

**BURIAL RITE ALONG THE BULGARIAN
BLACK SEA COAST DURING THE LATE ANTIQUITY
(4th – 6th CENTURIES)**

Some fundamental historical events set the chronological frame of the work here presented. The affairs running on the Balkan Peninsula in the course of 4th – the early 7th centuries were turbulent, and marked by severe raids of the Great Migration nations. One of the crucial turns of the Late Antiquity history was the adoption of Christianity as a dominant religion of clearly formulated dogma. The consecration of Constantinople as a new Capital of the Roman Empire in 330 came to be another event of great significance. As a result the importance of the Eastern Balkan territories for the economical and political reality increased ever so much, as they occurred to be naturally related to the subsistence and defense of the Capital. The division of the Empire into Western and Eastern one followed as the next important historical turn.

The evidence coming from 21 necropolises, as well as some particular grave finds is interpreted. The archaeological investigation shows a complicated picture. On one hand, the Christian burial rite appeared as inhumation, with the corpse extended, spine and leg bones in a straight line, orientated west – east, and the masonry tombs with hemi-cylindrical vault began to win recognition as typical early Christian burial structure. On the other hand, a series of heathen practices were still followed, as cremation, various orientations, and various position of laying the corpse, Charon's obolos, grave goods and food. The heathen sanctuaries, connected with some villages, also kept on functioning as late as the last decades of the 4th century.¹

The ethnic changes followed two main roads. On one hand, as a result of the wars the local population decreased, and on the other – immigrants from Barbarian origins settled down, peacefully or by violence. The ancient authors paid special attention on the great invasions and settling down of entire nations as foederati.

We have to mention here that the burial rite comes to be one of the most important archeological sources when investigating the ancient history. As a feature distributed on a large scale, and inherent to any archaeological culture,

¹ V. Dintchev, On the ethno-cultural features of the village population on the present Bulgarian territory in the 4th century A. D. – *Archaeologia Bulgarica* 2, 2, 1998, 64-87.

it can be best differentiated in chronological terms, compared to other kinds of sites under investigation, let us mention settlements for instance. The burial rite is traditional and conservative, and gives the best information about the ethnic affiliation, as well as the belief and social status of the buried.

The topography of the necropolises of the period and territory here discussed shows two main tendencies. On one hand it follows the antique Roman and Greek tradition. This particularly applies to cities that experienced no hiatus. The necropolises were organized *extra muros*, and in the cases of smaller settlements – outside the built-up area, though in the close proximity of it, as it is peculiar to the Greek and Roman world.² The big cities had two or even more burial grounds – Marcianopolis, Odessos, Deultum, and Bizone. The same feature can be found in some smaller dwelling places – the cemeteries in the countryside of Yaila, near the village of Kamen Bryag, Kavarna region. According to the antique tradition the necropolises were laid along the main roads, leading to the built-up area.³

The origin of certain burial grounds can be associated with the ethnic changes in the Late Antiquity – Necropolises NN 1 and 2, the village of Kamen Bryag, Kavarna region. A new tendency on choosing a place for organizing necropolis occurred with the adoption of Christianity as official religion. As a result some necropolises appeared around Christian churches *extra muros*. Concerning the territory under investigation, the necropolises of Odessos⁴, Tomis⁵ and Marcianopoli⁶ display similar location. At the end of the 3rd century the bi-ritual tumuli necropolises disappeared, and this is still another peculiar feature of the rite here discussed.

During the Late Antiquity the number of tombstones sharply decreased, and they were to be found mainly in the big cities' necropolises. Nevertheless, it seems rather likely that certain marking had existed made of non-durable material, perhaps wood, clearly visible over the land surface of those days.

In my work I have distinguished ten types of burial structures. The burial pits (fig. 1) are the first main type of graves. They display seven sub-types according to the ground they have been dug into, the way of covering, the way of digging in, and the possible existence of an inner marking.

We can suppose that the dissemination of this grave type relates to the spread of Christianity, as during the middle Ages it turned to be the main one.

² D. Robinson, *Excavation at Olynthus. XI. Necrolynthia. A Study of Greek Burial Customs and Archaeology*. London, 1942, 125-127; J. M. C. Toynbee, *Death and Burial in the Roman World*. London, 1971, 212.

³ C. Chera-Margineanu, V. Lungu, *Noi descoperiri din necropolele Tomitane*. - *Pontica* 17, 1984, 101-190.

⁴ X. и К. Шкорпил, *Двадесетгодишната дейност на Варненското археологическо дружество 1901 – 1921*. – *Известия на Варненското археологическо дружество* 7, 1921, 22.

⁵ H. Nubar, *Contributii la topographia cetatii Histria in epocha Romano – Bizantina. Consideratii generale asupra necropolei din sectorul Bazilicii „extra muros“*. – *Studii si cercetari de istorie veche* 2, 1971, 335, fig. 1.

⁶ В. Иванова, *Стари църкви и манастири в българските земи IV-XII в.* – ГИМ 4 (1922/25), 1926, 461-462.

The recent issue of the Late Antique necropolis in Gradishteto, near Gabrovo⁷, sheds some additional light on the question. The necropolis dates from the 6th – the very beginning of the 7th century. The simple pits are the main type of graves there. The necropolis originated round an Early Christian church and according to the investigator it belongs ethnically to a foederati population, perhaps Sarmathians.

The graves covered with tegulae of eaves – like arrangement make the second type⁸. The grave size corresponds to the height of the buried, as well as to the format of the tegulae employed. In certain cases imbricis have been also arranged along the ridge of the grave covering thus formed. The practice has pronounced Greek origin, and appeared as early as the 5th century B.C.⁹, spreading widely during the Hellenistic period.¹⁰ This type of grave covering often occurred during the Roman period as well.¹¹

The third type consists of graves built with stone slabs – cists (fig. 2)¹². This is a box – shaped structure made of stone slabs set on edge, usually a single slab on each of the short sides, and two to four slabs – on the long sides. We have to note, that this type of burial structure is to be found in most of the cities along the Black Sea coast, and in Northern Dobrudzha.

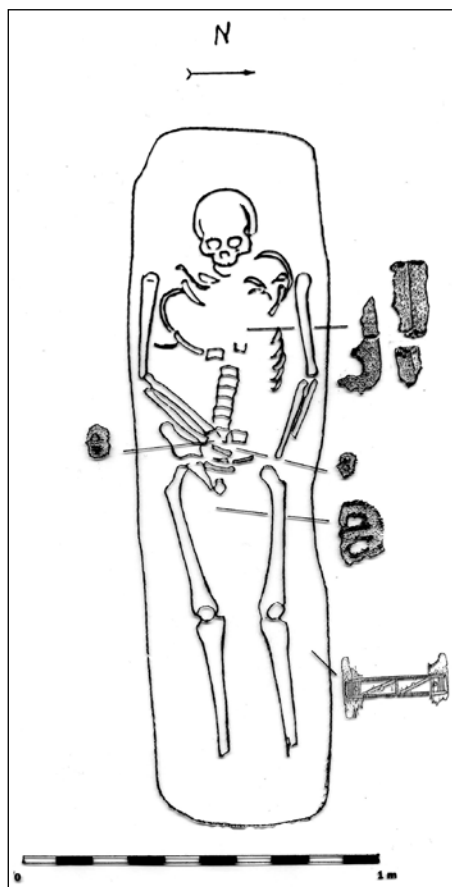


Fig. 1.

Сл. 1.

⁷ К. Койчева, *Черква и некропол при укрепено селище в м. Градище край Габрово*. – В: Л. Русева – Слокоска и др. (ред.). *Римският и късноантичният град*. София, 2002, 178-183

⁸ type VI, Л. Гетов, *Погребални обичаи и гробни съоръжения у траките през Римската епоха*. – *Археология* 12, 1, 1970, 1-12.

⁹ С. Blegen, H. Palmer, R. Young, *The North Cemetery*. Princeton, New Jersey, 1964 = *Corinth XIII*. 73-74.

¹⁰ В. Зубарь, *Некрополь Херсонеса Таврического I-IV вв. н. э.* - Киев. 1982, 15-16.

¹¹ Н. Nubar, *op. cit.*, 201-203.

¹² type VII, Л. Гетов, *op. cit.* 6.

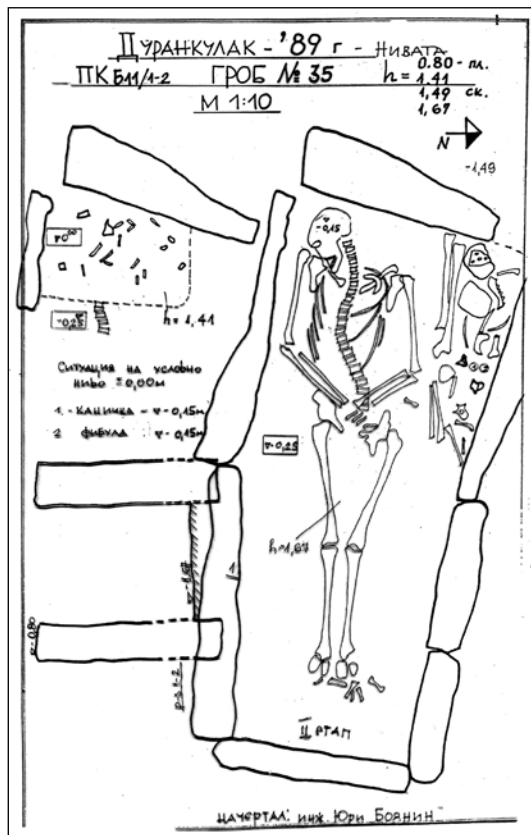


Fig. 2.

Сл. 2.

The cists occurred as early as the Classical era¹³ and spread broadly during the Hellenistic and Roman periods all over the Balkan Peninsula, Asia Minor, along the Northern Black Sea coast, and in Pannonia.¹⁴ From an ethnical point of view, the practice seems followed by the local Romanized or Hellenized population. They kept on this antique type of burial structure until the early 7th century, and then gradually abandoned it as a result of the Barbarization.

The next – fourth type are masonry graves. There is just a single monument of the kind known from the territory discussed. We have a report about another grave built with limestone and white mortar, in Odessos necropolis. This type of burial structure appeared in the Eastern Balkan territories in 1st – 2nd century. Initially the masonry graves received the ashes left after cremation. Their appearance is associated with the establishment of the

Roman power, and migration of Italic population that followed.¹⁵ They had their greatest spread during the 4th century, and in the 6th century they were no longer to be found. Usually they were meant to receive distinguished deceased.

The graves with shaft – shaped entrance and a niche form the fifth main type (fig. 3). They were dug into limestone rock or marl. The shaft – shaped entrance is of a rectangular plan¹⁶. The niche is hollowed out on the northern or southern long side, its floor being usually lower than the floor of the shaft. The access to the niche is blocked by tegulae or limestone slabs, arranged longwise the skeleton.

¹³ C. Blegen, H. Palmer, R. Young, *op. cit.*, 75.

¹⁴ C. Blegen, *op. cit.*, 448; E. Vago, I. Vona, 1976, 16-17; C. Preda, 1980, 15-16; В. Зубарь, 1982, 21.

¹⁵ Л. Гетов, *op. cit.*, 7.

¹⁶ М. Мирчев, *Късноримският некропол на Одесос*. – Известия на Варненското археологическо дружество, 8, 1951, 91-104.

Similar burial structures are to be found in Northern Dobrudzha – a grave in Callatis¹⁷; in the Crimea and some other regions of the Northern Black Sea shore.¹⁸ There they associate with Sarmathian tribes' migration to the West, considering the grave goods found in them.¹⁹ As a type they originate in the mid 3rd century B.C. in a Scythian – Sarmathian environment. Some of them have been long used as family vaults.

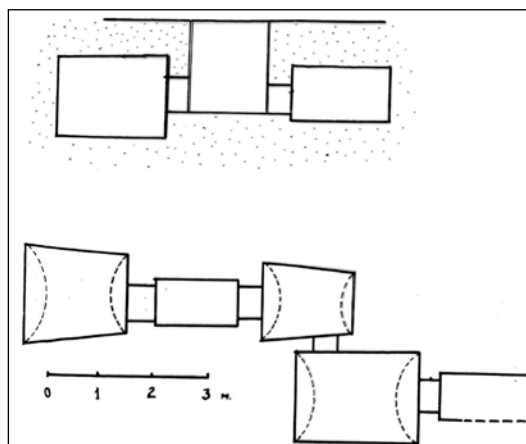


Fig. 3.

Сл. 3.

The next main type covers tombs dug into limestone rock, marl or loess. There are several sub-types distinguished according to the presence of an opening in the burial chamber that leads to the ground surface. The first sub-type – VI, 1 are tombs sunken in the rock, with chamber opened to the land surface, and entrance with steps hewn into the rock (fig. 4). They consist of burial chamber and

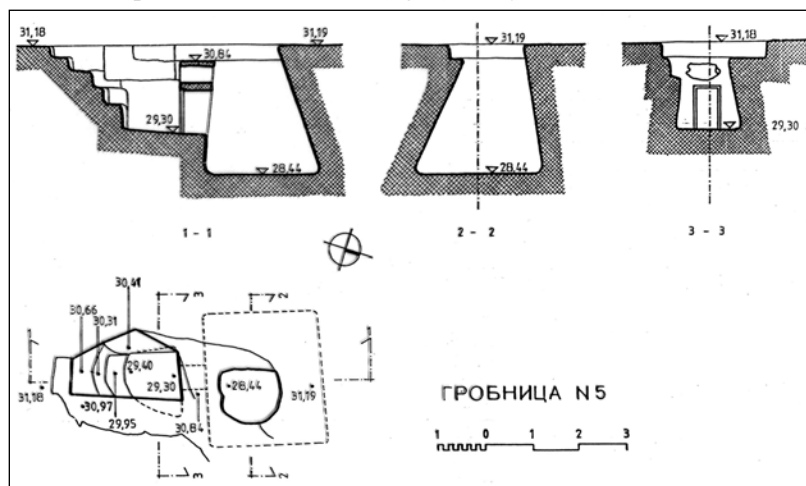


Fig. 4.

Сл. 4.

¹⁷ C. Preda, Callatis (Nekropola Romano – Bizantina). – Bucuresti. 1980, 86, pl. I, m. 14.

¹⁸ Н. Богданова, И. Гущина, *Новые могильники II – III вв. н. э. у с. Скалистое в Крыму*. – Крымский сборник Истории и Археологии 112, 1967, 132-139. 1967, 132-139; В. Зубарь, *op. cit.*, 17-18, рис. 7 и 8.

¹⁹ И. Гущина, *Населения сарматского времени в долине реки Бельбек*. – В: Археологические исследования на юге Восточной Европы. Москва, 1974, 74.

entrance. The chambers are shaped in the form of truncated pyramid, as the wall that has the entrance, is usually vertical. As a rule, the openings that lead to the surface are considerably smaller than the chamber basis. They close by means of massive limestone slabs, with grooves hewn for them around the openings. This type tomb were to be found during the Antiquity and Late Antiquity on the Balkan Peninsula only in Necropolises NN 1 and 2 in Yaila near the village of Kamen Bryag, Kavarna region, and on Cape of Kaliakra, Rock Necropolis N 1.

The next sub-type covers tombs that have chambers without any opening to the ground level. Their walls are inclined inwards to the ceiling, so that the chamber section displays the form of truncated pyramid (fig. 5). The angles are rounded. The ceiling is flat or rounded, though the tombs in Varna, generally the tombs with shaft-like entrance in the necropolis on the Market Square²⁰, and certain tombs in Necropolis N 1 near Kamen Bryag²¹ have their ceiling shaped as hemi-cylindrical vault. The latter clearly manifest the impact of the Early Christian tradition, and the tendency to resemble the masonry tombs with hemi-cylindrical vault. The crosses found occasionally on their walls evidence this also.

The next, seventh main type includes tombs built of stone slabs. In the territory under discussion we have just a single monument known to belong to this type – the tomb from the village of Gorun, Shabla region. As a burial structure they represent a development of the cists, so in some works they are combined in one and the same type²². The size and presence of entrance make the general difference.

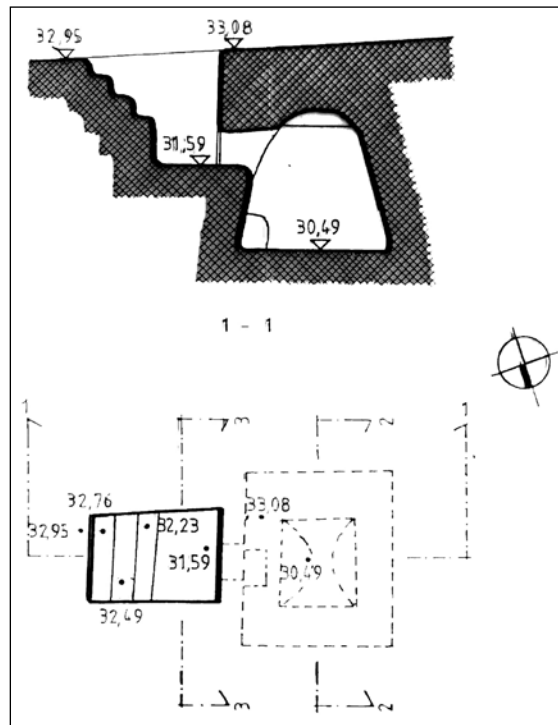


Fig. 5.

Сл. 5.

²⁰ Pazaren Ploshtad

²¹ А. Салкин, Д. Топтанов, *Скални гробници в местността Яйла край с. Камен бряг и на нос Калиакра, Толбухински окръг.* – Археологически открития и разкопки през 1985, В. Търново, 1986, 112-113.

²² С. Preda, *op. cit.*, 15-16

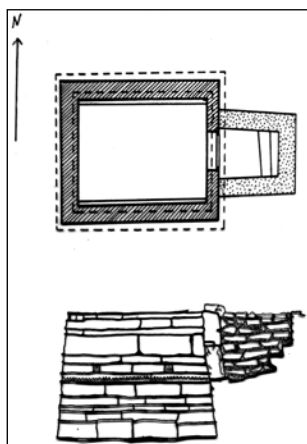


Fig. 6.

Сл. 6.

There follows the eighth main type of burial structures. These are masonry vaulted tombs hypogeum (fig. 6). They are the most typical ones in the Early Christian period. This type of tombs is clearly related to the adoption of the rite of inhumation during the Late Antiquity. Two main sub-types are distinguished - tombs with hemi-cylindrical vault, and tombs with cross-like vault. The construction of the roof – a hemi-cylindrical or cross-like curved plane, symbolizes the dome of heaven thus well corresponding to the Christian way of thinking. The vault's inner decoration exalts its architectural effect – stars, crosses, birds, and symbols of soul's salvation from the material²³. During the period here discussed this tomb type has its closest parallels in Asia Minor. The fact associates with the large number of Asia Minor and Syrian immigrants. The vaulted tombs were family ones, and

usually were used repeatedly.

Some of these tombs display painted decoration. In most cases the painting is similar to the patterns in the large necropolises of Serdica and Thessalonica. The decoration of the tomb in the village of Osenovo comes to be of a special interest. Its vault also represents the heaven, as the stars are rendered as blue and red dots. There are two human busts on the vault too, radial lines rising out from their heads, encircled by an arc. These figures symbolize the Moon and the Sun.

The sarcophagi are the next, ninth main type of burial structure²⁴. We know just a single piece of this type – a sarcophagus cover with a cross and inscription, coming from Deultum. We have reports for sarcophagi from the necropolis in Odessos as well²⁵. The last, tenth type of burial structure we have to discuss, is a small stone box used to receive remains after cremation. We know one and only piece of the kind, from the necropolis in the village of Krapetz, Shabla region. A coin of Constantine the Great dates the grave.

All the objects found during investigation of a burial structure can be interpreted as grave inventory. Generally they divide into two groups – costume elements: adornments, preserved parts of clothing – belt buckles, fibulae, etc. They all are personal belongings. We can add them to the objects of religious or apothropeus function – crosses, pendants containing roll with text, etc. The other group of finds represents grave goods – clay and glass vessels, food, coins left as Charon's obolos, etc. Unfortunately, a great number of graves, masonry

²³ К. Миятев, *Декоративната живопис на Софийския некропол*. София. 1925, 6-8; Д. Овчаров, *Архитектура и декорация на старохристиянските гробници в нашите земи*. – Археология 19, 4, 1977, 20-30; J. Valeva, *Sur certaines particularites des hypogees paleochretiens des terres thraces et leurs analogues en Asie Mineure*. – *Anatolica* 7 (1979-1980), 1981, 117-129.

²⁴ type VIII, Л. Гетов, op. cit., 6-7.

²⁵ М. Мирчев, 1951, op. cit., 92.

and rock tombs in particular, were plundered as early as the ancient days, thus it is difficult to say what kind of grave inventory had been left inside. Usually we unearth just fragments of clay or glass vessels, seldom a part of costume element, overlooked perhaps by the robbers.²⁶

Jewels form the most numerous group of grave inventory. Usually they are found at those regions of the skeleton, they have been traditionally worn while still living. This circumstance suggests that jewels were personal belongings and they have not been left as grave goods. The commonest types of jewels presented are bracelets, necklaces, rings, and earrings.

Bilateral, three-compound bone hair-combs, decorated with incised lines, are often to be found also in the graves dating from the Late Antiquity. Alongside a two-compound bone comb, an iron steel and two pieces of flint, three iron buckles, and an erased bronze coin were discovered together in a grave in the necropolis of Chirakman Cape²⁷. Graves containing a few belt buckles, steel and flint, two-compound bone comb, and a coin, left as grave goods, are peculiar of the German tribes, Gepidic in particular. The strongly worn out, indefinable, 3rd century coin, lying over the chest bones, left as a Charon's obolos, should be generally interpreted as a *terminus post quem* for the date of the grave, and of the necropolis too.

The costume elements discovered in the graves here discussed are fibulae and belt sets. The fibulae are usually made of bronze, occasionally gilded, and in rare cases - golden or silver. The *Zwiebelknopffibeln*²⁸ of the Late Roman type, dating from the 4th - beginning of the 5th centuries are the commonest pieces. Fibulae *mit umgeschlagenem Fuss*²⁹ are another type, often to be found. They form a provincial Roman type of a very broad spread, and were also often worn by the population of Sintana de Mures – Chernyahovo Culture. The rest of the fibulae discovered in the graves belong to the bow type, peculiar of the various Barbarian tribes from the Great Migration age. They are usually in pairs thus suggesting a fashion representative of the German tribes.

The belt buckles and fittings are the other large group of artifacts, pertaining to the costume elements. They are present in all types of grave structures. Most frequently they are made of bronze, occasionally of iron, the latter found strongly corroded. Belt buckles and fittings of precious metals are also well known. All objects of this group known from the territory discussed belong to Late Roman and Early Byzantine types. They have a chronology well worked out; nevertheless they do not present a possibility for an ethnic interpretation. The Late Roman belt buckles have oval, round, or U-shaped frame, and oval, round, triangular, or rectangular plaque of folded sheet metal, with rivets to fix it

²⁶ Л. Бобчева, *Археологическа карта на Толбухински окръг*. – София. 1971, 46.

²⁷ Й. Гатев, *Археологически разкопки на нос Чиракман край Каварна (античното Бизоне) през 2002 г. Проучвания на късноантичен некропол от IV-VI век*. Минало, 2, 2004, 9-13.

²⁸ I. Kovrig, *Die Haupttipen der kaizerzeitlichen Fibeln in Pannonien*. - Diss. Pann., Budapest, 1937, 125-129; E. Keller, *Die spätromischen Grabfunde in Südbayern*. – Munchener Beiträge zur Vor- und Frühgeschichte. Band 14. Munchen, 1971, 26-55.

²⁹ А. Хараламбиева, *Два типа късноантични фибули във Варненския музей*. – Известия на Народния музей Варна 25 (40), 1989, 31-33.

to the belt. The Early Byzantine buckles are with oval or rectangular frame and lyre-shaped or oval plaque. Most of them are entirely cast. Buckles consisted of hook and tongue alone, are also often found. Belt strap ends and mountings are presented in good number as well.

The grave gifts are the next main element of the grave inventory. Coins, weapons, lamps, and glass and clay vessels have been left inside. At some places they kept on following the custom of giving Charon's obolos during all the period in discussion. One to three in number coins have been left, occasionally in the dead individual's mouth, in graves generally displaying Antique tradition preserved. A grave in Deultum is of certain interest, as 23 bronze coins dating from the mid 4th century have been discovered in it.³⁰

Clay lamps appear to be grave gifts most frequently left – meant to light up the soul's way in the world beyond. A single lamp is usually present in a grave. In tombs the number of lamps usually corresponds to the number of buried individuals. The rite is a heathen one, its roots lying in the Antique tradition, and under the influence of the Sarmathian death customs, especially in the case of the rock necropolises in the vicinities of Kamen Bryag.

Clay vessels are the commonest grave gifts. Vessels of standard Late Antique types, made on fast potter's wheel prevail in the group of everyday ceramics. Drinking vessels – pitchers and cups, are the most frequent kinds. Pots are more seldom to find, usually in the region of leg bones, and some times – by the skull. Some graves contain earthenware unguentarii, peculiar of 3rd – mid 4th century. Leaving clay vessels for food, and oftener for drinking, as grave goods is a heathen practice that contradicts the Christian norms. Its roots must be looked for in the Antique tradition still kept on by the local population, as well as in the tradition of the coming Barbarian nations, who also adopted the practice of wine drinking as a part of the burial ritual³¹.

The orientation of the skeleton appears to be one of the most important elements of the burial rite. This refers particularly to the period here discussed, as it was the time the inhumation became the main way of burial. After the adoption of Christianity as the principal religion all over the Roman Empire in the 4th century, the dead had to be laid with their heads to the west, according to the regulation of the faith. So the prevailing cases are indeed of west – east orientation, thus confirming mass adoption of the Christian religion and custom. Nevertheless, the number of graves showing deflection from the main west – east orientation is rather not so low, and in certain cases the deflection reaches 45 degrees. Some of the mentioned cases can be explained as seasonal, though the others have to be interpreted as peculiarities of the rite, heathen reminiscence, and presence of Barbarians³².

The position of the skeleton comes to be the next very significant element of the burial rite. We distinguish 12 variants of laying the dead in the territory

³⁰ И. Бонева, *Късноантична монетна находка от Деултум*. – Нумизматика 3, 1984, 23-29.

³¹ В. Magomedov, *The tradition of ritual feasts as a part of burial customs in Chernyakhov – Sintana culture*. – Archaeologia Bulgarica 4, 2, 2000, 59-64.

³² Г. Никитина, *Систематика погребального обряда племен Черняховской культуры*. Москва, 1985, 35-38.

examined during the Late Antiquity. The main differences refer to the position of the arms. The legs were usually straight, though some exceptions are also known. The crouched position was still presented, though considerably more extended compared to the previous ages – let us term it a flexed position. In some cases the dead has been obviously laid on his back, with legs flexed at the knees, subsequently the leg bones falling on the side. We have no evidence of the arms' position in most of the cases. We have to accept though that the dead have been laid on the back, and with arms in various positions.

The richest collection of old Christian epitaphs all over Bulgarian territory comes from Odessos. The vast number of the inscriptions is in Greek, and in its spoken, vernacular version by that. This circumstance well illustrates the ethnic composition of the population in the Late Antiquity – local antique inhabitants, as well as large numbers of immigrants coming from Asia Minor and Syria, involved in trade and crafts. Inscriptions in Latin are also discovered in Odessos – three in number altogether entirely preserved, and six fragments.³³

Some of the tombstones from Odessos belong to ecclesiastic – let us mention Presbyter Peter and his son Bonos, reader.³⁴ The inscription from Byala, Varna region, also refer to a clergyman, presbyter.

Another group of individuals honored with tombstones, belonged to the military class. Two inscriptions from Odessos mention Karel's deceased wife and son. In the second inscription commemorating the death of his son Johan, he is denominated *stratilates*. The title likely corresponds to *Magister militum*, and that is general. *Magister militum* is mentioned also in an inscription from St. Vlas, Varna region, and it is well possible the *Magister militum* of province of Thracia to be referred to³⁵. The son of Strobil, known from a grave inscription from Odessos, was also linked to the military class. The father was *numerarius*, treasurer, in the regiment.

A large number of inscriptions relates to civilian trades exercised by the buried individuals. Two epitaphs honored ship owners; one of the men came from the Island of Pelle in Smyrna Bay, Asia Minor. The ship owners were merchants at the same time. They were also engaged in shipbuilding, and in shipping³⁶. Still another inscription mentions Stephen who was a merchant in linen, and was born in the village of Bambolo in Bithynia, Asia Minor. Daniel was a merchant too, coming from the village of Tarutia, in the province of Apamea, Syria.

A doctor's epitaph is known also from Odessos. According to the inscriptions preserved, the best-represented guild is that of the furriers. Five epitaphs

³³ V. Beševliev, *Spätgriechische und spätlateinische Inschriften aus Bulgarien*. – Berlin. 1964. 1964, 18-39; 1964; В. Бешевлиев, *Един нов старохристиянски надпис от Варна*. – Известия на народния музей Варна 20, 1969, 232-233; *Старохристиянските надписи от Варна като исторически извори*. – Известия на народния музей Варна 34, 1983, 24; 1983, 19-34; М. Мирчев, 1960, *Нови епиграфски паметници от Черноморието*. – Известия на Варненското археологическо дружество 11, 1960, 35-58; 1961, *op. cit.*, 7-21; E. Popescu, 1976 *Inscriptiile grecesti si latine din secolele IV – XIII descoperite in Romania*. – Bucuresti. 1976.

³⁴ V. Beševliev, 1964, *op. cit.*, 77-78; В. Бешевлиев, 1983, *op. cit.*, 24.

³⁵ V. Beševliev, 1964, *op. cit.*, 116-117; В. Бешевлиев, 1983, *op. cit.*, 23.

³⁶ V. Beševliev, 1964, *op. cit.*, № 96; В. Бешевлиев, 1983, *op. cit.*, 24.

and fragments of inscriptions belong to them. Still another trade are mentioned in epitaphs as well: an inscription refers to Iovin, who was marble-cutter; another one tells us about Damiana, wife of Johan, candle-maker.³⁷

The inscription begins with the monogram of ΗΜΓ - a Greek abbreviation of the sentence of Maria gave birth to Christ that is a typical Early Christian formula³⁸.

Considering the inscriptions discussed above, we can draw conclusions mainly on the ethnic composition of Odessos. Inscriptions coming from other places contain standard Early Christian names that cannot serve for ethnic interpretation. Some remains of Greek population from the ancient Miletus colony very likely survived to the Late Antiquity, probably mixed with local Thracian inhabitants. Greek has established itself as main language. When the city went under the power of Rome, new immigrants came too. They were connected with the army and provincial administration, and talked Latin. Nevertheless, judging from the inscriptions, the Greek remained still dominant during the Early Byzantine age as well. Many of the epitaphs mention immigrants from Asia Minor and Syria, as obviously the city kept busy trade and economic connections with them. A Barbarian ethnic element was also present in the city, German mainly; and perhaps Sarmathians or their Hellenized descendants, having in mind the spread of graves with niches. The same composition was preserved during the Early Byzantine time too, as it was very likely in the other west Black Sea cities. The indigenous inhabitants disappeared gradually and the Greek speaking element prevailed over all the others.

Јордан Гатев

ПОГРЕБНИ ОБРЕД НА БУГАРСКОЈ ОБАЛИ ЦРНОГ МОРА У КАСНОМ
АНТИЧКОМ ПЕРИОДУ (IV - VI ВЕК)

Овај рад базиран је на подацима из 21 некрополе и неколико посебно интерпретираних гробних налаза. Археолошка испитивања дају сложу слику. С једне стране, постојао је хришћански погребни обред, као уклапање равно положеног тела исправљених ногу, постављеног у правцу запад-исток, а зидане гробнице са полубличастим сводом прихваћене су као типичне рано-хришћанске гробне конструкције. С друге стране, још увек се упражњавао низ паганских обичаја, као што је кремирање, различита оријентација тела и уклапање у различитим положајима, Харонов новчић - обол, предмети и храна за загробни живот који су се стављали у гроб. Паганска светишта, повезана са неким селима, наставила су да функционишу све до последњих деценија IV века.

Етничке промене развијале су се у два правца. С једне стране, локално становништво се смањивало услед ратова, а с друге - насељавали су се дошљаци варварског порекла, милом или силом. Топографија некропола из периода и са територије који се

³⁷ V. Beševliev, 1964, *op. cit.*

³⁸ В. Бешевлиев, 1983, *op. cit.*, 27; А. Bandy, *The Greek Christian Inscriptions of Crete*. V. I. Athens, 1970, 10-11.

у овом раду разматрају показује две главне тенденције. На једној страни, она прати римску и грчку традицију. То се посебно односи на градове који нису имали прекид у развоју. Некрополе су биле организоване изван градских зидина (*extra muros*), а у случају мањих насеља - изван стамбене зоне, мада у њеној непосредној близини, што је карактеристично за грчки и римски свет. Велики градови имали су два или чак и више гробља. Према античкој традицији, некрополе су биле грађене поред главних путева који су водили у стамбену зону насеља.

Број надгробних споменика из касног античког периода драстично је мањи, а могли су се наћи углавном у некрополама великих градова. Ипак, гробови су вероватно били обележавани материјалом који није могао дуго да траје, можда дрветом, а у то време су се јасно видели на терену.

У раду сам класификовао десет типова гробних структура. Први главни тип гробница чине гробне јаме.

Гробнице покривене теголом - црепом аранжираним у облику стрехе чине други тип.

Трећи тип састоји се од циста - гробница издубљених у камену и озиданих каменим плочама.

Следећи - четврти тип су зидане гробнице. На испитиваној територији постоји само један споменик ове врсте.

Гробнице са улазом налик на шахт и нишом чине пети главни тип. Оне су биле укопане у кречњачку стену или лапорац. Сличне гробне структуре могу се наћи у Северној Добруци и на Криму, где се повезују са миграцијама сарматских племена ка западу, судећи по предметима који су нађени у њима.

Следећи главни тип обухвата гробнице укопане у кречњак, лапорац или лес. Има неколико под-типова који се разликују по облику отвора који од гробне одаје води ка површини земље.

Следећи, седми тип укључује гробнице изграђене од камених плоча. Као гробне структуре, оне представљају развој циста, па се у неким радовима трећи и седми тип комбинују у један јединствени. Главна разлика међу њима је у величини и присуству улазног дела.

Затим следи осми главни тип гробних структура. То су опеком засвођене гробнице - хипогеуми. Оне су најкарактеристичније за рано-хришћански период. Овај тип гробница је јасно повезан са усвајањем обреда сахрањивања током касно-античког доба. У неким од ових гробница налази се сликана декорација.

Саркофази представљају следећи, девети тип гробних структура. Познат је само један споменик ове врсте.

Последњи, десети тип гробних структура о којима ћемо говорити је мало удубљење у камену у које су се стављали остаци након кремације. Пронађен је само један овакав издубљени камени блок у некрополи у селу Крапец у региону Шабла. Гроб је датиран према новчићу Константина Великог.

Сви објекти нађени током истраживања гробних структура могу се интерпретирати као гробни инвентар. Они се, генерално, могу поделити у две групе. Прву чине елементи ношње: накит, сачувани делови одеће - појасне копче, фибуле, итд. Све то спада у личну имовину. Њима можемо додати религиозне или апотропне објекте - крстове, привеске који садрже свитак са текстом, итд. Другу групу налаза чине предмети за загробни живот - керамичке и стаклене посуде, храна, новчићи остављани као Харонови оболи, итд. Нажалост, много гробница, нарочито зиданих од опеке и камена, било је опљачкано још у античка времена, те је тешко рећи какав гробни инвентар се налазио у њима.

Најбогатија збирка старих хришћанских епитафа на целој територији Бугарске налази се у Одесосу. Велики број натписа је на грчком језику и на тамошњем дијалекту грчког. Овај податак добро илуструје етнички састав становништва у касно-античком периоду - локални староседеоци, као и велики број имиграната који су дошли из Мале Азије и Сирије, због трговине и занатства. У Одесосу су такође нађени натписи на латинском језику - укупно три очувана у целости, као и шест фрагмената.