

Session title: BARROW KNOWLEDGE: RITUAL PRACTICES AND MONUMENTAL IDEAS

Organizers: Mads Kähler Holst, University of Aarhus, Denmark
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Time: Thursday afternoon

Room:

SESSION ABSTRACT:

The session aims to explore ideas and knowledge expressed and transmitted in the architecture of barrows and in the associated burial events.

There has for some years now been an increased focus on the detailed study of the history of individual monuments, stimulated by both changed theoretical emphasis and improved excavation methods. These studies have revealed complex and varied activity sequences and provided insights into ideas associated with the barrows. Thereby the significance of the monument and its accompanying activities in the development and dissemination of constructional and cosmological knowledge has been emphasized. At the same time, the changed focus and the disclosure of considerable variation in the histories of monuments represent a distinct contrast to the concept of the barrows as expressions of geographically widespread common ideas as in theories of Megalithic cultures and Kurgan-waves.

It is the intention of this session to provide a basis for a general discussion of the character of the knowledge and ideas associated with barrows and the possibilities of approaching these aspects through the detailed studies of the monuments and their activity sequences. It is hoped that the session will stimulate a debate on

- how knowledge and ideas were transmitted between monuments,
- how the local uses and developments of ideas of the individual monuments relate to the barrow as a geographically and chronologically widespread phenomenon and
- the validity of the concept of common ideas of the barrow.

Paper abstracts:

INTRODUCTION: VARIED IDEAS AND COMMON PURPOSES

Mads Kähler Holst, University of Aarhus, Denmark

Barrows incorporate different forms of interwoven knowledge and ideas. There is the technical knowledge required to construct the monuments and organize the work, there are the ideological and religious ideas and practices referred to and performed at the burials and in the monument architecture, and after the construction of the monument there is the historical and genealogical significance maintained or assigned to the monument. As the corpus of the archaeological data on barrows grows, variations and similarities in various aspects of the practices and designs of barrow

monuments appear still more clearly. That allows renewed considerations of the character of the past barrow knowledge; how the different forms of knowledge were combined and how the knowledge was transmitted, modified and converted. An analysis of the Late Neolithic and Early Bronze Age barrow tradition in South Scandinavia is presented as an example of an attempt to characterize the structure of barrow knowledge. Particular emphasis is put on:

- 1) The relation between changeable and the stabile aspects of the barrow practices.
- 2) The significance of the principles of participation in the barrow construction for the dissemination and harmonization of the barrow construction, and the ensuing consequences of group size and frequency of the barrow construction.
- 3) The significance of the technical requirements in stabilizing and maintaining the knowledge.

LONG BARROW VERSUS ROUND BARROW: CONTINUITY OF IDEAS?

Tereza Křišťová, University of West Bohemia, Czech Republic

Petr Křišťuf, University of West Bohemia, Czech Republic

Ladislav Šmejda, University of West Bohemia, Czech Republic

In Central Europe, the architecture of barrows underwent significant transformation during the Eneolithic period (4500/4400 – 2300/2200 BC). The former elongated barrows were replaced by groups of burial mounds with a circular ground plan. When and why did this change take place? Can we trace any signs of continual development from one form to another? Did these different types of barrows represent the same ideas encoded in the mortuary practices of the later prehistory? What was the meaning of the disparate shapes? Is the monumentality the only connecting attribute between them or do they share more profound structural similarities? These are the questions which will be scrutinized on the basis of available evidence from the Czech Republic and selectively from other European regions.

THE IDEAS AND KNOWLEDGE OF THE MEGALITHS - EXPRESSED IN THE ARCHITECTURE

Torben Dehn, The Heritage Agency of Denmark, Denmark

By the restoration and investigation of the Danish megalithic tombs the construction and the architecture has been closely studied. Combined with detailed studies of the history of the individual monuments a number of significant elements has been pointed out, par example the dualism. Certain features in the building process, too, illustrate the idea of the monument. The paper describes examples of these elements and interpretations are suggested.

THE RIGHT STUFF: THE PURPOSEFUL SELECTION OF BUILDING MATERIALS FOR PASSAGE GRAVES IN STONE AGE DENMARK

Jørgen Westphal, The National Museum of Denmark, Denmark

An intensive campaign of restoration and investigation of megalithic tombs in Denmark have been undertaken during the last two decades. This effort has provided a large database of observations

of hitherto hidden construction features in a number of megaliths. It appears that these construction features, although slightly different from monument to monument, leads to the same physical properties of the tombs. This pursuit of certain attributes can be interpreted as a reflection of spiritual beliefs of the afterlife.

THE EARLIEST BURIAL MOUNDS IN THE BLACK SEA STEPPE: THE BEGINNING OF A TRADITION

Yuri Rassamakin, Institute of Archaeology Kyiv, Ukraine

In the beginning of the Eneolithic (the Middle of the V. Mill. BC) a new burial tradition appeared in the Black Sea steppe zone. In contrast to the collective Neolithic flat cemeteries with skeletons in an extended supine position, it had individual burials in flexed position and in separate pits. These burials were covered on the surface by small mounds of stones or/and soil. It was the beginning of the so-called “kurgan tradition”.

The basic question is: why did the burial rite change at this time. For an answer to this question we must study the problem in context of the development of the Early Eneolithic pastoral population between two early agricultural worlds. The first is presented by the Balkan-Carpathian cultures (Karanovo VI-Gumelnița-Varna and also Cucuteni-Trypillia); the second is the Northern Caucasian Premaikop culture. In this context we have some basic aspects to investigate:

1. economic relations between different cultural worlds as development of the prestige exchange (gold, copper, flint etc.);
2. changes in the social structure of the steppe population, the origin of the steppe elite groups as active power in the long distance prestige exchange with both agricultural worlds (the prestige burial assemblages show this clearly);
3. “Ideological” changes in the steppe elite groups under influences of the agricultural sacred traditions (individual burial rite in a flexed position, vessels in the graves).

We can propose, that a new burial tradition under mounds in the beginning of its development was a social adaptation of some steppe elite groups in the new cultural and economic reality.

Later, in the Middle Eneolithic, the development of the mound tradition connected to the steppe - Cucuteni-Trypillia - Maikop relations. In this period we have real cult monumental constructions with soil, stone circles and ditches which covered the steppe burials of the different cultures.

EARLY BRONZE AGE BARROWS IN TRANSYLVANIA: THEIR ORIGIN AND EVOLUTION

Horia Ciugudean, Muzeul Unirii Alba Iulia, Romania

The present paper is a review of the state of research on EBA barrows in the Transylvanian region. There are two main areas which may be separated inside this territory, each of them well-defined by its cultural evolution. The first one is the south-eastern corner of the Carpathian basin, dominated by the Schneckenberg culture, while the second is the Apuseni Mountains, with the Livezile – Copăceni - Soimuș cultural sequence.

The cist-graves with contracted skeletons are known from early finds of Zimnicea type, usually placed under small mounds. This burial rite was also used by the Schneckenberg folks, according to the present state of research. Cremation graves in stone slabs were found in the burial mounds from Brăduț, the pottery being close to the Jigodin group.

The burial mounds with stone coverings of the Apuseni Mountains are better known due to the last two decades of systematic research in the cemeteries of Ampoita, Livezile, Cheile Aiudului, Telna and Meteș. Both dismembered skeletons and burials in anatomic connection are known in this tumuli. Cremation graves start to be present by the end of EBA I, two such graves being discovered in the last phase of the Ampoita – Peret cemetery and one in the periphery of the tumulus from Meteș.

A different funeral pattern is known from the Transylvanian Plateau, where several large earthen mounds are known in the Mureș valley and its tributary streams. Some of them could be contemporary with Late Aeneolithic/Early Bronze Age groups. The recent finds from Sárrétudvari – Órhalom in eastern Hungary clearly proved that Pit-grave complex has close connections to the Livezile group in Transylvania. The calibrated ¹⁴C age of grave 4 and 9 from the Sárrétudvari – Órhalom kurgan is very close to the one of Livezile – Baia.

The origin of tumulus-burial practice in Transylvanian EBA is still a debated problem, as it is for the whole Carpathian – Balkan area. The adoption of this funeral monument from eastern Kurgan people was and it is still largely supported by many scholars. But the small mounds with stone coverings of the EBA people could be of local origin as well, from Transylvania to the Adriatic shore. Extensive research is still needed to find an accurate answer to this problem

THE TRANSMISSION AND MODIFICATION OF SUPRA-REGIONAL CONCEPTS IN LOCAL BARROW GROUPS IN THE NETHERLANDS

Quentin P. J. Bourgeois, Leiden University, The Netherlands

A diachronic study of large barrow groups in the Netherlands shows that each group is different in its own right. Clusters of contemporaneous barrows a few kilometres apart show distinct and highly differing practices. While at one group one type of surrounding feature is used in a certain way, at another group they are used in a completely different fashion. These choices indicate the conscious actions of local communities to set themselves apart from other barrow groups. Yet the actions they use are fixed in a rigid language and is part of supra-regionally carried identities that are unchangeable. The interplay between both the local groups and the supra-regional identities is what constitutes the individual nature of each barrow group.

CHANGING LANDSCAPE BY EXPRESSING MONUMENTAL IDEAS. HALLSTATT BARROWS AND HILLFORTS IN WESTERN HUNGARY – A COMPARATIVE STUDY

Elizabet Jerem, Archaeolingua Foundation, Hungary

This paper is a contribution to the idea that Iron Age populations expressed their feeling towards monumentality in using special burial rites and building fortified sites. The association and organisation of living space and tumulus cemeteries provided us with new ideas about contemporary planning and communication. With appropriate examples, we will demonstrate how

aerial photography, extended field surveys and large scale excavations led to a more precise view about the number of barrows and to the discovery of new sites. Grave architecture, constructional consistency, the realization of the whole burial process as well as the application of rules by dressing for the afterlife and the provision of different sets of drinks and food in graves will be discussed. Our aim is to follow the development of grave forms and the association of grave goods during the Hallstatt period in huge tumulus cemeteries and compare the results in a wider context. Finally we will focus on the problem of how these monuments changed the landscape and how we can preserve and present these relics in their original setting. The overview will be wound up by a discussion on the current perception of the barrow concept and the survival of the idea of sacred places.

REUSING FUNERARY SPACE: THE CASE OF NORTH THRACIAN BARROWS (5TH – 3RD CENTURIES BC)

Magdalena Dutescu, Digital Domain, Romania
Dan Stefan, Vector Studio, Romania
Monica Nicolaescu, Digital Domain, Romania

In this paper the authors will discuss certain aspects concerning the use and reuse of funerary space in the case of North-Thracian barrows dated between 5th to 3rd centuries BC. This behavior is seen as an indicator for the importance, in these very competitive and hierarchized communities, of the affiliation to a certain kin group in the process of claiming authority. Kinship relations and status inheritance are strongly indicated in the case of the Thracian princely graves, emphasizing that this was in fact, the decisive mechanism in the ascribing and maintenance of social positions. As archaeological discoveries prove, certain barrows, especially those containing built chambers, represented places, not only for repeated burials, but for other rituals implying funerary *symposia* and ritual dismemberment of the dead. Barrows are seen as dynamical monuments, developing both in time and space with an active role in the communities which identified themselves with them. In opposition with traditional views which associate Thracian barrows with individual identities of princes and chieftains, we rather point out for a connection with a collective identity of larger groups.

CHRISTIAN CHAPEL OVER PAGAN MOUND? HOW KRAKUS MOUND WAS USED IN MIDDLE AGES

Leszek P. Slupecki, Rzeszow University, Poland

Krakus mound, dominating over Krakow since ca 8th c. A.D. when it was build, had and still have a great importance in symbolic valuation of the space in the Krakow area. In the Middle Ages quite frequently in the neighborhood of important great mounds churches were built (e.g. Gamla Uppsala, Jelling, Borre, Tshernigov). It is well known that in Krakow from at least mid 13th century in the proximity of Krakus mound a St Benedict chapel was built (existing up today). On two drawings from 16th and early 17th century there are, however, traces of a strange structure standing on the top of the mound itself. I suspected firstly that it was just a trace of a small Christian chapel built in the form of small obelisk (very typical for Polish countryside, sometimes situated over barrows), enlarged on the drawings out of proportion because of painters

negligence. After my visit to Nin (20 km from Zadar) where I found a small early medieval St Nicolas church built on the top of a great prehistoric mound I understand that my interpretation was wrong. Coming back to the Polish drawings I discovered there a similar structure standing over Krakus mound. What's more, it is possible to explain some traces discovered during excavations on the top of the mound as relics of fundamentals of a structure about 7 m long. The St Nicolas church standing on the top of the mound in Nin has a similar size.

DISCUSSION

Poster abstract:

THE CONTINUITY OF PREHISTORIC TUMULI: A PERCEPTION OF BARROWS DURING PREHISTORY

Petr Krištuf, University of West Bohemia, Czech Republic
Ladislav Rytíř, University of West Bohemia, Czech Republic

This poster presents possible models of prehistoric people's attitude towards burial mounds. We shall focus on tumulus cemeteries of Bronze and Iron Ages from the West and South Bohemia. The research is based on non-destructive or low-destructive archaeological techniques as well as on published excavations carried out by the mid-20th century.