



The Archaeological Museum of Istria conducted a series of excavations of a large-scale early Croatian cemetery at Žminj in the period from 1955 to 1957 (B. Bačić and B. Marušić). This site is the most important archaeological witness for the new colonization of the Peninsula at the beginning of the 9th century. It was a reflection of Frankish state policy (after the victory over the Avars in 796), which is corroborated by the document stemming from the Assembly on the Rižana River (804). The Frankish allies - the Slavs from Istria - were led by dux Ivan. The Franks ruled the Peninsula from 788, and Byzantium confirmed Frankish rule over Istria and Dalmatia by the peace at Aachen in 812. Burial customs and finds (especially earrings) date the cemetery to the period from the middle of the 9th to the middle of the 10th century. At that time Istria belonged to the Holy Roman Empire and the Italic kingdom - from the reign of Charlemagne's grandson Lothar I (840-855) to Otto I (936-973), when it became part of the German kingdom (952). The medieval Croatian state of national rulers (during the reign of king Tomislav) extended itself to the Istrian hills and the town of Labin at that time.

In the vicinity of the school at Žminj, a so-called early medieval cemetery in rows was explored. The oldest graves are those with rare finds of ceramic jar sherds. All of the 227 graves belong to the type made with enclosing stone slabs, imitating thus sarcophagi. Older medieval cemeteries near Buzet and Motovun, with their numerous offerings in the form of weapons, implements and jewelry, contain only moderate traces that speak of the Christianization of the Slavs in the period of Byzantine Istria (7th and 8th century). However, the cemetery of the Croatian settlers at Žminj, without any grave offerings, with jewelry alone (earrings, rings, a missionary ring - *PAX*), emphasizes the already explicitly Christian character of the population around the castle at Žminj. In a political and economic context, the free Croatian settlers joined the Western European civilization by relying on the rule of the Franks who were to eventually develop the feudal system. As far as culture and religion go, this mirrored itself in the acceptance of Christian spiritual tradition.

A third of the unearthed graves contained finds - the most numerous being earrings, followed by twenty rings. Silver and bronze earrings from Žminj are classified into several jewelry groups. The oldest ones include a wide variety of earrings that reflect Mediterranean-Byzantine traditions (e.g., lots of filigree wire, pseudo granules). The female inhabitants of Žminj and its environs at the time wore jewelry that was produced in larger coastal towns from Istria (ruled by the Franks), where the tradition of Late Roman crafts was still alive. As far as dating goes, the related finds (unearthed during an age-old exploration in 1894/5) from Buzet (Mala Vrata) are significant due to a Lothar I coin. It is feasible that the settlers who came to Žminj brought this

jewelry from Dalmatia, because isolated cities like Split and Zadar, together with the islands in the Bay of Kvarner, were much longer under Byzantine rule (Dalmatian themata).

The second, early Croatian - Dalmatian group of earrings is especially prominent, featuring one, two, three or four so-called hollow "strawberries" (filigree wire, mesh and granulation). In its miscellaneous ornate variants, this jewelry group is most prevalent on the territory that the early Croatian state occupied in Dalmatia. Earrings from this group are, for example, found in Koper (Predloka), and of special importance are those specimens unearthed at Novi Vinodol (Stranče), as the settlers who were headed towards Istria went through it. Earrings featuring closed loops were most probably worn on a string or else they were interwoven in hair (hairloops).

The third characteristic group of earrings was influenced by early Slavic, subalpine traditions (small, simple Köttlach rings and one widened to resemble a crescent), as well as by Pannonian traditions (a single specimen featuring a cast earring). These are influences stemming from the wider subalpine and Pannonian region that was inhabited by Slavs all the way to the Danube. Köttlach earrings are an influence that came from the territory of Slovenia, and parts of Austria and Friuli, whereas the cast earring from Bijelo Brdo comes from Slavonia. The small, simple rings with a hook, or reinforced with wire and small joints, belong to a less attractive group, if we are to judge it by its ornamental modesty.

The manufacture of autochthonous souvenirs in the form of earrings typical for Žminj (Claudia Zlato - Savičenta), brings vivid memories of our distant ancestors from long forgotten times, and reminds us of our history. For an entire millennium, these exalted and proud women, grandmothers and ancestresses kept their jewelry, preserving it to this day. Nowadays they must surely be happy and satisfied, because after a thousand years (with the help of archeology and souvenirs, of course) they are now symbolically and proudly handing over this heirloom to their great-great-grandchildren.

Autor / Author: Željko Ujčić
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Starohrvatsko groblje u Žminju The Early Croatian Cemetery at Žminj



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Arheološki muzej Istre je u Žminju od 1955. do 1957. godine istraživao veliko starohrvatsko groblje (B. Bačić i B. Marušić). Ovo je nalazište najznačajniji arheološki svjedok novog naseljavanja Poluotoka početkom IX. st. Bio je to izraz franačke državne politike (nakon pobjede nad Avarima 796.), što naročito potvrđuje dokument sabora na rijeci Rižani (804). Franačke saveznike - Slavene iz Istre predvodi dux Ivan. Franci vladaju poluotokom od 788. g., a Bizant potvrđuje franačku vlast u Istri i Dalmaciji mirom u Aachenu 812. g. Pogrebni običaji i nalazi (osobito naušnice) smještaju groblje u vrijeme od sredine IX. st. do sredine X. st. Istra tada pripada Svetom Rimskom Carstvu i Italskom Kraljevstvu – od vladavine unuka Karla Velikog Lotara I. (840. - 855.) do Otona I. (936. - 973.), kada postaje dio Njemačkog Kraljevstva (952). Srednjovjekovna Hrvatska, država narodnih vladara, u to doba (za kralja Tomislava) doseže do istarskih brda i grada Labina.

U Žminju je blizu škole istraženo tzv. ranosrednjovjekovno groblje na redove. Najstariji su grobovi oni s rijetkim nalazima ulomaka keramičkih lonaca. Svih 227 grobova pripada tipu s obložnim pločama, koje oponašaju sanduke sarkofaga. Starija srednjovjekovna groblja kod Buzeta i Motovuna svojim brojnim priložima oružja, oruđa i nakita sadrže svega skromne tragove pokrštavanja Slavena u doba bizantske Istre (VII. i VIII. st.).

Međutim, groblje hrvatskih doseljenika u Žminju, bez priloga, samo s nakitom (naušnice, prstenje, misionarski prsten – *PAX*) naglašava već izrazito kršćansko stanovništvo oko žminjskog kaštela. Pristup slobodnih hrvatskih doseljenika zapadnoeuropskoj civilizaciji u političko-ekonomskom kontekstu oslanjao se na franačku vlast, koja će razviti feudalni sustav. Kulturno-religijski bilo je to prihvaćanje kršćanske duhovne tradicije.

Nalazi su prikupljeni u trećini grobova - najzastupljenije su naušnice, a slijedi dvadesetak prstena. Srebrne i brončane naušnice iz Žminja svrstavaju se u nekoliko nakitnih skupina. Najstarije su raznovrsne naušnice, koje pripadaju mediteransko-bizantskoj tradiciji (npr. puno filigranske žice, pseudogranule). Stanovnice Žminjštine tada nose i nakit proizveden u većim primorskim gradovima Istre (pod franačkom vlašću), u kojima i dalje živi zanatska tradicija kasne antike. Datacijski su značajni srodni nalazi (staro istraživanje 1894./95.) iz Buzeta (Mala Vrata), zbog novčića Lotara I. Moguće je da su doseljenici u Žminj ovaj nakit donijeli i pri kolonizaciji iz Dalmacije, jer su izolirani gradovi Split i Zadar, s kvarnerskim otocima, puno dulje bili pod bizantskom vlašću (Dalmatinski temat).

Posebno se ističe druga starohrvatsko-dalmatinska skupina naušnica, s jednom, dvije, tri ili četiri tzv. šuplje "jagode" (filigranska žica, preplet niti, granulacija). U raznovrsnim kićenim varijantama ova nakitna skupina najrasprostranjenija je na području starohrvatske

države u Dalmaciji. Naušnice ove skupine nalazimo npr. kod Kopriva (Predloka), a posebno su bitni nalazi iz Novog Vinodola (Stranč), jer su tim područjem prošli ovi doseljenici u Istru. Naušnice zatvorenih karika vjerojatno su nošene na vrpici ili upletene u kosu (sljepoočničarke).



Treća skupina naušnica odaje staroslavenski prialpski utjecaj (jednostavne ketlaške karičice i jedna proširena polumjesečasto) te panonski utjecaj (jedan primjerak lijevane naušnice). To je utjecaj sa šireg prialpskog i panonskog područja, naseljenog Slavenima sve do Dunava. Ketlaške su naušnice utjecaj iz područja Slovenije te dijelova Austrije i Furlanije, dok je lijevana bjelobrdska naušnica utjecaj iz Slavonije. Manje atraktivnoj skupini po ukrasnoj skromnosti pripadaju jednostavne karičice s kukicom ili pojačane žicom i koljencima.

Izrada autohtonog suvenira žminjskih naušnica (Claudia zlato – Savičenta) sjećanje je na naše daleke pretke iz duboke prošlosti, spomen na našu povijest. Čitav jedan milenij, te uzorite i ponosne žene, bake i pramajke očuvale su ovaj nakit sve do današnjih dana. Sigurno su one sada sretne i zadovoljne, jer nakon tisuću godina (dakako uz pomoć arheologije i suvenira) sada simbolično svoj nakit ponosno predaju u nasljeđe svojim prapraunukama.

