

A Prefatory Note

The independence of the Republic of Macedonia created the necessary preconditions for the transformation of cultural institutions. For the most part, the transformation meant decentralization of government-funded institutions. However, the law was not very helpful for the institutions, which came under the management of local governments not ready to take up this responsibility.

In present-day Macedonia, there are no archaeological institutes, nor archaeological research centres which would employ researchers and scientists. Thus, the arduous task of managing a large-scale archaeological excavations, which resulted in hundreds of thousands archaeological finds during the last few years, is a sole burden for curators and custodians employed by the Macedonian museums. These artefacts were stored into Museums' depots; in hope these artefacts to be the scope of scientific research in future times. Furthermore, one must not forget that these poorly maintained depots also hold artefacts from excavations performed 30-40 years ago. The limited number of experts employed in the museums is an additional obstacle for the process of inventorying and cataloging the artefacts, as well as the scientific processing and publication of the artefacts coming from both older and newer excavations.

In 2013, in an attempt to transfer the artefacts from the old to the new building of the Archaeological Museum in Skopje, curators discovered one of the biggest thefts ever registered in Macedonia. More than one hundred gold artefacts from the period of Antiquity were missing. This event calls into question not only the security, but also the overall management of cultural heritage. Instead of having these findings published in archaeological journals, they will probably end up in private collections, without any hope to become available to the public.

Macedonian museums are burdened by the lack of management and by the politicization that occurred in the last 20 years. A complete re-evaluation of museums and providing them with the best possible management will be necessary to overcome all these problems.

This prefatory note is dedicated to the Macedonian museums and to every other museum in the world, which by the similarity of circumstances can be the subject of looting and destruction.

“As for our Macedonian colleagues, HAEMUS gives you our wholehearted support.”

Vasilka Dimitrovska
Co-Founder of HAEMUS Journal