

Българска академия на науките
Археологически институт с музей

**Спасителни
археологически разкопки
по трасето на железопътната линия
Пловдив-Свиленград през 2004 г.**

Под редакцията на:

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Велико Търново
2006

В този сборник са събрани първичните публикации на резултатите от проведените през 2004 г. спасителни разкопки на 9 археологически обекта, попадащи в сервитутната зона на жп линията Пловдив-Свиленград-турска/гръцка граница. Археологическите проучвания са финансирани от Национална компания “Железопътна инфраструктура”.

НК “ЖИ”
Национална компания
“Железопътна инфраструктура”



NRIC
National Railway
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БЪЛГАРСКА АКАДЕМИЯ НА НАУКИТЕ
АРХЕОЛОГИЧЕСКИ ИНСТИТУТ С МУЗЕЙ

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Предговор

Във връзка с необходимостта от опазване на обектите на културното наследство при реализацията на проекта “Реконструкция и електрификация на железопътната линия Пловдив-Свиленград-турска/гръцка граница и оптимизиране на трасето за скорост 160 км/ч“ през 2001 г. се проведеха изследвания по трасето на железопътната линия. В резултат на системното проучване в рамките на сервитута на железопътната линия бяха регистрирани 28 археологически паметника, които в различна степен ще бъдат засегнати от предстоящите строителни работи. В съответствие с изискванията на българското законодателство, между Национална компания “Железопътна инфраструктура” и Археологически институт с музей към БАН беше сключен договор, в изпълнение на който през 2004 г. започнаха спасителните разкопки на застрашените археологически обекти. Съгласно договора, археологическите проучвания ще се проведат в три археологически сезона – от 2004 до 2006 г. и ще бъдат изцяло финансирани от Национална компания “Железопътна инфраструктура”.

Железопътната линия от Пловдив до Свиленград преминава по известния от древността транбалкански път, пресичащ Балканския полуостров от северо-запад на югоизток. Трасето на пътя и на железопътната линията в този участък са разположени успоредно на руслото на р. Марица. Известно е, че долината на р. Марица е една от най-наситените територии с археологически обекти в България. Според проведено от АИМ през 1988 г. специализирано прогнозно проучване за концентрацията на археологически паметници в отделните части от територията на България, по поречието на р. Марица трябва да се очаква гъстота от най-висока степен – над 1,5 археологически обекта на 1

км². Предпоставка за това са изключително благоприятните условия за живот и стопанска дейност, които предлага този район. По тази причина предстоящите строителни работи във връзка с реконструкцията на железопътната линия създават условия за нарушаване на целостта на такъв значителен брой археологически паметници.

Пред необходимостта за вземане на мерки за опазване на археологическите паметници в този район се изправят още строителите на т. нар. Барон-Хиршова железница. През 1871 г. австрийските инженери Целер и Вайзер провеждат спасителни разкопки на надгробни могили, през които трябва да премине железопътната линия. Те представят отчетите си за проучените 2 надгробни могили при с. Поповица и могилен некропол от 7 могили при кв. Дебър на гр. Първомай пред Антропологическото дружество във Виена.

Настоящият сборник представя резултатите от спасителните проучвания на 9 археологически обекти, разкопките на които бяха проведени през 2004 г. Изследванията се осъществиха от 11 екипа, в които участваха 20 археолози от АИМ-БАН, музеите в района и СУ “Св. Климент Охридски”. Като стажант-археолози в проучванията взеха участие 42 докторанти, магистри и студенти от всички университети, в които се изучава археология. Разкопките се проведоха с помощта на над 230 работници, наети от най-близките населени места.

Представените публикации за всеки от проучените обекти обогатяват познанията за селищния живот, погребалните обичаи и култови практики на населението, обитавало долината на Марица в миналото. Хронологическият обхват на изследваните обекти обхваща времето от ранния неолит (обект № 9 – с. Ябълково), през ранната бронзова епоха (обект № 26 – Свиленград),

ранната и късната желязна епоха (обект № 2 – Поповица, обект № 6 – Скобелево, обект № 9 – Ябълково, обект № 24 – Харманли и обект № 26 – Свиленград), римската епоха (обект № 3 – Винаца, обект № 6 – Скобелево) до средновековието (обект № 9 – Ябълково, обект № 12 – Крум, обекти №№ 18 и 20 – Симеоновград). При разкопките са открити значителен брой ценни находки с висока научна и експозиционна стойност, които обогатяват фондовете на Националния археологически музей и на местните исторически музеи.

Проф. Васил Николов,
Директор на Археологически институт
с музей при БАН и
научен ръководител на проекта

В заключение е важно да се отбележи доброто сътрудничество между Национална компания “Железопътна инфраструктура” и Археологически институт с музей към БАН, благодарение на което ще бъдат съхранени за науката важни следи от културното наследство на България. Отношенията между двете институции са пример за съвместяване на грижата и отговорността за опазване на паметниците на културата и успешното осъществяване на голям инфраструктурен проект.

Д-р Георги Нехризов,
Археологически институт с музей,
координатор на проекта

Trench Excavations at Gebelika Locality near the Village of Popovitsa, Plovdiv Region (Summary)

Alexey Gotzev

The archaeological site is situated on the right bank of the Maritsa River on the route of Plovdiv-Svilengrad railway between km 182.600 and km 183.100. The terrain is flat slightly slanting to the north and northwest towards the river and is not used as agricultural land at the moment. A natural low hill is visible in the central part of the area.

The site was studied through a dense network of trenches situated on both sides of the existing railway; the trenches were aimed at mapping the archaeological deposits – their existence, thickness and sequence as well as excavating the archaeological features. Their total number at this stage of exploration exceeds 100 and they are located all over the area of the site which was identified earlier.

The following main results of the excavations were achieved: the excavated area yielded a limited number of finds. Except for one trench in the southern part of the site there is no prominent cultural layer. The following features were excavated:

– An inhumation burial of an adult male. The skeleton is west-east orientated, the head pointing to the west. The deceased was bur-

ied according to the Christian tradition. The right arm and the upper part of the skull were damaged *post mortem*. No grave goods were found. The skeleton was laid into the natural and no traces of a grave pit were identified.

– Well preserved lower part of a biconical vessel *Buckel-amphora*. The vessel was filled with soil and pieces of human bones. The studies revealed that the bones belonged to two human individuals – a child and an old female. The vessel was damaged by the agricultural activity. It is dated to the Early Iron age and is related to its early phases, a time when elements of the cultures of the Northwest penetrated the cultures of Thrace.

Though quite insufficient in number, the archaeological finds yielded by the site give ground for certain conclusions related to its chronology. The pottery is dated to the 1st millennium BC and both Early and Late periods of the Iron age are represented. The excavated burial as well as some other isolated finds indicate certain activity at the site in later periods as well; so far it is not possible to specify them precisely and to identify the function of the site.

Kerakova Mogila Mound Necropolis from the Roman Period near the Village of Vinitsa, Plovdiv Region (Summary)

Ivan Panayotov, Stefan Alexandrov, Hristo Buyukliev, Anita Georgieva

The archaeological excavation of the mound necropolis in the area Kerakova mogila was carried out in May-July 2004 with Permit № 360 from 26.04.2004 for rescue excavations under contract between Archaeological Institute with Museum at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences and Railway Infrastructure National Company.

The purpose of the field research was determined by its rescue character – to free the building site for a very short period of time by conducting a complete research of the archaeological structures. The publication is a preliminary one and aims at publishing preliminary data on stratigraphic situations and finds, which are partially or completely restored.

The land of Vinitsa is situated the central part of the Upper Thracian lowland. In geostructural aspect it is situated within the zone of the Plovdiv depression. The region was built by the rocks of the Ahmatovo formation. The flora consisted predominantly of Xeromesophytes oar. In the land of Vinitsa winds blow predominantly from northwest-west direction.

The region is situated in the eastern part of the administrative territory of the ancient city of Philippopolis. The main road Singidunum-Philippopolis-Adrianople lies approximately 10-12 km to the north. It is there that the road stations Parebole near the village of Belozem, Ranilum near the village of Orizovo and Cille near Cherna Gora were localised. The archaeological literature mentions votive plates from the village of Vinitsa situated 2.5 km north of the village of Milevo.

Location. The mound necropolis is situated 2 km southwest of the village of Vinitsa in Kerakova mogila locality. In the 1970s the area was used for planting vineyards. The necropolis consists of two mounds situated on

an unflooded terrace of the Maritsa river on the rising part of the terrain in the direction of west-east and displacement north-south. The distance between them is 74 m (tabl. I, 1).

Kerakova mogila – mound I (tabl. I, 3-5) is 2.90-3.10 m high. Its foundation from west to east is 40 m and from north to south 35 m. On the one hand it is a result of the displacement and erosion and on the other of the sectioning of part of the periphery for leveling the terrain when the vineyards were planted. There is a treasure hunters' ditch in the center of the mound most probably from 2003. It was dug by hand and with a digger and the dimensions of the opening are 2.30-3.40 m and its depth is 3.20-3.30 m (tabl. II; III, 1).

The stratigraphic observations (tabl. II, 2; III, 2-4; Col. tabl. I, II) show the following way of piling the mound. The geometric center was ca. 1.25 m west of the central grid point (R). Initially the process started by heaping on the ancient surface 7 m west of R. The lower layers are dominated by the humus and layers of beige soil and humus alternate as well as their combinations with variation of the material. The upper layers consist of red soil. The height of this mound reaches 2.20-2.40 m. Following the same principle a second mound was done 6.20-6.50 m east of R. Initially it was mainly humus with few mixtures and further up beige soil with mixtures. The height of this mound reaches 1.50-1.70 m. The space between the west and the east pilings is filled up with layers of humus, different coloured soil with varying thickness and a total of 12 combinations of the two. This reveals that the piling material was gathered from different locations and depth. The depth of the buried soil from R is varies: from 2.75-2.85 to 3.10 m, depending on the displacement of the terrain at the time. Underneath the humus there is soil with dif-

ferent colours and the Ahmatovo formation is distinguishable at 7-8 m and at 11-12 m west of R and 9.50-12 m east of R.

For the formation of the mound periphery mainly red soil was used. It forms a belt with depth between 1.20-2 m situated 12-14 m from R. The belt is visible in the section (col. tabl. I, II) and in plan (tabl. VI, 3). Most probably it marks the end of the original piling of the mound, which presupposes that the initial diameter had been 28-28.50 m. It is difficult to determine whether red soil was consciously used for the formation of the peripheries because of its specific qualities (density and others). In 14 m from R in all directions the character of the mound piling changes in terms of structure and leaning of the layers. This was a result from the natural and human interference with the original mound. From stratigraphic point of view signs of a ditch or artificial lowering of the terrain were distinguished. This presupposed that the mound material was not collected near the mound.

No structures and archaeological materials contemporary of its piling were found in Mound I. Its eastern periphery was reused later in the Ottoman period (tabl. IV, 1-2; V). The structure found, marked as № 1-2, consists of demolished remains of a briefly used shelter or some other similar structure in the leeward of the mound build with non durable material which did not leave discernable traces. The material found – ashes, coals, stones, fragments of glazed and non glazed pottery, an iron nail, horseshoes led sphere and clay pipe – were not preserved *in situ* (tabl. VII and VIII). The reason for this is the small depth underneath the mound surface where they were found. At the site only a flat earthen baking dish was preserved (tabl. VI; VII, 3). Based on the clay pipe, field inventory № I 2 (tabl. VIII, 2) and the pan, field Inv. № 4 (tabl. VII, 2), the find was dated to the 17th-18th century. The analysis of the archaeobotanic materials found at the site reveals the presence of rice, wheat, barley and millet, the rice being the dominant

grain (tabl. XXVIII). The carbonised wood found was oak.

Mound II is flattened (tabl. IX; col. tabl. III). Its surface had been mechanically deeply ploughed which reduced its height with approximately 0.30 m. Its present height is 1.10-1.20 m. The size of its foundation is bigger from west to east and reaches 32 m while from north to south it is 30 m.

The stratigraphic excavations show the method of piling (tabl. X; XI; col. tabl. III). Initially a pile of humus was made with preserved height of 0.75-0.80 m and foundation north south 4.60 m and west-east 4 m. Then follows a piling of gray soil with white admixture, the height of which can not be determined, and foundations north-south 7.40 and west – east 5.60 m. The third piling consists of red soil with white admixture. Its height can not be restored. The dimensions of its foundation are north – south 11 m and west – east 10 m. It is also possible that when the land was cultivated the peripheries were reduces with about 1 m. The pilings are marked with A, B and C in the horizontal projection (tabl. IX, 3).

Non carbonized vetch seeds were found in the buried soil underneath the piling which could be seen as a 1-2 cm thick line.

The grave structure is situated in the southeast section of the mound (tabl. XIV). On the terrain from that time at depth from 0.87 m to 0.95 m from R at a distance of 3.80 m northwest and from 1.70 to 2.60 m west and south of the center of the grave pit the following vessels were placed: jug Inv. № II 1 (tabl. XI, 1; XIX; col. tabl. V, 1); jug Inv. № II 6 (tabl. XX, 3; col. tabl. V, 4), jug Inv. № II 5 (tabl. XII, 2-3; XX, 3), bowl Inv. № II 2 (tabl. XX, 2; col. tabl. VI, 8), jug Inv. № II 1 a (tabl. XVIII, 1-3; col. tabl. V, 3), jar Inv. № II 3 (tabl. XXIII, 1), cup Inv. № II 4 (tabl. XX, 1; col. tabl. VI, 1), jug Inv. № II 7 (tabl. XVI, 1; col. tabl. V, 6), jug Inv. № II 8 at 0.40 m northeast from Inv. № II 7 and closer to the grave (tabl. XVI, 2; col. tabl. V, 2) and jug Inv. № II 9 (tabl. XVII, 1; col. tabl. V, 5). Because of the dangers of

leaving them on site the vessels were moved in the days of finding and cleaning. In the immediate proximity of the grave pit at 0.92 m from R highly fragmented clay lamp Inv. № II 12 and to the northwest (tabl. XXV, 5) and west iron object Inv. № II 13 (tabl. XXV, 3) and two pieces of a roof tile Inv. № II 11 (tabl. XI, 5; XXIV, 2).

The burial was made on site through cremation in a grave pit without a step. The grave pit is at a depth of 0.95 m from R, oriented west – east with dimensions of the opening 2 x 1 m and depth of 0.30 to 0.55 m. It is dug in into the ancient humus and gray soil, its walls in the northwest, southwest and southeast corner are partially leaning to the center probably from the sinking caused by the pressure of the piling (tabl. XIII-XV).

The grave goods are concentrated mainly in the east part along the longitudinal walls and occasionally in the soil eroded from the sides of the grave pit. The sherds are deformed by the high temperature and displaced when the grave pit was filled (col. tabl. IV, 4). Only in jug Inv. № II 15, found in the central part with its bottom pointing downwards, there was no secondary burning and change of colour and form (tabl. XXII, 3; col. tabl. VI, 6), which presupposes that it was pit in the pit after the cremation.

The grave pit yielded the following finds two cups Inv. NN II 17 and 18 (tabl. XXI, 2 and 1; col. tabl. VI, 2-3), two plates Inv. NN 20 and 14 (tabl. XXII, 1-2; col. tabl. VI, 4), jug Inv. № II 15 (tabl. XXII, 3; col. tabl. VI, 6), bowl Inv. № II 14 (tabl. XXI, 3; col. tabl. VI, 7), parts of bone hair pin Inv. № II 21 (tabl. XXV, 4), two iron objects Inv. NN II 23 and 24 (tabl. XXV, 1-2), fragments of two partially restorable vessels – jar Inv. NN II 19 and 22 (tabl. XXIII, 2; tabl. XXIV, 1), fragments of rims Inv. № II 25 and three bases Inv. NN 26-28, probably from plates, few and very tiny parts of a glass vessel or vessels and traces of two tiny completely oxidized metal particles, probably from a nail. The bones of the cremated person are strongly burned and with small

dimensions. In the fill of the pit no seeds or grains from cultivated plants were found. The carbonized wood was oak.

Archaeological context. The mound necropolis from Vinitsa reveals many characteristics of burial rites typical of the Thracian tribes during the Roman period.

The method of mound piling was known around the territory of the whole country. In mound I the piling consists of two pilings at a distance of 13-13.50 m between each other with filling in the space between them and the final forming of the mound. Mound II was made at once and has with three layers. These methods of piling were known from the pre-Roman periods.

In mound I no grave or any other structures and archaeological material contemporary to its piling were found. In the Bulgarian archaeological literature such mounds are described as empty, unused, symbolic and cenotaphs. The first two terms are related to the formal characteristics and the other two with the interpretation. Currently the quantitative ration between used and unused mounds in Bulgaria can not be determined chronologically because there are few fully researched necropolises as well as topographic coincidence of mounds from different periods and reusing of earlier mounds. However the opinion expressed in the literature is that during the Roman period the unused mounds are fewer than those from earlier periods.

Grave structure from mound II. The cremation *in situ* in a grave pit without steps is very common for the Roman period. It is known from earlier periods as well. Cremation is accepted as dominating for the Roman period by the majority of Bulgarian researchers. There are certain areas in the country, for example Kazanlak, where there is evidence of only this type of burial.

The inventory found in mound II includes personal belongings, gifts and remains of the fire while artifacts with votive character were not found. Necropolises from the Roman period often yield cups, plates, jugs and bowls

similar to those found in Vinitsa. Only the bone hair pin could lead to speculations that the a woman was buried in the grave if it is accepted that men did not use this type of decoration for their hairdo.

It is possible to date mound II of the necropolis near the village of Vinitsa according to the inventory since the method of the mound piling, the grave and the cremation were widely spread in a long time span. The analysis of the pottery points out to the second half of the 2nd-3rd century. The wide chronological boundaries are due to the long term of existence of the pottery shapes and to some extent to the historiographic tradition. Objectively, there is

no data available for the individual dating of mound I. The identical morphology of the terrain where the two mounds are situated and the small distance between them presuppose their synchrony. The same is indicated by the common sign in the method of piling – the use of red soil with white admixtures in the final forming of their pilings. Because of the above reasons the relative dating is impossible.

In conclusion the mound necropolis near the village of Vinitsa can be described as a provincial necropolis in the province of Thrace from the second half of the 2nd-3rd century, with characteristics typical of the burial rites of Thracian tribes at this time.

Geophysical prospection of Mound Necropolis Kerakova tumulus near the village of Vinitsa (Summary)

Nikola Tonkov

On a request of Ph. D. Ivan Panayotov, director of the excavations of the site no. 3 on the line of the reconstruction of the railway to Svilengrad, a geophysical prospection was performed on Kerakova tumulus in the lands of the village of Vinitsa. The aim of the prospection was to establish the existence or the lack of a tomb or another stone construction. This could help the archaeological excavations (the use of heavy machines, in particular) to be organized more precisely in advance.

Kerakova tumulus is about 3 m high, its diameter is about 40 m with a circumference of some 120 m.

The geophysical prospection was performed applying the electroresistivity method, traversing with Wenner-Schlumberger arrays. The measurement grid was radial, conforming to the typical axial symmetry of the tumulus. The profiles were regular at 10^g, profile 0^g being north-south. The survey included a strip about 5 m beyond the visible outlines of the tumulus. The measurements were made with two current electrode separations – 3 and 5 m, the potential electrode separation was 1 m and the step – 1 m, that allowed a depth of investigation from about 0.3 to about 1.6 m. Equipment used included

resistivimeters ПИ-2, multicore cables and an automatic switcher. The total surveyed area is around 1300 sq. m.

The results of the measurements are processed with the computer program Surfer and are presented in the enclosed apparent resistivity maps for the each of the applied arrays (tabl. XXVI, 1-2). The following conclusion can be drawn by the above pointed maps:

As a whole, the apparent resistivity values are low and weakly disturbed. They vary generally from 10 to 15 ohm m. This speaks of a homogeneous tumulus embankment with a considerable clay content and an almost absolute lack of rock materials. The distinguished anomaly just north of the centre is aroused by a treasure hunters' ditch and the earth heaped around it. The only anomaly that could be of any archaeological interest is registered along profiles 290^g and 280^g some 8 meters west from the centre. It is quite weak, however, and could not be connected with a certain stone construction.

The data obtained by the geophysical prospection did not give ground a tomb or other stone construction to be expected under the embankment of Kerakova tumulus at the village of Vinitsa.

Natural Environment (Morphohydrographic and Geological Characteristics) in the Region of Mound Necropolis near the Village of Vinitsa (Summary)

Rositsa Kenederova, Alexander Sarafov

The territory of Vinitsa falls within the Upper Thracian Neogen-Quaternary depression. The development of the region began in the late Chalkolithic after the accumulation of residues on the Hercynian foundation. In the Neogenic grabenian structure sank in. The sinking of the blocks in the region of Chirpan threshold was less intensive.

The Grabenian structure determines the considerable water reserves. The dominating relief is the accumulative one rising to 100-200 m above the sea level and relative exceeding between 40-60 m. The alluvial surface in the Maritsa river valley accumulates unconfined ground waters. Vertisols develop on the zone soils above the relatively flat topographic surface. The Azonal soils are the alluvial on the flooding terrace, 1-3 m above the current river bed and the alluvial – meadow on the non flooding terrace (3-5 m above the Maritsa river bed). The dominating flora comprised of Xeromesophytes oar. At the moment the area is dominated by Shibliak – *Carpeneta orientalis* & *Paliureta spina* – Christi hornbeam and thorny bush.

From geologo-structural point of view the excavated territory is situated within the zone of Plovdiv fall. The structure of the upper Thracian valley includes horizontal and vertical fault (Parvomai, the faults around Zlatna livada and Merichleri), forming a block mosaic with central axis the Maritsa fault (Gerassimov, Galabov 1966).

From petrographic point of view the region around the village of Vinitsa is built from the rocks of the Ahmatovo formation.

The alluvial deposits (aQp¹, aQp², aQp³, aQh) are represented by sands and gravel. They were processed during transportation. The alluvial – proluvial (a-prQp) are represented by gravel and sand materials. The rock

segments are well rounded. The gravels layers are not identified. The flooding terrace is built by materials with rougher particles. The first river flat terrace is built by alternating layers of sand – clay materials, sands, gravel. The further they are situated from the riverbed the finer the material particles.

The Ahmatovo formation was classified by E. Kuyumdzhieva and L. Dragomanov in 1971 with the help of section in the near by village of Ahmatovo. The deposits are of continental origin covered by quaternary deposits with partial exposures between Popovitsa and Ezerovo. The sediments sit on a colourful underlay of metamorphs, sediments and granite. The maximum power of the Ahmatovo formation is 300 m, and that of the Quaternary – 120 m. In 1981 Dragomanov and others classified three macrocycles with age Meotian, Pontian-Dacian, Upper Pleistocene – Eopleistocene.

In each section the granulometric measurements of the sediment segments are diminishing in ascending manner which is a direct result of the conditions of the sediment deposit process. The basis is dominated by psephite/psammite deposits while the upper end is dominated by mudstow/siltstow. This is a resulting from the relative flattening of the palaeosurface during the sedimentation process (Dragomanov 1981).

The formation is represented mainly by river and continental (proluvial and deluvial) deposits, for example: gravels, sands, silt, siltstow and sandy clays. In the upper layers infiltration limestone. The ingredient dominating the profile are the sands. They are yellow, different granular cross bedding. The gravels and the гравелиите form lenses layers among the sand in the base.

The Quaternary stage is related to the withdrawal of the lake waters. As a result of

that wide mantle cones are deposited along the south periphery of the lowland. They are cut through by normal fault, carried out by the rise of the Rhodope Mountains and are related to the sinking of the lowland.

Therefore it can be concluded that from petrographic point of view the land is situated within uniform region built by sands, gravels and clays with Pliocene and Quaternary age.

Analysis of Archaeobotanic Material from Mound Necropolis near the Village of Vinitsa (Summary)

Tsvetana Popova

Materials and methods

The plant remains collected from different archaeological structures: from installation № 1-2 in mound I; grave № 1 and trenches № 1, 3 and 5 in mound II. The total number of samples is 78 and the floated sediment is 156 l. After the processing (flotation and drying) the material is determined by binocular lens and compared with collections and atlases (Schweingruber 1988). Carbonized and non carbonized seeds and carbonized wood was registered.

Mound I. Installation was registered in the eastern section of the mound, most probably a temporary shelter with a hearth. The archaeological materials from this installation was dated to the Ottoman period, the 17th-18th century. The samples were collected at the surface of the hearth as well as from the widening to the east. 44 samples were processed (table 1). Wheat mixes of the following cultivated plants were found: soft-compact wheat – *Triticum aestivo/compactum*; barley – *Hordeum vulgare var. vulgare*; millet – *Panicum miliaceum*; rice – *Oryza sativa*. Rice dominates all the mixtures. The grains are very well preserved (tabl. XXVIII, 2, 4). The morphological principles typical of cultivated rice were easy to observe. The measuring of a certain sample of 90 grains reveals the following average sizes: L: (length) – 4,48; B: (width) – 1,81; T: (thickness) – 1,64. The grains have the size of a typical cultivated plant. The presence of rice in this wheat mixture could be a result of domestic activity as the mixture was spilled near the hearth.

Fragment of metal objects and parts of a Turkish pipe were found in installation № 1-2. Charcoal with average size between 3,5 and 6 cm were found in many places. In proximity spilled rice was found again. Despite the fact that the precise dating is not possible the find

is extremely interesting because for the first time on the territory of the country rice was found in archaeobotanic materials. In Europe rice appears for the first time around 1500.

Mound II. The material was yielded from the following installations: grave № 1, vessels, trenches № 1, 3 and 5.

The analysis of the buried soil from mound II concentrates mainly on the study of plant remains. The research question was whether traces of old plants were preserved in it and whether they can provide reliable information. The samples were collected from different places of the drilling (table 2). The results reveal huge concentration of noncarbonized vetch seeds – *Vicia cf. sativa*. The seeds were round, sometimes flat (tabl. XXVIII, 1, 3, 5). It is often difficult to determine the kind by the size of the wild and the cultivated form. More precise data is certainly available from the Roman period (Zohary, Hopf 1988). Vetch was one of the characteristic types of Mediterranean agriculture. However, compared to the other types of bean it was used less often for forage and food for people. Today it is used mainly as forage plant.

Vetch is widely spread in the countries of Fore-Asia as a weed both in wild form. There it is found in its endemic forms. The closest wild variety can be found in Turkmenistan.

The archaeobotanic material reveals the following data: E. Werth find in Cairo seeds of peas and among them alloy of vetch (Werth 1939). They are dated to 5000 BC. According to Hillman (Hillman 1975), the earliest finds come from Natifian settlements in Abu Hureyra and from the layers of preceramic Neolithic in Can Hasan III – Turkey (French et al. 1972).

In Bulgaria vetch was found in Neolithic layers of the Tell Karanovo. The finds were reported

by M. Hopf but they do not specify whether it was wild or cultivated vetch (Hopf 1978).

Grave NI (table 3). 14 samples were processed in total. They were collected from the central, west and east section of the grave installation at 1,50 m. Neither seeds nor grain of cultivated plants were found. The carbonized *alburnum* fragments found belong to oak. The oak was also found in mound I. It was a widely spread sort in the past as it is today.

Vessels. None of the vessel samples contain organic material.

Conclusion. In general, the archaeobotanic materials are scarce but extremely interesting at the same time. This was the first time carbonized rice is found on the territory of Bulgaria. Extremely useful is the information from the buried soil in which vetch seeds were found for the first time – *Vicia sativa*. Most probably the site was a field planted with vetch used for animal food.³

Trench Excavations in Gerena Locality near Skobelevo, Dimitrovgrad Region (Summary)

Daniela Agre, Deyan Dichev

The construction of Plovdiv – Svilengrad railway required rescue trench excavations on the route of the railway between km 211+056.131 and 211+264.712. The excavations started on 1 October and lasted until November 1, 2004. The team was lead by Daniela Agre (IAM-BAS), project director and Deyan Dichev (National Museum of History), deputy project director and PhD students and students from Sofia University and New Bulgarian University, interdisciplinary research specialists and workers from the towns of Dimitrovgrad, Chirpan and Skobelevo.

The site is situated in Gerena locality, about 1.5 km to the west of railway station Skobelevo, Dimitrovgrad municipality. The area of the site is flat and is located on a non-flooding river terrace at the southern part of the Maritsa river. 25 trenches were made, 23 of them with dimensions 1x10 m and 2 – 3x25 m. Some of the trenches were enlarged later. The explored area is 350 sq. m large. The sections of the trenches show a layer of black soil from 0.10 to 0.70-90 m (from the surface), followed by a grey-brown layer and the white virgin soil (limestone soil). The trenches situated in the eastern part of the excavated area yielded a scarce amount of archaeological finds. In contrast, the trenches of the western part provided good results. A field of ritual pits was localized there – the so-called pit sanctuary. After the removal of a layer 0.15-0.25 m thick, patches of darker soil, round or oval in shape and varying in size became visible on the surface. It was difficult to specify the size of the pits at this level. They became clearly visible after the removal of the topsoil, 0.15 m thick in the westernmost part and 1.80-2 m – in the easternmost part of the excavated area. 19 pits were localized. The diameter of the opening varies from 0.50 to 2.50 m, the maximal

depth from the modern surface of the terrain reaches 2.70 m. They are dated as follows: one pit is dated to the end of the Early Iron age (pit № 7); 14 pits – to the Late Iron age (pits NN 1, 2, 4-6, 8, 10-13, 16-19); 4 pits – to the 3rd-4th century AD (pits NN 3, 9, 14, 15).

The pits are grouped in certain patterns. The greatest number of pits was concentrated in trenches I, IV, VI, XIV and XV situated in the south-western part of the excavated area. There were single pits in the rest of the trenches. All pits were filled in with black-brown soil, compact in most of the cases. Due to the many years of agricultural activity, the pit openings were damaged. They are round or oval in plan, their section being hemispheric, cylindrical or sand glass in shape. The pits bottoms were flat or concave. Except for pits NN 11 and 19, they were dug into the white limestone layer and filled in with soil from an earlier settlement, pits NN 3, 9, 14 and 15, i. e. the pits dated to the Roman period, being exceptions in this case. The fill of these pits was taken from the surrounding area. Although there were charcoals in all pits, traces of fire were found in none of them. Ashy remains were found in few pits.

The fill of all pits contained river or crashed stones. There is a piece of a grinding stone laid on the bottom of only one of the pits.

The pit filler yielded animal bones as well. Domestic animals were represented by sheep/goat, dog and bird bones. River shells were also found. A bone awl was found in pit № 9.

Pottery sherds is the most numerous finds. No complete vessels were found. Part of the pottery comes from an earlier settlement – it is handmade and the sherds are small in size and quite “worn out”. The pottery yielded by the Classic period pits was both hand- and wheel made the handmade pottery prevailing. It is made of clay containing big amount of quartz

grains, which became red-brown or gray-black after firing. High jars and bowls are most common. Most of the pottery is thick walled. The high jars are decorated with plastic band with finger pinches and finger prints and oblique incisions, plastic ornaments and lugs. The decoration covers the under rim section or the upper part of the vessel.

The wheel made pottery is made of fine clay, which became gray, yellow-gray or brown after firing. Plates, bowls, small cups, amphora-shaped and crater-shaped vessel are most common. The big vessels are silverfish slipped. Two pits yielded Greek black slipped sherds.

The pits from the Roman period (the 3rd – 4th century) yielded forms, which we were able to restore – pithoi, amphora-shaped vessels, plates and small cups.

The upper part of the pit fill contains a considerable amount of pieces of fired wall plaster. Imprints of wooden sticks, 0.1-2,5 cm are visible on them.

A loom weight was found in pit № 2. Pit № 9 yielded a loom weight and a spindle whirl. Such finds are common for other pit sanctuaries as well.

The metal finds from the pits are represented by a bronze fibula and three bronze coins. The fibula is classified to the type of bilateral fibula with four-angle plate, found in Thrace in the 7th-6th century BC. The coins are in a very poor state of preservation and provide no reliable data.

The single glass find – a bead – was yielded by pit № 9.

The results from the first stage of excavations of the pit sanctuary near Skobeleva reveal that it functioned during two periods – late 6th-4th century BC and the 3rd-4th century AD, with a five centuries interruption between them; Notwithstanding the long break the site functioned as a sacred place in the second period as well. This pit sanctuary belongs to the large group of such cult places whose number increased a lot in the recent years. The rituals attested in the pits near Skobeleva do not differ from those performed at similar sites.

The excavations at the site are to be continued.

Archaeological excavations at Yabalkovo Site in 2000-2003 (Summary)

Krasimir Leshtakov, Milena Tonkova, Rumen Mikov, Katja Melamed

The rescue excavations at Site № 9 on Plovdiv-Svilengrad railway are a continuation of the excavations at Yabalkovo site, which started in 2000. Site № 9 is situated in the northernmost part of the large multilayer, known as “Yabalkovo site”. The excavations at the site covering the future route of the Maritsa highway and the related facilities lasted two seasons, and the rescue excavations on the route of a local road connecting the town of Dimitrovgrad and the village of Yabalkovo took another two seasons (2002 and 2003).

I. Early Neolithic features at Yabalkovo site, 2000-2003

The archaeological survey in 1991 revealed that the open-air settlement covers an area of 100 decares. The pottery was dated to the Neolithic, Late Iron age and the Middle ages. In the process of excavations the site was divided into 3 sectors – sector Southwest, damaged by the construction of the Maritsa highway, sector Northeast, damaged by the construction of Dimitrovgrad-Yabalkovo local road and sector Northern, liable to rescue excavations due to the future construction of Plovdiv-Svilengrad railway. The area excavated until 2004 exceeds 15 decares, which puts this site at the head of the group of excavated Early Neolithic sites in Bulgaria.

The excavations in **sector Southwest** covered an area more than 10 decares large. Until 1960-s the terrain was covered by a forest, the eradication of which damaged severely the upper part of the Neolithic layer. Its maximal thickness is ca. 1.50 m; almost all of the features and the finds yielded by this layer are dated to the Early Neolithic. There are successive 3 levels. The house floors are not preserved due to the high erosion. Stone foundations of walls were unearthed in the western part of the site, on an area larger than 500 sq. m. There are two types of construction

techniques and building materials. The first type includes the use of small and middle size rubble complemented by river stones, and the second type is characterized by the use of big and very big stones, which were apparently arranged in separate rows and were usually laid below the level of the stone features of the previous type. Type 2 constructions are overlaid by type 1 constructions.

Sector Northeast presents a better preserved Neolithic layer although damaged by the Late Iron and Mediaeval layers. It is 1.50 m thick (measured from the modern surface) and has three construction levels, marked by house floors, ovens and other facilities. The walls of the majority of the houses are made in a *pisé* technique, the floors are plastered with white limestone substance, entirely covered with a thin organic layer (matting or carpets). The grain storages are situated on wooden platforms on the house floors but there are grain storages which are situated into dug in structures resembling larders. The ovens and hearths have the usual size and shapes. The same is true for the small finds as well, they resemble the types already known from other Early Neolithic sites in Anatolia, Thessaly and Thrace. The settlement area was densely overbuilt. The narrow passageways between the houses are covered with river sand and gravel, at some places colored with red ochre.

We are not able to provide absolute radiocarbon dates for construction levels I-III of the Early Neolithic layer at Yabalkovo since we still do not have results from the analysis of the ¹⁴C samples. However there is no doubt about the relative date – the comparative typological analysis dates the three construction levels within the frames of Karanovo I horizon. There are numerous parallels to finds from the eponymous site (Karanovo) as well as from other contemporary Neolithic sites in Bulgaria. They are related to the pottery shapes

as well as their decoration. The same is true for the figurines I. Parallels of the pottery are known both from Eastern Thrace and North-western Anatolia. However, a final opinion on the chronological position within the frames of Karanovo I horizon could be expressed when the study on the huge amount of finds from several seasons of excavations is completed. The relation between the stone features in sector Southwest and the three construction levels in sector Northeast is still not very clear. In this respect there are two main hampering factors: first, there is still no certain stratigraphic correlation between the levels in these two sectors and second, the pottery yielded by Sector Southwest is more poorly preserved, a fact that affects the precision of the study and thus making it more difficult to find its place in the pottery sequence.

II. Thracian pit sanctuary dated to the second half of the 5th – the beginning of the 3rd century BC near the village of Yabalkovo, 2000-2003

The results from the excavations give reasons to suppose that a pit sanctuary functioned at this place in the Late Iron age. Its boundaries and area are still not very clear although pits and related features were excavated in all sectors.

More than 50 pits have been excavated till now. Their maximal depth is 1.50 m and their section is beehive-shaped or cylindrical. The pits have either homogenous fill or complicated stratigraphy of the layers. The latter contain layers of various colors and concentration of materials, alternating layers as well as the so-called “sealing layers”. The natural intrusions in the fill consist of gravel, river pebbles, limestone and sand, and the anthropogenic ones – charcoals and pieces of wall plaster, pottery, small finds, animal bones. A situation not typical for the presented pit assemblage was recorded in pit № 1, square J 37. Traces of human sacrifice were found in it.

A group consisting of 12 “rich” pits deserves mentioning. The pit fill yielded sherds of Greek black glazed and red figure ware,

amphoras, jewels, coins, cult objects or facilities (andirons), loom weights and spindle whirls, complete vessels, pieces of pithoi, the so-called counters, grinding stones.

Some parts of the excavated area provide evidence for partially preserved cultural layer 0.20-25 m thick, contemporary to the pits.

The functioning of the sanctuary is well evidenced during the entire period of the second half of the 5th century until the first decades of the 3rd century BC by sherds from Greek Attic vases, amphoras, monochrome table ware and coins. The Greek pottery are most common in the second half of the 5th century BC. Cups are most numerous and are represented mainly by sherds from black glazed *stemless with inset lip kylix* type, red figure owl *skyphos* type, black glazed cup with vertical ribbing (Phidias shape) and a sherd of an Attic *skyphos* type. The presence of Greek pottery in the 4th century and the Hellenistic period is evidenced by several *kantharoses* sherds and a *lecythus* decorated with a net pattern. The amphoras are the other reliable indication for the time of the functioning of the sanctuary. The initial stage – from the second quarter of the 5th century on, was marked by import of Chios production. The next decade was a period of the most active trade relations and the initial dominance of Chios was gradually replaced by the one of Thásos. Thásos is still the only known big center in the 4th century BC and it kept its status till the first half of the 3rd century BC as well. The tableware, also very significant for the site, presents a well-defined shape repertoire, typical for the Classic period. The most informative shapes among the tableware are the amphoras, *lekanes* with handles protruding above the rim, cups and jugs with a handle protruding high above the rim, which have numerous parallels in the 5th century BC pottery assemblages.

Till now the deposition of coins is evidenced in the sanctuary in the second half of the 4th century BC and especially in the Early Hellenistic period. The coins of Maronea, Chersonesus Thracia, Messambria Pontica, a deposit consist-

ing of 8 coins of Phillip II of Macedonia and Alexander the Great (found in 2004), a coin of Lysimachus are related to this period.

The excavated features and finds from Karabyulyuk locality near the village of Yabalkovo in 2000-2003 seasons and the Late Iron age finds provide a good illustration of

the functioning of a wealthy and significant pit sanctuary. The location of the pits and the area with the cultural layer from the same period give us reasons to expect that there will be other related features and structures to the north, in the so-called sector North, where the excavations started in 2004.

Archaeological Excavations at Yabalkovo Site, Dimitrovgrad Region. Early Neolithic (Summary)

Krasimir Leshtakov

The excavations at the early Neolithic site in 2004 were focused on the hill to the north of the railway and the section made by the construction activities for the local road Yabalkovo-Dimitrovgrad, which flanks from the north the area excavated in 2003. Neolithic pottery and features were unearthed in square I₄₈, the stratigraphic trench and along the section, called Section North. They were damaged by numerous Late Neolithic and Mediaeval pits. In spite of the damage we were able to gather data about parts of houses, hearths, grain storages, pottery and small finds dated to the Early Neolithic.

The trench in square I₄₈ is situated on a hill to the north of the railway and about 25-30 m to the north from the area excavated in 2003. It is square in shape and is north-south oriented. After removal of a damaged layer 0.55 m, a house was unearthed. It was marked by 0.30 m thick layer of big pieces of fired wall plaster and small size rubble. A complete plate *in situ*, turned upside down, was found in the destructions. The Early Neolithic house is built in the *pisé* technique and is similar to the houses, excavated in 2003, the walls are consolidated by middle and small size rubble. The stratigraphic position of the house relates it to construction level II or even to construction level III – according to 2003 season stratigraphy. On the other hand, there is a possibility that the structure was terraced or slightly sunken in the terrain which compromises these conclusions. The pottery from the house is Early Neolithic but white painted sherds were not found, probably due to the small size of the excavated area.

Stratigraphic trench

A stratigraphic trench was made on the highest part of the hill, in squares G₃₈-H₃₈. It is north-south oriented and measures 8,00 x 2,50 m.

The stratigraphy is quite complicated. There are structures related to several periods and the modern pits and fills contribute to the complications.

Main results from the stratigraphic trench:

1. The uppermost layer is soil taken from the area of the future railway. This explains the presence of sterile and semi-sterile layers, the concentration of Early Neolithic materials in the topsoil and modern objects underneath.

2. This layer overlays a cultural layer related to several periods, which has an average thickness of 0,40-50 m. No other features apart from various pits were found in this layer.

3. The Late Iron age materials are the most numerous in the uppermost layer and we were not able to relate them to any feature. No pits from the Late Iron age were found.

4. Underneath the Middle age layer there is a Neolithic layer – it is light beige-brown sandy clay mixed with low number of materials. A comparatively shallow pit filled in with big pieces of fired wall plaster was partially excavated. The Neolithic layer was damaged by several mediaeval pits reaching the virgin soil.

5. The sterile ground of the hill is a light yellow sandy layer in the northern part of the trench, probably a sandy deposit of an old bed of the Maritsa river. In the southernmost part of the trench the sterile ground is clayey, similar to the one to the south of the railway, recorded in 2003.

Ditches were made in squares H-I₅₄₋₅₆, G₅₉₋₆₄ and F-G₆₈ **to the east of the Stratigraphic trench**. They were aimed at further clarification of the stratigraphy in this particular area. Underneath the topsoil there was a layer of fine muddy soil with a very low concentration of archaeological materials. The maximal thickness of this layer is 0.35 m and it overlays a layer of brown-grey to grey-black soil yield-

ing materials related to various chronological periods. Their stratigraphic position and nature make us suppose that the Neolithic layer in this part of the area was flooded periodically and for a long time, and in certain periods the water was still and not running. These changes in the environment ended when the terrain became part of a calm marshy (lake?) basin, which probably happened after the end of the Iron age. The area **to the west of the Stratigraphic trench** was excavated and a depth of 0.70 m from the modern surface was reached. Neolithic structures *in situ* were not unearthed but the virgin soil was not reached.

A section to the north of Yabalkovo-Dimitrograd road

The work on the section (cleaning and recording) was made with the help of archaeology students during their summer archaeological field school with the financial support of Sofia University. It was aimed at correlating the new result with the already existing data from the excavations in 2003 season and getting a complete idea about the stratigraphy at the site. The section was divided into two parts: section North 1 in squares F₂₆-F₃₀ (20 m long) and section North 2, which begins about 75 m to the east of R2 and is located in squares I₄₀-I₄₁. It is approximately east-west oriented and is 10 m long.

The results from the two parts of the section confirm the observations made in season 2003. Three construction levels are marked by hearths and house floors. They are built up in the techniques typical for the Early Neolithic period at the site. The Neolithic features are partially damaged by mediaeval graves and Late Iron age pits.

The pottery assemblage of 2004 season consists of ca. 1200 sherds providing information about the technology and the typology of the ware. Part of the sherd are worn out which suggests that they were exposed to the high influence of the atmospheric waters. According to the colour of the surface the pottery is divided into several groups of ware: beige to

light brown, grey-brown to grey-beige, grey-black and red brick. The last group includes secondary fired sherds whose initial colour was changed. Most of the pottery has a light colour.

The clay used for the various ware has different characteristics. The information about its composition together with the information about the thickness of the walls of the vessels, the presence or lack of slip as well as the surface treatment gives ground to divide the pottery to the following **ware groups**: coarse ware, semi-coarse ware, semi-fine ware and fine ware.

Shapes: conical plates, hemispherical open bowls, hemispherical bowls, hole-mouth low necked jars with a spherical body, jars with a semi-tall cylindrical neck, tall cylindrical beakers (“tulip-shaped vessels”), small jars or cups with elongated body and grain storages.

The great variety of the **bases** of the vessels needs mentioning. At least six types can be defined: flat bases, “heel” bases, low ring bases; pedestal bases, pedestal bases divided into 4 segments resembling feet, massive concave base. **Lugs:** predominantly vertically pierced lugs – hemispherical or oval plastic knobs vertically pierced. **Decoration:** plastic decoration, fingerprints, painted decoration, fluted/channelled decoration, Kerbschnitt decoration. Only one sherds with channelled decoration is recorded. There is no sherds with fine incised decoration. It is probably due to the relatively small number of studied sherds.

The stone and flint tools are well known from the excavated Early Neolithic sites in Thrace and the ones from Yabalkovo would not be discussed in this paper. The bone tools are of high quality in principal – carefully made awls, chisels and spatulas were found. Tripods are also part of the small finds assemblage – no complete tripod was found, only fragmented parts of containers and legs. The collection of zoomorphic clay figurines already consisting of a dozen objects, increased its number with a relatively well preserved figurine of a bull or ram. Anthropomorphic figurines were not found at the site.

Thracian Pit Sanctuary from the Second Half of the 5th – Early 3rd Century BC in Karabyulyuk Locality near the Village of Yabalkovo, Dimitrovgrad Region (Summary)

Milena Tonkova

The area liable to archaeological excavations, 520 m long and 25-50 m wide, is situated to the north of the existing Plovdiv-Svilengrad railway. It is part of the northern periphery (the so-called Sector North) of a multilayer settlement dated to the Neolithic, Late Iron age and the Middle ages, which has been excavated since 2000. Season 2004 lasted 40 days in June and July, and the excavations and the research on the various periods at the site were made by three archaeological teams, consisting of archaeologist, specialists on interdisciplinary research and students in archaeology.

The aim of the team researching the pit sanctuary dated to the second half of the 5th – early 3rd century BC was to excavate the eastern part of Sector North as well as to study the Late Iron age materials yielded by the trenches made in the central and western parts in the western periphery of Sector North (Hambaritsa locality) as well as the materials found during the cleaning of the so-called Section North in Sector Northeast, excavated by archaeological teams with team leaders Krassimir Leshtakov and Katya Melamed.

At the beginning of the archaeological campaign the team cut out the trees and the bushes in the area to the north of Plovdiv-Svilengrad railway and set the grid points. 1 decare large area was excavated.

16 trenches were made in the eastern part of sector North 4. Four squares were completely excavated. The stratigraphy of the layers in this sector (anthropogenic layers alternating with layers of deposited clay) as well as the state of preservation of the materials (worn out sherds due to the fact that they were exposed to the activity of water or were “transported” by water) reveal that this part of the site was flooded periodically by the Maritsa river. In the excavated trenches the

virgin soil was reached at a depth of 1.20-1.50 m. The yielded materials are mostly sherds from prehistoric and Late Iron age pottery. Several typical rims of lekane, plates and table amphoras similar to those from the sanctuary in Staroto selishte locality near Radnevo, Gledachevo and Pistiros (the Classic period) as well as a sherd from a black glazed *kylix* and a counter made of a sherd from a wall of a vessel (typical for the Thracian cult sites) worth mentioning.

Two trenches, 5x2 m, were made in the central, elevated part of sector North (Karabyulyuk mound, fig. 2, 3). The first one, square I 48, yielded Late Iron age pottery sherds and Early Neolithic house *debris*, and the second one, yielded walls of a Mediaeval building. The excavations revealed that to the north of the railway there are archaeological structures registered in its the southern side in 2003 and they are situated 25-30 m from the area excavated by the team. Sherds from Greek amphoras, gray table amphoras, *lekane*, foot of a “fruit bowl”, etc. typical for the 5th and the 4th centuries BC are worth mentioning.

Late Iron age materials were also found in all other parts of the area liable to archaeological excavations.

The excavations in the central stratigraphic trench in the northern periphery of Karabyulyuk mound (fig. 5), which started in 2000, continued. The trench is 8x3 m large, 1.60 m deep and there are pits and a pit dwelling in it, reaching a depth of 2.20 m. Its section shows the complicated stratigraphy of the cultural layers. Materials dated to the Neolithic and the Middle ages prevail but there are also many sherds dated to the Late Iron age among which there are a rim of a plate or a bowl having close parallels in the Classic period pottery assemblages and a counter, made of a wall of a wheelmade

pot. A coin of Messambria Pontica from the second half of the 4th century BC was found in the trench in the first excavation season.

Traces of Late Antique and Mediaeval building destructions as well as numerous Late Iron age materials were found in an area covering 10 squares. Among the Late Iron age pottery there are sherds from Greek amphoras, Greek black glazed ware and wheel- and handmade pottery sherds typical for this period. A rim of a Chios amphora with a cylindrical neck (the third quarter of the 5th century BC) provides very important information about the presence of Classic period materials in the layer. However, materials dated to the Early Hellenistic period prevail in this part of the sanctuary: a sherd from a foot of Peparetos amphora dated to the third quarter of the 4th century BC, typical table ware shapes in gray and brick red color. In spite of the high concentration of pottery sherds in this sector, no Late Iron age structures/features related to it were unearthed. It is possible that it is the so-called “Late Iron age layer” recorded in the area to the south of the railway during the earlier archaeological campaigns. A very important find was unearthed in square H 25. A collective find of bronze coins – 5 coins of Philip II of Macedonia and 3 coins of Alexander the Great – was found at a depth of 1 m. The team was not able to define any reliable context. The time of the coin deposition is 323-320 BC. It is possible that the coins were buried as a treasure on the territory of the sanctuary but they could also be a gift, buried with a ritual similar to the one related to the ritual pits. Near this find an early posthumous coin of Alexander the Great from the late 4th century was found.

Two trenches, 6 x 2 m, were made on a low hill in Hambaritsa locality situated in the westernmost part of the area liable to archaeological excavations. The virgin soil was reached at a depth of 0.30 m from the surface. Late Iron age structures are expected in this part of the site because a ritual pit dated to the Classic period was excavated there in 2000. A small black glazed flat based bowl with convex walls typical for the late 5th century BC Attic production

was discovered during an archaeological survey in 2000.

Four Late Iron age pits were excavated in Section North, Sector Northeast. The pits yielded pottery sherds and other finds dated to the 5th and the 4th centuries BC – Greek amphoras, gray table amphoras and jugs, small bowls, etc. The presence of ritual pits dated to the Classic period was illustrated by the “Thasos circle” amphora sherd, part of a gray table amphora as well as sherds from jugs and cups with handles extending above the lip. The performance of the ritual related to the digging of a pit and the ritual burial of gifts in it which continued in the Early Hellenistic period in this part of the sanctuary and is attested by a Thasos amphora stamp (table I.2) dated to the end of the 4th and the very beginning of the 3rd century BC. A pit dated to the same period yielded a stamp seal with a rhomb-shaped working surface (table I.3), used probably for decorating eschàra hearths.

The excavated Late Iron age pits and yielded materials added new details to the picture of the organization of the structures in the northern periphery of the pit sanctuary in Karabyulyuk locality situated most closely to the Maritsa river. The eastern part of the site was probably flooded periodically by the river, a fact which explains the lack of features and the state of preservation of the material bearing traces of transportation. In most of the cases the materials are dated to the Classic period although there are later ones as well. The situation in the western part of the site differs a bit. The Early Hellenistic materials prevail there and for the moment they are related to the so-called “Late Iron age layer”. The stratigraphic position of the Late Iron age materials shows that in the future pits and a layer from this period could be expected in the central and the western part of the area liable to archaeological excavation, i. e. in places which had not been flooded by the Maritsa river.

The unearthed materials confirmed the chronology of the site from previous seasons – the site was visited in the second half

of the 5th, the 4th and the early 3rd century BC. The new materials, the coins (a collective find of 8 bronze coins of Philip II of Macedonia and Alexander the Great) and the Thasos amphora stamp helped us to understand better the final period of its existence in the end of the 4th and the first decades of the 3rd century BC.

The sanctuary near Yabalkovo is an important element of the Thracian settlement pattern on the Maritsa river banks and the foothills of the Rhodope Mountains during the Classic and early Hellenistic periods. It is culturally related to the rich mound burials from the end of the 5th – the first half of the 4th century BC found in the vicinity of the neighboring village of Gorski Izvor. A chance find – a foot of a black glazed vessel decorated with a stamped palmette design and a graffito of the “Ω” letter (poster VIII) dated to mid 4th century BC – “from the area between the villages of Gorski Izvor and Yabalkovo” – adds another detail of the development of the region in the studied period.

The existence of the sanctuary near Yabalkovo was related to the intensive functioning of a route across the river. Direct evidence for this fact can be found in the result from the comparative analysis on the finds from the ritual pits at the sanctuary near Yabalkovo on the right bank of the Maritsa river and the sanctuary near the village of Malko Tranovo, Chirpan region, situated 20 km to the northeast on a probable pre-Roman route of *Via Diagonalis* from the Maritsa river to the Chirpan Hills to the north. The materials found at the two sanctuaries are comparable for many of their indices – time, categories, kinds and types of gifts and even versions of certain artifacts, e. g. *stemless with inset lip kylikes* type, owl *skyphoi* type, bell kraters, S-profiled cups and jugs presenting identical types, spiral serpent-shaped bracelets and glass beads, coins of Philip II of Macedonia, Alexander the Great and Chersonesus Thracia. Therefore it can be concluded that the sanctuar-

ies were contemporary to each other, existed in the same period and had direct relations. Both sanctuaries yielded a very big amount of Attic red figure and black glazed ware, shared one and the same centers and rhythm of imports of storage amphoras and yielded a specific kind of the single or double twisted handled table amphoras. These facts give reasons to conclude that both sanctuaries mark clearly a route through the Rhodope Mountains (“the step” in the plain is marked by the rich graves near the village of Gorski Izvor) to the north across the Maritsa river (the pass could probably be found somewhere in the vicinity of the sanctuary near Yabalkovo) and to the Chirpan Hills (passing nearby the sanctuary near the village of Malko Tranovo) and may be even further north through the passes in Sarnena Sredna Gora Mountain to the Odryssian centers in Kazanlak valley. Indirect proof for such hypothesis is the identical Greek vase type found in both sanctuaries as well as in the rich graves in the region of the maintain passes.

The sanctuary near Yabalkovo is an element of a pattern of pit sanctuaries located in the Maritsa river valley and its tributaries sharing similar typical features. The pit sanctuary in Dana Bunar locality near Lyubimets, the pit sanctuary related to the Thracian center near Simeonovgrad, the cult ditch near the village of Zetyovo, Chirpan region, the pit sanctuary in Pistiros, etc. All sites are located at fords of the Maritsa river. This pattern is confirmed by the geomorphology of the region as well as by the comparison with materials from sanctuaries, indicating routes from the Maritsa river to the Thracian centers on the region. These are the sanctuaries near Gledachevo, Radnevo and Polski Gradets in Maritsa-Iztok open mines region as well as a recently discovered big pit sanctuary near village of Malko Tranovo, Chirpan region.

Coins from the Pit Sanctuary near the Village of Yabalkovo (Summary)

Boryana Ruseva

14 bronze coins dated to the Late Classic and the Early Hellenistic periods are part of the Late Iron age artifacts found during archaeological excavations lasting four seasons (2000-2004) at the pit sanctuary in *Karabyulyuk* locality near the village of Yabalkovo, Haskovo region. Two of the bronze coins belong to Maronea and Messambria Pontica and the rest are bronze coins of Macedonian rulers, Philip II of Macedonia (6 pieces) and his son Alexander the Great (6 pieces), 8 of them being a collective find – one of the few known old deposits found on the territory of Thracian sanctuaries. This paper is aimed at studying this small bronze treasure from Yabalkovo as well as part of the remaining the coins from the same site.

I. Collective find of bronze coins

Eight bronze coins of Macedonian rulers – 5 pieces of Philip II of Macedonia, young man's head/rider type and 3 pieces of Alexander the Great, head of an young Heracles/the arms of the hero type (plate 1, 1-8) were found in square H 25 in the western part of sector North, an area excavated in June-July 2004. The coins were probably buried ca. 323-320 BC. This date confirms the period suggested by excavators as particularly intensive functioning of the Thracian sanctuary in the 5th-4th century BC.

II. Single coins

During the four seasons of excavations the same site yielded another 6 bronze coins – 1 piece of Maronea, *horse/vine* type and inscription MAPΩNITΩN (plate 1, A), minted until mid 4th century BC or even a bit later; 1 piece of Messambria Pontica, *wheel with four spokes* and inscription ME[T]A on the reverse (table 1, B), dated to the second half of the 4th century by M. Price; 1 piece of Philip II, head of a young man/rider type (plate 1, B); 1 piece of Alexander III and 2 early posthumous pieces of Alexander the Great, all of them *head of an young Heracles/the arms of the hero* type (plate 1, Γ-E). Especially important for the chronology of the pit sanctuary near Yabalkovo are the two latest coins – the two bronze coins of Alexander the Great with the king's title designated (plate 1, Д-E), which according to Price were minted after Alexander's death not later than 315 BC. It means that the coins were minted in the first years after Lysimachus became king of Thrace, a fact implied by the lack of Lysimachus's coin in this sanctuary.

Apparently, the collective find consisting of 8 bronze coins as well as the single bronze coins from Yabalkovo evidence the coinage of Lysimachus's Thrace characteristic for the first years of Alexander's successor in this region, a time when the Odryssian Seutes III was still his contemporary.

Archaeological Excavations near the Village of Yabalkovo, Dimitrovgrad Region. Mediaeval settlement and necropolis (Summary)

Katja Melamed, Zhivko Aladjhov

The archaeological research followed the contract between the National Railway Company and the Institute of Archaeology with Museum-Bulgarian Academy of Sciences.

The railway encloses the terrain to the south, and drainage – to the north. The drain was provided in 1950s, now much swampy and overgrown. The railway is a part from the Edirne-Septemvri railway, initiated in 1869. It passed along Yabalkovo in 1873. The track lies over a high fill accumulated from soil and gravel. Most likely, they took the soil from the terrain under investigation. Today it is remarkably level and flat, and lower compared to the fields to the south of the railway, and to the north from the drain. Moreover, an underground electrical cable feeding a signal runs along the entire length of the terrain, about 0,80-0,90 m deep into the ground.

Almost in the middle of thus described level terrace, a mound raises as high as the track itself, and sloping to the east and west. Initially we thought it is a fill. At the southern sector of the height, a trench was set years ago and now considered an arbitrary one.

A grid-lay-out covers the entire territory of the site, containing quadrants of 5 m side each. Trenches were set to the west of the height. They measure totally 25x10 m, and overlie quadrants NN H 21-25 and I 21-25. The depth reached is 1,50 m. There were no structures. The soil though was abundant with ceramic fragments, generally not indigenous, strongly deprived of features and broken into small pieces. They are dating from various periods, including modern days. The remarkable amount of the fragments, their condition and their dates allow at least certain initial conclusions:

1. The trench is in the periphery of a large settlement of long-lasting busy life and trade. The chronology of the settlement covers the following well-displayed and defined periods: Late Antiquity and Early Byzantium – pottery, amphorae and marked tegulae; and Middle Ages between at least early 9th and the very end of 12th centuries – pottery, many clay candlesticks and amphorae, glazed and early sgraffito ceramics. Some of the fragments can date from the 8th century, though the 7th and 8th century's pottery is rather not well clarified in Thracia. Judging from the pottery, perhaps fire marked the final stages of the settlement. Most likely people left about the very beginning of the 13th century because of the campaign of Tsar Kaloyan against the Fourth Crusade.

2. The ceramic fragments abound in amphorae pieces thus suggesting a busy trade. This observation requires an investigation of the River Maritsa bed and its changes during the centuries. Most likely a ford was there in the past. The settlement under research lies along the road to Uzundzovo, a well-known traditional market place.

3. The archaeological ceramic fragments are strongly washed up and smoothed. The fact suggests they have spent some time in water environment perhaps because the flood of Maritsa River. The stratigraphy of the western- and easternmost trenches confirmed this conclusion. River sand silt appeared there at a very small depth.

In the last few days of the excavations a new trench was set to the west just bellow the ridge of the height in the middle of the terrace. A northwestern corner of a stonewall appeared 0,10-0,15 m bellow the surface, most probably from a house. A round platform was

revealed upon the northern wall. It is small in size (0,40x0,45 m), made of small river stones arranged without much effort. Its date is obviously later than the wall is itself. The soil is abundant in ceramic fragments; sure dating evidence is missing though. Judging from analogies from previous campaigns the house might be medieval. This kind of platforms displays similarities to Medieval monuments as well, coming from the Medieval layer to

the south from the Railway, as well as in the 11th-13th century necropolis in the village of Sedlare, Momchilgrad region. Most likely, it relates to the necropolis we know there from previous campaigns.

Four graves from this same necropolis were unearthed too. The burial practices obviously followed the Christian custom. Dating artifacts were missing. The bone material has been sent for anthropological investigation.

Trench Excavations at Keramlaka Site near the Village of Krum, Dimitrovgrad Region (Summary)

Emilia Evtimova, Zhivko Aladzhov, Atanas Kamenarov

Site № 12 is situated in Keramlaka locality, about 1,5 km to the east of the railway station of the village of Krum, between the right bank of the Maritsa river and the road to Dimitrovgrad. The geomorphology of the terrain is characterized by alluvial and alluvial-prolluvial plains of Quaternary age. The geological age of the rocks is Holocene and Early Paleozoic volcano rocks. The region is part of the Sredna Gora tectonic zone and is an active seismic zone. According to the agricultural and meteorological division of Bulgaria, the region is located in the Upper Thracian transitional continental climatic zone. The studies reveal that in the 12th-13th century the climate of the region was relatively mild and dry while in the following two centuries there was a considerable drop of temperature. The soils are suitable for growing thermophilic crops. The fauna is mostly of East Mediterranean type.

Currently the site is situated in a field planted with tobacco, a fact that put many obstacles in front of the archaeological excavations. Trenches were made on the future route, in the areas between the agricultural fields. 21 trenches were set, the cultural layer in 19 of them was completely excavated. Some of the trenches were enlarged due to the necessity of excavation of features extending beyond the boundaries of the trenches. The excavation results are summarized in preliminary conclusions about the date and the character of the excavated features. Since the excavations are not completed they should be regarded as provisional and liable to certain revisions.

Most of the features are related to the mediaeval period. The located and partially excavated pits dated to the mediaeval period

are especially interesting. All of them have approximately one and the same depth. The pits yielded the 13th-14th century pottery sherds, metal objects, animal bones of cattle, sheep and goats. The sherds are mainly of kitchenware. There are only few sherds of tableware – probably sherds of sgraffito plates. There is also comparatively small number of sherds covered with yellowish, olive green or brown lead-glaze. They are thin walled, made of fine clay and nicely fired.

The so-called farm building and gravel pavement were the archaeological features probably related to this period. They are situated very close to the mediaeval pits. The small size of the excavated area prevents making final statements on the function of the apsidal building. It is provisionally defined as a farm building. The same is true for the stone pavement. After the excavation work is completed, it will be possible to make more precise conclusions.

Fired building remains mixed with pieces of limestone were unearthed in the eastern part of the area liable to excavations. Two levels were defined within the *debris*. A plastered hearth floor was discovered in the neighboring square. The *debris* yielded Late Bronze age materials. For the time being prehistoric materials were found only at these two spots.

The results from the excavations show that it is a mediaeval site. Especially in the western part of the site the materials are dated mainly in this period, 13th-14th century. The earlier materials are either highly fragmented or defaced or come from a very small part of the site. Further excavations will help solving many of the issues raised.

Archaeological Excavation near Simeonovgrad (Summary)

Valeri Grigorov

Site № 18 is situated on a flat river flooded terrace ca. 500 m to the south of Konstantia fortress near the town of Simeonovgrad. The excavated area is 325 sq. m.

At the surface of the arable layer mainly modern pottery sherds were found (fig. 4 and 5). In trench 12 the arable layer yielded three coins (fig. 6) – one of them is Ottoman, emission year ١٢٠٠ according to Hijra (1839-40). It is perforated and probably worn as a medalion. The other two coins are modern ones.

In many of the trenches a layer of charcoal was registered on the ancient surface (fig. 3). A hearth with a diameter of 0.60-70 was unearthed in trench 4.

A fragment of iron casing was found in trench 16 at a depth of 1 m (fig. 8). It reminds the wooden spade cases known from Pliska and Odartsi.

A layer related to a settlement was excavated in trenches 43, 44, 46, 47 and 48. They

yielded iron finds (fig. 8), pieces of bricks (fig. 9), animal bones (fig. 10) and flints (fig. 11).

A big number of pottery sherds was found in trench 46 on the level of the ancient surface (fig. 12). Most of the sherds belong to the same vessel – a wheelmade jug dated to the 11th-12th century.

The level of the ancient surface trenches 47 and 48 yielded a pavement made of rubble (figs. 15 and 16). A spindle whirl and a bronze ring dated to the 10th-11th century was found in the soil above.

The results of the archaeological excavation of Site № 18 reveal that the region was inhabited in the mediaeval ages. The finds testify that most probably in the 10th-11th century there was a settlement at this place. The settlement covered relatively large area and Site № 18 covers only its western periphery.

Settlement and Necropolis at Zlati Dol Neighbourhood, Simeonovgrad (Summary)

Boni Petrunova

Site № 20 is situated amidst an agricultural land, Northeast of Zlati Dol neighbourhood in the town of Simeonovgrad. Prior to the research in 2004 its northern side was agricultural land. The central part of the settlement is situated within an artificial dry gulch and the northwest part was used for the modern graveyard of Simeonovgrad. 100 m Southeast of site № 20 there is a partially excavated Thracian mound and 500 m to the north is situated the Classic and medieval town of Konstantia.

The archaeological research that took place in 2004 was aimed at specifying the character and the chronology of the site as well as its horizontal and vertical parameters related to the area of the future railway liable to archaeological excavations. In the process of work 14 trenches with different depth were made which provided the answers to the main questions of the scientific research. The trenches were situated within a working square network oriented towards the four cardinal points. The 0 point coincided with a point of the northern boundary of the right of way with co-ordinates on the national network E – 9453436.113.N – 4588779.505, elevation – 77.413. The sectors' dimensions were 20x20 m, and each of them consists of squares 5x5 m. Point 0 was situated on 25 m from the 256+870 km of the railway to the North.

By trenches 1, 2, 3 and 6 the north and the northwest periphery of the site was established. The research efforts focused on the central part of the settlement for two reasons. First, this was the part of the site was not a private property which was a plough area and second, it was there that traces of houses were found and they had to be completely excavated.

Layers of several periods were registered. Part of the sections were destroyed by the an irrigation system cutting through the site in the northwest-southeast direction.

More interesting are the situations in trenches NN 5, 10, 11, 12, 13 and 14. In trench № 12 part of a house wall was found. It was built up from small stones and clay and in the section of the trench were registered remains of a roof construction destroyed by fire.

It was established that most of the buildings were small, rectangular with approximate dimensions 2x3 m, the long building side west-east oriented. Only in trench № 10 a big concentration of bricks and roof tiles was unearthed. Its West-East length was 8.50 m and it has the biggest registered north – south width of 1.30 m. Most probably it was a rectangular chain building.

The data from the first stage of the archaeological research reveal that site № 20 is a classic and mediaeval settlement situated very close to the old bed of the Maritsa river. The buildings were destroyed by fire at least once. The estimated range of the whole site is west-east ca. 200 m (from km 256+800 to km 257+000). During the first stage an area of 2625 sq. m was excavated with depth to 1.90-2 m. It could be assumed that the necropolis of the settlement was situated in the western and southwestern part of the investigated territory and its eastern periphery borders the space around the burial mound mentioned in the beginning. The finds date the monument to the wide range of the 6th-9th and the 13th-17th century.

Archaeological Excavations at Shihanov Bryag Locality near Harmanli (Summary)

*Veselin Ignatov, Tatjana Kančeva-Russeva, Krasimir Velkov,
Tsvetana Popova, Georgi Ribarov, Nikolay Gospodinov*

The excavated site is situated 90° to the East, 2.1 km away from the administrative centre of the town of Harmalny. It is located in the area called Shihanov Briag (Chortlene), on the right bank of the Maritsa river on the water shed hill of the hilly terrain of Haskovo. To the Southwest the area borders the Chortlene spring, to the East with the Maritsa river, to the North with the valley of the Harmanliska river. The average sea level of the archaeological site is 85-90 m.

The site was registered in 1999 during a survey of the Sakar Mountain by an archaeological expedition of Sofia University.

The archaeological excavations of the site started in 1999 in relation to the construction activity of Maritsa Highway and continued till 2002. The following structures were partially or completely excavated during that period: dug in and ground buildings, parts of canals, road pavement and 71 pits.

In 2004 rescue excavations of settlement dated to Thracian, classic and mediaeval periods were made in Shihanov briag locality Harmanly municipality. The excavations were financed by the Railway Infrastructure National Company and were aimed at researching the section of the route and the area liable of excavation of Site № 24.

The route cuts through the area diagonally in its southwest section in northwest-southeast direction. The excavated area is 600 m long and its width varies from 19 to 77 m. 43 trenches were made with varying size and the area where they were done was broadened with the establishment of archaeological structures. Four sectors were identified based on the cultural deposit and the finds after finishing the excavations.

Sector I. It covers the eastern part of the route situated on the highest part of the area. 9 trenches were made.

Debris and negative structures were found in the sector imbedded in the gneiss rocks.

Π-shaped installation cut into the rock oriented with its open side to the northeast was completely excavated. Its maximum length was 2.70 m, side length 1.60 m and depth 0.30 m. It was filled up with rubble and a small number of Early Iron age pottery sherds. Two post holes (0.25-0.30 m in diameter and 0.20 m deep) were dug into the rock to the west of this installation.

Parts of ditches were found nearby varying in width and depth. They were dug into the gneiss rocks. The bigger one is 1.80-2.20 m wide and 0.50 m deep. It was filled up with grey-black soil and a layer of charcoal and ash, probably remains of a fire, was detected in some areas. It was here that clay spindle whirls were found as well as pottery sherds dated to the Early Iron and the Late Iron Age. The smaller ditch is 0.40 m wide and 0.30 m deep. Because of the early stage of the excavation the character of the ditches can not be determined.

In the most southeast part of the sector a layer of fired wall plaster was found. It covers an area of maximum dimensions 1.50 -2.20 m. The thickness of the layer is 7-10 cm. These are most probably remains of a ground installation. Among the plaster few pottery sherds and pieces of animal bones were found.

Materials dated to the Late Iron Age and the Roman period were found in the upper layers. They can not be related with certainty to the installations found there. The archaeological structures situated on the dominating point of the area most probably represent a sanctuary with an alter.

Sector II. It is situated to the northwest from Sector I at the bottom of the hill. Underneath the humus there is a light brown layer of compact clay 0,30-40 m thick followed by a layer of white clay.

3 dug in premises and 6 pits were partially excavated in the sector.

A dug in rectangular premise 3 m wide and 3.30 m long was partially excavated. It was

dug in 1.20 m from the modern surface and 0.60 m from the registered ancient one. The construction is similar to the already known mediaeval pit dwellings. Neither remains of clay plaster preserved *in situ* nor traces of fire were found. Few pieces of fired plaster were found and at places – concentrations of small pieces of charcoal. The lack of any inventory indicates that the dwelling was abandoned and the inhabitants took all their belongings that could be used in the future.

Two other dug in installations were registered in trenches NN 28 and 32 but were not completely excavated. Judging by the pottery sherds they could be dated to the 10th-11th century.

7 pits were excavated in this sector, 4 of them were completely excavated. They are round in shape with diameter of 0.80 to 1.20 m and depth of 0.30 to 0.83 m. Their section has cylindrical, conical or oval shape. They are filled in by soil, that varies in structure and colour, small pieces of charcoal, pottery sherds and pieces of fired plaster and slag. Three of them were dated to the Middle ages while pit № 5 was dated to the Late Iron Age.

Sector III. Underneath the humus a layer of light brown clay was found with no archaeological remains in it. In some of the trenches reaching 0.60 m depth the ground rock was reached. No cultural layer was registered. Few Late Iron Age, Roman and mediaeval pottery sherds were found.

Sector IV. It is situated in the most north west section of the site and is 35 m wide. Five drillings were carried out in the sector. Underneath the humus there was a layer of light brown loose clay reaching 0.60 m depth. It was here that half of a dug in house destroyed by a big fire was excavated (0.50 m from the ancient surface and 1.50 m from the modern surface). The floor level was not reached. The archaeological finds were dated to the early Middle Ages. Finds dated to the Late Iron Age and the Roman period were registered in the cultural layer as well.

Early Iron Age pottery was found mainly in the southeast part of the site – Sector I. The II-shaped installation interpreted as a cult installation yielded the biggest number of Early Iron Age sherds. The pottery is divided into

table ware, kitchen ware and storage vessels. The majority of the sherds was handmade and few sherds – on a slow potter's wheel.

A great amount of Late Iron Age sherds was found in Sector I. The so-called ditch was dated to that age as well. Finds from that age dominated among the finds in the structures situated in trench № 22. In the rest of the trenches finds of Late Iron Age pottery are rare.

The so-called grey Thracian ware is common. The shapes include mainly bowls with rounded converted rim. Sherds of red fired ware are common. Handmade vessels are made of brown coarse clay. The typical shapes were jars with a straight rim.

The Roman pottery is divided into tableware, kitchenware, amphoras, tiles and bricks. Tableware is represented mainly by vessels with lack covering. The tableware include mainly bowls sherds, the most common being with horizontal rim. The vessels used as food and liquid storages are represented mainly by amphora sherds. Some of those have white slip. Among the finds are six fragments of dolium walls. The bricks and tiles are represented by fragments of bricks, tegulae and imbrices. Roman age pottery is most numerous in sectors 2 and 4, while appearing incidentally in the other sectors. At this stage mixed layers were excavated.

The discovered pottery sherds are not numerous and in bad state of preservation and their study does not provide reliable information.

The Late Iron Age and the Roman pottery does not differ considerably from the already studied production typical of northeastern Thrace.

The mediaeval pottery is hand- or wheel-made. The decoration consists of incised in horizontal lines and wavy pattern. The pottery is dated to the second half of the 10th-12th century.

The excavations contribute to the clarification of the Thracian village structure in the different periods. The registered cultural layers are dated to the Early and late Iron Age, the Roman, Mediaeval and the Ottoman periods. Detailed study of the finds is needed for a more precise interpretation

Iron Age Pit Sanctuary and Early Bronze Age Settlement near the Town of Svilengrad (Summary)

Georgi Nehrizov

The site is situated in Brantiite locality, 2 km to the southeast of the center of the town of Svilengrad. It is located on the highest part of a non flooding terrace at a meander on the left bank of the Maritsa river, which was formed by the alluvial processes of the Maritsa river and its left tributary, Penkovska river. The topmost layer of soil, the following compact layer of yellow clay and the lowest layer of sand and gravel are results of the natural processes caused by the activity of the rivers. The northern parts of the site are destroyed by construction, meliorative and agricultural activities from the Ottoman period until present.

The rescue excavations revealed that there are traces of human activity in this area from different periods. In the northern part of the terrace an Early Bronze Age (EBA) layer was excavated in two trenches. The unearthed contexts probably belong to the thin layer of a settlement which existed in the late EBA 2 – early EBA 3. In the excavated area were found 67 Early and Late Iron age ritual pits and 2 pits which yielded materials dated to the Middle ages.

As a result of the rescue excavations in 2004 the territory of the pit sanctuary was defined. Its southern border was localized and it was found out that the territory with high concentration of ritual pits extends further to west and east from the excavated area. The modern destructions of the terrain to the north make it difficult to define the northern border of the site but apparently it is its periphery. 6 pits situated at big distance from each other were located in the northern sector. The rest of the pits were situated in the central and the southern sector of the site having much higher concentration, and quite often the later pits overlaying and cutting earlier ones.

All pits were dug into a layer of yellow clayey soil, whose thickness changes in various parts of the site. Several pits cut through the yellow clay and penetrate the sandy layer underneath. As the latter is friable, the lower part of some pits was consolidated by clay plastering. The pits have usually cylindrical, conical or hemispherical section and the following sizes: diameter of the mouth – 0,50-2,00 m, depth – 0,10-1,65 m. The fill of the pits has different structure, color and density from the sandy layer they were dug into. The fill most often consists of dark brown or black soil mixed with charcoal, ash, scorched clay, pieces of fired wall plaster and hearth floors, animal bones, river stones.

Regardless of the shape, size, fill and chronology, all pits contained pottery sherds. However, the number of the sherds varied – some pits yielded more than 500 sherds while other yielded just a few. The total number of the sherds found in the pits is 15 110. All of them were studied and the results from the statistical analysis reveal: sherds from handmade pottery – 13977, sherds from wheel-made pottery – 1133. The handmade pottery divides into smoothed ware (47%), burnished ware (36%) and coarse ware (17%). Sherds from all vessel shapes were found in the pits but jars are most common (36%) followed by drinking vessels (24%), plates (19,8%), amphora-shaped vessels (10,8%), grain storages (2,6%), pithoi (2,1%), lids (1,6%), miniature vessels (1,2%) and several other shapes represented by few pieces. The percentage of the decorated vessels from Svilengrad is comparatively low – 16.3 % from the total number. All Early Iron age techniques of decoration were used. An important specific feature of the Svilengrad pottery is that the sherds with stamped decoration are the most numerous.

The main ornaments of the stamped motifs from the pits are S-shaped ornaments (36,8%), “false cord” ornaments (34,6%) and the circles (23,3%).

An amphora-shaped vessel from the Svilengrad pottery assemblage deserves special attention. Its outer surface is black burnished and has metallic shine and is decorated with big hollow knobs, stamped and incised motives, whose esthetic effect is strengthened by filling with white matter the stamped and incised ornaments. The context, in which the vessel was discovered, gives reason to date it to the end of the second period of the Early Iron age. The find from Svilengrad broadens the territory and the chronological frames of the distribution of the amphora-shaped group of vessels defined as representatives of “the local Balkan variant of Gava amphoras type B”.

In contrast to the handmade pottery, sherds from a wheelmade pottery were found in less than half of the total number of the excavated pits. Red colored sherds (83,3%) are prevailing. The most numerous shapes are plates, crater-shaped and amphora-shaped vessels and lekanes followed by cups, jugs and bowls. The pits yielded also 10 sherds of imported ware, which helps to determine the chronology of the site.

A variety of archaeological materials were found in the pits besides the pottery – most often tools out of use and objects related to everyday life activities – spindle whirrs, loom weights, round-shaped sherds from vessel walls, pieces of grinding stones, flint tools, bone owls, iron knives. 7 anthropomorphic clay figurines were also found, 4 of them yielded by one and the same pit. The collection of 14 stamps for stamped decoration on pottery ranks Svilengrad at second place after the Ovcharovo settlement according to the number of such instruments found. Two finds – iron winged axe and a fragment of a bronze *Posamenterie* fibula type are especially important for tracing out the directions of the relations of the region. They are also the earliest

objects related to the pit sanctuary though the axe was found in a destroyed layer, and the fragment of the fibula – in a Late Iron age pit. A considerable amount of earlier materials was recorded in all pits of later periods and this could be considered one of the specific features of the site.

Some of the finds and the recorded archaeological situations provide information about the ritual practices performed at the pit sanctuary. The animal bones that were found, from domestic animals mainly, and carbonized grains of cereals and legumes, were remains from meals served in the pits. In several pits complete skeletons of animals – dogs, pigs and a rabbit – were found. Bone studies reveal that mainly young animals, even newborn or sucklings, were put in the pits. These ritual practices have parallels in the rites performed in neighboring Hellas during *Thesmophoria* and *Skirophoria* festivals during which piglets or puppies were thrown in underground chambers or pits.

Information from ancient authors for human sacrifices practiced by the Thracian tribes and the archaeological evidence from pit sanctuaries give reasons to assume that the skeleton of the infant found in one of the pits evidences a ritual sacrifice. It is a skeleton of an infant (7-8 years of age), buried on its left side with flexed legs and arms.

The earliest and latest significative finds enable the defining of the broad chronological frames of the pit sanctuary functioning. The *Posamenterie* fibula type and the winged axe set the earliest probable date in the early 1st millennium BC and the latest date is marked by the sherds of imported ware and storage amphoras dated to the second half of the 4th – the 3rd century BC. However, the earliest date is not confirmed by sufficient evidence to assume that the sanctuary had functioned in the first period of the Early Iron age. At the same time the pottery assemblage includes shapes and an ornamentation style typical for the second period of the Early Iron age. The statistical analysis of the pottery shows that

the earliest structures among the excavated pits are those that yielded materials from the beginning of the second period of the Early Iron age. The sherds from imported ware dated to the Hellenistic period and pieces of cult hearths (eschara hearths) allow the assump-

tion that the fill of the latest pits from the Iron Age is dated to the end of the 4th or the first half of the 3rd century BC. Sherds of mediaeval pottery (the 10th-11th century) were found in two pits, which did not differ from the other in shape, size and fill.

