

EARLY NEOLITHIC BURIALS FROM GRUMĂZEȘTI – DELENI, NEAMȚ COUNTY, ROMANIA

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Abstract: Human skeletal remains of at least three individuals were unearthed during excavations at the Early Neolithic site of Grumăzești – Deleni in northeast Romania (Moldova region) between 1968 and 1978. They comprise the articulated skeleton of an adult buried in a crouched position (M1), and the disarticulated remains of another adult and a juvenile found together in another part of the site and interpreted by the principal excavator, S. Marinescu-Bîlcu, as a disturbed burial (referred to here as M2/1–2). The human remains are described and analysed in terms of state of preservation, age-at-death, sex, stature and pathology. Results of radiocarbon dating and carbon and nitrogen stable isotope analysis of bone collagen from M1 and radiocarbon dates on herbivore bones from the site are presented and discussed.

Cuvinte-cheie: neolitic timpuriu, România, mormânt, ¹⁴C, izotopi stabili

Rezumat: Cercetările arheologice din situl de la Grumăzești – Deleni din nordul României, realizate între 1968 și 1978, au pus în evidență existența unor resturi osteologice umane de la cel puțin trei indivizi. Primul dintre aceștia, M1, era reprezentat de un schelet în conexiune anatomică, descoperit în poziția chirchit pe partea stângă. Resturile fragmentare atribuite altor doi indivizi (denumite în acest articol M2/1–2, un adult și un juvenil) provin dintr-un context diferit, fiind interpretate de autorul cercetării arheologice, S. Marinescu-Bîlcu drept un mormânt deranjat de o amenajare ulterioară. Lucrarea de față face o analiză descriptivă a stării de conservare a resturilor osteologice, determinarea vârstei, sexului și staturii, precum și a patologiilor identificate pe resturile osteologice prezente. Analiza antropologică este însoțită de o discuție asupra datelor de radiocarbon realizate pe probe prelevate de la M1 și două erbivore de talie mare. Pentru M1 au fost realizat și studiul izotopilor stabili de C și N.

INTRODUCTION

The Early Neolithic site of Grumăzești – Deleni (Neamț County, 47°09'19" N, 26°24'42" E, Fig. 1) was discovered by Silvia Marinescu-Bîlcu in 1966, while excavating the nearby Cucuteni settlement at Târpești. Five excavation seasons were conducted by Silvia Marinescu Bîlcu and Alexandra Bolomey in 1968, 1971, 1972, 1977 and 1978. Twenty trenches (*secțiune*) with a combined area of 323 m² were excavated. The results of the excavations were presented in a series of publications, the most important being those by Marinescu-Bîlcu (1975; 1993) and Boroneanț (2012). Cultural remains belonging to the Early Neolithic (Starčevo-Criș culture), Middle Bronze Age (Komariv and Noua cultures) and the Migration Period (3rd and 4th centuries AD) were uncovered. Early Neolithic features and finds were recorded more or less across the entire area investigated, while Bronze Age finds were concentrated in the southern part of the site. The following stratigraphic sequence was reported by Boroneanț (2012):

1. Surface vegetal soil with a maximum thickness of

30 cm, heavily affected by agriculture, and with mixed archaeological finds;

2. Dark brown soil with very few finds, mostly dating to the 3rd and 4th centuries AD;
3. Light brown soil containing mainly Early Neolithic and some Noua culture finds;
4. Yellow clayey soil, archaeologically sterile.

Subsequent investigations of Grumăzești – Deleni have been concerned with establishing the spatial extent of the site by means of archaeological and geomagnetic surveys (Diaconu 2012) and the provenance of obsidian used for making chipped stone artefacts (Boroneanț *et alii* 2018).

The Early Neolithic finds comprise large quantities of pottery, chipped and polished stone tools, a few ground stone tools, rare osseous tools, charcoal (collected for ¹⁴C dating) and Early Neolithic human remains¹. Thirteen features were associated with the Early Neolithic (Fig. 2): six (L1, L2, L3, G6, F1, F2) were likely dwelling structures, three (F21, F25, F26) were considered to be pit features, one (F24) was interpreted as a lithic workshop, and one (F6) is of uncertain function (see below). A formal human burial (M1) was uncovered in Trench IV, while remains of a possible second human burial (M2) were observed in Trench II.

¹ Most of the Grumăzești archaeological material is now in the storage facilities of the "Vasile Pârvan" Institute of Archaeology in Bucharest.