
9th International Symposium on Chert and Other Knappable Materials

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Last summer, specialists in lithic studies from around the world met in north-eastern Romania for an archaeological symposium on various subjects related to knapped artefacts and knappable materials. Titled “Stories Written in Stone” the International Symposium on Chert and Other Knappable Materials took place from 20 to 24 August 2013 in the city of Iaşi. This event was hosted by the Arheoinvest archaeometry centre of the Alexandru Ion Cuza University and run in partnership with the Center for Obsidian and Lithic Studies at Meiji University, the International Association for Obsidian Studies, and the Society for Archaeological Sciences. Fifty three presenters and several additional participants attended the symposium in person, along with six volunteer assistants, and faculty and students from the History Department. Participants had the pleasure to listen to 46 talks and look through 35 posters. An interesting innovation of this symposium was the possibility to participate via specialised conferencing software. This made it possible for another twenty two people to present without having to leave the comfort of home, two of which gave presentations while doing field work.

A particularly interesting aspect of this symposium was the diversity of presentations and presenters. There were people from nineteen different countries, often presenting on research from even more countries. Researchers from countries in Europe, Asia, North and South America, and Africa presented their work on all time periods, ranging from the Palaeolithic to the 19th century. Presentations include topics such as mining, trade, use-wear, raw material characterisation, and lithotheques. Among the conference material was an abstracts volume and a field trip guide book. Further details about the symposium can be found on the symposium web site (<http://arheoinvestsymposium.uaic.ro/stone/>).

In addition to the scientific programme, there were diverse and entertaining social events, such as various museum visits (including a special exhibit about the history of stone tool usage in the region), dinners, and a traditional music and dance performance at the farewell party. The highlight of the social events was the excursion to the Prut River in Botoşani County. The first stop on the excursion was at the modern flint mine outside Miorcani. In addition to seeing one of the few modern flint mines still around, it was also an opportunity for regional researchers to collect some sample of a regional high quality material used throughout prehistory. After the mines, we visited the Palaeolithic sites of Mitoc and Ripiceni.



The next international symposium on knappable materials will be hosted by the University of Barcelona in September of 2015. For more details on that check out the 2015 website (<http://cherts-symp2015.net/>). I look forward to seeing what new research will be presented next then.



Figure 1. “Stories Written in Stone” International Symposium on Chert and other Knappable Materials. Symposium. (Photo by Bogdana Milic.)



Figure 2. A visit to the Cucuteni Civilisation Museum. (Photo by Otis Crandell.)