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## The Roman Legionary from Ohrid Citadel

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The Ohrid Citadel, also known as Samuel's Fortress or Upper Kale, is a complex archaeological site with abundant vertical stratigraphy, with a phenomenon of chronological range from Prehistory to the Ottoman Middle Ages. Parts of this site include the organized *necropoleis* dated to Early and Late Antiquity, as well as the Middle Ages.<sup>1</sup>

There are a number of graves from the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD. According to the archaeological indicators, four funeral formations with inhumations can be dated to this time.<sup>2</sup>

Grave 72 belongs to this group. It was excavated in the northern half of the citadel during an excavation campaign in 2001. It has a southwest-northeastern orientation. The deceased was laid on the back, in an outstretched position, in the grave pit without any markings. The osteological material is poorly preserved and, in the absence of anthropological analysis, the grave goods are the sole indications that the deceased was an adult male (Fig. 1.) This article focuses on three artefacts: the grave goods found in Grave 72 (Fig. 2, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8). Near the left foot of the deceased was found a *bronze crossbow fibula* (N-77), a *D-shaped belt-buckle with a rectangular frame* (Pru-148) and a smaller *oval-shaped buckle with a cap-end attachment* (Pru-148).<sup>3</sup> These grave goods date the burial to the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD and show that the deceased was a legionary in the Roman army. They deserve more elaborate description and thorough analysis.

The abovementioned fibula is 13.2 cm long. Its basic constructive elements are: a foot, a bow, a head with three attached bulbous knobs and a pin (Fig.4, 5). In addition, a detailed description of these parts of the fibula will be made.

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1 This was confirmed with the systematic archaeological excavations performed on the site in the period 2000-2010.

2 *Ibid.*

3 I would like to pay my gratitude to the Head of the archaeological excavations at Samuilova Tvrđina, Pasko Kuzman for making this material available for my research, to S. Karpuzova for the field photographs, and to V. Todorovska, in whose sector Grave 72 was found.

Лок. Самуилова тердина-Охрид  
27.07.2001  
КВ. D/3-5

ГРОБ 72

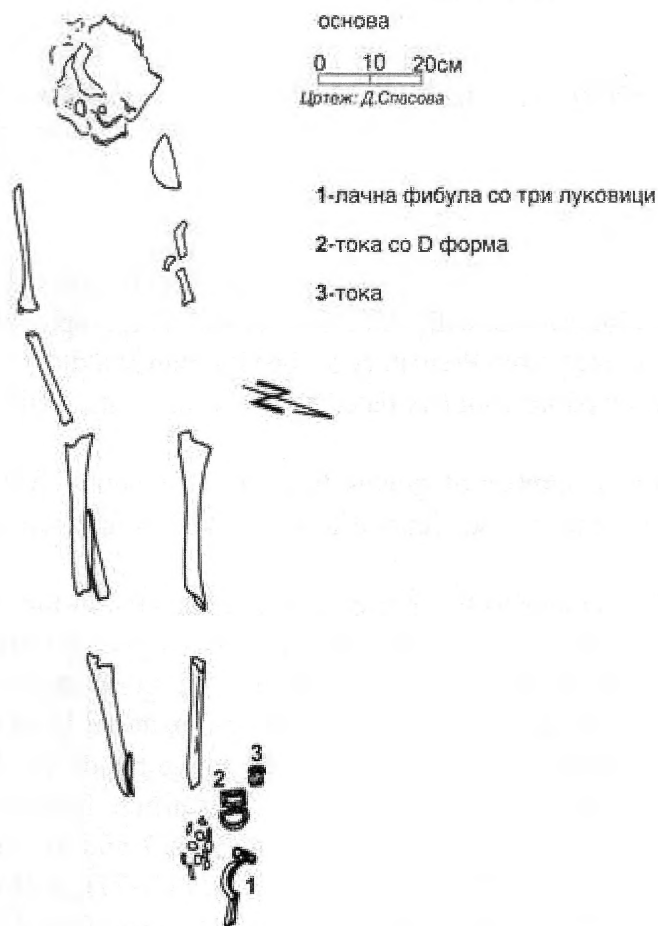


Fig. 1

*The foot (catch, container)* is longitudinal in shape, 5,6 cm long and semicircular in cross section. The slot is open on one side of the catch and the backend of the pin is placed there (Fig. 4, 5). The upper surface of the foot is flat, decorated with two rows of double incised circles that run its length; both consisted of 13 applied items. The rows are flanked by lines of closely positioned dots.

*The bow of the fibula* is fully cast and exceeds the height of the foot by 4.9 cm. The cross-section is trapezoid. Along the full length of the bow, on its upper side, is an incised row of connected S-shaped elements. This row is the central decoration, flanked with lines of thin, fine incised slashes on both sides.



Fig. 2

*The head of the fibula* is formed by a solid plate, forged on the frontal part of the bow and then bended over the transverse (cross) bar of circular cross-section. The back part of the plate touches the front base of the bow on its inner side. By applying such construction, the frontal part of the head was given pentagonal form. The edges of the plate are decorated with slanted incisions on its upper side. The crossbar bears the loop of the pin, applied in an opening made on the lower part of the head, where the plate was bended around it. Thus the hinge mechanism for clasping was formed.

In the section where the bow meets the head, on a central position a bulbous knob (garlic like) is placed. Back side of the knob is stretch in a circular shape. It attaches and perforates the head. The penetration is roughly covered backwards.

Concerning the way that head of the fibula was designed, the item found in the Grave 72 is closely related to two fibulae with a hinge and a transverse bar bearing two affronted bulbous, found at the site of Hrušnica..<sup>4</sup>

*The pin of the fibula* was broken off in the segment coming right under the bow. Its frontal part was inserted in the hinge mechanism previously described and the rear part was clasped in the slot of the foot of the fibula. Here, right above the pin, an elongated wing was soldered on and ran along the full length of the foot. The rearmost part of the wing is bended down and it ends outside the foot. *Both the foot and the pin wing are perforated and attached with a rivet.*

<sup>4</sup> Giesler, 1981: 58, T.19/4, 5.

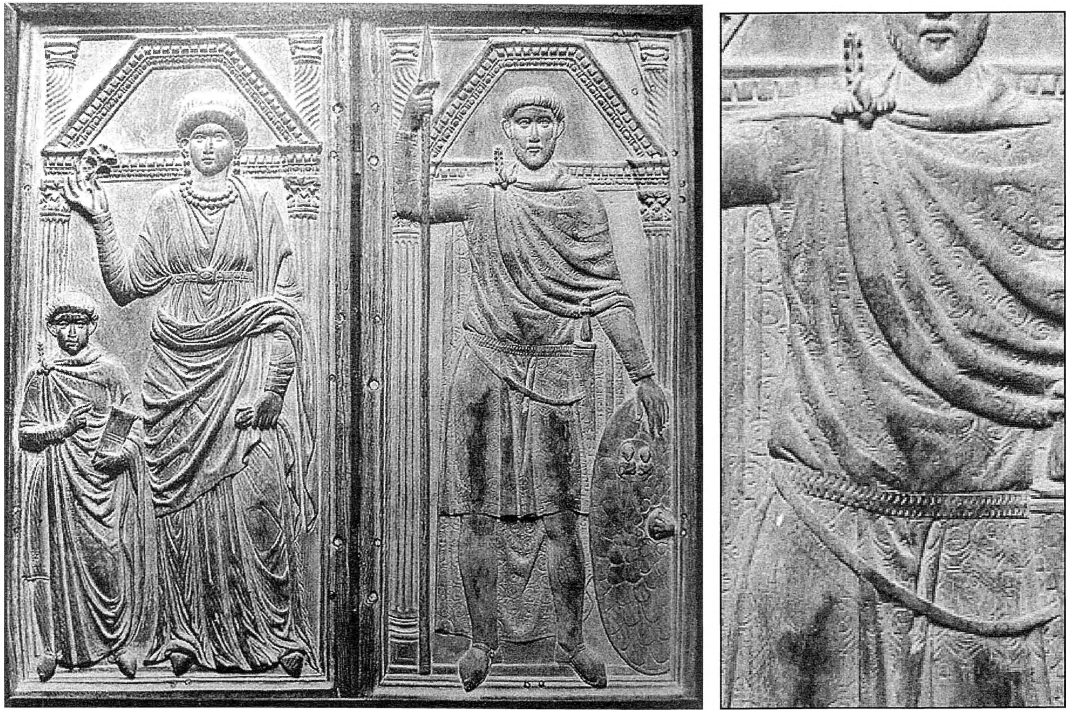


Fig. 3a, 3b

Concerning constructive elements, the fibula from Grave 72 is a transitional form between the T-fibulae with a hinge and the crossbow fibulae with three applied bulbous knobs. The mechanism for clasping determines it as belonging to the first type; the three finely designed bulbous knobs and the decoration betrays it as belonging to the second type. The shape of the bow and the foot are typical of both types.

The fusing of these two types as seen in the fibula of Grave 72 is understandable, for the T-fibulae with a hinge are considered the prototype for the crossbow fibulae.<sup>5</sup> The amalgam is more understandable when one takes into account that both types, besides their utilitarian function, were part of the Roman military equipment.<sup>6</sup>

The T-shaped fibulae with a hinge are set chronologically in the 3<sup>rd</sup> c. AD<sup>7</sup>; only a few variants of the type were in circulation at the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> and the beginning of the 4<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>8</sup> In general, the earliest standardized crossbow fibulae date from the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD.<sup>9</sup> They are most frequent in the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries AD<sup>10</sup> and would remain in use with the same intensity until the end of Antiquity.<sup>11</sup> The fibula from Grave 72, with all its characteristics and its relation with the other grave goods, belongs to the first half of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD.

5 Bojović, 1983: 78; Јевремовић, 1988: 166; Redić, 2006: 84.

6 Vinski, 1974: 9; Deppert-Lippitz, 2000: 41, 42.

7 Bojović, 1983:78.

8 *Ibid.*

9 Keller, 1971:31.

10 *Ibid.*

11 They are confirmed on frescoes in catacombs in Naples (beginning of 4<sup>th</sup> century AD); on the mosaics into sacral and funeral buildings in Ravenna (VI century AD); the church of St. Demetrius in Thessalonica (the first half of the 7<sup>th</sup> century AD). NB: Vinski, 1974: 9, 10; Deppert-Lippitz, 2000: 56.

The two abovementioned types occur in the given chronological parameters and exist subsequently with a short period of overlapping. Yet, despite the domination of the T-shaped fibulae with a hinge, the rare specimens of the crossbow fibulae date as early as the first half of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD.

The crossbow fibula from the grave 72 can be appointed as a transitional form. The earliest standardized crossbow items with three bulbous knobs were discovered in Bulgaria. One of them comes from Čausevo (near Pleven) and has been dated to the first half of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD;<sup>12</sup> the other comes from the site of Nikolaevo and belongs chronologically to the middle of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD.<sup>13</sup>

In the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries AD, the crossbow fibulae with three bulbous knobs, that have mainly descriptive names in the scientific literature,<sup>14</sup> became the most widespread items of male jewellery on the territory of the Roman Empire.<sup>15</sup>

Besides having meaning for the military hierarchy, they became a symbol of the official status of a civilian in Late Roman society as well.<sup>16</sup> A clear example of the double-meaning and hierarchical symbolism of this type of fibulae is found in the diptych portraits of Stilicho and his family—an ivory masterpiece from the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD<sup>17</sup> (Fig. 3 a, b).

There is no information on finds of T-fibulae with hinges from the territory of the Republic of Macedonia, though there have been significant finds of crossbow fibulae. These were discovered as grave goods in organized *necropoleis*<sup>18</sup>, deposited in separate grave formations located near suburban villas<sup>19</sup> or revealed by a chance.<sup>20</sup>

The large belt buckle (Fig. 6 and 8) was cast in one piece and is 5.7 cm long. It is made of a D-shape form that ends with rudimentary spirals and a rectangular frame. The part connecting them is thinner and designed for the purpose of bearing the prong which is missing.

The backside of the buckle is smooth and the visible one is decorated with fine circular indentations which are repeated in a sequence. The four angles of the frame and the two angles of the front part are finely profiled and accentuated with two or three incisions. There are no decorative elements on the back part of the frame and the part where prong was attached.

The smaller buckle (Fig. 7 and 8) was made in two pieces, an oval front part and a bronze cap-end which was roughly perforated on three spots. The whole length

12 Keller, 1971:30 and 31; Depperit-Lippitz, 2000: 43.

13 *Ibid.*

14 They can be met as *Zwiebelkopffibel* (Beharens, Keller); *Fibule en croix* (Jevremoviћ); *Crossbow fibulae*; *Lukovični fibuli*, *T-fibuli so lukovici* (Vinski); *Krstesti fibuli* (Bojović, Ređić); *Krstobrazni fibuli* (Jovanović) and *Lukovičesti fibuli* (Koščević, Busuladžić).

15 They were worn equally by both Romans and barbarians involved into the administrative and military structures of Late Roman society.

16 Vinski, 1974: 9; Busuladžić, 2008:29.

17 The First Military Commander of the Roman Army, Stilicho and his son Eucherius, a high administrative official, are both depicted wearing crossbow fibulae as insignia of their professions. N.B Vinski, 1974: 9; Depperit-Lippitz, 2000: 43.

18 Микулчиќ, 1974: 136, Figs.19, 20, 22, 23 and 26; Babić, 1961: 98; Babić, 1961a: 99; Николова, 2006: 261-272; Николовски, 2006: 254, Т.Х/1, 2.

19 Јосифовска, 1956:288, сл. 6,7; Јосифовска: 1959: 197-212; Битракова-Грозданова, 1966: 96, Fig. 2; Димитриоска, 1979: 134,Т.И/2; Ivanovski, 1987: 81-97 and Петрова, 1987, 106-107, figs. 8, 9.

20 Лахтов, 1959: 17, 63 Т.V/3-6; Манева, 1988: 138, Fig. 9 and Битракова, 1989: 113, Fig. 12.

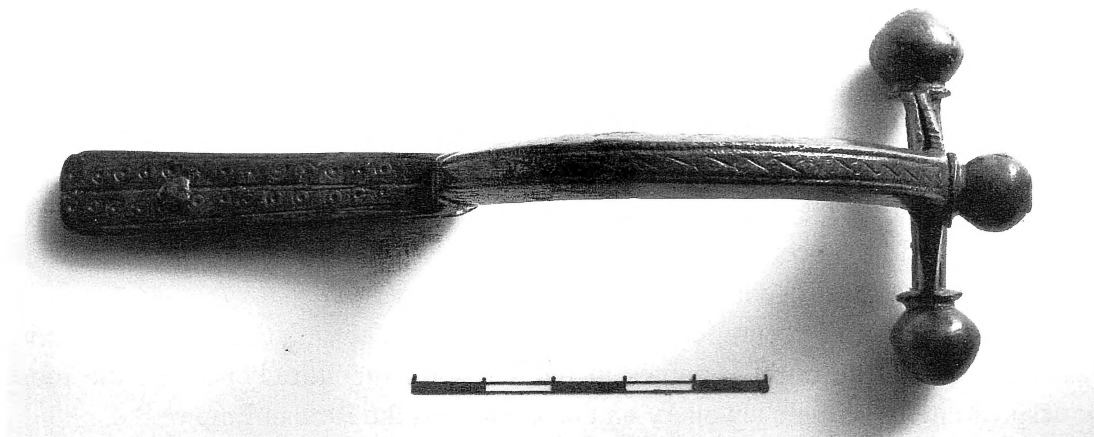


Fig. 4

of it is 3.2 cm and the width is 2.0 cm. The prong is missing.

These two buckles were parts of a military belt. On the wider, leather sash, or *cingulum*, worn on the soldier's waist the D-shaped buckle was attached. The scabbard for the sword was hung on this belt during battle. The smaller buckle is from the smaller auxiliary belt used to secure the scabbard with the sword near the soldier's hip to facilitate removal or attachment to the *cingulum*<sup>21</sup>. All this introduces the possibility that these belts belonged to a *balteus*.

The dating of the D-shaped buckle with a rectangular frame is sensitive. This type of buckle was an innovation introduced to the Roman army in the middle of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD and was in standard use up to the first decades of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD.<sup>22</sup> Specimens have been found in Nin,<sup>23</sup> Sisak,<sup>24</sup> Srem,<sup>25</sup> Dura Europos<sup>26</sup> and Corbridge.<sup>27</sup> Items have also been found at Viminacium in six graves<sup>28</sup> of the *Tri Grobalja* necropolis. Only one of them with inhumation had such belt-buckle as a grave good.<sup>29</sup>

A mere belt-buckle from the territory of the Republic of Macedonia has been written upon so far and it is almost identical with the one from Grave 72. This buckle was found during archaeological excavations at the site of Vrbjanska Čuka near the village of Slavej in the vicinity of Prliep.<sup>30</sup>

It is important to mention in this context that several ceramic moulds for one-time use have been found at the site of Scupi. One of the presented moulds was used for casting the very similar type of buckles as the one from Grave 72.<sup>31</sup>

21 Hoffiller, 1910:113.

22 Radman Livaja, 2004: 94.

23 Nedved, 1981: 180, Figs: 8/312-314.

24 Radman Livaja, 2004: 94, catalogue No.276-278.

25 Dautova Ruševljan- Vujovic, 2006: catalogue No.33, 34.

26 Bishop-Coulston, 2006: 191, fig. 124/7.

27 *Ibid.*, 191, fig.124/11.

28 Зотовић-Јордановић, 1990 84,90,100, T.LXXXV/9, CXVI/3, CLIX/5, CLXVI/5, CLXVI/7.

29 *Ibid.* 64, T.XXVI/12.

30 Миткоски, 2005: Т.V/3.

31 Јованова, 1992, 196, Fig. 3.

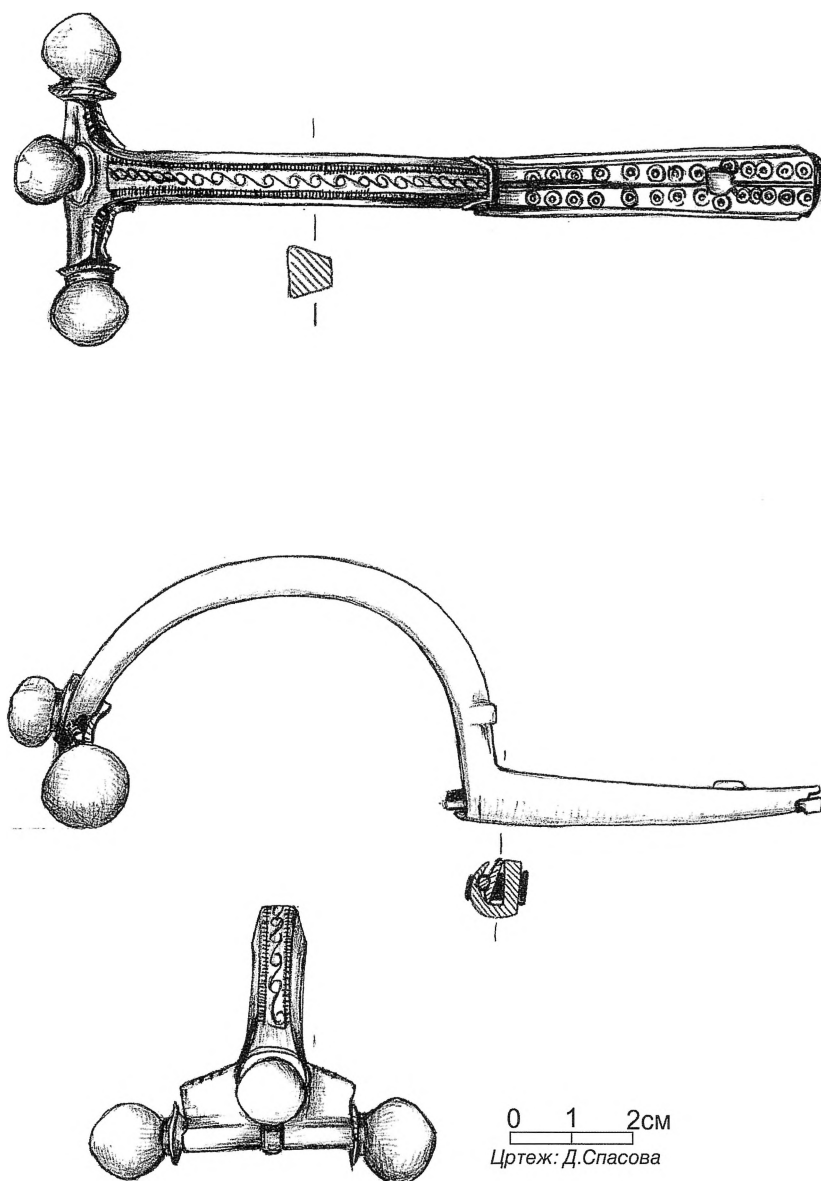


Fig. 5

All the evidence presented indicates that the burial at Grave 72 happened no later than the middle of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD. This dating is corroborated by the burial rites and especially the grave goods. Inhumation was the predominant burial rite practiced in the Roman Empire from the 3<sup>rd</sup> century onwards and was influenced by Oriental beliefs.<sup>32</sup>

On the basis of the analysis given above, the item of the crossbow fibula can be dated with confidence to the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD. However, the most chronologically sensitive artefact is the D-shaped buckle with a rectangular frame, dated to between

<sup>32</sup>Микулчиќ, 1974: 117,128, 129.

the middle of the 2<sup>nd</sup> and the beginning of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD.<sup>33</sup> Thus, the meeting point of these two artefacts is the first half of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD.

There is no other information about the identity of the deceased from Grave 72 beside his professional orientation as a Roman legionary. In the absence of any solid epigraphic or written sources, a short summary of historical events, military organization and units located on the territory of Lychnidos (Ohrid) in the first half of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD should further our understanding of the military rank of the deceased man.

In the given historical period the Roman Empire was facing a great crisis caused by internal struggles for supremacy and constant pressure from barbarian tribes.<sup>34</sup> The need to form mobile units to defend the interior of the Empire in addition to the *limes* defence thus imposed itself as the result of this social and political crisis.<sup>35</sup> Military detachments of legions called *vexillationes* were created for rapid intervention. They operated independently, led by a *dux* or a *praepositus*. The legions of *III Parthica* stationed in the vicinity of Rome, as well as the *III Augusta* located in Africa, both had their *vexillationes* located in Lychnidos.<sup>36</sup>

The deceased from Grave 72 most probably belonged to one of these units. The military insignia with which he was buried, especially the size and quality craftsmanship of the fibula, introduce the possibility that he was a high-ranking officer in the *vexillatio*.

Finally, in place of a conclusion, a survey will be made of the arrangement of the grave goods in the funerary context. These items were not located in the same places where they had been worn when the deceased was alive—they were positioned unattached near his feet. In times of peace, the *cingulum* and the fibula were the only distinguishing marks between a soldier and a civilian.<sup>37</sup> Military rules forbade the removal of the *cingulum* for any reason and its removal meant dismissal from the military.<sup>38</sup>

This is perhaps confirmed by the way in which the grave goods were placed near the feet of the deceased. The legionary from the Ohrid Citadel, after his final battle with life, laid down the military equipment in this world and moved to the eternal fields of peace where such accessories are unnecessary.

(English Translation by Jelena Jarić)

33 Radman Livaja, 2004: 94.

34 Папазоглу, 1985: 105; Микулчиќ, 1995: 239.

35 Папазоглу, 1985: 105.

36 *Ibid.*

37 Radman Livaja, 2004: 86; Dautova Rusevljan- Vujovic: 2006, 45.

38 *Cingi* means 'to be enrolled in the army'; Hoffiller, 1910:113.



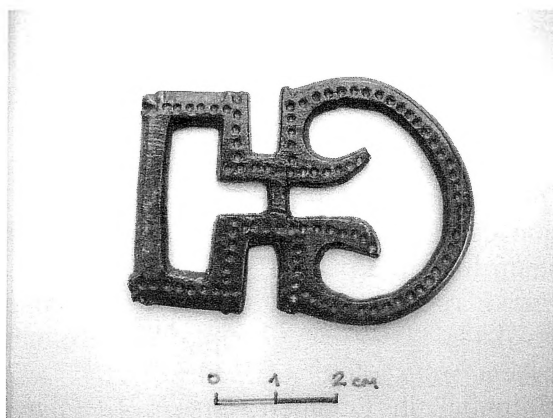


Fig.6

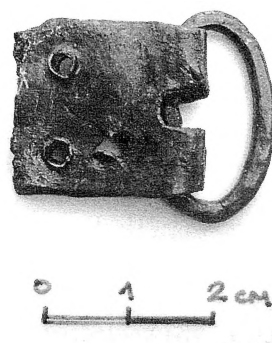


Fig.7:

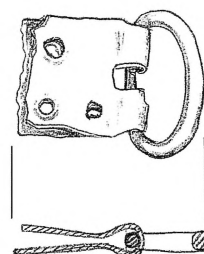
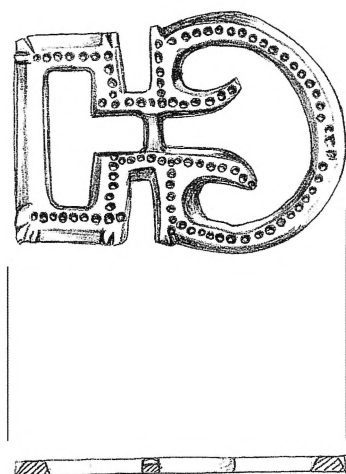
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Fig.8

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## Резиме:

## РИМСКИОТ ЛЕГИОНЕР ОД ОХРИДСКАТА ЦИТАДЕЛА

Во северната половина на *Охридската цитадела*, позната како *Самуилова тврдина* или *Високо кале* во 2001 година беше откриен гробот 72 кој припаѓа на римски легионер.

Инхумираниот покојник бил положен на грб, во гробна јама без било какви ознаки и ориентација југозапад-североисток. Покрај неговото лево стапало се откриени една *бронзена лачна фибула со три додатоци во форма на луковици* (тер.инв.бр. Н-77), *едноделно лиена тока со Д форма и правоаголна рамка* (тер.инв.бр. Пру-148) и уште една, помала *овална тока со оков* (тер.инв.бр. Пру-148).

*Фибулата* е составена од *рамна нога, полукружно извиен лак и глава со три луковидни додатоци*. Според конструктивните елементи таа претставува преодна форма од Т-фибула на шарнир во лачна фибула со три луковидни додатоци. Спојот на овие два типа, применет на примерот од гробот 72 е разбирлив со оглед на тоа што, Т-фибулите на шарнир се сметаат за прототип на лачните фибули со три луковидни додатоци. Нивниот сублимат е дотолку поприватлив ако се има предвид фактот дека, освен утилитарната намена и двата типа фибули биле вклучени во римската војничка униформа.

*Д-токата со правоаголна рамка и овалната тока со оков* припаѓаат на војнички ремен. На поширокиот кожен појас *цингулум* кој одел околу половината на војникот била прицврстена **Д**-токата. Во воени услови, на него висела корица со меч. Овалната тока со оков била дел од помало, помошно ременче коешто имало функција да ја фиксира и стабилизира корицата со мечот покрај бокот на носителот. Не е исклучена можноста приложените токи да се делови од *balteus*.

Претставените наоди хронолошки го детерминираат гробот 72 во III век и сведочат за професионалната ориентација на покојникот како легионер во римската војска. Лачната фибула со три луковидни додатоци, без сомнение се датира во III век. Најосетлив хронолошки показател е *токата со Д-форма и правоаголна рамка*, временска одредена од половината на II до почетокот на III век. Според тоа, допирниот временски распон на двата наоди е првата половина на третиот век.

Во недостаток на конкретен епиграфски споменик или историски документ, како дополнителен детаљ за личноста во гробот 72 може да се посочи фактот дека, во првата половина на III век легиите *II Parthica*, стационарирана во близината на Рим и *III Augusta*, лоцирана во Африка имале свои деташирани одреди (*vexillationes*) во Lychindos (Охрид). Голема е веројтноста дека, покојникот од гробот 72 бил припадник на некоја од двете посочени армиски групации. Прилозите со кои бил погребан, посебно големината и квалитетот фибулата сугерираат дека, тој можеби имал повисок воен чин во самата вексилација.

Евидентно е дека прилозите во гробот не се поставени на местата кадешто нивниот носител ги користел додека бил жив. Тие се положени слободно покрај

неговите стапала. Во мирнодопски времиња *цингулумот* и *фибулата* биле единствените показатели, според кои војниците се разликувале од цивилите. Војничките стандарди забранувале отстранување на цингулумот заради било какви причини. Неговото симнување значи напуштање на воената служба.

Тоа на некој начин го потврдуваат прилозите покрај стапалото на покојникот во гробот 72. Легионерот од охридската цитадела, по финалната борба со животот ја положил воената опрема на овој свет и се преселил на вечните полиња на мирот, каде што ваквите додатоци се излишни.

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