

NEW DISCOVERIES IN THE THRACIAN VALLEY OF THE
KINGS IN THE REGION OF KAZANLUK
EXCAVATIONS BY A THRACIAN EXPEDITION FOR TUMULI
INVESTIGATIONS 'TEMP' IN THE REGION OF KAZANLUK
FROM 1995 TILL 1997¹

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Introduction

The burial mounds on present-day Bulgarian territory indisputably testify to the once presence of the Thracians (Kitov 1994, 175-176). Heaped in the course of more than three thousand years (from the Early Bronze Age till Late Antiquity), they are part of the Bulgarian landscape (Fig. 1). There also are several mounds heaped by the Proto-Bulgarians during the period from the 7th till the 9th century A.D. Whether grouped or single, the burial mounds are characteristic of the geographical regions 1,500 m above sea level. As the smaller ones were destroyed by agricultural and construction activities, their historic number may never be established. Their current number is generally estimated to be about 15,000.

Until recently, as reflected in their names,² the mounds were assumed to contain the graves of Thracian rulers and supreme representatives of Thracian aristocracy. Not long ago, however, some of them appeared to be heaped over sacred gifts, sacrificed in honour of the many gods and deities worshipped in Thrace (Kitov 1988, 7, 40-42). The archaeological excavations in the region of Kazanluk (Kasanlak) question the traditional encompassing term "Thracian grave mounds". It has been ascertained that some of the monumental architectural constructions under the embankments, commonly referred to as tombs, were actually designed and built to serve as tomb-mausoleums or temples, where funeral ceremonies and complicated religious and cult practices typical of the Thracian society took place.

¹ Translation from Bulgarian into English by Rositsa Merjanova and Diana Dimitrova (Sofia); final English version by Mr. J.J.M. Schepers (Amsterdam).

² In old Bulgarian and Russian, the word "mogila" means "grave".

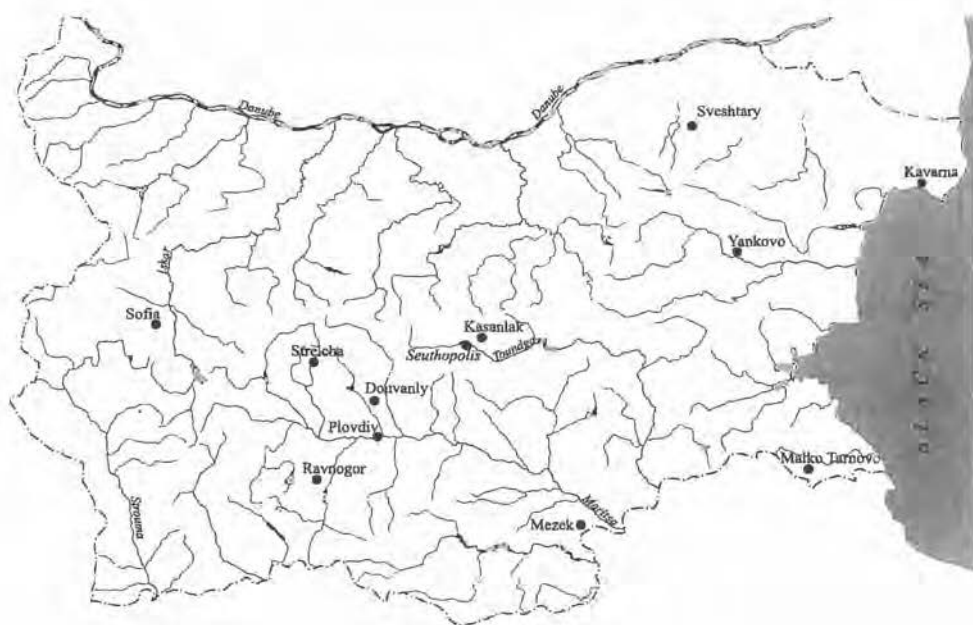


Fig. 1. Map of Bulgaria (drawing N. Tonkov).

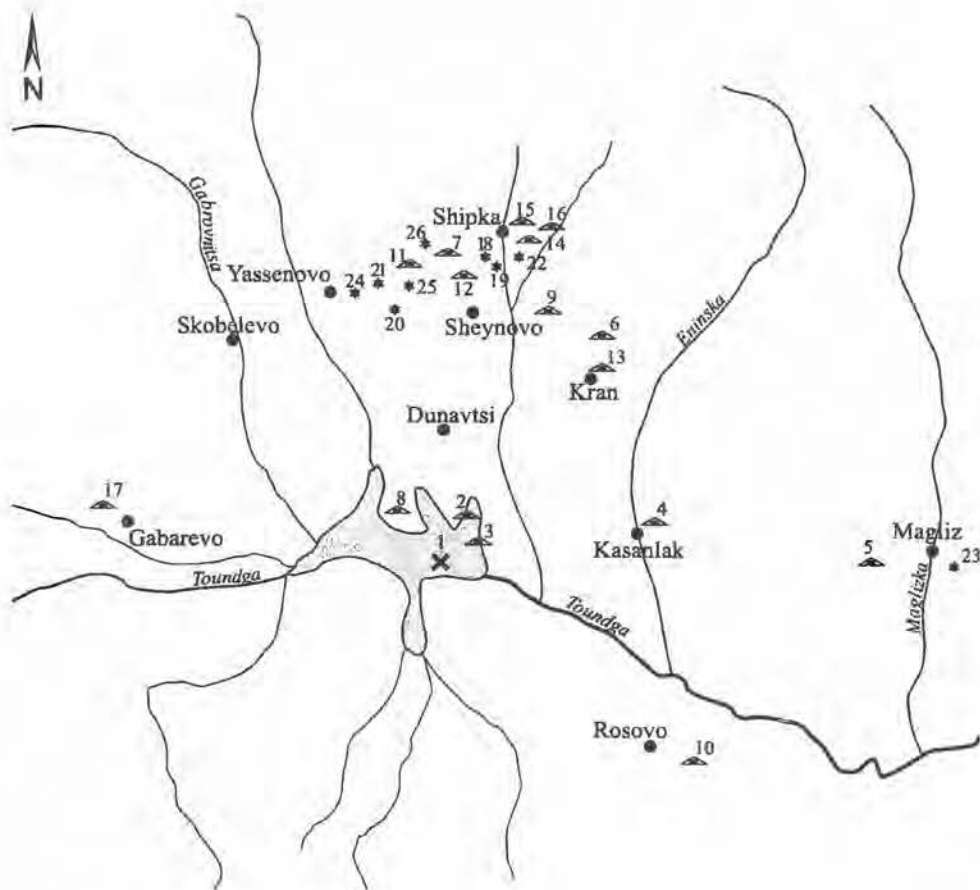


Fig. 2. Map of the Kazanluk district.

1. Seuthopolis; 2. Mound no. 2; 3. Mound no. 3; 4. Tomb-mausoleum in the town of Kazanluk; 5. Temple-tomb near the town of Muglij; 6. Tomb no. 1 near Krun; 7. Tomb in mound "Malkata mogila"; 8. Tomb in mound "Zapryanova mogila"; 9. Tomb-cult complex in mound "Ostrusha"; 10. Tomb-mausoleum in mound "Slavchova mogila"; 11. Tomb-mausoleum in mound "Sashova mogila"; 12. Temple-tomb in mound "Golyamata Arsenalka"; 13. Tomb-mausoleum in mound "Sarafova mogila"; 14. Temple-tomb in mound "Helvecia"; 15. Temple-tomb in the "Mound of the griffins"; 16. Temple-tomb in mound "Shushmanets"; 17. Tomb in mound no. 1 near Gabarevo/"Lulcheva mogila"; 18. Mound "Binyova mogila"; 19. Mound "Tsuyatkova mogila"; 20. Mound "Zareva mogila"; 21. Mound "Sineva mogila"; 22. Mound "Leshnikova mogila"; 23. Mound "Petrunkova mogila"; 24. Mound "Fomus"; 25. Mound "Tonkova mogila"; 26. Mound "Konsulova mogila"; 27. Group of mounds "Kosmatkite"; 28. Group of mounds "Donkova mogila" (drawing N. Tonkov).

The investigations of the mounds in the region of Kazanluk, which started in 1992, are still going on.³ The Kazanluk valley, inhabited since most ancient times, lies in central Bulgaria (Fig. 2).⁴ It is the valley where the famous Kazanluk tomb is found (Ogdenova-Mladenova 1991, 12-18 with references). The TEMP 1992-1994 excavations in the above region and the major discoveries were published in *TALANTA* (Kitov/Krasteva 1992/1993; 1994/1995).

In 1995, four monumental tombs of Thracian kings, over 30 human graves, 10 equine skeletons, and over 450 objects of museum value, remarkable works of Thracian and ancient Greek art, were found.

Tomb-mausoleum in mound "Slavchova mogila"

The first tomb lies in mound "Slavchova mogila" near the village of Rozovo (Kitov 1996a; 1996b; here Fig. 2, no. 10). It is of the so-called Macedonian type (Fig. 3) Built of big, well-hewed blocks joined by means of iron cramps poured over with lead, the tomb consists of a chamber and an antechamber, the latter with a 'false' semi-cylindrical vault. The chamber was robbed in ancient times. In the antechamber, an undisturbed equine skeleton was found. Only a single, round silver appliqué being preserved, the trappings must have been wrenched off after the horse had been laid on the floor.

In the layer above the skeleton, fragments were gathered from which two amphorae from Heraklea could be reconstructed, one of which has a rectangular stamp on its neck.

Furthermore, in the antechamber, a silver appliqué with a representation of a lion-griffin, an iron sceptre with a handle of antler, parts of a destroyed gold wreath, objects belonging to the armour and objects of minor importance were found.

³ Under the direct leadership and supervision of Dr. G. Kitov, the excavations were carried out by the "Thracian Expedition for Tumuli Investigations (TEMP)". They are spread as follows: 1992 - 1.5 months; 1993 - 2 weeks; 1994 - 3 weeks; 1995, 1996, 1997 - 3 months per year. At different places and times, contributions were made by: 1. The Institute of Archaeology and the Museum at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences - P. Teodosiev, M. Krasteva, D. Dimitrova, I. Katevski, N. Tonkov, G. Mavrov, E. Krondeva, S. Goshev, and L. Ninov. 2. The National Museum of History - G. Lazov, E. Dotcheva, and G. Vuzvuzova. 3. The Museum of History "Iskra" in Kazanluk - K. Zarev, B. Lilova, E. Dimitrova, and K. Stefanova. 4. Specialists, students, artists, photographers e.a. from Sofia, Plovdiv, Lovech, Novi Pazar, Kazanluk, as well as specialists from Greece. The expeditions were financed by the Swiss Government, the National Museum of History, the foundations "Pond" and "Seuthopolis", and financially supported by the firms "Vifor" (Kazanluk), "Fornus" (Sofia), "Mitsubishi product" (Sofia), "Ergin" (Plovdiv) and many others.

⁴ Georgiev 1972, 81-83; Georgiev 1974, 4-5; Todorova 1986, 45-47; 55-58; 277-279.



Fig. 3. Thracian tomb-mausoleum. 4th century B.C. "Slavchova mogila" near Rozovo, the Kazanluk region (photo G. Kitov).

Peculiarly, the construction was built in an existing mound at about 1.5 m above the surface after part of it had been removed. First, however, a ritual platform and a sloping 'alley' paved with pebbles and river stones, leading towards the entrance, had been made.

Tomb-mausoleum in mound "Sashova mogila"

August 25, 1995, another preserved tomb was discovered in "Sashova mogila", a mound of moderate size, situated between the villages of Yassenovo and Shipka (Kitov 1996b, 16-18; 1996c; here Fig. 2, no. 11). It consists of a rectangular first chamber with staircase-like roof and a central chamber at right angles to the axis with a semi-cylindrical vault of the so-called Macedonian type.⁵ Both chambers are built of well-hewed limestone and granite blocks, some of which are re-used. In contrast, the 10 m high corridor leading to the southeast is built of river stones and roughly hewed ones joined and plastered with mud. A clearly visible joint marks the point where the corridor was extended to lead out of the mound.

⁵ More than 15 such vaults are known from Bulgaria, most of which are mentioned by G. Kitov (1995, 7-8); Vuléva 1994, 3, 55-58 with further references; Miller 1993, 62-64.



Fig. 4. Burial place and gifts from an unrobbed Thracian tomb. 3rd – 2nd century B.C. “Sashova mogila” near Yassenovo, Kazanluk region (photo G. Dimov).

The same rough method was used to build a simple stone bed in the central chamber, parallel to its western wall. On it, the mortal remains of a Thracian ruler were laid to rest (Fig. 4). To the right of it, the half-destroyed bones of his horse are on the earthen floor. The finds and bones were in disorder, probably owing to the presence of small animals. The ruler, wearing a bronze helmet of the Thracian type, was dressed in an iron chain mail. A solid iron sword was at his left-hand side.

A bronze jug with a relief representation of a human head on the lower attachment of its handle and a silver phiale shaped like an inverted cone had fallen in the gap between bed and wall. Being well preserved and having three zones of thick gold decoration, the phiale is of special importance. Its bottom is decorated with a gilded rosette with twelve petals, above which there are bands with engraved and gilded ornaments - a running wave as well as alternating bands with stylised laurel leaves, rhombus and S-shaped lines. Above this, there is a circular interlaced design.

A gold bilateral fibula with sections filled with green and blue enamel squares had also fallen in the gap. Being characteristic of Celtic artistic traditions, fibulae of this type are rare finds in Thrace (Wozniak 1974, 109-115 with references).

Two large clay amphorae were placed between the northern end of the bed and the wall. On one of these, there are two rectangular stamps from Heraklea from the end of the 3rd or beginning of the 2nd century B.C. A silver torque made of twisted and plated, thick, round wires had also fallen there.

Metal objects and ceramic vessels, some of which disintegrated due to humidity, lay scattered on the floor. Of the horse trappings, only bronze and silver loops are preserved.

In all likelihood, the tomb was built at the end of the 4th or beginning of the 3rd century B.C., to have been in use as a mausoleum or temple for a long time. During its use, the corridor was extended, possibly after earth had crumbled away and the southern side of the mound had been partially destroyed. The last funeral in the tomb took place in the middle or second half of the 2nd century B.C. After that time, the construction was covered with earth, the dromos being filled with stones in a disorderly manner and blocked at two places with primitive walls. Fortunately, since then, no living being has disturbed the tomb, barring the small animals whose skeletons are left to tell the story. The fact that the construction was used during the Celtic presence in Thrace shows that the Celts dealt no serious blow to Thracian culture and traditions, contrary to what some scholars assume (Domaradski 1984, *passim*).

Temple-tomb in mound "Golyama Arsenalka"

The third tomb has a chamber with a domed roof. The position of the construction in mound "Golyama Arsenalka", lying southwest of Shipka and dead north of one of the workshops of the military plant "Arsenal" near Sheynovo, had already been established through geophysical measuring methods (Fig. 2, no. 12). The construction was, therefore, uncovered no later than an hour and thirteen minutes after the excavations had started on August 31, 1995 (Fig. 5).⁶ Built of precisely hewed stone blocks in an embankment made in advance, it was the best constructed stone building with a domed roof to be excavated that year.⁷ The blocks were joined by means of iron cramps poured over with lead.

The tomb has a large, representative facade and two chambers, the one rectangular, the other round and with a dome. In the course of time, the facade and entrance were blocked with a primitive stonewall. In the

⁶ This was possible after Nikola Tonkov had established the exact place of the construction by means of geographical measuring (GIS).

⁷ Until then, the domed tumuli near Mezek and Vulchepol, Svilengrad district, had been considered best preserved. See Filov 1937, 1-14.



Fig. 5. The facade of a tomb-mausoleum. 5th – 4th century B. C. Mound “Golyama Arsenalka” near Sheynovo, Kazanluk region (photo G. Kitov).

first chamber, a horse was buried, the bones of which were found in disorder owing to intervention.

The entrances to the two chambers could be closed with stone doors with two wings, only a few parts of which were found in their original places. The rest was broken and in disorder.

The floor of the central chamber is covered with thick stone plates, arranged in three concentric circles around a centric plate, which, being circular and having a convex hemispherical groove, resembles the sun. The three concentric circles might well symbolize the three worlds conceived of in Thracian religion: underworld, world on earth and world in the sky. The walls smoothly narrow in on each other so as to form a domed roof topped off with a central horizontal stone reminiscent of the flatness of the sky where the solar gods ‘live’. Facing the door, there is a bed of stone blocks and plates (Fig. 6). Its curved head is clear of the floor.

On and under the bed and in the gaps between some of the dislocated plates on the floor, four gold appliqués, part of a wreath, a breast-collar, gilded clay balls, and fragments of metal and clay objects were found.



Fig. 6. Mound “Golyama Arsenalka”, the burial bed (photo G. Dimov).

The facade, the movable doors with two wings, the worn out thresholds of the two chambers and a few other facts betray the construction to have been designed as a tomb-mausoleum⁸ or temple and have been used so for more than a century. The fragile taxonomy of the Thracian architecture does not allow of a precise date of building (Ruseva 1984, 11-16 with references).

The gold appliquéés, known from several finds from the region of Kazanluk and other Bulgarian places (Kitov 1996d), are characteristic of the 4th century B.C. However, several gold decorations from shaft tomb No 3 in Mycenae, dated to the middle of the second millennium B.C., show the very same form and composition of decoration (Dippert-Lippitz 1985, 19, Abb. 3). The appliquéés, other facts, evidence and observations - not to be discussed here - combine to betray Mycenaean elements anchored in Thracian religious and artistic traditions.

⁸ The term ‘mound-mausoleum’, introduced by G. Kitov (1997a, 1-12), has been supported by additional arguments in several publications. At the same time, it has been explained from the historical and religious points of view by A. Fol (1990, 171; and in several earlier publications).

Similarly, on September 27, 1995, having partially removed the embankment of mound "Sarafova mogila" near the village of Krun (Fig. 2, no. 13), we discovered a construction deep inside (Kitov 1995). It has a dromos made of stone blocks, a flat ceiling and a tiled ridge roof, which has fallen on the buried horse. The two rectangular chambers are built of thick, well-baked bricks. The walls of the chambers and the dromos are covered with a thick layer of lime plaster on which white, pink, purple, black, yellow and red paint bands alternate in irregular sequence. The two chambers are completely preserved. The second one was blocked by a stone plate – a door, which was very hard to open (Fig. 7).

The lower end of its projecting cylindrical axis was fitted in a hole strengthened with iron and lead, the upper end in a flat, iron loop fixed in the stone roof by means of melted lead.

Surprisingly, the central chamber was completely empty. Upon screening the thin layer of earth on the floor, many semi-globular glass balls, a silver attachment of a metal vessel, several gilded clay rosettes, insignificant parts of gold objects, fragments of iron weapons, parts of a black-varnished kantharos with a painted wreath around its mouth, and objects of minor importance were found. Furthermore, on the floor, imprints of the bottoms of three large and heavy metal vessels were discovered, and, on the walls, traces of their handles. Quite curiously, there is a mark of a human palm on one of the brighter fields of the colourful decoration.

The walls of the chambers have sunk into the embankment. In effect, the plastered floors are pushed upwards. The construction in mound "Sarafova mogila" has no parallels in Thracian architecture. Its walls gradually draw near each other, so as to end in a pointed roof. Their structure resembles that of the corridor walls of the tomb in Kazanluk (Zhivkova 1974), but the transitions from line to line are smoother. Probably, the destroyed tomb in one of the mounds between Krun and Shipka, which could not be thoroughly investigated, has the same layout (Getov 1991, 42, Fig. III,1).

Temple-tomb in mound "Helvecia"

The construction in mound "Helvecia", south of the village of Shipka, discovered on July 28 1996,⁹ is of similar design but on a larger scale (Fig. 2, no. 14). Built in a mound heaped in advance, it has a long and

⁹ The mound was called "Helvecia" in honour of the main sponsor of the 1996 expedition, the Swiss Government; see Kitov 1997b, 28-30.

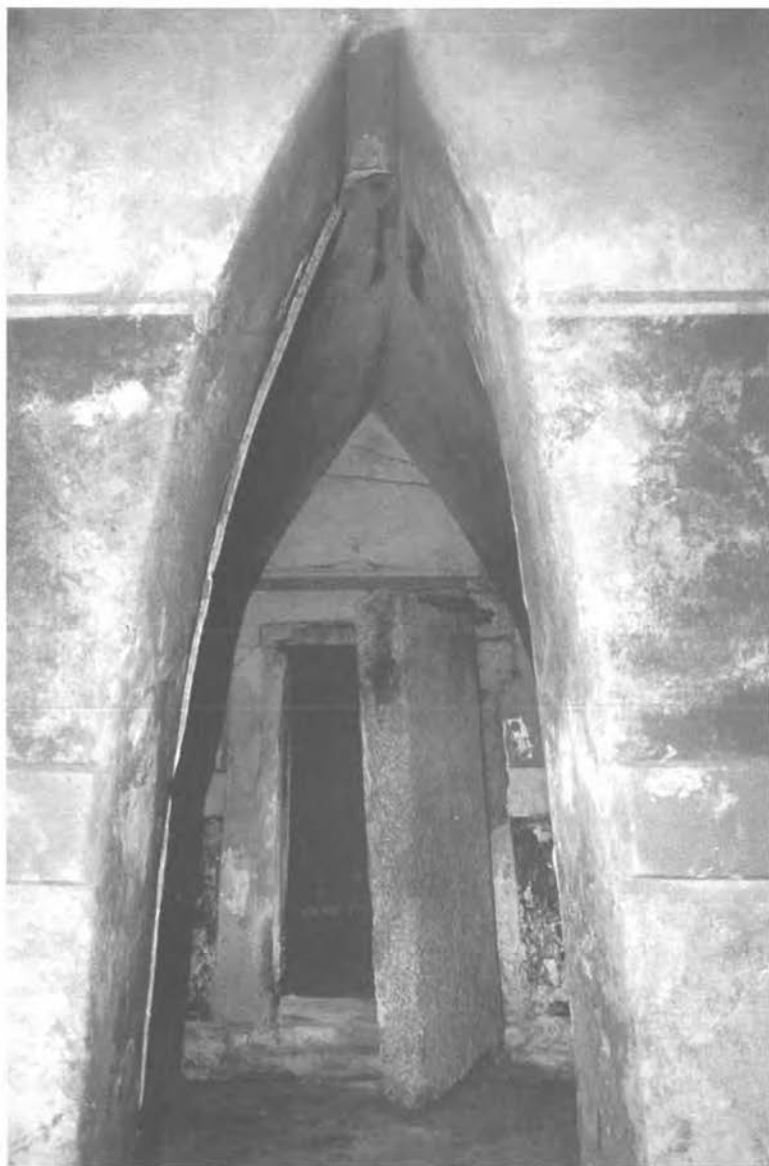


Fig. 7. Thracian tomb, the entrance and the door of the central chamber. 4th – 3rd century B.C. “Sarafova mogila” near Krun, Kazanluk region (photo G. Dimov).



Fig. 8. Thracian temple, the dromos, facade, antechamber and entrance to the central chamber. 4th century B.C. Mound "Helvecia" near Shipka, Kazanluk region (photo G. Dimov).

broad dromos, an antechamber and a chamber (Fig. 9). The corridor leads to the southern side of the embankment. The walls are plastered with lime. In places, a second plastering is seen to hide the original layer. Also in places, colourful decoration shows on the peeling plaster, which, in other places, has completely fallen off. Big stone blocks, joined by means of iron cramps fixed with lead, were used. The walls of antechamber and chamber are covered with relief plaster, some imitating a stone wall, some shining like well-polished marble.

Opposite the entrance, there is a plastered bed built of small stones, with, on either side of it, a bench; one made of a solid stone block, the other of a waste door. The entrance had two widely open faceted doors of stone plates, preserved in original positions, the eastern one painted red, the western black. This colour pattern was most likely symbolical, reflecting the Thracian belief regarding sunrise and sunset, daybreak and nightfall, birth and death.

The roof of the dromos cannot be reconstructed. Most likely, flat, curved tiles like those in mound "Sarafova mogila" were used for it. The fragments found in the embankment, however, were too few to allow of a reconstruction of the entire roof of the corridor. The roofs of

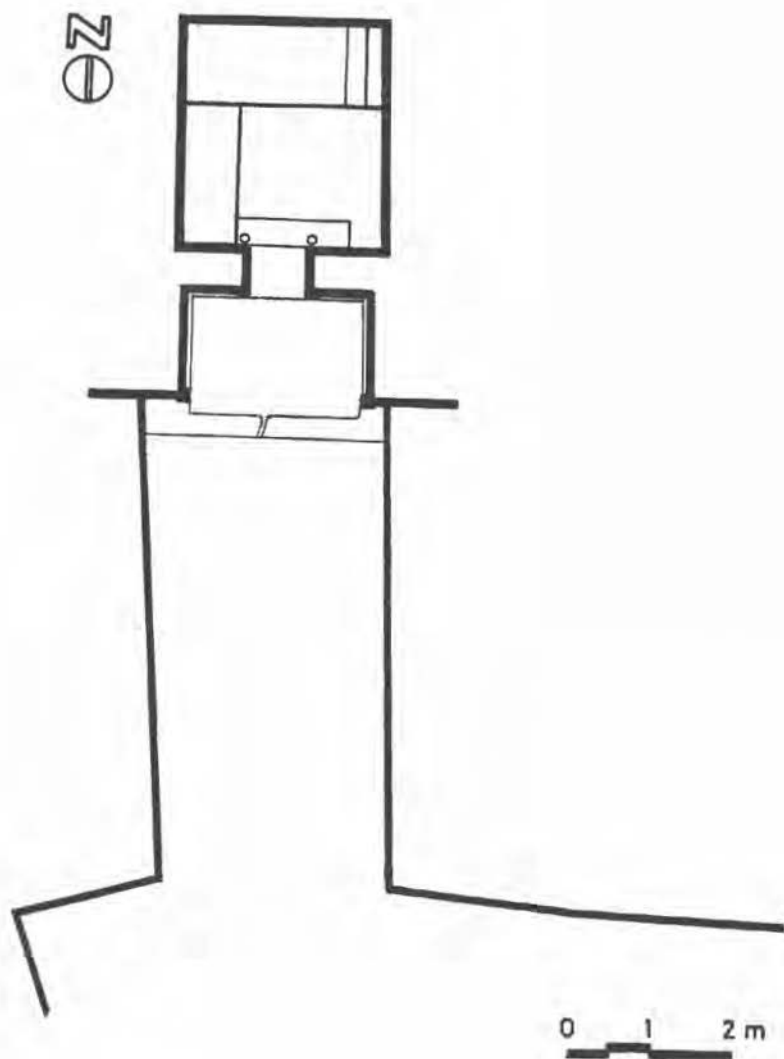


Fig. 9. Mound "Helvecia", plan of the construction (drawing H. Krondeva & S. Goshev).

the antechamber and chamber, though crossed by a horizontal line, also resemble that of the construction in mound "Sarafova mogila". Actually, the construction involves a combination of two kinds of roof. Thus, it may have determined the origin and development of the so-called Macedonian vault.

Excepting a few insignificant clay and metal fragments including gold flakes, the chamber was empty.

In the antechamber, an undisturbed equine skeleton was excavated. It should be noted that, at the southern side of the antechamber, there was an edge several centimetres in height. In it, two ray-like grooves plastered like the floor were engraved. Here is a striking resemblance to the so-called "sharap-tashi" (wine stones) spread over south-eastern Bulgaria, which have been identified as stone platforms used for sacrifices. The fact that a similar stone plate was re-used in the first chamber of the construction in mound "Sashova mogila", leaves no room to doubt that the plates are linked up with Thracian religious ceremonies. No doubt, the antechamber in the construction in mound "Helvecia" contains such a platform (or altar) for sacrifices (Fol 1993, 55-57 with references). Thus, the horse found there had been sacrificed in the last ritual, laid down and left on the spot while the construction was buried. The analyses of a red substance spread in the antechamber and dromos, right behind the grooves, showed it to be blood.

In front of the facade of the eastern wall of the dromos, another equine skeleton in anatomical order, its legs - obviously bound together - in an unnatural position, was found. A bronze horse-trappings appliqué was by its side, probably to symbolize the entire trappings. Consisting of two heads and parts of griffin bodies, the latter represented by means of engraved bulging lines, it is the only known instance of its type of Thracian toreutics.¹⁰ Though its style of workmanship is characteristic of the 4th century B.C., it is obvious that the horse was buried long time after the construction was built.

Temple-tomb in the "Mound of the griffins"

The construction discovered on August 18, 1996 in the "Mound of the griffins" (Fig. 2, no. 15), about a hundred meters south of mound "Helvecia" near Shipka, is similar to the one in mound "Golyama Arsenalka" (Kitov 1997b, 28-30; Kitov forthcoming; here Fig. 10). Its

¹⁰ It resembles a bronze appliqué found near the village of Stoyan Zaimovo (one-time Bednyakovo), Chirpan district, Venedikov/Gerasimov 1973, no. 275. This one, however, has three griffin heads. It is dated to the end of the 5th, beginning of the 4th century B.C.



Fig. 10. Thracian tomb-temple, the dromos and facade.
5th – 4th century B.C. “Mound of the griffins”
near Shipka, Kazanluk region (photo G. Kitov).

greater precision, the long and narrowing dromos, the facade with plastic decoration, the more complicated design of the bed opposite the entrance of the round chamber, and the stone floors covered with a thick layer of lime solution are peculiar of the construction (Fig. 11). The corridor has been extended to join the facade, which, above the entrance to the first chamber, has a gable with a centric palmette and a half palmette on each of its side corners. The palmettes are patterned

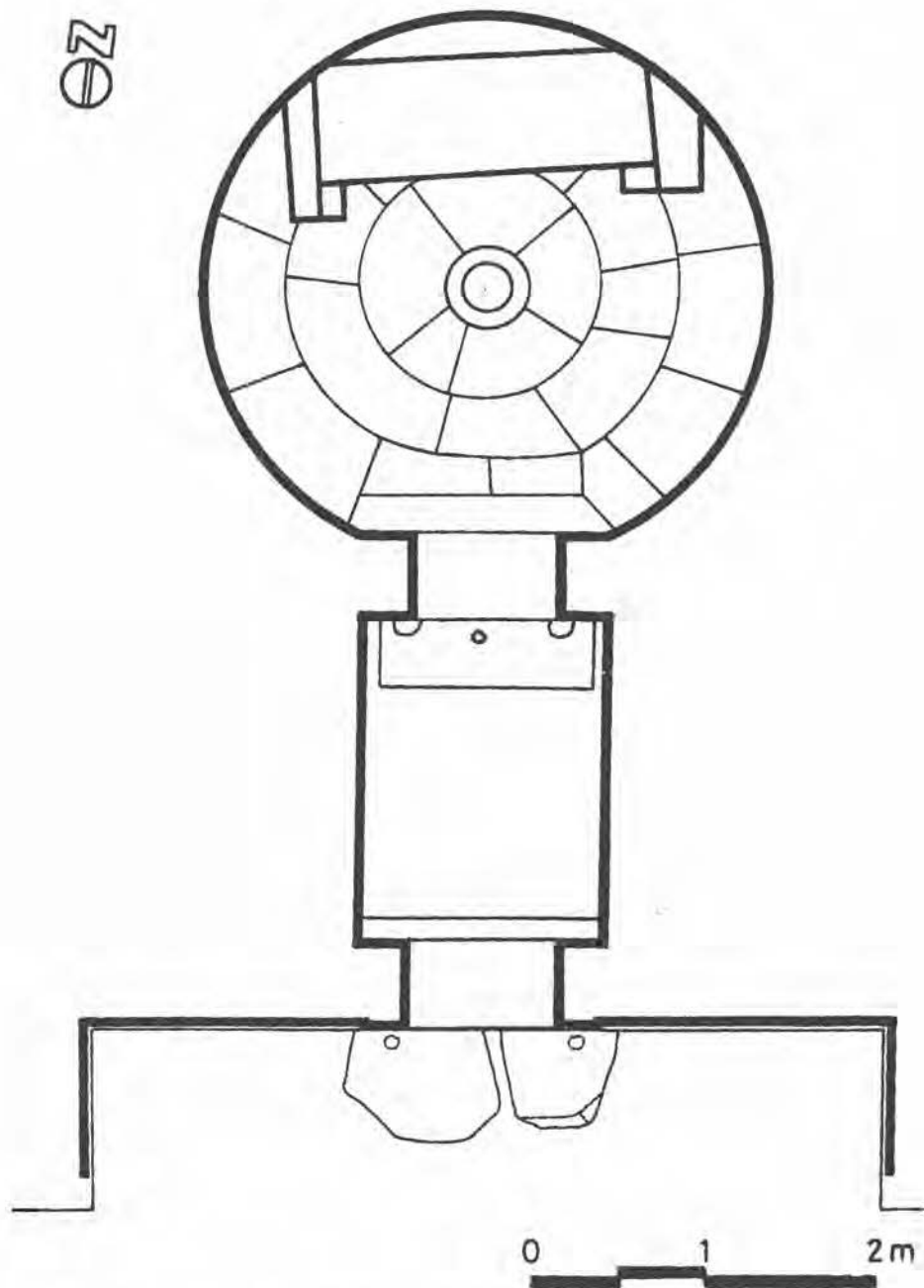


Fig. 11. "Mound of the griffins", plan of the construction (drawing H. Krondeva & S. Goshev).

after the fashion of griffin heads in Thracian toreutics. They consist of a big round eye and a curving, pointed beak protruding from it. A rectangular part of the floor of the round chamber is plastered. By its sides, there are 20 cm thick plates that may have served as seats. The pavement under them is arranged in three concentric circles around a centric, round stone, much like in mound "Golyama Arsenalka". The bed, showing sculptured legs on the vertical barrage plate, is more precisely made than those discovered earlier, its blocks are more carefully hewed. A stone block with profiled face and a horizontal line painted in red, resembling a step to the bed, is in front of it.

Over the facade, a row of flat, curved slabs serves as a shed. The thresholds of the chambers are worn (Fig. 12). Here too, excepting two gold beads, several gold flakes and small silver and bronze pieces, no significant archaeological material was found. There is evidence that also this building was constructed upon partial removal of the mound. Its dating is not certain

Temple-tomb in mound "Shushmanets"

About three hundred metres northwest of the "Mound of the griffins", mound "Shushmanets" is found (Fig. 2, no. 16). Its name derives from a legend about a buried treasure of the last Bulgarian king before the Turkish invasion at the end of the 14th century A.D. In its southern side, a construction without parallels among the monuments of the ancient architecture on the Balkan Peninsula was excavated (Kitov 1997b; Kitov forthcoming). So far, it is one of the most interesting buildings discovered, offering an opportunity to ascertain the function of the monuments/constructions in Thracian mounds. Here, a combination of a semi-cylindrical vault over the antechamber and a dome over the chamber was found for the first time. Here, the first column resembling those of the Ionic type was discovered, be it with a capital shaped as a knucklebone at its top (Fig. 13). Here, the first round chamber with walls divided into three horizontal zones was excavated. Its roof is supported by a plain column of Doric type, its walls divided by seven fluted Doric columns (Fig. 14). A dromos was attached to the facade, which is six meters wide (Fig. 15). The facade, the walls, floors and columns were thickly plastered, in places even in layers. In the antechamber, four equine and two canine skeletons were excavated. Most likely, these are the remains of the last mass sacrifice before the construction was buried after a long period of use.

The three zones in the round chamber reflect the structure of the world as imagined by the ancient Thracian society. The lowest zone, symbolizing the underworld, is divided by the seven fluted columns into



Fig. 12. "Mound of the griffins", the first chamber and part of the doors to the central chamber (photo G. Dimov).

seven equal parts. Reaching the 'world of the earth', the columns change into rectangular protuberances, which, growing thinner and



Fig. 13. Thracian temple, facade. 5th – 4th century B.C. Mound “Shushmanets” near Shipka, Kazanluk region (photo G. Kitov).

thinner, continue to also divide ‘the world in the sky’. The zone of the last world has 15 rays stretching from under the round disc over the central column so as to represent the sun. The round chamber displays the sacred numbers of Thracian mythology: three (zones), four (the facets on its doors), seven (the columns and the fields between them), ten (the flutes on the sides of the columns). Being beyond the scope of this article, these numbers will not be discussed here (see: Kitov 1997b; Kitov forthcoming, with references).

The construction in mound “Shushmanets” is eminently important to solving a number of problems of Thracian mythology, religion and architecture. These problems remain to be studied in detail.

Tomb in mound no. 1 near Gabarevo

The last tomb excavated is in a mound near the village of Gabarevo, west of the town of Kazanluk (Fig. 2, no. 17). It was discovered on September 7, 1997. Built of small stones and plastered with clay, the construction consists of a dromos (Fig. 16) and a rectangular chamber.

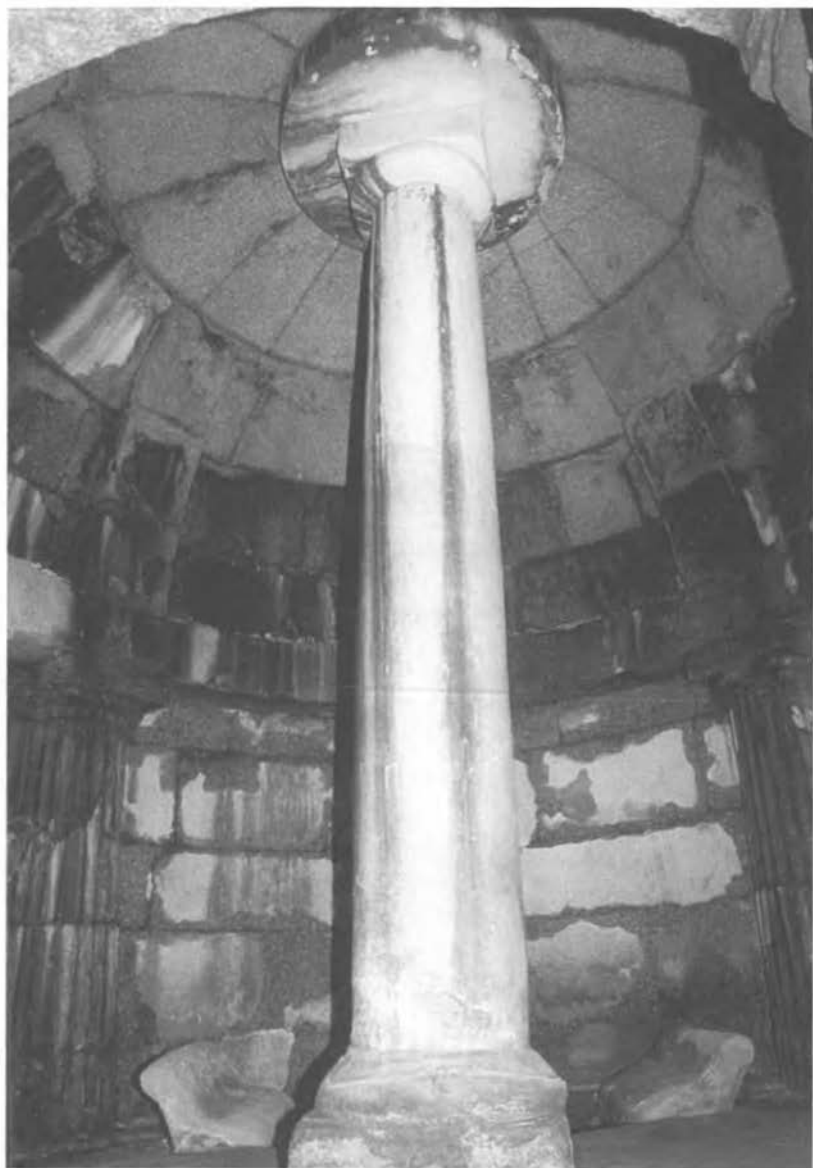


Fig. 14. Mound "Shushmanets", Doric column in the dome chamber (photo G. Dimov).

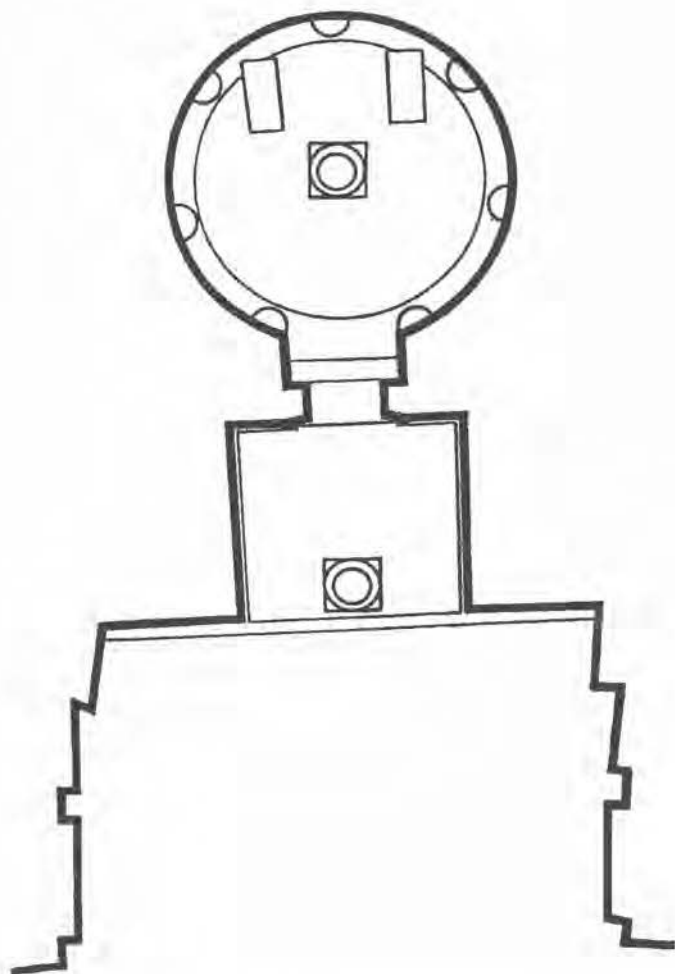


Fig. 15. Mound "Shushmanets", plan of the construction (drawing H. Krondeva & S. Goshev).

The roof is composed of four plane slab stones and covered with earth. The interior was filled up with earth. The tomb was probably used as a grave for a Thracian aristocrat. Nothing but hundreds of small glass beads was found in it.

The survey of the mounds in the region of Kazanluk raises many questions relating to the significance of the region to the history of the Thracians. It is the region where the town centre of Seuthopolis, the capital of the Thracian king Seuthes III, existed for several decades at the end of the 4th and beginning of the 3rd century B.C. (Nikolov 1992, 71-74). However, the mounds excavated so far do not date to these decades. This means that other representative town centres existed at least before and after them. The results of recent surveys also point in this direction.

The more than a thousand mounds are spread over unequal groups including various sizes. Our investigations suggest a degree of regularity to be confirmed or rejected by further investigations. All groups but one have a single monumental architectural construction, the exception being "Shushmanets", which has three, possibly four.¹¹

Around the large mounds of the "Shushmanets" group, there are several smaller ones. In one of these, a man was buried together with objects belonging to his armour, a box with 41 bronze coins, a wooden idol, clay vessels and other materials (Kitov forthcoming). Within the group, the excavation of "Sineva mogila" was sensational. There, in a deep pit filled with stones, a human skeleton with parts of a disintegrated equine one in front of it was found. The grave gifts comprise silver horse trappings with plastic decorations so far unknown, a gold ring with carefully engraved grapes, a tortoise and a head of a griffin, all these related to the cult of Sabasius. A less representative object was a broken clay amphora of which several parts were missing. To everybody's surprise, one of its missing parts was found in the dromos of the monumental construction in neighbouring mound "Helvecia".

Obviously, the ritual of breaking vessels during the funerary feast, registered for many sites, took place in "Helvecia" too, where, after the rituals, the fragments were gathered and buried in the mound close to it, to the omission of the one left behind. This fact, the design of representative facades (some of which resemble temples), the corridors leading from embankments to central chambers, the worn thresholds, and many more observations of our expedition raise the question of the function of monumental constructions in mounds. Were they intended and used as temples for funeral rites? And, if so, were the remains of the deceased buried elsewhere?

¹¹ Local people of the last century are rumoured to have found a rectangular chamber built of marble blocks in a fourth mound. However, we have not excavated such a chamber.



Fig. 16. Thracian tomb, the dromos. 4th century B.C. Mound no. 1 near Gabarevo, Kazanluk region (photo G. Kitov).

The above facts and the rich grave gifts from the uncommon graves are reason enough to refer to the Kazanluk region known as “Rose valley” by a new name: “Thracian valley of the kings”.

POSTSCRIPT

In the summers of 1997 and 1998, many remarkable objects from the Roman Period were discovered. These will be discussed in one of the forthcoming editions of *TALANTA*.

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