

# **MIHAI GLIGOR, The Archaeology of Death: Archaeothanatology. An Introduction**

**Abstract:** The prehistoric funerary archaeology is currently going through a fervid period as far as methodological and qualitative aspects are concerned. Researching and classifying burials are dealt with on a standard basis by every archaeologist involved in funerary studies. More and more funerary discoveries get us new approaches and interpretations of mortuary practices. In the early 1980s a new approach combining archaeology with biology-derived methods was developed in France. Its original name in literature was “l’anthropologie du terrain”, literally signifying “field anthropology”. Due to the fact that there were different meanings for both “anthropology” and “fieldwork” in French literature, Anglo-Saxon and American ones, Bruno Boulestin and Henry Duday coined instead the use of “archaeothanatology” term in 2005-2006.

In close connection to the objectives of the research project From Inhumation to Cremation in Romanian Neolithic and Eneolithic. New Archaeological Evidence, Burial Practices, and Osteological Approach (Principal Investigator PhD Mihai Gligor), University “1 Decembrie 1918” of Alba Iulia has been in 2014 the warm host of the “Archaeothanatology: an Interdisciplinary Approach on Death in Prehistory” conference. For two days (14-15 April), the scholars have been part of interesting debates about: 1. Burial context and characteristics of the funerary deposits; 2. Corpse decomposition and taphonomic processes; 3. Mortuary practices and the disposal of the bodies; 4. Dismembered and scattered human remains; 5. Missing, presumed dead. Where are people buried? The conference was funded by a grant of the Romanian National Authority for Scientific Research, CNCS-UEFISCDI, project number PN-II-RU-TE-2012-3-0461 (53/30.04.2013).

The present volume, entitled Archaeothanatology: an Interdisciplinary Approach on Death from Prehistory to the Middle Ages contains the most valuable contributions from the conference, as well as other studies related to the conference topics.

**Keywords:** Alba Iulia Conference, Archaeothanatology, mortuary practices, archaeological context, osteological analysis

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