

Investigation at the Thracian Sanctuary on Turlata Hill near Troyan

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Turlata is a hill with an elongated shape and steep slopes to the east, north and south. It is situated 556 m above sea level and is east-west oriented. The highest part of the hill is a rock edge, its widest part being 8 m.

The excavations at the site were made in October 2000 and consisted of 4 trenches on the highest part of the hill, surrounding a rock with geometric motifs cut on it.

The excavations evidenced that a building or a low enclosure wall of wattle-and-daub existed on the rocky surface of the highest part of Turlata hill. Rituals including fire and burning were performed there, followed by pottery breaking and burying of some of the sherds. The sherds were covered by small and mid sized stone slabs and soil. The presumed area of the structure, which we assume was round in plan, is 100 sq. m and its central part is occupied by the rock already mentioned with half a disk cut on it, facing the east. At this stage of the investigations we could assume that the pottery assemblage from the site near the town of Troyan falls into a very narrow

time span - the very end of the Bronze age and partly the beginning of the Early Iron age. It is the time (according to the pottery assemblage analysis data) when the sanctuary was in active use.

The presumed round plan of the structure is similar to the plans of the partly excavated sanctuaries from the 1st millennium BC in the Central Stara Planina Mountain. The closest parallel of burying pottery and sherds comes from the Late Iron age sanctuary on Chuchul peak. Sherds, coins and iron objects dated in the 4th century BC were laid on the two cult platforms unearthed there; later they were covered with 40 cm thick layer of soil and stone slabs. The rocky surface of the sanctuary was regularly fired during certain rituals as was evidenced on Turlata hill as well. The sanctuary on Turlata hill near the town of Troyan is a peak and rock sanctuary in inland Thrace. It is the eighth Thracian cult site that was localized on the northern slopes of the Central Haemus. According to the date proposed this sanctuary is the earliest excavated Thracian sanctuary in Haemus.