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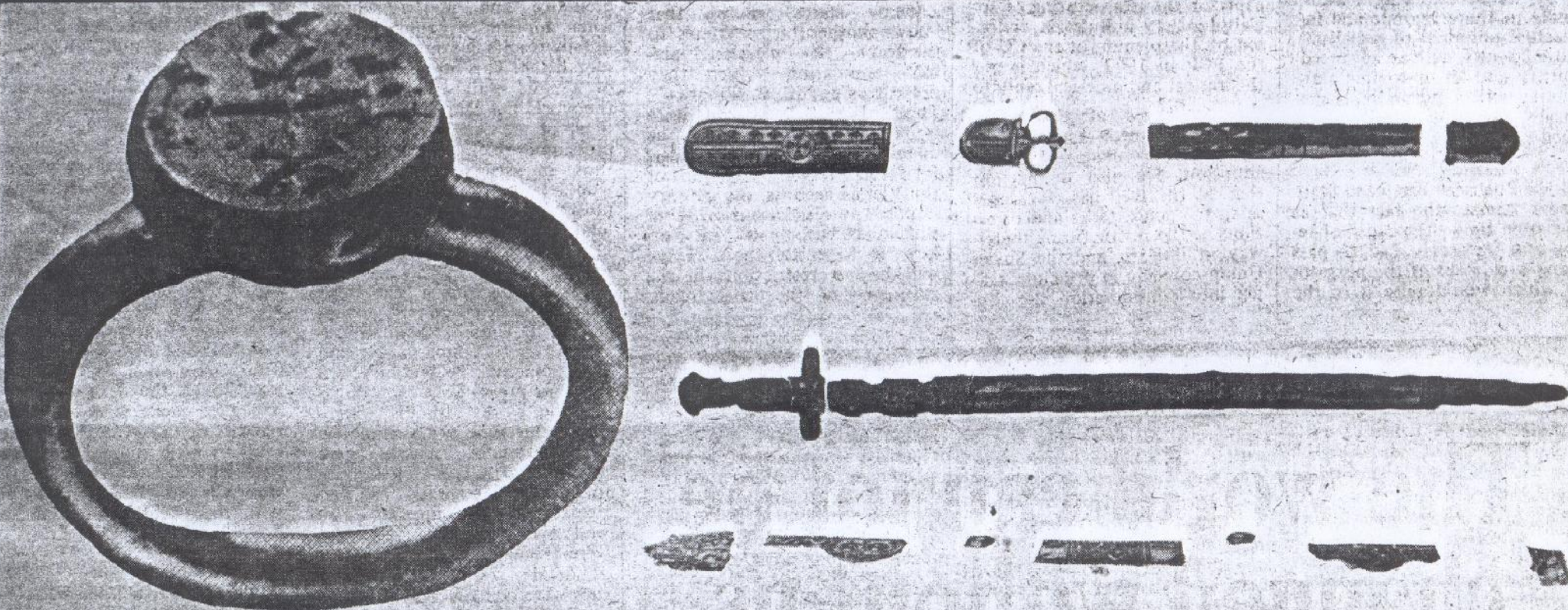
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Khan Koubrat's ring-seal, sword and sheath.

One of the richest funeral finds of the early Middle Ages in Europe – the treasure of Koubrat, Khan of Great Bulgaria – on view in Sofia from September 19. This is the first established funeral of a Proto-Bulgarian ruler.

TOMB OF PROTO-BULGARIAN KHAN

Remarkable Hermitage collection to visit Sofia

By Vessela DJEREKAROVA

On September 19 Sofia will see the opening of an exhibition of the treasures of the funeral of Koubrat, the Khan of Great Bulgaria, which rank, in fact, among the most magnificent of their kind from the Early Middle Ages.

Where and when did Koubrat, the founder of the Dulo dynasty of the Bulgarian Onoguri, and the father of Khan Asparouh who in 681 A.D. founded the Bulgarian state, die? History has been more specific as to the time of his death—circa 665 A.D. when his state, based in the Pontic steppes, was already under external

pressure exerted by the Khazars. However, the fact that he was buried in today's village of Malaya Pereshchepina, 13 km south of the town of Poltava in the Ukraine, became known but a few years ago.

Though discovered in 1912, for a long time the Malaya Pereshchepina treasure posed a mystery. It consists of gold and silver vessels—37 in all, of which the gold objects alone weigh 50 pounds (about 20 kg), as well as of many other funeral objects, like a sword, a combat belt, a quiver, a saddle, stirrups, a drinking horn, etc. However, archaeologists preferred to concentrate on the gold and silver rather than on the probable identity of their owner.

Why did it so happen was my question to senior research associate **Dimiter Ovcharov**, the history editor of the exhibition's richly illustrated catalogue. Archaeologists are not that absent-minded, are they?

"Of course not," he answered. "Scholars have been puzzling over the Malaya Pereshchepina treasure for many years. Initially, Russian and Soviet archaeologists gave it a very general definition and dating without relating it to any ethnic group inhabiting the steppes in those times. Thanks to the research of **Prof. Joachim Werner**, a German archaeologist, and a foreign Bulgarian Academy of Sciences member, it was proved beyond doubt that the trea-

sure was part of a luxurious funeral directly connected with Proto-Bulgarian culture. What is more, on the basis of various analogous historical sources, it was ascertained that **KOUBRAT, THE KHAN OF GREAT BULGARIA, WAS THE ONLY RULER TO WHOM IT MIGHT HAVE BELONGED.** This discovery is a significant contribution to the early history of our nation, pertaining to the time before the establishment of Danubian Bulgaria by Khan Asparouh in 681 A.D."

The Malaya Pereshchepina treasure will be mounted at Sofia's National History Museum, together with other Proto-Bulgarian, Slav and Khazar relics in the Hermitage

collection. The idea for arranging such an exhibition was born a year ago; coming now to fruition, it will probably arouse strong interest among the public.

The exhibition will be combined with a bilateral meeting of Bulgarian and Soviet scholars on problems of those "nomad" cultures. The latest results of research over individual monuments, discovered on local and Soviet territory, will also be reported.

Sofia News will acquaint its readers with the views of some of the Soviet guests and their Bulgarian colleagues on the role of the Proto-Bulgarians in the cultural development of Europe's Southeast.