

A NEW MEDIEVAL CEMETERY DISCOVERED AT TÂRGOVIȘTE (DÂMBOVIȚA COUNTY, ROMANIA). BIOARCHAEOLOGICAL CHARACTERISTICS

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Abstract: Recent preventive archaeological research in Târgoviște led to the discovery of a segment of a medieval cemetery (16th–17th centuries), previously unknown from archaeological and documentary sources. Eighteen inhumation pits containing at least 19 burials (36 individuals) were investigated. In what demography is concerned, there were 23 subadults (one foetus, 11 infants, ten children, and one male adolescent) and 13 adults (two young adults, two middle adults and two old adults, of which one male, six females and six indeterminate). The increased mortality among the subadults was evidenced both by traumatic manifestations, resulting in a violent death in one case, but also by means of three skeletal and dental indicators of biological stress: linear hypoplasia of tooth enamel, cribra orbitalia and osteoperiostitis. Among the etiological agents of these pathological conditions were noted nutritional deficiencies or infectious diseases. The recording of the pathological manifestations observed in the analysed sample provides significant information regarding the socio-economic conditions and the way of life specific to the population of Wallachia in the Middle Ages.

Cuvinte-cheie: Ev Mediu, Muntenia, Târgoviște, secolele XVI–XVII, cimitir, bioarheologie

Rezumat: Cercetările arheologice preventive recente de la Târgoviște au condus la descoperirea unui segment dintr-un cimitir medieval (sec. XVI–XVII), inedit sub aspect arheologic și documentar. Au fost identificate 18 gropi de înmușcare ce conțin cel puțin 19 morminte, în care am deosebit 36 de indivizi. Sub raport demografic am înregistrat 23 de subadulți (un fătus, 11 copii, zece copii, un adolescent de sex masculin) și 13 adulți (câte doi adulți tineri, maturi și bătrâni, dintre care un individ de sex masculin, șase de sex feminin și șase indeterminabili). Mortalitatea crescută în rândurile subadulților a fost evidențiată atât prin manifestări traumatice, soldate într-un caz cu o moarte violentă, dar și prin intermediul a trei indicatori scheletici și dentari ai stresului biologic: hipoplazia liniară a smalțului dentar, cribra orbitalia, osteoperiostita. Printre agenții etiologici ai acestor condiții patologice se numără deficiențele nutriționale sau bolile infecțioase. Înregistrarea manifestărilor patologice observate în eșantionul analizat furnizează informații însemnate cu privire la condițiile socio-economice și modul de viață specific populației din Muntenia evului mediu.

A. INTRODUCTION

In 2020, a team of archaeologists from the “Princely Court” National Museum Complex in Târgoviște, led by expert archaeologist Dr Florin Gabriel Petrică, undertook preventive archaeological research within an area in the *Vatra Orașului Medieval/Centre of the Medieval Town* archaeological site (192 Calea Domnească Street, Târgoviște, Dâmbovița County), right across the Princely Court in Târgoviște. On this occasion, several cultural levels corresponding stratigraphically to the 14th–20th centuries were discovered in the surveyed area: a series of waste pits which, through their content, were linked to a craft workshop; inhumation burial pits of a medieval cemetery; the remains of a wall belonging to a brick building and the stone paving around it; a level of modern and contemporary nature related to the building of the current house. The presence of cobblestones with compressed river stones, the collapsed walls (bell tower or place of worship) and the cemetery suggest the existence of an ecclesiastical complex in this location, during the 16th–17th centuries. Of interest to our analysis are the skeletal remains from the medieval cemetery, unknown until today, both in terms

of archaeology and documentary sources, of which a part was investigated in the surveyed area. The deceased were oriented towards the West in a supine position (with one exception, an individual laid on the right side) and with poorly represented grave goods consisting of coins, rings, clothing accessories, fragments of fabric and veil pins¹.

B. SKELETAL MATERIAL AND METHODOLOGY

The analysed skeletal remains came from 18 inhumation pits, containing one or more graves, as follows: G.1 (M.1), G.2 (M.2), G.3 (M.3), G.4 (M.4–5), G.5 (M.6, M.7), G.6 (M.18), G.7 (M.11, M.12, M.13), G.8 (M.8), G.9 (M.9), G.10 (M.10), G.11 (M.14), G.12 (M.15), G.13 (M.17), G.14 (M.19), G.15 (M.21), G.16 (M.16), G.17 (M.20), G.18 (bones from disturbed graves). Noteworthy is the fact that the skeletal remains from M.16 (G.16) could not be examined, namely a skull that was left *in situ*. Additionally, according to the archaeological information, G.18 includes, apart from the skeletal remains mentioned above, pits G.9,

¹ For a detailed description of the archaeological situation at *Strada Calea Domnească nr. 192*, see Petrică et alii 2023, in this volume.