

PREFACE

The decision to reassess and describe in detail the Peştera Muierii and its prehistoric and paleontological contents grew out of the documentation, at the beginning of the past decade, that the human remains from the Galeria Principală were indeed from the earlier Upper Paleolithic. Those few remains thereby became one of a very small number of samples of reasonably complete human fossils that documented the presence and biology of the earliest anatomically modern humans to occupy Europe. As such, they entered into the ongoing discussions regarding the establishment of early modern humans and, by extension, the demise of the Neandertals.

Yet, the Peştera Muierii presents more than just some rare remains of early modern humans. Its excavation in the 1950s yielded a substantial assemblage of Middle Paleolithic artifacts, a modest number of earlier Upper Paleolithic ones, a variety of Holocene archeological elements, a Bronze Age partial skeleton, and an abundance of Late Pleistocene and Holocene faunal remains. By combining our diverse areas of expertise, respectively in Paleolithic technology, Holocene bioarcheology and human paleontology, we have attempted to resurrect the available (published and unpublished) data from the excavations of the Peştera Muierii, reanalyze the available collections now scattered across various institutions in Romania, and place these findings into a broader context. This volume is the result.

As with any attempt to reassess material excavated at a time when documentation and curation of all specimens was not the accepted standard, there are limitations to what we have been able to do. In addition, the half-century of time and the changing people, politics and persuasions have resulted in the loss of a certain amount of information. Despite this attrition, we hope that the result presented here is a tribute to the people (and other vertebrates) who occupied the Peştera Muierii at various times from the middle of the Late Pleistocene to the early twentieth century and to those who tried to shed light on its prehistory since the late nineteenth century.

The reanalysis of the archeological and paleontological remains from the Peştera Muierii has been possible in large part thanks to our respective academic institutions and to the willingness

and hospitality of curators to allow us to study and, in a few cases, sample collections from the Peştera Muierii.

The Pleistocene human remains are curated in the Muzeul Olteniei and the Institutul de Speologie "Emil Racoviţă." Permission to study them was provided by Drs. Mihai Fifor and Ioan Povară respectively, and access was provided by Dr. Florin Ridiche at the former institution and by Drs. Emil Ştiucă, Silviu Constantin and Cătălin Petrea at the latter institution. The Bronze Age human remains are curated at the Institutul de Antropologie "Fr. J. Rainer," and additional Holocene human bones are in the collections of the Muzeul Olteniei.

The Pleistocene faunal remains that were sampled for radiocarbon dating and stable isotopic analysis are curated in the Muzeul Olteniei and the Institutul de Arheologie "Vasile Pârvan." The collections in the former institution were accessed courtesy of Dr. Aurelian Popescu.

The Middle Paleolithic archeological assemblages are curated in a variety of institutions, including the Muzeul Olteniei, the Muzeul Naţional de Istorie a României, the Muzeul Militar Naţional, and the Institutul de Arheologie "Vasile Pârvan." Dr. Florin Ridiche and Cristina Aftinescu provided access to the collections of the first institution.

Many of these individuals and others provided insights into the history of the analyses of the Peştera Muierii and its contents. Agata Olariu (National Institute for Physics and Nuclear Engineering) provided background information and chemical details on the original radiocarbon date of the Muierii 1 remains. H el ene Rougier (California State University) provided Late Pleistocene comparative cranial osteometrics and feedback on cranial variation. Roxana Dobrescu (Institutul de Arheologie "Vasile P arvan") and Jo o Zilh ao (University of Bristol) provided feedback on the Paleolithic and site interpretation. Marin C arciumaru (Universitatea "Valahia" T argovi te) furnished important publications. Adrian Lister (Natural History Museum, London) identified the *Aleo* molar. Alexandru Avram and Iulian B arzescu (Institutul de Arheologie "Vasile P arvan") deciphered and translated the Greek inscription from the Galeria Principal a. In addition,

many individuals and institutions, too numerous to detail, across Eurasia and in North America have provided ET with access to original fossil human remains, the data from which has been essential for the proper evaluation of the Muierii Pleistocene human fossils.

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