

# STUDIA HERCYNIA

Studies in memory of Jan Bouzek

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## Contents

Jan Bouzek - a man of many parts  
ANTHONY HARDING – PETER PAVÚK — 5

### Peer-reviewed studies

Mycenaean Greece and Europe. Interconnections and exchanges in the light of recent research  
ANTHONY HARDING — 21

At the confluence of the Corded Ware and the Únětice cultures. The case of amber discs  
JANUSZ CZEBORESZUK — 44

The Bronze Age on the Periphery. The hoard from Tichá and new finds from the Upper Malše Basin in Southern Bohemia  
ONDŘEJ CHVOJKA – JAN JOHN — 61

A brief remark on the philhellenic policy of Amasis at the *emporion* Naucratis  
KVĚTA SMOLÁRIKOVÁ — 71

A South Italian Bell-Krater – a New Acquisition of the National Museum, Prague  
HELENA SVOBODOVÁ – PAVEL TITZ – ROMANA KOZÁKOVÁ — 77

A New Silver Shape of a Hellenistic Askos  
ATHANASIOS SIDERIS — 92

The hidden treasure of Dionysus. Small portraits from eastern Adriatic stamnoid situlae  
MARTINA BLEČIĆ KAVUR — 102

Les transferts et les remplois de l'art grec à Rome dans l'Antiquité et le cas de Lucius Mummius  
KAROLINA KADERKA — 117

Coins of the Bohemian and Moravian Celts within the area of La Tène settlement in present-day Slovakia – reasons and consequences of their occurrence  
EVA KOLNÍKOVÁ — 133

New finds of metal vessel elements of the La Tène period from Eastern Bohemia  
TOMÁŠ MANGEL – PAVEL HORNÍK – PETR VRÁNA – MARTINA BEKOVÁ — 158

A Roman gilt finger ring from Přelouč and other Roman-Period settlement finds  
JAN JÍLEK – ALENA PUKANČOVÁ – MATĚJ PEŠTA – PATRIK URBAN — 174

Creusa, Ascanius, and Aeneas in Renaissance Prague  
JAN BAŽANT — 196

# The hidden treasure of Dionysus. Small portraits from eastern Adriatic stamnoid situlae

Martina Blečić Kavur

To Jan Bouzek,  
a 'radiant and divine man, affected by a power from afar.  
You have achieved beauty and pleasure for my heart'  
*Homeric Hymn to Dionysus, 55*

## ABSTRACT

The paper presents two decorative attachments depicting Sileni from stamnoid situlae from the eastern Adriatic sites of Karin and Budva. Through formal typological classification, stylistic and comparative analysis within the broader Late Classical and Early Hellenistic art of the Mediterranean, the 'Adriatic' Sileni are interpreted in terms of the miniature portrait art of that time, which had a decorative expression and aesthetic value on a lavish functional object such as the stamnoid situla. As visual art is particularly stimulating and evocative, these Sileni represented an iconographically clear message as a metaphor or a metaphor as a message. The artistic striving for recognition, idealizing or caricaturing and emphasizing the emotional state are some aspects that address the portraits of the presented Sileni. Even though every reading is a subjective act, it is an idealised artistic convention of a specific place and time, with a precise mythological and cultural-historical background of the remarkable toreutic achievements. It has been impressive and essential to observers in the past, which is also evident from their prevalence in a wide variety of 'Old World' cultural communities.

## KEYWORDS

Eastern Adriatic; stamnoid situlae; Macedonian toreutics; Sileni; iconography.

## THE DIONYSUS INSIDE...

The Vetren inscription begins with an invocation to the god Dionysus, a deity to whom, among his numerous roles, the one of transcultural mediation between people and communities is ascribed (BOUZEK 1993, 108; DEMETRIOU 2015, 169–171, 234). This paper also begins with an invocation of Dionysus but in honour of Jan Bouzek who, in his special way, like Dionysus, was a mediator of knowledge and tolerance between numerous worlds – past and modern ones. There was a lot that was noticeably Dionysian in Bouzek and a lot we have yet to discover. Moreover, the image of Dionysus, directly or indirectly, is well known to us from the art of the last centuries of the old era, especially from Greek and Macedonian productions that tried to be universally accepted and were consistently promoted in their cultural-historical propaganda. The portrait of Dionysus is one of the favourites in visual art, perhaps since one often chose this deity to represent ourselves; to identify with him and to justify all our virtues and flaws in life and death, and thus the triumph of the unity that must be found again after it is lost (SISSA 1986; SEAFORD 2006; ISLER-KERENYI 2008; MORAW 2012; DÍEZ-PLATAS 2013).

The visual artistic expression of the Late Iron Age on the eastern Adriatic coast can be tracked by observing the so-called small objects and focusing on 'non-representational art' *sensu* Bouzek (BOUZEK 1993, 116). At the same time, portrait art was extremely rare and when discovered, it was mostly considered to have been imported with symbolic and/or even exotic characteristics (e.g., KAVUR – BLEČIĆ KAVUR – KIRIGIN 2020). However, miniature portraits, mostly interpreted as masks, are more numerous in the considered decorative arts, especially on metal vessels. They can be observed as elements of attachment on exceptional stamnoid situlae, whose popularity was so pronounced that from the middle of the 4<sup>th</sup> and during the early 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC, they were used over the vast area of the 'Old World' – from the Ukrainian basin of the Dnieper in the east, all the way to the Iberian Peninsula in the west (GUŠTIN – BLEČIĆ KAVUR 2021; BLEČIĆ KAVUR 2021). At the current state of research, we know of only four sites on the eastern Adriatic area – from south to north – where these magnificent vessels were discovered: in Budva in Montenegro, Karin in Dalmatia, Novi Vinodolski in Kvarner, and Nesactium in Istria. While the situla from Karin is the only fully preserved vessel (ABRAMIĆ 1940, 693, t. 5b; KIRIGIN 2008, 4, 38, 42–43, cat. 18), a total of 10 further examples are known; due to their fragmentation and weathering it is mostly the massive cast elements such as the attachments – isolated or with handles – that were preserved. Figural decorated attachments from six stamnoid situlae are known from the so-called Hellenistic necropolis in Budva (MARKOVIĆ 2003; 2012; BLEČIĆ KAVUR 2021). Their number is comparable with sites containing the largest numbers of such luxury objects such as Bolsena in Etruria, or with the wider area of ancient central Macedonia (around Thessaloniki). Thus, their amount is creating a real treasure of these tenuitically small but artistically highly valuable works. However, only two of all the examples mentioned above, belong to the attachments of the 'lion – Silenus' type, namely those from the situla from Karin and a pair of attachments from Budva (Figs. 1 and 3).

In our discussion, we will focus on the portrayal of the Sileni, who, depending on their stylistic variety, can be the result of different artistic or craft traditions or, more likely, of in-



Fig. 1: Bronze stamnoid situla with Silenus from Karin (Dalmatia, Croatia) (after KIRIGIN 2008).

dividual master artists. As visual art itself is extremely stimulating and suggestive, especially the decorative and functional one, the motif of Silenus as a symbol was not chosen at random, nor is it a representative of the expression of a certain mere artistic trend. Sileni on stamnoid situlae hold a pride of place from an iconographical point of view: that of a message as a metaphor or a metaphor as a message that was obviously adopted in the most diverse cultural communities of the 'Old World'. Except for observing and admiring its formal characteristics, it encouraged a semiotic reading of these small works in a particular narrative of the visual concept, which was evolving between the 'image' and the observer (BAL 2006).



**Fig. 2: Distribution map of stamnoid situlae with the spout in the form of a lion's head (●), the "lion - Silenus" group (▼) and their imitation from Bucklige Welt (▽).** 1: Elne, plateau des Garaffes (Artefacts SIT-3026/12); 2: Pontós, Mas Castellar; 3: Populonia; 4: Chiusi; 5: Todi; 6: Bolsena; 7: Sovana; 8: San Giuliano; 9: Tarquinia; 10: Bomarzo; 11: Orte, San Bernardino; 12: Tiriolo; 13: Bucklige Welt; 14: Nesactium; 15: Novi Vinodolski; 16: Karin; 17: Budva; 18: Obrenovac, hoard?; 19: Ohrid, Deboj; 20: Korçë; 21: Himarë; 22: Nupactus; 23: Tsotyli; 24: Vergina; 25: Pydna; 26: Methoni; 27: Derveni; 28: Thessaloniki; 29: Nikisiani; 30: Velingrad; 31: Topolovo; 32: Poljanovo; 33: Šipka, Malkata Mogila; 34: Strelča; 35: Krávenik; 36: Izgrev/Orloveč; 37: Zlokučane; 38: Mărtiniş; 39: Peski; 40: Ryžanówka; 41: Pesčanoe; Unknown provenance: 42: Albania?; 43: Thrace?; 44: Thrace?; 45: Thrace? (completed after GUŠTIN - BLEČIĆ KAVUR 2021).

## STAMNOID SITULAE AS A FRAME

Stamnoid situlae were exceptional and expensive vessels, mostly made of bronze and rarely of silver. Despite their considerable territorial distribution, demonstrating their acceptance in various heterogeneous cultural communities even with different hierarchical positions, most discoveries are still concentrated in the Balkans and the Apennine Peninsula – more specifically in the cultural and historical areas of Ancient Macedonia, Thrace, and Etruria (CANDELA 1985; ARCHIBALD 1998; TOULOUMTZIDOU 2011; SIDERIS 2011; 2016; BLEČIĆ KAVUR 2012; 2021). In these cultural contexts, as their organic part, the eastern Adriatic coast was inaugurated with its diverse historical communities that were equally involved in the circulation of various cultural elements of that time, including trade with luxurious and prestigious goods (Fig. 2).



Fig. 3: Decorated attachments of the 'lion - Silenus' group from the Budva necropolis (Montenegro) (after BLEČIĆ KAVUR 2021).

Stamnoid situlae are so-called composite vessels, assembled from a deep body, and an attachment with movable double handles. Their rounded shoulders carried their key feature or *identitas* – two antithetically placed decorated attachments with one pronounced beak-shaped spout (cf. BARR-SHARRAR 2000; 2002). Therefore, it is generally accepted that their function was that of containing and serving wine, used as a jug. However, it was utilized to pour pure, not mixed wine, because the sieve on the inside of the spout served only to filter impurities present in the wine itself (BARR-SHARRAR 2000, 277; BARR-SHARRAR 2008, 14; BLEČIĆ KAVUR 2012, 153; BLEČIĆ KAVUR 2015, 187). For mixing liquids and/or herbs and honey, ovoid/bell or *kalathos* type situlae were mainly used (BARR-SHARRAR 2000; cf. TREISTER 2010, 11–13; TOULOUMTZIDOU 2011, 332–337, fig. 21–23a–γ; SIDERIS 2016, 226–228).

Attachments with rings for inserting the handles were, like the handles themselves, cast separately and then simply soldered to the shoulders of the situla. Their construction, ideal for the ease of carrying, had been appearing in fine metal crafts and toreutics from the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC and developed in terms of shaping and artistic design to a form that could be figuratively decorated with two or three motifs (CANDELA 1985, 39–43, 45–52; ZIMMERMANN 1998, 49–51; TOULOUMTZIDOU 2011; BLEČIĆ KAVUR 2012, 153; SIDERIS 2016). In fact, attachments represent much more than the decoration itself, as they functionally and primarily formed a multi-purpose part of the situla, uniting the attaching of movable handles, filtering wine and, finally, pouring it out of the vessel. This innovative technological solution, known for now exclusively from stamnoid situlae achieved at the same time an aesthetic improvement in artistic design and visual representation of metal vessels. A precious vessel thus became at the same time a medium and a framework, by which certain rather limited sets of meanings, especially in the cultural-historical sense, were expressed with regard to its rather neutral background.

## SILENI WITH GOAT EARS

Attachments from the 'lion - Silenus' group are the most common artistic, i.e., iconographic symbol of stamnoid situlae (PFROMMER 1983, 254–255). At present, there are 30 known examples of this group, and 18 of them are from valid archaeological contexts.<sup>1</sup> The Budva group of attachments also belongs to this category – they feature on one side the heraldic figure of the aged Silenus, and on the other a medallion with a lion-shaped spout (PETROVIĆ 1939, 168, 170; POPović 1969, 78–79, cat. 60; POPović 1994, 128, cat. 91; KRSTIĆ 2007, 16, cat. 1) (Figs. 3 and 4:3).<sup>2</sup> Both are cast in one piece together with twisted and distinctly cut S-profiled volute-like rings. Between the rings a leaf with horizontal stripes rises, evoking the motif of a palmette or lotus flower, a typical decorative detail that is damaged and partly broken off just above Silenus's head.

Since portrait art implies depicting a person with a prevalent image of the face and its expression, personality, and even mood, the so-called Silenus masks must certainly be treated as a kind of portrait that experienced truly great popularity at the time (SIDERIS 2011, 290; cf. ROLLEY 1999, 299). The Silenus from Budva, measuring 7.5×3.5 cm, was cast in a mould and plastically modelled in high relief. Despite considerable damage, one can clearly distinguish on the surface of the face and especially of the head decorative elements, as well as its key features. Namely, the head is characterized by androgenic alopecia, frontally crowned with a double tendril of ivy and with oppositely placed leaves (probably six of them) on each side and with ivy berries stylized as a rosette in the middle. This crown thus covers most of the calotte, reducing visible alopecia as much as possible, while at the same time it is achieving the lushness of the upper part of the head. The laterally lowered ends of the S-shaped volutes seem to fit into this carefully coordinated decoration of the head – in this way the artist achieved the visual illusion of the head and the lower part of the attachment as being a single entity. On both sides of the face large, oval ears are lowered closer to the temples, presented in the manner of a goat's round lowered ears – or according to some authors in the so-called dog or pig style (Figs. 4 and 5) (TOULOUMTZIDOU 2011, 384; SIDERIS 2016, 221).

The physiognomy of the face is skilfully rendered by soft transitions of light and shadows and flexible surface treatment. The dominant large moustache above the closed full mouth, adheres to the face and moderately transitions into a lush and strictly symmetrically divided beard consisting of three spiral curls on each side that are broken off at the tips. The nose is short, wide and prickly. The entire upper portion of the face is very naturalistic, with heavy eyebrows protruding from the root of the nose, further accentuated by a garland. The eyes are almond-shaped and bulging with slightly lowered 'tired' eyelids, in a position adjusted to the arched tension of the eyebrows. The iris and the pupil are highlights with an incision with a dot in the middle, which was probably inlaid, guiding the direct gaze softly downwards (BLEČIĆ KAVUR 2021, 229–230).

The presented attributes tell us about the character of the bearded old man and accurately introduce us to the mythical background or story. A story enables us to understand how within the hierarchy he unequivocally represents the icon of Silenus. Apart from the described decorative elements and attributes, this relatively small-size frontal portrait depicts the individuality of Silenus in a refined naturalistic way, perhaps even addressing his masculine strength. His mood is at first calm and his expression mild and a little bit tired, though serious as if exuding the wisdom of his existence and mission.

<sup>1</sup> Numerous finds of Silenus heads, are preserved in various collections, though without information on the site of provenance or archaeological context.

<sup>2</sup> National Museum in Belgrade (inv. no. 587/I).



Fig. 4: Decorative attachments of stamnoid situlae from the group of Sileni with rounded goat ears from 1 - Derveni, grave A (THEMELES - TOURATSOGLOU 1997); 2 - Methoni, grave 3 (BESSIONS - PAPPA 1995); 3 - Budva (after BLEČIĆ KAVUR 2021).



Fig. 5: Decorative attachments of stamnoid situlae from the group of Sileni with goat ears from 1 - Šipka, Malkata mogila (KITOV 2005) and 2 - unknown site from the ex-collection Kerry Jouby (GORNY - MOSCH 2014).

The proportionality, the harmony of ratios and workmanship that characterizes only this Silenus from Budva (Figs. 3; 4:3), despite the significant damage on the frontal part, will bring him closer to the group of almost identical Sileni from the Greek sites of Derveni, grave A2, and Methoni, grave 3 (Fig. 4:1-2) (THEMELES - TOURATSOGLOU 1997, 33-34, 73, 102-103, A2, A48-50; BESSIONS - PAPPA 1995, fig. 83 B; cf. SIDERIS 2011, figs. 10-12; TOULOUMTZIDOU 2011, figs. 30ζ-η; BLEČIĆ KAVUR 2012, 165-166, figs. 7:3-4), and, only partially to Sileni from the Bulgarian Šipka, Malkata mogila (Fig. 5:1), and from the former private collection of Kerry Jouby (Fig. 5:2) (KITOV 2005, 9-10, fig. 5; cf. SIDERIS 2011, figs. 10-12; TOULOUMTZIDOU 2011, fig. 30θ; BLEČIĆ

KAVUR 2012, 165–166, figs. 7:3–4; BLEČIĆ KAVUR 2021, figs. 4–5).<sup>3</sup> The damage to the Budva Silenus is certainly objectively misleading and diminish its original aesthetic expression. Nevertheless, it can be seen with certainty that the physiognomy of character naturalism, decorations, and the way of performing certain effective artistic solutions, especially ears with incised edges is comparable to the extremely well preserved Sileni from Derveni and Methoni (**Figs. 4:1–2**). The short and wide, wrinkled nose at the top only potentially connects it with the Silenus from Šipka (**Fig. 5:1**), while the Silenus from the former Kerry Jouby collection (**Fig. 5:2**) differs from our specimens in many ways, especially in the implementation of details. Nevertheless, it is the realization of its ears that connects it with the Silenus from Šipka.

All the shown examples are associated with stamnoid situlae of the so-called classical type, i.e., middle or second generation and are ascribed to the artistic circle of Macedonian craft production (SIDERIS 2011, 290–296; TOULOUMTZIDOU 2011, 368–398; BLEČIĆ KAVUR 2012, 157–158). In terms of the artistic-toreutical reception of this most important artistic motif, the characters of Sileni from Derveni, Methoni, and Budva (**Fig. 4**), which are sublime in their visual perception, differ significantly from the grotesque and somewhat beastly character of the Silenus from Šipka (**Fig. 5:1**). If we add to this, differences between individuals, even though they may belong to the same group, we can assume that we are probably observing works of different workshops and/or toreutic artists within them (BLEČIĆ KAVUR 2021, 231). These considerations may be supported by analyses of the composition of the metal alloys, in which significant progress has been made so far, especially regarding the understanding of Macedonian examples (TREISTER 1991, 74–76; ARCHIBALD 1998, 278, 331; TELEAGA 2008, 263; KATSIFAS – TOULOUMZIDOU – ZACHARIADIS 2019, 1313–1332).

Conceptually and chronologically, based on the available archaeological contexts from graves and tombs, the Sileni (and the situlae on which they are preserved) are dated into the Late Classical and the transition to the Early Hellenistic period, mainly the second half and/or third quarter of the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC. It was then that uniform stamnoid situlae were produced in large numbers and spread over a wide area, as has already been convincingly attested by the data of their distribution (**Fig. 2**) (BLEČIĆ KAVUR 2012, fig. 6; BLEČIĆ KAVUR 2015, fig. 67; GUŠTIN – BLEČIĆ KAVUR 2021, 529, fig. 5). However, it was also a period of flourishing artistic naturalism in Greek-Macedonian art, which aspired to show character and an immediate, almost realistic-psychological invention that we could easily follow in all the compared Sileni. The Budva attachments with the group of ‘lion – Silenus’ type attachments should therefore be understood both artistically and semantically in the stated temporal and cultural ambience of Sileni with goat ears.

## SILENI WITH ACANTHUS EARS

The second ‘Adriatic’ Silenus, the one from the Karin situla (**Figs. 1, 6:1**) was, conventionally and generally, compared to the Silenus from Budva (KIRIGIN 2008, 4, 42–43; BLEČIĆ KAVUR 2012, 162, figs. 4:1; 7:1; BLEČIĆ KAVUR 2021, figs. 3:1; 6:1),<sup>4</sup> although the differences between them are significant and have long been observed (PFROMMER 1983, 254–255; CANDELA 1985, 37–38). The Karin Silenus is marked by an opulent relief vine leaf crown with a rosette in the middle at the top of the forehead. The physiognomy of the face with a sumptuous parted beard and a moustache descending to the beard is also pronounced. The acanthus leaves stand out as ears and the taut arched and connected muscular eyebrows, not present on the Sileni from the pre-

<sup>3</sup> For situla from the private collection see: GORNY – MOSCH 2014, lot. 330, 174–175.

<sup>4</sup> Archaeological Museum in Split (inv. no. H 5468).

viously described group, are combined with lowered goat-ears and ivy crown. The most similar depictions are those from attachments of the italic Tiriolo (Fig. 6:4) and Lambros – Dattari collections (Fig. 6:3) (HIRSCH 1912, pl. XVIII:253; CANDELA 1985, 28, 63, cat. 10, 12) which, by all accounts, were not necessarily the work of Etruscan toreutic artists but perhaps Macedonian imports into *Magna Graecia* (BLEČIĆ KAVUR 2012, 161). However, very good comparisons can also be observed in the Silenus from an unknown site, in a private collection, exhibiting a characteristic way of plastic decoration with details in deep relief (Fig. 6:2).<sup>5</sup> It features the same decoration of a lotus flower between volutes, highly profiled and above the head incised S-shaped rings (not connected into one whole). All the characteristics of the portrait, expressive facial features, straight cut short moustache above the upper lip, chin and mouth position are completed by the strong personality and are almost identical to the piece from Karin. Therefore, they should be considered as a separate group, which may be supplemented by the recently published Silenus from Himarë in southern Albania (VESELI 2012, 214, pl. 1:1), although this cannot be confirmed with certainty from the available publication.

The Silenus from the former Christos Bastis collection in New York (SWAN HALL 1987, 290, cat. 130; cf. SIDERIS 2016, 221; BLEČIĆ KAVUR 2021, fig. 7) cannot be associated with the discussed group, since albeit more robust, it is simpler in the relief design – from the volute rings themselves lacking a pronounced, accentuated and truncated S-shaped profile, to a leafy, distinctly pointed decoration between them, with incised lines, which only vaguely resemble a palmette or lotus flower on the front, characteristic of the previously described Sileni group. Despite the represented plasticity, the physiognomy and character of the face are trivialized, with special emphasis on 'swollen' accentuated eyes and semi-circular thickened eyebrows and a wide and grotesque nose that is so reminiscent of the Silenus from Šipka (Fig. 5:1). A bunch of ivy berries also replaces the rosette in the centre at the top of the forehead, inside a lavish ivy leaf crown. As such, it could represent, only formally and stylistically, a transitional form towards the next group of Sileni with acanthus ears.

Also, the Silenus from Thrace in the collection of Vassil Bojkov (Fig. 6:7; SIDERIS 2016, 221–222, fig. 88:3) is close to this second group. It is even more rounded, i.e., more uniform in the shallower relief especially of the ivy leaf crown lacking central ivy berries stylized as a rosette. It can be seen that the stylization of facial features with indistinct beard folds and a smooth moustache has mostly replaced the brutal naturalism of the previous group. It is also interesting that its mouth is wider open, which is not a frequent occurrence in the execution of such attachments. Perhaps, the closest parallels are observable in the Silenus from Naupactus (Fig. 6:8) (KOLIA 2004, 544, fig. 525γ; TOULOUMTZIDOU 2011, fig. 31α; SIDERIS 2016, 222, fig. 88a), in the Silenus from the Metropolitan Museum of Art (Fig. 6:9)<sup>6</sup> (RICHTER 1915, 125–126, cat. 248; TOULOUMTZIDOU 2011, fig. 31β), from the Bibliothèque nationale de France in Paris (BABELON – BLANCHET 1895, 178, no. 401), and from the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Lyon (BOUCHER 1970, 133, no. 140).<sup>7</sup> They are characterized by a more pronounced open mouth, garland folds on the forehead, simplified relief, less careful execution, and are probably of a somewhat later date (TOULOUMTZIDOU 2011, 385–386; SIDERIS 2016, 222).

Furthermore, a Silenus from an unknown precise provenance in Albania, kept in the British Museum (Fig. 6:5) (BLEČIĆ KAVUR 2012, 158, 165), is an even more concise and reduced

5 Private collection, published in Gorny & Mosch 2013, 46–47, figs. 39–40, lot 40; <https://i.pinimg.com/originals/33/9c/fo/339cfo29e1f4f5adff1abcf8e9fbo036.jpg> (visited 19/09/2021).

6 The Metropolitan Museum of Art: <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/247979> (visited 19/09/2021).

7 Perhaps the Silenus from Waal/Millingen can also be added to this group (ZAHLHAAS 1971, 99, C15).



**Fig. 6:** Decorative attachments from the group of Sileni with acanthus ears from 1 - Karin (KIRIGIN 2008); 2 - unknown site (GORNY - MOSCH 2013); 3 - unknown site from ex-collection Lambros - Dattari (HIRSCH 1912); 4 - Tiriolo (CANDELA 1985); 5 - unknown site in Albania (BLEĆIĆ KAVUR 2012); 6 - unknown site from the Metropolitan Museum of Art (RICHTER 1915); 7 - unknown site from the collection Vassil Bojkov (SIDERIS 2016); 8 - Naupactus (KOLIA 2004); 9 - unknown site from the Metropolitan Museum of Art (RICHTER 1915).

product, although the plasticity is expressed in the relief of a vine leaf crown, garlanded with accentuated eyebrows with incised semi-circular lines and a radiantly spread beard. It is noticeable, however, that the calotte opens more and more freely towards the 'S'-shaped volutes, which are not particularly deeply incised or produced in detail. They are merged with the surface of the rounded calotte with rings of handles that are separated by a triangular remnant of a once ornate palmette or lotus bloom. Its closest comparison is the Silenus from the Metropolitan Museum of Art (**Fig. 6:6**) (RICHTER 1915, 125–126, cat. 247)<sup>8</sup>, which has a slightly open mouth. Given that we are deprived of knowledge of any archaeological contexts of the Sileni from Thrace (?), Albania (?), and the Metropolitan Museum of Art (?), Lyon (?), and Paris (?), it can only be assumed they represent products of alternative workshops and/or toreutic artists that manufactured under a Macedonian influence. They can probably be associated with Etruscan centres, which is arguably suggested for the opposite attachment with a lion-shaped spout on the example from Albania (TOULOUMTZIDOU 2011, 385–386; BLEČIĆ KAVUR 2012, 158; SIDERIS 2016, 222). Chronologically, therefore, they would mark a group of younger works than the Sileni group with acanthus ears and a lavish crown with ivy berries stylized as a rosette in the middle, for which we inherited two clear archaeological contexts, the one from Karin and the other from Tiriolo (**Figs. 6:1, 4**).

Based on the available archaeological contexts and a comparative analysis, the Sileni with acanthus ears of the first group (**Figs. 6:1–4**), one of the most representative examples of which is the Silenus from the Karin situla, can be dated to the last third of the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC and belong to the Macedonian artistic circle (PFROMMER 1983, 254–258; KOUKOULI-CHRYSSANTHAKI – VOKOTOPOULOU 1994, 224–225, cat. 262; SIDERIS 2011, 290–291, figs. 10–12; SIDERIS 2016, 222). Transitional examples, such as the Silenus from New York and younger examples from Thrace, Naupactus, as well as Albania and the Metropolitan Museum of Art (**Fig. 6:5–9**) could be works of Hellenistic artistic production, dated as early as the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC and most likely produced in Etruscan workshops. As we have seen and as pointed out already by M. Candela (1985, 37–38), it is precisely the differences in the selection of details and ways of aestheticizing or naturalizing a work of art that distinguishes the groups from each other, thus suggesting the products of different toreutical centres. The Silenus from Budva should therefore be classed in the group of *Sileni with goat ears*, and the Silenus from Karin in the group of *Sileni with acanthus ears* – the same distinctions can be further followed in their differently shaped and artistically presented beards.

## THE HIDDEN TREASURE OF DIONYSUS

The details of flexibility in the production and harmony of the ratio demonstrate a plastic morphological style, as well as the quality of artistic achievements of figural representations of stamnoid situlae. Representations of Sileni from Budva and Karin (**Figs. 1 and 3**), as well as 'their' lions, which, in addition to decorative, also had a practical purpose, are produced symmetrical and balanced in their composition. Their artistry and formal analysis itself, like in other 'Adriatic lions' from Nesactium (MIHOVILIĆ 2017) and Novi Vinodolski (BLEČIĆ KAVUR 2012; 2015; 2021), convince us that they come from the artistic circle of the late Classical/early Hellenistic style of Ancient Macedonia where such attachments were discovered in impressive numbers (**Fig. 2**). There are also located toreutical centres from the second half of the 4<sup>th</sup> and

<sup>8</sup> The Metropolitan Museum of Art: <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/247978> (visited 19/09/2021).

the transition to the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC in which such works of art, perceived as symbols of status and a certain prestige, were created. They were also directly connected with the Macedonian social elites: at various feasts and ceremonies of the wider circles of the Macedonian court, large vessels (kraters) were replaced by smaller ones, particularly situlae for practical mixing of liquids (ovoid), and those for carrying and pouring pure wine (stamnoid) (BARR-SHARRAR 2000, 277–279; ZIMMERMANN 1998, 48–50; TELEAGA 2008, 262–263). Another possible explanation for the popularity of these vessels in Macedonia and its wider area of interest can be suggested by the tradition from historical sources, according to which Macedonians, Illyrians, and all other ‘northerners’, called ‘barbarians’ by the Greeks, drank undiluted wine, (BARR-SHARRAR 2000, 279; BLEČIĆ KAVUR 2012, 157–158, 162; BLEČIĆ KAVUR 2021, 240–241).

Carefully selected signs and symbols, especially those from the group of ‘lion – Silenus’ type attachments, further emphasized the value and significance of these vessels. Since every reading is an act of reception of attributing specific meaning (BAL 2006), they have all been, historically and iconographically, closely connected with the youngest god from Olympus. The visual image of Dionysus, especially on luxurious vessels, was of a variable and unconventional form, a metaphor in which his presence was nevertheless always visible (DÍEZ-PLATAS 2013, 505; KIM 2017). Therefore, apart from its many transformations, the earliest appearance of Dionysus was precisely in the form of a lion, which becomes an iconographic substitute for his enlightenment, particularly in reduced artistic realizations such as these (*Hymn.* 7.44; *Bacchae* 1017–1019; DODDS 1960, XVIII, 205; WEST 2003, 186–187; SEAFORD 2006, 18, 23–24; KIM 2017, 36). Besides, the lion, as a solar symbol of a great protector in the sense of lord and ruler, i.e., a divine victor who integrates power and authority, wisdom and justice (BEVAN 1986, 231; WERNER 2005, 72; WERNER 2006, 255–257), was early inaugurated in the emblem of the ruling, Macedonian house of Vergina, although it was associated with the symbolism of the ancestors and with Heracles himself (ILIADOU 1998, 15–36; CHRISTESEN – MURRAY 2010, 430–431; MARI 2011, 81; cf. STAFFORD 2012, 142–146).

Furthermore, Silenus was both Dionysus’s educator and companion, a good old demon who liked to drink only pure wine – so perhaps this is one of the reasons that the spout was practically placed on the lion’s head, concealing the wine filter sieve in the body of the situla. Silenus triumphed on the aesthetic, always visible, side of the sumptuous vessel, marking the inspiring presence of the ambivalent Dionysus, with the intention of warning of the effect of excessive wine consumption and seemingly enchanted reality (LA ROCCA 2010; cf. MORAW 2012). The artistic striving for recognisability, idealization or caricaturisation, and emphasizing the emotional state are some aspects that mark the portraits of the depicted Silenus. In this example, even though the act of reading is always subjective, we have a mythological and cultural-historical framework that creates a specific image of an idealized artistic convention. Its wide prevalence in the past clearly demonstrates that it was both fascinating and essential to observers.

Dionysus is considered the guarantor of cosmic order and the bringer of peace (ISLER-KERENYI 2008; BURKERT 2012; DÍEZ-PLATAS 2013). As the spirit of wine, he contributed to the individualization of people by separating them from their blood kinship and helping to organize new relations among the liberated. He also acted as a transcultural mediator between different ethnic groups, which was especially evident in the example of Thracians and Greeks, both accepting him as the guarantor of requirements from the Vetren text (BOUZEK 1993, 115; BOUZEK 1999; BOUZEK – DOMARADZKA 2010; cf. DEMETRIOU 2015, 171, 186). Therefore, the Thracians and the Greeks recognized him as a deity, just like other peoples in the Balkans, who were in direct contact with them. The syntagma of a transcultural mediator can be confirmed precisely by the discoveries from Pistiros, defined and interpreted as a multi-ethnic

emporion (DEMETRIOU 2015, 185–187, 238). This role can be further perceived in the exceptional frequency of stamnoid situlae in Budva, located at the crossroads between land and maritime communications at the 'Adriatic gates'. Connected to a network of profuse Macedonian propaganda and business with centres of power and their specialised markets, especially in the northern Adriatic and Italy, the Budva society, controlling a substantial part of these transactions, clearly accepted and equally followed the trends of their more dominant and eclectic southern neighbours, which is well evidenced by numerous other prestigious finds of material culture throughout the Hellenistic period (MARKOVIĆ 2012). Both Budva and Nesactium were probably multi-ethnic communities with groups of people of various origin probably living side by side. Their statuses in the society were reflected in the material culture of luxury, particularly in symposium objects – not only in a material but also in a symbolic sense. Moreover, it was precisely the situlae that were often deliberately and violently destroyed, broken and burned during funerary ritual practices, thus reflecting the social dimensions of the living in eschatological practices that may have been associated with the Dionysian cult. Yet certain decorative elements, especially the lion-shaped spouts or portraits of Silenus, survived as metonymies of vessels and as numerous symbols of their users, revealing themselves to us again as some long-hidden treasure of Dionysus.

## SOURCES

*Bacchae* = Euripides, *Bacchae*. Transl. E.R. Dodds 1960: *Euripides Bacchae*. Oxford.  
*Hymn 7* = Homeric Hymn to Dionysus 7. Transl. M.L. West, 2003: *Homeric Hymns, Homeric Apocrypha, Lives of Homer*. Loeb Classical Library 496. Cambridge, MA – London.

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