

WHAT'S UNDER THE LID: A CONTRIBUTION TO THE STUDY OF SOME DETAILS OF THE VÄLCHITRÄN, CHERVEN BRYAG AND CĂLĂRAȘI TREASURES (102 YEARS LATER)

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Abstract: The present paper is a brief contribution to the study of the remarkable finds from Vălchiträn, Cherven Bryag, and Călărași. The focus of the study is on half of a stone mould, which is probably related to the gold and silver lids from the above-mentioned collective and individual finds. Based on the analysis of the shape and dimensions of the stone mould, it is assumed that it was most likely used to make a bronze construction placed at the base of a precious metal lid, similar to the widely popular ones made of gold and silver. The discovery of the mould and a stone sceptre similar to the one from the Uluburun shipwreck allows us to assume narrower chronological framework for the mould itself, and indirectly for the gold and silver artefacts from the territory of present-day Bulgaria and Romania.

Cuvinte-cheie: Bronzul târziu, matrițe din piatră, Coslogeni, Vălchiträn, Călărași

Rezumat: Lucrarea de față reprezintă o scurtă contribuție la studiul descoperirilor remarcabile de la Vălchiträn, Cherven Bryag și Călărași. Obiectul la care se face referire aici este o jumătate de matriță din piatră, care ar putea fi legată de discurile din argint și aur descoperite în spațiile mai sus menționate. Pe baza analizei formei și dimensiunilor acestei matrițe, se poate presupune că a fost utilizată pentru realizarea unui suport din bronz care să susțină discul făcut dintr-un metal prețios. Descoperirea matriței împreună cu un sceptru din piatră similar cu cel descoperit pe epava de la Uluburun ne permite să presupunem cadre cronologice mai restrânse pentru matriță și, indirect, pentru artefactele din aur și argint de pe teritoriile actuale ale Bulgariei și României.

INTRODUCTION¹

Over the past century, hoards and single finds composed of precious metals, including the Vălchiträn gold treasure discovered near the village of the same name near Pleven (Mikov 1958; Chukalev, Dimitrova 2018) the hoards from Călărași (Bondoc 2006; Constantinescu 2006), Cherven Bryag (Stefanova 2018), Rădeni, Kryzovlin (Vulpe, Mihailescu-Bîrliba 1986; Popescu, Oanță-Marghitu 2018) and others, continue to intrigue scholars and raise questions related to their origin, cultural affiliation, interpretation, and chronology. This study is a modest contribution to the attempt to resolve questions regarding certain details in the construction of some of the elements of the aforementioned treasure items, which could be of significant importance for clarifying their relative chronology and cultural connections.

THE MOULD OF GLĂVAN

The ancient collection² of the National Institute of Archaeology with Museum–Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (NAIM-BAS) stores an unknown and unpublished, fully preserved half of a stone mould, with noticeable small chips at the corners. It was discovered with the well-known sceptre from Glăvan (Vassileva 2018, p. 254, fig. 2), secondarily re-deposited in a burial mound from the second half of the Iron Age (5th–3rd century BC) (Kitov 1990, p. 36)³. The limited information concerning the circumstances of the finds does not permit an in-depth analysis. The presence of the two artefacts (discovered together) within the mound fill, outside the confines of any funerary structures, may be explained in several ways. The first possibility is that both artefacts were originally embedded in the soil that was excavated and subsequently used for the construction of the tumulus. It may be assumed that this soil was sourced from the immediate vicinity in order to minimise the time required for its transportation to the selected location of the mound. It cannot be

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³ The excavator interprets the mould for casting a bronze sceptre without substantiating the assertion in detail, see Kitov 1990, p. 36.