

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEYS AT TAMAȘI (COM. CORBEANCA, ILFOV COUNTY): BRONZE AGE DISCOVERIES

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Abstract. *During 2023, archaeological research was conducted in the village of Tamași (Corbeanca commune, Ilfov County). The geomagnetic map created prior to the archaeological intervention indicated a series of anomalies, suggesting the existence of possible archaeological features. However, research carried out in the area of the anomalies did not reveal the existence of any feature. The only materials discovered are a series of ceramic fragments found isolated at different depths, which must belong to a settlement whose character is difficult to define. Most of the vessels are decorated with striations using the Besenstrich technique, specific to the end of the Early Bronze Age and the beginning of the Middle Bronze Age, which we attribute culturally to the beginning of the Tei culture. Although there are no Bronze Age finds on neighbouring land, it is possible that the settlement extends in other directions.*

Keywords: *Bronze Age, Tei culture, Besenstrich, Tamași, Corbeanca.*

Introduction

During 2023, a series of archaeological research surveys (diagnostic and preventive) were carried out in Tamași (Corbeanca commune, Ilfov County) on two plots located a short distance from each other. In this article, we will publish only the findings from no. 54 E Crinului Street (parcel no. 115, plot 334/2/12, CF. 105501).¹

The studied plot is located in the south of Tamași, in an area that is being developed. The place is located in the Vlăsiei plain, between the basins of the Colentina and Ciocovașiștea Valleys. Topographically, the plot is relatively flat, while hydrographically, it should be noted that today there are no watercourses nearby (**fig. 1–2, 9**).

Background and research methods

The research was conducted in the context of the beneficiary wanting to construct a building with individual housing units, on a plot of 677.48 sqm, with a built area of 197 sqm.

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¹ The archaeological research was carried out by the Vasile Pârvan Institute of Archaeology, Bucharest, in collaboration with Arheosib Consulting LTD, based on the authorisation for preventive archaeological research no. 269/03.05.2023; the beneficiaries of the research are Manfred-Valentin Muller and Gabriela Muller. The results from no. 54 Crinului Street, I will present at a different time.

From the information known from the literature, there were no actual data regarding the site observed and its habitation stages. According to the National Archaeological Repertoire and the List of Historical Monuments, no sites or monuments of archaeological interest have been identified in the studied area. Also, CU² 1096/12.12. 2022 issued by Corbeanca City Hall does not mention their existence. However, the address no. 145/23.02.2023 issued by the County Directorate for Culture Ilfov mentions that the site “Settlement 8-115” of Corbeanca PUG is located on the respective land, with preliminary preventive archaeological research being requested.

In a context in which information about this objective is quasi-non-existent in the public space, to clarify the archaeological situation in the studied perimeter, as a preliminary stage (see Government ordinance no. 43/2000, art. 7 respectively Order of the Ministry of Culture no. 2562/2010, art. 11, lit. E), the decision was made to conduct a magnetometric scan of the plot, as well as an intrusive archaeological diagnosis.

In order to research the land affected by the project, traditional (intrusive) and modern (non-intrusive) methods were used, which allowed us to find of the optimal solutions to approach the archaeological intervention. Thus, before the actual archaeological diagnosis was made, was subjected to research benefited from geomagnetic scanning.³ Although limited on the perimeter area by the existence of concrete and iron structures, in the rest of the surface, magnetometry revealed the presence of anomalies, which could be generated by certain types of human structures from ancient times (**fig. 3**).

In stage two of the research on this lot, intrusive archaeological planning therefore took into account anomalies on the geomagnetic map. Sections were opened both to check these anomalies and to research the entire area with archaeological surveys. Seven research units were opened, designated from Sp 1 to Sp 7 (**fig. 4**).

Description of excavations

Stratigraphy

The area subject to preventive archaeological research is located in a very large field, with current sources of flowing water located several kilometres away (**fig. 1**). The stratigraphy of the investigated perimeter is homogeneous in succession, with variations from one area to another, only in terms of the thickness of the deposits.

Sp 1 (6 x 1 m) (see **fig. 5/1; 10).**

This was excavated in the northwest part of the plot. The stratigraphy is as follows: 0 to -0.15 m – loose, black topsoil; -0.15 to -0.40 m – black, clayish

² Urban planning certificate.

³ The geomagnetic scanning of the perimeter was done by “Terra Data Surveys” through Mr Adrian Şerbănescu.

soil, without archaeological materials; -0.40 to -0.65/1.00 m – yellow clay, archaeologically sterile.

The research revealed a sporadic habitation of the area, noting, first of all, the lack of archaeological features. However, from the culture layer, and especially in some places forming small concentrations (proven as rodent shelters and galleries), ceramic and osteological materials belonging to the Bronze Age emerged.

Sp 2 (6 x 1 m)

This was excavated in the northwest part of the plot. The stratigraphy is as follows: 0 to -0.15 m – loose, black topsoil; -0.15 to -0.35 m – black, clayish soil, without archaeological materials; at the base of the layer appeared a small reddish pigmentation; -0.35 to -0.65/0.75 m – yellow clay, archaeologically sterile.

Sp 3 (3 x 1 m)

This was excavated in the northwest part of the plot, between Sp 1 and Sp 2, on the coordinates of an anomaly observed in geomagnetic scanning. The stratigraphy is as follows: 0 to -0.15 m – loose, black topsoil; -0.15 to -0.45 m – black, clayish soil, without archaeological materials; -0.45 to -0.68 m – yellow clay, sterile from the archaeological point of view. The archaeological survey did not clarify the nature of the geomagnetic anomaly, but there was a lack of anthropogenic interventions or archaeological materials.

Sp 4 (6 x 1 m)

This was excavated in the southwest half of the plot, along the long axis. The stratigraphy is as follows: 0 to -0.15 m – loose, black topsoil; -0.15 to -0.60 m – black, clayish soil with small reddish pigmentation; -0.60 to -0.70 m – yellow clay, sterile from an archaeological point of view.

Sp 5 (6 x 1 m) (see **fig. 5/2**).

This was excavated in the southwest half of the plot, on the axis of the surface Sp 1. The stratigraphy is as follows: 0 to -0.15 m – loose, black topsoil; -0.15 to -0.50 m – black, clayish soil, at the base of which appeared scattered ceramic fragments (between which a rim from a jar and a small handle) and small bones; -0.50 to -0.65 m – yellow clay, sterile from the archaeological point of view.

Sp 6 (6 x 1 m) (see **fig. 5/3**).

This was excavated in the middle of the plot, along its short axis. The stratigraphy is as follows: 0 to -0.15 m – loose, black topsoil; -0.15 to -0.80/0.90 m – black, clayish soil, in which archaeological materials were discovered at all depths; -0.80/0.90 m – yellow clay, archaeologically sterile. Towards the ends of the section, at the top of the layer (-0.30 m), were outlined two small agglomerations of oval-circular shape, filled with black, loose or yellowish soil, containing prehistoric ceramic fragments. Following their study, it could be observed that the agglomerations belong to rodent galleries (**fig. 11**).

Sp 7 (6 x 1 m) (see fig. 5/4).

This was excavated in the southwest half of the plot, close to the driveway to the property. The stratigraphy is as follows: 0 to -0.15 m – loose, black topsoil; -0.15 to -0.80 m – black, clayish soil, in which prehistoric ceramic fragments were found sporadically; -0.80/1.05 m – yellow clay, sterile from the archaeological point of view.

Description of the archaeological material

In the entire area of the surveyed plot, no archaeological feature were identified. The outline of small agglomerations of materials, with ceramics, animal bones or daub fragment, identified in Sp 6 proved to be the result of rodent galleries and nests, which brought together from different areas the archaeological material, “grouping” them in these animal interventions. Archaeological materials found in the layer, among which we found a piece of daub fragment (fig. 8/1), indicate the existence of some housing structures in the area that, most likely, were preserved only in this form. The artefacts are concentrated in the southwest half of the plot, towards the access from Crinului Street, suggesting a possible development of habitation in the space located opposite our research.

The pottery discovered is entirely prehistoric. We note as very likely two stages in its dating. To the earliest phase should be assigned several ceramic fragments tempered with silt, without typical features, but exhibiting a fabric that likely supports their attribution to the Eneolithic period (fig. 7/7–8). But for now, more cannot be said. The most compact batch of findings is formed by fragments of vessels decorated on the outer surface with a broom, resulting in disorganised striae arranged throughout the entire body of the vessels, starting from under the rim and extending towards the bottom (fig. 6/1, 3–9; 7/2, 4 = 7/1–4, 6, 9). They are characterised by reduced firing, with black-coloured surfaces. Most of them come from Sp 6. We observe the existence of forms such as the jar-vessel, with a straight rim and bevelled obliquely and a triangular-section cordon placed beneath the rim (fig. 6/8 = 8/4), as well as a vessel with a funnel-shaped mouth, decorated along the rim with an applied clay cordon ornamented with finger impressions (fig. 6/7 = 8/2). Another fragment belongs to a black-coloured small cup with a handle (fig. 6/2 = 8/3). Two jar bottoms complete the repertoire of medium-sized pots, one of which still features the broom decoration on the side that descends towards its base (fig. 6/9–10 = 7/9–10).

Cultural and chronological classification

Even in the absence of habitation features, the ceramic material discovered in the contents of the culture layer provides some landmarks for a relative chronology and cultural classification. At the moment we can discuss with certainty the presence of some discoveries that we can attribute to the Bronze

Age. The shape of the vessels and their decoration, exclusively made with the broom across the entire surface of the containers, associated with cordons under the rim, indicate a narrower chronological moment, which can be placed at the end of the Early Bronze (EBA III) or at the beginning of the Middle Bronze (MBA I). Our understanding of this chronological sequence in the Ilfov area is rather limited, so cultural attributions can only be relative. Traditionally, such materials can be linked to the beginnings of Tei culture (Tei I phase).⁴ However, we must also consider other possible connections, which we cannot ignore, with cultural complexes from neighbouring areas, for example, from northeastern Oltenia. There we have similar materials very well attested at the end of the early Bronze, classified by Gh. Petre-Govora in the Gornea-Orlești group, with the observation that the Tamași discoveries lack ceramics⁵ with a textile motif. If we look at the views expressed for Muntenia, we will see that R. Băjenaru questions the independent character of the Gornea-Orlești group, referring to a Gornea-Orlești-type pottery that could represent, in fact, a component of the first phases of the Verbicioara culture.⁶ The discussions in literature on this subject, however, have not advanced in recent decades. Since we cannot speak of discoveries akin to the Odaia Turcului type in the case of the materials from Tamași, they remain to be potentially associated with so-called Bungetu-type finds, whether as part of, or separate from, the Tei I phase.⁷ This is all the more pertinent given that the neighbouring areas lack a more comprehensive understanding of the transition from the Early to the Middle Bronze Age.⁸ Valeriu Leahu emphasised the significance of the striated ceramics with a broom-like tool, characteristic of the Early Tei phase. He observed the irregular manner of decoration of these ceramics, which linked them to the Gornea-Orlești group⁹ (closely related to that from Tamași). After several decades of research, he concluded that the striated ceramic horizon might play a genetic role in the emergence of Tei I-type materials. However, the isolated striated finds discovered in the south-central region of Muntenia lack an assured contextual background,¹⁰ which, as already mentioned, is also the case with the Tamași pottery.

If we consider the site within the context of other Bronze Age finds known in the area and accept the connection with Tei-type discoveries, it is worth mentioning the identification of a Tei culture settlement at the former

⁴ Leahu 1967, p. 89, fig. 14–15.

⁵ Petre Govora 1995, p. 38–41, fig. 4/9; 8/16–17, 20; 1/1; 2/1–2, 9; 3/3; 4/3, 5, 9, 14; 5/1, 9; 6/2; 7/5, 8, 10; 8/1–6, 9, 14.

⁶ Băjenaru 2002, p. 120.

⁷ See the full discussion in Popa 2005, p. 80, 84, 133.

⁸ See Schuster 1997, p. 161–163.

⁹ Leahu 2003, p. 44, 106, 109, 163–164, 170–171.

¹⁰ Leahu 1995, p. 254.

village of Mecheaua (now no longer a distinct settlement, incorporated into the village of Corbeanca).¹¹ This site, located at the former pumping-station point on the opposite side of the current commune, near the border with Săftica, at this site, a settlement with decorated ceramics was identified featuring broom-like motifs, bands and bosses. Settlements with ceramic vessels decorated with the broom, also attributed to the Tei culture, are known in the immediate vicinity, on the left bank of Ciocovaliștei Valley, at Săftica,¹² Căciulați,¹³ Periș, west of the Periș-*Ostratu road*,¹⁴ at Balotești,¹⁵ or Dumbrăveni-*La Nisipărie IV*.¹⁶ The same ceramic category is reported around Snagov lake, at the level of Tei culture, at Tâncăbești-*La Ogresie* (Tei I)¹⁷ and *Gospodăria lui Mitu al lui Belu*,¹⁸ Snagov-*Coada Chiot*,¹⁹ Ghermănești²⁰ or Cocioc.²¹ The decoration executed with the small broom appears not only in early Tei sites but also in settlements attributed to Tei II and IV phases from Chitila-*Grădina de zarzavat*.²² In fact, Valeriu Leahu emphasised its existence also in the late phase, Fundeni.²³ Similar observations on Tei II pottery decorated with a small broom²⁴ are complemented by those from the Tei cemetery in Câmpina, from a later phase, where the striae appear isolated on a ceramic vessel.²⁵

Conclusions

The preventive excavation in Tamași village located in the real-estate development area at no. 54 E Crinului Street did not result in the discovery of habitation features, but only of ceramic materials attributed to the Bronze Age, revealed in the culture layer, in the sections traced in the half located towards the access road. Their presence, however, indicates the likely existence of a habitation dated during the Tei culture, which is likely to continue is likely to extend in a south-westerly direction in relation to the investigated plot. It is certain that 60 m away to the south, the habitation ceases. At least this is what was shown in the results of preventive excavations

¹¹ Sandu 1992a, pl. I; Sandu 1992b, p. 310; Gavrila 2015, p. 49.

¹² Gavrila 2015, p. 51.

¹³ Sandu 1992b, p. 315; Schuster et al. 2005, p. 90; Gavrila 2015, p. 45.

¹⁴ Sandu 1992b, p. 290; Schuster et al. 2005, p. 99; Gavrila 2015, p. 46–47.

¹⁵ Sandu 1992b, p. 307, pl. IV/1–4; Gavrila 2015, p. 43.

¹⁶ Sandu 1992b, p. 312–313, pl. IV / 5–6, 11.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 299, pl. III/1.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pl. III/9.

¹⁹ Sandu-Cuculea 2007, p. 343; Gavrila 2015, p. 51.

²⁰ Sandu 1992b, p. 309; Schuster et al. 2005, p. 94; Gavrila 2015, p. 47.

²¹ At two distinct points, *La Clinceanu* and on the right bank at the Vlăsiei River (Sandu 1992b, p. 295, 301); see also Gavrila 2015, p. 46.

²² Gavrila 2015, p. 46.

²³ Leahu 2003, p. 203–204.

²⁴ Leahu 1965, p. 4.

²⁵ Frînculeasa et al. 2011, p. 147, pl. 13/2.

on a neighbouring lot (no. 54 I Crinului Street), where traces from the Bronze Age are completely lacking, but a habitation from the Dacian era has been documented. Undoubtedly, in the future, contractual archaeology conducted in collaboration with the developers of real estate development within this perimeter has the potential to yield more comprehensive and robust data regarding the Bronze Age settlement.

(translated by Cosmin Mihai Coatu)

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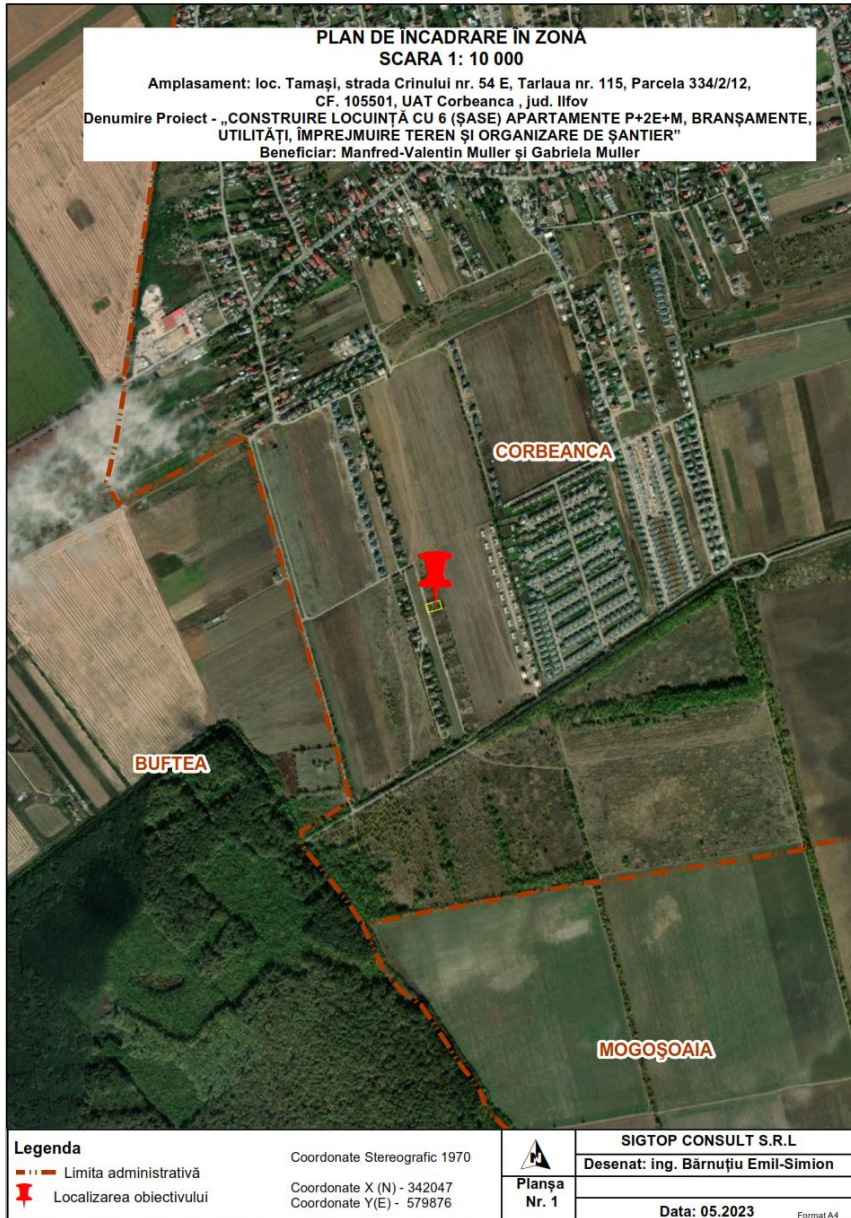


Fig. 1. No. 54 E Tamași-Crinului Street. Site location

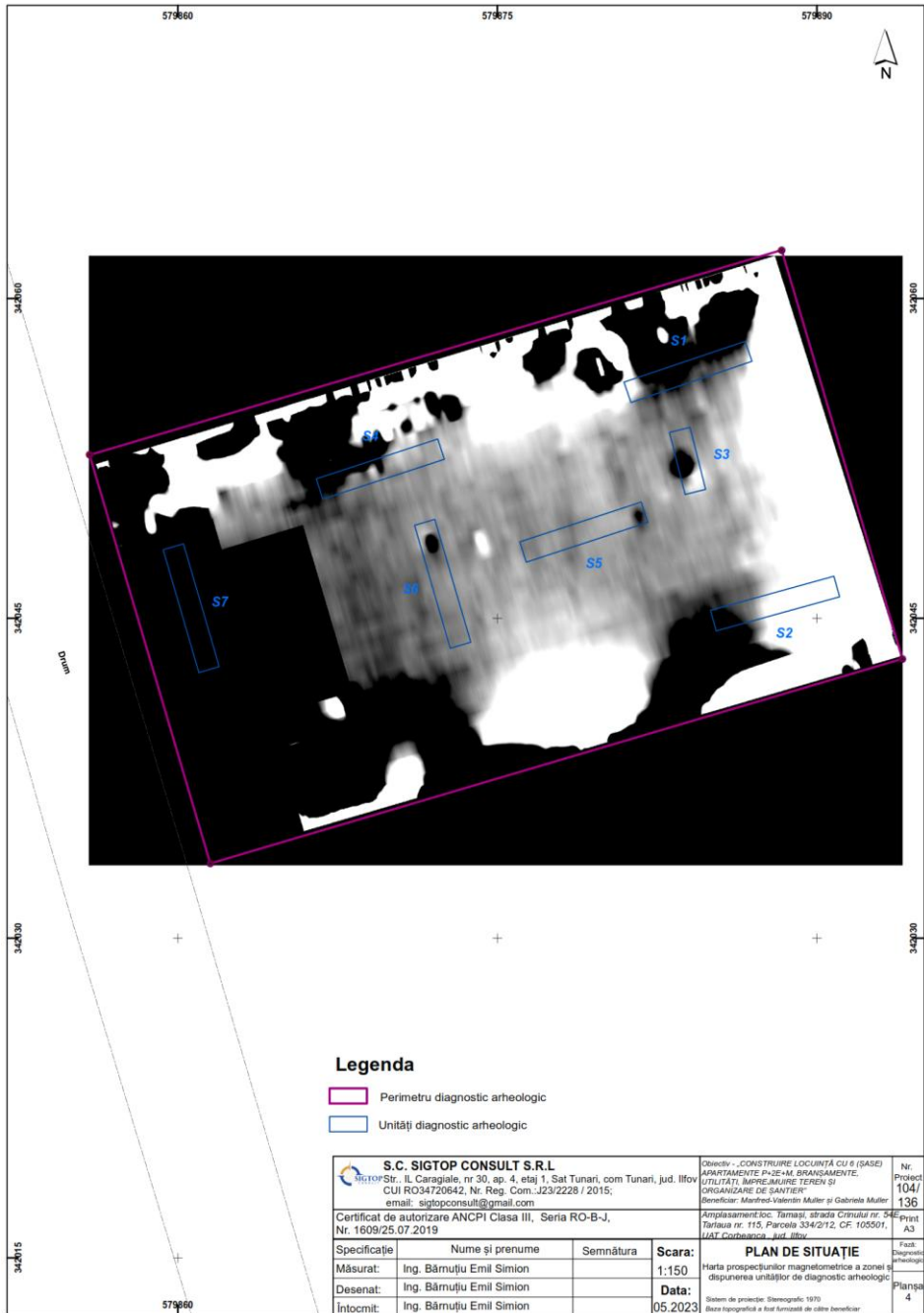


Fig. 3. No. 54 E Tamași-Crinului Street. Geomagnetic map of the property (made by Terra Data Surveys), with marking of diagnostic units

Archaeological Surveys at Tamași (Com. Corbeanca, Ilfov County)

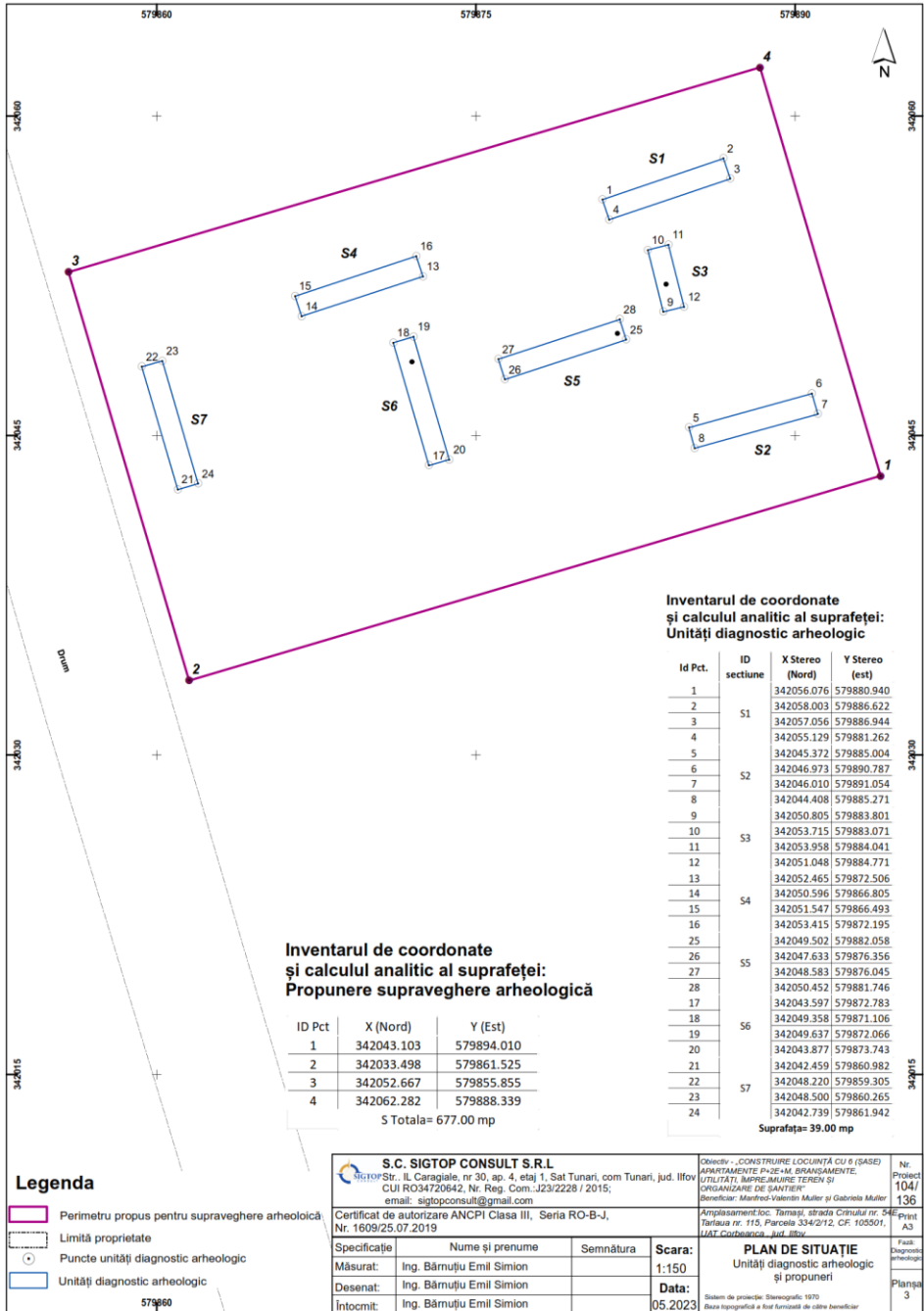


Fig. 4. No. 54 E Tamași-Crinului Street. Situation plan showing the perimeter boundary of the property and the placement of archaeological sections

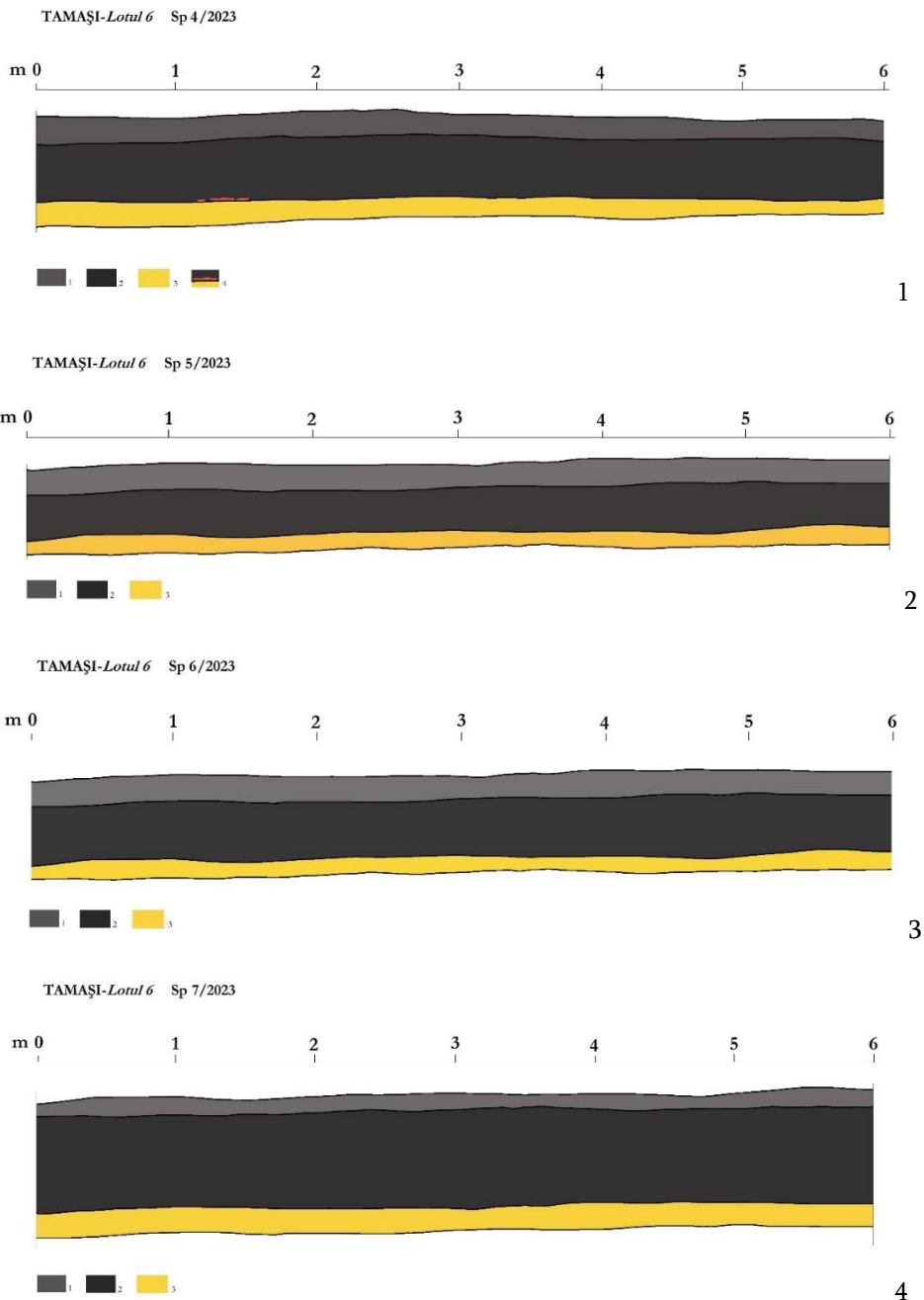


Fig. 5. No. 54 E Tamași-Crinului Street. Stratigraphic profiles of sections Sp 4 (1), Sp 5 (2), Sp 6 (3) and Sp 7 (4) (drawings): 1 – vegetable layer, grey-black colour, loose; 2 – black colour level, very clayish and compact; 3 – greyish-yellow soil, sterile from the archaeological point of view

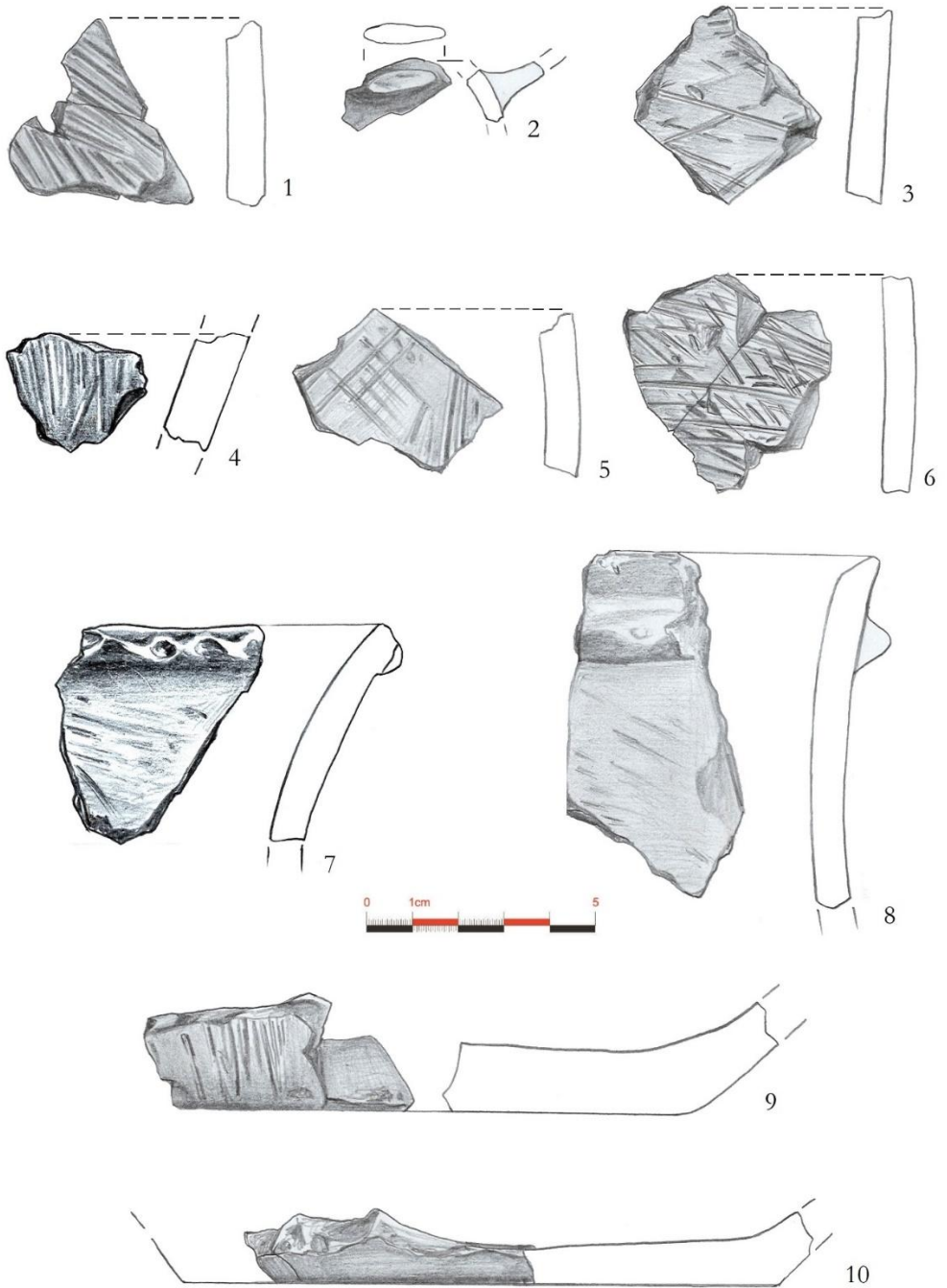


Fig. 6. No. 54 E Tamași-Crinului Street. Ceramic fragments belonging to the Bronze Age culture layer

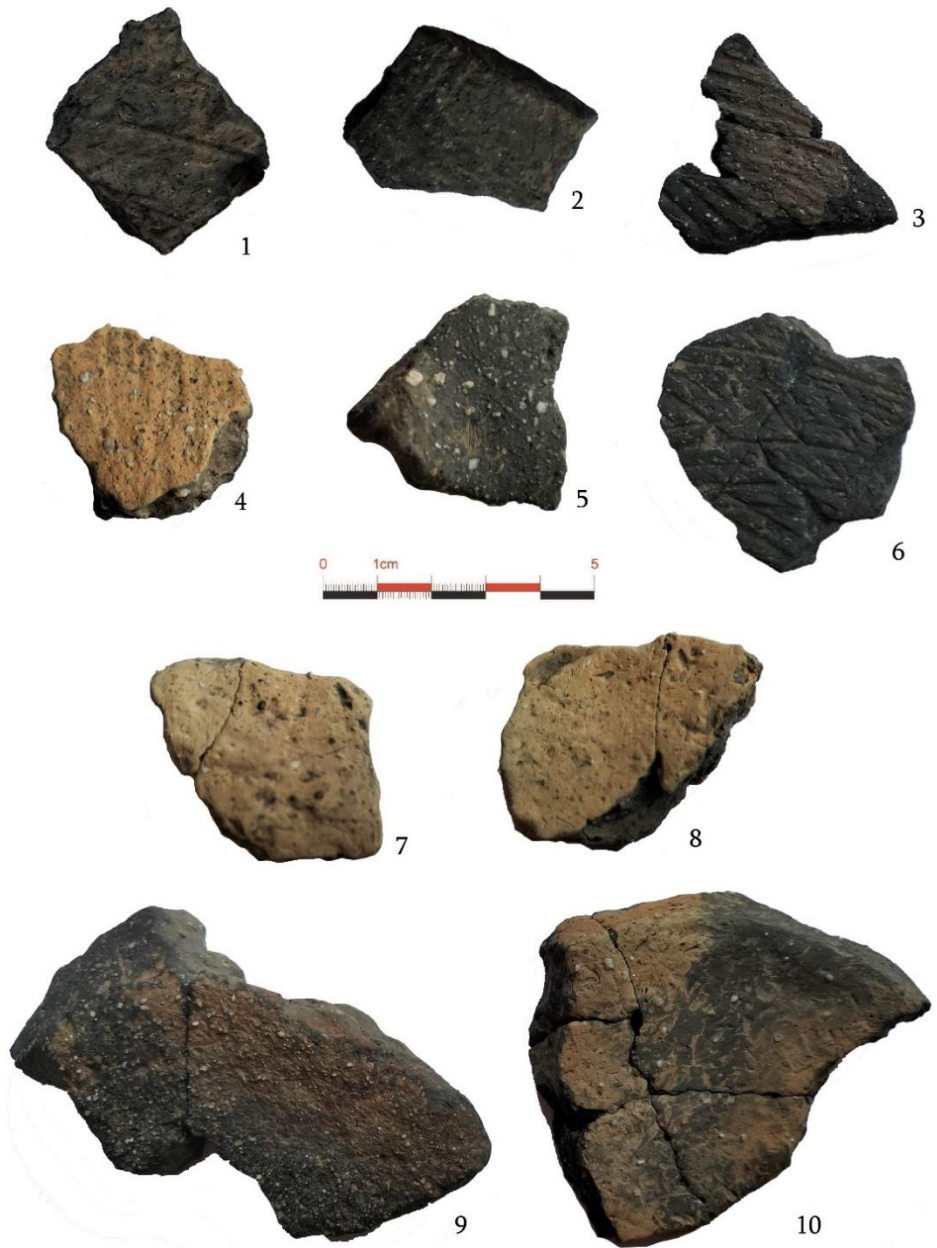


Fig. 7. No. 54 E Tamași-Crinului Street. Ceramic fragments (2–5) and daub fragment (1) belonging to the Bronze Age culture layer

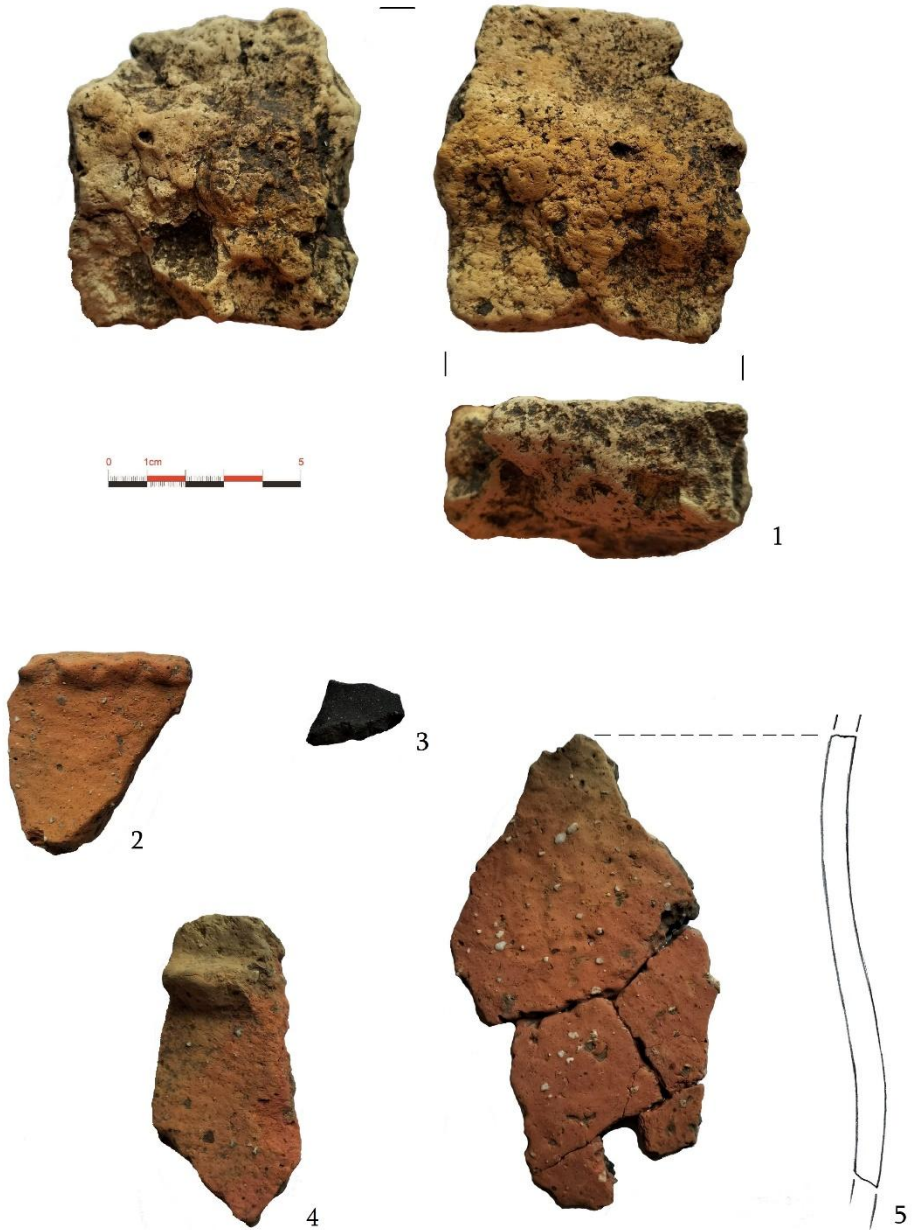
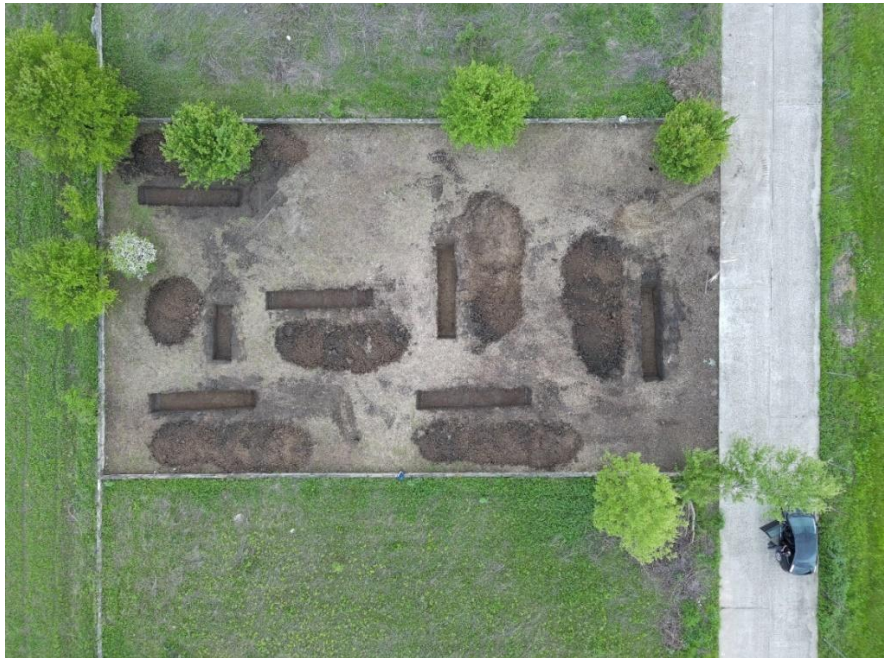


Fig. 8. No. 54 E Tamași-Crinului Street . Ceramic fragments (2-5) and daub fragment (1) belonging to the Bronze Age culture layer



1



2

Fig. 9. No. 54 E Tamași-Crinului Street. View of the lot archaeologically researched (aerial photographs)



1



2

Fig. 10. No. 54 E Tamași-Crinului Street. Section Sp 1: general view (1) and stratigraphic profile (2)



1



2

Fig. 11. No. 54 E Tamași-Crinului Street. Section Sp 6: rodent galleries with prehistoric archaeological materials