

Bone plaque with depiction of bird from Pliska (Abstract)

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The present article discusses a new artifact, discovered in 2014 in Pliska, at the site Palatial Centre - East. On the floor of a sunken dwelling (fig. 3) from the first quarter of the 11th c., a bone fitting was discovered. It is made of deer antler and has the following dimensions: 41 x 41 x 30 mm and 6 mm thick. On the face of the plaque, the image of a bird is depicted (fig. 1). It is represented to the left, with the head turned backwards. Usually, such images are interpreted as falcons. The body and the strong legs with curved long talons point to a rapacious, predatory bird. However, the very elongated neck and the long beak are not typical of falcons. The master engraver mixed elements from various species of birds and his aim was not to depict a specific species, but rather a summarized image.

In terms of style and technique, close parallels of the fitting from Pliska are known from Veliki Preslav (fig. 4 I) and from Chersonese (fig. 5). There are similarities in the bird's posture and the

way the body is represented. Various opinions have been suggested regarding the function of the bone fittings. In this respect, some indication about the function of the find from Pliska is the pin from the hasp of a luxury book (fig. 7), found in the fill of the dwelling.

Regarding this group of products of the small-scale plastic art, it has been suggested that they appeared under Byzantine influence. The common subject and style of the finds from Pliska, Veliki Preslav, and Chersonese reveal cultural specifics that were typical of the peripheral regions of Byzantium. The finds from Pliska and Veliki Preslav that are securely dated confirm that the items were used in the "Byzantine Period", from the last third of the 10th to the first third of the 11th c. The finds from Chersonese are of identical date. These observations point to the conclusion that bone fittings with bird images were items that were directly related to the penetration of Byzantine technologies and ornamental imagery in Bulgaria after 971.

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