

### **TUMULI AND TOMBS AND TEMPLES IN THE VALLEY OF THE THRACIAN RULERS**

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The famous Kazanlak tomb was discovered in 1944. Around ten years later the capital of the Odrysian king Seuthes III - Seuthopolis - got localized within this region and two domed tholos tombs were found out nearby. In 1965 Liudmil Getov excavated yet two of them (close to Kran and Maglizh), featured by rectangular premises and remainders from wall-paintings. After 1992 the excavations I directed under the Thracian Expedition for Tumuli Investigations (TEMP) brought to new life yet eleven monumental and less impressive stone and brick-built tumular constructions. Enough grounds have been collected to call the Kazanlak valley (known yet as the Rose Valley) the Valley of the Thracian Rulers. All over the Thrace there is no other place with such a great number of imposing archaeological and architectural monuments located on such a small surface. There are more than one thousand tumuli within the Valley. About one hundred of them have been investigated through archaeological methods and some hundreds of them have been excavated by treasure-hunters. But there are yet hundreds of not excavated embankments, some of them measuring more than 10 m in height and comprising beyond any doubt some more arguments to support the name of the Valley of the Thracian Rulers is well grounded.

Some dozens of the tumuli poses some king's features - great sizes (some of them measure more than 20 m in height), impressive architectural monuments, double-axes (*labryses*), gold finger-rings, silver *phiae*, sets

of silver decorations for horse trappings, burials and sacrifices of horses, pectorals, etc. Obviously rulers, who used to rule the Thracians from the Odrysian tribe between the sixth and the second centuries BC, or some of their high-born adherents, have been buried there.

Some of the tumular architectural constructions are primitive; they have been filled up after their first time use and practically they are plain tombs. Others (eight from our excavations and three from previous ones) represent impressive architectural monuments with facades, decoration elements, and traces from reconstructions, doors, *dromoi* and indisputable marks from multiple entries and have been used over several decades and even centuries.

They are so closely related to the cult that they do have to be specified as tumular temples where religious ceremonies took place and representatives of the highest Thracian aristocracy (including kings-priests) got buried.

The name of the Valley of the Thracian Rulers was proposed with some risks four or five years ago but over the years we find more and more evidences which support it.