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## New perspectives on the burial customs in Macedonia during the Early Iron Age

Anne-Zahra Chemseddoha

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**UNIVERSITY OF THESSALY**  
**DPT OF HISTORY, ARCHAEOLOGY**  
**AND SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY**

**aristea**

# **REGIONAL STORIES TOWARDS A NEW PERCEPTION OF THE EARLY GREEK WORLD**

**Acts of an International Symposium in honour  
of Professor Jan Bouzek**

**Volos 18-21 June 2015**

**EDITED BY  
ALEXANDER MAZARAKIS AINIAN  
ALEXANDRA ALEXANDRIDOU & XENIA CHARALAMBIDOU**

**VOLOS 2017**

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# NEW PERSPECTIVES ON THE BURIAL CUSTOMS IN MACEDONIA DURING THE EARLY IRON AGE

*Anne-Zahra Chemseddoha*

Ancient cemeteries are not only informative for the burial customs and the cultural heritage of communities. More importantly, they reflect what each society aims to show about itself to its members and its neighbours through its choices and strategies motivated by practical reasons as well as cultural, political, and social factors. In order to face death and “*faire du cadavre un mort*” (D’Agostino & Schnapp 1982, 17), communities set in motion an entire assemblage of specific actions from the treatment of the deceased to its commemoration, on the basis of the heritage and the traditions perpetuated or rejected, adjusted or modified through time.

The Iron Age in Macedonia lasts from the 11<sup>th</sup> to the end of the 8<sup>th</sup> and to the 7<sup>th</sup> century BC. Indeed, the latest phases have been marked by two historical phenomena: the Greek colonisation as well as the foundation and growth of the Macedonian kingdom (Tiverios 2008; see also Hatzopoulos 2006). The complex cultural background of this period requests to consider the data from a wider area beyond the actual political borders too. Nevertheless, this paper presents an analysis based on the published data provided by the excavated Iron Age cemeteries, lying in Greece between the eastern slopes of the Pindos range and the Drama region, in order to focus on one part of this vast area between the Balkans and the Aegean Sea.<sup>1</sup>

## **Introduction remarks and theoretical framework**

### ***History of the research***

Until the 1950’s, the limited research on the burial customs of the Iron Age in northern Greece was mainly based on three important excavations conducted at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and during the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in Agios Panteleimon, Axioupoli, and Chauchitsa (Koukouli-Chrysanthaki 2014). For the first one, apart from the metal and ceramic material, studied few decades later, the details concerning the graves and the rituals remained quite unknown until the last decade when the excavations were taken over by the Greek Archaeological Service, which investigated huge burial mounds and hundreds of graves (Ham-

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1. This study has been done in the frame of a doctoral dissertation submitted at the University Toulouse - Jean Jaurès in November 2015.

mond 1972, 341; *ArchDelt* 56-59, 2001-2004, *Chr.*, 385-387, 466-469). In Axioupoli (formerly Bohemitsa), the excavations of the 1990's has completed the image described in the preliminary report of L. Rey (1932, 40-44) and renewed our knowledge of the burial customs in the Axios valley during the Late Iron Age (Savvopoulou 2007, 607-612). In the 1950's and the 1960's, the excavations led by M. Andronikos and Ph. Petsas in the cemetery of Vergina marks an important turning point. More than one hundred tumuli were excavated and more than the third yielded at least 391 burials of the Iron Age (Andronikos 1969; Bräuning & Kilian-Dirlmeier 2013).<sup>2</sup> Then, the tumulus rapidly became a typical Iron Age feature of northern Greece. However, since the 1970's, the increasing urbanisation and major building works led to the discovery of numerous cemeteries with various features, displaying a mosaic of burial practices.

### ***Composition of the corpus and methodology***

More than a hundred burial plots have been recorded for the period extending from the 11<sup>th</sup> to the 7<sup>th</sup> century BC, 66 of which revealing useful data in different levels.<sup>3</sup> The geographical distribution of the cemeteries reflects more the current state of research than the ancient reality. Most sites have been discovered within the frame of rescue excavations, a few have been published, while the chronologies are not yet established in detail in all cases. However, it is possible to draw a first synthesis and in this paper we propose to question the geographical distribution of the burial practices and their diversity (**fig. 1**).

Each cemetery is not defined by one feature, like the ritual or the type of grave, but by the combination of all the choices offered and accepted by the community within the burial plot. The funerary practices were gradually set up and were likely to change through time. These combinations constitute "sequences", according to J.-M. Luce – an expression which shows the dynamic character of the elaboration of the rituals. Several cemeteries can share a sequence of burial customs. Then, it has a temporal depth and a geographical extension (Luce 2007, 44).

The cases of the cemeteries of Vergina and Torone are meaningful. The sequence of Vergina combines the collective burial mound with the pit grave, the boulder cist and the exclusive inhumation from the 10<sup>th</sup> to the 8<sup>th</sup> century BC. The enchytrismos in pithos seems to have been introduced in the 8<sup>th</sup> century. In the last phase of the cemetery, the set of ritual become more complex with the adoption of the secondary cremation (Bräuning & Kilian-Dirlmeier 2013, 90-91, 139). A shift from a quite closed sequence with a limited range of types of graves to an open sequence, which expresses more possible practices within the burial ground, can be observed.

The cemetery of Torone in Chalcidice, used from the SM to the middle of the 9<sup>th</sup> century, displays a kind of restriction of the rituals. During the first phase, both inhumation and cre-

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2. This number of graves results from a count based on the published data. Considering the poor preservation of the bones and the disturbances caused by ploughing, the number of burials must have been higher.

3. In total, 106 burial plots have been recorded. Among them, six are dated to the Iron Age but the available data are still fragmentary, 24 are cemeteries detected by surveys or trial trenches and are supposed to date back to the Iron Age (including the new sites not yet detailed in the preliminary reports) and 13 plots include only one grave in each. On the map (**fig. 1**), for better clarity, we have gathered some sites under the same number, like the burial plots around the ancient Aiani or those found near the modern Assomata.

mation are accepted, but during the PG the inhumation seems to have been abandoned in favour of the secondary cremation in urns (Papadopoulos 2005, 366-368).

The treatment of the deceased and the architecture of the graves are decided and/or accepted at a community level (Luce 2007, 42). This becomes particularly evident in the case of the elaborated graves whose construction requests *de facto* the assistance of several persons, who approved the performed ritual. The burial customs can therefore be the media for a discourse on collective identity. The burial offerings do not reflect the same values and they are not included in the construction of our funerary map. According to their functional dimensions, they concern individual, reflecting his gender identity and social position through specific codes, symbols and ideologies that can go beyond the limits of the cemetery.<sup>4</sup>

The elaboration of the funerary map requires a first analytic approach in order to establish a typology of the practices. For our region, five categories of features have been identified. The first includes the organisation of the graves. The common distinction between “burial mound cemeteries” and “flat” or “open ground” cemeteries<sup>5</sup> is relevant in Macedonia only if based on some specific criteria. Funerary tumuli, as artificial mounds covering one or several burials, are varied and each case requires specific architecture, logistic, gestures and meanings. If monuments have been erected in a single occasion or created by the accumulation of several interments, the investment of the community in their construction is differently affected. Moreover, unlike individual tumuli, the collective ones involve two levels of organisation: the graves inside the mounds and the monuments between them in the cemetery. For Iron Age Macedonia, it is more appropriate to consider as “burial mound cemeteries”, those where the collective tumuli with several individual graves constitute the main structuring element of the necropolis. Chamber graves, tholoi, and tholoi-like graves, covered or not by mounds,<sup>6</sup> have been isolated because they belong to a special category due to their collective use and specific architecture.

For the “flat” cemeteries, no clear definition has been stated. They concern vast burial grounds with individual graves where the tumulus is not a fundamental structuring element. The existence of several layers of burials, clusters, individual markers, and exceptionally collective tumuli is possible.

The second category of funerary traits concerns the types of graves: simple pits, cist graves lined with slabs, blocs or pebbles, clay or mudbricks, with various covers. The third category concerns the presence of a secondary container. It includes mostly the pot burial, namely the enchytrismos for the inhumation and the cinerary urn for the secondary cremation. The treatment of the deceased (inhumation or cremation) and its variants (primary, secondary, individual, plural) belong to a fourth category. The position of the body, which can be a distinguishing feature for particular regions of southern Greece (Luce 2007, 44), is less relevant in Iron Age Macedonia since most of the deceased are in supine position. In conclusion, the choice of graves and containers varies and their combinations in cemeteries can be multiple.

However, the comparison between the sequences defined for each cemetery brings out funerary regions, part of them characterised by a limited range of practices mostly located in the western hinterland and the rest of Macedonia where the diversity of the burial cus-

4. See for example the warrior graves which are not limited to a specific area.

5. The expression “νεκροταφεία των τύμβων” and “επίπεδα νεκροταφεία” are commonly used. The expression “open ground” is taken from Snodgrass 1971, 142.

6. Those in Pieria, in the south of Kozani prefecture and in the Aridaia river basin (Almopia).

toms sometimes constitutes the hallmark of a cemetery. Then we can question to what extent the Iron Age Macedonia is marked by a certain regionalism of the burial customs and how the opposition between “diversity” and “uniformity” of the burial practices depend on the scale of the approach and reflects diverse attitudes toward death.

### **The funerary map**

#### ***From the LBA to the Iron Age***

Our knowledge on the burial practices in the LBA is fragmentary. The available data only come from sites of southern (Pieria and Kozani) and eastern Macedonia (Serres and Thasos regions), Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (F.Y.R.O.M.) and Albania. Apart from a few burials found in the settlement of Toumba in Thessaloniki (Andreou & Eukleidou 2008), there is still a wide geographical gap in the central part of the region, where the practices remain quite unknown. The inhumation is widely applied and the secondary cremation is concentrated in the eastern part of Macedonia. In northern Pieria the deceased are inhumed in simple pits, whereas in southern Pieria the boulder or slab cists are common (Poulaki-Pander mali 2013, 45-62), like in Thessaly. In the valley of the Haliakmon river, the flat cemetery of Aiani, where most of the deceased are inhumed in simple pits and a very few cremated (secondary deposits), is different from the burial mounds of Polymylos or the collective one in Rymnio where the slab cists are exclusive. The contracted position of the deceased is their common feature, contrasting to the less widely used supine position (Karamitrou-Mentesidi & Vatali 1999; Karamitrou-Mentesidi 2011a, 89-134).

The EIA is marked by an increase of funerary sites and especially of burial mound cemeteries all over the region apart from northern coastal Pieria, Chalcidice and the Thermaic gulf area. Nevertheless, according to our classification, there are almost as many burial mound cemeteries as flat cemeteries, unlike the north of Epirus and Albania where collective tumuli are preferred (Andreou & Andreou 1987; Cabanes 2008, 51-60). In the EIA, a development of the secondary cremation is observed. During the transition from the Bronze to the Iron Age, it is almost exclusively applied in a few cemeteries of the northern and eastern part of Macedonia, like in Apsalos Verpen (Chrysostomou 1997), in Paliogynaikokastro (Savvopoulou 2001), and Nevrokopi-Exochi (Grammenos 1979), whereas during the Iron Age, it is virtually absent in western Macedonia and mostly spread elsewhere always as a minor ritual apart from the cemeteries of Torone (Papadopoulos 2005) and Koukos (Carington-Smith & Vokotopoulou 1990) in the southern Sithonia in Chalcidice. The third phenomenon, which finds a parallel in the rest of the Aegean, but which is virtually absent in western Macedonia, Epirus and the Balkans, is the reintroduction of the enchytrismos used both for adults and children. The introduction of the two last practices lead to a higher diversity of the choices offered for the treatment of the deceased.

#### ***The eastern Strymon group: LBA tradition, its coastal variant and the question of cremations in stone tumuli***

Since the LBA, the communities used burial mounds of stones with secondary cremations in urns in the western Rhodopes mountains, east of the Strymon river. The tumulus of Exochi near Nevrokopi seems to have been used in the EIA (Grammenos 1979). The sequence

extends to the coast, including the cemeteries of Drama (Peristeri 2004) and Amphipolis-Kastas (Koukouli-Chryssanthaki 1993, 682-684), but it has been modified by the adoption of inhumation in pithoi (for children in Drama), a local specificity of the Thracian coast (Baralis 2007, 18-19). The use of the secondary cremation in urns set up in tumuli made of stones at the turn of the Iron Age is also recorded in Apsalos Verpen in Almopia (Chrysostomou 1997, 141-143). It seems to belong to a northern tradition, if one considers the similarities with the cemeteries of the so-called "Transitional Period" defined by D. Mitrevski and found near Skopje and further to the south near Bitola (Mitrevski 2003, 51-53, with references). The tumuli-platforms of Paliogynaikokastro (Savvopoulou 2001) could be linked to that group at its first development (from the 12<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> centuries BC). However some distinctive features, like the duration of the use of the cremation (until the end of the 8<sup>th</sup> century BC) and the integration of inhumations in individual graves, continue to be present. The application of cremation in Almopia has a short duration and it doesn't seem to have had a significant impact since new burial customs spread all over the area at the same time or slightly later.

### **The western part of Iron Age Macedonia: a few funerary regions with a limited number of practices**

#### ***The Aridaia river basin group***

The group of the built graves set in mounds in the Aridaia river basin and its outskirts (ancient Almopia) constitutes one of the best-defined funerary areas. It includes, amongst others, the cemeteries of Apsalos Margarita, Konstantia, Kranaia, Nea Zoi (area ΣΤ), Neromyloi Prodrimos and Prophiti Ilias (Chrysostomou 2011). It consists of built chambers often accessible by a dromos and two solid doorjambs at the entrance oriented to the east, but low, without a roof and filled by stones, or in some cases, covered with slabs. They contained multiple inhumations. Each feature of this type of grave is reminiscent of the tholos but symbolically more than functionally, mixed with a megalithic aspect. These cemeteries spread at the edges of the plain and in the valleys like territorial landmarks. The absence of any satisfactory closed parallel led to the assumption that this was a local creation. The popularity and the conservatism of this type of grave is visible especially in the cemetery of Konstantia which seems to be used until the Classical period (Chrysostomou 2011, 581). However at least in the 7<sup>th</sup> century BC, the homogeneity is challenged by the flat cemetery of Nea Zoi (hill of Terikleia) which includes mainly enchytrismoi in pithoi and cooking-pots called *pyranoi* (Chrysostomou 1998) finding a close parallel to the cemetery of Axioupoli in the other side of the Paiko mountain (Savvopoulou 2007, 607-612).

#### ***The Vegoritis lake group and its parallel with Central Greece and the Balkans***

Beyond the Edessa pass and the Voras mountain, the cemeteries around the Vegoritis lake constitute another strong uniform funerary region. Agios Panteleimon (known as "Pateli") is the emblematic cemetery (Hammond 1972, 341; *ArchDelt* 56-59, 2001-2004, *Chr.*, 385-387, 466-469, 507-511), but at least Zervi-Panagitsa and Arnissa located on the way out of main communication roads should also be grouped here (see respectively *ArchDelt* 47, 1992, *Chr.*, 458-459; Chrysostomou 2012). In Pateli, the collective burial mounds cover hundreds of slab cist graves with radial or concentric orientation. Each grave contained one

or several individuals, while disturbances of the previous burials are frequent and complex. Despite the presence of a few pithos burials, pit graves and variations in the architecture of the cist graves, the set of ritual admitted by the community is restrictive and lasts until the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC. These burial mounds bring to mind the so-called “Clan Tumuli” identified by D. Mitrevski, which develop in the EIA, like the tumulus of Visoi in Beranci (Mitrevski 2003, 57). The combination of cist graves within tumuli is not unknown elsewhere even if less impressive, as shown by those found in Kozani prefecture (Rymnio, see Karamitrou-Mentesidi 2003, 555-556), Thessaly (Hexalophos, see Theocharis 1968), Central Greece (Marmara, see Dakoronia 1987), northern Epirus (region of Pogoni, see Andreou & Andreou 1987) and southern Albania (tumuli of Kakavi, Bodrishtë, Piskovë, Vodhinë, see Hammond 1967, 204-205, 350-351; AR 30, 1983-1984, 115).

***From one lake to another. The burial customs around Polyphyto lake:  
a southern extension of a wider funerary region of the northwest?***

Down to the south, in the region of ancient Aiani and around Polyphyto lake,<sup>7</sup> the transition to the Iron Age is marked by the expansion of the cist grave. We ignore the organisation of the graves due to disturbance and absence of the upper layers. Apart from the small burial plot with enchytrismoι and secondary cremations in urns of the Geometric period in Kranidia Kryovryssi B, the region displays uniformity, even if each cemetery keeps local specificities like the reuse of anthropomorphic stelae for the slabs of cists in Kranidia Kryovryssi A. The cemeteries of this long western corridor share many common features. Interestingly, a small detail stresses this homogeneity: the use of a flat stone as a pillow under the head of the dead only recorded in this part of Macedonia.<sup>8</sup> The geographical continuity of this funerary sequence towards Albania and Epirus is not well recorded, but the practices identified in Kastoria Dailaki including inhumation in pit graves covered by cairns or maybe collective tumuli (Tsougaris 1997) share common features with the burial mound cemeteries in the Korçë basin (Andrea 1985). In the south, in the Cambounian Mountains, the limit is marked by the presence of tholoi and chamber graves in Frourio (Chondroyanni-Metoki 1997, 37-40). Dating back to the transition from the Bronze to the Iron Age, they clearly belong to a Thessalian tradition and seem to represent its northern expression. In the north-east, down to the Haliakmon river, the limit is less clear. The cemetery of Tzamala is very singular with its divided tumuli (Kottaridi 2002). The combination with the cist grave would link it to the group of Polyphyto lake. However it shares also common features with Kountouriotissa and the burial mounds spreading on the foothill of the Olympos, west of ancient Dion (Hammond 1972, 339, 361; Poulaki-Pandermali 2013, 67-72). The closer to the Thermaic gulf, the more varied are the burial customs.

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7. Around Aiani, the burial plots include those found in Leivadia, Koupoutsina, Giannouka Vryssi, Rachi Kommenoi, Agios Ioannis Prodromos, Isiomata (Karamitrou-Mentesidi 2011b, 281-289). On the right bank of the river, the burial plots comprise those found in Servia Kolitsaki, Kranidia Kryovryssi, Velventos Kato Bravas (Chondroyanni-Metoki 1998) as well as Servia Kokkinoi and Rymnio (Karamitrou-Mentesidi 2003, 553-556).

8. In Agios Panteleimon, Agras, Aiani Leivadia, Aiani Rachi Kommenoi, Servia Kokkinoi, Velventos Kato Bravas, Zervi Panagitsa. For comparison, others are known from Epirus (Vitsa Zagoriou, Konitsa Liatovouni).

## **The Central Macedonia: a nebula of funerary regions**

### ***Pieria: diversity and southern influences***

During the LBA, Pieria is divided in two funerary regions. The north is characterised by homogeneity, reflected on the use of inhumation in simple pits, whereas in the south various types of graves have been used. During the EIA three phenomena are observed. The first concerns the continuity of practices in the SM cemetery of Petra Treis Elies. Inhumation, cist graves, the use of clay to seal the slabs are already known in the cemetery of Spathes Agios Dimitrios used in the LBA (Poulaki-Pandermali 2013, 53-62, 64-66). The second phenomenon occurs on the foothill of Olympos, west of ancient Dion with the development of collective burials mounds as a resurgence of earlier practices. They are made of earth and stones, surrounded by circles of stones and they cover pits, cists with slabs or blocs, sometimes coated with clay, and some rare enchytrismoι in pithoi (Poulaki-Pandermali 2013, 67-83). The third phenomenon is a deep modification of the burial practices in northern Pieria (Makrygialos), despite the continuity of occupation of the burial plots (Besios 2010, 65). The homogeneity is replaced by a wider range of types of graves: some are already attested in the LBA in the south (deep pits covered with slabs or wood, cists with slabs or blocs), while others were new (the primary and secondary cremations and the rock-cut chamber grave (Karliabas, Besios & Triantaphyllou 2004). The adoption of this southern typical grave doesn't seem to be a local direct inheritance of the LBA since no such grave of that time has been recorded. It would be rather an indirect adoption or influence from Thessaly, where built tholoi and chamber graves continued to be used during the Iron Age (Georganas 2006). The emergence of this monumental architecture in Makrygialos reflects the will of a certain elite group to use burial customs as a medium for social distinction finding in this type of grave the appropriate expression.

What about Vergina? This cemetery which has been a reference for many years seems to be rather isolated, according to the combination of specific rituals attested there. The tumuli differ from those of Dion, Tzamala or from those found in western Macedonia and especially by the virtually absence of slab cists (only one: Grave AA IX, see Andronikos 1969, 60), the use of secondary cremation (at least 17 cases) and the wide use of enchytrismoι in pithoi (at least 57 cases). The combination of the three first features find parallels in the tumuli of the Korçë basin, like in Barç or Kuç i Zi (Andrea 1985), but the use of the pithos burial strongly relates it to the northern Aegean tradition.

### ***The Axios river: a mosaic of practices***

The land along the Axios river does not represent uniform funerary region: the cemeteries present their own specificities but some common features are shared among them. We include in this region the cemeteries of Paliogynaikokastro (Savvopoulou 2001), Chauchitsa (Casson 1919-1921, 1923-1925), Karathodoreika (Savvopoulou 1994), Axioupoli (Rey 1932; Savvopoulou 2007, 607-612; 2012), and Agrosykia (Chrysostomou, Aslanis & Chrysostomou 2007, 209-279). The most ancient ritual, namely secondary cremation in burial enclosures, specific to Paliogynaikokastro, seems to have had no impact on the neighbouring cemeteries where inhumation prevailed (only one secondary cremation in Axioupoli). The inhumation graves can be burials in pits or on natural ground covered by cairns (almost exclusive in Chauchitsa, at least half of the graves in Agrosykia and mentioned in Karathodoreika and in



Paliogynaikokastro),<sup>9</sup> the pit lined with stones and sherds of pithoi (Chauchitsa, Agrosykia), the enchytrismos in pithos and/or in pyraunos (Paliogynaikokastro and especially Axioupoli from the 7<sup>th</sup> century BC) and the slab cist (all the sites). The increase in the last two types of graves find a parallel in the cemeteries of the so-called “Gevghelija-group” (Heilmann 2014, 88-89, with references) and constitutes a specific sequence of the Late Iron Age, which seems to spread also in Almopia (Nea Zoi, hill of Terikleia). It should then be noticed that the Axios river, being a natural pass between the Balkans and the Aegean sea, did not serve as a frontier between west and east at least as far as burial practices are concerned.

### ***The Thermaic gulf: homogeneity behind diversity***

In the region of the Thermaic gulf, the Iron Age is marked by the development of vast “flat” organised cemeteries from the 10<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> centuries, but especially in the 8<sup>th</sup> century BC, created at distance from the settlements and which are characterised by a variety of burial customs (for a short synthesis, see Havela 2012, 308-312, 318-319). It includes the cemeteries of Nea Efkarpia (Lambrothanassi-Korantzi, Papagianni & Pouloukidou 2002), Nea Philadelphieia (Misaïlidou-Despotidou 1998), Oraikastro (Lambrothanassi-Korantzi & Papagianni 2001), Stavroupoli-Polichni (Lioutas & Gkioura 1997), Toumba Thessaloniki (Soueref 2009) and Thermi (Skarlatidou 2009). The pit covered with slabs is the most widespread type of grave for inhumations. However the following types are also attested: cairn burials, cist lined with slabs, stones, pebbles, clay or mudbricks and the enchytrismos in pithos. The secondary cremation in urns (placed in simple pits or lined with blocs, a few in slab cists) is present in most of the cemeteries (Nea Philadelphieia, Oraikastro, Nea Efkarpia, Stavroupoli). Even some tumuli were found or supposed in Nea Efkarpia and in Nea Philadelphieia. We extend the funerary region to Nea Kallikrateia (Bilouka & Graïkos 2009), where the Iron Age burial customs as well as the type of the associated settlement in *toumba-trapeza* have more in common with the other sites of the Thermaic gulf than with the rest of the Chalcidice peninsula despite the fact that it could be identified with the Eretrian colony of Dikaia (Bilouka & Graïkos 2009, 240).

### ***Chalcidice: a divided geographical entity***

At the level of the burial customs, Chalcidice doesn't form one funerary region but several small entities. Torone (Papadopoulos 2005) and Koukos (Carington-Smith & Vokotopoulou 1990, with references), Nikiti Ai Giannis (Trakossopoulou-Salakdiou 1988) and Ierissos (Trakossopoulou-Salakidou 2004) have commonly been grouped together (Havela 2012, 313-314). The cemetery of Mende (Moschonissioti 2010), which develops at the end of the 8<sup>th</sup> century BC, should be added. The first two close geographically necropoleis share the use of the secondary cremation but both keep original features. Torone has a first phase in the SM marked by the bi-ritualism. The secondary cremation in urns placed in simple pits or a few in cist graves, totally replaced the inhumation during the PG. Such a development and the types of the graves point more to Athens than to Euboea (Papadopoulos 2005, 394). This initial phase is not represented at Koukos where the urns placed in cist graves are more fre-

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9. In Agrosykia, see the graves Δ, ΣΤ, Θ and Ι. The other graves perhaps belong to the same type but this cannot be attested due to unpreserved upper layers.

quent and the use of pithoi as container for the urns (containing the ashes) is a local specificity. The burial customs of Koukos could be considered as an adaptation of those of Torone but its roots could also be traced in an oldest local tradition, considering the already existing combination of cist graves and cinerary urns in the neighbouring EBA cemetery of Kriaritsi Sykia (Asouchidou 2011). The chronological gap prevents the assumption of continuity even if the recent discovery in Palaiokastro Polygyrou, namely two cinerary urns within a cist dating back to the LBA (Papastathis, Nasioka, Violatzis & Amantidou 2008) seems to lead towards this direction.

Few kilometres to the north, Nikiti Ai Giannis and Ierissos, which belong to the same funerary region, differ a lot from southern Sithonia. Apart from a few pit graves and one cremation grave in Ierissos, most of the others are enchytrismoi for adults and children, in pithoi set in pits lined with stones sometimes monumental which are reminiscent of some graves of the Iron Age cemeteries on Thasos (Koukouli-Chryssanthaki 1992, 653). In both sites, the cremation is used as minor ritual. The cemetery of Mende does not belong to that sequence. The Eretrian colony has its own particularities (enchytrismos for infants, pits and cist graves for older children) which actually seem to represent a northern extension of the Euboean (Luce 2007, 47).

### **Some conclusions**

Comparably to the rest of Greece, the Iron Age in Macedonia is marked by a certain regionalism of the burial customs but more fragmented and in a local scale. From a cultural point of view, the EIA Macedonia cannot be considered just a periphery of the Greek world, or of the Balkans, or a corridor north to south. It rather depends on the geographical areas and on the choices made by the communities. The cremation practiced in Apsalos Verpen, Palio-gynaikokastro and Nevrokopi Exochi in the transition from Bronze to Iron Age, seems to have a Balkan origin. This funerary practice in Torone seems to be part of the northern extension of the process that affects Athens and Euboea in the turn of the Iron Age (Jung 2007). While the customs in the Aridaia river basin reflect that the area remained closed to external influences, the neighbouring communities of the Vegoritis lake echo those in the northern Pelagonia. In the south, contacts between Macedonia and Thessaly are strong since the LBA. The frontier of the "Mycenaean world" has been recently challenged by the new researches conducted in the cemeteries of Aiani and those in southern Pieria. However, we have to admit that the Cambounian mountains and the Tempe pass still stress a limit concerning the use of the tholos grave (distinctive feature of Thessaly) or the collective burial mound (distinctive feature of the south of Macedonia). In the eastern coast of the Thermaic gulf, the cemeteries concentrate (and attract?) the types of graves known around, whereas in the Axios valley the pattern is consistent with the natural corridor formed by the river.

The degree of diversity or uniformity of the burial customs can be in some specific cases the result of contacts and networks between people, as in the context of colonisation. More importantly, however, it is the result of the choices of the communities in relation to their attitudes towards death, their beliefs and the construction of their collective identity. Individuals can have a passive or an active attitude towards their own heritage, the changes in their social organisation and towards the other neighbouring groups. In Macedonia it is quite difficult to comment on heritage when the funerary map of the LBA is so fragmented. Nevertheless, Pieria seems to reflect well this process. The group of people who buried its

dead in the cemetery of Petra Treis Elies perpetuated the customs of those living along the Olympos range at the end of the LBA, whereas those who settled on the foothill of Olympos and those around the ancient Pydna (Makrygialos) in the EIA, adapt, modify and finally create a new funerary setting that shared common threads with the older practices of the south. In the region of the Axios river, despite the hundred of cremations in Paliogynaikokastro, this ritual did not have local impact and seems to have been rejected by the closest communities but maybe not by those around the Thermaic gulf, as shown by some secondary cremations in circular pits lined with blocs in Nea Philadelphieia (Misailidou-Despotidou 2008, 38, fig. 25). In the cemeteries of these regions, the variety of practices, expressing an open and very dynamic attitude, is characteristic. The chronology of the adoption of each type needs precisions. Nevertheless, this group differentiates from those in the north-western fringes of Macedonia, namely the Vegoritis lake group and the Aridaia river basin group, where a stronger conservatism is attested. These two groups that perpetuate their specific burial mounds (collective with cist graves for the first, tholos-like graves under stones tumuli for the second) could not ignore their respective funerary architectures, especially when the cemeteries are established near communication routes, but they maintain their differences through time at least until the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC despite the major political changes brought by the rise of the Macedonian kingdom.

The geographical distribution of the burial customs and the variability within the cemeteries cannot be offered a single explanation. The direct correlation between those funerary *facies* with ethnic groups, as it has been done in the past is hazardous and simplistic. Identity is a complex construction and the burial practices may or may not be part of it (on this issue see Luce 2007; 2014). Moreover, social factors have to be taken into account, as shown by the major work of I. Morris on the variability of the burial practices (Morris 1987).

Despite the fragmentary data and the not well-established chronology, wide changes in this funerary map between the 7<sup>th</sup> and the 6<sup>th</sup> centuries BC can be observed with a gradual disappearance of the funerary regions, apart from the conservative regions located in Almopia, in the Axios valley, around the Vegoritis lake and in Kastoria. The earliest changes occur in Chalcidice with the withdrawal of the cemeteries of Torone (mid-9<sup>th</sup> century BC), Koukos (end of 8<sup>th</sup> century BC) and Ierissos (beginning of the 7<sup>th</sup> century BC). The latter is related to the foundation of the colony of Akanthos, which is accompanied by the creation of a new burial plot integrating more diversity in the types of graves (Kaltsas 1998). In all regions of the Chalcidice, decrease in cremation is observed as well as a progressive abandonment of the enchytrismos for adults before being reserved for infants. After the foundation of the new colonies, it is not possible to really distinguish specific funerary regions anymore. All the necropoleis display “open sequences” with a wide range of types of graves (for an overview of the Archaic burial practices, see Panti 2012). East of the Strymon, the cemetery of Drama is abandoned in the Archaic period and in Amphipolis-Kastas the deceased are inhumed in simple pits or cist graves since the 7<sup>th</sup> century BC like in the Thermaic gulf. In this region, the changes occur at the beginning of the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC. In the sites where an Iron Age cemetery is attested, new burial plots distant from the previous ones were created (Stavroupoli-Polichni, Nea Philadelphieia) or ancient continued to be in use (Thermi, Toumba Thessaloniki, Nea Kallikrateia), but with a wider range of types of graves, or with special arrangements correlated with the emergence of a class of very rich graves like as Archontiko (Chrysostomou & Chrysostomou 2009, 479-487). New cemeteries develop as well (Sindos, Agia Paraskevi, Agios Athanasios, Karabournaki, Nea Michanionia-Aineia, Edessa, Mieza etc.) where inhumation is the main ritual and the burials comprise mostly pit and cist graves (see above).

The 6<sup>th</sup> century BC also marks a break in Vergina (the Aigai capital of the Macedonian kingdom by that time), and in Aiani with the withdrawal of tumuli for the first, the come back to the simple pit graves for both and the development of royal necropoleis.

With the major political and social changes motivated by colonisation, the formation of the city-states and the growth of the Macedonian kingdom, societies redefined themselves again.

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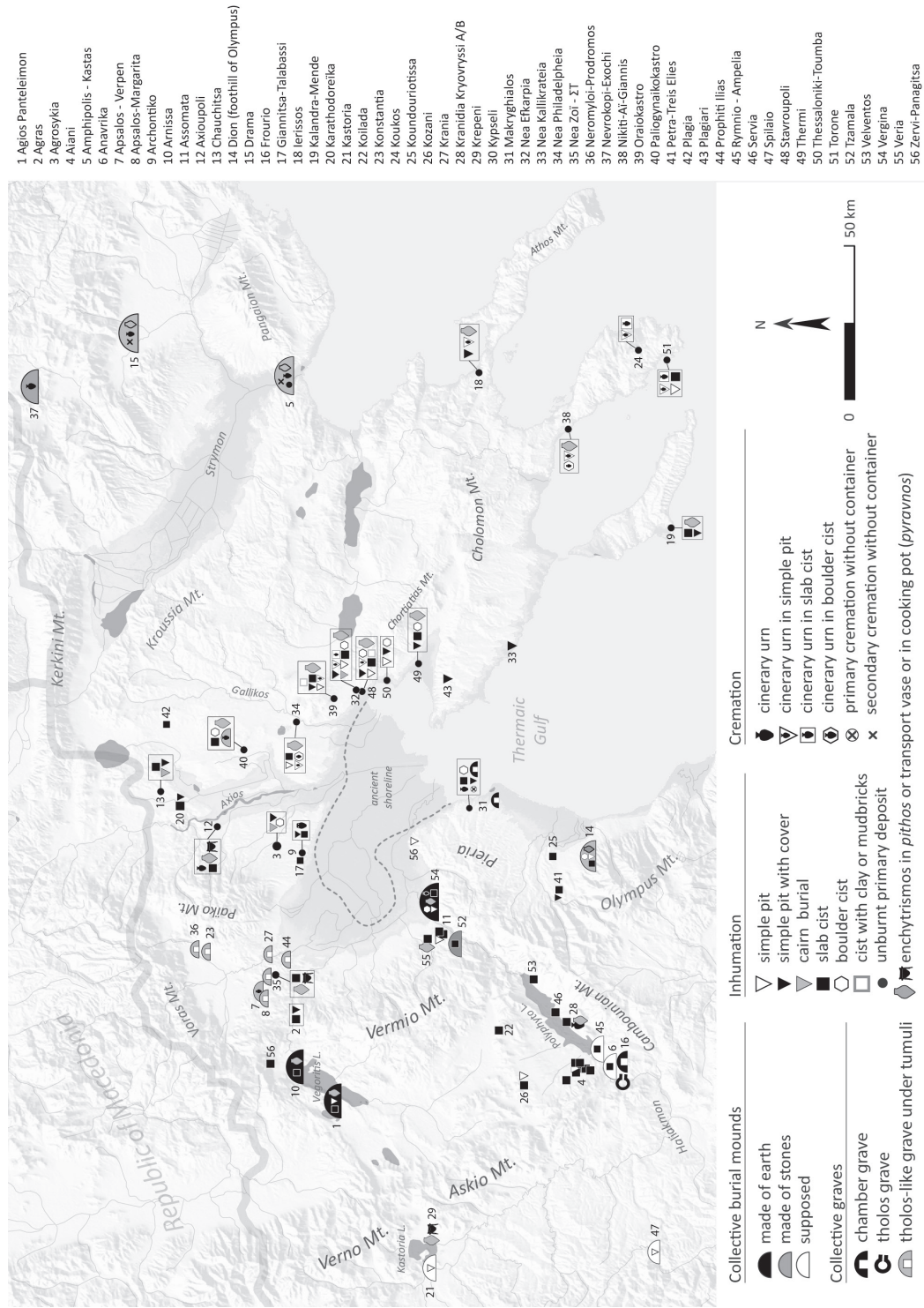


Fig. 1. Iron Age burial customs in Macedonia (A.-Z. Chemseddoha).

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