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The Second Cemetery from Sultana - *Malu Roșu* ?

Some hypothetical considerations

Cătălin LAZĂR*

Abstract: *In the year 1974, during the research of the IVth century A.D. necropolis, in the northeastern edge of it, was discovered a Gumelnița grave by Constantin Isăcescu. That area was 300 m south of the Sultana-Malu Roșu tell settlement, near the irrigation channel. The grave contained a skeleton in crouched position, oriented N-S, and have as inventory a polished stone chisel. In our opinion this grave may have belonged to a second cemetery from Sultana-Malu Roșu tell settlement.*

Rezumat: *În anul 1974, în timpul cercetării necropolei de sec. al IV-lea, în zona de NE s-a descoperit un mormânt de înhumatie atribuit culturii Gumelnița. Zona respectivă se află amplasată la 300 m S de tell-ul de la Sultana-Malu Roșu, în apropierea canalului de irigație. Mormântul conținea un schelet în poziție chircită, orientat N-S, ce avea drept inventar funerar o herminetă trapezoidală realizată din piatră șlefuită. În opinia noastră această descoperire poate aparține unei a doua necropole a așezării de la Sultana-Malu Roșu.*

Keywords: *Eneolithic, Gumelnița culture, cemetery, burials.*

Cuvinte cheie: *eneolithic, cultura Gumelnița, necropolă, morminte.*

The archaeological research is no longer just about digging, but involves the contribution of several disciplines (biology, geology, anthropology etc.). A true modern archaeological research is impossible without interdisciplinary approach. Besides these, sometimes the study of the archives and of unpublished archaeological documentation can bring us some new data on the some oldest archaeological discoveries. Therefore in this article we intend to present a series of data retrieved from the archives of the "Teohari Antonescu" Museum (Giurgiu County). All these data are about old archaeological excavations made at Sultana site, and they are presented in this paper in conjunction with a series of archaeological and topographical surveys made in 2010.

◆ Site Description and History of the Research

The archaeological site of Sultana (commune of Mănăstirea, Călărași County, South-East Romania), is a special case for the Romanian research of the Eneolithic. It was the first Gumelnița tell submitted to scientific research, in the 1920s. After 1975 the site was researched almost entirely, but the results of these researches have only been partly published (I. Andrieșescu 1924; C. Isăcescu 1984a, 1984b; R. Andreescu 2001). The archaeological investigations were resumed in 2001, focusing initially on the tell settlement. After 2002 there was started a new project with the purpose of identifying the settlement's necropolis. This objective was achieved in 2006 when the first graves were found on the high terrace of the lake Mostiștea. Between 2006 and 2010, 36 graves were researched (R. Andreescu, C. Lazăr 2008; C. Lazăr *et alii* 2008, 2009).

However, besides the Gumelnița culture site, in the area of Sultana village are attested a series of settlements and cemeteries belonging to the Boian culture and other habitations from the Bronze age, Iron age and early Middle Ages periods (G. Trohani, D. Șerbănescu 1978; D. Șerbănescu 2002; R. Andreescu *et alii* 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006). Also there are some settlements and a necropolis from the IVth century A.D. (C. Isăcescu, B. Ionescu 1976).

Among them stands the necropolis from the IVth century A.D., discovered in 1966 and researched by Constantin Isăcescu in early 1970s. It was identified at 200 m NW of the Sultana village and about 300 m SW of the Lake Mostiștea at some works at the irrigation channel (C. Isăcescu, B. Ionescu 1976, p. 181). In 2010, the research conducted in the "Teohari Antonescu" Museum archives have led to the discovery of the excavation notebooks of Constantin Isăcescu. In the 1974 campaign notebook, there was a note about the interesting discovery made during the research of the

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IVth century A.D. necropolis. In one section made to identify the northern boundary of the necropolis was discovered an inhumation grave from the Gumelnița culture (C. Isăcescu 1974).

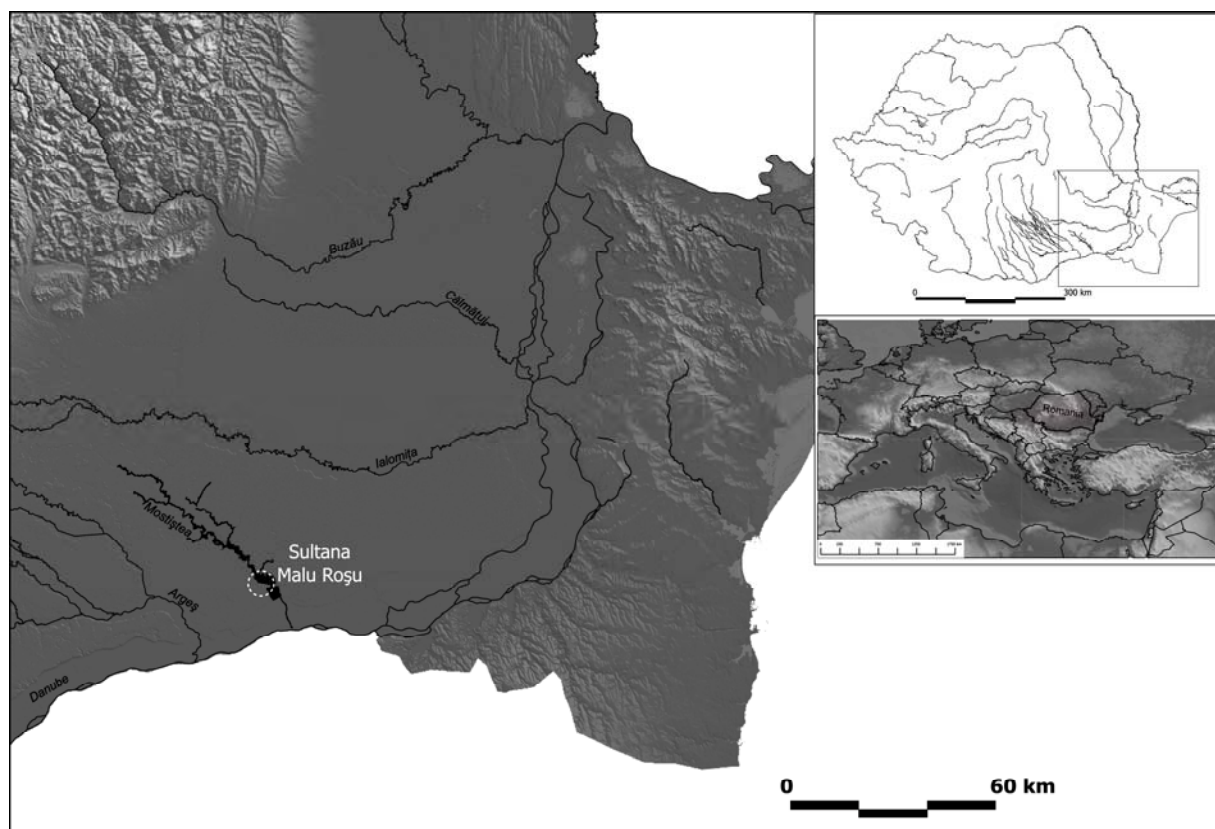


Fig. 1. Map of Romania and location of Sultana-*Malu Roșu* site.
Harta României și localizarea sitului Sultana-*Malu Roșu*.

◆ Results and Discussions

The grave discovered in 1974 contained the skeleton laid in a fetal position, oriented N–S. One of the arms was bent with the hand towards the skull. In the hand, near the skull, was discovered a polished stone chisel, typical for the Gumelnița culture (C. Isăcescu 1974). The discovery of this grave is important because it can lead to an interesting hypothesis: the existence of the second cemetery belonging to the Sultana-*Malu Roșu* tell settlement.

First of all, this hypothesis is based on the place where the discovery was made: 300 m S of the Sultana-*Malu Roșu* tell, beyond the valley that separates at ESE the settlement from the high terrace of the Mostiștea lake, approx. 10-15 m W of the irrigation channel (fig. 2-4). Previously in this area were not known Gumelnița materials. The area of the hypothetical second cemetery from Sultana-*Malu Roșu* is 22500 m² and is located at a distance of 400 m SE from the cemetery I.

On the other hand, taking into account the remoteness of this area and the distance to the first cemetery (approx. 400 m), we believe that the grave discovered by Constantin Isăcescu does not belong to the cemetery I from Sultana-*Malu Roșu*, but to other cemetery (II), unresearched yet.

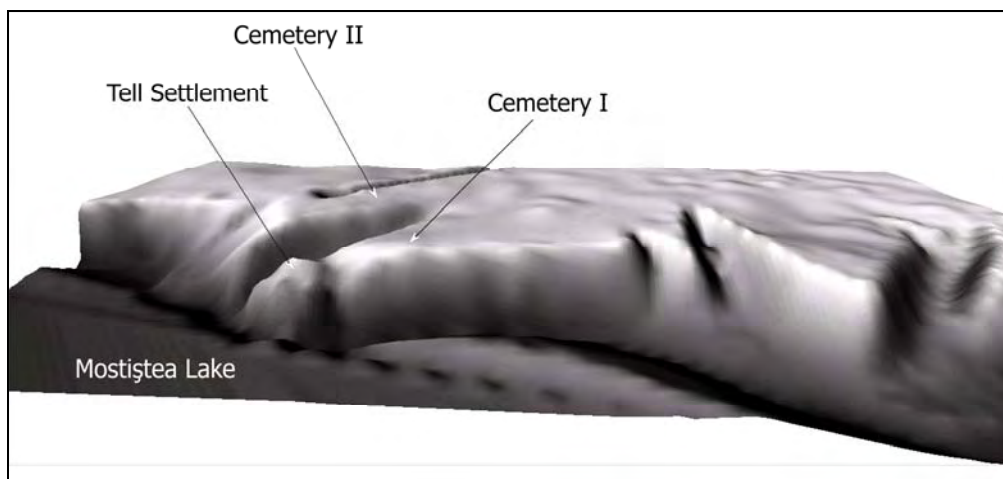


Fig. 2. Location of Sultana-*Malu Roșu* settlement and cemeteries.
Localizarea așezării de tip *tell* și a necropolelor de la Sultana-*Malu Roșu*.

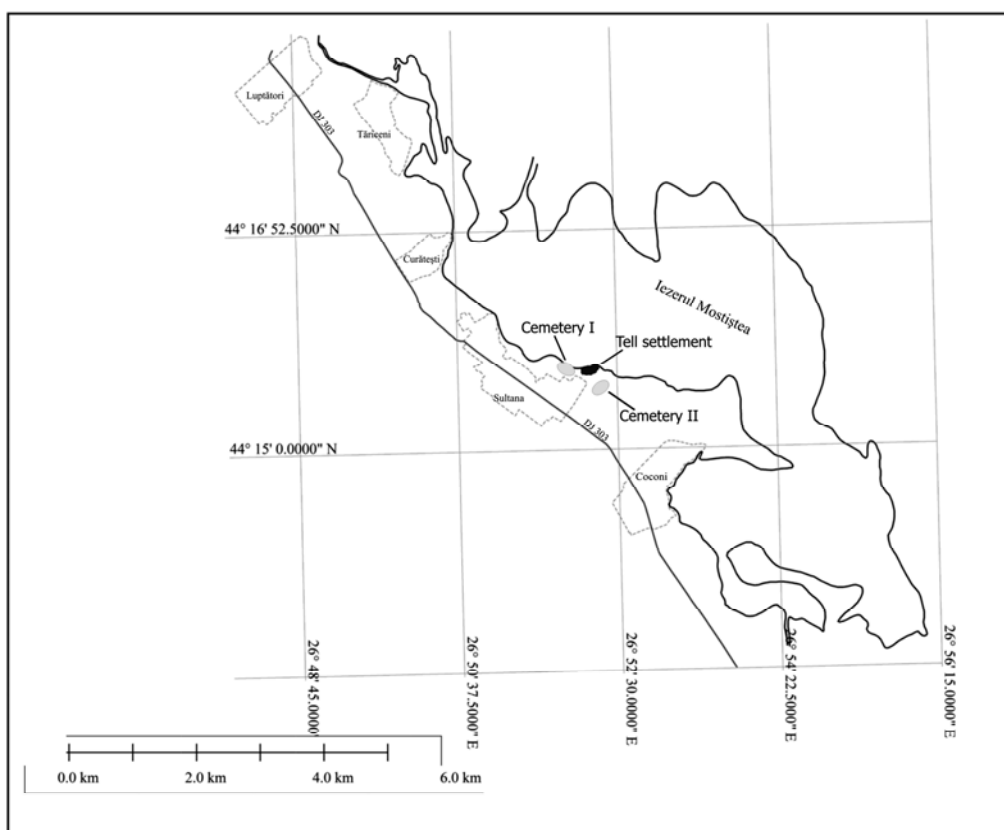


Fig. 3. Location of Sultana-*Malu Roșu* settlement and cemeteries.
Localizarea așezării de tip *tell* și a necropolelor de la Sultana-*Malu Roșu*.

However, the hypothetical situation from Sultana-*Malu Roșu* is not singular. So, we know other cases from the Gumelnița culture where we have two cemeteries for a single settlement. Here we have the Gumelnița eponymous site (Călărași County), where there are 2 cemeteries: the first necropolis is on the high Danube terrace, at 250 m E from the tell settlement (Gumelnița I) and the second one is on the same terrace, but at 950 m NW from the tell, in the intersection area of the Danube terrace with a Valley, called the Big Valey (Gumelnița II) (D. Șerbănescu 1985, p. 33-34; C. Lazăr 2001, 2010). Similar associations of a single tell settlement with two cemeteries is known at

Chirnogi (Călărași County). Unfortunately this second case is still unpublished (D. Șerbănescu 1982-1992, 1988, p. 2-6; C. Lichter 2001, p. 398; C. Lazăr 2001, 2010).

Based on this information, in 2010 campaign, we made an archaeological sondage for verification (Son 2/2010 – 10 x 2 m). It was placed in the area indicated by Constantin Isăcescu, at 25 m W from the irrigation channel. Unfortunately, this area was heavily affected by the development works at the irrigation channel in the early 70s. So between -0.10 m and -0.70 m, immediately below the vegetal layer, it was found a compact yellow soil layer, resulting from channel excavation. The arrangements made in the early 70s are also demonstrated by the study of aerial photographs and orthophotomaps of the area. The sections made by Constantin Isăcescu for the research of the IVth century A.D. necropolis (C. Isăcescu, B. Ionescu 1976, p. 181) are not visible on any of them.

Unfortunately in the Son2/2010 none archaeological complexes were discovered. We found just ceramic materials (potsherds) for the Bronze age and IVth century A.D. periods.

In the next years we will carry out other archaeological sondages to identify prehistoric graves.

◆ Conclusions

The discovery of the second cemetery from Sultana-*Malu Roșu* can complete the image about the funerary practices and eschatological conceptions of the Kodjadermen-Gumelnița-Karanovo VI communities.

Unfortunately the available data are minimal so far, which does not allow us any comments on the hypothetical necropolis from Sultana-*Malu Roșu* II. Only further research done on a much larger scale and possibly the entire surface of the terrace, will clarify the situation of this possible prehistoric cemetery.



Fig. 4. Location of the hypothetical necropolis II from Sultana-*Malu Roșu*.
Localizarea ipoteticei necropole II de la Sultana-*Malu Roșu*.

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