EAGLE-SHAPED BROOCH FROM SZŐLŐSGYÖRÖK

CSILLA SÁRÓ1 — MÁTÉ VARGA2

In September 2020, a volunteer cooperating with the Rippl-Rónai Museum drew our attention to an archeological site located south of the Lake Balaton, in the surroundings of Szőlősgyörök. We have carried out several metal detector-aided field survey campaigns in the area: we spent three days in 2020, and another four in 2021 on the site, and we hope to spend a few more this year. Among the several hundreds of recovered metal artefacts, there is an outstanding piece found by Gábor Jancsekity on 30 October 2021 (Fig. 1). We suspected in the moment of discovery the bird-shaped brooch to be special, and further research confirmed that. The brooch from Szőlősgyörök only has a few known analogies in Hungary, and only one of those is part of a museum’s collection. Since no Hungarian summary of this brooch type has been published so far, we present not only the eagle-shaped brooch from Szőlősgyörök but also its analogies in this paper.

**Keywords:** Roman Period, plate brooch, bird-shaped brooch, Szőlősgyörök, Somogy County, Pannonia

**DESCRIPTION OF THE FINDING**

The plate brooch in the focus of the present paper resembles a bird of prey, more specifically, an eagle. It was cast of a copper alloy; both its pin and pin mechanism have persisted in good condition. The pin mechanism has an internal chord, an axis, and a spring with 4+3 coils. The brooch was made in two pieces, that is, the brooch body was cast separately, and only became joined with the pin mechanism in the final stage of production. The pierced chord lug was cast with the brooch body. The flat bow plate depicts an eagle with stretched wings, its head turned toward the right wing. The surface is decorated with a simple pattern, small triangular notches along the back of the neck; furthermore, an engraved wolf’s teeth-like curve (Tremolierstich) connects the neck and tail feathers and a perpendicular one the wing tips. The brooch has a hooked perpendicular catchplate. Dimensions: length: 33.26 mm, width: 23.71 mm, thickness: 2.1–3.4 mm, spring width: 17.70 mm, pin length: 31.72 mm (Fig. 2).

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1 ELKH–ELTE Interdisciplinary Archaeology Research Group, e-mail: sarocsilla@gmail.com, ORCiD: 0000-0003-4444-8037
2 University of Szeged, Doctoral School of History; Rippl-Rónai Museum, e-mail: vargamate12@gmail.com, ORCiD: 0000-0003-1342-7823
THE SITE

Our site is located in the northernmost part of Szőlősgyörök (administratively, the settlement belongs to Balatonboglár), bordering Szőlőskislak, immediately east of the road between the two settlements and west of the Jamai Creek. The valley of the Jamai Creek has been densely populated in historical times, as proven by finds from various historical periods between the Neolithic and the Early Modern Age. Several other small springs and watercourses flow into the Jamai Stream in the area, originating at Gyugy, and discharging into the Lake Balaton. The close area has at least five smaller and larger parallel watercourses running northward; the site is positioned on top of a very slightly emerging bank of one and the plateaus behind that. It has not been registered yet, but we have already started the process and proposed the name “Szőlősgyörök-Tömör-pusztától kelete” for it.

The site is relatively abundant in Roman Period pottery fragments, as well as various slags and melts, indicating some metalworking activity in the area. Most recovered metal objects (around 150) were small bronze Roman coins dating back to the 4th century AD. Beside small coins, some bronze *folles* (large Roman coins) and a few silver coins were also found in the site, with a heavily worn 1st-century BC *legionary denarius* amongst them. Besides coins, we have also recovered other Roman Period artefacts: more than ten intact or fragmented brooches, including a swastika-shaped one, bronze belt mounts, belt clasps, bracelet fragments, earring/pendant fragments, and some objects made of iron. While the most prominent record of the site clearly belongs to the Roman Period occupation, we have also found a horse harness mount dated to the Hungarian Conquest Period and some medieval artefacts (the latter belonging presumably to the medieval Tömör[d] village).

SZŐLŐSGYÖRÖK AND ITS SURROUNDINGS IN THE ROMAN PERIOD

The nearby Roman sites are relatively well-known as several targeted field surveys have been carried out in the area. The settlement monographs of Szőlősgyörök, Balatonboglár, Balatonlelle, and Szőlőskislak have been published earlier, and several sites were unearthed during the excavations preceding the construction of the motorway M7. That the southern shore of Lake Balaton is rich in Roman Period sites has been proven, beside others, by the site where the eagle-shaped brooch was discovered. The area came under the rule of the Roman Empire in the 1st century AD, and the road running along the southern shore of Lake Balaton may have been created at that time. The road did not run in the line of the present main road and the motorway but bypassed some marshes and bays. A section of this ancient road was unearthed between Balatonlelle and Szőlőskislak; as far as we know, it also passed through our site. The road has remained important after the Roman Period, and its path has not changed until today. Early Roman settlements in the area are known at Balatonlelle-Rádpusza and by a former sand quarry in the southern part of Szőlősgyörök. Two further settlements existed in the outskirts of Ordacsehi in the 2nd and 3rd centuries AD (Ordacsehi-Bugaszeg and -Major), one at Balatonpszemes, and a major one, incorporating a Late Roman horizon, at Balatonlelle-Kenderföldék. A bone workshop in Ordacsehi has also been associated with the Late Roman Period. We know of only a single *villa* in the vicinity, in Fonyód (NÉMETH 2007; NÉMETH 1991, 43–48). Roman settlements were established in the territory of Balatonboglár-Berekre-dűlő, -Kokashegy, and several ones at Balatonlelle-Rádpusza (HONTI ET AL. 1988, 23–24). A 3rd-century AD hoard comprising 40 silver coins was found at Balatonlelle-Szennyvitztelep (HONTI ET AL. 1988, 23). Furthermore, it is worth mentioning a grave found at Szőlősgyörök, in the sand quarry mentioned above, that was dated to the turn of the 1st and 2nd centuries AD and contained nine bronze pots, bronze scissors, a bronze pin, and glass vessels (NÉMETH 1991, 43–44; NÉMETH 2007, 43).

Despite the high number of settlements, only a few cemeteries are known in the area. In addition to the grave in Szőlősgyörök mentioned above, burials have been found at Balatonlelle-Rádpusza (3rd–4th century AD), Gyugy, and Ordacsehi-Bugaszeg (5th century AD; NÉMETH 2018, 95, 101, 106–107).

Based on the related record, the Early Roman settlement at Szőlősgyörök may have been still in use as late as the 4th century AD. Péter Németh wrote in 1991 that he knew of no Late Roman Period settlement around Szőlősgyörök but only stray finds. For example, he only mentioned stray finds from the Gombosalja
II and III sites, and was of the opinion that no major settlement could have existed in the area. In the 1980s, pottery fragments indicating a settlement were found only 200 m away to the east of the present site, also in the outskirts of Szőlőskislak, at Jamai-patak II (Németh 1991, 46). A survey of the site in 2022 yielded 4th-century AD Roman coins. The stray finds discovered in the area outline an about 1 km-long and 5–600 m-wide settlement that flourished in the Late Roman Period in the territory north of Szőlősgyörök and south of Szőlőskislak.

**ROMAN PERIOD BIRD-SHAPED BROOCHES**

Brooches in the shape of different animals were popular throughout the Roman Period. Countless design and decoration types are known; the depicted animal, the brooch type, and the applied decoration may have depended on the place and time of production, the skill of the craftsman and the time spent, as well as the expectations and taste of the customer.

Bird-shaped brooches were made as plate bows with a plain, low-relief, or fully-modelled bow plate, where the bird is depicted on its own or as part of a composition comprising another bird, animal, or even object. Although the species cannot be determined in many cases, sometimes the maker put effort in portraying some characteristics in detail, thus it can be determined more precisely. Pannonian brooches depict, e.g., roosters, gooses, ducks, pigeons, peacocks, eagles, and owls (Patek 1942, 220–222; Matouschek & Nowak 1985–1986, 130–142; Winter 1985–1986, 338–340, 342–359; Berecz 2008, 151–153, 159).

Sometimes the brooches’ decoration is quite simple; besides, there are some specimens with incised lines emphasizing the body’s outline or independent of that, zigzag or wolf’s teeth-like patterns (Tremolierstich), or punched ring dot motifs. Higher-quality pieces are often niello-decorated: the brooch plate’s surface is interrupted by or even divided into shallow, sometimes narrow cells that became filled with a black, shiny substance containing copper- or silver sulphide (Bayley & Butcher 2004, 46). Bird-shaped brooches with niello decoration – depicting birds or scenes with birds and hares (Feugère 29a15–19, 29b7 types; Feugère 1985, 383–384, Figs. 59, 61) – are known in larger number from sites and collections in the territory of the former Gallia Provincia. The other often-applied high-quality decorative technique is enamelling. Enamel is glass coloured with metal oxides; its main ingredient is silica (SiO₂), liquefied by adding alkali metal carbonates, -nitrates and -sulphates (B. Bónis & Sellye 1988, 17; Berecz 2008, 88). The size and shape of the cells varies, emphasizing the body, the wings, and the tail feather on some bird-shaped brooches, but round cells also occur (e.g., Feugère 29a21–22, 24–30 and Berecz IIC/1a–e types; Feugère 1985, 383–384, Fig. 60; Berecz 2008, 151–153).

In the case of Roman Period brooches, to localise the places of production and survey all types manufactured at a certain site is a challenging task, but casting moulds, semi-finished products, and failed castings in the related record provide direct evidence. Production of bird-shaped brooches could only be proven for a few sites so far. A reject pigeon-shaped brooch was found at Schützen am Gebirge in Pannonia (Matouschek & Nowak 1985–1986, 328; Cocis 2019, 55, Pl. 125. 40), the lead model of a pigeon-shaped brooch and a reject piece have been recovered from Virunum in Noricum (Gugl 1995, 94, Taf. 19. 149–150; Cocis 2019, 63, Pl. 147. 145, 148), and the lead model of a pigeon-shaped brooch is known from an unknown site in Southern Pannonia (Cocis 2019, 56, Pl. 128. 55). It is possible that a clay mould discovered in Komárom–Szőny/Brigetio was used to make a bird-shaped brooch (Sáro 2020, 122–125, Cat. 3, Fig. 3, Fig. 6). As will be presented below, there is clear evidence of the production of eagle-shaped brooches in Pannonia.

**ANALOGIES AND DATING OF THE EAGLE-SHAPED BROOCH**

The shape of the brooch from Szőlősgyörök is unique, with only a few analogies in the related literature. Unfortunately, only the find spot but not the find context of most is known.

Several plate brooches, similar in form to the specimen from Szőlősgyörök but undecorated (Fig. 4.1–6) have been recovered from Bad Deutsch-Altenburg–Petronell/Carnuntum (Matouschek & Nowak 1985–1986, 132–134, 210–211, Nr. 4–9). Another piece from Loretto in Pannonia (Fig. 4.7) has small trian-
gular notches on the neck of the bird, akin to the brooch from Szőlősgyörök (Matouschek & Nowak 1985–1986, 134–135, 211, Nr. 10). Besides, two further specimens are known from unspecified sites in the territory of Hungary; currently, both are part of private collections. The tail feather on both is wide and the bow plate undecorated (Fig. 3, right and left). Another eagle-shaped plate brooch was found in Wagna-Leibnitz/Flavia Solva in Noricum (Fig. 4.8). The piece found in Insula XLI is similar to the previous undecorated ones (Puhm 1992, 73, 76, Nr. 25). Besides Noricum, another related find proves the type’s presence in the Barbaricum: the plate brooch discovered in Paltendorf, Austria, north of the Danube (Fig. 4.9) is also closely similar to the undecorated specimens described above (Adler & Schuppler 1990, 246, Abb. 1066).

The remaining available analogies more or less differ from the brooch from Szőlősgyörök in either form and/or decoration. Although a piece in a private collection, found near Tarján, shows close similarity to the finds presented above in many respects (same head orientation, similar body and wing shapes, pin mechanism below the tail), the tail feathers are clearly bifurcated (Fig. 3, middle). A fragmented brooch found at Enns-Lorch/Lauriacum (Fig. 4.10) has the same design (Kneifel 1981, 539, Abb. 729). Another undecorated one from the territory of a 3rd–4th century AD villa rustica at Vranj-Hrtkovci in Pannonia Inferior (Fig. 4.11; Ilić 2020, 79–80, Fig. 6, Tab. 1–2) also has a similar shape, but the pin mechanism is different: it has a “Backenscharnier” structure, a hinged pin between two pierced lugs instead of a spring (Petković 2010, 206, 214, Nr. 1069, T. XXXVII. 9), just like another specimen found at Belgrade-Ušće/Singidunum in Moesia Superior (Fig. 4.12; Bojić 1983, 140, Cat. 300, T. XXX. 300= Petković 2010, 206, 214, Nr. 1071).

Erzsébet Patek mentions a brooch with a somewhat more simple design from Sisak/Siscia in Pannonia (Patek 1942, 221, T. XX. 7). The head orientation, the shape of the stretched wings and the bifurcated tail feathers match the former ones, but the bow plate is decorated with punched ring dots: one at the eye, another one on the body, and one on each wing (Fig. 5.1). Its closest analogy in this respect is a brooch from Novi Banovci/Burgenae, also decorated with punched ring dots in similar positions (Fig. 5.2; Kovačević 1960, Sl. 57). Several other ring dot-decorated brooches are known from Moesia Superior. The number and position of ring dots differs on these examples but the eye is always marked. For example, a piece from Belgrade-Ušće/Singidunum features three ring dots on the neck, five on the wings, and one on the tail (Fig. 5.3; Petković 2010, 206, Sl. 62). Another plate brooch from Belgrade/Singidunum, 30 Knez Mihaïlova Street (Fig. 5.4) depicts an eagle with stretched wings, covered with 24 (originally, perhaps 29) punched ring dots (Petković 2010, 206, 214, Nr. 1073, T. XXXVII. 10). A piece from an unknown site in the Belgrade City Museum’s collection only has a ring dot on each wing and one marking the eye, while the tail feathers are emphasized with small incisions (Fig. 5.5; Janković 1997, 329, Cat. 560). A further piece was published from Dura-Europos (Rieckhoff 1975, 65; Petković 2010, 206).

An analogy from Mediana-Niš/Naissus may also be mentioned. According to the available description, this piece has no ring dot decoration but the bird’s claws are marked by incisions in the centre of the surface (Petković 2010, 214, Nr. 1075).
It is also worth mentioning eagle-shaped brooches that represent a looser analogy, like a less elaborate piece from Komárom–Szőny/Brigetio (Fig. 5.6) with the head of the eagle with stretched wings akin to the pieces mentioned above but a different wing design (PATEK 1942, 221, T. XX. 8).

Furthermore, there are plate brooches where the head looks left, unlike the bird on the brooch from Szőlősgyörök, or is perpendicular to the body, and the body is more realistic; a low-relief piece from Belgrade-Ušće/Singidum (Fig. 5.7; PETKOVIĆ 2010, 205, 214, Nr. 1068, Sl. 61) is a good example to the latter.
Variant 29a16 in Michel Feugère’s typology has a number of analogies (Feugère 1985, 387, Fig. 59). Feugère identified the bird as pigeon (Feugère 1985, 383), but several publications describe it as eagle (ArteFacts FIB-4569). For example, the collection of brooches from Neusiedl am See and Bad Deutsch-Altenburg–Petronell/Carnuntum by Johann Matouschek and Heinz Nowak comprises two same-size low-relief pieces in the shape of an eagle looking left, with a pin hinged between two lugs (Matouschek & Nowak 1985–1986, 131–132, 210, Nr. 2–3). One is coated with a light white metal (tin or lead) alloy layer, while the eyes are accentuated with niello decoration. It has a very close analogy from Windisch/Vindonissa (Fig. 5.8; Ettinger 1973, 125, 197, Taf. 28. 7); the legs on that piece are openwork, making the representation even

The eagle of the plate brooch published from the vicus of Hüfingen (Fig. 5.9) also looks to the left. The plate of this piece was also covered with a white metal alloy layer and has a pin hinged between two lugs. The makers aspired for a lifelike representation, accentuating the bird figurine with punched lines along the body (Rieckhoff 1975, 65, 93, Taf. 9. 144). Enamed left-looking-eagle-shaped plate brooches have also been found in sites in Great Britain (Matouschek & Nowak 1985–1986, 132; Artefacts FIB-41276).

Another eagle-shaped object was published from Bad Deutsch-Altenburg–Petronell/Carnuntum. Both the pin construction and the catchplate are missing, so this piece can only hypothetically be defined as a brooch; according to the author of the related publication, it could also be a mount. The head of the bird is perpendicular to the body, the eyes are marked with punched points, and fishbone pattern makes the feathers lifelike (Matouschek & Nowak 1985–1986, 131, 210, Nr. 1).

The brooch from Bern-Enge has a very unique shape (Fig. 5.10). Elisabeth Ettlinger classified it as “Type 42 Unicum” (Ettlinger 1973, 115, 196, Taf. 27. 6). The flat plate has a shape of two facing eagles; their feathers are portrayed with incisions, while the plate edge is lined with a point row. The composition is completed with a large, three medium-sized, and two small disc-shaped depressions; the perhaps bone applications have not persisted. The brooch from Avenches/Aventicum is a close analogy to the piece from Bern-Enge (Fig. 5.11; Mazur 2010, 67, Fig. 27. 727). The composition is almost identical regarding the number and relative position of the birds and discs, but the eagles look outwards, away from each other. The applied bone disc is still visible in the left-side depression. Another eagle-shaped brooch featuring a similar complex composition is known from a cemetery at Mechel/Meclo (Etlinger 1973, 115).

The eagle figurine also appears as central motif on openwork brooches (Artefacts FIB-41024), or as auxiliary motif, for example as relief application on other plate brooch types (see e.g., Gaspar 2007, 203, Taf. 87. 1925).

The survey presented above reveals that eagle-shaped brooches were produced in several types, while the distribution of the related variants (Fig. 6) indicates production by diverse centres. To determine the related workshops is a challenging task. For example, the Feugère 29a16 type, niello decorated brooches with a relatively lifelike design, were perhaps a product of the so-called “workshop C”, possibly located in Alise-Sainte-Reine–Mont Auxois/Alesia (Feugère 1985, 388–389). Erzébet Patek commented earlier on the possible manufacturing of simplified eagle-shaped brooches in Pannonia, considering them local products (Patek 1942, 52). We have to agree with Sofija Petković, in whose opinion lifelike pieces served as models for ones with a simplified design (Petković 2010, 206) that were certainly produced in Pannonia. Two previously mentioned findings from Burgenland, Austria prove the local production of eagle-shaped brooches similar to the one from Szőlősgyörök: the brooches from Carnuntum and Lorettom (Matouschek & Nowak 1985–1986, 108, 134–135, 211, Nr. 7, Nr. 10; Cocis 2019, 52, Pl. 122. 26, Pl. 122. 30) can be identified as brooch models, semi-finished products, or failed castings (Fig. 4. 4. 7). Both were made of copper alloy, and the catchplate and pin mechanism are unfinished as the lugs have remained unpierced. The authors interpreted the piece on Fig. 4.4 as a brooch model and the one on Fig. 4.7 as a reject (Matouschek & Nowak 1985–1986, 134–135). Sorin Cocis presented both pieces with the same descriptions in his monograph (Cocis 2019, 52). Based on the distribution of punched ring dot decorated brooches in Southern Pannonia and Moesia Superior, another workshop may be presumed in this region.

Most attempts to date the diverse animal-shaped brooch types consider only on morphological characteristics. Currently, the emergence of niello-decorated animal-shaped brooches is dated to the mid-1st century AD, while that of enamelled ones to the turn of the 1st and 2nd centuries AD (Riba 1994, 171–172; Ortisi 2002, 44; Gaspar 2007, 50). Werner Jobst dated the low-relief and fully modelled types without enamel decoration to the 3rd–4th centuries AD in general (Jobst 1975, 113), while others put the emergence of
these to as early as the 2nd century AD (PÁTEK 1942, 124; RÍHA 1979, 89–90). The production and use of brooches without niello or enamel decoration may also have started in the 2nd century AD (JOBST 1975, 113–114; MATOUSCHEK & NOWAK 1985–1986, 333; PETKOVIĆ 2010, 204–206).

The brooch from Szőlősgyörök could be dated by its close analogies; however, most are stray finds or dated only to a relatively long period. The brooch from Wagna–Leibnitz/Flavia Solva was dated to between the second half of the 2nd and the end of the 3rd centuries AD (PUHM 1992, 76), while the piece from Vranj-Hrtković to the 3rd or the early 4th century AD (PETKOVIĆ 2010, 206, 214). In this respect, the brooch discovered at 30 Knez Mihaïlova Street in Belgrade might be the most useful: its context dated it to the second half of the 2nd–early 3rd century AD (PETKOVIĆ 2010, 206, 214).

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REFERENCES


Csilla Sáró – Máté Varga • Eagle-shaped brooch from Szőlősgyörök


**RECOMMENDED LITERATURE**

On animal-shaped brooches from the Roman Period:


On brooches in *Pannonia* (in the territory of Hungary):


**Brooch production:**


APPENDIX

A. Stretched wings, broad tail feathers, engraved wolf’s teeth-like pattern (*Tremolierstich*):
   1. Szőlősgyörök

B. Stretched wings, broad tail feathers, undecorated:
   2. Bad Deutsch-Altenburg–Petronell
   3. Lorettom
   4. Wagna–Leibnitz
   5. Palterndorf
   + unknown site, Hungary (2 pieces)

C. Stretched wings, bifurcated tail feathers, undecorated:
   6. Tarján
   7. Enns-Lorch
   8. Vranj-Hrtkovci
   9. Belgrade-Ušće

D. Stretched wings, bifurcated tail feathers, punched ring dots:
   10. Sisak
   11. Novi Banovci
   12. Belgrade-Ušće
   13. Belgrade
   14. Dura-Europos
   + unknown site, Belgrade City Museum

E. Stretched wings, bifurcated tail feathers, claws depicted:
   15. Mediana-Niš

F. Other eagle-shaped brooches:
   16. Komárom–Szőny
   17. Belgrade-Ušće
   18. Hüfingen

G. Feugère 29a16 variant:
   20. Cricklade
   21. Wickham Skeith
   22. Velzeke-Ruddershove
   23. Titelberg
   24. Augsburg
   25. Köln
   26. Osterburken
   27. Saalburg
   28. Zugmantel
   29. Alise-Sainte-Reine–Mont Auxois
   30. Amiens
   31. Champigny-sur-Veude
   32. Augst (2 pieces)
33. Windisch
34. Neusiedl am See
35. Bad Deutsch-Altenburg–Petronell
36. Ivoševci
37. Dura-Europos
  + unknown site, Germany (2 pieces)
  + unknown site, France (4 pieces: Musée de Nancy, Musée de Péronne (Somme), Musée de Rouen
    (Seine-Marne), Musée de St. German-en-Laye)
  + unknown site, Syria

H. Brooches with eagle compositions:
38. Bern-Enge
39. Avenches
40. Mechel