

## TUMULUS GRAVES IN APOLLONIA PONTICA. OLD STUDIES AND NEW QUESTIONS

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**Summary.** The paper examines the existing hypotheses on the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC tumulus graves on the territory of Apollonia Pontica by means of a comparative analysis of evidence from the necropolises of the city as well as from other Greek colonies. The offered in the study new approach considers the phenomenon as a result of essential socio-cultural changes in the city resulting into a mutual infiltration of the Thracian non-literary and literary (Homeric) concepts and their transformations creating new “hybrid” religious models within the polis society.

The discussions on the character, specificity and similarities of the tumulus graves located either in the inland, or along the Black sea littoral are far not new (a general survey in Proceedings 1994, 1996; Simion G., V. Lungu (eds.) 2000). The situation with the tumular grave structures on the territory of the Greek city Apollonia Pontica is alike (see in Шкорпил, К., Шкорпил Х. 1890-1891, 125 - 126; Seure 1924; Цанева 1986; Tzaneva 1985; Zaneva 1986; Fless 2002, 70 – 75; Oppermann 2004, 87 – 88; Панайотова 1994; Damyanov 2005). Unfortunately, the incomplete publications which contain only primary information however cause some difficulties in reconstructing and interpreting the archaeological context.

Following the conclusions of the studies on the problem which are based in general on Seure’s article from 1924 (Seure 1924) and the subsequent research on the terrain, the tumulus graves are situated on the surrounding hills St. Elias, St. Marina, Senetudias, Mapes and on Kolokita promontory (Панайотова 1994, 81. Panayotova 2003, 124). Their chronological span covers the period between the end of the 5<sup>th</sup> and the middle of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC. (Филов 1913, 316; Младенова 1963 в: Аполония, 291; Цанева, Димитров 1976, 5 – 8; Tzaneva 1985, 356; Damyanov 2005, 215-216). With regard their construction, there are stone crepidae and/or stone heaping attested as supporting elements of the embankment (Tsaneva 1985, 356 – 357). In the periphery of some tumuli traces of ritual practices (bones, fireplaces, ceramic sherds) and circles or groups of amphorae were evidenced (Seure 1924, 328 f; Tsaneva 1985, 356; Damyanov 2005, 215 – 216 fig. 2). The complexes contain more than one, most commonly inhumation burials dating back to different periods and the funeral offerings – lekythoi, alabaster, bronze mirrors, strigilae etc. do not differ from those found in the flat necropolis (Seure 1924, 29 – 31; Цанева, Димитров 1976, 5-8; Tsaneva 1985, 352 – 359; summarized information in Oppermann 2004). This general view outlines the first question about the similarities between the tumular and the flat necropolises and respectively their specific character. In this respect, one of the points at issue concerns their location – around and/or outside the city, which is the main reason to conclude that they might have been border markers of the flat necropolis, being in connection with the encompassing settlements (Панайотова 1994, 81; Panayotova 2003, 124) which were annexed to the polis at the beginning of the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC (Димитров 1974, 54; Caneva 1982, 200; обобщение у Giuzelev 2003, 110 – 111 with references; Oppermann 2004, 88).

This statement, however, contradicts with the map drawn by Seure, which shows the existence of tumuli both on the surrounding hills and in the coastal strip between the quarter

Harmanite, Kalfata locality and the contemporary cemetery (fig. 1) (Seure 1924, pl. 87). The rapid changes of the sandy terrain (see Венедиков 1963, 8-9) are unfortunately a circumstance which eliminates the chances to establish an eventual connection between some of the tumuli marked in Seur's map and the recently excavated grave structures in the flat necropolis in Kalfata locality, which are typologically similar to those in the burial mounds. And yet, some of the latest studies on the problem (not mentioning any particular reasons) agree a priori on the fact that tumulus graves do exist in the flat necropolis as well (Tzaneva 1985, 358; Damyanov 2005, 216).

There are, however, several structures in the flat necropolis which could evidence this phenomenon, for instance, the round or ellipsoidal stone enclosures (crepidae?) attested in different years of excavations (Венедиков 1963 в: Аполония, 35; Панайотова 1998, 20; Panayotova 1998, 98 who erroneously applies the term "*peribolos*"). (fig. 2 and 3). Furthermore, graves dressed with stone slab occur both in the actual necropolis and under the tumuli (Nedev, Panayotova 2003, p. 129). The most expressive examples, though, are the graves, surrounded by circles, semicircles or groups of amphorae which are common both for the tumuli and for the necropolis in Kalfata locality (Венедиков 1963 в: Аполония, 40 – 42, обр. 24 – 25, Цанева, Димитров 1976; Tzaneva 1985, p. 352 – 359; Zaneva 1986, p. 166 – 173; Fless 2002, p. 69; for general overview see last in Damyanov 2005, p. 214 – 221) (fig. 4-6).

This briefly sketched situation brings the statement of the clearly outlined demarcation between the flat and the tumular necropolises (Панайотова 1994, p. 81. Panayotova 2003, p. 124) in question. In addition, the circumstances strengthening the doubts are the close proximity of the necropolises, the similarity of the ritual practice, as well as the funeral offerings which one traditionally would refer to as typically Greek, too. All those facts raise the question of the ethnic specificity and attribution of the burials in tumuli and in the necropolis in Kalfata locality. The latter evokes lively debates on the issue which are evident in various publications.

A group of opinions have consolidated around the idea of the strong Thracian aristocracy's influence (Seure 1924, 236 f.), of the Thracian origin of the practice considering the tumuli as providing evidence of a mixed Graeco-Thracian population (Цанева, Димитров 1976; Tzaneva 1985, 352 – 359; Zaneva 1986, 166 – 173). Other authors argue against their ethnic attribution of the tumulus graves pointing out the similarities between them and those in the Kalfata locality (Panayotova 2003, p. 129 – 137), the existence of Greek names and the analogies with their counterparts in Macedonia, Greece and Asia Minor (Fless 2002, p. 73 – 74 with references). This is the main argument for the conclusion that the tumulus graves are a result of the "process of acculturation" which took place on the territories of the Greek poleis along the Black sea coast (Oppermann 2004, 95).

In fact, all the above mentioned opinions follow more or less the modern anthropologists' theory of the "acculturation" process, presuming the independent existence of autonomous, monolithic culture units. As long as they are not able to provide sufficient explanation of the practices in question, I tend to refer to one recent view considering the so called acculturation as a phenomenon, which occurs when groups of individuals with different cultures come into continuous first hand contact with subsequent changes in the original cultural patterns of either of both groups" (Redfield, Linton, Herskovits 1936, 148 - quotation in Hall 2002, 104 – 111, Antonaccio 2003; Guldager Bilde 2006).

An example for this case is a very particular phenomenon – the practice of placing amphorae in groups or in circles on the base of the tumulus construction (for interpretation see Фол 2002, p. 99; general information in Fless 2002, pp.75, 82 – 83; last in Damyanov 2005, pp. 214 – 223), which is attested in a limited area of Apollonia Pontica, Histria, Olbia, Orgame, Nimphaeon and Pantikapaeon. A view which has most recently been exposed rejects any indigenous influence (Thracians, Skythians or Sindae) on the tumulus graves with circles of

amphorae (Damyanov 2005, p. 214 – 223). The author argues the purely Greek character of the necropolises in question and explains this “non-normative practice” as an idea “taken from the heroic epos”, while the reason for its distribution is said to be in the close contact with the aristocracy of those poleis (Damyanov 2005, p. 221 – 222).

This conclusion, which follows in general the statement of P. Alexandrescu and A. Avram concerning the tumulus graves in Histria (Alexandrescu 1990, 47-90; Alexandrescu 1994, 15-32; Avram 2003, 18ff), is far from being beyond doubt. Without being able to question the erudition of at least one group of Apollonians or the popularity of the Homeric poems during the whole antiquity, it is quite implausible to assume that this “non-normative” practice occurred because of an innovative fashion in the 4<sup>th</sup> century, based on the spontaneous impulse of the citizens to read the epos and consequently to start to identify themselves with the Homeric heroes.

There is one more doubtful point which is evident in the use of the definition “poleis aristocracy” referring to the political situation in the West Pontic city during the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC. Despite the scarce data of the political structure of the city (see last in Tsetschladze 2006, xxviii – xlii), Nawotka’s arguments for the existence of an oligarchic society in most of the Pontic cities even until the 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C. (Nawotka 1997) seem to be rather an overstatement. The social differentiation in Apollonia at that time is however beyond doubt, which is testified by the occurrence of separate grave plots in the necropolis from the so called *peribolos* type from the late 5<sup>th</sup> century on (Венедиков 1963 в: Аполония, р. 43, обр. 26; Panayotova 2003, p. 127-128; Недев, Панайотова АОР, 2006, р. 242). Their function as a demonstration of the belonging of the deceased to a particular social group should be associated with this of the tumuli as grave markers in many places in Greece and Asia Minor (Kurtz, Boardman 1971, pp. 105 – 106, Morris 1987, 152-153; about the tumuli in Greece and in Asia Minor see Eckert 1998 with references). As evidence in support of this statement is one of the finds from a tumulus excavated by K. Skorpil, which represents a copper chest with silver decoration and with an inscription “from the *demos* of the Apollonians” to a person with the epithet “μακροχεβρον”. Notwithstanding that the latter is single evidence compared with the conventional funeral inventory of the tumuli; Opperman considers it indicating a burial complex of a prominent Apollonian citizen (Oppermann 2004, p. 88).

As to the construction of the tumulus graves and to the performed rituals, it is beyond doubt that they demonstrate, to a certain extent, the archaic features of a “Homeric type” rituality (Damyanov 2005, pp. 222 – 223; for an eventual influence of the Pythagorean philosophy see in Русева 2000, 71 ff). It is however quite unconvincing to explain their occurrence in the Pontic apoikia with some kind of literary (epic) influence in the light of the recently published debates on the interrelations between the epic texts and some early funeral practices attested in aristocratic burials in Greece (Antonacio 1993, pp.49-52; Antonacio 1995, pp.252-264; Eckert 1998, Kap. 4; Morris 2000, p.235; Fol V. 2005, p. 68, Фол В. 2007, pp. 227 ff.).

Looking into the known archaeological counterparts of the Apollonian tumuli, the earliest examples of this type are the late 6<sup>th</sup> –early 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C. complexes on the Crimean peninsula (Цветаева 1957, 235). According to Tsvetaeva, the earliest tumuli were a result of traditions adopted from the metropolises, while the classical tumuli were considered as influenced by the neighboring Scythian culture (Цветаева 1957, 250; about the tumuli in Asia Minor see Eckert 1998, Kap. 3). This view was to some extent accepted by Fless but with certain corrections. In her study on the phenomenon she emphasizes the role of the Asia Minor inland and the transformation of traditions after their adoption in the new settlements. Finally, she concludes that in those “peripheral areas” there is not any distinction between Greeks and Barbarians, at least in the sphere of the so called dead cult (Fless 2002, 82 – 83).

This briefly outlined discussion on the character of similar phenomena clearly illustrates the difficulties to approach the issue of their ethnic attribution. The authors’ arguments for the

Thracian or respectively for the Greek characteristics of the Apollonian tumulus graves are based either on the “purely Greek character” of the grave goods, or on the unquestionable analogies of their construction and rituality as well with their counterparts in the Thracian inland (Fless 2002, p. 75, Oppermann 2004, 95 with references). Another argument in support of the latter is that the period of occurrence of the tumuli around Apollonia Pontica (the second-third quarter of the 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C.) coincides with the existence of some newly attested features of the grave inventory (Thracian type of fibulae) and of the funerary practices in the flat necropolis. These facts were interpreted as evidence of a certain ethnic change in the population’s structure and penetration of Thracian elements into the city (Венедиков и Иванов 1963 in АПОЛОНИЯ, pp. 271, 346; for arguments against this interpretation see Панайотова 1994, p. 153; Панайотова 1998, pp. 14 – 15; Panayotova 2003, p. 130 ).

The survey on the results of the archaeological research and the conclusions, offered in different publications, provide an opportunity of re-approaching the tumulus graves around Apollonia Pontica beyond the attempts at their ethnic attribution. In this sense it seems more reasonable to regard the phenomenon as a manifestation of the processes of exchange of concepts and ritual behavior in the interactive zone between Southeastern Thrace and Asia Minor and hence, as a result of a multi-level synthesis of merging components. This complexity itself causes many difficulties in distinguishing and attributing the particular elements as it was shown in the case of the Crimean tumuli and in the light of the conclusion that there is certain uniformity of the funeral practices in the interactive zones of the apoikias (Fless 2002, 82 – 83). It is also reasonable to complement our understanding of these phenomena by means of arguments in the more general context of the processes taking place in such type of “cosmopolitan” agglomerations as the Greek colonies which may not differ essentially from their modern counterparts.

This starting point creates an opportunity to give an alternative explanation of the territorial and structural changes in the necropolises of Apollonia Pontica and the newly-invented ritual elements, considering them as a manifestation of not simply quantitative, but of a qualitative alteration of the city’s socio-demographic structure.

Regardless of the scarce prosopographic evidence which could outline the socio-demographic picture and the rate of the eventual hellenization of the city population (about the presence of Thracian names see in Михайлов 1972, pp. 265 – 267; compare also Бешевлиев 1988 pp. 5-15 about Odessos, see the summary in Petersen 2004, 9 – 10), it is beyond doubt that the demographic changes are stimulated by the economic progress in the city from the end of the 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C. and later (Венедиков 1963 в: АПОЛОНИЯ, pp. 344 – 346) resulting in influx of new settlers and annexation of several adjacent settlements and of new territories to the polis *hora* (Giuzelev 2003, pp. 110 – 111, Гюзелев 2004).

Apart from the statements considering the economic factors as an indirect source, the analysis of the epigraphically attested personal names is of crucial importance to exploring the demographic situation in Apollonia Pontica. Unfortunately, reliable statistics is possibly expected only after the complete publication of the epigraphic materials whose number has increased after the intensive archaeological excavation during the last decades (see the first publications in Венедиков, Велков 1963, в: АПОЛОНИЯ pp. 325 – 329, Mihailov IGBulg. I., for some newly discovered inscriptions see recently in Giuzelev 2002; Giuzelev 2006).

It is a matter of fact that the number of the Greek (Ionian) names is predominant. At the same time however there are single personal patronymic and names attested in the late 5<sup>th</sup> and early 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C. inscriptions which were considered belonging to the Thracian prosopography (Mihailov IGBulg.I, N 426, 430, 438, 440, 441; Михайлов 1972, p. 264 supra 42). This fact was interpreted as evidence of the existence of intermarriages and mixed population in the city and in the hinterland, as well – a hypothesis which is supported by the

indirect references in the ancient written sources (Иванов 1963 In: Аполлония, p. 271; Венедиков 1963, p. 346, Михайлов 1972, pp. 261 – 265).

A similar point of view is generally represented in the recent issues concerning the debates on the phenomenon of the “ethnicity” in the Greek colonies (Hall 2002, Antonaccio 2005, Guldager-Bilde 2006). Halls’ arguments for the significant role of the intermarriages, serving both the demographic stabilization and integration of the not numerous groups of Greek *apoikists* and at the same time as functioning to cement alliances between Greek and non-Greek indigenous elites, are reasonable, and furthermore, available in the case of Apollonia Pontica, even when they are based on examples taken from Magna Graecia and Asia Minor (Hall 2002, pp. 97 – 103).

In the light of these conclusions the statement of the existence of clearly differentiated and isolated civil communities of Greek settlers who lived in “Barbarian surrounding”, sounds at least out-of-date. Unfortunately this tendency is present also in some modern Bulgarian publications, which were recently criticized by Petersen: “In the latest publication by Nedev&Panayotova from 2003 there is a very clear tendency to downplay the cultural complexity and interaction and focus instead on the “Greekness” of the polis and its relations with Athens and other major centres in the Hellenic world. The meeting of cultures is presented here as a hellenization of the local population rather than a more sophisticated perception of interaction (Petersen 2004, 6); see also Дамянов 2002, 119 – 125). Therefore the standpoint, already formulated by Fol more than 15 years ago, which considers the occurrence of new socio-demographic groups in the zones of the Greek coastal settlements as a result of a long-standing multipartite process of re-structuring society under the influence of various factors, seems more acceptable (Фол 1995, 35). A similar approach has recently been represented in Guldager-Bilde’s excerpt, which is based again on examples mainly from some Nort-Pontic apoikias and Magna Graecia as well: „It must suffice to say that the example of Black Sea eschatology demonstrates the creative potential of the meeting – and mixing – of cultures, and the creation of new hybrid cultures.” (Guldager-Bilde 2006, 14)

Thus it seems appropriate to consider the new elements in the ritual behaviour as indicative for the essential socio-cultural changes in Apollonia Pontica in the course of the late 5<sup>th</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> centuries B.C., which lead to certain infiltrations and uniformity of the religious (and civic) practices of different population’s groups. The consolidation of new socio-demographic groups which were not defined on the basis of the ethnic characteristics but rather as bearers of a new culture of syncretism, may have been the obvious reason for reclaiming the new grave plots in the Kalfata locality together with the increasing number of the population and the “peaceful co-existence with the Thracian hinterland” (according to Panayotova 2003, p.126).

Concerning the phenomenon of the tumulus graves dating to the same period, the explanation should be searched in the light of the above given arguments and within the syncretism between the ethnic (non-literary concept) of the aristocratic burial (for general conclusions see Китов 1993, 39 – 80; Китов 1994, 46–76; Fol 1994, 15 – 17; Китов 1999, 47–56; Kitov 2004, 239-265) and the literary elaborated Homeric view of σῆμα as a monument of the dead hero (for analysis of these terms see last in Eckert 1998, Kap. 4.1.1.), which were transformed into insignia of a civic honor within the poleis culture.

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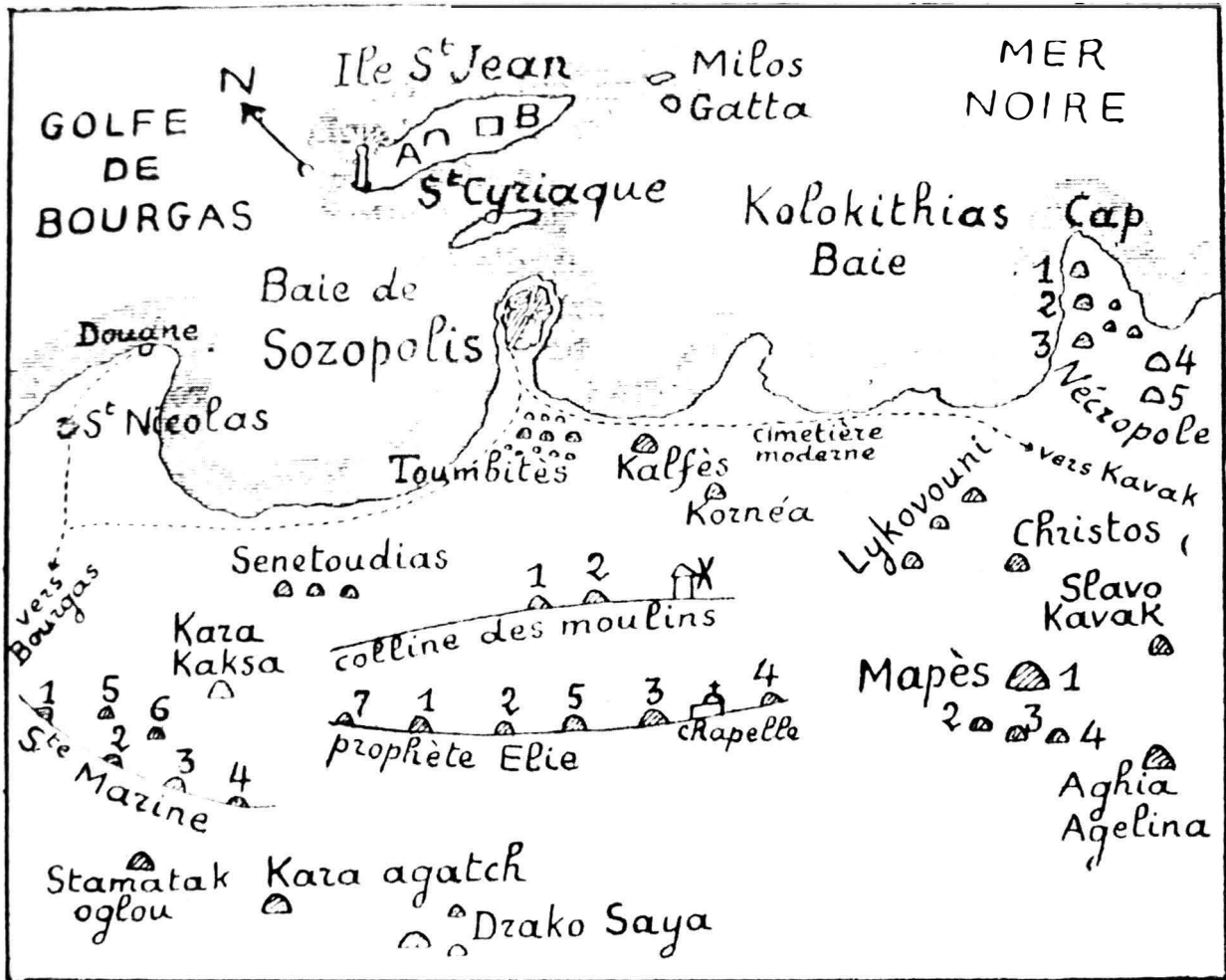
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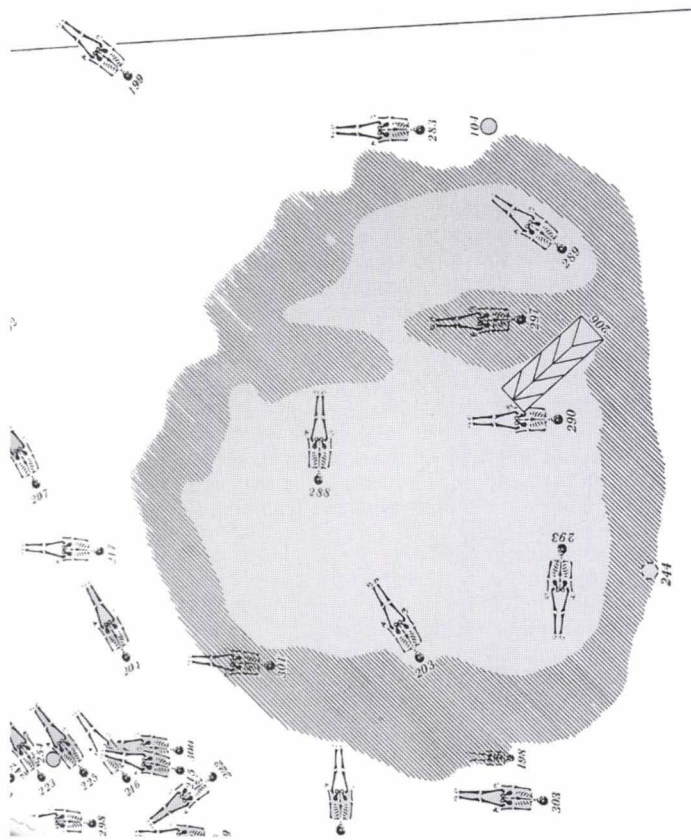
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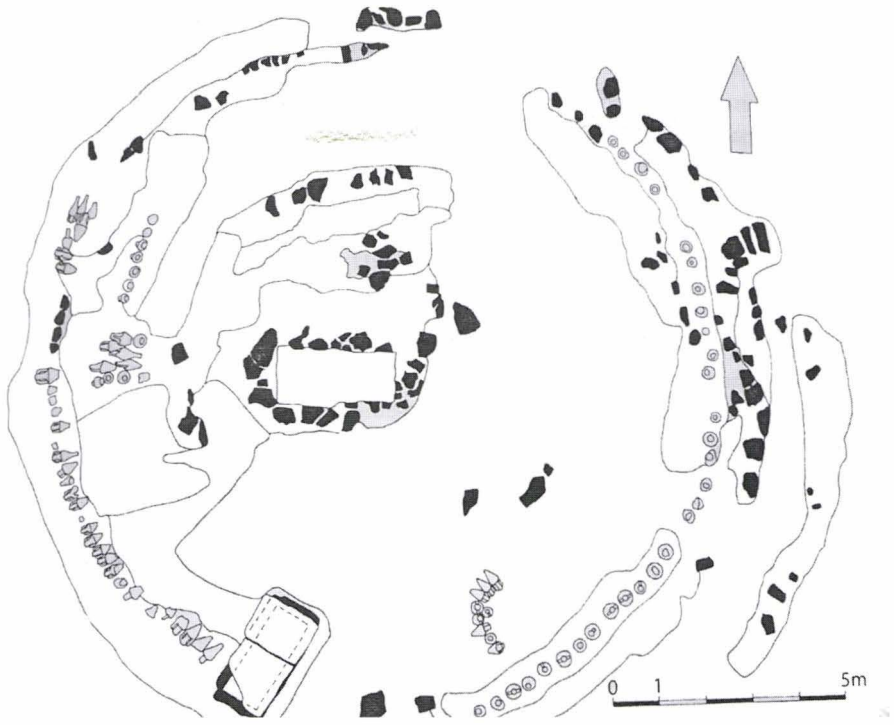
Map of the tumulus graves in Sozopol (after Seure 1924, pl. 87)



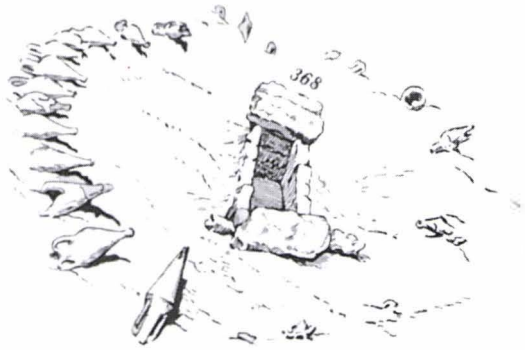
2. Plan of the grave plot with an enclosure wall and ritual fireplace (drawing after Венедиков 1963, 31, обр. 20)



2. Plan of the grave plot with an enclosure wall and ritual fireplace (drawing after Венедиков 1963, 31, обр. 20)



5. План на могилата на н. Колокита (по Damyanov 2005, 215)



4. Гроб, ограден с кръг от амфори, разкопки 1949 (по Венедиков 1963, 42, обр. 25)



6. Амфори, подредени в дъга, разкопки 1996 г.