

A Cult Shaft from a Cult Assemblage at Samovodene Neolithic Site

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This paper presents the cult shaft in the Samovodene Neolithic site that was excavated in 1987-94. It is part of a cult assemblage of the site related to phases Samovodene A and Samovodene B1 and the excavators have not yet reached virgin soil. A depth of 11.80 m was reached. The shaft is an irregular circle in plan, 1.80 in diameter. This circle varies in shape and dimensions as the depth changes and its diameter reaches 2 m. These changes are insignificant and do not change the shape of the shaft. The shaft walls are plastered with green clay, 5-7 cm thick. The shaft was sealed with clay at a depth of 3.80 m and then stopped functioning. This fact was confirmed also by the finds from 0 to 3.80 m and that the shaft was filled up.

The first (the lowest) layer of the excavated part of the shaft is between 11.80 and 8.80 m and has gray-ash colour though there are also patches of yellow-green and gray-green deposits. There are also pottery sherds, animal bones, charcoal, wood, ceramic loom weight, two grinding stones and river stones. Four landslips with gray-green and rust-green colour were fixed at a depth of 8.80-6.25 m and in this period the shaft was used less intensively. The most intensive use of the shaft was at the depth of 6,25-3,80 m. Four passages made from river stones

and antlers were excavated as well as ashy layers. A lamb sacrifice was unearthed at a depth of 4.60 m. The shaft yielded pottery and pottery sherds, tripods, anthropomorphic and zoomorphic figurines, an amulet, loom weights, grinding stones, bone tools, river stones, flint artifacts, lots of animal bones and horns (deer and aurochs). The wood remains are from branches of juniper, ash-tree, elm-tree, hazelbush and cornel-tree. There are also traces of fire that was burning in the shaft - black patches of soot and patches of semi-fired clay on the shaft walls. The reduced amount of oxygen prevented firing at high temperatures. The deposits in the shaft reveal ritual practices that included fire. The shaft was used during the Samovodene B1 phase, i. e. in the beginning of the Late Neolithic (the third quarter of the 6th millennium BC).

In my opinion prehistoric people considered the shaft the womb of the Goddess Mother-Earth. Digging of the shaft was the binding of the place of occupation and the deposits were used in relation to the future life cycles or exchanges with the ancestors. It reflects the main idea of the Neolithic society; this is the correlation between death-birth-fertility and its identity - the Goddess Mother-Earth and especially her womb.