

THE PREHISTORIC ARTEFACTS FROM ORȘOVA IN THE COLLECTIONS OF THE FORMER HISTORY AND ARCHAEOLOGY SOCIETY OF HUNEDOARA COUNTY, ROMANIA*

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Abstract. *The collections of the former History and Archaeology Society of Hunedoara County, currently part of the patrimony of the Museum of Dacian and Roman Civilisation Deva, contained, while it was active (1880–1923), many different items from the fields of history, archaeology, ethnography and the natural sciences. These included a small lot of prehistoric artefacts labelled as from Orșova (Mehedinți County): a serpentinite perforated axe, a fragment of a Gáva culture pot, a clastic limestone plug and a chert flake. Although our modest contribution brings forth a relatively small number of artefacts, discovered in uncertain circumstances at the end of the nineteenth century or the beginning of the twentieth century, its purpose is to enrich the archaeological data on the prehistory of Orșova.*

Keywords: *old archaeological finds, Prehistory, chipped stone, stone axe, Gáva pottery.*

Introduction

The patrimony held today by the Museum of Dacian and Roman Civilisation Deva (henceforth, Deva Museum), inherited from the History and Archaeology Society of Hunedoara County (henceforth, Society),¹ almost a century and a half (1880) after the establishment of the first museum institution in Hunedoara, is highly diverse.² Most of the items that made up the initial collections of the Society were from fields such as history, archaeology, ethnography and the natural sciences. Despite all the vicissitudes of time,³ the depositories of the Deva Museum still preserve some of the objects that contributed to the establishment and the development of the Society; in this case, we can mention a series of artefacts from across Transylvania and Banat, as well as from neighbouring, such as Hungary,⁴ or

* An earlier version of this article was originally to be published in 2021, in a special volume dedicated to archaeological discoveries from Orșova, entitled *DIERNA – An Ancient City Lost in the Waters of the Danube: Documentary and Archaeological Contributions*, about which we have received no information from the editors. The present article is an improved version of that study.

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¹ In Hungarian: “Hunyadmegyei Történelmi és Régészeti Társulat.”

² Petranu 1922, p. 131; Lazăr 1982–1983, p. 45; Wardegger 1988–1991, p. 400–402; Firczak 1988–1991, p. 823–827; Boda 2008, p. 201; Bodó 2012, p. 372–374; Bodó 2017, p. 235–236; Ferencz 2017, p. 15–18, 20; Bodó 2020, p. 369–370; Bodó 2021, p. 117–137.

³ The two World Wars, the thefts, the unreturned loans and the losses of certain items led to the spoliation of the former collections held by the Society.

⁴ Molnár, Popa 1999, p. 17–24.

areas that are at a greater distance, such as Egypt.⁵ These artefacts include a small lot of archaeological pieces, which represent the subject of the present paper, whose discovery, according to the old inventory ledger from the Deva Museum, occurred in Orșova, today a town in Mehedinți County, in south-western Romania, but also a village in Mureș County,⁶ in central-northern Romania.⁷

In the same inventory ledger mentioned above, entitled *Prehistory*, in manuscript, we have mentions on three different pages – 95, 146 and 147 – about four archaeological items that originated of Orșova (**fig. 1/1–4**). Unfortunately, beside the place of the discovery of the objects, namely a stone perforated axe (**fig. 1/1**), a ceramic fragment (**fig. 1/3**), a stone plug (**fig. 1/4**), and a “flint” flake (**fig. 1/2**), there is no other information regarding the right location and context in which they had been identified. Helpfully, in this circumstance was a reference of the Transylvanian archaeologist Márton Roska, who notes that a stone axe from town Orșova (Mehedinți County) is recorded with the number 4912 at Deva Museum – the stone axe discussed in this study.⁸ If the information published by Roska is accurate, we could assert that the archaeological objects discussed here were found in Orșova town or nearby, in south-western Romania, at least the stone axe.

Another issue we wish to point out is that when we searched for the four artefacts in the archaeology depository of the Deva Museum, we only found three of the aforementioned items – the ones made of stone. Luckily, a drawing of the shard, made now twenty years ago by one of the archaeologists of the Deva Museum, came recently into our possession.⁹

A description of the archaeological materials

The presentation of the archaeological material is made based on the way in which the items had been organised in the Prehistory inventory ledger from the Deva Museum, in which we can note that there is a difference of 11 pages and almost 1,000 entries between the entry that mentions the stone axe and the entry that lists the other three objects. We do not believe this to be particularly significant, in relation with the order in which the artefacts had entered the collections of the former history and archaeology Society, one of the reasons being the very late inventorying of the pieces from the

⁵ Cihó 1988, p. 14, 20, 28; Cihó 1990, p. 688, 694. Some of the Egyptian objects from Deva are believed to be possible fakes (Cihó 1990, p. 694).

⁶ Suciu 1967, p. 20.

⁷ On the map, in bird flew, between these two localities we have a distance around 300 kilometres.

⁸ Roska 1942, p. 214.

⁹ The drawing of the ceramic fragment was made by Professor Dr Cristian Ioan Popa (“1 Decembrie 1918” University of Alba Iulia) between 1997 and 1999, at that time employed at Deva Museum.

aforementioned collection,¹⁰ as opposed to the moment of their discovery, which only ended in the first half of the twentieth century.¹¹

Thus, in the following, we shall present the descriptions of the objects from the inventory ledger which had been discovered in Orșova, together with our observations from the macroscopic and microscopic study of the preserved artefacts.¹²

1. The perforated axe¹³ (inventory no. 4912).¹⁴ The description from the old inventory ledger, together with a drawing of the item (**fig. 1/1**), is the following, in the English translation of the Romanian text: “Stone hammer located in = Orșova.”¹⁵ The same artefact caught the attention of the archaeologist Márton Roska, who describe the item for the first time in *Erdély régészeti repertórium* [The Archaeological Repertoire of Transylvania, a.n.], as an „almond shape,” with a 8.3 cm length.¹⁶

The perforated axe is in a good state of preservation (**fig. 2/1a–1l, 4/1**); its surface is strongly polished and the initial raw material is visible here and there, in the form of small alveoli or even bumps (**fig. 2/1d, 1k**), details which indicate an incomplete uniformization of the item. The rock from which the prehistoric tool was made, similar to a serpentinite, after the polishing process, presents a dark grey colour with black spots. The object was provided with two active parts, namely a blade end (**fig. 2/1b, 1h**) and a butt end (**fig. 2/1c**), both of which show signs of obvious wear from prehistory. The traces of wear

¹⁰ Most of the archaeological objects recorded in the *Prehistory* inventory ledger (MDRC Deva) were inventoried in the 4th and 5th decades of the twentieth century. Still, in the same archaeological collection we can find items with red ink inventory markings, proof of a previous inventory.

¹¹ See the final pages of the *Prehistory* inventory ledger (MDRC Deva), as well as the final page, number 204, which mentions that, after a verification of the number of pieces held by the prehistoric items collection of the Deva Museum, on 16 March 1955, the institution actually owned 6,251 artefacts, out of the total inventory of 11,623.

¹² The microscopic observations and photographs were made using a handheld digital microscope, model Celestron MicroDirect.

¹³ In the archaeological literature that covers this type of artefact, there are several names to describe it: “wedge axes” (Roman 1976, p. 17; Ciugudean 2000, p. 31), “perforated axes” (Antonović 2003, p. 57–58, fig. 36/II/2), “axe hammers” (Edmonds 2005, p. 190), “perforated broad wedges” (Raemaekers et al. 2010, p. 3–4), “raindrop with flattened butt axes” (Kewley 2016, p. 92, fig. 3:9/TA03), etc.

¹⁴ The old inventory number (4912) was inscribed with red ink on the side profile B of the perforated axe (**fig. 2/1a, 1g**).

¹⁵ In Romanian: “Ciocan din piatră aflat la = Orșova.” The measurements of the perforated axe offered the following data: a. Length = 86.65 mm; b. The diameter of the hole = 18.20 mm (face side A – **fig. 2/1d, 1j**) and 16.80 mm (face side B – **fig. 2/1f, 1l**); c. The length from the butt end to the middle of the hole edge = 21.61 mm; d. The length from the blade end to the middle of the hole edge = 48.50 mm; e. The height of the axe from face sides A (**fig. 2/1d, 1j**) and B (**fig. 2/1f, 1l**) = 42.62 mm and the thickness between the side profiles A (**fig. 2/1e, 1k**) and B (**fig. 2/1a, 1g**) = 45.19 mm.

¹⁶ Roska 1942, p. 214.

on the butt end (**fig. 4/2a**) flattened this part of the axe, at the same time affecting its polishing in this spot. The blade end became blunt (**fig. 4/2e**) in a manner similar to the butt end, which indicates the fact that the axe was used not only to cut/process wood (?), but also for other activities, which we can now only assume to have been breaking bones in order to extract the marrow (for consumption), grinding certain natural pigments (ochre), chopping flint boulders, etc. On the edge of the perforation hole, there are several small chips (**fig. 4/2b**), possibly from the moment it was manufactured, or as a result of its use.

The macroscopic observations, corroborated with the microscopic ones, lead to certain hypotheses regarding the manufacturing of the axe in prehistoric times. Thus, we believe it is safe to say that the initial shape of the rock was triangular, perhaps even with rounded corners and, through sketchy processing (carving and polishing), it received the shape similar to the future axe that was to be perforated. The following action, that of perforating the item, was unilateral, resulting in an almost perfectly cylindrical orifice.¹⁷ Regarding the method used in the perforation of axes, some authors consider it was viable to use the “vertical drill,”¹⁸ similar to a bow drill, while other researchers have experimentally attempted to create a “mechanism” for the perforation of the axes, which, in the end, proved to be successful endeavours.¹⁹ Without going into too much detail regarding the components of such “mechanisms” for axe perforation, which were described at length in the aforementioned studies, we must add that sand and water were indispensable, obviously aiding in the perforation process.²⁰ This latter detail was identified in the inner part of the shaft hole of the axe under scrutiny, where several helical striae substantiate the use of fine sand in the perforation of the tool. It would appear that the sand granulation used in the perforation was similar to that used in polishing the tool, using water, possibly on a stone slab or on a grinder. The statement can be supported by the presence of several fine, multidirectional striae across the object, identified using the microscope (**fig. 4/2c**). By the end of all of the operations performed during the finishing of the object (such as polishing), the current shape of the axe had been obtained.

We must also add that as a result of the manipulation of the axe in prehistoric times, and perhaps even at the moment of its discovery or subsequently, its surface has obtained certain chaotic striations that intersect the fine striae from the moment of its manufacturing, the ones that give the glossy appearance on its outer surface (**fig. 4/2d**).

¹⁷ Kewley 2016, p. 92, fig. 3:9/PF01.

¹⁸ Bucur 1982, p. 84; Petrescu 2000a, p. 73, 76, fig. 1.

¹⁹ Osipowicz 2006, p. 3–5, 8–9, fig. 1, photo 2.

²⁰ Petrescu 2000a, p. 74; Osipowicz 2006, p. 4–5.

2. Ceramic fragment (inventory no. 5828). The description from the old inventory ledger, not accompanied by a drawing (**fig. 1/3**), is the following, in the form of the English translation of the Romanian text: “Fragment of a burnt clay vessel located in = Orșova.”²¹

Further, we must mention that the ceramic artefact was not identified in the archaeology depository from the Deva Museum, as it is probably lost or mixed together among other items, which probably took place at the beginning of the twenty-first century. In spite of this problem, a drawing of the ceramic fragment (**fig. 3/1**), made almost three decades ago, helped us to identify the main features of the shard.²²

The ceramic fragment, of a clay and sand mix, originates from the area of the maximum diameter of a biconical pot. The outside of the biconical pot was decorated with garland channelling, and a small conical knob was attached but that is missing today. Because we have little information about the shard’s chromatic palette, we suppose most likely the classical pattern so often found in the Gáva pottery style – a black exterior and red, orange or yellow-brown interior.

3. Stone plug (inventory no. 5829).²³ The description in the old inventory ledger, not accompanied by a drawing (**fig. 1/4**), is the following, in the form of the English translation of the Romanian text: “Fragments of a stone hammer located in = Orșova.”²⁴

What is interesting in this case is the way in which this artefact is presented in the old ledger, namely as fragments of a “hammer” [axe, a.n.], which is only partially true. The description is indeed inexact, but the item’s belonging to an axe was suspected; in reality, it is merely a stone plug (**fig. 3/2a–2f, 4/3**), resulting from drilling (in the manufacturing) into the perforated axe. Concomitantly, the use of the plural in the case of the noun “fragment” implies the presence of other pieces from the object, which we could not identify in the depositories of the Deva Museum. The stone plug does indeed show a “new” gap on the item’s longitudinal section (**fig. 3/2d**).

The piece is fragmentarily preserved (**fig. 3/2a–2f, 4/3**). On the longitudinal section crack, we can observe a crystalline surface, similar in appearance to a clastic limestone (**fig. 3/2d, 4/4b**). On the exterior, the artifact’s colour varies from light to dark greyish, with some white nuances as well (**fig. 3/2a–2c**). On the edges, the fragmentary stone plug contains traces of pecking

²¹ In Romanian: “Fragment de vas din lut ars aflat la = Orșova.”

²² See the note 9.

²³ A small, old, dark, dusty label was pasted on the rounded plug stone surface; unfortunately, it was impossible to distinguish anything on it. The inventory number (5829), marked in white, was written on the broken surface of the item (**fig. 3/2d**).

²⁴ In Romanian: “Fragmente de ciocan de piatră aflate la = Orșova.” The measurements taken for the stone plug offered the following data: length = 56.98 mm; diameter = 34.94 mm; thickness = 15.97 mm.

or chiselling (?), which possibly occurred during the manufacturing of the axe. The striations on the surface of the stone plug are parallel, helical and visible to the naked eye, and they offer sufficient arguments to support the idea that, at the time the axe was manufactured, probably using the method described above, in the case of the first item from Orșova, coarse-grained sand was used, namely of a grain size of over 1 mm (**fig. 3/2a, 4/4a**). The dimensions of the stone plug, particularly its length and diameter, offer enough indications for the fact that it can be considered to be the waste material resulting from the perforation of a massive axe, one that was at least two or three times the size of the axe presented above.

4. Flake (inventory no. 5830).²⁵ The description in the old inventory ledger, accompanied by a drawing of the object (**fig. 1/2**), is the following, in the form of the English translation of the Romanian text: “Silex flint located in = Orșova.”²⁶ Later, someone crossed out the second description of the artefact (flint) with a series of “X”s, in pencil; “Silex de cremene,” translated from Romanian, means “Silex flint,” which is tautological.

The item identified in the depositories of the Deva Museum, with a trapezoidal section, is preserved fragmentarily – the distal part is missing (the active part – the point), possibly broken off in ancient times. The general appearance of the piece, which, in reality, is a flake (**fig. 3/3a–3e, 4/5a–5b**), compels us to attribute it, with a certain degree of probability, to the category of tools, perhaps even that of borers. This idea is supported by the helical appearance, a notch on the right side (**fig. 4/6b**) and the retouching traces on the left side (**fig. 4/6a**), where the intention of creating a new notch is visible (?), all of which are details that indicate the hafting of the flake (tool) at the time of its use.

The flake was made through the direct percussion of a boulder from a siliceous rock (“flint”) that bore a dark brown colour in the opening, with black, discontinued, irregular streaks, regarded in the scholarly literature as fissures,²⁷ manganese oxides²⁸ or iron and manganese oxyhydroxides.²⁹ From the viewpoint of the raw material, the flake was obtained from a chert as this type of rock is regarded lately, as a result of the more recent petrographic assessments.³⁰ In the past, such artefacts, which regularly bore brown or fawn shades, with black streaks, were included in the category of the so-called “Banat” flint,³¹ a raw material characteristic to the south-western region of

²⁵ The inventory number (5830), marked in white, was written on the ventral surface of the item (**fig. 3/3b**).

²⁶ In Romanian: “Silex de cremene aflat la = Orșova.” The measurements taken for the “flint” flake offered the following data: length = 52.85 mm; width = 34.14 mm; thickness = 7.30 mm.

²⁷ Păunescu 1970, p. 85.

²⁸ Boboș-Radu 1991.

²⁹ Bălțean et al. 2008, p. 15, 17, photo 5, 9.

³⁰ Giornei 2013, p. 28–29.

³¹ Comșa 1966–1967, p. 31; Comșa 1971, p. 15–18.

Romania,³² often encountered in the area of the Poiana Ruscă Mountains (in the Romanian Banat Mountains) and in their neighbouring areas, as well as south of the Apuseni Mountains.

Discussions

The artefacts presented above, currently stored and inventoried by the Deva Museum, despite the fact that they are quite few (4 items), raise several issues, primarily regarding the context in which they journeyed from Orșova to Deva, as well as regarding their chronology.

The first issue we wish to emphasise is that of the moment in which the artefacts reached Deva. As we have already mentioned in the introductory section of the present paper, part of the collection of the former Society contained archaeological pieces from outside Hunedoara County and from outside Transylvania, as evidenced by the publications on this matter.³³ Moreover, it is known that there was a series of exchanges of archaeological objects between the members of the Society and other museums from the former Austro-Hungarian Empire,³⁴ a practice that continued for a long time as one component of the activities of the Deva Museum.³⁵

The only data we could take into account, as a plausible hypothesis for the context in which the small lot was brought from Orșova to Deva, is from the research activity conducted by some of the members of the Society in the Lower Danube area at the end of the nineteenth century. Two articles published in issue VIII of the Society's periodical³⁶ contain information according to which the director of the Deva Museum, Téglás Gábor (**fig. 5/2**),³⁷ starting from July 1893, was responsible for conducting surveys in the Lower Danube area.³⁸ Although the purpose of the surveys³⁹ was primarily to study

³² Selective bibliography: Comșa 1966, p. 441; Comșa 1966–1967, p. 31–32; Păunescu 1970, p. 85; Comșa 1971, p. 16, fig. 1; Boboș-Radu 1991; Luca et al. 2004, p. 62, 65–75, maps 4–7; Barbu 2007–2008, p. 52.

³³ Cihó 1988, p. 14, 20, 28; Cihó 1990, p. 688, 694; Molnár, Popa 1999, p. 17–24.

³⁴ Bodó 2020, p. 370; Bodó 2021, p. 117.

³⁵ After the mid-twentieth century, in the context of the establishment of the History Museum of the Romanian Socialist Republic in Bucharest and the “cultural” uniformization that took place on a national level (the latter representing the result of communist propaganda), certain archaeological items were shipped from the collections of the Deva Museum to different museum institutions throughout the country (see, the papers no. 472/12.12.1972 and 748/11.12.1984 from Deva Museum Archives). In certain situations, the Deva Museum was the one to receive, by way of exchange, other archaeological materials, some of which had no connection with the pre- and protohistory of Hunedoara County.

³⁶ In Hungarian, the journal is entitled *A Hunyadmegyei Történelmi és Régészeti Társulat Évkönyve*.

³⁷ For more information on the activity of the archaeologist Téglás Gábor, see especially: Gáll 2014, p. 228–271.

³⁸ Kuun 1893–1896, p. 17; Téglás 1893–1896, p. 138; Bodó 2021, p. 218.

³⁹ We must also add that Szinte Gábor (**fig. 5/3**) (for his activity see especially: Bata, Tasnádi 2015) also took part in the aforementioned surveys; he was an important member of the Society

the Roman roads that led to Hunedoara County and to Belgrade,⁴⁰ we must not exclude the possibility of an additional intent to gather certain prehistoric archaeological items from the banks of the Danube and perhaps even from the region of Orșova (**fig. 5/1**).

The same period, namely the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, is supported by other scenarios in which the aforementioned small lot of archaeological pieces reached Deva. One of the hypotheses is also that of a donation, made by a member of the Society or by a person who had travelled in the area of the Danube Gorge from Orșova, about whom there are no sources at the moment. We must also not exclude the possibility of an exchange of artefacts between the members of the history and archaeology societies of Hunedoara and Timiș Counties.

The second issue raised by the lot of archaeological objects is that of the chronology. Since we have no other data regarding the context, except for the mentioning of the locality of Orșova, it is almost impossible for us to draw any clear conclusions regarding the relative chronology of the items. Moreover, we do not know whether the artefacts originated from a single archaeological site, or from several, which can be assumed in the context described above, namely the possibility of the pieces having been gathered from the banks of the Danube. That being said, we can only establish a wide classification for the aforementioned prehistoric objects, in accordance with the main characteristics presented at the time of their description.

The serpentinite perforated axe (**fig. 1/1, 2/1a–1l, 4/1**), the most well-preserved artefact from the lot of archaeological items from Orșova, has correspondences beginning with the Late Neolithic period until the end of the Early Bronze Age, throughout the central and south-eastern European regions. The occurrence of certain archetypes of perforated axes from Orșova was observed in a series of archaeological cultures from the end of the Neolithic period and over the Early and Middle Eneolithic, as was the case of Vinča,⁴¹ Zau,⁴² Lengyel,⁴³ Gumelnița,⁴⁴ etc. However, such items are only somewhat similar in shape with the serpentinite axe discovered in Orșova. Bearing far greater similarity to the axe (and, implicitly, its wear traces) are the analogues from the Late Eneolithic sites and the Early Bronze Age sites of the areas of the Baden, Coțofeni, Vučedol, Foltești-Cernavodă II and Glina (among others) archaeological cultures, as shown by the pieces discovered in

and contributed to the archaeological results obtained by Téglás Gábor in 1893, some of which were published (Téglás 1893–1896, p. 138–139; Téglás 1894, p. 5–56; Téglás 1895, p. 447–448; Bodó 2021, p. 218).

⁴⁰ Kuun 1893–1896, p. 17; Téglás 1893–1896, p. 138; Bodó 2021, p. 218.

⁴¹ Antonović 2003, p. 57–58, fig. 36/II/2; Joanović 2003, p. 56–65.

⁴² Ignat 1998, p. 36, 168, fig. 24/1, 3.

⁴³ Zalai-Gaál 1991, p. 390–391, Abb. 1/B/1A.

⁴⁴ Klimscha 2014, p. 145–146, fig. 9/P48/F502.

Cuciulata-*Stogul lui Coțofan*,⁴⁵ *Pleșița Pietroasă*,⁴⁶ Dubova-*Cuina Turcului*,⁴⁷ Govora Băi,⁴⁸ Luncavița-*Mocuța*,⁴⁹ Șincai-*Cetatea Păgânilor*,⁵⁰ Udeni-*Lacul de Acumulare*,⁵¹ Vučedol,⁵² etc.

The vessel fragment (**fig. 1/3, 3/1**), in the absence of the item itself, can be analysed after the drawing. In this case, we can state with confidence that the main characteristics of the shard, such as the shape and ornamentation, are common of the Gáva culture during the Late Bronze Age III–IV or Reinecke Ha A2–Ha B1.⁵³ Even though we have no information about the shard's chromatic palette, it is likely to have had the same pattern so often found in the Gáva pottery style – a black exterior and red, orange or yellow-brown interior.⁵⁴ Regarding the shape and decoration, we mention that the fragment belongs to the shoulder of a biconical pot (ascribed in the literature to the “amphorae”), decorated with garland grooves and a with a small conical knob (deteriorated in the past), both with good analogies in early and classical Gáva pottery discoveries from Transylvania – during the phases I–II – at Călinești-Oaș,⁵⁵ Mediaș-*Cetate*,⁵⁶ Porumbenii Mari-*Vârfele*,⁵⁷ Sighișoara-*Weinberg (Gräberfeld)*⁵⁸ and Teleac.⁵⁹

If we look closely to the analogies cited before, it appears clear that the shard can be associated with the Gáva pottery of Transylvania. The scarcity of this type of pottery ornaments during the Late Bronze Age III–IV in Romanian Banat⁶⁰ and the use of the same ceramic decoration especially in Hungary and Transylvania⁶¹, where Gáva culture is best represented, raise at least one important question: was the shard discussed above found in Orșova? Unfortunately, it is difficult to answer this question, because we have no information about the exact provenance of the ceramic fragment, it perhaps having been found in another geographical and historical area. With the risk

⁴⁵ Bichir 1961, p. 351–352, fig. 1; Bichir 1962b, p. 104, Abb. 12/1; Băjenaru 2014, p. 63.

⁴⁶ Bichir 1962a, p. 283, 287, fig. 5/3; Băjenaru 2014, p. 63, 250, fig. 74/6.

⁴⁷ Roman 1976, p. 17, 115, pl. 10/3, 9; Păunescu 1978, p. 46, 48, fig. 22/20; Petrescu 2000b, p. 61–62, 249, pl. CII/3–4.

⁴⁸ Govora 1995, p. 26–27, fig. 6/20.

⁴⁹ Vasiliu 1995, p. 91, 95, 115, pl. IV/3.

⁵⁰ Lazăr 1977, p. 40, 44, pl. XII/5; Lazăr 1995, p. 253, pl. LXII/11; Ciugudean 2000, p. 31, 250, pl. 124/8.

⁵¹ Bichir 1983, p. 43, 58, fig. 8/3; Schuster et al. 2005–2006, p. 12, Taf. 2/3.

⁵² Schmidt 1945, p. 69–70, 104, Textbild 43/1, 61/1, 62/1.

⁵³ Gogâltan 2019, p. 54–55, 57; Ciugudean 2021, p. 70, 76, fig. 8.

⁵⁴ László 1973, p. 585, 598–599.

⁵⁵ Marta 2020, p. 23, 39, 44, 128, 149, pl. 1/1A, 19/1.

⁵⁶ Zaharia 1965, p. 87, 89, 97, fig. 10/1, 6; Pankau 2004, p. 106, Taf. 2/1.

⁵⁷ Nagy, Körösfői 2010, p. 135, 148–149, fig. 3/3, 4/1.

⁵⁸ Boroffka, Boroffka 2020, p. 81, 520, 576, Taf. 18/4, 74/4.

⁵⁹ Ciugudean 2011, p. 76, 96, pl. IX/2; Ciugudean 2012, p. 234, fig. 6/2.

⁶⁰ Gumă 1993, p. 188; Petrescu 2000b, p. 69.

⁶¹ Szabó 2017, p. 231–233, fig. 1; Szabó, Vácsi 2023, p. 195–196.

of repeating ourselves, we underline that all the ornaments of the shard lead to the idea that the fragment was unlikely found in Orșova, in southwestern Romania, but in the “archaeology” of old museum collections anything is possible.

For the clastic limestone plug (fig. 1/4, 3/2a–2f, 4/3), the waste material resulting from the perforation of an axe,⁶² we have certain doubts with respect to its chronology. Our reservations regarding the chronology of such perforation scraps are given by the data we hold today, knowing that, on the Romanian territory, such technological residue could have resulted from the perforation of stone axes or mace-heads, beginning with the Early Neolithic,⁶³ and continuing until the end of the Late Bronze Age⁶⁴ or beginning of the Early Iron Age⁶⁵. Thus, as indicated by discoveries made in the southwestern region of Romania, as well as in their vicinity, such stone plugs are often encountered in Neolithic and Eneolithic sites; in some cases, the occurrence of technological waste proves the presence of certain workshops, as shown by artefacts of this type identified in Lipova-*Hodaie*,⁶⁶ Potporanj⁶⁷ and Dubova-*Cuina Turcului*.⁶⁸ The chert flake (fig. 1/2, 3/3a–3e, 4/5a–5b) must be placed within an even wider frame; through the use of technology, it can be dated at least to the Neolithic – Bronze Age interval, without excluding the possibility of an even earlier dating.

Conclusions

Ultimately, we can conclude that our small contribution widens the horizon of the archaeological items once located in the former ancient town of Dierna, today's Orșova. Although the lot is rather small, comprising a perforated axe, a ceramic fragment, a stone plug and a chert flake (possibly a tool), we believe that, together (beyond the controversies raised by the Gáva shard), they offer information in addition to what has been known about the prehistoric Orșova.

Moreover, after consulting the most recently published archaeological repertoires for the western region of Oltenia, on the border with the Banat Mountains, we noted that archaeological discoveries belonging to the prehistoric eras, with a few exceptions, are known very little on the Orșova territory.⁶⁹ The information present especially in the old publications, between the end of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth

⁶² Due to the fairly large diameter of the plug, we are inclined to attribute the technological residue to the result of the perforation of an axe. We believe it is less likely that the residue originated from the perforation of a mace-head.

⁶³ Ursulescu 1972, p. 69–78; Ursulescu 2000, p. 141–150; Istina 1998, p. 21–29.

⁶⁴ Diaconu 2010, p. 13; Schuster et al. 2015, p. 201, 204–205.

⁶⁵ Ailincăi 2013, p. 244–245; Ailincăi 2016, p. 213–214.

⁶⁶ Luca 1987, p. 25–28, fig. 2/2–3, 5–6.

⁶⁷ Joanović 2003, p. 70–71, Ap. 4099.

⁶⁸ Păunescu 1978, p. 46; Boroneanț 2020, p. 21–22, 28–29, 36–37, 39, 48, fig. 10/7.

⁶⁹ Gherghe, Popa 2013, p. 80–81; Pătroi 2013, p. 73–74; Popa 2014, p. 35, 42; Pătroi 2015, p. 469.

century,⁷⁰ some of which are absent from the most recent archaeological repertoires compiled for the town of Orșova,⁷¹ indicate the necessity for a systematic resumption of research conducted on the older, less known bibliography and the archaeology depositories of the museums across the country, perhaps even abroad as well. Such an endeavour would be absolutely essential in the recovery (be it merely partial) of the archaeological patrimony of the town of Orșova, especially considering that an important part of the history of the prehistoric Dierna lies at the bottom of the Danube.

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⁷⁰ Ormós 1874, p. 15; Böhm 1880, p. 181; Hpl. 1898, p. 444; Mihalik 1908, p. 8–20; Roska 1942, p. 214; Drăgoescu 1995, p. 338; Milleker 2013, p. 104–105, etc.

⁷¹ Gherghe, Popa 2013, p. 80–81; Pătroi 2013, p. 73–74; Popa 2014, p. 42.

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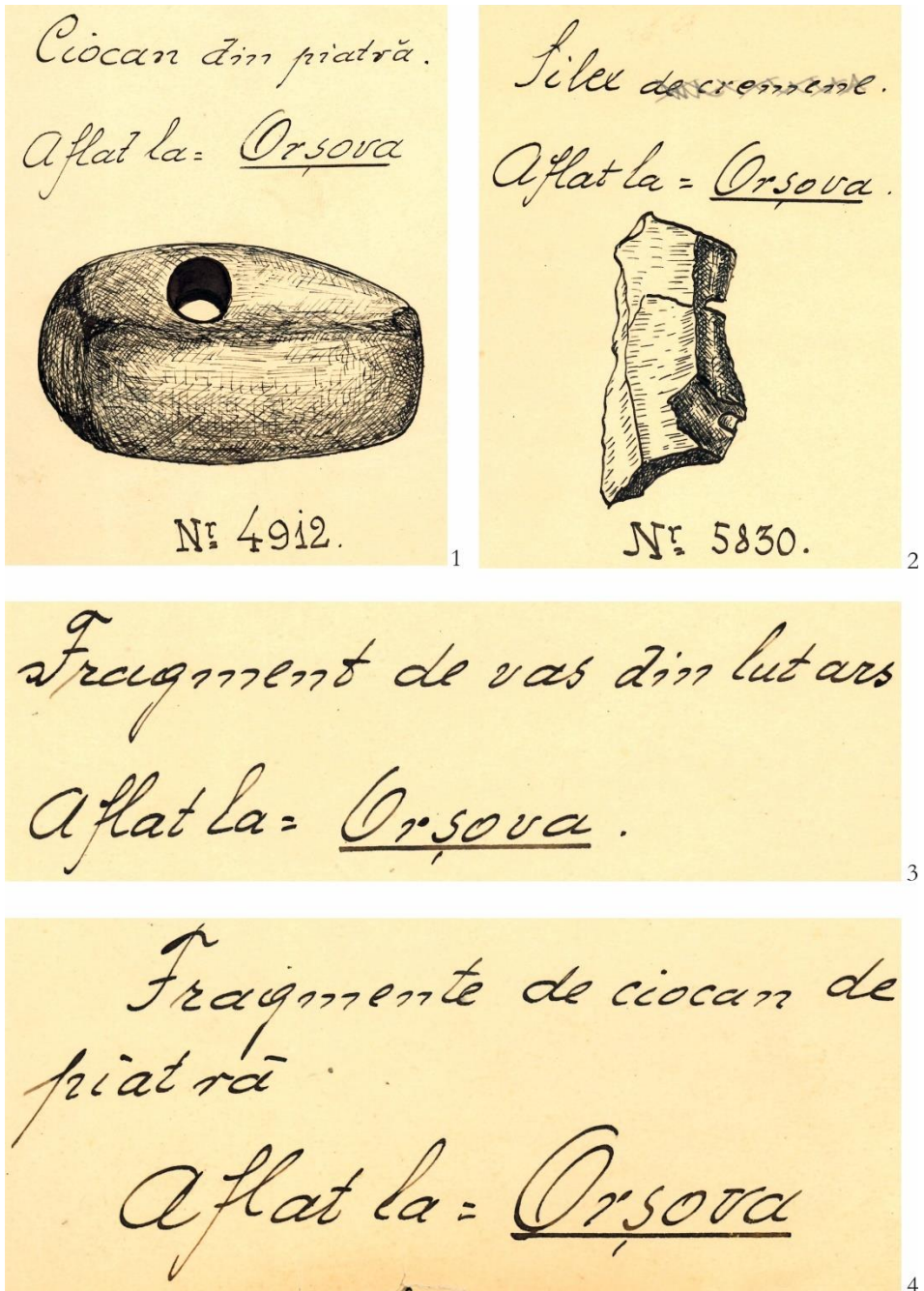


Fig. 1. 1–4. Archaeological artefacts discovered in the past at Orșova, mentioned in an old manuscript inventory record of the Museum of Dacian and Roman Civilisation Deva, entitled *Preistorie* (Prehistory) (photo: I. A. Bărbat)

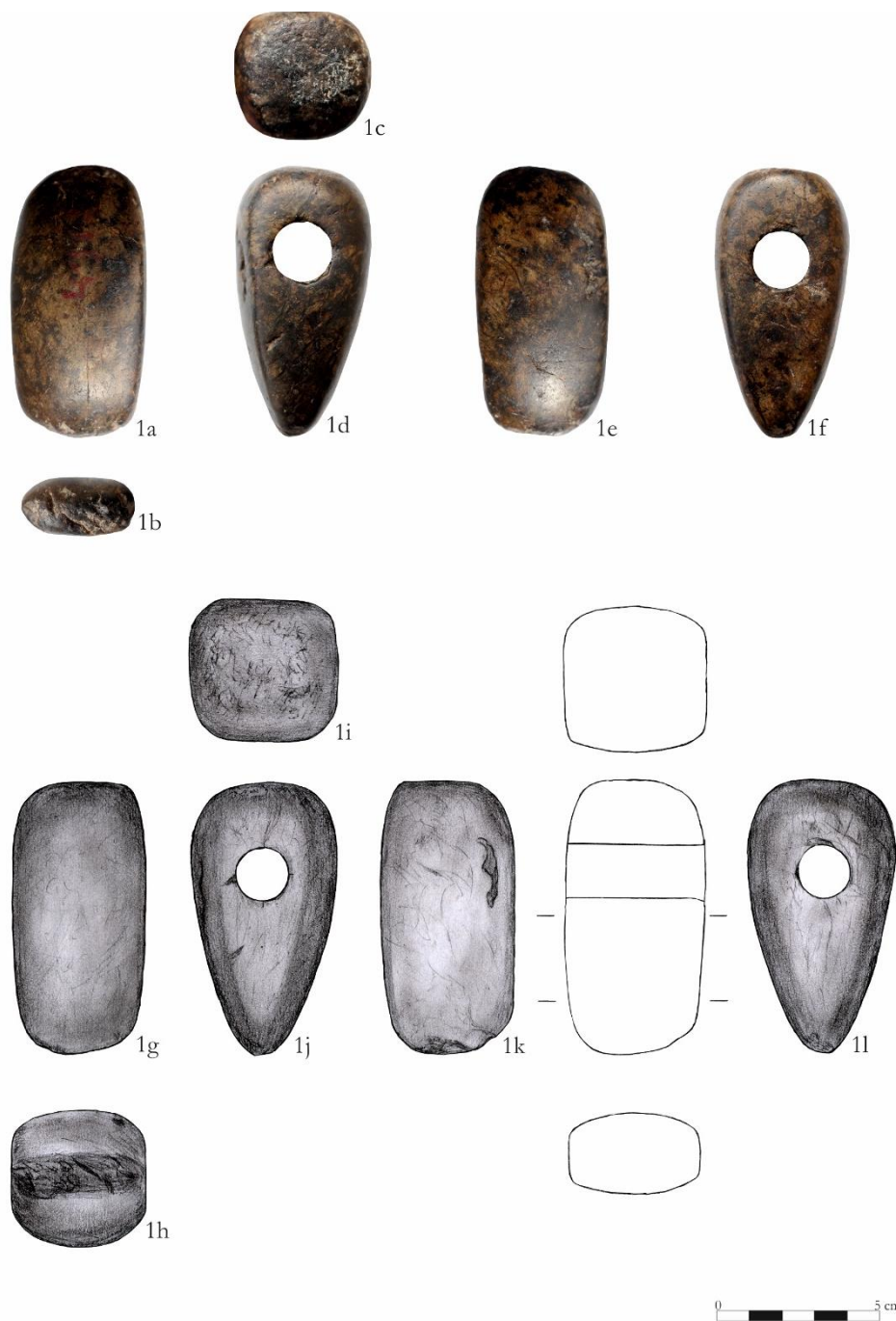


Fig. 2. 1a–1l. Perforated serpentinite axe, with wear traces, found at the end of the nineteenth or beginning of twentieth century at Orșova (photo: I. A. Bărbat; drawing: S. Ivan)

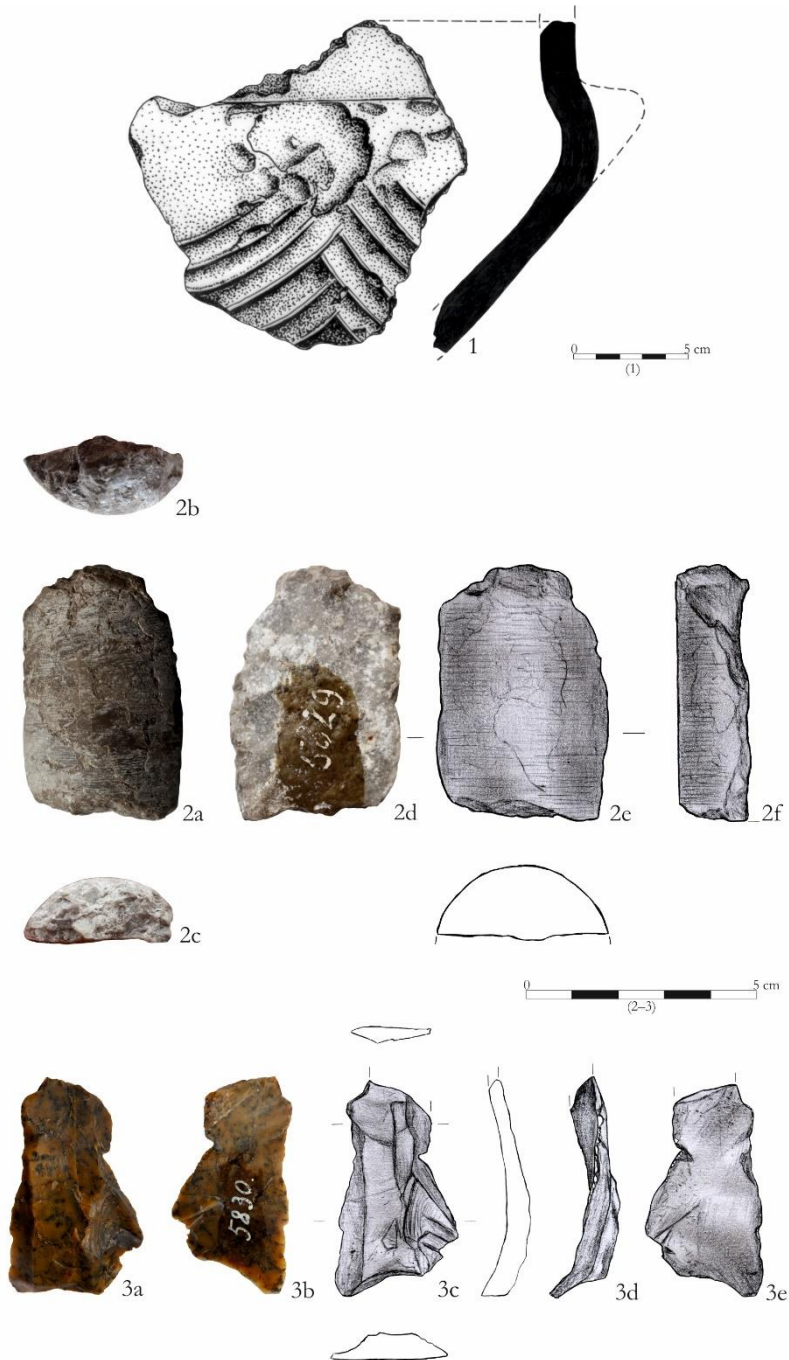


Fig. 3. Prehistoric artefacts found at the end of the nineteenth or beginning of twentieth century at Orşova. 1. Gavá culture shard; 2a–2f. Fragmentary clastic limestone stone plug; 3a–3e. Chert flake (photo: 2–3 – I. A. Bărbat; drawing: 1 – C. I. Popa; 2–3 – S. Ivan)



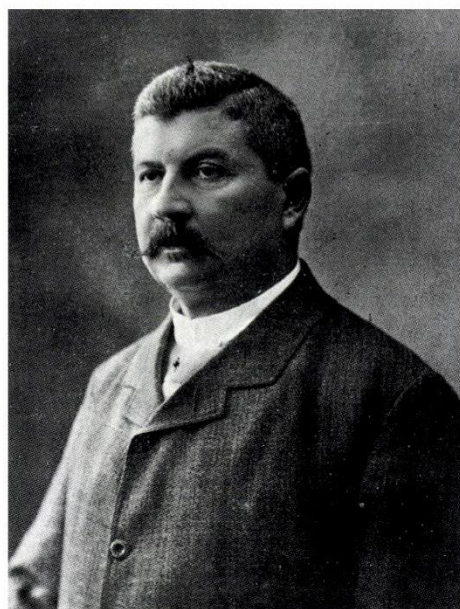
Fig. 4. 1, 3, 5a–5b. Polished and knapped stone artefacts discovered in Orşova at the end of the nineteenth or beginning of twentieth century (without scales); 2a–2e Microscopical details with the perforated serpentinite stone axe; 4a–4b. Pictures taken through the digital microscope, depicting the clastic limestone stone plug; 6a–6b. Photos of the retouched edge (left image) and a notch (right image) of the chert flake (photo: I. A. Bărbat)



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Fig. 5. 1. Panoramic view of the town of Orşova at the end of nineteenth century; 2–3. Two of the members of the History and Archaeology Society of Hunedoara County involved in the archaeological field surveys of the Lower Danube in 1893; Téglás Gábor (left) and Szinte Gábor (right) (1 – modified from Gonda 1896; 2 – apud Gáll 2014; 3 – apud Bata, Tasnádi 2015)