

ACTA TERRAE SEPTEMCASTRENSIS XIV, 2015

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DEPARTMENT OF
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INSTITUTE FOR THE STUDY AND VALORIFICATION OF THE
TRANSYLVANIAN PATRIMONY IN THE EUROPEAN CONTEXT

ACTA TERRAE SEPTEMCASTRENSIS

XIV

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Sibiu, 2015

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**PREHISTORIC SIGNS AND SYMBOLS IN TRANSYLVANIA (3).
"PROMETHEUS" BEFORE PROMETHEUS
THE NEOLITHIC AND AENEOLITHIC SETTLEMENT FROM
TĂRTĂRIA-GURA LUNCII (ALBA COUNTY)**

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***Abstract:** On this occasion, we are publishing the anthropomorphic plastic-art piece discovered in dwelling L.XVI/2014 during the archaeological preventive excavations. In our opinion this piece announces – as others also do (Turdaș-Luncă) – the myth of Prometheus.*

***Key words:** Neolithic, plastic art, Tărtăria-Gura Luncii, divinities, Romania.*

***Rezumat:** Publicăm cu acest prilej o piesă de plastică antropomorfă extrem de importantă descoperită în locuința L.XVI/2014 în timpul unor cercetări arheologice preventive. După opinia noastră aceasta anunță – la fel ca altele (Turdaș-Luncă) – mitul lui Prometeu.*

***Cuvinte cheie:** neolitic, plastică, Tărtăria-Gura Luncii, divinități, România.*

Along with the archaeological materials discovered during the preventive archaeological campaign on the site of Tărtăria-Gura Luncii (Alba County), in 2014 was discovered, as part of the archaeological materials around dwelling L.XVI, on its eastern side, at a depth of 1.83 m, a ceramic fragment that resulted after the braking

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of a Neolithic large size pot, more precisely from its neck. This one (photo 1-2; fig. 1-2) has a brick-like color, obviously secondary burned, tempered with gravel, being framed in the category of common usage. The character, made by the *alto relief* technique, it is most certainly a feminine character (a probe being the well pronounced breasts), having a vaguely pentagonal mask, more likely triangular (photo 3), obviously *connected* with the pot by the incisions that cross the hands (at the end of the left hand there can be also noticed the fingers – photo 3), but also the neck and the chest, by the body of the pot. On the top it preserves an angular incision, that seems to be the beginning of an ornament, filled with impressions, specific for the Vinča culture (photo 4). The preserved height of the body has 9.2 cm, and the maximal length, at the end of the hands is of 7 cm. The level from which this piece came is being framed in phase A of Vinča culture, at this point of the research (we intend to unearth the entire dwelling, that being the point when can say more about the chronological and cultural framing). Other details regarding this dwelling shall be publishes as soon as possible in the monograph dedicated to the preventive researches made at Tărtăria-*Gura Luncii* (work in progress, 2016).

What was striking to us was first the fact that the incisions start from the body of the pot and they don't necessary represent parts of clothing – as many times before in Neolithic. More, these link the hands and neck of the character and the general attitude is the one of "crucifixion".



Photo 1. Tărtăria-*Gura Luncii* (Alba County). "Prometheus". Front view.



Photo 1. Tărtăria-*Gura Luncii* (Alba County). "Prometheus". Lateral-left view.

The closest analogy for this piece is at Turdaş (photo 5)(Roska 1941, Tab. CXXLI/6; Marler (ed.) 2008, 94; Maxim *et al.* 2009, Cat. 92). The character from here is being presented, more likely, in Petreşti culture pattern (the fabrication technology, but especially the way the face/mask was reproduced being specific for this Aeneolithic culture). On the left shoulder, it seems to be represented a bird, by the incision method. More on the left side – also by incision – it is being represented a human character. Under the right arm there are a series of incisions which are difficult to interpret. We are quoting this analogy especially because the character seems to be "connected" with the stand/pot by a series of incisions, as our character from Tărtăria.

We notice, in the case of Sânpetru German (another piece that produced many "waves") – and this observation was made for the first time by A. Niţu (Niţu 1974, 24) –, that the suggested character is being reproduced on the wall of the pot and it is being made in *altor relief*, by modeling the of the pot's wall, not by addition. The pot on which it was modeled the character is a large size one, an amphora after all the probabilities. Its special character, given by the uniqueness of the representation – at Tărtăria is the first representation of this kind, plastic alto relief of this type. Also, the apparition of the special pot near L.XVI dwelling shows, once again, the special importance of this construction. Until this moment, the general attitude of the researchers was that this characters "glued (sic!)" on the body of the pot represent "dancers", "orants", anyhow, characters that are in movement, not modeld from the body of the pot.



Photo 3. Tărtăria-Gura Luncii (Alba County). "Prometheus". Front view, with shadows that emphasis the details.



Photo 4. Tărtăria-Gura Luncii (Alba County). "Prometheus". View from the top.

The bibliography in this domain is, anyhow, abundand, and comprises characters from Neolithic and Early Aneolithic from the central – south- eastern

European area. In Hungary we can find many representations of this kind in Körös culture (Kutzián 1947, fig. XVII/3; XXII/2; XLI/1, 3-5) or at Villanykövesd (Karmanski 2000, 284, Slika 163), in the ex-Yugoslavian space this characters are present at Donja Branjevina (Karmanski 2000, 238, 239, T.V/1, Sl. 145), Čavadar (Karmanski 2000, 238, T.V, Sl. 146), Vinča (Kutzián 1947, fig. LIX/1c; LX/5-7; Nițu 1974, fig. 3/2), Hrikovci-Gomolava (Nițu 1974, fig. 3/1), Gradac (Nițu 1974, fig. 3/3) or Malca-Radacie (Nițu 1974, fig. 3/4), in Bulgaria at Karanovo (Nikolov 2009, Fig. 2.1), in Greece at Skoteini Cave from Tharrounia (Sampson 2009, Fig. 3), in Ukraine at Jukovcy (Lazarovici C.-M. 2009, Fig. 16.5), Gneiding (Becker 2014, Fig. 6.5)(Cucuteni culture). Of course, we haven't comprised all the existent discoveries.

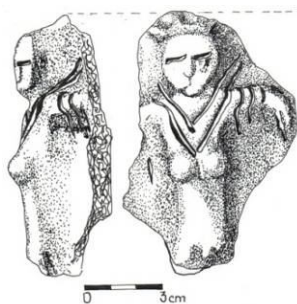


Fig. 1. Tărtăria-Gura Luncii (Alba County). "Prometheus". Drawing.
Left – view from the lateral-left side.
Right – view from front.



Fig. 2. Tărtăria-Gura Luncii (Alba County). "Prometheus". View from front. Colored drawing into the piece's tonality.

In Romania, there are also this type of characters, represented on medium or large size dimension pots, at Zorlențu Mare-Icreliște (Caraș-Severin County)(Lazarovici *et al* 2011, 115, Fig. VI.8b), Parța (Timiș County) (Drașovean, Ciobotaru 2001, cat.nr. 68), Tărtăria (Alba County) (represented in a totally different way)(Lazarovici *et al* 2011, 115, Fig. VI.6a-b; VI.8a), Sânpetru German (Nițu 1974) (the closest analogies from this representation are at Drassburg, in Austria (Nuțu 1974, fig. 4/2; Becker 2011, Taf. 72/7) or Brunn an der Wild (Becker 2011, Taf. 72/3) (Vinča culture), Scânteia (Lazarovici *et al* 2009, 149, Fig. 4; 189, Cat. 193, 269, Fig. 194) and Trușești (Lazarovici *et al* 2009, 159, Fig. 2b)(Cucuteni culture). There have

been made also synthetic studies on this them but not being able to problematize (Makkay 1971; Makkay 2006; Schuster 2011; Becker 2011, Taf. 133; 150-153; 161/6-9 (Starčevo-Criș); 90/3; 91/1-8; 181 (Liniarbandkeramic); Ilieva, Shtarbanova 2005; Ursu, Aparaschivei 2014 –for Precucuteni representations).

This subject requires some general comments.

First, we have to notice the fact that the number of the pot with human characters represented in alto relief is it very small, in each settlement, considering all the other categories of artifacts. In many settlements none was discovered. In others, as is the case for Turdaș, many representations of this kind were discovered (Roska 1941, Tab. CXXLI). In our opinion the *ritual sites* contain many pots like this which – currently – are *single in some* dwellings.

Secondly, we have to emphasis the idea of *alto relief* for the way human silhouette were made on pots. One of the most powerfull arguments for the idea above mentioned is the one for which we didn't found bibliography, or on the field, or in the museums deposits, an *imprint made on a pot wall* showing that an anthropomorphic representation was detached, fallen from its place. More, on the figure from Zorlențu Mare-*Icreliște* (Caraș-Severin County) (photo 6) it can be seen the fact that in the general conditions of fragmentation of the pot, the so-called application didn't detached not even in the breaking points, were it could at least chip.

We have seen how the detaches look like in the case of application of the clay on clay in the case of handles (especially the perforated ones). These ones detached many times and it can be noticed the fact that they have been applied afterwards and reinforced – many times – by a preeminence that enters in the pot's wall.

Third, and last, coming back to the idea of connection in substance, the leaven of the pot, we can notice the fact that this idea that connects us with the *birth* and *regeneration*. We believe that the materials that were deposited in the pot had a magical character, connected with the rituals of this period. Maybe that in this one there was a liquid. Maybe inside it fermented. Maybe the *euphoric concatenation* is being connected with this pots and their contains.

The concatenation – much rarer – has as a porpoise the fixing of the character, the cancelation of the *elevation* effect. We do not suspect why this thing is being necessary (Prometheus ?). We only observe, by some examples we have reached.

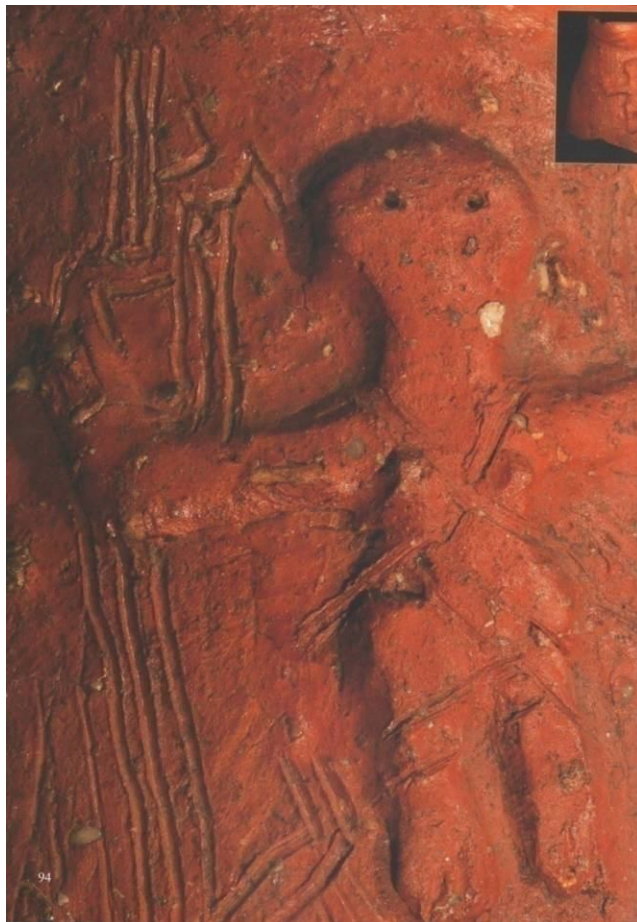


Photo 5. Turdaș-Luncă (Hunedoara County). "Prometheus".



Photo 6. Zorlențu Mare-*Icreliște* (Caraș-Severin County). "Dancers".

The essential myth of man comprises, without doubt, the form imposed by the distinct and successive periods of history.

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