

NEW DISCOVERIES OF HORSE BURIALS AND DEPOSITIONS IN THE GETIC CEMETERY FROM ZIMNICEA, SOUTHERN ROMANIA

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Abstract: During the previous excavations from Zimnicea – *Câmpul morților* (1948-1974), 14 horse burials and partial depositions were revealed. The recent excavations (2007-2009) brought to light other four such discoveries. Two thirds of these 18 features consist in complete horse burials, usually accompanied by inventory objects; the rest of them are partial horse bone depositions, without inventory. Distinct from other funeral discoveries (Agighiol, Peretu, Jankovo, Sveštari), contemporary with the early phase of the Zimnicea cemetery, dated in the 4th-3rd c. BC, the horse remnants were deposited apart from the human burials, without a visible association with them. We are discussing here the chronology of the recent finds, based on the inventory objects and we present the zooarchaeological study of the horse remains (sex, age, height, butchery marks).

Cuvinte-cheie: Zimnicea, necropolă, înmormântări și depuneri de cai, arheozologie, sec. 4-3 a. Chr.

Rezumat: În timpul vechilor cercetări arheologice desfășurate la Zimnicea – *Câmpul morților* (1948-1974), au fost descoperite 14 înmormântări și depuneri parțiale de cai, la care se adaugă încă patru descoperiri asemănătoare rezultate din cercetările recente (2007-2009). Din aceste 18 descoperiri, două treimi constau în înmormântări de cai întregi, predominant cu inventar, restul fiind depuneri parțiale fără inventar. Osemintele de cai sunt depuse separat de mormintele umane, fără o asociere vizibilă cu acestea, spre deosebire de alte descoperiri funerare contemporane (Agighiol, Peretu, Jankovo, Sveštari), cu faza de început a necropolei de la Zimnicea, respectiv sec. 4-3 a. Chr. Discutăm în continuare încadrarea cronologică a descoperirilor pe baza pieselor de inventar și prezentăm analiza arheozologică a resturilor de cai (vârstă, sex, talie, urme de tranșare).

Research history

The first finds in the Getic necropolis from Zimnicea – *Câmpul Morților* originated in the three “archaeological explorations” conducted by Cezar Bolliac between 1871 and 1873, in the area located in the immediate eastern vicinity of “Cetate”¹. He is the one who named the place “Câmpul de morți dacic”² (Fig. 1). After the researches of Bolliac, in the last quarter of the 19th c., the area was searched by amateurs such as Dimitrie Papazoglu and Dimitrie Butculescu. The first systematic researches were conducted by Ion Nestor (1948-1949)³, followed by Alexandrina D.

Alexandrescu (1967-1974)⁴.

There were revealed 165 graves throughout the excavations from the 19th c. and 166 graves during the Nestor and Alexandrescu researches. This makes the Zimnicea necropolis one of the most important in the Getic area up to now. The site is significant for understanding not only the material culture and the funeral practices, but also the chronology of the Second Iron Age at the Lower Danube⁵.

The archaeological researches at *Câmpul Morților* started again in 2007 and continued until 2009, followed by an additional campaign in 2015. The initial research team was

¹ Bolliac 1872, 2-4; Bolliac 1873, 1-2; Bolliac 1874, 1-2, 4; Măndescu 2009, 205-213.

² Bolliac 1872, 2.

³ Nestor 1949, 116-125; Nestor 1950, 93-102.

⁴ Alexandrescu 1980, 19-126.

⁵ Măndescu 2010, 165-182, fig. 22-30.