

Raiko Krauß, Dan Ciobotaru (eds.), *Stone Age Without Stones. The Early Neolithic of Bucova Pusta IV in northwestern Banat (Romania)*, in col. „Archaeology in Banat” I, Tübingen University Press, Tübingen, 2024, ISBN (Hardcover): 978-3-98945-007-3, ISBN (PDF): 978-3-98945-008-0

Volumul de față deschide o serie nouă a Universității din Tübingen, **Archaeology in Banat**, dedicată investigațiilor cercetătorilor germani și români care s-au ocupat de studierea acestei zone. De o înaltă ținută științifică și grafică, volumul conține 533 de pagini și numeroase figuri, tabele, anexe, reflectând cercetările într-un sit emblematic al Neoliticului timpuriu la nord de Dunăre.

Investigarea situl neolitic timpuriu Pusta Bucova IV din nord-vestul Banatului, aflat pe teritoriul administrativ al orașului Sânicolau Mare, județul Timiș, este rezultatul unui proiect arheologic desfășurat de-a lungul a cinci campanii anuale de cercetări arheologice sistematice. Lucrările au fost derulate prin colaborarea fructuoasă dintre Universitatea din Tübingen și Muzeul Național al Banatului și constituie un adevărat etalon de cooperare științifică internațională între instituții cu activitate în cercetarea arheologică. Finanțarea cercetării a fost asigurată în mare parte din fonduri germane.

Colectivul implicat în publicarea monografiei, pe lângă cei doi autori coordonatori ai proiectului, este format din 31 de specialiști în arheologie și din domenii conexe arheologiei. Lucrarea monografică este structurată sub forma a 21 de capitole realizate de autorii săpăturii arheologice, cu concursul unora dintre tinerii implicați în excavarea sitului, precum și de autori cu experiență în analiza și prelucrarea diferitelor tipuri de artefacte descoperite, provenind de la diferite instituții europene prestigioase.

În *Prefața/Preface* volumului, Raiko Krauß și Dan Ciobotaru fac precizări cu privire la deschiderea seriei „Archaeology in Banat” și necesitatea prezentării rezultatelor cercetărilor arheologice în volume de tip monografic, care asigură totodată și o mai bună înțelegere a vieții comunităților preistorice investigate.

Capitolul 1 – *Introduction* –, semnat de Raiko Krauß și Dan Ciobotaru (p. 1-10, 7 fig.), motivează alegerea investigării acestui sit arheologic cu notorietate în arheologia preistorică central-europeană încă de la finalul secolului al XIX-lea.

Capitolul 2 – *Palaeogeographical analysis of the Bucova Pusta feld* – prezintă rezultatele analizelor paleogeografice realizate de un colectiv larg de geografi, paleobotaniști și arheologi (György Sipos, Bastiaan Notebaert, Raiko Krauß, Tímea Kiss, Elena Marinova, Dávid Filyó, Tamás Bartyik, Cristian Floca, Petru Urdea; p. 11-23, 9 fig.), în care sunt integrate rezultatele obținute din prelucrarea sondajelor din împrejurimile sitului, cu studiile ample ale colectivului reunit de la Universitatea din Szeged și Universitatea de Vest din Timișoara pentru arealul istoric al râului Mureș în sectorul bănățean. Metodele de prelucrare sunt de ultimă generație, cu precădere asupra paleoalbiilor râurilor din zona cercetată.

Capitolul 3 – *History of research* –, semnat de Dan Ciobotaru și Constantin Kalcsov (p. 25-44, 27 fig.), este dedicat istoricului cercetării și prezintă succint rezultatele cercetărilor extensive efectuate în arealul fermei Pusta Bucova de către arheologul amator Gyula Kisléghi Nagy începând cu finalul secolului al XIX-lea. O atenție particulară este acordată prezentării contextului și materialelor arheologice rezultate din săpătura efectuată de arheologul amator în situl Pusta Bucova IV, care astăzi sunt păstrate în colecțiile Muzeului Național al Banatului. Etapele cercetării ulterioare a sitului sunt menționate împreună cu sursele bibliografice relevante.

Capitolul 4 – *Geophysical investigations at Neolithic sites in the Romanian Banat* (Cornelius Meyer, Dana Pilz, Henning Zöllner; p. 45-58, 11 fig., 1 tabel) – este realizat de ultimul colectiv de geofizicieni care au efectuat investigații geofizice în acest sit. Aici sunt introduse rezultatele analizelor succesive a mai multor echipe care au efectuat prospecțiuni neinvazive în arealul fermei Pusta Bucova începând cu anul 2002. Interpretarea rezultatelor oferă un reper excelent pentru estimarea tipologiei de ocupare a teritoriului în diferite perioade istorice.

În Capitolul 5 – *Process of the excavation works at Bucova Pusta IV* (Raiko Krauß, Dan Ciobotaru; p. 59-73, 6 fig.) – este realizată o trecere în revistă a campaniilor efectuate de colectivul româno-german de cercetare între anii 2010-2015. Suprafața totală excavată a fost de 458,59 metri pătrați. Sunt prezentate într-un mod coerent strategiile de dezvoltare a proiectului pe baza investigațiilor prealabile și a evoluției descoperirilor.

Metodologia de abordare a săpăturilor arheologice este prezentată în Capitolul 6 – *Methodology of the excavation at Bucova Pusta IV* (Clemens Schmid, Raiko Krauß; p. 75-88, 16 fig.). Sunt relevate metodele de ultimă

generație de excavare, prelevare, de organizare a documentației și arhivare a informației, cu utilizarea metodelor digitale și a bazelor de date realizate.

O prezentare consistentă a strategiei și distribuției complexelor arheologice este inclusă în Capitolul 7 – *Neolithic settlement structures and stratigraphical situation of excavated features* (Raiko Krauß, Dan Ciobotaru, Clemens Schmid; p. 89-127, 48 fig., 1 tabel). Pentru fiecare unitate de excavare de aproximativ 5 x 5 metri sunt explicate dispunerea structurilor arheologice și caracteristicile stratigrafice ale profilelor. Documentația fotografică și cea grafică sunt foarte bine reprezentate în completarea textului. Capitolul se încheie cu un catalog al complexelor arheologice menționate în text (Tabel 1).

În Capitolul 8 – *Notes on the construction of the dwellings* (Petru Ciocani; p. 129-140, 10 fig., 1 tabel) – sunt analizate elementele de arhitectură recuperate din cercetarea arheologică, cu încercarea de reconstituire a construcțiilor din care provin acestea.

Contextul descoperirii singurului schelet uman din situl Pusta Bucova IV este subiectul Capitolului 9 – *The Early Neolithic Child Burial, Feature S14* (Raiko Krauß, Lea Valcov, Laura Winkelbach, Joachim Burger, Jens Blöcher, Yoan Diekmann; p. 141-149, 9 fig.). Pe lângă descrierea condițiilor de dezvelire a acestuia, sunt prezentate și observații detaliate de natură antropologică. De asemenea, analiza paleogenomică a fragmentelor osteologice umane este de mare importanță și actualitate în domeniul neoliticului timpuriu. Rezultatele privind originea certă egeo-anatoliană a copilului au un rol esențial în determinarea modului în care procesul de neolitizare a zonei nord-dunărene a evoluat.

Capitolul 10 – *The Early Neolithic ceramic finds from Bucova Pusta IV* (Raiko Krauß; p. 151-329, 45 fig., 71 pl.) – tratează pe larg analiza ceramicii neolitice timpurii din situl Pusta Bucova IV. În prima parte sunt prezentate categoriile tipologice ale ceramicii, cu formele și ornamentele specifice fiecărei categorii ceramice. Partea a doua a capitolului cuprinde prezentarea ceramicii pe unități stratigrafice, cu o documentație grafică completă. Prezentarea ceramicii este continuată în Capitolul 11 – *Archaeometric analysis of the pottery from Bucova Pusta IV* (Silvia Amicone; p. 331-335, 1 fig., 2 tabele) –, cu analiza arheometrică a ceramicii din acest sit.

Capitolul 12 – *Chipped stones of Bucova Pusta IV* (Bogdana Milić, Michael Brandl; p. 337-357, 3 tabele, 2 fig., 7 pl. și o anexă) – și Capitolul 13 – *The ground stone tools from Bucova Pusta IV* (Florian Klimscha; p. 359-369, 3 fig.) – sunt dedicate cercetării industriei litice cioplite și șlefuite, precum și a industriei pietrelor de măcinat din situl Pusta Bucova IV. Capitolul 14 – *Between two worlds: Early Neolithic bone and antler artefacts from Bucova Pusta IV* (Petar Zidarov; p. 371-391, 5 pl.) – prezintă inventarul

artefactelor din os și corn, cu posibilele funcționalități. Rezultatele analizei realizate de specialiști cu notorietate din diferite centre universitare europene sunt corelate cu descoperiri similare din spațiul central și est-european specific preistoriei.

Capitolul 15 – *The faunal remains of Bucova Pusta IV* (Bea De Cupere, Wim Wouters; p. 393-426, 9 tabele, 8 fig., 4 anexe) – prezintă analiza resturilor faunistice din situl mai sus menționat. Studiul relevă existența unei strategii de subzistență bazate pe utilizarea tuturor resurselor disponibile în regiune, inclusiv a resurselor acvatice, bine reprezentate în regiunea bazinului Mureș-Aranca. Capitolul conține un tabel statistic consistent al inventarului faunistic, conform unităților stratigrafice descoperite.

Cercetările arheobotanice ale contextului neolitic timpuriu sunt prezentate în Capitolul 16 – *Archaeobotanical studies on the Early Neolithic structures from Bucova Pusta IV* (Elena Marinova; p. 427-442, 1 fig., 1 anexă). Utilizarea resurselor existente în mediul înconjurător, precum și cultivarea unor plante specifice perioadei sunt analizate și prezentate și sub formă tabelară.

Analiza mormintelor cu ocră specifice Calcoliticului sunt introduse în Capitolul 17 – *The Chalcolithic burials of Bucova Pusta IV* (Raiko Krauß; p. 443-450, 8 fig.). Pe lângă descrierea condițiilor de descoperire a acestor morminte, sunt coerent prezentate descoperirile contemporane din spațiul balcanic și egeean, precum și contextul cronologiei absolute ale acestora.

Capitolul 18 – *The Bronze and Early Iron Ages* (Mario Gavranović; p. 451-467, 5 pl.) – tratează vestigiile de Epoca bronzului și Epoca fierului care au fost documentate la Pusta Bucova IV. Autorul realizează o succintă trecere în revistă a descoperirilor contemporane din Banat. Studiul este completat de un catalog al unităților stratigrafice datate în această perioadă, însoțit de planșele cu reprezentarea grafică a ceramicii.

Mormintele medievale sunt analizate în Capitolul 19 – *The Medieval burials* (Erwin Gáll; p. 469-488, 30 fig.) –, fiind completate de un studiu antropologic exhaustiv. Autorul este un bun cunoscător al arealului medieval din Banatul vestic și realizează o analiză pertinentă a contextului medieval al regiunii bazinului Mureș-Aranca în perioada migrațiilor, până în evul mediu târziu.

Datele de cronologie absolută rezultate din acest sit fac obiectul Capitolului 20 – *Absolute chronological framework of the site of Bucova Pusta IV* (Raiko Krauß; p. 489-496, 4 fig., 3 tabele). Aici sunt analizate sintetic datele pentru neoliticul timpuriu, dar și cele aparținând Calcoliticului și Epocii bronzului. O serie de tabele sintetizează datele calibrate pentru acest sit și sunt realizate corelații cu așezări similare din spațiul central și est-european.

În Capitolul final 21 – *Tradition and Adaptation* (Raiko Krauß, Dan Ciobotaru; p. 497-505, 1 fig., 1 tabel) –, cei doi

autori sintetizează rezultatele cercetărilor din sit pentru perioada Neoliticului timpuriu, relevând importanța acestuia în evoluția fenomenului neolitizării în spațiile apropiate bazinului Dunării, raportat la descoperirile anterioare efectuate în regiune. În concluzie, se scoate în evidență rolul important al așezărilor neolitice timpurii în geneza neolitizării la nordul Dunării și în evoluția ulterioară a acestui fenomen spre centrul și vestul Europei.

Urmează *Bibliografia* folosită (p. 507-533).

Volumul prezentat pe scurt în rândurile de mai sus reprezintă o contribuție importantă la cunoașterea Neoliticului timpuriu din această zonă. Așa cum am menționat deja nu au fost neglijate nici materialele și complexele arheologice ulterioare, care atestă atractivitatea zonei pentru diferite comunități umane până la nivel de Ev mediu.

Lucrarea de față reprezintă un model de abordare pluridisciplinară, autorii folosind atât metodele cele mai noi

de excavare, de prelevare a materialelor, dar și cu privire la realizarea documentației, arhivarea informației, folosirea bazelor de date. Rezultatele obținute le-au dat posibilitatea realizării unei imagini clare și realiste a evoluției comunităților umane din zona investigată.

Analizele din fiecare capitol sunt susținute de o ilustrație elocventă de foarte bună calitate, care alături de bibliografia vastă și raportarea la descoperiri similare din zonele învecinate sau mai îndepărtate fac din volumul de față o publicație de mare ținută științifică, ca și un model de urmat, atât pentru preistoricieni, cât și pentru cei care investighează perioade mai noi din istoria comunităților umane.

Cornelia-Magda LAZAROVICI

V. A. Khrshanovskii (editor-in-chief), V. B. Jijina-Hefter, N. C. Jijina, S. V. Kashaev, O. Yu. Sokolova, with the assistance of E. D. Blashchuk, E. A. Hefter, N. V. Zakharenkova (eds.), *The Bosporan Phenomenon: Export / Import in the Economic and Cultural Life of the Bosporan Kingdom [in Russian]*. Proceedings of the 18th International Conference, St. Petersburg. Moscow: Indrik, 2025, 792 pp., ISBN 978-5-91674-783-6.

The eighteenth volume of the *Bosporan Phenomenon* series occupies a distinctive, transitional place in the historiography of the Cimmerian Bosphorus. Conceived and realised under the challenging conditions of an ongoing war, which has significantly affected academic infrastructures and collaboration in Eastern Europe and beyond, the volume reflects a fragmented scholarly landscape without foregrounding it. By placing export/import at its core, the editors encourage contributors to explore not only economic transactions but also the circulation of ideas, technologies, artistic forms, and political and religious practices, presenting the Bosporan Kingdom as an active participant in multiple networks of exchange. With more than seventy contributions, the volume offers a rich panorama of the conference, while the editorial preface, though concise, establishes a thoughtful framework that allows the depth and variety of the individual studies to speak for themselves.

1. Personalia (pp. 5-50)

The section presents scholarly tributes to leading figures in Bosporan and North Pontic studies, including V.

P. Tolstikov, I. V. Tunkina, V. A. Goroncharovsky, A. V. Podosinov, M. Yu. Vakhtina, A. K. Kasparov, I. I. Marchenko, A. A. Zavoikin, N. I. Sudarev, V. Y. Zuev, and N. A. Pavlichenko, in recognition of milestone anniversaries and significant birthdays. Rather than simple biographies, these contributions situate individual careers within the broader development of the field, highlighting key research agendas, methodological evolution, and illustrating how personal trajectories have collectively shaped contemporary Bosporan scholarship.

2. Import and Export in the Foreign Trade of the Bosporan Kingdom (pp. 51-112)

This section revisits questions of Bosporan external trade across a broad chronological spectrum, from the Archaic period to the early Roman Empire. Its principal merit lies in the consistent effort to move beyond schematic models of Bosporan economic dependence, reconstructing trade mechanisms as historically contingent, regionally differentiated, and institutionally mediated.

A. A. Zavoikin's study of the principal sources of Bosporan grain exports under the early Spartocids provides the conceptual anchor of the section. Through careful reconstruction of agricultural production zones, surplus formation, and mobilisation mechanisms, he demonstrates that export capacity was neither uniform nor structurally predetermined. Instead, it depended on political consolidation, control over rural territories, and the elite's capacity to integrate agrarian production into wider exchange networks. His analysis corrects older, monocausal interpretations of Bosporan grain export as an automatic response to external demand.

Placed within a wider Pontic framework, A. S. Balakhvantsev examines grain trade in the Black Sea region from the second half of the 7th to the early 5th century BC. By emphasising interregional competition, fluctuating markets, and multiple coexisting export centres, he situates the Bosporean Kingdom as one participant in a complex Pontic economic system rather than as a passive appendage of the Aegean world.

Localised and institutionally focused perspectives are offered by A. P. Bekhter and A. M. Novichikhin. Bekhter's epigraphic analysis of Myrmekion illuminates patterns of import and export through documentary evidence, revealing regulatory and contractual dimensions at the level of a single polis. Novichikhin's study of Gorgippia as a Sindian harbour foregrounds seafaring and maritime trade in shaping the city's economic profile. Together, these contributions illustrate the value of integrating epigraphy, archaeology, and topography in reconstructing micro-regional trade practices.

Two additional contributions broaden thematic and chronological scope. A. N. Kovalenko addresses retail trade at the Elizavetovskoe settlement in the Don delta during the 4th and early 3rd centuries BC, highlighting small-scale exchange and internal markets. R. M. Bobin examines a trade route in the eastern Black Sea region under Emperor Nero, extending discussion into the Roman imperial period and underscoring long-term continuity and periodic reconfiguration of Bosporean participation in supra-regional networks.

Collectively, the section presents Bosporean foreign trade as multi-layered: large-scale export strategies, regional redistribution, local retail exchange, and maritime connectivity. Grain-centred models still dominate, and non-agricultural commodities could be integrated more fully. Nevertheless, the combination of macro-regional perspectives with finely grained local case studies marks a significant advance.

3. Ceramic Import and Its Influence on Bosporean Ceramic Production (pp. 113-212)

The ceramic studies in this section are methodologically accomplished and internally coherent. They move decisively beyond provenance and typology, addressing chronology, distribution, technological transfer, and local agency in reception and transformation of imported ceramics.

D. E. Chistov examines the earliest imports of "proto-Thasian" amphorae from an unidentified Ionian production centre. Combining stratigraphic and typological analysis, he proposes a revised chronology for these containers in the northern Black Sea, recalibrating assumptions about early Ionian commercial penetration.

S. Yu. Monakhov situates ceramic finds from Dwelling No. 3 at Elizavetovskoe within their stratigraphic and

functional context, illustrating circulation within domestic spaces. E. V. Kuznetsova compares amphorae from Prikuban and Elizavetovskoe burial grounds, highlighting local preferences and social strategies in shaping ceramic consumption.

A. A. Suprenkov's excavation-based study at Nymphaeum (2022) refines distribution models, offering a temporally sensitive view of supply. V. G. Zubarev and K. O. Markova analyse amphora imports in late antique rural Crimea, demonstrating the persistence of imported containers in non-urban redistribution networks.

Specialised studies include N. B. Churekova on amphora stamps, S. V. Yartsev, E. V. Shushunova, and C. Zhang on Adzhel I, and S. N. Senatorov on Kizil-Koba pottery as markers of early Greco-barbarian contacts. S. M. Ilyashenko, V. V. Gerasimova, A. A. Klochko, and K. S. Mitrokhina integrate petrographic and chemical analyses of Gorgippia ceramics, showing local production informed by external models.

As a whole, this section convincingly demonstrates that ceramic import in the Bosporean Kingdom cannot be reduced to questions of supply and provenance. Instead, imported ceramics emerge as active agents in processes of technological transfer, social differentiation, and cultural negotiation. A certain imbalance remains in favour of amphora studies, while other categories of ceramic imports receive less attention. Nevertheless, the methodological range and empirical depth of the contributions mark this section as one of the strongest in the volume and set a benchmark for future research on material exchange in the northern Black Sea region.

4. Import and Export in the Spiritual and Political Culture of Bosporus (pp. 213-308)

Contributors treat political ideas, symbolic forms, and cultural capital as domains of exchange. Imported models were selectively appropriated, reinterpreted, and embedded in local contexts.

A. V. Podosinov examines the possible "export of Scythian wisdom" to Greece, centred on the figure of Anacharsis, challenging the unidirectional model of cultural transfer. V. N. Parfenov explores Bosporean hostages in Rome, focusing on the case of Dynamis, highlighting cultural negotiation rather than subordination. N. N. Bolgov reassesses the so-called "Second Flourishing" of the 2nd to early 3rd centuries AD, situating Bosporean developments in the wider Mediterranean while stressing local specificity.

Several contributions broaden the focus from political institutions to artistic and ritual forms as vehicles of cultural exchange. A. M. Butyagin's paper on the role of imported art in Bosporean culture between the 5th and 2nd centuries BC analyses how foreign artistic models were integrated into local visual languages. Rather than functioning as

markers of cultural dependency, such imports emerge as active components in the construction of Bosporan elite identity. This perspective is complemented by Yu. A. Vinogradov's case study of the settlement Fountan 6 in eastern Crimea, where the interplay between local and imported elements is traced at the level of everyday material culture.

Religious contexts are addressed by N. G. Novichenkova and K. V. Novichenkova-Lukicheva, who reconstruct the stages through which antique objects entered the sanctuary at the Gurzuf Saddle Pass. Their analysis highlights the *longue durée* of votive accumulation and the changing meanings ascribed to imported objects within sacred space, underscoring the role of sanctuaries as nodes of cultural mediation rather than passive repositories.

The political significance of imported objects and their imitations is explored explicitly by V. I. Mordvintseva, who examines how such material forms functioned as markers of political orientation among barbarian elites of the northern Black Sea region from the 3rd century BC to the mid-3rd century AD. By linking material choices to geopolitical alignments, the study bridges material culture and political history in a particularly productive way.

Later chronological horizons are addressed by M. M. Kazansky's contribution on the Bosphorus and northern barbarian groups in the post-Hunnic period. Focusing on the export of prestige culture, the author demonstrates how Bosporan models continued to exert influence even in periods of political fragmentation, suggesting a resilience of cultural authority that outlived formal state structures.

The final two contributions extend the discussion into the Late Roman and early Migration periods. A. A. Vnukov and L. Kh. Alieva examine the possibility of trade relations between the Akatziroi and the Bosphorus in the late 4th to mid-5th centuries AD, cautiously weighing archaeological and historical evidence. L. G. Shepko's study of Bosporan imports in Sarmatian contexts of the north-eastern Azov region further illustrates the persistence of Bosporan material culture as a medium of interaction across ethnic and political boundaries.

Despite the wide chronological and thematic range of the contributions, the section is unified by a consistent emphasis on agency, selectivity, and reinterpretation in processes of cultural exchange. Political ideas, artistic forms, and ritual objects are shown to circulate not as fixed packages, but as mutable resources whose meanings were continually renegotiated. A potential limitation lies in the uneven integration of textual and archaeological approaches, which occasionally results in parallel rather than fully convergent interpretations. Nevertheless, the section makes a strong case for understanding Bosporan spiritual and political culture as an active arena of exchange,

central to the Kingdom's long-term position within the wider Greco-Roman world.

5. Imported Ideas and Images in Bosporan Mythology and Religion (pp. 309-348)

This section addresses religious exchange with a degree of methodological nuance that sets it apart from older diffusionist approaches. Rather than treating imported deities, images, or ritual objects as straightforward indicators of external "influence", the contributors consistently conceptualise religion as a domain of cultural translation, in which meanings were negotiated and reshaped within local contexts.

The section opens with V. G. Lazarenko's study of the cult of Achilles on the Bosphorus, which foregrounds the significance of non-Greek, often labelled "barbarian" ritual components in the formation of a distinct Bosporan religious profile. By integrating archaeological, iconographic, and comparative evidence, the author demonstrates that the Bosporan Achilles was not merely a transplanted Greek hero, but a locally reconfigured figure whose cult accommodated indigenous conceptions of heroism, liminality, and protection. This contribution provides a persuasive model for analysing religious hybridity without resorting to hierarchical notions of cultural dominance.

Material culture as a mediator of religious practice is the focus of I. Yu. Schaub's analysis of Athenian ceramic imports. The author shows how imported vessels, initially circulating as prestige goods or commodities of daily use, could acquire ritual functions within Bosporan religious contexts. This approach challenges rigid distinctions between sacred and profane material culture and underscores the role of consumption practices in shaping religious experience.

A complementary perspective is offered by G. S. Chebyshev's study of lamps in Bosporan contexts. By situating lighting devices within broader sacred traditions, the author demonstrates how everyday objects participated in the performative and sensory dimensions of ritual. His contribution highlights the importance of visibility, illumination, and temporality in religious practice, adding a phenomenological dimension to the study of Bosporan cults.

The section concludes with S. A. Yatsenko's analysis of images of classical mythology in Sarmatian cultures. Although geographically and culturally adjacent rather than strictly Bosporan, this contribution significantly broadens the analytical horizon. By tracing the reception and reinterpretation of Greco-Roman mythological imagery among Sarmatian groups, the author situates Bosporan religious and mythological exchange within a wider steppe context, emphasising the permeability of cultural

boundaries and the circulation of symbolic repertoires across ethnic lines.

Taken together, the contributions in this section convincingly demonstrate that Bosporan religious life was shaped by ongoing processes of selection, adaptation, and reinterpretation. Imported ideas and images functioned less as markers of external domination than as resources through which local communities articulated their own religious identities. A potential limitation lies in the relatively small number of case studies, which constrains broader generalisation. Nevertheless, the methodological consistency and interpretative subtlety of the section make it a valuable contribution to the study of religious exchange in the northern Black Sea region and offer conceptual tools readily applicable to other areas of the Greco-Roman world.

6. Syncretism of the Bosporan Funerary Rite (pp. 349-438)

The section devoted to funerary syncretism provides some of the most tangible and methodologically productive evidence for cultural interaction in the Bosporan Kingdom. Burial practices are treated not merely as reflections of belief, but as arenas of social action in which identities were negotiated, affiliations signalled, and traditions selectively reconfigured. Across the contributions, funerary ritual emerges as a particularly sensitive register of cultural contact, capable of revealing both openness to external models and the persistence of local norms.

The section opens with M. Yu. Vakhtina's reassessment of the principal burial in the Temir-Gora kurgan, undertaken on the occasion of the 155th anniversary of the monument's excavation. Revisiting a classic and heavily cited assemblage, the author applies updated interpretative frameworks to reassess the structure, sequence, and symbolic grammar of the burial. Her analysis demonstrates that even well-known monuments can yield new insights when freed from entrenched typological readings and re-examined in light of broader questions of ritual performance and social representation.

A similar concern with hybridity at the level of practice underpins the study by D. V. Beilin and I. V. Rukavishnikova, devoted to the necropolis of Nymphaeum on the basis of excavations conducted in 2020. By analysing the interplay between "Greek" and "barbarian" elements within individual burial complexes, the authors move beyond binary classifications and show how funerary rites combined heterogeneous components into coherent local ritual systems.

The integration of imported material into indigenous funerary traditions is explored further by A. V. Batasova, whose contribution focuses on Greek ceramic imports in the burial rites of the native populations of Prikubanye and Zakubanye in the 6th and 5th centuries BC. Rather than

treating such imports as markers of acculturation or elite emulation, the author demonstrates how imported vessels were incorporated into existing ritual frameworks, acquiring meanings shaped by local conceptions of death and commemoration.

Several papers examine diachronic change within specific necropoleis. T. V. Egorova analyses the factors influencing shifts in the assemblage of black-glazed and painted ceramics in the funerary inventory of the Volna-1 necropolis, highlighting the interplay between supply structures, fashion, and ritual conservatism. S. V. Kashae's study of the Artyushchenko-2 necropolis in the 5th century BC complements this perspective by providing a site-based reconstruction of burial practices within a clearly defined chronological horizon.

More specialised aspects of funerary practice are addressed in the contributions by N. Yu. Limberis and I. I. Marchenko, and by N. I. Sudarev and A. V. Ivanov. The former examines the use of mortars in the burial rite of the Maeotians at the Prikubansky cemetery, drawing attention to food preparation and consumption as ritualised acts linked to funerary ideology. The latter focuses on undercut graves (*podboynye mogily*) on the Bosphorus, analysing their construction, distribution, and possible symbolic meanings within the broader funerary landscape.

The section concludes with M. A. Simonova's detailed study of red-slip bowls and dishes from funerary and commemorative contexts at the Iluraton necropolis, based on material excavated between 1968 and 1991 and preserved in the State Museum of the History of Religion. By foregrounding museum collections alongside excavation data, Simonova underscores the continued analytical potential of legacy material for understanding ritual practice.

Altogether, the contributions in this section convincingly demonstrate that syncretism in Bosporan funerary rites operated at multiple levels: architectural, material, performative, and symbolic. Imported objects and practices did not simply replace indigenous traditions, nor did they function solely as markers of cultural alignment. Instead, they were selectively embedded within local ritual logics, producing forms of practice that were neither wholly Greek nor wholly non-Greek. A potential limitation lies in the predominance of ceramic-based analyses, which, while methodologically robust, tend to privilege material availability over other aspects of ritual such as gesture, sound, or spatial movement. Nevertheless, the section as a whole offers a nuanced and empirically grounded account of funerary syncretism and constitutes one of the most persuasive demonstrations in the volume of how cultural interaction was lived and enacted in the Bosporan Kingdom.

7. Import in Bosporan Art and Culture (pp. 439-556)

This section examines artistic exchange in the Bosporan Kingdom through a series of closely focused case studies that collectively challenge long-standing dichotomies between “imported” and “local” art. Across a wide chronological range – from the Archaic period to Late Antiquity – the contributions demonstrate that imported objects and visual models were rarely adopted uncritically. Instead, they were selectively integrated, reinterpreted, and, in many cases, transformed through local artistic practices.

The section opens with A. E. Petrakova’s analysis of an Attic volute krater in the urban culture of European Bosphorus. By situating this prestigious vessel within its civic and social context, the author convincingly links imported luxury objects to elite self-representation and communal display, rather than treating them as isolated markers of cultural affiliation. A. G. Bukina’s study of Attic red-figure polychrome choes further develops this line of inquiry, highlighting the selective reception of Athenian ceramic imagery and its adaptation to Bosporan aesthetic sensibilities.

Questions of sculptural import are addressed by N. L. Kucherevskaya, whose contribution on imported sculpture in the Kerch lapidarium underscores the diversity of sculptural forms reaching the Bosphorus and the complexity of their local reception. Rather than constituting a homogeneous corpus, these works reveal varied patterns of acquisition, display, and reuse, reflecting both elite demand and local modes of visual consumption.

Several contributions explore the circulation of iconographic motifs across cultural boundaries. N. V. Moleva’s analysis of a carnelian intaglio from the Kytaiion necropolis, featuring the so-called “animal style”, provides a micro-scale study of symbolic hybridity, where steppe imagery and Mediterranean gem-cutting techniques converge. V. P. Yailenko’s examination of Greco-Egyptian amulets on the Bosphorus broadens this perspective, situating Bosporan visual culture within wider Mediterranean and Near Eastern networks of religious and apotropaic symbolism.

E. A. Savostina’s study of Greek imports in Scythian kurgans highlights the complexities of provenance, attribution, and stylistic interpretation. Rather than viewing these luxury items simply as markers of elite consumption, she situates them within broader frameworks of cross-cultural artistic exchange, showing how Greek craftsmanship was selectively received and transformed within the Scythian context.

The theme of local production informed by external models comes to the fore in M. Yu. Treister’s study of locally produced jewellery on the Bosphorus in the late 6th and 5th centuries BC. Demonstrating a high degree of

technical and stylistic creativity, the author shows that Bosporan workshops did not merely imitate imported forms, but actively reworked them to suit local tastes and symbolic needs. This *longue durée* perspective is extended by A. A. Stoyanova, who examines jewellery produced in Bosporan workshops for Crimean barbarian groups in the Late Roman period, revealing both continuity and adaptation in production strategies.

D. S. Korneev’s contribution on jewellery manufactured in the so-called “polychrome style” under gold leaf further deepens the Late Roman perspective. By reconstructing technological traditions and stylistic choices, the author situates Bosporan production within broader Eurasian trends while maintaining a clear focus on local craftsmanship. N. P. Gulyaeva’s study of lock-plates depicting Aphrodite Anadyomene from the eastern Mediterranean adds another dimension, illustrating how iconographic imports could circulate independently of larger artistic ensembles.

The section concludes with V. Yu. Zuev’s presentation of new finds of Borysthenes type mirrors from the eastern fringes of the Cimmerian Bosphorus. These discoveries extend the geographical and cultural reach of Bosporan artistic influence and underscore the permeability of artistic boundaries even in peripheral zones.

Overall, the contributions in this section present Bosporan art and material culture as a dynamic field of interaction in which imported objects, images, and techniques were continually recontextualised. Artistic imports functioned not simply as indicators of external influence or cultural dependency, but as resources through which local identities, social hierarchies, and political affiliations were articulated. A potential limitation of the section lies in its strong emphasis on high-status and luxury artefacts, which inevitably privileges elite perspectives. More systematic engagement with everyday visual culture might further balance the picture. Nevertheless, the empirical richness and methodological sophistication of the case studies make this section a substantial contribution to our understanding of artistic exchange in the Bosporan Kingdom and, more broadly, to debates on cultural interaction in the Greco-Roman world.

8. Numismatics and Epigraphy (pp. 557-598)

This section constitutes one of the methodological backbones of the volume, demonstrating the continued centrality of numismatic and epigraphic evidence for the reconstruction of Bosporan economic, political, and cultural history. Coins and inscriptions are treated not merely as auxiliary sources, but as complex artefacts that operated simultaneously as instruments of exchange, markers of authority, and vehicles of political communication within both local and supra-regional contexts.

Yu. K. Rogova's contribution analyses late antique coin finds from the necropolis of Iluraton, offering concrete evidence for Bosporan connections with the western part of the Roman Empire. By situating these finds within their archaeological context, the study moves beyond simple distribution maps and contributes to a more nuanced understanding of monetary circulation, connectivity, and the persistence of exchange networks in the later phases of Bosporan history.

Long-standing problems of regional monetary attribution are addressed by V. A. Goroncharovsky and A. E. Tereshchenko in their reassessment of Sindian coinage. Revisiting earlier hypotheses concerning issuers and political authority, the authors combine numismatic analysis with historical and archaeological considerations, providing a more cautious and differentiated interpretation of this complex corpus. Their conclusions underscore the fluidity of monetary practices in the Sindian-Bosporan interface zone and the difficulty of imposing rigid political frameworks onto the evidence.

A. E. Tereshchenko's separate contribution presents a preliminary overview of coin finds from the 2024 excavations of the antique settlement Veselovka 5. Although explicitly provisional in character, this study is methodologically valuable in demonstrating how even limited assemblages can refine local circulation patterns and raise new questions regarding settlement hierarchy and economic integration within the Bosporan periphery.

The section concludes with S. Yu. Saprykin's synthetic treatment of Bosporan minting at the turn of the era. Bringing together numismatic, historical, and chronological data, this contribution offers an important overview of monetary production and its ideological dimensions during a period of political transformation. Of particular significance are the chronological clarifications proposed, which have implications not only for Bosporan numismatics but also for the dating of associated archaeological contexts.

Taken as a whole, the section illustrates the explanatory potential of numismatics and epigraphy when embedded in broader historical and archaeological frameworks. A certain imbalance remains in favour of coinage, with epigraphic material playing a more limited role than the section title might suggest. Nevertheless, the contributions collectively demonstrate how careful contextualisation and methodological restraint can transform fragmentary evidence into a powerful tool for understanding Bosporan connectivity, authority, and economic practice across time.

9. Bosporan Diet in the Light of Natural Scientific Methods (pp. 599-640)

This section introduces an explicitly interdisciplinary perspective that has rarely been developed with comparable

coherence in earlier volumes of the series. By drawing on archaeozoological, palaeobotanical, and isotopic analyses, the contributors seek to reconstruct dietary practices across different social strata and regional settings, thereby situating food consumption at the intersection of economy, environment, and cultural interaction.

The opening contribution by N. I. Sudarev, L. N. Plekhanova, N. N. Kashirskaya, and R. A. Mimokhod addresses the particularly provocative question of sugarcane import into the Bosporan Kingdom. On the basis of biological reconstructions of amphora contents from the Volna-1 site, the authors cautiously advance the hypothesis that cane sugar may have formed part of imported commodities. While necessarily tentative, given the novelty of the methodology and the limited comparative material, the study exemplifies the heuristic potential of biochemical approaches in identifying previously unrecognised dimensions of long-distance exchange. At the same time, it also highlights the interpretative risks inherent in extrapolating broader trade patterns from a restricted dataset.

A more synthetic perspective is offered by A. K. Kasparov, who attempts a comprehensive reconstruction of the presumed diet of the ancient population of eastern Crimea. Integrating archaeozoological, archaeological, and historical data, this contribution provides a valuable framework for assessing regional dietary variability and long-term subsistence strategies. Its strength lies in the careful balancing of empirical evidence with interpretative caution, avoiding overly deterministic conclusions while still offering a coherent model of food consumption.

The section concludes with a preliminary isotopic study by N. G. Svirkina, D. V. Beilin, and I. V. Rukavishnikova on the diet of the population of Nymphaeum. By analysing carbon and nitrogen isotope ratios in bone collagen, the authors shed light on the relative contribution of terrestrial and marine resources and on patterns of protein consumption. Although explicitly presented as a preliminary report, the study demonstrates the considerable potential of isotopic methods for refining our understanding of social and environmental differentiation within Bosporan communities.

Taken as a whole, the section convincingly demonstrates that dietary practices constitute a significant, yet still underexplored, dimension of Bosporan economic and cultural history. While some hypotheses – most notably those concerning sugarcane import – require further corroboration, the integration of natural scientific methods opens new avenues of inquiry and encourages closer dialogue between archaeological science and historical interpretation. As such, this section marks an important step towards a more holistic reconstruction of everyday life and connectivity in the Bosporan Kingdom.

10. New Finds and Discoveries (pp. 641-755)

The traditional section devoted to new finds and discoveries remains one of the strongest components of the *Bosporan Phenomenon* series. In the present volume, preliminary excavation reports are consistently framed in relation to broader historical and interpretative questions, thereby enhancing their analytical value and preventing the section from becoming a mere catalogue of recent fieldwork.

V. P. Tolstikov's substantial contribution on the acropolis of Panticapaeum under Leucon I exemplifies the interpretative ambition of current Bosporan archaeology. Combining architectural analysis with stratigraphic and historical evidence, the author offers a reasoned reconstruction of the acropolis as both a political and symbolic centre, illuminating the relationship between urban form and dynastic authority in the late Classical and early Hellenistic period.

Problems of interpretation and long-term site development are addressed by N. I. Vinokurov in his discussion of the Artesian settlement. By confronting apparent paradoxes in the archaeological record, the study critically reassesses established assumptions and proposes alternative hypotheses, illustrating the complexity of urban and defensive strategies in the Bosporan hinterland.

Several contributions present the results of recent or ongoing fieldwork. D. V. Zhuravlev, A. M. Kamyshanov, N. P. Konotopov, and V. G. Chernenko report on the first results of excavations at the Semibratnee site conducted by the State Historical Museum's Bosporan Archaeological Expedition, providing new data on settlement structure and material culture. T. V. Egorova and G. A. Lomtatz introduce early materials from the Roman-period settlement Rumanian 1, including the Tamanskii tholos and the so-called residence of Chrysaliskos, a powerful Bosporan official, now held in the collections of the Historical Museum. Their study highlights the importance of museum assemblages for revisiting older excavations and refining site chronologies.

A cluster of papers is devoted to Chersonesus Taurica, reflecting its enduring importance within the Bosporan and wider Pontic context. S. V. Ushakov critically examines the long-standing characterisation of Chersonesus as an "exceptionally" Greek city, interrogating the cultural and ideological assumptions underlying this narrative. V. V. Vakhoneev and V. V. Kropotov analyse cremation areas in the southern suburb of Chersonesus, drawing on materials from Excavation 21 to shed light on funerary practices and spatial organisation. In a related contribution, Vakhoneev situates a Chersonesian exedra within broader Mediterranean architectural traditions, emphasising

patterns of reception and adaptation rather than simple imitation.

The historical depth of archaeological inquiry is further extended by N. V. Zakharenkov and V. A. Khrshanovskii, who compare the archaeological realities of the Iluraton plateau with plans drawn by Paul Dubrux two centuries earlier. Their study underscores both the continuity of scholarly observation and the transformations brought about by modern archaeological methods. Finally, S. L. Smekalov, A. A. Vnukov, and K. O. Markova challenge conventional chronological boundaries by treating nineteenth-century sacred and funerary monuments east of the Uzunlar Wall as legitimate objects of archaeological study. Drawing on cartographic evidence, satellite imagery, and archival photographs, this contribution broadens the temporal scope of Bosporan archaeology and invites reflection on the archaeology of the modern past.

Taken as a whole, the section demonstrates the vitality and methodological diversity of current field research in the Bosporan region. While the uneven scale and preliminary character of some reports are inevitable in a collection of this kind, the consistent effort to integrate new discoveries into wider interpretative frameworks represents a significant strength. The section not only expands the empirical basis of Bosporan studies but also illustrates how excavation, archival research, and spatial analysis can be productively combined to address enduring historical questions.

11. In memoriam (pp. 756-768)

This section commemorates Svetlana S. Bessonova (1942-2025) and Evgeniya F. Redina (1953-2024), whose scholarship and mentorship shaped North Pontic studies.

Bessonova began her career at the Kerch Historical-Archaeological Museum, leading excavations at Kytaiion. Even under challenging field conditions, she inspired students and volunteers through meticulous work in stratigraphy, pottery analysis, and the study of early Scythian religious practices. Later, at the Institute of Archaeology in Kiev, she continued her research, contributing to publications, curatorial projects, and the training of new generations of archaeologists. Beyond fieldwork, she left a lasting mark through both her scholarship and mentorship.

Redina, at the Odessa Archaeological Museum, led excavations at Koshary, Scythian burial mounds, and other sites, combining rigorous fieldwork with numismatic research. She guided students, fostered collaborative networks, and authored over fifty articles and three monographs, leaving a lasting impact on the study of the northwestern Black Sea.

Together, Bessonova and Redina exemplify the intertwining of personal dedication, mentorship, and academic achievement. Their work demonstrates how the

persistence, guidance, and generosity of individual scholars can sustain entire research traditions. This section honors their memory not only for their publications and excavations but for their human presence: the friendships, collaborations, and inspiration they offered to generations of archaeologists. Through their lives and work, they remind us that scholarship is sustained as much by personal commitment and shared endeavor as by the accumulation of data.

Overall, the eighteenth volume of the *Bosporan Phenomenon* series represents one of the most coherent and ambitious contributions to Bosporan studies to date. By

framing import and export as multidimensional processes – economic, political, religious, and biological – it aligns the study of the Bosporan Kingdom with wider international debates on connectivity and exchange, while retaining a strong commitment to empirical depth and regional specificity. Despite certain theoretical and thematic imbalances, the volume stands as a major achievement and a demanding point of reference for future research.

Victor COJOCARU

A. A. Maslennikov, *Bosporan Village of the Post-Mithridates Era. House-Building Practice and Historical Reconstructions of the Polyanka Settlement in the Crimean Azov Sea Region* [in Russian]. St Petersburg: Aletheia, 2024. 148 pp., 117 illustrations. ISBN 978-5-00165-886-3.

The volume under review represents one of the most mature and methodologically consistent contributions to the study of the Bosporan chora in recent decades. Although formally presented as a single-author monograph, the book is, in effect, a collective scholarly enterprise, bringing together the long-term fieldwork and interpretative synthesis of A. A. Maslennikov with a series of substantial appendices authored by specialists in archaeozoology, archaeometry, numismatics, and architectural reconstruction. This structure is not incidental: it reflects both the complexity of the archaeological record of the Polyanka settlement and the broader epistemological ambitions of the “Bosporan Phenomenon” as a research programme.

The monograph summarises many years of excavation and analytical work at the rural settlement of Polyanka, located in the Crimean Azov Sea region. What makes Polyanka exceptional is not merely the extent to which it has been excavated – almost completely, a rarity for rural sites in the Bosporan Kingdom – but also its remarkably narrow and historically charged chronology, centred on the second half of the 1st century BC. This is precisely the period following the Mithridatic Wars, marked by political instability, fiscal pressure, and profound transformations in the relationship between centre and periphery within the Bosporan state.

In this respect, the book addresses a long-standing imbalance in Bosporan archaeology. While urban centres such as Panticapaeum, Phanagoria, or Nymphaeum have generated a vast literature, rural settlements – especially those situated in the more

distant chora – have often remained poorly published or interpreted in overly schematic terms. Polyanka, as Maslennikov convincingly demonstrates, offers a rare opportunity to move beyond generalisations and to examine, in detail, the lived realities of a Bosporan rural community at a moment of systemic stress.

The main body of the book is authored by Maslennikov and focuses on house-building practice, spatial organisation, and construction chronology. This core narrative is complemented by four appendices, each with a distinct authorship and analytical focus:

1. Appendix I (A. A. Maslennikov): a comprehensive list of publications related to the site, effectively situating the present volume within a long trajectory of research and ensuring transparency and scholarly continuity.
2. Appendix II (A. K. Kasparov): an archaeozoological study of the faunal remains from Polyanka, providing essential data on subsistence strategies and animal husbandry.
3. Appendix III (T. N. Smekalova): an extensive archaeometric and numismatic analysis of the famous 1985-coin hoard, based on X-ray fluorescence studies of coin alloys.
4. Appendix IV (R. S. Ketsko): a graphic reconstruction of the architectural remains of the settlement, synthesising stratigraphic and architectural observations into a coherent visual model.

This organisation allows the volume to function simultaneously as a site monograph, a thematic study of rural architecture, and a laboratory of interdisciplinary approaches, a combination that remains relatively rare in publications devoted to ancient rural settlements.

The central chapters are devoted to a meticulous analysis of the settlement’s layout, construction techniques, and chronological development. Maslennikov identifies three main construction-

chronological periods within a relatively short time span, with further internal stages reflecting episodes of rebuilding, reorganisation, and adaptation. The attention paid to walls, courtyards, floor types, and spatial relationships between domestic units allows the author to move beyond descriptive archaeology towards historically meaningful interpretation.

Particularly valuable is the insistence that Polyanka does not conform neatly to established typologies of Bosporean rural sites. Although sometimes described as a fortified settlement, its topographical position in a basin between rocky hills, combined with the absence of clear military installations, challenges interpretations that emphasise a defensive or colonising military function. Instead, Maslennikov argues persuasively for identifying Polyanka as a Greco-Barbarian rural village (*kômē, oppidum*), inhabited by a mixed population engaged in agriculture, animal husbandry, fishing, and small-scale production.

Although the volume does not claim to offer a full socio-economic reconstruction, the integration of architectural, faunal, and numismatic evidence allows Maslennikov to advance several well-argued hypotheses regarding population size, household structure, and economic activities. Estimates suggesting a settlement population of no more than a few hundred individuals, organised in small family units, are grounded in careful spatial analysis rather than speculation.

The absence of large grain storage facilities, combined with the faunal evidence presented by Kasparov, points to an economy in which animal husbandry and fishing played a more prominent role than arable farming. This finding is particularly significant when compared with rural settlements in other parts of the Greco-Roman world – such as villa-based landscapes in Italy or large agricultural villages in Asia Minor – where cereal production often dominates the archaeological narrative. Polyanka thus enriches comparative discussions of rural economies by highlighting the diversity of subsistence strategies within the ancient Mediterranean and Pontic worlds.

One of the most innovative and consequential parts of the volume is Appendix III, authored by T. N. Smekalova. The X-ray fluorescence analysis of the 1985-coin hoard provides new insights into the circulation of copper and brass coinage during the Mithridatic and post-Mithridatic periods. The identification of variations in alloy composition, combined with typological analysis, sheds light on minting practices, monetary policy, and the economic subordination of the Bosporean Kingdom to the Pontic state during periods of war. Crucially, the numismatic evidence is not treated in isolation. Maslennikov integrates these findings into a broader historical argument, interpreting the hoard not

as a random accumulation of wealth but as an unpaid or interrupted tax contribution. This reading connects the micro-history of Polyanka to macro-historical processes, such as fiscal extraction, military financing, and political instability.

The monograph is richly illustrated, comprising 117 figures, many of them in colour, which play a crucial analytical role, particularly in the discussion of architectural remains and in the graphic reconstructions presented in Appendix IV. Although the volume is published in Russian, both the table of contents and the detailed captions accompanying the illustrations are also provided in English. This editorial choice substantially enhances the book's accessibility and facilitates its integration into international scholarly discourse, especially for readers who may not command Russian but are nevertheless engaged in comparative research on ancient rural settlements. Such attention to accessibility aligns the volume with best practices in contemporary archaeological publishing and significantly increases its potential impact beyond the traditionally defined sphere of Bosporean studies.

No scholarly work of this scope is without debatable points. Some readers may question the extent to which conclusions drawn from a single, albeit exceptionally well-documented, site can be generalised to the Bosporean chora as a whole. Others may wish for a more explicit engagement with comparative material from outside the Black Sea region, particularly from the Aegean or western Mediterranean. These issues, however, do not diminish the value of the work; rather, they underscore its capacity to stimulate further debate and research.

Bosporean Village of the Post-Mithridates Era is far more than a site report. It is a benchmark study for the archaeology of rural settlements in the Bosporean Kingdom and a major contribution to the broader historiography of the ancient Greco-Roman countryside. By combining detailed architectural analysis, interdisciplinary appendices, and historically informed interpretation, the volume exemplifies the strengths of the "Bosporean Phenomenon" as a research paradigm. In doing so, it places Polyanka alongside the best-published rural sites of the ancient world and demonstrates that the distant chora of the Bosporean Kingdom can offer insights of relevance well beyond the Black Sea region. The book will remain an indispensable reference for archaeologists, historians, and all scholars interested in rural life, state power, and cultural interaction in antiquity.

Victor COJOCARU

Bartłomiej Bartecki, Anna Hyrchala, Kyrylo Myzgin, *The Cichobórz Hoard. A Study of The Deposit of Roman Denarii and Their Imitations*, Muzeum Hrubieszów, Hrubieszów, 2023, 511 p., ISBN 978-83-949902-9-9

Lucrarea intitulată *Skarb z Cichobórz. Studia nad depozytem rzymskich denarów oraz ich naśladownictw* / *The Cichobórz Hoard. A Study of The Deposit of Roman Denarii and Their Imitations*, editată de Bartłomiej Bartecki, Anna Hyrchala, Kyrylo Myzgin, a fost publicată în anul 2023, la editura Muzeum Hrubieszów. Structurat în două părți, volumul prezintă, în cele 511 de pagini, considerentele de ordin arheologic și numismatic ale descoperirii de la Cichobórz. Prima parte a lucrării conține studiile specialiștilor, organizate în opt capitole, iar cea de-a doua cuprinde catalogul numismatic. Cartea este publicată în ediție bilingvă, în limba polonă și în limba engleză, facilitând astfel accesul specialiștilor la informațiile referitoare la această importantă descoperire.

Prefața, *The Cichobórz hoard - the largest deposit of Roman coins discovered in Poland in over half a century* (p. 8-19), realizată de Bartłomiej Bartecki și Kyrylo Myzgin, expune condițiile descoperirii, subliniind rolul analizei numismatice în studierea tezaurului și subiectele discutate în fiecare capitol al lucrării.

Primul capitol, *Archaeological verification investigations in Cichobórz* (p. 20-37), semnat de Bartłomiej Bartecki și Anna Hyrchala, prezintă circumstanțele în care au fost aflate artefactele și rezultatele arheologice obținute în urma excavărilor. Situl arheologic de la Cichobórz a fost identificat pentru prima dată în anul 1993, de J. Niedźwiedz și W. Koman, fiind atribuit, pe baza materialului arheologic, perioadei timpurii a Epocii Bronzului, dar și epocii Evului Mediu. În martie 2020, descoperirea accidentală a depozitului de denari, care constituie subiectul lucrării de față, împrăștiat pe o distanță de peste 150 de metri, a determinat demararea săpăturilor de salvare. Cercetările desfășurate în decembrie 2020, noiembrie 2021 și noiembrie 2022 au avut drept scop recuperarea întregului material numismatic și arheologic, în primă fază, cu ajutorul detectoarelor de metale. A doua etapă a cercetării arheologice a implicat realizarea unor secțiuni pentru colectarea materialului prezent în adâncimea solului.

Al doilea capitol, *Numismatic analysis of the hoard* (p. 38-89), după cum relevă și titlul, cuprinde ipotezele de ordin numismatic formulate de specialistul Kyrylo Myzgin. Tezaurul, constituit din 1776 de monede din argint, originale și imitații, prezintă unele particularități pe care autorul le evidențiază în funcție de tipurile

monetare identificate. *Terminus post quem* al depozitului este în prima parte a domniei lui Septimius Severus, în anii 197-198 p.Chr., iar piesele cele mai vechi sunt din timpul lui Vespasianus, respectiv din anul 70 p.Chr. Capitolul conține analiza numismatică a emisiunilor din acest interval cronologic, ponderea cea mai mare având-o denarii cu efiile împăraților Antonini și familiile acestora. Aspectul deosebit îl reprezintă prezența a șapte imitații barbarizate și identificarea prototipurilor după care au fost bătute aceste monede particulare. Prezența unui *denarius flatus*, cu o compoziție metalografică diferită față de majoritatea copiilor turnate cunoscute, reprezintă un subiect asupra căruia autorul insistă, datorită caracteristicilor inedite. Prin comparație cu cele mai frecvente situații, în care aliajul copiilor turnate se constituie din cupru, staniu și un procentaj scăzut de argint, rezultatele analizelor XRF realizate pe specimenul supus atenției indică o compoziție chimică asemănătoare emisiunilor oficiale de la Marcus Aurelius (94,39% argint și 1,91% cupru). În cuprinsul capitolului sunt precizate, de asemenea, date despre metrologia tezaurului, care însumează 5179,37 g, starea de conservare a monedelor, dimensiunea, cronologia și tipologia tezaurului, precum și procesul de depozitare.

Kyrylo Myzgin remarcă că imitațiile barbare din tezaurul de la Cichobórz sunt unicate, nefiind cunoscute în alte descoperiri publicate, asociate culturii Chernyakhiv sau altor zone din *Barbaricum*. Se admite posibilitatea existenței unor legături de ștanțe cu alte piese similare de pe teritoriul Ucrainei. Prin comparație cu alte descoperiri asemănătoare, datarea imitațiilor din tezaur este plasată între mijlocul și sfârșitul secolului al III-lea p.Chr.

Capitolul cuprinde tabele, grafice și hărți cu distribuția monedelor în funcție de emitent, structura cronologică a depozitului, localizarea tuturor celor 73 de tezaure monetare din *Barbaricum*, care cuprind imitații, precum și o anexă însoțită de ilustrații în care se explică caracteristicile utilizate în descrierea stării de conservare a monedelor (gradul de uzură și coroziunea).

Pentru indicarea stării de conservare a pieselor s-a făcut trimitere la sistemul elvețian, folosit anterior de către S. Frey-Kupper, O. F. Dubuis și H. Brem, în 1995 (p. 63), unde se face diferența între starea de uzură și cea de coroziune, ambele variind în funcție de o scară ce cuprinde cinci stadii. Acest sistem a fost preluat de Kyrylo Myzgin și modificat în funcție de aversul și reversul monedelor, a căror stare de conservare oscilează.

Structura tezaurului cuprinde un nucleu considerabil de monede atribuite dinastiei Antonine, majoritatea emisiunilor fiind bătute sub împărații Antoninus Pius (32,44%), Marcus Aurelius (40,09%) și Commodus (18,19%). Restul denarilor aparțin împăraților dinastiei Flaviene (0,22%), împăraților din anul 193 p.Chr. (0,40%) și, respectiv, lui Septimius Severus (0,79%). În componența depozitului intră și șapte imitații barbarizate (0,39%), dovedind o structură eterogenă.

În cel de-al treilea capitol, *Some observations in the Cichobórz hoard* (p. 90-104), Clive Stannard prezintă tehnicile de producție a imitațiilor barbarizate, punând în atenția cititorilor procesul de manufacturare a ștanțelor pentru imprimarea acestor emisiuni particulare. Specialistul britanic expune diferite tipare de matrițe pe care le-a discutat, anterior, în studiul publicat în 2011. Astfel, autorul realizează importante analogii cu descoperirea de la Cichobórz.

Următorul capitol, *Chemical analysis of selected silver coins from the Cichobórz hoard* (p. 106-122), semnat de Paweł Gań, discută compoziția chimică a unui număr de 105 monede selectate din tezaur. Pentru analizele metalografice a fost utilizată metoda XRF, cu ajutorul unui microscop Tescan Vega 4, prin care a putut fi observat procentajul aliajelor din care au fost confecționate monedele. După datele înregistrate, emisiunile au un procentaj deosebit de mare de argint (între 97% - 85%), alături de care se regăsește și un conținut mai redus de cupru (între 0.90% - 12%), precum și alte elemente minore (nichel, zinc, plumb, aluminiu etc.).

Al cincilea capitol, *Non-monetary part of the deposit. Rivets and a fitting* (p. 124-142), redactat de Katarzyna Czarnecka, este dedicat analizei niturilor și fragmentelor din argint găsite alături de monede, insistând asupra funcționalității și originii acestora. Se consideră că, destul de probabil, aceste nituri au fost utilizate pentru fixarea materialelor din piele, făcând parte din ornamentul de pe centurile de sabie sau din harnașamentul cailor, care aparțineau elitei societății.

Radosław Dobrowolski, Piotr Zagórski, Kamil Kultys și Kamil Misztal semnează cel de-al șaselea capitol, intitulat *Environmental surveys in Cichobórz* (p. 144-155), în care au fost realizate investigații asupra mediului înconjurător, în arealul unde tezaurul a fost descoperit. Sunt expuse rezultatele analizelor rezistivității electrice a solului și a studiului de fotogrammetrie realizat împrejurimilor sitului Cichobórz. Capitolul cuprinde și o anexă, *Lithological description of geological boreholes (C1-C10) in Cichobórz* (p. 156-159), care descrie straturile

geologice din timpul excavărilor și componența rocilor sedimentare.

În al șaptelea capitol, *Halfway between the worlds, that is what we know (and don't) about the cultural situation in the Hrubieszów Basin and its peripheries in the Roman and Migration Periods* (p. 160-259), Barbara Niezabitowska-Wiśniewska propune o cercetare exhaustivă asupra situației culturale din bazinul Hrubieszów și zonele periferice, în perioada romană și epoca migrațiilor. Problemele puse în discuție vizează transformările culturale petrecute la sfârșitul secolului al II-lea și începutul veacului următor, asociate declinului culturii Prezeworsk și afirmarea culturii Wielbark și Masłomęcz. În capitolul pus în discuție sunt repertoriile artefactelor descoperite, care au fost asociate culturilor identificate în bazinul Hrubieszów. Anexa cuprinsă în capitol, *Hrubieszów Basin and Horodło Ridge. Monetary finds (including hoards discovered on the peripheries of or outside the Hrubieszów Basin mentioned in the text)* (p. 260-282), înregistrează toate descoperirile monetare cunoscute (piese izolate și tezaure) aparținând culturilor arheologice Wielbark și Masłomęcz din arealul respectiv.

În ultimul capitol, *Research summary, or what we know about the Cichobórz hoard* (p. 284-313), Kyrilo Myzgin și Bartłomiej Bartecki examinează descoperirea de la Cichobórz în contextul arheologic, numismatic și istoric general. Accentul este pus pe înțelegerea rolului și a semnificației tezaurului dintr-o perspectivă modernă, interdisciplinară. În consecință, autorii urmăresc elucidarea unor răspunsuri cât mai plauzibile la întrebările pe care le includ și în introducerea capitolului: Ce reprezintă depozitul? Cât de particulare sunt monedele care formează tezaurul? Cât de deosebit este tezaurul comparativ cu alte descoperiri din bazinul Hrubieszów și din întreg *Barbaricum*-ul? Cum și când își află originea acest depozit? Ce rol a jucat? Când, de ce și cum a fost ascuns? În ce vas a fost depozitat? Ce a influențat alegerea locului de depozitare? De ce tezaurul nu a ajuns să fie recuperat?

Autorii relevă importanța tezaurului de la Cichobórz, care se deosebește prin anumite caracteristici particulare. Cele mai însemnate aspecte se referă, în primă instanță, la dimensiunea depozitului monetar, care, după cum se afirmă eronat în lucrare, înregistrează cele mai numeroase emisiuni din întreg *Barbaricum*-ul european. Menționez că doar pe teritoriul părții răsăritene a Moldovei istorice s-au descoperit tezaure de dimensiuni mai mari, precum cel

de la Măgura (jud. Bacău)¹, cu peste 3000 de piese și cel de la Muncelu de Sus (jud. Iași), cu aproape 2000 de exemplare². De asemenea, caracterul excepțional al tezaurului este conferit de prezența celor șapte emisiuni barbarizate și a unui *denarius flatus*.

A doua parte a cărții constă în catalogul monetar (p. 314-511), realizat de Kyrlo Myzgin. Sunt prezentate toate cele 1769 de piese originale, bătute în monetăria de la Roma, în ordine cronologică, începând cu împăratul Vespasianus, până în perioada lui Septimius Severus. Catalogul cuprinde, de asemenea, și descrierea imitațiilor barbarizate (7 ex.), care constituie un element de sprijin privind încadrarea cronologică a depozitului. Catalogul redactat sub formă de tabel, include descrierea aversului și a reversului, cu legende și reprezentările iconografice, trimiterea bibliografică, dimensiunea, greutatea, axul și starea de conservare a emisiunilor. Pentru trimiterile bibliografice au fost utilizate volumele mai vechi și mai recente din seria *The Roman Imperial Coinage*, II. H. Mattingly, E. A. Sydenham, *Vespasian to Hadrian*, Spink & Son Ltd., London, 1926; II.1². I. A. Carradice, T. V. Buttrey, *From AD 69-96. Vespasian to Domitian*, Spink & Son Ltd., London, 2007; II.3. R. A. Abdy, P. F. Mittag, *From AD 117-138. Hadrian*, Spink & Son Ltd., London, 2019; III. H. Mattingly, E. A. Sydenham, *Antoninus Pius to Commodus*, Spink & Son Ltd., London, 1930 și *Moneta Imperii Romani*, Bernhard Woytek, *Die Reichsprägung des Kaisers Traianus (98-117)*, Band 14, Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie

der Wissenschaften, Wien, 2010, în cazul emisiunilor din timpul lui Traianus. Remarcăm absența unui catalog care ar fi fost extrem de util pentru identificarea monedelor lui Marcus Aurelius și Commodus, respectiv *Moneta Imperii Romani*, Wolfgang Szaivert, *Die Münzprägung der Kaiser Marcus Aurelius, Lucius Verus und Commodus (161-192)*, Band 17, Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Wien, 1986.

Volumul include imagini și ilustrații bine realizate, calitative, care înlesnesc înțelegerea aspectelor elaborate în cuprinsul lucrării. Fiecare capitol conține o bibliografie consistentă, aferentă studiului întreprins, cuprinzând lucrări actuale, atât în limba polonă, cât și în limbi de circulație internațională. Cele două părți ale cărții sunt echilibrat structurate, cu un număr aproximativ egal de pagini, conferind volumului uniformitate.

În concluzie, lucrarea *The Cichóborz Hoard. A Study of The Deposit of Roman Denarii and Their Imitations* reprezintă o contribuție importantă pentru cercetarea numismatică, care vizează spațiul barbar european. Cartea se remarcă mai ales prin interdisciplinaritatea cercetării, fiind un complex studiu, care îmbină investigațiile numismatice cu cele arheologice și geologice asupra unei importante descoperiri de pe teritoriul actual al Poloniei.

Adelina PICIOR

¹ V. Mihăilescu-Birliba, I. Mitrea, *Tezaurul de la Măgura*, Muzeul Județean de Istorie și Artă, Bacău, 1977.

² A. Picior, L. Munteanu, *Tezaurul de la Muncelu de Sus (com. Mogoșești-Siret, jud. Iași). Lotul de monede păstrat în colecția Institutului de Arheologie din Iași*, în:

D. Aparaschivei, G. Bilavski, L. Bacumenco-Pirău (ed.), *Varia Archaeologica IV. Provocări, căutări și certitudini în cercetarea arheologică românească actuală*, Cluj-Napoca, 2024, p. 273-346.