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THE THRACIAN SILVER TREASURE FROM ROGOZEN

The largest Thracian treasure in Bulgaria was discovered in the village of Rogozen, Vraca district, in the first days of 1986 and was promptly qualified as "the find of the century." The treasure represents an enormous collection of 165 beautiful silver vessels with gilt, dated to a period prior to the Hellenistic Age, i.e., from the beginning of the fifth to the middle of the fourth century B.C. The vessels, which are with a total weight of 20 kilograms, were collected in the course of nearly a century and a half.

The Thracian silver treasure was discovered practically in the center of Rogozen. It was unearthed in an empty courtyard which had been used for many years as a vegetable garden. The silver vessels were concealed there in two pits close to one another. The first part of the treasure was found accidentally by the owner of the garden, tractor-driver Ivan Dimitrov, while he was digging an irrigation channel. At a depth of about fifty centimeters from the surface he was greatly surprised to find sixty-five silver vessels. Dimitrov informed the village mayor about the find and took the vessels to the municipality. In his turn, the mayor informed the District History Museum in Vraca. A team of archaeologists, led by Bogdan Nikolov, arrived immediately in Rogozen and started archaeological excavations. The aim of the archaeological research was to establish the reason for the burying of the beautiful silver vessels, namely whether they were part of a rich Thracian burial or remnants of an ancient settlement.

First of all, the pit in which Ivan Dimitrov had found the objects was thoroughly dug out again. Neither traces of a burial nor a culture layer of an ancient settlement were discovered. It became clear that the treasure was concealed there suddenly under some imminent great danger. The archaeologists were not far from the idea that the treasure could have been hidden in two separate pits, this idea being suggested by other ancient treasures in Bulgaria, discovered hidden in two separate places. In spite of the unfavorable winter conditions, the digging continued uninterrupted. The archaeological drilling was expanded on all sides and it also spread to the neighboring yards. In the yard next door burnt plaster was found at a depth of sixty centimeters, as well as fragments of pottery for everyday use, dated to the beginning of the Neolithic Age—the sixth millennium B.C. It became clear that this region had been inhabited by human communities long before the treasure of the Thracians was buried there.
On January 6, 1986, the efforts of archaeologists were rewarded with an amazing success. A second pit containing an ordered heap of exactly one hundred silver vessels was discovered only five meters to the northwest of the first one. In this way the second part of the Thracian treasure from Rogozen was discovered and thus the silver vessels numbered 165 in all. The second find was buried at the same depth as the first one. This is the first Thracian treasure in Bulgaria for the discovery of which archaeologists have been involved, and in this case its scientific value becomes even greater.

The village of Rogozen is located forty-three kilometers north of the town of Vraca, being situated in the middle of the fertile Danubian Plain—at an equal distance from the Balkan Range and from the Danube, between the Ogosta and Iskar Rivers. This region has been well investigated archaeologically in the past several decades. Man’s oldest cave dwellings were discovered, their remnants being found in the course of archaeological excavations in the region of the Fore-Balkan. These are the caves Pest, Samuilica I and II near the villages Staro Selo and Kunino, and the cave Peshketo near the village of Liljache, Vraca district. Flintstone and bone tools have been found in cave Samuilica I, together with a bone anvil used for polishing flint tools. The technique of their execution dates them to the Middle Palaeolithic Age and they can be considered as a local variant of the Musterian culture.

Until about three or four decades age, relatively little was known about the prehistory of the lands between the Iskar and Ogosta Rivers, and between the Danube and the Balkan Range. The gaps in our knowledge were filled by the results provided by the archaeological investigations of several prehistoric settlements, namely: Banica, Brenica, Gradeshnica, Krivodol, Gorna Beshovica, Gorna Kremena, Kunino, Rebukovo, Tlachene, Baurene, Cakonica, Borrowan, and so on. The Neolithic and Chalcolithic settlements near Gradeshnica occupy a central place among them in view of the rich scientific information provided by them.

The above-mentioned settlements have a considerable culture layer and good stratigraphy, which have contributed to the further specifying of the development and periodization of the Neolithic Age throughout Western Bulgaria. The processing of the stratigraphic data and the study of the archaeological monuments, as well as their comparison with the results obtained

1. Н. Джамбазов, "Пещерата Пещ до Старо село, Врачанск." Известия археологическия институт [ИАИ], 21 (1957), с. 3-25.