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EARLY MEDIAEVAL BRONZE FIBULA FROM THE CHURCH OF ST. STEPHEN IN DUBROVNIK

Abstract: The text discusses the rare finding of a bronze fibula with the motif of two doves that are facing each other and drinking from the same vessel. It was found in one layer during archaeological excavations near the church of St. Stephen in Dubrovnik. Its shape is simple, almost schematic, and subsequently decorated with circles with a dot in the middle. After typological, stylistic and iconographic analyses, it is assumed that this is a fibula with a Christian *fons vitae* motif. Considering the stratigraphic relationships at the site, it should probably be dated to the 8th century.

Keywords: Dalmatia, St. Stephen church, early middle age, early Byzantine, bronze fibula, fons vitae.

The church of St. Stephen the Protomartyr in Pustijerna is among the most famous shrines whose construction is placed at the time of the founding of Dubrovnik, according to legends (Fig. 1). It was first mentioned by Constantine Porphyrogenitus, and subsequently by other chroniclers. They all stated that it was a very revered temple where relics of many saints were kept. It was destroyed in the 1667 earthquake and never rebuilt again. It has been explored since 1897 (Radić 1897: 14-27), and the first excavations took place in 1927 (Karaman 1929: 269-273). Excavations were also carried out in 1997–1998, and the last extensive archaeological reinvestigations were made in 2011 and 2012, when many previous doubts were clarified (see Peković 2012: 341-376 for history and new research results; Janeković Römer 2019: 9-28 about the cult of St. Stephen and historical information about the church). On that occasion, its entire interior and a part of the courtyard outside the north wall and apse were explored. A multi-layered cemetery was discovered, located next to the pre-Romanesque church. The earliest layer of graves was partly damaged by the expansion

and extension of the church in the Romanesque period and, to some extent, by burials from the later centuries of the Middle Ages (Fig. 2.1)¹. Judging by the finds, the span of the excavated part of the cemetery can be dated to the period between the

¹ Radiocarbon analysis of bone samples from five graves showed that the cemetery had been in use for several centuries, approximately from the beginning of the 9th to the end of the 13th century. Cf. Topić, Radić, Rajić Šikanjić, Ilkić 2019: 66–69.



Fig. 1. Location of the church of St. Stephen in Pustijerna, Dubrovnik.



Fig. 2. Results of the 2011–2012 archaeological research of the church of St. Stephen:
1. Ground plan of architectural remains and investigated graves (according to: Ž. Peković);
2. Find-spot of the fibula with birds (photograph: Ž. Peković).

8th and the end of the 17th century. In this paper, we will discuss a bronze fibula with confronted birds, found under the layer of graves, in a red subsoil on the bed-rock (Fig. 2.2).² Stratigraphically, it was

located below a grave that has been dated to the first half of the 9th century by the ¹⁴C method. The intact layer of clayey *terra rossa* from which it was excavated is identical to that on the north side of the church, where double-sided bone combs were unearthed. They have been said to be from Late Antiquity, but it is also possible that they belong to

² Peković, Topić, 2012. The research was conducted by the *Omega engineering* d. o. o., a company from Dubrovnik. The director was N. Topić, and her deputy I. Radić. – Topić, Radić, Rajić Šikanjić, Ilkić 2019: 55–143.

the early Middle Ages, which yielded very similar specimens. A recent brief review of the discovered fibula with birds from St. Stephen, notes that it is a Byzantine product and that, based on stratigraphy, it can be dated to the 9th–10th centuries (Topić, Radić, Rajić Šikanjić, Ilkić 2019: 61, 69, 80, 101, Pl. 14/1, fns. 92–95). However, no exact archaeological information has been given in this respect, and such a dating is all the more unusual because the same article also claims that the fibula had been found in a layer below a grave dated to the first half of the 9th century using the radiocarbon method.



Fig. 3. Front and back of the fibula with birds from Pustijerna (photograph: M. Rogošić).

The fibula belongs to the plate type with a stylised figural representation of two upright confronted birds with their beaks touching, standing on the sides of a kantharos, high chalice or amphora (Fig. 3). It is cast in bronze, in a two-piece mould, together with a fastening system on its back. During the casting process, four perforations were made on the plate, two ellipsoids at the height of the birds' necks, and two rounds in the area of their legs. In order to render the schematic representation on the front of the plate more clearly, the fibula was finished by incising and drilling after casting. The shape of the vessel is incised in the middle, as well as two stripes on each of the birds' necks, which is why it can be assumed that they are doves. Circles with a hole in the middle of the birds' heads that suggest eyes and five other such ornaments on the plate are all drilled. One is on the neck of the vessel, and two on the bodies and tails of each bird. On the back, there is a hefty fastening system. It lacks the pin, which used to be placed onto a jut with a hole on the left side, and secured

on the bent stem on the right. The fibula is 2.4 cm wide, 2.9 cm high and 0.9 cm thick (including the fastening assembly).

The motif on the fibula is *fons vitae*, a Christian allegorical scene that illustrates *Psalm 42*, iconographically symbolising Christ as the source of *eternal life*³. When birds are depicted in such cases, they are most often peacocks or, as in our case, doves, as a Christian allegory of peace and moral purity. The motif of confronted birds, drinking from a well, appeared very early in Christian art and was used in almost all media. Two confronted peacocks with a kantharos in the middle on a fresco from the beginning of the 4th century, in the hypogeum at the *Via Latina (Via di Dino Campagni)* in Rome is one of the earlier such motifs in Christian art (see Ferrua 1960: 86–87 about two peacocks and a kantharos in the wall painting above the arch of the loculus in Cubicle E). Such scenes are also well known in the fifth-century mosaics in Ravenna, for instance, the depiction of two doves drinking water from a bowl on a stem in the mosaic of the Mausoleum of Gala Placidia, and the dove with a kantharos in the presbytery of the church of *S. Vitale* (Bovini 1980: 67, 86), as well as a similar representation in the floor mosaic with the tombstone inscription of Peter Papario in the basilica of St. Euphemia in Grado from the second half of the 6th century (Testini 1958: 498, Fig. 236). Approximately contemporaneous motifs of that type are also depicted in two floor mosaics in the presbytery of the southern church of St. John in Stari Grad on the island of Hvar (Fig. 4) (Jeličić 1984: 29–37; Jeličić Radonić 1994: 68–79). A very high quality marble relief with a *kantharos* from which a vine grows with two peacocks on it is carved on the altar screen in the church of *S. Apollinare Nuovo* in Ravenna, dating to the mid-

³ The motif of two birds drinking from a kantharos is, in essence, pre-Christian. It emerged as early as Hellenistic times (the lost mosaic with a bowl and birds by master Sosus of Pergamon from the 2nd century BC, known from a historical piece of information and preserved Roman copies), and was also used on funeral occasions in Antiquity, well exemplified by the urn from the Augustan-Tiberian period with architectural decoration, today in the *J. Paul Getty Museum*. On its left and right sides there are two frames with the motif of birds drinking from a kantharos; cf. Koch 1988: 2–3. For general information on this motif in pre-Christian times see Cabrol, Leclercq 1935: cols. 57–332; Parlasca 1963: 285–292, and on such motifs in Christian art cf. Cabrol, Leclercq 1914: cols. 2198–2228.



Fig. 4. Fragments of the floor mosaic in the church of St. John, Stari Grad on the island of Hvar (according to: J. Jeličić Radonić; photograph: B. Kirigin).

6th century (Bovini 1980: 50; Angiolini Martinelli 1968: 57-58, Cat. No. 77), and on a fragment of the coetaneous altar screen from the *Archiepiscopal Museum* in the same town (Angiolini Martinelli 1968: 56, Cat. No. 73). A number of such scenes can also be found on sarcophagi in churches of Ravenna (Valenti Zucchini, Bucci 1968: 31-32, Cat. No. 12, Cat. No. 28, Cat. No. 29, Cat. No. 31, Cat. No. 35, Cat. No. 45, Cat. No. 59).

The motif of two confronted birds with a kantharos was also used in reliefs from the early Middle Ages, especially in Veneto. Two peacocks drinking from a kantharos on the side of the marble sarcophagus of Theodotus in the monastery of *S. Maria alla Pusterla* in Pavia from the 8th century, represent one of the best stonemasonry creations of that time (Menis 1990: 311-312).

Approximately contemporaneous reliefs with the allegorical motif of *fons vitae*, depicting confronted peacocks or doves on both sides of a kantharos, were also made by artists of the early Middle Ages on the eastern Adriatic coast. Without having to list all such finds, we will refer to several examples here, taking into account that the selection should cover the entire area of the eastern Adriatic coast, from Istria to Kotor Bay. For example, two such motifs can be found on the now somewhat damaged altar screen from the cathedral in Novigrad, Istria, from the last quarter of the 8th century (Matejčić 2018: 24, 40-41, Cat. No. 16). Approximately of the same age is a fragment of an altar screen with dinosaurian birds on both sides of a stylized kantharos from the church of St. Maria the Great near Bale (Fig. 5.3) (Matejčić,

Mustać 2014: 199-200, Cat. No. 67.3), while on a fragment of the ninth-century altar screen from the church of St. Mary of the Snow in Maružini near Kanfanar there are two matching motifs of confronted birds drinking from a blooming chalice (Matejčić, Mustać 2014: 182, Cat. No. 56). This composition can also be seen on the corners of one side of the ninth-century ciborium from the cathedral in Rab (Fig. 5.4) (Domijan 2005: 14; Vežić, Lončar 2009: 52-57; Jarak 2017: 93-100, 188-189), and a very similar motif adorns one of the sides on the restored and recomposed ciborium of Proconsul Gregory from Zadar (Fig. 5.1). It is this side of Gregory's ciborium architrave that we believe is earlier and belongs to the ninth-century sculpture (Petricioli 1960: 15-18; Vežić, Lončar 2009: 81)⁴. A fragment of the altar screen gable with confronted birds and a chalice is also from Zadar, most probably from the church of St. Lawrence (Fig. 5.2) (Jakšić, Hilje 2008: 31, Fig. 39). As far as we know, monuments with the allegorical motif of the "source of life" with two antithetical birds and a chalice or kantharos between them, are completely missing in the rich repertoire

⁴There is a discrepancy in the text and figures elaborating the Zadar ciboria from the Cathedral and the church of St. Thomas in Zadar, precisely with regard to the side with peacocks and a chalice, today incorporated into Gregory's ciborium. We assume that this side of the ciborium architrave does not belong to the ensemble because it is earlier. This original opinion of ours, presented orally some fifteen years ago, has been accepted in professional and scientific literature (cf. Jakšić, Hilje 2008: 24-128, Cat. No. 037, Figs. on pp. 126, 128), and discussed in more detail in: Josipović 2020: 110-111.

of early mediaeval reliefs in central Dalmatia and the territory of the early mediaeval Croatian state. This phenomenon is yet to be explored. Such motifs reappeared further south, in the Dubrovnik area and Kotor. The ninth-century altar screen gable

tar screen fragment with peacocks and a chalice, whose dating has varied (Fig. 5.7)⁵.

This distribution of finds along the eastern Adriatic coast is interesting because it is apparent that monuments with such motifs are more



Fig. 5. The motif of birds with a kantharos in early mediaeval reliefs on the eastern Adriatic coast: 1. Detail of the ciborium architrave from Zadar; 2. Detail of the altar screen gable from the church of St. Lawrence in Zadar; 3. St. Mary the Great near Bale in Istria; 4. Side of the ciborium architrave from Rab; 5. Detail of the altar screen gable from Župa Dubrovačka; 6. Side of the baptistery from the cathedral in Kotor; 7. Fragment of the altar screen from the cathedral in Kotor.

from Župa Dubrovačka (Fig. 5.5) (Peković 2010: 191–192, Fig. 179), and the relief on one side of the baptistery from the Kotor Cathedral from the early 9th century (Fig. 5.6) are beautiful and interesting examples. The church of St. Mary in Kotor also has an approximately contemporaneous relief on the altar screen gable with confronted birds and an unusual vessel (Tomić 2009: 106–107, Cat. unit 25) between them, as well as a remarkable al-

frequent in areas that were more susceptible to Byzantine influences. It is in Byzantine art that we can find numerous examples of such allegorical Christian scenes (Vikan 1995: 87–90), but in

⁵ M. Abramić and Lj. Karaman were in favour of the 8th century, which we find acceptable. Cf. Abramić 1932: 330; Karaman 1941–1942: 93–94. Most other authors assume it is from the 11th century. Cf. Cat. unit 34, M. Zornija in: Tomić 2009: 111.

that cultural sphere, unlike in Europe, they were also used on jewellery and items intended for cult and everyday use. Objects with such scenes have been found in various parts of the Mediterranean and in areas that had more intensive contact with Byzantium. They were either imported or locally

er very similar matrix, also from the 7th century, found in Byzantine Cherson (today on the outskirts of Sevastopol) in Crimea (Fig. 6.11) (Ajbabin 2011: 413, 417, Fig. 8). The production of belt strap-ends with the motif of confronted birds with a kantharos in the Byzantine cultural sphere of the

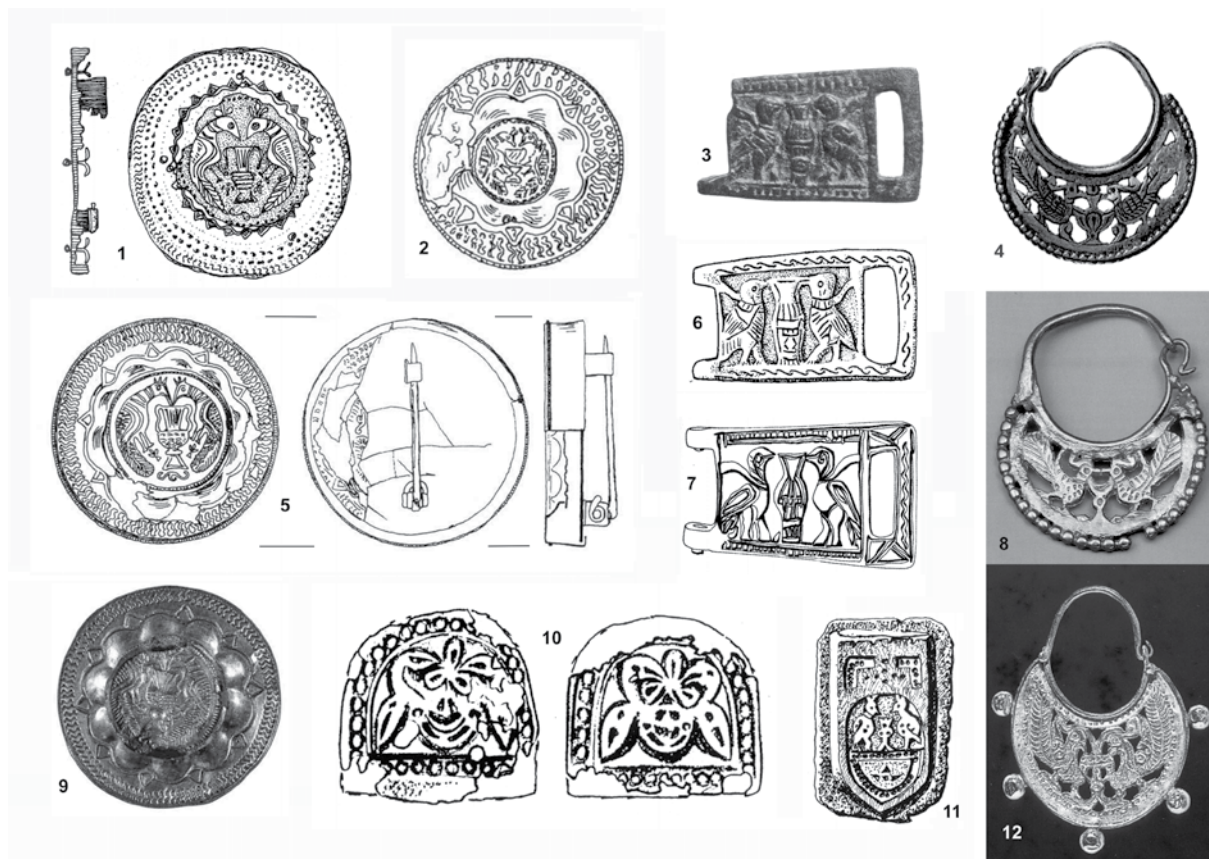


Fig. 6. The motif of birds with a kantharos on early mediaeval jewellery and cult objects:
1. Mjele near Virpazar in Montenegro; 2. Cannaro in Calabria; 3. Asia Minor; 4. Eastern Mediterranean;
5. Caracones in Calabria; 6.–7. Asia Minor; 8. Steinhöring in Bavaria; 9. Krujë in Albania;
10. Pohibuj-Macko (Kiskőrös); 11. Kherson (Chersonesos) in Crimea; 12. Athens.

produced, according to Byzantine models (Baldini Lippolis 1999: 172–173; 2010: 123–132). Local manufacture according to Byzantine models can be archaeologically proven by the belt strap-ends discovered in graves of the Pohibuj-Macko necropolis (Kiskőrös). Some of the strap-ends have motifs of confronted birds with a chalice (Fig. 6.10), and are dated by the solidi of the Byzantine Emperors Heraclius (610–640) and Constantine IV (668–685) (Garam 1992: 147, 249, Pl. 77). In terms of possible cultural and workshop origins, a mould for pressing similar strap-ends, discovered in Adony, central Hungary (Hampel 1905: 639, Fig. 2002) is quite interesting, as well as another

very similar matrix, also from the 7th century, found in Byzantine Cherson (today on the outskirts of Sevastopol) in Crimea (Fig. 6.11) (Ajbabin 2011: 413, 417, Fig. 8). The production of belt strap-ends with the motif of confronted birds with a kantharos in the Byzantine cultural sphere of the

7th century is also confirmed by a plate for pressing sheet metal unearthed in Antalya in Asia Minor (Schulze Dörrlamm 2009: 306–307, Fig. 122.1; Tobias⁶ 2011: 160–162, Fig. 10.6) and a strap-end with a pair of confronted birds from the *National Museum of Art* in Kyiv (Tobias 2011: 168, Fig. 20).

Good examples of the assumption made here are numerous discoid *encolpion* fibulae with inserted bracteates, which were worn as reliquaries with relics. It is assumed that they were mostly pilgrim items because they contained wax in the

⁶ The same paper (p. 168, Fig. 20) also presented the seventh-century strap-end from Kyiv, with two pairs of doves and a kantharos between them.

hollow space below the bracteate, which is good protection for relics, or the wax itself was a relic when collected from candles burning on graves of famous saints (Daim 2002: 119, 129-131). Presumably, their motifs were taken from now-lost mosaics in basilicas of the Constantine period in Jerusalem and Bethlehem (Volbach 1922: 80-84)⁷. However, confronted peacocks with a kantharos between them were not the sole iconographic depictions on them (Garam 1993: 99-134). Namely, a discoid casket and *encolpion* fibulae with various other motifs on bracteates, primarily with religious Christian messages, were quite widespread. They have been found in significant numbers in western Pannonia, especially among the finds of the Keszthély culture (Daim 2002: 113-132; Glaser 2002: 145-152), mainly on pilgrimage routes to the Holy Land, both also those connecting said areas by land with northern Italy and its ports (Ravenna, Venice, Torcello, Grado) and those relying on navigation on the Danube. These routes were used not only by the stalwart pilgrimage industry, bringing faith, hope and strength (e.g., Vikan 1982; Lambert, Pedemonte Demeglio 1994: 205-231; Anderson 2004: 79-93; Anderson 2007: 221-243) to the Christians at the time, despite the possible difficulties on the way, but also by Byzantine trade and diplomacy.

As far as we know, specimens of discoid *encolpion* fibulae (brooches) with the motif we are discussing have only been found on both sides of the southern Adriatic. Two of them originate from seventh-century graves in Cannaro and Caracones (Province of Crotona) in Calabria, southern Italy (Figs. 6.2, 6.5) (Spadea 1991; for Cannaro on p. 569, Fig. 6, and for Caracones p. 571, Fig. 8; Riemer 2000: 127, Fig. 15; Garam 2001: 51-57). Specimens related in style, age and manufacture have also been unearthed in graves from the 6th and 7th centuries on the eastern side of the Adriatic. Two of them are from the Komani necropolis of Krlež near Durres in Albania (the Theme of *Dyrrachium*), which was also an important pilgrimage port at the time (Fig. 6.9) (Anamali 1964: 149-181; Anamali, Spahiu 1988: 51, Cat. No. 86; Nallbani 2004: 37-39, Figs. 11-13a; Nallbani 2007: 57-58, Fig. 13 on

p. 253; Bollók 2014: 269-270, Figs. 8.1-2), and one each from graves of the same temporal and cultural horizon in Lezhë, also in Albania (Nallbani 2014: 79-80, Fig. 14; Bollók 2014: 269-270, Fig. 8.3), and in the village of Mjele near Virpazar on the shores of Lake Skadar in Montenegro (Fig. 6.1) (Velimirović Žigić 1971: 152-153; Baldini Lippolis 2010: 128). It should be further emphasised that the specimens from Cannaro and the one from Krlež, which was published first, are almost identical and undoubtedly originate from the same workshop. Given the dispersion of the finds, we assume that it should be located in the pilgrimage port of Durres.

The motif of confronted birds with a kantharos or chalice between them was also used on jewellery and other items of everyday use in the Mediterranean area. For instance, we know of several unearthed seventh-century gold filigree earrings, in repoussé, with open-worked lunular pendants, which have such motifs (Figs. 6.4, 6.8, 6.12) (Cf., e.g., Wamser, Zahlhaas 1999: 177-178; Drauscke 2010: 175-188), among others, as well as a cast bronze belt buckle with a rectangular plate with various relief depictions of animals. Most often they are lions and various fantastic animals, but there are also a few specimens from Asia Minor with depictions of confronted doves with a tall amphora-like vessel between them (Figs. 5.3, 6.6, 6.7). According to a recent thorough systematisation of Byzantine belt buckles, they belong to type G2, with a proposed date to the late 9th and 10th centuries (Schulze Dörrlamm 2009)⁸. We assume that this chronology, which had also been presented by Z. Vinski, was the reason for the dating of the Dubrovnik fibula when it was first published (Topić, Radić, Rajić Šikanjić, Ilkić 2019: 61, 69, 80, 101, Pl. 14/1, fns. 92-5).

A relevant piece of information for the dating of the Dubrovnik fibula with contrasted birds could be its circlelets with a dot in the middle. These small ornaments are among only a few decorative elements used over a long time on various items and in different domains, especially in the late antique and early Byzantine periods. They were mainly reserved for items of the so-called “small arts”,

⁷ A number of examples of such motifs from the 4th-6th century in floor mosaics of ancient Palestine and Jordan can be found in: Hachlili 2009: 116-119, 131-140, 268-269, Figs. IV.17b, VI.6-8, 14, IX.2a-d, X.3.

⁸ For general information on this type of buckle see pp. 204-243, and on buckles with birds, p. 239. Byzantine buckles with square or trapezoidal frames with relief ornaments were also covered in a paper by Vinski 1974: 60-61.

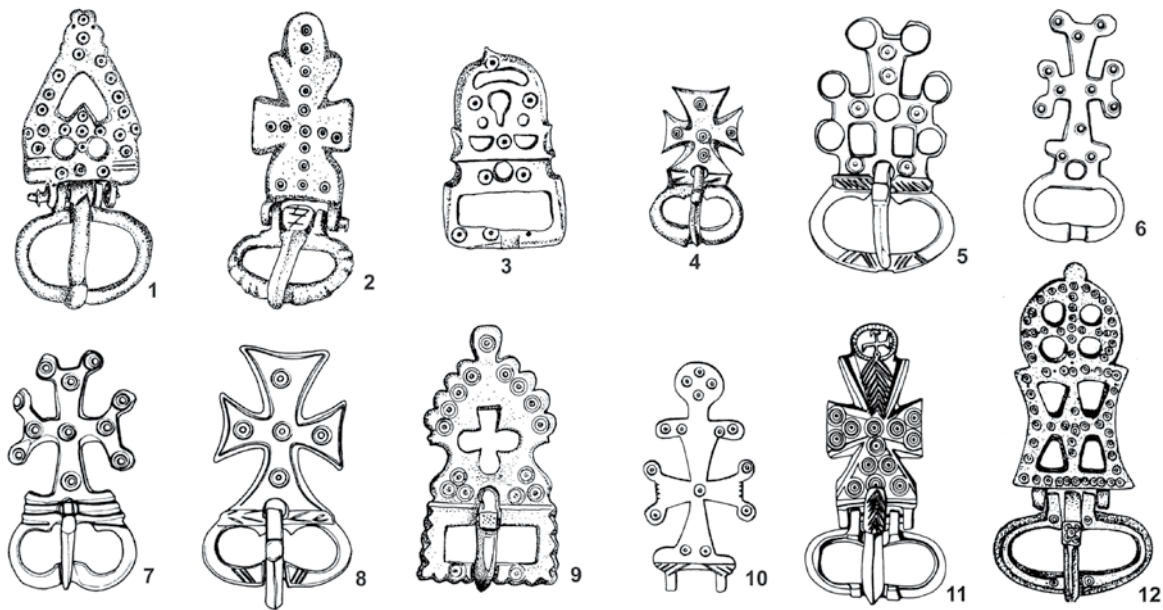


Fig. 7. Early Byzantine buckles decorated with circlets with a dot in the middle: 1.–2. Brkač (Istria); 3. Osijek; 4. Constantinople; 5. Unknown site; 6.–8. Asia Minor; 9. Antioch; 10. Asia Minor; 11. Sicily; 12. Skalistoe (Crimea) (according to: Z. Vinski and M. Schulze-Dörrlamm).

primarily bone products and jewellery (Figs. 7.1–12) (see Vinski, 1967; Schulze Dörrlamm 2009; Riemer 2011). During the 7th century, such ornaments presumably temporarily disappeared from use, but widely returned in the second half of the 8th and the early 9th century, when they became almost a trade-mark, especially in the then Lombard sculpture of the *Liutprand Renaissance* in northern Italy (Cividale, Monza, Zuglio, Sesto al Reghena, Sedegliano, Rive d’Arcano) (Lusuardi Siena, Piva 2001: 493-593), and in Istria (Novigrad) (Matejčić 2018: 46-48). They were sometimes used on artefacts from the sphere of early Carolingian art, for example on the reliquary of St. Liudger in the *Münster City Museum* from the second half of the 8th century (Effman 1901, cols. 293-308; Elbern 1989: 951-980). Such ornaments were very rare outside the chronological framework of the 8th century. In the art of the early Christian period in Italy, they were entirely sporadic, and in Croatia, they did not appear at all, except for the examples from Otok in Sinjsko polje, Cista and Dikovača near Imotski, and several churches from Herzegovina and Bosnia, which we believe belong to the second half of the 7th and the 8th century (Milošević 2005: 218-223; Milošević 2017: 117-125). More recently, such ornaments have been recognised in reliefs from the second half of the 8th century from the Cathedral in Split and interpreted as influences

from northern Italy (Basić, Jurković 2011: 149-185).

An interesting find for the topic at hand could be a perforated plate, probably a part of a belt set or fibula. It was found in Belhorn near Paderborn and dated to the 7th/8th century (Fig. 8). The iconographic depiction on the plate from Germany is vague. It is assumed that it portrays Daniel in the Lions’ Den or Odin from Norse mythology (Stiegeman, Wemhoff 1996: Vol. 1, Cat. unit VI.64, p. 366; Eggenstein, Börste, Zöller, Zahn Biemüller, 2008: Cat. unit 57.1, p. 210). Although it is not a direct analogy for the fibula from Dubrovnik in an iconographical sense, its workmanship and decoration are quite comparable, so it can help in its dating, to some extent.

Concluding the overview of the typological comparisons of the fibula from Dubrovnik, one



Fig. 8. Perforated plate (fibula) from Belhorn near Paderborn (according to: Eggenstein, Börste, Zöller, Zahn Biemüller, 2008).

should also point out a very similar find from the necropolis of ancient Budva on the Montenegrin coast. This find is a bronze fibula, approximately of the same size, on which two confronted birds drinking together from a vessel are depicted (Fig. 9). It was found in a damaged, stone-walled inhumation grave, with several other non-dated finds (Marković 2012: 123-124, T. 54/39). The precise dating of this find is not provided. Due to its likely



Fig. 9. Front of the fibula with birds from Budva (according to: M. Zagoričanin and Č. Marković).

Christian iconographic content, it is assumed that it dates no later than the 4th century. However, given that the grave in which it was found belongs to a group of late antique skeletal graves, some of which are of Byzantine provenance (Corinthian-type belt buckles), it is considered that the Budva fibula with two confronted birds should be attributed to the Byzantine cultural circle of the 7th century (Marković 2012: 247).

Although the Budva fibula is, in an iconographic sense, identical to the fibula from Dubrovnik, they differ significantly in execution. Both were made by casting, yet unlike the birds on the fibula from Dubrovnik, which are flat, almost schematically depicted and modestly decorated, the birds on the fibula from Budva are more realistic, voluminous and their necks, wings and tails are indicated by dense rows of incised stripes. There are also differences in the fastening system. The needle of the Budva fibula is an extension of the coil, while the Dubrovnik fibula has a movable needle fixed by a small shaft. We consider that the more simply executed example from Dubrovnik could be somewhat younger and that its Mediterranean cultural origin is indisputable, as well as the influences of the early Middle Ages recognisable on the stone

reliefs in the north of the Apennine peninsula, in Istria and on the eastern Adriatic coast. Such stylistic and cultural permeation is also visible in the recently published belt strap-end, which was also found in Dubrovnik's Pustijerna (Milošević 2021: 175-188).

From all that has been said above, it follows that the fibula with confronted birds and a kantharos from Pustijerna in Dubrovnik is, by all accounts, a peculiar find with only one direct analogy among similar products of the time. Notwithstanding, the analysis we have presented clearly shows that its eastern Mediterranean cultural and cult influences predominate to a considerable degree. Its uniqueness in Dubrovnik to date can be explained by the position of the town on an important maritime route used by merchants and diplomats at the time, and later by pilgrims on their way to the Holy Land, intensively so, since maritime routes were much safer than travel by land. We believe that it originated in the 8th century, or more precisely, in its second half, which, in addition to the numerous and widely covered analogies we have mentioned, is also indicated by the archaeological stratigraphy in which it was located. We also assume that it was made in one of the local workshops, probably in a Dalmatian town – perhaps in early mediaeval Ragusa – or in a monastic environment on the coast, where artisanal production based on late antique traditions was still sustainable⁹. Recently, an opinion has been expressed that one such workshop, whose important products were the very bird-like fibulae, had existed at the late antique castrum and mediaeval fortress of Sokol in Konavle, east of Dubrovnik (Katić, Kapetanić 2019: 7-21)¹⁰.

⁹ There are well-known examples from the Apennine Peninsula, where items were produced without the features inherent to the culture of the area where their workshops, i.e. monasteries, were located, but were rather made to the taste of clients (pilgrims) arriving from very distant lands (cf. e.g., Mitchel 1994: 129-131. – Giannichedda, Mannoni, Ricci 2001: 331-335).

¹⁰ Sokol, on the eastern edge of Konavle, is a fort with a significant past, in continuous existence from the Copper Age to the 18th century. The late antique and early Byzantine phases in its history are very significant periods. The unsuccessfully cast or damaged bird-shaped fibula referred to in the mentioned article originates from that time. It is not a product of archaeological excavations, but the result of a metal-detector search, so these overall circumstances are not sufficient to unreservedly accept the premise of a workshop at that site.

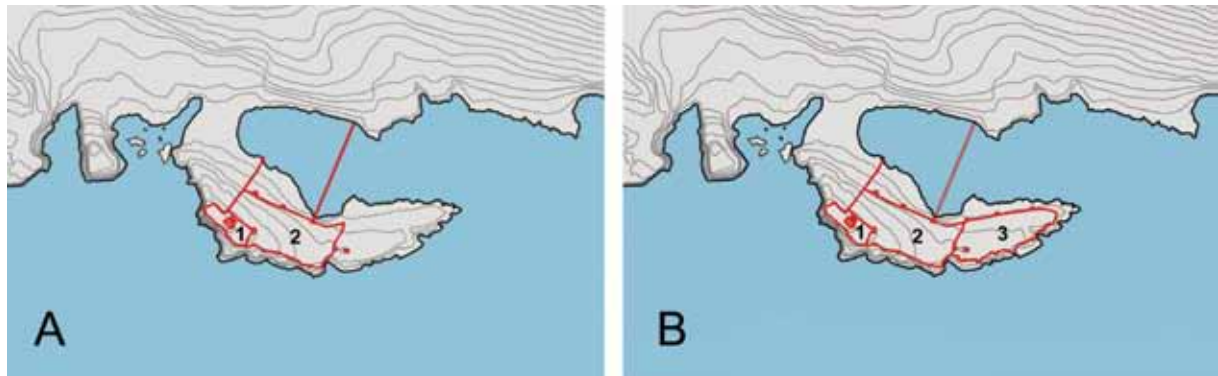


Fig. 10. Spatial development of early mediaeval Dubrovnik: A. Dubrovnik in 6th-7th centuries; B. Dubrovnik in the 8th-9th centuries; 1. Kaštio sexterium; 2. St. Peter's sexterium; 3. Pustijerna sexterium (according to: Ž. Peković).

Finally, this interesting and rare early mediaeval metal find is yet another confirmation of the early settlement of Pustijerna (Peković 2010: 24–26). Initially, it was a town suburbium, but since it was located just above the port, it quickly evolved into a very active section of the town, later surrounded by walls. As the third *sexterium* in the development of the town (Fig. 10), it was most likely mainly inhabited by merchants, artisans, and sailors.

Translation: Denis Gracin

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