

Gordinesti-Stinca goala as a model example of development and decline of fortified settlements of the Tripolye culture at the end of the 4th mill. BC

For years, ways of life of the people of the Tripolye Culture have been of interest among European scholars. This culture, considered as the first Neolithic Eastern European civilisation, flourished between the turn of 6/5th until the beginning of the 3rd mill. BC on the area between the Danube and Dnieper. For the classical phase of the Tripolye culture characteristic are so-called giant-settlements, covering the area up to several hundred hectares, with buildings arranged regularly in several concentric rings. Pottery decorated with rich, complicated patterns, most likely of a symbolic meaning, as well as anthropo- and zoomorphic clay figurines, show the mastery of Tripolye craftsmen. In the half of the 4th mill. the Tripolye civilisation begins to change. As contacts with western cultures become more and more intense, the great Tripolye entity slowly disintegrates. The giant settlements no longer exist, as Tripolye people prefer to live in smaller villages, covering the area up to few hectares. For now, we are able to reconstruct internal organization of settlements only of the earlier phase of this crucial period of transition, attributed to the Brinzeni group of the beginning of the 2nd half of the 4th mill. BC. Such information are not available for the very youngest stage of the Tripolye culture, represented by the Gordinesti group.

Way of managing space of prehistoric settlements provides not only information about characteristic of societies that built and lived in it, but also allows to reconstruct their economy. Sadly, when it comes to both the giant-settlements and smaller sites from the 2nd half of the 4th mill. BC, there is not enough data to establish roles of houses and relations between them. Very useful in decreasing this knowledge gap could be archaeological excavations of small settlement of Gordinesti, located on a naturally defensive place, and dated to the latest stage of the Tripolye culture. Examining archeological sources discovered there, using traditional, as well as modern bioarchaeological analytical tools, including stable isotope analysis, could help to not only reconstruct internal organization of settlement space, function of subsequent houses and their surroundings, but also, most importantly, to determine a type of economy practiced by the inhabitants.

Gaining information of managing space of Tripolye settlements dated to the end of the 4th mill. BC could be very useful in studying contacts of this culture with western societies of the Funnel Beaker Culture and the Baden Complex. In the 2nd half of the 4th mill. BC people of this cultures also tend to build their settlements in places with natural defensive factors. Sometimes, those sites were additionally fortified by ramparts, such as Gordinesti. The question is then – could be the different way of locating settlements, comparing to giant-sites characteristic for earlier stages, a result of economic transitions of the Pontic-Carpathian area, or it was rather induced by climate change resulting in increasing area of the steppe? And, finally, if migrations of people from the Caucasus could have impacted those changes? These questions are the basis of the research project at Gordinesti.