

The Necropolis near the Village of Durankulak, Dobritch Region

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Over 1200 burials from the Durankulak dwelling mound were studied in the period 1975-1991. They belong to different periods - to the second half of the Neolithic Age, to all stages of the Chalcolithic Age and to Early Bronze and Iron Ages. The necropolis is situated on the West side of the lake and covers an area of 12 decars. The longer side of the terrain is North-South oriented and forms a cape of the Dobrudza plateau. Its Eastern side is sloping easily towards the lake while the Southern slope is steeper and reaches a narrow ravine.

The Neolithic and the Chalcolithic burials are oriented from North to South in a terrace-like manner. Neolithic burials are concentrated in the highest Northern part of the terrain near the Neolithic settlement. Their total number is 300 and all of them are dug in a yellow loam at a depth between 1.10 and 2.10 m. The distribution of the burials is not uniform and they are more numerous in certain places - for example, 12 burials were studied in square - 18 with dimensions 5x5 m. One possible interpretation of this phenomenon is the preliminary parceling out of the terrain and its division among the different kinds or families of the Neolithic community. The burials had been carried out by laying the dead bodies in grave pits. The shape and the dimensions of the latter are hardly recognizable in the loam. All the graves are with a North-South orientation with the head to the North.

The dead bodies had been placed in the graves in three positions: straight supine (usually men), hocker to the left and hocker to the right (usually women). When the body is in the former position the arms are placed differently - crossed on the chest, bent at the elbows with palms on the shoulders and one on top of the other on the pelvis. In hoker position the body is bent to various degree and the arms are bent at the elbows with palms on the face. Nine east-West oriented burials were found in one sector of the necropolis. Here the body was placed in the pit in a seated position.

70 funeral feasts were studied within the borders of the Neolithic necropolis. 36 of them could not be associated with any particular burials. The remains of the funeral feasts consist of animal skulls and bones and of shards from the broken in situ pottery vessels in which the food and the drinks (beer, water) had been stored. The relativ small number of the funeral feasts suggests that the service had been performed in cycles for all the deads. 34 funeral feasts were associated with certain burials since the remains are found immediatly above the grave pit and the skeleton or the animal skulls in other cases had been placed in the pit alongside the body. According to the

buried remains the funeral feasts are associated with the graves of 16 males, 12 females, 3 children and 3 unidentified because of their bad condition. Sacrificial animals at these funeral feasts had been: cattle, sheep or goats, swines, dogs, wild donkeys, stags and wild boars. The most frequently found is the cattle.

Next comes the wild donkey and the small herbivorous animals as sheep, goats etc. In some cases - graves nos. 9, 11, 145 etc - the body had been covered with sherds of big pottery vessels broken at the end of the memorial service. Funeral offerings are found in nearly half of the Neolithic burials - ceramic vessels, stone and flint tools, ornaments made of various materials, idols and animal bones. Ceramic vessels are most frequently found as funeral offerings. They had been placed at the mouth of the dead or around the head. The clay used, the baking conditions, the smaller scale of the vessels all suggest that they had been made especially for the dead. The vessels vary both in colour - black, gray, gray-buff or brown - and in shape - cylindrical beakers with flat or concave bottom, biconical bowls and vase-like vessels with cylindrical neck and spherical body. Their decoration consists of pricked ornaments - straight or zigzag lines, triangles and rhombi.

Vessels with horizontal or oblique flutes are also found but rarely. The tools found are: stone adzes and axes, flint lamellae and arrowheads, stone for arrow straightening etc. Jewels are found in 79 burials - 26% of the Neolithic graves. They are made of: the shells of the Mediterranean Mollusk species *Spondylus* and *Dentalium*, beads made of stag teeth, bone, lignite coals and carnelian. Adornments were found in 39 male, 11 female, 24 children and 5 destroyed burials. Markedly rich in ornaments are 12 male burials, 3 female burials and 7 burials of children. The richest and the most varied are those found in male burials. The artifacts found in male burials are made of 3 to 7 material varieties while the ornaments found in the graves of children and woman are made of 2-3 types of material and maximum 2 types, respectively. The Neolithic *Spondylus* bracelets are relatively broad - 3 to 11 cm - and had been worn mostly above the elbow.

One interesting ornament is the schematically represented human figure-idol made of a *Spondylus* shell. Their total number is 5. Probably this representation is the archetype of the widely spread bone idols also worn as medallions or as pendants in strings of beads made of various materials. The statistical analysis of the funeral offerings found in the Neolithic burials gives reason to conclude that the man held the ruling position in that society.

The Neolithic burials studied from the Durankulak necropolis are dated to the end of the Middle or the Late Neolithic periods and they belong to the I - III stage of the Hamangia culture. Chalcolithic burials are situated on the slopes, southwards from the Neolithic burials and follow the configuration of the terrain in south-south-west direction. Compared with the earlier burials these are more uniformly distributed over the area and a tendency towards an arrangement in rows is observed. The

Chalcolithic burials are dug in yellow loam and their shape and dimensions are hard to be distinguished in the terrain too. A new feature of the funeral rite had been established during the Chalcolithic Age - the marking of the grave with stone slabs. Nearly 90% of the burials from that period had a stone cover at the surface. Several ways of grave-marking are recorded: Coverings consisting of different number - 1 to 15 - of stone slabs horizontally arranged in a row with North-South orientation. These had been placed after the grave pit had been filled with earth. Sometimes the burials are displaced and tilted in various directions because of the soil subsidence. The skeletons in such burials are found at a depth of 0.10 - 0.40 m.

This type of grave-marking is to be found all over the area of the Chalcolithic sector of the necropolis but it predominates in the Eastern part. Vertically stuck stone slabs set up in a row at the East or at the West side of the grave pit. The skeletons are found at the level of the lower end of the stone slabs. This fact suggests that the latter are placed in the pit before the body. This type of marking predominates in the Southeastern part of the sector. Vertically stuck stone slabs with thickness of 0.05 to 0.10 m which frame the grave pit with rectangular borders. Usually the skeletons are found at a depth of about 0.05 - 0.10 m below the lower end of the slabs. Usually the burials without stone cover are without funeral offerings too and such burials are found at the border-line with the Neolithic graves.

A small part of the rich burials are also without stone slabs but they belong to the Early Chalcolithic period - IV stage of the Hamangia culture. Both the grave-markings and the skeletons are with a North-South orientation and the head is to the North with slight deviations in accordance with the season. The laying of the bodies had been done in the following positions: straight supine (usually men); hocker to the right (usually women); hocker to the left or backwards (a small number of both sexes). Generally here the ceramic vessels had been placed near the feet - a tradition specific for the inner lands of the country. Probably these are graves of strangers buried according to their birthplace tradition. In some cases the body had been placed with the head to the East or to the South. Children are buried in both positions - straight supine and Hocker to the right but their sex is hard to be determined. 40 symbolic burials, (i.e. burials containing only various funeral offerings but without a buried body), are studied within the limits of the Chalcolithic necropolis.

Four burials of idols stand out from the group of the cenotaphs - 3 female and 1 male. The idols are made of clay and are accompanied by offerings similar to those from the graves of rich males and females. A further regularity was followed during the study of the Chalcolithic necropolis - the depth of the graves is directly dependent on the sex and age of the dead. The burials of children without funeral offerings are the most shallow - at a depth between 0.35 and 0.45 m. Next come the burials of children with funeral offerings - at a depth between 0.50 and 0.60 m; the burials of women found at a depth between 0.70 and 1.40 m; and the deepest

are those of men - at a depth between 1.50 and 2.10 m. The cenotaphs are studied at various depths but the pattern is the same - richer burials are deeper. 14 graves of men and women with layers of ashes between the covering and the skeleton or below the skeleton belong to the Chalcolithic necropolis.

Stripes of white, red or black paint - a deposition after the decomposition of the cloths - are found on various parts of the skeletons both in male and female burials. Broad - 3 to 5 cm - stripes of red paint on the forehead are most frequently found. This coloured pattern suggests that the cloths had been coloured only in red or in alternating stripes of white and red or of red and black paint.

The funeral offerings found in these graves vary both in quality and in diversity as was the case with those from the Neolithic necropolis. The burials without offerings are relatively rare. The variety of funeral offerings include: ceramic vessels; tools and weapons made of flint, stone, bone or cooper; ornaments made of various raw materials; idols and amulets. The ceramic vessels are the most frequently found items accompanying the dead as was in the Neolithic period. Again the vessels are specially made for the burial rites and both the quality of clay and of the baking yields to those used in the everyday life.

The type of the artifacts created for the male and the female burials had been standardized and respected. In the rich male burials the vessels had been placed above and around the head - the smaller had been placed in front of the mouth or on the chest. They include: stands (hollow vessels with prismatic or cylindrical shapes) on which smaller vessels with lids are often found; the so called C fruit dishT (a deep bowl with a tall hollow foot); cups; vessels with step-like outlines (a smaller version of the large store-vessels used in the everyday life). The vessels found in female burials include: cups, bowls, dishes and vessels with step-like outlines. These had been placed around and above the head, on the belly or in front of the mouth.

The ceramic vessels in the symbolic burials are placed below the northern end of the stone covering, i.e. as if they mark the place of the head. In the cenotaphs where antler axe-scepters were found the ceramic vessels repeat the standard set of shapes characteristic of the rich male burials while in the poorer symbolic graves the set of ceramics follows the pattern of the female burials. The decoration of the ceramic vessels is rich and varied both in style and in technology. It follows the pattern of the ceramic decorations of the Varna culture wide-spread along the Black Sea. The tools found are: flint lamellae, stone axes and adzes, cooper and bone awls etc. These are the most frequently found types of tools characteristic of that epoch. Usually they are worn out and useless which is another proof of their symbolic purpose as offerings to a dead.

Copper axes and wedges are found only in four male burials. Flint lamellae, spindle vertebrae, awls and the so called C sewing setsT comprising a flint lamella, a stone plainishing tool, a bone awl or needle, a freshwater shell and a piece of red

ochre are found in female burials. Usually the C sewing set had been placed in a lid-ded pottery vessel. The antler axe-scepters are impressive among the items and only 35 of them are found - 25 in rich male burials and 10 in symbolic graves. They had been placed on the chest or on the left shoulder while the right hand had been placed as if it held the haft of the scepter. The ornaments made of bone, Spondylus and Dentalium shells, copper, malachite, gold, lignite coals and chalcedony are most variable. They are: diadems of Spondylus or rectangular bone plates; copper and Spondylus bracelets; copper rings; beads of Spondylus, malachite, copper, gold, bone and chalcedony; Spondylus appliques which had been sewn on garments; copper plates bound over the front teeth (women); copper and gold earrings (women); belts made of Spondylus and malachite beads etc. A gold anthropomorphic amulet was found in a female burial and a concave bone idol was found in one male burial.

The preliminary data and analysis of the Chalcolithic burials studied in Durankulak give reason to claim that during the whole period the man held a chief position in the life of the community. Both the quality and the quantity of the items which accompanied them in the world of the dead considerably differ as compared to those in the burials of women and children. No doubt, the complete study of the whole data gathered from the necropolis will create a relatively true picture of the social, economical and culture relations in the Chalcolithic communities.

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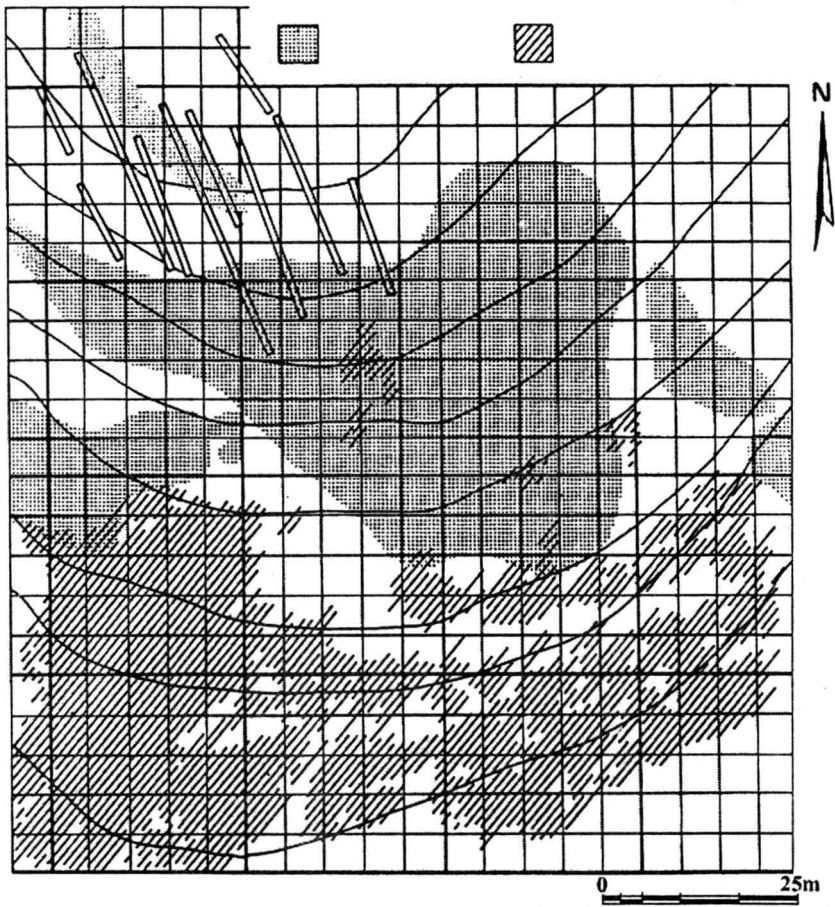


Fig. 1. The plan of the necropolis.



Fig. 2. Neolithic burial 643



Fig. 3. Chalcolithic burial 350