

## Bronze Age graves at Kamen, Sliven municipality (Abstract)

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In the summer of 2011, in the vicinity of Kamen, Sliven municipality, two burial mounds were excavated, belonging to two closely situated tumular cemeteries, situated on the left bank of Tundzha, at a distance of 2.2 km from one another as the crow flies.

The first tumulus, Gabrova Mogila, was erected on a low slanting slope, c. 100 m to the northeast of the outermost houses of the modern village. Twenty-one graves were uncovered in the complex, ten of which, all inhumation burials, date back to the Bronze Age. The bodies were laid on their backs, with flexed legs and east-west orientation. Only the deceased in grave 31 was laid in flexed position on the right side. In some graves, coloring of the bones with red ochre was identified. Grave 30 was the primary burial, on top of which the initial mound was piled. The grave is located almost in the center of the mound, at a depth of 3.10 m BD. The burial pit was covered with parallel wooden beams, placed longitudinally in east-west direction. In the upper end of the pit, two skulls were found at 0.10 m from one another. On the bottom of the pit, the remains of four adult males (c. 35 years (skeleton 1), c. 20 years (skeleton 2), c. 20-25 years (skeleton 3), and c. 35-40 years (skeleton 4) were found, laid in supine extended position, with one or both legs slightly apart. The arms are bent at the elbows. There are traces of red ochre on all four skeletons. All of them had amulets of boar tusks. The grave goods also comprise metal, ceramic, bone, and flint items, based on which the complex could be dated to the Early Bronze Age.

Grave 24 was contemporary with the primary burial. In an oval pit, dug into the bedrock, measuring 0.80 by 1.48 m and 1.30 m deep, the disarticulated remains of seven individuals were found. The physical anthropological analysis distin-

guished remains of two females (20-25 and 25-30 years), a male (30-35 years), three children (c. 2, 5, and 6 years), and fragments of the skull of a child of the Infans I group. There are no traces of cutting with sharp tools or other visible treatment. The remains of a funerary feast on the bedrock, 0.40 by 0.70 m, were also related to the initial burial. In the northeastern end of the deposit, there were a fragmentary undecorated *askos*, placed with its mouth downwards, a fragment of a ceramic bowl with traces of red ochre, and isolated bones of a small animal. The deposit is contemporary with graves 24 and 30 in Gabrova Mogila tumulus.

All other Early Bronze Age graves were dug into the initial mound. An additional mound was piled on top of them, bringing the tumulus to its present dimensions. All secondary burials have no grave goods.

The Shekerdzha tumulus is situated on a high ridge. It contained three graves from the Middle Bronze Age and six from the Early Bronze Age. The pit of the central grave 10 was dug into the bedrock and had additional walls above ground that were built of split stones. In the pit, two males (c. 35 and 16-18 years) were laid on their backs with flexed legs and parallel to one another. At about 0.30 m beneath the two adults, on top of the carved bedrock, a child of c. 3.5 years was buried in supine position with the legs bent in the knees. The bones were covered with a lot of red ochre. A fragment of the wall of an undecorated coarse vessel was placed as a grave good next to the child.

All above presented graves date to the Early Bronze Age and could be related to the bearers of the Pit-Grave culture. The newly excavated graves fill an important blank space on the map of their distribution and provide new information about both their burial practices and their relations with the bearers of the local Early Bronze Age culture.