

THE MEDIEVAL CEMETERY FROM DRIDU – LA METEREZE (IALOMIȚA COUNTY, ROMANIA). BIOARCHEOLOGICAL CHARACTERISTICS

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Abstract: The anthropological analysis of a skeletal sample (34 individuals from 29 burial graves) from the medieval cemetery at Dridu – La Metereze (12th–13th or 13th–14th centuries) determined the presence of 18 males, four females, and 12 whose sex is indeterminate (mostly children and adolescents). By age class, the highest mortality in subadults is found in children (57.1%), and in adults, in the group of young adults (50.0%). The demographic profile is comparable to the attrition mortality profile. Life expectancy at birth for the entire population is 23.67 years. The stature of the adults, despite the small sample, indicates a pronounced sexual dimorphism, the average values of males (160.3 cm) being 8.3 cm higher than those of females (152.0 cm). The high number of deaths among subadults has been attributed to diseases (dental, infectious and metabolic) that lead to a deficiency of vitamins (A, B₆, B₉, B₁₂, C, and D) and essential minerals (Fe) during the period of growth and development of the body. A series of enthesopathies, the presence of nonmetric dental and postcranial traits, as well as some traumatic manifestations, suggest that in the medieval population of Dridu we are dealing, in the case of certain individuals, with horsemen. Part of the funerary inventory also supports this statement, but we remain reserved about the Turanian origin (Pechenegs or Cumans) and the integration of these nomadic populations into the nucleus of sedentary, Christian populations (Romanians and Slavs) until we have molecular genetics results.

Cuvinte-cheie: Muntenia, Dridu – La Metereze, secolele XII–XIII/XIII–XIV, cimitir, bioarheologie

Rezumat: Analiza antropologică a unui eșantion scheletic (34 de indivizi proveniți din 29 de morminte de inhumăție) din cimitirul medieval de la Dridu – La Metereze (secole XII–XIII ori XIII–XIV) a relevat 18 indivizi de sex masculin, patru de sex feminin și 12 al căror sex este indeterminabil (majoritatea copii și adolescenți). Pe clase de vârstă mortalitatea cea mai ridicată la subadultii o întâlnim la copii (57,1%), iar în lotul adulților, la grupa adulților tineri (50,0%). Profilul demografic se înscrie într-o traiectorie apropiată de modelul atritional. Speranța de viață la naștere pentru întreaga populație este de 23,67 ani. Staturile adulților, în pofida eșantionului redus, ne indică un pronunțat dimorfism sexual, valorile medii ale bărbaților (160,3 cm) fiind cu 8,3 cm mai mari față de cele ale femeilor (152,0 cm). Numărul ridicat al deceselor în rândul subadultilor a fost pus pe seama unor boli (dentare, infecțioase, metabolice) care conduc la un deficit de vitamine (A, B₆, B₉, B₁₂, C, D) și minerale (Fe) esențiale în anii de creștere și dezvoltare a organismului. O serie de modificări entezopatică, prezența unor caractere non-metrică dentare și postcraniane, precum și unele manifestări traumatice ne fac să credem că în populația medievală de la Dridu avem de a face, în cazul anumitor indivizi, cu călăreți. O parte a inventarului funerar vine și el în sprijinul acestei afirmații, însă rămânem rezervați în legătură cu sorgintea turanică (pecenegi sau cumani) și integrarea acestor populații nomade în nucleul populațiilor sedentare, creștine (români, slavi) până la data la care vom beneficia și de rezultatele geneticii moleculare.

A. INTRODUCTION

In this section, we will try to briefly present some archaeological information, based on the few relevant documentary information, which refers to the medieval settlement and the related cemetery from Dridu – La Metereze¹. Dridu is located in the centre of the Romanian Plain, in the northwest of Ialomița County, on the banks of the Ialomița River, close to its confluence with the Prahova River. The construction of an accumulation lake on the course of the Ialomița, in the Dridu-Fierbinți Târg area, required the execution of archaeological investigations. Starting in 1979 and having a rescue character, the research continued at the beginning of the '80s of the last century, directed by archaeologist Viorica (Enăchiuc) Mihai from the Ilfov County Museum. Two large sites were researched, conventionally marked with the numbers XXVI and XXXI,

the last notation being related to the area known by the locals as La Metereze. It is located on a terrace riser, on the right bank of the river Prahova, right at the confluence with the Ialomița, bordered in its eastern and northeastern part by steep slopes, with depths of 12–25 m. Today, most of the site is overlapped by a monastery whose construction began in the 1990s. This edifice, together with the nearby accumulation dam, fundamentally altered the original landscape. At the La Metereze site, in Viorica Mihai's opinion², seven successive levels of habitation were highlighted, ranging from the Neolithic to the Middle Ages, as follows: I. Early Neolithic; II. Early Hallstatt (Babadag culture, phases I–II); III. La Tène (5th–4th centuries BC);

¹ Enăchiuc-Mihai 1981; Mihai 1983; Ioniță 1998; Ioniță 2005, p. 127–128, 199–212, 220, 222, 223, 224, 227; Ioniță 2013, p. 211–212, 214, 216–217, which amends some of the opinions expressed by Viorica Mihai.

² We chose to quote the chronology proposed by Viorica Mihai because this is how they entered the specialised literature. Although some involve chronological discussions and nuances, already expressed by archaeologists on various occasions, the purpose of our study is to bring a bioarchaeological perspective on medieval funerary discoveries from Dridu – La Metereze.