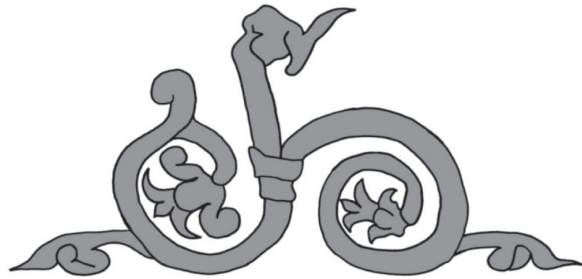


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A Bronze-Age Hoard Discovered in Ampoița (Alba County)*

Cristian Ioan Popa

Abstract: The article presents a previously unpublished bronze hoard discovered by chance in 2007 in Ampoița-Piatra Boului. The finding context of the items is unknown, as they were found on the margin of a pit, at the feet of a rock massif. The deposition consists of a bronze arrowhead and two fragmentarily preserved copper lumps. Their reduced chronological value only allows for their dating to the end of the Bronze Age (Br. D-Ha. A). In the context of the discovery the author also discusses the issue of the so-called “Zlatna II” hoard, found in 1907 and attributed to the Jupalnic-Turia series (Ha. A2) that, in the author’s opinion, was discovered in Gura Ampoiței (Ampoița). Therefore, the author suggests that the “Zlatna II” hoard should be called “Ampoița I” and thus the items found in *Piatra Boului* should be henceforth called “Ampoița II”.

Keywords: hoard, bronze, Ampoița, Zlatna, Bronze Age.

The settlement of Ampoița (Hung: Ompolycza, Kisompoly) is located in the middle basin of River Ampoi, along the valley of its right side effluent, *Valea Ampoiței*. The area is rich in archaeological discoveries; the best known are those found on the site of *La Pietre/Pietrele Gomnușei/Stogurile Popii*¹.

Three bronze objects, that are the focus of the present archaeological note, were found in 2007, inside the borders of the village, at the feet of the calcareous height called *Piatra Boului* (Fig. 1), ca. 30 north of the rock massif (Fig. 2). The calcareous height (510 m in altitude) at the feet of which the items were found is located at the meeting point of the valleys of Ampoița and Ampoi, being part of the southern continental embankment of Trascăului Mountains. Through its location it dominates *Dealul Fecioarei*, from which it separates by 45 meters, and the entire surrounding area. A single archaeological test trench was performed on the site, in 1944, by Ion Berciu; there were also a few on-site inspections that led to the identification of a Coțofeni habitation and to the recovery of pottery fragments, one copper knife blade, and tools made of stone and bone².

The three metal items were discovered by chance, at the feet of the rock massif, on the northern side on the margins of a pit, probably made by poachers. The depth of the pit suggests that the objects were buried at a small depth, of max. 0.25 m.

Description of the items:

1. *Lance head*, of which only a small part of the tip has been preserved. The middle groove can be noted in the center. Covered with dark green patina, well preserved. Dimensions: length = 1.9 cm; maximum width = 0.9 cm; maximum thickness = 0.4 cm (Fig. 3/1).

2. Fragment of a *copper lump*, convex in plane section. Several fragments have broken off. Covered in well preserved dark green patina. Dimensions: 7.2 × 6.2 cm; maximum thickness = 2.4 cm; weight = 406.848 g; inv. no. 9067 – “1 Decembrie 1918” University Alba Iulia (Fig. 3/3 = 4/2).

3. Fragment of a *copper lump*, convex in plane section. Several fragments have broken off. Covered in well preserved dark green patina. Dimensions: 5.1 × 4.1 cm; maximum thickness = 1.8 cm; weight = 126.799 g; inv. no. 9068 – “1 Decembrie 1918” University Alba Iulia (Fig. 3/2 = 4/1).

* English translation: Ana M. Gruia.

¹ RepArhAlba 1995, 48–50, no. 10.

² Ciugudean 1991, 82, Abb. 1, no. 5; RepArhAlba 1995, 48, no. 10/3; Ciugudean 1996, 37, 119; Ciugudean 2000, 36, 63, no. 24, pl. 134/1; Ciugudean 2001, 72–73; Ciugudean 2002, 98, pl. 2/1. In my opinion there are slim chances that the site is identical to the one mentioned in the older specialized literature under the toponym of *La Colț* (today lost) (RepArhAlba 1995, 48, no. 2), from where Coțofeni discoveries are known (Schroller 1933, 75, no. 26; Roska 1941, 61, no. 136; Roska 1942, 128, no. 185), since *Piatra Boului* features on Josephine Maps as *Piatra Bouluj* since the eighteenth century.



Fig. 1. Ampoița-Piatra Boului – view from the west



Fig. 2. Ampoița-Piatra Boului – the arrow indicates the spot where the hoard was found

Unfortunately, one cannot establish if the three artefacts were the only objects buried during prehistory, which is a less likely possibility, or if they are just the remains of a deposition selected by the person who initially discovered it. What is certain is that they were part of a hoard whose structure one can no longer determine. If they are the only bronze items, then the discovery indicates a small hoard. Nevertheless, since no Bronze Age habitation has been yet identified on *Piatra Boului*, one can estimate that the items were buried by the feet of the rock slope intentionally and are not the traces of habitational activities.

Due to its extremely fragmentary state of preservation, the type of the lance head cannot be identified. Also, the two fragmentarily preserved lumps, due to their common shape, cannot be the object of further discussions. These drawbacks prevent an adequate dating of the discovery. Nevertheless, the type of association between objects (lance head and metal lumps) reminds one of the series of depositions typical for Transylvania during the Late Bronze Age (Br. D-Ha. A). The settlement of Ampoița and its surroundings are known through discoveries dating to the Bronze Age (Wietenberg Culture)³, but none of them can be dated to the Late Bronze Age.

One needs to mention the primary material of which the two lumps are made of, weighing in total 533.647 g of metal. Even in the absence of metallographic analyses, one can estimate, based on the metal's weight and color, that the metal in question includes a high proportion of copper. This makes me return to the terminological issue of naming, correctly, the depositions that include large quantities of copper lumps⁴ – like the hoard under discussion – as *bronze and copper hoards*⁵.

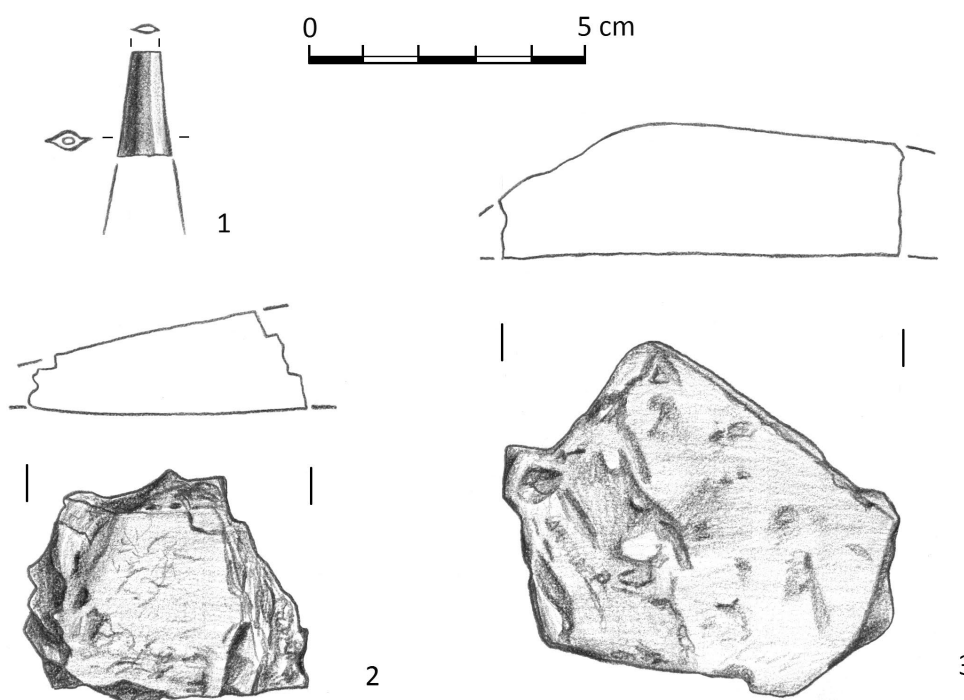


Fig. 3. The hoard in Ampoița-Piatra Boului (drawing)

³ Several spots with Wietenberg discoveries are known inside the borders of the municipality of Meteș: in Ampoița-*La Pietre* (Horedt 1960, 110; Ciugudean 1991, 82; Andrițoiu 1992, 119, no. 3; Boroffka 1994, 15; RepArhAlba 1995, 48, no. 10/1; Ciugudean *et al.* 1999; Sobaru, Andrei 2005, 36, pl. VII/3–10), Ampoița-*Colțul Caprei* (Ciugudean 1991, 82; RepArhAlba 1995, 49, no. 10/6), Ampoița-*Colții Romanesei* (Ciugudean 1991, 82), Ampoița-*Dealul Doștiorului* (Andrițoiu 1992, 14, 32–33, 119, no. 3; RepArhAlba 1995, 49, no. 10/5), Meteș-*La Peșteră* (RepArhAlba 1995, 126, no. 117/1), Meteș-*Vârful Băii* (Muntean 2008, 7–9, pl. 1), Presaca Ampoiului-Șura de Piatră (RepArhAlba 1995, 149, no. 145/2), and Galați-*Bulbuce* (Lipovan 1982, 82, pl. 2/27 – who wrongly attributes the discovery to the Coțofeni Culture; Muntean 2008, 8–9). Other Wietenberg discoveries are known from Ampoiului Basin, before its exiting into Mureșului Gorge, on the right side, in Tăuți (RepArhAlba 1995, 187, no. 189/1) and Șard-*Căsăluică* (RepArhAlba 1995, 179, no. 177/2). A higher concentration of Wietenberg discoveries can only be identified in the periphery of Ampoiului Basin, to the north, inside the settlement of Țelna, known in the spots of *Gugu*, *Rupturi*, *Pe Coastă*, *La Copaci*, *Gruicul Morii*, *Pe Râpe*, *Litău*, but also others in the same village (RepArhAlba 1995, 193–195).

⁴ M. Rusu drew attention, several decades ago, on the fact that the great majority of lumps from Transylvanian hoards are made of copper and very few of bronze, with 2–13 % antimony. The observation is strengthened by the older analyses performed on similar items from Hungary and Transylvania (Rusu 1972, 91).

⁵ Popa 2010, 329 and *passim*, with clear examples from Late Bronze Age hoards.

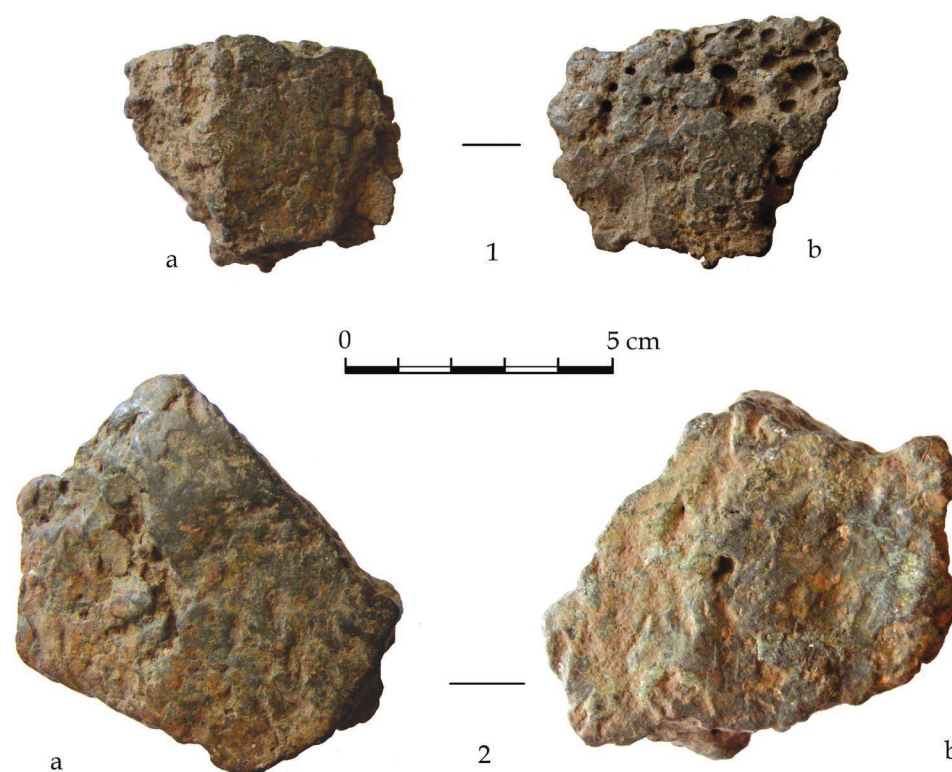


Fig. 4. Lumps from the hoard in Ampoița-Piatra Boului (photo)

There are rather few discoveries of bronze items dated to the end of the Bronze Age known in Ampoiului Valley (that extends over ca. 50 km). Two certain bronze hoards were found upstream, in Zlatna; one was discovered in 1869 (Zlatna I)⁶, and can only be dated with difficulty, while the second was unearthed in 1958 in *Făguleț* (Zlatna III), dated to Ha A1⁷. One can also add two isolated celts, among which one is of the Transylvanian type⁸. Several bronzes were found in the area where the river exists into Mureșului Gorge, as isolated finds from Șard⁹.

A separate issue in the present discussion refers to the so-called “Zlatna II” hoard that was discovered in 1907. It consists of three celts, two with decoration and one with concave socket, two axes with winged upper parts, and two lance heads (Fig. 5/1–7), dated to the Hallstatt A2 period and attributed to the Jupalnic-Turia series. In the same year, the same person sold another decorated celt, a lance head, a spade head, a sword tip, and an axe with shaft for an extended handle (Fig. 5/8–11); it is possible that the items belong to the same discovery¹⁰. The entire hoard has been published in the corpus of prehistoric bronzes from Romania signed by M. Petrescu-Dîmbovița¹¹; the different items were also the focus of special analyses, both before and after the publication of the above mentioned corpus¹².

M. Roska, who first mentioned its existence, states that the finding place was Zlatna, *Gura ampelizni*¹³. Mircea Rusu draw attention to a possible confusion between a toponym that did not

⁶ Könyöki 1890, 95–96; Hampel 1892, 172; Roska 1942, 309; Petrescu-Dîmbovița 1977, 152.

⁷ Rusu 1963, 208, no. 70; Berciu, Popa 1965; Alexandrescu 1966, 134–135, 175–176, Taf. XXIII/2; Berciu, Popa 1967, 73–81, fig. 1/1–9; 2/11–15; Petrescu-Dîmbovița 1977, 119, pl. 278; Petrescu-Dîmbovița 1978, 135–136, no. 188, Taf. 211/A; Bader 1983, 23–25, Taf. 2/10; Bader 1991, 86, 98, Taf. 24/242.

⁸ Rusu 1966, 38, no. 154; RepArhAlba 1995, 211, no. 215/1.

⁹ Roska 1942, 241, no. 20, fig. 294; RepArhAlba 1995, 179, no. 177/3.

¹⁰ The inclusion among these artifacts of an axe that Al. Vulpe included among those of Pătulele type, attributed in Transylvania to the early stages of the Wietenberg Culture, before 2000 B.C. (Vulpe 1970, 38–39, Taf. 7/97; Ailincăi 2009, 52–54, fig. 2/33) raises doubts on the homogeneity of origin of the lot that were recovered later (see also *infra*). I nevertheless believe that the attribution of the axe to the Pătulele type is problematic.

¹¹ Petrescu-Dîmbovița 1977, 125, pl. 293/11–12; 294/1–9; Petrescu-Dîmbovița 1978, 139, no. 207, Taf. 222/A.

¹² The axes in the hoard, of the Uriu, Aleșd, and Pătulele types, are illustrated and discussed by Al. Vulpe (Vulpe 1970, 38–39, Taf. 7/97; Vulpe 1975, 73, 75, Taf. 42/411, 413), while a sword fragment is analyzed by T. Bader (Bader 1991, 166–167, Taf. 56/404).

¹³ Roska 1942, 309, no. 6.

exist in Zlatna and another in Gura Ampoiței (Ampoița), the latter located much farther upstream from Zlatna¹⁴. Despite the fact that the error was identified, the hoard continued to be repertoried as having been found in Zlatna, under the name of “Zlatna II”. Since the toponym of *Gura ampeliznii* is unknown in Zlatna, I believe that Gura Ampoiței must be considered the place of discovery of this hoard, inside the borders of the present-day settlement of Ampoița, more exactly somewhere in the area where river Ampoița flows into the Ampoi. Therefore, I believe we should naturally abandon the erroneous name of “Zlatna II”. Since we can currently mention two hoards from Ampoița, I propose the names of “Ampoița I” for the deposition discovered in 1907 and “Ampoița II” for the one found in 2007.



Fig. 5. The deposition of bronze items Ampoița I (so-called “Zlatna II”), discovered in 1907 (1–7) and items that were probably part of the same lot (8–11) (photo National Museum Budapest)

The two hoards, discovered a century apart, are located at a distance of ca. 2.5 km in a straight line (Fig. 6). Though no traces of habitation during the Late Bronze Age (Br. D-Ha A) are known in the middle and upper basin of river Ampoi¹⁵, the accumulation of metal included in the above mentioned hoards from Ampoița and Zlatna proves either the actual presence of people during the Late Bronze Age period, in connection to metallurgical activities, or the occasional transit of people caused by the hiding or deposition of bronzes. The presence of rough metal pieces (lumps) in both hoards (Ampoița II (Pl. 2) and Zlatna III)¹⁶ rather supports the first hypothesis above¹⁷. The new data provided by this small hoard in Ampoița (Ampoița II) allows us to note that, at the present state of research, the distribution of hoards is much more balanced throughout Ampoiului Valley, from the river’s upper until its lower course. Besides, the area is already known through its rich copper resources, most probably

¹⁴ Petrescu-Dîmbovița 1977, 125.

¹⁵ During 2003 I was able to see in the museum collection of the Culture House in Zlatna several pottery fragments typical to the Late Bronze Age; the items have been donated by Eng. Ion T. Lipovan. Despite the fact that most of the collection consists of objects from the area of Ampoiului Valley, one cannot exclude the possibility that the items under discussion were found somewhere else.

¹⁶ Berciu, Popa 1967, 77, 80; Petrescu-Dîmbovița 1977, 119, pl. 278/25.

¹⁷ I. Berciu and Al. Popa supported the existence of a bronze processing workshop in Zlatna (Berciu, Popa 1967, 77, 80).

exploited since prehistory. Moreover, there is also the so-called “Golden Corridor”¹⁸. Unfortunately, there are few discoveries of metals in this area, far from the attested celebrity provided by the existence of non-ferrous ores.



Fig. 6. Location of the two hoards of bronze objects in Ampoita

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¹⁸ Ciugudean 2012, 223.

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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.
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AnB S.N.	Analele Banatului, Serie nouă. Timișoara.
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Apulum	Apulum. Alba-Iulia.
ArchKorrbl	Archäologisches Korrespondenzblatt. Urgeschichte, Römerzeit, Frühmittelalter. Mainz.
ArhMed	Arheologia Medievală. Brăila, Reșița, Cluj-Napoca.
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Dacia N.S.	Dacia. Recherches et Découvertes Archéologiques en Roumanie, București; seria nouă (N.S.): Dacia. Revue d'Archéologie et d'Histoire Ancienne. București.
DMÉ	A Debreceni Déri Múzeum Évkönyve. Debrecen.
DolgKolozsvar	Dolgozatok az Erdély Nemzeti Múzeum Érem- és Régiségtárából (Travaux de la section numismatique et archéologique du Musée National de Transylvanie). Kolozsvár/Cluj-Napoca.

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.
Marisia	Marisia. Marisia. Studii și materiale. Arheologie – Istorie – Etnografie. Târgu-Mureș.
MCA	Materiale și Cercetări Arheologice. București.
MEKSB	A Miskolci Egyetem Közleménye. A sorozat, Bányászat. Miskolc.
MFMÉ StudArch	A Móra Ferenc Múzeum Évkönyve. Studia Archaeologica. Szeged.
MFMÉ MonArch	A Móra Ferenc Múzeum Évkönyve. Monumenta Archaeologica. Szeged.
MHB	Monumenta Historica Budapestinensia. Budapest.
MIM	Materiale de Istorie și Muzeografie, Muzeul de Istorie a Municipiului București. București.
MSW	Materialy Starozytne Wczesnosredniowieczne. Kraków.
MW	Materialy Wczesnośredniowieczne. Kraków-Wrocław-Warsawa.
NK	Numizmatikai Közlöny, Magyar Numizmatikai Társulat. Budapest.
NNT	Norsk Numismatisk Tidsskrift.
NZ	Numismatische Zeitschrift, herausgegeben von der numismatischen Gesellschaft in Wien. Wien.
OJA	Oxford Journal of Archaeology, Oxford.
OpHung	Opuscula Hungarica. Budapest.
PBF	Praehistorische Bronzefunde.
Potaissa	Potaissa. Studii și comunicări. Turda.
PZ	Prähistorische Zeitschrift. Berlin.
Régészeti Füzetek	Régészeti Füzetek. Magyar Nemzeti Múzeum. Budapest.
RÉSÉE	Revue des Études Sud-Est Européennes. l'Institut d'Études Sud-Est Européennes de l'Académie Roumaine. București.
RI	Revista de Istorie, Institutul de Istorie „Nicolae Iorga”. București.
RM	Revista Muzeelor. Centrul pentru Formare, Educație Permanentă și Management în Domeniul Culturii. București.
RRH	Revue Roumaine d'Histoire, Academia Română. București.
Sargetia	Sargetia, Muzeul Civilizației Dacice și Romane Deva.

Savaria	Savaria – a Vas megyei múzeumok értesítője. Pars historico-naturalis. Szombathely.
SCIIVA	Studii și Cercetări de Istorie Veche (și Arheologie). București.
SCN	Studii și Cercetări Numismatice. Institutul de Arheologie „Vasile Pârvan”. București.
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.

