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„Friedrich-Alexander” University of Erlangen-Nürnberg**

**CUCUTENI – 140:  
INTERDISCIPLINARY FRAMEWORK  
FOR CUCUTENI - TRYPILLIA RESEARCH**

**INTERNATIONAL COLLOQUIUM**

**Programme and Abstracts**

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**TRYPILLIA CULTURE MEGA-SITES:  
STAGES OF RESEARCH,  
OLD AND NEW SOURCES AND FORMATION OF IDEAS**

**Mykhailo Videyko,  
Nataliia Burdo**

***Keywords:** Trypillia culture mega-sites, urbanization, research history, concepts.*

Twenty years ago, Dan Monah's speech at a conference in Talyanki (2003) was entitled *A Ghost is Haunting Europe: the Neolithic Proto-Cities*. Even then, the idea of a „ghost” was caused more by the lack of information about the state of research than by the real state of affairs. In the time that has passed, this „ghost” has acquired quite real outlines thanks to new research. In the history of the study of mega-sites of Trypillia culture, it is now possible to distinguish the following three stages: before 1971, 1971-2003 and 2009 - to the present day.

Until 1971, archaeological research was carried out on many of them. These are such sites as Trypillya, Tomashivka, Maidanetske, Volodymyrivka. The size of these sites then passed the attention of researchers who focused on other problems, primarily the periodization of culture. Only two researchers assessed these sites as a special phenomenon. They were Viktor Petrov (1948) and Serhiy Bibikov (1965). The first assessed them as possible cities, the second as centers of intertribal communication. Both had in mind such a settlement as Volodymyrivka.

In 1971, the second stage started from research in Maidanetski (Mykola Shmaglii, Valery Dudkin, Kostiantyn Zinkovskyi). The starting point was the aerial survey photos by Kostyantyn Shishkin, and the main means of studying settlement planning was magnetic prospection. Thus, a comprehensive approach to the study of mega-settlements (aerial photography / satellite images-magnetic survey-archaeological excavations) was initiated, which has now become a generally accepted standard. In 1972, the mentioned researchers proposed to consider these large settlements as „proto-cities”. Since 1981, research has started in Talyanki and other settlements (Volodymyr Kruts, Olena Tsvek, Tamara Movsha), as well as

archaeological explorations around them. These studies significantly increased the amount of information about architecture, economy (research by Halyna Pashkevich and Oleg Zhuravlev), as well as relative chronology (Serhiy Ryzhov). This information became the basis for the formation of opposing views on these settlements. The „urban direction” was continued (Mykola Shmaglii, Mykhailo Videiko) and the „agrarian” direction was opened-„agricultural villages” (Volodymyr Kruts, Volodymyr Zbenovych, Oleksiy Korvin-Piotrovskiy and others). The scope and direction of field research after 1991 did not provide either side with critical information to strengthen the argumentation of their views.

The conference in Talyanki in 2003 brought the topic of mega-sites to the international level thanks to the participation of archaeologists from Romania and Great Britain. Since 2009, research has been started in Nebelivka (together with *Durham University*), and since 2011 in other settlements (together with the *RGK* and the *CAU*). The use of new equipment for magnetic surveying and large-scale archaeological excavations changed the perception of the set of objects in mega-settlements. Traces of fortifications, large-scale public buildings and pottery kilns were discovered. A higher density of construction of individual settlements was also found: instead of 1,575 objects in Maidanetske, there could be about 3,000.

Subsequent archaeological research confirmed the presence of fortifications. It was established that there was a certain hierarchy among public buildings found in almost all settlements. The discovery was made of multi-channel pottery kilns, which proved the artisanal nature of production. Studies of the surrounding environment updated ideas about the conditions in which mega-settlements arose and existed. The discovery of the fact of the use of organic fertilizers changes the perception of the possibilities of food production at that time.

New information based on their use for reconstructions of ancient history can be systematized thematically: economy, structure of settlements, palaeodemographic reconstructions, society. Their interpretation in modern studies indicates a return to the „urbanist concept”. Currently, the reconstruction of the most complete and adequate picture of the history of the appearance, development and disappearance of mega-sites is possible if the entire mass of information obtained at the all three stages of research is used.



**Fig. 1.** *Stage one: Volodymyrivka, excavations in 1947; study of a row of buildings around the anti-tank ditch.*



**Fig. 2.** *Stage two: Maidanetske, excavations in 1987; research of a row of buildings.*



**Fig. 3.** *Stage three: Nebelivka, excavations in 2014; remains of the building with a small amount of burnt daub in the construction of the floors.*

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