Miniature with anthropomorphic features. Observations on a vessel discovered at Cerviceşti Deal-*La Morişcă* (Mihai Eminescu commune, Botoşani County)

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Abstract. The present paper aims to introduce into the scientific circuit a miniature vessel with anthropomorphic features, discovered in 1962. Unfortunately, the site documentation could not be recovered. The site of discovery is Cerviceşti Deal-*La Morişcă*, Mihai Eminescu commune, Botoşani County (RAN code 38116.03). The settlement was estimated at about two hectares, from the surface of which various materials were collected: animal bones, adobe fragments from the platforms, various objects of flint and ceramic fragments from the Cucuteni A3 and B2 phases. Only the left half was found from the miniature vessel, the right half being fragmented in previous times. Its shape is tronconic, with a flat bottom. The rim is rounded, in direct extension of the body. The vessel was modeled by hand, with thin walls. The anthropomorphic characteristic is determined by the modeling, being made in the form of a shallow groove, shaped like a "V", forming a visible step. Traces of red paint are visible on the entire surface of the vessel, but it has been better preserved in the deeper area of the groove. The vessel was modeled from fine paste, which probably comprises very fine clay, with floury surfaces, mixed with very fine sand, in a small proportion. It was smoothed very well, burnt oxidizing, reddish. It is possible that it was painted entirely red on the outer surface, with traces of red paint still visible. Dimensions: H: 48 mm; Rim diameter: 67 mm; Base diameter: 29 mm. The item belongs to phase A3 of Cucuteni Culture. According to the markings on this item, it was discovered in Pit 1, at the depth of 0.40-0.60 m. The closest analogies are, of course, found in the Cucuteni Culture, in sites dated to the same phase of habitation. The object is preserved in Botoşani County Museum deposits.
Keywords*:* Cucuteni Culture, Botoşani County, anthropomorphic vessel, miniature.

Miniatural cu caracteristici antropomorfe. Consideraţii asupra unui vas descoperit la Cerviceşti Deal-*La Morişcă* (comuna Mihai Eminescu, judeţul Botoşani). Articolul de faţă are ca scop introducerea în circuitul ştiinţific a unui vas cu trăsături antropomorfe, miniatural, descoperit în anul 1962. Din nefericire, documentaţia de şantier nu a putut fi recuperată până în prezent. Situl de proveniență este Cerviceşti Deal-*La Morişcă*, comuna Mihai Eminescu, judeţul Botoşani (cod RAN 38116.03). Aşezarea a fost estimată la aproximativ două hectare,

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de pe suprafața căreia au fost colectate oase de animale, bucăți de chirpici, fragmente din platformele locuințelor, diverse piese de silex și fragmente ceramice din fazele Cucuteni A3 și B2. De la vasul miniatural s-a găsit doar jumătatea stângă, cea dreaptă fiind ruptă din vechime. Forma acestuia este tronconică, cu fundul plat. Buza este rotunjită, în directa prelungire a corpului. Vasul a fost modelat manual, având pereții subțiri. Caracteristica antropomorfă este determinată din modelaj, fiind realizată în forma unei caneluri puțin adâncite, forma unui „V" cu vârful în jos, apăsat mai spre interior, formând o treaptă vizibilă. Urme de pictură cu roșu sunt vizibile pe toată suprafața vasului, însă mai clar s-au păstrat în zona de adâncire a canelurii. Vasul a fost modelat din pastă fină, care cuprinde probabil lut decantat, având suprafețe făinoase, în amestec cu nisip foarte fin, în proporție redusă. A fost netezit foarte bine, ars oxidant, de culoare cărămizie. Este posibil ca acesta să fi fost pictat cu roșu în întregime pe suprafața exterioară, fiind vizibile urme de pictură roșie. Dimensiuni: Î: 48 mm; DG: 67 mm; DB: 29 mm. Piesa se încadrează în faza A3 a Culturii Cucuteni. Conform marcajelor de pe piesă, aceasta a fost descoperită în Groapa 1, la adâncimea de 0,40-0,60 m. Cele mai apropiate analogii le regăsim, desigur, în Cultura Cucuteni, în situri datate în aceeași fază de locuire. Obiectul se află în depozitele Muzeului Județean Botoșani.
Cuvinte cheie: Cultura Cucuteni, vas cu trăsături antropomorfe, miniatură, pictură.

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Conditions of discovery

Reconstruction of archaeological contexts is impossible without properly prepared and preserved documentation. Sometimes the artifacts can provide information about those who used them, either in a utilitarian or symbolic way. But beyond the artifacts, beyond the names of various cultures and civilizations, there are people. They, through the preserved objects, can express multiple aspects regarding the ideas that circulated, the values in which they believed. Reconstructing the way of life and thinking of prehistoric people is one of the most difficult steps today. We know that museum deposits have extensive collections of archaeological materials, resulting from research, that were not properly exploited at the time of their discovery.

The item we present on this occasion has been discovered twice. First it was excavated in 1962, as a result of archeological field research. The second time it was noticed in the boxes with the ceramic material stored at the Botoșani County Museum, in 2019, on the occasion of current works carried out in the deposits. The artifact was not previously published, but two important aspects related to the symbolic universe of the inhabitants of the Cervicești Deal-*La Morișcă* site (Mihai Eminescu commune, Botoșani County) caught our attention: the miniaturization and the anthropomorphic characteristics.

The archeological site from Cervicești-*La Morișcă*, Mihai Eminescu commune, Botoșani county (RAN code 38116.03) is located outside the village, 4500 m East-North-East from the village church, 1200 m South-South-East from the Urechioaia pond dam, on the right bank of the Sitna brook, on a high plateau that dominates the valley by about 20-25 m. From the Cucorăni railroad stop, it is about 1.5 km East



Fig. 1. Location of the archaeological site Cerviceşti-*La Morişcă*, Mihai Eminescu commune, Botoşani County (RAN code 38116.03), according to Google Earth
Fig. 1. Localizarea sitului arheologic Cerviceşti-*La Morişcă*, comuna Mihai Eminescu, judeţul Botoşani (cod RAN 38116.03), conform Google Earth

(**Fig. 1, 2**). The settlement was estimated at about two hectares, from the surface of which various materials were collected: animal bones, adobe fragments, fragments of housing platforms, various items of flint and ceramic fragments from the Cucuteni A and B2 phases (Păunescu et al. 1976, p. 171-172). As a result of a surface research carried out personally in the spring of 2020, it was found that there are still multiple archaeological traces on the surface of the land, scattered by the plow over a large area. Especially in the terrace area there is a massive concentration of archaeological material, which means that not only agriculture, but also certain natural factors caused soil erosion and scattering of the material from the settlement.

According to the site file, it was identified in 1951 by Gh. Poenaru and it is mentioned in several archaeological repertoires (Păunescu et al. 1976, p. 171-172; Monah, Popovici 1985, p. 73; Popovici 2000, p. 70-71). Archaeological excavations were undertaken in 1962. A. Popescu made a reference about this in 1963. The note contains only the information that archaeological research was carried out, without mentioning details related to stratigraphy or about the discoveries from the site (Popescu 1963, p. 453).

Unfortunately, we did not find an archaeological research plan or any excavation diary, an aspect that makes it very difficult for us to reconstruct the research carried out more than five decades ago. The lack of site documentation obscured to some extent our knowledge of the contexts discovered. However, we found the marking on the objects to have been done meticulously. Two mentions appear on the

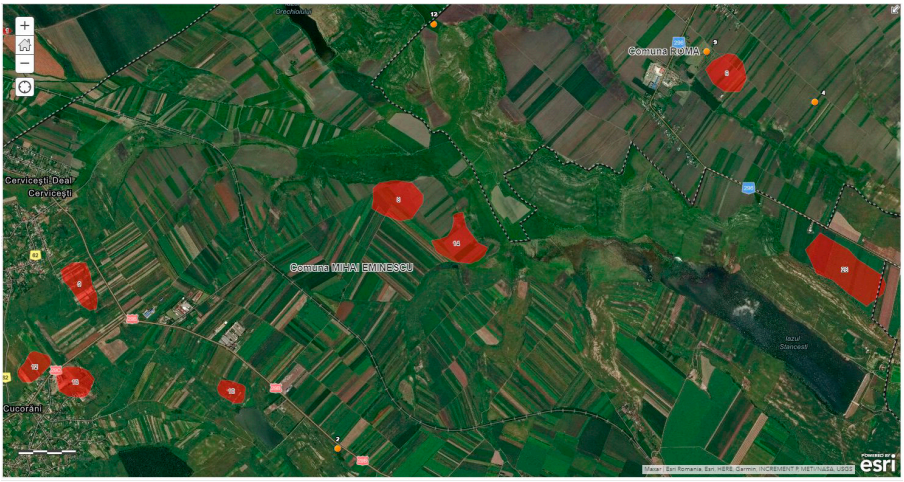


Fig. 2. Location of the archaeological site Cerviceşti-*La Morişcă*, Mihai Eminescu commune, Botoşani County (RAN code 38116.03) (marking 8), according to the Archaeological Repertory of Botoşani County (http://www.cimec.ro/arheologie/repertoriul-botosani/index.html)
Fig. 2. Localizarea sitului arheologic Cerviceşti-*La Morişcă*, comuna Mihai Eminescu, judeţul Botoşani (cod RAN 38116.03) (marcaj 8), conform Repertoriului Arheologic al Judeţului Botoşani

ceramic material: Pit 1 and Dwelling 2. Dwelling 2 was investigated in quarters, probably with intermediate bulks, because the mentions appear: NE, SE, NW and SW area. All artifacts were marked at different depths, demonstrating that the material was collected according to habitation levels.

Description of the vessel

Only the left half was found from the miniature vessel, the right half being broken from antiquity. Its shape is tronconical, with a flat bottom. The rim is rounded, in direct extension of the body. The vessel was modeled by hand, with thin walls. The anthropomorphic characteristic is determined from the modeling, being made in the form of a shallow groove, in the shape of the letter "V", forming a visible step. We do not know what the vessel was like on the opposite side, but we tend to believe that it did not have this V modeled on both sides, but only on the front. Traces of red paint are visible on the entire surface of the vessel, but have been better preserved in the area where the groove deepens. The vessel was modeled from fine paste, which probably comprises decanted clay, with floury surfaces, mixed with very fine sand, in a small proportion. It was smoothed very well, burnt oxidizing, reddish. It is possible that it was painted entirely red, with traces of red paint visible on the outer surface (**Fig. 3, 5**). Dimensions: H: 48 mm; Rim Diameter: 67 mm; Base Diameter: 29 mm.

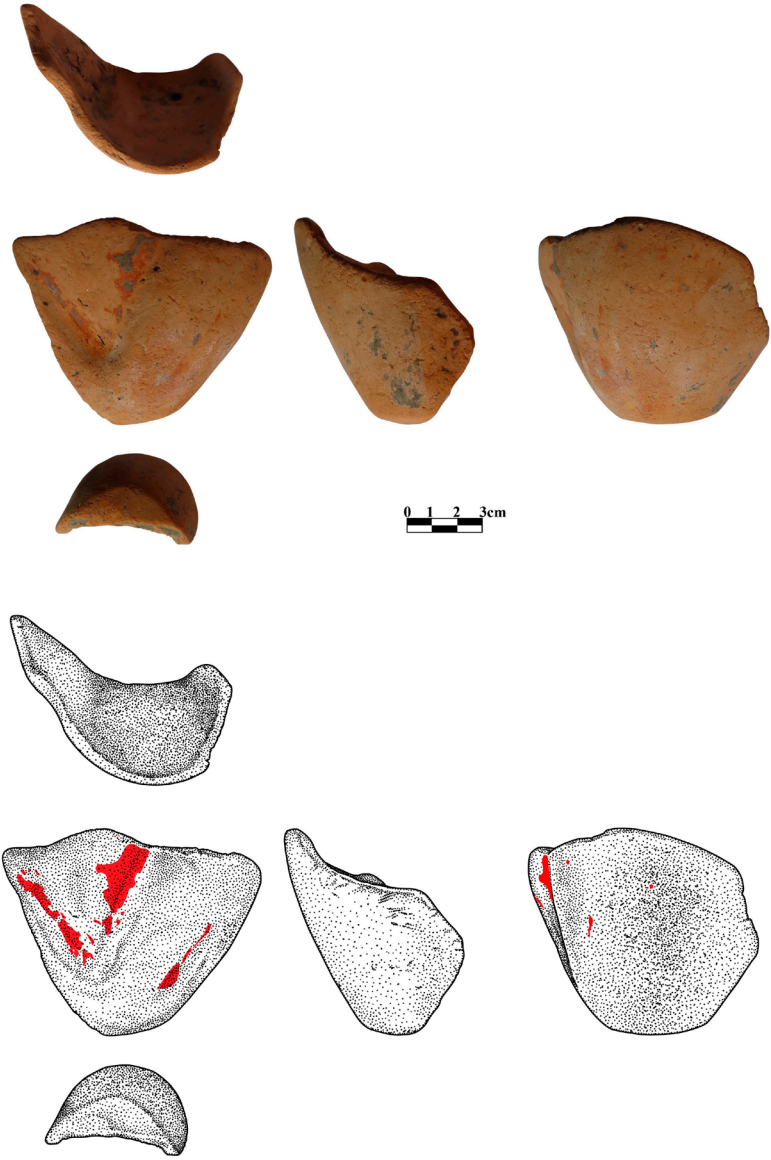


Fig. 3. Photography and drawing of the vessel fragment (illustration made by Sebastian Ciupu from the Botoșani County Museum)
Fig. 3. Fotografia și desenul fragmentului de vas (ilustrație realizată de Sebastian Ciupu de la Muzeul Județean Botoșani)

Considerations on the miniature anthropomorphic vessel

The artifact belongs to phase A3 of the Cucuteni Culture. According to the markings on the item, it was discovered in Pit 1, at a depth of 0.40-0.60 m.

Regarding the origin and primordial appearance of anthropomorphic vessels, most researchers have agreed on establishing the origin of this type of vessel in the Middle East. One of the earliest examples comes from the Hassuna culture and has the shape of a female face, with possible jewelry around the neck, marked by triangles (Müller-Karpe 1974, Taf. 60, fig. 13). The discovery from Çatalhöyük in 2006 is a vessel with a feminine physiognomy, which also presents a possible ornament in the temporal area of the head, made by deep incision (Yalman 2006, p. 198, fig. 141). As a result of recent research, several fragments of vessels with anthropomorphic features have been discovered. We mention the fragment of a vessel with an embossed physiognomy discovered in the filling of Building 94 (Erdoğu 2010, p. 49, fig. 46). Regarding the European area, some of the earliest anthropomorphic vessels have been identified at Nea Nikomedeia (Νέα Νικομήδεια) in Greece and Rakitovo (Ракитово) in Bulgaria (Perlès 2004; Matsanova 2003, p. 68; Todorova, Vajsov 1993). The number of anthropomorphic vessels or vessels with anthropomorphic decoration has increased significantly in Middle and Late Neolithic cultures. Although they became more frequent, they are not predominant in the ceramic inventory of settlements. Instead, there is a considerable variation in the shapes and register of ornaments represented (Gimbutas 1989, p. 19).

Within the Ariușd-Cucuteni-Trypillia cultural complex, although we notice a great typological variety, anthropomorphic vessels do not appear frequently. Some types are repeated, being present in several sites, and others have a unique shape (Kovács 2018, p. 17-38). We also notice the presence of vessels with special shapes, specific to the Precucuteni or Cucuteni settlements, such as vessels with a "crown" (Garvăn 2007, p. 221-238), binocular vessels (Palaguta 2007, p. 52), support vessels of various categories (Kovács, Gridan 2015, p. 663-690) and "circle-dance" vessels (Lazarovici C.-M. et al. 2009, p. 75, fig. 8).

The typology of anthropomorphic vessels belonging to the Cucuteni Culture is quite varied, both in form and manner of representation. The origin of this particular type can be identified in the earliest Neolithic civilizations and it includes several categories. Given the special shape of anthropomorphic vessels, they have been noted since the earliest research. Not being characteristic only of the Cucuteni Culture, we notice several typologies. They all have as center of interest the proportion of representation of the human body, the attributes are predominant and the basic shape of the vessel, from which the anthropomorphic characteristics develop. D. Boghian states that in the modeling of anthropomorphic and zoomorphic vessels, the potter "took into account both the requirements

related to the manufacture of fine ceramics and the needs of modeling containers for special purposes" (Boghian 2004, p. 139).

One of the authors who made refferences on the typology of anthropomorphic vessels is Olaf Höckmann. He distinguishes between "Figurengefässe" - vessels that reproduce the shape of the human body and "Figuralgefässe" - vessels that reproduce anthropomorphic attributes (Höckmann 1965, p. 1-26). The typologies were later nuanced by Anton Nițu (Nițu 1967 p. 549-562; Nițu 1968, p. 387-292; Nițu 1969, p. 21-43), Dan Monah (Monah 1997; Monah 2012) and R-R. Andreescu (Andreescu 2002, p. 72). D. Monah, in his work dedicated to Cucuteni anthropomorphic representations, specified a series of characteristics of anthropomorphic vessels, distinguishing between the anthropomorphic vessels themselves and the anthropomorphized supports, each with its own subtypes and variants. R. Alaiba adopted the typology of D. Monah and refers, in the case of the Cucuteni A3 phase, to anthropomorphic vessels, vessels with anthropomorphic attributes and vessels with anthropomorphic decoration (Alaiba 1998, p. 16). Anthropomorphization can also occur by applying bas-relief statuettes on the body of vessels, sometimes coarse or for supplies, as is the case of the one from Scânteia (Mantu 1992, p. 307-315).

R.-R. Andreescu, in his work on anthropomorphic plastic representations from the Gumelnița culture (Andreescu 2002, p. 72) established several main categories: I. vessels in the form of the human body; II. prosopomorphic lids; III. vessels with anthropomorphic features, with three subcategories: III.A. vessels with a human face modelled under the rim of the vessel; III.B. vessel with tube-arms; III.C. lids with anthropomorphic handle. IV. vessels with anthropomorphic decoration; V. anthropo-zoomorphic vessels.

Although the typology was developed for the Gumelnița Culture, it can be easily applied to other cultures as well. There is also another simplified classification, which can be applied, in general, to any culture and epoch: 1. Vessels which represent the whole human body; 2. Vessels that suggest the human body, with a few features; 3. Vessels on which some anthropomorphic characteristics are present (Sobaru, Andrei 2004, p. 14).

D. Boghian, in his study dedicated to anthropomorphic vessels from 2012, approached the problem closely and drew up a table that centralizes the main typologies prepared by O. Höckmann, A. Nițu, D. Monah and R.-R. Andreescu (**Fig. 4**). The vessel we study in this paper can be framed into the category of "vessels with human attributes" ("Figuralgefässe" cf. Höckmann 1965) or "vessels with anthropomorphic attributes" (cf. Nițu 1967, p. 549-562; Andreescu 2002, p. 72), or the second category defined by D. Monah, respectively II. Vessels with anthropomorphic attributes-ordinary vessels with human attributes (cf. Monah 1997; Monah 2012).

<table>
<tr><th colspan="3">Precucuteni-Cucuteni-Trypillia cultural complex</th><th colspan="3">Gumelnița-Kodžadermen-Karanovo VI-Dikili Tash cultural complex</th></tr>
<tr><th>Olaf Höckmann</th><th colspan="2">Dan Monah</th><th>Anton Nițu</th><th colspan="2">Radian-Romus Andreescu</th></tr>
<tr><td>Vessels in the shape of the human body (Figurengefässe)</td><td colspan="2">A. Proper anthropomorphic vessels</td><td>Anthropomorphic vessels with the opening on top</td><td colspan="2">Vessels in the shape of the human body</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="8">Vessels with human attributes (Figuralgefässe)</td><td rowspan="8">I. Vessels in the shape of the human body (with variants: postcephalic body, torso, pelvis, legs)</td><td rowspan="3">II. Vessels with anthropomorphic attributes</td><td rowspan="3">Vessels with anthropomorphic attributes</td><td rowspan="3">Vessels with anthropo-morphic attributes</td><td>With human figure modeled under the rim</td></tr>
<tr><td>Regular containers + human attributes</td><td>With tube-arms</td></tr>
<tr><td>Vessels with human face</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="3">B. Anthropo-morphised supports</td><td>Cylindrical supports anthropomorphised with arm-handles</td><td rowspan="3">Vessels with “bottle”-shaped body and tubular arms</td><td rowspan="3">Vessels with anthropomorphic decoration</td><td rowspan="3">Lids with anthropomorphic handle</td></tr>
<tr><td>Stylised caryatid-supports</td></tr>
<tr><td>“Circle-dance” supports</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Ceramics with anthropomorphic decoration</td><td>Stylised “circle-dance” supports</td><td>Vessels with wide mouth and human face</td><td colspan="2">Anthropo-zoomorphic vessels</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Anthropomorphised objects</td><td>Prosopomorphic lids</td><td colspan="2">Prosopomorphic lids</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2" rowspan="5"></td><td>Vessels with ronde-bosse anthropomorphic decoration</td><td colspan="2"></td></tr>
<tr><td>Handles in the shape of human heads/figurines applied on the lids</td><td colspan="2"></td></tr>
<tr><td>Applied human heads</td><td colspan="2"></td></tr>
<tr><td>Vessels shaped like the human leg/foot</td><td colspan="2"></td></tr>
<tr><td>Incised human representations</td><td colspan="2"></td></tr>
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Fig. 4. Synoptic table regarding the main typologies of anthropomorphic vessels (Boghian 2012, p. 109)
Fig. 4. Tabel sinoptic sintetizând principalele tipologii de vase antropomorfe (Boghian 2012, p. 109)

In this case, the presented vessel respects the production canons of a miniature vessel. What individualizes it is the pubic triangle deepened in the paste of the vessel, as well as the association of the painting on the outside of the container.

The bibliography on miniaturization is rich and it includes extensive discussions over all Neolithic civilizations, regarding the purpose and aim of making these containers. The vessel from Cerveceşti-*La Morişcă* has two symbolic components at the same time: the vessel is anthropomorphic and miniature (**Fig. 5**). In this case, the lower part of the body is highlighted, which, modeled in a feminine characteristic, is implicitly linked to the woman, as a giver of life (Bánffy, Goldman 2003, p. 112-117). Regarding the striking representation of the pubic area, we note some specimens from the Balkans, much earlier than the Cucuteni culture (Naumov 2007, p. 255-265; Naumov 2008, p. 93-101). Even if in this case the triangle is a “*pars pro toto*”, we notice the special manner of female representation. The closest analogies for this object is found at Drăguşeni-Ostrov (Kovács 2019, p. 20) as a miniature anthropomophic pot, although this one is made rather like a learning pot. Another pot which is made in the same manner, with a groove for making the pubic triangle is one discovered in Pit 5 at Truşeşti, in 1952. The grooves are represented on both sides and are deepened into the paste of the vessel (Kovács 2018, p. 18).

Assuming that rituals require a dedicated inventory, we can say that miniature anthropomorphic or anthropomorphized containers were used to perform a rite

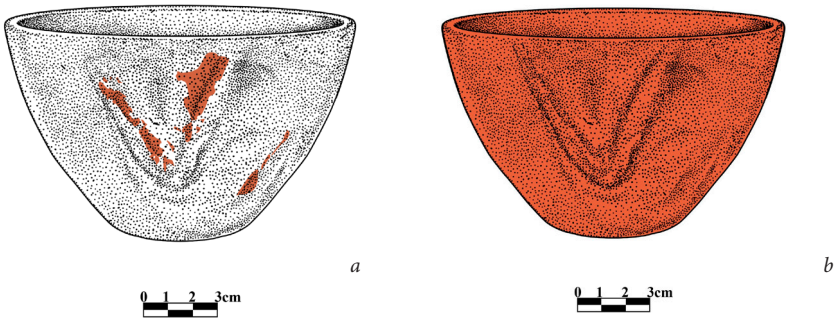


Fig. 5. Reconstruction of the shape (a) and the paint (b) of the vessel with anthropomorphic features from Cerviceşti Deal-*La Morişcă* (Drawing: Sebastian Ciupu from the Botoşani County Museum)
Fig. 5. Reconstituirea formei (a) şi a picturii (b) vasului cu caracteristici antropomorfe de la Cerviceşti Deal-*La Morişcă* (Desen: Sebastian Ciupu de la Muzeul Judeţean Botoşani)

or ritual, being related to the worship and religious behavior of the communities of that time. As an interpretation, we often notice that anthropomorphic vessels, but also zoomorphic ones, have been associated with religious or symbolic functions since the earliest Neolithic civilizations (Makkay 2005, p. 86), in ways we cannot describe with certainty at the moment and which are still difficult to decipher.

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