

INTERNATIONAL UNION FOR
PREHISTORIC AND PROTOHISTORIC
SCIENCES (UISPP) –
30th COMMISSION

BUZĂU COUNTY COUNCIL

INSTITUTE OF ARCHAEOLOGY
"VASILE PÂRVAN" BUCHAREST

BUZĂU COUNTY MUSEUM

**18TH INTERNATIONAL COLLOQUIUM
OF FUNERARY ARCHAEOLOGY**

***Bronze and Iron Ages in Eurasia: Rituals and Grave
Goods as Possible Markers of the Social Identity
of the Dead***

PROGRAMME

Organizing Committee:

Prof. dr. Valeriu Sîrbu
President
30th Commission UISPP

Dr. Daniel Costache
Vicepresident
Manager MJB

Prof. Dr. Sebastian Matei
General Secretary
Head of Archaeology Dept.

BUZĂU
17th-20th of October 2019

THURSDAY, 17 October 2019

- 12.00 - 16.00 - Welcome and Registration of the participants
- 14.00 - 15.30 - Lunch
- 16.00 - 16.45 - Official Opening Ceremony of the Colloquium
 - Book presentation
- 16.45 - 17.45 - Guide visit in the Buzău County Museum

SESSION: 18.00-19.30

CHAIRPERSON: Prof. Ion Niculiță

- Prof. Cristian Schuster (Bucharest – Romania), Dumitru Hortopan (Tg. Jiu - Romania), *About the funerary customs from the hilly and mountaneous region of Northern Oltenia in the Bronze Age*
- Dr. Alin Frînculeasa (Ploiești - Romania), *Contributions regarding the Middle Bronze Age period in northern Muntenia*
- Dr. Valerii Kavruk (Sfântu Gheorghe – Romania), *Social groups involved in salt production and traffic in the south-east and south-central Europe in 5000 - 500 BC*

Discussions

- 20.00 – Dinner

FRIDAY, 18 October 2019

8.00-9.00 – Breakfast

SESSION: 9.00-12.30

CHAIRPERSON: Prof. Cristian Schuster

- Dr. Marija Ljuština (Belgrade – Serbia), Dr. Katarina Dmitrović (Čačak - Serbia), *The Role of Amber in Forming the Social Identity of the Bronze Age Communities in Western Serbia Revealed through Funerary Practices*

- Dr. Lyubava Konova (Sofia - Bulgaria), *Markers of social identity from Early Iron Age Burials in Thrace. Notes on the grave goods from a warrior grave in the area of Maritsa valley*

- Dr. Aurel Zanoci, Dr. Mihail Băț (Chișinău – Rep. of Moldova), *The challenge of social markers: Archaeology of Death and Mortuary Practices in Early Iron Age in the Middle Dniester Region*

- 10.30-10.45. Coffee break

CHAIRPERSON: Dr. Lyubava Konova

- Prof. Ion Niculiță, Dr. Andrei Corobcean (Chișinău – Rep. of Moldova), *Reflection of the status and social prestige in the funeral rite and ritual of the communities in the Prut-Danube-Dniester space in the second half of the 1st millennium BC*

- Dr. Dragoș Măndescu (Pitești – Romania), *Old finds, new approaches. A possible marker of mounted warriors in Ferigile group*

- Dr. Katarina Dmitrović (Čačak- Serbia), Dr. Marija Ljuština (Belgrade – Serbia), *The Abundance Revealing Status? First Iron Age Princely Necropolises in Western Serbia and their Relation to the Common Funerary Practice*

- Discussions

- 13.00-14.30. Lunch

SESSION:15.30-20.00

CHAIRPERSON: Dr. Marija Ljustina

- Prof. Anatoli Kantorovich (Moscow – Russia), *Artifacts decorated in Scythian animal style from kurgan group Novozavedennoye-III as a social marker*

- Prof. Sergey Skoryi (Kyiv - Ukraine), *The version of the interpretation of the graves of heavily armed Scythian warriors in the South of Eastern Europe*

- Dr. Vitalie Sinica (Tiraspol – Rep. of Moldova), *Lyre-shaped Pendants from the Scythian Burials of the North-West Pontic region*

- Dr. Alexandru Berzovan, Dr. Angela Simalcsik (Iași – Romania), Dr. Adela Kováci (Botoșani – Romania), *The Iron Age necropolis of Strahotin, Dângeni Commune, Botoșani County (4th century BC)*

- 17.30-17.45 Coffee break

CHAIRPERSON: Prof. Anatoli Kantorovich

- Dr. Aurel Rustoiu (Cluj-Napoca - Romania), Dr. Iosif Vasile Ferencz (Deva – Romania), *Craftsmanship and identity. Tools and utensils in La Tène graves from the eastern Carpathian Basin*

- Dr. Magdalena Ștefan, Dr. Dan Ștefan (Bucharest - Romania), *Elusive ancient identities between ethnicity and social status. An analysis of Hellenistic chamber tombs on the Western Black Sea Coast*

- Prof. Valeriu Sîrbu, Dr. Magdalena Ștefan (Bucharest - Romania), *Commemorative practices and monuments in the early Hellenistic cemetery of Kallatis*

- Prof. Valeriu Sîrbu (Bucharest – Romania), Dr. Lucica Savu (Brașov – Romania), Dr. Diana Dăvîncă (Deva - Romania), *Dacian Warriors Graves in Southeastern Transylvania (2nd-1st centuries BC)*

- Discussions

- 20.00 – Dinner

SATURDAY, 19 October 2019

- 8.00-9.00 - Breakfast

SESSION: 9.00-12.30

CHAIRPERSON: Prof. Sergey Skoryi

- Prof. Valeriu Sîrbu (Bucharest – Romania), Dr. Marin Neagoe (Drobeta Turnu Severin - Romania), *Dacian Funerary Findings (2nd-1st c. BC) from Florești, Mehedinți County*

- Dr. Igor Prokhnenko (Uzhhorod - Ukraine), *Group of the Burials and “Graves” of Mala Kopanya*

- Prof. Valeriu Sîrbu (Bucharest – Romania), Dr. Sebastian Matei (Buzău - Romania), *Tumuli graves near the Dacian residential centres (davae) east of the Carpathians (1st BC – 1st AD)*

- Prof. Oleksandr Symonenko, Dr. Yelyzaveta Arkhypova (Kyiv - Ukraine), *The Late Scythians and Sarmatians: allies or vanquished?*

- Dr. Olena Dzneladze (Kyiv - Ukraine), *The Tomb of Noble Girl on the Chervony Mayak Burial Ground*

- Dr. Liana Oța, Prof. Valeriu Sîrbu (Bucharest - Romania), *Funerals and Social Status at the Sarmatians from a Border Area – Wallachia and Moldavia*

Discussions

- 12.45 - 13.15 - Round Table: Present and Future of the Funerary Archaeology
- Official closing of colloquium

- 13.30 - 15.00 – Lunch

- 15.30 - 18.30 - Documentary trip

- 20.00 - Dinner

Sunday, 20 October

- 8.00 - 9.30 – Breakfast

- 9.30 - Departure of the participants

INTRODUCTION

The 18th International Colloquium of Funerary Archaeology is all about “*Bronze and Iron Ages in Eurasia: Rituals and Grave Goods as Possible Markers of the Social Identity of the Dead*”. It has become a bit of a tradition for this event to be hosted in Buzău, as it is already the fourth time (after 2004, 2009 and 2012) that a Colloquium of Funerary Archaeology takes place here.

The basis of our approach is that rituals performed and the goods placed in the grave are an indication of the “identity” of the dead in the afterlife, as well as of that person’s social status and of the moral and religious worldviews held by the family and the surrounding community.

Therefore, it is necessary to analyse particular aspects of the rites and rituals and of the funerary fittings and inventory to discern all that they can tell us about the social identity of the dead. Furthermore, a larger pool for analysis is necessary, which is why we have looked at an extensive area (between the Ural Mountains, Balkans and Central Europe) and an extensive time span (about three millennia - Bronze and Iron Ages).

The focus has been on: a) positioning of the dead and funerary inventory, b) funerary fitting c) clothing and jewellery, d) fighting and ceremonial gear and weapons, e) animal sacrifices (and humans?), f) post-funeral rituals. Of particular interest was detecting the manner in which the funerary inventory indicates the social status and identity of the dead. The aim has been to pinpoint the shared aspects, as well as the differences, of the graves from various pre- and proto-historic peoples in Eurasia.

Of the 17 colloquia on funerary archaeology organised from 1993 to 2018, most were in Romania, namely Tulcea (1995, 1997, 2000 and 2008), Brăila and Tulcea (2003), Buzău (2004, 2009, 2012), Sibiu (2005, 2007), Bistrița (2008), Brăila (2010, 2016), Alun (2017) and Târgu Jiu (2018), while the rest were in Bulgaria (Kazanluk, 1993) and Serbia (Čačak, 2015). The participation has been pan-European and, at times, it even included researchers from outside Europe. All this has resulted in 15 volumes of colloquium Proceedings.

The sessions organised at the UISPP World Congresses have also yielded two volumes. We are referring to *Tumuli Graves – Status Symbol of the Dead in Bronze and Iron Ages in Europe* (Edited by Valeriu Sîrbu and Cristian Schuster), *Proceedings of the XVI IUPPS World Congress, Florianopolis (Brasil), 4-10 September 2011, Tome 2*. ISBN 9781407309897, BAR S2396, 2012, and b) *Later Prehistory to the Bronze Age and Iron Ages. 1. The Emergence of Warrior Societies and its Economic, Social and Environmental Consequences. 2. Imports and Aegeo-Mediterranean Influences on the Continental European Tombs in the Bronze and Iron Ages, Volume 9 / Sessions A3c and A16a* (Edited by Fernando Coimbra, Davide Delfino Valeriu Sîrbu and Cristian Schuster), *Proceedings of the XVII UISPP World Congress, 1–7 September, Burgos (Spain)*, Archaeopress, 2016, ISBN 9781784912970.

Furthermore, other international prestigious colloquiums have been organised under the aegis of 30th Commission of UISPP, which have looked into various occurrences associated with funerary practices. For example, there have been the gatherings in Braşov

(2006), Bistrița (2006), Galați (2007), Drobeta Turnu Severin (2008), Buzău (2014) and Alun (2019). All of them led to published volumes of the presentations.

These colloquia were under the aegis of the 30th Commission of UISPP and the Association for Studies of Funerary Archaeology – Romania.

The 30th Commission of UISPP changed its name at the 15th UISPP Congress in Lisbon (2006), from “Funerary Practices in South-Eastern Europe” (a name it had since 1993) to “Mortuary Practices in Prehistory and Proto-history”, in order to better indicate that it had expanded both its geographical and chronological scopes.

The Commission has its own website, accessible at www.uispp30commission.net4u.ro

The Buzău colloquium included 23 papers, with 31 authors from Romania, the Republic of Moldova, Ukraine, Russia, Serbia and Bulgaria. The contributions and the debates they generated yielded new information and approaches. The Proceedings will be published in 2020.

There was also a Round Table on the issue of “*Present and Future of the Funerary Archaeology in Prehistory and Protohistory*”.

We express our gratitude to the authorities of Buzău County and to the colleagues from the Buzău County Museum, in particular to Dr. Daniel Costache, museum manager, and Dr. Sebastian Matei, head of Archaeology Department, who were instrumental in organising this colloquium.

Prof. Dr. Valeriu Sîrbu

President

30th Commission UISPP: *Mortuary Practices in Prehistory and Protohistory*

ABSTRACTS

The Iron Age necropolis of Strahotin, Dângeni Commune, Botoșani County (4th century BC)

**Alexandru Berzovan, Angela Simalcsik (Iași – Romania)
Adela Kováci (Botoșani – Romania)**

Through this presentation we intend to discuss the necropolis of Strahotin - Ponoare point, located in the commune of Dângeni, Botosani county. Discovered accidentally in 1981 as a result of a landslide, the necropolis was investigated by the late archaeologist Paul Șadurschi between 1981-1988. In total, a number of 28 graves have been identified.

We have three tombs of inhumation, one of which certainly belongs to another chronological and cultural horizon (4th century AD). In most of the tombs the cremation remains were deposited in the urns, only in two cases, M8 and M19, the remains of the incineration were put directly in the pit.

As for inventory associated with discoveries, it consists of offering pots, arrows, spindle whorls, and glass beads. It is worth noting the presence of vessels with analogies in the North-Pontic environment, which is explicable if we take into account the geographical position of this necropolis in the ensemble of the Traco-Getic world. The necropolis may be connected to some nearby unfortified settlements such as the one at Strahotin - Depozitul de Carburanți.

Contributions regarding the Middle Bronze Age period in northern Muntenia

Alin Frînculeasa (Ploiești - Romania)

The northern region of Muntenia, southern Moldavia and south-eastern Transylvania are the setting of development of the Monteoru Culture. At the same time, towards the south, in Muntenia, there are discoveries that can be related to the Tei cultural milieu but also some elements rather connected to the north-western-Pontic area. Several unpublished finds, as well as older discoveries that can be reassessed, bring under examination a series of events that happen in southern Romania at the same time with the development of the Monteoru culture.

We are approaching several funerary finds from the central-northern area of Muntenia as well as heading towards the Bărăgan Plain. We are classifying funerary behaviours, keeping in mind the relative chronology, but also using some radiocarbon dates to delineate the absolute chronology.

The Abundance Revealing Status? First Iron Age Princely Necropolises in Western Serbia and their Relation to the Common Funerary Practice

Katarina Dmitrović (Čačak- Serbia)

Marija Ljuština (Belgrade – Serbia)

A solid number of excavated graves under tumuli in Western Serbia provided us with sufficient data to define basic characteristics and regularities in funerary practice particularly for the Bronze and Iron Ages. The Iron Age graves, which are going to be in focus of this work, usually have bi-ritually buried deceased along with typical inventory. When considering the grave items, aside from the chronological differences displayed by their typological characteristics, their number, type and position accompanied by the information on the grave architectonic features point to different status of the deceased. According to these criteria, the following grave categories can be distinguished.

Common graves are usually buried within the tumuli of smaller to middle dimensions, often encircled and/or covered with the structures made of stone, with inventory consisting of ceramic ware, bronze and iron jewellery and weapons. These graves are numerous and dispersed within the whole territory of Western Serbia.

The next category is represented by the graves more accentuated by the quantity of grave inventory, particularly in luxurious imported goods and valuable items such as warrior equipment. These graves can be associated with the members of tribal aristocracy and wealthy people. The highest rank is revealed in the graves with unconventionally rich inventory within the distinct and large barrows with pronounced grave structures. These graves with a large number of grave items - especially the luxurious, imported goods made of precious metals with high artistic and craft performance - were determined as princely graves. At this point goods of Greek and Italic origin, such as pottery, jewellery and especially amber artefacts should be emphasized.

The exceptional social status of the deceased who merited such opulence in funerary practices can be recognised with just a glance of the eye when compared with the rest of the graves from approximately the same chronological horizon.

The Tomb of Noble Girl on the Chervony Mayak Burial Ground

Olena Dzeladze (Kyiv - Ukraine)

The Late Scythian hill-fort and necropolis Chervony Mayak are located on the right bank of Dnieper (now the Kakhovka reservoir) in the chain of similar hill-forts ranging along both banks of the river up to its mouth. Chervony Mayak is the only burial ground of this type that is available for the regular excavations. The Late Scythian Archaeological Expedition of the Institute of archaeology of NASU headed by Prof. Oleksandr Symonenko explores Chervony Mayak since 2011.

Funeral ceremony and accompanying goods allow to date most of the graves to the 1st century BC – early 2nd century AD. They are typical Late Scythians deep crypts, containing several deceased, probably the relatives.

In campaign 2016 the grave 130 was excavated. The grave of 8-10 years old girls was accompanied by rich grave goods. Skeletons lied supine, directed to West-Southwest. On the face bones the pink rouge was found. Near the right shoulder of skeleton 1 the handmade bowl was placed, behind the skull wooden pyxis and black-slip bowl laid. The beads and bronze rings were on the bones. According to the complex of artifacts of skeleton 1 this burial can be dated to the end of 1st – first half of 2nd century AD.

The items of skeleton 2 indicate the noble status of the buried girl. She was accompanied by bronze earrings, mirror, and ring with portrait gem, golden, glass and cornelian beads, silver bracelets and rare manicure set. The find of the remnants of fabric, leather and location of the beads in situ in these tombs allows us to propose the reconstruction of the costume.

The beads of skeleton 2 are one of the main social and gender marker in this tomb. Among them a child amulet – the imitation of scarab plaque was found. By the chronological markers the burial of skeleton 2 can be dated to the first half of 2nd century AD.

We cannot say exactly until what age girls have a child status in the Late Scythian society. According to anthropological definition this girl was 8-10 years old. The burial was accompanied by typical female items: mirror, beads, silver manicure set. And along with that the scarab imitation is a child amulet which put this burial closer to child funeral tradition of the Late Scythians.

Artifacts decorated in Scythian animal style from kurgan group Novozavedennoye-III as a social marker

Anatoli R. Kantorovich (Moscow – Russia)

During four seasons (2015-2018) the Stavropol expedition of the Department of Archaeology of the Lomonosov Moscow State University excavated seven barrows of the Scythian elite kurgan group named Novozavedennoye-III (in the Stavropol region) dated by the end of the 5th – the 4th century B.C.

Among the findings there are zoomorphic artifacts that are realized in the canons of the so-called Scythian animal style, i.e. the protomes of horses shaping bronze harness, the head of predator (wolf) on the horn pin and full-figured images of an “elk-goat” on gold dress plaques. The “elk-goat” is a synthetic motif of the Scythian animal style previously identified by the author in the article of 1995 and till nowadays numbered on the territory of the Scythian archaeological culture by 21 original images and circa 120 while counting copies, - mostly decorating gold costume plaques located primarily in Kuban region, also on the Lower Dnieper, in Eastern Crimea and in Stavropol region).

While the images of horses and “elk-goat” belong to the Scythian-Maeotian school of animal style and their genesis is undoubtedly connected with the Kuban region, the head of the wolf is eventually originated from the “Sauromatian school” (Southern Ural – Low Volga) of the Scythian-Siberian animal style. The quality of these pieces is rather high and all the materials dominating in the art of Scythian animal style (i.e. bronze, gold and bone) are used here.

It is noteworthy that these images of Novozavedennoye-III are found in elite graves as far as the embankments of these mounds were erected over considerable burial pits and also reed ritual platforms and roll-shaped ejections of loess ground (produced while digging the grave) around the graves, holding the wood-reed constructions overlaying the graves. On the bottom of the burial pits on organic mats there had been reposed representatives of Scythian aristocracy, accompanied with armament (swords, arrows, armor), horses, vessels with a funeral food, bronze buckets or braziers, decorations, stone graters etc.

Judging by some finds this population was in interaction with the population of the territories of the Kuban region, the Transcaucasia, the Northern Black sea littoral, the Lower Volga and the Southern Urals.

In this situation the items shaped in Scythian animal style and belonging to costume and harness obviously mark rather high social position of deceased buried in Novozavedennoye-III kurgan group. For instance, one of the gold dress plaques with “elk-goat” and the horn pin with the head of wolf were found in the same funeral complex of an aristocratic lady with Greek ariball-lekythos and some Transcaucasian trappings.

Social groups involved in salt production and traffic in the south-east and south-central Europe in 5000 - 500 BC

Valerii Kavruk (Sfântu Gheorghe – Romania)

Since the Neolithic period, salt has become one of the indispensable ingredients of complex economies. In south-east and south-central Europe, substantial deposits of this mineral were mainly accessible in the Circum-Pontic area, in the outer sub-Carpathians, in the East-Carpathian basin, as well as in some regions of the Northern Balkans and the Eastern Alps. In contrast, most of the Balkan Peninsula, the central and western parts of the Carpathian Basin and most of the Lower Danube Plain are salt deficient. Salt supply of these salt-poor areas could be ensured by the large-scale salt production in the salt-rich areas and by substantial traffic of this commodity.

The most conclusive evidence for large-scale prehistoric and proto-historical salt production in this part of Europe is known in northeastern Bulgaria (ca. 4600 - 4300 BC), Subcarpathian Moldova (ca. 6000 - 3500 BC), Transylvania (ca. 1600 - 800, 400 - 200 BC), Maramureş (1200 - 800 BC) and Lower Austria (ca. 1500 - 350 BC). Some circumstantial data suggest that salt was widely trafficked in this area during the later prehistory.

The paper focuses on some Eneolithic, Bronze Age and Iron Age graves of the high-status persons, the warriors and foreigners, discovered near accessible and substantial salt deposits and in the key locations of salt traffic routes.

The Eneolithic graves that meet these conditions are known in Varna (northeastern Bulgaria), Giurgiuleşti (southwestern Moldova), Usatovo (southwestern Ukraine), as well as some Globular Amphorae graves in Subcarpathian Moldavia and East-Carpathian Transylvania. The Early Bronze Age high-status graves presumably related to the control of salt production and traffic are known in salt-rich areas of western Transylvania and Sub-Carpathian Muntenia. Most prominent Middle Bronze Age graves have been found in salt-rich areas of the Carpathian Curvature, at Monteoru and Cărlomăneşti. The Middle Bronze Age princely tumulus grave from Apa in northeast Crişana, the Late Bronze Age rich tumuli cemeteries from Lăpuş, Suci de Sus, and Bicz in northwest Transylvania, as well as the Nyírákarász-Gylahásza tumulus in the north-east Alföld, are distributed along the Someş River and its navigable tributaries that connect salt-rich regions of Transylvania and Maramureş to the salt-less Tisza - Danube Interfluve. In the North-Pontic area the Middle Bronze Age Borodino grave (?) and the Late Bronze Age Borisovka warrior tumulus grave may be linked with the Black Sea salt exploitation and traffic. The rich Early Iron Age Hallstatt cemetery in Lower Austria was connected with the Hallstatt salt mines, while the Hallein rich graves are connected to the Dürrnberg salt mines. Most of Skithian and Skithian-like graves in Transylvania are distributed in salt-rich areas, while in Alföld many of them are grouped along salt traffic routes.

The study of various aspects of funeral rites and inventory suggests various social groups involved in a way or another in the control of salt resources, salt production and salt traffic: local elites, warriors and salters. No prehistoric graves of salt miners could be clearly distinguished yet.

**Markers of social identity from Early Iron Age Burials in Thrace.
Notes on the grave goods from a warrior grave in the area of Maritsa valley**

Lyubava Konova (Sofia- Bulgaria)

This paper offers a discussion on some Early Iron Age grave goods uncovered on the territory of modern Bulgaria in terms of their significance in the process of social identity formation and demonstration. The focus of the study is an “unusual” grave located in the area to the south of Haemus mountain, along the Maritsa valley.

During rescue excavations in Tekirski bair locality, near the village of Novo selo, Stamboliyski Region, carried out by Dr. Kostadin Kisyov, a tumulus destroyed by grave looters has been explored. It was located on about 200 m. from an Early Iron Age settlement that was studied by the same researcher.

The funeral rite is inhumation in supine position; the body was placed on a stone platform and covered by stone heap. The inhumation practice does not differ significantly from the conventional one registered in a vast number of 8th – 7th centuries BC graves. However, some pieces of the grave inventory deserve special interest. Along with the iron sword that ranks among the over 20 known and published examples from the Bulgarian lands (most of them of an earlier date), iron spearheads with bronze plating, plastically decorated bronze *phalera* (shield boss?), gold appliqués and parts of gold plating were placed around the body. The specifics of the grave goods and some additional evidences of the quantity and quality of the gold objects, which were collected in the course of the police investigation, demonstrate clearly the prominent position of the deceased person as a warrior – aristocrat.

Taking into consideration the fact that our knowledge of the so called “burials of aristocrats” in EIA Thrace is based only on a few examples of excavated graves with rich inventory (Belogradets etc.) or stray finds (the gold cup from Belene and the treasure from Kazichene), the study has the following objectives:

- a/ to shed additional light on the phenomenon of the rich warrior graves on the territory of modern Bulgaria;
- b/ to discuss the specifics of the funeral gifts from Novo selo in a broader context by tracing some common features and/or local variations in comparison with contemporary examples within the neighboring areas of the Balkans

The Role of Amber in Forming the Social Identity of the Bronze Age Communities in Western Serbia Revealed through Funerary Practices

Marija Ljuština (Belgrade – Serbia)

Katarina Dmitrović (Čačak - Serbia)

Appearance of amber artefacts in the territory of Serbia can be connected with the Middle Bronze Age, which is later in comparison with the earliest finds of the Baltic amber in south Europe and the Mediterranean. The sites which yielded the amber products are neither numerous nor with even spatial distribution. The Middle Bronze Age finds are grouped inside borders of two geographical units of the central Balkans: the one in Western Serbia, comprising the basins of the rivers Drina and West Morava (sites Belotić-Šumar, Bela Crkva-Cerik Bandera, Banjevac-Jovanin Breg, Brezjak-Paulje, Vranjani-Veliki Lug and Jančići-Ravnine) and the other in the region of Kosovo and Metohija. In all of the cases, the amber finds have funerary context.

The amber from the Bronze Age graves in Western Serbia most probably came to the region from Pannonia, from where numerous cultural impulses of the Tumulus culture influenced the local communities now defined as the West Serbian group of the Middle Bronze Age or the Brezjak group. Recent studies recognised the Belegiš culture as the most important transmitter. Amber is a common product in the Middle Bronze Age of central Europe, so the finds from the western part of Serbia can be considered an extension, branch of the amber road, by which it reaches southern regions all the way to the Mycenaean centres, starting from central Europe and Pannonia.

Reflection of events at the turn of the Middle to Late Bronze Age can be easily recognised in funerary practices, with amber as an important part of grave inventory. The role of amber in forming the social identity of the local communities in Western Serbia can be comprehended having in mind that the rest of the grave inventory is opulent, comprising pottery, bronze jewellery and accessories. It is presumed that the amber decorated the attire of the individuals, possibly socially prominent, but certainly belonging to connected cultures and cultural groups. It is possible that placing the amber in the grave is actually putting the emphasis on the connectivity. The amber, albeit present in small amounts, reveals the importance of this precious resin, the procurement of which was not an easy and safe assignment.

Reflection of the status and social prestige in the funeral rite and ritual of the communities in the Prut-Danube-Dniester space in the second half of the 1st millennium BC

Ion Niculiță, Andrei Corobcean (Chișinău – Rep. of Moldova)

The evolution of the social stratification of prehistoric communities can be traced mainly on the basis of the analysis of the funeral rite and ritual, which in most cases are normative and regulatory for a culture. Archaeological investigations carried out on the burial mounds and ground burials provided relevant materials, the study of which contributes substantially to the coverage of the processes of social stratification of communities in the discussed space in the 6th-3rd centuries BC.

The first category of burials are those made in sumptuous structures of wood and stone, in which the dead, incinerated or inhumated, were accompanied by sacrificed animals, weapons, jewelry made of precious metals, and pottery. Among them there are the burials from Dolineni, Seliște, Pârjolteni, and Cosăuți.

The burials at Dolineni represent a sepulchral pit surrounded by a rectangular cromlech of stone slabs. The grave chamber was built using a wooden framework. Human remains and calcified bones mixed with pieces of charred wood, a disturbed skeleton of a horse and other animal bones were found inside the grave chamber. The grave goods consist of bronze arrowheads with three edges, some with a barb, remnants of a gorytos, 150 plates of an iron chain mail, and the pottery, of which four vessels are restorable. In Seliște, the sepulchral pit was rectangular, ranging in size from 170×170 to 400×200 cm. The vertical walls were lined with rods and clay, and then purified with fire. The calcified bones of the dead were put in an urn or in pits.

The burial of the 4th-3rd centuries BC at Cosăuți was made in a pit with the walls protected by a layer of stone blocks with clay binder. Inside it there were two rectangular wooden constructions placed one inside the other. The remains of a disturbed human skeleton, three skeletons of horses and one of a dog were found there. Among the bones of the horses, there were iron plates of a chain mail, bronze arrowheads, and a round silver plate. Inside the construction there were the remains of a wooden structure built in the shape of a log cabin where the remains of a human skeleton, 10 iron plates of a chain mail, and two bronze arrowheads were found. The second category is burials in simple pits, with or without urns, with modest grave goods.

The analysis of funerary complexes illustrates the complexity of the social structure of the respective communities. Some reflect the symbolism of the prominent status of the deceased and are intended for the leaders of residential centers. Others may suggest the belonging of the deceased to a category of priests, military.

Funerals and Social Status at the Sarmatians from a Border Area - Wallachia and Moldavia

Liana Oța, Valeriu Sîrbu (Bucharest - Romania)

Studies about the social system of the Sarmatians, in general or with reference to particular cases, are still few in the present stage of the research. The main reason consists in the pastoral way of life of the Sarmatian communities, from which derive some particular features. One of them lies in the fact that a nomadic way of life does not offer large opportunities for considerable accumulation of goods. Another characteristic feature is represented by the absence of settlements in vast areas, so that the only archaeological discoveries allowing the reconstruction of the Sarmatian society are the graves. However, graves are not an objective reflection of the social realities, but an interpretation, sometimes even a transformation of them, which requires a maximum of caution regarding the conclusions that can be drawn.

Besides the two above mentioned particular features, derived from the specific way of life of the Sarmatian communities, when the attention focuses on border areas, such as Wallachia and Moldavia, the political realities should be also taken into account. The Sarmatian communities entered Wallachia with the agreement and under the supervision of the Roman Empire, which seems to have a certain influence on the funerary ritual, at least of the so-called "elite graves" since the beginning (late 1st – early 2nd centuries AD). Even if in the case of Moldavia (more precisely the area between the Carpathians and the Prut River) the assumption of the Roman control cannot be argued, the secondary, perhaps even subordinated role played by the Sarmatians from Moldavia in the relations with the Dacians seems to have the same effects on funerary ritual.

Taking into account all these difficulties, the authors attention will be focused on that specific features of the funerary ritual and inventory that might suggest some clues about the social status of the deceased.

Group of the Burials and “Graves” of Mala Kopanya

Igor Prokhnenko (Uzhhorod - Ukraine)

Mala Kopanya was the largest fortified settlement of the Dacian culture of 1st century B.C. – 1st century A.D. in the Upper Tisza region. The systematic research of the site was started by the expedition of Uzhhorod national university in 1977. Two locations of the graves are founded near the main system of fortification. One group of the burials situated on the territory of Seredniy Hrunok. The majority of the cremation-burials were destroyed during active agriculture works in 1936. The discovered complexes of the warriors graves (bones, pottery, swords, spearheads and shield umbos) was dated to the second half of the 1st – start of the 2nd century A.D. One of the pottery graves consisted from 4.1 kg of the human bones and attributed as common burials of the some peoples.

Another necropolis was discovered by common Ukrainian-Romanian expedition of the territory of Chellenytsya. After the excavation of 6934 sq.m conducted in the course of six years there were discovered 24 burials and 9 other bones less complexes of the weapons. Also, a great number of the material was founded in culture stratum. The discovered items included weapons, horse harness, jewelry and garments, coins and some pottery. Clusters of weapons were found in separate areas during the research of Chellenytsya. There were no calcined bones found among them. The clusters were defined as complexes of the Dacian warriors, who died on the far lands in the struggle with the Celts. Hundreds of objects were found during the research of sacred center in the complexes and burials. These objects were connected to armament, riders' equipment, bits and their various details, knives, a small group of ornaments and garments, clay vessels and coins. The complexes with buried weapons included double-edged Celtic swords, sicaes, spearheads and dart heads, umbos, fibulae and pottery. Similar ritual and inventory can be found at the sites of Padea – Panagyurski kolonii.

The existence period of the sacral center of Chellenytsya is closely connected to the foundation date of the fortified settlement. The analysis of the main chronological indicators allows to define the functional time of sacral place in the LTD1 stage. It responds to the absolute dating of 120-60/50 B.C.

Ones more sacral territory is situated at the southern border of the main location of the sacral complex. It strongly differs from the main location of the site in its structure and material. Only six fibulae and five coins can be considered as chronological indicators. The oldest coin is the denarius of Naevius Galba (78-75 B.C.), the youngest – denarius of Augustus issued in 27 B.C.

The analysis of the material discovered during the excavations of the sacral center and group of the burials of Mala Kopanya provides reasons to consider this place as a unique Dacian archaeological site in the Upper Tisza region.

Old finds, new approaches. A possible marker of mounted warriors in Ferigile group

Dragoş Măndescu (Piteşti – Romania)

The paper resumes the debate on the weight and significance of the riders' graves in the South Carpathian necropolises belonging to Ferigile cultural milieu from the end of the Early Iron Age. An old but unpublished discovery from an incineration grave with weapons and horse-harness items in Ferigile necropolis, namely a small hollow tubular item in bone decorated with geometric motifs, is being redeemed. This kind of artifact is unique among the grave goods in the necropolises to the South of the Carpathians, but knows convincing analogies in the Szentes-Vekerzug group, where such kind of items are interpreted as whip components.

The structure of the grave goods of the burial to the bone item belonged (the main grave under the barrow 69) is broadly the same as those from the Szentes-Vekerzug group with such kind of bone artefacts, which implies a certain identity and status consistency of these dead in their communities. In this way, a new marker for warrior riders from Ferigile cultural milieu might be outlined for the first time in the eponymous necropolis.

Craftsmanship and identity. Tools and utensils in La Tène graves from the eastern Carpathian Basin

Aurel Rustoiu (Cluj-Napoca - Romania)

Iosif Vasile Ferencz (Deva - Romania)

The crafts and craftsmanship of past societies are among the most discussed topics in archaeology mostly due to the numerous traces of manufacturing activities which were identified on different sites. A series of funerary contexts hints to the social role and status of the craftsmen within the communities in question through the manner in which their identity is expressed.

This paper aims to discuss some important discoveries from the cemeteries located in the eastern Carpathian Basin. For example, at Vác and Ludas in eastern Hungary or at Pişcolt, Fântânele–Dâmbu Popii, Fântânele–La Gâța and Galații Bistriței in Transylvania were found graves containing various tools and other utensils used in carpentry, leather processing, blacksmithing or surgery. Their presence reflects the mourners' intention of deliberately expressing a particular identity and also allows the identification of certain individuals who specialised in these activities.

Another scope of this paper is to analyse the social status of the artisans according to their funerary inventories, by comparing them with other graves from specific cemeteries.

About the funerary customs from the hilly and mountaneous region of Northern Oltenia in the Bronze Age

Cristian Schuster (Bucharest - Romania)

Dumitru Hortopan (Tg. Jiu - Romania)

The records referring to the funerary customs from the mentioned region are rather poor in information. This refers to the preceding period to the Bronze Age and also to that specific time. For instance, there is not much data about the burials of the Coțofeni Culture. We could mention here the necropolis from Ostrovul Șimian (Mehedinți County), as well as the burials from Ostrovul Corbului (Mehedinți County) and Peștera Muierilor (Gorj County).

The Early Bronze Age is rather well represented by funerary vestiges. The necropoli from Milostea and Costești, both from the Vâlcea County, were assigned to the Yamnaya Culture, while the cemetery from Vârtopu-Ciuperceni (Gorj County) and the single burial from Govora Sat-Runcuri (Vâlcea County) were attributed to the Glina one.

For the Middle and Late Bronze Age we should mention the burials from Râmnicu Vâlcea, Godeanu (Mehedinți County), both included between the sites of the Verbicioara Culture.

The funerary rites and rituals would be also discussed, trying to make analogies with funerary monuments coming from the neighboring regions.

The version of the interpretation of the graves of heavily armed Scythian warriors in the South of Eastern Europe

Sergey Skoryi (Kyiv - Ukraine)

My report is devoted to the group of graves of heavily armed Scythian warriors (VI–IV centuries BC), found in various regions of South Eastern Europe.

In my opinion, there are no special grounds for considering them, both as burials of the Scythian elite at various levels, and as warriors-druzhinniks.

A version is proposed to see in them some mercenaries fighting on the side of certain warring factions of the Steppe Scythia and the Forest-Steppe tribes.

Lyre-shaped Pendants from the Scythian Burials of the North-West Pontic region

Vitalie Sinica (Tiraspol – Rep. of Moldova)

Lyre-shaped pendants with conic and snake-head endings were found in 12 Scythian burials of the North-West Pontic region like Glinoe/“Sluiceway” 10/3; Gradeshka 10/1, 15/1; Divizia 20/2; Kotlovina-I 6/2; Kugurlui 8/1, 17/2, 31/1; Mresnota Mogila 9/1, 21/2; Tabaki 3/1; Hadzhider I 3/1. Seven items are made of bronze (Divizia 20/2, Glinoe / “Sluiceway” 10/3, Mresnota Mogila 9/1, Hadzhider I 3/1), the other are silver.

The earliest assemblage with a lyre-shaped pendant is the Divizia 20/2 burial of the late second quarter of the 4th century BC. A pair of lyre pendants was also found in the Glinoe/“Sluiceway” 10/3 burial, which is dated back to the third quarter of the 4th century BC. A pair of lyre-shaped pendants was discovered in the Khadzhide I 3/1 grave, which was sunk in the burial mound of the second half of the 4th century BC. A pair of lyre-shaped pendants comes from the Mresnota Mogila 9/1 burial of the second half of the 4th century BC. The catacomb grave of Kugurlui 17/2 can be dated within the framework of the second half of the 4th – the first half of the 3rd century BC. Catacombs graves of Gradeshka 10/1 and 15/1, Kotlovina-I 6/2, Kugurlui 8/1 and 31/1, Mresnota Mogila 21/2, Tabaki 3/1 were constructed in the 3rd century BC.

Almost all lyre-shaped pendants (except for the find from Gradeshka 10/1) have conical endings.

A pair of similar pendants is known outside the North-West Pontic region, but only in the barrow 28 near Kholodny Yar in the forest-steppe of the right bank of the Dnieper river. Its dating could be limited by the second half of 4th century BC.

Researchers suggest the Greek origin of these adornments basing on the casting moulds found in the West Pontic region (Histria), in the North-West Pontic region (Nikonion) and in the Crimea (Nymphaion). However, the items cast in these moulds differ from the pendants in the Scythian graves of the North-West Pontic region. Some of them have pyramidal endings (barrow 20 near Kholodny Yar, burial 4/5 of the Nikonion necropolis, barrow of 1886 of Nymphaion), and for their producing were used moulds similar to finds from Nikonion and Nymphaion. Other pendants were cast in forms similar to those found in Histria, their endings are decorated in the form of skittles with ring rollers below (Astanino 17/2, Frontovoye 41, etc.).

Lyre pendants from the Scythian burials of the North-West Pontic region with the conical endings represent another type of adornments of this type. Their endings are simple conical like the endings of bracelets, earrings, temple rings of the Thracian origin, and fibulae of Thracian type. Similar bronze pendants are known in the burial 312 (the turn of the 4th-3rd centuries BC) of the Apollonia Pontica necropolis, as well as in the Getian burial 61 (the second half of the 4th – the first half of the 3rd century BC) of the Histria-“Bent” cemetery in the West Black Sea region.

Only one lyre pendant (Gradeshka 10/1) has different shape of endings – in the form of snake heads, thus further emphasizing the Thracian origin of this type of adornments.

Dacian Funerary Findings (2nd-1st c. BC) from Floresti, Mehedinti County

Valeriu Sîrbu (Buchareat – Romania)

Marin Neagoe (Drobeta Turnu Severin -Romania)

Two of the five complexes with grave goods found contained incinerated bones, most probably human, while some of the graves contained also wood charcoal.

The archaeologists recovered a rich and varied inventory that consists, almost in its entirety, of weaponry and fighting gear: three daggers of the sica type and an iron sica scabbard, three swords and one sword scabbard, three lance heads and one shaft, three shield umbos and one bit. One may notice that there are three items of sica daggers, lances and shields. One has uncovered, in a complex, only a fragmented bit, that might indicate a knight, but it is not certain whether this deposition could be associated with any of the goods found in other graves.

All pieces had strong traces of burning and deterioration (bending or fragmenting), which points out an obvious ritualistic intention. The clothing accessories are scarce: two iron bracelets in a complex, a bronze plate item in another, and a bronze fibula found near a complex. In the miscellany category, we mention a bronze piece ("a lid") whose utility is difficult to determine.

We could state that the recovered inventory is specific to warriors, one of them being a rider. It is worth mentioning that only a small part of the complexes of the area has been surveyed. Based on the present information, there can be ascertained the existence of a Padea – Panaghiurski Kolonii – Mala Kopanya necropolis. The ensemble of rituals and inventory leads us to the conclusion that the dead were most probably Dacian warriors.

Dacian Warriors Graves in Southeastern Transylvania (2nd-1st centuries BC)

Valeriu Sîrbu (Bucharest – Romania)

Lucica Savu (Braşov – Romania)

Diana Dăvîncă (Deva - Romania)

In the more recent years, owing to treasure finders using a metal detector, the number of the graves found has significantly increased, therefore, a new analysis of the funerary vestiges in Southeast Transylvania will outline new archaeological realities.

The densest micro-area of new findings is placed between Rotbav and Crizbav, where, in the period between 2014 and 2016, were identified minimum eight/nine funerary complexes and numerous isolated pieces, all placed on the two sides of Valea Seacă, i.e., on a specific lay-out. The nearest Dacian sites in the area are the *davae* from Crizbav and *Feldioara-Dealul Cetăţii* and the settlement from Rotbav- *Căldăruşe*, with findings datable in the 2nd BC- 1st AD centuries. Therefore, if one considers the entirety of findings on a wider area, it becomes obvious that they were placed along an important route which connected the Codlea area with the Valley of Olt River.

Although all findings have been made with the metal detector, many have been surveyed in the field and the research of some has already been finished by archaeologists, which is why a number of useful data could be obtained.

The typological variety of the artifacts is remarkable: a) weaponry (swords, spears, sica daggers, knives); b) gear and trapping elements (spurs and bits); c) jewelry and clothing accessories (fibulae, clasps, buckles, pendants, and links); d) pottery. The structure of the inventory found proves that they belonged to warriors, some, to knights. It is also emphasized the extreme scarcity of pottery.

In what concerns the rites, it is noted that almost all pieces have been burnt, and the remains of cremated bones on some of them prove that they were placed on the pyre with the dead; the weapons were also bent (ritually 'killed'). All the pieces found are dated in the 2nd-1st centuries BC.

Given the fact that these findings are located in an area with Dacian *davae* and settlements, and the inventory and rites are, to a great extent, local, they attest that the dead were Dacian warriors. The findings in the most recent years indicate that the findings of the *Padea - Panaghiurski Kolonii - Mala Kopanja* type tend to cover all area inhabited by Dacians, a phenomenon which is now also attested in Southeastern Transylvania.

Tumuli graves near the Dacian residential centres (davae) east of the Carpathians (1st BC – 1st AD)

Valeriu Sîrbu (Bucharest – Romania)

Sebastian Matei (Buzău - Romania)

As it is well-known, during the last two and a half centuries before the Roman conquest (c. 150 BC-106 AD), in the area inhabited by Dacians, one notes a dramatic decrease (down to extinction) of the number of funerary vestiges, especially in the commoners' ranks. The cremation aristocratic tumuli and the flattened warrior graves are the only ones attested during this period, but in small amounts, in certain areas, and in chronological sequencing.

This study only refers to the tumuli graves in the Dacian residential centres east of the Carpathians (Brad, Răcățău and Poiana), all located on the Siret River valley. More than 40 tumuli have been identified near these davae, but only 12 have been surveyed so far, which is the reason why the general observation regarding their characteristics must be cautious. They are cremation graves tumuli with soil embankment, without urns, or just cenotaphs, that can be dated in the 1st century BC (it is, however, possible, that one or two tumuli in Poiana to date from the end of the 1st century BC or the beginning of the 1st century AD).

They also present a number of specific features compared with the tumuli in the rest of the areas inhabited by Geto-Dacians: a) the absence of the stone in the funerary organisation, b) the presence of large pits with soil bases inside or on the edges; c) the presence of hearths under the mantles; d) the cremated bones, where available, have been found on the pyre or in other areas under the mantle, in cylindrical pits dug in the large pits or in the filling of the large rectangular pits; e) scarce inventory (with a few exceptions) found in various areas of the funerary arrangements; f) the lack of representative pieces of weapons (swords, *sica* daggers, pikes, spears, helmets, shields, etc.).

This contrast between the tumuli arrangement, the great variety of rites, on the one hand, the scarcity of inventory and offering, on the other hand, can only be explained by profound changes in the religious views and the funeral rites of Dacian aristocracy.

The tumuli findings will be analysed in the relation to the residential centres nearby in order to compare the inventory in the two site types and to better comprehend the social status of the deceased.

Commemorative practices and monuments in the early Hellenistic cemetery of Kallatis

Valeriu Sîrbu, Magdalena Ştefan (Bucharest - Romania)

Kallatis, a Greek polis on the western coast of the Black sea, went through a considerable reconfiguration of its urban plan and territory division during first half of the 4th c. BC. Even if its foundation was supposed to be earlier, almost nothing is known archaeologically from its first phase.

At the end of the Classical age – beginning of the Hellenistic period, its cemetery reached the largest extent, with considerable sectors being reserved to mound graves – large constructions dedicated as resting places and identity markers for entire families. The organized spatial character of some sectors of the cemetery may suggest their reservation for individuals holding a special status, like the polis citizens, where the preservation of funerary lots and mounds lasted until the early Roman period. Even if the cemetery has almost disappeared in the last century, with only few well enough documented excavations available, there are still data implying that in Kallatis one can talk about the practice of honoring significant individuals and holding commemorative rituals of ancestors and heroes.

This study will present several aspects of the commemorative rituals and reference to ancestors practices attested in the Hellenistic cemetery of Kallatis drawing information from: the spatial organization of the cemetery, the family character of the graves, the significance of monumental free standing funerary architecture and the deposition of offerings other than the funerary inventories – at the moment of the burial or later.

For the last two situations, the authors will make reference to a newly researched monumental grave, at *Movila Documaci*, that can be considered one of the most impressive tumuli ensembles known in the region, relevant for how the ancient poleis handled their political and symbolical relations with the Macedonian Kingdoms of the early Hellenistic period.

Elusive ancient identities between ethnicity and social status. An analysis of Hellenistic chamber tombs on the Western Black Sea Coast

Magdalena Ștefan, Dan Ștefan (Bucharest - Romania)

For the Classical and Hellenistic period, the ostentatious graves found inside cemeteries of Greek cities founded in northern lands, like in Thrace or Crimea, considered therefore 'too rich' or displaying unusually elaborate architecture, were traditionally labeled in the literature as non- Greek, despite the fact that there is no such thing as a unique Greek style of burial and that strict binomic interpretations would simply fail to perceive any mixture or dynamic social and cultural evolution.

Such was the case of groups of tumuli graves covering chamber tombs dated in the early Hellenistic period - found in vicinity of both ancient Greek cities of Odessos and Kallatis, on the western Black Sea, which stand as an example in which power and richness display is commonly perceived by scholars as a trade mark of Barbarian identity, in this case Thracian or Scythians dynasts.

By making reference to the historical events through which Kallatis and Odessos became parts of the larger supra-regional arena of the early Hellenistic period, the authors will argue for a change of focus in the case of these graves from their ethnic interpretation to their symbolic meaning in a political struggle fueled by Macedonian interests.

The Late Scythians and Sarmatians: allies or vanquished?

Oleksandr Symonenko, Yelyzaveta Arkhypova (Kyiv - Ukraine)

The relationship of the Sarmatians with their sedentary neighbors – the Late Scythians is long time under discussion. Points of view are different: from unequivocally hostile to the allied and even marital relations. Such polar conclusions are often made on the basis of the same literary sources and archaeological records.

Among the grave goods in the burials of Late Scythian elite of the 1st – early 2nd century AD in the Crimea (Ust-Almynski and Zavetnoye burial grounds) the artefacts characteristic for synchronous Sarmatian graves have been discovered, such as Chinese lacquer caskets, metal sets of status belts, tamga-signs. There is a hypothesis according which in the second half of the 1st century AD the Sarmatians established the political domination over the Late Scythian society. The appearance of the Sarmatian elements in the culture of the Late Scythians coincides in time with the appearance of Alans in the Northern Pontic region. From the frontier of the Han Empire the Alans brought with them those exotic Chinese objects.

The traces of Sarmatization one can watch in the Late Scythian crypts of the Lower Dnieper. Among the finds from looted crypt 113 of Chervony Mayak burial ground there are the half of ivory pyxis with two cut Sarmatian tamgas dating from the 1st to the mid-2nd century AD. In the tomb 121 the Scythian warrior equipped and armed as a noble Sarmatian was buried: he wore the Xiungnu-Sarmatian status belt with double buckles and the bronze "royal" Sarmatian colben armband. According to Sarmatian custom the dagger was fastened to the right thigh of the warrior, and the long sword of Parthian type lay aside him. Near his feet the horse harness was placed. The grave dates to the first half of the 2nd century AD.

The warrior from Chervony Mayak wore the status dress and equipment of the Sarmatian nobleman though he was the Scythian judging by the funeral rite. Such phenomenon is noted in the societies that have fallen into political dependence on conquerors. The local elite borrowed the costume, weapons, and sometimes language, mythology, and even the name of the conquerors (North Caucasian Alans, Bulgarians). The elements of the Sarmatian military and noble subculture in the Late Scythian relics of the 1st – mid-2nd century AD do not exclude the political dependence of the Late Scythians on the numerous and powerful tribes of the Alan union who migrated to the Northern Pontic region from the Inner Asia.

The challenge of social markers: Archaeology of Death and Mortuary Practices in Early Iron Age in the Middle Dniester Region

Aurel Zanoci, Mihail Băț (Chișinău – Rep. of Moldova)

In the early Iron Age, the Middle Dniester Region was inhabited by many sedentary communities, whose remains have been identified as belonging to several archeological cultures: Holercani-Hansca (12th-11th century BC) → Cozia-Saharna (10th-9th centuries BC) → Basarabi-Șoldănești (8th-7th centuries BC).

For the Holercani-Hansca culture we do not have enough data at the moment to draw some conclusions about the mortuary practices of human communities during this period.

The funerary practices of the Cozia-Saharna communities are better known. They are very diverse and involve the use of inhumation and incineration, double inhumation, deposition of human skulls and human bones, and other post-deposition interventions such as re-inhumation or bone displacement. Funerary discoveries come from necropolises (Saharna „Gura Hulboacei”, Saharna „Țiglău”, Alcedar etc.) and settlements (Saharna Mare/„Dealul Mănăstirii”, Glinjeni „La Șanț”).

Very important for understanding the funerary behavior of the Cozia-Saharna communities is the recent discovery from Saharna Mare/„Dealul Mănăstirii”, where a skeleton of a man, with a death age of around 35-45 years, has been discovered in a tronconical shaped pit. The ash layer and the secondary burning traces on the artifacts which were deposited together with the deceased suggest that the pit was “purified”. Since the skeleton was deposited on a layer of ceramic fragments placed directly on the bottom of the pit, we believe this pit could have been made for this particular funeral complex. The traces of small pits found at the bottom of the funeral complex are remains probably from a construction designed to protect the burial pit, but also to restrict access to the deceased. It is important to remember that all funerary discoveries from Saharna Mare/„Dealul Mănăstirii” settlement come from the southwestern part of the site, which could indicate the existence of a public space for rituals and funerals. The deposition of skeletons and human remains in settlements, as well as the social status of individuals, is interpreted differently, being associated, on the one hand, with human sacrifices and ritual offerings, and on the other hand – with funerals of people from a low social class (slaves, prisoners).

In the burial mounds around the settlements Saharna „Gura Hulboacei” and Saharna „Țiglău” inhumation is predominant, while incineration is a secondary funerary ritual. The type and quantity of objects deposited, especially of prestige goods, can represent the expression of a social hierarchy. The funerary objects recovered could indicate a high and recognized social status of the deceased. The special care of the community for this high social category is shown by the use of stone in building funerary structures. An indicator of a high social status could also be the practice of a funerary banquet.

The mortuary practices of Basarabi-Șoldănești culture communities in the Middle Dniester Region are known thanks to the research of the necropolis of Șoldănești II and Mateuți „Curtaia”, where incineration is predominant. The analysis of burial rituals and funerary inventory makes it possible to distinguish the graves with a special status. Also, the discovery of spearheads in the necropolis of Mateuți „Curtaia” could be linked to the existence of a warrior elite.

The study of funerary monuments of communities living in the Middle Dniester Region during the Early Iron Age, provides important data on funeral standards and the relevance of mortuary practices, which depended both on the social status of the deceased and the level of organization of society which showed special care for the deceased.

NOTES

