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## INTENTIONAL INTERFERENCE ON THE SKELETONS OF THE OTOMANI PEOPLE FOUND AT THE CULTIC OBJECT IN SPIŠSKÝ ŠTVRTOK

The skeletal remains found at the fortified Otomani settlement in Spišský Štvrtok, district of Spišská Nová Ves, have furnished besides basic anthropological data also valuable information on the spiritual standard of the contemporary civilization.

The skeletons, respectively their remains, were found on the bottom of the object dug into the gravel-sand and rocky ground of the settlement (object 40/74, Vladár 1972). The exact documentation of the find-circumstances in situ, the lifting of all bone fragments from the object as well as the character of the fractures and cuttings in the bones enabled us to interpret the recorded facts in a relatively objective way. The complete evaluation of the finds from the given object with regards to the situation in the settlement enhances our knowledge of the Middle Bronze Age Society on the territory of Slovakia. There are concrete proofs of the spiritual culture in a society with an adequate social hierarchy.

The character of the finds and the find-circumstances indicate that it was a sacrificial place. It is not the objective of this paper to bring exhausting proofs supporting this presumption, we shall limit ourselves to presenting the facts concerning the anthropological material, i.e. the skeletal remains of the human sacrifices.

As I have mentioned the sacrificial place is the only object dug into the ground of the settlement. We have found here two groups of skeletons with various traces of intentional interference. The more numerous group marked with letter A, formed by five complete and two incomplete skeletons, lay on the bottom of the object, in its south-western part, looking like an oval pit. It had 120–140 cm in diameter and was 20–40 cm deep under the bottom of the sacrificial place. The situation of the skele-

tons in situ suggests unequivocally that the victims have been dumped to the pit. Other two skeletons, situated in more or less stretched position and marked as group B were found at the central part of the northern wall. One skeleton lay with its face down and its long bones of the shins were missing. In contrast to the skeletons of group A we found at group B fragments of a reconstructable pot. The situation of the skeletons, however, suggests that they had been carelessly dumped.

The skeletons of altogether nine individuals with traces of intentional interference have been lifted — some of these traces have the character of lethal injuries. Three skulls have vestiges of cut wounds. Most fractures and splittings have evidently been caused by stones falling on these individuals, respectively on their cadavers, since they were covered with a large amount of rocks and stones. Intentional were also the injuries caused by cutting implements, respectively weapons. On interpreting the split fractures it is difficult to say anything about the causal basis of the studied effect since some of the bone fragments are missing.

The small fragments in most cases belong to the occipital region, facial skeleton and to the lateral parts of the neurocranium. From this fact we can presume that most blows were concentrated on the head. In group A the bones of the postcranial skeleton (especially the bones of the thorax) were also smashed. None of them showed, however, vestiges of cut wounds. Most of these fractures were caused probably by stones falling on the bodies of the victims.

Traces of larger intentional interference were found only in the skeletons of group A. The number, extent and probable effects of these blows (several lethal wounds on one skull) indicate the

ritual motivation of these killings. The skeletons of group B were only slightly damaged, though they had also traces of lethal wounds and skeleton No. 8 was found without the shin bone. On the other hand the stretched position of these skeletons, the limited extent of intentional wounds, the presence of funeral offerings and absence of stones suggest that their burial formed an act of piety. Their position in situ, however, differs from the burial customs of this period of prehistory.

As I have mentioned the skeletons of group A lay on the bottom of the pit formed by the basic impermeable or only slightly permeable rock substratum. On the other hand the filling of the pit was formed by permeable soils, yellow loess, a mixture of charcoals and soil, etc. Due to this fact the bottom of the shaft was almost permanently soaked by water. The bones lying below were almost always of darker hue.

On reconstructing the skeletons we realized that though many fragments fit together, they were of different hues. It is so probably due to various conditions of fossilization (*Tab. II - 2, 3* and *Tab. III - 2*). Most cut wounds (eight of them) were found on the skull of skeleton No. 1 belonging to a man of about 25 years of age. The longest of these cuts has 37 mm (*Tab. I I- 1*). These blows have characteristic orientation — they are always oblique to the surface of the skull. Almost each blow is accompanied by splitting off the corresponding part of the bone surface (*Tab. I - 3, Tab. II - 1*). From this fact follow further facts:

a) if the blow is accompanied by splitting-off the respective part of the bone surface, the blade of the cutting implement (weapon) had to hit the bone under a relatively large angle;

b) the blow with the implement (weapon) caused big pressure on both sides of the cut, i.e. the implement had large splitting effect;

c) the oblique blow caused splitting off the bone matter on the side of the smaller resistance, i.e. always between the external surface of the bone and the blade.

On studying the shape and overall character of the cut wounds it has been realized that in each case when the blow penetrates at least to half of the bone thickness one of its ends is perpendicular to the longitudinal axis of the cut. The transition between the cut and between the immediately adjoining surface of the bone is not continuous, it ends abruptly (*Tab. I - 2, 3; Tab. II - 1*). Such a blow can be inflicted only by a weapon whose blade ends abruptly (not like that of a sword e.g.). The degree of disintegration of the bone tissue indicates that big force had been concentrated on a small spot. All the cuts on the skulls look like wounds caused by an axe.

The discovery of the left half of the maxilla (found in the control wall — approximately at the centre of the object) is of extraordinary importance for the explanation of the purpose and character of the object containing human sacrifices. The fragment was discovered alongside of the foot bones of an adult (*Tab. IV - 1*). An exact description of the

find circumstances would be too lengthy, I shall confine myself to the most important facts. The right half of the maxilla was found together with fragments of the skull and thorax bones at the bottom of the pit under the complete skeletons of group A, covered with a layer of yellow loess. The fact that the left half of the maxilla from the wall and the right one among the group of bones marked as skeleton No. 7 (*Tab. IV - 2*) belong together (*Tab. IV - 3*) is of extraordinary importance.

The fact that two parts of the same maxilla were found at two different, considerably distant finding places cannot be explained by secondary interference since the bones marked as skeleton No. 7 were found under skeletons buried in their normal anatomical position.

Some skeletal fragments have not been preserved, though we have lifted even the smallest fragments with the utmost care. They could have not been absorbed fully by the soil since the preserved bone fragments show only slight marks of corrosion. Some missing bones, eventually their fragments had not been dumped to the sacrificial place (*Tab. II - 2, 3; Tab. III - 1*).

The filling of the pit with cadavers was completed within a relatively short space of time. It can be proved by the finding of the half maxilla buried at a comparatively distant place from the right half found under the skeletons of group A. The left maxilla, was dumped to the pit together with other bones subsequently.

As I have mentioned the sacrificial place contained the skeletons, respectively part of the skeletons of nine individuals. One skeleton belonged to a man, three to women and five to children. Let me mention the craniometric characteristics of the skulls: The neurocranium of the man was brachy-, ortho- and tapeinocranic and aristencephalic, the splanchnocranium was mesoprosopic, mesene, the orbits chamaeconch, the nose mesorrhine and the maxilla brachyuranic, the stature was medium-high. Two of the neurocrania of the women were brachyranic, the third was hyperbrachyranic, in one case chamaecranic. The capacity of two skulls has been calculated from the approximate dimensions — both are aristencephalic. We were able to evaluate metrically the splanchnocranium of one woman only — it is hypereuryprosopic and euryene. The orbits of two skulls were hypsiconch and one was mesoconch. Two of them had chamaerrhine noses and the third was leptorrhine. We could evaluate only one maxilla, it was brachyuranic. Two women were tall and the third was of medium-high stature.

I do not know from the literature any data concerning the physical characteristics of the people belonging to this culture. From the cultural horizons of the Middle Bronze Age settlements we know various finds of human skeletons and their parts (Chochol 1972 a, 1972 b, Jelínek 1954). They were almost all dumped instead of being buried according to the current ritual and they often bear traces of intentional interference. The settlements of the Maďarovce and Knovíz cultures con-



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TABLE I.

*Skeleton No. 1 - 1, 2 - traces of cut wounds on the occipital bone from the occipital view. The original length of the localized interference is 41 mm and the wound above it is 28 mm long. 3 - Cut wounds on the occipital squama - view from the norma basilaris.*

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TABLE II.

1 — Skeleton No. 1 — traces of a cut wound on the right parietal bone between the foramen and tuber parietale (minimum length 37 mm).

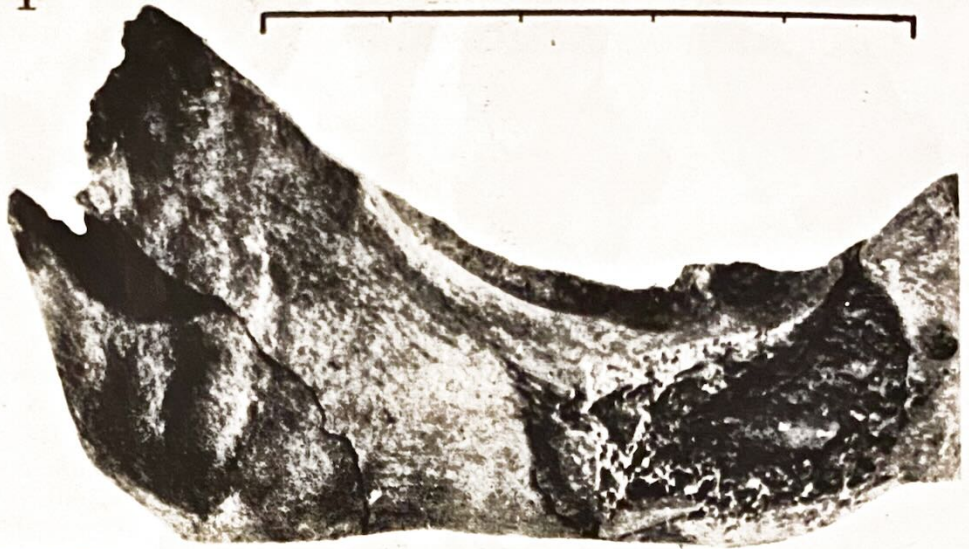
2, 3 — Skeleton No. 2 — fragments of the frontal, parietal and temporal bones (right) of different hues.

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all the bones are from the same site and are of the same age. The bones are of the same size and shape as those of the same species. The bones are of the same color and texture as those of the same species. The bones are of the same color and texture as those of the same species.

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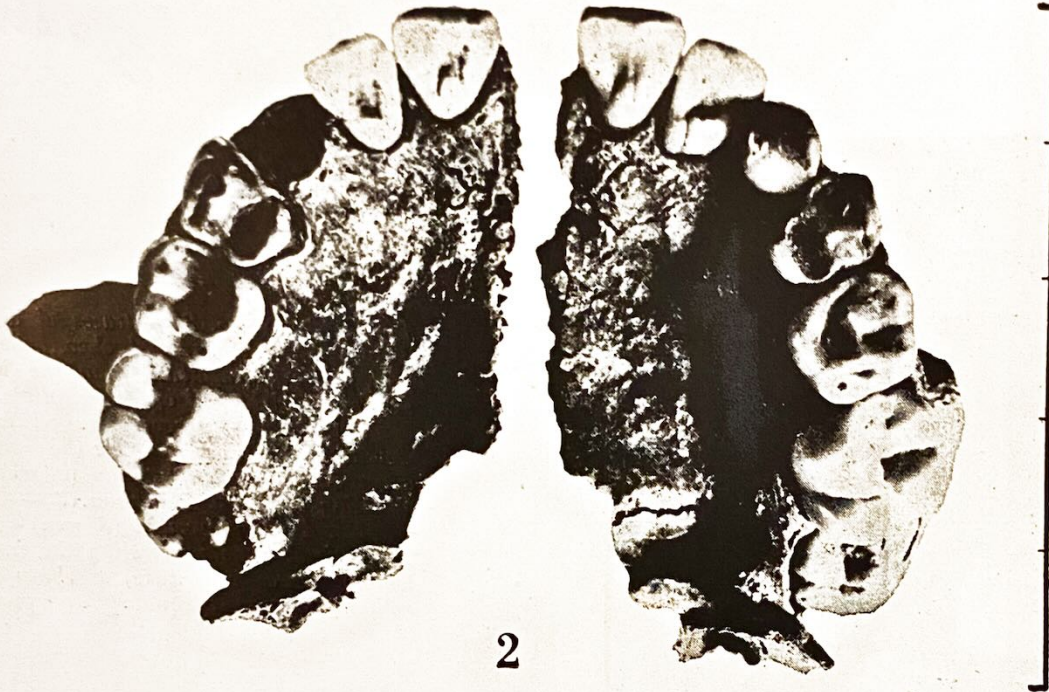
TABLE III.

1 — Skeleton No. 2 — traces of a blow with a dull implement, broken bone surface, missing fragments from the lateral side of the right half of the mandible. 2 — Skeleton No. 4 — traces of superficial cut wound on the tuber parietale (28 mm) and a cut above the left asterion (24 mm) penetrating to the endocranium; 3 — Skeleton No. 4 — cut wound (33 mm) on the left parietal bone penetrating the internal lamina, traces caused by a sharp point splitting off an adequate bone fragment (11 mm).

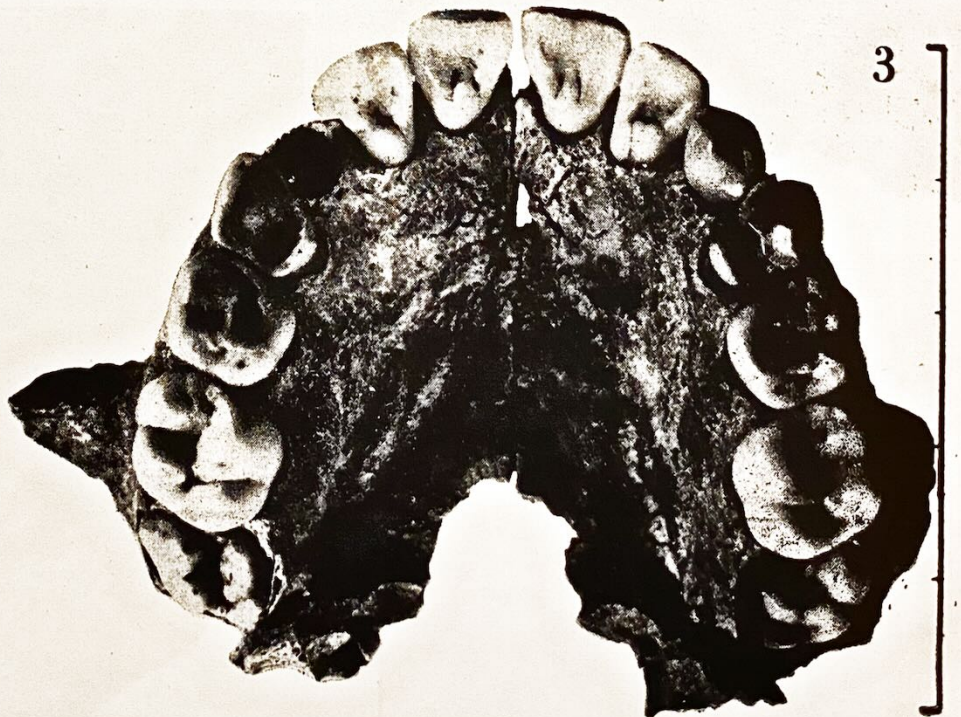


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TABLE IV.

1 — A group of isolated bones obtained from the control wall at the centre of the object (170 cm to east and 50–60 cm above the level of the bone finds marked as skeleton No. 7).

2, 3 — The halves of the maxilla before and after gluing — the left half comes from the control wall and the right from the group of bones recorded as skeleton No. 7.

tained many documents of anthropophagy and some skeletal remains are remains of human sacrifices (Ambros 1971, Jelínek 1957). It is not yet clear whether they belonged to local inhabitants or to people from foreign ethnic groups; this fact could explain the heterogeneity of the anthropological finds originating from this period (Jelínek 1973).

The character of the finds and the circumstances of their discovery in the above object indicate that it had exceptional position in the settlement and we can rightly call it sacrificial place.

An overall evaluation of the sacrificial place is of great importance for a more objective interpretation of the spiritual and cultural standard of the socially differentiated society of this period, using human sacrifices as one of the most effective forms of the manifestation of the power of the ruling layer.

#### SUMMARY

During the research of the Otomani settlement in Spišský Štvrtok a special object dug into the gravel sand and rocky ground was discovered inside the settlement. Due to its character and contents it occupied an extraordinary position in the settlement. The findings and the circumstances of the finding indicate that the object served as a sacrificial place. Besides other things it contained the skeletal anthropological material of nine individuals with traces of intentional interference. The skeletons formed two groups, and though some of them were discovered in the anatomical position, it is obvious that they had been dumped to the object.

The paper deals with the most important cut wounds on the skulls and contains also the basic

characteristics of the studied skeletal material. It has been concluded that the blows were inflicted by an axe.

An overall evaluation of the finds from this object will contribute to the interpretation of the spiritual and cultural standard of the human society of the Middle Bronze Age on the territory of Slovakia.

The paper has been worked out for the scientific conference on the Bronze Age in Czechoslovakia, taking place on March 2/3, 1977 in the National Museum in Prague. The text is published in the original form and extent of the paper.

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