



INTERACTIONS, **CHANGES** AND **MEANINGS.**

Essays in honour of Igor Manzura
on the occasion of his 60th birthday

Edited by
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2016



КУЛЬТУРНЫЕ ВЗАИМОДЕЙСТВИЯ. **ДИНАМИКА** **И СМЫСЛЫ.**

Сборник статей в честь 60-летия И. В. Манзуры

*Под редакцией
Станислава Церны и Благое Говедарицы*

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60-летию
Игоря Васильевича Манзуры
посвящается

Dedicated to 60th anniversary of Igor V. Manzura



Manz

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C.-E. Ursu

Precucuteni — a culture or a chronological horizon?

Keywords: Precucuteni, Cucuteni A, chronological horizon

Ключевые слова: Прекукутень, Кукутень А, хронологический горизонт

C.-E. Ursu

Precucuteni — a culture or a chronological horizon?

Basing on a compact analysis of the Precucuteni dwellings' construction, evolution of ceramics, anthropomorphic representations and funerary rites, the author finds inappropriate the term of „Precucuteni culture”, spread in Romanian archaeology, pointing rather to a linear evolution between Precucuteni and Cucuteni A stages. Thus, Precucuteni is rather a distinctive chronological horizon within Precucuteni-Ariuşd-Cucuteni/Trypolie Cultural Complex, with three evolutionary phases. Consequently, this article brings arguments in favour of using the term „Precucuteni chronological horizon” as part of Precucuteni-Ariuşd-Cucuteni/Trypolie Cultural Complex, which corresponds, generally, to phase Trypolie A (according to Passek's periodization).

К.-Э. Урсу

Прекукутень — культура или хронологический горизонт?

Основываясь на кратком обзоре способов постройки жилищ, эволюции керамического комплекса, антропоморфных изображений и погребального обряда, автор находит неуместным дальнейшее использование распространенного в румынской археологии понятия «культура Прекукутень». Скорее, речь идет о процессе линейного развития от этапа Прекукутень к этапу Кукутень А. Следовательно, Прекукутень следует рассматривать в качестве отдельного горизонта с тремя фазами развития в рамках культурного комплекса Прекукутень-Ариушд-Кукутень/Триполье. В статье представлены аргументы в пользу использования понятия «хронологический горизонт Прекукутень», как часть культурного комплекса Прекукутень-Ариушд-Кукутень/Триполье, в целом соответствующего фазе Триполье А (по периодизации Пассек).

In 1899, following the discovery of the archaeological site with the same name in 1893 (Monah et al. 1997: 23), historian Vikentii V. Hvoiko published a report titled „*Kamennyj vek Srednego Podneprov'ja*” (Дослідження 2006, I: 41—72), detailing his discoveries, which, he claimed, revealed a “Neolithic culture”. The Ukrainian researcher compared every known Trypillian discovery in Ukraine and then categorized them as a new, separate subject within the recognized field of archaeology (Пассек 1949: 7). At the same time, the Ukrainian researcher claimed that the clay floors could not have been part of Neolithic dwellings, because “it is not about the material side of life, but rather about its spiritual one”, theory which led him to believe that the floors themselves were to be looked at as places “with a sacred destination — even sanctuaries”, associated with funerary rites (Пассек 1949: 8). Attempting to establish a chronology

for Trypillian sites, Hvoiko separated the floored “monuments” into two Neolithic cultures: “culture A” and “culture B”, the later being the eldest, due to the more primitive characteristics of its ceramics (actually, “culture A” coincides with phase Cucuteni A, and “culture B” with phase Cucuteni B) (Пассек 1949: 8; Marinescu-Bîlcu 1974: 11; Дослідження 2006, I: 68—70). Later on, in 1913, Hvoiko adds another phase, which includes the incised and string decorated ceramics discovered in huts (known today as type “C” ceramics). Thus, he classified the Neolithic culture into three stages: the oldest one (the hut culture), “culture B” and “culture A” (Пассек 1949: 22; Marinescu-Bîlcu, 1974: 11; Дослідження 2006, I: 147—153).

In 1906, Ernst von Stern talked about how, “based on purely stylistic criteria, the ceramics decorated with deep incisions, with comb impressions and by using an ornamental circle, found on

Trypillian sites in the area between the Dniester and Dnieper rivers, must be regarded as dating before the polychromatic ceramics discovered in the same area (Dumitrescu 1963: 53 and note 1; Marinescu-Bîlcu 1974: 12 and note 10). In 1927, while analysing the decorated ceramics in Eastern Europe, Vladimir Dumitrescu mentions, in his chronological table, a Trypolie A phase — characterised by a deeply incised decoration, prior to Cucuteni A phase (Dumitrescu 1927: 307). In his review on Vladimir Dumitrescu's paper, Ion Nestor confuted the theory according to which there would have been another phase, i.e. characterized by incised ceramics, prior to the painted one, claiming that the categorization is merely "a methodological error, since, up to this point, no known all-incised ceramics has been found in a Trypolie A settlement" (Marinescu-Bîlcu 1974: 12 and note 9).

In 1935, Tatiana Passek separated the Trypillian culture in phases A (old, primitive stage), B, C and γ , stating that since the end of stage B₁, two separate evolutionary trends are distinguished: B₁ → B₂ → C and B₁ → γ_1 → γ_2 (Passek 1935: 127—128 and „Schéma de classification de la céramique tripolienne”); V. Dumitrescu criticised severely her paper, saying that she used only bibliographic references published up to 1930 (disregarding Hubert Schmidt's monograph on his researches at Cucuteni), and that she erroneously placed numerous ceramic vessels in Trypolie A stage, etc. (Dumitrescu 1941: 455—456). The Russian researcher reviews her paper on the Trypillian civilization in 1949, when she regards the culture as a whole, and, consequently, establishes the periodization still used, with some small changes, to this day; thus, Tatiana Passek makes the following five-stages classification of the Trypillian civilization: A, BI, BII, CI/ γ_1 and CII/ γ_2 (Пасек 1949: 30—31); at the same time, the last phase of Pre-Cucuteni culture is considered to be the first stage in Trypolie civilisation (Dumitrescu 1963: 53).

Following the excavations he undertook in 1936 at Izvoare (jud. Neamț), Radu Vulpe presented his finds in Oslo, mentioning for the first time the term “Precucuteni level”, i.e. a settlement on top of which a Cucuteni one was built (Vulpe 1937: 134, note 1; Vulpe 1957: 11); henceforth, the term will define this cultural sequence within the Romanian territory.

Studying the Precucuteni ceramics excavated at Traian-Dealul Fântânilor, Vladimir Dumitrescu claims that it is “definitely older and belongs to an earlier phase (than the painted ceramics phase –A.N.), in fact belonging to an entirely different civilization” ((Vulpe 1937: 134, note 1; Vulpe 1957: 11).

The discoveries at Traian-Dealul Viei from 1951 were a turning point in the study of Pre-Cucuteni culture; the first Precucuteni phase (Marinescu-Bîlcu 1974: 109—113), originally named by Hortensia Dumitrescu “Zănești culture” (Dumitrescu H. 1954: 51; the entire subject matter is debated by Marinescu-Bîlcu 1974: 109—113), would be extensively debated in every specialized publication. The above mentioned researcher reviews the issue of the discoveries from the first Precucuteni phase in 1957, when she abandons the term “Zănești culture”, arguing that the phase in question is in fact a first phase of Precucuteni culture (Dumitrescu H. 1957: 63). Later on, in 1967, Zoltán Székely catalogues the finds from his survey at Ereteghin as belonging to the first Precucuteni phase (Székely 1967: 75—92).

In 1960, Valentin M. Danilenko claims that Trypolie A and Boian-Giulești are, in fact, parallel cultural horizons, while Precucuteni and Trypolie A are different cultures (Burdo 2005: 75). He will detail the subject later, in 1969, in a paper on Precucuteni-Trypolie A culture, which he divides into local types, based on local development traditions, progressing from west to east (Burdo 2005: 75).

In 1961, in a paper on the finds from Larga Jijia, Alexandrina Alexandrescu places the settlement in question in Precucuteni II phase (Александреску 1961, *passim*).

In an article from 1963, while discussing the origins and evolution of Cucuteni-Trypillian culture, Vladimir Dumitrescu argues that “it is more suitable to talk about a Cucuteni-Trypillian *cultural complex* when it also includes the Precucuteni culture and all its phases, and refer to Cucuteni-Trypillian specifically and exclusively as a *culture*, if it involves the earlier phases defined by painted decorations in ceramics” (Dumitrescu 1963: 53). At the same time, while debating “Precucuteni culture”, the researcher mentions that “arguably, we can distinguish three separate phases”: the first is defined by the archaeological finds from Traian-Dealul Viei, the second, by the discoveries at Izvoare I₁ and Larga Jijia, and the third by the finds from level Izvoare I₂ and Traian-Dealul Fântânilor (Dumitrescu 1963: 53). This division into three main evolutionary phases will be used, with the addition of new information for each individual stage, by every researcher concerned with the periodization of Precucuteni culture (Marinescu-Bîlcu 1974; Маркевич 1974; Petrescu-Dîmbovița 1978; Черныш 1982; Погожева 1983; Comșa 1987; Збенович 1989; Petrescu-Dîmbovița et al. 1995; Ursulescu 2000; Burdo 2005; Ursulescu, Boghian, Cotiugă 2005). In the same study, V. Dumitrescu also adds that

the “data gathered so far regarding Mid and Late Neolithic in Moldavia, allow us to argue that, as we have stated before, there is a direct genetic and chronological connection between the final Precucuteni phase and the oldest Cucuteni find. However, it is precisely the fact that the ceramics painted *before* firing is missing from Precucuteni culture (only the crude red decorations, applied after firing, are known to date) that is considered an indisputable proof for asserting the theory that, while most of the fundamental decorative motifs and forms which define the Cucuteni culture are based on Precucuteni ones, the technique of painting an object before firing, a superior technique for that matter, and the firing method itself, i.e. in an oxidizing atmosphere, in kilns designed to withstand high temperatures (up to 900°C), were embraced later on, under foreign influence” (Dumitrescu 1963: 60).

The argument according to which between Precucuteni and Cucuteni there is only a linear evolution, is based on a few arguments, briefly presented below: the dwellings’ construction systems, the special ceramic vessels, the anthropomorphic representations and funerary rites, all of them fundamental elements which make the difference between one stage and the other, and between one culture or another.

Thus, *the dwellings were constructed using several techniques*, which prove a linear evolution:

Dwellings with foundations and post holes.

A more basic structure of these types of dwellings was discovered as early as Precucuteni I, at Baia-În Muchie (L3) (Урсу, Церна 2015: 288—292, fig. 5/2, 6; Ursu, Țerna 2015: 49), but they become more and more complex in Precucuteni II and III [Isaiia (Ursulescu et al. 2002: 15; Ursulescu, Tencariu 2007: 133, fig. 3, 5—6)], Ariușd phase [Malnaș Băi (László 2007: 104, fig. 2), Păuleni (Kavruk et al. 2007: 362)] and Cucuteni A [Hoiești (Ursulescu et al. 2003: 7; Bodi 2010: 34—36)]; other post holes, which might proof the existence of this type of dwellings, were discovered at Drăgușeni, Dobreni, Leț, Olteni, Poduri, Fetești-La Schit (Lazarovici, Lazarovici 2006: 183 and bibliography).

Floored dwellings. A floor made from a bed of branches and leaves, covered with a net of reed and twigs, for extra support, laid on top with a layer of clay mixed with straws and chaff, of about 10—12 cm thick, was discovered at Traian-Dealul Viei, Precucuteni I (Marinescu-Bîlcu 1974: 25). A floor, partially covered with splint trunks of trees, was discovered at Eresteghin (Székely 1967: 76, fig. 2), a site from the same

archaeological phase. At Isaiia, phase II, another dwelling (D3) was found, this time covered with a thick (about 10—14 cm) clay floor (Lazarovici, Lazarovici 2006: 556). Incomplete floors, considered to be sleeping places, similar to those found at Traian-Dealul Viei, are found in some of the dwellings at Târpești (D3, D8, D14, D16), phase III (Marinescu-Bîlcu 1981: 25). However, since phase III, new types of floors are discovered, namely floors covering the entire surface of the hut, made from split trunks of trees, 20 to 25 cm in diameter, the splitting facing downwards, on top of which a coat of clay [just clay, like at Tg. Frumos — D8 and 11 (Ursulescu, Cotiugă 1998: 77; Ursulescu et al. 2000: 106—107; Boghian et al. 2002: 314; Ursulescu, Boghian, Cotiugă 2006: 3—23)], or clay mixed with straw and sand [Chiperești (Iconomu, Ciudin 1993: 15—16, fig. 2), Târpești (Marinescu-Bîlcu 1981: 25)], or clay mixed with leaves, pebble and broken snail shells [Traian-Dealul Fântânilor (Marinescu-Bîlcu 1974: 32)], was laid: the layers are between 10 and 25 cm thick (Lazarovici, Lazarovici 2006: 557). The floors covering the entire surface of the buildings will evolve in Cucuteni A (Ursulescu, Tencariu 2007: 131—132 and bibliography). Without getting into much detail, it must be mentioned that sizes, shapes and heating systems of many buildings will have a linear evolution since Precucuteni up to Cucuteni A.

As for the *ceramics*, a few elements turn out to be decisive: the clay, the firing, the decorations and the forms.

Types of paste and firing techniques. The three main types of clay used in making pottery, i.e. fine (homogenous), semi-fine (mixed with grog as a degreaser), and coarse (clay mixed with grog, sand, pebble, sometimes broken shells), are all utilized from Precucuteni III up to Cucuteni A (for comparison: Dumitrescu et al. 1954: 277, 309, 386; Marinescu-Bîlcu 1974: 75; Marinescu-Bîlcu 1981: 30, 58—60; Marinescu-Bîlcu 1989: 216; Marinescu-Bîlcu, Bolomey 2000: 117—119; Sorochin 2002: 158—159, 162; Ursulescu, Ignătescu 2003: 52, 58, 80; Petrescu-Dîmbovița et al., 1999, p. 266, 313; Petrescu-Dîmbovița, Văleanu 2004: 156, 161; Lazarovici, Lazarovici 2012: 209—210, 214). The firing technique progresses from an incomplete one, in a reducing atmosphere, resulting in shades of black and greyish-black {see the ceramics from phase Ariușd, at Poduri [late Precucuteni III—Cucuteni A₁ (Monah et al. 2003: 36—37) and Cucuteni A₂] or from Drăgușeni}, brownish-grey, brown and brownish-yellow, to firing in an oxidizing atmosphere, which results in a red colour.

Decorum. The way in which a decoration was added to a ceramic object, be it incised or paint-

ed, is also progressing, as the incisions are slowly substituted by the paint. In the western part of the region inhabited by the people of Precucuteni-Cucuteni/Trypolie Cultural Complex, Cucuteni A phase still preserved the incised, relief or channel decorated pottery; however, in the eastern part, this type of decoration is used until the final phases of the culture. Generally speaking, the symmetry of the decorum follows a certain pattern, both in Precucuteni [ever since phase one (Marinescu-Bîlcu 1974: 56)] and in Cucuteni (Dumitrescu 1979: 19). The “band ornamentation” used in the decorum of painted Cucuteni ceramics is a natural continuation of the incised decoration utilized in Precucuteni phases ((Dumitrescu 1979: 20). The main motifs, i.e. lines, spirals, angles, dots, are used from Precucuteni to Cucuteni A, even if the technique differs (be it incision or painting); thus, incisions combined with dots, channels rendered around prominences, wide channels, spiralling lines, running spirals (and their derivatives — tangents to a circle), lines incised in white painting, short lines interwoven with an incised line, etc. (Marinescu-Bîlcu 1974: 75—76; Marinescu-Bîlcu 1989: 218—219; Sorochin 2002: 165; Lazarovici, Lazarovici 2010: 86), they all evolve as decorative motifs from Precucuteni to Cucuteni A. The motif called „*horror vacui*”, one of the dominating elements in the decorum of Cucuteni ceramics, also originates in Precucuteni (Marinescu-Bîlcu 1974: 86). At the same time, the positive and negative ornamentation, characterized by a sketched decorum, will be passed on from Precucuteni to Cucuteni (Marinescu-Bîlcu 1974: 86; Dumitrescu 1968: 35). Therefore, one can notice a gradual transfer of decorating techniques, from applying two colours (Ariușd, Bonțești, Frumușica, Izvoare) to three colours (Dumitrescu 1963: 59—60) (more commonly used since Cucuteni A₃ phase). The study Gheorghe Lazarovici and Cornelia-Magda Lazarovici undertook on the ceramics discovered at Poduri-Dealul Ghindaru, level VII (Precucuteni III—Cucuteni A₁), shows that the decorative motifs turn out to be quite identical in some case, even if the decorating technique might differ (i.e. painting or incision) (Lazarovici, Lazarovici 2010: 72—73, fig. 69). Phases Cucuteni A₃ and A₄ use decorative motifs from Precucuteni III, but the techniques vary from a three-coloured painting to a two-coloured one, sometimes associated with ornamental channels (particularly in phase Drăgușeni-Jura); as for the motifs used for decorating objects made from coarse clay, such as alveolar belts, prominences, vertical incisions, etc., they will follow a linear evolution.

Forms. A brief typological analysis of ceramic forms shows that they had a linear evolu-

tion from Precucuteni to Cucuteni A (Boghian 2004: 111). Thus, the custom of cup-making in Precucuteni is transferred to Cucuteni, starting as early as phase I (bithronconical cups were discovered at Traian-Dealul Viei). Many objects have a linear evolution from Precucuteni III to Cucuteni A: pear-shaped vessels, stem-less cups, globular vessels, bithronconical vessels with flared rims, lids with knobs, semi-spherical and truncated cone-shaped bowls, stemmed bowls, two-storey vessels, lids, etc.

As for the unusual vessels, the main ones to consider are the anthropomorphic ones and the “hora-type stems, with human silhouettes”. Anthropomorphic vessels are used since Precucuteni III (one object, found at Ruseștii Noi I (Маркевич 1970: fig. 14/1), was both painted and incised), and they continue to be used, quite rarely though, up to Cucuteni B (Monah 2012: 175—179). The “hora-type stems, with human silhouettes” are used since Precucuteni III, up to Cucuteni A (Monah 2012: 184—186), most of them discovered during the A₂ (Monah 2012: 186) stage. In fact, other types of anthropomorphic stems have the same linear evolution since Precucuteni and Cucuteni (Monah 2012: 181—182), as is the case of the human-faced vessels (Monah 1991: 302—303; Monah 2012: 179).

The anthropomorphic representations, associated with the spiritual life of the above mentioned prehistoric communities, evolve greatly in terms of ornamentation, which is richer in Cucuteni A. As for the sizes of the objects, there is a natural continuation from Precucuteni, most of the anthropomorphic statuettes being as high as 8 up to 25 cm. The incised statuettes have an obvious evolution till the end of phase Cucuteni A; within this context, an interesting aspect is the evolution of the decorative rhombus belt rendered on the belly of the statuettes, a decorative technique which emerges in phase Precucuteni II and only evolves up to Cucuteni A₄ (Ursu 2015: 423). The painted decorum is relatively rare, both in Precucuteni (starting with phase II), and in Cucuteni A; we argue that the painted representation is part of the evolution process, even if we agree with Dan Monah who claims that “there is no clear evidence of the existence of a technical and decorative continuation between the painted statuettes from Precucuteni and those from Cucuteni”, as it is clear “that some of the links connecting the painted representations in Precucuteni and those in Cucuteni are missing” (Monah 2012: 108—109).

The position of the anthropomorphic representations is somewhat different: in Cucuteni A the statuettes are rendered mostly “standing”

(Dumitrescu 1979: 74; Monah 2012: 95), although traces of rendering a “seated” silhouette, not just a “standing” one, are prefigured from Precucuteni III. However, as Vladimir Dumitrescu claimed, “the classical manner of rendering an anthropomorphic statuette in this phase (Cucuteni A–A.N.) is the modified legacy of the type which originated in the final phases of Precucuteni” (Dumitrescu 1979: 74).

The funerary rites are still an enigma for all Precucuteni and Cucuteni phases, even if the data collected from the neighbouring living areas, for the same period of time, is quite clear regarding the issue. Human remains have been discovered at Tg. Frumos — pit 34, and Luka Vrublevetskaia — in a pit adjacent to the heart of hut 5 (both Precucuteni III-Trypolie A) and at Ariuşd, Bodeşti — *Frumuşica*, Mărgineni — *Cetăţuia*, Cucuteni-*Cetăţuia*, Hăbăşeşti and Drăguşeni — *Ostrov* (Cucuteni) (Lazarovici et al. 2003: 299–300 and bibliography). We argue that it is not by chance that one of the most important aspects of spiritual life is common for only two chronological horizons: Precucuteni and Cucuteni.

The above mentioned elements are joined by the linear evolutions of zoomorphic representations, the carved (the shape of the nucleus, blades, chips) (Păunescu 1970: 46, 54–55; Sorochin 2002: 157) and grinded (trapeze-shaped and perforated, hammer-like axes) (for comparison, for example: Marinescu-Bîlcu 1974: 41, fig. 20–21, 22/2–6,8; Petrescu-Dîmboviţa et al. 1999: 249, 256, fig. 154, 156–157, 158) stone objects, and the bone objects (several types of punchers, grubbing hoes, handles etc.).

The Russian, Ukrainian and Moldavian literature have a unitary way of approaching the two chronological horizons that the Romanian specialists called Precucuteni and Cucuteni, which is by integrating them within Trypolie culture (starting with Passek in 1949). As time went by, a series of Romanian researchers have touched upon the organic connections between the two cultures (Dumitrescu et al. 1954: 520, 534; Monah 1993: 151–153; Ursulescu 2007: 8–9, 12; Monah 2012: 25–26. Even more, Lazarovici, Lazarovici 2010: 86, when referring to the results of the research at Poduri, touch upon a terminology issue: “the term which would best describe the notion of a single civilization, is Precucuteni-Cucuteni-Trypolie.”). In recent years, the Romanian literature adopted the term Precucuteni-Cucuteni/Trypolie Cultural Complex (for example: Boghian, Enea 2013: 30–47; Heghea 2013: 161–168).

Within this context, considering the linear evolution of different aspects of material and spiritual life in Precucuteni and Cucuteni, we believe that, historically speaking, there cannot be a Precucuteni culture (apart from its archaeological perspective), but rather *a distinctive chronological horizon within Precucuteni-Cucuteni/Trypolie Cultural Complex, with three evolutionary phases*, of which the first is known in Romania alone (so far): Traian-Dealul Viei and Baia-În Muchie. As a result, we suggest that the term *Precucuteni chronological horizon, part of Precucuteni-Ariuşd-Cucuteni/Trypolie Cultural Complex*, should be used, which is generally equivalent to Trypolie A phase (based on Passek’s periodization).

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