

"Burial Practices and Archaeoethnology From General to Particular: A View of Transylvanian Neolithic and Eneolithic"

Abstract

The habilitation thesis that I propose for evaluation to the History and Cultural Studies Commission of CNADTCU represents the scientific research synthesis of the archaeological activity I have carried on, with direct reference to the study of the prehistorical mortuary practices.

Scientific and Professional Achievements

The direct interest for funerary archaeology had a milestone when in 2003 we researched in Alba Iulia-Lumea Nouă an unusual discovery, which presented completely new mortuary practices for the neolithic communities on the present-day territory of Romania. When, as a result of the 2005 excavations, we uncovered a second funerary complex, it became a certitude the fact that one of the important thesis chapters would be related to the prehistorical funerary practices.

The doctoral thesis, publicly defended on the 15th February 2008, has been published in 2009 at Mega Publishing House in Cluj-Napoca, under the title of "*Alba Iulia-Lumea Nouă Neolithic and Eneolithic Settlement in the Light of Recent Research*", and in 2009 it received the "Vasile Pârvan" prize from the Romanian Academy.

Since 2008 I have published ten papers as single author, and nine others as co-author, all in journals indexed in international databases (ISI, Scopus, CEEOL, Ebsco, Index Copernicus). Five articles are part of collective volumes, which appeared in prestigious Romanian and EU publishing houses.

In the above mentioned period, I have presented papers at international conferences: *36th Annual Meeting Computer Applications and Quantitative Methods in Archaeology (CAA)*, 2-6 April 2008, Budapest; *37th International Symposium on Archaeometry (ISA)*, 12-16 May 2008, Siena; *Sixth World Archaeological Congress*, 29 June-04 July 2008, Dublin; *14th Annual Meeting European Association of Archaeologists (EAA)*, 16-21 September 2008, La Valletta; *16th Annual Meeting European Association of Archaeologists*, 1-5 September 2010, The Hague; *17th Annual Meeting European Association of Archaeologists*, 14-18 September 2011, Oslo; *11th European Meeting on Ancient Ceramics (EMAC)*, 29 September-01 October 2011, Vienna; *Methods, Means and Aims in Socio-Humanities*, Accademia di Romania, 25-27 November 2011, Roma; *19th Annual Meeting European Association of Archaeologists*, 4-7 September 2013, Pilsen.

I have undertaken research stages in European Union universities: 2011 - Ruprecht-Karls Universität Heidelberg, Institut für Ur- und Frühgeschichte und Vorderasiatische Archäologie and Universiteit Leiden, Faculteit der Archaeologie; 2012 - University of Oxford, Institute of Archaeology; 2013 - University of Durham, Department of Archaeology.

I have obtained a postdoctoral scholarship as part of the POSDRU 89/1.5/S/61104 project, at the Iași branch of the Romanian Academy, with the subject "*Funerary Practices of the Transylvanian Human Communities in the Neolithic and Eneolithic Age*" (2010-2012). At present, I am coordinating as principal investigator the research project PNII-RU-TE-2012-3-0461, no. 53/30.04.2013: "*From Inhumation to Cremation in Romanian Neolithic and Eneolithic. New Archaeological Evidence, Burial Practices, and Osteological Approach*" (2013-2015).

Since 2011, I am organising at Alba Iulia University an international conference of funerary archaeology and anthropology, "Homines, Funera, Astra", which will be this year at its fourth edition.

The habilitation thesis is structured in six chapters.

I. *The Archaeology of Death: Archaeoethnology*

Contains explanation of speciality terms and presents the methodology on funerary archaeology and archaeoethnology.

II. *Methodological Aspects and Case Studies Concerning the Contribution of Paleoanthropology and Bioarchaeological Techniques on Reconstructing the Prehistoric Human Past:* II.a Age at Death; II.b Sex Estimation; II.c Bioarchaeological Techniques (II.c1 Isotopes; II.c2 aDNA); II.d Human Bones; II.e Case Studies (II.e1 Reconstruction of Diet; II.e2 Violence and Death; II.e3 DNA; II.e4 Lifestyle); II.f Osteological Paradox

Discusses the most representative and recent bibliographical references on subjects like paleoanthropology and bioarchaeology.

III. *Review of Neolithic and Eneolithic Funerary Discoveries on the Present-Day Territory of Romania*

Contains a synthesis of the current state of research regarding funerary neolithic and eneolithic discoveries on the present-day territory of Romania.

IV. *Neolithic and Eneolithic Funerary Discoveries in Transylvania*: IV.a Necropolis; IV.b Graves inside the settlements; IV.c Cremation

Treats the funerary discoveries in the Transylvanian area, obtaining a repertory and a classification of the burial types. It also contains case studies for the relevant discoveries.

V. *Unusual mortuary practices in Transylvania: Human remains from Alba Iulia-Lumea Nouă*

Presents data about the archaeological context of the 2003, 2005, 2011, and 2013 discoveries, most important results of the osteoarchaeological analyses, funerary rite and ritual elements, possible analogies and interpretations.

VI. *14C AMS Data from Transylvanian Neolithic and Eneolithic Human Remains*

In the last chapter are included diagrams of OxCal calibrated 14C AMS data for 30 samples taken between 2007 and 2013 from various funerary contexts in Transylvania.

In the annexes there are 42 plates, which include photos and drawings meant to support the theoretical argumentation from the thesis.

Career Evolution and Development

In 2014 I will organise the first Archaeoethanatology conference in Romania: "Archaeoethanatology - an Interdisciplinary Approach on Death in Prehistory".

From the university year 2014-2015 I will teach the "Archaeoethanatology" course as part of the *Interdisciplinary Archaeological Research* MA study programme of the History, Archaeology, and Museology Department. I am also currently teaching "Social and Funerary Archaeology" course for the BA programme.

The Alba Iulia Osteoarchaeology Laboratory activity will develop, in order to offer a high-level way of specialisation to the MA and doctoral students in such an improperly developed domain.

The archaeological site in Alba Iulia-*Lumea Nouă* that I coordinate became international in 2012, by attracting British students from various UK universities. In the coming years, I will extend the collaboration with other European Union universities for students' practice, including Erasmus-type programs.

By the CNCS-UEFISCDI research project I am supporting stable isotopes analyses for the Alba Iulia-*Lumea Nouă* skeletal remains, which are already ongoing. I have initiated also the first ancient DNA analyses, in collaboration with the Archaeology Department of Durham University. For the first time in a Transylvanian neolithic site, we will be able to operate with scientific information to establish kinship and determine the local or allogeneic character of the population.

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