LIST OF SUMMARIES

Submitted for participation in a competition for Associate Professor in the field of higher education 2. Humanities, professional field 2.2. History and Archaeology (Ancient Archaeology) announced by the Institute of Balkan Studies with a center of Thracology at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences for the needs of the Regional Museum of History – Sliven, published in the "Darzhaven vestnik" № 39 / 13. 05. 2025.

I. MONOGRAPHS

1. Kovachev, Georgi (2025). *Antique hybrid theriomorphic creatures from Southeastern Bulgaria*. Sofia: Kovachev Press, 204 pp. ISBN: ISBN: 978-619-257-068-2.

The monograph examines monuments depicting well-known ancient hybrid theriomorphic creatures discovered in Southeastern Bulgaria during regular archaeological excavations or acquired by museum collections under unclear circumstances. These mythical beings represent combinations of the torso of one living creature ending with the body of another—animals, birds, reptiles, and sea creatures. Unlike the anthropomorphic mythical characters, these combinations do not include human parts or bodies.

The study follows the principles of post-processual archaeology combined with art-historical analysis, aiming to interpret the archaeological find within its discovery context, but from the perspective of those who placed it within the archaeological site. In this sense, the conceptual idea accompanying the artifact is regarded as static in time and conservative according to later and contemporary interpretations. The research focuses on six hybrid creatures—the hippalectryon, the griffin, the pardalokampos, the hippocampus, Pegasus, and Cerberus.

The ceramic rhyton in the shape of a hippalectryon represents a mythical beast with the head of a horse and the body of a rooster. In the Mediterranean world, vessels of similar form have been known since the 9th century BC, but their "flourishing" occurred between the 7th century and the first quarter of the 5th century BC (up to 480 BC), after which they disappeared from the Balkans. This disappearance is associated with Xerxes' destructive campaign in Greece and the subsequent affiliation of these hybrid beings with the Persians. Later, until the second half of the 2nd century BC, the hippalectryon continued to appear on coins minted in Asia Minor cities along the Dardanelles. Similar depictions are also found on coins of Alexander the Great and Lysimachus. The ceramic rhyton discovered in the Taneva mound near the village of Topolchane, Sliven region, dates to the first quarter of the 4th century BC and demonstrates Asia Minor influence on the philosophical and ideological orientation of the buried Thracian paradynast. The horse, symbolizing power and mobility, and the rooster, symbolizing a new beginning, together reflect the dynamics of life and its imaginary cyclicity. In the context of the funerary ritual, this mythical beast also serves an apotropaic (protective) function.

The second creature discussed is represented by the horse's forehead ornament from the Dalakova mound in the form of a griffin protome. This mythical being, a combination of eagle and lion, symbolizes strength, grandeur, and divine power. Written sources and archaeological finds testify to the widespread diffusion of the griffin motif from the Ancient East, through Egypt and Greece, to the Scythian steppes and the Far East. Initially associated with the protection of sacred spaces and divine domains, the griffin gradually evolved into a symbol of royal power and an apotropaic figure. The examined monument, created by a local Thracian toreutic artist, is more closely related to depictions from Scythian art than to those of the Near East. In the funerary context of the Dalakova mound, the horse's forehead ornament

shaped as a griffin is not only a symbol of royal authority and dignity but also a required apotropaic element intended to accompany the deceased ruler on his final journey.

The third figure, the pardalokampos, is a mythical beast combining a panther and a sea mammal, symbolizing the complex relationship between land and sea, the wild and its mythological dimensions. Chronologically, monuments depicting this creature span from the 4th century BC to the 6th century AD. The sea-panther from Karanovo, dated to the mid-1st century, according to the archaeological context, suggests that the hybrid beast served not only a decorative function on the chariot placed in the grave but also a symbolic one, linked to spirituality and the transition to the afterlife.

Another artifact, although of uncertain provenance, is a silver-plated bronze ring with a bezel depicting a hippocampus. The image of the sea-horse is also known from other finds on Bulgarian territory. These artifacts demonstrate both the influence of Greek culture and local interpretations of the mythical image. In the art of Mediterranean peoples, the sea-horse often appears in funerary scenes, symbolizing the journey to the afterlife. At the same time, during the Hellenistic period, it features in compositions depicting marine thiasoi—rich mythological scenes emphasizing aesthetic decoration. In the Roman period, depictions of hippocampi became widespread, appearing in mosaics, coins, and architectural elements throughout the empire. The hippocampus on the ring from the Sliven museum is yet another example of the adaptation of ancient motifs.

The next mythical hybrid beast is Cerberus, the three-headed guardian of the underworld—one of the most recognizable symbols of ancient mythology. He personifies the boundary between the world of the living and the dead, preventing souls from crossing between the two realms. Among the most notable scenes are depictions of Hercules bringing Cerberus out of the underworld and of Serapis, who, especially in the Roman period, was often syncretized with other deities. In modern-day Bulgaria lands, depictions of Cerberus are mostly found on roman coins, illustrating the spread of monuments featuring the mythical dog and Serapis. This is evident in coin issues from Anchialos, Serdica, Augusta Traiana, Deultum, Marcianopolis, Odessos, and Nicopolis ad Istrum. In some of these cities, Serapeums existed, while in others, the engravings reflect the introduction of Eastern cults among the local population. Such is the case with the bronze statuette of the "Macrobius-type" Cerberus found near Augusta Traiana, discussed in this study.

The final mythical figure examined is Pegasus, represented by a gem discovered in Kabyle. The presence of a monument depicting this mythical winged horse in the city is associated with the Roman military units stationed there.

The main functions of the examined theriomorphic creatures relate to their symbolism, representing demonstrations of power and protection; the creation of mythological connections—metaphors between humans and gods, the physical and spiritual worlds; and their role as elements in utilitarian ritual use in various ceremonies and practices.

The study sheds light on a lesser-known aspect of ancient Thracian art and culture, and the inclusion of monuments from Southeastern Bulgaria broadens the scope of research into their beliefs and customs. The observed tendencies in the development of these images, as demonstrated by the presented artifacts, form a foundation for further exploration of theriomorphic beings and their role in the ancient world.

Future studies could focus on comparing theriomorphic creatures in Thracian art with those in other cultures of the Balkans, Asia Minor, and the Mediterranean, and on exploring their relationship to the social structure of Thracian tribes, including their roles in royal and religious rituals. Hybrid theriomorphic beasts represent a unique cultural phenomenon that transcends purely artistic boundaries and offers a window into the mindset and beliefs of ancient people. Examining their imagery and symbolism helps us better understand the

relationship between humans, nature, and the divine in antiquity, as well as the richness of the Thracian cultural heritage.

2. Kovachev, Georgi (2002). *The Bulgarian lands between the Eastern Stara Planina and Strandja in the XII-XIV century (historical-archeological research).* Veliko Tarnovo: Faber, 196 pp. ISBN: 954-775-085-2.

The monograph was published on the basis of the dissertation defended by the author in 2001, titled *"The Bulgarian Lands between Eastern Stara Planina and Strandzha during the 12th – 14th Centuries."* The book examines the political history of the region during the specified period; the daily life and material culture; the location of settlements according to established physical-geographical (hypsometric) parameters and soil composition; the road and communication network; and the monastic centers of Holly Mountain of Sliven and Paroria.

According to the results of the analysis, the material culture of the population in the region during the 12th – 14th centuries is identical to that of the other territories of the Second Bulgarian Kingdom, which indicates the Bulgarian ethnic character of the local inhabitants. The road and communication routes were intended to connect the major urban centers of the Second Bulgarian Kingdom and Byzantium, as well as the capital, Tarnovgrad, and other cities of Northern Bulgaria with the southern Bulgarian Black Sea coast. The defensive lines of the fortress system in the region were oriented toward enemy attacks from the south. The location of the settlements on different soil types confirms the production of well-known agricultural resources—various grains, domesticated animals, and other products – as described in the known medieval written sources about the area.

The examined written sources and the results of archaeological research on the medieval monasteries and churches in the areas of Holly Mountain of Sliven and Paroria reveal the connection between these structures and the road network of the region, as well as the influence of the ecclesiastical architecture of the Second Bulgarian Kingdom on their construction plans. The two monastic communities are associated with prominent representatives of Bulgarian Christian hesychasm, among them St. Theodosius of Tarnovo, Roman of Vidin, and others.

II. STUDIES IN SCIENTIFIC COLLECTIONS AND JOURNALS

3. Kovachev, Georgi (1997). Ancient Cults in the Sliven Area in the 2nd -3rd Century. – *Bulgarian Historical Review (BHR)*, № 4, pp. 111-133. ISSN – 0204-8906.

The study examines ancient cult monuments in the Sliven region that reflect Thracian religion in the context of Roman rule (1st – 4th centuries). The overall picture emerging from the statistical analysis of the cult monuments in the region shows that the most widespread was the cult of the Thracian Horseman god. So far, 24 monuments dedicated to him have been identified, but it can be assumed with certainty that their actual number was much higher. In general, the monuments fall into three main categories: votive tablets of Heros, votive tablets of Apollo as a horseman, and statues of the Hero. The monuments of the Thracian Horseman were produced during the second half of the 2nd to the end of the 3rd century, when the cult of the Horseman god was most widely spread and likely when the sanctuaries dedicated to him flourished. Given the small number of discovered monuments found in various places, it is difficult to say whether the monuments of Heros were forcibly destroyed and the cult erased, or whether they were simply abandoned after the adoption of Christianity.

Considering the strong spread of the Apollonian cult in the administrative territory of Augusta Traiana nearby, it is logical that the known monuments of Apollo should be second in number after those of Heros. They are represented by a variety of examples—votive tablets of Apollo as a horseman, bronze statuettes of Apollo as a horseman and of Apollo himself, a marble statue, and a dedicatory inscription. The analysis shows that these monuments represent both the Thracian interpretation of Apollo—as a horseman—and his Hellenistic manifestation—as a statue or a dedicatory inscription without any images.

Zeus is represented by two monuments, one of which also bears the marks of Hellenistic iconography—a statue of Zeus Okonenski with a dedicatory inscription. A link should be sought between Zeus Zbelsurd, worshiped near the village of Bozadjii, and the same deity venerated in ancient Kabile. The appearance of two such monuments in close proximity suggests that the worship of Zeus Zbelsurd was not an isolated phenomenon in Thrace. The monuments dedicated to Dionysus and Heracles found near Kabile indicate the spread of their cults in the city's hinterland. The relief of Heracles—unfortunately of unknown current location—points to the veneration of the Thracian interpretation of the hero, as evidenced also by the Thracian names of those dedicating votive tablets to Dionysus and Heracles.

It is also worth considering that the two monuments dedicated to Dionysus and one to Dionysus and Heracles provide serious grounds to search for a sanctuary, and perhaps even a Dionysian association. Within this context, the appearance of a monument to Hecate nearby is significant, as this goddess was known to be connected with Dionysian associations. Alongside Asclepius, it is likely that Dionysus and Heracles also carried healing functions. This assumption aligns with the veneration of Asclepius and Hygieia in Kabile, with whom they were themselves associated.

The discovery of a statuette of Hermes in the region, especially in Sliven, is not accidental. As we know, this deity was considered the patron of merchants, who were present in the established marketplace there. The agricultural tribes of the region venerated Zeus, Hera, and the Three Nymphs, as evidenced by the votive monuments dedicated to them, which testify to their devotion. The offering of these monuments occurred during the 3rd century, when the class of peasants and farmers became more concerned with securing high yields and divine favor. Those making the offerings sought the gods' protection over their families, themselves, or their harvests.

Of particular interest is the syncretism evident in dedications to certain Greek deities, which reveal their Thracian interpretation intertwined with local cults. From the inscription on the monument of Zeus Okonenski, we learn the ancient name of the settlement near Sliven—*Tuida*—and from the inscription on the monument dedicated to Zeus, Hera, and the Three Nymphs from Trapoklovo, we learn the probable name of the ancient settlement there—*Sikin*. The text proposes hypotheses for sanctuaries in the localities of Hisarlaka, Trapoklovo, Malko Chochoven, Staro Selo, and Chokoba, based on the cult monuments discovered. These places were most likely connected by roads.

III. ARTICLES IN SCIENTIFIC COLLECTIONS AND JOURNALS

4. Kovachev, Georgi (1992) Votive plates of the Thracian Horseman from the History Museum of Sliven. –*Bulletin of the museums from Southeastern Bulgaria*, T. XV, pp. 15-23. USSH: 0204-403X.

The article examines nine unpublished votive plates of the Thracian Horseman from the History Museum of Sliven, some of them with an unknown location. Based on iconographic

features, an attempt was made to date the monuments to the 2nd – 3rd century. All plates were related to the existing at the time of publication iconographic typology.

5. Kovachev, Georgi (1992) On the issue of the distribution of the cult of the Thracian equestrian god in the region of Sliven. –*Bulletin of the History Museum in Kyustendil*, T. IV, pp. 233-239. ISSN: 0861-4342.

The article examines the known monuments of the Thracian Horseman from the area around the town of Sliven, the monuments are grouped according to their place of origin. On this basis, the locations of several temples, in which Heros was worshipped, were proposed.

6. Kovachev, Georgi (1993) Once again for the relief from Novo Selo, Sliven. –*Archive for settlement research*, № 2, pp. 35-46. ISSN: 0860-6507.

The article aims to determine the exact location of the double-sided relief from Novo Selo, Sliven region. According to the existing information and data from the inventory book of the National Archaeological Museum in Sofia, as well as the comparison made between various, and in some cases contradictory, publications on the subject, it is clarified that the monument was originally discovered in the neighborhood of Novo Selo in the city of Sliven, and not in the village of Novo Selo, Sliven region, as many researchers have assumed.

7. Kovachev, Georgi (1994) Votive plates from the History Museum of Sliven. –*Bulletin of the museums from Southeastern Bulgaria.* T. XVII, pp. 47-51. ISBN: 0204-403X.

The article presents four unpublished votive plates from the collection of the History Museum of Sliven – reliefs of Dionysus and Heracles; of Heracles; of Hecate; and a fragment of a tile of the three nymphs. The plate of Dionysus and Heracles is accompanied by an inscription according to which the monument was presented by Beitus, son of Teres. The iconographic types and parallels are considered. The monuments were produced in the 2nd – 3rd century.

8. Kovachev, Georgi (1994) Ancient bronze sculpture from the History Museum of Sliven. – In: *Maritsa East. Archaeological studies*. T. 2. Sofia, pp. 161-163.

The article presents four works of small bronze sculpture from the collection of the History Museum of Sliven – two bronze statuettes of Apollo, a horse and a fibula in the form of an eagle. The monuments are dated back to the 2nd – 4th centuries.

9. Kovachev, Georgi (1995) A two-faced terracotta head from Sliven. – *Bulletin of the museums from Southeastern Bulgaria*. T. XVIII, pp. 28-31. USSH: 0204-403X.

A terracotta head of two-faced Hermes is presented, possibly syncretized with Janus as well. The head is part of a terracotta herm. Made ca. 3rd century AD.

10. Kovachev, Georgi (1998) Small ceramic amphores from the Northeastern Thrace from the Roman era. –*Archaeology*, № 1-2, p. 58-64. ISSN: 0324-1203.

The article presents 49 small table amphorae from the territory of Northeastern Thrace from the Roman era. According to the visible shapes of the vessels, a total of seven types of amphorae were determined.

11. Kovachev, Georgi (1998) Antique cults from the emporium Tuidas. – In: *Seminarium Thracicum 3, First Academic Readings in Memory of Academician Gavril Katsarov*, Sofia: BAN, pp. 127-137. ISBN: 0078851.

The article presents the existing monuments of the ancient religion from the territory of ancient emporia Touidas near the city of Sliven. The monuments of Heros, Apollo, Hermes, Zeus and Heracles are considered. From the known inscriptions becomes clear the possible syncretization of the known deities and the possible connections of Touidas with Kabile and Augusta Trayana.

12. Kovachev, Georgi (1998) Several antique monuments from the Historical Museum of Sliven. – *Bulletin of the museums from Southeastern Bulgaria*. T. XIX, pp. 75-82. USSH: 0204-403X.

The article publishes monuments of the Thracian Horseman, Apollo and fragments of a statue of Dionysus from the area of the village of Kamen from the Roman era.

13. Kovachev, Georgi (1999) Thracian cults from Nova Zagora area (I-IV century). – In: *Archaeological and Historical Studies in Nova Zagora area*. Nova Zagora: Geo Press, pp. 104-113.

The article presents the monuments of the Thracian cults from the region of Nova Zagora during the 1^{st} – 4^{th} century. According to the observations, the most widespread were the monuments of the Thracian Horseman. Along with them are found monuments of Zeus as Sabazius, Heracles, Apollo, Asclepius and Hera. According to the concentration of the monuments, the existence of temples near Karanovo, Sadiisko pole, Ezero, Korten, Zapalnia, Nauchen and Nova Zagora may be suggested.

14. Kovachev, Georgi (2016). Ceramic rhyton with a shape of hippalectryon from the collection of Regoinal Museum of History – Sliven – In: *Thrace and the surrounding world. Proceedings of reports from the national scientific conference 27-29 October*. Shumen: Faber, pp. 260-282. ISBN: 978-619-00-0528-5 (co-authored by Nikolay Sirakov).

The article examines the ceramic rhyton from Taneva Mound near the village of Topolchane, Sliven region, shaped as a *hipalektrion*—a mythological creature with the head of a horse and the body of a rooster. The monument is dated to the middle - second quarter of the 4^{th} century BCE. This type of depiction disappeared in ancient Greece after 480 BCE, as a result of its association with Persia and Xerxes I's campaign, which led to the devastation of numerous Greek poleis. After this period, depictions of *hipalektrions* survived primarily on the coins of several cities in Asia Minor along the coast of the Dardanelles and on the coins of Alexander III the Great and his successor in Thrace, Lysimachus. The appearance of a monument depicting this mythical creature in Thrace at this time is connected with the philosophical and ideological orientation of the Thracian ruler, buried in the mound, toward the East, specifically associated to the cities along the Asia Minor coast. The rhyton placed in the tomb also served apotropaic (protective) functions.

15. Kovachev, George (2018). Silver Rhyton with a Protome of Centaur. – In: *Bosporskiy Phenomenon. General and Particular in the Historical and Cultural Space of the Ancient World. Proceedings of the International Scientific Conference.. Part 2.* St. Petersburg: IPC SPbGUPTD, pp. 133-140. ISBN: 978-5-7937-1721-2 (co-authored by Nikolay Sirakov).

The article examines the silver rhyton with a centaur protome from Dalakova Mound near the village of Topolchane, Sliven region. The monument is dated, based on the archaeological context, to the first quarter of the 4th century BCE and likely belonged to the Thracian paradynast Seuthes II (late 5th century – ca. 385 BCE). The text discusses the written sources and artistic monuments depicting the mythological creatures known as centaurs in the ancient world, as well as their typology according to existing publications. According to Paul Baur's classification, the centaur on the described rhyton from Dalakova Mound belongs to Type A – a centaur with the forelegs of a horse. Placed in the tomb, the rhyton is interpreted as an object with an apotropaic function and likely indicates a connection with the ancestors of the buried individual from the dynasty of the Thracian ruler Teres I.

16. Kovachev, Georgi (2021) The Rooster and the Gods in Antiquity. Chronology of the symbol. –*Journal of historical and archaeological research*. № 2-3, pp. 20-50. ISSN: 2683-0418.

The article examines and interprets the evidence regarding roosters in Antiquity. According to preserved written sources and depictions on various monuments, this bird can be associated with Apollo, Ares, Artemis, Asclepius, Athena, Dionysus, Zeus and Ganymede, Persephone, Hades, and Hermes. The earliest evidence comes from Greek painted vessels. In the 6th century BCE, the rooster can be associated with Athena, Artemis, and Dionysus. In the 5th century BCE, the rooster is linked with Apollo, Ares, Artemis, Asclepius, Athena, Dionysus, Zeus and Ganymede, Persephone and Hades, and Hermes. Depictions on vessels showing the connection between Athena, Dionysus, and the rooster became less popular after the Persian conquest of Athens in 480 BCE. In the 4th century BCE, the rooster is associated with Ares, Asclepius, Athena, and Dionysus. In the 3rd century BCE, the rooster is connected with Asclepius, Athena, and Dionysus. In the 2nd century BCE, sacrifices of roosters were performed in the temples of Artemis and in the Sarapeion on the island of Delos; in the latter case, it is unclear whether these rituals can be attributed solely to Serapis or whether Asclepius and Dionysus should also be included. In the 1st century CE, a connection between the rooster and Apollo is mentioned, while in the 2nd century CE, Apollo, Ares, Asclepius, and Hermes are associated with the rooster. In the 3rd and 4th centuries CE, the rooster is associated only with Hermes.

17. Kovachev, Georgi (2021) The ring from Yakimova mound. –In: *Maritsa-East. Archaeological studies. A collection in honor of Dimitar Yankov.* V. 8, Smolyan: Marty-Denis Group, pp. 74-87. ISBN: 978-619-7207-23-1 (co-authored with Nikolai Sirakov).

The article examines the gold ring from Yakimova Mound near the village of Krushare, Sliven region. The ring features a gem – a scaraboid – and is dated to the second half of the 5th century BCE. The gem depicts a bent-over man holding a barbiton lyre. The execution of the engraving, the figurative composition, and the position of the body—particularly the twist of the back—suggest a work created in the style of the engraver Epimenes. The article discusses three possible hypotheses: that the ring depicts the god Apollo; a dancing man playing the barbiton lyre as part of a Dionysian symposium; or a man performing a libation with wine, holding an amphora.

18. Kovachev, Georgi (2022) Whose is the gold ring from the Dalakova mound? – *Thracia 26, In Honorem Valeria Fol*, Sofia: BAS, pp. 267-276. ISSN: 0204-9872 (co-authored with Nikolay Sirakov).

The article examines the gold ring – a seal of Seuthes from Dallakova mound near the village of Topolchane, Sliven's district. The ring belongs to type N of the archaic era and type IX of the classical era of the typology of John Boardman, distributed as a form during the 5th – second half of the 4th century BC. The grave in which the ring was discovered is dated ca. 380 BC. According to the authors'opinion, the ring belongs to the Thracian paradinast Seuthes II (405–387 BC) and should be read as "Seuthes (from the kin of) Teres".

19. Kovachev, Georgi (2024) Bronze statuette of a sea-panther with a rider from the "East Mound" near the village of Karanovo, Nova Zagora region. – *Journal for historical and archaeological research.* № 1, pp. 20-29. ISSN 2683-0418.

The article presents a bronze statuette of a sea-panther (*pardalokampos*) with a rider from a chariot yoke, discovered in the burial mound "Eastern Mound" near the village of Karanovo, Novo Zagora region, dated shortly before the mid-1st century CE. According to the proposed theory, the combination of the panther and the marine creature, together with the rider, may be associated with the infant Dionysus and his journey to the underworld. The statuette, in combination with depictions of Eros on the two *Boscoreale* – type cups found in the tomb, shows similarities with comparable images from dismantled stucco reliefs in tombs from Pozzuoli, Italy. The mythological narrative behind these scenes remains unclear at present.

IV. CHAPTERS FROM COLLECTIVE MONOGRAPH

20. Rusev, Ivan, Georgi Kovachev (2011) *The monastery community of Holly Mountain of Sliven and its region in the XII-XVII century*. Veliko Tarnovo: Faber, 228 pp., ISBN: 978-954-400-480-480-4 (co-authored with Ivan Rusev).

Georgi Kovachev is the author of two chapters of the monograph:

Chapter One: The Bulgarian lands between the Eastern Stara Planina and Strandja in the XII-XV century, pp. 17-41: The presented section examines the political development of the Bulgarian lands between the Eastern Stara Planina and Strandja in the 12th – 15th century.

Chapter 5: Holly Mountain of Sliven in the ancient spiritual traditions of the region, pp. 129-138: The presented section examines the ancient information that indicates the local cults spread in antiquity, the information of the existence of ancient shrines in the rock massif "the Blue Stones" above the town of Sliven, the preserved folklore motifs for ancient rites and the way of perception of the mountainous region in which the Holly Mountain of Sliven is located. The area was viewed as sacred since the Ancient time.