

ANOTHER LOOK AT THE SILVER JEWELLERY FROM PSARJEVO NEAR ZELINA IN NORTHWESTERN CROATIA

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Silver jewellery from Gornje Psarjevo is observed in the context of new finds and interpretations in Romania as well as in southern Pannonia. The endeavour aims at filling up the picture of events taking place during the 1st cent. B.C., when the jewellery probably arrived in the country.

KEY WORDS: *silver jewellery (necklace) from Psarjevo, Dacian silver jewellery, barbarian silver coins, connections with the Dacian production circle*

Zdenko Vinski published the silver find from Gornje Psarjevo near Zelina, located 24 km northeast of Zagreb, in *Abramićev Zbornik II (Abramić's Bulletin II)*. He gave a minute description of that find, entirely unusual for these areas: a part of a silver necklace consisting of small chains intertwined several times over, ending with small stylized serpentine heads made of silver sheet with filigree decoration (Fig. 1).¹ It is important that the author established that a twisted bronze wire, visible only at the damaged segment, was used as the axis for the chain; it reinforced the braid but at the same time diminished elasticity of the chain part of the necklace (even though the Psarjevo find is in fact only a part of a necklace, in the following text I shall refer to it as a necklace). Vinski's observation was crucial for determining the way the necklace was worn. It was worn as part of pectoral jewellery, suspended with both terminal loops on a chain – a necklace in the proper sense of the word, as that one encircled the neck. It is not excluded that it was attached on the chest with fibulae. For the details of the description I direct to the publication by Z. Vinski², and bring here only the basic data; the length of the jewellery is 33 cm, the cross-section of the chain, composed of 12 densely intertwined small chains, is 1 cm, while the length of the serpentine fitting is 4,7 cm. Various analyses of such small chains that developed from Greek-Hellenistic goldsmithing speak of at least three technical methods of execution; the Psarjevo chain was made in the most complex – the so-called "Fox Tail" technique ("Fuchsschwanz type").³ The serpentine terminal of the necklace preserves a mount for a now lost inlay, probably of glass.

¹ The photograph was provided courtesy of my colleague Dubravka Letunić-Balen, a museum advisor in the Archaeological Museum in Zagreb. My most cordial thanks.

² Z. VINSKI, 1957.

³ *THE GOLD OF MACEDON*, 39, Fig. 31.



*Fig. 1. Silver necklace from Gornje Psarjevo near Zelina.
Sl. 1. Srebrna ogrlica iz Gornjeg Psarjeva kod Zeline*

Z. Vinski found a proper analogy in a very distant site in Romania, in the Merii-Goala hoard of silver Dacian jewellery in Wallachia. That necklace, with an almost identical design, is somewhat shorter and the decorations on serpentine terminals vary.⁴ Merii-Goala is a typical Dacian hoard of silver jewellery, rich and appropriate for chronological considerations. Interestingly, no other analogy for the Psarjevo necklace has been found so far in the Daco-Getic territory, even though the number of jewellery hoards reached 120.⁵ Vinski was of course right in

⁴ D. POPESCU, 1937-1940, 183-188, Fig. 1-8.

⁵ G. TROHANI, 1997, 74-76.

connecting the necklace from Psarjevo with the Romanian silver jewellery and he determined it as a product of a Dacian workshop, in all probability from Transylvania, the same or related to the one that made the necklace in Merii-Goala. Lacking the publications of finds that appeared in the Romanian literature after the publication of Psarjevo⁶, and also those of other south Pannonian finds, Vinski dated the Psarjevo jewellery very widely, with a two-century span. By interpreting it historically, he emphasized that in all probability the necklace was transported this far west through the Roman conquest of Dacia. True, he also mentioned that the jewellery may be dated to the mid-1st cent. B.C. in the time of king Burebista's rule, but he stated that it was equally probable that it was brought as booty by a Roman legionary from the Dacian wars during Trajan's rule, or perhaps even later.⁷

As we presently know of a far larger number of hoards of Dacian silver jewellery and forms found in both graves and in settlements, and in the fortifications of the "dava" type (*cetatuia*) in particular, and as we have new information about the character and time of minting of Dacian silver coins, which all in their own way contribute to chronological and historical considerations, I believe that the time has come after half a century to call the remarkable find from Psarjevo to mind. It forms part of tumultuous historical events and the dynamics of life in the late La Tène period in northern Croatia.

If we analyzed the Psarjevo necklace on the stylistic grounds, we would have difficulty to narrow down the time of its manufacture. It takes only a look at the gold chain necklace from the very rich female grave 20 in Sindos, dated around 500 B.C. The chain of that Sindos necklace has double-forked terminals and again ends in sheet metal cones shaped as serpentine heads with filigree decoration.⁸ Chains intertwined in such a complex fashion are therefore not attributed more narrowly in terms of chronology, and the same is the case with serpentine motifs and the filigree technique. All those are ancient south Balkanian phenomena that reached northern Balkans and the Danubian Basin with time. Only when those motifs and techniques started appearing in standardized jewellery sets, as in the case of the Daco-Getic silver jewellery repertory, do we acquire a firmer chronological framework. Popescu and Horedt alike, and in the recent times also Rustoiu, dealt with the classification and dating of the Dacian jewellery forms in the mentioned works. A small chain such as the one from Psarjevo can be classified into Horedt's group B2, dated to the first century before and the first century after Christ.⁹ The Romanian jewellery hoards contain also silver coins: Dacian imitations of Macedonian coins, real coins of Thasos and their imitations and finally, as the latest, the Roman Republican denarii, widely spread in the first cent. B.C. The style of Dacian silver jewellery started forming from the end of the 3rd and during the 2nd cent., while from the beginning of the 1st cent. B.C. that jewellery started to be manufactured in far larger quantities. This is at the same time the period of the greatest economic, political and cultural prosperity of Daco-Getic territories, which experienced their heyday during the rule of king Burebista and his conquests (his reign lasted from ca. 65/60 to 40 B.C.). Burebista made use of the already existing Dacian flourish and power, best testified by numerous fortified settlements, trade in southern, eastern and western goods as well as the lively flow of Greek-Hellenistic, and of the local Dacian coins, minted in a large number of emissions,

⁶ D. POPESCU, 1940; 1948; K. HORED T, 1973; A. RUSTOIU, 2002.

⁷ Z. VINSKI, 1957, 76-77. – In the 1950s the prevalent opinion was that the Romans were at war with the Dacians already during the rule of Augustus and Tiberius. Regarding

that issue Vinski relied on obsolete theses of A. Alföldi about the Dacians in Pannonia, e.g. in *Archivum Europae Centro-Orientalis* VIII, 1940.

⁸ *SINDOS*, 86-103, 156.

⁹ K. HORED T, 1973, 137-139.

as well as of Roman Republican coins.¹⁰ Having conquered some of the Pontic colonies and having united the Daco-Getic territory, the Dacian king turned northwards and westwards and confronted the Celtic Boii and Taurisci. The clash, mentioned in ancient sources and historical literature many times over, took place somewhere on the Tisza river around the middle of the last century B.C. and ended with a heavy defeat of the Celts.¹¹

That armed clash certainly brought about considerable changes in the Pannonian region, including the migration of the Boii to the northwest. It is clear that southern Pannonia had been connected with the Dacian world from an already earlier period, for which we provide several examples. For instance, the hoard of silver jewellery from Kovin in Banat, known from long ago, belongs to late La Tène Dacian hoards of silver treasure.¹²

Most recently an extraordinary find of silver treasure emerged in the late La Tène fortified settlement at Židovar in southeast Banat. In addition to its intrinsic value, it gains further importance by virtue of being the only stratified find of that kind discovered in a systematic archaeological excavation. That representative treasure contains chains identical to the Psarjevo one; cylindrical boxes decorated with filigree and glass inlays, of the kind we presumed to have been present on the Psarjevo necklace, and large late La Tène fibulae of the Jarak type. It was thus demonstrated that in southern Banat astragal fibulae of the Dacian type, like those found in Kovin, were worn simultaneously with the Celtic-La Tène fibulae of the Jarak type. The most numerous and so far typologically most varied part of the treasure are light pendants made of silver sheet, already known earlier from the Százard-Regöly treasure and from Kovin. To all of this one should add a wealth of amber beads of various forms.¹³ The authors of the publication of the Židovar treasure consider that hoard as a late La Tène and Celtic (of the Scordisci) one, deposited during times of peril for the settlement; they are nevertheless aware of the fact that it forms part of the general fashion present in the Carpathian Danubian basin from as early as the end of the 2nd cent. and from the 1st cent. B.C. in particular. The burial of the Židovar treasure is archaeologically well determined in the time of the Dacian destruction of the settlement of the Scordisci, and before the construction of the new settlement at Židovar, characterized in addition to late La Tène forms also by predominant Dacian material.¹⁴ The burial of the hoard was determined as belonging to the time of king Burebista and his regulation of the borders of the Dacian state. At that time the power of the Scordisci waned considerably, and we soon encounter them as allies of the Romans.¹⁵

The connection of the Pannonian-Celtic circle with the Daco-Getic one had been taking place from a much earlier date, which we can discern in interesting archaeological facts. At the time being we cannot be specific in their interpretation in terms of history.

¹⁰ C. PREDA, 1973, 439-461.

¹¹ I. DEGMEDŽIĆ, 1959. – While most authors believe that the Boii, settled in northwestern Hungary, in that war campaign against the Dacians joined ranks with the southeastern Alpine Taurisci, certain Romanian authors advocate for the Taurisci settled in northern Transylvania. Even though that opinion may carry certain weight and also have a support in geography, we cannot address that topic here. I quote the opinion of our renowned scholar for interpretation of ancient sources M. ŠAŠEL-KOS, 2005,

378. – the author includes the southeastern Alpine Taurisci in that historical event; at the same time gives a lower date for the clash, after Caesar's death.

¹² R. RAŠAJSKI, 1961; K. HORED, 1973, 130 does not think that the silver fibulae from Kovin are Dacian; however, they are typologically different from the Jarak type.

¹³ M. JEVTIĆ – M. LAZIĆ – M. SLADIĆ, 2006.

¹⁴ M. JEVTIĆ, 2006, 82-167.

¹⁵ M. ŠAŠEL-KOS, 2005, 389 with a quote of Cassius Dio.

For instance, here I mention the presence of barbarian coin types, particularly the Celtic-Bastarnian type Huși-Vovriești, found in three hoards in our territory: in Krčedin in Syrmia, and in Baranda and Narta near Bjelovar.¹⁶ These hoards, as well as other ones in southern Pannonia, have a mixed composition of Greek-Macedonian coins and their imitations of various types and they bear testimony to highly ramified connections between sometimes very remote areas. In C. Predi's opinion the coins of the Huși-Vovriești type were minted in Moldavia in the second half of the 3rd cent. and in the first half of the 2nd cent. B.C., while Popović determined the burial of the Krčedin hoard at the beginning of the 2nd cent.¹⁷ The composition of the hoards known to us (we know that not one hoard reached scholars intact) and some of the features, such as numerous incisions for testing the quality of silver and numerous countermarks, bear witness that those collective finds had been collected over a longer period and that they in fact represented a hoarded value of silver. Although I have no intention to treat those coins as archaeological imports, I nevertheless believe that they speak of indirect connections and document the historical events that are presently not entirely clear to us.¹⁸

A small vessel with a relief decoration, of fine texture, of light red colour, discovered in systematic excavations in the layer of late La Tène settlement at Lijeva Bara in Vukovar (Fig. 2)¹⁹ caused great surprise at one time. True, we have known for a long time now about larger quantities of coarse Dacian ceramics of the kind found in late La Tène settlements in Syrmia, both fortified and open ones.²⁰ No definite conclusion was reached regarding its ethnic attribution, but it is evident that typologically it stands apart from the contemporaneous production of the Scordisci, both the fine ceramics made on a wheel as well as the coarse, the so-called hearth pottery. The fine wheel-made ceramics of Dacian style and probably also of Dacian origin was found in the Iron Gates gorge²¹, but the Vukovar find was a true surprise. It comes from the late La Tène layer of the settlement at Lijeva Bara, it considerably differs from the remainder of the ceramic finds from that layer and it was correctly published as a product, an import from the Dacian territory. It belongs to the characteristic Dacian ceramics with relief decoration²², known to us from settlements, the most properly published one of which is that from the Transylvanian site of Popești.²³

It appears that the find from Lijeva Bara is not the sole example from Syrmia. At Gomolava, a late La Tène fortified settlement on the Sava bank, two fragments of Hellenistic relief ceramics were found in systematic excavations, and were published as Italian import (an Italian-Megarian product) to Gomolava.²⁴ However, P. Puppo, an expert on that type of pottery, believes that they belong to the Dacian production of relief ceramics, or possibly to a local manufacture that during the 1st cent. B.C. modeled itself on the Dacian one.²⁵ The same period – Lt D 1 phase in terms of relative chronology – also saw the beginning of certain common forms of late La Tène fashion, naturally with local variations, that connected the basin of the Sava (Gomolava) and the Danube (Vukovar-Lijeva Bara and Zmajevac) with the east all the way to Moldavia. P. Popović

¹⁶ P. POPOVIĆ, 1980; 1983; C. PREDA, 1973, 113; J. BRUNŠMID, 1895, 96.

¹⁷ C. PREDA, 1973, 111, 126; P. POPOVIĆ, 1983, 19-20.

¹⁸ R. MARIĆ, 1960, 196-197 – Gold coins of the Boii from the Bački Obrovac hoard are also of interest here.

¹⁹ I thank my colleague Željko Demo, PhD, for the photograph of the find.

²⁰ B. JOVANOVIĆ, 1979.

²¹ P. POPOVIĆ, 1984; 1991.

²² D. BALEN-LETUNIĆ, 1996, 13-15, 33, No. 57(4).

²³ A. VULPE – M. GHEORGHITA, 1976.

²⁴ V. DAUTOVA – RUŠEVLJAN – O. BRUKNER 1992, 111.

²⁵ D. GABLER, 2005, 157, note 122. I thank colleague Marko Dizdar, PhD, for drawing my attention to this paper.



Fig. 2. *Dacian ceramic vessel with relief decoration from Lijevo Bara - Vukovar settlement.*
 Sl. 2. *Dačka keramička posuda s reljefnom dekoracijom iz naselja Lijevo Bara - Vukovar.*

recently singled out several costume types whose main traits were shared by the Scordisci and the Bastarnae: spear-shaped fibulae, bracelets with a thickening in the middle of the band and various variants of belt buckles of the Laminci type.²⁶

Simultaneously, at least from the end of the 2nd cent. and more intensely during the 1st cent. B.C. various imports started arriving in southern Pannonia from northern Italy: bronze drinking vessels²⁷, fine Italian ceramics and amphorae.²⁸ All such imports were documented in large numbers in southeastern Alpine region and further north, and they are also encountered in late La Tène *milieus* of both the Taurisci and the Scordisci in southern Pannonia. Judging by the rich influx of Roman objects and Republican denarii into Romania, it is clear that this commercial flow did not stop in southern Pannonia.²⁹ By mentioning all these archaeological facts we bring to mind that the southern Pannonian region was experiencing dynamic movements and events at that time. If the Psarjevo necklace was supposed to reach that far west, then it probably

²⁶ P. POPOVIĆ, 1999.

²⁷ M. DIZDAR – I. RADMAN-LIVAJA, 2004.

²⁸ J. HORVAT, 1995.

²⁹ I. GLODARIU, 1976.

happened precisely in that period and it may have been a booty of one of the defeated soldiers in the clash with the Dacians on the Tisza. One should not forget that the Amber Route functioned with a higher or lesser intensity but that the traffic along it was not interrupted. Zelina lies near that Amber Way, it is situated between the mountain massifs of Medvednica and Kalnik, where one smoothly passed to the Hrvatsko Zagorje region and further toward Italy. The necklace from Psarjevo, naturally, is not connected with the amber trade but it was lost (or consecrated – we shall never know) in the area that was both attractive and frequented during the 2nd and 1st centuries B.C.

I dedicate this paper with great pleasure to academician Nenad Cambi, my colleague from the studies and frequent collaborator in our archaeological activities over the course of the last half a century.

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PONOVNO O SREBRNOM NAKITU IZ PSARJEVA KOD ZELINE U SJEVEROZAPADNOJ HRVATSKOJ

SAŽETAK

Kada je prije pola stoljeća Z. Vinski objavio nalaz iz Psarjeva, bio je to izoliran i neobičan nalaz za sjevernu Hrvatsku (Sl. 1). Autor ga je tipološki točno uvrstio među srebrna dačka blâga, ali je pri njegovoj kronološkoj i povijesnoj interpretaciji ostao u preširokim okvirima - u rasponu dva stoljeća.

U ovom članku dodajem neke novije nalaze koji ogrlicu iz Psarjeva čine manje izoliranom i neobičnom. Ogrlicu možemo datirati oko polovice 1. st. pr. Krista, s obzirom da je najvjerojatnije tada bila izrađena. Navodim ostavu iz Kovina u Banatu a posebno naglašavam značenje pronalaska bogate ostave srebrnog nakita na Židovaru. Povezanost panonsko-keltskog s dačko-getske krugom ostvarivala se i znatno ranije što naziremo u zanimljivim arheološkim činjenicama koje ipak, zasada, ne možemo konkretno tumačiti u povijesnom smislu. Svakako su to nalazi keltsko-bastarnskih novaca tipa Husi-Vovriesti pronađenih u nas u tri ostave. Za našu problematiku posebno se ističe ona iz Narte kod Bjelovara. Taj novac ne tretiram kao arheološki import no smatram da on govori o posrednim vezama s udaljenim krajevima i da dokumentira za sada nepoznate povijesne događaje.

Važan podatak predstavlja dalje nalaz malene reljefno ukrašene posudice iz kasnolatenskog naselja Lijeve Bara u Vukovaru (Sl. 2). Posudica je objavljena kao dački proizvod i import iz dačkog područja. Nalaz s Lijeve Bare nije osamljen u Srijemu – u kasnolatenskom utvrđenom naselju na Gomolavi nađena su dva fragmenta također dačke reljefne keramike.

Istodobno, u prvoj polovici prvog stoljeća prije Krista (LtD1) nastali su i neki zajednički oblici kasnolatenske mode, dakako lokalno varirani, što spajaju doline Save i Dunava s istočnim područjem sve do u Moldaviju. Istodobno se južnom Panonijom širio sjevernoitalski import, naročito brončano posuđe te keramika i amfore. Sudeći po prisustvu rimskih predmeta i republikanskih denara u Rumunjskoj, jasno je da se trgovački tokovi nisu zaustavljali u južnoj Panoniji.

Južna se Panonija u to vrijeme očituje kao područje zahvaćeno dinamičnim kretanjima i zbivanjima. Pozicija Psarjeva u jugozapadnom dijelu Panonije mogla bi se tumačiti kretanjima uz staru jantarsku cestu. Ogrlica je ovamo mogla stići kao plijen nekog od keltskih ratnika poraženih u bitci s Dačanima na Tisi.

KLJUČNE RIJEČI: *srebrni nakit iz Psarjeva, srebrna dačka blâga, barbarski srebrni novci*