

## The study of the archaeozoological remains found in pit no 3, containing human skulls from Cârcea-*Viaduct*, Starčevo-Criș culture

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**Rezumat:** Groapa de cult cuprinde diverse tipuri de ceramică, inclusiv idoli, trei cranii umane aparținând unor femele cu tipologie mediteranoidă și 100 resturi animaliere provenind de la două specii de bovidee: *Bos taurus* și *Bos primigenius*. S-a realizat un studiu morfologic și biometric al acestor resturi. S-a constatat că resturile au fost depuse doar sub formă de fragmente osoase, de tip menajer; este posibil ca și craniile umane să fi fost depuse sub formă de capete întregi.

**Cuvinte cheie:** neolitic, arheozoologie, groapă cultică, ceramică, cranii umane, resturi de animale.

**Keywords:** Neolithic, zooarchaeology, cultic pit, ceramics, human skulls, animal remains.

The bony material on which is centered this article was given to us in order to be analyzed by Marin Nica, the archaeologist who discovered it in 1995, during the diggings in the well known settlement in the south-east of Craiova, the Cârcea-*Viaduct*. The well-known archaeologist offered us the following written archaeological data: the bony material was discovered in pit no. 3, pit that belongs to the Cârcea IIIc phase; the pit had an oval form (4,75 x 2,75 m) and of 0,50 m depth, being placed on a terrace of Cârcea brook (M. Nica *et alii* 1996). He also sent a drawing and a photography of the pit (fig. 1). There were ceramic fragments, polychrome painted, housing vessels some of them in miniature, two praying tables, idols, even tools, in the pit, all of them in great quantity. What is of very great importance for us is the revealing of three human skulls at about 80 cm from each other surrounded by a great quantity of animal bony fragments; on one side there was another pile of animal bones. We mention that the three skulls were placed in line, north – south direction.

Before presenting the archaeozoological data, we must say that the anthropological material was given for analysis to the well known anthropologist from Iasi, Dan Botezatu, who analyzed it but did not published and who was kind enough to let us present only those characteristics of archaeological interest.

The skulls are not integer anymore; for two individuals there is the upper part of the neuroskull that is called calva by the anthropologists, a fragment that it could have been studied properly. Only some small fragments have been preserved for the third individual.

The first skull came from a female individual, an adult of 25-30 years old, belonging to the mediterranean type, with slight protoeuropean characteristics (developed malare). It also presents a metopic suture and postbregmatic distortion, due to a ligature caused by a tight hood wore during lifetime that resulted in a constriction of the 8 – 10 cm anterior part of the parietal bones going almost to the interparietal suture.

The second skull comes also from a 20-25 years female, so an adult, of a more pregnant mediterranean type than the first.

The third skull is very fragmentary so no significant part could be reconstructed; it could be an infans II as age, and possible a female. So all the three skulls discovered in pit no. 3 came from female individuals of mediterranean type, the dominant type for the Neolithic.

The fauna remains are represented by mammal bony fragments and even more, they come from only two species: a domesticated one, *Bos taurus* (the bull), and a wild one, *Bos primigenius* (the aurochs), the cattle ancestors disappeared by now. The material is very fragmentary, no integer long bones (except the phalanxes), the tears resulting from slaughtering being similar to the other Neo-eneolithic settlements. On one of the I phalanxes there are slight cutting marks, maybe as a result of using some silex tools for skinning. We can observe the extraction of the red marrow in the superior and inferior epiphysis of the femur bone and the tibia superior part. One astragal coming from *Bos taurus* and one from *Bos primigenius* are partly polished. On the I phalanx coming from cattle there are no such protuberances on the dyaphysis indicating the cattle usage for work. No selection of the bony fragments have been made, being thrown fragments coming from different parts of a standard mammalian skeleton (clearly evidenced in table 1). For *Bos primigenius*, with little fragments, this aspect is less pregnant,

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having only parts of the skeleton placed at random. We also should mention that there are no burn marks.

Three horn axes, two better preserved and one sagittally sectioned belonging almost certain to female individuals of *Bos taurus* have been found. The bones evidentiate a relatively strong sexual dimorphism, both with male and female (see table 2). It is almost certain that there were no gelded individuals. Both morphological and by measurements we can ascertain that the cattle were high-sized, specific for the Romanian Neolithic and based on a fragment of a forehead bone of primigenius type.

The 100 bony fragments are divided between bulls with 88 fragments (coming from at least 6 individuals) and aurochs with only 12 fragments (2 individuals). The last being wild and difficult to be hunted has a rather high frequency for the bony material in the pit (see table 3).

It is known that the cattle used to have the highest frequency of the mammalian fragments in the Neo-Eneolithic settlements, and somehow ranking first in the domesticated species; they were also the highest and the most massive domesticated species. We must say that this species was not chosen on purpose to be deposited in the pit, considering those 88 bony fragments of domesticated animals there should also have been at least one or two fragments coming from pigs or *Ovicaprinae*. The same thing is available for the aurochs too (hunting had a well defined position in the Neo-eneolithic economy), which used to have a lower frequency than the red deer or the wild boar whose fragments are also not to be found among the animal remains in the pit.

We must state that the depositing of animal remains in the pit together with the three human skulls was a matter of human choice, the fragments belonging only to two species: *Bos taurus* and *Bos primigenius*, very similar species, the aurochs being as we said before then ancestor of the cattle. Even more, the fragments came from both male and female individuals, adults and matures, sometimes almost old (more than 10 years old) the youth missing. There was no preference for a certain fragment, all the bones of a mammalian skeleton being found in the pit as we said before. We must take into consideration the way the animal remains have been deposited. We suppose they have been deposited after slaughtering and eventually after removing the meat.

As regarding the skulls, as we showed before, only parts of them have been preserved, the calva, so it is impossible to establish if they were deposited as a whole (both skull and mandible) or only parts of them. It is also impossible to say if they used to be deposited not as human skulls but as human heads whose soft tissues have disappeared in time without leaving any trace. In conclusion, we must say that pit no. 3 is a typical cult pit, with both sacrificed animal and human fragments (V. Cotiugă, S. Haimovici 2004). We observe that there were two types of cult, the one of human skulls and the one of the cattle, the *Bos* gender (including both the domesticated and the wild species), both male and female individuals.

Judging from the found animal bony fragments we may say how the specific environment was, during the Post glacial climate optimum, the Atlantic period.

The nowadays deforested area used to be covered by forests with *Quercus* then thermophile oaks including some other trees. These clear forests with many clearings which are supposed to have changed into the later silvostepa, was the optimum environment for *Bos primigenius*, and the domesticated cattle that used to live free and not in shelters like they do it now.

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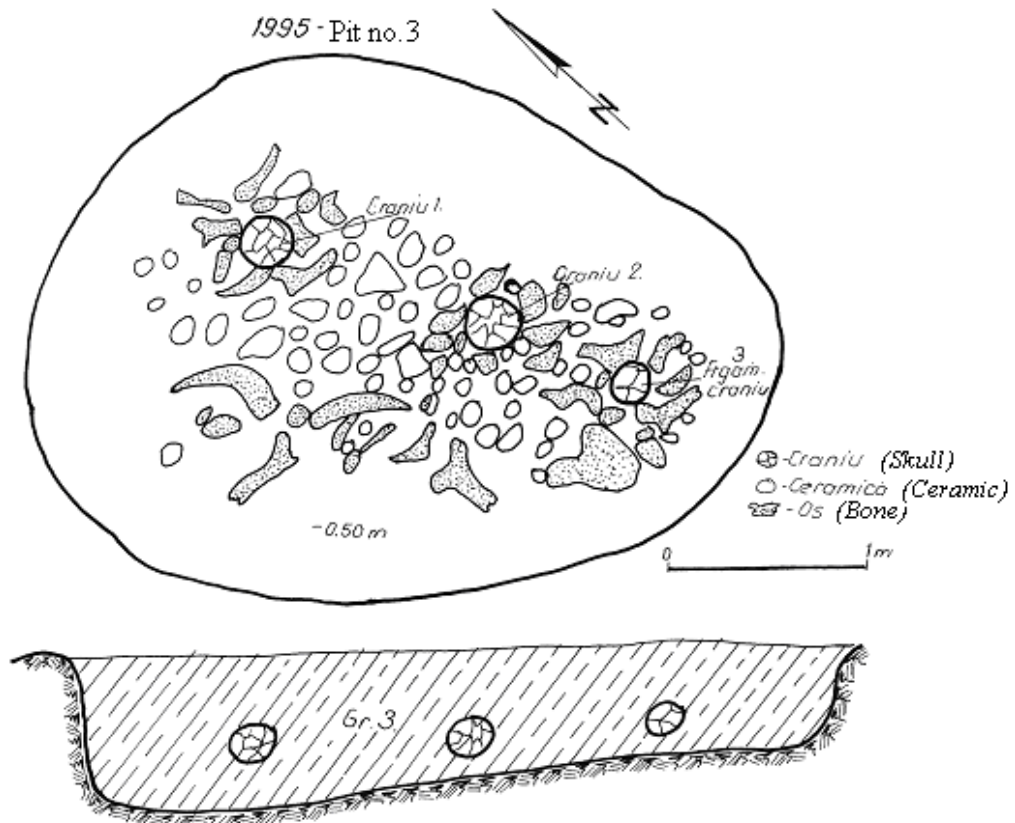


Fig. 1. Cârcea-Viaduct. The pit no. 3.  
Cârcea-Viaduct. Groapa nr. 3.

Table 1. The distribution upon skeletal parts.  
Distribuția pe elemente scheletice.

<b>Bone fragments</b>	<b><i>Bos taurus</i></b>	<b><i>Bos primigenius</i></b>	<b>Total</b>
Horn cores	3		<b>3</b>
Neurocranium	2		<b>2</b>
Splahnocranium	1		<b>1</b>
Maxillary	1	1	<b>2</b>
Upper teeth	2	1	<b>3</b>
Mandible	2		<b>2</b>
Vertebrae	6		<b>6</b>
Ribs	10		<b>10</b>
Scapula	8		<b>8</b>
Humerus	7	1	<b>8</b>
Radius	6	1	<b>7</b>
Cubitus	1		<b>1</b>
Coxal	15		<b>15</b>
Femur	3		<b>3</b>
Tibia	5	1	<b>6</b>
Talus	3	1	<b>4</b>
Calcaneus	1		<b>1</b>
Metacarpals	3		<b>3</b>
Metatarsals	1		<b>1</b>
Metapodials	2		<b>2</b>
Phalanx 1	2	2	<b>4</b>
Phalanx 2	2	3	<b>5</b>
Phalanx 3	2	1	<b>3</b>
<b>Total fragments</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 2. *Bovinae*. The variability and the media of measurements.  
*Bovinae*. Domeniul de variație și media măsurătorilor.

Bone fragment	Measurements	<i>Bos taurus</i>			<i>Bos primigenius</i>		
		Nr.	Var.	Average	Nr.	Var.	Average
HORN CORES	1.Greatest diamter at base	2	60; 64	-	-	-	-
	2.Smallest diamter at base	2	53; 62	-	-	-	-
	3.Base circumferince	2	176; 202	-	-	-	-
	Ind 2x100/1	-	88,3; 96,9	-	-	-	-
UPPER TEETH	M <sup>3</sup> length	-	28	-	-	32	-
MANDIBLE	premolar length	-	52	-	-	-	-
	M <sup>3</sup> length	-	-	-	-	42	-
SCAPULA	Greatest length of artic head	1	74	-	-	-	-
	Artic. surface length	1	64	-	-	-	-
	Breath of colum	1	60	-	-	-	-
HUMERUS	Distal breadth	5	83-97	90,60	1	114	-
	Distal artic. surface breadth	5	78-89	83,00	1	103	-
RADIUS	Proximal breath	1	85	-	1	102	-
	Proximal artic. surface breadth	1	79	-	1	94	-
	Distal breadth	2	57; 63	-	-	-	-
ULNA	Artic. surface breadth	1	58	-	-	-	-
FEMUR	Proximal breath	1	(119)	-	-	-	-
TIBIA	Proximal breath	-	-	-	1	107	-
	Distal breadth	5	61-65	63,60	-	-	-
	Distal artic. surface breadth	5	54-61	57,00	-	-	-
CALCANEUS	Greatest length	1	139	-	-	-	-
	Greatest breadth	1	49	-	-	-	-
TALUS	Greatest length	3	69-77	73,00	1	83	-
	Distal breadth	3	42-52	45,66	1	55	-
METACARPUS	Distal breadth	1	63	-	-	-	-
PHALANX 1	Greatest length	1	73	-	2	78; 82	-
	Proximal breath	1	42	-	2	44; 44	-
	Smallest diaphysis	1	37	-	2	38; 39	-
	Gracility ind.	1	50,68	-	2	46,3; 50,0	-
PHALANX 2	Greatest length	2	49; 52	-	3	55-58	56,66
	Proximal breath	2	33; 36	-	3	39-41	40,00
	Smallest diaphysis	2	27; 29	-	3	32-35	33,66
	Gracility ind.	2	55,1; 55,8	-	3	58,2-60,4	59,38
PHALANX 3	Plantar length	2	(81); 85	-	1	94	-
	Plantar breadth	2	34; 40	-	1	42	-
	Artic. Surface breadth .	2	32; 34	-	1	35	-

Table 3. The frequency of that two species.  
Frecvența celor două specii.

Species	Fragments	
	Nr. absolut	%
<i>Bos taurus</i>	88	88
<i>Bos primigenius</i>	12	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>