

Chapter 6

THE HOLOCENE ARCHEOLOGICAL REMAINS

Holocene archeological remains were discovered during excavations principally in the Gura Peșterii and the Galeria Principală during the 1950s, plus in the Gura Peșterii in 1929. They consist mainly of fragments of pottery and three metal objects. They can be dated technologically, stylistically and historically from the Early Neolithic to the present. The presence of a few fireplaces indicate a seasonal occupation of the cave or use of the cave in periods of danger. The post-Paleolithic levels have a thickness of about 0.50 m, and they were excavated and analyzed during the four principal archeological campaigns (1951 – 1953, and 1955).

The excavations during 1951 were made at the entrance of the cave (Gura Peșterii) in the uppermost level from 0.00 m to a depth of 0.60 m. The discoveries consisted of: 1) Coțofeni (Bronze Age) ceramics; 2) at a depth of 0.40 m a fireplace with Glina III (3,000 – 2,500 BC) pottery; 3) between 0.40 to 0.00 m some fragments of pottery from the first and second periods of the Iron Age, the Roman period (106 – 275 AD) (Popilian 1976), medieval period and modern Romanian times; and 5) in the east side of the excavation, at a depth of 0.10 m, a fireplace with Roman ceramics (wheel pottery) (Gheorghiu *et al.* 1954:80).

During the excavations of 1952 a partial skeleton was found in the Galeria Principală in the niche S, in a sedimentary level at 2.90 – 3.0 m depth (Chapter 8). Based on the ceramics, the skeleton was assigned to the Coțofeni culture. However, over the skeleton Dacian La Tène and modern ceramics had been discovered (Daicoviciu *et al.* 1953:203). In the same gallery were found a Coțofeni fireplace, many fragments of ceramics including Hallstatt / La Tène periods (handwork pottery and wheel pottery), and early twentieth century ceramics (from the first World War), in association with a modern fauna (cow, sheep, pig, dog, domestic birds, wild boar, chamois, and bats) (Daicoviciu *et al.* 1953:205-206).

The excavation discoveries from 1953 are missing from the published archeological reports, but there is information for the 1955 excavations (fig. 25 to 27). The digging continued at the Gura Peșterii, where the excavated superior level was from 0.50 to 0.00 m. The discoveries were mostly ceramics from

the Sălcuța culture (4,500 – 3,500 BC) (Lichter 2001:30, fig. 2), the Coțofeni culture (3,500 – 2,900 BC) (Oanță-Mărghitu 2006:86-87; 108), the Glina culture (3,000 – 2,500 BC) (Petrescu-Dîmbovița & Vulpe 2001:225, fig. 30, 236), the Hallstatt (1,400 – 450 BC) (Petrescu-Dîmbovița & Vulpe 2001:300, fig. 50) and La Tène (450 BC – 100 AD) cultures (Petrescu-Dîmbovița & Vulpe 2001:464-465), the late Medieval time, and the modern period (seventeenth to twentieth centuries). Two jewels from the La Tène period were also found (Nicolăescu-Plopșor *et al.* 1957:16). In the Transversal Section the Holocene level was located between approximately 0.25 – 0.30 m below the surface, and it contained ceramics from the Early Neolithic, the Coțofeni and Glina cultures, the La Tène period (including an iron curb bit), and Late Medieval period (Nicolăescu-Plopșor *et al.* 1957:20-21).

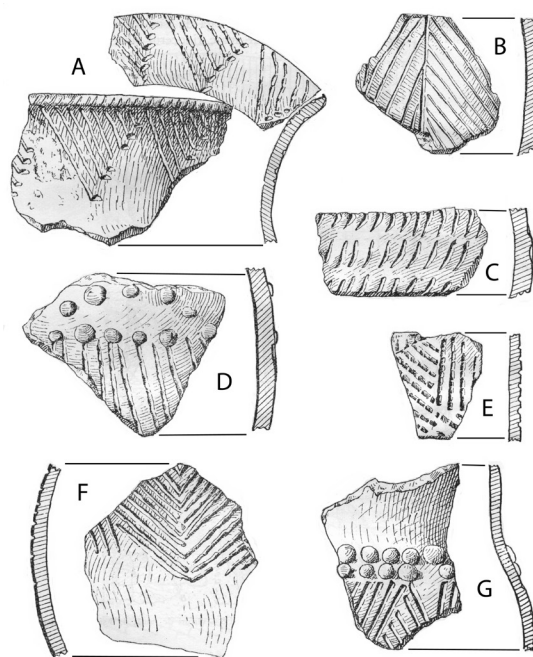


Figure 25 - Coțofeni ceramic remains from the 1955 excavations in the Gura Peșterii. Heights: A: 62 mm; B: 58 mm; C: 38 mm; D: 68 mm; E: 44 mm; F: 91 mm; G: 77. Modified from Nicolăescu-Plopșor *et al.* (1957: fig. 5).

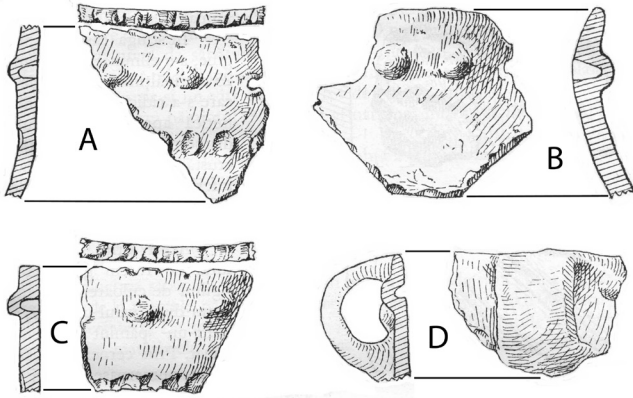


Figure 26 - Aninoasa ceramics from Baia de Fier. Heights: A: 54 mm; B: 65 mm; C: 44 mm; D: 43 mm. Modified from Nicolăescu-Plopșor *et al.* (1957: fig. 6).

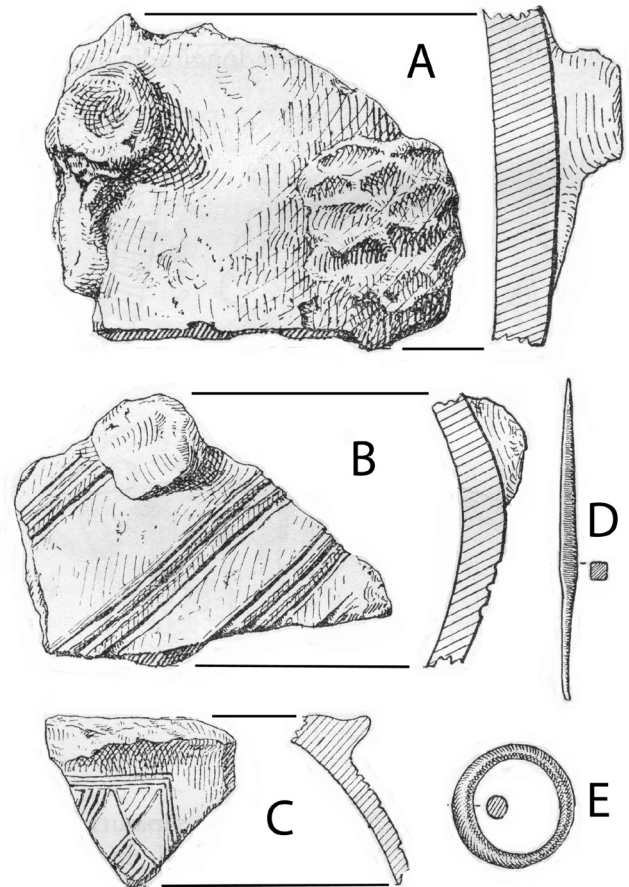


Figure 28 - Holocene ceramics and metal objects from the Peștera Muierii. A and B: Iron Age ceramics. C: Bronze Age ceramic. D: Neolithic copper awl. E: bronze ring. Heights: A: 80 mm; B: 64 mm; C: 39 mm; D: 76 mm. Modified from Nicolăescu-Plopșor *et al.* (1957: fig. 7).

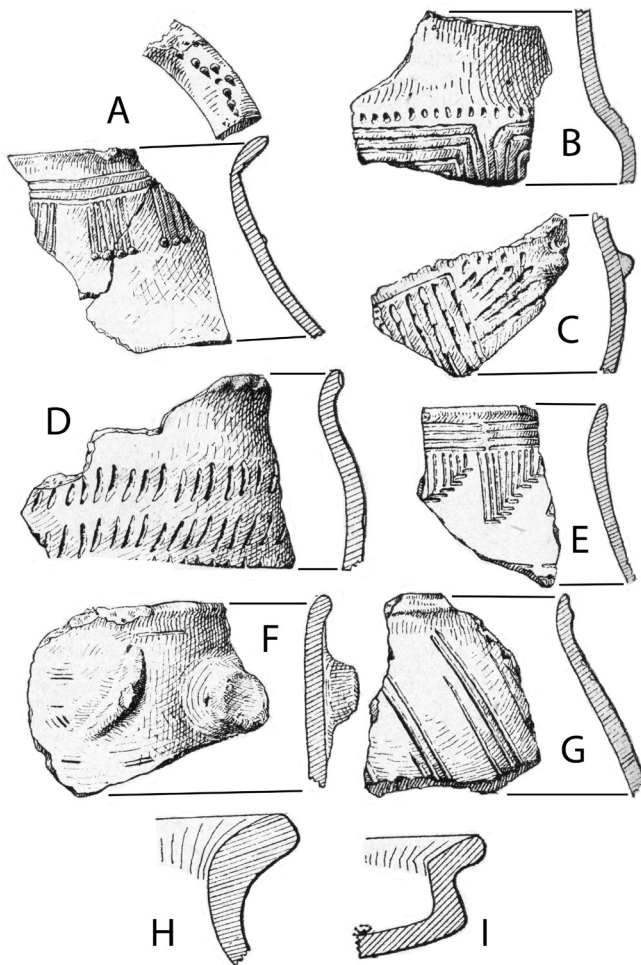


Figure 27 - Ceramics from the Galeria Principală and Cotlonul S of the Peștera Muierii. A to E: Coțofeni Bronze Age ceramics. Heights: A: 155 mm; B: 64 mm; C: 60 mm; D: 73 mm; E: 67 mm. F to I: La Tène Iron Age ceramics. Heights: F: 70 mm; G: 73 mm; H: 55 mm; I: 45 mm. Modified from Daicoviciu *et al.* (1953: fig. 11).

According to a current interpretation, the Coțofeni culture is a theoretical construction by the Romanian archeologists, and it was created almost exclusively based on the ceramic styles (Oanță-Mărghitu 2006: 85–93). Despite this situation, the

description of the pottery is all that is available; for example the Sălcuța culture, 4,500 – 3,500 BC (Lichter 2001:30, fig. 2) is indicated by a type of bowl with a truncated cone or semi-spherical body, the margin of the vessel is thickened and beveled obliquely towards the interior, and the body is sometimes decorated with incision lines or buried triangles realized by grooving (Oanță-Mărghitu 2006:36). For the Coțofeni culture, 3,500 – 2,900 BC (Oanță-Mărghitu 2006:86-87), the pottery is decorated by metopes with horizontal and parallels lines (Oanță-Mărghitu 2006:103).

In the article regarding the excavations from 1953 there were illustrated some objects (fig. 28), which were not described in the text. They include a fragment of a Greek Rhodos amphora with an inscription (Daicoviciu *et al.* 1953:206, fig. 11.10), a copper awl from the Neolithic, and a bronze ring (Nicolăescu-Plopșor *et al.* 1957:22, fig. 7.4 and 7.5).

The stamp from the Greek Rhodos amphora fragment (fig. 29) reads (deciphered and translated for us by Alexandru Avram and Iulian Bârzescu of the Institutul de Arheologie "Vasile Pârvan"):
 Ἐπὶ Δαμοθέμῳ
 Ἀσραμιτίῳ
 The magistrate's name is Δαμοθέμῳ (in the genitive), and it is dated to about 200 – 191 B.C. (Finkielsztein 2001:192).

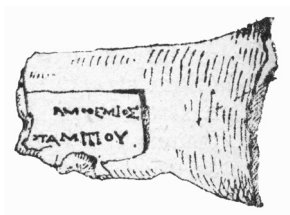


Figure 29 - The second century B.C. ceramic fragment with a Greek inscription. Modified from Daicoviciu *et al.* (1953: fig. 11).

Summary

The upper levels of the Peștera Muierii, in particular in the Galeria Principală and to a lesser extent in the Gura Peșterii, have yielded a variety of Holocene archeological remains, from the Early Neolithic to the twentieth century. Most the remains for which we have data consist of isolated artifacts, or portions thereof, and faunal remains. These are joined by a few hearths and a Bronze Age burial. These remains testify to occasional occupation of the cave through much of the Holocene.