



VASSIL BOJKOV COLLECTION  
PAST AND  
PRESENT

A collection is the unity of: the collected items  
(realia, artefacts, beings, images, narratives...),  
the conceptual design for their amalgamation (taxonomy),  
the subjective dimensions of their integrity  
(the figure of the collector),  
the socially significant model for identification and value affirmation  
(the collection's role in the shaping of certain tastes,  
notions of meaning and value)  
and protection and preservation policies  
(medicalization of the material world  
aimed at a real and symbolic battle against time). \*



\* "Collecting – passion and value"  
2020, Valeri Stefanov

# ITS FUTURE WILL BE DIFFERENT



This collection has been assembled with care and attention, in-depth research, endless meetings with the most prominent collectors, galleries, and museums. Some of the artefacts have been obtained from various museums – from the New York Metropolitan Museum to the Louvre. I have participated in auctions at all auction houses across the world and have never lost a bid for an artefact related to Bulgarian history. I have purchased from the best – the oldest private collectors, museums and galleries. This fact is widely known and evidenced through documents, witnesses and archives. The collection has been assembled in aid of global knowledge, but most importantly because Bulgarians deserve to own their history. I am fascinated by our history.

The collection has been meticulously collected over a period of twenty years. Day by day. Every single day I devoted time, resources and care to this project. I created a laboratory, tracked down and hired world experts in conservation, restoration and protection. In the years of government neglect, I managed to compile and preserve a priceless portion of Bulgarian cultural heritage. Admittedly, by possessing this portion. Then again, who else could have done it?

The collection contains artefacts that are not just utilitarian but also transcendent in nature. They serve as a bridge to the immortality of human spirit. Not eschaton, but eternity.

The collection is complex and complete. It shows the lifestyle, culture and art of the people who inhabited our lands as well as the cultural relations existing in the Ancient world during the 1st millennium BC.

You can see similar artefacts in numerous museums, but this collection is the only place you can see them gathered together. Some are the very last of their kind. In order to see such artefacts, you would have to tour hundreds of museums across the globe, whereas I succeeded in assembling all this in a single collection. My collection. This makes it the most valuable collection in the world on this particular historical period.

With such an approach to its creation, you can be certain that the artefacts were looked after, protected and preserved under the best possible conditions. Very few museums in the world can boast of similar conditions, and as for Bulgarian museums, you are probably aware of their miserable state.

What is currently happening to the collection is a crime: seized illegally by the Taliban, stolen in garbage bags and cardboard boxes, sold illegally. Abandoned by the Junta in conditions that destroy it bit by bit, with every passing day.

Its future will be different. This collection will be exhibited in the best museum on the Balkans. This collection will be the pride of Bulgaria.

You can trust me on that.

Vassil Bojkov  
March 2021



Rhyton with caracal protome, gilded silver. 150 – 125 BC.

# VASSIL BOJKOV

## THE COLLECTOR

Vassil Bojkov was born in 1956 in the town of Velingrad, Bulgaria. He graduated from the National High School of Mathematics in Sofia. He earned a master's degree in Mathematics and Economics from Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski", the University of National and World Economics and the University of Buenos Aires. He is one of the most prominent patrons and collectors in the field of history and the arts. Over the years, Vassil Bojkov has collected, built and preserved a unique collection of ancient artifacts.

In 2004 he founded the Thrace Foundation bringing together brilliant scientists of international repute. Exhibitions of objects from the Vassil Bojkov Collection were held in renowned museums in a number of European capitals. Following launch of the Foundation, a private Vasil Bojkov museum was created along with one of the most advanced conservation and restoration laboratories in Europe.

International recognition speaks volumes about Vassil Bojkov's success in the field of culture and business: he is a member of the New York Academy of Sciences since 2000; Honorary Director for Europe of IBC, Cambridge since 2005; in the same year he received worldwide recognition for his contribution and achievements in the field of economics from the World Congress on Arts, Sciences and Communications; again in 2005 he was awarded the American Medal of Honor for his outstanding achievements in business and economics (by the American Biographical Institute, USA). Mr. Bojkov is also a senator in the Congress of World Nations.

Since 2007 he has acted as General Ambassador for the United Cultural Convention. Moreover, he's a Nobel laureate of the American Biographical Institute.



Kantharos, gold. 1025 – 950 BC.

# THRACE FOUNDATION

The Thrace Foundation is a non-profit organization, founded by Mr. Vassil Bojkov in 2004. From its very inception, the Foundation has taken an active stand on the processes of promoting and supporting the preservation of cultural assets comprising Bulgarian and global cultural and historical heritage. The Thrace Foundation supports institutions and individuals committed to the study and preservation of cultural and historical heritage. Its financial support has helped the study of several archaeological sites. The Foundation implements initiatives and activities that facilitate access to museum collections and strengthen the role archaeology and art history as major disciplines. One of its main contributions is the advancement of conservation and restoration practices, training and career development for current and future researchers, developing and creating software products for museum services – electronic catalogues, exhibition schedules, publications and scientific studies.

The Thrace Foundation Publishing House was founded in 2004 and focuses on scientific literature related to the protection and promotion of Bulgarian cultural and historical heritage. The Thrace Foundation closely collaborates with governmental and non-governmental organizations, educational and scientific institutions.

## The Thrace Foundation Publishing House has published the following works:

- Marazov I., G. Kabakchieva, G. Lazov, T. Shalganova. 2005. **Vassil Bojkov Collection**. Catalogue. Sofia (in Bulgarian and English).
- Marazov I., G. Kabakchieva. 2007. **The Splendour of Bulgaria. Vassil Bojkov Collection**. Exhibition catalogue. Sofia (in Bulgarian and English).
- Marazov I., G. Kabakchieva, T. Shalganova. 2009. **The Saved Treasures of Ancient Thrace. Vassil Bojkov Collection**. Exhibition catalogue. Sofia (in Bulgarian, Russian and English).
- Marazov I. 2011. **Thrace and the Ancient World. Vassil Bojkov Collection**. Exhibition catalogue. Sofia (in Bulgarian and English).
- Sideris A. 2015. **Theseus in Thrace. The silver lining on the clouds of the Athenian-Thracian relations in the 5th century BC**. Sofia (ISBN 978-954-92384-4-0).
- Sideris A. 2016. **Metal Vases and Utensils in the Vassil Bojkov Collection. Vol. 1**. Sofia (ISBN 978-954-92384-5-7).
- Sideris A. 2017. **Metal Vases and Utensils in the Vassil Bojkov Collection. Vol. 1**. Sofia, in Bulgarian (ISBN 978-954-92384-6-4).
- Sideris A. 2021. **Metal Vases and Utensils in the Vassil Bojkov Collection. Vol. 2**. Sofia (ISBN 978-954-92384-5-7).

Albeit targeted to the audience,  
the collection also builds the image of its owner,  
formulates his or her cause,  
gives voice to his or her personal message.  
This happens through exhibitions,  
but also through the various aspects of diligent research  
and publishing work – descriptions, interpretations,  
arguments, preparation of catalogues,  
sharing of restoration practices...\*

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\* "Collecting – passion and value"  
2020, Valeri Stefanov

# VASSIL BOJKOV MUSEUM

## THE COLLECTION

The Vasil Bojkov Museum Collection at the Thrace Foundation comprises archaeological materials collected over a long period of about 20 years. It contains artefacts dated from 4,000 BC to 6th century AD.

The inventory units of the main collection/museum fund, as registered in the main inventory book, amount to 3,000 pieces (a single inventory unit may contain more than one artefact as several may be included as a set, being of the same type and period and thus entered under the same inventory number).

The collection also includes a research support stock of 400 inventory units containing certain items of significance for the museum's research and educational activities, in accordance with the Cultural Heritage Act. Several of these items are part of a large collection of purchased red-figure pottery classified as Apulian (late 4th – first quarter of 3rd century BC). An exhaustive analysis established that these vessels were in fact the work of 18th-century ateliers well known in scientific literature and museum practices (abroad) which produced copies of ancient vessels at a time of huge interest in this era. Such objects and groups of objects have found their way into the collections of many museums across the world, through donations from heirs of collectors, through purchases, etc. The presence of such a collection in a Bulgarian museum with its clear dating would be of great educational significance since Bulgarian museum experts and archaeologists are not trained to identify such artefacts. The research support fund also includes items that have been proven to be counterfeit, as well as items of suspicious authenticity, which nevertheless have a certain educational and scientific value. This part of the collection was therefore selected to be placed in the educational section of the museum (under construction) in Sofia.

The third separate fund, in compliance with the Cultural Heritage Act, is the exchange fund, which comprises movable cultural valuables that do not correspond to the thematic scope of the museum, as well as duplicates of valuables from the main fund. It contains artefacts acquired as Roman, but subsequently identified as Medieval – a period that does not correspond to the scope of the collection. This third fund also contains a large number of household ceramics from the Roman period – the early years of collecting yielded a huge volume of such items. This is the type of artefacts most often offered at auctions, usually in groups of 3 or more objects.

The identification process for artefacts included in the collection involves several different museum departments. Upon receipt, the artefact is forwarded to the experts at the Con-

servation and Restoration Laboratory with the Thrace Foundation, where a thorough technological analysis of the object is carried out, aimed mainly at establishing its authenticity. In the next step, the object is taken over by curators who apply art expertise, archaeological and historical methodologies in order to establish the chronological, historical and cultural-historical context. The final step is to determine the fund to which the particular specimen should be added.

It is the experience of the Vassil Bojkov Collection at the Thrace Foundation that the antiquities market and even leading auction houses occasionally offer artefacts of dubious authenticity and, following an identification procedure, proven counterfeitness. Some of these artefacts, subjected to the relevant investigation process, have had to be returned. Such was the case with three silver rhyta offered by a world-famous museum, the authenticity of which was refuted after a thorough analysis.

Some of the objects in the collection were purchased in unrestored state or in the process of restoration. Another considerable part required further restoration, despite their relatively good appearance at the time of purchase, due to poor work. This was the motivation behind the establishment of the Conservation and Restoration Laboratory with the Thrace Foundation in which funds were invested for furnishing, security, the purchase of expensive specialized equipment (unique for Bulgaria). The long-term head of the Laboratory was Prof. Veselina Inkova, who led a team of experts. Over the years, the laboratory performed analyses on behalf of the National Museum of History and the National Archaeological Institute with Museum at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, as well as other museums for artefacts seized during police operations. Archaeologists from those institutions sought the assistance of laboratory experts for technological analyses of archaeological discoveries prior to presenting their finds to the community as is the generally accepted mode of operation worldwide. The initial plans for the museum, which was to be located in the specially purchased Telephone Chamber in Sofia allocated a vast area for the laboratory.

In the last two years, it was resolved that the wide scope of the Collection and its display in a museum environment in the selected building, required well-trained expert curators. The chronological scope of the artefacts required solid historical knowledge of various periods, good art history training and proficiency in classical languages. One of the interns with a master's degree in History of Arts from Edinburgh was at an advanced stage of training: Ancient history, two semesters of ancient Greek, independent inventoring of artefacts, writing of scientific texts, etc.

# ABOUT THE COLLECTION

The most significant groups of objects in the Collection are offensive and defensive weaponry, harness parts and decorations, jewellery and belt appliquéés, metal and ceramic household and cult objects, metal and marble sculpture.

In the beginning, the collector expanded his collection with the most accessible antiquities on the market: Roman bronze and stone sculptures, metal and clay vessels from different periods. The eclecticism of this initial stage can be observed in the first catalogue published in 2005 by the likes of Prof. Ivan Marazov, Assoc. Prof. Gergana Kabakchieva, Assoc. Prof. Tatyana Shalganova, Gavrail Lazov.

Over time, Mr Bojkov's concept evolved and he came up with the idea of turning the collection into a museum: he restricted the chronological scope to between the Late Bronze Age (14th - 9th centuries BC) and the 1st century BC, as well as the scope of artefacts, shifting the collection's emphasis to metal vases and utensils. He did, however, continue to purchase some exceptional specimens of ancient jewellery, painted pottery and marble sculpture.

This new stage in the development of the collection, prior to acquiring museum status, is evident in the catalogue of the Brussel exhibition (2007) on the occasion of Bulgaria's accession to the European Union.

In April 2009 the Vassil Bojkov Collection was exhibited at the Museum of Oriental Art in Moscow at the invitation of the Ministry of Culture of the Russian Federation. The exhibition lasted 3 months and a catalogue (of the exhibited objects) was published in Bulgarian, Russian and English with texts from Prof. Ivan Marazov and Assoc. Prof. Gergana Kabakchieva. In the same year, the Collection was granted museum status.

In 2010, in compliance with the Cultural Heritage Act, 2,700 artefacts were duly declared and submitted to the National Museum of History in Sofia for registration: the relevant documents were accompanied by an inventory of the artefacts and a detailed description (including dimensions and dating), together with photographic materials (at least 3 photos) for each item.

In 2010 Assoc. Prof. Gergana Kabakchieva presented two artefacts from the Collection (a marble funerary statue of a woman and a bronze bust-balsamarium of the child Dionysus, both from the Roman period) at an international thematic exhibition in Bonn entitled "Old Age in Antiquity".

In 2011, a large exhibition of objects from the Collection dating from the 10th - 1st century BC period, was opened at the NMH – Sofia, accompanied by a catalogue in Bulgarian and English by Prof. Ivan Marazov.

In 2013, the Collection was invited to participate in a joint exhibition with NMH – Sofia and several regional museums from across the country in Moscow. The accompanying catalogue presented the Collection's artefacts with words by Prof. Ivan Marazov.

In 2018, a thematic exhibition of artefacts from the Collection was opened at the National Art Gallery in Sofia under the title "The Golden Fleece: The Quest of the Argonauts".

In 2018, the Getty Foundation also expressed interest in the Collection and an invitation was extended for participation in an exhibition dedicated to Thrace and the Thracians. Negotiations were at an early stage, to be continued in 2020. The preliminary catalogue of selected artefacts from various museums in the country placed a particular focus on those from the Collection.

In 2013 preparation began for a multi-volume edition on artefacts from the Vassil Bojkov Collection. The beginning was made with one of the main groups of objects – metal vessels and utensils (dating prior to the Roman period) due to interest demonstrated by the eminent researcher in the field, Dr. Athanasios Sideris. The said author, having researched this type of objects in his master's and doctoral theses, in specializations and fellowships in various museums and private collections, not only published a description of the first 146 objects he selected, but managed to place them in a cultural and historical context, finding parallels in various museum collections and publications. His research has expanded the knowledge base for a certain type of vessels, which, up to that moment, were mostly known from published fragments, not having the opportunity of being identified and reconstructed in their entirety.

The first volume was published in 2016 in English, with the Bulgarian translation being completed and published in 2017. The book *Metal Vases and Utensils in the Vassil Bojkov Collection* is not simply a catalogue, but a work of research which introduced part of the Collection to the global scientific community. Publication of the book stirred a great deal of interest among various archaeology, history and art history experts. Several of them expressed the desire to study certain artefacts falling within the scope of their own research field, and to be allowed to publish material on them: Michael Treister (German Archaeological Institute) – jewellery (jewels and harness decorations, wreaths, masks); Alan Shapiro (Johns Hopkins University) and Amalia Avramidou (Democritus University of Thrace – Komotini, Greece) – world-renowned specialists in painted pottery; Beryl Barr-Sharrar (New York University), a leading specialist in metal vases and more specifically in craters; Raimon Graells i Fabregat (Romano-Germanic Museum in Mainz) – for armaments. The latter two experts were unable to visit the Collection as their visits were scheduled for April and September 2020. Michael Treister made four trips for the purpose of selecting, describing and obtaining consultations on his work on jewellery; by January 2020 the text of the two catalogue volumes was ready.

Today, regardless of the circumstances, Volume 2 of Dr. Athanasios Sideris' book *Metal Vases and Utensils in the Vassil Bojkov Collection* is a fact.

Over the years, individual objects from the Collection have been introduced to the

scientific community thanks to publications based either on access to the Collection or on photographs provided at the request of researchers. Access has not been denied to any expert; photographs have been provided free of charge. More recently (June 2020), a newly-published bilingual (Bulgarian and French) scholarly volume on Egyptian deities in the Graeco-Roman world includes two statuettes of the goddess Isis from the Collection.

Over the years prof. Ivan Marazov has included images of individual artefacts from the Collection in various editions (beyond the relevant catalogues): *The Thracian Warrior* (2005), *Beautiful Helen between Troy and Thrace* (2009), *Ram Head Rhyton* (2010), *The Mysteries of the Kabeiroi in Ancient Thrace* (2011), *The Kantharoi of the Classical Age* (2011), *The Amazons* (2013), *The Wine of the Thracians: Myth, Ritual and Art* (2014), *The Whisper of the Giants* (the latest monograph, published in 2020). Some of these publications came to life through the financial assistance of the Thrace Foundation.

The collection of the Vassil Bojkov Museum at the Thrace Foundation is one of the best structured in the world. At its core is an impressive selection of metal vases and utensils – gold, silver, bronze. This significant group comprises vases and utensils produced between the 14th/13th and 1st centuries BC in workshops scattered throughout the ancient world: the Middle and Near East, Asia Minor, mainland Greece and the Greek islands, the North Aegean coast, Greece's neighbours Thrace and Macedonia, North Black Sea Scythia, as well as Etruria, Southern Italy (Magna Graecia), the Iberian Peninsula, and North Africa.

The most remarkable among those is the collection of bronze and silver horns and rhyta, unparalleled in the world. It has aroused much interest in the general public and among specialists alike with its rich variety of forms, ateliers, inscriptions on some items, and especially with the scenes presented on their horns.

The various types of bronze vases also form an impressive part of the Collection: oinochoae (wine jugs), situlae (buckets), hydriae (water jugs), podanipteria and lekanai (washing vessels), a calyx-krater (one of few preserved in the world), amphorae (large vessels for liquids), phialae (type of shallow bowls), cups, ladles, strainers, etc.

A separate group encompasses silver vessels and utensils, as well as cups of various shapes made of silver and decorated with gilded scenes. The Collection contains three silver-gilt vessels with the image of Orpheus. These are the only known depictions of the mythical singer on metal vessels. One even bears the name of Orpheus inscribed in Greek. Other silver vessels show images of the ancient Greek heroes Theseus and Helen, whose appearances on metal are extremely rare.

Vessels with inscribed names of their owner, of the characters depicted, of dedications to gods or of the weight of the vessel itself are of special value. Epigraphy is a subject of enduring interest in research. Inscribed metal vessels and utensils are of particular significance, as they carry additional information that is invaluable to interdisciplinary historical, archaeological and linguistic studies. Some of the inscriptions have been published over the years by interested researchers. Their most detailed presentation, however, is in the



Calyx-krater, bronze. 340 – 330 BC.

two volumes of Metal Vases and Utensils in the Vasil Bojkov Collection (2016 and 2021). The author, Dr. Athanasios Sideris, is a world-renowned researcher with a broad range of interests: archaeology, ancient history, classical languages and the reception of antiquity in modern times. He has devoted his scientific career to metal vessels throughout Antiquity: the study of forms, classification and craftsmanship. He is one of the most-cited authors in this particular field of research. In studying the metal vases and utensils in the Collection, Dr. Sideris pays special attention to the inscriptions, which enable him to place them in a historical context.

## THE SEIZURE OF THE VASSIL BOJKOV COLLECTION

On January 29, 2020, a seizure procedure began at the Conservation and Restoration Laboratory located at 1, Dunav Street. On January 30, 2020, search and seizure operations were launched in the building at 43, Moskovska Street, where the Vassil Bojkov Museum and the Thrace Foundation are registered. In the very first days, inventory books of the museum fund, lists of movable cultural values submitted for registration in 2010 with accompanying documents (application, certificate and declaration) and photographs for each item, copies of expert valuations of movable cultural values registered in 2006 and 2008, as well as copies of invoices for the purchase of some of them, were handed over to the investigative bodies and experts from the Ministry of Culture and the National Museum of History – Sofia.

The movable cultural property from the museum repository was described and seized as material evidences. To that end, experts from museums (the National Museum of History – Sofia and the Regional History Museum of Sofia) were asked to describe the objects as follows: metal – by colour or as alloy; shape – general description, with no specific features; name of artefact. This led to situations where silver cups were registered as “made of copper alloy”, and vessels such as rhyta were downgraded to “cups/drinking vessels”. A similarly poor description was given to registered artefacts of international expert recognition, bearing the signatures of experts from the National Museum of History, as well as its official seal; artefacts exhibited abroad and in the country and presented

in publications of the Thrace Foundation and other sources. Naturally, this method of documenting raised suspicions that these cultural valuables would be hard to identify in the course of subsequent action. Moreover, the copy of the search and seizure report provided at the end of each day was not accompanied by photographs of seized items.

From the very first day of the search in the museum building, false claims were circulated through the media that the artefacts were not properly preserved and that the collection's owner and his team had not taken the necessary care. The suggestion was that after the monuments were seized, they would finally receive the necessary care. The public was informed that the objects were stored in cigar boxes and cardboard boxes, or even without any packaging whatsoever. However, no one asked how artefacts are normally stored in museums, in what and how, when not on exhibit. Hopefully, such insinuations have not misled the public into thinking that what they see in museum glass-cases is the entire museum collection.

These suggestions naturally had repercussions on the work of the experts. They were told how to inventory and to provide the exact number of seized objects every day. This number was achieved by describing fragments and even listing a fragmented object under a common inventory number several times in the same protocol. The experts were further humiliated by being told that specialists from abroad would subsequently describe the artefacts professionally, identify and evaluate them. This suggested that Bulgarian experts were no match for foreign ones, who possess knowledge that the locals did not have. This continued until October 1, 2020, when only the marble statue of a young woman, an outstanding example of Roman funerary sculpture, remained in the museum building. It was left because experts believed that its condition would not allow transportation.

Moreover, due to intense public interest (as was claimed), the Prosecution alleged, through the media, that the assessments of the museum's movable cultural valuables were severely downgraded. However, as the relevant documents demonstrate, each registered artefact was assessed by an expert evaluation commission from the National Museum of History – Sofia, appointed by order of the NMH Director, signed by the commission members and bearing the seal of the institution. Only then were the documents handed over to the authorized Thrace Foundation representative to become part of the scientific documentation of the museum.

The whole story, which unfolded between January 29 and October 1, 2020, seems to allude that the EU building in Brussels exhibited, on the occasion of Bulgaria's accession to the European Union in 2007, "physical evidence", and not movable cultural property. That in 2009 and 2013 the people of Moscow admired physical evidence that was extolled in the Russian media. The huge exhibition at the NMH in 2010 and the one in the capital's centre, at the National Gallery The Palace in 2018, also presented material evidence and not artefacts of high cultural and historical value.

On March 25, 2019, in response to a request by the Consulate of the Republic of Bulgaria in Istanbul for organisation of the exhibition "The Golden Fleece: The Quest of the

Argonauts" with artefacts from the Vassil Bojkov Museum, the Bulgarian Ministry of Culture noted as follows:

The Vassil Bojkov Museum at the Thrace Foundation is a private museum established under the Cultural Heritage Act. Its movable cultural property is managed and presented in Bulgaria and abroad in accordance with the general legal procedure. [...] We believe that this initiative is an excellent opportunity to promote Bulgarian cultural heritage and a positive contribution to our bilateral cooperation with the Republic of Turkey. Given the nature of the proposed exhibition and the movable cultural property involved, we would recommend that it be also presented in the Istanbul Archaeological Museum.

The Ministry of Culture remains available for further assistance in organising the exhibits' transportation. The letter is signed by the Deputy Minister of Culture Amelia Gesheva.

The question remains: how did the movable cultural property mentioned in the letter dated March 25, 2019 and managed in compliance with the law, according to experts from the Ministry of Culture, suddenly, on January 25, 2020, become "physical evidence", according to the same Ministry?

Unfortunately, the seizure of tangible cultural artefacts from the Vassil Bojkov Museum took place amid the deafening silence of cultural and museum institutions, the silence of the people of science and art. Despite the "intense public interest" stated by the Prosecution, society remained silent. Individuals who had launched exhibitions of the Collection in Bulgaria and abroad over the years, who had declared its high value and the collector's contribution to the preservation of cultural and historical heritage, were also conveniently silent.

The Vassil Bojkov Collection has been visible over the years through publications and the exhibitions in which it participated on its own or alongside other museums. The limited access of visitors to the Vassil Bojkov Museum over the years was solved by exhibiting parts of the museum collection in the National Museum of History in Sofia and in the National Gallery The Palace. This issue was to be resolved with the purchase of the Telephone Chamber building in Sofia. Its purpose was to house the Conservation and Restoration Laboratory with the Trace Foundation and the museum's collection. The building was planned as a museum space where the Vassil Bojkov Museum's antique collection would be exhibited in a state-of-the-art way. Education was to be an important focus of the new space, being the main mission of museum work. Claims that the artefacts were collected "in the dark", that the Collection was obscure and hidden from the public, besides being false, are also manipulative, which is evident both from the numerous publications of individual artefacts (too many to count), as well as from the exposition activity and from the collection's wide-open doors to science.

Dr. Ruja Popova  
March 2021

МИНИСТЕРСТВО НА КУЛТУРАТА№ 09-67 ЗАПОВЕД 125.02.2009

На основание чл.7, ал.8 от Закона за паметниците на културата и музеите и чл.5, ал.3 от Устройствения правилник на Министерството на културата и постъпило заявление вх. № 94-00-1696 от 03.12.2008 г. от Васил Крумов Божков – председател на Управителния съвет на Фондация „Тракия“, разгледах Протокол за наличието на движими паметници на културата на експертна комисия, назначена с моя Заповед № РД 09-788 от 16.12.2008 г. – неразделна част от настоящата заповед; списък с регистрационните номера на движимите паметници на културата по експертни оценки, издадени от Националния исторически музей, съгласно приложение №1 – неразделна част от настоящата заповед; Протокол за наличието на сграден фонд на експертна комисия, назначена с моя Заповед № РД 09-787 от 16.12.2008 г. – неразделна част от настоящата заповед; Протокол за наличието на постоянен източник на финансиране на експертна комисия, назначена с моя Заповед № РД 09-17 от 20.01.2009 г. – неразделна част от настоящата заповед и като взех предвид, че са изпълнени изискванията на чл.7, ал.2 от Закона за паметниците на културата и музеите

**НАРЕЖДАМ:**

1. Разрешавам създаването на ЧАСТЕН МУЗЕЙ от фондация „Тракия“, с наименование “Васил Божков”, със седалище и адрес на управление: гр. София, ул. „Московска” № 43, като самостоятелно юридическо лице - културна организация по смисъла на Закона за закрила и развитие на културата.
2. Заявителят в 14 – дневен срок от вписването на юридическото лице по т.1 в съответния регистър да представи в Министерството на културата съдебното решение за неговото вписване или да уведоми за извършеното вписване в търговския регистър.
3. Заявителят в срок три месеца от съобщаване на настоящата заповед да представи на министъра на културата правилник за устройството и дейността на музея. Правилникът да бъде изработен под методическото ръководство на Националния исторически музей.
4. Заявителят в срок три месеца от съобщаване на настоящата заповед да представи на министъра на културата план за дейността на музея.
5. Музеят по т.1 ежегодно до 31 март да представя в Министерството на културата доклад за дейността си и годишен финансов отчет. При условие, че годишният финансов отчет, подлежи на независим финансов одит от регистриран одитор да представя копие от годишния финансов отчет, върху който е изразено независимо одиторско мнение, заедно с копие на одиторския доклад.
6. Да се извършва контрол върху дейността на музея от оправомощени лица от министъра на културата, както следва:
  - а) За първите три години от дейността – чрез проверка на всеки шест месеца;
  - б) След третата година – чрез ежегодни проверки.

Заповедта подлежи на оспорване в 14 – дневен срок от съобщаването ѝ чрез министъра на културата пред Върховния административен съд.

Контролът по изпълнението на настоящата заповед възлагам на г-н Иван Токаджиев – заместник - министър на културата.

Копие от настоящата заповед да бъде връчено на заинтересованите лица, за сведение и изпълнение.



МИНИСТЪР: *Stefan Danailov*  
**ПРОФ. СТЕФАН ДАНАИЛОВ**



На 22.12.2015 г., БОГДАНА БЪЧВАРОВА, нотариус в район РС София с рег. № 515 на Нотариалната камара, удостоверявам верността на този препис, снет от: ОРИГИНАЛ на официален (частен) документ представен ми от: ИЛИЯН ЖОРОВ ХЛЕБАРОВ, ЕГН: 6911266568, АДРЕС: СОФИЯ - Приносител като в първообраза нямаше зачерквания, прибавки, поправки и други особености.  
 Рег. № 8530

Събрана така: Нотариус № 515

Нотариус: Богдана БЪЧВАРОВА

Помощник нотариус  
**ЦВЕТА МАТОВА**  
 по заместване



## MINISTRY OF CULTURE

## ORDER

No. РД09-67 / 25.02.2009

On the grounds of Art. 7, par. 8 of the Monuments of Culture and Museums Act and Art.5, par. 3 of the Rules of Organization of the Ministry of Culture and application received under reg. No. 94-00-1696 of 03.12.2008 from Vassil Kroumov Bojkov – chairman of the Managing Board of Thrace Foundation, I reviewed a Protocol on the existence of movable cultural objects by an expert committee appointed under my Order No. РД 09-788 of 16.12.2008 – an inseparable part of the present order; a list of registration numbers of the movable cultural objects as per their expert evaluations issued by the National Museum of History, in accordance with appendix No. 1 – an inseparable part of the present order; Protocol on the existence of a stock of buildings by the expert committee appointed under my Order No. РД 09-787 of 16.12.2008 – an inseparable part of the present order; a Protocol on the existence of a permanent source of financing of an expert committee appointed under my Order No. РД 09-17 of 20.01.2009 – an inseparable part of the present order, and by taking into account that the requirements of Art. 7, par. 2 of the Monuments of Culture and Museums Act are satisfied

## I HEREBY ORDER:

1. Authorized shall be the vreation of a PRIVATE MUSEUM by the Thrace Foundation under the name of Vassil Kroumov Bojkov, having its seat and address of management in the city of Sofia, 43 Moskovska Str. as an independent legal person – cultural organization within the meaning of the Protection and Development of Culture Act.
  2. The applicant shall, within a term of 14 days from registration of the legal person per it. 1 in the respective register, submit at the Ministry of Culture the court decision on its registration or notify about such registration in the trade register.
  3. The applicant shall, within a term of three months from promulgation of the present order, submit to the Minister of Culture regulations on the organization and activity of the museum. Such regulations shall be worked out under the methodological management of the National Museum of History.
  4. The applicant shall, within a term of three months from promulgation of the present order, submit to the Minister of Culture a plan for the activity of the museum.
-

5. The museum per it. 1 shall, on a yearly basis, present until March 31 to the Ministry of Culture a report on its activity and an annual financial statement. On the condition that the annual financial statement will be subject to independent financial audit by a registered auditor, a copy of the annual financial statement shall be submitted whereon an auditor's opinion must be expressed, together with a copy of the auditor's report.

6. Control shall be exercised on the activity of the museum by persons authorized by the Minister for Culture, as follows:

- a) For the first three years of the activity – by way of checks made every six months;
- b) After the third year – by way of yearly checks.

This order shall be subject to contestation within a term of 14 days from its promulgation through the Minister for Culture before the Supreme Administrative Court.

Control over the implementation of the present order as hereby assigned to Mr. Ivan Tokadjiev – Deputy Minister for Culture.

A copy of the present order shall be served to the interested persons for information and execution.

MINISTER: (signature illegible)

PROF. STEFAN DANAILOV

Round seal of the Ministry of Culture,  
Republic of Bulgaria

On this 12th day of December, 2015 I, BOGDANA BUCHVAROVA,  
Notary Public in and for the area of jurisdiction of the Sofia District Court,  
registered under No. 515 with the Notary Chamber, do hereby certify that this is a true  
copy taken from the original of an official (private) document, presented before me by:

ILIAN ZHOROV HLEBAROV, PIN: 6911266568, ADDRESS: SOFIA – Bearer  
and that there were no deletions, additions, amendments  
or other peculiarities in the document.

Registration No. 8530; Fee collected ... Levs.

Notary: (signature illegible)

Round seal of Notary 515

Stamp: assistant notary by substitution TSVETA MATOVA

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Order of the Ministry of Culture dated 25.02.2009  
and signed by the Minister Prof. Stefan Danailov, authorizing the creation of a private museum  
by the Thrace Foundation under the name 'Vassil Bojkov'

(TRANSLATED)



РЕПУБЛИКА БЪЛГАРИЯ  
МИНИСТЕРСТВО НА КУЛТУРАТА

УДОСТОВЕРЕНИЕ

№ *У-181* / *15.11.2016*

за

ВПИСВАНЕ В РЕГИСТЪРА НА МУЗЕИТЕ

Настоящото удостоверение се издава на:

**МУЗЕЙ „ВАСИЛ БОЖКОВ“  
КЪМ ФОНДАЦИЯ „ТРАКИЯ“**

и удостоверява, че музеят е вписан в регистъра на Министерството на  
културата по чл. 32, ал. 1 от Закона за културното наследство.

ЗАМЕСТНИК-МИНИСТЪР:

*[Signature]*  
/ДОЦ. Д-Р БОНИ ПЕТРУНОВА/



REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA  
MINISTRY OF CULTURE

CERTIFICATE  
No. Y-171 / 15.11.2016

Re:  
MAKING AN ENTRY IN THE REGISTER OF MUSEUMS

The present certificate is issued to:

'VASSIL BOJKOV' MUSEUM  
WITH THE THRACE FOUNDATION

and is to certify that the museum was entered in the register of the Ministry of Culture under Art. 32, par. 1 of the Cultural Heritage Act.

(signature illegible)

ASST. PROF. DR. BONI PETRUNOVA  
DEPUTY MINISTER

Round seal of the Ministry of Culture,  
Republic of Bulgaria

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Certificate by the Ministry of Culture dated 15.11.2016  
and signed by Deputy Minister Asst. Prof. Dr. Boni Petrunova, evidencing entry in the  
Register of Museums of the Vassil Bojkov Museum with the Thrace Foundation

(TRANSLATED)

**МИНИСТЕРСТВО НА КУЛТУРАТА**

**ЗАПОВЕД**

№ *РД 09-МЧ / 26.02.2016*

На основание чл. 15 ал. 2 от Наредба № Н-6 за формиране и управление на музейните фондове и чл. 5, ал. 2 от Устройствения правилник на Министерството на културата

**НАРЕЖДАМ:**

Определям шифър на Фондация „Тракия“ с музей „Васил Божков“, както следва:

**VBM2009 – Васил Божков музей 2009**

Отчетните обозначения да бъдат поставяни върху движимите културни ценности, инвентирани във фонда на музея.

Изпълнението на заповедта възлагам на директора на музея.

Копие от настоящата заповед да се връчи на заинтересованите лица за сведение и изпълнение.

**МИНИСТЪР:**

**ВЕЖДИ РАШИДОВ**



**ВЯРНО С ОРИГИНАЛА**



За министър:	
Заместник-министър:	<i>Б. Баков</i>
Заповед за заместване №:	<i>РД 09/100</i>
от	<i>26.02.2016 г.</i>

## MINISTRY OF CULTURE

## ORDER

No. РД 09-114 / 26.02.2016

On the grounds of Art. 15, par. 2 of Ordinance No. H-6 on the formation and management of museum funds and Art. 5, par. 2 of the Rules of Organization of the Ministry of Culture

## I HEREBY ORDER:

Assigned shall be a code to Thrace Foundation with 'Vassil Bojkov' Museum, as follows:

VBM2009 – Vassil Bojkov Museum 2009

The reporting designations shall be placed on the movable cultural objects inventoried in the fund of the museum

The implementation of this order is assigned to the director of the museum.

A copy of the present order shall be served to the interested persons for information and execution.

(signature illegible)

VEJDI RASHIDOV  
MINISTER

Round seal of the Ministry of Culture,  
Republic of Bulgaria

(signature illegible)

TRUE TO THE ORIGINAL

Round seal of the Ministry of Culture,  
Republic of Bulgaria

Stamp:

For Minister: (illegible)

Deputy Minister: B. Banev

Order for substitution No. РД 09-100

Dated 18.02.2016

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Order of the Ministry of Culture dated 26.02.2016, assigning a numerical code for the Vassil Bojkov Museum with the Thrace Foundation

(TRANSLATED)



**РЕПУБЛИКА БЪЛГАРИЯ**  
**Заместник-министър на културата**

Изх. № *68-00-16/07032016*

**ДО**  
**Г-Н КИРИЛ ХРИСТОСКОВ**  
**ИЗП. ЧЛЕН НА ФОНДАЦИЯ „ТРАКИЯ“**  
**УЛ. МОСКОВСКА 43**  
**ГР. СОФИЯ 1000**

**Към наш вх. № 68-00-9/29.01.2016 г. и**  
**№ 68-00-16/12.02.2016 г.**

**ОТНОСНО:** Определяне на шифър на Фондация „Тракия“ с музей „Васил Божков“

**УВАЖАЕМИ ГОСПОДИН ШИВАЧЕВ,**

Приложено Ви изпращам Заповед № РД 09-114/26.02.2016 г. на министъра на културата, с която се определя шифър на Фондация „Тракия“ с музей „Васил Божков“.

**Приложение:** съгласно текста (само за адресата)

**ЗАМЕСТНИК-МИНИСТЪР**  
**ДОЦ. Д-Р БОБИ ПЕТРУНОВА/**



REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA  
Deputy Minister for Culture

No. РД 09-114 / 26.02.2016

On the grounds of Art. 15, par. 2 of Ordinance No. H-6 on the formation and management of museum funds and Art. 5, par. 2 of the Rules of Organization of the Ministry of Culture

TO

MR. KIRIL HRISTOSKOV  
EXECUTIVE MEMBER OF THRACE FOUNDATION  
43 MOSKOVSKA STR.  
1000 CITY OF SOFIA

To our incoming No. 68-00-9/29.01.2016 and  
No. 68-00-16/12.02.2016

SUBJECT: Assignment of a code to Thrace Foundation with 'Vassil Bojkov' Museum

DEAR MISTER SHIVACHEV,

Please find attached Order No. РД 09-114/26.02.2016 of the Minister for Culture whereby a code is assigned to the Thrace Foundation with 'Vassil Bojkov' Museum.

Appendix: as per the text (for the addressee only)

(signature illegible)

ASST. PROF. DR. BONI PETRUNOVA  
DEPUTY MINISTER

Round seal of the Ministry of Culture,  
Republic of Bulgaria

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Order of the Ministry of Culture dated 07.03.2016 providing the relevant numerical code  
for the Vassil Bojkov Museum to the Thrace Foundation

(TRANSLATED)

МФ 01-09-21/10.04.2010

До  
Националния исторически музей  
гр. София

## ЗАЯВЛЕНИЕ

от Кирил Николов Христосков. ЕГН 5302036260, упълномощен с нотариално заверено пълномощно и представляващ Васил Крумов Божков. ЕГН 5607293540

С настоящото заявление и на основание § 5. ал. 1 от преходните и заключителни разпоредби на Закона за културното наследство, заявявам искане да бъде извършена идентификация и регистрация на 2700 (две хиляди и седемстотин) движими културни ценности, собственост на Васил Крумов Божков.

**Приложение:**

1. Декларация за произход и способ за придобиване.
2. Цветни снимки на предметите на електронен носител (CD-ROM). съгласно изискванията на Наредба Н-3/2009г. на Министерство на културата на Република България.
3. Нотариално заверено пълномощно от Васил Крумов Божков, упълномощаващ Кирил Николов Христосков.

**Забележка:** Поради огромния брой предмети към настоящото заявление ще бъде приложена на електронен носител (CD-ROM) таблица, съгласно разпоредбите на Приложение № 6 към чл. 10. ал. 3 с описание на предметите.

09.04.2010 г.  
гр. София

ПОДПИС:



MΦ 01-09-21 / 10.04.2010

To  
The National Museum of History  
City of Sofia

#### APPLICATION

From Kiril Nikolov Hristoskov, PIN: 5302036260, authorized by a notarized power of attorney and representing Vassil Kroumov Bojkov, PIN: 5607293540

By the present application and on the grounds of § 5. Par. 1 of the transitional and final provisions of the Cultural Heritage Act I state a request to have identification and registration made of 2700 (two thousand seven hundred) movable cultural objects property of Vassil Kroumov Bojkov.

Appendix:

1. Declaration for origin and manner of acquisition.
2. Colour photographs of the objects on an electronic carrier (CD-ROM) in conformity with the requirements of Ordinance H-3/2009 of the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Bulgaria.
3. Notarized power of attorney from Vassil Kroumov Bojkov authorizing Kiril Nikolov Hristoskov.

Note: Owing to the huge number of objects, appended to the present application will be a table on an electronic carrier (CD-ROM) in accordance with the provisions of Appendix No. 6 to Art. 10, par. 3 with description of the objects.

09.04.2010  
City of Sofia

(signature illegible)

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Application dated 10.04.2010 from the Thrace Foundation requesting identification  
and registration of 2 700 movable cultural objects

(TRANSLATED)

Приложение № 8 към чл. 12, ал. 5

УДОСТОВЕРЕНИЕ  
МФ 01-10-21/10.04.2010

Настоящото се издава, за да удостовери, че Кирил Николов Христосков,  
упълномощен и представляващ Васил Крумов Божков

е подал в срок заявление за идентификация и регистрация по § 5, ал. 1 от  
преходните и заключителните разпоредби на Закона за културното наследство за

2700 (две хиляди и седемстотин) движими културни ценности, по приложен списък  
със снимки електронни носители (CD-ROM) – 6 броя.

ДИРЕКОР:

(Цв.Кьосева)



Certificate dated 10.04.2010 and signed by the Director of the National Museum of History – Sofia, Ms Tsvetana Kyoseva, evidencing that the Thrace Foundation has submitted to the National Museum of History – Sofia, within the applicable time limit, application for identification and registration of 2 700 movable cultural objects together with the relevant documentation, in accordance with the Cultural Heritage Act

Appendix No. 8 to Art. 12, par. 5

CERTIFICATE

MΦ 01-10-21 /10.04.2010

The present document is issued to certify that Kiril Nikolov Hristoskov, authorized by Vassil Kroumov Bojkov and representing the same person

has submitted on a timely basis an application for identification and registration under § 5, par. 1 of the transitional and final provisions of the Cultural Heritage Act of

2700 (two thousand seven hundred) movable cultural objects as per an attached list with photos 6 (six) electronic carriers (CD ROM)

(signature illegible)

DIRECTOR:

(Tsv. Kyoseva)

Round seal of the

National Museum of History – Sofia,

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Certificate dated 10.04.2010 and signed by the Director of the National Museum of History – Sofia, Ms Tsvetana Kyoseva, evidencing that the Thrace Foundation has submitted to the National Museum of History – Sofia, within the applicable time limit, application for identification and registration of 2 700 movable cultural objects together with the relevant documentation, in accordance with the Cultural Heritage Act

(TRANSLATED)

МФ 01-09-21/10.04.2010

## ДЕКЛАРАЦИЯ

от Кирил Николов Христосков, ЕГН 5302036260, упълномощен с нотариално заверено пълномощно и представляващ Васил Крумов Божков, ЕГН 5607293540

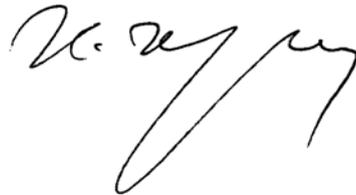
Декларирам, че заявените 2700 (две хиляди и седемстотин) движими културни ценности, собственост на Васил Крумов Божков, са придобити, чрез откупка.

Запознат съм с отговорността си за деклариране на неверни данни по чл. 313 от Наказателния кодекс на Република България.

**Забележка:** Поради огромния брой предмети към декларацията ще бъде приложена на електронен носител (CD-ROM) таблица, съгласно разпоредбите на Приложение № 7 към чл. 10, ал. 3 с описание на предметите и произхода и способа на придобиването им.

09.04.2010 г.  
гр. София

ПОДПИС:



MΦ 01-09-21 / 10.04.2010

DECLARATION

by Kiril Nikolov Hristoskov, PIN: 5302036260, authorized by a notarized power of attorney and representing Vassil Kroumov Bojkov, PIN: 5607293540

I hereby declare that the stated 2700 (two thousand seven hundred) movable cultural objects, property of Vassil Kroumov Bojkov, have been acquired by buying-up.

I am aware of the responsibility for declaring untrue data under Art. 313 of the Penal Code of the Republic of Bulgaria.

Note: Owing to the huge number of objects, appended to the declaration will be a table on an electronic carrier (CD-ROM), in accordance with the provisions of Appendix No. 7 to Art. 10, par. 3 with description of the objects, their origin and the manner of their acquisition.

09.04.2010  
City of Sofia

SIGNATURE: (illegible)

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Declaration dated 10.04.2010 by the Thrace Foundation certifying acquisition of the declared  
2 700 movable cultural objects by means of purchase

(TRANSLATED)



РЕПУБЛИКА БЪЛГАРИЯ  
МИНИСТЕРСТВО НА КУЛТУРАТА

гр. София, бул. "Александър Стамболийски", № 17, тел.: 02/ 9400900; факс: 02/ 9818145;  
дежурен тел.: 02/ 9879551; e-mail: info@mc.government.bg; URL: www.mc.government.bg

Изх. № 04-01-211..... 25-03-2019

/моля цитирайте при отговор/

ЧРЕЗ  
ДИРЕКЦИЯ „ЮИЕ“  
МИНИСТЕРСТВО НА  
ВЪНШНИТЕ РАБОТИ

ДО  
Г-Н АНГЕЛ АНГЕЛОВ  
ГЕНЕРАЛЕН КОНСУЛ НА  
РЕПУБЛИКА БЪЛГАРИЯ В  
ИСТАНБУЛ, РЕПУБЛИКА ТУРЦИЯ  
На Ваш изх. № КЛ-09-246/15.02.2019 г.

**ОТНОСНО:** Организиране на изложба в Истанбул на колекцията „Златното руно. Пътят на аргонавтите“ по предложение на фондация „Тракия“

**УВАЖАЕМИ ГОСПОДИН АНГЕЛОВ,**

Във връзка с Вашето искане за съгласуване на действия относно организиране на изложба в Истанбул на колекцията „Златното руно. Пътят на аргонавтите“ по предложение на фондация „Тракия“ Ви информирам за следното:

Музеят на Васил Божков към Фондация "Тракия" е частен музей; създаден по реда на Закона за културното наследство. Съхраняваните в него движими културни ценности се управляват и представят в България и в чужбина по общия законов ред.

Изложбата „Златното руно. Пътят на аргонавтите“ бе представена със значителен успех през 2018 г. в Националната галерия. Считаме, че инициативата е отлична възможност за популяризиране на българското културно наследство и добър принос в двустранното ни сътрудничество с Република Турция.

Предвид характера на предлаганата изложба и включените в нея движими културни ценности бихме препоръчали тя да бъде представена и в Археологическия музей в Истанбул.

Министерството на културата остава на разположение за допълнително съдействие при организиране на процедурата по износ на експонатите.

С уважение,

.....  
АМЕЛИЯ ГЕШЕВА  
Заместник министър на културата



*СВ. ЗАП. № П.009-205*

25-03-2019

REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA  
MINISTRY OF CULTURE

Ref. No. 04-01-211 / 25.03.2019  
/kindly quote in your correspondence/

C/O  
'SEE' DIRECTORATE  
MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

TO  
MR. ANGEL ANGELOV  
CONSUL GENERAL OF  
THE REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA IN  
ISTANBUL, REPUBLIC OF TURKEY

To your Ref. No. КЛ-09-246/15.02.2019

SUBJECT: Organization of an exhibition in Istanbul of the 'Golden Fleece. The Quest of the Argonauts' collection at the proposal of Thrace Foundation

DEAR MISTER ANGELOV,

With reference to your request for coordination of actions concerning the organization of an exhibition in Istanbul of the

'Golden Fleece. The Quest of the Argonauts' collection at the proposal of Thrace Foundation, kindly be informed as follows:

The museum of Vassil Bojkov with the Thrace Foundation is a private museum created under the procedure of the Cultural

Heritage Act. The movable cultural goods stored therein are managed and presented in Bulgaria and abroad under the general legal procedure.

The 'Golden Fleece. The Quest of the Argonauts' exhibition was presented with considerable success in 2018 at the National Gallery. We believe that this initiative is an excellent opportunity to promote Bulgarian cultural heritage and a good contribution to our bilateral cooperation with the Republic of Turkey.

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In view of the nature of the proposed exhibition and the movable cultural goods therein we would recommend to exhibit it in the Archaeological Museum in Istanbul as well.

The Ministry of Culture remains at your disposal for additional assistance in the organization of the export procedure of the exhibits.

Respectfully,

(signature illegible)

AMELIA GESHEVA  
Deputy Minister of Culture

Round seal of the Ministry of Culture,  
Republic of Bulgaria

Re order No. РД09-205 / 25.03.2019

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Letter from the Ministry of Culture dated 25.03.2019 signed by Deputy Minister Amelia Gesheva  
in connection with organization of the 'The Golden Fleece: The Quest of the Argonauts'  
exhibition in Istanbul

(TRANSLATED)



19. Снимка на движимия паметник на културата  
минимум 8 см - x 12 см



20. Експертно заключение:

1. Движим паметник на културата, представляващ национално богатство  X
2. Движим паметник на културата, влизащ в категория по т.....от приложението към чл.33а ЗПКМ
3. Движим паметник на културата, който не представлява национално богатство и не влиза в една от категориите от приложението към чл.33а ЗПКМ
4. Няма качества на движим паметник на културата

21. Експертно-оценителна комисия:

Председател:

1. Гергана Александрова Възвъзова  
(собствено, бащино, фамилно име)

ПЕЧАТ НА МУЗЕЯ:



Членове:

2. Мартин Георгиев Христов  
(собствено, бащино, фамилно име)
3. Светла Руменова Цанева  
(собствено, бащино, фамилно име)

22. Данни за връчване на експертната оценка:

Expert evaluation of a movable cultural object from the Vassil Bojkov Collection (No. 73/ 15.12.2006.), prepared by an expert evaluation committee from the National Museum of History – Sofia, noting the approximate value of the object. The document is signed by the members of the expert evaluation committee and bears the seal of the National Museum of History

02233

*to Art. 7, par. 1*

## EXPERT EVALUATION OF MOVABLE CULTURAL OBJECTS

### REGISTRATION NUMBER OF A MOVABLE CULTURAL OBJECT

00073/15122006/001/01

Victoria Hristova Karatsanova, junior expert curator 'Funds' department at NMH  
(signature illegible)

#### 1. Declaring person (name and address)

Vassil Kroumov Bojkov  
Sofia, 43 Moskovska Str.

#### 2. EXPERT EVALUATION

No. 73

15.12.2006

(date, month, year)

#### 3. Representative of the declaring person (name and address)

4. EXPERT-EVALUATION COMMITTEE to the National Museum of History  
Appointed by order No. 259/07.12.2006

#### 5. Address, telephone, facsimile and e-mail, to it. 4

1618 city of Sofia, 16 Vitoshko lale Str., Boyana; phone: 9554290, fax: 9557602;  
e-mail: nim@anetbg.net

#### 6. Description of the movable cultural object:

A flat form with edge of the mouth twisted inwards. Rich embossed and incised decoration: around the umbo – a soldered plate of two concentric belts with palmettes and an ivy twig. Situated between two wreaths formed with a running wave motif are 6 figural scenes representing a battle between Greeks and Amazons.

#### 7. Weight 440 g

#### 8. Dimensions: diameter 20.5 cm height 3 cm

#### 9. Approximate value in BGN

1 200 000

#### 10. Criteria for identification of the movable object of culture technological and stylistic features, specific damages and cracking of the surface

#### 11. Material:

silver, gilding

#### 12. Name:

phial

---

13. Dating:  
V century BC

14. Other characteristics:

15. Creator, period or workshop:

16. Tools or technology:  
cast and forged

17. Condition:

A greater part of the body is restored and reinforced with polymer. The silver is very brittle and cracked. On the inside the umbo is covered by individual soldered plates, cracked in several sections; 1/3 of it has been restored with polymer. Old scratches. There are sections of the gilding with corrosion which have been restored with retouch. Sections with active corrosion.

19. Photo of the movable cultural object 8 cm x 12 cm as a minimum  
photos 797

20. Expert opinion:

1. Movable cultural object, representing national treasure yes

2. Movable cultural object, falling under the category of it. .... from the appendix to Art, 33a Monuments of Culture and Museums Act -

3. Movable cultural object, not representing national treasure and not falling under one of the categories from the appendix to Art, 33a MCMA -

4. No qualities of a movable cultural object -  
Round seals of the National Museum of History and illegible signatures

21. Expert-Evaluation Committee:

Presiding person:

1. Gergana Alexandrova Vazvazova (signature illegible)  
(name, father's name, family name)  
SEAL OF THE MUSEUM: (round seal)

Members:

2. Martin Georgiev Hristov (signature illegible)  
(name, father's name, family name)

3. Svetla Roumenova Tsaneva (signature illegible)  
(name, father's name, family name)

22. Details of the service of the expert evaluation:

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Expert evaluation of a movable cultural object from the Vassil Bojkov Collection (No. 73/ 15.12.2006.), prepared by an expert evaluation committee from the National Museum of History – Sofia, noting the approximate value of the object. The document is signed by the members of the expert evaluation committee and bears the seal of the National Museum of History

(TRANSLATED)



Hydria, bronze, 350-330 BC

Collections can be locked for years,  
even centuries,  
but their public existence is of particular significance.  
A well socialised collection  
is like a carefully structured public speech.  
It unfolds various narratives and has immense informative,  
oeducational and instructive value.\*



\* „Collecting – passion and value“  
2020, Valeri Stefanov

# EXHIBITIONS

January 2007

## THE SPLENDOUR OF BULGARIA Vassil Bojkov Collection

European Union Headquarters  
in Brussels, Belgium.

The exhibition was organised under the patronage of Prof. Stefan Danailov, Bulgarian Minister of Culture, and Sir Graham Watson, Chair of the Liberal group in the European Parliament. It was presented on the occasion of Bulgaria's accession to the European Union. More than five hundred people attended the opening, among whom MEPs, ambassadors, diplomats, cultural figures and journalists.

The exhibition, comprising forty artefacts, was arranged opposite the Konstantinos Karamanlis Hall. Their cultural-historical, artistic and scientific significance aroused admiration and was highly appreciated as is evident by the speeches of Bulgarian and foreign MEPs, diplomats, and journalists.

Days after Bulgaria acceded to the European Union, the exhibition created a positive environment for ideas and discussions on Bulgarian culture and its rich cultural and historical heritage, which was a positive sign of Bulgaria's acceptance by EU state representatives in the common home – the European Parliament. The time had come to demonstrate that there is a place for private and public-private initiative in the field of culture and cultural heritage conservation, provided that this initiative complies with relevant legislation and regulations.

The exhibits from the Collection were presented in a catalogue issued in Bulgarian and English.



February 26 – June 7, 2009

Participation in the international exhibition

## OLD AGE IN ANTIQUITY

Landesmuseum – Bonn, Germany.

The exhibition featured artefacts from twelve European museums: The Capitol Museum in Rome, museums in Munich, Berlin, the Karlsruhe Museum, museums in Switzerland, France, Greece, Bulgaria, and others.

The Vassil Bojkov Collection participated with two artefacts from the Roman era, presented by the Thrace Foundation: a life-size marble statue of an elderly woman; a bronze balsamarium (oil vessel) shaped like the head of infant Dionysus and his old teacher Silenus.

Through various ancient artefacts – statues, reliefs, Greek vases, murals, figurative objects – the exhibition showed the multi-layered understanding of age in antiquity. The exhibition was of great interest to the wide public. It was visited by over five hundred thousand visitors.



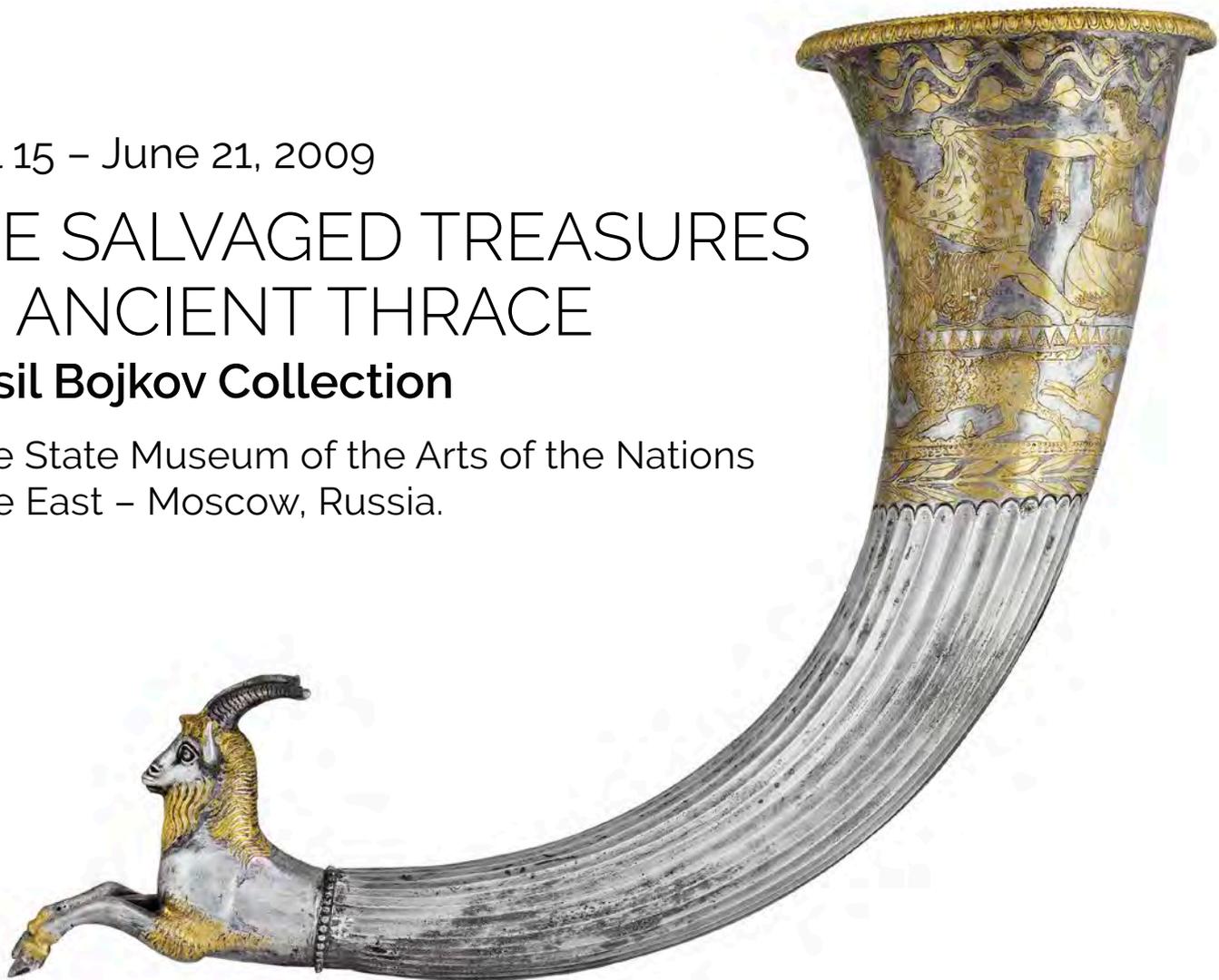
Funerary statue of woman, marble. 3rd century

April 15 – June 21, 2009

# THE SALVAGED TREASURES OF ANCIENT THRACE

## Vassil Bojkov Collection

at the State Museum of the Arts of the Nations  
of the East – Moscow, Russia.



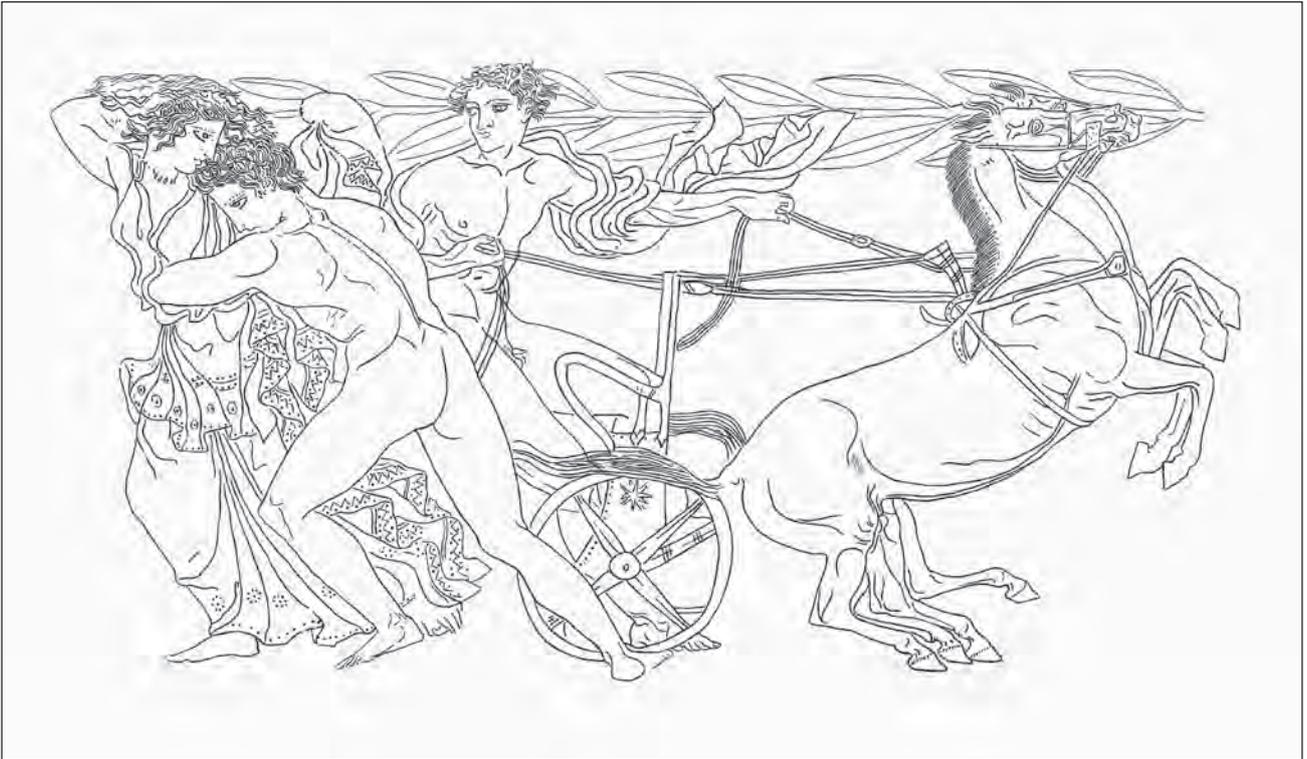
Rhyton with goat protome  
and a depiction of the "Death of Orpheus" on the horn, silver and gilding. 420 – 410 BC

The exhibition was organized under the patronage of the Ministries of Culture of the Russian Federation and the Republic of Bulgaria as one of the leading events of the initiative "Year of Bulgaria in Russia". The Thrace Foundation and a team of experts from the State Museum selected and displayed 212 exhibits from the Vassil Bojkov Collection, dating from the beginning of 1st millennium BC until the end of 4th century AD. The rhyta – exquisitely shaped vessels – occupied central place in the exhibition.

The selection of gold funeral masks, jewellery and various gold, silver and bronze vessels as well as harness ornaments was equally impressive and informative of ancient culture and art in Thrace.

Preserved, restored, published and presented in the exhibition, the Collection artefacts were accessible to both researchers and ordinary people who wished to expand their knowledge of the history of Ancient Thrace and the ancient world.

A catalogue in Bulgarian, Russian and English was published for the event. In addition, an international scientific conference was held during the exhibition, entitled "The Thracian gold: Myth and Reality".



"The Abduction of Helen" from silver-gilt kantharos. 420 – 410 BC.



Kantharos with the "Death of Orpheus" on one side and "The Abduction of Helen on the Other", silver and gilding. 420 – 410 BC.

June 2010

## THE OTHER MUSEUM

at the National Gallery for Foreign art  
(today National Gallery / Square 500)

Sofia, Bulgaria.

*The Other Museum* exhibition was the first public event of the newly established Union of Private Collectors in Bulgaria (March 2010), chaired by Prof. Dr. Valeri Stefanov. The Thrace Foundation actively participated in the organisation and presentation of the exhibition – a unique event for the exposition and museum practice in the country. The exhibition was unparalleled in its content and diversity. The unique works of the art, owned by Bulgarian private collectors, were grouped in several sections: archaeology, fine arts, numismatics, phaleristics, philately, weaponry and weapon accessories, ethnography. The exhibits demonstrated the interest of collectors in a variety of artistic and historical valuables. For many of the works, the exhibition was their first contact with the public.

The Vassil Bojkov Collection and the Foundation participated with two antique artefacts and one painting. Antiquity was represented by a silver rhyton with a horse protome, crafted in a Thracian atelier and dating from 4th century BC. The other antique artefact was the remarkable marble bust of Emperor Trajan Decius (249 - 251). The painting was *Nude*, the graduation work of Prof. Iliya Petrov.

The exhibition lifted the curtain to private collections and revealed the incredible care collectors provide for their works of art. The main curators of the exhibition were Academician Svetlin Roussev and Prof. Dr. Ivan Marazov.

Revealing a small portion of the treasures held in private collections, *The Other Museum* exhibition aimed to demonstrate that the past is not “unknown territory”. The collectors were presented as individuals who bring the past closer and make it more understandable. *The Other Museum* proved that Bulgarian cultural heritage has an excellent caretaker in the face of civil society. *The Other Museum* was an expression of the deep conviction that spiritual wealth preserved in private collections must be shared, not hidden away. It is only in this way that it can support the spirituality of the nation.

The exhibition was one of the most visited temporary exhibitions in the capital in 2010.



Bust of Emperor Gaius Messius Quintus Trajan Decius (249 – 251 AD),  
white and onyx marble, 3rd century AD



March – June 2011

THRACE  
AND THE ANCIENT  
WORLD

**Vassil Bojkov Collection**

in the National Museum of History  
Sofia, Bulgaria



March – June 2011

# THRACE AND THE ANCIENT WORLD

## **Vassil Bojkov Collection**

in the National Museum of History  
Sofia, Bulgaria

The organisers were the Thrace Foundation, the National Museum of History and the Union of Collectors in Bulgaria.

The curator and author of the scientific catalogue published on the occasion of the exhibition was Prof. Dr. Ivan Marazov.

Unique specimens of ancient toreutics were presented, some of which were displayed for the first time. More than 230 magnificent examples of ancient art were selected, with the oldest being bronze weapons from the 2nd millennium BC. Rare specimens were presented – silver rhyta with gilding and various animal protomes dating between 5th and 3rd century BC. The exhibition introduced scientists to novel problems related to antiquity in general and to toreutics and art from the 2nd to 1st millennium BC in particular. Several rhyta resembling Persian art were presented for the first time, highlighting a hypothesis published years ago on the proximity between Thracian and Achaemenid art.

A silver phiale and a bronze situla (bucket) revealed scenes from a battle between Greek warriors and Amazons. Two variants of the myth of the beautiful Helen were presented on a silver kantharos with gilded figures.

The exhibition also provided purely aesthetic pleasure, as ancient art never ceases to impress with its perfection.

Vessels from royal tables (rhyta, phialae, kylikes, kantharoi, hydriae, amphorae, jugs), along with weapons, harnesses and jewellery, which reached the Collection in deplorable condition, were presented in their true splendour thanks to skilful restoration work under the guidance of Prof. Dr. Veselina Inkova. The exhibition also allowed the Thrace Foundation to demonstrate, for the first time, the complex process of research, conservation and restoration of ancient artefacts in thirteen colour posters.



# THRACIAN GOLD FROM BULGARIA. THE LEGENDS BECOME ALIVE.

in the State Historical Museum – Moscow, Russia.  
Days of the Bulgarian spiritual culture in Russia

This was a joint exhibition with ancient archaeological artefacts from Bulgarian state and private museums: National Museum of History – Sofia, Regional Archaeological Museum – Plovdiv, Regional Historical Museum – Vratsa, Rousse Regional Museum of History, Regional Historical Museum – Lovech, the Thrace Foundation with Vassil Bojkov Museum, Arete-Fol Foundation Museum.

317 exhibits were presented, 127 of which were from the largest private collection – the Vassil Bojkov Museum.

This was the first occasion on which public and private museums partnered in an international exhibition with the common aim of showing a representative exposition of some of the most significant and valuable artefacts from Ancient Thrace: the treasures from Letnitsa, Borovo, Malomirovo-Zlatinitsa, the Panagyurishte and Rogozen treasures, hundreds of unique gold, silver and gilded insignia, offensive and defensive weapons, burial gifts, ritual vessels and jewellery representing the veneration of Dionysus, the myths of Orpheus, of the Amazons, and other mythological narratives.

Preparation of the exhibition was delegated to the Bulgarian National Museum of History. The team which selected the exhibits included two members of the Thrace Foundation, Prof. Dr. Ivan Marazov and Prof. Dr. Veselina Inkova, as well as two experts from the National Museum of History – Elka Penkova and Dr. Lyubava Konova.

The exhibition was conceived as a chronicle of the Thracians, their faith and rituals, presented through exhibits in several thematic areas.

The first was dedicated to the Thracian king. His image as a ruler, warrior and priest was presented through insignia, exhibits of weapons and ritual vessels. Military equipment was illustrated through swords, scabbards, helmets, chain armour, etc. Two of the three swords on display were from the Vassil Bojkov Museum: a bronze sword with gilded handle from the 11th - 10th century BC, and a *machaira* from the 4th century BC with an exquisite handle shaped like a horse protome.



The offensive equipment exhibit was supplemented by a silver and gold sheath with the silver side dating from the beginning of the 5th century BC and the gold dating from the second half of the 4th century BC.

Two of the three helmets on display were from the Vassil Bojkov Museum. One was a bronze helmet with ornamental decoration and cheek pieces from the 4th century BC, and the other was from the second half of the 4th century BC, fashioned out of over 2000 iron scales attached to a leather base.

A bronze suit of armour from the 5th – 4th century BC was also displayed: its textured labrys demonstrated that the armour belonged to an aristocrat.

The Vassil Bojkov Museum holds the largest rhyta (prestigious ritual regalia) collection in the world. The museum participated in the exhibition with 10 silver-gilt rhyta with animal protomes. The ritual vessels were complemented by a gold phiale from the 4th century BC and a silver-gilt cup in the shape of a ram's head, dating from 3rd - 1st century BC.

Among the insignia most impressive was a gold wreath from the second half of the 4th century BC (one of three presented in the exhibition), as well as two massive gold bracelets from the end of the 6th - beginning of the 5th century BC, a gold funeral mask from the first half of the 5th century BC, etc.

The second theme was dedicated to the importance of the horse in the lands of "horse-loving" Thracians: horse possession was a sign of high social rank, an attribute of power and authority. The horse was the sacred animal of the ruler, his divine guard and loyal companion, accompanying him on his last earthly journey to immortality in the afterlife. Therefore, harness decorations, as a divine symbol of power for Thracians, were buried as "treasure". It is no coincidence that the exhibition included seven sets and several individual harness appliqués, the specific style and manufacturing technology of which reflect Thracian traditions of horse bridle decoration. Five virtually complete sets, two of which contain the main appliqués, as well as several individual decorations, came from the Vassil Bojkov Museum.

The third topic was related to Orpheus and was narrated entirely with artefacts from the Vassil Bojkov Museum. It is believed that the name of Orpheus symbolised the concept of death as a passage towards the life beyond – the ultimate goal of human existence – which was more or less foreign to the Hellenistic way of thinking. According to ancient literature, Orpheus was the author of cosmogony and theogony different than the official Olympic religious notion of the cosmos. Belief in the musician's Thracian roots has remained relatively stable over the centuries: thus, mythology and literature emphasize the reasons for this difference which in Hellenic philosophy is called Orphism – a religious and philosophical doctrine based on the immortality of the soul.

According to Prof. Alexander Fol, the image and concept of Orpheus is the brightest metaphor of Thracian belief in immortality. The presence of the musician-teacher-prophet Orpheus on objects from the Thracian environment appears to identify their owner as belonging to the circle of people initiated in this faith and knowledge, experienced through the death and re-birth of the Teacher.

Orpheus' assassination by a mob of angry women – a scene well-known from literature – is depicted on the horn of a silver-gilt rhyton with goat protome dating from the end of the 5th century BC.

An exquisite silver kantharos with gilded scenes presents the same literary narrative on one side, with the name of the mythological hero carefully inscribed. This wine-drinking vessel dates from the last quarter of the 5th century BC.

Orpheus is also depicted as a singer in the medallion adorning the bottom of a silver-gilt kylix from 430 - 425 BC.

Other themes presented the myths of the Amazons and Dionysus, as well as Thracian faith through images of deities. In addition to the artefacts included in the exhibition, an innovative element was the presentation of posters of some of the most significant and interesting exhibits illustrating the process of restoration and conservation, as well as information on technical and technological research, which complements their cultural and historical interpretation.



March 16, 2018 – June 10, 2018

THE GOLDEN FLEECE.  
THE QUEST OF THE  
ARGONAUTS

**Vassil Bojkov Collection**

at the National Gallery  
Sofia, Bulgaria



March 16, 2018 – June 10, 2018

# THE GOLDEN FLEECE. THE QUEST OF THE ARGONAUTS

## **Vassil Bojkov Collection**

at the National Gallery  
Sofia, Bulgaria

Organizers: Thrace Foundation and the National Gallery.

Curators of the exhibition were Dr. Lyubava Konova, a specialist in Thracian and ancient history and archaeology, and Elka Penkova – together these two experts have prepared and realized over 30 temporary exhibitions in Bulgaria and abroad, as well as sections of the permanent exhibitions at the National Museum of History in Sofia.

Sixty-two exhibits were on display. Through the magnificent works of ancient masters, visitors were able to follow the fabulous adventure of the Argonauts. The Golden Fleece has left a lasting image in the collective historical memory as a symbol of new life, fertility, royal power and connection to the gods. The exhibits took spectators to ancient sacred places – Delphi and Samothrace, in the Thracian kingdoms, in the lands of the legendary Amazons, in the realm of the sun – Colchis on the sacred island of Crete.

The individual modules revealed various aspects of the faith and rituals of ancient people, as well as some of the secrets of their crafts and arts. The sacrifice of the sacred golden ram that brought Helle and Phrixus to Colchis was presented in a scene on the silver-gilt kantharos, placed in the centre of the exhibition.

The exhibition included gold and silver oriental vessels, rhyta, red-figure vases with images of the Delphi sanctuary, ritual silver-gilt vessels, funeral gifts, ritual sets, etc. The exhibition also displayed two vessels – a gilded kantharos and a rhyton – with images of Orpheus the Thracian as one of the Argonauts, the only ones discovered so far. Sixteen objects made their first appearance before the public, two of which were red-figure vases. A spectacular specimen of sophisticated work of luxury was the silver rhyton with a sculpted figure of Silenus, reclining on panther wineskin. Two silver vessels displayed the image of Theseus – the most famous Attican hero of Antiquity. The exhibition also showed a massive golden kantharos from the 12th - 10th century BC, a silver amphora-rhyton with zoomorphic handles – the work of a Western Anatolian studio from the end of the 6th century BC. Images of Heracles embellished a gilded silver kantharos and exquisite silver jug.



Collections are historical, in so far  
as they trace the route of a century-old shift –  
from the community-integrated individual  
to self-aware individuality.  
From the private to the public realm.  
From personal passion to institutional care.\*



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\* "Collecting – passion and value"  
2020, Valeri Stefanov



Rhyton with horse protome, silver and gilding, 330 – 300 BC.

IN MEMORIAM  
KIRIL NIKOLOV HRISTOSKOV  
(03.02.1953 - 10.10.2020)

Kiril Hristoskov dedicated the last sixteen years of his life to the Thrace Foundation as its Executive Director. He worked for the promotion of Bulgarian cultural heritage. He was the main organizer of the many exhibitions that the Foundation prepared and presented in the country and abroad during this period. As the head of a non-governmental organization and lawyer by education (graduate of the Faculty of Law at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski"), he took part in various forums, councils and discussions related to changes in the legal framework in the field of cultural heritage.

Kiril Hristoskov worked tirelessly for the promotion of Thracian art and Antiquity, which he considered the "emblem" of Bulgaria. It was his understanding that through Thracian art "cultural bridges" between our country and the countries of Western Europe would be easier to build. With great sense of responsibility, he headed the organization of the first exhibition abroad, the one in Brussels (January 2007) on the occasion of Bulgaria's accession to the European Union. He ensured that all legal requirements for such exhibitions were met. Moreover, at its opening, he was delighted with the huge recognition the exhibition received by the MEPs. He believed that the publication of catalogues with objects from the Vassil Bojkov Collection was their "registration" in front of the public. Of course, he also worked to register the objects legally. K. Hristoskov's legal education helped him solve a number of cases related to the activities of the Thrace Foundation. An example in this regard is the exhibition in Moscow (April – June 2009). During its preparation, he studied the legal basis in the field of cultural heritage in Russia and proposed that all objects be insured in Western Europe in order to be sufficiently well protected due to differences in legislation on cultural heritage in Bulgaria and the host country. The exhibits presented in the exhibition have been described in publications in Bulgarian, English, and Russian and are thus accessible to all researchers and individuals interested in the culture of ancient Thracians.

The Thrace Foundation founded by Mr. Vassil Bojkov and the activities of Kiril Hristoskov as Executive Director show that their goal has always been to preserve and present

Thracian Antiquity to the general public. If that was not the case, how could we explain all the efforts to publish such a prolific number of catalogues, to organize exhibitions, support educational programs and scientific publications, and numerous other projects and events of public nature? K. Hristoskov saw the addition of each new rhyton to the Collection compiled by Mr. Bojkov from across the world as a success not only for the Collection itself, but also for Bulgaria. He was also interested in the opinion of experts about the Collection. In this regard, I will mention his account of the visit of the Head Curator of the Miho Museum in Tokyo (where ancient rhyta are kept). He was very emotional. The appreciation that this lady had shown for the Collection inspired him to believe that the museum with the largest collection of rhyta in the world, the one in Sofia, would soon be open and visible to the public. Anyone who has worked with K. Hristoskov has witnessed his professionalism and his aspirations for the preservation of Thracian art and culture, treasured in the Vassil Bojkov Collection and in Bulgaria in general. He sincerely believed that the state can and should work together with non-governmental organizations to preserve and promote the cultural and historical heritage of the Republic of Bulgaria.



Dr. Gergana Kabakchieva



Rhyton with caracal protome, gilded silver. 150 – 125 BC.

An object is like a human: it ails. We would be right to say  
that a collection is the nursing home of objects.  
It not only changes their status and self-confidence,  
but literally heals their inherent diseases.  
Iron, bronze, wood, paper, pigments...  
these are all ailing substances,  
they rot, tarnish, wither and die.  
If man wants to have them as companions in history  
and as witnesses to a significant past,  
he is forced to constantly take care of them.\*

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\* "Collecting – passion and value"  
2020, Valeri Stefanov



Лаборатория за консервация, реставрация и изследвания на културни ценности  
към фондация "ТРАКИЯ"  
Музей Васил Божков



Директор: проф. д-р Веселина Инкова; сътрудници: К. Драганова, Е. Костадинова, Н. Първанова, И. Левичаров, Н. Ангелов, А. Аенска, М. Калачка

**КОНСЕРВАЦИЯ И РЕСТАВРАЦИЯ НА РИТОН С ПРОТОМЕ НА ЕЛЕН.  
СРЕБРО С ПОЗЛАТА, НИЕЛО IVB, ПР. ХР.**



16 Етап от разкриване на оригиналната повърхност, позлата и ниело по протомето.



17 Укрепване, ламиниране и разкриване на оригиналната повърхност на рога.



25 Ритонът след консервация и реставрация.

**Консервация и реставрация**

1. Повърхностно обезмасляване с органичен разтворител.
2. Механично укрепване на нестабилни участъци чрез пропиеване и ламиниране откъм гърба (Paraloid B 72, Streplin), (обр. 17).
3. Разкриване на позлатата чрез послойно освобождаване от хетерогенни отложения и корозионни налепи чрез галваностатична катодна и анодна поларизация (обр. 18), неутрализация, промиване, изсушаване и консолидация.
4. Изявяване на неопозлатената „оригинална“ повърхност на рога чрез механично и локално химично третиране с гел на селективен комплексобразувател, неутрализация, промиване, последвано от цветова и „материална“ рентгенграфия на рога чрез катодна потенциостатична поларизация (обр. 19); неутрализация, промиване и изсушаване.
5. Изявяване на „оригиналната“ повърхност на протомето и прилежащата украса с ниело чрез последователни етапи на послойно механично и локално химично третиране с гел на селективен комплексобразувател, съчетано с неутрализация, промиване, изсушаване и локална консолидация на разкритото ниело (обр. 16).
6. Органикохимична стабилизация чрез инхибиране, консолидация чрез импрегниране под вакуум (BTA, Paraloid B 72).
7. Компенсация на напели и загуби чрез *in situ* моделиране с полимерна маса, свързване на конструктивните елементи (Polyester resin Plus 720 с пълнител талк), (обр. 20, 21).
8. Защитна полимерна изолация, цветова рентгенграфия с имитативен ретуш, хидрофобизация (Paraloid B 72, Mica Powder, Cosmoloid H 80), (обр. 25).



20 Етап от неутрализация на дефекти по протомето.



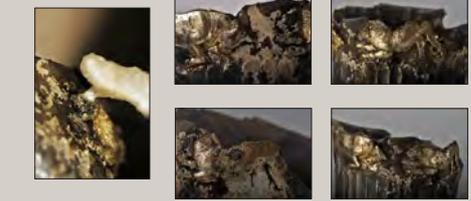
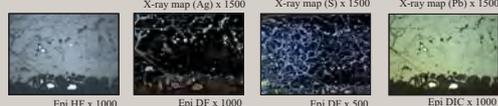
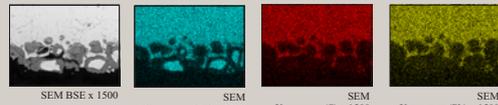
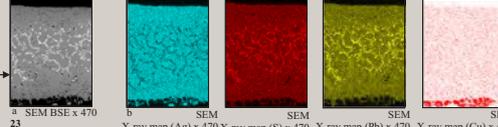
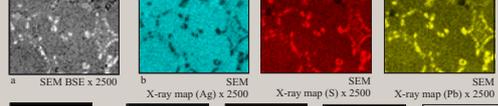
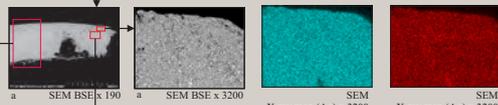
22 Украса с ниело на елементи на протомето.



- а) Изображения а, б, в, г при различни увеличения, илюстриращи характера на структурата и разпределението на градивните фази.
- б) X-ray разпределение на съставните ниелови елементи.
- в) X-ray разпределение на съставните ниелови „фази“.

24 Налепи от корозионни продукти и обогатяване с мед на повърхността на ниелото в резултат корозионна минерализация на латината основа.

**НИЕЛО**



18 Етапи на локално разкриване на позлатата на фриза.



19 Рентгенграфия на неопозлатената повърхност на рога чрез потенциостатична поларизация.



21 Етапи на реставрация на рога.

Таблица SEM EDX химичен състав (нормализиран) на ниелото									
Lin	N	Изст. ъгъл	Вид на проба	Али. атоми	Елементи %				
			[µm]		Ag	Cu	Au	Pb	S
1		н-лти напречно сечение	шифр 480	270x235	83.13	0.27	-	5.09	11.39
2		„нагори“	шифр 480	12x15	87.68	-	-	1.23	11.08
					75x25	86.50	-	2.19	11.2
3		участък с бели гъбози	шифр 480	50x50	80.00	-	-	8.94	10.43
4		белги гъбози	шифр 480	1.8x0.75	46.90	-	-	42.50	10.72
					1.75x0.75	32.38	-	58.43	9.29
5		Ад зърно с Au и Pb	шифр 480	2x2	90.89	-	4.54	1.31	3.15
					1x1	85.35	0.01	8.37	1.76

# THE LABORATORY

*We were the only museum conservation and restoration laboratory in the country that used to employ globally accepted standards. This was our most important rule.*

*We worked at the Lab with the feeling that we were part of something immensely important: the exploration and preservation of our cultural heritage; we often stayed until ten o'clock at night, locked in a magical circle of mystery and discovery... We didn't want to leave, but we had families to go to. Today, the role of the Lab, not only with regards to the collection but to other museums too, has been entirely destroyed.*

Prof. Dr. Veselina Inkova

*The name of Prof. V. Inkova ranks among world-renowned restorers. She has an impressive resume, which includes several scientific achievements, one of which is demonstrating (in the course of studying burials at the Holy Forty Martyrs Church necropolis in Veliko Tarnovo) that grave 39 belongs to Tsar Kaloyan. She is the author of a study on the gilding technology used on the domes of St. Alexander Nevsky Cathedral, as well as numerous publications contributing to the development and improvement of conservation and restoration in our country. Prof. Inkova is the head of the Conservation and Restoration Laboratory at the Vassil Bojkov Museum.*

*Prof. Dr. Veselina Inkova talks about her work at the Conservation and Restoration Laboratory at the Vassil Bojkov Museum with the Thrace Foundation.*

# THE ARTEFACTS

To me, all the objects are culturally significant and precious, I have been through highs and lows with all of them. As you may be familiar, conservation and restoration aim at halting or minimizing the processes of deterioration of cultural treasures (rehabilitation, recovery), revealing and highlighting their technical, artistic, cultural and historical qualities and merits. This is an interdisciplinary process involving research as well as practical activities and interventions. Their effectiveness, on the one hand, depends on the availability of experts with a deep understanding of both the physicochemical and structural deterioration of matter and of ancient metalworking techniques. On the other hand, success also depends on the availability of modern facilities for analytical research and conservation. These we had at our disposal and we were able to unravel the history of the artefacts, to travel back to the time and place of their birth. One such example is deciphering of the enigmatic history of three silver rhyta with deer protomes of identical size, shape and stylistic and decorative scheme. They arrived at the Laboratory at different times and in different condition. Data from their examination (trace evidence and microscopic analysis of surfaces under different modes, endoscopic examination, elemental and metallographic analysis of all constituent elements and structural connections, of any repair made and of gilding) suggested that the rhyta were produced by the same production centre but in different times.

I remember the unique kantharos, symbol of the “The Golden Fleece: The Quest of the Argonauts” exhibition, presented in 2018 at the National Gallery. This exceptional exhibit, shrouded in the magic and mystery of gold mining, arrived at us in a helpless state. In no less than twenty or thirty individual fragments, attached together with tape, with no discernible images. Frankly, no one had dared tackle it, and we were extremely grateful for this. The task was complicated, the work extremely difficult, but when its original form and the iconography associated with the ram sacrifice were finally restored, its extraordinary cultural significance was revealed. It turned out that there is only one other such vessel in the world, a ceramic one, with an identical scene of the Golden Fleece, belonging to the Metropolitan Museum.

Perhaps this is where I should note the different state of the objects submitted to the Conservation and Restoration Laboratory. Most, if not all, had undergone some kind of intervention. Many of the silver objects had been subjected to chemical or electrochemical cleaning. Their surface was “stripped”, oxidized. Some of the rhyta were in this condition, as were some harness ornaments. Two silver kantharoi, cleaned in this way, displayed misleading colour and surface as a result of patination through thermal oxidation and retouching (which is why experts from the National Museum of History had initially identified them as copper alloy items). Other objects had undergone integrative restoration, typical of the last century, aimed at imitative integrity and beauty. We encountered interventions of this nature and purpose in varying degrees. For example, deformations covered with thick putty from broken or abraded corrosion products; rebuilding of lippage with synthetic resins, waxes, fillers and colouring agents, including irreversible repairs using unstable materials or even materials which are active in atmospheric conditions; imitation of preserved “original” corrosive mineralization by means of coloured soil deposits; bonding of destructed constructive connections and fragments through impregnation with resins, with retouched plaster and even by means of metal plates fixed not only with adhesives but also with metal elements pushed through breaches in the walls of the original. We encountered all sorts of things. I cannot forget the damage done to one of the bronze dinos, “strengthened” with a huge amount of epoxy resin poured inside, the removal of which cost us several bits and a hand drill. The surface of some objects had been “ennobled” with pigments, imitating noble patina.

To our delight and relief, some of the copper alloy items had an intact mineralized layer that had only undergone professional, properly controlled mechanical intervention. This allowed us to ‘read’ the ‘biography’ of the corrosion layer, suggesting the nature of the deposition environment. As a result of selective corrosion, some of the objects displayed cathodically protected (non-corroded “metallic”) areas, areas with so-called water patina, or areas with pseudomorphically manifested structure. The surface of others showed corrosion extrusions of varying size and a step-like structure and metal particles (alpha solution or eutectic) visible even to the naked eye, or similar wart-like formations with active recurrences, areas of intermittent corrosion and Liesegang-type precipitation. In some cases, the corrosion phenomena suggested the composition and technique of work, while in others they were sufficiently convincing diagnostic signs of authenticity. Much to our surprise, some of the “bright” areas had been interpreted by the “experts” as areas of disturbed or scratched surface, “while mineral corrosion products with fractal morphology were interpreted as signs of instability (i.e., active, ongoing corrosion).

In many cases, the removal of materials used for deceptive reconstructions led to further fragmentation, the revelation of large gaps, and even disintegration of the imitated object form. Such degradation occurred in quite a number of copper alloy vessels – in several bronze hydriae with applied decorations, in the large bronze askos, bronze



Лаборатория за консервация, реставрация и изследвания на културни ценности  
към фондация "ТРАКИЯ"  
Музей Васил Божков



Директор: проф. д-р Веселина Никова; сътрудници: К. Драганова, Е. Костадинова, Н. Първанова, И. Леванаров, Н. Ангелов, А. Аспска, М. Калпачка

КОНСЕРВАЦИЯ И РЕСТАВРАЦИЯ НА РИТОН С ПРОТОМЕ НА ЕЛЕН.  
СРЕБРО С ПОЗЛАТА, НИЕЛО IVB. ПР. ХР.



1 Състояние преди консервация и реставрация.

Оличаващият се с изцялата си форма, пластическа и технико-изобразителна грамотност на изпълнение артефакт е един от малкото антични примери на доказана украса с ниело. Изграден е от рог и протоме с отделно изработени крака, чучур, рога и уши. Протомето е на прескупач елен с високо издигнати позлатени рога с пластичен лопатобразен връх с розета, с маркирани перли, анатомично точно моделирана шия и глава с големи пластични очи, с полчергани с ниело жълба и врис. Покрити с ниело са и устните и копитата. Позлата бележи сплесковидните сезонни петна, както и мускулатурата на раменните стави. На долната страна на протомето с перлен поансон е нанесен знак (обр. 16). Разширяващият се към горния си край рог, с огънат навън устие, е украсен с канелюри и фигурален фриз (обр. 1, 25).



3 Състояние на рога.



2 Детайли, отразяващи физико-химичното и механичното състояние на протомето.

Резултати от консервационно-реставрационната експертиза

Консервационно-реставрационната експертиза на артефакта, целяща изясняване на естеството на изграждащите го материали, технологични и технико-образителни характеристики и физикохимично състояние – степен на характер на протекли деструктивни изменения, включва определяне на елементния състав, радиография, ендоскопски, трактологичен и металографски анализ с използването на стереомикроскоп Stemi 2000C, ендоскоп Olympus IPLEX II, дигитален микроскоп Hirox KH-7000, металографски микроскоп Observer.A1m и сканиращ електронен микроскоп SEM - Hitachi S 3700 N с EDX - Noran Ultra Dry.

Ендоскопски констатираното присъствие на лярска „кожа и салзи“ по вътрешните повърхности на протомето и участъци с незалечена лярска повърхност по рога (обр.9 а, б, с, г, h, I, m), данните за елементния състав, както и установената при металографското изследване на напречни и надлъжни шлифове от протомето и рога едрозърниста структура с единични двойници, ненапълно модифицирана ликвация и вивши на пълзгане до повърхността свидетелстват, че както рога, така и протомето представляват пластично доработени отливки от високотемпературно сребро с примес на мед, детайлирани с главлки, поансонни водичи и поансон, отбелязващи дълбочина (табл. 1, ан. №1-4; обр.5, 7, 9 I, J, k, l, 12). Деформационните белези по вътрешните и външни повърхности на фигуралния фриз на рога свидетелстват, че е изпълнен в техника репусе и детайлирани с прави водичи и тънък „прелен“ поансон.

Дефекти по свивката между главата и шията, както и дефект по брадичката са коригирани със споена от вътрешната страна пластина (обр. 9a, b, d; 12).

Позлатата е лъскава, изпълнена преди окончателното детайлиране, с изключително ефективна термодифузионна връзка.

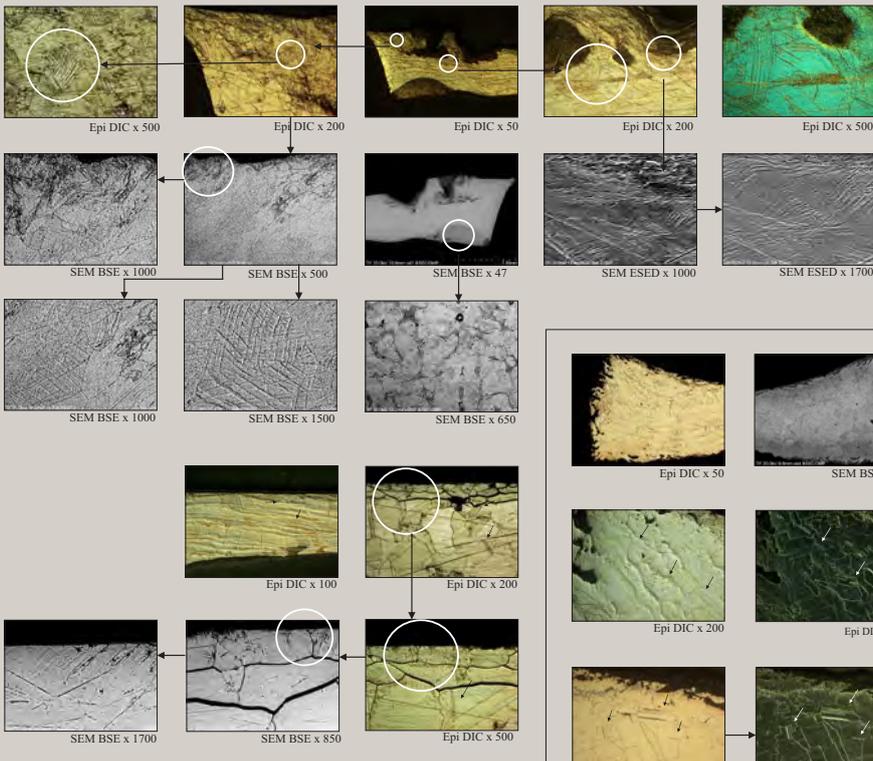
Свърването на краката е постигнато чрез спояване с високотемп. припой на вмянката в раменните стави цилиндрични изрязъци от подрамната на излятите крака (обр. 9 f, g; 13, 15). Чрез спояване са прикрити ушите, рогцата и трибъчката за излизане (обр. 9 с, g; 13, 15).

Връзката на протомето с рога е осъществена чрез спояване с високотемп. припой на влизания в протомето долен край на рога (табл. 1, ан. №5; обр. 14, 15).

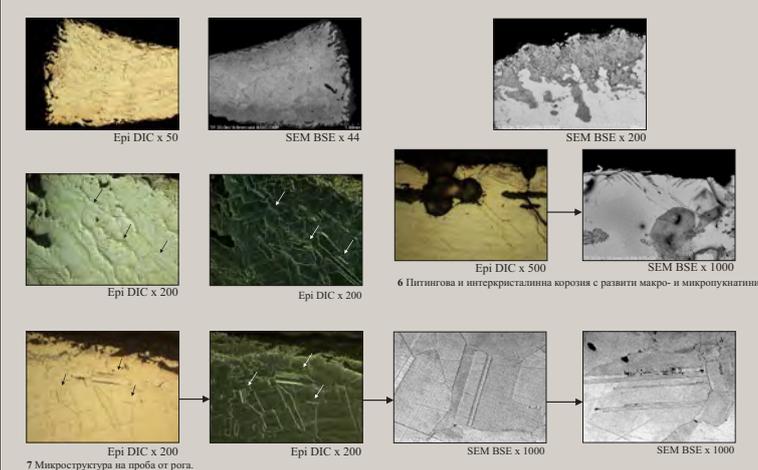
Ниелото е неструктурално, с гладка, лъскава черна повърхност и сравнително здрава връзка с основата (обр. 22). Средният елементен състав на ниелото изяснява сешият на шиф от ниелото на копитото с плочи около 0,04 mm<sup>2</sup> - Ag 83,13%; Cu 0,27%; Pb 5,09%; Sn 11,49% - сочи, че е съставено от Ag-S (калцити) (табл. 2, ан. №1). Притежава слоеста хетерогенна структура с четливи долен, среден и повърхностни слоеве. Средният е наситен с ясно разграничени габули, обогатени на PbS (галенит), а другите два са съставени основно от Ag-S с различни по размер пори, разположени основно в повърхностния. Твърде малкото (около 5%) количествено съдържание на галенитната фаза спрямо акантитната, дава основание за предположението, че най-вероятно за направата на ниелото е използвано ненапълно рафинирано сребро, съдържащо олово, а не последното да е добавено като отделен компонент на сплав. В структурата на шифа се наблюдават и слабо суфидирани, съдържащи злато, от порядъка на 5% или и олово, богати на сребро зърна (табл. 2, ан. №2-5; обр.23).

Изделето е засегнато от протекла по цялата повърхност неравномерна галванокорозия, продуцирала различни по дебелина и морфология образувания от сребърен хлорид, на места и от основни медни соли като консолидирани с калцитни образувания конгломерати, силно деформирани оригиналните топографии, пластични повърхностни детайли и участъци с ниело (табл. 1, ан. №6, обр. 1-4). Индуцирана от технологично обусловени остатъчни напрежения в повърхностния слой и протекла, особено по рога, корозия с интерметалурен механизъм, е породила птитити с различна дълбочина и развити макро и микрокуватини (обр. 5, 6). Засегнати от дълбочинна корозия и окръжностване са големите участъци от рога и особено устие и фриз (обр. 3, 4). Корозионно дефектирани са споевите връзки на протомето с рога, ушите и рогцата (обр. 1-4). Уязвимостта на ребрената част на протомето при научаването ѝ с цел пасане към рога, е обусловено надлъжни, достигати почти до основите на краката, фрактури с минерализиран дом (обр. 6, 7, 16). Проведеното механично почистване на повърхността е обусловило мрежа от напещи и загуби по контура на десния крак, връзката на лявото ухо, разупване и загуби на голяма част от устие на рога, както и демонтинирането на част от напълно минерализираните споени връзки (обр. 1-4).

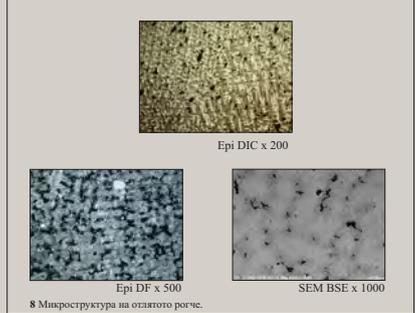
№	Елемент	Wt. %	At. %	Wt. ppm	At. ppm
1	Ag	83.13	99.99	83130	999900
2	Cu	0.27	0.00	270	0
3	Pb	5.09	0.01	5090	100
4	Sn	11.49	0.00	11490	0
5	Fe	0.03	0.00	300	0
6	Al	0.01	0.00	100	0
7	Si	0.01	0.00	100	0
8	S	0.01	0.00	100	0
9	Ca	0.01	0.00	100	0
10	Mg	0.01	0.00	100	0
11	Zn	0.01	0.00	100	0
12	B	0.01	0.00	100	0
13	N	0.01	0.00	100	0
14	O	0.01	0.00	100	0
15	C	0.01	0.00	100	0
16	K	0.01	0.00	100	0
17	Na	0.01	0.00	100	0
18	Mn	0.01	0.00	100	0
19	Co	0.01	0.00	100	0
20	Ni	0.01	0.00	100	0
21	Br	0.01	0.00	100	0
22	I	0.01	0.00	100	0
23	Ba	0.01	0.00	100	0
24	Sr	0.01	0.00	100	0
25	Zr	0.01	0.00	100	0
26	Hf	0.01	0.00	100	0
27	Mo	0.01	0.00	100	0
28	Cd	0.01	0.00	100	0
29	Te	0.01	0.00	100	0
30	Se	0.01	0.00	100	0
31	Cr	0.01	0.00	100	0
32	Mn	0.01	0.00	100	0
33	Pb	0.01	0.00	100	0
34	Bi	0.01	0.00	100	0
35	Po	0.01	0.00	100	0
36	At	0.01	0.00	100	0
37	Rn	0.01	0.00	100	0
38	Fr	0.01	0.00	100	0
39	Ra	0.01	0.00	100	0
40	Ac	0.01	0.00	100	0
41	Th	0.01	0.00	100	0
42	Pa	0.01	0.00	100	0
43	U	0.01	0.00	100	0
44	Np	0.01	0.00	100	0
45	Pu	0.01	0.00	100	0
46	Am	0.01	0.00	100	0
47	Cm	0.01	0.00	100	0
48	Bk	0.01	0.00	100	0
49	Cf	0.01	0.00	100	0
50	Es	0.01	0.00	100	0
51	Fm	0.01	0.00	100	0
52	Md	0.01	0.00	100	0
53	No	0.01	0.00	100	0
54	Lr	0.01	0.00	100	0
55	Rf	0.01	0.00	100	0
56	Hs	0.01	0.00	100	0
57	Mt	0.01	0.00	100	0
58	Ds	0.01	0.00	100	0
59	Rg	0.01	0.00	100	0
60	Cn	0.01	0.00	100	0
61	Nh	0.01	0.00	100	0
62	Fl	0.01	0.00	100	0
63	Mc	0.01	0.00	100	0
64	Lv	0.01	0.00	100	0
65	Ts	0.01	0.00	100	0
66	Og	0.01	0.00	100	0



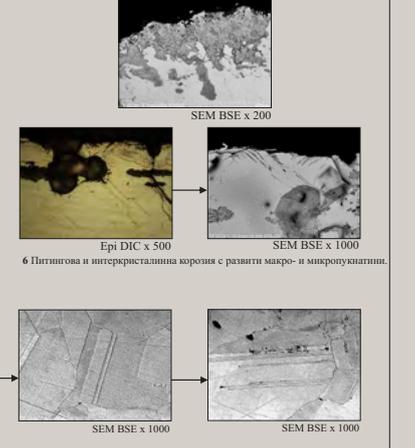
5 Микроструктура на проба от протомето. Участък с корекцията чрез доливане.



7 Микроструктура на проба от рога.



8 Микроструктура на олатото рогче.



6 Питингова и интерметалурна корозия с развити макро- и микрокуватини.

situlae, etc. This group of objects also includes the unique bronze calyx-krater the shape of which was restored through the use of setsquares, metal plates and screws driven through the original walls, while losses and deformations were restored with various synthetic resins and colour reintegration with blurring retouch. It took several months for Lab experts to carry out the temporary and final conservation and restoration of this exceptional object.

Such disintegration of deceptive integrity was most often encountered in silverware that was excessively pitted due to aging, intercrystalline, and/or microstructural induced corrosion. I'll never forget the result of removing the restorations and strengthening coatings of an astounding silver rhyton. Its horn was crowned with detailed plant decoration and masks in rich relief and a protome with the figure of Silenus reclining on a panther wineskin. As a result, the protome and the mouth separated from the body and the wreath disintegrated into 40 - 50 fragments with multiple losses. It took three Laboratory experts two months to perform physicochemical and mechanical stabilization, to uncover the gilding and the niello-inlaid spots on the panther skin and to ensure constructive strengthening. Similar was the case with the two large rhyta with lynx protomes.

Any intervention in the condition of the objects began with their identification, clarification of the issue of their authenticity and diagnosis of their state. This involved successive stages of microscopic inspection of the surface at different magnification levels, contrast, endoscopic examination, X-ray fluorescence analysis of the elemental composition of the alloy used and of corrosion products, digital radiography. In most cases, the study was complemented by electronic microscope observations and analyses. Only then did our direct conservation intervention, i.e., the treatment process, begin.

## CULTURAL ERAS. THE CONTEXT

The methodological framework and the goal of the identification and diagnosis process is clarification of the technological style of each object, i.e., decoding the information about its materiality and material qualities. Identification on the basis of stylistic and iconographic features alone entails risk and uncertainty, as shape and iconography can be imitated. The technological style, i.e., the chain of successive stages of production, comprises a unique combination of materials, tools, implements, modes, approaches and techniques linked to a specific culture, period and geographical location, i.e., to a situational context – social, technological, ideological. This approach allows interpretation of an object's biography as recorded in its materiality and material qualities, from the stages of production, functional purpose and use, reuse and repair, the effects of specific actions at deposition, subsequent destruction, actions during discovery, to the changes that have occurred as a result of contemporary interventions.

There have been several cases of anachronistic data on elemental composition, on technological characteristics and tools used, or of destruction type and extent which did not correspond to the accepted dating – discrepancies which we identified during examination.

At the slightest doubt regarding authenticity, work was discontinued. And, as Mr. Bojkov told me, there have been cases of purchased objects being returned. In this context, one should review the Ministry of Culture's Regulation on the Identification of Movable Cultural Objects. The Regulation does not lay down requirements for authenticity; what is more, the very term 'authenticity' is never mentioned. Identification, clarification of material, technology, and condition are to be determined through inspection.

The described methodological approach compensated for the lack of context of the artefacts. Actually, it is not only Bulgarian museums, but also the largest museums in the world, such as the Louvre, the Metropolitan, the Victoria and Albert Museum, and the Romano-Germanic Museum in Mainz, that possess context-free artefacts. Personally, I have quite a bit of practice and experience in deciphering archaeological artefacts of unknown provenance. I will mention only the following examples of artefacts kept at the National Museum of History: a collective find of Bronze Age diadem appliqués, silver bracelets, gold beads and goldsmith metalworking tools – which served as basis of my habilitation thesis; one of the most splendid, quintessentially Thracian helmets, and two greaves (knemides) with preserved textile fragments and biological remains from burials.

## THE LABORATORY WAS HIS DREAM AND MINE

Today it is a shattered dream.

When Mr. V. Bojkov invited me to work for the Thrace Foundation, I had only one condition – that we have a laboratory equipped for the purpose. I had previously attempted to set up such a laboratory in Veliko Tarnovo, my first workplace. Unfortunately, its research department no longer exists. Years later I was involved in the design of the Conservation and Restoration Laboratory at the National Museum of History in Sofia. Perhaps you should go and see how work is carried out there. How could a conservation intervention, i.e., treatment, be justified and relevant in the absence of objective diagnosis of the condition of the ailing artefact and of an appropriate approach to its rehabilitation? I am somewhat reassured by the fact that at least my colleagues at the Laboratory of the National Archaeological Institute with Museum at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences – a team which includes a former Ph.D. student and graduate student of mine and a colleague trained by us – is successful. But even their laboratory has the practice of conserving and restoring ceramic and metal objects and even paintings in the same premises. That alone can give you an idea of the problems they encounter in their work. Would a hospital carry out eye, heart and brain surgery in the same room at the same time? These are highly incompatible activities.

After evaluating the results of our work, Mr. Bojkov came to trust us completely. It is no coincidence that everything we requested for the Laboratory was provided unconditionally. Colleagues could not hide their delight: right here, in Bulgaria, we had a conservation and restoration laboratory which met the highest modern standards. With Mr. Bojkov's permission, one of the colleagues, in addition to working on material identification and

application of chemical and electrochemical methods in diagnostics, stabilization and process control, was tasked with examining current scientific publications concerning the conservation, restoration and research of cultural property. The fact that our laboratory subscribed to the most authoritative literature on conservation, restoration, archaeometry and archaeometallurgy was regarded by the industry as an incredible privilege. However, it also serves as sad and shameful reminder of the conditions in which we are left to work and care for the preservation and study of movable heritage.

In this context, I recall the opinion of Prof. Falko Daim on Vassil Bojkov which he shared with Prof. St. Stanilov: "Could this be the Bulgarian Paul Getty?" The meeting was organized on the occasion of the construction of the new Laboratory, following his viewing of the Collection.

Today, as you can see, everything is destroyed – the artefacts have been taken, the laboratory is destroyed. They don't even understand what they are taking... Shocked and worried about the artefacts' fate, I kept asking the investigators why these fragile and vulnerable objects had to be carried away. Wasn't it better to seal off, to fence off the building that houses the museum collection?

## WE HELPED

We have continuously helped the National Museum of History, the National Archaeological Institute with Museum at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, the Regional History Museum of Sofia, the Veliki Preslav Archaeological Museum, and other museums... Four days before the prosecutor's inspection, I was at the National Museum of History, where, at the museum's request, I was to provide expert opinion on whether a unique artefact could travel outside Bulgaria. Whoever asked for assistance, we always helped, of course with Mr. Bojkov's knowledge and permission, with his willingness to help. And help we did.

It is no secret that he financed the purchase of artefacts for the National Museum of History during the time of Prof. B. Dimitrov. We carried out the conservation and restoration of a medieval sword, which Mr. Bojkov gifted to the National Museum of History. The Laboratory at the Thrace Foundation also examined a medieval necklace from the National Museum of History, a unique prehistoric dagger with a deliberate silver-coloured coating made of arsenical copper using a specific casting mode. At the request of Sofia Municipality, assistance was provided for the study of the elemental composition and condition of the Tsar Liberator's monument. Last year, at the request and insistence of Bulgarian experts participating in the international project for conservation and research of the Preslav Treasure at the Romano-Germanic Central Museum in Mainz, the Laboratory at the Thrace Foundation carried out a technical and technological study of the tiara from the treasure. When the investigative proceedings began, the Laboratory was researching a group of objects (a find of unknown origin) with similar composition and manufacture technology (when inspection and seizure of the Collection began, these artefacts were returned to the National Museum of History).

<sup>1</sup> Until last year, Prof. F. Daim was the General Director of the Romano-Germanic Central Museum in Mainz, lecturer at the Institute for Pre- and Protohistory at the Vienna University.

Perhaps this is the place to note that in normal countries conservation and restoration are very expensive activities. Skilled professionals in this field enjoy as much respect as doctors. It is no coincidence that in their documents ECCO (European Confederation of Conservator-Restorers' Organisations), ICCROM (International Centre for the Study of Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property), ENCORE (European Network for Conservation and Restoration Education) refer to the stage of direct intervention as curative or remedial conservation. I remember that sometime in the last century, in an ICOM document, conservation and restoration were compared to the mastery of a surgeon. Every touch, especially unprofessional touch, does irreparable damage.

Mr. Bojkov never requested that we should be paid for our assistance: it was all about collegial, purely professional relations in the name of science. With one exception, and – this I need to emphasise – at my express insistence, as it was becoming somewhat awkward to be constantly helping, despite the belief that in our small scientific world we should always lend a hand. The object was a unique bead from the 3rd millennium BC, studied by our colleague Borislav Borislavov; an amazing artefact in terms of technique and technology, of technological traditions and achievements in the field of metalworking in our lands, composed of 38 parts. The documentation we prepared included over two thousand analyses. The research we did was reported by the discoverer at an International Archaeological Conference attended by scientific colossi from Germany, the USA, England, etc. After the report, as Mr. Borislavov said, none of the attendees dared to ask a question: there was an astonished silence – the attendees were in awe of the incredible world revealed to them and contained within an ancient bead. By the way, the bead is property of the Archaeological Museum at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences and can be seen there.

I would add to the list the fifty objects discovered by a team headed by prof. Rasho Rashev at the aristocratic pre-Bulgarian grave at Kabiyuk, now kept in the Regional History Museum of Shumen. All of these objects were examined and preserved in the Laboratory of the Thrace Foundation. If prof. Rashev were alive, I would like to believe that relations between archaeologists would unfold in a very different manner, but unfortunately, fate decreed otherwise.

In this context I should add that thanks to the equipment of the Laboratory I have personally participated in 10 forensic archaeological and numismatic teams. Even the trips to court hearings in Vidin – for colleagues from the National Museum of History and from the archaeological branch in Veliko Tarnovo – were organised by Mr. Bojkov. It may be worth mentioning that an employee of the Paul Getty Museum visited us three months before the "catastrophe", as I like to call it. A prominent metal specialist at the Getty Conservation Institute (GCI) came to see our work first hand. Her professional curiosity was piqued after seeing our posters outlining the restoration processes. These are extremely interesting for both the public and professionals and have become an essential part of the last few exhibitions. She couldn't believe that we had actually accomplished everything described. When she left, we received a formal request for specialization from them. I am well aware what the Getty Museum stands for, especially its collection of antiquities. Things like this don't happen unless there is a good reason, and this reason were our achievements in cultural preservation.

<sup>2</sup> Prof. Rasho Rashev, the director of the National Archaeological Institute with Museum at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, perished in the fire which erupted on the Sofia – Kardam train on 28 February 2008.

<sup>3</sup> On January 30, 2020, at 6:00 a.m., employees of the Special Prosecutor's Office commenced a search operation in the offices at 43, Moskovska Street in Sofia. While searching for computers and documentation, the employees proceeded to seize antique artefacts; this seizure process continued over the next eight months.



Лаборатория за консервация, реставрация и изследвания на културни ценности  
към фондация "ТРАКИЯ"  
Музей Васил Божков



Директор: проф. д-р Веселин Илков; сътрудници: К. Драганова, Е. Костадинова, Н. Първанова, И. Левчаров, Н. Ангелов, А. Аенска, М. Калпаева

ТРИ РИТОНА С ПРОТОМИ НА ЕЛЕН IV В. ПР. ХР.  
ЕДНАКВИ И РАЗЛИЧНИ.

Ритон 1



Ритон 2



Ритон 0



1 Състояние на ритоните преди консервация и реставрация.



2 Ритоните след консервация и реставрация.



3X-графи.

Ритон 1



Ритон 2



Ритон 0



4 Декоративни фризове, украсяващи рогувете.

Ритон 1



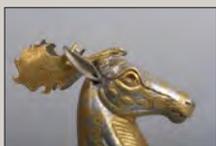
Ритон 2



Ритон 0



5 Подход за оформяне на канелюрите.



6 Ползателните елементи на главите.



7 Детайлиране и позлата на очите.

2. **Роговете** им са оформени от глътка заготовка чрез допълнителна пластична деформация (обр. 15, 18, 22). Дефекти на отливката - недоливци с различна големина - са коригирани чрез доливане с близки по състав „тапи“ (обр. 8а), както и „заличени“ с положен върху повърхността им златен лист (обр. 8б). Канелюрите и в трите случая са оформени чрез научукване с различни поансоци за моделиране и продължителен напречен и надлъжен пригладжащ натиск с гладилки (обр. 5). Присъстващи при ритон 1 дефекти - нацепи и разкъсвания - са затворени чрез застъпване и научукване на краищата им.

**Протомите** са изработени обаче чрез различни полумози:  
-принадлежащите на ритоните 1 и 2 представляват цяла отливка, пластично дооформена основно от лицевата страна (обр. 9а, 12а, г, ф, 14, 17). Дефекти в областта на хопката на ритон 2 коригирани с фиксирана чрез нитоване допълнителна пластична (обр.8д). Чрез заглаждане и доначукване е поправен и дефект по лявата плешка, „коригирани“ и положен върху участъка златен лист (обр. 8с);  
-протомите на ритон 0 е от лява и дясна половини, дооформени чрез двустранна пластична деформация (обр. 11б, с; 12о, р.; 21);

-при ритоните 1 и 2 **отворите за изливане** са оформени чрез пробив отвътреш навън (обр. 9а, 10б);  
-при ритон 0 **отворът за изливане** е отделна тръбичка (обр. 11с, 24с);

**Краката** и при трите - представляват пластично домоделирани отливки (обр. 9с, д; 10г, 11г), а **рогцата и ушите** са оформени чрез доначукване на отлитя заготовки.

Три ритона от „Колекция Васил Божков“, впечатляват с изключителната си прилика. И трите, названи при консервационно-реставрационната експертиза с работни номера 1, 2 и 0, се състоят от протоми на скачани елени и високо издигнати и разширени към устието рогуве (обр. 1, 2). Протомите са обобщено, но натуралистично разработени, с локална позлата по главите, рогцата, гърдите, плешките, набраздените с гънки предни ръбове и гривни, китки и венци над копитата. Чрез позлата е маркирана юздата, украсена с набубри апликаци. И трите елени са със сезонни „златни“ петна (обр. 2, 6, 7). Роговете на ритоните са надлъжно канелюрани до разположен под устието ползателен фриз, орнаментирани с бръшлянов венец (обр. 4). Рыбът на устието им е с рамкиран от гладки ивици несъвършен ред, последван в долния край от редовни.

Във връзка с консервацията и реставрацията на обектите, а и изясняване на причините и обстоятелствата за изключителната прилика между трите ритона в Лабораторията за консервация, реставрация и изследване на културни ценности към Фондация „Тракия“ бе извършена експертиза, включваща: проучване на вътрешни и външни повърхности (при различни увеличавания и режими); рентгенография; изясняване на съставния състав и състояние на осъществени връзки, в това число и позлата, чрез проследяване и на характера на протекли дифузионни процеси; металграфски анализ чрез оптична и SEM микроскопия при различни режими. Използвана бе следната апаратура: стереомикроскоп Stemi 2000C, ендоскоп Olympus IPLEX II, радиограф SIEMENS FD-X, сканиращ електронен микроскоп HITACHI S 3700N с енергийно-дисперсивен рентгенов микроанализатор Noran Ultra Dry с NSS software Thermo Scientific (SEM-EDX), металграфски микроскоп AXIO Observer A1.m, оборудван с дигитална камера Jenoptik.

На настоящия етап от провеждането на изследванията резултатите предоставят следната технико-технологична информация:

1. И трите ритона са изработени от изключително близък по състав материал - рафиниран високочисто сребро (табл. ан. №1, 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13).

№	Обект	Състав	Вис. на отливка	Тегло	Объем	Състав, мас. %														
						Ag	Cu	Al	Pb	Zn	Sn	Bi	Co	U	Cl					
1	Ритон 1	сребро	100	100	100	99.99	0.01													
2	Ритон 2	сребро	100	100	100	99.99	0.01													
3	Ритон 0	сребро	100	100	100	99.99	0.01													



8 Подходи за корекция на лярските дефекти.

The head of the Metal Department at the Laboratory of the State Historical Museum in Moscow, Sergey Klepikov, spent 15 days on specialisation with us.

There so much more I could tell you. The terms of reference of the international competition for the design of the future museum in the building of the former Telephone Chamber provided for an entire floor dedicated to a conservation and restoration laboratory, a separate section for a research centre, halls for scientific conferences and specialisations, a scientific library, a separate section for lectures and training workshops: a veritable cultural centre equalling the best in the world. The concept of the museum was to address not only the specialised audience, but also the general public. What would be the point of a museum without people? Or even worse: what would be the point of a museum without a collection? As a specialist who has seen plenty in this world, I can say that the Vassil Bojkov Collection, with its outstanding contribution to the history of Antiquity, was not just a regional or European treasure, but a universally recognised global cultural fact.

A shattered dream. And a loss to us all.

## WORLD STANDARDS FOR PRESERVATION OF CULTURAL TREASURES. OUR REALITY.

According to the European standard Conservation of cultural property – packing principles for transport, adopted several years ago by the European Committee for Standardisation (CEN), of which the Bulgarian National Standards Body is a member, any transfer of museum objects from one place to another must comply with methodological rules for packaging production and handling of artefacts, the rules and mode for packing and unpacking, transport, monitoring of the objects' state before and after transport, acclimatisation requirements. But what happened in reality? Yes, they took them away as physical evidence, but, let me just remind you that wherever cultural property is concerned, it is the Cultural Heritage Act that applies.

They didn't have the patience, much less the materials needed. I alerted a colleague, a Conservation and Restoration graduate, that he was holding a unique helmet currently undergoing conservation, and one with temporary reinforcing pads in it... They took it away! A silver gilt bowl was in a similar condition, extremely brittle. I warned the investigator that transporting it in this state involved an extreme risk of it being destroyed. They sensed that something was wrong and left the bowl in the Laboratory. I have to say that one of the experts told me: "I refuse to be a part of this, neither today nor in the future... It's a matter of personal morality."

During the expropriation, they gradually learnt, purchased materials and started to follow some principles, although not the rules and standards mentioned. In spite of my insistence on being informed of the conditions in which the cultural property was kept so that I could follow up its state, to this date I have received no information. Officially, again

through the media, it was reported that the artefacts are held in a suitable, compatible environment. I dare not comment on the storage conditions at the National Museum of History, but I know that there is no storage facility in Bulgaria built in accordance with international regulatory documents. Movable cultural property needs constant control and monitoring, periodic maintenance. We constantly monitored the condition of the artefacts we conserved. When changes were detected, they were returned to the Laboratory for reconservation.

Suspension of Laboratory activities is an irreparable and unforgivable mistake. A scientific research unit, vital for the preservation of Bulgaria's cultural and historical heritage, was arbitrarily liquidated. Since 1974, I have been in close contact with the Ministry of Culture, or the Committee for Culture as it was called back then, as a member of the Council for the Preservation of Cultural Heritage, as a member of the National Museum Council, as Chairman of the Commission for the Conservation of Museum Valuables. There's no need for me to go into detail. I am well familiar with the facilities and working conditions at the conservation and restoration laboratories in Bulgarian museums. My question is, is there a strategy, a procedure and concern on behalf of the state for the conservation of movable cultural heritage today? Or do they only exist on paper?

I would gladly change my opinion if I received from the State some sort of justification, some practical assurance that it can act as a good steward and has the competence, the perseverance, the financial resources, the will and the faith to collect and care for our cultural heritage in the way I witnessed being done – an incredible professional opportunity for me, along with the opportunity to serve as companion in the creation of Mr. Vassil Bojkov's priceless private collection.

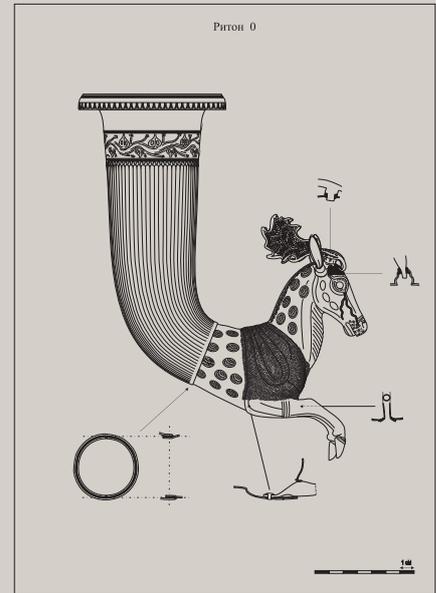
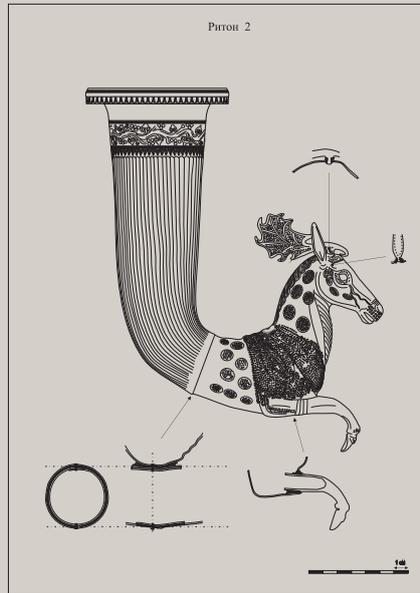
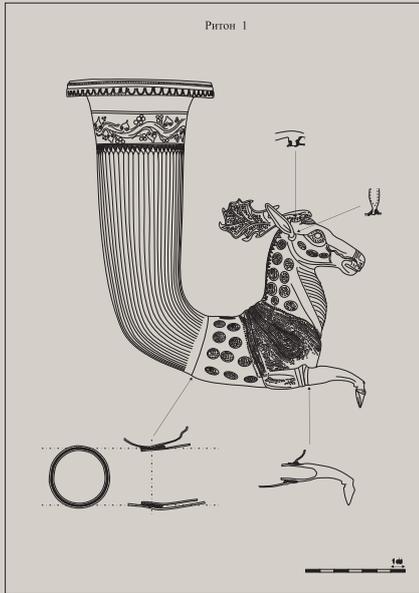
Prof. Veselina Inkova, 2021



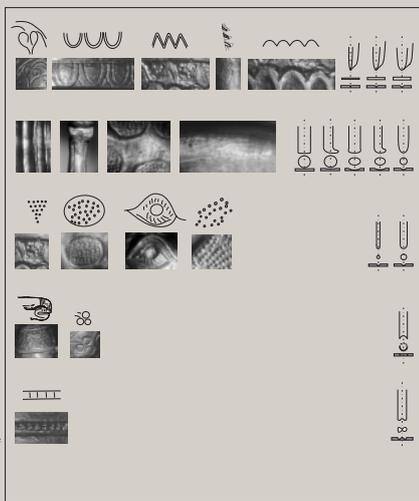
Rhyton with deer protome, gilded silver. 350 – 325 BC.



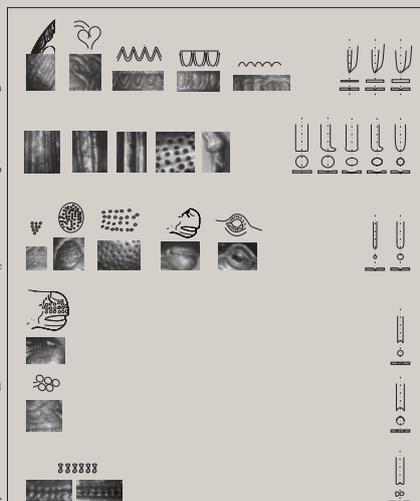
**ТРИ РИТОНА С ПРОТОМИ НА ЕЛЕН IV В. ПР. ХР.  
ЕДНАКВИ И РАЗЛИЧНИ.**



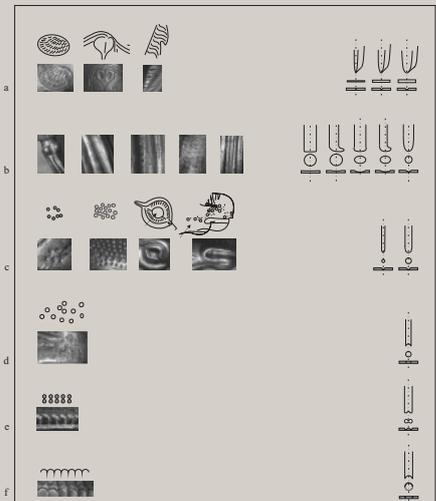
24 Вид на конструктивните връзки на елементите на ритоните.



25



26



27

25, 26, 27 Микроскопни и графични схеми, илюстриращи вида на инструментите, използвани за дооформяне и украса на ритоните (моделиране, трасиране и шпизлиране):

- a. Водачи за трасиране на реда от ови по устийните ръбове, ритони 1, 2 и 0
- b. Гладилки, използвани за моделиране, ритони 1, 2 и 0
- c. „Перден“ поансон за маркиране на козината по тялото, сезонните летва (при ритон 1 и 2), челната китка и за фактуриране на рогцата, ритони 1, 2 и 0
- d. Поансон, отпечатващи връччета, ритони 1, 2 и 0
- e. Фигурни поансон за моделиране на псевдо-зърната от устие и подустийния фриз, ритони 1, 2 и 0
- f. Поансон, отпечатващ дългици в горния край на канелорите, ритон 0
- g. Фигурни поансон с плосък триъгълен връх, използван за изпълнение на триъгълните мотиви над канелорите, ритон 0
- h. Фигурни поансон използван за отпечатване на овите по устийния ръб, ритон 0

Направените на този етап от изследването на ритоните **изводи** за:

- близък, дори идентичен състав и технологични характеристики на използвани и при трите ритона материали и техники за изграждане и свързване;
  - единотипен подход за дооформяне на отливки чрез пластична деформация, не само с различни поансон за моделиране, но и с продължителен прилежащ натиск с пособия от типа на стъргалки и гладилки;
  - традиционен, с тенденция за засилен декоративност, технико-стилов изобразителен похват за пластично доизграждане и орнаментална украса с използването, както на поансон за трасиране и моделиране, така и чрез локално отпечатване с фигурни поансон;
  - смислова натовареност на семантично значими елементи на изображенията чрез позлатяване със златно фолио, с твърде неравномерна, поради късия етап на изпълнение (след рисуването детайлиране), термодифузионна връзка. Характерна особеност и при трите ритона е и присъствието на неотстранени излишки от листа извън рисуваните контури;
  - еднакъв похват за корекция на дефекти не само чрез доливане, механични вставки и итговане, а традиционно „заличаване“ чрез позлатяване;
- дават основание за твърдението, че тези артефакти са дело на съществуващ в Древна Тракия производствен център, специализиран за изработка на този вид, характерни за тракийските земи, изделия на торевиците.
- Установените технологични отлики между ритон 0 и ритони 1 и 2, както и присъстващите белези за практическото използване на ритон 0, показват изработка от различни тореци или по-скоро и по-различно време. Разглеждайки като семантични елементи в системата на архаичната култура, присъствието на неотстранена пластична опора, както и останките от вино, подчиняват изработката на ритони 1 и 2 на депонирането им и прочит в контекста на тракийската потребна обрядност.





Plate with medallion depicting the 'Birth of Aphrodite', silver and gilding. 320-350 BC.

Unfortunately, we have the other side of the coin as well – forcible seizure and plundering of private collections. This usually occurs in turbulent times, in revolutionary situations. The consequences of egalitarian visionary thinking are contradictory, they have changed status-quos, but have also caused a lot of harm.

The French Revolution of 1789 is an example in this direction.\*



\* "Collecting – passion and value"  
2020, Valeri Stefanov

# TREASURES ARE BURIED. WHEN THE BARBARIANS COME

Opening speech by Prof. Valeri Stefanov at the first exhibition of the Union of Collectors in Bulgaria entitled "The Other Museum". National Gallery for Foreign Art, June 2010

Dear ladies and gentlemen,

We have the pleasure and honour to welcome you to the threshold of the exhibition entitled *The Other Museum*.

*The Other Museum* is the brainchild of the Union of Collectors in Bulgaria. It is the visible manifestation of the earnestness and passion of a small collecting community.

*The Other Museum* is a project that we intend to enrich and develop.

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Since the term 'collector' provokes contradictory implications in today's Bulgaria, we need to say a few words in this regard.

There are four things that make the collector's figure possible and effective.

The first is passion. Passion as a strong attraction to something. Not so much the passion to possess, but the passion to communicate. A painting is something you communicate with. Something you talk with.

The second is knowledge. The ignorant person is not a collector. Collecting opens paths of knowledge, which can easily be missed.

The third is chance. The streams of time and coincidence carry different things and you need to be by the shore at the right time and in the right place. Fortuna is the patroness of collectors.

The fourth condition is the means, the financial ability. Cultural heritage and contemporary art are part of the market and abide by market rules.

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With whom and with what is the "otherness" of *the Other Museum* juxtaposed?

First of all, this is the museum of Bulgarian citizens. The result of their personal enterprise, diligence and patriotism. Secondly, this is the visible museum as the counterpoint to the invisible, the secret, the hidden, carried away elsewhere. The modern museum is the offspring of the Age of Enlightenment and is guided by the belief in knowledge, in enlightenment. I'd like to quote a well-known fact: treasures are buried when barbarians advance. When destruction occurs. So, let us ask the rhetorical question – what type of barbarians are advancing on us today? What "wonderful" legal conditions have been created so that once again, much of the nation's cultural wealth is taking the downward path, to the "storage depot" of the earth and the darkness of hiding places?

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*The Other Museum* is an outstretched hand towards state institutions, towards all who are concerned by the problems facing culture. It must be clearly known and understood – culture is created neither through boasts, nor through the accumulation of objects. However beautiful they may be. However expensive. Culture is created by people who can read and understand the messages. By citizens capable of thinking, judging and making decisions.

This is the idea that *The Other Museum* wants to develop and establish in public space.

It wants to bring spirituality to the forefront, not just in words, but in deeds. To cultivate respect for achievements and admiration for talent.

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*The Other Museum* is a message to the Bulgarian state. For the wise state and the democratic society, there is one supreme value: man. Man is worth it more than all treasures piled together. Because man is the measure of all things, including the real value of what is defined as “national cultural heritage”. The wise state is not governed by myths and obsessions, but by clear written rules and pragmatic assertion of goals. Pragmatism refers to the skill of creating conditions to engage the enthusiasm, will and abilities of all stakeholders.

Thomas Hobbes defined the state as Leviathan. Leviathan is a monster capable of swallowing everyone. What we want to know is: if everyone is swallowed up, who will be left to enjoy “wealth”? And who will recognize it as such?

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*The Other Museum* is an appeal to the “Other Law”. Just like Kafka characters, today’s Bulgarian collectors stand in front of the closed door of a law that is unnecessarily aggressive and devoid of wisdom.

We do not question the Law in principle, we question the bad will which has constructed this specific law. We question the ignorance, which shows through it.

Another effect of this bad will is the thin red thread of fear that has spread today over our exhibition. As much as they glorify the survival instinct, we are convinced of one thing: fear is closer to death than to life.

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We know how the envious Bulgarian people will react and what they will say about this exhibition.

Envious people always ask “How much does it cost?” And “How come?”. We want to extend a hand towards the smart people of Bulgaria. Smart people ask “What does this mean?” and try to understand the message.

We will say it quite clearly: *The Other Museum* is a spiritual event that we want to share with the smart, talented and responsive people of Bulgaria.

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Finally, on behalf of our Union, we want to thank those who made this event possible.

Mr. Ginyo Ganev, who showed that the Ombudsman institution has its place in civil society and is a major factor in a democracy. The academician Svetlin Roussev, this unique person, thanks to whom *The Other Museum* will surely become a significant cultural event. The team of the National Gallery for Foreign Art for their dedicated work in preparing the exhibition. Everyone whose perseverance made *The Other Museum* possible.

Prof. Valeri Stefanov -  
Chairman of the Union of Collectors in Bulgaria, 2010



Rhyton with centaur protome, silver and gilding. 150-100 BC.

# THE OTHER MUSEUM



*Excerpts from a conversation between Rumyana Konstantinova and academician Svetlin Roussev, published in the journal Art Studies Quarterly, issue 3/2010 on the occasion of the exhibition The Other Museum, organized from 7th to 21st of June 2010 at the National Gallery of Foreign art (now the National Gallery / Square 500). The exhibition was the first public initiative of the Union of Private Collectors established in March 2010 in Bulgaria. The exhibition showed over 200 works owned by 32 private collections. The exhibits were grouped in several sections: archaeology, pictorial art, numismatics, phaleristics, philately, weapons, and their accessories, as well as ethnography. Curators of the exhibition were Acad. Svetlin Roussev and Prof. Ivan Marazov..*

**Rumyana Konstantinova:** In the state and municipal galleries' recent years conditions - lack of funds to purchase works, lack of modern equipped repositories to allow the restoration of works, etc., it turns out that private collectors largely take over the functions of the state - to buy, store, restore and as it is with you with Atelier-collection Svetlin Roussev and Collection - donation of Svetlin Roussev in Pleven, to make their collections available for the public. How do you see the development of this problem?

**Svetlin Roussev:** The state has its main functions in preservation, protection, development, and display of spiritual culture. Private collections and collectors can be a partner of the state, but in itself, a personal collection is definitely specific, with a non-standard expression and content. The genuinely serious state is obliged to support and stimulate private collections because they are part and often a very essential part of its spirituality. But the overall cultural policy is the work of the state - the helping hand of private collections is an expression of creative attitude. Unfortunately, we are witnessing exactly this type of lack of understanding. Does my collection, which I found in my studio and I maintain and show in a relatively professional way, excite any state institution about how I do it or what does it cost me?! These days Boyan Radev showed me several new "acquisitions" - two still lifes by Peretz and two artworks by Bencho Obreshkov, which he had bought abroad. At the same time, he

opened an exhibition of works by Georgi Baev. In recent years, he has shown solo exhibitions of Vassil Stoilov, Bencho Obreshkov, Ivan Nenov, Zlatyu Boyadzhiev, a large exhibition of his entire collection etc. His entire collection of paintings, sculptors, icons, antique sculptures (he had donated an entire hall to the National Museum of History) is shocking. He has clogged his apartment not with one, but with several museums. Where is the state? Where is its understanding that a huge museum, collected by one person, in which our whole development is reflected, is doomed? How will this collection become available without the assistance of the state? Doesn't the state have a building to display this collection in? It is not economic poverty, but spiritual poverty that is so dangerous. I shudder at the thought of what future this collection has. I don't want to go into detail about how many serious collections were squandered and scattered without seeing the light of day.

**Rumyana Konstantinova:** For specialists and researchers it is important in regards to their studies to have information about the works sitting in private collections. Do the members of the Union of Collectors have any plans in the near future to use new technologies and provide information about the works they possess on the internet?

**Svetlin Roussev:** One of the ideal goals of the Union is to bring it out and make it accessible for professionals researching our spiritual heritage, thus motivating its display in all classical and modern forms. Some of the most serious collections, like the Vassil Bojkov one, have several catalogues. He made several exhibitions abroad and at home, visited the National Museum of History for a long time and created one of the most serious restoration workshops. So what?! Perhaps did the state say thank you?! For now, except that envy was brushing its teeth on this collection, I do not know about anything else. What information regarding the works in private collections are we talking about? Did the state galleries, which have exhibition areas, and creative capacity, to have made their collections fully accessible? Our understanding is completely focused on serious cooperation and collaboration with specialists and researchers of the Bulgarian culture, but before everything, the collector must be freed from the fear that he is a persecuted private individual since the time of socialism.

**Rumyana Konstantinova:** Recently, after many years of debates in the Parliament and public space in our country, was adopted the Cultural and Historical Heritage Law. According to the Union of Collectors in Bulgaria, does this law help private collectors in their activity?

**Svetlin Roussev:** In our opinion, this is an illegal law – legally and professionally illiterate! Created as criminal action against some serious collectors of ancient art, in fact, it blocked the normal art market and created chaos and confusion at all levels of this activity. The action against Apollo and Mercury Auction house was in fact the offspring of this law – deeply speculative in their public ambitions. This law only shows that based on some kind of political consent, people who have not given five leva for art and have not set foot in an exhibition, cannot write and adopt a law on a matter that is not only too complex for them to understand but is also organically alien to them. Prof. Valeri Stefanov formulates very well the attitude of our Union towards this law: "The Other Museum exhibition is the other law!". What is now sad is that a lot of nerves, effort, and time will be wasted in saving the Bulgarian cultural heritage and the development of contemporary art by their own "lawmakers." A lie was released into the public space as a law for the salvation of the cultural and historical heritage. Sadly, there is little chance that among the authors of this lie, in all the chaos they have given us, someone will claim responsibility!



Rhyton with protome of Silenus reclining on wineskin, silver and gilding, 175-150 BC.

And so, ownership is different from possession,  
it is its legislative nuance.

Ownership is not simply what you have at your disposal,  
what is around you, in your immediate realm of control.

Ownership has become a legal abstraction – what is at your disposal  
plus the adopted regulation.

Regulation serves to both legitimise (it is yours!)  
and to prevent (thou shall not covet!).\*



\* "Collecting – passion and value"  
2020, Valeri Stefanov

# OPEN LETTER BY THE MANAGEMENT BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE UNION OF COLLECTORS IN BULGARIA

To the President of the National Assembly of the Republic of Bulgaria

To the President of the Republic of Bulgaria

To the Prime Minister of the Republic of Bulgaria

To the General Prosecutor of the Republic of Bulgaria

To the Members of the Union of Collectors in Bulgaria

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

The Union of Collectors in Bulgaria is a non-profit association with the main objective of preserving and socializing the cultural heritage of the Republic of Bulgaria in the frames of the Bulgarian state.

In recent months, the Union of Collectors and its members have been seriously disturbed by the systematic and purposeful imposition in the public space of a negative attitude towards Bulgarian collectors and collecting in Bulgaria as a whole.

Representatives of the state power, journalists, "experts" suggest through various media that Bulgarian citizens have no right to own cultural property, that these objects can only be owned by the state, that collectors are people who have illegally seized public property and now the time has come for it to be returned to the people.

With such populist statements, an opinion is imposed in society that collecting cultural and historical values is an illegal activity, and the people who carry it out are mostly oligarchs, that is, thieves and criminals.

A cursory review of the legal framework concerning the ownership of cultural property from the time of the Ottoman Empire to the present day shows that such claims are false and manipulative. An objective and professional analysis of this legislation shows that in all historical periods Bulgarian citizens have had the right to acquire and own 'antiquities', 'cultural monuments' or 'cultural property'. No law in the history of the country has provided for the expropriation and nationalization of already acquired cultural property. And since the nationalization of privately owned cultural property would be an uncon-

stitutional act, the adoption of the Cultural Heritage Law (CHL) in 2009 and subsequent amendments provided for requirements for the identification and registration of property in legal transactions and the export of cultural property. Paragraph 5, subpar. 1 of the CHL introduces mandatory identification and registration of movable archaeological objects over which possession had been established before the entry into force of the Law. At the same time, the Penal Code has adopted texts that criminalized the possession of unidentified and unregistered archaeological objects and the sale, purchase, export of unidentified and unregistered cultural property. Thus, in practice, penalties were provided for non-compliance with administrative obligations - deprivation of 4 to 6 years imprisonment, fines of up to BGN 10 - 20 000, confiscation of half of the property, and confiscation of the "object of the crime".

Thus, although the right of ownership of movable cultural property and movable archaeological artefacts is not formally prohibited, its practice exercise is significantly restricted. Moreover, although individuals have the right to own movable cultural property, they may be subject to criminal prosecution and imprisonment for failure to comply with administrative obligations.

The fate of the movable cultural property seized in various criminal proceedings is also unclear - where and how is it stored, who guards it, in what order and by who is it identified, what is the qualification of the experts and who is responsible for these items?

In recent years, we have witnessed numerous cases in which cultural property seized in pre-trial proceedings has subsequently disappeared without a trace.

We think that the legislative approach adopted in 2009 for the "protection" of cultural property in the Republic of Bulgaria is deeply flawed and short-sighted. This legislation introduces disproportionate criminal repression for acts or omissions that essentially constitute administrative offenses. That is to say, an equal sign is placed between a criminal offense and an administrative offense.

This approach, according to the late Property Law Prof. Vladimir Petrov, tells citizens, "Don't declare them, hide them, do everything, the law supposedly wants to prevent, just so they don't take them away from you." If you can't take them out, destroy them so you don't become the subject of endless criminal proceedings, inspections, arrests, and lawsuits. Will this approach preserve Bulgaria's cultural heritage? Will this socialize it and turn it into a source of pride and self-esteem for our heirs? Will we thus become an interesting and attractive destination for cultural tourism?

The Union of Collectors in Bulgaria finds that the public disclosure of information about criminal proceedings and ongoing investigations is not and cannot be evidence of crimes committed. Pending a final conviction by a Bulgarian court, such suggestions are inadmissible in a democratic and law-abiding state. Setting public opinion in Bulgaria against a large group of people is not in the interests of either the state or the legal order in it. It is another dividing line that disintegrates society, distracts it from the essential problems of the day, and prevents Bulgarians from uniting in the name of common national causes.

Collectors are different people, with different social and material status, with different professions, education, age, and interests, who are united by a common passion - collecting and preserving cultural values in the Republic of Bulgaria. Many of them are

people with middle and low incomes who consciously deprive themselves of the usual material benefits of allocating funds for their hobby. We believe, this is a public benefit activity that should be encourage and support by the state, not persecuted and subjected to repression.

Given the foregoing, the Union of Collectors in Bulgaria calls upon all state authorities in the Republic of Bulgaria, all media and journalists to respect the fundamental constitutional rights of Bulgarian citizens: their right to honour and personal dignity, the right to property, including ownership of cultural property, the right to inviolability of the person, privacy and home, the presumption of innocence until proven otherwise by a final verdict.

All actions relating to the restriction of these rights should be carried out within the framework of the law, in compliance with the procedures provided for in the Code of Penal Procedure, and following the purpose of the law. Because, in the general opinion of our members, the main value in a democratic state must be the Human Being and his fundamental rights, and not the things and procedures related to them. Human lives and destinies cannot be sacrificed these days for the sake of "preserving" real or supposed cultural values.

Board of the Union of Collectors in Bulgaria  
15 June 2020



Exaleiptron, bronze. 560-540 BC

# STATEMENT OF THE MANAGEMENT BOARD OF THE UNION OF COLLECTORS IN BULGARIA

**Subject: Legal regulation of the ownership of movable cultural property in Bulgaria from the second half of the 19th century to the present day**

To preserve and socialize the cultural heritage of Bulgaria is a cause behind which the Union of Collectors stands firm.

In recent years, in R. Bulgaria, certain state institutions, their officials, and experts have been imposing in the public consciousness the understanding that the possession of the cultural property is illegal, and the owners of such items are presumed to be criminals, immunologists, oligarchs... We believe that such an understanding is deeply wrong, manipulative, and harmful for the preservation of the cultural and historical heritage of the Republic of Bulgaria.

As an argument for a much wiser policy, we present a brief historical overview of the legal framework concerning the right of ownership of cultural property that has been in force on the territory of Bulgaria from the time of the Ottoman Empire to the present day.

An objective analysis of the legislation reveals that in all historical periods Bulgarian citizens have had the right to acquire, possess and exchange "antiquities", "monuments of culture" or "cultural property".

**In 1856, Sultan Abdul Majid issued the Hatt-i humayun**, a reform act proclaiming equal treatment for all subjects in the Ottoman Empire. It guaranteed the freedom of religion, life, honour, and property of subjects regardless of their ethnic origin or religious affiliation.

Subjects of Bulgarian origin had the right of ownership of movable property, without limitation in their nature.

In 1874, **Statute of antiquities** was published. The first attempts for the legal regulation of the cultural and historical heritage on the territory of the Ottoman Empire were made. Several concepts and terms, property rights, conditions for the search, preservation, movement, and trade in the cultural property (referred to as "antiquities") were clarified. According to this act, discovered movable property was divided equally between the State, the discoverer, and the owner of the land. If the discoverer and the owner were the same people, the discoverer took two-thirds of the find, and when the land was municipal (i.e.,

state), the discoverer received one-third and the state two-thirds.

After the Liberation, legislation was passed in Bulgaria to preserve the "antiquities".

**Provisional Rules for Scientific and Literary Events - 1888, Law on Searching for Antiquities and Supporting Scientific and Literary Events - 1890, Law of Antiquities - 1911.**

According to **Article 16** of the Law of Antiquities, "Movable antiquities found on private property belong to the finder if he is the owner of the place where they were found. Otherwise, they belong equally to the owner of the place and the finder." Държавата е имала право да изкупи онези старини, които е счела за нужни за нейните колекции срещу заплащане на стойността им (чл. 17).

State-owned antiquities are those antiquities that would be found on sites owned by the state, counties, municipalities, cities, and towns. The "surveyor" was owed a fee even in these cases. All antiquities found during archaeological excavations were the property of the State, and compensation was due to the landowner or, at his request, to the antiquities themselves or a part of them (Article 29 of the Law of Antiquities).

That is, according to the legislation in force in the Kingdom of Bulgaria, the state did not impose prohibitions on the acquisition and possession of the movable cultural property. On the contrary, the state encouraged citizens to hand over and preserve the antiquities they found. Such incentives were the payment of a significant part of the value of the found objects or even their provision in kind to the owner of the land or the "finder". If the state was not interested in buying them, citizens had the right to own, store, barter, and sell them.

These principles have continued in the legislation after the turning point of 1944 also. Even the socialist state did not nationalize the cultural property acquired following the laws in force at that time during the mass nationalization in 1947-1948.

**In 1951, the Property Law was passed** and is still in force. Article 91 of this Act provides that "things buried in the ground, walled up or otherwise hidden, the owner of which cannot be found, shall become the property of the State. The person who found them shall be entitled to a remuneration of 25% of the value." Things buried in the ground, walled up, or otherwise hidden may be the property of citizens and other legal entities; 2. Such things become state property in case their owner cannot be identified; 3. The discoverer of such property shall be entitled to just remuneration.

Article 28 of the same law establishes that "property of natural and legal persons may be all things **except those which, according to the Constitution of the People's Republic of Bulgaria, are exclusive state property or under the law are public state or municipal property.**"

Article 77 of the Law on Property regulates the means of acquiring the right of ownership - **"by legal transaction, by prescription or by other means specified in the law"**. These extraction methods are still valid today, and movable objects - cultural property and archaeological sites are not excluded from them.

**In 1969, the special Law on Cultural Monuments and Museums was adopted and acted until 2009.** Article 2 of the Law (in both its 1969 and 1995 versions) regulates the right

of "citizens" / "natural persons" to own cultural monuments. Article 11, subpar. 3 (version State Gazette No. 10 / 02. 02. 1990) of the Law even provided that the State should "encourage citizens to create personal collections of works of art and other works of art, antiques, coins, posters, stamps and other cultural property".

**According to Article 16 of the Law on Cultural Monuments and Museums**, "all monuments of culture discovered during archaeological excavations shall be the property of the State". This means that natural and legal persons may own all other monuments of culture that have not been discovered through archaeological excavations.

**According to Article 17, subpar. 3 of the 1991 Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria, private property is inviolable**, and Article 18, subpar. 1 defines as exclusive state property "the underground resources, the coastal beach, the republican roads, as well as the waters, forests and parks of national importance, nature and archaeological reserves defined by law."

Cultural property, including movable archaeological sites, is not exclusive state property.

**According to Article 86 of the Law on Property**, no property that is public state or municipal property may be acquired by prescription (version State Gazette No. 33 / 19. 04. 1996 - until today).

**In 1996, the Law on State Property** was adopted (in force since 1 June 1996). Article 2, subpar. 2, (3) of the same law states that "state properties and objects declared under the established procedure as monuments of culture of the universal or national value".

With the amendment of the Law on State Property of 30/10/1998 (State Gazette No. 124 / 1998), the text of Article 2, subpar. 2 (3) was repealed, i.e. the monuments of culture of the universal and national value were excluded from the scope of public state property. In the period 1998-2009, movable cultural property, including archaeological cultural property, could be acquired and owned by natural and legal persons.

**In 2009, the Cultural Heritage Law was adopted** (State Gazette No. 19 / 13. 03. 2009), which is still in force today with several amendments.

According to Art. 2a, subpar. 1 of the Law for public state property were declared cultural values, archaeological sites from the territory and aquatory / territorial waters of the Republic of Bulgaria within the meaning of Art. 146, subpar. 1: "Archaeological objects are all movable and immovable material traces of human activity of past ages, located or discovered in the earth strata, on their surface, on land and underwater, for which the main sources of information are field studies." От анализа на тези разпоредби следва изводът, че вещи, които не са открити чрез теренни проучвания, могат да бъдат собственост на други правни субекти освен държавата. In this sense are the reasons for Decision No. 176 / 20. 12. 2018 in case no. No. 5111 / 2017 of the First Supreme Court of Justice. These texts of the Law on Cultural Monuments of 2009 continue the understanding adopted by the Law on Cultural Monuments and Museums of 1969 that only cultural monuments discovered during archaeological excavations are the property of the state.

The Cultural Heritage Law introduces the principle of voluntary identification and registration of cultural property owned by natural and legal persons (Article 97, subpar. 3 of the Cultural Heritage Law).

The Cultural Heritage Law introduces the principle of voluntary identification and registration of cultural property owned by individuals and legal entities (Art. 97, subpar. 3). The obligation of identification and registration for natural persons arises in the case of **movable archaeological objects**, the possession of which was established before the entry into force of the law (§ 5, subpar. 1 of the Law), as well as in the case of legal transactions (Art. 113, subpar. 1 of the Law) and the case of export of cultural property.

Paragraph 5, subpar. 2 of the Transitional and final provisions to the Law provided: "In the identification of movable cultural property of national treasure, the right of ownership shall be established by an official document, whereby the persons under subpar. 1 may not invoke an expired statute of limitations", and in § 5, subpar. 3 provided that "persons who, within the period referred to in subpar. 1 have requested identification and registration, but have not established their right of ownership over the movable archaeological cultural property - national treasure, shall be considered as their holders...".

**Decision No 7 / 29. 09. 2009 in Constitutional Case No. 11/2009 of the Constitutional Court (published in State Gazette No. 80 / 9 October 2009), § 5, subpar. 2 and 3 of the Transitional and final provisions to the Law were declared unconstitutional.**

In the reasoning to the judgment on § 5, subpar. 2 of the Transitional and final provisions to the Law, the Constitutional Court held that "the requirement of an official document is in most cases an unenforceable condition and has the character of a deliberately placed legal obstacle to the implementation of the procedure of identification of the said movable cultural property - national wealth". The Court also accepts that "the Bulgarian legislation has not provided either in the past or at present a special form for the acquisition by purchase and sale of movable property (except for motor vehicles), regardless of whether they have the quality of cultural property". Furthermore, "the norm of § 5, subpar. 2 of the Transitional and final provisions to the Cultural Heritage Law contradicts Art. 4, subpar. 1, Art. 17, subpar. 1 and 3, and Art. 57, subpar. 1 of the basic law of the country and due to the restriction introduced in it in proving the right of ownership of movable cultural property - national wealth. According to the constitutional judges, "the legal consequences provided for in the contested provision of the Cultural Heritage Law have the character of denationalization of private property outside the hypothesis of expropriation regulated in Article 17, subpar. 5 of the basic law".

In Decision No. 7 / 29. 09. 2009 in case No. 11 / 2009 of the Constitutional Court on § 5, subpar. 3 of the Transitional and final provisions to the Cultural Heritage Law, the court held that the presumption introduced by the law (in case of unidentified ownership of archaeological cultural property it is always considered that the property is held for the state) contradicts Art. 17, subpar. 1 and 3 of the Constitution. The judges recall that the distinguishing criterion between the possessor and the possessed is the intention, by which the thing is held - the owner holds it personally or through another as his own, and the holder holds it personally but for another. According to the reasoning of the decision, "the legislature unreasonably assumed that since ownership is not established, possession is necessary for the state...". In fact, an individual may exercise possession for another natural or legal person or hold the thing for himself.

The compulsory identification and registration of movable archaeological objects and movable cultural property subject to remunerative transfer transactions are administrative procedures that restrict the free exercise of the right to property of Bulgarian citizens.

These procedures aim not to ensure the preservation of cultural heritage as to ensure the control of the State over the turnover of movable cultural property and justify criminal repression against the owners of such property.

The procedures for identification and registration of movable objects as cultural property require significant financial resources from the owner of the objects. In some cases, the resources required for identification and registration may exceed the value of the objects themselves or the material interest in the transaction.

Many Bulgarian citizens cannot afford to pay for these funds. At the same time, they are at risk of prosecution for failure to comply with identification obligations.

Thus, in practice, they are forced by the state to conceal, export, or even destroy the cultural property they own.

Identification and registration is not a unilateral process. It involves the fulfilment of several obligations by the Ministry of Culture and museums. We have witnessed the fact that this activity has been going on for years. Therefore, the failure to comply with the obligation to identify and register cannot be blamed solely on citizens.

In 2009, the Penal Code of the Republic of Bulgaria (in force since 1968,) texts were adopted that criminalized the possession of unidentified and unregistered archaeological objects and the sale, purchase, export of unidentified and unregistered cultural property. For example, Article 278, subpar. 6 of the Penal Code provides for imprisonment of up to 4 years and a fine of BGN 2,000 to BGN 10,000 for possession of an archaeological object that has not been duly identified and registered. And when the object of the offense constitutes national wealth, as well as when more than three archaeological sites are held the Penal Code provides imprisonment for up to 6 years and a fine of BGN 3 000 to BGN 15 000.

Thus, in practice, for non-compliance with administrative obligations, without affecting the rights and interests of others, the Penal Code provides for penalties - imprisonment for up to 4-6 years, fines of up to BGN 10-20 000, confiscation of property, and confiscation of the object of the "crime".

We consider that this legislation introduces disproportionate criminal repression for acts or omissions, which by their nature constitute administrative offenses. Completely unjustifiably equates a criminal offense with an administrative offense. The penalties provided for in the Penal Code do not correspond to the public danger of the acts related to the possession and sale of unidentified cultural property.

Similar penalties are provided for certain serious crimes against the person (minor and medium bodily injury, manslaughter, defamation, coercion, etc.).

That is, in the system of legally protected values in democratic Bulgaria, the legislator puts the rights to the property before the rights of the individual. There is even a restriction of the freedom of the individual to ensure the control of the state over the ownership and turnover of movable property - cultural property.

Such a repressive legislative framework in the field of cultural heritage protection did not exist in any period of the history of the Bulgarian state after the Liberation. No law has

provided for the expropriation and nationalization of already acquired cultural property. In addition, since the expropriation of cultural property would be unconstitutional and socially unacceptable nowadays, the legislator has used other means to confiscate movable cultural property from Bulgarian citizens.

By imposing unenforceable conditions for the identification and registration of cultural property and by linking the identification and registration procedures to increased criminal repression, in contemporary Bulgaria, the expropriation of private property is in practice taking place. What is the fate of the confiscated items, whether they become the property of the State, and the public does not know how citizens will be able to access them.

The legislative approach adopted in the last 10 - 12 years does not achieve the objectives of the Cultural Heritage Law for protection and socialization of the cultural property. On the contrary, it has led to the dissipation, concealment, and destruction of the country's cultural heritage.

The Board of the Union of Collectors in Bulgaria considers it necessary to undertake urgent legislative changes to achieve a fair balance between public and private interest in the preservation of cultural property.

These changes are necessary to guarantee the fundamental rights of Bulgarian citizens - the right to personal freedom and the right to private property. It is unacceptable today human lives and destinies to be sacrificed in the name of administrative procedures and the "preservation" of things that can only be assumed to represent the cultural property.

We still believe that the man and the human rights are the highest values in a democratic country.

They deserve to be protected by a new and wise legal framework.

Board of the Union of Collectors in Bulgaria,  
March 2021

# BOJKOV'S COLLECTION WOULD BE A SOURCE OF PRIDE FOR THE LOUVRE



*Excerpts from an interview of Mariela Baleva with Prof. Ivan Marazov, published in "Trud" newspaper, issue 6, February 2020.*

*Professor Ivan Marazov is a specialist in Art History, Culturology, and in Thracian history and culture. He graduated Art history in St. Petersburg. Director of the Institute of Art History of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences from 1988 to 1991. Lecturer at New Bulgarian University, Head of Department of History of Culture from 1995 to 2006. Minister of Culture (1995-1996). Candidate for President of Bulgaria in 1996.*

**Mariela Baleva:** You are among the most respected specialists in Thracian history and culture and as such, how much do you appreciate the collection of Vassil Bojkov?

**Ivan Marazov:** I will start a little further. In 1996 I was invited to be a lecturer at the Paul Getty Museum in Malibu – this is one of the most luxurious museums of Antiquity in the world. There I happened to be at an exhibition of a great Japanese collection with collected items such as those in Bojkov's collection. No one asked why these items are here, how they were obtained, where they were bought from, and so on. Back then, I really envied this family for having such a collection. There were many rhyta, ornaments... In 1972 - 1973 I met George Ortiz – an American billionaire who lived in Switzerland. He came here, we talked about his objects – he had a magnificent collection as well. Vassil Bojkov's collection is at least five times richer than these two collections put together. Moreover, they were considered to be the richest private collections of antique objects. I have been dealing with Antiquity for 50 years and I do have an idea of what is owned in the world. There are no such quality things as in Vassil Bojkov Collection. I would even say that the world's biggest museums do not have as many objects from the end of the 5th century BC.

We call this *toreutics* – work with precious metal and metal in general. Nowhere – not in the Hermitage, not in the British Museum, not in the Louvre, not even in the Metropolitan Museum and Paul Getty have it in such dimensions.

**Mariela Baleva:** Were you a consultant to Vassil Bojkov, or is this only media speculation?

**Ivan Marazov:** I'm sorry, but most of the journalists don't make a difference between consultation and study. I haven't consulted him about anything. Bojkov accumulated a lot of knowledge about the art of that time and he bought his own objects. I don't know who consulted him or if he was consulted at all, but surely not with me. My task was different, and this is why has he invited me in 2005, to be in charge of the publishing of this heritage. Therefore, I wrote three books, published a catalogue, made two exhibitions – one at the Museum of Eastern cultures, and the other at the State Historical Museum in Moscow – that was it. Mr Bojkov was at the opening of both exhibitions, and their success was huge.

**Mariela Baleva:** Bojkov is rich enough and can buy anything he wished, but what's more interesting about him is that he did not choose to hide the most valuable things instead he displayed them.

**Ivan Marazov:** He showed the acquired objects to real connoisseurs in exhibitions - that's what he certainly wanted to do. In 2011 we did a big exhibition in the National Museum of History, where Bojkov showed almost everything. The deceased director of the museum, Prof. Bozhidar Dimitrov gave him an entire hall and was really proud that these amazing valuable objects are exhibited in the largest Bulgarian museum.

**Mariela Baleva:** This exhibition was also shown in the European Parliament in Brussels, on occasion of our entry into the EU. What do you remember from back then?

**Ivan Marazov:** Then the exhibition was a great success – at its opening, there were at least 100-200 MEPs. I was present, I took part in the line-up and we did a catalogue. The exhibition was not large – there were between 40 - 50 items, and the score of the performance was extremely high, as they asked a lot of professional questions. My Grace led several groups of deputies, individual ones as well, stopping and explaining in front of every display... On occasion of Bulgaria's accession to the EU, there was no other cultural event than the exhibition.

**Mariela Baleva:** Who paid for the insurance then, maybe the state after all?

**Ivan Marazov:** No, I must tell you that everywhere he pays his own insurance. The state did not help him. As far as I remember, the media spat at him then "Why him! Why Bojkov, will be representing Bulgaria?" Well, the truth is that someone has invited him and no one else thought of proposing something else. I am not a lawyer nor a defender of Bojkov, I'm talking about the collection. I'm talking about this Bojkov, who owns all these things and how he lives with them. An interview with Vassil Bojkov was published in the newspaper *European* at the time. My article came out, as well as an interview with Svetlin Roussev: all this is Bulgaria too!

**Mariela Baleva:** During the communication with Vassil Bojkov did you see which were objects that he had the greatest weakness for?

**Ivan Marazov:** I can't say, he liked every single object that he acquired. However, he was

especially happy when he added another rhyton to the collection. Bojkov has the most rhyta, more than there are in the whole world. Of course, at least from those collections, we know.

**Mariela Baleva:** Does one of his rhyta really cost 2.5 million euros, as you mentioned days ago?

**Ivan Marazov:** I don't know exactly how much it costs – it could cost 500 000 euros. But I can assure you that there is no Bulgarian museum which could invest this money. The price is a very relative thing in auctions where antiquity is sold. I regularly take a look at catalogues and I see that some prices are not that high. Of course, for us, the price of 50,000 dollars is unbearably high, but for a man like Bojkov, it isn't. I remember him explaining that for a cup he was bidding more than the Hermitage, for a vase he was bidding more than the Athens National Museum... He was really proud to own things that others do not have. It seems like this is the pleasure of collecting. Unfortunately, I am completely devoid of such a pleasure, I do not suffer from this. However, it appears that one of the motivations for all collectors is to possess what no one else has.

**Mariela Baleva:** I would like to ask you whether you have an opinion on the following issue: between the state and the private individual, who would take better care of such a fantastic collection?

**Ivan Marazov:** Bojkov made a very rich laboratory, in which he invested a lot of money. All his objects passed through it. I guess the state also could take care of such a collection because if it didn't, it would be morally accusable. There are enough good restorers in Bulgaria who can take care of such wealth. I remember in the early years of democracy they said: "The state is a bad owner". And now at this point, I really do not understand the position of **Mariela Baleva:** Do you think that all objects or at least most of them are officially declared? Because there were rumours saying that there are about 3000 items in the collection, but only 200 of them were described.

**Ivan Marazov:** In these three thousand most of them are small statuettes, marble pieces... But from the things I dealt with when I organized the exhibitions in Moscow in 2013, there were 150 and in the exhibition, there were about 50 more objects from the most valuable museum rarities: these are described. I remember that in 2009 when the law came out, Dr. Gergana Kabakchieva did not leave the office until describing everything to declare and to register it. She is a representative of the Trace Foundation, which personally dealt with part of Bojkov's collection, and as a scientist, she processed objects from the Late and Roman Antiquity. Besides, so many catalogues and publications came out with everything described, no one hid anything, everything was exposed to the audience.

**Mariela Baleva:** Did this contribute to the rapid spread of the information regarding this collection around the world?

**Ivan Marazov:** Of course. Colleagues from the USA, England, and Germany called me to send them pictures of some things from the collections – of course, they wanted permission to be able to include them in their publications in comparative material. What could be better than this: the collection appeared in scientific circulation terribly fast! Because Bojkov wanted everything to happen this way.

**Mariela Baleva:** How did the items for the exhibition in Moscow arrive, with Bojkov's private jet or with a Bulgarian airplane?

**Ivan Marazov:** Oh, things don't happen easily. Vassil Bojkov hired a special company for art logistic Hasenkamp, the most expensive in this type of service. An exclusive organization followed the transport of the treasures to Moscow. The protection of the artefacts were implemented by Russian federal services. The collection was insured for a record 52 million euros. Moreover, this German company was involved in transport, but also in the legalization of exports both in Russia and in Brussels. It was charged to pick up the objects at the airport and therefore to take care of the entry and the exit of objects. Employing this company is an extremely expensive investment, it also had special requirements on how to pack the objects... not an easy job. He paid insurance, as well as the residence of the curators in Moscow. In total, all of this must have cost him dozens of millions.

**Mariela Baleva:** Was it worth it?

**Ivan Marazov:** Absolutely! The response from the audience was huge. I am not going to forget how in the first exhibition in Moscow the Deputy Director of the museum invited me to guide a selected audience. When I met this audience, I was amazed: there was the grandson of one of the greatest collectors in the history of Russia, Schukin. In fact, Schukin collected works of art in the late nineteenth century. Today, his possessions fill the halls of the biggest Russian museums – The Hermitage and Pushkin. What is more, his grandson invited me to see his collection, among which was Malevich's earliest painting.

**Mariela Baleva:** You graduated in St. Petersburg and you were in the Hermitage probably hundreds of times. Do you think that such a rhyton would fit well in this temple of art?

**Ivan Marazov:** Oh, God! This will be exceptional if it happens! Well, the Hermitage owns only one Greek object, a part of a fragmented kylix from the end of the 5th century BC whereas Bojkov has at least 15 to 20 objects from that time. This particular century is a very complex period. Things are not comparable. Many of the items in Bojkov's collection would be a source of pride for any museum like the Louvre, the Metropolitan in New York, and everywhere... Did you know that in the British Museum there is only one vase from the 4th century, whereas Bojkov has many objects from the 4th century, which are quite difficult to find? That's why it would be blasphemy if such a collection gathered with much patience, insistence, and of course a lot of money, is not protected as a greatest value.

February 6, 2020

# THE VASSIL BOJKOV COLLECTION AND ITS PLACE AMONG PUBLIC AND PRIVATE ARCHAEOLOGICAL COLLECTIONS OF WORLD-WIDE IMPORTANCE



*Prof. Athanasios Sideris is a classical archaeologist. Between 2009 and 2014 he was the director of excavations in Halka, Bulgaria and of the field survey for the Gaugamela battlefield in Northern Iraq.*

*He currently heads the study in the area of Kastrouli, Phocis – a joint project with the University of California, San Diego.*

*His research fields encompass economy and ecology of the Greek world, works of toreutics and more particularly metal vessels, Achaemenid art, the history and archaeology of Phocis and Boeotia, Greek-Thracian and Greek-Scythian relations.*

*He lectures in several European universities and studies works of toreutics from various collections, including the George Ortiz Collection in Geneva, the Benaki Museum in Athens, the Shelby White Collection in New York and the Gulbenkian Foundation in Lisbon.*

*Head curator at the Vassil Bojkov Museum with the Thrace Foundation.*

*Member of the Editorial Committee of the International Journal of Computational Methods in Heritage Science.*

The Vassil Bojkov Collection of antiquities counts a few thousands of artifacts of varying nature, function, date and cultural affiliation. The core of the collection dates from the first millennium BC and it contains items of luxury metalware (toreutics), personal ornaments, arms and weapons, pottery, some works of sculpture and epigraphic monuments. They pertain mainly to the Greek and Thracian cultural domains, but some outstanding examples represent as well the Phrygian, Lydian, Achaemenid, Scythian, Celtic, Etruscan and Roman cultures. Several crucial aspects of the Classical world are documented and illustrated in unparalleled ways through the artifacts of the collection.

These objects, acquired through international auctions or from other collectors at home or abroad, often lack a precise provenance or extensive contextual data. But this should not be surprising since it is the case for large parts of the artifacts constituting some of the greatest museums of the world, such as the Munich Antikensammlung, the Louvre, the British Museum, the Benaki Museum in Athens, the Metropolitan Museum in New York, the Boston Museum of Fine Arts and many others. And the Vassil Bojkov Collection belongs to these top-class collections by the quality, originality, uniqueness and diversity of its artifacts. All categories of its objects include some extraordinary masterpieces, such as the gold-and-silver sword sheath, the gold snake-head bracelets, the red figure pelike with Apollo and a muse, or the Hellenistic marble statue of Aphrodite with Eros. Many of these works of art would be leading exhibits in any world museum. For many of them actually European and American museums have bided in international auctions, but the collector didn't spare the means for acquiring the best of the best, making many world-museum-directors jealous.

Let's not forget that a world-class collection is not determined by the quantity of the exhibits, but by their quality, uniqueness and diversity. Thus, claiming that this or that museum possesses hundreds of thousands of artifacts does not say much about the importance of its collection. And in this aspect the Vassil Bojkov Collection is undoubtedly the most important collection in the world concerning luxury toreutics of the Greek world and its periphery. No European or American museum can claim better representation of various shapes, local workshops, artistic styles and historical periods in the domain of the bronze vases. You may visit the Louvre, the Berlin Antikensammlungen and the Hermitage, and still not finding in all three combined the variety, originality and skillfully crafted bronzes that you encounter in the VBC. As for the silver let's only say that it is the largest single collection of Athenian Classical silverware, containing more than half of all known exemplars (in six museums and collections around the world) with gilded figurative representations. Moreover, these representations are of paramount significance for the understanding of the artistic developments in the time of Parthenon and the political and ideological postulates of the Athenian democracy under Pericles and during the ensuing Peloponnesian War. Further extraordinary masterpieces document thus far unknown aspects of the Pergamene and other Hellenistic schools of toreutics making this section of the VBC comparable only to (if not surpassing) the analogous collections in Getty, Malibu, and in Thessaloniki.

Museums are often the result of accidental amassing of works of much varying quality through time, some of which may be masterpieces. This particular collection, however, has been created both by the determination of one person and the existence of a clear and coherent concept, which led in the acquisition of really unique and representative pieces with high artistic, cultural and educational value. Anyone who may have the opportunity to visit it will be confronted with the magnificent, brilliant and uninterrupted fresco of the history of toreutic art and its social implications, from drinking parties to religious festivals and death rituals, for more than a millennium.

Dr. Athanasios Sideris  
March, 2021

What "has no end" is not the collection itself,  
as a compilation of objects, but rather the desire of the human,  
the collector.

When the human ceases to collect, when he puts an end,  
he is no longer a collector, but becomes a holder,  
an owner, a curator.

It is the infinity of desire that guarantees a collection's life.  
This is yet another important characteristic of the collection –  
its deep fusion with the passionate figure of its creator.  
It is he who renders it incomplete – he not only knows the deficiencies,  
but rather creates them himself with his imagination, his dreams.  
Even if he succeeds in collecting all known coins  
of a certain type or epoch,  
he will continue to seek and to find – new, better  
or simply different specimens, etc.\*

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\* "Collecting – passion and value"  
2020, Valeri Stefanov



Phiale, silver and gilding. 540–520 BC.

VASSIL BOJKOV COLLECTION

# PAST AND PRESENT

Compiled by:  
**Kristiana Ilieva**

Editor  
**Dr. Ruja Popova**



The present edition incorporates:

Archives of the Thrace Foundation  
Archives of the Union of Collectors in Bulgaria  
Quotes by Stefanov, V. 2020: Collecting. Sofia  
Press publications

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to follow their dreams and gratitude to all we have worked with.

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The cover shows a detail from: Rhyton with lynx protome, inscribed, silver and gilding.  
End of 2nd – beginning of 1st century BC.