fig. 192; p. 239, fig. 194; p. 241, fig. 196; p. 275-276; p. 277-278; p. 278-280; Luca 2018; Luca *et alii* 2012, p. 31-32, fig. 5.).

At plan 3 can very easily notice that Petrești dwelling has on the east side, at -0,40-0,45 m below it, around construction (with pillars pits called features 364-368, 380 and 387-388). Such a construction we also discovered

at Tărtăria-Gura Luncii in the preventive researches from 2014-2015 (Luca 2016, p. 77-78, fig. 50, feature XXXIX – house L.XXA; Pața: Lazarovici *et al* 2002, p. 248, fig. 208). It belongs to the Turdaș culture, third phase.

As can be seen in photo 2-4, feature 341-2 was discovered after removing the remains of the Petrești I dwelling, with number 341, at 0,40-0,45 m under its level (feature 341-2). This elevation is the result of the disturbing of the Turdaș layer in order to strengthen the base of Petrești dwelling-platform (Luca 2018, plan 10, 12).

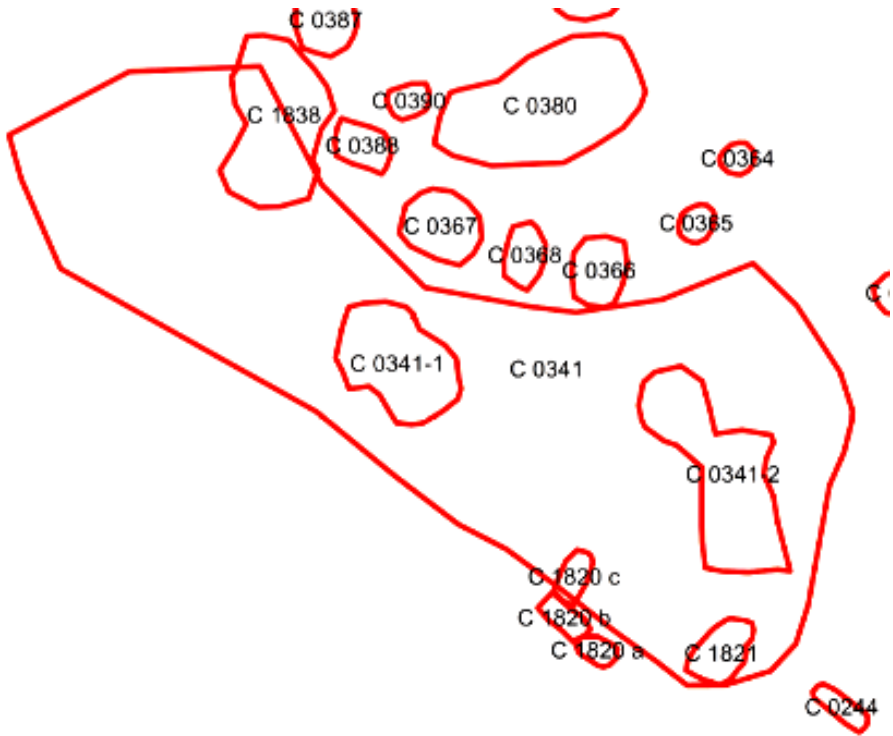
These pits, together with round construction, from the right of the plan 1 and 2, form a unit that can be integrated in phase III of the Turdaș culture.

One of the interesting pieces discovered at the dismantling of the Petrești remains is the herbivorous head made of clay (photo 5). It had been applied to the wall of the house. Such heads applied to the dwellings of the time are often found in the Danube area.

We will only mention a few, to see that such discoveries are a common good and do not have a clearly specified epoch of emergence. Examples are from Gorsza Horváth 1987, fig. 33/3; Lazarovici *et Lazarovici* 2016, p. 227, fig. 108a/2).

Feature 341-2 (photo 2-4) is in a series of hundreds of such pits, with well-burnt walls, placed behind the interior system (second row of palisades and fences) of fortifications (Luca *et alii* 2012, p. 33-45).

These pits (initially we defined them as ovens; the realities from the field oblige us to return to their definition, as pits for lighting by night fire the back of the palisades or pits of special character, but atypical so far) are – usually – rectangular, with rounded corners.



Plan 2. Turdaș-Luncă. 2011 campaign. Sector B. In the central area of the plan, surrounded by dwellings with floor, Turdaș III, (preserved parts of them) and Petrești surface dwellings (in this case feature 341) is feature 341-2 (Turdaș III).

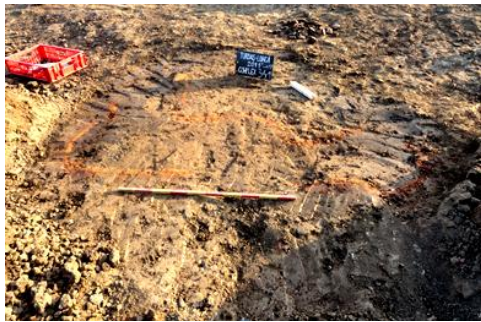


Photo 2. Turdaș-Luncă. 2011 campaign. Sector B. Feature 341-2. Turdaș III.



Photo 3. Turdaș-Luncă. 2011 campaign. Sector B. Feature 341-2. Turdaș III.



Photo 4. Turdaş-Luncă. 2011 campaign. Sector B. Feature 341-2. Turdaş III.



C. 341

Photo 5. Turdaş-Luncă. 2011 campaign. Sector B. Feature 341. Petreşti I. Adobe animal head (bos?, dog?, wolf?).



Photo 6. Turdaş-Luncă. 2011 campaign. Sector B. Feature 341-2. Turdaş III. Woman giving birth. Burnt clay.



Photo 7. Turdaş-Luncă. 2011 campaign. Sector B. Feature 341-2. Turdaş III. Woman giving birth. Burnt clay.



Photo 8. Turdaş-Luncă. 2011 campaign. Sector B. Feature 341-2. Turdaş III. Woman giving birth. Burnt clay.



Photo 9. Turdaş-Luncă. 2011 campaign. Sector B. Feature 341-2. Turdaş III. Woman giving birth. Burnt clay.



Photo 10. Turdaş-Luncă. 2011 campaign. Sector B. Feature 341-2. Turdaş III. Woman giving birth. Burnt clay.



Photo 11. Turdaş-Luncă. 2011 campaign. Sector B. Feature 341-2. Turdaş III. Woman giving birth. Burnt clay.

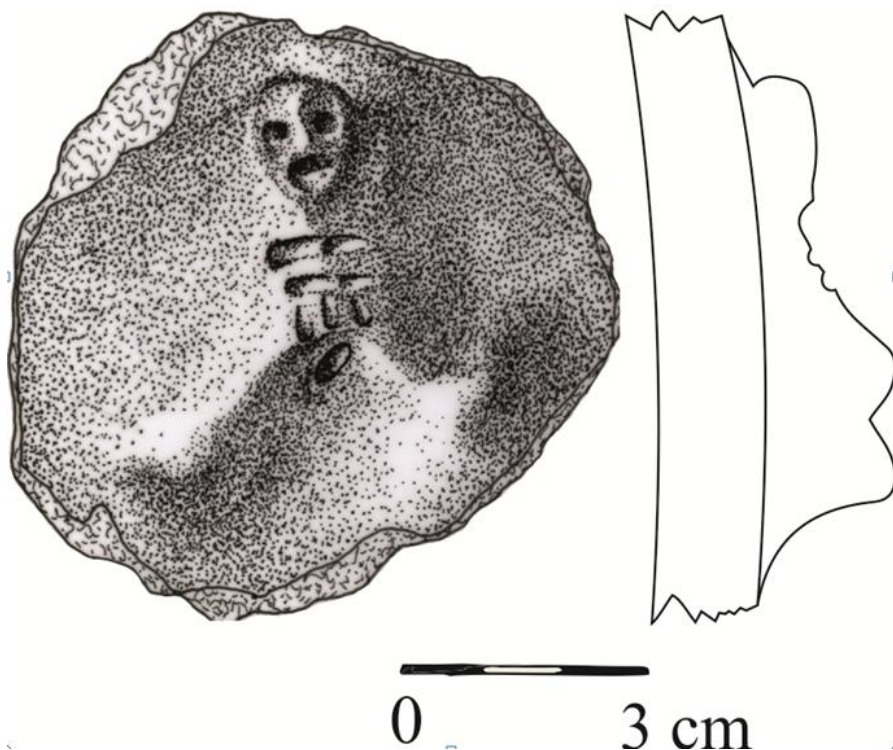
And the geometry of the 341-2 pit, when contoured, shows that we are in front of a special archaeological feature. As you can see (photo 2-4), it seems to have been built in a unique way, by twining two, quadrilateral geometrically parts that have an "entrance", at the twinning between them (the two quadrilateral bodies do not intersect at a right angle). As in all other cases of features of this kind, very well-burnt walls have a thickness of 2-3 cm, and on the bottom are remnants of black ash.

In the filling of the pits of this kind is found something (archaeological materials) very rarely. From here the inability to give them credible use, for the man of today. Some have some pottery fragments, others a bone or two. The case described now is unique. In the filling of the pit was discovered a piece made of burnt clay, unique.



Photo 12. Turdaş-*Luncă*. 2011 campaign. Sector B. Feature 341-2. Turdaş III. Woman giving birth. Burnt clay.

This is an anthropomorphic application (photo 6-12; drawing 1; fig. 1) made on a common use pot which – after the thickness of the wall – seems to be 50 cm high. The pot was, according to the angle and roundness of the preserved part, an amphorae, a rounded pot. The temper mixture contains pebbles with large grain, silt, a small amount of sand, rare mica and is dense. The color is yellowish-reddish on the outside and black on the inside. Burning is good.



Drawing 1. Turdaș-Luncă. 2011 campaign. Sector B. Feature 341-2. Turdaș III. Woman giving birth. Burnt clay.

Even if the usual temper is not the most suitable for such pieces – in the rest of the Neolithic and Eneolithic worlds – (but the usual temper for such pieces is – even – a rule, often found in the Turdaș plastic from the eponymous site), the expressiveness of the achievement shows us – from the beginning – a very developed artistic inclination of the modeler (usually the new – archaeologists – we refrain from observing that the plastic pieces are never made identically, they do not have the same features, and the similarities come only in groups of dimensions, depending on the direct use of the parts).

The statuette has the following dimensions: maximum height – 7,5 cm; maximum width – 7,6 cm and maximum thickness – 3,5 cm.

We want to draw attention – from the very beginning – to the fact that we are in front of a unique piece, which has no analogies or identities in the neolithic world in Europe, at least.

It represents, with amazing plasticity, a birth scene. The character sits on his back, with the middle tied with some straps and with her legs open, pulled to the side and knees up.

We have other information, which exemplifies the fact that this is a birth scene:

- the eyes are wide open, rendered disproportionately, a reflection of great astonishment or pain – an extremely rare thing found in neolithic statues (Schwarzberg 2011, Tafel 72/7; 105/3; 123/2-3; 126/1);

- his mouth is wide open, as if she were shouting – a thing rarely found in neolithic statues Schwarzberg 2011, Tafel 72/7; 105/ 3; 125/4-5; 126/1, 6);

- in the middle, the body is tightened with two straps;

- the character`s hands are not visible and seem to be tied through those straps;

- below them (straps), are the fringes of a short skirt;

- the vulva is extremely expressive rendered, dilated;

- the legs are pulled sideways, with the knees up;

- between the legs and the vulva is suggested the existence of a deep container for collecting the fetus.

From the early neolithic there are characters applied, arranged on the vessels. These – female – seem to give life (Klindžić și Hršak 2014, p. 20, up).

All the attributes described above have no direct analogies. There are vessels that realistically reproduce the birth scene (Schwarzberg 2011, Tafel 1a). On the walls of the vessel, even from the early neolithic, there are applications, not very realistically made, called – usually – ”dancers”. One of them, the one from Donja Branjevina, seems to represent a birth scene (Becker 2011, Taf. 133/5).

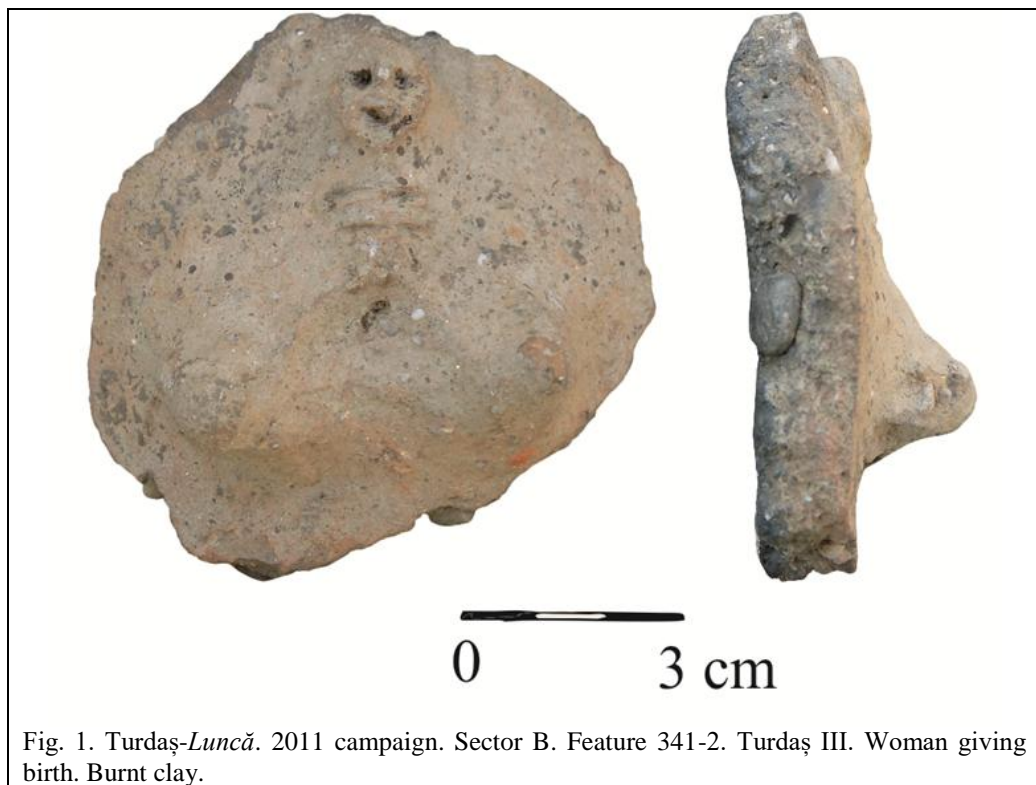


Fig. 1. Turdaş-Luncă. 2011 campaign. Sector B. Feature 341-2. Turdaş III. Woman giving birth. Burnt clay.

The other, from the Orient (Hačılar), seems to be – on a three dimensional piece, this time – identical to that of the modeling published by us (Hansen 2007, vol. 2: Taf. 62/2, 67/4 and 526/1). Another very significant statue for this moment is the one from Halaf (Joffe *et alii* 2001, p. 11).

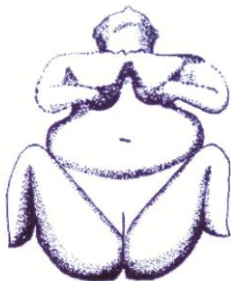
Reproduced several times in the bibliography, a piece from Achileion, the Sesklo culture, is exceptional in terms of reproducing the birth scene (Dexter 2014, p. 150, Fig. 5). It is also another stylized statue of Greece (Ifantidis 2017, 2/3).

From here we can draw the conclusion and believe that the role of the "letter"/position M represents – much easier said – the way to represent *the birth of life*. To the same conclusion it seems to push and celebrate M. Gimbutas by publishing other statues from Achileion (Dexter 2014, p. 150, Fig. 5). In a similar way, another statuette from Greece (Ifantidis 2017, 2/3) is rendered, the position of the latter being very close to the statuette applied to the vessel which is the material of this article.

Analogies. Reproductions I.



1. The Hohle Fels cave, southwestern Germany (Dexter 2015, p. 297, Fig. 1).



2. Anatolia (Nikolov 2009, p. 143, Fig. 3.3).



3. Tell Halaf (Lazarovici et Lazarovici 2015, p. 37, fig. 152).

And in the cultures of the ceramic linear are other scenes on the vessels, with characters that seem to give life ((Becker 2011, Taf. 102/3-5, 8-9; 103/1-5; 104/1-4)). Such is the character published by S. Hansen (Hansen 2007, vol. 2: Taf. 503/6). Another such piece, applied and incised is on a vessel from Drassburg (Schwarzberg 2011, Tafel 112/2).

In the Eneolithic there are such representations at Krivodol (Biehl 2003, Fig. 24/666) or Pekijuk (Biehl, 2003, Fig. 31/428). Here we must point out that a lot of anthropomorphic pieces on the throne or chair can use it – in fact – for birthing. As well as many of the statues that are rendered "tied", semi-seated, with the hand under the breasts and the lower part very pronounced (Hansen 2007, vol. 2 – și dăm doar câteva exemple: Taf. 14/4-21; 17/1-2; 18/10; 20-21; 25/4-5, 7-10; 26/1-2; 27/5; 28/1; 31/5, 10; 32/2-3; 33-35; 36/1-4; 37/3-4; 38/3-8; 39/4; 40/3; 41/6; 42; 43/5, 8; 44/3; 52/3; 66/3-4, 8; 67/1-3; 68/1-2; 69; 447/2; 457-458; 476; 479/3; 484/1-2; 485; 486/3; 509/2-3, 5) having a schematization of the gesture rendered in a unique way (Hansen 2007, vol. 2: Taf. 40/4).

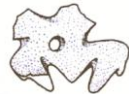
These female characters can also be overweight. We have an example from Șoimuș-*La Avicola* (Fram 2) (Ștefan 2012, Fig. 3.), but the most representative character is a feminine one, applied to the vessel during the birth, finishing the labor (Ștefan *et alii* 2013, p. 51-52, pl. IV/3a-b). It was appropriate to conclude these few lines with the piece from Șoimuș because it represents the end of the life-giving process.



4. Kolečovice (Lazarovici et Lazarovici 2015, p. 36, fig. 143)



5. Tell Azmak, Stara Zagora ((Nikolov 2009, p. 142, Fig. 2.4).



6. Kovačevo, Sandanski (Nikolov 2009, p. 142, Fig. 2.6).



7. Kovačevo, Sandanski (Nikolov 2009, p. 142, Fig. 2.7).



8. Golyam Porovets, Razgrad (Nikolov 2009, p. 142, Fig. 2.8).

Seeing the few analogies attached to this work, we see that genre scenes are still represented by the paleolithic (Analogies. Reproductions I/1 – the Hohle Fels cave). They also appear in the Orient from very ancient periods (Analogies. Reproductions I/2 – Anatolia or Analogies. Reproductions I/3 – Tell Halaf).

In Europe such reproductions appear – however stylized (Analogies. Reproductions I/5-8) – and significantly patterned or – even – incised (Analogies. Reproductions I/4).

We draw attention, once again, to the fact that the discovery from Turdaş, which is the material of this text, is unique in its realism as well as that of Şoimuş-*La Avicola* (Farm 2) (Ştefan 2012, Fig. 3).

Acknowledgement

I must thank all those who have helped us with the smooth running of the Turdaş excavations over time (from 1992 to 2019) (note).

Finally, the ideas of dozens of colleagues in the country and abroad have led us, in my opinion to a balanced understanding of the discoveries made over time in Turdaş. Their list would be too long, but everyone who helped with the tips deserves thanks.

The students of the 29 successive years of study that we had in Sibiu, without realizing – sometimes – enormously in knowing and spreading these realities from archaeological sites all over the world. I thank them!

Illustrations list

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Drawing

- Drawing 1. Turdaş-*Luncă*. 2011 campaign. Sector B. Feature 341-2. Turdaş III. Woman giving birth. Burnt clay.

Figure

- Fig. 1. Turdaş-*Luncă*. 2011 campaign. Sector B. Feature 341-2. Turdaş III. Woman giving birth. Burnt clay.

Analogy. Reproductions I.

1. Hohle Fels cave, southwestern Germany; 2. Anatolia; 3. Tell Halaf; 4. Kolečovice; 5. Tell Azmak, Stara Zagora; 6-7. Kovačevo, Sandanski; 8. Golyam Porovets, Razgrad.

List of bibliographic abbreviations

ActaTS	- <i>Acta Terrae Septemcastrensis</i> , Universitatea „Lucian Blaga”, Sibiu
AnB(SN)	- <i>Analele Banatului. Serie Nouă</i> , Muzeul Național a Banatului, Timișoara
Apulum	- <i>Apulum, Acta Musei Apulensis</i> , Muzeul Național al Unirii, Alba Iulia
BB	- <i>Bibliotheca Brukenthal</i> , Muzeul Național Brukenthal, Sibiu
BMA	- <i>Bibliotheca Musei Apulensis</i> , Muzeul Național al Unirii, Alba Iulia
BMN	- <i>Bibliotheca Musei Napocensis</i> , Cluj-Napoca
BrukAM	- <i>Brukenthal. Acta Musei</i> , Muzeul Național Brukenthal, Sibiu
BS	- <i>Bibliotheca Septemcastrensis</i> , Universitatea „Lucian Blaga” din Sibiu
MAF	- <i>Münchener Archäologische Forschungen</i> , München
NEA	- <i>Near Eastern Archaeology</i>
OPA	- <i>The Old Potter's Almanack</i>
SBA	- <i>Saarbrücher Beiträge zur Altertumskunden</i> , Bonn
SP	- <i>Studii de Preistorie</i> , București

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