INTERNATIONAL UNION FOR PREHISTORIC AND PROTOHISTORIC SCIENCES (UISPP) – COMMISSION: *PREHISTORIC AND PROTOHISTORIC MORTUARY PRACTICES*

STUDY CENTRE OF DACICA FOUNDATION

3RD INTERNATIONAL COLLOQUIUM

IRON AGE SANCTUARIES AND CULT PLACES AT THE THRACIANS AND THEIR NEIGHBOURS

INVENTORY, OFFERINGS AND RITUALS IN THE PRE-CHRISTIAN TEMPLES AND SACRED PLACES OF CONTINENTAL EUROPE AND MEDITERRANEAN AREA (7TH C. BC–2ND C. AD)

Study Centre of Dacica Foundation

Alun, Hunedoara County, Romania

June 16th-19th, 2022

INTERNATIONAL UNION FOR PREHISTORIC AND PROTOHISTORIC SCIENCES (UISPP) – COMMISSION: *PREHISTORIC AND PROTOHISTORIC MORTUARY PRACTICES*

STUDY CENTRE OF *DACICA* FOUNDATION (CSFD)

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3rd International Colloquium "Iron Age Sanctuaries and Cult Places at the Thracians and their Neighbours"

Inventory, offerings and rituals in the pre-Christian temples and sacred places of continental Europe and Mediterranean area (7th c. BC-2nd c. AD)

Organizing Committee:

Prof. dr. Valeriu Sîrbu
President,
30th Commission UISPP

Dr. Aurora Peţan
Secretary,
Director, CSFD

PROGRAMME AND ABSTRACTS

Edited by Valeriu Sîrbu and Aurora Peţan

Alun, Hunedoara County (Romania)
June 16th-19th, 2022

PROGRAMME

THURSDAY, 16 June 2022

- 10.00-14.00 - Welcome and registration of the participants

- 14.00 – 15.00 - Lunch

- 16.00 – Official Opening Ceremony of the 3rd International Colloquium
Speakers: officials, organizers and participants

- Launching of the publication: **ARHEOVEST, IX_1-IX_2, Interdisciplinaritate în Arheologie și Istorie*//Interdisciplinarity in Archaeology and History* – IN HONOREM VALERIU SÎRBU -, Timișoara, November 2021;** - Speaker: **Dorel Micle**

SESSION: 17.00-19.30
CHAIRPERSON: Lyubava KONOVA

- Wojciech BLAJER, Tomasz BOCHNAK, Piotr N. KOTOWICZ, Marcin MACIEJEWSKI, Katarzyna SKOWRON (POLOGNE) - *Les dépôts métalliques du premier et du deuxième âge du Fer de la région de Sanok (sud-est de la Pologne) et leurs relations transcarpatiques*

- Bartosz Kontny (POLAND) - *Lubanowo in NW Poland. Watery deposits of the Roman period weapons*

- Mihail BĂȚ, Aurel ZANOCI (Republic of MOLDOVA) - *Foreign Objects for Gods? About a Middle La Tène Find from Mășcăuți „Dealul Cel Mare" (Republic of Moldova)*

- Alexandru BERZOVAN (ROMANIA) - *Religion and magic in early Late Iron Age hillforts from the East - Carpathian area of Romania*

Discussions

- 20.00 – Dinner

FRIDAY, 17 June 2022

SESSION: 9.00-13.00
CHAIRPERSON: Dragoș MĂNDESCU

- Davide DELFINO (ITALY) - *Devotion of the Samnites "Pentri" in IIIth cent. BC. A comparison between sanctuaries of Campochiaro and San Pietro in Cantoni in the State collections of the Samnite Museum of Campobasso*

- Gely FRAGOU, Aris TSARAVOPOULOS (GREECE) - *Rock cut sanctuaries: the case of Antikythera*

- Dora KATSONOPOULOU (GREECE) - *On the Cult of Poseidon Helikonios in Helike (Achaea, Greece) and the Ionian Mission of the Fourth Century BC*

10.30-10.45. Coffee break

- Lyubava KONOVA (BULGARIA) - *Beyond the Archaeology: Some Observations on the Ritual Context of the Thracian Pit Fields in the Light of the Written Records*

- Diana DIMITROVA (BULGARIA) - *Unusual burial complexes from Central Bulgaria in the IV century BC*

- Ilian PETRAKIEV, Maya IVANOVA, Vladislav ZHIVKOV, Varbin VARBANOV (BULGARIA) - *Late hellenistic structure from Ryahovets fortress (Gorna Oryahovitsa, Bulgaria)*

Discussions

- 13.00-14.30. Lunch

SESSION: 15.30-18.30
CHAIRPERSON: Dora KATSONOPOULOU

- Livia BUZOIANU, Nicolaie ALEXANDRU (ROMANIA*) - Kernos cult pots discovered at Callatis and in the territory of the ancient city*

- Dragoș MĂNDESCU, Pavel Mirea (ROMANIA) - *Radiocarbon dating of the ritual well from Ciolănești din Deal, Teleorman County*

- Sebastian MATEI, Despina MĂGUREANU (ROMANIA) - *Ceramic artefacts at the end of their lives. The relation between the modes of disposal and deposition of the ceramic artefacts, and the cult edifices during the 2nd-1st centuries BC at the settlement from Cârlomănești, Buzău County*

17.00-17.15. Coffee break

- Valeriu SÎRBU, Diana DAVINCA, Marinela PENEȘ (ROMANIA) - *Pit fields in the Geto-Dacian World: Some Observations and Case Study*

- Aurora PEȚAN, Valeriu SÎRBU (ROMANIA) - *Revisiting Fețele Albe - an important Dacian site near Sarmizegetusa Regia*

- Dorel MICLE, Andrei STAVILĂ, Iosif Vasile FERENCZ (ROMANIA) - *The pits at Unip-Dealu Cetăţuica. Sacred or profane features?*

Discussions

- 20.00. Dinner

SATURDAY, 18 June 2022

- 9.00-17.00. Documentary trip in the area of the impressive Dacian residential centres in Orăştiei Mountains, including the capital of pre-Roman Dacia - Sarmizegetusa Regia

19.00 - Dinner

SUNDAY, 19 June 2022

- 08.30 - Official closing ceremony of the International Colloquium

- 09.00 – 12.00 – Documentary trip: Alun - *Piatra Roșie* – Dacian fortress and cult place

- 12.00-13.00. Lunch

- Departure of the participants

ABSTRACTS

Foreign Objects for Gods? About a Middle La Tène Find from Măşcăuţi „Dealul Cel Mare" (Republic of Moldova)[1]

Mihail BĂŢ, Aurel ZANOCI (Republic of MOLDOVA)

…many others of the Barbarians persuade their children that the soul cannot be destroyed … (Iamblicus, Life of Pytagoras, XXX)

The display of foreign material culture was usually aimed at the acquisition prestige within the community. If the profane nature of the accumulation of "foreign" objects can be more easily identified, then their presence in ritual contexts requires an integrated approach.

Therefore, let us return to the discussion of an old find from Măşcăuţi "Dealul cel Mare". Here, in 2001, in a non-funerary context, two hearths arranged over a child's skeleton were discovered. The skeleton was laid in the *dorsal decubitus* position, head to the west. At the time of discovery, the state of preservation of the skeleton was satisfactory; it was fragmented due to anthropogenic causes and environmental conditions. Age at death was determined from the size of the right femur, which remained almost intact. If we assume that its length is 24 cm, then the age of the person was five years (Maresh 1970; Danforth *et al.* 2009). Fragments of an iron necklace were found in the neck area, and ten fragments of hand-shaped pottery were found nearby.

This find, unusual for the Eastern Carpathian space, attracted increased attention of researchers, and was interpreted as a foundation sacrifice (Zanoci, Matveev 2003; Zanoci 2004; Arnăut 2014; Davâncă 2015, etc.). Despite much research into the ritual context, a particular aspect of the discovery has remained less explored. First, this is the presence of an iron necklace of La Tène type, and then the

[1] This research was conducted within the Project 20.80009.1606.14 "The archeological heritage of the Iron Age in the Middle Dniester region and the Cogâlnic River basin: interdisciplinary research and scientific development".

meaning of this deposition. One of the ends of the necklace is missing; it was probably broken off in antiquity. The preserved one shows that the necklace had terminations in the form of a truncated cone with a round section. The merit of determining the La Tène origin of the artifact from Măşcăuţi "Dealul cel Mare" belongs to the researcher D. Măndescu, who dates it to the middle of the 3rd century BC (Măndescu 2010). According to the typology of W. Adler, the shape of the ends is similar to the ends of type I, variant A.1 (without a locking system) of the classification of gold items of the Middle and Late La Tène period. At the same time, this object corresponds to the type with trumpet-shaped ends (*mit Trompetenenden*) from the classification of figurative representations. Only women wore the latter ones, according to the German researcher (Adler 2003).

Returning to the context of the discovery of the necklace, we note that the child was buried on the eastern slope of the promontory, on which the settlement was located. After the burial place was covered with a layer of earth (about 3-5 cm thick), two clay hearths were arranged on it, one of which completely covered the skeleton. At the layer of hearths there are signs of intense burning. After excavation of the hearths, it was found that their edges were raised by about 10-17 cm above their surface. The crust of the hearths was about 12-17 cm thick.

Summing up the above, without knowing the cause of the child's death[2], we conclude that he was buried at the eastern end of the Măşcăuţi "Dealul cel Mare" promontory, which rises above the Răut valley and nearby plateaus. Despite the young age of the deceased, we notice the presence of a traditional La Tène iron necklace. Later, two hearths were built on this site, which were used in rituals associated with the use of fire. According to some opinions, objects of foreign tradition have magical and religious character and give the owners prestige, power and influence in society. Also, the display of foreign material culture emphasizes the esoteric character of knowledge (Brandt 2010).

[2] Anthropological material is lost.

It should also be noted that the iron neckalace is not the only find of the La Tène type known from the Old Orhei microzone. The “Poiana Ciucului” settlement in the immediate vicinity of Măşcăuţi “Dealul cel Mare” is known in literature for its brooch with a side spring and a foot decorated with a pseudo-spring. Recently, several artifacts of the La Tène type have been accidentally found in the region. Another agglomeration of finds of the La Tène type was attested in the Saharna Mare hillfort in the Middle Dniester River basin. Without presenting other areas with agglomerations of similar objects, it becomes clear that the presence of objects of the La Tene type in the area of residential centers can be explained by the fact that the hillforts were centers for the exchange of goods and new ideologies, in our case, the wearing of fibulae and necklace. A similar situation has been attested in regions with fortifications in Northern Europe, which were involved in the process of latenization (Kaul 2007). For example, the latenization of the Jastorf culture begins in the La Tène B2 stage, and among the first La Tène-type objects are brooches of early La Tène scheme and the necklaces (Brandt 2010).

Finally, we may wonder about the ritual significance of giving a foreign object to a child. The location and context of the find, the presence of the imported object, and the deciphering of this practice may indicate a votive deposition in the first stage, and the community would repeatedly use the consecrated space in ritual practices.

Religion and magic in early Late Iron Age hillforts from the East – Carpathian area of Romania

Alexandru BERZOVAN (ROMANIA)

Between the 5th and 3rd centuries BC, a significant number of hillforts were built in the area east of the Carpathians, witnessing large-scale collective efforts. Through this presentation we set out to discuss the issue of archeological and religious practices attested within these objectives.

The most numerous category of artifacts attesting to magical practices are anthropomorphic burnt clay figurines. The phenomenon is also attested for other neighboring ancient populations, but in the eastern Carpathian area it seems to have had a slightly higher intensity. Many of these figurines show signs of intentional destruction (broken limbs, stitches, etc). On the other hand, there are also instances of artefacts without such traces, that might indicate other, various uses. Also, the figurines are associated in sets, such as the one discovered in the fortress of Bunești - Averești. Of special interest are also the clay rattles, that also could be linked with various magical practices.

In regard to structures related to magical and religious practices, we may mention the presence of pits with human remains, attested in the fort of Stâncești, that attest to widely spread practices in the East-European Iron Age. It is interesting to note that so far no temple structures had been found and documented in the hillforts, a situation that could be have many explanations.

Les dépôts métalliques du premier et du deuxième âge du Fer de la région de Sanok (sud-est de la Pologne) et leurs relations transcarpatiques

Wojciech BLAJER, Tomasz BOCHNAK, Piotr N. KOTOWICZ, Marcin MACIEJEWSKI, Katarzyna SKOWRON (POLOGNE)

La région de Sanok (sud-est de la Pologne) est une zone montagneuse et peu fertile, située sur la rivière San - un affluent oriental de la Vistule. Cependant, cette zone était importante en raison de la présence de sources salées et de routes transcarpatiques. Dans cette zone, un certain nombre de dépôts d'objets métalliques (Falejówka, Sanok-Biała Góra, Wola Sękowa, Zarszyn, Pakoszówka) datés de l'âge du bronze à la période de La Tène ont été découverts.

Cela montre que dans cette région la coutume de déposer des trésors avait une longue tradition. Ces ensembles font actuellement objet d'une recherche interdisciplinaire approfondie, dans le cadre d'un projet de recherche. Les dépôts en question contiennent, entre autres, de nombreux éléments d'origine méridionale, qui mettent la lumière sur les contacts de la population du sud-est de la Pologne d'aujourd'hui avec les zones situées au sud des Carpates.

Kernos cult pots discovered at Callatis and in the territory of the ancient city

Livia BUZOIANU, Nicolaie ALEXANDRU (ROMANIA)

Kernos cult pots are known as cult pots used in consecrated ritual processions. They were usually used to chtonic divinities, such as *Demetra, Kore, Cybela*. This fact does not exclude their presence from other consecrated spaces of another divinities, such as Athena (at Chios) or Aphrodite (at Nymphaion). A large number of kernos cult pots was discovered in the north-pontica area, at Olbia, Chersones, The Bosporan Kingdom and at Elisavetovskoe region. Most of them are dated at the end of the 4th century and the first half of the 3rd century BC (their presence continues here until the first third of the 1st century BC).

In the west-pontica area, we notify an exemplary in the Hellenistic sanctuary from Nuntasi the 2nd and other two exemplaries at Albesti, dating to the limits of the 3rd century BC.(whereas at Nuntași it was until the middle of the 2nd century BC).

Our contribution refers to a considerable number of pieces discovered at Callatis – 11 copies/exemplaries from older discoveries (probably around the year 1958), and other recent discoveries (on Oituz Street, 26); to them is added a 3rdexemplary from Albesti, from sector A of the fortress.

The analysis of the pieces implies ritual observations, cults and places of worship (public or particular ones), their provenience being from the fortress or from the territory.

Devotion of the Samnites "Pentri" in IIIth cent. BC .
A comparison between sanctuaries of Campochiaro and San Pietro in Cantoni in the State collections of the Samnite Museum of Campobasso

Davide DELFINO (ITALY)

The third century BC sees the definitive fall of the Samnites into the sphere of influence of Rome, following the end of the third Samnite war. In the central part of the Pentri tribe's territory there are two of the most important sanctuaries of this Samnite tribe: Campochiaro and San Pietro in Cantoni. Located less than ten kilometres from each other, they are two sanctuaries located near an important transhumance route: Campochiaro is dedicated evidently to Hercules, San Pietro in Cantoni supposedly dedicated to goddess Mephitis. Both have his main intense attendance, and the most important phase of monumentalization, in the third century BC.

A comparative analysis of the votive materials found in the votive pits, and now exhibited at the Samnite Museum of Campobasso, can help to understand any differences or similarities of worship dedicated to theses divinities, completely different each other in nature and attributes.

Unusual burial complexes from Central Bulgaria in the IV century BC

Diana DIMITROVA (BULGARIA)

In the region of the Kazanlak lowland, called by the Bulgarian archaeologist Dr. Georgi Kitov the Valley of the Thracian rulers, intensive archeological researches of the Thracian burial customs began in the early 90s of the XX century. Unusual practices have been reported in some of the mounds studied. Such are cenotaphs without human remains, graves containing only parts of the human skeleton (for example in the tumulus Svetitsa near Shipka) or mounds erected over animal graves in pits.

I will illustrate the above statement with three selected unviolated archeological complexes from the 4th century BC. - those in Lidkina mound near Maglizh, in Belichenova mound near the village of Yassenovo and in Kasabova mound near the village of Sheynovo. The sites are located at the eastern and western ends of the Valley, and have been selected to illustrate the diversity of burial practices in the Odrysian state at the end of the Classical era.

Rock cut sanctuaries: the case of Antikythera

Gely FRAGOU, Aris TSARAVOPOULOS (GREECE)

The prehistory of sanctuaries cut in the rock goes back to the Minoan period, when the Minoans worshipped “the Mountain”. It is not only the view, or the control one might have from a hill, but the symbolism of the mountain/ the rock that is associated with the land, the nature and the divine presence.

The direct carving on the rock, practically, saves time and trouble. However, this is not the main reason for the selection of this type of sanctuaries.

The case of Antikythera meets the standards, such as its location along the road, outside the ancient fortified city. The contemporary road along which the sanctuary is located, follows the line more or less of a path that would connect the fortified city with the countryside. It should also be mentioned that the level of the ancient path would have been higher than the current. Furthermore, part of the sanctuary has been destroyed by the opening of the current road that cut the open-air sanctuary in two.

Characteristic is also the oval niche cut on the rock for the placement of offerings. The offerings were found upside down, in front of the niche, as fallen, and consist of ceramics and metal valuable objects. The evidence of animal bones, charcoal and fine pottery indicates that rituals were taking place at the area, while the amphorae found indicate that some goodies were being transported at the site. Metal nails and items indicate that some light, probably, wooden construction had been built to protect the worshipers from the rain or sun. This evidence is supported by the existence of, vertically cut on the face of the rock, at least five circular cavities that would accommodate the wooden beams. It seems that part of the beach rock has collapsed and thus perhaps the cavities for the beams

would have been more in number at the time of the sanctuary's function. The finds date the open air rock cut sanctuary to the Hellenistic period. The terminus post quem is 67 BC, when the island was conquered and destroyed finally by the Romans.

The identity of the deity has not been identified, but the symbolism is that the worshippers visit the deity in its natural place. The rock cuts are not only a representation, but an embodiment in the face stone with the belief that it contained an aspect of divine essence or representation. In the sense that it is the rock itself that is sacred.

This is not the only sanctuary located outside the fortified city, as there is also a harbour sanctuary with a temple and a peribolos, as well as a cavernous sanctuary and another niche almost exactly outside one of the gates to the fort.

On the Cult of Poseidon *Helikonios* in Helike (Achaea, Greece) and the Ionian Mission of the Fourth Century BC

Dora KATSONOPOULOU (GREECE)

Poseidon is a very ancient and important god, whose primeval properties are associated with his dominating powers over the waters and earthquakes. In this capacity, Poseidon *Helikonios* was worshipped in his panhellenic sanctuary in Helike of Achaea, in northern Peloponnese, since prehistoric times. When at the end of the Mycenaean period, the Ionians, expelled from Helike by the Achaeans, settled together with Ionians from Attica in Asia Minor, they transferred the cult of Poseidon *Helikonios* in the new land. To this god were dedicated altars and sanctuaries in various places of Ionia. In particular, his worship in Priene, originating from Helike, remained strong until the Late Antiquity.

In the 4th century BC, upon the transfer of the Panionion from its original place near Mykale to a safer location near Ephesos, Ionian envoys were sent to Helike to sacrifice to the ancestral altars of the Ionic race, found of old times in Poseidon's sanctuary. The Ionian mission is generally placed in the early 4th century BC on the assumption of a total destruction of Helike in the 373 BC earthquake. However, our systematic excavations in the Helike area have brought to light the remains of a post-earthquake settlement, revived only a few decades after the catastrophe in the western part of the Helike plain. This settlement flourished in the following Hellenistic period and continued its life well into the Roman era.

This new evidence offers the data for an alternative interpretation of the Ionian mission to Helike, now placed after the 373 BC catastrophe. In accordance with our results, a similar date is indicated by the recent discovery of remains of the younger Panionion in the Mykale Mountain in Asia Minor dated to the late 4th century BC.

Lubanowo in NW Poland.
Watery deposits of the Roman period weapons

Bartosz KONTNY (POLAND)

Since 2014 the team from the University of Warsaw has been conducting an underwater survey in Lake Lubanowo in Western Pomerania. During underwater research the weapons, tools, and horse harness elements were found dated mainly to the Roman Period; some of them bear traces of ritual destruction.

The parallels to weapons may be pointed out namely in Central Europe and, to some extent, in Scandinavia. The site should be attributed to sacrificial military deposits, known generally from northern Europe, but until recently unknown to the south of the Baltic Sea. Its extraordinary character is manifested by the fact that the site is still in its 'lake stage', not a bog, into which ancient lakes have evolved due to the process of eutrophication.

Most probably the site was used by local inhabitants, i.e. the people of the Lubusz group, in the 1st until the early 3rd c. AD but at least some of deposited weapons may be linked to the neighbouring cultural groups.

The author will present first conclusions concerning the character of the deposit.

Beyond the Archaeology: Some Observations on the Ritual Context of the Thracian Pit Fields in the Light of the Written Records

Lyubava KONOVA (BULGARIA)

This communication looks at the general question whether and to what extent is it possible to contextualize an archaeologically attested phenomenon by comparing it with somehow distant time-space realia coming from the written tradition.

The intensive rescue excavations in Bulgaria over the past decades have revealed a significant number of archaeological sites from different periods where the main structures are pits. The pits from over a hundred sites that have been studied by the archaeologists allow them to trace some common features, especially of those dating to the 1st millennium BC situated outside settlements and necropoleis, which have been designated as pit fields or pit sanctuaries. However, reading the archaeological data may be very ambiguous and depending on the subjective interpretation of the field situation. In search of an exit from the situation written sources are addressed once more for providing opportunities for comparison with archaeological observations. Such written data are available in some Hittite texts which mentioned the Pit in its capacity of powerful mediator between the realm of people and that of the underworld deities.

I take as a starting point of my comparative analysis the following criteria: the location of the pits, their shape and construction, and the content that testifies to blood and bloodless sacrifices, and hoarding of various objects: metal adornments, weapons, nails, pieces of house mortar, portable hearths, whorls, etc.), clay “cult” objects. By pointing out the similarities and the differences between the archaeological phenomena and the realia in the Hittite texts, it is possible to suggest the general meaning and purpose of the ritual acts performed, viz. the

purification and cyclic sanctification of the territories by their inhabitants.

Whether this interpretation is convincing enough, it deals not so much with the view of specific "religious" actions, but rather with behaviour that is intended to legitimise the social order and to underpin shared values of the 1st millennium Thracian communities.

Radiocarbon dating of the ritual well from Ciolănești din Deal, Teleorman County

Dragoș MĂNDESCU, Pavel MIREA (ROMANIA)

The communication presents the results of radiocarbon dating obtained in 2020 on a sample of wood (oak wood) from the timber parts of the cult well from Ciolănești. This well was researched almost 60 years ago, during two archaeological seasons (in 1964-1965), and a single piece from the structure of wooden joints (probably the single one preserved following the archaeological diggings) is kept in good condition in the archaeological collection of the Teleorman County Museum in Alexandria.

A sample of wood was extracted from this only preserved piece and dated in the radiocarbon laboratory of the University of Poznan, Poland. The recently obtained result will be presented here for the first time and will be compared with the data of relative and absolute chronology attributed so far to this Getic cult complex.

Late hellenistic structure from Ryahovets fortress (Gorna Oryahovitsa, Bulgaria)

Ilian PETRAKIEV, Maya IVANOVA,
Vladislav ZHIVKOV, Varbin VARBANOV (BULGARIA)

The medieval fortress "Ryahovets" is located about 7 km north of the present town of Veliko Tarnovo and 3 km west of Gorna Oryahovitsa, on the border between Stara Planina region and the Danube lowland, outlined by the northern slopes of Tarnovo heights. The fortress is built on the highest part of the so-called Middle Hill, reaching 250 m.a.s.l.

The first archeological excavations were conducted in the period 1985-1991, and in 2015 they were renewed. One of the sectors studied during both campaigns is the so-called southern suburb of the fortress, where along with Medieval materials, a significant amount of late Hellenistic were found. In 2019, started the study of the first structure so far from this period, the excavation of which continues today. At this stage the plan and the function of the studied structure are not fully clarified. The working hypothesis is that this may be a protective ditch on the slope of hill. This is the most vulnerable place on the rocky hill, where the medieval fortress is located. So far, the established length of the supposed ditch is about 15 m, the maximum preserved width is about 4 m, and the depth reaches 2 m. The filling of the structure is made of dense clay soil, stones, animal bones and ceramic fragments, made by hand and on a wheel. The integrity of the structure is partially damaged by later structures. From the west the "ditch" is damaged by a pit from the 11th century, and along its entire length the foundations of a building from the 13th century are dug in. The full study and clarification of the structure in question is yet to happen.

The four anepigraphic amphora stamps found in the late Hellenistic structure, together with two coins and other finds (only

from the 2019-2021 campaigns) are the basis for defining the studied site as an important trading point. Probably it is of the *dava* type - a center with significant commercial, economic and religious functions.

Pit fields in the Geto-Dacian World: Some Observations and Case Study

Valeriu SÎRBU, Diana DĂVÎNCĂ, Marinela PENEȘ (ROMANIA)

In the last three decades, the issue of "pit fields" in the Thracian area has preoccupied many researchers, as discoveries of this type, from the first millennium BC, have become more numerous and relevant. Most researchers accept their cultural role, considering them, based on their essential characteristics, a new type of sacred area.

We will discuss, mainly, the discoveries from the north of the Danube and we will refer, in detail, to the Dacian site from Băneşti-*Dealul Domnii* (Prahova County). It dates from the 1st c. BC. -1st. c. AD, and it was only partially published about a decade ago. On a high plateau, 17 pits and 11 agglomerations of materials were found here, containing pieces of burnt walls of houses and hearths, ash and coal, animal bones, numerous fragmentary vessels and fragments of Dacian vessels, and Hellenistic, plus a few other individual pieces. Its location on a mountain plateau, the lack of fortification elements, the archeological layer, the houses and household annexes, as well as certain categories of pieces (tools and weapons made of stone, bone and metals, jewelry), are decisive evidence in stating that there was neither settlement nor fortress here.

The placement of the types of complexes in the field, the succession of layers of earth and the deposition of artifacts from the pits suggest that rituals took place on this plateau, then some of the resulting materials were deposited, according to certain rules, in nearby pits. The massive fragments of hearths, the layers of burning, ash and coal in the pits are undoubted evidence of the important role that fire played in these rituals. Based on all the characteristics of the vestiges on this plateau, we can conclude that here was an important place of worship, such as the "pit fields" of the Geto-Dacians.

Finally, we will try to highlight some possibilities for interpreting the meaning of such "pit fields".

Revisiting Fețele Albe - an important Dacian site near Sarmizegetusa Regia

Aurora PEȚAN, Valeriu SÎRBU (ROMANIA)

The impressive ashlar walls at Fețele Albe (Grădiștea de Munte) have attracted the attention of scholars since the 19th century, who thought that there was a Dacian fortress like the others nearby, an idea that still persisted in the middle of the 20th century. Only with the first archaeological research, carried out in the late 60's of the last century, it was stated that there was a settlement, not a fortress.

The nature of this site is still unclear, due to the exceptional elements that characterize it and distinguish it from other settlements in the area: monumental retaining walls, luxury inventory and, above all, the presence of temples. Although considered a rich neighborhood of Sarmizegetusa Regia, the relationship between Feţele Albe and the royal capital, located very close to it, has not yet been clarified, especially since the chronological clues published so far place the beginning of the site before the appearance of the dwelling and the sacred area on Grădiștii Hill, an possibly before any Dacian dwelling in the Șureanu Mountains.

Our field observations revealed a larger number of temples than previously thought, as well as the existence of figurative representations on stone blocks, which are probably confined to the sacred realm.

In this presentation we aim to re-analyze the information available in the excavation reports on the group of buildings and their inventories, then we will present some novel data and try to clarify the functionality of the site at Fețele Albe and its relationship with Sarmizegetusa Regia.

The pits at Unip-Dealu Cetăţuica. Sacred or profane features?

Dorel MICLE, Andrei STAVILĂ, Iosif Vasile FERENCZ (ROMANIA)

Research conducted at Unip – Dealu Cetăţuică since 2009 has resulted in the identification of archaeological features dating from several periods. But most of them belong to the Late Iron Age.

The research effort concentrated mainly in the central area of "Cetățuica" ridge gives us a partial image of the character of the site. Although no dwellings have been discovered so far, several pits and the materials accumulated in the archaeological layer document an intense habitation that supports the assumption that in the Dacian period at Unip there was a settlement.

In the same space, there are also monuments whose cultic role is indicated by the inventory and by the complex patterns of depositing objects. The structures seem to document that the inhabitants of the ridge located in the meadow of the river Timiș carried out some private activities in the sacred sphere. We do not know at this time whether it is an area within the site where such ceremonies took place followed by the deposition of objects (at Unip it is about ceramic tableware, especially). Future research may show that they are present only in this area, or on the contrary, that they are spread over the entire surface of the site, interspersed or not by other structures. The objects with chronological value, but also the typology of pottery indicate a dating from the second half or from the end of the 2nd century BC, until the end of the 1st century BC, or maybe in the first quarter of the 1st century AD.

An interesting hypothesis recently launched by a young researcher from Cluj-Napoca led us to re-evaluate the archaeological file of the graves considered by us to be the custodians of some ritual deposits.

NOTES

Study Centre of Dacica Foundation

Alun, Hunedoara County, Romania

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