

Anthracological analysis of three chariots in South Bulgaria

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Abstract: *The presence of wood in the archaeological site is usually connected with its usage in different activities: construction, instruments of production, etc. Well preserved wooden parts of chariots were found for the first time in the territory of Bulgaria. Three chariots from South Bulgaria are studied. The analysis made it possible to identify the following taxa: Quercus sp., Fagus sp., Carpinus sp., Acer sp., Picea sp. and Abies sp. The results indicate the presence of several tree species. The most commonly used is the oak. The data show that Pinus nigra was then still existing and later as result of cutting it disappeared. The third species is ash. It is known that this wood is very good for making various carpentry tools.*

Key words: *chariot, Roman time, wood, Bulgaria*

MATERIAL

Two chariots dated to the 3rd century BC were discovered during excavations of Dalgata mogila Tumulus near the village of Karanovo, Nova Zagora. This is one of the very few cases where we can trace the entire pattern of ritual practices accompanying burials of prominent Thracians who believed in a better after-life. That is why the deceased were to be laid with all the objects they needed during their lifetime.

The carts – one four-wheeled and one two-wheeled chariot – were placed near the tumulus. The two-wheeled chariot is characterized by its extremely interesting design and exquisite decoration. The saddle – horses were laid near the carts. The funeral feasts, offering and libations marked the beginning of piling the burial mound. The chariot from Karanovo is closest to the Roman *cisium* – a two-wheeled cart famous for its high speed and luxurious design.

The second cart is a 1900 years old well-preserved chariot found in an ancient Thracian tomb in southeastern Bulgaria. The cart is a four-wheeled chariot. At the funerary mound, were also discovered table pottery, glass vessels and other gifts for the funeral of a wealthy Thracian aristocrat.

Another chariot was discovered near Nova Zagora in the location Triagalnika. The chariot there is a two-wheeled one and it is dated to the second half of the 1st century to 3rd century.

The objects of study are the wooden parts of this chariot – plates, rims, nails, hubs, wooden objects from the basket of the chariot, wooden chairs, etc.

RESULTS

The analysis made possible to identify the following taxa: *Quercus sp., Fagus sp., Carpinus sp., Acer sp., Picea sp.* and *Abies sp.*

The results indicate the presence of several tree species. The most commonly used is the oak. It is the *taxon* most often found and its wood is very appreciated for construction.

Furthermore, there were found fragments of ash, hornbeam and beech. With less participation some conifers as pine, fir and spruce are also present. The data show that *Pinus nigra* was then still existing, and it disappeared later as result of cutting. Its habitat is the mixed deciduous forests dominated by oak that nowadays are not present. The third species is ash. It is known that its wood is very good for making various carpentry tools.

