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ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCHES AT PIȘCOLT-LUTĂRIE
(THE SATU-MARE COUNTY) 1986-1989

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Abstract: *The archaeological research at the site Pișcolt-Lutărie (Satu Mare County) began in 1970, when its inhabitants disturbed several archaeological features by exploiting clay. The archaeological discoveries belong to the Neolithic Age, to the La Tène Celtic period and to the period between the II-IV centuries AD.*

Researches were continued until 2001 by the archaeologists of the Satu-Mare County Museum, especially by János Némethi and Robert Gindele. This article focuses on the research made between the years 1986-1989. Two archaeological features were discovered in that period and comprised many ceramics decorated with incisions or painted with black besides animal bones, stone tools and chips of obsidian. The archaeological site of Pișcolt-Lutărie is ranked among the most important Middle Neolithic settlements containing discoveries of the Painted Pottery Culture. The two features date from the Middle Neolithic, phases II and III, of the Pișcolt culture.

Keywords: *Pișcolt-Lutărie, Painted Pottery Culture, Neolithic, archaeological discoveries Romania.*

Rezumat: *Cercetările arheologice la situl Pișcolt-Lutărie (jud. Satu-Mare) au fost începute în 1970, după ce localnicii au deranjat mai multe complexe arheologice, prin exploatarea lutului. Descoperirile arheologice de pe acest sit se încadrează în epoca neolitică, La Tène celtic, și sec. II-IV. d. Chr.*

Cercetările au fost continuate până la 2001 de către arheologii Muzeului Județean Satu-Mare, în special de către János Némethi și Robert Gindele. În articolul de față vom prezenta cercetările din anii 1986-1989. În această perioadă a fost descoperită două complexe arheologice, cu multe materiale ceramice, ornamentate cu incizii sau pictate cu negru, oase de animale, unelte din piatră și așchii de obsidian. Situl arheologic Pișcolt-Lutărie se numără între cele mai importante așezări din neoliticul mijlociu cu descoperiri din aria de răspândire a civilizației cu ceramică pictată (Painted Pottery Culture). Cele două complexe descoperite se datează în epoca neolitică mijlocie în faza a II-a și a III a culturii Pișcolt.

Cuvinte cheie: *Pișcolt-Lutărie, Ceramică pictată, Neolitic, descoperiri arheologice, România.*

Pișcolt locality (Satu Mare County) is situated to the west of the county, passing by the national road DN19 (Satu Mare-Oradea) that goes through the village, where the Plain of Carei meets the Plain of Nir. Several streams flow through the village collecting the waters in the area and drain them towards the Ier Valley (Plate I/1-2, 4). The site was verified and localized with GPS devices and also was made topographical measurements (Plate I/3). This area, especially the terrace of rivulets is extremely rich in archaeological remains from the Neolithic Age until the Middle Ages (Németi 1999, 43-46).

The point Lutărie (Kincsverem) is approximately 200 m to the west of the village centre, in an area densely inhabited in the antiquity. The Neolithic site is situated on a grind from the Ierul Rece creek bed, which marks the peripheral areas of the sandy areas of the Nir. The first archaeological deposition dates from the Middle Neolithic, represented by the Pișcolt culture, with several levels of habitation (Lazarovici, Németi, 1983, 22-23; Németi 1986-1987, 15-61; Németi 1999, 44-45).

The first researches at Lutărie point began in 1970, after the inhabitants, who were digging pits for exploiting clay, disturbed several archaeological features. Archaeological researches from Pișcolt-Lutărie site which were carried out in 1980-1986 focused on rescue excavations or field research and were conducted by János Németi, the director of the Museum of Carei.

In 1986, the locals working in clay exploitation disturbed a Neolithic pit. János Németi conducted a small rescue excavation in July. The pit was irregular but its broadest part was destroyed. It measured 2.20 x 1.60 m in dimensions; it grew deeper gradually until it reached the maximum depth of 1.10-1.20 m (Plate II/1-2). It uncovered pottery fragments painted with black and whitish pottery, lightly burnt, lacking decoration but similar to the discoveries from Pișcolt SMA (Lazarovici, Németi 1983, 23; fig. 18-19). In order to proceed to the excavation of the feature, a research box that measured 2.40 x 1,80 m had been opened. The upper layer of the feature unveiled pottery fragments dating from the Roman and La Tène Ages, then a small, complete vessel, an axe of fragmentary stone, animal bones and obsidian chips (information taken from the excavation diary).

The ceramic category

The pottery which was discovered in the archaeological feature can be divided into three categories: coarse (the common pottery, used in cooking and food storage), semi-coarse and fine. The semi-coarse pottery is best represented, followed by the coarse pottery and finally the fine category with the lowest

representation. In percentage, they appear as follows: 71 % of semi-fine pottery, 28% of coarse pottery and 1% of fine pottery. The results of extraction taken from the database are presented in table and chart.

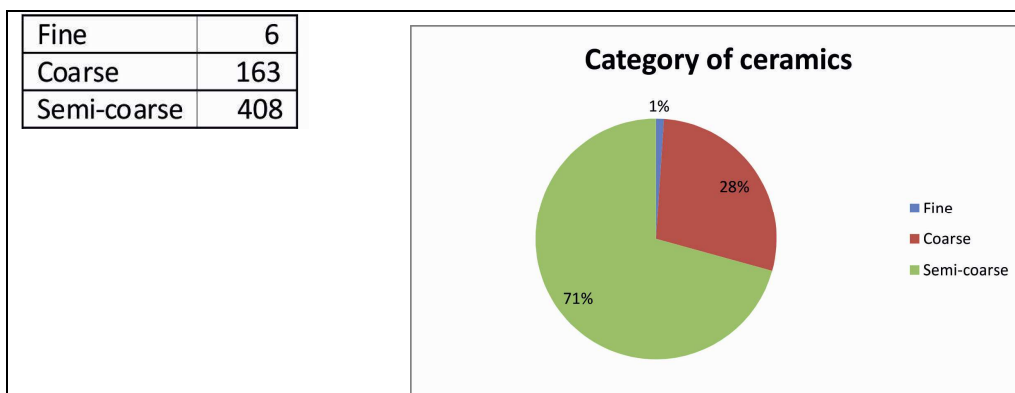


Fig. 1. The ceramic category.

Tempering

The material used for tempering the vessel clay is presented in table and chart. Most commonly appears the temper made of sand and chuff, followed by mud and chaff, and lastly, fine sand. The remaining materials appear in a limited number.

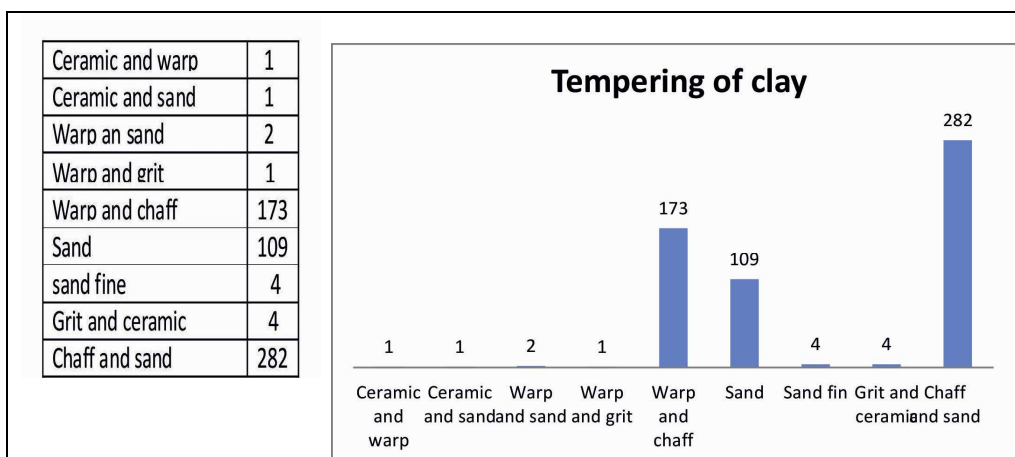


Fig. 2. Tempering of clay.

The smoothing technique

The smoothness of the pottery under analysis was as follows: most pottery fragments had smoothed surface, followed by the ones with porous and polished surfaces, and in small amounts, there also appeared other smoothing techniques. Their presence ranks from 1% to 3%.

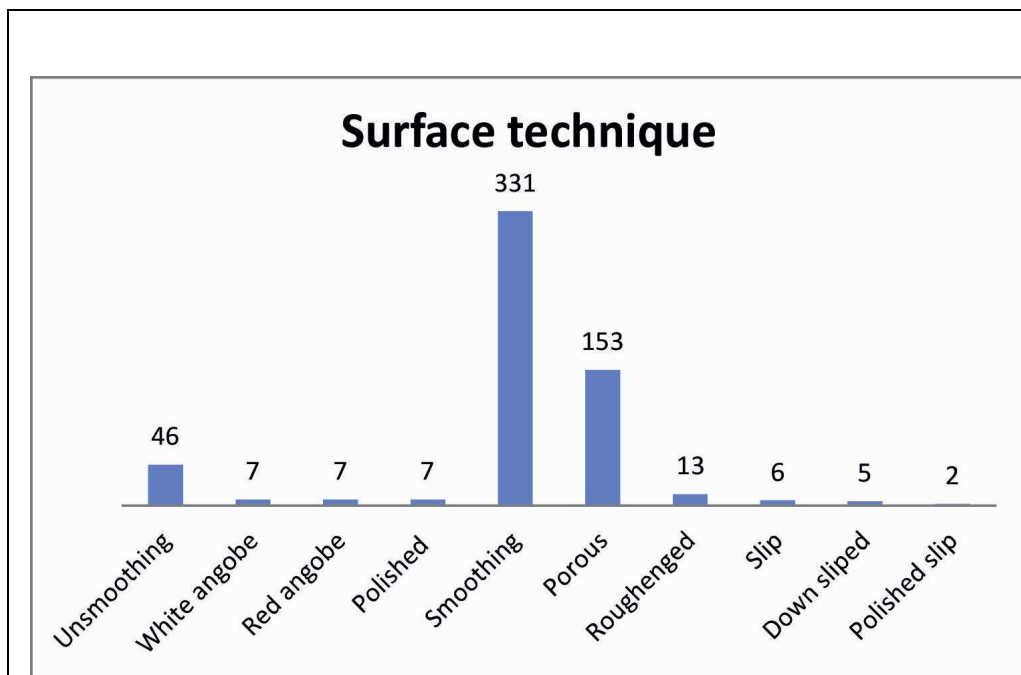


Fig. 3. Smoothing technique.

The burning technique

Regarding technique used at burning the pottery which was discovered in the archaeological feature: GI/1986 we observed a good oxidant burning in a proportion of 49%, followed by a good reductant burning in a proportion of 40% and the poor oxidative and reductant burning appeared in proportions of 4% and 7%, respectively.

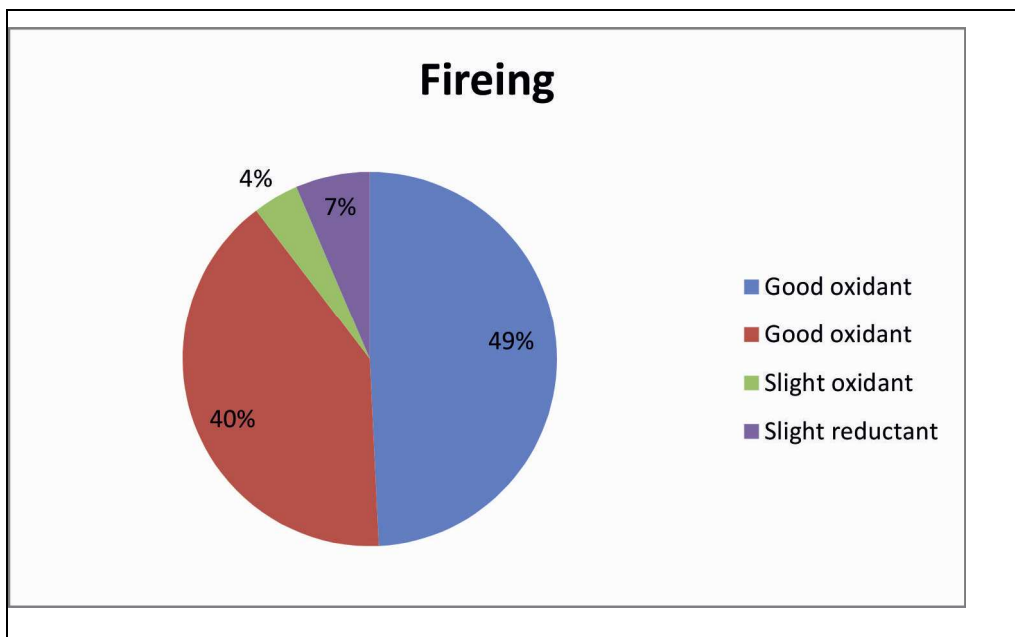


Fig. 4. Burning technique.

Pottery shapes

The pottery was quite fragmentary; therefore the percentage of pottery forms identified was quite small. Most of the ceramic material, that was 56 %, could not be identified in matter of shape, 14% were identified as pots of various sizes and bowls, 3% were pedestal cups, and to a lesser extent, there were square mouthed vessels, amphorae, deep bowls, vessels with the middle pushed inwards, strainer, miniature vessels and components, daub (Plate III-VIII). Eliminating from this analysis the pottery and tokens that could not be identified, the situation is suitable for a graph (Fig. 5; Plate XII. 1-2). For the identification of pottery shapes I used the catalogue of ceramic forms prepared by Zoia Maxim (Maxim, 1999, 76, fig. 88).

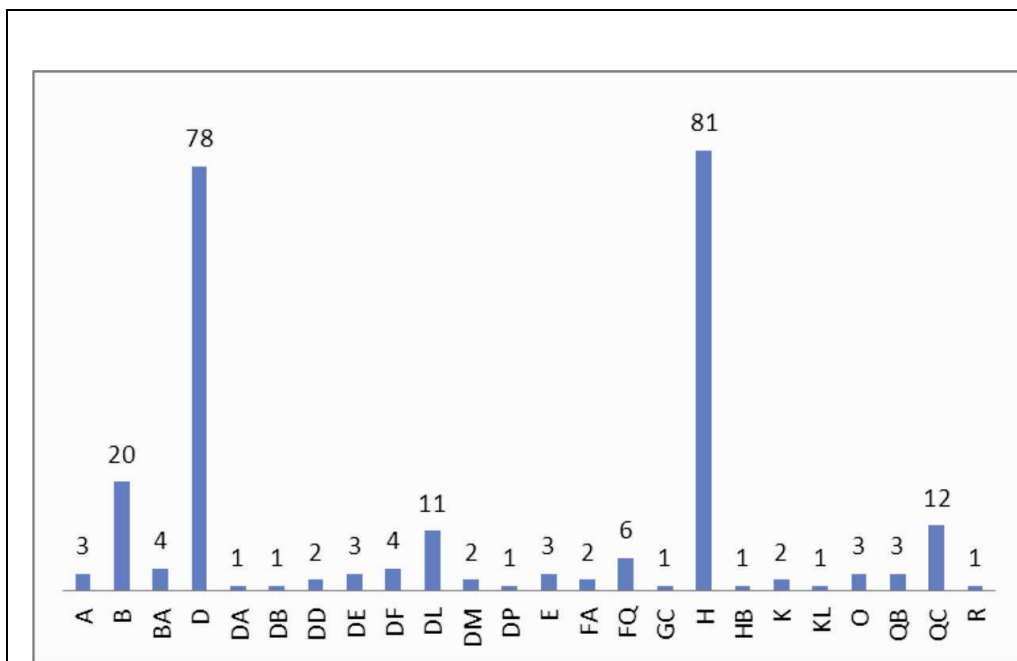


Fig. 5. Pottery shapes.

The decoration technique

Analyzing large amounts of pottery from this complex, we could conclude that 98% of the vessel fragments lacked decorations, and 2% were represented by black painting, but only partially preserved; there were few cases where pierced ornaments occurred. The painted motifs were identified in few cases only: AD, NC, XC (Virag, 2011, 35-37; Plate XII/1-3), as for the rest of the fragments the painting was preserved in small amounts and was hard to identify. Based on the ceramic forms, on the mixture and decoration of pottery, the GI/1986 feature falls into the final phase of the Pişcolt culture.

The best analogies that are classified as stage III are the following sites: Căpleni-*Reök tag* (Iercoşan 1992-1993, 7 -22), Pişcolt-*SMA* (Lazarovci, Némethi, 1983, 23; Némethi 1986-87, 18-19; Némethi 1999, 45; Maxim 1999, 176; Virag, 2004, 13-25); Săcuieni-*Horo* (Comşa, Nánási, 1972, 633-636), Săcuieni-*Horo domb* (Luca, Iercoşan 1997, 11-22); Căpleni-*Malul Canalului* (Iercoşan, 1992-1993), Moftinu Mic-*Pescarie A* (Némethi 1986-1987, 101-137); Andrid-*La Pășune*, Oarța de Sus-*Oul Făgetului* (Kalmar, 1979-1981, 117 -114); Blaja-*Grind Cehal* (Virag

2007, 27-42), Pişcolt-Nisipărie (Németi 1999, 44), Bicz-Ighoie (Maxim 2003, 7-17); Berea-Bodzás (Németi 1999, 59), Berea-Puposhegy (Lazarovici, Németi 1983, 21; Németi 1999, 54), Halmeu-Vamă (Virag 2004a, 25-45); Sanislău-Curtea grajdurilor (Németi 1986-1987, 19; Németi 1999, 48), Tăşad-Cetăţuia (Pop 1996, 9-14); Turulung-La intrare în sat (Maxim-Kalmar 1987-1988, 471); Urziceni-Podul canalului (Németi, 1999, 63), Văşad-Lutărie (Lazarovici, Németi 1983, 24).

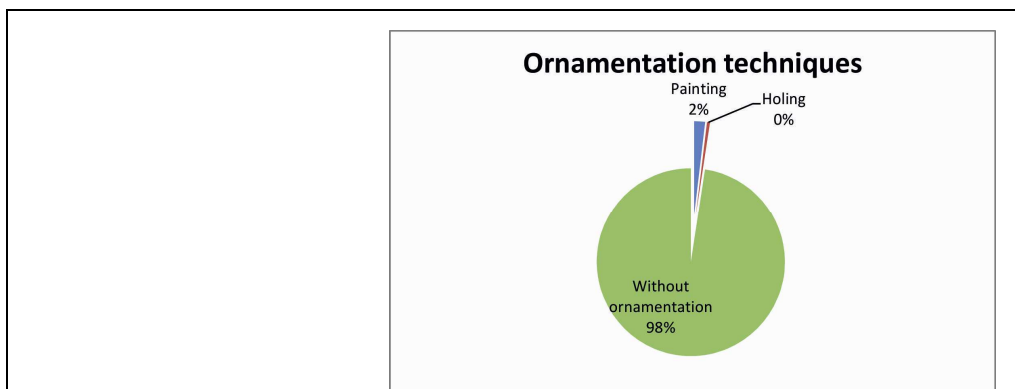


Fig. 6. The decoration techniques.

The second archaeological feature was investigated in the 80s, more precisely in the summer of 1989, at Pişcolt-Lutărie, when digging a well whose water was to be used at making clay bricks. With this occasion, another Neolithic complex was disturbed. In this case, the pit was only partially preserved. It was oval shaped, its maximum diameter was 1.60 m, and it was as deep as 0.40 m. This feature unveiled pottery that belonged to the Pişcolt culture, animal bones and obsidian fragments. The ceramic materials have been introduced in the ZEUS database, and they submitted to analysis the same characteristics as in the case of the feature: GI/1986. Therefore, eighty-six pottery shards were entered into the database in order to analyze the archaeological material.

Pottery

Looking at the chart and diagram, one can see that in the case of the feature discovered in 1989, there is a percentage of 69% covered by semi-fine pottery, followed by 30% of coarse pottery and only 1% of fine pottery.

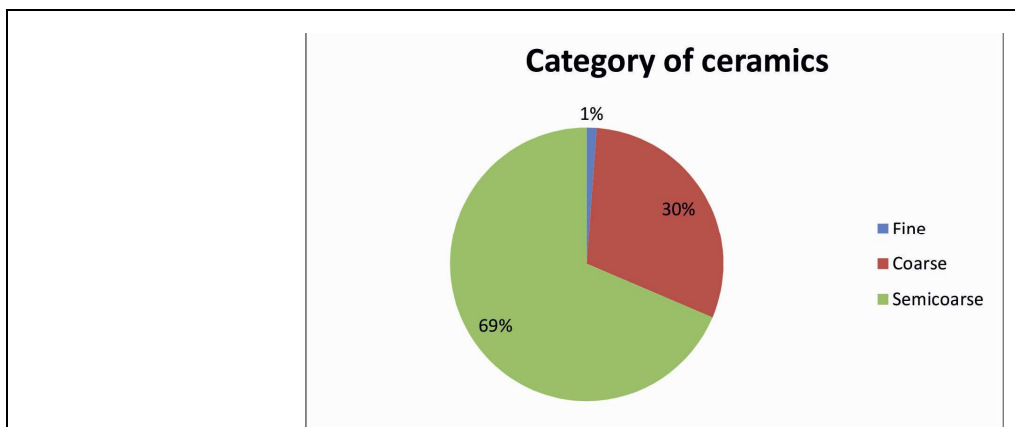


Fig. 7. Category of pottery.

Tempering

The most commonly used material in tempering clay can be seen in a diagram. As shown, the temper made of chaff and sand is prevailing in the amount of 60%, followed by the temper made of mud and chaff which is amounting 20% (this was especially used for common pottery), the one made of sand is only amounting 13%, the one made of pebbles and shards is amounting 5% and the temper made of pebbles and mud were used in an amount not more than 1%.

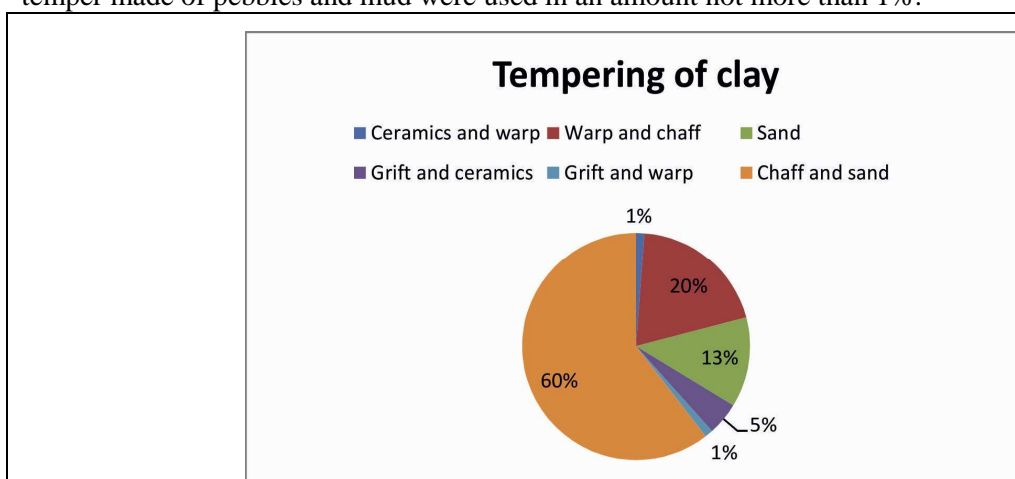


Fig. 8. Tempering of clay.

Smoothing

As can be seen in the chart, the shards with smoothed surface are dominant, followed by the pinked surface shards and finally the smoothing technique on slip or polishing appears in smaller proportions. Out of the entire material under analysis, only a few shards have a porous surface or bark surface.

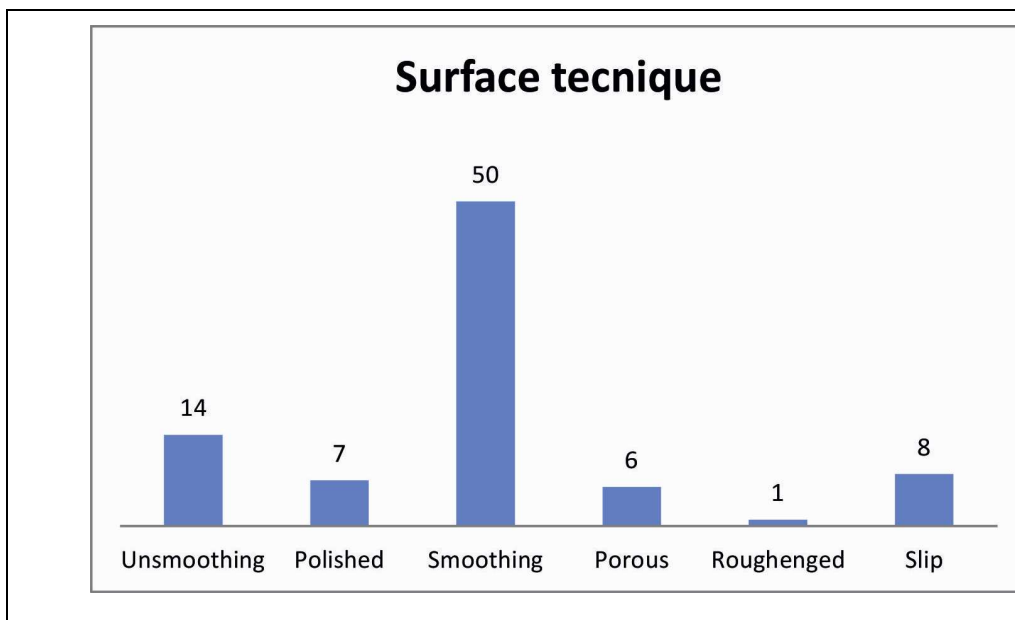


Fig. 9. Smoothing technique.

Burning procedure

According to the database on pottery burning, good reductant burning had a prevailing rate of 76 %, followed by the oxidizing burning with a rate of 14%, the poor reductant burning with a rate of 8% and the poor oxidizing burning with a rate of 2%.

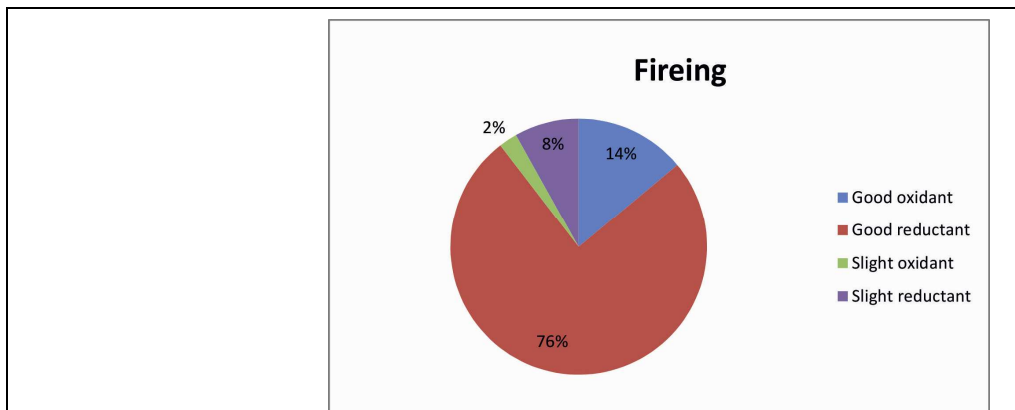


Fig. 10 Burning procedure

The ceramic forms

The GI/1989 feature uncovered few ceramic materials and few of them belonged to the Middle Neolithic. Most of them could not be determined, followed by 19 % of different sized pots, bowls, deep bowls, pedestal cups, vessels with the middle area pushed outwards (bowls and deep bowls). There were various sized vessels with Lippenrad lip, which is typical of the phase I of the Pişcolt culture (Plate IX-XI; XII/3).

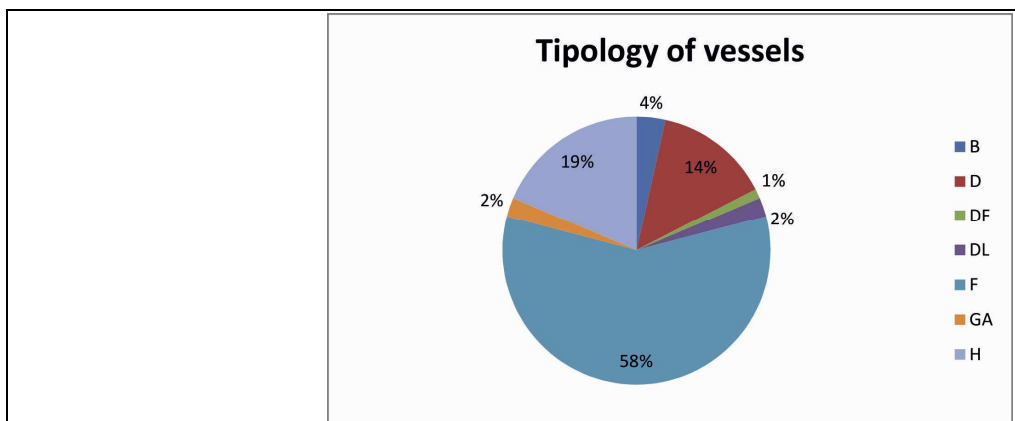


Fig. 11 Tipology of vessels

As can be seen from the chart above, the most common techniques of ornamentation are paintings and pinches. Analyzing the complex opened in 1989 we can observe: 75% of the materials lacking decoration, followed by 15% of painted materials, and the rest is represented by stitches, pinches and incisions. Regarding the motifs of decoration, we report the following: AA, AB, AC, GB, and HC (Plate XII/4-9).

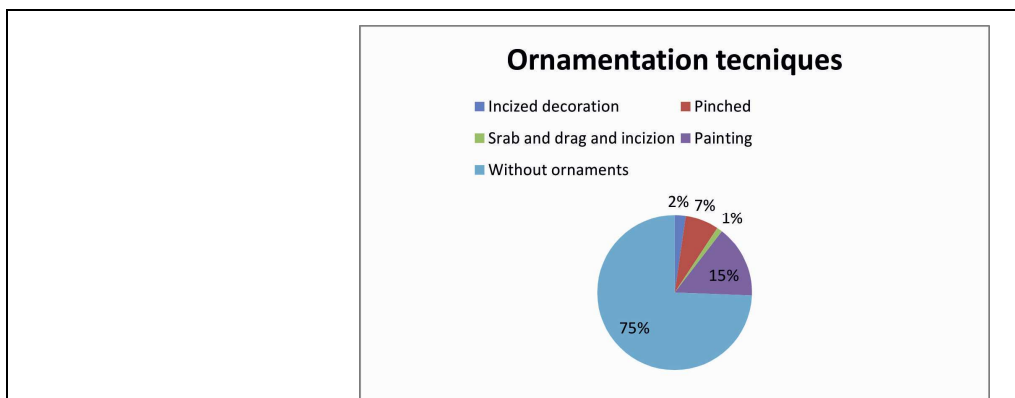


Fig. 12 Ornamentation techniques

If the case of paintings, it is difficult to identify the motifs, because in most cases they were not preserved. The painted decorations are thin, parallel, horizontal, vertical or oblique lines, or broad bands arranged in meanders. Out of all of the painted shards there was a single case in which QB motifs were identified.

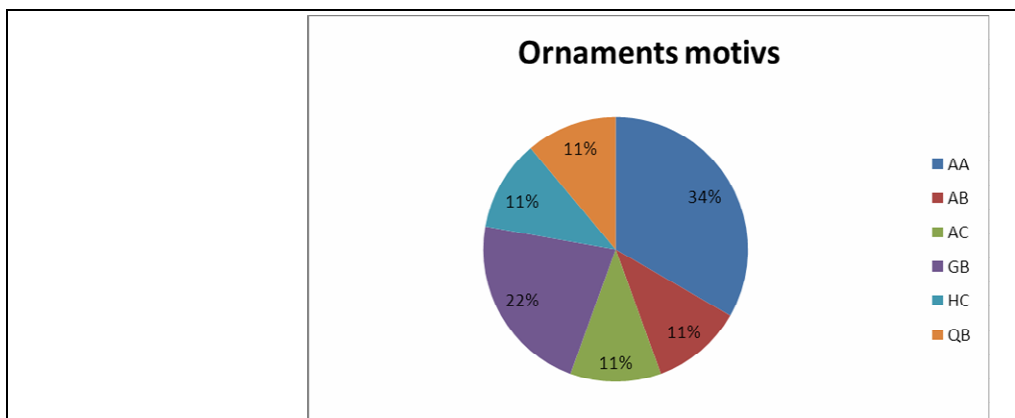


Fig. 13. Ornaments motifs.

Based on the pottery and especially on the painting as well as on the tempering material, the archaeological material discovered in the GI/1989 feature fit well into the settlements of the Pişcolt culture, Phase I/II or II spread in the Plain of Carei, Nir area and the Ier Valley. The painted motifs that were discovered in the feature from Pişcolt-*Lutărie* also occur in Căpleni (Iercoşan 1992-1993, 7-22), Moftinu Mic-*Pescărie B* (Németi 1999), Andrid-*La Pășune*, Tiream (Ciarnău, Lazarovici, 1985, 15-25), Săcuieni-*Horo* (Comşa, Nánási 1972, 633-636), Urziceni-*Vamă* (Virag 2004, 41-76), and from the Berea and Ciumeşti belonging to the Kovács collection (Németi 1997, 63-68; Virag 2008, 91-124).

Comşa, Nánási 1972	Eugen Comşa, Zoltán Nánási, <i>Mormântul neolitic descoperit la Săcuieni</i> , SCIV, 22, 4, 1971, p. 633-636.
Ciarnău, Lazarovici 1985	Ioan Ciarnău, Gheorghe Lazarovici, <i>Descoperiri neolitice pe Valea Ierului</i> , Crisia XV, 1985, p. 15-25
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Lazarovici, Németi 1983	Gheorghe Lazarovici, Ioan Németi, <i>Neoliticul dezvoltat din nord-vestul României (Sălajul, Sătmarul, Clujul)</i> , AMN, VII, 1983, p. 17-60.
Luca, Iercoşan 1997	Sabin Adrian Luca, Neţa Iercoşan, <i>Contribuţii la cunoaşterea neoliticului din nord-vestul României (III). Materialele descoperite la Săcuieni-Horo (jud. Bihor), în Studii şi Comunicări Satu Mare</i> 14 (1997), Satu-Mare, p. 11-22.
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Maxim 1999	Zoia Maxim, <i>Neo-eneoliticul din Transilvania, Cluj-Napoca</i> , 1999, p. 75-80.
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Németi 1997	János Németi, <i>Câteva consideraţii asupra colecţiei „Kovács”</i> , StComSM, XIV, 1997, p. 63-68.
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Pop 1996	Speranţa Pop, <i>Consideraţii privind un posibil atelier neo-eneolitic de prelucrat piese mici de obsidian de la Tăşad (jud. Bihor)</i> , Satu-Mare, StComSM, XIII, 1996, p. 9-14.
Virag 2004	Cristian Virag, <i>Aşezările grupului neolitic Pişcolt în</i>

	<i>nord-vestul României</i> , StComSM, XVI-XXI/1, 2004, p. 13-26.
Virag 2004a	<i>Cristian Virag, Un complex de la Halmeu – Vamă, in Studii de Istorie și arheologie, Omagiu profesorului Sabin Adrian Luca, Hunedoara, p. 25-45.</i>
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