

# TOPOGRAPHICAL INVESTIGATION AND MAGNETOMETER PROSPECTION OF THE AGIGHIOL TUMULUS, TULCEA COUNTY (4<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY BC)

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**Abstract:** The Agighiol tumulus was investigated in 1931 after the unprofessional dismantling of the funerary construction. The rediscovery of the documentation of the archaeological excavation has allowed the revalorization of this monument, finding that only a quarter of the tumulus had been investigated. In order to estimate the potential of further systematic archaeological excavation, a detailed topographical survey of the mound and a magnetometer prospection of its surface were carried out. The topographic elevation revealed a depression with raised edges corresponding to the pit of the old excavations. The geomagnetic prospection aimed at the discovery of possible funerary structures; the remains of the funerary structure had a circular form; possible anthropogenic pits were also identified near the mound.

**Cuvinte-cheie:** tumulul Agighiol, ridicare topografică, prospecțiune geomagnetică, groapa săpăturii, posibile gropi antropice

**Rezumat:** Tumulul Agighiol a fost cercetat în 1931 după demantelarea neprofesionistă a construcției funerare. Redescoperirea documentației săpăturii arheologice a permis revalorificarea acestui monument, constatându-se că doar un sfert din tumul a fost cercetat. Pentru a estima potențialul unei săpături arheologice sistematice s-a efectuat o ridicare topografică detaliată a tumulului și prospecțiunea geomagnetică a suprafeței lui. Ridicarea topografică a evidențiat depresiunea cu margini înălțate corespunzând gropii vechilor săpături. Prospecțiunea geomagnetică a urmărit descoperirea unor eventuale structuri funerare; urmele construcției funerare au apărut sub formă circulară; de asemenea, au fost identificate posibile gropi antropice în apropierea tumulului.

## INTRODUCTION AND FIELD RESEARCH

The rediscovery of old documentation of the Agighiol tumulus, which was excavated in 1931 by Ioan Andrieșescu and Dumitru Berciu, has enabled us to update the research of this milestone monument from the beginning of Thracology<sup>1</sup>. At that time, the tumulus was excavated following the systematic dismantling of the funerary structure, whereby only the horse chamber was left intact.

The new evaluation of the 1931 documentation contributes to a more precise stratigraphy of the tumulus, to the understanding of the type of construction, and to the distribution of the finds of the burials in the antechamber. It makes it possible to attribute the harness pieces to the three differently valued horses.

Our understanding of the earlier archaeological field work at Agighiol relies on its method of excavation. Thus, a "rectangular" area (13.8 × 15.6 m / 15.2 m) located at the centre of the tumulus was dug not in layers but all at once, down to what was considered to be the natural ground. In order to completely uncover the entire construction, this area was extended by two lateral sondages, located to the south and west, that explored the supposed limits of the tumulus (Fig. 1).

Even for that time, the excavation method of cutting a rectangular area in the centre of the burial mound, later extended towards the limits of the structure, was rather unprofessional. Bisecting the tumular embankment and documenting a profile (by drawing or photography) to clarify the stratigraphy were already commonly used methods (used for example by Bogdan Filow<sup>2</sup>).

With a diameter of 34.3 m, the area of the tumulus is 923.9 m<sup>2</sup>. The excavated area (257.05 m<sup>2</sup>) represents only 27.82% of it. This means that almost three quarters of the burial mound area have not been excavated.

The incomplete excavation of the tumulus and the somewhat primitive excavation methods has prompted us to evaluate the potential of new investigations by means of a detailed topographical survey with dense measuring points and geophysical prospection.

The traces of the old excavations (the pit and the earth removed from it) are still visible to the naked eye on today's *Movila lui Uță*. A wide, roughly NNE–SSW-oriented depression with raised edges can be recognized by a topographical survey, but its orientation differs slightly from the orientation of the reported excavated surface, given as NE–SW in the old documentation (Fig. 2).

<sup>1</sup> Teleaga 2020, p. 3–116, 157–218, pl. 1–12.

<sup>2</sup> Filow 1934.