

**DEAD AMONG THE LIVING:
REMARKS ON THE TREATMENT OF THE
DECEASED IN THE BABADAG CULTURE (EIA)**

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ABSTRACT

The Babadag Culture was named after the settlement from Babadag. Archaeologist defined the culture, establishing its chronological frame to the 11th – 7th centuries BC, period considered by the Romanian archaeology as covering the Early and Middle Iron Ages (Early and Middle Hallstatt). Three phases of the culture have been determined, based on the stratigraphical observations at the eponym site and on the characteristics of the pottery decoration: the first 2 phases belonging in his opinion to the Early Iron Age, the third to the Middle Iron Age. Up to present, around 90 sites with Babadag pottery were determined, the majority being situated in the south-eastern part of Romania, with other two finds in Ukraine. It must be noticed that the most part of the sites were determined through archaeological surveys, the number of the excavated sites being extremely small. As a result, the information is scarce and uneven.

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Introduction

The Babadag Culture was named after the settlement from Babadag, Tulcea county, identified in 1953 (Vulpe 1955: 550-551), where excavations were conducted by Sebastian Morintz starting with 1962. This archaeologist defined the culture, establishing its chronological frame to the 11th – 7th centuries BC, period considered by the Romanian archaeology as covering the Early and Middle Iron Ages (Early and Middle Hallstatt). Also, he determined 3 phases of the culture, based on the stratigraphical observations at the eponym site and on the characteristics of the pottery decoration: the first 2 phases belonging in his opinion to the Early Iron Age, the third to the Middle Iron Age (Morintz 1964: 101-118). Up to present, around 90 sites with Babadag pottery were determined, the majority being situated in the south-eastern part of Romania (Eastern Muntenia, Southern Moldova, Dobroudja), with other two finds in Ukraine (Jugănaru/Ailincăi 2007, in print). But an observation is perhaps necessary here: although the number of sites could create quite an impressive image, it must be noticed that the most part of the sites were determined through archaeological surveys, the number of the excavated sites being extremely small. As a result, the information is scarce and uneven.

In the area of the Babadag culture a phenomenon can be observed which is also present in other parts of Europe during the same period: the deposition of the human bodies (complete or partial) inside the settlements, very often in so-called “storage pits”. The ambiguous character of this category of finds (frequently described as “non-funerary”) led to a prudent and even discreet attitude of the archaeologists towards this phenomenon for a long time. As an example, although the first find of this kind, coming from Babadag, dates back in 1962 and was followed by similar finds during the next years, the situation was left somehow aside. In fact, outside some brief mentions in the annual reports (unpublished), the information was not published until 1987, when was not accompanied by any drawings, photos or other details. In his article, S. Morintz was frankly admitting the fact that the information regarding the funerary rites of the Babadag people presented “too many gaps”, and limited himself to present a short list of the finds known at that moment (Morintz 1987: 68). The only find from Babadag better analyzed was a pit containing 3 skeletons, found in 1990 and published 3 years later with an anthropological analysis (Perianu 1993: 163-168). Only during the last decade of the 20th

century, the growing number of similar finds in the settlement of Babadag, as well as in other settlements of the Babadag culture, contributed to the arising interest of the archaeologists in this matter.

Catalogue of finds

This catalogue consists in a short presentation of the complexes with human remains belonging to the Babadag culture. It is based on the already published information, old and new finds, and also on a series of documents from the Sebastian Morintz archive at the Institute of Archaeology "Vasile Pârvan" Bucharest (unpublished so far).

1. Babadag, Tulcea county

1.1. During the first campaign (1962) a pit containing human remains was found (Fig. 1.2). The lower part of a human skeleton was present in the filling of the pit. The bones were in anatomical connection and presented strong traces of burning. The archaeologists considered that the bones belonged to a individual from the *maturus* class of age. The alignment of the found lower body was N-S (feet to the south). After removing the pottery sherds other human bones were found, this time from the upper part of a skeleton, described as less burned than the other, and considered by the excavators as belonging to a different skeleton, most probably that of a child. The complex was attributed to the Babadag III phase (Morintz archive; Morintz 1987: 68).

1.2. During excavations conducted in 1962 in order to verify the stratigraphical situation on the plateau NW from the settlement, at a depth of 1 m some sherds and cremated bones were found under a Hallstatt dish put upside down. The find was considered as chronologically belonging to Babadag III (Morintz 1987: 68) Due to the fact that no anthropological analysis was conducted on the cremated bones, and no ulterior similar finds appeared, there are serious question marks connected to considering this find as funerary.

1.3. In 1963, a human skeleton was found in a "storage pit", circular in form (Fig. 1.1). The body was articulated, in a flexed position, deposited on the right side (Morintz archive; Morintz 1987: 68).

1.4. In 1965, another human skeleton in anatomical connection was found. The body was articulated; deposition: semi-flexed on the back; position: the knees flexed and then collapsed; alignment: NW-SE. The skull and right upper arm were destroyed by later pits. The skeleton was in the filling of the pit, not on the bottom. Traces of burning were detected, especially in the deeper part of the pit, where a layer of ash could be noticed. A complete cup was found near the pelvis, and in the filling of the pit many fragments of clay walls, presently burned (clay with reed and rods impressions), and "human or animal" burned bones. The complex was attributed to the Babadag III phase (Morintz archive; Morintz 1987: 68).

1.5. In 1965, a fragmentary human skeleton was found, in partial articulation. The body was also in the filling of the pit, approximately 35 cm above the bottom. The drawing seems to indicate that there were present the skull with the mandible, a part of the chest, the vertebral column and the long bones. On the bottom of the pit there were traces of burning (Morintz archive).

1.6. In 1990, a pit with 3 human skeletons, differently aligned, was discovered. The pit was trapezoidal in profile, perfectly circular in form, the bottom slightly hollowed. A black substance covered the bottom of the pit. The bones were in good condition and belonged to 3 adults (2 women and 1 man). The body in the middle was placed with the head between the others' two pelvises, that is with the legs to the others' heads (Morintz/Jugănaru 1995: 182).

The skeleton no. 1 was in the middle, flexed on the left side, hands to the head, facing skeleton no. 2. The body belonged to a mature woman (45-50 years old), over-medium height (1.60 m). The skeleton no. 2 was facing skeleton no. 1, and belonged to an adult woman (24-25 years old); over-medium height (1.58 m); semi-flexed on the back; head turned right; right hand to the head, left hand to the pelvis; knees flexed and collapsed. The skeleton no. 3 was somehow separated from the rest, being disposed a little separately and having at his head a jug (which contained the same black substance like that on the bottom of the pit). Well-preserved, this skeleton belonged to a man from the *maturus* III category (55-60 years old), under-medium height (1.63 m). The skeleton was deposited on the back; head to the right; left hand on the pelvis; right hand to the head; knees flexed and collapsed on the skull of the skeleton no. 1. All three skeletons presented signs of bone diseases, like artrosis and osteoporosis, and

there were also some signs of old wounds. The complex was dated to the third phase of the Babadag culture. The anthropological analysis showed no *perimortem* violence, and the author considered that the displacement of the bones took place during excavation (Perianu 1993: 163-168).

1.7. In 1992, another complex was partially uncovered. Inside a pit, trapezoidal in profile, at -1.90 m below the surface, a human skeleton was found. It was deposited on the back, arms along the sides and knees slightly flexed (most probably collapsed, right foot to the right and left foot to the left); alignment S-N (head to the north). Interesting was the fact that a massive stone slab was put on the skull. On the left side of the pelvis it was a small ceramic vessel with three stems, made of a brick-colored clay. The vessel had inside strong traces of burning (Morintz/Jugănaru 1995: 182). The authors don't mention the level from which the pit was dug up, which makes more difficult dating the complex. The majority of the finds in 1992 indicate that a level from the second phase of the culture was subject to excavation at that moment. This observation, corroborated to the fact that in the filling of the pit a pottery sherd characteristic to this phase was found, determines us to consider this complex, with some degree of uncertainty, as Babadag II. The anthropological analysis showed that the skeleton belonged to a woman, *adultus* II (30-40 years old), height 1.472 m¹.

1.8. In 1996, during the excavations in the level II of the Babadag III phase, a bell-shaped pit was found, with a depth of 0.85 m. In the upper part of the pit, on 0.40 m, it was a "lid" made of black polished sherds, followed by a layer of burned earth mixed with ashes. On the bottom of the pit it was a skeleton oriented to N (head to the north). It was in a flexed position; on the left side; hands under the head; knees flexed. On the chest and legs the skeleton was covered with a layer of stone slabs and sherds from a polished black vessel. On the pelvis a burned reddish clay object was found, a fragmentary valve from a mould (Jugănaru 2005: 33).

1.9. During the 2002 campaign, a pit connected to the fortification structure of the Babadag settlement was excavated. The pit was trapezoidal in profile and approximately circular in plan. The diameter of the opening was

¹ The anthropological report following the analysis was presented by dr. N. Mirițoiu and A. Soficaru, from The Institute of Anthropology "F.I. Rainer" Bucharest

0.75 m and that of the bottom 1.20 m. The filling of the pit consisted in brown earth, probably loess mixed with ashes. At half a distance between the mouth and the bottom of the pit 3 human skulls were found. One of them (on the NE side) was upside down, facing NE, while the other two, grouped towards the opposite side of the pit, were facing SW. No jaw was present, and for the two grouped skulls the upper maxilla were almost completely destroyed (Jugănaru/Ailincăi 2003: 55).

The skull no. 1 belonged to a woman, young adult (around 25 years old). A damage noticed on the lateral of the upper orbital bone, showing no *postfractum* reaction, is leading rather to the possibility of *perimortem* violence. The skull no. 2 belonged to a young adult female. The skull no. 3 presented also some ancient damages. It belonged to a woman, with age difficult to be determined: based on dentition and cranial sutures the *maturus* category (or even a more advanced age) could be advanced as a strong possibility².

During the 2003 campaign, the collapse of the profile because of heavy rains and flooding of the section conducted to the discovery of the fourth skull in the same pit. This was not anthropologically analyzed yet. The complex was dug up in the earthen structure of the fortification system, which was erected during the third phase of the culture. Based on this fact, the complex could belong to the 8th-7th centuries BC.

1.10. During the 2004 campaign, a human jaw was identified in a pit, together with a big quantity of sherds. The complex is attributed stratigraphically to the third phase of the Babadag culture (Jugănaru 2005: 33).

1.11. In 2004, in the filling of a pit human remains were found from at least two individuals. The complex had a circular opening with the diameter of 0.60 m, a depth of 0.55 m, and an irregular trapezoidal profile, with a diameter of 1.50 m at the bottom (Jugănaru 2005: 33). The bones were on the bottom of the pit, together with a fragment from a big mammal's jaw and the fragments of a big pot. In the filling there were also many animal bones and a great number of sherds. This complex is considered as belonging to the third phase of the Babadag culture, based on the level from which the pit was dug up.

² The anthropological report following the analysis was presented by dr. N. Mirițoiu and A. Soficaru, from The Institute of Anthropology "F.I. Rainer" Bucharest

1.12. In 2004, another pit with human remains was found in the eastern side of the site, at the base of the promontory. On the bottom of the pit there was a skeleton deposited on the back; knees flexed and collapsed on the right; head turned to the right; aligned NW-SE (head to the NW) (Jugănaru 2005: 33). The pit was circular in plan and trapezoidal in profile. The left femur was found in the filling of the pit. Near the skeleton, in the northern part of the pit, it was found a fragmentary vessel, kitchenware category. In the filling there were a lot of sherds and animal bones, as well as some small clay objects. The complex is later than the fortification wall, so it is proposed a date at the end of the third phase of the culture.

1.13. During the 2006 excavation, on the floor of a house a fragmentary human jaw was found. The complex is part of level 5 of the settlement, as a result the find being attributed to the third phase of the Babadag culture (Jugănaru 2005: 33).

2. Brăila ("Brăilița"), Brăila county

2.1. One rectangular pit containing one human skeleton, deposited on the back, dated to phase Babadag II (Ailincăi/Jugănaru 2007: Cat. No. 4; Harțuche/Anastasiu 1968: 26-28, 59-60).

3. Bucu, com. Bucu, Ialomița county

3.1. One pit containing one human skeleton, a child in anatomical connection (Ailincăi/Jugănaru 2007: Cat. No. 6).

4. Capidava, com. Topalu, Constanța county

4.1. "La Bursuci". One pit containing a human skeleton, partially in anatomical connection. The skeleton was deposited on the back, alignment SSE-NNW (Dobrinescu/ Voinea/Cârpuș 2005: 99-100). The results of the anthropological analysis: female; young adult (about 26 years old); over-medium height (157.2 cm) (Vasile 2006: 215-218).

4.2. "Necropola tumulară romană". One of the tumuli excavated in the Roman necropolis presented in the center a rectangular pit, containing a skeleton deposited on the right side (left foot over right foot), hands in front of

the face, alignment E-W (head to the W). Near the head a vessel was found, dated to the second phase of the Babadag culture (Cheluță Georgescu 1979: 179-180).

4.3. **“Necropola tumulară romană”**. Another tumulus excavated in 1993 in the Roman necropolis contained a skeleton deposited on the back, with no inventory. The find was attributed to the Hallstatt period (Cheluță Georgescu 1994: 13).

5. Enisala (“Palanca”), com. Sarichioi, Tulcea county

5.1. One pit with human remains, partially in anatomical connection, dated to the Babadag III phase (Jugănaru/Ailincăi/Stănică 2004: 118-119).

6. Garvăn (“Mlăjitul Florilor”), com. Jijila, Tulcea county

6.1. In 1992, one pit, almost quadrangular in shape, dug in the native rock, with one human skeleton, deposited on the right side, in flexed position, alignment N-S. No inventory (Jugănaru 1997: 104; Sîrbu 1997).

6.2. In 1992, one human skull was found deposited on a strongly burned clay platform (the floor of a house). Other finds: a clay vessel, animal bones, pottery sherds, stones, charcoal, a fragmentary iron knife. The complex was dated to Babadag II phase (Jugănaru 2005: 34).

6.3. In 1994, one skull was found deposited on a clay platform, in similar conditions. The difference consisted in the fact that the house’s floor was not burned. The complex is considered to belong to the second phase of the Babadag culture (Jugănaru 2005: 34).

6.4. In 1995, a human mandible was found together with the femur of a big mammal, a stone slab and an oval stone tool. The find was dated to Babadag II (Jugănaru 2005: 34).

7. Izvoarele, com. Lipnița, Constanța county

7.1. A found described as grave, containing a skeleton with a miniature vessel placed aside. It is considered to belong to the Babadag III phase (Irimia 2003: 254-255).

7.2. A similar situation, one complex described as grave containing a skeleton and a miniature vessel, dated to the Babadag III phase (Irimia 2003: 255).

8. Jijila (“Cetățuia”), com. Jijila, Tulcea county

8.1. In a pit placed under the fortification structure a human skull and a thighbone were found, together with a burned clay fragment from a hearth, a bone from a big mammal, one massive fragment of rock, pottery sherds. All were covered with a layer of ashes and charcoal (Sîrbu/Ailincăi 2005: 203).

9. Jurilovca (Argamum), Tulcea county

9.1. A pit of great size, partially destroyed by the archaic Greek wall, contained 15 human skeletons (complete and fragmentary). The pit contained also pottery (fragments from at least 80 vessels), as well as small iron objects (2 fragments of knife, 1 fishing-hook, 2 arrowheads) considered to be the oldest iron objects on the territory of Dobroudja. The results of the anthropological analysis: 12 adults; 1 individual between adolescence and adulthood; 1 adolescent; 1 child. From the total there were 7 males, 6 females, one undetermined. The anthropologists consider that different types of treatment took place: 5 complete bodies; 2 incomplete bodies; bodies in a state of advanced putrefaction; disparate bones. Two of the dead show blows in the head which could have been the cause of death. The pit belongs to the second phase of the Babadag culture (Ailincăi/Mirițoiu/Soficaru 2003: 307-324).

10. Niculițel (“Cornet”), Tulcea county

10.1. One pit (Pit 1) with one skeleton, placed on the bottom, on a bed of sherds. The body was deposited on the back, alignment NE-SW, with the right hand on the abdomen and the left hand on the chest. It is considered to belong to the Babadag II phase (Jugănaru/Topoleanu 1994: 71; Topoleanu/Jugănaru 1995: 204).

10.2. One pit (Pit 2) with collapsed walls, containing one skeleton (Fig. 2.1). Only the head and limbs were preserved. Possibly the body was initially placed in flexed position, deposited on a side. It is considered to belong to the

Babadag II or the beginning of Babadag III phase (Jugănaru/Topoleanu 1994: 72; Topoleanu/Jugănaru 1995: 204).

10.3. One pit (Pit 3) with collapsed walls (Fig. 2.2). On the bottom of the pit were placed, on a bed of sherds: one complete skeleton (in anatomical connection), deposited on the back, alignment N-S, with the hands placed on the abdomen; 4 skulls; upper and lower limbs; parts of ribcage. It is considered to belong to the Babadag II, based on pottery (Jugănaru/Topoleanu 1994: 72; Topoleanu/Jugănaru 1995: 204).

10.4. One pit (Pit 4) containing fragments belonging to 2 skeletons (skulls, limbs, ribs), placed on the bottom, on a bed of sherds. It is considered, based on the pottery, to belong to the Babadag II or the beginning of Babadag III phase (Jugănaru/Topoleanu 1994: 72; Topoleanu/Jugănaru 1995: 204).

10.5. One pit containing the rests of at least 2 individuals, partially in anatomical connection. The bodies were placed on the bottom of the pit. In the northern part of the pit, the bones were covered with a layer of sherds and ashes. The find belongs to the Babadag II phase (Ailincăi/Topoleanu 2003: 45).

10.6. One pit containing the incomplete skeletons of 2 individuals, deposited on the right side, in a flexed position, with their hands placed under the chin. The skull of the skeleton placed in the southern part of the pit is missing. The second body was placed with the head on the other's legs (Ailincăi/Topoleanu 2003: 45-46).

10.7. In 2000, on the floor of a hut it was found a skull with the jaw and the upper vertebrae still in anatomical connection (Jugănaru/Ailincăi 2003: 56).

10.8. In 2000, a skeleton was found, placed in flexed position, deposited on a side, under a floor (?). It is considered to belong to the second phase of the Babadag culture (Simion 2001: 164).

11. Novoselskoe II, r. Reni, Odessa region, Ukraine

11.1. It is mentioned grave no. 3: a rectangular pit containing one human skeleton deposited on the back, belonging to the Babadag III phase (Ailincăi/Jugănaru 2007: Cat. No. 56).

11.2. Pit 7 contained one skeleton, deposited on the right side, hands in front of the face, alignment S-N, in flexed position (Ailincăi/Jugănaru 2007: Cat. No. 56).

11.3. Pit 11 contained one incomplete skeleton (skull, mandible, backbone, few ribs, one long bone), deposited initially on the left side (?), alignment approximately WSW-ENE (Ailincăi/Jugănaru 2007: Cat. No. 56).

12. Orlovka, r. Reni, Odessa region, Ukraine

12.1. One pit with human remains, dated to Babadag III (Ailincăi/Jugănaru 2007: Cat. No. 57).

12.2. One pit with one complete skeleton, deposited on the right side, in flexed position, dated to Babadag III (Ailincăi/Jugănaru 2007: Cat. No. 57).

13. Rasova ("Malul Roșu"), Constanța county

13.1. Near the Babadag settlement, in an oval pit was found a skeleton: deposited on the back; alignment N-S; knees flexed and fallen on the left (Fig. 3.1). The pit had no inventory, being superimposed by another pit with atypical Hallstatt pottery sherds (Irimia 1974: 124-125).

13.2. In the same location, it was found a pit containing the skeleton of a child: alignment N-S; flexed position. Near the skeleton's pelvis it was found a spindle-whorl (Irimia 1974: 125).

14. Revărsarea, Isaccea, Tulcea county

14.1. "Cotul Tichilești". One oval pit with one human skeleton, partially in anatomical connection. The skeleton was aligned SW-NE, deposited on the back. Near the feet was a vessel belonging to the third phase of Babadag culture, and near the head an iron brooch dated to the 7th century B.C. (Jugănaru 2005: 37).

14.2. "Dealul Tichilești". A human mandible was found in a bell-shaped pit (Simion 2003: 102; Jugănaru/Ailincăi 2003: 56).

15. Satu Nou (“Valea lui Voicu”), com. Oltina, Constanța county

15.1. One bell-shaped pit (Pit 41) with 2 human skeletons (a child in flexed position and an adult flexed, with the face down) and one animal. The skeletons were placed in the filling, not on the bottom of the pit. It is considered to belong to the Babadag II-III (Irimia/Conovici 1997: 87; Irimia/Conovici 1993: 53).

15.2. One bell-shaped pit (Pit 43) containing a skeleton, a female in flexed position, with her face down. The skeleton was placed on a layer of stone, disposed circularly (Babadag II-III) (Irimia/Conovici 1997: 87; Irimia/Conovici 1993: 53).

15.3. One bell-shaped pit (Pit 44) containing a skeleton, in flexed position, on the left side, with the face down; alignment N-S; with stones placed above. It was found in the filling of the pit (Babadag II-III) (Fig. 4.1-2) (Irimia/Conovici 1997: 87; Irimia/Conovici 1993: 53).

15.4. One bell-shaped pit (Pit 46) containing parts of a human skeleton: a lower limb, slightly flexed, in anatomical connection; one bone from the pelvis; several vertebrae (Babadag II-III) (Fig. 4.3-7). In the filling of the pit there were animal bones, ashes, stones and a big stone slab, probably used as a lid for the pit (Irimia/Conovici 1997: 87; Irimia/Conovici 1993: 53).

15.5. Surface with 11 animal skeletons (most of them in anatomical connection; especially dogs, but also pigs) and human bones (including one jaw and 2 skulls) (Babadag II-III) (Irimia/Conovici 1997: 87; Irimia/Conovici 1993: 52-53; Jugănaru/Ailincăi 2003: 55).

16. Siliștea - Nazîru (“Conac”), Brăila county

16.1. One pit, rectangular in shape, with rounded corners, containing one human skeleton, in anatomical connection, deposited on the back, head to S (Fig. 3.2). Dated to Babadag I (Sîrbu/Pandrea 1994: 27-32; Sîrbu 1994: 90).

17. Suceveni (“Stoborăni”), Galați county

17.1. One pit containing 4 skeletons, found in 1971 (Fig. 5). The skeletons had a radial deposition: nos. 1-2 aligned WSW-ENE (head to the WSW), nos. 3-4 aligned W-E. Skeleton no.1 was placed in the center of the pit:

deposited on the right side; facing south; knees flexed; left hand on the pelvis. Skeleton no. 2: deposited on the back; flexed; facing north; right hand on the chest; feet over the skeleton no.1. Skeleton no. 3: deposited on the back; upper limbs along the body; the left foot over the right foot. Skeleton no. 4: deposited on the back; facing north; left hand covering partially the face; feet over the feet of skeleton no. 3. The filling of the pit contained ashes, charcoal and burning traces. Over the bodies was a thin layer of ashes, and 30 cm above them, in the center of the pit, was an ox skull, with short horns, presenting strong traces of calcinations. The human bones show evident traces of superficial burning (Dragomir 1996: 365-366). We consider the find as belonging to the third phase of the Babadag culture.

Discussion

The chronology. The finds presented above cover all three phases of the Babadag culture. There are rather few finds dated to Babadag I – only from two sites (Garvăn, Silișteea) –, but this fact could be related to the general situation, the total number of complexes that could be attributed to the first phase of the culture being small. The number is increasing for the other two phases of the Babadag culture: to Babadag II are attributed complexes with human remains from 12 settlements, and to Babadag III complexes from 7 settlements.

The place of the dead. From the total number of complexes with human remains contained by the catalogue (51), a clear majority comes from settlements (38 finds from 12 settlements), other 7 are possibly from settlements, while 4 are described as graves (with no connection to settlements). From these last 4 situations, two come from Izvoarele (Irimia 2003: 254-255). Unfortunately, the conditions under which the find was made (the consolidation of the local church's foundation) led to the absence of any clear description. A very interesting case, from our point of view, could be at this point the site from Capidava, which offered so far one find from the settlement and two tumuli with graves dated to the Hallstatt period.

As concerning the complexes with human remains found in settlements, the present state of the archaeological research does not allow to make speculations over the area used for placing the dead. So far, there is no clear sign that was any concern for placing the human remains in special zones inside

the settlement. But there are also some exceptions: the situation observed at Satu Nou, where a ravine was used for placing animal skeletons and human bones (Cat. No. 15.5) and the two cases when pits with human remains seem to be connected to the fortification structures (Cat. Nos. 1.9, 8.1).

The container. From the total number of finds: 5 come from pits described as rectangular in shape (Cat. No. 2.1, 4.2-3, 11.1, 16.1); 4 were placed on clay floors or platforms (Cat. No. 1.13, 6.2-3, 10.7); for 2 there are no details regarding the shape of the pit (Cat. Nos. 7.1-2); 1 (Cat. No. 1.2) is a very doubtful find; 1 represents a surface with animal skeletons and human bones (Cat. No. 15.5); for one the information is unclear (Cat. No. 6.4); all the rest (37 finds) come from pits described as “bell-shaped”, “trapezoidal in profile and circular in plan”, or “oval”, similar to the “storage pits” or “garbage pits” from the respective settlements.

The filling. There can be determined no difference between the pits with human remains and other pits regarding this aspect: all cases described in detail present a mixture of debris that can contain pottery sherds, animal bones, stones, ashes, charcoal.

The inventory and the arrangement. Only in a few cases it could be possible or adequate to talk about inventory, like for Babadag – one small one-handle jug in the pit with 3 skeletons; Izvoarele – 1 miniature vessel near each of the two skeletons; Jurilovca – small iron objects, etc. But a real interesting aspect is connected to the arrangement made for placing the human remains: the presence of stones or sherds, sometimes arranged as a bed for the skeletons, sometimes covering them; layers of ashes and charcoal covering the remains; in some cases the possible purification of the pit that seems to be indicated by the traces of burning. As an observation, although usually the sherds are in great number (like for the find from Jurilovca), it was not possible to complete any vessel, the conclusion being that the pottery was broken elsewhere, only some sherds being placed in the pits.

The body. Here are some things to be taken into consideration.

The number of individuals (complete or fragmentary) found in the complexes with human remains varies, but the most common situation seems to be, at the present moment, one pit (or other structures – like for instance the clay floors) containing one skeleton or rests that most probably come from a single

skeleton. Sixteen from the seventeen sites taken into discussion present this situation. There are also complexes with 2 individuals, complete or fragmentary (Babadag ?, Niculițel, Satu Nou), 3 (Babadag, Satu Nou?), 4 (Babadag, Suceveni), 5? (Niculițel), 15 (Jurilovca).

The disposition of the bodies show some particularities. While in the rectangular and some of the bell-shaped pits the skeletons are placed on the bottom, in quite a lot of cases for the bell-shaped pits they are placed in the filling. This fact could be a strong argument for the re-use of some containers, previously used as storage pits.

The age. There are present individuals from children to advanced classes of age.

The sex. For the situations where it exists an anthropological analysis, it was noticed there are present men as well as women.

The treatment of the body. There could be only one case of cremation, with the bones placed under a dish (Cat. No. 1.2), but the situation is very uncertain. As long as there was no anthropological analysis for that find, it is not sure if the bones were really human. All the other finds indicate inhumation or other modalities of treatment. The differences in the state of preservation of the bodies seem to point to the fact that more than one way of dealing with the bodies of the dead were in use in the same time. Some of the bodies found in pits are complete and articulated, indicating rather that the deceased were placed inside soon after their death. In other cases there are bodies in partial articulation or disarticulated parts. These situations point to a treatment in more than one step, probably with the placement of the bodies in open air, until total or partial disappearance of the flesh. The fact that some finds consist in complete limbs, parts of ribcage or a skull still connected to the upper vertebrae seem to represent an argument in the favor of this idea, parts of the bodies being replaced inside pits before complete disarticulation could take place.

The alignment of the bodies does not look like following special rules. Unfortunately, this aspect is often neglected when the finds are published, so the image is incomplete. Still, for the N-S alignment normally the head is to the north.

The deposition is more frequently on one side, in this cases the position being flexed, or on the back, often with the knees flexed, then collapsed. If there are more than one in a pit, the bodies seem to be placed in order to face each other (Babadag, Suceveni). When deposited on one side the hands are usually placed in front of the face or under chin, when deposited on the back the hands are alongside the body or placed on the torso. In some cases also, one hand is placed on the face. At Satu Nou there is an interesting situation, with some of the bodies being deposited on one side, with the face down.

The cause of death is in most cases impossible to be determined, but usually there are no signs of violent death. Exceptions so far seem to be one individual from Babadag (Cat. No. 1.9), - one of the skulls from the pit showing *perimortem* signs of violence, with no recovery of the bone, and 2 of the individuals in the great pit from Jurilovca, also with blows in the head. For this last example, it could be a question if the arrowheads found inside the pit were really part of the inventory or were at the beginning in the flesh of some of the bodies placed there.

Now, after reviewing the information we presently held, some questions arise: how do we have to look at this situation? Must the idea of human sacrifices “be taken seriously into consideration”, as claimed by some archaeologists (Sîrbu 1994: 86)? Should we consider these complexes as “no ordinary graves”, but places for individuals that could not be treated after usual rites and rituals, and implying even “ritual human sacrifices” (Irimia/Conovici 1997: 87)?

The problem is that, like many times, questions lead to new questions. If these are the exceptions, where is the rule? Where was a place for the dead in the Babadag culture? It is quite certain that our view is still biased by the state of the research and unsatisfactory publication, but still it is quite strange to have so far almost only exceptions. So, at the present moment, it seems that what is usually considered to be exception would constitute rather the rule. And this also because, in our opinion, at this point the idea of human sacrifices is quite difficult to be sustained with the present arguments. There are very few signs of *perimortem* violence determined through anthropological analysis, and none of them can be connected to the idea of human sacrifice beyond any doubt.

What seems to have led to expressing the opinion that these complexes with human remains can be the result of sacrifice or out of ordinary rites and rituals is mainly the *strangeness* (if we are allowed to use this term) of the discussed situations. In other words, placing the dead inside a necropolis would be the norm, and the normal situation, for anything else being necessary a different explanation. But is this always the reality? For many parts of Europe and for different chronological frames archaeologists came to the conclusion that the population is underrepresented in “normal” graveyards, that many funerary rites must have been rather discreet, leaving no archaeological traces; that when traces are found they often challenge the old ideas about the treatment reserved to the deceased, implying a series of steps, like exposure, de-fleshing, and manipulation of the bones. The very image of death is challenged: it ceases to be a moment by becoming a series of transformations, a long journey of the deceased from one world to another, from one social status to another.

Summing up all the information available at this moment regarding the treatment of the deceased in the Babadag culture, maybe it is time to turn to the question asked before and try a tentative answer. So, where is a place for the dead in the view of this people? The dead are considered as still a part of the community, they remain among the living.

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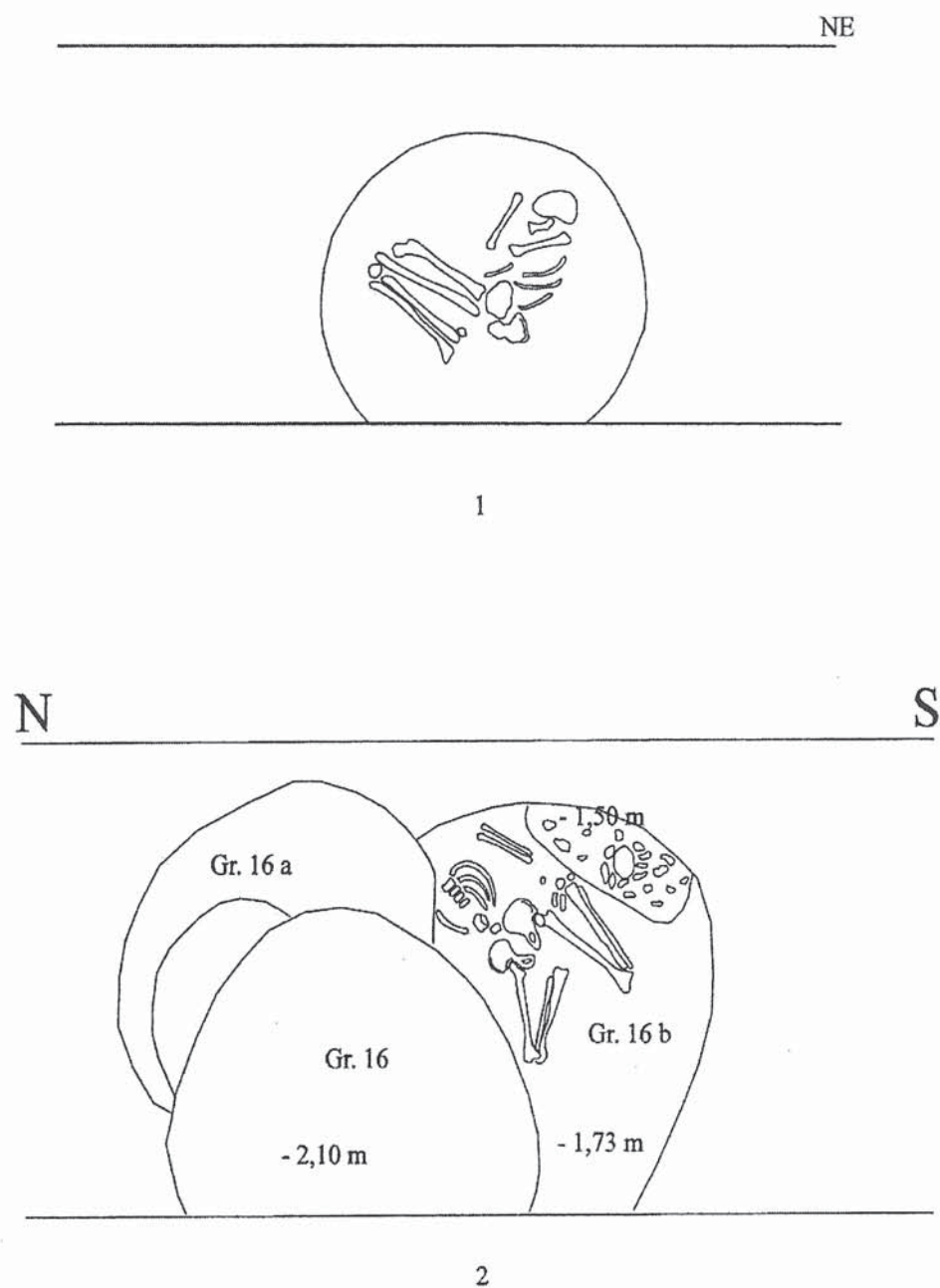


Fig. 1: Babadağ 1963; 2. Babadağ 1965 (Archive S. Morintz).

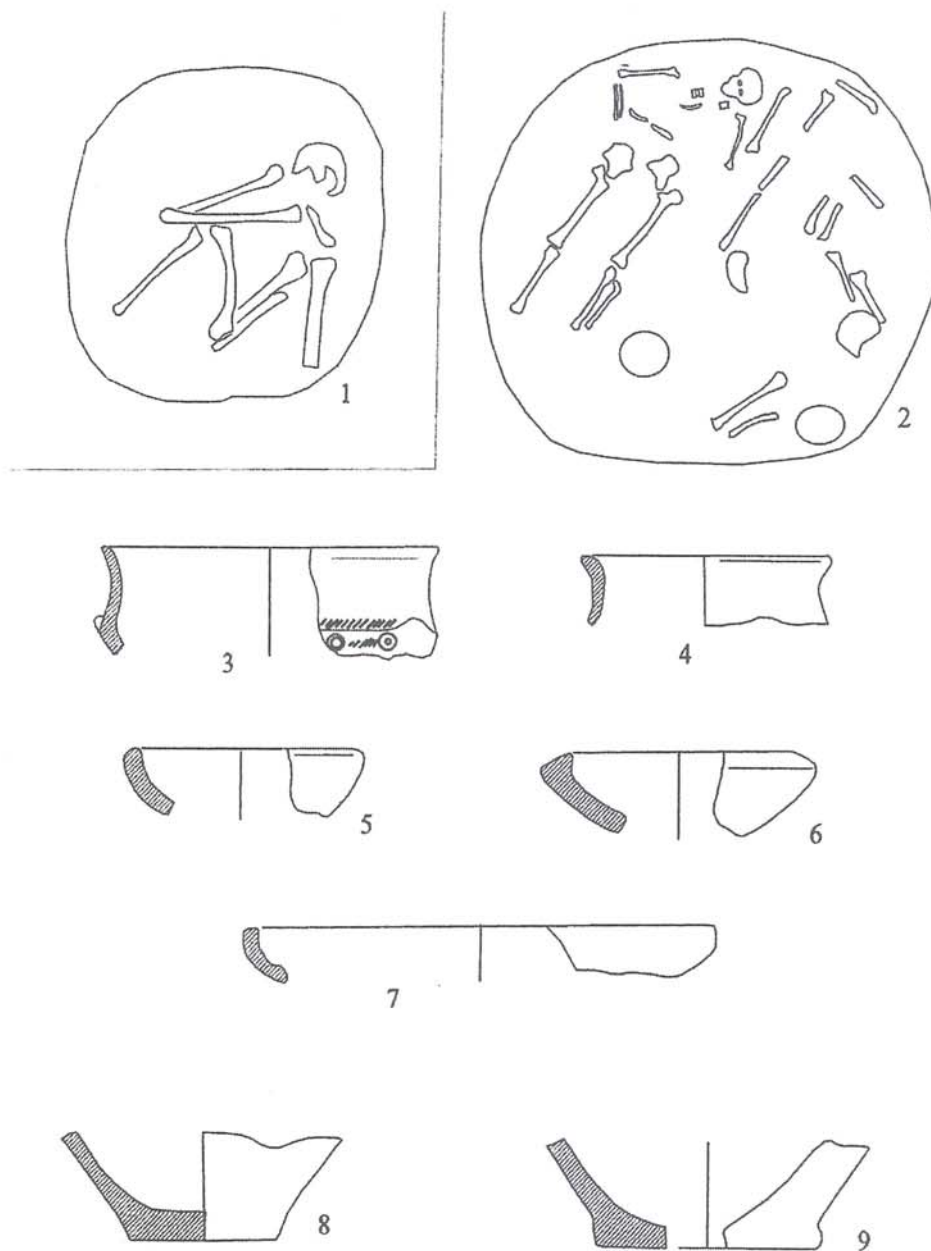


Fig. 2: Niculitel "Cornet" - 1988. 1. Pit 2; 2. Pit 3, 3-9 Pottery from the pits (After Jugănaru/Topoleanu 1994).

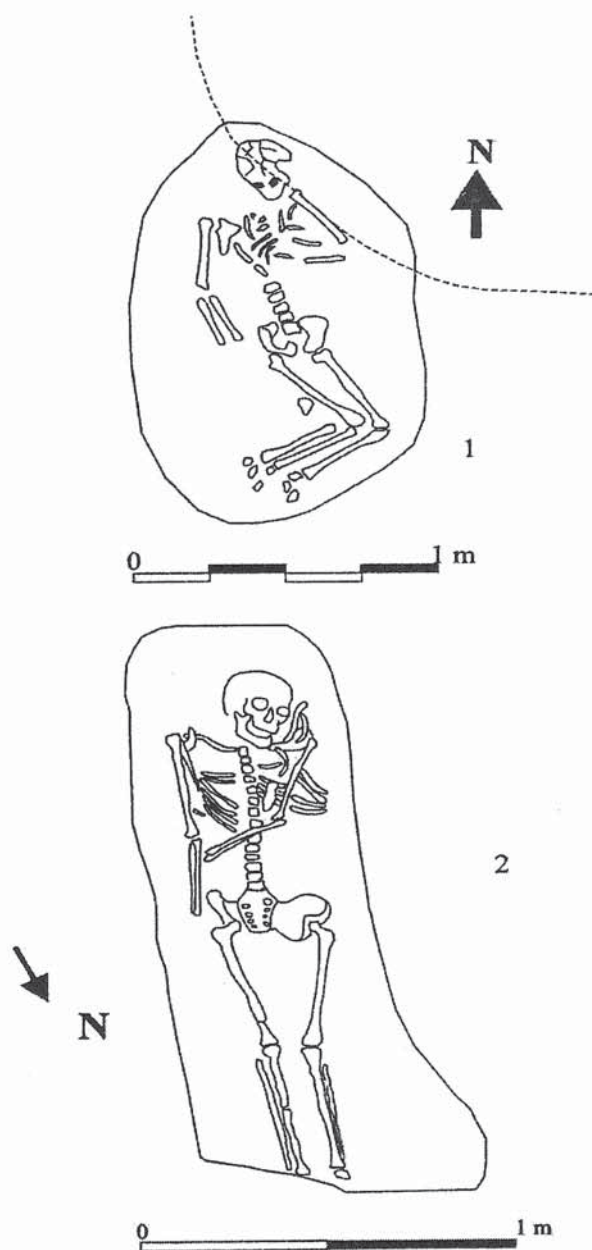


Fig. 3: 1. Rasova "Malul Roșu" (After Irimia 1974); 2. Siliștea "Conac" (After Sirbu/Pandrea 1994).

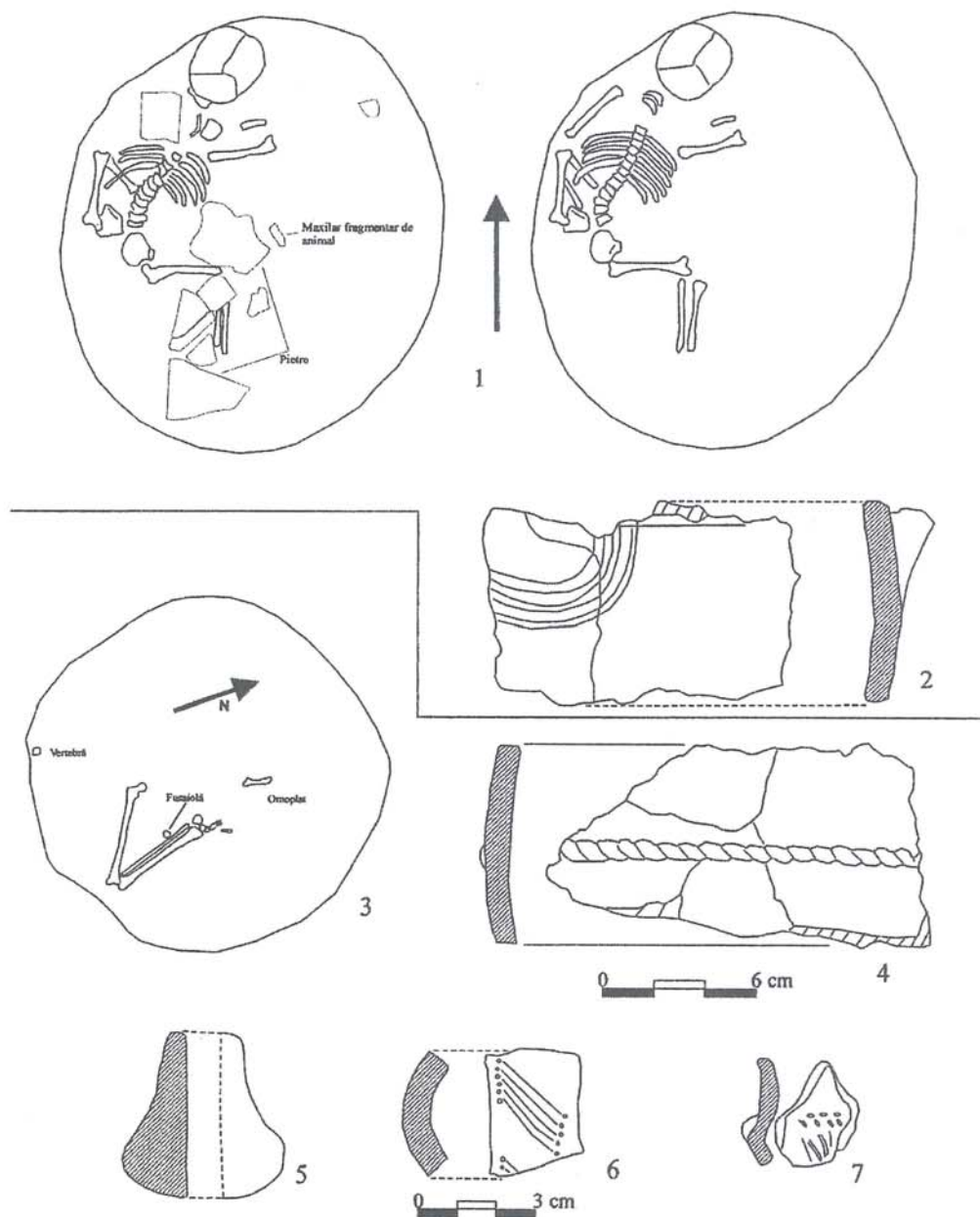


Fig. 4: Babadağ 1963; 2. Babadağ 1965 (Archive S. Morintz).

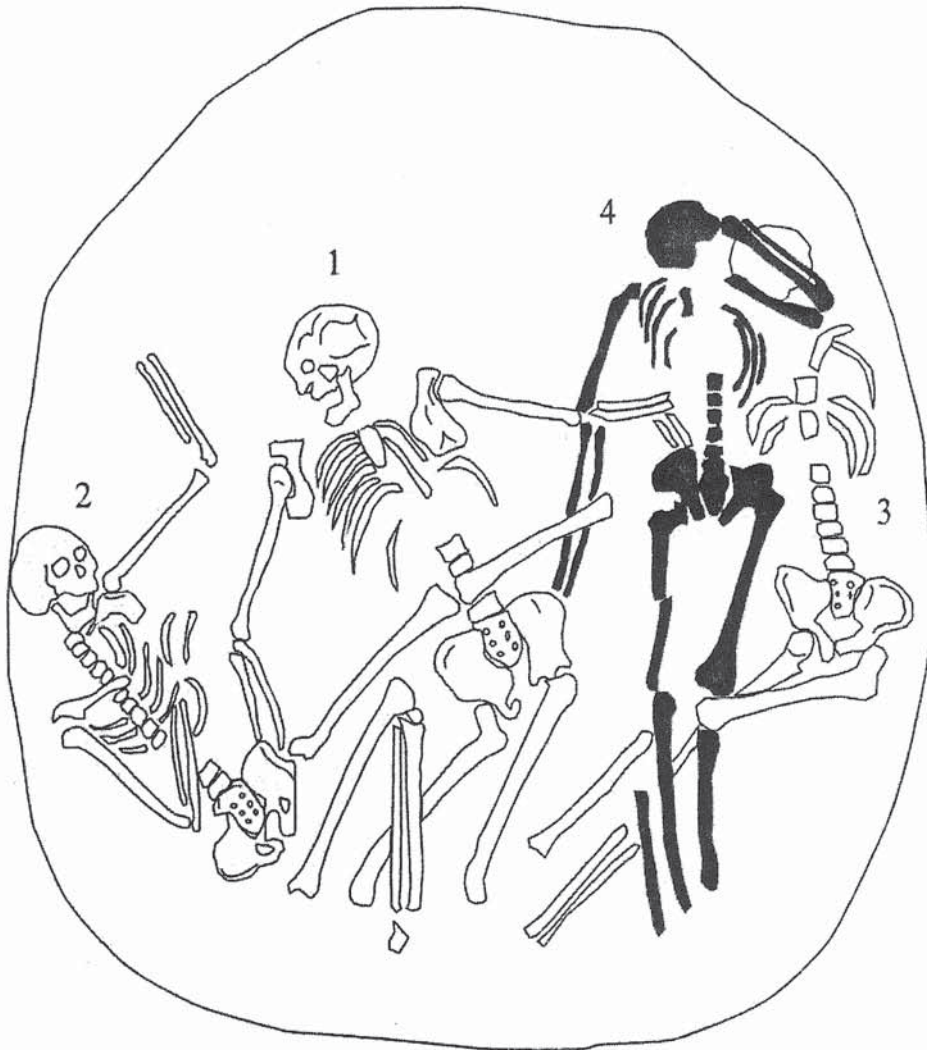


Fig. 5: Suceveni (After Dragomir 1996) - drawing after photo.