

Some remarks on the riding harness pendant from the Roman legionary fortress of Tilurium (Gardun)*

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The Cetina Regional Museum in Sinj has a small bronze plate with an ajouré frame found in Gardun, near Trilj, at the site of the former Roman legionary fortress Tilurium. The item has not been entirely preserved, rather only its central rectangular part with an ajouré border remains. Attribution of this – unique at that site – find is rather difficult not only because it is incomplete but also because it is a rare find within the framework of the Roman Empire, as only a few similar items have been found anywhere in its territory. It belongs to a small group of riding harness pendants with common features such as a full central plate and an ajouré frame. Although few in number, such items are widely distributed, so they have been found from Hispania and southern Gallia through northern Italy, Pannonia and Dalmatia, to northern Africa. The fragment from the Tilurium probably may be defined as a riding harness pendant on the basis of typological analysis and comparisons to similar items that can be found over a broad territory of the Roman Empire. The fact that they are the most numerous in Sisak, where four such pendants have been found, leads to presumption on production at this site, particularly if they are viewed as a variation of the pelta-shaped Bishop 3 pendant, which is also assumed to have been produced at this site. In this regard, we prefer the dating of the pendant from Tilurium to the latter half of the 1st and 2nd century.

Key words: *Tilurium, pendant, riding harness*

The Cetina Regional Museum in Sinj has a small bronze plate with an ajouré frame¹ found in Gardun, near Trilj, at the site of the former Roman legionary fortress (Sanader 2003; Sanader *et al.* 2014; Sanader *et al.* 2017; Sanader & Tončinić 2010; Sanader & Tončinić 2013). The item has not been entirely preserved, rather only its central rectangular part with an ajouré border remains. Traces of silver-plating are visible over the entire surface, and the central section contains a portrait depicted in right profile framed by an engraved zigzag line (Ivčević 2016: 92–94, P. 10. 100).² The image cannot be more precisely

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² Riding harness pendants are not unusual finds in Tilurium and account for almost 70% of the riding gear finds at the site. Thus far, approximately forty pendants have been published, and they belong to various types, from the earliest dating to the reign of Emperor Augustus to later types which endured into the 2nd c. Lunular pendants are present with two examples, three-part foliate pendants with three, while ovoid and bird-shaped pendants are present with one example each. Phalloid pendants with seven and tear-shaped pendants with eight examples are the most

identified since this is a simply engraved portrait without any specific iconographic attributes that would allow for a more detailed analysis. The item was procured for the Cetina Regional Museum by purchase and the only preserved information on the find circumstances is that it was discovered in Gardun (Tilurium).³ Attribution of this – unique at that site – find is rather difficult not only because it is incomplete but also because it is a rare find within the framework of the Roman Empire, as only a few similar items have been found anywhere in its territory. It belongs to a small group of riding harness pendants with common features such as a full central plate and an ajouré frame, and they differ from one another in terms of the shape of that central component and the decoration motifs. On examples with preserved decoration in the central plate it is rendered by application of the small plate with the image in relief or, as on the example examined herein, by engraving. Although few in number, such items are widely distributed, so – as we shall see below – they have been found from Hispania and southern Gallia through northern Italy, Pannonia and Dalmatia, to northern Africa.

The pendant from Tilurium is most similar to the one found at the site of the Roman villa in Gaugac, roughly twenty kilometres west of Narbonne in France (Feugère & Abauzit 1995: 11–12, Fig. 1). It is characterized by a rectangular central plate with an engraved portrait, probably of a woman. This unusual riding harness pendant has been linked by scholars to the similar finds from Tangier (Tingis) in Morocco (Boube-Piccot 1980: 369–370, P. 129: 631) and Sisak in Croatia. The highest number, four, of such pendants were in fact discovered in Sisak, of which two have been entirely preserved, while two are fragmentary, so all that has been preserved are the hooks for hanging them and the upper parts of the border which were used to ascribe them to this type (Koščević 1991: 52, P. XV: 224, 225; Radman-Livaja 2004: 111–112, P. 66: 480–483). The two whole pendants from Sisak differ from one another primarily in the shape of the central plate, which is rectangular on one, and circular on the other. The frame on the first pendant has a more prominent lower section in the shape of a stylized pelta, while the lower part of the other pendant is smaller and simpler. The motifs of the frame, craftsmanship and decoration (applied circular plates in relief with figural images) exhibit considerable mutual similarity.

The described pendants show similarities to the pelta-shaped riding harness pendants (Bishop 3 type) which is particularly apparent in the typical pelta-shaped terminal extension with kidney-shaped perforations and applied central circular plate with decoration in relief (Bishop 1988: 96, 145, Fig. 44, P. 6). Pendants of this comparatively rare type have been dated from the mid-1st to the first several decades of the 2nd century (Bishop 1988: 96; Deschler-Erb 1999: 56; Radman-Livaja 2004: 110). The solid presence of the Bishop 3 type in Sisak, where several apparently unfinished examples were also found, has led to assumption that production was conducted in the area (Koščević 1997: 46; Radman-Livaja 2004: 110). The same may also be assumed of the specifically-shaped pendants covered herein, which, besides the typological links to Bishop 3 type, is also backed by the fact that they are the most numerous in Sisak and that it is thus far the only site at which both variants, with circular and rectangular central components, have been found.

Opinions on the dating of the Sisak examples differ, but given the similarities they exhibit with the Bishop 3 pendants, it is not unfounded to believe that they are perhaps a variant of this type. They may, at least generally, be roughly dated to the same period, i.e., the latter half of the 1st and the 2nd century (Radman-Livaja 2004: 112). There are several proposals for the dating of the pendant with a portrait based on interpretations of the image. One opinion is that the portrait corresponds to the emperors of the Severan dynasty, possibly Caracalla (Rendić-Miočević 1987: 216, cat. no. 184), but since the pendant has the features of earlier types dated to the 1st and early 2nd century, the possibility that it is a portrayal of Flavian dynasty emperor, perhaps Domitian, has also been proposed (Radman-Livaja 2004: 112). A later dating, not prior to the mid-2nd century, probably during the Severan era, was suggested by M. Boura for a pendant of this type from the Museum in Aquileia that is rather similar to the Sisak example with a circular central plate and portrait (Buora 1996: 165, P. II. 1).⁴

numerous, while foliate pendants are the most common in Tilurium, as thirteen were found (Šeparović 2003: cat. no. 47–51; Ivčević 2004: cat. no. 18–23; 2010: cat. no. 6–15; 2014: cat. no. 34, 35, 37; 2016: cat. no. 94, 103, 112–113, 121–123, 139, 141; 2017: cat. no. 239–242).

³ Held in the Cetina Regional Museum in Sinj under inventory number MCK-B-868, with the record that it had been purchased as part of the Tadinac collection.

⁴ Since they are few in number but present over a broad territory from Gallia, through Italy, Pannonia and Dalmatia to northern Africa (Morocco), he noted the possibility that they may have had symbolic meaning as phalerae, *dona militaria* or gifts of similar significance. The emperor's portrait in the central component would back this hypothesis (Buora 1996: 164).

The pendant found in excavations at the Roman villa in Višići (Bosnia-Herzegovina), roughly dated to the time when life proceeded at this site, from the end of the 1st to the end of the 4th centuries, belongs to the same type. Two concentric circlets are engraved onto the pendant's central component, and traces of gilding are visible on its surface (Čremošnik 1965: 196, P. X.1). The silver-plated example from Tangier (Tingis) in Morocco (Boube-Piccot 1980: 368–370, cat. no. 631) is particularly interesting, as it is basically a Bishop 3d pendant with the addition of a rectangular frame on the central component which exhibits considerable similarity to a pendant of precisely this variant of the Bishop 3 type from the same museum (Boube-Piccot 1980: 368–369, P. 129: 630). Here some attention should be accorded to the pendant (Šeparović & Uroda 2009: 46, cat. no. 70) found in the legionary fortress of Legio XI in Burnum (Cambi *et al.* 2007; Miletić 2010; Glavičić 2011; Borzić *et al.* 2014), which differs from the rest because the ajouré decoration is on the upper and lower sides of the pendant while the lateral sides have no borders. The pendant from Burnum exhibits features that correspond to Bishop 3d, but it has a rectangularly formed central component. It is similar to the pendant from Rabat in Morocco (Boube-Piccot 1980: 147–148, P. 47: 179).

Bishop 3d (Bishop 1988: 145, Fig. 44, 3d) pendants are a rare variant of an otherwise scarce type. In Dalmatia's territory, there is only a single Bishop 3d pendant⁵ which was found at the Podgrađe site near Podstrana, in the wider Poljica area⁶ (Ivčević 2016: 240, cat. no. 98, P. 10: 98). Pendants of this variant are well represented in Vindonissa (Unz 1975: 25, cat. no. 145, 150; P. 12. 145, 150; Unz & Deschler-Erb 1997: 44, P. 57: 1605–1607) where the Bishop 3 type is otherwise well represented, and besides the already mentioned pendant from Tangier in Morocco (Boube-Piccot 1980: P. 129: 630) a Bishop 3d pendant was also found in Emona (Plesničar-Gec 1983: 143, cat. no. 11, P. 29:11).

A pendant similar to the group we are dealing with in this article was found in the Ampurias in Spain. It is particularly similar with the Sisak pendant with a portrait (Aurrecochea-Fernández 2007: 332, Fig. 2.2). Also noteworthy here is the example from the Villasequilla de Yepes site in central Spain (Aurrecochea-Fernández 1995–1996: 59, Fig. 6. 8) which exhibits similarity to the group of pendants with ajouré frames, and for which the examples from Morocco are cited as analogous pendants (*idem*: 79).⁷ This pendant differs from the preceding examples by its standard circular shape and it shows similarity to the appliqué found in Slovenia during archaeological excavations into a Roman villa rustica at a site near the village of Mošnje in Upper Carniola in a layer that could not be dated any more precisely than the duration of life in the villa in the 1st and 2nd centuries, and up to the mid-3rd century at the outside. The appliqué has a standard circular shape with ajouré border and rectangular central plate with engraved circlets (Pflaum & Lux 2015: 300–301, Fig. 7, P. 1.5). In the publication, the author connects them to the Sisak pendants and also the group of appliqués well-represented in the territory of southern Gallia. Also classified into this group is the rectangular appliqué found at the Glanum site in St-Rémy de Provence (Abauzit 2000: 16–17, Fig. 1. 2) on which the ajouré border was formed by an alternating series of triangular and pelta motifs, while the central component probably has an image of an Eros with a weapon, and then an appliqué found in Hyères (Olbia) (Abauzit 2000: 16–17, Fig. 1. 3); and one in Octon (Abauzit 2000: 16–17, Fig. 1. 1; Feugère 2002: 106, cat. no. 120, Fig. 16). Evidence of a possible common origin, besides the quality and manner of engraving of the images, is primarily the shape and rendering of the frame, which exhibit considerable mutual similarity. So four more fragments from this area may be classified into the same group.⁸ Their similarity speaks in favour

⁵ Besides the example from Podgrađe, I am also familiar with two more Bishop 3 pendants from Dalmatia. Both belong to the Bishop 3c variant. One was found in Bribir (Varvaria) (Šeparović & Uroda 2009: 47, cat. no. 71), and the other is from Nin (Nedved 1981: 181–182, cat. no. 327, Fig. 8. 327). Bishop 3c pendants are generally better represented than the Bishop 3d type, and can be found throughout the Empire's territory (Bishop 1988: 148, P. 6 (list of finds); Deschler-Erb 1999: 56) and the most common are pelta-shaped pendants (Unz 1972: 50, P. 6. 55–59; Oldenstein 1977: P. 54. 654; Unz & Deschler-Erb 1997: P. 57. 1590, 1610; Deschler-Erb 1999: P. 29. 577–581; Golubović 2006: 96, P. 49. 26). They are particularly numerous in Sisak, where approximately ten examples were registered (Radman-Livaja 2004: 110, P. 65, 66).

⁶ This is a site at which archaeological excavations have not been conducted, and the few finds held in the Archaeological Museum in Split are chance finds which were procured for the Museum by purchase at the beginning of the 20th century (Ivčević 2016: 169).

⁷ The materials found at the site largely belong to the period from the end of the 2nd and 3rd century (Aurrecochea-Fernández 1995–1996: 86).

⁸ They were found at the Margon (Abauzit 2000: 17, Fig. 2; Feugère 2002: 98, cat. no. 81, Fig. 13.81), St-Martin de Crau (Badan *et al.* 1995: 282, Fig. 17. 3) and Baron sites (Abauzit 2000: 17). The find from Bessan belongs to the same group (Feugère 2002: 88, cat. no. 27, Fig. 9).

of their common origin, and according to one opinion they were produced in the same workshop, probably somewhere in the territory of southern Gallia (Abauzit 2000: 17). They are associated with similar examples found in Yambol, in Bulgaria, during excavations into mounds with burials of carriages and horses, which is an important indicator on the purpose of these items. There they were dated to the end of the 3rd and early 4th centuries. They were published in the 1960s, and they were pointed out by D. Božić in an article in which he dealt with harness ornaments with ajouré borders.⁹ It is assumed that they were made in the territory of Thrace in the same workshop as the pendants and appliquéés from the archaeological excavations near the village of Mogilovo near Plovdiv, where parts of carriages with horses were found, and a part of the decorations consisted of appliquéés and pendants with ajouré frames. They were dated to the same time as those from Yambol (Vassilev 1995: 447–448). These finds from Gallia and Thrace, although similar to the riding harness pendants being considered herein, nonetheless exhibit certain different features from those from Narbonne, Sisak, Višići, Burnum and Tangier, such as, for example, the manner of formation of the ajouré border, the motifs of the image in the central component, and even in the dimensions. The link, possibly developmental, between these two groups of items should therefore be studied in greater detail.

The fragment from Tilurium probably may be defined as a riding harness pendant on the basis of typological analysis and comparisons to similar items that, although few in number can be found over a broad territory of the Roman Empire. They are present at sites of differing character; in the area of *villae rusticae*, cities and at military camps. Examples which correspond to the one considered herein have been found from Hispania and southern Gallia, through northern Italy, Pannonia and Dalmatia to northern Africa, and the fact that they are the most numerous in Sisak, where four such pendants have been found, leads to presumption on production at this site, particularly if they are viewed as a variation of the pelta-shaped Bishop 3 pendant, which is also assumed to have been produced at this site. In this regard, we prefer the dating of the pendant from Tilurium to the latter half of the 1st and 2nd century.

1. Riding harness pendant, inv. no. MCK-B-868, Fig. 1.

Site: Tilurium (Gardun)

Materials: bronze, silver-plating

Dimensions: ht. 3.4 cm, wid. 3.1 cm

Description: the central rectangular component of the pendant with ajouré frame is preserved, traces of silver-plating on surface also preserved, portrait facing right in central component.

Dating: latter half of 1st c., 2nd c.

Procurement method: purchased, Tadinac collection

Current location: Cetina Regional Museum, Sinj

Unpublished.

References: Čremošnik 1965: 196, P. X: 1; Boube-Piccot 1980: 369–370, cat. no. 631, Fig. 631; Košćević 1991: 52, P. XV: 224, 225; Feugère & Abauzit 1995: 12, Fig. 1; Buora 1995: 165, P. II: 1; Radman-Livaja 2004: 138, cat. no. 480–481, P. 66: 480, 481.



2. Pelta-shaped riding harness pendant, inv. no. AMS H-3880, Fig. 2a-b

Site: Podgrađe near Podstrana in Poljica

Materials: bronze, silver-plating

Dimensions: ht. 5.6 cm, wid. 3 cm

Description: silver plating applied to central circular component of pendant, pelta-shaped extension on lower side, winding tendrils and loop for hanging on upper section.

Dating: latter half of 1st c., beginning of 2nd c.

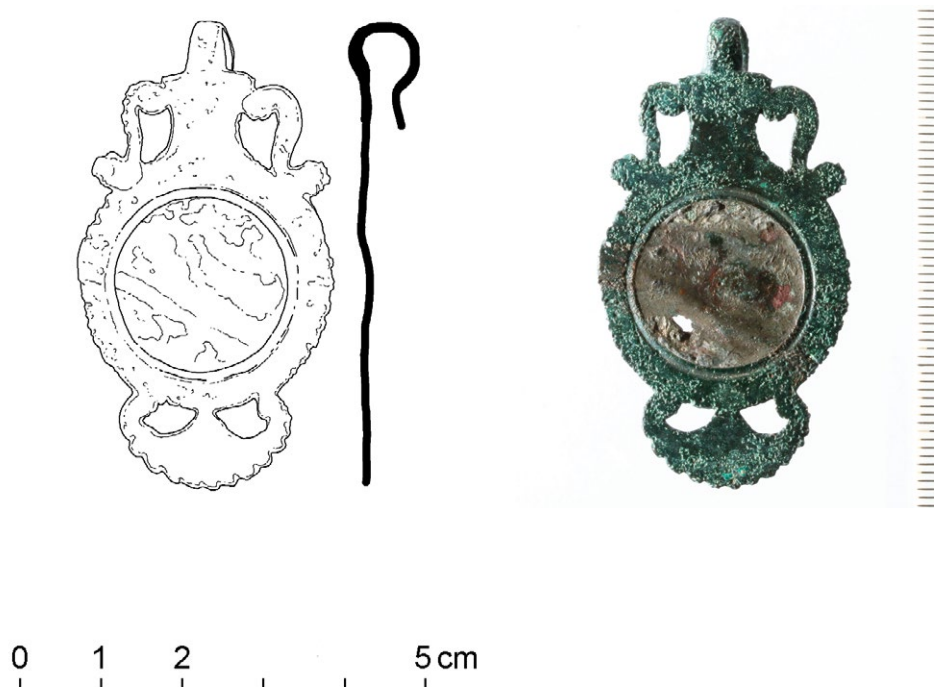
Procurement method: purchased, 1900

⁹ For more details on the publication and dating of the finds from Yambol with commentary see: Božić 2001: 25.

Current location: Archaeological Museum in Split

Unpublished.

References: Unz 1975: 25, cat. no. 145, 150, P. 12: 145, 150; Boube-Piccot 1980: 368–369, cat. no. 630; Plesničar-Gec 1983: 143, cat. no. 11, P. 29: 11; Unz & Deschler-Erb 1997: 44, P. 57: 1605–1607.



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