

A SHRINE TUMULUS OF GREEK PERIOD AT ORGAME-ARGAMUM

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Among the findings having funeral character discovered so far in the tumular necropolis of the Greek city Orgame-Argamum, we can remark a building with outstanding features. The investigation has begun in 1995 and is still active, the research being not yet complete. It is about a tumulus with the diameter of almost 40 m, preserved in the central zone as high as 2.2 m. A stone construction having a truncated-cone shape, as wide as 5 m at the basis and having a height of maximum 1.75 m is marking a pyre with the entire surface burnt, with the diameter of about 8 m. In the central part of the pyre there was the pit for burning, dug in the stone, having an irregular rectangular shape, filled with earth mixed with ash, burnt bones, pieces of coal and ceramics fragments. On the edge of the pit, outside this one, there was the place for burning the offerings of animals (sheeps, goats) and birds, extended on an area with the diameter of about 0.80 m. The surface of the pyre was marked by several oak logs, arranged accordingly to a circular shape, under which there were laid the offerings in Chios and Samos amphoras, a cup with bands of Greek-Oriental origin, a hand-made vase, oinochoai, etc. These findings are dated for the last years of the 7th century BC and the first ones of the 6th century BC. Outside the tumulus there was a ditch dug in the stone, as wide as 2 - 4 m, in which there were laid during the periods of time many types of offerings.

The offerings are not spectacular, but cannot be neglected for the signification of the construction. The amphoras, having the origin in Thasos, Chios, Mende, Sinope, Pontic Heraclea, as well as the arrow tips, a coin from Alexander the Great, burnt animal bones, are the dominant pieces. Although this material is not yet taken from the excavation site, prepared and analyzed, we can remark its focus in the second half of the 4th century BC and the beginning of the 3rd. The outstanding quantity of pottery and its chronological framing certify the practice of a specific ritual by a much larger community, during a long period of time. Such a ritual can be associated with the *cult of the hero*, obviously different from the rules applied within the usual cult of the deaths, consisting in bringing the offerings to a person recently deceased.

In the Greek world, the Homeric poems already certify a knowledge of the hero's cult, which proves the previousness of the rite. The current rite, presented in Iliad (see Patrocle's death), consists in the complete burning, along with an inventory selected accordingly to certain rules of the specific ritual. The ashes were placed in an urn and/or under a tumulus. In the Homeric tradition such monuments were dedicated to a *hérô*s, term which was assigned to a nobleman or to a chief, whose tomb (heroon) would be the object of a specific ritual practiced along many centuries.