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CHRONOLOGICAL RELATIONS OF LATE AENEOLITHIC OF THE CENTRAL AND EASTERN BALKANS

Abstract. – Macro-typological analyses (comparison of cultures and cultural complexes) have given clear and increasingly accurate chronological scales; however, the interesting phenomena of the populational clannishness of the Aeneolithic cultures was not manifest. Through a methodological research of the closed entireties, especially if comprised of different cultures (micro-typological analysis), is as equally justifiable as a method for establishing the chronology of the given cultures. The chronological value of the stratigraphy of the Glavcovska mound lies primarily in the relationship between the steppe burial rite and the local Cotofeni culture: the steppe pit-grave culture and subsequent Cotofeni cultures existed parallel in Transylvania, Oltenia and northwestern Bulgaria. The chronologically complex composition of the necropolis in Trnava reflects the heterogeneous populational composition in the central and eastern Balkans in the Late Aeneolithic, as well as the chronological order of the use of individual categories of the material culture for cult purposes.

Our knowledge so far about the Aeneolithic cultures of the Central and Eastern Balkans enables a study of their chronological relationships in rough moves. This has already been done, or is being done, with increasingly reliable typological and stratigraphic parallels.¹ It is evident that a division of territories among the Aeneolithic cultures of this part of the Balkans is of prime importance in this respect. They have been demarcated roughly, and it is doubtful whether the exact boundaries will ever be drawn, as most probably they never existed.

However, along with this advancement, the fact that Aeneolithic cultures are rarely found to co-exist on the same site, i. e. in the same dwelling area or the same object, is becoming more apparent. However justifiable the continual effort to place in the foreground the mutual influences of these cultures, the common life of its members seems not to have been a habit, or at least not often. This

¹ Garašanin, 1979, 154; Tasić, 1989, 134; 1992, 200; Todorova, 1991, 91.

interesting phenomenon, seemingly present throughout the prehistoric period, was not as prominent in the, if they could be thus termed, macro-typological analyses. The reason being, especially recently, that a culture is compared with other cultures, and a cultural complex, too, as a whole, with another complex. The final result is favorable, since most often clear and increasingly accurate relatively chronological scales of the Balkan Neolithic and Aeneolithic are obtained.

However, an individual analysis of closed entreties would be just as justifiable methodologically, such as domestic inventories, grave items, hoards, etc. especially if they comprise different cultures. The purpose of such studies might be directed towards the same objective, which is ascertaining the chronological relations of given cultures, except that on this occasion it would be realized on small samples, i. e. like a kind of micro-typological analysis. The rarity of such circumstances in the Balkan Aeneolithic, and more broadly for certain, is truly amazing.

Asquiescing in the statement, therefore, of the extreme populational clannishness of the Aeneolithic cultures discussed here, a known exception can be cited. This is a necropolis from the Late Aeneolithic in the village of Trnava near Vrace, northwestern Bulgaria.

It concerns tumuli, a total of twenty of which three have been excavated. The information obtained reliably testifies to primary burials in tumuli in the period of the steppe pit-grave culture. Speaking on behalf of this are above all the burial rites and sepulchral architecture, while gifts laid next to the deceased are something else. They differ not only among the three tumuli, but also in the graves within the first one, named the Glavcovska funeral mound.²

The stratigraphy of the Glavcovska mound is very clear, because the tumulus itself remains almost intact. The earthwork was filled over two primary graves (1 and 3 – level I), buried from the initial humus into the subsoil. Its central part was subsequently occupied by a square sepulchral construction, framed with piled stone enclosing the primary graves. Two of the following graves: 5 and 6 (level II) were buried, parallel to each other, from the floor of this construction. Finally, graves 9 and 10 were buried into an additional earthwork which covered the square sepulchral construction (level 3), (Fig. 1).

The other graves can also be determined stratigraphically: grave 2 was buried into a mound piled over grave 1, and therefore belongs to a second level; grave 4 has a rectangular stone construction, partially preserved. The rectangular pit of the grave reached the subsoil, which bespeaks of its belonging to level II; grave 7 was buried into a mound of the eastern periphery of the mound covering grave 2 – which sets it at level III; grave 8 was situated in the southern periphery of the mound in an earthwork covering the square grave construction and could be somewhat older than graves 9 and 10, nevertheless belonging to level III, (Fig. 1).

² Nikolov, 1976, 38.

The stratigraphic order of the graves in the Glavcovska mound implicitly implies three levels: I – graves 1, 3; II – graves 2, 4–6 and III – graves 7–10. Three chronologically different stages of burial have been observed, with minor differences in the attribution of individual graves.³

The time intervals of the burials during one cultural period are a regular phenomenon in tumuli of corresponding necropolises. The Glavcovska mound is set apart from the tumuli of the pit-grave culture of the Lower Danube Basin in the grave inventories, different in composition. The practice of dual funeral rites was also observed: inhumation and cremation.

The inventories of primary graves offered typically Cotofeni ceramics: a vessel for hanging (grave 1) and askos (grave 3), (Fig. 1, 1–2). Both burials were conducted through inhumation. Grave 1 – contracted position, grave 2 – corpse extended on its back, legs bent at the knees.

Grave items from level II also belong to the Cotofeni culture: the vessel for hanging from grave 5 (Fig. 1, 3) is of the same type as the one from grave 1 (level I), a deep bowl on a high leg also from grave 5 (Fig. 1, 4); grave 4 – a biconical vessel with two handles (Fig. 1, 6); grave 2 – a conical vessel used as an urn (Fig. 1, 5). Inhumation and cremation are present only at this level (graves 4 and 6) and (graves 2 and 5) respectively.

The latest, third level, does not contain the ceramics common to the previous two levels. The accent is now placed on the conical vessels (graves 7 and 10), (Fig. 1, 8, 12), typologically akin to the vessel from grave 2 (level II), (Fig. 1, 5), as well as the askoid ewer, of later date (grave 9), (Fig. 1, 11). This is the horizon that displays jewelry characteristic of the pit-grave culture (i. e. steppe tumuli): earrings of bronze and gold string (graves 8 and 9), (Fig. 1, 7, 9–10).

A common trait of all the burials is the strictly observed burial rites of the steppe Aeneolithic: the dead were laid in rectangular vaults, closed with wooden covers made of round logs and planks. In all the graves with inhumation, red ochre was strewn over the corpses.

The Glavcovska funeral mound is a solitary example of a tumulus of steppe characteristics whose graves, stratigraphically classified, contain sepulchral samples belonging to the autochthonous Aeneolithic culture (Cotofeni).⁴ The typological diversity of this compression of the steppe burial ritual with the local material culture is apparent from the following facts:

– The ceramics of the Cotofeni culture, present in the graves of levels I and II, comprise three categories: vessels for hanging (with handles, to be hanged on a rope), originating from the Pannonian–Danubian Basin; askos distributed primarily in the Eastern and Southern Balkans as well as the Aegeans, with a long tradition of manufacture; and bowls of two types: the biconical ones, as well as semi-spheric, similar to the extended, beaked vessels known as "sauce boats" (Fig. 1).

³ Panajotov, 1989, 37; Garašanin, 1991, 212.

⁴ Nikolov, 1976, 41, Sl. 4a–b, 7a–b.

– Jewelry from graves of level III belonged specifically to the area of the steppe Aeneolithic, primarily from necropolises with tumuli of this period, but also of the Early Bronze Age (Fig. 1, 7, 9–10).

– The construction of the tumuli and the manner of covering the grave vaults have been linked directly to the steppe pit-grave culture; this also refers to the burial rite.

– In tumulus 2 of the necropolis in Trnava, the only grave, the primary one, with cremation, had as a supplement a biconical vessel decorated with corded decoration.⁵ Ceramics with this type of decoration appears in the wider regions of the Balkans and Aegean, precisely linked to the steppe cultures. Each of the categories of jewelry cited, as could be seen, had a specific purpose and was produced in limited amount. At the Glavcovska funeral mound, all the items were collected at approximately the same time and with the same purpose, to serve the cult of the dead.

Vessels for hanging contain two basic characteristics: they are essentially anthropomorphic, and secondly, their vertically set handles replace hands raised in adoration. It is not hard to be convinced of this, from examples offered by the Baden culture, not to go deeper into the past. For instance, this stand of adoration – corresponding almost entirely with the well-known Baden cult vessel from Rackeva⁶ – was applied to the cult vessel from Achilleion (Thessaly) from the Sesklo culture.⁷ Frequently cited urns from grave 3 in Center,⁸ from the Ozd group of the Baden culture, offer an example of the anthropomorphic interpretation of vessels of this type. New findings of this proportionally rare category of urns have been mentioned lately, again in the necropolises of groups Ozd (Western Slovakia).⁹ It is worthwhile to note that vessels for hanging are rarely found in the ceramography of the Danubian Aeneolithic cultures, that they are typologically uniform and evidently intended to serve a specific function, as can be seen at the Glavcovska mound. Besides, the same tradition was sustained in the Early Bronze Age of this region.¹⁰

Emphasis is placed on the narrow typological linkage of this type of vessel which has endured continually since the Baden culture. Findings from Gomolava and Vučedol offer clear evidence. The first site offers characteristic samples of vessels for hanging originating from the Baden and Kostolac settlements (phase Gomolava IIIa)¹¹ and (phase Gomolava IIIc)¹² respectively; the excellently preserved sample from Vučedol belongs to the early phase of the Vučedol culture.¹³

⁵ Panajotov, 1989, 91, Sl. 50.

⁶ Kalicz, 1963, 27, Sl. 6.

⁷ Gimbutas, 1991, 254, Sl. 7–19.

⁸ Kalicz, 1963, 43, 1a–c

⁹ Kovács, 1987, 100.

¹⁰ Girić, 1984, 47; Kalicz, 1984, 198.

¹¹ Petrović, 1986, 23, Sl. 46–47.

¹² Brukner, 1978, 10, T. III, 5.

¹³ Durman, 1988, 19, 94.

The decorative motifs on the vessels were adapted to the given cultures, although common principles were observed: rich ornamentation on the belly and shoulders of the vessel, singling out the neck which, as a rule, is void of any ornamentation, and finally, the regular application of the technique of incision. The important cult role of these vessels is apparent from the honoring of their established shape and manner of decoration in a long time period between the Aeneolithic cultures of the Carpathian Basin.

Two askoi from the Glavcovska mound equally share the stratigraphic and typological differences. The askos from grave 3 (level I), (Fig. 1, 2) has an extended, cylindrical belly and a slanting neck, while the latter sample from grave 9 (level III), (Fig. 1, 11), is to a larger degree an askos-ewer. The first sample is the typical representative of ceramics of phase IIIa of the Cotofeni culture in Oltenia, with the popular motif of incised manifold triangles, as well as fish-bones. Askos found in graves in Brailica (Moldavia) and Cirna (Oltenia) have been determined at the beginning of the Early Bronze Age.¹⁴

Askoi are well represented in the previous, Aeneolithic phase, in the Kodzadermen–Gumelnita–Karanovo VI complex. They exhibit an effort at modeling the extended, horizontally set recipient, as well as the slanting neck with the oval lips. Ornamentation was more diverse, with the techniques of graphite and painting frequently employed.¹⁵

Contrary to this, askos from the multi-layered settlement of Ezero in southern Thracia (12th dwelling horizon), resemble more closely the shape of askoid ewers. This dwelling horizon of Ezero is appropriate to phase A, in the periodization of the Thracian Aeneolit.¹⁶

As opposed to vessels for hanging, askoi are most widespread in the Eastern Balkans and then in the Aegean and Cyclades. However, these southern Balkan and islandish types display considerable typological differences as regards continental forms.

According to existing information, the askos originate from the later Neolithic (sample from Anzabegova IV, eastern Povardarje, corresponds to the early Vinča culture).¹⁷ They have been retained, similar to the vessels for hanging in the cultures of the Early Bronze Age of the Carpathian Basin (e. g. the Hatvan culture).¹⁸ The basic form and ornamentation of the askoi show they derived from richly ornithomorphic plastic of the region in the Early and Late Neolithic – this category of dishes from the Cyclades was named, e. g. "duck-shaped vases".¹⁹ Found frequently in graves, the askos were not popular ceramics for everyday use. They are, in fact, a simpler interpretation of ornithomorphic plastic and, emulating it, pursued its peculiar (ritual?) function.

¹⁴ Zirra, 1960, 104, 110; Roman, 1976, 43, T. 97.

¹⁵ Radunceva, 1989, 81.

¹⁶ Georgiev, 1979, 370, Sl. 174.

¹⁷ Gimbutas, 1991, 233, Sl. 7–18.

¹⁸ Kalicz, 1984, 198, T. LVII, 6.

¹⁹ Renfrew, 1972, T. 12; Buchholz, 1973, 284, No. 845–847.

The chronological relationship between inhumation and cremation was expressed in the stratigraphy of the Glavcovska mound. Cremation was carried out only at level II, i. e. in the piling phase, when the tumulus belonged to the phase IIIa of the Cotofeni culture. Grave 5 with the burned deceased was buried in a square grave construction, and grave 6 with inhumation was also buried in the same space. There is no difference either in the grave items: grave 1 (level I, inhumation) and grave 5 (level II, cremation), contain as items identical vessels for hanging (Fig. 1, 1, 3). Grave 2 has as an urn a vessel resembling the "sauce boat" and other similar conical vessels also present in graves 7 and 10, of the final, third level of burial (Fig. 1, 5, 8, 12).

Gold and bronze earrings are pieces of jewelry known in the Balkans and Pannonia solely from graves of steppe origin.²⁰ Together with silver samples, typologically correspondent, these earrings disappeared together with the abandoning of the steppe ritual of burial in the beginning of the Early Bronze Age of the Danube Basin.

Excavations of two other tumuli evince that burials in the Trnava necropolis strictly observed the tradition of the steppe pit-grave culture. In one of them (tumulus 2) the central and only grave had as a supplement, it was said, an urn embellished with corded ornamentation.²¹ Although in form it fails to correspond to the vessel from the tumulus in Srpski Krstur (Banat), the urn from mound 2 in Trnava displays similar ornamentation, both in technique of manufacture and motif, common to the corded ware of the Aeneolithic.²² Hanging triangles around the frame of the vessel made by cord impression several times is a common trait of this type of ceramics, spread out from the steppes of the Black Sea to the Aegean and Adriatic littorals. The hanging triangles motif is known in the Cotofeni culture of Oltenia, i. e. in the sphere which includes, in the wider sense of the word, the Glavcovska mound. Tumulus 3 in Trnava offered from primary grave 1 gold earrings of steppe type, with 1 and 1/2 coils.²³

The chronological value of the stratigraphy in the Glavcovskal mound lies chiefly in the relationship between the steppe burial rite and the local Cotofeni culture. Tumuli in Transylvania with fragments of Cotofeni ceramics in piles are known, but also with graves belonging to phase Cotofeni III.²⁴ In the steppe tumulus 1 in Jabuka (southern Banat), the central grave was buried through dwelling horizons of the settlements of Kostolac and Baden.²⁵ Finally, in the Glavcovska funeral mound, the Cotofeni culture in phase IIIa is parallel to the grave-pit culture. This relatively chronological order underlines again the absence of researched tumuli, since, without the Glavcovska mound, the

²⁰ Gimbutas, 1991, 384.

²¹ Panajotov, 1989, 91, Sl. 50.

²² Roman, 1986, 14.

²³ Nikolov, 1976, 43, Sl. 12b.

²⁴ Vlassa, 1987, 115; T. VI, 1-3, T. VII, 2-3; Jovanović, 1991, 68.

²⁵ Bukvić, 1978, 17; Jovanović, 1983, 41.

Cotofeni/Kostolac culture would appear reliably older than the late steppe Aeneolithic. However, one is now able to obtain the following relatively chronological scheme:

a. Tumuli of the steppe grave-pit culture have been piled over the cultural layer of the Kostolac and Baden settlements (Jabuka, Basarabi)

b. Tumuli of this culture contain fragments of Cotofeni ceramics (Kakova – Vladhaza) in their pile.

c. Tumuli of the same culture contain graves whose inventories belong to the later Cotofeni culture (Glavcovska funeral mound, Dealul Velii).

This review leads to the general conclusion that the steppe pit-grave culture and the later Cotofeni culture lived parallel in Transylvania, Oltenia and northwestern Bulgaria, ending with the emergence of the Vučedol culture.

However, this preliminary conclusion fails to explain the complex composition of the necropolis in Trnava, whose tumuli were erected in the same place, but completely differ one from another. They all contain grave items belonging to the same period – later Danubian Aeneolithic period with elements of the steppe pit-grave culture.

It is understandable that detailed chronological differences were expressed in the Glavcovska mound, but they fail to offer satisfying explanations. Perhaps it is more a question of the complex populational compositions of the later Aeneolithic of the Central and Eastern Balkans, as well as its origin. The possibility of autochthonous cultures of the Balkan and Carpathian basins formed under strong influx from the east (Cernavoda III – Boleraz, Baden, Kostolac, Cotofeni) practicing steppe burial rites has been pointed out elsewhere.²⁶ This includes smaller enclaves of the steppe Aeneolithic, particularly in the Lower Danube Basin, but the Glavcovska funeral mound offers clear evidence that the local population practiced the same burial rite.

Moreso, it retained its indigenous burial custom – cremation, quite alien to the steppe culture. The necropolis in Trnava then reflects the heterogeneous populational composition of the Eastern Balkans, as well as the chronological order of the use of individual categories of the material culture for cult purposes.

The unity of the Late Aeneolithic horizon of the Carpathian Basin and the Balkans was confirmed fully by the stylistic and typological correspondence of the cult ceramics and plastics, such as vessels for hanging, askoi and ornithomorphic vases. This cult togetherness encompasses the Aegean, Southern Balkans and Cyclades, outlining thus older religious traditions of the broad region, begun in the Late Neolithic and Early Aeneolithic.

²⁶ Tasić, 1991, 266; Srejić, 1987, 49; Ecsedy, 1981, 132; Jovanović, 1991, 70.

ХРОНОЛОШКИ ОДНОСИ КАСНОГ ЕНЕОЛИТА ЦЕНТРАЛНОГ И ИСТОЧНОГ БАЛКАНА

Резиме

Испитивање хронолошких односа енеолитских култура централног и источног Балкана претпоставља углавном поређење културе са културом или културног комплекса у целини са другим комплексом. Методолошки је такође корисна и анализа појединачних целина, са поузданим хронолошким и стратиграфским подацима, што би условно могло да се назове микро-типолошким испитивањима.

Овом приликом изабрана је Главчовска могила, са јасном стратиграфијом и употребом два различита погребна ритуала: кремацијом и инхумацијом. Али заједничка одлика свих сахрана је строго поштовање погребног ритуала степског енеолита. Сем тога, Главчовска могила пружа врло редак пример да гробови степског карактера садрже гробне инвентаре и енеолитске Cotofeni културе. На основу свог стратиграфског положаја сахрањивање у Главчовској могили је извршено у три етапе: примарни гробови бр. 1 и 3; други, млађи ниво, гробови 2, 4-6; трећи, најмлађи, гробови 7-10.

У стратиграфији Главчовске могиле исказан је и хронолошки однос између инхумације и кремације, као и између степског погребног ритуала и локалне Cotofeni културе. На основу добијених података произилази да у Трансилванији, Олтенији и северозападној Бугарској степска култура гробова јама и Cotofeni култура живе паралелно, све до појаве вуџедолске културе. Исто тако може се претпоставити да су аутохтоне културе Балкана и Карпатског Басена, образоване под снажним утицајима са истока (Cernavoda III-Bolez- Baden-Kostolac, Cotofeni) такође носиоци степског ритуала сахрањивања. Међутим, то локално становништво не заборавља ни свој аутохтони обичај сахрањивања, кремацију, иначе сасвим стран степској култури. Главчовска могила, као и други тумули ове некрополе, одликавају и хетерогени популациони састав Источног Балкана, обележавајући и хронолошки редослед употребе појединих категорија материјалне културе у култне сврхе.

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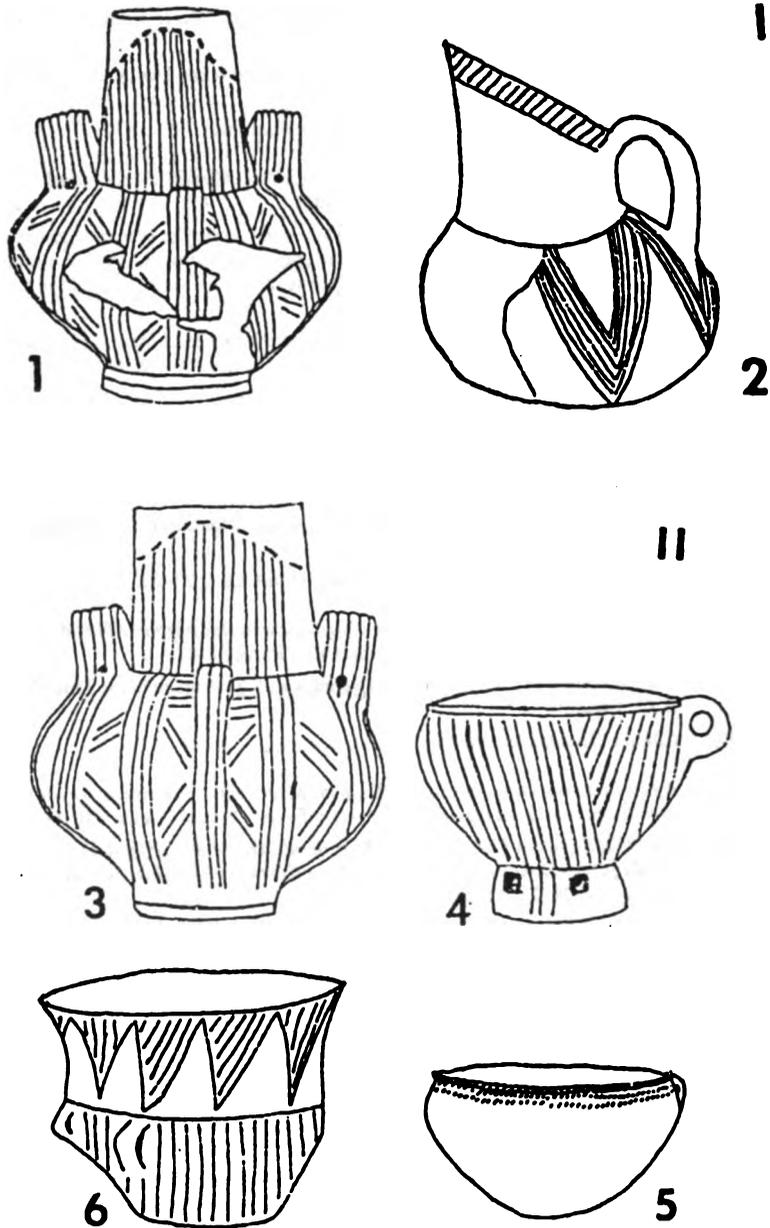
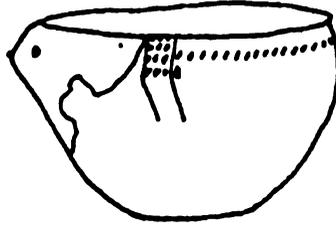


Fig. 1 Trnava. Glavčovska mogila. Level I: grave 1-1; grave 3-2; Level II: grave 5-3, 4; grave 2-5; grave 4-6;

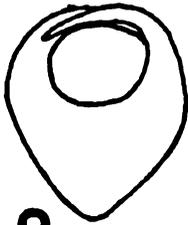


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8

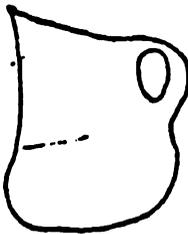
III



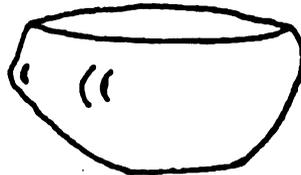
9



10



11



12

Trnova, Glavčovska mogila, Level III: grave 7-7, 8; grave 8-9; grave 9-10, 11; grave 10-12. (Cf. Panajotov, 1989; Nikolov, 1976)

