The Metropolitan Museum of Art

Bulletin
Summer 1977

Director's Note

We know little about the early Thracians—they left no written language, and the later historical sources, Greek and Roman, vary in their accuracy. Rough and warlike, they were considered true barbarians by the Greeks, but they had a taste for luxury. The Thracian kings were described in dazzling terms by Homer in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. The splendor of King Rhesos amazed a Trojan ally: "His chariot is beautifully finished with gold and silver; and he brought some huge pieces of golden armor with him too, a fantastic sight. Men really shouldn't wear such things; they are only fit for the immortal gods." And Odysseus, who spared the life of the Thracian priest-king Maron, was rewarded by him with seven talents of gold—over 500 pounds!

Even if we were to credit about half that amount to poetic fancy, such extravagance would still seem unbelievable were it not for the evidence of Thracian wealth presented in *Thracian Treasures from Bulgaria,* an exhibition that opens at the Metropolitan in early June. Here are hoards that lend credence to the legends: gold jewelry and plaques from about 3200 B.C. that are among the oldest found in Europe; gold ritual vessels—a collection of thirteen objects weighing over 27½ pounds—perhaps once used by a Bronze Age Thracian chieftain; a lavishly decorated gold drinking set, probably made in Asia Minor around 300 B.C., that may be the most fabulous from the ancient world. And these, all discovered on Bulgarian soil within the past fifty or sixty years, represent only a minute portion of what must have existed.

While gold will certainly be the greatest revelation to visitors to this exhibition, there are other discoveries as well: works of great refinement, including beautiful jewelry to satisfy the most extravagant taste, exquisite harness plaques (swift Thracian horses were highly prized), elaborate clothing ornaments, and armor of precious materials; and there is a tremendous variety. For Thrace, which was one of the crossroads of the Greek, Persian, and Roman worlds, drew from them all. Here in splendid juxtaposition are vessels and jewelry by Greek and Persian craftsmen, Greek and Persian forms adapted by Thracian artisans, and purely Thracian works of great originality and vitality.

This important exhibition—much of this material is new even to the specialist—and this *Bulletin* have been made possible through the assistance of the Robert Wood Johnson Jr. Charitable Trust. The coordination of the show at the Metropolitan was in the capable hands of Dietrich von Bothmer, Chairman of the department of Greek and Roman Art, who also played an indispensable role in the preparation of the *Bulletin.* Most of the extraordinary photographs in this issue were taken by Lee Boltin. We are especially grateful to Professor Ivan Venedikov, of the National Archaeological Institute, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Sofia, and The Committee for Art and Culture of The People's Republic of Bulgaria for providing most of the text, and to the Bulgarian museums who lent us their priceless objects.

Thomas Hoving
Director

Cover and frontispiece: Horse and bull, details of two rhyta. Silver, partly gilt. First half of the 4th century B.C., Borovo, Rousse district. District Museum of History, Rousse, Inv. Nos. II 357, 359

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The Thracians

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When Hector led the army of Troy against the Greek invaders, he had allies from far and near fighting at his side. There was even a king from distant Thrace who arrived, as a character in the *Iliad* reported, with

> the biggest and handsomest horses I ever saw,
> whiter than snow and swifter than the winds,
> and a chariot finely wrought with silver and gold.

The arms that he brought were also of gold. A taste for war, for silver and gold, and for fine horses—Homer neatly caught the characteristics that were the hallmark of Thracian aristocrats throughout ancient history.

The earliest traces of man in Thrace—roughly speaking what is today part of northeastern Greece and southeastern Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, and European Turkey—go back to Paleolithic times, forty thousand years ago. By about 6000 B.C. its fields were being tilled by a settled agricultural population; Thrace had entered the Neolithic Age. Two thousand years later some of the inhabitants discovered the riches under the soil, abundant deposits of minerals, and turned to mining and metalwork. In central Bulgaria archaeologists have come upon shafts sunk deep into the earth to extract copper ore and have excavated numerous copper tools, weapons, and ornaments, all dating from this remote period. By 3000 B.C. Thrace's precocious smiths were working in gold —probably panned from rivers rather than mined—and were fashioning the rings, bracelets, plaques, and other adornments that were among the earliest gold objects to come out of Europe.

Sometime around 1500 B.C. there swept in upon this land the Thracians Homer wrote about, the hard-riding, opulently equipped warriors. They spoke an Indo-European language—one akin to Latin and Greek and most of the other languages that now prevail in Europe—so they must have been part of the vast movement that brought speakers of Indo-European from their homeland, wherever it was, into southern Europe and Asia Minor. The new arrivals established themselves as a ruling aristocracy and indulged fully in that fondness for gold which Homer observed. Some fifty years ago the owner of a farm at Vulchitrun in northern Bulgaria, while turning the soil, stumbled upon a hoard that must have belonged to one of these Thracian chieftains, a collection of solid-gold bowls, cups, lids, and a strange three-part vessel, with an aggregate weight of more than twenty-seven pounds; one bowl alone weighs nearly nine.

The Thracians, both the nobles and the peasants, were caught up in the churning of peoples that took place between 1200 and 1000 B.C. as the curtain came down on the Bronze Age in the Mediterranean. When the Iron Age opened, there was a new cast of characters, including the Greeks of Classical times and later, those whom we know so well from their renowned intellectual and artistic achievements. Thanks to these Greeks, the Thracians finally stepped out of the dim shadows of prehistory and into the light of recorded history.

About 700 B.C. Greek emigrants began planting colonies along the strip of Thrace that borders the northern Mediterranean and the Black Sea. The first years were hard: the Thracians were tough fighters, and much blood was spilled before they gave up their rights of possession and grudgingly retreated into the mountains and valleys that lay behind the coastal plain. But by 600 B.C. a line of Greek cities had been firmly established, and an active trade developed between them and the "barbarians" in the hinterland. By "barbarian" Greeks usually meant anyone who did not speak Greek, but in the case of the Thracians, they meant it the way we do today. For the Thracians, instead of living in cities as all Greeks thought civilized peoples should, clung to their age-old tribal organization, clustering in hamlets that were mere collections of huts and existing on meager farming augmented by herding, hunting, and brigandage.

Around 450 B.C. that tireless and observant traveler Herodotus found himself in Thrace. Herodotus has been called the Father of History; he might equally aptly be dubbed the Father of Anthropology: his chapters on the

Opposite: Thracian soldier and a woman holding a *harpe* (sickle), detail of an Attic red-figured bell krater by the Painter of London E 497. About 440 B.C. Metropolitan Museum, Fletcher Fund, 24.97.30

Thracians and their neighbors are a milestone in Western literature, the first eyewitness account of primitive peoples living beyond the pale of civilization. He reported, among other matters, the Thracians' belief in immortality and their curious sexual and marital customs. Men had not one but several wives, and the wives, upon the death of their jointly held husband, competed as to who had been his favorite; the winner gained the privilege of being killed and placed at the side of the corpse in the grave, which was in a tomb covered by a prominent mound. We may believe what he says, for archaeological excavation has confirmed his words. All over Thrace have been found the burial mounds he mentions, tumuli containing chambers that were carefully built, lavishly decorated, and filled with precious objects to serve the deceased in the next life. A recently discovered tomb at Vrasta revealed that more than one favorite might accompany her lord to the hereafter: in the inner chamber archaeologists found the bodies of a young couple, the woman with a knife through her breast, and, in an outer, a second woman transfixed by a spear.

Paintings on Greek vases, such as one on the fifth-century B.C. bell krater on page 2, confirm Herodotus's description of the dress and armor of a Thracian soldier: "They wear fox-skin caps on their heads, tunics next to the body, and over this long cloaks of many colors. Legs and feet are in fawn-skin boots. They carry javelins, light shields, and short daggers."

Any Thracians who could afford it, Herodotus reported, had nothing but contempt for the life of a farmer and considered fighting, above all brigandage, as the only proper way to earn a living. This attitude soon brought them out of their mountain fastnesses and into contact with the Greek world, for here, they discovered, there was plenty of opportunity for employing their warlike talents. Greek armies depended almost exclusively on the heavy-armed infantryman, the famed hoplite; they were chronically short of cavalry, and had no light-armed troops at all. Thracians were born horsemen and, so far as foot soldiers were concerned, they had only light-armed men, dressed, as Herodotus described, with nothing but a light shield as defensive armor. The shield was crescent-shaped and made of wicker covered with hide; it was called a pelta, and the men who carried it, like the soldier illustrated at the right, were peltasts. Completely mobile, they made ideal guerrillas—and, through bitter experience, the Greeks discovered that the only way to protect their solid, slow-moving lines of hoplites from the hit-and-run peltasts was to fight fire with fire and have some of these agile troops on their own side. Thracian peltasts and cavalrymen began hiring out as mercenaries to Greek commanders as early as the sixth century B.C. Within a hundred years there were contingents of them in most Greek armies, and they became so common a sight in Greek cities that Aristophanes could crack jokes about them: in his *Lysistrata* one of the characters tells how she saw a Thracian buck swagger into the marketplace

> and, brandishing pelta and javelin, make
> some fruit vendor so afraid
> she runs for her life—and lets him take
> her total stock in trade.

Thracian slaves were an equally familiar sight. Herodotus mentioned the Thracians' habit of selling their children into slavery abroad. In addition, any males taken as prisoners of war generally ended up on the auction block. Consequently, considerable numbers of Thracian men and women were to be seen in the service of Greek households, where, being tall and gray-eyed and either fair-haired or red-haired, they must have stood out among their shorter, dark-complexioned owners. The plays of Aristophanes and Menander and other writers of Greek comedy often have slaves named Thratta or Geta in the cast of characters; Thratta is simply Greek for "Thracian girl" and the Getai were one of the most important Thracian tribes. In a comedy by Menander, a slave named Geta delivers a bit of ethnic humor: he holds forth on how much better off his countrymen are than the ordinary run of males who must make do with only one wife; Thracians, he declares, can't get along with less than "ten, eleven, twelve, even more. Why, back home, any poor devil who has only four or five doesn't even count as married."

Toward the end of the fifth century B.C. Thrace began making an impact on the Greek world in more significant ways than supplying it with mercenaries and slaves. The tribes were continually squabbling and gradually the heads of the stronger, conquering their weaker neighbors, promoted themselves from chieftains to kings. Eventually, around 420 B.C., a king named Sitalkes managed to subjugate the whole country, not excepting the Greek cities along the coast, which put him in a position to play a hand in international politics. His moves affected even Athens: though the mightiest among the Greek city-states, she wooed him assiduously, going so far as to grant this barbarian's son honorary Athenian citizenship. Sitalkes's successor managed to do just as well, building up the total revenues—tribute levied on the tribes and Greek cities he controlled plus "presents" they were constantly being invited to give him—to a grand total of 800 talents, a considerably greater sum than Athens collected from all her subjects

Thracian peltast, detail of an Attic red-figured kylix in the manner of Onesimos. About 480 B.C. Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University, Bequest of David M. Robinson, 1959.219

during Pericles's heyday, equivalent in purchasing power to perhaps $24,000,000 or more. These parvenu rulers grew so wealthy that they were able to turn the tables and hire contingents of Greek mercenaries to fight for them. Indeed, we get our next firsthand glimpse of the Thracians from the leader of one such group, the soldier-writer Xenophon. In 400 B.C. he arrived in Thrace with the bulk of the 10,000 Greeks he had led to safety across Asia Minor's rugged terrain and through its hostile tribes. An ambitious king named Seuthes hired practically all of them, figuring—rightly, as it turned out—that, with his local cavalry and peltasts stiffened by this hardbitten collection of hoplites, he would have no trouble defeating all rivals.

By this time Thrace was showing clear signs of the centuries of contact with Greeks. Archaeological excavation of Thracian tombs reveals that, from the fifth century B.C. on, the objects buried with the dead included many either imported from Greece or made by resident Greek craftsmen, while those made by native craftsmen often mingled Greek and local elements. In fact, Hellenization had gone so far that, as we can see from Xenophon's account, many a Thracian spoke some Greek. At court banquets, at least one of the wine servers was able to take orders directly from the Greek guests. Seuthes himself, though he used interpreters, could follow most of a Greek conversation. The language even penetrated deep into the hinterland: once, when Xenophon and his men were passing the night in the huts of a mountain village, they were surrounded by a hostile local force who knew enough Greek to shout, "Xenophon, come on out and die like a man!"

But Xenophon's account shows equally clearly that Greek influence was only superficial, that the Thracians were still very much their old primitive selves. At court banquets Seuthes served his guests by tossing—literally tossing—chunks of bread and meat at them. Wine was drunk from horns, and the custom was, after draining a hornful, to splash the last drops over oneself. Music was supplied by army trumpets and by what Xenophon describes as "trumpets of raw oxhide," which may have been bagpipes. When the music started during a court occasion, Seuthes leaped up and went into a solo war dance. Another war dance was a pas de deux in which the performers mimed a duel with sabers, and often did it with such verisimilitude that, when one fell at the end, audiences thought he really was dead. A form of entertainment that actually did at times end in death was a sort of Thracian equivalent of Russian roulette. A man clutching a Thracian short sword would stand on a stone and put his head in a hangman's noose. Someone would kick the stone away, and the trick was to slash the cord before it was too late. Those not fast enough drew a big laugh from the crowd for their unfortunate lack of skill.

When Alexander the Great died in 323 B.C., his spectacular conquests introduced changes that marked a new age for the Aegean and Near East. The Greek city-states such as Athens and Sparta, who for so long had directed the flow of history, lost their power and became subject to the whims of Alexander's successors ruling as absolute monarchs over large empires. Inevitably the Greek part of Thrace along the shore was affected—but not the interior: there the tribal leaders maintained their independence and, with it, the freedom to carry on their interminable fighting with each other. In the second century B.C. a new and mighty power, Rome, made its weight felt in the area. For a long while the Romans were content to do as the Greeks had, confine their attention to the coastal strip and let the rest of the country go its own way. All they required from the various Thracian chieftains was the right to recruit cavalrymen and peltasts to serve with the Roman armies and the opportunity to acquire slaves. Rugged young Thracian males were especially in demand since the Romans had discovered that they made first-rate gladiators. During the great days of the Roman Empire, no program of gladiatorial combats was complete without a duel in which a *Thrax* took part. The one gladiator most of us know by name, Spartacus, was a Thracian.

Then, shortly before the middle of the first century A.D., the tribal squabbling created such unrest that the

The "Thracian Horseman" (see color plate 17)

Opposite: Horseman attacking a lion. Silver, partly gilt, 7.5 cm. (2⅞ in.); weight 38 gr. End of the 4th century, Loukovit. Archaeological Museum, Sofia, Inv. No. 8213

Roman emperors decided they had to do something about it, and began marching the legions into the hinterland. And so, civilization finally came to this region as army bases and administrative centers began to rise and a network of roads connecting them began to be laid out. Like Gaul in the wake of Caesar's conquest, Thrace was becoming tamed.

The extensive Roman ruins visible today show how pervasive the process was. At Oescus on the northern boundary of Bulgaria, where a legion was stationed, there are the remains of a fort, two aqueducts, and a bath. At Nicopolis, not far from Veliko Turnovo in north central Bulgaria, are the remains of a theater, colonnade, forum, council house, and paved streets. Serdica, today Sofia, site of a Thracian village which was selected as an administrative center, was garnished with a governor's palace, fort, baths, and temples.

The Romans carried out their program with characteristic organization and thoroughness. Yet, despite this, something of old Thrace tenaciously managed to linger on, especially in the remoter sections. Language is a case in point. In the plains and along the valleys where urbanization had progressed relentlessly, the Thracian language was scarcely heard any longer, having given way to Greek. But up in the mountains it was still spoken and continued to be, right up to the sixth century A.D. when the Slavs arrived en masse and took over the land.

In religion, too, some Thracians clung to traditional ways. In the new Roman settlements there sprang up temples and chapels for the worship of the Roman emperors, of Serapis, Mithras, and the multifarious other deities to whom Rome's subjects addressed their prayers. But in the back country the ancient gods and forms of worship held their own. Old-fashioned landowners still had themselves buried in the time-honored way, laid to rest in their tombs with a funerary chariot and surrounded by grave goods, and, as marker over it all, a prominent mound. Peasants still made obeisance to the gods of their ancestors, particularly one we call the "Thracian Horseman," since he is invariably represented on horseback charging with a spear at some wild animal. When Christianity finally reached these backwaters, the locals simply shifted their allegiance to Saint George.

Like so many of the lands around the Mediterranean, Thrace was, so to speak, an archaeological ledger. The earliest entries are the dim traces of Paleolithic man. Then come the entries of the Neolithic population, the humble stone tools of the farmers and the fine copper and gold objects of the precocious smiths, and then, the tombs of Thrace's opulent horse-loving aristocracy. The latest entries—at least of ancient date—are the bricks and mortar of the structures of the Romans.

The Archaeological Wealth of Ancient Thrace

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Whoever travels in Bulgaria today has noticed the countless grass-covered Thracian burial mounds that dot the plains and hilly regions. Here, as all over Europe, they are the most important sources for the study of ancient cultures. Besides the rich and interesting finds, there are stone tombs within these mounds that reveal something of the history of Thracian architecture. These burial mounds have produced jewelry worn by women, arms borne by men, the ornaments of their cuirasses and shields and the trappings of their horses, vessels made of clay, bronze, glass, silver, and gold, and countless other articles used in daily life.

The treasures hidden in the earth are of no less importance. Composed of wonderful gold and silver vases, of coins in circulation in Thrace, and sometimes of jewels and ornaments made of precious metals, they all complete the picture of the development of Thracian culture.

The Thracian settlements are being carefully studied. However, in this country, as in the Eastern kingdoms, it is the palaces of the kings that would provide a fuller picture of the achievements of Thracian architecture. The greater number of them, however, still escape the archaeologist's eye; the only residence of Thracian rulers discovered so far is Seuthopolis, capital of one of the Thracian kings, Seuthes III, who reigned in the period of Alexander the Great and Lysimachus.

In offering a selection of Thracian wealth it should be borne in mind that it does not come from the whole of ancient Thrace, but only that part which is now within the present boundaries of Bulgaria. It originates therefore from an area of only 110,000 sq. km., yet it shows a variety not to be found in any other country, and which is due largely to the proximity of Thrace to the great cultures of the first millennium B.C. This variety was the fruit of the inner development of Thrace, which, lying as it did between several cultures totally different in character from one another, adopted elements from them all. For Thrace, which was a European country, had a culture that was not very different from those of the neighboring countries of central and western Europe. However, Thrace was very near Greece and was divided from Asia Minor by only two straits, neither of them wider than a big river. Persia, the most highly cultured country of the East, which had absorbed the cultures of almost all the peoples she had conquered (Assyrians, Babylonians, Urartians, Phrygians, Lydians, and Carians, and even the Bithynian Thracians), lay beyond those two narrow straits. On the other hand, the Greeks surrounded her on all sides. Their colonies sprang up along the entire coast of Asia Minor, of southern Russia, and of Thrace herself. Lastly, we should not forget the Scythians of southern Russia, to whom research workers assign a considerable contribution to the development of Thracian culture. Situated on the outskirts of four very different cultures, Thrace could most easily pass from within the range of one into the range of another, accepting elements from all these cultures. Moreover, when it is borne in mind that in the last three centuries of the first millennium B.C. the Celts and, after them, the Romans penetrated deep into the Balkan Peninsula, we cannot expect a steady and calm development in Thrace, such as has been observed in western or central Europe.

The Thracian material and spiritual culture, highly original and richly colored by fruitful interrelations, is the result of many centuries of dramatic historical development, and can be considered one of the most beautiful and brilliant stones in the mosaic of civilizations in the period of the slave-owning society.

Map on page 74

1

Thrace before the Thracians

Neolithic to the Late Bronze Age

The first rich culture in Thrace came into being in the sixth, fifth, and fourth millennia B.C. The forms of its artifacts were original, and seem to have occurred spontaneously without evidence of any earlier developments in the country. This culture belonged to an unknown and mysterious people. Scholars cannot explain it, but ascribe to it a slow and regular growth. This culture appeared throughout almost the entire country at the same time.

It is possible, however, to find certain similarities between Thrace and Asia Minor during this period. In Asia Minor the walls of forts were made of stone and those of houses of lath and plaster; in Thrace both types of walls were made of lath and plaster. The burial mounds were similar in both regions. Local pottery, gracefully made from its very beginnings, was often brightly colored and richly ornamented. In Thrace, as in Asia Minor, images of the mother-goddess predominated in idols made of clay or bone, whether as pregnant women, women in labor, or mothers.

About the end of the fourth millennium, this culture reached its zenith. Models of houses were made of pottery, and the first stone sculptures and sickles (figure 4) made of antlers, with flint cutting edges, were developed. These examples, too, have close parallels in Asia Minor.

It often happens that accepted opinions about a given society, previously thought to be primitive and backward, are seriously upset by the discovery of a necropolis such as the one near Varna dating back to the end of the fourth millenium B.C. The richness of its treasures, especially the considerable quantity of gold jewelry, indicates that these were the tombs of rulers.

At a later date, about 2800 B.C., during the Bronze Age, far-reaching changes took place. These changes, connected with a strongly centralized rule, contributed to the disappearance of all traces of this culture.

The decline that followed does not permit us to present many works of the Early and Middle Bronze ages. Here we are restricted to the Late Bronze Age, which was already part of the Thracian culture.

2

1 · Female idol. Bone, height 15 cm. (5⅞ in.). Late Chalcolithic, about 3000 B.C., Lovets, Stara Zagora district. District Museum of History, Stara Zagora, Inv. No. I-C3-135

2 · Head of an idol. Pottery, height 7 cm. (2¾ in.). Late Chalcolithic, about 3000 B.C., Gabarevo, near Kazanluk. Archaeological Museum, Sofia, Inv. No. 2958

3 · Anthropomorphic rhyton. Pottery, height 15 cm. (5⅞ in.). Late Chalcolithic, about 3000 B.C., Gabarevo, near Kazanluk. Archaeological Museum, Sofia, Inv. No. 2957

4 · Sickle. Antler and flint, height 21 cm. (8¼ in.). Late Chalcolithic, about 3000 B.C., Karanovo, near Nova Zagora. Archaeological Museum, Sofia, Inv. No. 3143

3

4

The Varna Treasures

These treasures belong to the Late Chalcolithic Age (3200-3000 B.C.) and were among the finds from the necropolis of that date near Varna. They were discovered in Tombs 1 and 36 of the necropolis, where digging has been in progress since 1972, and are shown to the public for the first time in this exhibition. We are most grateful to the director of the excavation, Research Fellow Ivan S. Ivanov, for permission to show these objects, only part of this unique find. Digging is still in progress at the site, and so far forty-four tombs have been brought to light, in many of which there are similar articles. Some of the tombs have no skeletons and were probably symbolic burials, or cenotaphs. This necropolis offers surprising information about a highly organized society, with the beginnings of social differentiation, existing in the Balkan Peninsula at the end of the Chalcolithic Age.

5

5 · Bracelets. Gold, diameters 9.6 cm. (3¾ in.); weights 268 gr., 194.32 gr. Archaeological Museum, Varna, Inv. Nos. I-1512, 1513

6 · Horned animals. Gold, heights 3.7 cm. (1 7/16 in.), 5.8 cm. (2¼ in.); weights 6.74 gr., 11.70 gr. Archaeological Museum, Varna, Inv. Nos. I-1634, 1633

6

Thracian Art in the Era of the Legendary Kings

Late Bronze Age, 1600-1200 B.C.

In Greek legends the history of the Achaean kings of Mycenae is interwoven with that of the Thracian kings. This has led many scholars, who consider the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* as a source for the earliest history of the people of the Aegean, to believe that the culture discovered in Thrace belonged to the Thracians mentioned in these legends.

In the age of Orpheus, of Maron, or of Diomedes, whose horses tore strangers to pieces, Troy dominated the Hellespont. To the east of that city lay the kingdom of the Hittites; to the west, in the southern part of Macedonia, lay the land of the Phrygians; while the Scythians and the Paeonians had not yet settled in central Russia and in Macedonia. In this period, as yet only slightly known, the life of the Thracian tribes did not differ greatly from that of the other peoples in the northern part of the Balkan Peninsula.

Pottery was the most widespread art, and the distant influence of Mycenae is to be felt in it; but Thracian pottery differs from Mycenaean both in form and in ornamentation. The proportions are rather heavy, and the vessels are ornamented with incisions (see figure 8) and encrustations of a white paste; these characteristics also apply to vessels shaped like birds and to idols in the form of women (figure 7), who wear long dresses like those of Mycenaean figures. The distinct features of both countries are once more found in the western Balkan Range, in the Carpathians, and along the middle and lower reaches of the Danube. The pottery of southern and western Thrace is similar in character, but it is more primitive, as, in general, the entire culture of the regions in the northwest was calmer than in the south and the east—a fact that may be due to the way of life.

The bronze weapons of the Thracians of this period are found throughout the Danubian Plain, where two-edged swords with a very long point were used. The rapier with a cross-shaped handle, which made thrusting possible, was also known.

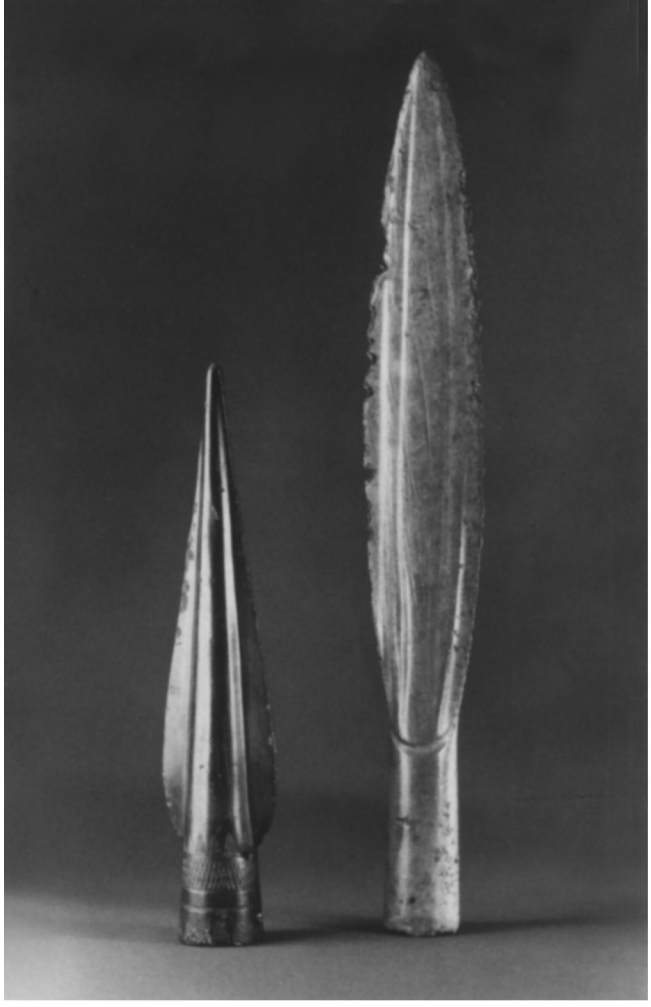
The rapiers found in Thrace are of the same quality as those discovered in Greece, and it was thought for a long time that they had been imported from Mycenae. However, aside from articles common to Thracians and

7

7 · Female idol. Pottery, height 11.5 cm. (4½ in.). Late Bronze Age, 1500-1200 B.C., Orsoya, near Lom. Museum of History, Lom, Inv. No. 20183

8 · Two-handled vessel. Pottery, height 8.3 cm. (3¼ in.). Late Bronze Age, 1500-1200 B.C., Orsoya, near Lom. Museum of History, Lom, Inv. No. 20188

8



9

Greeks in the epoch described by Homer, Thracian art was often of a local character, as are the matrices (figure 10) for the casting of bronze weapons discovered at Pobit Kamuk, near Razgrad. Improved ornamentation indicates they were intended for Thracian chieftains, and shows how the technique of the master bronze workers had been perfected to satisfy the wishes of their clients. On the other hand, the discovery of these matrices, which were probably deliberately buried, is evidence of the incursion into Thrace of a population that surely did not possess such highly perfected articles. Some articles cast in similar matrices were found in Romania, and therefore provide evidence of a local art. Another treasure, that of Vulchitrun, demonstrates the skill of the craftsmen better still, not only in cast metal but also in wrought metal.

9 · Spearheads. Bronze, heights 19.2 cm. (7 9/16 in.), 29.1 cm. (11 7/16 in.). Late Bronze Age, 1500-1200 B.C., Dolno-Levski, near Panagyurishte, and Sarantsi, Sofia district. Archaeological Museum, Sofia, Inv. Nos. 617, 2755

10 · Matrices for casting a scepter. Stone, length 25 cm. (9 7/8 in). Late Bronze Age, 1500-1200 B.C., Pobit Kamuk, Razgrad district. Archaeological Museum, Sofia, Inv. No. 5086

10

11 · Cup and vessel. Gold, heights (with handles) 18.3 cm. (7 3/16 in.), 22.4 cm. (8 3/4 in.); weights 919 gr., 4395 gr. Archaeological Museum, Sofia, Inv. Nos. 3193, 3192

The Vulchitrun Treasure
[*Color plate 1*]

This treasure is a masterpiece of the Thracian goldsmith's art. Composed of a large, two-handled vessel, a triple vase, four cups, and seven lids, for a total weight of 12.5 kg. (about 27½ lbs.), it is the most important find of gold articles to come to light in Thrace.

Some archaeologists date it to the end of the Early Iron Age, others to the Bronze Age. More recent discoveries of the Iron Age, as well as two finds in Sofia and Belogradets, near Provadia, prove that metal was not so finely worked in the Iron Age; on the other hand, the gold studs with conical heads, which rivet the handles of the large vessel (figure 11), and the studs of the cups (figure 11) are reminiscent of those found on Cretan-Mycenaean swords. In addition, the silver inlays on the lids also offer evidence in support of the Late Bronze Age date.

The most characteristic feature of this treasure, besides the simplicity of its forms, is the sparing use of ornament, which is limited to the grooved handles. This shows a sense of proportion not to be found in later articles. However, the Thracian goldworkers were quite able to make intricate articles, as is apparent in the triple vessel (figures 12, 13). The electrum handle in the form of a trident and the small silver tubes connecting the elements prove that the master who cast them worked with the same precision as a goldsmith. The craftsmanship of the large lids (color plate 1) reveals the same skill: under the handles a bronze pad, which continues in a bronze circle, provides a firm hold, and an openwork cross strengthens the handles.

In this period the difference in quality between pottery and metalwork is proof of the power of the aristocracy, which had craftsmen at its disposal well able to satisfy its requirements and refined taste. Perhaps originally hidden in the walls of the palace of a Thracian chieftain, this treasure also indicates that political power was linked with religious power, for such a find was, indeed, intended for ritual use.

Originally this treasure must have been far greater. The gold lids should have belonged to seven vessels, all of them larger than the two-handled lidless one. The number of large vessels was probably considerably greater than that of the small ones, which are shaped as though they were intended for pouring rather than for drinking. These cups were used to fill the big vessels with liquid, which was then poured into the cups of each individual, a ceremony that accompanied the mystical rites of the Thracians. The triple vessel, whose strange form proves the ritual nature of the find, must have been used to mix three different liquids.

In composition the Vulchitrun treasure may be compared to another one, which bears an inscribed dedication to the Thracian deity Pyrmerulas. However, the latter is of a much later date, since it belongs to the period of the Roman Empire.

12

12 · Triple vase. Gold, width 23.9 cm. (9⅜ in.); weight 1190 gr. Archaeological Museum, Sofia, Inv. No. 3203

13 · Back of the triple vase

13

14

15

14 · Ritual axe. Bronze, height 10.6 cm. (4⅛ in.). 10th-7th centuries B.C., provenance unknown. Archaeological Museum, Sofia, Inv. No. 744

15 · Kantharos. Pottery, height 12 cm. (4¾ in.). Beginning of the Early Iron Age, Krivodol, Vrasta district. Archaeological Museum, Sofia, Inv. No. 3258

Thrace in the Early Iron Age

Geometric Art

Little is known about Thrace in this period. No name of a king or a chieftain, and no exact records of any events have come down to us in myths and legends. Only burial mounds remain in large numbers, for at that time they were very widespread. The archaeological name for this period is the Early Iron Age, and it can also be defined as the era of megaliths, or of geometric art.

No matter how the invasions may have taken place in the twelfth century B.C., it is obvious that the farther to the southeast they reached, the more important they became. These movements from Europe into Asia passed through Thrace in great waves. The Thracian population experienced times of hardship, and some had to flee the broad plains and take refuge in the mountainous regions of Sakar and Strandja, in the Rhodopes, and in the eastern sections of the Balkan Range.

Huge stone tombs appeared in the southeastern regions when these invasions came to an end. They were dolmens built of very large slabs. The walls of these tombs, made of one or two slabs, surrounded a burial chamber, which could be from 2 to 2.5 m. (6½-8 ft.) long, with a single slab as a cover. Sometimes a passage *(dromos)* and an antechamber led to the burial chamber, over which were constructed a false vault and a mound. In the southeast, rock-cut tombs were also found. All these tombs were intended solely for the aristocracy of the tribe. They were robbed in antiquity, in the Middle Ages, and in still more recent times, so that today only pottery is to be found in the dolmens and the rock tombs. But the richest archaeological discoveries were made in northwestern Thrace, where the work of craftsmen was also intended for the aristocracy. The chief finds in women's tombs were fibulae, while in the men's there were weapons and horse trappings.

As in Greece, pottery of this period in Thrace returned to old techniques and old decorative designs. However, the execution was simpler, sometimes even clumsy. The principal ornament was composed of circles with a dot in the middle, connected by triangles and other geometrical motifs, loops, or spirals. These designs were usually painted and often encrusted with white paint and at times were also worked in relief. Metalwork did not reach the perfection of former ages. In eastern Thrace the fibulae went back to models from the Ionian Islands, while in western Thrace those in vogue came from Greece and Macedonia. The small bronze figures of animals made in this period are characteristic; in the west they imitated models from Greece and Macedonia, while in the east, they had elements very reminiscent of forms from Asia Minor. Certain royal insignia, known in Asia Minor, also appeared among the Thracians under the influence of the East; most notable is the iron scepter, whose upper part, made of bronze, is in the form of an axe (figure 14) and is ornamented with heads or animal figures, which in Thrace included rams, bulls, goats, stags, horses, and birds. Whereas in the East axes had wooden handles,

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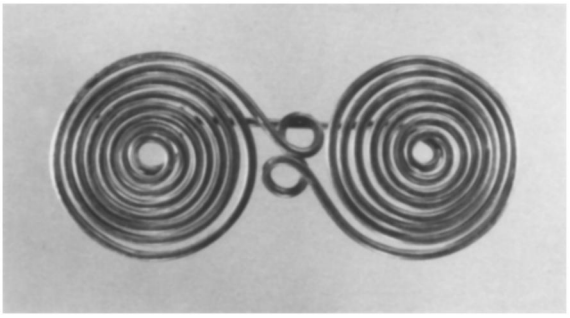

16 · Headstall. Bronze, height 7 cm. (2¾ in.). 6th century B.C., Sophronievo, Vrasta district. District Museum of History, Vrasta, Inv. No. 757

17 · Stag. Bronze, height 16 cm. (6¼ in.). 10th-7th centuries B.C., Sevlievo region. Archaeological Museum, Sofia, Inv. No. 747

18 · Bowl. Gold, diameter 24 cm. (9⁷⁄₁₆ in.). About 700 B.C., Kazichane. Museum of History, Sofia, Inv. No. 3014

19 · Fibula. Bronze, length 14.5 cm. (5¾ in.). 8th-7th century B.C., Vidin. Archaeological Museum, Sofia, Inv. No. 120

20 · Ornamental sheath. Gold, length 20.1 cm. (7⅞ in.). 8th-7th century B.C., Belogradets, Varna district. Archaeological Museum, Sofia, Inv. No. 2865

in Thrace some of them were used as amulets and were simply synthesized geometrical forms. This type of axe spread far to the northwest and has been found in the cemeteries at Hallstatt (Austria).

Other royal insignia of this period, also mentioned by Homer in connection with Caria and Lydia, are the headstalls decorated with appliques that were known throughout the northern part of the Balkan Peninsula. These appliques, cast in bronze, sometimes took the form of little crosses, circles, or rosettes. The only headstall with animal ornamentation is the one from Sophronievo (figure 16). The statuette of a stag from Sevlievo (figure 17) should be mentioned among the animal figures: its symmetrical antlers end in stylized animal heads, the summarily executed heads of birds, a motif that was later to pass into Thracian art, and from there to the Scythians.

Goldwork of this period is represented by several pairs of earrings in the form of open rings and by bracelets. Few other examples have survived, but what has come down to us is particularly important, such as a gold bowl (figure 18), dated about 700 B.C., from Kazichane, a suburb of Sofia. Its simple ornamentation is reminiscent of pottery, heavy and clumsy both in form and decoration: the ribs are deep and irregular and at some distance from one another. This is curious, when we remember that a large number of pottery vessels are thought to be imitations of metalwork.

Development of Thracian Art in the Middle Iron Age

525 to 280 B.C.

In the mid-sixth century B.C. Thrace attained a high degree of development, as is evidenced by the finds from many burial mounds. Her culture was at its zenith, but at the same time underwent far-reaching changes.

The Greeks founded a great number of colonies, until the whole Thracian coast was in their hands. Here they built forts, temples, theaters, and rich houses; they made statues and reliefs and vessels of bronze, gold, and silver. Under the influence of the Orient, they wore garments made of expensive fabrics and gold jewelry and introduced filigree work. A rich inhabitant of Thrace could easily buy Greek works of art, either in the cities on the coast or in the large centers of continental Greece. Greek coins also made their appearance in the Thracian marketplaces along with these objects.

On the other hand, the shores of Asia Minor were in the hands of the Persian Achaemenids, who ruled these territories until Alexander the Great conquered them. Everything was adapted to the Persian monetary system. Thrace could not fail to be influenced by this Eastern power, and even the Greek colonies on her shores extended their contacts with the East.

In the fifth and fourth centuries B.C. trade flourished between the interior of Thrace and the towns of Cyzicus on the Propontis in Asia Minor, Appollonia on the European shores of the Black Sea, and Parium, as well as the Thracian Chersonese on the Hellespont. All of the treasures of the fifth and fourth centuries B.C. found in Thrace contain coins of these places.

At that time, through her trade with the Persians and the Greeks, Thrace emerged from the general isolation of the previous period. The Thracian burials are a good illustration of this change. In them has been found much gold jewelry, as well as alabaster vessels, glass, and classical pottery.

At the end of the fourth century B.C. imports from Greece increased greatly, and at the same time many works were made by Thracian master craftsmen under the influence of the Orient.

The Mounds of Douvanli

[*Color plates 2, 3*]

Of the numerous mounds near the village of Douvanli, in the Plovdiv district of southern Bulgaria, about fifty have been excavated to date. They belong to various periods from the sixth to the first centuries B.C. Five of the mounds proved to be the greatest discoveries in Thracian archaeology, and the articles found in them could well fill a large museum. They were the richest mounds, and also the oldest, since they date back to

21 · Mug. (Illustrated here more than twice actual size.) Silver, height 8.6 cm. (3⅜ in.); weight 236 gr. Greek type and workmanship; a name, perhaps that of the owner, is inscribed around the neck. Turn of the 5th-4th centuries B.C., Bashova mound, Douvanli. Archaeological Museum, Plovdiv, Inv. No. 1518

22 · Necklace. Gold, weight 54.7 gr. Greek workmanship. 460-450 B.C., Arabadjiyska mound, Douvanli. Archaeological Museum, Plovdiv, Inv. No. 1646

22

the end of the sixth and to the fifth centuries B.C.

In all three women's burials, the Moushovitsa, Arabadjiyska, and Koukova mounds, were found wonderful gold ornaments made by Greek workshops in Thrace, together with pectorals of rare forms, necklaces, and massive bracelets, which are very impressive for their rich ornamentation and attest to the great wealth and luxurious taste of their owners. Two other, later mounds, Golyamata and Bashova, are the burials of men. Helmets and cuirasses were found in the men's burials, while all the mounds contained a large number of vases.

In antiquity, the tribe of the Bessoi inhabited the territory of the present-day village of Douvanli. The oldest finds were discovered in the Moushovitsa mound.

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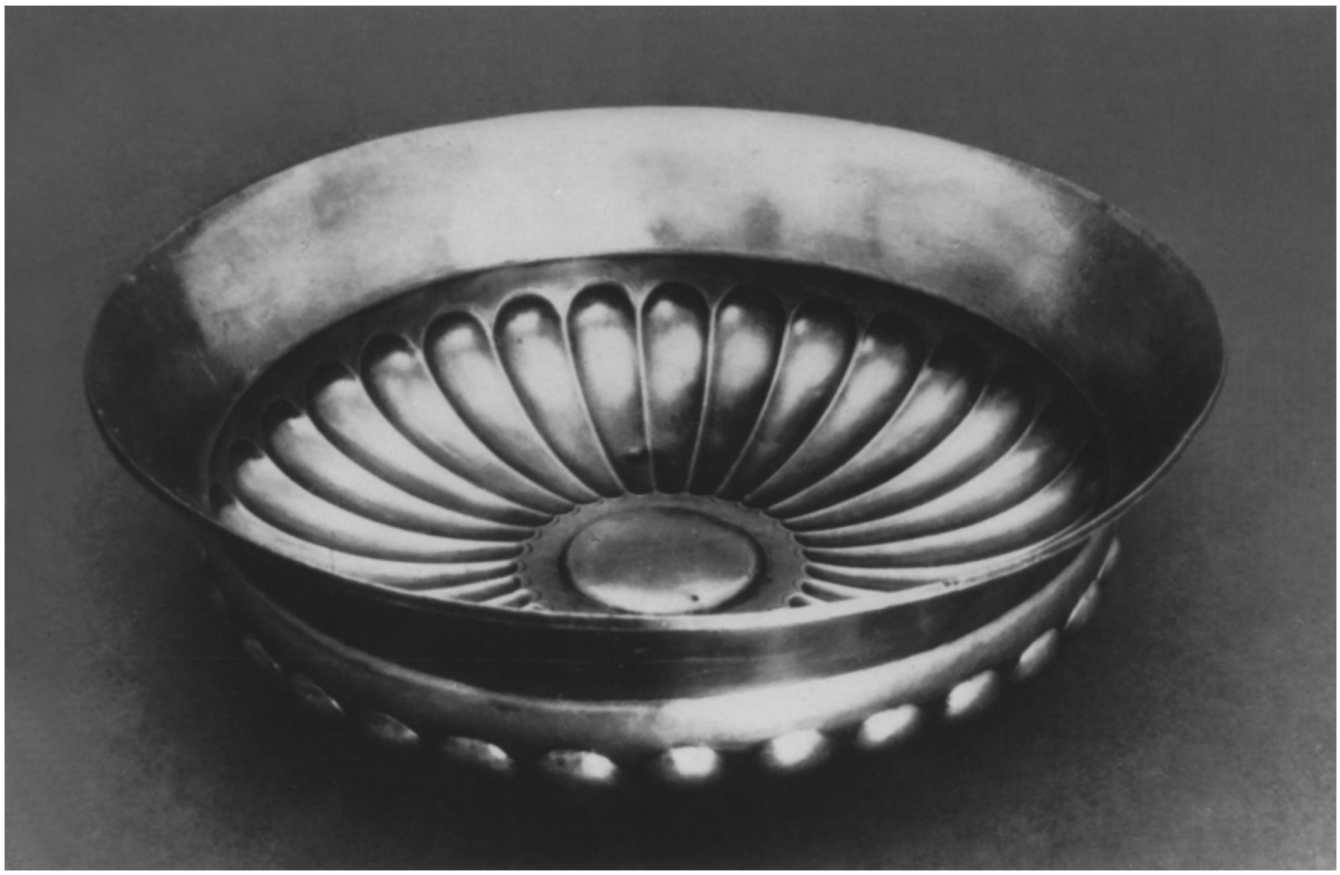

26

23 · Earrings. Gold, heights 3.6 cm (1⅜ in.); weight of both about 26 gr. Greek workmanship. End of the 6th century B.C., Moushovitsa mound, Douvanli. Archaeological Museum, Plovdiv, Inv. No. 1538

24 · Pectoral. Gold, length 25.9 cm. (9⅞ in.); weight 65.5 gr. End of the 6th century B.C., Moushovitsa mound, Douvanli. Archaeological Museum, Plovdiv, Inv. No. 1531

25 · Phiale. Silver, diameter 26 cm. (10¼ in.); weight 120 gr. Early 5th century B.C., Koukova mound, Douvanli. Archaeological Museum, Plovdiv, Inv. No. 1275

26 · Bracelets. Gold, diameters 9 cm. (3½ in.); weights 257.10 gr., 298.25 gr. Early 5th century B.C., Koukova mound, Douvanli. Archaeological Museum, Sofia, Inv. Nos. 6128, 6189

27

28

27 · Cuirass. Bronze, height 35 cm. (13¾ in.); height of semicircular part 28 cm. (11 in.). 450-400 B.C., Rouyets, near Turgovishte. Archaeological Museum, Sofia, Inv. No. 6168

28 · Helmet. Bronze, height 21 cm. (8¼ in.). 5th century B.C., Sborishte, near Nova Zagora. Museum of History, Nova Zagora, Inv. No. 1152

29 · Belt. Silver gilt, length 31 cm. (12¼ in.). 5th-4th century B.C., Lovets, Stara Zagora district. Archaeological Museum, Sofia, Inv. No. 6617

Chance and Isolated Discoveries

End of the 6th century and the 5th century B.C.

[Color plates 3, 4]

Numerous articles found in various mounds in the course of chance discoveries reveal the splendor surrounding the Thracian aristocracy at the end of the sixth and during the fifth centuries B.C. Such are the finds at Tatarevo, Turnichene, Svetlen, Rouvets, Pastousha, Pesnopoi, Sadovets, Staro Selo, Chervenkova Mogila, near Brezovo, Mazrachevo, Daskal Athanassovo, Ezerovo, and Skrebetno. It is also evident that the kinds of military equipment (helmets and cuirasses) and jewelry (rings, torques, bracelets, and earrings) found at Douvanli were widespread throughout the Thracian area (see figures 30-32).

The presence of the same elements of grave furniture is a characteristic feature of all these tombs. Changes took place only at the turn of the fifth and fourth centuries B.C., when, more particularly, hydriai (water jars) and helmets disappeared, being replaced by other vases and another type of armor.

Two objects of particular importance among the chance finds, and those which are difficult to date with any certainty, should be mentioned here: a belt (figure 29) from Lovets and a matrix (color plate 4) from Gurchinovo that was used in ornamenting beakers. Beakers with this kind of decoration have not been found in Bulgaria, but did come to light in another region of Thrace, now in Romania, as part of a treasure found at Agighiol. It contained a silver beaker, whose ornamentation can be compared to that of the Gurchinovo matrix. The principal motif is a stag, with antlers ending in the shape of animal heads. The stag is used in connection with other animal motifs.

The belt from Lovets has a type of ornamentation often found on gold pectorals from Anatolia: a composition of hunting scenes symmetrically placed on both sides of a plant motif. This motif is influenced by an Oriental model, the symbol of the Tree of Life.

29

Color Plates

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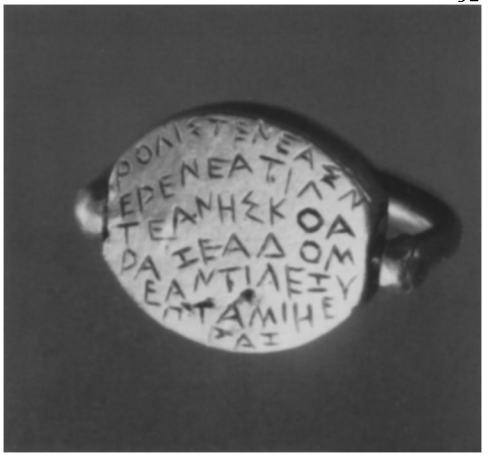


32

Plate 1

Of gold, inlaid with silver in a wave pattern, these large lids show the refined technique of the early Thracian craftsman. They are part of an astonishing treasure—thirteen gold objects together weighing more than 27½ pounds—discovered accidentally at Vulchitrun. Lid in foreground: diameter 37 cm. (14½ in.); weight 1850 gr. Lid in background: diameter 37 cm. (14½ in.); weight 1755 gr. Late Bronze Age, 13th-12th century B.C. Archaeological Museum, Sofia, Inv. Nos. 3196, 3197

30 · Phiale. Gold, diameter 14.5 cm. (5¾ in.); weight 80.95 gr. 5th century B.C., Daskal Athanassovo, Stara Zagora district. District Museum of History, Stara Zagora, Inv. No. II-Cz-1132

31 · Bracelet. Gold, diameter 10 cm. ($3^{15}/_{16}$ in.); weight 41.5 gr. 5th century B.C., Skrebetno, near Gotse Delchev. Archaeological Museum, Sofia, Inv. No. 3167

32 · Ring with movable bezel. Gold, diameter 2.7 cm. ($1^{1}/_{16}$ in.); weight 31.3 gr. Engraved with a Thracian inscription in Greek letters. End of the 5th century B.C., Ezerovo, near Purvomai. Archaeological Museum, Sofia, Inv. No. 5217

Plate 2

The silver-gilt lion's head above as well as the medusa head and the Nike (color plate 3) originally ornamented a cuirass; they came from Golyamata, the earliest burial of a man at Douvanli. This plaque, one of five from the same matrix, was locally made. Height 5.5 cm. (2⅛ in.). Mid-5th century B.C. Archaeological Museum, Plovdiv, Inv. No. 1652

The silver amphora at the left came from the Koukova mound, Douvanli, which dates back to a time when Thracian lands between the Rhodopes and the Aegean were under Persian rule. Made by an Achaemenid craftsman, it was undoubtedly a royal gift to accompany the woman buried in the tomb. Perhaps she was a hostage for a peace treaty between the Bessoi tribe and Persian troops occupying the neighboring territories. Silver, partly gilt, height 27 cm. (10⅝ in.). Early 5th century B.C. Archaeological Museum, Sofia, Inv. No. 6137

A Greek work from the Propontis (Sea of Marmara), the silver rhyton at the right is influenced by Persian art, notably in the palmette and lotus ornaments at the top. The hooves, mane, and trappings of the horse are gilt. An inscription in Greek letters at the lower end of the rhyton perhaps gives the name of the owner. Height 20.6 cm. (8⅛ in.). Turn of the 5th-4th centuries B.C., Bashova mound, Douvanli. Archaeological Museum, Plovdiv, Inv. No. 1517

The helmet above once had cheek-pieces attached by hinges. The palmette on the frontlet, the scrolls on either side, and the winged lion-griffin with its serrated mane are wholly Greek in style. Bronze, height 21 cm. (8¼ in.). Second half of the 5th century B.C., provenance unknown. Archaeological Museum, Sofia, Inv. No. 4013

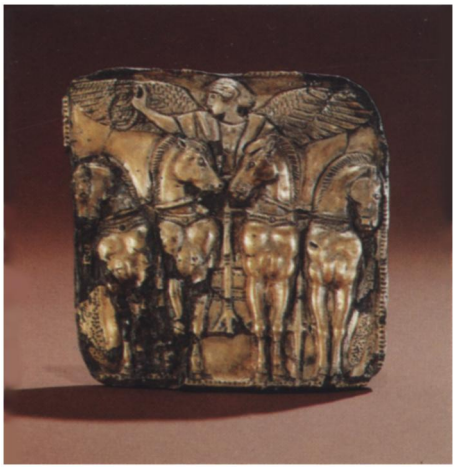


Plate 3

The silver-gilt medusa head above reveals some of the features of the fifth century B.C., such as more even teeth, carefully combed hair, and a less monstrous nose; it may be the product of a local workshop less familiar with the more ferocious Greek prototypes.

Below, Nike, goddess of victory, stands in a quadriga, which has trace horses facing out and pole horses facing in. In her right hand she holds a victory wreath. The frontal chariot and the rendering of horses and goddess are pure Greek. Although the plaque is dated in the mid-fifth century B.C., the profile heads of Nike and the horses go back to archaic Greek convention of the sixth century B.C.

Medusa plaque: width 9 cm. (3½ in.). Nike plaque: silver gilt, height 6.5 cm. (2½ in.). Mid-5th century B.C., Golyamata mound, Douvanli. Archaeological Museum, Plovdiv, Inv. Nos. 1653, 1562

The helmet at the right is of the standard Corinthian type. Bronze, height 20.9 cm. (8¼ in.). End of the 6th century B.C., Chelopechene, Sofia district. National Museum of History, Sofia, Inv. No. 547/63

Erich Lessing

Plate 4

The highly stylized lion on the gold pectoral at the left is surrounded by a border of peltas, the shields used by Thracian foot soldiers. Width 13.8 cm. (5⅜ in.) ; weight 19.60 gr. Turn of the 5th-4th centuries B.C., Bashova mound, Douvanli. Archaeological Museum, Plovdiv, Inv. No. 1514

Not intended as a unified composition, the bronze matrix above combines animal motifs that could be used individually for repoussé work: a large stag whose antlers end in birds' heads, a chimera, and a bird with birds'-heads talons ; below, a lion, a boar, and a bull facing left; a lion facing right ; and two sitting lions, who have been turned 90 degrees, on either side of a reclining stag. Length 29 cm. (11⁷⁄₁₆ in.). 5th century B.C., Gurchinovo, Shoumen district. District Museum of History, Shoumen, Inv. No. 23

Plate 5

Found in a bronze vessel at Letnitsa were a number of silver and silver-gilt plaques decorated in a special rather rustic style based on local artistic traditions and influenced by the East. The one at the upper left depicts the *hieros gamos,* a ritual marriage of two deities. On the middle plaque, a mounted warrior wears the topknot described by Herodotus as typical of the Thracians. Below, a wolf attacks a deer. Heights 4.5-5 cm. (1¾-2 in.). 400-350 B.C., Lovech district. District Museum of History, Lovech, Inv. Nos. 604, 585, 582

This silver rhyton is part of a luxury drinking set found at Borovo in 1974. Its design of ivy twigs, which also appears on another rhyton, the procession of silens, maenads, and satyrs, headed by Dionysos and Ariadne, on a pitcher (figure 42), and the satyr's-head handles on a dish unite the find in a single theme connected with the cult of Dionysos. The rhyton is inscribed with the name of the Thracian king Kotys (382-359 B.C.) and that of the craftsman Etbeos. Height 20.2 cm. (8 in.). First half of the 4th century B.C., Rousse district. District Museum of History, Rousse, Inv. No. II 358

Plate 6

A rich tomb at Vrasta yielded the skeleton of a man, that of a woman with the elaborate earrings illustrated at the far right, and those of horses with fine trappings, two still harnessed to a chariot. The grave goods included this magnificent greave and small gold mug.

The mug has a handle in the shape of a square knot, known as the knot of Herakles. The body is decorated with two winged quadrigas, thought to represent the chariot of Apollo. While much detail has been lavished on the horses' harnesses, the chariots are summarily executed. The mouth of the mug is beaded, and the lip is decorated with a kymation; another kymation is around the base. Palmettes encircle the shoulder, and one separates the quadrigas. The mug's shape and part of its decoration (knot-handle, kymation on top) are Greek, but the figure style represents local taste.

The top of the greave, covering the kneecap, is decorated with the head of a woman, following the Greek tradition in which tops of greaves were sometimes rendered as gorgoneia, or medusa heads. Two locks of her hair are snakes that terminate in ferocious lions; two lion-headed snakes, emerging from snail shells, form a clavicle; the stylized calf muscles are snakes terminating in the heads and wings of *kete,* or sea monsters. (Because of its fragility, the greave is shown in the exhibition in facsimile; the photograph at the right is that of the original.)

The disk-shaped upper part of the earrings is decorated with tendrils and rosettes, and looped to it is a crescent-shaped pendant with spirals and rosettes. Suspended from the crescent are beads; attached to the upper rim are sirens with outspread wings.

Mug: height 9 cm. (3½ in.); weight 240 gr. Greave: silver and gold, height 46 cm. (18⅛ in.). Earrings: length 7.5 cm. (2 15/16 in.); weight 37 gr. 380-350 B.C., Mogilanska mound. District Museum of History, Vrasta, Inv. Nos. 391, B-231, B-60

Erich Lessing

Plate 7

The cup of this silver deer's-head rhyton is decorated in relief with three satyrs cavorting against the background of an ivy wreath. Height 11.2 cm. (4⅜ in.), weight 49.5 gr. Early 4th century B.C., Rozovets, Plovdiv district. Archaeological Museum, Sofia, Inv. No. 49

A rich find at Vurbitsa included the silver cup at the right, photographed on a mirror. Its neck is decorated with an engraved gilt ivy wreath and the lower part of the body with tongues. On the bottom is a rosette. Height 8.7 cm. (3⁷⁄₁₆ in.); weight 168.5 gr. Second half of the 4th century B.C., Shoumen district. Archaeological Museum, Sofia, Inv. No. 51

The iron pectoral above is silver-plated, with traces of gilding, and was part of an iron cuirass. It was found in a beehive tomb near Mezek, in the burial chamber of a man. The superior quality as well as the individual decorative elements, which are arranged in zones, point to Greek workmanship. Width 21 cm. (8¼ in.). 350-300 B.C., Maltepe mound, near Mezek, Haskovo district. Archaeological Museum. Sofia, Inv. No. 6401

Plate 8

The objects on these pages show the wide variety of styles found in Thrace during the fourth century B.C. The rich ornament of the silver shield plaque at the left includes fantastic animals from the Achaemenid repertory, a winged lion and an eagle-griffin, who are placed above and below a boss surrounded by a circle of beads. There is also a decorative device frequently found in Thracian art: the stylized spirals on the animals' shoulders and thighs. From the same tomb group, the silver plaque at the right depicts Herakles wrestling the Nemean lion in a composition that is typically Greek.

Shield plaque: height 32 cm. (12⅝ in.). Herakles plaque: diameter 8.6 cm. (3⅜ in.). 350-300 B.C., Panagyurishte. Archaeological Museum, Sofia, Inv. Nos. 3555, 3559

On this silver plaque a lion attacks a stag that has collapsed, a motif that was extremely widespread in the fourth century B.C. and has been found from Etruria in the northwest to Anatolia in the east. It may have entered the repertory of Greek artists originally in the "Orientalizing" period of the seventh century B.C. The motif also appears on painted vases and in sculpture. Silver, partly gilt, length 8.7 cm. (3⅜16 in.); weight 102 gr. End of the 4th century B.C., Loukovit. Archaeological Museum, Sofia, Inv. No. 8216

Plate 9 (overleaf)

One of two magnificent gold stag's-head rhyta from the Panagyurishte treasure (color plates 9-14). Height 12.5 cm. (4¹⁵⁄16 in.); weight 505.5 gr. Turn of the 4th-3rd centuries B.C. Archaeological Museum, Plovdiv, Inv. No. 3198

Plate 10

Of all the finds in Bulgaria, the Panagyurishte treasure is justly the most famous. Its sheer weight in gold—almost 13½ pounds—is in itself most impressive, but its rich decoration, interesting iconography, superb workmanship, and excellent preservation all add to the uniqueness of the discovery. Since the inscribed weights are expressed in the monetary unit of Lampsakos, on the Asiatic shores of the Dardanelles, it may be assumed that the nine vessels were made there.

This splendid amphora-rhyton is of a shape that was originally Persian, but the artist has turned the handles into two opposing centaurs, one of which is shown in the detail above, and has liberally covered the entire body with figural scenes. The main subject, framed above and below by floral ornament, is an attack on a palace (see color plate 11). On the bottom are shown Silenus and the infant Herakles strangling snakes and two heads of Negroes, whose mouths form the openings of the rhyton; arranged opposite each other, they allow the wine to flow in two streams. Perhaps the amphora-rhyton was used to drink blood brotherhood or in treaty ceremonies. Gold, height 28 cm. (11 in.); weight 1695.25 gr. Turn of the 4th-3rd centuries B.C. Archaeological Museum, Plovdiv, Inv. No. 3203

Plate 11

In the scene at the left, from the amphora-rhyton illustrated on the preceding page, a warrior threatens an old man, who peers through a half-open gate. The warrior's powerful body shows a fine grasp of anatomy; his tensed muscles and the expressive faces of both figures are indicative of an advanced state of Hellenistic art.

The libation bowl, or phiale, from Panagyurishte shares with others of the fifth and fourth centuries B.C. a decoration of concentric circles around a central boss, the omphalos. Here, in three tiers, are seventy-two Negro heads above a circle of twenty-four acorns. The space between the heads is ornamented with palmette crosses. Gold, diameter 25 cm. (9⅞ in.); weight 845.7 gr. Turn of the 4th-3rd centuries B.C. Archaeological Museum, Plovdiv, Inv. No. 3204

Plate 12

The cup of this rhyton in the shape of a goat's protome is decorated with a scene of Hera enthroned, flanked by Artemis and Apollo. On the back, fully visible because the rhyton has no handle, is Nike (shown in the detail above). The names of all the deities are inscribed in Greek letters. Gold, height 14 cm. (5½ in.); weight 439.05 gr. Turn of the 4th-3rd centuries B.C. Archaeological Museum, Plovdiv, Inv. No. 3196

Plate 13

Animal-head rhyta were among the many themes introduced into Thracian metalwork by Greek workshops. Above is one of the two stag's-head rhyta from Panagyurishte (the other is illustrated on color plate 9). The subject on the cup is the Judgment of Paris, who is shown seated, as are Hera and Athena. Aphrodite, to whom Paris awarded the prize, is standing near the handle that terminates above in the form of a lion and below in a female head. Their names are inscribed; Paris is given the name by which he is sometimes identified —Alexandros. On the other stag's-head rhyton the scenes are of Herakles fighting the hind of Cyreneia and Theseus fighting the bull of Marathon.

On the ram's-head rhyton at the left, Dionysos and Eriope, whose names are inscribed, are depicted seated, flanked by two maenads. Its handle also terminates in a lion above and in a head below.

Stag's head: gold, height 13.5 cm. (5½ in.); weight 674.6 gr. Ram's head: gold, height 12.5 cm. (4⅞ in.); weight 505.05 gr. Turn of the 4th-3rd centuries B.C. Archaeological Museum, Plovdiv, Inv. Nos. 3197, 3199

Plate 14

Three of the rhyta from Panagyurishte are in the shape of a female head and all three share the same handle finial, a sphinx resting its front paws on the rim of the vessel. One of the women wears an exotic helmet decorated on both sides with a griffin, and this element of armor has led to the assumption that they are Amazons. Left: height 20.5 cm. (8⅛ in.) ; weight 387.3 gr. Above: height 22.5 cm. (8⅞ in.) ; weight 466.75 gr. Right: height 14 cm. (5½ in.) ; weight 460.75 gr. Turn of the 4th-3rd centuries B.C. Archaeological Museum, Plovdiv, 3202, 3201, 3200

Plate 15

On the bronze helmet at the left, the deities Hermes, Apollo, Athena, Nike, and Ares are shown in an arcade, each under an arch, while Poseidon appears on the cheekpieces. Height 19.7 cm. (7¾ in.). 1st century A.D., Bryastovets (Karaagach), Bourgas district. Archaeological Museum, Sofia, Inv. No. 6176

Gold spirals such as the one above were worn in the hair. This coil, thought to represent a dragon, was inlaid at both ends with stones; only one remains. Length 6.1 cm. (2⅜ in.). Mid-3rd century B.C., Nessebur. District Museum of History, Bourgas, Inv. No. 1336

Herakles fighting the Nemean lion on the silver plaque at the right is surrounded by six other animals or monsters, arranged in a zone: pairs of lion-griffins, winged lions, and lions. Diameter 17.8 cm. (7 in.). 1st century A.D., Stara Zagora. District Museum of History, Stara Zagora, Inv. No. II-132-7

Plate 16

One of four found at Kroumovgrad, the silver plaque at the left shows in its medallion the bust of a bearded man. His wild, unkempt appearance evokes the iconographic tradition of giants in battle with the gods; and since two of the other plaques from this find depict busts of Herakles and Athena, the four may be related in subject. Diameter, 7 cm. (2¾ in.). 2nd century A.D. Archaeological Museum, Sofia, Inv. No. 3747

Above, a gold coin struck in Caracalla's reign (A.D. 198-217) is mounted on a pendant suspended from a triple chain of twisted gold wire. Length 46.6 cm. (18⅜ in.) ; weight 91.99 gr. A.D. 249, Nikolayevo, Pleven district. Archaeological Museum, Sofia, Inv. No. 4774

The helmet at the right is in two parts: a silvered-iron mask representing a man's face and an iron top and back made to look like hair, banded by a silver laurel wreath. Similar helmets were found in the European and Asian provinces of the Roman Empire, those found in Thrace being close to examples from Asia Minor. Presumably such helmets were worn on dress occasions and not in battle. Height 22 cm. (8⅝ in.). 1st century A.D., Plovdiv. Archaeological Museum, Plovdiv, Inv. No. 19

Plate 17

After the conquest of Thrace, the Romans established their religion in urban centers, but in more isolated areas traditional deities were still honored. At the right is a terracotta statuette of the Thracian god of health, Telesphorus, wearing a typical native outer garment with a hood.

The purely Thracian "Horseman" or Thracian "Hero" was a strange deity who combined the characteristics of many gods, among them Asklepios, Apollo, and Dionysos. Besides being the subject of votive tablets—where during Roman times he was usually represented as a hunter—he was often depicted in bronze, as he is below. Later on, Christians frequently reinterpreted the "Hero" as Saint George.

Telesphorus: height 17 cm. (6¾ in.). 2nd century A.D., Stara Zagora. District Museum of History, Stara Zagora, Inv. No. C3-612. Horseman: height 7.5 cm. (3 in.). Droumhor, Kyustendil district. Archaeological Museum, Sofia, Inv. No. 7046. Horse: height 7.8 cm. (3 in.). Chavka, near Momchilgrad. Archaeological Museum, Sofia, Inv. No. 6231

Mounds from the End of the Fifth to the Third Centuries B.C.

The only group of mounds of this period to have been discovered and systematically studied is at Mezek. In other cases the objects were obtained from chance finds, which did not yield an archaeological context. It should, moreover, be noted that despite the existence of the Odrysian kingdom (mainly in the southeast), the richest finds were discovered in the north on both sides of the Balkan Range. The splendor of Douvanli should therefore be attributed to tribes that were detached from the kingdom of the Odrysians or had never been subjected by it. The crisis that this kingdom experienced at the end of the fifth and in the early fourth centuries B.C. is very clearly shown by these archaeological finds.

Another interesting fact revealed by these excavations is the widespread distribution of bronze and silver plaques for horse trappings (figures 33-35, 37). Although some archaeologists explain this by the presence of the Scythians, it should be noted that there were no Scythians in southeastern Thrace, which bordered on Asia Minor, or in the northeast, the region nearer to the Scythians. No matter how strange it may seem, it is precisely in northwest Thrace that a large number of these plaques were found. Phialai (figure 38) and vases made of silver were most widespread, and ornaments for shields appeared at the same time. These articles were ornamented with animal motifs, treated in a style close to that of the Scythians, but preserving a certain purely Achaemenid character. In contrast to the Geometric period, the animals most frequently depicted were lions, bears, wolves, griffins, and lion-griffins, not counting other imaginary animals with the bodies of snakes, which are quite strange, and alien to old Thracian art. Human figures were also shown, and sometimes we come across a whole composition in which a deity in the form of a horseman occupies the central place. Fighting animals and animal motifs are depicted, motifs whose complexity sometimes makes interpretation difficult, and these works are close to Scythian art. Certain distinctive features nonetheless reveal the originality of Thracian art.

33

34

35

33 · Lion's-head headstall. Silver, height 4.7 cm. (1 13/16 in.). Turn of the 5th-4th centuries B.C., Brezovo, Plovdiv district. Archaeological Museum, Sofia, Inv. No. 1712

34 · Harness plaque. Bronze, height 5 cm. (2 in.). Turn of the 5th-4th centuries B.C., Orizovo, near Chirpan. Archaeological Museum, Plovdiv, Inv. No. 2584

35 · Harness plaque. Silver, height 5.5 cm. (2 1/8 in.). Turn of the 5th-4th centuries B.C., Sredna Mogila, near Mezek, Haskovo district. Archaeological Museum, Sofia, Inv. No. 6799

Animal ornamentation is not a phenomenon peculiar to Thracian or Scythian art. The Greeks who lived in the coastal cities of Thrace introduced many Oriental elements into their metalwork under the influence of the Achaemenids. The rhyton (a drinking vessel) in the form of a human or an animal head appeared in Thrace at the same time, and also much jewelry, brought from Greek workshops, which was ornamented with animals: heads of lions, bulls, or horned lions. The Greek craftsmen tried to achieve an even greater stylization, and so did the Thracian craftsmen; for example, muscles and wrinkles around the mouth and eyes were treated in a very abstract manner.

In brief, the finds from this period indicate influences from the East, which increased and culminated with the campaigns of Alexander the Great in Asia.

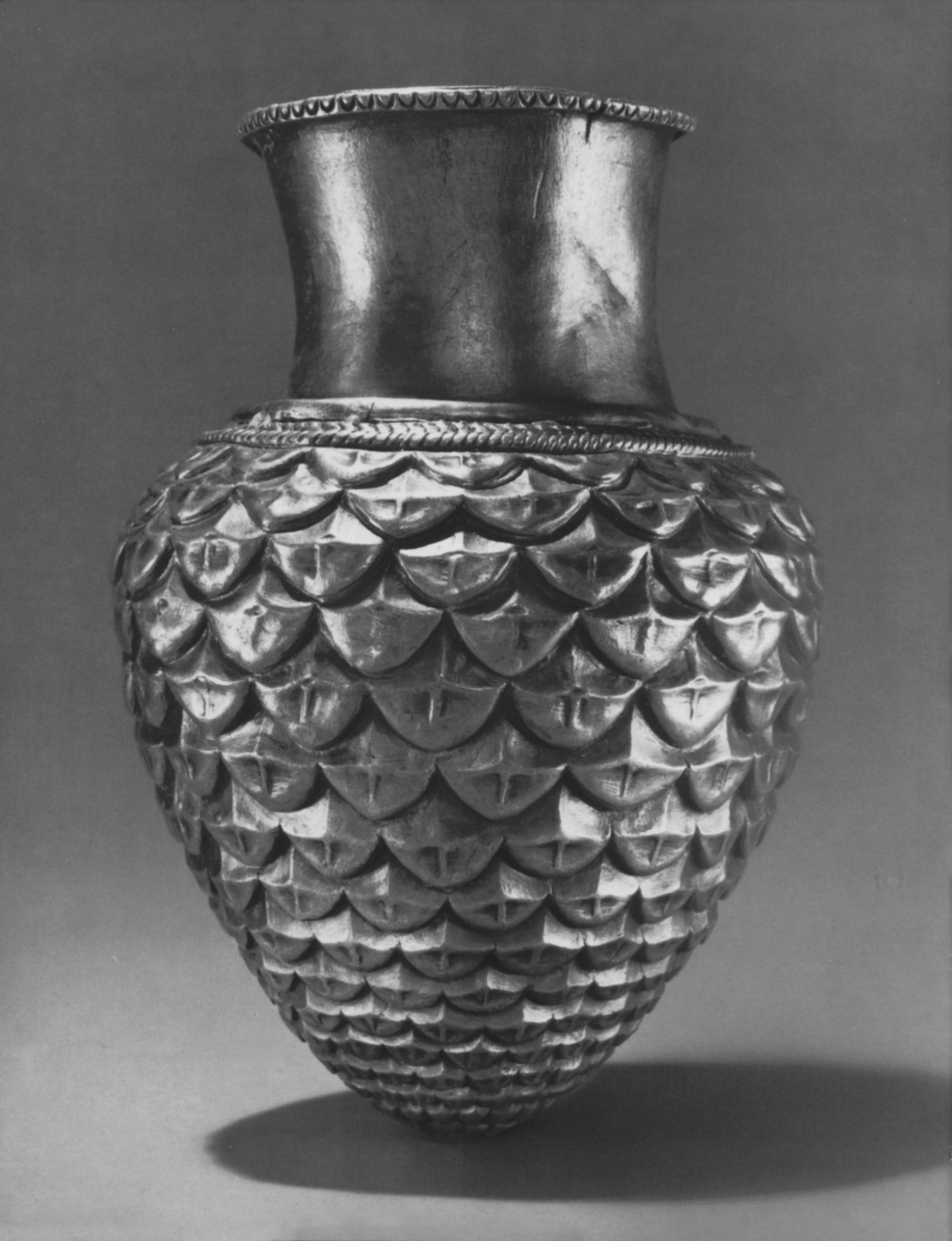
37

36 · Helmet. Bronze, height 23.7 cm. (9⅜ in.). Thracian type with movable cheekpieces. 4th century B.C., Kovachevitsa, near Gotse Delchev. Archaeological Museum, Sofia, Inv. No. 2676

37 · Headstall. Silver, height 7.4 cm. (2⅞ in.). Turn of the 5th-4th centuries B.C., Sveshtari, Shoumen district. Archaeological Museum, Sofia, Inv. No. 3159

38

38 · Phiale. Silver, diameter 10.5 cm. (4⅛ in.). Early 4th century B.C., Vladinya, Lovech district. Archaeological Museum, Sofia, Inv. No. 8150



Rich Burials of the Fourth Century B.C.

[Color plates 5-8, 15]

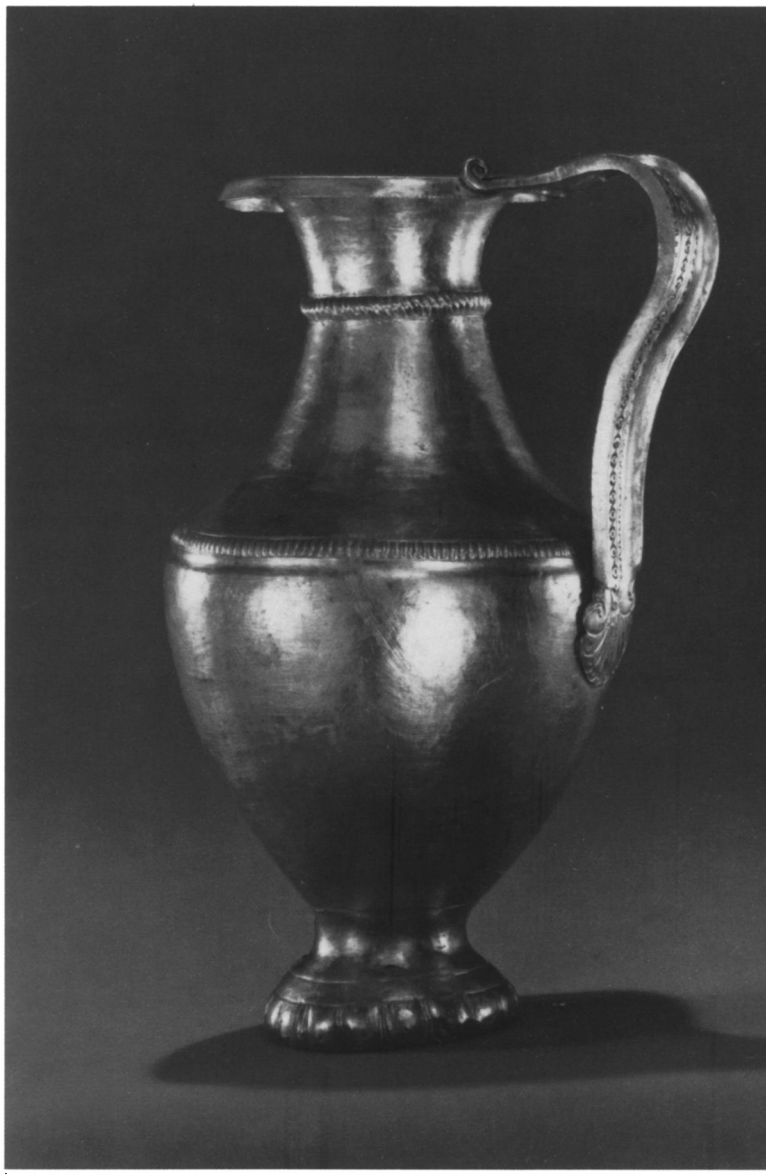
The large finds of Letnitsa, Alexandrovo, and Branichevo contain many similar articles, allowing us to assign these treasures to the same period, to which we can also assign Mogilanska mound in Vratsa. In all of them, particularly Vratsa and Branichevo, silver phialai were found that are inscribed with the names of the Thracian kings Kotys (382-359 B.C.) and Amadokos (359-351 B.C.), upon whose orders they were made to be offered to the persons buried in the tombs. The names of the master craftsmen who made the phialai are also found on them: Engeiston at Alexandrovo (see figure 41), Etbeos at Vratsa, and Teres at Branichevo.

The Panagyurishte Treasure

[Color plates 9-14]

Its weight in gold (6.1 kg., almost 13½ lbs.) is not the only impressive feature of this treasure; the original form and ornamentation of the vessels are equally so. The treasure consists of a phiale (color plate 11) and eight rhyta (color plates 9-14); one is in the form of an amphora, while the others are shaped like the heads of women and animals and the protome of a goat. These vessels have openings at the base through which the liquid flowed and which had to be stopped when the vessel was filled. The amphora has two openings, making it possible for two persons to drink from it at the same time, and it was perhaps intended for blood-brotherhood or treaty ceremonies. These articles seem to have been made by several craftsmen at Lampsakos, on the Asiatic shores of the Dardanelles; the inscriptions give the actual weight of some of the vessels in terms of staters of Lampsakos.

The subjects and ornamentation (an attack on a palace, the Judgment of Paris, and bacchantes) belong to the Hellenistic repertory; also in accordance with the style of this period, the craftsman placed the figures in tense attitudes and emphasized their muscles and strong facial expressions.



40

41

39 · Vase. Silver, height 14 cm. (5½ in.). 380-350 B.C., Mogilanska mound, Vrasta. District Museum of History, Vrasta, Inv. No. B-66

40 · Pitcher. Silver, height 13.9 cm. (5½ in.). End of the 4th century B.C., Loukovit. Archaeological Museum, Sofia, Inv. No. 8212

41 · Phiale. Silver, diameter 13.5 cm. (5⁵⁄₁₆ in.); weight 133.7 gr. Inscribed with the name of the Thracian king Kotys (382-359 B.C.) and that of the craftsman Engeiston. Early 4th century B.C., Alexandrovo, Lovech district. Archaeological Museum, Sofia, Inv. No. 2241

42

43

42 · Pitcher. Silver, height 18.2 cm. (7⅛ in.). Inscribed with the name of the Thracian king Kotys (382-359 B.C.) and that of the craftsman Etbeos. First half of the 4th century B.C., Borovo, Rousse district. District Museum of History, Rousse

43 · Rein ring. Bronze, about 8 cm. (3⅛ in.) 350-300 B.C., Malkata Mogila, near Mezek. Archaeological Museum, Sofia, Inv. No. 6411, 6412

44 · Phiale with the head of Aphrodite. Silver, partly gilt, diameter 10 cm. (3 15/16 in.). 380-350 B.C., Mogilanska mound, Vrasta. District Museum of History, Vrasta, Inv. No. B-68

45 · Plaque with eagles and griffins. Silver gilt, height 2.8 cm. (1⅛ in.). 400-350 B.C., Letnitsa, Lovech district. District Museum of History, Lovech, Inv. No. 594

44

45

The Decline of Thracian Culture

3rd to 1st centuries B.C.

In 280 B.C. upon the death of Lysimachus, the last great ruler of Thrace, Thracian culture began to decline. The conflicts between this ambitious general of Alexander the Great and the Thracian kings and the wars against the other successors had exhausted the economic and military resources of Thrace. This opened the way for a new conqueror to enter the country: the Celts of western Europe who ravaged the Thracian regions and the Greek cities of the coast. In 216 B.C. their rule was overthrown. In the same year the Romans reached the Adriatic coast of the Balkan Peninsula. After engaging the Macedonians (who had tried to restore their rule over Thrace in three prolonged and consecutive wars), and occupying Macedonia in 164 B.C., the Romans invaded Thrace, first aiding the Odrysians and then the other Thracian tribes. In the second half of the first century B.C., when the Thracian tribes in the northwest had been subjected, the Odrysian kingdom became a Roman protectorate that preserved its independence until A.D. 49.

This period can be called the epoch of great invasions from the West. There are few monuments connected with it: the campaigns of the Macedonians, the Celts, and the Romans devastated the region, and the mounds of the third to first centuries B.C. offer only ordinary articles. The fibulae, swords, and shield plaques are identical with those of central Europe and Italy. North of the Balkan Range, as in southern Russia, occur the so-called Sarmatian monuments, the treasures of Galiche and Yakimovo. The coins found in them are imitations of Macedonian coins and of those struck in Thasos.

47

48

46 · Phalera, or chest ornament, in a silver bowl. Bowl: diameter 14.7 cm. (5¾ in.). Phalera: silver, partly gilt, diameter 8 cm. (3⅛ in.). 1st century B.C., Yakimovo, Mihailovgrad district. Mihailovgrad Museum, Inv. Nos. 38, 40

47 · Phalera. Silver gilt, diameter 15.8 cm. (6³⁄₁₆ in.). 2nd-1st century B.C., Galiche, near Oryahovo. Archaeological Museum, Sofia, Inv. No. 5877

48 · Phalera. Silver gilt, diameter 18.3 cm. (7³⁄₁₆ in.). 2nd-1st century B.C., Galiche, near Oryahovo. Archaeological Museum, Sofia, Inv. No. 5876

50

49 · Helmet mask. Bronze and iron, height 23 cm. (9 in.). Second half of the 1st century A.D., Stara Zagora. District Museum of History, Stara Zagora, Inv. No. II-C-1116

50 · Saltcellar. Silver, height 10.4 cm. (4 1/16 in.); weight 106.44 gr. A.D. 249, Nikolayevo, Pleven district. Archaeological Museum, Sofia, Inv. No. 4766

The Roman Period

[Color plates 15-17]

After the Roman conquest, Thrace was divided into three provinces, Macedonia, Moesia, and Thracia. Urbanization increased, and the Thracian cities possessed almost all the usual features of Roman cities: architecture on a large scale, sculpture, paintings, and the applied arts, the latter always influenced by Hellenistic art. The religion of the conquerors was also established in the urban centers, while the Thracian deities, displaced and isolated in solitary areas, were only worshiped in the inaccessible mountains. Rich cemeteries with tombstones, marble statues, and painted tombs surrounded the cities. But, in general, the Thracians remained true to the old burial customs and preserved their burial mounds right down to the Christian era.

In the mounds of the Roman period, helmet masks (color plate 16, figure 49) and plaques (color plate 15) of the types found in Stara Zagora (the second half of the first century B.C.) came to light, objects that had always been considered Eastern in character. However, most typical of this period are the Thracian chariots, which were discovered in the mounds with horses in rich trappings still harnessed to them. The articles from Shishkovtsi (figures 51-53) give us an idea of the ornamentation of these chariots, of which more than fifty have been found.

Most of the art originating in Roman Thrace is quite similar to that found in all the Roman provinces of Europe: portraits on gravestones, reliefs and statues, bronze vessels, glass and silver vases, weapons, silver and gold jewelry. However, there is a group of articles found only in Thrace: votive tablets depicting Zeus (Jupiter), Hera (Juno), Asklepios (Aesculapius, god of medicine) and Hygieia (goddess of health), Sylvanus, Dionysos (Bacchus), Pan, satyrs and maenads, Herakles (Hercules), and other Greek and Roman deities.

The most interesting are the reliefs that depict a horseman (figure 54), the Thracian "Hero," a strange local deity who combined the characteristics of many gods (Asklepios, Zeus, Dionysos, Sylvanus, Apollo, Pluto, and Mithras). The "Hero" is also portrayed in bronze (color plate 17), and there is no doubt that these figures,found only in Thrace, were locally made.

Another frequently treated theme is that of the three nymphs, depicted as goddesses of humility and fertility, whose images are similar to those of the Three Graces.

The Roman period is represented in the exhibition by typically Thracian monuments. Gold and silver jewelry was then also very plentiful in Thrace; the pieces shown are from the Nikolayevo treasure (figure 50, color plate 16).

51

51-53 · Chariot ornaments from Shishkovtsi, Kyustendil district. Pectoral with the head of a maenad: bronze and silver gilt, height 19 cm. (7½ in.). Chariot part with maenad heads: bronze and silver gilt, height 21 cm. (8¼ in.). Ornament with bust of Herakles: bronze and silver gilt, height 22 cm. (8⅝ in.). 2nd-3rd century A.D. Archaeological Museum, Sofia, Inv. No. 7992

52

54 · Votive relief. Marble, height 30 cm. (11¾ in.). Kaspichan. Archaeological Museum, Sofia, Inv. No. 1322

55

Coins

55 · At the left is a coin from the Derroni tribe showing a man with a pointed beard and broad-brimmed Macedonian hat driving an ox-drawn chariot. In the center is a symbol of the sun; on the reverse is a *triskelion* (three legs). Silver decadrachm, diameter 3.5 cm. (1⅜ in.). 6th-5th century B.C. Archaeological Museum, Sofia, Inv. No. 8739.

At the right, on a coin from an unknown tribe, Silenus kneels with a maenad in his lap; on the reverse is an incised swastika. Silver stater, diameter 1.9 cm. (¾ in.); weight 5 gr. 5th century B.C. Archaeological Museum, Sofia, Inv. No. 10473-54

Thrace

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For many a long year Thrace was an unknown country associated with all kinds of mysteries and legends, which students of ancient Greece were unable to explain through Greek history, culture, philosophy, and religion. This was quite natural, because the complex study of Thracian antiquity, known as Thracology, was undertaken in Bulgaria only after the Second World War and has just recently developed in many other countries.

One of the strangest and most mysterious figures in the history of Europe, Orpheus, came from Thrace. Anyone can find his own interests reflected in this mystical personage: the historian sees the earliest Thracian king, who united Thrace and Macedonia under his rule; the archaeologist sees one of the ancient high priests who built the temple at Libethra; the musician sees the legendary singer who charmed with his voice not only men and beasts, but also the deities of the underworld; the philosopher sees the ancient thinker who reformed the Thracian religion. It is therefore no accident that Orpheus should be the first person linked with the most strategic spot in Thrace, the Hellespont (Dardanelles), where he reigned by the will of none other than the god of wine and fertility, Dionysos. For, according to Diodorus Siculus, when this god, accompanied by his retinue of silens, satyrs, and maenads, wished to cross from Asia into Europe at the head of his army, he had to obtain the consent of the ruler of these straits, the Thracian king Lycurgus. The king tried to deceive the god. When Dionysos passed into Europe with the maenads, Lycurgus ordered his troops to slay the divine settlers. However, Charops, father of Oeagrus and grandfather of Orpheus, betrayed the plan to Dionysos. The god then returned to Asia in secret, led out his army, captured Lycurgus, and tortured and crucified him. He then gave the Hellespont to Charops. The earliest mention of Thrace is to be found in these strange legends about Orpheus and the Thracians.

The Thracian king Rhesos is another personality who is mentioned in the Homeric epics and Greek legends. Greek legends place him at various times around the mouth of the Strymon (Struma), in the Pangaion (Pangaeus) Mountains, and in the Rhodopes, along the shores of the Aegean, from where he set out to help Troy in the war against the Achaeans. (The Trojan War was waged by Mycenae and the whole Achaean world for mastery over the Hellespont, the narrow sea route that led from the Aegean to the broad Pontos [Black Sea] and the riches of Colchis. That was the country for which Jason set sail in his ship the *Argo*, and Orpheus joined him at the Hellespont.)

The Achaeans first set foot on Thracian land only after the victory over Troy. Returning with his ships, and pursued by the gods, Odysseus passed through Ismara on the shores of the Aegean, and turned aside to the land of the Ciconians. Here he spared the life of Maron, king of the Ciconians and high priest of Apollo. In gratitude, Maron richly rewarded him, giving Odysseus and his companions seven talents of gold, exquisitely worked, a silver krater, and eleven amphorae of wine. The wine was so wonderful that even when mixed with twenty times the amount of water, it still preserved its strength and flavor.

All these tales belong to an epoch in which Thrace was not yet a reality for Greek writers. Even later, however, this country was to remain just as mysterious, because the Greeks were not accustomed to people who differed so greatly and sharply from them in their way of thinking. It was the strange religion of the Thracians, above all, that impressed the ancient Greek historians. What was told to them about the Trausoi, a Thracian tribe of the southern Rhodopes, seemed improbable. Herodotus was astonished that the Trausoi should welcome death and accompany the dead to their resting place with songs and merrymaking, while they lamented over the newborn because of the hard life that awaited them. What this historian had to say about the Thracians who lived north of the Belasitsa Mountains, in Macedonia, also seemed strange to the Greeks. The fol-

Opposite and cover: Horse, detail of a rhyton. Silver, partly gilt, first half of the 4th century B.C., Borovo, Rousse district. District Museum of History, Rousse, Inv. No. II 357

BULGARIA

(Ancient names are within parentheses)

lowing custom was found among them: these people were polygamous, and when a man died, his relatives tried to discover which of his wives he had loved the most; they then decked her out in all her finery, took her to the tomb, and there her closest relative sacrificed her to the dead man. Thus she went into the other world to accompany her husband.

Thracians believed that they could associate with the gods, and sending a messenger to a deity was quite usual among them. This custom was also recorded of the Getai, who inhabited both sides of the lower Danube. Herodotus gave this description of it: "Every five years they choose by lot one among them, whom they send as an emissary to Zalmoxis to tell him of their needs at the moment. They send him thus: several of them, selected to this end, hold three spears; others seize the messenger by the arms and legs, rock him in the air and cast him onto the spears. If he dies, they believe that the god is favorable to them; if he does not die, they say that he is an evil man, casting the blame on the messenger. After

This horseman and the following figures are from a group of harness plaques found at Letnitsa, Lovech district. Silver gilt, 6-5 cm. (2⅜-2 in.). 400-350 B.C. District Museum of History, Lovech, Inv. Nos. 589, 581, 505, 587, 590, 583

which they send another man!"

The god Zalmoxis was also strange to the Greeks. According to legend, he had once been king of the Getai, and taught them that no one really died but all went to a place where men lived eternally, enjoying "every conceivable good." When Zalmoxis died, he was resurrected three years later, and, by returning from the world of the dead, he proved to the Getai through his resurrection that he had spoken the truth. Herodotus reported a more rational explanation of the death of Zalmoxis, which accused him of having hidden in an underground dwelling that had been built beforehand; but he had doubts about this explanation, and gave up the attempt to find out if Zalmoxis was man or god. In any case, it is obvious that the ideas of the Thracians about the other world, in which Zalmoxis had offered them a paradise, were quite different from those of the Greeks, with their gloomy life of shades beyond the grave. Moreover, Herodotus asserted that besides Zalmoxis the Thracians honored only Dionysos, Ares, and Artemis among the gods, yet that when it thundered, the Getai shot arrows into the sky, believing that there was no other god but theirs, Zalmoxis. Thus Herodotus sometimes presented the Getai as followers of a primitive monotheism and the Thracians as worshipers of many gods.

These legends made Thrace seem quite different from Greece. Indeed, the ancient Greeks knew amazingly little about Thrace despite their geographical proximity to that country. For a long time they saw it as the home of Ares, the bloodthirsty god of war, and of the North Wind, Boreas, who dragged their ships down into the depths of the sea. Even the sea that washed the eastern shores of Thrace was an inhospitable sea, the Pontos Axeinos (*Axeinos* means "unfriendly").

The legends about Orpheus, about Rhesos, and about Maron, and probably even about Zalmoxis, should be referred to very great antiquity, to the era of the Trojan War in the Mycenaean period. Therefore, according to the Greek legends, the Thracians were already in Thrace at that time, between 1600 and 1200 B.C. Of course, this presumption, although confirmed by archaeology, is far from solving the great problem of the origin of the Thracians, which has recently exercised historians and is being considered in connection with their possible autochthonous tribal development and the great migrations in the Balkans.

Troubled times set in for the whole peninsula at the end of the Bronze Age. In Greece the Dorian migration put an end to the Achaean kingdoms. A legend preserved by the Greek historians tells us that this was an even harder age for the northern part of the Balkan Peninsula, where the Phrygians migrated from Macedonia, around the mouths of the Vardar and Struma rivers, passing through the Dardanelles to settle in the lands of the Hittites, whose kingdom they destroyed. In the same period the Carians migrated from the lands along the lower Danube. In antiquity many names are mentioned that are common to Thrace and Asia Minor, a fact that ancient authors explain by the migration of part of the population of the Balkan Peninsula. Thus, for instance, the Mysians inhabited the lands along the Danube, but were also to be found in northwestern Asia Minor; the Dardanians inhabited the upper reaches of the Vardar, and also gave their name to the inhabitants of Troy in the *Iliad*; the Mygdonians are mentioned in Macedonia and also in northwestern Asia. References to the passing of the Thracians known as the Bithynians from the valley of the Struma to the lands south of the Bosphorus are still more persistent. Finally, there is mention of a later migration of the Trerians and the Cimmerians through Thrace.

After all these migrations, some certain, others more conjectural, calm set in once more in both Greece and Thrace. There is no information in this epoch either about Greece or Thrace. However, somewhat later, when the Greeks settled along the Thracian coast and colonized it, we learn of individual names, also legendary. Just as Maroneia bore the name of the legendary Maron, whom Odysseus visited, so, according to Strabo, Messembria (modern Nessebur) was earlier called Menebria

Fighting bears

("the city of Mena") because its founder was called Mena, while *bria* means "city" in Thracian; thus the city of Selya, on the northern shore of the Propontis (Sea of Marmara), was called Selymbria, while Ainos was once called Poltymbria. It is debatable how far these statements can be believed, although they are repeated in the works of several authors going back to Herodotus, and some of them are supported by inscriptions. In any case, if we accept them as true, they give us a little information about the people who lived in the period after the ruin of the Achaean kingdoms and after the migrations. Trustworthy information about Thrace begins to appear much later, when, thanks to colonization, the Greeks began to come into direct contact with the Thracians. From that time on we are well informed about Thracian society, Thracian political history, and the Thracian way of life.

Although Herodotus noted that the Thracians were the most numerous people after the Indians, the Greek colonists were able to settle along the Thracian coast because they found the Thracians divided up into many tribes. (The numerous small tribes of southwestern Thrace had joined earlier in a tribal state, although its territory was small.) The king headed the tribe, and the tribal aristocracy was grouped around him. For a long time the king was also the high priest, and, in the days of Orpheus and Maron, possessed both religious and political power. At first the Thracians had no cities. Life was lived in the villages and in the fortified residences of the chieftains. The population was organized in village communities, which were chiefly engaged in stockbreeding and to a limited extent in farming, and for centuries led rather isolated lives in certain regions of Thrace.

The polygamous Thracian family was the basis of the community. A man had many wives, who were described by Greek authors as living a hard life. Women did the work in Thrace, both at home and in the fields. They reared children and, moreover, according to almost all Greek and Roman writers, were the servants of their menfolk. A man usually bought his wife from her parents. Before marriage young women had free intercourse with the men of their choice, but after marriage they were strictly guarded. According to Herodotus, Thracian men considered it shameful to till the land, and their noblest occupation was to go to war. They were also tattooed, a custom that clearly distinguished the aristocracy from the peasantry. Parents often sold their children as slaves. Herodotus gave the same information in greater detail about the Lydians and the Carians, inhabitants of Asia Minor. It is hard to say how far the negative traits of this way of life, so different from that of the Greeks, were overemphasized in the Greek sources. Nonetheless, in many respects Thracian society resembled that of the tribes and peoples of Asia Minor, rather than that of the Greeks, particularly in its distinctive features.

The Thracians did indeed inhabit a vast territory. Some of them made their way onto the islands of the Aegean Sea, while others inhabited present-day southern and eastern Macedonia, and also Pieria, a region of Thessaly. North of the Danube the population up to the Carpathians was Thracian, or akin to the Thracians, while there were Thracians living in the lands as far northeast as the Dnieper. Finally, to the southeast, in Asia Minor, Bithynia was also a Thracian region. This is why Greek colonization along the Thracian coast and in Asia Minor resulted not only in a breaking of ties between Asia Minor and Thrace, but also in detaching the Thracians of Asia Minor from those of Europe.

More than fifty names of various tribes were known in Europe, among them the Thynians in the Strandja Mountains; the Odrysians in the valley of the Maritsa, where Edirne (Hadrianopolis) now stands, and in the eastern Rhodopes; the Bessoi in the southern regions of the Rhodopes; the Edonians, Bisaltians, and Maidoi along the Struma. There is less information about the tribes north of the Balkan range, where the Getai had settled on both banks of the Danube; while the Mysians lived between them and the Triballoi, who settled in the

Woman with a three-headed snake

valley of the Morava in northwestern Thrace.

The important events in the lives of the Thracian tribes from the end of the seventh to the last decades of the fifth centuries B.C. were caused by the advance of the southern peoples to the north. The Greeks first began colonizing the Thracian coast in the second half of the seventh century B.C. The shores of Aegean Thrace were occupied chiefly by colonists from Naxos and Chalcidice, after they had taken the islands of Thasos and Samothrace; while the Greek metropolises of Asia Minor were more active in colonizing the coast of the Propontis and the Pontos. Miletus was the most active of the cities of Asia Minor. In the light of the information we have regarding this colonization, it appears that the Greeks rarely settled in Thrace by peaceful means, the colonies they founded being several times destroyed and rebuilt.

Cities appeared along the Aegean coast: Amphipolis, Maroneia, Abdera, Ainos, and the little towns on the Thracian Chersonese (Gallipoli Peninsula). Along the Propontis were Perinthus, Selymbria, and Byzantium, and along the Pontos, Apollonia Pontica (Sozopol), Messembria, Odessos (Varna), Dionysopolis (Balchik), Kallatis (Mangalia), Histria (Istria), and many other smaller colonies, of which there were more than thirty, that played a more insignificant role.

Colonization was still expanding when another misfortune befell Thrace. The Persians, who had gradually conquered the kingdoms of the Lydians, Carians, and Phrygians in Asia Minor, struck at the Greek cities in this area and in 512 B.C. crossed over into Europe. The campaign that Darius undertook against the Scythians was aimed at placing Persian troops at their rear. The huge army of Darius crossed eastern Thrace and the Danube and advanced toward Scythia. Here, after the defeat of the Persians, the Thracians followed at their heels, reaching as far as the Thracian Chersonese. Somewhat later, while Darius was still on the Persian throne, the Persians made for Aegean Thrace. They reached the Maritsa River, at the mouth of which they had earlier built Doriskos, a large fort; they then crossed the river and captured the lands as far as the Mesta. From here, in the reign of Xerxes, they headed for the Struma, crossed the river, conquered the Thracians of that region, and, taking all the conquered tribes with them, they invaded Greece through southern Macedonia. Thus, in the course of more than thirty years, the southern regions of Thrace were occupied by the Persians, who placed their military administration in the cities of Doriskos and Ainos, where it remained until 476 B.C.

After their defeat the Persians withdrew to Asia, but the Greek colonists remained along the Thracian coast. We do not know whether it was before the withdrawal of the Persians or immediately after it that, in the reign of Teres, the Odrysians went to the regions inhabited by the Thynians and neighboring small tribes and conquered them. The Getai along the lower Danube also joined his kingdom after this, but no one knows how they and the Bessoi, the western neighbors of the Odrysians, came to be included in the Odrysian kingdom. We do know that Teres improved his relations with the Scythian ruler Ariapites by giving Ariapites one of his daughters for a wife.

Athens, which headed the Greek world after the Greco-Persian Wars, appears to have been favorable to the founding of the Odrysian kingdom, in which she saw a strong ally should the Persians again try to cross into Europe. The kingdom lay along the shores of the Propontis and the Black Sea up to the lower Danube. In the last years of the reign of Teres, many of the Greek cities between the mouths of the Mesta and the Maritsa, which had paid tribute to the Athenian Naval League as allies of the Athenians, reduced or absolutely stopped payment of their tribute. It is thought that this occurred because they now depended on Teres, to whom they had to pay a tax. For this reason, and so not to antagonize Teres, Athens consented to these payments being reduced or stopped.

Sitalkes, the son of Teres, extended the lands of the Odrysian kingdom to the west, as far as the upper

Horseman brandishing a spear

reaches of the Struma. From here, after signing an alliance with Athens, he attacked Macedonia, but, receiving no aid from Athens, he was forced to put an end to his campaign.

The Odrysian kingdom achieved great prosperity, and from a mention by Thucydides it is apparent that in the reign of Seuthes I, who followed Sitalkes on the throne, the annual revenue reached the sum of 400 talents, paid in gold and silver, at a time when taxes were the highest. Thucydides added that as much again was received in the form of gifts, not counting among them colored and plain fabrics and other articles. For, according to the same author, gifts were offered not only to the king, but also to the governors and the Odrysian nobles. In general this was a Thracian custom, but in contrast to the Persians, the Odrysians made full use of it.

It appears that in the reign of Seuthes, who came to the throne in 424 B.C., a change took place for the first time in the policy of friendship with Athens. Information of doubtful reliability indicates that Seuthes I made war on the Athenian colonies in the Thracian Chersonese. On the other hand, it is also known that in the reign of Seuthes the Greek cities along the Aegean coast continued to pay taxes to the Odrysian king. In the last years of the reign of Seuthes, the Odrysian kingdom began to decline rapidly.

The reigns of the three kings Teres, Sitalkes, and Seuthes I were a comparatively calm period of progress. In this period, besides the kings who ruled the Odrysian kingdom, sons and grandsons of Teres were appointed as governors of various parts of the kingdom. One of them was Sparadokos, the elder brother of Sitalkes. Another grandson of Teres, a certain Maisades, ruled the Thynians and the neighboring tribes between the Maritsa, the Black Sea, and the Propontis. At that time the Odrysian kingdom began to disintegrate. The Greek historian Xenophon, arriving at the Propontis at the head of his army upon his return from the campaign against the Persians in 400 B.C., was summoned by Seuthes II, the son of Maisades, to try to regain the land formerly ruled by his father. With the aid of Xenophon's army, Seuthes II dealt with the Thynians and the other rebellious tribes and reestablished his rule. (Seuthes explained that he had grown up in the palace of Medokos; therefore it can be deduced that the rebellion of the Thynians occurred in the reign of Medokos and after the death of Seuthes I.) Thus it soon became necessary for Athens, and particularly for Thrasyboulos, who, while in charge of the Athenian fleet, was sent to the Thracian Chersonese in 389 B.C. on the way to Byzantium, to reconcile Medokos and Seuthes II.

In 383 B.C. an energetic ruler, Kotys I, probably the son of Seuthes II, seems to have restored the unity of the Odrysian kingdom. In the course of his reign, which lasted until 359 B.C., he tried to seize the Thracian Chersonese, and had some measure of success; but was unable to accomplish his plan, being killed by two inhabitants of Ainos. The death of Kotys, about whom ancient authors tell many anecdotes, describing him as a very artful and at the same time as an irascible and hysterical man, did not put an end to the war with Athens for the Thracian Chersonese. Kotys had availed himself of the services of the mercenary armies of two Greek generals, Iphikrates and Charidemos, whom he had married to his daughters. One of them, Charidemos, continued his operations under Kersobleptes, who followed Kotys on the throne. However, the disagreements with Amadokos, the heir of Medokos, led once more to the disintegration of the Odrysian kingdom at a most critical moment, when an extremely enterprising ruler, Philip II, came to the throne in Macedonia. He at once seized Amphipolis, crossed the Struma, and settled at the spot known as Crenides. Here the inhabitants of Thasos had just founded a colony, which Philip reorganized as a Macedonian city, calling it Philippi. Philip II took advantage of the strife that had broken out in the kingdom of the Odrysians and advanced eastward, first into the lands of the independent Thracian tribes, and then into the lands of the Odrysians. In the middle of the fourth

Horseman attacked by a bear

century B.C., Amadokos was forced to recognize the rule of the Macedonians, and, after him, Kersobleptes was defeated.

The Triballoi, who took advantage of the fighting between the Odrysians and the Macedonians, expanded to the east between the Danube and the Balkan Range, seizing the lands of the Odrysians and conquering all of southern Thrace almost as far as the Balkan Range. One of the kings of the Getai, a certain Kotylas, gave his daughter as a peace hostage to be Philip's wife. However, it was Philip's son, Alexander the Great, who dealt with the Triballoi, who had remained free. After the reign of Alexander, when the kingdom of Macedonia, which had been extended to an extraordinary degree, was divided up, and fell apart, Thrace remained under the rule of his general Lysimachus, and a period in the development of the country came to an end.

We have a large amount of information on this period, but it sheds light only on some of the events in Thrace, those concerning the country's southern regions in which the Greeks had great political and economic interests. For the Greek authors, events that directly or indirectly affected the Greeks and their colonies in Thrace were of interest; that is why the internal relations in Thrace were not fully elucidated. It is hard to say what the relations were between the individual Thracian tribes within the Odrysian kingdom, and how they changed during the period of its power, and when the kingdom declined.

It would appear that the Odrysian kings were in the habit of placing their own trusted chieftains at the heads of the individual Thracian tribes, while the Macedonians tried to depend on the lesser dynasts. Because of this, rulers on both sides of the Balkan Range formed alliances in the time of Lysimachus. Seuthes III, who ruled the Valley of Roses, formed one of them, while Dromichaites, ruler of the Getai, headed another. There were major clashes between the alliances and Lysimachus in which neither he nor the Thracians got the upper hand. Lysimachus's further struggles to master Macedonia, and after that Asia Minor, where he died, reduced the powers of resistance of all the peoples of the Balkan Peninsula and opened the gates to the invasions of the Celts from central Europe.

After invading Macedonia and Thessaly, the Celts headed for Thrace, where a considerable number of them settled and founded a kingdom. While some were busy plundering and looting Thrace, without sparing the Greek colonies, another group crossed the whole of Thrace and settled in Asia Minor, where Galatia was founded on the former territory of Phrygia. In Thrace the kingdom of the Celts lasted from only 279 to 216 B.C., when it was finally swept away by a rebellion of the Thracians, who received help from Macedonia. However, liberation from Celtic rule did not lead to union, but to the complete splitting up of Thrace.

Just when the Celtic rule was overthrown in Thrace, a new conqueror appeared in the westernmost regions of the Balkan Peninsula, slowly advancing from the shores of Albania to the interior. In 168 B.C. the Romans were already masters of both Macedonia and Greece, and were gradually imposing their rule on the Greek colonies in Thrace and on Thrace herself. They found the Odrysian kingdom weakened and ruined, and, in the course of the first century B.C., Rome exploited this situation in order to impose her rule on the neighboring tribes. Actually, however, this entire period was spent mainly in fighting with Macedonia and afterward, when the kingdom had become a Roman province, in fighting between the Bessoi and the Odrysians. At the end of this period, around 56 to 54 B.C., the Getai organized a powerful military and political alliance under Burebista. It was short-lived, however, and Rome subjected the northwestern regions of Thrace. The province of Moesia was formed there, while the southeastern parts of the country became a Roman protectorate ruled by the Odrysian kings. The complicated internecine strife that Rome created in Thrace paved the way for the gradual and imperceptible turning of the Odrysian kingdom into a new province — Thracia.

Nereid (sea nymph) riding a hippocamp

Opposite: Goat, detail of a rhyton from Panagyurishte (see color plate 12)

From the first century A.D. the fate of the numerous Thracian people was decided. The Roman Empire built cities in the provinces it had founded, cities in which the crafts flourished, in which there was a rich citizen class, possessing considerable estates, and in which there were paved roads and temples. In most cases the Roman rulers organized life in those centers that formerly had had a more or less urban character. We know, for instance, that as early as the oldest Thracian kings certain settlements had developed to the size of cities. Demosthenes mentioned several of them, such as Kabyle (near Yambol), Masteyra (near the village of Mladenovo, Haskovo district), and Drongilion. In addition, we also know Helis was the name of the city that was the residence of the Getai rulers. The most important Thracian city of the Hellenistic period discovered and excavated so far is Seuthopolis, near Kazanluk, on the Toundzha River. The conquest of Thrace by the Macedonian kings resulted in the building of many cities in the country, such as Philippi, in the southern regions, and Philippopolis, which in their language the Thracians called Poulpoudeva (modern Plovdiv), the Thracian name being a translation of the Greek name and meaning "Philip's City." There was also Beroë (now Stara Zagora). It is probable that many more settlements like Serdica (modern Sofia) appeared still earlier, and that the Romans found in them an already fairly well developed city life. In any case, the building of roads and the turning of the cities into important trade, administrative, military, and cultural centers led to the urbanization of a considerable part of the peasant population of Thrace. The officers, the army, and the military officials brought from other countries, or from Italy herself, the veterans who colonized Moesia and Thracia, the officials, merchants, and craftsmen who were brought there played a large part in creating this urban life.

As everywhere else, the rapid transformation of life in the provinces created stability for the Roman rule and respect for its government. The Roman legionaries who manned the frontiers, the First Italic, the Fifth Macedonian, and the Seventh Claudian legions, as well as the numerous auxiliary troops organized in various squadrons and cohorts, provided a strong defense for Thrace and a peaceful life, which it had not known in earlier times. There were, of course, many invasions, but the Roman Empire was strong enough to overcome them and turn them into brief and temporary misfortunes. It was power that provided all the necessary conditions for the prosperity of the two provinces, which reached its zenith in the period from the middle of the second to the middle of the third centuries A.D. By that time Moesia was no longer a frontier region. Divided into two parts, Upper and Lower Moesia, it had become an inner region of the Roman Empire after the conquest of Dacia by the Emperor Trajan. The Severan period (the turn of the second and third centuries A.D.) was one of the greatest prosperity for Roman Thrace.

The Roman way of life transplanted in Thrace did much for the gradual Romanization of its people; however, Greek was still the official language in the greater part of the country. Greek had a long history in Thrace, since as early as the time of the Macedonians, and even earlier, it had come to the fore as an international language. The few official inscriptions of the Thracian kings were written in Greek. The oldest of them is the inscription settling matters between the followers of Seuthes III, who ruled at Seuthopolis, and the ruler of Kabyle. Far more inscriptions of the last Thracian kings have come down to us, however, and they, too, are written in Greek, even at a time when Thrace was already a Roman protectorate. The coins of the Thracian kings also had Greek inscriptions.

In the fourth century A.D. Thrace fell under the rule of the emperors of the Eastern Roman Empire, the capital of which, Byzantium (Constantinople), was actually one of the cities of Thrace. When the Roman Empire disintegrated, a new period began, a period not touched upon in our exhibition.