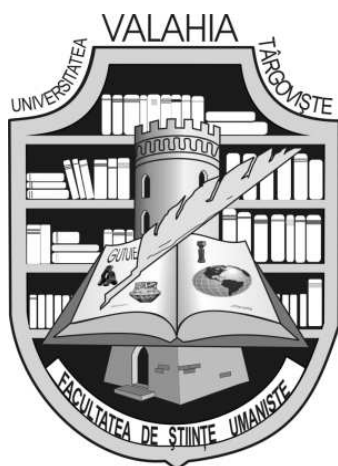


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Some consideration regarding the “package” burials in the necropolises belonging to the Monteoru Culture

Alexandra Comşa*

*Institute of Archaeology “Vasile Pârvan”, Center of Thracology, Casa Academiei, Calea 13 Septembrie nr. 13, Sector 5, Bucharest, Romania; e-mail: alexcomsa63@yahoo.com.

Abstract: The present paper refers to the so-called “package” burials of the Monteoru Culture, but this kind of interments are known since Neolithic times. We have attempted to make a comparison between such individuals discovered in three necropolises: Sărata Monteoru III, IV and Pietroasa Mică.

Key words: funerary practices, Monteoru Culture, “package” burials.

General considerations

The “package” burials are well known in the Romanian prehistory, even beginning with the Neolithic time. The term defined the way the dead have been placed into the burials¹. The skeletons have been found in a very flexed position (fig. 1, 2).

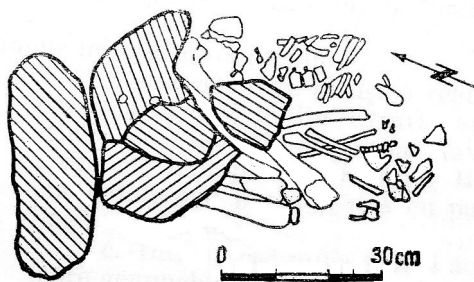


Fig. 1 - Burial no. 10 from Sărata Monteoru III, necropolis.

This strong contraction of the limbs that normally could not be obtained upon a cadaver could result in a brutal detaching of the bones from the joints. Therefore, it was presumed that these kind of skeletons had been tightly bond, in order to

¹ Some explanations concerning the “package” burials have been kindly offered to us by Valeriu Cavruc, to whom we take this opportunity to address our gratitude.

maintain their position (E. Comşa, 1981; D. Gheorghiu, 1997). The more intense attention had been cast by this kind of interments in the research about the Bronze Age and especially in that concerning the Monteoru Culture (see, for instance, Al. Oancea, 1981; L. Bârzu, 1989). In some archaeological contexts, when other relevant elements had appeared, the mentioned individuals had been considered as being sacrificed for prominent members of the community, or for other purposes of social meaning. We are reluctant in sharing this opinion.



Fig. 2 - Package burials from Pietroasa Mică.

In the following lines we will try to make a comparison between the situation of the “package” burials in some necropolises belonging to the Monteoru Culture, regarding few of their anthropological features. The study we made included data about cemeteries III and IV from Sărata Monteoru, as well as those regarding the necropolis from Pietroasa Mică². It would have been also interesting to use the data for the necropolis from Cândeşti, but, unfortunately, we couldn't take yet the benefit, neither of an archaeological, or an anthropological detailed study about it. For this comparison, both the information for “normal” and “package” burials has been considered (sex, age and, when possible, the cephalic index). Yet, we will include all these in the general description offered by the archaeologists that provided a more unitary image about the mentioned burials.

We could mention here that in cemetery III from Sărata Monteoru, belonging to the phase Monteoru I.a there was just a single “package” burial, where the skeleton was laid on his back and belonged to an adolescent aged at about 20 years (M.1) (tab. 1). This individual was buried between a man and a woman (fig. 3). We should not neglect here to emphasize the funerary rituals employed for those three individuals. The juvenile was buried in a “package”, the woman (?) in a stone cist, while the man, placed in a moderate flexed position. In fact, all these aspects reveal the existence of some cultural interference of populations that used different funerary practices (L. Bârzu, 1989; C. Maximilian *et al.*, 1962).

We should mention here that those three burial groups rendered upon the plan were distinct in time, the central one being older, being followed by the other two (E. Comşa, 1981)³.

Generally, the archaeologists considered that, towards the end of the Middle Bronze Age, some series of changes and population movements have occurred and their consequences could be detected within the

discovered vestiges (M. Florescu, A. Florescu, 1990).

Firstly, we should take into account that cemetery IV from Sărata Monteoru was located on a rather steep slope, a geomorphologic configuration that was totally improper for such a functionality. This led to the conclusion that such a use of the land could be determined by the beginning of a restless time for the community, possibly due to some allogeous elements that displaced other population groups (E. Comşa, 1981).

In the case of the necropolis IV from Sărata Monteoru, dated in the phase II.a of the mentioned culture, the plan of the excavations pointed out a uniform distribution of the burials containing to the “package” skeletons (fig. 4). The anthropological structure has pointed out the diversity of the population members that comprised all categories of cephalic indexes. By a comparison between the “normal”⁴ and the “package” burials, we can observe the similar situation, the anthropological features being very distinct for both individual groups, even if dolichocranians prevailed in both of them (C. Maximilian *et al.*, 1962).

In the necropolis from Cândeşti, there were also “package” individuals, but their number and position in the cemetery are not published yet. Anyway, seemingly, they must have been in a rather large number (M. Florescu, A. Florescu, 1983).

At Pietroasa Mică-Dealul Dogaru, the cemetery belonging to the Monteoru phase II.b was situated on a plateau and comprised three successive burial horizons. The “package” skeletons were part of the last level (fig. 5), thus, being the latest ones. Moreover, they were situated in a zone of the necropolis that was obviously separated from the remainder burials (fig. 6) (A. Oancea, 1981). Here is what archaeologist Alexandru Oancea had pointed out regarding this kind of interments:

“A distinct group within the necropolis is represented by few inhumed people who, by a special ritual, by their position, orientation and inventory and location in the cemetery were obviously different, compared with the

² We also intended to include in this study the necropolis from Poiana but, unfortunately, the archaeological investigation being published during the '50s, no special mention about the “package” burials had been done.

³ This cemetery was not anthropologically studied.

⁴ “Normal” burials have been considered those that contained skeletons in a slight or moderate flexing position.

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Necropolis/N o. of the burial	Individual number	Burial type “normal”= N “package”= P	Orientatio n	Position (Flexed=F)	Sex of the individual (Male=M, F=F)	Age	Crania l index
1	1	N	SSE	F	F?	-	-
2	2	N	SSV	F	F?	-	-
3	3	N	ESE	F	C	-	-
4	4	N	-	-	-	-	-
5	5	N	NNV	F	Adolesce nt	-	-
6	6		SSV	F	M?	-	-
7	7	N	NNE	F	M?	-	-
8	8	N	ESE	F	F?	-	-
9	9	N	VSV	F	M?	-	-
10	10	P	SSE	F	-	-	-

Tab. 1- The necropolis no. 3 from Sărata Monteoru – phase Monteoru Ia (This table does not contain the cranial index of the individuals, because the necropolis was not anthropologically analysed. The sex of the individual was assessed by the archaeologist, based upon the inventory of the burials. There were also some considerations about the age of the individuals. Even if they were practically correct, considering the dentition problem described, we could not use them here, as they referred to a rather general integration into an age category (adult, mature etc.). The source for this table was taken over from E. Comşa, 1981).

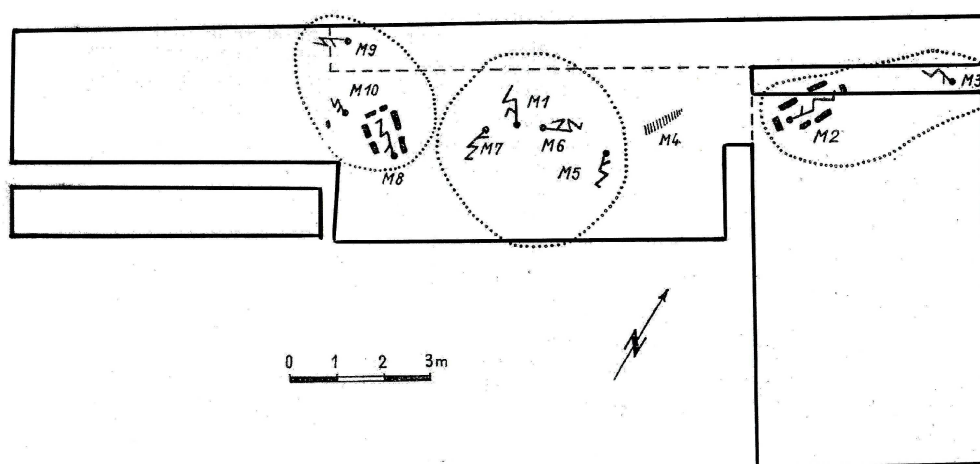


Fig.3 - Plan of the necropolis Sărata Monteoru.

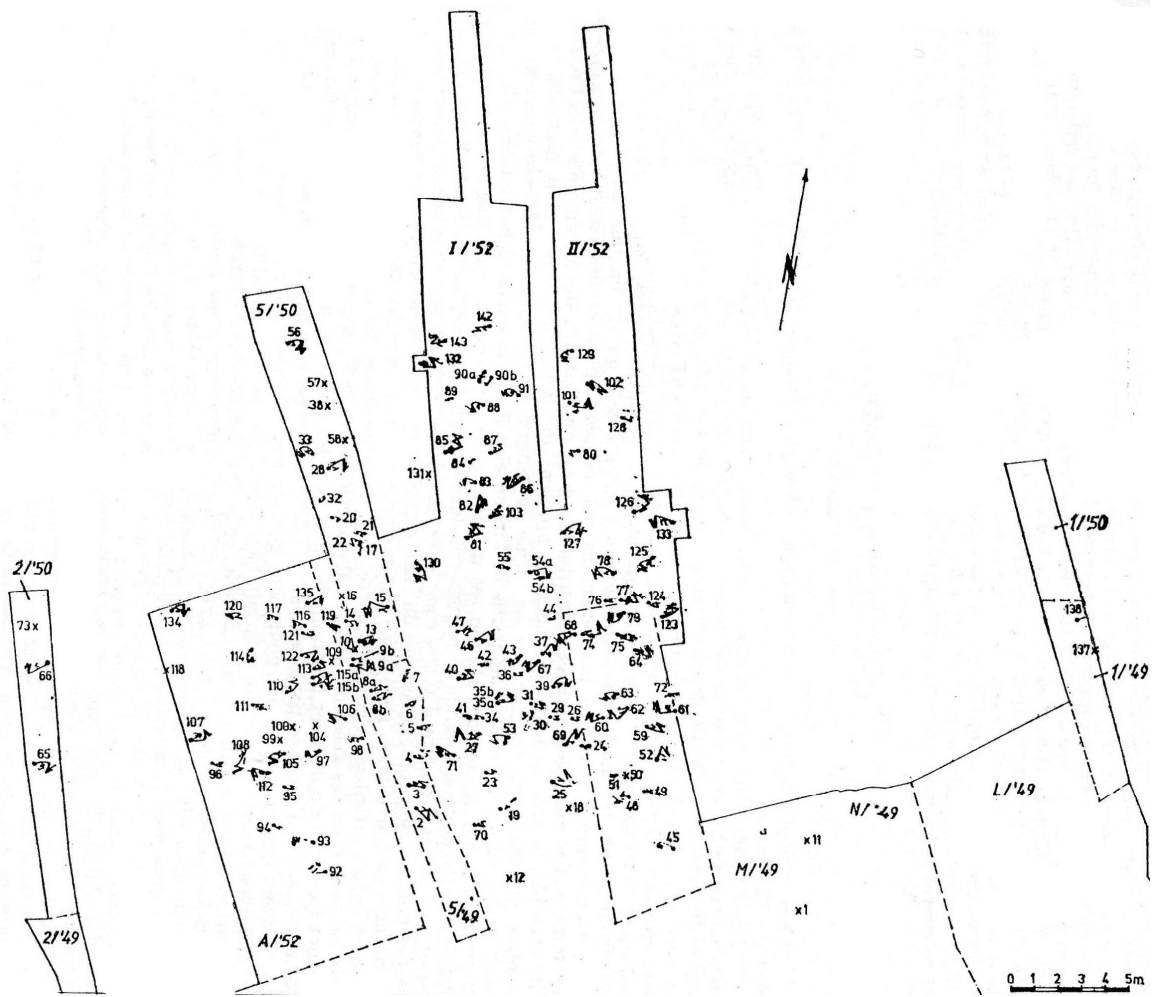


Fig. 4 - The plan of the necropolis 4 Sărata Monteoru.

No. of the burial	Individual number	Burial type "normal"=N "package"=P	Orientation	Position (Flexed=F)	Sex of the individual (Male=M, F=F)	Age	Cranian index
1	1	N	WE	F	-	-	-
2	2	N	ESE-WNW	F left	-	Adult	-
3	3	P	WE	F left	-	Adult	-
4	4	N	WE	F left	-	-	-
5	5	N	WE	F left	-	-	-
6	6	N	WE	F right	-	Child	-
7	7	N	WE	F left	-	Adult	-
8	8	N	-	F left	-	Child	-
8	9	N	-	F right	F	Adult	-
9	10	N	WE	F right	M	Adult	-
9	11	N	WE	F left	-	Child	-
10	12	P	WSW-ENE	F right	-	Child	-
11	13	N	WE	F left	F	Adult	70.5 dolichocranian
12	14	N	SN	F	-	Child	-
13	15	P	WE	F right	M	Adult	83.6 brachycranian

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							81.2 acrocranian 97.3 metriocranian
14	16	P	WE	F right	-	Child	-
15	17	N	WE	F left	M	Adult	96.3 ultrabrachycran 75.5 hysicranian 109.0 acrocranian
17	18	N	NNW-SSE	F right	-	-	-
19	19	N	WE	F left	M	Adult	76.4 dolicho- mesocranian
20	20	N	WE	F right	-	-	-
21	21	P	WE	F right	-	Child	-
22	22	N	WE	F left	-	Child	-
23	23	N	WE	F left	-	Child	-
24	24	P	WE	F on the back	-	Child	-
25	25	N	WE	F left	M	Adult	70.1 dolichocranian
26	26	N	EW	F left	-	Child	-
27	27	N	WE	F right	M	Mature	70.3 dolichocranian
28	28	P	SW-NE	F on the back	-	Adult	-
29	29	P	WE	F on the back	-	Child	-
30	30	P	WE	F right	-	Child	-
31	31	P	WE	F on the back	-	Child	-
32	32	N	WE	F right	-	Child	-
33	33	N	ENE-WSW	F left	F	Mature	77.0 mesocranian
34	34	P	EW	F on the back	-	Child	-
35	35	N	WE	F on the back	F	Adult	-
35	36	N	WE	F right	-	Child	-
36	37	N	WE	F on the back	-	Child	-
37	38	P	NS	F right	F	Adolescent	73.2 dolichocranian
38	39	N	WE	F	-	Child	-
39	40	P	SW-NE	F right	M	Adult	72.4 dolichocranian
40	41	N	WE	F left	F	Adult	65.4 hyperdolichocranian
41	42	P	WE	F right	-	Child	-
42	43	N	-	F right	-	Child	-
42	44	N	SSW-NNE	F right	-	Adolescent	-
47	45	P	WE	F right	F	Mature	91.0 ultrabrachycranian
48	46	P	WE	F left	F	Adult	67.5 dolichocranian
49	47	N	WE	F left	-	Child	-
50	48	N	-	-	-	Child	-
51	49	P	NNE-SSW	F right	-	Child	-
52	50	P	-	F right	-	Adult	-
53	51	N	EW	F left	M	Adult	69.9 dolichocranian
54	52	N	WE	F right	F	Adult	74.2 dolichocranian 61.8 ortocranian 83.3 metriocranian
54	53	N	EW	F on the back	-	Child	-
55	54	P	EW	F right	-	Child	-
56	55	N	WE	F	F	Senile	84.2 brachycranian 76.4 hysicranian 90.7 tapeinocranian
59	56	P	WE	F left	M	Adult	63.7 hyperdolichocranian

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60	57	N	NNE-SSW	F	M	-	67.7 hyperdolichocranian
61	58	P	EW	F right	F	Adult (?)	72.7 dolichocranian
62	59	P	EW	F right	M	Mature	71.3 dolichocranian
63	60	N	EW	F left	F	Adolescent	67.6 dolichocranian 80.8 hypsicranian 96.4 metriocranian
64	61	N	WE	F left	F	Adult	83.8 brachycranian
65	62	P	WE	F right	M	Mature	78.8 mesocranian
66	63	P	WE	F right	-	-	-
67	64	P	WE	F right	F	Adult	68.4 dolichocranian
68	65	N	WE	F left	M	Adult	75.6 dolicho- mesocranian
69	66	N	WE	F left	F	Adult	74.7 dolichocranian 77.6 hypsicranian 103.9 acrocranian
70	67	N	WE	F left	-	Child	-
71	68	P	WE	F left	-	-	-
72	69	P	WE	F left	-	Child	-
73	70	N (?)	-	-	-	Child	-
74	71	N	WE	F left	F	Mature	72.7 dolichocranian 59.3 ortocranian 81.5 metriocranian
75	72	P	WE	F left	F	Adult	75.4 meso- dolichocranian
76	73	P	WE	F left	-	-	-
77	74	P	WE	F left	M	Senile	76.6 mesocranian
78	75	N	WE	F	M	Mature	76.5 mesocranian
79	76	N	NNE-SSW	F right	M	Mature	77.8 mesocranian
80	77	P	EW	F left	-	Child	-
81	78	P	WE	F left	F	Adult	68.1 dolichocranian
82	79	P	SSW-NNE	F right	F	Adult (?)	73.8 dolichocranian
83	80	P	WE	F left	-	Child	-
84	81	-	-	-	-	Child	-
85	82	N	WE	F left	F	Adult	78.6 mesocranian 72.8 ortocranian 92.7 metriocranian
86	83	P	WE	F right	M	Adult	73.5 dolichocranian
87	84	P	WE	F left	-	Child	-
88	85	N	WE	F left	-	Child	-
89	86	P	WE	F left	-	Suckling	-
90	87	N	NE-SW	F left (?)	-	Child	-
90	88	N	NNE-SSW	F	-	-	-
91	89	P	WE	F left	-	Child	-
92	90	P	WE	F right	-	-	-
93	91	N	EW	F right	-	-	-
94	92	P	WE	F left	-	Copil	-
95	93	P	WE	F left	-	-	-
96	94	P	WE	F left	-	Child	-
97	95	N	NE-SW	F right	-	Child	-
98	96	P	ESE-WNW	F left	-	Child	-
101	97	P	WE	F left	M	Adult	77.0 mesocranian
102	98	P	EW	F left	-	-	-
103	99	P	WE	F left	-	Child	-
104	100	N (?)	-	F left (?)	-	Child	-
105	101	P	EW	F left	F	Adult	67.4 dolichocranian
106	102	N	EW	F left	-	Child	-
107	103	N	WE	F left	F	Mature	75.5 dolichocranian 64.5 hypsicranian 88.8 acrocranian
108	104	P	EW	F left	-	-	-

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109	105	N	EW	F left	-	Child	-
110	106	P	SSW-NNE	F left (?)	-	-	-
111	107	N	WE	F right	-	Child	-
112	108	N	EW	F left	M	Adult	64.9 dolichocranian
113	109	N	WNW-ESE	F left	-	Child	-
114	110	P	EW	F left	-	Child	-
115	111	N	WE	F right	F	Mature	71.2 dolichocranian 74.9 hypsicranian 105.2 acrocranian
115	112	N	WE	F right	-	Child	-
116	113	N	EW	F left	-	Child	-
117	114	N	EW	F left	-	Child	-
119	115	P	WE	F left	-	Child -	-
120	116	P	WE	F right	F	Adolescent	73.8 dolichocranian
121	117	P	WE	F left	-	Child	-
122	118	P	WE	F right	M	Adult	78.2 mesocranian
123	119	P	WE	F left	-	-	-
124	120	N	WE	F left	-	-	-
125	121	P	EW	F left	-	-	-
126	122	P	WE	F left	M	Adult	76.7 mesocranian
127	123	N	WE	F right	M	Senile	68.5 dolichocranian 59. ortocranian 86.5 metrio- acrocranian
128	124	N(?)	WE	F left	-	Child	-
129	125	P	EW	F left	-	Child	-
130	126	N	SSW-NNE	F right	F	Adult	78.1 mesocranian 64.0 hypsicranian 82.0 metriocranian
131	127	N (?)	WE	-	-	Child	-
132	128	N	WE	F left	F	-	dolichocranian
133	129	N	EW	F left	-	-	-
134	130	N	WE	F right	M	Adult	74.9 dolicho- mesocranian 66.7 hypsicranian 89.1 acrocranian
135	131	P	WE	F right	-	Child	-
136	132	N	WE	-	-	-	-
137	133	N	WE	-	-	-	-
138	134	N	WE	F left	-	Child	-
139	135	N	-	F	-	-	-
140	136	N (?)	-	-	-	Child	-
141	137	N (?)	-	-	-	Adult	-
142	138	P	EW	F left	-	Adolescent	-
143	139	P	EW	F right	-	-	-
144	140	N	-	F left	M	-	-
145	141	N	EW	F left	-	-	-
146	142	N	EW	F right	-	Child	-

Table no. 2 - The “normal” and “package” burials in necropolis IV of the Monteoru Culture – phase Monteoru II (the data have been taken over from Ligia Bârzu (1989) and C. Maximilian *et al.* (1962) for Sărata Monteoru IV).

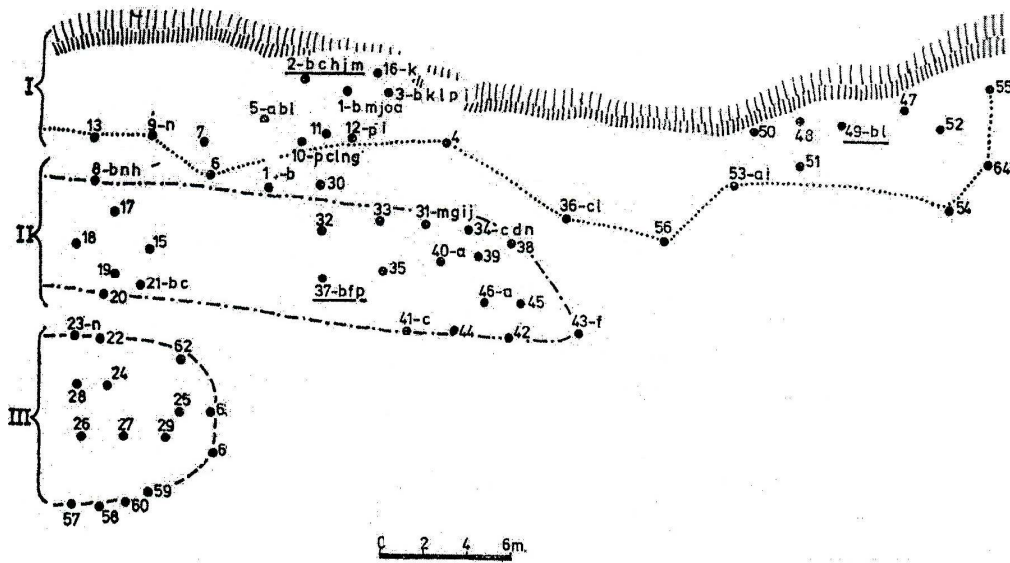


Fig. 5 - Repartition of the burials from Pietroasa Mică in all three burial levels (after Al. Oancea, 1981, p. 137, fig. 2).

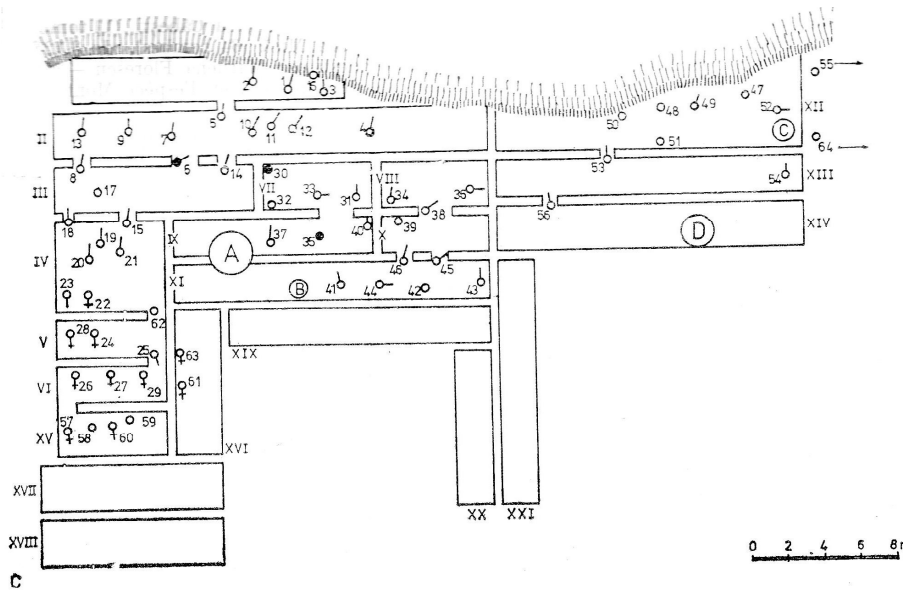


Fig. 1. Pietroasa Mică. B, carte des alentours ; C, plan d'ensemble des fouilles.

- Tombes d'inhumation — position recroquevillée
- Tombes d'inhumation — position « en paquet »
- Tombes d'incinération
- Tombes détruites
- Inhumé étendu.

Fig. 6 - Plan of the necropolis from Pietroasa Mică.

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remainders buried on the *Dealul Dogaru*. The characteristic feature of that group was the “package” position before the inhumation, either on the left, or on the back of the individual, with the limbs extremely flexed and set tight near their chest” (Al. Oancea, 1979; M. Florescu, A. Florescu, 1983).

The individuals discovered in those burials, according to the results of the anthropological analysis, were predominantly of male sex and covered all age categories (L. Georgescu, 1992). We are almost sure that some certain distinctive features must have appeared at these skeletons. The prevalence of

the male sex is an aspect would point out that the necropolis is not a usual one and it might have belonged to a community that was involved and died in special conditions. What we need to stress here is that the “package” burials have all comprised just male individuals, of different ages, between *infans* and *senile* categories. Table no. 3 shows all features of the necropolis discussed here. Unfortunately, due to the lack of individual data for the mentioned necropolis, we cannot make a more detailed evaluation of those individuals, but we believe that a certain difference must have surely existed.

Out of the above data, we can infer the

Necropolis/No. of the burial	Individual number	Burial type “normal”=N “package”=P	Orientation	Position (flexed=F)	Sex of the individual (Male=M, F=F)	Age	Cranial index
1	1	N	WNW-ESE	F left	F	Adolescent	-
2	2	N	WNW-ESE	F right	F	Adult	-
3	3	N	WNW-ESE	F left	F	Mature	-
4	4	N	WNW-ESE	F left	F	Mature	-
5	5	N	WNW-ENE	F left	-	Child	-
7	6	N	WNW-ESE	F left	M	Mature	-
8	7	N	WNW-ESE	F left	F	Mature	-
9	8	N	WNW-ESE	F left	M	Adult	-
10	9	N	NNW-SSE	F left	F	Mature	-
11	10	N	NNW-SSE	F left	M	Adolescent	-
12	11	N	NNW-SSE	F left	F	Mature	-
13	12	N	WNW-ESE	F left	F	Mature	-
14	13	N	WNW-ESE	F left	-	Child	-
15	14	N	WNW-ESE	F left	F	Adult	-
16	15	-	WNW-ESE(?)	-	F	Adult	-
17	16	N	WNW-ESE	F left	-	Child	-
18	17	N	WNW-ESE	F left	-	Child	-
19	18	N	WE	F left	F	Adolescent	-
20	19	N	WE	F left	F	Adolescent	-
22	20	P	ENE-WSW	-	M	Senile	-
22	21	P	ENE-WSW	-	M	Mature	-
23	22	N	EW	F left	M	Adult	-
24	23	P	NNE-SSW	F left	M	Mature	-
25	24	N	NNE-SSW	F left	M	Senile	-
26	25	N	NNE-SSW	F left	M	Senile	-
27	26	P	NNE-SSW	-	M	Mature	-
29	27	P	ENE-WSW	-	M	Mature	-
31	28	N	WNW-ESE	F left	F	Adolescent	-
32	29	N	WSW-ENE	-	-	Child	-
33	30	N	NNW-ESE	F left	M	Adolescent	-
34	31	N	WNW-ESE	F left	M	Mature	-
36	32	N	WSW-ENE	F left	F	Adult	-
37	33	N	WNW-ESE	F left	M	Adult	-
38	34	N	N-S	F left (?)	M	Mature	-
39	35	N (?)	-	-	M	Adolescent	-
40	36	N	WNW-ESE	F left	F	Adolescent	-

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41	37	N	W-E	F left (?)	M	Adolescent	-
42	38	N	NNW-SSE	F left (?)	M	Mature	-
43	39	N	W-E	F left	M	Mature	-
44	40	N	NNW-SSE	F left	M	Senile	-
45	41	N	NNW-SSE	F left	F	Mature	-
46	42	N	WNW-ESE	F left (?)	-	Child	-
47	43	N	ENE-WSW	-	-	Child	-
48	44	N	WNW-ESE	-	M	Mature	-
49	45	N	WNW-ESE	F left	F	Mature	-
51	46	-	-	-	M	Mature	-
52	47	N	NNW-SSE	F left	F	Adolescent	-
53	48	N	WSE-ENE	F left	M	Mature	-
54	49	N	W-E	F left	-	Child-	-
55	50	-	-	-	M	Mature	-
56	51	-	W-E	-	M	Mature	-
57	52	P	NNE-SSE	-	-	Child	-
58	53	P (?)	NNE-SSE	-	M	Child (infans II)	-
59	54	-	-	-	M	Mature	-
60	55	P	ENE-WSW	F on the back	M	Adult	-
61	56	P	ENE-WSW	F on the left	M	Senile	-
62	57	-	-	-	M	Child (infans II)	-
63	58	P	ENE-WSW	-	M	Senile	-
64	59	-	-	-	M	Adult	-
28	60	P	ENE-WSW	F on the back	M	Mature (?)	-

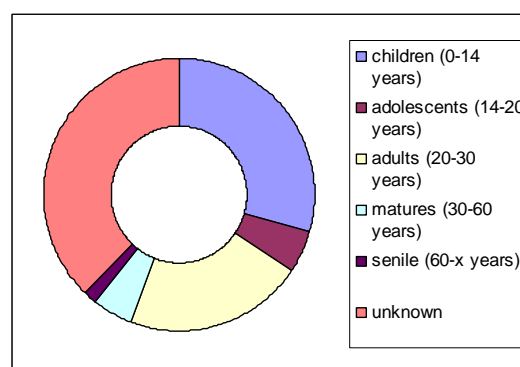
Tab. 3 - The necropolis from Pietroasa Mică – phase Monteoru Iia (Here were not included the cremation burials, as well as the supine ones. The cranial indexes were not included, as the anthropological study was just a comparative one, without individual data. The source of this table was taken over from L. Georgescu 1992, p. 73-82).

following:

In the moment of the penetration into the community from Sărata Monteoru of an allogeous community, that was bearing such a practice like the “package” burials, its members were fully assimilated by the locals, of course, in a longer time span. This would be also an explanation for the regular distribution of the “package” burials among the “normal” ones.

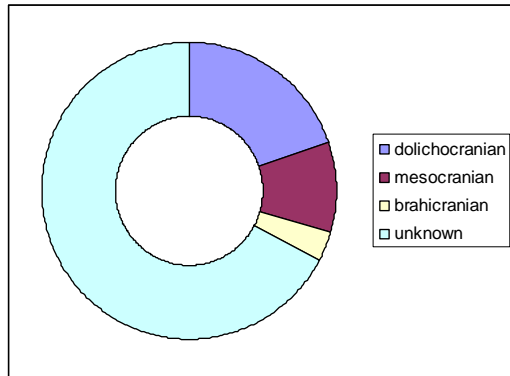
As we took the advantage of using the individual data for the necropolis IV from Sărata Monteoru, we could find that, out of the 146 anthropologically analysed individuals, 61 were discovered in “package” burials. Graphs no. 1 and 2 render the proportion of the age categories as well as the the cephalic indexes for the respective category of interments. Unfortunately, we could not make the same study upon the other two cemeteries, in one case due to the lack of the anthropological study (Sărata Monteoru III) and

in the second due to the missing individual data of the skeletons (Pietroasa Mică).



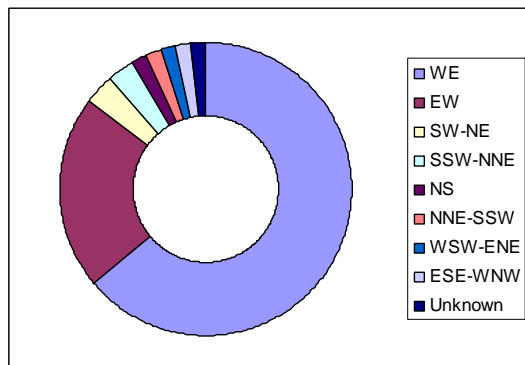
**Some consideration regarding the “package” burials
in the necropolises belonging to the Monteoru Culture**

Graph 1 - Distribution of the “package” burials according to the age categories in the necropolis from Sărata Monteoru IV.



Graph 2 - Distribution of the cephalic index of the “package” burials in the necropolis from Sărata Monteoru IV.

What is interesting to stress here is the large diversity of orientations that we find at the “package” skeletons, in all studied necropolises (graphs 3-4), even if the WE position prevails.

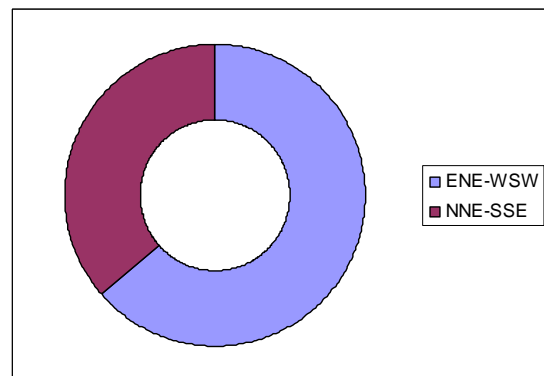


Graph 3 – Proportion between the orientation of the “package” burials from Sărata Monteoru IV.

Instead, in the necropolis from Pietroasa Mică we could observe an orientation restrained just to two positions (ENE-WSW and NNE-SSE), the first one being predominant (7 out of 11 “package” burials). What we need to point out here is that, when analysing the situation of the mentioned skeletons within all those three necropolises of the Monteoru Culture, it could be drawn the conclusion that no rule existed regarding their orientation within the cemetery

and their position must have been connected with other spiritual aspects.

In the case of Pietroasa Mică, the situation is even more distinct compared with the other cemeteries. The seclusion of the “package” burials from the remainder ones, their distinct place in the cemetery, shows that the newcomers had no time to be “absorbed” into the mass of the locals. In fact, their occurrence was subsequent to the one of the communities identified at Sărata



Monteoru, as I already mentioned that the necropolis from Pietroasa Mică belonged to the phase Monteoru II.b.

Graph 4 – Proportion between the orientation of the “package” burials from Pietroasa Mică.

In the context of some important cultural changes, that affected Muntenia towards the end of the Middle Bronze Age, we could reveal some different community situations for two populations placed within a rather restrained territory (the distance between Sărata Monteoru and Pietroasa Mică reaching about 30 km).

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