

**CONTRIBUTIONS MADE TO THE STUDY OF THE BURIAL RITE
PERFORMED BY THE COMMUNITIES INHABITING EAST
OF THE CARPATHIANS IN 3RD C. B.C. - 3RD C. A.D.**

Ion Niculiță (Republic of Moldova)

Key-words: *East Carpathians, funerary practices, biritualism.*

Abstract. *Despite this axiom, the analysis of the funerary rite and ritual known at the communities East of Carpathians in the I millennium BC – the first half of the I millennium AD, represents a special interest as it allows to highlight certain similarities, in some cases up to perfect match, caused probably by some genetic, religious links or traditions characteristic to the historic period. The detailed analysis of the whole ensemble regarding the funerary practices will facilitate establishing whether biritualism and other rituals were common phenomena for the communities from the entire Central and South-Eastern Europe or if it was a tradition particular only to certain ethno-cultural groups from this area.*

According to specialized literature a burial rite presents the most conservative aspect of any ethno-cultural group. A burial rite reflects only those completely formed phenomenon which deeply penetrated in the daily use of a community thus becoming traditions.

As a rule practice of most funeral rituals is connected either with the existence of social differences or with penetration of foreign tribes. Most frequently, transfer from an inhumation to an incineration rite and vice versa is caused by the fact that population who changed had other religious views, customs and traditions, etc. It is believed that one single funeral rite is typical of a community irrespective of its population and territory size. Thus, yet in the 20^{ies} of the past century Vasile Pârvan prestigious Romanian scientist launched the idea that "...incineration as a general rule ..." is typical for the "La Tène Getae", which is in fact "...a continuation of the local Bronze Age IV"¹.

Notwithstanding these suppositions, archaeological investigations of the monuments from various regions of the east of the Carpathians space produced a considerable number of material that unambiguously prove the predominance of biritualism in the burial rite in both 2nd half of 1st Millennium BC - 1st half of 1st Millennium AD. Analysis of the materials from the necropolises showed many similarities in some cases identities due to common religious views or certain customs typical of the epoch or historical epochs.

Incineration prevails in the early 4th to 3rd centuries BC. Out of 72 burials excavated at the necropolis of Hansca, 64 had been performed by incineration and only 8 by inhumation. Out of over than 900 early burials known today, 693 burials which constitute 77,22% had been performed by incineration and 207 burials, i.e. 22,78% by inhumation. In the incineration rite prevails burial in urns with or without cover². Necropolises where calcined bones are buried in the bottom of the grave constitute the majority.

There are two types of inhumation burials according to the alignment of the deceased: in a horizontal or rare fetal position. In some of the necropolises there are inhumation burials which contain poor or no inventory at all. In others like those from Poienești, Agighiol, Peretu, etc. the deceased were accompanied by a rich array of personal possessions such as gold, silver, bronze, weapons, imported vessels, etc.

No differences had been found in the way they were interred. Both incineration and inhumation burials were discovered in the tumular necropolises or flat inhumation graves. There are cases when in one tumulus there are both incineration and inhumation burials. It demonstrates that undoubtedly a ritual rite wasn't influenced by the social status of the deceased.

¹ V. Pârvan, *Getica. O protoistorie a Daciei*, București, 1982, p. 631-632.

² I. Niculiță, *Pogrebal'nyj obrjad getov v IV-III vv. do n.e.*, Sovetskaja Arheologija, 2, Moskva, 1973, str. 27-44.

A similar situation has been observed in 2nd – 1st c. BC: 125 burials discovered to present day show that the majority of the burials had been performed by incineration in either hand-made or wheel-turned urns, i.e. 92,5%³. Burials by inhumation constitute only 13,6% and like in the 3rd c. BC with funerary inventory or without it which is also typical of burials by incineration.

Biritualism also exists in different correlations in 1st half of 3rd c. AD. Thus at the necropolis of Budești, 372 burials discovered had been performed by inhumation prevailing over those by incineration: 132 (35,5%) incineration graves and 240 (64,5%) inhumation graves⁴. By contrast/On the contrary, at the necropolis of Dănceni, 388 burials have been discovered: 236 (70%) of them had been performed by incineration, 99 (29,2%) by inhumation and 3 (0,8%) are cenotaphs⁵. At the necropolis of Văleni I⁶ of 1st half of 2nd c. - mid. 3rd c. AD 578 burials have been discovered: 470 (81,31%) incineration burials and 108 (18,69%) inhumation ones⁷.

In other cases, correlation between the number of incineration and inhumation burials isn't that evident. At the necropolis of Valea Seacă of 3rd c. AD, 547 burials have been discovered: 295 (53,78%) of them had been performed by incineration, 245 (44,78%) by inhumation and 7 (1,27%) are cenotaphs⁸. About the same correlation of the incineration and inhumation burials is observed at the necropolises of Văleni, Mălăești, Bălțata⁹, etc.

The incineration rite performed in or without urns is roughly similar to that of the last centuries of 1st millennium AD. This fact has been supported by archaeological data. At the necropolises of Budești incineration burials in urns constitute 59,8% and burials containing calcined bones which had been put directly in the grave without an urn constitute only 24,2%¹⁰. At the necropolis of Mălăești only one of 10 burials had been performed by inhumation¹¹. At the necropolis of Dănceni out of 236 incineration burials only 47 (19,9%) burials contained urns¹².

At the necropolis of Valeni I 255 (54%) incineration burials had urns and in 212 (45%) burials the calcined bones had been put in the grave¹³. The situation is similar to that of 3rd c.-1st c. BC. Funerary inventory contained in both incineration and inhumation burials include artifacts typical of the respective cultural chronological periods.

Based on the analysis of archaeological materials we can draw a conclusion that irrespective of age, sex, social status biritualism was practiced over both cultural chronological periods of 3rd – 1st centuries BC – 1st -3rd centuries AD.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Etnokul'turnaja karta teritorii Ukraïnskoj SSR v. I tysjačeletii n.e., Kiev 1985.

Fedorov, G. B. *Malaeštiskij mogil'nik*, in *Materialy i Issledovan'ja po Arheologii SSSR*, nr. 82, Moskova, 1960.

Ioniță, I, Ursachi V. *Văleni. O mare necropolă a dacilor liberi*, Iași, 1988.

Niculiță I., Pogrebal'nyj obrjad getov v IV-III vv. do n.e., *Sovetskaja Arheologija*, 2, Moskva, 1973, str. 27-44.

Palade, V. *Așezarea și necropola de la Bârlad-Valea Seacă. Secolele III-V*, Monografie, București, 2004.

³ *Etnoku'lturnaja karta teritorii Ukraïnskoj SSR v I tys. n. e.* Kiev 1985, str. 35.

⁴ E.A. Rikman, *Etničeskaja istorija naselenija Podnestrov'ja i privilegajuščego Podunova'ja v pervyh vekah n.e.*, Moskva, 1975, str. 263-266; Vlad Vornic, *Așezarea și necropola de tip Sântana de Mureș-Cernjachov de la Budești*, Chișinău, 2006, p. 161.

⁵ I.A. Rafalovič, *Dančeny. Mogil'nik Černjahovskoj , kul'tury III-IV vv. n.e.*, Kišinev, 1986, str. 8.

⁶ Ion Ioniță, Vasile Ursachi, *Văleni. O mare necropolă a dacilor liberi*, Iași, 1988, pag. 84.

⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 97.

⁸ Vasile Palade, *Așezarea și necropola de la Bârlad-Valea Seacă, secolele III-IV*. Monografie, București 2004, pag. 86.

⁹ E.A. Rikman, *op. cit.*, str. 263-301.

¹⁰ Vlad Vornic, *op. cit.*, pag.163.

¹¹ G.B. Fedorov, *Malaeštiskij mogil'nik*, în: *Materialy i Issledovan'ja po Arheologii SSSR*, nr. 82, str. 284.

¹² I.A. Rafalovič, *op. cit.*, str. 9-10.

¹³ Ion Ioniță, Vasile Ursachi, *op. cit.*, pag. 85.

Pârvan V. *Getica. O protoistorie a Daciei*, București, 1982.

Rafalovič, I.A. *Dančeny. Mogil'nik Černjahovskoj , kul'tury III-IV vv. n.e.*, Kišinev, 1986.

Rikman, E.A. *Etničeskaja istorija naselenija Podnestrov'ja i prilegajuščego Podunav'ja v pervyh vekah n.e.*, Moskva, 1975.

Ion Niculiță
University State of Moldavia – Chișinău
E-mail: ion_niculitsa@yahoo.com