

THE THRACIAN GRAVE AND CULT COMPLEX IN THE OSTROUSHA TUMULUS NEAR SHIPKA*

Georgi Kitov & Marlena Krasteva

The field enclosed between the present-day artificial dam called Seuthopolis, below whose waters the capital city of Seuthes III¹ is located, and the Shipka part of the Balkan Range, abound in more than 300 tumular embankments of different sizes,² divided into several groups (Fig. 1). The most impressive among them are the tumuli called Golyamata Kosmatka, Shoushmanets, Donkova Mogila and Ostrousha. The necropolis is one of



Fig. 1. Map of Bulgaria.

* Translated from Bulgarian by Nedyalka Chakalova.

¹ Димитров 1984: 11 ff. For a complete survey of the literature, see Николов 1991: 71 ff. On the possible links between the necropolis near Shipka and the capital city of Seuthes, cf. Китов 1994a: 85 ff.

² Тадакова-Цанова 1991: 104; Домарадски 1991: 127 ff.

the largest in Bulgaria, being comparable only to those near the village of Sveshtari,³ Smyadovo⁴ and several more.

The threat of treasure-hunters prompted the start of the archaeological excavations of the necropolis in 1992 and 1993. Fifteen tumuli were explored during the first archaeological season, but the embankments of most of them proved to be destroyed by farming. Primitive graves or tombs were found scattered in the chronological space between the Late Bronze Age and the Late Roman period. Of particularly high value among them are the unplundered royal tomb in the Malkata Mogila tumulus, two stone accumulations from Binyova Mogila—below which horse skeletons were discovered, one of which had a very impressive full set of silver horse-trappings, with zoomorphic and floral decoration on the appliques—metal objects of a high value from Konsoulova Mogila, as well as a primitive tomb and a large circular grave-platform with rarely observed or completely unknown rituals, etc.⁵

The exploration of one of the largest tumuli—Ostrousha—also started in July 1992. It is 21 m tall and has a diameter of 70 m.⁶ It was apparently used during the War of Liberation (1877-1878)—a spirally winding road leads to its deformed top which resembles a platform of irregular shape, with traces of trenches for cannons.⁷

During the verification of the evidence of geophysical anomalies,⁸ an approximately 5 m wide trench was dug in E-W direction close to the southern periphery of the embankment. The discovery of several Late Roman graves in the construction of which roof tiles were used, delayed our work, which was subsequently discontinued for lack of time and money. A collapse in the southern part of the trench in the beginning of April 1993 became the reason for the discovery of the largest Thracian tomb known so far (Fig. 2).⁹ Later it became clear that this was a large

³ Гергова 1992: 9 ff.

⁴ Unpublished observation by G. Atanasov and the author first mentioned.

⁵ The excavations were conducted for six weeks in July-August, 1992. For preliminary communications, see Китов 1994b: 5 ff.; Китов & Krasteva 1992-3: 59-75.

⁶ The tumulus is located at about 4 km southeast of Shipka. In immediate proximity to it there are six other tumuli accumulated, ranging between 1 and 7 metres in height, while at a distance of one kilometre to the southeast there is another group of tumuli, including the one in which L. Getov investigated a stone tomb, see Гетов 1991: 40 ff.; Лилова 1991: 47 ff.

⁷ Доксанлиев 1971: 85.

⁸ The measurements were made by Nikola Tonkov, geophysicist at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences.

⁹ The excavations were conducted April 13-27, 1993, by Georgi Kitov, assisted by Marlena Krasteva. In view of the importance of the site, the competent help of the following specialists was requested: Dr G. Mavrov, conservation specialist at the

grave cult complex which functioned in the second part of the 4th century BC.

The cult complex consists of a monolithic burial chamber, five other chambers and a megalithic grave construction (Figs. 3-4). There are numerous pythoi, amphorae, smaller clay vessels and architectural details in front of the complex. The archaeological observations and the analyses of the architectural data distinguish three periods in the existence and use of the construction. During the first period—around the middle of the 4th century BC—a monolithic chamber with a funerary bed and paintings on the ceiling was mounted on a stereobate consisting of large stone slabs. Later, four rectangular and one circular chamber were additionally built close to it. Finally, probably towards the end of the century, a megalithic grave construction was built in front of the entrance, but no burial was discovered in it. That was probably also the time when the cited clay vessels and architectural details were arranged, probably from the mausoleum-like tomb, and then the embankment was piled over the complex—a practice known from other mausoleum-like tombs in Thrace.¹⁰ The tomb was dated on the basis of analyses of the painted decoration on the walls and the archaeological materials, including a silver diobolus minted in Apollonia c. 350-340 BC and two bronze coins of Philip of Macedon (382-336 BC), one of which was minted during his lifetime, the other one posthumously.¹¹

The complex was plundered in the 4th century AD. The central burial chamber was probably cut into when diggings were made for some of the later graves. It was traced from the north and a tunnel with N-S orientation was built in the middle below it. The early Christians apparently sought a crypt which was so popular in the sacral architecture practised at that time. The tunnel comes out in front of the entrance of the chamber. Several dozens of Byzantine coins of Constantine the Great (306-337 AD) were discovered both in the tunnel and in the area to the south of it, as well as iron shoe nails and other materials. Several blocks from the base of the monolithic chamber have been taken out, others are still

Archaeological Institute with Museum of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Dr Lazar Ninov, osteologist from the Archaeological Institute, Ms Theodora Petkova, restauration specialist at the Museum of History in Kazanluk, and the architectural technicians E. Krondeva and S. Goshev from the Archaeological Institute. In the course of the explorations, all possible measures were taken for preserving the microclimate in the burial chamber and for the prompt processing of the material discovered. The instructions of the technical specialists in the team were disregarded by the Ministry of Culture, which took over the work on the conservation and restoration, making it expensive and inefficient.

¹⁰ On the mausoleum-like tomb from Strelcha, see КИТОВ 1977: 18.

¹¹ The coins were identified by Prof. Y. Youroukova.

hanging in the space preserved to this day. That was probably the time when the burial chambers were plundered, leaving only one—the southwestern chamber—in the construction of similar buildings, or—which seems more likely—they were structurally necessary to make the foundations sounder and more stable.

After the treasure-hunters penetrated into the central burial chamber, they tore away the gold incrustations from the painted decoration on the walls, which damaged the paintings. Other frescoes have been totally scraped out, perhaps due to the intolerance to human images and pagan monuments in Early Byzantine society.

The stereobate (the foundation of the central burial chamber) is rectangular in shape, oriented along the cardinal directions and with an E-W long side, 4.25 x 5.34 m in size. It consists of three rows of large stone slabs forming along the peripheries three steps of identical average width and height: about 30 cm. Hence the foundations of the stereobate protruded by about 90 cm from all sides. Its height is also 90 cm (Fig. 5). Stratigraphic observations on the embankment show that the tomb was built in the ready tumulus after a part of the southern periphery was removed, therefore steps from the north would have been unnecessary. Nevertheless, they were built of scrap material and a layer of crushed stone, probably following some preconceived construction pattern. Bearing in mind the absence of any construction debris, it seems that all stone blocks had been hewn outside the confines of the tumulus and were brought to the construction site in a ready form. This is true of the central burial chamber as well—a circumstance testifying to a well conceived and carefully executed preliminary plan.

The central monolithic chamber was mounted on the stereobate after it was finally built, being fixed to it with a solid layer of lead, poured and preserved as an uneven solid sheet. The burial chamber itself, entirely hewn outside the tumulus, is impressive with its enormous size: 2.45 x 3.54 x 2.36 m. According to the estimates, the initial weight of the block was above 40 tons and its transportation from a quarry located at a distance of at least 3-4 km in the southern slopes of the Balkan Range required extreme skill, as well as the use of serious, albeit primitive, technical means. The molten lead does not stay liquid for a long time, which suggests that the chamber was kept in the air at the moment when the metal was being poured over the stereobate.

The walls of the monolith are equally well hewn on all sides, inside and outside. The entrance is from one of the wide sides, placed from the south. It is slightly trapezoid in shape, 1.56 m high, 0.7 m wide at the base and 0.66 m at the top. On the outside the entrance is framed by a 0.14 m wide frieze in relief. The threshold is 25 cm high on the outside and only

3 cm on the inside. Its width is equal to that of the chamber wall—35 cm. At the moment of the discovery its edges were very worn out, similar to the tomb in Strelcha,¹² which confirms again that the chamber had been entered many times. In other words, it was used for worshipping and for ceremonies, i.e. as a mausoleum,¹³ all the more so because on the inside there are two shallow holes cut into the floor for the axes of a two-winged door. The upper ends were caught by bronze hooks, the existence of which is evidenced by two apertures in the wall above the entrance. Such hooks have been preserved in the Mezek tomb.¹⁴

A funerary bed, 0.53 m high and with upper dimensions 0.99 x 2.9 m was modelled adjacent to the northern wall. Aediculae are shaped in the corners, viewed from above, and the peripheries are with a fence in profile. The lines shaping the aediculae are very blurred, unlike those which frame the decoration of the facades of the funerary bed. This suggests that it was covered with a matter doubling the decoration, but in a more representative and impressive way. The funerary bed is with protruding vertical bands in front, which imitate legs of a wooden bed. A frieze in profile features prominently at the base, but it is badly preserved due to the character of the stone—large-grained and crumbling limestone. Nevertheless, the ornamentation on it was accurately executed. It is possible to discern lion's paws, bucrania, ivy leaves and other floral ornaments.

On the inside the floor and the walls are smooth and undecorated. The space between the southern wall and the funerary bed is small and it can hold not more than 4-5 people.

The roof slab of the central burial chamber is also monolithic, generally profiled in a pentahedral shape with a N-S orientation, imitating a two-eaved roof. It is again fixed to the walls of the chamber by means of molten lead.

On the whole, the complex resembles an enormous sarcophagus, therefore we shall also use the concept sarcophagus-like chamber. The lid was exquisitely processed on the outside.¹⁵ Its base is profiled and

¹² Кнгов 1977: 16 ff.

¹³ The term was used for the first time by Кнгов 1977: 15 ff. For the historical argumentation see Фол 1990: 171.

¹⁴ Филов 1937: 21.

¹⁵ Damage inflicted to the monument since Antiquity is insignificant and does not spoil the excellent impression from its outward appearance. After the northern and northeastern corners were discovered, treasure-hunters tried to lift it with levers and broke off several small pieces at the place where it is fixed to the chamber. No damage to the stone material was inflicted in the course of the archaeological excavations, although the digging was done with the help of excavators and several heavy lorries, which were not allowed on the embankment over the tumulus. The burial chamber and the walls of the remaining chambers were cleared by hand.



Fig. 2. General view of the Ostrousha Mound with the tomb-mausoleum at its southern periphery [photo: Georgi Kitov].



Fig. 3. General view of the tomb-mausoleum at Shipka [photo: Georgi Kitov].

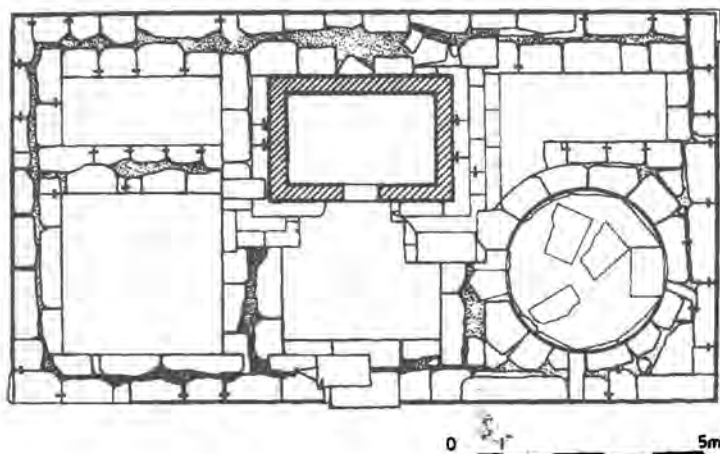


Fig. 4. General plan of the tomb-mausoleum at Shipka
[drawing: Elena Krondeva].

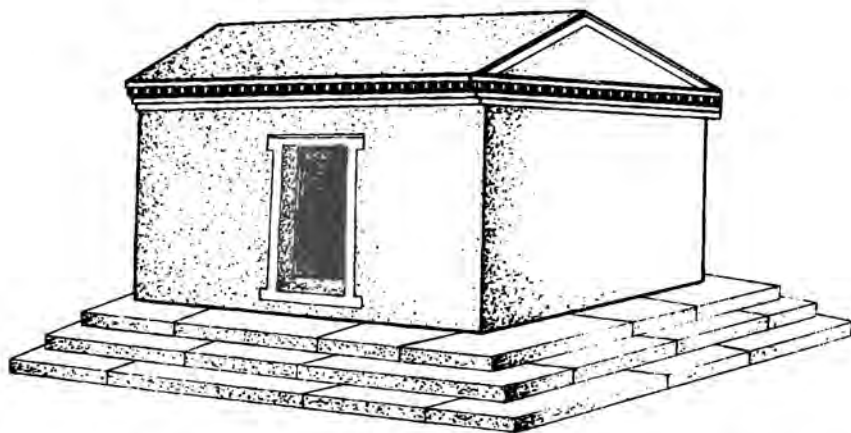


Fig. 5. Reconstruction of the first building horizon: the sarcophagus-
like burial chamber [drawing: Elena Krondeva].

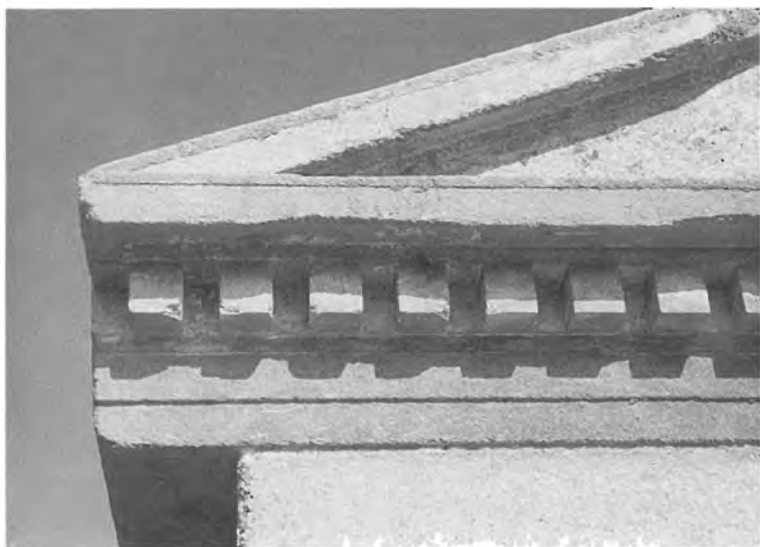


Fig. 6. Detail of the western fronton of the central burial chamber
[photo: Georgi Kitov].



Fig. 7. The circular chamber of the tomb-mausoleum at Shipka
[photo: Georgi Kitov].



Fig. 8. Silver head-piece from a horse-trapping found in the unrobbed chamber of the tomb-mausoleum at Shipka [photo: Georgi Kitov].



Fig. 9. Ceramic fragments and architectural details found to the south of the facade of the tomb-mausoleum [photo: Georgi Kitov].



Fig. 10. Architectural element of the fronton and corner piece of the tomb-mausoleum at Shipka [photo: Christo Pelov].



Fig. 11. View from the interior of the newly discovered tomb from the Sarafova Mound in the Shipka-Sheynovo necropolis [photo: Georgi Kitov].



Pl. I. Plastic and wall-painting decorations on the ceiling of the central burial chamber [photo: "Foton"-Kazanluk].



Pl. II. Multicoloured portrait of a young woman in one of the ceiling cassettes of the central burial chamber [photo: "Foton"-Kazanluk].

indented with rectangular protrusions and lower sections, so as to imitate wooden planks ordered from west to east (with 18 "teeth" each) (Fig. 6). This decoration is also present at the southern side, but not at the north where the lid protrudes 24 cm like an eave. Apparently on this side it rested on the tumular embankment and no special care was taken for its decoration here. Two similar triangles carved one into the another are traced in red paint on the northern wall of the chamber, being apparently the projection of the pediments on the lid from east to west. The actual pediments are slightly concave between the protruding upper ends of the lid and the band imitating ordered wooden planks.

An imitation of "wooden planks" appears on the lid of the sarcophagus-like tomb as well. The "planks" and the fields between them were entirely covered by frescoes in blue, red, yellow and green. The surprisingly consistent and geometrically oriented composition is built around a large circle in the middle, similar to some objects of Thracian toreutics. It is inside two squares which are carved in such a manner that the corners of the inner square touch the middles of the external one, thus forming four triangular decorative fields on each side—the inner ones being smaller than the outer ones. To the east and to the west, about 10 cm closer to the floor, there are two groups of three square decorative fields with a side of 14 cm. At a level of yet another 10 cm closer to the floor on the periphery there are another 22 square decorative fields, and from the east and west—5 each (the corner ones being counted for both sides).

The central circle seems to have depicted the Sun. It is totally destroyed, gold flakes being preserved only in some places, which suggests that it was entirely gilded. The triangular fields were filled with scenes with human and animal images, as well as floral ornaments. In the corner of one of them it is possible to discern a beautiful female head, on another one—the tail of a fish, dragon or some unidentified fantastic animal (Pl. I).

On the basis of the preserved images, the twelve small squares (14 x 14 cm) can be reconstructed as a system of rosettes, male and female portraits. The squares in the external corners—northwest, northeast, southwest and southeast—were filled with 16-petalled rosettes of alternating laurel and oak leaves. In some cases the oak leaves are red and the laurel leaves green, in other cases vice versa, but the background is always dark-blue. Female portraits are presented between the rosettes in the outside groups of three squares. In the middle of each of the inner ones there is a male portrait, in the end ones female portraits. Therefore, four rosettes, two male and six female portraits are depicted in the small squares. In the larger peripheral squares it seems that the system of depicting floral compositions in the corner squares was preserved. The

rest are filled with scenes of fights between animals, individual human figures and scenes with human figures. The working hypothesis is that the small squares depicted the faces of the ruler buried in the tomb and the faces of his family. The large squares probably depicted scenes from the ruler's life, as is suggested for the compositions in the corridor of the Kazanluk tomb,¹⁶ or mythological scenes.

The best preserved among the portraits is that of a female head in 3/4 profile, with short brown hair, lovely expression, gold earrings and a gold necklace, of which only small flakes have been preserved (Pl. II).

A considerably destroyed male image appears, with individualized features and wearing a gold wreath on his head, similar to the "dynast" buried in the Kazanluk tomb.¹⁷ The comparison with the Thracian coins will perhaps make it possible to identify him. Several of the relatively well preserved scenes deserve attention. On one of them the rump of some animal is seen and it is possible to perceive a strong stylistic resemblance with some examples of Thracian toreutics. Another one features a recumbent warrior with a large shield. Two seated figures, apparently engaged in conversation, fill a third one. It is also interesting to note a man resting on a club, similar to the figure on Anaxander's stele.¹⁸ The figure is turned to the right, probably in conversation with an unclear standing human figure. A form painted in red falls from the left shoulder of the man, which may also be the lion skin worn by Herakles.

The images close to the entrance are totally destroyed.

The transition from the flat surfaces on the inside of the squares to the "planks" is at an oblique angle, usually covered with Ionian cyma. Laterally and from below the "planks" are covered with friezes consisting of geometric and floral ornamentation, which cannot always be deciphered. Some of them seem to be covered with a "film" of semi-transparent matter, which suggests that older ornaments were smeared over with not very thick yellow ochre, over which other ornaments were painted. Whether this is true will become apparent after the technological examination of the frescoes, which is in progress.

The second period gave the final appearance of the complex. It is not possible to discern the chronological difference between that period and the first one. Without a future parallel it will not be possible to determine whether the difference between them was technological only. Perhaps the mounting of the central burial chamber would not have been possible if the construction of the other five chambers had started simultaneously.

¹⁶ Огненова-Маринова 1991: 13.

¹⁷ Огненова-Маринова 1991: 14; Живкова 1974: 68, обр. 21.

¹⁸ Димитров 1942-3: 1; Венедиков & Герасимов 1973: no. 49.

At any rate, it is obvious that they were built additionally and that their walls rest or lean on the steps of the stereobate. Two rectangular chambers were added to the east and to the west along the line of the sarcophagus-like chamber. A closed antechamber is built in front, with a rectangular chamber from its western side and a round one from the east.

The northwestern and northeastern chambers are almost identical in size and shape: 1.4 x 3.1 and 1.37 x 3.26 m, respectively. A maximum of 2-3 rows has been preserved in height, without any evidence of an entrance to them. It seems most probable that they were planned as burial or treasure chambers, which were subsequently walled in during the actual construction process. The level of the floors is discernible only from the change in the colour of their walls, but no archaeological materials have been found in them. The obvious destructions of the floor levels testify that they were conscientiously plundered already in Antiquity—most probably in the 4th century AD. Their walls are structurally connected to the other additional chambers, built of carefully hewn stone blocks, some of which were rusty on the inner surface.

A closed antechamber with inner dimensions of 1.83 x 3.1 m was built in front of the central chamber. Up to three rows are preserved in height, i.e. to the level of the stereobate. There is a 0.95 m wide entrance from the south, with a threshold and a step, i.e. considerably wider than the symmetrical entrance to the central burial chamber. Two other entrances make the southwestern rectangular and the southeastern circular chambers accessible from the antechamber. Barely discernible yellowish-brown colouring on the thresholds and more intensive colouring on the preserved stone blocks laterally from them suggest that they were covered with some organic matter—rugs or animal hides. Sculpted bands, similar to those on the external wall of the central chamber around the entrance, are preserved on the external walls from the south. Remains of plastic decoration in the form of an animal body in the northeastern corner of the antechamber suggest the existence of a rich decoration in relief in its interior. The eastern chamber is round (Fig. 7). It is situated in the almost square area structurally defined by it. It cannot be ruled out that the idea was born later, when the square chamber was ready: straight walls with inner faces pass along the tangent to the external circumference, while some of the corner sectors are filled with specially designed triangular blocks. It is best preserved in height. The inner face is of coarse rusty blocks with strongly protruding central fields—the higher they are located, the more numerous they are. This gives ample reason to assume that a peculiar way of vaulting was used. Several blocks of the walls had fallen into the interior of the chamber, thus marking the floor level and the level of the remaining chambers. It is marked by the cutting of the

stone blocks from the bottom layer. No archaeological materials were found in the round chamber. Its diameter is almost equal to that of the Mezek tomb: 3.23 m.¹⁹

The southwestern chamber is square, with a side of 3.15 m. Its construction does not differ from the rest. Iron braces over which lead was poured were used. It is distinguished by the fact that it was not plundered. An equine skeleton with legs pointing to the south and head to the west was discovered immediately next to the southern wall. The remains of the horse are in anatomical order, and it is lying over the original floor level, marked by compact sandy soil of greyish-green colour—perhaps as a result of the spreading of organic matter over the floor. Iron pieces of armament were found among the animal's bones, which were probably used to kill it. Far from the horse, in the northwestern corner of the chamber, there is a pile of appliqué from the trappings: a head-piece and six cheek-pieces of silver, all of which are richly decorated with animal and floral ornaments, as well as several undecorated silver and bronze objects (Fig. 8). Immediately next to them there were also *two or three silver vessels, strongly deformed and fragmented*. Before the cleaning and restoration of the fragments has started, it is possible to claim with certainty the presence of at least a phiale and a jug.

The total dimensions of the Shipka tomb-mausoleum are 7 x 14 m, i.e. it occupies an area of almost 100 m², which makes it twice more spacious than the Mezek tomb.²⁰ A megalithic grave construction was built in front of it.

Even further south, along an E-W line, there are clay pythoi, amphorae (some of them with sealings), small vessels, six antefixes and one acroterion made of stone with stucco, plastic decoration and traces of colouring (Fig. 9). Semi-palmettes with leaves turned inwards and volutes at the base are mounted on the antefixes. The acroterion is decorated with a whole palmette whose leaves are also pointing inwards (Fig. 10).

The complexity and multipurposeness of the monument, the brief time after its discovery and the limited scope of the present communication do not allow more than to mark here some of the problems and to cite some of the numerous analogies of the architectural, artistic and even purely archaeological aspects of the discovery. The main objective which the

¹⁹ Филлов 1937: 20. The diameter of the chamber of the *tholos* in Mezek is 3.3 m. The tomb in Shipka is the 22nd *tholos* chamber discovered in Thrace. The largest *tholos* outside Bulgaria is that from Lozengrad, while the most spacious tombs of that type in Bulgaria are the ones near Ravnogor. For a survey and literature, cf. Китов 1989: 31 ff.

²⁰ The three most spacious tombs discovered so far were those found near Mezek (about 60 m²), see Филлов 1937: 13 ff., and at Sveshtari (less than 30 m²).

present paper pursues is rather to launch in circulation new facts and materials which are important for Thracian archaeology.

The tomb-mausoleum at Shipka presents an essentially new type of sepulchral construction in Thracian architecture.²¹ Not a single, even most remote analogy can be cited not only in Bulgaria and in the Thracian world, but in the regions of ancient culture as well. Only the sarcophagus-like chamber can be compared to some monuments in the East (Anatolia), hewn into the rocks or mounted on high pedestals,²² as, for instance, the tomb of Cyrus II (559-530 BC) in Iran.²³

The ornament known as "wolf's teeth", running below the roof, is also characteristic of Asia Minor. The absence of a colonnade and the placing of the entrance at the longer side, above which there is no pediment, distinguishes it from the small Greek temples, sanctuaries and treasuries. Similar to them, however, it rises above the surrounding terrain by means of a stereobate having three steps (there are six steps in the tomb of Cyrus).

The funerary bed has many parallels in Bulgaria²⁴ and among other ancient funerary monuments, whereas the cell-like ceiling is the earliest in Bulgaria. They became known in Bulgaria only after the time of the Roman provincial cities.²⁵ Similar are the ceilings of the Erechtheion,²⁶ the *tholos* from Epidauros,²⁷ and some tombs and temples in Southern Italy. Cassette-like ceilings can also be seen in painted decoration on ancient Greek ceramic material, again mostly from Southern Italy.²⁸ Some of them are undecorated, others are with plastic or painted decoration.

The frescoes from Shipka are extremely well executed. Their merits are many-sided. The composition is faultless. The placing of the Sun in the middle testifies to the preferences for the solar cults. The distribution of the scenes, portraits and ornaments suggests serious preliminary planning. From an artistic point of view, the images are meticulously executed. An exceptional achievement of their author(s) is the ability to

²¹ On the classification of Thracian sepulchral constructions, see now Китов 1994c with the cited literature.

²² Akurgal 1978: 265, pl. 4, fig. 105.

²³ Луконин 1977: 61 ff.

²⁴ For example, a tomb in Varna with two rectangular chambers (Шкорпил 1898: 50 ff.; the tomb from Muglitzh with a long corridor and three rectangular chambers (Цанова & Гертов 1973: 15 ff.); the tomb near Belovo with one vaulted burial chamber (Велков 1942: 37 ff.); the Mezek tomb (Филов 1937: 24 ff.), etc.

²⁵ Иванов 1994: 127 ff.

²⁶ Брунов 1973: 117 ff., figs. 69 and 72.

²⁷ Moermann 1922: 339, fig. 363.

²⁸ Dentzer 1968: 85 ff., as well as the literature cited there.

present complex scenes and portraits with many details in a surprisingly small area: fields measuring 14 x 14 cm and 18 x 18 cm. The colours are fresh and heighten the expressivity of the images. The four main colours are with nuances.

All preserved images are very well executed, the proportions are entirely respected, the faces are expressive and with individual features, all of them are attractive, some are even animated. The animal figures are with correct proportions in the spirit of the Thracian realism of the 4th century BC.²⁹ The stylistic characteristics of the frescoes in the Shipka tomb bring them closer to those of the Kazanluk tomb, appearing to be several decades earlier than them. As the composition and the pictorial fields are very different, they could be used as a dating argument. On the other hand, painting in Thrace is not so well known so as to trace the chronological pattern in its evolution and propagation. Analogies with some tombs in Southern Russia and with the artistic design of some of the sarcophagi in Kerch can be pointed out.³⁰ These hardly occurred later than the last quarter of the 4th century BC. And the painting of the ceiling should be attributed to the middle of the same century. Here it is necessary to bear in mind that the painted decoration on the roof slab was made in advance. The paints have been well preserved along the periphery of the ceiling, without any traces of them on the lateral walls.

In view of the territorial, chronological and stylistic proximity to the frescoes from the Kazanluk tomb, it is possible to assume that the decoration of both of them was made in the same workshop (or belonged to the same school and tradition). This confirms the already launched hypothesis about the existence of a Thracian school in Hellenistic painting.³¹

The interpretation of the portraits and scenes is not possible for the time being, all the more so because there is no space in this paper for extensive argumentation. The assumption that the male portraits belonged to a ruler or rulers is based on the wreaths on their heads, which were originally incrustated with gold, as well as on the preserved individual features. The female images could have belonged to members of the family. However, since they are very numerous, it cannot be ruled out that they were combined images of actual women and goddesses. The best preserved female image has individual characteristics, although the position of the head is well known from Hellenistic wall-painting and vase-painting.

The small friezes at the bottom of the cassettes are usually with Ionian

²⁹ Китов 1980: 171.

³⁰ Ростовцев 1914: 53; 239; Altmann 1902: 13; 60.

³¹ Огненова-Маринова 1991: 21; Димитров 1966: 2 ff.

cyma. The larger ones are filled with intricate floral decoration which is not always easily discernible, in spite of being well preserved. This leads to the assumption of some additional ornamentation. Spots resembling human images and drawings are visible in some places and appear to be outlining vessels. The lack of more precise observations results from the tendency to spend as little time as possible in the chamber, in order to protect the wall-paintings from the effect of moisture from the human body during the relatively cold days of April 1993.³² After comparing the conserved painted ornamentation with the photographic documentation and after the technological analysis of the painted layers, it would be possible to learn more about the content of the decoration and about the links between its different elements.³³

The antechamber and the sarcophagus-like chamber were used for representative religious and cult ceremonies. It is not accidental that only these had painted and plastic decoration. The round chamber, which was accessible through an entrance from the west, has relatively crude walls. Only very cautious assumptions can be made about its possible role as an open temple of the Sun.³⁴ It cannot be ruled out that at some point it was used for burials or at least was intended for such purposes. The corresponding southwestern square chamber contains the burial of a horse. Perhaps this occurred during the last period in the functioning of the complex or immediately before the embankment was piled over it, which had been preceded by deliberate or accidental, partial or more extensive destruction of the building. The six antefixes are undoubtedly elements of its architectural decoration. It seems most probable that four of them decorated the four corners of the complex. The existence of two more antefixes and one acroterion suggests that the entrance to the antechamber and its southern side had a pediment at the base of which the antefixes were mounted, with the acroterion on its top. All architectural parts have holes through which they were joined to other structural elements by means of metal rods.

The "arranging" of architectural parts in front of the facade of the tomb-mausoleum was not an isolated phenomenon in Thrace. Similarly, in front of the Strelcha tomb archaeologists discovered chariots, three horses, nine large urns covered with blocks from the tomb and architectural parts with ornamentation: two acroteria, fragments of a stone gate,

³² All operations in the chamber were performed strictly according to the instructions and under the control of the restoration specialists Georgi Mavrov and Theodora Petkova.

³³ The work on the exploration, conservation and restoration of the layers with painted decoration was assigned to Zdravko Barov from the USA.

³⁴ В. Фол 1993: 59 ff., and the literature cited there.

etc.³⁵ However, more facts and observations are necessary in order to assume one day that the impressive sepulchral cult complexes were partially dismantled and the elements of their construction and decoration were carefully “buried”, after the complex was no longer in use or for some other reason. All the more so because in front of the Shipka tomb-mausoleum there were, together with the stone decorative elements, also *pythoi*, amphorae and small vessels, arranged in a straight line. Unfortunately, most of the clay vessels have not yet been restored and it is as yet impossible to make a comparison between their number and that from, e.g., Strelcha or other sepulchral complexes surrounded with clay amphorae.

The megalithic grave was also built in front of the tomb. Similar to the one in front of the primitive tomb in the Malkata Mogila tumulus, which is however much more carefully executed,³⁶ and it also bears no traces of a regular burial. No other similar cases are known, possibly due to the circumstance that most of the representative tombs in Thrace were discovered accidentally, without the presence of a specialist. Perhaps these graves may prove to be a pattern which is yet to be explained.

Finally, we shall also discuss the finds in the course of the exploration. In the first place, the horse-trappings. The cheek-pieces are almost identical to those found in the Binyova Mogila tumulus,³⁷ being undoubtedly produced not only in the same workshop but perhaps even by the same silversmiths. Their decoration is carefully executed, which is observed for only a few similar type of finds from Thrace.³⁸ The head-pieces in the two sets augment their scientific and artistic value. Their “Thracian type” plaques—an elaborate interpretation of the double axe as a power insignia³⁹—were characteristic for that moment in the history of Thracian toreutics when zoomorphic images were replaced by floral ornaments resembling them under southern influences and by virtue of their own development. However, the three-dimensional parts are different and of a much higher value: in the case of the head-piece from Binyova Mogila for the fact that a three-dimensional ram’s head is presented for the first time in the centre of the composition, and in the case of the Ostrousha headpiece—because it presents a griffin’s head which was unknown in Thrace in this form, but very common for toreutic

³⁵ Китов 1979: 6.

³⁶ Китов 1993: 27.

³⁷ Китов 1994b: 13, обр. 9; Китов 1994a: 87, обр. 3.

³⁸ Above all from the Mogilanska Mogila tumulus in Vratsa (Венедиков 1975: 18 ff.), Mezek (Велков 1937: nos. 1 ff.), the Loukovit treasure (Венедиков & Герасимов 1973: nos. 277, 278). The latter treasure is still unpublished. Cf. Китов 1987: 27 ff., with the literature cited.

³⁹ Маразов 1981: 19.

monuments from Scythia (head-pieces, or nose-pieces as they are called in the Russian and Ukraining literature). Some of them have already been assumed or proved to have been imports or trophies from Thrace.⁴⁰ The head-piece from Ostrousha is the most categorical evidence of the validity of these observations and it might prove to be the missing link between some earlier finds from Thrace and some later ones bearing the same stylistic features found in the lands inhabited by the Scythians.

The silver vessels from the same—southwestern—chamber have not yet been cleaned and restored, and for the time being even their exact number cannot be determined. The traces of decoration on their surfaces probably define them as important evidence for the high level of Thracian toreutics, irrespective of the abundance of similar vessels in the silver treasure from Rogozen.⁴¹

The fragmented pectoral belongs to a type well known in Thrace. It is ellipsoid in shape and its closest analogies are the specimens from Mezek, Yankovo and Vurbitsa.

In spite of its uniqueness, the Shipka tomb-mausoleum and the archaeological materials found in it offer an exceptional opportunity for broadening current notions about Thracian art, including architecture and painting. Besides, it is an attractive monument and learning more about it is valuable both to specialists and to amateur admirers of ancient culture. Therefore, it is to be hoped that the necessary measures will be taken for its preservation and display. The exploration of the rest of the embankment over the Ostrousha tumulus promises to offer other archaeological materials, as well as buildings, which would allow more accurate observations about Thracian archaeology.

Addendum

The excavations of the tumular necropolis near Shipka-Sheynovo in the district of Kazanluk continued in the summer of 1995. Among the major discoveries were four imposing—probably royal—Thracian tombs. The first one is the tomb from the Slavchova Mound. It consists of an antechamber and a chamber with semi-cylindrical vault. Although robbed in Antiquity, this tomb still produced an intact horse burial. The second tomb is the one from the Sashova Mound. This is unique for the fact that it has not been robbed in Antiquity. It consists of a long dromos, an antechamber and a transversely situated chamber with semi-cylindrical vault. In it were found a bronze helmet of Thracian type, a gilt silver

⁴⁰ Мелюкова 1979: 37 with the literature cited there; Мелюкова 1981; Манцевич 1980: 287 ff.; Мозолевский 1975: 166 ff.

⁴¹ The Rogozen Treasure. Sofia, 1989.

phiale, armour, metal and ceramic vessels. The third tomb comes from the Big Arsenalka Mound. It merits as the best preserved domed tomb in Thrace. Although looted in Antiquity, fine objects made of gold and silver were found in it, which rank among the best examples of Thracian craftsmanship. From the Sarafova Mound, finally, came to light a tomb consisting of a dromos and two chambers. It is built from stones and bricks and contains polychrome decoration. In one of the two chambers was found the burial of a man, whereas the dromos contained that of a horse. The door to the central room is completely preserved. It is firmly bolted by an iron hoop to the lintel, whereas the axis fits into a hole in the ground (Fig. 11). So far this type of tomb is unique for Bulgaria.

A detailed discussion of these newly discovered monumental tombs will be presented to the next issue of *Talanta*.

[Georgi Kitov]

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Akurgal, E.
1978 *Ancient Civilization and Ruins of Turkey*.
Istanbul.
- Altmann, W.
1902 *Architektur und Ornamentik der antiken Sarkophage*.
Berlin.
- Брунов, Н.И.
1973 *Парёенон и Зрехтейон*.
Москва.
- Велков, Ив.
1937 *Разкопките около Мезек и гара Свиленград. Известия на Българския Археологически Институт* 11. Pp. 117-170.
1942 *Новоткрита Куполна гробница край с. Малко Белово. Годишник на Народния Археологически Музей* 7. Pp. 37-44.
- Венедиков, Ив., & Герасимов, Т.
1973 *Тракийското изкуство*.
София.
- 1975 *Съкровището от Враца*.
София.
- Гергова, Д.
1992 *Десет години проучвания в Сборяново. Хелис* 1. Pp. 9-27.
- Гетов, Л.
1991 *Тракийски гробници в хинтерланда на Севтополис през елинистическата епоха*. In: *Тракийската култура през елинистическата епоха в Казанлъшкия край*. Pp. 40-46.
Казанлък.
- Димитров, Д.П.
1942-3 *Нови наблюдения върху надгробната плоча на Анаксандра от Апология. Годишник на Софийския Университет, Историко-Филологически Факултет* 39. Pp. 1-16.
- 1966 *За датата на стенописите от тракийската гробница при Казанлък. Археология* 1966, 2. Pp. 1-12.

- 1984 Тракийският град Севтополис. Севтополис I. София.
- Dentzer, J.M.
- 1968 Les systèmes décoratifs dans la peinture murale Italique. *Mélanges d'Archéologie et d'Histoire* 80. Pp. 85-141.
- Доксанлиев, П.
- 1971 Шипка. София.
- Домарадски, М.
- 1991 Културата на траките през късножелязната епоха в Казанлъшкия край. In: Тракийската култура през елинистическата епоха в Казанлъшкия край. Pp. 126-143.
- Казанлък.
- Живкова, Л.
- 1974 Казанлъшката гробница. София.
- Иванов, Т.
- 1994 Никополис ад Иструм I. София.
- Китов, Г.
- 1977 Тракийска гробница-мавзолей край град Стрелча. *Векове* 1977, 1. Pp. 12-21.
- 1979 Тракийските могили край Стрелча. София.
- 1980 Стилска характеристика на паметниците на тракийското изкуство с зооморфни изображения. *Pulpudeva* 3. Pp. 165-176.
- 1987 Новопостъпила апликация за конска амуниция от Луковитското съкровище. *Изкуство* 1987, 8. Pp. 27-31.
- 1989 Куполните гробници при Равногор в Родопите. *Археология* 1989, 3. Pp. 28-41.
- 1993 Откритията в тракийския могилен некропол Шипка-Шейново. *Изкуство* 1993, 2. P. 27.
- 1994a Тракийски могили в хинтерланда на Севтополис. In: III Международен симпозиум: Поселищен живот в Древна Тракия. Pp. 85-93. Ямбол.
- 1994b Владетелска гробница от тракийския могилен некропол Шипка-Шейново. *Минало* 1994, 1. Pp. 5-14.
- 1994c Тракийските могили. *Thracia* 10. Pp. 39-80.
- Kitov, G., & Krasteva, M.
- 1992-3 A 4th century BC Thracian royal tomb from the Kazanluk region, Southern Bulgaria. *Talanta* 24-5. Pp. 59-75.
- Лилова, Б.
- 1991 Погребални обичаи през елинистическата епоха в района на Севтополис. In: Тракийската култура през елинистическата епоха в Казанлъшкия край. Pp. 47-59. Казанлък.
- Луковин, В.Г.
- 1977 Искусство Древнего Ирана. Москва.

- Манцевич, А.П.
1980 Об уздечках фракийского типа из кургана Огуз. In: Actes des II^e Congrès International de Thracologie I. Pp. 267-293.
Bucaresti.
- Маразов, Ив.
1981 Тракийски тип начелници. *Проблеми на изкуството* 1981, 1. Pp. 19-27.
- Мелюкова, А.И.
1979 Скифия и фракийский мир.
Москва.
- 1981 Краснокутский курган.
Москва.
- Moermann, K.
1922 Geschichte der Kunst.
Leipzig.
- Мозолевский, Б.Н.
1975 Фракийская узда из Хоминой могилы. *Studia Thracica* 1. Pp. 166-179.
- Николов, Д.
1991 Историография на тракийския град Севтополис. In: Тракийската култура през елинистическата епоха в Казанлъшкия край. Pp. 71-79
Казанлък.
- Огненова-Маринова, Л.
1991 Казанлъшката гробница—шедьовър на тракийското изкуство. In: Тракийската култура през елинистическата епоха в Казанлъшкия край. Pp. 12-25.
Казанлък.
- Ростовцев, М.
1914 Античная декоративная живопись на юге России.
СПД.
- Тадова Цанова, Г.
1991 Принос към археологическата карта на казанлъшкия край. In: Тракийската култура през елинистическата епоха в Казанлъшкия край. Pp. 104-125.
Казанлък.
- Филов, Б.
1937 Куполните гробници при Мезек. *Известия на Археологическия Институт при БАН* 11. Pp. 1-116.
- Фол, А.
1990 Политика и култура на Древна Тракия.
София.
- Фол, В.
1993 Скалата, конят, огнят.
София.
- Цанова, Г. & Гетов, Л.
1973 Тракийската гробница при Мъглиж. *Археология* 1973, 2. Pp. 15-29.
- Шкорпил, Х. & К.
1898 Могилы.
Пловдив.