

NATIONAL MUSEUM OF ARCHAEOLOGY

**100 YEARS FROM THE OPENING
OF THE FIRST EXHIBITION
18.05.1905 – 18.05.2005**

BULGARIAN ACADEMY OF SCIENCES
INSTITUTE OF ARCHAEOLOGY WITH MUSEUM

**NATIONAL
MUSEUM OF ARCHAEOLOGY**

**100 YEARS FROM THE OPENING OF
THE FIRST EXHIBITION**

18.05.1905 – 18.05.2005

Edited by
Prof. Vassil Nikolov



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Preface

Despite being founded in the late 1892, the National Museum organized its first exhibition in the former Buyuk mosque and opened for visits on 18th May 1905. This day wasn't chosen at random: that was the Name's Day of the Royal Prince Ferdinand of Bulgaria, who had supported the Museum's activity and the repairs of the building. The Royal Prince Ferdinand, his military and civil suite, the princes Boris and Cyril, the ministers and the diplomatic corps, the Mayor of the capital, deputies, generals, high magistrates, University professors and ordinary citizens were present at the 'modern but slow ceremony', which started at 11 o'clock and continued for about two hours.

In a long speech the Director of the Museum Vaclav Dobruski presented in detail the Collection, which had started from 165 objects and in the course of a dozen of years reached 22,642 units. The archaeological exhibits were received both following instructions from the Ministry of National Education of 1895 sent to the administrative and school authorities about handing in all finds, and by means of limited archaeological excavations. The ancient stone artifacts prevailed, but the numismatic collection was also very rich already. Dobruski pleaded for the construction of a 'vast modern building' of the Museum, which however even to-date has remained only a dream.

With a short but full of matter speech the Royal Prince Ferdinand announced that the "Bulgarian National Museum is open". Very topical sounded his message that 'this temple of the past... should not be visited eagerly only by foreigners... but also by all Bulgarians, who could learn here, firstly, that our land is one of the most precious places on earth, which have ever played a role in the world cultural history, and, secondly, that the cultures have been generally established for long centuries through interaction, where each people according to its talents puts a more or less original mark upon the things perceived and inherited.'

Professor Ivan Shishmanov, Minister of National Education, also gave a speech. He pointed out the necessity of studying the past of Bulgaria, which should be the task of the National Museum.

He welcomed the royal prince and the official guests to take a look at the museum's exhibition and the guests started on a detailed tour around the hall.

The central newspapers wrote about the official opening of the National Museum. Among them were the State gazette, *Dnevnik* (meaning, Diary), *Vecherna poshta* (Evening post), *Mir* (Peace), *Bulgaria*, *Priapiaporet's* (Flag) and *Narodni prava* (People's rights). Some of them published the whole speeches of the royal prince and the Minister of National Education. *Dnevnik* also wrote: 'The National Museum will be the pride of the whole nation and everybody who helped make the Museum what it is today: a monument of the glorious past and a teacher for a better future.'

During the first five months after the launch of the exhibition 86,000 people visited the Museum! This number speaks of the immense public need which the Museum fulfilled.

The following history of the Museum is told in short in this book. This is the history of a national cultural institution that since 1949 has been administratively linked to the activity of another national scientific institution – the Institute of Archaeology. Nowadays the Institute of Archaeology with Museum, a part of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, is an institution with national functions, whose task is to be the organizer and drive of the archaeological research and archaeological science in Bulgaria, as well as to have a leading position in the museology and the popularization of the archaeological heritage of the country. The National Archaeological Museum, which is a part of the bigger institution, is the biggest and the richest archaeological museum in the country. Its collections were made predominantly before the World War Two, after which, mainly due to lack of space in the depositories, they have been complemented sporadically. After the gradual development of the new exhibition, which has already been finished, we started enriching the Museum with new significant finds from excavations, directed by scientists of the Institute of Archaeology with Museum. After the long reconstruction of the building and the lack of exhibition, during the last year people of all age groups have found or re-found the National Museum of Archaeology's new face. Besides a temple of the ancient times, which has been and will be visited by tens of thousands of admirers of the knowledge about the past of this land, the location of the Museum in the very heart of the capital has determined its natural role of a place, where many of the foreign guests and delegations welcomed to the Presidency, the Council of Ministers and the Parliament, are able for a very short time to realize that their high-ranking hosts present a country with a very rich cultural heritage and to feel respect for it.

The centennial anniversary of the launch of the first archaeological exhibition in Bulgaria is a good reason to present before a wider public, even in short, the history of the National Museum of Archaeology. The authors of the chronicles are employees of the Institute of Archaeology and Museum, they know well different aspects of the past and the present of the Museum and they have prepared this well illustrated book for a very short time and with great enthusiasm. It is a necessary addition to the new exhibitions of the Museum, which in a modern and scientific way, through a wide range of artifacts, represent all the periods of the long history of the Bulgarian society.

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