

THE LATEST TUMULARY NECROPOLEIS IN SOUTHERN DOBRUDJA

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There are more than 4,000 tumuli, most of which grouped into tumulary necropoleis, registered in Southern Dobrudja up to now. The oldest of them date back to the Early Bronze Age. In spite of the scarcity of archaeological research, it is hardly to expect earlier finds to appear. However, much more difficult is to establish when the ritual of heaping up burial mounds here was in use till. The Christianization of the region during the Roman period has usually been considered terminus ante quem.

The present state of research seems to confirm such a suggestion. 24 tumulary necropoleis from the period of Roman domination have provided archaeological evidence, which deserves a discussion from chronological point of view. Another group of 27 necropoleis of the kind should also be added with highest degree of probability, in spite of the lack of excavations. If this total of 51 put into topographical consideration, specific features, characteristic of burial mounds from the Roman period in Southern Dobrudja, can be revealed. Special attention is paid to the pattern of location of tumulary necropoleis, regarding the settlements, which they are to be attributed to.

However, there are a number of tumuli, which do not reveal any relationship to settlements either from the Iron Age or from the Roman period. Being of large dimensions, they often form huge linear necropoleis. Generally considered as relies from the Early Bronze Age, yet there are arguments to suggest a post-Roman date for some of them.

MOUNDS AND MOUND NECROPOLEIS FROM THE IRON AGE AT THE NORTHERN SLOPES OF THE CENTRAL BALKAN AND FOREBALKAN

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The northern slopes of the Central Balkan and Forebalkan, cut by the upper reaches of the rivers Vit, Ossam, Vidima and Rossitsa and their tributaries were inhabited during the two stages of the Iron Age. This was proved by the numerous single mounds, mound necropoleis, unfortified settlements and high mountain fortresses, built on the naturally protected mountain peaks.

The accidental findings and materials from the excavations testify that not only in the old Iron Age, but also in the new Iron Age, Thracian tribes inhabited the region. The population's occupation were not only the stock-breeding and agriculture, but also the pottery and metal-working the life was especially intensive during the period of 5th - 3th centuries BC. In that time the region was in the boundaries of the Odrisse state, expanding to the north of the Hemus Mountains, during the reign of the Thracian tsar Kotis I (382 - 359 BC).

The archaeological investigations of the mounds show that the Thracians Mountains had a knowledge of the both ways of funeral ceremonies - the burial of the dead body and the burning of the corpse. The cremation had been held on the place where the mound was built later, or on a special place, usually used for that ritual. The graves were roughly built of crashed stones and covered with a small stone pile, over which they piled up earth to form the mound. The burial practice connected with its architectural building of the mounds, as well as the burial implements are evidence for comparatively high socio-economical and cultural level of the Thracian population, that lived on the northern slopes of the mountain during the first millennium BC.