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ABSTRACT

Funerary rite and ritual in the Province of Scythia

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The main purpose of the thesis is to draw conclusions corroborating the main characteristics of a tomb: the typology of the tombs, its location in relation to some landmarks, the orientation and position of the skeleton, types of funerary inventory categories and the location of objects, the number of skeletons in a grave, anthropological, economic and social characteristics.

The period between the IV-VI centuries is a complex one from the point of view of the penetration of migratory populations into the Lower Danube region, together with their social and material culture often reflected in funeral rituals.

The subject constitutes a complex and interdisciplinary field generating, in addition to funerary archaeology, the creation of special branches such as: paleoanthropology, paleodiet or bioarchaeology. The analysis of the archaeological and anthropological material resulting from the investigation of the tombs dated in the Roman-Byzantine period can lead to some preliminary conclusions regarding the daily life, death and rites of passage, religion, social structure and principles of society in the province of Scythia.

The funeral ritual involves all the activities that take place from the moment of death until the ceremonies performed after the burial. All the funeral practices among the Romans were influenced by two notions: the first referred to the fact that the deceased person was a source of pollution for those around them, thus, acts of purification were necessary; the second problem was that if a deceased person remained unburied, his soul would never find peace.

Research on the necropolises of the Roman-Byzantine period in the province of Scythia has a long tradition, with a number of archaeological monographs, studies and articles on the necropolises of Greco-Roman and late Roman cities. Most of the studies present gaps, in the sense that simple enumerations of graves are provided, missing other significant details.

The main argument for which I chose this research topic is that the Romanian historiography dedicated to the funerary archeology of the province of Scythia is quite small in number in terms of interpretive approaches, most works have been limited only to the publication of information on the tombs from

archaeological point of view, without providing information of a symbolic, social or economic nature.

In order to carry out this analytical approach, we appealed to the reports of grave discoveries, as recorded in the reports of the Chronicle of Archaeological Research in Romania, the specialized studies on the necropolises of Dobrogea, some of the special studies in the field of funerary archeology published in abroad, articles published in specialized magazines and the results of the archaeological excavations in which I participated, thus, I worked on the basis of a sample consisting of 1467 tombs.

The paper begins with a review of the historiography related to the subject, both international and Romanian. Some of the most important writings that have as their theme funerary archeology and its branches have been mentioned, trying to highlight my own contribution to completing the information. For the area of the province of Scythia, we have listed the works in which information is indicated for each individual necropolis.

In the second chapter, is discussed that the social and economic situation of the deceased and his family can be intuited through the funeral rite he benefited from.

Archaeological discoveries have demonstrated that objects from burial inventories provide important information related to the social status of the deceased, generating data regarding occupation, marital status, trades, religion or origin. It is obvious that those who have not passed through some important stages of life, such as those who died at birth, those who died as children or those who are unmarried, benefit from different specific forms of burial that can also be reflected in the funeral inventory.

A part of the chapter is reserved for objects with apotropaic value that were often deposited in graves with the role of protecting the soul of the deceased. This type of object was frequently discovered in children's graves, a phenomenon that makes us understand their role in ancient communities in the context where infant mortality was increasing. Two main such objects were

the lunula pendants, worn especially by girls, and those of the bulla type, found, most often, in the case of boys.

I considered it important to include in the thesis some of the funerary inscriptions discovered in the territory of the province of Scythia. These found their place in the subsection dedicated to trades. In addition to the discovered inventory items and the anthropological study of the skeletons, the occupations they had during their lives are also communicated to us through the texts of the funerary epitaphs.

A controversial topic in the case of grave discoveries is the religion of the deceased. Thus, we know that with the spread of Eastern Cults, some changes in the funeral rite and ritual also appeared.

The adoption of pagan practices by Christians sometimes makes it difficult to attribute a grave as Christian. Thus, the main rules for classifying a grave as Christian are: the orientation V-E of the skeletons, the funeral rite of inhumation, the lack of a funeral inventory or the appearance of Christian symbols on it or the texts of funeral epitaphs.

Another problem that could be the subject of a separate study is that related to the origin of the deceased. From the end of the 1st century BC, migratory populations began to enter the province of Scythia, bringing with them some specific funerary practices, the best known being the practice of artificial deformation of the skull, such examples being found in the necropolises of Callatis, Ibida, Beroe, Histria and Noviodunum.

In order to determine some social characteristics, in addition to the typology of the grave, the inventory and funerary inscriptions, the position in which the deceased was laid must also be taken into account. The autochthons, most often, buried their deceased in the supine position, while the migrants are attributed the burials in which the skeletons were placed in a lateral or ventral decubitus position.

A subchapter is dedicated to the attitudes of family members in the face of death. The family of the deceased had the duty to commemorate him by erecting funerary monuments and writing texts on them. A funeral epitaph gives us important social data about the

deceased such as: name, profession, religion, age at which he died or family members.

Another occasion for commemorating the deceased was through celebrations dedicated to the dead. From ancient authors we learn that the most important of these were: Parentalia, Lemuria and Rosalia.

A complex topic is the one related to children's graves. Analyzing them, we conclude that the funeral rituals applied to children could be different from those of adults. From a legislative point of view, some funeral rites were restricted in order not to cause suffering to the parents, due to the increased infant mortality of that period. Some of the particularities found are the position in which they were deposited, *intra muros* burials, objects with apotropaic value or burials in ceramic vessels.

In order to draw conclusions about the economic situation of the deceased, we must take into account the funeral inventory from which he benefited, the type of the tomb, the funerary monument or the anthropological aspects relevant to the living conditions.

For the graves with a rich inventory, no constant can be determined regarding the funeral ritual, the typology of the graves varying from those in a simple pit with a coffin to those with a niche, or a cist.

Considering the publication of a larger number of tombs from the necropolises of Scythia, the need to create a general typology of them is felt, a subject researched in the third chapter of the thesis. This was done using as a basis the model proposed by Andrei Soficaru, chosen because it combines as completely as possible the archaeological data of the typologies previously formulated for the necropolises of Tomis, Callatis and Beroe.

The chapter begins with a brief presentation of the phenomena that led to the change of the funeral rite from cremation to that of inhumation, a relevant phenomenon for understanding migrations and the similarity between the practices of the first Christians and the pagan ones.

The order of discussing the graves was chosen according to the following criteria:

Black Sea necropolises: Argamum, Bizone, Callatis, Histria, Tomis.

Necropolises on the banks of the Danube: Aegyssus, Beroe, Capidava, Carsium, Dinogetea, Halmyris, Noviodunum.

Necropolises within the province: Enisala, Ibida, Nufăru, Pietreni, Šipote, Tropaeum Traiani, Ulmetum.

During the 4th-6th centuries, a diversity can be observed among the types of graves, with only the rite of inhumation existing, a rite that replaced cremation starting from the 3rd century BC.

Of the tombs that are the subject of this work, most come from the necropolis of Callatis, the large number being due to the monograph of the necropolis and the publication of the rescue excavations carried out in recent years.

Throughout the territory of the province of Scythia, graves in simple pits predominate, being the most accessible and least expensive form of burial.

The large number of cist graves are attributed to those from Callatis, where 237 graves belonging to this typology were discovered. The numerous cists at Callatis are due to the stone quarry on the shores of Lake Mangalia, most of the stone used in the construction of the main monuments coming from that area.

The tombs with internal arrangements are predominantly found in the Tomis necropolis, being the tombs with an access chamber and a longitudinal or lateral opening. In the database used, there are 174 such tombs. This typology has been known since the beginning of the 3rd century and up to the 5th-6th centuries. It is considered to have its origins in the East, having been brought to the province with the spread of Oriental Cults.

In the case of *hypogeum* type tombs, the name of *family tombs* was used due to the fact that members of the same family were buried in such constructions over time. The most famous such tomb is the vault type with a room built of stone slabs bound with mortar.

The crypts of martyrs discovered in Niculițel, Halmyris and Tropaeum Traiani were also included in this typology.

Also, the cenotaph tombs were divided into typologies according to their arrangement. These graves

can be linked to the period of the end of the 4th century when the migration of the Visigoths took place in the Empire, as a result of which the population suffered. Some of the cenotaph graves are believed to belong to those who died in a battle that took place outside the province.

As for the position in which the deceased were placed, the supine one predominates, followed by the crouched one, found most often among children, and the ventral decubitus. For many of the skeletons, the position could not be determined due to the fact that they were not in anatomical connection or showed a poor state of preservation.

The most common orientation is W-E followed by: E-W, N-S, S-N, which makes us assume that Christian graves predominate.

Although graves in which a single skeleton was discovered predominate, there are also numerous graves with multiple burials, with up to 39 skeletons, most of them being discovered in cists or in hypogeum type tombs where several family members were buried over time. There are also many graves in which bones were

discovered that were not anatomically connected and did not benefit from anthropological analyses, thus, the number of skeletons cannot be specified with certainty.

The fourth chapter is dedicated to the funeral inventory, the belief in the continuation of life beyond the grave being the origin of the burial with the body of the objects that the deceased was supposed to need. It includes the pieces in the grave that were related to the person of the deceased or to some activities that he carried out during his life. All burials had a well-established purpose, nothing was placed by chance.

More than half of the graves benefited from funerary inventory. For those without an inventory, we must also take into account the phenomenon of grave looting that was quite common since Antiquity, thus, some of them could have originally had inventory items.

I believe that for a better understanding of the phenomenon of placing objects in graves, it is necessary to review the conceptions formulated throughout history in relation to the idea of the soul through thoughts such as those of Herodotus, Epicurus or Calvin. As a main conclusion, we emphasize the fact that people who died before the age of maturity benefited from a richer funeral inventory compared to those who had passed this stage of life. Also, those who did not pass through some important stages of life, benefit from different specific forms of burial including the inventory discovered in the graves. This category includes: children, women who died in childbirth, unmarried people or those who suffered violent deaths

Analyzing the graves in which the funeral inventory consisted of a single earring, we conclude that the phenomenon is related to premature death, before marriage, the proof being the anthropological analyzes that revealed the fact that the majority were women who died around the age of adolescence.

Changes in funerary order are also evidenced in the objects of the funerary inventory. If initially the phylacteries contained Gnostic or Orphic texts with an imprecatory or apotropaic character, taken over by Christians, they housed fragments of relics or holy objects. Another example is the obol of Charon, the practice of depositing coins in tombs has survived to this day.

The funerary inventory was divided into 11 categories (Adornments, clothing accessories, toiletries, ceramics, coins, glassware, weapons and tools, spindles, flint objects, textiles, animal offerings and others) for which the type was specified the grave in which it was discovered.

The last chapter contains a brief presentation of the necropolises in the province of Scythia including the research history and various statistics regarding the conclusions we reached for each of them.

The work was completed by a catalog of the tombs, in the composition of which a unitary sheet was used to present them, inserting the information that we considered essential in the study of a necropolis, such as: the number of the tombs, the typology of the tombs, the number of discovered skeletons, position, orientation, burial inventory and bibliography.

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