

The function of the bronze D-shaped ring from the Late Republican horse burial in Kobarid, Soča valley (SI)

D. Božič

Dr. Carlo Marchesetti, director of the City Museum of Natural History in Trieste, began in 1886 to excavate the great Early Iron Age cemetery of Kobarid (It. Caporetto, Ger. Karfreit) in the Soča valley in western Slovenia, lying on a broad terrace between the prehistoric settlement on the Gradič hill and the Soča river and called V logu. By 1904 he had uncovered not less than 1,110 graves. Further graves were found here after 1945 by Stane Gabrovec from Ljubljana and Drago Svoljšak from Nova Gorica (Gabrovec 1976). The total number of graves, almost entirely unpublished, exceeds 1400 ! The settlement is unexplored, with the exception of one sanctuary of great importance, dated to the Late Iron Age and Early Imperial Period (Osmuk 1998).

The cremation graves of the cemetery V logu were covered by a stone slab and contained mostly ceramic vessels, bronze fibulae, earrings, bracelets, rings and pins. Over grave 32, covered with a limestone slab, lying in a depth of 0,50 m, and containing a round-bellied pot and a bowl, a horse skeleton lay in black earth (grave 32 bis). Associated with the horse were several metal objects: a curb bit made of iron and bronze, small iron circular rings, a bigger D-shaped bronze ring and a bronze spur of the Kobarid type. We may assume that the bit lay in the mouth of the horse, but the position of the rings and the spur in the tomb is not known.

A ground-plan of the horse tomb does not seem to exist. But Marchesetti made small drawings of the objects (a bronze fibula of the Sveta Lucija type was also discovered not far from the skeleton – fig. 2) and a brief description: *Numero 32, profondità 0,75 m. Sopra la lastra calcare, a 0,50 m, nella terra nera giaceva lo scheletro di un cavallo unitamente alla sua bardatura, dappresso fib. ad arco semplice e pendagli. - Sotto la lastra Pentola ventricosa e scodella* ⁽¹⁾. The excavations were visited also by Josef Szombathy, the curator of the

Naturhistorisches Museum in Vienna, who noted shortly afterwards in his diary: *Ein Pferdekopf mit Kinnkette, Gebiss und Bronzescheiben gab die einzigen grossen Knochen* ⁽²⁾. The note is not accurate: first, the bit has a chin rod not a chin chain, and second, no bronze round plates (Scheiben) were found, but a bronze spur.

Marchesetti himself never published the grave. He only briefly mentioned its discovery (Boll. d. Soc. Adr. 10, 1887, VI: ... *tralascierò di parlare degli oggetti raccolti, menzionando unicamente una grande situla di bronzo alta più di 70 cent., e lo scheletro d'un cavallo coi resti della sua bardatura*) and some years later the unusual horse bit (Boll. d. Soc. Adr. 15, 1893, 298: *I morsi che dapprima erano esclusivamente di bronzo, vennero più tardi fabbricati in ferro ed anche di ambidue i metalli, come è il caso in uno che trassi da Caporetto ... Si ebbero morsi da cavallo a sbarra snodata da Este, ... ecc., mentre molto più rari sono quelli a sbarra non articolata, come l'esemplare succitato da Caporetto, ...*). A good drawing of the spur was published 13 years after the discovery in the first synthetic work on spurs (Zschille, Forrer 1899, 7, pl. 22: 1), but it remained unknown to many scholars. In the catalogue of the exhibition Preistoria del Caput Adriae, held in Trieste in 1983, Laura Ruaro Loseri first published the drawings in Marchesetti's diary of the objects found in the horse burial over grave 32 (fig. 2). She dated the bit to the La Tène Period and the spur, the form of which she knew only on the basis of Marchesetti's little drawing, to the beginning of the Middle Ages (Ruaro Loseri 1983, 206, fig. 65). One year later Otto-Herman Frey dealt again with the horse grave, focussing his research on the curb-bit with omega-shaped lateral pieces (Frey 1984, fig. 2). He was unable to see the finds in person, as they were thought to be lost (Frey 1984, 119; Frey 1986, 37), and he also ignored the existence of the previous publication of the spur.

In February 1996 I became aware that there was some hope of finding the items, because I had found out by chance that already in 1976 Božidar Slapšak, now professor at the University of Ljubljana, during his survey of a part of the store of Trieste City Museum had come across the "lost" objects, found in the horse burial in Kobarid in 1886. He had even made small sketches of them in his note-book, but he had not told anyone about his important discovery. The objects had not been listed in the museum's inventory and, without any accompanying indication of the site, he could not know that they came from the Kobarid horse grave. At the end of 1996 I sent a copy of his sketches and a copy of the old drawing of the spur to Trieste Museum with a request that they look for the "lost" objects. The search lasted until December 2003, when Anna Crismani found all of them in the Museum store "in una scatola priva di indicazioni di provenienza". Her colleagues from Trieste managed to include the bit and the spur in the great international exhibition Guerrieri, Principi ed Eroi fra il Danubio e il Po, which opened in June 2004 in Castello del Buonconsiglio in Trento. In the exhibition catalogue Giuliano Righi gave very short descriptions of the two finds, accompanied by a colour photo, and dated them to the period from the 4th to the 2nd century BC (Righi 2004). But the D-shaped bronze ring, bearing now the inventory number 18391 and clearly visible on Marchesetti's drawings of the finds (Frey 1984, 122, fig. 1), remained unpublished.

The D-shaped ring is of semicircular section (fig. 1). It very probably possessed a hook in the middle of the bow, which has broken off. Its dimensions are 6,7 x 5,0 cm.

Fig. 2 — Marchesetti's drawings of the finds from the Kobarid horse burial.

Looking for parallels for the ring in Italy, France and Spain, where several bits and spurs comparable to those from Kobarid, were found (e. g. Salzani 1983-1984, 357, pl. 8: 2; Schönfelder 2003, fig. 71-74; Luik 2002, 93, fig. 55: 3; 81: C 88; 172, R 74), was not successful. But a search in the regions between the Adriatic Sea and the Lower Danube, produced different results. A very similar ring with a preserved hook in the form of a bird's head was found in the Selça e Poshtme hill-top settlement in Albania (Ceka 1999, 332, fig. 2: 4 – fig. 3: 1). The only difference is that it has flat bulges in the corners. It was compared by Ceka with rectangular buckles from the settlement of Rosuja in Albania (*Ibid.*, fig. 2: 3 – fig. 5: 3) and from grave 92 of the Celtic cemetery of Karaburma in Belgrade (Todorović 1972, 31, no 18, pl. 27: 14). He interpreted it as a belt buckle ("boucle de ceinture") and supposed that it had been of a Celtic origin.

Ceka was unaware that two bronze objects, found in Tomb II of the Great Tumulus at Vergina (Greek Macedonia), ascribed to King Philip II, are much closer to the buckle from Selça e Poshtme than the rectangular specimens from Rosuja and Belgrade (fig. 3: 2, 3). One was found together with an intact iron bit, iron plates and horse teeth above the vault of the tomb, the other in the chamber together with three fragmented bits, and metal and leather bridle parts (Faklaris 1991, 58, fig. 21, pl. 12). The beaks of the bird's heads are not broad as on the buckle from Albania, but pointed. That was obviously the reason why Faklaris saw in these objects an unusual type of spur. Such an explanation was also suggested by Antikas (2002, 47, fig. 9).

But the two D-shaped rings with a hook in form of a bird's head from Vergina are definitely not spurs. The bronze or iron spurs, recovered in Greece, southern Italy and Slovenia in graves, dated from the 5th to the 3rd century BC, are quite different (Božič 1984, 137, 139, note 96; Faklaris 1991, 51; Kilian-Dirlmeier 2002, 118; Egg 2003, 335-338). However, several comparable rings, made of bronze or iron, have come to light in rich tombs with human and horse burials found in the territories of modern Bulgaria and Roumania and dated from the late 5th to the early 3rd century BC ⁽³⁾ (Moscalu 1989, 174-175, fig. 10: 10; Vladimirova 1994, 52, fig. 11; Kull 1997, fig. 7: 19; 8: 15; 9: 24: 44-46; 49: 2n). They always have buttons or bulges in the corners, but sometimes a third button can take the place of the hook. As well as the D-shaped examples, some rectangular ones are also known. All these rings with a hook surely served as buckles for the leather bands of harness. They were found mostly on the belly, but sometimes on the neck, of the horse skeletons (Alexandrescu 1983, 77; Lazarova, Paunova 2003, 48).

On the basis of the spur of the Kobarid type (Božič 1999, 165; Luik 2002, 93, note 378, fig. 55) the horse grave from Kobarid can be dated to the period corresponding to the LT D1 period in Central Europe. The harness in the countries around the Lower Danube, and also further west, still included at this period a band buckle, generally of iron, rectangular, flat-sectioned and with a simple hook (Nikolov 1981, 40, fig. 6: v; Ginev 1994, pl. 6: 1-2; Rustoiu 1996, 117 s, fig. 75: 5; Božič 2001, 196, fig. 10-11; Kull 2002, 209, fig. 15: 3; Lazarova, Paunova 2003, 48, fig. 7; *Jahrbuch des Röm.-Germ. Zentralmus.* 47/2, 2000 [2003] 764, fig. 51; Torbov 2003, fig. 4 – fig. 4). Bronze examples, having buttons in the four corners, were an exception (Majnarić-Pandžić 1970, 22, pl. 8: 8; Rustoiu 1996, 118, note 364 ⁽⁴⁾; Ceka 1999, 332, fig. 2: 3; Stojić 2003, 34, fig. 32; Torbov 2003, fig. 1 – fig. 5). The rectangular Late La Tène buckles were in some cases also wrongly interpreted as belt buckles, but in fact they undoubtedly belonged to harness.

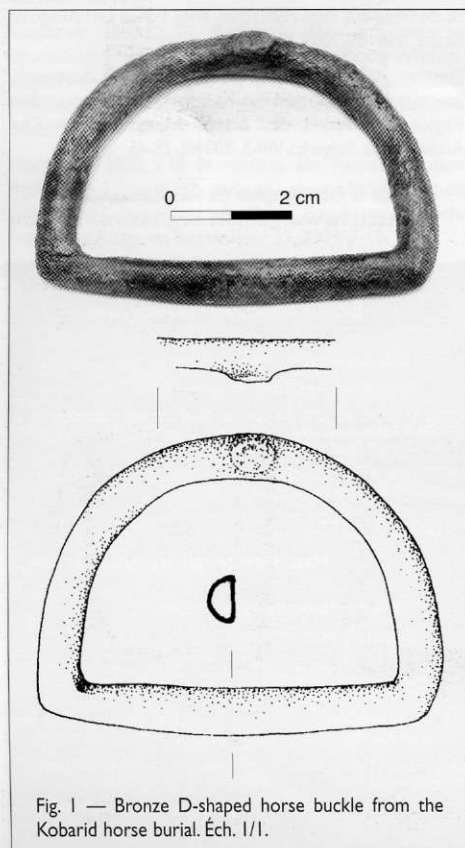


Fig. 1 — Bronze D-shaped horse buckle from the Kobarid horse burial. Ech. 1/1.

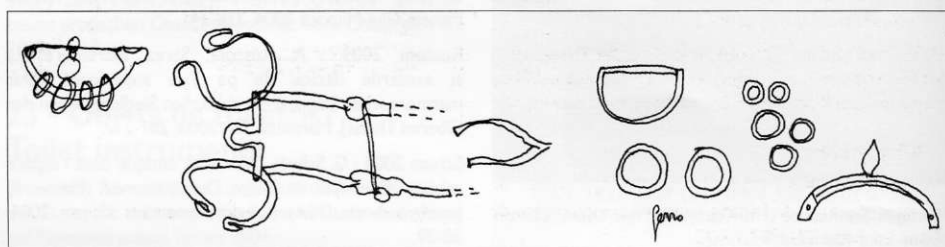


Fig. 2 — Marchesetti's drawings of the finds from the Kobarid horse burial.

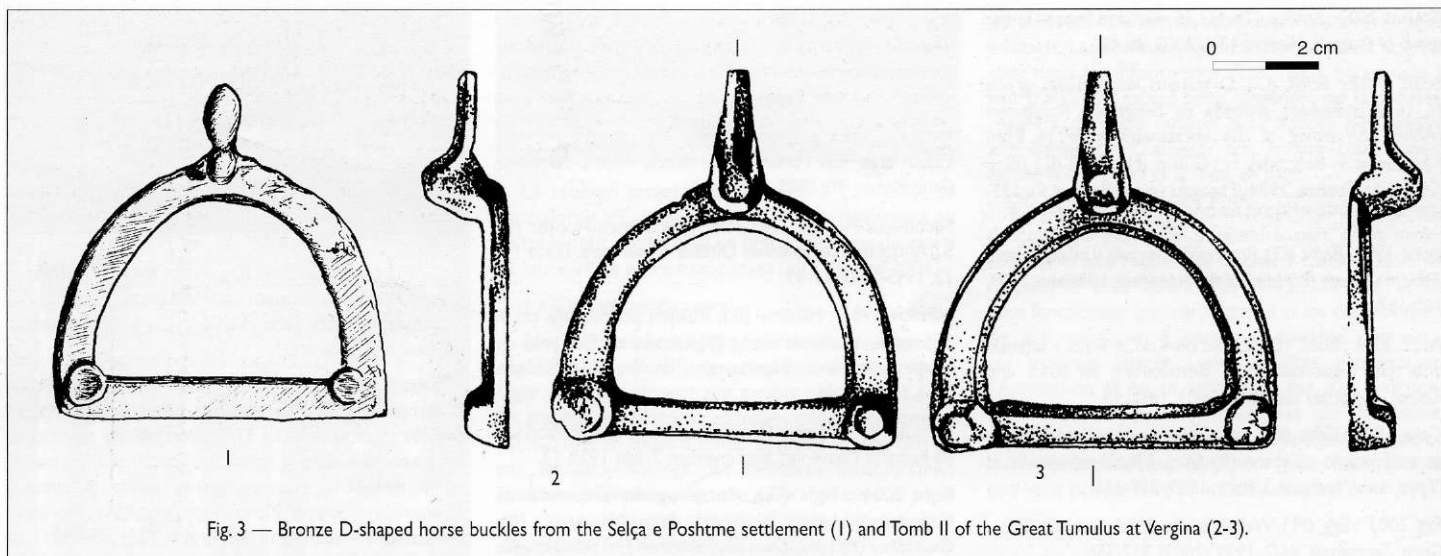


Fig. 3 — Bronze D-shaped horse buckles from the Selça e Poshtme settlement (1) and Tomb II of the Great Tumulus at Vergina (2-3).

This is clearly proved not only by the horse burials from the Scythian Neapolis (modern Simferopol) in the Crimea and from Zimnicea on the Lower Danube (Božič 2001, 196), but also by the discovery in tumulus I of the village Pajduško near Tărgoviște in north-eastern Bulgaria, where structure n° 2, interpreted as a cult hearth, contained nothing but an iron curb-bit, close to the specimen from the Orodol grave (Nicolăescu-Plopșor 1945-1947, 27 s, pl. 3 : 4), a circular iron ring with two points and two iron rectangular horse buckles with a hook (Ginev 1994, 27, 40 s, pl. 5 : 1-4 ; 6 : 1-4).

The D-shaped bronze ring from Kobarid (fig. 1), though by its form, material, and dimensions very close to the early examples from the Lower Danubian region, Macedonia and Albania (fig. 3), has no bulges in the corners. Since the absence of the buttons or bulges is a feature of the iron rectangular horse buckles (fig. 4), dated to the LT DI period, it is probable that the ring from Kobarid represents a late variant of the D-shaped bronze horse buckles, contemporary with the spur recovered from the same grave.

Dragan Božič
Inštitut za arheologijo ZRC SAZU
Novi trg 2
SI-1000 Ljubljana, Slovenija
dragan.bozic@zrc-sazu.si

Notes :

(1) The excavation diary of Marchesetti is kept in Archivio Diplomatico Trieste and a photocopy of it in Civici Musei di Storia ed Arte di Trieste. I would like to thank very much Mrs. Marzia Vidulli, who kindly sent me copies from the diary, drawings (by Giuliano Righi) and photos (by Marino Ierman) of the finds, and also Mr. Adriano Dugulin, director of the City Museums of Trieste, who kindly gave permission for the objects to be published. Last, but not least, I must thank Anna Crismani from Trieste for her successful search for the "lost" finds from the horse burial, Narcis Torbov from Vraca, who sent me his article on belt-buckles and chain-belts, still in print, and Nina Crummy from Colchester for her kind checking of the English text.

(2) Tagebuch, Büchlein 41, page 38 - Naturhistorisches Museum Wien, Prähistorische Abteilung, Fundaktenarchiv. A scan of the page was kindly sent to me by Mrs. Angelika Heinrich.

(3) The letter of Vasilka V. Paunova from Pernik (Bulgaria) to the author from 1st August 2004.

(4) The well preserved bronze buckle from the Piatra Craivii fortified settlement in Transylvania is still not published. Many thanks to Aurel Rustoiu from Cluj who sent me a drawing of it.

Bibliography :

Alexandrescu 1983 : Alexandrescu (A. D.), Tombes de chevaux et pièces du harnais dans la nécropole gète de Zimnicea, *Dacia* 27, 1983, 67-78.

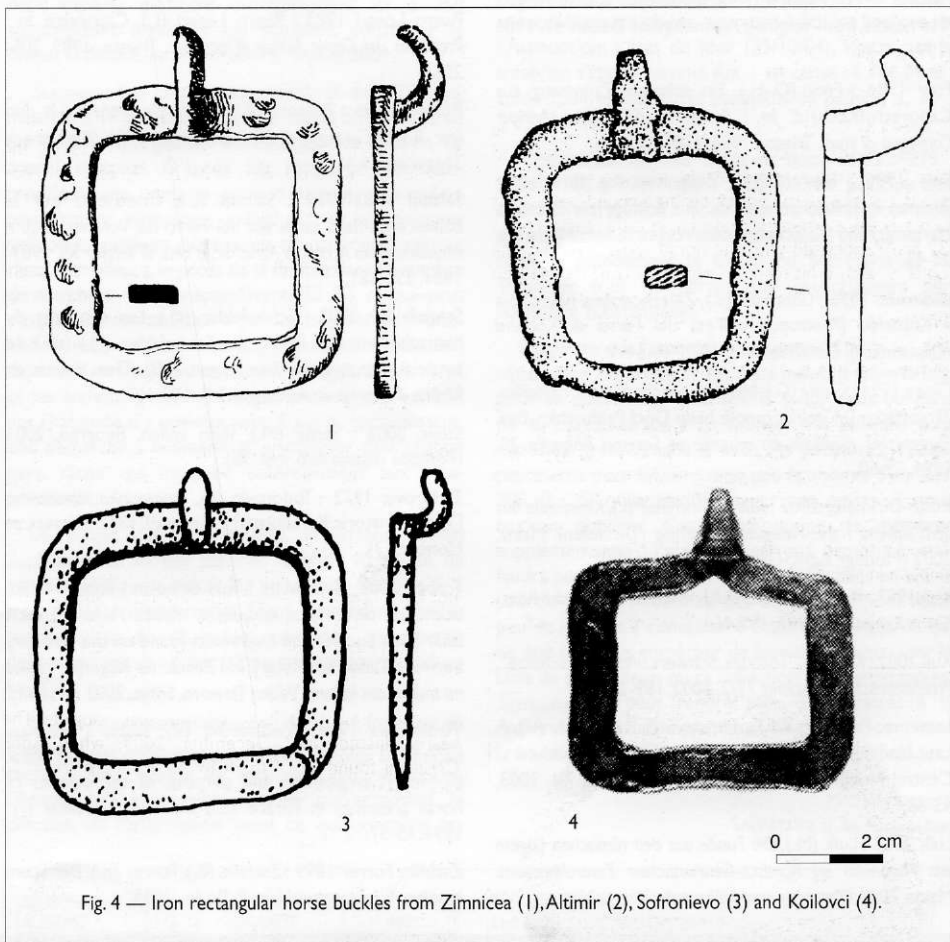


Fig. 4 — Iron rectangular horse buckles from Zimnicea (1), Altimir (2), Sofronievo (3) and Koilovci (4).

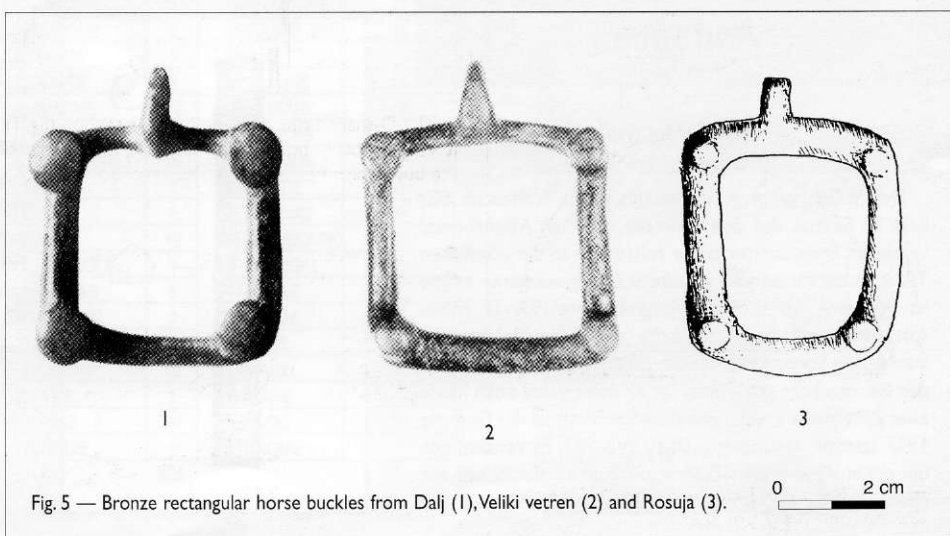


Fig. 5 — Bronze rectangular horse buckles from Dalj (1), Veliki vetren (2) and Rosuja (3).

Antikas 2002 : Antikas (Th. G.), Horses and heroes in the tomb of Philip II, *Minerva* 13/1, 2002, 46-49.

Božič 1984 : Božič (D.), O starosti konjeniškega groba št. 16 z latenskega grobišča na beograjski Karaburmi [About the dating of the horseman's grave 16 from Karaburma in Belgrade]. In : Guštin (M.), Pauli (L.) (dir.), *Keltski voz. Brežice*, 1984 (Posavski muzej Brežice 6), 133-139.

Božič 1999 : Božič (D.), Prebivališča mrtvih v mlajši železni dobi. In : Aubej (B.) (dir.), *Zakladi tisočletij*. Ljubljana, 1999, 165-167.

Božič 2001 : Božič (D.), Ljudje ob Krki in Kolpi v latenski dobi [Zur latenezeitlichen Bevölkerung an Krka und Kolpa], *Arheološki vestnik* 52, 2001, 181-198.

Ceka 1999 : Ceka (N.), Les Celtes en Illyrie méridionale et en Épire. In : Cabane (P.) (dir.), *L'Illyrie méridionale et l'Épire dans l'Antiquité* 3. Paris, 1999, 327-333.

Egg 2003 : Egg (M.), Waffenbrüder ?, *Jahrbuch des Röm.-Germ. Zentralmus.* 46/2, 1999 (2003) 317-356.

Faklaris 1991 : Faklaris (P.V.), Iposkeyés apó te Vergína [Harnesses from Vergina], *Archaiologikon Deltion* 41, 1986 (1991), 1-58.

Frey 1984 : Frey (O.-H.), Ein seltenes Zaumzeug aus Caporetto/Kobarid. In : *Preistoria del Caput Adriae. Convegno di studi*. Trieste, 1984, 119-129.

Frey 1986 : Frey (O.-H.), Zeugnisse sog. thrakischer Trensen in keltischen Oppida. In : *Beiträge zur Eisenzeit*. Marburg, 1986 (Kl. Schr. aus dem Vorgesch. Sem. Marb. 19), 37-42.

Gabrovec 1976 : Gabrovec (S.), Železnodobna nekropola v Kobaridu [Necropoli dell'età del Ferro di Kobarid (Caporetto)], *Goriški letnik* 3, 1976, 44-64.

Ginev 1994 : Ginev (G.), Mogilen nekropol pri s. Pajduško, Targoviško [Hügelnekropole beim Dorf Pajduschko, Bez. Targoviste], *Godišnik na muzeite ot Severna Bălgarija* 20, 1994, 25-60.

Kilian-Dirlmeier 2002 : Kilian-Dirlmeier (I.), *Kleinfunde aus dem Athena Itonia-Heiligtum bei Philia (Thessalien)*. Mainz, 2002 (Monogr. Röm.-Germ. Zentralmus. 48).

Kull 1997 : Kull (B.), Tod und Apotheose, *Bericht der Röm.-Germ. Komm.* 78, 1997, 197-466.

Kull 2002 : Kull (B.), "Torques, Schwert und Silberschätze", *Prähistorische Zeitschrift* 77/2, 2002, 189-223.

Lazarova, Paunova 2003 : Lazarova (S.), Paunova (V.), A Late Iron Age Grave Find from the Village of Koilovtsi in Central North Bulgaria, *Archaeologia Bulgarica* 7/1, 2003, 45-58.

Luik 2002 : Luik (M.), *Die Funde aus den römischen Lagern um Numantia im Römisch-Germanischen Zentralmuseum*. Mainz, 2002 (Kat. vor- und frühgesch. Altert. 31).

Majnarić-Pandžić 1970 : Majnarić-Pandžić (N.), *Keltsko-latenska kultura u Slavoniji i Srijemu* [Keltisch-latenezeitliche Kultur in Slawonien und Sirmien]. Vinkovci, 1970 (Acta Musei Cibalisensis 2).

Moscalu 1989 : Moscalu (E.), Das thrako-getische Fürstengrab von Peretu in Rumänien, *Bericht der Röm.-Germ. Komm.* 70, 1989, 129-190.

Nicolăescu-Plopșor 1945-1947 : Nicolăescu-Plopșor (C. S.), *Antiquités celtiques en Olténie. Répertoire*, *Dacia* 11-12, 1945-1947, 17-33.

Nikolov 1981 : Nikolov (B.), Trakijski pogrebenija pri s. Sofronievo, Vračanski okrag [Sépultures thraces près du village Sofronievo, département de Vraca], *Arheologija* 23/3, 1981, 30-41.

Osmuk 1998 : Osmuk (N.), Le sanctuaire protohistorique de Kobarid (Slovénie), *Instrumentum* 7, juin 1998, 13.

Righi 2004 : Righi (G.), Morso equino e sperone da Caporetto/Kobarid (Slovenia). In : Marzatico (F.), Gleirscher (P.) (dir.), *Guerrieri, Principi ed Eroi fra il Danubio e il Po dalla preistoria all'Alto Medioevo*. Trento, 2004, 685.

Ruaro Loseri 1983 : Ruaro Loseri (L.), Caporetto. In : *Preistoria del Caput Adriae. Il catalogo*. Trieste, 1983, 205-206.

Rustoiu 1996 : Rustoiu (A.), *Metalurgia bronzului la daci* (sec. II î. Chr. - sec. I d. Chr.). București, 1996 (Bibliotheca Thracologica 15).

Salzani 1983-1984 : Salzani (L.), Contributi per la conoscenza della tarda età del Ferro nel Veronese, *Atti e Memorie della Accad. di Agric. Sc. e Lett. di Verona* 35, 1983-1984, 353-381.

Schönfelder 2003 : Schönfelder (M.), Les éléments du harnachement. In : Perrin (F.), Schönfelder (M.) (dir.), *La tombe à char de Verna (Isère)*. Lyon, 2003 (Doc. d'Arch. en Rhône-Alpes et en Auvergne 24), 100-107.

Stojić 2003 : Stojić (M.), *Veliki vetren*. Beograd, 2003 (Posebna izdanja Arh. inst. 38).

Todorović 1972 : Todorović (J.), *Praistorijska Karaburma* [The Prehistoric Karaburma] 1. Beograd, 1972 (Dissert. et Monogr. 13).

Torbov 2003 : Torbov (N.), Toki ot kolan i kolani-verižki, otkriti na teritorijata, zaključena između reke Timok i Iskar [Belt buckles and chain-belts found on the territory between Timok and Iskar]. In : *Zemite na Bălgarija - Ijulka na trakijskata kultura*. Veliko Tŕnovo, Sofija, 2003 (in print).

Vladimirova 1994 : Vladimirova (V.), Săstav i prednaznačenje na aplikaciite kām konska sbruja v Trakija (V-III v. pr. Hr.) [Composition and purpose of the plaques of horse trappings in Thrace (5th-3rd c. B.C.)], *Analii* 1/1, 1994, 45-57.

Zschille, Forrer 1899 : Zschille (R.), Forrer (R.), *Der Sporn in seiner Formenentwicklung* 2. Berlin, 1899.

Figura di sistro Aquilaia. Museo Archeologico Nazionale (I)

A. Giovannini

Il centro altoadriatico da un ulteriore contributo in merito alla classe dei sistri : si tratta però di un apporto di natura indiretta, dato che l'oggetto è rappresentato sul fianco di un'aretta.

Il fatto, però, che essa sia stata realizzata in calcare di estrazione locale fornisce una indicazione precisa : il piccolo monumento (fig. 1), il solo con tale repertorio ad essere qui noto, è stato realizzato da maestranze attive nella città, verosimilmente legate al circuito santuariole isiacco di Monastero (località a Nord-Est dell'antico abitato, su cui Giovannini 2001, 294-301). La figura del sistro pertanto da il suo apporto sulla presenza ad Aquileia di sistri di diversa tipologia : può essere estrapolata dal contesto e considerata anche sul piano dell'instrumentum.

Lo strumento idiofono appartiene al tipo ad arco, con telaio ricurvo : mostra tre verghette con estremità che sembrano onitomorfe e manico a forma di fusto di papiro. I confronti risultano numerosi : i più significativi sono rappresentati da due degli esemplari restituiti a Roma dal Tevere, appartenenti agli arredi dell'Isseo fatto distruggere da Tiberio nel 32 d.C. (Iside 1997, 177, nn. 29-30).

Come si è accennato, l'aretta su cui il manufatto è rappresentato, potrebbe essere realizzata in una delle botteghe afferenti al complesso sacro a Iside e Serapide, dove sarebbe stata approntata per servire da ex voto a qualche fedele, che avrebbe provveduto a dettare il testo per la faccia principale, lasciata anepigrafe.

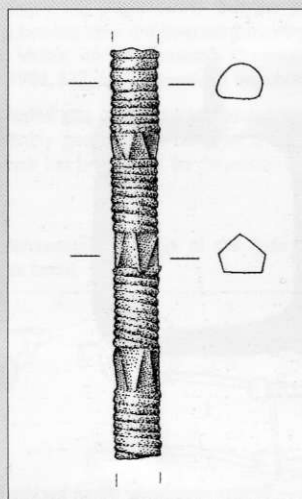
La prima notizia in merito all'aretta, risalente al 1877 (Gregorutti 1877, 11), infatti, concerne la sua presenza all'interno di un museo privato aquileiese, quello di proprietà della famiglia Cassis, sito nel Palazzo di Monastero. Nella tenuta Cassis di Monastero erano compresi i terreni nei quali, a partire dal 1862, si evidenziò con crescente chiarezza l'ubicazione del santuario delle divinità egiziane. Appare così verosimile l'ipotesi che l'ara possa essere pervenuta ai Cassis attraverso uno di tali rinvenimenti, cui purtroppo non seguì alcuna indagine sistematica (Giovannini 2002, 280-281, Vf.5).

Annalisa Giovannini
Collaborator archeologo
Museo Archeologico Nazionale
via Roma, 1, I-33051 Aquileia (UD)
annagiov@iol.it

Annonce

Wer weiss mehr ?

Der St. Georgenberg bei Berschis (Gem. Walenstadt SG) liegt im Seetäl, das den Walensee mit dem Alpenrheintal verbindet. Er ist ein markanter Felsrücken an der nördlichen Talflanke, die romanische Kapelle St. Georg auf seiner Kuppe ist von weit her sichtbar. Ausgrabungen 1937-39 haben spätbronzezeitliche, spätrömische und frühmittelalterliche Funde zum Vorschein gebracht. In spätrömischer Zeit war der Georgenberg stark befestigt, im Innern sind noch heute zwei Zisternen zu sehen. Aus dem Fundmaterial der Grabung 1937 stammt das gezeigte Stück WB 173. Es handelt sich um ein im Querschnitt D-förmiges Buntmetallstäbchen mit charakteristischer Verzierung : Rillenbündel wechseln mit



prismatisch fazettierten Zonen ab. Das Muster ist charakteristisch für das spätere 4. und frühe 5. Jahrhundert n. Chr. Doch wovon stammt das Stück ? Es erinnert an die Röhrenhülsen der breiten spätrömischen Gürtelgarnituren.

Allerdings handelt es sich bei WB 173 nicht um eine Hülse, sondern um ein massives Teil. Ist die Spur Gürtelgarnitur trotzdem richtig ? Könnte es sich um ein Fragment eines Stücks wie Köln oder Krefeld-Gellep handeln (Böhme, Germanische Grabfunde 1974, Taf. 75, 19 ; 82, 3) ? Oder stammt es von einer anderen Objektgattung ?

Besten Dank für jeden Hinweis !

Martin Schindler
Kantonsarchäologie
Rorschacherstr. 23, CH-9001 St. Gallen
martin.schindler@sg.ch