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THE LITHIC ASSEMBLAGES FROM TELEOR 003: PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Amelia PANNETT

Abstract: *In this paper I will present the results of the preliminary analysis of lithics recovered during excavations as part of the Southern Romania Archaeological Project (SRAP). The material was recovered from two distinct complexes (assemblages), one associated with Criş pottery and the other with Dudeşti pottery. A number of distinct differences were identified between the two assemblages; differences in raw materials, knapping techniques and tools. Of particular interest was the distinction between the use of the local grey flint and the imported honey-coloured flint, with the imported materials used predominantly in the manufacture of blades and the local material exploited for a range of utilitarian tools. While this work is still at a very early stage I will tentatively suggest some interpretations for the differences identified between the two complexes, interpretations that will be tested through further work on the lithics from SRAP excavations in the coming years.*

Rezumat: *În acest articol sunt prezentate rezultatele studiului preliminar efectuat asupra materialului litic rezultat din săpăturile arheologice din cadrul Southern Romania Archaeological Project (SRAP). Materialul provine din două complexe distincte, unul Criş şi celălalt Dudeşti. Au fost constatate mai multe diferenţe în ceea ce priveşte piesele analizate: materialul brut, tehnicile de cioplire şi uneltele propriu-zise. Interesante au fost deosebirile legate de folosirea silexului local, de culoare gri şi a celui 'importat' de culoarea mierii, cel de 'import' fiind utilizat mai ales la fabricarea lamelor, iar cel local utilizat pentru o serie de unelte. Chiar dacă acest studiul se află la început, voi încerca să sugerez unele interpretări pentru diferenţele identificate între cele două complexe, interpretări ce vor fi verificate prin continuarea studierii pieselor litice rezultate din săpăturile pe care SRAP le va efectua şi în următorii ani.*

Keywords: *Lithics; Criş; Dudeşti; technology; deposition.*
Cuvinte cheie: *piese litice; Criş; Dudeşti; tehnologie; depunere.*

Excavations under the auspices of the Southern Romania Archaeological Project (SRAP), a multidisciplinary British/Romanian project, run by Cardiff University, the Teleorman County Museum and the National History Museum in Bucureşti, have revealed extensive evidence for the Neolithic occupation of the Teleorman River Valley. The project's most recent work has sought to undertake high resolution investigations of a series of pit features dating to the early Neolithic. Pit features such as these have traditionally been viewed as 'pit huts': semi-subterranean dwellings, with the material recovered from within viewed as domestic 'rubbish', akin to midden deposits (Bailey 2000). SRAP is challenging this idea, focusing instead on these features as representative of temporally distinct depositional events occurring in particular parts of the landscape.

The site of Teleor 003 (Măgura 'Buduiasca', Teleorman County) is the latest of the areas targeted for excavation by SRAP, and has seen four seasons of investigation. The site is located on the upper terraces of the Teleorman valley, around 1 km from the river, and has evidence for occupation dating from the early Neolithic to Medieval times. Excavation has revealed evidence for numerous pit features dating to the early and middle Neolithic, including a number containing sealed assemblages (or complexes) of material associated with one specific form of pottery.

As part of the 2004 season of excavation, I undertook a limited and preliminary assessment of some of the lithic assemblages that had been recovered from Teleor 003, from complexes containing both Criş and Dudeşti pottery. The aim was to try to establish whether there were distinct differences in the lithic material deposited in association with each type of pottery, to add to the growing corpus of data regarding depositional practices in this context.

Here I will provide a brief outline of the nature of two of the lithic assemblages assessed, and put forward some preliminary interpretations.

Complex 13 – a closed Criş assemblage

The lithic assemblage comprises 40 pieces of struck flint. The assemblage is dominated by the imported honey-coloured flint, although a number of pieces manufactured on the local grey flint were also identified.

	Honey-coloured		Local material	
	No.	**%**	**No.**	**%**
Blade	23	96	4	25
Flake	0	0	12	75
Core	1	4	0	0
Retouched	12	50	4	25
Edge Damaged	7	30	3	19

Table 1. Comparison of local and non-local flint use in Complex 13.
Date comparative între piesele confecţionate din silex local şi de 'import' provenite din Complexul 13.

The assemblage was dominated by blades (67.5%; parallel sided with a length to width ratio of 2:1), the majority of which were manufactured on honey-coloured flint. Only three blades were manufactured on the local flint. This local material was used instead in the production of flakes, both regular (parallel sided) and irregular. The number of complete pieces in the assemblage was notably small, with only nine lithics retaining a platform and termination – the majority of these were flakes, manufactured on local materials. Only two blades, both manufactured on honey-coloured flint were complete. It is interesting to note that the majority of fragmentary blades had both platform and termination missing, surviving as medial fragments. In a number of cases retouch, direct strikes or notch and snap techniques had been used to deliberately remove the proximal and distal ends.

Figure 1. An example of a blade manufactured on imported honey-coloured flint from Complex 13 (image courtesy of P. Mirea).
Lamă cofecţionată din silex de 'import', de culoarea mierii, provenită din Complexul 13.

	Total No.	% of Assemblage
Blade	27	67.5
Regular Flake	2	5
Irregular Flake	10	25
Core	1	2.5

Table 2. Morphology of Complex 13 assemblage.
Tipologia pieselor litice provenite din Complexul 13.

A single core was identified in the assemblage; manufactured on honey-coloured flint, it was a single platform core that had been used in the production of both blades and flakes. The final reduction phase involved the removal of irregular flakes. The platform was created through the application of a single strike to the nodule, and the core was carefully prepared and used. Dorsal scar patterns on many of the lithic pieces, and the presence of a small number of identifiable platforms

indicated that single platform flaking was the primary reduction technique, concurring with the evidence from the core. One piece, however, suggested that multiple platform cores were also used during the working of local materials. The use of a range of percussion techniques was indicated by the variety in platform types and bulbs.

The assemblage was notably lacking any material that could be termed debitage: the waste material from knapping. Microdebitage (pieces <5mm in diameter) was also absent, although this is likely to only be collected during sieving.

A large proportion of the assemblage (40%) had been retouched, with the majority of tools manufactured on honey-coloured blades. A further ten pieces (25%) showed signs of edge damage, probably attributable to use. Again, the majority of utilised pieces were honey-coloured blades.

The majority of retouched pieces were blades with a single edge modified by retouch, both non-invasive retouch (possibly achieved with the use of an anvil), and invasive pressure flaking. In several cases the retouch had been applied in the creation of a notch, which had been used to truncate the piece. In four cases retouch had been applied along one edge of the piece, to blunt the edge.

Two piercers were amongst the retouched assemblage. Both had been created on blades, one on the imported honey-coloured flint and one on local material. The honey-coloured piece was manufactured at the distal end of the blade. Non-invasive retouch had been applied along both lateral edges to form a point. The point of the piercer was rounded and abraded through use. On the piece manufactured using local materials non-invasive pressure flaking had been used to modify the shape of the blank, and create a point. This piece also showed traces of a notch, which had been used to remove the platform. The tip of the piercer was missing, possibly snapped while in use.

Two end scrapers were identified, both manufactured on local flint. In one case, a heavy flake removed from a blade core had been retouched to form a proximal end scraper. Invasive pressure flaking had been used to create a steep, slightly convex scraping edge. Gloss was noted along the scraper edge and adjacent lateral edge, possibly the result of use. The second scraper was manufactured at the distal end of an irregular flake. Invasive pressure flaking had been used to create a steep, slightly convex edge, which also extended along the adjacent edge (left-hand side of piece when viewed from dorsal surface).

Interpretation

The lack of debitage, cores or other knapping debris, and the high proportion of retouched or utilised pieces demonstrate that this is not simply a deposit of material created through lithic working. Knapping did not occur in the pit, nor did the indiscriminate disposal of knapping waste; rather, it would seem, specific selections were made in the creation of the deposit.

The deposition of predominantly imported material is not unusual in a Criş context, nor is the focus on blade production (P. Mirea *pers comm.*; Gatsov 1982). The identification of a number of retouched blades and notched pieces is also consistent with other Criş assemblages. However, the recovery of both imported and local materials from Complex 13 provides an interesting opportunity to contrast the way in which local and non-local materials in the assemblage were being worked. The most apparent distinction between the different materials is the blanks that were being manufactured, with a clear focus on the production of blades with the honey-coloured flint. While blades were also manufactured using local materials, the focus appears to have been on the production of flakes. Over half of the honey-coloured pieces were retouched, compared to 25% of the pieces manufactured on local material; similar proportions can also be identified in the edge damaged assemblage. There was a clear preference for the honey-coloured materials in the production of tools, although this was not for functional reasons as the local materials identified were of comparable quality, and could evidently also be used in the production of tools.

The presence of a honey-coloured flint core and two pieces retaining cortex, albeit in small patches, indicates that this material could have been imported in unprepared nodule form, or as cores in the first stages of preparation. Dorsal scar patterns indicate careful preparation and working of honey-coloured cores, with consistent, parallel removal of blades. Platforms were also trimmed to remove lips and overhangs, and increase levels of precision. It is interesting then, that the final stages of use for the core recovered from Complex 13, which appears to have originated as a carefully curated blade core, involved the apparently haphazard removal of irregular flakes, effectively rendering the core unusable.

The dorsal scar patterns on pieces manufactured on local material reveal a more variable picture. While parallel blade removal can be identified in a small number of cases, the majority of

dorsal surfaces reveal a pattern of indistinct or multi-directional removals. Clearly, the local materials were not worked with the same degree of precision or care, and their use appears to have been associated with a more expedient technology.

Differences can also be discerned in the secondary technology, with the honey-coloured pieces being utilised in the production of a very limited range of tools: predominantly edge retouched and notched blades, although this material was also used in the manufacture of a piercer. This piece is morphologically similar to the piercer manufactured on local material; in both cases non-invasive retouch had been used to modify the distal end of a blade to form a point.

The honey-coloured blades were often modified prior to being retouched, with the removal of the proximal or distal end, or both. Medial blade fragments have been viewed as elements of composite tools (such as sickles or knives); the truncation of one or both ends of the blank regarded as facilitating hafting. The focus on a blade technology in the working of honey-coloured flint, and the limited range of tools produced may indicate a degree of specialisation associated with the exploitation of this material. In contrast, the local materials appear to have been used in the manufacture of a broader range of tools. Indeed, while edge retouch was used to modify an irregular flake in the local material assemblage, the end product was notably different. This flake retained both proximal and dorsal ends, and had been retouched along one edge. While it would have functioned as a cutting edge in the same way as a modified blade, it could not have formed part of a composite tool. Both scrapers identified were also manufactured on local materials.

It would appear that two distinct technologies are represented in the assemblage from Complex 13: one focussed on the production of specific blade tools, and the other a more expedient technology possibly associated with the production of utilitarian tools. In many ways, the local material assemblage from Complex 13 is comparable to that from Dudeşti Complex 7 (See below), which contains a greater range of tools, the majority of which are manufactured on flakes. It is possible that the presence of two distinct knapping technologies could indicate two distinct phases of deposition in Complex 13, although the pottery evidence suggests that this is unlikely. Rather, it might be more appropriate to consider that the two technologies co-existed, with the imported honey-coloured flint being used in the manufacture of specific tools – those associated with the processing of newly introduced domesticates perhaps; while the local materials formed the basis for the utilitarian tool kit.

Complex 7 – a Dudeşti assemblage

The analysed assemblage from Complex 7 comprised 58 pieces, representing around one third of the excavated assemblage. For this reason the data and interpretations presented in this paper must be regarded as tentative, in lieu of full analysis.

The assemblage comprised predominantly flint, although a single piece of quartzite was identified. In contrast to the material from complex 13, the assemblage was dominated by local flint materials ranging in colour from dark grey to almost white, with only three pieces of the imported honey coloured flint present. Cortex was present on 18 pieces, including two of the honey-coloured pieces. This was confined to the dorsal surface, with no cortical platforms identified. In contrast to Complex 13, over half of the pieces in the assemblage were complete, retaining both platform and termination.

	Honey-coloured		**Local material**	
	No.	**%**	**No.**	**%**
Blade	2	4	17	29
Flake	1	2	36	62
Retouched	1	2	24	41
Edge Damaged	0		1	2

Table 3. Comparison of local and non-local flint use in Complex 7.
Date comparative între piesele confecţionate din silex local şi de 'import' provenite din Complexul 7.

Figure 2. An example of the local dark grey flint from Complex 7 (image courtesy of P. Mirea).
Piese confecţionate din silex local, de culoare gri-închisă, provenite din Complexul 7.

The assemblage was dominated by flakes, both regular and irregular, with only 19 blades identified (31%), two of which had been manufactured on honey-coloured flint. The blade assemblage was morphologically similar to that from complex 13, with the majority (67%) surviving only as fragments. In contrast to the Criş assemblage, however, the proportion of medial fragments and apparently deliberate truncations using retouch or direct strikes was low.

	Total No.	% of Assemblage
Blade	19	32.7
Regular Flake	14	24.3
Irregular Flake	23	39.6
Core	1	1.7
Angular Shatter	1	1.7

Table 4. Morphology of Complex 7 assemblage.
Tipologia pieselor litice provenite din Complexul 7.

A single core was identified in the assemblage. Manufactured on mottled grey flint, this piece resembled a cubic chunk rather than a precisely engineered and curated core. Flakes, both regular and irregular, had been struck from three faces. The multiple platforms had been formed using a single strike technique, and were positioned laterally to each other. The dorsal scar pattern on the majority of the irregular flakes in the assemblage indicated that the use of multiple platform cores formed an integral part of the lithic technology. However, the evidence from the regular flakes and blades demonstrates that single platform cores and unidirectional reduction were predominantly used in the production of these more precisely engineered pieces. Precision techniques can also be identified in a small number of regular flakes and blades, where platform trimming was used to remove overhangs and prepare the platform for striking. A single crested blade also demonstrated the use of precision techniques – this technique was used to straighten the line of the arris scar on the dorsal surface of a blade to enable more controlled blank removal.

In contrast to Complex 13, this assemblage contained a number of debitage pieces, indicative of knapping activities. This included three core trimming flakes, used to rejuvenate a core and remove hinge fracture scars and other flaws from a core face. It was not possible to determine the types of core that these pieces had originated from. A single piece of angular shatter (debitage material lacking a recognisable dorsal and ventral surface) was also identified.

Around half of the assemblage had been retouched (43%), including one of the honey-coloured pieces, which had been retouched to form an end scraper. Only a single piece showed signs of edge damage. This piece was a distal blade fragment, which had been truncated using a direct strike to one lateral edge. Edge damage was identified along the same edge and may result from the truncation event rather than from the use of the piece.

The retouched assemblage was dominated by end scrapers, although two piercers and a number of edge retouched pieces were also present. The scrapers were predominantly manufactured on blades and regular flakes, although two had been produced using irregular flakes. In all cases pressure flaking, sometimes in combination with direct percussion retouch, had been used to modify and shape the distal end of the piece. One example had also been retouched to form an adjacent scraper edge along the right lateral edge. In two further examples non-invasive, direct percussion retouch had been applied to a lateral edge. One piece showed signs of edge damage along both lateral edges. The scrapers were of relatively comparable size, having been formed on heavy flakes. The retouched edge on a number of the scrapers showed signs of use.

The two piercers identified were morphologically distinct, with one resembling a micro-borer, a form of tool characteristic of Dudeşti assemblages (P. Mirea *pers comm.*; Gatsov 1982), rather than a typical piercer. This piece had been formed on an regular flake; retouch had been used to form a concave notch, which had been used in parallel with a small cortical concave flaw in the flint to form a piercing tip around 3mm in length. The second piercer had been manufactured on a blade blank, with direct percussion retouch used to form a point. The tip of this piece was broken and abraded, possibly attributable to its use. Both pieces were small, around 30mm in length.

Non-invasive retouch was noted on nine pieces, both blades and flakes. In five cases retouch had evidently been used in the truncation of the original blank, with definable notches identified on three of the pieces. In the remaining pieces, retouch had been used to modify one or more lateral edges.

Interpretation

The material analysed from Complex 7, although not the complete assemblage, provides a representative sample of the lithic material recovered. The assemblage forms an interesting contrast to that from Complex 13, and aptly demonstrates a distinction between the Criş and Dudeşti lithic technologies. The material from this complex contains a greater variety of tools and debitage, and appears to represent a broad based utilitarian assemblage. The presence of debitage, including core trimming flakes and angular shatter suggests that less selectivity went into the creation of the deposit, with the waste from knapping activities deposited along with tools. The absence of microdebitage undoubtedly results from the lack of sieving undertaken during excavation.

The dominance of local flint materials in the assemblage is interesting, and serves to further distinguish the two assemblages. However, it is significant to note that the local materials recovered from Complex 13 were morphologically very similar to the Complex 7 assemblage. As discussed above, this could relate to the occurrence of morphologically distinct but chronologically similar lithic technologies.

The presence of relatively large numbers of scrapers in the assemblage is interesting. However, in the case of the tools from this complex the use of the term 'scraper' is perhaps misleading. While each of these tools has a distinct scraping edge, further retouch had been used in a small number of cases to form cutting edges. The edge damage on one of the scrapers indicates that this too was used for cutting activities. It is perhaps more pertinent to regard these pieces as multi-purpose tools. Indeed, micro-wear analysis carried out on material from Divostin has demonstrated that scrapers were used for a range of activities including both cutting and scraping (Tringham 1988). Cutting edges were also formed on a small number of flake and blade blanks.

The material from Complex 7 appears to represent a utilitarian, domestic assemblage, with a range of tools suitable for a variety of processing activities. Knapping appears to have occurred in the vicinity of the site, with waste material deposited alongside functional pieces. Without complete analysis of the Complex 7 assemblage it is difficult to draw any further conclusions about the nature of the deposit. However, it is clear that there is a definite distinction between the assemblages from the two complexes, and more specifically in the way the different materials represented were used.

Conclusions

This paper has sought to provide some preliminary findings about the lithics associated with Criş and Dudeşti pottery in two distinct complexes excavated at Teleor 003, and put forward some preliminary interpretations. Owing to the limited nature of the analysis undertaken so far, and the large quantities of lithics from SRAP excavations still to be examined, these interpretations must be considered as speculative. However, they are offered here as a first step towards a greater understanding of the lithics technologies of the Teleorman River Valley.

It is hoped that analysis of many more lithic assemblages from Teleor 003 and other sites in the Teleorman River Valley will be undertaken over the next few years. The results of this analysis will allow a more detailed understanding of the processes of lithic deposition in relation to pottery forms and the variety of other artefacts recovered from the pit complexes.

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