

CERNAVODĂ – COLUMBIA D PUZZLE: THE SKULL COMPLEX

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Abstract: This paper focuses on the re-analysis of a feature from the Late Neolithic Hamangia cemetery at Cernavodă – Columbia D (Constanța County, Romania), excavated at the middle of the last century. The analysis took place in several stages: processing of archaeological information, anthropological re-evaluation, combination of the two sets of data, and interpretation. The sample of the re-analysed human osteological material includes 11 fragmentary crania and several dozens of other cranial and postcranial remains. Two of the crania present interesting characteristics: one was cut, broken, with a postmortem trepanation, and was polished, while the other bears the traces of a benign tumoral cyst. Another skull fragment bears traces of postmortem burning. In addition to human remains, this feature yielded a pig mandible, freshwater mussel shells, a bolder, a pottery sherd and a fragment of a stalactite/stalagmite.

Cuvinte-cheie: neolitic târziu, cultura Hamangia, cimitir, manipulare secundară a resturilor osteologice

Rezumat: Lucrarea este concentrată pe reanalizarea unui complex din cimitirul neolitic Hamangia de la Cernavodă – Columbia D (jud. Constanța, România), cercetat arheologic la mijlocul secolului trecut. Analiza a parcurs mai multe etape: procesarea informațiilor arheologice, reevaluarea antropologică, combinarea și interpretarea celor două seturi de date. Eșantionul scheletic uman re-analizat este format din 11 calote craniene și alte câteva zeci de resturi craniene și postcraniene. Două calote prezintă caracteristici deosebite; una a fost decalotată, ruptă, trepanată postmortem și șlefuită, iar alta prezintă urmele unui chist benign tumoral. La acestea adăugăm un fragment cranian cu urme de arsură (incinerare postmortem). Pe lângă resturi scheletice umane, complexul a conținut și o mandibulă de porc, scoici de apă dulce, o piatră, un fragment ceramic și un fragment de stalagmită/stalactită.

INTRODUCTION

The discoveries pertaining to the Hamangia cemetery from Cernavodă – Columbia D (Fig. 1), made in the middle of the last century, are still mostly obscure at a detailed level. Previous recent publications have presented information and analyses concerning the topography of the site and the various types of artefacts (Morintz, Kogălniceanu 2008; Kogălniceanu 2012a; Mărgărit 2012; Kogălniceanu, Haită 2015; Kogălniceanu et alii 2017). This paper focuses on a specific archaeological feature, namely the Skull Complex.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

The Skull Complex was only mentioned once, in an annual excavation report, being described briefly and accompanied by mediocre quality photography (due to the

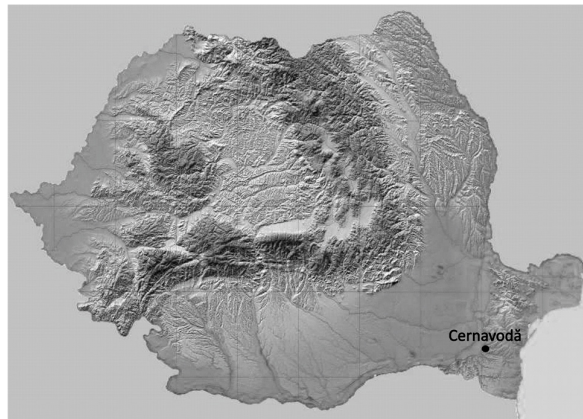


Figure 1. Location of the Cernavodă – Columbia D site.

printing capabilities of the time) compared to present-day possibilities¹. At the moment of publication, the anthropological analysis, had, most probably, not been

¹ În groapa-albie din punctul Columbia D, Ș 1, „La o adâncime destul de mică s-a dat peste o grupă de șase cranii fragmentare pe două rânduri, între care se găsea o falcă de animal (porc), iar deasupra rândului de la est zăcea un femur omenesc așezat transversal (fig. 7). La capătul de sud se afla o piatră de râu așezată aici intenționat. La ridicare s-a descoperit un mic fragment dintr-un maxilar superior și fragmente mici de cochilii de scoici de apă dulce. Nu s-a descoperit nici un obiect arheologic și nu s-a constatat nici o deranjare ulterioară sau depuneri aluvionale.” / In the ravine from Columbia D, S 1, “At a quite

shallow depth, a group of six fragmented skulls was encountered, laid in two rows with an animal (pig) jaw in-between them, and with a human femur laid transversally on top of the eastern row (fig. 7). A river stone placed intentionally was found at the southern end. When picked up, a small fragment of upper jaw and small fragments of mussel shells were found beneath it. No artefact was found and no later disturbance or alluvial deposit was noted.” (Morintz et alii 1955, p. 154–156, fig. 7).