

SETTLEMENTS OF LIFE AND DEATH. STUDIES FROM PREHISTORY TO MIDDLE AGES

Florin GOGÂLTAN

Institute of Archaeology and Art History, Cluj-Napoca, Romania

e-mail: floringogaltan@gmail.com

Sorin-Cristian AILINCĂI

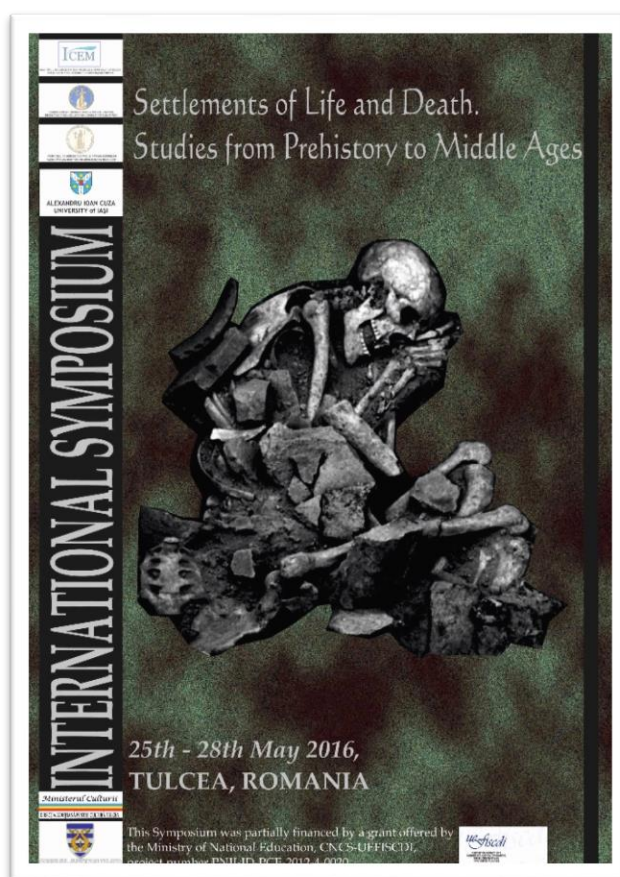
"Gavrilă Simion" Eco-Museum Research Institute, Tulcea, Romania,

e-mail: sailincai@gmail.com

The deposition of human bones in settlements is a worldwide spread funerary phenomenon, documented in different periods and contexts. Archaeologically speaking, it consists of skeletons or parts of human skeletons, with or without anatomical connection, deposited in disused habitation structures (pits, dwellings). This type of treatment of the human body after death is often labelled as "macabre" findings, "atypical" or "irregular" burials.

As this practice is often contemporary with cemeteries, the hypotheses regarding the status of the individuals deposited in the settlements are numerous. On the one hand, there are the discoveries of rich graves, which prove the high social position of the buried individuals; on the other hand, there are human bones found in domestic context which were considered to be the result of human sacrifices or burials of persons of special status: slaves, war prisoners, heretics, pariahs, convicts, etc. The study of this practice is completed by ethnographic sources indicating that human societies practiced complex funerary rituals, some of them involving manipulations and treatments of the body starting from the time of death until final deposition.

Considering all these situations, we can ponder upon the nature of the ritual mechanisms in a society that created a bound between the living and the dead by keeping the remains of certain persons in the living habitat.



*

The presence of human bones in prehistoric settlements was a constant meditation subject for the editors of the present volume. This is the reason we tried to be informed on all the finds from Romania and neighbouring countries. The international symposium held in Frankfurt am Main in February 2012, followed by the publication in 2013 of a volume dedicated to the subject of “irregular” burials¹ represented for us an incentive for attempting a similar course of action. The methodological and theoretical approach of this subject reached today a level which could be surpassed only by publishing new finds.

The resumption of financing the research grants from Romania in the beginning of 2016 made possible the organisation of an international symposium with the main purpose of discussing concrete situations concerning the presence of



human bones inside settlements. The geographical frame covers the Carpathian Basin and the extra-Carpathian areas. It was decided that the discussions should cover a longer timeframe, from prehistory to the Middle Ages, in order to obtain a larger perspective on this phenomenon. Even if the time we had at our disposal for organising the event was really short, we managed to convince a large number of friends and colleagues to join our debate. The symposium took place in Tulcea, during the 25th-28th of May 2016, with the financial support of a grant offered by the Ministry of National Education, CNCS-UEFISCDI, project number PNII-ID-PCE-2012-4-0020 (grant director Florin Gogâltan) and “Gavrilă Simion” Eco-Museum Research Institute Tulcea (director Sorin-Cristian Ailincăi). Two other institutions were implicated as co-organisers: the “Vasile Pârvan” Institute of Archaeology, Bucharest (Radu Băjenaru) and “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University of Iași (Neculai Bolohan).

In order to benefit of a one-day trip in the Danube Delta, well-deserved for the effort of taking part in this symposium, we decided to combine presentations in an open session with a poster presentation. The following presentations were held in the open session: Adrian Doboș, *A critical perspective on the Middle Paleolithic burials*; Raluca Kogălniceanu, Angela Simalcsik, Cristian Eduard Ștefan, *The dead among the living in the Hamangia culture*; Alexandra Anders, *The dead among the living. Manipulation of burials during the Neolithic in the Polgár region (NE Hungary)*; Cătălin Lazăr, Andrei Soficaru, Vasile Opreș, *Between the living and the dead: the scattered bones story from Sultana-Malu Roșu site (Romania)*; Szilvia Fábíán, Márta Daróczi-Szabó, Tibor Marton, Gábor Serlegi, Helen D. Donoghue, Tamás Hajdu, Kitty Köhler, Antónia Marcsik, *Multidisciplinary analysis of human depositions at a late Copper Age site from Central Hungary*; Vajk Szeverényi, Julia Giblin, Tamás Hajdu, Gabriella Kulcsár, Anna Priskin,

¹ Müller-Scheeßel 2013. Other works on similar subjects: Băčvarov 2003; Murphy 2008; Boulestin, Baray 2012; Ailincăi 2015.

Viktória Kiss, *Human remains from Early and Middle Bronze Age settlements in Hungary*; Raluca Burlacu-Timofte, Florin Gogâltan, *Human Bone Remains in Bronze Age Tell Settlements of the Carpathian Basin*; Mihai Constantinescu, *Human Bones in Bronze Age Settlements in the Curvature Carpathians*; Liviu Marta, Zoltán Imecs, Zsolt Molnár, *Burials and Social-System in Middle Bronze Age Northwestern Romania*; Nicolae Cătălin Rîșcuța, Antoniu Tudor Marc, Ioan Alexandru Bărbat, *Children engravings in the Bronze Age settlement from Șoimuș-„Teleghi”, Hunedoara County*; Gábor Márkus, János Dani, Zsuzsa K.Zoffmann, Antónia Marcsik, *Man in the pit. Human remains on a Hajdúbajos/Pişcolt-Cehăluț type settlement from eastern Hungary*; Ágnes Király, *Between death and discovery - Taphonomic, sociological and cognitive aspects of investigating Late Bronze Age burials*; Antoniu Tudor Marc, Angelica Bălos, Ioana Lucia Barbu, Ioan Alexandru Bărbat, Marius Gheorghe Barbu, Mihaela Maria Barbu, *Deposition of human remains in the Early Hallstatt period at Măgura Uroiului, Hunedoara County*; Corina Borș, *The mass grave and other contexts containing human remains discovered in the Hallstatt-period site at Tărtăria – Podu Tărtăriei vest (Alba County, Romania)*; Mariana Egri, Aurel Rustoiu, *Body and matter transformations. Human burials in workshop kilns during the Late Iron Age*; Sorin Oanță-Marghitu, Emil Dumitrașcu, Sorin Cleșiu, Silviu Ene, Florentin Munteanu, Gabriel Vasile, *Funeral and domestic in the second Iron Age settlement at București-Băneasa, Strada Gârlei*; Irina Achim, *The intra urbem dead and burials in the North-Balkan area during the Late Antiquity. Traditional urbanism vs. new Christian anthropology?*; Silviu Oța, Liana Oța, *Burials Outside the Cemeteries Found in Orașul de Floci (Comm. of Giurgeni, Ialomița County)*. Due to objective reasons, Janusz Czebreszuk and Mateusz Jaeger could not attend the symposium in order to present their contribution *Human bones' deposition at the Early Bronze Age fortified settlement in Bruszczewo*, but, as it can be noticed, their paper concerning the settlement burials of the Únĕtice culture in Poland is part of the present volume.

A similar number of papers were present in the poster category: Cristian Eduard Ștefan, Răzvan Petcu, Gabriel Vasile, *Features with human bones from Șoimuș-La Avicola (Ferma 2), Hunedoara County*; Meda Toderaș, *Pietrele: Living and dying at the Lower Danube in the 5th millennium BC*; Stanislav Țerna, Angela Simalcsik, *Late Copper Age settlement burials from the Prut-Nistru interfluvium: an archaeological and anthropological approach*; Gabriel Bălan, Raluca Burlacu-Timofte, *A Pit with Child Bone Remains from the Bronze Age Settlement at Aiud-Groapa de gunoi (Alba County, Romania)*; Antoniu Tudor Marc, Costin Țuțuianu, Ioana Lucia Barbu, Ionuț Codrea, Marius Gheorghe Barbu, Cristina Bodo, Mihaela Maria Barbu, *A collective grave found in the Wietenberg settlement from Șoimuș-„Lângă Sat”, Hunedoara County*; Anca Popescu, *Selection and manipulation of human remains during the Bronze Age: the evidence from Costișa (eastern Romania)*; Cristinel Fântâneau, Adrian Bolog, Ovidiu Oargă, *Funeral discoveries in Gâmbaș, Alba County, Romania*; Maja Kašuba, *Siedlungsbestattungen als norm des Bestattungsritus der Frühen Eisenzeit im Östlichen Karpatenvorland*; Mihai Constantinescu, Sorin-Cristian Ailincăi, Mihaela Culea, *Human Bones in the Iron Age Settlement of Babadag, Tulcea County*; Rita E. Németh, Szilárd Sándor Gál, Rezi Botond, *The Bronze Age mass-grave from Voivodeni-La Școală (Mureș County)*; Aurel Rustoiu, Sándor Berecki, *Human interments in Late Iron Age settlements from the Sighișoara region (Mureș County, Romania)*; Raluca Burlacu-Timofte, Gabriel Bălan, *Dacian Prone Burial from Micești – Cigașe (Alba County, Romania)*; Neculai Bolohan, Carmen Simona Ionescu, Irinel Rotariu, *Uncovering a peculiar mass grave in Eastern Romania (Work in progress)*.

Also, due to financial reasons, the volume based on the symposium had to be finalised before the end of 2016. Our call received an affirmative answer from an unexpected great number of our colleagues. Cristian Ioan Popa and Ioan Alexandru Aldea, even if they did not participate in the symposium, re-discuss in their paper an older find from the settlement of Gligorești, Cluj county (a ceramic vessel containing extremely fragmented remains of a child skeleton), offering new data regarding the funerary customs of the Neolithic communities in Central Transylvania. The old excavations from Cernavodă were re-evaluated by Raluca Kogălniceanu, Angela Simalcsik and Cristian Eduard Ștefan in an attempt to discuss these human remains in the larger settlement(s)-cemetery(s) context of the entire Hamangia culture.

The articles focusing on the analysing the human bones depositions in Bronze Age settlements occupy the greatest part of the volume. In fact, the massive presence of human bones in settlements, either burials containing anatomically articulated skeletons or disarticulated human remains scattered through the archaeological layer represents a characteristic for this chronological framework. The extra-Carpathian area was investigated by case studies offered by the well-known settlements from Bruszczewo (Mateusz Jaeger, Janusz Czebreszuk, Jutta Kneisel and Johannes Müller) and Costișa (Anca Popescu, Andrei D. Soficaru and Monica Mărgărit). To these it can be added the synthesis on isolated human bones found in Bronze Age Monteoru culture sites (Mihai Constantinescu). The recent rescue excavations from Transylvania brought a series of new data also on the presence of disarticulated children bone remains or inhumation graves in the settlements of the Wietenberg ceramic style. The paper offered by Raluca Burlacu-Timofte and Gabriel Bălan on the find from *Aiud-Groapa de gunoi* represents a good opportunity to discuss funerary treatment of children (perinates in archaeology). Nicolae Cătălin Rîșcuță and Antoniu Tudor Marc are of the opinion that the children burials in the Bronze Age settlement from Șoimuș can be considered deviant in relation to the funerary standard of the Wietenberg culture. It is a well-known fact that most of the necropolises belonging to the Wietenberg ceramic style consist of incineration graves. The papers of Antoniu Tudor Marc, Ioana Lucia Barbu, Daniel Costin Țuțuianu, Marius Gheorghe Barbu, Ionuț Codrea, Mihaela Maria Barbu, Cristina Bodo, Anna Osterholtz, Andrei Gonciar și Cristinel Fântâneau, Adrian Bolog, Ovidiu Oargă, Claudia Radu bring a new perspective on the funerary rite and ritual in the Wietenberg area, documenting the presence in settlements of individual inhumation burials (Gâmbaș) or collective inhumation graves (Șoimuș). After Raluca Timofte-Burlacu and Florin Gogâltan the 85 human bone remains in 20 Bronze Age tell settlements of the Carpathian Basin allowed the identification of different situations: burials which followed the funerary norm that can be archaeologically encountered in the formal funerary area as well (regular burials), burials which followed an atypical funerary ritual (irregular burials); unusual depositions characterized by placing the dead bodies or body parts in uncommon locations (such as household structures), and discarded human bones.

Two case studies, from Dobrudja and Transylvania, come with examples of depositing human bones in Early Iron Age settlements. At Satu Nou-*Valea lui Voicu* there were identified deposits and manipulations of human bodies, animal sacrifices and feasts, a characteristic feat of the Babadag culture (Sorin-Cristian Ailincăi, Mihai Constantinescu, Adrian Bălășescu). The rescue excavations from Orosia (summer 2016) occasioned the research of a very interesting girl grave belonging to the so-called Scythian horizon (Ciumbrud cultural group). The special character of this find determined us to convince the authors of the excavation (Adrian Ursuțiu, Malvinka Urák) to include as quickly as possible this information in the scientific circuit. As

regards the Late Iron Age period, both in Transylvania and the extra-Carpathian regions, the contexts from settlements containing human remains are a quite regular feature. To the older find from Sighișoara region (Aurel Rustoiu) new situations can be added, identified during recent excavations in București-Băneasa, *Strada Gârlei* (Sorin Oanță-Marghitu, Emil Dumitrașcu, Silviu Ene, Adrian Bălășescu, Gabriel Vasile, Sorin Cleșiu, Florentin Munteanu) or Micești-Cigaș (Raluca Burlacu-Timofte, Gabriel Bălan). Another unusual archaeological contexts containing human remains are a large pottery kiln from Krivina, in north-eastern Bulgaria and the burial in an oven at Poienеști, in eastern Romania (Mariana Egri, Aurel Rustoiu).

Very interesting proves to be the discussion proposed by Irina Achim for the Late Antiquity concerning the “intra muros” presence of isolated burials and relics in some of the cities in the Lower Danube region (e.g. *Tomis, Halmyris, Tropaeum Traiani, Istros, Ibida, Novae*). The excavations from the medieval city Piua Petri (Orașul de Floci), located at the mouth of Ialomița River, at the border of Wallachia, led to the discovery of graves disposed outside the Christian cemeteries (Silviu Oța, Liana Oța). The volume concludes with the presentation of a mass-grave containing the osteological remains of more than 200 individuals, who, based on the ^{14}C data, can be placed somewhere between the second half of the 15th century – first half of 17th century (Neculai Bolohan, Carmen Simona Ionescu, Irinel Rotariu).



Having the conviction that we managed to do a good thing together, we wish to thank both to the authors published in this volume for the effort and patience shown during the elaboration of the volume and to all the participants in the symposium *Settlements of Life and Death* (Tulcea, May 2016).

REFERENCES

- Ailincăi 2015 S. Ailincăi, *Trăind cu morții. Înnormântări în așezări de la începutul epocii fierului între Carpați, Tisa și Nistru*. Editura Academia Română. Centrul de Sudii Transilvane, Cluj-Napoca, 2015.
- Báčvarov 2003 K. Báčvarov, *Neolitni pogrebalni obredi. Intramuralni grobove ot Bălgarskite zemi v konteksta na Yugoiztočna Evropa i Anatolija*, Sofia, 2003.
- Boulestin, Baray 2010 L. Baray, B. Boulestin (eds.), *Morts anormaux et sepoultures bizarres. Les dépôts humains en fosses circulaires et en silos du Néolithique a l'âge du Fer*. Dijon, 2010.
- Müller-Scheeßel 2013 N. Müller-Scheeßel, *“Irreguläre” Bestattungen in der Urgeschichte: Norm, Ritual, Strafe ...?* Bonn, 2013.
- Murphy 2008 E. M. Murphy, *Deviant Burial in the archaeological record*, Oxford, 2008.