

ROMAN PERIOD FINDS DOCUMENTING WORK WITH NON-FERROUS METALS FROM STRAKOV, LITOMYŠL REGION (CZECH REPUBLIC)

David Vích

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Abstract: An accumulation of metal artefacts from Strakov dated predominantly to the Roman Period was gradually found using a metal detector between 2019 and 2023. The site, situated outside inhabited areas, has provided evidence of work with non-ferrous metals; moreover, it does not correspond to any archaeological components known so far. The archaeological concentration is apparently linked to a ritual practice.

INTRODUCTION

The arrival of the metal detector era is characterized by a steep growth in the source base for metallic periods of both the prehistory and the Middle Ages. This applies also to the growing number of hoards from later periods including finds from the Roman Period and the Migration Period. However, there are also archaeological contexts where the interpretation is ambiguous and does not correspond to the existing established schemes. The following lines present a survey, completed in June 2023, of an archaeological situation, very specific in many respects, in the Strakov cadastral area (Svitavy distr., Pardubice region, Czech republic).

ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT

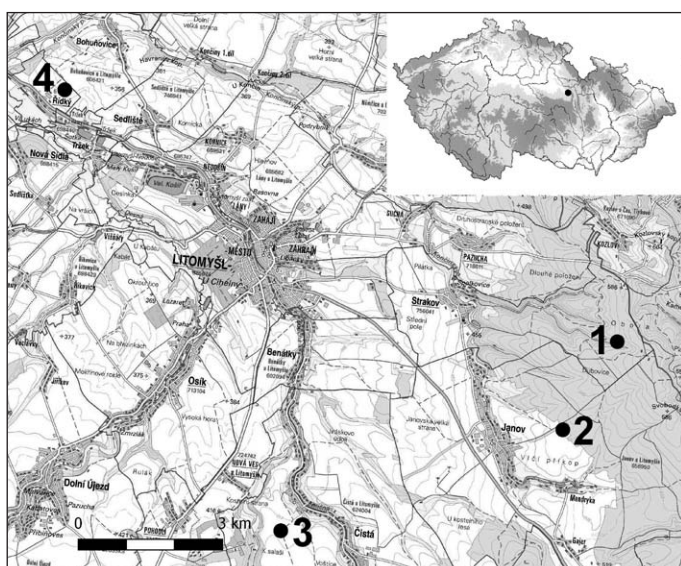


Fig. 1. Concentration of finds in Strakov and finds of bronze button-shaped spurs near Litomyšl. 1 – concentration of Roman Period finds in the Strakov cadastral area; 2 – Janov u Litomyšle, bronze button-shaped spur; 3 – Čistá u Litomyšle, bronze button-shaped spur; 4 – Řídký, bronze button-shaped spur.

Mr. Radek Smolen, a collaborator of the Vysoké Mýto Regional Museum, found copper alloy artefacts on 31 July 2019. He immediately announced the find to the Vysoké Mýto Regional Museum, and more objects were gradually found and documented in 2019–2020. The main concentration was situated in an area of 20×25 m, consisting above all of two accumulations of metal objects near the side of a modern forest track in a wooded hilly terrain west of Litomyšl. This main concentration was accompanied by solitary finds scattered in the neighbourhood (Fig. 1: 1; 2: 1). Terrain observations and the fact that the finds overlapped with the route of the modern track make it evident that earth moving related to the construction of the track had affected the archaeological contexts to a certain extent; this was confirmed by a test pit excavated later.

The first accumulation of artefacts consisted of a bracelet with folded ends and

an incomplete bridle situated under an iron sickle, along with more minor objects. The second concentration was represented by artefacts made of thick metal sheets in various degrees of fragmentation. The two concentrations were situated 2.5 m apart. More objects made of non-ferrous metals were found in the close neighbourhood; the most distant fibula was situated 35 m northwest of the two accumulations. Iron objects, even after the elimination of artefacts that are evidently later or recent, respect this archaeological image only partially; a coulter was even more than 600 m distant from the archaeological concentration (Fig. 2: 2).

A 3 × 1.5 m test pit was excavated in the artefact accumulation area on 11 March 2020 (Fig. 3). The test pit uncovered a simple stratigraphy: a 20 cm secondarily moved layer originating from the construction of the forest track lay on a 10 cm thick buried duff and dark forest humus layer that lay, in a depth of 30 cm from the present surface, on quite sterile subsoil. This means that both accumulations of objects were originally situated very shallowly in the sterile subsoil; according to the finder, the iron sickle from the first accumulation was discovered near the base of the buried humus layer. No traces of intact archaeological contexts or finds of non-metal objects related to the metal object accumulations were detected.

List of artefacts

The detected artefacts were processed primarily according to the archaeological concentrations; in the case of isolated finds, according to material. The list includes finds from the Roman Period and finds whose dating to the Roman Period cannot be ruled out.

Archaeological concentration 1

(E 0601790, N 5524300)¹

- copper alloy bracelet with eyelets and folded and wrapped ends, 98 × 95 × 10 mm (Fig. 4: 1; 5: 3);
- subtle rod-like copper alloy artefact, 16 × 9 × 7 mm (Fig. 4: 2);
- fragment of a semi-finished rectangular buckle frame, 42 × 35 × 12 mm (Fig. 4: 3; 5: 4);
- copper alloy bridle bit consisting of a bar bit; on one of its ends, a ring is threaded with a connected chain of seven links of the Vimose and Kirpehnen types; the other end is directly connected (using a ringlet) to a chain link that is loosely followed by six more links of the Vimose type; the intermediate ringlet is missing; stretched length: 830 mm; max. width: 97 mm (Fig. 4: 4; 5: 1);
- iron sickle with a perforated tang and a perpendicular prong, 287 × 37 × 20 mm (Fig. 4: 5).

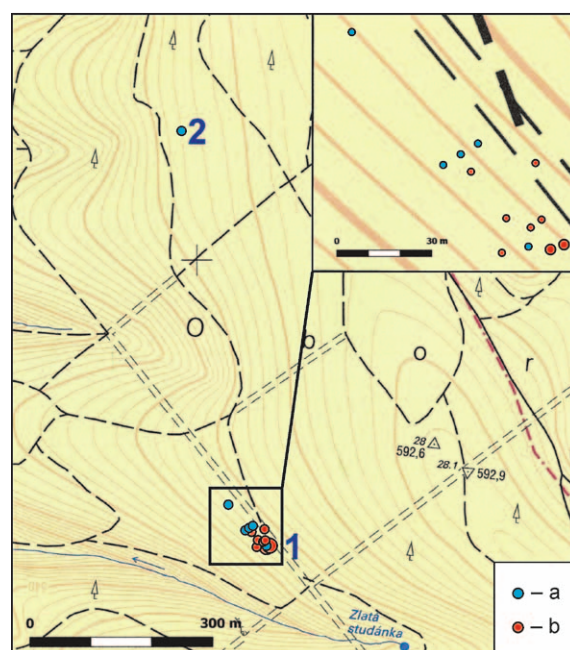


Fig. 2. Strakov. 1 – archaeological concentration of objects from ferrous and non-ferrous metals; 2 – find of an iron coulter. Legend: a – ferrous metals; b – non-ferrous metals.



Fig. 3. Strakov. Test pit from 2020 that only uncovered sterile subsoil (photo D. Vích).

¹ Coordinates stated in UTM, band 33U. The finds are the property of the Pardubice Region, deposited in the Litomyšl Regional Museum.

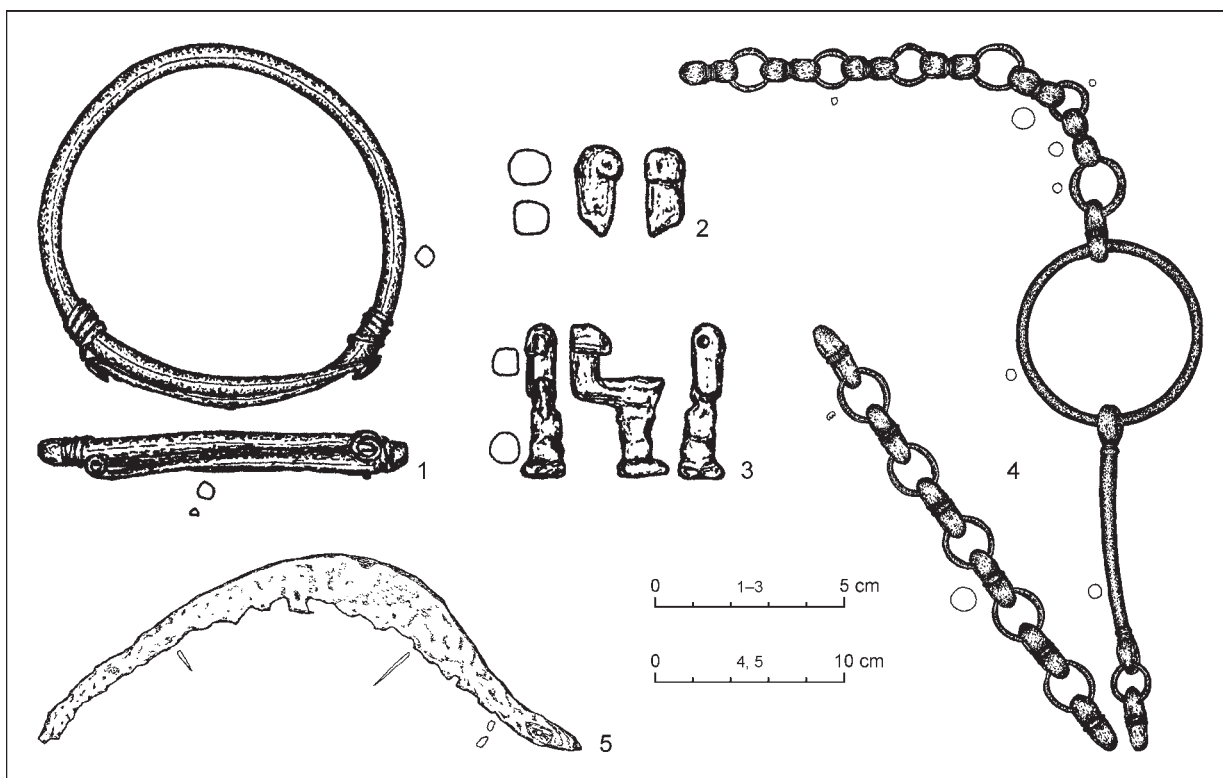


Fig. 4. Strakov. Archaeological concentration 1 (drawing H. Večeřová).

Archaeological concentration 2

(E 0601794, N 5524302)

- deformed folded copper alloy metal sheet with welded elements, 82 × 60 × 11 mm (Fig. 6: 1);
- copper alloy plate with a hinge, 76 × 37 × 10 mm (Fig. 6: 2);
- copper alloy metal sheet fragment, 40 × 18 × 1 mm (Fig. 6: 3);
- copper alloy metal sheet fragment, 42 × 20 × 1 mm (Fig. 6: 4);
- copper alloy metal sheet fragment, 44 × 24 × 3 mm (Fig. 6: 5);
- folded copper alloy metal sheet with grooves, 87 × 61 × 10 mm (Fig. 6: 6);
- folded copper alloy metal sheet fragment, 41 × 18 × 8 mm (Fig. 6: 7);
- copper alloy metal sheet fragment, 44 × 26 × 1 mm (Fig. 6: 8);
- copper alloy metal sheet band, 50 × 8 × 1 mm (Fig. 6: 9);
- copper alloy metal sheet fragment, 65 × 15 × 4 mm (Fig. 6: 10);
- copper alloy metal sheet fragment, 30 × 23 × 1 mm (Fig. 6: 11);
- copper alloy metal sheet fragment, 27 × 17 × 0.6 mm (Fig. 6: 12);
- folded thin copper alloy metal sheet fragment, 37 × 17 × 1.3 mm (Fig. 6: 13);
- copper alloy metal sheet with two projections, 49 × 34 × 8 mm (Fig. 6: 14);
- copper alloy metal sheet fragment, 63 × 37 × 1 mm (Fig. 6: 15).

Finds from the test pit area

- copper alloy metal sheet with rivet holes, 40 × 24 × 0.7 mm (Fig. 7: 1);
- small copper alloy metal sheet fragment, 16 × 14 × 1 mm (Fig. 7: 2);
- thick copper alloy metal sheet fragment, 29 × 24 × 1.5 mm (Fig. 7: 3);
- small folded copper alloy metal sheet fragment, 18 × 8 × 3 mm (Fig. 7: 4);
- copper alloy ring fragment, 58 × 7 × 8 mm (Fig. 7: 5).

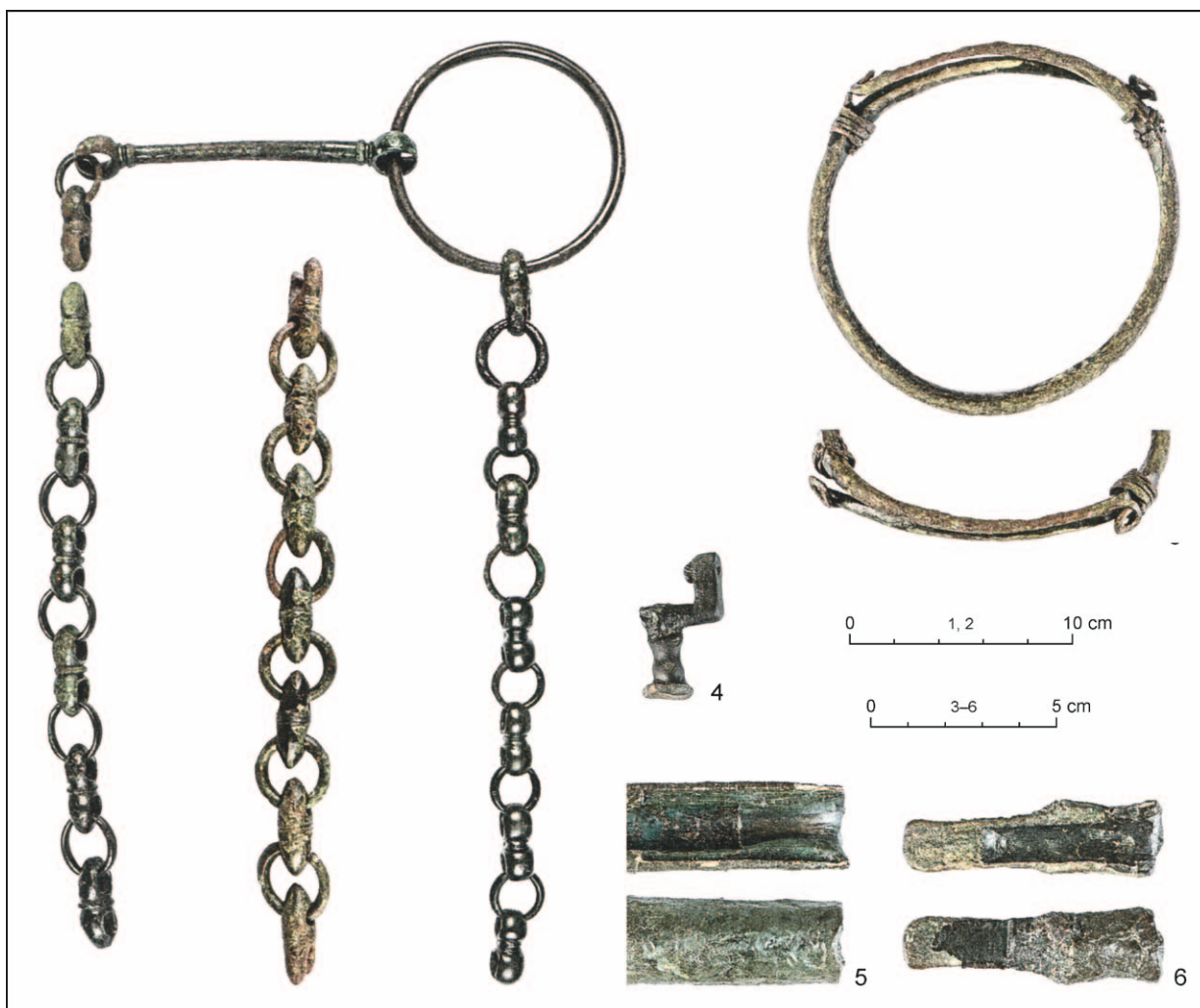


Fig. 5. Strakov. Selection of the artefacts (photo J. Čáp).

Solitary copper alloy finds

- bridle chain consisting of six ringlets and seven connecting links of the Vimose type, $303 \times 33 \times 19$ mm, E 0601791, N 5524306, found directly in the modern forest track (Fig. 5: 2; 7: 12);
- half of a casting mould, $66 \times 25 \times 15$ mm, E 0601775, N 5524308, find from the humus layer (Fig. 5: 5; 7: 6);
- half of a casting mould, $73 \times 42 \times 12$ mm, E 0601775, N 5524297 (Fig. 5: 6; 7: 7);
- solitary connecting link of a Vimose type bridle, $34 \times 13 \times 12$ mm, E 0601783, N 5524306 (Fig. 7: 8);
- Roman-provincial fibula with a semicircular head-plate, $30 \times 13 \times 23$ mm, E 0601762, N 5524321, depth: 20 cm on the boundary between the subsoil and the humus layer (Fig. 7: 9);
- copper alloy chain, $552 \times 12 \times 12$ mm, E 0601786, N 5524309, depth: 30 cm near the forest track (Fig. 7: 10);
- flat plate, $109 \times 40 \times 3$ mm, E 0601783, N 5524300, find from the humus layer (Fig. 7: 11).

Solitary iron finds

- coulter, $423 \times 46 \times 45$ mm, E 0601564, N 5524956, depth: 20 cm on the boundary between the humus layer and the subsoil (Fig. 8: 4);
- sickle with a perpendicular prong, $163 \times 34 \times 38$ mm, E 0601763, N 5524330, depth: 20 cm on the boundary between the humus layer and the subsoil (Fig. 8: 1);
- forked object with a twisted shank, $175 \times 66 \times 7$ mm, E 0601753, N 5524322, depth: 12 cm including 6 cm in the subsoil (Fig. 8: 2);

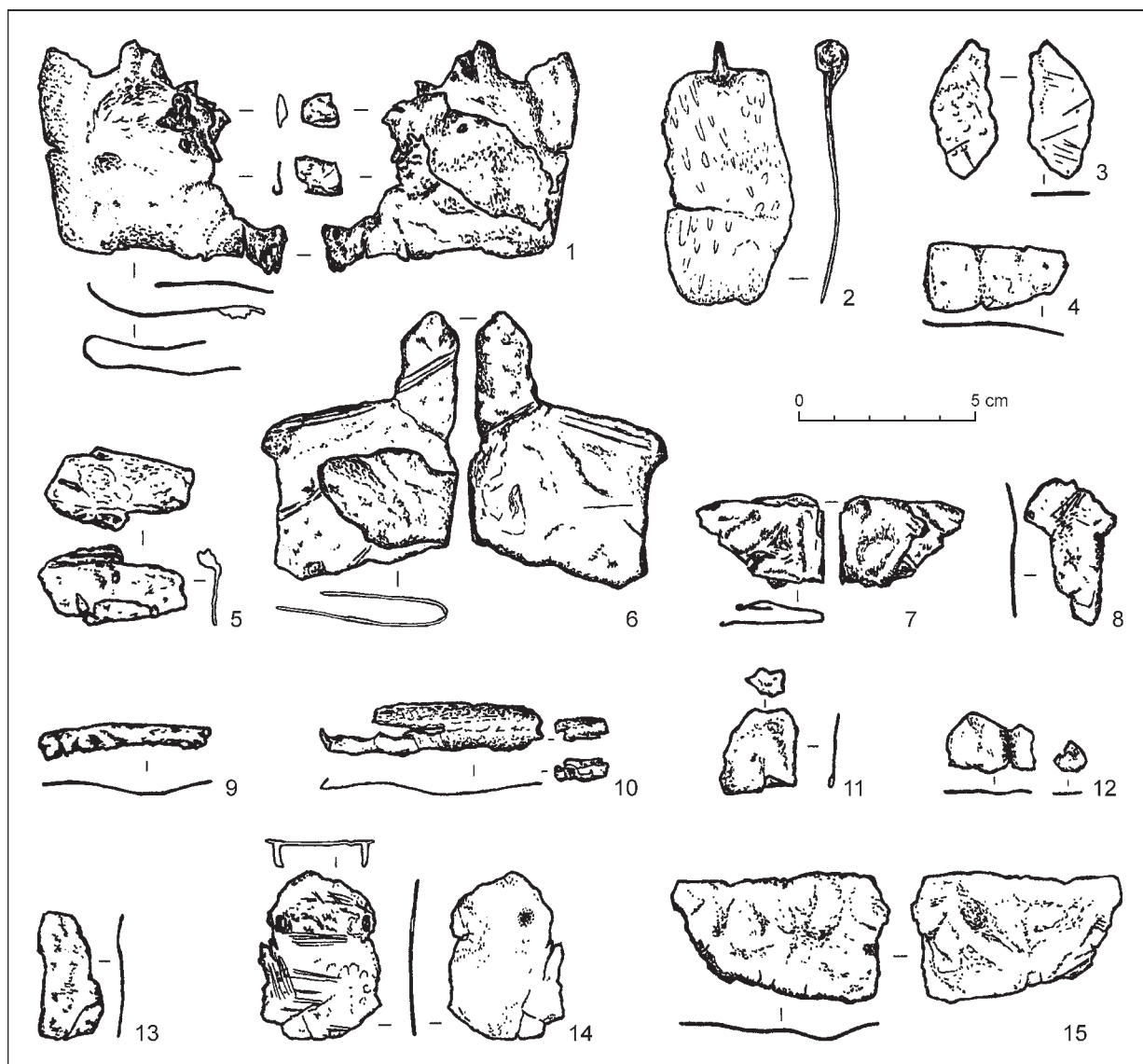


Fig. 6. Strakov. Archaeological concentration 2 (drawing H. Večeřová).

- knife with a haft prong and an indented blade, 117 × 23 × 5 mm, E 0601719, N 5524360, depth: 20 cm near the base of the humus layer (Fig. 8: 3).

EVALUATION OF THE FINDS

A very conspicuous component of the archaeological assemblage is represented by horse equipment, namely parts of a metal bridle. Based on the spatial distribution, we have altogether three finds in various levels of preservation.

The first one is a considerable torso of a whole bridle found in archaeological accumulation 1 (Fig. 4: 4; 5: 1). Several features of the artefact attract attention at first glance. First, it is the absence of one of the side rings of the bar bit, as the bridle chain is threaded directly in the bar bit eyelet. Much more important, however, is the evidence of a repair, as a ringlet interconnecting the link with the continuation of the chain is threaded to a connecting link that is attached directly to the ring. The interlinking ringlet differs from the rest in greater size and, above all, material, which is iron. The iron ringlet was evidently used as a replacement for the original copper alloy ringlet, which had apparently been rendered unusable by damage or lost. However, the copper alloy acorn-shaped connecting links and interlinking ringlets divided by this iron ringlet differ typologically. The link connecting the bar bit with the iron interlinking ringlet and all seven-connecting links of the second chain

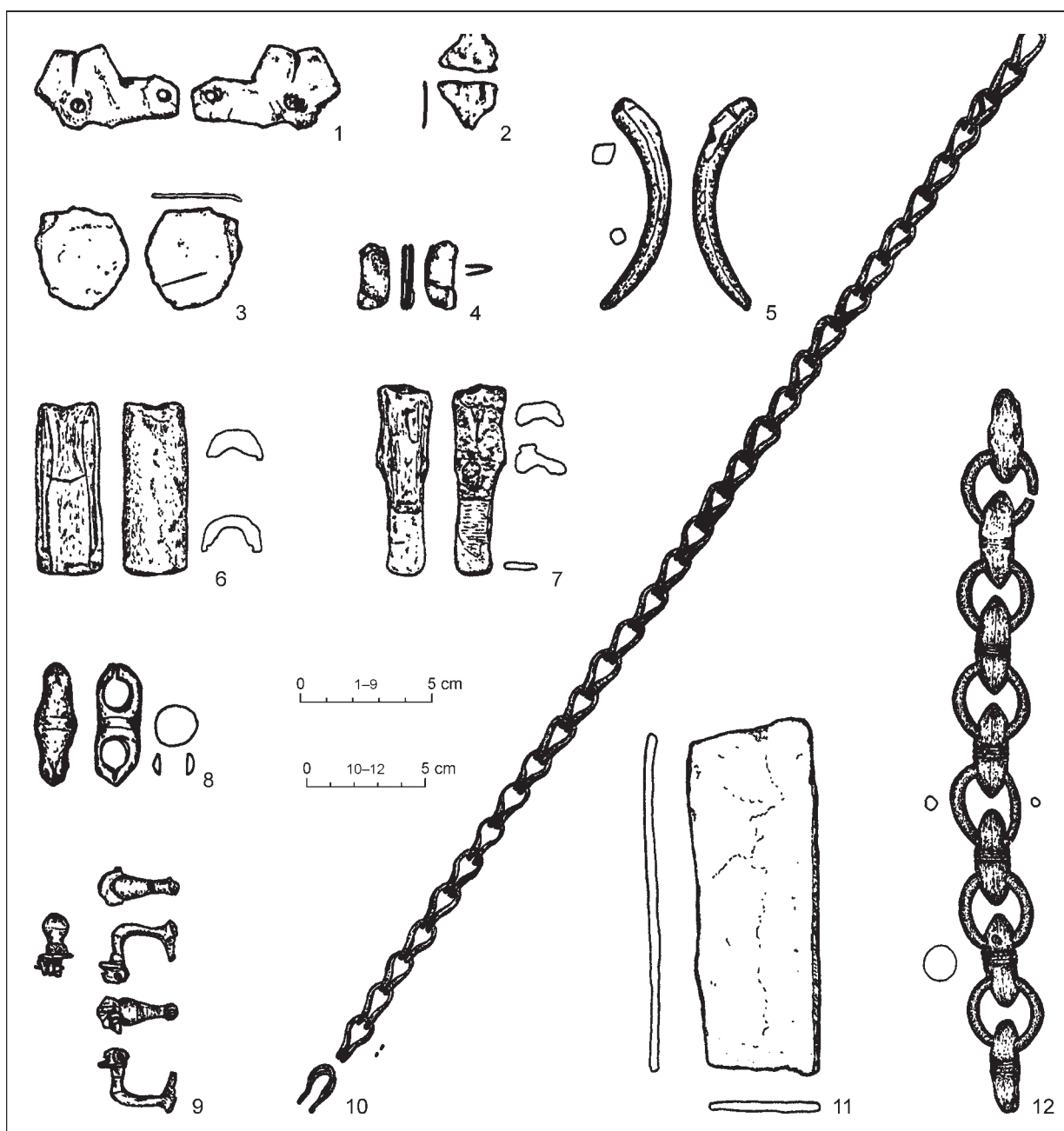


Fig. 7. Strakov. Solitary finds from non-ferrous metals (drawing H. Večeřová).

threaded directly into the bar bit eyelet are of type Z4i, profiled interlinking ringlets of type R2b (Wilbers-Rost 1994, 120, Beilage 1) comprising (especially in view of the used variant of the linking element) a bridle of the Vimose IV type (Lau 2014, 51–53). The part of the bridle beyond the iron interlinking ringlet in the direction away from the bar bit belongs to type ZA II (Lau 2014, 22, Abb. 15), simple interlinking ringlets comprising a bridle of the Kirpehnen II type. The chain found in the forest track (Fig. 5: 2; 7: 12) consists of seven connecting links of type Z4a with R2b interlinking ringlets; according to these characteristics, it is part of a bridle of the Vimose I type. The solitarily found connecting link of type Z4 (Fig. 7: 8) was also part of a Vimose type bridle; more precise categorization is prevented by the considerable corrosion of the artefact's surface (Z4i?).

Bridles of the Kirpehnen II type are dated to phase B2b and occur near the shores of the North and Baltic Sea from the Netherlands to the Baltic states; they were not registered in the Czech Republic's territory before (Lau 2014, 31–34, Abb. 25). A similar distribution area applies also to bridles of the Vimose type, but with a considerable additional concentration of finds in the middle Danube region (Bazovský et al. 2020, 262–264

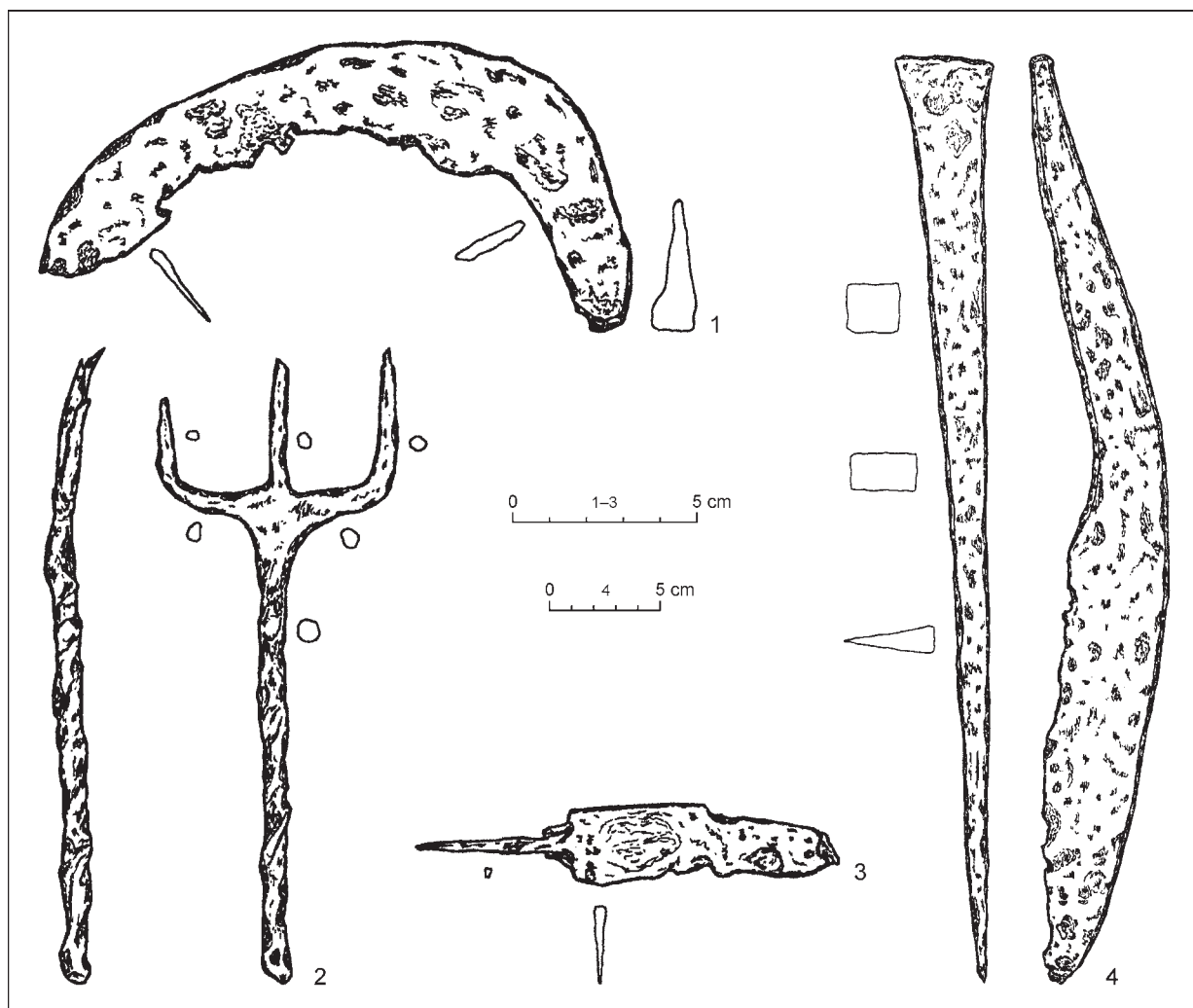


Fig. 8. Strakov. Solitary finds from iron (drawing H. Večeřová).

with more literature; Čižmář 2010, 129; Lau 2018; Tejral 2015, 437;); new finds have been registered also in Bohemia (Vích/Kmošek 2020, 99, fig. 2). Bridles of the Vimose I type (a chain consisting of seven connecting links and six interlinking ringlets) are encountered from phase B2b or C1b. Bridles of Vimose IV type only appear in phases C1a–C2 (Lau 2014, 39–53; 2018, 345, 348). The bridle bit from Strakov thus offers unique evidence of a combination of bridle bits of the Kirpehnen II and Vimose IV types. The find circumstances of metal bridles from the marshlands of northern Europe clearly indicate a ritual deposition of enemy weapons; in the Danube region, the interpretation is more ambiguous. Leaving aside individual parts discovered in the settlement milieu, the archaeological contexts of bridle parts from Zohor (Elschek/Rajtár/Varsik 2011), the bridle bits from Borinka, Slovakia archaeologies in mountain terrain, finds from rock crevices and finds with links to a water environment (most recently, summarily Bazovský *et al.* 2020, 262 with more literature) also indicate a deposition for ritual reasons.

The only fastener is represented by a Roman-provincial fibula with a semicircular head-plate (Fig. 7: 9). It can be categorized as type Jobst 13C with an undecorated head-plate; decorated types Jobst 13D or possibly 13E (Jobst 1975, 65–68) cannot be ruled out, either, in view of the broken off edges of the head-plate. These fibulae appear in the middle of the 2nd century; in the Barbaricum, they occur most often between the middle of the 2nd century and the early 3rd century, when their most intensive use is registered also in Roman provinces. Fibulae of the Jobst 13E type are documented in Noricum – Pannonia contexts only in the Late Roman Period (Jobst 1975, 65–68; Sedlmayer 1995, 45; Schmid 2010, 36, 37).

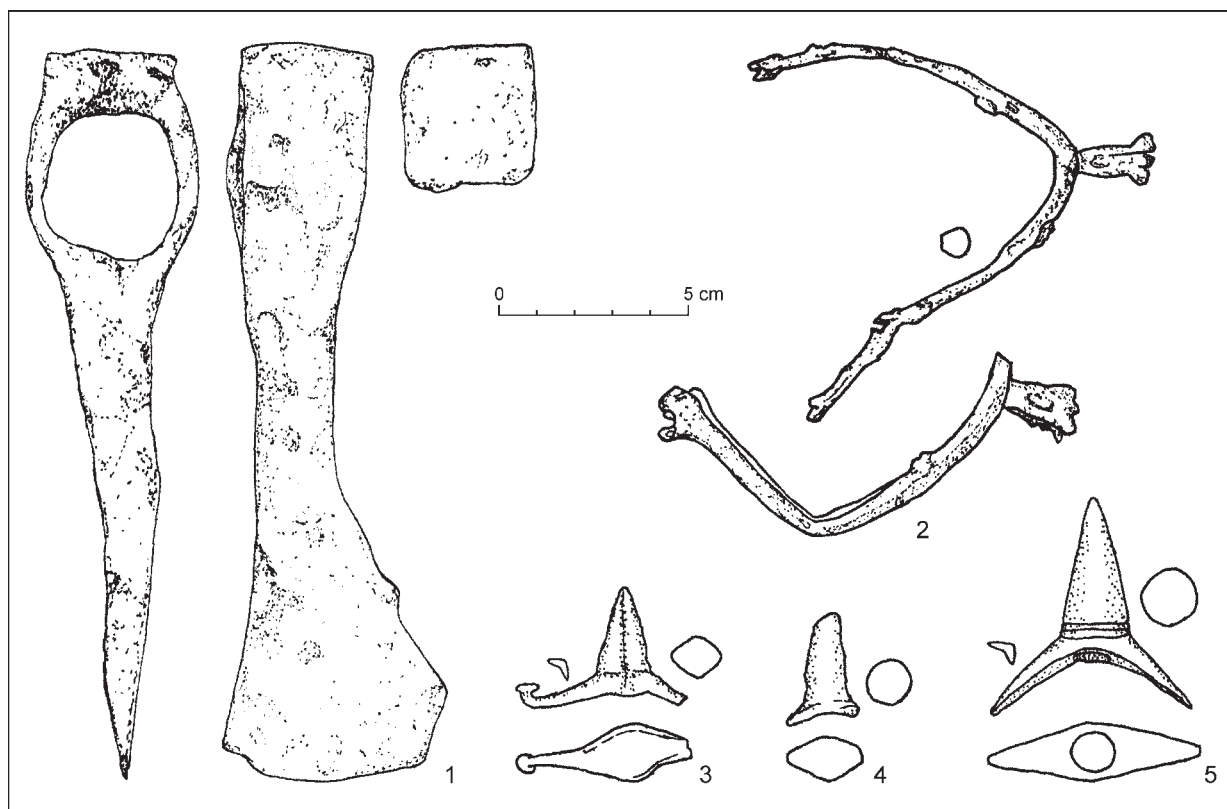


Fig. 9. 1, 2 – Strakov, medieval artefacts from the archaeological concentration and its immediate vicinity; 3–5 – bronze button-shaped spurs (3 – Janov u Litomyšle; 4 – Řídký; 5 – Čistá u Litomyšle; drawing L. Škopová).

Bracelets are encountered for both men and women in the Roman Period, but they were not a very popular or widespread form of decoration in this country's territory. The specimen from Strakov (Fig. 4: 1; 5: 3) is a bracelet with folded and wrapped ends; they were made of bronze and, rarely, of silver. Sometimes, like the present piece, they are also equipped with a circular loop. They occur from the late La Tène Period, in the Early Roman Period and, after a certain hiatus, in the Late Roman Period in the 4th century (Beckmann 1981, 10, 12; Koščević 1991, 25, 26; Riha 1990, 62). The object from Strakov can be categorized, based above all on the archaeological context, to the Early Roman Period, without the possibility of a more precise chronological classification.

The neighbourhood of the archaeological concentrations has yielded also two solitary finds of halves of casting moulds. The first one is a rectangular half of a two-part casting mould with a deep negative impression for the object and a sprue (Fig. 5: 5; 7: 6). The other half of a two-part casting mould with a considerably shallower impression is intended for the production of a similar object (Fig. 5: 6; 7: 7). This, as well as the fact that the two artefacts were found in a mutual distance of 10 m, offer the assumption that they might be two halves of one mould, but as the two mould halves do not fit together and the location of the objects and the sprues do not correspond, they might not have formed one unit. Regrettably, it is impossible to specify the type of object they were intended for and, strictly speaking, they do not enable an unambiguous dating in themselves. The only thing that is evident from the negative impressions is that the objects were cylindrical in shape; as the use of a casting core cannot be ruled out, the resulting cast might have had the shape of a small tube. Finds of copper alloy casting moulds represent very rare evidence of work with non-ferrous metals. We long lacked this type of find from the Czech Republic's territory; the situation only changed with the discovery of casting moulds for Vimose type bridles from a workshop feature, apparently disturbed by ploughing, in Dyjákovice near Znojmo (Čižmář 2010). They were recently joined by a half of a casting mould for casting A 132 fibulae from Kočí, Chrudim District (Vích/Kmošek 2020) and a fragment of a casting mould from Boršov near Moravská Třebová (Vích et al. 2020). Four more recently published moulds come also from Moravia: casting moulds for a belt end of the Madyda-Legutko 2/6 type from Klenovice na Hané, for a ringlet

from Mikulov, for a barbarian A 132 knee fibula from Velké Hostěrádky (*Jagošová et al. 2021*) and a part of a casting mould for button-shaped spurs of the Ginalski E5 type from Luleč, Vyškov District (*Jílek/Kaňáková et al. 2023*).

The buckle frame fragment with a preserved casting channel (Fig. 4: 3; 5: 4) is also related to non-ferrous metal working. The rectangularly formed double buckle frame enables the categorization of the artefact as the Madyda-Legutko G group, types 15–21 (the precise classification of the unfinished and incomplete object is problematic) dating generally to section B2–C1 (*Madyda-Legutko 1986*, 48–50). Finds of direct evidence of work with non-ferrous metals are not very common, either; a buckle frame semiproduct has been recently published from Přelouč (*Jílek et al. 2022*, 189, fig. 4: 8).²

More precise determination is more complicated for the other non-ferrous metal objects. Some metal sheet fragments with visible grooves apparently come from Roman vessels. The rectangular plate with a hinge (Fig. 6: 2) and the plate with two projections (Fig. 6: 14) also indicate a Roman-provincial origin. The copper alloy chain (Fig. 7: 10, e.g. *Müller 2002*, 69, Taf. 87: 994) also has direct analogies in the Roman milieu; there, they served as lamp hangings, for example (cf. *Starac 2022*, 146).

The sickle from archaeological accumulation 1 with a perpendicular prong and a perforated tang (Fig. 4: 5) approaches type H5 (*Henning 1987*, Taf. 39) or – in terms of the method of attachment, rather than blade shape – type 3c (*Hanemann 2014*, 199, Abb. 175). These typologically advanced tools occur in profusion from the 3rd to the 6th centuries (*Henning 1987*, 90). The other solitarily discovered tool (Fig. 8: 1) represents type 1 (*Hanemann 2014*, 199, Abb. 175) or H6 (*Henning 1987*, Taf. 42), an archaic hook-shaped sickle type with an earlier tradition. The connection of the type H5 sickle with Roman Period finds at the site is given (leaving the unprofessional excavation out of account) also by the archaeological context. A link to the discovered Roman Period finds is very likely also for the other, solitarily found sickle.

The iron forked object with a twisted handle (Fig. 8: 2) can probably be categorized as a meat fork. Analogies, albeit rectangularly bent, can be found instance in Magdalensberg (*Schütz 2003*, 44, Taf. 12: H75–H77) or Mušov (*Schönfelder 2009*, 780, Abb. 6: 2). The dating of the coulter (Fig. 8: 4) remains a big unknown. It is a very rare find in the Barbaricum in the Roman Period (cf. *Beranová 1980*, 136, 137; *Kolník/Varsík/Vladár 2007*, 29; *Pieta 2002*), even though a direct analogy to the object from Strakov is known from a hoard in Dunajská Lužná (*Bazovský 2010*). From this point of view, a Roman Period dating of the coulter from Strakov is problematic but possible. No dating is possible for the knife equipped with a haft prong from an organic material (Fig. 8: 3); this type of object has a long tradition of use.

Based on the discovered features, the earliest possible dating of the Strakov assemblage is the time of the Marcomannic Wars or the period not long after them; i.e., the second half of the 2nd century or, more likely, the first half of the 3rd century.

LOCATION OF THE FIND AND ITS TESTIMONY

The location of the find is situated on a mild slope close to a terrain fault sloping towards a local watercourse that rises 280 m southeast of the location of the find. The source is called Zlatá studánka (“Golden Well”) today (Fig. 2). More springs are situated 500–1250 m north to northwest of the location of the find. The watershed between the Rivers Loučná and Třebovka, or Tichá Orlice into which Třebovka empties, runs ca. 300 m to the northeast. An immediate link to the water environment cannot be proved, but the deposition of the find in the vicinity of a source area need not have been accidental.

In the absence of fertile soils and an altitude of 560–570 m above sea level, the location virtually rules out any link to a settlement context. The nearest Roman Period settlement component is situated in the territory of the present-day town of Litomyšl at a distance of 7 km in the direct line (*Marešová 1997*; *Němcová et al. 2009*). Sporadic prehistoric finds including the Roman Period are encountered southeast of Litomyšl, more or less bound to a communications corridor connecting present-day eastern Bohemia and northwestern Moravia. The importance of the region as a connecting line is documented for various periods by relicts of vanished roads in the form of hollow ways in the area of the Javornický hřbet (“Javornický Ridge”), from where the route continued via the territory of present-day Svitavy further on to Křenov and Malá Haná, as documented again by hollow ways in favourable terrain. Therefore, we can roughly reconstruct the local landscape in the Roman

² I am grateful to J. Jílek for his valuable comments on many artefacts.

Period as a territory where settlement activities extend from the northwest along the Loučná as far as present-day Litomyšl. The communications corridor continues from there to the southeast. The location of the find in the present-day cadastral area of Strakov is thus situated ca. 5 km northeast to north from contemporary activities, but at an accessible distance in an unsettled area covered with deep forest. An immediate link to a contemporary route can be ruled out (for the time being?) as no Roman Period activities are proved further in the given direction, to the north and northeast, near the Třebovka in the Ústí nad Orlicí and Česká Třebová Districts; this territory was not colonized until the beginning of the High Middle Ages in the 13th century. The area apparently gained a certain communications importance also in the High Middle Ages, as signalled by the discovery of three high medieval horseshoes, a linchpin (unseparated), a high medieval spur (Fig. 9: 2) and perhaps also a medieval axe (Fig. 9: 1). Besides, only an isolated find of a Bronze Age spearhead has been published from the cadastral area of Semanín (Vích 2019); for the Roman Period, we only have an unpublished bronze button-shaped spur found in a ploughed area near the edge of a forest less than three kilometres south of the archaeological concentration; it is not the only find from the neighbourhood of Litomyšl (Fig. 1: 2; 9: 3).

Button-shaped Roman Period spurs in the Litomyšl region³

1. Janov u Litomyšle

A bronze button-shaped spur of the Ginalski 5a type with one shank broken off and a full prick was discovered in the topsoil using a metal detector by Radek Smolen on 20 December 2020: E 0600899, N 5522306 (Fig. 9: 3).

2. Čistá u Litomyšle

A bronze spur of the Ginalski 6 type with broken-off button-shaped ends and a hollow prick was discovered using a metal detector by Jiří Mrázek in 2019. The archaeological importance of the find was recognized later, which is why the find was not localized by GPS and its localization is only possible within a field delimited by the following points: E 0595350, N 5519469, E 0595702, N 5519851, E 0596193, N 5518597, E 0595840, N 5518492 (Fig. 9: 5).

3. Řídký

A full prick of a bronze spur, considerably damaged by the long stay in the topsoil, was discovered on 11 March 2023 during the detector prospection of the route of the planned D35 highway: E 0589713, N 5527984 (Fig. 9: 4).

The slightly arched body and the lightly edged to conical prick categorize the Janov spur as type Ginalski 5a; the spur from Čistá can be categorized as type Ginalski 6 in view of its medium-arched body and a massive conical prick; the spur torso from Řídký cannot be categorized more precisely due to the state of preservation. Spurs of the Ginalski E5 and E6 types are dated to the second half of the 2nd and the first half of the 3rd centuries (Ginalski 1991, 62, 63).

EVALUATION

Like in other places, many Roman Period sites discovered in recent years through detector prospection on the boundary between eastern Bohemia and northwestern Moravia defy (for the time being) what was until recently the common understanding of archaeological components. The sites can be described as neither settlement nor funeral, even though those are not lacking in the studied territory, either. The sites, published as well as those that are still waiting for publication for various reasons (continuing survey, conservation of the source fund) usually share the following elements: a) location close to vanished routes that manifest themselves as hollow ways undatable by existing methods; b) chronological heterogeneity of the assemblage, either within or outside the Roman Period (representation of the Bronze Age or the La Tène Period), with the predominance of artefacts

³ All three spurs are the property of the Pardubice Region; the spurs from Janov and Čistá were handed over to the Litomyšl Regional Museum, the spur from Řídký to the East Bohemia Museum in Pardubice. Our thanks for the possibility of publication go to Daniel Stolz of Archaia.

from the second half of the 2nd and early 3rd centuries; c) absence of intact archaeological contexts, which means that our reasoning can be basically based only on the testimony of metal artefacts themselves and the spatial relations among them; d) representation of artefacts related to non-ferrous metal working (fragments of objects, undatable ingots and, above all, copper alloy moulds or their parts) within the Roman period component; e) visible representation of imports from the Roman Empire, often such that were rarely or never encountered in the Barbaricum before; f) accumulation of artefacts on a small area, which makes it possible, at least in some cases and with reservations, to consider an intentional deposition, i.e., a depositing practice.

However, these markers almost never occur together at one site and in themselves, for the time being, make it more or less impossible to interpret with certainty what activities are reflected by these archaeological sources. As for the absence of intact archaeological contexts, it can be justifiably assumed based on terrain observations that they might have been present to some limited extent, but they are either unpreserved due to post-deposition processes (for understandable reasons, this is especially true of contexts detected in ploughed areas) or (probably much less often) they have escaped attention in view of the method used. Of the published assemblages, these characteristics are fulfilled above all by a collection from the cadastral area of Boršov near Moravská Třebová, where ca. 70 metal objects (predominantly) from the Roman Period were found on an area of approximately 5 × 2 m (Vích *et al.* 2020), once again in the absence of intact archaeological contexts. A detector survey of the surrounding area yielded more solitary finds of metal objects from the Roman Period including copper alloy casting moulds, accumulations of metal artefacts and evidence of intact contexts in the form of a degraded cultural layer (from a forested environment) or features with barbarian pottery transferred by ploughing from a ploughed area.⁴ Another specific context is represented by the discovery of a shield boss and two spearheads in a spatially non-accidental arrangement near Jevíčko, once again without evident intact contexts but with a positive phosphate analysis result (Vích/Jílek 2016). Only a hoard consisting of a sword blade and a ploughshare deposited to the ground near the turn of the eras and a solitary find of the edge of another, later Roman weapon have been published so far from Křenov, Svitavy District (Vích *et al.* 2018); other finds (not only) from the Roman Period are waiting for publication. The image is made complete by solitary finds from a stronghold near the hamlet of Mařín (Zadní Arnoštov and Křenov cadastral areas, Svitavy District) and from Zadní Arnoštov, “Na Žlíbcích” field. They make it possible to consider above all activities connected with the events of the Marcomannic Wars, which directly affected also the territory of the nearby present-day Jevíčko. The finds there (together with the above-mentioned finds from Křenov) mark a long-distance route connecting present-day northwestern Moravia with the Bohemian Basin (Vích *et al.* 2021).

The assemblage from Strakov fits into this framework well, including the fact that not all the aforementioned markers are present there, either. We cannot see any clear chronological disproportion between the individual finds, but the main difference is the absence of a link to the course of a route, both on the practical level, as hollow ways as remnants of vanished roads are missing altogether, and on the theoretical level, since the location of the find is outside the territory that would need to be passed through when going to other settlement chambers; the area to the east and north was completely unsettled in the Roman Period.

If we view the assemblage as a whole, we certainly cannot describe it as a find complex (on the term, see Venc 2001, 600 with more literature) or as a poly-deposit, a set of objects deposited in the ground intentionally and at the same time (Salaš 2005, 12–15 with earlier literature) because the deposition in the ground at one time cannot be proved; nor can be even a Roman Period dating, given the occurrence of medieval artefacts. Moreover, some of the artefacts (especially the coulter) were found at a considerable distance from the main accumulation. These reasons rule out also its characterization as a “scattered hoard”, which can be encountered in the Alps, when the objects are scattered in a small area. In these cases, moreover, the possibility that the assemblage came into existence in another way or that its form is the result of post-deposition processes can never be ruled out (cf. Windholz-Konrad 2018, 115–117). Of the finds from Strakov, the interpretation as a poly-deposit can only be considered for the two archaeological accumulations consisting, with the exception of the iron sickle, of objects from non-ferrous metals. The question that remains is to what extent all the artefacts were deposited under the surface level. In view of the very shallow deposition, often in the present-day humus layer, the objects might have been left free on the surface, which corresponds to discoveries elsewhere in the region (similarly e.g. an assemblage of artefacts from Boršov, Vích *et al.* 2020, 178).

⁴ The assemblage is being prepared for press. In addition to finds from the Roman Period, high medieval finds have been registered as well, with a link to a high medieval castle under which the sites are situated. Distinguishing between high medieval artefacts and Roman Period objects is not always problem-free (on medieval finds, cf. Vích 2017; 2020).

Depositing practices are discussed by extensive literature, above all for the Bronze Age. In a very simplified way, we can say that the perception of hoards has gradually shifted from the interpretation of a concealed property aimed to be picked up later (reversible deposits) to collections of objects permanently deposited for religious or social reasons (irreversible deposits); especially in northern Europe, the first case concerns above all assemblages deposited on dry land, while the latter is connected with the water environment.

For the Roman period, the issues of the interpretation of depositing practices have been somewhat on the margin of interest, at least compared to the Bronze Age; this is doubly true in the central European Barbaricum, in view of the weak representation of this source category (perhaps except coins, *Militký 2013*, 20–31). Archaeological sources have been mostly interpreted profanely in this case. On the contrary, *Richard Bradley (2017)*, who has long been dealing with the deposition practices on a broader time scope, especially in the territory of northern and northwestern Europe, regards hoards as an archaeological record of sacral practices. In a study on Roman Period hoards published in 1997, Sabine Rieckhoff compares the contents of hoards; subsequently, based on certain repeating qualification features, she also interprets them as offerings. At the same time, however, where certain qualification criteria are fulfilled, she does not rule out profane reasons for depositing practices, such as concealed valuables or material storage, in some cases. In the case of iron objects, S. Rieckhoff ascribes primary importance to farming implements and objects linked to the fireplace/hearth. She also singles out parts of wagons and horse harnesses, construction fittings, craft tools including metalworking tools, weapons and objects of a “magical character” (i.e., objects that were incomprehensible or difficult to comprehend to the Germanic population, such as writing aids). Outside iron objects, she deals with other categories such as parts of clothing or vessels.

Viewing the assemblage from Strakov through S. Rieckhoff’s prism, the farming implement find category is represented in accumulation 1 by a sickle, the only object (except for the bridle repair ringlet) made of iron, while wagons and horse harnesses are represented by a torso of a bridle of the Kirpehnen II/Vimose IV type. Other categories present include a clothing part/accessory (bracelet) and evidence of work with non-ferrous metals (fragment of a buckle semiproduct and perhaps a minor fragment of an undetermined object with the possible function of raw material). The image is somewhat different for archaeological concentration 2 where various fragments of vessels and other objects clearly indicate a raw material character of the assemblage potentially intended for recycling. In the case of solitary finds (with many of the above-mentioned objections concerning dating and the spatial context), we encounter farming implements (coulters and the other sickle), clothing part/accessory (fibula), evidence of work with non-ferrous metals (moulds and possibly the undeterminable metal fragments) and wagon/horse harness (part of a bridle of the Vimose type, separate bridle connecting link). If the interpretation and dating of the iron forked object with a twisted handle as a meat fork is correct, there is also a representative of artefacts with a link to the fire and hearth.⁵ These facts, along with the isolated character of the presented assemblage and its deposition in a watercourse source area, make it possible to consider potential links of the Strakov situation to a ritual practice; it is impossible to determine whether the acts were one-time/short term or long-term/repeated. Ritual reasons for deposition have started to be considered recently also for many Roman Period assemblages discovered in central Europe (e.g. *Jílek/Nejedlá et al. 2024*; *Jílek/Rožnovský/Jamrichová 2022*; *Kontny 2020*; *Lauermann/Lindiger 2018*; *Pieta 2020*; *Půlpánová-Reszczyńska/Půlpán/Ondráčková 2018*). To confirm the correctness of this interpretation, however, it will be necessary to prove repeating identical rules also for other archaeological contexts (“*Kategorie der Wiederholung*”, *Rieckhoff 1998*, 509). Therefore, we must wait for the publication of more assemblages, not only from the boundary of eastern Bohemia and north-western Moravia but from the broader central European space.

CONCLUSION

The archaeological situation from Strakov represents another piece of evidence of an unknown or little-known archaeological context from the Roman Period apparently reflecting a ritual practice (among other things?). These discoveries somewhat reduce the disproportion between northern and north-western Europe, where contexts with such interpretation (unlike central Europe, bound to the water environment) occur often, and central Europe, where ritual interpretations have been encountered exceptionally so far. That makes this

⁵ It is worth noting that the presented solitary spur finds are connected with rider and horse equipment, but no conclusions can be derived from this fact (for the time being?) in view of the isolated character and limited number of the finds.

category of sources extraordinarily significant, despite great interpretive difficulties. Its further research is, also due to the danger posed to the source category by illegal activities, an urgent task for the archaeology of the Roman Period.

Translated by Milan Rydvan

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Nálezy z doby římské dokumentující práci s barevnými kovy ze Strakova, Litomyšlsko (Česká republika)

D a v i d V í c h

Zhrnutí

Dne 31. 7. 2019 nalezl p. Radek Smolen v k. ú. Strakov (okr. Svitavy, Pardubický kraj, Česká republika) artefakty ze slitiny mědi. Postupně docházelo v průběhu let 2019–2020 k objevování dalších předmětů. Ty se soustřeďovaly na ploše cca 40 × 25 m, hlavní koncentrace se nacházela na ploše 20 × 25 m a byla tvořena především dvěma kumulacemi kovových předmětů v blízkosti moderní lesní cesty v zalesněném kopcovitém terénu západně od Litomyšle, a dále nálezy soliterními rozptýlenými v okolí (obr. 1: 1; 2). Nálezovou koncentraci narušily terénní úpravy při stavbě moderní lesní cesty.

První kumulaci artefaktů tvořil náramek a neúplná uzda nacházející se pod železným srpem. Kumulaci doplňovaly další drobné předměty. Druhou koncentraci představovaly artefakty zhotovené ze silného plechu v různém stupni fragmentarizace. Obě koncentrace se od sebe nacházely ve vzdálenosti 2,5 m. V blízkém okolí se objevovaly další předměty z neželezných kovů. Železné předměty tento nálezový obraz respektovaly pouze částečně (obr. 2). Do prostoru kumulací artefaktů byla dne 11. 3. 2020 položena sonda o rozměrech 3 × 1,5 m (obr. 3). Nepodařilo se však zachytit žádné stopy intaktních archeologických situací ani nálezy z nekovových materiálů, sonda pouze prokázala původní velmi mělké uložení artefaktů.

Velmi nápadnou složku nálezového souboru představují části kovových uzd. V prvním případě se jedná o torzo celé uzdy objevené v nálezové kumulaci 1 (obr. 4: 4; 5: 1). Na mezičlánek uchycený na kruh je navlečen kroužek propojující článek s pokračováním řetězu. Spojující kroužek se od zbývajících odlišuje především materiálem, kterým je železo. Žaludovité mezičlánky i spojovací kroužky ze slitiny mědi oddělené tímto železným kroužkem se navíc typologicky liší. Jedna část patří uzdě typu Vimose IV s datací do úseku C1a–C2, druhá část náleží uzdě typu Kirpehn II s datací do fáze B2b. Řetěz nalezený v lesní cestě (obr. 5: 2; 7: 12) tvořil součást uzdy typu Vimose I datované do úseku B2b–C1b. Jako součást uzdy typu Vimose sloužil i soliterně nalezený mezičlánek (obr. 7: 8). Torzo udidla ze Strakova tak přináší unikátní doklad sekundární kombinace různých udidel typů Kirpehn II a Vimose IV. Spínadla reprezentuje římsko-provinciální spona s polokruhovitou záhlavní destičkou (obr. 7: 9) nezdobeného typu Jobst 13C respektive zdobených typů 13D, popř. 13E (okraj polokruhovité destičky je silně oláman). Tyto spony se objevují v polovině 2. století, na území barbarika se s nimi setkáváme nejvíce od poloviny 2. století

po počátek 3. století a přežívají hluboko do mladší doby římské. Náramek lze především na základě nálezových okolností klást do starší doby římské. Datování neumožňují dvě poloviny kadlubů (obr. 5: 5, 6; 7: 6, 7) pro odlévání blíže neurčených předmětů, jedná se však o jasné doklady práce s kovem. Totéž platí i pro torzo rámečku přezky (obr. 4: 3; 5: 4) datovatelné do stupňů B2–C1. U ostatních předmětů z neželezných kovů (obr. 4: 2; 6; 7: 1–5, 10, 11) je jejich klasifikace obtížná, alespoň část z nich má svůj původ v římsko-provinciálním prostředí, v některých případech jde o zlomky nádob.

Minimum datovacích opor nabízejí artefakty ze železa představující zemědělské nářadí (obr. 8: 1, 4), nůž (obr. 8: 3) a patrně vidlice na maso (obr. 8: 2). Pouze srp z kumulace nálezů 1 (obr. 4: 5) umožňuje rámcovou dataci do 3.–6. stol. Na základě zjištěných znaků můžeme soubor ze Strakova klást do období markomanských válek či (mnohem pravděpodobněji) nedlouho po nich., tedy do druhé poloviny 2. stol., či spíše do první poloviny 3. stol.

Místo nálezů vylučuje souvislost se sídlištním prostředím. Situováno je v blízkosti pramenů a lokálních vodotečí, ale nikoliv v jejich bezprostřední blízkosti, vazbu na vodní prostředí není možné jednoznačně prokázat, ale ani zcela pominout. Nejbližší sídelní komponenta doby římské se nachází na území dnešního města Litomyšl ve vzdálenosti 7 km vzdušnou čarou, s ojedinělými pravěkými nálezy včetně doby římské se setkáváme jihovýchodně od Litomyšle, kde se více či méně váží na komunikační koridor spojující dnešní východní Čechy se severozápadní Moravou. Vazba zkoumané lokality na komunikaci se proto zdá málo pravděpodobná, komunikační význam mělo místo snad až ve středověku (obr. 1: 2; 9: 3; neseparované podkovy a zákolník). Místo nálezů se nachází ve vzdálenosti cca 5 km severovýchodně až severně stranou od soudobých aktivit, nicméně v dostupné vzdálenosti na neosídleném území krytém hvozdem. Nejbližším nálezem z doby římské je bronzová knoflíkovitá ostruha nalezená v k. ú. Janov necelé tři kilometry od prezentované nálezové kumulace (obr. 1: 2), přičemž z Litomyšlska známe těchto ostruh více (obr. 9: 4, 5).

Nálezová situace ze Strakova rozšiřuje počet lokalit z doby římské zjišťované detektorovou prospekci, které se zatím vymykají zažitým archeologickým komponentám. Lokality tohoto druhu obvykle spojují následující prvky: a) situování v blízkosti zaniklých komunikací; b) chronologická heterogennost souboru; c) absence intaktních archeologických situací; d) zastoupení artefaktů souvisejících se zpracováním neželezných kovů; e) zřetelné zastoupení importů z prostoru římského impéria; f) kumulování artefaktů na malé ploše, u nichž lze alespoň v některých případech a s výhradami uvažovat o depozitním jednání. Tyto výše uvedené markanty ale téměř nikdy nevystupují všechny v rámci jediné lokality společně, což platí i pro prezentovanou lokalitu. Hlavní odlišností je především absence vazby na průběh zaniklé komunikace (absence úvozových cest).

Označení jako polydepozita můžeme u nálezů ze Strakova zvažovat pouze v případě obou nálezových kumulací tvořených, s jedinou výjimkou, předměty z neželezných kovů. Pro dobu římskou stála problematika interpretace depozitního jednání na okraji zájmu, přičemž archeologické prameny byly v tomto případě interpretovány profánně. Odlišně k depotům přistupuje R. Bradley (2017) a S. Rieckhoff (1998). Budeme-li se dívat na soubor ze Strakova perspektivou funkčních skupin S. Rieckhoff, máme v souboru zastoupeno zemědělské nářadí, výstroj koně, artefakt s vazbou na oheň a krb (vidlice?), součásti kroje a oděvu a doklady práce s neželeznými kovy. Tyto skutečnosti naznačují, že soubor mohl mít význam v rituální rovině, přičemž o rituálních důvodech uložení se v poslední době začíná uvažovat i v případě jiných souhorů z doby římské zjištěné na území střední Evropy. Tato zjištění snižují disporci mezi severní a severozápadní Evropou, kde se s takto interpretovanými situacemi (ovšem na rozdíl od střední Evropy vázanými na vodní prostředí) setkáváme často, a Evropou střední, kde jsme se s rituálními interpretacemi pro dobu římskou setkávali až dosud pouze výjimečně. Za daného stavu poznatků nezbývá než vyčkat publikování dalších podobných nálezů, kdy jejich vzájemné srovnání pomůže odhalit určité vnitřní zákonitosti.

Obr. 1. Koncentrace nálezů ve Strakově a nálezy bronzových knoflíkovitých ostruh v okolí Litomyšle. 1 – Strakov, koncentrace nálezů doby římské; 2 – Janov u Litomyšle, bronzová knoflíkovitá ostruha; 3 – Čistá u Litomyšle, bronzová knoflíkovitá ostruha; 4 – Řídký, bronzová knoflíkovitá ostruha.

Obr. 2. Strakov. 1 – nálezová koncentrace předmětů ze železných a neželezných kovů; 2 – nález železného kroidla. Legenda: a – železné kovy; b – neželezné kovy.

Obr. 3. Strakov. Sonda z roku 2020, která odkryla pouze sterilní podloží (foto D. Vích).

Obr. 4. Strakov. Nálezová koncentrace 1 (kresba H. Večeřová).

Obr. 5. Strakov. Výběr artefaktů (foto J. Čáp).

Obr. 6. Strakov. Nálezová koncentrace 2 (kresba H. Večeřová).

Obr. 7. Strakov. Soliterní nálezy z neželezných kovů (kresba H. Večeřová).

Obr. 8. Strakov. Soliterní nálezy ze železa (kresba H. Večeřová).

Obr. 9. 1, 2 – Strakov, středověké artefakty z nálezové koncentrace a jejího bezprostředního okolí; 3–5 – bronzové knoflíkovité ostruhy (3 – Janov u Litomyšle; 4 – Řídký; 5 – Čistá u Litomyšle; kresba L. Škopová).

PhDr. David Vích, Ph.D.

Regionální muzeum ve Vysokém Mýtě

A. V. Šembery 125

CZ – 566 01 Vysoké Mýto

dвич@centrum.cz

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2178-8194>