

Thracian Tombs: Mausoleums, temples, Heroons? Part I
(Abstract)
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This paper opens new discussion on Thracian tombs and their interpretation as a sacred space for burial practices and sacrificial rituals. First, this is the problem about the royal tombs in Thrace. Their dates proved to be mainly after the midfourth century BC and in the first half of the third century BC, after the collapse of the Odrysian Kingdom. Thus, they could hardly be related to Odrysian kings, as it has been attempted. We do find tombs near the new political centers in Hellenistic Thrace, and we need to set criteria for the identification of the royal ones. The next question concerns the influences in their use; they continue the traditions of planning of ritual space, attested in megalithic burial structures, the Early Iron Age dolmens, but differ in construction and decoration principles that belong to the Hellenistic fashion. Therefore, this first part of the paper deals with the problem of modern interpretations of tombs and ideas about their religious functions. Some authors consider the entrance/dromos to

the burial chamber as an evidence for a multiple use, as it is the case with mausoleums, and define the tombs as such. Later this was used to classify the Thracian tombs as temples, a place for religious ceremonies before and after the burial, or even as a place for the king's initiation and enthronation ceremonies, and for his deification after his death. The grounds for such ideas are discussed and the analysis indicates that neither the tomb (the burial chamber) was accessible after the burial, nor the templelike façade could be a good reason to interpret the tomb as a temple. The Thracian monuments, the archaeological study of rituals and burial practices, the decoration inside them, and the written testimonies of Greek observers all provide a varied picture of eschatological ideas that differed from those of the neighbors. The question about to what extent they differed and what were the differences will be discussed in the second part of the paper.