

Glass finds in Slovenia and neighbouring areas

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The Iron Age

The Early Iron Age in Europe including what is now Slovenia witnessed an extraordinary diversification of glass decoration in colour and form, as well as the first European glass vessels. Glass beads were strung on long necklaces and also sewn onto clothing. The beads are round, barrel-shaped, tubular, and shaped like baskets, ram heads or birds. Several have iron loops for hanging (Križ 1997, 38 [lower]). The colour combinations are highly varied. Decorative motifs include wavy lines, dots, zigzags, eyes, and applied elements of differently coloured glass (Haevernick 1974, 61; Križ 2003, 91 no. 19, 98-99). Several decorative brooches were also adorned with glass. So-called "porcupine" brooches, found at Magdalenska gora, Vače, Brezje, and Šmarjeta (Haevernick 1959, Taf. 1.1-8), are of particular interest: their bow has a bronze wire core surrounded by a coating of naturally transparent blue-green glass with spiky applied glass. The coating of dark blue glass that ornaments the *fibula* from Boštanj is decorated with glass threads in a contrasting yellow, drawn out in a zigzag design, and with eye-beads (Haevernick 1959, Taf. 2.8-9). The bow of the brooches from Rovišče was also made in a very particular way: amber glass was wound in a spiral around the wire core, and the decoration was completed with small glass projections (Haevernick 1959, Taf. 2.5, 2.7). *Fibulae* with a glass coating appear primarily in the 6th c. B.C. (Gabrovec 1987, 49).

An exceptional element in the graves of the SE Alpine region is represented by small vessels with vertical ribbing on the walls. They were probably made in a mould, their walls being ribbed subsequently (Haevernick 1958a, 14). In Slovenia they are known from the 5th c. B.C. at Most na Soči (Haevernick 1958a, Taf. 1.4-5, 2, and 3.1-2) and Črnlolica beneath Rifnik (Pirkmajer 1994, fig. 40; Lazar 2004b, 49, cat. no. 4). They were made from naturally coloured, slightly greenish glass, and from amber coloured glass of amber in various shades of brown or blue. Primarily blue cups were decorated with threads of differently coloured glass in straight or zigzag lines. Some cups from Most na Soči have an extended, ribbed handle (Haevernick 1958a, Taf. 2.3-6).

The extensive trading contacts of the Early Iron Age culture of the SE Alpine region with the Mediterranean world is reflected in the glass finds. They include vessels made on a core, which had the widest distribution among products of Hellenistic glassworks. An almost complete core-made vessel was found at Stična (Kastelic 1960, pl. 3.2; Lazar 2004b, 16, fig. 4). The double-handled blue flask (*amphoriskos*) was decorated with multi-coloured glass threads in a zigzag motif, complemented by simple lines on the neck and shoulders. Fragments of identical products are known from the barrows at Šmarjeta (Dular 1991, pl. 29.26-28). One contained a small dark blue vessel with a handle and rim bordered with a yellow glass thread. Both vessels can be classified as products of Mediterranean workshops, dating from the end of the 6th to the start of the 4th c. (Harden 1981, 77, pl. 11.175-90).

The exceptionally varied selection of glass beads and other decorative objects found on Early Iron Age sites in the SE Alpine region, with forms, colours, and decorations specific to this area, suggests that glass workshops must have been active in this region. This possibility was first noted by T. E. Haevernick (1974, 65). New finds, primarily from the tumuli at Kapiteljske njive in Novo mesto (Križ 1997, 37; 2003), have further enriched the palette of colours and forms of Early Iron Age glass beads. The hypothesis of local production seems all the more likely. Unfortunately, research into prehistoric settlements (as opposed to cemeteries), where traces of glass-working might be discovered, has been quite limited. Further, bead production requires only a furnace of small dimensions, and it produces little waste.

The glass finds of the Late Iron Age exhibit traits that distinguish them from those of the Early Iron Age. Bead necklaces are very rare, often comprising heirlooms from indigenous inhabitants. The La Tène graves at Kapiteljske njive in Novo mesto contain numerous forms of