

# **ACTA TERRAE SEPTEMCASTRENSIS XIV, 2015**



**LUCIAN BLAGA UNIVERSITY OF SIBIU**  
**FACULTY OF SOCIAL AND HUMAN SCIENCES**  
**DEPARTMENT OF**  
**HISTORY, HERITAGE AND PROTESTANT TEOLOGY**  
**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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## AENEOLITHIC BEADS MADE OF FISH VERTEBRA DISCOVERED AT PĂULENI-CIUC – “DÂMBUL CETĂȚII”, HARGHITA COUNTY, ROMANIA

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**Abstract:** *The archaeological excavations carried out during 1999-2013 campaigns in the Prehistoric site from Păuleni-Ciuc/ Csíkpálfalva – Șoimeni/ Csíksomortán-“Dâmbul Cetății”/ “Várdomb”, Harghita County offered the opportunity of recovering an assemblage of artefacts made of osseous materials belonging to Cucuteni-Ariuşd culture. It was recovered from the three Aeneolithic layers, both from complexes (pits, huts) and from archaeological layers. The assemblage contains the largest repertory of artefacts dated from Cucuteni-Ariuşd culture from Transylvania and has been analysed according to the current exhaustive methodology of the domain. A special attention was paid to the assemblage of artefacts related to symbolic manifestations of Cucuteni-Ariuşd communities. Besides various adornments made of osseous raw materials from mammals (bone beads made of fragments of long bones, pendants, plates, perforated teeth, perforated and decorated phalanges), there are several rare artefacts made of fish skeletal elements. Among these we have three beads made of vertebra coming from large species of fish (probably catfish, *Silurus glanis* or carp - *Cyprinus carpio*). The pieces were studied in a detailed manner, by applying a standardised methodology. The approach supposed a systematic examination of all artefacts using an optical microscope (x10 – x40) and a digital microscope (x10 – x400). The artefacts have been dated at 4200-4000 B.C.*

**Keywords:** *bone bead, Cucuteni-Ariuşd culture, Eastern Carpathians National Museum, osseous materials artefacts, paleotechnology, Păuleni-Ciuc/ Csíkpálfalva – Șoimeni/*

*Csiksomortán-“Dâmbul Cetății”/ “Várdomb”, Sfântu Gheorghe, perforated fish vertebra, spiritual life, symbolic artefacts, Transylvania.*

### **The archaeological context**

The paper presents the data issued from the analysis regarding special symbolic artefacts made of bone discovered in the well-known archaeological site of Șoimeni – “Dâmbul Cetății”, Păuleni-Ciuc Commune, Harghita County, Romania. These belong to the Cucuteni-Ariuşd Culture and they are dated at 4200-4000 B.C.

The prehistoric settlement is placed at 8 km northeast of Miercurea-Ciuc and at 1-1.5 km northeast of Șoimeni village (*Csiksomortán*), Păuleni-Ciuc comm., Harghita County, in the area called “Dâmbul Cetății” („*Várdomb*”).

The “Dâmbul Cetății” archaeological site is located in the western area of Ciuc Depression at eastern slopes of the Ciuc Mountains, on a natural promontory which is sheltered by the higher hills that surround it. The altitude of the place is 846 m.

The area on which the settlement is placed belonged from an administrative point of view to Păuleni-Ciuc comm. and Șoimeni village. Due to the fact that Șoimeni village (*Csiksomortán*) is closer to the archaeological site, since from the first excavations, Zoltán Székely used the Hungarian denomination of the village, but with a Romanian spelling *Ciomortan* instead of *Csomortán* (*Csiksomortán*) (Székely 1971; Székely 1988).

Initially, on the place where the settlement was established there was a natural promontory. It had an oval shape and it was three meters tall. This place offered good defence conditions, due to the fact that the access in the settlement was easily controlled.

The settlement is both natural and anthropic fortified. In the western, northern and eastern areas, the settlement have a wall and a “horseshoe”-shaped ditch (Székely 1971; Székely 1988; Cavruc 1999, 14-41; Cavruc 2005, 81-123; Buzea 2012a; Buzea 2012b; Whitlow *et al.* 2013; Whitlow 2014; Whitlow *et al.* 2014).

The earthen wall which fortified the settlement during the Bronze Age practically restricted the habitable area of the site. Thus, the living space of approximately 5,400 square meters (60 x 90 m) used during *Cucuteni-Ariuşd* culture (V-IV millennia BC), it got to about 2,200 square meters living area (32 x 70 m) during *Costișa-Ciomortan* culture and, later, during *Wietenberg* culture.

### **History of the research**

The Prehistoric fortified settlement of Șoimeni was first mentioned in the archaeological literature during the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. With that occasion, the first topographical and technical descriptions were provided. The name of the place frequently appeared as *Cetate/Dealul Cetății/Movila (Vár/Várdomb/Várhegy)* (Székely 1971; Székely 1988).

The first extensive excavations were carried out by the Székely Museum of Ciuc from Miercurea-Ciuc, together with the National Székely Museum of Sfântu Gheorghe, being coordinated by Zoltán Székely. During the three archaeological campaigns carried out in 1956, 1960 and 1967, five sections/trenches (S. I-V) and



three square surfaces (C. A-C) were excavated. The dug surface was about 160 square meters.

The excavations led to the following conclusions: the Aeneolithic Ariușd (*Cucuteni-Ariușd*) communities inhabited the place for the first time; they organised the territory for the first huts to be built there. During the Final Aeneolithic, the *Coțofeni* communities established there and during the Bronze Age, the *Ciomortan* and *Wietenberg* ones lived at Șoimeni – “*Dâmbul Cetății*”.

The earthen wall which surrounds the settlements and which was strengthened with palisade was made by a community which followed to the *Ariușd* one and lived during the Bronze Age. The most important result of these researches was the discovery of a cultural aspect which was unknown until then in Transylvania.

This new cultural aspect was introduced in the specialised literature like *Ciomortan culture* (starting from the Hungarian name of Șoimeni village: *Csiksomortán* but in Romanian official administrative variant at that time) and this was chronologically dated from the Middle Bronze Age (Székely 1971; Székely 1988).

Many aspects related to the settlement of “*Dâmbul Cetății*” remained unsolved due to the low extent of the research carried out by Zoltán Székely – only 3% of the surface of the settlement was excavated – and due to the summary and selective publication of the results of these archaeological excavations (Cavruc 1999; Cavruc 2005).

After 1990 when the settlement from “*Dâmbul Cetății*” started to be poached by the treasure hunters, the researchers became again interested in the situation of this very important site. Fortunately, a part of the archaeological materials which were discovered during the unauthorised excavations got into the patrimony of the Eastern Carpathians National Museum of Sfântu Gheorghe, Covasna County.

The analysed materials were dated from the Middle Bronze Age, more precisely to *Costișa-Ciomortan* and *Wietenberg* cultures (the 3<sup>rd</sup> – the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennia BC); so these were clearly documented in the area of Ciuc Depression for this Prehistoric stage (Cavruc 1999, 14-41; Cavruc 2005, 81-123; Buzea 2012a; Buzea 2012b; Whitlow *et al.* 2013).

### **Osseous materials artefacts**

The archaeological excavations carried out during 1999-2013 campaigns in the Prehistoric site from Păuleni-Ciuc/Csikpálfalva – Șoimeni/ Csíkcsomortán-“*Dâmbul Cetății*”/“*Várdomb*”, Harghita County offered the opportunity of recovering an assemblage of artefacts made of osseous materials belonging to *Cucuteni-Ariușd* Culture.

It was recovered from the three Aeneolithic layers, both from complexes (pits, huts) and from archaeological layers. The assemblage contains the largest repertory of artefacts dated from *Cucuteni-Ariușd* culture from Transylvania and has been analysed according to the current exhaustive methodology of the domain.

Data regarding the artefacts dated from *Cucuteni-Ariuşd* Culture and *Wietenberg* culture (discoveries from 1999-2013) were presented in various publications from 2009 to present (Beldiman *et al.* 2010 Beldiman *et al.* 2012a; Beldiman *et al.* 2012b; Beldiman *et al.* 2014a; Beldiman *et al.* 2014b; Beldiman *et al.* 2015; Beldiman, Sztancs, 2012a; Beldiman, Sztancs, 2012b; Beldiman, Sztancs, 2012c; Beldiman, Sztancs, 2012d; Beldiman, Sztancs, 2013; Beldiman, Sztancs, 2014; Sztancs, 2011; Sztancs, Beldiman, 2010a; Sztancs, Beldiman, 2010b; Sztancs, Beldiman, 2011a; Sztancs *et al.*, 2009; Sztancs *et al.*, 2010).

The pieces that we have studied until now are preserved in the collections of the Eastern Carpathians National Museum of Sfântu Gheorghe, Covasna County. Their status of conservation is good and very good.

This fact allowed us to quantify in optimal conditions all the aspects required by the complex study of the pieces. Our approach supposed a systematic examination of all artefacts using an optical microscope (x10 – x40) and a digital microscope (x10 – x400).

The assemblage of osseous materials artefacts recovered from the Aeneolithic layers comprises 89 pieces. As tools, we should underline the preference for long awls made of fragments of large herbivore bones and the use of red deer antler. There are also numerous adornments and other symbolic artefacts.

### **Bone beads. Beads made of fish vertebra**

A special attention was paid to the assemblage of artefacts related to symbolic manifestations of *Cucuteni-Ariuşd* communities. Besides various adornments made of osseous materials (pendants, plates, perforated teeth, perforated and decorated phalanxes), ten beads were also studied.

Among these, seven are made of bone, are circular or oval and three were made of vertebra coming from large species of fish (probably catfish, *Silurus glanis*). These last represent the object of the present paper.

They were approached in a detailed manner, by applying a standardised methodology, using microscopic analyses and palaeo-technological reconstructions whose results have not been included in the editorial project “Animals, technology and Prehistoric osseous materials artefacts discovered at Păuleni-Ciuc, Harghita County” (Beldiman *et al.* 2012a), subsequently being valorised with various occasions.

The catalogue, the data regarding the archaeological context, extensive descriptions, and details regarding the manufacturing chain (raw materials, procedures and techniques of manufacture, hypotheses regarding the usage of the pieces) are presented.

The illustration includes various photos – general and detailed views, macro- and micro-photographs – figs. 1-3.

The studied artefacts have also been dated (4200-4000 B.C.); consequently, the documentary value of the research is a higher one (Whitlow, 2014; Whitlow *et al.*, 2013; Whitlow *et al.*, 2014).

The beads made of fish vertebra (catfish - *Silurus glanis* or carp - *Cyprinus carpio*) are preserved entire or almost entire. They present some traces of superficial burning.

Their manufacture required the application of very simple technical procedures such as: fracture of the apophyses and their central perforation done by rotation.

There are no traces of finishing by polishing.

Use-wear traces: the smooth edges of perforation could indicate the rigid fixation of the piece in a string using a wire.

The beads were probably hung in a string, well fixed on a thread. This prevents the use-wear traces to appear at the level of perforation.

The use-wear traces such as: bluntness, polish and fine striations are located on the beads surfaces and they were produced probably by the long contact with a soft material (leather or textile clothes). The beads were probably used also in a string, tight hold on a thread.

### Repertory

Structure of repertory file: CODE (PCD) ● TYPE ● TYPOLOGICAL CODE ● Figures ● Category (tools, weapons, adornments, raw materials, accessories etc.) ● Institution / Collection ● Inventory number ● Context ● Raw material ● Conservation status (entire, fragmentary, fragment) ● Description (morphology, technical data regarding the manufacture, use-wear traces, function role etc.) ● Dimensions (mm) ● Bibliography ● Authors.

PCD/I 75 ● BEAD ● III D2 (Fig. 1)

● Adornments ● MNCR Sf. Gheorghe ● 17569 ● 2011 Square L 5 Plane 7 – 8 Aeneolithic Layer III

● Fish vertebra (catfish - *Silurus glanis* or carp - *Cyprinus carpio*).

● Piece entirely preserved.

● Bone bead made from a fish vertebra. Debitage: removing of the apophyses by fracture. Central perforation probably done by rotation. Without traces of finishing. Use-wear traces: smooth polish of perforation edge.

● Diameter 14/13.6; thickness 8.3; diameter of perforation 3.5.

● Beldiman *et al.* 2012a.

● Corneliu Beldiman, Diana-Maria Sztancs, Dan Lucian Buzea.

PCD/I 76 ● BEAD ● III D2 (Fig. 2)

● Adornments ● MNCR Sf. Gheorghe ● 17556 ● 2011 S I Squares L – M 4 Plane 7 – 8 Aeneolithic Layer III

- Fish vertebra (catfish - *Silurus glanis* or carp - *Cyprinus carpio*).
- Piece entirely preserved.
- Bone bead made from a fish vertebra. Debitage: removing the apophyses by fracture. Central perforation by rotation. Without traces of finishing. Use-wear traces: smooth polish of perforation edge.
  - Diameter 14.6/13.6; thickness 8.7; diameter of perforation 4.
  - Beldiman *et al.* 2012a.
  - Corneliu Beldiman, Diana-Maria Sztancs.

PCD/I 77 ● BEAD ● III D2 (Fig. 3)

● Adornments ● MNCR Sf. Gheorghe ● 17554 ● 2011 S I Squares L – M 4  
Plane 7 – 8 Aeneolithic Layer III

- Fish vertebra (catfish - *Silurus glanis* or carp - *Cyprinus carpio*).
- Piece entirely preserved.
- Bone bead made from a fish vertebra. Debitage: removing the apophyses by fracture. Central perforation by rotation. Without traces of finishing. Use-wear traces: smooth polish of perforation edge.
  - Diameter 13.5; thickness 9.7; diameter of perforation 3.8.
  - Beldiman *et al.* 2012a.
  - Corneliu Beldiman, Diana-Maria Sztancs.

### **Analogies**

During the past two decades we have studied Neo-Aeneolithic adornments and other pieces made of various osseous materials discovered in Romania whose functionality was connected with the spirituality domain (Beldiman, 2000; Beldiman, 2004a; Beldiman, 2004b; Beldiman, 2007; Beldiman, 2012; Beldiman *et al.*, 2010; Beldiman *et al.*, 2012c; Beldiman *et al.*, 2012d; Beldiman *et al.*, 2012e; Beldiman *et al.*, 2013; Beldiman, Sztancs, 2004; Beldiman, Sztancs, 2005; Beldiman, Sztancs, 2006; Beldiman, Sztancs, 2008; Beldiman, Sztancs, 2009; Beldiman, Sztancs, 2012a; Sztancs, 2011; Sztancs, Beldiman, 2005; Sztancs, Beldiman, 2011b; Sztancs *et al.*, 2009; Sztancs *et al.*, 2010).

Until recently, bone beads were not especially approached in studies and articles in Romanian literature. These were only mentioned in the catalogue of the artefacts coming from various sites. Lately, osseous materials artefacts as well as hoards with prestige goods dated from Cucuteni-Ariușd culture were published – articles and studies, chapters of PhD. thesis etc. (Beldiman *et al.*, 2010; Beldiman *et al.*, 2012a; Beldiman *et al.*, 2012b; Beldiman *et al.*, 2012c; Beldiman *et al.*, 2012d; Beldiman *et al.*, 2012e; Beldiman *et al.*, 2013; Beldiman *et al.*, 2014a; Beldiman *et al.*, 2015; Beldiman, 2004a; Beldiman, 2004b; Beldiman, 2012; Beldiman, Sztancs, 2004; Beldiman, Sztancs, 2005; Beldiman, Sztancs, 2006; Beldiman, Sztancs, 2008; Beldiman, Sztancs, 2009; Beldiman, Sztancs, 2012a; Beldiman, Sztancs, 2012a;

Beldiman, Sztancs, 2012b; Beldiman, Sztancs, 2012c; Beldiman, Sztancs, 2012d; Beldiman, Sztancs, 2013; Beldiman, Sztancs, 2014; Sztancs *et al.*, 2009; Sztancs *et al.*, 2010; Sztancs, 2011; Sztancs, Beldiman, 2005; Sztancs, Beldiman, 2010a; Sztancs, Beldiman, 2010b; Sztancs, Beldiman, 2011a; Sztancs, Beldiman, 2011b).

There was a project (ended) that approached the issue of Cucuteni culture adornments but no extensive catalogue or synthesis was published within this project (Țurcanu, 2011a; Țurcanu, 2011b).

As analogies for the bone beads (fragments of herbivores long bones, maybe cattle) which have been analysed with this occasion we may mention the pieces made of various materials (lithic, metal, clay) found within the hoards from: Cărbuna, Republic of Moldova; Brad, Neamț County; Hăbășești, Iași County (Dumitrescu, 1967, 35, fig. 51; Dumitrescu, 1974; Beldiman, Sztancs, 2006 – with bibliography; Beldiman, Sztancs, 2008 – with bibliography), as well as the isolated ones discovered at: Hăbășești-„Holm”, Iași County (Dumitrescu, 1967, 35, fig. 52), Poduri-„Dealul Ghindaru”, Bacău County (Monah *et al.*, 2003, 164, 171-172) and others.

The beads made of fish vertebra have no analogies identified within the literature that we have consulted regarding the Cucuteni-Ariuşd Culture. This type of pieces is mentioned during the Second Iron Age within the Dacian civilisation at the Ardeu-„Hillfort”, Hunedoara County (Beldiman *et al.*, 2012d, 93-94, 341-342, pl. 55-56).

On the other hand, skeletal elements such as carp pharyngeal teeth were exceptionally attested within Cucuteni-Ariuşd Culture as raw materials for beads – the case of hoard discovered at Ariuşd, Covasna County (Beldiman, Sztancs, 2012a; Sztancs, Beldiman, 2011b).

### **Conclusion**

The category of small finds in which the adornments are included, is the expression of highly developed Cucutenian spirituality.

The adornments (beads, pendants, plates, perforated teeth, perforated and decorated phalanxes etc.), which were part of everyday life of the Aeneolithic communities lived on the territory of Romania have not been the subject of an extensive approach (cataloguing, defining the typology, the manufacturing chain and usage, significance within the context etc.).

The detailed analysis of the three pieces discovered within the site of Păuleni-Ciuc/Csíkpálfalva – Ősoimeni/Csíksomortán-“Dâmbul Cetății”/“Várdomb” contributes to filling this gap of research, offering a pattern of studying the subject, centred on bone artefacts: beads made of fish vertebra.

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Photographs have been taken by Corneliu Beldiman.

English version by Diana-Maria Sztancs.

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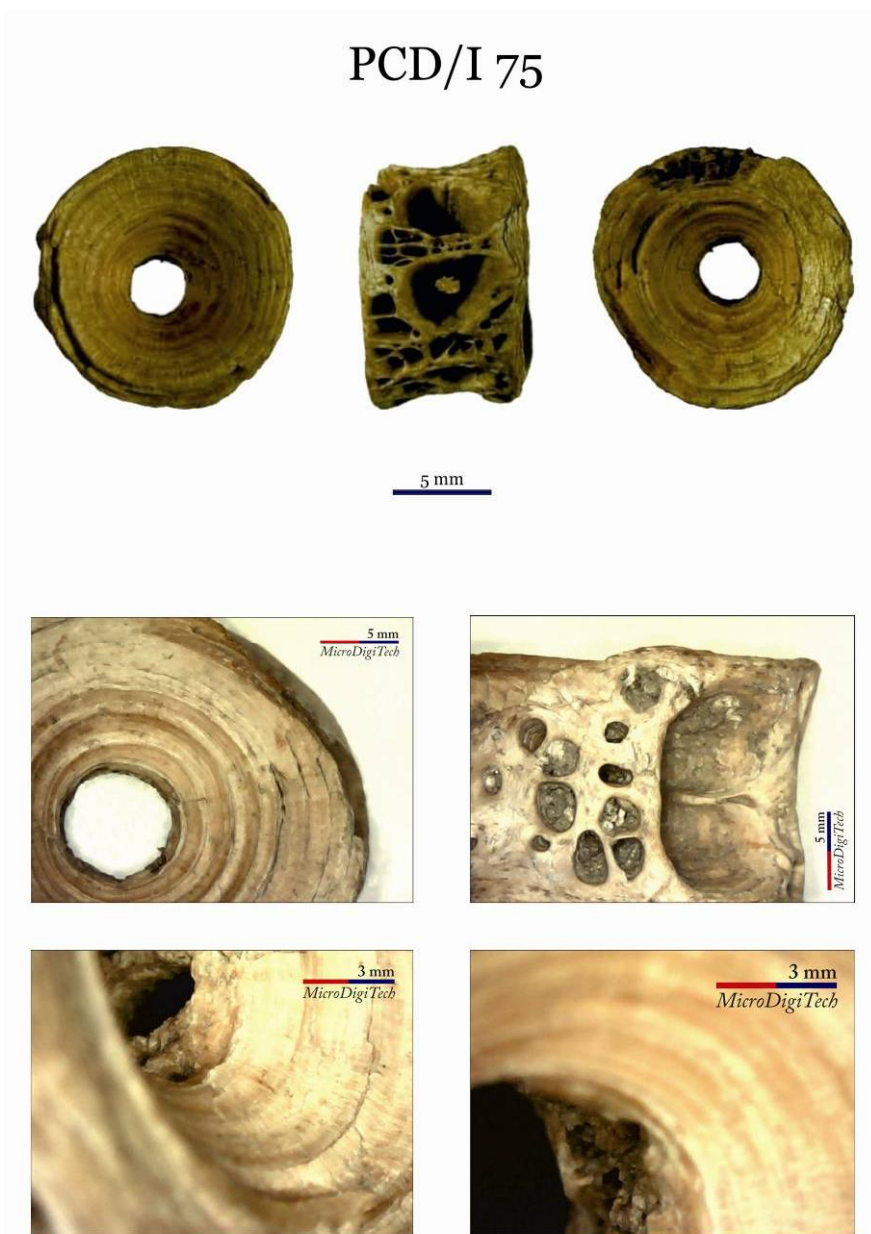
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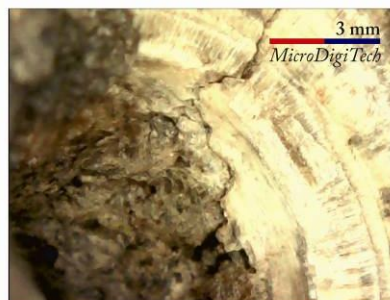
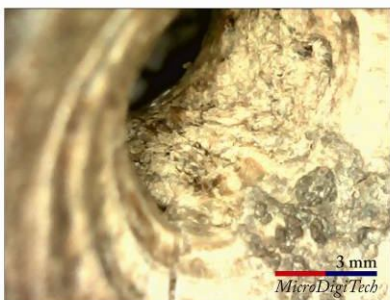
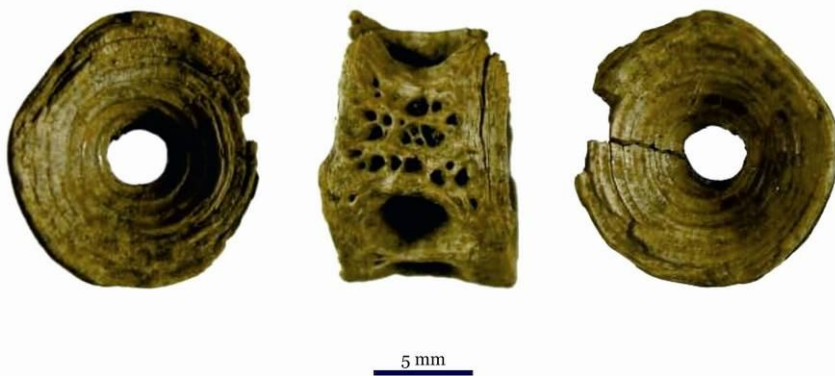
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**Fig. 1.** Păuleni-Ciuc/Csíkpálfalva – Șoimeni/ Csíkcsomortán-“Dâmbul Cetății”/“Várdomb”, Harghita County. Cucuteni/Ariușd Culture. Bone bead – perforated fish vertebra. PCD/I 75.

PCD/I 76



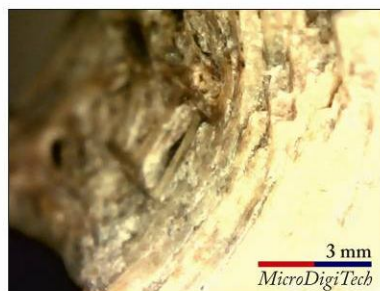
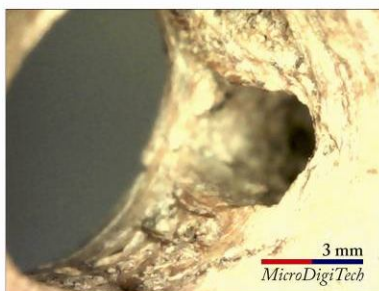
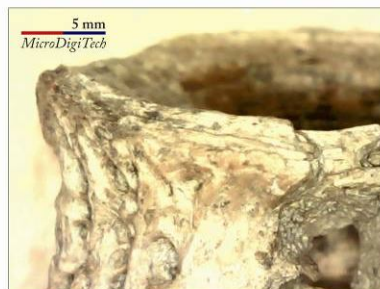
**Fig. 2.** Păuleni-Ciuc/Csíkpálfalva – Șoimeni/ Csíkcsomortán-“Dâmbul Cetății”/“Várdomb”, Harghita County. Cucuteni/Ariușd Culture. Bone bead – perforated fish vertebra. PCD/I 76.



PCD/I 77



5 mm



**Fig. 3.** Păuleni-Ciuc/Csíkpálfalva – Șoimeni/ Csíkcsomortán-“Dâmbul Cetății”/“Várdomb”, Harghita County. Cucuteni/Ariușd Culture. Bone bead – perforated fish vertebra. PCD/I 77.