

## Public patriarchy in contemporary Romanian archaeology and the image of women in the Romanian Neolithic and Bronze Age

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**Abstract:** *By writing this article I intended to initiate in the Romanian archaeology a debate on the issue of the 'genderless epistemology' and its consequences for the archaeological research and for the life course of Romanian archaeologists. By way of several examples I showed that irrespective of the quantity (large in the Neolithic, small in the Bronze Age) and variety of the artefacts easy to relate to the feminine gender, Romanian archaeologists see Neolithic and Bronze Age women according to the present patriarchal pattern dominant in the vision of male archaeologists on women in general: women were preoccupied by fertility and children; men, warriors and preoccupied by sexuality, were the real agents in social life. Since, as I tried to demonstrate, much of the archaeological record is evidence to the contrary and that other interpretations are more plausible, why does this traditional patriarchal image of prehistoric women appear in the works of female archaeologists as well? My conclusion: the profoundly patriarchal character of the relationships between men and women in Romanian archaeology are responsible for the fact that, at almost one hundred year after the first women entered this profession, the men still stand for the universal, the androcentric vision of the world is taken to be scientific and the female-archaeologists are not preoccupied with the construction of an identity of their own.*

**Rezumat:** *Am scris acest articol din dorința de a iniția în arheologia românească o discuție cu privire la 'epistemologia fără gen' și consecințele sale asupra cercetării arheologice și cursului vieții arheologilor din România. Pe baza mai multor exemple am arătat că indiferent de cantitatea (mare în neolitic, mică în epoca bronzului) și varietatea artefactelor ușor de pus în legătură cu genul feminin, arheologii români aplică femeilor din neolitic și epoca bronzului tiparul patriarhal contemporan, dominant în viziunea arheologilor bărbați asupra femeilor în general: femeile erau preocupate de fertilitate, fecunditate și copii; bărbații, în schimb, erau războinici și preocupați de sexualitate și constituiau elementul activ în viața socială. Arătând că mare parte din informația arheologică este în defavoarea acestor interpretări și că altele sunt mai plauzibile, mă întreb de ce imaginea patriarhală tradițională despre femeile din preistorie apare și în scrierile arheologilor femei din România. Concluzia mea: caracterul profund patriarhal al relațiilor dintre bărbații și femeile care practică arheologia în România face ca, la aproape un secol de la intrarea primelor femei în arheologia noastră, bărbații să stea încă pentru universal, viziunea androcentrică să fie luată drept științifică, iar femeile-arheologi să nu se gândească la construcția unei identități proprii.*

**Keywords:** *genderless epistemology, figurines, Neolithic, Bronze Age, contemporary gender relationships, patriarchy.*

**Cuvinte cheie:** *epistemologie fără gen, figurine, neolitic, epoca bronzului, relații de gen contemporane, patriarhat.*

This article is a first draft of a study that I intend to write on the issue of genderless epistemology in the Romanian archaeology: why is it that we think that a genderless epistemology is a *sine qua non* condition of the objectivity of a study, of the scientific character of an investigation? and if we had gendered epistemologies, what would they change in our research of the past and in the lives of present researchers? These questions were already raised by archaeologists in other countries, by feminist archaeologists in the first place, with important consequences for archaeology and archaeologists (e.g. M. Díaz-Andreu, M. L. S. Sørensen [eds] 1998; L. Prados Torreira, C. Ruiz López [eds] 2008), but they are still absent in Romania. I shall start the discussion here, by trying to examine the prevailing image of Neolithic and Bronze Age women in Romanian archaeology.

**First, on women in the Bronze Age (2600-1200/1000 BC).** With small exceptions Romanian archaeologists working on the Bronze Age hardly ever mention women in their interpretation, to the point the reader is left with the image of a social life that went on perfectly without any participation of women.

The large amount of weapons is considered to stand proof for the idea that in the Bronze Age war was of primary importance. All warriors were men – that seems to be unquestionable. Power and warfare were inseparable; some weapons are also prestige goods and insignia of power: e.g. the golden sword, golden daggers and silver axes from Perșinari, various richly decorated bronze weapons (I. Nestor 1960, p. 122-124; A. Vulpe 2001, p. 353-361 with illustration).

Since changes in material culture are considered to be – in the prevailing, culture-historical research tradition - the result of influence of human groups one upon the other as well as the result of penetration of groups of population into the territory of other groups, it becomes clear that men are

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seen as the great and only agents of social life in the Bronze Age. And since men are conceived as physically strong, all larger tools must have been used by them, i.e. men are the main agents in economic life as well. This is the image delivered among others by the *History of the Romanians*, a treaty edited under the aegis of the Romanian Academy in 2001; the chapter on social life does not mention women at all (*Ibid.*, p. 353-369). In the archaeology of the Bronze Age women appear usually only when one deals with their skeletons: then the reader is told of the differences in burial rite between men and women (M. Șandor-Chicideanu, I. Chicideanu 1989). In the few cases these difference are accounted for, they are invariably considered to mirror the men-women relationships characteristic for patriarchy (I. Nestor 1960, p. 121; I. Chicideanu 1986, p. 28). Even in cases where women's graves are clearly richer than those of men the attention is quickly diverted from the possible meanings of this fact to the preoccupation with demonstrating the social superiority of men (L. Bârză 1989, p. 49-51).<sup>1</sup>

In fact, in verbal discussions, many argue that women's role in the Bronze Age social life is absent from the archaeological studies because, unlike men, women didn't leave any important traces in the archaeological evidence. There are some exceptions however: the numerous female figurines stemming from the Žuto Brdo-Gârla Mare (LBA) cemeteries and settlements (Vi. Dumitrescu 1961, p. 244-279; pl. 152-161; M. Chicideanu-Șandor, I. Chicideanu 1990; Șandor-Chicideanu 2003, p. 101-112). They were variously interpreted from replacing the mother in the graves of deceased children to a feminine goddess associated with a particular social group (as summarized in M. Șandor-Chicideanu, I. Chicideanu 1990, p. 70-75), but again they didn't trigger a discussion on female identity and social role in the period, at least not otherwise than in such vague terms as women submitted to men's authority (I. Chicideanu 1986, p. 28). At the same time, artefacts and aspects of the archaeological remains relevant for women's life were ignored. E.g. Radu Vulpe noticed in his diary that during the 1954 excavation campaign in the settlement from Popești-"Nucet" a clay fragment in the shape of a female breast was found (Diary no. 1/1954, Section Ω, p. 127), but he didn't publish it (see the sherd in N. Palincaș 2004-2005, fig. 3/1) in the excavation report following the campaign, where he picked out other pieces as relevant for the site (R. Vulpe 1955); Vi. Dumitrescu noticed that many Žuto Brdo-Gârla Mare vessels, especially cups and mugs, were decorated with nipple-like protrusions (1961, p. 147), but the fact has received no further attention ever since.

That women are visible in the archaeological record is shown by a study of the Late Bronze Age in the Lower Danube: the integration of the small scale local communities into very large exchange networks favoured the social recognition of the importance of women's roles in economy and politics; women used the new context to challenge the old power relationships (N. Palincaș 2004-2005; *eadem* 2007). In other words: women were capable of understanding and being effective not only in their relationship with children, but also in economy and politics. Although no one brought arguments to the contrary, the articles were received with reluctance.<sup>2</sup>

**Women in the Romanian Neolithic.** But if the lack or scarcity of obviously women related objects is the issue, what difference is there when we consider an epoch with thousands of objects representing the female body and only few representing the male body? Such an epoch is the Neolithic, dated in Romania between ca 6600 and 3700 BC (M. Petrescu-Dîmbovița 2001, p. 121).

Archaeological evidence and its interpretation:

1. There are thousands of female figurines known from the Neolithic period in Romania and a very large number anthropomorphic vessels and scenes consisting of women, animals and vegetation depicted on pottery: e.g. in his book from 1997 Monah illustrated at least 1,000 figurines from the Cucuteni-Tripoli area alone (i.e. including the Ukrainian territory), while in 2002 Andreescu mentions having personally examined about 1,200 Gumelnița figurines and anthropomorphic vessels. Despite the fact that only few are represented in state of pregnancy<sup>3</sup> or as breast feeding children, female

<sup>1</sup> "En dépit de la position privilégiée des femmes qui transmettent sans doute aussi bien la richesse que le statut social, on peut démontrer que les chefs effectifs de la communauté sont des hommes." (L. Bârză 1989, p. 50).

<sup>2</sup> This was clearly visible in the reactions of the auditory as the first article (N. Palincaș 2004-2005) was presented as a talk: both during and after the talk most of those present laughed, some, more benevolent, considered this interpretation as useful only in that stage of archaeology where there is no more archaeological material to be dug out from the earth, while only a minority considered it interesting.

<sup>3</sup> E. g., only 4% of the total number of Gumelnița figurines represent pregnant women (R.R. Andreescu 2002, p. 89, 93).

figurines (fig. 1/1) were generally considered to be related to a fertility cult:<sup>4</sup> Neolithic women were concerned with their fertility either qua women or, less directly, as related through their sex to the Mother Goddess/Great Mother, the creator of all life (fig. 2) (D. Monah 1997, p. 203-208; C. M. Lazarovici 2006, p. 57-58; N. Ursulescu *et alii* 2006). Here are some examples of this obsession with fertility:

- 21 slightly differing female figurines found together at Isaiia were interpreted as representing the days of increase and decrease of female fertility; on this basis a 21 days long menstrual cycle of Neolithic women was reconstructed, followed by the conclusion that the Cucuteni population was about 30% more fertile than the present-day population; however, we are told, even if the menstrual cycle were of 28 days the 21 figurines can still be interpreted as representing it (N. Ursulescu, F.A. Tencariu 2006, p. 61-64).
- The Pre-Cucuteni figurines from Târgu Frumos and Căscioarele (fig. 3) were interpreted as representing women in "birth giving position", by analogy with the figurine with the prominent vulva from Achilleion (N. Ursulescu *et alii* 2006, p. 116); apart from other possible interpretations of the figurine from Achilleion itself (D.W. Bailey 1994; *idem* 2005, p. 181-196), N. Ursulescu *et alii* completely ignored the fact that the figurines from Romania they referred to do not have the vulva represented at all and every possible sign of pregnancy is missing; no attention at all is paid to the reasonable similarity of the position of the legs of these figurines with that of the famous and contemporary Thinker from Târpești (comp. *Ibidem*, especially fig. 3/1, but also fig. 3/2 with S. Marinescu-Bîlcu 1981, fig. 107/4) and I suspect that we have here a gender stereotype at work since the figurines from Târgu Frumos and Căscioarele are female while the Thinker from Târpești (even if in fact it has no indication of sex) was taken from the very beginning to be male (S. Marinescu-Bîlcu 1981, p. 40).
- The Vinča C–D female figurine with the head broken off in antiquity and bearing a mask in her left hand and an askos-like vessel in the right is considered to inform us on rituals carried out as part of a fertility cult simply because of the female sex of the figurine: 'Libation is carried out in correlation with the fertility cult, a fact suggested in the first place by the female sex of the statuette' (my translation of A.S. Luca, I. Dragomir 1987, p. 40).<sup>5</sup> The logical consequence of this is that whatever the props of a female statuette would be, they would invariably inform us on fertility cult.

2. A large number of anthropomorphic vessels in shape of the female body or figurines in shape of a female body with vessels attached to their lower abdomen are also seen as connecting women with the fertility of the vegetation and livestock (N. Ursulescu *et alii* 2006, p. 116-118).

3. A similar number of couples consisting of two females, of which one is always larger than the other was seen are lying at the origin of the Demeter and Kore cult (D. Monah 1997, p. 212, who takes over this idea from P. Levêque).

4. A considerable number of couples consist of one female and one male or one female and one androgynous person – interpreted as scenes of *hieros gamos* (D. Monah 1997, p. 206, 210-211).

Representations the male body or body parts are strikingly rare; e.g. only 1% among the Gumelnița (R.R. Andreescu 2002, p. 89) and less than 3% among the Cucuteni figurines (D. Monah 1997, p. 208) are male (fig. 1/2). Apart from the men represented in the *female + male* couple there are:

5. Figurines with 'garment typical for the warrior', considered to indicate the existence of a male divinity related to warfare (D. Monah 1997, p. 209; see also C.-M. Lazarovici 2006, p. 59). As far as I know there are hardly any weapons represented with the figurines, so the garment might very well be one typical for men and not necessarily for warriors.

6. Figurines in shape of phalli (fig. 4), seen as attesting to the connection between men and sexuality (D. Monah 1997, p. 209).

<sup>4</sup> The fact that some authors doubt that *all* female representations are related to a fertility cult (e.g. R.R. Andreescu 2002, p. 93-95; E. Comșa 1995, p. 121) – usually based on the argument of the great variety of the representations and the low number of women represented in state of pregnancy – does not change much of the general image of women in the Neolithic since they suppose that the variety of the representations is due to the variety of ritual contexts those figurines were used in and do not relate female figurines to women's lives in other ways.

<sup>5</sup> In Romanian, "Libația se efectuează în corelație cu cultul fertilității și fecundității, fapt sugerat în primul rând de sexul feminin al statuetei" (A.S. Luca, I. Dragomir 1987, p. 40).

7. Representations of stags, bulls and rams, considered to stand for the male sex (C.-M. Lazarovici 2006, p. 77).

The ideas summarized above share a few traits:

**A.** On the whole, in whatever shape or context they appear in the archaeological record, it is considered valid to say that women were preoccupied by their fertility and that of the living world around them, while men were interested in warfare and sexuality.

**B.** The absolute dominance of an essentialist concept of woman – and of men for that matter –, as obvious in considerations like: “The woman, as discoverer of the phenomenon of germination and inventor of agriculture, is considered in archaic cultures solidary with the fertility of the earth, the women being assimilated to the soil”<sup>6</sup> (my translation of D. Monah 1997, p. 206). In other words all archaic cultures are taken to have had the same concept of women.

**C.** The authors do not feel they should answer questions such as:

- Why only women were concerned with fertility, and men were not?
- Why only men were concerned with sexuality and women were not?

- How reproduction was conceived by, say, those who produced and used the Cucuteni figurines and if reproduction involved only women then what was its bearing upon women-men relationships.

This just to question the inner logic of their interpretations.

**D.** Compared to the large quantity and variety of the representations they refer to these interpretations consist of astonishingly few ideas. As my colleague Alexandru Dragoman noticed, there is hardly anything to deconstruct (pers. comm.). There is no real difference between what male and female archaeologists wrote; even more, the same ideas have been repeated since generations (maybe excepting the idea of sexuality, which might be only one or two decades old).

As somebody who worked for about 18 years in Romania’s archaeology I easily recognized in these interpretations the main ideas of male senior archaeologists about the roles of men and women in society. They are at the same time widely spread patriarchal ideas:

1. “Women rear children; this is such a difficult task that they cannot do anything else” (After all, I myself, at the beginning of my career, was told by my PhD supervisor “If you do not marry and have children you shall inherit the scientific rights on the settlement at Popești”).

2. “Men are by their nature interested in war”. The oldest generation still active as I entered archaeology was too young to directly participate in World War II, but they were fascinated by the idea of war somewhat in the same infantile manner as Virginia Woolf’s Mr. Ramsay, who emphatically recited scenes of war from poems (P. Bourdieu 1998, p. 99 = *idem* 2003, p. 63).

3. “Archaeological practice requires order of a type akin to military discipline”. Discussion over theory is useless small talk; as Alexandru Niculescu put it: theory is seen as feminine (Gh. Al. Niculescu, lecture on archaeological theory held in 2003 at the Faculty of History, Bucharest University); improving technique and producing without much talk is what real men do.

4. On several occasions, as I asked senior male colleagues “But are you not bored with these old ideas?”, the answer was: “Well, what else can be said? Archaeology is so limited in possibilities of interpretation!” But there was an obvious delight in this powerlessness, or as P. Bourdieu would put it there was a cruel pleasure of disappointing (1998, p. 102 = *idem* 2003, p. 65).

But why do women archaeologists write the same things as male archaeologists do?

The first generation of Romanian female archaeologists was borne around 1900. They studied on abroad, stemmed from the middle class, were only two (Ecaterina Dunăreanu-Vulpe and Hortensia Dumitrescu) and were married to colleagues of middle class origin (Radu Vulpe and Vladimir Dumitrescu, respectively). Hortensia Dumitrescu worked more for her own career but was less diligent than her husband and limited her interpretations to cultural assignment and dating of the excavated materials. Ecaterina Dunăreanu-Vulpe worked less for herself. At the beginning of the career she taught art history at the University of Iași. She was acquainted with archaeology from her student years, but she was employed as an archaeologist only after she had to move from Iași to Bucharest for family reasons. In her own words “I gave up working for myself not because I married, but because I became a mother” (pers. comm.). Thus, from an early stage of her professional life she

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<sup>6</sup> “Femeia, ca descoperitoare a fenomenului de germinare și inventatoare a agriculturii, este considerată în culturile arhaice solidară cu fertilitatea pământului, femeia fiind asimilată cu glia” (D. Monah 1997, p. 206).

conceived herself as a helper of her husband<sup>7</sup> and had no personal ambitions or goals as an archaeologist. She was very useful for, at that time, and ever since, there was no specialist stuff to help in the primary stages of the elaboration of an extensive publication. This was approximately the generation of Simone de Beauvoir (1908-1986), but instead of striving to find a voice of their own, as Beauvoir did (1949; T. Moi 1998, p. 3-263), these Romanian women archaeologists spoke with a man's voice or strove to help their husbands speak. This first stage in the history of women archaeologists in Romania was of particular importance since Ecaterina Dunăreanu-Vulpe had a son that became not only a well-known archaeologist (Prof. Alexandru Vulpe) but also a very influential one. The model of the research assistant related to the professor/senior researcher was thus established: the patriarchal family was transferred into the field of archaeology and it turned out that it was there to stay. This is a typical case of unintended consequence, since Ecaterina Vulpe never really wanted to be an archaeologist<sup>8</sup>, let alone to represent a model for female archaeologists; nevertheless she ended up by representing the model of *the* female archaeologist in the (masculine) vision of her son. Hortensia Dumitrescu's model, who seems to have been a more individualized type of archaeologist (S. Marinescu-Bîlcu 1982), by not having heirs in archaeology<sup>9</sup>, was soon forgotten.

The second generation of female archaeologists was borne in the mid 1920's mid 1930's: Eugenia Zaharia, Alexandrina D. Alexandrescu, Silvia Marinescu, Ligia Bârzu etc. They were students in the post WW II period; the communist regime being installed, study on abroad was out of question. As specialist higher education in archaeology was nonexistent in the country, they studied history; anyone wanting to work as an archaeologist had first to undergo a period of intellectual apprenticeship around the first generation of archaeologists. Under the circumstances one became an archaeologist not in virtue of a diploma, but by mere recognition by the community of archaeologists: to this end one had to write as "the archaeologists" did; since by that time all outstanding archaeologists were male, women wrote like men did. They wrote when they had time to do so, since for a considerable part of their working day they functioned as unofficial research assistants for their professors; this division of work fitted well into the logic of the communist regime for according to the communist ideology people were expected to work not for money or some other personal interest, but for the welfare of the society. The archaeological practice reinforced the idea that a woman's vocation in life was to sacrifice herself for her colleagues, in case she was an archaeologist, for her husband and children in case she had a family. It was an either-or situation (and it goes without saying that the system produced this kind of female *curricula vitae*, which it then used to confirm its basic assumptions). If one is to rely on hearsay, some of the female archaeologists of the second generation were involved in life long affairs with their – married – professors, thus entering into a kind of extended family; fact is that each and every female archaeologist of real importance was – at least officially – single. This is a particularly weak position in a patriarchal society: men and women are suspicious about the ethics of single women, and single women are constantly afraid of being suspected of unethical, dishonourable conduct. So in order to be taken seriously as a woman you had to be married, but if you were married – as some were<sup>10</sup>-, you didn't manage to produce enough archaeological work, so you were not taken seriously as an archaeologist. Women archaeologists were living in a social environment where it was better for them not to mention, let alone to theorize, the fact that they were women as well; they wanted to be considered archaeologists, not female archaeologists. This second generation of women archaeologists related to archaeology and to archaeologists the same way male archaeologists did, but for the fact that they didn't have research assistants, not even during their senior years: one was not assigned as somebody else's *de facto* research assistant, one slowly slid into this position; female *habitus* predisposed women to this role, male *habitus* did not (P. Bourdieu 1980, p. 88-89; *idem* 1998, p. 84 = *idem* 2003, p. 54); the model of somebody working of her own will for the benefit of a woman was absent in the Romanian society as a whole.

<sup>7</sup> 16 years ago it happened that I stayed for four months in the same house with Ecaterina Dunăreanu-Vulpe; she has just turned 90; every time I wanted to help out in the kitchen she would send me away and say: "I gave all my life so that others could work. Let me now do the same for you!"

<sup>8</sup> A considerably different view on her career as a professional archaeologist can be found in C. Mateescu 1993.

<sup>9</sup> She had one daughter that emigrated from Romania.

<sup>10</sup> From the female archaeologists of the second generation only Maria Bitiri (not mentioned above because she didn't work on the epochs here of interest) had a longer lasting marriage and children. However, apart from her PhD thesis (1972) her contributions to the Romanian archaeology are rather modest.

All later generations of female archaeologists inherited this system of values, this model of a woman archaeologist's life and this understanding of 'the normal archaeological practice', a fact that was very much favoured by the poor specialist education in the Romanian universities:

1. Even if in the meanwhile everyone is aware of the multiple changes in the world archaeology, the respected archaeological publication still consists of the thorough description of the circumstances of discovery and extensive illustration of finds; more recent directions in archaeology, such as the inquiry into gender relationship, are no priority, not even for the sake of being fashionable.

2. Tasks usually assumed by female archaeologists (the so-called "kitchen table archaeology" [L.H. Dommasnes *et alii* 1998, p. 110, 116]) have become overwhelming: primary documentation became an exhausting task, tones of archaeological material piled up over decades and it has to be cleaned, labelled etc., excavation plans and note books dispersed to the members of various excavation stuffs must be gathered and interpreted; and there are many other tasks. These tasks became nearly impossible to fulfil: the more a woman strives to contribute to the welfare of the system, the more she moves away from a successful career.

3. Since these activities are absolutely necessary many archaeologists, including females, argue that even more work is needed: engaging with feminist theory would only keep them away from the most urgent.

And to these one has to add the hardships of the transition from communism to capitalism.

4. Things changed very little from the interwar period to this day: we have basically the same gender relationships and the same principles of interpretation and much more archaeological material to deal with. My colleague Alexandru Dragoman noticed that not only is there only one Romanian female archaeologist working in prehistory that had received a festschrift volume – i.e. Dr Silvia Marinescu-Bîlcu – but the author of the introduction presented her primarily as a continuator of her mentor, the late Prof. Vladimir Dumitrescu (M. Neagu 2005, p. 9). That old habits die hard or do not die at all one can also see from the booklet *În spatele arheologiei: o poveste sub tăcere*<sup>11</sup> (2008). According to the CIP description of the National Library of Romania it is a publication of the History National Museum of Romania. It has an editor - Cătălin Bem -, two authors of the (otherwise less than mediocre and with various mistakes) text - Alexandru Ciornei and Cătălin Bem - and many photos, taken by the same two: from their order we understand that most of them are authored by Cătălin Bem. The intention of this publication is to show the public, who is considered to be ignorant of other aspects of archaeology than specialist literature and ancient objects exhibited in museums, a complete image of the archaeological practice. Since this is not the place for a complete review I shall only discuss the issue of gender relations as part of power relations in the profession.<sup>12</sup> Leafing through the booklet one can notice that both the photos and the text present the archaeological practice as full of rewarding hardships, with both a scientific and a romantic, adventurous side; archaeology is basically a male profession as one can take from the photos, even if the text makes no reference to the gender of archaeologists; but more precisely it is for these (all male) authors a profession suitable for macho men, so macho that some men in the photos resemble the Neanderthal's depiction as known from museum exhibitions from the earlier part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century; these macho men do all the important things, while women are relegated to modest auxiliaries. We are thus left with:

- man the founding father (photo on p. 15: men setting up the camp) – woman the housekeeper (photo on p. 44: a female person is cleaning up a tent);
- man the scientist - woman the "kitchen table archaeologist" (p. 29, 47; on p. 29 the photo presents us with a young man measuring animal bones and a young woman washing bones, i.e. preparing them for a higher stage of analysis);
- man the physically strong (photo on p. 31, with men sieving sediment; photos on p. 51-52 with men shovelling and carrying buckets with earth) – woman the physically weak (photo on p. 57: woman cleaning a small surface with a brush);
- man the excavator (p. 45) – woman cleaning up a small surface where nothing of any significance can be seen (p. 57);
- man fighting with the laws of nature (on p. 53 we see a man near a fire lit to dry the sherds quicker) – female counterpart missing;

<sup>11</sup> In (my) English translation: *Behind archaeology: a silent story*.

<sup>12</sup> For a critical discussion of power relations in the archaeological practice and the place of the 'romantic' side of archaeology see Palincaș 2006.

- man the tool maker (p. 22; actually it is not clear at all what the sitting archaeologist was doing; the image evokes Palaeolithic stone chipping) – female counterpart missing;
- man the negotiator with other communities (p. 23-25, photos and texts) – female counterpart missing;
- man the hunter (or whatever is left of him: see p. 38-39, with a male archaeologist roasting meat) – woman the dishwasher (p. 32 with a photo of a female archaeologists washing dishes; the text suggests other maintenance activities as well);
- men in their leisure-time (p. 37 presents four men bathing in a river, after a long day of work, according to the text) – female counterpart missing;
- tired man (p. 33 with an archaeozoologist fallen asleep during work, surrounded by a bone atlas, a large number of recording sheets, measurement and writing implements, animal bones) – tired woman (p. 3 with a young woman fallen asleep with her head on a table; however it is not quite clear why she was tired: the surrounding objects suggest that she washed either dishes or sherds);
- man the visible (on all photos men are recognisable as such) – woman the invisible; or more precisely women are easily recognizable on photos where they wash dishes or animal bones or clean up after a heavy rain (p. 29, 32, 44), less easily recognizable on the photo presenting the tired women (p. 34), and hardly recognizable on the photo presenting a working scene on excavation (p. 57; actually one realizes that the person with the brush is a woman only after careful consideration of the image).

The long and the short of it is that in 2008 the History National Museum of Romania published a booklet authored by archaeologists in their mid 30's who think of archaeology and present it to the public in terms of 'man the dominant' (see also the fact that from the 22 photos with people involved in archaeology or just visiting the site 17 present only men, four present only women and one presents a man and a woman).

**In conclusion**, unless we engender the theory of archaeology these gender relationships will go on as one can easily see from the photo on p. 30 in the History National Museum's booklet, where a female child, the daughter of Cătălin Bem, is helping out with the washing of sherds, thus being inadvertently socialised into a gendered activity. And there is then no wonder that the image of the Neolithic and Bronze Age women in the Romanian archaeology has much more to do with contemporary gender relationships than with the archaeological remains from the Romanian Neolithic and Bronze Age. In other words, the real, even if not conscientious, purpose of research in Romanian prehistoric archaeology is not to find out things about men and women from prehistory for a better understanding of humanity, but to offer a field in which contemporary gender relationships are played out and justified.

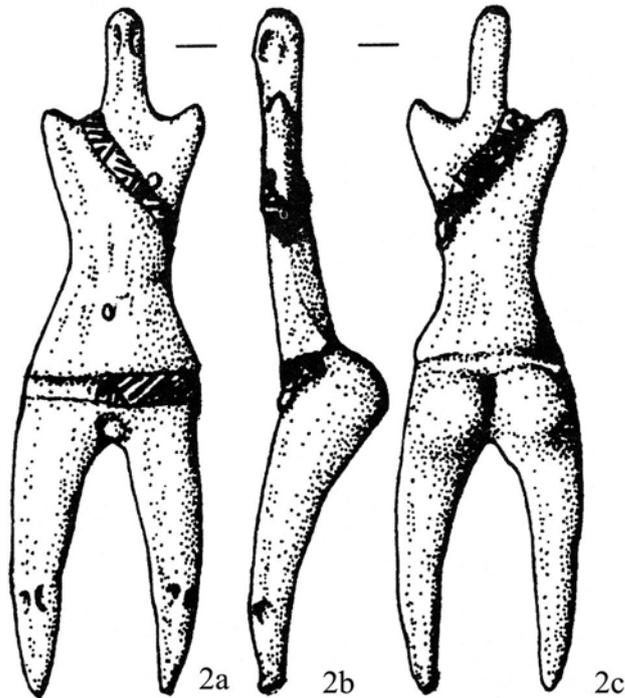
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### Literature

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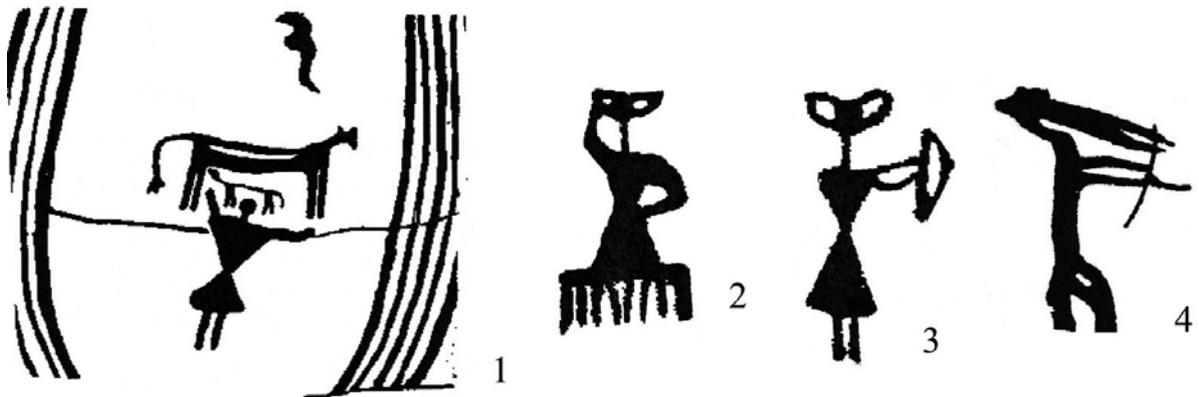
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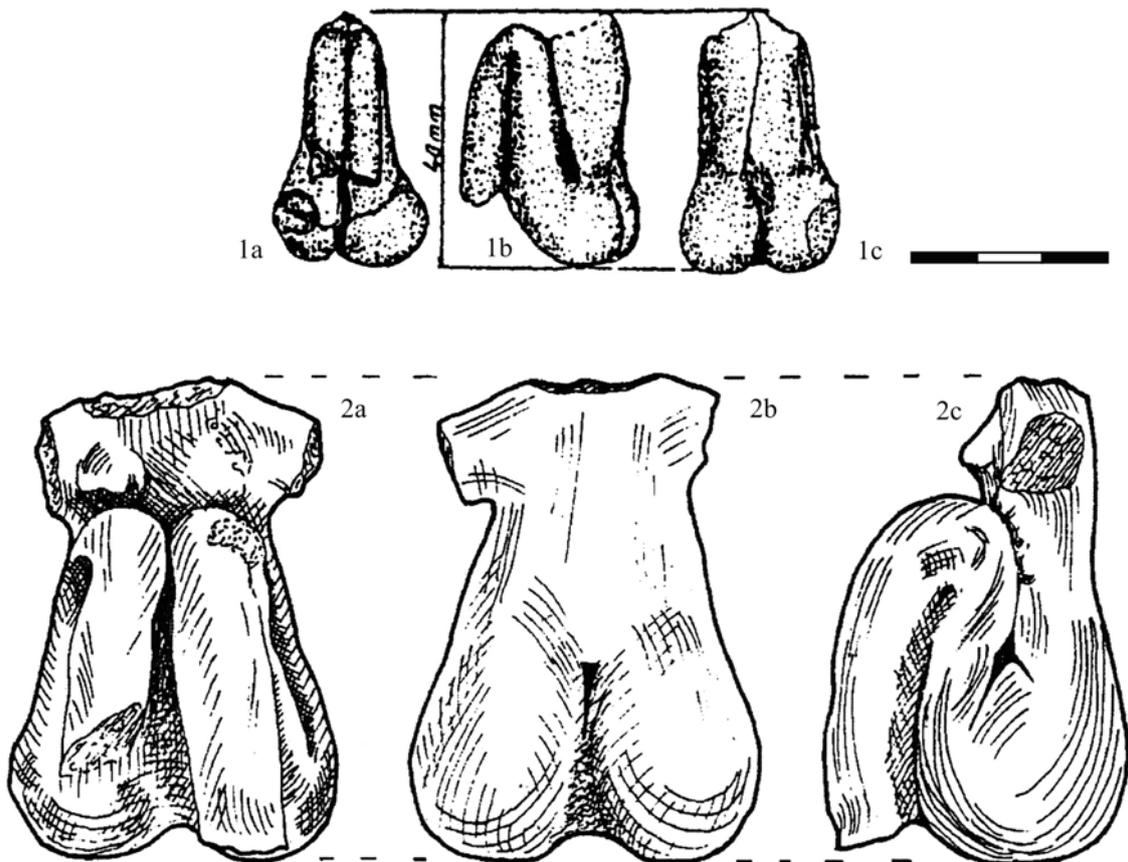
**Fig. 1.** 1: Female figurine from Igești-Scândureni; 2: male figurine from Dumești (from D. Monah 1997, fig. 61/1 and 41/1, respectively). Note at fig. 1/1b the flat abdomen contrasting with the prominent buttocks of this typical female Cucuteni A figurine as well as its similarity in terms of bodily shape with fig. 1/2b, a typical male Cucuteni A figurine.

1: Figurină de sex feminin de la Igești-Scândureni; 2: figurină de sex masculin de la Dumești (după D. Monah 1997, fig. 61/1 și respectiv fig. 41/1.). De observat în fig. 1/1b contrastul între abdomenul plat și bazinul proeminent tipic figurinelor feminine Cucuteni A ca și similaritatea din punct de vedere a formei corpului cu fig. 1/2b, o figurină masculină tipică Cucuteni A.



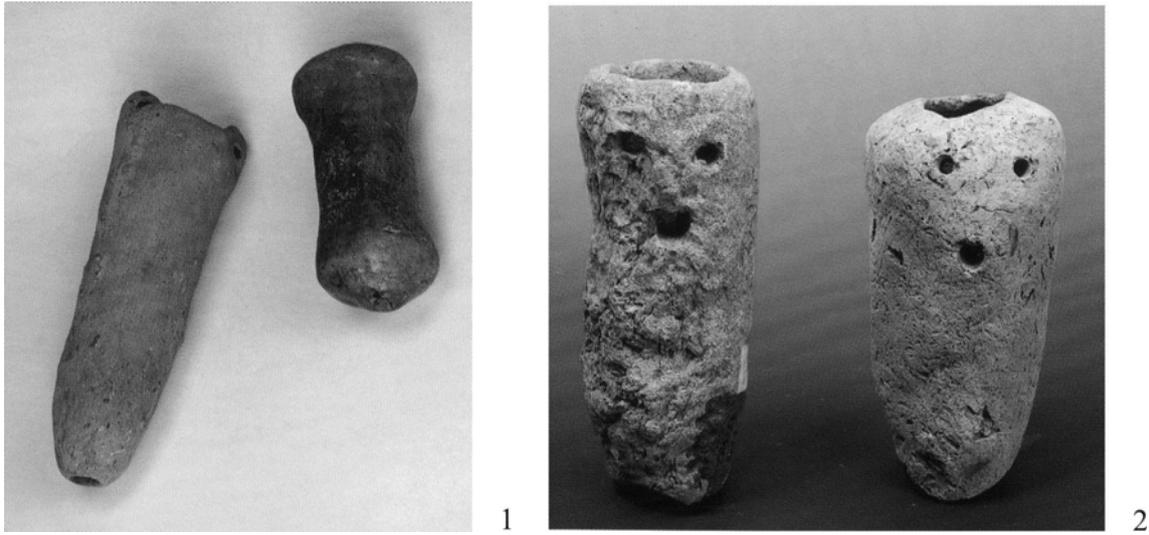
**Fig. 2.** 1-3: Female character often seen as the Great Mother, always considered as related to fertility cult; 4: male character with an arrow in his hands. All paintings on clay vessels. 1, 4. Brânzeni; 2-3. provenance not specified (from C.M. Lazarovici 2006, fig. 12/8; fig. 10 on p. 66 and fig. 15, lower row).

1-3: Reprezentări feminine vazute adesea ca Marea Mamă, întotdeauna legată de cultul fertilității; 4: Reprezentare masculină cu un arc în mâini. 1, 4. Brânzeni ; 2, 3. proveniență nespecificată (după C.M. Lazarovici 2006, fig. 12/8; fig. 10 pe p. 66 și fig. 15, rândul de jos).



**Fig. 3.** Fragments of female figurines from: 1. Târgu Frumos (Pre-Cucuteni III) and 2. Căscioarele (Gumenița B1) (1. from N. Ursulescu *et alii*, 2006 fig. 1/1; 2. after VI. Dumitrescu 1974, fig. 245).

Fragmente de figurine feminine de la: 1 Târgu Frumos (Pre-Cucuteni III) și 2. Căscioarele (Gumenița B1) (1. după N. Ursulescu *et alii*, fig. 1/1; 2. după VI. Dumitrescu 1974, fig. 245).



**Fig. 4.** Phallus-shaped Cucuteni clay objects: 1. Văleni (left) and Poduri-“Dealul Ghindaru” (right); 2. Trușești-“Țugueta” (from C.M. Mantu *et alii* 1997, fig. 116-117, 121).  
Obiecte din lut în formă de falus din cultura Cucuteni: 1. Văleni (stânga) și Poduri-“Dealul Ghindaru” (dreapta); 2. Trușești-“Țugueta” (după C.M. Mantu *et alii* 1997, fig. 116-117, 121).