

***THE CUCUTENI CULTURE IN THE SCIENTIFIC FIELD OF THE PREHISTORIC  
ARCHAEOLOGY - 1889-1937***

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**Abstract:** *This work examines the Cucuteni culture of the late nineteenth century to the first four decades of the twentieth century under the double perspective of the organization of prehistoric research and scientific practices in the European context. It articulates the study of institutional conditions of possibility of research to that of its implementation within the excavation and museum work. He wish, on the one hand, to grasp the institutionalization of prehistory (academic and non-academic) in Romania and, on the other hand, to clarify the effects of this institutionalization in the construction of the Cucuteni culture.*

**Keywords:** *Cucuteni culture, prehistoric archeology, research field, establishing science, institutions*

This article is not an overview of the prehistory of 1889 and 1937. It does not aim to provide a comprehensive overview of production on the prehistoric culture of Cucuteni or the prehistoric field. Firstly, because the expansion of prehistoric research, yet new area, takes place fairly quickly. Then because it is not a glance from the outside on the 'manufacturing' this scientific product, but an act committed in the reflection and the search for those who have produced it.

It claims to illustrate and promote a new problem that attaches in the construction of our subject: how do culture Cucuteni was it built? Here we do not think will bring more than an indirect answer. Instead, we present some remarks on the intellectual and institutional foundations of prehistory where we try to find the place of culture Cucuteni in selected chronological limits. This study does not intend to compete with the well-documented studies on the history -on the content- of this culture, on which it must support any reflection on Cucuteni. Our purpose is to make an analysis -incomplete- on how that is build a modern specialized knowledge of an archaeological culture in Romania. Yet the article contains no normative claim.

But what justifies our approach? The image of the traditional archeology has greatly confused with the study of the real discovery -material and whose antiquity is object of study. By new excavations and new discoveries the subject of archeology is defined in advance, as accumulating an preexisting knowledge. Therefore, the archeology field is infinite, for we still discover new finds and indefinite, because nobody knows what that represents this discovery

demonstrates a residual culture<sup>1</sup>. The wealth of documents and intellectual generosity of the construction of hypotheses about the significance testify to a crisis, exemplified in the '60s<sup>2</sup>. Since then, a critical consciousness on 'ancient science' has slowly established<sup>3</sup>.

Before, in fact, it incorporated in theories a prebuilt object that we forgot the social laws of construction<sup>4</sup>. By masking the social genesis was unknown relationships established between science and its public and thus placed in a word-not in institutional conditions of use -the word force. But for it to be known and recognized, the culture of our object-Cucuteni-, enjoys the institutional conditions necessary for its general taxation. Produced by authors with authority to write, set by archaeologists and professors, also responsible for instilling in control, the culture of Cucuteni corresponds to an officially accepted political unity. Rather than be a relevant archive annals of science from antiquity of man, the institutional approach -the work in somehow pioneer of Blanckaert<sup>5</sup> - to clarify some of the most visible manner, both cognitive and sociological, the identity of the prehistoric community of the late nineteenth century until the eve of World War II.

It is on this central premise of our analysis is based on the concept of 'scientific field'. How Bourdieu have describe it, the scientific field seems governed by the constraint of 'body ', fighting positions, interests groups and the dialectic of domination and social subordination<sup>6</sup>. The field is considered competitive and laminate, it would be inconsistent to assume uniformity without reproducing the speech agreed on the ethos of science, idealized formula of selflessness. Indeed, it is structured and individualized according to the principle of disciplines: 'There is, at every moment, a social hierarchy of scientific fields - which strongly oriented practices and especially the' choice 'of vocation -and each of them, a social hierarchy of objects and methods

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<sup>1</sup> A. Schnapp, *L'archéologie* in J. Le Goff et P. Nora (sous la direction), *Faire de l'histoire*, Gallimard, Paris, 1974, p. 310.

<sup>2</sup> K. C. Chang, *Rethinking archaeology*, New-York, 1967; D. L. Clarke, *Analytical archaeology*, Londres, 1968; J. Deetz, *Invitation to archaeology*, New-York, 1968.

<sup>3</sup> S. Cleuziou *et alli*, *Renouveau des méthodes et théorie de l'archéologie (note critique)* in *Annales. Economies, Sociétés, Civilisations*, n. 1, 1973, p. 35-51.

<sup>4</sup> P. Bourdieu, *La production et la reproduction de la langue légitime* in *Langage et pouvoir symbolique*, Paris, 2001, p. 69.

<sup>5</sup> C. Blanckaert, *Fondements disciplinaires de l'anthropologie française au XIXe siècle. Perspectives historiographiques* in *Politix*, vol. 8, n. 29, 1995, p. 31-54.

<sup>6</sup> P. Bourdieu, *La spécificité du champ scientifique et les conditions sociales du progrès de la raison* in *Sociologie et sociétés*, vol. 7, n. 1, 1975, p. 91.

of treatment<sup>7</sup>. Thus, the 'discipline' has become a unit of analysis that can deputize well 'science' deemed indeterminate and extensive.

Whatever it may seem, this little preamble is intended only to recall some studies that were marked indelibly research in history and sociology of science, the past three decades. It is in itself a critical positioning in a historiography field long dominated by professional archaeologists.

It may be time to clarify the chronological limits that determine our study. It is well known to archaeologists events because they make the introduction to almost every study on Cucuteni. Reflecting on the recent past that serves to demonstrate the fertility and the validity of the research on prehistoric pottery of Cucuteni: in the spring of 1884 in an open quarry on the property of Baiceni common for road construction Targu-Frumos -Harlau, workers came upon a crash of objects that seemed old. Saraga antiquarians from Iasi come into possession of these objets. N. Beldiceanu, known as a poet and passionate amateur archaeologist, after discovering antiquities in antique shops and buying-as he admitted later<sup>8</sup>, reports at the end of November in New Journal, a short article entitled " For archaeologists "the news of these discoveries"<sup>9</sup>. The findings from Cucuteni were made known by the participants in the tenth International Congress of Anthropology and Prehistoric Archaeology, held in Paris in August 1889. With the help and advice of Alexandru Odobescu (first professor of archeology at Bucharest University and member of the Permanent Council of the Congress) could participate Butureanu Grigore, who with Nicolae Beldiceanu, began excavations at Cucuteni. At the end of his speech, Odobescu, is convinced that one day, prehistoric archeology in Romania, which has a real interest in prehistoric Europe, would reach a high enough level to that Bucharest is hosting a Congress meetings<sup>10</sup>; his dream will be realized much later, in 1937, when, under the patronage of King Carol II will be held in Bucharest and Cluj, the XVII International Congress of Prehistoric Anthropology and Archaeology.

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<sup>7</sup> Idem, *Le champ scientifique* in Actes de la Recherche en Sciences sociales, n. 2-3, 1976, p. 88-104.

<sup>8</sup> N. Beldiceanu, *Les Antiquités de Cucuteni. Esquisse archéologique*, Iasi, 1885, p. 1.

<sup>9</sup> N. Beldiceanu, *Pentru arheologi* in Revista Noua: Politica, Critica si Economica, 1884, 2, 2, p. 11-12.

<sup>10</sup> *Compte-rendu, Congrès International d'Anthropologie et d'Archéologie Préhistoriques. Compte-rendu de la dixième session à Paris 1889*, Paris, 1891, p. 297-298.

This short history account will help us to better consider the portrait of prehistoric research in Romania and elsewhere, when the culture of Cucuteni has come forward. 'Universal' science<sup>11</sup>, prehistory operates its institutionalization framework of International Congress of Prehistoric Archaeology and Anthropology in 1865. Until the constitution of the first national societies for the study of prehistory, this institution was the only specialized forum for the discussion of prehistoric themes. However, neither of these structures - international and national - are the result of a very small group of determined scientists, for these frameworks must be themselves produced to and this demand the engagement of some actors of scientific research. If for the establishment of the Congress the assumed role in this process goes to the Frenchman Gabriel de Mortillet, we have to see what are the 'conditions de possibilité' that enable of the new finds of Cucuteni to be incorporated in the prehistoric speech.

The classic story of archeology emphasizes the ideological highlighting of the regional and national past and identity which was gaining ground throughout Europe at the end of the nineteenth century<sup>12</sup>. However, truth, we'll see that these issues coincide with the matters of heritage care - result of the positivist work deployed all *fin de siècle*. And this coincidence is not innocent. After his first evolutionist program - the condition for the universality of the science, the criteria of geographical and chronological interpretation of the past represent the difficulties for the prehistoric research as it was established around 1860. For feeling embarrassed of the theoretical level, the prehistorians concentrated their efforts into the positivism of dwelling. For the reasons of interpretative discretion and theoretical 'neutrality' all these researches are still retain pertinence for present archaeology.

In a national context where the intellectual elite benefits of teaching at European universities, the nineteenth century is characterized by the attempt to build the national state - a view where the national serves as a synthesis of the universal. The speech was largely dominated by the conviction of the Roman origin of the Romanian people. The quest for ancient 'finds' to demonstrate that membership has many night prehistoric research. Regarded as 'barbaric', everything that was not Roman was thrown. Interest in classical antiquities found it good to enrich the collections. The awakening of consciousness is a native Dacian updated program

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<sup>11</sup> M. -A. Kaeser, *Une science universelle, ou "éminemment nationale"? Les congrès internationaux de préhistoire (1865-1912)* in *Revue germanique internationale*, vol. 12, 2010, p. 17-31.

<sup>12</sup> M. Diaz-Andreu, T. Champion (eds.), *Nationalism and archaeology in Europe*, London, 1996; Ph. L. Kohl, Fawcett (eds.), *Nationalism, Politics and the Practice of Archaeology*, Cambridge, 1995.

initiated by B. Petriceicu Hasdeu<sup>13</sup>. Since then, the treatment of the 'barbarians' finds has changed. The activity of Bolliac Cezar Grigore Tocilescu, Dimitrie Butculescu Nicolae Grigore Butureanu Beldiceanu represents only a 'legitimate and noble curiosity about the past of our country'<sup>14</sup>. Their free methods activity attracts harsh criticism<sup>15</sup>.

In actual fact, prehistoric research was practiced by scholars with a very diverse scientific and intellectual background, who had come to the subject for a wide range of reasons and with quite various prospects. For an overwhelming majority of these people, 'prehistoric' investigations were only one part of a much wider scientific activity. Of course, we do not address the unspecialized nature of such works, for such a non-specialization is obvious, prior to professionalization. What matters here is that all these people did relate their prehistoric investigations to quite distinct spheres of activity. To put it roughly, one can say that in the late nineteenth century, prehistoric issues were pursued by two largely different categories of scientists: antiquarians, folklorists and naturalists. The great merit of these scientists was that these were made know to the Romanian public the discovery from the prehistoric times for a series of articles. Rather than ask the 'academician' opinion, they based of the public recognition. Also it must be mention that the activity of the antiquarians had made possible the discovery of a great number of prehistoric sites. As surprising that it may seem, the Romanian prehistoric research in the late of nineteenth century is not quite connected to the European reality<sup>16</sup> that they reclaimed. The theoretical efforts of Odobescu and Tocilescu in these direction are evident. Nevertheless, in their eyes, what we call prehistory was simply the extension of the history of cultures in times particularly remote. For them, prehistoric archaeology is nothing more than a subject of research.

However, the foundation of museums with a section for prehistory, periodicals, congresses participation and learned societies specially and exclusively dedicated to prehistory prepared

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<sup>13</sup> B. Petriceicu Hasdeu, *Pierit-au dacii* in *Scieri istorice*, Bucuresti, 1973, p. 78-106.

<sup>14</sup> Vl. Dumitrescu, *Cursuri universitare de arheologie preistorica*, Bucuresti, 2002, p. 3.

<sup>15</sup> Al. Odobescu, *Fumuri arheologice scornite din lulele preistorice* in *Columna lui Traian*, IV, 4, 1873; C. Moisil, *Privire asupra antichitatilor preistorice ala Romaniei*, 1910, p. 115-123; I. Andriesescu, 1912, 13, nota 12.

<sup>16</sup> N. Richard, *L'institutionnalisation de la préhistoire* in *Communications*, 54, 1992, Les débuts de la science de l'homme, p. 189-207; M.-A. Kaeser, *The first establishment of prehistoric science: the shortcomings of autonomy* in J. Callmer et al., *Die Anfänge der ur- und frühgeschichtlichen Archäologie als akademisches Fach (1890-1930) im europäischen Vergleich. Internationale Tagung an der Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin vom 13.-16. März 2003. The beginnings of academic pre- and protohistoric archaeology (1890-1930) in a European perspective. International conference at the Humboldt University of Berlin march 2003, 13-16, p. 149-160.*

the ground for its subsequent admission within university structures. This first institutionalization shows that the establishment of the 1927 was not merely the result of the ever-growing body of evidence in the field of prehistoric research. The establishment of prehistory as an independent academic discipline was also the consecration of sustained efforts in the organization of research — a process which had begun a half century before.

As far as the Cucuteni analyses goes, after the discoveries of Cucuteni were putting in scientific circuit, the dwellings on these site were rather a 'gathering for beautiful pieces' than the systematic archaeology. Reckoned as part of European painting pottery culture, we see interest in collecting the materials and the exposition in the Museum of antiquities. Even after the presence of Hubert Schmidt on the site of Cucuteni, there was not specific scientific interest in the research of the culture and it must wait the end of the World War II for the systematic excavations.

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