

the 3rd cent. BCE, providing an extensive bibliography. In the following chapter (pp. 31–34) H. Todorova writes on the geography of Durankulak during the 3rd cent. BCE, again with an extensive bibliography.

The chapter on the Hellenistic cave sanctuary of the goddess Kybele on the Big Island (pp. 35–50), written by I. Vajsov, G. Mavrov, and H. Todorova, is one of the most significant contributions. The authors examine the location, the geological set-up and the architectural plan of the temple, constructed on bedrock. The sanctuary comprises an almost square porticus, a corridor, an entrance hall and the east and west halls. The cult statue was positioned in the east hall. Based on the evidence of water flow in the west hall the authors conclude that it was apparently used for offerings. With regard to building techniques the authors deduce from the chisel marks on the walls in entrance room, running in downward direction to the platform level (fig. 38) that the floor of the cave sanctuary was carved in a downward slope (p. 43).

The retrieved small finds, among them black-glazed pottery, amphora stamps from 310–300 BCE, the fragment of a lead satyr head and a votive stele with a profiled pediment (fig. 40) suggest that the sanctuary was founded in the late 4th cent. BCE and used most intensively between 285/280 – 270/265. The latest datable finds are from the late 3rd cent. BCE, a date corresponding to the end of votive offerings in the pits and of interments of the Hellenistic Nivata settlement in the necropolis on the west bank of Lake Durankulak. The rise of the sea level was probably the main reason for the abandonment of the area (p. 44).

The establishment of the rock-hewn cave sanctuary documents the Anatolian impact on the Kybele worship in Durankulak (p. 48). The dimensions of the temple and the numerous votive pits of different sizes can be interpreted as clues to a sanctuary of interregional importance (p. 49). In the same chapter, the authors discuss the Anatolian origin of the Kybele cult and her earliest worship by the Phrygians in Anatolia. They also examine the Kybele votive stele from the sanctuary and survey the tradition of cave sanctuaries for the goddess Kybele. Depictions of the seated Goddess are quite common in the Pontos and entire Mediterranean regions. The text is enriched by maps, architectural plans and photos of the votive stele, architectural marble fragments, and pottery. For understanding the stratigraphy of the cave sanctuary the profile drawings from different sectors are very helpful (figs. 2–4 on p. 40).

In the next chapter (pp. 50–54) J. Burow and H. Todorova describe the vicinity of the cave sanctuary. There is a well at a distance of fourteen meters from the western entrance to the temple. The mouth is ring-shaped with a diameter of 1 m and a small edge on its north-eastern side. A small house for votive deposits was built at the foot of the south-western slope of the island. On its north wall there is a well preserved hearth. The entire floor surface of the building is covered with a black layer which contains a considerable amount of ash. Fragments of a votive plate, measuring 50 x 40 cm, came to light in the 10 cm thick ash layer of the hearth, and the authors interpret the find as evidence for small-scale votive practices (p. 539). The entrance to the cave sanctuary is located on the western shore of the island. Post-holes carved in the bed-rock indicate that there was a roofing system over the entrance (pp. 53–54).

Of particular importance is the chapter on the votive pits, written by J. Burow (pp. 55–68). Seventy-one of the ninety-one votive pits excavated date from the Hellenistic period, indicated on a plan (fig. 49 on p. 56). The different assemblages of votive offerings are numbered from A to D. The votive pits are cylindrical or pear-shaped, the latter with the widest diameter above the pit floor. They were filled with a thick ash layer and burned objects (fragments of pottery and metal objects as well as bones, probably of horses, rams, pigs, and goats). The Hellenistic votive pits were surely connected to the Kybele sanctuary, and based on the pit evidence, J. Burow concludes that in Durankulak Kybele was worshipped as ›mother earth‹.

In the Balkans votive pits are generally common, with numerous examples on the Black Sea coast, in Romania, Turkey and also in Bulgaria. In Durankulak votive pits were already in use during the late Bronze and early Iron Ages (p. 64), and since the foundation of the Greek colonies in the West Pontos region, the mother goddess was worshipped in this region, documenting the contacts between Thrace and Anatolia during the years 1200–800 BCE (p. 64).

The chapter ends with a table summarizing the crosswise connections of the sacrificial pits (table 1 on p. 64). A separate inventory lists the contents of the pits (pp. 65–68).

H. Todorova examines the sacrifice practices and rituals in the next chapter (pp. 69–72). She describes how the sacrificial animals were slaughtered and skinned. The entrails were set aside for the deity and placed on the pit floor to be burned. As a result, the pit floor is usually greasy. After each offering ceremony the fire was left to sear and the remains of the sacrificial animals were swept aside, creating the sacrificial dump (p. 70).

In a separate chapter metall items and clay objects are presented as well as the botanical remains from the votive pits (pp. 73–76). Noteworthy are a bronze arrow head, a lead comb fragment, loom weights and spindle whorls.

J. Burow provides detailed information about the amphora stamps from Durankulak, including relevant parallels (pp. 77–92). The brief commentaries by D. Jordanova and T. Dimov (pp. 99–104) help to track the distribution of the amphoras from different origins; vessels from Thasos (35 %), Sinope (30 %) and Herakleia Pontika (12.5 %) represent the significant classes during the Hellenistic period (p. 100).

The pottery assemblages of the votive pits are examined by J. Burow (pp. 105–118). Fine and coarse pottery constitute the bulk of finds, with amphoras forming 50–60 %. Among the vessels considered to be local products are coarse hand-made and thick-walled pots in a dark fabric (pp. 105–106). Various forms are represented: amphoras, jugs, kantharoi, bowls of different sizes, plates, fish plates, balsamaria, pyxides, lamps, and cooking pots, covering the usual household repertoire.

The animal bones of the votive pits are examined by J. Burow and H. Todorova (pp. 119–120), followed by a catalogue listing find-spots, animal species, and bone and assessing the meat quantity dished out to each participant of the offering ceremony (pp. 121–124). The measurements, state of preservation and full contents of the votive pits are documented in an additional catalogue, written by J. Burow and H. Todorova (pp. 125–136).

A brief description of the Kybele Sanctuary from Dionysopolis (a city south of Durankulak) on Black Sea written by I. Lazarenko, E. Mirtscheva, and R. Entscheva is also added (pp. 137–142). The sanctuary was built between 280–260 BCE. The original plan (pronaos, naos, and entablature of the temple) is based on the extant ruins. There is a water basin (louterion) almost in the middle of the temple. From a number of inscriptions, we know that here the goddess was worshipped as ›Meter Theon Pontia‹, ›Meter Pontia‹ and ›Thea Pontia‹, hence the sanctuary is called the Metroon, interpreted as a local modification of the goddess (p. 139). The text is enriched by illustrations: The groundplan of the temple, the photos of the extant remains, the cult statue of Kybele, the louterion, a votive stele, the pediment of the sanctuary and marmor stelae with inscriptions from the Hellenistic and Roman periods.

Hellenistic and late Antique burials from the Nivata settlement on the west bank of Lake Durankulak are evaluated by T. Dimov (pp. 143–174). Forty-one inhumation interments, excavated between 1979–1990, are classified in five typological groups¹. Twenty-nine Hellenistic graves², dated by pottery to the 3rd cent. BCE or slightly later, are contemporaneous with the Kybele Sanctuary and the votive pits. The graves and their contents are listed on p. 157 (pl. 9), including the anthropological information like age, sex and burial type and comparanda with regard to typology and grave goods. The author emphasizes their unique character, pointing out »that the Type IV burials (graves enclosed with an orthostat) can be in relation with the contacts between the Scythians and Sarmatians and the Thracian and the Getic world during

1 The first group of inhumations are in stone cists, oriented to the west. In the second group the rectangular or oval burial areas are dug into the loess. They are oriented to the east or west. They have vertical sides covered with stone slabs or unworked stones. In the third group the graves are oriented to the east. They are grave pits with vertical walls on the sides but without a stone slab. In the fourth group (2nd cent. BCE – 2nd cent. CE) the graves are with a barrier wall (they are closed with orthostats). The fifth group consists of rectangular catacombs with a dromos and a burial chamber (p. 154).

2 See nos. 1. 5. 7–8. 10. 13. 18. 20–22. 24. 28. 30–36. 43. 45. 52. 99. 278. 282. 341. 407. 419. 441.

the Hellenistic and late Roman Period« (p. 158). He supports this idea by written sources from Moldova and defines the Dobrudscha as a contact zone between Thracian and Getic tribal communities, the Russian steps, the Carpathian Mountains and Thrace and Asia Minor to the south (p. 159).

M. Oppermann compares the data available from Durankulak with Kybele monuments from the pre-Roman period in the West Pontos and thus integrates them in the wider geographical and archaeological context of the Pontos region (pp. 179–184). The following chapter by O. Höckmann addresses the subject of seafaring in the Pontos Euxinos, focussing on the region from Berezan/Olbia to Georgia and to the north of the Black Sea. Chronologically, he deals with Copper Age, the evidences from about 2000 BCE, the time of colonisation (8th–7th cent. BCE) until the Hellenistic period (pp. 185–198) and also refers to piracy in the Pontos during the Hellenistic period (pp. 193–194).

For the Hellenistic period palynological and paleobotanical data from Durankulak furnish evidence that some species, such as pistachio and olive, were consumed but not grown in the area, and were imported from the Balkans (pp. 199–200). The results of the geoarchaeological surveys in Durankulak yielded information about the ancient geography of the region (pp. 201–210) and established that Lake Durankulak did not exist during the Neolithic Age (5300/5200–4750 BCE) and that the coast in prehistoric times was further inland compared to the modern day coast (p. 204).

In sum, the book is an important contribution for the veneration of Kybele in the Balkans. No other substantial publications exist about the investigations on the Big Island and on the site of the votive pits in Durankulak. In this respect the volume is remarkable. Contributions in German and Bulgarian, together with an extensive English summary, invite many readers in a broad scholarly forum to make use of the publication.

Yet, some critical remarks need to be put forward. There are certain inconsistencies in the sequence of the chapters, for example, between pages 13–20 I. Vasjov introduced the archaeological find-spots on the Big Island and west coast of the Durankulak lagoon, referring to the excavations accomplished between 1974–2007. Then, this chapter is followed by an introduction by J. Burow and H. Tododorva. There are also some repetitions throughout the text, for example, the locations of the Big Island, the cave sanctuary (pp. 35. 51) and the votive pits are repeated several times. Also, additional comparanda for the Kybele Temple and the votive pits would have presented a broader spectrum for emphasizing the significance of the material which is described in detail, but lacking more comparisons. This observation holds true also for the welcome extra chapter on the Kybele Sanctuary of Dionysiopolis on the Black Sea coast.