

A Grave of a Warrior from the Hellenistic Period at the Tsrancha, Pazardzhik Region

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The author presents a collective find discovered in 2001 at the village of Tsrancha, Pazardzhik region. It is a chance find unearthed during excavation work in a private property. Since there was no archeologist present when it was found, there is no detailed record of the archaeological context.

The objects from the collective find can be divided into three main groups according to their function. The first group consists of two spearheads and two spearpoints (cauroters), two curved Thracian knives, a sword-rhomphaia, highly damaged sheath, a helmet, an umbo of a shield. The second group consists of a horse harness – a mouthpiece of a bridle and three rings. The third group consists of clay vessels. All the elements of the armament and the gear are made of iron. The find also includes a belt buckle. Part of the iron objects and the clay vessels had been broken or deformed before they were put in the grave and others have traces of fire on them. The author thinks that the collective find comprises grave goods from the grave of a warrior-horse rider. The traces of fire on some of the objects make the author think that it was a cremation burial, which was done out of the grave pit – the warrior was cremated together with part of his armament, and the rest of the armament

as well as the elements of the horse harness and the vessels were put in the grave pit as grave goods. The fact that some of the objects were broken or deformed could be explained with a ritual destruction performed on them. The author's hypothesis that part of the armament was produced in a local atelier and part of the clay vessel belong to the so-called "Thracian ritual pottery" which is typical only for the West Rhodope mountains region leads to the suggestion that the buried individual was a Thracian warrior. The abundant armament on the one hand, and the lack of luxurious grave goods, on the other, provides the author with reasons to refer the grave to the group of Thracian burials defined as close to the rich. The formal indications, the comparative analysis of the objects of the collective find as well as the time limits of the custom of burring a complete armament in warriors' graves date the studied grave to the 2nd century BC. The grave was found in the southwest part of the village; at this place a burial mound which had yielded finds from the second half of the 4th century BC was situated as well. These facts give grounds to the author to suggest that the grave was part of a necropolis which had been used from mid 4th century until mid 1st century BC.