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A LA TÈNE ARMING „FROM HUNGARY”
IN THE COLLECTIONS OF ROYAL ONTARIO
MUSEUM, TORONTO

Amongst the major part of the private collection of Dr. W. Allen Sturge purchased by the Royal Ontario Museum in 1918, just one year before the English physician's death, is the bronze arming, which forms the subject of this note (fig. 1, fig. 2, fig. 3.)¹ Although catalogues of the considerable British and Irish antiquities have been published (PRYOR 1976, 1980), the continental material remains generally unknown; the present piece recorded as coming from Hungary is however unusual enough to warrant special attention.

The U-section ring is of cast bronze with a single knob flanked by two swollen collars which together form a detachable unit which can be kept closed by a hook-and-hinge fastening; the maximum internal diameter of the ring is 75 mm. The cast decoration is restricted to the knobbed fastening and two flanking triangular areas. In low relief on the knob itself is a swollen „S” form consisting of a diagonally placed pointed oval terminating in snail-like curls. Some nine hollow settings each c. 2.5 mm in diameter are placed symmetrically over the knob. The triangular areas outlined by a double ridge each have three further hollow settings, a pair forming comma-like curves springing from the base of each triangle with at the apex a raised circle giving a hint of a human mask.

While the ring is in generally good condition with a fine over-all greeny-brown patina the ring shows signs of wear and some slight damage to the inside of the ring at the rear.

In its general form and decoration the ring is readily identifiable as belonging to a class of women's arm- and foot-rings or *Hohlbuckelringe* commonly found in pairs and introduced into central European fashion in the course of the first half of the third century BC (= La Tène B2; SCHAAFF 1972b; KRÄMER 1985, esp. 22 ff., 40). KRUTA (1975, esp. 75ff) is discussing in particular rings with „plastic” decoration confirms their distribution as ranging from Bavaria to the western Carpathians, Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia. Related rings with multiple hollow hemispherical knobs in fact represent some of the clearest evidence for the historically documented eastern movement of Celts into the Balkans and Asia Minor – the pair of anklets from a well in the Isthmus of Corinth (KRÄMER 1961, Abb. 1 for overall distribution) and that from Finike in the Bay of Antalya (SCHAAFF 1972a) (fig. 4) the former with plain knobs and close analogies in the Bavarian Danube Valley

(KRÄMER 1985, 40) and the latter with typical „plastic” decoration and similar diameter to our Toronto example.

As KRÄMER (1985, 22) indicates, the decoration on these rings represents some of the most characteristic material of Jacobsthal's „Plastic style” (JACOBSTHAL 1944, 99 ff. and esp. no. 279 „Bydžov Nový” – *sic* – = KRUTA 1975, Nový Bydžov 2, fig. 56:3) (fig. 5).

The range of cast low relief decoration consisting of variations on triskels or whirligigs, yin-yangs and S-curves frequently based on triple repeated motifs can be seen particularly in Bohemia; KRUTA (1975, 80) suggests that a single workshop in the eastern part of that region may have been responsible for not only the rings from cemeteries in the area of Nový Bydžov, okr. Hradec Kralové – with no less than ten examples recorded – but those from Lovesice, okr. Litoměřice, Nelhvizdky okr. Praha-východ and Brno-Maloměřice.

The occurrence in the flat-grave cemeteries of southern Bavaria of such materpieces of the „plastic” style as the footrings, from Klettham, Ldkr. Erdring (JACOBSTHAL 1944, no. 267; MEGAW 1970, no. 176; KRÄMER 1985, cat. no. 17), Aholming, Ldkr. Vilshofen (= a pair; JACOBSTHAL 1944, no. 267; KRÄMER 1985, cat. no. 126) or Staubing-Alburg grave IV (= a further pair; KRÄMER 1985, cat. no. 114), or for that matter, the most westerly of the type, that from the River Tarn (JACOBSTHAL 1944, no. 275; MEGAW 1970; no. 175) may all represent Bohemian exports – either of individuals or objects (KRÄMER 1985, 22).

While it is unfortunate that there is little documentation concerning the precise provenance of the Toronto ring there is no particular reason to doubt its Hungarian origin². Certainly there are not a large number of decorated *Hohlbuckelringe* from that region; one pair, without provenance, in the Hungarian National Museum, is not unlike the example from Finike and there is another from Hangospuszta, Kom. Tolna (MÁRTON 1933, 41 ff. and T. XIII: 1–3). There is also a 13-knobbed ring from Dunaszekcső, kom. Baranya (HUNYADY 1942–44, 98–101 exp. XXX t.5; SZABÓ and PETRES 1974, cat. no. 147: “2nd century BC”). In addition, JACOBSTHAL (1944, nos. 268, 269, 271 and 272) illustrates other Hungarian examples, respectively from Győr, provenance unknown – once more in the Hungarian National Museum – Kis-Köszeg and Kosd, grave 45, all exhibiting variation of plastic decoration.



Fig. 1. „Hungary”. Bronze *Hohlbuckelring* (ex Sturge Collection)

Internal diameter 75 mm

Photos: Courtesy Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto

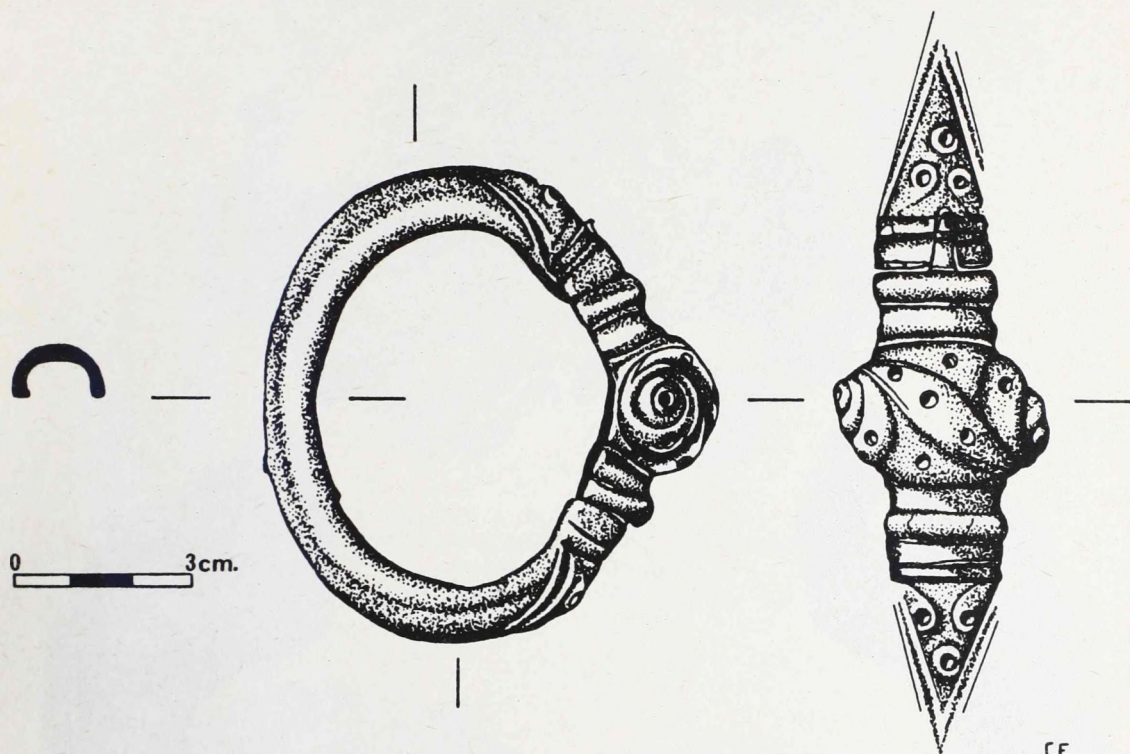


Fig. 2. „Hungary”. Bronze *Hohlbuckelring* (ex Sturge Collection)

Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto
Drawing: Christopher Evans

From more recently published material one may cite the eight-knobbed armring with alternating plain and plastic spiral ornamented knobs from grave 1, a female inhumation, at Keszthely-Felső-Dobogó, Kom. Veszprém (HORVÁTH et al. 1987, 78–81 and Pl.IX:7) and a much more ornate seven-knobbed ring with complex spiral and knobbed ornament in the manner of Klettham from grave 1, a possible inhumation found in a sand-pit, at Miklósfá, also in county Veszprém (HORVÁTH et al. 1987, 96–97 and Pl.XIV:2); these have been dated respectively to La Tène C1 and C2. From south-western Slovakia the seven-knobbed ring from Bajč-Vlkanovo, okr. grave 40 is also of the highly plastic ornamented variety (BENADIK 1971, 477 and obr. 8); the „cut” grave 2 from Palárikovo II, okr. Nové Zámky has a pair of nine-knobbed anklets (PAULIK and ZACHAR 1975, esp. obr. 24:2–3 and 31:2 – dated to La Tène C).

As to more precise parallels to the Toronto ring, while it is unusual in having only one hemispherical knob, armllets with single opposing knobs may be cited from Bohemia. In addition to Nový Bydžov 2 with its

„S” feature set off by a series of stamped circles a second ring, Nový Bydžov 9, has a more fleshy „S” with a dot-punched background (KRUTA 1975, Pl.XII: 2 and fig. 54b) while that found in an inhumation grave with an anklet, Nehvizdky 1, has a triskel within each opposing end of the „S” once again set off by a random dotted background (KRUTA 1975, fig. 54a). Without the dotted background – seen at its finest on the Tarn ring – is a fragmentary ring from Kostomlaty, okr. Nymburk (KRUTA 1975, fig. 56:2) and two from different graves, 6 and 7 at Kovošice also have less elaborated opposing fleshy „S”, s (KRUTA 1975, fig. 52a = Lovosice 3; fig. 53a = Lovosice 4); on the former the knobs are flanked by triangular features incorporating an even more recognisable „Cheshire cat” face (*q.v.* Lenerz-de Wilde 1982).

The use of dots or circles punched or cast into the surface of the ring brings one to a final example of an armring with – presumably since the hinge section is missing – single opposing hemispheres.

This is a find from disturbed graves at München-Moosach whose single surviving knob is decorated with

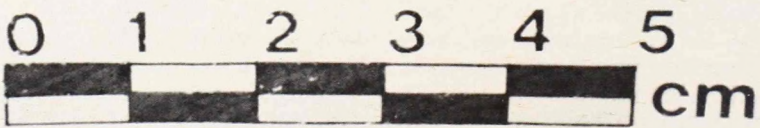


Fig. 3. „Hungary”. Bronze *Hohlbuckelring* (ex Sturge Collection)

Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto

Photos: Courtesy Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto

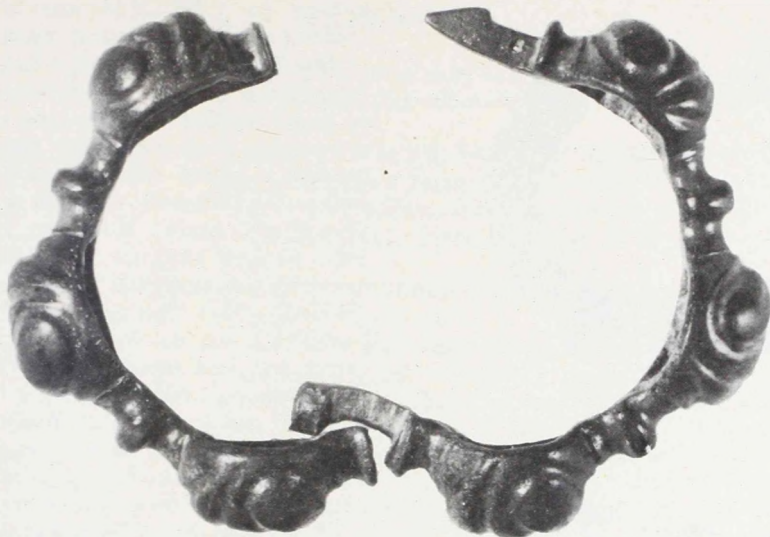


Fig. 4. Finike, Bay of Antalya, Turkey.
Bronze *Hohlbuckelring* (private collection, Vienna). Maximum
internal diameter 70 mm.
Photo: Courtesy Römisch-Germanische Kommission, Frankfurt.

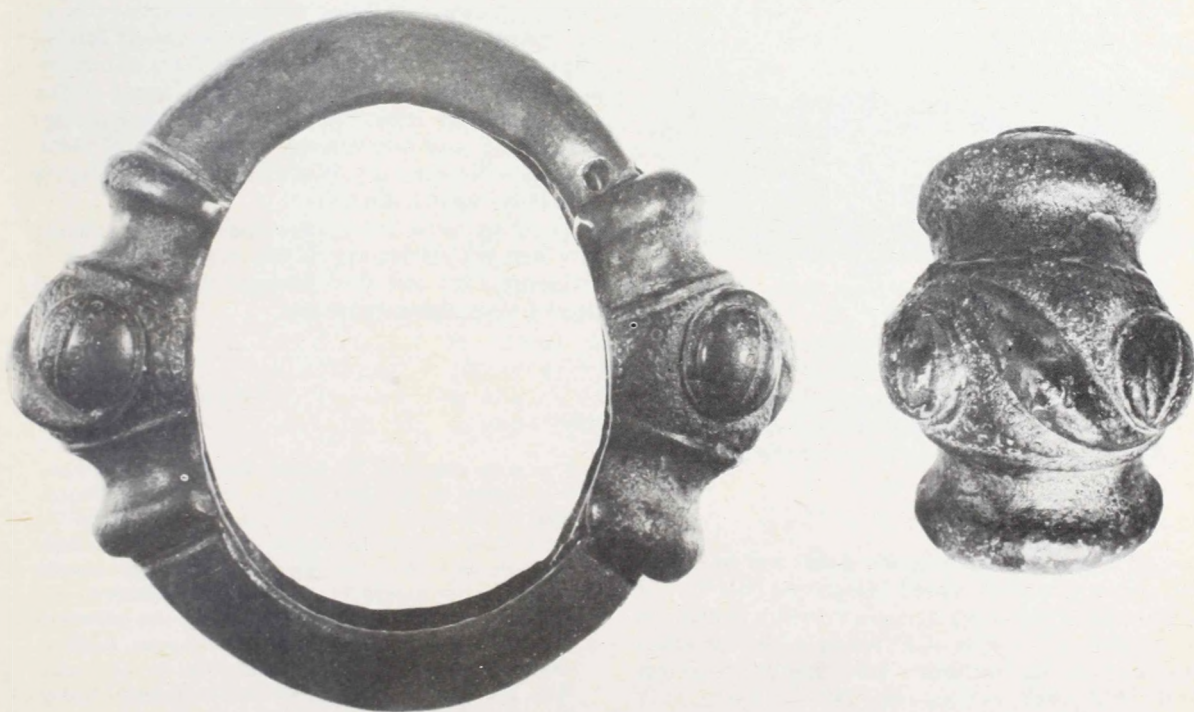


Fig. 5. Nový Bydžov, okr. Hradec Králové, Czechoslovakia
Bronze *Hohlbuckelring*. Internal diameter 58 mm.
Photos: Courtesy Prähistorische Abteilung,
Naturhistorisches Museum, Vienna

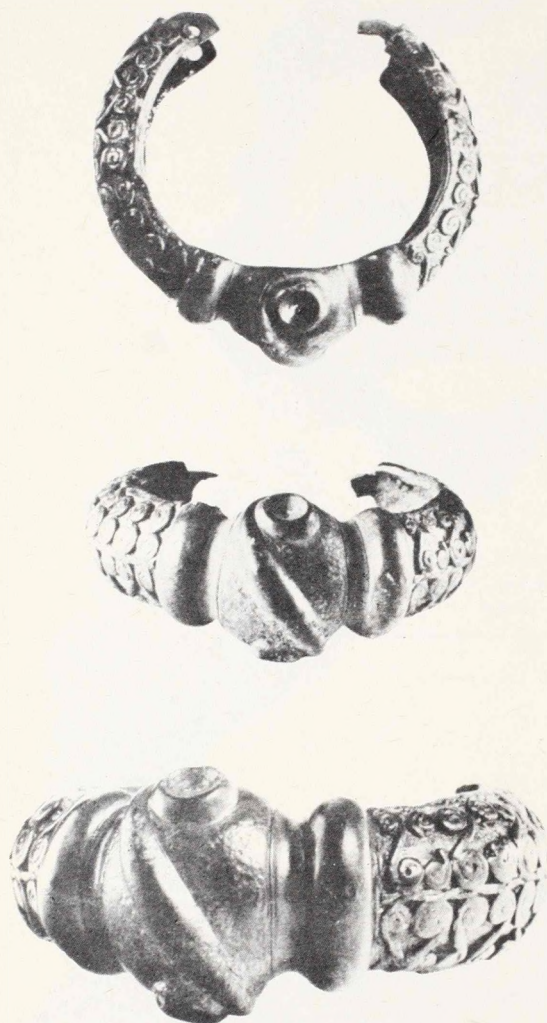


Fig. 6. München-Moosach, Stadtkr. München, Germany. Bronze armring (Catch missing). Internal diameter 60 mm
Photos: Courtesy Prähistorische Staatssammlung, Munich

an „S” ending in large hollowed domes and once more set against a random dotted background (fig. 6). The main curve of the ring is ornamented with a double row of smaller „S” s each with tightly curled terminals produced in the so-called „false filigree” technique (KRÄMER 1985, cat. no. 48, Taf. 57:11 and 117). This technique – in fact produced by last-wax casting from a model – is particular feature of the eastern Celtic region in the age of expansion (KRUTA 1975, 68–70; SZABÓ 1975) and the München-Moosach ring, like a further pair of armrings from Manching-Hundersingen grave 5, Ldkr. Ingolstadt (KRÄMER 1985, 22

and cat. no. 2, Taf. 28:14) must be regarded as further evidence of imports from that region.

One feature of the Toronto ring needs further comment; this is the grouping of shallow hollows. It might be considered that these originally were intended for insets perhaps in glass or amber. But such a form of decoration is known only from early La Tène contexts such as the fifth-century brooch in the form of a man from Mančtin-Hradek, Plzeň-sever, grave 74 (SOUDESKÁ 1968; MEGAW 1970, no. 31; KRUTA 1975, 14) or late insular British neck-rings of the first centuries BC/AD (MEGAW 1971). Since microscopic examination of the TORONTO ring has revealed no sign of the hollows having ever held anything, it seems possible to regard them as simply a variation on the subsidiary use of circle motifs in the decoration of *Hohlbuckelringe* to which attention has already been drawn. The recurrence of triple elements or multiples of three on the rings hardly needs emphasis in the general context of early Celtic art.

Finally as to date; KRÄMER (1985, esp. 40) is firmly of the opinion that *Hohlbuckelringe* in southern Germany do not extend into the developed Middle La Tène phase (but see SCHAAFF 1972, 155).

Questions of absolute chronology need not detain us here; Krämer’s detailed analysis of the South Bavarian material suggests a beginning there for *Hohlbuckelring* in the early third century BC which in any case would be demanded by accumulating evidence suggesting that in the western zone La Tène C1 must begin around 250 BC (HAFFNER 1979). As yet absolute – if not also relative – chronology in the eastern Celtic region is less certain. Further researches, not least the welcome appearance of successive volumes of the *Corpus of Celtic Finds in Hungary* (q.v. HORVÁTH et al. 1987) will measurably assist in this task.

For the present, the Toronto ring may remain at the very least as a further witness that in recent times as in prehistory Celts and their products have travelled far beyond their original homelands.

Notes

1. I am most grateful to Dr. Francis Pryor, at the time Assistant Curator in the Greek, Roman and Prehistoric Department of the Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto for affording me facilities to study the ring in April 1978. The line drawings are the work of Christopher Evans and the photographs of the ring (inv.no. 918.5.111 (AJ.69)) are published by permission of the Museum. I must acknowledge also discussions with Dr. Miklós Szabó, Szépművészeti Múzeum, Budapest and Dr. Venceslas Kruta, École pratique des Hautes Études, Paris. Dr. Eckehart Schubert, Römisch-Germanische Kommission, Frankfurt has been most helpful in supplying photographs as has been Dr. Stefan Nebehey, Prähistorische Abteilung, Naturhistorisches Museum, Vienna and Dr. H.P. Uenze, Prähistorische Staatssammlung, Munich.
2. Dr. Pryor believes that the provenances of material in the Sturge collection are well-founded wherever it has been possible to verify them (PRYOR 1980, 2).

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