ARCHAEOLOGICAL DISCOVERIES IN THE CAVES OF PĂDUREA CRAIULUI MOUNTAINS

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A Coţofeni Eneolithic necropolis and some mural drawings were discovered in the south-western Pădurea Craiului Mountains in 1986

The caves of the south-western Pădurea Craiului Mountains proved reach in archaeological vestiges. Several discoveries (Emödi, 1985 ; Halasi, Emödi, 1985 ; Halasi, Emödi, Lascu, Sârbu, 1985 ; Viehmann, Racoviţă, Rişcuţia, 1970) showed that the area has been inhabited since the Paleolithic. Intensive speleological exploration and research were done during 1986. The result was the discovery and investigation of several new caves, or new rooms in caves already known. In order to prevent unintentional degradation of the archaeological vestiges expected to exist in these caves, we decided to investigate the area, trying to find proofs of material culture or mural art.

We were guided and supported in our activity by the "Emil Racoviţă" Speleological Institute and by the Archaeological Institute of Bucharest.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL DISCOVERIES IN CAVE No. 3 OF PĂDUREA CRAIULUI MOUNTAINS

Our research was directed towards this cave because of its entrance that faces S—E. After getting into a big room "A", one has to crawl for about 12 metres to enter a smaller room "B". Medieval ceramic potsherds and fragments of human skeletons were found on the floor of the latter. The presence of an excavation was observed in the N—W part of the room and its shape analysis proved it to have been made hastily, probably by some "treasure-diggers". Therefore an investigation of room "A" seemed to be necessary.

The thick sediment bed in room "A" contained :

a) pottery : pot fragments (among them some decorated), two ritual car wheels (Bader 1978) and a broken ceramic shell ;

b) tools : stag antler axes and weed hooks, bone prickers, two silex and one obsydian tools ;

c) burnt wheat in great quantity ;

d) animal bones : pig, ox, goat, wild boar, roe deer and red deer, which were identified by P. Samson and C. Rădulescu from the "Emil Racoviţă" Speleological Institute ;

e) a child skeleton, found at a depth of about 50 cm, lying in a crouched position on the left side, head towards the cave entrance ;

f) burned wood;
g) river shells and snails;
h) ochre balls;

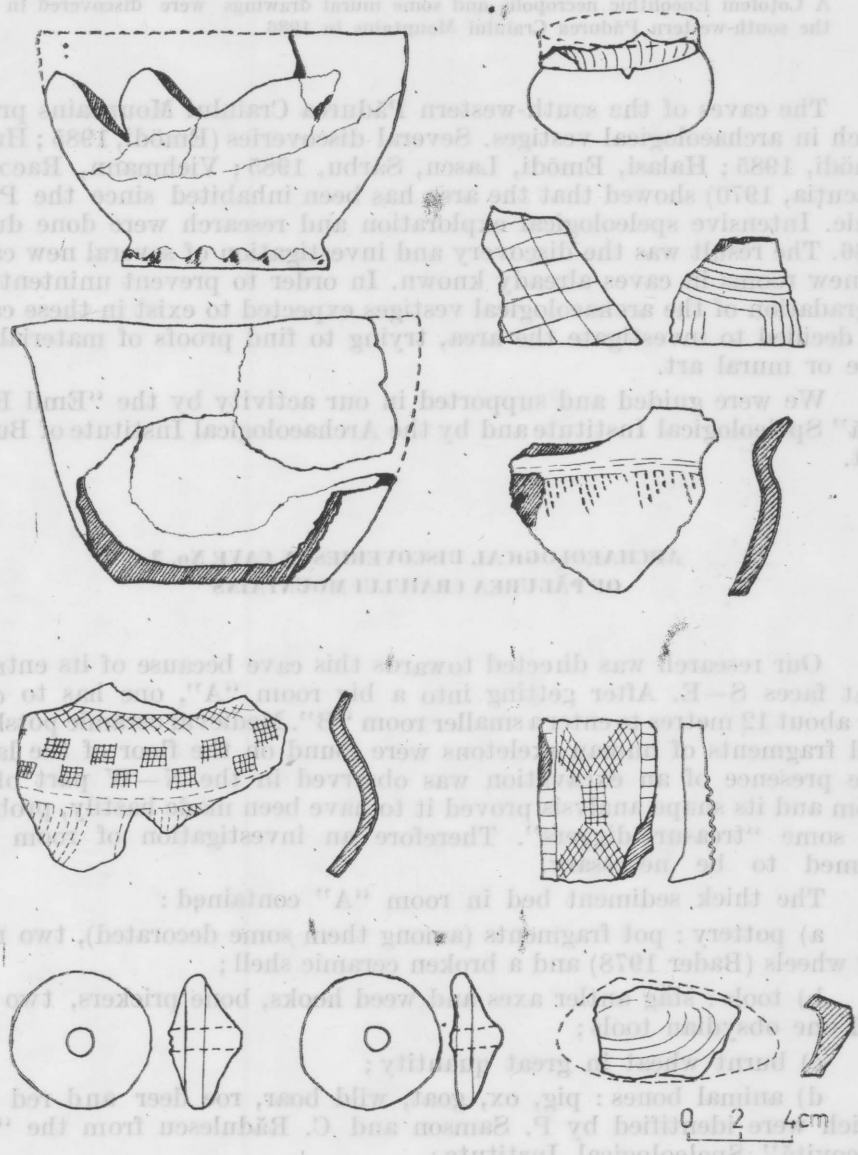

Fig. 1. — Coțofeni pattery found in Cave No. 3, room "A".

i) some unidentified gritstone objects.

The vestiges in room "A" were identified at the Archaeological Institute of Bucharest, by I. Chicideanu. as belonging to the Coțofeni

Culture. R. Popa from the same institute established that the medieval pottery in room "B" dates to the 10th—12th centuries.

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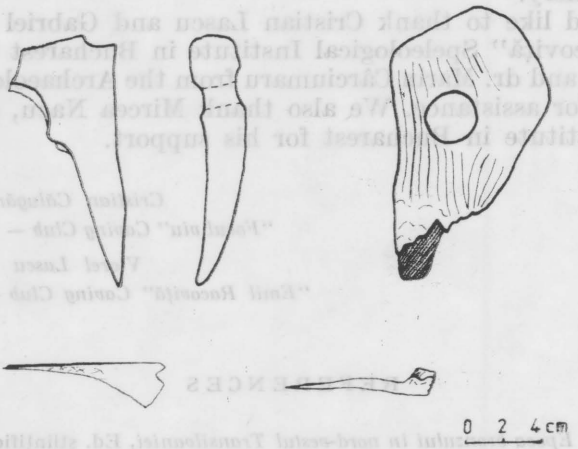

Fig. 2. — Tools found in Cave No. 3, room "A".

MURAL DRAWINGS IN CAVE No. 1 OF PĂDUREA CRAIULUI MOUNTAINS

Its entrance facing S—W, cave No. 1 is about 760 meters long and partially active. We entered this cave with an exploration team from the "Emil Racoviță" Caving Club of Bucharest.

Pottery fragments were found at about 70 metres distance from the entrance, both on the floor and covered by a thin bed of sediment. Not far from this place, in the main gallery some drawings incised in the clay-covered wall were discovered. The lines of the drawings were about

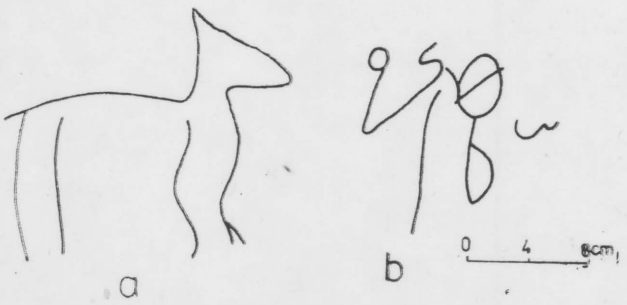

Fig. 3. — Mural drawings in Cave No. 1. Drawing a) is situated above drawing b).

5 mm wide and 2—3 mm deep. The clay vermiculation that covers uniformely the wall and the drawings proves that the latter are not recent; their rather blurred aspect led to the assumption that they are quite old. Specialists will have to find out what their exact origin is.

Other drawings next to the ones shown in Fig. 1 were unfortunately destroyed by the footprints of some cavers who stepped on the wall, trying to reach a gallery.

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