

Traditional jewellery and dress from the Balkans

**Our visit: 22 July 4pm the Main Hall
THE BRITISH MUSEUM**

This display complements the silver jewellery from Oman on display in Room 2 by looking at European societies where dress and jewellery play a similar role, as indicators of identity and protection for the wearer. The objects date from the late 19th and early 20th centuries and come from the countries of the former Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Albania and northern Greece.

Jewellery worn by rural, often wealthy, communities and was a crucial part of the lavish and complicated costumes worn as bridal outfits, for festive occasions, for dancing, and for daily wear. Balkan jewellery was made professionally in a small number of centres, resulting in a similarity of types and designs across the whole area: colossal clasps, head ornaments hung with clusters of rustling pendants, or chains strung with coins and pinned across the body, to mark rites of passage, protect from evil spirits and to create a jangling accompaniment to music when dancing. By contrast, the textiles were made locally, varying distinctly from village to village, so that the wearer's origin was immediately recognisable. The Balkan region is mountainous and, before the creation of roads, communications were extremely difficult. Settlements were isolated, encouraging the survival of traditional customs. One of the highlights of the display is a pair of complete early 20th-century wedding costumes with jewellery for a bridal couple from Galičnik, a village in the mountainous region of south-west Macedonia (the former Yugoslav Republic).

The Museum has an outstanding collection of textiles and jewellery from the Balkans. Edith Durham, champion of Albania, gave pieces in 1914. The Bulgarian government made a large gift in 1971, and since then many pieces have been acquired from collectors who had lived or worked in the Balkans in the late 1960s and early 1970s, a number of whom were members of folklore groups and bought complete costumes, often with accompanying jewellery, to be as true as possible to the spirit of the dance and the styles of the different regions.

Tuesday 16 August 13.15 Balkan traditional jewellery
and its place in daily life Gallery talk Free

Saturday 3 September 13.15 Balkan jewellery and dress:
traditions and ceremony Gallery talk Free

14.30-15.00 Embroidered harmonies –Bulgarian choral music performance. Free entrance

Curator: Judy Rudoie

CLOSING DATE - 18 September 2011



Serbia, silver embroidered waistcoat, 1920-30



Bulgaria, necklace, 19-20c.