

## RULER'S TUMULAR BURIALS FROM THE KAZANLAK REGION IN BULGARIA

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The Kazanlak valley is located almost in the geometric center of Bulgaria - between the Balkan range southern slopes and the Sredna Gora mountain northern ones.

Some dozens of graves have been found out during excavations, carried out over the last year under the direction of Georgi Kitov, into more than one hundred tumuli. Seven among them might be relevant to ruler's burials - those in the following tumuli: Malkata Mogila, Ostrusha, Sashova Mogila, Leshnikova Mogila, Zareva Mogila, Sineva Mogila and Petrunova Mogila. The burials have been performed into different types of constructions: in pits (Petrunova Mogila and Sineva Mogila); on platforms situated at different levels of the embankment (Zareva Mogila and Leshnikova Mogila); into primitive rough-stone tombs (Malkata Mogila); in a tomb-mausoleum (Sashova Mogila) and in a temple dedicated to the Thracian god Sabazios (Ostrusha). The selection of the burials has been made on the basis of the existence of at least one of the following ruler's and priest's insignia - a double-axe (*labrys*), a signet-ring or a *phiale*. Both signet-rings and *phialae* have always been made of precious metals (gold, silver), clay *phialae* being not taken into consideration. Also, burials without fragments from funeral wreaths, decorated with small clay bolls, have not been considered, regardless of the fact such objects have been found out in other places within the Valley of the Thracian Rulers, this name being given to the Kazanlak valley in the literature (Kazanlak tomb and Sarafova Mogila tumulus). Unfortunately, for the time being gold wreaths (an indisputable king's insigne, known from both written sources and pictures on finger-rings) have not been discovered within the above mentioned region. Three tumular burials comprising fragments from gold and silver collars on an iron pad are just mentioned (Tsivatkova Mogila, Goliama Arsenalka, Shushmanets) as the fragments are quite small both in size and number and the full restoration of the objects is not possible. The description of the burials includes the entire funeral inventory in order to give a better idea on the context where the ruler's insignia have been found out.

The monumental tumular constructions, found recently within the Valley, are not considered as a determinative sign for king's and priest's burials. Some of the architectural monuments had been used as tombs for rulers and higher Odrysian aristocrats over the late stages of their utilization - before they got finally sealed with embankments. But all monumental constructions had been *heroa* and temples, dedicated to different Thracian gods. This is proved by their impressive internal decorations and by the *dromoi* some of them had to facilitate the multiple visits.

The seven ruler's burials are dated from the end of the fifth to the end of the third centuries BC, some of the attributes having an earlier dating (the finger-ring from the Malkata Mogila tumulus - mid fifth century BC). As it is few probable that such number of Thracian kings had been buried over such a short period on a relatively limited territory, I take the liberty to presume that higher aristocrats had been buried there too. I dare say they had been gifted with some king's attributes for special merits in their life time (e.g. a *phiale*) and lately these object were rested in their graves as grave goods. Taking into consideration only part of the tumuli in the Kazanlak valley have been excavated, in the future it is much probable to find another double-axes, signet-rings, *phialae*, collars and - why not - *rhyton*-s, indisputable ruler's insignia, known from both written and archaeological sources from all over the Thrace.