

The Thracian Valley of the Kings in the Region of Kazanlyk

by Georgi Kitov

The Kazanlyk Plain is localized between the two great mountain ranges in Bulgaria: the Balkan Range and the Sredna Gora Mountain. The region has fertile soil; it is suitable for stock-breeding and has been populated since pre-historic times¹. Its strategic importance is beyond doubt: the Balkan East-West and North-South roads are crossing there. Its definition, however, as Valley of the Kings would have been unthinkable before 1992, although the famous 3rd century BC Kazanlyk tomb² has been known since 1944. It is built up of bricks and bears the most splendid and the best preserved frescoes in Bulgaria. Battle scenes are depicted in the corridor, probably revealing the life of the ruler buried there. The circular chamber with a vault offers various perfectly painted scenes. Their arrangement evolves around the images of the ruler and his mourning wife. Sitting at a table full of food, they stretch hands to each other in a farewell gesture. The man is adorned with a gold wreath, his hand is hardened and burned, while that of the woman is white and tender. Attendants bear burial offerings around them. All figures are true anatomically, display individual features and expressive attitude. Above them, a freeze is showing a chariot race. The scene is decorated with bucrania, floral and geometric patterns. The Kazanlyk tomb is a masterpiece of Thracian painting and architecture and an outstanding monument of the ancient culture.

A few years later, in 1948, the construction of an artificial dam was started near the neighboring village of Koprinka. The largest

excavations of a Thracian settlement began on its future bottom³. Soon a marble slate bearing a long inscription was discovered⁴. It revealed that the settlement was Seuthopolis, the capital city of the well known by the coins legends Thracian king Seuthes III (late 4th - early 3rd century BC). The ancient written texts say that he fought many wars with the Macedonian forces of Alexander the Great and his successor Lysimachus. The excavations disproved the popular statement by Demosthenes that the Thracians had no homes, but lived in "miserable holes", or "deplorable dens"⁵. The capital city of Seuthes III comprised an area of almost 13 acres and was surrounded by 2 m thick walls. The town planning complied with the Hippodamus scheme: perpendicular streets and rectangular quarters. Two domed tombs built of bricks were investigated near the city, unfortunately, destroyed⁶.

Two more tombs were discovered in the region of Kazanlyk in 1965: the Muglitzh⁷ and the Krun⁸ tombs. The first one has a long corridor and several chambers. Frescoes covered their walls, only partially preserved. The second tomb is badly damaged, but the remains of colored plaster show that it had been an imposing monument of Thracian art and architecture before robbed.

The above mentioned monuments, as well as the 1,500 tumuli available and many unexplored settlements⁹ have only suggested the importance

¹ Georgiev 1972, 81 sqq.; Георгиев 1974, 4 sqq.; Толорова 1986, 45 sqq., 55 sqq., 277 and the literature cited there.

² Огненова-Маринова 1991, 12 and the literature cited there.

³ Димитров 1984, 11 sqq.; Чичикова 1991, 60 sqq.; Николов 1991, 71 sqq. with the full bibliography.

⁴ Димитров 1957, 199 sqq.

⁵ *Ibidem*, commentary and literature.

⁶ Чичикова 1957, 133 sqq.

⁷ Цанова, Гетов 1973, 15 sqq.

⁸ Гетов 1991, 42, fig. III/1.

⁹ Табакова-Цанова 1991, 105 sqq.; Домарадски 1991,

of the Kazanlyk valley for the Thracian antiquity. Despite these suggestive data, archaeological excavations of the area were carried out only occasionally.

In 1992 tumuli investigation started on a large scale in the region, with soon justified position of the valley as one of the important centers of Thracian culture and its definition as Valley of the Kings¹⁰. Over 50 tumuli were excavated, where 7 tombs, dozens of significant grave constructions and more than a thousand objects of museum value were discovered: fine Thracian art objects and many metal and clay artefacts imported from ancient Greece.

The archaeological investigation made use of geophysical equipment¹¹ and excavators, which gave the possibility of a 4th century BC unlooted royal tomb to be discovered immediately on the 1992 first working day¹². It is quite primitive, built up of river boulders, and straight after the funeral had been performed, filled up with the same stones and soil. Its corridor leads to the South-East. A man was buried in a rectangular chamber with the head to the South. The objects that designate him as a ruler are two bone *labryses*: the one with a handle coated with spirally folded silver band, while the other was obviously suspended on a leather strap, hanging on the person's breast, as well as a solid gold ring bearing an incised scene of investiture. The Thracian ruler is represented while receiving the royal insignia from the Goddess. The rest of the objects supplement the pompousness of the funeral and the luxuriant taste of the dead. Two big gold necklaces, one of which is estimated as the finest piece ever found in Bulgaria, a pectoral, buttons, pendants and other gold jewellery, many silver chains and *fibulae*, finely manufactured bronze *situla* decorated with the image of a bearded Satyr and a lion head, two silver *phiales*, a bronze bowl,

local and imported clay vessels, armour, bone objects and many other materials.

In 1993 the already famous Shipka tomb-mausoleum was discovered in the Ostrousha mound¹³, which produced a basically new type of Thracian sepulchral construction, being the largest cult-burial complex known so far in Thrace. It consists of 6 chambers covering an area of 100 sq.m. One of the chambers is like a sarcophagus and is built up of a monolithic block. Exquisite frescoes cover the ceiling, some of which still bear traces of gold incrustation. One of the chambers is domed and allows to reckon the mausoleum among the other 21 beehived tombs in Thrace¹⁴. The fact that one of the chambers was not plundered was of special value, and there were found a horse skeleton, the weapon with which the horse had been killed, a full set of silver horse-trappings decorations, a silver *phiale* and a jug. Coins minted in the name of Philip of Macedonia were discovered at different places of the complex, as well as local and imported ceramic ware, stone architectural details with plastic and colour decorations and many other materials related to the construction, the use, the filling up and the robbery of the mausoleum. Ostrousha Mogul will be included in the UNESCO World Cultural Monuments List.

In 1994, at about 2 km to the northeast of Seuthopolis, a peculiar tomb was investigated. It is of circular plan and has a corridor filled up with stones and plastered up with a clay solution¹⁵.

1995 proved to be the most successful year in the history of the Thracian archaeological studies in Bulgaria, bearing in mind that the Mezek¹⁶ and the Kazanlyk¹⁷ tombs, as well as the Vulchitrun¹⁸, the Panagyurishte¹⁹ and the

125 sqq. and the cited literature.

¹⁰ Китов 1994a, 46 sqq.

¹¹ The geophysical measurements were done by engineer Ilian Katevski and Nikola Tonkov, geophysicists in the Archaeological Institute with Museum at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences.

¹² Китов 1994a, 51 sqq., catalogue Nos 04 - 33.

¹³ Китов 1993, 9 - 25; Китов 1994b, 13 sqq.; Китов 1995, 245 sqq.; Китов, Krusteva 1996 (forthcoming).

¹⁴ For a review of the literature on the other domed tombs in Thrace, cf. Китов 1990, 116 sqq.; Китов 1990 - 91, 23 sqq.

¹⁵ Китов 1995, 65 sqq.

¹⁶ Филов 1937, 1 - 116; Филов 1937, 300 - 304.

¹⁷ The last complete publication: Живцова 1974. Review of the studies and full bibliographic list: Табакова, Гетов 1983.

¹⁸ Full bibliography: Бонев 1977, 11 sqq.

Rogozen²⁰ treasures were discovered accidentally, without the participation of the archaeologists. The excavations continued 100 days²¹, when there were discovered four monumental Thracian, most probably royal, tombs, one of which is intact after the last funeral performed in it; over 30 human graves, 10 horse skeletons, over 450 objects of museum value, some of which unique and masterpieces of Thracian and Old-Greek art. Some problems of the Thracian archaeological studies were solved, but the investigations posed new questions. These sudden turns, however, keep attracting the attention of the scholarly community.

None of the newly-found tombs resembles the rest of tombs known in this region. They differ from those already studied in Thrace²², preventing us from the opportunity to make a clear classification of the Thracian grave constructions. At the same time they attest to the aspiration for a variety, to the unceasing creative search of the Thracian master that are well known from the toreutics²³.

The earliest tomb is situated in the immediate vicinity of a workshop of the Arsenal works producing modern firearms and ammunitions. That is why the tumulus was named Big Arsenal. The embankment was about 10 m high. The preliminary geophysical measurements²⁴ indicated an anomaly in the

southern periphery of the mound. One hour and 13 minutes after the excavations had started the tomb facade was outlined. It consists of a front side with *antas*, one rectangular and one circular chamber, built up of precisely worked out stone blocks, connected with cramp-irons and fixed with molten lead.

The constructions is as simple as amazingly precise, the volumes are perfectly formed and very expressive. After one has bent his head to enter the two successive chambers, he is both enraptured and depressed by the imposing construction.

The tomb was most probably constructed in the late 5th century BC in an existing embankment, after part of it had been taken off to form a construction site. Thus, the continuation of Mycenaean traditions to build tombs in natural hills, already attested elsewhere in Thrace²⁵, was proved. The completely preserved facade is 5 m wide and 2.5 m high. A double-leafed stone door had been closing the entrance to the first chamber. Its lower parts were found on the spot, while the upper ones were broken and fell in the fill. A similar door, also destroyed by the robbers, had stood at the central chamber. The doors have smooth outer sides and cassettes are hewn on the inner sides. Their lateral sides are rounded and bear per one upper and lower projection. The lower projections fit into hollows on the threshold, strengthened by iron and lead. The upper ones had entered in circular bronze hoops, now missing, which had been fixed by iron wedges whose holes can be seen clearly. For the first time excavations produced precise data about the way of closing the chambers of the Thracian tombs. Besides, they furnished evidence that the construction had been planned and used for a long time as a mausoleum²⁶. Furthermore

¹⁹ Венедиков 1961; Маразов 1978, 76 sqq. and the cited literature.

²⁰ The Rogozen treasure, Sofia, 1989.

²¹ My deputies as the head of the excavations were Gavrail Lazov and Elka Docheva from the National Museum of History, which was the major financial supporter of the excavations. Kosyo Zarev and Evtimka Dimitrova from the "Iskra" Museum of History at Kazanlyk, Gergana Vuzvuzova from the National Museum of History, Ilian Katevski and Nikola Tonkov from the Archaeological Institute with Museum at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences also took part in the excavations, as well as other specialists, postgraduate students, students and technicians.

²² Китов 1990, 116 sqq.; Китов 1990 - 91, 23 sqq.; Русева 1981 - 82, 301 sqq. and the cited literature; Вълева 1994, 60 sqq. and the cited literature.

²³ Китов 1980, 165 sqq.; Китов 1992, 70 - 80.

²⁴ Made by Nikola Tonkov, a geophysicist in the Archaeological Institute with Museum at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences.

²⁵ Kitov 1994, 175 - 218; Kitov 1993, 18.

²⁶ The term "mausoleum" introduced by me, seems to me more suitable than "*heroon*" (which is wider and suggests a complex including the embankment as well). The mausoleum is actually part of, element of the *heroon*, "sanctuary" (which also means sacred place, and the mausoleum could be part of a sanctuary in its broader sense). Cf. Русева 1987, 30 sqq. The term "mausoleum" was grounded and defended both historically and archaeologically by Фол 1990, 171; Kitov 1994, 187 and the cited literature.

the entrances thresholds are much worn out by frequent coming in and going out in antiquity.

The first chamber is rectangular with a pitched roof. The floor is of compact soil and was damaged by the robbers. The tomb was probably plundered soon after the last burial, because the bones of the horse buried there were found scattered, but well preserved. Possibly, the skeleton had been disarranged before the flesh decayed.

The central chamber is of circular plan and lined with thick and well-processed stone slabs. The central slab is circular and bears a hollow resembles the sun disc or the imaginary center of the world. Three concentric circles of slabs are arranged around it, the last one resting against the lateral walls. Such a case has not so far been known from Thrace. It cannot be ruled out that this organization betrays Thracian cosmological notions, representing a stereo-model of the world, comprising the nether world, the earth and the heaven²⁷. The vaulting of the chamber begins from the first row of lateral blocks, gradually becoming more expressed and finished by a horizontal key-stone. The blocks are horizontally arranged and their faces are archly cut, most of them in advance, some - on the spot. No mistake had been made in the arrangement, all arcs are absolutely equal, the rows are even and without fillings. The construction testifies to the unsuspected architectural and designing skills of the ancient builders²⁸.

Against the entrance a funerary bed is fixed on two specially cut blocks, with a straight face and archly cut back along the wall. The bed is roughly profiled, which suggest that it had been covered with an organic material: leather or cloth.

The first chamber was found half-filled with small stones and soil, penetrated through the broken door. The second one was quite empty. A millimeter-thick film of fine soil was still preserved on the floor and the bed, as well as an insignificant number of small stones of local origin, probably thrown there by occasional

visitors after the robbery, when the entrance was partially opened. Several floor slabs were taken out and displaced, two were missing. This was done by the ancient evil-doers. Despite the plundering, some artifacts were discovered during the careful clearing and screening of the soil²⁹. Most of them were discovered in the joints of the disarranged floor slabs, in the joints between the bed horizontal slab and its supporting blocks, as well as beneath and on the bed. The finds consist mainly from miniature peels of gold and silver, gilt bronze wire, small gilt-clay fruits and balls which undoubtedly were part of the funerary wreath. Four small gold elongated plates with hangers on their back are known from four tumuli in Bulgaria: Mezek³⁰, Koprinka, region of Kazanlyk³¹, Kravevo, region of Turgovishte³² and Dolna Koznitsa, region of Kyustendil³³. 27 similar small plates were discovered at our excavations during the same summer in Tsvyatkova Tumulus³⁴ near Shipka and in Sarafova Tumulus³⁵ near Krun. They have relief faces, bearing several transverse edges which sever a rosette on the one plate, and a griffin's head as seen from above, on the other. Many pieces of a broken silver-gilt pectoral of crescent shape were found in the chamber as well. Only three such pectorals have till recently been known from Thrace: from Mezek³⁶, Vurbitsa³⁷ and Yankovo³⁸ in Northern Bulgaria. A similar item was found in the unplundered

²⁷ Фол 1990, 170 sqq.

²⁸ The rate between the diameter and the height: 1 : 1 (per 3.3 m approximately), also testifies to the perfect design and construction.

²⁹ They entered the collections of the National Museum of History.

³⁰ Filov 1937, 302, fig. 13.

³¹ *The Riches of the Thracian Rulers*, Tokyo, 1994, n. 14.

³² ГИНЕВ 1983, 31 sqq.

³³ *The Riches of the Thracian Rulers*, Tokyo, 1994, nos. 25 and 27.

³⁴ Named after the then mayor of Shipka, Tsvyatko Smilev, who assisted the excavations in various ways.

³⁵ Named after the then mayor of Kazanlyk, engineer Boncho Sarafov, who helped us in our work and provided the temporary guard of the tombs.

³⁶ ФИЛОВ 1937, n. 43; *Ibidem*, 302, fig. 6 - 7.

³⁷ Ogdenova-Marinova 1969, 407 sqq. and the cited literature.

³⁸ *Ibidem*. Two more pectorals of the same type are kept in the Museum of History at Shoumen: Въоръжението от древна Тракия, Шумен, 1995, nos. 87 and 88.

chamber of the Shipka tomb-mausoleum in the Ostrousha Tumulus 1993³⁹ and in 1995 - in the Tsvyatkova Tumulus as well. Thus, 3 from the already 6 crescent-shaped pectorals which seem to have been used as collars for breast-plates and chain-mails, originate from the region of Shipka.

The pectorals from the Big Arsenalka and the Tsvyatkova Mogul had been almost the same. Their faces are covered with decorative bands which turn in an arc and become narrower towards the ends, following the outlines of the body. They consist of geometric and floral designs: volutes, circular interlaced designs, etc. Most unexpectedly, a stamped decorative band was found on them, which is absent on the other 4. It repeats the patterns on the small elongated gold plates: rosette, lines in relief and a griffin's head. The decoration manufacture is perfect both from artistic and technical point of view. The silver body had firstly been coated with a gold sheet and then the decoration was executed by hammering on the back⁴⁰.

The chronology of the tomb-mausoleum in the Big Arsenal tumulus does not present difficulties. It was built in the late 5th century BC, or quite early in the 4th century BC, and had been used as a mausoleum for several decades. In the meantime, other burials were possibly performed in it. The latest one dated to the middle or the beginning of the second half of the 4th century BC, and the finds we discovered originate from it. Then the horse was placed in the first chamber, which, if earlier, would have limited the access to the central ritual chamber. The doors to both chambers were closed. The facade door was supported by great stone blocks, and a primitive stone wall was erected between the *antas*, clinging close to the facade. Very soon, however, probably in the late 4th century BC, the tomb was desecrated by wrong-doers. They destroyed part of the barrage wall, took off the upper blocks supporting the two-winged door and broke through the wings into the interior. The robbers squeezed in through a small opening

made by them. Then the face wall was covered by the soil erosion and remained hidden under the solid embankment till August 31, 1995, when we found it.

Another impressive tomb was discovered in the Slavchova tumulus⁴¹ near the village of Rozovo, about 7 km to the South of Kazanlyk and about the same distance from Seuthopolis. It is also built in the southern periphery of the tumulus and has almost the same dimensions. It comprises an antechamber and burial chamber covered by a semi-cylindrical vault. This type of tombs is usually called "Macedonian type"⁴². It is the eighth such tomb found in Bulgaria⁴³, while the ninth was excavated in the Sashova tumulus and will be discussed below. The roofing of the antechamber and of the southern half of the chamber was destroyed, the blocks being found in the interior or in front of the tomb.

The stratigraphic observations allow to define four periods of construction and use of the tomb. The time of the piling up of the embankment remains unspecified. Then part of the mound was taken off to form a site where the tomb was later built up. Ritual activities were performed on the site: the soil is compact and traces of fire are visible. The ritual preceded the construction. The scarce ceramic material dates it to the early 4th century BC.

The stone construction is made of big, very well worked, probably on the spot, blocks. The chamber to be was paved with thick well arranged slabs. There is a joint in the pavement between the southern and the northern half. The northern half was disturbed by the robbery, while we found the southern part almost intact. The antechamber and chamber silhouettes are the same: vertical walls to the fourth row and a false semi-cylindrical vault above them up to 3 m height. The fixing was again done by iron cramps

³⁹ КИТОВ 1995, 66.

⁴⁰ The pectorals are now being restored by Assoc. Prof. Vesselina Inkova who specified the manufacturing technology.

⁴¹ Named after Slav Spassov, a teacher from Lovech, member of the team since 1974.

⁴² Вълева 1994, 60 sqq. and the cited literature.

⁴³ Four in Varna (Мирчев 1958, 571 sqq. and the cited literature), one in Lovech (Велков 1925, 175 sqq.), one near Mezek, but it is not quite certain that it was covered in the same way (Филиов 1937, 84 sqq.; *ibidem*, 303 - 304), and the Sveshtari tomb in the Ginina Mogila (Fol, Cacicova, Ivanov, Teofilov 1986; Чичикова 1988, 125 sqq.).

and lead. Some of the cramps, mostly those from the upper rows, were taken out because of the metal value already in antiquity.

The embankment was being restored simultaneously with the erection of the side walls, revealing oblique layers of soil and stone construction debris. After the tomb had been completed, a burial was performed in the chamber, while the antechamber remained free and open, accessible for visits and ritual activities, i.e. the construction was intended to be a mausoleum.

The last fourth period is related to a successive burial, after which the chamber entrance was closed with slabs from the northern part of the pavement. The antechamber was also barred by a primitive stone wall, where slabs from the chamber, as well as roughly worked stones of local origin, were used. Before that, the trampled floor of the antechamber was covered with stones, an equine body was placed there, small stones being piled up on it, and the construction was finally filled up.

Already in ancient times the tomb was opened again, part of the antechamber roof destroyed, the covering slab above the chamber entrance was broken. The tomb was robbed, but the equine body in the antechamber remained intact.

In spite of the robbery, the following items were discovered among the scattered pavement blocks of the northern half and on the floor slabs of the southern half: clay vessels fragments, almost destroyed armament, peels of gold and small gilt balls from a funerary wreath, iron scepter with a handle of a deer horn and a silver plate with an incised image of a lion-griffin⁴⁴. The latter is of special interest as the image has not yet been known from the other pieces of Thracian toreutics. The moulding and the manufacture are perfect, unlike the other similar appliques from the Scythian lands in Southern Russia and Ukraine⁴⁵. The applique from the Slavchova Mogul is the next proof that pieces of

Thracian art served as prototypes for the Scythian art, where the images were paraphrased and roughly executed due to misunderstanding of the initial artistic idea⁴⁶. The scepter testifies to the high rank of the dead: ruler or *paradynast*.

Although completely preserved in anatomical order, the equine skeleton was adorned only with one circular silver applique without any decoration. Pieces of two *amphoras* broken in advance, however, were discovered among the stones and in the soil above the horse, which are now being restored. A rectangular producer's stamp can be seen on the neck of one of the *amphoras*, whose reading and identification are forthcoming.

The area to the South of the antechamber is trampled, covered partially with uneven stone pavement; there are traces of fires and the place was probably formed and used during the period when the construction played the role of a mausoleum. The analysis of this insignificant number of pottery fragments did not allow to specify the chronology of this period. For the time being, it is clear that the finds can be appointed generally to the whole 4th century BC, which was the time between the construction and the filling up of the tomb-mausoleum.

The mausoleum in the Slavchova tumulus is of exclusive value for the studies of Thracian sepulchral architecture. It can be reckoned among the best preserved tombs of the so-called "Macedonian type" in Bulgaria, coming only after that in the Ginina tumulus near Sveshtari⁴⁷ and the one in the Sashova tumulus described below. The opportunity to make testing digging under the chamber floor and to reveal the initial platform with its finds would possibly allow to confirm the assumption that the construction was carried out in the early 4th century BC. Then one should probably remember a primitive built grave from Slavyani, region of Lovech⁴⁸, which was covered with the same primitive semicylindrical vaulting roof. Thus, it cannot be ruled out that a reconsideration of the widely

⁴⁴ The materials are kept at the "Iskra" Museum of History at Kazanlyk.

⁴⁵ Several such appliques can be found in: Ильинская, Тереножкин 1983, 103, 122, 251, etc.

⁴⁶ Kitov 1992, 74.

⁴⁷ See note 43.

⁴⁸ Unpublished excavations by Georgi Kitov and Pavel Pavlov.

used term "Macedonian type" tombs will be necessary. It seems that this type had early been known to the Thracians, and, if not creators, they could have at least been partners in the invention of this roofing.

Three other tumuli existed at about 1 km to the North-West of the Big Arsenal. The middle one, Sashova Mogul⁴⁹, covered a monumental stone tomb with a 13 m corridor and two rectangular chambers. It is noteworthy as being the first imposing unplundered tomb in Bulgarian lands found at archaeological excavation.

The tomb had been designed and used as a mausoleum for a long time. Its corridor leads out of the present-day periphery of the embankment. It is oriented to the South, with a slight deviation to the southeast, and was built in two stages with big, roughly worked stones of local origin. Its prolongation became necessary when the embankment began to slide and to cover the initial entrance. The corridor was uncovered, its walls gradually rising to follow the outlines of the mound. Its northern end rests by a joint against the face of the first chamber. The latter is relatively small. The side walls of its entrance are of limestone and the covering slab is of the same material. Its roof consists of several levels of big supporting and supported stone blocks. The floor is of trampled ground. No burial had ever been performed in it and the insignificant number of ceramic fragments had accidentally fallen there. The side walls of the central chamber entrance are built of limestone. The images of warriors performing ritual or battle dance are incised on two of the blocks⁵⁰. The central chamber is bigger and situated perpendicularly to the corridor axis, like that of the tomb-mausoleum in the Ostrousha tumulus⁵¹. The roofing is a genuine semi-cylindrical vault whose blocks lay down on the joint of the side shorter walls. Both

chambers are built up of great blocks, some of which re-used. The construction is not as imposing as that of the other two tombs already described. At some places the levelling of the rows is achieved by small specially cut stone pieces or by fragments of stucco. Among the re-used blocks there is one threshold bearing hollows for door axes and an arc-like scratch by the door. They are filled up with lime solution. Another block had obviously been a sacrificial altar with a hewn container, groove and basin where the blood of the sacrificed animal trickled down⁵². This block had been roughly rounded before being built in the western wall of the first chamber. Limestone and granite blocks of white, black, red and green color were used in the central chamber. The pattern of their arrangement could not be specified, which does not allow to assert that they were intentionally placed to express a certain symbolic meaning.

The first chamber was found half-filled up with infiltrated embankment soil and small stones, while filling was missing in the second one. The *dromos* was intentionally filled up with stones of local origin, gravel and embankment soil.

At least three periods of use can be defined for the mausoleum. The two chambers were simultaneously constructed during the first period. Only the disassembling of the corridor can reveal whether they alone had stood there for a certain time. At any rate, the northern half of the *dromos* was additionally attached to the face of the first chamber. The corridor was prolonged and went out of the then and present-day limits of the tumulus during the third period. The building periods differ both in material and manufacture. The chambers are built of well-worked blocks, the first half of the corridor is made of roughly cut stones, while the second one is still more primitively executed. A funerary bed was built to the left of the central chamber entrance in the same way and synchronously with the second part of the *dromos*. It consists of several rows of rough stones without mortar and does not rest against the walls. Later the hollows between them were filled up with the infiltrated fine soil.

⁴⁹ Named after Alexander Kitov, member of the team for more than 10 years.

⁵⁰ The graffiti resemble to those on the clay *crater* from the village of Dushantsi, region of Pirdop, which was manufactured in the 4th century BC at latest: Теодосиев 1991, nos. 4, 14.

⁵¹ Kitov 1993, 17 - general plan and 20 - a reconstruction drawing.

⁵² Фол 1993, 55 sqq. and the cited literature.

During the last period of use the body of a Thracian ruler was placed on the bed which has a raising, imitating a pillow, at its northern end. The body of a horse was placed to the right of the entrance, the burial offerings were arranged and the tomb was buried under the embankment where it remained hidden till August 24, the day of its discovery, a few hours after the excavations had started. Only small rodents, most probably mice, made their way into the interior, scattered the bones and the minor items of the furnishings and later died there - their skeletons were found while cleaning the chamber. The damp environment, almost 100% relative humidity, accounts for the destruction of most of the bones.

The furnishings were placed on the funerary bed, between it and the chamber northern wall, as well as on the floor. The horse bore only an iron bridle, several rings and buckles of silver and iron. The king's personal belongings lay on the bed or have been fallen in the hollows between the bed and the walls. Several clay vessels and fallen from the bed fragments were found on the floor, close to the bed.

The chieftain or the king had been dressed in a chain mail consisting of tens of thousand very small iron rings. This was discovered *in situ*, although pieces of it had been fallen down and carried about by the mice. Chain armour has very rarely been found in Thrace. Skorpil brothers announced a chain mail among the finds from the doomed tomb discovered near the village of Rozovets, some 35 km to the southwest from Shipka, in 1851⁵³. This statement, much doubted, has till recently been the only evidence for such an armour. During the last two decades complete or fragmented chain mails were brought to light in Kulnovo, region of Shoumen (excavations by Georgi Atanassov)⁵⁴, Smochan and Doyrentsi, district of Lovech⁵⁵, and from the domed tombs near Ravnogor in the Rhodopes⁵⁶. There is a good chance the chain mail from the Sashova tumulus to be restored completely and it will contribute significantly to the studies of the defense armament of ancient Thrace.

The dead wore an exquisitely manufactured Thracian type bronze helmet on his head - conical, spirally pointed forward, resembling the coat of arms of the French Republic of Mariana. The helmet had long been worn. Traces of repair can be seen inside on several places. The *palmettes* applied on the top are missing. Traces of direct fight, where its owner maybe died, can also be noticed: a hole produced by an arrow or spear and a hallow from battle sling ball. No doubt, the helmet had a long history before being placed in the tomb. A silver torque of two spirally twisted wires was fallen close to it - it marked a high social rank in the Thracian society. The armament is supplemented by a big, solid, straight iron sword, found at the place of the right hand on the funerary bed, several spearheads, broken knives, and a very well preserved iron *umbo* of a shield. A gold *fibula* with a bilateral spiral and three stringed beads reckon among the personal belongings as well. This type of *fibula* has not yet been known from Thrace. The beads have rectangular and rounded grooves inlaid with black, light green and blue substance, probably cellular enamel or semi-precious stones. It had fallen down in the hallow between the bed and the western wall of the chamber. The dress which the *fibula* had fastened was probably trimmed with bronze and glass beads. Over 200 in number, they were scattered on the funerary bed, between the stones building it and on the chamber floor.

The rest of the items found in the chamber are offerings or objects which had to be used by the already deified ruler in the nether world, according to the Thracian beliefs. A small bronze jug and a silver *phiale* came up close to the *fibula*. The jug has an egg-shaped body and a human face is plastically rendered on the lower part of the handle, which could not be interpreted before the cleaning. The *phiale* is a masterpiece of the late Thracian art. Its shape marks the transition from the classical Thracian *phiale* and the bowls known from Sindel⁵⁷ and Yakimovo⁵⁸ in the Northern Bulgaria. It is excellently preserved. On the outer side of the bottom four signs are dotted, probably referring to the weight of the silver vessel. On the inner side

⁵³ Шкорпил 1898, 125.

⁵⁴ Домарадски 1995, 22, n. 86.

⁵⁵ Китов 1987.

⁵⁶ Kitov 1990 - 1991, 23, note 18.

⁵⁷ Велков 1972, 23. sqq. and the cited literature.

⁵⁸ Маразов 1979, 7 and the cited literature.

there is a gold *rosette* on the bottom and three concentric bands of thickly gilt ornaments. The *rosette* resembles a 12-pointed star, like that from the tomb of Philip of Macedonia at Vergina⁵⁹. The band closest to the bottom is filled with the "running wave" pattern, widely used in Thracian art. Interlaced circular design is evolved in a wide band under the rim. Its lower half is just gilt without any decoration. The middle band is the most important for the dating of the *phiale*. It is divided by very elongated fields, filled up in succession by stylized laurel leaves and incised lines crossing each other at a right angle. Such a pattern is known in Bulgarian lands only on a few *phalerae* from the region of Ivaylovgrad (first published by Bogdan Filov)⁶⁰ and on a silver-gilt headpiece for horse-trappings from Ravnogor in the Rhodopes⁶¹. These are dated to the late 3rd and early 2nd century BC, which is also the presumable date of the present *phiale*. Both the *phiale* and the *fibula* allow us to specify the time of the last burial in the Sashova tumulus: most probably in the middle of the 2nd century BC.

Two big, completely preserved clay *amphoras* were placed in the northwestern corner of the chamber, between the funerary bed and the wall. One of them bears the producer's circular stamps on both handles. No doubt, they had been full of wine imported from the Greek islands. Several whole or disintegrated by the moisture clay vessels were placed on the floor, to the East from the bed. A fine Greek *kantharos* is the most significant among them, unfortunately, badly fragmented and damaged by crystallized salts. Its evaluation after the restoration would help to make more precise the date already mentioned. In the tomb there were found many other minor objects, like pieces of a gilt wreath: bronze wire, small clay balls and fruits⁶². The discovery of the un plundered tomb in the Sashova tumulus is of extreme importance for the Thracian archaeological studies. It seems that it was built

in the late 4th century BC and used as a mausoleum for a long time before being finally closed and covered with the embankment in the middle of the 2nd century BC.

The great quantity of finds and the stratigraphic observations have not yet been completely analyzed because of the short time between the end of the excavations season - middle of October, and the writing of this work - December 1995. The above date and some other considered here could hence be further specified. Although rich, the furnishings of the tomb do not correspond to its impressive appearance. They are poorer, for example, than those in the Malkata Mogul⁶³, near Shipka, whose architecture is far more simple. The comparison with some of the graves near Duvanlij⁶⁴, region of Plovdiv, is still more striking. The explanation of these discrepancies could be sought in several directions. The most serious arguments relies on the dating. The Thracian antiquity prime is usually situated between the early 5th century BC and the late 4th or early 3rd century BC at latest. At this time, the Thracians, although separated into many small states, had economic and political independence. Despite the frequent wars, the aristocracy could have afforded to live a very luxurious live. Macedonian invasion⁶⁵ and the Celtic raids⁶⁶ in the second half of the 4th and the 3rd century BC caused troubles, but not so serious as it has recently been thought of. The anxious and uncertain time related to these events, however, could not have failed to cause the gradual exhausting of the economic and creative resources of Thracian society. In the 2nd century BC the Roman state already cast a shadow before the Balkans⁶⁷. The civil wars, as well as the outer threat, gradually exhausted the various Thracian dynastic centers and they began uniting. The weaker the royal power was, the stronger the aristocracy grew and attracted part of the riches due to the king. Thus, the difference between the very rich burials and the less rich

⁵⁹ Andronikos 1984, 80 sqq. (8-pointed, 12-pointed and 16-pointed stars).

⁶⁰ Filov 1925, 33. Other publications falsely assign these *phalerae* to the region of Krumovgrad.

⁶¹ Китов 1988, nos. 7, 46.

⁶² The finds from the Sashova tumulus entered the collections of the National Museum of History.

⁶³ Китов 1994а, 51 sqq., catalogue Nos 04 - 33.

⁶⁴ Filov 1934.

⁶⁵ Фол 1975, 175 sqq. and the cited literature.

⁶⁶ Домарадски 1984, 73 sqq. and the cited literature.

⁶⁷ Тачева 1987, 49 sqq. and the cited literature.

ones progressively disappeared. This process seemed to continue till Thrace submitted to the Roman rule, which for the different parts of the country meant the period from the middle of the 1st century BC to the middle of the 1st century AD⁶⁸. The importance of economic power began to prevail over the political which faded away. A stratum of big landowners was formed in Thrace under the Roman rule which took on itself the political responsibility in the provinces⁶⁹. They continued the tradition of the rich Thracian burials, which had been disturbed for a certain time, but the *insignia* were missing⁷⁰.

The last excavated tomb in 1995 is a peculiar indicator of the transition from the unmatched extravagance to the practicalism imposed by the circumstances. It was built in the Sarafova Mogul, to the North of the village of Krun in the direction of Shipka. It has not been plundered either. But instead, all precious objects initially placed in it were intentionally, quietly and in an organized manner taken out.

It was discovered by a direct laying towards the entrance without disturbing the embankment. The tomb is situated in the southern section of the tumulus, has a 7-meters long corridor, very wide in comparison to the rest found in Thrace, as well as two chambers. The tomb reckons among the masterpieces of Thracian architecture with its polychromatic decoration and expressive spatial design. It was also erected in a ready-made embankment. But it was not completely exhausted for the site, so the walls rest on part of the filling and collapsed because of its lower density, while the floor slabs are warped. The tomb constructed in the late 4th century BC, and, like the above, had long been used as a mausoleum. The dromos leads to the South and ends with sideward juttred faces. These, together with the walls, are built up of stones coated with coloured lime plaster. The ceiling had been flat, mounted by a pitched roof. The ceiling had been covered by lime plaster in white and light pink. Very well manufactured flat and curved tiles with

artistically made functional relief grooves overlaid the pitched roof. They are perfectly fired and support the assumption that in Thrace, earlier than in other regions of the ancient world, burnt building ceramics were introduced⁷¹. The chambers are built up of big, also well worked and fired bricks. The floors bear a lime plaster, and the walls are covered with a thick stucco, coloured in Pompeian red, pink, yellow to orange, black and purple in horizontal bands. The arrangement of the coloured bands is different for the corridor and for each of the chambers. Some of them are plastically shaped, others are furrowed by horizontal and vertical lines, resembling polished marble. All the colours, especially those covering the central chamber, are perfectly preserved and vivid. The spatial arrangement of the chambers arouses admiration. The side walls slope gradually inward to form a pitched roofing. The line of the slope is elegant and does not comply with the constructive requirements. Similar outlines can be seen in the Kazanlyk⁷² and the Muglitzh⁷³ tombs, but the sloping there starts from the vertical walls at an angle. The general outlines are repeated at the entrances to both chambers.

The entrance to the central burial chamber is of special interest. It was firmly closed by a solid stone door. Its outer side is smooth like those from the Big Arsenal, while cassettes are hewn on the inner side. Its eastern vertical side is rounded and has two cylindrical juts. The lower one fits in a circular hollow hewn in a stone block, strengthened with iron and lead. The upper one enters a wide iron hoop. It is fixed at the front side wall of the entrance with two iron wedges reinforced by molten lead. The hoop is very well preserved and the door remained hanging on it after the opening. The opening of the door was not easy, but it turned to be a very exciting event. We stood in a perfectly designed space, the walls were vividly painted. The warped floor was covered by a thin layer of fine soil. The remains of an almost disintegrated human skeleton

⁶⁸ *Ibidem*, 59 sqq. and the cited literature.

⁶⁹ НИКОЛОВ 1974, nos. 1, 71 sqq.; НИКОЛОВ 1984, 59 sqq. and the cited literature.

⁷⁰ Kitov, Pawlow 1987, 32 sqq. and the cited literature.

⁷¹ Чичикова 1988, 129 sqq.

⁷² Огненова-Маринова 1991, 12 and the literature cited there; Живчова 1974; Табакова, Гетов 1983.

⁷³ Цанова, Гетов 1973, 15 sqq.

with the skull to the North were seen to the left of the entrance. Despite the firmly closed door and the intact skeleton, other finds were not visible. On cleaning the floor and screening the soil, however, two richly decorated silver-gilt appliques for handles of a big vessel were found. There were also discovered clay gilt *rosettes*, a number of gilt small balls and fruits from a funerary wreath, glass and incrustation crystal semi-balls, peels of gold, pieces of armament, two silver appliques of the already known type of *rosettes*, relief lines and griffins' heads, bearing hangers on their backs, and other minor objects⁷⁴. Three impressions from heavy metal vessels at the northwestern corner of the chamber were most striking. They had rested against the walls, where imprints of their handles could be seen.

Clay fragments were found in the first chamber and in the filling of the corridor, whose restoration yielded a fine black-burnished *kantharos* decorated by relief ribs on its lower part and by a painted wreath below the rim.

A horse had been buried in the corridor, whose skeleton we found in complete anatomic order under the collapsed ceiling plaster and the great number of flat and curved tiles from the pitched roof.

The date of the finds from the tomb in the Sarafova tumulus reaches the end of the 4th century BC. As they originated from the last burial performed there, the tomb had obviously been built some decades earlier than the Kazanlyk tomb⁷⁵ and seems a little later than the tomb-mausoleum in the Ostrousha tumulus⁷⁶. The fine colouring is an argument in favour of a Thracian wall-painting school⁷⁷ and supports the assumption that this school was located in the region of Kazanlyk and had existed at least for a century.

The discovery of the tomb in the Sarafova tumulus presents a problem in the interpretation of the firmly closed door and the absence of part

of the rich grave furnishings. For the time being a hypothetical explanation can be offered. Probably the central sepulchral chamber had played the role of a depot for the precious objects which were taken out and used in a moment of danger for the Odrysian state. They were possibly used for buying armour, or payment of mercenaries. Or, for paying ransom. It cannot be ruled out that these events were connected with some of the Macedonian raids or with the beginning of the Celtic invasion at the end of the second decade of the 3rd century BC.

The four newly-discovered tombs and their great chronological range of use will contribute significantly to the studies of ancient history of Thrace. It becomes evident that the Macedonian and the Celtic raids were not of so great importance as it has frequently been assumed. They did not deal a severe blow on the Thracian state, economy and culture. The region preserved its independence and safety as the earlier mausoleum continued to be used and new ones were built as well. Although a certain Celtic influence can be felt in the manufacture of some objects, it is not so powerful as it should be expected, if the center of the Celtic state on the Balkans was situated in the Kazanlyk Valley⁷⁸. The pure Thracian artistic traditions are, however, well presented by various objects and foreign influence cannot be followed.

These conclusions are supported by the investigation of the rest of the tumuli assigned to the Thracian aristocracy. The chronological range of the burials performed in them is between the 8th and the 1st century BC. A grave from the early Byzantine time remains beyond the above dates⁷⁹.

Numerous clay urns and small vessels, pieces of armament and two boat-like *fibulae*, one of which with stringed beads, are of special scholarly value among the early finds. Most of the objects date back to the time of the classical

⁷⁴ The finds are kept in the National Museum of History.

⁷⁵ Огненова-Маринова 1991, 12 and the literature cited there; Живчова 1974; Табакова, Гетов 1983; Димитров 1966, No 2, 1 sqq.

⁷⁶ Kitov 1993, 9 - 25; Китов 1994b, 13 sqq.; Kitov 1995, 245 sqq.; Kitov, Krusteva 1996 (forthcoming).

⁷⁷ Огненова-Маринова 1991, 12 sqq.; Димитров 1966, 1 sqq.

⁷⁸ Домарадски 1984, 79 sqq. and the cited literature.

⁷⁹ In the Ilieva tumulus which has not been excavated completely. Several other late burials were discovered in the upper layers of the Ostrousha tumulus to the north of the tomb-mausoleum in 1992. It seems very probable that the tomb was found and robbed while digging for these graves.

Thracian antiquity: the 5th - 3rd century BC. For the first time more than 10 Greek clay vessels were found in the interior of Thrace. Three big craters are covered with red-figures mythological scenes⁸⁰, related mainly with Dionysos. The bottom of one of them bears an incised inscription: KYLIKIA, which is interpreted as the designation of the capacity of the vessel: is contained 4 *kylikes* of wine.

Armament was supplemented by two more Thracian type helmets. The cheek-guards of one of them are well preserved and moulded in stylized beard and mustaches. A great number of iron spearheads, bronze arrowheads, iron knives, swords and curved cutlass were discovered as well.

Jewellery is also numerous and various. A silver set of 10 crescent-like shaped pendants, five rings with incised images on the bezels, pyramidal pendants, etc. were found in the Vifor tumulus⁸¹.

Clay vessels comprise urns, many *amphoras*, dishes, cups, jugs, *phiales*, etc. Three exquisitely made small dishes and three well preserved *oenochoi* were placed in the Halachova tumulus⁸², where no burial had been performed. The Zareva tumulus⁸³ yielded, beside a human and an equine skeletons, various pieces of armaments and an attractive set of clay vessels. Extremely interesting silver *phiale* was placed in the grave⁸⁴. Its shape is semi-spheroid, the body is decorated with incised gilt lines outlining regular pentagons and hexagons, thus arranged that strikingly resemble a modern football ball.

Another silver *phiale* was found in the Leshnikova tumulus⁸⁵. It is of special interest. It was discovered in a primitively built grave where

an inhumation had been performed. The furnishings consist of clay (a *kantharos*, a *phiale*, an *amphora* and small gilt balls from a wreath), iron (a bridle and nails), bronze (three vessels, small plates and nails) and silver objects (the above *phiale*, a jug, strap tags and appliques)⁸⁶. The bridle is of unknown type: 2 pairs of bronze decorations are strung on the iron bit. One pair consists of bi-conical beads with lengthwise incised lines. The other comprises three-pointed solid stars resembling the modern Mercedes sign. One of the clay vessels is a trefoil jug. I know only two such vessels: from Alexandrovo in the Northern Bulgaria⁸⁷ and from the Derveni necropolis near Thessaloniki⁸⁸. The silver jug is made up of three parts: a bottom with a low ring foot and a groove for the body; egg-shaped body, funnel-like mouth with a relief decoration band on the shoulders; band-shaped handle with *volute*s at its upper end and a circular small plate with a 14-foil relief *rosette* at the lower end⁸⁹.

The *phiale* has an archaic shape, its body is decorated with very elongated plastically moulded leaves ending like Ionian *cyma*. The umbo is highly projected and an inscription is incised around its outer side, consisting of 15 Greek letters. The inscription reads: (*This vessel belongs*) to DUNTAS (the son of) ZEILAS. So far, it can be said those it contains two Thracian royal names, that of a father and a son⁹⁰. This inscription is of great scholarly significance as the one name it reveals is unknown from other inscriptions from Thrace, and the other has not been attested at all. A certain problem is posed by the discrepancy between the primitive type of the grave construction and this *phiale* which undoubtedly was a royal possession. Perhaps it appeared in the grave as a booty or as some other kind of trophy. The grave is dated to the late 5th century BC.

⁸⁰ The vessels are now being restored by Dora Petkova.

⁸¹ Named after a photographers company in Kazanlyk, where our photodocumentation was partially prepared for free.

⁸² Named after one of our watchmen Ali Halach.

⁸³ Named after the Director of the "Iskra" Museum of History at Kazanlyk, Kosyo Zarev, member of the team as well.

⁸⁴ The *phiale* is still under restoration by Assoc. Prof. Vesselina Inkova.

⁸⁵ The tumulus was situated in the seed-plot yard near Shipka and had no name. It was thus named because it is overgrown with hazels like its immediate vicinity.

⁸⁶ The materials entered the collection of the "Iskra" Museum of History at Kazanlyk.

⁸⁷ Filov 1934, 180, No 4, Abb. 205.

⁸⁸ Andronikos 1983, No 41.

⁸⁹ The jug resembles in shape and decoration to other items from the Rogozen treasure - nos. 109 - 110. They are dated to the 5th century BC.

⁹⁰ The inscription is studied and will be published by Assoc. Prof. Peter Dimitrov.

Unexpectedly, numerous coins were also found at the excavations. Among them two silver coins were minted in the name of the Thracian king *Saratokos* (late 5th century BC ?), who is not mentioned in the ancient literary sources, but is known only from coin legends. His belonging to the Odrysian royal dynasty is doubted. It is assumed that he ruled over an area in the Southwestern Thrace, close to the island of Thassos⁹¹. For the first time coins of *Saratokos* were found in the interior of Southeastern Thrace. This fact could be explained in two ways, both of great historical significance. This coin circulation testifies either to the relations between the region of Kazanlyk and the far lands to the southwest, or that the kingdom of

Saratokos at a certain moment comprised a great territory including the Kazanlyk valley as well.

The investigations in the Kazanlyk Plain pose other historical and archaeological problems as well. A major point is the question about residence of the rulers buried in the royal tombs. Bearing in mind that Seuthopolis existed for a short time in the late 4th and early the 3rd century BC⁹², another urban center should be sought for in the region, which could have been a capital city before that of Seuthes III and maybe later as well.

Future archaeological survey of the Kazanlyk region will no doubt produce new materials and will contribute to the study of Thracian antiquity, and would, probably, elucidate some of the problems posed here.

Georgi KITOV

Thracians Expedition for Tumuli Investigations

Lagera Str., Bl. 49, A, apt. 5

1612 Sofia

BULGARIA

⁹¹ Юркова 1992, 43 - 47; Топалов 1994, 146.

⁹² On the problem about the time of the existing of Seuthopolis, Димитров 1991, 94 sqq. and the cited literature. According to the author, the city lost its importance about 275 BC at the latest.

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Fig. 1. Golden necklace from the Small Mound. Beads (the 5th century BC), pendant (the 4th century BC). (Photo: Zheljan Nikolov).



Fig. 3. A scene depicted on a ceiling cassette of the tomb-mausoleum in Ostrusha Mound (the middle of the 4th century BC). (Photo: Nikola Stoichev).

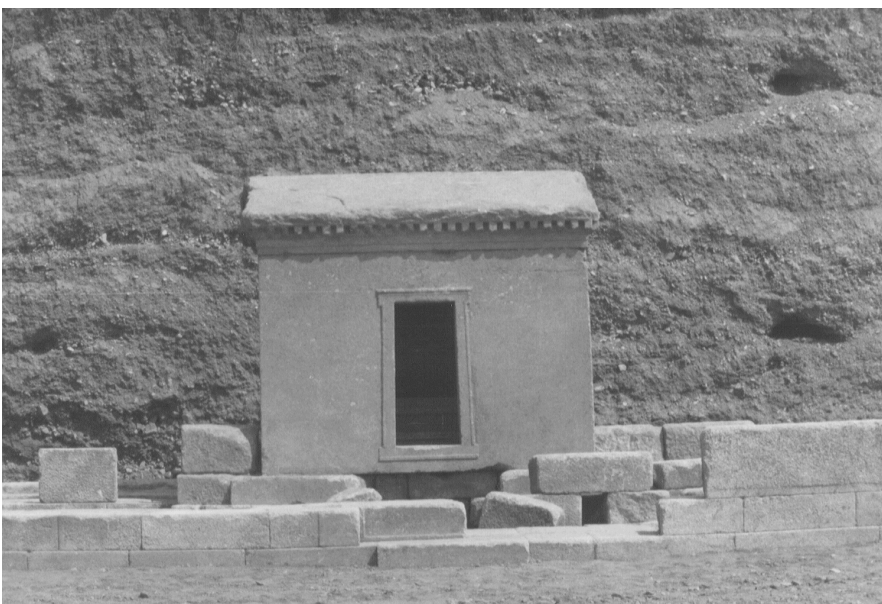


Fig. 2. The central monolithic chamber of the tomb-mausoleum in the Ostrusha Mound (the 4th century BC). (Photo: Georgi Kitov).

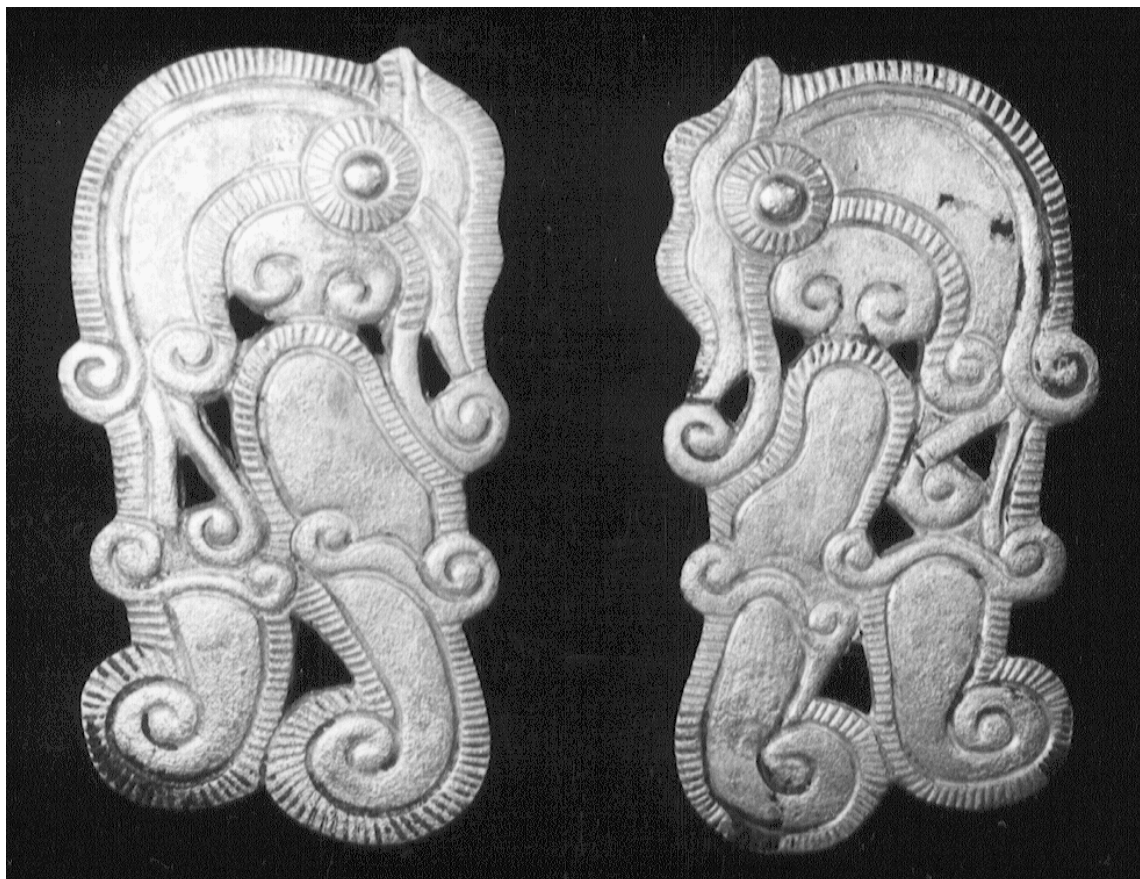


Fig. 4. Silver appliques found in the unplundered chamber of the tomb-mausoleum in the Ostrusha Mound (the second half of the 4th century BC). (Photo: Georgi Kitov).



Fig. 5. The facade of the domed tomb in the Big Arsenalka Mound. (Photo: Georgi Kitov).

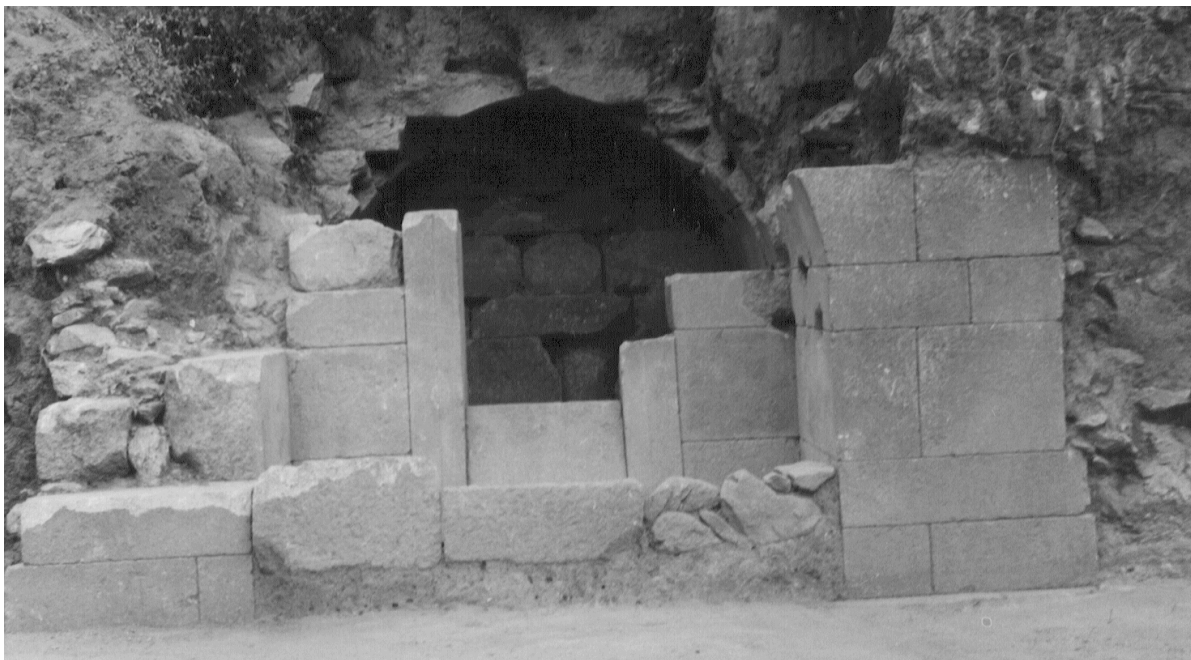


Fig. 6. The tomb in the "Slavchova Mogila" tumulus with the additional barrage wall in the antechamber. (Photo: Georgi Kitov).



Fig. 7. A section of the corridor and the entrance of the tomb in the "Sashova Mogila" tumulus. (Photo: Georgi Kitov).



Fig. 8. A section of the first chamber with the open door leading to the central chamber of the tomb in Sarafova tumulus. (Photo: Georgi Kitov).



Fig. 9. Some of the furnishings in Leshnikova tumulus. (Photo: Georgi Kitov).



Fig. 10. A silver phiale with an inscription: (This vessel belongs) to DUNTAS (the son of) ZEILAS. (Late 5th century BC). (Photo: Georgi Kitov).

