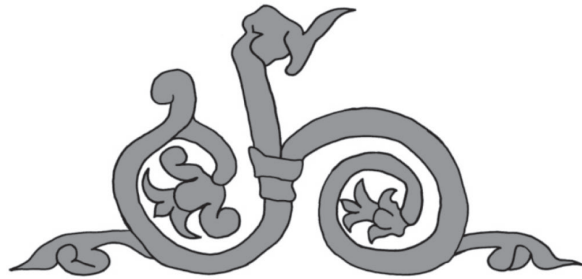


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Contributions to the Knowledge of Parietal Art in North-Western Transylvania. the Discoveries from Ileanda (Sălaj County)*

Radu Pop, Călin Ghemiș

In the memory of our colleague and friend Paul Damm (1969–2012)

Abstract: In this brief article the authors aim to present some new discoveries regarding the prehistoric art in North Western Transylvania. Seven sites with incisions were discovered until now located on the walls of the geological unit called “The Someș Corridor”. From a chronological perspective, five of these sites can be dated to Prehistory, while two belong to the Middle Ages. Research is still in progress and the purpose of this article is to include these new discoveries in the scientific circuit.

Keywords: Prehistory, Middle Ages, art, petroglyphs, Someșului Plateau.

Introduction

The discovery of the “Drawings Gallery” in the cave of Coliboaia led to specialists rediscovering, and implicitly reopening the somewhat forgotten file on prehistoric parietal art in Transylvania¹.

Drawings², paintings³, and incisions that depict animals, human figures, geometric motifs⁴, weapons and hunting scenes, composite elements of prehistoric parietal art in Transylvania, can be perceived today as a fresco to which new elements are added every day, as new discoveries point to new research directions and new approaches of geographical areas in different chronological and cultural contexts.

The extremely fruitful collaboration between speleologists and archaeologists illustrated by the discoveries in *Coliboaia*, and not only⁵, is now expressed in the identification of one of the most interesting discoveries in Transylvania: the petroglyphs from Ileanda⁶.

The significance of the “Someșan Corridor” for the prehistory and history of the area has been repeatedly stressed⁷, since it was frequented since the Paleolithic, as proven by the discoveries in Cuculiat or those in Perii Vadului.

The decorated areas are located on both slopes of the Someșan Corridor, but for reasons related to their need of protection, mandatory in such cases, we are unwilling to make public their exact topographical location until the due protection and conservation measures are taken.

The decorated areas (that we have labeled with numbers 1, 2, 3, and 4) are located on the right geographical slope and stretch over an area of ca. 1 km. The height at which the incised panels were

* English translation: Ana M. Gruia.

¹ Radu Pop is the author of the photographs and images annexed to this paper. I thank Florin Gogăltan, Gruia Fazecaș, and Victor Sava for some of the bibliographic indications.

² The case of *Coliboaia Cave*, with a final approach by the team coordinated by Jean Clottes (Clottes *et al.* 2010–2011, 513–528). Cărciumaru 2010, 39–83, with the older bibliography on the topic.

³ As is the case with those identified by Mărza 1996, 139–144; this discovery must be, naturally, verified on site and, implicitly, reevaluated.

⁴ The most recent discoveries – as yet unpublished – from *Meziad Cave* or the discoveries from Roșia- Vacii Cave.

⁵ The images reflecting this extremely important discovery were presented for the first time during a workshop held on 01.12.2010, at 20⁰⁰, under the coordination of Dr. Yanik le Gouillou, as part of the expedition organized by the Romanian Speleological Federation in the French Pyrenees, by Radu Pop, the author of the discovery. The expedition report was published in the periodical *Speomond* edited by the R.S.F., no. 15, 2010–2011. At Viorel Lascu’s initiative (as president of the R.S.F.), a field research was organized on 17.08.2011, in which took part the authors of the present study, Viorel Lascu, president of the F.S.R., and Dr. Ioan Bejinariu, from the History and Art County Museum in Zalău. Dr. Yanik le Gouillou and Prof. Jean Clottes have authenticated the discovery, on the basis of the images, during the expedition in France. From the beginning, the unanimous opinion was that the depictions are dated to one of the post-Paleolithic era. We subscribed to this opinion even since 2010.

⁶ Bajusz, Tamba 1988, 91–120; Bejinariu 2007.

created is located at different height. For the time being, due to the absence of a clear topography of the incisions, we shall provide approximate values for these heights. Thus, area 1 with incisions is located at an approximate height of 4 meters, measured from the present-day ground level. In this area one must note the existence of those elliptical cupulae in the lower part of the incised surface, since this is the only area in which such elements can be found. Area 2 is located at an height of 0.5 m, Area 3 at an height of 2.5 m, and Area 4 at ca. 1 m above the present-day ground level.

On the geographic left slope, Area 5 is located at 4 meters in height, while Area 6 can be found at an height of ca. 2.30 m.

Incision was the technique employed in the creation of the petroglyphs in Ileanda. The marl and compact gritstone that form Șomeșului gorge in this area have fully allowed for the use of such a technique in the creation of the panels with incisions.



Fig. 1. Area 1 – general view



Fig. 2. Area 1 – detail, the hunting scene



Fig. 3. Area 1 – detail of the hunting scene (image adapted by R. Pop)



Fig. 4. Area 1 – detail with antelopes



Fig. 5. Area 1 – antelope (image adapted by R. Pop)



Fig. 6. Area 2 – Christian marks



Fig. 7. Area 2 – Christian marks



Fig. 8. Area 2 – detail with the boat



Fig. 9. Area 3 – general view



Fig. 10. Area 3 – detail with stags



Fig. 11. Area 3 – detail with stags (image adapted by R. Pop)



Fig. 12. Area 4 – The abri with a stag, detail



Fig. 13. Area 4 – The abri with a stag, detail



Fig. 14. Area 4 – The abri with a stag, detail



Fig. 15. Area 4 – The abri with a stag, detail



Fig. 16. Area 5 – general view

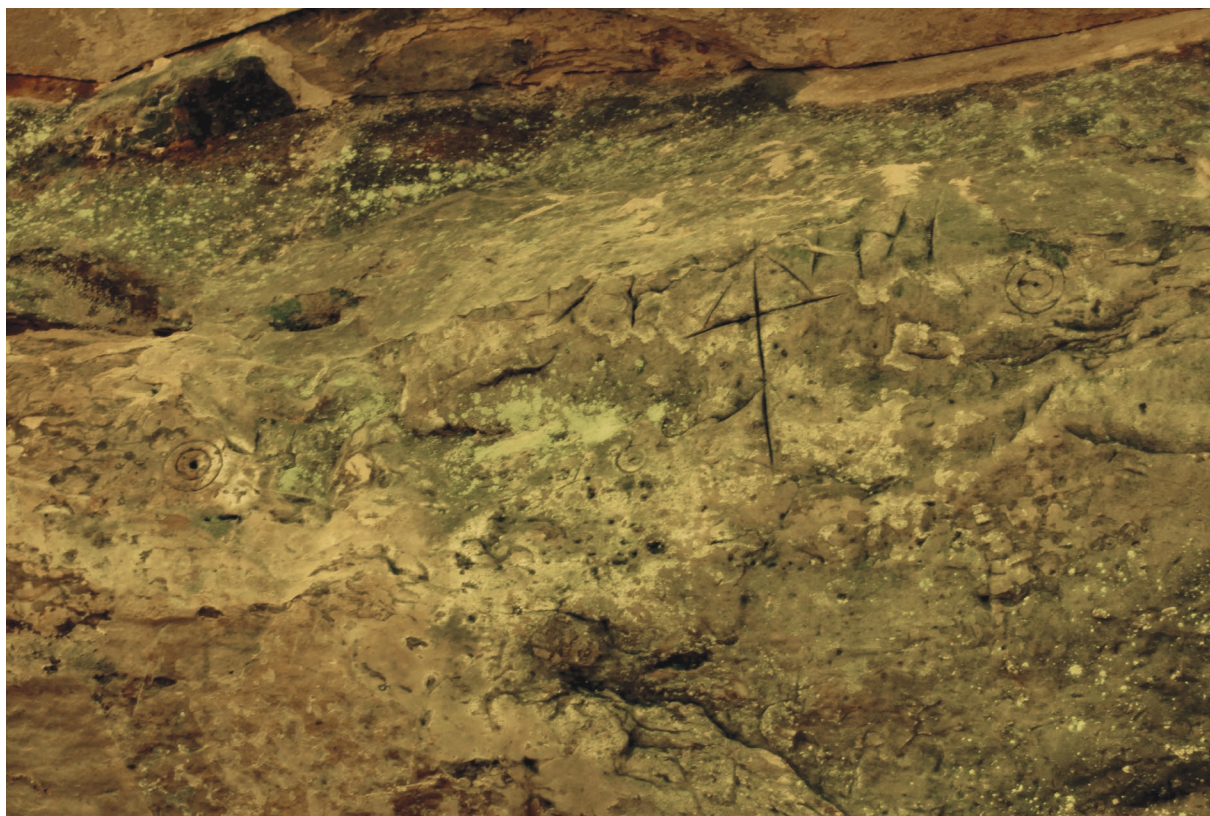


Fig. 17. Area 5 – Abri, Christian symbols



Fig. 18. Area 5 – detail

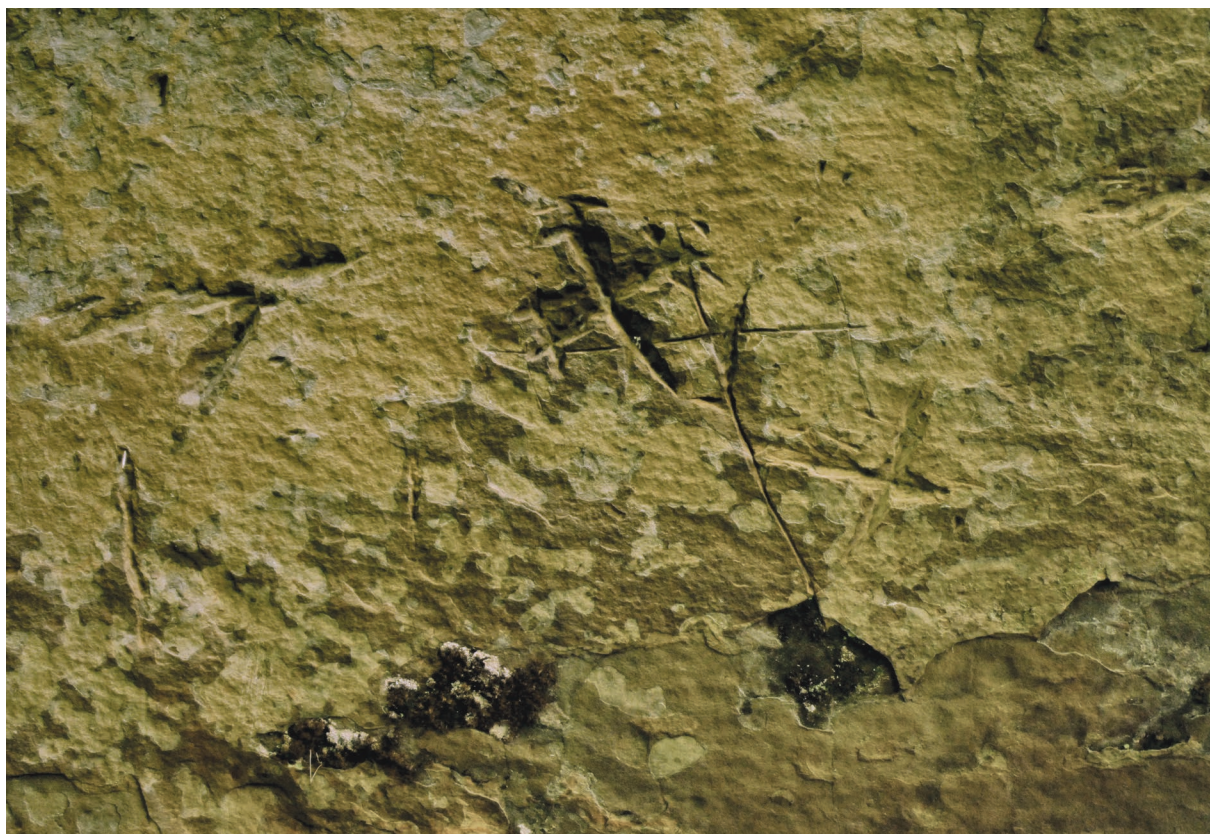


Fig. 19. Area 5 – Abri, detail



Fig. 20. Area 6 – general view



Fig. 21. Area 6 – detail

Discussions

From the very beginning we must state that the present paper aims at presenting and including in the academic circuit one of the most spectacular discoveries of parietal art in Romania.

As the analysis of the images indicates, the oldest petroglyphs can be considered those in Area 1 (Fig. 1–5). Beyond the stylistic arguments that will be analyzed in more detail in another article, another argument supporting the age of these incisions is the geomorphologic one. Their location at almost four meters in height indicates the fact that when the images were incised, the bank of River Someș in this area was much higher. Also, as mentioned above, the presence of cupulae is a strong argument in dating this decorated cliff to Prehistory.

Area 2 (Fig. 6–8) is in fact a small abri with the walls covered in fine incisions, most probably made with a metal tip. Someone has depicted a series of crosses, a boat, and other symbols that make us think of the Christian world.

Located at an height of more than two meters above the present-day ground level, Area 3 (Fig. 9–11) displays depiction of stags turned to the left. These depictions are not unique and can be easily dated to one of the prehistoric eras.

Suggestively called “The abri with a stag” or “The great stag”, Area 4 (Fig. 12–15) is a small abri where a stag with the body turned to the right, but the head in front view is incised on the vault and wall. On the outer surface of the abri one finds a series of hit marks that, at a first glance, can be interpreted as celt hit marks.

There are also depictions of lances and arrows around the stag that occupies the central part of the composition. The presence of the weapons, but also that of the hit marks on the abri’s wall allow us to hypothesize that this area was a place dedicated to hunting rituals.

Another abri, conventionally labeled Area 5 (Fig. 16–19), displays on its walls several marks, mostly crosses, simple or with a crossbar⁸, performed in the niche under the vault. Their position

⁸ Both types of crosses feature on early medieval pottery and have been interpreted as potter masters’ marks. Crosses with an extra crossbar nevertheless feature in the composition of the wall painting inside the church in Remetea (Bihor County), a composition dated to the fourteenth century A.D. (Chiriac 2010, 55.) Also, this type of cross was also included

around one cross and their association with a series of circles drawn with a compass suggest the existence of a Christian composition, maybe contemporary to the cave cells in Porolissum.

Area 6 (Fig. 20–21) is rather poor in schematic representations, but it preserves a row that includes a series of hit marks similar to those in “The abri with a stag” and a large number of vertical incisions. Until future approaches of these discoveries that will employ as argument the hit mark traces in Area 4, we believe that this discovery can also be dated to Prehistory.

An initial analysis indicates that the bestiary among the petroglyphs from Ileanda is simple. There is a single human silhouette identified so far⁹, while the other depictions belong to the animal kingdom: goats or antelopes, running or standing, stags that seem to be grazing or moving, as in the example inside “The abri with a stag”. The depicted species still inhabit the forests in this area, except for the antelopes¹⁰ or the goats¹¹.

Among the geometrical signs encountered in Ileanda, one composition from “The abri with a stag” deserves particular attention. It consists of nine circular incisions placed around a network of lines meeting in a central point. One cannot exclude the possibility that these depictions might have astronomical meaning, but such a hypothesis must be argued by future research¹².

As simple schematic contours, lacking an interest in anatomical details, the prehistoric petroglyphs in Ileanda masterfully complete the general view of prehistoric parietal art in Romania. As for the finds of a strong Christian nature, these must be discussed in another, wider context, to which we shall return.

The chronological enumeration of the petroglyphs, from Prehistory until the Middle Ages, brings the discoveries from Ileanda closer to those recently and exceptionally well published from Nucu¹³, but we must mention that research is still undergoing in this area of the “Someșan Corridor”¹⁴.

Field recognitions from this segment of the Someșului Gorge have led to a series of archaeological discoveries unprecedented in the prehistory of Sălaj. Their continuation will be certainly beneficial and, as mentioned above, there are still areas that might reveal similar finds. Nevertheless, a series of petroglyphs require urgent primary preservation measures and documentation¹⁵ according to the registration principles of parietal art¹⁶; at the same time, moulds must be cast of the most exposed petroglyphs since they might soon be destroyed.

We end here the succinct presentation of the petroglyphs from Ileanda, stressing once more the fact that this article is limited to a brief presentation of the discoveries and only aims at introducing them, as soon as possible, to the scientific circuit.

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in some of the monetary emissions of the first Hungarian kings (Weszerle, 1911, 34; for example Peter I, 1038–1041, 1044–1046), but one cannot exclude the possibility that our representations are earlier.

⁹ Human silhouettes can also be found in other caves, such as those in „the cave with incisions” in Fănațe (that we believe would be better called “The abri with incisions in Fănațe”) identified by Petru Brijan and published together with Prof. Marin Cărciumaru cf. Cărciumaru, Brijan 1989, 73–81.

¹⁰ On the paleo-fauna of this area, and not only, see: Filipașcu 1969.

¹¹ It might be *Capra Ibex*, also depicted in Neolithic discoveries from the gorge of River Crișul Repede (unpublished materials, discovered in Unguru Mare Cave during the 2000 campaign).

¹² In the same category of finds one could also include the incisions Cizmei Cave, (Cărciumaru, Nedopaca 1988, 181–196)

¹³ Sîrbu, Matei 2012.

¹⁴ Another area with incisions conventionally labeled as Area 7 was discovered after the completion of this article. We are currently working on a complete and complex study of these petroglyphs that also aims at reevaluating the discoveries from Maramureș (Mărza 1996, 139–144).

¹⁵ The declared intention of the County Museum in Zalău to implement a school project entitled “Trip towards the origins of European prehistoric art” (<http://muzeuzalau.ro/proiecte/incursiune-spre-originiile-artei-europene>), designed for pupils from the art high school, is a profitable initiative from the perspective of museum education, but once the location of the incisions is revealed, even to pupils, there is a risk that these incisions should “multiply” substantially in time. On the other hand, it is specialists who should record these petroglyphs according to a certain method that includes certain observations on the nature of the incisions, their size etc. See the subsequent footnote.

¹⁶ For example: Fritz, Tosello 2007, 48–80, and, more recently, Cassen, Robin 2010, 1–14.

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Abbreviations

AAC	Acta Archaeologica Carpathica. Cracovia.
AARMSI	Analele Academiei Române. Memoriile Secțiunii Istorice. București.
ACSSTU	Annals. Computer Science Series Tibiscus University. Timișoara.
ActaArchHung	Acta Archaeologica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae. Budapest.
AÉ	Archaeologiai Értesítő. Budapest.
AGGH	Acta Geodaetica et Geophysica Hungarica. Budapest.
AIINC	Anuarul Institutului de Istorie Națională Cluj. Cluj-Napoca.
AISC	Anuarul Institutului de Studii Clasice. Sibiu.
AJPA	American Journal of Physical Anthropology. New York.
Alba Regia	Alba Regia. Annales Musei Stephani Regis. Az István Király Múzeum Közleményei. Székesfehérvár.
AMN	Acta Musei Napocensis. Cluj-Napoca.
AMP	Acta Musei Porolissensis. Muzeul Județean de Istorie și Artă Zalău. Zalău.
AnB S.N.	Analele Banatului, Serie nouă. Timișoara.
Analele ANTIM	Analele Asociației Naționale ale Tinerilor Istorici din Moldova. Chișinău.
Apulum	Apulum. Alba-Iulia.
ArchKorrbl	Archäologisches Korrespondenzblatt. Urgeschichte, Römerzeit, Frühmittelalter. Mainz.
ArhMed	Arheologia Medievală. Brăila, Reșița, Cluj-Napoca.
AS	Acta Siculica. Sepsiszentgyörgy/Sfântu Gheorghe.
ATS	Acta Terrae Septencastrensis. Sibiu.
AUVT	Annales d'Université Valahia Targoviste, Section d'Archéologie et d'Histoire. Târgoviște.
BAM	Brvkenthal Acta Mvsei. Sibiu.
BAR International Series	British Archaeological Reports, International Series. Oxford.
Banatica	Banatica. Muzeul Banatului Montan. Reșița.
BÁMÉ	A Béri Balogh Ádám Múzeum Évkönyve. Szekszárd.
BCȘS	Buletinul Cercurilor Științifice Studentești. Istorie-Arheologie-Muzeologie. Alba Iulia.
BerRGK	Bericht der Römisch-Germanischen Kommission des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts, Frankfurt a. M. - Berlin.
BHAB	Bibliotheca Historica et Archaeologica Banatica. Timișoara.
BSNR	Buletinul Societății Numismatice Române. Societatea Numismatică Română. București.
Caietele CIVA	Caietele CIVA. Cercul de Istorie Veche și Arheologie. Alba Iulia.
CCA	Cronica cercetărilor arheologice. București.
CCDJ	Cultură și civilizație la Dunărea de Jos. Muzeul Dunării de Jos. Călărași.
CN	Cercetări Numismatice. Muzeul Național de Istorie a României. București.
CNA	Cronica Numismatică și Arheologică, Societatea Numismatică Română. București.
Corviniana	Corviniana. Acta Musei Corvinensis. Hunedoara.
Crisia	Crisia, Muzeul Țării Crișurilor, Oradea.
Cumania	Cumania. A Bács-Kiskun Megyei Önkormányzat Múzeumi Szervezetének Évkönyve. Kecskemét.
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DolgSzeged	Dolgozatok a Szegedi Tudományegyetem Régiségtudományi Intézetéből. Szeged.
Drobeta	Drobeta. Muzeul Regiunii Porților de Fier. Drobeta Turnu-Severin.
EME	Erdélyi Múzeum Egyesület. Cluj-Napoca.
EphNap	Ephemeris Napocensis. Cluj-Napoca.
ETF	Erdélyi Tudományos Füzetek – Erdélyi Múzeum Egyesület. Kolozsvár/Cluj-Napoca.
Fdi	File de istorie, Muzeul de Istorie. Bistrița.
FolArch	Folia Archaeologica. A Magyar Nemzeti Múzeum Évkönyve. Annales Musei Nationalis Hungarici. Budapest.
Germania	Germania. Anzeiger der Römisch-Germanischen Kommission des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts. Berlin.
História	História – történelmi folyóirat. Budapest.
HK	Hadtörténelmi Közlemények. Budapest.
HOMÉ	A Herman Ottó Múzeum Évkönyve. Miskolc.
Istros	Istros. Muzeul Brăilei. Brăila.
JAHC	Journal for the Association of History and Computing. Michigan University.
JahrbRGZM	Jahrbuch des Römisch-Germanischen Zentralmuseums zu Mainz, Mainz.
JAMÉ	Janus Pannonius Múzeum Évkönyve. Pécs.
KL	Kartografické listy. Bratislava.
Korall	<i>Korall Társadalomtörténeti Folyóirat</i> . Budapest.
Közl	Közlemények az Erdélyi Nemzeti Múzeum Érem- és Régiségtárából. Kolozsvár/Cluj-Napoca.
Lucrări	Lucrări Științifice. Istorie-Științe-Pedagogie, Institutul Pedagogic. Oradea.
GT	Geographia Technica. International Journal of Technical Geography. Cluj-Napoca.
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NK	Numizmatikai Közlöny, Magyar Numizmatikai Társulat. Budapest.
NNT	Norsk Numismatisk Tidsskrift.
NZ	Numismatische Zeitschrift, herausgegeben von der numismatischen Gesellschaft in Wien. Wien.
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OpHung	Opuscula Hungarica. Budapest.
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RRH	Revue Roumaine d'Histoire, Academia Română. București.
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SCȘI	Studii și Cercetări Științifice. Istorie.
SIB	Studii de Istorie a Banatului. Universitatea de Vest Timișoara.
SlovArch	Slovenská Archeológia. Bratislava.
SMIM	Studii și Materiale de Istorie Medie. Institutul de Istorie „Nicolae Iorga”. București.
SMK	Somogyi Múzeumok Közleményei. Kaposvár.
SSCR	<i>Social Science Computer Review. North Carolina State University.</i>
Speculum	Speculum. Cambridge Journals Online. Cambridge.
StComCaransebeș	Studii și Comunicări. Etnografie. Istorie. Caransebeș.
StComSatuMare	Studii și Comunicări. Satu Mare.
Stratum plus	Stratum plus Journal. High Anthropological School University. Cultural Anthropology & Archaeology.
Studia Caroliensia	Studia Caroliensia. A Károli Gáspár Református Egyetem szakfolyóirata. Budapest.
Studia Comitatus	Studia Comitatus. Tanulmányok Pest Megye Múzeumaiból. Szentendre.
Századok	Századok. A Magyar Történelmi Társulat Folyóirata. Budapest.
Terra Sebus	Terra Sebus. Acta Musei Sabasiensis. Sebeș.
Thraco-Dacia	Thraco-Dacia. București.
Transilvanian Review	Transilvanian Review/Revue de Transylvanie. Cluj-Napoca.
TS	Történelmi Szemle. A Magyar Tudományos Akadémia Történettudományi Intézetének Értesítője. Budapest.
UPA	Universitätsforschungen zur Prähistorische Archäologie. Bonn.
VAH	Varia Archaeologica Hungarica. Budapest.
VMMK	Veszprémi Megyei Múzeumok Közleményei. Veszprém.
World Archaeology	World Archaeology. London.
ZfA	Zeitschrift für Archäologie. Berlin.
Ziridava	Ziridava, Complexul Muzeal Arad. Arad.
ZMSW	Zeitschrift für Münz-, Siegel- und Wappenkunde. Berlin.

