

Collection of early Medieval earrings from north Bulgaria

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Over recent years, owing to massive treasure-hunters' interventions, a large amount of new archaeological monuments have been discovered. These usually fill up the private collections of the thousands fans of archaeological valuables in Bulgaria and abroad. Unfortunately, only a small portion of the material fall within the range of vision of professional archaeologists and museum workers and are accordingly subjected to expert assessment. Undoubtedly, the data on the context within which the monuments were found have already been lost forever. The only thing to do in this situation is extracting information from the finds themselves by comparing them with similar monuments acquired during regular archaeological research.

This article presents a collection of 48 earrings. These were found during treasure-hunters' interventions in the Near Danube region between the Iskar and Yantra rivers in north-central Bulgaria. Their presence is an important guideline for clarifying the archaeological picture of the region as well as the existence of local jewelry centers for the production of cast earrings. The

earrings are subdivided into nine types depending on the shape, ornamentation and working technique.

The first six types include earrings, which were widely distributed in the Proto-Bulgarian culture of the second half of 9-th - 11-th century. These were worked by casting in a binary closed mold. They have standard shape and ornamentation, which means that they were produced in large series and were intended to be marketed. Apart from the zone of Proto-Bulgarian culture, most types were widely spread over other Balkan and Middle European regions. Particularly high is the concentration of finds in northeast and northwest Bulgaria where the main production centers were found. The earrings presented here become even more valuable bearing in mind the fact that in the area between the Iskar and Yantra rivers, where the collection was first discovered, a comparatively smaller number of artifacts from this period have been investigated. This is undeniable evidence that in north-central Bulgaria large centers existed for cast earring production, which were as important as those in the other areas.