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DEPARTMENT OF
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TRANSYLVANIAN PATRIMONY IN THE EUROPEAN CONTEXT**

ACTA TERRAE SEPTEMCASTRENSIS

XIV

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LARGE-SIZE ANTHROPOMORPHIC STATUETTES DISCOVERED AT PĂULENI-CIUC „DÂMBUL CETĂȚII” (HARGHITA COUNTY), CUCUTENI-ARIUȘD CULTURE

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Abstract: *The study presents two large anthropomorphic statuettes (more than 25 cm height). They were discovered in the site of Păuleni-Ciuc „Dâmbul Cetății” Harghita County. The statuettes were made of clay and were discovered in fragmentary state. This paper is especially important since there are only a few objects of this type discovered within the Cucuteni-Ariușd culture. Most of the “statuettes/figurines/idols” assigned to Cucuteni-Ariușd culture are medium-sized objects (8-25 cm).*

Keywords: *Eneolithic, Cucuteni-Ariușd Culture, Transylvania, anthropomorphic statuettes, clay*

Archaeological researches developed during 1999-2014, at the prehistoric site Păuleni-Ciuc „Dâmbul Cetății”, Harghita County, by a team coordinated by Dr. Valerii Kavruk (National Museum of the Eastern Carpathians, St. George, Covasna County) contributed with important information for understanding several prehistoric cultures, like *Cucuteni-Ariușd-Trypillia* (5th-4th mil. BC), *Bodrogresztúr* (4th-3rd

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mil. BC), *Coșofeni* (3rd mil. BC), *Jigodin* (3rd mil. BC), *Costișa* (3rd-2nd mil. BC) and *Wietenberg* (2nd mil. BC), cultures which covered the Eastern Carpathians' area, among others, (Ferenczi 1938, 290-296; Székely 1970, 71; Căvruc 2000, 99; Căvruc, Dumitroaia 2000, 131-154; Căvruc, Rotea 2000, 155-172; Căvruc, Buzea 2002, 41-88; Lazarovici *et al.* 2000, 103-30; Lazarovici *et al.* 2002, 19-40; Buzea, Lazarovici, 2005, 25-88; Lazarovici, Buzea 2009, 130-131; Buzea, Briewig 2010, 205-246; Ștefan *et al.* 2010, 427-436; Whitlow, 2010, 413-426; 2014, 89-94).

Cucuteni-Arșiud-Trypillia civilization, considered the first major civilization of Europe, appeared in the 5th mil. BC and covered an area of 350,000 sq. km. Its name was conventionally established after three villages: Cucuteni (Romania, Iași County), Arșiud (Romania, Covasna County) and Trypillia (in Ukraine, near Kiev), where, at the end of the 19th century, were first found painted pottery and burned clay statuettes – categories of objects which became symbols of this ancient population (Dumitrescu 1968; 1979; Monah, Cucuș 1985; Lazarovici C. M., Lazarovici Gh., 2006; 2007).

Cucuteni culture, as part of this larger cultural complex, namely *Cucuteni-Arșiud-Trypillia*, is one of the last outstanding civilizations of Eneolithic/ Southeast European Copper Age. Lasting more than a millennium (approx. 4600-3500 cal BC), it generated a civilization with the unmistakable characteristic features, covering a vast territory, including south-eastern Transylvania, nearly all Moldova and a part of Ukraine (Mantu 1998, 13).

In archaeological literature in the first stage of research was used the term of “*Cultural Complex Cucuteni-Arșiud-Trypillia*”, or in the short version *Cucuteni-Trypillia Culture*. For western discoveries (south-east and east Transylvania) we use the term „*Cucuteni-Arșiud Culture*” or, in abbreviated form, discoveries of „*Arșiud type*”.

The earliest habitation layer discovered so far at Păuleni-Ciuc is coming from *Cucuteni-Arșiud culture*. The remains of this culture (buildings traces, rich ceramic pottery, artistic representations, tools, weapons, etc.) occurred all over the investigated settlement area (Fig. 1/1). The most important discoveries were made under the northern and eastern Bronze Age rampart of the settlement (Fig. 1/2). Here, at the edge of the hill, were discovered and investigated several features (houses, hearths, annexes and pits).

The dwellings discovered so far at Păuleni-Ciuc seem to be aligned and oriented NW-SE. In terms of organizing of the interior space, the houses were probably placed on a semicircle, right on the hill's edge. Light constructions, such as shelters, with simpler building structures, were found near large dwellings, without respecting a certain rule (Buzea 2009).

Even if the excavated area in the settlement's enclosure is relatively small compared with the extent of the site, after archaeological researches, we can state that much of it was probably left free, for current activities inside the settlement.

The habitation from Păuleni-Ciuc „*Dâmbul Cetății*” belongs to *Cucuteni-Arșiud*

culture, based on three radiocarbon analyses, with samples from a copper age feature (Cpl. 41), and made at Center for Applied Isotope Studies at the University of Georgia, USA. Based on the results of this analysis, we believe the late Ariușd occupation at Păuleni-Ciuc dates to 4,210-4,050 B.C. (Whitlow *et al.* 2013; 2014, 95-106)

Recent archaeological researches produced a considerable amount of artifacts belonging to a special category – *Plastic representations* (statuettes, anthropomorphic idols, zoomorphic idols, conical idols, figurines, zoomorphic vessels, small altars, miniature axes, stamp seals, disks, „*en violon*” pendants, clay balls, etc.) assigned to Cucuteni-Ariușd layer. The recovered objects were found in all levels of Eneolithic (I-III) habitation, both in enclosed contexts (pits, surface dwellings), as well as around contexts (Buzea 2007, 277-291; Beldiman *et al.* 2009, 359-375; Beldiman *et al.* 2012; Buzea, Kovács 2010, 129-140; Rusu *et al.* 2015, 74-81).

Anthropomorphic representations are an essential chapter in the prehistoric communities. In prehistoric times, religious events include a series of specific aspects of worship architecture, ritual miniature items (altars, figurines) and monumental cult elements which often define community buildings. Religious life of a community is developed on two very important coordinates, connected to time and space, in which a particular human group evolves, so that religious beliefs and practices are directly related to worship needs. The human group, in various forms of organization, through ritual and myth, solidified a certain perception of the surrounding reality. Religion will replace magic as invocation of natural forces. These forces were personified as deities, as beings more or less intelligible (Diamond 1997).

From the rich figurative cucutenian art were preserved tens of thousands of anthropomorphic and zoomorphic statuettes, pottery and plastic representations, along with a small number of painted images. During the Cucuteni millennium figurative canons for representations have changed, possibly due to religious ideas and perhaps reformulations of established characters in some sacred myths. Subordinated to concept of fecundity and fertility, the Great Goddess character remains dominant in religion of the Cucuteni tribes and its omnipresence is natural (Monah 2005, 171).

Inside Cucuteni-Ariușd sites from Transylvania were discovered so far 437 pieces from anthropomorphic statuettes and figurines, among which: 194 at Păuleni-Ciuc (Buzea 2009, 163-168/Anexa 18, p. 429-448), 142 at Ariușd eponym site, and 101 in other sites (Sztáncsuj 2005, 85–105; 2009, 185–206; 2009a, 409-434).

The assignment of these anthropomorphic statuettes and figurines to *Cucuteni-Ariușd* culture was made comparing with objects of the same type found in Cucuteni Culture, east of the Carpathians, mainly in Moldova area, Republic of Moldova and Ukraine.

Most anthropomorphic statuettes discovered at Păuleni-Ciuc, were modelled

according to strict canons, as in all Cucuteni-Ariuşd settlements, and they usually are portraying women standing and seated. Anthropomorphic statuettes and figurines are modelled in two or three rolls of clay pasted together by pressing them together, using in the composition finely crushed shards. After modelling, the objects were smoothened, decorated, sometimes even painted, and finally burned, oxidant or reductant. The statues are decorated with incised lines, generally in places that mark body parts (legs, buttocks, legs from body, the sexual characteristics) or rarely on the entire surface, forming geometric patterns (triangles, diamonds, etc.). Sometimes the breasts, navel, knees and ankles are made like small dimples, pinched in the soft clay, or applied to the objects. The statuettes were well smoothed and polished; on 2-3 fragments are observed traces of painting. In most cases the upper limbs are represented by small extensions of the body. Very often the arms are raised, in form of „adoration” (Fig. 4/1; 5/1-3). The legs are pasted together. Although most of the discovered statuettes do not have well defined legs, there are cases where they are clearly marked.

Most of the feminine anthropomorphic figurines and statuettes were discovered without the head; there are though several exceptions in which the head was very stylised by a conical pinch from the material of the body. In two cases the heads are individualized and they are modelled in shape of a disc with two lobes, with 2 perforations in each, separated by a median rib, which probably represents the nose (Fig. 4/2; 5/1; 6/3).

Considering dimension criteria (Fig. 2), anthropomorphic statuettes and figurines are divided into 4 categories (Monah 1997, 67; 2012, 89):

- A) small (2 – 8 cm),
- B) medium (8 – 25 cm),
- C) large (25 – 50 cm),
- D) very large (over 50 cm).

Until 2012, for Cucuteni - Phase A, were known only two objects assigned to category C - anthropomorphic statuettes of large dimensions (25-50 cm) discovered at Truşeşti (Monah 2012, 93, Fig. 30/5,6; after R. Vulpe).

At Păuleni-Ciuc two large sized feminine statuettes were discovered, over 25 cm high (Category C – after Dan Monah typology), of exceptional artistic value. These were found inside a dwelling, one on the floor, right near the wall, and the second between the cracks from the floor (Fig. 3).

Anthropomorphic statuette (fragment), was modelled out of clay mixed with crushed shards, well smoothened and polished (Fig.4/1; 5/4). The statuette was modelled out of two clay rolls, pasted together. Its body and left leg were broken in ancient times. It was quite a large statuette, it had about 25 – 30 cm. It represents a woman in vertical position. Its buttocks are separated and they follow the anatomical proportions. The excised line that separated its legs formed a triangle in the pubic area. The knees and the ankles were represented by conical prominences. The statuette has a rectangular section in the area of the femur and an oval one in the area

of the buttocks. Oxidized, brick-red pottery. Part of it was burnt also in a reducing atmosphere – black coloured. (Preserved H: 180 mm; width: 110 mm; thickness at the leg area: 23 mm; thickness at buttocks: 55 mm; length at sole: 47 mm; width at sole: 22 mm; discovery depth: - 3,1 m; Museum Inventory no.: 11597).

Fragments of the statuette were found in two archaeological campaigns: in 1999 was discovered the foot (oxidant burning, red colour) and in 2004 were found the legs and part of the buttocks (secondary burning, black coloured).

Antropomorphic statuette (restored object), made of clay mixed with sand, gravel and crushed sherds (Fig. 4/2; 5/1). It is modelled out of two clay rolls, pasted together and smoothened. Its left arm, left leg and the inferior part of its right leg were broken in ancient times. Its body and arms are flatter than a woman's body, while its thighs and legs are quite close to the real anatomic proportions. Its head is spherical. The features of the face are stylized, while two circular perforations on each side represent the ears. The stylized arms suggest a praying position. The breasts and navel are also stylized, and are represented by hemispherical prominences. Its legs are delimited by its body with an incised line that forms a triangle in the pubic area. Oxidized, brick-red pottery. The size of the statuette is noticeable, being larger than usual. One can also observe traces of red paint on its chest.

The figurine has a neatly smoothed surface. The colour is scarlet. The body has traces of red paint. The piece was burnt side after the break, whereas the right foot's hue differs substantially from that of the body. The figurine is larger than normal. (Preserved H: 248 mm; restored H: 345 mm; arms width: 110 mm; body width: 60 mm; thickness at the leg area: 23 mm; thickness at buttocks: 60 mm; discovery depth: - 2,5 m; Museum Inventory no.: 11288).

Fragments of the statues were found in three archaeological campaigns: in 2001 was discovered the right foot (oxidant burn, red with black spots), in 2004 was discovered the body (oxidant, red), and in 2007 was found the head (oxidant, red).

The fact that most anthropomorphic and zoomorphic statuettes were preserved in a fragmentary state is not due to chance, but to specific magical-religious practices, characteristic to Cucuteni populations. Thus, it is possible and likely that, after ritualic celebrations, anthropomorphic figurines, modelled specifically to be used in rituals, were not considered as having a magical role, so they can be „disposed” of (Florescu, Căpitanu 1996, 346).

During *Cucuteni-Trypillia* thousands of female statuettes are known. In time there have been well highlighted the differences between the state of obesity and pregnancy, although the vast majority of women are represented in their complete physical beauty (Chirica, 1999, 110).

Concerning the manner and duration of use of the statuettes, it seems that they were used in shrines or within religious features, with a longer period of use. There is some indication of intentional fragmentation of these objects, probably made also during some religious ceremonies (Monah 1997, 63).

It is generally accepted that most anthropomorphic statuettes are representing the main female deity („The Great Goddess”). The dominant character of the feminine divinity, symbol of fecundity and fertility, the female representation in various poses (nubile maiden, matron, pregnant woman, etc.) is modelled in most cases from two pieces of clay.

Excessive stylization of anthropomorphic statuettes faces from Ariușd-Cucuteni Culture might be connected with the prohibition to show it before the deity, but also related to the use of mask. Several Balkanic prehistoric cultures associated masks with deities' attributes (Gimbutas, 1991, p. 23, 62, 69), which is the case for cucutenian statuettes (Lazarovici C.-M. 2005). Even some female representations in the trypillian area are interpreted as masked, unlike the figurines that show realistic physiognomy (Burdo, 2010).

Large statues are not only rare, but are unique in terms of the shape of the embodiment and representation. The similarities, if any, can be discussed only on the base of ideas that incorporates these statues (Kovacs, 2015, p. 31-72).

Large anthropomorphic statues found at Păuleni-Ciuc express the female sensitivity and refinement through the body suppleness, praying position, back arching arms, shape of legs, highlighting sexual traits and quality of polished surfaces.

According to X-ray tomography analysis, which combines advanced computer technology to create accurate and detailed images of internal structures of the body (We express gratitude to dr. Szekély Zoltán from Brașov for the CT analysis on the statuette), carried out on the large dimensions statue (inventory number 11288) from Păuleni-Ciuc (Fig.6/1-6), confirmed that such objects were made of two large rolls of clay, then pasted together by pressing and smoothing; then the surface was very well processed and polished.

Following discussions with researcher dr. Dan Monah, about the statues discovered at Păuleni-Ciuc, he told us the followings: *„Beside the size, which is an important issue, the head of the statuette [restored anthropomorphic statuette, museum inventory number 11288] seems to show sample from phase Cucuteni AB or B. It's good to look at illustrations for these phases, especially in Cucuteni B. As far as I know there are no such figurines in Cucuteni A. Do you have in deposit layers other elements later than Cucuteni A? The manner of body treatment is not typical for Cucuteni A, it would approach somewhat of an incised representation from Jukovcy (Monah, 1997, fig. 241/3) and maybe with the painted one from Rzcev (Monah, 1997, fig. 245/7) without being identical. I refer to more realistic representation, naturalistic one of the human body and not the highly stylized statues in all Cucuteni phases”*.

So far, there has been little CT analysis on statuettes and figurines belonging to Cucuteni-Ariușd, from category B (small and medium sized: 8-25 cm). The most representative results were achieved in a project coordinated by dr. Cosmin Sucișu who managed a scientific approach, by this method, on several anthropomorphic

statuettes and figurines from Cucuteni culture, in several museums in Romania (Suciu *et al.* 2013, 323-332).

In the current stage of research for Cucuteni-Ariuşd culture, large anthropomorphic statuettes represent a particular category of objects, quite rare in the area inhabited by these communities.

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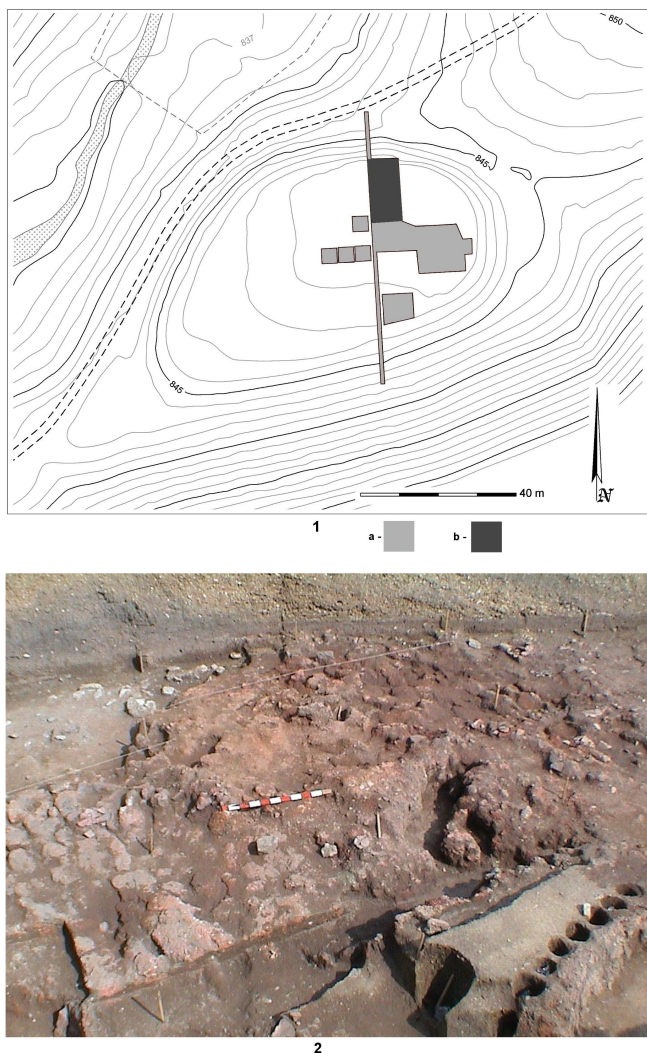


Fig. 1. Păuleni-Ciuc „Dâmbul Cetății” (Harghita County)

1: General plan of excavations at Păuleni-Ciuc „Dâmbul Cetății” site, Harghita County (Legend: a – surface excavated by National Museum of Eastern Caprthians; b – location of Cucuteni-Ariuşd dwellings); 2: Dwelling No. 5 (Cucuteni-Ariuşd Culture) view from north-west.



Fig. 2. Păuleni-Ciuc „Dâmbul Cetăţii” (Harghita County). Cucuteni-Ariuşd Culture
Dimensional categories of anthropomorphic statuettes.

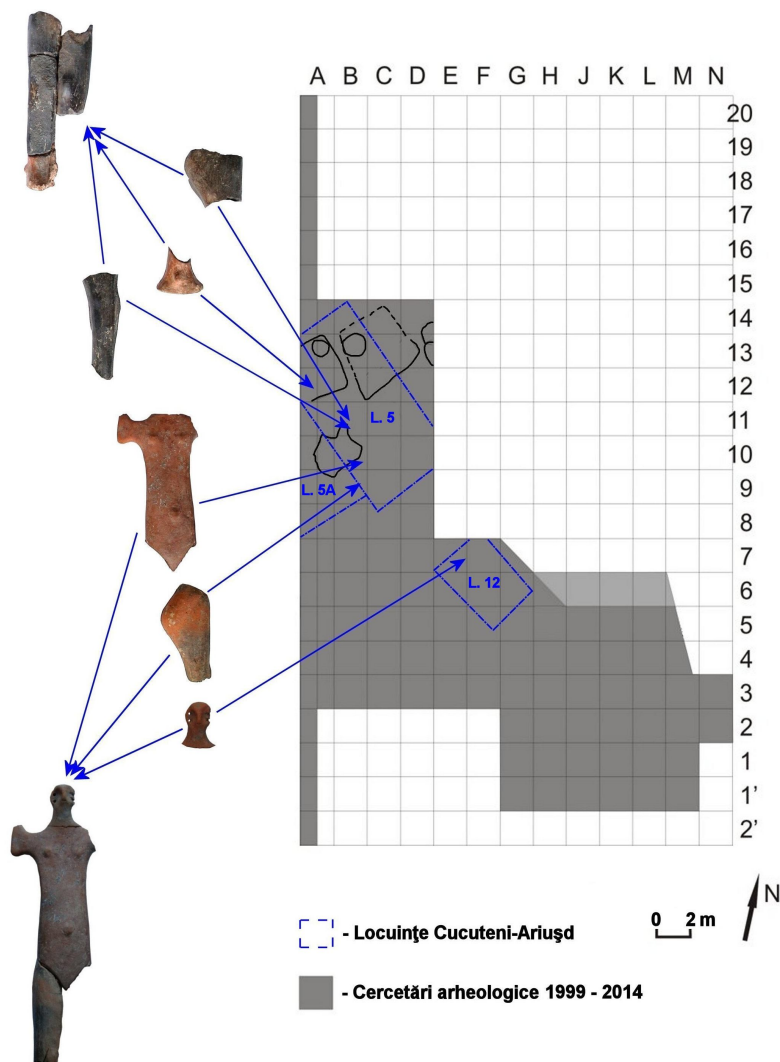


Fig. 3. Păuleni-Ciuc „Dâmbul Cetății” (Harghita County). Cucuteni-Ariuşd Culture
Location of the fragments of two large-size anthropomorphic statuettes.



Fig. 4. Păuleni-Ciuc „*Dâmbul Cetății*” (Harghita County). Cucuteni-Ariuşd Culture
1 – 3: Large
e-size anthropomorphic statuettes.

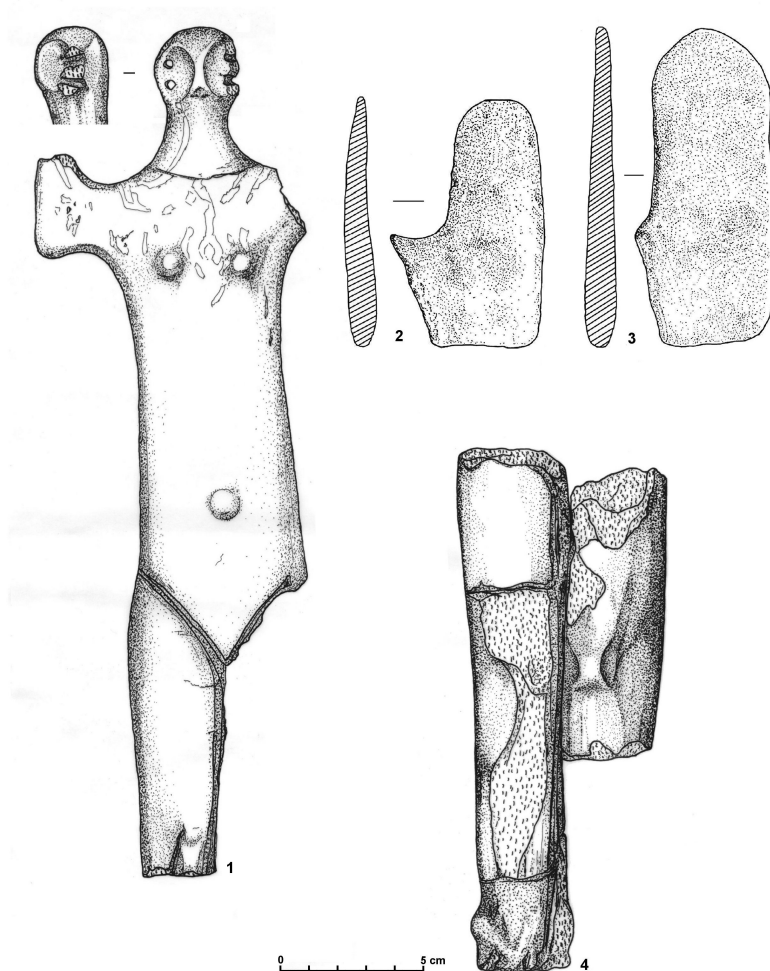


Fig. 5. Cucuteni-Ariuşd Culture: 1–4. Large-size anthropomorphic statuettes 1, 4: Large-size anthropomorphic statuettes discovered at Păuleni-Ciuc; 2, 3: Large-size anthropomorphic statuettes discovered at Truşeşti (after Mohah, 2012).

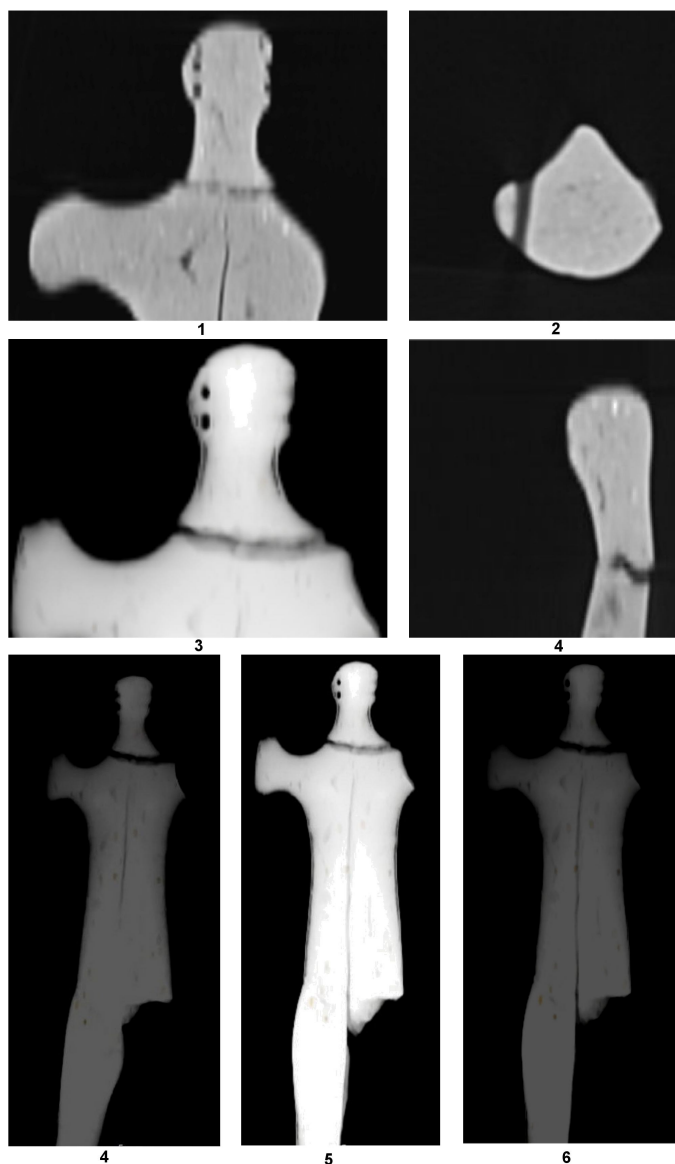


Fig. 6. Păuleni-Ciuc „*Dâmbul Cetății*” (Harghita County). Cucuteni-Ariuşd Culture

1 – 6: X-Ray computed tomography scan of the large anthropomorphic statuettes.