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Bakalářská práce



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Kurgans and Burials of the Yamnaya Culture in South-Eastern Bulgaria

Kurgany a pohřby Jámové kultury v jihovýchodním Bulharsku

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Prohlášení:

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Abstract (in English):

This thesis explores the significance and influence of the Yamnaya culture, focusing specifically on its presence and impact within the Middle Tundzha Valley. The Yamnaya culture, emerging at the end of the 4th millennium BC, played a crucial role in the development of a vast region across Eurasia, possibly contributing to the spread of Proto-Indo-Europeans. Through an examination of burial practices, particularly the use of ochre in graves, this study investigates the cultural and societal implications of Yamnaya customs in the region.

Abstrakt (česky):

Tato práce se zabývá významem a vlivem Jámové kultury, konkrétně se zaměřením na její přítomnost a vliv v údolí středního toku řeky Tundžy. Jámová kultura, která vznikla na konci 4. tisíciletí př. n. l., sehrála klíčovou roli ve vývoji rozsáhlého regionu v Eurasii a patrně přispěla k rozšíření takzvaných Praindoevropanů. Prostřednictvím zkoumání pohřebních praktik, zejména používání okru v hrobech, tato studie zkoumá kulturní a společenské důsledky zvyků Jámové kultury v regionu jihovýchodního Bulharska.

Key words:

Yamnaya culture, kurgan, ochre, Ezero culture, Bulgaria, Tundzha river

Klíčová slova:

Jámová kultura, kurgan, okr, Ezero, Bulharsko, Tundža

Poděkování

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Děkuji i Tereze, za její lásku.



Grave Stele For Helena (Getty museum collection)

Hoc opus Xavierio dedico, amico meo optimo, qui in memoria mea in aeternum manet.

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1. Introduction

This work focuses on the presence of the Yamnaya culture in the so-called Middle Tundzha Valley. The Middle Tundzha Valley is a microregion referring to an area located in the middle stream of the river. This geographical area is today made up of the Yambol District and peripheries of other neighbouring districts, mainly the Sliven, Burgas and Haskovo Districts.

The importance of the Yamnaya culture cannot be briefly summarized, as it had left a serious impact on the development of a large portion of the Eurasian continent, which to a certain extent is still visible to these days. For the past decades, the Yamnaya culture was seen as the prime candidate for the emergence and spread of the so-called Proto-Indo-Europeans. In other words, the Proto-Indo-Europeans were the speakers of a Proto-Indo-European language, which is in linguistic terminology defined as a root for all the modern-day Indo-European languages. ¹ In spite of these intriguing theories, the archaeological perspective is a bit sceptic about the issue as the Yamnaya culture left few traces of its existence.

The bearers of the Yamnaya culture were a nomadic people and the sole direct material heritage, that they left, are their burials. They buried their dead in a burial mound, which is usually called a kurgan. The Yamnaya burials are characteristic for their specific rite. The deceased are typically laid in a supine position with bent legs, their bodies are oriented East-West/West-East. The inventory is usually poor. The most typical feature of the Yamnaya graves is ochre, which is present either as a stain on the bodies or in the form of small lumps around them. ²

Scholars universally agree that the Yamnaya culture emerged sometime at the end of the 4th millennium AC in the Pontic-Caspian steppe (i.e. in the region of modern-day Ukraine and Southern Russia). ³ Apart from their supposed homeland, the Yamnaya kurgans are also found in neighbouring areas, namely in regions of modern-day Moldova, Romania, Hungary, Serbia and most importantly for the purposes of this work – Bulgaria. ⁴

The Middle Tundzha Valley represents the so far southernmost known limit, which the bearers of the Yamnaya culture reached. Their presence here raises various questions. Among the more typical one would obviously be the question about the approximate date of their arrival. Alas, radiocarbon dating has been performed only rarely on the deceased of the region and a satisfying

¹ Anthony 2007, 46.

² Frînculeasa – Preda-Bălănică – Heyd 2015, 47.

³ Anthony 2021, 17.

⁴ Preda-Bălănică – Frînculeasa – Heyd 2020, 95.

answer will thus not be found in this work. The most intriguing issue comes when studying the individual burials of the kurgans as they are not unanimously Yamnaya. A large portion of the burials does not resemble the Yamnaya burial in any significant way and is thus to be regarded as the local Ezero culture. No genetic analyses have yet been made for the burials of this region, but shortly is it possible to state, that these two cultures might be regarded as representatives of foreign nomads and an indigenous populace. The available data might serve as a tool to one of the most widely discussed topics regarding the Yamnaya culture – the relations between the locals and the nomadic “newcomers”.

2. Terminology

Before diving into either this particular text, it is imperative to focus shortly on terms that are to be not only frequently mentioned, but also are the core of the entire thesis. First and most important is undoubtedly the eponymous term Yamnaya. The word itself is an adjective of a Russian word *яма*, which is translated to English as pit, full translation of the culture into English would thus be the Pit grave culture. In current literature it is possible to encounter both Pit grave culture and Yamnaya culture, both are interchangeable and regard the same topic. However, taking into account all the sources used in this work and also the fact, that the term Yamnaya is mainly used by Slavic scholars, but also preferred by western ones, it is seen as a preferable choice to use in this work as well. There is also a small diffusion in how the culture is called among nations whose lands are inflicted by it, for our purposes that is mainly Bulgaria, Ukraine and Russia. Publications in both Bulgarian and Ukrainian seem to prefer for the denomination of the culture to use their native word Yamna (*Ямна*), while Russian is obviously in favour of its own Yamnaya (*Ямная*). Regarding all these possible alternatives, it is again found most favourable to stick with its Russian name, as it simply is the most used variant in the English written literature.

The entirety of this work operates solely based on material found in the context of burials. The Yamnaya burials are typically graves upon which a layer of soil is piled up. In English, such a type of burial is usually called a burial mound. In Bulgarian terminology, the universal Slavic word *mogila* (*могила*) is used most often in the articles about the barrows of the Yamnaya culture, however, a more recognized term in the western literature is *kurgan* (*курган*). Same as the term *mogila*, *kurgan* does not appear in the English dictionary and is present in languages such as Russian or Ukrainian. According to our latest understanding, its presence in eastern Slavic languages is most likely derived from Polovtsian, a Turkic language. The roots of this

word are either *gori*- “to guard/to protect” or *gur*- “to build/to erect”.⁵ However, more certain meaning of the term is basically a mound with some sort of burial structure inside it. Synonyms more common in English might be for example tumulus or simply already mentioned barrow. While those terms all bear their unique significance and some sort of difference mainly due to cultural and geographic specifics of the area or phenomenon they ought to describe, they are at the end of the day interchangeable and there is thus no reason to forcibly translate the eastern or southeastern European kurgans of the Bronze Age barrows or tumuli as there is no point in calling for example the early medieval barrows of England as kurgans. This work will thus prefer the term kurgan to refer to the burial mound.

A few key terms frequently mentioned in this work shall be illuminated in further chapters, for example the Yamnaya-type burial. There is however an important term, which is necessary to define in the beginning - ochre. It is best discussed in this introductory chapter, as this work ultimately does not concern itself with chemical analyses and we will only need to understand an elementary definition of this term. Ochre derives from an Ancient Greek word *ὄχρα*, literally meaning pale. It is a natural clay pigment, which according to a mixture of ferric oxide, clay and sand ranges in various colours.⁶ Throughout the history, ochre had been used as a standard colouring agent, some examples might be the Palaeolithic cave paintings or the wall paintings of the Egyptians or the Romans.⁷ For our purposes, it is noteworthy to mention, that ochre does not necessarily need to serve only as a colour agent for mural painting. It was and still is also frequently used by various cultures to paint bodies. Such technique is usually practiced by mixing the ochre with animal fat, which results in the skin being coloured in the colour of the ochre.⁸ As will be further seen, the Yamnaya culture is mostly connected with the use of red ochre. Its chemical formula is $\text{Fe}_2\text{O}_3 \cdot n\text{H}_2\text{O}$ and takes its red colour from an iron oxide called hematite.⁹ It is probably the most frequent find in the Yamnaya graves, most typically in the form of stain on the skeletons, mainly on their limbs and the cranium. For this reason, the Yamnaya culture is sometimes named also as the Ochre Grave culture.¹⁰

⁵ Starostin –Dybo– Mudrak 2003, 842.

⁶ Stein 1980, 511.

⁷ Thompson 1956, 98.

⁸ Crandall 2000, 48.

⁹ Rifkin 2012, 176.

¹⁰ Frînculeasa – Preda-Bălănică – Heyd 2015, 47.

3. Theoretical basis and applied methodology

This work can be divided into two main parts. First part aims to solely present the main specifics of the Yamnaya culture such as its characteristics, history of research etc. For this part, various sources have been used. Most notable of them are probably those presenting the Yamnaya culture in the light of the so-called Kurgan hypothesis, specifically by various publications of prof. Marija Gimbutas and prof. David W. Anthony.¹¹

The second part is where all the data about the studied area lie. Most of the available data come from annual excavation reports published by the Bulgarian National Archaeological Institute. In the text, these reports are referred to as AOR, which is a shortcut for Archaeological Discoveries and Excavations (*Археологически отрития и разкопки*). These reports are of a varied quality as a large portion of the studied kurgans was excavated in difficult conditions. Many of them were either only rescue-excavated or were located in complicated surroundings, which might have prevented to excavate the entire mound. Due to these conditions, we sometimes possess only a partial documentation. The insufficiently documented graves are thus usually left disregarded as they are ultimately unable to serve their purpose in this work.

The dating methods used for determining the age of the burials were mostly made through the relative dating. The available sources scarcely specify arguments for dating the regarded graves. However, since the dates are characterized as relative ones, we are to assume, that the biggest role probably was played by the overall inventory of the graves and their possible connotations with other sites. The radiocarbon dating was provided only for a handful of kurgans, namely two. The absolute dating will therefore not play a significant role in the work, as we do not possess enough data to build a comprehensive chronological overview of the 15 studied kurgans. We are thus obliged to rely mostly on the provided relative dates of the individual burials, which in the context of the Yamnaya culture span ca. 3300 – 2600 AC.¹² The relative date of those burials mostly relies on the presence of different non-Yamnaya graves, which usually possess more pottery. The Yamnaya burials themselves vary very little and it is not possible to establish their own chronology. In conclusion, the issue of arrival and disappearance of the Yamnaya culture in the region is impossible elaborate any further and we will simply stick with the known relative date of their existence in the region.

¹¹ Anthony 2007.

¹² Nikolova 1999, 7.

The kurgans are filled with burials dated to time periods spanning from the Early Bronze Age until the modern period. This work should serve as a summary of all of them with special attention paid to the EBA ones. However, the available sources are not uniform in their description of the individual burials. Some are extensively discussed, but some are also vaguely mentioned. This work is thus limited only to the available information. The burials shall be described in an ascending order from the oldest primary burial to the youngest ones. Some sources also mention possible chronological or construction phases, which are also taken into consideration in the summary.

Many of the studied kurgans possess burials not only of the Yamnaya culture, but also of the local Ezero culture. As will be addressed to a greater depth in the following chapters, the Ezero and Yamnaya burials are not that different from each other. A large portion of the deceased is buried in a similar looking fashion, most of the graves have a poor inventory and many of them also share several features usually assigned to the Yamnaya culture, for example the presence of wooden planks covering the grave.¹³ It is therefore difficult to differentiate one culture from the other. The only feature, which is seen as the only relevant option to recognize a Yamnaya burial is the presence of ochre. This option might raise several problems of its own, as ochre was not used solely by the Yamnaya culture. However, an important aspect to take into consideration is that the ochre is generally regarded as a feature used to distinguish a certain group of people.¹⁴ Ochre is a feature used only in a fraction of tens of EBA burials of the kurgans studied in this work, which must ultimately bear some sort of meaning. In this work, we will operate with a hypothesis, that the presence of ochre might indicate, that the deceased could be regarded as a bearer of the Yamnaya culture. The suggestion of ochre representing some sort of sociocultural differentiation might find its footing in the existence of mass burials in the kurgans. They sometimes contain a mix of deceased stained and unstained by ochre. We will probably never be able to explain this with certainty, but the sociocultural differentiation is rather tempting. This suggestion of some form of coexistence could also find its support in the fact, that the relevant sources often talk about the kurgans of the region as of sites containing burials of various cultures.¹⁵ However, not all sources mention any “cultural affiliation” of the deceased. It is thus one of the core tasks of this work to recognize the key features of the burials and assign them either to the foreign Yamnaya culture or the indigenous Ezero culture. It is also important to keep in mind, that for example the mass burials are often impossible to distinguish

¹³ Gimbutas 1993, 218.

¹⁴ Stavreva 2018, 121.

¹⁵ e.g. Illiev – Bakardzhiev 2020.

that easily, as they could resemble both the mentioned cultures. These situations might therefore be understood as an amalgam of foreign and local traditions. However, no genetic analyses have been made on the burials and the statement about some form of peaceful coexistence remains solely as a theory.

All the important EBA burials mentioned in the text are ultimately summarized in tables. The tables should aid the readers of this text to not get lost in endless pages characterizing each burial. The tables also serve as an organized overview of the important features of all the burials, which should in theory help in differentiating the foreign Yamnaya culture, the local Ezero culture and the hypothetical amalgam of both, which in the tables is referred to as Yamnaya/Ezero.

Regarding the geographical localization of the kurgans, it is difficult to pinpoint, where they concretely lie, as most of the available sources give us only an approximate location. One of the possibilities to find the kurgans' concrete location would be to compare satellite images from various time periods. Alas, the fulfilment of this thesis had a strict deadline and no time was left to apply this method. A map overview of the studied kurgans created in ArcGIS has nonetheless been attached to this work, but most of the locations are approximate.

4. An overview of the Bulgarian Early Bronze Age

The Early Bronze Age in the region of Bulgaria is a complex topic, which is difficult to summarize briefly. For our purposes it seems most efficient to focus on one specific aspect of the region – the interconnection of the land of modern-day Bulgaria with neighbouring regions and how it is visible in the material culture. This phenomenon of interconnection is not visible only in the Early Bronze Age, but also in older periods. Let us thus shortly start with them to paint a broader picture.

For most of the Neolithic, Bulgaria was dominated by Karanovo culture, which was defined in the 1930's by the eponymous site of Karanovo in the Sliven District.¹⁶ A simplified characteristics of the culture might include mentions of white-painted pottery or the terracotta statuettes. The best-known example of those statuettes seems to be the so-called “Gulmenita lovers”, which depict a male embracing a female, whose sex is clearly distinguishable by her pubic triangle and breasts.¹⁷ The Chalcolithic then saw the rise of the Varna culture (4500 –

¹⁶ Gimbutas 1982, 24.

¹⁷ Gimbutas 1982, 298.

4100 AC), which was followed by the Cernavodă culture (4000 – 3200 AC). Material assigned to the Cernavodă culture is found not only in Bulgaria but also along the entire Danube Valley. It is frequently mentioned that the Cernavodă culture shares similar features with the Sredny Stog culture of modern-day Ukraine. More specifically it is the fortified settlements found on hilltops. According to a large portion of animal remains in these settlements, it is assumed, that it was a herding-centred economy. The decline of this culture is usually seen as the beginning of the Early Bronze Age in the region.¹⁸

The Early Bronze Age is usually dated between 3000/2500 – 2000/1900 AC, not only for the region of modern-day Bulgaria but also for the most of the nearby countries such as Romania or Moldova. However, it is noteworthy to mention that up to this day, the entire chronology is not yet complete.¹⁹ The earliest phase of the Early Bronze Age in Bulgaria was mostly dominated by various cultures. The most important one for the purpose of this work is the Ezero culture, which was spread mostly in the eastern part of the country. It is dated between 3300 – 2700 AC and was firstly described in 1978 by prof. Georgi Georgiev who excavated a fortified settlement, eponymously named after the nearest village of Ezero (*Ezero*) in the Stara Zagora District.²⁰ One of the main characteristics of this culture is the trend of building Chalcolithic-like fortified settlements.²¹ However, it is noteworthy to mention, that most of the settlements have not been extensively excavated and we do not possess a comprehensive knowledge about them yet.²²

The importance of the Ezero culture lies in two main aspects. The first one can be generally summarised as the issue of pottery. The Ezero ceramic repertoire, frequently found in the context of settlements and burials, is usually made up of vessels with exterior sleeve-like thickening and small-footed bowls. The bowls often have a cross-shaped foot, which is a trait typical for different EBA cultures of the Balkans as well, for example the Glina-Schneckenberg culture and the Corlăteni culture of Romania. Such a decoration can also be seen as a possible connotation with the Bell Beaker culture of Western Europe. In the southern borders of the Ezero culture there are often found atypical shapes of pottery, especially asymmetrical jugs or

¹⁸ Anthony 2007, 260.

¹⁹ Boroffka 2013, 879.

²⁰ Георгиев *et al.* 1979.

²¹ Суванджиев 2022, 30.

²² Boroffka 2013, 881.

askoi. Those shapes are typical for Anatolia, especially Troy, which ultimately points out to the clear evidence of interregional contacts.²³

The second aspect is the issue of burials. The Ezero burials are usually pits containing inhumations. Those pits are often enclosed by rough rocks. Apart from the rocks, some graves also contain anthropomorphic stone stelae. According to Leshtakov, the presence of the stelae can be regarded as direct evidence, that the Ezero culture might have functioned as a sort of amalgam of the local and foreign traditions. The so-called “foreign traditions” are understood as a presence of the Yamnaya culture in the region, which is in certain periods contemporary with Ezero.²⁴

It is also noteworthy to mention the relative and absolute chronology, which is a bit problematic as available sources name the present cultures in different relative order. The EBA I is dated to 3300 – 3000 AC and is contemporary with Ezero 1 – 3. The EBA II is dated to 3000 – 2600 AC and is contemporary with Ezero 4 – 10. According to Nikolova’s table, these 2 periods are the only ones, in which the Yamnaya culture is present in the region of Bulgaria. The EBA III dated between 2600 – 2000 AC is thus of less interest to us.²⁵ It is also imperative to mention, that the Nikolova’s chronology names the oldest Ezero phase as Ezero 13. (*Fig. 1*) However, most of the available sources studying the on the kurgans discussed in this work names Ezero 1 as the oldest phase dated to EBA I, I have chosen to swap Nikolova’s order.

5. Defining the Yamnaya culture

5.1 The emergence

The Yamnaya culture was firstly defined by prof. Vasily Gorodtsov (1860 – 1945).²⁶ In 1901 and 1903, he led excavations of 103 kurgans around the city of Kharkiv (*Харків*) in modern-day Ukraine.²⁷ Definition of the term Bronze Age was not fully established in this period yet and Gorodtsov dated these graves mainly according to metal finds, which he compared to finds of better understood areas such as the Aegean or Anatolia.²⁸ In 1907, he presented a 3-phase chronological sequence of those kurgans. The oldest phase he defined as the Yamnaya culture (*Ямная культура*), which he dated to the Early Bronze Age. The second phase was named by

²³ Boroffka 2013, 881.

²⁴ Leshtakov 2011, 569.

²⁵ Nikolova 1999, 7.

²⁶ https://link.springer.com/referenceworkentry/10.1007/978-1-4419-0465-2_2439#citeas

²⁷ Городстов 1907, 211–365.

²⁸ Anthony 2007, 306.

him as Katakombnaya culture (*Катакомбная культура*) and dated to the Middle Bronze Age. The ultimate phase was dated to the Late Bronze Age and was named as the Srubnaya culture (*Срубная культура*).²⁹ The differentiation of those cultures was defined according to the style of the pits, in which the deceased were buried. According to Gorodtsov, the Yamnaya burials were simple pits; the Katakombnaya were, as the name indicates, catacomb-like structures dug into a wall of the pit; the Srubnaya were pits covered by timber logs. This pre-radiocarbon chronology is today regarded as inaccurate. Gorodstov defined these cultures in a culture-historical approach, which ultimately makes this chronology slightly obsolete. Names of those cultures nonetheless prevailed.³⁰

With the introduction of radiocarbon dating, it became apparent, that the simplistic characterization of the Yamnaya culture belonging solely to the Early Bronze Age is insufficient. The first person to point that out was prof. Dmytro Telegin, who compiled radiocarbon dates from 38 Bronze Age suggested kurgans found in the territory of southern Ukraine.³¹ Out of 210 samples, Telegin suggested, that the earliest phase of the Yamnaya culture can be dated between 3300 – 3000 AC and continues to 2800 – 2400 AC.³² However, such a suggestion raised several questions among scholars. The loudest opponent of Telegin's hypothesis was dr. Nikolay Merpert, who argued, that Yamnaya emerged in the Eneolithic. In his view, the Yamnaya culture was a contemporary with the Sredny Stog culture (*Среднестоговская культура*) of modern-day Ukraine. According to Merpert, the initial Eneolithic phase of the Yamnaya culture is attestable by a settlement of Mikhailivka (*Михайлівка*) located in the Zaporizhzhia Oblast (*Запорізька область*), which was excavated in the 1950's. This settlement contained three chronological phases. The first phase was interpreted as a pre-Yamnaya period with material of the Lower Mikhailivka culture (*Нижньомихайлівська культура*); the second and third were suggested to be Yamnaya, both dated to the Eneolithic.³³ There are also various counter-arguments, which disregard this theory, for example the issue of similarities between the metallurgy of the Yamnaya with the late phase of the Maykop culture (*Майкопская культура*), which is dated to the Early Bronze Age. However, for our purposes it is sufficient to stick with the generally acknowledged fact, that the

²⁹ The English written literature might sometimes call these cultures as the Pit Grave culture, the Catacomb culture and the Timber Grave culture. However, it becomes more and more frequent to use the latinized versions of the Russian names.

³⁰ Anthony 2019, 18.

³¹ Телегин 1978, 7.

³² Telegin *et al.* 2003, 160.

³³ Anthony 2019, 19.

rapid spread of the Yamnaya culture initiated in the Early Bronze Age, more specifically in the already mentioned period of 3300 – 3000 AC.³⁴

5.2 The Myth of Marija Gimbutas

For the past three centuries, scholars have been developing theories about the emergence of the so-called Indo-Europeans. The term itself was always mainly regarded as a linguistic one. Briefly put, the Indo-European language family contains most of the languages spoken on the European continent and also various languages in the Near East, Central Asia and Northern India. It is universally accepted, that this wide variety of language groups all derive from one root language, which is in linguistic terminology called the Proto-Indo-European.³⁵ The beginning of the 20th century saw the rise of a debate, whether the spread of the speakers of this reconstructed language could be attested by any archaeological culture. Theories about this emergence have been developing already in the first half of the 20th century. The biggest breakthrough came in the 1970's, when prof. Marija Gimbutas presented her *Kurgan hypothesis*. According to her, the so-called “Kurgan people” emerged in the Pontic-Caspian steppe and migrated westwards, which ultimately reshaped the population, language and culture of the entire European continent.³⁶

Gimbutas revisited this theory many times and had ultimately reached to a conclusion, that the migration happened in three waves. According to her, the first wave commenced in the middle of the 5th millennium AC, when the Lower Dnieper basin started to be filled by new type of burials. The deceased were buried in a kurgan and were laid in a supine position with bent or extended legs. The graves usually contained flint daggers, spears and small horse-head sculptures. Interestingly enough, the deceased were also stained by red ochre. This new type of burial was named as the Sredny Stog culture. Gimbutas also points out, that this type of burial was reserved for the male-warrior elite, which is attestable by the present grave goods. Similarly, the horse-head sculptures present in the burials might be interpreted as a sort of worship of the equids, which would further point out to a nomadic-like lifestyle of these people. Most importantly, similar kurgans also appeared in the Balkans, mainly in Romania and Bulgaria. At the same time, the local contemporary cultures such as Karanovo and Varna started

³⁴ Anthony 2019, 38.

³⁵ Anthony 2007, 99.

³⁶ Preda-Bălănică 2021, 137.

to diminish. These “Old-European” cultures were then replaced by cultures such as the Cernavodă culture. The Cernavodă culture was typical for building fortified settlements, production of a low-quality “Kurganoid” pottery and also the widespread use of horses, which she saw to be a direct consequence of a violent invasion.³⁷

According to Gimbutas, the second wave happened in the second half of the 4th millennium AC. It also targeted regions neighbouring the steppes of the Eastern Europe. This wave is seen by Gimbutas as an amalgamation of the indigenous and “Kurgan” cultural systems. In the context of modern-day Bulgaria, she pointed out to the emergence of the Ezero culture, which according to her, is a typical example of this amalgamation.³⁸

The third wave she ultimately connects with the emergence of the Yamnaya culture in the North Pontic steppe. She saw the core features of a Yamnaya-type burial accordingly: The burial pits were usually surrounded by a ring of rocks and were covered by birch or oaken planks; The pit was deep and usually contained male burials, predominantly in a supine position with bent legs and oriented West-East/East-West; Ochre was present either as a stain on the body or in the form of scatter around it; The deceased usually laid on an organic mat. She dated the migration between 3000 – 2800 AC and saw its importance namely in the Balkan region, in which hundreds of these Yamnaya-type burials have been found.³⁹

Gimbutas’ hypothesis was not widely acclaimed in the times, when she first presented it. One could mention various reasons playing part in the theory not being fully acknowledged back then. An example would be her problematic and rather subjective vision of the “Kurgan people”, whom she saw as a warlike patriarchal society destroying the peaceful matriarchal indigenous populations of the so-called “Old Europe”.⁴⁰ If we however disregard some of these outdated tendencies, we are left with the fact, that Gimbutas correctly defined the concept of invasions from the steppes. This concept is today almost universally acknowledged to truly have had a grave impact on Europe.⁴¹ For our purposes, her clear definition of a Yamnaya-type burial also plays a significant role, which we can further use as a sort of manual when characterizing the kurgans discussed in this work.

³⁷ Gimbutas 1993, 208–209.

³⁸ Gimbutas 1993, 213.

³⁹ Gimbutas 1993, 218.

⁴⁰ Gimbutas 1993, 211.

⁴¹ Preda-Bălănică 2021, 138.

6. Yamnaya presence in the Balkans

6.1 Defining the Yamnaya-type burial

With the established hypothesis, that the Yamnaya culture migrated to the region of the Balkans sometime at the turn of the 4th and 3rd, we must now look for plausible archaeological data to support it. This proves to be a complicated issue, as burying the dead into kurgans was practiced even before the time of the supposed Yamnaya emergence. For example, the so far excavated kurgans of the Romanian regions of Banat, Dobruja, Moldavia, Muntenia, Oltenia and Transylvania, reach a total number of 177. However, some of them do not show the typical Yamnaya traits and are suggested to be pre-Yamnaya.⁴² When seeking for Yamnaya burials, we must pay attention to several aspects. Despite the fact, that the kurgans containing Yamnaya burials are usually quite large in size, the dimensions do not play the most significant role. The greatest importance is in the features of the graves themselves. The burial pit is usually rectangular or oval and is covered by wooden planks, which are obviously attested only as fragments. The planks can sometimes also be covered by mats made of vegetal textiles. According to a 2020 publication by Preda-Bălănică *et al.*, most of the graves contain male burials.⁴³ However, it is noteworthy to consider the fact, that a high percentage of the Yamnaya kurgans was excavated in difficult conditions, often as rescue-excavations and regularly without the presence of an anthropologist. The sex of the deceased was more than often left unspecified and we thus are not able to tell a specific percentage of female and male burials. Further on, the bodies of the deceased were laid in a supine position with bent legs and head oriented to the west.⁴⁴ The westwards orientation of the head is, however, not uniform as the example of Bulgaria shows. In Bulgaria, we are often met with deceased, whose heads were oriented eastwards. Overall, the West-East or East-West orientation of the body is a standard.⁴⁵ Ochre is the most significant feature of the Yamnaya burials, which is present either in the form of stain on the body, mainly on the limbs and the head, or as small lumps found near the body, typically around the head. (*Fig. 2*) Grave goods are usually poor. Metal objects are usually simple spiral rings, typically made of silver and rarely of gold. (*Fig. 3*) A rarer find are daggers made of bronze or copper. Some burials contain necklaces made from teeth of domesticated animals, for

⁴² Preda-Bălănică *et al.* 2020, 85.

⁴³ Preda-Bălănică *et al.* 2020, 86.

⁴⁴ Preda-Bălănică *et al.* 2020, 88.

⁴⁵ Николова 2000, 436.

example dog. (Fig. 4) The animal necklaces are usually found in child burials. Pottery finds are not frequent. The Yamnaya culture did not have its own distinct pottery and all the ceramic repertoire found in the graves can be assigned to local cultures.⁴⁶ In context of Bulgaria, the pottery in the graves is typically a product of the Ezero culture.⁴⁷ The anthropomorphic stone stelae typically found in the Yamnaya burials of the Ukrainian steppes are not too frequent in Bulgaria. In context of burials, they are found very rarely. Most of them are found in non-funeral contexts, which can be interpreted as a cultural influence on the indigenous populations (Fig. 5).⁴⁸ Some other features typically found in the alleged homeland of Yamnaya are also less frequent or missing completely. For example, horse burials are quite rare.⁴⁹

6.2 Zones of migration

Direct traces of the Yamnaya migration westwards are obviously invisible. However, it is acknowledged, that they have been a nomadic people, which highly relied on the use of horses.⁵⁰ With that information in mind, we can look for analogies in different nomadic populations of the history, that entered Europe from the eastern steppes. According to prof. Volker Heyd, the route from modern-day Ukraine could have possibly led “*via the Romanian Moldavia over the east Carpathian passes into the upper Tisza basin*”. This route was used by the Mongols, who entered Europe in the 13th century.⁵¹ We will probably be never able to tell specific reasons, which led to the Yamnaya migration west. An overly brief explanation could be found in the characteristics of the landscape. Around 500 supposedly Yamnaya kurgans have been excavated around the Danube so far. Those kurgans are located within the borders of modern-day Hungary, Serbia, Romania and Bulgaria (Fig 6). The landscape of these countries can be characterized as the westernmost limit of the vast Eurasian steppe.⁵² Such landscape very much resembles the region, from which the Yamnaya culture originally emerged. They ultimately might have seen the regions out west as a completely natural way to migrate to. Other theory would be more sympathetic with the visions of a destructive invasion presented by Marija Gimbutas, who saw the nomads migrating west as an intrusive element, that sought spoils and riches.⁵³

⁴⁶ Preda-Bălănică *et al.* 2020, 86.

⁴⁷ Nikolova 1999, 175.

⁴⁸ Preda-Bălănică *et al.* 2020, 98.

⁴⁹ Николова 2000, 423.

⁵⁰ Trautman *et al.* 2023, 1.

⁵¹ Heyd 2011, 538.

⁵² Heyd 2011, 535.

⁵³ Brami 2021, 137.

According to prof. Heyd, the Yamnaya presence in the Balkans can be divided into several zones of distribution. The easternmost is located in the State of Moldova and also in the Romanian region of Moldavia. All of the so far excavated kurgans have been found in well-drained hills and flatlands between the rivers Prut and Siret. The westernmost lies in the central Carpathian basin, which is framed by the river Tisza to the west and Danube to the south. Most of the kurgans in this zone are located within the borders of modern-day Hungary, namely in the counties of Szabolcs–Szatmár–Bereg, Hajdú–Bihar and Békés. A few kurgans have also been excavated in the Srem District (*Сремски округ*) of Serbia. The next two are both located along the lower Danube. The bigger one lies along Danube's delta. In Romania, most of the kurgans from this zone are located in the Wallachian plain.⁵⁴ In the region of northeastern Bulgaria, there are three subcentres of distribution – 1. Around Dobrich (*Добрич*) 2. Northeast of Shumen (*Шумен*) 3. East of Varna (*Варна*). A total number of Yamnaya suggested kurgans in this region is not given, but as of 2021, up to 53 Bronze Age mounds have been excavated here, most of them in large necropolises.⁵⁵ Some Yamnaya kurgans have also been attested in the region of northwestern Bulgaria, mainly in the districts of Pleven (*Плевенска област*), Lovech (*Ловешка област*) and Vratsa (*Врачанска област*).⁵⁶

7. Topography and natural conditions of the Middle Tundzha Valley

The river Tundzha (*Тунджа*) springs in the central parts of Stara Planina (*Стара Планина*). From there, the river flows eastwards into the Thracian Plain near the town of Sliven (*Сливен*) and continues through the centre of the Yambol District. The river flows through the town of Yambol, in which it bends 90° south and separates itself into one wide stream and several smaller braids, which are reunited further south. Along the way, the river serves as a natural border between the districts of Yambol and Haskovo. The flow of the river through these provinces is usually called the Middle Tundzha Valley. The river ultimately continues further east, where it joins the Maritsa River (*Марица*) (*Fig. 7*).⁵⁷ All of the kurgans discussed in this work are either located directly in the Yambol District, or in its close vicinity (*Figs. 8 – 10*). Let us thus characterize the environment of that province to paint a picture of the region.

⁵⁴ Heyd 2011, 536.

⁵⁵ Alexandrov 2021, 273.

⁵⁶ Preda-Bălănică *et al.* 2020, 95.

⁵⁷ Sobotkova – Ross 2018, 121.

According to a 2013 census, the province is populated by 127 176 inhabitants. Around 70% of them live in the provincial capital of Yambol (*Ямбол*). Apart from Yambol, there are four other major towns – Tundzha (*Тунджа*), Straldzha (*Стралджа*), Elkhovo (*Елхово*) and Bolyarovo (*Болярово*). The province is also consisted of 105 villages, which are distributed into five municipalities, all named after the previously mentioned major towns.⁵⁸

The 3 355.5 km² large area is dominated by the Thacian Plain (*Горнотракийска низина*). The lowlands are mostly formed by proluvial sediments, gravels and clays. The plain is mostly flat, however also contains several elevations in the form of rocky hills. An example of such an elevation is Zaiychi vrakh (*Зайчи връх*) located in the northernmost part of the district, which is also further discussed in this work. The northern part of the Yambol District also contains a small part of the mountain range of Stara Planina. There is also a second mountain range, which partially reaches the region. In the southeastern part is consisted of the Strandzha mountain range (*Странджа*), which apart from Bulgaria is also located in the European part of Turkey, where the highest peak of Mahya Dağı (1031 m) lays.⁵⁹

The terrain is very fertile, which results in about 77% of the province being used for agriculture. Forests represent some 15% of the region and are mostly concentrated in the south.⁶⁰ The forests are mainly oaken, which grew in the region since the prehistory. Until the Early Bronze Age, the forests represented a significantly larger portion of the land. A sudden deforestation is usually attributed to various social and economic changes. According to Leshtakov, the Early Bronze Age Bulgaria saw a rising importance of stock breeding and a rising demand for fuel because of the development of metallurgy.⁶¹ About 7% of the region is consisted of bodies of water, residential areas, zones of transport and other human-made infrastructures. The remaining 1% represents areas such as rocky hills and similar uninhabited places.⁶²

Regarding the current climate, entire Southeastern Bulgaria is one of the warmest areas in the country. The hottest month of the year is July, which on average reaches 23 Celsius°. In the summer months, the temperature can rise to up to 40° Celsius. Summers are also usually humid. However, rains are occasional, which frequently results in droughts during the hottest months. Rain also highly depends on local topography. For example, the city of Yambol has a higher

⁵⁸ Sobotkova – Ross 2018, 120.

⁵⁹ Sobotkova – Ross 2018, 118–119.

⁶⁰ Sobotkova – Ross 2018, 123.

⁶¹ Leshtakov 2009, 26–27.

⁶² Sobotkova – Ross 2018, 122 – 123.

annual average rainfall than Elkhovo. The coldest month is January, which on average reaches the temperatures of 0 – 1.5° C. The winter months are usually short and rather mild.⁶³

8. Yamnaya presence in the southeastern Bulgaria

In Heyd's publication, there is a brief mention of kurgans located in the region of southeastern Bulgaria. He does not describe them to a further depth, but from the provided map we are able to tell, that the kurgans of the Middle Tundzha Valley are the southernmost periphery, where the Yamnaya culture was attested so far.⁶⁴ Excavations of those kurgans in this microregion started some 20 years ago and continues to this day. We currently know of 20 kurgans dated to the Early Bronze Age. A 2022 publication by dr. Stefan Alexandrov and dr. Piotr Włodarczak provides an overview map of them. For our purposes, it is necessary to point out, that not all of the excavated kurgans contained Yamnaya burials.⁶⁵ The further chapters will thus characterize and discuss only those kurgans, which either directly are or at least resemble the Yamnaya-type burials. In total, we are dealing with 15 kurgans, which might be regarded as such. (*Fig. 11*) They are mostly dispersed across the Yambol District (*Ямболска област*), but some of them also lie within the neighbouring districts of Sliven (*Сливенска област*), Burgas (*Бургаска област*) and Haskovo (*Хасковска област*).⁶⁶ Questions might raise, in which order the kurgans should be described. Since the Middle Tundzha Valley is the southernmost periphery of the Yamnaya presence, I have chosen to arrange them in a descending order, from the northernmost ones all the way to the very south. This order obviously does not represent any hypothetical age or significance of the kurgans and serves only as a best possible arranged overview.

⁶³ Sobotkova – Ross 2018, 121.

⁶⁴ Heyd 2011, 537.

⁶⁵ Various sources, mainly the AOR reports.

⁶⁶ One more kurgan has been excavated in 2023 by dr. Stefan Bakardzhiev. However, no publication is yet available, therefore will not be discussed.

9. Sliven District

9.1 Shekerdzha mogila

The Shekerdzha mogila (*Шекерджа могила*) was one of two kurgans found north of a village called Kamen (*Камен*) in the Sliven District, which lies some 20 km away from the administrative centre of a city of Sliven. It had been excavated in 2011 under the lead of dr. Diana Dimitrova, dr. Miroslav Markov and dr. Nikolai Sirakov of the Bulgarian National Archaeological institute. The available publications about this mound are an AOR excavation report and also Dimitrova's separate 2011 publication focusing mainly on several of its EBA burials.⁶⁷

The kurgan was erected on a hillock and measured some 45 m in diameter and reached a height of 5 m. Regarding stratigraphy, it seemed to have been consisted of four types of soil. and a significant part of the mound was also filled with rocks, which overall points out to the fact, that the mound must have been raised several times and therefore reused in different periods (*Fig. 12*).

In total, ten graves have been discovered (*Fig. 13*). Six were dated to the Early Bronze Age, three to the Middle Bronze Age and one to the Late Iron Age. Additionally, the kurgan is suggested to be consisted of four chronological phases.⁶⁸ From the available stratigraphic cross-section of the kurgan, we are also able to tell, that the EBA graves of the kurgan are not only divided into two different chronological phases, but also two phases of construction.⁶⁹

9.1.1 First chronological phase

The primary burial was Grave no. 10. It was dug up directly upon the bedrock. The pit was oval shaped and was covered by a cluster of rocks. No wooden planks covering the pit were attested. The pit itself contained two individuals of an unspecified gender laid in a supine position and oriented East-West. Ochre staining was attested, however it is unspecified in the report, whether on both bodies. No organic mat under the bodies was present. Apart from these two adults, remains of a ca. 3 years old toddler were present in the grave. The child was buried in the same fashion and was also stained by red ochre.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ Димитрова – Марков – Сираков 2012, 109–112; Dimitrova 2011.

⁶⁸ Димитрова – Марков – Сираков 2012, 110.

⁶⁹ Димитрова – Марков – Сираков 2012, 109.

⁷⁰ Димитрова – Марков – Сираков 2012, 111.

9.1.2 Second chronological phase

The second chronological phase was consisted of a grey-brown earth and contained five graves in total.⁷¹ The deepest one was Grave no. 9, located in the northern sector of the mound, followed by Grave no. 7 located a bit more north. The highest one was Grave no. 6, followed by Grave no. 8 directly beneath it. The largest burial pit was Grave no. 5, which was located ca. 2 m south of Grave no. 6. The graves were not individually described. We thus have to rely on a statement, that all of them were similar. Supposedly, they were all covered by wooden planks, the bodies were laid in a supine position with bent legs and were oriented East-West. Ultimately, ochre was also allegedly present either as a stain on the remains, or as lumps near the bodies. There is, however, no mention of organic mats being present. They are all dated to the Early Bronze Age.

9.1.3 Third chronological phase

The MBA burials were named as Graves nos. 1 – 3. The deepest one was probably Grave no. 3, which is also the only described burial of this phase.⁷² It contained remains of one individual, who was most presumably an adult male. He was laid in a supine position and oriented East-West. In terms of goods found in the grave, two bone figurines depicting what seems to be an eagle have been found. Interestingly, no other MBA analogies of those eagle “amulets” have been found to this day (*Fig. 14*).⁷³

9.1.4 Thracian period

The earliest phase of the mound is dated to the 4th century AC. It was consisted of several fragmentary vessels of Thracian origin and also a cremation located under one of the rocks. This burial might also correlate with luxury bronze mirror and a bronze bracelet found southeast of the stone, which is regarded by local archaeologists as a form of ritual commonly known from Slavic periods as *trizna* (*Тризна*).⁷⁴

⁷¹ Dimitrova 2011, 6.

⁷² Dimitrova 2011, 7.

⁷³ Димитрова – Марков – Сираков 2012, 110.

⁷⁴ Димитрова – Марков – Сираков 2012, 110

9.1.5 Summary

The literature available for the Shekerdzha mogila does not describe most of the present burials individually, which ultimately lowers our conception of the entire kurgan. For our purposes, the absent individual description of the graves is most blatant in the younger EBA construction phase. We are given a general overview, but without a more detailed description, it is difficult to determine, whether those burials indeed are Yamnaya. However, given the fact, that the situation of the two separate EBA construction phases resemble other more thoroughly described kurgans of the region, we might suggest, that the Graves no. 5 – 9 are probably Yamnaya. This conclusion is made mostly due to the presence of the primary Grave no. 10, which has its analogies in a handful of EBA kurgans of the Southeastern Bulgaria. These family-like burials are usually not as easily definable as Yamnaya. Due to the insufficiency of the description, it is seen as a best solution to see this burial as an analogy to different family-like graves of the region, that are usually typical by the fact, that not all the deceased are stained by ochre, which ultimately raises the everlasting question of whether to actually interpret such a burial as Yamnaya, non-Yamnaya or an amalgam of both.

Grave	Type	No.	position	orientation	covering	ochre	relative dating	Culture
G10	family burial	3(1child)	supine	E-W	no	stain	EBA I-II	Ezero/Yamnaya
G9	inhumation	1(?)	supine, bent legs	E-W	wooden planks	stain/lump	EBA I-II	Yamnaya
G8	inhumation	1(?)	supine, bent legs	E-W	wooden planks	stain/lump	EBA I-II	Yamnaya
G7	inhumation	1(?)	supine, bent legs	E-W	wooden planks	stain/lump	EBA I-II	Yamnaya
G6	inhumation	1(?)	supine, bent legs	E-W	wooden planks	stain/lump	EBA I-II	Yamnaya
G5	inhumation	1(?)	supine, bent legs	E-W	wooden planks	stain/lump	EBA I-II	Yamnaya

Tab. 1: Overview of the EBA graves of Shekerdzha mogila and its important features

9.2 Gabrova mogila

The kurgan of Gabrova mogila (*Габрова могила*) is the second attested Early Bronze Age burial mound found near the village of Kamen. The excavation of this kurgan was performed by the same team as in the case of the Shekerdzha mogila, which was led under the supervision of dr. Diana Dimitrova. The amount of available literature is thus similarly limited to her publication regarding these two kurgans and also in the 2012 AOR report.⁷⁵

The overall dimensions of the mound were some 32 m in diameter and about 2.60 m in height, which makes it slightly smaller than the Shekerdzha mound. Regarding the stratigraphy, two different types of soil were attested, the deeper one being described as grey-brown and the upper one as whitish (*Fig. 15*). The number of excavated graves in total reached the number of 31. Nine of them are dated to the Early Bronze Age and the remaining 21 into different time periods spanning from the Late Antiquity until the Middle Ages (*Fig. 16*). The mound is not in any available literature characterized according to the different construction phases, but solely through the general description of the respective graves. The literature also does not mention a possible number of chronological phases. However, the described types of soil present in the kurgan point out to the fact, that it was probably consisted of two phases of construction – the first one containing all the EBA graves and the second representing the rest of the uncovered burials.⁷⁶

9.2.1 First construction phase

The primary grave was Grave no. 30. It was located nearly in the very centre of the mound and at dimensions of 3.10 x 2.60 m represents the biggest grave of the entire kurgan. The 0.50 m deep pit was presumably not covered by any wooden structure and contained remains of up to four individuals. Apart from that, the filling of the pit was also consisted of three skulls presumably belonging to children. The four individuals in the pit were all adults, all of them have been identified as males. All of them were laid in a supine position and oriented East-West. No organic mat was attested. At least two skeletons were stained by red ochre, which is similarly not described in literature. It is nonetheless visible in documentation photos (*Fig. 17*).

⁷⁵ The same literature as in the case of Shekerdzha mogila

⁷⁶ Dimitrova 2011, 40.

The goods were also present, namely several copper daggers, axe-heads, some fairly preserved clay vessels and also animal bones, which were suggested to be amulets.⁷⁷

Some 5 m west from the centre of the kurgan, Grave no. 24 was unearthed. The uncovered pit contained scattered remains of three adult individuals, two of them were distinguished as males and one as a female. Similarly to Grave no. 30, the filling of the grave contained skulls of four children. Among the goods were several “amulet-like” animal bones have been found, same as one preserved clay pot and several pottery fragments. There is no mention of ochre or organic mat. Additionally, it is suggested, that the material found in both the so far discussed graves resembles certain Eneolithic graves of the biggest European mound of Bereketska mogila (*Берекетска могила*) located in the Stara Zagora District.

Grave no. 31 was unearthed at the same depth as Grave no. 24. Its further description is vague and we are left with the only conclusion, that the grave is dated to the Early Bronze Age.

According to depth, Grave no. 28 is the next in line. It contained two individuals, both of them laid in a supine position and oriented East-West. Interestingly, one of the individuals was probably inhumated later into the pit and partially disturbed the second individual, whose body was partially burned. Sex was surprisingly only determined on the burned remains, which presumably belonged to a fairly young male. Near his body also laid a similarly burnt bronze dagger.

Another grave absent description is Grave no. 29 found directly above Grave no. 31; Graves nos. 26 and 27, which were located next to each other in the eastern part of the mound; The highest grave of this construction phase, Grave no. 23.⁷⁸

The final grave to bear the privilege of a distinguished characterization is Grave no. 25, which was more or less located in the central part of the mound. The pit was attested to be of an oval shape with an irregular heap of rocks around it. It contained one adult male laid in a supine position and oriented East-West. No inventory or organic mat was attested, but the skeleton was stained by ochre.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ Dimitrova 2011, 39.

⁷⁸ Dimitrova 2011, 114.

⁷⁹ Dimitrova 2011, 112.

9.2.2 Second construction phase

The whitish soil, understood as a secondary construction of the kurgan, was consisted of 22 graves in total. Apart from the fact, that their age spanned from the Late Antiquity until the 15th century, none of them is described in a greater detail. There is also a mention, that at least some of the graves were buried according to a Christian funerary custom – in a prone position and arms parallel to the body.⁸⁰

9.2.3 Summary

The nine graves of Gabrova mogila dated to the EBA certainly lack in terms of a more thorough description. This state of research ultimately leaves us with a lot of blank space and not enough room for a distinguished conclusion of how many Yamnaya burials are actually present. Let us, however, start with the central Grave no. 30 and a similarly deep Grave no. 24. They are both mass graves containing a high number of individuals, whose rite of passage might be understood as Yamnaya, at least for some of the deceased. While in Grave no. 30, ochre staining is present on a majority of individuals, the situation in Grave no. 24 is completely opposite. The similar grave goods then build-up a hypothesis, that they must have been dug in a more or less similar time. The suggested connotations with an Eneolithic part of the large Bereketska mogila then point out, that the buried individuals might have borne a “tradition” of the pre-Yamnaya times. What this ultimately leaves us with is a speculation, whether to understand them as Yamnaya or not. Considering the fact, that the graves were both rather deep pits and ochre was indeed present, it is my suggestion to either understand them as Yamnaya, or as an amalgam of Yamnaya and non-Yamnaya influences. With the exception of Grave no. 25, which could be regarded as Yamnaya, we are not able to make any conclusion about the rest of the burials as they are simply uncharacterized further.

Grave	Type	No.	position	orientation	covering	ochre	relative dating	absolute dating	Culture
G30	mass burial	4 (males)	supine	E-W	no	stain (2)	EBA I-II	3300-2600	Ezero/Yamnaya
G25	inhumation	1	supine	E-W	heap of rocks	stain	EBA I-II	3300-2600	Yamnaya

Tab. 2: Overview of the EBA graves of Gabrova mogila and its important features

⁸⁰ Dimitrova 2011, 39.

10. Burgas District

10.1 Tonchova mogila

The kurgan referred to as Tonchova mogila (*Тончова могила*) was located in a field, which separates the villages of Venets (*Венец*) and Tserovski (*Церовски*) in the Burgas District. The close vicinity of this kurgan was also consisted of two other, significantly smaller mounds, however, they do not date to the Early Bronze Age. The Tonchova mogila was excavated in 2007 under the lead of dr. Rumyana Georgiyeva, dr. Krasimir Nikov and dr. Dimcho Momchilov, who are also responsible for the only existing publication of this kurgan, which is available in the 2008 issue of the AOR. The state of our knowledge about this kurgan thus relies solely on this excavation report.⁸¹

Regarding the dimensions of the kurgan, it measured some 40 x 48 m in diameter and reached a height of about 6.50 m, which makes it a considerably large mound. The overall number of graves is not further specified, which is probably due to the kurgan being one of the many victims of grave robbers' activities. The only quantitative information available to us is therefore the statement, that the southeastern part of the mound contained five burials dated to the Early Bronze Age. Graves of older or younger periods are not mentioned, however, in a kurgan of this size it would be a rare exception to contain only EBA burials. The only knowledge of the presence of younger periods is ultimately only presented by random mentions of a significant number of objects made of different types of iron and an unspecified amount of burned remains dated to the 6th – 5th century AC.⁸²

10.1.1 Early Bronze Age burials

The five EBA burials similarly lack more thorough description, which is probably partially due to the state of the excavation. For example, Graves nos. 1 and 5 were not fully excavated and the only knowledge of their existence comes from the profile observations.

The deepest laid grave seems to be Grave no. 4, which laid at the bedrock. The trapezoidal pit of the grave was not covered by any wooden planks or stones and contained one adult individual of an unspecified sex. The body was laid in a supine position with bent legs and oriented East-West. The presence of an organic mat might be attested by some sort of black-coloured cloth partially visible under the body. Red ochre was more easily visible, especially on the periphery

⁸¹ Георгиева – Ников – Момчилов 2008, 231–232.

⁸² Георгиева – Ников – Момчилов 2008, 231.

of the body. Regarding grave goods, one broken silver spiral ring was found near the skull. The suggested dating, which is the same as for the rest of the Bronze Age graves, is EBA III.

Grave no. 3 was a rectangular shaped pit covered by wooden planks. It contained one individual, whose sex was unspecified. The body had been laid in a supine position with bent legs on several wooden planks. Its orientation was also East-West. No ochre was attested. The grave goods were significantly richer than in Grave no. 4. More specifically, the grave contained one silver ring, two golden spirals, one flint arrow and one pendant allegedly similar to widespread type called Leukas.⁸³ This type of objects is synonymous with the Nidri plain of the Lefkada island in the Ionian Sea, which contained various subtypes of precious metal jewellery distributed in various EBA burials of the entire Balkan peninsula.⁸⁴

The ultimate documented EBA burial was Grave no. 2, which was most probably located in more or less the same height as Grave no. 3. The elliptical pit was not covered by any wooden planks and contained partially pulverised remains of one individual of an unspecified sex. Apart from the hypothesis, that the body might have been stained or wrapped in some organic material, no further specifics are determined and we are thus left with the sole EBA III dating.⁸⁵

10.1.2 Summary

The state of description presented to us in available literature for the Tonchova mogila is significantly vague. From the available data, Grave no. 4 partially resembles the Yamnaya-type burial. Other attested burials are less clear, mainly due to the absence of ochre in all of them.

Grave	Type	No.	position	orientation	covering	ochre	relative dating	absolute dating	Culture
G4	inhumation	1	supine, bent legs	E-W	no	lump	EBA III	2600-2000	Yamnaya

Tab. 3: Overview of the EBA grave of Tonchova mogila and its important features

⁸³ Георгиева – Ников – Момчилов 2008, 232.

⁸⁴ Vasileva 2017, 2–3.

⁸⁵ Георгиева – Ников – Момчилов 2008, 232.

11. Yambol District

11.1 Straldzha

The kurgan in literature simply referred to as Straldzha (*Стралджа*) named by the nearest located town has been investigated in 2015 in a as one of many rescue-archaeological excavations, which were carried out due to the construction of a gas pipeline leading to Turkey. The leaders of the excavation were dr. Stefan Bakardzhiev and dr. Ilia Iliev, who are also responsible for the AOR report.⁸⁶ The regarded Bronze Age kurgan was part of a larger necropolis containing burial mounds from various time periods such as the Iron age. It is located southeast of the railway line connecting Burgas with Sofia.⁸⁷

The dimensions of the kurgan were some 30 m in diameter and about 3 m in height. Regarding the stratigraphy, four different layers have been recognized. The highest one has been described as a light grey earth, followed deeper by light brown earth. Further down appeared a combination of those two types, while the layer upon which the deepest deceased laid was once again a light grey earth (*Fig. 18*).⁸⁸ Due to presence of several cables running through the western part of the kurgan, only an eastern part was investigated.⁸⁹ The eastern part contained two burial pits and there is also a possibility of a third one, which has only been revealed by scrapping of a southern part of the central profile because of the presence of the pipe lines (*Fig. 19*).⁹⁰ The number of burials in this kurgan is most definitely larger, but due to its difficult location, we may never tell a precise number.⁹¹

11.1.1 Burials

Grave no. 1 was the primary burial. It was located in the almost perfect centre of the mound. Remnants of some sort of stone or wood covering the grave are not documented. The pit contained one adult burial of an unspecified sex. Orientation of the skeleton was West-East, it has been laid in a supine position with bent legs. The body laid on some sort of organic mat, most presumably bark. Ochre was attested on most of the bones. Two pieces of a silver pendant have been found near the skull and also two flints. Its suggested dating is EBA I.

⁸⁶ Бакърджиев – Илиев 2016, 154–156.

⁸⁷ Бакърджиев – Илиев 2016, 224.

⁸⁸ Бакърджиев – Илиев 2016, 155

⁸⁹ Бакърджиев – Илиев 2016, 154

⁹⁰ Бакърджиев – Илиев 2016, 155

⁹¹ Бакърджиев – Илиев 2016, 156

The Grave no. 2 is positioned left of the primary burial, about 1 m higher. It also contained one adult inhumation with further unspecified sex. Similarly, no stone or wood covering had been attested. Apart from the fact, that the skeleton was found in a rather worse state when compared to the primary grave, it was nonetheless possible to determine, that it was laid in a supine position and oriented West-East. Similarly, the deceased laid on the same kind of dark organic mat as Grave no. 1. Ochre was also present on the bones. Apart from that, no grave goods were found. The suggested dating is also to EBA I.⁹²

11.1.2 Summary

The kurgan of Straldzha suffers from its geographical location. Had the several pipelines not be passing directly through the mound, our knowledge of the entire mound would be tremendously bigger. As already mentioned, a possible third burial pit was found in one of the central profiles indicating a larger number of burials. However, it is unbeknownst to us both how many actual graves were present in the kurgan and also how old they might have been. The suggested chronological classification of the two excavated graves is EBA I.⁹³ Considering aspects such as the West-East orientation of the individuals, supine position of the bodies and most importantly the presence of ochre, they might be most definitely regarded as Yamnaya.

Grave	Type	No.	position	orientation	covering	ochre	relative dating	absolute dating	Culture
G1	inhumation	1	supine, bent legs	W-E	no	stain	EBA I	3300-2000	Yamnaya
G2	inhumation	1	supine	W-E	no	stain	EBA I	3300-2000	Yamnaya

Tab. 4: Overview of the EBA graves of Straldzha kurgan and its important features

⁹² Бакърджиев – Илиев 2016, 155

⁹³ Бакърджиев – Илиев 2016, 156

11.2 Zimnitsa

Zimnitsa (*Зимница*) is one of the kurgans which was also named according to the nearest settlement. Same as the Straldzha kurgan, this one has also been investigated solely as a part of a rescue-excavation, which took place in the summer of 2009 under the lead of dr. Stefan Bakardzhiev and dr. Ilia Iliev. They are also responsible for the only source available to us for this mound, an AOR report.⁹⁴ Several human factors influenced the state in which the mound was at the beginning of the excavation. The first one being a significant damage done by heavy machinery somewhen in the 1960's, which significantly flattened the earth. Authors of the AOR report suggest, that an estimated height of the mound was about 2.5 m. However, at the commence of the excavation in 2009, the height was only about 1 m. It is further unspecified, how they hypothesized the original height of the mound to be 2.5 m. The second complication is rather recent and bound with part of the mound being unable to be investigated due to the presence of the Trakiya highway. For that reason, only the southern part of the kurgan was excavated. The diameter of the mound was around 20 m.⁹⁵

In total, 22 burials have been present in the excavated southern part of the mound. Four of them are dated to the Early Bronze Age and 18 to the Middle Ages.

11.2.1 Early Bronze Age graves

The Early Bronze Age burials were Graves nos. 4, 5, 11 and 20. The oldest ones are Graves nos. 4 and 5, which belonged to children. The information about all the burials is scarce and the only available information is that they have all been laid in a supine position. There is, however, no mention of any wooden or stone covering of the grave, nor about the ochre.

The stratigraphy is not possible to understand well since not enough sources are available. It has been suggested, that the child burials were both primary graves and Graves nos. 11 and 20 must be a bit younger. Both of the graves allegedly contained adult inhumations laid in a supine position with bent legs, but no other information is given.⁹⁶

⁹⁴ Бакърджиев – Илиев 2010, 113–114.

⁹⁵ Бакърджиев – Илиев 2010, 113.

⁹⁶ Бакърджиев – Илиев 2010, 113

11.2.2 Medieval graves

The available knowledge about the Medieval graves is scarce. It is only said, that all 18 of them contained inhumations laid in a prone position, which is seen as a typical Christian-like burial in the region. The Medieval dating is also supported by the fact, that some of the graves contained jewellery datable to the 12th century AD.⁹⁷

11.2.3 Summary

The available data for all the burials of this mound is scarce and it is simply impossible to point out anything remarkable. Regarding the EBA burials, it is my suggestion, that none of them could be associated with the Yamnaya culture. That is mainly due to the fact, that the main element sought for – ochre – is not present. Apart from that, the covering of the grave is also probably not present and no remnants of wooden mat were most likely unattested, as they are not mentioned in the report. The overall conclusion is thus, that the uncovered part of the mound did not contain any Yamnaya burials.

Grave	Type	No.	position	orientation	covering	ochre	relative dating	absolute dating	Culture
G20	inhumation	1	supine	?	?	?	?	?	?
G11	inhumation	1	supine	?	?	?	?	?	?
G5	child burial	1	supine	?	?	?	EBA I-II	?	?
G4	child burial	1	supine	?	?	?	EBA I-II	?	?

Tab. 5: Overview of the EBA graves of the Zimmitsa kurgan and its important features

⁹⁷ Бакърджиєв – Илиєв 2010, 114

11.3 Sabev bair

The kurgan regarded as Sabev bair (*Събев баир*) was one of several mounds found in a necropolis near a hill, which bears a local name *Zaiychi vrakh* (*Зайчи връх*). This some 300 m high rocky hillock is located just northwest of what is today the Archaeological Museum of a Thracian and Roman Kabile, therefore no further than 12 km north of Yambol.⁹⁸

According to the available sources, four mounds in total have been unearthed in this area. Our knowledge about the contents of the mounds themselves is dated to 2004, when all of them were excavated as a part of rescue-archaeological excavations under the lead of dr. Stefan Bakardzhiev.⁹⁹ However, only Mound no. 1 should be of a concern for the purposes of this work, as it is the only one dated to the Early Bronze Age. All of the remaining mounds were dated to the Late Iron Age.¹⁰⁰

The Mound no. 1 reached a height of 2.70 m and had a diameter of 37 m. The highest layer of the mound contained graves dated to Antiquity. However, their precise number is not mentioned. The initial removal of the youngest graves also uncovered a pack of rough reddish stones, which encircled roughly in the middle of the diameter. Five graves in total have been excavated in this encirclement, more specifically two cremations and three inhumations. The cremations were located above the inhumations (*Figs. 20 - 21*). Further knowledge regarding possible chronological phases of the mound is not precisely documented, but it is suggested, that the stone circles demarcate the core of the EBA construction phase and all the present burials are to be dated as such (*Fig. 22*).¹⁰¹

11.3.1 Early Bronze Age graves

The oldest grave was Grave no. 3. It was located in the very centre of the stone ring. The pit contained three individuals in total. None of them preserved to the state, in which their sex could be attested. However, one of the deceased definitely was a small child as deciduous teeth were present. The two supposedly mature individuals were both oriented Northeast-Southwest, one of them laid in a supine and the second in a lateral position. Ochre was also present, more specifically as a stain on the bones of the supine laid body. No organic mat was attested, however, the supine laid individual had remnants of what might have been a piece of cloth

⁹⁸ Iliev – Bakardzhiev 2020, 14

⁹⁹ Бакърджиєв 2004, 150

¹⁰⁰ Бакърджиєв 2004, 153

¹⁰¹ Iliev – Bakardzhiev 2020, 18.

present on his body. Grave goods were also plentiful in this grave, some pottery similar to younger graves of this mound was present and also several hair rings have been found near the heads of both the adult individuals. Apart from that, a copper dagger was found next to the supine laid body. Among other smaller finds were also several animal bones. The suggested dating is EBA I, more specifically Ezero A2 – B1.¹⁰²

The Grave no. 2 was located beneath one of the attested cremations. The pit was covered by wooden planks and contained one partially preserved adult individual of an unspecified sex. The body had been laid in a right lateral position in a Northeast-Southwest orientation. No organic mat was attested, however the knees were stained by red ochre. The pottery was also plentifully present, more specifically one larger bowl, one mug and one amphora-shaped vase. The dating suggested dating is the second half of the Early Bronze Age.¹⁰³

The poorly preserved Grave no. 1 was located directly beneath the Cremation no. 1. It was allegedly covered by wooden planks and contained one adult individual of an unspecified sex. The body was laid in a right lateral position and Southeast-Northwest oriented. No organic mat was attested, but the pit contained a significant amount of pottery, namely one hydria-shaped vessel with a slight decoration on the neck, one mug and two bowls, one of which had a carved decoration on the inside. The decorated bowl also contained remnants of ochre (*Fig. 23*). Some animal bones were also present, same as a lump of ochre near the deceased. The suggested dating is the same as for the previously mentioned graves, namely the second half of the Early Bronze Age, more specifically the Michalich phase of the Ezero culture.¹⁰⁴ The Michalich phase is usually attributed to Ezero II – III.¹⁰⁵

The Cremation no. 1 was probably the highest burial present in the ring. It was located in the northernmost part of the encirclement directly above Grave no. 1 and was covered by yet another ring of stones. Inside this facile tholos, burned bone remains laid on a soft greyish-black earth. No organic material was attested, however the ring also contained a well-preserved mug and a fragmentary cup. The suggested dating is the same as for all the inhumations, the Ezero Horizont A2-B1.¹⁰⁶ The same dating was suggested for the Cremation no. 2, which resembled the first one, the only difference being the absence of any pottery and a simpler tholos.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰² Iliev – Bakardzhiev 2020, 96.

¹⁰³ Iliev – Bakardzhiev 2020, 93.

¹⁰⁴ Iliev – Bakardzhiev 2020, 91.

¹⁰⁵ Nikolova 1999, 207.

¹⁰⁶ Iliev – Bakardzhiev 2020, 89.

¹⁰⁷ Iliev – Bakardzhiev 2020, 90.

The presence of a circle of stones that large is regarded as unprecedented in different Bronze Age kurgans of the region, but it is noteworthy to point out the Zaiychi Varkh is a rocky hillock and the presence of a ring of this magnitude might correlate with the simple availability of such material.¹⁰⁸ The inner part of the stone ring was filled by fragmentary animal bones and occasional lumps of ochre.¹⁰⁹

11.3.2 Discussion

The Mound no. 1 of Zaiychi vrakh definitely does not represent the biggest EBA kurgan found in the region, but might be nonetheless regarded as one of the most unique ones. Firstly, the simple presence of this mound on such a rocky place most probably defined the possibility of an extensive use of stones for the construction of the circle and also for the tholos like structures used for the cremation burials. The above-average presence of various goods also aids in defining the kurgans in several different ways. For example, the types of pottery, in many cases exquisitely preserved, helps date the graves into the period of the Michalich phase of the Ezero culture. There is, however, the everlasting question, whether to understand these burials as Yamnaya or not. They most definitely possess some Yamnaya traits – the wooden planks covering the grave were present in all three inhumations, ochre was attested and apart from pottery, some of the bodies possessed silver hair rings found in other Yamnaya definable mounds.¹¹⁰ Ochre was also present in all the graves, however not on all the bodies. This ultimately raises one of the most important questions of this work – how to understand the fact, that the same chronological phases possess burials, of which some possess the Yamnaya traits and some do not.

Grave	Type	No.	Position	Orientation	Covering	Ochre	Relative dating	Culture
G3	Mass burial	3 (1 child)	1.left lateral 2.supine	NE-SW	stone ring	stain (supine-laid body)	EBA I	Yamnaya/Ezero
G2	Inhumation	1	right lateral	NE-SW	wooden planks	stain	EBA II-III?	Yamnaya/Ezero
G1	Inhumation	1	right lateral	SE-NW	wooden planks	lump	EBA II-III	Yamnaya/Ezero
C2	Cremation	?	0	0	tholos	no	EBA II-III	Ezero
C1	cremation	?	0	0	tholos	no	EBA II-III	Ezero

Tab. 6: Overview of the EBA graves of Sabev Bair and its important features

¹⁰⁸ Бакърджиев 2004, 151.

¹⁰⁹ Iliev – Bakardzhiev 2020, 19.

¹¹⁰ Iliev – Bakardzhiev 2020, 104.

11.4 Mogila necropolis

11.4.1 Introduction

Some 3 km northwest of a village called Mogila (*Могила*) in the Yambol District, there is a necropolis of seven burial mounds called Golemiya Kairyak (*Големия Кайряк*), five of them have already been excavated. Three are dated to the Early Bronze Age and two to the Roman period. The first EBA kurgan was excavated in 2004 as a rescue-excavation under the lead of dr. Stefan Bakardzhiev and dr. Iliia Iliiev. In this work, it bears the name Mogila 1 and is the easternmost kurgan of the necropolis.¹¹¹ The second was excavated in 2021 by a Finnish-Bulgarian team and in this work is referred to as Mogila 2. It is noteworthy to mention, that this kurgan is located some 1500 m from all the remaining mounds. Nevertheless, the available literature still attaches this kurgan to the rest of the necropolis.¹¹² The ultimate EBA kurgan has been excavated in 2022 by a Czech-Bulgarian team.¹¹³ The two Roman mounds have been excavated in 2018 and in 2022 by a Polish-Bulgarian team. For the purposes of this work, it is thus sufficient to state the obvious – the Roman mounds did not contain any material in any way related to the Yamnaya and will thus not be discussed.¹¹⁴

11.4.2 Mogila 1

One might also find an alternative name for this kurgan, that is Golyamata mogila (*Голямата могила*), which overall reflects the fact, that it is the largest kurgan of the necropolis.¹¹⁵ The kurgan had a diameter of ca. 37.6 m and a height of around 3.20 m (*Fig. 24*). It has been excavated in 2004 under the lead of dr. Iliia Iliiev and dr. Stefan Bakardzhiev as the first kurgan of the necropolis and has since been a subject to several studies. Due to this we thus do not have to rely solely on the standard AOR report, which came out in 2005, but also on a 2020 YMPACT publication and on dr. Valchev's 2023 book serving as an overview of burial mounds located in the Yambol District.¹¹⁶ The mound was consisted of eight types of soil before reaching the bedrock, the most represented ones being various shades of brown and red soil.¹¹⁷ The total number of hypothetical construction phases is not explicitly mentioned, it is nevertheless certain, that the kurgan must have been piled up several times before reaching its ultimate dimensions. In total, 30 graves were excavated, 14 of them being dated to the Early Bronze Age or to the transition period between EBA and the Middle Bronze Age. The remaining 16 belong to the 11th century AD and resemble the Medieval Christian rite of passage (*Fig. 25*).¹¹⁸

¹¹¹ Бакърджиев 2005, 81–82.

¹¹² Iliiev – Bakardzhiev 2020, 11.

¹¹³ Вълчев 2023; Tušlová *et al.* 2024.

¹¹⁴ Вълчев 2023, 269.

¹¹⁵ Alexandrov 2023, 210.

¹¹⁶ Вълчев 2023; Iliiev – Bakardzhiev 2020.

¹¹⁷ Iliiev – Bakardzhiev 2020, 125.

¹¹⁸ Вълчев 2023, 270.

11.4.2.1 Early Bronze Age burials

The EBA graves are referred to as Graves nos. 9 – 12, 21 – 30. With the exception of Graves nos. 10 – 12 and 21, they were all located in the centre of the mound.¹¹⁹ These burials are divided into two different construction phases, which combined with the existence of the Medieval burials points out to the fact, that the kurgan was probably consisted of three in total. Additionally, the depth of the individual graves is not explicitly stated and is thus seen as the most arranged solution to continue with the description of burials solely according to their hypothesized construction phase and the number that they bear in the sources.

The oldest burial seemed to be Grave no. 30. The pit was not covered by wooden planks nor stones and contained partially preserved remains of one adult, whose sex was not specified. The body was laid in a right lateral position and oriented Southeast-Northwest. The grave goods were consisted of several pottery fragments and animal bones. No ochre or organic mat under the body was attested. The suggested dating of the grave is EBA I, more specifically the local Ezero A.¹²⁰

Grave no. 29 was covered by long wooden planks, on which several rough rocks were laid. The pit contained remains of one adult individual, whose sex was not specified. The body was laid in a supine position with bent legs and oriented East-West. Regarding the grave goods, four silver spiral rings were found in the grave and also a yellowish organic mat, on which the deceased had been laid. Ochre was also present, more specifically as a stain on several bones. The suggested dating is once again Ezero A of the Early Bronze Age with the additional suggestion, that it most likely is a Yamnaya burial.¹²¹

The Grave no. 28 laid north of the Grave no. 29 and was similarly covered by long wooden planks. The pit itself contained poorly preserved remains of one adult individual, whose sex was unspecifiable. Despite the poor state of the skeleton, it was hypothesized, that the body had originally been laid in a supine position with bent legs and oriented West-East. The grave has also been classified into the Yamnaya variant of Ezero A, but it is noteworthy to mention, that for example ochre and organic mat was not attested. Apart from the body, the grave only contained one seashell, otherwise was it completely empty.¹²²

The Grave no. 27 also contained wooden planks covering the pit. Inside it laid one well preserved adult individual, who was identified as a male. He was laid in a supine position with bent legs and oriented South-North. The grave goods were consisted only of a couple pottery fragments, which were datable to the EBA, but could not have been classified into any specific culture. Despite that, grave was suggested to have been the Yamnaya variant of Ezero A.

¹¹⁹ Iliev – Bakardzhiev 2020, 125.

¹²⁰ Iliev – Bakardzhiev 2020, 85.

¹²¹ Iliev – Bakardzhiev 2020, 84.

¹²² Iliev – Bakardzhiev 2020, 83.

The same dating was also given to Grave no. 26, which contained poorly preserved remains of one individual, whose sex, position or orientation was further unspecifiable. No cover of the pit, no grave goods, ochre or organic mat were attested.¹²³

The pit of Grave no. 25 was covered by several small wooden planks and contained partially preserved remains of one adult individual, whose sex was unspecifiable. The body was laid in a supine position with bent legs and oriented Northwest-Southeast. No grave goods were present, but there were traces of ochre staining on the bones and also barely visible remnants of an organic mat, on which the body originally laid. The dating is once again suggested to be the Yamnaya variant of Ezero A.

The Grave no. 24 contained a cover of several askew put long wooden planks. Inside the pit laid 1 well preserved juvenile individual, whose sex was unspecified. The body had been laid in a supine position with bent legs and was oriented Southwest-Northeast. The contents of the grave were rather poor as they consisted only of 3 pottery fragments dated to Ezero A2-B1 and a couple of animal bones found north of the skull. The limbs were stained by ochre. No organic mat was attested. The suggested dating is once again the Yamnaya variant of the Ezero A.¹²⁴

The Grave no. 23 was also covered by several wooden planks and contained partially preserved remains of 1 adult individual of an unspecifiable sex. The body was originally most likely laid in a supine position with bent legs and oriented West-East. No grave goods were uncovered and also no organic mat was attested, however, the body was partially stained by ochre. The Yamnaya-Ezero A suggested dating applies for this grave as well.

Grave no. 22 was similarly covered by long wooden planks. The pit itself contained poorly preserved remains of 1 individual, whose sex was not determined. The body was laid in a supine position and oriented Southwest-Northeast. The body was stained by red ochre, no organic mat was attested. Its dating is once again suggested to be EBA I, more specifically the Yamnaya variant of Ezero A.

The Grave no. 21 was allegedly the deepest and possibly the primary burial of the hypothetical second construction phase of the kurgan. It resembles all the previously mentioned graves, as it was also covered by several wooden planks and contained one buried individual. The state of preservation allowed the deceased to be specified as an adult male. He was laid in a standard supine position with bent legs and oriented Southwest-Northeast. There were no signs of any organic mat under the body and the grave goods were also absent, however, the lower limbs were stained by ochre. Its dating is the same as for the majority of the graves in the first construction phase, the Yamnaya variant of Ezero A.

A bit different dating is suggested for the remaining graves of this phase. They are all suggested to be dated somewhere between EBA II and the Middle Bronze Age. The Grave no. 12 was not covered by any planks and contained poorly preserved remains of one individual, whose sex or age could not be determined. What could however be determined, was the position and the

¹²³ Iliev – Bakardzhiev 2020, 82.

¹²⁴ Iliev – Bakardzhiev 2020, 81.

orientation of the body. It was laid in a left lateral position and oriented Northeast-Southwest. Interestingly enough, the lower limbs of the body were stained by red ochre.¹²⁵

The remaining three graves were the same as Grave no. 12 with only one significant difference – no ochre had been found neither on any of the buried bodies, nor anywhere else in the grave.

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Grave	Type	No.	position	orientation	covering	ochre	relative dating	Culture
G29	inhumation	1	supine, bent legs	E-W	wooden planks	stain	EBA I	Yamnaya
G25	inhumation	1	supine, bent legs	NW-SE	wooden planks	stain	EBA I	Yamnaya
G24	inhumation	1	supine, bent legs	SW-NE	wooden planks	stain	EBA I	Yamnaya
G23	inhumation	1	supine, bent legs	W-E	wooden planks	stain	EBA I	Yamnaya
G22	inhumation	1	supine, bent legs	SW-NE	wooden planks	stain	EBA I	Yamnaya
G21	inhumation	1	supine, bent legs	SW-NE	wooden planks	stain	EBA I	Yamnaya
G12	inhumation	1	left lateral	?	no	stain	EBA II	Yamnaya/Ezero

Tab. 7: Overview of the EBA graves of Mogila 1 and its important features

11.4.3 Mogila 2

The Mogila 2 was excavated in 2021 as a part of an ERC Advanced Project “The Yamnaya Impact on Prehistoric Europe” under the auspice of prof. Volker Heyd from the University of Helsinki and prof. Stefan Alexandrov from the National Archaeological institute of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. The kurgan is described in a 2022 AOR publication, which has not yet been published. The only referable source for this mound is thus Valchev’s 2023 publication.¹²⁷ The dimensions of the mound were ca. 30 m in diameter and 2.5 m in height. It was allegedly consisted of 17 burials and two supposedly empty pits. In total, we are dealing with seven graves of the Early Bronze Age, two of them being the empty pits, eight of the Middle Bronze Age, one of the Late Iron Age and also one mass burial dated to the middle 20th century AD. The mass grave was consisted of three inhumations in total and is not further discussed, but due to its suggested dating, it might possibly correlate with the then ongoing Second World War.

The stratigraphy is not well defined, but same as in the case of Mogila 1, the EBA burials of this kurgan could very well be divided into 2 different chronological phases. The older one

¹²⁵ Iliev – Bakardzhiev 2020, 79.

¹²⁶ Iliev – Bakardzhiev 2020, 74.

¹²⁷ Вълчев 2023.

contained three graves in total, Graves nos. 13 – 15. - The “Graves” nos. 13 and 15 were the empty shallow pits containing only remnants of wood. The Grave no. 14 is thus the oldest burial of the kurgan and contained remains of one child. The pit was not covered by any wooden planks and no organic mat was attested beneath the body. Similarly, no ochre was present. The grave goods contained a couple of silver spiral pendants and few pottery fragments.¹²⁸

The remaining four EBA graves were located somewhat up above the child burial and represent the younger use of the kurgan. They are referred to as Graves nos. 11, 12, 16 and 17. They are not individually described, but they all probably shared some elementary features – all contained one individual stained by ochre and were laid in a supine position. There is, however, no mention of further traits such as the presence wood/stone covering or grave goods.

The MBA graves are referred to by dr. Valchev as Graves nos. 1, 2, 4 – 9. The only context provided for them is that they all supposedly contained inhumations laid in a supine position and Graves nos. 1, 7 and 9 contained pottery fragments, which further helped with the MBA dating. The Late Iron Age burial is Grave no. 10 and was covered by a rubble of rough stones. It contained one partially burned body and a couple of iron objects, namely two fibulae and a knife.¹²⁹

Grave	Type	No.	position	orientation	covering	ochre	relative dating	Culture
G17	inhumation	1	supine	?	no	stain	EBA I-II	Yamnaya
G16	inhumation	1	supine	?	no	stain	EBA II-II	Yamnaya
G12	inhumation	1	supine	?	no	stain	EBA I-II	Yamnaya
G11	inhumation	1	supine	?	no	stain	EBA I-II	Yamnaya

Tab. 8: Overview of the EBA graves of Mogila 2 and its important features

11.4.4 Mogila 3

The last addition to the EBA kurgans of the necropolis was excavated in 2022 under the joint cooperation of dr. Petra Tušlová from the Institute for Classical Archaeology at Charles University in Prague, dr. Stefan Bakardzhiev and dr. Todor Valchev of the Regional Historical Museum in Yambol. The mound was located in the centre of the necropolis and found itself in the vicinity of the two Roman period mounds. The state of our knowledge about this kurgan comes from two main sources, one of them being once again Valchev’s 2023 publication and

¹²⁸ ВЪЛЧЕВ 2023, 298.

¹²⁹ ВЪЛЧЕВ 2023, 299.

the second being an article by the excavators currently submitted for publication.¹³⁰ Regarding the overall dimensions of the kurgan, it measured ca. 20 m in the East-West direction, 16 m in North-South; its embankment reached a total height of about 1 m. In total, 12 burials were excavated. Six of them belonged to the Early Bronze Age, five to the Late Bronze Age and the ultimate one to the Late Iron Age, which was the only cremation found in the mound.¹³¹ The state of research of this kurgan possesses a sort of privilege in comparison to the other ones of the necropolis. Firstly, radiocarbon dating is provided for the graves and secondly, an anthropologist Mgr. Pavel Kubálek was present at the excavation, who ultimately aided greatly in determining the sex of the deceased.

11.4.4.1 First chronological phase

The EBA burials could once again be divided into two different chronological phases. Both of them were consisted of the same type of earth characterized as a brown soil with white colouring. The older phase was consisted of two burials, both of them located very close to each other in the southeastern part of the kurgan. The first excavated of these two was Grave no. 11, which had an oval shaped and was covered by wooden planks. Additionally, around the grave laid a significant number of piled up rocks. Inside the ca. 1 m deep pit laid one deceased, who despite a poor state of preservation could be identified as a young female. She was laid in a supine position and oriented West-East. Beneath her, a darkly coloured organic material was attested, which might be interpreted as a mat. Regarding the grave goods, one silver spiral ring was found, which also makes the Grave no. 11 the only burial to contain any significant metal find. Ochre was not attested. The provided radiocarbon dating determined the grave to be dated somewhere between 2909 – 2882 AC.

Just south of this burial laid Grave no. 12, which was noticeably smaller. Similarly, it was covered by both the wooden planks and a pile of rocks. The 0.60 m deep pit contained poorly preserved remains of a small child, who was also laid in a supine position with bent legs and oriented West-East. The darkly coloured organic material was also present beneath the body. Similarly, no ochre was attested. The grave goods are totally absent in this burial. The provided radiocarbon dating determined the grave to be more or less of the same age as Grave no. 11, more specifically between 2882 – 2677 AC. Some sort of familiar bond presents itself as a

¹³⁰ ВЪЛЧЕВ 2023; Tušlová *et al.*

natural explanation for these two burials. It is unfortunately impossible to state with certainty as no genetic analysis was made.

11.4.4.2 Second chronological phase

The second chronological phase was consisted of two additional graves, namely Grave no. 5 and 9, both dated to the Early Bronze Age. The Grave no. 5 was located in the southeastern sector of the mound and was not covered by any wooden planks or rocks. The pit contained remains of one individual laid in a supine position with bent legs. The deceased was determined to be an adult female. She was oriented West-East. Regarding the contents of the grave, no traces of any organic material nor ochre have been attested. Similarly, no grave goods were present. The radiocarbon dating determined the grave to be dated between 2873 – 2624 AC.

The deceased of Grave no. 9 was dated rather similarly between 2870 – 2629 AC. The burial was located in the southwestern sector of the mound and belonged to a young child, possibly 13 years old. Due to a very poor state of preservation, the sex could not be determined. The body was once again laid in a supine position with bent legs and oriented Northwest-Southeast. No material whatsoever was present in the grave.

11.4.4.3 Third chronological phase

The third chronological phase was consisted of two ultimate EBA burials, Graves nos. 2 and 6. The Grave no. 2 was located in the northwestern sector of the mound and most probably fell victim to grave robbers' activities as the remains were heavily scattered. Due to this fact, not much can be said about the further specifics of the deceased – neither sex nor position of the body could be determined. Due to the size of the bones, it could however be determined, that the remains belonged to a young child, possibly 13 years of age. A bottom of a black vessel was found. Regarding any organic material or the presence of ochre, non was attested. The radiocarbon dating determined the grave to be dated between 2574 – 2457 AC.

The Grave no. 6 was located in the southeastern sector of the mound and same as the previously mentioned burials was not covered by any wooden planks nor pile of rocks. The pit contained the most well-preserved remains. They belonged to one individual, who was determined to have been a young male, possibly in his 20's. He was laid in a supine position with bent legs and oriented Southwest-Northeast. Apart from the bones, nothing else was present in the grave. The radiocarbon dating determined the grave to be dated between 2624 – 2475 AC.

11.4.4.4 Fourth and fifth chronological phases

The five yet unmentioned graves are dated to the Late Bronze Age and Late Iron Age. In the Late Bronze Age period, the kurgan probably gained its final dimensions as a new layer of soil was probably added. The LBA graves are four, more specifically Graves nos. 1, 3, 7 and 8. They all resembled each other as they were all position either lateral left or lateral right. The Graves nos. 10 and 8 contained ceramic vessels, apart from that, no other grave goods were attested. The radiocarbon dating of all the graves floated between the 17/16th – 15th centuries AC.

The Grave no. 4 is the only Late Iron Age burial of the kurgan. The deceased was cremated and his remains put inside a ceramic vessel, which was found fragmentarily. The radiocarbon dating determined the cremation to be dated between 546 – 374 AC.¹³²

Grave	Type	No.	position	orientation	covering	ochre	absolute dating	Culture
G12	child burial	1	supine, bent legs	W-E	rock ring, wooden planks	no	2882-2677	Ezero
G11	inhumation	1 (young female)	supine	W-E	rock ring, wooden planks	no	2909-2882	Ezero
G9	child burial	1	supine, bent legs	NW-SE	no	no	2870-2629	Ezero
G6	inhumation	1 (young male)	supine, bent legs	SW-NE	no		2624-2475	Ezero
G5	inhumation	1 (adult female)	supine, bent legs	W-E	no	no	2873-2624	Ezero
G2	child burial	1	?	?	no	no	2574-2457	Ezero

Tab. 9: Overview of the EBA graves of Mogila 3 and its important features

11.4.5 Summary

All the characterized kurgans resemble each other in several striking ways. The discussion will thus regard all the kurgans at once. The most intriguing feature is probably the primary grave(s) in Mogila 2 and 3. Both of them are consisted of a feature that is very tempting to define as a parental burial. As was already mentioned, no genetic analyses have been made so far. We are thus only left to wonder as to why these features resemble each other so much and what event caused these individuals to die in such a young age. Nonetheless, for our purposes it is far more important to state the fact, that all these three primary burials most definitely are not Yamnaya. According to the radiocarbon dating provided for Mogila 3, we are thus also able to conclude,

¹³² All the mentioned data about Mogila 3 come from a yet unreleased publication by Tušlová *et al.* 2024, whom I once again thank greatly for the provided text.

that at least the primary burial of that kurgan was a contemporary of the Yamnaya presence in the region. It would be tempting to state the same for Mogila 2 as well, but we unfortunately do not have any hard evidence to prove it. The Mogila 1 cannot be of a help to us in this case as we simply have to take into an account its significant distance from the remaining kurgans. However, the second phase of use of both the Mogila 1 and Mogila 2 seems a bit more resembling as both of them contain a fair amount of EBA burials, which might be confidently characterized as Yamnaya. In Mogila 1, we are most certainly met with eight Yamnaya-type burials. Additionally, there are four graves, which are a bit different. The deceased are laid in a different position and also are not stained by ochre. Since they are dated to the Early Bronze Age, it points out, that they are most probably to be understood as local non-Yamnaya contemporary burials. In Mogila 2, the situation is more facile as the ochre-lacking burials are either the primary ones, or those dated to the Middle Bronze Age. In total, we can suspect a total number of four certain Yamnaya burials. Mogila 3 might ultimately confirm the hypothesis, that this necropolis must have been revisited throughout the entire EBA and used not only by the foreign nomads, but also by the local populations.

11.5 Irechekovo

The kurgan sometimes referred to as Yankovi grobove (*Янкови гробове*) was located on the outskirts of the Bulgarian village of Irechekovo (*Иречеково*), which lays some 30 km away from Yambol. It was excavated in 2005 as a rescue-excavation under the lead of dr. Stefan Bakardzhiev and dr. Ilia Iliev. Apart from the obvious AOR report, the mound is also discussed in the 2020 YMPACT publication, which serves as probably the best overview of this mound.¹³³

The kurgan was rather small, as it reached only ca. 0.78 m in height. Regarding the stratigraphy, the excavations showed the kurgan to be consisted of only one type of lightly brown earth, which is also identical to samples of earth from the surrounding area (*Fig. 26*). The mound was overall consisted of ten graves in total, three of them were dated to different periods of the Bronze Age and seven to a rather recent period of the 18th – 19th century AD (*Fig. 27*).¹³⁴

11.5.1 Bronze Age graves

The Bronze Age burials are Graves nos. 7, 8 and 10. The Grave no. 7 was the oldest one and contained poorly preserved bones of up to three individuals, who were most probably laid next to each other. From what had been preserved, we are able to tell, that the bodies have been most likely laid in a right lateral position, oriented North-South. The rather shallow grave was not covered by any wooden planks. The bodies were not stained by ochre and no organic mat was present. However, a fragmented bowl was also found in the vicinity of the bodies. Its shape and ornaments ultimately helped to decipher the grave as most probably being dated to the Early Bronze Age, more specifically to the local EBA III.¹³⁵

A few meters to the right, just some 6 cm deeper, Grave no. 10 was uncovered, which also was not covered by any material. The similarly shallow pit contained one poorly preserved individual, whose sex could not be identified. It was however traceable, that the deceased had been laid in a left lateral position and was Northeast-Southwest oriented. No ochre nor organic material was attested and apart from one fragmented cup, the grave was absent any goods. The suggested chronology of this grave is Middle Bronze Age, more concretely a local culture named Tei III.¹³⁶

¹³³ Бакърджиев – Илиев 2006 76 – 78; Iliev 2020.

¹³⁴ Бакърджиев – Илиев 2006, 77.

¹³⁵ Бакърджиев – Илиев 2006, 78.

¹³⁶ Iliev 2020, 106.

The last grave to be present in this mound, Grave no. 8, was located in the northern sector in the exact same depth as Grave no. 7. This once again shallow grave contained poorly preserved remains of presumably one individual laid in a left lateral position and oriented Northeast-Southwest. Similarly, no cover of the grave was attested, however at the level of the deceased, a heap of middle-sized rough stones was found. Its suggested dating is into the Late Bronze Age.¹³⁷

11.5.2 Younger graves

The Graves nos. 1 – 4, 6 and 9 were located in the higher part of the mound. They were all dated to the period of Bulgarian National Revival (*Българско възрождане*), which is attested by Turkish silver coins manufactured during the turn of the 18th and 19th century. No context about these graves is available, but it is obvious, that this mound already located on a natural hill was used for different purposes during various parts of time, as was furthermore visible by a considerable amount of Thracian pottery found in an upper layer of the mound.¹³⁸

11.5.3 Summary

The greatest noteworthiness of the Bronze Age Irechekovo kurgan is probably the presence of several modern era graves, especially considering the fact its height ranks it as probably least significant mound of this work. The nature of the EBA graves in these graves is however less breathtaking, as it is more than safe to say none of the graves bear any resemblance to the Yamnaya culture.

Grave	Type	No.	position	orientation	covering	ochre	relative dating	Culture
G7	mass burial	3	lateral right	N-S	no	no	EBA III	Ezero

Tab. 10: Overview of the EBA grave of the Irechekovo kurgan and its important features

¹³⁷ Илиев 2020, 108.

¹³⁸ Бакърджиев – Илиев 2006, 78.

11.6 Boyanovo necropolis

The entire area around a small village of Boyanovo (*Бояново*) in the Elkhovo municipality is filled with burial mounds dated to many periods. Early Bronze Age kurgans are so far represented by three in total.¹³⁹

11.6.1 Lozianska mogila

The kurgan named as Lozianska mogila (*Лозянската могила*) is located northwest of Boyanovo. It is the northernmost Bronze Age kurgan of the necropolis. It was excavated in 2008 under the supervision of dr. Daniela Agre and dr. Khristo Khristov of the of the Elkhovo Ethnographic Museum. Dr. Daniela Agre is responsible for both the sources available for this mound, namely an AOR report and a 2015 article published in *Praehistorische Zeitschrift*.¹⁴⁰

The shape of the kurgan was very round and resembled a steep hill. Its diameter was around 32 m and height ca. 5.50 m. The rather enormous height of the kurgan might naturally raise questions about possible several phases of construction. The total count of graves reached the number 21, which were dispersed in three different layers of soil. Ten burials have been dated to the Early Bronze Age, ten to the Middle Bronze Age and one to the Late Iron Age (*Fig. 28*).¹⁴¹

11.6.1.1 First chronological phase

The primary burial was Grave no. 21. It was an oval-shaped pit covered by wooden planks. It contained one heavily damaged skeleton. Its position was supine with bent legs and was oriented East-West. Despite the rather poor state of the skeleton, it was suggested to have belonged to an elderly individual. Further contents of the burial were a few lumps of red ochre found near the upper part of the body and also remnants of a greyish mat.¹⁴²

11.6.1.2 Second chronological phase

Graves nos. 16 – 20 were all located in approximately the same depth. They all are suggested to represent the second chronological phase of the mound. The Grave no. 20 is characterized as trapezoidal with rounded corners. Wooden planks are fragmentarily attested. The pit itself

¹³⁹ Iliev – Bakardzhiev 2020, 24.

¹⁴⁰ Arpe 2008, 235 – 237 ; Agre 2015, 1 – 31.

¹⁴¹ Agre 2015, 3.

¹⁴² Arpe 2008, 31.

contained one individual of an unspecified age or sex in an East-West orientation and laid in a supine position. The skeleton was only partially preserved, having missed significant parts of the chest. No grave goods were uncovered. The skull and lower limbs were stained by red ochre. Organic mat was also present, though of an unspecified colour.¹⁴³

The Grave no. 19 is arguably the poorest preserved grave. With its uncertain pit shape and also very fragmentary bones, it is difficult to make any conclusions about this burial. The only significant helper is the fact, that the bones were found in almost the same depth as Grave no. 20, dating them almost certainly to the Early Bronze Age. Apart from a pair of pottery sherds, nothing of worth was present in the pit.¹⁴⁴

The Grave no. 18 was not covered by any wooden planks. The pit contained a single East-West oriented individual laid in a supine position. Due to the state of the bones, the deceased is being suggested as an elderly individual, though of an unspecified sex. The grave goods were slightly richer compared to the rest of the graves, having included two silver spiral rings on both sides of the skull and also a jug of dark colour also located near the skull. Both ochre and an organic mat were attested, same as two rough stones serving as a sort of periphery marker of the grave.¹⁴⁵

Graves no. 16 and 17 both contained a pair of buried individuals. Both the pits were rectangular with wooden planks covering the it. In Grave no. 16 both the deceased have been laid in a supine position with bent legs in an East-West orientation. Sex is once again not specified. Both the bodies have been heavily stained by red ochre and both also possessed a silver spiral ring. (*Fig. 29*) Organic mat was also attested underneath both the bodies, being of a light greyish colour.

Grave no. 17 shares all the characteristics with Grave no. 16. The only exception is the orientation of both the bodies, as they were laid in a North-South orientation. In addition, ochre was attested on only one of the bodies, more specifically on the forehead of skeleton.¹⁴⁶

Grave no. 14 was approximately 1 m deep.¹⁴⁷ The rectangular pit was covered by several wooden planks reaching the length of 1.80 m (*Fig. 30*). Inside the relatively small grave, two skeletons have been uncovered, both being in a supine position with bent legs. Orientation of

¹⁴³ Arpe 2008, 30.

¹⁴⁴ Arpe 2008, 29.

¹⁴⁵ Arpe 2008, 29.

¹⁴⁶ Arpe 2008, 26.

¹⁴⁷ Agre 2015, 4.

both the bodies was Southwest-Northeast and both of them laid on an organic mat. Sex is not mentioned in any available literature, but it is my suggestion, that the bodies might have belonged to male and a female. Reason for that is because the rite of passage for both the buried individuals seems slightly different as the right side of skull of the skeleton on the right side contained traces of ochre while the one on the left did not. What also differentiates both the bodies is that the skeleton on the left had a silver spiral ring present on the left side of his skull. The presence of some kind of jewellery is obviously a trait not limited only for one sex and it would be folly to hypothesize the sex of these individuals solely based on this fact. More important is the presence of ochre on only one of the skeletons, which most definitely had some sort of significance, one that we are however unable to define with certainty. Apart from the male-female differentiation, it might also suggest some sort of social/tribal status. The Grave no. 14 is also the only grave, for which radiocarbon dating has been provided. The dating is between 2888 – 2676 AC.¹⁴⁸

The Grave no. 11 as was approximately 2.5 m deep inside the first layer and is the southernmost grave of the mound.¹⁴⁹ It was once again a rectangular grave covered by a couple of wooden planks. The rather shallow grave contained one individual of further unspecified sex or age. However, with the grave being only 1.5 m long and the deceased laid in a supine position, it is most probable to have belonged to a juvenile. Lumps of ochre were also present, more specifically on the left side of the skull and the East-West oriented body was once again laid on some reddish organic mat.¹⁵⁰

The deceased in Grave no. 5 has been buried in an oval pit covered by several wooden planks, the tallest of them measuring approximately 2 m. The northwestern sector of the grave's periphery also contained one rough stone. The 2.10 m long and 1.57 m wide pit contained one body, whose remains were preserved to the point of being possible to characterize him as a robust elderly male. He was laid in a supine position with bent legs in an East-West orientation. The grave itself contained two lumps of ochre on both sides of the skull and also a small rough stone, which was put on the chest of the deceased. An organic mat is also attested underneath the skeleton, having been of a rusty-brown colour.

The Grave no. 6 was located slightly higher and was originally not an oval pit, but a rectangular one. Apart from that it resembles Grave no. 5 in all the important factors. Wooden planks

¹⁴⁸ Arpe 2008, 20.

¹⁴⁹ Arpe 2008, 4.

¹⁵⁰ Arpe 2008, 21.

covering the grave are present, though the longest one measuring only about 1.30 m. The pit itself contained one individual, whose sex was further unspecified. The deceased had been laid in a supine position with bent legs in a typical East-West orientation. No grave goods are attested and the only contents were small lumps of ochre placed on the right side of the skull and an organic mat of a reddish colour.¹⁵¹

10.6.1.3 Middle Bronze Age graves

The second layer was about 1.5 m thick and was consisted of a darkish soil. This layer contained seven graves, namely Graves nos. 1 – 4, 7, 8 and 12.¹⁵²

The Graves nos. 15 and 10 unanimously shared the same features as the all the already mentioned typical MBA graves – hardly detectable outline of the uncovered grave, inhumation of one individual with an unattested sex, and embryonal position of the deceased with an East-West orientation.

The Grave no. 12 contained one fairly well-preserved individual. Sex was not further determined. The body was laid in an embryonal position with an East-West orientation. No grave goods or ochre were obviously attested, however, south of the grave was filled with a row of rough calcareous stones.¹⁵³

Grave no. 13 contained remains of one individual of an unspecified sex or age. Regarding the position and orientation of the body, it was the same as Grave no. 12. The pit also contained a lightly coloured clay vessels with traces of sand as an addition. Apart from that, remnants of some sort of reddish organic material covering the floor of the grave have also been attested.¹⁵⁴

All of the graves contained adult burials, with the exception of Grave no. 9, which contained a small child in an embryonal position. The aspects of the grave itself are however similar to the rest.¹⁵⁵

Grave no. 8 was covered by three rough rocks. The skeleton of the deceased was poorly preserved, but it is known to have been laid in an embryonal position. The body was oriented Northeast-Southwest. A clay bowl was also found near the upper limbs. Apart from that, an

¹⁵¹ Agre 2015, 20.

¹⁵² Agre 2015, 4.

¹⁵³ Agre 2015, 21.

¹⁵⁴ Agre 2015, 21.

¹⁵⁵ Agre 2015, 22.

unknown animal's bone was found on the skeleton's chest. No ochre or organic mat was attested.¹⁵⁶

Grave no. 7 was covered by four rough rocks geometrically lined up in a North-South orientation, which probably aided in finding the actual grave, as its outline was hardly detectable. The grave itself not being even half a meter deep contained one individual of an unspecifiable sex. The deceased was laid in an embryonal position with a North-South orientation. No grave goods or presence of ochre is attested, which makes the grave most probably datable to the Middle Bronze Age.¹⁵⁷

The Grave no. 4 resembles in almost all ways the Grave no. 7 – the outline of the pit was hard to detect, however, rocks covering have been attested. The body was laid in an embryonal position with a Northeast-Southwest orientation and the only uniqueness seems to be in the presence of a clay cup, which has been put between the arms of the deceased. No presence of ochre whatsoever or any organic mat is attested.¹⁵⁸

The Grave no. 2 was also not covered by any heap of rocks, however, three smaller rough calcareous stones were found on the eastern periphery of the grave. The outline of the grave was also hardly visible. The burial pit contained one individual of an unspecified sex. The bones were found in a poor condition, though it was possible to detect the deceased to be laid in an embryonal position on its left side.¹⁵⁹

The highest grave of the mound, Grave no. 1 was located in the southeastern sector and can be characterized as an oval shaped grave containing an inhumation of one individual of a further unspecified sex. The dimensions of the grave were rather small reaching only 1.14 m in length and about 0.63 m in width. No kind of wooden or stone structure covering the pit was documented as the outline beginning of the pit was also hardly detectable. The remains of the deceased have been slightly damaged, but it was nonetheless possible to recognize it had been laid in an embryonal position with an East-West orientation. Apart from two bones of some kind of livestock, no other grave goods were found. Neither organic mat nor traces of ochre have been attested. Grave no. 1 in particular is dated to the Middle Bronze Age.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁶ Agre 2015, 20.

¹⁵⁷ Agre 2015, 19.

¹⁵⁸ Agre 2015, 17.

¹⁵⁹ Agre 2015, 14.

¹⁶⁰ Agre 2015, 4.

11.6.1.3 Late Iron Age grave

Out of all the discovered graves, Grave no. 3 is surely the richest burial of the kurgan. Namely it contained eight gold appliques, six bronze appliques, four spearheads and a forehead piece. The most extraordinary remark on this single inhumation is that just south of the barrier of the rough stones an almost undamaged skeleton of a horse had been found.¹⁶¹ The grave also contained a set of horse-strappings and other parts of the horse gear, all made from bronze. Overall, the grave is regarded as a typical LIA burial of an individual in literature characterized as “Thracian aristocratic warrior”.¹⁶²

11.6.1.4 Summary

Out of all the ten EBA graves of the Lozianska mogila, we may say, that all of them certainly resemble the features associated with the Yamnaya culture. Not only the rich use of ochre in all the candidate Yamnaya graves, but also the rather rich state of grave goods, makes this kurgan an interesting specimen.

Grave	Type	No.	position	orientation	covering	ochre	relative dating	Culture
G21	inhumation	1	supine, bent legs	E-W	wooden planks	lumps	EBA I-II	Yamnaya
G20	inhumation	1	supine	E-W	wooden planks	stain	EBA I-II	Yamnaya
G18	inhumation	1	supine	E-W	no	stain/lump	EBA I-II	Yamnaya
G17	pair burial	2	supine, bent legs	N-S	wooden planks	stain (1 body)	EBA I-II	Ezero/Yamnaya
G16	pair burial	2	supine, bent legs	E-W	wooden planks	stain	EBA I-II	Yamnaya
G14	pair burial	2	supine, bent legs	SW-NE	wooden planks	stain (1 body)	EBA I-II	Ezero/Yamnaya
G11	inhumation	1 (juvenile)	supine	E-W	wooden planks	lumps	EBA I-II	Yamnaya
G6	inhumation	1	supine, bent legs	E-W	wooden planks	lumps	EBA I-II	Yamnaya
G5	inhumation	1 (elder male)	supine, bent legs	E-W	wooden planks	lumps	EBA I-II	Yamnaya

Tab. 11: Overview of the EBA graves of Lozianska mogila and its important features

¹⁶¹ Agre 2015, 10.

¹⁶² Agre 2015, 13.

11.6.2 Boyanovo 1

The kurgan Boyanovo 1 measured some 41.40 m in diameter and reached a height of 4.80m, which makes it the largest kurgan of this necropolis and (*Fig. 31*). It was rescue-excavated in 2009 under the lead of Dr. Stefan Bakardzhiev, Dr. Iliia Iliev and Dr. Yavor Rusev, who are also responsible for the 2010 AOR report. Apart from that, the kurgan is also discussed in a 2020 YMPACT publication.¹⁶³ In total, the kurgan contained 21 graves.¹⁶⁴ Although the stratigraphy of the kurgan and possible soil variants are not described in a large detail, it is more than certain that the kurgan has been enlarged at least one time, which is visible in the depth of some 3.8 m underground, as the central sector was covered by a ring of piled up stones, meaning that the primary mound must have measured approximately 1.20 - 1.30 m.¹⁶⁵ The graves are dispersed across the entire depth of the mound, which was during the excavation divided into a northern and a southern sector. This helped get at least an elementary grip on a rather complicated stratigraphy. The kurgan might ultimately be divided into two phases of construction.¹⁶⁶

11.6.2.1 First construction phase

The first construction phase contained five burials, whose specific depth is not well characterized. We are thus obliged to settle with the knowledge, that they have been buried between the depth of 3.40 - 4.80 m. Let us then continue in numerical order of the graves in hope, that their number might coincide with their depth, or at least to keep an elementary consistency. The graves Graves nos. 17 – 21 and they are dated between the Late Chalcolithic and the Early Bronze Age.

The primary burial of this kurgan, Grave no. 21, was made up of nothing more than a few fragmentary bones scattered above and below a few stones, most probably belonging to a female. Nothing else is however specified and it is thus hard to make any significant conclusions from this situation.¹⁶⁷

Grave no. 20 was not covered by any wooden planks, but the entire volume of this oval pit was surrounded by rough rocks. The grave itself contained two skeletons, one belonging to a female and also a small child aged between 3 - 4 years. The buried female is similarly laid in a right

¹⁶³ Бакърджиев – Илиев – Русев 2010, 117 ; Iliev – Bakardzhiev 2020.

¹⁶⁴ Iliev – Bakardzhiev 2020, 24.

¹⁶⁵ Iliev – Bakardzhiev 2020, 25.

¹⁶⁶ Бакърджиев – Илиев – Русев 2010, 118.

¹⁶⁷ Iliev – Bakardzhiev 2020, 119.

lateral position in and oriented East-West. Ochre is in this case not attested, same applies for grave goods or organic mat. The suggested dating is a bit more problematic as she is hypothesized to be from the Late Chalcolithic/Early Bronze Age and thus pre-Yamnaya.

Grave no. 19 can be characterized as an oval shaped grave covered by long wooden planks. Simultaneously the entire volume of the pit's profile was filled by rough stones. The almost 1m deep pit contained one well preserved skeleton of a supposedly young female. She was laid in a right lateral position and oriented West-East. No grave goods or organic mat have been discovered. Her body was heavily stained by ochre.¹⁶⁸

Grave no. 17 was covered by some 1.30 m long wooden planks. The northern part was also covered by rough stones. The grave being some 0.65 m deep contained one well preserved individual, who has been determined to be a young male. Though not containing any grave goods, the skull of the West-East oriented body was noticeably stained by ochre. He was laid in a supine position with no organic mat attested beneath him. He is also suggested to belong to the Yamnaya.

11.6.2.2 Second construction phase

The second construction phase of was the most plentiful when it comes to the number of the graves present. In total it contained 16 graves in a depth of around 0.60 m to some 3.40 m. In total, six graves were confidently dated to the Early Bronze Age, four to the Middle Bronze Age and two to the Late Bronze Age. Additionally, one grave dated vaguely to the Historical period has also been uncovered. Two graves lack any hypothetical dating and one was simply referred to as a Bronze Age burial.¹⁶⁹

The deepest grave of this phase is Grave no. 8 and was located some 3.40 m deep in the southeastern sector. It contained poorly preserved remains of what seemed to be a middle-aged female, in whose vicinity was also found a skeleton of a small 9 - 13 years old child. The position of the hypothetical mother was supine with bent legs and West-East oriented. She was laid on a ca. 1 m measuring organic mat and in the vicinity of her skull, a small lump of ochre was found. The suggested dating is Early Bronze Age.

At a depth of 2.92 m in the southeastern sector, Grave no. 9 was located. It contained a fairly well-preserved skeleton of one elderly male in a supine position with bent legs. He was oriented

¹⁶⁸ Iliev – Bakardzhiev 2020, 116-117.

¹⁶⁹ Iliev – Bakardzhiev 2020, 120.

West-East and was laid on ca. 1.40 m long organic mat. He was not stained by any ochre and also was not accompanied by any grave goods. The suggested dating is Early Bronze Age.¹⁷⁰

The Grave no. 7 laid at the same depth as Grave no. 9. It was, however, located in the southwestern sector of the mound. The pit was covered by several small rough rocks and contained remains of one individual, who was supposedly a young male. He was laid in a left lateral position and oriented East-West. No ochre nor organic mat has been attested. The grave goods were consisted of several ceramic vessels, which ultimately helped date the grave to the Middle Bronze Age.¹⁷¹

At a depth of 2.82 m, Grave no. 10 was uncovered. It laid in the southeastern sector of the mound. The pit was not covered by any wood or rocks and contained remains of one individual, who was characterized as an adult female, possibly in her 30's. No inventory was present, however, the overall deposition of the body resembled Grave no. 7 and was thus similarly dated to the Middle Bronze Age.¹⁷²

In the southwestern sector at a depth of 2.72m, Grave no. 11 was uncovered. The pit was not covered by any wooden planks or rocks and contained poorly preserved remains of one individual, who was supposedly an adult woman, possibly in her 30s – 50's. She was laid in a supine position with bent legs and was oriented West-East. The body had been laid on some kind of organic mat, however no ochre was present. Similarly, no grave goods have been attested. The suggested dating of this grave is the Early Bronze Age.¹⁷³

Next in line was Grave no. 13, which was also located in the southwestern sector at a depth of 2.50 m. It was covered by several small wooden planks. The almost perfectly preserved skeleton belonged to a young male in his early 20's. We are also able to determine, that he must have been a robust individual as his bones were rather massive. He was laid in a supine position with bent legs and oriented West-East. No organic mat was attested, but the body had been richly stained by ochre, namely his skull and lower limbs. He was also decorated by two partially preserved silver hair rings, one at each side of the skull. Additionally, one grey-brown jug with a handle was present in the grave (*Figs. 32 – 33*). The suggested dating Early Bronze Age.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷⁰ Iliev – Bakardzhiev 2020, 112.

¹⁷¹ Iliev – Bakardzhiev 2020, 111.

¹⁷² Iliev – Bakardzhiev 2020, 113.

¹⁷³ Iliev – Bakardzhiev 2020, 113.

¹⁷⁴ Iliev – Bakardzhiev 2020, 114.

The Grave no. 12 has been uncovered in the southwestern sector at a depth of 2.05m. The rectangular grave was covered by several wooden planks and contained one fairly well-preserved individual, who was most probably an elderly male. He was laid in a supine position with bent legs and oriented West-East. No organic material nor ochre was attested. Same as the previously mentioned graves, it has also been dated to the Early Bronze Age.¹⁷⁵

At a depth of 1.77 m, the deepest LBA suggested grave had been uncovered, Grave no. 5. It was not covered by any artificially put material. The body of the deceased belonged to a young male, whose body was heavily fragmented, mainly the upper part. He was laid in a left lateral position with an East-West orientation.

In terms of depth, the next in line was Grave no. 2 of the northwestern sector, which was embedded at a depth of ca. 1.64 m. The noticeably well-preserved bones belonged to a fairly young man, who was laid in a supine position with bent legs and oriented West-East. The grave was absent any wooden or stone covering, same applies for the contents of the interior of the pit, which did not contain anything apart from the skeleton. The suggested dating of the grave is Early Bronze Age.¹⁷⁶

At a depth of 1.57 m in the southeastern sector, Grave no. 6 was uncovered. The pit was not covered by any wooden planks or rocks and contained remains of one fairly young individual, whose sex was unspecifiable due to the poor preservation of the bones. The body was laid in a left lateral position and was oriented East-West. No grave goods or organic material was discovered. The suggested dating is Middle Bronze Age.¹⁷⁷

The ultimate burial dated to the Middle Bronze Age was uncovered at a depth of 1.39m and was named as Grave no. 4. The pit was located in the southwestern sector and contained poorly preserved remains belonging to an elder individual of an unspecified sex. No structure covering the grave was attested, same as the presence of any form of grave goods as well as ochre or an organic mat. Frankly the only contents of the grave were a couple of west oriented bones and a somewhat preserved east oriented skull.¹⁷⁸

Grave no. 3 is only burial dated to the “Historical period”. It was located in a depth of 1.24 m in the southeastern sector. The pit contained an elderly individual in a prone position without any grave goods accompanying the body. He has been suggested to be dated somewhere to the

¹⁷⁵ Iliev – Bakardzhiev 2020, 113.

¹⁷⁶ Iliev – Bakardzhiev 2020, 109.

¹⁷⁷ Iliev – Bakardzhiev 2020, 111.

¹⁷⁸ Iliev – Bakardzhiev 2020, 117.

period of Late Antiquity as the position of the body resembles the Christian canon already mentioned in this work several times.¹⁷⁹

The ultimate burial with a certain dating was Grave no. 15, which was located at a depth of 0.98 m in the very centre of the mound. It was not covered by any wooden planks or rocks. Inside the pit laid one fairly preserved individual, who was identified as an adult male. He had been laid in a left lateral position and was oriented North-South. No organic material was present. He was accompanied to the afterlife by a clay cup, which slightly resembles that of Grave no. 16, which was located some 10 cm above and is simply said to be of Bronze Age.¹⁸⁰ It would thus be my suggestion, though unimportant for this work, that the Grave no. 16 located at an unspecified depth was also LBA.

The Grave no. 1 was the highest laid grave of this phase. Being only some 0.60 m deep in the southwestern sector, it contained only fragmentary bones and no grave goods. No dating is suggested and considering the fact, that the next grave in the similar depth was located in a completely different part of the kurgan, it is hard to establish a dating of a couple of bones.¹⁸¹ However, these unitary and heavily fragmented graves are not uncommon in the Bulgarian Bronze Age.¹⁸² This, however, does not prove this grave to be surely dated to the Bronze Age and could very well belong to different time periods as well.

11.6.2.3 Summary

The kurgan of Boyanovo 1, despite its rather above-average published documentation, presents itself with a high number of questions, some of them concerning the issue of Yamnaya. The Yamnaya suggested graves are seven in total. Out of those, two are to have definitely belonged to middle-aged women, one of which also contained a body of a child. Given the fact, that the “parent burial” does not seem to resemble the Yamnaya aspects in no principal way, I believe the suggestion of it not being Yamnaya is correct.¹⁸³

The next “type” of burials are graves of elder men, whom we can find two in this phase. Though both being buried in a somewhat Yamnaya resembling art, they lack probably the most typical aspect – ochre. Here we are confronted with the question, why that might be, given the fact that

¹⁷⁹ Iliev – Bakardzhiev 2020, 109.

¹⁸⁰ Iliev – Bakardzhiev 2020, 110.

¹⁸¹ Iliev – Bakardzhiev 2020, 109.

¹⁸² Alexandrov – Włodarczak 2022, 207–240.

¹⁸³ Iliev – Bakardzhiev 2020, 118.

a young individual of a not so respected age from Grave no. 13 was buried with ochre. The four discovered burials of the first phase of the kurgan struggle with the typical problematics, what can be defined as Yamnaya and what as its predecessor. The most notable fact due to be taken into consideration is that out of the three well preserved graves, two of them contained bones stained by ochre. The Grave nos. 17 and 19 are most definitely Yamnaya. If we consider the fact, that the first phase of the mound could have measured only about 1.40 m, all the graves must have most definitely been dug in a span of a limited period of time, possibly one or two generations. To my knowledge, no radiocarbon dating was performed on any of the deceased of this kurgan. I would ultimately stick with the suggestion of experts far greater than myself to date the Grave no. 20 into the Late Chalcolithic, which would then mean the Yamnaya graves present in this phase might belong to the earliest phase of Yamnaya presence in the region.

Grave	Type	No.	position	orientation	covering	ochre	relative dating	Culture
G19	inhumation	1 (Female)	lateral right	W-E	stone ring, wooden planks	stain	EBA I-II	Yamnaya
G17	inhumation	1 (Young male)	supine	W-E	wooden planks	stain	EBA I-II	Yamnaya
G13	inhumation	1 (Young male)	supine, bent legs	W-E	wooden planks	stain	EBA I-II	Yamnaya
G11	inhumation	1 (adult female)	supine, bent legs	W-E	no	stain/lump	EBA I-II	Yamnaya
G8	parental burial	2 (1 female, 1 child)	supine (female)	W-E	no	lump	EBA I-II	Ezero/Yamnaya

Tab. 12: Overview of the EBA graves of Boyanovo 1 kurgan and its important features

11.6.3 Boyanovo 3

The last addition to the necropolis of Boyanovo is the Mound no. 3, which dimension-wise speaking is the smallest one of them. At a diameter of 27.40 m and a height of 1.40 m, it was probably consisted of only one construction phase containing four individual graves in total. Three of them were vaguely dated to the Bronze Age and one to the Antiquity. Noteworthy to say however, the state of all of them was rather poor as the mound was overran with traces of

graverobbers' activities. Same as Boyanovo 1, this kurgan has been excavated under the lead of dr. Ilia Iliev.¹⁸⁴

11.6.3.1 Bronze Age graves

The burials vaguely dated to the Bronze Age are Graves nos. 2 – 4. They mostly share similar features. For example, no wooden or stone cover of the graves was attested in any of them.

The Grave no. 4 was most probably the primary burial. The pit contained remains of one individual, who was most probably a middle-aged male. His West-East oriented body was laid in a supine position and was accompanied by two clay cups. Ochre or organic mat were not attested.¹⁸⁵

Grave no. 3 contained well preserved remains of a young female, possibly in her 20's. She was most probably laid in supine position and oriented West-East. Near those female bones, a skull of most probably a male was also uncovered, though nothing more can be attested about him. No inventory of any kind was also attested.

The remains of the deceased in Grave no. 2, though scattered across the grave, were well preserved and could thus be determined, that they must have belonged to a middle-aged male. He was oriented East-West. He was most probably laid in a lateral position, though it is only a hypothesis. A second set of remains was also uncovered in the grave. They most probably belonged to an elderly woman. No additional aspects such as e.g. her orientation is not specified. The 1.15 m long and about 0.53 m wide grave contained no goods, no organic mat and no ochre.¹⁸⁶

11.6.3.2 Younger finds

The Grave no. 1 was located as the highest burial of the mound, was utterly destroyed by graverobbers and its context is therefore virtually unknown.¹⁸⁷ These random graves being millennia younger than the primary burials seem to be quite frequent, as is visible e.g. in the closest EBA kurgan – Boyanovo 1. During the excavation, in the depth of 1.12 m a ring of medium-sized rough stones was uncovered, which was present almost around the entire diameter. The same depth also contained a swarm of rough stones. Under them, three shallow

¹⁸⁴ Iliev – Bakardzhiev 2020.

¹⁸⁵ Iliev – Bakardzhiev 2020, 121–122.

¹⁸⁶ Iliev – Bakardzhiev 2020, 120.

¹⁸⁷ Iliev – Bakardzhiev 2020, 28.

graves were uncovered. The state of all of them was similarly poor due to the grave robbers' treasure hunt efforts. The Graves no. 2 and 3 were more or less in the same depth divided only a couple meters from each other.¹⁸⁸

11.6.3.3 Summary

The suggested dating of all of the three graves is limited to the vague statement, that they belong to the Bronze Age. This fact might be confirmed by several factors, some of them being for example the lack of material found in all of the burials, as well as the overall resemblance of one another. The found pottery is not further discussed nor classified into any BA culture of the region. What might illuminate the more concrete dating of the mound is the presence of the stone ring attested the nigh entire diameter of the mound.¹⁸⁹ The depth in which this structure had been found correlated with the period of either the Early Bronze Age or the Middle Bronze Age.¹⁹⁰ I would thus suggest the date of those graves to float somewhere in this period as well, which is similarly vague, but at least a bit more concrete. However, the date of this burials is in the end not too important for the matter of this thesis as one thing can be stated with confidence – they do not possess the typical Yamnaya features and are in my view thus not to be regarded as Yamnaya.

Grave	Type	No	position	orientation	covering	ochre	relative dating	Culture
G4	inhumation	1 (adult male)	supine	W-E	no	no	EBA/MBA	?
G3	inhumation	1 (young female)	supine	W-E	no	no	EBA/MBA	?
G2	pair burial	2 (1 male, 1 female)	lateral (?)	E-W	no	no	EBA/MBA	?

Tab. 13: Overview of the EBA graves of the Boyanovo 3 kurgan and its important features

¹⁸⁸ Iliev – Bakardzhiev 2020, 25.

¹⁸⁹ Iliev – Bakardzhiev 2020, 45.

¹⁹⁰ Tušlová *et al.* 2024.

11.7 Pamukli Bair

The kurgan known as Pamukli Bair was excavated as a part of a joint Polish-Bulgarian excavation project in 2021. In comparison to other studied kurgans in this work, this bears the advantage, that the studies were not limited on a single excavation report. Apart from the standard AOR report, which did not serve as a source for this overview, the kurgan was thoroughly studied by a lead Polish researcher of this project, dr. Piotr Włodarczak, whose 2023 work mainly focuses on several most important burials of this mound, specifically those regarded as Yamnaya. The year older work made by a collaboration of dr. Stefan Alexandrov and dr. Piotr Włodarczak also represents the privilege this kurgan has received, as it deeply characterizes all the present construction and chronological phases.¹⁹¹

The mound was located near the village Malomirovo (*Маломирово*) southeast of Elhovo (*Елхово*) in the Yambol District.¹⁹² Apart from the Pamukli Bair kurgan, in the vicinity of Malomirovo, there have also been attested two other Bronze Age mounds. They are, however, not going to be discussed in this work as they did not contain any significant EBA material. Regarding the dimensions of the kurgan, it is estimated to have had a diameter of around 40 m and about 4 m in height (*Fig. 34*).¹⁹³

11.7.1 Chronology

Overall, four chronological phases of the kurgan were attested, which are then more specifically divided into three phases of construction.¹⁹⁴ The kurgan also bears the privilege of available radiocarbon dating, which has been made for all the graves. In total, 21 burials have been excavated. However, only 14 of graves have been further described. The undescribed ones are all probably dated to the Early Bronze Age, but since we do not possess any further data about them, they will be left disregarded. Apart from these, ten more graves have been dated to the Early Bronze Age. The remaining burials were consisted of three Middle Bronze Age graves and one dated to the Late Antiquity (*Fig. 35*).¹⁹⁵

¹⁹¹ Alexandrov - Włodarczak 2022; Włodarczak *et al.* 2023.

¹⁹² Alexandrov - Włodarczak 2022, 207.

¹⁹³ Alexandrov - Włodarczak 2022, 212.

¹⁹⁴ Alexandrov - Włodarczak 2022, 214.

¹⁹⁵ Alexandrov – Włodarczak 2022, 212.

11.7.2 First chronological phase

The oldest chronological and construction phase of the Pamukli Bair kurgan contained three burials, Graves nos. 18, 19 and 21.

The grave suggested as the primary one is Grave no. 19. It contained one inhumation of a middle-aged female laid on her right side. The pit itself was rectangular and was not covered by any wooden planks or rocks. It was also apparent, that the grave had fallen victim to the grave robbers, which is attested by a post-depositional damage of her skull. No ochre or any kind of organic mat was attested. The radiocarbon dating for this burial is between 3321 – 3016 AC, which proves it to be the oldest burial of the mound.

Grave no. 18 was found in the northeastern sector of the mound and Grave no. 21 in the southeastern sector. They share a striking similarity as both of them were surrounded by rocks and had no wooden planks covering the pit. They also both contained an individual burial of fairly young males. The bodies of the deceased have been laid in a supine position with an East-West orientation. Both the graves also contained a lump of ochre found next to the body's left arm, no goods or organic mat were however attested (*Fig. 36*).¹⁹⁶ Radiocarbon dating then proved these graves to truly belong to the oldest phase of the construction. Grave no. 21 was dated to 3081 – 2928 AC, Grave no. 18 to 3092 – 2923 AC.¹⁹⁷

11.7.3 Second chronological phase

The second chronological phase was consisted of three burials, namely Graves no. 16, 17 and 20. Grave no. 16 has been dug up by grave robbers, which ultimately resulted in part of the grave being destroyed and certain aspects of it unable to document.¹⁹⁸ The grave itself was covered by rocks and traces of wooden planks with West-East orientation were detected in all sectors surrounding the grave apart from the northern one, which was damaged due to the presence of the grave robbers' pit.¹⁹⁹ The rocks surrounding this grave contained a rather large agglomeration of scattered bones of up to three individuals. Though this is suggested to represent a mere feature of this burial, it has been labelled as Grave no. 20. The pit itself was located right above an older burial of Grave no. 19. It was consisted of bones significantly damaged by the collapse of the northern stone structure. No presence of an organic mat or any

¹⁹⁶ Alexandrov – Włodarczak 2022, 212.

¹⁹⁷ Alexandrov – Włodarczak 2022, 222.

¹⁹⁸ Alexandrov – Włodarczak 2022, 215.

¹⁹⁹ Alexandrov – Włodarczak 2022, 224.

remnants of ochre have been documented, however, two golden hair rings were found. The radiocarbon dating for the burial is between 3002 – 2885 AC. For the Grave no. 20, radiocarbon dating is more or less the same, which ultimately proves these two features to be interconnected.
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The Grave no. 17 was a rectangular pit surrounded by a cluster of rocks.²⁰¹ Apart from the rocks, the grave itself was covered by up to 15 partially preserved wooden planks with maximum length of 2.5 m. The planks have also been covered by some sort of a further unspecified organic mat.²⁰² More interestingly the grave was also surrounded by three large rocks, two of them on the northern side and one on the western side.²⁰³ All of them bear traces of a red ochre them, most visibly however on the largest one located on the northern side. On the bottom of the 0.95 m deep pit laid a single skeleton. It was laid in a supine position with bent legs and oriented West-East.²⁰⁴ The body was found in an extraordinarily good state, which enabled to distinguish the deceased as a robust, 173 cm tall elderly man, who in the span of his life frequently used all the muscles of the upper body.²⁰⁵ The extensive use of the body's potential is also visible on the number of fractures the bones appear to have and also a slight deformation of the pelvis as a result of horse riding. The auditory canal was affected by a disease commonly called surfer's ear.²⁰⁶ Such a disease results from a chronic exposure to either cold water (hence the name) or to inhospitably cold weather in general. It is slowly progressive. One of the possible symptoms of this disease is a graduating hearing loss.²⁰⁷ The body had been laid on an organic mat, on which due to the favourable conditions traces of red coloured zigzag ornaments were preserved.²⁰⁸ Traces of red ochre were also present on most of the body, most notably on the both the upper and lower limbs and also on the skull.²⁰⁹ Two corroded silver hair rings were also found near the skull (*Figs. 36 – 37*).²¹⁰ The radiocarbon dating showed all three graves to belong to the Early Bronze Age.²¹¹

²⁰⁰ Alexandrov – Włodarczak 2022, 222.

²⁰¹ Alexandrov – Włodarczak 2022, 215.

²⁰² Włodarczak *et al.* 2023, 38.

²⁰³ Włodarczak *et al.* 2023, 43.

²⁰⁴ Włodarczak *et al.* 2023, 38.

²⁰⁵ Włodarczak *et al.* 2023, 39.

²⁰⁶ Włodarczak *et al.* 2023, 40.

²⁰⁷ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK534874/>

²⁰⁸ Włodarczak *et al.* 2023, 38.

²⁰⁹ Włodarczak *et al.* 2023, 40.

²¹⁰ Włodarczak *et al.* 2023, 39.

²¹¹ Alexandrov – Włodarczak 2022, 222.

11.7.4 Third chronological phase

The third chronological phase is represented by two individual burials, Graves nos. 1 and 14. Despite them being belonging to the middle chronological phase, the construction phase of these burials is most probably the last one and all the graves from the younger chronological phases thus did not have any additional soil added up.²¹²

They resemble the previous chronological phase as Grave no. 1 was located directly 1 m above Grave no. 14 and was consisted of nothing more than bones scattered across a stone pavement, which once again points out to some sort of interconnection. Due to the state of those rather fragmentary found bones, no sex of the deceased is suggested, no traces of ochre were attested and no goods were found in the area of the scatter. The radiocarbon dating showed the bones to be dated between 2877 – 2677 AC. The Grave no. 14 contained one buried individual, most probably an adolescent male. He was laid in a supine position with bent legs. Wooden planks were found both above the pit as a cover of the grave and also beneath the deceased as a mat for the body.²¹³ The skeleton was not found in the best possible state. However, it was possible to distinguish its orientation as West-East.²¹⁴ Regarding the grave goods, a long wooden object was found along the left arm of the skeleton. Stains of red ochre are also documented, namely on the right side of the fragmented skull.²¹⁵ The interconnection of these two graves is also distinguishable by the radiocarbon dating, which showed Grave no. 14 to be dated between 2846 – 2582 AC, both thus dated more or less the same.²¹⁶

11.7.5 Fourth chronological phase

Two burials are to have belonged the fourth chronological phase, more specifically Graves nos. 3 and 5. Both of them contained remains of only one deceased of a further unspecified sex and the grave itself was found in a rather complicated state of preservation, as it had most possibly been affected by erosion. Due to this fact no remnants of any wooden structure were found. The position of both the skeletons was very similar, they were both laid in a supine position with bent legs, however no orientation of the bodies is provided in literature. Regarding further specifics, no sort of organic mat on which the deceased might have been laid is documented

²¹² Alexandrov – Włodarczak 2022, 218.

²¹³ Alexandrov – Włodarczak 2022, 217.

²¹⁴ Alexandrov – Włodarczak 2022, 218.

²¹⁵ Alexandrov – Włodarczak 2022, 228.

²¹⁶ Alexandrov – Włodarczak 2022, 226.

and apart from the red ochre stained on the bones in Grave no. 5, no other material has been found.²¹⁷ Both the graves are dated to the Early Bronze Age, more specifically Grave no. 3 to years between 2836 – 2504 AC and no. 5 almost similarly 2850 – 2587 AC.²¹⁸

11.7.6 Fifth chronological phase

The fifth chronological phase was located in the southwestern sector of the kurgan and contained three burials, all individual graves. They have been marked as Graves nos. 4, 12 and 13. All of them very similar, none of them contained any grave goods or remnants of ochre. The only significant difference is that the deceased one in Grave no. 4 was laid on the side, while Graves no. 12 and 13. contained individuals buried in a supine position.²¹⁹ Radiocarbon dating then showed these graves to be dated between the 18th and 16th century AC, therefore to the Middle Bronze Age.²²⁰

11.7.7 Sixth chronological phase

The ultimate chronological phase was consisted of one burial, named as Grave no. 2. The shallow pit contained one inhumation of an unspecified sex or age. The body was laid in an articulated position and was also accompanied by an iron buckle. The radiocarbon dating showed the burial to be dated to the Late Antiquity, as its age is somewhere between 421 – 535 AD.²²¹

11.7.8 Summary

The Pamukli Bair kurgan is one of the best documented burial mounds containing the burials of the Yamnaya culture in the region. Not only for the radiocarbon dating, but also for the comprehensive description of each grave providing a better possibility to not only recognize the Yamnaya-type burials, but also to collect data from which we might be able to understand the broader meaning of their presence in this region (*Fig. 38*). For this chapter let us however restrict ourselves on the standard conclusion. Out of the total 21 burials, ten of them are dated to the Early Bronze Age, four of them have some kind of grave goods attested, all of them are laid in a supine or semi-supine position and all those well enough preserved are oriented West-

²¹⁷ Alexandrov – Włodarczak 2022, 219.

²¹⁸ Alexandrov – Włodarczak 2022, 222.

²¹⁹ Alexandrov – Włodarczak 2022, 219.

²²⁰ Alexandrov – Włodarczak 2022, 222.

²²¹ Alexandrov – Włodarczak 2022, 222.

East or East-West. The issue of wooden planks covering the grave is hard to sort out as firstly in some cases it might not have preserved to our time and secondly it is arguably not the standard for all the graves suggested to be Yamnaya found in the region. What in the end might be the greatest aid in separating the chaff from the wheat is the presence of absence of ochre. Out of those ten EBA graves it has been attested in five of them, namely Grave no. 14 having belonged to the third construction phase, Graves no. 16 and 17 to the second and ultimately Grave no. 21 from the first phase. The two well preserved graves from the second construction period combined are with utmost certainty Yamnaya. Not only the position of the deceased and other aspects typical for the Yamnaya burials in this region support this, but also the presence of those three large ochre stained boulders found at Grave no. 17 might point out to the broader Yamnaya or Yamnaya-related traditions. They are addressed as stelae in relevant literature. According to Włodarczak, they do not resemble their anthropomorphic namesakes in the Pontic steppe and might thus have connotations with the pre-Yamnaya stelae of the Trans-Black Sea area.²²²

Grave no. 14 also presents a typical Yamnaya-type male burial with his supine West-East orientation, presence of ochre and of a long wooden object, that also might find its correlations in different regions. The most “problematic” seems to be the Grave no. 21, as it resembles the typical pre-Yamnaya burial, mainly due to the absence of ochre.

Grave	Type	No.	position	orientation	covering	ochre	absolute dating	Culture
G3	inhumation	1	supine, bent legs	?	no	?	2836-2504	Ezero
G14	inhumation	1 (young male)	supine, bent legs	W-E	rock ring, wooden planks	stain	2846-2582	Yamnaya
G5	inhumation	1	supine, bent legs	?	no	stain	2850-2587	Yamnaya
G1	feature of G14	?	?	?	0	no	2877-2677	?
G20	feature of G16	3 (scattered)	?	?	?	?	3002-2885	?
G16	inhumation	?	?	?	rock ring, wooden planks	no	3002-2885	Ezero (?)
G17	inhumation	1 (elder male)	supine, bent legs	W-E	rock ring, wooden planks (ochre stain)	stain	3008-2890	Yamnaya
G21	inhumation	1 (young male)	supine	E-W	rock ring	lump	3081-2928	Yamnaya
G18	inhumation	1 (young male)	supine	E-W	rock ring	lump	3092-2923	Yamnaya
G19	inhumation	1 (adult female)	lateral right	?	no	no	3321-3016	Ezero

Tab. 14: Overview of the EBA graves of Pamukli Bair and its important features

²²² Włodarczak *et al.* 2023, 45.

12. Haskovo District

12.1 Sechenata mogila

The kurgan named by locals as Sechenata mogila (*Сечената могила*), which could be translated as a “Chopped off mound”, was located in the vicinity of the village Sinapovo (*Синапово*) in the Topolovgrad municipality within the Haskovo District.²²³ It was excavated in 2012 under the lead of dr. Daniela Agre and dr. Deyan Dichev, who are also responsible for the 2013 AOR report, which serves as the main source of information about this mound.²²⁴

The kurgan had around 26 m in diameter and was about 3,2 m high making it one of the smaller mounds discussed in this work. The size of the mounds also correlates with the significantly smaller number of graves found than in some previously mentioned ones, namely eight in total.²²⁵ Regarding the stratigraphy, the kurgan could be divided into two layers. The first layer one reached height of about 1,5 m and could be characterized as a white limestone soil. The remaining half was consisted of soil, that was described as brownish. This points out to the fact, that the kurgan was probably consisted of two construction phases. In total, seven burials were attested. All are located in the supposed first construction phase and are all suggested to be dated to the Early Bronze Age. The second construction phase contained several pottery fragments dated to the Antiquity. Its purpose is not clearly understood.

12.1.1 Early Bronze Age graves

The primary burial was Grave no. 6 and was located in the very centre of the mound. The depth of the pit was about 1 m and has been consisted of grey and black soil, no wooden planks or stones covering the grave is documented. The pit itself contained remains of one individual, whose sex is unspecified. The remains, mainly an upper part of the body, were found in a rather poor condition, despite that it was possible to determine that the deceased had been laid in a supine position with bent knees and oriented Southwest-Southeast. No remnants of any organic mat under the body were attested, however, the lower part of the skeleton had been stained in red ochre and a fragment of a vessel had been found. Due to all those mentioned aspects of the grave including the fact it is in fact the deepest and oldest one in the kurgan, it is safe to say the

²²³ Alexandrov – Włodarczak 2022, 210.

²²⁴ Агре – Дичев 2013, 122–125.

²²⁵ Агре – Дичев 2013, 122.

grave could be dated to the Early Bronze Age. The pottery fragment is decorated by incised lines.²²⁶

Similar type of pottery was found in Grave no. 4, which was oval shaped and contained one body of an unspecified sex in a supine position and East-West orientation. No presence of ochre or any kind of wooden cover is mentioned. The found pottery was a shard of a clay cup, in which an admixture of large quartz grains have been found, same as in Grave no. 6. Shards of this type of pottery have also been found on the uncovered surface of the original pre-Antiquity mound.

It is further unspecified as to which of the remaining graves is higher and which is deeper. However, it does not play that important of a role, because all the graves are suggested to be dug up in a rather short time period. The only mentioned highlights are Graves nos. 1, 2 and 7, which contained pieces of ochre inside and Grave no. 5, which was a child burial.²²⁷

12.1.2 Younger finds

The limestone soil layer contained fragments of an amphora, which was suggested to have been originally made in Skopelos in the Aegean Sea called and dated to the turn of the 4th and 3rd century AC. This amphora was most probably related to some kind of burial ritual, due to which the mound was enlarged in Antiquity, but no grave structure or any remains were found, most likely because part of the mound might have been damaged due to mining excavations.²²⁸

12.1.3 Summary

The Sechenata mogila is a rather small kurgan with a handful of burials, of which at least those containing ochre might be understood as Yamnaya. However, there is not enough room for any larger debate as the mound is simply not thoroughly described. Regarding for example the child burial of Grave no. 5, it is not mentioned in which depth it had been found and whether it correlates with any of the adult graves.

²²⁶ Агре – Дичев 2013, 123

²²⁷ Агре – Дичев 2013, 122

²²⁸ Агре – Дичев 2013, 123.

Grave	Type	No.	position	orientation	covering	ochre	relative dating	Culture
G7	inhumation	1	?	?	?	stain/lump	EBA I-II	Yamnaya/Ezero
G6	inhumation	1	supine, bent legs	SW-SE	no	stain	EBA I-II	Yamnaya
G2	inhumation	1	?	?	?	stain/lump	EBA I-II	Yamnaya/Ezero
G1	inhumation	1	?	?	?	stain/lump	EBA I-II	Yamnaya/Ezero

Tab. 15: Overview of the EBA graves of Sechenata mogila and its important features

13. Conclusion

The 15 discussed kurgans of the Middle Tundzha Valley present a significant amount of data, which can be taken into consideration and compared. Let us start with the geographical location of them. As was already mentioned, it was impossible to find their precise whereabouts in this work. It is nonetheless possible to see some similar patterns in all of them from their approximate position in the landscape. Firstly, they were all located in a close vicinity to the river banks. This pattern correlates with other Yamnaya kurgans found in the Balkans, as most of them are found close to river streams.²²⁹ Since the Yamnaya culture is understood as a nomadic culture, the most tempting explanation for this tendency of setting up the burial mounds close to the rivers would of course be, that the rivers might have served as a natural way of orientation. The Yamnaya kurgans in the steppes of modern-day Ukraine, from which the culture originally emerged, also show this tendency.²³⁰ This might therefore ultimately point out to the fact, that their presence might have overall been centred around rivers streams. Due to the fact, that we have not been able to distinguish the precise location of the kurgans, it is impossible to hypothesize some pattern regarding the type of landscape, in which the kurgans were built. However, it seems as most probable, that most of them were located on elevated hills, as is for example attestable in the kurgan of Sabev Bair, the Mogila necropolis or the Boyanovo necropolis.

The dimensions of most of the kurgans are a result of several construction phases, of which the EBA burials represent only a fraction. Due to the fact, that most of the documentation is scarce, we are unable to tell the dimensions of the original EBA phases of the kurgans. Conclusively, it is only possible to point out, that the kurgans have been continuously used throughout the rest of the Bronze Age, as a large portion of the non-EBA burials are dated either to the Middle Bronze Age or to the Late Bronze Age. Some of the kurgans also sporadically contain significantly younger burials. There are seven documented Late Iron Age burials, the most significant of them seems to be the rich “Thracian aristocratic warrior” of Lozianska mogila. Among earlier periods are also the Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages, which are in the available sources typically left disregarded. The only aspect we can thus point out about the burials of these periods is that their features are typically uniform, as most of the deceased were

²²⁹ Heyd 2011, 537.

²³⁰ Anthony 2021, 28.

buried in what is named as the Christian funerary custom – a prone position and arms parallel to the body.²³¹

From the 15 discussed kurgans, there is a total number of 99 graves dated to the Early Bronze Age. Out of this quite large number, 27 burials are forced to be disregarded, as they have either not been well preserved or were not properly documented. Among other disregarded burials are either shallow pits or burials damaged to the point of being impossible to date with certainty. All these disregarded graves were dated to the Early Bronze Age, but they nonetheless do not possess any of the criteria sought for in this work. With the exclusion of these burials, we are left with a number of 72 graves, which possess some relevant data. The aspects of these 72 burials vary and they can be divided into several groups, but their greatest differentiation comes when hypothesizing their cultural “allegiance”. For this determination, two terms are worked with – Ezero and Yamnaya.

Some of the kurgans studied in this work might raise questions, as to why they have been included. Firstly, there is the issue of the Boyanovo 3 kurgan and the Zimnitsa kurgan. The Boyanovo 3 did not contain any burials dated with certainty to the Early Bronze Age. In all the burials of Zimnitsa, it was impossible to determine, whether they might be regarded as Yamnaya or Ezero. The decision to keep these kurgans present in this work should in theory serve as an everlasting memento, that nothing is ever certain in the context of the Bronze Age burials of Bulgaria, as they are often very simple and difficult to differentiate. Another issue might be several kurgans, which were initially found as fitting for the thesis, but their further study showed, that they do not possess any burials, which could be determined as Yamnaya, namely the Mogila 3 and the Irechekovo kurgan. The reason to keep them in this work is because the burials of the Ezero culture quite often possess features usually attested to the Yamnaya – for example the typical spiral rings. The purpose of summarizing these non-Yamnaya mounds should thus serve as a proof, that the Yamnaya culture proved to be more than just a migratory force entering foreign lands and leaving nothing behind. On the contrary, they might have been in an active and possibly a non-violent contact with the locals, as might be attestable by the shared repertoire of material present in the graves.

If we take into consideration the Kurgan hypothesis and the Yamnaya culture representing a group of nomads migrating to foreign lands, then the Ezero culture represents the indigenous populace of the region. However, when looking at the rites of passage in the studied kurgans,

²³¹ Dimitrova 2011, 39.

we find very little difference among these two cultures. Most of the graves share similar characteristics. Wooden/stone covering is present in 50% of all the described graves. 80% of all the documented deceased are laid in a supine position and most of them (47 individuals) are also oriented East-West/West-East. Most of the graves are also quite poorly equipped by grave goods. All of these aspects are usually typically assigned to the Yamnaya culture.²³² It would however be folly to think of most of the graves as Yamnaya as there is one aspect, which seems to differentiate the burials in all the kurgans – ochre. Out of all the 72 described graves, ochre is positively attested in 45 of them. Out of the 15 discussed kurgans, they are present in 10 of them. Due to aspects such as the poor inventory in the graves, similar positioning and orientation of the deceased, but also absence of any genetic research, which might reveal more about the individual's origin, it is my suggestion, that ochre is the only plausible way of determining a Yamnaya grave. We are thus left with a total number of up to 45 burials, which might be regarded as such.

Not much can be said about the individuals themselves as only a fraction of them had a determined sex and age. Most of the graves are absent any inventory. The most widespread good found are spiral rings, which are attested in 24% (10 graves) of the ochre present graves. An insignificant number of graves contained pottery. Apart from the ochre-filled bowl found in Sabev Bair, none of the found pottery is further characterized. The only conclusion about pottery we are able to make is a standard statement, that the Yamnaya culture did not have a distinct pottery of its own and just simply used that one of the locals.²³³ It is thus most probable, that pottery found in the kurgans of this region are a product of the Ezero culture. The only atypical find is the so-described “long wooden object” found in Grave no. 14 of Pamukli Bair. No similar object is attested in any of the kurgans in the region. The only plausible analogy seems to be clubs or maces found in the Ukrainian steppes, although they are usually made of either stone or copper.²³⁴ The sought for organic mat is also not the most typical find, as it is attested only in about 20% of the ochre-containing burials (nine graves).

The most noteworthy aspect is most definitely the presence of ochre in graves containing more than one individual. In total, there are five pair or mass burials containing ochre. Interestingly enough, ochre is typically present as a stain only on some of the deceased in the grave. The total number of either pair burials or mass graves containing ochre is five. If we stick with the

²³² Preda-Bălănică *et al.* 2020, 88.

²³³ Preda-Bălănică *et al.* 2020, 86.

²³⁴ Anthony 2007, 256.

suggestion, that ochre is the indicator of the Yamnaya culture, it might serve as a proof, that their presence in the region is not to be understood solely as an invasive force destroying everything in its way as presented by Marija Gimbutas.²³⁵ On the contrary, some of the Yamnaya nomads originally emerging from the steppes of Eastern Europe might have had non-violent contacts with the locals. They might have very well merged with them, creating some sort of amalgamation of foreign and indigenous traditions. There is obviously no way in definitely proving such a theory, but apart from these mixed burials, the kurgans are also filled with local burials dated to the same period as the Yamnaya ones, which might be yet another indicator of a not so hostile coexistence.

The certain Ezero burials represent 33% of all the described burials (24 burials). 20 of them are singular inhumations (78% of the Ezero burials) and the rest are either pair burials containing two deceased or mass burials containing three individuals. Regarding their further aspects, about (73% of the Ezero burials) of the deceased are laid in a supine position and almost all of them are oriented West-East/East-West. The grave goods are very poor. Same as in Yamnaya graves, most of the Ezero burials are absent any inventory, only a handful of them contained some pottery, animal bones, metal spiral rings or daggers. The presence the spiral rings is vital, as they present the probably most typical find of the Yamnaya burials, which might once again point out to a shared material repertoire.

Regarding dating and chronology, seven kurgans have a primary grave, which could be determined as Yamnaya. The remaining eight kurgans are either poorly documented, or might be viewed as Ezero. The most typical non-Yamnaya primary burials seem to “parent graves” containing a young female and a child. The child either is typically laid next to her or in a separate grave, which is usually very close by the supposed mother. According to relative chronology, most of the burials are dated to the period of EBA I/EBA III, which according to Nikolova’s 1999 publication correlates with years between 3300 – 2600 AC. A handful of Yamnaya burials is also dated somewhen into EBA II/EBA III, therefore between 2600 – 2000 AC. However, they are most probably to be understood as the youngest phase of EBA II as the Yamnaya presence in the region is usually seen as ending somewhen in 2600 AC.²³⁶ Any absolute chronology is unfortunately impossible to establish as out of the 15 kurgans, only the Pamukli Bair possesses radiocarbon dating for the Yamnaya burials. From that kurgan we are only able to tell, that the oldest Yamnaya burial belongs to a young male, who must have been

²³⁵ Gimbutas, 1993.

²³⁶ Nikolova 1999, 7.

buried in the later stage of the EBA I, somewhen between 3092 – 2923 AC. On the other hand, the youngest Yamnaya burial of the kurgan is dated between 2846 – 2582 AC.²³⁷ The only conclusion we are thus able to make on this matter is to state, that the Yamnaya culture was present in the region in the span of those several centuries.

Apart from these rather concrete outcomes of the gathered data, it is also noteworthy to point out several insufficiencies, which were not in my abilities to overcome in this thesis. Many of the kurgans were excavated in complicated conditions and the quality of their documentation varies. Most of the excavations were also obviously limited by finances as some of the most crucial methods of research are used only partially. The radiocarbon dating is one of the underused methods, which could in the future shed more light on when the Yamnaya culture could have possibly reached the so far southernmost known limit of their migrations. Due to the conclusion, that the Yamnaya culture might have partially merged with the local populations, it would also be interesting to see the results of genetic analyses and see whether this theory might also have a confirmation in the genetic admixture of the deceased.

Kurgan	Diameter	Height	Total amount of graves	EBA graves	Yamnaya graves	Ezero graves	Amalgam of both the cultures (Ezero/Yamnaya)	Uncertain EBA graves
Shekerdzha mogila	45m	5m	10	6	5	0	1	0
Gabrova mogila	32m	2.6m	31	9	1	2	1	5
Tonchova mogila	40x48m	6.50m	>5	5	1	1	0	3
Straldzha	30m	3m	>2	2	2	0	0	0
Zimnitsa	20m	1m	22	4	0	0	0	4
Sabev Bair	37m	2.70m	>5	5	0	2	3	0
Mogila 1	37.6m	3.20m	30	14	6	7	1	0
Mogila 2	30m	2.5m	17	7	4	1	0	2
Mogila 3	20x16m	1m	12	6	0	6	0	0
Irechekovo	?	0.78m	10	1	0	1	0	0
Lozianska mogila	32m	5.50m	21	10	7	0	2	0
Boyanovo 1	41.40m	4.80m	21	5	4	0	1	0
Boyanovo 3	27.40m	1.40m	4	3	0	0	0	3
Pamukli Bair	40m	4m	21	10	5	3	0	2
Sechenata mogila	26m	3.2m	8	6	1	1	3	0

Tab. 16: Overview of the kurgans and burials

²³⁷ Alexandrov – Włodarczak 2022, 227.

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16. Abbreviations

AOR – *Archaeological Discoveries and Excavations* (Археологически отрития и разкопки)

EBA – *Early Bronze Age*

LBA – *Late Bronze Age*

LIA – *Late Iron Age*

MBA – *Middle Bronze Age*

YMPACT – *Yamnaya Impacts on Prehistoric Europe*

17. Illustrations

See the attachment