

The Dobrogea region in the 4th and 3rd millennia BC was on the migration route of steppe communities towards the Balkans. Currently, numerous round barrows ('kurgans') are the main evidence of their presence. Few of them have been the target of systematic archaeological research. The project "The Yamna people at the gate to the Balkans" will involve excavations of two large kurgans in the Bulgarian (southern) part of Dobrogea. Large kurgans are tombs created in many phases, containing numerous burials from different stages of the Early Bronze Age. Therefore, the effect of the research will be the discovery of a sequence of graves in each kurgan, which will allow for studies of changes in the kurgan burial rite in subsequent phases. This will also enable precise dating of successive periods. An essential effect of these studies will be acquiring a high-quality sample for genetic studies of human remains. Their results will be key to studies on the genetic differentiation of individual waves of the Kurgan population expansion. Equally important will be the analysis of burials in terms of mutual kinship ties, revealing the rules of forming kurgan cemeteries. A series of other planned specialist analyses planned for materials from newly discovered graves will concern both the biological features of the buried people and various aspects of the funeral rite.

The kurgans in Plachidol and Pobeda, located near the town of Dobrich (Bulgaria), have been selected for excavation research. They belong to the class of huge earth tombs (over 7 m high). Such large kurgans have not been the subject of systematic excavation research so far. One of the selected kurgans (in Plachidol) was examined in 1980 with a shovel, in which, among other things, stone stelae were discovered, as well as the only grave in the Balkan zone in which the deceased was buried together with elements of a four-wheeled cart. New research will uncover the oldest graves and clarify the stratigraphic situation in this intriguing and unique barrow.

The project's final result will be a monograph presenting the problems of barrow communities in the southern part of Dobrogea and a series of articles explaining the results of excavations and specialist analyses. The research will consider the results of excavations within the project and archival data on the Bulgarian and Romanian parts of the mentioned region.

The summary of the research results on barrows in Dobrogea is of great value for studies on the problems of the waves of migration of the steppe population of Eastern Europe towards the Balkans and the Pannonian Plain. For this reason, the project will systematise data on barrows not only from Dobrogea but also from neighbouring regions, including the northwestern part of the Pontic region (the starting area for the western migration of the steppe population).