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# The Izvorovo Gold. A Bronze Age Tumulus from Harmanli District, Southeastern Bulgaria

## (preliminary report)

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<sup>1</sup> At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, G. Bonchev, and later V. Mikov did a survey on the megaliths of Sakar mountains; the 70s saw several expeditions led by prof. A. Fol and prof. I. Venedikov; in the 90s the Archaeology Department of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" initiated a number of surveys and rescue excavations related to the development of the "Maritsa" highway.

<sup>2</sup> The sanctuary at the Semercheto locality, near the village of Dositeevo, was continuously in use over several centuries in the LBA and the initial EIA (14<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> c. BC) – unpublished excavations of Dr. B. Borislavov; the settlement from the EBA II – EBA III near Mihalich (Stefanova 2005, 178).

<sup>3</sup> The excavation season lasted between 02.06 and 16.08.2008; The team was directed by Dr. Borislav Borislavov (Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski") and doctoral candidate Nadezda Ivanova (NAIM – BAS). The excavations were funded by the National Museum of History.

The Sakar Mountains are periodically put in the spotlight of archaeological interest. As a rule, interest is focused upon the dolmens and the rest of the megalithic monuments dated within the first millennium BC and characteristic of the region<sup>1</sup>. Information on the funerary practices of the preceding Bronze Age, however, is scanty – due not to a genuine paucity in the archaeological record, but to the research agenda. On other types of archaeological sites the EBA and LBA strata are substantial enough to suggest a comparatively extended human habitation of the Sakar Mountains, spanning throughout the Bronze Age<sup>2</sup>.

The tumulus discussed in the present article is situated in the southwestern part of the Sakar Mountains, 4 km southwest of the village of Izvorovo, in the locality of Yorgovi mogili (fig. 1), at an altitude of 229 masl (fig. 2). It is located on the left bank of the river Golyamata reka, on a low, flattened promontory, elongated on the east-west axis, and bordering at steep gulleys to the north and south. In the vicinity of the tumulus, to the west and to the north, almost the entire surface of the promontory yields materials and destructions indicative of a settlement, whose surface finds, put it in the Roman period (2<sup>nd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> c. AD.) A necropolis of low, stone-enclosed tumuli, among which two more prominent, lays some three-four hundred meters to the northeast of the tumulus. The pottery collected from looter's ditches in the necropolis suggests it was contemporary to the above mentioned Roman settlement. Our team was attracted to the hitherto reported mound because of its obvious separation from the Roman necropolis, and because its immersion in the Roman settlement (Бориславов / Иванова 2009, 132-135) strongly supported a very early date for it, since its location is also markedly different from the one preferred for EIA tumuli, which are rather situated on higher elevations and on spots with good visibility.

The dimensions of the mound are as follows: diameter – 27.6 m (N-S), and 25 m (E-W), height 2.40 m. Its southeastern periphery has been eroded by cultivation. Approximately at the ideal center of the embankment, looters have left a crater, measuring 4.30 m (NW-SE), 3.10 m (SW-NE), with an obvious depth of 1.50 m (fig. 3). The excavations on the tumulus recorded three stages of accumulation – one dated to the Bronze Age, and two to the Roman period<sup>3</sup>.

### STRATIGRAPHY AND STAGES OF ACCUMULATION

#### First stage (Bronze Age)

In the Bronze Age, a nearly circular platform (diam. about 25 m) is formed, with gravel foundations, covered with an 8-10 cm layer of packed clay. The gravel

Fig. 1. Sakar Mountains and the village of Izvorovo: location (N. Ivanova).

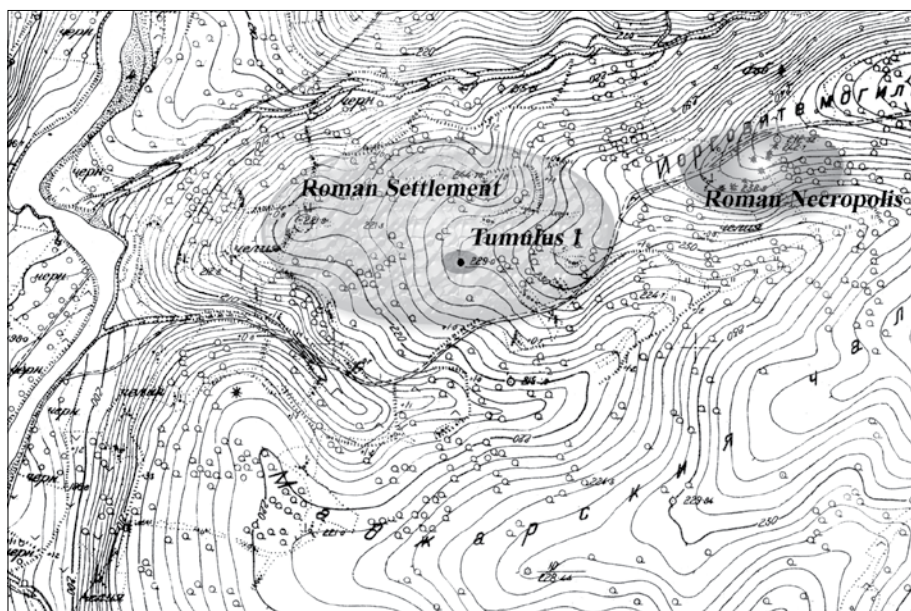
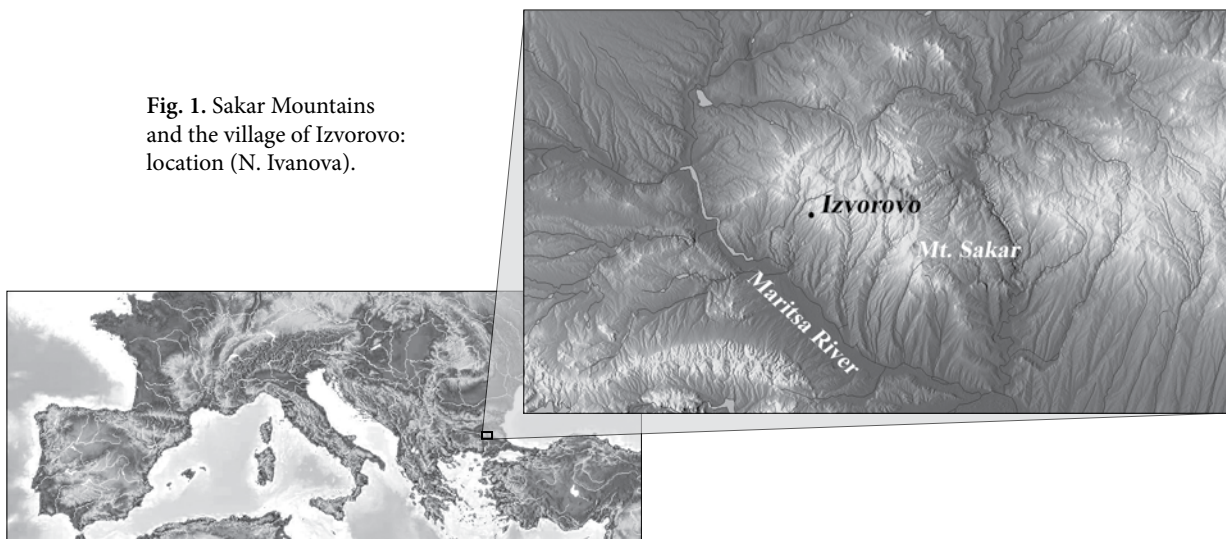


Fig. 2. Location of tumulus 1, Roman settlement and necropolis in the locality of Yorgovi mogili (N. Ivanova).

is both a foundation and drainage placed on top of the red clayish virgin soil<sup>4</sup>. Beneath the gravel, small pieces of charcoal have been noted, which suggests that ritual actions, involving fire, preceded the establishment of the platform.

An oval burial structure was constructed at the center of the packed clay platform (fig. 4). Its base is a stratum of red-grey-dark brown clayish soil, on top of which large stones were arranged. The interior of the foundation is filled with 1-2 rows of stones, mostly quartz – both river boulders and quarried stone, all placed with their flattened side up. Atop the so-formed platform were found the remains of a cremation burial. The incineration of the human remains, however, took place somewhere outside the burial structure. The bones, charcoals, and burial inventory were found dispersed between the stones over an area of 12 sq.m in a 30 to 35 cm thick layer (fig. 5). A looter's ditch (NW-SE 2.25 m and NE-SW 1.20 m) cuts through that layer and reaches all the way into the gravel layer. The area of

<sup>4</sup> Prof. R. Kenderova (Sofia University, Geomorphology department) is of the opinion that the gravel accretion at the base of the mound is caused by intentional human action, not by natural force. I hereby express my gratitude to Prof. Kenderova for her information.

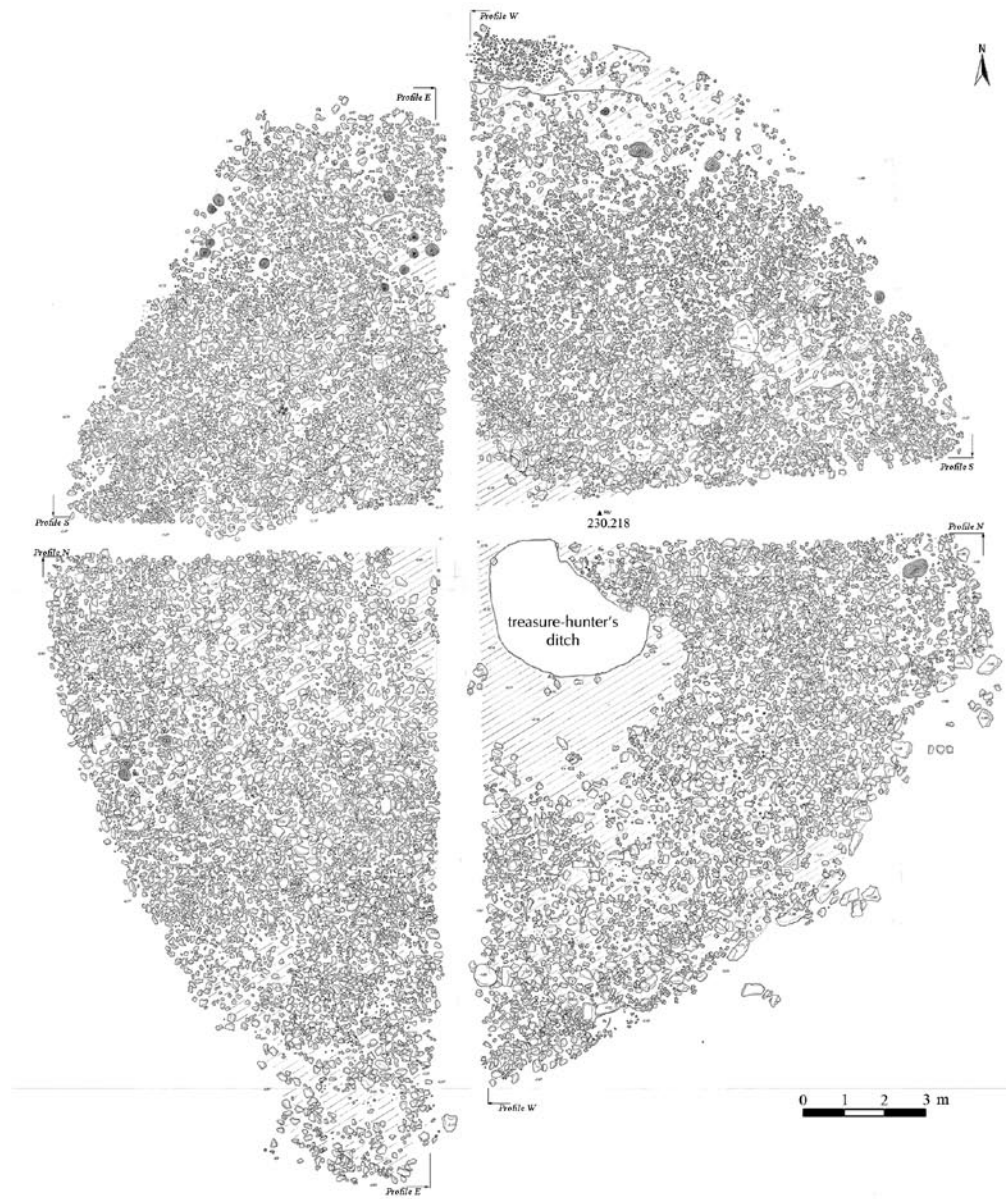


Fig. 3. Tumulus 1:  
stone embankment  
(plan: N. Ivanova).

the looter's ditch was completely stripped of artefacts. West of the looter's ditch a hollow gold object, shaped like a spindle whorl, and decorated with engraved lines (fig. 5/b) was found. It was placed between the stones, and despite the fact that no special space was created for it, the object was not deformed. Around and underneath it, numerous large gold wheat grain-like, and small spherical gold beads were found, part of which were torn or pierced by a sharp object (fig. 5/c). Their position suggests that they were spread over the platform before the larger gold object was placed there.

In the eastern part of the structure, a second hollow gold spindle whorl-like object was found, larger than the first one, and with a decoration of closely spaced engraved lines connecting the two holes (fig. 5/d). Again in the same area large and small gold beads were found. Their concentration, however, was lower than the one encountered in the western half. To the southeast, 1.50 m, a silver

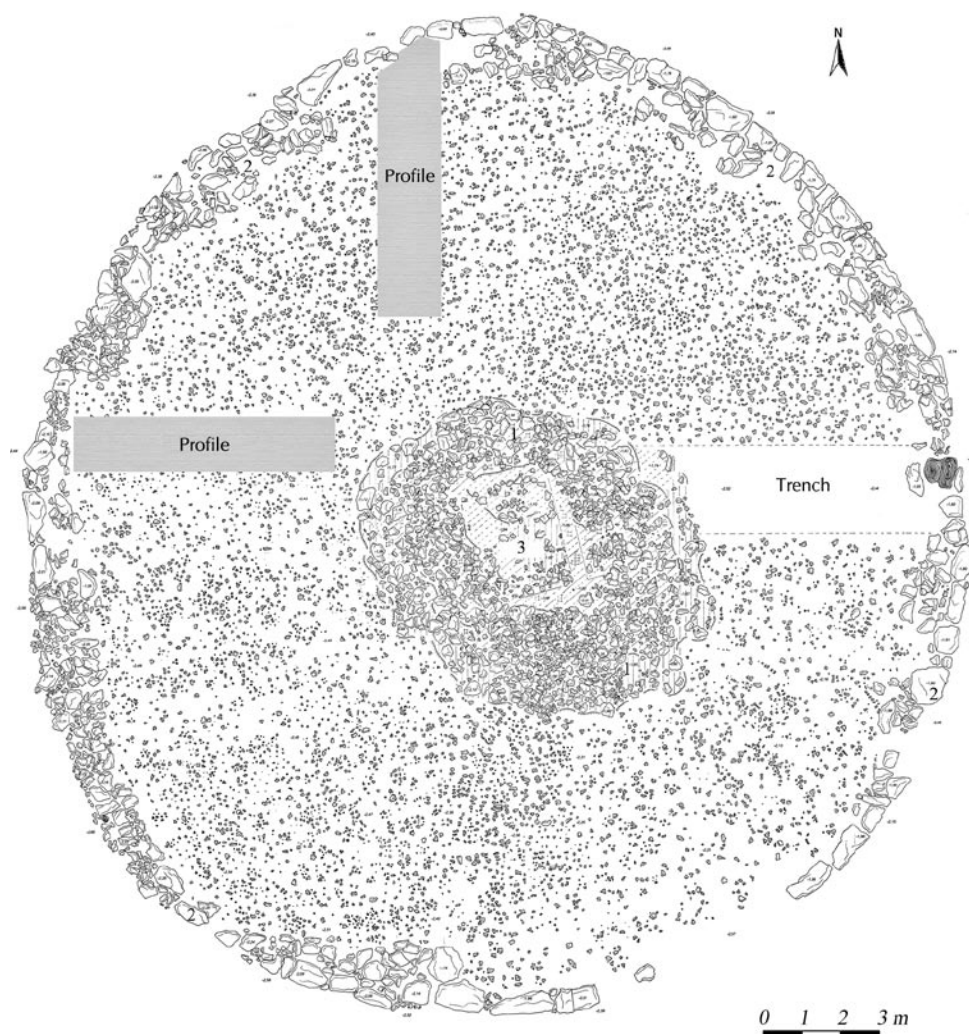
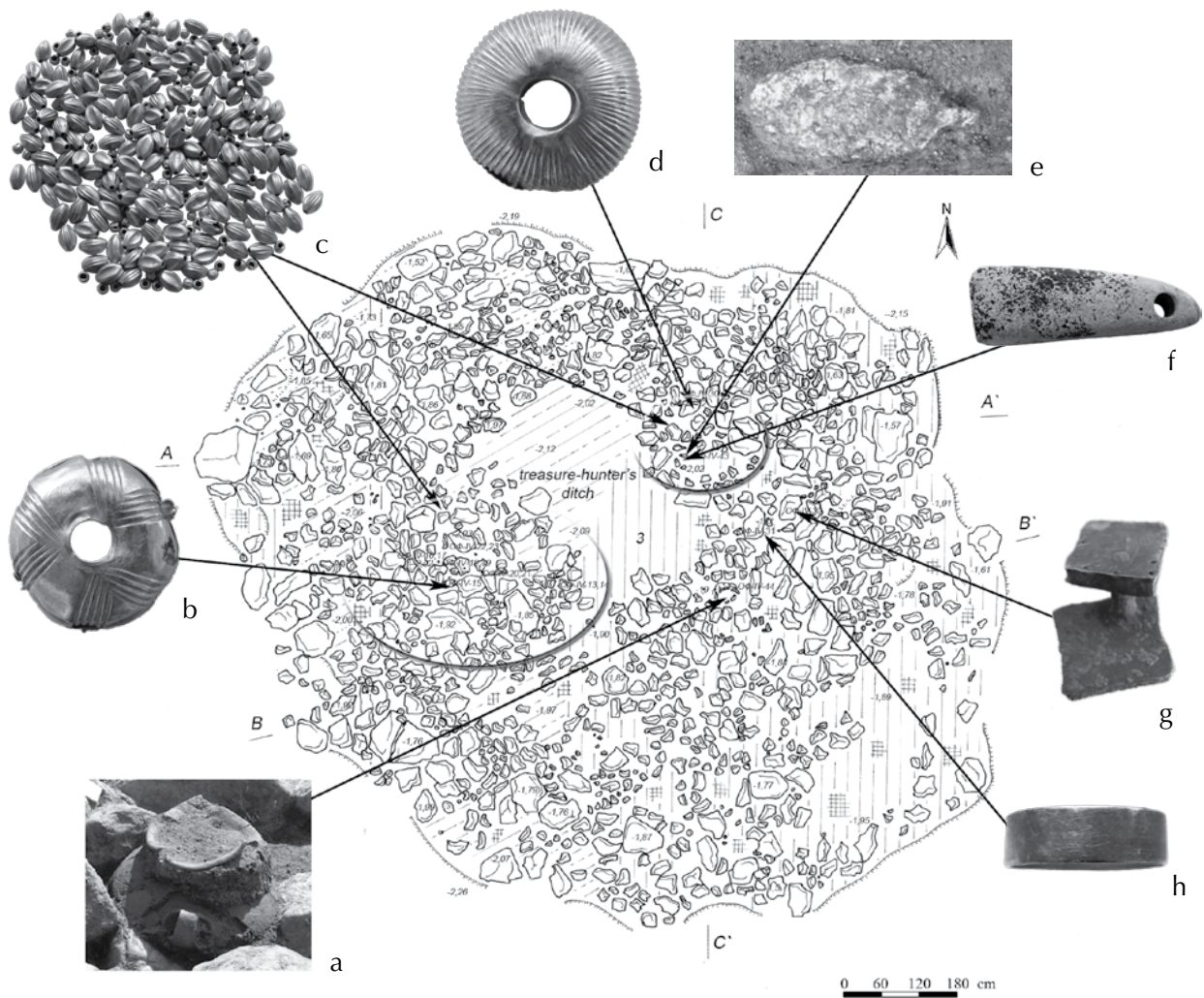


Fig. 4. Burial structure, gravel foundations (BA) and granite *krepis* (RP) (plan: N. Ivanova).

polished-surface ring, made of a flat band (fig. 5/h) was found. It may have been a lining of an organic handle. There were found two rectangular plates – of silver and of gold, firmly bound together with a round silver rivet, in the immediate vicinity. The silver plate has some deposits on its surface, and the gold one has punctured dots on its periphery. The two plates are asymmetrically attached to each other (fig. 5/g).

1.20 m to the west of the silver ring, a set of a bronze razor and a whetstone were found (fig. 5/e, f). Both objects lay directly on the soil, 3.5 cm apart, and were surrounded by medium-sized hewn stones, and covered with a flat stone. In the southeastern part of the structure, 1.40 m south of the razor-whetstone set, a complete ceramic vessel (fig. 5/a), carefully enclosed and covered with stones, was found. We removed the vessel together with its soil content. Its cleaning at the National Historical Museum's lab produced no materials, apart from a single small quartz pebble. The vessel resembles an amphora, with two vertical handles on the upper body, two cylindrical knobs evenly distanced from the handles, and decoration of incised hanging triangles enclosing punctuated dots with white paste fill.



**Fig. 5.** Burial structure: location of the findings (N. Ivanova).

<sup>5</sup> The flotation was partly conducted during the excavation season, and partly in a later session, between 28.09 and 09.10.2008. The sieving and inspection of the soil that has been subjected to flotation was completed at the end of November 2008.

The entire volume of the soil from the layer associated with the finds from the burial structure was sieved and subjected to flotation<sup>5</sup>. As a result, human bones, including teeth, leftovers from the cremation, as well as un-burnt vegetable remains (seeds, pits), but most copiously – small spherical gold beads were found.

Atop the layer of stones, between which the artefacts and the cremated remains were dispersed, an embankment of quartz stones was formed, with the stones at the periphery being markedly larger (figs. 6, 7). The soil between the periphery stones is grayish-red clay, while in the central area of the structure there are zones of light-grey and of brown loose soil. In just one spot in the eastern half, between the stones, several fragments of previously broken vessels were located, but as a whole, pottery fragments are an exception. The finished stone structure formed a 1.60 m tall truncated cone, 8 m in diameter (NW-SE) by 6.80 m (NE-SW). The quartz-stone mound is covered by clayish grayish-red soil, resulting in a Bronze Age mound standing 1.80 m high, and with a diameter of 17.20 m N-S, and 19.60 m E-W.

In the southeastern periphery of the Bronze Age mound a very poorly preserved pot of unusually coarse and under-fired clay is placed, decorated with a plastic band in its upper part.

In the stratigraphic profiles the margin of the Bronze Age embankment is clearly distinguishable by a layer of grey color, thicker at the periphery (fig. 8). This grey soil is topsoil formed during the 2000 years gap between the formation of the original mound, and the construction of the secondary mound. No secondary graves or other kinds of intrusions into the original embankment datable to those 2000 years were detected.

#### Second stage of formation (Roman Period)

Possibly during 2<sup>nd</sup> c. AD, around the Bronze Age burial mound a settlement developed. The embankment was enclosed by a granite gneiss *krepiš*, 23 m in diameter north-south, and 21.50 m east-west. Blocks of irregular shape, with an average size of 0.50 by 0.60 m up to 1.10 x 0.50/0.60 m were used (fig. 4). Loose red soil, collected from the immediate vicinity of the tumulus, was added to the embankment of the earlier mound (fig. 9), and in it iron objects (nails, clamps, hooks), together with a low concentration of wheel-made pottery fragments were encountered. In addition to the above-mentioned finds, a chert sickle blade with traces of extensive use was found<sup>6</sup>. This find suggests that the area around the burial mound was utilized as an agricultural field during the Bronze Age, a hypothesis further strengthened by the total lack of early pottery fragments or other artefacts in the Roman addition to the embankment.

<sup>6</sup> The chert sickle blade was studied and drawn by Stanimira Taneva from the NAIM – BAS.



Fig. 6. Burial structure: view from north (photo: B. Borislavov).

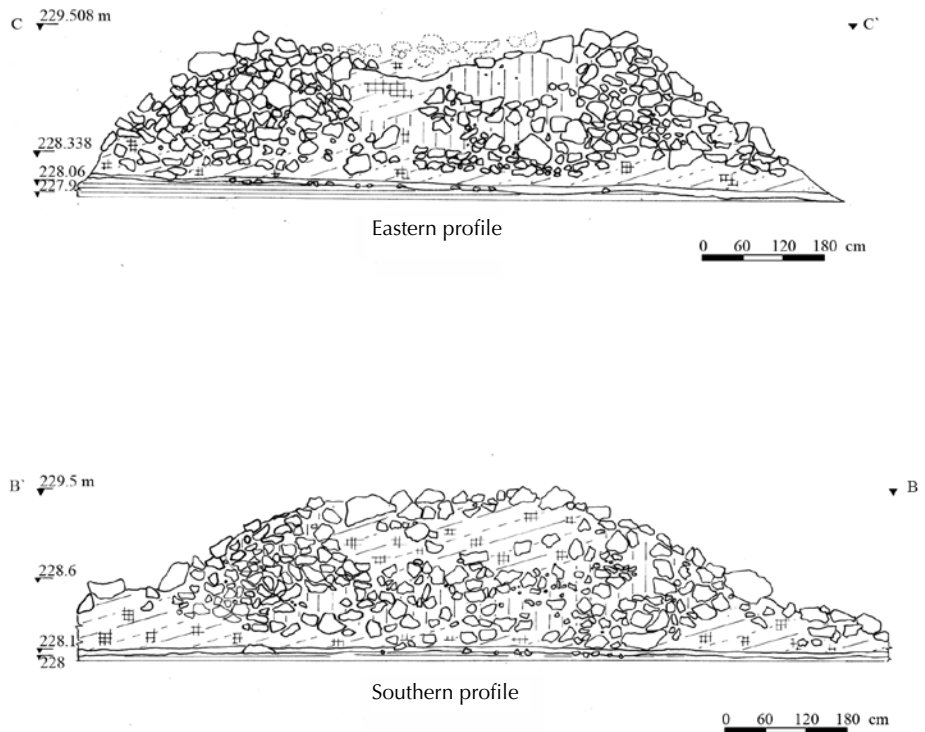


Fig. 7. Burial structure: eastern and southern profiles (N. Ivanova).

At odds with the widely attested in Roman Thrace practice of re-use of earlier mounds as burial monuments, the tumulus by Izvorovo was devoid of Roman intrusions in either the original embankment, or the Roman strata, which points to its special treatment. The most likely explanation seems to be that since it fell within the limits of the settlement, it became necessary to separate what was commonly recognized as burial structure from the realm of the living, as the logical way of showing deference to the ancestors. It could be concluded that in the course of about two hundred years, the mound was a cult place within the settlement limits.

#### Third stage of formation (Late Roman Period)

The stratigraphic observations demonstrate that at a later stage (probably during the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of the 4<sup>th</sup> c. AD), atop the loose red soil embankment, three layers of stones, mixed with grayish-brown earth were added. The stones completely cover the *krepis* and an additional 1 meter area outside the *krepis* (fig. 3, fig. 9, fig. 10). The stones, some of them of a considerable size, were tightly arranged together, according to shape. No stones, just soil were added to the upper-most part of the mound. In between the stones of the three layers, individual iron hobnails/cinti occur, which most likely fell off of the moundbuilder's shoes. Non-descript fragments of wheel-made pottery – cups, pots, pitchers, as well as the incidental *pithoi* fragments, have also been found. A Constantius II (337-361) coin was collected from the uppermost stone layer, as well as an iron knife, and a bronze fibula, shaped as a hare running to the right. The concluding act in the mound building was the placement of four large white quartzite stones in the four cardinal points<sup>7</sup>.

The burial of the *krepis* and the embankment of the Roman period was a one-time organized event, and the size of the embankment suggests that it involved considerable effort and the employment of many people. It is hard to guess the

<sup>7</sup> Our excavations on rock sanctuaries in the region established that large white quartzite stones mark the location of sacrifices, or the spot where the remains of ritual acts were deposited. This observation holds true for LBA, EIA, and Hellenistic age sites, but we are inclined to accept that the situation observed at the Izvorovo mound attests to the preservation of this particular tradition into the 4<sup>th</sup> c. AD (Borislovov, unpublished).



Fig. 8. North-western quarter of the mound: profiles (photo: B. Borislavov).



Fig. 9. Western profile and the burial structure (photo: B. Borislavov).

purpose of this act, but the most logical explanation – minding the timing of the event – seems to be a measure taken against the pagan practices after Christianity was adopted as the official religion of the Roman Empire.

### BRONZE AGE BURIAL

#### Burial structure and mortuary ritual

Several characteristics distinguish the Bronze Age burial under study from the ones known from the region of Thrace, south of Haemus: 1. Cremation; 2. Above-ground burial structure – a platform raised above the ancient ground; 3. Spreading of the ashes and bones, collected from the pyre, over the area of the platform; 4. Versatile and rich burial inventory – gold, silver, bronze, and stone objects, as well as a ceramic vessel. Since we have not yet arrived at an exact date for the burial complex, it is hard to commit to a concrete comparison to roughly contemporary necropolises from the region. Additional problem is posed by the extremely low number of necropolises, which forces us to look for comparanda on a broader chronological scale.

The burial ritual, registered at the tumulus, is cremation, performed outside the burial structure perimeter. Soundings in the vicinity of the tumulus failed to localize the pyre, but we think it is safe to assume that it was not in the immediate neighborhood of the mound. The position of the cremation remains within the burial structure was also unusual. The ashes and the bones were not left in the vessel used to transport them from the pyre, but were spread over the stone platform

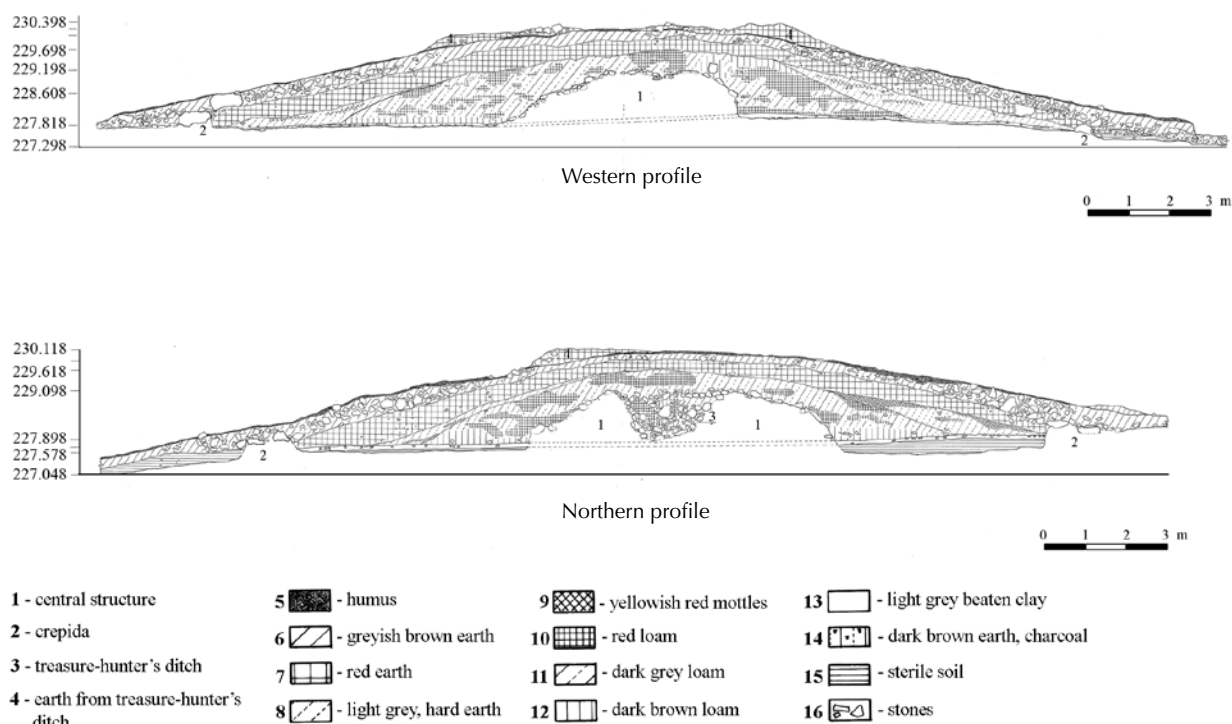


Fig. 10. Tumulus 1, northern and southern profiles (N. Ivanova):

1, 8-14 – Middle Bronze Age; 2, 7 – Roman Period (2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> c. AD); 6 – Late Roman Period (4<sup>th</sup> c. AD).

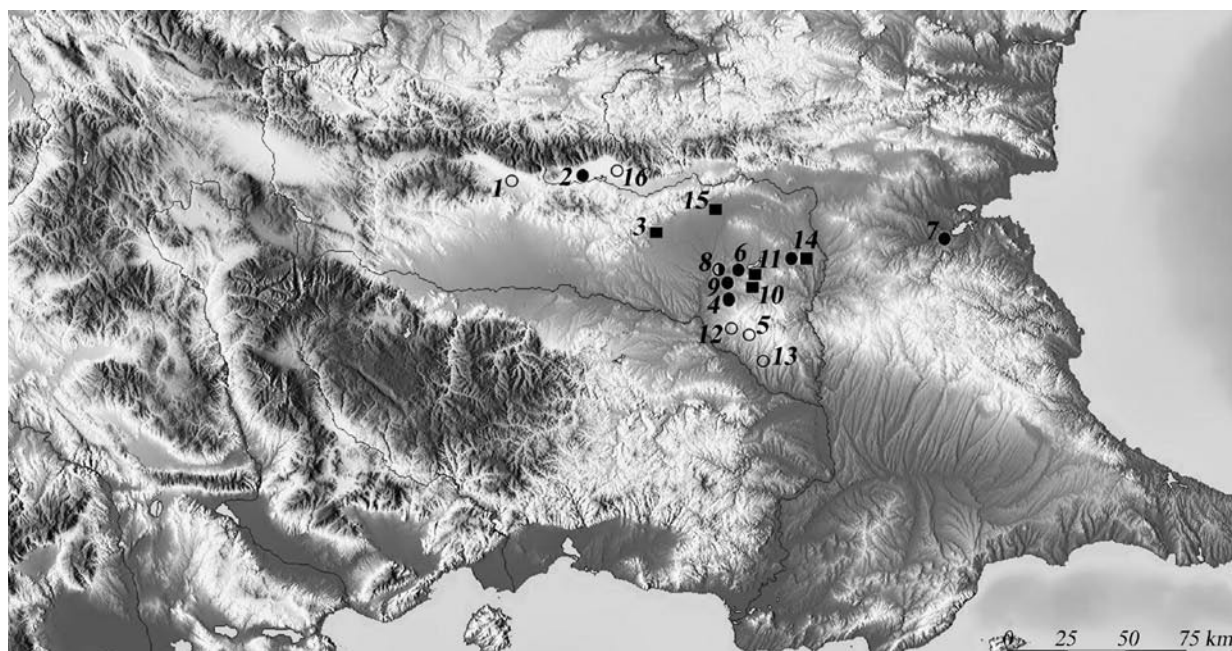
prepared at the center of the burial structure. The position of the human remains suggests that they were spread together with the gold beads.

Bronze Age cremations from Upper Thrace, according to the available data, are rather exceptional. The commonly accepted practice throughout the EBA and the LBA is inhumation. Flat necropolises (Bereketska mound necropolis, Nova Zagora, Polski Gradec), as well as tumulus necropolises (Malka Detelina, Golyama Detelina, Mednikarovo, Ovchartsı, *etc.*) were in use (fig. 11). In the EBA the body is normally placed in a burial pit, dug in the virgin soil, while in the LBA the embankment of earlier mounds is utilized (Панайотов 1989, 57; Менкова 2003, 133).

The only graves dated to the MBA – near the village of Ovchartsı, near the village of Drama, Yambol district, and near Debelt, Burgas district, are also inhumations. However, the three of them are different. The Ovchartsı grave is placed in a pit, dug very deep into the earlier EBA mound embankment; its inventory is rich (gold hair ornaments, bronze needle, belt elements and an imported wheel-made vessel), with parallels pointing to Central Europe and the Aegean-Anatolian world (Александров 2007, 75). The inhumation pit-grave from Drama, is dated on the basis of an undecorated pitcher with analogies in the Monteoru culture in the time of Tei II-III, synchronous to MH III – LH I. (Lichardus *et al.* 2000, 166, Abb. 58). The grave from Debelt, Burgas district, dated to the first half of the second millennium BC, is so far the only analogy for burial on a stone-formed platform raised above the ancient ground. Its placement at the beginning of the MBA is argued on the basis of an amphora with parallels in layers II-III of tell Galabovo (Lestakov 1995, 41).

The closest parallel for the Izvorovo grave, in terms of funerary ritual, is the recently discovered EBA III necropolis by Dabene, Karlovo district (Христов 2005a, 80-81). To-date, Dabene is the second bi-ritual EBA II-III necropolis (featuring cremations and inhumations) on Bulgarian territory, and the first of its kind on the Upper Thrace valley, where cremation is the only burial rite attested during the EBA III (Христов 2005b, 132). As in Izvorovo, the funeral pyres at Dabene were situated outside of the burial structure. Ash and bones from the cremation, mixed with gold objects (mostly items of personal decoration), are found spread over the ancient terrain, covered up by a stone pile. The destruction of the items of personal decoration could be considered introduction of a new practice in the EBA III Thracian burial rites, and the tearing and piercing of gold jewelry (ritual killing) in the Izvorovo tumulus could be seen as a continuation of the practice. I know of no similar practice from the lands outside of Thrace, which could be an argument for the local origin of the custom. Dabene's complex is different from Izvorovo's primarily in terms of the lack of prearranged platform of stones and clay (to spread the cremated bones on) and in the exposure/immersion of at least some of the gold beads to fire, melting partially some of them. The most striking difference between the two sites is the chronological gap, demonstrated in the pottery assemblage found in the two mounds, as well as by the gold beads comparanda, which connects some of Dabene materials to Polyochni, Leukas, some to Troy II and II-III hoards (EBA II), and others to Lower and Middle Danube and Bulgaria (EBA III) (Христов 2005b, 133-135).

The Izvorovo Tumulus No1 is the first Bronze Age burial found in regular excavations in the Sakar region. The preferred regional EBA burial practices remain uncertain, since no necropolises have been registered by either Mihalich or the rest of the open-type settlements in Southern Sakar (Stefanova 2005; Стоянов / Лещаков 2005). With regard to the LBA burial ritual, the unconfirmed data from



- |                                  |                                            |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|
| ○ tumular necropolis, cremation  | ● tumular necropolis, cremation/inhumation |
| ● tumular necropolis, inhumation | ■ flat necropolis, inhumation              |

**Fig. 11.** Necropolises in south-eastern Thrace during the Bronze Age (N. Ivanova).

**Early Bronze Age:**

- 1 – Dabene;
- 2 – Dolno Sahrane;
- 3 – Bereket cemetery;
- 4 – Mednikarovo

**Middle Bronze Age:**

- 5 – Izvorovo;
- 6 – Ovchartsii;
- 7 – Debelt;

**Late Bronze Age:**

- 8- Golyama Detelina;
- 9 – Malka Detelina;
- 10 – Polski Gradets;
- 11 – Ovcharitsa II;
- 12 – Kolarovo;
- 13 – Levka;
- 14 – Drama;
- 15 – Nova Zagora;
- 16 – Kran.

surveys and chance finds available, cremation seems to have been preferred in the whole the region. Near the village of Kolarovo, only 5-6 km from the tumulus we excavated, in the course of vineyard cultivation, a ceramic pitcher with ashes and bones was found, possibly from an eroded low mound, dated to the 14<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> c. BC (Stoyanov / Nikov 1997, 230, fig. 49.1, 49/a). On a gently slanting slope near the village of Levka (Southern Sakar), a necropolis of low, heavily eroded mounds with earth-and-stone embankment was registered. Among the stones of one of the mounds, a bronze dagger (LBA) was found, and there were again indications of burned bones (Бориславов 1999, 193, табл. 125, 1). The scanty data presently available implies that, at least from the MBA to the end of the LBA, cremation was the preferred burial practice. The remains were usually covered by a slightly raised stone embankment, atop of which earth was piled to produce low mounds, normally situated on relatively low, gentle slopes.

**Burial inventory**

According to use, the artefacts found beneath the tumulus mound could be arranged into three groups: 1. Objects used in the burial ritual and the accompanying rites (a ceramic amphora-shaped vessel, clay spindle-whorl, fragments of pottery vessels in the fil.); 2. Personal everyday-use items (a bronze razor, a whetstone); 3. Items of personal adornment and jewelry (gold and silver objects) – which served to signal social status and prestige, and were probably symbolically charged in religious ceremonies.

**1. Objects used in the burial ritual and the accompanying rites**

**1.1. Ceramic vessel – amphora (cat. #1; fig. 12).**

The only vessel in Izvorovo Tumulus #1 found intact was most likely used to transport the ashes and the bones from the funerary pyre to the tumulus. It is hard

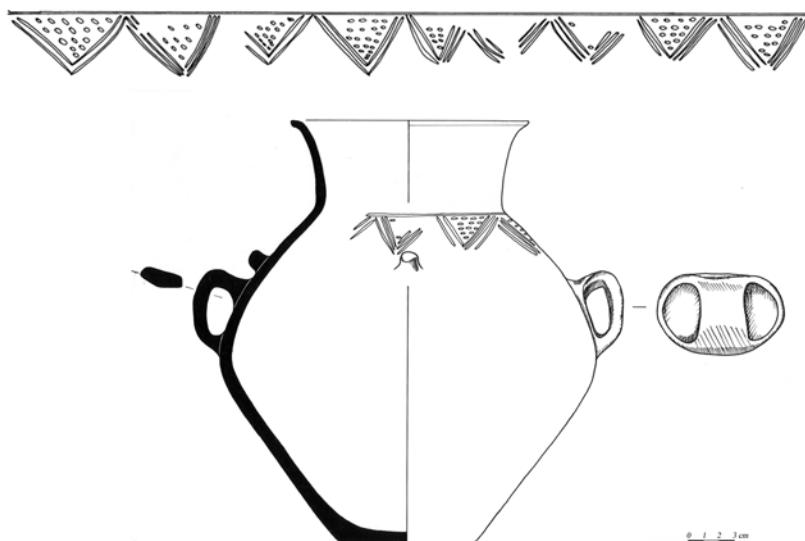


Fig. 12. Amphora – OF-40  
(drawings: A. Petrova).

to decide whether the vessel was purposefully produced for the funerary, if it was previously used in the everyday life, or it was just used in religious ceremonies. It was deposited in a designated space of the same strata with the rest of the burial inventory and the burnt human remains.

**Shape.** The vessel has an almost biconical shape, with a slightly conical neck and outturned rim. Two vertical handles are placed on the shoulders. Amphorae appear in Thrace during the EBA III, and their origin is thought to be EBA III – MBA Anatolia (Leshtakov 1996, 262), but there are also good analogies in continental Greece (Hanschmann 1981, Taf. 1.10, 4.6, 110.16, 110.17). The technological characteristics, as well as the paste facture indicate local production, an impression further strengthened by the fact that no significant difference exists between the amphora and the local LBA pottery from already studied neighboring sites<sup>8</sup>.

**Decoration.** The Izvorovo amphora combines several decorative techniques – incised, embossed, relief and white encrusted. Both the decorative techniques and the decorative motifs are well known in Thrace throughout the Bronze Age – the EBA and the LBA. The incised hanging triangular fields, filled in with pits (and during the LBA – with oblique stripes, inscribed triangles, *etc.*) and encrusted with white paste are among the favored decorative motifs. The applied cylindrical knobs, placed on the opposing sides of the vessel, equally spaced from the handles, appear in the EBA III, and continue to be in use throughout the second millennium BC. The shaping of the handles is specific, and could also be considered part of the relief decoration of the vessel. The two handles are vertical, with a flattened oval section. The lower end of each is transformed into a relief band, which forms an arch and merges with the upper end. Viewed frontally, one perceives an ellipse, with the handle at its center.

**Comparanda.** The best parallels for the Izvorovo amphora are found in the Galabovo tell pottery, layers I-IIIa, dated to the MBA, in Debel't, and in Constantia (Lestakov 1993, 191-222, Abb. 8-12, 11-5, 16.1, 3, 4; Leshtakov *et al.* 2001, fig. 36/b). The parallel to the Constantia vessel is only drawn because of the formation of the handle, whereas the relief bands stemming from the upper and lower end of the handle do not overlap. A fragment of a similar amphora was also reported from the lowermost layers at the rock sanctuary near the village of Tatul, in the

<sup>8</sup> The technological characteristics are very similar to the LBA pottery from the rock sanctuary in the Semercheto locality, near the village of Dositeevo, some 8 km from Izvorovo Tumulus #1 (unpublished excavations of the author).

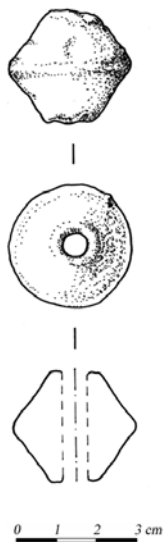


Fig. 13. Clay spindle-whorl  
– OF-8 (N. Ivanova).

Eastern Rhodope, dated to the end of the first quarter of the second millennium BC (Овчаров *et al.* 2008, 43, обр. 5Б 2). The comparison between the amphora from the II layer at Galabovo (Lestakov 1993, 212, 214, Abb. 11-5) and an amphora from the northern slope of the Athenian agora (Immerwahr 1971, 75-76, pl. 18, 271) is quite interesting. The Galabovo find is claimed to be wheel-made, despite the lack of the characteristic of that technology surface marks. It is accepted that it is an imported item of the Minyan black ware. The above-cited Athenian Agora amphora, dated to the Lerna V (MH) period, is cited as its best parallel. Juxtaposing the three containers, an assortment of similarities and divergences in various details comes to the foreground, but generally speaking the three share many common features. One of the important conclusions of this comparison is that the two Thracian amphorae share decorative technique, as well as the location on the decoration on the body – just under the transition between the neck and the body, and perhaps, present a good case for the intrusion of, and the reception of, trends in ceramic styles, altered in accordance with local taste and worldviews. The Izvorovo amphora, with its undoubted local origin, exemplifies a more advanced stage of this process.

### 1.2. Clay spindle-whorl.

While clearing of the earth of the looter's ditch, a biconical clay spindle-whorl was found<sup>9</sup> (cat. #2; fig. 13) – these types of artifacts played a special role in the burial and cult practices since the Chalcolithic period, and are almost mandatory attributes in the graves (especially those with cremation) in the Rhodope mountains (second-first – millennium BC), as well as in the rock- and pit-sanctuaries. In the later red-earth embankment, dated to the Roman age, no clay spindle-whorls were found, so its find-spot, as well as the clay characteristics – identical to the amphorae paste, give us reason to conclude that the spindle-whorl is among the objects buried together with the incinerated remains at the pyre. In addition, spindle-whorls were among the most common finds in the near-by LBA-EIA rock-sanctuary in the Semercheto locality, near Dositeevo.

### 1.3. Fragments of pottery vessels.

The fragments of pottery vessels, found distributed in the stone embankment, are not many. Some were found in the stone layer immediately above the layer of the central burial structure saturated with finds. Those are fragments of several hand-made pots, with grayish-brown and grayish-black color, produced of coarse paste mixed with quartz and mica. A portion of the fragments has brown patches. The pot deposited in the southeastern periphery at the end of the construction of the stone heap, was made of very coarse and poorly fired clay, and was decorated with a relief band. This container probably marks the end of the ritual actions following the burial, or is evidence of commemorative practices.

## 2. Personal items

Here belong the bronze razor and the whetstone. They bear no trace of being placed in the funeral pyre, and are deposited as a set near the amphorae. Both objects, without doubt, were extensively used.

### 2.1. Bronze razor<sup>10</sup>.

The bronze razor is of ellipsoid shape, with a rounded tip, with a single curved cutting edge. The handle is relatively short, with a rectangular section. Presently the artifact is of bluish-green color and porous surface. (cat. #3, fig. 14). During cleaning at the NHM lab, a minute piece of wood was discovered at the base of the handle, which suggests the razor supported a wooden handle. I know of no comparable find from the territory of Bulgaria, although ever since EBA, and espe-

<sup>9</sup> It was found almost at the base of the looter's crater. This is the only find with uncertain stratigraphic context, which could not be assigned to a closed complex, but we consider it safe to include it together with the burial inventory.

<sup>10</sup> The metal, heavily deteriorated, is currently undergoing restoration in the NHM labs.

cially since the MBA, razors are common in graves, hoards and at settlement sites throughout Europe, the Mediterranean and Anatolia (Efe 2002, 54, fig. 5.6, 6.1, 2; Branigan 1974, 33, 34, Pl. 16; Kavanagh 1991, 77). The closest parallel is a fragment from a green schist mold, from the Mikro Vouni settlement at Samothrace, found in a level dated to the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> c. BC (Matsas 1995, 236, 243, Pl. XXXVIIIa). Its shape resembles the Izvorovo razor, but the Mikro Vouni object is of relatively lesser dimensions – about 1 cm narrower blade. The shape of its handle, however, is not certain, since the mold was broken at precisely this point and the fragment is missing.

## 2.2. Whetstone (cat. #4, fig. 14, 15).

It is of irregular trapezoid shape, narrowing and pointed towards one end. A hole is bored through the narrow end, wide enough to accommodate a rope or a thong, used to attach the whetstone – most likely to a belt. The opposite end of the whetstone is broken, but what remains suggests well rounded edges, a hint that the owner was once fond of the object.

The traces of wear on the surface allow us to claim that the object was used to whet, held in the left hand, while the object whetted was held in the right hand. The sharp edge of the whetstone was also used as a hammer<sup>11</sup>. Two kinds of residue were deposited on the surface – brown and black (resembling bitumen), with different structure and origin.

These two artifacts are so far the strongest argument towards identifying the interred person as male. The strongest argument against this identification is the set of gold beads. Similar adornments during the Bronze Age were used by men, as well as by women. It is thought that the practice was originally Minoan, and was adopted in other parts of the Aegean world (Dickinson 1994, 180). It is likely that in addition to adornment the gold bead-necklace served predominantly to signal prestige and social status. The need for symbolic proof of social standing

<sup>11</sup> I express my gratitude to Dr. M. Gyurova (NAIM-BAS) for the consultation.

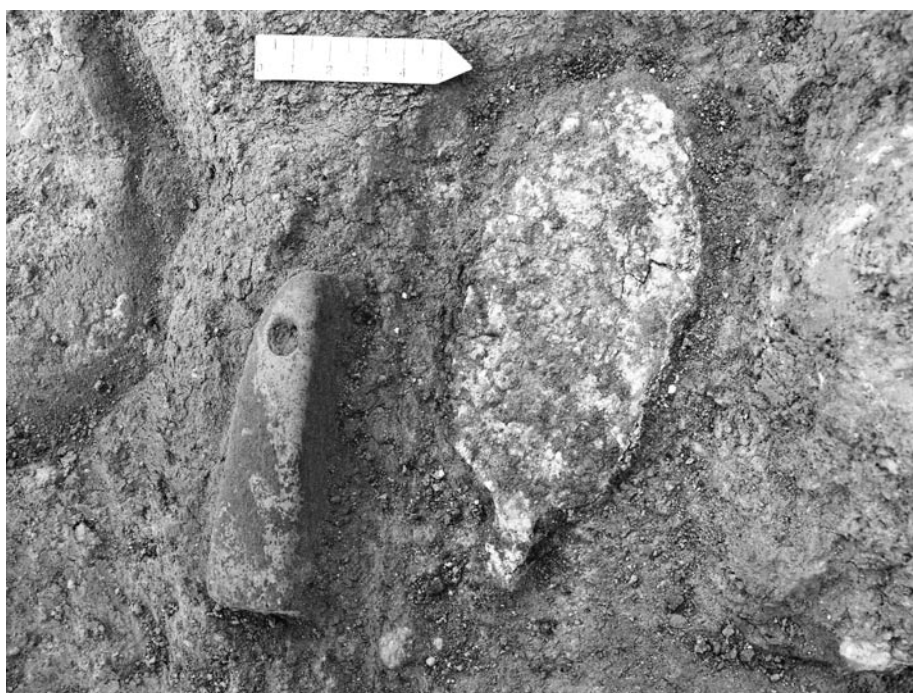
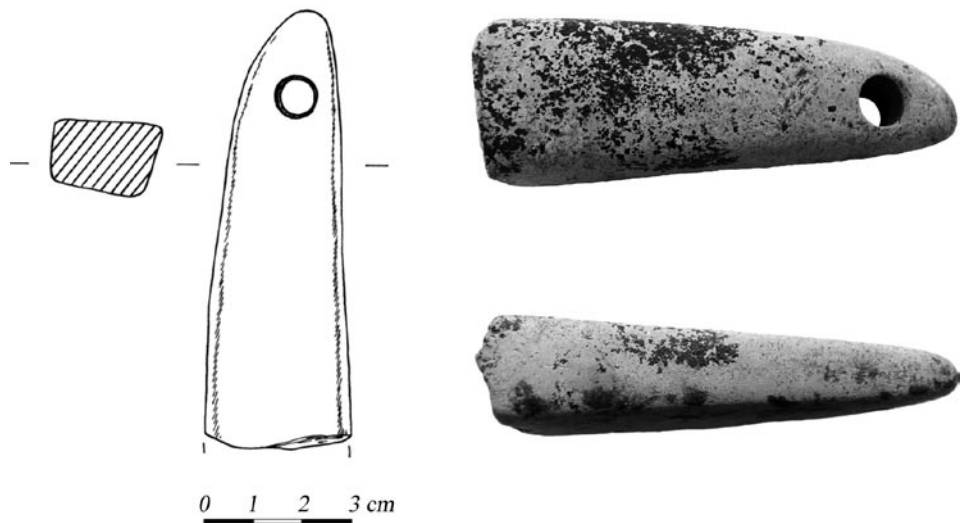


Fig. 14. Bronze razor (photo: B. Borislavov).



**Fig. 15.** Whetstone  
(drawings: A. Petrova;  
photo: B. Borislavov).

(most commonly – the need to display many gold objects) is conditioned by the political development and the necessity to corroborate social position (Laffineur 2003, 84).

### 3. Jewelry and adornments

#### 3.1. Gold object, shaped as spindle-whorl (cat. #5, fig. 16a).

The object was found in the western half of the Central structure, in an area with high concentration of large (barley grain-shaped) and small (spherical) gold beads. It was made of two hemi-spherical halves of gold sheet, connected at the maximum diameter<sup>12</sup>. In a sector the two halves seem to be soldered together, attached firmly, after which the two halves are “closed”. It is easily seen that one half slightly overlaps the other. The consequent treatment obliterated the resulting edge in certain areas. The object has two holes, of equal diameter. After the two constituting halves were connected, the decoration, consisting of five engraved oblique lines running between the two holes was applied. The five lines form a zigzag along the circumference. A sharp instrument (chisel) was used for the engraving of the decorative lines. The decorative motive is known from the ceramic vessels with incised decoration in Southern Thrace – Nova Zagora, Constantia (EBA III/MBA), including the amphora from Galabovo, layer IV (Лещаков 2006, фиг. 21; Lestakov 1993, Abb. 16/4).

Most likely, immediately before its deposition, the gold “spindle-whorl” was perforated in three places with a sharp instrument, which caused tearing of the walls. The tear is along the maximum diameter, and all three are limited to the decorated areas. It can be claimed with certainty that the perforations were intentional, and not accidental. Comparable practice of “killing” artefacts, used as burial inventory, is widely attested. It is believed that the practice secures the transition of the object in the afterlife. However, the perforation of gold objects is rare.

#### 3.2. Gold object shaped as spindle-whorl (cat. #6, fig. 16b).

A second similar object is found in the eastern half of the central structure. It is larger and heavier than the first one, and bears different decoration, but is very close to the first one in shape. The production method is identical – the two halves are produced separately from gold sheet, and later joined. Now the seam is much

<sup>12</sup> These observations on the technology are only preliminary. The detailed analysis of all metal finds is forthcoming.

more precise, and harder to distinguish with naked eye. The object has two openings, centrally placed, and at both holes the gold sheet is curved inwards. The decoration is applied in a similar manner, after the two halves are conjoined, but in now it consists of tightly spaced parallel lines, running from one opening to the other.

The object is pierced by a blade in two opposing spots, at the ridge between the two halves. The pressure of the perforation cracked the seam, but the object remained whole. The destruction of the object just preceded the funeral or occurred during it.

The two gold objects, shaped as spindle-whorls, though found separately, and relatively distanced from each other, and despite the differences in size and decoration, should be properly regarded as a set. The shape and the production method are very similar. I know of no exact parallels, which significantly impedes the attempt to define their function. There are at least four potential explanations, and it is of course possible that neither of them is valid. Most likely the two objects are part of an adornment (necklace or a string), *i.e.* they are in fact large beads. Both are found above the rest of the gold beads, which are smaller than the diameter of the holes in either of the objects, and hence could not belong to the same jewelry item. If we were to accept that the strings were torn and they were spread within a designated space, the two artefacts were may have been a part of a

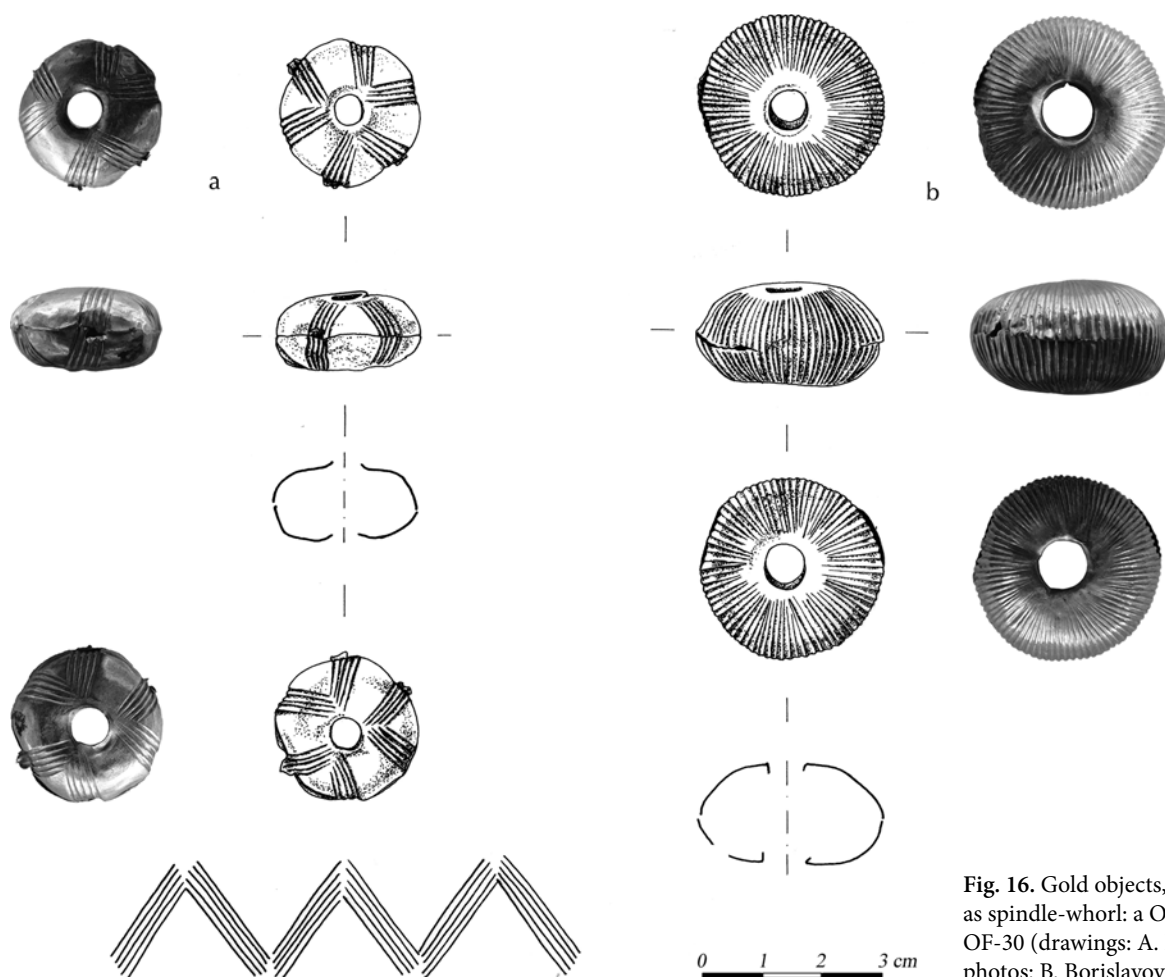


Fig. 16. Gold objects, shaped as spindle-whorl: a OF-15; b OF-30 (drawings: A. Petrova; photos: B. Borislavov).

different adornment item, which would also explain the fact that they were found some 2.96 m apart. In addition, it must not be forgotten that the looter's ditch cuts through the center of the structure, between the two finds, and hence it is possible that other similar items could have been originally deposited here as well (fig. 5).

During the LBA in the Aegean world, beads similar to 3.2, are quite popular and common, but are usually smaller (spherical or biconical), and usually produced of cheaper material – faience or glass (Nightingale 2003, fig. 1. 14, 15; Baxevasi-Kouzioni / Markoulaki 1996, fig. 64; Ingram 2005, 38–42). Relatively larger, hollow gold beads are found in the Mycenaean necropolis Aidonia, dated to the 15<sup>th</sup> c. BC. Those are smaller (1 – 1.5 cm) than the Izvorovo artefacts, but are a good example of beads produced in a similar manner – from two separate halves, joined in the middle and afterwards decorated. The decoration on some resembles strongly the one applied on 3.2, while others bear granulation and cloisonné (Demakopoulou 1997b, 19, fig. 11, 17; cat. #13, 14, 17). At grave VIII from the Mycenae prehistoric necropolis, (LM II), ten such gold beads were found, of smaller size, and with less densely spaced engraved lines (Alden 2000, 43, Pl. 14a).

Three other, less likely interpretations are that the two objects could have been scepter heads (staves), needle-tops, or spindle-whorls with ritualistic/symbolic function. Examples of small scepters with bronze handles and gold heads that closely resemble the Izvorovo object (cat. #6) in shape and decoration are known from the EBA II/III Alaca Höyük burial complexes (Kosay 1951, Pl. CXLVIII, CCV, fig. 1, 50, CCVI). The difference lies in the lack of bronze handle, an element that was of course not mandatory, but the equal diameter of both openings on both objects would make the fastening of the handle harder. Almost the same arguments hold true for the interpretation of the objects as “needle-heads” – even more so, since no needle-body was found. The resemblance to spindle-whorls is most striking, since similarly decorated and shaped clay artefacts abound. However, there is no convincing evidence to support their interpretation as ritual gold spindle-whorls.

### 3.3. String of gold beads

The most numerous finds in Tumulus #1 are the gold beads. A total of 344 – 174 large, which bear channels and incised lines to resemble barley seeds, and 170 small ones, which are spherical and bear short grooves. As far as it could be judged by the position where the in beads were found, and by the relatively equal number discovered, we could presume that the small and the large beads were elements from one or more identical strings (fig. 17). If they were strung into one necklace, it probably alternated small and large beads, to a total length of 1.60 m. Just like the two gold objects resembling spindle-whorls, some beads were perforated by a blade, which caused tearing of their walls. Such perforations were found in six of the small and thirteen of the large beads. Other sixteen beads have cracks at the mouth of their holes, which could be explained by the ripping of the string. Black residue (resembling bitumen), identical to the one found on the whetstone, was found on one small and one large bead. Another large bead bears brown deposit, such as the one observed on some of the pottery fragments, on the whetstone, and in a spot on the smaller gold “spindle-whorl” (3.1).

#### 3.3.1. Large beads (barley-shaped or grain-like) (cat. #7, fig. 18).

The large beads are 174 in number. Their shape is quite complex – and hard to describe<sup>13</sup> – elongated, with three grooves, alternating with three convex sectors, narrowing towards the two bead openings, and widest at the middle of the bead, at its maximum diameter. The convex sectors have additional decoration of two, three or four longitudinal engraved lines. Based on the number of lines, five vari-

<sup>13</sup> The same shape has been described in previous publications as “amygdaloid” or “grain of wheat”.

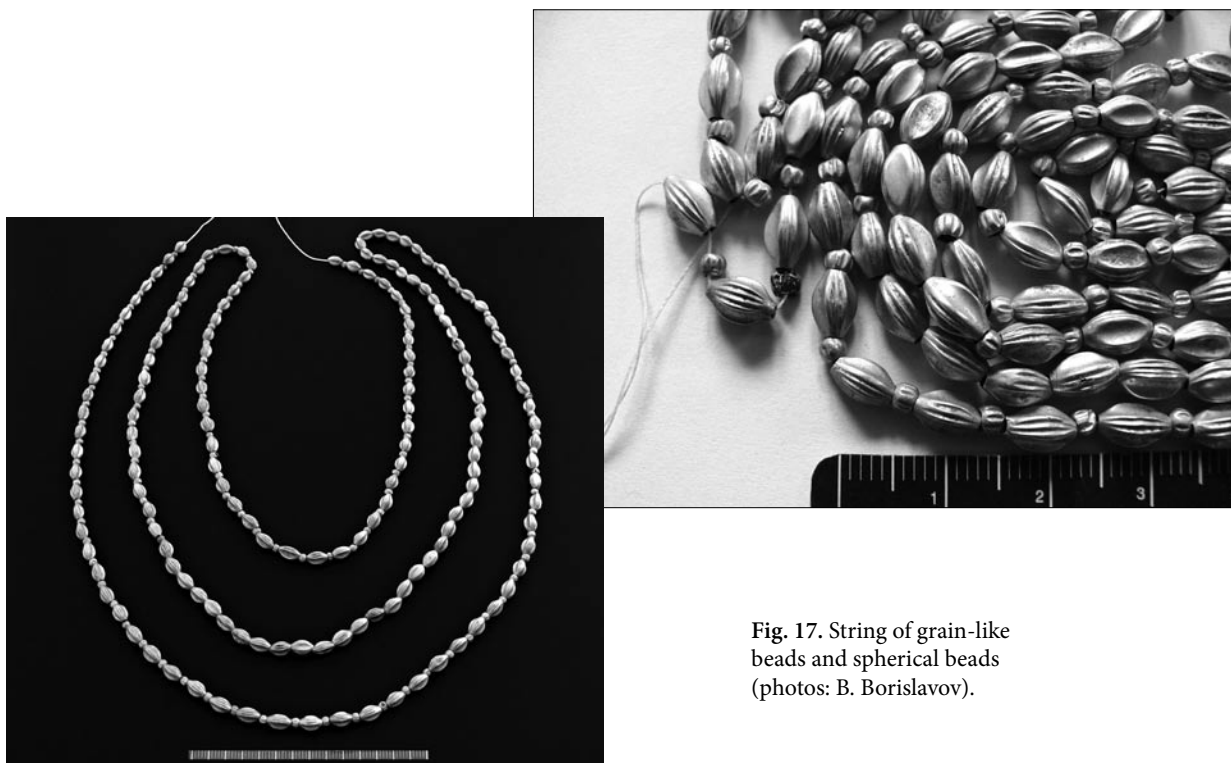


Fig. 17. String of grain-like beads and spherical beads (photos: B. Borislavov).

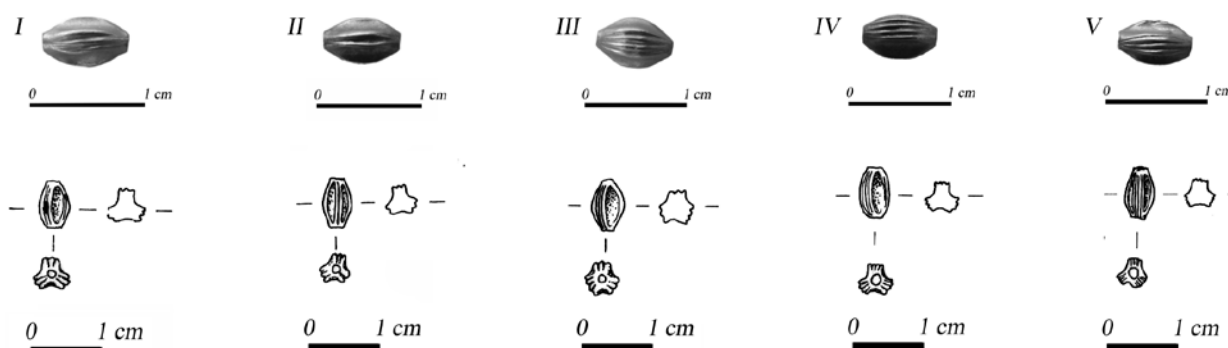


Fig. 18. Grain-like beads – variants (drawings: A. Petrova; photos: B. Borislavov).

ants have been distinguished. Variant I – with two engraved lines on each of the three convex sectors – 2-2-2; Variant II – 1-2-2 lines; Variant III – 3-2-2 lines; Variant IV – 3-3-3 lines; Variant V – 4-3-3 lines (fig. 18, fig. 19). These variants are conditional, since it is obvious that the main factor was the shape of the bead, while the additional decorative lines were applied in accordance with the available space on the convex sectors. More importantly, there are no beads without the additional engraved lines. Certain variation in the proportion – length v/s maximum diameter – is observed, but on the whole the beads seem to form a set and it could be claimed with a fair degree of certainty that they were all produced simultaneously, in the same workshop (or by the same craftsman)<sup>14</sup>.

To-date, we have received report on the chemical composition of two of the large beads only<sup>15</sup> (fig. 20). The chemical composition suggests that alluvial gold

<sup>14</sup> I would abstain for now from commenting on the technology, to which a special study will be dedicated.

<sup>15</sup> The analyses are carried out in the Department Test Laboratory at the Eurotest-Control Inc. – Sofia.

was used. 19-20<sup>th</sup> century sources report procurement of alluvial gold in the immediate vicinity (АВДЕВ 2005, 284).

**Comparanda.** At present, best parallels are found on the island of Crete. At Agia Triada, in a tholos tomb a necklace was found of 39 hollow gold beads of various sizes – 21 shaped as “grains of wheat”, twelve shaped as drops, and six spherical. It is dated to the 15<sup>th</sup> c. BC (Demakopoulou 1997a, 48, cat. #34; Paribeni 1905, 59). By their shape and production technology, the almond-shaped ones are an exact match to the Izvorovo beads – they feature channels along the length of the body, the only difference being the lack of incisions on the convex sectors in the Cretan examples. The earliest beads of this type were found on Crete in Pre-Palatial contexts. A similar necklace of gold beads, shaped as grains of wheat, alternating with spherical beads of lapis lazuli, was found in a tholos tomb at Knossos (1500-1400 BC) (Hood 1993, 249, fig. 207T). Identical beads are also parts of strings of different in shape and material beads. From a well-dated deposit (LM I A), near the Temple Tomb at Knossos, a similar gold bead was found together with others of carnel and amethyst (Pendlebury 1963, 221, Pl. XXXVI, 4). Similar beads are also found in a burial in a *larnax* from Pyrgos, in a royal tomb at Izopata (LM II), and in Mallia, while in a tholos tomb at Kakovatos similarly shaped beads were produced of lapis lazuli (Higgins 1980, 58, 64; Pendlebury 1963, 221). Gold beads shaped as grains of wheat continue to be in use on Crete and in burial contexts in later periods (LM III A1) – as in a chamber tomb at Pankalochori – (Baxevasi-Kouzioni / Markoulaki 1996, 689, 690, fig. 50/δ, ε, θ, ι, 66). Comparable bead was found next to a bronze sword in a chamber tomb at Chania, NW Crete, dated to LM III A2/LM III B (Karantzali 1986, 78, fig. 18/T8).

Outside Crete, the closest analogy for the Izvorovo beads comes from a Mycenaean grave (IX) from the Athenian agora, dated to LH III A – a single gold bead with identical shape, decoration and dimensions (Immerwahr 1971, 108, 194, Pl. 41, Tomb IX, (J 8:1), 2, Pl. 77, IX/2).

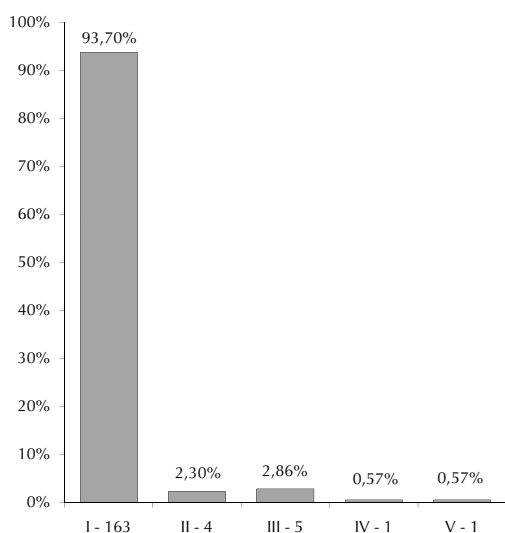


Fig. 19. Grain-like beads – percentage distribution of the variants (diagram: N. Ivanova).

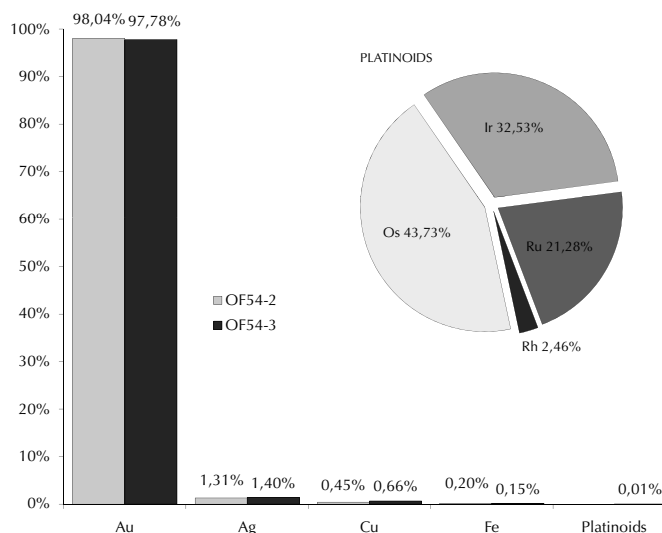


Fig. 20. Chemical composition of grain-like beads: OF54-2 and OF54-3 (diagram: N. Ivanova).

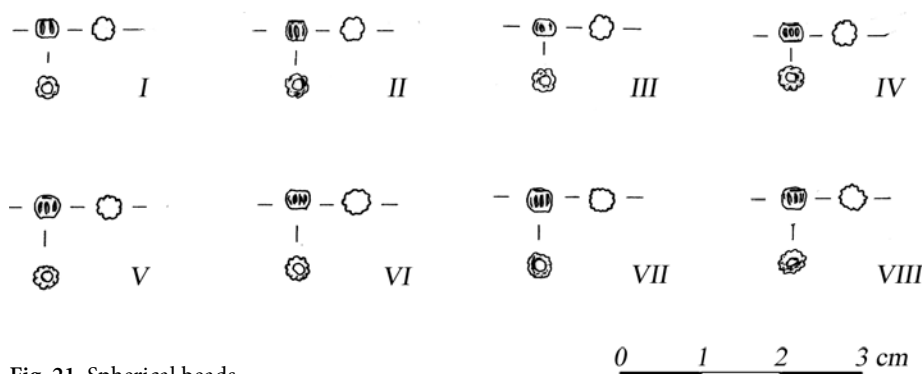


Fig. 21. Spherical beads – variants (drawings: A. Petrova; photos: B. Borislavov).

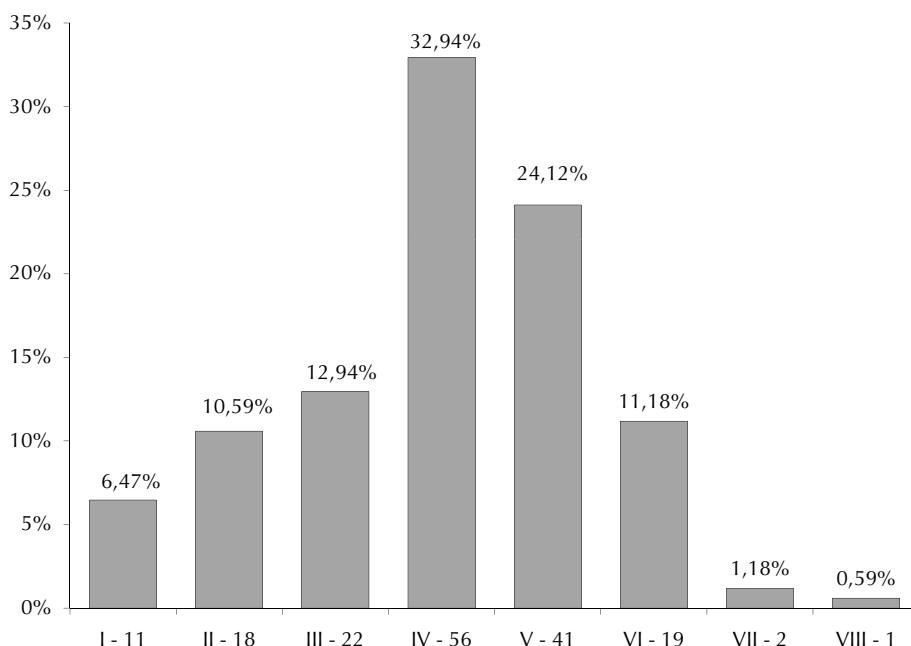


Fig. 22. Spherical beads. Percentage distribution of the variants (diagram: N. Ivanova).

In one of the little-known Cycladic MBA necropolises situated on the island of Keos-Agia Irini – in grave #24 a necklace of stone and gold beads was found. One of the beads is shaped as a grain of wheat and thus resembles the Izvorovo beads (Davis 1992, 709, fig. 2).

In summary, the comparanda for the Izvorovo wheat-shaped beads demonstrate clearly that this type of beads was in use from the MBA to the end of the LBA (together with examples produced in faience and glass), that they are most common on the island of Crete, and that they are found individually, or in combination with other types of beads on the island of Keos and in Attica. To-date the Izvorovo find of such a large number of gold beads, shaped as wheat/barley grains is unprecedented, with no parallels even on Crete.

### 3.3.2. Small beads (Spherical beads) (cat. #8, fig. 21).

The small beads, a total of 170 pieces, are hollow, of spherical shape, and have wide openings. On some beads the seams of the sheet from which they were produced

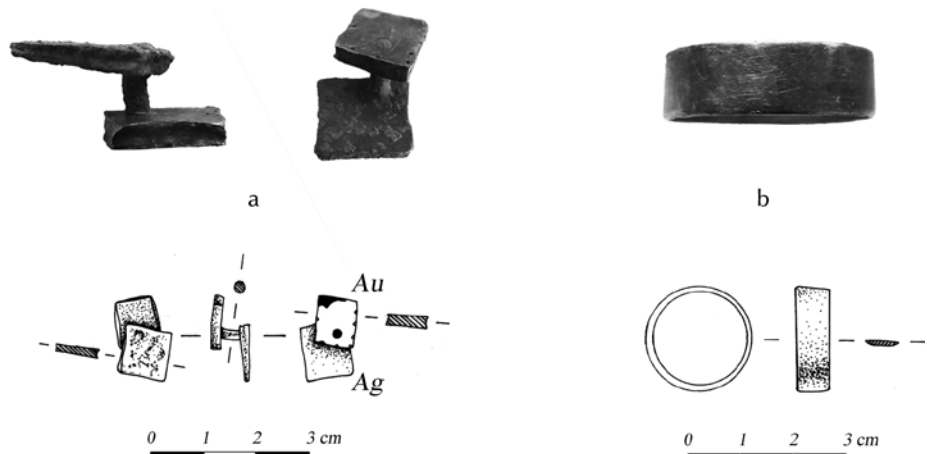


Fig. 23. Findings, discovered nearby the amphora OF-40: a gold and silver plates joined by a silver rivet; b silver ring (drawings: A. Petrova; photos: B. Borislovov).

is observable. On most beads, however, the seam is perfectly smoothed. All small beads were decorated with engraved lines. As with the large beads, the number of the engraved lines varies, which prompts the distinction of eight variants – for beads with five to twelve lines, with the largest number of beads featuring eight and nine lines (fig. 21, fig. 22). Stylistically the small beads are completely compatible with the large wheat/barley-shaped beads; the decorative technique is identical and it could be accepted that both kinds of beads have a common origin and belonged to a single string.

A similar type of beads constituted gold items of personal adornment in the Bronze Age Aegean and the Near East, usually as complementing elements of necklaces. (Трејсеп 1996, 210-212; кат. #78-101; Özgüç / Temizer 1993, 614, fig. 34, 40). In later LBA stages, such beads were made of faience or glass – mind-ing the examples from Elateia – Alonaki (LH III C middle to Protogeometric) (Nightingale 2003, fig.1/6) or Uluburun (1320±15 B.C.) (Ingram 2005, 28, fig. 2/5; fig. B 11-15; Manning *et al.* 2009, 181).

### 3.4. Gold and silver plates, joined by a silver rivet (cat. #9, fig. 23a).

This object could well be the most extraordinary and strange of all the artefacts making up the burial inventory of Izvorovo Tumulus #1. It is the only item produced of two different precious metals, as well as the only one with an utterly puzzling function. The two rectangular plates – one of gold, the other one of silver, are asymmetrically fixed to each other by the silver rivet, for which a special hole is made in the gold plate. Both sides of the silver plate are covered with deposits. The gold plate has nine small additional punctured holes along three of its sides, irregularly spaced and with varying depth and diameters. Traces of smoothing and secondary scratches on the surface of the gold plate could be distinguished, as well as wear towards one of its ends, due to a prolonged abrasion by textile, leather, or another material. The side boards of both plates are uneven, jagged or even spiky at places. This seems to suggest that, whatever the function of the object was, those fringes were hidden. The thickness of the plates, too, is uneven; the silver plate is thickest at the sector where the base of the rivet is located.

In shape, both conjoined plates resemble a button. It is possible that the object actually served such a function – a two-sided – gold and silver – button. Such an interpretation, however, leaves the jagged condition of the sides without explanation. It seems that those borders were intentionally unfinished, as if exposing the edge in a “just-cut” condition. This decision is in sharp contrast with the traces of

prolonged use, left on the surface of the gold plate. Another possibility is that the entire object served as a kind of a rivet – for a wooden, leather, or other organic-material object – now entirely lost.

### 3.5. Silver ring (cat. #10, fig. 23b).

The ring was found near the two plates. The seam is undistinguishable to naked eye. The diameters at the two openings are unequal – one is 0.13 cm narrower than the other. A multitude of ancient surface scratches suggests extended use. It is hard to pinpoint the function of this silver ring, but given the narrowing diameter, it seems most plausible that it used to line the handle of a now lost object.

## ANALYSIS OF THE BURIAL INVENTORY (REGIONAL CONTEXT OF THE BURIAL INVENTORY)

When the burial inventory is regarded as a complex, the first thing that attracts attention is the observation that objects produced of all expensive metals – gold, silver, bronze (with the exception of iron) – known to the Bronze Age society, were included. It is important to underline that most likely, the artefacts uncovered in the excavations do not represent the entire set originally deposited in the structure. Despite that, the complex is notably rich and unique for the territory of Southern Thrace to-date.

The metal finds from Izvorovo so far find no parallels in the immediate region, an observation even more valid for the decorative objects. Regardless of the character of the context – funeral, settlement, or accidental finds, most common in Thrace are gold and silver earrings, pendants and hair accessories, made of varying in kind and number wire coils (Александров 2009a; Александров 2007; Христов 2005b). Unlike the richest of the previously excavated graves – Ovchartersi (MBA) and Dabene (EBA III), at Izvorovo no items of personal adornment were produced of gold or silver wire. Both the objects and the technology used to produce them are entirely different. Similarly, no parallels exist with other gold finds, dated to the LBA (Александров 2009b; Vasileva 2004; Бонев 2003; Sherratt / Taylor 1989).

Among the Izvorovo burial inventory, there are a number of objects that appear in Thrace for the first time – such as the hollow gold barley grain-shaped beads. The scale of precision in their manufacture points to a very knowledgeable, skillful and experienced jeweler. Accordingly, questions arise as to the local or foreign origin of those objects, as well as to the location of the workshop that produced them<sup>16</sup>. It seems very hard to prove that those items were the product of local craftsmen, working in isolation from any foreign influences. Unlike all preceding gold and silver Bronze Age finds in the territory of Thrace, which have numerous parallels in Central Europe, the Carpathian basin, the lower Danube, Troy, and Poliochni, Izvorovo assemblage produces no such objects (Александров 2009b; Christov 2008; Hristov 2007; David 2007). It is equally hard to find common elements with Mycenaean gold objects and jewels (Karo 1930; Higgins 1980; Laffineur 2003).

## THE "MINOAN CONNECTION" IN THRACE

As was noted in the analysis of the separate grave finds, the most exact and numerous analogies are with Cretan jewelry, with jewels that bear Cretan influence, or with direct imports from Crete. If we are to assume that the Izvorovo beads are of Minoan origin, several scenarios for their appearance in the Sakar mountain could be suggested: 1. The beads were produced by local craftsmen, informed in details about Minoan models and technology; 2. They were a direct

<sup>16</sup> More definite answers to those questions are likely to be provided at the conclusion of all studies and analyses on the chemistry and the technology of the metal finds, hence the observations shared in this article should be considered preliminary.

import from Crete – brought by Minoan merchants travelling along the Maritsa valley; 3. Produced in a Cretan workshop, the beads were brought to the northern Aegean coast (for example – to the Maritsa mouth), and transported to Sakar by local representatives; 4. The beads were produced on the spot, in the Sakar region by traveling Minoan craftsmen accompanying Minoan merchants.

The idea of traveling craftsmen, as an element of the Minoan trade organization, is not new, but evidence to its support has been slow to accumulate. We side with Sir Renfrew that trade contacts should not just be assumed, they need to be demonstrated (Renfrew 1979, 24). However, similar proposition has also been voiced in relation to the Valchitrun treasure (Sherratt / Taylor 1989, 128).

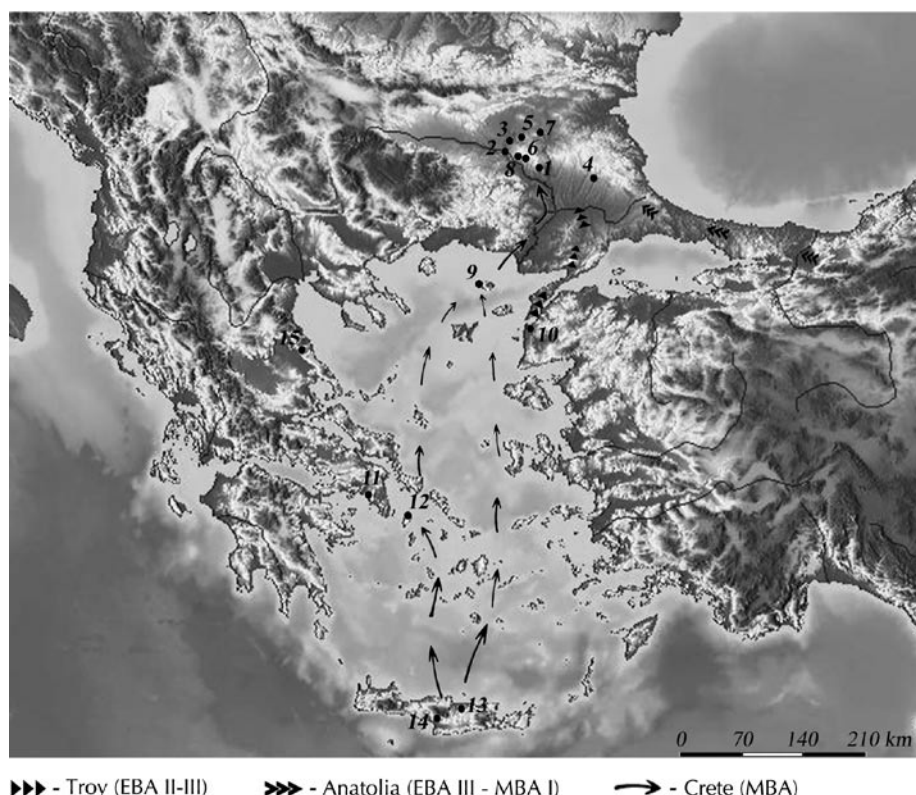
What evidence supports Minoan presence in Thrace?

The results from the excavations at the coastal settlement of Mikro Vouni, on the island of Samothrace, seem to offer undeniable support to an extended Minoan presence at one of the gates to Thrace – the Maritsa mouth (Matsas 1991; Matsas 1995). Over the course of the last years, new finds from Southern Thrace, fitting within the context of the Cretan finds from Mikro Vouni seem to traverse a contact route from Samothrace, up the Maritsa valley and along the Tundza river valley.

The most important find is that of a pierced clay spool with a Linear A inscription from Drama, Yambol district. The text has been deciphered as AB 01-51-301-[\*]-[\*], with the initial sign combinations 01-51 also found at the beginning of a couple of texts from Knossos and Agia Triada (Lichardus *et al.* 2000, 159-162, Abb. 57). It is accepted that Linear A was exclusively used for trade purposes, which explains its occurrence at Ayia Irini, Phylakopi and Akrotiri (Matsas 1995, 242). I see no reason why the same assumption should not be extended to the Drama item. The importance of this find is also supported by at least two more

Fig. 24. Map of possible trade routes from Crete and Asia Minor toward south-eastern Thrace (N. Ivanova).

- 1 – Mihalich;
- 2 – Constantia;
- 3 – Galabovo;
- 4 – Kanligeçit;
- 5 – Ovchartsı;
- 6 – Izvorovo;
- 7 – Drama;
- 8 – Dositeevo;
- 9 – Mikro Vouni;
- 10 – Troy;
- 11 – Athenian Agora;
- 12 – Agia Irini (Keya);
- 13 – Knossos;
- 14 – Agia Triada;
- 15 – Elateia-Alonaki.



discoveries from the rock sanctuary, located just ten kilometers away from Izvorovo – in the Semercheto locality near the village of Dositeevo. There, a clay structure – a labrys-shaped altar, constructed from fitted clay pieces, and a clay object (nodule) with a deep rectangular imprint of an animal (deer) were found. The second object was found in a closed stratigraphic context, on top of a floor level of the central sanctuary building (Бориславов 1999, 254-255, Табл. 39/1)<sup>17</sup>.

Another example is the Cretan spear-heads found in Thrace, whose analysis concludes that there was undisputed Cretan interest vested in Thrace, and that the Maritsa river was the main contact route (fig. 24). The presence of LM II-III Cretan weapons has been interpreted as “diplomacy gifts” for the local rulers, who secured metal supplies from the Continent to Crete (Höckmann 2007, 221-222).

In the context of those instances of Minoan presence in southern Thrace, the most credible interpretation of the gold and silver finds from Izvorovo is to attribute them to direct contacts with Minoan deputies (merchants?). At this preliminary stage of excavation data processing, I believe that the items of decoration from Tumulus No 1 were produced “on the spot” by Minoan craftsman/craftsmen. It is possible that they had models at their disposal, and that they worked under the errand of the local elite, and in accordance with the local taste, tradition and need. For example, one of the two gold objects shaped as spindle-whorls (3.1) is decorated in complete accordance with the local ornamental traditions. It is also possible that the craftsmen used locally-procured material (gold or silver), which would have also been a kind of insurance during their long travels.

#### DATE<sup>18</sup>

The various objects from the burial inventory have different inherent use-life, and hence – different dating value. Thus, it is quite likely that the gold and silver objects had much longer use-life in comparison to the ceramic vessel. The preliminary date of the grave is based on the pottery vessel which, after its best parallels in the pottery from the Galabovo tell, layers III-Ia, and in Debelt, has been assigned an MBA date (Lestakov 1993, 191-222, Abb. 8-12, 11-5, 16/1, 3, 4). The three uppermost layers of the Galabovo tell, have been dated after 2000 BC, based on two <sup>14</sup>C samples collected from the fourth layer (2470-2270/2240-2200 BC and 2270-2260/2200-2030 BC, cal.), and on imported Anatolian pottery (Görsdorf / Bojadžiev 1996, 163). Comparanda on the imports is found in well-stratified sites in Anatolia, and supports the opinion that the Galabovo III-Ia objects could be placed at the end of EBA III- the beginning of the Transitional period to the beginning of the XVIII c. BC. On the other hand, parallels with the Mikro Vouni pottery assemblage (on Samothrace) have also been suggested, which points to contemporaneous existence of Galabovo III-Ia and the Mikro Vouni, and hence puts the discussed levels in the XVIII c. BC (Лещakov 2006, 182).

It must be kept in mind that at the beginning of the MBA the situation in Asia Minor changed and the contacts between Thrace and Anatolia must have rapidly loosened, while Anatolia was structuring a new trade network (Efe 2002, 59). In contrast with the final EBA III and initial MBA interest of certain Anatolian centers, in trading, and even in launching colonization in Thrace – as exemplified by the settlement at Kanlıgeçit (Özdoğan 2003, 342-343, 356; Özdoğan 2007, 207), this interest disappears in the following period. The period of this change is easily defined on the basis of Anatolian imports in Kanlıgeçit and Galabovo (Özdoğan 2003, 355; Leshtakov 1996, 259-264). This is a very important clarification, since the Galabovo III-Ia amphorae, which we cite as closest comparanda for the Izvorovo amphora, were found together with the imported Anatolian pottery. Consequently, the lack of any kind of Anatolian goods or influences at Izvorovo

<sup>17</sup> The stratum, to which the imprint belongs, is dated to the second half of the LBA (13<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> c. BC), but, given the sacral nature of the site, the object was considerably older than its deposition context.

<sup>18</sup> We are expecting <sup>14</sup>C analyses, which should allow for a more refined date for the complex.

points to the fact that the funeral took place after the interruption of the contacts between Anatolia and Thrace – *i.e.*, after the beginning/middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> c. BC. On the other hand, the analogy with the Tatul vessel, dated to the end of the first quarter of the second millennium BC, shows that this type of vessel remains in fashion not only during the final EBA III – initial MBA, but also throughout the MBA. Unfortunately, this precise period of the Bronze Age in Thrace is very little known, which means that presently the ceramic vessel is only of a limited use for the precise dating of the complex.

The other chronological yardsticks for our attempt to assign a preliminary date to the Izvorovo grave is the Mikro Vouni settlement (Samothrace), whence five <sup>14</sup>C samples have been published. After calibration, the second construction phase, to which the Minoan roundels and nodules belong, is dated to the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> c. BC and most likely towards the end of the late MM II/MM III A (Matsas 1991, 168; Matsas 1995, 236). The same level produced the fragment of a stone razor mold cited as similar to the one found at Izvorovo.

This date is entirely supported by the date of the best parallels for the gold beads – the MM-LM I Cretan provenience finds. Although there the beads are often found, though in isolation, in funerary contexts up till LM III A, there are reasons to believe that the Izvorovo beads were produced some time during the second half of the MBA (possibly at the end of 18<sup>th</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup> c. BC MM III/LM I). It is possible that they were deposition as burial inventory at least some decades later.

## CONCLUSION

The rich burial inventory – the quantity and the skilled manufacture of the objects, the ritual, as well as the burial structure, show convincingly that the person buried there was a member of an elite, the existence of which, until now, was not even suspected for the territory of Thrace during the first half of the second millennium BC. This observation challenges the currently accepted opinion that during the EBA III and the MBA, no clear social differentiation existed in Thrace, and that the priestly institution was not clearly defined (Лещаков 2006, 205-206). I am convinced that both statements, or at the very least their dogmatic overtones, should be subjected to a thorough revision.

The results from the excavations of Izvorovo Tumulus #1 present us with many new questions, such as: where are the burials of the other elite members; is it possible that we have failed locating them because of the specifics of the burial structure formation, the specifics of the embankment, and the specifics of the ritual; what were the graves of those people who did not belong to the elite class; what types of locations were selected for them; and was the same funerary ritual used for them? What is the context of the Izvorovo tumulus in terms of contemporary settlements, necropolises and sanctuaries?

The tumulus near Izvorovo is of great importance, because of the possible origin of the unique gold jewelry items, and the possible way they reached the Sakar mountains, thus presenting a very strong argument in favour of the “Minoan connection” in Thrace.

The southern Thracian finds from the recent years – the Dabene necropolis gold, the Ovchartsi rich MBA grave, the Devin burial with bronze rapier type A (according to Caro) (Бориславов / Иванова 2007, 87-89), as well as some older finds, like the Valchitrun Treasure, show that the social organization of the Thracian population in the first half of the second millennium BC was much more complex than we are used to believe.

## CATALOGUE

**1. Amphora-shaped vessel (fig. 12)**

Field record entry #44. Height – 26 cm, diameter at the mouth – 14.6 cm, maximum diameter – 23.1 cm, diameter of the base (flat) – 8 to 8.2 cm, handles – vertical (height – 5.4 cm), the upper and lower part of the handle connect, section – flat, minimum width – 2.6 cm, thickness 1.1 cm. Wall thickness – 0.6 to 0.7 cm. Paste – high concentration of fine mica, medium high concentration of fine quartz. Fracture – tri-partite, wide grey core. Surface – fine engobe slip. Color – dark brown, grey-black at spots. Decoration – incised, embossed; motives – incised triangles, filled in with embossed, white paste filled dots; relief decoration – two cylindrical knobs – diameter at the base 1.15 cm, height – 1 cm, attached to the wall at even distance from the two handles.

**2. Clay spindle-whorl (fig. 13)**

Field record entry #8. Shape – bi-conical. Height – 2.7 cm, maximum diameter – 3 cm, diameter of the hole – 0.6 cm. Paste – coarse, small quartz and mica particles. Color – dark brown. Undecorated.

**3. Bronze razor (fig. 14)**

Field record entry #42. Shape of the blade – elliptical. Total length – 13.5 cm, maximum width – 5.5 cm, blade length – 11.5 cm, blade thickness – 1 mm, socket length – 2 cm, socket section – quadrangular.

**4. Whetstone (fig. 15)**

Field record entry #43. Shape – prismatic. Section – quadrangular. Hole drilled through one end, diameter – 0.8 cm. Length – 9 cm, width – 2.2 to 2.9 cm. Fragment broken off the lower part.

**5. Gold bead (fig. 16a)**

Field record entry #15. Shape – oblate spheroid. Weight – 4.76 g, maximum diameter – 2.55 cm, height – 1.39 cm, diameter of the hole – 0.545 cm, thickness of the gold sheet – 0.05 cm. Decoration – engraved lines (5), running in a broken zigzag around the two symmetrically drilled holes. Torn at three places (in the area of the maximum diameter).

**6. Gold bead (fig. 16b)**

Field record entry #30. Shape – oblate spheroid. Weight – 6.63 g, maximum diameter – 3.212 cm, height 1 – 1.25 cm, height 2 – 1.182 cm, maximum diameter of the hole 1 – 0.757 cm, diameter of the hole 2 – 0.75 cm, thickness of the gold sheet – 0.023 to 0.03 cm. Decoration – engraved parallel lines, running from the center to the periphery. Secondary perforation and a cut, caused by a sharp instrument, in the area of the maximum diameter.

**7. Gold beads – a total of 174 (fig. 18)**

Field record entry #9-13, 16, 18, 20, 22, 24, 26, 28, 32-37, 40, 46, 48, 50, 52, 54. Shape – hollow, barley grain-shaped, with three longitudinal channels. Tri-partite section. Total weight – 35.7 g, maximum diameter – 0.49 cm, length – 0.63 to 0.77 cm, diameter of the hole 0.11 to 0.17 cm, thickness of the gold sheet – 0.018 to 0.023 cm. Decoration – engraved longitudinal lines on the three projecting sectors.

**8. Gold beads – a total of 170 (fig. 21)**

Field record entry #14, 17, 19, 21, 23, 25, 27, 29, 38, 41, 45, 47, 49, 51, 53, 55, 56. Shape – spherical. Total weight – 6.476 g, maximum diameter – 0.245 to 0.295 cm, length – 0.22 to 0.26 cm, diameter of the hole 0.11 to 0.14 cm, thickness of the gold sheet – 0.018 to 0.023 cm. Decoration – engraved longitudinal lines.

**9. Gold and silver plate, joined by a silver rivet (fig. 23a)**

Field record entry #39. Weight – 3.43 g. Total object height – 0.772 cm; total object width – 1.639 cm. Gold plate – 0.935/0.802 cm, thickness – 0.211 to 0.214 cm; silver rivet – diameter – 0.177/0.197 cm, length – 0.77 cm; silver plate – 1.053/0.940 cm, thickness – 0.208 to 0.140 cm.

**10. Silver ring (fig. 23b)**

Field record entry #31. Section – flat, trapezoidal. Weight – 2.48 g. Diameter 1 – 2.011 to 2.02 cm, diameter 2 – 1.88 to 1.9 cm, thickness – 0.74 to 0.58 cm, width – 0.632 to 0.645 cm.

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## Златото от Изворово. Надгробна могила от бронзовата епоха в района на Харманли, Югоизточна България (предварително съобщение)

Борислав БОРИСЛАВОВ  
(резюме)

Надгробната могила се намира в югозападната част на планината Сакар, на 4 км югозападно от с. Изворово, в местността Йорговите могили (фигури 1 и 2). Около нея, на запад и север, почти по цялата площ на билото има

рушевини и материали от селище, което според данните от повърхността, е съществувало през римския период (II – IV в. сл. Хр.). На 300-400 м североизточно е разположен некропол, който се отнася към същото време (II – IV в. сл. Хр.). Могилата е с размери: диаметър: 27.60 м (С-Ю) и 25 м (И-З), и височина 2.40 м. Приблизително в центъра на насипа има иманярски изкоп с размери – 4.30 м (СЗ-ЮИ), 3.10 м (ЮЗ-СИ) и видима дълбочина около 1.50 м (фиг. 3). В резултат на цялостното проучване на могилата са установени три етапа на натрупване – един от бронзовата епоха и два от римския период.

### **I етап на натрупване (БРОНЗОВА ЕПОХА)**

През бронзовата епоха е оформена приблизително кръгла площадка (диам. около 25 м) с основа от чакъл, покрита с пласт трамбована глина с дебелина 8-10 см. В центъра е изградено гробно съоръжение с елипсовидна в план форма (фиг. 4). Основата му представлява пояс от червено-сива-тъмнокафява глинеста пръст, върху който са подредени големи камъни. Вътрешността на основата е запълнена с 1-2 реда кварцови камъни. Върху оформената площадка е извършено погребение с кремация. Трупозгарянето е извън гробното съоръжение. Всички намерени при разкопките кости, въглени и гробен инвентар са разпръснати между камъните на площ около 12 кв. м, в пласт с дебелина от 30 до 35 см (фиг. 5). Иманярският изкоп е пресякъл този пласт в центъра, като е достигнал до нивото от чакъл. Западно от изкопа е намерен кух златен предмет с форма, наподобяваща прешлен за вретено с украса от врязани линии (фиг. 5b). Около и под него са открити множество големи зърноподобни и малки сферични златни мъниста, част от които имат разкъсвания и пробоявания с остър предмет (фиг. 5c). В източната половина на съоръжението е открит втори златен кух предмет с форма на прешлен за вретено, но по-голям и с украса от гъсто разположени от единия към другия отвор врязани линии (фиг. 5d). В този участък също са намерени големи и малки златни мъниста. На 1.50 м югоизточно е открита сребърна халка с плоско сечение и полирана повърхност (фиг. 5h). Възможно е предметът да представлява обков. В непосредствена близост до него са открити две правоъгълни плочки – сребърна и златна, с правоъгълно сечение и форма, здраво свързани със сребърен нит с кръгло сечение (фиг. 5g). На разстояние 1.20 м западно от сребърната халка са открити бронзов бръснач и каменен брус (фиг. 5/e, f). В югоизточната част на съоръжението, на разстояние 1.40 м южно от бръснача и бруса, е намерен керамичен съд с амфоровидна форма (фиг. 5a).

Върху нивото с камъни, между които са разпръснати останките от кремация и находките, е натрупан насип от кварцови камъни, които са по-големи в периферията (фигури 6 и 7). Формата на завършеното каменно съоръжение представлява пресечен конус с диаметър 8 м (СЗ-ЮИ) x 6.80 м (СИ-ЮЗ) и височина 1.60 м. Могилата от кварцови камъни е затрупана с глинеста червено-сива пръст. Размерите на завършената могила през бронзовата епоха са: височина 1.80 м, диаметър С-Ю 17.20, И-З 19.60 м. Няма регистрирани вторични гробове от по-късни епохи нито други нарушения на могиления насип.

### **II етап на натрупване (РИМСКИ ПЕРИОД)**

Вероятно през II в. сл. Хр., когато около надгробната могила от бронзовата епоха възниква селище, могиленият насип е ограден с каменна крепида с диаметър 23 м (С-Ю) и 21.50 м (И-З), изградена от гранито-гнайсови блокове с неправилна форма със средни размери (фиг. 4). По-ранната могила е

донатрупана с насип от червена рохка пръст (фиг. 9), в която са открити железни предмети (пирони, скоби, халки) и фрагменти от керамика на колело в ниска концентрация. В продължение на около 200 години могилата е била култово място в рамките на селището.

### III етап на натрупване (КЪСНОРИМСКИ ПЕРИОД)

В по-късен етап (вероятно през втората четвърт на IV в.) върху насипа от червена пръст са натрупани три пласта камъни със сиво-кафява пръст между тях. Камъните покриват напълно крепидата и пространство до 1 метър извън нея (фигури 3, 9, 10). В най-горното ниво камъни е открита монета на Констанций II (337-361), желязно ножче и бронзова фибула-брошка с форма на заек, в бяг на дясно. Затрупването на крепидата и насипа от римския период е извършено еднократно и организирано и като се има предвид времето на това събитие, вероятно това са мерки за прекратяване на езическите практики след приемането на християнството като официална религия в Римската империя.

### Гробно съоръжение и погребален ритуал (Бронзова епоха)

Няколко характеристики отличават гроба от бронзовата епоха, в сравнение с известните досега от района на Тракия, южно от Хемус: 1. Трупоизгаряне; 2. Надземно гробно съоръжение – площадка над нивото на древния терен; 3. Разпръскване на пепелта и костите, останали след кремацията върху площадката; 4. Разнообразен и богат гробен инвентар – златни, сребърни, бронзови, каменни предмети и керамичен съд. Пепелта и костите са пръснати заедно със златните мъниста.

Кремацията през Бронзовата епоха в Горна Тракия, според досега известните данни, е по-скоро изключение. Инхумацията е основният погребален ритуал, както през раннобронзовата епоха (РБЕ), така и през къснобронзовата епоха (КБЕ). Единствените гробове, отнесени към средната бронзова епоха (СБЕ) – до с. Овчарци, с. Драма, Ямболско и при Дебелт, Бургаско – също са извършени с трупополагане.

Най-близкият паралел на гроба от Изворово, от гледна точка на погребален ритуал, са гробове от открития наскоро некропол от РБЕ III до с. Дъбене, Карловско. Там е установена сходна ситуация – кремацията е извършена извън гробното съоръжение. Пепел и кости от трупоизгарянето, примесени със златни предмети (предимно от накити), са пръснати върху терена и са покрити с каменен кожух.

### Гробни находки

Находките, намерени под могиления насип, се разделят според предназначението си на три групи: 1. Предмети, използвани в погребалния ритуал и обредните действия (амфоровиден керамичен съд, глинен прешлен за вретено, фрагменти от натрошени керамични съдове в насипа); 2. Лични вещи, използвани в ежедневието (бронзов бръснач, каменен брус); 3. Накити и украшения (златни и сребърни предмети), представляващи демонстрация на социално положение, престиж и, вероятно, натоварени с определено значение при религиозни церемонии.

Керамичен съд – амфора (кат. #1; фиг. 12). Единственият цял съд, открит в могила #1 до с. Изворово, най-вероятно е използван за пренасяне на пепелта и изгорелите кости от мястото на кремацията до могилата. Технологичните характеристики на съда и фактурата на тестото са показател за местно производство. Амфората от Изворово съчетава няколко техники на украса – врязана, набодена, релефна и инкрустация с бяла паста. Най-точни

паралели амфората от Изворово намира в керамиката от селищна могила Гълъбово в строителните хоризонти I-IIIa, отнесени към средната бронзова епоха, Дебелт и Констанция. Фрагмент от подобна амфора е намерен и в най-ранните пластове на скалното светилище до с. Татул в Източните Родопи, датирани в края на първата четвърт на II хил. пр. Хр.

Глинен прешлен за вретено. При почистването на пръстта от иманярския изкоп е намерен биконичен глинен прешлен за вретено (кат. #2; **фиг. 13**) – това е предмет, който е натоварен с особена роля в погребалните и култовите практики.

Фрагментите от глинени съдове, пръснати в каменния насип, са открити непосредствено над нивото с находки в централното гробно съоръжение. Това са фрагменти от няколко съда със сиво-кафяв и сиво-черен цвят, груба глина с примеси от кварц и слюда.

Бронзов бръснач (кат. #3; **фиг. 14**). Има елипсовидна форма, заоблен връх, заострен е едностранно, като режещата част е дъговидно извита. Основата на дръжката е сравнително къса, с правоъгълно сечение. Най-близката аналогия е фрагмент от каменен калъп от зелен шист, намерен при разкопките на селището Микро Вуни на остров Самотраки в ниво, датирано във втората половина на XVIII в. пр. Хр. Формата е подобна на тази на бръснача от Изворово, но размерите са малко по-малки.

Каменен брус (кат. #4; **фигури 14, 15**). Има неправилна трапецовидна форма, която се стеснява и заостря към единия край. В тесния участък има дупка. Отворът е достатъчно голям за ремък или въженце, на което брусът е стоял закачен, вероятно за колан. И двата предмета, без съмнение, са използвани продължително време в бита. Те не са горели с тялото и са поставени в комплект близо до амфората. Двете гробни находки засега са основният довод в полза на предположението, че погребаният е мъж.

Златен предмет с форма на прешлен за вретено (кат. #5; **фиг. 16a**). Изработен е от две полусферични части от златен лист, свързани в най-изпъкналата част. Предметът има два отвора в центъра, които са с еднакъв диаметър. След свързването на двете съставни части е нанесена украса от косо спускащи се от единия до другия отвор пет успоредни линии, които образуват зиг-заг по цялата обиколка. Линиите са врязани с остър инструмент (длето) чрез отнемане на материал от повърхността (engraving). Мотивът на украсата е познат от врязаната украса върху керамични съдове от Южна Тракия (РБЕ III / СБЕ). Преди депонирането златният „прешлен“ е пробит на три места с остър инструмент, който е предизвикал разкъсване на стените.

Златен предмет с форма на прешлен за вретено (кат. #6; **фиг. 16b**). Втори подобен предмет е намерен в източната половина на централното съоръжение. Той е по-голям и по-тежък от първия и е с различна украса, но като форма двата предмета са много близки. Украсата е направена със същата техника след свързването на двете половини, но се състои от паралелно, плътно разположени една до друга врязани линии от единия към другия отвор. Предметът е прободен с острие на две срещуположни места – в най-изпъкналата част на тялото на мястото на свързване на двете полусфери. Най-вероятно двата предмета са част от накит.

Накит от златни мъниста. Общият им брой е 344 – 174 големи, с форма, наподобяваща ечемични зърна и 170 малки, сферични, с насечки. Накитът се е състоял от последователно редуващи се малко – голямо мънисто (**фиг.**

17). И при мънистата има умишлени пробождания с острие, което е довело до разкъсване на стените.

Големи (зърноподобни) мъниста (кат. #7; **фиг. 18**). Големите мъниста са общо 174 броя. Имат издължена елипсовидна форма с три жлеба през равни разстояния, които се редуват последователно с три изпъкнали участъка, стесняващи се към двата отвора на мънистото, допълнително украсени с по две, три или четири надлъжни врязани линии. Въз основа на броя на линиите са определени пет варианта (**фигури 18, 19**). Изработени са едновременно и в едно ателие (или от един майстор). Химичният състав на два екземпляра от големите мъниста предполага, че става въпрос за алувиално злато (**фиг. 20**). Този тип мъниста се срещат от СБЕ до финала на КБЕ (във варианти от фаянс или стъкло). Най-разпространени са на о-в Крит, като има единични екземпляри, самостоятелно или в комбинация с други типове мъниста, на о-в Кея и в Атика. Засега няма паралел на един накит с толкова много еднотипни златни мъниста, наподобяващи житни/ечемичени зърна, включително и от о-в Крит.

Малки мъниста (кат. #8; **фиг. 21**). Малките мъниста, които са общо 170 броя, са със сферична форма, кухи и с широки отвори. Всички са украсени с врязани линии. Отделени са 8 варианта (**фигури 21, 22**). Стилизово са напълно съвместими с по-големите мъниста с форма на зърна, техниката на украса е идентична и може да се приеме, че двата вида мъниста са с общ произход и са предназначени за един накит. Подобен тип мъниста не са уникални и се срещат в златни накити от бронзовата епоха в Егейския свят и Близкия Изток, като имат предимно допълваща роля в огърлици.

Златна и сребърна плочки, свързани със сребърен нит (кат. #9; **фиг. 23a**). Двете правоъгълни плочки – едната от сребро, а другата от злато – са разположени асиметрично една спрямо друга. Свързани са със сребърен нит, който влиза в специален отвор, направен в единия край на златната плочка.

Сребърна халка (кат. #10; **фиг. 23b**). Има разлика в диаметрите – единият с 0.13 см по-тесен от другия. Най-вероятно е била обков от дръжка на предмет.

В гроба са поставени предмети от всички видове скъп метал, познат през бронзовата епоха (с изключение на желязо) – злато, сребро и бронз. Металните находки от Изворово засега нямат паралели в региона, като особено това важи за накитите. Сред предметите от гробния инвентар в Изворово има такива, които се откриват за пръв път в Тракия, като например кухите златни зърноподобни мъниста. Тяхната изключителна изработка показва сериозни познания, опит и умения в бижутерията. Вероятността да са продукт на местни майстори, без никакви чужди влияния, изглежда трудно защитима. Най-точните и многобройни паралели са с бижута от о-в Крит и такива, които вероятно са резултат на критско влияние или са пряк внос. Ако допуснем, че мънистата от Изворово са с минойски произход, то възможностите за появата им в Сакар са няколко. Златните и сребърни находки от Изворово най-вероятно са резултат на преки контакти с минойски представители (търговци?). На този предварителен етап от обработката на резултатите от проучването на могила #1 може да се допусне, че накитите са изработени „на място” от минойски майстор.

#### Датировка

Най-близките паралели на златните мъниста са от Крит и са отнесени към ММ-LM I. Въпреки че единични, макар и много подобни, златни мъниста се

откриват в гробни контексти чак до LM III A, има основания да се приеме, че изработката на мънистата от Изворово е станала през втората половина на СБЕ (вероятно – края на XVIII – XVII в. пр. Хр. MM III/ LM I).

Богатият гробен инвентар, количеството и майсторската ювелирна изработка на предметите, ритуалът, както и гробното съоръжение показват убедително, че погребеният е принадлежал към елит, за който досега се смяташе, че не съществува в Тракия през първата половина на II хил. пр. Хр. Надгробната могила от с. Изворово е от голямо значение, тъй като вероятният произход на уникалните златни накити, както и евентуалният път на достигането им до района на Сакар, представлява сериозен довод в подкрепа на „минойската връзка“ в Тракия.

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