



Silver Belt Fittings With Openwork Decoration. Byzantine Empire, 6th-7th Century

1 000 EUR

Period : Before 16th century

Condition : Etat d'usage

Material : Sterling silver



Description

Set of Early Byzantine Silver Belt Fittings with Openwork Decoration. Byzantine Empire, Pontic Steppe or Black Sea Region. 6th-7th century AD.

Measurements o Large Strap End: 9 × 2.1 cm;
Weight: 20.3 grams o Buckle: 5.8 × 2.1 cm;
Weight: 16.7 grams o Small Strap End: 4.7 × 3.2 cm; Weight: 14.6 grams

A set of three Early Byzantine silver belt fittings comprising two strap ends and a buckle, each worked in openwork with stylised and symmetrical decoration. Crafted in high-tin silver, the fittings feature incised and pierced motifs of bifurcated scrolls and heart-shaped volutes, articulated with notable balance and clarity. The largest component, a rectangular strap end with rounded terminals, is pierced throughout with mirrored foliate forms and retains its original rivet holes. The central

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buckle, with arched loop and cast tongue, is mounted on a shield-shaped plate decorated in a similarly abstract vegetal scheme. The smallest strap end is flared, terminating in a notched or stepped fringe, with a prominent heart-shaped motif pierced into the surface. The high quality of execution, formal consistency, and use of silver suggest these fittings once adorned the belt of a military or aristocratic figure within a frontier or provincial context. Their design is representative of the transitional material culture of the early Byzantine world, in which classical motifs were abstracted and reinterpreted through regional aesthetic idioms.

Cultural Context This ensemble belongs to the broader category of Early Byzantine personal dress fittings, and is closely related to the Martynivka Hoard--a group of silver artefacts discovered near Kanev (modern Cherkasy Oblast, Ukraine) before 1909. Now divided between the British Museum and the National Museum of the History of Ukraine, the hoard includes strap ends and buckles of closely comparable design and manufacture. While their precise cultural attribution remains debated, the prevailing scholarly consensus situates them within the orbit of Byzantine provincial production, possibly influenced by or intended for Slavic, nomadic, or client populations in the Pontic steppe region. Similar artefacts have been recovered from Kerch in Crimea, further supporting the view that such belt fittings were widely disseminated in Byzantine-controlled or influenced regions along the northern Black Sea during the 6th and 7th centuries. Their function was not merely practical; richly decorated belts of this kind were important signifiers of rank, allegiance, and imperial favour.

Comparisons

- o British Museum, Martynivka Hoard, Registration no. 1912,0610.6 https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/H_1912-0610-6
- o British Museum, Kerch Find, Early Byzantine strap end, Registration no. 1856,1004.50 <https://www.britishmuseum.org/coll>

ection/object/H_1856-1004-50 o See also:
Sventsitskaya, I. V., The Martynivka Treasure
and the Art of the Steppe Peoples in the 6th-7th
Centuries, Kyiv (in Ukrainian) o Comparable
pieces in the Hermitage Museum from
Chersonesos and Olbia, Crimea