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Let the dead speak for the living
Late Bronze and Early Iron Age burials in Southeast Europe – theoretical
perspectives in Balkan archaeology

ABSTRACTS

INTERNATIONAL conference VIENNA,
November 30th / December 1th–2th, 2016

organized by the Institute for European and Oriental Archaeology – OREA, Austrian
Academy of Sciences and the Institute of Archaeology Zagreb



FWF

Institut za arheologiju

Program

December 1th, 2016

09.30 **Introduction (M. Gavranović, S. Gimatzidis, D. Ložnjak-Dizdar)**

1. Panel – Chairman Biba Teržan

10.00 Marko Mele, Graz

Land of the dead – continuity or discontinuity in cemeteries of Kleinklein/Großklein, Styria

10.30 Georg Tiefengraber, Graz

Grabausstattungen und soziale Differenzierung spätbronze- und früheisenzeitlicher Gräber am Rande der Südostalpen – die „steirische“ Perspektive

11.00 Christin Keller, Berlin

Trophy Wives und harte Kerle. Zur statistischen Rekonstruktion sozialer Gruppen und ihrer Bestattungssitten im Nordbalkanraum der frühen Eisenzeit

Coffee break

12.00 Brina Škvor-Jernejčič, Berlin

Burial rites between the Late Bronze and Early Iron Age in the cemetery of Ljubljana, Slovenia

12.30 Matija Črešnar, Ljubljana

Persistence and change in Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age Eastern Slovenia

13.00 Daniejl Džino, Melbourne

Burials and social stratification in the Early Iron Age Eastern Adriatic Hinterland: problems and perspectives

Lunch break

15.30 Daria Ložnjak Dizdar, Zagreb

Late Bronze Age societies in the southern Carpathian Basin and perspectives

16.00 Mario Gavranović, Vienna

Late Bronze Age burials in Bosnia: rites, structures and identity traits

16.30 Aleksandar Jašarević, Doboj

The forgotten graves from Donja Dolina

Dinner at a Viennese *brewing local*/Bierstube

December 2th, 2016

2. Panel – Chairman Christopher Pare

10.00 Aleksandar Kapuran, Belgrad

Burial rites changes during the Bronze Age in the territory of Serbia

10.30 Marija Ljuština, Belgrad / Katarina Dmitrović, Čačak

On the outskirts of Urnfield World: West Morava Basin at dawn of Late Bronze Age

Coffee break

11.30 Daniela Heilmann, München

Pots in context – the dynamics of burial rituals between the Rhodope Mountains and Strymon/Vardar Valleys

12.00 Aleksandra Papzovska Sanev, Skopje

Burial practices and rites along Vardar valley in the Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age

Coffee break

13.00 Maja Gori, Heidelberg

The Living are Speaking for the Dead. Interpretations of Late Bronze and Early Iron Age Burials in south-western Balkans

13.30 Sevi Triantafyllou, Thessaloniki

Identifying death in LBA northern Greece: innovations or traditions in the mortuary arena at the threshold of the EIA?

14.00 Stefanos Gimatzidis, Vienna

The necropolis of Polichni: a new paradigm of mortuary practice in the Aegean and the Balkans

Closing remarks discussion and get-together

The colloquium will be organized within the annual panel “UK-Gespräche” – Get Together of the Urnfield Culture Network (UCN) and in the frame of the project “Burial”¹.

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<http://www.orea.oeaw.ac.at/UCN.html>

<http://www.orea.oeaw.ac.at/Burial.html>

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Land of the dead – continuity or discontinuity in cemeteries of Kleinklein/Großklein, Styria

Marko MELE

The site of Kleinklein (Großklein) is known to the scientific community as a Hallstatt-period center with four princely tumuli, large tumulus cemeteries and a hilltop settlement at the Burgstallkogel. Since the publication of the tumuli excavated in the 1880s and the settlement excavations from 1982 and 1984 by C. Dobiat and the recent publication of the princely tumulus Kröllkogel by M. Egg and D. Kramer, it seems we have a solid frame for understanding the site in this period. What still remains open are the beginning and the end of the prehistoric occupation of the settlement at Burgstallkogel. Changes of settlement patterns, use of space and burial rites are some indicators identified by archaeological research, which are connected with transitions and changes in societies. Such changes can be observed in the transitional periods, like from the Urnfield- to Hallstatt-period in the 9th-8th century BC and from the Hallstatt- to Latène - period in the 5th-4th century BC. In my paper I would like to discuss these “times of change” in Sulm- und Saggau-valleys. At first the topic of the beginning and the end of the cemeteries in Großklein will be discussed, with the focus on continuity or discontinuity in the burial rituals and graveyards beyond the Hallstatt-period. The focus of the second part won't be only on single graves, but will take into account also the space itself, beyond the central settlement at Burgstallkogel and its famous cemeteries. By using GIS based LIDAR-analysis and the results from our yearly research campaigns in the region, I will try to create a new view on the wider region and its organization, with the focus on the spaces for the living and for the deceased.

Grabausstattungen und soziale Differenzierung spätbronze- und früheisenzeitlicher Gräber am Rande der Südostalpen – die „steirische“ Perspektive

Georg TIEFENGRABER

Obwohl aus dem Gebiet des heutigen österreichischen Bundeslandes Steiermark am Südostrand der Alpen und dem Übergang zur pannonischen Tiefebene bislang über 350 Gräber von der spätbronzezeitlichen Stufe Bz D bis in das früheisenzeitliche Ha C bekannt geworden sind, so ist davon bis heute noch nicht einmal ein Drittel publiziert worden. Diese Tatsache, sowie die chronologisch ungleiche Verteilung der Gräber erschwert die Untersuchung grundlegender Fragestellung etwa zu standardisierten Grabausstattungen, Grabtypen und -bauten sowie in weiterer Folge zur sozialen Differenzierung der Bestatteten.

Zumindest für die Stufe Ha B wird aber anhand der bis dato greifbaren Gräber einerseits erkennbar, dass sich diese aufgrund ihrer Ausstattungen – allen voran den Keramikgefäßsätsen – sowohl von den nördlich und nordöstlich benachbarten Gebieten (z.B. Stillfrieder-Gruppe) als auch von der südlich verbreiteten Ruše-Gruppe klar differenzieren lassen. Dies führte 2015 zum Vorschlag der Definition einer eigenen „Steirischen-Gruppe“ der jüngeren Urnenfelderzeit, die darüber hinaus dadurch gekennzeichnet war, dass in den bekannten Gräberfeldern ein beachtlicher Anteil an fremdartigen Ausstattungsteilen – beispielsweise der Lausitzer-Kultur, der Melauner-Gruppe und auch – oder vermutlich sogar von fremden Personen nachweisbar ist, die in der „autochthonen“ Thanatokoiné Aufnahme finden. Dieses Phänomen einer (potentiell) „multikulturellen“ Bestattungsgemeinschaft, die weitläufige Kontakte in alle Richtungen nachzuzeichnen

vermag, ist in den benachbarten späturnenfelderzeitlichen Gruppen weitgehend unbekannt.

Burial rites between the Late Bronze and Early Iron Age in the cemetery of Ljubljana, Slovenia

Brina ŠKVOR-JERNEJČIČ

In the contribution we would like to present the results of a comparative analysis made on the grave goods, attires and most of all burial rites from the urnfield cemetery of Dvorišče SAZU in Ljubljana. The revision showed that the site has been continuously used as a burial place from the early phase of the Urnfield culture period (Bz D) up to the Early Iron Age (Ha C). However, the rare graves from younger periods indicate that the site maintained its character of the sacred place up until the La Tène period. Throughout this whole period, spanning several centuries, cremation burial pertained, while the burial ritual and grave structures have undergone numerous changes.

The oldest graves of the Ljubljana cemetery were arranged over the entire area of the cemetery, what points to the fact that the thesis about the horizontal stratigraphy of the cemetery, according to which the cemetery spread gradually from southeast towards northwest, cannot be sustained any more. In this phase all the graves were urn-graves with vessels of particular forms, such as jugs and bowls, used as urns. As regards the position of the individual types of vessels, appearing only in the particular areas of the cemetery, we could state that the form of the vessel was directly connected with the sex, age and social position of the deceased. The arrangement of the graves from the phase Ha A clearly shows that these attach directly to the older graves. The burial ritual remained the same – graves were as a rule urn-graves, whereas the containers, functioning as an urn, were now frequently two-handled vessels. Surprising are the connections established between the Ljubljana cemetery and the cemeteries of the so-called Piliny and Lusatian cultures from Hungary, Slovakia and Czech Republic in the time of the early and older phases of the Urnfield culture period.

At the end of the second millennium BC, when the number of the graves substantially increased, the burial ritual at the Ljubljana cemetery experienced a major change. In the time of the phase Ha B1-B2 first cremation graves without an urn appear. Moreover, they contain numerous fragments of vessels and handles. According to our opinion we could speak of the intentional fragmentation of vessels as well as of the selective placement of particular vessel fragments into the graves. Furthermore, it is interesting that this type of graves appeared only in the eastern part of the cemetery, from which it can be inferred that smaller groups wished to differentiate between each other not only by their grave-goods or attire but also by their burial ritual.

In the Early Iron Age period once again urn-graves became the norm at the Ljubljana cemetery, while the ritual of intentional fragmentation and placing of specific vessel fragments into the graves was completely abandoned. The number of the graves once again increased, although mainly in the western part of the cemetery. Even more, it seems as if certain “families” from the Bronze Age vanished completely.

Persistence and change in Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age Eastern Slovenia

Matija ČREŠNAR

The development of the Late Bronze Age and its transition to the Early Iron Age represents one of the major turning points in European prehistory. As such, it is also a topic of ongoing debates in the scientific world of archaeology.

On the one hand, we can make broad-scale observations, where ideas of abrupt changes and overreaching identities might seem plausible and appealing. On the other hand, looking at the data again at the small-scale regional level is probably the more appropriate, as it offers detailed insights into individual groups of people. Studies of cemeteries should be, if possible, combined with those of settlements, which represent real pictures of life, not representations of and for the dead.

Are the changes which occur really so abrupt? Do settlement patterns, mortuary practices and other cultural expressions really undergo swift and clearly distinct change, or are we speaking of gradual transitions and individual decisions? Where is the balance of common/collective and individual identity?

When examined in detail and on a case-by-case basis, the situation often looks far less clear. Research carried out in recent years, including the use of new methods and modern technologies, has shown that we are dealing with a period when the “old” and the “new” often co-existed, when the foundations of new ways of thinking have not yet fully cut through the ties of tradition.

Frustratingly, the more knowledge we appear to have, the more complex the situation seems in the struggle between the persistence and change in the Late Bronze Age and the transition to the Early Iron Age. There is no doubt, however, that even more intriguing questions await us in the course of our ongoing research.

Burials and social stratification in the Early Iron Age Eastern Adriatic Hinterland: problems and perspectives

Danijel DZINO

The research of the Iron Age communities in the Eastern Adriatic hinterland was for a long time captured by culture-history interpretative approaches and the attempts to interpret evidence through ethnicization of material evidence and burial assemblages. Only recently appeared the attempts to understand these earlier paradigms as a part of particular intellectual zeitgeists of 19th and 20th century and offer interpretations of the existing evidence that are more attuned to prevailing scholarship on this period. Going beyond modern constructs such as ethnicity and archaeological group, those approaches are attempting to better understand social structure of Iron Age communities and wider social networks they belonged to.

Attuned to those recent approaches, this paper aims to provide comparative approach to selected evidence from this area coming from burials and cemeteries. The emphasis will be made on outlining the problems researchers face in approaching the existing state of evidence, and examining the links between the burials and social stratification in those communities before 400BC.

Late Bronze Age societies in the southern Carpathian Basin

Daria LOŽNJAK DIZDAR

Late Bronze Age societies in the southern Carpathian Basin are known from literature where they are presented as several cultural groups. They were observed through several topics: distribution area and most important sites, relative chronology, mortuary practices, material culture, genesis of the group and relationship with neighboring groups. During BAMPICa project's research different networks of detailed data about mortuary practice have been noticed. Research questions about societies are observed in several case studies within mortuary practices: body ornaments, body treatment, body disposal, selection of urn, funerary feast. Several levels of similarities and differences have been noticed. Late Bronze Age communities cremated their deceased in the southern Carpathian Basin. In most cases they disposed them in urns. During the Late Bronze Age different types and size of urns were used. Important part of the Late Bronze Age funeral was funerary feast whose traces are often found in graves. Map of distributions of different material evidences and different phases of funerary practices show that our knowledge about identities of LBA communities, reading from graves are sparingly. Observed different communication networks of items and customs indicate different dynamics in selection, acceptance and practice. The reasons for differences can be in geographic positions, communication routes and their importance during the period. Late Bronze Age mortuary practice show unity and awareness of communities which buried deceased, in some steps: cremation as body treatment, using of urns, while in body ornaments and selection of urns they used what they possessed. It can be concluded that some customs and beliefs were widespread much more then we take for granted in Balkan archaeology. But on the other side, LBA communities also had invisible boundaries, defined by the people that we investigate, rather than researchers.

Late Bronze Age burials in Bosnia: rites, structures and identity traits

Mario GAVRANOVIĆ

The burial practices of the Late Bronze Age in Bosnia vividly mirror the intermediary geographical position of this area between the south fringe of the Urnfield culture and the western Balkans, with predominant inhumation tradition. For this reason, Bosnia represents suitable case study region to explore mutual relationships and influences of the two different burial traditions.

Throughout the older stage of LBA (13th – 12th century BC), the spreading of the Urnfield cemeteries reached the plains and hilly region of the northern Bosnia; the occasional cremations appear however also in the tumuli of the Glasinac area further to the east and in the region of Central Bosnia further to the south. Characteristic for the younger stage of LBA (11th – 9th century B.C.) is a limited amount of the graves. The lack of graveyards or burials in general, is even more conspicuous as other archaeological parameters actually indicate intensified human activity (settlements, hoards). The graves were found mostly either singularly or in smaller, short-term cemeteries, pointing to the fact that the burial places were used only by selected groups or families. With regard to burial rite, it is to observe that inhumations now occur in the area with previous cremation tradition (Tešanj, Gornja Tuzla, Jablanica), while the urns remained to be dominant only in the northwestern part of the country (Petkovo Brdo, Miostrah). Toward the end of the LBA, the first biritual burial places are emerging as well. To underline is the site Mekota in western Bosnia which stand out not only as biritual graveyard

with balanced number of inhumations and cremations but also as one of the few LBA and EIA cemeteries that was likely used by the most members of the community (total of 796 graves between 9th – 7th century B. C.)

Bearing in mind the diversity and the local character of the mortuary practices, the top-down interpretation of LBA societies in Bosnia as cultural groups with presumable collective identity traits appears to simplistic and not in accordance with an actual archaeological record. It is also to observe that the local communities with different burial rites often reveal resembling grave sets (jewelry and weaponry), which is an indication that the affiliation with the same exchange network of metal finds is actually more decisive for the structure of the grave finds than the local traditions. In consequence, the burial places in Bosnia can rather be used rather as a valuable source toward understanding of interaction between different groups and networks than as the starting point for the reconstruction of LBA societies

The forgotten graves from Donja Dolina

Aleksandar JAŠAREVIĆ

Donja Dolina is one of the most famous Early Iron Age archaeological sites in this part of Europe. This pile dwellings site has a long history of research which began at the beginning of the 20th century and lasted until the end of the 80s. This mighty trade center located along the route that mostly followed the Sava managed with goods and community that was located on the tri-border of: the Alps, the Pannonia, and the Balkans with influence reaching of the faraway Mediterranean civilizations. Along with research at the settlement, the cemetery of residents was discovered at beams around the site and below pile dwellings. The material found in graves and settlement at Donja Dolina is of so much importance that an entire Early Iron Age culture in this part of northern Balkan.

In this work we will present unpublished graves excavated during campaign 1982/83, which has not yet been published. A total of 7 graves were discovered, 5 of which belonged to the graves of Early Iron Age and 2 of Late Iron Age. The findings are somewhat typical and well-known from other published graves at sites. Findings include ceramic sets, amber and glass beads, jewelry made of bronze, iron spear etc. Warrior's grave is the most important, not so much because the amount of finds, but more because of kind of equipment that includes imported Macedonian shield.

Burial rites changes during the Bronze Age in the territory of Serbia

Aleksandar KAPURAN

The territory of today Serbia is spread over three different geographical units: lowland, transitional zone and mountainous region that developed during the Bronze Age in different ways under the influences of adjacent cultural complexes. The southern part of the Carpathian Basin lies in the northern Serbia, in Vojvodina region, where during the Middle and Late Bronze Age, with slight changes Transdanubian culture with incrustrated ceramics dominated, which was practiced though biritual burial in flat graves and tumuli. South of the Sava and Danube rivers, the transition zone extends from lowland to mountains ecological system consisting of Western Serbia, Šumadija and northeastern Serbia with Djerdap, where is obviously the big difference between the necropolis in the basin of the West Morava and the Timok basin necropoles (Eastern

Serbia). The mountain region covers the Dinara Mountains in the Central Balkans where the distribution of a necropolis of late Bronze Age spreads only in the valleys systems of Morava and Nisava river basins and in Kosovo, where at the end of the Bronze Age the biritual burials are also represented. Geographical conveniences are shown to have a great impact for the formation of various funeral rituals which essentially show the strong traditions of the Bronze Age, but also certain influences of indigenous components.

On the outskirts of Urnfield World: West Morava Basin at dawn of Late Bronze Age

Marija LJUŠTINA, Katarina DMITROVIĆ

The communities inhabiting northern part of the Balkan Peninsula in the second half of the II millennium BC did not stay aside happenings in the wider region of South-East Europe. Undoubtedly, water routes were of great importance for establishing contacts and spreading and exchanging ideas. Examining character of contacts of the zone of the river Morava, namely the West Morava basin – a natural connection between the Dinara massive of the Western Balkans and the main transversal of the Central Balkans – the Morava-Vardar valley, with the surrounding area at the turn of the Middle to Late Bronze Age, was instructive for some general conclusions.

The picture of the later phase of the Middle Bronze Age in the West Morava basin is formed almost exclusively on the basis of a significant number of excavated graves within several necropolises. The region during the Bronze Age confirmed to be a good terrain to explore specific phenomena in funerary practice, indicative of a certain social agenda. In the developed Middle Bronze Age, the deceased were often buried in the mounds from the Early Bronze Age. The mounds, comprising bi-ritual burials as well as presumed cenotaphs, are characteristic for the northern part of the area and an alternative term is proposed for this cultural entity - West-Serbian group of the Middle Bronze Age, while flat necropolises with incinerated deceased buried in ceramic urns appear in the southern part and are related to the Paraćin culture. The phenomenon of contact zone between these very different cultural entities was noticed in the river valley, by the mountain periphery, as it was the case in preceding and succeeding periods of the Bronze Age.

Based on the very few funerary finds dated at the Late Bronze Age, it can be expected that in the area, quite far from the leading cultural centres, prolonged life of previous cultural patterns slowly changed and consistently kept most of its funerary practice. On one side, we can follow the local community in the western part who inhumed their dead, but the inventory, especially metal items, clearly speaks in favour of contact with northern neighbours. On the other, the unique incineration grave indicates that the West Morava basin was influenced by the dominant burial custom of the time, too. Archaeology of the centuries at the turn of the II to the I millennium BC, when the communities of the West Morava basin lived at the most remote edge of the urnfield world, have not provided us with sufficient data to claim what happened with the Bronze Age population who mainly incinerated their dead. The only connecting link with the Early Iron Age would be usage of tumuli in burial practice, which leads us to presume that the Late Bronze Age population went through substantial changes during the centuries immediately preceding the Iron Age. Consequently, the area was not directly affected by migration or conquest, but rather by constant influence from the northwest, as it had been confirmed in the preceding phases of the Bronze Age.

Pots in context – the dynamics of burial rituals between the Rhodope Mountains and Strymon/Vardar Valleys

Daniela HEILMANN

Due to different archaeological research traditions the regions between the Upper Vardar and Strymon Valley as well as the Western Rhodope Mountains have been treated as different cultural zones in the Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age. This has led to varying conceptions of the time period. On the one hand, the period is viewed as an unstable transitional phase with significant migration movements. On the other hand, other research traditions are dominated by concepts and constructions of cultural groups based mainly on pottery types and/or burial customs. And, at the same time, parts of the Western Rhodope Mountains have been assigned to Thracian culture, implicating certain general cultural manifestations such as religious beliefs, symbolism or ideologies.

Meanwhile, parallels have been identified in the material cultures of these regions (mainly regarding pottery) (Georgieva 2003) and explained as a result of migrations and intermixture of various cultural elements (Bulatović 2011). The emergence of these similarities are not a central theme of this paper. However, the fact that a certain segment of the material culture is comparable allows one to at least postulate an area of dynamic communication and exchange. The typological and distribution analysis of biconical vessels with cone shaped neck (better known as urn „Brnjica type“) serves as example and as a starting point for the general comparability of the area in question.

Due to the supra-regional distribution of the biconical vessels a certain symbolic significance in burial contexts is assumed. The further aim of the paper will therefore be to analyse the contexts of the vessel type within the region in question and to discuss its particular function. Mainly known as containers for cremated bones, they are also identified as furnishings in inhumation graves – indicating a rejection of the „new“ way of treating the deceased body by simultaneously adopting certain „foreign“ pottery forms? The differentiated treatment of the deceased body is further singled out as a central theme. Worth noting is an urn with cremated bones from the cemetery of Faia Petra (Strymon Valley) integrated in an enclosure including several inhumations that showed post-burial manipulations. This example allows for a discussion of different ideologies. Enclosing the cremated bones of the deceased individual in the urn serves to delimit the individual from the inhumations scattered in the enclosure. This further raises questions regarding the individuality of the person buried in the urn by contrast with the „collective“ grave enclosure. The case studies are rounded out by considering social, cultural, and religious aspects as possible explanations.

Burial practices and rites along Vardar valley in the Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age

Aleksandra PAPAZOVSKA SANEV

The Late Bronze Age along Vardar valley is manifested with characteristic local features of the material culture and several imported finds. The beginnings of this period can be connected with the first Mycenaean findings in this part of the Balkans. At the end of the Bronze Age, the Vardar valley was wide open and directly related to the late Mycenaean world. The breakthrough of these Mycenaean elements along the Vardar valley to the north made it important and major communication in the Balkan. All this provided conditions for the creation of a strong local culture in the middle river Vardar valley, known as Ulanci group. The traditional values typical for the Late Bronze Age

are the foundations of this cultural group. They mark the Late Bronze Age as a complex period in which the economic, cultural and even ethnic changes particularly manifested in the burials, are clearly seen.

We can mention several elements in the burial rites which have important role in the development of the Ulanzi group and they are result of the influences of the Aegean Bronze Age:

- Inhumation as a burial rite, and
- The presence of distinctive pottery with matt painted decoration and local copies of Mycenaean vessels.

It can be noticed that all funeral elements within this group were canonized, including the cemetery organization, the grave goods or the offering found outside the graves as part of the burial rituals.

Without exceptions, in all necropolises the burial rite is crouched inhumation. Depending on the gender of the deceased men are turned to the right and women on their left side, buried with their belongings and the other offerings placed around them in the grave. On the territory of Ulanzi group, the necropolises with inhumations are dominant during the Bronze Age, and later through the Iron Age they will be established as a basic funeral ritual.

The big and turbulent historical events related to the second wave of the Aegean migrations (in the second half of the XII century BC), were definitely upsetting the peaceful life of the late Bronze Age communities. These several successive waves of migrations from the north to the south were the main reason for the discontinuation in the development of the Ulanzi group and its end. All these events were followed by destruction, clearly seen in the appearance of new objects unknown in the material culture until then (celts, arrows, urns). The most beautiful example of these turbulent times is evident in the large and frequent burnings and even complete destructions of the settlements in the Vardar valley.

The emergence of the new cemeteries with urns is a true indicator of a new culture. This phenomenon is well documented in the necropolis Klucka Hippodrom near Skopje and the recently discovered necropolis of Mali Dol-Tremnik, near Negotino. The parallel existence of the two burial rites (both inhumation and cremation) makes the Mali Dol necropolis a significant indicator of the existence of two completely different cultures with completely different ways of life. On one hand, there are burials in an organized cemetery, with crouched inhumation as a main burial rite, which connects this necropolis to the Ulanzi group. On the other hand, the appearance of burials with cremation in urns, within the same necropolis during the XI century BC, represents the news that emerged after the significant cultural and ethnic invasions from the north. These burials in urns present the fact that the carriers of these migrations were not destroying the local communities and leaving devastation behind, but on the contrary, some of them stayed together with locals, continuing their existence together, while still respecting and holding to the values of their own culture. This provided creation of a new and extremely unstable situation in all spheres of life, which will require more than a century to stabilize, and be the foundation of the Iron Age culture in Macedonia.

The living are speaking for the dead. Interpretations of Late Bronze and Early Iron Age burials in south-western Balkans

Maja GORI

Culture-historical paradigm occupies an important place in Balkan archaeology. Spatial variation and patterning in the distribution of artefacts are traditionally classified into discrete “cultures”, which have been conventionally treated as bound entities and equated with past social or ethnic groups. By focusing on Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age burial evidence from south western Balkans, this paper will address the not always straightforward relation between theoretical interpretative frameworks used to approach archaeological past, and present day political, social and cultural milieus. In particular, the construction of past identities and their relation to present ones will be object of analysis. This paper will focus on burials from present Kosovo, the Former Republic of Macedonia and Albania, and through the presentation of selected sites which will serve as case study, interpretative issues concerning Late Bronze and Early Iron Age Burials will be approached and critically addressed.

Identifying death in LBA northern Greece: innovations or traditions in the mortuary arena at the threshold of the EIA?

Sevi TRIANTAFYLLOU

Extramural cemeteries consisting mainly of inhumations and of only a few cremations appear to be the rule in Late Bronze Age northern Greece. Contrary to the mortuary homogeneity and laborious investment in grave types and prestige items observed in LBA southern Greek mainland (the Peloponnese, central Greece and Thessaly), the mortuary scenery in northern Greece displays variability particularly in regional terms. In the west (namely, the broader area of Aeani), south-west (southern Pieria) but also the east, a standard funerary programme in grave types, additional furnishing equipment, burial types, position and orientation and associated artefacts is cross-cut by the variable deposition of wealth within the cemeteries including local artifacts and imports or imitations of foreign products such as gold, silver, amber, or glass jewelry, Mycenaean-type swords and seals, Mycenaean- and Danubian-style aromatic containers and luxurious matt-painted ceramic drinking sets. In central northern Greece, on the other hand, where tell settlements dominate the natural and symbolic landscape, there is an absence of formal mortuary practices. The recent recovery of intramural burials within the settlement of Thessaloniki Toumba sheds some light on the long held question regarding the treatment of the dead in tell-type habitation sites. Also, while single inhumations are common in the early phases of the Bronze Age, in the Late Bronze Age, there is a growing interest in multiple and secondary burials, both involving re-opening of the grave and manipulation of the body in a variety of modes ranging from relocation and grouping of body parts to incomplete burning of defleshed human remains. Besides, there is an evident formality in the organization of the mortuary space manifested in the layout of burials in groups (e.g. clusters, tumuli or burial enclosures) but also in the construction of special ‘ceremonial’ areas within the cemetery dedicated perhaps to the commemoration of the deceased. The formality in the layout of the cemeteries expressed particularly as an emphasis on the grouping of burials alongside the manipulation of the body and the well-planned and organized post-burial activities (e.g. feasting, rituals etc.) mark out a persistent display of descent and ancestral links. This particular feature will dominate in the mortuary

arena of the Early Iron Age together with the co-occurrence of inhumations and cremations while also standardization in material culture and dressing of the deceased associated often with sex and/or age appear to establish. This paper aims to investigate the special features which constitute the mortuary programme of LBA northern Greece and discuss the degree but also the character of their continuity in the EIA. Death is dealt as a dynamic and multi-staged mechanism in the local communities of northern Greece where the living created active areas to claim and negotiate social identities in the diverse cultural landscape of the area.

The necropolis of Polichni: a new paradigm of mortuary practice in the Aegean and the Balkans

Stefanos GIMATZIDIS

For a very long time mortuary practices in the Aegean served as a means to trace human migration or diffusion of burial ideology that were accordingly perceived as a basis for the definition of ancient identities and tracing cultural origins. A more recent belief that derived through interaction – though restricted – of Aegean prehistory and Classical archaeology with the theoretical premises of New Archaeology considered mortuary practice as a proper field for the reconstruction of social and economic relations. Complex mathematic models and exhausting statistical analyses were engaged in the archaeological interpretation that rationalized and objectified the archaeological record. The latter was conceived as a mirror of contemporary social behavior and structure. The starting point of these debates was the belief that completeness of the archaeological record depended on the extent of excavation and the – statistically tolerable or not – representability of the burial practices within the excavated part of any necropolis. At the same time the discussion of the mortuary practices in the Aegean had a major impact in regional Balkan archaeologies that applied similar methods in their search for identities and social organization looking always for origins in the Aegean or the European hinterland.

These methods and research objectives have biased the debate in the Aegean and consequently distorted some aspects of the past mortuary behavior or left others unconsidered. This paper wishes to challenge these positivist views and highlight some unconsidered issues of the burial rites in Macedonia – some of them being barely visible or even invisible but still forming part of ancient social behavior. With focus on the well excavated necropolis of Polichni and comparative study of other sites in the North Aegean we will see how mortuary practice may obscure rather than enhance our comprehension of the past, if this is taken as an a priori criterion for the study of ancient demography or social organization.

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