

# ΑΛΟΓΑ ΚΑΙ ΑΜΑΞΕΣ ΣΤΟΝ ΑΡΧΑΙΟ ΚΟΣΜΟ

ΠΡΑΚΤΙΚΑ ΕΠΙΣΤΗΜΟΝΙΚΗΣ ΣΥΝΑΝΤΗΣΗΣ  
ΟΡΕΣΤΙΑΔΑ 30 ΣΕΠΤΕΜΒΡΙΟΥ 2006

ΕΠΙΜΕΛΕΙΑ  
ΔΙΑΜΑΝΤΗΣ ΤΡΙΑΝΤΑΦΥΛΛΟΣ-ΔΟΜΝΑ ΤΕΡΖΟΠΟΥΛΟΥ

ΥΠΟΥΡΓΕΙΟ ΠΟΛΙΤΙΣΜΟΥ ΚΑΙ ΤΟΥΡΙΣΜΟΥ  
ΤΑΜΕΙΟ ΔΙΑΧΕΙΡΙΣΗΣ ΠΙΣΤΩΣΕΩΝ  
ΓΙΑ ΤΗΝ ΕΚΤΕΛΕΣΗ ΑΡΧΑΙΟΛΟΓΙΚΩΝ ΕΡΓΩΝ



ΟΡΕΣΤΙΑΔΑ 2010



# HORSES AND WAGONS IN THE ANCIENT WORLD

PROCEEDINGS OF ONE DAY SCIENTIFIC MEETING  
ORESTIADA-GREECE SEPTEMBER 30, 2006

EDITED BY  
DIAMANTIS TRIANTAPHYLLOS-DOMNA TERZOPOULOU

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ORESTIADA 2010

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Διαμαντής Τριαντάφυλλος - Δόμνα Τερζοπούλου

Η πνευματική ιδιοκτησία αποκτάται χωρίς καμμία διατύπωση και χωρίς την ανάγκη ρήτρας απαγορευτικής των προσβολών της. Πάντως, κατά τον Ν. 2121/1993 και τη διεθνή σύμβαση της Βέρνης (που έχει κυρωθεί με το Ν. 100/1975), απαγορεύεται η αναδημοσίευση και γενικά η αναπαραγωγή του παρόντος έργου, με οποιονδήποτε τρόπο (ηλεκτρονικό, μηχανικό, φωτοτυπικό, ηχογράφηση ή άλλο), τμηματικά ή περιληπτικά, στο πρωτότυπο ή σε μετάφραση ή άλλη διασκευή, χωρίς τη γραπτή άδεια του εκδότη.

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**Η** ανασκαφή στον ταφικό τύμβο της Μικρής Δοξιάρας-Ζώνης άρχισε τον Σεπτέμβριο του 2002 από την ΙΘ΄ Εφορεία Προϊστορικών και Κλασικών Αρχαιοτήτων Θράκης. Η αποκάλυψη, για πρώτη φορά στην Ελλάδα, πέντε αμαξών ρωμαϊκών χρόνων με τα υποζύγια τους, προσέλκυσε από νωρίς το ενδιαφέρον του κοινού και της επιστημονικής κοινότητας. Λόγω της ιδιαίτερης αρχαιολογικής σημασίας των ευρημάτων του τύμβου και της διεπιστημονικής μορφής της έρευνας το Έργο έχει ενταχθεί στο Ταμείο Διαχείρισης Πιστώσεων για την Εκτέλεση Αρχαιολογικών Έργων του Υπουργείου Πολιτισμού και Τουρισμού με τίτλο «Έρευνα, προστασία και ανάδειξη των ευρημάτων του ταφικού τύμβου της Μικρής Δοξιάρας-Ζώνης Ν. Έβρου» και εποπτεύεται από Επιστημονική Επιτροπή.

Στις 30 Σεπτεμβρίου 2006, τέσσερα χρόνια μετά την έναρξη της ανασκαφής, διοργανώθηκε στην Ορεστιάδα μια ημερήσια Επιστημονική Συνάντηση με θέμα *Άλογα και άμαξες στον αρχαίο κόσμο*. Στόχος μας ήταν να κοινοποιήσουμε τα πρώτα πορίσματα για τις άμαξες και τα άλογα του τύμβου και να προσεγγίσουμε την παρουσία τροχήλατων οχημάτων στην αρχαιότητα, με τη βοήθεια της εικονογραφίας, των αρχαίων πηγών και των αρχαιολογικών ευρημάτων. Ο τόμος των Πρακτικών, ο οποίος περιλαμβάνει και ορισμένα επιπλέον κείμενα που αφορούν τον ταφικό τύμβο της Μικρής Δοξιάρας-Ζώνης, αποτελεί τον καρπό της Συνάντησης αυτής.

Η πραγματοποίηση της Επιστημονικής Συνάντησης δεν θα ήταν δυνατή χωρίς την οικονομική συμβολή της Τοπικής Ένωσης Δήμων και Κοινοτήτων Νομού Έβρου, του Νομαρχιακού Διαμερίσματος Έβρου, του Δήμου Ορεστιάδας και του Δήμου Κυπρίνου. Το ενδιαφέρον του Νομάρχη Νίκου Ζαμπουνίδη οδήγησε στη χρηματοδότηση της έκδοσης των Πρακτικών από το Νομαρχιακό Διαμέρισμα Έβρου.

Η Επιστημονική Επιτροπή του Έργου «Έρευνα, προστασία και ανάδειξη των ευρημάτων του ταφικού τύμβου της Μικρής Δοξιάρας-Ζώνης Ν. Έβρου».





The 19th Ephorate of Prehistoric and Classical Antiquities (Thrace) began excavating the burial tumulus of Mikri Doxipara-Zoni in September 2002. The discovery of five Roman wagons and their draught animals—the first of its kind in Greece—attracted the interest of both the public and the scholarly community from early on in the excavation process. The continuation and completion of research and the enhancement of the finds from the burial tumulus have been included in the Ministry of Culture and Tourism’s Management Fund for Archaeological Projects (T.D.P.E.A.E.).

Four years after excavations began, on September 30, 2006, we organized a day-long Scientific Meeting in Orestiada on *Horses and Wagons in the Ancient World*. Our goal was to announce our initial conclusions concerning the wagons and horses in the tumulus and to approach the theme of wheeled vehicles in Antiquity with the aid of iconography, the ancient sources, and the archaeological finds. The present volume, which also includes a number of additional texts on the tumulus of Mikri Doxipara-Zoni, represents the fruits of this Meeting.

The Scientific Meeting would not have been possible without the financial contribution of the Regional Association of Municipalities and Communities of the Prefecture of Evros, the Prefectural District of Evros, the Municipality of Orestiada, and the Municipality of Kyprinos. Interest on the part of Prefect Nikos Zambounidis led to the Prefectural District of Evros’ funding the publication of the Proceedings.

The Scientific Committee for the T.D.P.E.A.E. Project “Research, Protection, and Enhancement of the Burial Tumulus of Mikri Doxipara-Zone, Prefecture of Evros”.



**ΔΙΑΜΑΝΤΗΣ ΤΡΙΑΝΤΑΦΥΛΛΟΣ**

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AAA	Αρχαιολογικά Ανάλεκτα εξ Αθηνών
AΔ	Αρχαιολογικόν Δελτίον
ΑΕ	Αρχαιολογική Εφημερίς
ΑΕΜΘ	Το Αρχαιολογικό έργο στη Μακεδονία και Θράκη
Γαία	Γαία. Περιοδική έκδοση του τμήματος Γεωλογίας του Εθνικού και Καποδιστριακού Πανεπιστημίου Αθηνών
Εγνατία	Εγνατία. Επιστημονική Επετηρίδα της Φιλοσοφικής Σχολής του Αριστοτελείου Πανεπιστημίου Θεσσαλονίκης
ΕΕΦΣΑΠΘ	Επιστημονική Επετηρίς της Φιλοσοφικής Σχολής του Αριστοτελείου Πανεπιστημίου Θεσσαλονίκης
Ήρος	Ήρος. Ένα αρχαιογνωστικό περιοδικό
Θεσσαλονικέων πόλις	Θεσσαλονικέων πόλις. Έκδοση πολιτισμού της πολιτιστικής εταιρείας επιχειρηματιών βορείου Ελλάδος
Μακεδονικά	Μακεδονικά. Σύγγραμμα Περιοδικόν της Εταιρείας Μακεδονικών Σπουδών
Τεκμήρια	Τεκμήρια. Συμβολές στην Ιστορία του Ελληνικού και Ρωμαϊκού κόσμου
AA	Archäologische Anzeiger
ABV	J.D. Beazley, <i>Attic Black-figure Vase-painters</i> . Oxford 1956
Achse	<i>Achse Rad und Wagen. Beiträge zur Geschichte der Landfahrzeuge</i>
Acta RCRF	<i>Acta Rei Cretaria Romanae Fautorum</i>
AEMTh	Το Αρχαιολογικό έργο στη Μακεδονία και Θράκη
AF	<i>Archäologische Forschungen. Deutsches Archäologisches Institut.</i>
AJA	<i>American Journal of Archaeology</i>
AJPh	<i>American Journal of Philology</i>
AM	<i>Athenische Mitteilungen. Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts</i>
Antiquity	<i>Antiquity. A Quarterly Review of Archaeology</i>
AntCl	<i>L'Antiquité Classique</i>
Archaeofauna	<i>International Journal of Archaeozoology</i>
ArchCl	<i>Archeologia Classica</i>
ArcheologijaKiiv	<i>Archeologija. Nacional'na akademija nauk Ukraini. Institut archeologii</i>

<i>ArcheologijaSof</i>	<i>Archeologija. Organ na Archeologičeskija institut i muzej (pri Bălgarskata akademii nauk)</i>
<i>ARV<sup>2</sup></i>	<i>J. D. Beazley, Attic Red-figure Vase-painters, 2<sup>n</sup> έκδοση. Oxford 1963</i>
<i>ASAtene</i>	<i>Annuario della Scuola archeologica di Atene e delle Missioni italiane in Oriente</i>
<i>AttiMemMagnaGr</i>	<i>Atti e memorie della Società Magna Grecia</i>
<i>BAC</i>	<i>Bulletin archéologique du Comité des travaux historiques et scientifiques</i>
<i>BalácaiKöz</i>	<i>Balácai közlemények</i>
<i>BAR</i>	<i>British Archaeological Reports</i>
<i>BCH</i>	<i>Bulletin de Correspondance Hellénique</i>
<i>BerRGK</i>	<i>Bericht der Römisch-Germanischen Kommission</i>
<i>BIABulg</i>	<i>Izvestija na Arheologičeskija Institut (Bulgaria)</i>
<i>BSA</i>	<i>Annual of the British School at Athens</i>
<i>Bull.épigr.</i>	<i>Bulletin épigraphique</i>
<i>Chiron</i>	<i>Mitteilungen der Kommission für Alte Geschichte und Epigraphik des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts</i>
<i>CP</i>	<i>Classical Philology</i>
<i>CSIR</i>	<i>Corpus Signorum Imperii Romani</i>
<i>CVA</i>	<i>Corpus Vasorum Antiquorum</i>
<i>Dacia</i>	<i>Dacia. Recherches et découvertes archeologiques en Roumanie</i>
<i>Darenberg- Saglio</i>	<i>C. Daremberg-E. Saglio, Dictionnaire des antiquités grecques et romaines d'après les textes et les monuments. Paris 1877-1919</i>
<i>Eirene</i>	<i>Eirene. Studia graeca et latina</i>
<i>FA</i>	<i>Fasti Archaeologici</i>
<i>GodMuzPlov</i>	<i>Godišnik na Archeologičeski muzej Plovdiv</i>
<i>Hellenica</i>	<i>L. Robert, Recueil d' épigraphie de numismatique et d' antiquités grecques. Paris. 1940-1965</i>
<i>Hesperia</i>	<i>Hesperia. The Journal of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens</i>
<i>JAnthArch</i>	<i>Journal of Anthropological Archaeology</i>
<i>JASc</i>	<i>Journal of Archaeological Science</i>
<i>Jdl</i>	<i>Jahrbuch des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts</i>
<i>JHS</i>	<i>The Journal of Hellenic Studies</i>
<i>JIES</i>	<i>Journal of Indo-European Studies</i>
<i>JPR</i>	<i>Journal of Prehistoric Religion</i>
<i>IG</i>	<i>Inscriptiones Graecae</i>
<i>Klio</i>	<i>Klio. Beiträge zur alten Geschichte</i>
<i>KölnJB</i>	<i>Kölner Jahrbuch für Vor- und Frühgeschichte</i>



LSJ	H. G. Liddell- R. Scott και H. S. Jones. <i>A Greek-English Lexicon</i>
MÉFRA	<i>Mélanges de l' École française de Rome. Antiquité</i>
MM	<i>Madrider Mitteilungen. Mitteilungen des Deutschen archäologischen Instituts.</i>
Mnemosyne	<i>Mnemosyne. A Journal of Classical Studies</i>
MonAnt	<i>Monumenti Antichi</i>
Nikephoros	<i>Nikephoros. Zeitschrift für Sport und Kultur im Altertum</i>
Orpheus	<i>Orpheus. Journal of Indo-European, Paleo-Balkan and Thracian Studies</i>
Palaeovertebrata	<i>Paleovertebrata. Montpellier, Laboratoire de Paléontologie.</i>
Paralipomena	J. D. Beazley. <i>Additions to Attic Black-figure Vase- painters and to Attic Red-figure Vase-painters</i> <sup>2</sup> . Oxford 1971.
Physis	<i>Rivista Internazionale di Storia della Scienza</i>
PNAS	<i>Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America</i>
PPM	G. Pugliese Carratelli και I. Baldassarre (επιμ.), <i>Pompei: Pitture e Mosaici</i>
PZ	<i>Prähistorische Zeitschrift</i>
RA	<i>Revue Archéologique</i>
RdA	<i>Rivista di Archeologia</i>
RE	Pauly-Wissowa, <i>Real-Encyclopädie der klassischen Altertumswissenschaft</i> (1893- )
REA	<i>Revue des Études Anciennes</i>
RM	<i>Römische Mitteilungen. Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts</i>
SaalbJb	<i>Saalburg-Jahrbuch. Bericht des Saalburg-Museums</i>
SEG	<i>Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum</i>
Seminarium Thracicum	<i>The Professor Alexander Fol Centre of Thracology. Papers and communications read at the meetings of the Seminar</i>
SIMA	<i>Studies in Mediterranean Archaeology</i>
Smith	W. Smith, <i>A Dictionary of Greek and Roman Antiquities</i> . London 1842-1890.
Starini	<i>Starini. Spisanie za Balkanza Arkheologia</i>
TAPhA	<i>Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association</i>
ThesCRA	<i>Thesaurus Cultus et Rituum Antiquorum</i>
TIG	<i>Trends in Genetics</i>
TrZ	<i>Trierer Zeitschrift für Geschichte und Kunst des Trierer Landes und seiner Nachbargebiete</i>
ZPE	<i>Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik</i>



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## THE BIG MOUND OF THE FAMILY NECROPOLIS OF THE ANCIENT VILLA ARMIRA

Researching the Big Mound near the village of Svirachi, the Ivailovgrad municipality, helped resolve many of the questions about the ancient Villa Armira<sup>1</sup>.

### The Big Mound

The Mound is situated 1 km south of the Villa, not far from the east end of Svirachi. The Mound was raised on top of the highest hill in the vicinity – a location both strategic and chosen at a very early stage as a cult site by the Thracians<sup>2</sup> (**Fig. 1**).

Rescue archaeological efforts were prompted by the treasure hunting inroads and the damages they inflicted. Excavations started in 2001 under my supervision. Archaeologists of the National Institute of Archaeology and Museum /NAIM/ within the framework of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences /BAS/ staffed the team as well as an expert from the History of Sofia Museum<sup>3</sup>. The excavations were sponsored by the foundation “Support Centre for Cultural Heritage Research and Preservation” in Sofia and the Horizon Foundation from the Netherlands<sup>4</sup>. Professor Bozhidar Dimitrov has also provided inestimable support in raising funds for the Big Mound excavations<sup>5</sup>.

The latter were finalized in 2007 as part of the activities within the Splendour of Armira project carried out by the Ivailovgrad municipality<sup>6</sup>. While drawing up and carrying out the cross-border cooperation PHARE Bulgaria - Greece project, we enjoyed the financial support of the Thrace Foundation in Sofia<sup>7</sup>.

1. Mladenova 1965, 1970, 1979, 1980. Kabakchieva 1986a. Mladenova 1991. Kabakchieva 1995. Kabakchieva 2005, 2008a. Kabakchieva 2009. Kabakchieva (in print).

2. Kabakchieva 2008b.

3. The archaeology team: team leader – senior research associate Gergana Kabakchieva PhD from BAS, NAIM; deputy team leader - Unian Meshekov from the Museum of Sofia History; Veselka Katsarova PhD; Zdravko Dimitrov PhD; Nadia Ivanova – all from BAS, NAIM; undergraduates from the Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski” and the New Bulgarian University.

4. I would like to say thanks, personally and on behalf of the whole team, to Mr. Kiril Christoskov, CEO of the Support Centre for Cultural Heritage Research and Preservation in Sofia, and to Mrs. Ginka Cholakova, a representative of the Dutch Horizon Foundation. The two foundations provided both financial and moral support to archeological research of the Big Mound by the ancient villa Armira, thus warding off the looting of a remarkable monument of ancient Thracian culture.

5. This is the right moment to acknowledge the contribution of Prof. Bozhidar Dimitrov who helped raise the funds for the emergency rescue 2001-2002 excavations, and provided valuable oversight in raising public awareness for the works around the Big Mound near Svirachi.

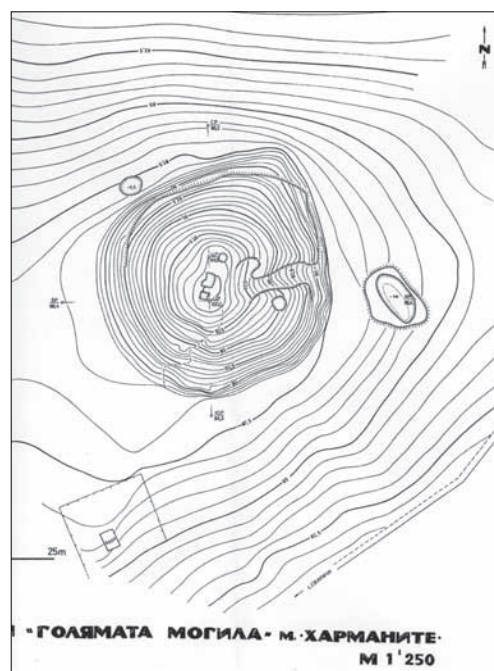
6. Dr. Gergana Kabakchieva was in charge of the archeological excavations under the project.

7. Project “The Splendour of Armira” was designed and implemented with the financial support of the Thrace Founda-



**Fig. 1** A Big Mound of the necropolis of ancient villa Armira by the village Svirachi, municipality of Ivaylovgrad.

The Big Mound surroundings had special implications for the ancient dwellers of the Armira river valley and the area (**Plan 1**). The Mound's top is a good vantage point offering vistas not only down the Armira valley but in all directions (**Fig. 2**). The river is the last right-hand tributary of the Arda. The Greek towns Didymóteicho (its ancient name was Plotinopolis) and Orestiada can be viewed from here, and, on a bright sunny day – Edirne in Turkey as well. In westerly direction there is view towards the Thracian fortress that in more recent history gave rise to the medieval town named Liutitsa as well as towards the Eastern Rhodopes. An antique road passed near the mound and Villa Armira: it used to be the shortest connection between *Via Egnatia* and *Via Diagonalis* meandering through the Balkans<sup>8</sup>.



**Plan 1** Design of the Big Mound.

tion: my thanks to Mr. Vassil Bozhkov and the CEO Mr. Kiril Christoskov.

8. In 2001, remains of this road were found at several places in the vicinity of Villa Armira by the Big Mound research team. A separate study of the road will be out for publication.





**Fig. 2** A view of the *Big Mound* to east.

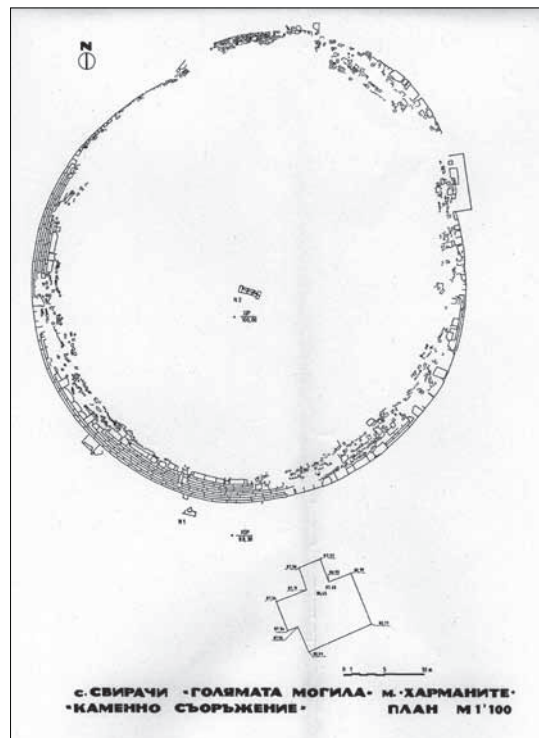


**Fig. 3** A solid stone structure of the *Mound*.

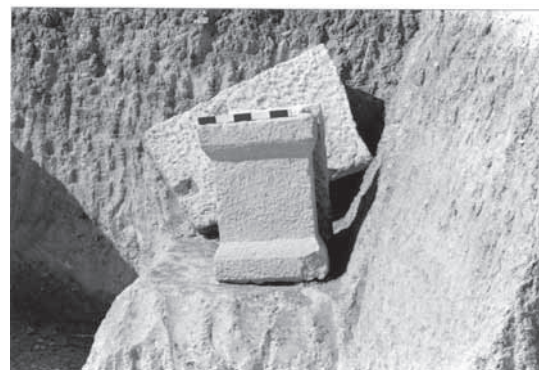
The Big Mound near Svirachi is among the largest Roman era mounds found in Bulgaria. Its diameter is approximately 60 m, and its original height was in the order of 18 - 20 m.

Its stone support structure (*crepis*) was completely recovered: a sturdy stone ring encircling the mound and covering over 1/3 of its height (**Fig. 3**). The crepida stonework is a unique achievement of ancient Thracian architecture (**Plan 2**). It matched an architectural plan prepared in advance<sup>9</sup>. As a type of engineering work, it is reminiscent of the big Thracian sub-mound shrine's crepida near Starosel erected five centuries earlier<sup>10</sup>, i.e. the Svirachi mound is a showcase of continuity in an age-old Thracian tradition.

The foundation of the stone structure is 1.20 x 1.20 m in size, the small height of the facility notwithstanding. This was the chosen engineering method designed to provide a basis for the large blocks of the terraced structure. The foundation was made of dimension stone fixed together with white mortar, a recent Roman masonry technique. Upon the foundation rests a terraced structure composed of blocks, each one of them 1.80-3.80 m long, 1.20 m wide and 0.29 m thick. The blocks are laid out in dry masonry and fastened together by "swallow tail" iron braces. A rostrum shaped as a broad platform sits on top of the terraced structure<sup>11</sup>. Further up stood a plinth of orthostats alternated by profiled aras. A rectangular slab of the orthostats as well as an ara were found south of the mound. They were ripped apart to be taken away as early as the late Roman period but instead were left in place for unknown reasons (**Fig. 4**). The aras have intricate profiles and decorated tops. The preserved ara has an orifice where a plug was fastened to keep the embossed



**Plan 2** A graphic plan of the stone construction of the Mound.



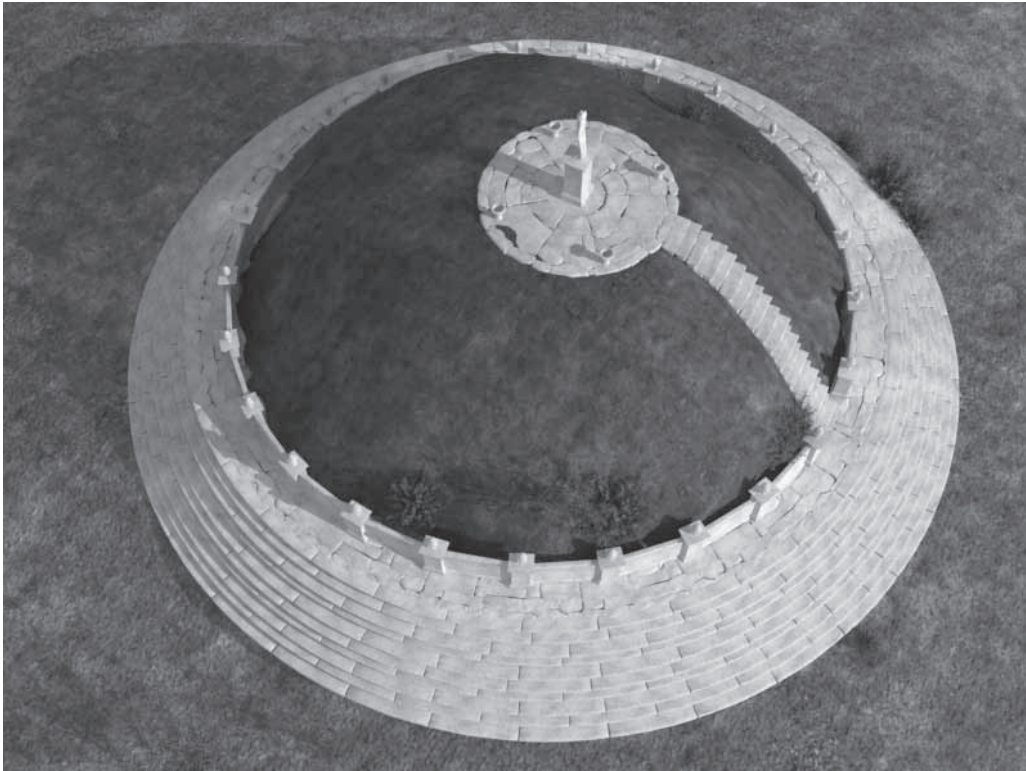
**Fig. 4** Discovery of one of the "ara", south of the Mound.

9. Ward-Perkins 1985, 67 - 70.

10. Kitov 2002a, 2002b, 5- 6.

11. Terraced structures and rostra were built in theatres and amphitheatres, shrines and mausoleums, in both private and public buildings. As architectural components they contribute to a lighter and more dynamic space, which commanded their attraction. Terraced structures were extensively used for religious buildings in Roman times. See: Ward-Perkins 1985, 21 - 60. I have to note here that the latest archeological findings in Bulgaria have corroborated that the Thracians revered "the staircase" as connection to the gods: Fol 2000, 2002.





**Fig. 5** “3 D” – computer reconstruction of the Big Mound by G.Kabakchieva and St. Krastev. A view from above.



**Fig. 6** “3D “ – computer reconstruction of the Big Mound by G.kabakchieva and St. Krastev. A view from south.

decoration in place. The latter could have been shaped like a stone-pine cone, a vase or otherwise<sup>12</sup>. These richer-relief elements were the first ones to be looted after Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire and that set off the destruction of pagan heritage in the 4th century AD.

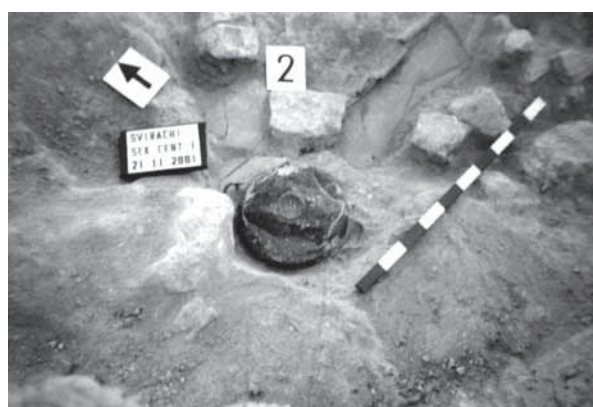
A narrow staircase lead to the mound's top adorned with a headstone sculpture or a marble stele<sup>13</sup>. Fragments of the slabs, which formed a quadrangular or a circular platform of the top (**Fig. 5**) were found during excavations. Parts of slabs thick 0.08 m were found everywhere of the mound. They were made of the same greenish tuff stone as the mound's rock face. It is likely that the buried woman's close relatives were the only ones who had access to this sacred spot.

All these elements of the site are supported by archeological evidence recovered in the course of excavations works. At various places of the mound's embankment, findings of marble vase shards were registered alongside those of slabs' fragments. The vases probably embellished the top platform. A greenish coloured soft stone type, the tuff, was used throughout the rock structure. Each one's outer side was chiseled into an arc shape to enable assembling them into a huge circle. Thus shaped, this unique stone facility did not only serve cult functions, it also supported the high mound embankment (**Fig. 6**).

In the last few years, a computer-aided restoration of the ancient Villa was done in addition to the one of the mound<sup>14</sup>. It provides a clearer idea of this remarkable accomplishment of ancient architecture and civil engineering. The mound's massive stone bordering accommodated the Roman antique masonry canon. The accurate foundation work is an indication the contemporary (1st century AD) state of the art construction methods were applied. Towering the Armira valley, this monument is comparable with the theatres, amphitheatres and stadia across the Roman Empire as an engineering achievement<sup>15</sup>. A status symbol of the wealthy Villa Armira owners, it must have reminded them of the glorious days of their predecessors, the Thracian aristocrats who ruled the whole Armira valley region.

### **The grave of the eminent Thracian heiress**

The Svirachi Mound was commissioned and raised by the founder of the antique villa facility by the side of the Armira in his lifetime, or by his immediate heir. However, the Mound was handed over to a close relative of his – a daughter or a granddaughter. Her grave is the primary



**Fig. 7** *The grave of the Thracian gentlewoman in Big Mound.*

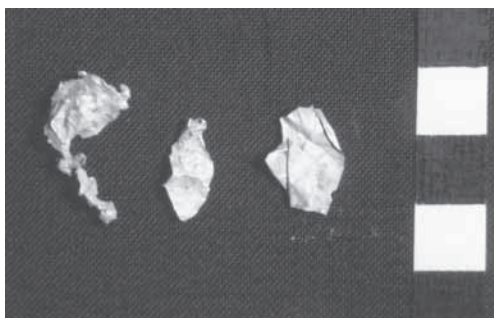
12. On tomb mounds and mausoleum decoration, see: Hajnocy– Mezos– Nagy and Visy 1999, 87. Dimitrova, 2000.
13. This is a high probability assumption for this kind of monument despite the Thracian origins of the family who owned the Villa Armira as they must have been romanized fairly early.
14. G. Kabakchieva authored the design for the restoration works of the Big Mound and the Villa Armira, and S. Krastev produced the computer imaging. The two researchers are jointly putting together a special publication of the computer restored images. See also: Kabakchieva 2009.
15. On amphitheatres and theatres from the early Roman period and the construction methods applied thereto, see: Ward-Perkins 1985, 67-79. Hönle and Henze 1981, 132 -42 with Lit.



**Fig. 8** Alabastron vessel from the central grave's stock.



**Fig. 9 a – b** The bronze applications from the decoration of the big chest.



**Fig. 10** The three leaves from the golden crown from the grave's stock.

one within the Mound (**Fig. 7**). It was recovered high up the embankment. The body of the deceased woman was burned on the same spot. A small heap of limestone rocks was piled up on top of the interment place. The burial rituals applied belonged to the mainstream traditions of Thracian aristocracy. The remains from the burning were collected in the central section of the platform to be covered with tiles. The grave has a rich set of paraphernalia and gifts comprising bronze, marble, glass and earthen ware, alabastron (**Fig. 8**) – crushed and half-destroyed by the fire. The grave did not only hold vessels aimed to service the deceased in the hereinafter, but two wooden boxes containing her favourite personal belongings. The bigger box has a rich decoration of bronze ornaments: Dionysus's masks, satyrs and maenads with inlaid glass eyes (**Fig. 9 a-b**).

The woman died very young: anthropologists have put her age at 20- 25 years. Three golden wreath leaves found in the grave corroborate her noble Thracian origin (**Fig. 10**). The multiple clay amulets placed in the grave represent various shapes (**Fig. 11**) – anthropomorphous, zoomorphous, geometrical (a.k.a. "the toys of Zagreus") – and suggest that the woman was a priestess of the paramount local deity, Dionysus, rather than just the Villa's owner. A small cameo of white agate was also found in the grave bearing a depiction of Medusa Gorgon, the prevalent image across the Villa's marble decorations (**Fig. 12 a - b**). The cameo is just one of the elements that connect the Thracian lady's grave to the Villa Armira's owners<sup>16</sup>. The link is similarly corroborated by other jewelry and household items found inside the grave, by the mound's positioning vis-a-vis the Villa, by the methods and materials used in its construction. The deceased was seen off to the other world by her relatives who surrounded her with a multitude of clay or glass vessels (*lacrimaria*). The objects found inside the grave have helped date it to late 1st, first quarter of the 2nd century AD. Another

16. Kabakchieva 2009, 16 -20.



grave finding was a silver coin of the emperor Traian (AD 98-117), provincial coinage from A.D. 98 of Perinthus, Turkey, on the Marble Sea coast, the capital of the province Thrace.

### The horses, the dog and the vehicles

A set of ritually buried antiques vehicles, skeletons of four horses and one dog belonged to the Thracian aristocrat's grave. The vehicles were two – the one was lavishly decorated and the other simple. The ironworks of the vehicles were found round the mound. Back in 2000, treasure hunters, using state-of-the-art equipment, found the place of the vehicle's ritualistic interment and embarked on digging around the place. The vehicle's hind half was consequently destroyed, its decorations were plundered. During the excavation, we found the iron parts of the vehicle's structure scattered round the mound and the decoration of the yoke. Graves with horses and dogs, offered up to the nobility of the society, existed in Thrace since the beginning of the Iron Age<sup>17</sup>.

The 2001 excavations found the skeletons of the four horses comprising the two teams as well as a skeleton of a dog interned in between (**Plan 3**). One of the horse teams was harnessed to the ritual vehicle, the other was from the simple one. Like in other upper class sub-mound graves, this one also exhibits the Thracian aristocracy's ritual tendency of sacrificial interment of a vehicle complete with the animals<sup>18</sup>.

The first vehicle was a four-wheeler, it served ritualistic purposes, and was lavishly decorated<sup>19</sup>. More than 100 iron parts of the two vehicles were recovered, enabling the vehicles' reconstruction<sup>20</sup>. The iron spoke of the wheel rims



Fig. 11 The clay's amulets from the grave of the Thracian gentlewoman.

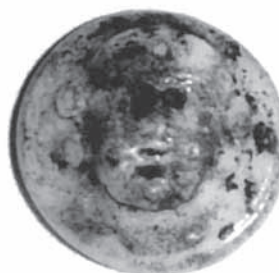


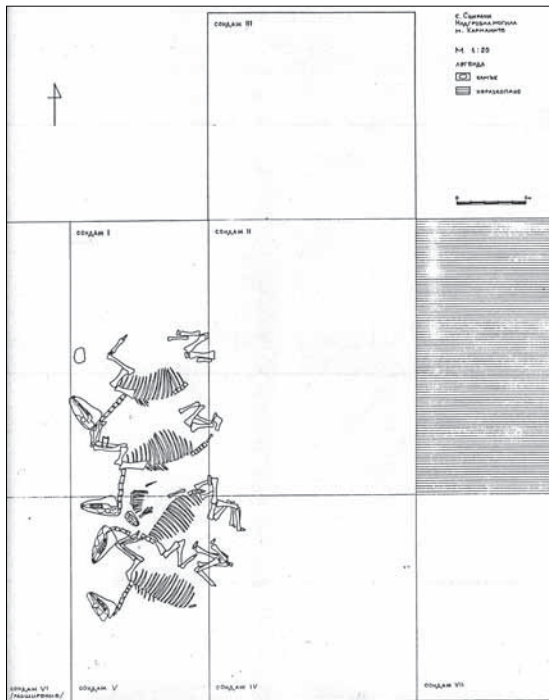
Fig. 12 a – b a/ Cameo of the white jet with the image of Medusa – Gorgon head; b/ Marble frieze decoration of the ancient villa Armira with the heads of Medusa - Gorgon images.

17. Georgieva 1995, 2000. Meshekov 2007.

18. On the topic of graves with vehicles and dogs from the Roman age in Thrace, see: Botusharova 1950. Venedikov 1960. Bujukliev 1986. Meshekov 2001, 31. Kitov 1999.

19. The rich horse harness and yoke decoration gives me enough reason to assume that the bodywork of the vehicle itself was also embellished. Its trimmings must have been plundered by treasure hunters.

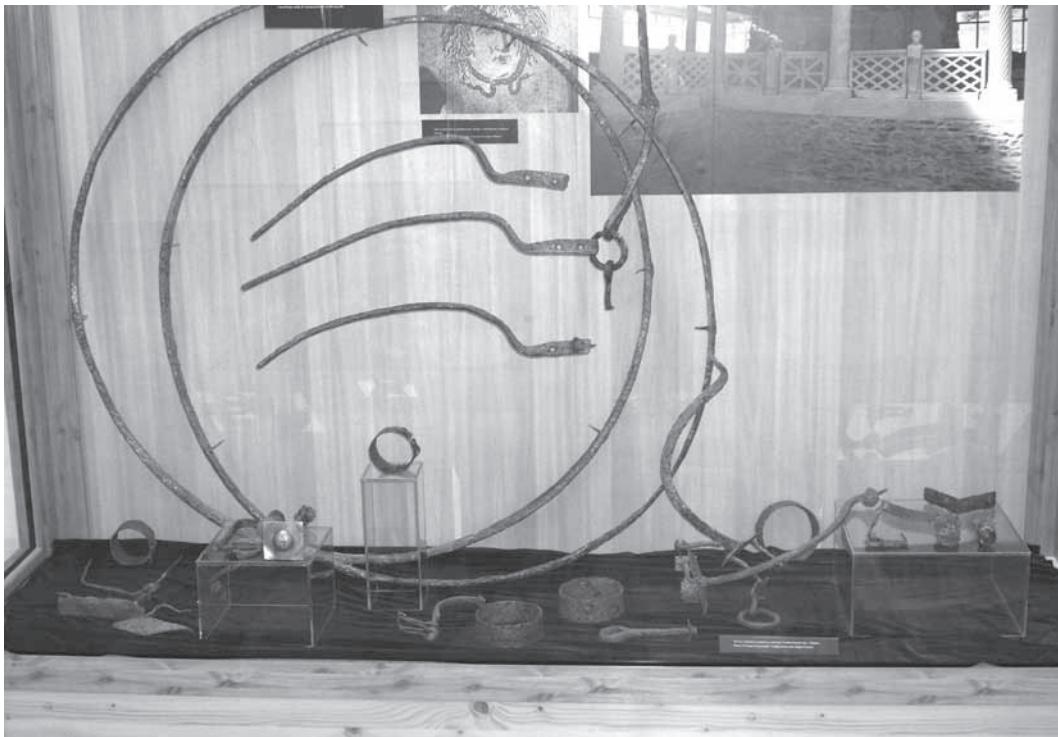
20. I must note that the better part of the vehicles' iron details – held by the National History Museum – have not been conserved for reasons I am unaware of.



**Plan 3** Plan of the archaeological situation by the discovery of the skeletons of the horses and the dog.

as well as the parts of the axles indicate the size of the ancient vehicle (**Fig. 13**). Some of the parts found suggest the wagon had a suspended body designed to soften its ride. Experts have dated this wagon development back to the early 2nd century AD<sup>21</sup>.

The recovery of the horse teams was a crucial point in the vehicle's/ ritualistically interned next to the mound. They comprise two pairs, with two young tall horses/mares in each one of them<sup>22</sup>. The animals' skeletons were recovered in their anatomical order. They were drugged on the spot. The second horse pair was found south of the first one: it was either the spare team for the first vehicle or went along to a second, which did not bear any decorations. No meaningful traces of harness were found in its proximity. The horses only had reins, and the single trimming found next was a hexagonal bronze element (**Fig. 14**).



**Fig. 13** The iron's parts of the chariots, shown in the Historical museum of Ivaylovgrad.

21. Röring 1983. Meshekov 2001. Meshekov 2007a. Meshekov 2007b.

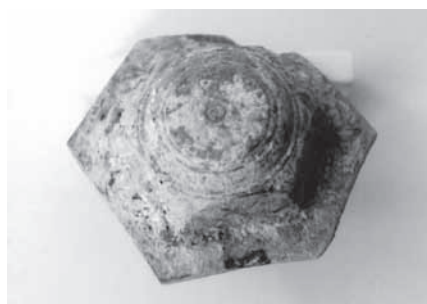
22. The skeletons of the animals in the chariot section were investigated by Dr. Lazar Ninov, a senior researcher for the National Institute of Archaeology with Museum under the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. A publication is forthcoming.

Similar ornaments have been found with other Thracian vehicles: they are typically interpreted as decoration of the front section of them<sup>23</sup>. Therefore, a second vehicle is a likely assumption: the first was ritualistic and abundantly decorated, the other – an ordinary one.

A dog's skeleton was recovered between the two horse teams. A canine interment is another tendency of Thracian aristocratic burial rites and it is shown for the culture from the pre-roman time in Thrace<sup>24</sup>. A dog was found between the horses with one of the wagons excavated near the Mikri-Doxipara Mound, and it was even of the same breed as the Svirachi one<sup>25</sup>.

The ornaments of the ceremonial vehicle's yoke, the horse trappings, the reins and the collar were recovered during the digs. Part of the yoke ornaments were found *in situ* while the rest were wrapped in a gold-embroidered scarf near the right horse's head. These rank among the best preserved, intricate bronze, silver or gold-plated ornaments ever found in Thracian lands. They are quite similar in shape to the ones with the chariots found in Shishkovtsi, near Kiustendil and Yambol<sup>26</sup>. The yoke and harness details found by the Big Mound lend themselves to restoration<sup>27</sup>.

The ornaments' base was made of silver-plated cast bronze. The shapes were thinly cut like a fretwork, and were decorated in several relief levels (**Fig. 15 a-b**). A silver element was fitted onto each one's centre. Their number is substantial. The yoke's decoration was neatly composed around a central ornament (**Fig. 16**). The latter is larger and in higher relief than the rest. A gold-plated silver ornament representing Gods' head forms its centre. The figurines of the young Dionysus standing, a thyrsus (stick) in his right hand, of a satyr, a silenus and a maenad surround the centre. The figurines were poorly preserved but discernible at the time of recovery. Besides, small multi-leaf rosettes were applied at each



**Fig. 14** A bronze part of the yoke of second horse team.



**Fig. 15 a – b** Two of the big applications from the horse trappings.

23. Venedikov 1960 81-2.

24. Georgieva 2000.

25. Triantaphyllos and Terzopoulou 2005.

26. Venedikov 1960, 7 -21; 49-60.

27. The restoration of the horses' harness and yoke became subject of a separate paper currently in the pipeline.





**Fig. 16** A central application of the yoke decoration with a relief head of Dionysus.



**Fig. 17** A silver application with the image of the young god from the horses harness.



**Fig. 18** A silver application with the scene "Charon's boat".

corner of the ornament. Across the ornaments, the transitions between relief planes were highlighted with frames of pearl and egg-shaped details. This is actually the repeated pattern of decoration: a pearl, an egg-shaped ornament and rosettes. However, with the rest of the ornaments, the central silver fittings are smaller and represent various images – a god (**Fig. 17**), a satyr's head, a silenus's head, a medusa-gorgon's head, a woman's head, an elderly man's head, a goat standing on a cliff etc.

The application with the image of Charon's boat and the deceased woman on board warrants some special attention (**Fig. 18**)<sup>28</sup>. The two figures are placed on either side of the boat. Charon is standing, holding a paddle in his hands, and the frail and stooped woman is sitting opposite. Similar decoration was found near Plovdiv (its ancient name was Philipopolis) and in Northern Dobroudja, the north-eastern tip of the country<sup>29</sup>. It is likely that the yoke embellishments of one of the wagons found near Mikri Doxipara-Zoni, the Kyprinos municipality in Greece, bore similar imagery, but too little was preserved for a secure claim to this effect<sup>30</sup>. Nonetheless, it is safe to say that the decorations of the Mikri-Doxipara-Zoni wagons stand closest to the Svirachi ones by way of design and production techniques used. Timewise, they provide the nearest parallel as well<sup>31</sup>.

The richly decorated translucent bronze and silver ornaments of the horse harness and yoke provide evidence for the link between the Big Mound and Villa Armira. The ornament images furnish new archeological evidence for the development of Thracian religion and art during the years of Roman rule in Thrace. This dynamic has to do with the Dionysus cult: revered as the

28. Inv. No. 163 and 164/ 2001.

29. For parallels with ornaments involving human images in burial chariots' decorations, see: Alföldi 1939, 355; Velkov 1943, 202, fig. 282. Botusharova 1950, 117, fig. 32.

30. Triantaphyllos and Terzopoulou 2005, 21-2.

31. Triantaphyllos and Terzopoulou 2005, 20-7.

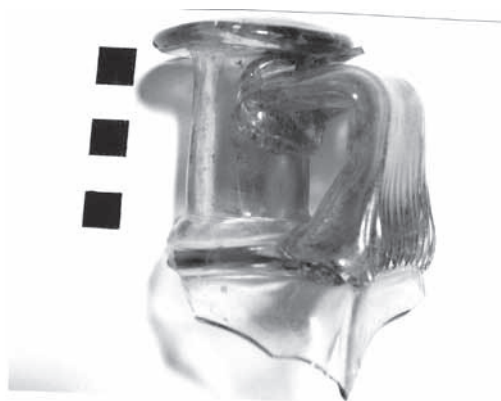
god of the constantly reviving nature and life, the Thracian Dionysus was also known under the names of Zagreus or Sabazius<sup>32</sup>.

The comparison between the Svirachi and the Mikri Doxipara-Zoni vehicles reveals the following disparities: while the wagon's structures of the latest Greek finding are exquisitely preserved, their decorations were all but completely destroyed and whatever images had remained were impossible to identify; on the other hand, the Svirachi vehicle has lost its decorations yet the ones on the yoke and the harness are intact. Therefore, the two findings are complementary. This is reinforced by the fact they are only 25–30 km apart, i.e. a day's journey as shown by data indicating travel times in antiquity<sup>33</sup>.

The short distance between the two mounds, the similarity of the Thracian burial methods applied, the gear found inside as well as the datings of the recovered graves and vehicles furnish enough evidence allowing me to claim that both mounds belonged to the owners of Villa Armira. Their common location within the Armira valley also corroborates such an assumption. The Svirachi mound was erected by the western end of the hill, south of the river, whereas the Mikri-Doxipara-Zoni one – at the hill's eastern tip.

### Glass and ceramics around the vehicles

The glass and earthenware found crushed on the spot just behind the horses is a testimony of the well preserved state of the front part of the set. These findings were helpful in dating the vehicle and identifying its link with the noble Thracian woman's tomb in the mound. The glass was an import from Italy. The vessels had the shape of tall quadrangular bottles, form 50, b by the Isings classification<sup>34</sup> (**Fig. 19**). The earthenware was of local origin. The plates belonged to types 1 and 8 by the typology of Kabakchieva for the Thrace province<sup>35</sup> (**Fig 20**). The atelier's brand was printed on the bottom's inside of some of the vessels, in the shape of a stamp *planta pedis*.. These plates were among the most prevalent ones in Thracian lands. Besides, they belonged to those forms of the eastern *terra sigillata*, which were the earliest ones to be adopted and produced in



**Fig. 19** Upper part of one of the glass bottles, finding near the horses skeletons.



**Fig. 20** Some clay vessels from the complex of the vehicles.

32. Fol 1993,1994, 2002.

33. Pekary 1968.

34. Isings 1957, 66-7, Form 50, b.

35. Kabakchieva 2000.

Thrace<sup>36</sup>. The pitchers are the typical Thracian forms of Type 1 by Kabakchieva<sup>37</sup>, representing a further development on the Hellenistic lagynos. Publications have been made of such earthenware originating from Villa Armira as well as from many other locations across Thrace.

### Conclusions

The Big Mound was designed to be the mausoleum of one of the antique Villa Armira's first owners<sup>38</sup>, yet it was used to be the eternal abode of a heiress of his, whom we can safely identify as a Thracian princess. The dating of the grave and of the mosaic with the portraits inside the Villa's room 10 give me reasons to assume that the Big Mound provided a tomb for the wife of the Villa's owner portrayed in one of the mosaics. She was also the mother of his young children featured in the same mosaic (**Fig. 21**). We will hardly ever know whether she died at childbirth or shortly afterwards, but there are plenty of signs she had been loved by many, who paid their respects while seeing her off on her way to the hereinafter.

Remains of a more recent grave were recovered in the mound's embankment. It was dated back to 3rd century AD and most likely was of a child. A similar grave was found at the mound's base in its southwestern section. Excavations only unearthed a set of marble slabs left from the latter. The grave had been looted. It is quite probable that only child interments were allowed at this mound subsequent to the burial of the young heiress.

The 2007 excavations of the Big Mound and Villa Armira unveiled yet another secret in the dramatic history along the Armira banks. It was established that a powerful earthquake that



**Fig. 21** Part of the floor mosaic from the room 10 of the ancient villa Armira, dating in the first quarter of the 2nd century AD, with the portrait of the Villa's owner and his children.

36. Kabakchieva 2000, 314.

37. Kabakchieva 1986a, 25 - 6, Table 36. Kabakchieva 1986b.

38. Kitov 2003, 34.

took place by the late 4th century AD destroyed the mound's imposing terraced stone face<sup>39</sup>. Another part of this structure fell through limestone hollows underneath the hill upon which it had stood (**Fig. 22**).

The Big Mound's embankment was restored so that it may treasure for posterity the remains of a grand and mystifying piece of ancient Thracian heritage in Bulgarian lands.

The latest archeological research has established why such a great number of marble decoration elements and such a large mosaic-covered area were found in the antique Villa Armira. The powerful earthquake triggered a landslide off the hilltop so that soon after the burning the Villa remains were enveloped in a thick layer of clay soil. This enabled their recovery nearly 2000 years later and a revelation of ancient Thracian art at its best.



**Fig. 22** *The remains and traces of the strong earthquake, which demolished the Big Mound in the end of the 4th century AD.*

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39. Kabakchieva 2008b.

## Ο ΜΕΓΑΛΟΣ ΤΥΜΒΟΣ ΤΗΣ ΟΙΚΟΓΕΝΕΙΑΚΗΣ ΝΕΚΡΟΠΟΛΗΣ ΤΗΣ ΕΠΑΥΛΗΣ ARMIRA

Στο κείμενο παρουσιάζονται τα αποτελέσματα της ανασκαφής ενός ταφικού τύμβου στο χωριό Svirachi (περιοχή Ivailongrad). Ο τύμβος βρισκόταν σε απόσταση 1χλμ. νοτίως της μεγάλης έπαυλης Armira. Είχε διάμετρο περίπου 60 μ. και το αρχικό του ύψος υπολογίζεται σε 18-20 μ. Μια κλιμακωτά διαμορφωμένη κρηπίδα από μαλακό λίθο, περιέβαλε τον τύμβο και συγκρατούσε την επίχωσή του. Η κρηπίδα αυτή καταστράφηκε σε μεγάλο βαθμό, εξαιτίας ενός σεισμού του 4ου αι.μ.Χ. Στο κεντρικό τμήμα και πολύ ψηλά στην επίχωση του τύμβου αποκαλύφθηκαν τα υπολείμματα καύσης νεαρής γυναίκας 20-25 ετών, που συνοδεύονταν από πολυάριθμα χάλκινα, πήλινα και γυάλινα αγγεία και από δύο ξύλινα κιβωτίδια. Η ταφή χρονολογείται στο τέλος του 1ου – πρώτο τέταρτο 2ου αι. μ.Χ. Τρεις μεταγενέστερες ταφές παιδιών του 3ου αι. μ.Χ., εντοπίστηκαν στην επίχωση του τύμβου. Έξω από τον τύμβο και σε πολύ μικρή απόσταση ήρθαν στο φως δύο κατεστραμμένες άμαξες μαζί με τους σκελετούς τεσσάρων αλόγων και ενός σκύλου. Εντοπίστηκαν πολλά από τα μεταλλικά εξαρτήματα των οχημάτων, ανάμεσα στα οποία ξεχωρίζουν τα χάλκινα, επαργυρωμένα ή επιχρυσωμένα διακοσμητικά στοιχεία της μιας τετράτροχης άμαξας. Η δεύτερη άμαξα ήταν ακόσμητη.

Σύμφωνα με την ανασκαφέα η νεαρή γυναίκα, που αποτεφρώθηκε και τάφηκε στον μεγάλο τύμβο, ήταν η γυναίκα του ιδιοκτήτη της έπαυλης Armira. Η ίδια διατυπώνει την άποψη ότι και ταφικός τύμβος της Μικρής Δοξιπάρας-Ζώνης, ο οποίος βρίσκεται σε απόσταση μερικών χιλιομέτρων από τον τύμβο στο Svirachi, πρέπει επίσης να συνδεθεί με τους ιδιοκτήτες της έπαυλης.





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