ANTHROPOLOGICAL RESEARCH ON THE URBAN POPULATION INHABITING THE CITY OF IAŞI DURING THE MEDIEVAL PERIOD. THE 17TH CENTURY NECROPOLIS LOCATED ON THE EASTERN SIDE OF "CURTEA DOMNEASCĂ"

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This article contains anthropological data regarding a series of 111 human skeletons (discovered in 60 inhumation tombs) unearthed from the medieval necropolis (17th century) located on the eastern side of "Curtea Domnească" of Iaşi. By analysing each skeleton according to the methodology used in paleoanthropological research, we distinguished a set of biometric and morphological features which signalized in the end the common anthropological features of the group inhumed in this medieval necropolis. We point out that the anthropological research conducted upon 96 adult skeletons (70 males and 26 females) indicates, on average, a population of over-medium height in the case of males and tall in the case of females, with a wide, high and moderately long neurocranium, a brachycephalic cranial index, hypsicranic and metriocranic skullcap, oval metriometope forehead, with intermediate crests and medium-sized occipital bone.

The faces are mesoprosope and mesene with mesoconch orbits and mesorrhine noses. The mandibular robustness is moderate in the case of males and reduced in the case of females, while the shaping of the cranial bone is more accentuated at the former. Analyzing the main biometric and morphological indicators, we established that the primary background for this population group can be defined as dinarico-mediteranido, with secondary Alpinoid, Nordoid and East-Europoid influences.

Key words: paleoanthropological analysis, necropolis, 17th century, mortality, biometric features.

1. INTRODUCTION

The foundation of Iaşi, similar to that of other urban settlements, represents the result of a long evolution dependent on a socio-economic process maturation, on the geographic context and on the historical background [9]. Examining the map of the routes which connected the city of Iaşi to the rest of the country in the second half of the 13th century, Cihodaru and his collaborators [9] state in the book "The history of Iaşi" that "*The city of Iaşi had a most fortunate location and it was meant to become the most important administrative, military and strategic center*".

As regards the beginnings of urban life on the current territory occupied by the city of Iaşi, documentary sources place them in the second half of the 14th century [17].

In 1396, the city of Iasi is mentioned by the German crusader Johan Schiltbergher (a participant in the battle of Nikopol) as being "*situated on the commercial road which connects Cetatea Alba and Liov*" [10]. Beginning with the 15th century, the city expands due to the afflux of people from the rural areas and to the craftsmen and merchant who came from other areas to settle in the borough [4].

The archaeological excavations conducted in 2008 in the central area of Iaşi (the eastern side of Curtea Domnească – the area of the Palas Complex) led to the discovery of a necropolis with 111 human skeletons found in 60 inhumation tombs. The osteological material was unearthed in June – July 2008 and the diggings were directed by Mrs. Stela Cheptea, PhD and C.S.I archaeologist, who was helped by her team of researchers at the Centre for European History and Civilization of Iaşi. According to the information provided by those in charge of the excavations, the necropolis was dated from the 17th century. This osteological series containing 111 skeletons represents a small segment of the population who inhabited the city of Iasi during the medieval period, which adds up to the anthropological array of the population of Iaşi. This study offers a novel perspective, since there are very few anthropological traces unearthed from the medieval Iasi up to this point, despite the fact that we have ample archaeological documentation, dating from the beginnings of urban life in this area.

2. MATERIALS AND METHOD

The human osteological material is represented by 111 human skeletons unearthed from 60 inhumation tombs: 96 adult skeletons and 15 teenage skeletons.

We remark upon the absence of mortality in the age interval 0–14 years. The paleoanthropological analysis was conducted upon a group of 96 adult skeletons (70 males and 26 females); their preservation degree and the restoration potential permitted a relatively complete study.

The actual anthropological study of the osteological material was preceded by a process of skeleton washing and dirt removal; each bone was marked and the main parts of each skeleton were reconditioned using the fragments available; the missing parts were substituted with a mouldable substance. The final step of the study was the age and sex determination. For the sex determination we analyzed a set of features, using to this effect all the bone pieces which provided us with metric and morphological data. We studied the common shape of the pelvis, the sciatic notch degree of opening, the sacrum degree of curving, the massiveness and robustness of the long bones, the articulations and muscle insertions development levels, the cranial relief development, the forehead shape and degree of inclination, the mandible robustness, the teeth shape and size. For determining the age at death in the case of subjects over 20, we took into account the facies symphysialis and sacro-iliac surface transformation degree, the changes in the spongial tissue from

the humeral and femoral epiphyses, the presence of certain pathological processes which can appear with age, the cranial sutures level of obliteration, as well as the degree of tooth abrasion. For the segment 20–x years (*adultus, maturus* and *senilis*), the sex and age at death were determined based on the methods and technics recommended by Brothwell, Buikstra and Ubelaker, Mays, Schmitt, Walrath and collaborators, White and Folkens [6, 8, 14, 16, 19, 20].

The anthropometric and conformity study of each skeleton was conducted according to the classical methods recommended by Martin and Saller [13] and for the evaluation and classification of the absolute and relative values we used the dimorphic scales of the authors Alexeev and Debetz [1] ,whereas for the index assessment we used the classical unitary scales.

The dimensional and conformative characterization of each skeleton was complemented by the somatoscopic description, using the classical methods suggested by Broca, Eickstedt and Olivier [7, 11, 15].

The individual stature was determined based on the size of the long bones, using the dimensional scales suggested for each gender (Bach, Breitinger, Manouvrier, Trotter and Gleser, [2, 5, 12, 18].

The type of skeleton anthropology was determined for each subject based on the anthropometric, conformative and somatoscopic features, the average stature and the degree of robustness (when the available materials allowed us to make these observations).

For establishing the type of skeleton anthropology we used the classifications suggested by Boev, Eickstedt and Vallois [3, 11, 21].

The individual characterization of each skeleton pointed out the distinctive traits of the population to which the skeleton belonged; to that effect, we calculated certain location and dispersion statistical parameters for each anthropometrical type (dimensions and indices).

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

ANTHROPOLOGICAL STRUCTURE

Cephalic skeleton

The statistical parameters associated with this part of the skeleton are presented in the synthetic Table 1 concerning the main dimensions and the most important indices which describe both the neurocranium and the facial cranium for each population.

3.1. FEATURES OF THE NEUROCRANIUM

3.1.1. Biometric data

The neurocranium is averagely long (179.85 mm) but wide (145.42 mm) in the case of males, consequently the cranial index falls into the brachycranic category (80.93 u.i.). In the case of females, considering the sexual size dimorphism,

the mean value of the skullcap length is high (176.13 mm), while the average width can also be described as high (143.44 mm); as a result, the mean value of the cranial index (81.48 u.i.) is slightly higher than in the male group (an extra 0.5 u.i.), indicating that the brachycranic feature of the neurocranium is even more pronounced (Table 1).

Table 1

Statistic values of the main, absolute and relative, cephalo-facial and stature dimensions

Martin No.	Character	Male			Female		
		N	M	δ	N	M	δ
1	G-op	60	179.85	5.52	16	176.13	6.52
5	N-ba	55	101.95	4.19	14	99.21	3.47
8	Eu-eu	61	145.42	4.85	18	143.44	3.93
9	Ft-ft	61	98.66	4.43	17	98.71	6.37
10	Co-co	58	122.61	5.18	17	120.18	4.64
12	Ast-ast	63	110.98	4.26	17	108.53	3.76
17	Ba-b	57	137.32	5.46	14	134.04	3.83
20	Po-b	61	117.48	3.89	17	114.44	3.89
40	Ba-pr	52	95.52	7.65	13	92.35	6.11
44	Ek-ek	53	96.91	3.79	14	95.36	7.33
45	Zy-zy	55	133.97	6.81	15	130.87	7.73
48	N-pr	56	69.29	4.22	13	66.42	4.18
47	N-gn	54	118.97	6.35	13	114.19	6.17
50	Mf-mf	56	24.00	2.31	14	22.00	2.46
51	Mf-ek	55	40.71	1.90	13	39.77	1.91
52	Height of the orbit	55	32.76	2.66	13	33.08	3.87
54	Al-al	57	24.55	1.88	16	23.63	1.78
55	N-ns	57	52.27	3.84	13	50.08	3.62
62	Ol-st	56	44.88	4.09	16	42.47	5.74
63	Enm2-enm2	50	40.20	3.47	14	38.50	3.61
65	Kdl.-kdl.	61	120.50	5.17	15	117.50	5.02
66	Go-go	65	104.76	5.91	18	101.75	6.14
68	Depth of the mandible	66	70.21	3.83	18	68.64	4.62
69(1)	Height at the g.m.level	67	32.69	2.35	18	31.36	2.84
69(3)	Thickness at the g.m. level	67	12.11	1.29	18	11.39	1.20
8/1	Cranial index	60	80.93	3.47	16	81.48	3.77
17/1	Basio-bregmatic long. index	55	76.49	3.91	14	76.10	4.12
17/8	Basio-bregmatic transv. index	56	94.41	4.56	14	93.71	2.34
20/1	Porio-bregmatic long. index	58	65.47	2.66	16	64.99	2.88
20/8	Porio-bregmatic transv. index	59	80.91	2.99	17	79.98	2.36
9/10	Frontal-transversal index	58	80.20	2.58	17	82.12	3.71
9/8	Frontal- parietal index	59	67.62	2.62	17	68.72	4.02
12/8	Parietal-occipital index	60	76.31	2.83	17	75.87	2.86
47/45	Total facial index	53	89.34	5.74	13	88.29	5.44
48/45	Facial superior index	54	52.06	4.00	13	51.31	2.76
52/51	Orbitary index	55	80.58	6.64	13	83.07	7.45
54/55	Nazal index	57	47.20	4.80	13	47.30	4.08
45/8	Cranial-facial transv. index	55	92.08	4.28	15	91.20	4.18
69(3)/69(1)	Mandibular robustness index	67	37.18	4.37	18	36.55	4.53
	Stature	76	169.04	3.38	25	165.44	3.67

As regards the distribution of the cephalic index, both men and women display a more significant weight of the high indices – the brachycranic and mesocranic indices are encountered in over half of the females (87.50%) and males (78.34%).

The incidence of the dolichocranic shapes is higher among males (10%) by comparison with females (6.25%), (Fig. 1).

The basio-bregmatic height of the neurocranium, determined after the study of 57 male skulls and 14 female skulls falls into the high category for both genders (males: 137.32 mm; females: 134.04 mm), taking into account the sexual size dimorphism.

The basio-bregmatic longitudinal index is hypsicranic on average in the male group (76.49 u.i.), while the female mean is situated at the average limit for this category (76.10 u.i.).

The mean of the basio-bregmatic transverse index falls into the metriocranic category for both genders (94.41 u.i. in males and 93.71 u.i. in females).

In the male group, 67.27% of the basio-bregmatic longitudinal indices are hypsicranic, 30.91% are orthocranic and only 1.82 % of the indices are chamecranic (Fig. 2).

The basio-bregmatic transverse index for the male group are mainly metriocranic (51.79%), then tapeinocranic (26.79%) and acrocephalic (21.43%), (Fig. 3).

64.29% of the basio-bregmatic longitudinal index for the female group are hypsicranic, 28.57% are orthocranic and only 7.14% can be defined as chamecranic (Fig. 2).

As regards the basio-bregmatic transverse index distribution on categories, in the female series, the metriocranic category prevails (71.43%), followed by the tapeinocranic category (28.50%), (Fig. 3).
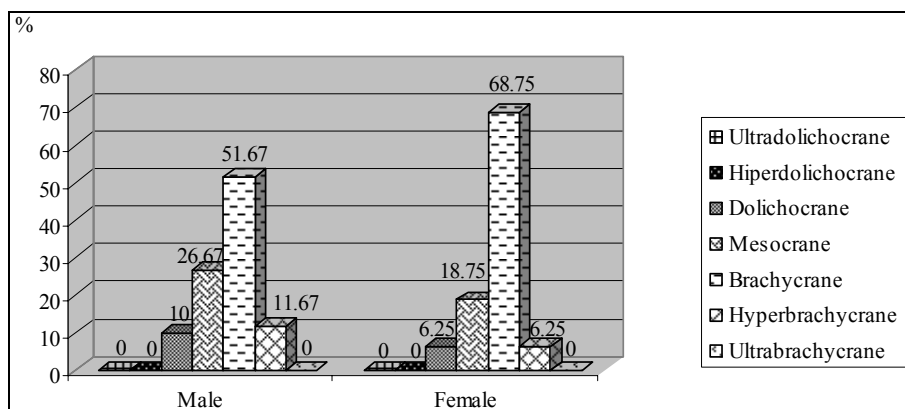

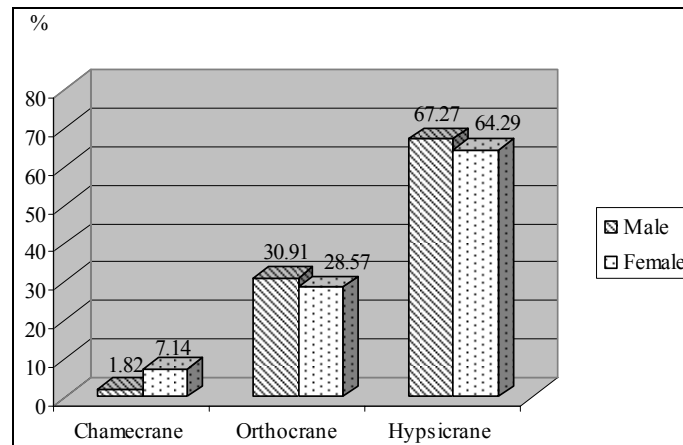Fig. 1. Cephalic index (8/1).

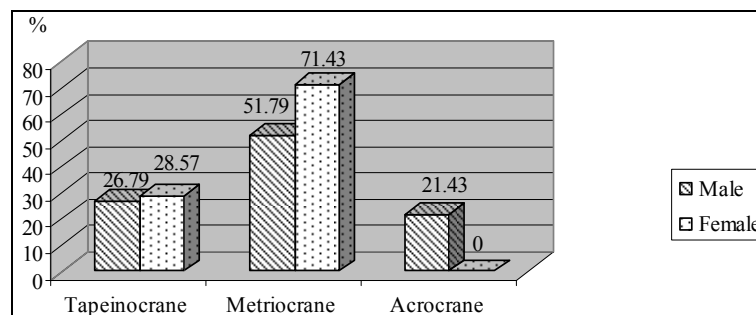Fig. 2. Basio-bregmatic longitudinal index (17/1).

Fig. 3. Basio-bregmatic transversal index (17/8).

The porio-bregmatic height is averagely high in both sexes (117.48 mm in the male group and 144.44 mm in the female group).

The mean of the porio-bregmatic longitudinal index in relation to the calvaria is hypsicephalic for both the male (65.47 u.i.) and the female group (64.99 u.i.).

The mean of the porio-bregmatic transversal index is metriocranic (80.91 u.i.) in men and tapeinocranic (79.98 u.i.) in women.

The distribution of the porio-bregmatic longitudinal index on categories indicates that the hypsicephalic category has the highest incidence in both genders (81.03% in males and 68.75% in females), followed by the orthocranic category (18.97% for the male group, respectively 31.25% for the female group), (Fig. 4).

In the distribution of the porio-bregmatic transversal index, the highest concentration of cases corresponds to the middle (metriocranic) category in both genders (64.41% in males and 52.94% in females), followed by the tapeinocranic index (33.90% in males and 47.06% in females); there was only one male case of acrocranic index (1.69%), (Fig. 5).
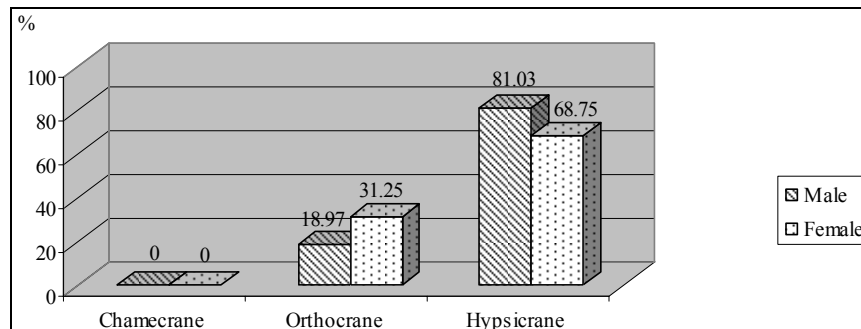
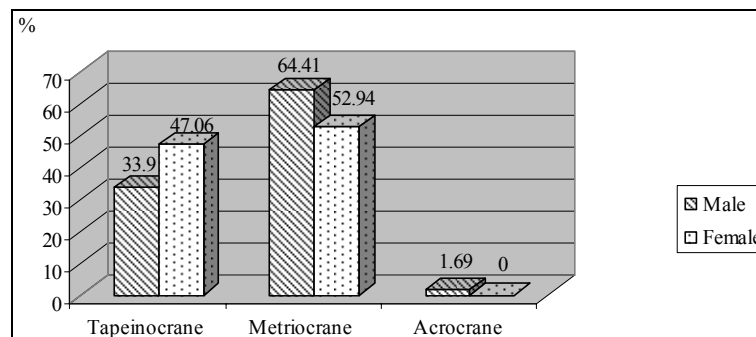Fig. 4. Porio-bregmatic longitudinal index (20/1).

Fig. 5. Porio-bregmatic transversal index (20/8).

The forehead dimensions, both minimal and maximal, are defined in both sexes by high means, except that in women the mean maximal diameter is situated at the inferior limit of extremely high. The ratio between the minimal and maximal width of the forehead, expressed through the frontal-transverse index, has in both genders mean values which fall into the category of intermediate foreheads (80.20 u.i. in males and 82.12 u.i. in females).

The distribution of this index on the three categories is defined in both sexes by the highest incidence of the intermediate foreheads (oval forehead) – with a higher percentage in women (82.35% compared to men – 58.62%); the last place is occupied by the spherical foreheads (a shape which is more frequently encountered in males – 41.38% compared to females – 17.65%); the foreheads with parallel lines are absent (Fig. 6).

The frontal-parietal index, which is the ratio between the forehead minimal width (ft-ft) and the neurocranium minimal width (eu-eu), gives metriometope means in both the male and the female series (67.62 u.i., respectively 68.72 u.i.).

The distribution of these indices on categories indicates that in the male group the metriometope type prevails (49.15%), while the eurymetope and steno-metope types have lower rates (27.12%, respectively 23.73%).

In the female group the highest incidence is associated with the eurymetope category (47.06%), followed by the metriometope (29.41%) and stenometope (23.53%) types (Fig. 7).
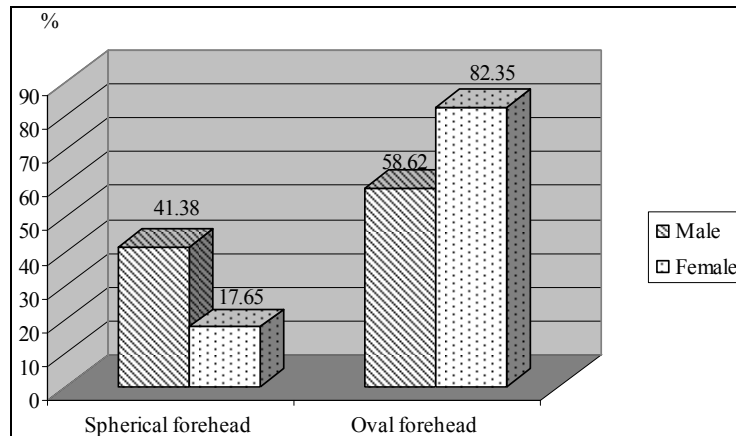

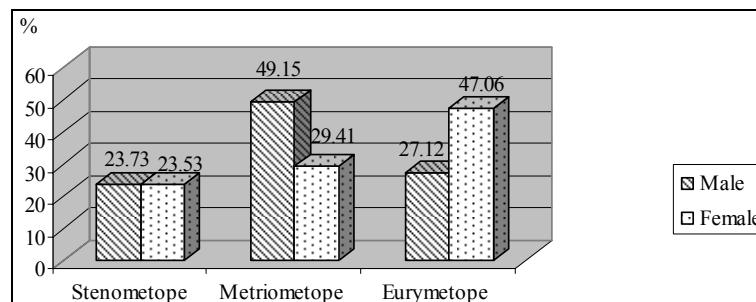Fig. 6. Frontal-transversal index (9/10).

Fig. 7. Frontal-parietal index (9/8).

The analysis of the occipital width development revealed an average mean in the case of males, while the female mean is situated at the inferior limit of the high category (108.53 u.i.).

The parietal-occipital index falls into the medium category, on average, both in males (76.31 u.i.) and in females (75.87 u.i.).

The analysis of the index distribution on categories showed a higher incidence of the medium and large categories for both genders. In the male group, the mean category (81.67%) is more frequently encountered than the large category (16.67%), while narrow occipitals record a mere 1.67%.

In the female group, the medium category also takes up a rate of 64.71, followed by the large and narrow categories with equal rates (17.65%), (Fig. 8). The occipitals situated on the very wide side are absent in both genders.
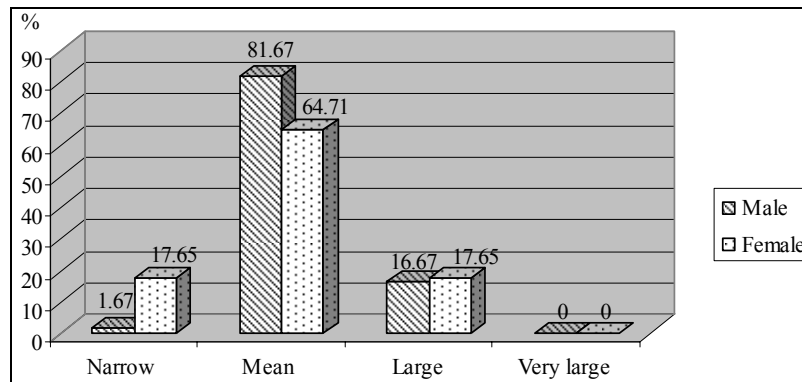
Fig. 8. Parietal-occipital index (12/8).

3.1.2. Morphological features of the neurocranium

The morphological features of the neurocranium mainly refer to its shape in the norma verticalis and in the norma occipitalis and to the occipital shape in the norma lateralis, as well as the development of the bone relief.

The most frequently encountered neurocranium shape in the "*norma verticalis*" is sphenoid in the male group (28.81%) and ovoid in the female group (35.29%), followed by the pentagonoid shape (10.17% in males and 17.65% in females), ellipsoid (15.25% in males and 17.65% in females), rhomboid (3.39 in males and 5.88% in females) and the brisoid shape which is only encountered in males (5.08).

In the "*norma occipitalis*", the most frequently encountered neurocranium shapes are the "*house*" shape (88.52% in males and 72.22% in females), followed by the "*bomb*" shape with a higher incidence in females (27.78%) compared to males (9.84%); the "*tent*" shape is only occasionally encountered in the male group (1.64%).

The glabellar relief displays a low variability; we only discovered cases pertaining to three of the six possible levels in both sexes; the first level has the highest incidence, while the second and third levels have lower incidences.

The supraorbitary relief is defined by the presence of the first two levels; the IIIrd and IVth levels are absent in the two groups. The highest incidences are associated in males with level I (61.67%), followed by the levels I→II and II (26.67%, respectively 11.67%); all the female cases correspond to the level I→II.

The shape of the occipital region in the "*norma lateralis*" is in most cases averagely curved in males (46.15%) and extremely curved in females (52.94%).

The flattened and curved occipitals have lower rates in both the male and the female series.

3.2. THE FACIAL SKULL

3.2.1. Biometric data

Most skeletons have well preserved facial bones, so reconstruction was necessary only in a few cases.

The mean of the total face height (facial massif and mandible) falls into the medium category in the case of males (n-gn = 118.97 mm), while the female mean comes under the high category (n-gn = 114.19 mm).

The mean of the facial massif height (n-pr) in both the male and the female series falls into the medium category (69.29 mm in males and 66.42 mm in females). The mean of the bizygomatic width (zy-zy) corresponds to the limit between the narrow and the medium category (133.97 mm) in the case of males, while the female mean belongs in the high category (130.87 mm), taking into account the sexual dimorphism.

The ratio between the total face height (n-gn) and the bizygomatic width (zy-zy) is defined by mesoprosope total facial indices on average in both the male and the female group (89.34 u.i., respectively 88.29 u.i.); the mean of the superior facial index (which is the ratio between the superior face height and the bizygomatic width) falls into the mesene category in both the male and the female group (52.06 u.i., respectively 51.31 u.i.), with a difference of approximately 1 u.i. – Table 1.

As regards the total facial index (47/45) distribution on categories, in the male group we encounter all the categories; the highest incidence corresponds to the mesoprosope category (35.85%), followed by the hypereuryprosopic and euryprosopic categories (with equal rates of 20.75%). The euryprosopic and hypereuryprosopic categories have lower incidences (15.09%, respectively 7.55%). In the female group, the total facial index has a lower variability, because the hypereuryprosopic category isn't represented. The mesoprosope category records the highest incidence (46.15%), followed by the euryprosopic category (30.77%). The hyperleptoprosopic and leptoprosopic categories have lower incidences (15.38%, respectively 7.69%) – Fig. 9.
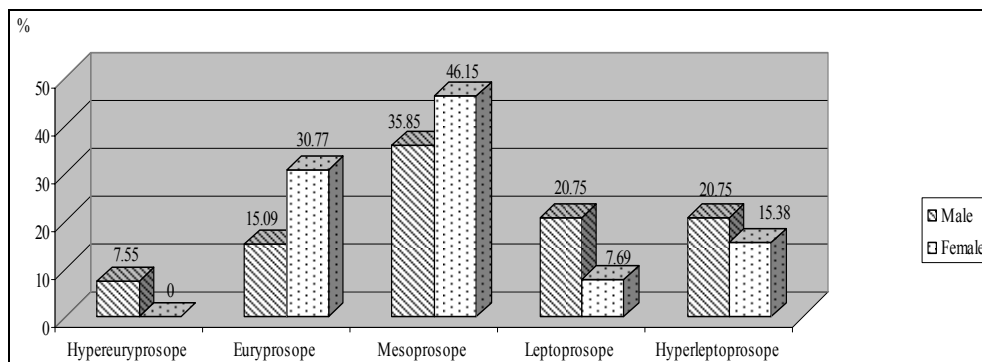

Fig. 9. Total facial index (47/45).

The superior facial index (48/45) has a more concentrated distribution than the previous index, despite the fact that the number of skulls used in the calculation was higher. Thus, in the male group we encounter all the shape types, while in the female group the hypereuryene and hyperleptene shapes are absent.

In the first group, the highest index concentration corresponds to the mesene category (40.74%), followed by the euryene (29.63%) and leptene (24.07%) categories; the hypereuryene and hyperleptene shapes appear only in exceptional cases (3.70% and 1.85%). In the female group, the highest concentration is also associated with the mesene shape (53.85%), followed by the euryene shape (38.46%) and the leptene shape which has a much lower rate (7.69%) – Fig.10.
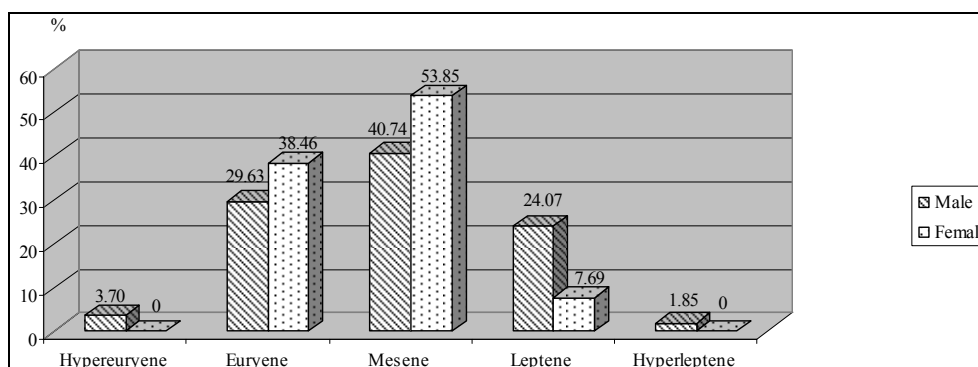

Fig. 10. Superior facial index (48/45).

The orbit size means in the male group can be described as low as regards the orbit height (37.76 mm) and incipiently narrow as regards their width (40.71 mm). In the female group, the means for both the height and width of the orbits belong in the medium category (33.08 mm, respectively 39.77 mm).

The orbitary index mean (52/51) in men is mesoconch (80.58 u.i.), while the female mean is slightly higher (83.07 u.i.)

As regards the distribution on categories, we observe that the three categories of orbitry index are present in both sexes, but they have different weights.

From this point of view, the most interesting difference is the one related to the cameconch orbits. Thus, this category is very rarely encountered in women (7.69%), whereas in men it has a notable incidence (30.91%). The mesoconch and hipsiconch categories have higher rates in the female series compared to the male series; the most pronounced difference is observed in the mesoconch category, which has a much higher incidence in women (Fig. 11).

The nose is averagely long (n-ns: 52.27 mm in males and 50.08 mm in females) and large (al-al: 24.55 mm in males and 23.63 mm in females) in both genders, respectively mesorrhine by the nasal index (with approximately equal values in the two genders – 47.20 u.i. in males and 47.30 u.i. in females).

The nasal index distribution on categories is indicated by the mean values, showing the higher incidence of the leptorrhine and mesorrhine shapes, with different values between the two genders (Fig. 12).
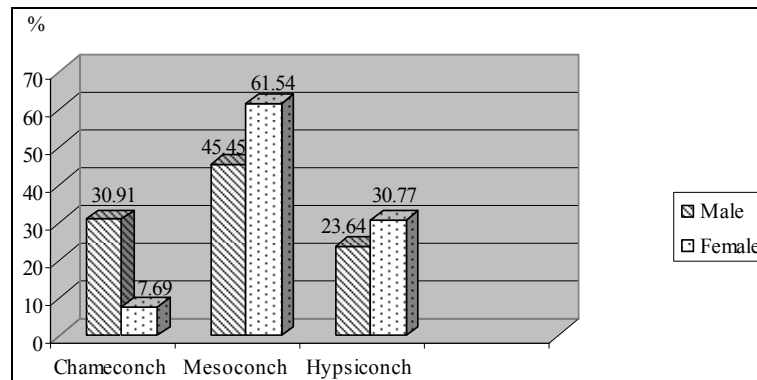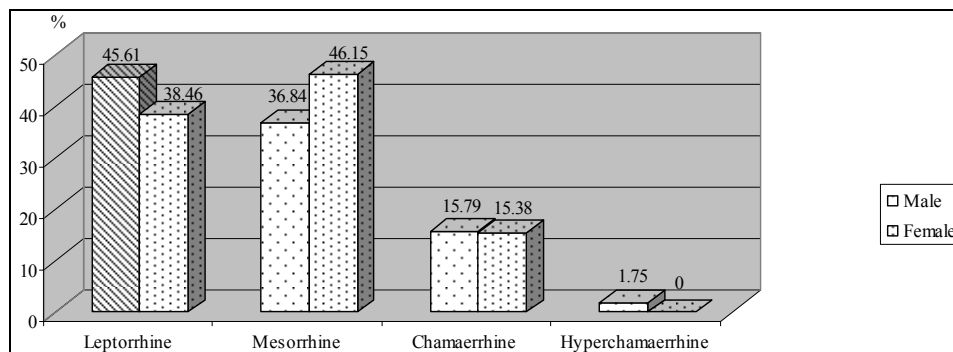
Fig. 11. Orbitary index (52/51).

Fig. 12. Nasal index (54/55).

The transverse craniofacial and facial indices which express the ratio between the maximum width of the neurocranium and the maximum width of the facial massif (the jugo-parietal index) or between the minimal breadth of the forehead and the maximum breadth of the facial massif (the fronto-jugal index), or between the breadth of the lower face (bigonial breadth) and its maximum breadth (bizygomatic breadth) have a fair significance in the characterization of a population.

By analyzing these index means, we can see that the jugo-parietal index (45/8) has a male mean of 92.08 u.i., which is situated at upper limit of the cryptojugal category; in the female group of the same series, the mean of the jugo-parietal index is 91.20 u.i., which also falls into the cryptojugal category. The fronto-jugal index (9/45) is defined by a male mean of 73.46 u.i., which falls into the almost wide category, indicating a fair development of the forehead compared to the bizygomatic breadth of the facial massif. The female mean is slightly higher (75.41 u.i.), indicating a better breadth development of the frontal bones related to the maximum breadth of the facial massif, same as in the male group of this population (Table 1).

The gonio-jugal index is defined by a male mean of 78.68 u.i. and a female mean of 77.19 u.i., indicating a lower development of the bigonial breadth, that is of the lower face breadth, in relation to its maximum breadth.

The mandible is averagely wide in males and wide in females; both sexes display a shallow mandibular fossa. The robustness indices, on average, fall into the medium category in males and into the small category in females (Table 1), but the male mean is approximately 1 u.i higher than the female mean (37.18 u.i. in males compared to 36.55 in females).

3.2.2. Morphological features

The facial skeleton morphological features include the size and the arrangement of the malar bones, the development of the canine fossa, the arrangement of the nasal bones, the height of the mandible and the development of the genial apophysis.

The size and the arrangement of the malar bones is variable in this series, where we encounter fairly massif malar bones, which is a feature associated with their more or less frontal position (43.33% in males, respectively 17.65% in females), as well as relatively gracile malar bones, with either intermediate (48.33 % in males, respectively 64.71% in females) or almost temporalized arrangement (8.33% in males, respectively 17.65% in females).

The development of the canine fossa has a fairly high variability, ranging from barely delineated fossae (gr. I – 35.58% in the male series and 5.88% in the female series) to deep fossae (gr. III–IV – 3.51 in the male series; gr. III – 11.76% in the female series).

The palate depth differs between the two sexes – women display predominantly shallow palates, whereas men display in equal measure high and medium depths.

The shape of the pyriform aperture is in most cases anthropine (70%), whereas in the other cases it is shaped as a prenasal ditch or prenasal fossa.

The mandibles are relatively high in the male skulls and low in the female skulls. The shape of the menton in the male group is mostly pyramidal (78.50%), whereas in the female group we encounter in equal measure the pyramidal and the button shapes (50%).

The gonia are generally slightly turned-down towards the outer area in the male group, whereas the female mandibles don't have this tendency.

For the characterization of the population mean size, we calculated the overall mean inscribed for each gender in the synoptic table number 1. By studying this table we can say that the male mean size of the population inhabiting the city of Iasi during the Medieval Period is 169.04 cm, falling into the over-medium sized category – at the upper limit, whereas the female mean belongs in the tall category (165.44 cm).

From the distribution on categories of the mean stature (Fig. 13) in the male group we observed a relatively ample individual variability of the statures (oscillating

between the bellow-medium and extremely tall category); the maximum con-
centration of the male cases corresponds to the over-middle category (35.53%),
followed by the hight category (34.21%), middle (21.05%), under-middle (7.89%)
and very hight (1.32%). The distribution on the dimorphic scale in the female
group is defined by a more limited variability (between the over-middle and very
hight categories) and the highest concentration is recorded in the hight (68%) and
very hight (28%) categories, whereas the over-middle stature occupies the last
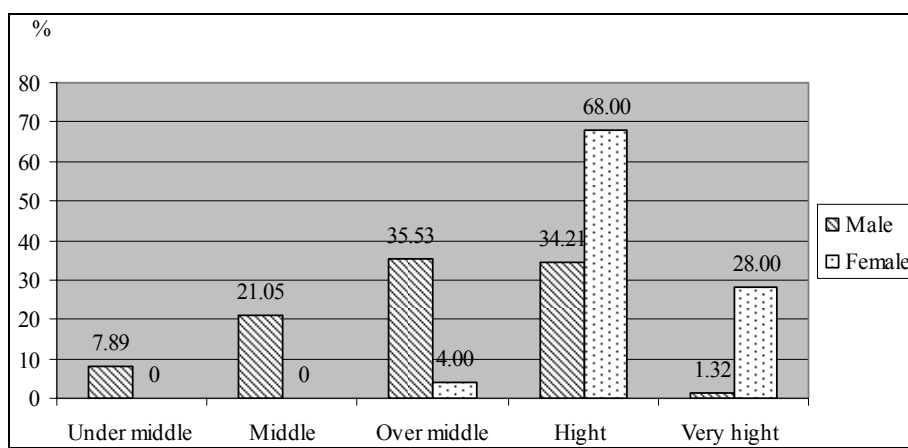place (4%).

Fig. 13. Stature.

4. CONCLUSIONS

By analyzing the variability of the dimensional and conformative features of
the osteological series unearthed from the necropolis located on the eastern side of
"Curtea Domnească" of Iaşi, which dates from the late medieval period (17th century),
we discovered important information about a set of common anthropological
features defining this group of people.

Thus, as regards the typology, the neurocranium is sphenoid in males and
ovoid in females, wide, high and moderately long. The cranial index is brachycephalic
and the skullcap is hypsicephalic or metriocranic.

The forehead is oval and metriometope, with intermediate crests and the
occipital bone is averagely broad.

The face in both genders is, on average, mesoprosope and mesene, with
mesoconch orbits and a mesorrhine nose with anthropine pyriform aperture.

The cranial bone relief is less developed in women and more pronounced in
men; the canine fossa ranges from moderately deep to barely delineated. The mandible
robustness is moderate in the case of males and reduced in the case of females.

As regards the stature, the mean values in the male group are situated at the limit between the over-middle and hight categories, whereas in the female series the mean values belong in the hight category.

Considering this set of features, we established that the primary background for this population group is dinarico-mediteranido, with secondary Alpinoid, Nordoid and East-Europoid influences, suggesting that we are in the face of a mixture of features and implicitly of populations, which is most probably due to the fact that the city of Iasi was at the time in the middle of an urbanization process.

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