

**RESCUE EXCAVATIONS OF ROMAN AND EARLY
CHRISTIAN CEMETERY IN KAVARNA
(ANCIENT BIZONE)**

In 1996 during building activities in the valley of Kavarna (district Dobritch, north eastern Bulgaria, fig. 1) were founded burial structures, dating from 3rd – 6th c. A. D. Immediately after we started rescue excavations and 24 graves have been discovered, some of them partly destroyed (fig. 2). We distinguished two main levels in the cemetery – earlier from 3rd - first half of 4th c. A. D. of and the other early Christian level from late 4th – 6th c. A. D. The archaeological investigation shows a complicated picture. On one hand, the latest Christian level burial ritual appeared as inhumation in stone cist, with extended position of the body, spine and leg bones in a straight line, orientated west – east. The graves of that level have no grave goods. On the other hand, the lower level shows series of pagan practices, which were still existed, such as various orientations, and various position of laying the body, grave goods – adornments, ceramic vessels, clay lamps etc. All finds from that level are in the chronological span of 1st – 4th century A. D. Some of earlier graves were partly destroyed by latest graves with different orientation.

Six graves related to the earlier pre-Christian level. The grave structure of four them is a pit – graves 4, 7, 9 and 21, all partly destroyed from latest graves. In the graves # 4 and # 7 were found 4-6 iron nails, probably from a coffin. In all these graves were discovered grave goods – vessels, clay lamps etc. Grave # 10 belong to a child. The grave is covered with single tegula. In this grave were found silver spiral bracelet in the shape of a snake, typical for 1st – 3rd century A. D. (fig. 6). This type of bracelets were discovered in the burials of young girls and women and have apothropeic function. The practice to covered graves with tegulae has believed to be of Greek origin in science literature and appeared as early as the 5th century B.C., spreading widely during the Hellenistic period. This type of grave covering often occurred during the Roman period as well¹.

In this level also we have studied a grave with niche – grave # 5 (fig. 3). This is a grave with shaft – shaped entrance and a niche. The shaft – shaped entrance is of a rectangular plan and destroyed from modern digging activities in

¹ Л. Гетов, *Погребални обичаи и гробни съоръжения у траките през Римската епоха*, Археология 12, 1, 1970, 6.



Fig. 1 place of Bizone in southeastern Europe

Сл. 1 место Бизоне у југоисточној Европи

upper part. The niche is hollowed out on the southern long side, its floor being lower than the floor of the shaft. The access to the niche is blocked by six tegulae, arranged longwise to the skeleton. A clay lamp was found into the grave along with a figure of a bird and ceramic cup, all dating from 3rd – 4th century A. D. Over the skeleton were also found five iron nails and iron cramp, probably from a coffin or other wooden installation.

Similar burial structures are to be found in Northern Dobruzha – in the grave in Callatis;² in the Crimea³ and some other regions of the Northern Black Sea shore. There they were associated with Sarmathian tribes' migration to the West, judging by the grave goods found there. This type burial structure originated from the mid 3rd century B.C. in a Scythian – Sarmathian region.⁴ Some of them have been long used as family vaults.

² C. Preda, *Callatis (Nekropola Romano – Bizantina)*, Bucuresti 1980, 86, pl. I, m. 14

³ В. Зубарь, *Некрополь Херсонеса Таврического I-IV вв. н. э.*, Киев 1982, 17-18, рис. 7 и 8.

⁴ И. Гущина, *Населения сарматского времени в долине реки Бельбек*, В: Архе-

To the second (early Christian level) belong 18 graves, all built with stone slabs – cists. This is a box – shaped structure made of stone slabs set on edge, usually a single slab on each of the short sides, and two to four slabs – on the long sides. All of them with the exception of grave # 13 are built and covered with limestone slabs. The walls of grave # 13 were built of little stone blocks and covered with slabs. We have to point out that this type of burial structure was also characteristic in most of the cities along the Black Sea coast, and in Northern Dobruzha.⁵

The cists occurred as early as the Classical period and spread broadly during the Hellenistic and Roman periods all over the Balkan Peninsula, Asia Minor, along the Northern Black Sea coast, and in Pannonia. From an ethnical point of view, the practice seems retained by the local Romanised or Hellenised population.⁶ They kept this antique type of burial structure until the early 7th century, and then gradually abandoned it as a result of the Barbarisation. There are not clear evidences that the early Christian level with cists in necropolis of Bizone continues without hiatus after pagan period. Have in mind that all of earlier graves are partly destroyed by latest, i. e. at the time when the cists were built and the earlier graves were not visible on the ancient surface. It is very possible that between the two levels there were 50 years or century difference. In that case the date of the second level must to be middle of the 5th – late 6th century.

We found in grave # 22 one of the covering stone slabs, above the chest of the skeleton has an inscription. The slab is engraved with cross and the name TIMQTI written with Greek letters (fig. 9). This is the second time that that early Christian inscription appears from Bizone, and it was found during ar-

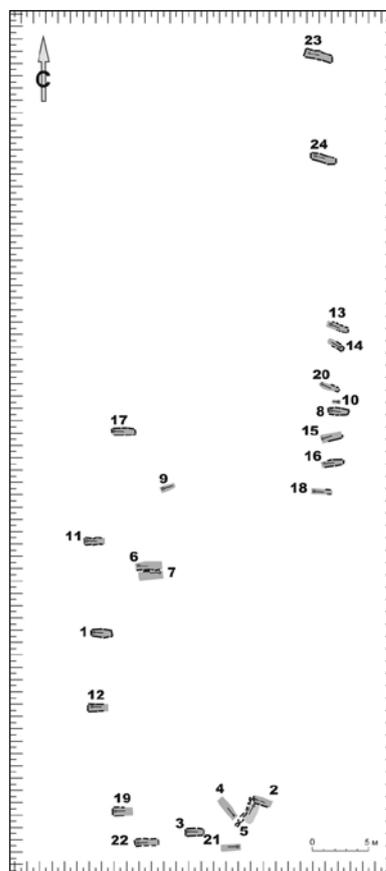


Fig. 2 Plan of the excavated part of the necropolis

Сл. 2 План ископаног дела некрополе

ологические исследования на юге Восточной Европы, Москва 1974, 74

⁵ C. Blegen, *Excavations at Troy 1932*, American Journal of Archaeology 36, 1932, 448; Л. Гертов, op. cit. ,6, type VII; E. Vago, I. Bona, *Der spätrömische Südostfriedhof von Intercisa*, Budapest 1976, 17-18; C. Preda, *Callatis (Nekropola Romano – Bizantina)*, Bucuresti 1980, 15-16.

⁶ C. Blegen, H. Palmer, R. Young, *The North Cemetery*, Princeton, New Jersey 1964 = Corinth XIII, 75.

archaeological excavations. The other inscription was also found in a stone slab with cross and woman's name ΛΕΟΝΤΙΣ. **There are also few fragments of funeral inscriptions with parts of crosses and letters, mainly parts of names in the collection of the city museum of Kavarna.**

Inscriptions contain common early Christian names and that cannot be in help for ethnical interpretation.⁷ Bizone during 3rd – 6th century had variety of population including local Thracian inhabitants, which is very difficult to be proved after they adopted Christianity and changed their names following Christian tradition of the names. A Barbarian ethnic groups were also present in the city, mainly German and perhaps Sarmathians or their Hellenized descendants, according to the results from the graves with niche and the last excavations of extra muros necropolis of Bizone⁸ as well as the rock necropolises 1 and 2 in Yaila near the village of Kamen Bryag and on Cape of Kaliakra, Kavarna region.

In conclusion we can say that the excavated graves were part of the city necropolis, build as extra muros necropolis following antique Greek and Roman tradition. After adoption of Christianity in 4th century and in Early Byzantine period the burial rite has changed. During Hellenistic and especially Roman period Greek language has established as main on the Western Black sea coast. Judging by the inscriptions, the Greek remained still dominant during the Early Byzantine age as well. The same composition was preserved during the Early Byzantine time too, as it was very likely in the other west Black Sea cities. As time progresses the indigenous inhabitants disappeared gradually, and the Greek element become prevailed over the others. This situation remained while the new Bulgarian state was founded in 681 A. D.

Catalogue of the graves:

Grave # 1. Grave, built with stone slabs - cist. The burial structure is destroyed during digging activities. The slabs of the cover are missing. Dimensions of the cist – 1.58x0.68x0.30 m. Orientation of the grave – West-East. The bones of the buried are also missing. Grave inventory was not found.

Grave # 2. Grave, built with stone slabs – cist (fig. 4, № 2). The burial structure is destroyed during digging activities. The slabs of the cover and of the North and East sides are missing. There are remains two slabs of the south side and one of the West side, each of it with dimensions – 0.50x0.60x0.30 m. Remaining length of the grave – 1.27 m. Orientation of the grave – West-East. The skeleton is partly destroyed. The bones of the legs, lower part of the hands and tibia are missing. Grave inventory was not found.

Grave # 3. Grave, built with stone slabs - cist. Dimensions of the cist – 1.75x0.60x0.40 m. The stone box is covered with 3 slabs. Orientation of the grave – West-East. The skeleton is decay. Grave inventory was not found.

⁷ В. Бешевлиев, *Старохристиянските надписи от Варна като исторически извори*, Известия на народния музей Варна 34, 1983,30.

⁸ Й. Гатев, *Археологически разкопки на нос Чиракман край Каварна (антично-то Бизоне) през 2002 г.*, Проучвания на късноантичен некропол от IV-VI век, Минало, 2, 2004, 9-13.

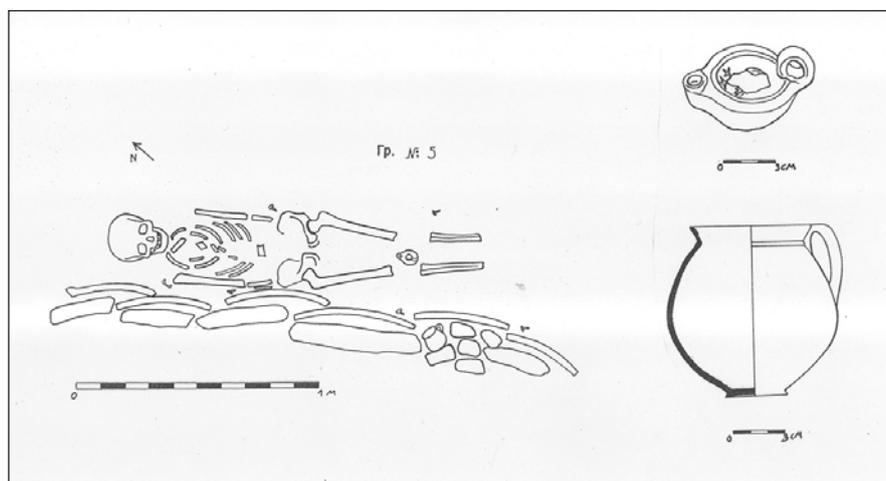


Fig. 3, grave 5

Сл. 3, гроб 5

Grave # 4. Grave pit with dimensions 1,90x0,55m. Orientation of the grave – South East-North West. The skeleton was found in anatomic order with hands, lying alongside of the corps. . Length of the skeleton: 1,61m. Grave inventory: 1. Glass balsamarium. Found near to the left hand. Destroyed. 2. Clay lamp. Found over legs. Similar lamp was found in Ognyanovo, Bulgaria, district Pazardjik,⁹ dated in 3rd – 5th century A. D. 2. Over the corps was found 4 iron nails, probably from the coffin.

Grave # 5. Grave with niche (fig. 3). Upper part of the skeleton is situated under later Grave # 2. Enter shaft to the niche is destroyed by grave # 2 and modern building activities. On southwest side of the corps entrance to the niche is covered with six tegulae, puted on their short side. The dimensions of the tegula are 0.66x0.39 m. Orientation of the grave – North West-South East. The skeleton is partly decay. Length of the skeleton: 1,55m. Grave inventory: 1. Clay lamp, decorated with bird. Found between the knees of the buried. Similar lamp was found in Ognyanovo, Bulgaria, district Pazardjik^{10,10} dated 3rd – 5th century A. D. 2. Clay cup. Found in southeastern part of the entrance between tegulae and niche. Similar cup was found in Piatra Frecaței, Romania, Northern Dobrudzha,¹¹ dated in 4th century A. D. 3. Over the corps was found 5 iron nails and iron cramp, probably from a coffin or some wooden installation.

Grave # 6. Grave, built with stone slabs – cist (fig. 4, № 6). Partly destroyed by building activities. Orientation of the grave – West-East. Length of the skeleton: 1,56m. Grave inventory was not found.

⁹ Г. Кузманов, *Антични лампи. Колекция на Национални археологически музей*, Sofia 1992, 44-48, # 390, type XLII,2.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, # 200, type XXII.

¹¹ A. Petre, *La Romanité en Scythie Mineure (II-e – VII-e siècles de notre ère)*, Association internationale d'Etudes du Sud-Est Europeen. Bul. 17-18, Bucarest 1987, 17, fig. 36d.

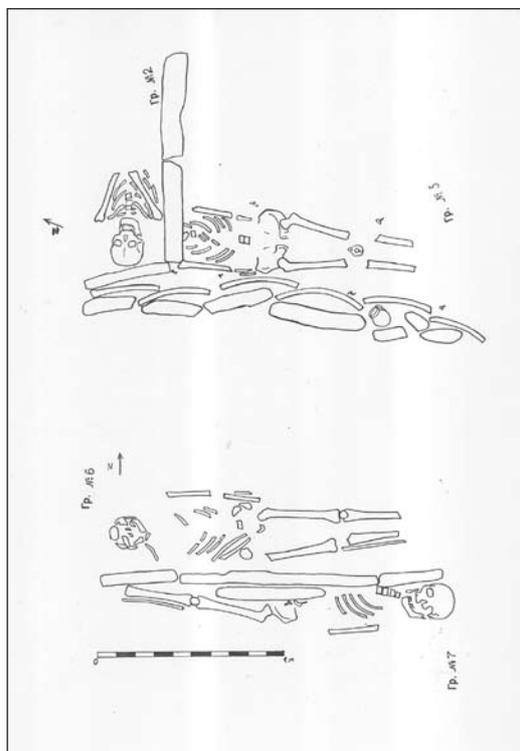


Fig. 4 graves 2 and 5, graves 6 and 7

Сл. 4 гробови 2 и 5, жуди 6 и 7

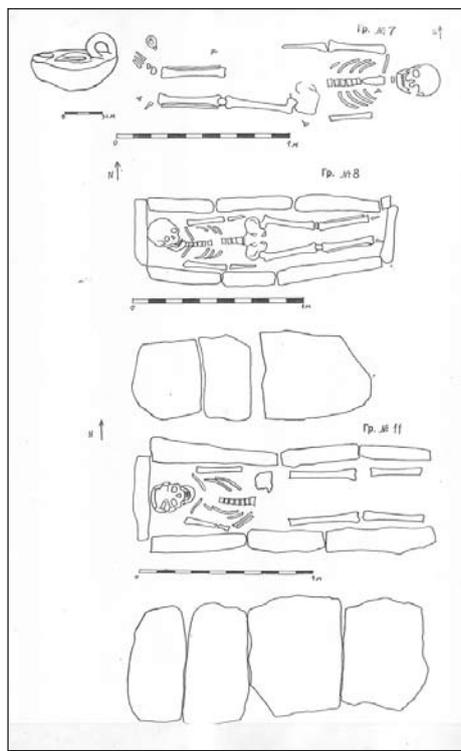


Fig. 5 graves 7, 8 and 11

Сл. 5 гробови 7, 8 и 11

Grave # 7. Northern part of the grave pit is destroyed after digging of grave # 6 (fig. 4, № 7; fig. 5, № 7). Orientation of the grave – East-West. Parts of the skeleton are missing (fig.). Length of the skeleton: 1,66m. Grave inventory: 1. Lamp, clay. Found between the feet. 2. Over the corps was found 6 iron nails, probably from the coffin.

Grave # 8. Grave, built with stone slabs – cist (fig. 5, № 8). Covered with three limestone slabs. Orientation of the grave – West-East. Grave of a child. Length of the skeleton: 1,34m. Grave inventory was not found.

Grave # 9. Grave pit was partly destroyed by building activities. From the skeleton was preserved only lower part of the legs and part of the chest. In the remaining part of the grave inventory was not found.

Grave # 10. Grave pit, covered with tegula. Grave of a child. Orientation of the grave – East-West. From the skeleton preserved only part of the skull. In the grave was found silver spiral bracelet in the shape of a snake (fig. 6, № 10).

Grave # 11. Grave, built with stone slabs – cist (fig. 5, № 11). Covered with four limestone slabs. Dimensions of the cist – 1.64x0.65x0.60 m. Covered with four slabs. Skeleton is decay. Orientation of the grave – West-East. Length of the skeleton 1,55m. Grave inventory was not found.

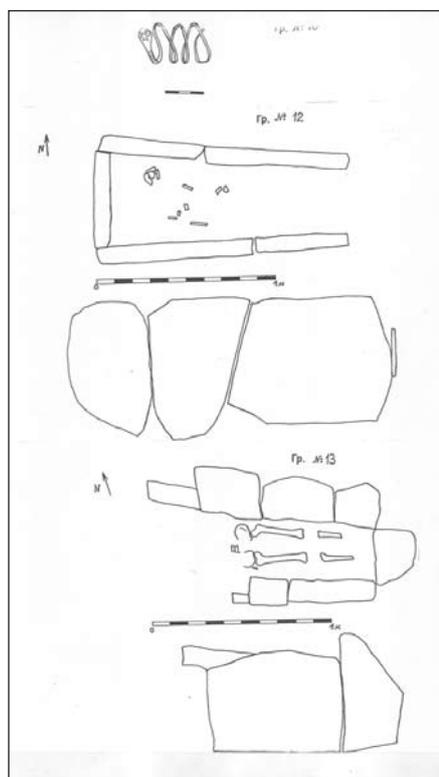


Fig. 6 graves 10q 12 and 13
Сл. 6 гробови 10к 12 и 13

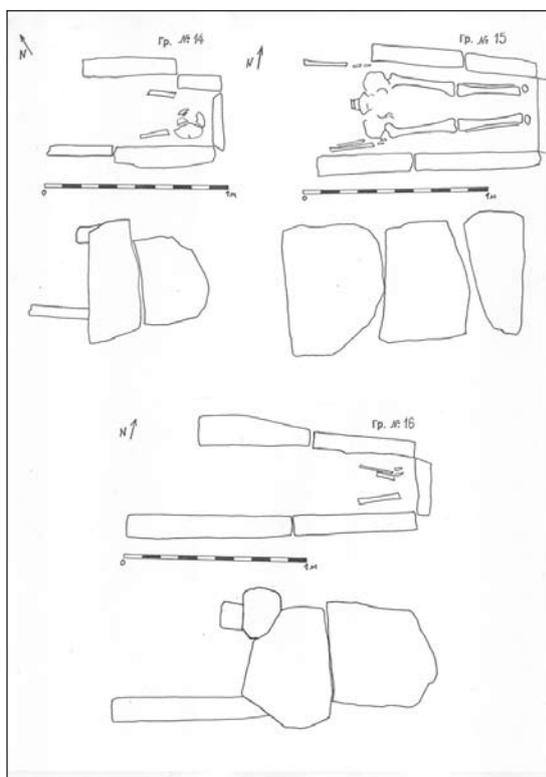


Fig. 7 graves 14, 15 and 16
Сл. 7 гробови 14, 15 и 16

Grave # 12. Grave, built with stone slabs – cist (fig. 6, № 12). Partly destroyed in eastern part. Covered with four limestone slabs. Skeleton is decay. Orientation of the grave – West-East. Length of the skeleton 1,50 m. Grave inventory was not found.

Grave # 13. Grave, built with little stone blocks with dimensions - 0,20-0,40x0,20 m. Partly destroyed in western part (fig. 6, № 13). Covered with limestone slabs of which is still remained two. Orientation of the grave – West-East. The skeleton is destroyed in upper part. Grave inventory was not found.

Grave # 14. Grave, built with stone slabs – cist (fig. 7, № 14). Partly destroyed in western part. Covered with limestone slabs of which remained two. From skeleton remained only skull and few small bones from the chest. Orientation of the grave – East-West. Grave inventory was not found.

Grave # 15. Grave, built with stone slabs – cist (fig. 7, № 15). Partly destroyed in western part. Covered with limestone slabs of which is still remained three. Skeleton is decay. Orientation of the grave – West-East. Grave inventory was not found.

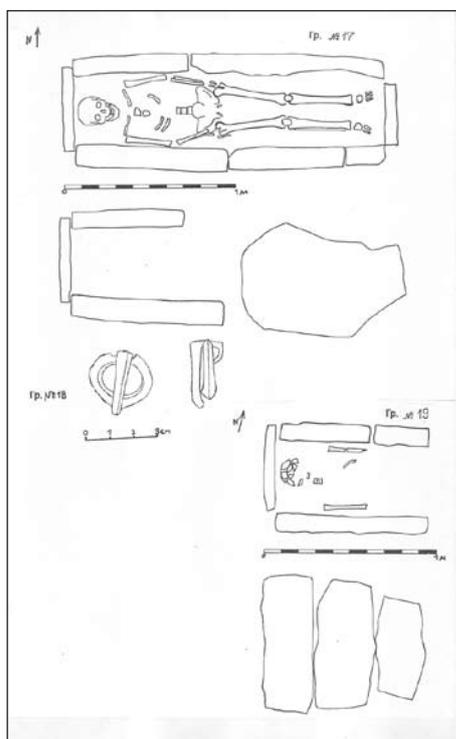


Fig. 8 graves 17q 18 and 19

Сл. 8 гробови 17к 18 и 19

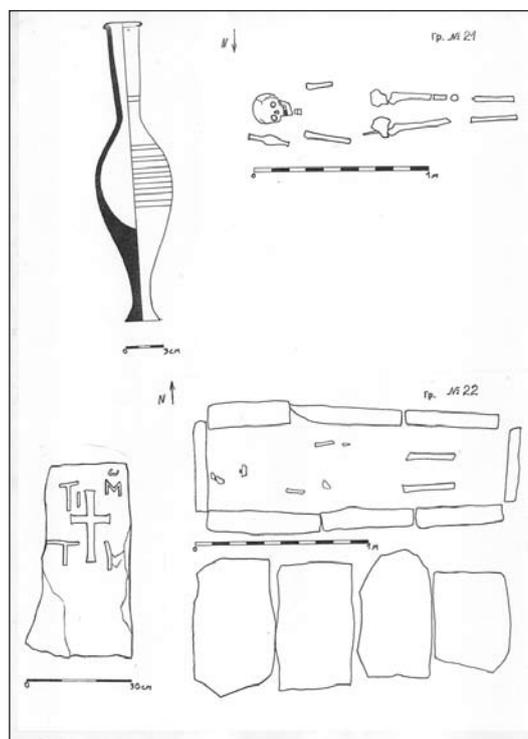


Fig. 9 graves 21 and 22

Сл. 9 гробови 21 и 22

Grave # 16. Grave, built with stone slabs – cist (fig. 7, № 16). Partly destroyed in western part. Covered with limestone slabs of which is still remained two. Skeleton is decay. Orientation of the grave – West-East. Grave inventory was not found.

Grave # 17. Grave, built with stone slabs – cist (fig. 8, № 17). Covered with a single large slab in the lower part. Orientation of the grave – West-East. Length of the skeleton - 1,61m. Grave inventory was not found.

Grave # 18. Grave, built with stone slabs – cist (fig. 8, № 18). Orientation of the grave – West-East. Destroyed by modern building activities. Between the remained bones was found bronze buckle. Similar cup was found in Piatra Frecaței, Romania, Northern Dobrudzha^{12,12} dated with the coin of Honnorius (395-423 A. D.)

Grave # 19. Grave, built with stone slabs – cist (fig. 8, № 19). Partly destroyed in eastern part. Covered with limestone slabs of which is still remained three. Skeleton is decay. Remained only the skull and upper part of the arms. Orientation of the grave – West-East. Grave inventory was not found.

¹² A. Petre, *La Romanité en Scythie Mineure (II-e –VII-e siècles de notre ère)*, Association internationale d'Etudes du Sud-Est Europeen. Bul. 17-18, Bucurest 1987, 62, fig. 166 g.

Grave # 20. Grave, built with stone slabs - cist. Destroyed by modern building activities. Skeleton is also destroyed. Orientation of the grave – West-East. Grave inventory was not found.

Grave # 21. Grave pit (fig. 9, № 21). Orientation of the grave – East-West. Length of the skeleton – 1,48m. In the lower part skeleton is decay. Right of the skull was found clay balsamarium. Similar is found in cemetery of Thomis, Romania¹³13, dated in 4th century A. D.

Grave # 22. Grave, built with stone slabs – cist (fig. 9, № 22). Dimensions of the cist – 1.91x0.77x0.60 m. The stone box is covered with 4 slabs. Orientation of the grave – West-East. Skeleton is decay. On the third cover slab from west to east on the side with face to the corps is incised cross and over the cross name ΠΙΜΩΤΙ. Dimensions of the slab – 0.56x0.315x0.045 m. High of the letters – 0.021-0.052 m. Grave inventory was not found.

Grave # 23. Grave, built with stone slabs – cist (fig. 10, № 23). Dimensions of the cist – 2.20x0.77x0.60 m. The stone box is covered with 6 slabs. Orientation of the grave – West-East. Length of the skeleton – 1,62m. Grave inventory was not found.

Grave # 24. Grave, built with stone slabs – cist (fig. 10, № 24). Dimensions of the cist – 2.01x0.68x0.60 m. The stone box is covered with 5 slabs. Orientation of the grave – West-East. Length of the skeleton: 1,72m. Grave inventory was not found.

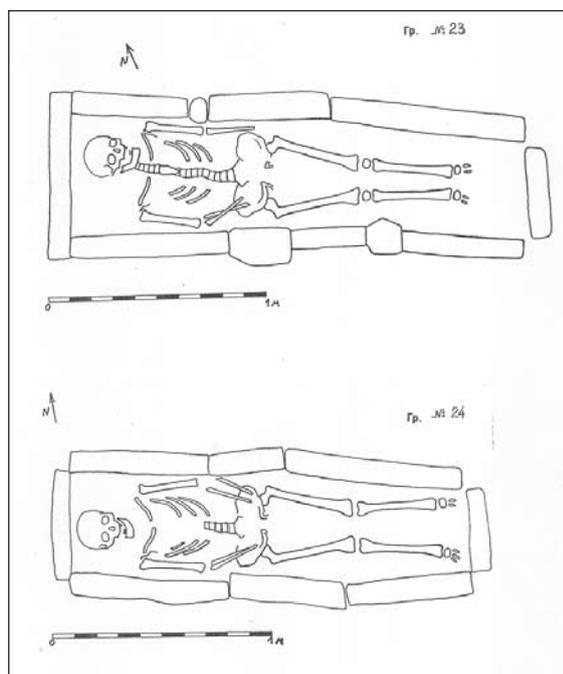


Fig. 10 graves 23 and 24

Сл. 10 гробови 23 и 24

¹³ C. Chera–Margineanu, V. Lungu, *Contributii la cunoasterea unei necropole creștine a Tomisului(II)*, Pontica 16, 1983, 1983, 219-224.

Jordan Gatev
ИСКОПАВАЊА РИМСКОГ И РАНОХРИШЋАНСКОГ ГРОБЉА
У КАВАРНИ (АНТИЧКИ BIZONE)

Године 1996 за време грађевинских радова у долини Каварна (округ Добрич, северноисточна Бугарска) 24 гробнице су откривене. Ми смо издвојили два основна нивоа на гробљу, пре прве половине III века до прве половине IV века нове ере, и други, ранохришћански ниво од краја IV до VI века. Археолошка истраживања показују компликовану слику. С једне стране, последњи ниво садржи ритуал хришћанске сахране у каменој крипти, са испруженим положајем тела, кичме и костију ногу у правој линији, у смеру запад - исток. Гробови на том нивоу немају никакве пратеће предмете. С друге стране, нижи ниво показује низ паганских обичаја, који су још увек постојали, као што су различити смерови, као и разни положаји полагања тела, пратећи предмети - накит, керамичке посуде, глинене лампе, итд.

Шест гробница је повезано са ранијим прехришћанским нивоом. Гробна структура четворо њих је јама - гробница 4, 7, 9 и 21, и све су делимично уништене новијим гробовима. У гробницама 4 и 7 пронађена су 4 - 6 гвоздена ексера, вероватно из ковчега. У свим овим гробницама откривени су пратећи предмети - посуде, глинене лампе, итд. У овом нивоу, такође смо проучавали гробницу са нишом - гроб 5. То је гробница са јамом, обликованим улазом и нишаом. Приступ ниши блокирале су четири опеке распоређене по дужини скелета. Слична структуре за сахрањивање могу се наћи у северној Добруци - у гробници in Callatis, на Криму и неким другим регионима северне обале Црног мора. Ту су били доведени у везу са миграцијом Сарматских племена на Запад.

Другом (старохришћанском) нивоу припада 18 гробова, сви изграђени помоћу камених плоча - крипте. То је структура у облику кутије од камених плоча постављених на ивице, обично једна плоче на сваку од кратких страна, и две до четири плоче - на дужој страни. Са етничке тачке гледишта, праксу је наставила романизована и хеленизована популација. У гробу бр. 22 пронашли смо једну од покривајућих камених плоча, која изнад груди скелета има натпис. У плочу је угравиран крст са именом ΤΙΜΩΤΙ написаним грчким словима. Ово је други пут да се ранохришћански натпис појављује из Бизоне, што је утврђено током археолошких ископавања. Други натпис је такође пронађен у каменој плочи са крстом и женским именом ΛΕΟΝΤΙΣ.

У закључку се може рећи да су ископани гробови припадали градској некрополи, изграђеној као extra muros necropolis, по угледу на грчку и римску традицију. Након усвајања хришћанства у IV веку и у раном Византијском периоду, ритуал сахране се променио. Током хеленистичког и посебно римског периода, грчки језик је постао званични језик западне обале Црног мора. Судаћи по натписима, грчки језик остаје и даље доминантан током рановизантијског доба.