

PART III

FINE ARTS

1. SEVERAL CONSIDERATIONS ON THE SETTLEMENTS AND BUILDINGS OF THE FIRST NEOLITHIC PERIOD ON ROMANIAN TERRITORY

Ioana-Iulia Olaru²⁰²

Abstract: *This study will only deal with the Neolithic period which we distinguish from the Eneolithic one in the sense that in this period man only used tools made of stone and later on, in Eneolithic (Chalcolithic), he started using copper. In its first period, the Neolithic has new characteristics as a result of the progress of human communities; thus, as opposed to the Palaeolithic, man starts a new period with changed “clothes”. Firstly, man now starts to create and appreciate beauty as the Palaeolithic art did not have aesthetic purposes. But an important transformation regards the habitat, Neolithic settlements and buildings reflecting the increasing stability of communities, thus taking a step forward from Palaeolithic and their evolution to the higher levels of the future society, the Eneolithic one.*

Key words: *Neolithic, Eneolithic, living hole, nomad agriculture, palisade, sanctuary*

1. CHARACTERISTICS OF ENTIRE NEOLITHIC PERIOD ON THE ROMANIAN TERRITORY

Shorter than the Palaeolithic but much more dynamic, the entire period of the Neolithic is characterised by the superior technique of polishing stone and the production of ceramics. In the Neolithic, people start to create and appreciate beauty (the purpose of the Palaeolithic art had not been an aesthetic one). On Romanian territory, the Neolithic (cca 6 600/5 500²⁰³ – cca 3 800, 3 700 (3 500 BC)²⁰⁴) lies on the foundation of the Neolithic which came from the south of the Balkan Peninsula; the new cultures had strong contacts with the Mesolithic found here which led to the destruction of the latter’s populations²⁰⁵. Consequently, the first Neolithic cultures belong to meridional populations with a pre-Indo-European character; the end of the Neolithic civilisation will be a gradual one and will be brought by the invasion of Eastern tribes, coming from North-Pontic steppes. Man’s transformation from hunter and picker to farmer and shepherd could not occur without polishing tools which had been only carved before. Communities become stable, sedentary and live in secure settlements with a producing economy.

²⁰² Lecturer PhD, “George Enescu” University of Arts from Iași of Romania, email: olaruioana2004@yahoo.com

²⁰³ L.R. in Radu Florescu, Hadrian Daicoviciu, Lucian Roșu (coord.), *Dicționar enciclopedic de artă veche a României*, București, Ed. Științifică și Enciclopedică, 1980, p.236, s.v. *neolitic*

²⁰⁴ N. Ursulescu, M. Petrescu-Dâmbovița, D. Monah, *Cap. II. Neo-eneoliticul (Partea I. Preistoria)*, in Mircea Petrescu-Dâmbovița, Alexandru Vulpe (coord.), *Istoria românilor*, vol.I, *Moștenirea timpurilor îndepărtate*, București, Academia Română, Ed. Enciclopedică, 2010, p.113

²⁰⁵ Mihai Bărbulescu, Dennis Deletant, Keith Hitchins, Șerban Papacostea, Pompiliu Teodor, *Istoria României*, București, Ed. Corint, 2007, p.16

Neolithic settlements

In the Neolithic people found their permanent settlements near running waters on heights or hills to control the neighbouring areas²⁰⁶. Temporary Palaeolithic huts were gradually replaced. From hollow settlements in the beginning (either round or oval of approx. 20 sq.m. and even over 100 sq.m.)²⁰⁷ – *living holes* are the oldest types of Neolithic settlement –, reaching solid constructions elevated at surface, with a rectangular pillar beam structure of resistance to fit families with many children. Communities consist of families and common interests start to be important, not just the degree of relatedness.

Neolithic beliefs

The entire Neolithic period is responsible for the spread of the cult of the Great Mother Goddess, as well as the cult of fecundity and fertility as shown by the zoomorphic and anthropomorphic figurines; the cult of the dead is also generalised – all these were sporadic in the Palaeolithic. As proven by the representations and sanctuaries, there is a complex spiritual life, the religious system being a dualistic one organised around two symbolic characters: the feminine one, the Universal Mother, the god that subordinated the cosmos and was symbol of fecundity and the masculine one, first reincarnated from the Taurus and then, gradually, and with anthropomorphic representation, subordinated in relation of filiation with feminine divinity²⁰⁸. The cult of the dead (also less encountered in the Palaeolithic) will also be generalised. We still do not know much about their conceptions on death: people probably believed in the afterlife, therefore they buried their dead wearing jewellery and objects they considered necessary in another existence. Inhumation has started to be practised ever since the middle Palaeolithic²⁰⁹ when the body was buried in squatting or sleeping position and there had been various burial rituals.

2. INFORMATIONS ON THE NEOLITHIC PERIOD ON ROMANIAN TERRITORY

Cultures in the Early Neolithic

In the first period of the Neolithic – the early (old) Neolithic (cca 6 600/5 500²¹⁰ – 5 500²¹¹/4 500 BC²¹²) – man's main occupation was to grow plants and the communities were always seeking fertile fields (*nomad agriculture*), which led to the detachment of some groups and their *swarming*²¹³ on bigger or smaller places, the current of neolithisation going from South to North (from the Anatolian-Hellenic-Balkan space to the Danube and the Carpathians). Where they settled, south Neolithic communities influenced by assimilation and acculturation the local Epipalaeolithic communities which also perpetuated

²⁰⁶ Manuela Wullschleger (ed.), *L'art néolithique en Roumanie*, Napoli, Arte'm, 2008, p.25

²⁰⁷ *Ibidem*

²⁰⁸ N. Ursulescu et. al., *op. cit.*, p.162

²⁰⁹ Mihai Bărbulescu et. al., *op. cit.*, p.19

²¹⁰ L. R., in Radu Florescu et. al., *op. cit.*, p.237, s.v. *neolithic*

²¹¹ N. Ursulescu et. al., *op. cit.*, p.116

²¹² L. R., in Radu Florescu et. al., *op. cit.*, p.237, s.v. *neolithic*

²¹³ Marius Ciută, *Aspecte ale complexului cultural Starcevo-Criș pe teritoriul României*, in *Sargetia*, XXVII/1, Deva, 1997-1998, p.20

traditional cultural elements which led to the rise of many cultural groups and cultures in the Balkans.

The stage of formation of the two cultural types (the one of first neolithic ceramic communities settled in the Carpathian-Balkan area, as well as the one in which the synthesis with local Epipaleolithic groups occurs) is a period of expansion for the cult of the Great Mother Goddess as well as artistic definition of the future iconographic types and the shape of a stylistic tendency of the entire Neolithic by stylisation and geometrisation. Two different cultural types characterise the early Neolithic on the field of Romania. The former, **the cultural group of Gura Baciului-Cârcea (Precriș culture)**²¹⁴ will preface the following, the **Starčevo-Criș** culture, as well as a particular group, namely **Ciumești-Pișcolț**²¹⁵.

Settlements and places to live of the cultures in the Early Neolithic

As far as the settlements are concerned, in the early Neolithic people continue to live in caves as they did in the Paleolithic (Clisura Dunării, Hunedoara county, Bihor county)²¹⁶ but the settlements start to be stable, located on low terraces near water sources; they are scattered and open (although there are records of fortification attempts with small ditches: Cârcea, Schela Cladovei, Gornea²¹⁷ – but only in the later stages and the efficacy of their defensive system is not certain). As far as buildings are concerned, huts were the predominant ones, but there were also huts built on the surface. Anyway, elementary architectural forms start to show in the early Neolithic: the technique of construction and rationalising thought: a geometric plan, geometry of volume ordering.

In the central group Gura Baciului-Cârcea (Precriș culture), the settlements (located in remote places²¹⁸ near waters on non-flooding terraces²¹⁹)

²¹⁴ Idem, *Contribuții la cunoașterea celui mai vechi orizont al neoliticului timpuriu din România: cultura Precriș. Descoperirile arheologice de la Șeușa – La cărarea morii*, in *Apulum*, XXXVII/1, Alba Iulia, 2000, p.51-101

²¹⁵ The first one, the cultural group of Gura Baciului-Cârcea (Precriș culture) belongs to the first Neolithic communities established in the Carpathian-Balkan area; the name is given by the settlement in Cluj-Napoca area and one near Craiova (Dolj county) and discoveries from Ocna Sibiului, Șeușa (Alba county), Miercurea Sibiului (Sibiu county) and Oltenia. The second cultural type is represented by Starčevo-Criș culture (named after a locality near Belgrade after the discoveries in the Crișurilor basin), the larger and most unitary Neolithic culture, born from the adaptation and synthesis of Southern communities that got here with the local Epipaleolithic groups. In the North, Starčevo-Criș communities entered a process of synthesis with the Epipaleolithic ones from Central Europe that imposed themselves and would subsequently give birth to the cultural complex of linear pottery. This oldest Neolithic culture from Romanian territory, the Starčevo-Criș culture is also spread in Hungary, Serbia and North Bulgaria and in our country it will have local variants in Moldova, as well (where previously there had only been sporadic epipaleolithic settlements). Named after two localities from Satu Mare, the cultural group Ciumești-Pișcolț belongs to the early horizon with painted pottery and linear incisions from the Tisa basin with strong connections in South-Eastern Slovakia and North-Eastern Hungary, also found in the North of Moldova and there is a tendency of turning Starčevo-Criș culture into a new linear ceramic culture; its evolution will be extended to late Neolithic, as well. Cf. Florin Drașovean, *Cultura Starčevo-Criș în bazinul Mureșului Mijlociu*, in *Apulum*, XIX, Alba Iulia, 1981, p.33; Nicolae Densușianu, *Dacia preistorică*, București, Ed. Meridiane, 1980, p.74; Marius Ciută, *Aspecte...*, in *Sargetia*, XXVII/1, Deva, 1997-1998, p.29; Gheorghe Lazarovici, Ioan Némethi, *Neoliticul dezvoltat din nord-vestul României (Sălajul, Sătmarul și Clujul)*, in *Acta Musei Porolissensis*, VII, Zalău, 1983, p.26; N. Ursulescu et. al., *op. cit.*, p.124

²¹⁶ N. Vlăsa, *Considerații asupra neoliticului timpuriu din România*, in *Marisia*, VIII, Târgu Mureș, 1978, p.25

²¹⁷ N. Ursulescu et. al., *op. cit.*, p.126

²¹⁸ N. Vlăsa, *Considerații...*, in *Marisia*, VIII, Târgu Mureș, 1978, p.26

²¹⁹ Marius Ciută, *Aspecte...*, in *Sargetia*, XXVII/1, Deva, 1997-1998, p.19

were large, compact, stable²²⁰, unfortified, with scattered buildings: curve-linear huts²²¹, partially deepened in the earth (as the one of Miercurea Sibiului-Petriș, quadrilateral of 5x2m, located at 1,83m beneath earth)²²² or surface cabins with a room of poles and earth netting, no arranged floors. Two important settlements of this cultural group had a longer existence: one in Cluj and another in Craiova, as well as the ones in Ocna Sibiului (a first organization attempt – territorial systematisation)²²³ and from Șeușa (Alba County)²²⁴.

The settlements of Starčevo-Criș culture were not very large (300-400mx40m) and they were generally unfortified, yet defended – in their late phases – with small ditches rarely having a palisade: Cârcea, Ostrovu Golu, Schela Cladovei, Dudeștii Vechi. They were located in low places (Balomir – *Gura Văii Cioarei*, Lancrăm, Sebeș – *Casa Jampa*, Tărtăria), in slopes (Suplacu de Barcău, Râpa, Biharea, Mișca, jud. Bihor)²²⁵ or on the higher terraces of water courses (Hăpria, Galda, Ghirbom, Hunedoara – *the Reformed cemetery*)²²⁶, on water banks (Suplacu de Barcău, Fughiu, Râpa)²²⁷, and in the caves that had also been inhabited in the Paleolithic (Cioclovina, Nandru, Bordu-Mare²²⁸, Câmpani, Vadu Crișului)²²⁹ or in settlements under rocks (Dubova – Cuina Turcului).

The places to live are few (3-8) and scattered. At first they were hollow huts (0,75m, Fughiu) (1,15m, Râpa)²³⁰ (2,75m) (Leț, Cipău)²³¹ with a distance between them, rectangular with rounded corners, partial sides roof²³² and semi-huts (*cabins*)²³³ (partially deepened 0,40, 0,35m, Suplacu Barcău)²³⁴; in time surface settlements were built (Bedehaza, Leț) with a pillar skeleton and a floor of stone and clay²³⁵. In Moldova more than 50 settlements of Criș culture were found: placed in fertile places, on the inferior and middle terraces of rivers, but rarely on high places; concentrated settlements (in *nests*) with buildings raised randomly²³⁶.

²²⁰ *Ibidem*, p.20

²²¹ N. Vlăsa, *Considerații...*, p.27

²²² For more details on the first Neolithic manifestations of Transylvania, see Sabin Adrian Luca, Cosmin Ioan Suci, *Despre începutul neoliticului timpuriu din Transilvania*, in *Studia Universitatis Cibiniensis*, I, Sibiu, 2004, p.9-24

²²³ Marius Ciută, *Aspecte...*, in *Sargetia*, XXVII/1, Deva, 1997-1998, p.21

²²⁴ N. Ursulescu et. al., *op. cit.*, p.117

²²⁵ Doina Ignat, *Așezarea neolitică aparținând culturii Criș de la Suplacu de Barcău (j. Bihor)*, in *Crisia*, VIII, Oradea, 1978, p.16

²²⁶ Florin Drașovean, *op. cit.*, p.37

²²⁷ Doina Ignat, *Așezarea...*, p.16

²²⁸ N. Vlăsa, *Cultura Criș în Transilvania. Scurt istoric al cercetărilor privitoare la cultura Criș*, in *Acta Musei Napocensis*, III, Cluj, 1966, p.17

²²⁹ Doina Ignat, *Așezarea...*, p.16

²³⁰ *Idem*, *Neoliticul vechi în nord-vestul României*, in *Crisia*, XXX, Oradea, 2000, p.25

²³¹ N. Vlăsa, *Cultura Criș...*, p.17

²³² L. R., in Radu Florescu et. al., *op. cit.*, p.121, s.v. *Criș, cultura*

²³³ Marius Ciută, *Aspecte...*, p.20

²³⁴ Doina Ignat, *Neoliticul vechi...*, p.26

²³⁵ Ion Miclea, Radu Florescu, *Preistoria Daciei*, București, Ed. Meridiane, 1980, p.56

²³⁶ Marius Ciută, *Aspecte...*, p.30-31

In the perimeter of early neolithic settlements, there were also funerals, the death being buried together with the remains of the funerary meal²³⁷ in isolated tombs, as in the case of Starčevo-Criș culture inside the buildings (Bedehaza, Cipău, Cluj, Gura-Baciului)²³⁸. However, it is worth mentioning that in the Gura Baciului-Cârcea group the rite of incineration first occurred²³⁹.

Cultures in the Developed Neolithic

In the (late) developed Neolithic (5 500/4 500²⁴⁰ – 5 000/3 700²⁴¹ BC)²⁴², the naturist myth takes shape, also hosting the idea of fertility and fecundity. Now the second cultural and demographic Neolithic wave of Southern origin reaches Romania (Vinča culture), then followed by the cultural current of Central-European origin (the culture of linear pottery) and new cultural syntheses are born (to replace the great cultural unity that had prevailed, Starčevo-Criș)²⁴³. From an artistic viewpoint, they are characterised by the same stylisation by geometrisation to which the interest for realism adds so as to diversify iconography and forms. A series of cultures brought by communities coming from South: Vinča fund (**Vinča, Dudești, Hamangia incipientă**) and later on from Central Europe: the culture of linear pottery (**Tisa variant and the phase of linear music-note pottery**) would replace the Starčevo-Criș²⁴⁴ and from their mixture the new and original cultures of the Eneolithic would rise.

²³⁷ N. Ursulescu et. al., *op. cit.*, p.126

²³⁸ N. Vlăsa, *Cultura Criș...*, p.18

²³⁹ N. Ursulescu et. al., *op. cit.*, p.121

²⁴⁰ L. R., in Radu Florescu et. al., *op. cit.*, p.237, s.v. *neolithic*

²⁴¹ *Ibidem*

²⁴² N. Ursulescu et. al., *op. cit.*, p.126

²⁴³ N. Ursulescu et. al., *op. cit.*, p.126

²⁴⁴ Of the first cultural fund i.e. Vinča of communities coming from the South, the Vinča culture thus named after the famous tell type settlement near Belgrade, occupies an area represented by the former Yugoslavia, North-Western Bulgaria and South-Western Romania; via a process of synthesis with Starčevo-Criș communities and the ones of linear pottery, several related cultural variants were born. Therefore, it is impossible to speak of a Vinča culture at present, but of more vincien groups (*Banat culture* – which enlarges its contacts with the groups of linear ceramics from The Great Hungarian Plain (the Alföld culture), particularly with the Szakalhat group – the cultural Parța group, the cultural Bucovăț group, the cultural Rast group, Turdaș culture, the cultural complex Lumea Nouă-Cheile Turzii-Cluj, the cultural Iclod group). Until the beginning of phase C, Vinča culture belongs to this period, of the developed Neolithic. The communities of subphase A1 do not enter syntheses processes with the communities of the late phase (IIIB) Starčevo-Criș of Banat and Serbia. (Probably the relations between the two cultures were quite tense at the beginning: in many late Starčevo-Criș settlements and early Vinča ones of Banat and Oltenia, the first systems of defence with ditches and Neolithic palisades occur on Romanian territory). Only in the sub-phase Vinča A2 – and the last one (IV) of Starčevo-Criș culture – a mix culture will rise from this synthesis: *Banat culture*, parallel with phases A 2-3, B, and C1 of Vinča culture and local peculiarities (as the ones from the cultural groups of Parța and Bucovăț which came out in the north of Banat from the interference of the Vincien cultural phase with the Northern one with linear pottery). However, these latter groups belong to the period of early Eneolithic. Southern influences are also reflected in Dudești culture (named after a neighbour from Bucharest) in the Southern half of Muntenia which is the Eastern neighbour of the Vinča culture it interferes with in Oltenia; Dudești culture will play an active role in the formation of Boian and Vădastra cultures of early Eneolithic. Then the territory of Dobrogea entered developed Neolithic, but would mainly develop in the subsequent period, the early Eneolithic. The other cultural fund brought by the communities coming from Central Europe, of linear pottery, was born in the north of Starčevo-Criș culture, especially on Hungarian and Slovakian territory and in Romania comprised several areas of Transylvania, all Moldova, reaching Muntenia. This great synthesis of the Neolithic in Central and North-Western Europe shows in two variants: the Tisa variant (Alföld culture) in the Tisa basin and in a later phase, linear music-note pottery spread in Western Slovakia, Hungary, The Czech Republic, Low Countries, Germany, Austria, Poland, North of Romania (Moldova, Eastern and Central Transylvania, North-Eastern Muntenia) and the North of the Republic of Moldova, Western Ukraine (areas of the two variants being divided between them

Settlements and places to live of the cultures in the Developed Neolithic

The settlements of the developed Neolithic are grouped in cultural areas located in hydrologic basins. Buildings are small and have a single room. Many houses had porches, an architectonic element that would later on perpetuate into our traditional architecture. The settlements of Vinča culture (Gornea, Parța, Zorlențu Mare, etc.)²⁴⁵ are very adapted to the diversity of field types. For instance, the central building from Parța was an island between the branches of Timiș where other similar places in islets or corners of river meanders existed²⁴⁶. There are defence systems with ditches and palisades. The gradual replacement of the partially hollowed houses with the surface ones can be noticed, the latter having a more complex architecture: walls on netted pillars stuck with clay and clay floors²⁴⁷. At Parța (Timiș county) (Vinča culture), the houses (sometimes 80 sq.m. large) had logs and clay splice²⁴⁸. The huts of the Dudești culture settlements (on low terraces) are scattered²⁴⁹.

The other cultural fund of the great synthesis of linear pottery had small settlements (under 1ha) located near water resources on low terraces (rarely on higher positions), naturally well defended. The lack of continuous strata of living testifies to the instability of living²⁵⁰. The bearers of this culture adopted here a new type of building: they gave up the Central European tradition of long buildings of dozen meters and adopted small sized buildings (for little families) and the hollowed type (Mihoveni, Suceava county) of late Starčevo-Criș communities²⁵¹, not very solid with thin non-clayed walls (which also reflect short-time presences). The settlements of the linear music-note pottery ceramics were small, open with few buildings in clay and wood, a skeleton in logs and pillars²⁵².

Regarding the religious constructions of the developed Neolithic, in the Parța centre a *market* was discovered and it had the oldest Neolithic sanctuary in Romanian territory²⁵³ (analogies are possible with the Čatal Hüyük sanctuaries or the ones from Madjare – Macedonia)²⁵⁴, which suggests the existence of a religious centre having a role in social organisation. The sanctuary, risen on the

by Apuseni Mountains). In Moldova, the first places are held by linear pottery which is only placed in the stage of musical-note pottery (although coarse pottery also has linearly incised ornaments). Linear musical-note ceramics will contribute to the rise of Eneolithic cultures of Boian, Gumelnița, Vădastra, Sălcuța, Turdaș, Petrești, Precucuteni, and Cucuteni. Cf. N. Ursulescu et. al., *op. cit.*, p.127; Ortansa Radu, *Plastica neolitică de la Chișoda Veche și câteva probleme ale neoliticului din nordul Banatului*, in *Tibiscus*, *****, Timișoara, 1978, p.72; Nicolae Ursulescu, *Contribuții privind evoluția culturii ceramicii liniare pe teritoriul Moldovei*, in *Arheologia Moldovei*, XIII, Iași, 1990, p.13, 18

²⁴⁵ Ion Miclea, Radu Florescu, *op. cit.*, p.58

²⁴⁶ Gheorghe Lazarovici, *Parța, un monument preistoric*, in *Revista muzeelor și monumentelor. Monumente istorice și de artă*, nr.1, anul XIII, București, 1982, p.31

²⁴⁷ Ion Miclea, Radu Florescu, *op. cit.*, p.56

²⁴⁸ N. Ursulescu et. al., *op. cit.*, p.177

²⁴⁹ Ion Miclea, Radu Florescu, *op. cit.*, p.63

²⁵⁰ Nicolae Ursulescu, *Caracteristici ale habitatului comunităților culturii ceramicii liniare în regiunile răsăritene ale României*, in *Carpica*, XXXIX, Bacău, 2010, p.21

²⁵¹ N. Ursulescu et. al., *op. cit.*, p.138

²⁵² L. R., in Radu Florescu et. al., *op. cit.*, p.94, s.v. *ceramică cu decor liniar din capete de note muzicale, cultura*

²⁵³ N. Ursulescu et. al., *op. cit.*, p.131

²⁵⁴ Gheorghe Lazarovici, *Venus de Zăuan despre credințele și practicile magico-religioase (Partea I-a)*, in *Acta Musei Porolissensis*, XII, Zalău, 1988, p.34

place of an older one (the latter had four chambers and an altar table, a hearth and an idol socle got preserved), had two rooms and a total surface of 70 sq.m.: a larger one (of 8,5x7,5m) at the East (with the altar) and a smaller one (of 5,5x7,5m) with many hearths²⁵⁵. A round opening (window) on the Western wall let the light shine on the sanctuary; near it there was a half-moon in landform. The Sun-Moon may be related to astronomic beliefs and practices with moon rhythms, with the renewal of vegetation and feminine cycles. In the Eastern sacred room²⁵⁶, a double statue with the Mother Goddess and the masculine acolyte was found. The Vinča culture tombs were still the result of inhumation, located in the perimeter of the settlements, isolated (as in the case of Criș culture)²⁵⁷. At Cipău an inhumation tomb belonging to linear pottery culture was found²⁵⁸.

3. CONCLUSIONS

Thus, we can see how man – who exited Palaeolithic caves (that he would then sporadically occupy during early Neolithic) – will seek the vicinity of water courses to found his permanent settlements. They will evolve from the scattered ones in the beginning to the first attempts at territorial *systematisation* (from the Precriș culture), from the open ones, without any fortifications (although small ditches can be noted at the end of the period in Starčevo-Criș culture), yet naturally defended, to the ones comprising defence systems with ditches and palisades (Vinča culture). Buildings will also have an important path: from the early *living holes* to huts, cabins and then the rise of elementary architectural forms regarding technique and the geometry of plans and volume ordering. They are all applied to more complex architectural buildings: houses with porches in developed Neolithic, with pillar walls of netting in clay and clay floors. Along with an increasingly complex spiritual life, the spread of the cult of the Mother Goddess and then of fertility and fecundity, religious buildings occurs, i.e. the sanctuary. We could further see how in the future great Neolithic period – of the Eneolithic (Chalcolithic) – the evolution will grow into a true science of territorial organisation applied to the disposition of houses and their buildings; as far as religious buildings are concerned, there is the large sanctuary with monumental architecture (Cucuteni culture). However, we leave the issue for future research.

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