

CELTIC ENAMEL BROOCHES FROM THE MIDDLE TISZA REGION

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The involvement of ‘civilian’ enthusiasts in the archaeological work in Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok County started in 2015 as a response to an increasingly growing public interest: more and more people, including amateurs devoted to the research of the past, enquired about the possibilities of participating in projects (primarily metal detector surveys) organised by the museum. The almost whole decade of joint work yielded many important results, the presentation of which would exceed the frame of this paper; thus, Celtic enamel brooches, a type of finds considered rare earlier, were chosen to be its focus. Metal detector surveys have yielded altogether 17 specimens of this type so far; the GPS coordinates of their findspots have also been recorded. Ten of these have already been published in previous studies (F. KOVÁCS 2020; 2021), but seven more have been added to our collection since the last overview. This unexpected abundance may contribute to improving our understanding of the Late Iron Age connection network of the Middle Tisza Region and to assessing this find type correctly.

Keywords: Iron Age, Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok County, enamel brooch, Celts

Decorating diverse artefacts with enamel has become frequent in the eastern Celtic art in the 3rd century BC. The first comprehensive overview of enamel brooches was published by I. Sellye (SELLEYE 1939), who dated them to the late La Tène Period and believed them to be a part of chain belts. I. Hunyady also dated them to the late La Tène and the Roman Imperial periods, suggesting that the type developed ‘in the southern regions’ (HUNYADY 1942–1944, 82–83). According to the scientific consensus formulated somewhat later, based on a large number of such brooches appearing in academic literature (TODOROVIĆ 1968; 1971; 1974; TATIĆ-ĐURIĆ 1970), the type emerged sometime around the transition between the middle and late La Tène periods and remained in fashion during the late La Tène Period (MAJNARIĆ-PANDŽIĆ 1970, 15, 37). M. Guštin believed it to be primarily part of the attire of Scordiscan women (GUŠTIN 1984, 330). An analysis by P. Popović has revealed that the variant he referred to as the ‘Zemun type’ was produced in eastern Srem and reached the Daco-Geta cultural influence area through the ‘Small Scordisci’ (POPOVIĆ 2002). He dated these brooches to the 2nd–1st century BC (POPOVIĆ 2002, 353–354). M. Guštin classified the Celtic enamel brooches into two categories: quadrangular middle La Tène and triangular late La Tène types, the latter either with triangular or quadrangular plates. Based on the distribution map he published, both variants were scattered primarily in the Sava Region; he explained their appearance in such a large area with migration (GUŠTIN 2011, Fig. 8). Based on the patterns decorating their plates, M. Dizdar distinguished between seven types of Celtic enamel brooches (DIZDAR 2014) and supposed that more than one workshops produced such jewellery in the eastern Celtic territory during the middle La Tène Period (DIZDAR 2014, 106–107). He also considered proven that the brooches found in the area of Zenum were made by a local workshop in eastern Srem (DIZDAR 2014, 107).

Only a few Celtic enamel brooches are known from the territory of Hungary: two specimens from Törökszentmiklós–Surjány (STANCZIK & VADAY 1971), one from Szeged–Kiskundorozsma (PILLING & UJVÁRI 2012, 221, Pl. 7.1), another from Balatonboglár–Berekre-dűlő (JÁKY 2016, Pl. 7.18), and an uncertain and unpublished piece from the area of Dunaújváros (GUŠTIN 2011, 126, Fig. 8). Recently, two such brooches have been recovered from a cemetery at Sajópetri–Homoki-szőlőskert (SZABÓ 2018); the piece obtained from Feature 28/90 bears a rectangular plate with six concentric depressions (SZABÓ 2018, Fig. 114), while the rectangular plate of the one from Feature 57/127 is decorated with five engraved triangles (SZABÓ 2018, Fig. 106).

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Thanks to the metal detector surveys of the past few years, nineteen Celtic enamel brooches are known from the Middle Tisza Region today: seventeen metal detector finds and two pieces from the destroyed Celtic cemetery at Törökszentmiklós–Surjány.

THE FIND MATERIAL

The Celtic enamel brooches in the collections of the Damjanich János Museum in Szolnok and the Jász Museum in Jászberény can be identified as the following types:

1. With a plate adorned with a central star and four crescents in the corners (Törökszentmiklós type) (Fig. 1. 1, 7, 9–10)

Five pieces belong to this variant: three metal detector finds and the brooch pair from Törökszentmiklós (Fig. 1.7). Such brooches typically appear on sites along the Tisza River. The best-known specimens are the brooch pair from Törökszentmiklós; however, a find of unknown provenance (SELLEYE 1939, Pl. II.9) may also come from the Tisza Region (DIZDAR 2014, 103). The specimen found in Szeged–Kiskundorozsma was recovered from a settlement context, probably the uppermost layer of the fill of a building, during the removal of the topsoil (PILLING & UJVÁRI 2012, 221, Pl. 7.1). The pattern of the quadrangular plate—with a central motif surrounded by four smaller ones in the corners—is closely similar to the decoration of the brooches from Törökszentmiklós and the one published by I. Selleye; however, the central motifs are different, as that on the Kiskundorozsma piece resembles a lozenge instead of a star.

The fragment found at Törökszentmiklós–Szenttamás during a metal detector survey (Fig. 1.9; F. KOVÁCS 2020, Pl. I.9, III.9; 2021, 2. kép 9) clearly features a star-shaped central motif and arched motifs in the corners. It was filled with red enamel; while the object is heavily fragmented, with only a single button and a plate with missing edges, it could be identified with certainty. Another metal detector find from Túrkeve–Vecserke-part is identical to the ones discussed above (F. KOVÁCS 2020, Pl. I.10, III.10; 2021, 2. kép 10). The pattern on the piece from Gospođinci–Šuma Parohija is also closely similar; however, as both the central motif and the ones in the corners are slightly different from those on the brooches in the Tisza Region, this find cannot be considered a close analogy (MEDOVIĆ 1998, 92, Pl. 46.4). A plate fragment of a relatively small brooch was discovered at Besenyszög–Fokorú Site 3 (Fig. 1.10; F. KOVÁCS 2020, Pl. I.1, III.1; 2021, 2. kép 1). As only a fourth of the plate has persisted, its decoration cannot be reconstructed; based on the arched motifs in the corners, it was likely similar to the Törökszentmiklós type. The only persisting button bears a hole with green enamel at its bottom; this type of decoration has no published analogy.

2. With three hourglass motifs on the plate (Fig. 1.5)

The single specimen of this variant in our collection was obtained from Kunhegyes–Jajjhalom. The plate of the brooch features three hourglass motifs: two vertical ones on the sides and a horizontal one between them (F. KOVÁCS 2020, Pl. I.5, III.5; 2021, 2. kép 5). It has no analogies with an identical pattern, as the closest ones are adorned with a circle between the two hourglasses on the sides: such brooches have been obtained from Zenum–Kapela (DIZDAR 2014, Pl. 1.11), Căpușu Mare (RUSTOIU 1997), Alba Iulia (DIZDAR 2014, Pl. 2.1), and Obišovce (PIETA 2010). Besides, a brooch with an hourglass motif has been recovered from a settlement context (House 153) in Balatonboglár–Berekre-dűlő (JÁKY 2016, Pl. 7.8), where the horizontal hourglass motif covers the entire plate.

3. With a central circle and two hourglass motifs on the sides of the plate

The single specimen of this variant in our collection comes from Tiszajenő–Boc-ér Site 2 (F. KOVÁCS 2020, Pl. 1.7, III.7; 2021, 2. kép 7). Brooches with identical pattern are known from Zenum–Kapela (DIZDAR 2014, Pl. 1.11), Căpușu Mare (RUSTOIU 1997), Alba Iulia (DIZDAR 2014, Pl. 2.1), and Obišovce (PIETA 2010).

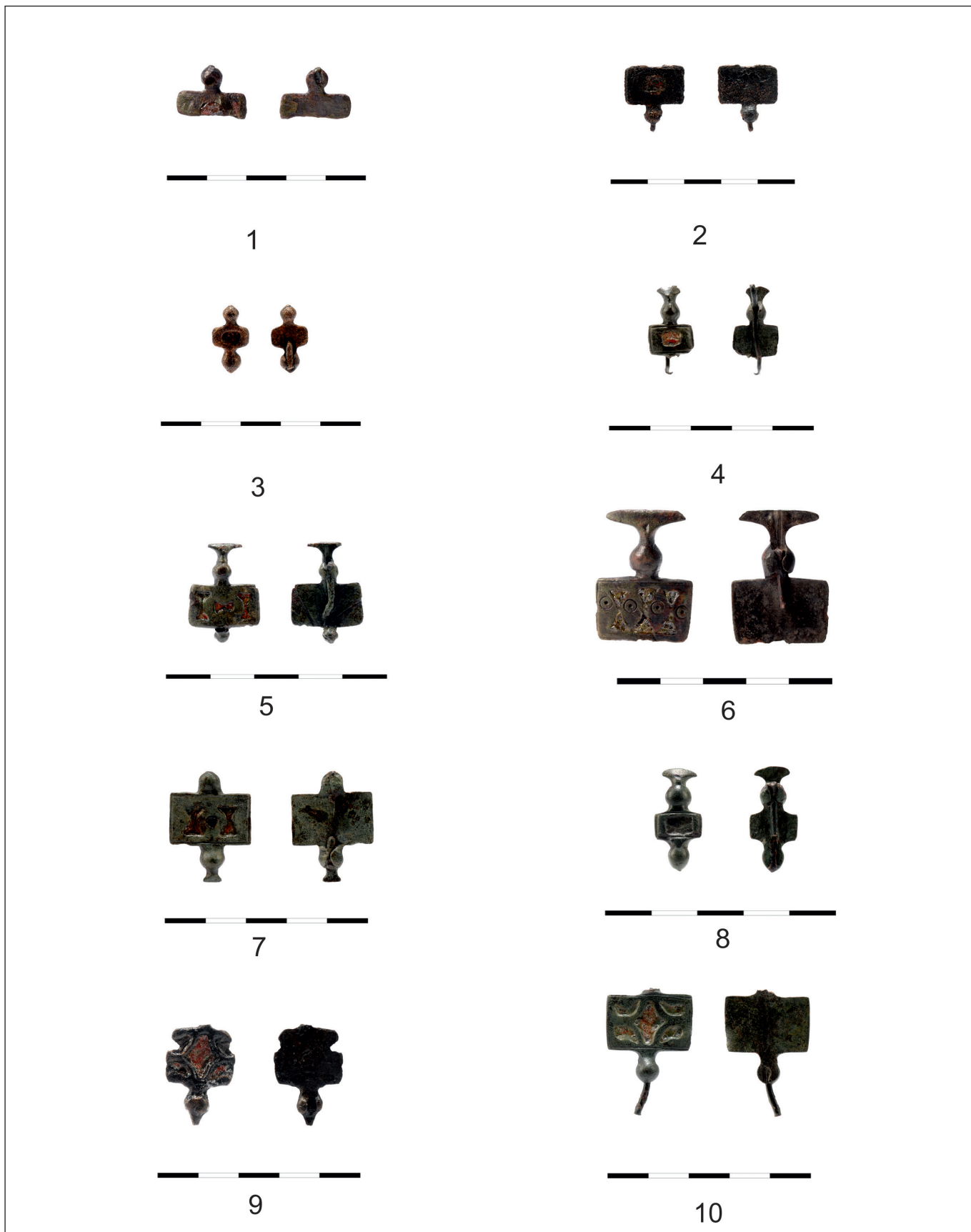


Fig. 1. Celtic enamel brooches from the area of Szolnok County. 1. Besenyszög–Nagy-Fokorú 3, 2. Jászjákóhalma–Szászegyház, 3. Jászjákóhalma–Négyszállási tó, 4. Jászjákóhalma–Négyszállási tó, 5. Kunhegyes–Jajjhalom, 6. Tiszajenő–Boc ér 2, 7. Tiszapüspöki–Fehértó-part felett, 8. Törökszentmiklós–Surjány, 9. Törökszentmiklós–Szenttamás, 10. Túrkeve–Vecserke-part

4. The Boljevci variant (Fig. 1.6)

Akin to the variant discussed above, the single known specimen of this one was also found in Tiszajenő–Boc-ér Site 2 (F. KOVÁCS 2020, Pl. 1.6, III.6; 2021, 2. kép 6). Its plate is adorned with three pairs of triangles with perhaps touching vertexes and four concentric circles between them. Such brooches are known as the ‘Boljevci variant’; its specimens appear primarily in the core dwelling area of the Scordisci (POPOVIĆ 2002; DIZDAR 2014, Fig. 5). Most of the green and light green enamel has been preserved in the triangular cells.

5. With a rectangular pattern on the plate (Fig. 1. 2–4, 7)

With nine known specimens, this is the biggest group thus far. The sizes of the brooches classified here vary, and the width of their plates ranges between 1 and 1.7 cm. such brooches are known from Tiszapüspöki–Fehértó-part felett (F. KOVÁCS 2020, Pl. I.8, III.8; 2021, 2. kép 8), Jászjákóhalma–Négyszállási tó (2 db; F. KOVÁCS 2020, Pl. I.3–4, III.3–4; 2021, 2. kép 3–4), Jászjákóhalma–Szászegyház (F. KOVÁCS 2020, Pl. I.2, III.2; 2021, 2. kép 2), Újszász–Tápió-dűlő (Fig. 2), Újszász–Nyaraló-halom II. (Fig. 3), Mezőhék–Kollárt-halom (Fig. 4), Szajol–Szajolföld II. (Fig. 5), and Szolnok–Szandaszőlős V. (Fig. 6). A large number of similar brooches, with a complete specimen amongst them, are known from the area of Zenum (DIZDAR 2014, 99). Such a brooch was also found in the Kamenjača cemetery near Sarajevo; that piece is unique



Fig. 2. Enamel brooch from Újszász–Tápió-dűlő



Fig. 3. Enamel brooch from Újszász–Nyaraló-halom II



Fig. 4. Enamel brooch from Mezőhék–Kollárt-halom



Fig. 5. Enamel brooch from Szajol–Szajolföld II



Fig. 6. Enamel brooch from Szolnok–Szandaszőlős V

because it was worn as a kind of pendant and also because it was found in a woman's grave together with La Tène B2 Duchcov-type brooches (DIZDAR 2014, 100). The chronological position of this variant is awaiting to be specified, as most specimens are stray finds. J. Todorović and P. Popović dated it to the 1st century BC (TODOROVIĆ 1971, 150–153, Pl. LXVIII.9, 12, 14; POPOVIĆ 2002, 352–353, Pl. III.4–5, 7–9). A similar brooch from Ilişua was dated to the 2nd–1st century BC (RUSTOIU 1997, 99). Previous data suggest that these brooches were made primarily in the territory of Srem. Thus, the nine new specimens from the Middle Tisza Region may be evidence of an active connection between the two areas or of a workshop somewhere in the Great Hungarian Plain.

6. With an irregular pattern on the plate (Fig. 7)

The piece from Öcsöd–Kincstári-földek has four motifs on its plate: two interconnected semicircles in the middle and two hourglass-like motifs on the sides. It has no published analogies.



Fig. 7. Enamel brooch from Öcsöd–Kincstári-földek



Fig. 8. Enamel brooch from Kétpó–Deák dűlő

7. With a relief pattern: a circle in a rectangular frame (Fig. 8)

The single known specimen of this variant was found in Kétpó–Deák dűlő. The plate is adorned with a central circle in relief, and the background is filled with enamel. It has no published analogies.

SUMMARY

Several researchers published comprehensive overviews of Celtic enamel brooches, identifying them as part of the attire of Scordiscan and Tauriscan women in the first place based on the fact that most pieces were obtained from the dwelling areas of these tribes. In the case of some variants (Zemun), even the presumed workshop was located. Based on the scatter of these finds, it was reasonable to hypothesise that the few enamel brooches found in the Carpathian Basin got to their findspots via trade or migration from the northern Balkans; however, in his synthesis M. Dizdar concluded that likely more than one workshop produced such jewellery.

The discovery of the nineteen brooches in the Middle Tisza Region alone made us reassess these hypotheses—especially in light of the fact that besides our finds, only 45 enamel brooches are known altogether, which means about a third of all enamel brooches were discovered in the relatively small Middle Tisza Region. This distribution also suggests that more than one workshop produced such brooches during the middle La Tène Period; it cannot be excluded, however, that the type originates from Scordiscan territory. The different variants are likely to be connected with particular workshops; for example, the Törökszentmiklós type is typical to the Tisza Region, while all but one specimen of the Boljevci variant have been discovered in the northern Balkans. The exception is the piece found at Tiszajenő–Boc-ér Site 2, which likely got to its place of discovery so far from the core distribution area of the type via trade or migration.

The new research results on this artefact type demonstrate excellently the huge contribution metal detecting carried out by enthusiasts within the frame of community archaeological programmes may represent to archaeology. As a result of this work, our understanding of a find type has improved considerably: while previously, enamel brooches were thought to be rare, they turned out to be common accessories to 3rd–2nd-century BC Celtic women's attire; some variants were likely made locally, while others could be brought from great distances as personal items or traded goods.

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